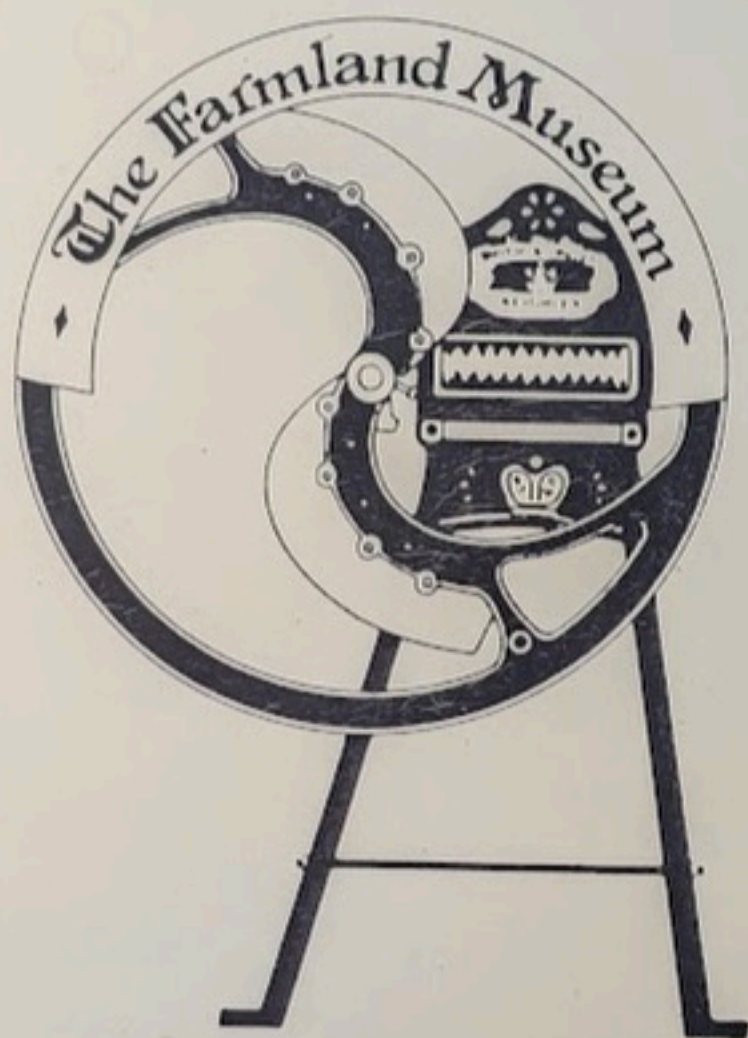


The Farmland Museum



1969 - 1992

Lorna Delanoy

£2

THE FARMLAND MUSEUM

1969 - 1992

The Story of a Village Museum

by

LORNA DELANOY

"Possibly Britain's finest self
help Museum"

Good Museums Guide : Kenneth Hudson

PROVIDENCE PRESS

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The Farmland Museum received the following awards :

1983 Village Ventures Certificate : Cambridgeshire
Community Council,

1989 Certificate of Achievement for New Displays
in the Natural History Building : Shell Better Britain
Campaign,

1990 Conservation Award : Highly Commended -
Heritage for the National Curriculum - Ford Motor
Company

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Introduction and Appreciation

The story of the Farmland Museum from its beginnings in a shoe box to its importance as a collection of rural artefacts has been told many times. Now thanks to a generous bequest in memory of our dear friend, Bill Leach, it is available in book form. Had it not been for the enthusiasm of my husband, Mike, the museum would probably have faded away within three years or so. It has survived against innumerable obstacles for 23 years and now both energy and money are exhausted, but the memory of 'the shoe box collection that became a way of life' will live on. The future of the Farmland Museum is, at the time of writing, still uncertain. These jottings are of its life here in the garden of 50 High Street, Haddenham from 1969 to 1992.

The original purpose of the museum, "to help children who can't see and walk" was always borne in mind, but after 10 years of financing the operation as a family, and giving all the proceeds to charity, we reached a crisis. It was no longer possible to carry on without some financial support. Idesons, the local garage proprietor, realised the value of the collection and the educational importance of it to schools, and together with Lada Cars financed the running costs for five years. Unfortunately because of a change in policy by the Lada Importers, this support ceased in 1985, and new sponsors had to be sought.

A body of Trustees, Chaired initially by Clement Freud, had drawn up the required Memorandum and Articles as suggested by the Association of Independent Museums, and Charitable Status was aquired in 1984 because of the Museum's educational role.

In 1986 a chance meeting on a train from London between John Goldsmith, Cambridgeshire County Museum's Officer, and a Director of United Molasses (part of the Tate and Lyle group), resulted in a new sponsor and financial security for the next four years. Again a change in policy led to the support not being renewed so another crisis arose in late 1989. This time things were desperate as a full educational programme had been planned and a long term commitment made with the Principal and Governors of the Cambridgeshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture (CCAH), at Milton, on

the assumption that there would be on-going support from the sponsor.

At a public meeting held in the village in 1986, the Farmland Museum Friends had been formed to give support in any way possible, and to try to ensure that financial crises could be avoided. In 1989 when new sponsors were needed the Friends and Curator found twenty one firms and individuals who agreed to sponsor the museum for a four year period, but sadly the main sponsor paid for only the first year and so the final financial crisis arose.

The Farmland Museum 2, had been established at the CCAH, Milton, from surplus farming artefacts for the benefit of students, and visitors. However its expansion was not developed as planned because of County Council financial restraints, and also the change of Principal at the College. The part-time lecturing post which Mike had there was terminated in December 1991, and this further aggravated the financial position. As a result of inadequate financial support the Farmland Museum, will close at the end of this year (1992)

To the end of June 1992 the museum has had 87,000 visitors and has given over £13,000 to worthy causes. This does not include the thousands of pounds raised by the annual Blossoms and Bygones Events for Arkenstall Village Centre.

To the curators and staff at Sedgwick Museum and the Anthropology and Archaeology Museum in Cambridge I give thanks for their ready help in indentifying exhibits.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have given loyal and unstinting support over the years. To the Friends of the Museum, sponsors, helpers, visitors, friends, donors of exhibits, and the press, a big thank you. I especially thank Ann Biggs for the art work both at the museum and in this booklet, and for help with organising school visits.

I also thank the Editor of the Ely Standard, and others for permission to use their photographs.

Lorna Delanoy

July 1992

How Things Began

During the summer of 1969 the garden of 50 High Street, Haddenham, was ploughed up for the first time in many years. Until the early 1920's it was a well cared for garden belonging to the farm next door. Ashes from coal fires, together with broken china from the kitchen, had been used to make a raised pathway. This was before the refuse cart paid its weekly visit!

Before the last war the garden had become neglected and overgrown. The 'War Ag' reclaimed it, levelled the paths, uprooted the box hedges, nut trees and the superb mulberry tree which grew there. For several years it was used for market gardening, then in the 1950's it was put down to pasture and pigs were 'put out to grass'.

When this grassland was ploughed up, 'buried treasure' came to the surface - bits of pottery, clay pipe fragments and pigs' teeth showing varying signs of decay! These were collected up by a 4 year old boy, Craig Delanoy washed thoroughly and arranged neatly in cardboard boxes. He then announced to his family that on payment of a small fee, anyone could look at his 'museum collection'. The money raised was to help children who 'couldn't see and couldn't walk'.

