



Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society Newsletter



AUTUMN 2025

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EDITOR'S NOTE

It's great to see how busy the Museum has been this summer. July was hot and the heat didn't seem to put off visitors. August was equally warm and there were two very busy weekends due to the Bank Holiday. September was a little quieter due to the weather, but still a reasonable footfall.



Pitstone enjoyed a visit from a group of steam rollers and traction engines at the July open day (front cover), as well as a classic fire engine, WWI army lorries and an array of motorbikes. On the Bank Holiday in August, we were also joined by members of the National Morgan Sports Car Club. See the article on these later in the newsletter.

Would you know what 'Squizzers' are? Or a 'Spangle?' In this edition, you can learn all about these items and much more about lacemaking. Having had a go myself on one of the Open Days, it requires a great deal of concentration, but the results are amazing, making it quite addictive.

The AGM will be held at 3.00 pm on 16th October and it is hoped that as many members as possible will attend. Prior to that, there will be a talk by Michael Hazell, a regular volunteer at Pitstone. He will regale us with tales about Non-Food Rationing during and after the Second World War at 1.30pm. Further details about the talk can be found later in the Newsletter.

In addition, the Museum is always so busy and in need of extra pairs of hands. Why not enquire about volunteering on our open days? It is great fun, offers the chance to learn different skills and make new friends. If you are interested, please contact John Powell, Vice Chairman: vicechairman@pitstonemuseum.co.uk

Lyn Asquith
Newsletter Editor

LACEMAKING AT PITSTONE - 'LADIES WHO LACE'

Lacemaking in the UK began in the 16th century, introduced by Flemish Protestant refugees fleeing religious persecution. They brought with them bobbin lacemaking techniques and settled in areas such as Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. Children were paid tuppence a week for training. In the 1800's, girls as young as 5 were taught how to lace (see below). Once trained, they would join their mothers making lace, often well into the night, assisted by candlelight to ensure maximum productivity. The lace would then be sold by the length to the Tallyman, who would sell it on.



Originally, most lace made was usually (although not always) white or cream. However, black lace became very popular during Queen Victoria's reign, as she wore it on her dresses when her husband Prince Albert died. Today, lace has a wide range of uses; from intricate designs on wedding gowns and veils (often with beading such as pearls, crystals or sequins), garment trimmings (collars, cuffs and hems), tablecloths, jewellery pieces and pictures, to name just a few.

Over the years, lace pieces have become highly collectable and valuable. Initially, the lacemaking at Pitstone Museum was housed in a 1930's caravan run by Margaret Horne.

Linda and Mary, our resident lacemakers, demonstrate many different patterns of Torchon, which is one of the easiest to learn. The bobbins are placed on a pillow and a pattern is used called a 'pricking' as the design is pricked out before starting, placed underneath and held by pins. The bobbins are then crossed over each other to produce a pattern.

The number of bobbins required depends on the complexity of the design. Bobbins are used in pairs and there can often be as many as 200 bobbins on the pillow.

Crafting scissors (known as 'squizzers') are used to cut threads. The beads at the end of the bobbin are called 'Spangles' and are used to add weight.

Different areas of the country have their own patterns. Locally, we have Bedfordshire lace, which is a more open pattern. Buckinghamshire lace is more closed and Devon produces 'Honiton Lace,' which typically incorporates leaves or flowers and is often sewn onto outfits.



Top Torchon lace
Left Bedfordshire lace
Right Buckinghamshire lace

The Nottingham lace machine, first invented by John Leavers in 1813, had a huge impact on the industry. It enabled mass production of lace, which was previously a luxury item making it more affordable and accessible. This led to a significant increase in lace production and exports, boosting Nottingham's economy and establishing the city as a global hub for lacemaking. However, it was no longer handmade resulting in the demise of the cottage industry.

Linda and Mary are keen to promote lacemaking and to keep the practice alive.

Linda originated from Northamptonshire, one of the main areas of lacemaking and had always been keen to learn the skill. She saw Margaret Horne demonstrating at Pitstone Church and she invited Linda to attend her classes. Mary had been keen to learn and as there were no adult classes in her area, the ladies at the Pinner Church Hall group offered to teach her the basics.



Both ladies have large collections of wood, glass and bone bobbins. It can be a very expensive hobby. Mary's son made her an aluminium bobbin and Linda has a 'hanging bobbin' (in memory of William Bull). These were often made as souvenirs to commemorate public hangings in the 18th century.

Linda and Mary like to demonstrate and share their craft at Pitstone Museum. The ladies enjoy the sense of achievement of creating a beautiful piece of work. Both agree it is good therapy to help one relax, as you have to concentrate and it's an opportunity to forget everything else around you.

