

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter



Museum Report – April 2014

Every year there is always a bit of a panic to get ready for the first open day of the year and this year has been no exception, even though Easter is about as late as it can be. The weather over the Winter period has been appalling being both cold and wet but at least we now have had a week or two of good weather.

This year we are trying to increase our visitor numbers with a change of name from just 'Pitstone Museum' to 'The Heritage Park, Pitstone Museum'. The other change has been to update our road signs and put them out a couple of weeks before the appropriate open day. This change has created additional work as we now have to add the actual date rather than just add Monday or Sunday as we did when we placed them out a few days prior to the event.

In 2013 a new General Manager was appointed to the Ashridge National Trust and there is now a greater cooperation between ourselves and the Trust. We now promote the Trust both on our website and the museum guide and we will hand out the Trust leaflets to our visitors. In exchange we now have an entry in the National Trust's leaflet. Other forms of co-operation are proving very helpful to us.

Work on the new Cook collection is well underway, although we still have some further items to collect. All the individual artefacts have, or will have been photographed and entered onto our database. We are now up to about 450 items with some still to go. The artefacts have been grouped into various subjects and the next task will be to design and manufacture some form of shelving to fit the low side walls and sloping roof. The room itself is now finished apart from obtaining and fitting carpet tiles down the centre walk way. The access door and side loading doors of the loft have either been repaired or new ones made.

Our Printing shop at the museum came from the late Mr Eric Hudgell from Church Lane, Pitstone. He ran a small printing business from his home and when he died his widow donated his equipment to the museum. This was several years ago and it has never been a great attraction as we never found anyone to take an interest to run it. We are fortunate now that we have a small team, experienced in the printing trade to clean, repair and get everything working. We have two printing machines, now fully functioning, that can be demonstrated on open days and produce nicely printed cards for visitors to take away.

We have also spent some time in reorganising the layout of some of the buildings. All our carts are now in the Sheepyard sheds together with a massive early chaff cutter, which we think dates from the late 1800's. This is scheduled for a complete rebuild, hoping to restore it to a working condition. It should make quite an attraction, as it can be easily powered from a tractor. The reorganisation has also resulted in a vast improvement in the exhibition of heavy farming equipment in our 'New Grain Barn'

which was previously very congested. The Blacksmiths shop has been given a face lift but at the same time taking care not to destroy its character. It is now somewhat tidier with the artefacts much better displayed. Repairs to our Shepherd's Hut are now well underway. The timbers carrying the axles and wheels have been replaced and the hut is now capable of being moved to a better location. It is hoped to use it as an exhibit rather than to just store our road signs in, as we do now.

The Museum Drive, which we share with William Hawkins, has been repaired to a suitable standard, as it does suffer during the Winter months from the heavy traffic that uses the drive as well as our own and William's vehicles.

With the coming of Spring there is a massive amount of ground work to do, both in mowing the orchards and the farm yards, to clearing up the accumulation of rubbish around the tree belt and other areas.

Another project well underway has been to refurbish the Cow Sheds leading off from the Big Barn. These have hardly been touched for many a year. Substantial portions of the walls have been repainted; artefacts cleaned and wax oiled and the photographic display previously in the Big Barn, remounted on display boards. The work is to continue between open days, as time permits.

Well over two years ago we started an exercise to identify, check the numbering and location of, and photograph every artefact in the museum that we had ever catalogued. At the same time we would discover the suspected large number of items in the museum, many on display, which we believed had never been catalogued or numbered, and we would number them and likewise photograph them. So far we are up to nearly 800 of these. We have every confidence that this project is quite near completion, particularly as only myself and Peter are now left who know the history of many of these items.

Our Long Case Clock which was donated to us in 2013 is now complete and working. The case which was in quite a bad condition has been restored and the clock mechanism completely stripped, cleaned and repaired. The clock face has been renumbered as the original numbers and makers name had almost disappeared. It is a chiming clock, now located in the meeting room, so we may have to immobilize it during our monthly meetings!

We have again been fortunate in attracting filming in the Lancaster cockpit. A small organisation is making a promotional film about the experiences of a wartime Lancaster pilot who is still alive. It is a short film about 20 minutes long which will be shown at a Film Festival in the hopes that the 'Big Boys' will pick it up. If they do it may mean more filming and hence a further boost to our income.

Norman Groom, Museum Manager.

Memories of Helen Hickson who died in December 2013.

Helen was a member for many years of the Pitstone Local History Society (later to be renamed Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society).



Like myself she was initially involved in the Catering area at Pitstone Green Museum and we were shown by Mabel Goodliffe how much margarine to spread on to the bread rolls ready for filling. We were also shown a stool to sit down on to do it, although not always taking up this offer.

