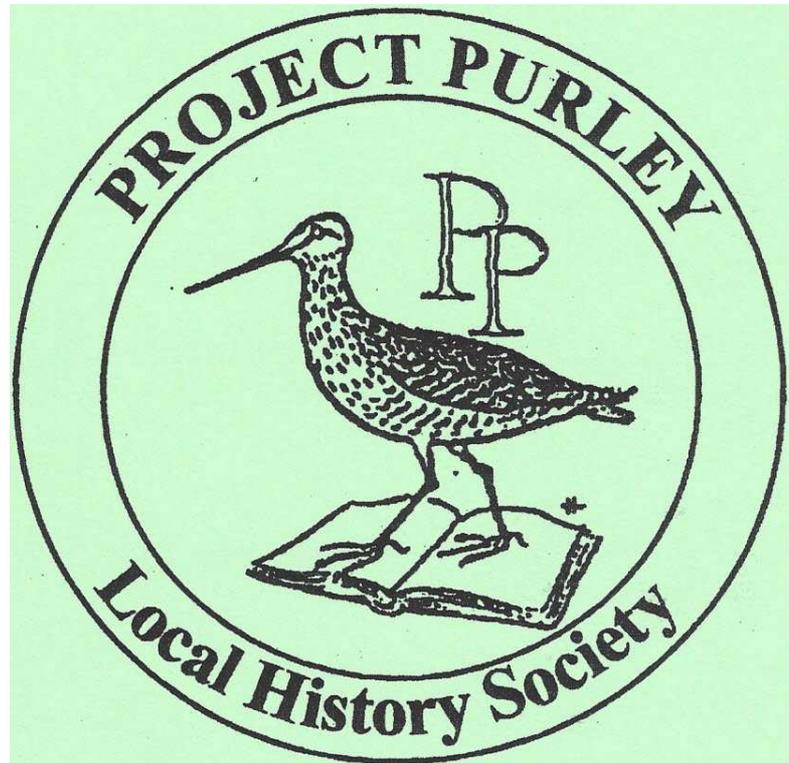


ISSN 1361 5599

PURLEY'S LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



SEPTEMBER 2000 NEWSLETTER

No. 54

EDITOR'S NOTES

The next meeting of Project Purley will be held at the Parish Office, Beech Road at 8.00 pm on the usual third Friday of the month September 15th. This will be an open meeting when all will be welcome. Members of the Society will demonstrate how they go about their research. It may be that you have an old house or an interest in a place you would like to know more about and would perhaps welcome some suggestions as to how to pursue your interest.

A video is available of the Project Purley representation of the Court Baron held in Purley in 1786.

A blank video cassette accompanied by a £5.00 note to Rita Denman at The Mimosas, Purley Village will secure your copy.

**ALL PROCEEDS to MACMILLAN CANCER RELIEF
TO DATE £71.00 HAS BEEN FORWARDED**

We are indebted to Bill Fisher for the reproduction of the programme for the Temperance Festival held at Parley Hall in 1891. Although electronically enhanced, some of the wording was entirely obliterated and it has not been possible to reproduce the programme in its entirety.

The Christmas Party Rick Jones has kindly agreed to us holding our party in The Gatehouse and we shall meet there at 8.00 pm. On Friday 8th December.

2001 The Society's meetings will resume next year on the usual monthly basis commencing on January 19th at 8.00 pm. in the Parish Room. Details of speakers etc. will be announced later.

STOP PRESS ~ PROJECT PURLEY TEA TOWEL

A new supply of the Project Purley tea towel has arrived - the design has been slightly amended i.e. the wording "in the year 2000" has been deleted. As the tea towel is light and therefore cheap to post, it proved to be a very popular gift to send to overseas relatives and friends Jast Christmas. So, if you are looking for an attractive, easy to pack, inexpensive (the price remains at £3) gift, please remember the Project Parley tea towel and contact Ann Betts on 9422485 to place your order.

GOSECROFT ART FESTIVAL

The next event in our cycle of celebrations will be an arts exhibition. This will be called the Goosecroft Art Festival and will be held on Saturday 30th September and Sunday 1st October in the Ball. Incidentally, the area where the barn is located was once called Goosecroft.

