

Wargrave Local History Society

Latest News - December 2019

Recollections and Ramblings

Wargrave Local History Society held its Christmas Party in December, when members enjoyed home-made festive fare and mulled wine created by committee member Wendy Smith.

The evening also included a presentation of "Recollections and Ramblings" by renowned local photographer Tim Hodges. He began by explaining how the Society played a part in his taking up photography as a profession. Tim had entered two pictures in a photographic competition, and the one of Mill Green, Wargrave, in the snow had won. He was invited to party held by the Society's President, Lord Remnant, and presented him with a copy of the winning image. This led to Lord Remnant asking if Tim would take the official photographs at a reunion of the Earl Marshal's 1953 Gold Staff Officers to be held at the House of Lords. Apart from images of the 'below stairs staff' there would be a formal portrait of the Gold Staff Officers - who had been escorts at the Coronation in 1953 - with the Queen and Prince Philip. That went well, and at the next reunion, 10 years later, Tim was again asked to take the official photographs - there were now less Gold Staff Officers able to attend, so the event included those who had served as pages at the Coronation. Tim commented that the Queen is a lovely person to take photographs of.

Tim had also taken a picture of the House of Lords seen from across the Thames, and when he discovered that the House of Lords gift shop did not have anything similar, arranged for them to stock copies of his photograph, which sold well - he was now a professional photographer.

Most people who pass through Wargrave will be familiar with its buildings etc, but Tim observed that most will be unaware of how good a community Wargrave is. Very few people choose to leave the village once they have moved here. Examples of this were the parties held on Mill Green to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee, and her 90th birthday. Tim had captured the spirit of both events with photographs taken from the top of the church tower. Tim entered one of these in a Portrait of Britain competition - and it was adjudged worthy of a double page spread in the resultant book.

Other community activities that Tim portrayed were the Omani evening - part of the 1985 Village Festival, the activities of the Wargrave Adventurers Group (young and 'not so young' ascending of Snowdon, or cycling or riding the Ridgeway), the "Mini-Marathon" and the Wargrave and Shiplake Regatta, the latter no longer including the 'greasy pole' event. There was even an "Alternative Village Festival", which had featured a water-less version of the Henley Regatta - teams in linked boxes representing the boats running backwards over straw bales!

A series of photographs Tim had taken from a micro-light gave a different view of the village, whilst images of the area around the rivers Loddon and Thames recorded the floods that have affected the area from time to time.

Tim then showed what he called "Wargrave's Hidden Secret". The stones of a Jersey Temple had been gifted to a one-time governor of the State, and re-erected on ground over-looking the Thames. The site now also includes a distinctive iconic house designed by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Tim had captured both on film during a Society visit many years ago.

The last collection of 'recollections were of various "'village characters". The first was a thoughtful John Ratings, former vicar, taking part in the Wargrave Theatre Workshop's production of Measure for Measure. Others included Oliver Cock - the first Olympic canoe coach; Robert Morley, the actor; David Imrie, the village newsagent who, as a Chelsea pensioner was taking part in the Remembrance Day parade; Theresa May at the unveiling of the Flying Fortress crew memorial, Jim Waldron - who campaigned for a long time for its creation; Paul Daniels (one in which Tim was experimenting with a new high-speed flash, captured the cascading cards as Paul shuffled them); John Connell, the local antique shop owner; Alan Richardson, the village hairdresser, Douglas Goddard, former district councillor, village pharmacist Fred Freeman, and Society committee members at a Festival Fete 'many years ago !

Members enjoyed spotting many other familiar faces - present and past - in Tim's portrayal of the village over the last few decades.

The Society's latest publication - A Brief History of Wargrave, outlining aspects of village history, illustrated with over 40 photographs from the Society archive, is now available at Society meetings, or at Newberry's in Twyford.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday January 14th Aldon Ferguson will recall The Role of Women at Danesfield and Phyllis Court in Photographic Interpretation in World War 2, whilst on Tuesday, February 11th Catherine Sampson will give an insight into Georgian Cooking.