

*Pitstone & Ivinghoe  
Museum Society  
Newsletter*



*Spring 2008*

## **Chairman's Report**

As I write this we have had a couple of days of sunny weather with (I hope) a lot more to come. Work has been proceeding well on Tuesdays as on the other two less well populated working days. The new Models Room has been completed and the railway successfully installed. The track for the larger scale models has been laid out.

A new petrol engine has been acquired and is currently being stripped down and given a full overhaul.

Some work has commenced on repairing/replacing some doors on the existing buildings.

All our meetings have been well attended particularly the last one on the "Enigma Code" by Dr. Foxell and I think a number of us will look forward to our next on "Tools of Bygone Days". I wonder if we can offer a few?

**David Goseltine**

## **Museum Report – April 2008**

The last sentence of the last Museum Report was "Roll on spring, and hopefully warmer weather". Some hopes of that at the time of starting to write this report. The first day of spring was bitterly cold with a biting north-west wind. The second day was worse with snow in the afternoon; the third day was really horrible with an inch of snow on the Beacon, and the whole Museum site wet and soggy with the first open day of the season the next day.

The Easter Monday open day was better, financially, than we had dared to hope. For several years past Easter Monday has been our best day of the year. This year, due to the weather, we were well down on takings compared to the previous two years, but even so we managed to reach about 60% of last years figure. Part of the car park had to be fenced off as there was surface water on the lowest levels. The higher levels were quite firm though. Several vehicles did become totally bogged down in mud and we had to get the museum tractor out to give them some assistance. Refreshments were moved inside the Big Barn where it was out of the wind and rain, and some sandwich preparation was done in the kitchenette by the Meeting Room. There were only two hardy craft stalls and they set up in the meeting room with the lace makers in the shop. There was a good display of stationary engines in the chicken yard however, all by members of the Beds & Bucks Stationary Engine Club.

The Science & Radio Room extension is making progress; the foundations are laid and we are now ready for bricklaying. We have obtained the services of Roy Cutler, of Markyate, to do the bricklaying for us. Roy has worked here in the past on a number of occasions and does a good job. It will be so much quicker having a

professional to do the work for us, and while he is laying our bricks the volunteers are free to get on with other tasks.



### **Jo Marling working on the new Science Room**

The restoration of the hayloft above the Meeting Room has been proceeding at a sedate pace. The protection of the timberwork by applying preservative was a long job as we only had one set of spraying gear and protective mask etc. This time we have used a commercial wood preservative having minimal odour because there were so many complaints about the smell of creosote in the Meeting Room after we had renovated it.

The major task at the moment is to gain “accredited status” for the Museum. In a nutshell, last year we had a deadline to meet for our application – 1<sup>st</sup> July if I remember correctly. Norman Groom and I were preparing the application as a joint effort. We had not realised the amount of work before us and we left it late before starting. We had completed the application as far as possible with 2 weeks in hand, but there were two outstanding problems; we had no Curatorial Adviser at that time, and we had not had a security assessment. We appealed for help to the MLA (the national body which watches over Museums, Libraries & Archives, and also is responsible for registration and accreditation of museums) but none materialised, but we were assured that our application would not be jeopardised by being late in a case like this. In October the MLA advised us to submit our application in its incomplete state, which we did in early November, just prior to our last AGM.

Nothing was heard until late January when we were asked if we had indeed sent our application in, and when we replied in the affirmative we heard that it could not be found. It was found eventually in mid February just before we heard that Catherine Grigg, our previous Curatorial Adviser who had been on maternity leave (successfully I'm pleased to say) was returning to work and would probably resume her work with us. Since then my life has mainly revolved around paperwork. Not the old fashioned paperwork, but the modern stuff which computers throw at each other through cyberspace. It's a good job I have a comfortable chair in which I sit at my computer; it is my chair which I used at work, and when I was made redundant I was permitted to take it home with me. I have surprised myself in that I have managed to find time to produce this Museum Report. Our latest deadline is 2<sup>nd</sup> May and all submissions need to be sent well before that date.

