

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter



Spring 2015

Museum Report April 2015

Our first open day of the season, the Easter Monday, is now over and what a day! We broke all previous records for attendance and takings with six hundred visitors turning up. The weather was just about perfect, a pleasantly warm sunny day. We had all our usual exhibits and demonstrations together with several extras this year. The Cook Collection was a great attraction, as was our new shop layout, the new bookbinding room, the reconditioned cowshed and adjacent stables and a new exhibit in the form of a working teletype machine in the small science room.

As with previous years it was a last minute dash to get everything ready; the only two exhibits we failed to have up and running were the new Peter Keeley model engineering workshop and the old carpenters shop currently being set up as a Victorian/Edwardian Room. A relative of one of our volunteers came along with four scaled down battery powered Land Rovers that the children could drive around a track in the orchard. All the funds raised were generously donated to the museum. We also had quite a number of vintage and military vehicles together with lots of stationary engines from the local engine club. The local tractor club attended and the local boat club set up a marquee in the chicken yard. Visitors were treated to a country dancing display in the afternoon. Without the help of all our volunteers, both during the closed season and on the day itself, none of this would happen and I know that a lot of them went away quite exhausted.

Although the Easter Monday is usually our best day of the year, providing the weather is acceptable, why did this year break all records? We carried out a survey of what attracts people to the museum and the two dominant factors were previous visits or recommendations from others plus the road signs. We now put out the new big bright road signs and several smaller ones two weeks before the event, together with additional ones at Ashridge on the day itself. It will be interesting to see what the rest of the year brings.

I am not sure if it's just old age creeping on but this winter's closed season seemed long and cold with endless overcast skies and cold winds, even when the rain held off. Apart from the Christmas break, work went on throughout the winter. The restoration of our massive Victorian chaff cutter is not too far from completion and we hope one day to have this running, driven from one of our stationary engines. Three new volunteers have joined us, Sandra (Oxley), Andrew Reeve and Allan Carter; Allan worked for Jeff Hawkins on the farm years many ago and has provided us with lots of interesting facts about the site. Another project started was the restoration of our Victorian/Edwardian Bath Chair that has been stored in the upper Mill Barn for as long as I can remember. The chair itself is made from wicker work and was just falling to bits. We have found someone to

make an exact copy of the old basket chair and the metal framework and wheels have now been stripped, cleaned and repainted ready for when the chair itself has been made. Another project has been the restoration of a funeral bier, again sadly neglected. This has been fully restored and looks quite impressive with its nice varnished wood and painted chassis and wheels. This is now on display in the Big Barn.



Other winter projects have been to completely refurbish the cow shed and the small stable in the Big Barn. Both of these were scruffy and neglected and are now cleaner and much brighter with a new coat of white emulsion. The museum shop has been completely stripped out and repainted and a smart new elegant counter made by one of

our volunteers. It has new racking for sales items, curtains at the windows and a small table and chairs for children to sit and draw at whilst the parents look around the shop. The room that the 3mm model railway people vacated has been fully refurbished, the walls wet blasted to leave the original brickwork and a new false ceiling fitted. This is now being fitted out as the model engineering workshop with the room next door used for bookbinding demonstrations. The most time consuming project has been work on the Cook Collection. Four of our volunteers have been beaver away for many months to get the collection ready for the first open day and there is still more work to do before it is finally finished.

We are still getting offers of donations to the museum, many of which we have to refuse because of lack of space. Others, because of their age or rarity we accept and try and find space to display. One collection we did accept was a large number of model farm animals made by Brittan in the 1930's. They arrived in two cardboard boxes, each individual model wrapped in newspaper and in excellent condition. They are now exhibited in the old carpenters shop. Another recent acquisition is a 1920's piece of medical equipment. In the early years of the 20th century people were fascinated with the application of scientific discoveries for medical purposes. X-rays were used in amateur experiments, electric shocking

machines were used to treat anything or everything and radioactive radium was added to medicines and even incorporated into clothing, thinking it a cure all. The device we have just acquired is called a 'Violet ray treatment device'. It is an extremely high voltage generator (some 50,000v although very low current) and was applied to the skin via various shaped glass tubes filled with different gases. When the tip of the glass tube is applied to the skin the gas in the tube glows violet and produces a warm or tingling feeling on the skin. You can draw a spark to the skin with some of the tubes and although I have tried it I would not repeat it again, not being partial to electric shocks!