Helen with Rose and Margaret

Later on Helen took on the responsibility of being in charge of the Catering for Open Days which she did over many years. She was a good organiser and also so efficient with the paperwork.

One member who used to make a cake for our Open Days reminded me that Helen would always phone after the event and thank her for producing it.

Due to failing health Helen had to give up this work. This photo shown of Helen was taken in 2005.

Brenda Grace

Following a request in the Spring Newsletter, I would like to say thank you to the people who brought sheets and covers to the Museum for use on the tables in the Big Barn.

Brenda

Membership

The 2014-15 season is well underway now. Please do not be alarmed that you may not have paid your membership fees yet.

Due to a late committee meeting, the Spring newsletter is slightly later than usual, so this is the first newsletter to contain a membership renewal slip.

Please complete the form and send it with your cheque to the address on the form. Please enclose a S.A.E if you would like the membership card posted back to you, otherwise your card will be inside the next **Summer** newsletter.

Bill Barnard Membership Secretary

The following is an extract from our historical documents held on our computer at the Museum.
This long report was prepared from a WEA course-project on local history in Pitstone, 1971-72. (See Summer 2013 issue)

Pitstone 1800 – 1850 a Report by WEA.

Part 4 Continued from last Newsletter.
PARISH GOVERNMENT: THE VESTRY

General

For an outline of parish insinuations, see Tate, The Parish Chest. Our principal source for Pitstone in this period is the vestry minute book commencing in 1815. Though a valuable record, it varies greatly in the amount of information given. Only 6 vestries are recorded before 1827 and none at all between 1815 and 1821. From 1829 the record is fuller and more formal with occasional references to proposals and voting. From 1837 the chairman is named. There is a reference to the appointment of a "select vestry" in April 1826, which was to meet fort-nightly for the purpose of investigating the parish finances, but it is not mentioned again.

Meetings and Attendance

Meetings averaged from 1 to 3 per year but as many as 10 are recorded in 1832. Average attendance was about 5-6 including parish officers and was drawn almost entirely from the farmers. The labourers, who formed the bulk of the population, took no part. Among the more regular attendees were Samuel Hawkins (1815 - 1838, a Non-Conformist), Peter Parrot (1832 - 1848), Moses Blinco (from 1833) and William Bigg (from 1833). The Ashridge estate agent Charles Cooley attended only twice in ten years and then for particular reasons, but G. Potts representing the landowner J.A. Gordon of Stocks was active between 1831 and 1835. The incumbent was usually present and, when present, acted as chairman.

Parish Officers (For Church Wardens, see section on Religion).

Overseers

Samuel Hawkins
Joseph (Barley End)
Benjamin Anstee
Francis Tompkins (Miller)
William Bigg (Dunscombe)
John Hawkins
Francis Beesley (Miller)

Surveyors

Samuel Hawkins
Joseph Simmons
Thomas Woodman
Benjamin Anstee
William Bigg
Moses Blinco
John Hawkins

Constables

none recorded

Principal Business

(a) Upkeep of the church.

Between 1827 and 1829 the vestry was much occupied with the execution of repairs to the parish church. (See section on Religion).

(b) The Poor. (See also section on Social Welfare).

Until 1835 the relief of the poor was the vestry's most important responsibility. Under the 1834 Poor Law Act the parish ceased to be the unit of relief and Pitstone was incorporated

in the Berkhamstead Union. In so far as any consistent policy can be discerned from the references in the vestry book. It is that of providing work rather than allowances for the able-bodied poor. Some requests for assistance addressed to the vestry were refused, but insufficient information is given for an assessment of the decisions. The overseer seems to have been left to act on his own discretion much of the time. There are only three examples of vestry action in relation to the laws of settlement. In November 1824 an agreement was made "concerning the hiring of servants at or near St. Michael" which imposed a fine on anyone who enabled a servant to gain a settlement in the parish. The amount is left blank and there are no signatures. Agreements of the sort were not uncommon at the time. The other two instances occur in 1832 and 1833 and concern individuals who were to be examined as to their settlements. In neither case is the outcome given.

(c) Regulation of the commons.

