

## SARRATT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

### Walk and Talk round Sarratt Green

by Dawn Pitts and Gregory Edmund, 25 July

The posters were up, the 'walk' publicised, and Dawn Pitts and Greg Edmund ready to relaunch our History Society activities - 'in person' not 'Zoom'.

Then came the weekend weather forecast... amber warnings, torrential rain, thunder storms, high winds!!!! And no way to cancel since we had no idea who might decide to turn up anyway.

I arrived at the Village Hall with 10 minutes to spare before the advertised starting time. It was grey, chilly and dour and there was not a soul in sight. Then two or three cars drew up by the Hall and parked and their owners got out .... and walked to the Cricketers. At just before 2pm, Dawn and Greg walked across the Green to join me. And then, within a few minutes, not only were there 30 optimistic people around us, but there was even a tentative ray of definitely unforecast sunshine

The magic of Dawn's Walks starts with the fact that she, a proper Sarratt villager, has real and family memories of the buildings she talks about! It's not out of a dry textbook. Starting with the pretty flint and brick original Village school, which she herself once attended, she seemed to take us time-travelling into the past, every building coming alive with earlier named occupants, functions (forges, wheelwright, butcher, baker, no 'candlestick maker' sadly, but female straw plaiters, haberdashers, chandlers, a surprisingly large selection of pubs and beer gardens, religious establishments and even, within living memory, a Co-op!)

We learned the names of the actual families that lived in them and ran them. And periodically, Greg would feed us some splendid gossip about the owners, culled from the Great Sarratt Scrapbook, from local history sources and from other obscure 'info' that only Greg would find. So, we heard of scandals, tragedies, criminal intent or just funny stories handed down through the generations.

The origin of the very long Sarratt Green (approximately half a mile!), which is well away from the original village by the Church, is in itself a slight mystery. But it was likely to have developed from an early 'drovers' halt', where cattle and sheep could graze and be rested as they were walked to the great markets in the area and in London itself. That would certainly explain the length of grassland and its excess of small public houses and beer gardens (for the farmers and drivers also needing R&R, like their flocks).



Despite the length of the Green, we were all enthralled throughout the tour which fittingly finished at the unique green metal well-head and pump that provided the essential fresh water for the area and is directly opposite Sarratt House. This historic building is now sadly and fondly remembered by us as the home of our late

President Pam Turner, a lifelong historian, who must surely have accompanied our tour in spirit.

Physically tired but intellectually stimulated, many of us retreated to the nearby Boot pub (a very distinctive and old feature of The Green) for 'refreshment', as so many rural workers would have done for hundreds of years. Our time travel was suitably concluded there, brought back to the present with a start by 'Covid-masked' bar staff.

**Angela Colman**