

PITSTONE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Newsletter October 2002

Congratulations to the 152 members who renewed your membership this year. The few defaulters have a letter with this mailing to jog their memories.

Lady Chairman's column

I feel honoured to have been elected as Chairman of a Society that seems to be doing so well despite recent difficulties. The Museum has had a good season and in spite of the poor weather, attendance has been good. I shall leave any more detailed comments to Norman except to say that volunteers on Tuesdays and Sundays are still needed for all kinds of jobs that do not necessarily involve getting dirty. You do not need to commit yourself to every week either, just as many as you can manage.

As David will tell you the pace of life at the Watermill has slowed considerably owing to Erma's Lindsay's illness. We all wish her a good recovery.

The highlight of the Summer was undoubtedly the Cheese and Wine with antique valuation by Stephen Hearne and for those of you who were disappointed at not having their items valued we are doing the whole thing again next summer.

At the last AGM members voted to move the date of future AGM's from May to November because preparing the papers for the meeting and organising the first museum opening of the year is too difficult for all those involved. This means that there will be an **AGM on Thursday 14th November**. This should be a brief meeting though it will

include some tidying up of the constitution which we could not bring to the last AGM. You will find all the relevant papers attached to this newsletter.

I hope to see you all there and at the other winter meetings.

Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society - Programme 2002 / 2003

The venue will be the small meeting room in the Millennium Extension of Pitstone Memorial Hall beginning at 8p.m.

Thursday 17th October * The Sherriff family, keepers of the Aylesbury Gaol**

John Landon is our speaker this evening. He has researched his ancestors in order to discover more about this topic as three successive generations of the Sherriff family were Governors of Aylesbury Gaol from 1788 until 1879. That represents ninety one years of continuous public service through four reigns!

Thursday 14th November * AGM and Quiz**

We wish to change the timing of our AGM and therefore need to slip this meeting into November so as to establish the new routine. We do hope that you will be able to attend. There will be rock buns on offer with your coffee that evening and after the business, Gill Arney will be running a Quiz based on the Museum, its artefacts and records.

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 the Aldbury Madrigal Group with their programme of 'Music through the Ages' and a conjuror, Chris Winnick with his programme of light-hearted, close-up magic, performed before your very eyes.

Thursday 16th January * Ridge and Furrow in Buckinghamshire and Beyond**

Professor Bill Mead has spoken to our Society once before many years ago. He is an eminent geographer with a particular interest in Scandinavia. He will be looking this evening at the ridge and furrow technique of farming both locally and globally.

Sue Lipscombe, Programme Secretary

Bess on The Mill - 9

During the summer months, apart from the odd bit of maintenance, most of our time at the mill is spent keeping it tidy for the visitors. The Boss says they pay to come in, so we should make sure it looks respectable for them. This includes what seems to be endlessly cutting the grass. John, Chris and the Boss are all in agreement that it is a bind, but it has to be done. Sometimes there are three mowers on the go at once, or if only two, a strimmer as well. When done though, I must admit the mill does look smart.

An exception to this housekeeping and gardening has been the siphon. You may remember we use it to bypass the sluice gate and direct a small flow of water onto the waterwheel, sufficient to turn the wheel, all



the mill gearing and to work the sack hoist. This is done when visitors are in the mill and we are not milling, and for school and other parties. It brings the mill to life with minimum effort.

Well, unfortunately, after putting in the new sluice gate - and I told you last time what fun we had doing that - we could not use the old pipe to the siphon and had to buy a new and longer one. This worked for a time, but then the water flow diminished to such an extent it was insufficient to turn the wheel. Various remedies were suggested and tried without success. In the end, the whole lot was dismantled, and guess what, it was just that the valve had become partially blocked.

After it had been cleaned out, it worked well. I thought to myself, it's taken them a lot of time and effort to find out what was wrong. Had I been asked, I would have suggested they looked at the valve first. But then, I'm only a border collie!

The Jubilee milling on Tuesday 4th June went very well. 70 visitors came and saw the mill looking very festive with all its red, white and blue bunting and large Union Jack - see the photo taken by my friend Corral. I doubt if anything like it has ever been done there before. The Jubilee stickers on the bags of flour were much admired and appreciated. The milling day on the August bank holiday Monday was even better with 99 visitors who snapped up all the 53 bags of flour that were produced. This equals our record made in May 1999. The gross takings were over £190. The Boss was disappointed (he would be of course) that we not reach 100 visitors; at the end of the afternoon, he even tried to persuade one of the wardens to go out onto Station Road to see if he could entice a passer-by to come in!

