

### **Museum Report – October 2008**

The open season is now over; at the time of writing we have just had the last public open day on 14<sup>th</sup> September, and we have no further visits by private parties scheduled. I think it is fair to say that, on the whole the weather has not been kind to us this year, and this is reflected in the takings figure. As the entrance fees were increased by 33% this year we had hoped for a 33% increase in total takings for admissions to the Museum, but this has not happened. Our takings at the entrance door have increased by about £250 whereas we could have expected them to increase by £1920, all things being equal. In fact, our total takings on public open days for everything is about £200 down on last year. We can only blame the weather; we had two pleasant days and the remaining six days were, more or less, bad.

Bricklaying for the Science & Radio Room extension was completed by the beginning of September and the roof was installed a few days ago. Roy Cutler and Joe Marling have done a very good job for us. We are still on target for the room to be open with plenty of new exhibits on Easter Monday 2009, our next open day. There is still much to do, of course, as the room is just a doorless empty shell. There is a ceiling to fit, walls to be decorated, electrics to be installed, and then display shelves and cabinets to be designed and fitted, and finally filled with artefacts.

The restoration of the hayloft above the Meeting Room has been proceeding at a very sedate pace when the weather is inclement. Some thought is being given to strengthening measures for the far end where there has been past subsidence. Following the donation of a large quantity of second hand cedar panelling we are replacing the very tatty-looking frieze at the front of the black shed with this donated timber, and very fine it will look too, when finished.

We have had meetings with people from the National Trust (NT) and these have been both cordial and constructive. The National Trust is a very large organisation and we, as tenants, are administered from Ashridge. They have expertise in many areas where we are just amateurs and we are hopeful of a harmonious relationship developing. As local residents may be aware a plan to provide new allotments for Pitstone is coming to fruition. The land where it is intended to site them is a field between Marsworth Road and the Museum which the National Trust now owns and is intending to lease to Pitstone Parish Council for this purpose. Part of the western side of this field will not be needed for the allotments and we understand that this will be available to the Museum. As negotiations are still underway we cannot be more specific at this time.

Our crop of prunes and gages this year was virtually nil. Just two trees had gages; one tree had 4 fruit and the other had maybe twenty or thirty. When I went to

inspect them the one tree had been totally "wasped", but the other tree with just 4 gages had not been discovered by the blighters. I picked them, and ate them, and they were lovely. I did see the odd prune here and there in August when they would be unripe, but when I touched them they just fell off onto the ground. I am sure the heavy rain would have finished them off long before they were ripe.

Several years ago I noticed honey fungus at the foot of one of our horse chestnut trees and predictably it was almost dead 12 months later and had to be removed. In autumn 2006 I noticed it at the foot of another tree some way away from the first one, and a couple of months ago it was quite dead. Most of it has been removed leaving just the stump for Nigel to pull out with his Field Marshall tractor. I do hope we shall not lose any more for a while to this deadly fungus. It is edible, by the way, and quite nice; 'mushroomy', but different.

We have recently been approached to see if we could accommodate a rather large working model with very local connections. The group involved would be prepared to operate this on open days, and we are wondering where we could site it. Negotiations are at a very early stage so I will not say any more at present, but with luck we may have another interesting exhibit next year.

For several of us regular volunteers for the remainder of this year is to complete the greater part of the inventory of all our artefacts and to see that they are correctly numbered and identified, and that the associated documentation is in order for each item. We have to attend to this in a given timescale as a consequence of our gaining Accreditation Status. We have something like 3000 different items catalogued and supposedly marked with an identification number, but some of these numbers were not very well marked originally and many are now illegible. An item can be anything from a combine harvester (of which we have one) to a tiny broach. Where do you look on a combine harvester to find where someone else, years ago, has hopefully written a small 4 digit number; and how do you number a broach? In addition to all this there could be as many as 1000 uncatalogued items around the Museum. We have been very lax in the past on some occasions; a visitor might bring us something and we see at once it is something we would like to have. Maybe the visitor is in a hurry to be away, maybe the person accepting the item is unaware of the correct procedure, maybe, as quite often happens, we just find something left in a box or a bag on the doorstep. Anything coming into the Museum is supposed to be correctly documented straight away, and the signature of the donor obtained. So often this has not happened, and only now are we beginning to appreciate just how often this has not happened. We don't have to complete this task by the year end; but we do

have to know by year end just how much more remains to be done, and we do have to say how long this is expected to take.

