

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter



New Year 2012

Museum Report – January 2012

This time at the Annual General Meeting held last November we managed to attract, and elect two additional people to serve on the Executive Committee. They are Sandra Barnard who has for a long while been our officer in charge of Computer Records and our Newsletter Editor, and her husband Bill Barnard who has also served us as Membership Secretary for some years and is our Technical Adviser-Computers. It is really good to have the views of two extra people to help steer the running of the Society & Museum after steadily losing committee members for various reasons over several years past.

One of our major projects this winter has been completed; a brand new drain now takes away all of the rainwater which falls onto the roofs over the Meeting Room and over the Tractor Sheds etc, to the rear. Previously the old drains there were totally and utterly blocked, and any attempt at renovation would have involved the roadway, which belongs to the Hawkins family, being dug up. Even then nobody knows where the existing drain there used to discharge its effluent before it became silted up. Even Jeff Hawkins was unable to answer this question. It is thought probable that the old drain was built at the same time as the farmhouse and outbuildings in the 1830's.

The other drainage project for the winter has been abandoned. We also have blocked drains from the Grain Barn but this has never seemed to cause any problem; the ground there always seems to be able to soak up the water like a sponge. However the reason for abandoning the project is that we have found evidence that it is not advisable to take water from metal or asbestos roofs into ponds where there are fish and that is precisely where we intended the water to drain – into our wildlife pond.

The 'Green Shed' has been demolished; or rather I should say disassembled. Some of the sections are being restored with a view to re-erecting a somewhat smaller building in the future, but the roof was judged to be beyond repair. The replacement for the Green Shed will be started soon when the worst of the winter weather has finished, and by the end of the open season we hope to have a new building into which we can move various exhibits. In 2013 it is our intention that this will be an additional display building open to the public.

Work on the Gauge '1' model railway has been progressing steadily all through the open day season and has continued up to the present. You will recall from the last Newsletter that Dave Fuller left suddenly about a year ago taking some equipment with him and leaving the layout in a condition in which it was barely possible to demonstrate trains running to visitors on open days. A great deal of

effort has been put into restoring this popular exhibit and now the basic work is just about complete. However a great deal of additional work remains which can best be classified as 'enhancements & refinements' and we see this progressing steadily into the future. No attempt will be made to resurrect the outdoor Gauge '1' track circuit at present as there are no spare volunteers available to tackle this.

Grass cutting around the Museum and in the orchards effectively ceased after the last open day in September. This was because we had been experiencing a slight leak of diesel fuel from the ride-on mower all year and this was becoming noticeably worse. It took some time to find the leak which was eventually shown to be due to a small crack in the (plastic) fuel tank. Repairs will be effected during the winter, but this has meant the grass not being cut at all throughout the autumn. Some of the grass is now quite long so we shall have to start cutting as soon as weather permits from the end of February onwards and reduce its length in stages. This inevitably results in piles of cut grass which only decays slowly until the warmer weather returns and certainly the orchards will not be displaying their usual tidy appearance until late spring at the earliest. Volunteers to do some of the grass cutting in 2012 are still being sought.

We are also still 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.

Finally, during the high winds in the middle of the second week of January we suffered a major roof tile slippage on the north side of the Big Barn. We have discovered that damage due to 'Storm & Tempest' is not included in our buildings insurance and are seeking quotations to remedy this. We have decided we have the skills to carry out repairs to a satisfactory standard, and at the time of writing we have had scaffolding erected professionally ready for starting this work on the first suitable day. It is worth noting that the whole roof of the Big Barn was re-tiled by the late Chris Wallis around 1990-1991, just after the start of our 99 year lease of the farm from the late Jeff Hawkins. We obtained a grant to help with this. Of the present volunteers at the Museum, only Norman Groom and I were actively involved there at that time, and my only activity there was irregular visits on Sunday mornings to help in the restoration of the Crossley gas engine. I did

take parts home with me to work on during any spare time that arose, and I believe Norman's involvement was similar. I certainly have no recollection of roof repairs in progress.

