



Pitstone Local History Society Newsletter December 2000

**A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year
to all members of the Society**

Mike Sear

David Lindsey has been to see Mike Sear our Chairman, who suffered a severe stroke at the end of August, and was amazed and pleased to see how much progress he had made. He was walking and the use of his right hand had returned. That morning, Mike had cooked his own breakfast of ham and eggs. He had been home for a day at the weekend, part of the preparation for his going home permanently. He still found it difficult to read and express his thoughts, but he's improving all the time. Let's hope this good progress continues - Mike certainly intends it will.

Since David's visit Mike has been discharged from hospital and is expected to be back at the Museum before Christmas.

Museum Newsletter December 2000.

The millennium year has, on the whole, been a good year as far as the financial situation is concerned. The Open Days have been a great success and, in spite of one day when we had heavy rain, our income has been the best yet. We can now offer an excellent service to the public with our refreshments, the museum shop with its sidelines of second hand books, and the plant stall. Our morale was boosted even further when we acquired two contracts to supply farm machinery to film studios. All the equipment was collected and returned by the film companies with the exception of the

threshing box. Jeff towed the threshing box up to Ivinghoe Beacon and spent considerable time on the site, helped by Ron Ashurst, to ensure the safe setting up and use of the equipment.

This year we are due for re-registration with 'Resource', renamed from the old Museums and Galleries Commission. This process also applies to the Water Mill and has kept myself and David Lindsey busy for quite a while producing the necessary paperwork. This is another area in which we have missed Mike, our chairman. However all is just about ready for submission.

Come the late autumn our luck started to turn. The film company that borrowed a potato spinner smashed one of the cast iron wheels. Although it was insured we elected to supervise the repairs ourselves, not trusting the film company with such an engineering problem. We have organised a replacement casting and, although we had great difficulty in removing the old broken wheel, we will be financially better off if we can complete the repair ourselves. Our winter work schedule has been severely upset by the atrocious weather and the usual winter illnesses. We have only just been able to start the paving and levelling of the floor under the Black Shed in which much of our restored farm machinery is housed.

Our biggest disappointment is that we are unsure when or if the new society meeting room will go ahead. This was to be Mike's,

our chairman's, idea to pull the various groups within the P.L.H.S. together by providing a central meeting point at the museum as well as providing a room for the visiting school parties and a temporary exhibition area on open days. We were due to have possession of the room at the end of September but in spite of offering help to clear the room we are no further ahead in getting access to start the restoration work. According to our lease, we should have always had possession since the lease was granted in 1990 but have only recently discovered this fact.

It has been a double blow as the project was also intended to provide the volunteers with a winters' inside task' protected from the worst of the weather. At the moment the volunteers are scratching around trying to find odd jobs to do; let's hope they don't get fed up and depart. One other thorny problem we started on was to sort out the Nissen hut, full to bursting with rusty metal and worm ridden wooden artefacts. We started by filling a trailer with obvious rubbish but unfortunately a very rusty quoit ring was found in the trailer (a quoit ring consists of an extremely heavy metal ring resembling a massive steel washer used in the game of quoits). This caused some controversy resulting in a letter of complaint to the museum. Needless to say the doors to the Nissen hut are now firmly shut and the rusting and woodworm are left to their own resources. Lets hope 2001 starts on a better note.

Norman Groom. Museum manager.

WEA

There will be a new course for the new Year, looking back over the last century. How will history judge the Twentieth Century? We all have fragmented knowledge of the last century - come and fill in the gaps, and get an overview of the period. The course looks at key events and ideas, and at movements, personalities and technical changes that shaped the century. The ten week course starts on Monday 15th January, 7.30pm till 9.00pm at

Brookmead School and the course fee in £40

For a syllabus giving full details please contact M. Connolley, 48 High Street, Cheddington, LU7 0RQ Tel. 01296 668719 Our Literature course, the Teller and the Tale, started in September, continues for another 11 weeks in the New Year. Anyone wanting to join in January will be very welcome. We meet on Friday mornings 10am till noon in Ivinghoe Library, and the first meeting of 2001 is on 19th January.

For further information contact M. Connolley as above.

