

# **Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter**



**Spring 2022**

## EDITOR'S NOTE

You will see that later in the newsletter there is a list of open days for the current year. This is the first time we have been able to put together a “normal” sequence since the onset of Covid19 and we hope to be able to maintain our usual high standards of engagement with all of our visitors now that restrictions have been lifted. As yet, we have not come to any decision concerning the re-commencement of afternoon/evening talks but the matter is under discussion.

It is with regret that we must record the passing of one of our oldest volunteers who, until prior to the epidemic, was a regular attendee at open days. Norman Groom has written an interesting piece on Maurice Wingrove and his association with the museum. I got to know a little of his generosity of spirit whilst running the Gauge One model railway and much enjoyed his company.

The volunteer body goes from strength to strength, as has been noted elsewhere and there seems to be a good spread of abilities and interests that suggest that the museum is in safe hands as we look forward. I have to say that some little while ago I recommended viewing the series **Secrets of the Transport Museum** on the Yesterday channel. It is now into the second series and I sometimes have to stifle a laugh because the characters that emerge on the screen share an awful lot with those here at Pitstone. There must be something about museum volunteers that makes them unique! If you haven't caught up with this programme yet, it really is worth the view.

Dennis Trebble

## MANAGER'S MUSING

As I write this we have a short time before we reopen again, hopefully on our way to getting back to some sort of normal. Looking around the site on Tuesdays and Thursdays I am pleased to say that most things are looking good and well up to the high standards we are used to maintaining for our eager visitors. Although we have had some tragic losses, this is something to be expected with a workforce as old as ours and I'm glad to say that our workforce of volunteers is probably a greater number than ever before.

Over the last couple of seasons we have had a steady influx of people wanting to help and we now have a great selection of willing members working away come rain or shine. I've made a list of new volunteers numbering 16 in total. We could really do with another person helping with management as it is very difficult keeping our workforce pointing in the right direction and working together in the most constructive way.

We seem to be well set up for our season of open days, with healthy bookings for the craft tables in the barn. Activities that are current include the blacksmith's shop, wood turning, printing, bookbinding, basket making and medieval archery, with many more people doing their best to entertain and educate our visitors. We have had changes in Pottery and in Reception but we hope that new volunteers can try to fill in the gaps.

We had a large horse chestnut tree blown down in the last big storm (Eunice) but luckily it fell over the fence across the track to the allotments, demolishing a small section of fence. If it had fallen the other way it could have done a lot of damage. We've sorted it ourselves and repaired the fence, work continues to clean and tidy the areas up around the skips and the Garage.

Thinking about the quarterly newsletter the writing up of personal reminiscences, as done by Pat Kerry recently, would be much

appreciated. If you have any good stories about anything interesting historically, you will be surprised how much fun it can be to recall these as well as it being fascinating for the rest of us. In the meantime spread the word, we reopen soon and we need to make sure everything is well up to scratch to maintain our historic high standards. Well done everyone.

Pete Farrar (Museum manager)

## **STONE MILLING AT PITSTONE HERITAGE MUSEUM**

The vicinity of Pitstone and Ivinghoe is somewhat unique in that it has three examples of stone milling, each with a different source of power – wind, water, steam and electricity. All of these examples are situated within a radius of two miles from each other. Only one of the stone mills is working and producing flour, this being the Ford End Watermill in Ivinghoe village, a short distance from Pitstone Museum. This watermill is well worth the visit. Opening arrangements /directions are available on the Ford End Watermill website.

The windmill at Pitstone nearby to the museum, is owned and maintained by the National Trust and can be visited by a short walk from the museum or by road. It has been restored and is the oldest “post” mill and oldest dated windmill in Great Britain. It ground flour for 300 years. Details of opening times are available on the National Trust website.

At Pitstone Museum we have three stone mills. Two of them are at the far end of the Big Barn and date from c.1902 when they were moved from Pitstone Windmill because the windmill was severely damaged in a storm. You can read about this incident on information displays in the stone mill area. The last time the stone mills were working to produce flour was c.2009. Another smaller mill is in the small grain silo, adjacent to the big barn. This is being re-commissioned as a static display.



We have recently recommissioned one of the stone mills in the Big Barn so that the “runner” millstone on No.1 stone mill can be seen rotating by means of an electric motor /pulley system located in the loft space above. This motor also drives, by pulley, the green seed crusher you can see working in the right hand corner of the mill room, and No.2 stone mill. Some clever “electrickery” has been performed by our electricians to put in a control box and safety cut out features to get the electric motor working again. The pulley system in the loft is designed so that it can be operated by a belt from the pulley of a steam engine or tractor located outside at the back of the Big Barn. We may try to get this drive system working again in the future.



