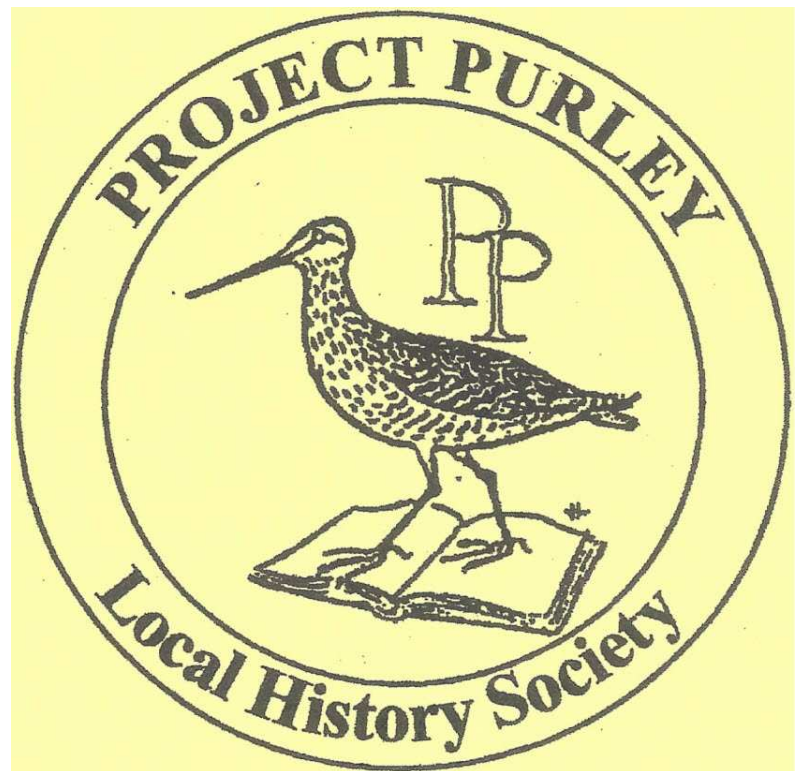


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**PURLEY'S LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

**SEPTEMBER 1999 NEWSLETTER**

No. 51

## **FUTURE MEETINGS**

17th September 1999

Purley Park Trust  
Gordon Raeburn.

15<sup>th</sup> October 1999

The Village of Shinfield  
Barry Boulton.

19<sup>th</sup> November 1999

Writing about Tilehurst Village  
Sue Handscomb

## PARISH RELIEF IN PURLEY c. 1828

A234

Before the creation of the Bradfield Union in 1835 and the first Old Age Pensions awarded in 1910, the old and infirm, widows and children etc. received weekly payments from the Overseers of the Poor of their parish of settlement. One book of these accounts, dating from 1825, transcribed to 1835, exists for the parish of Purley in Berkshire. In between payments for coal at 1/5d per cwt to heat the Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 16 "loads" of stones at 6d a load to repair Long Lane, sparrows at 3d per dozen and hedgehogs at 4d each - considered vermin and a threat to the crops - the names of those who were given cash payments (Parish Relief) for one reason or another were listed weekly.

The men received 3/6d a week, women 3/- and married couples 6/-. Other women had irregular payments during periods of illness, etc. and were presumably expected to obtain what work they could in the fields - for which, incidentally, they received substantially less than the men. Children received 2/- a week plus the occasional article of clothing or pair of shoes, the latter costing between 5/- and 10/-.

When I first studied the names in the accounts, my reaction was that here were people who should have been "*trying harder*" to support themselves and their families - the lazy and indolent poor was how society saw them then, and how we still tend to view things today. However, closer examination using the parish registers etc. revealed that most were either far too old to work, ie "*Old Age Pensioners*", or children under 16 whose father had died.

Among the "*old men*" who received 3/- were William Lukeman and John Shennan, 85 and 76 respectively in 1826. The widows, who incidentally were all called "*Dame*", were Dames Hamblin and Lambount. These have been identified as 67 year old Jane Hamblin nee Gutteridge, widow of James, a labourer who died in 1796, and Ann Lamboum nee Shennan (Shunnan), aged 74, whose husband Joseph died in 1799.

