

# **Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter**



**Autumn 2020**

## EDITOR'S NOTE

We live in unprecedented times. It is difficult to know which way the wind will blow from week to week and this is certainly the case when it comes to trying to keep the organisation of the museum on an even keel.

As you know, we are required to hold an Annual General Meeting each year and it has been our habit for this to take place on the last Thursday in November. This year that falls on the 26<sup>th</sup> November. We have had to reconsider how this may be conducted. Obviously, we cannot hold it within the restricted confines of the Meeting Room. Also, we would like to have this meeting in the afternoon, not the evening. That being the case, there are two options available to us. If we have a fine day, then it could be held on the grassy area in front of the rack saw. Should it be too wet or cold, we could hold it within the Big Barn. At present, we have no motions to put forward and envisage a business meeting in which the year is reviewed, our finances are discussed and voted upon and where expediency is the order of the day. Elsewhere in the newsletter you will find the relevant form for attendance and any other business.

I am saddened to report the demise of two of our volunteer supporters over the intervening time since last newsletter.

John Barber, universally known for being “the steam car man” and brother of Rob, will be missed a great deal. I quote from Ronnie, our indefatigable organiser,

*“John used to help me on the evenings of our monthly talk. He would hand out biscuits and cups of tea or coffee and best of all do the washing up. In fact he would help wherever possible and he was always up for a good giggle. He will be missed by many, and*

*particularly by me on those evenings. I am sure many of those present will also miss him."*

You will find a longer piece by Rob within this newsletter.

Also, Ken Leach's wife, Daphne has recently passed on. I have seldom known a lady with such a light touch for pastry and her mince pies will be hard to be surpassed! She and Ken seem to have been fixtures for as long as I have been involved with the museum and I choose to remember her in happier times at an open day in 2010.



Dennis Trebble

## **MANAGER'S REPORT**

As time goes by I realise just how lucky we are to have such a friendly and hard working bunch of volunteers to keep this special place running and managing to keep mother nature from overwhelming the site. Our deepest sympathies go to all of you who have lost someone in these awful times, no matter what the cause, and our best wishes to all of you who have been confined to your homes due to health vulnerability.

Work is progressing on many of the long term projects and I congratulate Steve and Norman for finally getting the old Cyclomaster to perform as it was intended, after so many frustrating weeks trying to fathom out the mysteries of a seventy year old 35cc single cylinder two stroke engine. Well done for still being on speaking terms and not having made a bonfire of the bike!

We have been having some discussions about how we may be able to open most effectively next Easter, bearing in mind that we will not know what regulations will be in force until much nearer the time. There are a few things we need to sort out and put in place for the practical opening of the museum next year. Firstly, in the calendar of dates I have suggested for next year's Open Days, there are some extra dates to compensate for this season's closure and next year's possible lower numbers. Secondly, we may have to have an entry system based non-timed, pre-booked tickets and may have to put up our prices to include the costs of this. Lastly, we may need a one-way system and some of our exhibits may need to be run differently. These are all things to be borne in mind to be enacted nearer the time when we know what rules we are subject to.

My thanks to everyone for the continuing support and good work being carried on at this difficult time. There is no Program Report as all activity is cancelled until further notice and it is not feasible to do much advertising until we know what we are trying to promote.

Pete & Ronnie

## **A REMINISCENCE**

*prompted by J Young's recollection of wartime London*

I found the item by John Youngs especially interesting. My parents' house in East Ham - Milton Ave, just about 1/2 a mile from Navarre Rd., and near East Ham Station - was also bombed. This was in 1939, right at the beginning of the Battle of Britain. My brother was killed, along with a neighbour who was sheltering with them in the cellar, when the house was flattened and the gas pipes broken. My mother and sister who were in another part of the cellar survived. My mother, who was pregnant at the time and went into early labour, had my brother. Unfortunately, my sister contracted meningitis six months later and died. Mother and baby were evacuated to Newbury. My father, who was a builder, served as a 'special' in the police so had to stay in London but visited mum when he could. I was born in 1942. We returned to London - to Clifton Road, Forest Gate - at the end of the war in 1945, just in time for the VE Day celebrations! Clifton Road is less than half a mile away from where my parents were bombed (and less than a quarter of a mile from where my John lived.)