Bess on the Mill (4)



To begin on a disappointing note. You remember last time I mentioned a theatre group wished to put on a play about a miller and a ploughman's wife at the mill next year. Well, the Boss brought up the suggestion at the Society's

committee, and after some discussion it was voted by seven to one (the Boss) not to go ahead with it. The reasons were, doubts about the financial arrangements, whether there was sufficient room in the mill for a lot of people especially if the weather was poor and the fact that the mill's programme was very full at the time when the play could be staged. The Boss thought it was worth a go, but now it's not to be.

Undaunted, work on preserving and maintaining the mill continues unabated. We have repaired the stonecase for the French burr stones (the ones we use for milling) and carried out conservation work on the sack lifter, sack holder, hoist barrel and the two grain hoppers on the bin floor. We are now planning to cover the bridge with expanded metal to make it non-slip, to make secure 45 out of the 92 pit wheel wooden cogs which have become loose and to replace the wooden support for the trash grill (prevents twigs and

leaves clogging the sluice gate) with a metal one. Obtaining the correct materials is not too easy and expensive - the new nails for pit wheel cogs cost 14p each.

The millwright who replaced the spur wheel's wooden cogs in March last year has been back to finish off his work. We have applied linseed oil to the new cogs and they now look really good, but we won't know how good, so says the Boss, until we start milling again next May.

Talking of milling, I had a brief visit to the Farm Museum with John and the Boss recently. I like going to the Farm because of all the interesting smells to sniff at and all the nooks and crannies to explore. We'd gone to meet the farmer from Caddington who was delivering half a ton of Hereward wheat for next year's milling. We're storing it in Norman's Science Room (said to be rat and mouse free) until we get a chance to clean it using the winnowing machine donated by Reg Jellis. When cleaned, the wheat will be stored in the mill. Unfortunately the farmer has now given up farming - this was one of his last deliveries - so we have bought sufficient to last us until 2002, or so the Boss hopes!

The Boss is very pleased by the number of school visits so far this year, especially by outdoor study centres. Dell Farm (Luton Borough Council) at Whipsnade has brought 614 children and teachers, and the local Chiltern Study Centre 365. We value their support highly. One of the main reasons for preserving the watermill is so that it can be used for educational purposes.

Hope you have a very pleasant Christmas, and the Boss and me wish you all the very best for the coming New Year. Till next year, **Bess**

Lost Property

There is a brown corduroy jacket in the museum shop which has probably been there since the last Open Day. If you realise that you have lost it please ring Gillian Arney 0129 6668123 and claim it.

Acquisitions

The week after Andrew Gould's most interesting talk about village cricket the Museum acquired a most interesting photograph. It is a picture matching the Ivinghoe and Pitstone Cricket team photo with the tent in the background. The major difference is that it shows the other team who were made up of the Reeve family (then at College Farm Marsworth) and their friends. It is most unusual to have a photograph of both teams from the same match and we are most grateful to Mrs C Medlow a descendant of George Henry Reeve who gave us the photograph. Not all the members of the team have been identified though we have the detectives out. If you have Reeve family connections we would be grateful for your help. Ring Andrew Gould 01296 661855

The Odd Item

I have been recently given the following press cutting from the Northampton Mercury of 30 June 1804.

To be sold by auction on the Premises on Wednesday July 11 1804 and following day. Part of the HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, STOCK in TRADE, and other valuable EFFECTS, of Mr WILLIAM PROCTOR, Baker and Grocer, in IVINGHOE, Bucks (who is leaving this part of the country); consisting of Mahogany and other Tables; Chairs, large Copper Boiler, and Kitchen-Furniture in general; capital Fowling-Piece; Alarum complete; seasoned Ironbound Casks, Washing-Trays, large Pickling-Lead, Meat-Safe, Clothes-Horses, Hair-Line, and Flasks.