An example of the vestry taking over a function of the manor court. Between 1828 and 1833 there are numerous references to the exercise of common rights over the Green. In May 1828 there is a table listing owners of "cow commons" and amounts of "head money" payable, and in April 1832 there is a mention of the passing of the "commons account". In 1831 cottagers were expressly permitted to run their pigs on the common. The following year some disagreement arose on this point, Mr. Potts moving in May that "as the Hog commons are claimed as a right, that claim shall be resisted in order to ascertain the legality or not". A compromise was finally reached at the June vestry when it was agreed on Mr. Potts proposal "that all who wished to have the run of the Hog commons for this year be permitted to have it upon application to the Vestry". After 1833 there is no further reference to the commons until February 1848 when it was agreed to give up the commons "in the Field" by allowing Mr. Blinco and Mr. Jellis to keep a hundred dry sheep or sixty couples apiece. At a special adjourned vestry held in August 1833 detailed measures agreed to in relation to the open field were set down. They included rules about cropping, and the commoning of sheep on the arable. The signatures or marks of eleven commoners are appended to the "minutes of the meeting".

(d) Town Lands and Town Houses. (See section on Social Welfare).

Though in theory controlled by the trustees, the Town Land Charity appears to have been, in practice, under the direction of the vestry during the period. The first reference is in May 1830 when new trustees were appointed. Later we find the vestry arranging for the re-letting of the land and for the taking of a valuation (1832 - 1833) and fixing a new rent for some of the town houses (October 1841). In May 1848, however, a vestry called to decide on the best mode of letting the land, was told that this function was legally vested in the trustees and it was thereupon agreed to request the latter to act. We learn, however, from the Charity's own records, which are extant from 1850, that three of the trustees - Thomas Woodman, Samuel Hawkins, and William Newman - were no longer resident in Pitstone by this date and that one of them, Thomas Woodman, disagreed with the letting policy favoured by the vestry. He wanted half of the income, which had previously all been paid to the church, expended on the poor. How the dispute ended is not yet clear. The Charity's income seems, from a brief examination of the account book, to have been about a £100 per annum in 1850.

(e) The Parish Roads.

A vestry was called in November 1831 "for repairing Wadborow Hill and other roads". It laid down the hours of work to be observed and added "Butterfield is to have 7/6d per week to lodge in the parish and to be foreman over the men on the road". There are several later references to the roads between this and March 1834 (when they cease), but few details are given.

(f) The Rates.

In addition to approving the rates for the church, the poor, and the Parish Roads, the vestry also decided who was to pay and on what basis. The problem as to who should be required to pay was complicated by the consideration that payment of rates could confer a legal settlement upon an outsider, who thus became a potential burden in his turn. In March 1830 the vestry decided by a majority of 5 to 3 to require the "paupers" to attend the vestry "to decide whether they are to pay or not". The outcome is not recorded but in March 1831 28 persons were exempted from payment of a "Stone rate" of 6d in the £. In March 1833 it was agreed to demand poor rates from six named persons (probably newcomers) "and exempt the poor belonging to Pitstone parish". In November 1837, 37 persons - representing about half the population of the parish were exempted; the number of children under ten being taken into account in each case. In 1837/38 a new rating valuation was carried out. There are several examples of re-rating of individual properties, e.g. in 1844/45 the rateable value of the railway property was increased. There are no references, however, to the imposition of rates on new cottages during the period, though we know that numbers were erected.

To be continued Sandra Barnard Editor

PITSTONE GREEN FARM AND THE HAWKINS FAMILY PART 2

Pitstone Green Farm grew over the years. In 1809 it was 112 acres, in 1841 220, in 1851 250 and 1861 328 acres. Besides the increase in size of farms there had also been a tendency for the farms to be owned by people living out of the village and let to tenants to farm them until at the beginning of the 19th century there was very little land in Pitstone that was not owned by the man who farmed it.

Continuing..

So Samuel came, with his family to live in the house belonging to one of the original farms as the first tenant of the new Pitstone Green Farm. A map of 1808 in the Bucks County Record office shows the layout of the building with a large pond, The only



features that remain today are the big barn which was used to store the sheaves of corn at harvest, later to be threshed with the flail on the mowstead or threshing floor it contained, and a small shed, known as 'Stevens' barn. No doubt this was the name of an earlier owner or tenant of over 170 years ago, which it was part of another farm.

Left of picture

The Stevens' Barn today.

The Big Barn today

After Samuel took over the farm the barn was lengthened by adding three more bays and another threshing floor was installed. This extension would have been needed to store and thresh the larger amount of cereals grown on the bigger farm. Otherwise Samuel had to make do with the old farm house and building until 1830, when it is recorded in an account book of the Countess of Bridgewater at present in the Herts County Record Office, a new house and building were built for Samuel Hawkins at a cost of £896 15s 3d. To build the same today would cost more than a hundred times as much.