# Peter Keeley, Business Manager



# Left Michael Bickerton working on the mill gear

# The Museum Catering Service

One of our greatest assets on our museum Open Days is the catering service that we offer to the public. It is a great attraction for visitors as well as providing a substantial income for the museum, second only to the admission receipts. For this we have to thank the dedicated

band of volunteers who provide this service. One of our problems is finding a sufficient number of volunteers to spread the workload, making it less stressful for the few that, at present, carry all the workload themselves. Working all day from 9.00am to 5.00pm is really too much and we are desperate to find other helpers such that we can have morning and afternoon shifts, thus easing the workload for all.

We were hoping to have our annual catering meeting early this year, in October but as many of the helpers were unavailable we have decided to postpone it until 2009. If you can help on the catering in any way, even for an hour or two please come along to that meeting. It will be held on a Saturday morning about 11.00am followed by a small buffet to thank in a small way, all those that helped during 2008. We also have to thank those that worked behind the scenes, both prior to, and following the open days as well as those who generously providing those very popular homemade cakes. All are welcome to the meeting even if you can offer only ideas and suggestions. Dates of this meeting will appear in the next newsletter.

We are also hoping to rebuild the catering area to improve the facilities and make it easier to clean. The work load that we have on at the moment means that this will not be completed until the 2010 season but we are making a start this winter and hopefully the area will have a new roof, covering the whole of the serving and food preparation area. We will be consulting the helpers about the scheme and it will be discussed at the catering meeting next year.

#### Norman Groom

## **AGM - November**

Enclosed with this Newsletter is the Agenda and Nomination slip for this year's AGM. All the existing Committee members are willing to stand for re-election apart from Brenda Grace, our present Secretary. We have to thank Brenda who, not only has kept all of us at the museum up to scratch, but has served the society well in many aspects over the last 18 years. Due to various problems that Brenda has had over the past twelve months, Peter Keeley has undertaken the duties of Secretary, but due to his other duties as Business Manager he must now cut back on his workload. Peter is willing to stand for election as Secretary but is in need of someone to stand as Minute Secretary. This will entail taking the minutes at the four committee meetings and the AGM, typing them up using 'Word' on a computer and emailing the results, in conjunction with the agenda to the committee members. If needed, help with this will initially be given to you so you will not be dropped in it at the start. If you can offer your services or know of anyone who would be willing to do this job, it will be greatly appreciated.

#### Norman Groom.

#### **Archives**

At the same time as our volunteers are checking and numbering artefacts in the museum I am continuing with the updating and improvement of our computer program Catalist. This has been neglected in the past and has required an immense amount of time to sort out. Peter has mentioned in his report that we have discovered that lots of items have never been properly catalogued. The task of this is enormous both the physical and the computer checks.

In September I attended a Catalist course in Derby, together with my husband Bill. There we found out how to use the program properly and what we have been doing wrong. We have used our knowledge to improve our computer records. Bill does a great deal of work in the background, helping me with the more complicated aspects of the computer work.

#### Sandra Barnard

# Farming Memories

I wonder how many of you readers have wondered what farming knowledge and qualifications I have to become a member of the Executive Committee of an organisation such as PIMS. The answer is not very much, and in fact very little applicable to farming in this area. A few days ago there was nothing I wanted to watch on "The Box" (is there ever these days?), I had just a quarter of a glass too much with my dinner, the weather was cold and wet making a visit to the workshop unthinkable so I scribbled down (or my computer did for me) just a few anecdotes from my earlier existence.