The various strands that will make up the exhibition are»

- An art competition and display of the work of Infants and Juniors from local schools.
- A display of the work of Seniors from local schools
- A series of displays and talks on important artists with Purley connections (Cecil Aldin, Mortimer Mompes etc) ,
- A display of paintings showing Purley and neighbouring parishes.
- An opportunity for local artists to display and sell their work.
- An opportunity for groups or individuals to display and sell their craft work

Various members are involved in this project and it is hoped as many members as possible will support the event. As with the exhibition there will be a need for stewarding and other help during the weekend.

This should be a very interesting exhibition and the involvement of the schools will be an important part of this millennium celebration,

BEATING THE BOUNDS - 2000

A190

Members of Project Purley set off from St. Mary's church at 11.30 am. on 1st July. We were waved on our way with a 'bon voyage' from James Heslop. As we got into our stride we were very much aware that we were actually re-enacting the ancient custom of walking the Parish Boundary, once a regular event to ensure that everyone in Purley knew exactly where the bounds lay.

Negotiating Church Mews, Waterside and Brading Way we soon found ourselves on the old Thames towpath - well trodden over the centuries by countless horses pulling their barges. John Chapman reminded us of the closeby site of the horse ferry. We headed upstream passing through the Kissing-gate and entered the lush meadows (once known as Hascutt & Marsh Mead - names now forgotten). Mapledurham Lock was its usual bustle of activity with boating holiday-makers.



The Starting Point

Once again the tow path crossed several more individually named meadows which, even today, can be easily identified by the still existing ditches and hedgerows dividing them. Very soon we beheld a fine view of Hardwick House - which as John Chapman pointed out was the scene of a skirmish during the Civil War when Charles II stayed there. It seemed in no time at all that we reached the SuI Brook, found a pleasant spot to sit down, and all (including our two dogs who

enjoyed the outing) tucked into a picnic. After half an hour or so we headed south alongside the SuI towards the railway bridge, where I bade my farewell to the party as I was going to a local wedding at St. Mary's of course!

I returned home walking beside the railway embankment to Westbury Lane, whilst the other walkers crossed the A329 and continued along Sulham Laue to Home Farm.

Tom Hine

At Home Farm we had a look at the ancient water wheel now attached to the barn. We then departed from the route shown in the booklet, as John Haggerty, the Sulham Estate Manager, had given us permission to follow the private path that follows the western boundary of the garden of Purley Hall.

We had a good view of the canal and then walked alongside the wall of the enclosed kitchen garden and soon reached the public footpath that skirts along the southern boundary of Purley Hall, which we followed to have a look at the remnants of the base of the statue of Hercules and Anteaus,

We rejoined the walk as described in the booklet in the large field south of Sulham Woods in the company of skylarks that were singing and soaring in the sky above us. After the trudge down Long Lane the footpath from Long Lane to Cornwall Close came as a relief Here we could see the remnants of the parish boundary bank.

The network of roads and footpaths that we followed down to the Oxford Road was a sharp contrast to the rural setting of the earlier part of our walk. Once we reached the Oxford road we crossed over into Skerritt Way and walked back to where the walk started.

Ben Viljoen

SUMMER BARBECUE

On a beautiful summer's evening in July, Project Purley held their annual barbecue. I was invited as a guest to Rita and Ron Denman's home for the first time this year and their peaceful garden is the perfect setting with its lovely view over the valley to the Chilterns.

As usual, members of the Society brought a variety of salads and sweets and we were not left hungry after Ron's delicious barbecued burgers, sausages and chicken. There was much talk about Project Purley's successful Millennium events, in particular the Court Baron and some photos were passed around, much to some people's embarrassment. It was good to hear plans being made for the future too.



All in all it was a relaxing evening including a pleasant stroll for most of the guests around the meadow at the back of the house. New faces and existing members mingled with a strong sense of local identity.

I would like to thank Rita and Ron for a lovely event and all those who helped make it such a pleasure.

Sarah
Betts

RA Y~..A...R.D S

ROYAL CRYSTAL PALACE

FUROR AND JUDY SROW

'WUI Perfono tit .• tcruls. 111U'Od- I ariety H~ cDmctf!!Sy-i1111:hdidc
&.be O1WrlWulcmud ~~.

