

PITSTONE & IVINGHOE MUSEUM SOCIETY



Newsletter April 2002

2002-2003 SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE

The subscriptions were due on the 1st April 2002. Please renew your subscription promptly as it does make the work of our Membership Secretary and Treasurer somewhat easier and we do not have to send out a reminder. A subscription slip is attached to this Newsletter



Bob serving on a Museum Open Day

Editorial

Since our January Newsletter our Society has again been shaken by the death of three prominent members. Bob Rayner, probably the greatest shock of all, died suddenly on Sunday the 24th March with John Greenwell and Bob Grace passing away some weeks earlier.

The Society will miss Bob Rayner more than they imagine. He was Vice Chairman for several years before being thrust into the limelight as Chairman; a job he was just beginning to enjoy when he died suddenly on Palm Sunday. Before then, he had kept a mainly low profile since he and Val joined the Society soon after they moved to Marsworth in 1984. They first appear as active members in the minutes in 1986. Bob

was an ideal king-consort helping Val with the crafts from the requisite one pace behind but there are all sorts of little moments when we shall miss him in his own right, particularly on open days when he was always busy. Ice cream selling was his forte but he also sorted out the disabled parking, and more important still, cleaned the tables in the big barn the day before. Keeping the visitors happy rated high on his agenda. On Tuesday mornings he was often to be found at the museum apparently pottering but little jobs such as securing the photograph cupboards are down to him. I'm sorry his vision of reviving the game of quoits never came to fruition. He also joined the Museum Sub-committee where he made an excellent job of keeping the minutes, in what was often a difficult and complex meeting with lots of differing points of view. Our thoughts are with Val, Sue and Lynne at this time

Bob Grace

Robert George (Bob) Grace was born at Parsonage Farm, Tring on the 15th of March 1911. In June 1914 his mother died and he, with his father and brother Tom, moved to the Mill House in Akeman Street to live with his grandparents and aunts. He first attended Tring School and then Berkhamsted School for Boys. When he left he was apprenticed to his Uncle George Smith, a builder in Brook Street. Bob's father was a corn merchant and farmer and Bob helped with both in his spare time.

In 1940 he was called up and served with REME in many part of this country and finally in India. He was demobbed early in 1946 and arrived home to learn that his father had died in the December. He lived at the Mill with his stepmother and took on the management of the corn business.

He became a Councillor in 1950 as the ratepayer's candidate and served 24 years on Tring Urban Council. From 1974 to 1983 he served on the new Tring Town Council. He was a local historian.

With Bob narrating and his brother Tom working the Magic Lantern, they gave talks on Old Tring, The Rothschilds and farming. He was a Trustee for Tring Charities.

Bob was a member of Tring Camera Club, the Ratepayers association (now the Residents Association) Tring Rifle Club and a member of the Management Committee for the Red Cross Hall. He was very keen on the countryside and could often be seen walking with his dog. He moved to 99 Western Road when the corn business closed. Here he kept up with his hobbies. In the last few years failing health meant that he had carers calling 3 or 4 times a day.

Bob moved into Swiss Cottage Nursing Home shortly after Christmas and enjoyed his stay there, albeit short. He became ill again a week later and was admitted to the Luton & Dunstable Hospital where he remained until he died.

Nora Grace (Bob's sister-in-law)

Bob Grace was a member of the PLHS for many years, elected an Honorary Member in the 90's and well known for the donation of the big Crossley Gas Engine to the Museum. Bob visited the museum on several occasions during the engine restoration programme and was invited to initiate the start-up on the official opening day. He was quite a character and told us many stories about the engine and the Producer Gas Plant. Bob managed to start the engine when at the mill by himself. He would prime it with a wineglass full of petrol, swing the engine back against compression tripping the magneto at the right moment with a piece of string tied to the mag. We have never managed that and we require three burley blokes to turn the flywheel to start the engine. Like a lot of people we have lost recently they were a generation that had a vast knowledge that unfortunately cannot be replaced.

Norman Groom

John Greenwell

It is with great sadness and loss that I write this obituary to John Greenwell, who passed away on 14 January 2002.

I had known John for about 40 years, we first met when I bought a Cattle Truck and business off a Mr Sidney Smith of Cublington, who had among his customers Messrs Rothschild's Ascott Estates of Wing, for who John was in charge of the livestock. He used to call me when he required some animals to go to the markets and other places and he would often ride with me to wherever we were going. Soon we found we had a common interest in many things and a business relationship grew into friendship.

