

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter



New Year 2022

EDITOR'S NOTE

We are at the beginning of a new year and still subject to on-going restrictions as I write this. Fortunately for us, the museum has not suffered too badly as a consequence of our enforced closures last year and it has certainly given us the opportunity to re-assess some of our displays. In these days of digitised computer displays that often see presentation triumph over content, I have heard visitors say how refreshing it is to be able to experience a museum where the displays are physically tactile and where volunteers are more than ready to pass on their knowledge of particular areas of the site. Some may call us old-fashioned, though there is no shame in that. Part of the museum mission statement is to engage with the public and to be educative in our approach. You don't always need hi-tec expense to accord with these aims.

Throughout the year there has been a hard core of volunteers who have kept the grounds in terrific condition. It is not always recognised that this takes a significant amount of effort, time and expenditure to achieve. Irrespective of whether the public have been present, the upkeep of the site has continued unabated. I am sure that we would all join in a vote of thanks for the readiness with which our grounds persons (men and women) have carried on regardless!

On a personal note, when I joined the museum some twelve years ago, one of the first persons to welcome me as a volunteer and to steer me along the right track was Brenda Grace. Anything I needed to know about local families, history or museum organisation was always at her fingertips. You will find an obituary written by Norman later in the newsletter which touches on the many facets of Brenda's character. For my part I would like to share the following picture which she passed on to me because of my motorcycling background. Happier days, full of optimism and hope!



Dennis Trebble

MANAGER'S MUSINGS

Well, here we are again, this seems to be becoming rather a habit. The news bulletins are all screaming at us that the statistics are breaking all records and we must avoid swamping the NHS and we are all doing our best to carry on our lives in the most responsible way we can. These emergencies seem to bring out the best and worst in the members of our society. One section demand to know what the government is going to do to save us all, while another section actually riots, complaining that they don't want to be told what to do by the government ! Then you get people who want the prime minister to resign because he has infringed one of his

own rules, even though they have no idea who would replace him. It's very easy to break your own rules, as many of us would be able to testify.

At this time, I don't feel confident enough to make definite decisions about this year's open days. We got our fingers burned in 2020 when we had thousands of leaflets printed about 6 weeks before everything was shut down. It's not just the waste of money, I hate seeing perfectly good leaflets binned.

Our trusty volunteers are still plugging away at the various projects they are involved with. I send out a huge thank you to you all, for your fantastic efforts, particularly with the less glamorous tasks such as gutter clearing, broken glass replacement and general maintenance. Repainting of the brush shop is well under way and a group of new volunteers have joined up with Alan Fairbrother who has been looking after the computer room very efficiently for a while and some exiting new plans are being developed to make the whole area more user friendly and informative. By the time we reopen (hopefully at Easter) we should have finished replacing the two old gates and the fence at the front of the volunteer orchard making the front of the site look far more presentable.

Congratulations must go to Bill Griffiths the top man at Milton Keynes museum, who has been awarded the MBE after many years at the helm and making them almost as good as us. If you haven't been, it's well worth a visit and it is open 5 days per week. If we were ever to contemplate opening more often, then they would probably be a good example to guide us.

We had a very successful celebration of the life of Brenda Grace who was a key person here for many years until recently, being struck down by the terrible Motor Neurone Disease. Despite our best efforts it was freezing in the big barn after her funeral, but it was rather fitting being there as Brenda took great pride in looking after the place for the craft stall people on open days. She will be missed by the many people who knew her.

Many of our non-local members will probably not have heard of The CuriosiTEA Rooms based in The Hub in Ivinghoe who have recently had to leave their premises in the village and are moving to the Memorial Hall opposite The Museum in Pitstone. They have a very good reputation in Ivinghoe and will be greatly missed. It occurred to me that we could be of mutual benefit to each other, from the point of view of publicity or staffing and I have arranged to meet with the owners to see if we can come up with a plan that will be good for both of us and, if not, just to make friends so that we can be friendly neighbours.

2021 may have been rather truncated, but all our open days were a huge success and I cannot see why we shouldn't be just as good this year, assuming that we are not blighted by Covid or the weather, thank you to all of you who have supported the museum in any way and a happy new year to everyone.

Pete Farrar - January 2022

AGM BRIEF REPORT

Held on the 12th December via a Zoom meeting, the AGM was structured to deal with the business of the society following a proscribed agenda. Inevitably, given the constraints of both the Covid 19 virus threat and the access to appropriate technology, attendance was limited, though at nineteen persons was above the 10% necessary to be declared quorate. The chairman, as well as thanking the officers of the society, made a point of thanking volunteers for the continued care of grounds and buildings during these unprecedented times. The accounts that were circulated with the last newsletter were accepted unanimously and the manager made the point that we still have some unresolved difficulties about opening to the public within the ever changing rules about meetings and gatherings.

