

Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter



Autumn 2022

EDITOR'S NOTE

I wonder how many of us hang on to objects that seem to have been in the family for so long that it might be unthinkable to let them go? They mostly have little monetary but huge emotional value. Amongst the miscellaneous bits and pieces I seem to have kept are the First World War postcards sent to my grandmother from her sweetheart, later to become my grandad. She kept, too, some from her brother whilst training to go to France where he lasted less than six weeks. I also have two substantial volumes on the First World War, published in the early 1930s and edited by H G Wells. My father's medals from World War Two and his army service book, together with heavily supervised letters sent from a Japanese PoW camp are reminders of what a previous generation endured. Little trinkets, photographs and badges and costume jewellery add to the items that provide a connection to a personal history.

Such thoughts prompted the realisation that one day, somebody in the future will be feeling that way about some of my belongings. The question, is, though, which ones? It is not as if we can predict what will be kept and what will be thrown away. All that we might hope is that whatever makes it through the next century will also be a reminder not simply of family connection but also of the broader sweep of social history.

Did you know, by the way, that for anybody over the age of sixty there is a school history syllabus somewhere in the country that examines events like the post WW2 emergence of European society, the beginnings of the NHS, personal credit, expansion of international trade and political blocs as well as points in our lives where the world changed (Cuban Missile Crisis, Berlin Wall, Common Market and so forth). I find it hard to believe that we are now text book material.

Dennis Trebble

STOP PRESS

Our talks are recommencing in January thanks to the efforts of one of our new volunteers, Richard Bysouth and the first three to have been arranged are the following:

- 1 2.30pm Thursday 26th January 2023
 Colin Oakes,
 The museums of London.

- 2 2.30pm Thursday 23rd February
 Richard Tregoning,
 Nica Rothschild -Jazz Baroness.

- 3 2.30pm Thursday 23rd March,
 Paul Miller [National Trust manager]
 The Ashridge Estate.

Please come along and support if you are at all able to.

MANAGER'S MUSING

We are almost at the end of our season of Open Days and it feels like things are getting back to some kind of recognisable normal. We have been very lucky with the weather we've had for our special days in 2022 and have been blessed by happy, knowledgeable visitors, enjoying a great day out at our lovely old farm. It's a bit depressing, though, looking at the ages of many of our volunteers and listening to their varied medical problems but we have been gifted with some superb new volunteers who all seem to be settling in very well, getting used to our old fashioned ways and seemingly all getting along brilliantly.

On a personal note, next Easter marks the 10th anniversary of Ronnie & me joining PIMS. We came along because we had to entertain a lively four year for the day; he fell in love with the 40s Room and still enjoys visiting on open days and often helps (supervised) on busy days. Ronnie and I haven't missed any open days in ten years but it has been touch and go, particularly lately as poor Ronnie fell over a large piece of our log cabin that I had stupidly left on the ground near where she was working. This resulted in a compound fracture of her arm and a dislocated elbow joint. It seems to be healing OK and we both blame ourselves but we can all learn to "look where you're going" and be more aware of obvious trip hazards and potential dangers round the site.

Towards the end of our August Bank Holiday Open Day, one of our younger, more eagle eyed volunteers, pointed out that one of the large cross beams in the big barn was seriously cracked and that the crack had recently got bigger! For this reason I took the decision to close the barn for the last two open days, using the marquee for the craft stalls. We should be able to get it fixed during the winter but it occurs to me that maybe we should start thinking about a sinking fund which, combined with outside grants, would help pay for a proper refurbishment of the building. It's something we need to discuss at EC level.

It has been a long time since we had to give up our popular PIMS talks due to the very real threat of being struck down by the awful Covid virus and I have been waiting for a sensible, safe time, to restart. Arranging talks is one of my three jobs and I think it's been a good excuse to get out of work which I already struggle to do as thoroughly as I should. The good news is that one of our keen new volunteers has agreed to have a go at restarting the talks in January, in the afternoons in winter. Ronnie and I will help out until he gets the hang of it and will assist the usual crew with teas and coffees. (*See Stop Press above for dates*).

We are still awaiting a decision on the fate of the Lancaster Bomber exhibit which is still up for sale by its owner and amazing constructor, Norman Groom. We fervently hope that a way might be found to keep it at Pitstone where it would form a thoroughly worthy reminder of all the fantastic work Norman has done at the museum over many years.

Overall, I think we can award ourselves a pat on the back for a good job done but we must not get complacent about our position, as we must take steps to replace some senior members of our administration as the years take their toll and make it more difficult for them to carry out their duties satisfactorily. I for one, will need to take a step back soon, as my Parkinson's makes working all day on open days more difficult to do satisfactorily.