I have lots of fond memories of East Ham, particularly many a happy hour spent in East Ham swimming baths followed by a slice of hot buttered toast costing 1d - wonderful!

Margaret Cole

## **RESTORATION OF A CYCLEMASTER**

Just after WWII very few people had cars and the most popular of individual transport was the bicycle. OK for pleasure but for everyday use and travelling any distance not very convenient. Motorcycles were quite expensive and several manufacturers came up with small engines that could be fitted to an ordinary bicycle.

Many were mounted behind the saddle driving a friction wheel onto the tyre. The Cyclemaster was a great improvement as the small engine, initially 25cc later 32cc, was mounted in the centre of the rear wheel. It was a relatively simple matter to remove the original rear wheel and drop in a replacement wheel and fit the throttle, choke and clutch cable to the bicycle All fittings being supplied with the wheel. The total cost being around £30.

At Pitstone museum we often get artifacts donated to the museum and in 2019 we had what is normally termed a 'Barn Find' donated. One of our members died at the grand old age of 102 and his daughter was left a barn full of items and unsure of what to do with them. Her partner uncovered an Austin 7, a Batam motorcycle, and pre-war sports bicycle, a Ford Popular car and a Cyclemaster bicycle. The daughter who had been a member for several years generously donated the motorcycle, the Cyclemaster, the Austin 7 and vintage bicycle to the museum for restoration and preservation.

Back in the 1950's my Father used to ride a Cyclemaster but he died when I was in my late teens. The Cyclemaster became my first powered vehicle and when I was old enough to drive, I obtained my first motorcycle driving licence riding the Cyclemaster .When I saw the Cyclemaster at the museum for the first time I could not resist the challenge of restoring it to a reasonable condition as possible and in running order and that became a big challenge.

Steve, another volunteer at the museum who had lots of experience on motorcycles including two stroke engines, joined me on the project. Although I had owned a number of two strokes myself, mainly Stuart engines, two strokes were not my favourite. Two problems immediately became obvious, the engine was seized and the bike was covered in rust. Some years ago, I had cobbled up a sand blasting chamber out of an old wooden cabinet and with a bit of work, the availability of a reasonably large compressor and the purchase of a gun I was able sand blast many of the parts. The motorized wheel was removed from the bike so that it could be worked on separately from the rest of the bicycle. The engine was

removed from the wheel and proved the biggest problem especially the seized piston, no amount of force seemed to shift it. Eventually Steve produced a hydraulic ram and with a steel plate made up to support the cylinder the piston eventually came out.



As donated to the museum

The piston and rings had white corrosion on them typical of what you get on aluminium after such a period. The cast iron cylinder was not too bad but we had to replace one ring as one broke up when we tried to remove it. The engine and clutch mechanism were stripped completely, cleaned, new gaskets made and re-assembled. This was quite a long and messy job as much of it seemed to be the remnants of the old oil that had been added to the petrol, which later evaporated. We devised a method of clamping the restored engine in a large vice, rigged up a temporary petrol/oil supply and tried starting it using a battery powered drill coupled to the nut on the end of the flywheel. We must have tried everything, dozens and dozens of times, but apart from short bursts could not get it to run properly. Finally, we gave up and Steve took it home to strip it down again to see if he could identify the problem.

The engine has a disc valve fitted on the crank shaft consisting of a thin hardened steel disc with a rectangular hole in it which lines up

with a hole in the casting at the appropriate time for the gases to enter the combustion chamber. This showed some wear on one edge and the surface. It was possible however to simply turn the disc around and use the good side. Steve took the engine home, stripped and reassembled it and again we tried to start it. Still no luck even when using Quick Start in the carb inlet or in the cylinder. Eventually it went! Not for long as Steve was holding a battery drill used to turn it over and I was holding the cable to the choke and throttle trying to keep it going. However, we knew we had an engine that could run and we decided to put everything back together in the wheel.



