

PITSTONE & IVINGHOE MUSEUM SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 26th NOVEMBER 2015 AT PITSTONE GREEN MUSEUM AT 19.30

1. Present:-

Treasurer – John Youngs
Secretary - Dennis Trebble
Archivist - Sue Denty
Publicity Secretary - Pete Farrar
Programme and Minutes Secretary – Sue Lipscomb
Membership Secretary – Bill Barnard

Plus 27 additional members of PIMS

2. Apologies were received from:-

Sandra Barnard, Paul Chapman, John Childs, Norman Groom, Brian Davis, Libby Thompson, Jean de Selincourt, Roy Cutler, Leslie Laing, Jean Treacher, Barbara Jacobs, Don Flower, Hazel Travis, Lesley and Tim Newing.

3. Minutes of the AGM (27th November 2014)

It had been decided that we would not print the full minutes of last year's AGM this year for each of the attendees as it seemed rather wasteful. The main points of the previous AGM, including the Treasurer's report were outlined clearly by Dennis Trebble, in the absence of the Chairman. It was then proposed by Roy Smith, seconded by Geoff Travis that the minutes should be accepted as a true record and it was carried unanimously.

4. Matters arising

There was a question from Roy Smith regarding the number of members we had and Bill Barnard replied that there were around 180.

5. Chairman's Report – delivered by John Youngs

John Youngs began by apologising that no formal report had been received and said he would do his best to summarise the past year's highlights. It had been a good year financially, influenced largely by very successful Open Days. 2015 brought our highest attendance figures for many years but the 'bumper' year of 2009 was still outstanding with 10 more people than this year. At present we appear to be short of major projects on our site. One project we are engaged on is to expand our office which provides an area of secure storage. The number of regular volunteers is now 53 but we do need more for Open days to guide visitors and for artefacts security. The main project still to complete is reroofing of the Silos. Access to the roof is difficult so we asked the National Trust, our Landlords, if we could remove the brick built storage bins alongside the Silos but they said 'no' which is what we had expected. The nuisance was the delay caused by the time it took them to answer our request. They have given provisional approval to our cutting a hole in the side of one Silo so that visitors could see how they were built and work. The Silos are of historical interest as they were the first of their kind in the UK. We are having difficulty in finding a firm to undertake the work, we presume due to the access problem, firms visit but never quote or vice versa. Our Secretary Dennis Trebble is progressing the onerous task of renewing our Arts Council approval. We are required to have an external Museum Mentor and Dennis is hopeful that he has found a suitably qualified person. There followed many suggestions and discussions on why we cannot find a suitable contractor.

6. Treasurer's Report and approval of accounts for the year ending 31.03. 15 – John Youngs

Copies of the accounts for year ended 31st March 2014 were available at the meeting. The Treasurer's report was as follows:-

The Treasurer stated that the Balance Sheet as at the yearend 31st March 2015 was printed on the back of the AGM notice and hoped that most had read this. It showed a very healthy position with cash funds of £53.5k. He had only two copies of the full Accounts available but offered to send one to anyone requesting it. He reminded all that the Accounts actually covered the 2014 Open days as our year end is 31st March. Income was £22.4k compared to a budget of £18.4k and the prior year of £19k. Expenditure was below budget due to lack of project spend, partly due to lack of volunteer time. The Surplus (Profit) for the year was £9.8k compared to budget of £7.9k and prior year of £7k. So a very successful record year. Current year to date our income is £22.8k compared to a full year budget of £22.2k, surplus is about £14k against budget of £5.8k so this year is expected to show further improvement.

Unfortunately investment income is extremely low so it is not worth moving funds which makes the Treasurer's job easier but frustrating. Due to the excellent results your Executive Committee propose no increase in subscriptions or entrance fees.

Approval of the Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2015 was proposed by Mr R. Barber seconded by Mrs. B. Barber and unanimously approved.

7. Sub Committee Reports

- **Museum Report**

Norman Groom was unwell and therefore unable to present a report but it was agreed that his very comprehensive museum reports in the newsletters would suffice.

- **Programme**

Most of the events I organised last year were well supported. There are some really exceptional attendance numbers linked to some of the talks. Frank Banfield's film night last December attracted 40 members who enjoyed a really fascinating evening. The more environmentally themed talk about the development of the Dancersend Nature Reserve by Mick Jones was very well supported with 30 members. The numbers supporting our Leavesden Airport talk and the History of Radar talk were in the upper twenties. However evenings where food is also supplied tend to attract even more of our members. Our opening of the three new rooms attracted 28 people, our Hobbies evening 30 and the Cheese and Wine 59 people. Next year we have decided to open some of our science related rooms for our members in September. I must once again thank Barbara and Rob for their support when setting up and serving the refreshments every evening and Brenda who always welcomes members at the door. The programme is almost complete for next year but remember that I always welcome new ideas for speakers. I must thank Dennis for providing really interesting talks after recent AGMs. If any other members would like to offer their services for this slot I would be delighted to hear from them.

- **Publicity – Pete Farrar**

If attendances at open days are a measure of our ability to market ourselves, then we must consider 2015 a resounding success. After boosting our profile on radio, we concentrated our efforts on internet based advertising options, as this is obviously the way forward and much less labour intensive. We are represented on several popular websites, without having to pay fees and we market each individual open day separately, to avoid getting stale. We are also trying to get dialogues going on Facebook, which can reach a lot of people locally. We need to find someone active on Twitter and also to encourage visitors to post their experiences here, on Trip Advisor.