My formative years (age six to twenty-one) were spent on the extreme outskirts of Southport (now Merseyside, but then Lancashire). Just ten dwellings along the road from where we lived in what was then a very large borough (85,000 souls?) was wide open country for at least 20 miles into a very flat rural south-west Lancashire. Down this road were two farms, Todd's on the right, and Halsall's on the left. These were called farms but they were really just smallholdings – just one big field and a small farmhouse. Halsall's had an orchard and a field in which there always seemed to be a few horses, but nothing was grown there except apples and pears in the orchard, and grass in the field. How on earth did this family make a living? Todd's was no bigger, but different. Sometimes there were a few cows in their field, but not always. One autumn (1938 - 1939? I don't remember) a traction engine and threshing box arrived and proceeded to do the appropriate with a large stack of corn which had had been built in the yard. My main memory was of the huge clouds of dust produced, the smell of hot steam oil, and of the terriers (Jack Russels?) and the rats they caught and despatched escaping from the rapidly diminishing stack. We kids ran all around this scene, no restrictions unless we ventured too close to the moving machinery. Mrs Todd had a milk round and she used to go round our neighbourhood daily in a horse and trap with one or two churns aboard, calling at various houses where she would measure milk into a jug which the householder had left near the front door for this purpose. It was only some years later when I went to grammar school that I found out that Mrs Todd was the aunt of my best friend. But by then both Todd's and Halsall's had gone and their farmhouses demolished. I don't know why this happened, but this was during World War 2, and I heard that the landlord was in fact the Council. The two vacant smallholdings were turned into adventure playgrounds and football/cricket pitches by my friends and I.

Next down the road was Fairclough's farm; this was a real farm, cows and arable. My friends and I would never dare to venture into the farmyard because of the dogs. Two dogs, one each side, seemingly chained for life to the opposite walls with chains not quite long enough for the dogs to meet, but plenty long enough for each of them to tear an intruder to shreds. They each had a substantial kennel for shelter and sleeping. Fairclough had a tractor, and he also had draught horses. As a boy I did not take too much notice of these; I wish I had done so now. I seem to remember both being used for ploughing. With hindsight Fairclough had one very unusual field in which he grew rhubarb. Not the forced pink rhubarb which they specialise in growing in Yorkshire, but natural green rhubarb. We young boys thought it very brave to look when the coast was clear and then sneak through the fence and pluck a few stalks to eat raw. Two or three bites were OK but then the acidity became too much and the rest was discarded. Somehow we knew

instinctively that the leaves were poisonous. Then, suddenly the rhubarb field was transformed into a mangelwurzel field; I think this was around the early years of the war. We soon found that mangelwurzels had no epicurean value.

The predominant crop in my part of south-west Lancashire was potatoes grown in the rich loam of what was, ~400 years previously, England's largest fresh water lake, **Martin Mere**, nowhere over 6 feet deep. This lake was drained by Dutch drainage engineers setting the fashion for subsequent drainage of the fens. My other memory of this part of England was of the wild geese. These birds would arrive during the autumn from the 'north'; by day they would forage on the flat lands which were once Martin Mere; at night they would roost somewhere on the salt marshes of the Ribble estuary, and twice a day scores of them would fly over my house in noisy 'V' formation on the way to feed, or to roost.

My other experience of farming was totally different. My in-laws were friendly with a hill farmer in Wiltshire, and when I was courting my wife, and after we married, we often went there on a Sunday. It was a dairy farm. At one time rabbits were prolific there and I understand that my father-in-law spent most wartime Sundays shooting them; he even had an allocation of petrol for his motor-bike-andside-car so he could travel to shoot these pests. When I went there myxomatosis had taken its toll and the only shooting available was pigeons, and the occasional duck from the derelict Wilts & Berks Canal which passed through the farm lands. In late afternoon my fiancée would call me to heel and we would go to the field where the dairy herd was grazing. She would locate the 'lead cow' and take a running jump on to its back and ride it towards the farm buildings; the rest of the herd would follow; I was just there to close the gates when all the cows had gone. Later she would show me how to milk, but I never tried it. You had to lean your head into the side of the cow while you did this, and it was essential to wear a hat because, apparently, grease from the cow's hide was very unpleasant and difficult to wash off. Also you had to be very careful where you placed the bucket (for the milk); certain cows would kick it over if they could, when it was full.

