

Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter

April 2007



From the Chairman

Welcome to the new Pitstone & Ivinghoe Newsletter. Sandra and Norman are trying to improve the appearance of the newsletter with this new format. Thanks also to Brenda for dotting the i's and crossing the t's before publication. Despite all our pleas to members to submit articles, nothing has been forthcoming and we would like others to participate in the contents of the newsletter. We hope that will give you all encouragement and pleasure

I have also been asked to appeal for help of a different nature. As you know, Mike and Jean Morris have given a great deal of time, knowledge and enthusiasm to maintaining and improving our valuable displays. This workload is spiralling and they desperately need the help of someone with experience in display work to help. If there is anyone out there who could possibly spare a few hours then please, do, get in touch. Norman Groom or anyone on the Committee would love to hear from you.

As most of you will already know, the season has started exceptionally well and we hope for a continuation throughout the Summer. My thanks to everyone who contributes to this very worthwhile museum's success and we hope to see you all soon.

Kit Kite

Museum Report – March 2007

Thank goodness winter is over. Now we can look forward to starting some interesting outdoor work. Or can we ? At present (mid-March) the ground is so soft and waterlogged in many parts of the Museum that it is not even fit to just walk on.

In January we took delivery of our new grass mowing machine. In view of the fact that very little mowing was done after early September last year the grass in many places was very long. It was decided that an early start must be made cutting it before it really starts to grow in the Spring. Most of the Museum ground has had a light cut now and both orchards have had a heavier cut, and the performance of the new machine so far has been very satisfactory.

The restoration of the Hawkins cart is now virtually complete apart from the shafts and some restoration of the paintwork and signwriting. The large, ex-Lacey-Green-Windmill Amanco engine has been 90%stripped, cleaned, and either painted or otherwise preserved, and tested for integrity. It will not be running for Easter but there are still hopes for this for the early May Bank Holiday opening. The stone

mill which came from Lacey Green at the same time as the engine has been put to one side pending the availability of someone to work on its restoration.

The restoration of the hayloft above the Meeting Room has started. One section of the floor up there is being completely renewed due to rot and woodworm infestation. After that a start will be made on enhancing the ceiling. We feel we must not use creosote (substitute) up there as we received so many adverse comments about the smell from our using it when we restored the Meeting Room below. The few remaining artefacts still stored in there are being sorted into three piles; wanted, rubbish, and for disposal. Having sorted through this lot twice previously in order to get rid of the rubbish there is still a surprising amount this commodity (rubbish) up there.

The Microcosm exhibits are now spread over two adjacent rooms, with the one room doubling as rest room for the volunteers when the Museum is not open to the public. Reception has also been 'tarted-up' with a lick of paint here and there, a new ceiling, and the removal of those dreadful cobwebs (complete with occupants, one hopes).

We have finally managed to send our planning application to the District Council, having received from them an encouraging letter. It is usually about 6+ weeks for a planning application to be accepted (or rejected) and I understand there is some statutory requirement for this to occur within eight weeks, so we should have a response by about 23rd April this year. If we are successful it is intended to make a start on the new exhibit building at the far end of the Sheepyard in early May. This will commence with the removal of quite a substantial area of substandard concrete. We shall then have to dig out for a new concrete floor and add at least one new rainwater drain. Then several courses of brick laying will precede the woodwork. Simultaneous with this could be the installation of a new gate into the orchard. We have no target date for completion of this project as there are too many variables involved for us to make even a wild guess. One thing is for certain, it will keep a lot of the volunteers busy for a long time.

Our oldest volunteer, Jack Brantom (87) is no longer able to come to the Museum due to failing eyesight. Over the past years he has had a hand in the restoration of many items on view in the Museum, with more in store awaiting space to display them. Jack is scheduled to receive treatment for his eyes and we hope to see him back one day when he can drive again.