STOCK in Trade; consisting of forty sacks of prime Flour and Sacks; large Dough-Trough, Copper Liquor-Pot, seasoning Tubs and Pails, Scales and Weights, Bushel shovels, and other measures; about one hundred Tons of dry Billet Wood and one thousand ditto of faggots; useful Road or draught Mare; Baker's Cart., and harness complete; saddle, Bridle

and Pannel; fat Hog and seven store Pigs; four Pockets of fine kent Hops 10cwt of excellent Derby and Cheshire Cheese, twenty-four Sides of capital bacon, a Chest of genuine Green Tea, a Hogshead of fine Jamaica Sugar, five Loaves of Lum ditto, Plumbs, Currants, Starch Quantity of Soap, six Dozen of potted Butter, with various other articles in the Grocery and Baking Line; Tin Tea-Canisters, Scales and weights and fixtures of the shop, as Counters, Shelves, Drawers &c.

NB The above will be placed in convenient Lots either for the Trade or private Families...

Does anyone know what a hair-line (a length of rope made of hair) was used for? I like the way that bacon was stored on the hoof.

In the next newsletter I hope to give you a break down of a family's spend at their general store in 1849

Programme

Thursday 14th December (second Thursday) * The History of the Windsor Chair**

Stuart King is a creative wood turner with wide ranging interests including photo journalism, Romanies and travelling, particularly in Romania. In his talk he will trace the history of the Windsor chair from the earliest beginnings with the bodgers in the Chilterns to the Victorian chair factories of High Wycombe. Sherry and mince pies to celebrate Christmas will be served at this meeting.

Thursday 18th January 2001 * Dr. George Lipscomb, historian of Buckinghamshire, his life and works**

Our County Archivist, Mr. Roger Bettridge will be coming to talk to us this evening about the eminent local historian George Lipscomb. Dr. Lipscomb was born in 1773 and died in 1846. Since he appears in my husband's family tree, this talk will be of particular interest to us.

Saturday 10th February 2001 * Visit to The Walter Rothschild Zoological Museum**

Paul Kitching is the Education Officer at this Museum in Tring. He has promised to show us around the exhibition at the museum entitled "An Anecdotal Eye - the work of Thomas Bewick." Bewick was an eighteenth century printmaker who was preoccupied with wildlife. When we have finished looking at the exhibition he will then show us around the rest of the museum, talking particularly about the history of the collection. We shall meet at the museum soon after 10.00a.m. for a 10.30a.m. start, finishing at 12.00 noon. The new 'Zebra Cafe' will be open and you may wish to have a cup of coffee before returning home.

Thursday 15th February 2001 * The Aylesbury Duck**

We have the last remaining Aylesbury Duck farmer coming to talk to us this evening. Richard Waller's father was the last of the old 'duckers' to breed the Aylesbury duck for its meat, and Richard continues the family tradition, supplying amongst other places, the King's Head at Ivinghoe. If you want to find out more before the talk, read the booklet entitled 'The Aylesbury Duck' by Alison Ambrose, which can be bought from the County Museum. Richard will be bringing a duck which will be raffled during the evening

Thursday 15th March 2001 * Walter Rothschild, his life, work and loves**

Wendy Austin has spoken to our Society before; her talk about the history of Aldbury was in 1995. This time she will be talking about Walter Rothschild, the man who founded the Zoological Museum in Tring. This links very well with the visit to the museum which some Society members will have made only a month beforehand.

Thursday 19th April 2001 * The Rise and Fall of Local Cinemas**

Jill Fowler and Michael Bass have visited us some years ago. Their talk then was about Tring. This time they will focus on the cinema that used to be in Tring in years gone by. Jill felt certain that many Ivinghoe and Pitstone residents would have visited the cinema in Tring in their youth.

Thursday 17th May 2001

Our Annual General Meeting will take place first of all. Then Gill Arney, our Museum archivist will illustrate a slice of local history from museum resources.

Thursday 21st June 2001 * Straw Plaiting**

Veronica Main is the resident straw plaiter at Luton Museum, who is in great demand for her talks and straw plait tuition. I recently attended one of her workshops at Wingrave and was quite delighted to be taught the technique for making the Seven End Plait. This time she is giving us an introductory talk with slides.

