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## *Forthcoming Meetings & Events*

Members' Memories of Childhood	16 <sup>th</sup> January
How the English Language Evolved <i>Hugh Granger</i>	20 <sup>th</sup> February
AGM at 7.30pm followed at 8pm by Revised & Updated History of Reading Football Club <i>David Downs</i>	20 <sup>th</sup> March
Prisoners of War: War Letters & Memories of Life <i>Karina Jordan</i>	17 <sup>th</sup> April
Outing to the Joint Aeronautical and Geospatial Organisation at Hermitage	Thursday 28 <sup>th</sup> May
The Taming of the Shrew <i>Rain or Shine</i>	19 <sup>th</sup> June



# 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: View towards Roebuck: Repton's Purley Red Book.  
Frontispiece: Apples from Cross Lanes Fruit Farm.*

## THE PROJECT PURLEY JOURNAL



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## *New Year's Message from the Chairman*

JOHN CHAPMAN

*Editor Ann Betts  
Designer Ben Viljoen*

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This last year has seen several very interesting and varied talks and visits. We started off with members' hobbies in January and attracted perhaps the greatest member participation we have ever had – with lots of surprises. February we had a talk on Mapledurham Mill which was followed up by a visit in May. In March we heard about the Huntley & Palmers cricket team and learnt how it came to have links with Purley. I missed Catherine Butcher's talk 'Daughter of the Regiment' but it seems to have gone down well and started off our military theme for the year. In July we visited Stratfield Saye to learn all about the Duke of Wellington and in September we welcomed Richard Benyon MP talking about his big bike ride over the Normandy and Somme battlefields. Andrew Hutt came to talk to us in October and we dived even farther into the past to hear about how our area was the cockpit for pre-Roman tribal squabbles. A complete change of scene in November brought us an insight into apple growing. A big thank you to Tony Trendle for organising many of these events.

The Journal has gone from strength to strength under the formidable pairing of Ann Betts and Ben Viljoen. We learnt about war time Purley, the impact of German POWs in the area and several items about the river. We would welcome a few more contributors and are preparing a list of suggested topics to stimulate a few ideas.

As usual the Rain or Shine Theatre Company put on one of their fabulous performances in June with *The Winter's Tale*. I have to confess that I hated Shakespeare and managed to doze my way through performances at both Stratford Ontario and Stratford upon Avon Warwickshire in the past, but this group really brought him to life and while I am not yet fully converted I am a good way down the road.

Our social programme went off swimmingly – literally in July when the Barbecue was almost washed out, but figuratively in

December when we had our Christmas party and another great quiz from David Downs. Thank you Rick and Val for your hospitality.

We had a small exhibition at the Village event in August which generated some interest from non-members and we put on a display at the launch of the Berkshire Heritage Forum in Wokingham. Otherwise our outreach has been limited to the sale of tea towels with our new design. We made two contributions to charity this year - £700 to the Alzheimer's Society from the Shakespeare performance and £140 to Help for Heroes from Richard's talk.

We were all sad to note the passing of Sylvia Conquest but I don't think anyone who attended will ever forget her funeral at Thatcham. In July we said goodbye to Hazel and Michael King who have gone to live in the west country so we are looking for someone to keep an eye on our local natural history scene.

Who knows what 2009 will bring? We all hope the financial climate will improve and that we will come to next year happier and perhaps richer than at the moment. But one thing we can always be assured of is that Project Purley will have a successful year. So may I close by wishing everyone a very happy New Year.

## *The Life of Humphry Repton*

BEN VILJOEN

*This is the first in a series of articles on famous people associated with Purley. As I have been spending much of the winter in the company of Mr Repton, reading his books and researching his work for a talk I am about to give for the newly formed Berkshire Gardens Trust I was delighted when Ann Betts, the Editor, asked me to do the first article.*

Humphry Repton, the successor to "Capability" Brown in the pantheon of great English landscape improvers, was born in 1752 in Bury St. Edmunds. Knowing that fortunes were being made in foreign trade, his father, a Collector of Excise, sent the 12-year-old Repton to Holland to learn Dutch. Two years later he returned to acquire the skills of a trader but admits that his real interest was "drawing and representing to others what I saw in my imagination".