We have been given another musical instrument – a Barrel Piano. It needs quit a bit of t.l.c., but basically there appears little else wrong with it. (A barrel piano is a piano frame which has a wind-up clockwork mechanism which causes a cylinder [barrel] to rotate; this cylinder has a large number of projections strategically located on its circumference which cause the hammers to strike the strings in an ordered sequence as it slowly rotates. There are no keys for it to be played as a normal piano).



**Barrel Piano**

Really there is little more to say. Fingers crossed for good weather on the next open day on 5<sup>th</sup> May.

**Peter Keeley, Business Manager**

### **Membership**

**Please make a note of our current fees.**

The 2008/2009 membership subscription is now due. Subscriptions are now £7, with a £1 reduction per person if you accept one newsletter and one membership card for a couple living at the same address, i.e £12 per couple.

**Please pay by cheque. This is now our preferred method of payment.** Cheques should be made out to PIMS and must be returned with the enclosed slip to the following museum address:-

**The Membership Secretary**

**Pitstone Green Museum,**

**Vicarage Road,**

**Pitstone, Leighton Buzzard**

**LU7 9EY.**

**Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope**, if you want your membership card quickly, otherwise they will go out with the next newsletter. Cash will only be accepted for people without a bank account.

**Bill Barnard Membership Secretary**

### **The Boatman's Chapel**

Canal boats were a common sight, transporting goods to various places such as wheat for the flour mill (Hills and Partridge), and wood to the sawmills. Every item one could think of could be moved in the barges.

Harvey Taylor was the owner of a large fleet of boats. Records show that he had the welfare of his employees at heart regarding their religious beliefs. So in 1900 one of the barges was hauled onto dry land by the canal basin .This was then fitted out as a chapel, with chairs, a stove, alter and small harmonium.

“Harvey Taylor’s Navy”, as they were known locally were able to pray to their lord near to their place of work, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Grand Union Canal. In 1903, a stained glass window was inserted in the chapel to mark (King Edward the V11) Coronation, which must have caused great excitement to all concerned.

The men and women that worked on the barges were tough hard people and they knew no other life. They would be amazed to see the luxuries that we all take for granted today.

In Kelly's directory of 1899, a record tells of a chapel for the boat people will be in use by 1900. It appears to have gone out of use by 1921 although many people today remember it before the redevelopment of Aylesbury in the 1906's. It was looking sad and neglected and another piece of history vanished. Can we afford to keep on regarding the past as dead as the Dodo? If it was not for the efforts of people like the canal boatmen and women, I would not be able to take a peek into the era when 'Harvey Taylor's Navy' was a hive of activity on the Grand Union Canal.

### **Ena Ashurst**

#### **Note - Re Pitstone Soldiers** (winter issue 2008)

The enclosed Bans and Marriages are from Aylesbury Library for the Coker Family of Pitstone. (Pitstone – Prestwood- Quainton).

**Bans** at Pitstone. James Thomas Coker, bachelor of Pitstone. Sarah Shillingford, spinster of Pitstone. September 21<sup>st</sup>, September 28<sup>th</sup>, October 5<sup>th</sup> 1879.

**Marriage** at Pitstone. James age 22 and Sarah aged 21. Fathers Steven Coker Labourer, William Shillington labourer. Witnesses Jesse Dodd, Sarah Dodd. October 15<sup>th</sup> 1879 (by bans).

**Bans**, Sarah Coker "of this Parish", spinster, Jesse Dodd, bachelor "of this Parish". September 5<sup>th</sup>, September, 12th & September 19<sup>th</sup> 1875.

**Marriage**, Jeff Dodd, age 20, bachelor, labourer of Ivinghoe.

Sarah Coker, age 20, spinster of Pitstone. Father's. Thomas Dodd labourer (deceased) Steven Coker labourer. Witnesses, John London, Elizabeth Marks, September 21<sup>st</sup> 1897 (by bans)

### **Ena Ashurst**

#### **Here are some facts about the 1500's**

The next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things used to be.