All visitors were asked to sign their names in a book and it really was quite exciting when the address was NOT Haddenham. This was especially true when one lady, who was holidaying in this country, wrote her address as 'Abaco, Bahamas'. On seeing sea shells with the label 'found at Hunstanton' she announced that Bahamian shells were much more attractive and that on arriving home she would send us some. So many people do not keep their promises but early in 1970 a big parcel arrived containing dozens of shells, which she had picked up on the sunny beaches of her homeland. The shells had been carefully classified and labelled.

Of course, the first visitors were family and friends. Within days they were returning with various items to add to the display - a commemorative clay pipe (unbroken!), real Roman pottery sherds and various bric-a-brac. One enthusiastic senior citizen brought along a prized possession which had belonged to her grandmother - a double baking dish whose design and shape was almost identical with some of the modern Swedish pottery



Photograph taken in August 1969, of Craig (4), Kevin (6) left, and James (2) in the foreground.

Soon the collection was too big for a child's bedroom so a shed in the garden was cleared of its lawn mowers and tools and the 'bits and pieces' were arranged there on an old kitchen table. From then on the collection became known as "THE MUSEUM" and the appropriate wording was placed on a sign on the door. Friends, neighbours and acquaintances brought along all sorts of things for which they had no further use.

It is due to people's kindness and thoughtfulness that a child's enterprise grew into the venture described in the following pages.

The entire garden became the setting for the exhibits and the collection was named THE FARMLAND MUSEUM. Another sign was painted and this was displayed at the front of the house so that intending-visitors could easily find the museum.

The big open shed at the bottom of the garden was completed in time for the first Blossoms and Bygones event held in the village in May 1971. Later the ends were boarded in to form the Rural Crafts shed at the south end and the farming shed at the north. The story of the blacksmith's shop, completed in 1972 is recorded elsewhere.

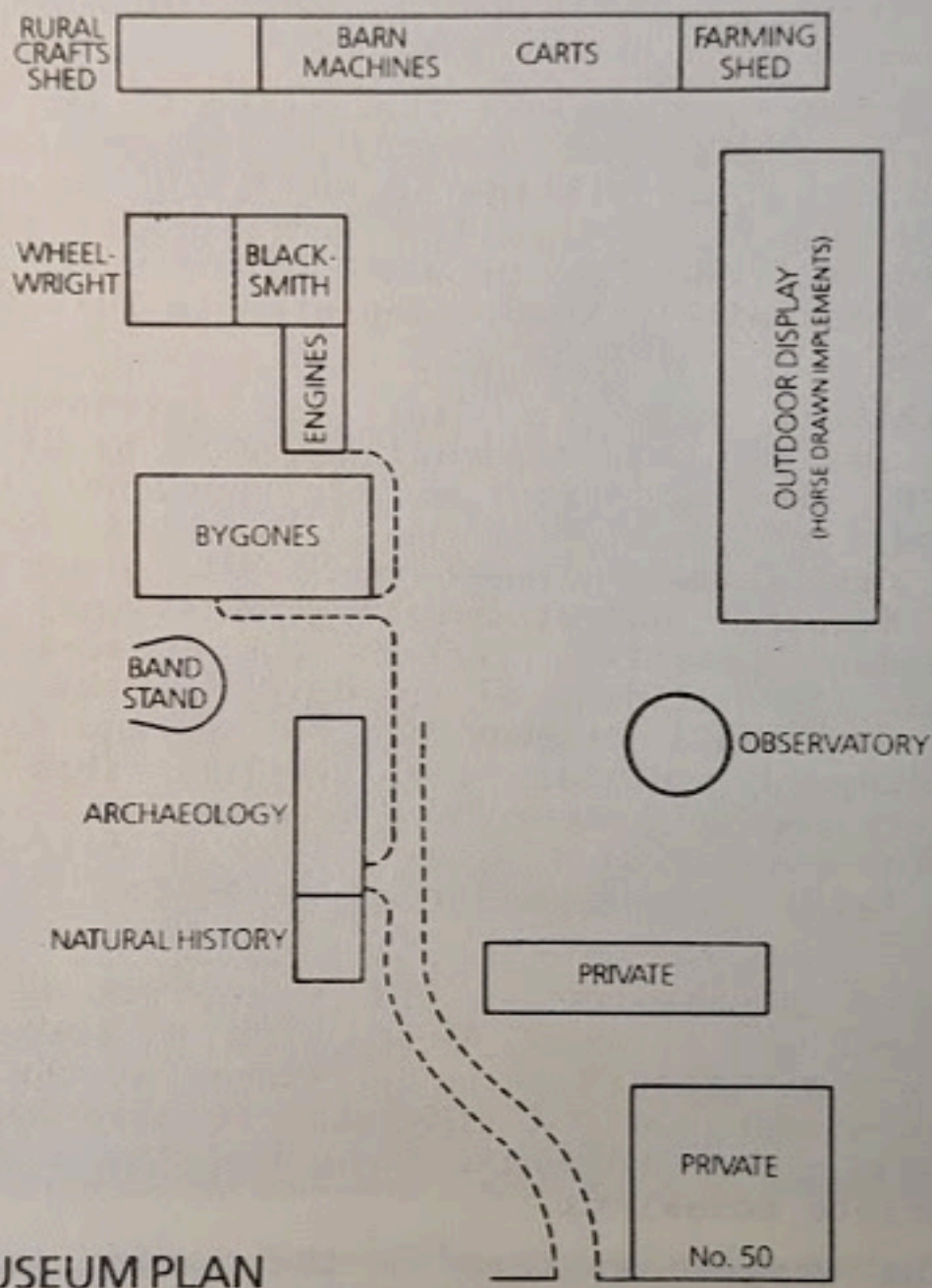
Exhibits came in fast and furiously and the Bygones Building was officially opened by Clement Freud in 1976. Consolidation and improvement in displays followed. A grant from Shell enabled the original garden shed to be made waterproof and a grant from the County Museums' budget bought professional labels for the outdoor exhibits. Perhaps the greatest labour of love was the building of the trolley designed by Mike to move on small railway bogies. He and Craig worked many lamp-lit winter evenings so that the barn machinery could be moved out more easily on open days. Great fun was had in the early days of rolling oats for rabbit feed and chopping root crops for the pigs next door.

Also in the garden was a replica of the Holme Post, and a telegraph pole with a stern Victorian warning that 'people throwing stones at the telegraphs will be prosecuted'. A flagpole was also available for the raising of the Union Jack and the Scout flag on appropriate occasions.

The largest feature in the garden was the band stand, built by Mike to accommodate the surplus soil and broken bricks, one of the problems of building on a hill! This was a horseshoe-shaped podium abutting the

farm wall and was used by two bands in 1979, our local one and one from Leicester. People in Hill Row have said how very beautiful the sound of the bands was on that special Sunday afternoon in August when over £500 was raised for the cancer scanner at Addenbrooke's hospital.

Two trees, in themselves museum pieces, featured midway down the garden, a metasequoia glyptostroboides and a ginkgo biloba. Some visitors preferred to wander in the garden rather than look at the museum exhibits!



MUSEUM PLAN

The Age of Horse Power

The national importance of the Farmland Museum was because of its large collection of horse-drawn implements related to farming in the fens.