Mike and Jean Morris still regularly visit to clean and re-arrange some of the artefacts. Some get provided with new labels bearing better and more legible

information. They, and Sandra Barnard, with the help of Janet Page, will hopefully soon be starting on a cross-checking exercise wherein all the objects displayed in any one location are compared with a computer print-out showing what the computer thinks should be there. This will be a mammoth task but has to be done.

The annual meeting for the catering volunteers took place on Saturday 3rd February. There was a good attendance with at least one new face, but we are always on the look out for additional helpers on open days. If you would like to help us occasionally contact Norman, Brenda or me.

Peter Keeley, Deputy Museum Manager

Membership etc.

The 2007/2008 membership subscription was due on 1st April. You will find a subscription slip enclosed with this Newsletter. One or two have already paid so if you do find a slip enclosed, apologies, just throw it away. Subscriptions remain the same as last year, with a £1 reduction per person if you accept one newsletter and one membership card for a couple living at the same address. Please pay promptly, it is just more work for me to chase up unpaid subs during the open season. If you do pay by cash, please hand in the filled in slip with the payment as it helps to keep the records straight.

Sandra and myself are also trying to improve the appearance of our Newsletter by going to an A5 format. Contents of the Newsletter is however still a problem as we are still not getting any input from members and we have to scratch around in the archives to find something of interest. There must be someone out there that can contribute an article?

The first Open Day of the season, Easter Monday, was a great success with just over 350 adults attending and around 50 children. The takings were slightly down on the same day last year but only by a small amount and last year was an all time record. Slowly but surely we are getting more entertainment on the Mondays, we had one or two crafts stalls and the potters were in attendance which we did not have last year. The Beds & Bucks Engine Club came along with a good show of Stationary Engines. The problems with the Crossley rack saw Engine has now been overcome and several of our volunteers were busy cutting up large bulks of timber, in between running the big Crossley Gas engine. A great day and thanks to all our volunteers, helpers and all others that made it a success, lets hope the rest of the season continues along the same lines.

Norman Groom

Museum of Technology

It is not often that one recommends a museum other than our own to members but this one is a must if you have any interest in WWI, WWII or just technology. It is a private museum run by Rosie and Trevor in Hemel Hempstead. Although housed in just two rooms of what was a shop, it contains a vast collection of electrical instruments and equipment, telephone equipment, radio equipment, both commercial and military, steam engines, wartime artefacts and every item you could think of relating to technology. Everything is beautifully displayed in well lit glass cabinets and many of the items can be demonstrated. On a recent visit we were made most welcome and given a personal tour by Rosie and Trevor. It is open by appointment only by ringing 01442 262541. The location is :-

81 High Street, Old Town,
Hemel Hempstead,
Herts. HP1 3AH.

website :- www.museumoftechnology.co.uk

It is on the right as you leave Hemel, there is a car park at the far end of the old High Street and a small one almost opposite.

Norman Groom

Dig for Coprolite at Ivinghoe

Introduction

Whilst rummaging through the museum archives I came across an article about digging for Coprolite at Don Levy's Vicarage farm that I thought might interest members. When I first heard about Coprolite, many years ago, I thought it was a mineral ore that was mined like many other deposits. When I was told it was dinosaur dung I was very suspicious but later found out that it was in fact, fossilised dung.

**Don Levy, Barry Horne,
Jeff Hawkins and helpers at
Vicarage Farm**

picture circa 1960



The following article was produced by Barry Horne of the Manshead Archaeology Society who worked with Don Levy and Jeff Hawkins on the dig.

The article follows, with some very minor alterations. If anyone wishes to see the original article, which contains the map referred to, it is available at the museum.

Norman Groom

During the latter half of the nineteenth century there were extensive workings between Cambridge and Aylesbury in the Gault and Greensands for phosphatic nodules, 'coprolites'. These were a valuable source of fertilizer when reacted with sulphuric acid they produced 'superphosphate'. This paper will restrict itself to the immediate area around Vicarage Farm, Ivinghoe.