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons, and men, and then the women and finally the children last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water".

Houses had thatched roofs-thick straw-piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and some times the animals would slip and off the roof. Hence the saying “It's raining cats and dogs”.

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the saying “dirt poor”.

The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until when you opened the door it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entranceway. Hence the saying a “thresh hold”.

In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme, “Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old”.

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off it was a sign of wealth that a man could “bring home the bacon”. They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and “chew the fat”.

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or “upper crust”.

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of holding a “wake”.

England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a “bone-house” and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the “graveyard shift”) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be “saved by the bell” or was considered a “dead ringer”.

And that's the truth... Now, whoever said that History was boring!

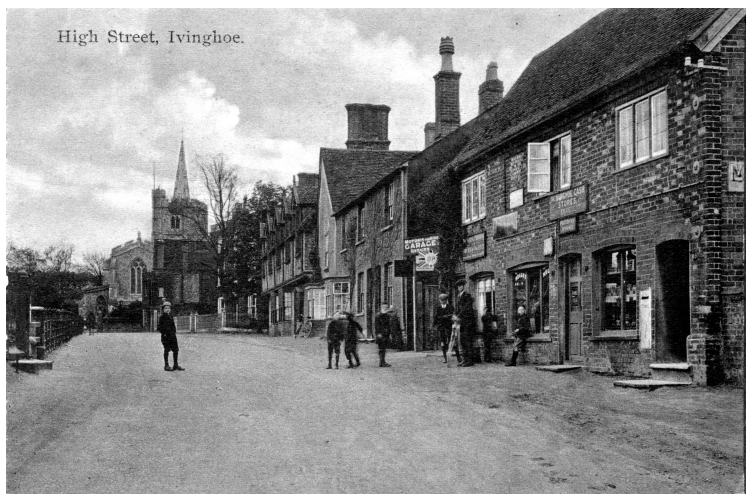
**Sandra Barnard**

### **Front Cover Picture.**

Nuffield 10/60 with weeder behind under the clock at Pitstone Green Farm. Don Levy is driving the tractor which he now owns.

### **Picture of Ivinghoe**

This picture is held in our archives on the computer only. It is listed as Reg's Pictures! I guess it was donated by Reg Jellis who will no doubt be able to tell me more about it next time I see him. He may know the names of the boys in the street. The sign in the middle



of the photograph says: “Motors for Hire. GARAGE. Repairs. BP ”. The sign

above the open window says “Ivinghoe Cash Stores” and the one below it “Post Office Ivinghoe”. I will report more about this picture in the next newsletter.

## **Model Railway**

**Pictures of our outside model railway taken at an open day 2 years ago**



**Pictures by  
Bill Barnard**

**Sandra Barnard**

## **Obituary Geoff Vines**

We are sorry to hear of the passing of one of the stalwarts of the Pitstone Gauge One model railway group. Geoff Vines painted the back scene of the Much

Hammering layout and contributed much of the rolling stock. Geoff was also a Pitstone member. He was noted for his dry sense of humour and his easy and informative chats to visitors to the two 'Gauge One' railways at Pitstone. Geoff was born in 1925 and was in the Navy during the 39-45 war, serving on mine sweepers, his mine sweeper was sunk however, by a mine! Apparently he was most upset as he lost his hoard of saved up chocolate. In peace time he owned a business selling and servicing air conditioning equipment. Typical of Geoff he used to have a supply of the drained off water from air conditioning plant, which was very suitable for model steam engines. Geoff used to take his Swiss born wife Margrit, on long continental camping trips in their camper van. Despite being 83 he toured Europe last summer, always at high speed! This vehicle was also useful for bringing a range of steam engines and rolling stock to run at our open days. Right up to the end he kept up a mock argument with me, this had been rumbling on for about 17 years, and used to worry on lookers. One or other of us would sometimes approach the other in private and mention the fact that this was a joke, always to be told by the other that it was a serious row! Characters like Geoff are hard to find, we will miss his humour, his kindness and his commitment to promoting model railways to the public.

