

# Wargrave Local History Society

## Latest News - January 2003

### Wokingham Old and New - (part 2)

For the January meeting of the Wargrave Local History Society, Ken Goatley returned to show the second part of his presentation on *Wokingham Old and New*. (the first part was in November) The tour resumed by the Dukes Head, in Denmark Street, and then looked at cottages in the Finchampstead Road, where the occupants had been able to grow all their own vegetables etc. The cottages had been swept away for a planned relief road, which was never built, so modern housing now stands there.

One notable business man in the town was Isaiah Gadd, who had arrived in Wokingham in 1860, and worked for Heelas. He later left that firm to set up his own furniture, antiques and coal businesses. Originally his vehicles were horse drawn - but when steam traction took over, the routes had to be rearranged to make sure that the engines could reach suitable sources of water. Later, Ernie Reeves came from Heelas, as manager, and eventually took over the removals business, to be replaced in turn by Bishops Move. Gadd's depository survived until the site was used for the Berkshire Ambulance Control. Near here, under the railway bridge, was the Pin and Bowl pub - one of the oldest in the town, where also a shoemaker (one of many in Wokingham) worked. Then along towards the station stands a building erected in 1965 as a replacement for the borough council town hall - described at the time as 'one of the best designed' and also 'one of the ugliest' of the year.

By the level crossing was a factory that made secret equipment during the war and some of the first hover mowers afterwards, whilst at the station, the original Victorian buildings have been replaced by a modern concrete block. The line from Guildford had opened in 1849, whilst that from Staines followed in 1856. The original footbridge, however, has been listed. One notable feature of the 1950s view of the station was the number of porters available to assist passengers! With the opening of the line came 'The Station Hotel' - now called the 'Molly Millar'. Moving towards Shute End, Alderman Willey Close stands on the site of the old Wokingham Laundry, and Gadd's main offices were nearby, with the council's wheelbarrow store next door.

Turning towards Reading on the main road are St Pauls' school (now the registry office and a training centre) and St Pauls church. Both of these were given to the town by the Walter family. On the opposite side of the road is The Terrace - the earliest photographs being from before 1860. One house here belonged to a Mr Martin, who had a swimming pool built in the gardens. He allowed local people to use "Martins Pool" - until it was taken over by the council in 1974, modernised, and then sold off for the present housing. Nearby, the Queens Head is the only building in Wokingham with a cruck frame. The police station, built in 1904, stands around the corner.

Across in Broad Street stands Montague House, built in the late 17th century, and for most of the time a 'place of education'. The milestone beside the Post Office relates to the time when Broad

Street was part of a turnpike trust. Our tour then continued down ancient Rose Street - where most of the buildings are listed. There were 6 pubs in this street alone. Many of the cottages are timber famed - one was noted as having cost just £7/10/- to build -- in 1450. Ken told us of many more interesting buildings - including the one where he had himself grown up.

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