

Museum Report – October 2009

In July I had to report that we had started the year with three exceptionally good open days, two of them record breaking, followed by two quite mediocre results in June and July. August was a lot better and we were very pleased. August Bank Holiday was another record breaker and September likewise. All-in-all a very satisfactory year indeed. Now that the open season is finished we can look forward to spending some of our gains, finishing the catering area upgrade, refurbishing the Tractor Sheds, and a few other lesser tasks we have in mind.

The last open day of the season provided a surfeit of additional attractions; we had a small number of vintage and/or interesting vehicles as we usually do, along with a cluster of World War II era military vehicles. We had two separate troupes (is that the right word? Do they come in troupes? My profound apologies to them if not.) These were one from the Whitchurch Morris Dancers, and the other from Aldbury. We also had the Riley Owners Club in the orchard. To round all this off we had about 20 motorcycles (and two Morgan 3-wheelers) visiting from the Vintage Motorcycle Group for most of the afternoon, plus an unexpected additional visit from Alan Frost's superb traction engine. The Rickyard was quite crowded with just enough room left for the Tractor and Trailer to turn round for rides to the Windmill. Also, financially it was a very satisfactory day as we easily broke all September day records for takings.

Still no allotments in the next field (I have been reporting this for quite a while now, haven't I?) but we believe this autumn will see some action. I remember my first year as an allotment holder in my own village on a brand new plot; following advice I planted just potatoes. I had a fair crop of rather warty tubers, but many of the spuds were holed by nasty underground bugs and wouldn't keep through the winter. My overwhelming recollection is of WEEDS. It was a continuing battle just to keep them down, even in among the potatoes. I fear some of the new allotment holders of Pitstone and Ivinghoe will be disheartened by them as I was.

First day back on site after the last open day saw the catering area being demolished. Demolition finished on the next working day leaving a big space with only the fridges, freezers, and sinks in place. But we are still discussing the finer points of what we are intending to do. One thing is certain; it will look totally different there by Easter next year. Easter is early-ish next year with Good Friday being the day after the Thursday April Fools Day, so make a note of this and come to see the result of our efforts on Monday 5th April. This gives us less time to finish the job, and also increases the chances of cold weather on the first open day of 2010.

The tractors and the large seed drill were promptly moved out (or covered up) from the tractor sheds as soon as the open days season had finished, and the rusty corrugated iron roof was methodically removed over the following fortnight. So demolition has

more or less finished, and construction is due to start shortly. A large quantity of timber has been bought and delivered and bricks, cement and new corrugated iron will be ordered soon. Another facility is also undergoing change; Dave's outdoor gauge '1' model railway track is moving from its present spot in the trees to a new location in the orchard. This will make manning the indoor and outdoor displays much easier with the limited number of volunteers available on open days.

We have finished building our pond. A group of the volunteers has, for a long while, been talking about building this wildlife pond somewhere on the site; now we have done it. It is just over what was once our boundary fence, near the osiers. We did in fact have to lose several isolated osiers, but the main clump remains intact and we shall propagate a few more this coming winter. Dragonflies etc were spotted within a day or two of starting to fill the pond. Since filling with water we have landscaped the rough edges, using turf, and planted a small number of bog and marginal plants native to the British Isles and one or two small water lilies. Algae growth has not proved to be a problem (yet). We are still keeping some fencing in place because we are concerned that wild deer might visit in the night to drink, and their sharp hooves could pierce the liner if they step into the water. When the new fence is erected to separate us from the new allotments this should provide an effective barrier to them and we will take down our own fence. We have also provided them, temporarily, with a drinking trough situated on "their" side of the fence so that there is no need for them to try to find a way round, which would not be difficult for a clever deer.

Other than this there does not seem to be much else of interest to report this time. Projects in progress when the last newsletter was published are still in progress now and will probably still be so at the time of the next newsletter next year. In short, no other new projects have started, and none have finished.

Peter Keeley, Secretary

In Pitstone Green there is a Farm, or was there?

A strange title for a Newsletter article and it is also the title of a report sent to The National Trust.

Part of the title 'In Pitstone Green there is a Farm' was taken from the publication that Jean Davis helped to produce for our society some years ago.

The National Trust has recently commissioned a report by the Northamptonshire Archaeology to survey the museum site including a detailed survey of all the buildings and structures. It is a very detailed report, not only describing the site as it is today but some of the history of the site obtained from various sources. Some of the information came from Peter and myself, from knowledge we had gained by talking to Jeff

Hawkins. Other information was obtained from the archives in Aylesbury, including some early maps dating back to 1810 before Pitstone Green Farm was built. It was seeing one of these maps that triggered my report to the National Trust and the question 'In Pitstone Green there is a Farm, or was there?'

