

# *Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter*



## *Summer 2015*

## **Museum Report July 2015**

Rather a brief Museum report this time, no eureka moments only steady work on existing projects. The new Book Binding room however is fully operational together with the new Cook Collection and we have assembled a Scalextric car racing track from items previously donated to the museum. The track dates from 1962 and is something the children can use. Other ongoing projects are the Model Engineering workshop, a small OO gauge railway layout, the Victorian/Edwardian Big Chaff Cutter and Bath Chair, a Bolton & Paul Stationary Engine and the farm's Shepherds Hut which we hope to equip with some suitable artefacts and which will eventually be open to visitors.

Several years ago we had all the equipment available to create a public address system; at last it is operational and was used with great success at the last open day. With numerous other small projects, maintenance work, ground work (including never ending grass cutting), we are never without a job.

A friend of one of our volunteers specialises in repairing clocks. He has offered his services to the museum and our Long Case clock is now fully operational. We did originally restore it ourselves but due to our lack of knowledge about clocks it would hang up and stop when striking the hours.

I am sure most members are aware of the clock on the outside wall of the farm building opposite the farm house. It is a double face clock and was driven by a falling weight mechanism within the building. Over the years the gearing between the mechanism and the two outside dials became worn and the clock became unreliable and kept stopping. A number of years ago we replaced the weight driven mechanism with a mains synchronous motor giving greater power and apart from power cuts the clock keeps perfect time. The old mechanism has now been restored by the same person who restored the long case clock for us and together with a friend of his , who made a metal frame support, can now be seen working at the museum.

The original double face clock was supplied by J Clements Jeweller (Jeff Hawkins' uncle) for the Post Office in Tring. It was taken from there by him and erected on the farm in the 20's. It was previously restored by Michael Bickerton during winter of 2000 and ran until 2001 when it was replaced by the electric motor to improve reliability.

The Open Days attendances have improved considerably in recent times. The improvement started toward the end of 2014 on the last two open days in September and October and every day, apart from the last one of July, we have broken previous records for the equivalent day. We are doing so well this year that with four open days to go we have just exceeding our total income for 2014. The improvement started at the same time we introduced the new big road signs. I would like to think that they had something to do with it but that may be wishful thinking.

Right at the end of April I added a counter to our website, to date, the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, we have had just over 3000 hits. The web address is prominently displayed on the road signs whether this has helped we do not really know.

We do occasionally have mysteries at the museum that we cannot resolve; things disappear or sometimes appear but we do not know the reasons for this. The latest mystery relates to our pond. It was in need of some loving care and attention with a lot of the weed needing to be removed. Almost overnight someone had cleaned out all the unwanted weed. It was been done in a professional manner in that all the weed was left tidily around the edge of the pond to allow the wildlife to return to the water. If you can shed any light on the mystery we would love to hear from you.

**Norman Groom Museum Manager**

### **Visit of Brookmead School, Ivinghoe**

On Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May, the museum hosted a visit to eighty four pupils of Brookmead School. The children were between the ages of six and eight and their purpose was to find out something of the local history of the area. These days, primary school history is less about the big political and economic events that shaped a period than it is about the everyday lives of those who lived through such changes. The great English Historian G.M.Trevellyan, in the 1950's, wrote his seminal work *An English Social History* and its reverberations are still being felt in the way that historical record is now interpreted.

The day was organised into three one and a half hour shifts of approximately thirty children apiece. Each shift was then further subdivided into three work groups to circulate around each of three activities. In the Meeting Room, the concept of cottage industry was examined through the craft of straw plaiting, with the children being given the opportunity to make their own plait using old

fashioned drinking straws. Next to the Grain Barn and using one or two of the ploughs from the Owen Barn, the change in farm machinery from the use of horses to tractors was looked at and culminated in the idea of the combined harvester. Finally, the way in which the dominant building materials of dwellings changed from wood to brick gave the opportunity to study childhood mortality rates, disease and water use. The mundane but necessary activities of washing and using the toilet were also highlighted as examples of how life changing simple building improvements could be.

Unfortunately, the day was wet and cold in comparison to what had gone before but appeared to do little to dampen the enthusiasm of those involved. The school provided sufficient adult cover and teachers for each element of the visit and it is to be hoped that this local initiative will pay dividends in terms of making the museum known more widely to families in the area.

**Dennis Trebble Secretary**

### **Morris Dance...“Nine days' wonder”**

The earliest known and surviving English written mention of Morris dance is dated to 1448, and records the payment of seven shillings to Morris dancers by the Goldsmiths' Company in London. Further mentions of Morris dancing occur in the late 15th century, and there are also early records that mention Sword Dancing, Guising and other dancing activities, as well as Mummers Plays. (*Mummers Plays (also known as mummering) are seasonal folk plays performed by troupes of actors known as mummers or guisers*). By the mid 17th century it had adopted the nature of a folk dance that was performed in the parishes.