In families where the father - ie. the breadwinner - had died it was almost impossible for the widow to earn sufficient at field work to support herself and any children still living at home. James Buckland came to Purley in the early 1790s and married a village girl, Elizabeth Lamboum, in the parish church in 1792. The family fell on hard times when, 34 years and 12 children later, James died in 1826 aged 68. This left his widow with their youngest surviving child, 12-year-old Elizabeth (Betty), and a son, Joseph aged 18, still at home. In April

1826 "*Buckland's girl*" received shoes which cost 5/6d and in February 1827 Joseph was given a great coat worth 1116d. Household repairs were sometimes paid for in Purley. In autumn 1827 "*Buckland's house*" was thatched with straw at a total cost of £3 .15. 4'i2. It has not been possible to identify where this house was, but the family may have been living in the Parish Cottage. In February 1832, a "*Necessary*" was built at the "Workhouse" (ie. the Parish Cottage) for £2.19.11 for which the carpenter received 4/9'i2d. At the same time, Thomas Draper was paid 13/3d for repairing a window. This building, although much altered and extended, still exists: it was later known as Lichfield Cottage and is on the south side of the Oxford Road almost opposite the present Purley Rise Stores.

Medical payments are interesting. Mutton was then considered a nourishing food for the sick and when "*Ilsley's wife*" was ill in April and May 1828 she was given two pieces worth 2/- and 3/-. This was probably Harriet Ilsley, nee Rust, wife of John who had married in Reading in 1799. Between November 1828, when Dr. May attended the couple at a cost to the parish of £2.9.6., and January 1832 the couple received numerous payments on account of "*illness*". John died in January 1832 and the Parish Overseers paid his funeral expenses of £1.10s although he was not buried in Purley. His widow continued to receive 2/- a week even though she lived in Reading. It is not known how they obtained their (Poor Law) settlement in Purley.

On one occasion William Lukeman was helped by the parish to get rid of what must have been a very uncomfortable predicament. William lived in Purley for over 60 years. In the seventeen years between 1764 and 1788 he and his wife Ursula (who died in 1800) had ten children of which only two died as babies. It must have been a keen disappointment to the couple when their eldest daughter, Sarah, had two illegitimate children before getting married: however, these grandchildren, Ursula and Fanny, grew up in Purley and received a Prayer Book and Testament in 1892, probably when they were confirmed by the Rector, Rev Charles Manesty.

In 1810, when Fanny Lukeman was 19, she married 45-year-old widower, Richard New, and they produced 12 children during the next two decades. Tragically three children aged 4, 3 and 1, died within ten days of each other in June 1819. As their family grew up Richard and Fanny found it harder to make ends meet and they received intermittent assistance from the Parish plus 5/- for the midwife at the last two confinements.

Meanwhile, by the late 1820s, Fanny's grandfather, the widowed William Lukeman, was well into his 80s and becoming increasingly frail and infirm.

Apart from his weekly payments from the Parish of 3/6d he also had supplementary benefit in the form of 50 faggots of wood for his fire worth 9/-. In

March 1827, the Overseers spent £3 on Doctor's fees and from September 1828, when William was about 87, "*New's daughter*" (probably Eliza aged 15 and his great-grand-daughter) was paid 116d a week for attending him. The following May was evidently a period of crisis: "*Dame New*" - Fanny - now looked after him for 3/- a week and at the end of the month a shilling's worth of castor oil was obtained. I do hope it did the trick! Fanny's "pay" was reduced to 2/- a week in November 1829, and the following month, "*R New's girl*" (?Eliza) took over again at the same rate as her mother. She continued to look after the old man until he died five months later at the grand old age of 89. During this period, Richard New his son-in-law, received 116d a week; this ceased at William's death and appears therefore to be a form of rent allowance for housing the old man.

Looking back, it is hard to imagine how the poor managed as the money they received barely covered their rent and basic food cost, leaving little or nothing for clothes or any small luxury that we now take for granted.

*[Adapted from an article first published under the same title in the Purley Parish News in May 1981 and in The Berkshire Family Historian in September 1995 and reproduced with the Editor's permission.]*

#### Footnotes

1. BRO DIP 93/5/1
2. cwt = hundredweight ie 1121bs
3. James Buckland is listed as "*An inhabitant of Purley*" from 1790 in the Court Leet Records of the Honour of Ewelme (OxfRO CRIE. XVI)
4. Bap in Purley 16 March 1773, daughter of Joseph and Ann (BRO DIP 93/1/1)
5. Probably Harriet Ilsley, nee Rust, wife of John. She was not buried in Purley.
6. See list in Parish Register (BRO DIP 93/1/3)

Jean Debney

## THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY COMES TO PURLEY (PART 2)

### Construction

Work started at London and Bristol as soon as the first Act was passed. The tin was divided up into sections and individual contracts were identified by a ke letter and a number. Thus in Reading's case the contracts were identified as IR, 2J etc. It would seem that the contract for Sonning cutting to Reading station was 11 and the next stage to Purley was 2R.