The stone milling process is linked to the unique grain store silos on the other side of the driveway outside of the Big Barn. The history of these grain silos is depicted on a display board and is well worth reading. We may restore stone mill No.2 with an aspiration to produce flour again, but this is a long term project requiring much work and expertise. A recent speed reduction modification to the pulley system is virtually complete.

The process of stone milling flour can be seen on information displays in the stone milling area. It has been a fulfilling pleasure, with great help from other volunteers, to get a stone mill running again. It provides a demonstration of an aspect of rural life at Pitstone in its' heyday.

Simon Heaton

## **The re - TURNING Volunteer!**



He could be one of our oldest volunteers and he has been patiently waiting for the opportunity, once again, to demonstrate his muscle power in operating a Winnowing Machine in the Big Barn on the next Open Day.

Over the winter time we have been helping him with cleaning the machine and manufacturing a new component which will make his demonstration an easier task. Paul Chapman and myself discussed a new pulley and Paul took away the idea and manufactured and fitted

the pulley. So if you are going to visit the museum on the next Open Day, don't forget to visit the Big Barn and say hello to our volunteer and see the Winnowing Machine in operation.

I was thinking of giving him a name and thought of "Gabriel Oates". Perhaps you could think of a name we could give him?

Allen Fairbrother

## **AGRICULTURE ON THE CHILTERN IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

I suspect that very few, if any, who are reading this will have heard of Pehr Kalm. He was from Finland and was the favoured follower of the great Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus. During a visit to North America in 1748, he stopped off in England for five months to study farming methods in different parts of the country. He spent three weeks at Little Gaddesden and kept a detailed diary of his visit. What follows is a snapshot of some of his observations and without doubt, much of what he recorded would have reflected the way in which animal and land husbandry was carried on in our area.

Apart from descriptions of the land and geology, the first thing that struck our visitor was the number of sheep present.

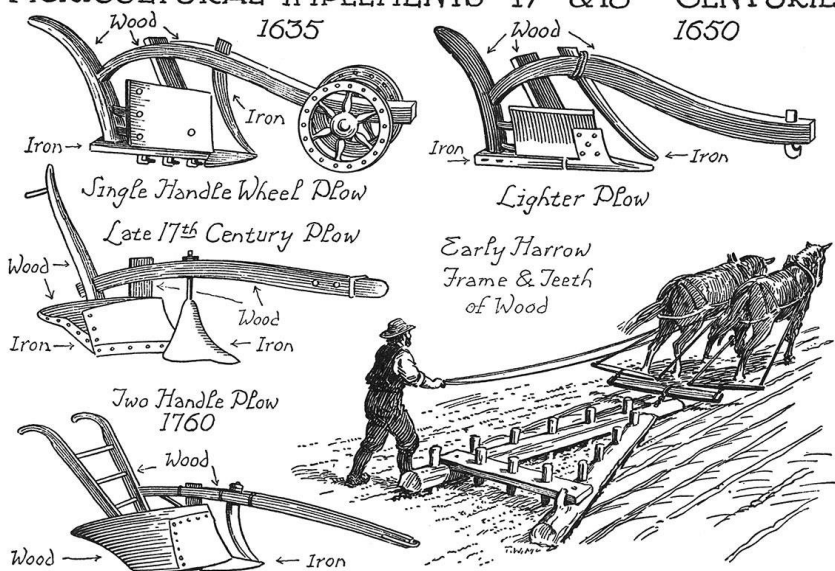
*Sheep are found everywhere in large numbers throughout the countryside. They are partly explained by the abundance of wool they produce to sell; partly by the fact that no nation eats as much meat as the English. Among the meats, mutton or roast sheep is in no way despised, so that a farmer made a considerable profit if he had plenty of sheep – even if other uses are disregarded.*

He was also interested in the social hierarchy of the work force and the relationship between employer and employee.



*Farmers do not keep servants much here. They have enough if they have a man and a girl.....it is the custom here that a farmer usually employs day labourers, who work for daily wages and do all his jobs in the ploughland, meadow and threshing floor. Here in Little Gaddesden a labourer makes 8 to 10 pence to a shilling a day. (With this) he must keep himself in food and gets from the farmer or whoever employs him nothing extra but small beer.*

## AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS 17<sup>TH</sup> & 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES



At the time, farming methods were adapting to changing demands from urban areas and there was a drive to improve production. Chemical fertilizers had yet to be used and so traditional methods held sway.

