

Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society



Newsletter July 2005

Picture by B. Wright (01296 668083)

From The Chairman

It is with sincere regret that I have to tell you that after many years of valuable service to the Society Gill Arney has had to resign. Ill-health and personal reasons have necessitated this decision so, on behalf of all members of the Society, I thank her for all the hard work and expertise she has contributed and wish her well for the future.

The recent Sunday Fun Days have been disappointing in that so few people visited us. The June date was affected by several other functions in the area and July (competing with the VE Day Celebrations and the Silverstone Grand Prix) had such beautiful weather that people decided to go further afield for their fun day.

My thanks also go to Sandra for agreeing to carry on with the production of the Newsletter. As you will appreciate articles are essential to ensure an interesting Newsletter so please put on your thinking caps as - no contributions - no interesting Newsletter! Please contact any member of the committee regarding such contributions.

Kit Kite

Message

John Wallis wishes to thank Society Members and others for their generous gift and kind wishes on his retirement after 12 years as Treasurer of the Society

Programme 2005

Thursday 15th September 2005

Reminiscences of two wartime Evacuees

Cherry Anne Evans and her sister will be coming along this evening to share with us their experiences as young girls evacuated from London to rural Buckinghamshire. Did you have a similar experience? Do come along and see whether your evacuation was in any way similar to that of these two ladies.

Thursday 20th October 2005

Behind Bars in Buckingham

Our speaker this evening is John Credland, a professional photographer. He began collecting photographs of this subject whilst helping the author of a book entitled 'Behind Bars in Buckingham' with the photographic content. The book was written to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the gaol.

Thursday 17th November 2005

AGM and Quiz

After the business of the AGM, Norman Groom has agreed to challenge us by putting together a collection of artefacts from the museum for us to identify.

Thursday 15th December 2005

Members' Social Evening

This will be our second Christmas Social evening where members are encouraged to bring a poem or story to read or a tale to tell. I suggest that those of you who wish to should plan an item that will take no longer than 5 minutes, so that we have time for everyone's 'party piece' during the course of the evening. We will serve our usual sherry, mince pies and sausage rolls and if you simply want to sit around and chat to friends, that is fine by us.

Sue Lipscomb, Programme Secretary

St Mary's Church, Pitstone.

Have you ever visited Pitstone Church?

If not, it is open every Sunday afternoon between May and September 2.30pm to 5.30pm. The Church is at the end of Church Road off of Vicarage Road.

The Church is dedicated to St Mary the Virgin and was probably founded about 1180 by the Lord of Pitstone Manor which stood to the north east of the Church.

The Chancel and North Chapel Capitals with stiff leaf foliage known locally at Ivinghoe and Eaton Bray were built about 1230.

The Medieval chest was acquired when the Nave walls were built c.1290. One of the oldest brasses of women is on the Chancel arch pillar. There are medieval floor tiles in the Chancel sanctuary. The bells were cast in 1652, locally at Drayton Parslow.

The Lord's Prayer, Royal Coat of Arms and the Ten Commandments above the Chancel arch date from 1733. These have recently been conserved to stop any further flaking.

After the Oxford Movement Religious Revival in 1835 services increased to two or three times on Sundays. By 1973 the church was declared redundant and in 1974 the care was vested in the Redundant Churches Fund (now the Churches Conservation Trust). A local committee was formed by those interested in the churches future

and to arrange for the church to be open on Sundays during the summer by volunteers. Since the church was declared redundant there have been several concerts, some weddings and a blessing.

An Art and Flower Festival was started 25 years ago which has raised £21,000 over the years towards the upkeep of the internal fabric of the church.

The church is situated in a peaceful setting with views to the Chilterns and is well worth a visit.

Mike and Jean Morris

From the Museum

Museum Report

Since the last report in April there has been no one item which stands above all others; just routine progress all round with a few new, and as yet unresolved problems.

Roof repairs and rewiring has been carried out in the Concrete Workshop, and John Youngs has built us a new carpenters bench in there. The Sheep yard workshop is now more or less finished with just the lights to be installed.