The science rooms are getting full to capacity and we need more people to help look after things, especially on open days. It is not a full day job, just an hour or two to give a break to those that help at the moment. We have lots of equipment that can be demonstrated but without more help they just sit there doing nothing. The Cook collection also has many scientific items like early film projectors, stereo viewers, early gramophones, tape recorders, magic lanterns etc, but again without the help of someone to look after and operate these devices they remain just as static exhibits. If you have the slightest interest in scientific bits and pieces and willing to spend a few hours at the museum please contact us, we are not looking for a degree in science just a basic DIY interest.

Every day is different at the museum; we have a Forward Plan we are supposed to work to but something new always occurs and we are then off on a different track.



Our volunteer force is steadily growing, as are the projects we are working on. I don't think anyone ever gets the opportunity to be bored.

**Norman Groom,
Museum Manager.**

Easter Open Day 2015

The Sun Shone! Dancers - New Moon Morris



PITSTONE GREEN FARM AND THE HAWKINS FAMILY



Correction! Son of John Hawkins 1811

John Henry Hawkins as a young man.

(Picture from our archives.)

(I wrongly titled this picture in the New Year issue as his father John 1811 Sandra Barnard Editor)

FINAL PART

As far as can be judged the farm made a good profit. From May 1839 to March 1840 the excess of income over expenditure was £275 (approx.). Production from farms is supposed to have increased at this time. We can certainly see from these accounts how the farm was made to produce well by the keeping of livestock that manured the land, buying fertilisers in the form of loads of manure and ashes and by the growing of legumes including, trefoil, beans, peas and tares, that had the effect of increasing the level of nitrogenous compounds in the soil. The most naturally fertile soil in

Pitstone is the lower wetter land. It is only by draining that good crops can be grown.

Another account book has items for cost of drainage spread over several years. That for 1846 comes to £79 19s 6d. which would pay for a large area to be drained. It included the cartage of the rag for the drainage of the piece nearest to the Bell by measurement 11 acres and 30 poles. Seven horses for 32 days at 4 shillings a day came to £44 16s 0d. and labour, use of carts etc. to go with them to £34 3s 6d. These were rag drains. Trenches were dug and hard chalk or rag carted from one of the rag pits in Pitstone was put into them allowing the water to percolate away. The effect of these rag drains can often be seen in crops today by a line of better crop along the course of the drain. As careful account was being kept of the cost of this draining, it is likely that the landlord was paying for it. These improvements are a testament to the confidence existing between landlord and tenant.

The farm was held not on lease but on a yearly tenancy. The effects of these improvements on crop yields can only be guessed at, but there are some memoranda of the amounts of grain "cleaned" in the barn in 1839 which suggest that, even at this time, yields were good by the standards of the time at 30 bushels per acre of wheat and 25(34 in 1834) for barley. The national average for wheat in 1839 has been estimated 31.2 bushels but this is based on figures for the biggest and most advanced producers. The average for Bucks as a whole had been reported at a mere 21¼ bushels. Decreased costs, offsetting the relatively low grain prices, probably helped to finance the improvements. (There are no indications of money being borrowed for the purpose).

This is particularly evident in regard to poor relief. Although the situation in Pitstone had never been as bad as in many other parishes, the poor rate had been a heavy, if fluctuating, burden on farmers from the earlier part of the century. In 1813, one of the worst years, for example, Samuel Hawkins paid £15 4s. on one rate of 2s. in the pound. The recorded parish expenditure for the year shows that over four such rates must have been needed so Samuel's total bill on his farm of 112 acres cannot have been less than £60, equivalent to over 10s. an acre. By contrast, in 1848 his son paid only one 2s rate amounting to £24 3s 6d, or about 2s. an acre.

Because the farm was held on a yearly tenancy and not on lease, it was possible for the rent to be adjusted easily to take account of changed circumstances, but in practice it appears to have remained steady between 1830 and 1850 at around £1 and acre, rising thereafter. The evidence for this is set out in the following table:

Year	Rent	Acres	Per Acre	Source
1830	£223	c.214	c.£1	Ashridge rent book
1840	£223	c.220	c.£1	Farm account book
1848	£272	246	£1.2s.	Poor rate book
1867	£520	319	£1.13.4d.	Farm tenancy agreement

The rent was a lower rent than the county average for 1851, reported by Caird to be 30s. an acre. Another commentator, Read, writing in 1856, gives 30s. as the average for the mixed loams of mid Bucks; the average for the Chiltern range was lower at 10-20s; it was the highest in the Vale at 42s. The benefit of a moderate rent was enhanced by the absence of any payments arising from tithe, for in Pitstone the land owner was also the tithe owner and it is probable that even before the general commutation of 1841 the tithe was meagre in the tenant's rent. Labour costs - the other major item of regular expenditure - were by modern standards extremely low, thanks to the prevailing low rates of wages. When wages finally began to rise after 1850, the increased cost was offset at Pitstone Green by a proportional reduction in the number of men employed. The evidence for this is shown below:

Year	Acres	Employees	Acres	Annual Wage Bill
1840	220	10 men 4 boys	18	£312
1851	250	20 labourers	14	£420
1861	328	16 men 5 boys	18	(this figure is missing)

The trusteeship administration of Pitstone Green Farm did not last long, for within a few months Samuel's second son John had taken sole control. Entries in the account books are mostly in his handwriting and begin at the time of his marriage in early 1839 (some entries in one book go back to the end of the previous year) suggesting that he had already taken to some of the responsibility for the farm at

this time. In the marriage register he is styled "farmer" and not as previously "corn factor". He seems to have carried on where his father left off both in size of family and in methods of running the farm.

Entries he made in an account book in April and May 1840 show some of the live and dead stock he took over and what he paid for them. "Sheep and turnips £356; Horses £110; 6 qrs and 1 Bsl. Oats @24s qr £7 7s 0d; 6 carts and wagons & Ploughs and harrows and Bayards (a sort of trestle for resting the back of loaded carts upon when the horse has been shut out) & Trussels & Rowl and great Jack (used for lifting carts to remove the wheels to grease them) £63 3s 0d. The total comes to £536 10s 0d - a large sum for a young man of 29 to find.

John's wife was Emily Heley from Ivinghoe and they had two sons and two daughters. Emily died about 10 years after they were married and John married again. His second marriage in 1852 was to Mary Ann Gadsden a farmer's daughter from the nearby village of Dagnall. They had five sons and eight daughters before John died in 1866. All but two of the eight girls died young, five of them in their late teens or early twenties of tuberculosis, a disease that has now mercifully been practically eradicated. It also caused the death of John himself. The boys or some of them, received a modest education at the boarding school kept by Alfred Hart, a country schoolmaster in Ivinghoe. A letter written by John in 1866 to Mary Ann Hawkins, addressed as "Polly" on a rare occasion when he was away from the farm and family, gives a picture of loving and affectionate husband and father.

Farm and family apart, John Hawkins principal interest in life was the Wesleyan Free Chapel in Ivinghoe of which he was the leading patron, he is credited with having advanced most of the money for building the new chapel in 1854. It is hardly surprising that after his death (from tuberculosis) in 1866 his wife should have married a Methodist preacher.

In 1751 when William Hawkins the Elder signed his Will it was with a cross as he could not write. The Samuel Hawkins who came to Pitstone in 1808 could write very well as his entries in an account book for 1837 show. The writing in these account books for the farm throughout the 19th Century is very good although the spelling is a bit individualistic at times. Probably most of the workers on the farm during that time could neither read nor write.

The account books for Pitstone Green Farm show a general picture of the system of running the business, and the feeling of the farmer and the workers towards the farm and the work, very similar to that pertaining into the present century, and in

spite of vastly changed methods, even up to the present day. Samuel Hawkins influence from 150 years ago can still be seen. It is likely that with sons following on from fathers, and learning how to farm from them, and the workers coming as boys, being taught and teaching in their turn until they retire, that there should be a very strong continuity and tradition on a farm.

There is some significance in the half joking question when some problem arose; "*How did we done it last year?*" There has been a pride in doing the job well, with the farm kept tidy, weeds to the minimum, tools and implements looked after and all produce going off the farm in a good a state as possible. Straw was sold off the farm in hand tied trusses, using hand spun straw bands. They were always made to look as attractive as possible. A craftsman's pride was taken in their appearance. It was said that a good load of straw would sell more as it travelled to its destination. The loads were very carefully loaded with the "backing" (a layer of straws pulled straight) on the outside of the load with it is said the "best side towards London".

Crops, ricks, thatching, hedging and livestock would have been entered in local competitions and shows. Samuel's son John won Lord Brownlow's prize for the best cultivated farm in 1865, not many years after the upheaval of the enclosure and when his health was failing (he died a year later) beating J K Fowler of Aylesbury, the well known farmer and writer, into second place.