After the magic

In the mean time I had been sand blasting various bits and pieces and priming and painting everything we could. The nickel-plated parts we treated with light sand blasting and rust remover and then they were given a clear coat of lacquer. We did not intend to re-nickel everything but leave it original. Finally, the whole thing was reassembled and looked quite smart. The only new bits were a couple of cables, one piston ring, tyres and inner tube. Steve has been promoted to test pilot so hopefully it will be running around on our open days in 2021.

Norman Groom



I have continued scanning 19th century copies of The Bucks Herald to find articles which I hope would be of interest to our members and mention, at least, Pitstone, Ivinghoe and/or Ashridge in the text. The following item was printed over two editions in September 1850. Remember the spelling of this era may differ slightly from today.  
Bill Barnard.

## **ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY FOR THE COUNTY OF BUCKINGHAM**

### **ANTIQUITIES OF THE CHILTERN HILLS.**

By the Rev. W. J. Burgess, M.A.

There is a certain celebrity attached to the name of the Chiltern Hundreds, nominally those of Stoke, Desborough, and Burnham, from the fact that a seat in the Lower House of Parliament is vacated by accepting the Stewardship of the said Hundreds. The Stewardship has this efficacy, because it is still held as a Royal Appointment; and indicates the time when this forest tract of hill country required the appointment of Two Knights or Wardens, to act on behalf of the King, for the protection of his liege subjects dwelling in or travelling through these parts. Thus it was an office, speaking more favourably for the Royal care, extended over the subject, than for the security and moral condition of the Chiltern country. The necessity of such a Stewardship implies too clearly a degree of wildness, violence, and lawlessness existing in this unreclaimed part of the country.

But the same wild and woodland features which secured for the Chilterns the unenviable notoriety of the Royal Stewardship, favoured also another purpose, for which this line of country was distinguished. This was the amusement of hunting pursued by the Royal Masters of the Chiltern Knights or Stewards. Here might the beasts of chase be found in abundance, undisturbed by the cultivation of the land, unmolested by the busy haunts of men, alike hateful and hostile to the wild boar and other like animals *ferae naturae*.

That Edward the Third, and his chivalrous son, the Black Prince, frequented this country, is well authenticated by the fact, that in the town of Princes Risborough the Black Prince held a Castle and Demesne, the foundations of the Castle being at this day visible near the church: whilst another seeming indication of the presence of these great personages among the Chiltern Hills, is afforded by the amusing and unpoetical stanza, which imputes to an ancestor of the long-descended family of Hampden, the loss of three manors at once, in consequence of an early outbreak of antiregal independence of character, in the shape of a blow administered by the Hampden to the Prince. The stanza is as follows :

"Tring, Wing, and Ivinghoe,  
Hampden did forego,  
For the striking of a blow,  
Right glad to escape so."

But whilst we may believe that the King visited the house of Hampden, and perhaps joined him in a friendly hunting excursion, the fact that the manors in question could not have been thus confiscated because they never had belonged to the Hampden estate, leaves us in the conviction, that there was no such stain upon the loyalty of John Hampden's ancestor, and that he was a better subject than his calumniator was a poet.

The occasional visits of Royal persons to the sequestered haunts of the Chilterns appear also indicated by the significant names of many places among them. Thus we have King's Wood, near St. Leonard's, with King's Ash, and King's Gate, King's Beech, also a venerable tree in the valley below Hampden House, may have witnessed the time when the Monarch partook of his twelve o'clock dinner under its shade, literally "*recubans subtegmine fagi*."

Of the Chiltern Hills as a natural feature of the country, those who know them may well speak with pleasure; for it is this district of varied scenery that adds a picturesque quality to

the generally monotonous county of Bucks. Taking their rise in Cambridgeshire, and there known as the Gog-Magog Hills, this chain of heights runs through Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, and entering this county by Ivinghoe, at a very fine elevation, runs across in a south-west direction, and leaves it at Chinnor in Oxfordshire. Through Oxfordshire, the Chilterns pursue their course with the same bearing, and in a line but little broken or varied; until after receiving the Thames from the Yale of Oxford, at Goring and Streatley, the change at once their course, and running due westward, form the line of the Berkshire Chilterns, on one of which, near Newbury, is incised the gigantic and rude figure of a horse, well known round all that country.