Rebuilding has started on the open fronted shed near the fuel pumps; what started out as a repair job where some rotten wood was cut out and replaced by new has turned into a complete rebuild with mostly new wood. Fortunately Ron Ashurst has sourced a quantity of second hand timber in useable lengths and sizes (free) and this is being used for most of the rebuild. The museum's thanks must go out to Ron for this.

Restoration has continued on various artefacts, and where this is complete the items are mainly to be seen in the Owen Barn and the Science & Radio Room.

The first three open days on the Bank Holiday Mondays were extremely successful, one of them being easily our best day ever. Contrasting with this the first Family Fun & Craft Day in June was a dismal failure. Of course we made a profit; we always make a profit, but this meagre amount will not go far towards the next winter season's repairs and restorations. The second (July) Family Fun & Craft Day was a little better, but still disappointing.

We have a new Craft Co-ordinator, Kathleen Haran. Gillian Loose did not wish to continue and had asked us to see if we could find her replacement. Kathleen offered to try to see if she could make a success of this and is doing well so far; she is full of ideas and is herself an experienced Crafter (I think that is what they call themselves) over many years and with many contacts.

For the summer we must look forward to painting with black bituminous paint all but one of the new corrugated iron roofs; the curved roof in the sheep yard must wait until it has weathered next summer. Also a great deal of repainting of Ashridge Red woodwork is needed and we are waiting for the rush of volunteers to come forward. If we get as many volunteers as we did last year the amount of painting done will be nil, and in 2006 the museum will be looking very tacky indeed.

The Crossley engine which drives the rack-saw must be repaired as soon as possible as this is a big open day attraction. We suffer from lack of detail knowledge of this type of Diesel engine and it is difficult to find anyone to turn to for advice.

The old stable – affectionately known as Ron's Workshop – will be cleared and refurbished; then the contents of Archaeology may be moved in there. The use to which the old archaeology room will be put is still under discussion. Cleaning and applying wood preservative will continue to completion in the Cart Shed area so that next year the area will be looking very much better with the rebuilt shed across the yard. We can then endeavour to attract the public round there as very few seem to venture there at present.

The other big task for this summer is the weatherproofing of the roof gully between the Cart Sheds and the Meeting Room. There is evidence that this has been giving trouble for many years with short lived patching being applied. This has caused some structural timber rot. We have the capability and knowledge to do this ourselves, but it is very doubtful if we could do it in the time available. It would need a working party there several days a week, but our

volunteers are all ageing and in many cases one day per week is all we can reasonably expect. We have a quotation for (a) a complete repair, but using modern hi-tech materials instead of lead, and (b) a much cheaper repair using the same hi-tech material but where we do all the woodwork ourselves

We are still considering this but are leaning towards having the whole job done for us.

The next open day is on 14th August and we are keeping our fingers crossed for a fine warm day with a plentiful turnout of the general public eager to see what a fine museum we have.

Peter Keeley, Deputy Manager

Donation from the Friends of the Vale of Aylesbury.

Mike Malone has generously organised a donation of £250 towards woodworking machinery for the museum from the 'Friends of the Vale of Aylesbury'. This organisation is a registered charity and was set up to fight the plans for a new airport at Cublington near Wing. Fortunately the airport never happened and some of the Charities funds have been donated to our museum. Further information about the Friends of the Vale of Aylesbury can be obtained from Mike on 01296 624137

Membership

The 2005 membership subscriptions were due on 1st April this year and some 40 members still have not paid. All of the committee members are stretched to their limits and late payment only adds more work for those that have to package the newsletters and keep up with the membership. The dual membership card has made life a lot easier as both cards and mailing labels are produced from the same file information. I have had only one complaint and a request for dual cards. Those cards have been re-done but we still await payment. If you have paid then you should already have your card or it will be included with this newsletter, if not, then a renewal slip is enclosed. If we do not receive your payment prior to the next newsletter we must unfortunately assume that you no longer wish to be a member. Any queries, please ring Norman Groom on 01582 605464.

