

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society



2003-2004 Subscriptions

The subscriptions were due on the 1st April 2003. 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.

Membership News

The last membership year was well subscribed with 163 members; this has been a small but welcome increase over the last 5 years. Although a few people didn't rejoin last year we did have 12 new members. Membership for the current year is now due and this newsletter includes a renewal form. We would like to thank everyone for their continued support.

Corrall McCormack,
Membership secretary

Chairman's Note

As I write this it is snowing and spring has been and gone already. We must all hope it will improve and this summer will be even better than last at both the Museum and the Watermill. The new meeting room is now ready to welcome members who come on the evening of the 15th May. There is parking at the back by the cart sheds and weather permitting in the yards. My plea for a new editor has produced results and this issue is edited by Sandra Barnard who is also press officer for the Society.

Gillian Arney, Chairman & Archivist

Museum Report

At the time of writing this report we are close to our first open day. The lads at the museum have put in an enormous amount of work in the last few months including paving, drainage, and car park area and boarding the whole of the rear walls of the rooms down the sheep yard. The site has been cleared of all disposable items especially the recently acquired cart sheds and all areas are now clear and reasonably tidy. We did not reach our goal however of laying out the new display areas so this is for the future. The catering area has been upgraded considerably and Helen has worked hard with Brenda on the new catering arrangements. Thanks once again to Reg Jellis for his help to both William and ourselves in the work in clearing and reorganising the area at the rear of the museum.

Norman Groom, Museum Manager

Program 2003

Thursday 15th May *The Role of the RBST in the 21st century *** Pitstone Green Museum**

The rare Breeds Survival Trust is based in the National Agricultural Centre in Warwickshire. Rosemary Mansbridge, their Chief Executive will be talking to us this evening and showing slides to illustrate in more detail the work of the trust.

Thursday 19th June * 40th Birthday-Celebrate with Cheese, Wine & Antiques *** Pitstone Green Museum**

This year is PIMS' 40th birthday and what a better way to celebrate than to repeat the format of last years successful, **'Cheese, Wine and Antiques'** at the Museum. Stephen Hearn will be there to help us enjoy the evening with his informative and amusing valuations. **Please bring only 2 items per household.** The doors open at 7.0p.m., cheese and wine served at 7.30. **Tickets £3 members, £4 non members, an application form** is at the end of this newsletter.

Sue Lipscomb,
Programme Secretary

Reminiscences of Pitstone

After the war my father returned to the Hertfordshire Constabulary at Tring, where I was born in 1921. My brother was born in the early years of the Great War. In 1922 we moved to Kings Langley and it was from there that I recall making occasional visits to Grandfather Coker at Pitstone.

He lived in one of a block of three homes at Ship End.

The 1891 census describes the building as Pitstone Charity Estate, and as a postcard to my mother from her brother Sam dated 1914 was addressed to No 1 Town House I assume this was a reference to the Pitstone Town Lands Charity. In No 1 were James Coker aged 33, Farm Labourer (sic) Shepherd and his wife Sarah, Strawplaiter, and their family (up to that date) Emma, Mary, Alfred, Florence, Edith and Richard. No 2 Town House was uninhabited and in No 3 was another family of Cokers, Stephen Coker, aged 68, Farm Labourer (sic) and Diana his wife, Straw Plaiter, both born in Pitstone. They had an invalid son and two unmarried daughters Ann and Hannah, both Straw Plaiters. I do not know that the two families were related, but it seems most likely.

In the 1920's grandfather was still at No 1 but then a widower living with his daughter Maud Goodyear and her husband Sam. Grandfather had been a shepherd at Pitstone Green Farm. He had a large

Father Christmas type white beard. He walked with the aid of two sticks and usually was sitting in his wooden armchair at the corner of the table by the fire. My memento of him is a sheepbell, cluck type, which my mother said was one of his - but I suspect more likely was one belonging to Pitstone Green Farm.

