



Hello everyone,

With Spring on the way, I thought that this month we would start a series of articles in which leaders of the various activities, groups and services that make up The Debenham Project tell us in their own words a little about them. Everyone enjoys a good old natter about the old days and there is something special about bringing back memories, remembering with friends what they did in the 40s, 50s, and 60s, talking about the hobbies and activities that they loved with others who also enjoyed them, hearing about what Debenham and the surrounding villages was like all those years ago, and recounting what it was like where they grew up. So we begin with Steve Robbins.

‘Way Back When’ is a monthly reminiscence afternoon held at Dove Cottage (see p11 for details). It was started with the aim of stimulating chat about the past and can be especially enjoyed by those with good long term memories but a failing short-term one. It has now been running for about a year with a small but regular group of people who really enjoy their sessions.

We share a variety of stimuli including, artefacts, books, music, photographs and DVDs. Also two old video tapes about Debenham were unearthed, both made in the 1990s. There were surprising changes to note, as well as interesting aspects of village history. When looking at objects, it is surprising how passing round an old kitchen appliance can elicit chat about changing times and approaches and then lead naturally onto other memories.

Regulars Joan and Hav Wilkins use their vast knowledge of the local area to good effect. Joan Read also has an encyclopaedic memory - she moved to Suffolk from Yorkshire as a wartime land girl. Also a moment in history on a DVD can link people to their past. For instance, Marjorie and Bill discovered they both grew up in Sydenham, South London. They were able to share their vivid childhood memories of seeing the Crystal Palace light up the night sky when it burnt to the ground in 1936 after seeing film of it.

‘Way Back When’ runs most months and new participants are always welcome. It would also be good to encourage visitors who have interesting objects, photos or stories of past times to share. Please get in touch if you can do this, or know someone who can.

Thank you, Steve.

To finish this month, I especially want to thank: The United Reform Church for their very generous donation and all those individuals whose gifts enable us to organise and run all the groups such as Steve’s; our volunteer drivers who have been exceptionally busy over the winter months; and The High School for entertaining a number of our members to their Diversity Lunch – It was so much enjoyed by everyone.

With best wishes, Lynden

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