

*Pitstone and Ivinghoe  
Museum Society Newsletter*



*New Year 2016*

## **Museum Report January 2016**

First of all just to wish all our members a very Happy New Year and secondly it is not often that we wish a Happy Birthday to a member via the newsletter but I understand we do have a member, who in mid February this year will be 100.

Nothing dramatic has happened since the last report with work slowly progressing on the tasks in hand.

A couple of new projects have recently been started, one being the extension to the office. Space in the existing office was getting a bit tight and as we had space in the outside corridor that was under used, we are extending the office into this area. This will also make additional space in The Colin Cook Collection by relocating a storage cabinet that is in there. We hope to use the vacated space to house the many nice artefacts that are stored in the office and for which we have nowhere to display them at the moment. There is no desperate time scale on this project and it can extend into the open season if needed.

The second project is, yes! another model railway. This is an old project started many years ago. We acquired a quantity of five inch gauge track in order to construct a ride on railway for the children. Unfortunately the track had to be dismantled when we acquired the new piece of land from the National Trust. One of our members has a steam fired loco and is also building another. He has already re-erected the track and it may be not long before we have something running.

Work on the Village and Country Life room adjacent to the catering area started immediately after the last open day and things are progressing well. Refurbishing the room is almost finished apart from some electrical work. The room originally held numerous, rather tatty cabinets, that had been painted white; these have been taken out and dismantled for the timber. The doors of the cabinets were however rather nice being made of mahogany with glass fronts. We have had one or two chemically stripped and they have come up rather well. With the old hinges and locks removed and using the recovered timber, we can easily convert them into deep recessed

picture frames that will hold the display boards similar to those used previously. They will be easy to mount on the wall and it will be a simple matter to change or alter the display boards if needed in the future. Work has started on remaking and relaying out the boards themselves and by everyone working in parallel it should all come together hopefully by the first open day or very soon after.

The massive chaff cutter is almost finished and perhaps sometime this season we will be able to see it powered up, if not actually cutting chaff, on one of our open days.

The Crossley engine room is undergoing a face lift and we now have the old factory time clock working. The idea is to print time cards in the print room such that children can clock themselves in and out; at least that's the idea.

For several years we have been talking about erecting line shafting under the Black shed that housed much of the farms grain processing machines. Well this time we have something underway and with the main structure already in position. Another project to get working for the open season.

Again lots of work behind the scenes with the Accreditation update due in the Spring, the Newsletters and the work on the Archives. The Archive work is never ending but we have now broken the back of it and it's the day to day work to cover rather than the massive backlog we have had in previous years. At least the grass cutting time is not yet on us but it will not be long before ground work is underway.

With the New Year well under way and an early Easter there is still a lot to do in quite a short time. We are still desperate for more help on our open days. The rate we are generating more and more attractions is exceeding the number of people we have to look after them. If you do have time to spare please contact either myself or any other committee member.

**Norman Groom Museum Manager**

**Gordon Rodwell 1921 – 2006**  
(Continued from October Newsletter)

**1944-45**

**166 Squadron, Kirmington**

**Crew:**

**Pilot –**

A.S Caunt, DFC

**Flight Engineer –**

D. Baverstock, DFM

**Bomb Aimer –**

B.L. Thomson, DFC, RAAF

**Rear Gunner –**

L. Wayte, DFM

**Wireless Operator –**

E. Ridout, DFM

**Mid-Upper Gunner –**

S. Williamson

Having completed twenty two months of training, January of 1944 saw the men posted to squadrons. Gordon Rodwell was posted to 166 Squadron, based at Kirmington. For this period, the men lived in corrugated iron Nissen Huts which slept eight, or two crews, who shared a shelf running the length of each side of the hut for storage and one Turtle stove. This period of the war for Gordon involved many highly dangerous missions over enemy territory. The crew's very first operation was to bomb Berlin. In just that first expedition, one aircraft from Gordon's squadron and 33 out of a total of 546 did not return. The crew then worked out that, statistically, they would be on borrowed time if they went on to complete sixteen operations.

