

# Wargrave Local History Society

## Latest News - January 1999

### Warren Row

George Beck, in his diary written from about 1890 - 1920 records Bowsey Hill as a natural reservoir, with many springs etc. Joanna Power told us that Warren Row had never been a large community, but had started as groups of cottages on the edge of 3 estates - Hall Place (Clayton East), Rosehill and Park Place (now Cayton Park). Her talk was illustrated with pictures and stories of many of the local families.

The Park Place estate had been owned by Sir Charles Henry, a Liberal M.P. He had built Wellington Cottages, in the middle of the village. He was good to his tenants - the other terraces in the village built at a similar time being relatively small and dark. Sir Charles also laid out a golf course and a cricket ground at Park Place - near to the present Cayton Park lodge. This estate was later bought by the Trimmer-Thompsons, who had a stud farm there, and now belongs to Prince Khalid.

Towards the end of the last century, Rosehill was rented by Lady Donaldson. She also opened a home for poor mothers at Golders Farm, and provided much towards the new Warren Row Church. Before this was built the Church Army would take services "in a little cottage under the wood owned by Betty Fidler" (no longer there). The Church, dedicated to St Paul, was built in 1894, on land given by Sir Gilbert Clayton East. The building itself was bought from a mail order catalogue, and the total cost was £191.8s.11½d. It was consecrated by the Bishop of Reading, and "a bountiful tea" followed. A report in the *Maidenhead Advertiser* recorded every detail of the service, and the centenary celebration in 1994, again taken by the Bishop, was closely based on it. At the first Harvest Festival, on October 28th, the little church (designed to hold 130 people) was packed to capacity. In due course, it came under the care of the vicar of Knowl Hill. The debt for the building was finally paid off in June 1897.

Warren Row was well endowed with public houses, with 3 for its 40 houses. The oldest is probably "The Old House at Home", which in 1830 was run by William and Sophie Keeley. They started a whiting works, which after William's death, Sophie continued, helped by her sons. The Keeleys continued to run the pub until 1891, when Hussey took over. Brakspears then built a new pub, also called "The Old House at Home", at which the first tenant was Tom Prior. In time, he moved to Braywick and the gravel works there. More recently, it became a pub/restaurant, then to a French owner, as the "Frog and Toad", and is now the "Crooked Inn". The old building became unsafe, and was eventually pulled down in 1987. The second pub was the "Red House", run for a long period by the Collins family. By the late 1940s the licensee was a Mr Lewis, who laid out a cricket pitch, and so Warren Row Cricket club was formed. When the pub was sold in 1982, and renamed "The Warrener", the new owner wished to go "up-market". The cricket pavilion "mysteriously" burnt down, and the pitch was removed. It was sold in 1986, extended again by 1990, and is now a private house. The third pub was The Pheasant, which had existed in 1761 on Pudding Hill. It was demolished in the 1920s.

Prior's Yard for the whiting works was behind the church. As well as the works, he also ran a haulage business. The chalk workings were quite extensive, parts of the "new mine" having two storeys. In 1942, a shadow factory was moved into the underground complex. Here, in tunnels 20ft wide and 20ft high, and with up to 50 ft of soil overhead, local people kept the machines working 24 hours a day, making superchargers for aeroplane engines. The temperature was said to be constant and pleasant. After the war, some of the surface buildings were used for an ink and perfume factory for a while, and the underground areas were used as storage for the Science Museum and British Museum. It later became a "Regional Seat of Government" - causing the CND marchers to call there on their way to or from Aldermaston. It was sold in 1988, and bought by a data storage company - later it was also used to store wines.

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