



Project Purley

PURLEY'S LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MAY 1995 NEWSLETTER

NO.38

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Annual General Meeting was held on the 17th March at 8pm 1995 at The Gatehouse Purley Lane, Purley on Thames.

The Chairman Cliff Debney presented his report on the year's activities. It had been another very good year for the Society. The talks arranged had been on a wide variety of topics many of which had been outstanding. The visit to Bere Court and the warm welcome of Mr and Mrs Tucker was recalled. The Society held a very successful Open Day which was very well attended and many compliments had been received. The Society also took part in the Flower Festival held at St Mary's Church. The exhibit, based on the sketch of the marriage between Miss Storer and Mr Downing Fullerton which appeared in The Lady in 1889 was particularly well received, and as a result of a suggestion, permission was obtained from The Lady Magazine to reproduce the drawing as notelets and cards which are now on sale. The talk by Derek Sweet titled "A Journey into Nepal" was something different but very much enjoyed by everyone. The summer barbecue in the garden of Pat and Tony Deane was a highlight of the year, and the Chairman thanked them for hosting our summer event in such delightful surroundings. The Christmas social evening proved to be particularly enjoyable, and Jan and Rick Jones were thanked not only for hosting the social evening but also for allowing the society to use their home as a venue for meetings.

Cliff Debney stood down after 6 years as Chairman of the Society. He thanked all the committee members for supporting him so well, James Heslop for the quality work in looking after the Society accounts, and Rita Denman for her support as Secretary. Thanks were extended to Millie Bordiss and Pat Deane for their work in producing the Newsletter. One other member of the Executive retired and that was our Founder Chairman Jean Debney who had been on the Executive every year since the Society was formed and would now be taking a well deserved break. Cliff Debney expressed to her the Society's thanks for her continued interest and input into the Society and in closing he thanked the Members for their loyalty which showed that we are on the right lines.

Also presenting his final report after 5 years in office as Treasurer, James Heslop reported the accounts as being in a healthy state. It was pointed out that the Society was in a very fortunate position in being able to meet in the home of Jan and Rick Jones and without cost to the Society and this situation should not be taken for granted. The Treasurer's thanks were extended to Ron Denman for the computer printouts of the accounts and to Mr Francis who once again audited the accounts free of charge.

John Chapman gave an up to date report on the progress in the rebuilding of the barn on its new site at Beech Road and also on the results of the timber sample dating. One group of timbers had proved to be dated from 1509-1512 and a second group dated from 1730-1732.

Trévor Cotton placed on record his thanks for the Society Newsletter which is a very worthwhile part of Project Purley.

The following were elected for the coming year;

Chairman - Pat Deane	Committee Members - Cliff Debney
Treasurer - Henry Bordiss	Edna Bint
Secretary - Rita Denman.	Millie Bordiss
	John Chapman
	James Heslop
	Jan Jones.

In taking office as Chairman Pat Deane thanked Cliff Debney for all the work he had done on the Society's behalf over the past 6 years. This was heartily endorsed by all those present.

Rita Denman Hon. Sec.

REVIEW OF MEETINGS

The New Year's programme on the 20th January began with a talk by Leslie Cram of Reading Museum whose subject was Reading Abbey. All those present became thoroughly involved with the story of the great Abbey. Mr Cram had a wealth of information on this fascinating subject which he related with great humour, answering many questions as the talk progressed. We discovered the origin of the word plummery, as in the Plummery Wall surrounding the Abbey. It was not as might have been expected, to do with a plum orchard. The name came from 'plumbago' the site of the lead workings for the abbey. There was only time to show part of the slide collection, but members will be delighted to know that Leslie Cram will be returning to continue his talk and also tell us something about the preservation and future plans for the abbey site.