The only crop grown on this farm was hay. My fiancée would take out the hay rake harnessed to the huge shire "Prince" and somehow we managed to sit side-by-side on the machine while we turned the hay. The following weekend it was time to get the hay in (it always seemed to be sunny in summer those days) and this time Prince would be between the shafts of a 4-wheel cart. We males would each have a pitchfork to load the dry hay from the field onto the cart. This was hard work. Then, when the cart was full it would be drawn to the yard and unloaded by pitchfork from the cart to the stack. This was even harder work, and the more hay unloaded the higher the stack became and the lower the hay on the cart so the effort

became progressively harder. I don't remember the stack being thatched; by then I was probably off somewhere canoodling with my fiancée.

That, dear friends, was the sum total of my farming experience when I first was introduced to Pitstone Green Farm around 1988. It has been a steep learning curve since then.

## **Peter Keeley**

# Note: - Martin Mere today

This area is part of "The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)" which is a leading conservation organisation saving wetlands for wildlife and people across the world. WWT is the only UK charity with a national network of specialist wetland visitor centres.

WWT Martin Mere Wetland Centre can be found at:-

Fish Lane, Burscough, Lancashire L40 0TA.

Martin Mere Wetland Centre is home to over 100 species of rare and endangered ducks, geese, swans and flamingos.

### The Cheddington Flyer

The route was from Cheddington to Aylesbury.

It was just before 5 pm Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1953 that the Cheddington Flyer arrived at Aylesbury High Street Station. Passengers scrambled for seats to experience the magic of being aboard the last passenger train along the branch line. The driver was "Victor Bunn" and his mate a "William Hodgson" proudly posed in their cab for photographers. All too soon it was time to go. Flagging the train on its final journey was a proud and sad affair for "George Thorpe" as he heard the cheering and applause burst around him.

The main line at Cheddington dates back to the 1820's. Local Landowners were opposed to a route planned by Robert Stephenson who was compelled to select a route from London to Birmingham to the east of Aylesbury.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> November 1835 there was a meeting in the White Hart Inn to discuss the possibility of a rail link. One can imagine the local dignitaries discussing the profit to be made. In the splendour of Aylesbury's finest inn it was Sir Harry Verney who helped the Aylesbury railway obtain its act on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 1836. After an aborted proposal to build a line from Cheltenham to Aylesbury, there was a delay until at last on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1838 the first sod was cut. Hardy labourers, who had been responsible for work on the canal system throughout the country, began to toil.

The grand opening was on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1839. Shops in the area were closed and the people of Aylesbury were given a day's holiday. The excitement those people

of so long ago felt, is difficult for us to imagine. They dressed in their Sunday best. Shoes and boots normally kept for special occasions would no doubt have been worn and even the poorest of the population wore a hat. As each train came to Cheddington, the Long Crendon village band played for the train's arrival and departure.

Initially three trains a day ran on weekdays and then two on each Sunday. Gone are the days when porters pushed trolleys along platforms with passenger's luggage. It is now a different era, but there are still very many enthusiasts for the

glorious days of steam. Like everything you either love them or hate them.

#### Ena Ashurst

## "One of the Machine Wreckers" Historical background part 2

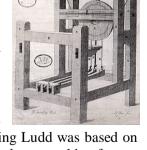
The Luddites were a social movement of British textile artisans in the early nineteenth century who protested – often by destroying mechanized looms – against the changes produced by the Industrial Revolution, which they felt threatened their livelihood. This English historical movement has to be seen in its context of the harsh economic climate due to the Napoleonic Wars; but since then, the term Luddite has been used to describe anyone opposed to technological progress and technological change.

The Luddite movement, which began in 1811, took its name from the earlier Ned Ludd. For a short time the movement was so strong that it clashed in battles with the British Army. Measures taken by

the government included a mass trial at York in 1812 that resulted in many executions and penal transportation.

The principal objection was to the introduction of new wide-framed looms that could be operated by cheap, relatively unskilled labour, resulting in the loss of jobs for many textile workers.