While young Repton was cutting his teeth as a merchant, Brown was at the height of his career. He had been appointed Gardener Royal and his annual turnover was around £15,000, equivalent to more than a million pounds per year in today's money.

Just before Repton turned 21 he married Mary Clarke and was set up by his father as a general merchant dealing in silks and calicoes. His parents died a few years later and Humphry, knowing that his business was failing, moved to Sustead in Norfolk where his sister lived in a house left to them by their parents. Here Humphry spent five glorious years, living as a country gentleman, improving his garden and investigating the wonders of nature.

Repton, later in life, wrote a memoir. The early part of this memoir, sadly now lost, was available to J C Loudon, an important garden designer and publicist. Loudon wrote a biography of Repton and, luckily, quoted profusely from the lost memoir.

In Sustead one of Repton's neighbours was William Windham who, in 1783, was appointed secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of

Ireland. Repton, realising that his money was rapidly running out, persuaded Windham to take him to Ireland as a private secretary. Sadly Windham, after only a short while in his new appointment, resigned and Repton, ever the optimist, wrote back to his wife: "and now my dearest Mary, what have I been doing? ... I have formed some connexions [sic] with the great; I have seen a fine country, in passing through Wales ... I have lost very little money". Little did Repton know how much the success of his future career would depend on the connections he was making with the great!

Repton may not have lost much money in Ireland but his finances were now in an even poorer state. While in Bath, where he was sketching to raise some money, he met John Palmer, a theatrical impresario who hired coaches to move his company between venues. Could such a scheme not be used to improve the very poor mail service? Palmer and Repton, who invested much of his remaining capital, set up trial runs, toll-free and with armed guards to transport the mail between London and Bristol. These proved to be a great success and impressed the government; John Palmer received all the credit and became Comptroller General of the Mails while Repton received nothing. This was not to be the only time in his career that Repton was thwarted by a canny business partner.

Repton could no longer pretend to be a country gentleman. Instead he moved his family to a modest cottage in Harestreet, near Romford in Essex, closer to London where he hoped to stand a better chance of earning a living. He wrote a play that enjoyed modest success then, one morning in 1788, when he was 36 years old and Brown had been dead for five years, Repton decided to become a landscape gardener. He wrote to his friends and acquaintances telling them about his decision, and the speed of his success was remarkable.

He never moved from Harestreet, possibly because it was centrally located and reduced the prodigious amount of travelling necessary to carry out his hundreds of consultations. Most of Repton's commissions were on a smaller scale than Brown's and, unlike the landed aristocracy that Brown dealt with, many of

Repton's clients were self-made men who knew the value of their money and wanted to know what they were paying for.

Repton would rapidly survey a client's land and do sketches showing the "before" view that would then be cleverly transformed into the "after" view by lifting flaps or what Repton called slides. These, together with a map of the estate and Repton's recommendations would often be bound together in a volume with a red leather cover that became known as Repton's Red Books.

Repton did a drawing with flaps that shows the improvements to his own front garden at Harestreet. Before one lifts the flap one can see the garden terminated by a fence against which leans a beggar with a wooden leg. Behind the beggar there is a triangle of common land surrounded by public roads and in the distance a butcher's shop. When the flap is lifted the piece of common land has become part of Repton's garden and a flower-covered obelisk hides the butcher's shop.

For many years Repton commissioned his local Court Leet to enclose the piece of common land that enabled him to transform his garden. The parish of Harestreet was made up of two large estates: Gidea Hall and Hare Hall. Repton writes about the inevitable tensions arising from the close proximity of two such estates and tells how he brought about a reconciliation between the two families by arranging dances in the village inn. The heads of these two families sat on the bench of the Court Leet that eventually granted Repton the right to enclose the piece of common land and improve the enjoyment of his front garden. The owner of Gidea Hall was Richard Benyon, one of a long line of Richards who, much to the regret of Repton, moved to Englefield House when he inherited the Englefield Estate here in Berkshire.