Peter Keeley, Secretary

1939 One person's story – Mr William H. West

Imagine being self-employed as a shoe repairer and all the various tasks that would entail. As well as the craftwork itself, there would be the upkeep of stocks, the balancing of books, the taking of orders and one hundred and one other things to think about. Working hours would be those that were necessary to complete deadlines and this would often mean working into the early evenings and over weekends. We would agree that this would constitute a busy life. Now think about volunteering to do extra for the community, mostly during anti-social hours. Such an effort would be bound to interrupt sleep patterns and certainly add another pressure to your everyday existence. This is what Mr West did in 1939.

Tring cobblers shop.

Leicester boot and shoe company with Harry E West and William outside.

After Tring, William had a shop in Cheddington and finally at the bottom of his garden in Green Lane, Ivinghoe. Harry E West's first shop was in Berkhamsted.

He was the son of Harry West, who had been chairman of the Pitstone Parish Council between 1917 and 1939. As such he was brought up in an atmosphere of public service and had seen action in the First World War. One of the health problems he carried was a direct consequence of having survived a gas attack during that time. With the gathering war clouds over Europe, Mr. West wanted to "do his bit". We are fortunate that amongst the museum artefacts we have one of his diaries that records his time as a Police Special Constable between July 1939 and July 1941. Throughout



that time he was located in Ivinghoe and covered a beat that extended from the Tring turn off at one end of town to the Pitstone cross roads at the other. The focus of this patrol was the Town hall, the Church and the Youth Hostel. His duty periods were normally of two or three hour's duration and involved frequent checking with the regular local bobby – Arthur Godliman. He was also part of a bigger group of specials that included Ted Treacher, who kept an eye on their



activities.

Arthur Godliman, Local Police Constable 1935 – 1947 picture from “Pitstone 2000”.

Of the one hundred and seven weeks that the record covers, he performed one hundred and ninety duties, missing only three due to ill health. War was officially declared on 3rd September 1939, though it is evident that the country had been preparing for the conflict for some time beforehand. Mr West had enrolled in the specials in late July 1939 and one of his first duties, on August 11th of that year was to take part in a Black Out exercise in the neighbourhood. In the period from September onward, there seems to be a predictable pattern of activity as the so called “phoney war” settled into people’s consciousness. The on-duty patrols were usually twice a week affairs patrolling the regular beat. Throughout this time, Linslade Police Court acted as a focal point for lectures on subjects such as first aid, gas attacks and procedural matters. On 3rd June 1940 the diary takes on a more urgent note. It records the passage of a tramp through the village who was aggressive enough to warrant a request for help from the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service) unit that operated the searchlight at Tring turn. Mr. West

records a fairly detailed description of the person, though the outcome is not specified. Clearly, strangers who would have been tolerated a bare eighteen months previously were now treated with both caution and suspicion.

The first of ten air raid warnings covered by the diary was on June 25th 1940. There was a substantial hiatus before the second on August 30th. There then followed a flurry of activity as the next eight happened in close timing with one and other between Sunday September 8th and Wednesday October 16th. These warnings had coincided with an increase in enemy bombing raids over the South East as the effects of the war began to impinge ever more closely on daily life – even in such a relatively remote rural setting. Throughout this time Mr. West had

been without a uniform. It was eventually delivered in September 1940 after a twelve week wait (not a bad effort for a country with ever decreasing reserves of cloth, dyestuffs and the necessary tailoring skills).

It might be thought that Mr. West was one of a limited number of war-time volunteers, though nothing could be further from the truth. The threat of air raids was so real, for example, that twice weekly first aid lectures were held in the Memorial Hall in Pitstone. These lectures had a particular emphasis on gas attacks and people carried their boxed gas masks with them wherever they went. The diary shows a close liaison with ARP volunteers who manned a rota of all-night watches. Fortunately, Pitstone and Ivinghoe were, for the most part, spared the nightmare of bombing. He notes three instances of bombs in the area – one at Cheddington and two in the fields surrounding the built up area of Pitstone and Ivinghoe.

