

#### **Museum Report – April 2009**

Records are made to be broken...so they tell me. We have certainly broken one; indeed we have smashed it. Easter Monday this year we had 15% more adults through the door than ever before, and took just under £1,000 more than ever before. We seemed to cope with this quite well, although I was told we ran out of rolls quite early in catering. Perhaps we need to rethink our provisioning policy as it is cheaper to throw away 100 bread rolls than it is to lose the profit on selling around 30 filled rolls to hungry customers, and anyway a quality roll like we use can be frozen very successfully for use on the following open day. Having said that I should mention that these Bank Holiday Mondays are very hard work for the core of volunteers who are at the Museum all day on the Sunday before and all day on the Tuesday after the event, as well as from soon after 8 am until nearly 6 pm on the day itself, and they are all (very) senior citizens. I understand that Dave's new railway layout, "Wag's Wharf' and Norman's radio room extension were all very popular, but I myself was too busy to verify this in person.

We are still waiting to see some development towards the provision of allotments in the field at the back of the Museum. We understood that preparation of the ground was due to start 'in the near future' in January but nothing has happened yet. It is now very unlikely that we shall be able to make any use of any of the additional ground we are expecting to be given this year.

The Well which we discovered in the Owen Barn has now been expertly surrounded by a low brick wall, and a safety mesh installed to prevent accidental falling in by toddlers, pets, etc. It will be there for you to see on your next open day visit. It is not a wishing well so don't throw coins in; we get awfully wet and cold retrieving them. Put them in the 'donations' box in the Science and Radio Room instead and you will surely have good luck for the rest of the day.

It was mentioned in the last but one newsletter that we might be gaining a large new working model to display at the Museum this year. It has arrived and has been installed in one of the Cart Sheds. It is an interpretive model of a hypothetical pumping station on the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal, and represents what could have been at Little Tring if the canal to Wendover had found commercial success instead of a slow, leaky demise. This is a very attractive working model so don't forget to see it next time you visit.

The determined effort, forced upon us by our gaining Accredited Status, to complete our backlog of cataloguing by a set date failed at the first stage, but not by very much. Our first target was to complete cataloguing of all but six of our 48 locations by the end of 2008, and to ensure that all catalogued items in those

locations are marked with their identification numbers. We did not achieve this because there are still a significant number of artefacts to be marked or re-marked, but basic cataloguing is virtually complete, and there are now only five locations outstanding. Probably for the first time ever the Museum knows what it owns and where these items are in all but the five locations. There is still a great deal of work to be done in formally documenting all this and ensuring all items are identified and cross referenced. We shall spend the rest of this year consolidating what we have achieved whilst trying to keep up with constantly occurring changes, and we may find time to make a start on checking our archive of papers and paper artefacts. Also digital photography has made it feasible to hold a photographic record of every artefact and we are starting to retrospectively compile such an archive.

Dave is busy enhancing the model railway layout at "Much Hammering"; there seems to be almost double the amount of track there was last year, and the station has been converted to a through line rather than the rural terminus of last year. Don't miss seeing the new layout; I think there is some new rolling stock as well.

Michael and Alan are well on the way with their mill restoration in the large cart shed, but it has just been discovered that a significant part is missing. It could well be at Lacey Green still and we have asked them to make a search there, but we may have to make a new part. John (Y), Tom and Robin are progressing well with their cart restoration; the last time I talked to them they were discussing how to make a new shaft to replace the rotten one.

The refreshment area has undergone stage one of a two-stage renovation. Stage one has involved building a wall to replace the flimsy plywood structure at one end, and fitting an extended ceiling so that the whole area is now protected from falling dust etc. The whole room has had a lick of paint which will suffice until next autumn when the remaining parts are due for a complete rethink and refurbishment.