Dacorum Council is undertaking a major initiative to market our beautiful region to the wider public under the banner, 'ENJOY DACORUM Hemel Hempstead - Berkhamsted – Tring'

This will include the distribution of 35,000 tourist maps of the area which shows us here at Pitstone.

They will be distributed locally and throughout Southern England. To go along with this we will also be part of 'VISIT HERTS'. This is a professional promotion, run by the same company that ran Visit Kent and was apparently very successful at increasing tourism in Kent, particularly from London residents.

We have experimented this year, with putting leaflets in pupils school bags as part of the system operated by many schools in the area and will continue to do this next year.

There are two main priorities for next season. One will be a new website to replace our now rather dated one, which, like most of us, is showing its age. It needs to be fresh and attractive and will be kept up to date and revised for each open day, as many people's lives revolve around the information they find in such places. Secondly, it's about time we had a decent sign at the entrance to the site, something tasteful but classy, representative of the experience people will have when visiting our fantastic Heritage Park. We will get opinions from all the volunteers with regards to information shown size, shape, design etc.

Another thing that's taking shape next year is the possibility of a live outside broadcast by the lunchtime presenter Nick Coffey on BBC 3 Counties Radio, based in Dunstable. At the moment we are looking at the end of May or beginning of June, as this would promote our June and July open days which are traditionally poorly attended. We are talking to the local cubs and scouts group to provide us with a live audience on the day.

Our main concern is not to kill the goose that laid the golden egg, we have a fantastic somewhat quirky attraction here, we want more people to know that we are here, but we don't want to modernise everything and destroy the wonderful atmosphere that has taken so long to establish, over many years of hard work by a dedicated team of enthusiasts, working for the fun of it.

- **Membership Report – Bill Barnard**

The Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society has 178 members. This is a decrease of two from last year. We had 17 members who did not renew their membership this year, but we picked up 15 new members, all at our Open Days. The membership list is used to post out the Newsletters to members and also to 11 other people and organisations, such as local newspapers and libraries. We hope you all enjoy the publication and we would welcome contributions to the newsletter from the members as we seem to rely on just a small handful of us to produce it.

8. To consider any motions brought forward by the membership

Geoff Travis asked for clarification regarding the ownership of the silos. John Youngs explained that certain buildings, the original ones, are owned by the National Trust and then PIMS volunteers have built other buildings which we own, but the agreement with the National Trust ensures that we maintain all the buildings. It is useful that John is now a member of the National Trust committee at Ashridge. He made it clear that with the bins knocked down we would have good access to the silos and could maintain them. Dennis Trebble added that the silos are an important prototype of hot air grain drying in this country. It is the roof above them that is leaking. Pete Farrar said that we would continue to try to find someone to do the job. The National Trust have agreed that once safe, we could cut an access on the side of the silos so the public could gain access and we could 'interpret' this important part of the farm. Once we obtain a quote, we would aim to get a grant to have the work done.

Ron Hartwell asked whether the toilets could be refurbished and extended. There was some discussion regarding whether the number we have was adequate but it was decided that they are at present. Others could not be positioned in another part of the site as there would be no services elsewhere. The general opinion was that they should be refurbished.

Mel Davis wanted the membership to know that we now have two trained First Aiders, herself and Pete Farrar. It had been felt that this would be important for the volunteers working on the site on Tuesdays, Thursday and Sunday and also for all on every Open Day.

Chris Smith made a suggestion that our opening hours should be changed so that we open 30 minutes earlier and close 30 minutes earlier too. This would then reflect the time when members of the public arrive to enter the site and when they leave.

Bill Barnard suggested that we should have a really successful year next year by opening on an additional Open Day.

Ron Hartwell raised the concern that there was no emergency exit at the far end of the Colin Cook Collection. Pete Farrar said that this was something that was under serious consideration.

John Youngs assured everyone that all these matters would be thoroughly discussed at the next EC Meeting. He added that there would be an extra Open Day on Saturday 10th April 2016.

9. Election of officers and committee members

Before voting in the committee members John Youngs said there were spaces for another two but there were no volunteers.

It was proposed by Geoff Travis and seconded by Barbara Barber that the officers should be voted in en bloc. This was unanimously agreed.

It was proposed by Rob Barber and seconded by Brenda Grace that the committee members should be voted in en bloc. This was also unanimously agreed.

To summarise:-

Officers

Chairman – John Childs

Vice Chairman – Norman Groom

Treasurer – John Youngs

Secretary – Dennis Trebble

Other Executive Committee Members

Museum Manager – Norman Groom

Deputy Museum Manager – Pete Farrar

Archivist – Sue Denty

Programme & Minutes Secretary – Sue Lipscomb

Publicity Secretary – Pete Farrar

Other EC members – Paul Chapman, Nigel Thompson & Mel Davis

Other posts who do not necessarily need to be Executive Members

Site Manager – John Childs

Membership Secretary – Bill Barnard

Newsletter Editor – Sandra Barnard

Computer Records Officer – Sandra Barnard

10. Appointment of Independent Accounts Examiner

It was proposed by Rob Barber and seconded by Barbara Barber that Tony Sargeant should be appointed to continue in this role and all were in favour.

11. Any other business

There was none.

Signed by the Chairman

Date