

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter



Autumn 2011

Museum Report – October 2011

The summer season is now over and we can reflect on our performance for the year. First and possibly most important is our financial situation. As regards to public open days our total takings for this year are slightly higher than those for last year, but 2009 still remains by far our best year when we took over a thousand pounds more than either this year or last year. A quick scan of the figures suggests that much of our higher income for 2009 came from higher numbers of adults through the ‘turnstiles’ on the Bank Holiday Mondays and the June and July Sundays in that year. This year we had two wet Sunday open days which affected attendance on both days; we had no wet open days during 2009 or 2010. The tractor/trailer rides are a steady source of income, but a wet day is catastrophic. Income from catering showed a satisfying increase this year, but then we are charging higher prices than in previous years. Of course, open day takings are not our only source of income as we earn money from private visits and functions, donations, use of Museum site by outside bodies, school visits, etc, etc.

Major projects for the volunteers this winter season are improving the drainage in two areas where we suffer blocked drains, and re-roofing the fan room. Many of you will not have heard of the fan room; it is not a part of the Museum open to the public and there has to be a good reason for showing anyone in there. Its original purpose was to house the electric fans which produced the draught of air used to dry grain stored in the grain drying silos, and this automatically became the room where the fuses, switches, and meter for the electricity supply to the whole farm was sited. The roof leaked about 5 years ago and was temporarily repaired, but it is leaking again now and needs a full re-roofing job. Another task we are considering is to carry out a major rebuilding of the ‘Green Shed’. This is another building not open to the public, and it is called the Green Shed because it was once painted green although you have to look hard to find any vestiges of paint on it now. This shed was presented to the Society in the early 1980’s by Reg Jellis, and prior to that it was the office for Pitstone slaughter house. It is now showing its age and has a pronounced sag in the middle. It has never been suitable for admitting the public and has been used for storage and various work, but if it was rebuilt it could form additional exhibit space and the committee are considering various options.

The Gauge ‘1’ model railway has had its ups and downs this year. Dave Fuller, who had done much of the construction work on the layouts as they were in 2010, left us as he could not agree with some of the views of the committee, taking with him some quite essential items which he owned. The committee thought the whole scheme had been made too complex and some of the workmanship was not

of a satisfactory standard to ensure trouble free working on open days. An attempt was made to revert to a situation more like it had been in 2009 while retaining some of the improvements. This unfortunately led to erratic working of the indoor layout and virtually no working on the outdoor one. It is hoped that we can do better next year by finishing off the new indoor system and restoring at least one track somewhere outdoors.

I enjoy grass cutting and orchard maintenance; otherwise I would not be involved in this work. I also enjoy artefact restoration provided there is not too much woodwork involved, and I enjoy working with the artefacts we have in store and new ones which are coming in all the time. My problem is that this year, from March onwards, I have had to spend an estimated 90% of my time at the Museum cutting grass whereas I feel my working with the artefacts would be of much greater long term value to the Museum. The trouble is grass needs to be cut regularly, otherwise it not only begins to look a mess it also takes longer to cut, but we do not seem to have anyone else interested in this sort of work. Surely there must be some society members who would enjoy some outdoor light work during the warmer months on a regular basis. Anyone who feels he/she could help us in this way is urged to get in touch before next spring; plenty of tuition is available and driving the mower does not require too much effort.

We are also in need of people with other skills, or indeed with no skills at all but willing to learn. Extra help is always welcome on open days in all areas. Helping with dusting and re-arranging and labelling artefact displays is an activity where we are very short of volunteers. Operating and demonstrating the Gauge '1' model railway layouts on open days always could use extra helpers, and of course relief operators on the reception and catering tills would be very welcome. If you think you would like to be more involved but don't know quite where you could help why not come and talk to us. The main working days when volunteers are always present are Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays.

Peter Keeley, Secretary

One of our Volunteers Michael Bickerton **-an appreciation of his achievements**

I first met Michael in May 1983 at a meeting held at what is now referred to as City Campus of Oaklands College, St Albans. The meeting had been convened by the then Dean Of St Albans, Peter Moore, who was interested in building some sort of replica of the Richard of Wallingford clock which was located in St Albans Cathedral from the 14th to the 16th century. To relate the whole subsequent story would take up more paper than this whole newsletter, but in a nutshell both Michael and I became involved in the construction of the first phase of a working

clock built to the recently translated design notes of Richard himself. As well as his share of the metalwork involved Michael also did all of the woodwork himself.

