

Wargrave Local History Society

Historical Wargrave Walks

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A Brief History

Wargrave has a long history. The first documentary evidence appears in a charter dated 1061 of Edward the Confessor, which mentions ‘a late 10th century grant to the Old Minster of Winchester’ (i.e. the Bishop of Winchester). The Domesday survey of 1086 makes reference to the Manor of Wargrave belonging to the King and states that before 1066 it had belonged to Queen Edith, the wife of Edward the Confessor. At the time of Domesday, the village’s 500 acres had a population of about 250 people. The land was worked by 29 ploughs and there were three fisheries on the river, whose traps at the weirs produced about 3000 eels a year. Valued at £27.6.8d, Wargrave was one of the richest and most populous places in East Berkshire. At that time, Windsor Forest extended as far as the Thames at Wargrave. The river weirs were surrounded by woodland groves, providing the most likely explanation of how the village got its name, which appears as ‘Weregreave’ on early documents.

The earliest site of the village was probably the area of Mill Green, or the land between the Loddon and Wargrave station. Both places show signs of early settlement. The riverside site would have been liable to flooding, and it is most likely that the village referred to in the eleventh century was near the church, with a continuation of Church Street being a main thoroughfare. By 1225, Wargrave was recorded as being a borough, with its own bailiffs and jurors. It seems likely that a new village was developed in the thirteenth century, when most of the houses around Mill Green were abandoned. Whether this was due to flooding, an outbreak of plague, a desire to be around the Henley road or some other reason, is not recorded. A survey of 1607 states that the manor house was near the church, where there was ‘an ancient house with many necessary rooms such as hall, parlour etc’. A 1634 glebe terrier (land survey) adds that land around the church was ‘tythe or gardenage . . . where anciently houses or orchards have stood, but converted to pasturage or tillage’.

The thirteenth-century village was laid out as burgage plots along the High Street, with back lanes on both sides (Ferry Lane and Backsideans). The village settlement developed along the High Street in both directions during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By the early nineteenth century, the village had begun to spread to the east, so that by 1837 there were houses up the hill towards the workhouse, today the site of Elizabeth Court. The rest of Victoria Road dates from the second half of the century, with some later infill.

The Highfield Park houses were built after World War II, the roadway having originally been laid for a wartime army camp. Former farmland to the north of Victoria Road was developed as housing in the late 1960s and 1970s. The area towards the River Loddon was built up in the early part of the twentieth century. Many of the dwellings around the Loddon itself stem from 1930s development, often initially as houseboats.

The church is first mentioned in a document of 1121, from which it is clear that it already existed. The present tower dates from 1635, whilst the building was altered in 1817 and 1849. Apart from the tower and north wall, however, most of the present church dates from the rebuilding which followed the fire in 1914.

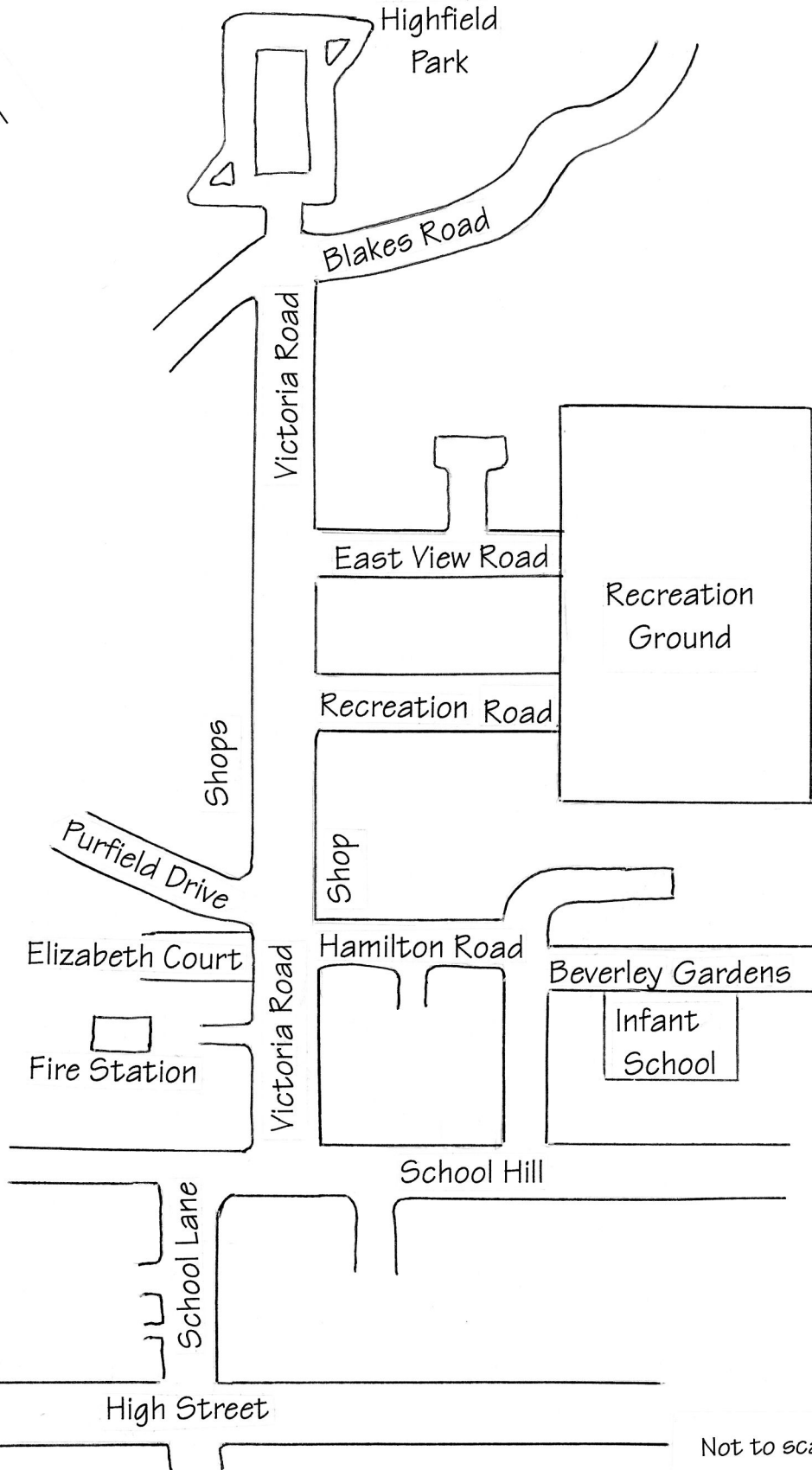
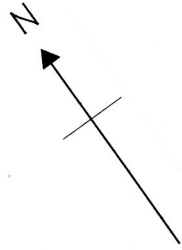
For much of this period, the farmhouses were situated in the centre of the village. *Hamilton House*, in the High Street, and *Ouseleys*, in School Lane, are amongst those that remain. The fields around the village were usually farmed on the strip system. The enclosure of the fields was largely carried out in 1818, when sections were parcelled together for each farmer. The fields around Willow Lane were used as summer grazing for cattle. An indication of the variety of crops is given by the produce on which tithes were levied, which included wood for poles, faggots and walking sticks, osiers, lambs, calves, colts, pigs, cygnets, honey, wax, ale, pigeons, soft fruit, flax, poultry, hemp and garden produce.

The foundation of the village schools dates back over 200 years, having already been in existence when Robert Piggott wrote his will in 1796. The Piggotts were a long-standing Wargrave family and Robert established two schools, one for boys and the other for girls, in the High Street. His sister, Ann, left a further large sum of money in her will for the schools when she died in 1827. The three Wargrave schools continue as Church of England foundations and recall the Piggott name in their titles, all being descended from the original foundation. Several important facilities in the village bear the name 'Woodclyffe' - the hall, the hostel, the almshouses, the allotments and the recreation ground; all benefactions presented to the village by Mrs Harriette Smith.

Interesting people who lived in the village include Lord Barrymore, who had his famous theatre here in the late eighteenth century, Robert Morley, the actor, and Sir Morrell Mackenzie, physician to Queen Victoria.

Most of the development in Wargrave has left the medieval village largely untouched, and it is now protected as a conservation area.

Walk One



Not to scale

Walk One - Victoria Road

This walk begins at the Recreation Ground and includes Victoria Road. It can be completed in about an hour or so.

We start by the bowling green. The Recreation Ground was given to the village in 1907 by Mrs Smith, who had also given the various 'Woodclyffe' benefactions to the village. Amongst the previous owners of the land were the Piggott family, who were also village benefactors. The field boundaries can be seen to be the same on the old maps, including a 'wobble' in the south-east corner. Mrs Smith gave the pavilion and groundsman's house, as well as the eleven acres of land for the 'Rec'.

In the distance, beyond the trees, can be seen the A4 road. This was built in the late 1920s as a by-pass to Twyford. For many years it was lined with tall poplar trees (removed in the early 1970s), and with the nurseries either side came to be known as the Floral Mile.

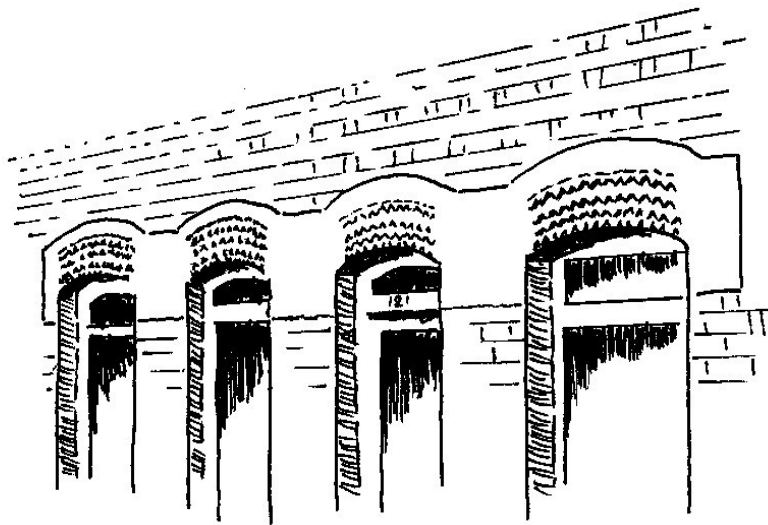


The bowling green was laid out in 1926. The first club room was replaced by more modern facilities in early 1987. Also in this corner of the Recreation Ground are the Scout and Guide 'huts' - now proper buildings that replaced earlier premises. The Scout Group is one of the oldest in the country, being formed in 1909. In 1982, a youth centre was added, extended in 1984, and now the home of the Wargrave Pre-school. The new cricket pavilion was built in 2011 and the old one is now the Parish Council Office.

Now leave the Recreation Ground through the gate by the bowling green, into East View Road, where a village street party for 600 local children was held in 1977 as part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations.

Part way along on the right is East View Close. This is built on the second site of the *Evelyn Home*, opened in April 1926 by Princess Marie Louise. The home had been built by Easterlings, the village firm, who also built the houses opposite in East View Road at about the same period. The home, named after the founder, Mrs Evelyn Murray, was used to give rest to London mothers and their new-born infants. In 1929 the Peter Pan Garden was opened - approximately where the garages and grass are now - complete with a Peter Pan statue, a photograph of which appears in 'The Book of Wargrave'. The charity had a connection with Great Ormond Street Hospital, who own the rights to Barrie's book. The home closed in the 1950s, and after use as a private residence was replaced in about 1966 by the present Close.

