

THE PROJECT PURLEY JOURNAL



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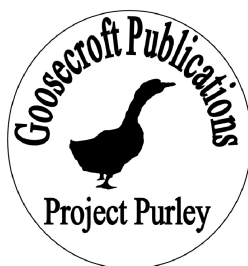
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A Message from our Chairman

Catherine Sampson

May I first thank you for your support when I was elected chairman at our AGM in March. My predecessor John Chapman will be a very hard act to follow and we owe him a great deal of thanks for all that he has done for the society over the last five years as Chairman. I was very pleased that one of my first duties as newly elected chairman was to be able to award honorary lifetime membership of Project Purley to both John and Cliff Debney, both founder members of the society; in recognition of the unstinting support they have given over the last thirty years.

The last few months have already been somewhat busy what with the exhibition and Jubilee – more of later, and also our summer programme of visits, theatre and the BBQ. While these have been taking place, Val Jones has also been planning next year's programme which offers some very interesting speakers and topics and new places to visit. As always we have tried to focus on local subjects as much as possible but also include some of wider interest.

In January our members' evening will once again push the boundaries of previous sessions. We plan to open up our archives, briefly talk about the contents and then let people browse through the memorabilia, maps etc. You will probably be aware that until now much of the archive material we have accumulated over the years has been held in different people's houses, often tucked away in hard to get at places. Some is now held electronically but as we start to move everything into one central storage space in The Barn it will give us an opportunity to start to catalogue items, protect them against the ravages of time and make them more accessible. Hopefully they will also encourage and allow more local research – one of our key objectives as a society.

Finally I would like to welcome all of our new members. I hope that you find us a friendly bunch, enjoy our meetings and get involved.

The Aldermaston Pipeline

John Chapman

Next summer a decision will be taken as to the final fate of the pipeline which stretches from the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston to the Thames at Purley. The two main options are *dig up* or *seal off*. As this will affect Purley more than most other parishes we felt it might be useful to give some of the history of the pipeline.

During World War Two there was an airfield at Aldermaston. This was used as the site for the development of British Nuclear weapons when the war ended with the explosion of the two American bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These had been developed with the active participation of a number of British scientists who had in fact begun the research as part of the 'Tube Alloys' project at Birmingham University.

The airfield at Harwell had already been taken over to be used for civilian research but a second site nearby where the military developments could take place was deemed essential and the airfield at Aldermaston was selected. This was quite close to the site of the first British nuclear reactor which had been located at Aldermaston Court. The reactor hall remained there until quite recently when Blue Circle redeveloped the Manor House and its grounds for their national headquarters.

The Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (AWRE), as it became known, was established in the 1940s under its first Director William (later Sir William) Penny. It was responsible for the design and development of all British Nuclear weapons which were constructed at the nearby Royal Ordnance factory at Burghfield. Many workers and scientists were transferred into the area from the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich. An estate was built for them at Calcot but many preferred to find their own accommodation and a number settled in Purley. The establishment was renamed Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) in 1987.

The disposal of waste products from the establishment was always a matter for concern and great care was taken to ensure that it was disposed of safely. One of the waste products was contamina-

ted water. After a great deal of heart-searching it was finally decided to build a pipeline to take it from Aldermaston to discharge in the River Thames.

In the early 1950s Purley Parish Council were informed that this pipeline would run into the Thames at the Sul Brook. There would be eleven miles of pipe of between 5 and 3 inches diameter which would discharge about 25,000 galls daily into the Thames.

The pipeline enters the area running alongside the A340 from Theale to Pangbourne. Just after it goes beneath the M4 motorway it swings north east to cross the Sulham to Tidmarsh road. It then heads due north to cross Sulham Lane. It runs to the east of Sulham Lane and the Sul Brook crossing under the railway near the sewage works. From there it veers slightly north east and drains into the Thames about 100 yards to the east of the bridge over the Sul Brook.

The pipeline operated successfully for many years without any serious problems or complaints. The rise of protest about all things nuclear reached a peak at the time of the introduction of Cruise missiles at Greenham Common in the late 1970s and a lot of very ill informed press coverage was given to the pipeline.

Many people were put into a state of near hysteria, having been persuaded by the media that the whole area was being polluted and everyone was being turned into either a zombie or, at best, a cancer victim. The reassurances of local councillors and the safety officers at Aldermaston had very little effect.