This project took about 5 years, after which I did not see very much of Michael for some time as he did not take part in the second and final phase of the clock building project. I think it was 1995 when I became involved with Redbournbury Watermill. My involvement was initially electrical before becoming part of the team procuring, restoring and installing the Crossley engine there. Michael was already involved at the mill with woodwork but soon became interested in the engine project. I told him of my involvement at Pitstone Green Museum and he became interested in joining the volunteer group working at the Museum on Tuesdays. He joined us and soon started to bring his friend Alan. Michael and Alan worked together on Tuesday mornings on many restoration projects for the Museum.

I think his first project was the restoration of the lumber wagon. This was followed by the restoration of the farm clock, but unfortunately soon after the restoration was finished the pendulum driven movement began to show real signs of its age and had to be replaced by an electric motor. Michael and Alan built and installed a new staircase to gain access to the office and loft. A few of you may remember the steep original stairs complete with copious woodworm holes which Michael and Alan's new staircase replaced.



Michael working with John Youngs is taking his life in his hands standing in the cart and working the hoist.

For some years the Racksaw restoration project had been in limbo. The saw was complete but someone (to this day nobody can recall who it was) had “grouted in” the engine onto its concrete plinth before it had been correctly aligned. Michael and Alan undertook to

rectify this error which involved jacking up the engine in order to build a new larger and higher plinth for it to stand on complete with fixing bolts and a steel framework referenced to the old fixings, thus encasing the “error” in concrete for evermore. The duo were involved in several cosmetic restoration projects on various carts before taking on the restoration and erection of the stone mill

donated to us by Lacey Green Windmill along with the Amanco engine for which they cast the concrete plinth.
Far left in the picture

Michael is several years older than me and at the end of the last winter season he told me he was feeling his age more and more, and that he and his friend Alan might not be such regular visitors to the Museum. As we have not seen them since I thought it appropriate to write this appreciation of all they have done for us over many years. Thank you Michael; thank you Alan. Two true gentlemen, a disappearing breed these days.

Peter Keeley.

Mike Morris 1931 - 2011

Mike joined the Society soon after he retired in 1989, and when help was needed to look after a room he volunteered. He chose Microcosm 1 which was then in what is now the Entrance and Toilets.

Mike & Jean talking to Norman at the Easter Open Day

The cupboards were moved into the next room where they are today. He painted



the background to the cupboards and made the replica Brewery Worker. Gradually as the room was completed he moved to another and so it went on - painting, labelling, cleaning and checking numbers with Sandra the then Archivist. He worked his way through most of the rooms. All this

was done on Sunday mornings. On Open Days he took his turn in the shop.

Mike was born and grew up in Southampton and then joined the Merchant Navy after serving an engineering apprenticeship. He was in the Merchant Navy for 8 years before 'swallowing the anchor' and became a Draughtsman for Vickers Armstrong which took him to Dounreay on Scotland's north coast where a mock up of the first nuclear submarine was being built. After 5 years he moved to Watford and became an Engineer Surveyor.

In 1981 he moved to Pitstone where he got involved with many local societies. He was diagnosed with cancer in June 2010. His Funeral was held in Pitstone Church on 30th August followed by burial in the churchyard there. The collection and donations were in aid of the Iain Rennie Hospice at home and the magnificent sum of £1514 was raised.

He is survived by his wife Jean and children Sally, Ian and Trudy.

Jean Morris

Ron Ashurst 4/12/1929- 14/8/2011



Ron Ashurst died in August following a long illness. He was born in Yorkshire, the eldest of three children, having a brother and a sister.

His parents moved to Aylesbury when he was about 3 years old and his Father took a job at Hazel, Watson and Viney, Printers. His Father was in the Grimethorpe Colliery Band playing the trombone and down here he joined the Hazel, Watson and Viney Brass Band.

Ron served in the REME and following a number of other jobs, joined the Fire Service until he retired in 1982. He was a member of the 'Aylesbury Lions' and supported the 'Aylesbury Hospice'. One of his hobbies included

a beautifully restored Austin A30 which he would take to the Fire Station on Open Days to support the 'Benevolent Fund' for the 'Injured Firemen and their Dependents'. Other interests included stationary engines and the Pitstone Museum. His Austin A30 was found in an old barn after the death of the owner and came complete with chicken feathers and a vacant mouse nest in the engine compartment. Ron spent many hours restoring the car to showroom condition and won many prizes for it at the shows.

Ron was also a member of the Beds and Bucks Stationary Engine Club; he owned several engines and attended many of the shows. He came to Pitstone and helped to restore the Big Crossley Gas Engine in the early 1990's and stayed on as a volunteer working with David Goseltine on many of the major projects then being undertaken. Pitstone became his second home and he could always be

found attending to the Crossley Engine on Open Days and chatting to the visitors. He will be sadly missed by all, especially the other volunteers at the museum, he was always laughing and joking, a character that is irreplaceable.

