

*Pitstone & Ivinghoe
Museum Society
Newsletter*



Summer 2008

Museum Report – July 2008

Summer is here! At least it has been, briefly. The June open day was WARM. Unfortunately the June open day has, over many years past, been one of our quietest of the year. True to form it was quiet this year too. And the same can be said for the July open day, quiet but on the whole satisfactory.

The early and late May Bank Holiday Monday open days were quite successful. The early May one was quite a pleasant day. This was the day when we try to attract working models and stationary engines as an added attraction. There were a number of interesting stationary engines but the models were very limited, consisting of several quite old stationary steam engines, toys of the better off children of yesteryear. The late May one saw heavy rain all day long and the car park in the orchard is still suffering badly from the mud and ruts caused by visitor's cars. I am pleased to say that only one vehicle (a large van, but it would be wholly inappropriate to mention the sex of the driver, so I won't) had to be assisted out.



Bricklaying for the Science & Radio Room extension is now well underway, and although we do not have a target date for this to be finished we are confident the whole extension will be open with displays for the start of next year.

Bricklayers, Joe Marlin and Roy Cutler

The restoration of the hayloft above the Meeting Room has been proceeding at a sedate pace when the weather is inclement. Some thought is being given to strengthening measures for the far end where there has been subsidence.

Norman, John Youngs and Tom have finished working on the barrel piano; no easily recognisable tunes have emanated from it yet, although if you wind it up and feed it with an (old) penny it will happily tinkle away to itself for a minute or two. Michael and Alan are still working on the stone mill given to us by the Lacey Green Windmill Group; unfortunately the paintwork which was applied mid-winter has to be stripped and re-done as it is peeling off in places. Whether this is due to cold and damp at the time of application or to using one of these new-fangled “environmentally friendly”

water-based gloss paints on top of traditional primer is not yet known. Rob has restored a Wolesley stationary engine which was donated (along with a water pump) to the Museum recently from the Princes Risborough area; it dates from the WWII era. These Wolseley engines were very successful and are among the quietest running of all engines of a similar horsepower. The 8-horse power Amanco engine, which suffered damage on its first run last year, has now been repaired, and was run for nearly an hour on the recent July open day, and will be run on the remainder of this year's open days

We have had meetings with people from The National Trust (NT) who became our landlord officially on 2nd January this year. It would be premature to report on the first of these meetings as we are yet to receive any feedback from them but there will, no doubt, be further meetings covering particular topics. Items discussed include our rent, the water and electricity supplies, the future of the grain silos, drainage, our boundary with the proposed allotments, insurance etc, etc. As situations develop any items of particular interest to Society members at large will be reported in future Museum Reports. There has been a separate meeting with NT to explore the possibility of including visits to the Museum in their educational programme along with visits to the Windmill and Ashridge based activities. We are unlikely to have any results this year, but next year looks hopeful. In recent years school visits to the Museum seem to have been on the decline but we hope to turn this around next year with visits organised by NT along with more visits from the Julie Lloyd-Evans' Chiltern Study Centre.

Our crop of prunes and gages this year looks as if it will be minimal. This is in stark contrast to last year when the crop of both was so heavy that many substantial branches were unable to bear the weight of fruit and simply broke off.

Several years ago I noticed honey fungus growing at the base of one of our trees within the tree belt on the north and east sides of the Museum. Predictably, the tree was dead within a year and a half. I found this worrying as there is no treatment for honey fungus, and it spreads underground. During autumn 2006 I noticed a small growth of honey fungus on a tree in a different part of the belt. The tree was fine last year and there was no repeat growth last autumn; but I have just noticed the tree is dead this year, and one of its neighbours is sick. Maybe I am a pessimist, but I am concerned for the long term future of the whole tree belt. (Honey fungus is good to eat if you gather it when new). I am also unhappy about the horse chestnut trees; I understand there is a disease prevalent and am seeking expert advice.