As the years passed Repton felt that some of his suggestions were misquoted and that other people were taking credit for his ideas. His solution was to publish a book that, unlike his custom-made Red Books, which were one-off creations for his clients, would be available to a much wider audience. In this way there could be no doubt that the ideas were his.

In 1793, when Repton came to Purley, the writing of his book must have been very much on his mind. He worked on the manuscript for long periods in that year, during the long coach journeys to his many commissions.

In 1981 part of the lost Repton memoirs turned up in a saleroom and is now safely deposited in the British Library. Fortunately the portion of the rediscovered memoir starts in 1788, just as Repton started his career as a landscape gardener, and continues to the end of his life.

In these memoirs Repton describes the man who asked him, in 1793 to come to Purley. This was Anthony Morris Storer whose family owned sugar plantations in the West Indies. Storer went to Eton, became an MP and diplomat and was part of a delegation that tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade the Americans not to declare independence. Repton wrote that: "Antony Storar [sic] Esq. was a gentleman who in early life was one of a fashionable trio, who were distinguished in their world by the soubriquet of 'the Three Superiors'. They were equally celebrated for their heads and their heels, for they were all men of talent and all chose to distinguish themselves by wearing red heels to their shoes." Repton goes on to say that when he met Storer "he was advanced in years, had long secluded himself from the world, having made the purchase of an estate without having seen it". Apparently Storer knew no one in the district and had come to Purley solely to meet Repton. He had however brought with him three volumes of his Granger, which was the *Biographical History of England* published by the Rev James Granger in 1769. Blank pages were left, in which engravings could be pasted. Repton records that in the evenings when "conversation flagged, Granger helped us out, till it was time to go to bed". Anthony Morris Storer left his books to Eton College, and the librarian at Eton has told me that Storer's Granger consists of no less than 27 volumes.

We know that Repton was in Purley early in November 1793, and that later in November he completed the Purley Red Book. There was

no sign of this book amongst the Eton College collection of Storer books. Then in 1987 Peter Fullerton, a collateral descendant of Anthony Morris Storer, knocked on the door of Jean Debney, a former chairman of Project Purley, with the Purley Red Book in a plastic carrier bag and allowed Project Purley to make a copy of it.

Much of the Red Book concerns the positioning of a new house that Storer intended to build. Repton felt strongly that the new house should be by the river and close to the church: in fact next to the existing house that Storer wanted to demolish. Storer, fearing floods, wanted the house to be on higher ground. Much of Repton's argument is based on the 18<sup>th</sup> century dictum of conforming to the "spirit of place"; locating the house on higher ground would sever its historical links with the river. To strengthen his case, Repton used an aesthetic argument: he painted the view downriver towards the Roebuck, a local public house, in two ways. The first is directly lit by the sun, and all the man-made objects look very prominent. The second painting shows the same scene back-lit; the man-made objects are far less prominent and he even remarks on the beauty of individual blades of grass when seen with the sun behind them.

What Repton was arguing was that, if the house was built on higher ground, the major views from inside the house would be of the hills on the north side of the River Thames that are in full sun (at least on those occasions when the sun is shining). As I sit here typing, looking over the river to the same hills on the north side of the Thames, with the Pangbourne College boathouse and all the other buildings glaring across to me, I can see precisely the point that Repton was making.

Storer was not convinced. He had the new house, now called Purley Magna, built on higher ground, well away from the river. Repton's advice was followed with regard to the layout of the farm buildings, including the Purley Barn, although these were not located where Repton suggested; they were instead moved to an area close to today's Sherwood Rise.