◆ BALLOON ASCENTS ◆

Will be made at intervals.

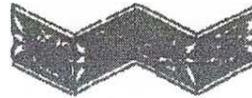
CHOICE SIU.J!CFIONS OF Mt1SIC .,;m be pe:rt'omN dUring the day by' the
Siol\0ncbutth ttempemlncce :SPOS! Band,
fflQ_ ~-4:z'iliA hlr 10tQr1J01f.

-;Par.&: ihrirap. :Bou.nd&boute. o.o-.nut, mu-. Oriobst. ami
othar OUt-door AmUHm8llm,

TA, Pattry. Fntit ud other ~111 'Irill be: 'npllie4 by Ms. W. F.
Sunv4X., ofthe •• ~:' Rcaillpg. at Vodcrate~. id apaci- .~
c~ttd iR the Patk.

— 811 — c.

The Pri~e. to the Succe.srul Com-petiLON at the
Athletic:: SpOM& "Will be preaon,.d aft.n" the
Public Me&ttn.~.



2.90. 'E N.TJ: RTATHM£;:N.t:r!

IIEDGIO1'!.DMIW JrARDBg&:B •• .,1U

.Cl1†

F'IBfW GYMKAStfG DmPLkY

By the Members of the Reading Lads' Temperance Association, under
the direction of Mr CHAS. MOSS, consisting of performance upon the
Vaulting Horse Horizontal Bar, Vaulting Bar Rings, Trapeze, Parallel
Bars, concluding with Indian Club, Indian Bar Bell, Kettle, etc., etc.
4.0 Tea to the Members of the Association when present.

4.11 .;ENTERTAXNMEN~

mmc.mOVB !'AMILr.~B1'Ii.'I.Ii!

i'.SO

SE.OOND GYMN.ASTro DISPLAY

By. t/t.6~LlvJ.s;~Gtl'i'

! ••

6.30

TEMPERANCE MEETING.

Chairman

W. L. PAEMER, Esq., J.P.

A4d'laIn will alJO -!t rhlll

.BeY. W. 'R: 'fOtING. H..A.. of ~~.

Rev. O. A. DAVII.I of liaIdtDg

-19SEPB Im~ lhq., 1 ••• M.P lbr West; 'IJ.am.

Mr. JAMES ~ r4 ~nr

Mr. JOHN GOULL at M~

81LJrimon OJ' DSIC, .,h.. Wm lit nlt- bJII~.t:XHtlq.
oloma tmll 'nJ;,BETmST /s PAfll:a01711B IWmIOF:en.

COURT BARON

From the moment on the evening of 24th June when we walked into the Purley Barn we knew we were going to experience something special. An area of a beautiful barn had been screened off and with a few deft touches it had become a Red Lion, alehouse, venue of the last Court Baron and Court Leet held in Purley 1786. An area for the Court to be held was arranged at one end and the remaining area was set with long radiating tables to accommodate the participants and visitors who would attend. There was 18th century music to entertain and mine host, Joe Emmons, and his serving wenches were already busy from their tap room keeping their customers happy with refreshment. The floor was strewn with sweet herbs rosemary and lavender, to allay the odour that the workers would bring with them. When crushed underfoot the herbs released a very pleasant scent.

There was an excellent attendance, and villagers came from all areas of Purley to experience a little bit of its history. As the main characters arrived dressed in authentic 18th century clothes the atmosphere grew, and the arrival of the narrator, a man obviously of the 21st century dressed in dinner suit and black tie caused a stir among the 18th century villagers. The narrator kept those present informed of what was going on internationally and nationally and also at village level in 1786. He also guided everyone through the proceedings, explaining the procedures and drawing parallels with the 18th and 21st centuries.

There was a great deal of good humoured ribbing between the guests and narrator and everyone seemed to slip easily from the 18th to the 21st century and back again. A pause had to be taken for the flypast of Concordel. Guests were provided with a programme which explained the various terms used and gave added information about the real people who had taken part in the actual proceedings. Also provided was an informative news sheet which gave the news of the day in 1786, culled from the archives of the Reading Mercury.