The controversies reached another peak in January 1966 after a television programme put out by Yorkshire Television purported to prove that children living in the area suffered an abnormal rate of childhood cancers. They were unable to supply the so called evidence upon which the claim was based but an enquiry was called for by the County Council which was conducted by the Commission for Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE)

In order to reassure themselves Purley Parish Council visited AWRE in 1986 where they were told about the procedures for discharging and the safety precautions that were taken. By and large everyone was satisfied with the assurances given.

A more serious problem occurred in December 1987 when a valve was left open at Ufton Nervet and effluent flooded a field, while a section of the pipeline was being maintained. The pipeline has twin pipes which run alongside each other so that when one is being maintained the other can be used for discharging. This means that every so often there is a set of valves which switch effluent from one pipe to the other. One of the valves was left in the wrong position and effluent flooded the manhole and overflowed into ditches. About 4000 galls was released. When it was realised what happened the valves were closed and the water pumped out of all the neighbouring ditches. Newbury District Council took samples of water, soil and vegetation which were sent to the National Radiological Protection Board at Harwell for analysis.

The effluent that is discharged down the pipe came from water used in various activities at the establishment, eg in showers and to wash surfaces. This water was drained into a storage tank and treated to deposit minerals. After treatment it was allowed to drain into a second tank and allowed to settle again. It went into a third tank and after sampling was allowed to flow into the pipe down to Purley. Each batch contains around 3-4000 galls.

Each year a report was made based upon samples of water from the Thames both above and below the pipeline outfall and for comparison in 1985 a survey was made of radioactivity in spa water sold in local shops. Seventeen samples were purchased and subjected to the same analysis as was used for the samples taken from the River Thames. Every sample was several times as radioactive as the effluent. More detailed surveys could find no pattern of radioactivity related to the pipeline and the results were roughly the same all over southern England, partly from natural radiation and partly as a result of atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons - even the traces from the tests in China greatly exceeded any local sources.

The pipeline has not been used now for many years as quite different methods of disposal of waste water are now used. The Health and Safety Executive will be deciding whether it is best to dig up and remove all traces of the pipe or just seal it off and forget about it.

Reminiscence

Rides and Rambles Round Reading

This article was originally published as no 5 in a series by 'Viator' in an unidentified local newspaper. The cutting was found in the Reading Reference Library in part of the collection by Mary Outen. Only the first part referring to Purley and Pangbourne is reproduced.

From the references to the renovation of Pangbourne Church we may date it to between March 1865 and June 1866.

This ride will not be easily matched, either in picturesque beauty or in historical associations; its total length may be about 16 miles, but such a 16 miles as will challenge any other district in the vicinity of Reading. I have often thought, Mr Editor, that if there be a spot in which total abstraction from the world may be obtained, it is in a village church, on some week day; it is true that the door is generally locked, from the impression that the good people only expect ingress once a week, and never think of stepping aside out of the daily routine, for a brief application of a waste five minutes to a higher purpose. Perhaps if daily access were afforded it might lead to better results.

But my remark was, that the Village Church when left to its solitude and unbroken silence, when environed with the soft green shadow of stately elms or limes is of all places the most conducive to contemplation, as Cowper says,

"Meditation here may think down hours to moments"

If this be so, how strictly is it illustrated in the case of "Purley Church", for I may further observe that there is a portion of residents of the neighbourhood who have never even seen it! When Mr. James Thorne took his "Ramble up the River Thames" he investigated Purley, which he calls "*a pretty little rustic village*" and he surveyed "Purley House" and he looked at "Purley Hall" and at the old mill opposite, at Mapledurham, but he did not find Purley Church, about 50 yards from the banks of the said Thames! This is not surprising, for one would suppose that the pious founders of the building had studied to conceal their own production. In a quiet corner of the Purley Manor House Park, buried in a luxuriant mass of elms and chestnuts, rises the brick tower; the nave canopied with the droop-

ing branches, and the south front closed in with beech and poplars: the whole forms a picture in which solemn repose and quietude are in their fullest force.

The Tower bears the date of 1626, and this leads the visitor to fall back on historical recollections. What in the year 1626 was going on outside the leafy barriers of this consecrated spot? What agitated Old England then? certainly not a Reform Bill; perhaps it would have been better if it had - taking the word in its moral bearing. The Year 1626 was the year of the accession of Charles I to his throne and to all his Regal cares: the year of his coronation, when Arundell, the Lord Marshall, bade the people cry "*God save King Charles*" and they remained silent: the year of the impeachment of his minister, Duke of Buckingham, afterwards assassinated: the year of his disagreement with his new bride, Henrietta Maria, youngest daughter of Henry IV of France, and that of his first quarrel with his Parliament: his Capital had been decimated by the Plague, nearly as severe as afterwards in 1666.

