

*Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum
Society Newsletter*



Spring 2011

Museum Report –April 2011

The Museum report will be brief this time, basically because I have nothing much new to mention. Rather than bore you all with just repeating (more or less) what I said three months ago I will report on progress and leave space in the Newsletter for more deserving causes.

The Owen Barn upgrade is finished; come and see it for yourself. Some of the labelling of the artefacts and the descriptive plaques leave a lot to be desired I'm afraid, but we have no spare effort to attend to this. Now that Mike and Jean Morris are no longer able to assist us in this sort of thing we are realising just how valuable their work was, and how desperately short we are of this sort of volunteer. Not only did they produce much of the information display around the Museum they also ran the vacuum cleaner over many of the exhibit rooms during the winter season, and their absence this winter past is recorded in the proliferation of cobwebs and dust. We are sorry about this, but we cannot do it all. The Grain Barn and its display of larger farming machines are in a very bad state and we may even not open it to the public this year unless we can find volunteers to clean it out.

The new annex to the Science & Radio Rooms is finished and objects of (hopefully) interest are being moved in. Microscopes which can be used by visitors will certainly be in there. Reception has been virtually rebuilt, leaving just some painting to be done as at the time of writing. The chain-link fence across the orchard is in process of erection now that we have a spell of better weather, and should be complete at Easter. Another open-fronted shed is at present being built behind the Nissen hut to keep more of our old machinery under cover, but it will be just that; a cover for a collection of rusting machines

After two or three years of total neglect the containers in which we grew a selection of native plants and herbs, etc, are going to be replanted and will then receive some tender loving care from Shirley Marling. I'm sure they will thrive as never before. I know I would if I were in their place.

And finally could I please issue a plea to members for more help on open days. We really need a few more assistants around the site to help. You wouldn't need to be there all day just 2 or 3 hours would be much appreciated. No special skills are needed. We would like spare helpers to stand in for the regular staff while they leave their exhibits to get a drink, or make a toilet visit. We would like help between 8 and 10 am "getting things out", and again at 5 pm putting them away again. For those who are now not so active we would welcome someone who could sit with the Crossley Gas Engine while it is running, or sit in part of the Science and Radio Room, or in the Models Room, just keeping a watchful eye open. We are, after all, a **Museum Society**; do give us a hand running **your** Museum.

Peter Keeley, Secretary

As a postscript to the above report I would like to use the newsletter to appeal to all the volunteers who work at the Museum on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. The subject I want to broach is "RUBBISH". An establishment the size of Pitstone Green Museum must necessarily produce a lot of rubbish, and its disposal has always been a problem. I know we could just, periodically, hire a skip, but this is increasingly expensive these days what with Landfill Tax and licensing of disposal operators, and VAT on top of all that. We have now acquired an official Aylesbury Vale bin which is emptied weekly, and this will be a big help, but it must only be used for what could be described as "domestic" waste. Things like non-recyclable paper and plastic, old rag, broken "domestic" items and leftover items from minor DIY jobs. Recyclables such as cans and bottles have always, since recycling started, been taken by volunteers to put with their own domestic salvage; there is a marked bin for these.

It is the rest of the rubbish and its disposal I want to talk about. We have an incinerator which we can use for burning waste and our method of using this leaves much to be desired. Could I please lay down a few simple rules governing its use?

1. Do not light the incinerator if the wind is going to blow the smoke back over the Museum site or over the Farmhouse.

2. Do not store stuff for future burning in the incinerator itself; rather store it somewhere under cover and bring it out on a suitable day for burning.
3. Before starting a new “burn-up” empty the ashes by upending the container; empty them in a tidy pile where they can later be sieved with a magnet and/or sorted through.
4. And finally, don’t light the incinerator in such a location that flames or hot gases will damage trees or shrubs. And **NO PLASTICS, PLEASE!**

There is one other type of rubbish which sometimes causes us problems ... building debris. By this I mean piles of sub-soil from digging foundations, broken bricks, surplus concrete and mortar, etc. At present I do not have an answer as to what should be done with this, but what should not be done with it is dumping it in small piles in the tree belt. One of our ride-on mowers is used to keep down the undergrowth in the summer and profound damage is done to the cutters when the machine runs over one of these piles. If you have this sort of rubbish for disposal ask the Museum Manager what to do with it.

