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| Big Battlefields Bike Ride <i>Richard Benyon MP</i> | 19 th September |
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| Christmas Party | 12 th December |
| Memories of Childhood | 17 th January |



THE PROJECT PURLEY JOURNAL

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Project Purley Publications

- 4 **Sources for the History of Purley on Thames Vol 1 Index** (revised Feb 1989)
- 5 **Sources for the History of Purley on Thames Vol 1 part 3** (items 39-61) (Reprinted and revised Sept 2005)
- 6 **Index Locorum to The Diary of Reading Corporation** (reprinted September 2005)
- 16 **Monumental Inscriptions at St Mary's Church Part B - Memorials in old churchyard**
- 18 **Beating the Bounds (£0.50)**

Please contact Ann Betts if you would like to purchase copies of the above publications. The costs, unless marked otherwise, are £1 per copy for members and £2 per copy for non-members, plus postage where applicable.

The following are being prepared for re-publication

- 1 **Sources for the History of Purley on Thames Vol 1 part 1** (items 1-23) (revised Aug 1988)
- 2 **Sources for the History of Purley on Thames Vol 1 part 2** (items 24-38) (Aug 1988)
- 3 **Monumental Inscriptions at St Mary's Church Purley Part C** (Feb 1989)
- 8 **The Early History of Purley C of E School** by Rita Denman (1993)
- 10 **The Place Names of Purley on Thames** by John Chapman (Sept 1990)
- 11 **Project Purley Newsletters 1-11** (Apr 1996)
- 12 **Project Purley Newsletters 12-16** (Apr 1996)
- 13 **Purley on Thames at the Millennium** compiled by John Chapman (Dec 1999)
- 14 **Monumental Inscriptions at St Mary's Church Part C - Memorials in new churchyard**

Other Purley Related Publications

- Tour Guide to Purley Church** (1988)
A History of St Mary's Church Purley by John Chapman (1988)

*Cover: Insignia of the Thames Conservancy that replaced the Thames Navigation Commission in 1875.
Frontispiece: Interior of Mapledurham Mill.*

THE PROJECT PURLEY JOURNAL



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The Thames Commissioners

JOHN CHAPMAN

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The Thames was for many centuries the main transport highway of England linking the capital, London, with a vast area of central England. There were three quite different groups with a serious economic interest in the river, the fishermen, the millers and the boatmen. Unfortunately what each of these wanted of the river, tended to conflict with the requirements of the others. Thus in 1771 the Government enacted the Thames Navigation Act to regulate affairs and established a Board of Commissioners to oversee and enforce that regulation. Their minute books are preserved in the Berkshire Record Office (D/TCI) and in 2008 the Berkshire Record Society published an edited version of these minutes running from 1771 to 1790. In this article is a summary of the activities reported in those minutes which affected the stretch between Caversham Lock and Whitchurch Lock as the river wends its way past the parish of Purley forming its northern boundary.

The Commissioners included everyone of substance with an interest in the river between London and Lechlade which meant all the clergy, the adjacent land owners, the more substantial barge owners and the boroughs and cities. This amounted to about 600 persons of whom only 130 actually attended any of the quarterly meetings with the maximum attendance at any one meeting being 40. On many occasions no one turned up.

The first general meeting was held at the Town Hall in Henley on the 9th May 1771 and as well as appointing officers they divided the river up into districts so that as well as general meetings to deal with overall affairs, there could be district meetings to deal with strictly local matters. Mapledurham was the boundary between two of the districts. Meetings relating to the stretch from Boulters Lock to Mapledurham were to be held at Henley and those for the stretch between Mapledurham and Shillingford to be held at Wallingford.

At subsequent early meetings it was agreed that proper pound locks would be built to replace the flash locks, so hated by both

millers and boatmen, and this meant setting a maximum size for barges so they would fit into the locks. The barge owners were also required to display their names, abode and the gross tonnage on each barge in letters not less than three inches long. It was also decided to build a towing path not less than 29 ft 3 ins in width alongside the river and commissioners were asked to subscribe money to pay for all these works in return for a proportion of the tolls to be levied on river users.

