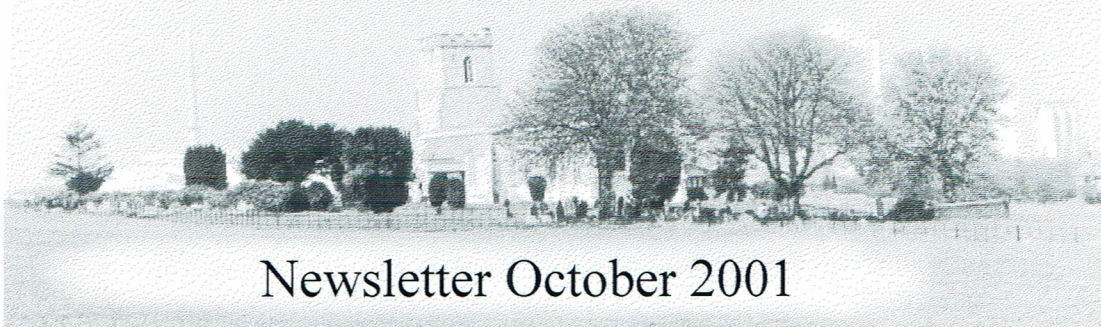


PITSTONE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Newsletter October 2001

Urgent plea

Can anyone give a home to one of the six redundant silkie cockerels at the Museum. 12 eggs hatched this year and there are probably 8 cockerels though two are still too young to know. Their future is very uncertain at present. Any offers of help to Jeff 01296 668223 would be most welcome.

AGM

Mike Sear, our Chairman for many years felt that due to his illness he was unable to continue as Chairman this year. He wanted to remain in contact with the Society and the Committee however and would continue as a Trustee. Mike was prepared to accept the position of Vice Chairman and Bob Rayner was elected to the position of Chairman. Jeff Hawkins recommended that the Malcolm Lee join the committee and was proposed and elected.

The AGM agreed that negotiations could begin with Paul Jellis for the renewal of the lease on the watermill in 2004

Membership

This year 152 members have rejoined. Reminders are included with this newsletter for those who have not sent in

this years subscription. If you do not rejoin, this is the last newsletter you will receive.

We are sorry to report the death of Elsie Banfield on 12th September. Elsie was best known for her work with the Beacon Villages Society. She also supported the Local History Society from its earliest days. We extend our sympathy to Bernard and to Francis and Adrian.