And finally, (and surely this must be obvious to all), please don’t bring any rubbish to the Museum for us to dispose of. We all have refuse bins at home; please use them. If the item is too big for your bin there is a local authority dump just down the road off the Aston Clinton by-pass.

Peter Keeley, Secretary

Gift Aid

We are pleased to say that we have received £188.22 from HM Revenue in respect of a Gift Aid claim for the years 2006 to 2008 thanks to the endeavours of our Secretary Peter Keeley. He did all the work so I said I would write the notice. Peter tried to claim for early years but unfortunately they changed the rules. He is currently submitting a claim for 2009 up to date and expects this amount to be significantly greater so long as they don’t change the rules again.

This a useful source of funds to the Society so if you have not completed a Gift Aid form and are currently a tax payer please do so

when you renew your membership. If you cannot remember whether you have completed one in the past don't worry complete a form and we will check if we already have one. *A form is available with this newsletter.*

John Youngs, Treasurer

Wags Wharf

A brief update from the little men on Wags Wharf [and the big ones that stand behind] - work has been proceeding apace on upgrading the track electrical wiring under the ground. This originally dates from some 7 years ago when the layout was first built and it has travelled some hundreds of miles to exhibitions since then. The boiler has also undergone improvements for easier operation on Open days and a new Test Certificate will be in place before Easter.

Plans are also moving forward for new accommodation for Wags Wharf just behind the shop off the Green. A budget has been submitted to Committee and work should start during this year with an opening date ready for next year's season. Offers of donations and labour would all be gratefully received!

Geoff, Chris, Roy & Pete.

The Story of the Crossley Gas Engine at the Museum.

The engine is a Crossley GE119, single cylinder horizontal type and although the flywheel weighs over 3 tons the power developed is only about 37HP, much less than a small modern car engine. Needless to say it runs very quietly at a relatively slow speed of 180 rpm.

The engine came from Grace's Mill at Tring, sometime in the eighties and the parts laid in a barn for many years before restoration was started. Unfortunately the Mill, located in Akeman Street in Tring, is no longer in existence being converted for residential purposes.

The Mill dated from about 1750 and the books of the business are held in the archives at Aylesbury. The original family started as Maltsters and corn milling came in as the malting business died.

The first power in those times was provided by horses but later steam power was used and eventually a series of internal combustion engines.

The Crossley, one of the last engines used, was purchased second hand from a Picture Palace in Kingston-upon-Thames where it had remained unused since its purchase from Crossley's in 1914. It was intended to use the engine for the generation of electric power for the Picture Palace, hence the unusually large flywheel.

Thomas Boughton transferred the gas engine to Tring using a steam traction engine. The Crossley engine was installed at Grace's Mill in the winter of 1921/22 and remained in daily service until the severe frosts of 1963/64 burst the big cooling tanks. Other power sources were used until the mill was finally closed.

The engine was started by hand using 'Town Gas' and then switched over to 'Producer Gas' after a few minutes running. The Producer Gas Plant now resides alongside the engine and was the last of many used with the engine as they tended to corrode away very rapidly. This last one was made by Hornsby Stockport in 1913.

The gas was produced by passing steam through red hot 'pea sized' anthracite, where the steam reacted to produce various combustible products. In the 1920's when times were hard, the anthracite was purchased direct from the South Wales collieries and collected from Tring Railway station by horse and cart. A wagon load cost £8.00 and undercut the local coal merchants, much to their annoyance.

The Gas Plant was called a 'Suction Gas producer Plant' as it was the suction of the engine that drew the steam and the air over the anthracite. The greater the suction of the engine, the more gas was produced. When starting up, a blower was used instead, until the gas produced a clean blue flame from a test cock on the expansion tank near the engine (no longer fitted).