Coprolite workings in the area

It was in the 1870's that the most extensive extraction was carried out in this particular area. At that time much of the land was owned by Earl Brownlow and as a result of this the Records Office in Aylesbury has a number of agreements and maps drawn up between the Earl and the contractors who hired the land for coprolite extraction. Using these maps we are able to construct a map showing the areas where coprolite was removed. The nodules occur as bands in the gault and to extract them it is necessary to remove the topsoil and then trench down to the layer. After removal of the nodules the trench was refilled and another alongside was dug. Progressively the whole field was worked over. Afterwards the topsoil was replaced and the ground returned to agriculture. In none of the local records is there any mention of the depth of the nodule bed.

After seeing an earlier publication of this map two local farmers, Jeff Hawkins and Don Levy, felt they would like to try to find some of the coprolite by digging a hole on Don's land at Vicarage Farm, which lies within the 'coprolite belt'. It was at this time that Jeff Hawkins spoke to me about the best place to dig. I pointed out that we do not know all the fields that were dug and that inspection of the field will not be a help. However as the land immediately surrounding Vicarage Farm was under ridge and furrow we could be sure that it had not been disturbed.

On Saturday 27th October 1990 an attempt was made to expose the coprolite bed. The first hole dug was near the farm. This was dug by a JCB, owned and operated by Maurice Reynolds, another local farmer. A shaft was dug to a depth of 3.6m by the digger. This was subsequently deepened to 4.04m by hand. Although the hole passed through some 3m of gault clay no nodule bed was found. The gault became darker towards the bottom.

As a result of this it was decided to dig another nearer to the known worked area but stay within the ridge and furrow. This was dug to a depth of 3.7m by the JCB; Dr Don Aldiss of the British Geological Survey then augured a further 2.27m through the bottom. At no stage was the coprolite bed encountered although a few very small nodules (less than 1cm across) were found.

The strata were as follows:

0 to 0.25m	Topsoil
0.8m - 1.2m approx	Chalk and sandy gravel
1.2m to 2.9m approx	Weathered gault
2.9 to 5.9m approx	Blue gault clay

Rather than dig further large shafts it was decided to prospect with the auger. Don Aldiss bored three holes in the field in the positions shown.

The results were as follows:

1st hole	1.24m	chalk with little sand and gravel
2nd hole	2.54m	slightly silty clay with flinty gravel, some shell and phosphatic nodules up to 1cm diameter. This hole was drilled alongside the steam and was able to go deeper.
3rd hole	1.2m	light, silty clay.

At no stage was a deposit encountered that indicated disturbed ground. We can therefore be sure that the area has not been coprolited.

Two further auger holes were bored in the neighbouring field to the northwest. The positions are shown on the map.

The results were as follows:

4th hole	1.2m	flinty gravel. Difficult to auger
5th hole	1.2m	clay

By this time, mid afternoon, the weather was starting to deteriorate and a decision was made to sink one last shaft with the JCB as near to the centre line of the 'coprolite belt' as possible. The fields in this area show no ridge and furrow so to ensure undisturbed ground the shaft © was sunk through a trackway in the position shown. Again no coprolite stratum was found but with the auger a 30cm thick concentration of small (1cm) pale blue nodules was found at 5m.

The strata were as follows:

To 2m	Gault clay with race near surface. Pockets of gravel near surface
2 – 5m	Gault clay with a scattering of pale brown phosphate nodules
5 – 5.3m	slight concentration of pale blue nodules
5.6m	Gault clay

Conclusion

From these researches it might appear that we did not find the coprolite bed, which was exploited in the nineteenth century in the surrounding fields. However, a paper written by A J Jukes-Browne and published in 1875 seems to show that we did in fact expose the place where the coprolite bed should have been. In this paper he gives the following section from a coprolite pit between Cheddington and Northall:-

Gravel and top earth
Light slate-coloured gault
Coprolite-bed with green grains
Dark blue gault

This is very similar to the section exposed in our second shaft. If this is so then at this point the coprolite bed is about 2.9m (9ft 6in) below the surface.