The very first large exhibit to be given to the museum was a tumbril cart made in 1939 by a firm in Stretham. On seeing the tumbril a farmer from Hill Row Fen promised a special Hemingford-made cart, on condition that it was kept under cover. This necessitated the building of the large shed at the bottom of the garden where wooden implements could be on show protected from the weather. This was the museum's first custom-built structure and it had to be economically priced. Second-hand sheets of zinc were bought at Cambridge market; these formed the roof and back. Voluntary helpers, some from as far away as Huntingdon, completed the project in a matter of weeks. The Delanoy boys coated the whole building with creosote to preserve the wood.

It was not long before the building began to fill with drills, dressing machines, a reaper, a self-binder, stationary engines and other barn machinery. A prize possession, the one and only wooden plough was treated with preservative and also stored there.



The reaper was a great improvement on mowing corn crops by hand. It was soon replaced by the self-binder, which was later replaced by the combine harvester. Photo taken 1913.

All the other ploughs, cultivators, ridgers, rakes, potato harvesters, etc. were displayed out of doors. They numbered over 60 and were wire-brushed on arrival, repaired if necessary, and then treated with a special preserving oil so that they did not deteriorate from exposure to the weather.

It was very interesting to listen to the old ploughmen talking to each other and comparing the finer aspects of design and balance of individual ploughs. One such visitor, well over 90 years old, insisted on grabbing hold of each pair of handles in turn, to get the feel of each of the ploughs. His working life had been spent as horsekeeper on various Cambridgeshire farms.

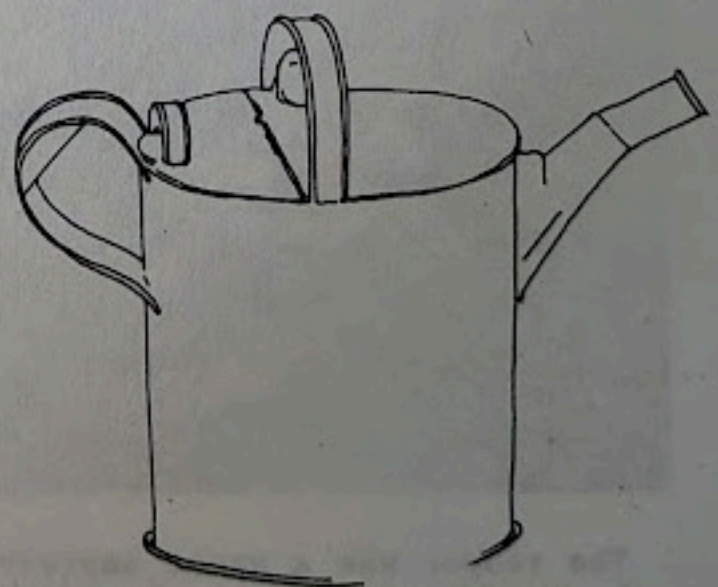
The horse-drawn reaper which appeared on the cover of the first Guide, was last used on a farm near Littleport in 1947. That year the corn was so badly damaged by thunderstorms that the self-binder could not cope with it.

Sugar beet is a crop which was introduced into this country in the early 1920's and necessitated the development of a whole range of new implements. At that time the tractor was beginning to make its presence felt on the farm, therefore some of the sugar beet equipment was for use with horses and some with tractors.

The Smythe seed drill, supreme in its class, was originally supplied to a farm near Ipswich in 1919. It was bought at a farm sale and used until 1970 by my brother. Like so many horse-drawn implements, the shafts were removed and a tractor tow-bar fitted. Knowing that farmers are renowned for not throwing anything away it came as no surprise that its original shafts, which had been removed in 1944, were safely stored in the roof of the farm barn.



Jug and Basin



Water can : to fill up
Jug and basin

The Blacksmith's and Wheelwright's Shop

As early as 1970 the local blacksmith, Keith Patterson, had offered to give demonstrations which necessitated humping a mobile forge down the garden, and led to the cry of 'Let's build a proper blacksmith's shop'. The enthusiasm was bubbling from young and old alike. Builder Alwyn Carter headed the team and did all the haulage.



General view of the blacksmith's forge - one of a series of photographs taken by the Ford Motor Company Ltd.

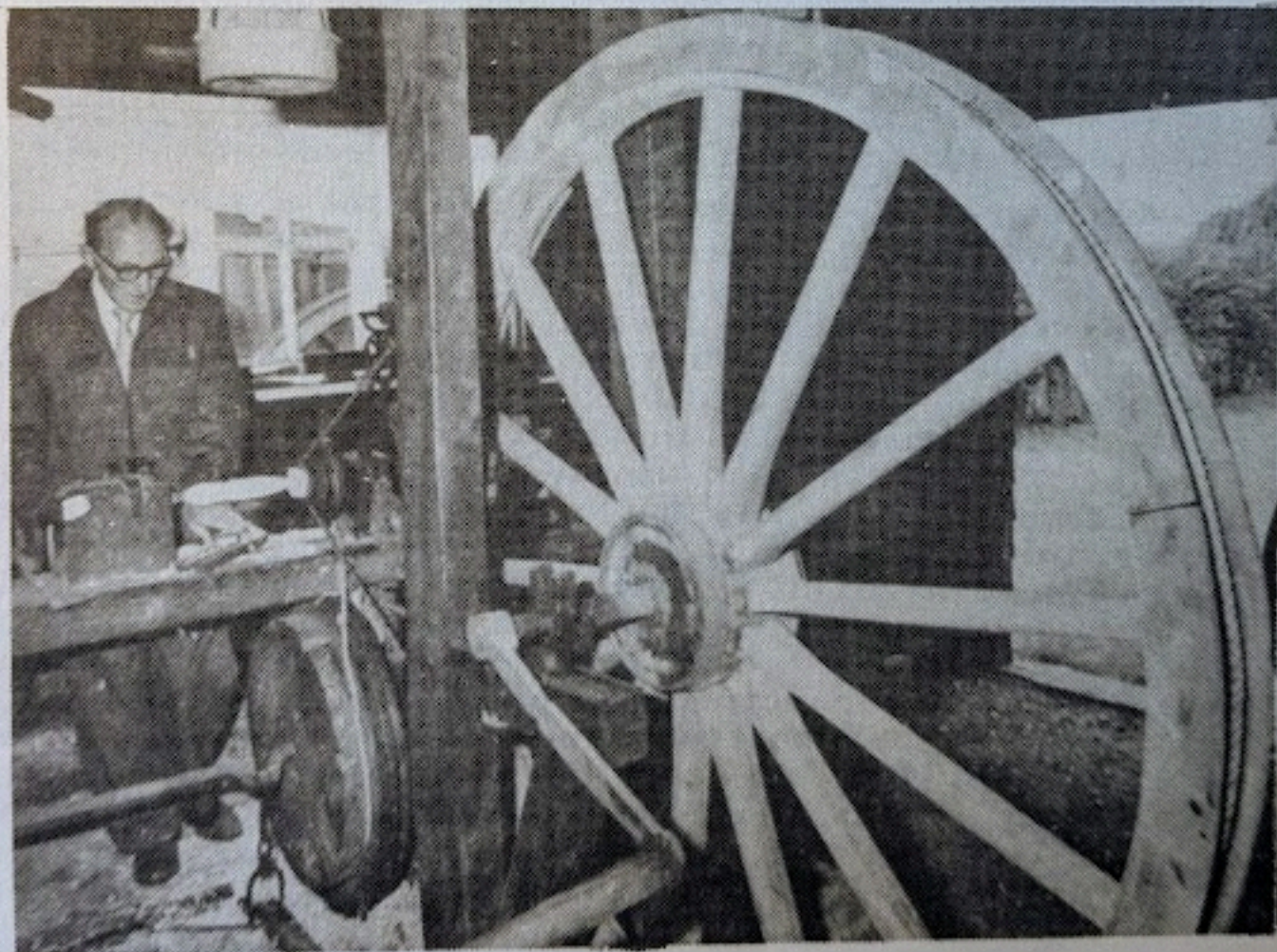
A wide range of people were involved in the construction of this building. A local farmer had heard that sufficient pantiles to make a fine roof were about to be broken up to fill in the holes along a fen drove - we saved them. A bank manager needed to have an old house demolished on his building site and offered the timber in it for use as walling. On being told about the project, a building firm allowed any suitable wood to be taken from the site of the old threshing tackle sheds at Stretham. A bricklayer travelled from Buckden on a cold winter's morning to build the forge chimney, and another from Chettisham put in the footings. The rest of the work was carried out by friends purely voluntarily. It is thanks to such enthusiastic workers

that the entire building was constructed for little more than £70.

