

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society



Newsletter July 2004

Thursday 19th August 2004

A Trip on the Leighton Buzzard Railway

We have almost 50 people committed to this trip. Anyone else who is interested should phone Sue Lipscomb on 01296 630578. This 'Sunset Special' trip will leave Pages Park station at 7.30p.m. Passengers should arrive at least 15 minutes before this. We shall be stopping for refreshment at a pub 'en route' and will be able to have a look around the workshops. Members and their friends, who have opted for food, should arrive at 6.30p.m. There will be a choice of jacket potatoes or 'shunter's platters (ploughman's). The return fare for adults is £4.40, £3.60 for senior citizens and children aged 2-15 travel for £2.50. Those under 2 travel free. The station is at the southern end of Leighton Buzzard, on the A4146 towards Hemel Hempstead. It is signposted from the town centre. From the A505 west of Dunstable, turn towards Leighton Buzzard at the A4146 junction, and the station entrance is on the right, just after the second roundabout. There is a free car park adjacent to the station.

Programme 2004

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

Thursday 16th Sept 2004

Restoring the Chilterns using 4 legged conservationists!

Howard Horne, our speaker, works for the National Trust. For about fifteen years the Chilterns have benefited from a programme of restoration. He will talk about the unusual breeds of sheep, which are used, and the reasons why they are so suitable for the task. He will also outline what a variety of organisations are doing in the Chilterns to preserve the unique environment.

Thursday 21st October 2004

Cornfield Flowers of Yesteryear

Graham Atkins, Warden of College Lake Wildlife Centre, will be coming to talk to us about the arable fields with their beautiful flowers that were the focus of the Society's visit a few years ago. He will be emphasizing the part played by Jeff Hawkins and other members and the loan of PLHS farm machinery, as the cornfields were established at College Lake, and will be illustrating his talk with slides.

Sue Lipscomb, Programme Secretary

Chairman's Note

I am sorry to tell you of the deaths of two valued members of the Society:

Don Brooks, for many years the official photographer for the Museum, died on 18th

June in Barnard Castle. He and Marjorie had recently moved there to be near their family. Don was responsible for copying many negatives in the photo collection before scanners made it easy. He also contributed to The Countryman's Year and was always ready to help when a photographic record of events was needed. Both he and Marjorie were also regular helpers with refreshments on Open Days.

Richard (Dick) Stevens though not as long serving as Don also contributed to the wellbeing of the Society. He and Sheila, his wife, were regular attenders at the monthly meetings where his kindness and cheerfulness added to the friendly atmosphere. It was a shock to hear that he had died suddenly on 7th July. Richard will be missed by everybody who knew him.

Our sympathy to both Marjorie and Sheila at this sad time.

Brenda has heard from Nellie Charlton now living in Maidenhead. She enjoys receiving a newsletter and would like to be remembered to those who knew her when husband Bill was the Society treasurer.

Gillian Arney - Chairman

From the Museum Archives

Gay Wiseman very kindly volunteered to transcribe one of the museum tapes for me. She found it very hard work but recently returned the tape and the transcript. Thank you very much, Gay!

The tape was made in the 1960's by an unknown lady talking to Arthur Reeve who lived in Marsworth at Church Farm during the 1st World War and then at Townfield Farm. Here are excerpts from his stories.

He spoke first about the 1st World War "I remember being sat on our lawn one Sunday night. We could hear the band playing, this is the truth, in Tring Square playing "Onward Christian Soldiers" and that was a time when Kitchener was coming round for his army. I can remember that as clear as you like.

I remember Arthur Oakley going because he worked for us. We used to send him presents. He won a medal you know - he was something to do with horses, well mules they were. He'd got two I understand on a portable kitchen. When they went forward, the kitchen, I suppose, had to go with them. He brought it right back through the enemy lines, there was flak all around him and he got through and they presented him with a medal.

It was all horse drawn stuff, especially in the army - we used to have a man come round - an army man to the name of Vernon from Aston Clinton and he used to buy hayricks up. They gave about £5 a time. He used to put like a sort of spear in them, in these hayricks and at the end of the spear three little gadgets would open sideways so that you couldn't pull it out of the hay rick and on the end you've got a little metal frame with WD on - War Department - and you couldn't fiddle them by saying this was the hayrick that you bought if it was a smaller one because it would have this thing in and it was impossible to get it out and then they used to have a gang come round, soldiers, officer and a gang with a steam engine and an old Ruston's baler, come round and bale it. They never used to take any thatch off, everything went in this old bale, all squashed up and they used to weigh it as it came out of the other end on a long arm hanging down. It was put on an old cart and taken into Marston Gate and put on the railway and that's how they got their hay about in those days."