Such were a few of the outside events, whilst the quiet little Purley Church rose within its leafy enclosure. A uniformity of style pervades the interior: the nave divided by a Saxon arch from the chancel; monumental tablets are numerous, one the work of the celebrated Nollekens, to the memory of Anthony Storer Esq. On the pavement is the tombstone of William Noble "*Preacher of the Word of God*" date 1644; an ornamented oak ceiling covers the Chancel.

Quitting the Church one of the leading residences in this parish is 'Purley Hall' once the resort of Warren Hastings during that great epoch of his life - his trial.

'Purley House' is said to have cost £15,000 in building: it commands noble views of the valley of the Thames as far as Sonning and from the lawn are seen the Elizabethan mansions of Mapledurham and Hardwicke, backed by the noble woods above.

The Roebuck Inn possesses a garden with a view unrivalled - the river and the rail beneath the observer's feet, and the churches and buildings of Reading and vicinity in the distance.

Such are some of the features which may be noted at Purley; but

following the turnpike road (in some cases in most dangerous proximity to the Great Western and its fearful Express) the stranger soon enters the village of Pangbourne - built says a tourist, in the form of the Roman capital 'T'.

The Manor was once granted to the Abbot of Reading: afterwards transmitted by Queen Mary to Sir Fras. Englefield and after further successions to John Bredon, Esq. in 1671

Pangbourne Church is undergoing a perfect renovation and that in so beautiful and elaborate a style that it promises when completed to be the finest specimen of the highly decorated in the neighborhood. The solid and massive brick tower will not, I fear, be in unison with the building, and to convert it into the foundation of a graceful spire would be a costly undertaking; as it is, very large sums are evidently being absorbed, but they are absorbed in a noble work, the best product of man's genius - a Christian Church.

Pangbourne is known as the resort of the painter, the angler, and the poet. Hoffland, Constable and Creswick have transferred the weir, the lock, and the fisher's hut to their canvass: the inverted image broken by the interrupted but transparent stream glows on paper through the magic power of the optic nerve: the rustic scenes of this vicinity might be applied to an old poet's picture of the cotter's life. He writes thus:

When morning's twilight tintured beam
Strikes their low thatch with slanting gleam,
They rove abroad in ether blue
To dip the scythe in fragrant dew:
The sheaf to bend, the beech to fell
That nodding shades a craggy dell

Midst gloomy glades, in warbles clear
Wild nature's sweetest notes they hear:
on green untrodden banks they view
The hyacinth's neglected hue:
In their lone haunts and woodland rounds.
They spy the squirrel's airy bounds.

The Diamond Jubilee in Purley

Catherine Sampson

Our approach as a village

In June 2012 Queen Elizabeth II became only the second queen in our country's history to celebrate a Diamond Jubilee, the only other being her great, great grandmother, Queen Victoria, in 1897. As plans of our national celebrations began to be released from early 2011, we began to plan our celebrations in Purley and started with a general meeting to which interested villagers and representatives from Purley's clubs and organisations were invited. From this first meeting came the Jubilee Steering Group which Bill Ayling had already volunteered to chair and Jean Chudleigh act as secretary (she soon also became the treasurer). The steering group met monthly and from October a smaller project management team comprising of Bill, Jean, Pam Beddoes and myself met weekly.

Our aim was to produce a coordinated programme of events and activities between June 1st and 5th which would enable everyone to have the opportunity to participate and celebrate, have fun, make new friends and enjoy being part of our vibrant community. We aimed to involve all sections of Purley's community and in particular its organisations and societies (a record 30+ local organisations were ultimately involved) to promote the many village facilities (over ten different venues were used) and to celebrate our rich culture of sports, arts and history. The strapline 'A weekend to Remember' seemed most appropriate.

