

Wargrave Local History Society

Latest News - January 2005

Waltham St Lawrence

Over a number of years, Margaret Railton has been able to collect illustrations of Waltham St Lawrence from many of the 'long standing' residents of the village. By means of a selection of these - mostly dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, she was able to take us on a 'walk' from north to south through the village as it was 100 years ago. We began by the Church - which in the early 1800s shared its Vicar with the parish of Wargrave - travelling to Waltham on horseback to take services. At that time there was no church wall, just a post and rail fence. Each section was paid for by a different property in the village, who was responsible for its upkeep. The wall was erected in the 1860s by Mr Lawrence, a local builder.

Close by, the present Neville Hall had been a village school, where the 'class of 1890' were to be seen in their 'best bib and tucker'. Alongside stood a wheelwright's shop - run by several generations of the Mortimer family. When Mr Mortimer, also the local undertaker, had a new house built, he had his own coffin moved there 'ready for use'!. The Bell - which began as a Wealden house in about 1400, was given to the village by Ralph Newberry, a London stationer who lived at Beenhams., on condition that the rent was used to help the most poor and needy of the village. It has always been a focal point for the village. Close to the Church is Church Farm - by 1900 the 1604 farm house was in poor condition, and so was replaced by the present house. Views from the church tower taken in 1897 and in relatively recent times showed that this part of Waltham St Lawrence had changed very little - a row of elm trees that had disappeared being the most conspicuous change.

Moving to the south from the ancient pound, we saw the blacksmith's, forge, Watkins Farm, the post office and stores run by Mr and Mrs Palmer, Ivybank Farm (noticeable was the change in the number of windows in this house!). At Paradise Crossroads - where now the village war memorial stands - all was quiet and peaceful. Along Broadmoor Road (where is to be found Waltham's only remaining shop) is The Star - the group of cyclists pictured here were the same as had been seen outside The Bell earlier!

Moving further southwards towards Shurlock Row, was Hewett's brewery. The water supply was good here, and Hewett's had over 60 public houses as outlets for their beer, including the Royal Oak at Shurlock Row and the Fox and Hounds on the Straight Mile locally. The brewery, therefore, gave a lot of employment at the Shurlock Row end of the village, until it closed around 1911. In Shurlock were several businesses - Mortimer's Stores, the Candy Store, opposite, Mr Reading the butcher, and a laundry at the White House. The White Horse pub later became the post office and telephone exchange, whilst Mr Spackman's cycle shop and petrol pump was sold in 1961 to Mr Eaton - who also now owns the garage in Broadmoor Road. In the 1980s most of these businesses were sold, and the properties became private houses - the Royal Oak, The White Hart, King the butcher and Eatons garage being all that remains. At the southern end of Shurlock Row is the small All Saints church - no longer in use - whilst across the main road was the entrance to

Billingsbere. The house here was built in 1567 for Henry Neville, Lord of the Manors for Wargrave, Waltham St Lawrence and Warfield. His descendant, Lord Braybrooke, decided to make Audley End as his 'seat'. The house was sold in 1924, the house demolished, and a modern one built on the site in 1954.
