

PITSTONE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Newsletter March 1999

Editorial

Another year, another Newsletter and another editor! Since Roger Hillier retired as editor, Mike Sear has had a go but in order to share the work load I agreed to have a try myself so you are going to get two doses from me, one as editor and the other as Museum manager. On one of the pages you will find a list of Committee members and yes! we do have committee meetings about four times a year. At the last AGM the membership agreed to a subscription increase and this was discussed at the last committee meeting. We have tried to keep the increase to a minimum so as not to frighten off members whilst at the same time ensuring that the subscription pays for the basic costs of the Newsletters, the meetings and the other necessary expenses.

The new prices will come into operation for the 1999 to 2000 session in April and are as follows

Senior Citizens :- £4.00

Family membership £9.00

Ordinary Members £6.00

Junior Members £4.00

New subscriptions are due on April 1st and Corral, our membership secretary would appreciate prompt payments as it does reduce her work load.

We still have a number of members who's subs are still unpaid for this year. If you are unable to rejoin the society for any reason a note or phone call would be appreciated.

A payment slip for your convenience is included with this newsletter.

Congratulations to Corral who gave birth to a baby boy in early February. Mum and baby are doing well.

Due to her family commitments Corral is unable to continue as a committee member and Gill Arney has agreed to join the Committee.

The Annual General Meeting of the PLHS will be held at Ivinghoe Village Hall on May 20th. Please try to come along. All Committee positions are open for re-election and I know that some existing members would welcome a break in their seemingly endless duties. If you would like to stand for election to the

committee a nomination form will be sent out with the AGM documentation prior to the meeting.

Another matter that was discussed at the last Committee meeting was the need for an education officer. I know Gill Arney has mentioned this in the past and David Lindsey brought the subject up again. We do have a number of school parties around the Watermill and the Museum and education matters do require special consideration. We also need more helpers in taking the parties around the Mill and the Museum. You would of course not be thrown in at the deep end but work together with existing helpers until you were confident enough to take over yourself. Please contact Mr B. Wright on 01296 668083 or John Wallis on 01296 661997 if you think you can help.

Norman Groom

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of Tom Owen who passed away on January 4th. Tom was a founder member of the Society and had been involved for many years at the museum. There is a barn in his name at the Museum. ('Owen Barn')

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY

The large number of members and friends who came along to the October meeting in Ivinghoe Town Hall were fascinated and enthralled by former police officer John Woolley's first hand reminiscences of this daring crime which made world news for many months and years.

He first of all set the scene of the period, recalling the "swinging sixties": England winning the World Cup; the Aberfan disaster; the Beatles; President Kennedy's assassination and the downfall of John Profumo.

On the night of Wednesday 8th August, 1963, the mail train from Glasgow to Euston was brought to a halt by the alteration of gantry signals some way south of Leighton Buzzard. David Whitby, the assistant in the cab, climbed down to telephone for instructions 'In accordance with established procedure. He was immediately seized by assailants, thrown down the embankment and held captive. Jack Mills, the driver,

was next attacked but put up a stout resistance before being battered into unconsciousness.

The robbers then detached the sorting coach, which was immediately behind the locomotive, from the rest of the train. The intention was to drive the engine and following coach, containing the registered mail and the Post Office sorting staff, some half a mile further towards London and then to stop above a bridge spanning a small country lane where other members of the gang were waiting with motor transport.

It seems that the robber with supposedly appropriate experience was unable to start the train, and poor Jack Mills was shaken into consciousness and forced to drive, under threat of further violence. The mail coach was forced open, the staff putting up little resistance, and the 21/2 tons of mail in 120 sacks was transferred to the waiting vehicles. The gang then drove to Leatherslade Farm - a remote property near Brill, which they had earlier acquired as a hideout. Buckinghamshire Constabulary, after being alerted, set up an incident room in Aylesbury and soon called in the Metropolitan Force.