While the earliest (15th-century) references place the Morris dance in a courtly setting, it appears that the dance became part of performances for the lower classes by the later 16th century. In 1600 the Shakespearean actor William Kempe, who was probably Europe's most famous comic actor at the time who performed at the Globe Theatre, was also an expert Morris Dancer. For a wager, he Morris danced from London to Norwich a route that took him to Sudbury, Melford, Cavendish and Clare often amid cheering crowds.

The event was chronicled in his “*Nine Daies Wonder*” published in 1600. He took up the challenge for a bet and covered the distance of a hundred miles or

more in nine days (spread over a few weeks). Hence the expression “*Nine days’ wonder*”, meaning “*a novelty that loses its appeal after a few days*”.



**Will Kempe and Thomas Slye (picture from Wikipedia)**

William Kempe, despite his fame as a performer and subsequent intent to continue his career, appears to have died unregarded in 1603. Parish records record the death of "Kempe, a man" in St. Saviour, Southwark, late in 1603. While this is not necessarily the comedian, the record fits his departure from the documentary record.

Almost nothing is known about the folk dances of England prior to the mid-17th century. "Morris dancing" appears to have moved from a courtly to a rural setting. It may have acquired elements of pre-Elizabethan (medieval) folk dance. In the Elizabethan period, there was significant cultural contact between Italy and England, and it has been suggested that much of what is now considered traditional English folk dance, and especially English country dance, is descended from Italian dances imported in the 16th century.

By the mid 17th century, the working peasantry took part in Morris dances, especially at Whitsun. The Puritan government of Oliver Cromwell, however, suppressed Whitsun Ales and other such festivities. When the crown was

restored by Charles II, the springtime festivals were restored. In particular, Whitsun Ales came to be celebrated on Whitsunday



*(Note: Pentecost was sometimes called Whitsun Ales).*

### **Whitchurch Morris men perform at the Museum**

Morris dancing continued in popularity until the industrial revolution and its accompanying social changes. Various Towns and Villages have created their own styles from the basic building blocks of Morris stepping and figures.

Several English folklorists were responsible for recording and reviving the tradition in the early 20th century, often from a bare handful of surviving members of mid-19th-century village sides. Among these, the most notable are Cecil Sharp, Maud Karpeles, and Mary Neal.

Cecil Sharp was visiting at a friend's house in Headington, near Oxford, when the Headington Quarry Morris side arrived to perform. Sharp was intrigued by the music and collected several tunes from the side's musician, William Kimber. It was a decade later, however, when he started to collect the dances, spurred and at first assisted by Mary Neal, a founder of the Espérance Club (a dressmaking co-operative and club for young working women in London), and Herbert MacIlwaine, musical director of the Espérance Club. Neal was looking for dances for her girls to perform, and so the first revival performance was by young women in London.

In the first few decades of the 20th century, several men's sides were formed, and in 1934 the Morris Ring was founded by six revival sides. In the 1950s and

especially the 1960s, there was an explosion of new dance teams, some of them women's or mixed sides. There are now male, female and mixed sides to be found.

The Morris Ring is one of three umbrella groups for Morris dance sides in the United Kingdom. Partly because women's and mixed sides are not eligible for full membership of the Morris Ring, two other national (and international) bodies were formed, the Morris Federation and Open Morris. All three bodies provide communication, advice, insurance, instructionals (teaching sessions) and social and dancing opportunities to their members.

**Sandra Barnard Editor**

### **Like us on Facebook**

We are using Facebook to increase publicity about the museum. If you are on Facebook, please visit our page “The Heritage Park, Pitstone Museum” and tell your Facebook friends about the museum by “liking” and “sharing” the page. Our first target is 100 “likes” - at the time of writing, we have 71. Please help us to reach our target. Thank you.

**Mel Davis Committee Member**

### **Membership**

Current membership stands at 166 people, and for those that have still forgotten to renew from last year, I include a final reminder slip in this newsletter.

If you were at the November AGM, you will remember the discussion on a membership rule change put forward by the committee. As no-one seemed to put up a good argument against the committee's wishes, there is a new rule concerning new members. Basically, new members will not be able to get into the museum free, on Open Days, for the first year of membership. This will only affect current members if you forget to renew one year. If you wish to re-join the following year, you will be considered as new members and the new rule will apply. This will mean you will have to pay to get into the museum on Open Days for the first year. So, for last year's members who still wish to renew and who do not want to get caught out by this rule, please renew as soon as possible.

**Bill Barnard (Membership Secretary).**

### **A Few Highlights from The Open Day on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

This Open Day saw the usual huge array of exhibits together with a few new ones. Although we did not break any attendance records, we had a steady stream of visitors all day. The weather started out a bit grey and we had some light rain during the day which did not help, but by mid-afternoon the sun came out and stayed out.