The original Luddites claimed to be led by one "King Ludd" (also known as "General Ludd" or "Captain Ludd") whose



signature appears on a "workers' manifesto" of the time. King Ludd was based on the earlier Ned Ludd, who is believed to have destroyed two large stocking frames in the village of Anstey, Leicestershire in 1779, although Ned Ludd is believed to have been a mere simpleton and his actions had no direct relation to those of the later Luddites.

History places the Luddite movement as organised action by stockingers and had occurred at various times since 1675. The present action had to be seen in the context of the hardships suffered by the working class during the Napoleonic Wars.

The movement began in Nottingham in 1811 and spread rapidly throughout England in 1811 and 1812. Many wool and cotton mills were destroyed until the British government harshly suppressed the movement. The Luddites met at night on the moors surrounding the industrial towns, practising drills and manoeuvres and often enjoyed local support. The main areas of the disturbances were Nottinghamshire in November 1811, followed by the West Riding of Yorkshire in early 1812 and Lancashire from March 1813. Battles between Luddites and the military occurred at Burton's Mill in Middleton, and at Westhoughton Mill, both in Lancashire. It was rumoured at the time that agents provocateurs employed by the magistrates were involved in provoking the attacks. Magistrates and food merchants were also objects of death threats and attacks by the anonymous King Ludd and his supporters. Some industrialists even had secret chambers constructed in their buildings, which may have been used as a hiding place.

"Machine breaking" (industrial sabotage) was subsequently made a capital crime (Lord Byron, one of the few prominent defenders of the Luddites, famously spoke out against this legislation), and 17 men were executed after an 1813 trial in York. Many others were transported as prisoners to Australia. At one time, there were more British troops fighting the Luddites than Napoleon I on the Iberian Peninsula.



# The Leader of the luddites Nedd Ludd, engraving of 1812

Three Luddites ambushed a mill-owner (William Horsfall) in Crosland Moor, Huddersfield; the Luddites responsible were hanged in York, and shortly thereafter 'Luddism' waned.

The movement can also be seen as part of a rising tide of English working-class discontent in the early 19th century.

An agricultural variant of Luddism, centring on the breaking of threshing machines, was crucial to the

widespread **Swing Riots** of 1830 in southern and eastern England. (*adapted from Wikipedia*, *the free encyclopedia*)

Sandra Barnard

## **Front Cover Picture.**

Picture from our archives of carts in the big barn

#### Programme 2008 -2009

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

## **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

This year, as always, we will have mince pies and sausage rolls ready for you and some liquid refreshment too. All we ask is that you come to this social event, bringing with you if you wish, some anecdote, reading, song or anything that might interest or amuse the assembled group. If you would prefer not to 'perform' please don't let that put you off and come simply to chat to others.

#### Thursday 15th January

## The History of Popular Photography

John Credland last spoke to us about the Old Gaol in Buckingham. In this talk he will show us how photography moved gradually over the last hundred years to become the pastime of the masses. At the turn of the century only the Middle classes had their Kodak camera, between the wars the richer members of the working class had their box cameras and with the advent of the seaside holiday photography became more accessible to all. Now in the twenty first century almost everyone dabbles in photography with varied degrees of success.

# STOP PRESS

We have been very grateful to Mary Tyrrell over many, many years as she prepares our tea and coffee with efficiency and good humour. I shall certainly miss the chats we used to have in the kitchen every month. I know that our meetings have always clashed with those of the Aylesbury branch of the National Trust and it is for that reason that Mary has decided that she will no longer be able to attend.

If anyone else would be willing to take over this job at each meeting I would be very grateful.

# Sue Lipscomb, Programme Secretary

*Note:* - 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 2009

First open day Easter Monday. Followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays of June, July, August and September.

All Bank Holiday Mondays

Opening times from 11.0 a.m. to 5.0. p.m.

## Committee:-

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Please Note: - Last date for articles for

next copy 7th January 2009

### **Museum Website:** http://website.lineone.net/~pitstonemus Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Pitstone Green Farm, Vicarage Road, Pitstone Leighton Buzzard LU7 9EY



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