Funding

Funding was critical from the very beginning. A number of societies and organisations, and some very generous individuals kindly donated money. Project Purley gave the £600 raised at June's Rain or Shine performance out of which our exhibition costs were also to be taken and John Chapman also arranged to sell bricks from the demolished Brunel bridges which netted an additional £200+. A gift from His Excellency Mr Shaker allowed a souvenir bone china mug to be bought for every child in the village who attended one of our schools or pre-schools. An additional £2000+ was raised by the

sale of souvenir programmes and advertising space within, and from the sale of commemorative bone china mugs. Our biggest fund-raising attempt however was perhaps the slowest burner. We submitted a grant application to findmeagrant in December and began to benefit immediately from their donation-matching but had to wait until mid-May, with events just two weeks away, to learn that our bid had been successful and we were fully funded. It made possible the last minute addition of several new attractions to the Goosecroft Gala including a climbing wall, kiddies' carts, a bucking bronco and a Punch 'n' Judy man – all of which were highly popular on the day, and also allowed the return of the £2000 'fall-back' loan which the Parish Council had made.

Events

So what took place in the end - well probably the first thing to say is that every planned event took place – no mean feat given the number of events and the inclement weather. Celebrations kicked off locally on the Friday morning when the infants' school opened its doors to past pupils. In the evening the first of a series of cricket matches took place at Goosecroft – this one saw Purley on Thames Cricket Club playing Purley Jubilee Football Club in the ultimate home derby. The footballers had won on their last encounter and they triumphed once again much to the horror of the cricketers who also suffered the injury of their former chairman Martin Bishop in his swan-song match. Friday evening also saw the first of two performances by Purley Players in a specially-written mystery play set at the time of the coronation. Dinner was served between acts and the ambience of 1953 was enhanced by the additional extras of a period pub bar and stalls selling WI cakes and jam and preserves. Profits from the sales of jam and cakes and also the proceeds of a raffle raised over £700 for charity, one of a number of charitable donations made possible because of the weekend's events.

On Saturday the artistic and horticultural talents of the village were further put to the test. The Horticultural Society ran a Planted Trough Competition with entries being displayed first at the Memorial Hall and later at the Goosecroft Gala, whilst up at Goosecroft the first of around 30 scarecrows were already gathering with some

incredibly creative examples. Tim Metcalfe had the tough job of judging, assisted in his deliberations by competition organisers Marion Maybank and John Murphy.

The torrential rain may have put off a few people from attending but it did not put a dampener on Sunday's events. A celebration church service at St Mary's was well attended and included a community choir which had been brought together for the occasion. Afterwards Rick Jones as chairman of the parish council and Revd Sally Robertson led a procession of flags and congregation down to Purley's Big Jubilee lunch at Bucknell's Meadow. Family sports, music and falconry displays followed in the afternoon and the music went on into the evening with Purley's Got Talent before ending with a sail-past by the African Queen.

Monday brought not only better weather but also our own exhibition, the Goosecroft Gala, Victorian bowling at Trentham Bowls Club and a disco at the Purley Sports and Social Club. Well over a thousand people attended the Gala, perhaps nearer two, and we probably had around 750 of them into the exhibition. A Jubilee Fancy Dress Competition saw the crowning of our Jubilee King and Queen and Kingsley was a big hit at his Royal Tea Party where over ninety children sat down to tea. Monday evening brought the official Jubilee beacon – lit spectacularly at 10.15pm on the tower of the church in front of a crowd of over a thousand people. St Mary's hosted the evening and arranged for the Jubilee concert taking place at Buckingham Palace to be beamed onto the tower of the church – it worked brilliantly and the crowd kept Gurmit and Ruchi from Purley Rise Post Office busy with sales of Indian hot snacks and drinks at a temporary bar in the car park.

Our final day of celebrations was the Tuesday which was day two of our exhibition and also the day of the tea dance organised by Elizabeth and Ian Burn and the West Berks Scrabble Club, and the finale concert by Thames Vale Singers which included a rousing 'last night of the proms' style ending. Both were sold out almost as soon as tickets went on sale as was the case with Purley Players – a testament to the support given by the community as a whole for the events.

The Reigning Queens' Exhibition:

Purley during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II

Planning for our own exhibition started in early 2011 when the executive committee agreed the theme and we started to plan the breadth of the exhibition and the board topics. This was a very different theme for an exhibition and one that gave us plenty of challenges – not least how we presented Purley during the Tudor period – given the lack of church records before the Restoration.

