

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter



Summer 2021

EDITOR'S NOTE

I begin with an apology to our membership secretary, Bill Barnard. Bill has contributed much to the Newsletter over the years and his unearthing of the article on Antiquities of the Chiltern Hills has been an interesting window on the past. Unfortunately, I missed the final part in the last issue, so it is included here. Put it down to my excitement at having enough to fill the pages of the Spring Newsletter!

I am very grateful to one of our committee members, Pat Kerry, for his reminiscences on growing up in the 1950s. It is a dreadful thing to realise that much of what we took for granted as background family and local knowledge as we grew, is now looked upon as Twentieth Century social history and is not only taught in schools, but also on university history courses! This has been brought home to me in a very personal sense as I have been trying to flesh out some of the characters in my family tree with anecdotes that were passed on to me by my parents and grandparents. I have sent these on to my children and nieces and have been surprised by their interest in such quasi-historical matters. It was the realisation that now there are no longer any living combatants from the era of the First World War to tell their stories first hand that means that to my granddaughter, at the age of eleven, 1914 is as distant to her (107 years) as 1842 was to me at a similar age. I have included a short article on post card propaganda from that era that will, I am sure, jog a few family memories.

As a matter of interest in 1842, the first Income Tax Act was passed, charging 7 pence in the pound on incomes over one hundred and fifty pounds a year. The Rebecca Riots against turnpike road trusts occurred in South Wales, the Mines and Collieries Act made it illegal for females of any age and boys under ten to be employed underground and in the first Anglo-Afghan War, the Battle of Kabul was fought. From my point of view, the most interesting piece of trivia of the year was that Richard Owen (palaeontologist and founder of the Natural Science Museum) first coined the word *dinosaur*.

Exciting times!

Dennis Trebble

MANAGER'S MUSINGS

Well I think we are almost there, after 20 months in a state of uncertainty that has been unprecedented in our lifetime, we are beginning to see a dim light emerging from a long dark tunnel. We have struggled long and hard to keep our heads above water, with many volunteers unable to attend due to extreme vulnerability or understandable reluctance to take risks with a possibly lethal virus. Those who were able to work at the farm were faced with more tasks than it was possible to handle and had to make some difficult decisions about what could be left undone. Our very wet weather early on meant that the grass, cow parsley and nettles won the battle in the orchards which made the damage done by the badgers seem quite trivial.

We've lost a few volunteers due to many different reasons and our sincere best wishes go to all those who are stuck at home for whatever reason and would like to say that if you can get away for a short while you know you are always welcome at the farm, for a cup of tea or coffee and a chat. We are pleased that we have a steady trickle of new volunteers coming in, who have all proved to be fantastic and a great asset to the museum. My thanks go out to all of you who have contributed in any way and as usual our pleas go out to all members who may be able to help in any way. There are many jobs that can be done from home by anyone with any skills in the field of administration. I have been doing three jobs (manager, publicity and program secretary) for several years and considering the fact that administration is not my forte, it means that time taken on administration, which I'm not good at, makes less available for practical work, which I am good at. If some members would be prepared to take over some of the work involved with publicity and the monthly talks (program) I could be a lot more use to the museum, as manager.

As for projects, we have managed to complete the paving of the areas outside the shop and the big barn, the reception hut is useable if not exactly finished, we now have two Portaloos behind the new grain barn and despite the ride-on mower breaking down for three different unrelated reasons, we are beginning to get the orchards sorted out. Paul has finished the staircase for the Cook Collection and our thanks go to him for a very awkward job, done, as usual, superbly. The big dip in the roadway between the orchard and the area of the 5" railway has been levelled so that classic sports cars

will not get stuck any more and we now have internet coverage in most of the buildings that need it on open days. New(ish) recruit Dave Hale has taken over responsibility for the railway hut and I gather the railway system now works as it should do, with the rolling stock having exactly the right gauge so that it doesn't keep derailing.

The old Austin 7 is coming along nicely and we hope to get the bodywork repairs done sometime in the next few weeks. In the meantime there is a large dead conker tree right behind the Austin's garage where it would do some nasty damage if it were to fall. This will have to be attended to ASAP and we will have to come up with a plan, or pay someone to do it.