The pitched roof was of traditional pantiles and the walling was of feather-edged boards. The weather vane, depicting a smith and his apprentice at work, was specially designed and made for the shop by Keith, who gave demonstrations here very regularly for many years.

The forge was brick-built and was equipped with pear-shaped bellows which had given years of service at threshing tackle works at Haddenham. There were also cylindrical bellows which were donated to the museum by an officer in the Navy who owned property at Orwell.

The lathe at the wheelwright's end of the shop came from Kedington. It was repaired by a wood turner from Willingham, and made to work both by treadle (in the style of Edwardian sewing machines) and by a pulley system using a beautifully-made wooden wheel which had been part of a mechanism at the old brewery in Ely. Small boys loved to be asked to turn the wheel much as they did years ago when the wheelwright really needed such power for his everyday work. Paul Howard of Wilburton was a regular demonstrator, ably assisted by museum helpers James and Matthew Kent, and others.



Bill Farthing using the wheelwright's lathe where dibbers, rolling pins, and other items were 'turned' on open days.

The work of the village blacksmith and that of the wheelwright was often inter-related. A wooden cartwheel which had a tyre in the form of a band of metal was an example of work involving both trades. It seemed appropriate therefore, to make this building dual-purpose so that tools connected with both trades could be displayed and used there.

The designs of blacksmiths' and wheelwrights' shops from all over the country had been studied by Mike, thanks to having access of the archives of the Museum of English Rural life (MERL) at Reading, and the one built at Haddenham was as 'authentic' as it could possibly be.

The Dairy

Until the end of the Second World War, many farmhouses in Haddenham had their own dairying equipment. Milk was sold at the door and butter churned twice a week.

The three butter churns all came from local people and it was interesting to note that the three separators were made in different countries - Belgium, England and Sweden.

Small quantities of milk did not require a mechanical separator. It was left in shallow pans to allow cream to rise naturally to the surface due to its lower density. This was then scooped off with a skimmer, a saucer-like structure with holes in it through which the skim milk could drain. The cream was then made into butter in a hand churn.

Wooden butter hands were then used to 'knock it up' thus getting rid of any surplus buttermilk. The butter could then be shaped into blocks. In larger dairies this action was carried out by the butter worker.

Farmers' and smallholders' wives would take their surplus butter to Ely on a Thursday morning, travelling either with their own pony and trap or in the carrier's cart. The Butter Market is still known by that name but the stalls there now sell such things as shoes, clothes and toys, although a first-rate cheese stall is still the centrepiece.

Cows were regularly milked twice a day. The milking pail which was held between the cowman's knees

had a brass rule fixed inside it to measure the amount of milk given by each cow. The milk was then strained to remove grit, hair, etc, and cooled. Until well after the Second World War, farmers sold their milk in churns which were collected early every morning. Nowadays milk is collected in bulk by large tankers and the days of a small farmer keeping two or three cows, and milking them by hand, are over.



Many machines were operated by turning a handle. This young girl is pretending to make butter in an 'up and over churn.

Milk deliveries to the householder used to be made by a milk cart on which stood a churn. It had a tap and brass plate, and a measure was used to pour the required amount of milk into jugs or cans which were left on doorsteps in readiness for the milkman's call. Later, one-third, one-half, one and two pint bottles were used. These were sealed with a cardboard disc. The Dairy Section of the museum was well-supplied with bygones from these earlier days and making butter with school groups was very popular, especially when the produce was eaten on crackers at the end of the morning for dockey.

How We Used To Live

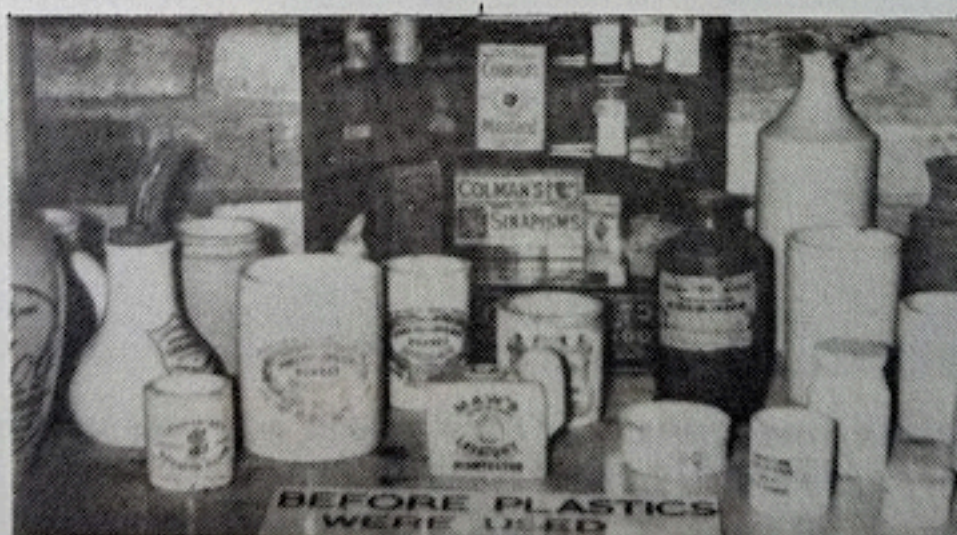
The brick building was erected in 1976 and officially opened by Clement Freud, then M.P. for the Isle of Ely. All labour was given voluntarily, as were many of the building materials. The north end served as a local history display area for the village, while the south end was divided into rooms depicting how we used to live. The wash-house contained the copper with washing dollies for stirring the clothes, and the mangle. The living room with its cluttered appearance contained a figure of an old age pensioner sitting on a Windsor chair. The child's bedroom had an open fire and an iron cot and washstand. The centre block consisted of small exhibits and concentrated on feminine crafts such as lace making, embroidery, tatting and macrame.

War items ranged from a soldier's water bottle dated 1862 to a helmet from the Falklands, and were arranged in proper museum display cases

There were two cases of children's toys and amusements from pre-war days. The science case showed post-war development from valves to micro-chips. Victorian office items, containers (pre-plastic era) and models made by children and adults, also a good collection of glazed domestic ware, were arranged on shelves for 'hands-on' experience. The original collection of broken pottery together with information on up-to-date museum statistics was near the main door.

On top of the unit were two mantraps and an impressive punt gun used many years ago in the Fens.

The initials K.G. on the north end wall outside commemorated the many hours of work done on building the walls by builder Keith Gatward. A plaque inside listed the other volunteer builders. Mary Gimbert of Sutton baked and sold over 100 cakes to help with building costs and retired farm workers at Soham 'cleaned' hundreds of the bricks from an old barn to be recycled into the Museum Bygones Building.



