

Sarratt Local History Society: Terry Simmonds

For the many of us lucky enough to hear Terry Simmonds' fascinating and moving story of his family's local nursery at Chipperfield, buying plants there will never be the same again.

Starting with an intriguing reference to his 'ancestress' Emily Knapp and the pre-Raphaelite painters, Terry took us on a historical, personal and romantic tour of his delightful family and their part in the development of the traditional market garden of the late 19 and early 20 century (concentrating mainly on vegetables), through landscape design on a large scale, and then via two World Wars on to the present day 'Garden Centres'.

Like a pattern book for how local history should ideally be set out, Terry used his wonderful collection of personal photos and anecdotes to create for us an entire intimate history of the area in which we live and about which we are now so curious. Family names, cottage and pub names, lanes and villages with which we are all more or less familiar, were woven together with the history of the changing face of horticulture over the last century.

Which of us will buy our next rose at 'Garden Scene' (or Simmonds' as we still often call it) without remembering the photo of the fields of roses and the workers bent double over their work? Who will ever pass a cotoneaster without recalling that it was Terry's grandfather who bred the first weeping cotoneaster – *cotoneaster hybridis pendulus* – and exhibited it at Olympia in 1933? And how many know that most of the plants and the wonderful hanging baskets we buy there each year are *still* produced locally, near Tower Hill?

Thank you Terry, for an evening none of us would have missed.

Angela Coleman