When we mill, we have to vacuum clean the milling areas before we start and afterwards as required by the environmental health officer. We use two sausage type vacuum cleaners which are just right for the job. Sadly, one seems to have lost a bit of its 'suck', so we are on the look out for a replacement. If anybody has a sausage vac.

with its implements that they no longer need, the Boss would like to hear from you (01582 600391). An Electrolux 55 would be ideal! Hope you have had a good summer holiday.

Bess

WEA

Courses for 2002

Come travelling with the WEA. Our ever popular Literature course returns to Ivinghoe Library on Friday mornings, 10am til noon, starting on 20th September with the theme of The English Abroad. The first book is EM Forster's 'A Room with a View', followed by Laurence Stern's 'A Sentimental Journey' and during the course we shall be visiting many parts of the globe, including Burma, Ireland and Japan. For a full book list please contact the Secretary. The course lasts 10 weeks but please note we have a break on the 4th and 11th of October. The course fee is £40.

By popular demand our evening courses are now scheduled for **Tuesdays**. Tuesday 17th September sees the start of a five week Geology course, entitled 'Rocks Around Us'. Under the excellent guidance of Joanne Davis, who many will remember from her course last year. Sessions are from 7.30pm til 9.00pm and the fee is £20.

On November 5th Andy Gunn returns for a further five weeks on The Victorians, and those who came to Andy's course last Autumn will remember his enthusiasm for his subject. Sessions are again from 7.30pm til 9.00pm and the fee is £20.

Both evening courses meet in the new Meeting Room at Pitstone Memorial Hall. Would you like to go into print? Ivinghoe WEA's Beneath the Beacon Fund may be able to help you. This Fund is designated to encourage publication by either an individual or a group living locally. If you have an idea for a book or a booklet, we may be able to assist you get started.

For further information on any of the above please contact M Connolley (Secretary) on 01296 668719

Museum report

In spite of the bad weather we have had this year on several of the Open Days, the year has been a great success and on two occasions we have had our highest income ever since I have been involved with the museum. Helen, Brenda and the other helpers have again been an enormous asset in providing a high standard of catering but this is Helen's last year and we soon have to come up with answers for 2003 on how we can continue to provide that essential service. You may remember last year we proposed that the job of providing refreshments on open days would be broken down into several discrete work packages i.e. cleaning the area on the day before, buying in the food and actually serving on the day itself. This technique has been started this year and has worked quite well however we do need someone to organise the various persons who would be prepared to carry out these tasks. It could be carried out at home during the Winter or early Spring months and would not need any expertise in catering, only sending out correspondence and booking dates, double checking before the event that those persons involved had remembered their duties. This does not therefore exclude the gentlemen and would not involve actually attending on the open days. Please give this some thought, we will be having a meeting in the near future to sort out the details which will appear in the next Newsletter. If you would be willing to help in any way please give me a call (Norman on 01582 605464) and I will pass on the details to those involved

All the other attractions of course, including the crafts, tractor rides, plant stall, racksaw, sawmill, all the engines, the science room, the museum shop, model railway etc. and all those persons that looked after them have contributed to a very successful year.

The new meeting room and kitchen are now complete, has already been used for one event and provided additional space for other attractions on two of the open days. The pathway access at the rear of the museum

through the cart sheds has been paved, the cart sheds cleared completely and Peter Keeley has power washed the building ready at an attempt to creosote the beams. The proposed parking area under the trees has been cleared and work is underway to install drainage and provide hard standing. Many tons of scrap iron is awaiting disposal but this will stay until further scrap has been collected from around the site.

The roof of the building at the rear of the museum shop has been completely stripped and replaced using new galvanised sheet and work is underway to repeat the same procedure on the roof above the rack-saw. Many other projects are continuing and several new projects are planned for the winter months.

It is now proposed to use the Nissen hut to display the multitude of unusual items that are presently stored in the loft, I have suggested the name of the 'Old Curiosity Shop' and it offers great possibilities as another popular attraction for the general public in exploring the past. The New Grain barn will eventually be set out as a harvest scene when we have solved the problem of disposing of the unwanted items. Most of the carts and wagons will be housed in the cart sheds, retaining those pieces of equipment that could eventually be used as a working demonstration adjacent to the Rick Yard where there would adequate space.

We still have no news about if or when the National Trust will become our landlord, William still has a lot of work to do in clearing his own area to provide parking for the family vehicles. We now have access to all of the museum site except Jeff's workshops. We need these before next spring as considerable amount of work has to be carried out on both the buildings and the gully between the two roofs above the cart shed and the loft.

The cataloguing of all the artefacts we wish to keep is now fast approaching completion and we have identified those items we wish to dispose of. The actual problem of how we

carry this disposal task out has not yet been decided.

We are still adding to and improving the electrical wiring around the site and have installed an experimental CCTV camera and recorder looking down the side drive which will be linked into the security system. The system will have to be further extended to cover the rear of the museum. General clearance around the site continues but as we extend and improve the museum we tend to generate even more jobs rather than reduce them and plans are in hand that could occupy the work force for several years to come.