The Act had set the maximum draught of each barge at 3 feet and barge owners were required to paint white lines on the barges to show where the water level should be. A number of them were found to have been over-generous with their measurements and fined, usually after having been 'shopped' by one of their competitors. Boat builders were not allowed to build new boats greater than 118 feet in length and old boats had to be cut down to no more than 130 feet.

At first consideration was given to matters affecting the river below Caversham Lock and it was not until April 1776 that the Commissioners turned their attention to the stretch from Caversham to Oxford. The first problem was to raise the money to pay for the work that had to be done and then to survey the route and agree rents with landowners over whose land the horse towing path would pass. In June 1776 they were told there was just enough money to build the new pound lock at Mapledurham but this would mean they could not build the necessary towing paths.

On the 4th January 1777 it was reported that Richard Rivers was to be paid £40 to carry timbers by barge and Thomas Munday to be paid £70 to dig out the new lock at Mapledurham and in February they ordered the towing path from Caversham to Mapledurham to be built on the Berkshire side of the river. They instructed Mr Clarke to stake out the path, cut down any trees and value the land to be used. Three months later on the 16th May they again ordered Mr Clarke to start cutting down trees without delay. The reason for the delay became apparent as on the 5th July it was reported that Mr Worlidge, the owner of lands and meadows at Purley, had refused Mr Clarke access to his property claiming an exemption under the 1771 Act. The commissioners were of the opinion that 'the meadow

and ground at Purley is not within the exemption of the Act' and ordered Mr Clarke to write to Mr Worlidge and inform him that 'unless he allows the Commissioners to enter and make a horse path there in an amicable manner, they will be obliged to give him notice of taking it according to the directions of the Act'

By the meeting of 2nd August a letter had been received from Mr Worlidge asking for an explanation of the threat and by what powers they were making it. The Commissioners asked the clerk to send Mr Worlidge 'an account of the clauses of the Act' and request a response from him as to whether or not he was prepared to settle the matter amicably. At the same time they ordered that John Clerk, the surveyor of the 3rd District should, in the case of a refusal, issue the formal notice as required by the Act and offer an annual rent at the appropriate valuation. The reply had not been received on the 16th August and another letter was sent asking Mr Worlidge to hurry up. The matter had still not been resolved by the 15th November when the Surveyor was told to go away and build the path from Mapledurham to Pangbourne unless he received formal objections. Mr Sherwood apparently raised an objection and on the 14th March 1778 they asked the Sheriff to appoint a jury 'to view Mr Sherwood's land at Purley and to assess damages for the same'

At the meeting on the 25th April 1778 it seems they had given up on Mr Worlidge and plans were submitted for getting the horses past his land by traversing The Orchard and The Woodyard, following the road to Purley Green and thence round the churchyard to the top of the Woodyard. The surveyor was ordered to inquire into the value of the lands over which the diversion would run.

Work on the lock at Mapledurham had apparently been going to schedule as on the 28th June 1777 they ordered the use of the old lock to be discontinued and stopped up and from that day a toll of 3d per ton was to be levied for each voyage a barge made through the new pound lock, the charge to be levied on the upward passage only with a half charge for barges going downstream and not intending to return. It would seem that some merchants were trying to get around the toll by simply floating timber down the river, so on the 16th August it was ordered that 1d a load be charged at Mapledurham for passage.

There was evidently more scheming going on as on the 19th September 1778 the collector at Mapledurham was ordered to send Mr Antrum a bill for £1-4-0 for the passage of his boat carrying coals and timber and to collect all tolls unless the boat was carrying timber or goods for the Mill alone.

Flooding had been a problem in November 1777 so the Commissioners resolved to promote a Bill to give them powers to address the problems and appointed Mr Taunton to solicit on their behalf. Further flooding was reported in April 1783 when the tail of the lock was said to be obstructed by gravel washed in by the recent floods.

Mr Clark, the surveyor for the second and third Districts was ordered on the 14th February 1778 to install gauges showing high and low water levels at all the locks and weirs. This had not been done by the 27th February 1779 and the Commissioners ordered it be done immediately. This was reported by the surveyor on the 25th August 1780 as having been done.