On a more serious note, a society member set off the site security alarm on the evening of the April society meeting. On these meeting evenings we usually leave the rear gate unlocked so that if members arrive early they can drive in and park their cars on the hard standing behind the meeting room. A key holder will usually arrive by half past seven and open up the reception and toilets area and reset the security alarm; he or she will then proceed to open up the meeting room. Sometimes the key holder could be unavoidably late arriving, and if the rear gate was not open there could be a long queue of cars on the drive outside the farmhouse and this would certainly represent an intrusion on the privacy of the Hawkins family. Also, technically, our right of way along the drive from Vicarage

road finishes at our front gate by reception and we should all turn left here into the Museum. On meeting evenings therefore we must ask all members not to go wandering around the museum site until they are certain that the key holder has arrived and disabled the security alarm. If this happens again we shall have to keep the gate locked until the key holder arrives.

And to finish I think we are now getting serious about our proposed wildlife pond: maybe this year, you'll have to wait and see.

Peter Keeley, Secretary

### HUMPHREY GEORGE WILLIAMSON - 12.06.1920 - 10.02.2009 Born in Pitstone

Humphrey was a member of the Pitstone Local History Society from its formation in 1963. He was of course a great friend of the late Jeff Hawkins of Pitstone Green



Farm, who he helped on a number of projects at the museum.

Over the years he generously gave a number of items (38) to the Museum including a Fordson Tractor, a Combine Harvester and a millstone. He also gave domestic items and china, some of which belonged to his grandfather.

The funeral was held on 25th February at the Methodist Chapel in Edlesborough and he was laid to rest in Pitstone Churchyard.

**Brenda Grace** 

Humphrey Williamson mowing in his smallholding now part of Crispin Field

#### From David Goseltine

Those of you with long memories may remember that last Feb we had a rare meteorological event called a snowfall. Well, as my bungalow is situated some 100 yards from the main road and when I measured the snow it was some 8ins deep I decided that home was the best place to be. Back indoors I picked out a book to read and chose 'The Grand Junction Canal by A. H. Faulkner'. In it I read of an engineer named Benjamin Bevan who was referred to as residing in Leighton Buzzard. Thinking it might make an entry in a newsletter I suggested as such to Sandra and she came up with the following:-

#### Benjamin Bevan 1773- 1833 Canal Engineer

Benjamin was born on 26th December 1773 the eldest of four children of Joseph Bevan a yeoman of Ridgmont Beds, and his wife Mary Ravens. His home before he died on 2nd July 1833 was at Leighton Buzzard. He was buried at Ridgmont. When his father died in 1782, he inherited a farm at Ridgemont and Husborne Crawley. He married in 1799 Mary Allen at Bedford and they had five Children.

The first record of his employment as a civil engineer was in 1802 when he was requested to provide a design for rebuilding Lake Bridge at Leighton Buzzard. In 1804 he was employed on the Grand Union Canal Wendover Branch. In 1808 he was called upon to supervise the replacement of Wolverton Aqueduct that had collapsed. This work allowed him to be involved in proposals for other canals and in 1807 he surveyed the river Ivel from Biggleswade to Shefford to make it navigable. 1808-1809 finds him involved in the link from the Thames to the Trent which became the original "Grand Union Canal". He surveyed for a connection between canals at Market Harborough and Stamford 1809-1811. He made a further survey in 1814 but neither scheme was used.

He continued to be employed with The Grand Union Canal and built their Northampton Branch. He was also an engineer to the Newport Pagnell Canal. In 1811 he was involved in the best means of bringing the Worcester and Birmingham Canal down the Lickey Hills. In 1812 he submitted reports on navigation of the Great Ouse, drainage of the River Welland and a reservoir for the Stratford on Avon Canal. He was one of the engineers consulted on the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal. In 1818 he proposed a link from Tiverton to Taunton but work did not start until 1831. He was involved in several canal projects and in 1823 he reported on the navigation of the river Nene and the drainage of Deeping Fen in Lincolnshire.

Canal construction slowed at this time but Bevan continued to produce various reports on rivers and canals. At this time he also undertook surveys of towns and estates around his home town of Leighton Buzzard. His main interest now became mathematics, astronomy and the science of materials. He was interested in the weather and the sun. He was also researching the correct method of measuring the heights of places. He conducted several experiments and developed a rain gauge.