During 1794, the year after he was at Purley, Repton was getting ready to publish his new book, which was to be entitled *Sketches and*

*Hints on Landscape Gardening*. Repton still saw himself as the successor to Capability Brown and custodian of the great man's legacy - Brown's son had given Repton all his father's plans and papers, now sadly all lost, a recurring theme in the history of garden design. I have already mentioned that Repton tended to work on a smaller scale than Brown. Repton was also instrumental in the re-introduction of the terrace around a house, many of which had been swept away by Brown's enthusiasm for parkland. After Brown's death many of his ideas had been reduced to formulaic rules of thumb by landscapers of lesser ability than the master.

In Herefordshire two landowners, Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price, not only disliked what Brown's incompetent successors were doing to the landscape, but objected even more to what Brown had swept away and had created. Knight was first off the mark with the publication in 1794 of *The Landscape: a Didactic Poem* in which he savaged Brown and directly attacked Repton. About the Tatton Park Red Book publicly displayed by Repton to attract sponsors for his new book Knight wrote:

"He therefore, leads you many a tedious round,  
To shew th' extent of his employer's ground:  
Climbs o'er the hills, and to the vale descends;  
Then mounts again, through lawns that never ends."

This was followed in the same year by Uvedale Price's *Essay on the Picturesque* in which he criticised the high polish and flowing lines of the modern improvers and maintains that Picturesqueness (a term that Price coined) holds the station between beauty and sublimity.

Repton felt, quite rightly, that both he and his profession was under attack. He retaliated by publishing an open *Letter to Uvedale Price* and delayed the publication of his new book to 1795 to more fully develop his arguments against Knight and Price.

This is all part of what became known as the Picturesque controversy. Price especially argued that instead of following the bland conformity of Brown, property owners should instead study the great landscape painters, see what they find attractive and copy

them when they do their improvements.

The arguments rumbled on. Repton found comfort in the fact that the king, George III, supported his side of the controversy. But then he learnt that "the King having looked at the size and shape of each (book) - Knight's a larger quarto, Price's a thick octavo and Repton's thin duodecimo - he took my little book in his hand, and said 'I suspect Repton has the best of it, Repton is right, for truth lies in a small compass'". Well, at least the king knew the size and weight of each book, even if he had not read them!

Both camps could point to painters of the past who supported their landscape preferences. The wild, moody landscapes of Salvator Rosa were favoured by Knight and Price while the calmer, classical landscapes of Claude Lorraine and Poussin were admired by the followers of Brown. However, it was an argument that Repton never could, in the broader sense, win as it was symptomatic of a profound change that was going on: the Romantic movement. Poets, writers and artists such as Wordsworth, the Brontes and Turner were all to redefine our relationship with nature. As the Romantic movement progressed the emotional needs of artists became intrinsic to the ways that they portrayed nature and Repton's insistence that the "cheerfulness, and comfort of a country residence" should not be sacrificed to the "wild but pleasing scenes of a painter's imagination" remains true but only in a very limited sense.

Repton, as we know from Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, charged five guineas a day for his work although he later varied his charges depending on how far he had to travel. If he was working as an architect or contracted to implement his designs, he could have charged a percentage of the building costs and his earnings would have been much higher. In 1796 he met John Nash, who was clawing his way up the ladder of success. They agreed that if a building resulted from a Repton introduction, Nash would pay Repton 2½% of the construction costs. At first the arrangement worked well, particularly to the benefit of Nash, but it all ended in acrimony. Repton was no match for the ruthless and ambitious Nash.

In 1803 Repton published *Observations on the Theory and Practice of*

*Landscape Gardening* and here his thought again returned to Purley. In a chapter dealing with optics he states that there “may be mentioned a curious observation, which occurred in the view of the Thames, from PURLEY. In the morning, when the sun was in the east, the landscape appeared to consist of wood, water, and distant country, with few artificial accompaniments; but in the evening, when the sun was in the west, objects presented themselves which were in the morning scarcely visible“. Two pictures are shown to illustrate his points but they are very much inferior to the ones in the Purley Red Book.