John Woolley, then aged 25 and a constable with four years' service, had for three months been the village constable in Brill. On the morning of Tuesday, 13th August, he was alerted by his sergeant in Waddesdon to a report from a farmworker who had seen unusual movements of traffic in the remote lane to Leatherslade Farm. Sergeant and constable later that morning drove to the farm, apparently deserted apart from two land rovers (with identical number plates) and a truck in the yard. Upstairs and downstairs windows were obscured by curtains and other coverings, but John noticed that one bedroom casement was slightly open.

With very natural trepidation he climbed in, to find signs of recent usage - bedding and a large quantity of food and other supplies. But no occupants! Just before the two policemen left to seek help for a full examination, a trapdoor with ringbolt was spotted on the ground floor. This, when lifted, revealed a flight of stairs to a cellar containing a large quantity of mailbags and banknote wrappers, establishing beyond doubt the use of the farm as a base for the robbery.

For whatever reason - oversight, failure to carry out instructions, or panic - no effort seemed to have been made by the gang to conceal their identities. Forensic examination of fingerprints and other evidence such as the contents of the trap in the waste pipe of the bath, which had been used (!), quickly established their names. All were known criminals and before long the majority of the sixteen identified were in custody.

Their trial in a special courtroom set up in the offices of Aylesbury Vale District Council, began in January, 1964. Most of the gang eventually received sentences of thirty years. James White avoided capture for two and a half years and so did Bruce Reynolds for five, while Buster Edwards finally gave himself up.

Charlie Wilson and Ronnie Biggs escaped dramatically from prison, the former being recaptured two and a half years later in Canada; while Biggs

remains to this day living in Brazil, successfully evading extradition. After eventual release, Edwards could be found until his death selling flowers outside Waterloo Station. On release, virtually all of the gang re-offended and served further prison sentences. Poor Jack Mills, the unfortunate train driver, never fully recovered from his ordeal and was unable to drive again. After some years of light duties with the railway he retired early and died prematurely in 1969.

John Woolley himself retired from a senior position with the Police in 1984, but retains lively and at times amusing memories of an extraordinary experience. He had put on display for us newspaper cuttings and memorabilia, including signed personal cards to him from some of the robbers.

After many questions and answers, very warm applause was given for a thoroughly professional and entertaining performance which will long be remembered.

John Davis

Extract from the 1937 News chronicle

Fortune telling Ears

No two ears in the world are alike!

People with small ears are tenderly affectionate; if the lobes are strong and red, they are capable of passionate love.

Small ears show refined tastes: but when extremely small, timidity and hesitation. Ears that lie close to the head indicate a tendency to be fearful, even cowardly. The same applies to ears that slope too much backwards.

Well-shaped, straight, upstanding ears somewhat out from the head, indicate courage and power. But if peaked and pointed, there is a strain of craftiness in the owner's nature.

Pale ears, ears belong to the dreamer. Pale, back sloping ears to melancholy person.

Large ears betoken a taste for material pleasures and for things that pertain to the senses. When large and ill-shaped, a coarse nature. Ears that are large and stand out far from the head, a born fighter - the man whose motto is "When you see a head hit it."

If the ear rises any higher in the head than the eye, a man who pays back with interest any injury done to himself.

Wide spacing between the ears and the eyes always indicates ability. A tingling or burning of the ears means that some one is speaking about you:

"The left for love and the right for spite."

From the Leighton Buzzard Observer, pre 1914

AN ACCOUNT OF MY SMASH UP

Sir - I am not asking you for any assistance now I am down in the world, but should like you and your readers to know the way I was treated on Monday last week, after holding my head erect in the world, and as

dignified as possible in our place for many years. I have always been looked up to by rich and poor in a most admiring manner, and many compliments have been passed as to my even noble appearance, doing my duty to my employers in a straight - forward commercial way.

