

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society



Chairman's Note

This year's AGM was a far quieter evening than last years even though the constitutional issues are still not fully resolved. The main part of this newsletter is taken up with reports presented to the AGM to which I would like to add a few comments.

The principal one being to make sure that the work of the volunteers at Open Days is fully appreciated. I know that Norman and David value everybody from engine men through catering assistants, craft people and Watermill wardens to those who keep a general eye on exhibits and visitors. Without them the Society would have a very poor future.

Secondly the AGM agreed to raise membership fees. The details of the changes can be found later in the newsletter. It is a long time since the last rise and administrative costs do increase. In return we shall attempt to return the newsletter to four issues a year to keep all the diverse interests within the Society in touch with what is going on.

We have a new Committee member. Val Rayner after many years work as Craft coordinator has decided to retire and she has been replaced by Gillian Loose whom many of you may know as the card lady on Open Days. Thank you Val and welcome Gill. There are still unfilled vacancies on the Committee chiefly that of Vice Chairman whose job is mostly to open meetings and other events when the Chairman is absent. If you would like to be closer to the heart of the Society

without too much responsibility this could be it.

Gillian Arney - Chairman

Membership Fees

Please note there is a change to membership fees from April 2004

The AGM made two changes to the membership fees:

1. To up the concessionary fee by £1 to £5.
2. To abolish family membership

For most families it works like this:

One person becomes a member at £6. If the whole family visit the museum on open days that person gets in free, the other adult pays £3 and two children £1.50 each. If the member comes to a meeting they pay 50p and any other adult with them pays £1. Most families only come to one open day a year as visitors. Presuming this, families will not lose more than if we put up the family membership to £12 a year, which was the alternative. If you come to the museum or the watermill as a helper or in other official capacity everybody with you gets in free. The losers are the married couples under 60 who have to pay £6 each including the Chairman.

Catering - Open Days 2004

On the 7th February at the Museum at 11.00 am. There will be a meeting followed by a buffet lunch to thank the people who have helped with refreshments on Open Days. If anyone would like to join the team this year they would be most welcome on that day.

A.G.M held on 20 November 2003
at 8.00pm at Pitstone Green
Museum

Chairman's Report – Gillian Arney

Welcome to everybody here this evening! I'm glad to see more than we had this time last year. I am happy to report that the society is in good heart. During the year membership has increased to 163 with new members joining all the time. As I reported in the newsletter a rough count estimates that a large number of members are active in one way or another either at the Museum, the Watermill or helping at meetings. Thank you all very much for your Contribution – 'Many hands make light work'.

Norman and David will give you detailed reports on the museum and watermill. The museum in particular has had a good year with an increase in visitors and the workforce. My own experience is that of a friend of Colin's who came to lunch with him on an Open Day and deliberately dallied in the sun before coming down the museum because he thought it must be 'a few cases of stuffed animals'. He was here for an hour, saw the Lancaster and some of the rest and declared himself ready for another visit next year because he hadn't seen half of it. Colin was in the doghouse for not coming earlier. Let's hope we can keep up that much variety of interesting exhibits in future years.

The Watermill has had a more up and down year. At least it went up and up and then came down with a thump but David will tell you the details of his adventures.

Though this is the first AGM in this room, the comforts are becoming known and it is a real asset to the Society. Meetings have gone from strength to strength though alas a large audience such as that for Emlyn Jones climbing in the Himalayas forced us back to Pitstone Memorial Hall. At that meeting were many local people who were not members, so the Society name is spreading.

Over the year we have said goodbye to some active members, particularly Don and Marjorie Brooks who are trying to move north. They have been active members for many years and helped in many ways. For me in particular Don's photographic skills were essential before scanners became commonplace. Thank you both.

Roy Curzon has thrown in the towel literally as David Goseltine's right hand man. Not only was he an excellent worker but also he was a dab hand at the washing up with jokes for all occasions. Roy – Colin will miss you as much as the rest of us, thank you.

One of the society's unsung heroines is Corral who collects all the forms and keeps control of the membership despite some good efforts at confusing her. She always has the information at her fingertips.

All members of the committee have worked hard this year. Thank you all – in particular Norman who has led the museum through a most successful year; David for his continuing work at the Watermill particularly in finding new wardens for the Sunday openings and Brenda for being a wonderful right hand woman as well as sorting out all the administration for the Committee and acting as catering assistant.

Sadly after many years Val has decided to call it a day as Craft Co-ordinator. Every year she has arranged for the crafts people to come and kept an eye on them while here. Not an easy job as they all consider themselves to be the most important person on the site on the day. Val – I shall miss you very much on Open Days. We would like to give you something to remember the happy times you have spent with the Society.

Gillian Arney, Chairman

Museum Report – Norman Groom

The usual maintenance is continuing, although a lot of effort is now going into restoration.

The last open day we took over £1200. The best ever, I believe.

I would like to thank Val Rayner for all her efforts in organising the crafts at the museum, also thank Gill for her continuing work cataloguing photos. Hoping to put these on to disc at some point, they then could be sold at the Museum on Open Days.