Continue to the corner of East View Road and Victoria Road. Here



on the east side is the earlier site of the *Evelyn Home*. The charity had originated in 1908 as the Convalescent Cottage for London Mothers and Infants in Hertfordshire. It moved to Wargrave in 1913, occupying the house on the corner. As this

could only accommodate four mothers and babies, the house next to it was added in 1914. The connecting passages between the two parts can still be found, although they are again two separate houses.

Now walk up Victoria Road, which follows the line of an old foot-path shown on maps of 160 years ago. The houses were mainly built in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and at first the road was named Jubilee Road.

A little way up on the right was a long low house. This was originally a wooden army hut from the 1914-18 war. It was bought by Mr Williams, the Crazies Hill milkman in the early 1920s; he and his two daughters lived there. It was replaced by three modern houses in the

early 21st century. Beyond here, numbers 158-164 were built by George Street, a relative of the family who kept *The Hurdlemakers* at Crazies Hill. Higher again is a pair of houses, *Ivyhurst* and *Ivydene*. A Mrs Fidler ran a dressmaking business from the lower one, and the mother of farmer Ron Bush lived in the other.

Further up is a row of cottages known as 'The Top 10' or 'The A's', because they were numbered with an 'A' suffix to distinguish them from *Gardeners Cottages*, also numbered 1-10, lower down Victoria Road. When Victoria Road was numbered throughout, the row acquired new numbers - but the names remain in use. All the houses on this side of the road have quite long gardens, bounded at the rear by the playing field that can be seen behind the Youth Centre, which is now the Recreation Ground extension known as Kings Field.

The house near the top of Victoria Road, called *Windy Brow*, used to be an upholstery business, run by William Hunt.

At the top of Victoria Road turn right towards Hare Hatch, and walk as far as the pair of farm cottages on the left. Take care with the traffic, as cars entering the village do not have a good view. Look over the fence by the Kings Acre houses and you will see Kings Field and the community orchard. The two brick-built cottages opposite are known as *Kings Farm Cottages*, after Joseph King. He was related to Ann Piggott, and inherited all the land we have covered so far - the boundary being the edge of the field that we have just looked at. Further along the road to Hare Hatch is a small housing development occupying buildings inscribed as the Wargrave and Twyford Waterworks. The original borehole is now capped, although a pipe runs under the fields to the new waterworks. Walking up this narrow twisting road is hazardous.

Now return to the top of Victoria Road, opposite which is Highfield Park. This was still an open field until World War II, having previously belonged to the Piggotts and Kings. During the war, from 1943, an army camp occupied the site, but as the road was made of concrete, the land could not be returned to agricultural use. It was acquired by the Wokingham Rural District Council and the Highfield Park houses built around the original road.

On leaving Highfield Park, turn right and walk a short way along Blakes Lane. In the 1930s the Misses Lewis used to run a small laundry here, in the first house called *Greenacres*. The ladies' 'finery' was delivered in a pony and trap. A little further along here there is a

stream which rises in Bowsey Woods, and continues behind the houses in Victoria Road, to which now return, and walk down the north side. The stream is known as the 'Gully Ditch' to many locals, and was occasionally used in times past for traction engines to refill their boilers. A fair was sometimes held on a piece of land at the top of Victoria Road.

Also near the top of the road was a pole in the pavement - the remains of a bus stop sign, as the previous bus company used to run a service terminating here several times a day until the 1970s. There is still the corresponding concrete pole at the bottom of the road.

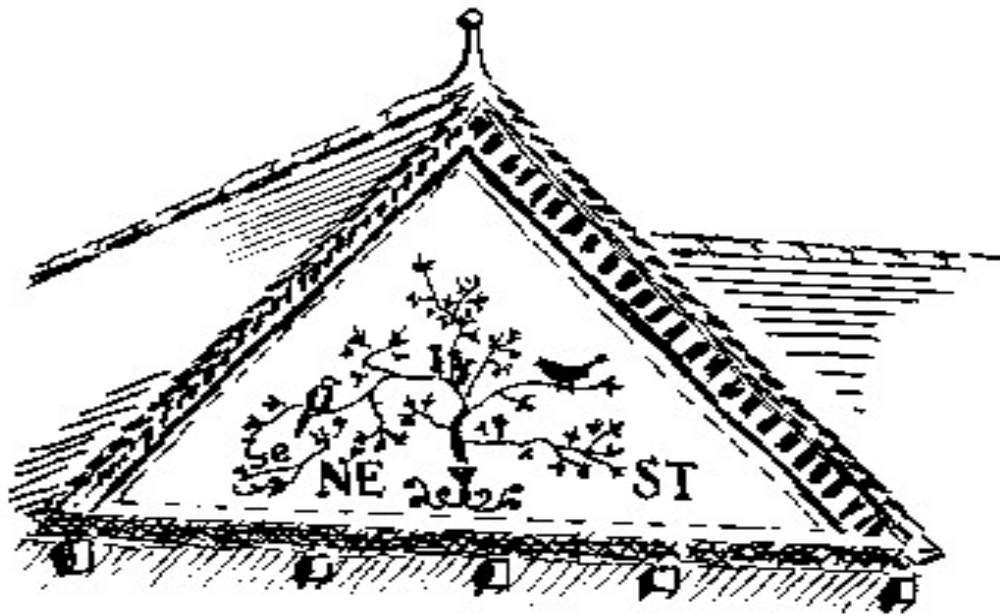
A little way down Victoria Road some of the houses have their building dates on the gable end, as at *Olney Cottage*.

Continue down Victoria Road to *Fernleigh*. Mr Earles ran a builder's business from here, having a workshop at the back. He later moved higher up Victoria Road.

Numbers 161-3 used to be a village store and the Upper Wargrave post office was situated at the back of the shop (left-hand part of the building), although in earlier times the shop was in the right-hand half, run by the Jonas family. After a Mr Cross, a Mr Brown ran the shop, and Mr Smith was there until Mrs Brandon took over in 1981. An old-style red phone box stood outside, and the small post box was mounted in the wall. In 1982 the post office was the object of an attack by armed raiders. The shop and post office, having been there for 70 years, closed early in 1984.

A little further down was the site of Gleneagles Garage which sold petrol and specialised in repairing Rolls-Royces. The garage was started by Norman Bird, and was called *Gleneagles* as that was the name of the cottage on the site, formerly occupied by Jimmy Piggott. Next door, at *Ye Nest*, Norman Bird's brother Harold used to run a local taxi-hire service. Despite the obvious connection, the house had the name before being acquired by the Bird family! Although the house remains, the garage site has been redeveloped to create Bird Gardens. The house had previously been occupied by a builder and funeral director by the name of Bennett.

From here westwards several houses have a building date or name in the brickwork, as at *Rhodesia Cottages*. A Mr Topsfield used to run a carrier's business from here, taking goods to and from Reading. Number 139 used to be the manse for the Pastor of Wargrave Chapel, and *Court Cottage* was occupied by Mrs Wells.



On the opposite side of the road are two bungalows. These are set back from the road because there was a large pit in front. Although this had been filled in, the ground was not suitable for building, so the bungalows had to be built behind this area. It is also said that they are set back because the occupier of the next house up Victoria Road claimed 'ancient lights' by a hastily-painted notice (now removed) when the bungalows were to be built. They were erected quickly - in about three weeks.

Several of the older houses on both sides of the Victoria Road had either a pump or, more usually, a well in the back garden. These were often shared by adjoining properties, and are marked on large-scale maps at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In the front room of one of the cottages here, a Mr Tack used to keep a sweet shop. Apparently the constable had to be called at times as he 'knocked his wife about a bit'. A little further down lived Mrs Turner who, in Canon Winter's time, was the church cleaner.

Walk down Victoria Road until the grocery shop is reached. This store, previously Caston's, and then Ashton's, used to belong to Maurice Owen, who still runs Victoria Nurseries and who had an adjoining florist's shop. The Upper Wargrave post office moved here in 1984, until Ashton's closed down in 1988. During the 1930s the Victoria Dairy was set up by Mr Jones. The long white building behind the shop was the dairy bottling plant, and Jones' Dairy also used to occupy the shop.

Next we come to Victoria Newsagents, where copies of History Society books may be purchased. This used to be the seed shop owned by Frank Pope, and later Maurice Owen changed it to a sweet shop. The nursery and greenhouses, including land behind the bottling plant, used to belong to Frank Pope as well. It is the site of the present Upper Wargrave post office.

The Gully Ditch runs behind the houses from there to Purfield Drive. The lower eight of these houses were built on the site of a smallholding, rented from the manor and used to grow vegetables.

The Purfield Drive/Langhams Way development was built on the former Fidlers Farm in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At one time this area was called Royal Hill, and the present road names have local connections - the Pur Field and the Langham Field being towards Crazies Hill. Some local residents remember a donkey being kept on the field behind the fire station, until the land was built on. Number 7 Purfield Drive was a show house, the form of construction being new at the time, and was opened by the then Minister of Housing.

Across Purfield Drive is Elizabeth Court. These elderly people's flats were built in 1971 and extended in 1976, when the surgery was added. The site was given to the village in the late eighteenth century by John Piggott for a workhouse. It was used as a District (Poor Law Board) School in the mid-nineteenth century, and part of the buildings was used as the village infants school from 1910 until 1963, when it was still gas-lit! On one occasion the Superintendent of the District School returned home in the evening drunk, and began a brawl with the schoolmaster in the girls' yard. He was promptly dismissed - the schoolmaster, Bennett, eventually took charge at the Piggott (now Junior) School. The National School, merged with The Piggott School from 1827, occupied an adjoining site down Victoria Road from 1818 until 1862. In the mid-1930s the council built four houses on part of the asphalt yard.

Walking around to the back of Elizabeth Court, the village fire station can be seen. This was built in 1930 by the firemen - most of whom worked for Easterlings the local builders - to house their new Morris fire engine. A photograph appears in 'The Book of Wargrave'.

Previously, part of the District School had been used as the fire station. The station is maintained by part-time firefighters, and the present-day engine is non-standard as the building is too small to house the usual type with a longer ladder. Behind the fire station the Guides had a wooden hut for meetings, until they moved to the Recreation Ground.

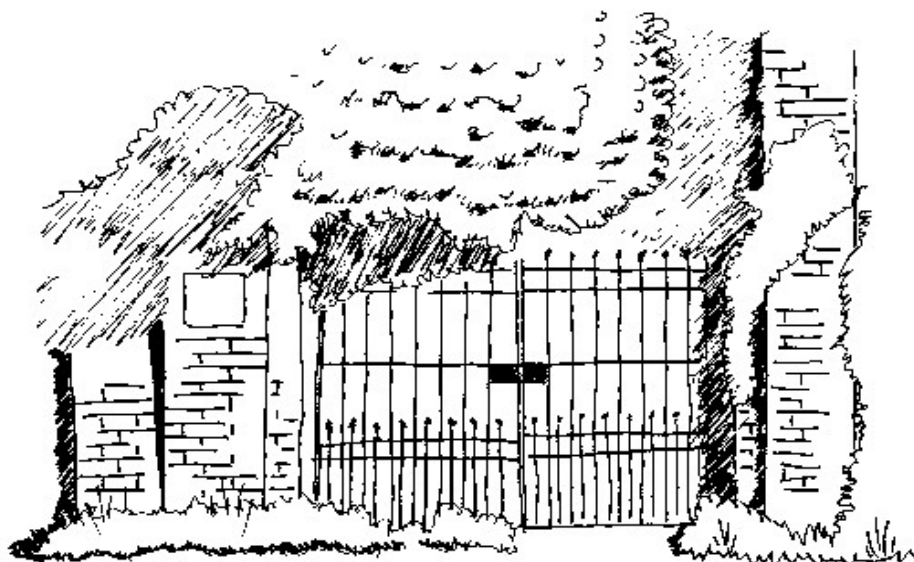
Now walk down to Victoria Road, and cross to walk up Hamilton Road. The land behind the modern houses was often used by a visiting fair named Feltham. At the top of Hamilton Road is Silverdale Road, named after an old Wargrave family, the Silvers, who owned the land here 150 or so years ago. Turn right to Beverley Gardens, in which will be found the Piggott Infants School, built to replace the old school that closed in 1963.