Pitstone Local History Society - Programme 2001

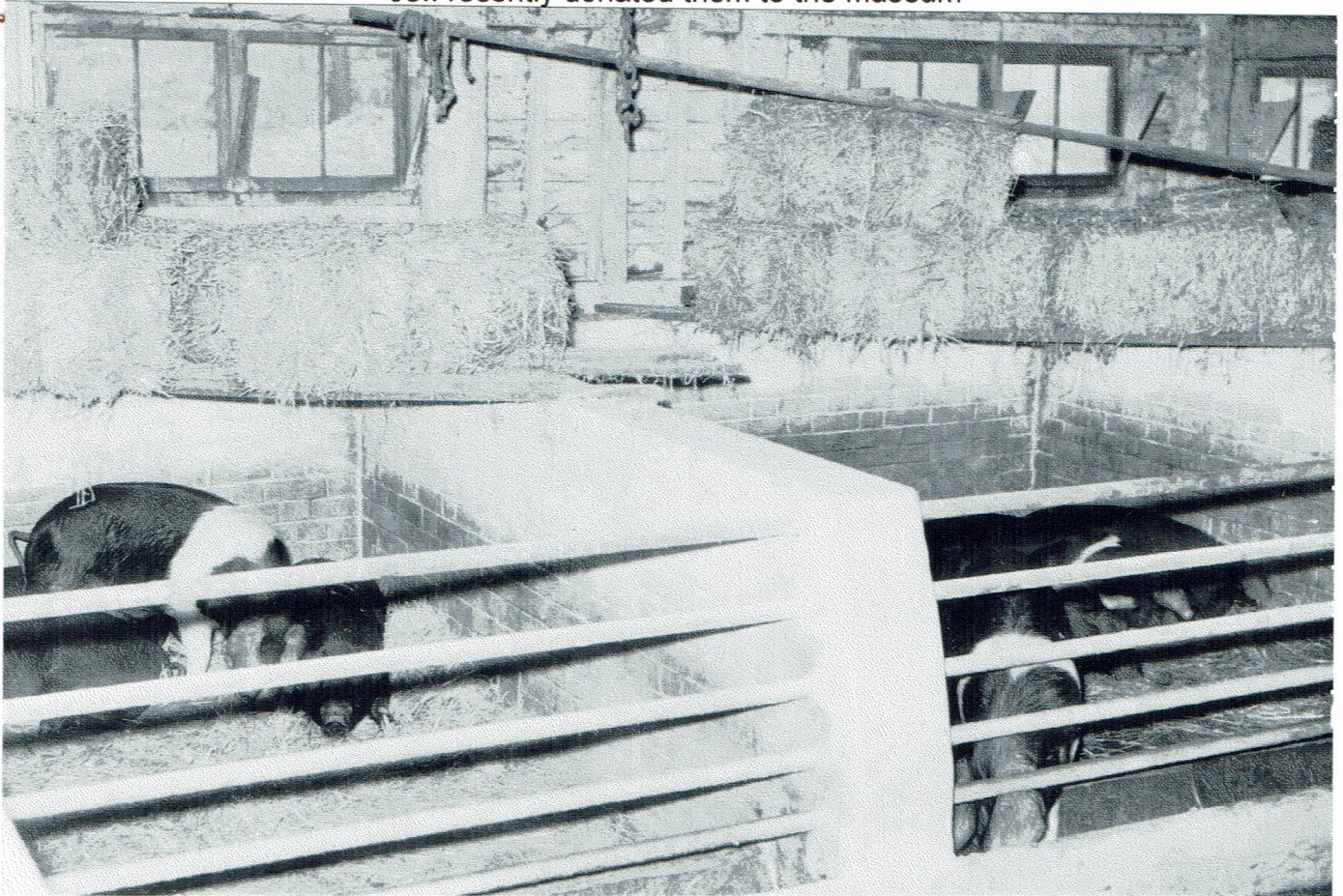
PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF VENUE - PITSTONE MEMORIAL HALL WE SHALL BE IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM IN THE MILLENNIUM EXTENSION MEETINGS TO BEGIN AT 8 P.M.