Bevan died probably of a heart attack whilst watching an eclipse of the moon. Bevan's eldest son Benjamin followed his father's footsteps and became a civil engineer and surveyor based in Northamptonshire and continued with work on The Grand Union Canal.

<u>Notes: -</u> Joseph Bevan .Spouse: Mary Ravens Marriage: 28 May 1765 Ridgmont, Bedford, England

Benjamin Bevan. Birth: About 1774 Of, Cardington, Bedford, England

Spouse: **Mary Allen** Family Marriage: 18 JUL 1799 Marriage: St Mary and St Peter Martin, Bedford.

Source:-FamilySearch.org- International Genealogical Index

**1851 Census Benjamin Bevan Jr**. (c. 1802) Cheese Lane Wellingborough, Civil Engineer .Born Leighton Buzzard Beds. Wife Harriet (c. 1800) born Hackney,

Son **Benjamin** 13 born Wellingborough

Household included one visitor and three servants

<u>1861 Census</u> Benjamin Jr.now 59 and still a civil engineer has a second wife, Mary 51 born Northamptonshire. They are living in Cambridge Street Wellingborough.

Sandra Barnard.

### Restoration of the Museum's Cart/Wagon collection.

Members who have visited regularly over the last few years will have noticed that a number of our carts have been restored to their original appearance. I say



appearance as the restoration has not gone as far as making them usable as this would in most cases require new/rebuilt wheels, hubs and axles.

I started working at the museum early 2003 and my first project was the Light Market Cart which was in a sorry state. I call it that name because no one has given us a better description; if you know more then please let us know. We think this cart dates from the early part of the

last century and would have been used by a family for going to the market, church or visiting friends. The front bench can seat three and more seats can be fitted in the rear or carry goods or animals. There are fittings for front and rear lights but I have not fathomed out where the whip would go. Some have described it as the equivalent of a Rover car of the 1940/50s or an SUV of today.

Michael Bickerton and Alan Easter who had been working on the carts before I arrived were just completing the Timber Carrier Wagon which can just about be seen in the background of the second photo. They then moved onto other projects leaving me with the carts.



The LM cart was not completed until November 2004 largely because I worked on this one alone. I had to replace much of the upper frame work, the foot well, tail board, part of the floor and part of the shafts. The wheels required a number of The felloes and spokes. metalwork, whilst rusty, was still usable and this is what we have found with all the Carts/Wagons so far. Sandblasting, chemical derust or vigorous wire brushing is usually

what is required. How to finish the carts is always a matter of debate. The metal work was usually painted black and that is what we have continued to do. Books tell us the bodywork of this type of cart was painted, colour presumably the choice of the purchaser, often with black lining. In the Second World War most appear to have had any names or addresses painted over with a nasty blackout paint that together with the original colour sinks into the wood and takes many hours to remove not always successfully. With this cart I decided on a clear protective finish which turned out not to be as clear as I thought as the wood darkened more than expected.

The photos show the progress of work from starting to dismantle, half way and finished.



In the winter of 2004 I did minor repairs to the night soil cart and other carts before Michael, Alan Tom Coles and myself started the major project of restoring the Heavy Wagon which dates from 1850. It took us three years to complete but that's a story for next time.

JohnYoungs(The cart man)

### **Membership**

The 2009/2010 membership subscription is now due. Subscriptions are £7 single, 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 Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society and returned with the slip that is in this Newsletter to the museum address: - Pitstone Green Museum, Vicarage Road, Pitstone, Leighton Buzzard LU7 9EY.

**Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope,** if you want your membership card quickly, otherwise they will go out with the July newsletter.