Returning to Silverdale Road, past the top of Hamilton Road, brings us to Clifton Rise. This was built on the site of the Wargrave Laundry, a rather larger establishment than the one in Blakes Lane. Quite a few people were employed and aerial photographs of the 1930s show lines of washing drying! A Mr Watts and his three sons took over from Mr & Mrs Barley in the 1930s. The laundry lasted through the 1950s.

Walk back down Hamilton Road to Victoria Road, and turn right. Lloyds Pharmacy was formerly Freemans Pharmacy, which moved from the High Street in the late 1980s to be near the surgery. The site had previously been the third grocery shop in Victoria Road, occupied by Bottings. It has also housed a butcher's, run by a Mr Cruse and later Mr Stevens, for whom Jack Luker was manager, a fruit shop run by a member of the Jennings family, a cycle shop run by Jim Watts, and Mrs Rogers' sweet shop. Behind the shop was a bakehouse, run by Charlie Bryant. He used to bake for Harry Barker, in Church Street, but set up in Hamilton Road when he 'retired', using a three-wheeled cycle for deliveries. The old bakehouse was used by Mr Botting after he gave up the shop, to run a freezer-meat business.

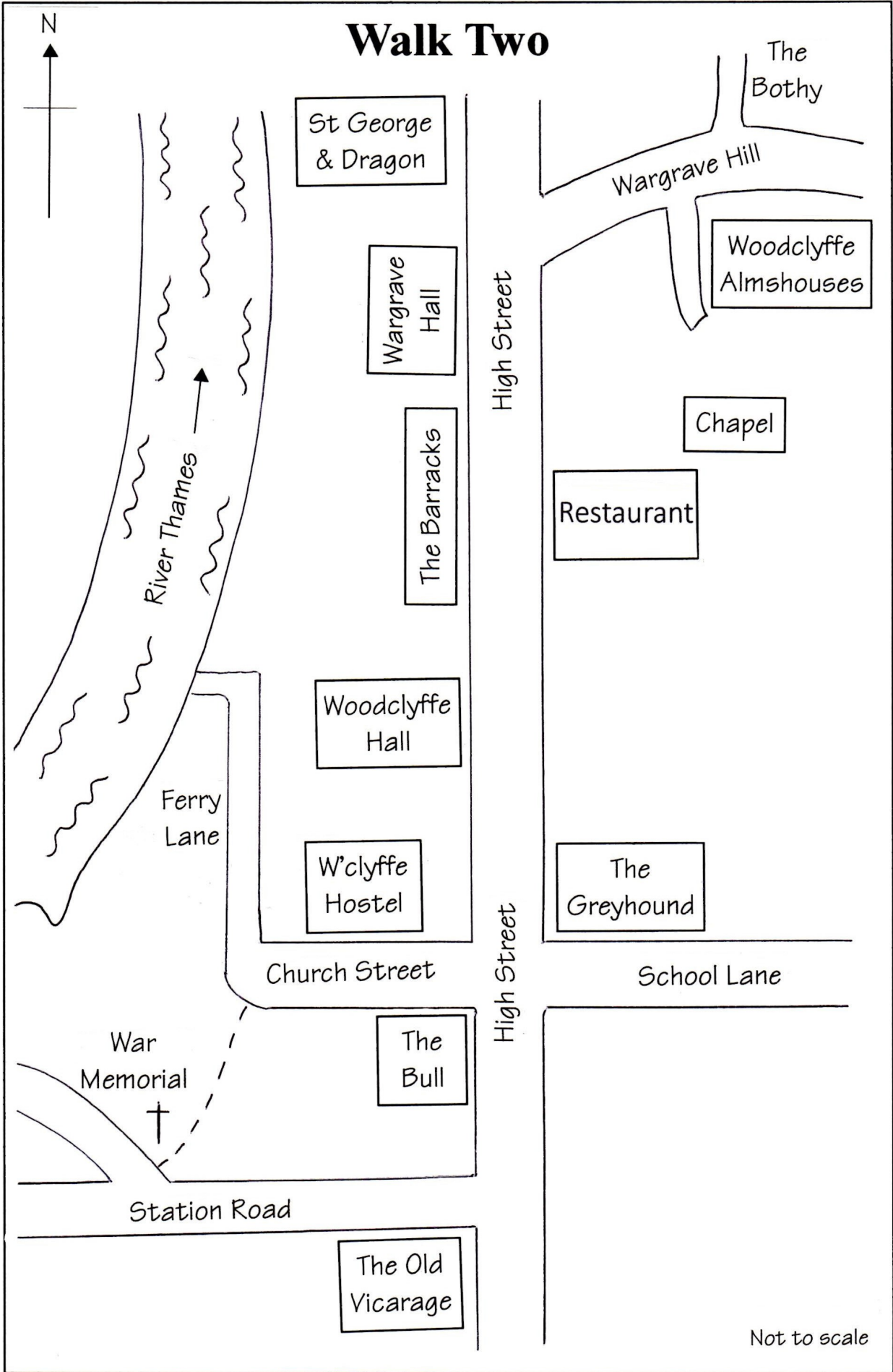
Nearby, in the detached house called *The Brambles*, a dairy was started by Mr Heakes, who set up in opposition to Rose and Bennett in the High Street. This dairy was taken over by Jones, who moved it to number 60, which used to be called *Ours*, and later across and up the road to where the grocer's is now.

Continuing up Victoria Road, an entrance will be seen on the right to the Woodclyffe Allotments, marked by stones in the brick pillars that once supported an ornamental ironwork arch. The six-acre allotments were another gift of Mrs Smith to the village, and she also provided a tool shed for the gardeners in 1903. The grounds extend from the Recreation Ground to behind the houses in Clifton Rise.



The house called *Black Chimneys* used to be called *Larches*, on account of the trees in its garden. *The Bungalow*, is opposite *Barons View*, a reference to 'Baron' Dover, the brother of the blacksmith.

Walk up Victoria Road to Recreation Road, passing *Gardeners Cottages* on the corner. In one of these a provision and sweet shop was kept by Mrs Clark. We turn into Recreation Road and return to the Recreation Ground. At the end of World War II the Italian prisoners of war played football on the 'Rec' with the local team but during the summer cricket is more likely to be encountered, so, watching out for the ball, make your way back to the bowling green where we began.



Walk Two - The High Street

This walk begins outside the Woodclyffe Hostel (library) in Church Street. It is possible to start at a different point on the walk, as it returns to the starting point. The walk takes an hour or so to complete, and is largely on the level.



The Woodclyffe Hostel is built on the site of an old building known as 'Queen Emma's Palace', which was pulled down in 1827. This was a timber-framed building that, although old, probably did not date back to Queen Emma's time. She was the mother of Edward the Confessor - Wargrave being a part of the Royal Manor at that period. A picture of the building appears in 'The Book of Wargrave'. The Woodclyffe Hostel was built in 1905, the building date

appearing on some of the brickwork and the gutter downpipes. It was provided by Mrs Harriette Smith, the daughter of a former vicar of Wargrave, and was one of several gifts to the village. It was provided, in part, to give working men a place to meet, apart from the public houses; Mrs Smith being keen on the Temperance movement. In 1915 the local branch of the Red Cross took over the Hostel for use as a hospital for 20 soldiers - a plaque by the doorway commemorates this. Later it was used as communal rooms when the ward was moved to the Woodclyffe Hall. At one time the Hostel bathroom was available for use by any villagers without a bathroom of their own.

The house next door has been used as a branch of the National Provincial Bank, and has also been an estate agent's, run by Sidney Briscoe.

Walk to the corner. Before the turn of the twentieth century there was a grocer's, Burgis's, on this site. The shop was rebuilt in about 1903-4, and for a short period had a tearoom upstairs. The bakehouse associated with the shop was renowned for good doughnuts. The shop later became Budgens, and remained a grocer's until the early

1970s. This was followed by Whistle Stop Toys, a gift shop called The Three B's and then two estate agents. More recently, it has been a dress shop and an art gallery.

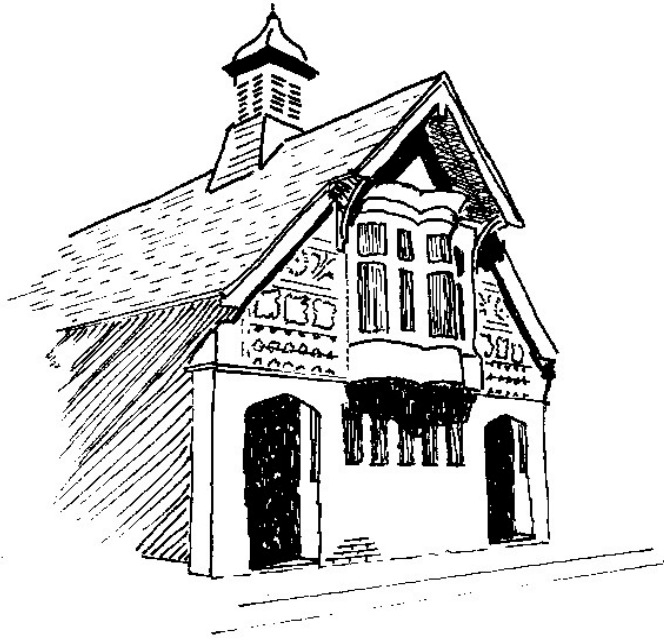
The pair of small shops next along the High Street stands on the site of three small cottages. A tailor and hosier by the name of James, and later a shoe-repair business, followed by a greengrocer's, a butcher's, an antiques shop and then an upholstery business occupied the site. It has now become a dental surgery.

W.H. Smith, the booksellers, occupied the other shop which is now a hairdresser's. Over both of these was Wargrave's first telephone exchange, run in the early days by the National Telephone Company.

The shop next door was a butcher's until early 1987. Although owned by Jennings for many years, it used to be run by John Richardson, 'family butcher and poulterer', and later by O'Hara and Lee. There was a slaughterhouse at the rear, and sides of meat were hung outside the window, above the pavement. For many years it was occupied by Wargrave Antiques.

The adjacent shop was for a long time a hairdresser's, as Charlie Lunn used to ply his trade here. He also sold tobacco products, fishing tackle and bait. It continued as a hairdresser's until the late 1980s as 'Beyond the Fringe'. Next door was the site of a coffee tavern, established in the second half of the nineteenth century 'to fight the evil of drink'. Later a corn merchant's occupied the site and some of the original painted signs have been revealed. The Pether family ran a tearoom here from 1906. For many years after the war this was the home of Gemsa's electrical store. In the last of this block of shops was a village estate agent, Hart and Seary, before Nicholas, and later Mann and Co. took over. Prior to that it had been a fancy goods shop, called The Doll's House, and at one time was occupied by Messum, the village fishmonger. It became a wine merchant's for part of the 1990s and a restaurant in 2000.