The big- wigs of our Brewery are very good sort of people in their way, but they go down 50 per cent in my eyes by letting a faithful friend like myself go to smash, after all the years I have done their dirty volatile work, and more over made myself a mouthpiece for all their black business. I suppose they will start some finely dressed Eiffel thing in my place, which will doubtless cost them more than I charged them. I have overlooked the whole of the staff, horses, carriages, the farming, in fact the entire domain, ever since they started me, and then to be told I have had my day, and to be hurled from the sublime to the ridiculous is really too much for one in my exalted position not to revolt against. Not but what the firm have always attended to me well; they know I wouldn't work without, and they took good care I was never lazy, but from what I hear my grand successor will demand more feeding than poor me, because he will be head and shoulders above what I was and will do a lot more work over extra men and premises. This is all through "Beer, beer, glorious beer."

On that beautiful Monday morning, Sir, I had the cold shoulder, no one started me at my usual job. I stood on the premises in my old place and looked down in scorn at our Boss, who was talking very familiar to two or three rough looking fellows I had never seen about our Brewery before. Then they all stared me in the face, and apparently made grimaces they seemed to agree amongst themselves, and their language was vicious. Then they prowled round me and pointed at my head, This made my blood boil, cool as I was, for they had always kept me up to a good temperature during labour hours. During this worse than Fenian plot, I kept my balance, and towered as loftily as ever, promising in my innermost soul not to budge one inch, come what would. To describe my feelings on this fateful morning, and what ran through my mind as to my unbroken services, and being the backbone so to speak of our establishment, would occupy columns to fairly detail.

Now, what riled my dignity as much as anything, was for our firm to insult me before I left the premises, and tell a man off to take my photo. I could plainly see something out of the common was going on when he focused my beautifully beaded old topknot, but I seemed transfixed, and like a statue allowed myself to be thus played upon. Around this local artist, the recreation ground teemed with all the youth our village could muster, gay visitors at the Hotel flocked to the balcony and windows and even the servants at the Brewery took every vantage point to stare at my dismissal. I knew it was all up, so resigned myself in martyr fashion, uncouth men made miserable hacks at my body, then a Calcraft-looking fiend, thought me too

Pitstone Local History Society

Programme 1999

All the talks will be held in the Ivinghoe Town Hall at 8pm.

Thursday March 18th *** Straw Plait and All That

The book, 'Children of Straw' was based on the straw plait industry around Ivinghoe and was written by this evening's speaker, Mr. Grof. Although this book is no longer published it would certainly be interesting to order it through a local library.

Thursday April 15th *** Civil War in Buckinghamshire

George Lamb has been our speaker on several previous occasions and we look forward to meeting him once more. This time his talk tells of a period of unrest in this country.

Thursday May 20th *** AGM and Member's Evening

As usual, our AGM will get the evening off to an informative and businesslike start. Then we have two talks by members to look forward to. One is by John Greenwell whose 'Warwickshire Boyhood' has appeared in our newsletters. As a follow-up to that he will be talking about 'How War came to our Village.' The second talk will be by David Lindsey and will, I'm sure, be related to watermills in some way. I would like to thank the two of them for volunteering.

Thursday June 10th *** Visit to Redbournbury Watermill

Please note, this is the second Thursday in the month. The mill is situated one mile south of Redbourn on the A5183 Redbourn-St Albans Road. It is an eighteenth century watermill set in a rural situation on the River Ver. The owner, Mrs. Mandy James will give a talk and show members around. The cost is £1.50 per person and we can buy coffee and cakes on the premises. I would appreciate an idea of numbers by the end of May. (01296 630578)

Saturday July 17th *** Walk Around Historic Tring

Tim Amsden, Chairman of the Tring & District Local History & Museum Society has agreed to give us a conducted walk around the Hertfordshire town of Tring. Those wishing to join us will meet with Tim outside the museum in Akeman Street at 7.30pm. The walk should take about one and a half hours.