Why not come along to the lacemaking area, based in the Pitstone Shop, and try lacemaking for yourself? You never know, you may be as fascinated by the hobby as Linda and Mary are. Or, you can contact the Lace Guild, to find a local group.

FARMALL M TRACTOR

There has been a Farmall M tractor, a large three-plough row crop tractor in the shed for many years, having first arrived at Pitstone in 1952. Manufactured by International Harvester under the Farmall brand, they were produced from 1939 to 1953. Alan Carter, one of our volunteers, remembers as a young boy riding behind in the trailer when his father worked on the farm. In latter years, he drove the tractor himself when he was employed there.

In its early years during harvest, the tractor carted the corn and was also used for various jobs around the farm, including gathering dung to spread on the fields. It was a very reliable tractor but any problems were always fixed by Geoff Hawkins. Unfortunately, the Farmall couldn't keep up with demand and was replaced by more modern tractors. Alan can remember it being used up until the early 1960s.

A few weeks ago Alan expressed how many special memories the tractor held for him and it was a shame that it wasn't running. During August this year, Will Gamble, one of our volunteers who takes a keen interest in mechanics, set himself the challenge of fixing it and was able to get it running again. This was its first outing for over 20 years.



'VISITORS' TO THE MUSEUM JULY 2025



As well as people visiting Pitstone Museum, we always have a wide range of classic cars, motor cycles and other vehicles on display.



1918 Leyland Standard
500gpm pump.
A rare London Fire Brigade
survivor

1917 Hallford Model
EIDI 80 4545 army truck



JULY

There was also a visit from a number of steam rollers and traction engines.

Ben Griffiths has a yard in Gubblecote where he keeps his own steam engines, and last month, he organized a group (some of whom come from big steam families) decided that as they would be on a 'road run' the day before the July open day, it would be nice to finish the weekend with a trip to Pitstone.



Ben's interest initially came from his grandfather who was involved commercially with steam engines, but it was his father who had the passion for driving the vehicles.

AUGUST

Present, were members of the national Morgan Sports Car Club who are also members of a local Cranfield centre in Bedfordshire known as "Cranmog." The name came about as there is a Morgan dealer in Cranfield. Two of the cars attending were red 4/4's - 4 wheels and 4 cylinder Ford engine. This model was first introduced in the 1950s. The other two cars, blue and white, were "+8" which are larger and have a Rover 3.9 V8 engine. This model was introduced in 1968 and continued until 2003.

Meetings are held 2nd Wednesday of the month at the Jolly Coopers PH in Wardhedges, north of Luton.



OPEN DAYS 2025

12th October Sunday

OPEN DAYS 2026

6th April Easter Monday
4th May Early May Bank Holiday Monday
25th May Spring Bank Holiday Monday
14th June Sunday
12th July Sunday
9th August Sunday
31st August Summer Bank Holiday Monday
13th September Sunday
11th October Sunday

Free Parking is available in the Orchard.

All Open Days are from 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

In addition to the wonderful exhibits, on our Open Days you can also enjoy the Craft Fair in the Barns. Here, you can find an array of wonderful gifts for any occasion.

There are also different demonstrations on our Open Days, which may include pottery demonstrations, barn and stationary engines, lace makers, tractor rides to the windmill and a blacksmith.

Hungry? While you are visiting, make sure you enjoy the light refreshments which are available. Rolls, a wonderful range of cakes and a variety of hot and cold drinks are all available at very reasonable prices.

Pitstone Green Museum Autumn Talks (Held in the Meeting Room)

Thursday 16th October 1.30 p.m.

**Non-Food rationing during the 1940s and 1950s Britain
AGM follows at 3.00 p.m.**

Mike Hazell will talk about non-food rationing which will include fuel, clothes, utility schemes for furniture and other household goods. This includes a priority system and the supporting information programmes to conserve supplies.

Thursday 27th November 2.30 p.m.

The Pinkerton's Detective Agency

Denis Myers is a regular volunteer with the Museum on Open Days. He will talk about wartime experiences from his career as a detective and the history of the Pinkerton's Agency, 1850 onwards, which is absorbing. Denis more recently worked for the Independent Police Complaints Commission, now called the Independent Office of Police Complaints, covering England and Wales. A light hearted and informative talk brought up to date.

Thursday 18th December 2.30 p.m.

Probes into Space

Steve Burnage returns, following a popular talk last year about the provocative Government Hydrogen Strategy. This time Steve will talk about probes into space, particularly the Mars Probe, with a section on the size of the solar system. Steve is a very relaxed speaker with a wealth of knowledge, and eager to have a range of questions from the audience.

Refreshments are served after the talks, and traditionally before questions to the speaker.

Cost is £2 Members. £3 Guests. *Cash only please.*

Please note, due to unforeseen circumstances these talks may be subject to change.



Pitstone and Ivinghoe Museum Society

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