We have now reached the Woodclyffe Hall, built on the site of an old malthouse. This was another of Mrs Smith's gifts to the village which were called 'Woodclyffe'. That was the name of her house along the Henley road - it was in an old quarry with a wood at the top of the cliff! The architect was Cole Adams, and it was built by the



Reading firm of Collier and Catley, being opened in December 1900. Mrs Smith's Temperance views seem to be reinforced by the use made of bottles, several appear end-on in the upper part of the front wall. Apart from village entertainments, the Hall was used as a hospital ward for part of the 1914-18 war, and for entertaining troops in World War II - including an appearance by Budd Flanagan, who lived in Willow Lane at the time.

gan, who lived in Willow Lane at the time.

A little further along is a building that began as *Alma Cottage* and became a fishmonger's when Messums moved here. Later Tony Shaw took over as the fishmonger before it became Mallows the newsagents, Village News, Village Pantry and more recently has returned to being two private houses.

Next door is a house called *Tinkerbelle*, where Mr Bennett started his electrical business. Originally this was the site of the post office. In 1899, in a fit of rage, the postmaster Henry Bolton threw the letters out into the High Street. They were collected up by Mr Sansom who ran a drapery shop opposite, and he subsequently became the postmaster.

Walking a little further north, we come to a long terraced row of houses. This is often known as 'The Barracks', but there is no military connection. The building was put up in the late-eighteenth century in order to accommodate visitors to Lord Barrymore's theatre. Twenty ladies could stay upstairs, and twenty gentlemen downstairs. The conditions were rather spartan, hence the name; the guests staying in long dormitories. Later, the block was divided into twelve separate cottages. Whilst stood here, turn and look at the restaurant opposite This used to be the White Hart public house and had a large picture of a white hart on the front wall above the doorway.

Moving along to the far end of the Barracks, we come to a small shop. This was a cycle shop run by Binky White, and later by his son,

Herbie. They advertised as makers of ‘the Wargrave cycle’, although it is not known what was special about it, and at one time carried out motor car repairs as well. This was later occupied by Wargrave Motors, before they moved over the road.

Now continue to walk along the road, until you reach the driveway that swings down to the large white house, *Wargrave Hall*. This was split into five apartments, and has superb views up the river. It was bought by Edward Goulding, later Lord Wargrave, in 1906. Many Cabinet ministers used to visit here at that period, and it is said that Bonar Law and Lloyd George were staying in August 1914 when war was declared. During World War II the Hall was used to house members of the United States Air Force.

Walking a little further, we come, opposite the bottom of Wargrave Hill, to the house called *Barrymore*. It is surrounded by a wall that, unfortunately, makes it a little difficult to see. It is named after its most famous resident, Lord Barrymore, who was here from 1787 to 1793. Barrymore enlarged the building to its present size, although it was for a time divided into two dwellings. It is rumoured to have been connected by an underground passage to Barrymore’s theatre.

A walk along the narrow pavement will now bring us to the St. George and Dragon. This is one of the seven drinking houses that used to be in Wargrave High Street. For many years it was run by the Wyatt family, who also ran an adjoining boatyard, later occupied by Swancraft, although that was replaced by a private residence. It was from here that there was, until relatively recent times, a ferry across to the Shiplake bank of the Thames. The Wyatts also offered wharfage, and commodities such as coal would be brought up river. On the south side of this site, towards the river, was an inlet that was used as the local sheep dip in former times. The original inn sign for the St. George and Dragon can still be seen. It was painted by G Leslie RA and J Hodgson RA and is renowned for showing a victorious Saint George drinking a pint of beer and is mentioned in Jerome K Jerome’s ‘Three Men in a Boat’.

Now cross the road to the east side, and walk back to the foot of Wargrave Hill, and turn the corner. The new houses of Garrick Mews stand on the site of Barrymore’s theatre. At the time, it was said to be the most modern in England, seating several hundred people (a picture appears in ‘The Book of Wargrave’). Barrymore had the best actors and actresses from London, and the Wargrave Theatre was a

place where ‘society’ gathered. It is recorded in contemporary newspapers that the Prince of Wales of the day, later George the Fourth, visited several times. Barrymore spent about £300,000 on his theatre, but he became bankrupt, the theatre being auctioned and broken up.

Walking a little further up Wargrave Hill brings us to The Bothy. Before the house now known as *Wargrave Manor* was built, the road went this way towards Crazies Hill. The large house was built in the late eighteenth century by Joseph Hill, and was therefore called *Wargrave Hill*. It was never the manor house.

Fixed to the wall facing Wargrave Hill near here is an iron cross. It was placed there to mark the spot where, many years ago, a horse rider was killed when her horse bolted whilst descending the hill.

Crossing the road, a path leads up and behind the buildings in the High Street towards the Woodclyffe Almshouses. These were previously the north block of the Hill Lands military academy, and were given to the village by Mrs Smith in 1902. The conversion into eight homes for elderly people was carried out by Cole Adams, and some decorative features pick up themes from the house, *Woodclyffe*. The long wall that leads from here up Wargrave Hill was provided, at a cost of £500, by Lord Braybrooke to give employment to local men in wintertime.

Now return along the path to Wargrave Hill, and down to the High Street. On the left-hand corner is a group of new houses on the site which was occupied for many years by Wargrave Motors. The footpath stops just before the first white cottage, close to the road, called *Jessamine Cottage*. The house set back from the road here was, for a while, used as the postal sorting office and telephone exchange. *Jessamine Cottage* was the second of the drinking places, a beer house called the Red Lion. Walking carefully along here, as there is no pavement, past a house that was a bank until 1995, brings us to the site of two cottages. They were demolished to make way for Tony Shaw’s new fishmonger’s shop which was opened in the early 1960s by the actress Diana Dors. It later became Aquadine Enterprises, who operated restaurant-boats on the river and was then used by an electronics business but has since returned to residential use.

Walk to the driveway beside the restaurant, formerly the White Hart public house, and into the car park, away from the traffic. To the north side of the car park is the building that was Wargrave Chapel. This was founded in 1835, as part of ‘The Countess of Huntingdon’s

Connexion', which was a group of independent chapels. The chapel ceased to be used for worship in 1981, the congregation merging with that at the parish church. The building was subsequently sold and converted to a private house. On the other side of the car park was a billiard room, over the livery stables behind the former White Hart, the third of the drinking houses. This was a pub before 1840, although in 1828 the records tell us a butcher was in occupation. Walking back to the High Street, two passages once ran where the driveway is now. The one to the chapel had an ornamental iron arch by the pavement, whilst a sign to the billiard room marked the passage nearer to the White Hart.



Walking past the restaurant brings us to the coffee shop. In earlier days roadside petrol pumps used to dispense Cleveland petrol for the garage up the lane here and one of the old pumps can still be seen. The garage was run by Ridout and later Eaton, before specialising in motorcycles. The garage has now been replaced by modern housing. The coffee shop was formerly the drapery store run by William Sansom at the turn of the century, and later by his son Cyril. It was to here the post office moved in 1899, where it remained for well over a hundred years. At the time of the First World War, Lloyd George was a frequent visitor, as all messages to and from Whitehall had to be sent by Morse telegraph from the post office. He had 'an eye for the ladies' - to the extent that it is said that the shop girl would disappear out to the back whenever he came in. The Post Office closed in 2008.

Walking along a little further, stop by the large house called *The Little House*. This was for a time a small antiques shop, but it's better known as the one-time home of Sir Morell Mackenzie. He was a physician in Queen Victoria's time who in 1863 founded the first hospital in the world to specialise in diseases of the throat and nose. In 1887 he was asked to examine Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia. He disagreed with the diagnosis of cancer of the larynx made by the German doctors. Following his treatment, Queen Victoria, Frederick's mother-in-law, was so delighted that she gave him a knighthood.

Sadly, a little more than a year later, Frederick, by now Emperor, died

of the cancer. It has been suggested that his premature death, which led to William becoming Emperor, indirectly led to the First World War, and so reflects on Sir Morell Mackenzie's wrong diagnosis. His reputation certainly suffered, and on being given a book entitled 'The Gentle Art of Making Enemies' is reported to have replied 'I do not seem to have any need to study it'. The house was given its present appearance by Sir Morell - it had previously been called *Sycamore Lodge*, and had been inhabited by W Gosling, the artist. Sir Morell is buried in Wargrave Churchyard. One item of note is the inscription over the front door. It reads 'Cho fads abhios monadh an Ciuntail ca bhi Macoinnica gun ala chro' which approximately translated from the Gaelic means 'the Mackenzies will never want for cattle while there are moors in Kintail'.

A short walk now takes us to *Timber Cottage*. This is thought to be the oldest house in Wargrave - behind the brickwork visible from the road it has a timber frame dating from the mid-fourteenth century. It has at various times been used as a shop. Jennings the butcher was here before moving to the shop opposite, and later Claude Batty ran a cycle shop here. It was also the Timbered Cottage Tea Parlour, as can be seen in the picture in 'The Book of Wargrave', which also includes a photograph of the timber frame inside.

Next door was the High Street Stores. For many years this was a branch of International Stores, but previously belonged to Collins, who not only sold groceries and provisions, but ironmongery and general household goods as well. For a while before World War II, the room above the International Stores was used by Claude Batty to give dancing lessons. It is now occupied by a firm of chartered surveyors.

Continuing along the High Street, we come to the fitness centre in a modern building which was Barclays Bank until it closed in June 1991. The building that previously stood here housed another butcher, Bailey's, and later W.H. Smith moved here, from across the road, when they needed a bigger shop.

Walking past the next entrance brings us to *Old Dairy Court*, which belonged to Rose and Bennett, who delivered milk twice daily. Later this village concern was taken over by Job's, who used the shop for a while. The dairy was extended and converted for residential use in 1990. Next door is the fourth of the village drinking places, the Grey-

hound. This dates from the early eighteenth century, although the brick wall seems to be an outer cladding added later. It has chalk foundations which can be seen in the cellars. On occasions in the mid-eighteenth century the Manor Court met here, instead of at The Bell at Waltham St. Lawrence as usual.

Walk round the corner to the building with the Parish Council notice board on it, just before the car park. This was the village blacksmith's, where Bill Dover and his assistant, Charlie Stevens, would shoe the many local horses, and make various iron implements. The building used to be adorned by the colourful enamelled-metal advertising panels that were once commonplace.

Across the road stands one of the fast-disappearing red telephone boxes. A century and a half ago the parish officers had a roundhouse here - thought to have been a kind of lock-up.

The large house on the corner, *Wargrave House*, was for many years the home of the Taylor family, village doctors for several generations

Cross the road carefully by the traffic lights to The Bull. This is said to date from the fifteenth century. Certainly inside this, the fifth of



our drinking places, are some very old oak beams, and a ghost is reputed to have appeared here on several occasions. It is also built on chalk block foundations.

From here we walk along the High Street towards Twyford to the site of two shops. The first one we reach had been part of an antiques shop, but prior to that a green-

grocer's run by Mr and Mrs Brown, and later by the Stringers. The other shop had been, until 1984, the village chemist's for well over

50 years. Underneath here flows the stream, commonly called the Gully Ditch, on its way to the Thames from Bowsey Hill.

Looking across the road two large houses can be seen. The later one, on the right, is the white-painted *Nelson House*. The house to the left is older and was originally known as *Thorncliffe*. Later it became *Hamilton House*, an appropriate name to match its neighbour. The older parts of the building were once the farmhouse for *Turner's Farm*, although the fields for the farm were on the eastern edge of the village. The building later belonged to the Piggott family (of the schools) - Robert Piggott's mother being Martha Turner before her marriage.

Walking on further, there is a row of cottages that appear to have belonged to *Turner's Farm* at some point. One of these, plus another cottage a little further south, were the earliest sites recorded for the Piggott School. Behind us at this point is *Orchard House*, where lived the mother and sister of Mrs Smith, who gave the 'Woodclyffe' bequests to the village.