Perhaps the most evident fact that springs off the pages is the similarity with which each duty period progressed. It is often said that familiarity breeds contempt, but in this instance, I think it bred a sense of security with people following a daily pattern that reassured them of some normality in their lives at a time of tense national insecurity.

(In order to flesh the bones of the diary entries I have used one or two ideas from "Pitstone 2000" and I am happy to acknowledge the help given by Mrs Brenda Grace in providing me- an outsider- with a locational frame of reference).

Dennis Trebble, Archivist, Pitstone Green Museum.

Christmas

We now celebrate the season of Nativity in a very different way today than our Great-Grandparents ever dreamt of. In the villages small farmers counted every farthing. They were self sufficient; it was the way of life, as it was for the ordinary inhabitants.

Their homes would be decorated on Christmas Eve with bunches of holly, ivy, sage and rosemary, in fact anything that would give an aroma to their rooms. Last would be the Yule log, to put on the large open fire which would burn day and night for the twelve days of the celebrations.

Wives would have made various pies for hungry appetites, if possible, boiled mutton and a joint of pork, which had been previously smoked up the cottage chimney, before boiling and cheese, again made by the wives and daughters of the family.

Dried fruit and sugar were expensive items to purchase to make the Christmas pudding and cake. The housewives of those days knew how to make a little go a long way by adding dried damsons or dried dark plums. Those hard working women knew so much, I would imagine they would be horrified how much we now spend with such ease.

Church or Chapel would be attended on Christmas Day as it was to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child, and Vicars would take a note of those who were absent.

It was not a habit of giving presents, the men of the cottage a pair of socks knitted from an unpicked old jumper, or a welcome pair of mittens. To the females, a strip of lace, perhaps a piece of ribbon.

In the large country houses, the celebrations were a very lavish affair indeed. Parties would be arranged by the lady of the house in pecking order, by informing the housekeeper of her desired menus. She in turn gave instructions to the cook, who would send a kitchen maid for the head gardener to give him the lady of the house's instructions for various fruits to dress the table from the hot house.

All the vegetables would be kept in clamps in a cool dark shed. Any brassicas would be cut on the day, weather permitting. Should it be that the head gardener failed to please the mistress of the house with the fruits or vegetables needed for her guests, then he would be dismissed, lose his home and would only find work as a labouring gardener, or, go into the workhouse.

There would be various decorations of evergreens, much more lavish than the cottagers'. "Prince Albert" had introduced from his homeland Germany, which every wealthy household admired, "the Christmas Tree". Can you imagine the voices of admiration at the spectacle in the wealthy home? Meanwhile the people in their humble cottages would eat, talk and admire their little gifts, which cost nothing, but the thought was there.

Ena Elliot Ashurst.

Victorian Christmas Traditions

Although the birth of Christ has been celebrated for the best part of 2,000 years, it only became a festival as we know it in Victorian times. Imagine a Christmas with no Christmas tree, no crackers, no Christmas cards and no time off work!

Many of these Victorian Christmas traditions were introduced to English society by Queen Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert. Being from German aristocracy,

Albert was used to the custom of bringing a fresh fir tree into the home and decorating it on Christmas Eve, so he had one brought to Windsor Castle in the 1840s.

The burning wax candles and decorative baubles were a focal point and quickly the idea became fashionable in Victorian parlours everywhere. Electric lights for Christmas trees were invented by Thomas Edison's assistant, Edward Johnson, in 1882. However they did not become mass produced and affordable to the general public for many more years.