Brunel was directed by the Directors on 1st March 1838 to '*make arrangements for letting the line from Reading to Purley*', and the remaining contracts for the Reading to Didcot portion were let later on in 1838. Construction started with the two bridges over the Thames at Basildon and Moulsoford. At Purley the first step was to dig a deep trench down to the level that Brunel had decreed as being the track alignment. This level was carefully checked along its route and then a plateway was laid down so that horse drawn trucks could remove the spoil as the trench was widened to form the cutting. Initially of course the spoil had had to be removed by pack horses and then carted along very slippery tracks as the cutting was made through loose chalk. All of the digging had to be done by hand, mainly by Irishmen who traditionally had come to England to help build the canals and hence had become known as 'Navvies', short for Navigation cutters. The first trains were running to Reading on the 14th March 1840 and the line from Reading to Steventon was built the canal!! and hence had to be built as 'Navigation cutters'. The first trains were running to Reading on the 14th March 1840 and the line from Reading to Steventon was eventually opened to the public on 1st June 1840.

### The Effect of the Railway on Purley

With the substitution of the cutting for the originally proposed tunnel, Purley was suddenly faced with being split into two and with the village cut off from the main road. The railway for its part had to begin a quite new series of negotiations with the local landowners to obtain the required parcels of land.

The route took no account of ancient field boundaries. It started tight against the river on the easternmost boundary of the parish and swung in a gentle curve through the side of the escarpment until it reached the plain between Purley and Pangbourne. The line bisected Purley Park which had only recently been completed and as noted before part of the deal called for the railway to build a

tunnel beneath the line so that the occupiers of Purley Park House could reach the church and the lower part of the estate by the river. West of New Hill the line cut through the rectory Glebe lands and part of the property belonging to Purley Lodge. Thereafter it cut across the Great Conunon fields of both Purley and Pangbourne.

Four bridges over the railways were constructed. These were for New Hill, Purley Lane, Purveys Lane and Westbury Lane. Also three bridges were constructed to carry the railway over tracks at Purley Park, Fiddlers Bridge and by the Sul Brook.

The ancient road which had run down from the Roebuck to the village, along the Village Street, around Purley Lodge and had joined Westbury lane just before the junction with the turnpike was cut in two places. At the east of the parish the road was simply abandoned, but at the west the bridge at Purveys Lane was constructed and the road dog-legged towards what is now Glebe Road.

When the line was opened the parish discovered it had a rateable value. The one and a half miles of line was rated at £1950 and as soon as this was announced the Surveyor of the Roads for Purley, Edward Sherwood, promptly ordered a supplementary rate of 4d in the pound which raised an extra £30. He obviously got in quickly because when Pangbourne and Tilehurst tried to get their sections rated they found that the GWR were not prepared to give in so easily. They had gone to court to appeal other assessments and all Pangbourne and Tilehurst got was an assessment of £600 per mile as opposed to Purley's £1300 per mile.

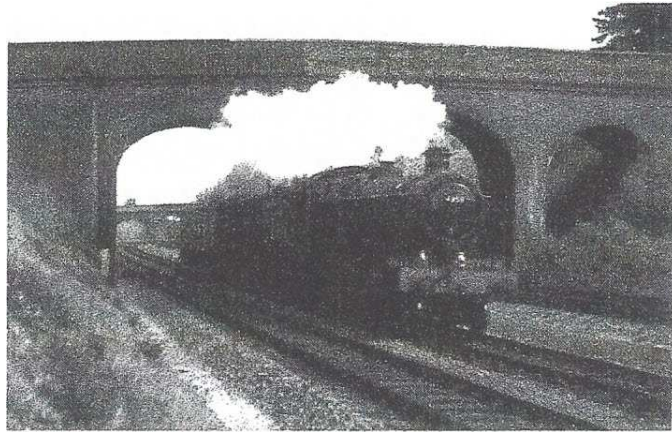
#### Services in the 1800s

When the GWR line was first opened in 1840 the main station for Purley was Pangbourne opened in 1844. The original layout was designed by Brunel and had a trailing cross over from down to up lines at each end of the station with a small siding to the east on the south side. This was fitted with a small wagon turntable.