Helen Hickson has been doing her job as Catering Manager for yet another year, although we have reduced her workload to some extent.

Norman Groom, Museum Manager

Chairman's Comment

For me, the most impressive renovations in the Museum are:-

1. Electrification of the Museum's clock due to the failure of its hundred-year-old mechanism – thank you Norman.
2. The development of Jeff's workshop by Peter Keeley. He has even got a working coal fire in there!

Watermill Report – David Lindsey

In 2003 the mill was open for 14 afternoons between Easter Monday and the end of September. There were 799 visitors an average of 56 each afternoon and 5% more than last year. 1600 schoolchildren plus 150 teachers have visited the mill to date. 70% have come from Dell Farm and the Chilterns Study centre. There were only two adult parties but with 51 people in each? Gross takings excluding flour sales were £990, a decrease of 3% on last year. (*David explanation?*) There were five millings producing 232 bags of flour - nearly 7cwts.

Major events during the year included torrential rain on the 2nd January for almost 24 hours, the millpond flooded onto the field and water could scarcely pass under the road bridge. Water was spraying from the pen trough into the mill. Stop boards were used to stem the flow and water levels had subsided by next day.

In March Paul Jellis drained the millpond to have it deepened to improve the habitat for his new fish. We took the opportunity to repair the dam wall (cement rendering) and to plug the breach below the wall made in 1980. The dam's integrity is now assured.

A far more serious problem arose on 25th August (Bank Holiday). At the end of milling, the pitwheel wedges came loose with a clunk and the pitwheel shifted on the wheel shaft. No major damage was done but two new pairs of wedges were required – made by Mike Bickerton. After seven weekends' work the pitwheel was (apparently) successfully repositioned and re-wedged. However, they came loose again during a milling training session. We decided to ask a millwright to complete the work. David Nicholls, from Mapledurham has visited to assess and will do the work post Christmas.

Normal maintenance has gone on throughout the year particularly sealing the waterwheel buckets using Acropol. This is very slow, very expensive but very successful. We have also replaced the siphon valve with a new one donated by Paul Jellis. The siphon is now working well. Roy Cutler (a brickie) came to repair the tailrace arch and we have begun replacing the gable shutters

Administration The Executive Committee agreed at its meeting on 2 October that the mill should secede from the registration scheme. A letter has been sent to Resource advising them of this decision. After 31 December therefore, the mill will cease to be a registered museum. Those wishing to see the detailed reasons can obtain a copy from the Secretary.

Future events The mill is participating in the exhibition 'Tring's Local Mills' put on by The Tring & District Local History & Museum Society in the Victoria Hall, 28 and 29 November in association with the town's 'Victorian Fiesta'.

A 'Breadmaking' (by machine or in the oven) evening has been organised jointly by the Ivinghoe & Pitstone W.I. and the Watermill for Tuesday 13 January 2004 at

8.00pm in the large room at Pitstone Memorial Hall (admission £3.00). The Speaker is Stanley Gauvain, Cereals director of the Campden and Chorleywood Food Research Association.

David Lindsey

Chairman's Comments

Since the AGM David and John had a very successful time at the Victoria Hall in Tring.

Programme Secretary – Sue Lipscomb

Most of the talks since the last AGM have been held in the Pitstone Memorial Hall, but in May we made a move to this room at the museum. Since then we have had two talks here, one about the Rare Breeds Survival Trust and one about the Victorian Schools. The venue was ideal for both, but whenever we feel the response will be particularly large, as with Emlyn Jones' talk about the Himalayas, we will have to revert to the Memorial Hall again.

Attendance at the talks this year has been very good, and feedback positive. There has been an average of 35 people in attendance, which compares extremely favourably with the average in recent years.

Do please keep attending these talks, and if you are one of our members who rarely do so, then maybe you could suggest talks to me that would appeal to you.

Sue Lipscomb

Publicity Secretary – Anne Ball

The publicity work continues much as in previous years. Both the Watermill and Museum now have a website address and I understand these generate a number of enquiries.

Some local newspapers have changed their deadlines, which makes sending out letters for open days more time consuming. Some want them earlier, some later. I am contacting them all during the winter with a view to using their email to send in details of open days.

Sandra Barnard has taken over some of the work previously done by the publicity secretary, for which I am grateful and this is working well from my point of view.

We continue to look for new avenues of free advertising and both Norman and David have given information for articles in both local newspapers/radio stations, which I am sure encourages visitors.

As always, my thanks to those who helped with the leaflet distribution this year.

Anne Ball



Regular members of the Museum working party enjoying their Christmas Lunch

Letters to the Editor.

I am sure in the article written on prunes, in the newsletter of September 2003, Gill was provoking me to reply, as we often argue that there is no such thing as an Aylesbury prune. They are Prunes, full stop. Never in my lifetime knowing, most of the prune growers in the area, as well as owning orchards ourselves, did I hear them called Aylesbury prunes. Although there were some orchards around Aston Clinton and Western Turville, that Mary Farnell researched in 1977, she it seems did not look at the greatest growing area, which started at Pitstone and became larger as it reached Edlesborough, Eaton Bray and Totternhoe area, hardly Aylesbury.