It is always a great pleasure when the speaker is also a Society member and on 17th February John Chapman gave an illustrated talk about The Royal Berkshire Regiment. As part of a University study group John has been researching the Regiment and has found a great deal of hitherto untapped information and the talk was based on this research. John explained that there was enough information available to fill several books and the difficulty was in editing this vast fund of new knowledge to fit an hour's talk. This was managed with great success and an introduction to the Regiment's history, the Regiment's relationship with the home town of Reading, the Regiment's engagements in the Great War (1914-18), and insights into the experiences of the men who were part of the Royal Berkshires was given. The diaries kept by the Gold brothers of Maidenhead, all serving with the Royal Berkshires were particularly poignant.

The Annual General Meeting was held on the 17th March. This is reported separately. The business meeting was followed by a talk given by Joyce Voysey Hon Sec. of The Ancient Parish of Whitchurch History Society. Joyce was accompanied by Mr Voysey but unfortunately, due to illness Wendy Adair, Chairman of the Society was unable to be present. Joyce gave an informal chat about the preparations and experiences of the Whitchurch Society in mounting their highly successful exhibition "Whitchurch at War". This was a trip down memory lane for all those members who remembered the war albeit in some other place, and an informative evening for the "younger set". The evening was

a great success and Joyce Voysey presented the chat with a typical wartime mixture of sadness and humour.

On the 21st April we were fortunate to have a visit from David Kent Senior Lecturer in History at the University of New England, New South Wales, Australia. With a colleague, David is engaged in researching the Swing Riots of 1830. His particular interest is the agricultural labourers of Berkshire who were subsequently sentenced to transportation to New South Wales. The purpose of his visit to the UK is to finalise his findings and present an argument in favour of the transportees, which will be the subject of a book he is writing and which is to be published in the near future. The speaker was passionate in his presentation, and put forward some very interesting points about the tradition and customs of the agricultural labourers of the time, and suggested that they had no perception of the grave consequences that would follow. Given the fact that not too far back in time most families have agricultural labourers on their family tree this was a persuasive argument, but there was no time to develop discussion of the ideas put before us. David Kent was totally absorbed in his subject and was somewhat surprised that many people that he had met in the UK were not equally knowledgeable about the Swing Riots. Perhaps this is something that we should know more about.

FUTURE MEETINGS.

19th May 1995. Basildon Village. Clive Williams.

16th June 1995. Walkabout - Lardon Chase and The Holies.

21st July 1995. Barbecue at The Mimosas.

A proposed party outing on The Watercress Line, Hampshire.
Further information at meetings.

Rita Denman Hon. Sec.

YEW TREE COTTAGE

On the 12th July 1994 my wife Hazel and I celebrated our Silver Wedding. We had a party with friends and family that was a truly memorable occasion. Little did we know then that only seven weeks later we would be living in a 220 year old Grade two listed thatched cottage. After all we were not even looking for another house! The story of how it all happened is too long for this short piece but is an interesting tale and had all the magic about it that is Yew Tree Cottage.

On moving in we quickly realised that there was nothing available to us about the history of the cottage. The deeds dated only from 1979 when Joseph Kirton sold Yew Tree Farm Dairy to a development company. Houses were built on the dairy land and the cottage sold to a "restorer". The restoration that was done was really just a modernisation and whilst we have modern wiring, modern plumbing and gas fired central heating almost nothing is left to tell us what the original interior was like. All floors, doors, windows, plaster work and staircase are new, with the upstairs the floor plan unrecognisable from the original. Luckily the exterior of the cottage was Grade 2 protected and was not damaged and still displays all the charm that it was built with. The years from 1979 to 1994 were ones of default for Yew Tree Cottage with result that we bought a rather jaded and shabby little house. However Yew Tree Cottage has special magic about it that we couldn't resist and since we moved in we have begun a programme of sympathetic redecoration and furnishing that will restore the cottage to its former glory.

With the cottage came the barn. Looking very ramshackle, dilapidated and uncared for it still managed to charm the surveyor into passing it for the mortgage. His report said that it had character! Having replaced the windows, re hung the doors and re-clad two sides, the barn is now coming back to life. Incidentally it was never a barn but a workbuilding almost certainly built by carpenter and wheelwright William Pocock who lived at Yew Tree Cottage with his family after 1840.