Hobbies Evening

This was a new experiment for the society. I tried this first at the Engine Club several years ago and it proved very successful. When I suggested this to Sue we decided to go ahead with it and I then wondered what the response would be. Would it be only one or two tables in our meeting room or would we need the Big Barn?

I twisted every ones arm I knew that may have items and they nearly all came up trumps. So much so, that on the day of the meeting I only just had enough tables available. Altogether we had about 24 tables and some 20 members and visitors exhibiting. It was a great evening, a great atmosphere with an opportunity for members to meet and discuss their own interests with other members of the society. The names and items exhibited are listed below.

I have had to keep it brief for space limitations and it can only give a rough idea of the quality and the variety of the item exhibited.

Exhibitors

John Cole – A fine collection of radio controlled model aircraft and model boats.

Nigel Thompson - A working potters wheel and collection of pots he has made.

‘B’ Wright – A beautiful collection of his watercolours he has painted, many in the locality.

Brenda Grace – A working disc musical box (Polyphon) and collectables – selling Cheese, Wine and Antiques evening tickets.

Mike & Jean Morris – Samples of their homemade wines - Quince, Elderberry and Grape.

John & Jeannette Wallis - Jeannette had a display of her crochet work and John a number of unusual and miniature models he had made, including ships in bottles, a 1/12 scale Windsor chair and a 3.3L Buggati.

Peter Bradfield – A display of functional and ornamental items he had made from turned and polished wood

Frank Banfield – A collection of very early model steam trains and a working model steam engine.

Geoff and Hazel Travis - Hazel had her large collection of Circus memorabilia and Geoff had many items from his very tiny ‘N’ Gauge model train layout.

Hilda and Les Jones – Hilda showed us her dolls houses and contents whilst Les had an ‘O’ gauge model railway that he had kept since childhood.

Peter Keeley – A most unusual collection of ‘Hippopotami’ animal models, some functional and others just ornamental.

John and Margaret Childs - A remarkable collection of machine made silk bookmarks, made on card-operated machines dating from the mid 1800’s. So fine detail that they looked like they were hand painted.

Michael & Lois Bickerton – Another remarkable item, a tapestry or kneeler, one of two for either side of the shrine in St Albans Abbey. It was seventeen feet long and had taken Lois and members of the Abbey Fabric Group many years to bring near to completion. Each contained over a quarter of a million smurner stitches each stitch having sixteen passes.

John Youngs – John, an enthusiastic angler, showed us some of his collection of fishing equipment rods etc., and flies he had made himself.

Helen Hickson - A display of beautiful little collectables, many home made furnishing items and some of the genealogy work she has been carrying out on her family history.

Roy Geary – A large collection of Tropical and Semi-tropical Cowrie shells collected over the years. Members asked if they had been polished? The answer was no, that is their natural state.

Norman Groom – An exhibition of antique microscopes and home made slides. One slide was a microscopic bouquet of flowers made from the brilliantly coloured wing scales of tropical butterflies and the other slide a microphotograph of a Hogarth print. Only 1.5mm high.

Moira Hegarty – A collection of Enid Blyton and other books.

If I have missed out anyone, or made an error in the description of their exhibits, my apologies, it was rather a busy evening. Unfortunately Sue our Programme Secretary, could not be with us at this event.

Newsletter content

We have been struggling in recent times with obtaining interesting items for the Newsletter. The various reports, whilst essential for information were not always the most exciting

items to read unless you were closely involved with the running of the society. Following the Hobbies evening, it is obvious that members have some fascinating interests and could those exhibiting or indeed any other member, consider writing an article for the Newsletter. If you have never written an article before no matter. It can be hand written and can be edited if necessary, we just need to tell your story. If you want to discuss it please contact either Brenda or myself.

A 19th Century Novelty.