The old Pitstone Green Farm house was pulled down in 1830 but we can get a good idea of what it was like by looking at two other yeoman farmers' houses in Pitstone. When Lord Bridgewater bought up these farms and amalgamated them, the farm houses, often ancient structures, became redundant. Two such now called Icknield and White Friars, which were on the edge of the Green, were each converted into three workers cottages with one room up and one downstairs, and remained so until 1924, when on the death of the Fourth Earl Brownlow, much of the estate was sold. They were then bought and converted back into single dwellings again, to house people who wished to live in the country and commute to the town to work.

The agent or steward's position on a great country estate like Ashridge was a very powerful one, with many employees and tenants, land and building, subject to his control. He had to advise and act for an owner who was often absent and lacking in expert knowledge. The agent often acquired the not undeserved reputation of being over bearing and autocratic. The tale has been told about a neighbouring estate where a tenant suffering under a dictatorial agent once said "He fancies himself bigger than Lord Rothschild".

During the early years of last century William Buckingham was agent for the Ashridge Estate. He kept a very full day by day diary which gave a valuable indication of what went on at the estate at that time. He records in his diary that at least six people were interviewed before a tenant was found for Church Farm, the next farm to Pitstone Green Farm, now called Moat Farm. It was finally let on 15th April 1913 to William Newman, later to become one of the church wardens responsible for the grant repairing of Pitstone Church.

An entry in the diary tells of one applicant. "Saw the Lord B. in his dressing room respecting G. Gadsden as tenant for Pighstone Farm (Query being a dissenter)" and later "Gadsden declined the farm." But in spite of Samuel Hawkins being a dissenter, Pitstone Green Farm was let to him. No doubt Samuel's farming capacities were known to William

Buckingham, and perhaps he had a plan whereby with letting Pitstone Green Farm to Samuel, Lord Bridgewater could buy the family farm at Edlesborough which he did two years later.

William Buckingham's diary shows how he and Lord Bridgewater were interested in new farming methods. Besides the home farm there was other land in hand so there was plenty of opportunity to get practical experience and to try out new methods. We get a picture of farming in the early 19th Century from the diary.

An entry in the diary for **17th February 1813** Says that a visitor came to see the new threshing machine which was very new in January;
"In the barn proving the threshing machine"

At the end of **February 1813** is the entry *"Mr Ellman been to draft lambs for show."*

At the beginning of **March** *"Went to London with Lord B. in carriage changing horses at Watford. Went to see Lord Somerville, Lord Dundas, Coke, Ellman, etc."*

May 1813 *Went to Woburn to see implements.*

Later *"Write to Woburn for hay machine."*

Some days later, *"Visitor to see hay machine"*

12 May *"Lent out winnowing machine"* But the machines were not always an unqualified success. (See entry 2nd July)

8th June 1813 *"Began mowing with 18 at Pendley"*

It must have been quite a sight eighteen men swinging their scythes in line across a meadow.

By the **14th June 1813** the hay was dry enough to cart. *"Up at 6, then in the yard giving directions to labourers etc."*

Then *"in at breakfast,"* Then *"to Ashridge to Lord B. in his dressing room."*

Then *"to the Office and to Pendley to the Haymakers and Teams Carting till 5 o'clock, it then rained with men covering the Rick and Loading the wagons with Old hay to take home with horses. Stopped there till 7 o'clock then to Ashridge to Lord B. respecting the work and the woodland belonging to Pendley"*

Then *"home to Tea and Bed at 1/2 past 10 o'clock. New machines were tried out."*

2nd July 1813

"James Rogers cut off his hand with chaff machine and Mr Tompkins threwed my mare down going after Dr. Steele.....Mary scalded her foot"

Not a good day! William Buckingham and Lord Bridgewater entered stock in agricultural shows and met leading agriculturists of the day.

Today we depend on government Institutes and experimental stations to develop and experiment with new farming methods, and the Ministry of Agriculture advisory services to disseminate the information. In the early 19th century when great improvements were being made in agriculture, it was the big landowners that were trying out the new methods, which would no doubt be copied by their tenants if they proved successful. The productive type of farming Samuel Hawkins was carrying on shown by his farm account books of the 1840s would have been affected by his landlord's example.

We can get some idea of Samuel's tenancy agreement by an agreement made between his son's widow and her eldest son on one side and Lord Brownlow who inherited the Ashridge Estate on the other, in 1867, for the letting of Pitstone Green Farm on a yearly tenancy. Very comprehensive and rigorous conditions were imposed, reflecting the current ideas as to good husbandry. The farm must be kept free from weeds, the hedges, ditches and drains looked after and the buildings maintained. "All game and wildfowl were reserved" to his lordship, and he had "the liberty of hunting, coursing shooting, fishing and sporting upon the premises, for him and all persons with his permission."