Walk a little further, until you are opposite the house beyond the row of white cottages. The lintel over the driveway between them once bore the legend 'Good Stabling', for the house used to be the sixth of our drinking places, The Old Star. It became a pub in the 1850s, later being called The Old North Star Inn. It ceased to be a pub in the early part of the twentieth century, although until recently it was still called *Star Cottage*.

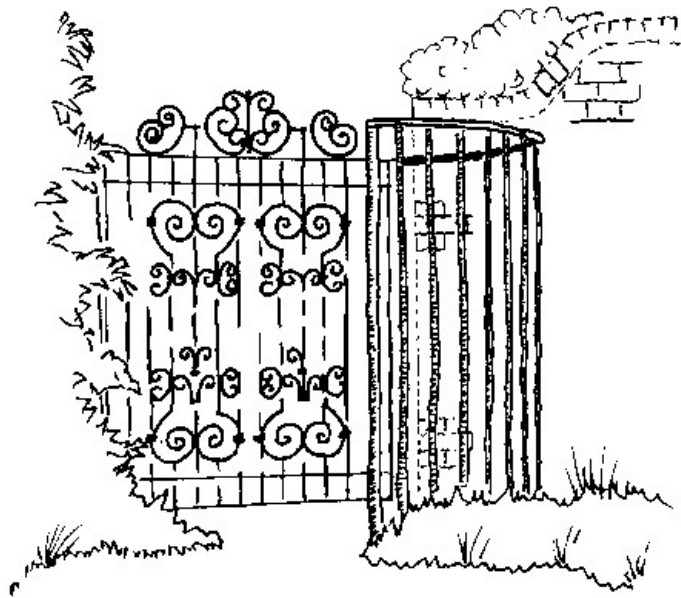
Just a few steps, and we reach *Tudor Cottage*, the seventh of the High Street drinking houses, as this used to be The White Horse. High up on the wall is one of the few firemarks to be seen in Wargrave. A firemark was fixed to a property to show the insurance company's fire brigade that a premium had been paid, for there was no community fire service at that time.

Walk along to the corner of Station Road, where on the opposite corner stands *The Old Vicarage*. This house belonged to Lord Braybrooke, the Lord of the Manor, who had his seat at Billingbear. In 1827 the then vicarage, near the church, was in a poor state of repair, so was exchanged with Lord Braybrooke for the house we are looking at. There was a parish meeting room in the garden, and vicarage tea parties were held in the grounds, part of which was used to build the present vicarage on. Since it ceased to be used as a vicarage

it was called *Reading House*, when the MP Peter Emery lived there, and it was later renamed *The Old Vicarage*.

Now walk along Station Road, and take the fork on the right to Mill Green. This path used to be gated, and by the corner was the village pound, where stray animals would be put until claimed by their owners. Walk along the right-hand path, leaving the War Memorial on your left. This was designed by Lutyens, who also designed the Cenotaph in Whitehall. Along this path on the right is a pond, where the Gully Ditch appears from a culvert, as it turns north to the Thames.

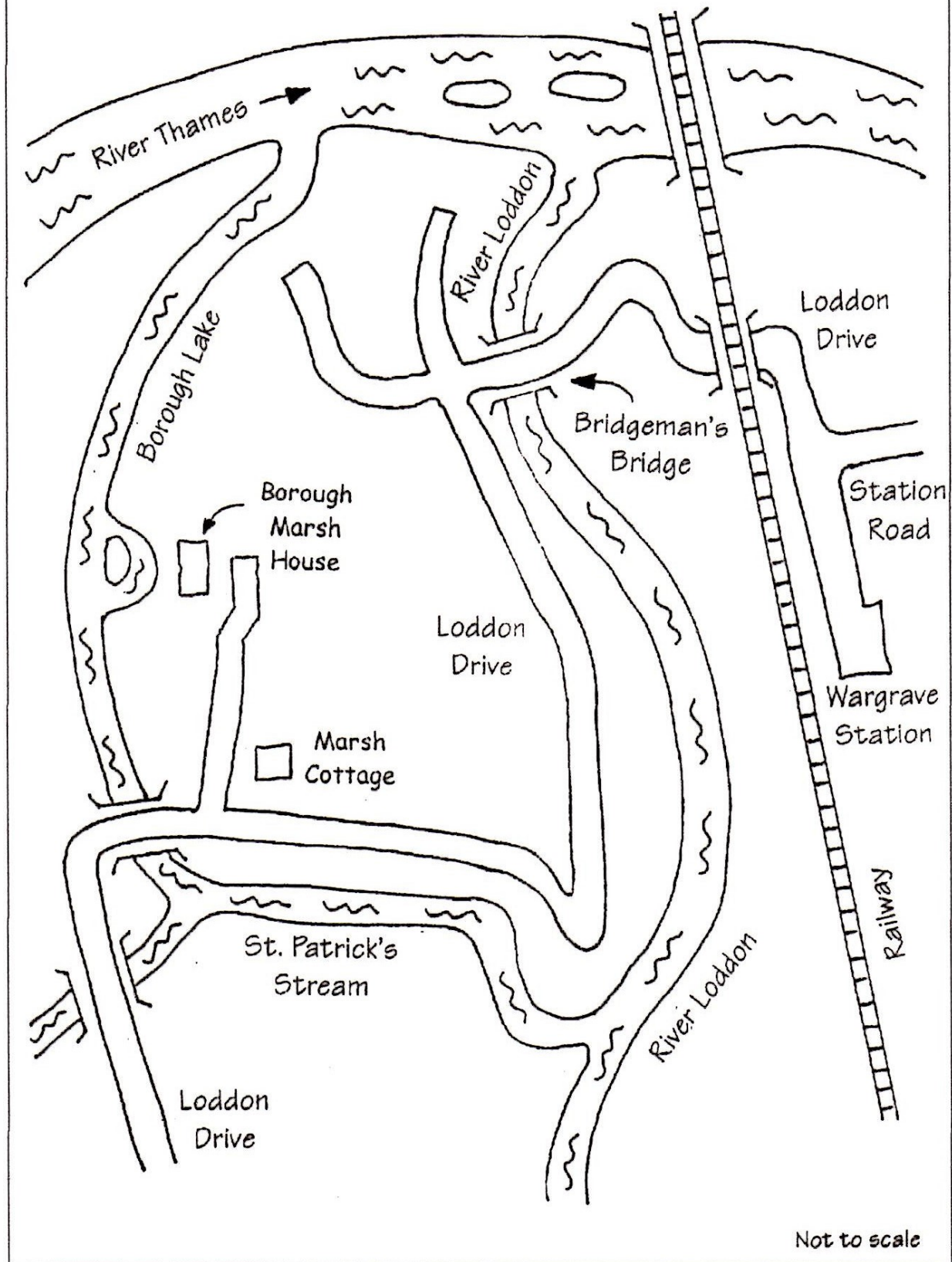
At the end of this path, turn to the right, through the 'kissing gate', into the bottom of Church Street. Immediately to our left is *Treetops*, which was the home of Dr Black, and where the surgery was until the new one was built in Victoria Road. The boat-house was used for a long time as the Mass centre for the village Catholic community, until the Roman Catholic Church in Braybrooke Road was built in the 1960s.



Walk up to the corner of Ferry Lane. On this corner, where just the brick wall remains, was the baker's shop of Harry Barker. In one of the nearby Church Street houses, a Mrs Pritchell used to run a millinery and dressmaking business. Just a little further up is *Gaunt Cottage*, which, in 1800 was the first documented village shop. It is just a few steps from here to return to our starting point, outside the Woodclyffe Hostel. Before leaving, a glance upwards will reveal another firemark on the wall of *River Cottage*.



Walk Three



Walk Three - The Loddon

This walk begins at Wargrave station car park. The area around the River Loddon that this walk covers was largely opened up following the construction of the railway - the line opened in 1857, and Wargrave Station in 1900, being first used for the Wargrave Regatta on August 18th. The station was much used by those who lived on the island formed by the Thames, the Loddon and St. Patrick's Stream. Until the 1930s the only bridges were near Borough Marsh - the artist George Vicat Cole painted a bridge at Wargrave in 1876 which may be one of these. There was a good train service, a station master, Mr Malprus, and two porters (Aubrey and Charlie) - one of the local servant girls marrying one of the engine drivers! For a detailed history of the railway, see 'The Book of Wargrave', pp. 127-132, or 'The Henley on Thames Branch', by Paul Karau.

A 'feature' of this area that occurs from time to time is less pleasant than the scenery. The river is liable to flood - particularly in the winter, although it is not unknown in summertime. The highest recorded flood was in 1894, the worst in living memory being in 1947 and 2014. Despite improvements made by the Environment Agency, this 'feature' still occurs.

Loddon Drive is a private road, and all the property on the island is privately owned. There is no separate footpath for much of this walk, so please take special care to keep safely out of the way of any traffic. To begin the walk, leave the station car park, past the small post-mounted letter box, and turn immediately left down Loddon Drive. At the bottom of the slope, just before turning left under the railway bridge, can be found the old entrance to Bushnell's boatyard, which was straight on at this point. Once through the bridge, there are several houses, including *Channing House* on the left and *Meadswood* on the right-hand side. The latter fronts onto the River Thames, or its backwater, rather than the River Loddon. Perhaps the most unusual of these is *The River House*, which is built over an arm of the backwater, which is thus a large boathouse. On the other side of the road, the large field stretches between the railway and the River Loddon as far as the waterworks road. From aerial photographs and other surveys, this field appears to contain a very old settlement site.

Continue along Loddon Drive, past *Sherwill* and the drive to *The Cabin*, to the entrance to *Cape Farewell*, on the right-hand side. This house, unfortunately, cannot be seen from the road - the access to it being by a private footbridge or by river. It was, however, the first house built at the mouth of the Loddon, and so is of historical interest. It was built originally about 1910 by the late Major Arthur Vigor, on land previously owned by the Church Commissioners. At that time a small stream separated the 'point' from the remainder, so that, even now, the house and end of the garden are in Oxfordshire, and the rest of the garden in Berkshire. *Cape Farewell* was later owned by Lord Broadbridge, sometime Lord Mayor of London, and the Van Zwanenburgs. Mrs Diana Long and her husband acquired it in 1948, living there for 31 years - it then became the home of Mary Cooper (née Long) and her family. In 1963 the garden was divided, and Peter Long built a new house which, although not strictly on the Loddon, is on the 'island'. In 1964 there was a disastrous fire, but the Longs rebuilt it almost as before, although they were not allowed to re-thatch it. It has now been slightly enlarged. The name, which was spelt 'Faeirewell' on old maps, means 'mouth of the beautiful stream' - it being at the point where the Loddon and Thames meet.

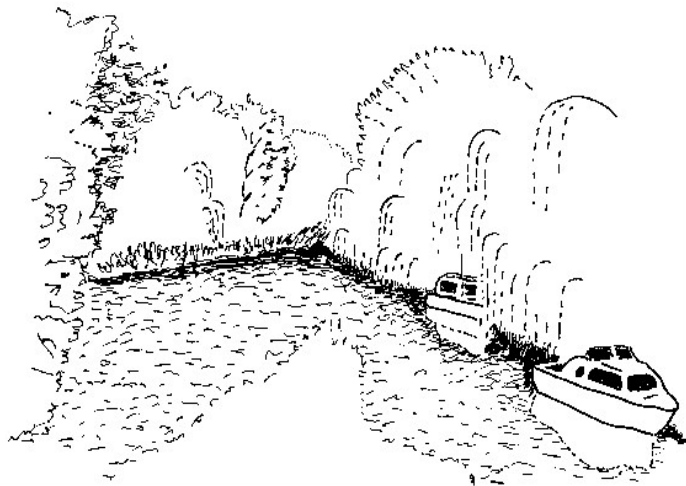
Just a little further along Loddon Drive are *Loddon Court* and *Loddon Acres*. Originally, *Loddon Court* was a houseboat called *The Syrinx*, which was pulled up onto the land, and, like several homes along the Loddon, slowly 'grew'. It was rebuilt in about 1989.