Jukes-Browne's paper makes it clear that the fossil bed was by no means always level and that the nodules tended to accumulate in the depressions. It may be that our small shaft went through a high point in the bed so we were unable to recognise it as such.

The question of how much coprolite should we have found should also be considered. From documents deposited in the Bucks County Record Office we have the following figures for a field at Northall called Home Meadow and owned by John Archer. In 1873 683 tons of coprolite were raised from 5 acres 2 roods and 10 perches. That is 1,529,920 pounds of coprolite from 242,319 sq ft or 6 lbs 5 oz per square foot. As you will realise this is not very much and should warn us against expecting to find a thick band full of large nodules.

Although we were all disappointed and puzzled on the day I think that subsequent research has shown that we did indeed expose the coprolite bed in the section but regrettably not at a place where it was easily recognisable.

Norman Groom

Front Cover Picture

Rory in the Blacksmith's Shop on an Open Day at the Museum

Can anyone please identify this Windmill picture?

I received this photograph some 6 years ago from Dorothy Millard who then lived in Hampstead Garden Suburb, and whose Mother was from a Pitstone family by the name of Payne. On the back of it someone had written 'is this Pitstone Windmill'.



Brenda Grace

Please contact Brenda if you know where it is.

Original transcript of proceedings from the Old Bailey.

The following article can be found on the web site below together with many other interesting reports.

N.B: There was a Seabrook Farm in Cheddington. On the 1841 census there were pages of Seabrooks in Cheddington, Pitstone, Ivinghoe and surrounding areas. Was George related...?

Sandra Barnard

Copyright:-Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 20th April 2007), January 1823, trial of John Barnes, George Seabrook (t18230115-3).

JOHN BARNES, GEORGE SEABROOK, theft : animal theft, 15th January, 1823.
Ref: t18230115-3

Crime(s): theft : animal theft,
Punishment Type: transportation,
Verdict: Guilty, Guilty,
Other trials on 15 Jan 1823
Crime Location: Burns Oak-meadow

Before Mr. Justice Burrough.

174. JOHN BARNES and GEORGE SEABROOK were indicted for stealing, on the 29th of November, an ass, value 5 s. , the goods of James Deacon Hume , Esq. MR. ANDREWS conducted the prosecution

GEORGE DIX . I am servant to Mr. John Deacon Hume , of Pinner-park, Middlesex. About four o'clock in the afternoon of the 28th of November, I saw the ass safe, turned out in Burns Oak-meadow - the gate was locked safe. We had had the ass ever since June; it had three black strokes on its right fore leg, and a sore tail - I missed it next morning, and found it a fortnight after, at the Crown, public-house, Pinner. I was fetched there, and Jeaves shewed it me. Barnes lived at Norwood near Pinner, and was apprehended there.

THOMAS JEAVES . I am a seedsman, I did not know Barnes before this - I knew Seabrook. I live at **Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire**, about thirty miles from Pinner. The prisoners came together to our house, about eight o'clock one Sunday night; they had two donkies, and said they wanted to speak to me; I asked their business - Seabrook said they had a donkey or two to sell, for they were in distress, as they had been gambling at the Crown, public-house, at Anstead. I went with them to a public-house; they had three more donkies there. I at last gave them 10 s., a quart of ale, and a load of sand for one of them - they delivered it to me; they were both together. Seabrook said it was his own, but Barnes said he should not sell it for 10 s., for he would go without bread first. Seabrook said he should sell it, and Barnes said no more. Seabrook took the money. Both appeared to be dealing with me. Barnes fetched the donkey out of the orchard. I left them and on Monday morning they both came for the load of sand, and carried it away on the donkey which they had - Barnes helped to load. I did not see them again for a week or ten days, when they were taken at Ridley, both in bed at different houses. Barnes hid himself in bed after being dressed. I kept the donkey with my others. Dix afterwards saw it at the public-house - it had a sore tail. GEORGE DIX . The last witness shewed me the donkey, which I knew to be my master's.