No motions were received by the meeting and all officers and committee members, being willing to do so, were elected for the coming year. Our independent examiner agreed to stand for the next year and was thanked for her continued scrutiny of the society accounts. Membership was reported at 179 persons, fifty of whom, at renewal, had been generous in donating more than their appropriate fees

Dennis Trebble

BRENDA GRACE

It was a sad and upsetting day for some of us at the museum on Tuesday 23rd November when we heard that Brenda passed away at 11.30am that morning, a day when those who knew her will never forget.

Brenda was one of those individuals that seem to devote her life to helping others in any way she could, both at the museum and in the local community. She was a fountain of knowledge about people and places and passionate about the history of the Society, Ivinghoe and Pitstone. If you needed to know anything associated with the local area you always asked Brenda.

Brenda joined the society, then called Pitstone Local History Society, a few years before I joined. We often spoke of those early days and I think it would have been about 1986 when she joined. Going through my own records I found that she first appeared on the committee as Secretary on October 1989 and served as Secretary continuously until October 2007. In recognition to her many years of service to the Society she was granted Life Membership in 2018.

Brenda was not just a secretary for the Society she became like a mother figure, keeping everyone on track with dates and events, organising coffee and biscuits for the volunteers, assisting with the catering on Open days, organizing coffee and biscuits for the many group visits we used to have and selling Museum Guides to those visitors. Her last official position was Craft Organiser and was very much liked by all the craft people.



Brenda working in the old office which is now part of the Cook Collection, the picture was taken in 1993.

She worked as a Secretary at Tunnel Cement and was skilled in short hand. Any time we had an article for the Newsletter or indeed other documents that needed proof reading, it was always passed though Brenda for the final checks. The picture on the next page was taken at Tunnel Cement in her earlier years, Brenda being at the back on the right-hand side



Brenda loved music, especially popular classics and would often attend recitals at the Organ Museum in St Albans, even then she would often go to the trouble of picking up others in the village to go with her.

In later years, before her health went downhill, she befriended one of our elderly volunteers, Jack Brantom who had failing eye sight. Jack lived in Leighton Buzzard and she took the trouble of seeing him some three days a week, buying him food and looking after all his needs right up to the time that Jack passed away.

In the last few years her walking became very difficult which curtailed some of her activities but she never lost her interests in the museum and everything of local interest. She enjoyed both receiving and sending us pictures of people, places and events relating to the local area and several

Society members helped her in as many ways as they could. The final blow came when she was diagnosed with MND in June this year and the disease spread quickly. She was taken into hospital and transferred to a Hospice within a few days where she sadly died. At least she did not have a long lingering death.

Brenda's funeral took place in St Mary's Church Ivinghoe and was followed by a wake at the Pitstone Green Museum which she loved so much.

Norman Groom

A NEW YEAR MUSEUM CHALLENGE

All of the following items are to be found in well-known British Museums. Can you identify where they are located? Answers are to found at the back of the newsletter. Editor's interests to the fore, I'm afraid!

1. The Barnes-Wallis Stratospheric Chamber
2. Bluebird CN7
3. The Sutton Hoo Hoard
4. Both American spy planes – the U2 and the SR71 in close proximity
5. A Colossus machine
6. TSR2 (extra point for knowing where the second is displayed)
7. The millionth production Austin car (1946).
8. The Fighting Temeraire by Turner
9. Mallard – holder of the World's Fastest Steam Locomotive title
10. Slippery Sam – a British triumph!

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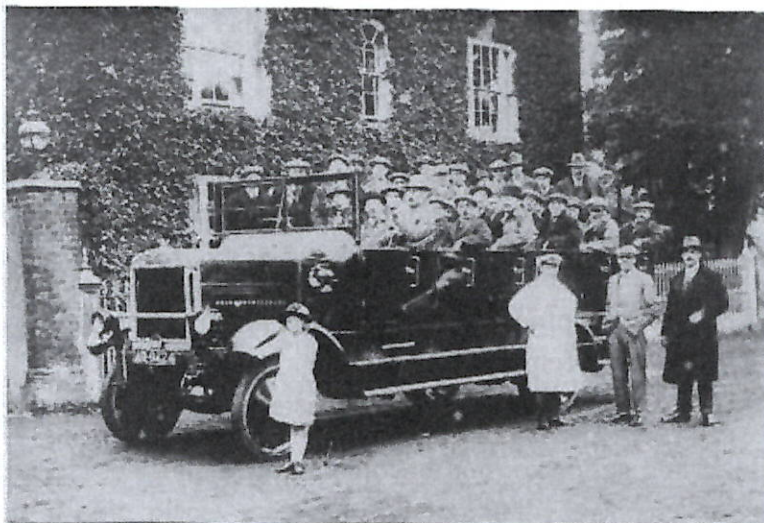
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HISTORY IN PICTURES.