The timetable for August 1840 showed passenger trains from Paddington to Pangbourne leaving at 0800, 0900, 1200, 1600 and 1900 with a goods train leaving at 0400. In addition there were four trains which did not stop at Pangbourne. They ran on to Faringdon Road, later Challow where coaches took passengers on to Oxford. In the reverse direction there were 5 passenger and one goods train each day except Sunday when there were only three passenger trains in each direction.

As well as conveying passengers; coaches and horses could be accommodated providing they arrived at the station at least ten minutes before departure. It cost

24 shillings to take a four wheel carriage or 18s for a two wheeler. Horses wet 20s for one and 32s for a pair. Passenger fares were 9/6 first class, 6/6 second class and 3/6 to ride on a goods train from Pangbourne to Paddington. To Reading it was 11s, 11- and 9d and to Faringdon Road 5/-, 4/- and 2/6 respectively. This timetable did not say when the trains arrived but compared with a coach it was considerably faster and there was no possible comparison with the comfort of the ride.



**4-6-0 HaD Class locomotive No.4959 'Purley Hall' passing under the bridge by the Memorial Hall. c.1962. Photograph by Ian Nash of Pangbourne.**

In December 1840 the line was extended to Wootton Bassett all the new timetables gave arrival times. The journey time from

between 1 hr 2 minutes and 1 hr 3

was that the railways

had realised the futility of trying to keep local times and insisted on using London times at all their stations. This

added a slight hazard to the passenger as Reading was some 4 minutes later than London time and thus a train advertised to depart from Pangbourne for London at 0954, actually left at 0950 local time. It was not until 1884 that Greenwich Mean Time was finally adopted as the standard for the whole of Britain.

In the December 1840 timetable there were only four trains which stopped at Pangbourne, two on Sundays. By 31st July 1841 the line was now open as far as Bridgewater with the same service for Pangbourne. In the next few years the railway network expanded rapidly with more and more lines being opened.

*John Chapman (to be concluded)*

## SUMMER BARBECUE

It is the summer of '99, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is slipping away.

Still, there was time for the Project Purley barbecue at The Mimosas in August

( Our genial hosts Ron and Rita greeted some thirty-four of us on a lovely summer's evening. As ever, there was delicious food and wine and much chatter and laughter.

Ann's David (there was more than one David present!) took photos with his 21<sup>st</sup> Century camera to record for posterity. See back page.

We walked down to the meadow with Marion and David, and paused at the gate along the bottom. The Debney Grandchildren ran along, so excited, and laughing with the sheer delight of the moonlit field.

Then it was quiet, and we heard the sound of the bells of Mapledurham Church drifting across the Thames. We fell silent, and I stored the memory of that moment when everything was well.

{ Then we returned, up the steps, and back to friends and colleagues, and all was indeed well.

Our thanks to Rita and Ron.

Millie Bordiss

A26

## SUMMER IN SULHAM

There appears to be no delineation between the exodus of Spring and the advent of Summer, which imperceptibly heralds another joyous season that quicken the senses.

Pure white fleecy cumulus leisurely drift across the azure sky whilst we become cosseted by the zephyr wind extending into long evenings culminating with the almost silent whirr of the bats as they undulate to and fro at dusk feeding, with the golden sun slowly sinking in the west.

The scent of new mown hay, pleasurably assails the nostrils of those fortunate to be exempt from the miseries of hay fever.

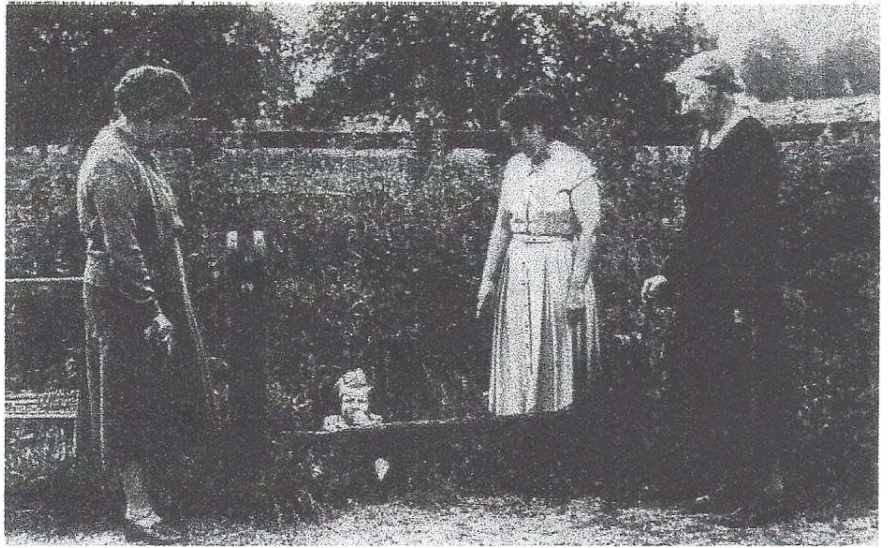
There is the dawn chorus of the birds expressing their joy to the universe and entralling us with the purity of their song; especially the thrush and blackbird continuing throughout the daylight hours. The green woodpecker's staccato attention to its chosen tree resounds above other woodland sounds. At night there is the thrill of listening to the wonderful song of the nightingale.