Early on we decided to purchase some new exhibition display screens – we chose Marler Haley as the supplier for their robustness, flexibility, practicality and value. They also gave us the additional benefit that they were compatible with others owned by other local societies, giving us potential to share more easily. We needed still more screens however and approached other local societies, community groups and local museums to see what we could borrow. The schools and pre-school became involved fairly early on and agreed to support a children's section of the exhibition with pictures and a model from Long Lane pupils of Purley during Tudor times, complete with grazing animals. The 1st Purley Brownies organised crown-making for the younger ones whilst our 'Ask the Experts' Area ensured the exhibition allowed people to not only find out more about Purley's history but also explore further their own history. Berkshire Family History Society provided help with family research, Jean Debney provided advice and dating on family photographs, John Chapman provided military expertise and Simon Jones gave free dating and valuing of antiques and heirlooms. Running throughout the exhibition were reminiscence groups – designed to help us to capture more memories about Purley's history. This was a first for us and a little experimental, some such as the River Estate were very popular, others less so.

The most important part of our exhibition however was our display boards and artefacts. The boards were arranged in reign order and each reign opened with a timeline of national and local events before then opening into a range of boards. Some 'themes' such as the coronation, fashion and food and drink ran from one



Browsing the exhibition mounted on our new Marley-Hayley boards

reign to the next, whilst others were reign-unique. A common design-thread linked all of the boards – ensuring that they looked professional and also were more easily readable. Board colours were matched to each reign to add interest. Alongside the visual spectacle of the boards were a range of artefacts, some from Project Purley's archives, and many, such as the old bell which hung in the bell tower of Purley Infants School, which were lent especially for the occasion. Our aim was to offer a multi-sensory experience, whilst the 1953 coronation ceremony played in the background on speakers, 'Tudor' biscuits, made by Margaret Cowling, were available to taste, flowers and herbs chosen by Rita Denman and Angela Edwards added scent to each reign and Tudor fabric samples sourced by Val Jones even gave a legitimate opportunity to touch the displays. Finally as people left the exhibition they had the opportunity to relax with wonderful cakes and tea made by the ladies from Purley WI.

A large number of people were involved in researching and putting the boards together and even more came in to help assemble

them in the run up to the exhibition. Others helped by stewarding. I've mentioned a number of our members already who researched and put the boards together but also involved were Ann Betts, Lee Hall, John Murphy and Peter Perugia. My thanks to everyone who gave their time and energy to making the exhibition such a resounding success, including Charles Wheeley and John & Pat Turner and also to Clive Killick who designed and made our entry into the scarecrow competition.

Feedback on the exhibition has been fantastic and it was notable how many people returned on the Tuesday morning for a second look. We sold more copies of *Purley in Old Images* and gained a record number of new members – eleven at the last count. We gained new information about Purley, were lent and now have copies of hundreds of new photographs and have offers of more to come. We have also strengthened our relationships with local

organisations still further and are already discussing several new future joint ventures. All of the boards have been retained both as display boards and in electronic form, ensuring we can reuse the research and material in the future. We will also consider other ways in which we can make the information available



The Children's area

*Meeting Report**Visit to Dorchester on Thames**Catherine Sampson*

Twenty seven members made the trip to Dorchester on Thames on Friday 11th May and enjoyed a visit to both the Abbey and village. Our visit was planned to coincide with the John Piper exhibition at the Abbey which contained paintings, stained glass, drawings and even ecclesiastical vestments including Piper's iconic painting of the Abbey itself.

After the exhibition came a tour of the Abbey by Sue Dixon who brought it to 'life' and showed us the more important surviving features, starting with a rare lead font which dates to around 1180 and is still used in baptisms today. St Birinus is commemorated in a chapel dedicated to his name and also a shrine. The roundel in St Birinus' chapel is the oldest stained glass in the Abbey and dates to about 1225. Next to the shrine is a particularly fine effigy in marble of a cross legged knight in chain mail which dates to the late 13th century and is considered to be William de Valance, a professional soldier who died in battle in 1282. Our tour finished at the tomb of Sarah Fletcher who died in 1799, apparently of 'excessive sensibility'

Lunch was taken at the George Hotel, a 15th Century coaching inn which was the starting point for our afternoon tour of the village led by local historian Margot Metcalfe. Dorchester is a fascinating mix of old and even older houses standing on a site which has seen almost continuous occupation since neolithic times. One house we stopped at had just restored a mediaeval kitchen. Amazingly the day remained dry and the sun actually came out for us for an excellent day out.