He was still waiting for a response from Mr Worlidge but as Mr Worlidge was reported as being 'so ill as to be incapable of giving an answer' they decided to postpone the matter for the present.

On the 2nd December 1786 the Commissioners decided to rename Mapledurham Lock as Purley Lock as it had been pointed out to them that the lock had been built in a headland of Purley and they had a policy of naming the locks according to the parish in which it was situated.

In 1783 an Act was passed authorising the construction of the Thames and Severn canal. The Commissioners were alarmed at the prospect but were unsure as to whether this would benefit them or not as it potentially offered an alternative route so a committee was established to assess the situation. As a consequence it was agreed to look into the state of weirs and locks from Mapledurham to Lechlade to see if improvements to the Thames Navigation were justifiable. This in turn led to the agreement made on 31st December 1785 to construct a pound lock at Whitchurch. A committee was appointed on the 1st April 1786 to ascertain likely costs. They reported back on the 22nd April and the committee was instructed to order plans and

models and get on with it. It was agreed on the 27th January 1787 that a 'gull below Whitchurch lock be immediately ballasted to make a clear passage for the barges there' and on the 31st March payments of £100 to Mr Hill of Pangbourne for timber and of £70 to Mr Clarke for the building works, were approved. On April 25th James Walters of Whitchurch was appointed collector with the toll set at 4d a ton, payable on the upward passage only. At the same meeting the Commissioners agreed that they needed their own boat and Mr Treacher was given £36 and told to buy one. The lock was declared passable on the 30th June and the clerk was ordered to send to the collector copies of orders on how to collect the tolls. On the 8th September it appears that Mr James Walters who had been appointed collector, had not taken up the post and so the post was re-advertised. On the 29th October James Walters the miller was re-appointed at a salary of 5s 6d a week having given £100 in his own security with a further £50 in surety. He was reported dead at the meeting on the 26th June 1790, his widow having applied to take over his post. She claimed to have been doing all the work anyway as well as running the adjacent ferry.

The question of the old ford at Pangbourne was taken up on the 11th June 1788 when it was ordered that a barge passage be dredged at the tail of the new lock.

Among the commissioners and bond holders were Mr Robert Southby (whose memorial is in the tower of Purley Church), the Rev Thomas Powys of Hardwick and Mr Philip Lybbe of Hardwick. All had put up money towards the cost of building the new lock at Whitchurch and the tolls were assigned initially on the 30th June 1787 to guarantee the £1500 cost of the lock. It is not entirely clear from the minutes how all the money advanced by the many parties was accounted for and repaid. By this time the Commissioners were getting a steady income from the tolls which evidently was sufficient to pay all the costs of running the navigation ie wages, rents and maintenance. Interest was being paid on the bonds as well as a share of the profits.

At several points on the river it was necessary to ferry the horses across so that the towing could be continued from the other

bank. There are many references to 'chain ferries' but no mention of one at Purley. There were still many outstanding problems and on the 9th May 1789 Mr Treacher was ordered to produce a complete account of these problems.

On the 28th June 1788 it was reported that a revised Act had been passed by Parliament. One of the consequences was that the draught of barges was increased to 3ft 10 in and there were some revisions as to how the tolls were to be calculated. The Commissioners were also empowered to seize goods, should tolls not be paid and a penalty of £10 was to be imposed on anyone who tried to force a barge through a lock. A few months later it was ordered that the tolls payable should be displayed on a board at each lock.

By the time 1790 had been reached the Commissioners had established the Thames as a thriving highway for river traffic with income flowing in to provide both maintenance and improvements to the new pound locks that had been established. Many thorny issues had been tackled and resolved and by and large most of the parties with an economic interest in the river were satisfied with the new system of regulation.

We await with interest the publication of Jeremy Sims' second part of the edited minutes of the Commissioners.

The Purley Barn

JOHN CHAPMAN

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 groom-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.



Interior of eight bay section of Barn

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 its turn was replaced by a brick house in 1741 and the timbers reused in our barn.

Now we move to 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 Belleisle 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.

Between 1985 and 1994 there were great debates as to the future of the Barn. Various plans were submitted for its conversion into three or four dwellings, total demolition and conversion to community facilities in situ. However, all these came to naught as the developer went broke and the site was bought by Bryant Homes.