Bottles and jars from a bygone age.



All the appliances needed for a day's baking in the open hearthed kitchen. No electric or microwave ovens here.



The Bible, aspidestra, oil lamp, and numerous oddments make this old man's room looked 'lived in'.

Open Days

An open day was held on the first Sunday of each month. A full programme of events with the subjects to be featured was planned and issued each January, but each month the topic was given further publicity through the local press, and radio stations.

Preparatory work started on the Saturday morning. The Alden family cleaned the Rural Crafts and Farming sheds, Jean Richards was responsible for the Bygones building, Judith Dale looked after the Natural History building, while her husband, Rodney, 'did' the blacksmith and wheelwright shop. All were committee members of the Friends of the Farmland Museum.



Keith often made a bracket, or poker while visitors watched, and it could be taken away as a real hand-made souvenir

Outdoor tidying, and from April to November an acre of lawn mowing, was capably coped with by James and Matthew Kent, with extra help from time to time.

Ann Biggs checked up on the monthly theme and its requirements such as tables and posters, whilst I did

drinks and meals, and the most horrible job of all - cleaning up after our feathered friends. Mike was the overall organiser, and coped with the garden and master-minded the hundreds of other chores behind the scenes.

The Sunday team arrived around 2 o'clock and consisted of Ben Fletcher from Witcham, Peter Gimbert from Sutton, Jack Kerridge from Littleport, and Craig Secker from Ely, together with the locals, Enid Milton who brought stock for the Friends' shop, and Paul Melton who was responsible for the sound archives, Hilary Rolfe and Wilf Palmer who sold cups of tea to visitors on pleasant afternoons and, of course, our octogenarian tea ladies, Ivy and Rachael.

On some summer open days the Alden family organised the Olde Curiosity Shoppe in the summer house, where plants grown by Rita Spiegel and bric-a-brac were sold in aid of worthy causes. To date, over £1,200 has been raised in this way.

The final open days in 1992 :

- 6 Sept Ladies day, Craft demonstrations and displays
- 4 Oct Art, Music and Photography
- 5 Nov Heaviest Sugar Beet Competition
- 6 Dec REVIEW OF THE YEARS 1969 - 1992



Doug Few (right), originator of the Sugar Beet Competition, with Bernard Fretwell from Stunteny, a regular competitor.

Odds and Ends

Over the years there have been numerous comments about the museum and the exhibits, but it is some of the more amusing and unusual which I have recorded in this section.

One morning a middle-aged couple were looking over the front wall and seemed anxious to find out more about the museum. It transpired that they were visiting the U.K. on holiday from Pietermaritzburg and had read about the little boy's museum in a magazine out there. The wife had wanted to visit Westminster Abbey but the husband's first place to visit, having landed at Heathrow, was the Farmland Museum at Haddenham.

A little old lady was visiting her nephew, accompanied by a relative who could speak German. The lady's home was just outside Novosibirsk (further east of Moscow than Britain is west) and through her interpreter she said that in her village hand tools and simple machines for animal food preparation were still in use. Apparently the old tools and machines here at Haddenham were the highlight of her visit to the U.K.

A nearly-new Volvo drew up at the museum just as we were about to leave to visit grandma. Remembering the Sunday School adage 'others before yourself', Mike and the boys showed the unexpected visitor round the garden. On leaving, he put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a 50 pence piece and a two pence coin. Muttering how good it was to help handicapped children he commented that he could not afford 50 pence and that 2 pence would not be of much help anyway, and drove off. The boys have never forgotten that Volvo driver, and neither have I.

During a 'phone call to book a visit for a coach load of members of a W.I. Branch to the museum as part of a mystery tour, the secretary asked what the charge would be. On being told that it was 15 pence (this was in the early days) she enquired whether that was for the coach load or per person.

'Hullo, have you brought Grandad to show him round?' was the greeting to a little boy who arrived accompanied by his mother and a much older man. 'No' was the reply, 'that's my dad'.

Two little lads were visiting with their mother and enquired whether Mike was the gardener here, 'Yes, and the boss as well' they were told. The 7-year old

monopolised Mike in conversation, never allowing his younger brother to get a word in edgeways. In an effort to involve the younger one, Mike asked him how old he was. 'I'm 4' came the reply. 'That is a very special age' Mike told him, 'the collection here was started by a little boy of 4', 'Oh, and was he stupid too?' was big brother's reply.

A St. Ives basket maker was asked to make some items for Dick Joice's 'Bygones', Anglia T.V. programme. His wife visited the museum and suggested that the items be given to the Delanoys so that more people could see and appreciate them. They included a duck nesting basket, a pheasant trap, a potato 'molly' for filling sacks, and a cow collar.

Another visitor, a retired cooper, had all his hand tools and those belonging to his father and uncles stored in a garden shed. They were collected from Ely and formed a comprehensive display in the brewing section.

One open day, a studious sort of man chatted with Mike about his religious belief based on some Eastern cult and asked if we had ever experienced things happening if several of us wished it. Mike said that we were all looking for some model figures to bring the little rooms to life. 'Don't worry' said the visitor, 'I am sure they will soon turn up.' Imagine our surprise and delight when the very next visitor to speak with Mike, Bob Elliott, offered some models surplus to his requirements at Old Warden Aircraft Museum. 'No, I am not a bit surprised' commented visitor number one as he left the garden.

Two elderly men stood looking at the framed serviette listing the 5 survivors of the R 101 crash, given by the museum's dear friend, Elsie Wright. 'I was one of them' said one to the other. 'and so was I' came the reply. Thus a friendship was renewed over half a century after the event.

For many years, the Cambridge News mentioned each open day in its 'What's On' column. One Sunday afternoon a foreign visitor arrived saying he had read in the paper that some Morris dancers were performing here and would it be all right if he joined in with his dancing puppet? The crowds enjoyed this unscheduled entertainment and the following summer his sister arrived from Austria and introduced herself as the puppet man's sister, saying how much her brother had

enjoyed his real English Sunday afternoon in a Fenland garden.

A couple had retired to Bury St. Edmunds and read about an open day at Haddenham. They came along and asked if it was the same museum that their son had helped with while on a cycling holiday some 10 years earlier. Apparently he and his friend had helped to clean some floors and in return had earned some lunch, or dockey as it is known in these parts.

Stationary engines sometimes prove difficult to start but after standing for over 20 years in a shed at Aldreth, the large Lister, 7½ hp fired into action on the third attempt. Another engine occupied the attention of a high-energy physicist and the local gypsy's son for a whole afternoon, neither realising who the other was but both united in their common aim of getting the Pilter engine to start.

Two farmers at a farm sale were bidding for a cart jack. When the item had been knocked down to Albert Newman, his opponent Ernie Cole said 'Well, that's a devil, I wanted that for the museum'. 'Well, that's just what I wanted it for' was the reply.

A stuffed otter was given to the museum by the Head of Science at Witchford Village College. Several years later one of the former students said that her mother had given it to the college when she had been a pupil there 20 years earlier and that the otter had been shot in Haddenham Fen at the turn of the century by her former neighbour, Tom Benton.

A Wilburton infant, having been told about the stuffed birds in the Natural History section, was heard to comment to her little friend on seeing the old man in the bygones living room. 'He's dead and stuffed you know.' Another child, on seeing the old man called to her mother and said 'There's an old man asleep in there, let's be quiet.'