I particularly remember one instance when I took some of their Show cattle to Leighton Buzzard Christmas Fatstock Show where they used to tie the cattle for show in Leighton Buzzard Church Square and John came with me. During the journey one of the bullocks became shuff (agitated and wild), they all had halters on and John went into the back of the lorry and took the halter. It charged down the tail board but John held on, not going to let go. It charged around becoming more agitated, somehow he got in front of it and it charged across the street with John in front of it's head. It hit the gates to the Post Office, squashing John between it's head and the gates which burst open, badly winding him and I believe hurting his ribs quite badly. At this point John had to let go, it caused mayhem till it was brought under control, but John still stayed on and prepared the other animals for the show and auction, that was John, never give in.

After Rothschild's finished keeping livestock, John went into business selling Fire Extinguishers of which I bought some from him. After this he started a Steam Cleaning business and he used to come and clean lorries for MOT tests for me until he retired. We didn't meet again until he came to the Museum and we always used to have a good chat and reminisce about the good old days of markets and the farming characters of the past we both knew. The last time was on the August Open Day 2001. It was too wet to do the Tractor Rides and we must have had a couple of hours chatting in the Wheelwrights shop. Later Jeff came by and joined in, jogging one anothers memories of those happenings and characters involved. Bob Rayner came in and I believe he was enthralled with what he heard and said could he get his tape recorder and tape us, but we declined, as we thought some of the remarks we made might not be taken too well by relatives of some of the characters we were talking about if they heard them. In hindsight perhaps we were wrong, it will never happen now and I feel so sad at their passing. Now there are so few to talk of that era that has gone forever and which we knew so well. Unfortunately, I could not attend John's funeral, as I was unwell.

Reg Jellis

AGM

The Society's AGM is being held on the 16th May at the Pitstone Village Hall. Please make every effort to attend. With the death of both Mike Sear and Bob Rayner we have neither Chairman or Vice Chairman. If you can help the society in its present predicament or know anyone who would stand, your help would be appreciated and anyone taking up either position would be given all the help they require. We also have some amendments to the Society's Constitution, these are mostly dotting the I's and crossing the T's and bringing the wording in line with the way that we operate. All the AGM documentation, including last year's Vice Chairman's report is enclosed with this Newsletter. Full copies of the last years Minutes will of course be available at the AGM but if you are unable to attend and require a copy please ring Brenda Grace on 01296 668167 and Brenda will send you a copy.

Museum Report

With the acquisition of the additional buildings at the museum the workload has increased significantly although we can now see a light at the end of the tunnel rather than working part way though and coming to a halt.

Reg Jellis and Don Levy have been concentrating on clearing, storing or disposing of items in the Nissen Hut, clearing and reorganising and storing items belonging to Jeff in the offsite barn he built. William, Jeff's son also joins in and it is a joint effort now to tidy and sort the whole area. Don has sorted out problems that existed with Jeff's tractor, he has fitted it with a rear fork lift to the tractor and William has allowed us the use of it. Relaying out the site to

create a coherent farming display is going to be our biggest problem. Space is still limited and we have to abide by safety, access to machinery and other limitations. The work is extensive and will go on for many months. Significant funds have been raised by disposing of broken or unwanted items and the loan of Reg's skip means that the expected costs of clearing and tidying up may in fact produce a profit. Peter Keeley has been working in the tree belt surrounding the site and when later in the year we dispose of the caravan we should have an attractive wooded area which we may be able to open to the public.

The new room is progressing, we are almost ready to lay the carpet tiles although the kitchen area still requires further work. The pathways outside the new room and the engine room are being or have been relayed making the area safer and tidier for the public. The pathway at the front of the new barn has been paved making it much safer, as it was like a skating rink in wet weather.

We have had a visit from our insurers which proved better than we had hoped for. He was very understanding and the only problems were items of machinery that people could walk into or trip over and rotating equipment that was not securely tied. All these faults have now been corrected and additional warning labels put up around the site.

New road signs have been made and which I put up on the roundabout, the end of Vicarage Road, at the bottom of the Beacon hill and two signs in from Dunstable on the open days. I have yet to get anyone to put up signs on the Tring/Aylesbury side of Pitstone.