Loddon Acres is built on the garden running down to the river. It dates from about 1906, and, it is thought, was built by a Mr Oppenheimer, then President of the National Rose Society, at a cost of £1000. He made an ornate rose garden of 51 beds, which took the gardener in 1956 three whole days to weed. The house has been enlarged since it was first built, and further building has recently taken place in what was part of the garden. The house was rented by the late Clive Brook, the English film star, for a period following World War I. His daughter, Faith Brook was taught to swim, by the late Len Bushnell, in the Loddon. Faith and her brother, Lyndon, also took up acting as a career.

Continue to the River Loddon, which is crossed by Bridgeman's Bridge. This gained its name from a Mr Bridgeman, who used to live

at *River Close*, on the opposite side. It is now leased by Loddon Residents Ltd, having been built just before World War II. Before it existed, the way to cross was by boat, or even by swimming across. On the left is *Peri*, which replaced another of the houseboats. Like many of these along the Loddon, the houseboat eventually sank. Whilst on the bridge, a good view can be had of *Loddon Manor*, formerly known as *Laughing Water*, which lies on the left bank downstream.

Walk on from the bridge to the small crossroads just beyond, and turn right, past *River Close*. The entrances at the end lead to three



houses which front the Thames rather than the Loddon. They are built on land bought by Marjorie Harding in 1918 from Mrs Vigor and John Sell Cotman. It seems likely that he was a descendant of John Sell Cotman, the nineteenth-century artist, of the Norwich School. During the War, accommodation of some kind was needed for the many 'refugees' from

London. Colin Harding improved them to a degree, and they have been beautified beyond recognition by the present owners.

Through the gate on the right is *Loddon Manor*. The Hardings first came here in 1910, when Milward Harding was rowing down from Oxford. At Shiplake Lock he bought a little houseboat called the *Greta* - probably from the Cotman family, which was then punted up the Loddon. Later he ordered a houseboat from the Army and Navy Stores - the *Nirvana*, built at Reading. The two houseboats were used during the summer months, with access by boat. There were, of course, no main services, so cooking and lighting were by paraffin, and water was pumped up by hand - visitors also being required to help. The hand pump was later replaced by one driven by a petrol engine, and eventually by electric power. In such a setting, life was simple, but enjoyable. The ladies wore graceful dresses, with long skirts

(even when punting) sun bonnets and hats. For the men, white flannels were the order of the day - keeping Wargrave Laundry busy. Much entertaining took place at weekends - the servants, regarded as friends, also entering into the fun. The houseboat can be seen on page 117 of 'The Book of Wargrave'. *Laughing Water* was built between 1918 and 1920. At that time, there were no bridges to this area, so all the building materials had to be brought by river. The original house was a long low thatched building, right on the water's edge. There was a boathouse underneath the building, and the Hardings lived an idyllic life - retiring to London for the winter. The original house burnt down in the 1920s, and again in the late 1930s. At that time, the property was quite extensive, reaching right up to Shiplake Weir. On Marjorie Harding's death in 1972 the house was acquired by Colin Harding, who rebuilt it into its present form and later sold it to Dick and Maggie Goodall.

Behind *Loddon Manor* can be caught a glimpse of *Loddon Banks*. This was built as a small thatched cottage in 1916 as an adjunct to the houseboat *Nirvana*. At that time it was called *Rosemary Cottage*. Later enlarged, it was bought in the 1960s by Mrs Long's daughter, Mary Cooper and her husband John. They rebuilt it as it is now, renaming it *Loddon Banks*. The Coopers sold it on moving to *Cape Farewell*.

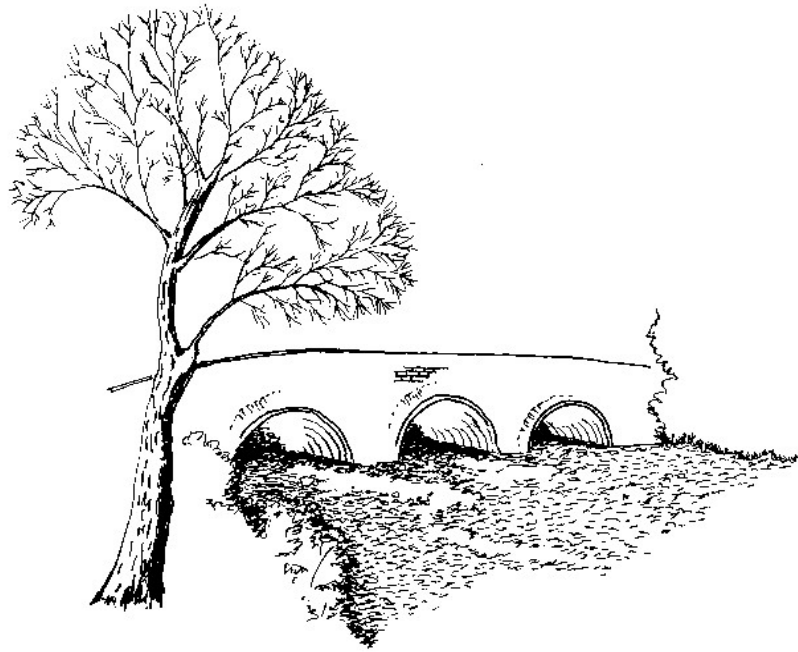
Now leave *Loddon Manor*, return to the crossroads and continue straight ahead. Most of the houses in the next stretch of the walk date from after World War II. Nearly all of them are on the left-hand side, with gardens running down to the Loddon - of which glimpses can be seen as you walk. *Berkley House* was originally called *Witches Stone*, after a real stone where witches were burned in Scotland. It was later enlarged, the main part as an 'A' house, of which the prototype was exhibited at the 'Ideal Home Exhibition'. A little further along is *Down Yonder*. For many years this was occupied by the late Peter Clark, a well-known fashion photographer, until he moved to Church Street, in the village. Next come *Lily Pads*, *Lodona* and *The Boat-house* - the history of which remains to be written.

Eden Cottage, which is next, is a more substantial building built of brick. It was built, about 40 years ago by Dr and Mrs Marshall. Many

of the homes along this stretch of the Loddon started as a houseboat moored alongside a plot of land which was later developed in its place. In the case of *Eden Cottage* the houseboat was called *Cloneed*, and was previously owned by a Mrs Johnson.

The next house is *Wagtails*, followed by *Farthings* which was built in the early 1920s

by Hector and Fanny Seale. Hector was an artist who, it is said, made the plaster friezes in a number of buildings in London, and those around the walls of the rooms in *Farthings*. The first part he built was the studio as his workshop, but being at ground level,



it tended to flood in the winter. As they saved up their 'farthings', the rest of the bungalow was built on stilts to avoid the worst of the floods. Even that was not sufficient to cope with the big flood of 1947, when they had to be evacuated. One of their many cats could not be found, so had to be left behind. It survived in the loft for three weeks - in good heart, if a little thin, when the family returned. In the summer of 1949, *Farthings* was bought by Colonel and Mrs Blaber. Their 16 years there are described as 'happy, hard-working, amusing and, at flood times, worrying years'. Colonel Blaber bred prize-winning Aylesbury ducks, having a flock of between 100 and 200. The river was an ideal setting for them, and they made a picturesque sight. He sold large numbers of day-old ducklings, which were despatched not only to many parts of Great Britain, but also abroad.

From *Farthings* walk on past three more properties for which the history remains to be discovered - *Lianti*, *The Moorings* and *Whynot*, before coming to *Heather Cottage*.

Heather Cottage was built as a tiny thatched cottage before the war. Mrs Johnson, who lived here, used to reach the house using an electric punt, her white cat loving to perch on the front. The next owners were the Henriques, and for many years the house was occupied by Mrs Angela Slazenger.

Downmead was owned by Sir John Witt, and has been extensively rebuilt by his daughter.

Situated on the bend is *Cherry Eyot*. On the far side of the garden is the point where the St. Patrick's Stream joins the Loddon. The present house was rebuilt in 1965 by Mr and Mrs Wilks.

Continue walking, past *River Bend* and *Water's Edge* until *Three Barns* is reached. This was originally, as the name suggests, three barns that belonged to *Borough Marsh House* when it was a farm. They have been converted into the present house, which was used as the setting for a television film about the art historian Sir Anthony Blunt - eventually shown to be the fourth member of the Cambridge spy ring. The then owner, Martin Harley, wrote about the filming in the 'Wargrave News' at the time.

Marsh Cottage is the small brick cottage opposite, and then comes *Barnacre Cottage*, on a privately-owned section of the road. It is likely that this began as two cottages built for farm workers employed on



the Borough Marsh farm. In 1949, Professor Zarnecki dug up some twelfth-century stones here and at Borough Marsh. The remains of two of these can be seen in the gateposts of the cottage. For many years this was the home of the actor Glen Byam Shaw and his wife Angela

Baddeley, well-known as 'Mrs Bridges' in the television series 'Upstairs/Downstairs'.

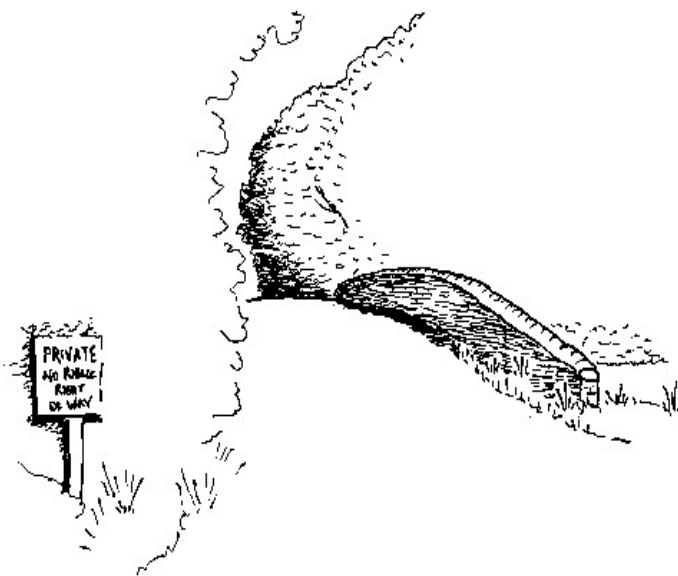
Looking a little further from the corner, along the private road, can be seen the bridge over the stream - built of brick, but not the one in

the picture by George Vicat Cole referred to earlier, as his bridge has three arches. Looking to the far bank of the Thames, Shiplake College can be seen in the distance, alongside the large white private house. On the right, opposite *Barnacre Cottage*, are the gates to *Borough Marsh House*. The present house was built in about 1760, when it was called *Borough Farm*. There is also a reference to 'Burwey Marsh' in 1651. The artist Walter Field lived here in the late nineteenth century, building a studio in 1880. He died here in 1901. Tennyson was a friend of Walter Field, and visited him at Borough Marsh. (Tennyson married a cousin of the wife of the Rector of Shiplake). On the Ordnance Survey map of 1910 both *Borough Farm* and *Barnacre Cottage* are shown, along with mention of some ancient carved (Norman) stones found at Borough Marsh. According to newspaper reports they came from Reading Abbey or possibly the palace of the Bishops of Sarum, at Sonning - perhaps part of a barge-load of stones which was wrecked on its way down river. The stones were presented by the owners of *Borough Marsh House* to a museum, and are now in Reading Museum. In the old days, the house was very isolated, and was reputed to be haunted. It was bought in 1948 by Mr Budgen and Mr Myles - the latter being instrumental in bringing electricity to the island in 1953.