Thursday 20th September 2001 ***

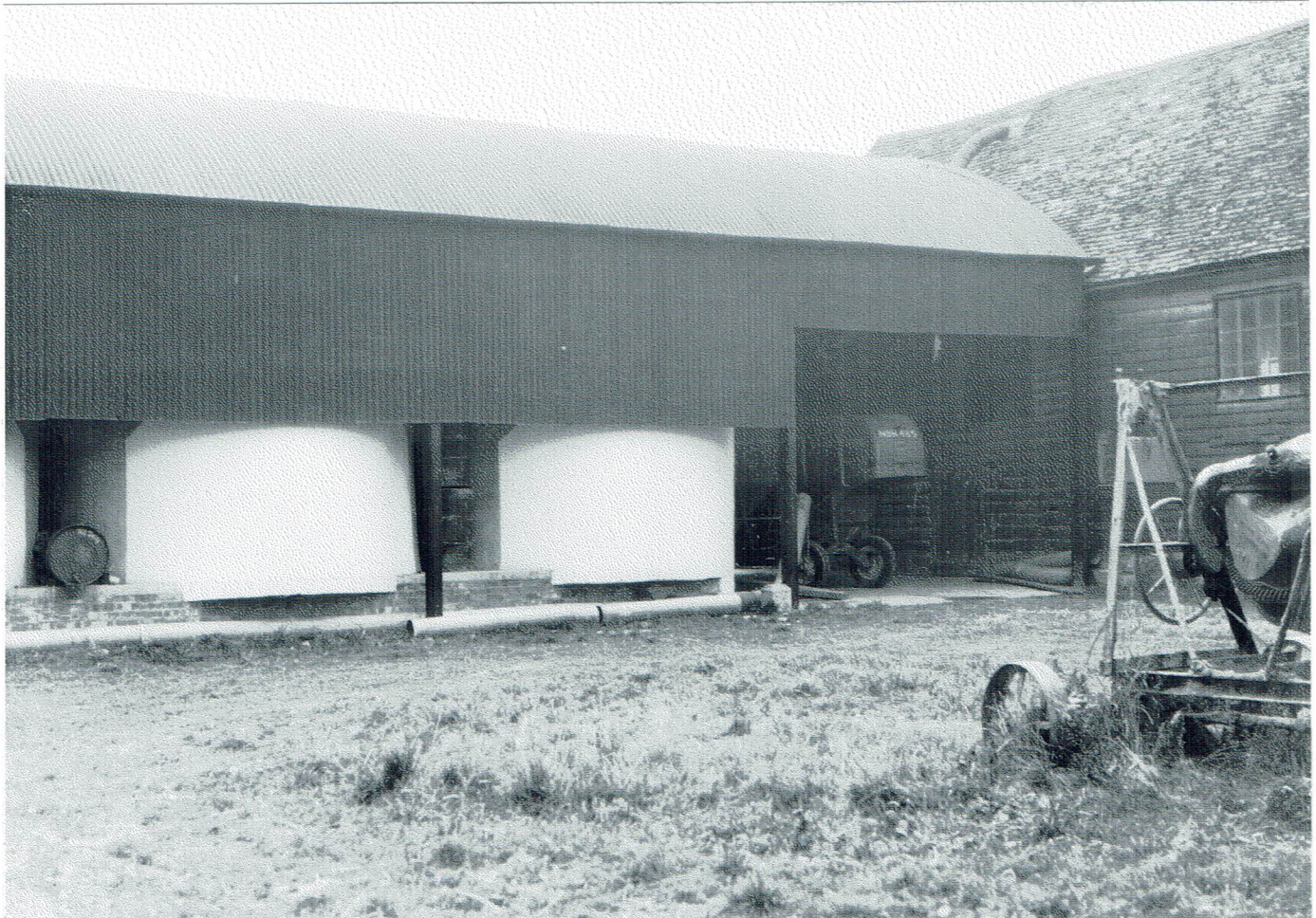
The Religious Houses of Bedfordshire

Vivienne Evans was our speaker on this occasion. Although she mainly concentrated on Bedfordshire she will briefly venture into Hertfordshire to include the Benedictines of St. Albans Abbey as well as numerous other types on monastery and nunnery including those with members of the Cistercian and Augustinian orders.

These photographs were taken by Charles Topham in 1952 for Farmers Weekly.
Jeff recently donated them to the museum



The pigs are living in great comfort in the big barn



The grain dryers are now concealed by the radio room and the shop

played to full houses in the villages during this time to the Museum. They will bring back many memories when we exhibit them.

Committee Members

Chairman Bob Rayner, 94 Vicarage Rd , Marsworth Tring Herts HP23 6AT 01296 661967

Treasurer John Wallis, Hazel Bank, Groomsby Drive, Ivinghoe LB Beds LU7 9ER 01296 661997

Secretary Brenda Grace, 20 Wellcroft, Ivinghoe, Leighton Buzzard, Beds LU7 9EF 01296 668167

Museum Manager Norman Groom, 39 Periwinkle Lane, Dunstable, Beds LU6 3NP 01582 605464

Watermill Manager David Lindsay, 11 Morland Close, Dunstable, Beds LU6 3QB 01582600391

Craft Coordinator Val Rayner, 94 Vicarage Rd , Marsworth, Tring, Herts HP23 6AT 01296 661967

Programme Secretary Sue Lipscomb
The Surprise, Buckland Wharf, Aylesbury
Bucks HP22 5LQ 01296 630578

Publicity Secretary Anne Ball
Broadview, Drayton Beauchamp, Bucks
HP22 5LU 01442 822672

Trading Secretary Jeannette Wallis
Hazel Bank, Groomsby Drive, Ivinghoe
LB Beds LU7 9ER 01296 661997

Archivist Gillian Arney, 63 Cheddington Road, Pitstone, Leighton Buzzard, Beds LU7 9AQ 01296 668123

Membership Secretary Corall McCormack, 32 Maud Janes Close, Ivinghoe, Leighton Buzzard, Beds LU7 9AD
01296 662590



Thursday 18th October 2001 ***

Old Films with some Local Interest

Francis Banfield is a member of our Society who is an avid collector of old film. Some of these films record life in the 1930's and some are as recent as 1960! His films cover a wide range of subjects including a light hearted film about ridiculous events in Buckinghamshire, film of a rural milkman and postman, a record of the brick works at Stewartby and Wheathampsted in the 1940's. There is even one which shows Pitstone Windmill. We shall have to wait and see which of these Francis selects.