I have many family, and other documentation going back to the 1890 accounts, sale catalogues and many other documents and nowhere is mentioned (Aylesbury) prunes. I am probably among the last alive in Ivinghoe or Pitstone who took prunes from this area in the mid 50's, before their demise, by road to Covent Garden and Brentford fruit markets, and riding with my father in the 40's before that. Never ever were they booked in the sales as Aylesbury Prunes. They wouldn't have known what you were talking about.

I could write much more on this, but we will leave that 'till another day when I get more written confirmation about prunes from others whose families also had large orchards in this area, and to the East.

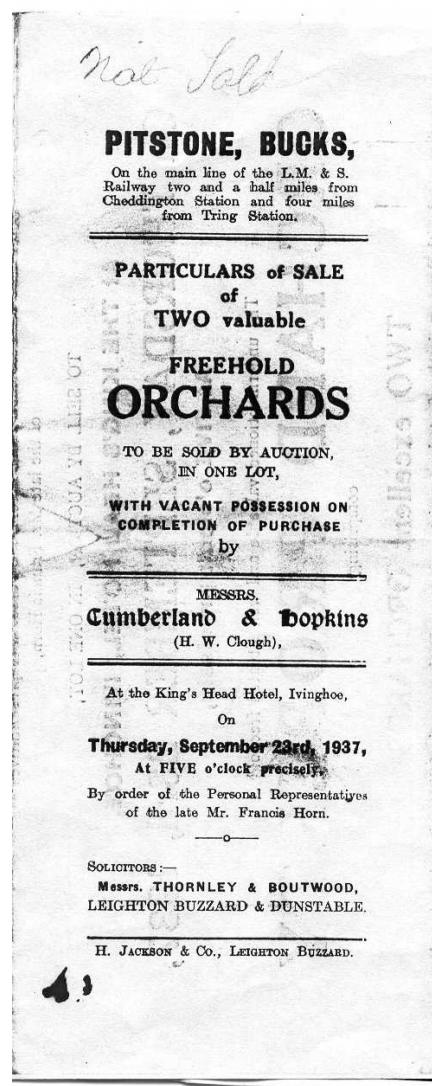
As for information, they were sives not skips they were carried in, and bushels and half bushels and quarters.

Reg Jellis

Programme 2004

All meetings are held in the Education Room in the Pitstone Green Museum at 8pm.

Thursday 15th January 2004 *Roman Dunstable** Joan Schneider, a longstanding member of the Manshead Archaeological



Society of Dunstable, has been involved with excavations of Roman Dunstable over the years, at one point finding the skeleton of a Roman monkey! Quite simply, without the Romans there would be no Dunstable. They built Watling Street. Where it crossed over the ancient Icknield Way, the town of Dunstable grew.

Thursday 19th February 2004*Milton Keynes Museum** Bill Griffith from Milton Keynes Museum will talk about developments since the fire in 1995.

Thursday 18th March 2004 * The history and work of the Boxmoor Trust** David Stevens has had a long association with the Boxmoor Trust, and although no longer a trustee, he is still happy to give talks to local groups. It is one of the oldest

grazing trusts in the south of England, which originated way back in 1594.

Sue Lipscomb, Programme Secretary

Workers' Educational Association Programme- Ivinghoe Branch

New Year – New Courses

Our literature course **Out Of Africa** starts again for 10 weeks on Friday 16th January at Ivinghoe Library with **Jane Irons**. This course ran for 10 weeks in the Autumn, but you are welcome to join for the New Year sessions. Books include Coetzee's *The Life And Times Of Michael K*, and V. S. Naipaul's *A Bend In The River*. If you are interested please contact me for a full book list. If you enjoy reading, why not come along to the first session and find out what it is all about, with no obligation to continue for the rest of the course.

The fee for this course is £40.

PLEASE NOTE THAT "THE ART OF SPAIN" HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

We are very sorry about this and hope to run the course next year.

The History Of Medicine with **Alan Myers** starts on Tuesday the 2nd of March for 5 weeks from 7:30pm to 9:00pm in the meeting room at Pitstone Memorial Hall. This course will describe the twists and turns, the people and ideas involved in the continuous battle against disease waged by humanity from earliest times to the present.

The fee for this course is £20.

After the Easter break, we welcome back **Caroline Ellwood** for a further course on **Islam**. In spring 2003 Caroline was with us for a course which gave us an introduction to the origins of Islam. This new course will develop that history in a study of how the situation of the modern Middle East relates to historical events and the beliefs of Islam including fundamentalist groups

The course starts on Tuesday 20th April in the meeting room at Pitstone Memorial Hall from 7:30 to 9:00pm and runs for 6 weeks. **The course fee is £24.**

If you would like a syllabus for any of these courses please contact M. Connolley on 01296 668719.

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Museum Website:-
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Watermill Website:-
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