

PITSTONE & IVINGHOE MUSEUM SOCIETY



Newsletter January 2002

It is always sad to see an obituary in our newsletter but to see three, all prominent members of our Society and well known in the community is terrible. For this to happen over the Christmas period as well is about the worst anyone could imagine.

On December 16th Jeff Hawkins owner of Pitstone Green Farm and the Museum's landlord died after a very short illness. Only about a week later we heard of the death of Mike Sear our Chairman and Trustee for many years and for the last year holding the position as Vice Chairman and soon after Christmas Bernard Banfield also parted this life.

Jeff's funeral was held at the Amersham Crematorium on the 28th of December 2001 with invited friends and family attending. It was requested that there were to be no flowers and donations in his memory should be sent to the following trust.

**The Churches Conservation Trust.
89 Fleet Street,
London. EC4Y 1DH**

A Memorial Service for Jeff will be held at St Mary's Church Ivinghoe on
Friday 25th January 2002 at 3.00 p.m .

The funeral service of Mike Sear took place at Amersham on 7th January and the family
wish any donations to go to :-

Rayners Hedge Croft Road Aylesbury Bucks HP21 7RD

In Memoriam

.Jeff Hawkins Founder Member and Greatest Benefactor to Pitstone Local History Society

A memory by Don Levy

Jeff is dead. He was 80 on Saturday 1st December. We (*Jeff, Muriel and myself*) went to the Bucks Archaeological Society meeting at Aylesbury Museum on this day. On the Sunday

he came with us on a walk for farmers who were taking part in a Royal Society Protection of Birds census at Otmoor. He was happy.

A fortnight later he was dead. Feeling ill on Wednesday and refusing help he had driven himself to hospital where he died on Sunday.

Gill Arney had asked me to prepare an address for the surprise party the PHLS were going to give him at the December meeting. Instead I am writing this.

Jeff's family came to Pitstone Green in 1808. They were leading figures in the parish, helping to build the Chapel and as members of the Vestry which became the Parish Council. Jeff inherited this tradition of service. He grew up in the 1930's when life on the farm was very hard. Nothing must be wasted or thrown away. He recycled before recycling was invented and re-recycled anything that could still have any use. He believed that money invested in the farm should not be wasted. Wherever possible he went out and learnt how to solve problems rather than paying for someone else to do the job. The tough world of wartime production targets when land and home were always at risk reinforced his views. He simply could not understand modern throwaway society.

Jeff was educated at Berkhamsted School (unhappily) and at Oaklands Farm Institute at St Albans which he greatly enjoyed. The war ended his formal education and he came back to work on the farm. He also joined the Home Guard and was made dispatch rider because he had a motor bike. There were many discussion groups to help increase farm production and farm walks to exchange ideas. He built the prototype under floor grain drying bins still standing on the farm which were given national recognition.

After the war his interests diversified. He regularly attended WEA classes in the village, often playing host. He was particularly interested in Greek philosophy led by Miss Cameron. He was interested in wood carving and took up pottery at Pendley Manor with Murray Fieldhouse. He even taught at some pottery evening classes and naturally had his own wheel and kiln at the house.

I first met him in 1950 when Aylesbury Young Farmer's Club went for a walk round Pitstone Green Farm. We both attended WEA meetings and 'farmers' talks, where he took pages and pages of notes. When I was asked to form a YFC in Ivinghoe, I asked Jeff if he would help me and together we ran for many years, a most unusual YFC but we won the efficiency cup and many other awards with kids of whom few had agricultural backgrounds. We raised money by growing vegetables behind the Youth Hostel at Ivinghoe and carted the members all over the place. Teenagers did not have their own transport then.

The members interest in local history led to the formation of a group with John Allerton as Chairman. They wanted to investigate the making of a parish. The first constitution said that no person over 25 should hold office!

As the teenage members left to go out into the world, that rule was dropped and the adults- Jeff, Tom Owen as Chairman, Keith Saunders as Secretary and myself took over. The rest belongs to PLHS history.

