

## Wheatley Village Archive Origin

In 1974 when the Wheatley Society was formed, there was a strong interest in parish affairs and so, when the Oxfordshire Community Council organised a local history competition in 1980, the members decided to take part. This resulted in the High Street booklet which is still available today and is a valuable source of local information.

A small group under the leadership of Mary Hodges, the history tutor at Lady Spencer Churchill College, met regularly to record and analyse the census from 1851 to 1901. Margaret Rosenthal, the English tutor, continued to lead the group after Mary moved away. Gradually the group acquired more material which was stored in the Parish Council room, now the library. However when reorganisation occurred, and the Parish Council moved to its current home, there was no vacant storage space. Eventually a cupboard, accessible to the public, was allocated in the library. Unfortunately not all the archive material could be accommodated so there was still pressure to find alternative accommodation. Meanwhile with each annual exhibition there was a growing amount to store as villagers donated more material to the archive. Eventually Peter Audley Miller persuaded the Parish Council to give an annual grant to pay the rent of a room for the Village Archive in the Merry Bells and so the history group could, in 2001 and at long last, have a permanent home. No longer was it necessary for members to get records under their beds!

This led in 2003 to the opening of the Wheatley Village Archive, as an initiative of the Wheatley Society. It was agreed that the History side should be recognised as a separate entity in order to attract additional support both in terms of people and finance. Liz O'Sullivan, a member of the Committee, agreed to set it up and was joined by Marian Darkin who had been running the History group within the Society. Other founding members of The Wheatley History Group were David Harverson, along with Cyril Newton for a short period. Liz became the Coordinator and managed to obtain a grant of £4703 from the *The Countryside Agency* to set up and equip the Archive room which opened later that year in the Merry Bells. Martin Tims gave technical support and set up the original computer database as an index to the collection. Since then a small team of volunteers has manned the Archive on weekly basis.



Members of the Wheatley Society freshened up the walls with a coat of paint. Now the proud owners of a computer the next step was for all the material to be catalogued, numbered, and recorded.



This organisation of the archive worked well for many years until in 2018 it was digitised and so all the material became available on-line for all interested in Wheatley's history from far and wide.

Archive Ref 0411