But if Buckinghamshire falls in for but a narrow section of these conspicuous hills, it receives its full share of their characteristic beauty or boldness. Viewed from the Vale of Aylesbury or of Thame, the appearance of the hills is that of a high rampart of table-land, of very uniform level, its front to the vale here green with downy turf, there clothed with native and characteristic beechen wood. The escarpment of this high land is very often broken into deep recesses, and penetrated by vallies in some cases, as at Tring, Wendover, and Risborough, running through the chain eastward into the sloping country within the Range. Viewed in profile, the hills present a series of lofty slopes, and bold brows or headlands, some of very sharp descent, and turfed, others covered with hanging woods, in which are found the box and juniper, as well as the ash, oak, and beech. These eminences, attaining the height of 910 feet above the sea level, are all distinguished by that roundness of outline which the Geologist recognizes as peculiar to the chalk formation, of which the Chilterns form a distinguished example: although within the range, at about four miles from the summit, runs a line of hard sandstone boulders, claiming no kindred with the great masses in which they are embedded.

It may be observed further, that this platform of high land, showing invariably its steepest face on the north-west limit, is penetrated by vallies running into it at intervals from the

plain which carry off its waters. It is at the opening of the vallies or among the declivities of the hills, that there are found those hanging woods and wild glades, which have gained for such spots as Velvet Lawn or Bledlow, their well deserved name for picturesque beauty. Within the high rampart of the hills slopes gently down, for many a mile to the south-eastwards, what may be termed the Chiltern country. It forms a high but undulating tract of hill, vale, and wood, in which the upland Hamlets, with "secure delight," have invited and might still invite the visits of a Milton and in which quiet and picturesque farms, country towns and villages, seated generally by the brook in the vale, a few pleasant with some noble mansions, may claim for the district a character for cheerful rural beauty. Assuredly, from an acquaintance of some years with this country, the writer can promise the lovers of good exercise, fine air, and pleasant scenery, many an agreeable walk or ride over the open commons, or through the shady lanes and fertile fields of this variegated hill country.

Let the scenery of Marlow, Missenden, Penn, and Wycombe attest that this is no undue partiality.

To be continued...

## **John Barber 21<sup>st</sup> May 1937 to 19<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

John was born and grew up with his brother Rob in Chalfont St Giles where his parents ran a farm and riding school. This encouraged their love of horses and involvement with them – leading to them both meeting their wives this way.

His three year apprenticeship with Lucas Aerospace turned into a 23 year stay, often working abroad on underwater missiles. When he retired, he set up his own company manufacturing test rigs, which could often be found spread out over the dining table.

He married his first wife Di in 1961 and she sadly died of cancer in 1999. He married his second wife Hazel in 2004 and she also died of cancer in 2017.

Full retirement gave him time to further indulge his love of modelling, which had started during his school days. One of his greatest projects was a scaled down Vulcan Bomber, carefully designed to fit into the family car for transportation to the many flying displays he gave. It was thought to be the first successful twin gas turbine model ever made and flying it was enjoyed by the whole family.

His interests included model planes, hybrid rockets, a gas turbine powered model of Bluebird and anything else connected to steam – a boat, engines and finally the locally familiar car Lily.

Although he later had his own health problems, he still remained very active – bringing Lily to Pitstone Green Museum Open Days and giving rides at The Lee fete to raise money for Rennie Grove, who had helped both wives. They also supported him when he was able to return home from hospital. So many children – and adults – were thrilled to enjoy a ride on Lily next to John in his bowler hat and we hope his younger son Martin will be able to continue rides on her.

John will be remembered by many for his unfailing kindness in helping others unconditionally and was never happier than being able to fix or repair something for someone.

Rob

## **2020 Museum Calendar**

The museum is closed to visitors until further notice.

### **FRONT COVER**

Barn Roofs

### **BACK COVER**

John Barber : Farewell

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