When I attended secondary school in the so – called enlightened 1960s, History, as a subject, was still predominantly concerned with kings and queens, battles and empire. The role of the common man was never considered and what we have come today to view as social history really had not begun to assert itself in the curriculum. However, there is a vast untapped resource that we all have access to. We all have old family photographs – some formal studio shots and others more relaxed. In addition to these there may be postcards in the same collection. Looking beyond the main subject of the photograph, all kinds of other information can be gleaned. Fashion in clothing, hairstyles and furniture, together with building styles, roads, vehicles and farm land, all tell their stories to enable us to paint a wider canvas. I thought that I might look at some pictures from the museum archive to illustrate what I mean and perhaps this might act as a catalyst for you to consider re-evaluating some of your old family photographs.



Consider this picture taken outside the Ivinghoe brewery. Clues to the date are the charabanc conveyance, evidently with more passengers than seats. The driver is an important man in his peaked hat and white coat. The social hierarchy is marked by hats – the trilby wearers are higher in the social order than those in flat caps. This is evidently a works outing with both management and workers present. The little girl to the left is in her smart clothes and as the only child present is likely to be the boss's daughter, but would not be allowed to accompany the outing. Solid wheels and tyres date the charabanc, which although equipped with an internal combustion engine, is not new. The brewery house is covered in a profusion of ivy – another clue to when that was an accepted treatment of the exterior of buildings. Moustaches and short backs and sides are the order of the day. The picture is dated at 1924 – is this close to your guess?



This picture has been chosen because it, to an extent, mirrors the previous one but is from a different time with different values. Obviously on a day trip, the party is multi-generational. The older ladies wear hats, but they have ceased to be necessary headwear for the others. A few of the men cannot avoid wearing ties on a summer's day. The boys are in shorts and all dresses are at knee length at least. Hair styles for both men and women remain short. The coach is a late 1950s Bedford Duple so this picture must be between sat 1957 and 1962. The lady at the front has a well -stocked bag – probably sandwiches and other bits of food (who wants to pay the exorbitant prices for food at the destination?). The implication here is that the battle of the sexes had begun to even up with men no longer holding the dominant position suggested by the previous picture.

In the next picture, the marquee behind the team says The Ivinghoe and Pitstone United Cricket Club. A number of observations suggest themselves. The club was well-off enough to afford to buy a “changing tent”. The team was comprised of a broad range of ages. The man on the left at the back wears a boater and stiff formal collar. The onlookers, including the chap in the bowler hat, wear heavy fabric clothing . All of this suggests the 1920s, though the bicycle in the background looks more modern . Certainly this has to be in the inter-war years.



My final picture for consideration is fascinating for what it doesn't show. This group of ladies are covered from swept back hair on their heads to their toes. No fripperies are on display and all have a serious look for the photographer.



About the only expression of individualism that is allowed is the hat decoration. The range of ages is significant and it is evident that some really do not want this picture to happen, judging from their expressions. Clearly this is prim and proper high Victorian from around the 1870s. They are pictured in a formal setting – possibly on the vicarage lawn.



I felt we couldn't leave this topic without a view of the typical British seaside holiday. Note the personal space, the horrid knitted trunks, the blow-up beach ball, all the fun of the fair and the implication of good behaviour. Just a challenge then – where and when?

I wonder if you also have these kinds of pictures in your possession. They may be worth a second look.

Dennis Trebble

ANSWERS TO MUSEUM CHALLENGE QUIZ.

1. Brooklands , Surrey
2. National Motor Museum, Bealieu
3. British Museum, London
4. American Air Force Museum, RAF Duxford
5. Colossus was installed at Bletchley Park
6. Either of Imperial War Museum sites at RAF Cosford or RAF Duxford
7. Heritage Motor Centre, Gaydon, Warwick
8. National Gallery, London
9. National Railway Museum, York
10. National Motorcycle Museum, Solihull

Front Cover: The Orchard in Winter

Back Cover: The Orchard in Summer



Pitstone and Ivinghoe

**Museum Society
Pitstone Green Museum,
Vicarage Road, Pitstone
Leighton Buzzard LU7 9EY
Tel. 01296 663887
Mob. 07944 357715**

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