All eyes were on the new Lord of the Manor, Robert Macreth, as he arrived in fashionable London clothes with his London airs and graces. He had recently acquired the manor of Purley Magna, it is believed from a gambling debt, and he came down to survey his new property and commission an up to date map. The 18th century has been dubbed the age of gambling. It is known that Robert Macreth and his friends were well into the London gambling scene.

The Project Purley members who played the parts of the real villagers of 1786 brought the whole thing alive and all the guests entered into the spirit of the evening, joining in wholeheartedly and adding their own comments. At the end of the Court Baron which dealt with the administration of the village, there was more music, and bread and cheese was served with the liquid refreshment.

After the break came the COULT Leet which was designed to deal with misdemeanours. It was a unique moment when all the males present, over twelve years of age, stood as freemen of the parish and swore the view of frankpledge, pledging their loyalty to their Lord of the Manor and promising to hold mutual bail or pledge for the good behaviour of his neighbours.

With the Court proceedings over, the assembled company took their fill of the remaining bread, cheese and ale. No one wanted to go home and the buzz of conversation and laughter continued to fill 'The Red Lyon'. The only person anxious to leave was Robert Macreth, Lord of the Manor, who was heard to comment that he couldn't get out of this odour and back to London quickly enough. Perhaps his final comment was in the fact that before the ink was hardly dry on his new map, his name had been crossed off and a new owner inserted.

Rita Denman

THE HISTORY OF PURLEY

Jean Debney's opening remark at the beginning of the fourth millennium lecture titled 'Purley Through the Ages' was "Is there any history to Purley and is there anything worth talking about?" The following hour or so was a masterful overview of the last 1000 years of Purley's history, which allayed any doubts that Purley very definitely has a colourful history, and has many links to Royalty and National history. To allow listeners to follow all the boundary changes and the field pattern, the lecture was accompanied by a series of fascinating slides of maps and plans.

In the beginning. The earliest written evidence for Purley is in William the Conqueror's Domesday survey of 1086. Two manors are listed both of which belonged to Edward the Confessor before the Conquest, and Norman barons afterwards. The largest manor, identified as Purley Magna was held by Roger, son of Siegfried, and taxed for 412 hides. The other, Purley Parva, was only 12 hide and was held by Theodoric the Goldsmith.

There are two reasons why we know that Purley existed in Saxon times. First! was recorded as an existing settlement in the Domesday Book and secondly parish name, variously spelt in old documents Porlei, Porlaa (1086), Pur Purlegh (13c.), and Purly (17c.) is compiled of two old English elements. first, 'Pur]', is thought to mean either a pear tree or a snipe or bittern. The S11 which is featured in the Project Purley logo, likes to nest in marshes or d: meadows. However near Westbury Lane there used to be an acre of pasture ~ Pear Tree Pightle (or Piddle) which belonged to Whitchurch. By 1840 the 1 had been virtually obliterated by the newly built Great Western Railway. second element, 'ley' means a woodland clearing where trees have been felled a field), a common placename suffix.

The Middle Ages. In this section Jean. explained how the manors changed in many times. None of the various manorial Lords actually lived here, instead leased their estates to tenant farmers. Some were known as copyholders and (occupied a small cottage and a few acres of land. An archaeological dig carried out by members of Project Purley before the new extension to the church was 1 in the 1980s, revealed several 'pillow' burials with large flints placed on each of the head, a custom thought to date from the Middle Ages.

The 1500's We can only guess how Purley was affected by the traumatic religious changes of the 1500's. The earliest probate records date from the 1500's. In these wills the men named their wife, children and other relatives and neighbours whom they left clothing, animals and other possessions. From this information can start to construct family groups. Craftsmen listed the tools of their trade which they owned.

Purley in the 1600's This section dealt with rates and manorial records, probate records and wills, and the civil war between 1640 and 1660. This period caused a gap in records. During the Commonwealth the Rector of Purley was David Raynor, a Puritan and Congregationalist. At the Restoration he was ejected in favour of Rev. Thomas Blagrove.