On a WEA outing to London Jeff first mentioned that he was thinking of forming a group to restore the windmill. This led to involvement with Quainton and Lacey Green mills. The restored windmill will be a lasting memorial to him.

The lease and restoration of the Watermill followed. Excavation of the Quarries which had been abandoned by the Dunstable Manshead Society, was resumed to rescue prehistoric remains before they were crushed to cement. Jeff was deeply involved in all these activities.

Jeff was also at this time working the farm as a pig unit. He decided to try to reclaim Quarry 1 which people said could not be done. For many years it grew good barley crops. Farming and the countryside was changing very rapidly and so much was being destroyed or thrown out that we (PLHS encouraged by Jeff) decided we must save what we could and we used the loft at Vicarage Farm as a store. A successful show at Little Gaddesden, organised by David Wray and featuring objects from the loft and Pitstone Green transported by Jeff, led to demands for further shows. Jeff allowed the farm now empty of pigs to be used to house and display the overwhelming quantity of material we were collecting.

Jeff was a major figure in the Society's involvement in Hugh Baddley's film "The Agrarian Revolution" where we all had parts playing a farming community at the turn of the century. As the threat to the countryside increased during the 1970's Jeff played a leading part in the formation of the Chiltern Society and Beacon Villages Society. He said that he would shave off his beard if the cement works ever went and to his surprise he had to. He grew it again as so few people recognised him without it. He spent a great deal of time supporting the inquiry that led to victory in the "Battle of the Tip".

Jeff was also for some time Chairman of the Committee that looked after Pitstone Church when it was made redundant. He sat on the Parish Council with a stint as Chairman, was president of the Cricket Club and allowed the farm to be used as a storage place by other village societies.

The Curator of Reading Museum of Rural Life noted that the museum had one of the most important rural collections in the country. Jeff's determination to ensure that nothing was lost led him to offer the buildings at Pitstone Green Farm to the PLHS as a gift but they felt unable to accept and a 99 year lease was arranged at a peppercorn rent. Now we must try and carry on as he would have wished.

Like the dew on the mountain
Like the foam on the river
Like the bubble on the fountain
Thou art gone and forever
Sir Walter Scott

Mike Sear - Chairman PLHS 1973-79; 1982-85 and 1990-2001

Bob Morgan PLHS Trustee writes

It is with great sadness that I have to record the death of Mike Sear, Chairman of the Pitstone Local History Society, who passed away on Friday 21 December 2001.

The work and example which Mike gave to the Society will be sorely missed. It was during his chairmanship that the Ford End Watermill lease was prepared and the 99 year lease of the Pitstone Green Farm Museum land and buildings was finalised. The lease and subsequent dedicated hard work enabled the museum to become an officially registered museum in 2001.

Mike was a member of the PLHS from more than 30 years and soon after joining he quickly established his worth as an active supporter of the aims of the Society.

During his 20 years as chairman he used his boundless enthusiasm and useful contacts with local authorities and museum bodies to ensure maximum benefit to the Society.

Mike who was 68 leaves a widow Diana and two married children Tim and Caroline, all of whom have been deeply involved with the society.

Bernard Banfield

Thoughts from Don Brooks and others

Bernard Banfield died last week in hospital in Aylesbury age 95.

Bernard was a man who had an immense range of interests, including such diverse subjects as railways and cycling. In the 1930's with Elsie, he was deeply committed as a youth leader and supporter of the newly formed Youth Hostels Association. A professional radio engineer, he was responsible for installing radio in the airships being built at Cardington in the early 'thirties'. They moved to Pitstone after the war and soon took up the fight against pollution of the village by the cement works. They founded an association now the Beacon Villages Society. In 1967 the dust problem became national news and the Banfields entertained Robert Maxwell, then MP for Buckingham to tea.

He joined PHLS very early on in its history. His house was often used as a venue for committee meetings during the 1970's. Among his Society interests was the archaeology of the quarries; finds from which, he was still trying to interpret in the year before he went into hospital. He was a regular attender at meetings and a shrewd commentator on events around him.