Work continues on improving the security and emergency lighting on the site and in the future it will be extended to cover the newly acquired cart sheds and workshops at the rear of the site.

We are maintaining and improving our workforce all the while, more work seems to generate more enthusiasm, the numbers are such that we have to have coffee break in shifts due to space and coffee making limitations.

Our first Open Day on Easter Monday was a great success with an increase in income of over 40% of last year's which in itself was considered very good. The Bank Holiday Mondays are slowly catching up with our Sunday opening and we are trying to find alternative attractions for these days.

Norman Groom Museum manager.

BESS - ON THE MILL (8)

The Society seems to be having more than its fair share of misfortune these days; after the sad deaths of Jeff Hawkins, Mike Sear, John Greenwell and Bernard Banfield, now Bob



Rayner. Bob always spoke kindly to me when he saw me at the Museum.

To the mill: the saga of the new sluice gate began when it was delivered by British Waterways first thing on Friday 15th March. By the end of the day, it and a new side piece had been fitted into place. It was a very successful day apparently. I say 'apparently' because I was left behind so I can only tell you that when the Boss came home he was very pleased.

Work continued on the Saturday - I was left at home again - but this time, as the Boss said when he came back, everything that could be difficult, was difficult. However, after a struggle, the pinions and racks (used to raise and lower the sluice gate) were successfully fitted.

Sunday saw me at home and the work continuing without me. By late morning the sluice gate was closed, the stop planks removed and the water flowed onto the gate. The test showed that whilst the gate was an excellent fit at the sides, it leaked badly underneath. The stop planks were replaced, the water emptied and a post mortem begun. A possible reason was identified

- the pentrough bottom was slightly bowed, whereas the new gate was perfectly level. Disappointed, after further discussion, work was suspended for the day .

Back to the mill on Tuesday - I was allowed to go this time so I am recounting what happened first hand - when experiments with wooden mock-ups made by John were carried out, but without success. In desperation a 'phone call was made to the manager of British Waterways and he came round to the mill to look at the problem. He came up with a solution which entailed the fitting of a metal 'sole' plate to the pentrough against which the gate should be able to close properly. He promised to have one made quickly. Our problems did not end there. Because of slight changes in layout of the new sluice gate, the pipe for the syphon needed to be replaced with a longer and more flexible one. We use the syphon to turn the wheel and gearing for visitors when we're not milling and for school parties. So on the Friday, John, me and the Boss went to Berkhamsted to try to buy some piping, but the stockist didn't have anything suitable. In desperation, on the way back, we called on the helpful manager at British Waterways, Bulbourne, and he let us have a piece of flexible hose 'at cost'. What we would do without such helpful people, I don't know. We also took delivery of the 'sole' plate which was ready.

The following Sunday, John and the Boss fitted the new hose, and after considerable trial and error, they managed to get the syphon working again, which meant we were ready for opening at Easter and for school parties after Easter. We hope to fit the 'sole' plate on Sunday 7th April so that we will be ready for milling in May.

As for Easter Monday, we had a very successful afternoon with 93 visitors, which pleased the Boss as you can imagine. But what pleases him more is that 5 new volunteers have offered to help when the mill is open, and he has just arranged a Saturday morning's 'training' session for them.

My Mum says she wishes she were a watermill! I wonder why?

T.T.F.N.

Bess

PITSTONE GREEN FARM AND THE HAWKINS FAMILY

On the 22nd June 1751 "William Hawkins the Elder" of Edlesborough, a village some three miles north-east of Pitstone, describing himself as a yeoman (a man farming his own land) signed his will. A copy of it is kept in the Bucks County Record Office. an extract reads:- "I do give Will devise and bequeath unto William Hawkins my Son his heirs and Assigns for ever All that my Messuage or Farmhouse wherein I now dwell situate standing and being on Edlesborough Green in the County of Bucks together with all and singular Outhouses Edifices buildings barns Stables Yards Gardens orchards and backsides thereunto adjoining and belonging And also all my sever all pieces and parcels of Arable land Ley Meadow and Sward ground lying and being in the fields and precincts and Parish of Edlesborough aforesaid or elsewhere in the county of Bucks and in the Kingdom of Great Britain".