In January of 1944, the crew were back to base after bombing Berlin in their new aircraft 'L' Love. There was significant cloud cover and poor visibility. With a sudden spluttering, the connection to the fuel tanks cut out. As they began to lose height, Gordon remembers his ears blocking and becoming so deaf he could no longer hear the engine at all and he began to mentally memorise his 'dinghy drill'. At the same time, they were having to navigate Flak and sent out an



SOS. When the engine started up again, they found that they had very little fuel left that they could access and not enough to get home. Having taken up their ditching stations, the engine unexpectedly roared back into life. They had lost half their remaining fuel, but had no immediate need to ditch. They had descended to 6,000 feet by this point and then came down to 1,500 to save their fuel. Fortunately they were able to cancel their SOS and got back to Kirmington safely.

Disappointingly, the engineers could not find anything wrong with the craft and the crew was stood up for another operation with the same plane the following night. This time the engines cut just after take-off and at a height of only 500ft. The crew managed the situation and got the craft back on track but a rapid loss of fuel had occurred and with only three quarters of it accessible, not enough to complete the operation, they were forced to dump their bombs and return to base. Following this, Rodwell's crew were provided with a new plane. A few days later, they found out that the crew sharing their hut, Pilot Officer Tosh's crew, had taken out 'L' Love and did not return. It is now thought that they were shot down over Berlin, though at the time there were naturally worries among their housemates that 'L' Love's engines might have cut again.

On another operation over Denmark and Berlin, the night was clear and the crew had a new, safer aircraft, 'U' Uncle. On this occasion, they dropped their bombs seven minutes late and subsequently found themselves off course, though this was not too big a problem. As they were coming up to the Dutch coast, Caunt found that Louie, their rear gunner, was not replying on the intercom and realised that he must either be dead or unconscious. At 21,000 feet, the outside temperature was minus 25 degrees. Gordon undertook the challenge of getting to the back of the craft to check on Louie. It was so cold even inside the craft that gloves were required to stop your hands from sticking to the metal and he had to navigate between oxygen points to Louie's turret at the rear of the craft. When he got there, taking turns on the oxygen with their Wireless Operator, he fortunately found that Louie had only passed out, due to a lack of oxygen. It was during these more turbulent expeditions that pilot Caunt noted the formation of the group into real crew, who worked well together and managed to get through difficult situations rationally, cooperatively and without panicking.

In 1945, Gordon was posted to the Pathfinder Force, 582 Squadron. They were based at Little Staughton, near Bedford, which was also home to 109

squadron (Oboe Mosquitoes). Number 8 group of the Pathfinder Force was commanded at its HQ by Air Vice Marshall D.C.T Bennett. This period of Rodwell's service was less exciting as his group were there as 'spare bodies' to fill in for sickness or leave. In fact he only flew once between the middle of October and the middle of February.

North Germany surrendered on the fourth of May, 1945. The eighth marked Victory in Europe Day and, for the RAF, the beginning of the codenamed 'Exodus' mission to return troops home. Lancasters were not designed to carry more than crew, but it was found that it was possible to carry about twenty soldiers, if they sat on the floor. Gordon was scheduled on an Exodus operation on VE day but was able to find someone to fill in for him, so he headed up to London. The streets were crammed with people out to celebrate; they were dancing and drinking in the streets and pubs, which seemed to have a never-ending supply of beer. There were parades in Regents Street and bonfires in St James Park. Gordon went to Buckingham Palace at midnight to see the royal family waving from the balcony and spent the rest of the night dozing by the bonfires in St James Park.

Once 'Exodus' had been mostly completed, 'Cooks Tours' began. These were designed to give RAF crews a look at the damage done by bombing. The tour Rodwell attended went via Cap Gris-Nez, Wizernes, St Vith, Karlsruhe, Darmstadt, Mannheim, Maintz, Frankfurt, Hannau, Coblenz, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Aachen, Brussels and Dunkirk. From the air, Gordon could see that there were no permanent bridges left. Prisoner of War cages were clearly visible and those containing Germans were still in use. The dramatic views over Cologne stood out particularly to Gordon as the apparently undamaged Cathedral still stood in the midst of seemingly endless streets of collapsed buildings.