**Bill Barnard Membership Secretary** 

#### Victorian Medicine

At our February meeting we were treated to an extremely informative talk by **David Hammond BSc (Hons)** about Victorian Medicine. David studied to be a Medical Herbalist at university and he is a member of the National Institute of Medical Herbalists. He told us there were about 1,000 practicing herbalists in the country who are all registered by the Health Proficiency Council. All Medical Herbalists must pass a four year degree course, and are trained in the medical sciences as well as botany, the making of phytomedicines, *materia medica* and herbal therapeutics. In addition they must complete a minimum of 500 hours of supervised clinical training. He described how Herbalists prescribe a blend of several herbs specifically chosen to suit individual needs

David based his talk this evening on Victorian Medicine. The era 1832 to 1901 was Victorian England. Most Victorians used herbal medicines and this was the main course of treatment right up to the Second World War. He described the high mortality rates. These were due to poor health caused by poverty, poor sanitation, poor air quality, for example smog. Half the children of the working classes died before they were five. The rich children were likely to survive better and their mortality rate was one in eleven. The main killers were infections such as influenza and cholera. The poor people could not afford doctors so treated themselves with herbs as their ancestors did before them.

These were some of the herbs they used, Fever Few for migraine headaches, Fox Glove (digitalis) for heart problems, Marigold; an anti-inflammatory was used for healing and eczema. Coughs were helped with colts foot, hyssop and liquorish and valerian was given to soothe. Laudanum an Opiate was frequently used as a medicine for pain relief as well as a recreational drug. St. Johns Wort is still used as an anti depressant having proved to be better than some prescribed drugs. Dandelion makes a superb diuretic (water pill!) These are just a few well known herbs, there are many more.

David told us how medicines were prepared as, teas, syrups, creams and powders. Some were preserved in alcohol often vodka, vinegars, sugar syrups and honey. This allowed them to last up to five years. Herbal medicines can treat most of the conditions for which one would visit a GP. These include digestive and circulatory problems, skin complaints, sleep, stress and emotional issues, hormonal imbalances respiratory conditions aches and pains etc! Following the talk we were invited to try some of his herbal preparations.

Many Victorian homes had herb gardens for the families use and some can be seen today at historical houses that are open to the public.

The use of herbal medicine decreased with the onset in 1948 of the National Health Service.

#### Sandra Barnard

#### The early History of Leighton Buzzard

Viv Willis lives in Leighton Buzzard and has studied its history for many years; in fact he has been giving talks on the subject for about 40 years! He runs a history group within the local U3A and came to give the March talk to our Society. He began by telling us that there was evidence that people have been living in and around the area currently occupied by Leighton Buzzard since Saxon times. These early invaders would have searched for an area with good loamy soil for growing vegetables and fresh running water. They needed land that never flooded and they first settled in the area we now know as Market Square. Pottery and jewellery from the sixth century have been excavated in and around the town and there is evidence of Saxon burial sites nearby. In 625AD Christianity was brought to the town and the Saxon population was converted.

Viv told us how the town slowly and steadily expanded and how in 903AD the Danes invaded but did not succeed in occupying this particular area. The town is mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086 where it is referred to as the manor of Leighton. This is interesting as it mentions that Leighton had a weekly market which of course is still held in Leighton Buzzard to this day. 'Leigh / ley / lee' is the Anglo Saxon word for cultivated land or a clearing and 'ton / tun' means settlement. There would have been eighty or ninety people living there at that time, occupying 47 hides. A hide is a French term meaning 'area'. One hide equals 120 acres so the settlement and its surrounding agricultural land would have covered an area of 5640 acres.

Henry I gave an annual rent of £56 from the manor of Leighton to a Benedictine monastery in Normandy known as the Abbey of Fontevrault. In 1164 Henry II

gave most of the manor of Leighton Buzzard to the Abbey of Fontevrault. Then later during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries, a priory was established at Grovebury which had a great influence on the town. At the same time others were established near Rugby, near Amesbury in Wiltshire and at Tintagel in Cornwall. In Leighton the priory was built of stone and King Henry and his queen Eleanor often stayed there. There were two men always on duty there at that time as falconers. Their job was to use the falcon to bring down heron as this bird was the king's favourite. It is interesting to note that there is a public house in Stanbridge Road called The Falcon!