*The George Hotel*

Meeting Report

The Summer Barbecue

John Chapman

We had a minor miracle on Friday 22nd June - it stopped raining!! Our work gang arrived at 10 am at Highveldt to set up the gazebos, including one which Catherine had to dash out to purchase for Project Purley. Then the wind got up and at about 3 pm we got an urgent call to say one of my gazebos was upside down.

However by 7 pm order was restored and guests began arriving laden with all sorts of goodies. We started at 7.30 with melon and promptly at 8 pm the main course of burgers, sausages, chicken, salads and savouries was ready.

It was a most enjoyable evening despite the wind - the range of food, not to mention the freely flowing wine and drinks made for jolly good company. It was left to Catherine to close off proceedings with thanks to Dorothy and Ben for their hospitality.



The array of Gazebos



*John Chapman cooking
the burgers*

*Meeting Report**Visit to Stonor House**Angela Edwards*

On Tuesday 17th July members of Project Purley enjoyed a private visit to Stonor Park. After coffee and biscuits in the 13th century aisled hall we heard how the Stonors were first recorded in 1156 when they were minor Oxfordshire landowners and took their name from the stony hill on which the house was built near the site of a



The stone circle which is the namesake of 'Stonor'

pagan stone circle said to be 4-5 thousand years old. It has been the family home of the Lords and Ladies Carmoys for more than eight centuries.

We then commenced our guided tour entering the family chapel, also built in the late 13th century and in spite of two hundred and fifty

years of persecution following the Reformation it has remained catholic.

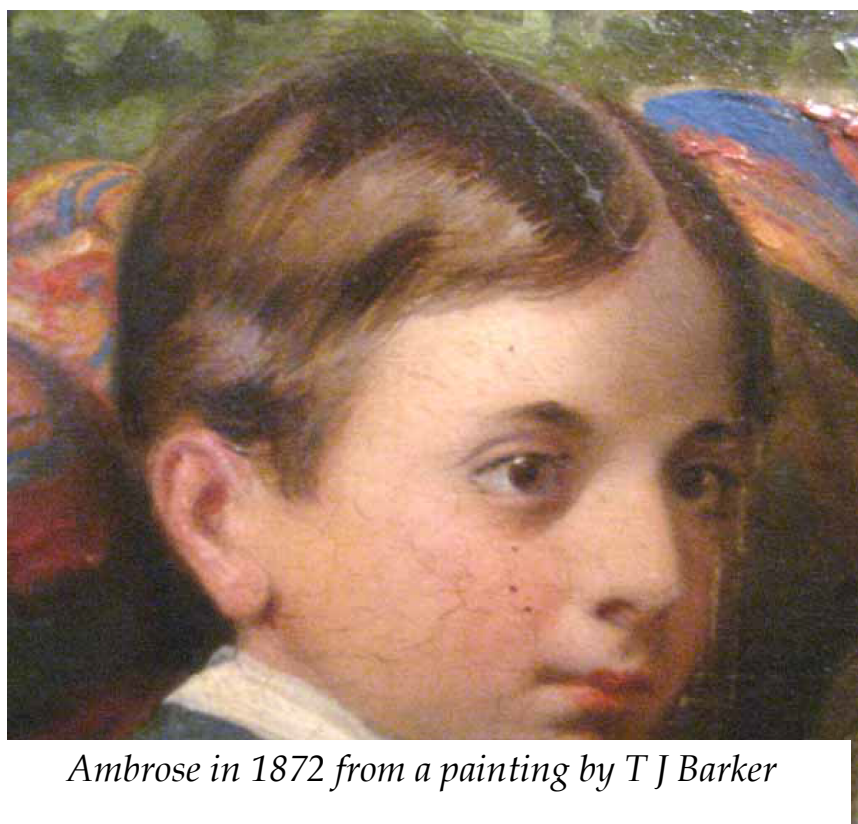
Inside the house we were treated to a remarkable collection of Old Master paintings and family portraits, bronzes, ceramics and furniture. In the Blue Dining Room an amazing early 19th century French wallpaper formed a continuous panorama of Paris monuments as if built along the River Seine. Over the years the house has seen many changes resulting in a rather grand manor house but without any large or grand rooms, very much a family home.

After an excellent lunch we were free to explore the deer park and beautiful gardens before ending our day with a delicious cream tea.

*Biography***Ambrose Petrokokino***Jean Debney*

Ambrose Petrocokino was an Anglo-Greek from Yorkshire who, while the rest of his family remained in the north, settled in Pangbourne as a young man. A great traveller he went round the world three times and wrote two books about his adventures. He also fought in three wars, served the local and wider community in many ways and later became associated with Purley.

