

# **Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter**



**New Year 2018**

## **MANAGER'S REPORT**

This report marks a major change at Pitstone Green Museum. Norman Groom, our hardworking manager for many years, has been taken ill and is unable to carry on in the post and has decided to stand down. We cannot begin to appreciate what he has done for The Museum over his many years of dedication, even excluding the 7 years he spent constructing the Lancaster Bomber exhibit. His talents encompass, woodwork, metalwork, electronics, model engineering and administration, he will be a difficult act to follow but we all wish him well and hope to see him again when he has recovered.

Norman has his own way of organising things, based on many years of working with all the major players at Pitstone, I am a relative newcomer, so I will be hoping to gain a consensus on anything, before deciding which direction to take.

Our teams of volunteers are continuing with all their existing projects throughout the cold winter days and work is proceeding steadily. The electrical rewiring is a never ending job but essential for the safety and reliability of the workings of the old farm and our two qualified electricians are doing an amazing job. The restoration of the small agricultural machines continues and it looks like the farming aspects of The Museum are coming back to the fore. The Elliott shop is progressing but Brian is recovering from having a new knee and Roy is looking after his wife Chris who has had the same thing done. The new builders' shed is taking shape but with Norman poorly and the cold weather at this time of year, I feel that this may slow down somewhat.

We are beginning to make progress with working out what to do with the grain silo area. We have been trying to get permission to demolish the two storage bins beside the silos; this would make the job of replacing the roof simpler and cheaper and would enable us to make this into a much more interesting feature. We are very lucky to have someone who actually worked on the farm in the 1950s and remembers how it all worked!

We look forward to another successful year but remember, we do always need people to help with particular aspects of running Pitstone, and there are specific jobs such as publicity, which need help with writing articles and dealing with specific aspects of promotion. We have plenty of Indians but we really need a few more chiefs. It's usually stuff you can do at home in a spare hour or two, so go on, have a go!

### **Craft Stalls Coordinator**

After six years of organising the craft stalls on our open days, Brenda Grace is giving up the job this year. We sincerely thank Brenda for her work in this area over all this time and at the same time welcome the entrance of Tony and Jill Baxter who will be taking over the job. Tony and Jill are stall holders themselves and so have a unique insight into what is needed. If you are interested in having a stall please contact them on [tonymbaxter@hotmail.com](mailto:tonymbaxter@hotmail.com)

### **Dancers Coordinator**

Margaret Elliott who has been booking various Dancers for the Museum for a long while now is also giving up this job. We would also like to thank her for her work. This position is now vacant. Please let us know if you are willing to undertake this job.

### **Pete Farrar**

**Museum Manager, Publicity and Programme Secretary**

### **Fact or Fiction**

Transferring information from one generation to the next one is usually either verbal or documented in some way or other. Since the mid eighteen hundreds photography appeared to be accurate and reliable but with the advent of digital imaging and the ease in the way that images can be 'doctored', this is now in doubt. The only way of checking that verbal is accurate is to go back to the very source of that information, assuming it is available. Fortunately the archives at Pitstone do in fact contain a great deal of source material.

When I started at the museum some 27 years ago, it was helping to install the Crossley gas Engine with the Beds & Bucks Stationary Engine Club. At the conclusion of the work many of the members, including myself joined the Society, then the Pitstone Local History Society later to become the Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society.

Jeff Hawkins was still very prominent and heavily involved in the museum even though he had granted us a 99 year lease on the site. We spent many hours talking to Jeff about the history of the Society and his experiences during the war years at the farm. Two subjects covered were of particular interest to us, the first, the formation of the Society and the second the creation of the farm back into the 1830's. Obviously going back to the 1800's involved information being transferred through several generations either verbally or written and hence can become unintentionally corrupted. Myself and Peter Keeley our previous Secretary became interested in the

early years of the Farm itself. The facts as we were given concerning the first item was that the present Pitstone Green Farm was built on the site of a earlier farm, that the Big Barn already exists on that site and that the new farm used the barn as its central structure. Doubts however began to arise as whether this was true as certain facts and early maps did not always agree with this assumption. We did produce a detailed report at the time, using much original source material and a detailed study of the barn, which concluded that the farm was actually built on a green field site and that the Big Barn had been dismantled from elsewhere and re-erected on the site.

