

Wargrave Local History Society

Latest News - March 2009

Annual General Meeting - Down Memory Lane

The March meeting of the Wargrave Local History Society began with the AGM, when the past year's activities were reviewed, the committee for the coming year elected, and details of the 2009-10 programme given to members.

For the rest of the evening, John Luker, Geoff Brooks and John Sumner - three long time residents of the village - took us Down Memory Lane, with their recollections of Wargrave in time past. With stories about the old wells, pig sties or forge, to incidents on the river, in the fire brigade, or recollections of villagers such as Dr Mc Crea, Bill Wyatt and Bill Collyer, members were entertained and informed. John Luker showed a dongola paddle, which John Sumner told us about - it having been made at Wyatt's boatyard (where he worked) for Hugh van Zwanenberg and Mike Symons just before the 1952 Olympics. Geoff Brooks recalled the fire at Laughing Water, on Loddon Drive, when after an hour or two fighting the blaze, Bill Collyer - in charge of the Wargrave brigade - said his feet hurt somewhat. Geoff had then noticed that Bill had his boots on the wrong feet! He also recalled that in the war, his father had the task of removing rubbish from an officer's club at Hennerton. In due course he received the payment - and a duplicate a week or so later. The second was sent back, but then returned to his Father - with a note that 'the army doesn't make mistakes' - both cheques were then cashed! John Luker recalled that boys would swim the Thames - or 'some silly people' even jump in from the railway bridge. On one occasion, some other lads had encouraged him to swim across, even though he could not swim properly. He made it to the Shiplake bank - and back again - and all was well - till someone told his Mother! John had also brought along some old maps, scrap books and photo albums, which members enjoyed being able to study.

The next meeting is on Tuesday, April 14th, when Angela Spencer-Harper is returning to tell us this time about historical artefacts found in south-east Oxfordshire, as recorded in her latest book *The Old Place*, whilst on Tuesday, May 12th, Stephen Loyd will tell us about Ruscombe Wood, and the natural history and conservation work being done there.