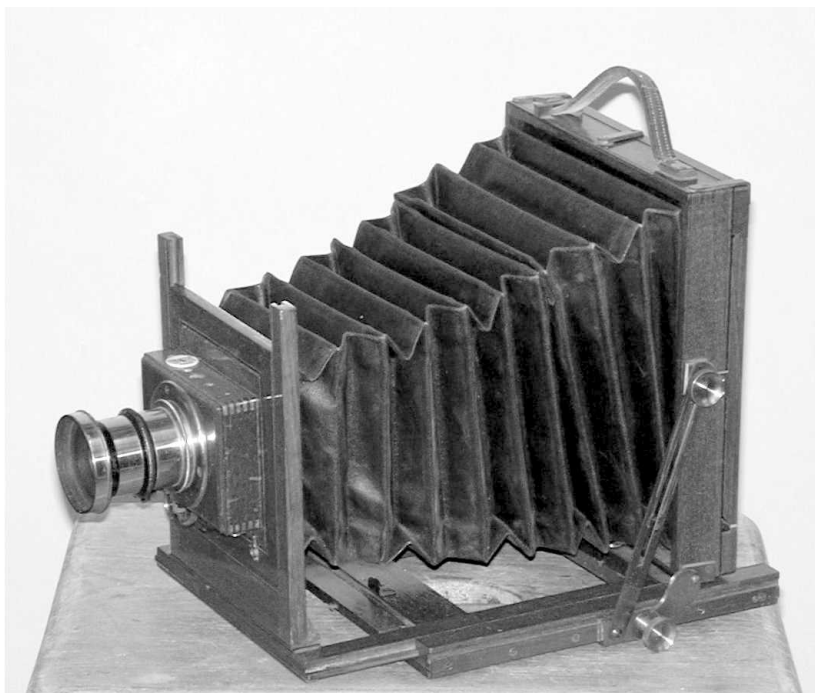
The gas from the anthracite was hot and dirty with bitumen products. Before use in the engine it was passed through a washing tower containing running water and coke, mounted alongside the anthracite burner, prior to passing into the expansion tank near the engine.

The furnace containing the anthracite was water-cooled, the cooling water in turn producing the steam for feeding through the anthracite to produce the gas.

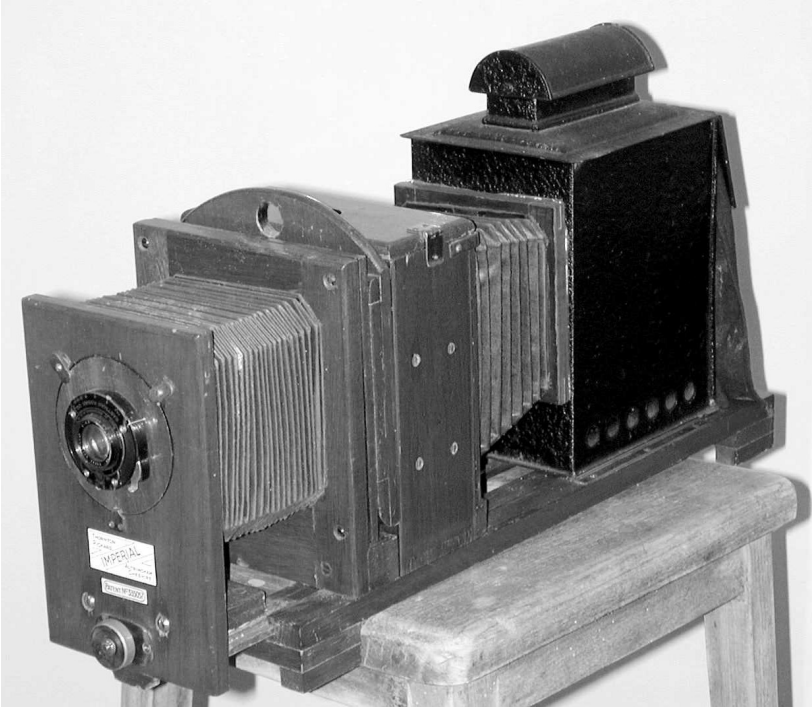
Although the gas plant is beyond restoration it has been brought inside the engine house, alongside the engine, to show the complete plant.