In 1846, Thomas J. Smith, a London confectioner, had a great idea for selling more sweets at Christmas. He wrapped a bon-bon in a twist of coloured paper, added a love note, a paper hat and a banger mechanism which was said to have been inspired by the crackle of a log fire! This new idea took off, and ironically the bonbons were eventually replaced with a small toy or novelty. These became today's "crackers"

The first Christmas cards in England were designed for Sir Henry Cole, the Chairman of the Society of the Arts. The year was 1846 and the first 100 Christmas cards, designed by John Calcott Horsley, were printed at great expense which rather curbed the idea from taking off. However, shortly afterwards colour lithography was developed making printing much cheaper. Another significant factor was the rising popularity of the Royal Mail allowing postage costs to be reduced to one half penny per ounce. By the early 1870s anyone who was anyone could afford to send Christmas card greetings. Initially Victorian Christmas cards were single postcards with simple designs but soon plum puddings, robins, and snowy scenes became popular designs.

Holly, ivy and mistletoe are common plants that all produce winter berries and were held to be "magical" long before Victorian times. The holly berries were said to repel witchcraft and a berry-laden sprig would be carried into the Victorian house by a male and used to decorate the Christmas pudding. Mistletoe had pagan origins and in Victorian times it was not allowed in churches. However, kissing under the mistletoe was popular in Victorian homes. After each chaste kiss a white berry had to be removed from the sprig until there were none left – and no more kisses were to be had.

Although Christmas songs had been sung by wassailers from the 15th century, it was only in Victorian times that they began to be sung in churches. Silent Night, for example, was written in Austria and was only translated into English in 1871 when it was added to the Methodist hymnal.

Traditionally the Victorian Christmas began on Christmas Day when church bells called everyone to church for scripture readings interspersed with carols. Christmas dinner was a grand family affair for those who could afford it with a goose, chicken or roast beef. Turkey became popular in the late 19th century. Christmas pudding was

served then crackers were pulled and everyone exchanged gifts before playing parlour games.

From the web site:-

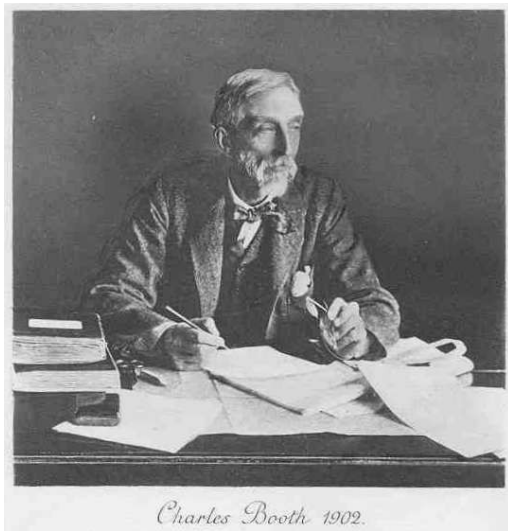
<http://www.aboutbritain.com/articles/victorian-christmas-traditions.asp>

Charles Booth

Sadly many poor people were lucky to have just a crust of bread at Christmas. Charles Booth a remarkable English Victorian was profoundly concerned by contemporary social problems.

In 1884 he undertook to assist in the allocation of the Lord Mayor of London's Relief Fund, by analysing census returns. From this he discovered the highly unsatisfactory nature of the censuses, and would later become a member of the official committee in charge of the 1891 census and make a number of recommendations for its improvement. In the autumn of 1885 Henry Hyndman published the results of an inquiry into poverty conducted by the Social Democratic Federation, which claimed to show that up to twenty-five percent of the population of London lived in extreme poverty.

Charles Booth 1902



He produced a survey into London life and labour. The inquiry was organised into three broad sections: poverty, industry and religious influences. The poverty series gathered information from the School Board Visitors about the levels of poverty and types of occupation amongst the families for which they were responsible. Special studies into subjects such as the trades associated with poverty, housing, population movements, the Jewish community and education were also included. The industry series, working as a complement to the information already gathered about occupations from the School

Board visitors, investigated every conceivable trade in London, from cricketers to wigmakers, to establish wage levels and conditions of employment. The series also covered the "unoccupied classes" and inmates of institutions, thereby including some fascinating material on the workhouses and causes of pauperism. The religious influences series - perhaps better described as social or moral influences - sought to describe these other forces acting on the lives of the people. As well as religion and philanthropy, it also covered local government and policing.