And finally, the Museum has just gained Accredited Status. What is this, and what does it mean, I expect most people reading this will say. Accreditation is awarded by MLA. This is best described as a Quango sponsored by Government, and the letters stand for Museums Libraries & Archives. For administration by MLA the country is divided into regions, and our region is MLA-South-East, and this is further subdivided and our area consists of Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire. MLA introduced

“registration” many years ago and we have been a Registered Museum for a number of years now. Then “accreditation” was introduced a few years ago and in turn all registered museums are invited to apply. There is a huge amount of paperwork involved in this, and we have to satisfy the MLA that all our paper systems are in order, that the Museum is being run strictly ‘by-the-book’, and that it is being managed efficiently, legally, and responsibly by, in our case, the Trustees. The Trustees are the Executive Committee that you vote into office each year at the Annual General Meeting.

And now that we are accredited what benefits shall we see? To be absolutely honest I only know of one at this moment; grant giving bodies such as the National Lottery will only give grants to museums with accredited status. Perhaps there are other benefits: we shall see.

Peter Keeley, Business Manager

Accreditation and the future

As you will have read from Peter’s Museum report we have achieved Accreditation Status for the Museum. It may not give us any immediate advantage but it is a very big ‘feather in our cap’ and we can now stand alongside other major museums like the Chiltern Open Air Museum and Milton Keynes Museum. This task has involved a vast amount of paperwork and a lot of the thanks must go to Peter for processing much of the documentation and interfacing with the MLA.

One area that was, and still is crucial, is the work we still have to do in cataloguing and documenting the artefacts at the museum. Sandra has taken on a massive job and has already achieved a great deal. Although we already had a high percentage of items on our cataloguing system we were finding many errors, missing or lost items and incorrect locations for others, which means that we have to recheck and update everything on the site which will still take a considerable amount of Sandra’s time.

The MLA are also proposing future improvements, some being feasible and others we consider not viable but we still need more help from members if we are going to continue our ever onward and upward climb.

We need more help on cleaning, restoration, conservation, updating and creating new displays, Jean and Mike Morris are already putting in many hours on this task but it is a big task and extra help would be appreciated.

The other two areas that we need help with are advertising and catering. Anne Ball already distributes the leaflets, posters and contacting various other outlets but again extra help, new ideas, new contacts and promotions would ease Anne’s task and could bring in more visitors. Much of this work could be carried out at home without the need to attend the museum on a regular basis. We are already looking at ways to increase our roadside advertising as I think this is a major factor in bringing in visitors.

The other area we need more help with is the catering. Our catering team have always produced a very high standard in the food that we offer and at a very reasonable price but more help is always welcome. Just a few hours a year on open days is all that we ask for. We have never been able to replace Helen Hickson who carried out the organisation for many years but by breaking the tasks up into smaller packages, our existing catering staff have managed magnificently.

If you can offer some help in any of these areas please contact any committee members or myself as eventually the future of the museum is in your hands.

I dispute Peter's comments about no recognisable tunes on the barrel piano, there are! I have even heard one of our volunteers whistling one of the tunes.

Norman Groom

Membership

The 2008/2009 Membership year currently consists of 117 fully paid up members. I am still waiting for about 12 forms from previous members, which potentially will take the membership total up to 135. Most of the members will have had their membership cards posted to them or delivered by hand, otherwise you will find your card inside this newsletter.

If I have not received your 2008/2009 subscription form yet, then you will find another copy inside this newsletter. Anyone not paid by September will cease to be a member. Subscriptions cost £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.

Apologies if I have made any mistakes with names/payments etc. If you would like to contact me, then please either phone me at work on 01923 664362 or email [**barnardw@bre.co.uk**](mailto:barnardw@bre.co.uk)

Bill Barnard Membership Secretary

Congratulations must go to Don Levy (founder member with Jeff Hawkins) and his wife Muriel on the birth of their first Grandchild. Robin their son and his wife Claire have a daughter born on 30 June and her name is Emily Jennifer.

Ronald Joseph Treacher – known as Ron – Died 8 March 2008

As most of the local members will have seen there was a fitting tribute to Ron in both the 'Pitstone Parish Post' and the 'Ivinghoe Beacon'.