Editorial

The Society is still looking for an editor. We have been struggling now for a couple of years with members of the committee taking on the task. Mike Sear, myself (Norman Groom) and Gill Arney have all had a go and I have once again taken on the task.

You will notice that the Society's new name now appears on the newsletter heading. It was approved by the Charity Commission at the end of last year but they have not at present approved minor corrections to the Constitution until they had been accepted at an AGM in May.

Whilst these corrections were being discussed I referred back to the earlier constitutions and came across the original version dated 1963, when the society was in fact called the Pitstone Local History Group. One of the most fascinating clauses referred to committee members, where it stated that all committee members must be under 25 years old. You could add 25 years to that and if it was applied now you wouldn't have a committee member left (apologies to our present committee). However I thought it would be an interesting item for the newsletter so I have asked Brenda to retype it and we have included it in this issue.

Note also the list of talks that Sue has organised for the coming months. Please try to attend as many as you can as Sue puts a great deal of effort into arranging them. I am afraid I am guilty of not attending many, although I did go to Francis Banfield's vintage cine film show. It was quite fascinating and extremely well attended. One other one I am not going to miss is the one about the Cheddington Airfield. I remember talk about secret underground bunkers that were covered over and no one knew what was in them, Who knows what secrets will be revealed. The Antiques Valuation event to be held at this years Cheese and Wine is also a 'must'. Bring along those items you were always unsure about! Who knows they may be worth a fortune.



BESS - ON THE MILL (7)

Unhappily this time, I begin by mentioning two very sad events. Firstly, as you will have read elsewhere in this 'Newsletter', Jeff Hawkins, a founder member of the Society, died in hospital from pneumonia on Sunday 16 December. He was very keen to see the watermill preserved when it ceased working in 1963. After the sluice gate had been repaired by Society members,

he was filmed working the mill and producing meal. The Boss hopes to show this film after the AGM this coming May. It was Jeff who introduced the Boss to the mill when he joined the Society in 1986 and set him to work erecting the top support for the new handrail for the steps alongside the wheel. The Boss has been working at the mill ever since. Jeff had practical experience of milling - there is a tractor (now electric) driven mill at the Farm Museum - and was always supportive and ready to give advice and help when asked.

The second sad event, again as you will have seen, is that Mike Sear, who was our Chairman for a number of years until he suffered a stroke in August 2000, has also died in hospital from pneumonia. The Boss took me to see him just before he was moved to hospital; he was pleased to see us. Mike had been very involved with the mill from the outset in 1965 and helped with many of the working parties. He fully supported the Boss in what was being done at Ford End. In August 1991 he welcomed John Bly to the mill and showed him round when he came to perform the official 'opening' after it had been restored to working order. Mike was always ready to listen to our problems and make helpful suggestions.

Both Jeff and Mike will be sorely missed.

Otherwise it seems to have been a quiet time at the mill recently with nothing very special to report. I suppose the Boss being ill with a virus infection didn't help matters; he must have been pretty poorly as he stayed in bed for 3 days. I suffered too as I did not get any real walks on the Downs for 3 weeks!

That does not mean to say nothing has been happening, but it's all been what you might call routine maintenance and preservation. Having creosoted the bin (top) floor boards to discourage woodworm and mill moths, we set about the stone (first) floor but decided to use woodworm insecticide instead so as not to darken the boards too much. The fact that Chris (from Tring) brought along a spare 5 litre can he had, helped with this decision as the insecticide is not cheap.

All the holes in both floors have now been covered with sheet metal patches of varying sizes. Surprisingly, they look quite good. To help with fixing them, the Boss had to buy a new pair of expensive end nibblers; I'll leave you to imagine what these are!

We have received the quotation for the replacement sluice gate, and the Boss arranged a meeting early in January for those involved (John, Chris, Bob from Buckingham and himself) to go through what we will have to do to fit it and how. It was a 'table top exercise', as he put it, to try to anticipate the problems in the hope that we are not caught out. To be honest, it will be a difficult job to tackle, and it has to be completed well in time before we open at Easter and mill in May. After the meeting, we all adjourned to the Rose & Crown for well needed refreshment and a lunch together.

