

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter



Summer 2011

Museum Report – July 2011

The first three open days this year could best be described as very satisfactory. No records have been broken, but we are happy. Our takings were over half of our total takings for last year, but remember the first three open days are bank holiday Mondays which are almost invariably better attended than our Sunday open days. Then the fourth open day on the second Sunday of June can only be described as abysmal. It was wet; it was cold, it was windy; and very few visitors turned up on what is always our worst day of the year. We were packing up to go back to our warm homes at 4 o'clock, thoroughly dispirited.

Picture by Peter Keeley



We have hosted two major functions so far this year. There was a 60th birthday party at the end of May which (we think) went very successfully. The weather was OK considering it was still only May but it went very cold as it got dark. This was followed by a wedding reception in

mid-June. The weather was not too kind at the wedding reception with some rain and a rather cold wind, but the scantily clad ladies attending did not seem to be shivering too much. The newly wed couple arrived on a horse and cart and after the usual photograph formalities a barbecue was enjoyed by all with a professionally run bar sited in catering and a barn dance in the Big Barn. There was a marquee erected near to the racksaw with tables and chairs as an overspill dining area. The Museum was open until dusk and there seemed to be plenty of interest in the exhibits.

There are no major projects underway at the Museum during the open season but there are considerable number of changes taking place and lots of new ideas underway.

Our biggest attractions on open days are the model railways, one of these being Wags Wharf. Unfortunately they have been set up in one of the bays in the cart sheds with limited space and in an area that is not that popular with the general public. Much thought has been given to finding them a new home and they are now resident in the Nissen hut together with the Dairy and the 'Old Curiosity Shop'. The visibility and access to the layout has now been vastly improved and they are in the central area of the museum.

The Gauge 1 railway layout has proven difficult to manage over the past couple of years. Substantial sums of money were made available to extend the layout, linking the layout within the model room to the outside track. In the end it proved a disaster, the person responsible leaving virtually without warning and rendering a substantial portion of the layout unusable. We have removed all the recent modifications and are in the process of rebuilding and restoring the layout to its original excellence. In spite of the setbacks we are still able to use the core part of the layout on open days. The only good thing to come out of these problems is that the Gauge 1 society was sympathetic to our difficulties and has given us ownership of the layout.

The process of restoring and painting some of our farm machinery is in its second year with three new items shot blasted and awaiting painting. New information sheets are on display in the Owen Barn along with our already restored machinery which may soon be joined by the recently restored items.

We are also contemplating storing our tractors in the carts shed and moving and displaying the carts in the tractor shed. The tractors are moved out in any case on open days, leaving the sheds empty. This will make our carts more visible to the general public and filling a somewhat empty void.

We have made a big step forward regarding our archives. There is a large document storage cabinet full of interesting papers and documents in our big loft. Some work has been done in the past to record this information but we now have a very detailed computer spreadsheet enabling us to quickly identify and find information regarding a particular subject matter. Another project that has been suggested is to create a museum reference library in the museum shop. We have a large number of books in the office and the

loft store but no one knows what we do have. It will mean removing some unsold second-hand books but space should then be available at the far end of the room for our library. We are also going to install a table in the far corner to allow Sandra access to a computer without climbing steep stairs to the office. This will also be an advantage to ourselves, as this will give us quick and easy access to our computer records.

Next winter season we plan to install some new surface water drains in two locations on the site where the existing drains have been blocked for many years. We consider it is more cost effective to install new rather than attempt any clearing of the old systems. There is some talk of moving the building known as “The Green Shed” but no decisions have been taken yet. There are still some vestiges of pale green paint on this building which has been on the Museum site since the 1980’s but which used to be the Slaughter House Office situated on the other side of Marsworth Road in days gone by.

And so the work goes on, never ending but very enjoyable, I am sure, to all our volunteers. Another volunteer joined us recently who loves painting (the doors and windows) and I am sure he will prove a great asset. We are always looking for more help especially in cleaning and looking after the existing museum displays and coming up with more temporary, or perhaps permanent, displays. With the loss of David Goseltine we are desperate to find others to serve on the committee. We have just about the minimum number required and if one person was unable to attend we may find ourselves unable to convene a meeting. If you can help in any way please contact a committee member or come down to the museum for a chat. We are always there on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays.