Aunt Maud had a large family to look after as well as her father; Dorothy, Evelyn, Edith (Edie) Herbert, Mabel and Daisy the youngest. A picture of three of them, Edith, Herbert and Mabel, at Pitstone School in 1929, is on page 27 of Pitstone 2000.

At No 3 lived Aunt Sarah, or, as she was known, "Aunt Sairll, whom I have always assumed was Grandfather's sister. She was white haired, petite, and looked very frail but had all her wits about her. The small window of the front room was hung with net curtains, which seemed rather unnecessary as you could not see out for the geraniums which stood on the window sill. The middle cottage which jutted out about eight feet was covered in the summer with Aunt Sarah's everlasting sweet peas. The most interesting thing in the room was a straw plait mill by the front door.

The Goodyear's home, like Aunt Sarah's, had only two rooms downstairs, the living room at the front and the scullery at the back. The front door was like that of a stable so the top half could be left open for fresh air while the bottom remained closed. A fire in the living room was always burning whenever we visited. A kettle could be boiled on a hob on the bars of the open fire and a hook hung down the chimney. As far as I can recall there was no oven. Lighting was by paraffin lamp and candles, which was just the same as at home.

In the front corner of the house was a "barn" that was used to store coal, tools, and odds and ends. There was a wooden bin with a wooden lid hinged with bits of leather which contained corn for feeding the hens. In the back corner of the house but with no connecting door was the

bakehouse (pronounced bakkus) where according to my mother they baked bread in her day. She said the oven was heated, by burning twigs in the oven. It sounded a bit biblical to me. At that time a sack of flour was kept by the chimney breast in the living room in order to keep it dry. I do not know if there were three or four bedrooms but I know Herbert (never called Bert) slept in a small bedroom above the scullery. The wooden stairs from the scullery to the bedrooms were just plain boards without any covering.

There was a yard running the whole length of the building about nine feet wide paved with blue bricks which sloped across the width to a shallow gutter which took away the rain water, and immediately behind this was a brick wall and behind that the gardens. At Aunt Sarah's end of the paving there were three privies, not water closets, one for each home. I was always reluctant to use these facilities but there was no acceptable alternative. The content of the privy bucket was buried in the garden - but not always to an adequate depth, as I discovered one year when picking gooseberries. At the other end of the paved yard was a well covered by a wooden flap. Water was obtained by lowering a bucket on a pole.

The main meal, dinner, was just after midday and tea just after four, determined, I should imagine, to fit in with school times. One thing I really enjoyed was tea time because they always had new bread and treacle (pronounced trekkle) whereas at home we ate bread a day old. Most visits were just for a day but there was time to walk up to Mardells to spend a few pennies my mother supplied. The Mr Mardell I remember (I suppose it was Mr Mardell) had a piece missing from the end of his nose. I know I tried not to look at it but it had an attraction that was hard to resist. Sometimes we walked in the other direction along Up Whistle to the railway and back or to the lower slopes of the Downs. I was told it was in this area Herbert found a Roman artefact, a sword, I believe, which was sent to the British

Museum. Occasionally we might feed the hens which were kept on a piece of land about half way to Up Whistle on the other side of the road. Surplus eggs were sold to the eggler whom I understood made regular visits.

When we moved to the other side of Hertfordshire visits were very infrequent and with the outbreak of World War Two I lost touch.

A. John Ward

Bess- On the Mill (11): The Mill Dam



Paul Jellis, the farmer at Ford End, had told the Boss some short while ago that he proposed draining the millpond so that it could be deepened

to make a better habitat for the fish. When we arrived at the mill on Sunday morning (8 March), we found an expanse of mud instead of water (see Corral's picture).



As Paul had said he was keen for the work to go ahead as quickly as possible, the Boss held what you might call a 'round the mud conference' with John and Chris. It was agreed that this was too good an opportunity to repair the dam walls which could not be missed, but we would have to get a move on as we had no idea when the deepening would be completed. So on Thursday morning (13 March), John and the Boss chipped off the loose rendering on the brick walls of the dam and cleaned them by scraping and power water jetting. The following Sunday Roy Cutler the

brickie came and cement rendered one of the walls.