The story started several years ago when we lost our last Archivist. With no one to look after the archives I took it on myself to keep track of things until we could find a replacement. I already knew the working of the office and the computer cataloguing program and undertook the task of investigating the vast amount of documentation, papers, artefacts etc. stored in both the office and the loft. Amongst the many items discovered were various maps and photocopies of Ordnance Survey maps, one of which was what appeared to be an original map dating from 1840. The map showed the farmhouse and farm buildings including a basic outline of the site of the big barn plus the two side wings, i.e. the meeting room with the loft above and the cow shed on the opposite side of the yard. I had known from Jeff that many years ago there was once an open stream that ran though our orchard, which in later years was diverted in an underground culvert. In fact we have pumped water from this culvert to fill our recently constructed wildlife pond. A study of the 1840 map shows a complex of streams, ponds and culverted brooks surrounding the museum with many old cottages or dwellings built along the east bank (the museum side) of the stream that ran in our orchard. These cottages continued along the stream, many being within our orchard and other following the stream which eventually crossed over Vicarage Road. The steam continued towards Marsworth over what is now the site of the Pitstone Memorial Hall. Land to the west of the stream i.e. towards Marsworth was always 'common land' used for grazing cattle and sheep, part of which forms the present village green.

The cottages or smallholdings shown on the map of 1840 were almost continuous along the east bank of the stream except for a gap where the present farm lies, although noticeably further away from the stream than the remaining cottages.

When we received a copy on The National Trust Report we found it contained an earlier map dated 1810 that covered the same area as our 1840 map. The reproduction of this map was not of the best quality but it did show the area around the present farm site. As one would expect in 1810 the present farm did not exist as the reported build date has been given as 1831. However the gap seen on the 1810 map in the row of buildings along the stream now contained a group of barns or dwellings, which we assumed to be the earlier farm, pre-dating the present Pitstone Green Farm. This earlier farm was very close to the stream much like the other dwellings but it appeared that the land on which our big timbered barn stand was just farming land devoid of any buildings. This was a puzzle as we had always been told that our Big Barn dated from the 17th to 18th century and should be present on the early map.

In order to investigate this anomaly further Peter Keeley and Brenda Grace visited the archives in Aylesbury and obtained a quality photograph of the 1810 map. Certain

features on maps usually retain their position over a considerable period of time and can be used as reference points. These reference points allow one map to be directly compared with another. In our case two ponds were chosen, one that existed near the present Memorial Hall and the other that existed in the field between the museum and the Marsworth road. These ponds are shown on both the 1810, the 1840 and even on a later 1925 map. Nowadays we are fortunate to have the use of the computer and this enabled us to adjust the scale and orientation of the maps such that they were virtually identical apart from features that had changed over the time period between the two maps. By creating a transparency of one of the maps and overlaying it on the other it appeared that our initial conclusion was correct and that our Big Barn, supposedly dating from the 1700's did not exist on its present site prior to 1831 when the present farm was built.

Even at this stage there were doubts about the theory, could it be that these early maps were inaccurate although many of the features such as watercourses and some buildings matched almost perfectly. The other option to give credence to the theory was to study the construction of the buildings. It had always been stated from various sources that the Big Barn had always existed on the present site, that it was part of an earlier farm and that it had been extended with the two alcoves added when the new farm was built from 1831 onwards. The Big Barn plus the extensions are timber frames built on a low brick wall. If the barn had already been in existence in 1831 then one would expect a junction in the brickwork of the low brick wall where the 1831 wall joined onto the earlier wall, but no break or junction could be seen, this suggests that the wall and the building were built at the same time. Other features of the buildings also suggests a single build date.

The report sent to The National Trust is quite extensive and too large to be reproduced in full in this Newsletter however the basic conclusions to the report are as follows: -

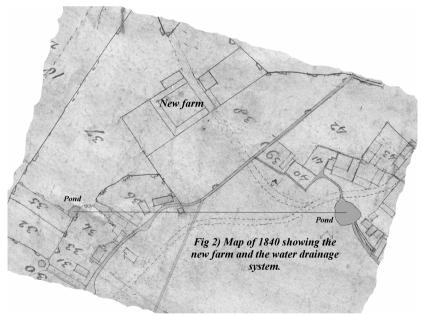
- 1) There was no earlier building on the present site of the Big Barn and the new farm was built on a 'green field' site.
- 2) The only building that still may exist of the earlier farm is the Blacksmiths shop known as Stevens or Stivens Barn
- 3) It is likely that the building of the present farm and farmhouse took many years and the earlier farm would have remained in use whilst the new farm was being built, possibly using material from the old farm as the building progressed.
- 4) The Big Barn, wherever it originated from, would have been constructed off-site and the frames assembled in situ, this makes it even more likely that it was dismantled from a site elsewhere and brought to the present site. It is also unlikely that a smallholding such as the 'old farm' could have afforded such a large and substantial structure as the Big Barn.
- 5) The 1865 Enclosure map, of which we have a copy, showed the farmhouse but no other structure other than two small buildings or sheds opposite the house. Is this an indication that the Big Barn had yet to be erected even as late as 1854?