A Chettisham man, who sold us some bricks at a very reasonable price, for the foundations of the blacksmith's shop, had a prick of conscience that night and came over the following Saturday morning and laid them without charge.

A vicar's widow commented that the blacksmith's shop was quite the oldest she had seen. In fact, it was exactly 2 months old but due to its design and genuine cobwebs, it appeared much older. An architect for the

Open University said how superbly the style and design of the buildings complemented the setting and exhibits.

The Royal train was taking the Queen and her family to Sandringham for the New Year when our convoy of vehicles was held up at the Stretham level crossing, while bringing home the building materials for the blacksmith's shop in December 1971. A horrible thought - what if the demolition party had demolished the wrong house in Soham Fen?. After all, there were several wooden houses there and instructions on its position had only been verbal from the owner to one of our helpers.

On a winter day an ambulance load of old folk in residential care at King's Lynn came on a visit: one who had been very quiet, suddenly came to life when he saw the rat traps, mole traps, and other pieces of keeper's equipment. It emerged that he had been a gamekeeper on the Royal estate at Sandringham and these artefacts he had used all his working life. The old man's day was made complete when our gun dog Ben would retrieve for him but not for the ambulance driver.

After a frozen Woolly Mammoth was featured on Blue Peter, I managed to get a photograph of it direct from the USSR. On seeing it a small girl remarked 'That Mammoth kept solid in the ice for more than 40,000 years, but the fish fingers don't last in our freezer for 4 weeks'.

One visitor in the early days voiced his objection to children playing quoits on a Sunday on the clay bed which had been constructed at the bottom of the garden. He considered it was a pub game and not suitable for children to play on a Sunday afternoon.

Letters

'Thank you' letters are always special and a few chosen ones are included here. Reading a pack of school letters brings great enjoyment to older friends of the museum who can no longer visit it in person so then it gives double pleasure.

'Thank you for giving us lots to do'. Adam

'My brother liked the ostrich egg because he said it was nearly as big as his head'. Ann

'I was not bored at all. On most school trips I am always bored'. Ruth

'I liked stitching the two hexagons it was fun'. Paul

'I was flabbergasted at how big the museum was'. Robbie.

Letters from Special Needs children are often written under extreme difficulty. Here are three quotes:

'I was interested in the old washing machine'. Alfie

'Thank you for being kind to us'. Christopher

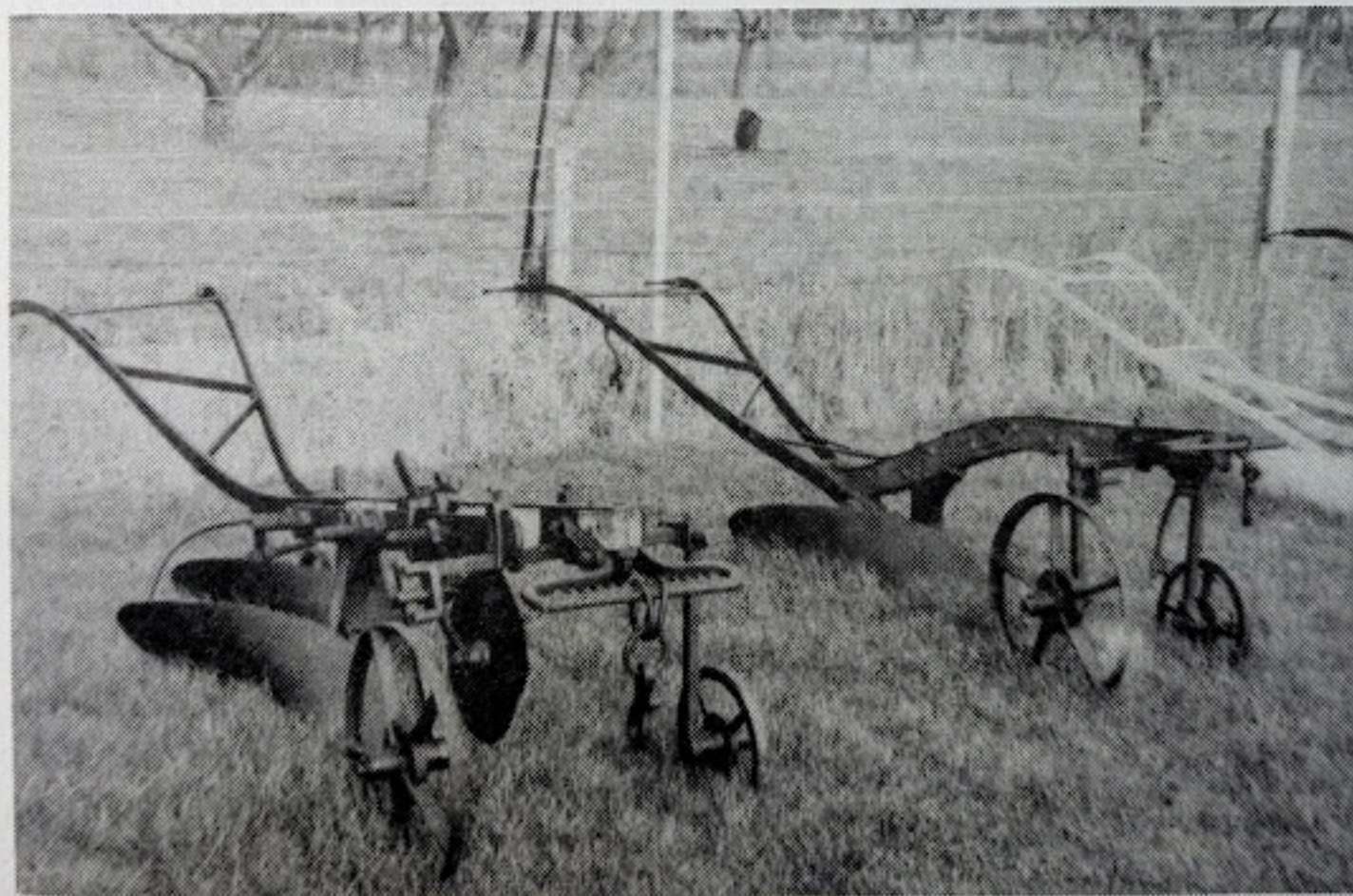
'The corn dollies were brill'. Julia

Letters from school staff included the following comments:

'Highlight of the weekend stay in Cambridgeshire was the museum visit'. Head master from a school in Balcombe, Sussex.

'It was a marvellous experience for the children'. Class teacher at Eltisley.

'The museum has continued to provide such excellent facilities for the village, and for young people from far and wide'. School Governor.



Horse ploughs which formed part of the outside exhibits.

Archive Materials

Over the years people have given the museum many things which cannot be on permanent display. These include a set of parish maps related to bore-holes, catalogues from builders' suppliers no longer in existence, personal mementos of significance only to the donor and close friends, a patchwork quilt, and so the list could continue. Taped interviews have been of great use at the museum, although sadly not as commercially successful as had been hoped.

In the late 1970's Kevin, then a 6th form pupil, interviewed many of the old village characters - George Green, a First World War veteran, Fred Woolstenholmes, one of the first people in the village to own a lorry, George Amory, who recalled vividly the floods of 1947, and so on... At about the same time, Paul Melton, an experienced interviewer, collected stories and anecdotes on tape from a wider area and together they form the Farmland Sound Archives. With the help of Dr. Magaret Spufford, a museum trustee, a grant was obtained from the Queen's Silver Jubilee Trust, to enable the tapes to be played on open days and for school parties. Copies of all the interviews have been made for the local collection of the County library and an attempt was made to market some under the title of 'County Characters' and 'Mid-Anglia Characters', but financial backing and expertise was never available. Perhaps in the years to come the real value of this oral history will become appreciated. Certainly Manchester University was interested for its oral history department and David Bellamy Associates referred to the County Characters for their production of the T.V. series 'Wetlands'.