Well done to everyone and thank you for your support, let's look forward to the continued success of this amazing place and hope that it continues to go from strength to strength without losing the quirky charm that continues to fascinate our eager public.

Pete Farrar (Museum manager)

H.M. QUEEN ELIZABETH II

How is history recorded? Traditionally it has been written down by an erudite scholarly elite who may have scorned the populist viewpoints. Fortunately, with the spread of a variety of ways of keeping the historical record, there has been a change of perception. Looking back at the reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II we have been fortunate enough to see that change at work and it is for this reason that I have chosen to use an everyday item in the form of postage stamps as the medium through which we might reminisce. A small square or oblong of gummed paper with a printed image can

often say more than a page of text. What is more it may well jog a personal recollection because of an association made via a letter sent, a collection made or a picture taken.



I would like to start with an image of the queen with which we are all familiar. This is from the July 1958 games and shows a young woman full of confidence. It is an image that had been in use since her coronation in 1953 and which was almost ubiquitous. Note, though, the name of the games – they were still the Empire and Commonwealth games. Under her supervision as various nations sought independence, the notion of empire was abandoned and they were assimilated into the Commonwealth – something she passionately believed in.



As the 1950s gave way to the 1960s, the nation was changing rapidly as the old guard accepted new ideas. We have just been witness to the pomp and pageantry of a state funeral, normally reserved for the monarch. However, in 1965, Sir Winston Churchill, our war time leader, was accorded this honour at the behest of the Queen. This was a singular moment that recorded the debt the nation owed him and showed that the queen had her finger on the pulse of public opinion.



Following closely, in October 1965, the sky line of London changed markedly with the opening of the Post Office tower. This single building became the image of improved information technology and communications: the Second Elizabethan Age had well and truly made its mark, with the queen willing to embrace such changes, also, within Buckingham Palace.



A little known fact is that the tower monitored international satellite activity for the government and was considered so important to national security that although everybody knew it was there, it was not marked on OS maps of London until its functions had been superseded by other installations. In fact, under parliamentary privilege, Kate Hoey announced its address in February 1993 (the first official recognition of its existence after twenty eight years)!

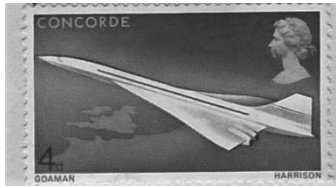
Known for her following of equine sporting pursuits it was surprising to find out that along with almost the rest of the nation, the Queen had been following the World Cup football as England made its way, in 1966, to the final against West Germany.



National prestige was given a further boost in July 1967 when an unlikely hero emerged to be knighted by the queen for his single-handed round the world voyage in Gypsy Moth IV – Sir Francis Chichester. He personified the determination and aspiration of society and was lauded for his efforts. His boat resides at Greenwich, though many who walk past it have little idea of the huge significance of this small vessel.



Throughout the 1960s the technology race had been gathering impetus with increasing dependence on nuclear power and pumped storage hydroelectric schemes to support the National Grid. However, although these schemes were of huge engineering significance they were not “sexy” enough to capture the public’s imagination. What it needed was a headline-grabbing engineering masterpiece and that came in the dart-shaped aircraft known as Concorde – a supersonic airliner that stunned the world, at first, but which eventually lost out in mass transit to the Boing 747 “Jumbo Jet”.



Although it was not until November 1977 when the Queen travelled on Concorde to Barbados, the very fact that she did so was seen by British industry as vindication of the faith that had been vested in the new flight systems of this world leading design.

It seemed that by 1977 that H.M. Elizabeth II had always been a part of our life experience and it was no surprise to realise that she had been queen for twenty five years and was celebrating her Silver Anniversary. The stamp used to mark this occasion owed much of the design of that for her grandfather George Vth.



By this stage it is evident that her profile has been refigured to reflect the passing years and this is particularly well seen in the decimal stamps issued in 1971, the head on the anniversary stamp being the same image used then. Another element of the celebration was seen in depiction of the State Coach, which had held a significant role in her coronation in 1953.



Of course, celebrations such as the Investiture of the Prince of Wales, the wedding of Princess Anne and Mark Phillips, together with that of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer all had appropriate stamp issues. Throughout her time spent on the throne it seems that every pertinent celebration, be it family or state, was recorded for posterity in this way. The Queen was consulted on imagery and design of such stamps and although she had no power of veto, her input was regarded highly and the outcome helped form the background to our daily lives.