One of the most striking products of the inquiry were the maps of London coloured street by street to indicate the levels of poverty and wealth. The first of these series was produced based on the information gathered from the School Board visitors representing the situation in 1889 and was widely circulated and commented upon. Ten years later, as the inquiry was still progressing, it was thought necessary to revisit the maps and a second series was produced, the Maps Descriptive of London Poverty 1898-99. These were based on the observations made by investigators accompanying policemen on their beats around London.

From:- <http://booth.lse.ac.uk/static/a/2.html>

The map can not be produced here as it needs colour but can be seen on the web site below.

<http://booth.lse.ac.uk/> Click on Poverty maps of London: Browse.

Many of my ancestors from London lived in the poor areas of his map.

Sandra Barnard Editor

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Due to a wedding being booked on the 8th of September, we have had to change the Open Day date to Sunday 16th September.

Please correct this on the calendar that some of you have received from me. I handed out calendars to members who volunteer and those who have supplied email addresses also received one. If you would like to have one in future years please remember to write your email address on the form supplied for payment of membership fees.

Sandra

Programme 2012

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

ALL VISITORS VERY WELCOME

Thursday 16th February '12

Wildlife of the Chilterns

Barry Oxley works for the Chilterns Conservation Board and will be giving an illustrated talk about the Chilterns a unique and special place for wildlife. It is here the much loved Red Kite was first released and we will discover how this project is progressing as we delve into the flora and fauna. It is however impossible to ignore the Chilterns past and so we visit some of the ancient settlements and historic buildings during our tour.

Thursday 15th March '12

Echoes of Totternhoe

James Knight gave us a talk back in 2005 entitled 'Transport of Yesteryear'. He has lived in the village of Totternhoe all his life and his Father worked at the quarry

which James visited many times as a child. He will be showing slides and talking about both the village and the quarry.

Thursday 19th April '12

The Paper Trail - Not just the Quaint Old Mill Story!

Jacky Bennett, Chair of Trustees of The Paper Trail will give us an illustrated talk about the founding of The Paper Trail, the significance of this heritage project, the progress the trust has made and the plans for the future. Jacky has helped the Trustees; over the years create a thriving and vibrant heritage and education centre at Frogmore Paper Mill.

Thursday 17th May '12

Quiz by Dennis

This Museum Quiz will be master-minded by Dennis Trebble, our Museum archivist. More detail in the leaflet included with the 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

Obituary- Alfred James Fuller 17 February 1914 – 6 December 2011

Alfred was a member of the Society over many years and gave a number of items to the Museum and they included a Baler, a wooden chocolate box, and a very heavy coat which was used by the Drivers of the Chiltern Bus Company based in Tring (E. and F. Prentice).

He was born into a family of homesteaders on the edge of the prairie in Alberta Canada before the outbreak of World War 1. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in July 1941 and in 1944 arrived in Britain.

A Service of Thanksgiving for his Life was held on Thursday 15 December at St Peter and St Paul's Church Tring.

A more detailed report of his very interesting life written by his son Robert will be given in the next Newsletter.

Brenda Grace

Membership

It was agreed at the AGM to increase the membership fees for 2012. Single membership is now **£10**, whilst joint membership is now **£15**.

Bill Barnard (Membership Secretary)

Front Cover... picture by Peter Keeley Drainage excavations at the Museum.

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 **16th September**

Sunday **14th October**

Opening times from

11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Admission charges adults £4 children £2.

Members free.

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Museum Site Manager

John Childs **01582 833501**

Vice Chairman &

Museum Manager

Norman Groom **01582 605464**

Treasurer

John Youngs **01582 833678**

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