Norman Groom

“Memories”

Do you remember when a child
Games with friends you did play.
Marbles, skipping, tiddler fishing
Were all part of a child’s day.

Boys would make a Go-Cart,
With old boxes, and pram wheels.
One would drive, the other gave power
All gave them space midst squeals.

Girls would acquire an old laundry line
For the “All in-to together girls”,
display.
Legs flying, many with drawers on
show.
Let’s play “Hopscotch” and put the line
away.

Summer, was the time for “Scrumpling”
When nature’s bounty adorned the trees.
There would be apples, pears and plums
Grateful mothers cooked and preserved
with ease.

But then adults would speak of war,
To children then, an unknown word.
There was an excitement, unexplained
Soon the children’s play would show.

Boys would run with arms outstretched.
To mimic pilots of the day
Others with two cocoa tins and a length
of string
Watching and keeping an enemy at bay.

Letters to the Editor:- David Goseltine 1931 – 2011.

It was only when I received my copy of the Summer Newsletter that I became aware that David had died. If I had known earlier I would have attended the Memorial Service.

Leapfrog and Two Ball Pat
Collecting cardboard milk tops
Every item would have a use one day.
Girls were taught, not to throw away!

Children had gardens to tend
While fathers were away
Families had to grow their own
Then, they could think of play.

Over the fields with the dog
You knew without a doubt
It would roll in a nice new cow pat
“Chuck him in the Brook” goes the
shout.

Did children then know how to play?
To improvise with what they had
Use imaginations to gain knowledge
To prepare them for another day?

Perhaps they had a little, but everything
All knew how to play.
Do today’s children have everything,
but little
Something is missing, is it play?

Ena Elliot Ashurst

(Widow of Ron)

When as a family we moved to Aldbury in the spring of 1970 Jean and I to a lesser extent, became involved with the Society: and Jeff Hawkins and David and Betty were among those with whom we forged early friendships. Jean had developed a strong interest in genealogy and local history as well as archaeology – our son Nick was about to go up to Sheffield to take a degree in Pre-history and Archaeology – and soon was busy on that side of the Society's activities. I well remember working parties at Church Farm, where we first lived, sorting out and assembling the pots recovered from the Roman Well in the quarry.



As the years passed I increasingly admired his devotion to the Society, his service in various official roles and, perhaps above all, the variety of skills he so willingly made available to the restoration and development projects in the Museum.

Since Jean's death in December 2004, I have been less involved with the Society but when I was talking to David at the Museum earlier this year I was delighted to find that he seemed to have recovered from Betty's sad death and was again fully committed to the Societies activities. He was a good and most agreeable friend.

David in the big Barn at a recent Open Day

John Davis

David

We only had notification of his death a few days before publication of the last Newsletter too late to let members know about the memorial service.

David was indeed a most agreeable friend.

I would like to thank everyone for the good wishes both Brenda & I have received following our recent times in hospital.

Sandra Barnard Editor

LOCAL DEATH RECORDS 1879-1886

The museum's paper archive cabinet contains an absolute treasure trove of papers that historians refer to as primary source material. This means that the papers concerned are genuine documents from a particular time and not ones that have either been edited in any way or used in another work. Whilst attempting to catalogue the contents of the cabinet I came across a bundle of Certificates of Registry of Death that pertained to the Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1874. Prior to this act, the recording of births and deaths had been by parish registers

and were very much a hit and miss affair dependent upon which part of the country you lived in. The appointment of official registrars and the division of counties into manageable sub-districts for the purposes of maintaining an accurate record was one of the lessons learned from the first census of 1871.

The certificates we hold are mostly from either Tring or Ivinghoe sub-districts and the registrars were M Young and W W Andrews respectively. When looking at such material we should be aware that it can only be a partial record (that which has survived the passage of time) and that it will inevitably be selective. Coming to any conclusions would be tentative at best. The certificates were necessary in order for a burial to take place and would have been handed to the minister responsible for the service by the undertaker. They do not record the cause of death but simply state the name and age of the deceased, together with the date of registration.

A few facts and figures from this bundle of certificates might be appropriate at this stage. Of the fifty five records, twenty one are for males and thirty four for females. Infant deaths (under the age of five) number nine boys and twelve girls. The age distribution of the rest is rather skewed, with few prior to the age of fifty, and twenty two being over the age of sixty. Thirty seven families are represented in the group and all deaths were recorded between 1879 and 1886, the greatest numbers occurring between 1881 and 1883.