Our first Open Day was a great success with lots of smiley faces and many happy customers. My thanks go to all who battled with frustratingly bad international organisations to set up the ticketing system that we needed as a means of controlling numbers and abiding by the guidelines for museums. Although it was a lot of work I think that, along with the electronic payment systems, it brings us into the 21st century and means we can run ticket-only, one off events if we want in the future.

Pete Farrar (Museum manager)

GROWING UP IN THE 1950s – Part I

I was born in 1939 in the village of Kings Langley, which lies between Watford and Hemel Hempstead. My recollections of the early years are naturally a bit vague but, I do remember my father being in the Home Guard, my mother working at the Ovaltine factory and the sound of so called Doodlebugs whilst at the infants' school in Church Lane. I particularly remember VE Day on the 8th of May 1945, which just happened to be my sixth birthday. There was a huge street party in Alexandra Road, where we lived, and I thought it was just for me.



The Ovaltine factory, Kings Langley

The following year, my father was tasked with setting up a new factory, to help the post war recovery. The chosen location for the new business was the village of Haddenham, situated between Aylesbury and Thame. I clearly remember travelling to Haddenham in the removal van and passing a bus on Tring Hill. The bus was towing a small trailer carrying a gas tank containing the fuel. Presumably this was because of oil shortages caused by the war.

The business was started in an existing building in the High Street, which had previously housed a metal working company. The main product was something called Sistoflex, which was a textile sleeving, varnished and baked and used for electrical insulation. The varnish was highly inflammable, and one day, in June 1951, there was a huge fire causing the factory to be completely destroyed. Work began immediately to get the business going again and a group of ex-military Nissen huts was taken over in Bank's Park. However, the Sistoflex plant required more height and so was relocated to a disused premises in nearby Thame. The building of a new factory started after a few weeks, adjacent to the Nissen huts. By the end of 1952 it was one of the biggest employers in the village and an active social club was formed. One of the Nissen huts became the social centre with weekly film shows and a youth club with a snooker table, two table tennis tables and a temperamental Juke box. I guess we were quite lucky.

Haddenham was quite a large village with two centres known as Fort End and Church End. There were, of course, no mobile phones but somehow we found a way to communicate by connecting the two phone boxes just by

using buttons A and B. There was intense rivalry between the two "Ends" and impromptu football and cricket matches were fiercely contested.

I attended the village Primary School from 1946 to 1950 and then, having passed the 11 plus, I moved to Aylesbury Grammar School. I had a half mile walk to catch the bus at Fort End, a six mile bus journey, and a one mile walk from Kingsbury Square to Walton Road, resulting in a one hour journey at each end of the day. When the Aylesbury Grammar School was badly damaged by fire in November 1953, I began to worry a bit. But apart from my current local pub, the Swan in Wheathampstead, suffering severe fire damage a few years ago, I have not been troubled further.

June 2nd 1953 was Coronation Day and several events were arranged around the village. Our nearest was in Turner's Orchard in the Lower High Street. The apple trees, already in blossom, were further decorated with red, white and blue rosettes, made by local children, from coloured waxed paper. I remember a hog roast, with an apple wood fire, in a half steel drum that had once contained Sistoflex varnish. Crates of beer were carried from the nearby King's Head. Wine was either not very popular or just not available at that time and cider or Babycham were the fruit-based options. Music was provided by anyone who could play an instrument and there was a lot of singing, including some of the wartime favourites.

When I left the Grammar School in 1955, I was advised to go into engineering and serve a five year apprenticeship. This took me to Balham in south-west London, at the age of 16. The company was involved in the design and manufacture of paper converting machinery, which produced envelopes and other stationery items. They also became involved in the early production of plastics packaging. Who could have predicted where that was going to lead us. I spent the first three years of my apprenticeship in the engineering workshop and the final two years and two and a half years thereafter in the Drawing Office. I found lodgings just a short walk from my place of work. I stayed there for seven and a half years, for the first few months returning home at weekends, and later less frequently. My apprenticeship allowed me to go on day release to study engineering at Wandsworth Technical College, now part of South Thames College. At first it was a forty minute journey on two buses, then a twenty minute cycle ride and eventually, a ten minute drive in my 1938 Hillman Minx.