Norman Groom

Treasures from the Museum



A quarter plate, brass and mahogany camera dating from the late 1800's, now on display in the new science room extension.



Thorton Pickard Enlarging Camera.

The Ivinghoe Road Race Circuit Proposal

I have, over the winter months, been engaged on a project to update the information we hold on the contents of the multi-drawer museum cabinet that lives in the loft above the meeting room. This has involved going through each drawer and listing the contents in detail: the end result then being checked against the list of what we thought was there and amended accordingly. Finally, misplaced items were returned to their appropriate places in the cabinet. As you might imagine, this has been a task fraught with interruptions – not the least because almost every other piece of paper has brought yet another interesting snippet of the history of the area alive through the presence of original documentation. I intend to write the occasional article for the newsletter, based upon the various stories and

characters that have piqued my interest. Those that know me will not be surprised that I have chosen to begin with a motoring theme!

By the early 1930s the UK's only purpose built speed track at Brooklands was showing its age. Several alternative locations were suggested for a replacement and the Ivinghoe proposal was publicised in late 1932 and early 1933. The track was to contain a mile long straight that more or less paralleled the LMS railway and which was divided in half by the current B488 just after the bridge over the rail line at College Lake, in the vicinity of Folly Farm. The north westerly loop of the track was limited to the east by Church End and enclosed much of the land that was later to become part of the Pitstone Cement Works. To the south east of the B488, the track cut a series of sharp hairpin bends and short straits as it negotiated elements of the scarp slope in the vicinity of Pitstone Hill.

To show how serious the proposal was, the following information is given. One of the notable consultants was George Eyston, Brooklands record breaker and later to become World land Speed Record Holder (August 27th 1933). It was estimated that construction costs would be in the order of £142,000, the enclosed area of the track 435 acres and approximately 700 men would be required for the initial workforce. Within the confines, a special hill climb road would have a gradient of 1 in 2.5 and the main grandstand was designed to accommodate 10,000 spectators. In 1933 terms it was thought that around 3,000 vehicles per hour would pass through the main gates.

So where were some of the facilities to be located? The purpose built club house would be just after the new roundabout, on the right hand side of the B488 heading in the Dunstable direction. This placed it more or less opposite Folly Farm, where a swimming pool was to be built. The grandstand would be on the left of the new road leading into the business park and the pits would be opposite, where the housing development has taken place. The area enclosed by the course to the North West was to serve as an aerodrome. Now for anyone familiar with the lay out of the old Brooklands track, this all seems very similar. It was as if the designers could not think "outside

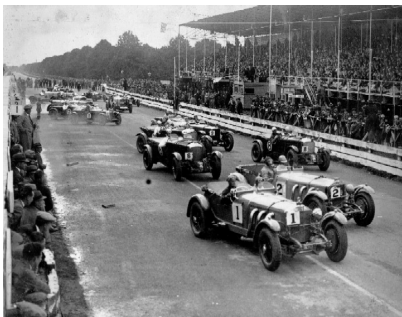
the box” of the then twenty year old first effort. Had the cement works not been established in this location, what would have been the effect of the track upon the area? Without doubt, the local rural lanes would have had to have been upgraded, the railway station at Tring expanded significantly and the agricultural life blood of the area curtailed.

So sure were the financial backers of this plan that Motor Sport Magazine for February 1933 said the following

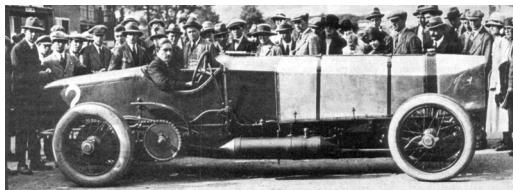
“At last it seems that England is to have the chance for which she has been waiting for years, for our drivers, with such a practise course at their constant disposal, will be able to compete on level terms with the so-far supreme continental aces.