Having noted the bare facts, the first thing that I noticed was the good age to which a number had survived. Whilst countryside living was hard, it seems that it was healthier than in the crowded towns of the time. The median age of the adult group (its middle value) was sixty five and six managed to live well into their eighties. Accepting that most families would have grown a large part of their fresh vegetables for their own consumption, that earth closets were the order of the day and that little leisure time would be available, the high incidence of the over sixties age group seems remarkable.

Looking at the other end of the age spectrum, the survival of infants in their first year of life appears to have been capricious. One child was recorded as being two minutes old at time of death and fifteen of the twenty one deaths occurred within the first year of life. There could have been very little access to formal medical care within the local environment; particularly as such care would have to be paid for. The East Bucks Friendly Society existed but most people would not have been able to afford to enrol their families as well as support them on a day to day basis.

Infant deaths, occurring within the first year of life, were the consequence of a number of factors. A bit of research suggested that the most common causes of such mortality were tuberculosis, convulsions, meningitis, gastrointestinal diseases (infantile diarrhoea), toxæmia and various un-ascribed infections. There have been a number of studies done that have linked the incidence of such deaths to the socio-economic parental group, with those at the lower end of the spectrum having the highest frequencies. It is possible, though, to take some comfort from the fact that these figures tended to be lot lower for rural areas, where the transmission of infection was less than in the overcrowded and generally unsanitary conditions found in the industrial suburbs.

The names of the families involved are in the following list. Should any family historian like to get in contact with me in order to view the said certificates, I can be found at the museum most Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Dennis Trebble

Barwick	Heley	Simmons
Bilbey	Helery	Souster
Bonham	Jackson	Tompkins
Bray	James	Treacher
Brinklow	James	Wakeman
Collins	Lloyd	Warren
Chowns	Mardell	Wells
Deeley	Moore	Wheeler
Dimmock	Morris	Williamson
Dollimore	Parsons	
Elliott	Payne	
Ginger	Peppiat	
Green	Short	
Hawkins	Short	

Programme 2011-2012

All meetings are held in the Meeting Room in the Pitstone Green Museum at 8.00pm.

ALL VISITORS VERY WELCOME

Special information regarding the AGM

This year the Annual General Meeting will begin at 7.30p.m. Copies of the minutes of the last AGM and current year's accounts will be available for those who attend. Our speaker should be able to begin at around 8.30p.m. and refreshments will be served as usual.

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.

Thursday 15th December '11 *Social Evening**

This year we are reverting to our 'social gathering'. We will have mince pies and sausage rolls ready for you and some liquid refreshment too. Dennis Trebble works closely with the Museum artefacts and has promised to prepare a light hearted 'Museum Christmas Quiz' and the lucky winner will receive a prize! In addition to this quiz we would be delighted if any other member could bring along an 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 enjoy the fun with the assembled company. Let's hope this year's weather will allow members to travel easily to this meeting.

Thursday 19th January '12 *Walking Sticks**

Working sticks have a long history in rural life with shepherds whiling away the long evening hours tending their flocks making crooks and leg cleeks to aid them in their work and for protection travellers cut staves from the hedge-rows. These sticks were initially made from materials close at hand. This rural craft is still practiced today by men and women using similar materials and methods.

Michael Cox has been making sticks locally with the 'Sticks in Beds' group for about 10 years and in this talk will be demonstrating the different types of sticks and the various materials now used."

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

Open Days 2012-Advance Notice

There are some changes next year as you may be aware. The late Mayday Bank Holiday has been moved to June 4th so we have delayed the June Open Sunday to the 3rd week as we have done with July to bring July into the school holidays. August and September are back to the second Sunday and we are going to try an extra day in October. **The dates are as on the back page.**

Norman Groom

Membership 2011-12

Membership stands at 153 fully paid up members with a handful of last year's members either forgetting or are not renewing this year. A reminder membership renewal slip will be enclosed for these people.

Bill Barnard, Membership Secretary

Front Cover... picture by Bill Barnard

Tappalachian Dancers at our open day on Sunday, 10th July 2011

Open Days 2012

Easter Monday **April 9th**

Early May B.H. Monday **May 7th**

Spring B.H. Monday **June 4th**

Sunday **17th June**

Sunday **15th July**

Sunday **12th August**

B.H. Monday **August 27th**

Sunday **9th September**

Sunday **14th October**

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**

Programme &

Minutes Secretary

Sue Lipscomb **01296 630578**

Publicity Secretary

Anne Ball **01442 822672**

Committee member

Position vacant

Non Committee Posts:-

Archivist post vacant

Craft Co-ordinator

Brenda Grace **01296 668167**

Dancers

Margaret Elliott **..email**

MEchippie@aol.com

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Reg Jellis

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