Purley in the 1700's Jean related the fascinating story of the church restoration, accompanied by an illustration of how they looked and which villagers were responsible for their upkeep. Some parts were stone walls, presumably provided

by the more wealthy members of the community. Others were wooden rails of differing lengths according to the financial standing of the person responsible. Also in this section Jean included the Turnpike Road, the River Thames and the Roebuck Ferry, John George Liebenrood who lived at Purley Lodge, the licensed premises known as The Red Lyon and the change in ownership of Purley Magna.

Purley in the 1800's This covered the arrival of the Storer family and the building of Purley Park Mansion between] 800 - 1805, the Great Western Railway which was constructed in 1840 and the rise of the Sherwood family in Purley This period also covered the opening of the school in 1873 for all local children between the ages of 5 and 10 years, and the restoration of the church in 1869 - 70.

The 20th Centmy At the beginning of the] 900's Purley was still a small rural parish with few residents and few houses. In the 1920's the old order began to break up with the sale of Pur ley Park in 1920. In 1935 Mr Fanniloe of Pur ley Park offered camping plots in a large field near the church. The owners formed a strong community spirit which in 1936 developed into the Purley Park Property Owners Association. Also in 1936 the old blacksmith's shop was demolished for road widening. It stood where the traffic lights are now on the comer of Long Lane and Oxford Road. After the war, the Memorial Hall was built to commemorate those lost in two world wars. It was built by voluntary labour and was completed in 1953 and is still in regular' use. Since the 19th century when there was never more than 220 souls living in Purley, the population has increased, and at the last census in 1991 had reached over 5000. It is impossible to include all that this absorbing lecture contained. The full attendance and the lively question and answer time demonstrated the interest there is in the fascinating history of Purley .

Rita Denman.

THE MILLENNIUM EXHIBITION

The Saturday that the exhibition opened was a warm and sunny June day. 10.00 am the Goosecroft Fair was in fun swing on the nearby field and the do-to The Barn were opened wide. Project Purley was ready!

Plans for the exhibition had been formulated over eighteen months with the expertise of Pat Deane to lead the project, aided (and perhaps hindered) by A Betts and Millie Bordiss. The excellent stands were created by Ben Viljoen and John Chapman, and with Pat's meticulous planning all the carefully prepared exhibits fitted into place without a hitch.

It was cool in The Barn that opening morning. There was a steady stream of visitors who were happy to linger and chat with one another, and Project Purley members, as memories of days gone by were revived.

We had provided a book inviting comments and questions, and many visitors took the opportunity to air their views, ask further questions and make requests for copies of some of the material shown.

One of the nicest things that came out of the event was the delight and interest shown by various people whose memories of Purley go back many years.

One afternoon we had Mrs Monica Venner and Mrs Gwen Theobald visiting at the same time. Their obvious pleasure of seeing one another again, and looking together at the various photographs of Purley in days gone by, was delightful to see. Both ladies, now in their nineties, had much to tell of the old days in Purley. It was obvious that both had contributed much to village life.

Then, another day, a Mrs Hine visited. Her husband, now eighty, had been manager at the O.A.K. Nurseries in Long Lane. She had brought along a photograph of her husband taken in 1947 at the Nurseries and in the distance showed the Tilehurst water tower! Impossible now!

These were just some of the people of Purley who came. There were many more. Possibly some were newcomers to the village who would go away with the knowledge that Purley on Thames has an infinite store of memories of its people and their lives going back over the centuries.

Millie Bon

COMMITTEE

Chairman:	Ben VILJOEN (0118) 9843170	HighveIdt Beech Road Purley on Thames
Treasurer:	TomHINE (0118) 9624853	Oakley Cottage Westbury Lane Parley on Thames
Minutes Secretary	Ann BETTS (0118) 9422485	4 Allison Gardens Purley on Thames
Meetings Secretary:	RitaHINE (0118) 9624853	Oakley Cottage Westbury Lane Purley on Thames
Editor:	Millie BORDISS (0118) 9415777	2 Hillview Close Tilehurst
Committee	John CHAPMAN (0118) 9426999	5 Cecil Aldin Drive Purley on Thames
	Pat DEANE (0118) 9426180	183 Long Lane Tilehurst
	CliffDEBNEY (0118) 9413223	8 Huckleberry Close Purley on Thrones
	JeanDEBNEY	As Above
	Rita DENMAN (0118) 9844682	The Mimosas Purley Village Purley on Thrones