The Tappalachian Dancers again, gave us all a great display of dancing and music. Here they are having a good old knees-up.

Among the display of old vehicles was a frequent visitor this year, the Jensen Interceptor, seen behind a new appearance of this fabulous “K” registration BMW 3.0 cs.





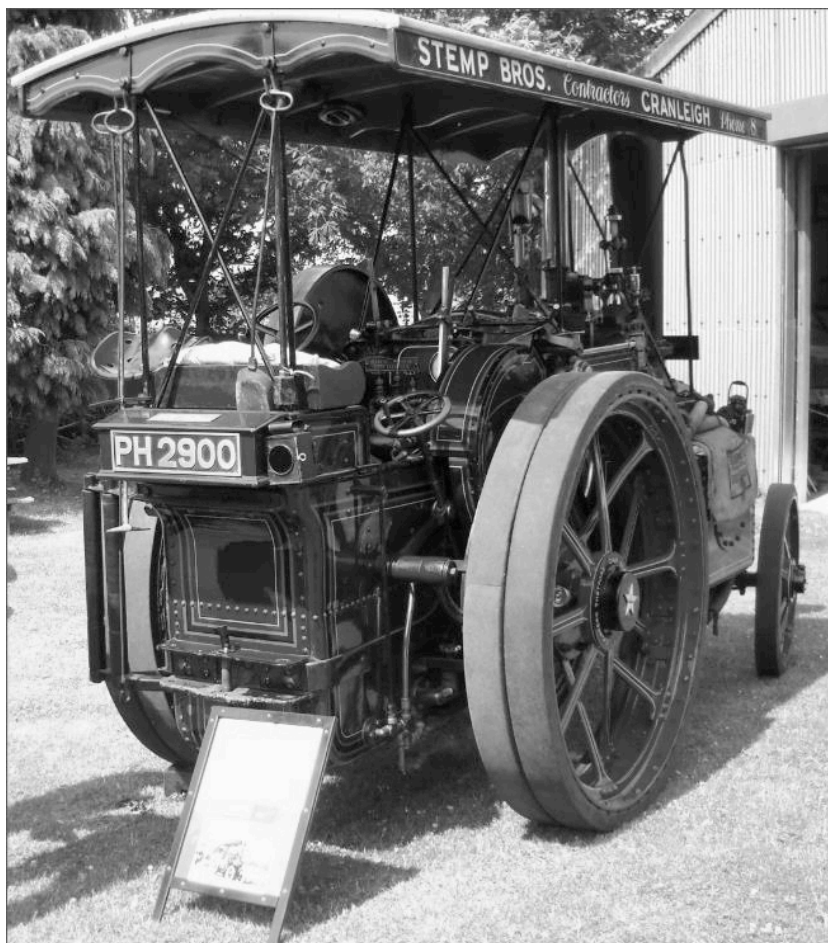
Always worth a view is Malcolm Lee's Austin



The Working Clydesdale Horse called ‘Molly’ could be seen doing a turn around the bottom field.



Later in the afternoon, after the sun decided to make a longer appearance, this Steam Traction Engine visited us.



**Bill Barnard**

*Photographs by Bill Barnard*

### **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 27<sup>th</sup> 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 was with your Spring Newsletter.

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September '15 \*\*\***

**An Introduction to our three newest rooms**

This evening we will put on display a room which will be opened to visitors for the first time in 2015; the Book Binding Room. We shall also show you the Print Room which opened during our last season and the Cook Collection where much progress has been made since last year. A Group of volunteers have worked very hard to bring these rooms to life. A finger buffet and drinks will accompany this evening and pre-booking will be necessary; booking form already sent as above.

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October '15 \*\*\***

**Subterranean Secrets**

Edna, the alter ego of Amanda Pickard has been fortunate enough to have worked at the Imperial War Museum's Cabinet War Rooms. Since leaving Churchill's WW2 secret underground bunker she has collected a series of images on subterranean London during WW2 & devised this fascinating talk. The talk is in 3 sections; firstly she sets the scene and explains why it was necessary to transfer many wartime activities underground. Edna then talks about Churchill's Cabinet War Rooms, including behind the scene images of how they are today. The final part of the talk features images from the many other wartime secret locations around London.

**Sue Lipscomb Programme & Minutes Secretary**

**Cover page** The lady blacksmith **Katie Wright** at the Museum. To find out more about her go to her website: - **[www.blacksmithmunro.co.uk](http://www.blacksmithmunro.co.uk)**

**Photograph by Bill Barnard**

**Errata**

April Newsletter, page 7 table, final column should read "Annual Wage Bill" please delete "Per Man". Page 8 second paragraph should read £536 10s 0d not £36 10s 0d.

**Editor**

### **Open Days 2015**

**Sunday 9th August Beryl's  
Bells (Handbell Ringing Group)**

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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