Although the stoat is still resident within Sulham Woods it is rare to hear the anguished squeal of the rabbit as the stoat attacks.

Dragonflies dance over the SuI. I appear to possess an attraction for wasps and bees and when rescuing them from the pool on a forefinger they are so grateful I am never stung. I believe the wasp to be a much maligned insect and fail to comprehend why there is an instinct to kill on sight.

The bathing pool on the SuI situated at the southern field from Tidmarsh Road, resounded with the happy laughter of the Sulham children throughout the summers of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s; now no longer echo the children's pleasure.

Eager anticipation of holidays, planned during the dark days of winter adds spice to the season of summer.



**Sulham Stocks - A salutary punishment during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, happily became a plaything to delight the children during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, until their removal just after the second world war.**

A highlight is the church fete, held alternately between Sulham and Tidmarsh, organised by willing volunteers from both Parishes, and with venues readily provided by residents of Sulham and Tidmarsh who possess gardens large enough to accommodate up to 1000 visitors. This is a social gathering not to be missed.

Numerous weddings at St. Nicholas Church produce a panorama of colour and joy within the church and without; not only to the participants but to the village residents as well, with the bells ringing out their paean of nuptials blessed by God.

A galaxy of colour is appreciated by all who walk along the lane. Early harvesting in late August sets the seal to the idyllic months of summertime. The glories of summer are all too soon over and we must now move on to the approach of Autumn.

I crave your indulgence for interjecting other anecdotes from my late friend's taped reminiscences of life in Sulham in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The glass milk bottle made its appearance about 1930 and dairies were constrained to purchase these to supplant the churn. The Pangbourn dairy situated where the D.I. Y. shop now stands was run by a Yorkshireman and his wife. He wore beautifully polished leather gaiters whilst delivering the milk. The bottles were at a premium since he had only purchased just sufficient for his immediate needs. It was not unknown, when empty bottles were not left out for collection, to hear him expressively mutter "no bottles, no milk."

Another well liked character possessed a bath chair and when visiting Pangbourne to go shopping he would place his daughter (who was not disabled) in the bath chair, reverse the steering arm, attach it to the saddle of his bicycle and trundle off.

Bill  
Fishe

### **EDITOR'S NOTES**

Members will be interested to hear that Cliff Debney has been appointed Chairman of the Federation of Family History Societies. Jean tells me he already has a heavy schedule.

One very pleasant occasion is shown in the September Family Tree magazine, when Cliff was at the Hampton Court Flower Show where the rose "Ancestry" was launched to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Federation.

Project Purley's plans for the new millennium continue to take shape.

The tea-towels have been delivered and are excellent. The selling price for these has yet to be decided by the Committee.

Plans for the exhibition of The History of Purley are well advanced.

Further news will be given in the January Newsletter.

## BEATING THE PARISH BOUNDS

A185

On the evening of 21<sup>st</sup> May a group of Project Purley members walked the southern perimeter of our parish in order to check a pamphlet that John Chapman has prepared for the beating of the parish bounds during the millennium year; we had walked the northern boundary last summer.

The group met at Home Farm, Sulham Lane. The forecast for the day was poor but just before the walk started the wind dropped and the sun appeared. We had a look at the Purley Hall canal which can be seen from behind Home Farm and then walked along Sulham Lane and up the hill across a field to Sulham Woods.

- 1 In Sulham Woods we paused at the remnants of the plinth that once held the statue of Hercules and Antaeus known popularly as Cain and Abel. One of our members recalled the story that his father told of having a few beers one night at the Royal Oak. On his way home through Sulham Woods he lost his way and stumbled across two white ghostly figures. He arrived home somewhat shaken only to have his story dismissed by a somewhat sceptical family, who, unaware of the statue's existence, thought that he may have had too much to drink.