**David Fuller**

### **Programme 2008**

For members who have not attended meetings for some time, the entrance to this room can be found by walking along the lane past the reception buildings and down towards the back of the Museum where there is car parking through the gate, that is open on meeting nights. The entrance is on your left.

All meetings are held in the Education Room in the Pitstone Green Museum at 8pm. ***ALL VISITORS VERY WELCOME***

### **Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May '08**

#### **Tools of Bygone Days**

Alan Bunting has been involved with either farming or gardening all his life. He has lived in Little Gaddesdon for the last forty years but before that he lived in Norfolk. He has been collecting artefacts for many years and quite a few of his vast collection are over 100 years old. Do come and see whether you can identify them all.

### **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June '08**

#### **Cheese and Wine with Cheddington History Society at the Museum**

This should be a good opportunity to meet with members of the Cheddington History Society and will give us the opportunity to show them our museum. We intend to open for visitors at 6.45p.m. to allow people time to chat and browse

around the museum's exhibits and then the Cheese and Wine will be served at 8p.m. There will be 35 tickets available for each Society and these will cost £4.00. **If you would like to come to this event, please complete the form in this newsletter and send it to me with a cheque to cover the cost of the tickets and a stamped self-addressed envelope. My address is: - Sue Lipscomb, The Surprise, Buckland Wharf, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP22 5LQ 01296 630578**

### **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July '08**

#### **The Neanderthals: The ancestors no-one wanted**

Peter Humphries has had a long and varied career in the clinical sciences and his hobbies in retirement are playing golf and giving talks. His 'blurb' about his forthcoming talk is as follows:- 'Most people have a perception of 'Neanderthals', usually of a brutish early stone age man who spoke in grunts and whose courtship consisted of a light tap on the head with a club and a dragging off by the hair to a cave! The Neanderthals were the ancestor no one really wanted. Research which has been going on for more than 50 years has revealed a very different picture and this talk aims to present the modern view of these ancient people.'

### **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> August '08**

#### **Members' Hobbies Evening with Picnic**

This is a great occasion for putting yourself and your hobby on display! All are welcome however quirky and unusual your collection. If you have brought a display to a previous hobbies evening, please don't let that stop you from coming again and if you truly have nothing to bring, then do come and learn more about other people's hobbies. I hope the weather will be kind to us so that we can bring a picnic to enjoy. There will be a barbecue alight there if you wish to cook something to add to your meal.

**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](mailto:Sue.Lipscomb@btopenworld.com)**

### **Detail of some events at open days**

Early Spring BH Monday 5th May models day.

Spring BH Monday 26th May Crendon Morris (they will be in the Forecourt)

June 8th Bellworthy Handbell Ringers (in the Barn)

July 13th Ivinghoe Handbell ringers (in the Barn)

Sept 14th Whitchurch Morris (in the Forecourt)

## **Open Days 2008**

Easter Monday 24<sup>th</sup> March.

Early Spring BH Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May  
(models day).

Spring BH Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May.

Sun 8<sup>th</sup> June.

Sun 13<sup>th</sup> July.

Sun 10<sup>th</sup> August.

Summer BH Monday 25<sup>th</sup> August.

Sun 14<sup>th</sup> September.

Opening times from

11.0 a.m. to 5.0. p.m.

## **Committee:-**

### **Chairman**

David Goseltine

Email... [daigos@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:daigos@tiscali.co.uk)

### **Vice Chairman**

Norman Groom 01582 605464

### **Treasurer**

John Youngs 01582 833678

### **Museum Manager**

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### **Deputy Secretary**

Peter Keeley

## **Site Manager**

John Childs 01582 833501

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**Please Note: - Last date for articles for  
next copy 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

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

**Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society**

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**Leighton Buzzard LU7 9EY**

