

Wargrave Local History Society

From the archives

We look back to September 1940 for this image from the Wargrave Local History Society archive, when the Piggott (Senior) School was opened.

The school has its origins in the schools (originally one for boys and one for girls) founded by Robert Piggott in the 1790s. In 1862 the combined schools had moved to new buildings on School Hill, but as the village population increased, there was not sufficient space, so in 1910 the infant classes were moved to buildings in Victoria Road. By the 1930s, however, space was again a problem on the School Hill site, and so thoughts turned to developing a new site to cater for the older pupils. The 'driving force' behind the project was the Vicar of Wargrave, Canon Stephen Winter. He was able to take advantage of a provision under the 1936 Education Act, under which if local people raised sufficient funds, the Government would provide the remainder of the costs of a new school. To achieve this, Canon Winter obtained the support of the parishes of Twyford, Waltham St Lawrence, Knowl Hill, White Waltham and Hurst. The foundation stone had been laid on 12th October 1939, and despite the restrictions of wartime, it was ready to welcome its first pupils for the opening on 18th September 1940. Seen in the photograph taken that day are the Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire (on the right in the doorway) with the Bishop of Oxford, (stood to the left, in front of the foundation stone), with Mr Clement Bush, the school's first headmaster, stood to the left in the doorway. At that time, the school motto "Sursum Corda" had not been carved into the stone above the doors - that was added by January 1942.

As it was wartime, the pupils from the outlying villages could not be provided with school buses to travel to and from the new school, and so Berkshire County Council operated a cycle loan scheme for those pupils living more than 'walking distance' from the school (those from Wargrave or Twyford would normally walk).