The photographs of the Martin Lane Collection of the 1947 fen floods belong to the family. (Walter Martin Lane was a great uncle of the founder of the museum). Old street scenes have been loaned to the District Council when planning development has been sought, as at the Top Corner site when the town houses and flats were built. Some were used for books, (e.g. the railway station in operation), and students of family history find photographs of houses and public buildings of help in their researches. Old machinery handbooks, pre-TV advertisements, day books of various trades, e.g. Bone and Manure Manufacturers, newspaper and magazine cuttings, together with scrapbooks carefully assembled, all add to the archive material.

Unusual Exhibits

A collecting policy never existed as far as the Farmland Museum was concerned and consequently, over the years, a wide range of items was accepted. These became the property of the Museum Trustees, currently Chaired by Lady Hughes of Wilburton, once the official charitable status of the collection was established. Over six hundred and fifty people gave exhibits. Some of the more unusual are listed below.

Sand, made molten by the 'A' bomb explosion in the Alamogordo desert together with an eye-witness account by Professor Otto Frisch.

A wireless by A.J.S. of motor cycle fame. Even the Science Museum in London does not hold one of these models.

A kite made in the shape and appearance of a hawk, used by a Cottenham man to keep partridges flying low on shooting days. This was featured in an article in the Shooting Times magazine.

A Bronze Age sword, identified at the Archaeology Museum in Cambridge as being of the Wilburton type. This was found in a field at Sutton.

A bolas and lasso made in leather, brought back from Australasia and found in sheds at Haddenham and Sutton. Ideal for a 'materials' project in the National Curriculum.

A gate made from straightened-out cart tyres, proving that years ago nothing was thrown away as it might be useful.

A weaver bird's nest carefully transported here from Liberia in a case of clothes by the grandmother of the child who gave it to the museum.

A faded Royal Standard found in a house in the High Street, and a family tree of Queen Victoria printed on a large white handkerchief, which was sold at the Top Shop, Tebbutts, for 2 pence and 3 farthings and given to the museum in the early days by Jessie Tebbutt, J.P. herself.

The largest exhibit was the 1906 sail reaper. It belonged to the Kerridge family at Caves Farm, Littleport, and was restored to its original colours by museum friends, Bob Elliott from Pidley, and Bill

Farthing of Haddenham It was last used in 1947 and needed 3 horses to pull it. (See photo page 9)

Perhaps the most simple design was an invention, patented in 1896, of a swivel toasting fork. A small button on the handle turned the slice of bread round to be toasted on its second side. Many people these days have never tasted toast made in front of an open fire.

The Victorian gadget which children enjoyed most, was the apple peeler which not only peeled the apple, but removed the core too. Enid Milton bought a modern plastic model for the museum to compare old with new, but the latter only peeled, not cored.

In the autumn of 1982 Doug Few brought along a large sugar beet which he had grown and, bearing in mind the array of beet equipment here, he wondered if a competition could be held to find the heaviest beet. The following year, Standens, the machinery firm, gave a trophy for the heaviest beet and in 1984 the record beet was included in the Guinness book of Records. From modest beginnings, it became an annual event each November and over £2,000 were raised for the Elysian Branch of Riding for the Disabled. (See photo page 18)

A silk cushion cover sent from France in the First World War from a soldier to his sweetheart. Sadly he did not return and his sweetheart never married. She gave the cushion to her god-daughter, who in turn passed it on to the museum.

So many exhibits had their own story to tell. Jane Adams kept the Vine Public House. She died in the late 1940's and her effects were sold by auction. Her wooden wash tub was purchased in a job lot by a neighbour and was presented to the museum as an exhibit for the scullery in the Bygones Building. Children enjoyed using it for their wash-day project, part of the 'water' theme for the National Curriculum.

Peter Gimbert gave a solid oak 'king post' from a barn in Sutton in which it is thought that John Wesley, founder of Methodism, preached while on a journey from Ely to St. Ives.

Some soil cores taken from a bore-hole near the village cemetery were presented by the Institute of Geological Sciences.

A tree calendar made from a slice of Elm trunk, was labelled with historical events. Research for this exhibit was carried out by Andy Biggs.



Wednesday afternoons in August were for many years Activity Afternoons for local children. Here a small group is pegging a rag rug (top), and the others (bottom) are making sweets.



Group Visits

It was always the museum policy to show groups round providing that prior arrangements had been made. Until the Halt (a residential centre owned by the Guides) closed in the mid eighties, Charles Bester took responsibility for these tours, and showed over 90 parties of Brownies around the museum between 1973 and 1985. For many Brownies it was their first experience of a museum visit. It was very fitting therefore that he was presented with a memento in appreciation of the many hours he spent at the museum. More recently Len Wood helped with evening visitors.

Ambulance Groups : Hunters Down, Huntingdon : St James, King's Lynn : Sue Ryder, Ely.

Church Groups : Bluntisham Baptists : Catholic Church, Royston : Christchurch Sisterhood, Hitchin : Methodist Mens Clubs (Ely, and Huntingdon) Methodist Youth Club : St George, Littleport, Mothers Union : St James Church, Cambridge : Theological Students, Cambridge :

Farming Groups : Bottisham YFC : Comberton, YFC : Epworth Lincs, Branch NFU : Farm and Garden Association : Milton YFC : Soham YFC : Swavesey YFC : The Soil Association.

Historical Groups : A.J.S. and Matchless Owners' Club : Buckden WEA : Cambridge Industrial Archaeological Society : Cambridge Granta Round Table : Comberton Antiquarians : Dunmow Collectors : Haddenham(Bucks) Society : March Museum Society : Peterborough Decorative and Fine Arts : St Ives Museum Society : The Thorney Society : Veteran Car Club : Saffron Walden Museum Society :

Other Groups included : British Council : Cambridge Farm Machinery Club : Cambridge Outdoor Club : Caravan Club (Mid-Anglia Branch) : Chernobyl Parties 1990/1991 : Eaton Socon Holiday Group : Ely Choral Society : Ely Society : Ely Theatre Group : Ely Wildfowlers : Forest School Camp : Little Downham Pigeon Club : Muskegan High Chamber Orchestra, U.S.A. : Over Sixties, Townswomens Guilds, and Womens Institutes, (often on Mystery Tours) : St Helens Camera Club : Silsoe, Engineering Students : Soroptomists : Steeple Morden British Legion : Swavesey Camera Club : The Bell School of Languages, and other foreign groups : The Loyal Order of Foresters.

Uniformed Group Visits : Boys Brigade : Girls Brigade : Guides : Rainbow Guides : Red Cross : Trefoil Guild.

Schools

For many years special arrangements were made for visits by schools. At first the museum team was headed by Pat Sanigar, and from 1988 by Ann Biggs. Tempus fugit and it is amazing that some of the later children to visit the museum were the off-spring of some of the earliest children to do so. The following extract from the 1990 records, when over two thousand youngsters came on Educational visits, illustrate the range of topics studied, and the schools which made use of the educational facilities provided.