The problem often arises of course when unintentional errors end up in print, then become facts and are used by others as reference source material. The only way to avoid these problems is to go back to any information available at the time, compare several sources until a somewhat clearer picture emerges.

The second fact that everyone appears to have accepted is that museum collection was started by members of the Young Farmers' Club which somehow merged into the Pitstone & Ivinghoe Museum Society. Again going back to source information and talking to individuals that were members of the Young Farmers' Club this is not correct. We are fortunate at the museum to have accumulated a vast amount of archive material so much that is difficult to remember and find what we do have. It was pure chance that I came across the minutes books from issue 1 of both the Young Farmers' Club and the early society then named the Ivinghoe & Pitstone Local History Group. At this date this Group would arrange walks around the area looking at the flora and fauna and studying areas of historical interest, there was no mention in the early years regarding the formation of a museum. The Young Farmers' Club appeared to be just a social organisation formed entirely for teenagers and not the impression I had of Farmers in their 20' and 30's. This has been confirmed by two past members of the Young Farmers. There were obviously individuals that were members of both organisation and the ideas of creating a museum originated in the Ivinghoe & Pitstone Local History Group at a later date. Jeff Hawkins often used the farm as a meeting place for the Local History Group providing coffee and biscuits and somewhere to meet. The museum collection appears to have been initiated by Jeff Hawkins helped by Don Levy and others, the collection being initially housed at Don's farm and then Pitstone Farm where unused buildings became available.



All this data we still hold in our archives and we have only just scratched the surface uncovering this information. It would be lovely to think that someone would continue to research and publish a more detailed report of our early history. It's all there, it just needs unearthing. A job that can be carried out at the museum or at someone's home, at their convenience.

**Norman Groom.**

### **Minutes of the first meeting of the group held on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1963**

Present at the first meeting of the group were Mr. J. Hawkins, Mr. D Levy, Mr S, McGechan, Mr J. Allerton, C. Allerton, A. Allerton, M. Bishop and T. Chaplin

#### **The following were elected as officers.**

Chairman J. Allerton; proposed M. Bishop; seconded T.Chaplin.

Vice Chairman: - M. Bishop; proposed C. Allerton; seconded A. Allerton.

Secretary: - C. Allerton; proposed M. Bishop; seconded A.Allerton.

Treasurer: - A. Allerton; proposed T. Chaplin; seconded C. Allerton.

After some discussion it was proposed by Mr J. Hawkins that we should be called the Ivinghoe and Pitstone Local history Group this was seconded by Mr. D Levy

The aim of the group was discussed and it was decided that he group will make a history of Ivinghoe and Pitstone.

#### **The group constitution**

- 1) Officers: -
  - a) All elected offices will be under the age of 25 years
  - b) Officers to be elected shall be Chairman, Vice chairman, Secretary, Treasurer
- 2) Membership :-
  - a) Members must be at least 15 years of age.
  - b) Any younger person may attend if invited by the Group
  - c) Any member may be asked to leave the Group by a straight majority vote
- 3) Business
  - a) Any matters of business may be carried out only when 25% of the members, or 6 members, whichever is the greater are present.

- b) There shall be an annual general meeting of the Group within 18 months of the Groups first meeting, and three after within every 12 months.
- c) A committee shall be formed when the Group feels it is necessary.

4) If the Group ceases to exist all money shall be put in Trust in a Bank for a period of 10 years and the all the money and records shall be donated to the County Museum to be used as the Curator thinks fit.

At this stage tea and biscuits were provided by Mr Hawkins and we discussed the future programme of the group.

