

Wargrave Local History Society

Latest News - September 1998

Wargrave from 11th - 20th Century

For their September meeting, the Wargrave Local History Society had an illustrated talk on *Wargrave from 11th - 20th Century* by Peter Delaney.

The village has a long history. The first written evidence is in a charter dated 1061 of Edward the Confessor. Although this document is questionable, the village certainly existed by that time. The Domesday survey, completed in 1086 refers to Wargrave, with the Manor of Wargrave belonging to the King. Before 1066 it had belonged to Queen Edith, Edward the Confessor's wife. At the time of Domesday, Wargrave's 5000 acres had a population of about 250 people. Valued at £27/6/8d, Wargrave was one of the richest and most populous places in East Berkshire. Windsor Forest then came as far as the Thames at Wargrave, and weirs on the river being surrounded by groves (woodland areas) is probably how the village gained its name.

The earliest site of the village was probably the area of Mill Green. The Manor belonged to the Bishop of Winchester again from 1199 until the 16th Century. The bishop had the land cleared, fenced and ditched, and in 1218 was granted the right to hold a market at Wargrave. By 1225, Wargrave was recorded as being a borough, with its own bailiffs and jurors. A new village was developed, however, in the 13th Century around the crossroads, and most of the houses around Mill Green were abandoned. Timber Cottage, which survives from the 14th Century, is probably the oldest ordinary house in the village.

The village settlement developed in both directions along the High Street, in the 17th and 18th Centuries. By the early 19th Century, the village had begun to spread to the east, so that by 1837 there were houses up the hill towards the workhouse (the present site of Elizabeth Court). The rest of Victoria Road dates from the second half of the century, with some later infill. The Highfield Park area is post-war housing, the roadway having originally been laid for a wartime army camp.

Former farmland north of Victoria Road was developed as housing in the late 1960's and 1970's. The area towards the River Loddon was built up early in this century. Many of the dwellings around the Loddon itself stem from 1930's development - initially as houseboats. The medieval part of the village is now a conservation area.

The Church is first mentioned in 1121, when it is clear 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 building dates from the rebuilding following a 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 among those remaining. The fields

around the village were mainly 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 meadows for grazing cattle.

The origin of the village schools dates back over 200 years - already in existence in 1796 when Robert Piggott wrote his will. He died on August 30th 1798. The Piggotts were an old Wargrave family and Robert established two schools, one for boys and the other for girls, in the High Street. His sister, Anne, left a further large sum for the schools when she died in 1827. The three Wargrave schools are Church of England foundations - and are all descended from the original foundation. Another village benefactor was Mrs Harriette Smith, who gave the hall, hostel, almshouses, allotments and recreation ground - all named Woodclyffe, after her home.

For a slightly more detailed version of this synopsis, read [The Potted History of Wargrave](#).