Saturday 4th September *** Coach Trip to Hampton Court

The historic royal palace of Hampton Court bears traces of all the kings and queens of England from Henry VIII to the present day. I would like to organise a coach trip but have not booked it yet, since I think I would like to get some idea of the support members would give to the venture. I will be canvassing at our next meeting and would appreciate 'phone calls of support if you do not attend meetings.

Thursday 16th September *** The Life and Times of John Hampden

I have contacted the John Hampden Society who were delighted to provide us with a speaker for this occasion. I'm particularly interested in this talk since the school where I teach in Wendover is named after the great man himself.

NB The whole 1999/2000 season of talks have been arranged and include such interesting items as 'The History of Morris Dancing', 'Disraeli and Hughenden', 'Ancient Countryside in the Chilterns' and 'Wendover's Waterways.' More about these in the next newsletter.

Sue Lipscomb

sturdy for a common rope, so the ignominy of a chain was my neck apparel, then they tugged at me, but I staggered victoriously until the fatal moment came. The drop sudden, the tremendous crashing roar I yelled in my last moments echoed in the near Chilterns I loved the surroundings of, accompanied by the deafening shouts of a regiment of wretched children who revelled in my downfall. I finished by career, honoured and sung, and created such a supreme moment in the annals old Ivinghoe, that will go down to generations although I was only
A BREWERY CHIMNEY.

Does any member still have a full set of Yesterday's World published by the society between 1976 and 1984 intermittently. The Museum set is incomplete and any additions would be welcome. Recently they have proved useful as background information to items in the museum. If you can help please contact Gillian Arney 01296 668123

Farm Museum Report.

Once again the Open Season is near at hand only this year is a little earlier. As we do not have many Open Days at the Museum we thought we would try opening on Easter Monday. We are also going to try offering a better refreshment service as an experiment and Brenda Grace has offered her services for this task.

David Goseltine and his team have again worked wonders over the closed season, they have carried out considerable reconstruction work on one of the cart sheds at the rear of the mill barn and their 'piece de resistance' is the new science room. I thought the new shop was great but just wait until you see the science room. The problem is I have to get the room operational by Easter Monday and that is now very close.

David has now started improving the refreshment area and we already have Formica covered permanent counters and work tops. The front of the counter is boarded in with feather edge board and looks very smart as well as keeping out some of the dust. Future improvements in the area will be carried out in stages as funding, materials, time and effort are available.

My unending search for new helpers still goes on. Can anyone make up some signs to put out around the roads on Open Days. (or actually put up the signs) David Lindsey's questionnaire at the Watermill showed that roadside signs can be a great crowd puller.

One new recruit this year has been Malcombe Lee who has taken the Brush Shop under his wing. He is doing a great job reorganising the room and will be demonstrating some of the skills of Brush Making on the Open Days. Peter Keeley, another conscript from the engine club, has taken charge of the electrical distribution system at the museum. He is busy extending the wiring to cover some new areas and is going to document the wiring of the whole site.

I have some help on Easter Monday but still require someone (or two) to look after the shop. It would also be nice if a couple of members would turn up and act as Wardens, to keep an eye on things. I am desperate for helpers on the other Bank Holiday Mondays. If you helped last year please see if you can come again this year. If you haven't helped before please give it a try.

Norman Groom. Tel 01582 605464

FARM MUSEUM OPENING DAYS.

EASTER MONDAY

and each

BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY
afternoons 2.30pm to 5.30pm

CRAFT & FAMILY DAYS

on

SUNDAY JUNE 13th. JULY 11th, AUGUST
8th & SEPTEMBER 12th

WATERMILL OPENING DAYS.

EASTER MONDAY

and each

SUNDAY & BANK HOLIDAY
afternoons 2.30 to 5.30pm

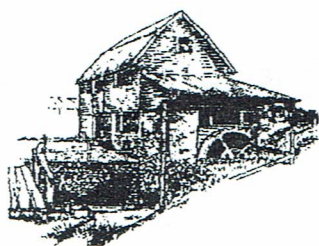
2nd May to 26th September (incl)

MILLING DAYS

3.00 to 5.00pm approx
(water level permitting)

BANK HOLIDAYS. May 3rd, May 31st
& August 30th.