It was proposed that 6d a week shall be paid by attending members and Mr McGechan was the first to pay. We then looked at Mr Hawkins old maps and talked about some of the inaccuracies. The meeting finished at 11.00 o'clock – everyone was so interested and we hope they will continue to be so.

**M. Bishop    Vice Chairman**



**The Pitstone Young Farmers' Club circa. 1963.**

**(Photo. from our archives)**

Picture taken when they won the cup at the Vale competition.

Jeff Hawkins on the left, Don Levy on the right.

**One of the original founders of PIMS Don Levy passed away on 15 December 2017. John Wallis remembers those early days.**

**Don Levy 1927 - 2017**

Don with Jeff Hawkins started the Ivinghoe and Pitstone Young Farmers' Club over 50 years ago and in 1963 some members of the club became interested in the history of the Pitstone Parish and in particular early

farming and rural life. A committee was formed from the members and thus under the guidance of Don and Jeff, the Pitstone Local History Society was formed.

Encouraged by another enthusiast, the model maker David Wray, The youngsters collected old agricultural tools, carts and wagons they found rusting or rotting away in corners of barns and fields. Initially the smaller items were stored in a loft on Don's Vicarage Farm, Ivinghoe. Larger items like carts, wagons and ploughs were collected by Don and Jeff with a tractor and trailer. When space became available at Jeff's Pitstone Green Farm the collection was moved there and formed the beginnings of the Pitstone Green Farm Museum. Nothing was too large or small for the collection. I remember going with Don and Jeff to recover an old mill stone from a front garden in Berkhamsted. It weighed about 30cwts, but somehow we managed to get it onto Jeff's pick-up truck and place it against a wall at the Museum. I've still got the double hernia!

Don was an accomplished artist, especially in oils. He painted the rural scene facing the cow stalls in the cowshed. Sadly though I believe that most of it is now hidden by exhibits. At committee meetings he always had a sketch book and would draw members during proceedings.

Don was one of the four Holding Trustees for the lease relating to the property known as Pitstone Green Museum now vested in The National Trust.

### **John Wallis**



**Don Levy  
digging for  
coprolites  
Vicarage Farm  
Ivinghoe.  
Circa. 1960  
(Photo. from  
our archives)**

## **PIMS TALKS – 2018**

Most talks take place in the meeting room at the Museum. They start at 8pm sharp but there are interesting videos showing from 7.30. The cost is £2 for members and £3 for non-members. The visit to Tring Park and the antiques evening need to be booked in advance and please note the November AGM starts at 7.30.

### **January 25th**

#### **Roger Moorhouse - The Third Reich in 100 Objects.**

Local historian and author, Roger, returns with a talk based on his latest book. He describes it as “all good fun and interesting” If it’s as good as his talk about Berlin, you will need to get there early to get a seat.

### **February 22nd**

#### **Paul Rabbits - Bandstands**

Nobody can accuse us of not having a wide range of subjects! Paul comes highly recommended and we look forward to learning about something that was very popular in Victorian times but has waned in significance since modern media forms took over our lives.

### **March 22nd**

#### **Roger Mason - Extra Marital Affairs of Prime Ministers 1721-1948**

Roger returns to show us that the behaviour of our present politicians is nothing compared with what used to be tolerated in years gone by.

### **April 26th**

#### **Colin Oakes - Tools Through the ages**

The subject of this evening’s talk is self explanatory but Colin has over 300 talks on his list and so it was difficult to decide which to go for, we chose this one as being of most universal appeal, as we all use tools of various sorts.

### **May 24th**

#### **Malcolm Ferris-Lay - Tea**

Malcolm is coming to tell us all we need to know about tea, from the bush *Camellia sinensis* to the drink of builders’ tea we consider as our national drink. We may even get a demonstration and a tasting.

### **June 28th**

#### **Nick Hill - Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway**

Tonight we look forward to learning all about one of our local successful tourist attractions which in the past was part of a huge and profitable industry which even managed to sell sand to the Arabs.