In 1811 the carriage bringing Repton home from a ball overturned and Repton hurt his back, and by 1814 he was confined to a wheel chair. In 1818, aged 66, Repton died of a heart attack.

What are the lasting contributions of Repton? Well over 300 consultations by Repton have been identified, many of these were implemented and more than 100 Red Books have been located. His consultations ranged over 37 English counties with a handful in Wales, Scotland and Ireland; a truly prodigious body of work. There are surviving details of his work, such as the terrace and children’s garden at Endsleigh House in Cornwall based on the last Red Book that Repton produced. Patrick Taylor in *The Oxford Companion to the Garden* points out that Repton’s unique contribution to the history of landscape gardening is that he was the first professional garden designer to describe his working practices.

*Humphry Repton's Memoirs* were published in 2005, edited by Ann Gore & George Carter, and it is from this edition that I have taken my quotations. Other books and writers that I am indebted to are *Humphry Repton: Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England* (1999) by Stephen Daniels, *The Life & Work of John Nash, Architect* (1980) by John Summerton; John Phibbs who provided me with extracts from the Repton *Memoir* before it was published and especially to Peter Fullerton for allowing access to the Purley Red Book.

## *Reviews of Meetings & Events*

### *Big Battlefield Bike Ride*

Project Purley has enjoyed listening to many distinguished speakers in the society’s 26 year history. This number was added to on Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup> when Richard Benyon, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Newbury, came to The Barn to tell us about “The Big Battlefield Bike Ride.”

Richard, himself a former army officer in the Royal Green Jackets, took part in the bike ride from May 26<sup>th</sup> to June 1<sup>st</sup> this year to raise funds for service charities, in particular the Help for Heroes appeal. Richard is a trustee of the charity and has visited Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham as well as the Headley Court rehabilitation centre in Surrey to meet injured and wounded servicemen and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. He explained that many of the battlefield casualties will need lifelong support, and the Help for Heroes appeal has so far raised £10 million to provide improved gymnasium and swimming pool facilities at Headley Court.

The idea of the sponsored bike ride interested our speaker because it meant that he, his wife Zoe and the three hundred cyclists who accompanied them – including several servicemen who had experienced rehabilitation – could combine the ride with visits to the sites of several World War One and World War Two battlefields.

The party was seen off at Portsmouth by the Red Arrows display team, and the band of the Royal Marines playing in front of H.M.S. Victory, as well as a group from Headley Court, as they prepared for their 342 mile long ride.

Escorted throughout by a bugler, the cyclists were ferried across the Channel and disembarked at Sword Beach, one of the five D-Day landing zones. They then cycled the short distance inland to Pegasus Bridge where, in 1944, Major John Howard and his men of the Ox.& Bucks. Light Infantry had made an airborne assault and held the bridge against repeated German attacks until relieved by Lord Lovat’s Scouts. At Pegasus Bridge Café, the cyclists were warmly greeted by the daughter of the café owner who had welcomed the

invading troops on D-Day.

From Pegasus Bridge the cyclists pedalled on the 65 miles to Le Havre, a town where there is to this day much resentment over the Allied invasion. This attitude persists because the town was almost flattened by British shelling, as the invading forces attempted to drive out the Germans and establish a much needed deepwater port. In fact, the brother of Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the former Prime Minister, was court-martialled because he refused to order his tanks to fire on the town, knowing that many French civilian casualties would be caused.

The next stop was Saint Valery where the party laid a wreath in memory of the British servicemen killed during the retreat to Dunkirk. Then came the visit to Dieppe, where the Canadian raid of 1942 ended in a massacre of the invading force. Despite the disaster, many valuable lessons were learned which would be implemented for D-Day.

The bike ride moved on towards the World War One battlefield of The Somme, stopping several times for food and liquid refreshment on the way. As they did so, they noticed many small cemeteries where often body parts had to be scooped up and buried together because it was not possible to identify which part had belonged to which dead soldier. The Somme plateau was described as "a cesspit of death" by our speaker, and the Thiepval Memorial, designed by Lutyens, commemorates the loss of a golden generation of our British youth. Of all the names on the memorial, including many of Royal Berkshire Regiment soldiers, Richard has chosen just one, that of Rifleman Abraham F.H., to research and find out more about the man and his next of kin.