Changing the Society's name to the Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society (P.I.M.S) as decided at the AGM last May and now agreed by the Charity Commissioners, has meant, so far as the mill is concerned, altering the name on such things as notices, leaflets, flour bag labels and so on. All of which has kept the Boss occupied. Did I say things had been quiet! Well, that's all for now; hope you all had a very good Christmas and the Boss and I wish you all the very best for 2002.

Bess

(PIMS)

Museum Report

The end of the year 2001 was not a happy one we seem to have been dealt several blows one after the other. A 'break in' at the museum started the sequence of events followed by the death of Jeff Hawkins our landlord. Even this was not enough and a little over a week later we heard of the death of Mike Sear our past Chairman of the society for many years. Jeff's death was very sudden, he had joined our sub-committee together with Don Levy and Bob Morgan and Jeff regularly appeared when we were at the museum for a general chat about what was happening. The last time was a little over a week before his death. Mike had suffered a long illness following a stroke in the autumn of 2000. I missed Mike a lot at the museum as we tended to work together on projects and we often planned the future of the museum at the Anglers Retreat at Marsworth during the lunch breaks.

However in spite of all the doom and gloom we have made considerable progress during 2001. The new meeting room which we propose calling the 'Stables' as that is what Jeff called it, is progressing well. We had a professional shot blaster in to clean down the walls and they are now a very attractive natural brick finish. The timbered ceiling beams are retained and lined in between the beams with white insulation board. The original floor was hard blue brick, sloping and with drainage channels for when it was used as stables. We are covering this up with a boarded floor so as not to damage the original. The floor will be covered with carpet tiles acquired second hand by one of our volunteers. We have lots more plans to implement but the finished room should be quite impressive.

The Future

With the death of Jeff there will be some significant changes at the museum, any changes occurring probably at a faster rate than when the lease was first granted. At that time Jeff was very much involved with the museum and changes progressed at a steady rate. We are now have a new landlord rumoured to be the National Trust. According to our lease we also inherit all the remaining part of the museum site, probably about 25% extra which will involve a great deal of further restoration and reorganisation. We have provisional plans but it looks like a busy and challenging time ahead.

A Plea

One problem that the Museum has suffered from is the quantity of exhibits that we have accumulated. Without the collection there would be no Museum and it is difficult to arrive at the correct balance as to the number of artefacts we can cope with. We are now careful what we accept at the museum and we have a defined collecting policy which virtually says; 'nothing unless it is pre-1950, in good condition, a subject covered by the museum, we do not have one and that we have space to display it'. This policy has worked well but people are still dumping items at the museum without our knowledge. A few months ago two lawn mowers turned up, about 12 months ago two Rotovators appeared in the tractor shed and recently a quantity of timber from old bunk beds appeared and no one had any knowledge of where all these items came from. We already have many horticultural items of machinery that we do not know what to do with and objects like this give us even more problems. Please do not bring anything to the museum without consulting myself, Gill Arney or David Goseltine, if it is building or similar material, and we will consider the offer. We would however like to be asked just in case the item or materials are what we have been looking for.

A Word of Warning

A couple of months ago we had a break in at the museum and Jeff's ride-on lawn mower was stolen, quite an expensive item. The thieves entered the museum probable by climbing over the side gate, went through the museum to Jeff's concrete workshop at the back of the site, wrenched off the lock and removed the mower. It was taken back through the museum, the small wooden fence alongside the side gate lifted bodily out of the ground in such a way that

the mower could be removed from the site. The robbery was obviously well planned by someone who knew where the mower was and was familiar with the site layout. We now have increased the security on the site and in the next few weeks it will not be possible to even enter the site and walk around without setting off the alarm. We also hope to have closed circuit TV covering some arrears. So the warning is :-

'PLEASE DO NOT ENTER THE SITE ANYWHERE UNLESS YOU HAVE ACCESS TO THE ALARM SYSTEM AND KNOW HOW IT OPERATES'