The final move to the Recreation Ground was due to the generosity of Bryant Homes who had it restored and made available for community use. The restoration was done by Ovary Construction who are specialists in this field. The barn was stripped to a skeleton so it could be examined in great detail, including the tree ring dating exercise by Nottingham University on the 31st January 1995.

The tiles were first removed and stored in a portable steel shed but even so many were broken and a large quantity of second hand tiles had to be obtained from other sources. As the barn was

dismantled frame by frame, the timbers were cleaned and treated and then it was re-erected on its new site. There was a sod cutting ceremony on Jan. 9th 1995 attended by members of the Parish Council and the Scouts and work began immediately to prepare the new site. Foundations had to be dug and a new trench cut so that power cables could go underground instead of overhead and via a pole right to where the barn was to go. As far as possible all the old timbers were resited in their original positions, but a number of new baulks of Suffolk oak had to be obtained to replace sills which had rotted away and softwood timbers which Trenthams had used in their repairs. Also the Building Control people insisted that the joints were all reinforced with iron bars. New cladding and windows were provided along with some new fire-exits and there was a dividing partition built to split the 8-bay structure into 5-bay and 3-bay sections. In the aisle part some small offices were built and gents, ladies and disabled toilets plus a small kitchen provided.

The new Barn was officially opened on the 24th June 1995 with a major exhibition put on by Project Purley. For the next few years the 3 bay section was used intensively by the scouts and youth club with the 5 bay section almost unused. However gradually over the years usage of the barn has increased and can now show a small profit. The maintenance and insurance costs are very high but we are now hopeful that it will pay its way in the future.

Farewell to Hazel and Michael King

We were very sorry to see Hazel and Michael King vanish off to the West Country. Hazel has done a great job as our minute secretary and Michael has opened our eyes to what is going on around us in the way of nature. They will both be very much missed although they have promised to come back for the occasional wine tasting - so we hope to see them at one of our meetings in the not too distant future. We can only wish them well in their new home.

John Chapman

Nature Notes

MICHAEL KING



April

First week started warm but on the 6th two to three inches of snow fell during the early hours, followed by snow and hail in the second week. This cold snap caused damage to many spring flowers and tree blossoms.

At the end of the month we were in Scotland and it was great to see the snow on the mountains – saw red deer and oystercatchers on ploughed fields. Later learned on Spring Watch that these coastal birds are beginning to breed inland.

May

The month started with heavy showers, second and third weeks warm and sunny (apparently the highest recorded temperatures for 200 years), but the weather turned cold and wet again as the month drew to a close.

During the warmer spells observed speckled wood, holly blue and orange tip butterflies in the garden.

Coal tits busy at the nest box on the cherry tree, feeding the young every two to three minutes and the brood successfully fledged by the end of the month. A dunnock (also known as the hedge sparrow) had built its nest in the gooseberry bush on the allotment. Swifts and martins seen regularly. Heard a cuckoo when fishing the Pang – its calls have not been heard a great deal this year.

Trees now in full leaf and the garden very colourful. Long Lane hedgerow was particularly colourful with the pink and white of the hawthorn and yellow of the honeysuckle.

June

Very heavy rain on the 3rd which caused flooding in some areas, with river levels rising. Second week saw some very warm days. High winds in third week and chilly in the shade.

Walked some of the Ridgeway from Aldworth to Bury Down on a particularly warm day. The views were spectacular and the hedgerows dressed in many colours; dog rose, elderflower, rock rose, buttercup, vetch and pyramid orchid. Saw and heard skylarks, yellowhammer, buzzard, red kite, curlew, warbler, long-tailed tits, swifts, martins and a hare escaping from the encroaching tractor spraying the crop.

National reports stated that the moth population is declining, probably due to the wet conditions in 2007. Could impact on young birds successfully fledging due to lack of caterpillars and also may cause poor pollination of plants.

In 2006 short-snouted seahorses were discovered in the Thames estuary following a conservation survey, probably due to cleaner river water. This information was only released in April 2008 for protection purposes. There have also been more sightings of the whale family entering tidal waters.