The final French stage of the ride saw the cyclists travel ninety miles to Dunkirk, where the 1940 evacuation of British forces saw 330,000 servicemen brought safely across the Channel and back to England. At Dunkirk, Richard and his party were taken off the beach by landing craft and transferred to the aircraft carrier, H.M.S. Bulwark. A memorial service was held on deck, then the cyclists landed at Dover to be welcomed by the Red Devils parachute

display team.

The very last leg of the journey was completed as the group cycled up from Dover and into London, passing the Ministry of Defence building, the Cenotaph, down Whitehall and finally braking to a halt on Horse Guards Parade.

In conclusion, our speaker told us that the Big Battlefield Bike Ride had raised £1.3 million in sponsorship and donations. He had been privileged to be accompanied on the ride by many servicemen who had lost limbs on active service, as well as by one of Winston Churchill's granddaughters and an 82 year old Irish peer who was awarded the France and Germany Star for his World War Two service.

Questions followed for some twenty minutes, during which Richard said that he thought the current generation of youngsters, exemplified by those serving in Her Majesty's Forces, were as good as any that had gone before it. In reply to one persistent questioner, he answered "yes, thank goodness!" when asked if he was a member of the Royal British Legion. He also mentioned the Help for Heroes rugby match due to be played at Twickenham the following afternoon (one of our members, Ian Burn, was going to watch the game), and explained that future funds raised would continue to support wounded servicemen, including those suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, as well as their families and of course many service widows who would eventually have to move out of army accommodation.

Richard's clear speaking voice allied to an excellent powerpoint presentation had made this a most informative as well as poignant meeting. Invitations to attend had been extended to several British Legion branches in the area, so there were several ex-servicemen in the audience. A "Help for Heroes" bucket collection at the end of the evening, augmented by our speaker donating his fee, raised £133.26. The attendance of forty-one, including several guests, was the highest seen at a Project Purley meeting for many months.

David Downs

### *Tribal Boundaries*

Dr. Andrew Hutt came to talk to members of Project Purley plus a smattering of invited guests on Friday evening, October 17<sup>th</sup>. This was his second visit in three years, his first topic having been "Dovecotes." On this occasion the title was to be "Rituals, Society and Power in and around Iron Age Berkshire." Despite the wordiness of that title, Dr. Hutt's talk was, as before, clear, precise, carefully structured, neatly illustrated and accurately summarised so that his audience had no excuse for not understanding an apparently complex subject.

He began by explaining that the earliest Iron Age dated from 800-600 BC and the latest Iron Age from 25 BC to AD 43-80. Archaeological evidence tells us about the kind of rituals which took place, and which Dr. Hutt stated may find their modern day equivalent in the chanting which happens at football matches for example.

Even before the Iron Age, rituals in the Bronze Age concentrated on reverence for the Sun as a male icon, and the Moon as a female equivalent, with swords and metalwork being deposited in riverbeds to ensure safe passage to another world. Similarly Iron Age rituals were used to implore the intervention of the gods and offer solace to families. Iron Age families lived in small groups of one or two round houses, and after death, bodies and bones were deposited on settlement boundaries in the belief that reverence for ancestors was a source of protection for the living. Few actual burials took place, as many bodies were defleshed by scavenging birds and animals.

In the Middle Iron Age the ritual rebuilding of homes led to the establishment of larger communities centred around a hillfort, and burials became more frequent and also more visible. Many pits have been found in and around Berkshire which contain not only human bones, often placed in ritualised patterns, but also include the bones of animals such as dogs, ponies and sheep which had also been interred.

The Late Bronze Age saw burial sites based on the location of "temples," such as the one at Heathrow, away from settlements.