Sometime last year, Peter, our deputy Manager showed me a small pair of scissors that could have been carried in a ladies handbag and asked me if I had seen anything like them. He pointed out a small hole about two millimetres in diameter in one half of the handle of the scissors and asked me to hold them up to the light and look though the hole. One could quite clearly see a black and white picture, that was entitled 'Cannes, Kiosque de le Musique' the scissors obviously of French origin.

All my life I have been interested in science and engineering, subjects that included Astronomy. Telescope making, Electronics, Microscopy (the use and manufacture of microscopes) and it was my interest in microscopy that led to my discovery of these miniature pictures.

The small lens that one looks through is called a Stanhope lens and the item that contains such a lens and picture is just called a Stanhope. The lenses and miniature pictures are found fitted to items of jewellery and other small knick-knacks. They are now quite collectable and I saw one recently on a TV antiques programme, in a broach that raised some £60.

The Stanhope lens acts as a miniature microscope though which one sees the picture. It consists of a solid cylindrical or rectangular piece of glass about four millimetres long and two millimetres in diameter. One end is flat and on which the miniature picture is mounted and the other end is hemi-spherical, like a strong magnifying glass. Holding it up to the light and looking though the hemi-spherical end one sees a

magnified image of the picture that is mounted on the other end.

It was the miniature pictures themselves that interested me, who first made them and why?

People have always been interested in miniature writings, drawings etc for sending secret messages or storing lots of information in a compact form. The very first miniature

writing was found during excavations at Ninevah dating from some 5000 years ago. Hexagonal clay cylinders were found inscribed with characters so small that a magnifying glass was needed to ascertain their form. Legible characters were being produced in the first half of the 19th century using some form of diamond micro-writer with characters less than one thousandths of an inch high. Benjamin Dancer started producing photographic miniature pictures soon after photography came on the scene in the mid 19th century and he had a



It wasn't a great surprise to me as many years ago I remember we had a drawer at home that held all sorts of small bits and pieces that one accumulates. In this drawer was a small bone or ivory cross with one of these miniature pictures that could be viewed through a small hole. The cross was given to my mother, by her brother, who was later killed in WWI.

Many years later I came across these miniature pictures again and discovered something of their history.

thriving business making and selling them mounted on 1" X 3" microscope slides to be viewed through a microscope. With the invention of the Stanhope lens these could now be mass-produced and sold to the manufacturers of jewellery and other items to be seen without the need of a microscope.

I collected many of Dancer's slides, which are now quite valuable, and over several years, as a hobby, manufacturing my own, including making the special emulsion and coating the slides, but that is another story.

Discs of Light

Have you ever walked through the Big Barn at the Museum sometime after midday on a sunny day and wondered what the discs of light are that fall on the floor and tables? The obvious initial conclusions are that they are due to the sun and holes in the roof of the barn. But think further and ask yourself why they are all virtually the same size, why are they all perfectly round and why are the fainter ones sharp and distinct and the brighter ones a bit fuzzy?

The answer is that you are standing inside an enormous pinhole camera and what you are looking at are almost perfect images of the sun itself.

I am sure most people know that a camera consists of a light tight box with a lens fitted in one side to let the light in. The lens forms an image of the outside scene and projects it onto a screen or film on the opposite side of the box.

If the lens is made bigger the image gets brighter and vice versa, however the size of the image remains the same even though the size of the lens changes. If the size of the lens is reduced to the size of a pin, the camera still works but the image is not very bright. With these very tiny holes it is found that the lens itself can be completely removed and the camera still works.

This is what we have at the museum. The sun is so bright and it is capable of forming an image of itself even with the tiny holes in the roof of the barn. The smaller the hole the sharper the image and the size of the sun's image only depends on the distance between the tiny holes in the roof and the floor of the barn. It does not even matter about the shape of the holes providing they are tiny. I have often walked though the Big Barn and if I was carrying a piece of white paper, held it square onto one of the

sharper images to see if I could see any sunspots. Sunspots are vast areas of relatively cooler areas of the sun that appear as black irregular shaped spots on the sun's surface, compared to its brilliant background. One day when a large sunspot group appears, I am still hoping to see one in our own very large pinhole camera.

