

# Wargrave Local History Society

## Latest News - March 2023

### A.G.M. and “Bring and Tell”

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Wargrave Local History Society’s March meeting began with the AGM when the society’s activities over the past year were reviewed, a committee for the coming year elected, and the programme for 2023-24 was announced.

Following the formal business, there was a “Bring and Tell” time, when several society members told of an item of interest they had brought to the meeting. First was Terry Grouk, who spoke about the visitor’s book of Wargrave Hall (the original now being held in the House of Lords archive). The story began in 1911, when Edward Goulding MP was able to buy the house, which he owned until 1922. He used it for political purposes – at a time before Chequers became available for such gatherings. Winston Churchill was a frequent visitor, for example. With an impending war, Herbert Asquith, the Prime Minister realised that it would be necessary to have a united Government, so during July 1914 Edward Goulding arranged a meeting between leading Liberals (including Winston Churchill) and Conservatives at Wargrave Hall, at which the Conservatives agreed to support the Liberal Government if war broke out. Asquith also realised that the Germans had also been supplying guns to the Irish seeking to have home rule. Amongst the signatures on July 31st 1914 (the Bank Holiday weekend before war was declared) were Andrew Bonar Law (a future British Prime Minister), Edward Carson and F E Smith (later Lord Chancellor). Edward Carson was leader of the Unionists, and the meeting at Wargrave Hall resulted in the Unionists agreeing that their first call of duty was to support the British Government in the event of a war with Germany, and so they would not fight the Republicans. The Republicans gave a similar assurance to Andrew Bonar Law a few days later, so the Government was reassured that the British Army forces in Ireland would be available for the ensuing conflict in Europe. The same page of the book included a visit by Tim Healey a week earlier – he was later to become the first Governor General of the Irish Republic.

After World War 1 ended, the question of Irish Home Rule remained to be settled, and the visitor’s book records the presence of Lord Birkenhead, Winston Churchill, Lord Beaverbrook and Andrew Bonar Law on October 21<sup>st</sup> 1921. Edward Goulding was the architect of a plan to create the Irish Free State, with 6 counties in the north to be separate. Winston Churchill (Colonial Secretary at the time) was not sure about this, but all agreed to progress the plan. Later, Lord Beaverbrook declared that the events at Wargrave Hall were so important to British history that he wanted to write a record of them, although he never completed

Next was Sue Milton, who brought a stoneware foot warmer to show to the meeting. In the early days of the railways, there was no heating in the carriages, and so this type bottle was developed in about 1854 – the company later becoming Doulton Lambeth. Production of the ‘improved foot warmer’ that Sue had started in 1923, and hundreds of them were supplied until 1948 for the London and North Eastern Railway. A simple form of carriage heating had been introduced in 1880, with pipes from the steam engine – but if the pipes got blocked, a man would be sent to bang on the pipes to get the hot water through – a process known as “breaking the ice”.





With the Coronation of King Charles III to take place in May, Maureen Prince then looked back to what happened in Wargrave in June 1953 on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth's Coronation. Her father, Alf Beckford, had been involved in the arrangements, starting with a meeting on February 5<sup>th</sup> 1953. An executive committee was formed, and Alf would organise sports competitions as part of the festivities, with Coronation spoons costing 5/- each as prizes. 400 Coronation mugs were ordered for presentation to children up to the age of 16 at the afternoon tea – provided at a cost of 2/6d per child, the ladies of the WI waiting on the children. After tea, adult games were arranged, with 10/- first prizes and 5/- for second place donated by local shops. 480 Wall's ice creams would be available for sale, and Mr Briscoe was authorised to spend up to £1/10/- on insignia for the event, whilst coaches were arranged to bring the children of Crazies Hill and Hare Hatch into the village. It had been suggested that there be a parade up to the Recreation Ground from the St George and Dragon – but it was decided not to have that as 'most people would be watching the service on television'. A fantastic day was had by all, at a time when in the village 'everybody knew everybody'. Maureen was able to show one of the Mappin and Webb Coronation spoons, as she had won it in the sports that day.

Sarah Houghton then showed two letters which related the wedding of Princess Elizabeth (as she then was) in 1947. People from all over the world had sent parcels of food as presents for the couple. This was a time of food rationing in Britain, and so it was arranged that the food would be donated to deserving people across the country. Sarah's father had written to Buckingham Palace, to suggest that his aunt be a recipient, and the first letter, dated January 1948 was from the Lady-in-Waiting to the Queen (later the Queen Mother) to say that the Queen would be graciously pleased to send one of "Princess Elizabeth's Wedding Present Parcels". The second letter, from Buckingham Palace, written in her own hand by Princess Elizabeth, asking that the parcel be accepted with my very best wishes, and signed 'Elizabeth'.

Maureen Prince then recalled Henri and Julia Wynmalen (for whom she had worked as secretary). Henri had been born in Holland in 1889, first coming to England at the age of 17 to work as a stable lad for a racehorse trainer at Malvern. He later returned to Holland, and in due course bought a Fairman bi-plane, and taught himself to fly it, setting a world altitude record in 1910 at 2810 metres, and the following day flying from Paris to Brussels. On this flight, he carried a letter – the first air mail service in the world – he was just 21. When he returned to England, he set up various building firms, with contracts for pre-fabricated buildings, having the main office at Hare Hatch Estate Office. He also owned several local farms, and at Woodside (now Kingswood) in Tag Lane had a range of tack rooms and stables. His interest in horsemanship led to him introducing dressage to this country, and then organising the 3-day Equestrian event at the 1948 Olympic Games.



His wife, Julia, had been born in Peru, of an English father and a Spanish mother. Their land was worked by local peasants, and Maureen was able to show the spoons made of Peruvian silver, which had long pointed handles. These were used by the ladies not only for feeding, but also to secure the tops of their clothes with the handles. Julia also became very knowledgeable about horses, learning much from Henri, and in time became chairman of the Arab Horse Society, and both Henri and Julia wrote several books on horsemanship.

Lastly, Peter Delaney showed a rather plain looking old pewter plate. Until the development of porcelain and glass for plates and drinking vessels, pewter was the material normally used to make such items. In a similar way to the hallmarking of gold and silver, the work of pewterers was given a touchmark to record its maker.



In this case, the maker had been Master of the Pewterer's Livery Company for 1770, the same year as he got married. Born in Wargrave in 1715, his name was Francis Piggott, and his spouse was Ann Piggott, sister of the founder of the village school. From his trade card, he would appear to have been an important pewterer, making and selling both "wholesale and retail at reasonable rates".

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