Arthur's recollections of World War II are more vivid. He was a groundsman at Cheddington Airfield for the whole of the war.

"We used to sit out on the banks there - the reservoir banks - when you come to think of that we'd see the planes go out and didn't see them come back the next day. I helped a pilot and his navigator in the first plane that did crash there. That was a Wellington. That came so near I stopped me tractor, jumped off and run. I thought it was going to knock me clean over. They crashed close to me, all full of smoke, I nipped up on the wing and opened up the

shutter, got these two chaps out and dropped them down the side and jumped down afterwards. They were taken to hospital.

Then we had another incident where a Wellington landed on No. 2 runway pointed toward the Cheddington Long Marston Road - very foggy - he couldn't see - touched down three parts along the runway. Reg Brummage and I were cutting the hedge down the bottom so Reg run out in the road, stopped a lorry with 50 gallon drums on it and this plane came down across the road and into the other meadow. So I said to Reg, let's go down and have a look to see if there's any trouble and it had gone through between some fallen trees and it's a wonder it didn't catch them. Anyway it was stood on its wheels okay, and the pilot said lets open up the door and lets look at my boogies. I said to Reg "Well I don't know what's going to happen now" He opened up the bomb bay and there the bombs were in there. He'd been to France and couldn't see so he brought his bombs home. I thought it was a brave thing to do, he could have dropped them in the channel, no-one would have known."

The tape is full of local references and anecdotes of life in Marsworth between the wars and later. His memories range from drinking condensed milk straight from the tin on a canal bridge rather as children today drink coke (they knocked a nail in the tin to open it) early in his life, to removing the Army's stage (as trod by Brian Rix) in bits to go into the Memorial Hall - one of the last military acts at the end of WW2.

If Marsworth historians want to read more please contact Gillian Arney 01296 668123

Gillian Arney

Museum Report June 2004

There is nothing startling to report this time. Slow progress is being made on several projects; others are static for want of time and man-power (or woman-power of course). The upgrading of the Nissen hut is progressing well and, at the time of writing, could be finished in ~6 weeks. That would bring us to the end of August.

Thoughts about what to display in there have clarified and it is now the intention to fill it with models. There will be the 'O' gauge model railway along one side of the room, and all our collection of various models will be displayed along the other side, and to add variety there may be a few guest models on show from time to time.

Work on the farm workshop and the silo area has been almost static since the last report. All the information for the display board describing the silos and grain storage is ready and just needs further effort to kick it into the shape of an information board. Also static is work on the workshop and store area at the end of the sheep yard. Restoration work on artefacts by Jack, John-the-cart, Maurice, Michael and Alan is proceeding.

This summer the doors around the reception yard are due for painting, a relaxing pastime on a warm summer day. Anyone with an hour or two to spare who fancies him/herself with a paintbrush would be very welcome; talk to Norman or me.

The last minute planting of bluebells at the rear of the grain barn did flower surprisingly well. The flower bed at the end of the cart sheds is trying to flourish despite the appearance of masses of bindweed and convolvulus; with hindsight I wish I had left it fallow for a year and just sprayed repeatedly with weed killers of various sorts.

Open days have been very satisfactory so far. The late May bank holiday one was very surprising considering the museum was almost deserted by the middle-to-late afternoon. The June and July open days were satisfactory, but not as many visitors as we hoped for. New (second-hand) chairs and tables have been acquired for the big barn for craft stalls on summer open days; the old ones were becoming very 'tatty' and have been scrapped.

Slow but steady progress has been made in clearing and sorting 'The Loft' (the rooms

upstairs excluding the office). This space was so full that it was virtually impossible to start sorting. Not wishing to discard anything of any conceivable value to us or to anyone else a start was made by identifying a number of sizeable items which were either (a) rubbish, or (b) totally beyond any hope of restoration. These were then removed to yield space to move. Now we will sort everything remaining into categories before making any decisions about the future. As an example, what can we do with 20 or more scythes all in various stages of decay ?