Sadly, this is Michael's final contribution to the Journal following his and Hazel's move to Wiltshire. A number of members have commented on how much they enjoy reading the Nature Notes – perhaps there is someone who would be prepared to write about the natural history of the area and keep us informed of interesting facts that come to light. If so, I would be very glad to hear from them. Editor.

Reviews of Meetings & Events

Mapledurham Walkabout

The Society's annual walkabout was planned with military precision by our secretary, Tony Trendle, so that on Friday, May 16th, a party of twenty-six followed Tony's route map towards Mapledurham House, where we were to have a conducted tour.

The majority of the members had also decided to enjoy a pub lunch beforehand, so after some erratic map reading by Edna, Marion and Rita, the four of us eventually arrived at the Sun Inn at Whitchurch. There we enjoyed a convivial meal in a traditional country pub built in 1910 to replace the original building which had been destroyed by fire. There was also the opportunity to meet and play with Salem, the inn's resident three-legged but perfectly content cat, who is so well looked after by the staff and regular customers.

After eating, there was a short drive down a narrow, winding road and into the Mapledurham estate where we met those in our group who had eschewed lunch, as well as Corry, who was to be our guide for the afternoon. Corry was immediately recognisable as the face behind the stall selling flour at Purley Farmers' Market and after greeting us, he led us into the first stage of our visit, the watermill. He explained how the mill works, telling us that the grain is fed through a hopper towards the stones, where only the top runner stone turns, grinding the grain against the bottom bed stone to produce flour. Some of the timbers in the mill date from 1423, and the gear wheels have to be made of wood. Metal wheels could produce a spark which, in turn, could set alight the flour dust which lies on the floor of the mill. The actual waterwheel is made of oak and has to be replaced every twenty-five years. The mill has a private water supply and at the moment the estate has submitted an application to install an Archimedes screw and turbine to improve efficiency. Unfortunately we were not able to see one of Salem's relatives as mills are no longer allowed to keep cats on the premises to keep

down the number of rats and mice.

We left the mill, watched Corry close the sluice gates to stop the flow of water, and walked towards Mapledurham House itself. As we did so, we noticed pairs of Canada geese waddling across the lawn with their fluffy chicks following resolutely behind, and a pair of great crested grebe meticulously building a nest against a barrier in the stream. Our route took us past the 12th century church, which uniquely serves the Protestant and Catholic religions, across the beautifully manicured lawns and on to the steps of the house. It was built towards the end of the 16th century as an Elizabethan manor house, idyllically situated facing Caversham and the River Thames and sheltered by the Chiltern Hills. Originally built for the Blount family, it has a gable end decorated with oyster shells showing it was a safe refuge for Catholic dissidents, plus a number of priest holes for extra security.

The house has been passed down through generations to the present owners, Mr John and Lady Anne Eyston, who are continuing with



a programme of renovation. The building has seen several periods of disrepair, and was one of the few large country houses not requisitioned by the War Office during World War Two due to its lack of facilities. It became derelict during the 1960s, but the major refurbishment carried out during recent decades meant that we were able to view an attractive building with many distinctive features. Our guide took us through all the state rooms including the library where many original works by Alexander Pope are kept. He spent time at the house whilst enjoying a dalliance with the owner's daughters in the 1740s. We also saw the sunken chapel, originally the servants' quarters, the cantilevered staircase which

has an unusual summit, the upstairs bedrooms including one which has a bedspread containing 15,900 pieces of material, and the dining room. The latter contains a selection of family photographs as well as one which shows the Queen Mother as a visitor in 1982.

But perhaps to most people, especially the younger generation, Mapledurham Estate is best known as the location for film and television productions. The most publicised of these is "The Eagle has Landed," starring Michael Caine and shot at Mapledurham in 1976. (Edna Bint could remember visiting the site at the time of filming and seeing an American jeep which had been deliberately driven into the stream.) In more recent times, television series such as "Class Act," "Midsomer Murders" and "Sharpe's Regiment" have all been filmed on the estate.

It had been a long but enjoyable afternoon, so we concluded our tour by first visiting the tearooms to take some refreshment and talk over our experiences, and then looking round the small but well-stocked gift shop.