When this was done, there was another conference which resulted in the decision just to explore the 'plug' of plastic fertiliser bags filled with soil which were used to block up the hole where the dam was breached in 1980. We ended up by removing all the bags and having a good look at the hole. The consensus of opinion was that it could be repaired permanently by filling with a concrete mix. This was completed on Thursday morning (20 March). Bob Morgan was able to come along and help - he was one of the Society members called out to deal with the emergency in 1980.

Paul had arranged for a new spillway sluice gate to be made and he installed it on Saturday (22 March), and on Sunday, Roy cement rendered the other dam wall with John and Chris keeping him supplied with 'muck' (the sand and cement mix). The Boss took the easy job of cleaning and painting the metal supports of the stop boards. I must say, I was happy to be kept away from that sloppy, sticky, smelly mud. The concrete plug had set and blue clay was 'puddled' (trodden firmly in) all around it to ensure there would be no water leakage. The Boss was very relieved to find that the bottom of the millpond between the brick side walls had been puddled with blue clay just as it should have been. The clay acts as a waterproof lining and prevents seepage; it is the way canals are constructed.

When everything had been put back in place (stop boards, trash grill, etc.) ready for the water's return, we headed off up the hill to the Rose and Crown to review our efforts. We felt very pleased with our achievement since the integrity of the mill dam had been a bit of a worry. The Boss had even called in a consultant hydrological engineer to assess it. Now, with the repairs, all felt that there ought not to any problem with the dam for many years to come.

As you can imagine, all other work at the mill came to a halt, but just before the dam

saga began, a new valve was fitted to the siphon which now works very efficiently - much better than with the old valve. School parties can again see the mill wheel and gearing turning and work the sack hoist.

Finally, the Boss has completed the warden's roster and it has been sent out. He is pleased with the excellent response and by being able to include 8 new volunteers. By the way, the Boss managed to locate the lady who volunteered and whose address and 'phone number he had mislaid - you know, lost! She's now joined the happy band of open day helpers.

Do come and see the mill this summer. First open day, Easter Monday afternoon 21st April.

✍ Bess

PS On Sunday (30 March) the millpond was full - it took just 18 hours - so we are back to normal again.

Museum Opening Times

From 11.0a.m. - 5.00p.m.

Craft and Family Fun Days

8th June, 13th July, 10th August, 14th September. Craft fair, Tractor rides, Country dancing etc.

Museum Days

Bank Holiday Mondays – 5th May, 26th May, 25th August

Adults £3 children £1.50. Members of PIMS free

Watermill Opening Times

From 2.30 – 5.30p.m.

Sundays 4th May, (M) 11th May (National Mills Day), 1st June, 8th June, 6th July, (M) 13th July, 3rd August, 10th August, 7th September, 14th September (National Heritage Day) Bank Holiday Mondays, (M) 5th May, (M) 26th May, (M) 25th August, M= Milling demonstrations from 3-5p.m. Approx

**Adults £1.20, Children (5-15) 40p
Members of PIMS free**

Committee:-

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

Watermill Website:-
<http://www.fordendwatermill.co.uk>

2003-2004 SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Subscriptions were due on April 1st 2003

Name –
Address –
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.....Post Code.....Te.....

Membership Fees: - (please tick)

Family/Couples.....£9.00.....

Individuals 16-60.....£4.00.....

Over 60's.....£4.00.....

I enclose cheque for £.....Cheques payable to PIMS and sent to:-
Membership Secretary:- Corral McCormack,
32 Maud Janes Close, Ivinghoe, Nr. Leighton Buzzard, Beds LU7 9ED

Ticket Application

Please send.....tickets at £3(members)

Please send.....tickets at £4 (non members)

Name.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

I enclose cheque for £.....Cheques payable to PIMS and sent to:-
Mrs Gillian Arney, 63 Cheddington Rd., Pitstone, LB Beds. LU7 9AQ (to reach her no
later than Monday 16th June, please)