NATIONAL MILLS DAY. May 9th.
SUNDAYS. June 13, July 11, Sept 12



FORD END WATERMILL BOSS - ON THE MILL (4)

Sorry to say Bess shows no inclination as yet to put pen to paper, though she is now thoroughly at

home in the mill, scampering up and down the stairs without any difficulty and watching everything we do intently. Next time perhaps!

You will recall that in the last 'Newsletter' I asked if someone could 'restore' the "Northern Isles" lifebuoy which was in a bad way. Barry Darkins (the knot man), came forward and has made a valiant effort to save it, but all to no avail. Once he had stripped off the old canvas, the inner cork segments just disintegrated and the whole lot just fell apart. Sadly, it has had to be written off. Many thanks to Barry for all his time and trouble.

Last year's school party figures are now available - 2055 children and adults came to the mill, nearly half as many more as in 1997. Hopefully, the tide seems to have turned. Dell Farm, the outdoor studies centre in Whipsnade, brought 823, and 233 came as part of the Chiltern Studies Centre programme. I am now seeking more help for 'B' who virtually looks after the school parties himself apart from some help from John Wallis. I have written a short article for local village and parish newsletters, and already two people have come forward. If you know of anybody who might be interested, please ask them to contact me. They need not be put off if they know nothing about mills, as adequate tuition and advice will be given.

We have been very busy at the mill of late. The French burr stones have been dressed by a millwright, and most helpfully, we have been reimbursed the cost by a donation from the Ivinghoe Entertainment's Committee. Many thanks to them. John has skilfully put mesh ventilation panels in the stone case covers to allow air to circle through the burr stones, which is necessary to prevent mould from developing.

In February we removed all the 122 wooden cogs from the spur wheel in readiness for another millwright who came at the beginning of March to recog the spur wheel - see illustration.

We had intended doing the work ourselves, but were advised by our technical consultant Alan Stoyel, not to attempt to do so because of the difficulties involved - the mortise holes are so eccentric. With the cogs removed, the spur wheel looked a real sorry toothless thing!

Alan Stoyel was right-what a job the millwright had! The recogging took him 5 long days with members of Team Ford End helping him in relays. He finally finished just before 6.00pm on the Saturday, when he left for home in Devon, 'pretty tired' as he confessed. Now the recogging has been completed, we can mill again.

We have been fortunate in obtaining a 70% grant towards the cost from the PRISM fund, which is treasury money managed by the Science Museum. The joint end-of-season mills party last October was a great success and enjoyed by all. Don Otter, a warden from the National Trust Ashridge Estate gave a very informative illustrated talk on the wildlife of the estate.. Which reminds me, you will very shortly be receiving the request for volunteers for the 1999 season, and I hope you will be generous with your offers of dates! The mill will open on Easter Monday, and the season proper begins on May 2nd. Full details are given in the adjacent panel.

Opening the mill last November in connection with National Architecture Week was a dismal failure - only 3 visitors, and one was a Society member!