After the surrender of North Germany, although the war was still ongoing in the East, life became somewhat quieter for Gordon. He spent much of his time doing odd jobs around local farms and he often helped out at Tring Hill Café, now The Crow's Nest. 'Liberty runs', which involved transporting people and objects between Britain and Germany, kept air crew in practise as their opportunities to fly regularly decreased. During these trips it became obvious that the damage done to German buildings was mostly superficial. Nearly all of those that had been damaged had lost their roofs, which is why the views must have been so dramatic from the air.

**Katie Brown** *To be continued*

# Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum

## Society

### Programme 2016

All meetings are held in the Meeting Room in the Pitstone Green Museum at 8pm. Members pay £2.00 and non-members £3.00. Refreshments are provided.

**ALL VISITORS VERY WELCOME**



**Sue Lipscomb, Programme Secretary**

### **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January '16   \*\*\*   Winston Churchill's Toyshop**

Having become Prime Minister, Churchill knew of the red tape at the War Office so he appointed himself Minister of Defence and created one Department, MD1 at Whitchurch near Aylesbury, under his direct control via Lord Cherwell. This department created over 50 weapons that went into production and also paid a pivotal role in the creation of the atomic bomb - a fact that the authorities seem to want to hide. Five years ago our speaker Gordon Rogers decided to make his own PowerPoint presentation and decided to find some humour in this serious subject.

### **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February '16   \*\*\*   The Challenge of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro**

Committee Member Mel Davis will give us a multimedia presentation on one of her charity challenges. This involved trekking to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro which, at 5,895metres (19,341 feet), is the highest free standing mountain in the World. Mel will explain how she prepared for this adventure and, using her own photographs and a video clip, will describe the challenge of reaching the summit at Uhuru Peak, "The Roof of Africa".

### **Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March '16   \*\*\*   The History of the Magic Lantern**

Gordon Casbeard and Tony Brown have visited our Museum once before to give a magic lantern show. This time they are returning, having heard that we have magic lanterns in The Colin Cook Collection, to show us various pieces of equipment relating to Magic Lanterns and then they will conclude with a projection of some sets of their slides.

### **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April '16   \*\*\*   An Evening of Music with Ron and his player pianos**

Ron and Barbara Hartwell have once again invited us to their home in Chesham to enjoy music from the collection of player pianos that Ron has accumulated over the years. This event will start at 7.30pm

Please book this by emailing [Sue.Lipscomb@btopenworld.com](mailto:Sue.Lipscomb@btopenworld.com)

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May '16   \*\*\*   A Walk across the Dancersend Reserve**

A 2-hour walk with warden Mick Jones through Dancersend Nature Reserve, the oldest reserve in the county, starting from the historic Rothschild pumping station. We will explore chalk pits, species-rich scrub, an orchard and ancient woodland on our way to open clearings, full of orchids and butterflies, where Dame Miriam Rothschild carried out some of the first wildlife conservation experiments in the UK. There will be rough ground and one steep climb so sturdy footwear is advisable. There is no charge, but there will be an opportunity to make a donation towards the work of BBOWT, the local Wildlife Trust.

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June '16   \*\*\*   Monastery Gardens**

Our speaker, Gordon Bell will be giving us a brief history of Dunstable Priory and its contribution to the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the lasting legacy of the Reformation. He will talk about the recreated Physic Garden and other more extensive herb gardens recreated throughout England. We will also hear about the *Doctrine of Signatures* and the development of modern medicines from plant materials.

**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> July '16   \*\*\*   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. 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 will appear in our newsletter nearer the time.

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> August '16   \*\*\*   Hobbies Evening**

Our evening which showcases our members and the wide range of hobbies that interest them is always popular. 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 will appear in our newsletter nearer the time.

### **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September '16 \*\*\* The Science Rooms at the Museum**

It has become a tradition for us to show you part of the Museum worthy of further investigation and this September it is the turn of the Science Rooms. In these rooms there are many items that would benefit from more detailed examination and we hope to help you to explore some of these gems. A finger buffet and drinks will accompany this evening; details to follow and pre-booking will be necessary.