Born in Bradford, West Yorkshire on 20 January 1864 in Eldon Lodge, now a Grade II listed building in a Conservation area, Ambrose was the second son and fifth of six children of Themistocles Pandia Petrocokino (1824-1900) and Merope Mavrogordato (1839-1912) both from Greece.



Ambrose in 1872 from a painting by T J Barker

Educated at Harrow School, he became a monitor and was in the football eleven. By 1883 he was living in the Bath Road, Calcot, and then moved to Pangbourne, living first in 'Runnymede', then 'Thames Cottage' and, after his marriage, in Flowers Hill. At first he took up fruit growing in Tilehurst and then bought Clarks Lead Works and Oil Refinery in Queens Road, Reading.

In 1897 he volunteered for yet another Greco-Turkish war and then the Duke of Cambridge's Special Corps in the Boer War where he received the Queen's Medal with three clasps. At the start of the

First World War he became 2nd Lieutenant in the reserve in charge of prisoners on the Isle of Wight. In 1915 he transferred to the Hampshire Regiment and served in Mesopotamia and North Persia until he was retired by age in 1917.

For over thirty years he represented Pangbourne on the Bradfield (Workhouse) Board of Guardians and served as vice-chairman. He also represented them on Bradfield Rural District Council and both Purley and Pangbourne on Berkshire County Council from 1907 until his death.

He took a major part in the social life of Pangbourne and Berkshire, lecturing about his travels, singing in concerts and attending balls, etc. In Pangbourne he was president of the Working Men's Club, a trustee of the Breedon Charities, churchwarden of St James parish church and member of the Parochial Parish Council. He was also a visitor to Berkshire Mental Hospital, belonged to the Berkshire Archaeological Society and was a great shot.

On 23 August 1904 in St Mary's, Purley, he married Violet Anne May Sykes (1888-1924), youngest daughter of the late Frederick Henry Sykes, 5 Bt of Basildon and Caroline Bettesworth (b1844), formerly of Westfield, Purley.

After his wife died, Ambrose was not in good health and after a short illness, he died on Sunday, 10 October 1926, aged 81, in Dunedin, Bath Road, Reading. His funeral on 13 Oct in St Mary's, Purley, was packed. Among 67 named people present were close family members, several local ministers, the Chairman of the Highways Committee, Clerk of the Berkshire County Council, the Chief Constable of Berks, Clerk of the Bradfield Board of Guardians and District Council, plus representatives of the South Berks Hunt, Berkshire Mental Hospital, British Legion and Pangbourne Constitutional Club, Council Schools, Gardeners' Association and Club and Institute. He was survived by his only son, Paul, a pupil at Harrow School.

The Bard in the Barn

David Downs

The summer visit by the Rain or Shine Theatre group took place later than usual this year on Friday July 6th. to avoid a clash with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The actors' performance of '*As You Like It*' was described by those who watched as the best yet, high praise indeed for a company whose presentations have become such a popular part of village life. The audience for the evening performance was slightly smaller than usual but those who stayed away missed a treat.

The matinee was watched by year six children from Westwood Farm Junior School as Kendrick School were unable to attend. It is so exciting for young children to be able to watch live drama and a measure of the success of the experiment of inviting a younger age group can be measured by the fact that none of them asked to go to the toilet while the play was on.

The adapted script included a reference to the Olympic Games which delighted both audiences, though the Olympic rings had become triangles to avoid copyright problems. In addition one member of the audience was selected as a torch bearer to carry the Olympic flame on stage. The actors are all hugely talented; but I particularly appreciated the skills of Hilary Dernet, doubling up as Jacques and Madame Labeau.

I am grateful to those Project Purley members who helped so much in making the occasion possible yet again. The profit on the day was £475 which will be donated to the Duchess of Kent Hospice.

You may be interested to know that two of the regular cast members, Claire Tucker and actor/director James Maynard, were married as recently as April 4th. James has been working on a stage adaptation of Kenneth Graham's '*Wind in the Willows*' which Rain or Shine will perform at the Barn on Friday December 7th, and next summer's play, Shakespeare's '*Comedy of Errors*' will take place at the Barn on Friday June 7th 2013.

