

A Newspaper Obituary of Alfred R. Wagg who died in 1969

MR ALFRED WAGG Merchant banker.

Mr Alfred Wagg,, C.B.E., who died yesterday, in his 93rd year, was born in 1877 and educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge.

He joined the family firm of Helbert Wagg & Company, members of the Stock Exchange, and in due course succeeded his father and uncle as its head, but in 1912 at his instigation the firm left the Stock Exchange and became merchant bankers. In this field, Helbert Wagg and Company Ltd., established a unique reputation in the city and throughout the world.

No one could meet Alfred Wagg without recognizing his width of vision, his integrity and his high ideals. These ideals permeated his business life but they went, beyond this to a constant desire to serve his fellow men. In 1907 he started to visit the Eton mission at Hackney Wick and it was doubtless this direct contact with East End conditions that convinced him of the importance of giving to the boys and young men of our cities, at their impressionable age, opportunities of knowing other environments, wider outlooks, and higher standards of behaviour and of purpose. To this end he was to devote a large part of his activities and personal resources. In 1912 he and others founded the Eton Manor Club, also in Hackney Wick, and during the difficult years of the 1914-18 War, Alfred Wagg, while still carrying on his business almost single-handed, kept the club going, and still found time to keep in touch with the serving members and to send them parcels of food and cigarettes.

The Eton Manor Club had become one of the outstanding Boys' clubs in London and was something in which the whole East End took immense pride. Soon after the end of the First World War, Wagg went to live in Sussex, and here again his thoughts turned to the boys he had left, and to considering how best to give them the chance of a country holiday. His plans gradually developed in scope and and magnitude and when in 1929 the 'Isle of Thorns Boys' Camp ' was opened in Ashdown Forest, it provided permanent housing for some 200 boys at a time, with dormitories, mess rooms, swimming pool, tennis courts, together with 160 acres of playing fields heathland and woods. Some 1,200 to 1,500 boys from clubs all over the country used this camp for many years but times changed and now the camp is a greatly prized part of Sussex University.

In addition to this Wagg purchased extensive acres of land and wood in the neighbourhood as camping sites for boy scouts and girl guides, and these properties together with the Isle of Thorns Camp he transferred to the Manor Charitable Trust, established to place these enterprises on a permanent footing.

Wagg never married and, until her death, lived with his sister, Elsie, originator of the scheme for opening private gardens in aid of the Queen's Nursing Association.

Alfred Wagg's vision was directed towards the two great interests of his life, his business in the city and the Manor Charitable Trust. In both cases his dreams came true.