1938 Hillman Minx

During my apprenticeship, the company enrolled me in a four week Outward Bound course at Ullswater in the Lake District. This was a real eye-opener for me and we were instructed in fell walking, rockclimbing, mountain rescue and survival skills. I had to spend 24 hours alone in the mountains with only a ground sheet, a sleeping bag and basic food supplies. I was required to make sketches of particular buildings and landmarks to prove that I had followed the prescribed route of about 20 miles. It was May, so the weather was fair but very cold at night. I constructed a bivouac using the ground sheet to make a triangular tunnel at the base of a dry stone wall. All I could hear was the babbling of Aira Beck and the bleating of distant sheep. I think I grew up quite a lot in those four weeks.

The foregoing covers my experiences in education and training. The social and recreational aspects of growing up in the 1950s will be covered in the next edition of this Newsletter.

Pat Kerry

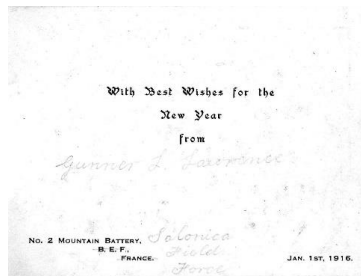
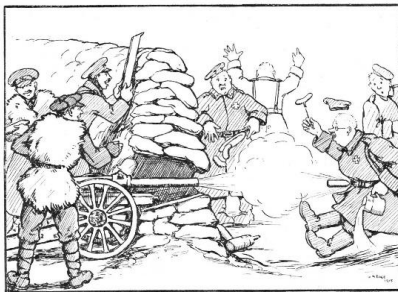
PROPAGANDA

The term *propaganda* is defined as “a concerted set of messages aimed at influencing the opinions or behaviour of large numbers of people” (*Shorter OED*). We are all subject, to a greater or lesser extent, to such effects from, for example, government, commerce, newspapers, telecommunications and the internet.

Here are some Twentieth Century war-time examples.

During the First World War it was well known that the figurehead in charge of the Army was Lord Kitchener and that he absolutely detested the presence of representatives of the press on the battlefield. He tried to keep the general populace of the UK in ignorance during the first months of the war but the government rapidly realised that letters home from the front were giving a very different picture to the party line. It was therefore decided to try to sway public opinion by both a factual (though censored) set of reports and the use of subliminal imagery.

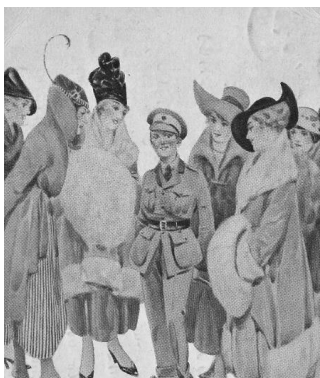
In the second category, I offer the following.



This was a New Year's card for 1916 that had been issued to the British Expeditionary Force in France. However, if you look carefully, because the age of the card has caused the writing to fade, on the greetings page it says “from Gunner Lawrence, Salonica Field Force”. This was sent by my granddad to my grandmother, written in pencil. It portrays the Germans as overweight, unfit, sausage eaters who enjoy their drink (bottle in front of sandbags). The British, on the other hand, are fit, dressed in goatskin

jackets (issued only to some very fortunate companies), protected by well built fortifications (no mention of the mud, water and slime of trenches) and having sufficient ammunition (the shell shortage at the front was a national disgrace). If enough of these were sent, the propaganda machine had done it's work.

In the next examples, the idea is fixed that a soldier would attract the amorous attention of ladies –particularly if he were a volunteer and not a conscript. The first picture is entitled Manpower.



The second card suggests that no matter what kind of physical specimen you were, the army could use you and that you would be irresistible to the ladies. These were sent by my great uncle Charlie from the training camp in Herne Bay prior to being sent to France. He survived less than six weeks in the trenches and his name is now inscribed on a war memorial in his home village.

If such propaganda works for those in power, could it be turned to be used by those less well placed in society? When the First World War was over, demobilisation of the forces proceeded apace. Unfortunately, many men found that upon their return, there were fewer jobs available and that the rates of pay had decreased rather than increased.



Lloyd-George's much vaunted promise of homes fit for heroes was just that – it failed to materialise. The next card shows the strength of feeling and also suggests that opinion might be swayed by pointing out the contrast between war time profiteering and the realities of life of much of the UK population.

TOMMY'S REWARD,

Or Your Service no Longer Required.

By W. PEARMAIN. 3120 1st Mons.