Thursday 15th November 2001 ***

English Gardens over the Centuries

Our speaker in November will be Mrs. Peggy Cunningham. Her talk will be illustrated by slides and will chart the development of gardens in this country from the Roman times until the present day. Surely a subject that will interest gardeners and historians alike.

Thursday 20th December 2001 ***

Victorian Evening - Further details to be announced at the November meeting or ring me on 01296 630578

Sue Lipscomb

Programme Secretary

Museum Report

Well it's all over for this year, regarding the Open Days but now the work really begins. We had our ups and downs in 2001 but the ups have definitely won. Although not the most obvious achievement but probably the most important is that we have achieved full registration for the museum. Over the last 5 years we have been only provisionally registered with, what was then, the Museums and Galleries Commission (they keep changing their title and it is a job to keep up with the latest version) as the standard of the museum was far below what was required. We have been steadily nibbling

away at the problem and this year we have made the grade, full registration! and now we can stand alongside others like the Open Air Museum and the Milton Keynes Museum without feeling too much like a bunch of amateurs.

The most obvious success though was the Open Days. The year started well, with the Bank Holiday Mondays being the best I have known. The weather through this year has been appalling but in spite of this we had record incomes for a couple of the days. I think this has been achieved by the advertising which has increased steadily over the last few years. We had three big spreads in the local papers, one on the filming contract (more in a minute), one on the Crossley Gas Engine and another on the Lancaster project. The Lancaster has certainly brought a lot of people into the museum and I have collected quite a few pounds from 'out of hours' visitors to the project.

Our new website is fully functional and we get about 10 hits per week (the latest 'buzz' word for people looking at the site). We are of course on several other sites as well. A questionnaire earlier in the year indicated that some 44% of visitors had access to the internet and would look at the site if they knew of the web address (<http://website.lineone.net/~pitstonemus>).

If you use the address don't forget that funny little squiggle (tilde) just before 'pitstonemus', it was accidentally missed out on some publications.

The most labour intensive activity on our Open Days is still the catering. The Bank Holiday Open Days have improved so much recently that the catering on those days is as much work as on the 'Family Fun and Craft' days. Helen is looking for someone who would be prepared to take over the organisation of the catering as she has been doing it now for many years.

Work at the museum has been going on throughout the season. Our new

meeting room has not progressed much, as David and his team have been trying to sheet up a couple of sides of Jeff's barn, which hopefully will hold both Jeff's equipment and surplus equipment that the museum has no space for. This should allow the meeting room to be cleared ready to work on during the Winter months. Jeff, Don Levy and Bob Morgan have joined the museum subcommittee and we have provisional plans to reorganise the farming equipment which, although it should be the main feature of the museum, is in fact almost totally ignored by visitors, due to the congestion, the poor condition and inaccessibility of the items we have.

The area outside the Crossley Engine room is really coming on. It has a paved area surrounding the engine driven equipment with the floor covered with pebble to prevent chalk dust blowing over the equipment.

Several weeks throughout the season was taken up with preparing some of our farming equipment for hire to Yorkshire Television. As well as bringing in a substantial sum of money, several of the lads had the time of their lives dressing up as extra's and taking part in the filming. You should see a picture of our Ron dressed up in an old smock and adorned with side whiskers. Jeff's friend John was responsible for the organisation with Jeff and Malcolm Lee offering lots of advice about farming techniques. A lot of work went into getting the equipment ready, as they required the thrashing box, the elevator, our reaper/binder and lots of tools and accessories, all being required to work on site. The film was 'Our Uncle Silas' which I believe will be shown later in the year. The filming took place on a farm near Kings Walden, somewhere between Hitchin and Stevenage, remote from motorway noise. It looks as if filming will provide a useful income for the museum in the future and this is all the more reason the get more of the farming

implements to a working and presentable condition. We still manage to attract one or two new volunteers each year to the museum but we could still do with more, particularly if you have skills in engineering or building and construction work.