Norman Groom. Museum Manager

Teachers' Seminar

Though the museum is not open to the public during the winter, it is often seething with activity. There is a continual stream of schoolchildren from schools both near and far. In order encourage this the Society held a seminar for teachers in conjunction with FACE (Farming and Countryside Education). Nine schools were represented and everyone was amazed at how much the museum and the watermill had to offer to schools. We now have loan boxes full of items about cooking, washing and W.W.II which can be borrowed by schools or for any other kind of educational purpose.

Since then, the Society has been represented at the Bucks History Day and the Leighton Linlade Heritage Day in October.

Jeff's Family History. Part 2(Cont' from last Newsletter)

The move of Samuel Hawkins to Pitstone was connected with the extension of the Ashridge estate by the Earl of Bridgewater who had inherited it from his relative the Duke of Bridgewater, 'the father of inland navigation'. The Duke had made a large fortune building and running the canals that provided the development of the industrial revolution in this country. At the beginning of the 19th Century Lord Bridgewater was using money made on the canals to buy up land in the villages surrounding Ashridge. It

has been suggested that this buying up of land was to make the estate large and thereby suitable for the Dukedom the family wished to reacquire. No doubt the prices paid were good and it was of benefit to Samuel Hawkins that the small family farm be sold and he become tenant of the larger farm at Pitstone.

In 1807, Lord Bridgewater had bought a farm of 57 acres from Thomas Birdsey that we know was occupied in 1798 by Thomas Eustace. The homestead of this farm was sited where Pitstone Green Farm now stands and is shown on a map dated 1755 from the Ashridge collection in the Herts County Record Office entitled "a farm lying in the several parishes of Pitstone and Marsworth in the county of Bucks and of Tring and Aldbury in the county of Herts being the estate of Mrs Ann Astley". The farm was made up of eighty- three separate strips in the common fields and three enclosed pieces of land. To this farm was added another bought by Lord Bridgewater in 1804 from Thomas Kerr, occupied by 1800 by James Burt and another bought in 1806 from Billington, occupied in 1798 by William Poulton. Land from these farms together made up a holding of 112 acres, with one or two areas of enclosed land and many strips in the various furlongs of the great open fields of Pitstone. Although the creation of larger farms must have made sense financially (small farms in France today make food cost more there) the fact that the land was split up into so many small scattered strips must have made farming in larger units more difficult. The small strips were necessary when most farms occupied no more than one or two of them in each of the open fields. So; no wonder that there was some consolidation of them in 1829. Strips were exchanged so as to make larger pieces of land under one farmer. The enclosure act for Pitstone in 1854 finally put an end to them altogether. The farm created by the joining together of these three farms was and still is called Pitstone Green Farm this part of the village was known as Pitstone Green as it bordered the Green, a large open

area of common grassland some 100 acres in extent.

This amalgamation of three farms to form one was typical of what was happening in England. The concentration of the land into fewer larger holdings was a process that had taken place in the 18th century and was to continue into the 19th. It made for more efficient farming but meant that fewer working on the land were their own masters, and accentuated the difference in the financial position of the now more prosperous farmers and their workers. Also, due to the increase in the population, fewer people were needed to work the land and as there was little alternative employment, there was surplus of labour and people suffered accordingly. Pitstone Green Farm grew over the years. In 1809 it was 112 acres, in 1841 220, in 1851 250 and 1861 328 acres. Besides the increase in size of farms there had also been a tendency for the farms to be owned by people living out of the village and let to tenants to farm them until at the beginning of the 19th century there was very little land in Pitstone that was owned by the man who farmed it.

So Samuel came, with his family to live in the house belonging to one of the original farms as the first tenant of the new Pitstone Green Farm. A map of 1808 in the Bucks County Record office shows the layout of the buildings with a large pond. The only features that remain today are the big barn which was used to store the sheaves of corn at harvest, later to be threshed with the flail on the mowstead or threshing floor it contained, and a small shed, known as 'Stevens' barn. No doubt this was the name of an earlier owner or tenant of over 170 years ago, which it was part of another farm.. After Samuel took over the farm the barn was lengthened by adding three more bays and another threshing floor was installed. This extension would have been needed to store and thresh the larger amount of cereals grown on the bigger farm. Otherwise Samuel had to make do with the old farm house and building until 1830 when it is

recorded in an account book of the Countess of Bridgewater, at present in the Herts County Record Office that a new house and building were built for Samuel Hawkins at a cost of £896 15s 3d. To build the same today would cost more than a hundred times as much.

Jubilee Day at the Mill
Tues 4th June.



In the Blacksmiths Shop
September 2002.



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