The Kaiser trained his armies, then war he did declare
 Then marched on gallant Belgium before she could prepare;
 But up jumped Jack and Tommy and crossed the
 raging main
 And drove those Hunish murderers back to Berlin again,
 But now the war is over tho-e lads you don't require,
 And they are left to tramp the country with neither
 fool nor fire.

While Tom was facing the Germans in the bitter
 winter's cold
 You were facing brilliant Ballrooms and Diamonds
 set with Gold,
 While Jack was facing dangers to try and get your bread,
 You slept at home in safety on a snow-white feather bed
 While we'd a paltry sixpence, with Bully Beef and Jam,
 You dined in your beautiful mansions on home-fed veal
 and lamb.

But rich men, please remember, with the lad in navy
 blue
 We fought like hell in Flanders and won this war for YOU.
 Remember we were promised good homes and a little
 wealth,
 But all Lloyd George has built, sir, is Chequers for himself.
 So while you sit in comfort beside you fire's glow.
 Please try and help those Heroes who are tramping in
 the snow.

Then rub out that old notice, "Your service we don't
 require."
 And try and find us work, sir, and we'll find food and fire.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

The last example that I have in my possession concerns the Second World War, Hitler and Germany's much repeated call for *Liebensraum*. This was defined as the additional territory deemed necessary for the continued economic well-being of Nazi Germany, including the provision of adequate space in which to live and develop. Hitler often referred to this as *vital space* and was his excuse for invading Czechoslovakia and annexing Austria. My mother's brother had been in the Welsh Guards during the retreat at Dunkirk and had witnessed, first hand, the dismemberment of a German pilot who had strafed a column of mostly women and children refugees. It was the women who had done this when his aircraft was downed in a nearby field. My uncle's viewpoint is well illustrated.



Never doubt the power of a cartoon or a well-constructed phrase as a method of planting ideas that can then be used as the basis for further ideological manipulation!

Dennis Trebble

ANTIQUITIES OF THE CHILTERN HILLS by REV W J BURGESS

PART 3 (Courtesy Bill Barnard)

That the Roman legions ever penetrated the surrounding hills, is more than even an Antiquary can conjecture; though the Hamlet of Speen may possibly derive its name, as Speen in Berkshire is supposed to do, from the Roman Spina (or Spinae? or Spiuae?). It is still a thorny nook in the woods. Nor is it unlikely that the Icknield way, pursuing its persevering course to the westward, along the lower eminence of the Chilterns, would be overlooked by so good a judge of roads as the Roman Conqueror. For the Icknield was, I presume, an ancient British Trackway from East to West, and may have been so called from the Iceni, from whose territory it takes its rise.

But I must hasten to conclude this paper, with a few remarks on one of the chief mysteries left us from the olden time in the keeping of the Chiltern Hills. Mystery certainly envelopes the origin, and a solemn awe is felt by the country folk in the presence of a work passing by the ominous name of Grimsdyke, i.e. the foss or ditch of Grim. The name itself is ancient. It occurs in a charter granted by Edmund Earl of Cornwall, in the reign of King Henry the Third, to his Monastery of Bonhommes, at Ashridge in Bucks, and describes the course of a way, as leading "usque ad quoddam fossatum quod dicitur Grymes ditch" —Clutterbuck's Herts, vol. i., p. 291. The name is also found in Scotland as descriptive of a similar work. It is there called Graham's, Graeme's or Grim's dyke, and is believed to have been executed by Lollius Urbicus. It is an immense ditch, averaging 40 feet in width, and stretching from sea to sea. By the country people it is commonly asserted that the Chiltern Grim's Dyke runs round the world, for the notion of German or Atlantic oceans is but imperfectly presented to their minds; or, at least, the Great Dyke is more than a match for the sea,

and like the Sea Serpent, drags its length along beneath the surface.

Certain it is, that the extent of country traversed by the Dyke is very great, and the labour of moving so great a mass of earth could only have been undertaken when whole tribes turned out to break the ground, nothing daunted by the difficulty of moving soil with their fingers, or at best a wooden spade and wicker-basket. The course of this singular Bank or Ditch is very devious. It is met with in Berkshire, near Streatley, and is traced for a considerable distance. It appears on the Chilterns in Oxfordshire, near Watlington. In this county it has been tracked from Bradenham, whence it runs in bold outline through woods to Lacey Green, forming the boundary of Princes Risborough parish. Thence, turning at right angles, it maintains its conspicuous course, by Redland End, through Hampden Park, where, again turning sharply round, it runs near Hampden House, and onwards by some lofty Barrows, towards Great Missenden. Crossing the valley, we find the well known features of our old friend near King's Ash, in Wendover parish; then passing through woods near St. Leonards, it passes in bold relief over Wigginton Common, and is met with in full preservation above Berkhamstead, in Herts; and crossing the valley northwards at that point stretches over Berkhamstead Common towards Ashridge.