Norman Groom. Museum manager.

WEA Ivinghoe Branch - Autumn Programme

We are running three courses this Autumn - History, Drama and Geology.

The Victorians are in our sights for the history course, under the expert guidance of Andy Gunn. Five meetings on the morals, machines and minds of our Victorian ancestors and the legacy they left us start on Monday 24th September. We meet from 7.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. in the Committee Room at Pitstone Memorial Hall. The fee for the whole course is £20

We are having a change from our usual study of novels on Friday mornings this Autumn and are running a course looking at five plays from the later part of the 20th century: Amadeus, A Man for all seasons, The Caretaker, Travesties and the Lady in the Van. The first meeting is on 28th September at Ivinghoe Library from 10.00 a.m. to noon. Copies of the plays should be available at the beginning of September, so if you intend to join the course and want to get ahead with the reading please get in touch with the contact number given below., There are 10 meetings and the fee £40.

Last but not least, Joanna Bourne who was with us last Autumn is coming back with a five week course entitled Our Restless Planet, which looks at the causes and effects of volcanoes and earthquakes and the associated rocks and minerals, all with reference to the geological history of the British Isles. This starts on Monday 5th November, 7.30 to 9.00 p.m. in The Committee Room at Pitstone Memorial Hall, The fee is £20.

For further information or to register for a course, please contact M Connolley, 48 High Street, Cheddington, LU7 0RQ tel. 668719

Bess on the Mill 6

The swallows did return to the wheelhouse but unfortunately began to rebuild their nest over a large staple supporting a cord used to open the viewing window above the water wheel. This meant that each time the window was opened the swallows could not fly into the nest. The Boss had to free the cord and restrict the distance the window would open. The swallows were not too happy with the limited access but seemed to adapt to it. The two chicks were so big there was scarcely room for them, and what a noise they made. They have now both flown south following their parents.,

The mill's visitor season was late starting because of Foot and Mouth restrictions. When they were eased a little we could open, provided we followed all the MAFF precautions. This meant approved disinfectant in two trays provided by John and soaking some old carpet donated by Andrew Clarkson of the Youth Hostel across the farm entrance to disinfect car tyres.

All the precautions were in place in time to open on Sunday 13 May for National Mills Weekend, usually one of our busiest days. During the weekend some 350 wind and watermills throughout Britain are open to the public., Despite some additional publicity sent to local papers and radio saying we were open again and would be milling, the number of visitors was disappointingly low - just 66 whereas the year before there were 147 and in 1999 - 184. Never mind, said the Boss, those that came seemed to enjoy themselves and many were really interested and asked a lot of questions, which made it all worthwhile.

We got back onto our scheduled programme and the Whit Monday bank holiday was a great success with 105 visitors slightly more than last year, which lifted the Boss's spirits no end. He arranged an additional opening with milling on Sunday 8 July to coincide with the Farm Museum's Craft Day and this drew 77 visitors. Even so the Boss reckons that the closure due to Foot and Mouth disease reduced our gross takings by at least £600, the main loss being having to cancel so many school parties.

I mentioned the expanded metal we put on the bridge to make it non-slip and how the Boss shuddered at the cost, well the Ivinghoe Entertainments Committee has made a generous donation to meet the full amount. They were pleased to support our work in looking after the mill which is part of the local heritage. The Boss and John (Wallis) were very pleased.

My mum, (the Boss's wife) has started baking bread again using a Panasonic breadmaking machine. Very successful it is too. She uses a 50/50 mix of Ford End wholemeal flour and strong white as we recommend to visitors; it really does produce good bread. No wonder people queue to buy the flour when we are milling and keep asking for it afterwards. That's all for now **Bess**

Acquisitions

The Museum has been given some very interesting items recently.

1. Jeff's partner found an original straw splitter - like a crochet hook with fins - while he was ploughing at Gaddesden Row and gave it to us. We had not got one of these and it will enhance our straw plait collection.

2. Marjorie Hartop who died recently had been a prime mover of the Ivinghoe and Pitstone Dramatic Society from 1948 - 1992. Her niece Joanna Edmunds has kindly given us a collection of cast photographs, programmes of the many plays pantomimes and music halls which