Ron had been a member of the Society over many years. His Father Edwin (known as Ted Treacher) had worked for the Hawkins family at Pitstone Green Farm before the Second World War.

Ron felt very passionate about the Society and always supported us and said he wished he could offer more time to it, but as a Pitstone Parish Councillor, Chairman of Pitstone Town Lands Charity and also involved with Ivinghoe and Pitstone Chapel his time was already taken up. Ron was a Parish Councillor for 36 years and Chairman for 24 of these years, and during this time worked alongside Jeff Hawkins.

He had always used a typewriter but at the age of 70 he was given his first PC for Christmas. His first project was compilation of a book. That book, which was published at the turn of the century was 'Pitstone 2000' and is a definitive history of the village.

Our thoughts go to Jean his wife of 56 years, son David and family and daughter Pamela and family.

Mrs Margaret Morley of Wingrave

It is with sadness we have to report of Mrs Morley's passing. Mr and Mrs Morley have been members of the Society for many years. At times when researching for their publications they have been to the Museum to look through our archives for information and photographs. The last book they had published was launched in November 2007 and it was called 'Tis the Far Famous Vale'. We extend our sympathy to Mr Ken Morley and the family.

"One of the Machine Wreckers"

His name was **Thomas Fisher**, and was aged 19. He along with other men destroyed machinery used in the manufacture of paper at the mill on the premises of Mr William Robert Davis, at Chepping-Wycombe on the 29th of November 1830. It would seem that no evidence could be found in this case, but he was seen breaking Plaistow's machinery.

He was married, his wife Louisa was a bonnet maker at Woburn and they had one child. Thomas was 5'4½" tall, fair complexion, thin brown hair, brown whiskers, high forehead, brown eyebrows, dark blue eyes, a short very broad nose and with a thick set body. He wore a ring on the middle finger on the right hand, sun tattoo on his chest and letters L-F-T-F and an indecent figure on the inside right arm. He could read and write.

He was found guilty at Aylesbury for breaking machinery. He was given the death sentence which was commuted to transportation for 7 years to Australia. He boarded the prison hulk “York” at Portsmouth on 22nd February 1831.

By the 10th April 1832, he left his master’s station, then returned drunk, for which he received 50 lashes. On the 2nd September 1833, he was absent without leave and received 30 lashes. On the 12th October 1835 after pilfering potatoes from his master’s property, he received 3 months hard labour in irons and was removed from his master’s service. Obviously the authorities had decided Thomas was not to be tamed. By 1841 he was given a ticket of leave. We now find Thomas departing from “Hobart” on board the “Currency Lass” on the 18th of July 1837 bound for Sydney. At the age of 37, he claimed to be a widower and duly married Mary Rogers on the 19th February 1844 at Hobart.

In England his home town had been Beaconsfield, Bucks where he worked as a pit sawyer. Now in Australia, a free man he has changed his job and is now a gardener.

There is every possibility that someone has perhaps relations in Australia descended from Thomas, they were unaware of... it happens.

This is just one case of the 1830 riots against the machines that were taking away the farm labourers livelihood to support their families. So next time you look at a threshing machine, or a chaff cutter, remember what happened at Waddesdon, Stone, Upper Winchendon and Chepping-Wycombe to the men of 170 years ago, one who was Thomas Fisher.

Ena Ashurst

Historical Background

The article above describes one of the machines destroyed and the consequences that happened during the “**Swing Riots of 1830**”.

The Swing Riots

These were widespread uprisings by the rural workers of the arable south and east of England in 1830. The rioters, largely impoverished and landless agricultural labourers, sought to halt reductions in their wages and to put a stop to the introduction of the new threshing machines that threatened their livelihoods. They reinforced their demands not only with riots in which objects of perceived oppression such as workhouses and tithe barns were destroyed, but also with more surreptitious rick-burning, the destruction of threshing machines and cattle-maiming. The movement paralleled its urban-industrial counterpart, the **Luddite*** disturbances. The first threshing machine was destroyed on Saturday night, August 28th, 1830. By the third week of October, over one hundred threshing machines had been destroyed in East Kent.