The main feature of the Dyke consists in its course, kept carefully within the platform of the high ground, and generally, when it approaches the outer face of the hills, maintaining a uniform distance from the summit. But for what purpose all this labour? Did this line of embankment serve to connect the Strong Holds of West Wycombe, Cholesbury, and Maiden Bower, not far from which it runs? Or, if a Military Work, would it leave the summit of the hill undefended, and follow the weaker positions, being itself a line of defence too long to be held by troops, without the aid of towers and forts in close connexion, such as distinguish the Northern Wall of Severus? Let us then conceive that this work, so massive and continuous, was a territorial line, the boundary of tribes or nations. Let us suppose that its

singular appearance and unknown origin have gained it the name it bears. Let us suggest that the name is not a translation of Severus into Grim, as some suppose, but rather, that like other mysterious works, as the Devil's Causeway, or the Devil's Bridge, our Dyke owes its name to the superstition which assigns such matters at once to a supernatural origin; and that the aid of the magician or wizard was necessary for the digging of so deep, so long a trench, for Grima is the Saxon for magician. And with this clue, we may fairly interpret Grimsdyke as the Ditch of the Wizard.

Consistently with such an origin concerning this said Dyke, many and curious traditions are afloat. It is a weird, or wizard spot, upon its bank nothing of good omen happens. I have been told in perfect good faith, by one who dwelt near it, that on Grimsdyke the unhappy Jane Shore perished, being starved to death by King Richard's order, a baker being also put to death for his compassion in offering her a penny loaf. A curious connexion in which to find an historic name, and showing how great names and tragic events are rumoured amongst the people, though often, as in this case, in a distorted shape. That fairies make fun or make mischief, that ghosts and spectres have peculiar liberty on the soil of the Dyke, is the current belief of the country gossips.

I must, however, take my leave of my subject, by confessing that my tale can boast no fairy charm, but that I am content if this simple record of facts and features of the Chiltern Hills may serve to excite interest upon its subject, and direct the researches of more persevering enquirers.

IVINGHOE WITCH

An extract from Northampton Mercury 2nd July 1770, Page 3

We hear from Ivinghoe, (Buckinghamshire) that one Horse and two Sheep, belonging to a Farmer, in the Parish of Slapton, near that Place, having died, the Farrier who had them under his Care, not having sufficient Skill to recover them, yet had the Sagacity to discover the Cause of their Death, which he declared was owing to their being *bewitched*, and named the Witch, a Widow about 55 Years old. This ridiculous Assertion made the poor Woman a Terror to her weak Neighbours, and very unhappy in herself; and, as she was not conscious of being a *Witch*, was willing to undergo the usual Method of Trial, viz. by Water-Ordeal and weighing against the Church-Bible, and a Miller in the Neighbourhood was pitched upon to perform the Ceremony. On the 18th past, every Thing being got ready for the Trial, the poor Woman went to the Mill, where a great Number of People were assembled, in order to prove her Innocence; but the Miller recollecting the fatal Consequences of a similar Affair, about 18 Years ago *, declined performing it before so great a Concourse of Spectators, but promised that he would do it in private the first Opportunity.

* At Tring, where a poor Man and his Wife, accused of Witchcraft, were so cruelly used that the Woman died on the Spot, and the Man was with Difficulty recovered; for which Offence one of the Ringleaders was executed, and his Body hanged in Chains.

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(Research by Bill Barnard)



2021 Museum Calendar

Sunday **August 8th**

Bank holiday Monday **August 30th**

Sunday **September 12th**

Sunday **October 10th**

Opening times from
10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Admission charges.

Adults £9, Children £4, under 5 free. Concessions over 65, £8.

FRONT COVER : Aerial view of the museum site

BACK COVER : Austin 7 pictorial update of restoration progress

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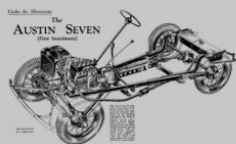
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