Now, as you walk back along Loddon Drive towards the station, you may see some of the flora and fauna which used to grow in profusion in this area. Meadowsweet, iris, forget-me-not, and in particular the Loddon Lilies (which are best described as large and tall snowdrops) grow here. In the spring the willows are golden, in the autumn there are hips and haws and spindleberries to be found in the hedgerows. The water was very clear - someone who lost her pearls having them quickly recovered by the divers! There used to be many types of fish, and amongst the birds could be seen nightingales, herons, kingfishers and swans.

The River Loddon itself rises near Basingstoke - it is said that the course has altered in the past. It flows through the grounds of *Stratfield Saye*, before passing south east of Reading towards Twyford. Its last stretch, down to the Thames, of course, is where you are now. As you return to the bridge over the Loddon, it may be of interest to know a little more about the 'Loddon Residents Ltd', which was mentioned as you crossed before. In 1945, the bridge which crosses

St Patrick's Stream was in need of urgent repairs, and Judge Wells, of *Borough Marsh House*, suggested that an Association was the best way to deal with this, and other island problems. A meeting was held at *Farthings* on May 5th that year, at which the 'Borough Marsh Property Owners Association' was formed, with Judge Wells, Hector Seale (of *Farthings*) and Mr Theale (of *Green Gates*) as its administrative committee. Twenty subscribers were invited to join, for an annual subscription of £1. There was severe flooding in 1947, in part as a result of lack of maintenance whilst the Thames Conservancy men were serving in the war. The two miles of road and three bridges all were in need of constant repair, and gradually the Association took on responsibility for them. The old Association was absorbed, in 1967, into the new 'Loddon Residents Ltd', which was formed to take over the, by now, heavy responsibility for the area. The Articles were drawn up by two solicitors then living on the, island - Sir John Witt and Mr Farrer-Brown, and the chairman for the first 14 years was Mr Wilks of *Cherry Eyot*. In addition to maintaining the road and bridges, the Association, and later 'Loddon Residents Ltd', monitor all the planning developments in the area, so that the island will retain its unspoilt peaceful character for the future.



We hope that you have enjoyed this walk, and found it interesting. The late Rosemary Harding compiled an album on the Loddon which contains old views of the houseboats and buildings, as well as further information on the Reading Abbey stones.

Walk Four - St. Mary's Church

This walk begins at the lych gate, on Mill Green. The Church and churchyard contain many interesting memorials, of which a sample of the more notable will be mentioned.

A lych gate is provided as a sheltered place where a coffin rests, to await the priest, before it is carried into the church. The lych gate here was erected in 1913, in memory of John Rhodes, of *Hennerton*. Passing through it, a Saxon tub-font lies on the ground on the right-hand side. Next to this, alongside the path, is the gravestone to Sir Morell Mackenzie, his wife Margaret, and their son Henry. Sir Morell, who died in 1892, lived at *The Little House*, in the High Street. In 1863 he had founded the first hospital in the world to specialise in diseases of the throat and nose. Being Queen Victoria's physician, he was called upon in 1887 to examine Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia. He disagreed with the German doctors' diagnosis of cancer of the larynx. Morell Mackenzie prescribed a treatment that so delighted Queen Victoria, Frederick's mother-in-law, that she knighted him. However, Frederick, by now Emperor, died of the cancer a little more than a year later.

Further along, a path leads to the Hannen Room. This stands on the site of a former vicarage. By 1827, the house had fallen into a state of disrepair. Lord Braybrooke, then Lord of the Manor, arranged to exchange it for the house presently called *The Old Vicarage*, and a cash adjustment of £705.14s.10d. The old house was then demolished in 1828. The Hannen Room was built originally as part of one of Mrs Smith's several important benefactions to the village. It was an 'engine room' to house a Tangye engine used to generate electricity to charge batteries, also housed in the building, provided to give the Church its first electric lighting in the early years of the century. In later years it was used as a store for gardeners' materials, until it was converted to be used as a Parish Meeting Room - officially opened by Nigel Hannen on 28th November 1976. Just outside stands a large rectangular tomb for the Cain family. Sir William Cain was Lord of the Manor, and thus held the patronage for the parish, from 1918. The Dowager Lady Cain inherited the patronage in 1924, and it passed to Sir Ernest Cain in 1957.

Standing on the corner of the path is an unusual brick-built vault, the Hannen Columbarium. This was designed in 1906 by Sir Edwin Lutyens - a friend of the Hannen family. The Columbarium is a mausoleum built of, it is said, Elizabethan bricks. It has a domed ceiling, lined with ceramic slip tiles over brick barrel vaults. Inside may be seen the various compartments for the storage of remains. The door itself is made of stone - the key is in the shape of a crucifix - the lock being revealed with the aid of the other end of the key. The Columbarium was restored in 1989 - the style of its tiling being more suited to a Mediterranean climate than the English rain.

Return to the main path, turn left as far as the main wall of the church. In the corner in front here is a large stone tomb to Francis Piggott, who died in 1781, and his wife Ann Piggott, who died aged 92 in 1827. Francis had been a pewterer in the City of London, (pewter being an important material for drinking vessels, plates etc at the time) becoming Master of the Pewterers' Company in 1770, the year he married Ann. On the wall near here are three stones to other members of the Piggott family. Two are to Ann's older brother, Robert, who founded the village schools (and to which she also left a benefaction). The other is to Mary, Robert's first wife - no memorial has been found to his second wife Elinor, who also died before him. These three stones appear on photographs of the Church before the 1914 fire, and seem to have been placed to record the location of graves near here that were covered in the extension to the Church in 1849. Also in this corner is a tomb to another family who appear in Wargrave records from at least the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries - the A'Bears, after whom A'Bears' Corner is named.

Continue along the path, where between the two doors into the Church will be seen two matching long polished grey stone tombstones. Next to these is one to Frances Mary Fuller-Maitland, quoted in some hymn-books as part author of 'Oft in Danger, Oft in Woe'. About halfway between the path here and the churchyard wall is the gravestone to Mrs Harriette Smith, and her husband William. She was born in 1825, the daughter of the Revd. James Hitchings, Vicar of Wargrave from 1826 to 1850. She lived in *The Old Vicarage* (as it now is), and *Orchard House*, after her father died. On marrying in 1858 she moved to London, but they returned to Wargrave in 1869 to

the house which, four years later, they renamed *Woodclyffe*. In the first decade of the twentieth century she gave various benefactions to the village, most of which have the name Woodclyffe. She died in 1912. More details of her life and benefactions will be found in 'The Book of Wargrave'. Further over, towards the wall, will be found the grave of the Young family, who have inhabited Hare Hatch from the eighteenth century.

Walking towards the porch you will pass the Rhodes tomb which was moved outside the church, having been inside for many years at the east end of the south aisle. The sides and plinth of the tomb are inscribed with memorials to several members of the Rhodes of *Hennerton*. Before entering the church, there is an unusual double-sided gravestone standing a short way from the path,



close to the tree. It is often stated that Madame Tussaud is buried in Wargrave Churchyard, but in fact she is buried in Chelsea. The stone here is to Elizabeth Tussaud, whose parents were William and Amelia Elliott, of Wargrave. She had married Victor Tussaud, the grandson of the Madame Tussaud who founded the famous waxworks.

Now enter the Church. Although Wargrave is mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086, the first document to mention the Church is a charter dated 1121 in which Henry I took it from the Abbey of Mont St Michel in Normandy to give to Reading Abbey - so there must have been a Church here before that date. It is possible that parts of the north wall, opposite the door by which we have entered, date from shortly after Reading Abbey acquired it - the previous building was most likely wooden. The next event of note was the consecration in 1363 of John Bokyngham (or Buckingham) as Bishop of Lincoln - why this took place here is not recorded.

From the centre aisle, the main features of the Church can be seen.

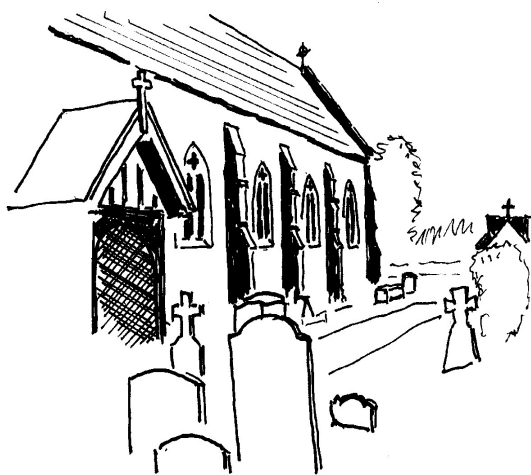
The oldest part is the north wall. After the fire in 1914, the plaster which the Victorians had added as an 'improvement' over this wall was removed. This revealed the old stone window arches, which are bisected by the later windows. These date, probably, from the early nineteenth century, when the nave was heightened, and the roof line raised. The apex of the earlier roof came to just above the crown of the brick arch, at the base of the tower. In 1849 the Church was widened by the addition of the south aisle - a gallery being removed at the same time. In order to make room for this, several graves had to be removed - the stones for some were incorporated into the floor of the church, whilst others were set into the churchyard wall. The main structure of the church, however, dates from after the 1914 fire. This was discovered in the early hours of the morning of Whit-Monday that year. It was strongly rumoured, although not proven, that the fire was caused by the suffragettes - certainly the report of the Diocesan architect of the time, G H Fellowes-Pryne, refers to the fire having been begun in several places in the church. The fire burnt with such ferocity that all the timber was destroyed, and much of the stonework rendered unsafe by the heat, so that the aisle pillars and south wall had to be replaced. The beams in the roof were of larger section than might have been otherwise expected in order to brace the retained north wall. As a result of the fire many memorials were destroyed, along with the stained glass windows. Fortunately, neither the Church registers - dating from 1538 - nor the Church plate were destroyed - the latter including an Elizabethan chalice and paten, and a silver-gilt French chalice inscribed 'Formerly the property of Marie Louise, wife of Napoleon'. (A detailed account of the Church fire appears in 'The Book of Wargrave'). The rebuilt Church was consecrated on 22nd July 1916. Although it was wartime, the opportunity was taken to extend the church, the chancel and south aisle both being lengthened by one bay at the eastern end. This again involved taking part of the churchyard, but one large and heavy tomb was left *in situ*, and so the Rhodes tomb remained inside the church. More recently, it has been moved outside, close to the south door.