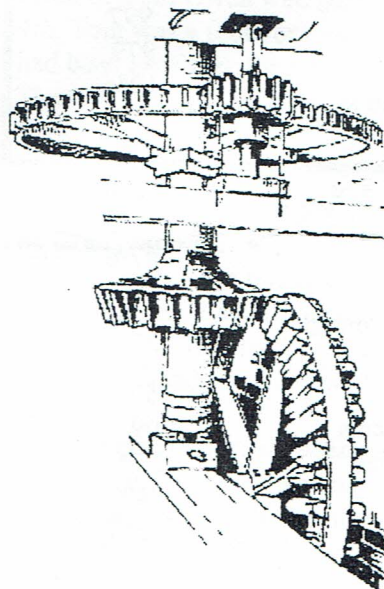
During last year, wardens were very helpful in cajoling visitors to complete a questionnaire saying how they had heard about the mill and from where they had come. The results were most revealing. Nearly 60% of all visitors gave replies, of whom 44% came as a result of 'communication' (road signs, sent by windmill or farm museum, told by friends etc.) and 56% as a result of all forms of publicity. In the 1993 survey, the respective percentages were 70 and 30, so publicity in 1998 seems to have been more successful than in 1993. The response to newspaper adverts and articles increased from 13% to 27%, which is encouraging as advertising is so expensive. There was a disappointing response to some leaflets - the Beds Heartlands brochure brought only 4 people, and that for the Bucks Museums leaflet just 3! However the Aylesbury Vale D.C. leaflet was more successful with 50. The information produced by the survey is proving very

valuable, and thanks to all the wardens for their perseverance in persuading visitors to complete the forms.

Finally, please note that there is an unfortunate error on this year's mill leaflet - milling will take place on Sunday July 11th, and not the 12th!

Have a good summer, and do make an effort to

come to YOUR mill, preferably with many relatives, friends and visitors! See opening times in the panel on the previous page.



PITSTONE

Year	pop	Male	Female	H/holds
1801	275			
1811	268			
1821	353			
1831	436			
1841	424			
1851	438			
1861	457			
1871	479			
1881	433			
1891	459			
1901	386			
1911	435	202	235	
1921	372	166	206	
1931	363	165	198	
1941	no census			
1951	544	271	273	170
1961	766	394	372	252
1971	1147	567	580	370
1981	1665	829	840	573

IVINGHOE

Year	pop	Male	Female	H/holds
1801	1215			
1811	1361			
1821	1665			
1831	1648			
1841	1843			
1851	2024			
1861	1849			
1871	1722			
1881	1380			
1891	1270			
1901	1077			
1911	827	400	427	
1921	810	396	414	
1931	763	384	379	210
1941	no census			
1951	807	402	403	246
1961	863	453	410	260
1971	949	469	480	280
1981	850	443	405	293

The P.L.H.S. Meeting of February 18th

Alison Smith of the Strategic Planning Manager in the Bucks C. C. gave a stimulating talk on the uses of the modern census in forward planning and future development potential.

She concentrated on Pitstone in particular but provided statistics for both Pitstone and Ivinghoe as shown in the accompanying table. Two further tables gives information on the population count for the two villages from 1801 to 1981.

<u>Usually resident Population in 1991</u>	<u>Pitstone</u>	<u>Ivinghoe</u>
Total Population	1956	861
Males	997	431
females	979	430
In Households	1956	851
Not in Households	0	10
Aged under 16	23%	17%
Aged over retirement Age	12%	13%
Non-White ethnic group	1%	0%
Economically active	67%	66%
With long term illness	7%	7%
Moved in previous 12 months	5%	9%
Total households	710	326
Total Dwellings	757	343
Dwellings with Residents	709	326
Average Household size	2.75	2.61
Owner Occupiers	74%	71%
With no car	15%	12%
Without Central Heating	4%	10%
With more that 1 person per room	1%	0%
Lone parent	2%	0%
Containing Pensioners only	18%	17%

PLHS COMMITTEE

Chairman:-

Mike Sear 01296 622221

Vice-Chairman :-

Bob Raynor 01296 661967

Secretary :-

Brenda Grace 01296 668167

Treasurer :-

John Wallis 01296 661997

Museum :-

Norman Groom 01582 605464

Watermill :-

David Lindsey 01582 600391

Programme :-

Sue Lipscombe 01296 630578

Crafts :-

Val Raynor 01296 661967

Publicity :-

Jean de Selincourt 01296 662151

Trading :-

Jeannette Wallis 01296 661997

Archives:-

Gill Arney 01296 668123

Membership:-

Corrall McCormack 01296 662560