Artefacts like helmets, shields and body armour were deposited in the Thames, and it seems from archive material that the influence of the Druids – as described by Caesar and Pliny was now increasing. There were now three principal gods to be worshipped – Mercury, Jupiter and Esus, the fertility god.

So Dr. Hutt's summary explained to us that, in the Early Iron Age, burials and rituals took place at settlement level, in the Middle Iron Age they were community affairs, and in the Late Iron Age they were centrally organised by Druids.

The second half of our speaker's talk concentrated on the development of society and power in the Berkshire area. Much of the archaeological evidence for this comes from the finds of Iron Age pottery and coinage. In the Bronze and Early Iron Ages pottery was widely distributed around Poole Harbour, and social groups were spreading up towards and through Wessex. The Upper Ock community included hillfort settlements at Ramshill, Segsbury and Uffington, where the cutting of the White Horse in the hillside is an obvious example of community spirit and power.

The River Kennet was a major social boundary and continued to be so during the Middle Iron Age when coinage became more prevalent as it spread from the Continent. Caesar's invasion in 55 BC was inconsequential, as his ships were driven back by storms and his soldiers withdrew, but his second invasion a year later in 54 BC, had a more profound effect.

This time he landed with five legions and four cavalry units, leaving three legions back at base in Gaul. His men took many *Obsides* (Iron Age tribal elders) as hostages, transporting them to Rome, where they were taught Roman culture and values, then returned to England to spread Roman influence as leaders of their tribes. In Berkshire this resulted in tribes developing, from 35 BC onwards, *oppida* or small towns such as Silchester, Dorchester, Abingdon and Forest Hills, all with the purpose of controlling areas of land. British gold coins from that era have Roman images showing the increasing status of the invaders. However maps showing the distribution of coins and the aspirations of tribes to increase their

territorial boundaries show that much of the land was disputed.

Yet again Dr.Hutt summarised his research by telling us that, in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages people in small communities worked together to create hillforts, in the Middle Iron Age hillforts were rebuilt rather than abandoned, so improving social cohesion and power, then in the Late Iron Age there was a social separation between the druids as ritual leaders, and the secular elite which had been strongly influenced by the Romans.

There was warm applause and also several questions for our speaker, despite a lower than usual attendance of just twenty-five on an admittedly cold evening. Those members who stayed away missed a treat. Dr.Hutt had given us a fascinating insight into a serious archaeological concept in a down to earth manner.

David Downs

### *History of Cross Lanes Fruit Farm*



On Friday 21st of November, 2008 Jill Franklin gave us a talk on Cross Lanes Fruit Farm. The farm lies to the north of Mapledurham House, at 450 feet elevation. The house itself was built in 1132 and is mentioned in the Domesday Book, but the fruit farm was created in 1948. In the early 1900s a tract of land adjoining the Cane End Estate, lying within the foothills of the Chilterns exchanged hands reputedly through a gambling debt and remained undeveloped until Mr John Belcher a local builder purchased the land, built a small two roomed house and planted a small orchard, later adding a third room to the property for apple storage. His motivation for this development was a Government initiative to grow more

fruit, as a result of food shortage in the aftermath of the War. The soil on the Chilterns was poor, but they discovered between the caps of the chalk hills, clay and flint deposits more suited for fruit trees, where in wet years the drainage would be better, and yet in periods of hot droughts, the clay content of the soil could retain water. The owners found that during these trying and variable conditions, no fruit tree was lost, by comparison to losses sustained by other orchards lying in more fertile sandy soil.

Many orchards similar to that at Mapledurham were created after the war, and it was found that 25 acres or more could just sustain a family. In those earlier years, 85 % of the crops of such orchards were Cox's Orange Pippin, which required cross fertilisation with other varieties of apple such as Bramley or Worcester Pearmain and thus it was usual to interplant with such trees, or with soft fruit such as blackcurrants and raspberries, when all the picking was done by hand. Soft fruit planting however became impractical, when mechanisation was later introduced.