*Cattle manure was driven and laid in small heaps close behind each other on the arable lands. It consisted mostly of straw, because the practice here is to litter straw generously in the farmyard under the animals. Later the straw is shovelled together in*

*heaps, left to lie and rot a little and then taken out onto the fields. The manure that is carried out is spread after several days, ploughed in and the land is then sown with barley or turnips.*

One of the pests that we, as gardeners, often encounter is the snail, However it is unlikely that we ever have to deal with something akin to the following observation. A man who had inherited his father's property found the following.

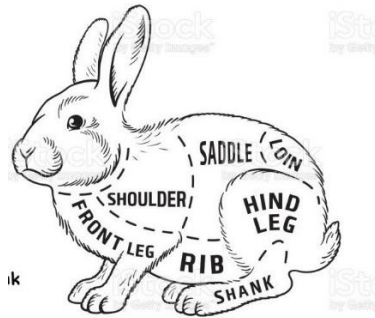
*He found on a stone wall of the estate an enormous number of snails. They were out on the grass and arable before sunrise and did so much damage that people looked upon them in much the same way that those in the east look upon grasshoppers or locusts. Once, when the pigs were turned out in the morning and went along by the wall they ignored all other food and started to search after and eat the snails. As a result, he decided to send boys out in the morning while the dew was till heavy on the ground so that they could collect them in baskets and give them to the pigs at home .Here he enjoyed seeing the pigs eat them greedily as if they were the finest food. After that he had them collected for pig food every day. The pigs not only became surprisingly fat on them, but those that were fed on them yielded the most delicate and tasty meat that could be obtained.*

Being European in outlook, Pehr Kalm would have been used to various cereal grains being used for bread making. In particular, he was interested to see how the English used rye – a staple grain on the continent.

*An old farmer told me that rye is never sown here as a bread grain, but that it is sowed in the autumn to be used the following spring, in April, as a fodder crop for sheep after they had eaten the crop on turnip land. The sheep are then turned onto the rye and are left to graze it until it is so short that they can get no more from it. Some of the farmers then leave the rye to grow and harvest it when ripe but most plough up the land on which it grows and prepare it for a wheat crop.*

All kinds of food was prepared differently to today's methods. We are used to having rabbit as an occasional meat in our diet but when these observations were being made, it was much more commonly eaten.

*.....he used to kill rabbits in the same way as a pig or other animals, namely by sticking the throat and letting the blood run out, so that the meat from the animal might be more agreeable than when it is killed in the usual way by a blow on the nape of the neck. He also told that he always had some of the bucks castrated so that their flesh would have a better flavour than if they were left ungelded.*



Field preparation for cereal crops had to meet three criteria. The first was that whatever was done needed to yield a return for the farmer. The second was that the preparation had to increase the fertility of the ground, and lastly, it should be capable of repetition over a number of years. The following extract explains how a field was prepared for barley.

*In May of the preceding year, chalk and a large amount of manure was spread and ploughed in. In June the whole enclosure was then sown with turnip seed. In September sheep were then turned onto it until it was ready to be ploughed. The dung and urine of the sheep, together with some of the half rotted turnips helped considerably to fertilise the soil.*

*Several experienced farmers said that the arable land was never fertilised with chalk more often than every 16, 18 or 20 years. The reason was said to be that if they fertilised more frequently, the arable land and the soil becomes to dry, loose and friable. But the arable land was always fertilised with other manure every third year; while industrious farmers may manure it every year.*

An unusual record was made specifically of a method of field preparation in the Ivinghoe area.

*On the arable fields that were sown with wheat we saw rags and small tatters of old clothes which were ploughed down into the field. Those who live around and about Ivinghoe, which is 34 English miles from London, go to the trouble of buying from tailors and other Londoners all aorta of old rags. They bring them home, cut them into small pieces, scatter them over the fields which they propose to put down to wheat, plough them in and then sow wheat. They said they scarcely knew of anything which fertilises the land so effectively and encourages crop growth on the soil better than rags. The rags hold moisture for a long time, which has several advantages.*

During his time at Little Gaddesden, he visited Ivinghoe and his description of the town some 274 years ago still has elements we might recognise today.