A fixture on the International Calendar has been secured for August 19th, so if you want to be present at the first great road-race in England, don’t arrange your summer holidays in August!”

Ah, what might have been.....



Brooklands 1930



**Count Zborowski with Chitty
Bang Bang1 at Brooklands**

Dennis Trebble, Deputy Museum Manager

Membership 2011-12

Membership subscriptions are now due for the 2011-12 season. You will find a membership renewal form inside this newsletter. Fees are the same as last season, £8 for single membership or £14 for joint

membership (i.e. a couple living at the same address). Please return the completed form with a cheque together with a Stamped Self-Addressed Envelope if you want your membership card posted to you. Otherwise it will be posted to you inside the next newsletter. Or, to save yourself a stamp, I will be at the Museum on the next 2 Bank Holiday Monday Open Days. You will find me in the meeting room, with my wife Sandra, displaying a selection of photographs from the Museum's archives, and films of past Open Days.

Bill Barnard, Membership Secretary

Obituary – Joyce Whipps

A number of years ago Joyce used to be one of our regular Lace Ladies at the Museum.

Joyce was also very good in advertising our Open Day dates when talking to the radio presenters around the area. She is shown on our present website making lace.

Her funeral took place on Friday 15th April. There will be a Memorial Service at 2.30pm on Monday the 9th May at Wingrave Church.

Programme 2011

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

Detail as issued with last newsletter

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

Sue Lipscomb, Programme Secretary

Date for your diary

Saturday 30th July 2011

Bucks Family History Society Open Day.

Opening 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Venue, The Grange School, Wendover Way Aylesbury.

I will host a table there for Pitstone Green Museum.

Sandra Barnard, Editor

Front Cover Picture by Bill Barnard

The Bee Man Gunter Weber at our Open Day c. 2009

Open Days 2011

Easter Monday, 25th April

Wicket Brood Morris Dancers

Spring Bank Holiday

Monday 2nd May

Whitchurch Morris Dancers

Late Spring Bank Holiday

Monday 30th May

Ivinghoe Handbell Ringers

Sunday, 12th June

Crendon Morris Dancers

Sunday, 10th July

Tappalachian Dancers

Sunday, 14th August

Owlswick Morris Dancers

Summer Bank Holiday

Monday 29th August

Sunday, 11th September

Opening times from

11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Admission charges adults £4

children £2. Members free.

Committee Officers:-**Chairman &****Museum Site Manager**

John Childs 01582 833501

Vice Chairman &**Museum Manager**

Norman Groom 01582 605464

Treasurer

John Youngs 01582 833678

Secretary

Peter Keeley 01582 792701

Other Committee Members:-**Deputy Museum Manager**

Dennis Trebble 07738786210

Committee member

David Goseltine..email

daigos@tiscali.co.uk

Programme &**Minutes Secretary**

Sue Lipscomb 01296 630578

Publicity Secretary

Anne Ball 01442 822672

Non Committee Posts:-**Archivist post vacant****Craft Co-ordinator**

Brenda Grace 01296 668167

Dancers

Margaret Elliott ..email

MEchippie@aol.com

Events Manager

Bernard Warden..email

bernard_warden@o2.co.uk

Membership Secretary &**Technical Adviser**

Bill Barnard..email

barnardw@bre.co.uk

Newsletter Editor &**Computer records Officer**

Sandra Barnard ..email

alexrose42@btinternet.com

Trading Secretary

Jeannette Wallis 01296 661997

Holding Trustees:-

Don Levy

Bob Morgan

John Wallis

Reg Jellis

Museum Website:- www.pitstonemuseum.co.uk

Hits to January 31st 2011... 28362

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society

Pitstone Green Museum, Vicarage Road, Pitstone

Leighton Buzzard LU7 9EY

Registered Charity No 273931