The family had acquired the farm, about fifty acres belonging to them and as much rented, in about 1700, and were to keep it until 1810 when Samuel, grandson of "William the Elder", sold it to the Earl of Bridgewater for £1,400. Another document at the County Record Office written by a lawyer employed by the Earl of Bridgewater to verify Samuel's title to the land, shows that "William the Elder" died five years after making his will " at the advanced age of 84 years". William's personal effects were valued at under £20 when he died.

The family were nonconformists. Another part of the will reads:-

"And also I do give and bequeath unto my poor Brethren belonging to the Meeting at Thorn whereof I am a Member Twentye Shillings to be distributed among as many as my said son William Hawkins shall think hath most need...."

It was a time when nonconformists had to worship at an out of the way place like Thorn, a small hamlet to the north of Dunstable, if they were not to be molested. A History of Houghton Regis Baptist Church published for the centenary in 1964 reads:-

"....nonconformists faced many hazards to exercise their right to enjoy freedom of worship. In those difficult times they had to worship when and where occasion served, often travelling long distances to worship with like minded Christians.

Thus it was that the secluded hamlet of Thorn, some one and a half miles from Houghton Regis, became a centre of Baptist witness with worshippers travelling from Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Tilsworth, Woburn, Toddington, Chalton and Leighton. Records show that a meeting was established there as early as 1720, an offshoot from Park Street, Luton, although a building was not erected until 1738. "William the Elder" also remembered two grandsons in his will. One, Joseph was to have £5 when he was twenty-one. Then the will goes on to say:- "Also I do give will and bequeath

unto my Grandson Samuel Hawkins the Sum of Ten Pounds of Good and lawful money of Great Brittain.....to put him out apprentice if he shall choose a Trade and if not then the said Ten pounds to be paid unto the Samuel Hawkins when he shall attain the age of One and Twenty Years". But if Samuel who was the elder son and fourteen years old at the time, did choose a trade, it did not prevent him from inheriting the farm.

The name Samuel was to be given to the eldest son for the next three generations. The next Samuel (Born 1775) was helping his father on the farm when he married Sarah and they had six daughters while living in Edlesborough. The first named Sarah after her mother was born in 1799 Samuel continued to work with his father on the farm for a further nine years during which time he and his wife Sarah had six children - all girls. Then in 1808, when his father was over seventy, he moved from Edlesborough to Pitstone Green as tenant of the Earl of Bridgewater. The farm at Edlesborough was formally conveyed to the Earl some two years later. It is likely that the two transactions were part of a single arrangement. Samuel had chosen to abandon his birthright as a yeoman and to become, at the age of thirty-three, a tenant farmer on a great landed estate. At Pitstone Green during the next ten years he and Sarah had six sons and two more daughters and there his descendants were to live and farm to the present day when the farm is occupied by the writer, his great-great grandson.

To be continued.....from a document written by Jeff Hawkins

Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society - Programme 2002

The venue will be the small meeting room in the Millennium Extension of Pitstone Memorial Hall unless otherwise stated. Meetings begin at 8 p.m.

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

Do come to our AGM which will be followed if time permits by a series of videos shown by David Lindsay. In these you will see Brook End Mill, Stockwood Mill and our own Ford End Mill with Jeff Hawkins milling.

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

Thursday 21st November * The Rothschild Family and Waddesdon Manor**

Arthur Keating is a guide at Waddesdon Manor and is therefore an excellent choice as the speaker on this subject.

Thursday 12th December * A Social Evening**

Please note that this is a week earlier than usual. We can look forward to our usual mince pies and sherry, together with convivial conversation, and some entertainment which will include madrigal singers and a conjurer.

Sue Lipscomb, Programme Secretary

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

Chairman - Vacant

Vice Chairman - Vacant

Treasurer (also Trustee) John Wallis - 01296 661997

Secretary - Brenda Grace - 01296 668167

Museum Manager - Norman Groom - 01582 605464

Watermill Manager - David Lindsey - 01582 600391

Craft Co-ordinator Val Rayner - 01296 661967

Programme Secretary - Sue Lipscomb - 01296 630578

Publicity Secretary Anne Ball - 01442 822672

Trading Secretary Jeannette Wallis - 01296 661997

Archivist - Gillian Arney - 01296 668123

Committee - Malcolm Lee - 01296 668603

Membership Secretary Corral McCormack - 01296 662560

Additional Trustees - Don Levy - 01296 661939

Bob Morgan - 01296 668 579

Reg Jellis - 01296 668291

Museum Website :- <http://website.lineone.net/~pitstonemus>