

# Wargrave Local History Society

**Latest News - March 2022**

## **A.G.M. and Snippets of Local History**

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Wargrave Local History Society's March meeting began with a period of silent reflection as a mark of respect for the Society's President, Lord Remnant, who had died a few days earlier. This was followed by the AGM when the past year was reviewed. Initially, meetings were held on-line, but for the autumn and winter they returned to the Old Pavilion on the Recreation Ground, in time to mark the Society's 40th birthday.. A committee for the coming year was elected, and details of the 2022-23 programme were given.

Following the formal business, there was a look at "Snippets of Local History". The Society archive includes scrap books of newspaper articles about Wargrave from the 1960s onwards, and the presentation looked at examples from the 1970s and 80s.

The cuttings ranged from the light hearted, such as a knobbly knees contest judged by the popular singer Mary Hopkin, who lived in Wargrave then, to the more serious, such as issues with the sewage works.

The first topic was something that remains a problem – car parking. In November 1975, the difficulty was in East View Road, whilst a few years later inconsiderate parking there actually blocked in the milkman whilst doing his round!



The first part of the Elizabeth Court elderly persons flats was built in the early 1970s, being added to a few years later. In 1976 the papers reported the addition to the site of a new surgery for the Wargrave doctors, which still serves the village. Previously patients were seen at the doctor's house – in Church Street, or before that in School Lane. Originally the new facility had 2 surgeries, but it was later extended.

An unusual hobby was featured in the newspaper in 1978. The Quantrill family collected veteran and vintage bicycles. Daughter Zoe and sons Neil and Barry were seen with their father, Terry and some of their collection, which included penny-farthings. One of the latter Terry rode in several of the Village Festival parades

Other events that were reported were the – then annual - Wargrave Flower and Produce Show, which in 1979 had been “running for over 30 years”, and the ‘Berkshire Best Kept Village’ competition, which the papers recorded in 1981 had been won yet again by Wargrave – the village having won the trophy on 4 out of the 5 past occasions when it had been held.

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The village schools, of course, featured from time to time. In 1980, two Wargrave girls, both pupils at the Piggott School, had won first and second prizes in a national essay competition about health and human biology, whilst in 1982 there was a proposal to merge the infant and junior schools on the School Hill site. The governors were split on the idea, according to the headlines, the report noting that "there is a strong lobby in the village who do not want the schools merged".



A different provision for the village’s young people was the building of a youth centre in 1981. As well as local fund-raising there was a large anonymous donation. The centre was well used, so in 1984 an extension was added, the £9,500 cost being met by the then Sultan of Oman, who owned Wargrave Manor - the extension being named 'The Sultan Room' in his honour. Although a youth club no longer meets there, the building now houses the Wargrave Pre-School.

The news in August 1982 was of an armed robbery at one of the village post offices. Three men raided the then Upper Wargrave post office in Victoria Road, stealing about £1,700, the 'teenage shop assistant' being held at knifepoint. "They were quite good looking, but I hate them now for what they have done, said the girl", according to the paper.

The sewage treatment works near the River Loddon has given rise to various issues over the years. In July 1984 the problem was the smells from lorries in the High Street passing to and from the treatment works, the owners of the butcher's and greengrocer's shops saying “it is most off-putting to customers”. There were also smells from the works itself, whilst in 1988 the pollution from the works into the river led the Wargrave Resident's Association to take legal action against Thames Water - one of the first of such cases - and they won - with a substantial penalty imposed on the company.

Contentious issues in the 1980s related to the chalk pit, off Braybrooke Road. In 1980 there was a plan to 'fill in' the chalk pit in Braybrooke Road. The land was given to the village in the 1920s for use as a burial ground. Many villagers were concerned at the thought of large lorries bringing waste into the village, creating a "dust bowl in summer and a quagmire in winter", and the dangers posed to pupils walking to and from the Piggott School along Braybrooke Road, or the "serious hazard" of pollution to the water source along the Twyford Road. At the end of the decade, the church arranged to sell the chalk pit land to developer Berkeley Homes for £1,125,000, subject to planning permission. Wokingham District Council received over 500 objections, and the planning committee unanimously rejected the application – the area subsequently becoming a nature reserve.



Back to something more light hearted - a pancake race on Mill Green used to take place on Shrove Tuesday – the papers noting in February 1986 that it was on somewhat slippery icy ground. The event was initiated by the Wargrave Women's Institute, but later it was organised by the Wargrave Women's Club. The winner's trophy was a copper warming pan - now in the Wargrave Local History Society archive collection. A village activity that still takes place, however, is the Wargrave Luncheon Club, which provides a hot meal for elderly village residents, a local paper reporting on its 15th birthday party in 1989.

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