Two of our small group of volunteers have both been in hospital for surgery recently. They are Brenda Grace and Sandra Barnard, I feel sure all of you will join me in wishing them well for a speedy recovery

David Goseltine 1931 – 2011.

David, who has been involved in our Society and a volunteer at the Museum for over 40 years, died suddenly on Saturday 18 June at his home in Whipsnade. He was on the PIMS Executive Committee for many years holding various offices including Chairman as well as being our

representative on the Ashridge National Trust Committee and on the Pitstone Windmill Committee.

David's involvement with Pitstone Green Farm and Pitstone Windmill started when he attended a three year industrial archaeology course at Britain Street School in Dunstable. During this course they visited several sites one of which was Pitstone Windmill where he met Jeff Hawkins. Jeff had just finished pig farming and thoughts were underway to create a museum at the farm. David was invited to help and stayed for the next 42 years.

He was a valued member of the Museum volunteers having excellent carpentry skills, many of the doors and window frames you see around the Museum were made by him and he was responsible for numerous major construction projects such as the museum shop. Although the major rebuild of Pitstone Windmill was complete when David started in 1969, he became involved in later work on the Windmill and served on the Windmill Committee. David's skills in carpentry were also put to good use at Ford End Watermill before they became a separate entity from the Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society.

David was born and grew up in Dunstable before serving as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery, seeing action in the Korean War. After demob he worked for Luton DC as an engineer until he retired. He married his wife Betty in 1955 and moved to Holland Cottage in Whipsnade; unfortunately Betty died a few years ago after a difficult illness. David was a long standing member of the Masons, keen on the countryside and walking. He is survived by his son Robert, daughter Sue and four grandchildren.

A memorial service was held at 14.15 on Wednesday 6th July at Whipsnade Church.

Castle/Tunnel Cement photographs by John Rogers

On an open day in 2010 we had a visit at our photograph display from John Rogers. He informed me that he had a vast collection of photographs taken during the working life of the Pitstone Cement Works. John worked as a fitter for Leverton, Caterpillar dealer who supplied and serviced the Caterpillar machines. He offered to send me a disc of these.

Two weeks ago the disc arrived in the post with all these pictures nicely documented. I hope to produce a visual display of these in due course. Meanwhile here are a few with John's letter to me.

Dear Sandra.

I bet that you had given up ever hearing from me again as to the photos that we talked about at one of the museum open days last year. I was so impressed by the museum and I thought perhaps these photos would make an interesting display when someone has the time to exhibit them.

My involvement with the works lasted for about 30 years with the last 15 years virtually on a day to day basis.

In the late 60's early 70's the works used Ruston face shovel type excavators and Foden and Euclid dump trucks. Quarry 1 was used for most of the chalk required turning to Quarry 2 for the excavation of white chalk for white cement, two rather old D8's a 2U and a 14A type. About this time, mid 60's Tunnel purchased two caterpillar tractors from Jack Olding of Hatfield, these proved to be quite troublesome, very fast but trouble. These were soon traded in for two Caterpillar D8H machines 68A478 – 68A700 which in fact lasted until the closure of the works in 1991. The real leap forward was the building of Kiln 5 a dry process (possibly the first in the UK), with the new dry kiln came new investment in the quarries.



**1982 Tunnel Cement Pitstone Quarry 3,
Leverton Caterpillar Fitter John Rogers repairs Cat D8 68A 478**

Quarry 2 was enlarged and Quarry 3 opened up, 36 inch belting was installed by the mile. Two O&K German bucket wheel machines were built in both quarries and Barry Earl was posted in from the closing West Thurrock works as the Quarry Manager. Barry had the foresight to invest in high quality plant; this he did in quarry transport new Caterpillar 245 50 ton excavators two refurbished Caterpillar D9L tractors and the Caterpillar D9G and Komatsu D155 from the closed West Thurrock. With this sort of investment chalk output was maintained for the very hungry Kiln 5 and the other kilns.

It has to be said that I enjoyed working at the plant for what was a very hard environment for both men and machines our job was to dig chalk and dig chalk we did.

I could go on and on but I had better stop now, I hope these snippets (I could relate more!) will be of interest to anyone who needs information on the cement works.

*Yours sincerely
John F Rogers*



Pitstone Quarry 2 Top Site 1982. The Leibherr 871 lifted.

A close up of the lifting of the failed machine, Top Site fitter in view. The machine will be shipped off site to be repaired by the maker's dealers.