School	Topic	No's	Age
Cottenham	Wheels	38	6-8
CCAH	Machinery	7	17
Haddenham	Sound and Light	64	9-11
Sutton	Winter	36	4-5
Haddenham	Movement	64	7-9
Marshfields	Sugar Beet Machinery	10	14-15
Folksworth	The Fens	25	5-6
Heltwate	General Tour	9	14-15
Croshall	Transport/Wheels	31	6
Histon	Wheels	94	5-6
Bar Hill	Farming	60	5-6
Haddenham	Fossils	27	5-6
Over	Farming	36	10-11
Gordon Fendick	Water	30	8-10
Earith	Food and Farming	57	9-11
St Mathews	Food and Health	30	5-7
Burwell House	Fens and Folklore	32	10
St Collettes	Stone Age Man	19	7-8
Waterbeach	Farm Machinery	60	6-7
Holme	Victorian Harvests	50	6-7

Students from Homerton College, the teacher training college in Cambridge, together with their tutors did many hours of research here, and the resultant booklets, compiled by senior tutor Jill Waterhouse, are geared for the National Curriculum in integrated subjects. They have been well received by school staff, H.M.I. and the children themselves.

Another aspect of the museum's work with young people is that of its role with those of Special Needs. This is perhaps the most rewarding aspect of the education programme.

At CCAH Milton, Mike's work involved children with moderate and severe learning difficulties. The satisfaction that they obtained from practical work such as plough painting was enormous. A group from Marshfields School at Peterborough did practical restoration work on a Bentall beet gapper, and received congratulations from the Duke of Gloucester, during his tour of the East of England Show.

Even a task of wire brushing an old rusty implement, until it shone like new proved to be gratifying. This was recorded on both photographs and video. Much of the day-to-day work at the Milton Museum was done by such students. A six week course on Understanding the Countryside was attended by five students in wheelchairs together with those of other educational needs.

The practical work at Haddenham, such as 'Washing by Hand', pegged rug making, and churning butter gave a great sense of achievement to such pupils at both Primary and Secondary levels.

Cataloguing

Alison Taylor, the County Archaeologist was aware from the early days of the museum of the importance of the finds from within the Parish and elsewhere She arranged for each exhibit to be photographed, catalogued, and had the locations of the finds plotted on large scale O.S. maps after each Archaeology Workshop.

The Fen Farming Collection was recorded by the Manpower Services Team based at Warboys. Members worked through the cold winter months of 1987, photographing, listing, and documenting each exhibit.

Simon Timberlake of the Area Museums Service for South East England listed the geological collection, and two members of the County staff made a particular study of the fossils from the Old Brick Pits off the Sutton Road.

'In house' cataloguing was carried out by Mike who had assistance from the Royal Anthropological Institute and advice from Laurel Ball of the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading (MERL). Other recording was carried out by Clifford Manning, Audrey Kirk, Nagus Millar, and Anne Biggs. MERL was very helpful with advice, photostats, and general information, and Agricultural lists from the Farmland Museum are held there.

Exhibitions Staged Elsewhere

Churchill College, Cambridge : Artefacts of World War 2,
Cottenham. Racecourse : Percheron Horse Society Show
Cottenham Village College : Within 15 miles of Cottenham,
East of England Show : History of Sugar Beet Growing,
Ely Cathedral : Ely and area, as part of the 1973 celebrations,
Ely Library : Peat digging, at launch of Turf Village by A. Day,
Haddenham, Bucks : Haddenham, Cambs,
Hemingford Abbots : Festival,
Kempen : For twinning with East Cambridgeshire District Council,
Lolworth : West Anglia Y.F.C. Rally,
St. Albans : Rose Society Annual Fair,
Wilburton, Twentypence Inn : The Story of Brewing,
Wisbech Museum : Gala Fair

Demonstrations and Displays

Demonstrations : Blacksmithing (Keith Patterson) : Building - local Boy Scouts : Coopering : Corndolly Making (Redd Levitt, Shirley Bavester, Rosemary and Melanie Salmons) : Crochet : Haddenham Art Group : Lambs in Spring (in conjunction with Ron Sulman) : Pottery (Stocky and his team) : Quilling : Quilting : Tatting : Spinning : Weaving : Wood Turning (Paul Howard)

Musical Entertainment : Clog Dancers : Fair Organ : Fordham Hand Bell Team : Haddenham Ballet School : Haddenham Hand Bell Team : Haddenham Silver Band : Littleport Riot : Morris and Molly Men : Red Oak Country Band.

Where Visitors Came From

Visitors came from far and wide and the map in the Bygones Building of The World with their home countries marked, was a source of endless interest.

Alaska	Finland	Liberia	Sicily
Algeria	France	Libya	South Africa
Argentine	Germany	Luxembourg	Spain
Australia	Ghana	Malaya	Sri Lanka
Bahamas	Greece	Malta	Sweden
Bavaria	Holland	Mexico	Switzerland
Belgium	Hong Kong	New Guinea	Syria
Brazil	Hungary	New Zealand	Taiwan
Canada	India	Nigeria	Tasmania
Canary Islands	Iran	Norway	Thailand
Channel Islands	Ireland	Orkney	Togo
China	Israel	Palestine	Turkey
Colombia	Italy	Peru	Uganda
Cyprus	Jamaica	Poland	U.S.A.
Czechoslovakia	Japan	Portugal	U.S.S.R.
Denmark	Java	Rhodesia	Venezuela
Egypt	Jordon	Roumania	Yugoslavia
Eire	Kuwait	Saudi Arabia	Zambia
Falkland Islands	Lebanon	Senegal	Zimbabwe

Some off the Charities Supported by the Museum

Barnardos	Highfield School, Ely
British Heart Foundation	Ida Darwin Hospital
Children in Need (BBC Appeal)	Isle of Ely Society for the Blind
Ely Branch Musular Dystrophy	Leukaemia Research
Ely Branch N.S.P.C.C.	MAGPAS
Ely Palace School	National Childrens' Home
Ely Branch R.D.A.	Save the Children Fund
H.E.A.R.T.	Sue Ryder Home, Ely

Media Coverage of the Farmland Museum

Frequent references have been made of the museum in various publications, television and radio programmes. Some of them are listed here to illustrate the wide interest that it has created.

Books:

Blandford, Percy, : Old Farm Tools and Machinery,
Cambridge Guide to Museums of Britain and Ireland,
Dairy Diary 1989
East Anglian Tourist Board Maps and Publications
Hudson, Kenneth, : Good Museums Guide,
Newbury, Elizabeth, : Collect It
Rouse, Mike, : A View into Cambridgeshire,
Shell Guide to Countryside Museums
Shire Publications
Smith, Guy M., : Moles and their Control,
Ward, Sadie, : War in the Countryside 1939 - 1945

Magazines and Papers:

Beet Review : Cambridge Evening News : Cambs, Hunts and
Peterborough Life : Country Living : Eastern Daily Press : Ely
Standard : Ely Weekly News : Farmers Weekly : Methodist Recorder :
My Weekly : Newmarket Journal : Town Crier : Worlds Fair : Young
Observer.

T.V. Programmes:

Bygones : About Anglia : Dave Allen and Friends : Look East : Why
Don't You (a Childrens' Programme).

Radio:

BBC Radio 4 : C.N.F.M. 103 : Chiltern Radio : Radio Cambridgeshire
: Hereward Radio :

Others:

Fenprobe : Lane Head Studio (audio tapes) : Videofilm (Burwell
House) : and even a mention in Hansard !