From the archives

The Constitution of Pitstone Local History Society. 31st May, 1963

1. Title. Ivinghoe and Pitstone Local History Group.
1st Am. 9.5.65 Pitstone Local History Society.
2. Aim. To make a record of the history of Ivinghoe and Pitstone.
1st Am. 8.11.63 Immediate aim; to discover the history of Pitstone Windmill.
2nd Am. 9.5.65 To write a Parish History.
3. Officers. a) All elected officers must be under the age of 25 years.
1st Am. 12.6.64 a) Officers may be of any age but people of under the age of 25 years should be given preference.
b) Officers to be elected shall be: Chairman; Vice Chairman; Secretary; and Treasurer.
4. Subscriptions. Sixpence a week should be paid by attending members.
1st Am. 8.11.63 Fee of sixpence per meeting plus threepence for refreshments.
2nd Am. 12.6.64 Fee of one shilling per meeting to include refreshments.
This to be increased for a meeting if a speaker has to be paid. Full time students should be admitted free.
3rd Am. 9.5.65 Annual subscription fixed at five shillings in addition to the shilling per meeting fee. (Confirmed at A. G. M.)
5. Membership. a) Members must be at least fifteen years of age.
b) Any younger person may attend if invited by the Group.
c) Any member may be asked to leave the Group by a straight Majority vote.
6. Business. a) Any matters of business may be carried out only when 25% of the members or six members, whichever is the greater are present.
b) There shall be an Annual General Meeting of the Group within 18 months of the Group's beginning, and thereafter within every 12 months.
c) A committee shall be formed when the Group feels it is necessary.
7. Dissolution. If the Group ceases to exist, all money shall be put in trust in the Bank for a period of ten years* and then all money

and records shall be donated to the County Museum to be used as the Curator thinks fit.

1st Am. 7.6.63* to be used as capital for reforming the Group within these ten years; if not used then.....

8. Meetings. Group began by meeting weekly.

1st Am. 8.11.63 Group to meet monthly, on second Friday of month.

2nd Am 10.12.65 Group to meet on the third Thursday of each month. Meeting to begin at 8.00 p.m.

Notable Dates

12.6.64 Dig Committee formed.

11.12.64 Watermill Restoration Committee formed.

Museum Committee formed.

Tape Recording Committee formed.

AGM 1965 Windmill Report desired, "as a matter of interest".
Business Committee formed.

AGM 1966 Newsletter proposed.

Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society - Programme 2002

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 17th January 2002 *** The Victorian Workhouse

Trevor May last spoke to us in October 1995, when his subject was the interpretation of visual evidence. This time he has been invited to give an illustrated talk about the Victorian workhouse, a grim but fascinating subject.

Thursday 21st February 2002 *** Phoenix from the Flames

On 20th November 1997, 5 years to the day after the disastrous fire swept through Windsor Castle, her Majesty the Queen re-opened the restored rooms after personally meeting and thanking over a thousand craftsmen who had worked on the restoration. Alan Frost - better known as the traction engine driver at our Open Days- was the architect in charge of the project and he will show us how, with these craftsmen's (and women's) efforts, a magnificent Phoenix arose from the flames.

Thursday 21st March 2002 *** Cheddington Airbase: its men and machines

Pat Carty is a local historian who has focused his attention on the airbase at Cheddington and has become truly passionate about the subject, as I'm sure those of us who come to his talk will soon realise. His most recent book on the subject is 'Secret Squadrons of the Eight.'

Thursday 18th April 2002 * High Days and Holidays; Old May Day**

The last time Janet Dineen came to speak to us she invited us to sample food made by her from old local recipes. This time, in preparation for May 1st, she is telling us about all the customs and traditions surrounding May Day. Her talk will be illustrated with slides, and the material she has gathered together includes original pictures with local interest.

Thursday 16th May 2002 * AGM and Watermill Video**

Do come to our usual AGM which will be followed by David Lindsey showing a video.