Turning now to the west end, enter the bottom of the tower. On the wall here will be found a watercolour of the Church as it appeared in 1847 and a photograph showing the devastation caused by the 1914

fire. Above, on the wall, hang the bent clappers from the bells which, together with the clock mechanism, fell to the ground - the tower of course acting like a chimney to the fire. The small bell was cast from some of the salvaged bell metal - from the rest were made medallions presented to each of the bell-ringers at the time. The new peal of eight bells, by Mears and Stainbank, replaced the six destroyed dating from 1668-88, some of which had been made by Henry Knight of Reading. The font is made of chalk, and is thought to date from the fifteenth century. In the nineteenth century it was of a style out-of-fashion, and so was discarded to the north-west corner of the churchyard. The font that replaced it, however, was destroyed in the fire, and so the old chalk font was retrieved and replaced in the baptistry, although has now been moved to the east end of the south aisle. The carved wooden cover that hung over the font was given in memory of Arthur Henry Austen-Leigh, vicar from 1890 to 1911 and remains in the baptistry. It is suspended from a chain and large brass sphere inscribed 'The gift of the Rt Honble The Countess of Preston to the Parish Church of Wargrave 1741'. This was originally part of a large ten-branched chandelier that can be seen in the nave in photographs of the Church interior around 1900. The tower itself is an inner tower of chalk, with the outer being of brick. The outer structure largely survived the fire, although some repairs had to be made to the top using special small Dutch bricks. It dates from 1635, but is not the first tower that St Mary's had. In 1634 a petition was presented to the Bishop, signed by many of the prominent members of the village. They asked for permission to rebuild the tower 'as the tower formerly standing in the middle of the Church' had 'fallen down', and they wished to build a new (the present) tower 'in a more convenient place'.

As we leave the tower, on the south side are oak panels in memory of Sir William Cain and Revd. R A Lowry, listing the vicars of Wargrave. On the west wall north of the tower is another set of oak memorial panels to the Hitchings and Smith families, in replacement of the east window memorial which had been destroyed in the fire. Walking up the nave, the ancient window arches can be seen, and three windows between the doorway and the chapel. The middle of the windows is dedicated to members of the Remnant family of Bear Place, and shows St. James and St. Frances. The chapel in the north

transept was, pre-fire, granted by the Bishop of Salisbury, in whose diocese Wargrave was until 1836, to John Hamilton, and later the Ximenes and Nicholl families, of Bear Place. There are five memorials to the Nicholl family on the west wall of the chapel, as well as four to the Ximenes on the west and north walls. A bronze plate on the next pillar records that the pulpit was given in memory of John Adolphus Young - a Hare Hatch family from 1741 until the present. He died in 1862 and would have known the original octagonal Jacobean pulpit that stood here. The 1916 pulpit is also oak, octagonal and of Jacobean design.



The nave floor that has just been walked along is made of ten old gravestones. Furthest from here are two to Sarah Maynard (1811) and Mary Ann Maynard (1809. Next are two black ones to Mary Hill (1802) and Joseph Jekyll of Wargrave Hill (the house now called *Wargrave Manor*). Next come stones to Francis Webb and John Montague. The next stone (i.e. fourth from the

step) is to Martha Piggott (1755) (née Turner) the wife of William Piggott. She was the mother of Robert and Ann who established the schools in the village, and herself of a Wargrave family who owned *Turner's Farm* (now *Hamilton House*). The next stone is to the Hitchings family, including Revd. James, former vicar. The remaining two stones are to Raymond White (1844) and Edward Swift, although the new dais covers these.

Turn now to face the altar and the oak rood screen donated by Sir William and Lady Cain in 1921 - early views of the post-fire Church show the nave without the screen. The screen was carved by, or some say for, Mr W Maidment of Wargrave, and the panels include the names of those from the village who died in both the 1914-18 and 1939-45 wars. Passing through the screen, the organ can be seen on the left-hand side. This was made by J Walker and Sons in 1917. The Great organ has five stops, the Swell has eight stops, and the Pedal organ four stops (of which three are derived from other ranks). It was rebuilt in the early 21st century, when the historically significant

‘action’ and console were replaced by a modern, detached, electric console and ‘action’. Moving on to the altar rail, the east window can be clearly seen. It was given by Sir William and Lady Cain in memory of those who died in the 1914-18 war, and was made James Powell of Whitefriars Glassworks (who made most of the decorated glass windows). The centrepiece shows Christ crucified on a rustic cross, with two angels below - one holding a chalice, whilst the other (left) holds a paten. In the bottom left are portrayed St. George and St. Andrew, with St. Oswald above, whilst bottom right are St. Patrick and St. David, with St. Edmund above. Below the window is a stone reredos, in memory of E Walters Bond, of *Wargrave Court*. In front of this stands the altar which is made of oak. The embroidered altar frontals are mostly twentieth century, but the dark red velvet one bearing the words ‘Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus’ is late nineteenth century. Although red is the liturgical colour for Whitsuntide (the time of the fire) this frontal had been removed to the vicarage, and so survived. The altar cross is made of brass and dated June 1887; being further inscribed that it was ‘saved from the fire which destroyed the Church 1st June 1914’.

Turn now to the south (right), where the processional cross may be seen, although the silver cross section is not always in position. It is marked with the name of Amy Sturges. Pass on through the wooden screen to enter the Rhodes Chapel - so called because this is where the Rhodes tomb stood before it was moved outside the church to create more space. The tomb had originally been outside the church but in the rebuilding following the 1914 fire the east end of the aisle was extended, thus enclosing the tomb within the church. On the wall near here is a grey stone tablet in memory of Lionel Platt of the 17th Lancers, which also bears the Royal Flying Corps badge. It records that he died ‘in an aerial combat’ over France in 1917.

Descend the steps from the chapel, and on the right, in front of the screen, will be seen the large brass eagle lectern. It was given to the Church by Mrs Smith in memory of her mother, Harriet Hitchings who died on 24th March 1880. On the base is engraved ‘This lectern was saved from the fire which destroyed the Church June 1st 1914’ - it is reported that it took four men to lift it. Continuing along the south aisle, there are two windows of interest on the left. The third window from the east end is made with glass removed from the Hare Hatch Mission Room in 1967. It was originally installed there in

1951 in memory of Mary, wife of Commander Oliver Young of Hare Hatch. The next window, designed by John Hayward, is in memory of Hugh M McCrea, for some years the village doctor with his brother John. The left-hand panel shows St. Luke, whilst the right-hand one shows various medical professions and associated instruments, beneath a cypher based on Dr McCrea's initials. Also to be seen on this section of the wall are four memorials to the Youngs of Hare Hatch - Adolphus William and his family, Oliver, Horace and Mabel Ann. The first and third of these have Australian connections (New South Wales and South Australia respectively). Along by the doorway will be seen a bronze plaque in memory of Edward Joseph Hill Jekyll, of *Wargrave Hill*. His son, as with members of the Young family, joined the Royal Navy, and died when his ship was wrecked in New Zealand. Before leaving the Church, there are two stones of interest facing, on the west wall. The large oval white one is to Jane Leigh Perrot (née Cholmeley) of *Scarletts* who died in 1836. She was the aunt of Jane Austen. To the right of this is a black marble tablet in memory of Arthur Austen-Leigh, son of Arthur Henry Austen-Leigh, the vicar from 1890-1911.

Now leave the church, and turn to the right, where, on the left, there stands an unusual stone tomb, supported on metal feet at its corners on a stone pedestal. This, the inscription tells us, contains the remains of James Leigh-Perrot of *Scarletts*, and Jane his wife. He died in 1817, she, as noted above, in 1836. Cross the grass to the west side of the churchyard, where the graves of several members of the Ximenes family will be found. The family lived at *Bear Place*, and later *Bear Ash*. Their antecedent, Sir Moris Ximenes, had founded the Wargrave Rangers in 1801, a local militia that lasted until 1814, when it became part of the 1st Berkshire Yeomanry Cavalry. Old views of this side of the Church show the river inlet near here, and at times the area used to flood.

Continue to walk around the church, and into the north-west corner of the churchyard. Here, surrounded by iron rails, are seven graves of the Bond family. During the early part of the twentieth century they lived at *Wargrave Court*, Frank Walters Bond having bought it from Lord Braybrooke. His son, Henry Coulson Bond gave the village the cemetery in the chalk pit, and donated the land on which the Piggott

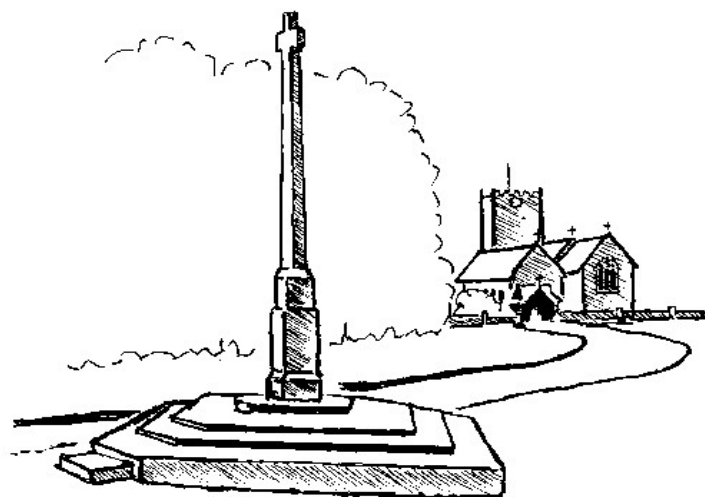
School was built in the 1930s. The granite stones with their Celtic crosses are unlike most others in this churchyard.

Return to the main path by the tower where, against the north wall will be found a relatively upright stone tomb, surrounded by iron railings, to the Nind family. Philip Nind was vicar of Wargrave from 1784 to 1815, and he was followed by his eldest son Philip Trant Nind from 1815 until 1826. Moving along to the doorway, the ancient archway here indicates that this section of the wall is the oldest part of the Church - the author of 'The Victoria County History of Berkshire' considered it was probably built in the twelfth century. Pass the new extension and the vestry door. Looking back, the Church clock can be seen. The post-fire mechanism by Gillett and Johnson was the gift of Mr Rankin. The numeral dial was reused in the same place - views of the Church in the early nineteenth century show a clock to be lower on the tower. Before reaching the gateway, just to the left of the path, and third from the gate, is the grave of John Worthy, the only Wargrave centenarian recorded in the churchyard. Across the other side of the path, near the wall will be found the grave of Revd. Simon Sturges, who became vicar in 1859. He founded the parish magazine in 1861. On 3rd December 1889 he left the vicarage, late, to take prayers at the Piggott School on School Hill. On arriving, he took his place at the prayer desk, heard the children sing a psalm, concluded the prayers, and fell forward. He died ten minutes later.

Now leave the churchyard, and follow the path close by the hedge to the first gateway. The driveway leads to *Wargrave Court*, of which the oldest parts date from the fifteenth century. It has a timber frame of such quality and size that it must have been built by someone of ample means - it has even been suggested that it may have been a manor house. Mill Green actually belongs to *Wargrave Court*, although it is rented by the Church for a peppercorn rent. Walk along the path towards the war memorial, and as you do so notice that the land on the right rises slightly. Standing on top of the rise and looking towards the memorial various bumps and dips can be noted. These are the same as seen on the site of medieval streets which, when excavated, show a house below each hump. It is very likely that this is an early site for the village settlement - when or why it was moved is unknown, although it might have been a consequence of the plague.

Continue to the War Memorial. This was designed by Lutyens, who also designed the Cenotaph in Whitehall. Lutyens was a friend of the Hannen family - the cross here is a particularly fine example. A roll of honour was compiled in 1990 by the Wargrave British Legion, with biographical notes on those who died in each of the World Wars. The notes are included in 'The Second Book of Wargrave'. As the memorial has weathered somewhat, additional stones have been laid on which the names are more easily read.

Walk back towards the lych gate along the path. Although on the Sunday after the Church fire a service was held in the open air on the area in front of the lych gate, a 'tin tabernacle' was soon erected on the ground to the left of the path, and services took place there until the Church was rebuilt.



We hope that you have enjoyed these walks and found them interesting. To all those who have been mentioned in the narrative, we trust that no offence is caused, and that the notes are accurate. The Society would be delighted to receive further information, especially on those properties for which details are lacking, or by way of correction.