

THE WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

At the January meeting one of our own members, David Wilson, talked about twentieth century farming and in particular the last fifty years in which he spent his life in agriculture. When David began work in the 1950s farming had already changed from when five men had been able to tackle any farm task with ease to one when two men could complete the same task with machinery but with some difficulty.

Subsequently more efficient machinery has been developed, farm buildings re designed and to increase yields there have been plant and animal breeding programmes, more fertilisers and more herbicides. David also commented on the farming changes locally with larger farms buying up the smaller whose farm buildings are then sold off for housing development, and whose workers are replaced by machinery.

Another of our members, Alan Watkins, spoke at the next meeting on 'Place and Events' by Packer and Simms', two of the Chipping Norton photographers who covered this area in the first fifty years of the last century. They photographed the routine events like weddings, parades, fetes and garden parties in the hope that those portrayed would buy a good selection of the post cards subsequently produced.

Alan also showed how Packer and Simms tried to cover the more unusual events such as freak weather conditions and crashes of trees, trains and road transport. Again, they were hoping to sell post cards and perhaps gain further coverage in the county and national press. Although covering what was essentially an agricultural area there are very few farm scenes on the ordinary run of post cards but Alan explained that such scenes were depicted in the 'Country Series' of post cards.

Today the efforts of Packer and Simms provide a fascinating, and sometimes the only, visual record of places hereabouts in the first half of the last century. The collection can be viewed at the Chipping Norton museum and at the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies at Westgate, Oxford. But, if you have questions, ask Alan!

The April meeting of the society will celebrate our 21st Anniversary and will be held at Shipton on the 18th. It will be a light-hearted affair at which it is hoped that the next issue of Wychwoods History will be available (free to current paid up members).

The last monthly meetings of this season:

16th May Saxon Settlement at Yarnton The Missing Link? by Gill Hay

20th June A Country Brewery Hook Norton 1849 - 1999 by David

Eddershaw

This summer's activities include outings to Coleshill, near Highworth, on Wednesday 29 May and Hook Norton Brewery on Tuesday 25 June and Thursday 4 July.

Contact Sue Jourdan for more details - 830179.

John Rawlins