£20 an acre a year had to be paid if grassland was ploughed up or planted with bushes or with hemp, flax, woad or any pernicious seeds.... or £10 an acre if more than one white straw crop running was grown, without the landlords consent. The land was to be managed in a four course rotation with one quarter fallow each year.

Today's cropping on the farm would be expensive in fines. One field, Sindcotts, of thirty five acres, has this year (1975) its thirteenth crop of wheat running, with the advice of the Ministry of Agriculture Advisory Service. How farming methods have changed with the advent of chemical fertilisers and sprays and tractor power!

The new buildings at Pitstone Green Farm were designed with the best interests of the then modern farming in mind. It was a great rebuild in keeping with improved farming methods and the increasing size of the farm. It would have taken into account the tenants capacity to pay an increased rent. No doubt Samuel had come to be considered a good tenant.

The new house and buildings were placed so as to form three sides of a square with the existing big barn. To the west were built a cowshed with standings for ten cows, a loosebox and a range of pig sties. On the east was built a 'nags stable' with room for two light horses for riding and driving (the farmer's car of those days) a big stable with room for eight or ten cart horses, and above, a loft, for hay and chaff for feeding to the horses.

Between the stable and the big barn they built a granary with space below it serving as a shelter for the cattle kept in the 'fold yard' formed within the square of buildings that was completed by the house to the south. During the Winter cattle were kept in this warm sheltered yard and many tons of farmyard manure was made to put on the land. The cowshed, pig sties and stables were easily cleaned out into the yard, and straw from the oats, barley and wheat threshed on the two threshing floors within the big barn was carried

straight into the yard for the cattle to eat or tread into manure. This is more or less how these buildings were used until the last war. Over a hundred years later, changes to farming began to make the buildings obsolete.

To be continued

Programme 2014

All meetings are held in the Meeting Room in the Pitstone Green Museum at 8.00pm. ALL VISITORS VERY WELCOME. Fees £2.00 members £3.00 visitors.

22.5.14 Another Evening of Music

After the success of last year's May Meeting Ron and Barbara Hartwell will once again be hosting this event in their home

(16, Ridgeway Road, Chesham HP5 2EG). It will need to be pre-booked using my email Sue.Lipscomb@bopenworld.com. Those attending will see a unique collection of Player Pianos and a Roll playing Reed Organ. After a brief talk on the history of these instruments and how they work they will be demonstrated, after which you will be encouraged to have a go yourself. **Please note the start time will be 7.30pm.**

26.6.14 Bygone Implements of Home and Farm

A light-hearted look at a Buckinghamshire family's collection of rural bygones, both domestic and agricultural. Sara Oliver is our speaker this evening.

24.7.14 Cheese Wine and Antiques

Our very popular evening at the museum with Stephen Hearn is appearing once again in our programme. 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 £7.00 for members and £9.00 for non-members and will include a ploughman's platter and complimentary glass of wine. Please do not bring more than two items for Stephen's comments and valuations. We hope you will park in the orchard. You will need a ticket for this event and a booking form will be with this newsletter.

28.8.14 Hobbies Evening and Supper

This is a great occasion for putting yourself and your hobby on display! All are welcome however quirky and unusual your collection (nothing has been censored yet!). If you have brought a display to a previous hobbies evening, please don't let that stop you from coming again and if you truly have nothing to bring, then do come and learn more about other people's hobbies. If you have friends who would like to show us their hobby or simply enjoy the evening, please bring them along. This year we are again including a supper, booking form enclosed.

25.9.14 An Introduction to the Cook Collection with Buffet

In a break with tradition we are invited to visit the Cook Collection in its newly created exhibition space in the loft above our Meeting Room. The late Colin Cook accumulated an enormous collection of artefacts which he carefully restored and which his wife has donated to the Museum. Norman Groom our Museum Manager and his team will be on hand to show us the items in this collection and answer our questions. A finger buffet and drinks will accompany this evening, booking form enclosed..

Sue Lipscomb

Cover Picture by Peter Farrar ...Entrance to our 1940's room.

Open Days 2014

Spring B.H. Monday **May 26th**

Sunday **8th June**

Tappalachian Dancers

Sunday **13th July**

Sunday **10th August**

Wicket Brood Morris Men

B.H. Monday **August 25th**

Sunday **14th September**

Sunday **12th October**

Opening times from

11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Admission charges adults £6

children £2. **Adult and child £6**

(Sundays Only). Members free.

Committee Officers:-

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Museum Site Manager

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Vice Chairman &

Museum Manager

Norman Groom **01582 605464**

Treasurer

John Youngs **01582 833678**

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