### **July 26th**

#### **Stephen Hearn - Antiques Evening**

Tickets need to be purchased in advance for this annual event which includes refreshments. Bring your prized possessions to be described and valued by one of the county’s leading antiques experts.

**August 23rd**

**Guided tour of Tring Park Mansion**

Another ticket only event, probably starting at about 4pm. Details to be finalised nearer the time.

**September 27th**

**Stephen Barker - Buckinghamshire in the Civil War**

Most of us know that we had a civil war, but how did it affect life in Bucks and were there any significant events in the county? Come and find out from Stephen who is actually our official Museum Mentor and gives us advice on anything we see fit to ask him.

**October 25th**

**Hugh Granger - Deception in WW2**

The Second World War was ended by the superiority of the allied forces but only after some amazing feats of deception by some very clever, ingenious people working away behind closed doors. Come and find out what actually went on.

**November 22nd**

**Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society - AGM**

Come and see how the museum has been doing. Come and volunteer to do your bit. Listen to a talk, the subject of which will be arranged nearer the time.

**December 20th**

**Frank Banfield - Film night**

By now you will be thoroughly fed up with being implored to buy the latest high tech gadget that you will never find a use for, so come and escape to a world of old films provided by our old friend Frank and his vast library of scenes from the past

**Pete Farrar**

**Museum Manager, Publicity and Programme Secretary**

**History Fair ... Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

Bill and I were pleased to be invited to host a table for the Museum at the "Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies", at the County Offices in Aylesbury. This event attracted many serious researchers. There were several lectures held during the day. We were pleased to see some of our members there.

Bill and I with the help of Brenda Grace and Sue Lipscomb run a table every year at the Bucks Family Society Open Day in July. This event attracts over 400 people and we are busy most of the day talking to people about the museum and of course about Family History. The event hosted by The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies attracts about 100 people. These people seem to be more serious Family Historians and although we were not as busy as we

were on the Bucks Family History Open Day, we actually did better business at this later event.

One of the other Museums at the fair was the Buckinghamshire Military Museum Trust. We purchased one of their DVDs entitled “OUR COUNTY AT WAR-The Home Front in Buckinghamshire 1914-1918” and we were given permission by them to show this at the Museum Open Days.

**Sandra Barnard**



**Our History  
Fair Display**

**Picture Bill  
Barnard**

### **MEMBERSHIP 2017**

The membership year ends on 31st March 2018 and starts again on 1st April 2018. The next newsletter will probably come after this date and will contain a membership renewal slip for you to use. You will still be able to use your 2017 membership card to gain entry into the museum on our first Open Day on Easter Bank Holiday Monday 2nd April, where, as usual, I will be in the meeting room to take renewals.

**Bill Barnard Membership Secretary**

### **FRONT COVER**

Museum outside 5 inch sit on railway....Picture Bill Barnard

### **BACK COVER**

Lily on Tow! .... Picture Rob Barber

### **Open Days 2018**

Easter Monday 2nd April  
Early Spring B.H. Monday 7<sup>th</sup> May  
Spring B.H. Monday 28<sup>th</sup> May  
Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June  
Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July  
Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August  
Summer B.H. Monday 27<sup>th</sup> August  
Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September  
Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> October

**Opening times** from  
11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

### **Admission charges.**

Adults £7, Children £2, under 5  
free. Concessions over 65, £6.

### **Committee Officers:-**

**Chairman & Museum Site Manager**

John Childs 01582 833501

**Deputy Chairman**

Norman Groom 01582 605464

**Treasurer**

John Youngs 01582 833678

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### **Committee Members:-**

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**Programme Secretary**

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### **Non Committee Posts:-**

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**Computer Records Officer**

Norman Groom

**Craft Co-ordinators**

Tony and Jill Baxter

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Vacant

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**Secretary**

Ronnie Farrar 01525 221583

### **Holding Trustees:-**

**John Wallis**

**William Hawkins**

**John Youngs**



**Lily on Tow!    “I told you so!”**



**Pitstone and Ivinghoe  
Museum Society**

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