### **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October '16 \*\*\* The History of Royal Flying**

Sqd Ldr Graham Laurie joined the Royal Air Force as a pilot in 1964. He flew for 36 years amassing a total of 13500 hours and during the last 20 years of that career he flew members of the Royal Family and Senior government Ministers. In 1981 he was selected for The Queen's Flight and in 1995, after that unit's disbandment, he moved to No 32 (The Royal) Squadron at RAF Northolt, completing in all, over 2200 Royal Flights. He retired in Dec 2000. He will give us an illustrated talk in aid of The RAF Benevolent Fund, covering the early days of Royal Flying, the formation of The King's Flight and The Queen's Flight, up to the present day, together with some personal reminiscences.

### **Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November '16 \*\*\* AGM \*\*\* A Triumph of Form over Function**

This talk by Dennis Trebble will trace the evolution of motorcycle design over the course of the Twentieth Century, whilst at the same time introducing the idea that the socio/economic impact of this type of transport has been far-reaching and has reflected more than just a narrow range of users. From military machines, through "bread and butter go-to-work" machines right through the Rock'n'Roll era up to modern times - a real thermometer of society!!

**Please note the AGM start time will be 7.30pm.**

### **Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December '16 \*\*\* Christmas with Films from the Archives**

Frank Banfield will be returning once again with his amazing film archive. He has a vast collection of 16mm cine films, and will choose a selection, mainly of local interest, dating from the 1930s to the 1970s. These films will be interspersed by our usual mince pies and mulled wine.

**Please note that this is the third Thursday of the month.**

## Photographs from the Museum Archives



**Elliott the Pig Killer outside the Old Raven, Great Gap Ivinghoe  
on his cart with all his implements**

Killing the pig was a local ritual for providing food for the winter. The slaughter traditionally takes place in the autumn and early winter, and the timing has several practical considerations. It can start as soon as it gets cold, as the cold is required as a natural method of preserving the relatively large quantities of meat during the butchering. Yet, because people often do the work in the open, it is preferable that the temperatures aren't too much below freezing during this time, hence the slaughter rarely extends into winter. Also, slaughter activities typically need to produce results before the Christmas season, to provide for the festive cuisine. In the past, this was also the only time of the year when people could afford to eat larger amounts of meat.

The slaughter requires numerous preparations, including troughs, large quantities of boiling water, and large wooden barrels for storing meat, pots, and sharp knives. Historically, the butchering was a trade passed from father to son

**Elliott the pig killer with cart and friends**  
**This picture taken at Ford End is believed to be Elliot**



**Research Sandra Barnard Editor**

15-10-15  
My friend & I visited  
Pitstone Green Museum on  
August Bank holiday Monday,  
and it poured with rain, all day.  
However, she sent me  
a poem she made about  
that day, and I enclose  
it as I think it rather good.  
We had a lovely day  
with the lovely volunteers help.  
Thank you  
Desiree Plummer

**Letter to the  
Museum**

**We received this  
letter from  
Desiree Plummer  
from Chesham.  
She did not give  
us her friend's  
name.**



## PITSTONE GREEN MUSEUM

Pitstone Green Museum is out in the countryside,  
And one in which its volunteers can feel a sense of pride.  
Open only occasionally, it's well worth a visit when  
Comes a Bank Holiday Monday or summer Sunday again.  
There's plenty of space for parking, as if you're coming from far  
It's really quite hard to get to unless you possess a car.  
There's enough for an all-day visit; it's open eleven 'til five,  
With hundreds of texts and exhibits to make the past come alive.  
The Ivinghoe Brewery story, a wealth of country pursuits,  
Making lace, straw plaiting and much with rural roots.  
Tools of trade and pastimes, toys and times of war,  
Items of handmade clothing, which used to be worn before.  
Lots of farm machinery, lovingly restored,  
Items from old kitchens which will strike a familiar chord.  
A blacksmith's shop and a carpenters; a brush shop's included, too.  
Along with a model railway, so smart it looks like new.  
A room from the 1940s; a plumber's and cobbler's shop;  
The photo room and the film show are worth a lengthy stop.  
A wheelwright's and a printer's; computers from the past;  
Typewriters and comptometers, together with a vast  
Array of collected items from the home of Mr. Cook,  
Now housed in the Museum, and deserve a longish look.  
A tractor ride to the windmill might make a small child's day,  
Along with fields which give the chance to be outside and play.  
All are housed in buildings which existed on the farm,  
All all exude a certain air of rustic rural charm.  
The volunteers are super, and they take their job to heart,  
Involved with the Museum, they've much knowledge to impart.  
At any large museum it is quite safe to assume  
Somewhere in its precincts there will be a nice tea-room.  
And so it is at Pitstone, where they serve delicious fare,  
Teas and cakes and sandwiches, they all are offered there.  
It's worth a day long visit, I think all would soon agree,  
Because there really is so much that one can do and see.