The availability of these early maps will allow us, given time, to investigate further the early farm, the surrounding land and who were the original owners. We have already discovered recently in the office, lists of the land strips purchased by Samuel Hawkins dating from the early 1800's. The map of 1810 is intriguing in that it shows a large 'L' shaped pond covering the area where the present museum reception is. It is also connected directly to the stream in our orchard. There is no connection shown between this pond and the pond that existed near to the present village hall or to the brook or stream from Moat Farm, originally called Church Farm. All these watercourses are shown linked on the later 1840 map which shows the new farm built on higher ground away from the stream. This suggests that a substantial land drainage scheme was implemented during this period, which linked all these water sources together in a common drainage system.

If anyone has information that would help these investigations or would be interested in undertaking some research, perhaps they would contact Peter Keeley or myself. If you would like a copy of the full reports including all the relevant maps Peter will, I am sure, email you a pdf copy.

A detailed description of the various maps attached.

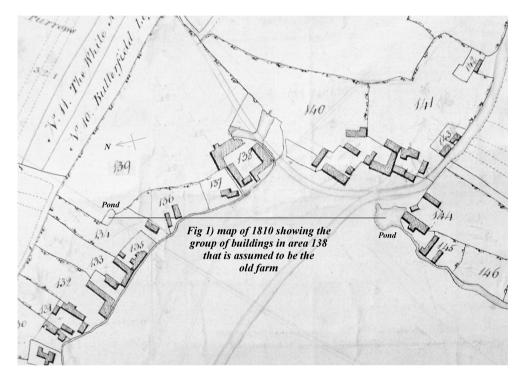
Fig 2 is the 1840 map showing the position of the new farm.



Vicarage Road is the dotted line coming in on the right hand side. The road branches into two, the upper branch is the drive into the museum, the other continues to what will be the Pitstone cross roads. The Marsworth road had yet to be built but now

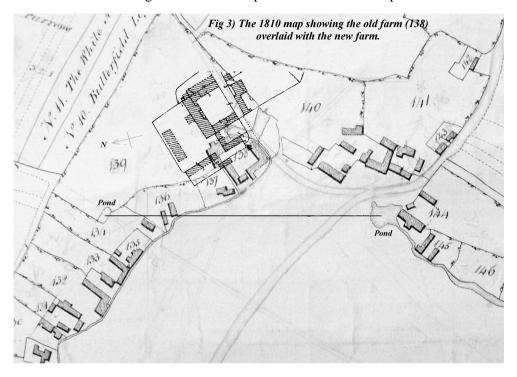
crosses roughly though plots marked 32 and 33. The line joining the two ponds is the reference line used for aligning the various map. The R.H. pond is about where the Pitstone Memorial Hall now exists and the L.H. pond (no longer in existence) is shown in the field approximately half way between the museum and the Marsworth road. The culverted stream comes into the map from Moat Farm (originally Church Farm) between plots 38 & 42 at the top R.H. corner of the map. It branches down to the left in another culvert, with the old stream still shown continuing on through our orchard, eventually crossing Marsworth road. The old stream disappears on later maps with all the water passing through the culverted branch only.

Fig 1 is the earlier 1810 map.



Note that Vicarage Road was originally much further away from the farm and was only a track across what was then Common Land. On this 1810 map there are no culverted steams shown and no obvious connection between the various water features, other than possibly ditches too small to be shown on the map. The plots 133 to 138 are shown just above the stream running through our orchard, with the old farm assumed to be on plot 138. The stream wraps around the R.H. side of the buildings on 138 into a strange 'L' shaped pond shown blue (as is the stream) on the original map. A bridge is indicated shown crossing the pond. The line shown leaving the upper arm of the pond

to the boundary line may be a brook that provided the source of water for the pond and the stream. This may have been drainage water from the fields on higher ground towards the beacon. The final map, fig 3 shows the new farm, taken from a 1925 map overlain on the 1810 map. The only feature of the old farm that appears to overlap with the new farm is a building that could be our present Blacksmiths shop.



Norman Groom, Museum Manager.

Meetings

On Thursday 17th September our talk was on 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.

The publication of results, undertaken on behalf of The Highways Agency, UK, of archaeological excavations and watching brief works in advance of and during the construction of a 6.3km bypass around Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire (UK).