We left the woods and walked across the fields entertained by skylarks singing in the evening sunshine. Then down Long Lane to the Purley on Thames sign. This area, John points out, was known as Purley Cross because of the cross that used to stand here marking the boundary between Purley and Tilehurst.

We then followed a footpath to Knowsley Road, the beginning of which is part of an ancient parish boundary bank; then further footpaths to Hazel Road via Theobalds Drive and the Oxford Road. By now some of us were pretty weary and welcomed the cars that were waiting to take us back to Home Farm. A lovely evening's walk following paths that some of us hadn't realised existed.

Ben Viljoen

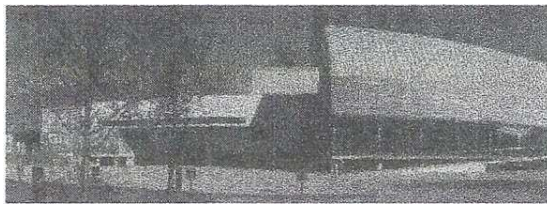
A186

## THE TRIP TO THE RIVER AND ROWING MUSEUM, HENLEY

Seven 'Projectors' met up by Caversham Bridge around 10.30. We all took food, suitable beverages and appropriate clothing to cope with whatever the weather decided to do to us. The morning was pleasant, we boarded, and in a short space of time we headed upstream under Caversham Bridge to a wider stretch of river by the Reading Canoe Club to enable the boat to turn and head downstream. At Reading Bridge we

were struck by the changed view, whereby we could see the Ape Plaza/Reading Station where until recently the Thames Water office blocked the view. We slipped through the lock and enjoyed the delightful views across the water meadows. Very soon Sonning Lock appeared with the usual hustle and bustle of boats and holiday makers all enjoying themselves afloat. Through the lock, then under the old Sonning Bridge passing Sonning Mill on our left (now a theatre).

A little lower down and the Saint Patrick stream joins the Thames, the approaching Wargrave the River Loddon also flows in. It was here that a short sharp bend sent us all scurrying for cover. From Wargrave to Henley was, to my mind, the most scenic part of the cruise. Soon we came upon Marsh Lock, where Marsh Mill once stood on our right on the Berkshire



bank, and to our left the remains of Town Mill close to the horse bridge. Just a few more minutes and we disembarked and strolled

**The River and Rowing Museum, Henley** across the meadow to the award-winning structure of the Rowing Museum.

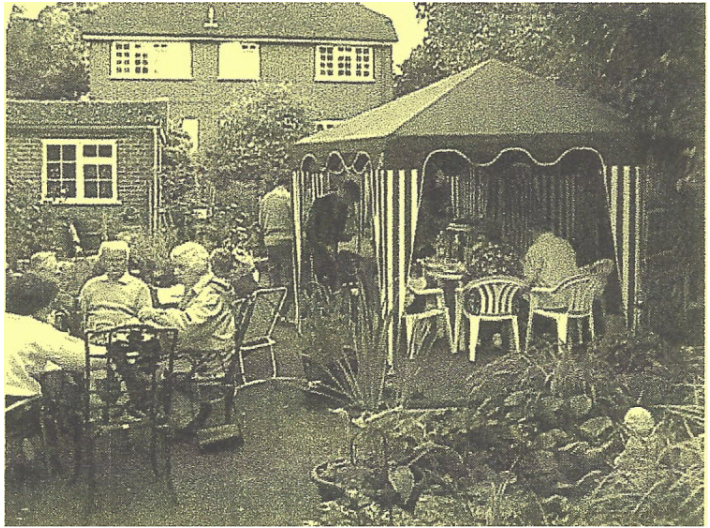
Here there was something of interest for everyone. The Museum houses six galleries of features all dedicated to the Thames and the sport of rowing, taking us through from the earliest types right up to date. There are photographs, film shows and mementoes from the past about Henley and the Thames, all devoted to their history and development. Also of interest are several hand operated mechanical pieces of apparatus that test one's rowing abilities. All in all good entertainment for all ages.

The afternoon was completed by a visit to the Gift Shop and Riversk Cafe. All too soon we were heading out of Henley, but this time by train to Twyford and thence to Reading Station. Another shower awaited us on our return as we made our various means of transport home - back to Purley. Really a most enjoyable day out.

TomHil

## COMMITTEE

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**Summer Barbecue 1999**



Photographs by David Betts