Nature Notes

Rita Denman

1st May 2012

'The Wettest Drought on Record' was everyone's favourite headline. Despite the prevalent rain in April and May there was still the hope of a beautiful spring and summer to follow. The birds loved the rain, and the deer were frequent visitors to the meadow.

10th May

The rain has been relentless with the odd morning or afternoon of springlike sun. There have been flood alerts for our stretch of the Thames but fortunately there has been nothing untoward. The so called, super-moon, when the moon is closest to the earth occurred this week. As was to be expected our region was covered in cloud, but where it was visible it was spectacular. Tim at Home Farm has turned the cattle out into the pasture and it is good to see them again. The meadow looked very pretty with the fruit and crab apple trees in flower and buttercups coming into blossom. All at one moment, the birds were singing an extended version of the dawn chorus, seven swans flew over the meadow and to add to all this excitement, the cuckoo was calling, announcing the arrival of spring.

18th May

The meadow is looking particularly lush and the May (hawthorne) is coming into blossom. Calves are being born on the farm.

25th May

The skylarks are aloft, and the cuckoo calling frequently. Pheasants and a pair of English Partridge are almost permanently in the meadow which has the promise of a wonderful show of daisies and many low growing wild flowers.

2nd June

A few days of extremely hot weather and cloudless blue skies have now turned to lower temperatures and cloud. The oak and ash trees have remained bare of leaves long after other trees had their spring dressing.. There is an old saying which says, 'The oak before the ash

we are in for a splash , ash before the oak, we will get a soak.' It seems that the leaves of both trees will be out almost together! The bluebells have been spectacular but they are over for another year.

8th June

The rain has been almost continuous. Thames Water hope to be able to lift the hose pipe ban. The lovely grasses and meadow flowers have all been beaten down by the heavy rain and the garden in general is looking very bedraggled but the birds are still singing and bees are braving the rain.

15th June

Everything is growing very fast, but a new problem is the huge slugs that are trying to take over the garden. The BBC inform us that they are Spanish slugs and they are voracious. Tender seedlings and new planting doesn't stand a chance against them. What is more, we are told that they could wipe out our own slugs. Never before have English slugs been the good guys!

22nd June

Butterflies are noticeable by their absence. Early in the year there were a few Brimstones, and many tiny daytime flying moths, but hardly any butterflies since then. There has been constant rain and wind. The garden flowers come into bud but are sodden before they can open out or the petals are blown away in the wind.

22nd July

The heavy rain and intermittent sunshine is promoting very heavy tree and hedge growth. The border in the garden is thick and reasonably attractive considering the variable weather. Many gardeners lost their first sowing of seeds due to a wide range in temperature, and second sowings are in danger from the giant sized slugs. The sound of many skylarks has been a delight. A family of handsome Jays is being raised near the bridle path. Their flashing blue wing feathers are beautiful, but their 'call' is less attractive! Rabbits are in the area again.

6th July

When the sun shines it is quite hot. A fine afternoon brought out

some butterflies, meadow browns and marbled white with the flash of electric blue and red damsel flies and large dragonflies

13th July

On a pleasant dry and sunny early evening I walked to the end of the garden. The cats love to come with me if they know I am outside, bounding down the garden after me. Suddenly they both stopped, looking toward the meadow. A Roe fawn was standing on the short grass path between the long grasses. It's ears which looked far too big for it's head were pricked and it just stood watching us. I froze taking in this beautiful moment. At the first movement the fawn was off, soon swallowed up in the long grass.

20th July

The rain continues. A naturalist this week described our weather as apocalyptic for our butterflies and insects, but there are tentative forecasts that the jet stream will move north and allow high pressure to return. For the sake of our natural world let's trust that it will be so.

Editorial

Our usual editor, Ann Betts has had to take a break this time for family reasons. We send her and David our very best wishes for the future and look forward to her return to the chair next year.

Many thanks to all our contributors, several of whose contributions had to be shortened to keep us within our 24 page budget, for getting their copy in so promptly. We did so well this issue that there was little room for pictures.

For each Journal we try to have three standard items, a biography about someone with Purley connections, reminiscences or a description of Purley in the past and nature notes. There are also reports of meetings and events and a main article relevant to Purley.

Can you remember Purley well before Project Purley started in the 1980s? If so then we would be delighted to hear from you. It would be nice to have it in your own words but otherwise just tell us your memories and we will write it up for you. Also photos of events are always welcome - even if there is no room in the Journal they will go into our electronic library.