Sue Lipscomb Programme Secretary

Pitstone Church

Imagine a summer afternoon in the country. Around you there are wildflowers and insects. The birds are singing in the trees and the noisy world seems a long way away. You can experience this in Pitstone if you volunteer to spend a Sunday afternoon at Pitstone Church. It really is a good experience. You can sit in the church and admire the stain glass or out in the church yard appreciating the scenery. Take the family and have a picnic. You meet a variety of people who have come to visit the church because they are interested in the building. (there is a guide book to explain it all), or because their family once lived in Pitstone and they are tracing their roots. You can learn more about the place where you live and how much it has changed over the years.

The hours are 2.30 -5.30pm on Sunday afternoons from May to September but you need to be there a little earlier to put out the signs. If you are interested call Joan Bolton King on 01296 668806

Pitstone Church is no longer used for regular worship and is vested in the Churches Conservation Trust.. There is an Art, Craft and Flower Festival at the end of May to raise funds towards maintenance.

Committee members

Chairman - Mike Sear 01296 662221

**Vice-Chairman - Bob Rayner
01296 661967**

Treasurer - John Wallis 01296 661997

Secretary - Brenda Grace - 01296 668167

**Museum Manager - Norman Groom
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**Watermill Manager - David Lindsey
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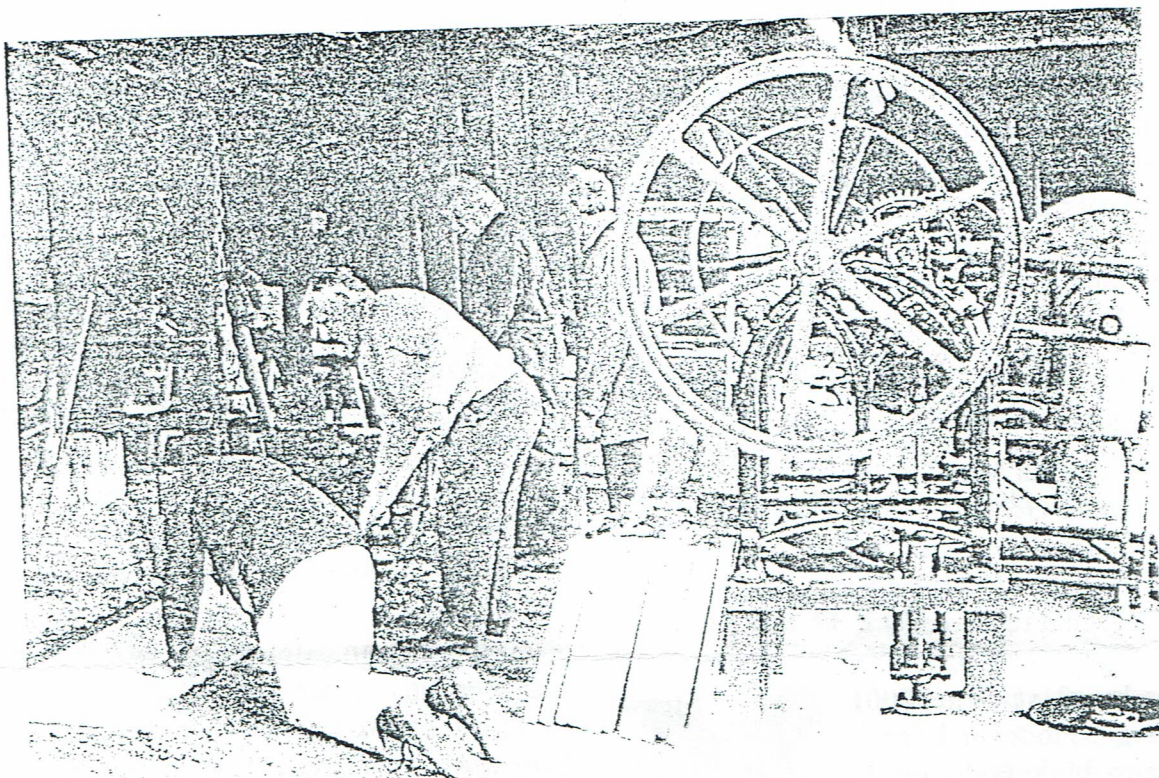
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**Archivist, Newsletter Editor -
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The Workforce finally start work on the winter programme
From left to right: David, Malcolm, Ron and Alan