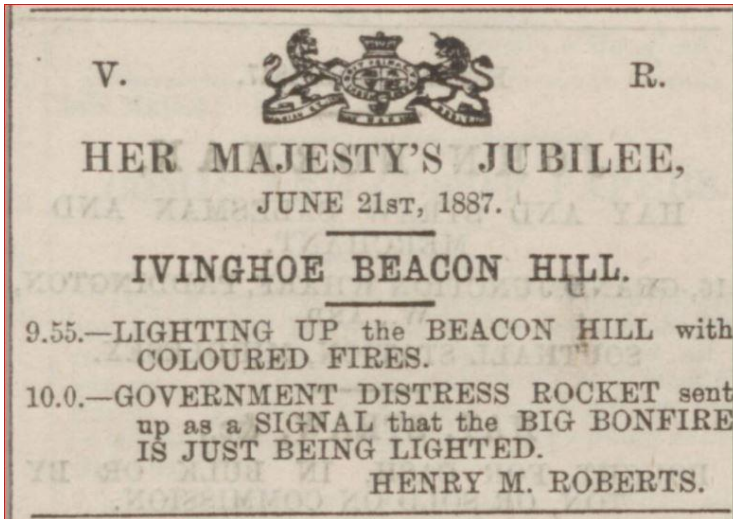
*Ivinghoe is a parish, the inhabitants of which live for the most part by farming. ...In the centre of the parish stood a beautiful stone church with a tower on top....which had a spire in which was set a clock without a hand. All of the houses were built of stone or brick, though the brick was set wholly between cross timbering. The roofs were nearly all of straw, well-constructed and quite steep. Trees were planted everywhere in the streets and around the houses, so the place was as if it lay in a garden. High chalk hills press close to the village on the eastern side and arable land is found right on top of them.*



The information in this selection is taken from a book written by Professor Bill Mead who died around four years ago (*Pehr Kalm – a Finnish Visitor to the Chilterns in 1748* ISBNi-85065-729-7). He was a resident of Aston Clinton and had been elected emeritus professor at UCL where, as a fellow, I had the distinct pleasure of knowing him. Bill translated the work of Pehr Kalm from the original Finnish – a language he had learned earlier in life in order to pursue his interest in the Geography of Finland.

Dennis Trebble

Notice relating to Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee



What a coincidence...

The government today is also in the process of sending up a distress  
rocket!

## MAURICE WINGROVE. (JUNE 1935- JANUARY 2022)



On the 27<sup>th</sup> January this year we lost yet another of our long standing members. Maurice became involved with the museum when the Beds & Bucks Engine Club started restoring the big Crossley gas engine, back in about 1989. He was then the chairman of the engine club and signed the agreement between our society and the engine club in which the club became a corporate member. The name of the society was then the PLHS (Pitstone Local History Society).

Like many of the engine club members who worked on the restoration, he stayed on and became a regular volunteer, especially using his plumber's skills on several major projects. Prior to obtaining mains water to our site, the water was supplied though an iron underground pipe from a pump and tank in the farmhouse, as it was when the museum was a working farm. At one stage we had a problem in that the pipe had corroded and our water supply could have been contaminated. Maurice found the location of the problem and was able to dig down, connect a modern plastic pipe to the old iron pipe, and with the help of other members, much of the old metal pipe was then replaced.

It was later decided to replace the supply from the farmhouse with mains water which terminated in the reception area. Maurice again undertook re-routing much of the piping work needed on the site. As well as general day to day work he carried out at the museum and being a plumber by trade, he looked after the plumber's shop and on open days, together with his friend Bob, they would demonstrate their skills of lead beating. This involved starting with flat sheets of lead and making the various complex shapes needed for water sealing problems on roof work.



The Lead Sheet Association Cup was presented jointly to Bob Garrett and Maurice Wingrove for their lead work. The presentation took place at a luncheon at The Wax Chandlers Hall, Gresham Street, London and was presented by the Grand Master of the Worshipful Company of Plumbers.

One of his hobby's was Gauge 1 model railways and in later years he would bring his radio controlled loco to the museum and run it on our own track for the public to see on open days



Maurice was one of those individuals that could turn his hand to solving many problems, he was easy going and always had a smile for everyone. He will be sadly missed by those older serving members of our society that knew him.

Norman Groom.

**MUSEUM OPEN DAYS 2022**  
**(10.30AM TO 4.30PM)**

**Easter Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April**

**Early Spring Bank Holiday Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> May**

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May**

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

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

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

**Bank Holiday Monday 29<sup>th</sup> August**

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

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

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

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership renewal forms will be included in this newsletter for the 2022-23 season. Please return payments by cheque, if possible. I hope to be in the meeting room at our Easter Monday Open Day to receive payments in person.

I have included a GDPR for some of our new volunteers who may not have signed this agreement. PIMS requires everyone to sign a GDPR form which will allow us to store your details securely on a computer. No personal details are ever given out to third parties and only the committee sees all of these details.

The membership fees for 2022-23 remain at £12 for a single member and £18 for joint membership.

Bill Barnard  
(Membership Secretary)

**FRONT COVER** : The lane leading to the entrance to the museum

**BACK COVER** : The Ship: sign for licenced premises

*Both photographs by Dennis Trebble.*

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