A word of warning. Never ever attempt to look directly at the sun though a telescope, binoculars, any optical aid or even with the naked eye as it could damage your eyes or even blind you.

You can have too much of a good thing

At the museum we have had many donations of artefacts, tools and materials that have saved us a lot of money and for which we are very grateful. However there are times when we reach saturation point and we have to first check that items offered are indeed required. We are still finding items or materials that are left at the museum. We often do not know who left them and sometimes we do not want them. Please, please ask myself or Peter first, as it is often time consuming or difficult for us to dispose of unwanted items or materials.

Norman Groom



Bess - On The Mill **17: Big Changes** **Planned for t'Mill' .**

Very good news to start with. As you'll probably already know, John has been passed 'fit for normal duties' after his heart bypass surgery which has been declared a great success by the medical millwright who worked on him. Which means the regular Sunday morning crew now has two able bodied members and just one, the Boss, who's not so able bodied. He's still improving but is not quite himself yet. It's a real pain when he takes me for a walk - he's so slow that I have to stop and wait till he catches up! And we only go short distances. Now - THE BIG news. I overheard the Boss explaining some important changes that are being considered for the mill. I'll try and tell you

what seems to be afoot. There's concern that should the Boss 'fall off his perch' (as someone put it delicately) there's nobody really to take his place to do all the administrative and planning work and such like things that are necessary for looking after the mill. John, Chris and others could continue but the mill, like a ship, needs a skipper to keep it on course and co-ordinate all the activity.

The plan is to set up a new separate body to look after the watermill such as a simple Ford End Mill Trust or Ford End Mill Preservation Society. The latter name is the one favoured by some. This arrangement would create a body which is solely focused on the mill which should ensure that it will continue to thrive in the future. As ever there are some difficulties such as finding suitable people to help and finding money. Once up and running and when there is money in a bank account, the new Society/Trust will in time be registered as a charity. Unfortunately, although PIMS holds quite a bit of money in the 'watermill account', the new body cannot have access to it until it has obtained charity status.

A steering group has been set up and its seven members and secretary are busy doing the ground work such as drafting the Society/Trust's governing document (a Constitution/Deed of Trust). All this is complex and time consuming and time is of the essence. The extended lease on the mill expires at the end of October, so any change needs to take place soon so that discussions can begin with our landlord, Paul Jellis about a new one.

Good news here though. I saw Paul hand the Boss a piece of paper on which he confirmed that he was willing to lease the mill to the new body along the same lines as the present lease with PIMS. I also heard him talking about other helpful things which seemed to please the Boss a lot.

I sat in on a meeting of the 'Constitution sub-group' and it all went very well. At the end, they chatted about the name Ford End Mill

Preservation Society, or, as its so long, FEMPS for short. Then someone suggested that those who helped in any way at the mill could be called 'Fempsies'!

So, I hope all those of you who wish to help with the new venture will come along in due course to enrol as Fempsies. It is planned to operate the mill as heretofore (the Boss suggested that word!), for example, the Steering Group decided that the opening regime next year would stay the same, but that admission charges should increase to £1.50 for adults and 50p for children. Some form of newsletter is being talked about to keep everybody informed.

Looking forward to seeing you again,

✍ Bess

Watermill Opening Times

From 2.30 – 5.30p.m.

14th August Sunday

28th August Sunday

*29th August Bank Holiday Monday

11th September Sunday – National

Heritage Day

*25th September Sunday

* Milling demonstrations from

3-5p.m. Approx.

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

Museum Opening Times

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

Craft and Family Fun Days-

14th August,

11th September.

Museum Days- Bank Holiday Mondays

29th August.

Adults £3 children £1.50. Members of PIMS free



Morris Dancing at July Open Day

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Museum Website:-

<http://website.lineone.net/~pitstonemus>

Watermill Website:-

<http://www.fordendwatermill.co.uk>