Thursday 27th June 2002 * Cheese, Wine and Antiques at the Farm Museum**

Our Cheese and Wine evenings at Pitstone Green Museum have become something of a tradition but we have added something this year to increase your enjoyment. Do bring along any interesting items, as Stephen Hearn, who many of you will know as the resident antique expert at Tring Market Auctions, will be there to talk about your possessions and to give valuations. More details of this event will follow later.

Saturday 6th July 2002 * Guided visit - Priory Church, Dunstable**

Some of you will remember the talk given by Vivienne Evans recently on the religious houses in our local area. She was an extremely interesting and knowledgeable speaker and has now offered to guide us around the Priory Church in Dunstable. We will give you details of this later. In the meantime, this is a date for your diary.

**Sue Lipscomb
Programme Secretary**

P.I.M.S. Executive Committee members and Trustees.

Chairman -	Bob Rayner -	Tel 01296 661967
Vice Chairman - Vacant		
Treasurer (also Trustee)	John Wallis -	Tel 01296 661997
Secretary -	Brenda Grace -	Tel 01296 668167
Museum Manager -	Norman Groom -	Tel 01582 605464
Watermill Manager -	David Lindsey -	Tel 01582 600391
Craft Co-ordinator	Val Rayner -	Tel 01296 661967
Programme Secretary -	Sue Lipscomb -	Tel 01296 630578
Publicity Secretary	Anne Ball -	Tel 01442 822672
Trading Secretary	Jeanette Wallis -	Tel 01296 661997
Archivist -	Gillian Arney -	Tel 01296 668123
Committee -	Malcolm Lee -	Tel 01296 668603
Membership Secretary	Corrall McCormack -	Tel 01296 662560

Additional Trustees - Don Levy - Tel 01296 661939
Bob Morgan - Tel 01296 668 579

The catering that our volunteers provide on our Open Days is very important and the income it generates is second only to the entrance charges. Helen Hickson has been organising the catering for the last 8 years, with Brenda Grace taking charge on the Bank Holidays. Helen must make this her last year, and because the job has grown considerably we have to think of new ways of dividing it up. A few years ago there were only 3 Activity Open Days and on the Bank Holidays little more than coffee and biscuits was provided. Recently the Bank Holiday attendance has necessitated full catering and, with additional Open Days, this makes a total of 9 days to be covered this season

There is a splendid team of people who help on the day, but with more days to cover we would welcome more volunteers for that; and there are about 6 people who regularly provide the home made cakes which add enormously to the appeal of the refreshments – as well as to the profit.

The main purpose of this note relates to some of the other tasks that Helen and Brenda deal with before and after the Open Days. We are hoping to spread the workload by breaking down some of this work into small packages that other members would be willing to undertake. If we can make the task of catering organiser somewhat lighter we are more likely to attract either an individual or a small team to take on the job - hopefully in the course of this year to enable a gradual handover. Below is a form to complete if you can help at all, even if it is only on one or two of the days. The Museum Open Days for 2002 are given in the Newsletter.

Many thanks for anything you can do. We really are dependent on getting more help
Norman Groom (Museum Manager)

Pitstone Green Museum Catering – Response to the Museum Manager's request for assistance (14.1.02)

Name.....Telephone.....
Address.....

I would be willing to visit a Supermarket and purchase supplies from a list provided, and deliver them to the Museum at a date and time agreed

I could probably do this for about of the 9 Open Days in the season

I would be willing to attend the Museum on the day before the Open Day to help clean and prepare the refreshment area (say up to 2 hours work for 2 people)

I could probably do this for about of the 9 Open Days in the season

I would be willing to shop around for an agreed number of suitable rolls and to purchase and prepare various fillings for them. I could probably do this for about of the 9 Open days.

I would be willing to discuss taking on the organising of the catering on one or more of the days.....(please tick)

New volunteers willing to help on the day, make cakes, or offer any other help not listed here are invited to write overleaf.

Please drop this slip into the Museum reception, or send it to :-

Helen Hickson, 6 Startops End, Marsworth, Tring, Herts, HP23 4LJ