Learning about the history of Yew Tree Cottage has been a very interesting exercise and here I must thank Jean and Cliff Debney who have been so helpful in providing information. We now know who lived in the cottage - with a couple of gaps - and have discovered almost beyond doubt the date when it was built - 1786.

Recently I said to my wife Hazel "You know, it wasn't us that chose Yew Tree Cottage. It was Yew Tree Cottage that chose us!" Such is the charm of this little house with its strong warm and welcoming presence.

David Roscoe
10th May 1995

The Purley Barn

The story of our barn starts with a marriage. In 1514 the daughter of the lord of the manor of Mapledurham became engaged to the son of the lord of the manor of Purley. Elizabeth Blount was the bride to be and Nicholas St John the goom to be. Both were part of the energetic and fun loving court of the young Henry VIII. When they married they came to live in Purley at the ancient manor house which stood somewhere to the south of the church almost opposite the ancient Mapledurham House. During the coming century both these houses would be rebuilt. The details of Mapledurham House are well documented and the new design, built in 1588 is essentially what is there today. Nicholas died in 1589, still living in Purley as far as we can ascertain. Of the 'new' 16th century Purley Manor House we know next to nothing.

It was only when our ancient barn was being demolished that some clues began to emerge and even then it is much more speculation than well documented fact. What do we know of the barn? - well we know that in 1793 it was standing just beyond the south wall of the churchyard and roughly parallel to it. A similar building also appears on an earlier map dated 1746. In 1741 we hear of a new brick house built by Edward Sherwood in Purley and there is a reasonable assumption that this house replaced the 16th century manor house. When Nottingham University came to do ring dating on the timbers of our barn they found two distinct groups. The main beams were all from timber felled around 1730/1 and most of the secondary beams were from timber felled around 1540. These latter beams all bear the signs that they were originally part of an older building and what more natural than when a timber framed house is demolished, the timbers should be put to good use. There is also little doubt that the timbers came from a high class building as witnessed by the quality of the finishing and jointing.

So we make the reasonable assumption that the ancient manor house was replaced by a Tudor style timber framed house around 1540, that this in turn was replaced by a brick house in 1741 and the timbers reused in our barn. Now we move onto well documented history. The brick house was replaced in its turn by the present Purley Park and the barn was moved to its second site at Bekeisle Farm around 1800. Here it remained. First in use as a farm building until around 1904, then as stabling for the South Berkshire Hunt until 1950 when Trenthams bought the site and used it for a workshop and store. The final move to the Recreation Ground is due to the generosity of Bryant Homes who have had it restored and made available for community use, principally by the scouts.

Although much of interest is now hidden again by cladding and distance there is still a lot to see and we hope that as many as possible will come to our open days on 24th and 25th June, on both days starting at 2 pm.

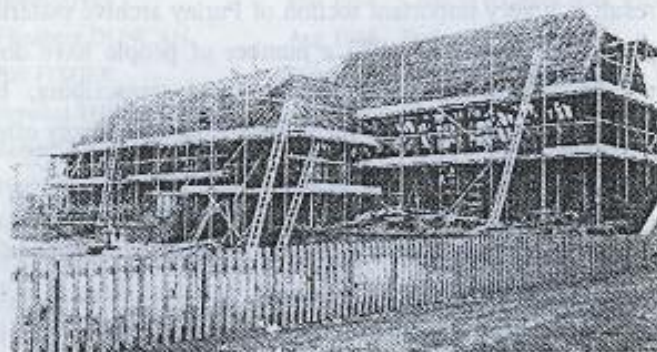
John Chapman.

OFFICIAL OPENING OF PURLEY BARN 24TH JUNE

BARN AND EXHIBITION OPEN TO THE VILLAGE & VISITORS ON
24th & 25th JUNE FROM 2PM - 5PM

TEA WILL BE SERVED BY THE SCOUTS

We should be pleased to receive offers of help from anybody with an hour or more to spare to steward and/or answer questions about the exhibition.
Those interested should contact Pat Deane on 426180.