Quarry 3 1991



A view of quarry workings as Castle Cement Pitstone is about to cease operations at Pitstone Works. In the view is one of the two MLG Bucket Wheels (the other one was in Quarry 2) these machines were replaced with Caterpillar 245 loaders starting in 1982. The background is Kiln 5 chimney and the other four kiln chimneys. Just over the earth bank is the West Coast railway line in a deep cutting. The van belongs to Leverton, Caterpillar dealer who supplied and serviced the Caterpillar machines



Castle Cement Pitstone Dec 1991. The end of Levertons.

What a sad shot I can nearly feel a tear in the eye. A line up of most of the mobile plant awaiting disposal, up to this point I had been involved with Tunnel / Castle Cement since the building of Kiln 5.

John Rogers.

This is just a few of the 126 pictures he sent me.

Sandra Barnard Editor

Membership 2011-12

So far I have received fees from 126 people, of which, 7 are new members this year. Some of you will find your membership cards with this newsletter, others will find a reminder membership renewal slip.

Bill Barnard, Membership Secretary

Programme 2011

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

Thursday 21st July '11

Cheese Wine and Antiques

Once again here is our very popular evening at the museum with Stephen Hearn 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 £6.00 for members and £8.00 for non-members and will include a ploughman's platter and complimentary glass of wine or soft drink. Please do not bring more than two items for Stephen's comments and valuations. More details in the preceding newsletter.

Tuesday 9th August '11 at 6.30.p.m.

Visit to see the largest collection of Leyland Coaches anywhere in the world (and a beautiful garden)

Mike Sutcliffe has restored nine Leyland coaches and buses which date from 1908 until the 1920s. He has the oldest and largest collection in the world with the only surviving charabanc and the oldest single decker bus. He has received an MBE from the Queen for his restoration work and those who visit will be shown each vehicle in turn by Mike and then will be given some refreshments (tea or coffee and biscuits). His garden is open in the Yellow Book and will be open for those who are not so interested in the vehicles. He will ask for a contribution of £5 for each person attending.

The address is:- Valley Forge, 213, Castle Hill Road, Totternhoe, Dunstable, Beds. LU6 2DA. Phone 01525 221676

Directions can be found at www.mikesutcliffe.com. Some cars will fit into Mike's drive but he requests that others do not park on the main road, due to a width restriction or in the nearby pub car park.

There will also be an opportunity to see the cottage garden on a half an acre sloping site which was planted from scratch by Mike and his wife Pat, 18 years ago. It is opened to the public twice a year through the National Gardens Scheme and the shrubs, perennials and trees have all been carefully chosen for the chalky soil and include the Aylesbury Prune.

I would like to be able to give Mike a rough idea of numbers beforehand, so would appreciate it if members would contact me by phone 01296 630578 or by email Sue.Lipscomb@btopenworld.com by the end of Friday 5th August if they intend coming.

Thursday 18th August '11

Bomb Disposal in World War II

Last time John Emlyn Jones came to talk to the Society it was about his experience climbing Everest. This time he will be drawing on personal experiences of bomb disposal during the last World War.

Thursday 15th September '11

The Lace Industry in Buckinghamshire

Lace making was the standard occupation of poor women in Buckinghamshire from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Their laborious work brought little reward, but the lace buyers who organised the trade made fortunes. This talk given by Julian Hunt will identify these lace buyers and show how they commissioned and distributed the product.

Thursday 20th October '11

The Story of Halton

Wendy Austin will be giving an illustrated talk which will cover the building of Halton House by Alfred de Rothschild; the outbreak of WW1 and the arrival on the estate of Kitchener's Army, and the infant Royal Flying Corps; the transition of the latter to the RAF; including the establishment of the School of Technical Training and concluding with a few slides of Halton as it is today.

Thursday 17th November '11

AGM ... My career in the CID

After the business of the AGM has been completed we will have a talk by Michael O'Neill who began his career in the police force in 1961, twenty seven

years of which were spent in plain clothes as a detective. He ended his career as the Detective Chief Inspector of the Regional Crime Squad. He will be telling us of the varied and intriguing experiences of his career.

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.

Bill & Sandra will be hosting a table there for Pitstone Green Museum.

Sandra Barnard, Editor

Front Cover & Below

Pictures by Norman Groom

All decked for a wedding! The Big Barn as we have never seen it before.



Open Days 2011

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**

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Programme &

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