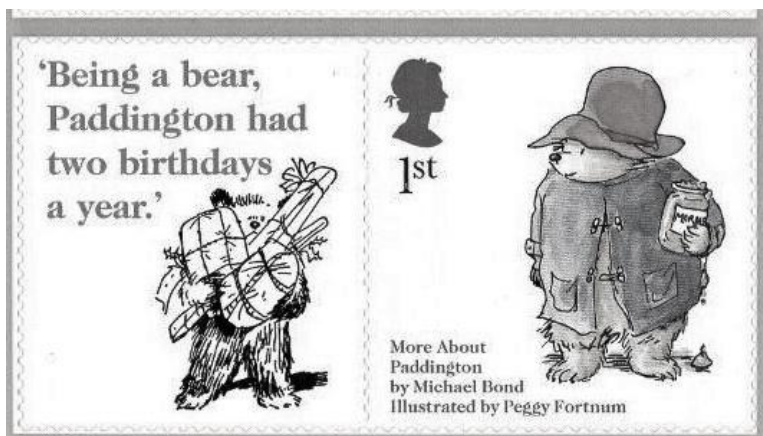
Bringing ourselves more up to date, the death of the Duke of Edinburgh in 2021 created a wave of sympathy for the monarch. Who could forget the picture of her sitting alone, socially distanced from her closest family at his funeral whilst Whitehall partied? It was appropriate that the stamp issues should concentrate on the Duke when he held good health.



Whilst aware that the Queen was, like the rest of us, getting older, it never really seemed to impinge on the nation's consciousness that her demise might have been closer than we thought. Stamps issued to celebrate the Golden Jubilee are on the cover of this newsletter and encapsulate a life of service and continuity.

We should not forget that underneath the serious business of state dwelt a sense of humour that was particularly shown in the parachute sketch with 007 at the opening ceremony of the London Olympic Games. More recently we discovered a liking for marmalade sandwiches shared with Paddington Bear. A little known fact is that both also had two birthdays every year.

I think the final illustration is best left to the bear.



Dennis Trebble

THE WAY IT USED TO BE

It all started one evening in January 1966. I had seen an advert to attend the old Uxbridge bus garage to see if I was suitable to become a driver! After giving my details I was sent around to the driving instructor. Next thing, I am driving out of the garage, along the Oxford Road around the old Dunham roundabout and back to the garage. At least I had driven a bus. I was informed that I would be a suitable candidate, (must have been desperate for drivers). Next was a medical, eye tests and a X-ray at 55 Broadway, and a few weeks later I was at Chiswick bus works to start training. The main training was driving from one London transport bus garage to the next and going into their canteen to sample their tea? One day we picked up about 20 trainee conductor/clippies and worked the 65 route from the mobile canteen by Ealing Broadway station to Leatherhead with them ringing bells and issuing tickets to each other. One of the new chippies turned up in high heels, think she regretted that? After about 8 days of tea sampling, a driving examiner tested me and to my surprise I passed.

Next was back to Chiswick and the famous skid pan experience. Which I also passed. Then I reported to Uxbridge garage and spent 2 days learning 11 bus routes, not easy starting at 05.30 in the dark. I wrote the routes down on post cards, which were wedged in the windscreen, must have worried some passengers! On returning to the garage from the route learning I was asked if I wanted any overtime as they wanted a short Uxbridge to West Drayton St covered, so my first journey with farepaying passengers was on time and a half! The driving instructors had one last laugh as when I got to West Drayton St I could not stop the engine! The engine stop on the training bus was cable on the steering column but the RT buses you had to lift the accelerator pedal. This was the start of 4 happy years doing a job I loved and always wanted to do as a little boy.

Dave Hale

RAILWAY SHED UPDATE

The large gauge 1 loco had the wrong finescale wheels which were causing running problems. These were changed for the correct standard ones and the engine now runs well. The American loco and coaches plus the tram layout has been rewired to be semi automatic working with the switches behind Much Hammering layout to save somebody blocking the walkway to operate it.

A new G.W.R 0-4-2 tank loco was recently purchased from the estate of Maurice Wingrove. He was a past member and the loco was run by him in earlier days. It is radio controlled with steam and whistle sounds. It makes an attractive addition to the layout. There have also been some new additions to the glass cabinet including Lesney vehicles, Minic clockwork cars, lorries, some leaflets and railway tickets from local stations.

It is lovely to see the children and adults on open days playing with the small layout. They can control this with a button that has to be kept down with a finger pressure in order to work. Sometimes you'll hear a mum or dad trying to persuade their young ones to move on to another exhibit with a "we'll come back later". Often, that is exactly what happens and is the highlight of a youngster's day.



Dave Hale

PLEA FOR HELP

We have a Mamiyaflex twin lens reflex camera that has been cleaned and tested. It works very well but the leather case in which it resides is in need of re-stitching and needs to be looked at by somebody with experience of this sort of thing. A picture of part of the case is shown together with a ruler to work out stitch size. If you think you can help, please contact archivist@pitstonemuseum.co.uk.

Many thanks.



FRONT COVER : In memory of Queen Elizabeth II
BACK COVER : Farm Workshop (*by Dennis Trebble*)

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