Excavation at Woodlands Roundabout Site A in 2002 revealed late Bronze Age to early Iron Age activity, on the fringes of settlement and included placed human bone and rare 'concertina' vessels in pits. Structures, including an unusually robust 4-poster within a pennaular gully and an oval structure may have associations with mortuary practices. This site was abandoned no later than the middle Iron Age, well before the construction of Roman Akeman Street, which lies beneath the A41, and over which Woodlands Roundabout has been constructed. The Roman road's construction was evidenced by gravel quarries and by its probable make-up layers.

Other sites reported include excavation on either side of the B489 Lower Icknield Way Site B near Buckland, in 2001 and 2002, and excavations in 2001 on former arable land at Tring Hill Site D, just within the Buckinghamshire boundary with Hertfordshire, which produced plough truncated remnants of late Iron Age enclosure ditches, pits and post-holes, including four-post structures.

Sue Lipscomb, Programme Secretary

Helping Hands.

The museum is fortunate that we often receive donations from various sources to help our funds. In the last two years we have received several hundred pounds from the Guinness organisation now named Diageo. Joe and Shirley Marling together with Joe's brother Dave worked at Guinness Park Royal for a total of nearly 100 years between them, Joe started as a Messenger, Barley Roaster and then on transport for 34 years, Shirley in catering for 27 years and Dave in the machinery room for 34 years. Under their pension scheme they were allowed a £100 each year to go to their chosen charity. We are fortunate that their chosen charity has been PIMS for which we thank them and Diageo for the actual donations. Shirley can be seen on most open days, working at the museum, taking the entrance money with Joe and sometimes Dave, busy during weekdays digging holes and trenches, helping Roy Cutler with bricklaying and other tasks that need a big strong person. Joe also sorts out our military vehicle display and brings his own Jeep down with the other military vehicles.

Norman Groom

Programme 2009 -2010

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

Thursday 19th November '09

AGM and short talk

David Goseltine, our Chairman will be giving a short talk entitled '70 years of book collecting' after the business of the AGM.

Thursday 17th December '09

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 21st January '10

Sulgrave Manor and the Washingtons

Martin Sirot-Smith, our speaker this evening was, from 1988 until 2002, the Managing Director of Sulgrave Manor near Banbury. He succeeded in raising the profile of the manor, thus increasing the visitor numbers enormously. He often appears in role as Lawrence Washington, Lord of the Manor of Sulgrave in 1539 when he tells of how he came to build the manor and how his great, great grandson Col. John Washington was to emigrate to Virginia in 1656. This event began the American line of the family, producing George Washington, President of the USA. Martin will also give an illustrated talk showing the treasures in the house and will talk about some of the special events that have occurred there.

Thursday 18th February '10 TBA

Thursday 18th March '10

Ashridge Estate – the management of a landscape

Our speaker, Graeme Cannon, has a long standing association with the countryside. He began working for The National Trust at Ashridge in 1986 and has been Property Manager for the estate since 1995. He also has an additional role representing The National Trust on matters of countryside management throughout the Chilterns. He will be giving us an illustrated talk which covers the whole estate and includes a bit of everything from habitat management, land uses and history/archaeology (only a little) to filming and also some of the less pleasant issues they deal with.

Thursday 15th April '10

Ashlyns: My life in a Foundling Hospital

In the 1730's, Captain Thomas Coram returned from many years at sea and was appalled by the plight and neglect of children left to die on the streets. In 1739 he received a Royal Charter from King George II to establish a "hospital for the maintenance and education of exposed and deserted young children". This became known as the Foundling Hospital and over a period of two hundred years, up to the Second World War, the Foundling Hospital took in over 27,000 children. The governors of the Foundling Hospital decided in 1926 that it should be moved to

Berkhampstead. Our speaker, Lydia Carmichael lived there from 1938 until 1948. Two years later it became Ashlyns School.

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**

Restoration of the Museum's Cart/Wagon collection - Heavy Wagon

The heavy wagon is thought to date from about 1850. It is sign written with the Hawkins name so we presume has been in the family for many years if not from new.



The cart in its final restored glory

Full Story in next Issue

John Youngs (The cart man)

Front Cover Picture. By Norman Groom

Margaret Smith Basket Weaving on an Open Day

Open Days 2010

Easter Monday, 5th April
Spring Bank Holiday, 3rd May
Late Spring Bank Holiday, 31st May
Sunday, 13th June
Sunday, 11th July
Sunday, 8th August
Summer Bank Holiday, 30th August
Sunday, 12th September
Opening times from
11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.
Admission charges adults £4 children £2
Members free.

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Hits since January 2007... 18061

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