The barn being carefully taken down.

From this to ??????

Come and see for yourself at Beech Road Recreation Ground 24th/25th June

Oral History Group

Project Purley now has 25 tape-recorded interviews with past and present residents with long memories of our village. They range over many aspects of Purley life, going back in some cases 60 or 70 years, and in total they amount to somewhere in the region of 28 hours of recordings. The topics covered include, to name only a few, several accounts of the River Estate in its early days with colourful description of the floods and primitive conditions; Home Farm on its original site; Purley Park Trust; Westbury Farm and vineyard under Bernard Theobald; tales of the Vietnam boat people; and many others.

Except for a few of the most recent, all the tapes have been or are being transcribed, and I have started a programme of putting them on to word processor discs. These are somewhat slow and tedious process but will eventually result in a very important section of Purley archive material. Since the group was formed in 1982 a number of people have done sterling work in conducting the interviews and transcribing, but inevitably some have had to drop out for various reasons, and any offers of help in transcribing or typing would be very welcome.

As there has been a long gap since the last report in the newsletter I felt it was time we published a list of what we have, so here is a list showing for each tape who was interviewed, when it was made, and the main theme where possible (though in fact many of them cover a wide range)

1	David & Rose MARTIN	Dec 1974	River Estate, Village
2	Eric HOGBIN	Jan 1975	
3	Fred & Phyllis RAWLINGS	Jan 1975	River Est & Purley Pk from 1930
4	Hilda DAW	Jul 1983	River Est from about 1940
5	Lynne NICHOLSON	Sep 1983	Village & Purley Pk from 1947
6	Bob & Olive SKERRIT	Feb 1984	Village & Parish coun from 1935
7	Mr & Mrs KIRTON	Mar 1984	Farms, Kennels, etc. from 1920s
8	Mrs GUTCH	Apr 1984	Post Off, village, etc from 1940
9	Mrs E & Sybil PRYOR	Jul 1984	Life at the Old Rectory
10	A & D NICHOLS	Oct 1984	
11	Doris HERN	Nov 1986	Village from 1930, esp wartime
12	Archie & Jessie WHITE	Oct 1986	River Est, P Park Assn, fm 1949
13	Andrew FINDLAY	Jan 1988	Long La, kennels, Menpes fruit fm
14	Michael CASEY	May 1988	"
15	Isobel Sykes	Mar 1988	Chinese refugees from Vietnam
16	Elizabeth DUNCAN	Aug 1988	Purley Park Trust
17	Bill FISHER	Dec 1988	Village, esp Glebe Rd, fm 1930s
18	Bernard THEOBALD	Apr 1989	Westbury Farm and Vineyard
19	Robert & Ethel GUEST	Feb 1989	Home Farm on old site, fm 1953
20	Fred MAY	Feb 1989	The river & Mapledurham Lock
21	Joan KETTLEY	Mar 1989	School, rectors, etc from 1920s
22	R STUBBS, Q POCOCK	Feb 1991	Hunt kennels & stables, Long La
23	Eric & Dennis KIRK	Nov 1991	Long Lane, the Forge, etc
24	Eileen TOMS	Apr 1994	Purley over the last 35 years
25	Reg MARSHALL	Apr 1994	Purley over the last 40 years

James Heslop

Who'd Have a Concubine?