Five o'clock was the time on our watches as we made our way back to the car park and began the drive back through Woodcote, Crays Pond and across Whitchurch toll bridge towards Pangbourne and Purley. The weather had been kind to us which added to a most pleasant occasion. Our thanks to Tony and the staff at Mapledurham for making it all possible.

David Downs

Outing to Stratfield Saye

Stratfield Saye House, the ancestral home of the Dukes of Wellington, was the venue for the summer outing by members of Project Purley. A total of 37 of us made our way in a convoy of cars out along the A.33 on a pleasantly warm morning following Tony Trendle's route map, until we arrived at the estate entrance just before 10.30 a.m.

Once admitted and gathered together in front of the house, we



were divided into three groups according to the colour-coded card we had been given in the car park. I found myself in the Orange Group, and our guide for the house tour was to be a most pleasant and knowledgeable lady wearing the name tag "Mrs Patricia Weeks." We also had an additional guide, carrying a walkie-talkie, who brought up the rear of our party, and whose function was apparently to co-ordinate the movement of visitors around the property and ensure nobody was lost or left behind.

Mrs Weeks addressed our group in the Great Hall and by way of introduction explained that the house and stable blocks were built in about 1630 by Sir William Pitt, Comptroller of the Household to James I. After the Duke of Wellington's victory over Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, a grateful nation, represented by Parliament, voted the sum of £600,000 for the purchase of a suitable country house and estate for the Great Duke. He chose the beautiful Carolean house and an estate which was then 5,000 acres in size and Stratfield Saye has remained the family home ever since. It is currently owned by the 8th Duke, though he lives quietly in retirement, and the day to day running of the estate is undertaken by his eldest son, Lord Douro.

Our tour of the house began in reverse order in the dining room, where the walls were hung with family portraits including that of the

Great Duke's mother, who apparently told her son, "You will never make a soldier." The structure of the house has remained virtually unchanged over the years, but the interior has been extensively remodelled. It was only in 1948 however, we learned as we entered the servery, that it became connected to electricity.

From the servery we moved to the music room, with its piano dating from 1820, and the many tributes to Copenhagen, Wellington's favourite charger which he rode for fourteen hours at Waterloo. Then it was on to the China Room, with its display cabinets filled with many collections of ornate crockery, and next the Lady Charles Room, named after the wife of the Great Duke's second son, Lord Charles Wellesley. This room is now the family's principal sitting room and leads to the Print Room, which is adorned with a mixture of landscape, military and sporting prints, chosen more for their symmetry than for their subject matter.

Our rapid tour continued with brief stops at The Study, once the Great Duke's bedroom, but from where Lord Douro now administrates his office staff, the Library containing over 3,000 books, many of them captured from Napoleon, and the Gallery, which looks out over the beautifully manicured lawns to the River Loddon and the country park beyond. The Gallery is perhaps the most elegant room in the whole house, as it is decorated with prints mainly of Shakespearean scenes, and a series of bronze busts, partially gilded, and which include representations of Napoleon as a Roman Emperor, King Charles I and Louis XIV of France. This room is used quite frequently by film and television companies for period dramas.

By this stage our three groups were starting to catch up with each other, and beginning to criss-cross with a speed and precision reminiscent of the Royals Signals motor-cycle display team at the Royal Tournament. But the indomitable Mrs Weeks led us through the Large and Small Drawing Rooms to the Great Hall once again, which was to be the final stop on our house tour. The Hall displays portraits of each of the eight Dukes, placed above the gallery which is supported by a range of Ionic columns, unusually made of wood.

The most attractive features in the Hall however are the Roman mosaic pavements set in the floor. They date from at least 400 AD and were excavated from Silchester and brought to Stratfield Saye in 1866 by the second Duke.

This brought our house tour to its conclusion. The tour had been a little confusing, as we were not able to follow the history of the house in chronological order, because the three groups had each needed to start at a different part of the building. But this barely detracted from our enjoyment, which was enhanced by a walk in the Pleasure Grounds. We were also able to visit the Wellington Exhibition, containing mementoes of the Great Duke's life as soldier and statesman, and finally to view the funeral carriage. Wellington died on September 14th, 1852 at Walmer Castle aged 83, and his body was taken on November 18th on a huge and richly ornamented carriage, drawn by twelve black horses, to the funeral service in St. Paul's Cathedral.