There are many theories for the derivation of the suffix 'Buzzard' in the town's name. The most plausible theory is that it derives from the name of Theobald de Busar, who was a Canon of Lincoln and prebendary of Leighton Buzzard at the turn of the 13th century. Under Theobald's control were two places called Leighton, and it has been suggested that his name was appended to the town's name to distinguish it from the other Leighton.

All Saint's Church dates from 1277 but it is believed that a church has stood on the site for more than 1000years. The spire is 60 metres tall but it is an unusual feature of the church that the nave and the chancel are also about the same length as the spire is tall.

It was obvious that Viv could have continued talking enthusiastically about his town and if there had been time, would have traced its history up to the present day. There were many questions which Viv expertly answered to conclude the evening's meeting.

### **Sue Lipscomb**

### **Programme 2008 - 2009**

All meetings are held in the Meeting Room in the Pitstone Green Museum at 8.00pm. *ALL VISITORS VERY WELCOME* 

## Thursday 21st May '09 \*\*\* The First Landing of an aircraft at Halton

Francis Hanford is the curator of the Trenchard Museum at RAF Halton which deals with the history of RAF Halton. This museum is open every Tuesday from 10a.m. until 4p.m. and could also be opened by arrangement and might make a very good visit for society members later in the year.

# Thursday 18th June '09 \*\*\* Hobbies Evening at Pitstone

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. If you have friends who would like to show us their hobby or simply enjoy the evening, please bring them along. I hope the weather will be kind to us so that we can bring a picnic to enjoy. There will be a barbecue alight from 7p.m. if you wish to cook something to add to your meal. Please note we will not be providing any food or drink.

# Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July '09 \*\*\* Cheese, Wine and Antiques

Our very popular evening at the museum with Stephen Hearn has been repeated again this year due to popular demand. The museum will be open from 6.45p.m. to allow members and their friends to walk around the exhibits, and then the refreshments will be served at 7.15p.m. The evening will cost £5.00 for members and £6.00 for non-members and will include a ploughman's platter and complimentary glass of wine. Please do not bring more than two items for Stephen's comments and valuations. We hope you will park in the orchard. YOU WILL NEED A TICKET FOR THIS EVENT – SEE SLIP WITHIN THIS NEWSLETTER. DO NOT LEAVE IT TOO LATE TO BOOK.

# Thursday 20th August '09 \*\*\* Please note: no August meeting

## Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September '09 \*\*\* The Archaeology of the A41; Aston Clinton Bypass

Robert Masefield was the archaeological consultant who was involved in the management of the Aston Clinton Bypass once it was realised that there was a potential for interesting finds. He will talk about three main sites; the woodlands roundabout, the Lower Icknield Road near Buckland and the area at the top of Tring Hill. The finds were related to many different periods of history from Prehistoric times right up to the Middle Ages.

October, November and December \*\*\* meetings as described on last Newsletter.

### **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** 

# A Date for Your Diary \*\*\* Saturday 25th July 2009

Bucks Family History Society Open Day at The Grange School, Wendover Way, Aylesbury. 10.00a.m to 4.00p.m.

Sandra and Bill Barnard

#### Front Cover Picture.

Reg Jellis takes his dog Basil for a tractor ride on an Open Day at the Museum!

Open Days 2009

Spring BH Mon. 25<sup>th</sup> May

Sun. 14<sup>th</sup> June -

Ivinghoe Handbell Ringers

Sun. 12<sup>th</sup> July - Bellworthy Hand bells Sun. 9<sup>th</sup> August

Summer BH Mon. 31<sup>st</sup> August

Sun 13<sup>th</sup> September -

Whitchurch Morris Men

and Aldbury Morris Men

Opening times from

11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Admission charges adults £4 children £2

Members free.

Committee:-

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David Goseltine

Email... daigos@tiscali.co.uk

Vice Chairman

Norman Groom 01582 605464

Treasurer

John Youngs 01582 833678

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#### Museum Website: http://website.lineone.net/~pitstonemus Hits since January 2007...14,103

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society