SEABROOK'S Defence. I bought it at Smithfield; but do not know who of.

BARNES'S Defence. I was not close by him when he bought it.

BARNES - GUILTY . Aged 19.

SEABROOK - GUILTY . Aged 18.

Transported for Seven Years .

From "Old Bailey Proceedings Online" web site above

Programme 2007

All meetings are held in the Education Room in the Pitstone Green Museum at 8.00 pm.

Thursday 17th May '07

Glis Glis in the Chilterns

Brian Barton is an enthusiastic amateur natural historian. We will look at his slides and listen to his sound recordings as he talks to us about these fascinating creatures, where they came from and how they reached this part of the country and got such a foothold in the locality.

Thursday 21st June '07

Victorian Bottles

Ernie Jones, an Ivinghoe resident, has had a fascination with bottles from all periods of history for the last 20 years and has a collection of about 200 examples. He will be bringing a selection of these when he comes to talk to us, and invites us to bring any old bottles we have as well. He will focus on the Victorian times, since it was then that bottles became invaluable containers for the expanding population of this country.

Thursday 19th July '07

The Fifty Finest Churches in Buckinghamshire

Julian Hunt has spoken to our Society before, and is at present researching this topic for the Buckinghamshire Historic Churches Preservation Trust. His talk will be illustrated by slides and we shall have to wait to see whether any of our local churches feature in this shortlist of fifty.

Thursday 16th August '07

Cheese, Wine and Antiques

Once again we will be welcoming Stephen Hearn to our ever popular Cheese, Wine and Antiques evening. The museum will be open from 7p.m. to allow members and their friends to walk around the exhibits, and then the refreshments will be served at 7.30p.m. Please do not bring more than two items for Stephen's comments and valuations. Tickets cost £4.00 for members and £6.00 for non members.

There will be a slip to complete in the July newsletter if you would like to come to this very popular event.

Sue Lipscomb, Programme Secretary

NB.

If you would like to be put on Sue's email reminder list, so that you receive an email about a week before each meeting, please send her an email -

Sue.Lipscomb@btopenworld.com

Open Days 2007

Bank Holiday Monday 7 May
" 28 May
Sunday 10 June
" 8 July
" 12 August
Bank Holiday Monday 27 August
Sunday 9 September
Opening times from
11.0 a.m. to 5.0. p.m.
Adults £3 Children £1.50.
Members of PIMS free

Committee:-

Chairman

Kit Kite 01296 668918

Museum Manager, Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Norman Groom 01582 605464

Deputy Museum Manager

Peter Keeley 01582 792701

Secretary

Brenda Grace 01296 668167

Committee

John Wallis 01296 661997

Programme Secretary

Sue Lipscomb 01296 630578

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Anne Ball 01442 822672

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Jeannette Wallis 01296 661997

Other Officers:-

Archivist (of computer records) Sandra
Barnard

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Kathleen Haran 01582 792895

Newsletter

Sandra Barnard

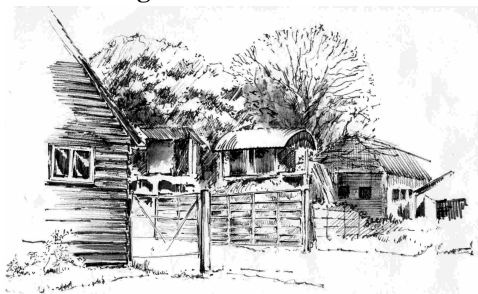
**N.B. Last date for articles for next
copy:-30th June 2007**

School Group Visits

For information on school visits, please
contact Sue Jones on 01296 660436

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

**Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society
Pitstone Green Farm, Vicarage Road, Pitstone
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