

Wargrave Local History Society

From the archives

Most of the places or events in the 'items from the archive' are familiar to local people - the church, the St George & Dragon, the High Street, the regatta, the river in flood, and so on. This item is about a school - but one that few will have heard of.

Avington School was a preparatory school, that began in the Boscombe area of Bournemouth in the mid 1920s. The name came from the family home of the Adolphus family, Edwin Marriott Adolphus being the head teacher. In a register of public and preparatory schools at the West Sussex Record Office, it is listed in 1950 as "Avington School, Westbourne" (near Emsworth, right on the West Sussex / Hampshire border). So what is the local connection?

An exercise book of a former pupil includes the address "Avington", Cockpole Green, Wargrave, Berks, and is a diary of "Incidents of Christmas Term 1941" - 80 years ago - including pen and ink drawings for each entry.

October 3rd "Blackberry Picking - On Friday October 3rd, the cyclists went to Fox Steep to pick blackberries, and they were very successful and 7½lbs were picked ... several times before, the whole school went Blackberrying, but never before has the total mounted to over 7½ lbs".

October 21st "Riding Back from Match - Coming back from the Eaton House match (football - Eaton House School being then based in Twyford) the team passed many army vehicles and convoys, and on the Great Bath Road, Howitzers and lorries were seen. The picture shows an armoured car towing a Howitzer, and the team waiting with their cycles for a chance to cross the road".



November 7th - "Cycle Ride. On Friday afternoon, just after lessons, Mr Adolphus took the cyclists down to Henley, as he wanted to get some paraffin. The ride there was downhill, but coming back uphill with the paraffin was made easier by half the contents being spilt in Henley". (!!)

The school had been evacuated from Bournemouth early in the war, to a farmhouse called Rosedene, on the eastern side of the Upper Culham to Warren Row road. The pupils also went potato picking for a Mr Fleming - he was at Dean Place Farm, which backed onto the school lands. At the end of the war it moved to Sussex (rather than return to Boscombe). Edwin Adolphus died in 1950, and the probate record gives his address then as Avington, Westbourne, Sussex - the school being bequeathed to a Beatrice Smyth - but it disappears from directories by 1952.

After the school left Cockpole Green, the property was occupied by Jimmy Barclay (brother of the owner of the large Rolls Royce and Bentley dealers in London) and the name changed to The Old Farmhouse, its present name.