A small group of us also took the opportunity to walk through the Rose and American Gardens to view Copenhagen's grave in the Ice House Paddock. The faithful chestnut stallion enjoyed a long retirement at Stratfield, dying in 1836 aged 28 and was buried with full military honours. The Turkey oak behind his grave has grown from an acorn planted by the Great Duke's housekeeper in 1843.



By now the Project Purley party had fragmented for lunch. Some went to the nearby Wellington Arms, but our group of Millie, Peter,

Marion (1) and Marion (2) and myself decided to visit the estate gift shop, then eat in the adjacent tea room. Over a pleasant salad lunch we reflected on an excellent outing which had taught us so much about the Wellington family, their house and the Stratfield Saye estate. Our sincere thanks go to Tony Trendle for making it all possible.

David Downs

Summer Barbecue

Exactly one year after the dreadful floods which devastated so much of the Thames Valley, a grey, leaden sky threatened the success of the Project Purley summer barbecue. In the event, the evening of Friday, July 18th was only slightly disfigured by rain, which veered between slight drizzle and heavy downpour during the occasion.



We were saved from the worst of the weather by the cluster of gazebos and tents pitched on the front lawn at Highveldt. These had been set up by Ben, Cliff, John and Peter during the morning and provided more than adequate shelter for the 35 members and

friends who attended. The only drawback was the disinclination to circulate from table to table of guests, though this again did not prevent each of the huddled groups from engaging in animated conversation. In between the courses, timed once more with military precision (starters at 7.30 p.m, main barbecue 7.45 p.m, dessert at 8.15 p.m.) our tent discussed a range of topics.



We talked about the most enjoyable recent outings to Mapledurham House and Stratfield Saye, the incidence of car crime in the village, Marion Venner's forthcoming visit to Australia, and whether she will attempt the Sydney Harbour Bridge climb (Marion says she is thinking about it!), questioned which direction water goes round the plug hole in Australia and discussed the relative merits of the various wines on our table. We told a few jokes too, which became ever so slightly more risqué as the evening progressed, and also spoke about the new sponsorship deal which has seen the name of the supermarket "Waitrose" appear on the Reading F.C. shirts. One helpful contribution was the suggestion that a footballer having a poor game might have a "reduced" label added to the logo!

While this healthy buzz of conversation was going on round the garden, Ben and John were on duty at the grill and we were invited to queue for our main course. Best behaved of all of those waiting to

be fed was Bri, the two year old dog, who sat patiently while we worked our way through the sausages, chicken legs and burgers, followed by a selection of mouth watering puddings laid out on tables at the bottom of the garden steps.



The rain stopped for a brief period to enable guests to escape the confines of the tents, Bri was able to trot around the garden and be fed various titbits, and then almost before we knew it, the evening was drawing to a close. Chairman John made a brief speech thanking Ben and Dorothy for their hospitality, Edna led us all in a chorus of "Happy Birthday" for Dorothy, (who declined to reveal her age) and Ann announced that the new Project Purley tea towels were available in green, terracotta and blue at a cost of £3 each.

Just as we were packing away cutlery and crockery and folding

up chairs, some of us were fascinated by a pair of bats swooping backwards and forwards between the eaves and the branches of



neighbouring trees. They were quite clearly happy and contented visitors to Highveldt, just as the rest of us had been.

David Downs

Barn Exhibition & Alzheimer's Presentation

As part of the Village Day celebration on 24th August Project Purley mounted a small exhibition in the Barn.



The theme of the exhibition was the history of the Barn. Also on display was a framed description of the Barn's history that will be

presented to the Parish Council as a permanent display. The text from this description is printed as an article in the current Journal.



At the exhibition Chreanne Montgomery-Smith of the West Berkshire Alzheimer's Society was presented by our Chairman with a cheque for £700, made up of donations and profit from the Rain or Shine production of *The Winter's Tale* earlier this summer. The money will be used by the Purley Singing for the Brain group which is run by Janet Southall under the auspices of the Alzheimer's Society.

Ben Viljoen

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