

# Wargrave Local History Society

## Latest News - March 2003

### Annual General Meeting - Memories of Wargrave

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 2003-4 programme given to members.

The main part of the evening was a sharing of memories of those who had lived in the village for some time, on '*How Wargrave has changed over the last 50 years*'. Lord Remnant, the Society President, began by recollecting his time in the village. His family had moved to Hare Hatch just over 100 years ago, moving to Bear Place in the 1930s, and then to Bear Ash in 1980. In his grandfather's time, the household had 6 servants 'inside' and 6 employees outside, apart from the farm - now there is just one part timer and some help in the garden. Three generations of the Hopwood family served the Remnants - from 'Hoppy', the groom of the 1930s who would take them all over the county by pony and trap, to a 'daily' who still worked for the family till 5 years ago. Bear Place also featured on the official Royal Mail route for the local postman with "7 am -Tea and Biscuits at Bear Place"!!

Peter Johnson, manager of Lord Remnant's farm for 20+ years, recalled that when such people retired, they lived rent free for life - and that some 19 cottages were thus connected to Bear Place and the farm. At least 15 of them have since been sold and 'gentrified'. The farm was 300 acres, and supported a herd of Guernsey cattle until 1979 - there were 1500 head of dairy cattle within 3 miles then - now there are thought to be no livestock on farms in the parish.

The Church has long been a strong part of the community, and this continues under John Ratings - now with a team of leaders, some ordained, but also a team of lay people. Lord Remnant became Patron of the parish in 1969, following on from members of the Cain family. Pre-war, it was the custom for some people to place visiting cards in 'their' pew in the Church - every week to be removed by the Vicar - and every week replaced by the worshipper !

The disappearance of the Floral Mile was noted, and also the change in shopping habits, with the loss of many High Street shops, and the changes in others, such as the site which had been Waterers Garden Centre.

The village sports activities were the next topic. The Recreation Ground had been run by a private trust until 1969, when the Parish Council took it over. Cricket matches were remembered by several people - particularly regarding Lord Remnant's father, who would consider it 'not worth continuing to play' if a ball was dropped. A silk handkerchief would be produced to decide the wind direction, and Mr Pope would then ask from which end was his Lordship going to bowl. It was suggested that many visiting teams were scared by the sight of Lord Remnant in his MCC kit!

Farming and gardening were next talked of - the resentment of some who had to redeem the tithes

payable to the Church being very strong - and crippling to some farmers. The practice eventually ceased, although the Church still collects rent for some fields locally. Maurice Owen had come to the village in 1948, as his father was head gardener at Wargrave Manor. There was great rivalry between the gardeners there, at Bear Place, and for the Wynmalens. Wargrave Manor had 21 greenhouses at the time, and a vinery on Bonds Hill (ie Wargrave Hill). There was also a Village Produce Association, which organised a show each year on the Recreation Ground and there would be carnival floats around the village - there being 'no end of clubs' then. Maurice added that at that time 'nobody spoke to you' as a newcomer - everyone knew everyone else - and 'knew their place' - and many families were inter-related.

The Village Festival, which began in 1975, formed the next topic. The group running it were inexperienced, but it brought the community together, and made a profit of £625. It was largely saved by the then new Wargrave Theatre Workshop under Miriam Moore and John Tankard. The Festival Ball, however, has now grown to be more of a 'money raiser' than an event for the community.

Village doctor, Wargrave's manual telephone exchange, the Regatta, and the rifle range were amongst many other reminiscences shared during the evening. Wargrave is a changing community - the members present having lived in the village for as little as 18 months to as long as 70 years.

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