Museum Picture of the Threshing Machine used in the filming of “Plotlands”

The Swing Riots had many immediate causes, but were overwhelmingly the result of the progressive impoverishment and dispossession of the English agricultural workforce over the previous fifty years, leading up to 1830. The anger of the rioters was directed at three targets that were seen as the prime source of their misery: The Tithe system, the Poor law guardians, and the rich tenant farmers who had been progressively lowering wages while introducing agricultural machinery.

Early nineteenth century England was virtually unique among major nations in having no class of landed smallholding peasantry. The parliamentary enclosure movement of the previous century had eradicated the last rights of poorer country folk to graze their livestock, be it cattle, sheep, chicken or geese, on what had formerly been “Common” Land. The common grazing of older times was divided up among the large local land-owners, leaving the landless farm workers solely dependent upon offering their labour to their richer neighbours for a cash wage. Whilst this may have offered a tolerable living during the boom years of the Napoleonic wars, when labour had been in short supply and corn prices had been high, the coming of peace in 1815 brought with it plummeting grain prices and an oversupply of labour.

The social status of agricultural workers had also declined. In the 1780s workers would be taken on at annual Hiring Fairs, to serve for a whole year. In this period the worker would receive payment in kind and in cash from his or her employer, would often work at his side, and would commonly share meals at the employer's table. As time went by the gulf between farmer and employee widened. Workers were hired on stricter cash-only contracts, which ran for shorter and shorter periods. At first monthly terms became the norm; later contracts were offered for as little as a week at a time. Farm labourers were thrown on to parish relief the moment that their services were no longer profitable. This casualisation and growing insecurity of rural labour lent much to the anger of the 1830 riots.

The “Old Poor Law” introduced in Tudor times began to break under the strain. The system charged a Parish Rate to landowners and tenants which was used to provide relief payments to settled residents of the parish who were ill or out of work. These

payments were minimal, and at times degrading conditions were required for their receipt. As more and more people became dependent on parish relief, ratepayers rebelled ever more loudly against the costs, and a lower and lower level of relief was offered. Three and a half “one gallon” bread loaves were considered necessary for a man in Berkshire in 1795. However provision had fallen to just two similar-sized loaves being provided in 1817 Wiltshire. The way in which poor law funds were disbursed led to a further reduction in agricultural wages, since farmers would pay their workers as little as possible, knowing that the parish fund would top up wages to a basic subsistence level.

To this incendiary mixture was added the burden of the Church Tithe. Originally this had been the Church's right to ten percent of the parish harvest. However the earlier collection of goods in kind had been replaced by a cash levy that was payable to the Church of England Parson, and which went to pay his (often considerable) wages. The cash levy was generally rigorously enforced, whether the resident was a Church member or not, and the sum demanded was often far higher than a poor person could afford. Calls for a large reduction in the Tithe payment were prominent among the demands of the rioters.

Horse-powered threshing machine

The final straw was the introduction of horse-powered threshing machines, which



Fig. 318. — Threshing Machine & reaper direct grain into the sack.

could do the work of many men. They spread swiftly among the farming community, threatening the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of farm workers. Following the terrible harvests of 1828 and 1829, farm labourers faced the approaching winter of 1830 with dread.

Farm labourers finally snapped in the late summer of 1830. With fewer jobs, lower wages and no prospects of things improving for these workers, the “immoral” threshing machine seemed to be the object that was to place them on the brink of starvation. Starting in the south-eastern county of Kent, the Swing Rioters smashed the threshing machines and threatened farmers who had them. The riots spread rapidly through the southern counties of Surrey, Sussex, Middlesex and Hampshire, before spreading north into the Home Counties, the Midlands and East Anglia. Moving on as far as Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, the Swing Riots soon became the largest popular rural uprising since the Peasants Revolt of the fourteenth century.