## **Pitstone Mills**

It is amazing what information can be found in short items from old newspapers. For example, the following advert from The Bucks Herald, dated Saturday April 30 1842, gives us an insight into the property of the Water Corn Mill and Pitstone Post Windmill. The grammar and spelling reproduced below is from the original article.



**Picture from our archives**

***To Mealmen, Bakers, &c.  
- Pitstone Mills for Sale, with 7 Acres of Land.***

to be Sold by Auction, by

Messrs. GIBBS and SONS,

At the King's Head Inn, Ivinghoe, on Monday, the 6th of June, 1842,  
at two o'Clock, in one Lot,

THAT conveniently situate Freehold Water Corn Mill, at Pitstone, Bucks, driving 2 pair of stones, worked by a 12 feet iron water wheel and other improved iron machinery, with a capital modern and substantial dwelling house, good yard, and numerous outbuildings; also several closes and parcels of meadow and arable land (about 7 acres) with the very valuable appendage of a Post Windmill, driving 2 pair of stones, and within two furlongs of the above premises; is surrounded with good roads; only three miles from the London and Birmingham Railroad; and near the capital Market Towns of

Aylesbury, Leighton, and Tring. Full particulars may be had at the Grand Junction Canal Office, Surrey Street, London, and of Messrs. Gibbs and Sons, Estate Agents, Aylesbury.

### **Man Killed By A Windmill**

Windmills, just like any other piece of machinery, can be fatal when things go wrong. Here's an article from the Bucks Herald on February 26th 1842.

Last week a man named James Messenger, was killed at Houghton Regis, by the sails of a Windmill. It appears that whilst about his work there he imprudently passed close to the sweep of the sails to get to a door, and one of the fans struck him on the back part of the head. The poor man was struck to the ground with great violence and was picked up insensible. His master rendered assistance and forwarded a messenger to Dunstable for a surgeon, who, in examination found that there was no fracture of the skull, but the poor man was labouring under a severe concussion of the brain, and in a few days after he died. On Friday last an inquest was held upon him and the jury returned a verdict of accidental death.

**Research Bill Barnard**

### **Programme 2016**

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 28<sup>th</sup> January '16**

Winston Churchill's Toyshop

### **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February '16**

The Challenge of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro

**The complete programme of events can be seen as an insert within this newsletter.**

**Sue Lipscomb Programme & Minutes Secretary**

### **Cover page (picture from Museum Archives)**

Chaff cutting by hand operated machine

**Open Days 2016**

Easter Monday **28<sup>th</sup> March**

Sunday **10<sup>th</sup> April**

**New Moon Morris Men**

Early Spring B.H. Monday **2<sup>nd</sup> May**

**Whitchurch Morris Men**

Spring B.H. Monday **30<sup>th</sup> May**

Sunday **12<sup>th</sup> June**

Sunday **10<sup>th</sup> July**

**Tappalachian Dancers**

Sunday **14<sup>th</sup> August**

B.H. Monday **29<sup>th</sup> August**

Sunday **11<sup>th</sup> September**

Sunday **9<sup>th</sup> October**

**Opening times** from

11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

**Admission charges.**

Adults £6 children £2.

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**Museum Website:- [www.pitstonemuseum.co.uk](http://www.pitstonemuseum.co.uk)**

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