There has never been a foreman on the farm. The farmer has always met the men first thing in the morning and discussed with them and given orders about the work for the day. He was always closely in touch with what was going on. Almost his only time away from the farm was his regular trips to market to sell his produce and to find out the state of trade. In the 1839 accounts at least once a week is the item for "*Market expenses*" to "*Self at Leighton*" or "*Dinner and Hors*", amounting to about 2/6. When attending market the farmer would also bring back things that were needed on the farm. "*June 27th 1839 Self and expenses 2/8 2 plough tails 4/- 20 lbs turnip seed £1*".

There are many intriguing items in the account book for 1839 and 1840. "*S Norris constable Ivinghoe searching for a stolen sheep 1s., Tole and Horse 10½d., 2lbs treacle for sheep 10d., 2 horse brushes, 1 fish linney? Comb 3s. Sperm oil for machine 1s.2d. Hired a Ploughman Gave 1 shilling, Harness? 1s. Paid Leah for looking for eggs 1d. (How those hens hide their nests but a good job for a little girl finding them) gave Chap money 1s.*" and many more such expenses.

In 1840 10 men and 4 boys were employed, the men getting about 10s. a week each and the boys half that or less. By 1860 the staff had grown with the size of the farm to 24 men and boys, but the wages paid had not increased by more than 1s. a week. Wages for the younger workers were less in proportion than they are now. This may have been because skill at the work was considered more important and took longer to learn; also young people matured later 100 years ago. In 1860 William Treacher who was 17 years old worked on the farm and was paid 5s.6d a week; half the adult wage.

Today the Agricultural wages Board consider the fair rate for a 17 year old is two thirds that of an adult. It is difficult to understand how workers could live on the low wages they received. On Pitstone Green Farm much butter was made and there would have been skim milk that could have been given to the men.

This is how the article written by the late Jeffrey Hawkins of Pitstone Green Farm, ends.

Membership News

Thank you to the 119 people who have renewed their membership on time this year. A membership renewal slip will be included in this newsletter to remind others to re-join again.

Bill Barnard (Membership Secretary)

Programme 2015

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.

Thursday 28th May '15 ***

Re-discovering the Lower Icknield Way; the archaeological excavation of an Iron-Age/Roman road and settlement at Aston Clinton

An archaeological excavation at Stablebridge Road in Aston Clinton in the summer of 2014 revealed a Roman road, thought to be the Lower Icknield Way, and the remains of a late Iron-Age and Romano-British settlement. Eliza Alqassar, Archaeological Officer at Buckinghamshire County Council, will talk about the discovery and how it fits into our wider understanding of Iron Age and Roman rural settlement in Aylesbury's hinterland.

Thursday 25th June '15 ***

The History of Leavesden Airfield in Wartime

Our speaker, Derek Sayell is a member of the Abbots Langley History Society. He will give us an illustrated talk which will focus on the development of the

airfield during the Second World War. His interest was sparked by a collection of photographs he was given which are now part of his PowerPoint presentation.

Thursday 23rd July '15 ***

Cheese Wine and Antiques....to be held in the Big Barn

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. Refreshments will include a ploughman's platter and complementary 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 is enclosed.

Thursday 27th August '15 ***

Hobbies Evening....to be held in the Big Barn

Our evening which showcases our members and the wide range of hobbies that interest them is being featured again. The hobby you decide to show us does not have to have historical links and could be one you have shown us before. If you truly have nothing to bring, then do still 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 with quiches and salad with a complementary glass of wine. You will need a ticket for this event and a booking form is enclosed.

Thursday 24th September '15 ***

An Introduction to our three newest rooms

This evening we will put on display two rooms which will be opened to visitors for the first time in 2015; Peter Keeley's Workshop and the Book Binding Room. We shall also show you the Print Room which opened during our last season. Group of volunteers will have worked very hard to bring these rooms to life and Peter's Workshop will provide a fitting tribute to his memory. A finger buffet and drinks will accompany this evening and pre-booking will be necessary; booking form enclosed. **Sue Lipscomb Programme & Minutes Secretary**

Date for your diary **Buckinghamshire Family History Society Open Day**

Saturday, 25th July 2015 - 10.00 am-4.00 pm

The Grange School, Wendover Way, Aylesbury, HP21 7NH

We will have our usual table there.

Cover page Museum Easter Monday Open Day 2015

And all other photographs by Bill Barnard

Open Days 2015

Early Spring B.H. Monday **May 4th**

Whitchurch Morris Men

Spring B.H. Monday **May 25th**

Sunday **14th June**

Sunday **12th July**

Tappalachian Dancers

Sunday **9th August**

B.H. Monday **August 31st**

Sunday **13th September**

Sunday **11th October**

Wicket Brood Morris Men

Opening times from

11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Admission charges.

adults £6 children £2.

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