The pattern of the riots was remarkably similar. Threatening letters, often signed by Captain Swing, would be sent to Magistrates, Parsons, wealthy farmers or Poor Law

Guardians in the area. The letters would call for a rise in wages, a cut in the Tithe payments and for the destruction of the hated threshing machines, otherwise people would take matters into their own hands. If the warnings were not heeded local farm workers would gather, often in groups of 200 - 400, and would threaten the local oligarchies with dire consequences if their demands were not met. Threshing machines would be broken, workhouses, tithe barns and other hated buildings would be attacked and the rioters would disperse or move on to the next village. Despite the prevalence of the slogan “Bread or Blood”, not one person is recorded as having been killed during the riots, whose main intent was to damage property. The burning of barns and hayricks took place in parallel to the riots.

The similar pattern of the disturbances, and their rapid spread across the country was often blamed on sinister agitators, or upon “agents” sent from France, where the revolution of July 1830 had broken out a month before the Swing Riots began in Kent. The campaign against the Tithes and threshing machines was met with considerable sympathy, even among many farmers and magistrates, who put up little resistance to the destruction of thousands of threshing machines across the country.

However the government, led by Home Secretary, Lord Melbourne, dealt with the riots harshly. Blaming local magistrates for being too lenient, the government appointed a Special Commission of three judges to try rioters in the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire. Agreements made to raise wages or cut tithes were rarely honoured. Many arrests followed the riots. Across the country, nine of the rioters were hanged and a further 450 suffered transportation to Australia.

These riots added to the strong social, political and agricultural unrest throughout Britain in the 1830s. The “Swing” riots were a big influence on the Whig Government, leading to the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, which made life for the poor even harsher, ending “outdoor relief” in cash or kind, and setting up a chain of grim workhouses across the country, to which the poor had to go if they wanted help.

(adapted from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

** The Luddites were a social movement of British textile artisans in the early nineteenth century who protested – often by destroying mechanized looms – against the changes produced by the Industrial Revolution, which they felt threatened their livelihood. More on them in the next issue.*

Sandra Barnard

Front Cover Picture.

Nuffield 10/60 with weeder behind under the clock at Pitstone Green Farm.

Derek Carter is driving, Jeff Hawkins’ Tractor. (Please note this is a correction to the last newsletter- details were incorrect on the computer records)

Programme 2008 All meetings are held in the Education Room in the Pitstone Green Museum at 8pm. ***ALL VISITORS VERY WELCOME***

Thursday 21st 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. Please note we will not be providing any food or drink.

Thursday 18th September

A tour round Old Tring

Nuala Grace and her son Henry will be bringing a lantern and slides which have been in the Grace family for over 110 years now. Originally it was Frank Grace who was the camera man and his daughter looked after the lantern and they gave 'temperance' lantern shows around Tring hoping to turn people against the demon drink. At least half the photographs were taken by Frank and the experience should be quite unique.

Thursday 16th October

Wooden Narrowboat Restoration

Bates Boatyard on the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal is one of the last boatyards in the country to be devoted to wooden narrow boat building and restoration. Jem Bates gives a unique insight into the wooden boat building skills that were once a common sight but are now as rare as the boats themselves.

Thursday 20th November

AGM & The Restoration of the Windmill

David Goseltine has kindly agreed to give a talk after the business of the meeting. There only two members of the restoration team left alive - one lives in Herefordshire and, of course, David.

Thursday 18th December

Christmas Social

Details to follow. Please put this date in your diary.

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 2008

Sun 10th August.

Summer BH Monday 25th August.

Sun 14th September. Whitchurch Morris

(in the Forecourt)

Opening times from

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

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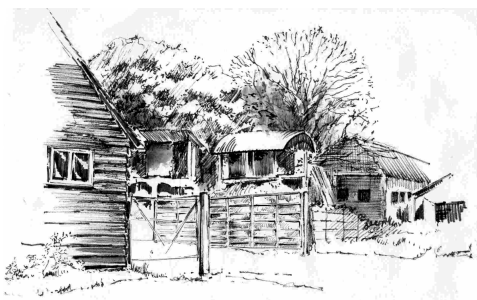
Please Note: - Last date for articles for next copy 30th September 2008

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

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