A large quantity of sorted bones and rocks from a Society 'dig' many years ago have been removed to the silo area with a view to either placing them in a silo or discarding them. We must ask ourselves, the Society not the Museum, will ANYBODY EVER want to do anything with these in the future.

Finally I must mention the Sunday morning efforts by John-the-grass to keep our grass cut short and tidy and maintain the mowing equipment. He certainly earns his lunch-time pint (or two).

Peter Keeley, Deputy Museum Manager

Bess - On The Mill (14)



I begin this time with a really sad piece of news. Don and Marjorie Brooks whom you will know well, moved a couple of months ago from Dunstable to

Barnard Castle in North Yorks to be near their son and his family. Don fell whilst walking in the town, was taken to hospital but sadly died there on the 29th June. He was 81 years old and his health had not been too good of late.

Both Don and Marjorie have been a great asset to the mill during the past 15 years or so, helping with visitors and the milling and with organising the annual end-of-season party we used to have with Mr Figgy's fish and chip suppers. It was Don who did the

complicated calculation to work out the power of the wheel (he determined it to be 10 hp.) and who obtained the patent details of the moisture meter from the Patents Office.

He was quite a photographer and helped the Boss by converting many of his photos and diagrams into slides so he could use them when giving talks on the mill. I won't forget the time he dressed the Boss up in old miller's 'clothes' and a paper miller's hat and then took overlaid photographs to make him look like a ghost (he was inspired by Corral's double-take picture which produced a similar result). It took nearly all one Sunday morning and they wouldn't even let me be a doggie ghost!

It is hoped to organise a gathering for his friends in our Society, the Chiltern Society, the National Trust and other organisations in the area with which Don had long associations so that they might remember him together. In the meantime, our thoughts are with Marjorie and the family.

Back to happier things. The mill is now fully operational and milling again. The troublesome pit wheel wedges are holding well and the wheat arrived just in time. It is not as clean as we would have liked but it's not too bad. So far we have milled and sold 180 bags of flour (over 5 cwts). Our next milling is on the August bank holiday (usual times) and the Boss is contemplating an extra milling on the last Sunday in September, the 26th, if there is sufficient wheat left.

Our work has been more routine and of a simple nature, like replacing rotten fence posts along side the sheep wash and making firm the stop board supports for the sheep wash pool and fixing the new log hand rail for the old bridge. And of course, the endless grass cutting!

Work came to a stop last Sunday when a friend of Chris's brought an American drop box wall clock for the Boss to look at. It was dismantled, examined, identified,

commented on and put together again and the friend departed an hour later, happy with what he had been told. It's surprising what happens down at t'mill sometimes.

Finally, sadly, the swallows did not return to the mill this year. Perhaps they had a mishap on their way north, but more likely they were put off when they found that their nest in the wheelhouse had been filled with moss by a wren which commandeered after they left it last year.

Don't forget to come and see me.

✂ Bess

Membership News

As the year has progressed the membership has slowed down, we are only up to 126 members at the moment, last years total was 165. For those members who have not paid there is a reminder enclosed with this newsletter. If at all possible would anyone sending in membership be able to enclose stamped addressed envelope - it will help to keeps costs down for the society and get your card back quicker.

Corrall McCormack

Open Days 2004

Museum (open 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.)

8th August (Sun) Family Fun & Craft Day

30th August (B.H. Monday) Museum Day

12th September (Sun) Family Fun & Craft Day

Admission costs

Adults £3 Children £1.50

Members free

Watermill (open 2.30 to 5.30 p.m.)

Milling demonstrations between 3.00 and 5.00 p.m. on days indicated by *

25th July (Sunday)

8th August (Sunday)

22nd August (Sunday)

***30th August** (B.H. Monday)

12th September (Sunday) National Heritage Day

26th September (Sunday)

Admission costs

Adults £1.20 Children (5-15) £ 0.40

Members free

Committee:-

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

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



Red Lion Bridge Marsworth where Arthur Reeve loitered as a child with the Ship shop on the right

PLEASE HELP

Would you be prepared to help us during the Museum Open Days especially with the refreshments or taking the money for refreshments either all day, half a day or maybe just an hour or two.

We desperately need help in different ways but the refreshments are in most need. If you would be willing to give a few hours help, please complete and return this form to the secretary Brenda Grace, hand it in at the monthly meeting or give it to any member of the committee. Thank you.

Name

Telephone Number