Well at least two of Purley's Rectors did. For those who have lead sheltered lives a concubine is a cohabiting woman without the benefit of marriage lines. In the days when the clergy were supposed to be celibate, many of them had a concubine, everyone knew about it but turned a blind eye. Occasionally however a new bishop came along and decided to bring things back to order. This seemed to happen in the 1390s in Purley just after John Waltham became Bishop of Salisbury. Each bishop was supposed to hold a visitation every three years at which the clergy had to present their credentials, the churchwardens had to prepare a report and all were subject questioning by the bishop. We have quite a number of visitation reports for Purley from the 1700s, these are in the Wiltshire Record Office and are very readable. Churchwardens presentments from 1665 to 1835 are in the Berkshire Record Office and from 1836 onwards in the Oxfordshire Archives. We recently came upon some for Purley from the 1550s in the WRO. But in Bishop Waltham's register there are copies of visitation reports for 1391 and 1394. This register has recently been published by the Canterbury and York Society and while we were hoping that there would be information about Purley, it is noticeable that Purley returns are missing. For 1391 Pangbourne Sulham and Tidmarsh are there but not Purley. The answer seems to be tucked away at the back of the Register where cases are recorded of two different vicars being accused of concubinage. William Smyth (vicar 1387-1390) had by the time of the 1391 visitation become Vicar of Chobham in Surrey, and hence the jurisdiction of Bishop Waltham. One can surmise that Isabel Seman had been named by William's successor, Thomas Bonelyth (vicar 1390-1391) and the matter referred to the bishop of Winchester. He no doubt took action against William and Isabel was kicked out. She would then have had to return to her own Parish (Purley) as destitute. Now she was within Bishop Waltham's jurisdiction and on 13th August 1394 she was summoned to the bishop's palace at Sonning and confessed that she had been William's concubine for 5 years and had

had several sons by him, one of whom was still a babe in arms. As a penance she was ordered to go around Reading market place on seven suitable market days to receive public punishment. She had to go around bare headed and bare footed wearing only her under-tunic with her hair hanging loose. She had to do the same around Purley on the next seven festival days. The 1394 visitation seems to have caught Stephen atte Wall (vicar 1391-1405) who was still vicar and so came under bishop Waltham. The archdeacon was told on 17th August 1394 to issue Stephen with a severe warning that his concubine Rose must leave Purley vicarage within three days. Stephen had confessed under oath that Rose had been his concubine but she was more of a housekeeper and he had not had intercourse with her for six years. However he was told in no uncertain terms that she must go and that there must be no improper meetings in suspicious places. He had to go to Sherborne in September 1394 to do his penance before the bishop.

The News of the World would have had a field day with the 1391 reports. The reports for Newbury Deanery especially are full of accusations of adultery, fornication and mal-practices. Stephen Albury of Thatcham was apparently paid 20s by John Chiseldon so that the latter could have intercourse with Stephen's Wife Marion. The vicar of Bucklebury was fined 6s 4d for the woman living with him whom he claimed was his sister. The vicar of Kintbury was accused of letting his beasts foul the churchyard and allowing William Alisander to remove 300lbs of lead from the church roof. Henry Sutter of Beedon was accused of not attending church on a Sunday, rather he set up a stall outside the church to sell shoes at service times. John Huntingdon the vicar of Basildon was cited for committing adultery with Agnes Schepard and Emma Tresher, both of Basildon. Also Thomas Pye vicar of Aldworth was involved with Agnes Clerke of Basildon. - A fascinating read!

John Chapman

NOTICES

Family History Fair - Bracknell

On Sun 29th October 1995

From 10am - 4pm

At Bracknell Sports Centre

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Berkshire Local History Association

Wantage Walkabout 3rd June

Meet 10:30am at the Vale & Downland Museum.

Lunch at the Museum. Tour of the Exhibition in the afternoon

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Watercress Line Excursion

We are arranging a trip on the Midhants Watercress Line.

On Tuesday 15th or Wednesday 16th August

Anyone interested please contact Rita Denman - 844682

COMMITTEE

Chairman:	Pat DEANE	183 Long Lane Tilehurst (01734) 426180
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	James HESLOP	Thornwood Purley Lane (01734) 842982
	Jan JONES	The Gatehouse Purley Lane (01734) 843779



This edition's view is of
Yew Tree Cottage
in 1965

Faint, illegible text from the reverse side of the page, appearing as bleed-through.