After just two or three years, Mr Belcher passed away, and Mr Harrison, a coffee planter from Brazil, purchased the 25 acre orchard, and later still, in 1962, the orchard passed to Roger Chapman, an auctioneer who had imported the first Charolais and Simmental bulls to the UK for breeding, and who subsequently became Chairman of the Newbury Show.

Mr and Mrs Franklin, the present owners, purchased Cross Lane Fruit Farm in 1977, moving from their home in London, when a change of lifestyle was necessary through recession. They had no knowledge of fruit farming whatsoever, but saw an opportunity for a country life away from the city, and possible help with the advent of Britain's entry into the European Union. After the disappointment of one orchard sale at Chapel Row falling through, in November 1977, their offer for Cross Lanes Fruit Farm was accepted, and they moved their home into the cramped and cold conditions of the small house. One great piece of good fortune occurred, when the two local ladies who had carried out pruning for many years for the previous owner, offered their services, and

remained with the Franklins for ten years.

In the late 70s and early 80s many small shopkeepers, especially greengrocers, became customers of the fruit farm, but their numbers declined rapidly with the emergence of supermarkets, which were only interested in varieties such as Golden Delicious (Golden Disaster in Jill's word), which crops four times greater, is very sweet in flavour, and which subsequently swept the market to the detriment of varieties such as Cox's Orange Pippin. During the last 20 years, the number of orchards in the UK has declined from 2000 to less than 400. Today, orchards such as Cross Lanes survive, by producing fine varieties of apples, which are sold to the public direct and particularly through Farmers Markets, which cause concern to the supermarkets.

The Franklins grow and sell no less than 46 different varieties of apple, extending the selling season by producing early-, mid- and late-season varieties. Amongst these are: Cox's Orange Pippin – in 4 sizes; Ribstone Pippin – the original prior to Cox's; Gloster 69 – polished, sweet, juicy, crisp; Blenheim Orange; Spartan-American/scented/white flesh and can be stored in the refrigerator; Falstaff – a modern variety with a citrus flavour; Jester- similar to Worcester Pearmain; Gala – a variety adopted by supermarket and internationally popular; Pink Lady (coming into fashion) and Sunset- similar to Cox's but sweeter.

Cross Lanes Fruit Farm is open Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 6pm from the end of August to January. They have a website and can be emailed, and their telephone number is 0118 972 3167.

Tony Trendle

### *Christmas Party*

Counter attractions of the coldest winter for thirty years plus a Christmas Concert by Thames Vale Singers on the same evening failed to deter twenty-eight members of Project Purley from gathering at Rick and Val's on Friday evening, December 12<sup>th</sup> for the Society's annual Yuletide Party.

On entrance to the neatly decorated Gatehouse, guests were greeted with a glass of pleasantly mulled wine provided by Cliff and Jean. This enabled everyone to warm up and circulate, then get on with the important business of the evening, i.e. exchanging Christmas cards. This was conducted at a brisk pace, though nobody appeared to achieve the Post Office recommended walking rate of 4.5 miles per hour.

Proceedings were interrupted by Chairman John's brief speech of wel-



Come, during which he thanked Rick and Val for their hospitality yet again, then it was down to the main activities, comprising (a) eating, (b) drinking, (c) socialising and (d) trying to solve the notoriously complicated quiz.

Conversation ranged around several topics. David and Tony were deep in thought whilst discussing the possible Reading line-up against Norwich City the following afternoon. Lee was clearly proud of her young grand-daughter's achievements, several of the guests were looking forward to Purley Players' pantomime in the New Year ("Sleeping Beauty" on January 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>), Ben announced his forthcoming talk on Repton in Berkshire, and most people grumbled about the recession, the weather and the voting on "Strictly Come Dancing."

While all this was going on, Ann was taking photographs, Ben and Catherine were topping up everyone's glass with mulled wine, and members were making their way backwards and forwards to the table laden with a superb buffet and desserts.



This year's quiz, devised by your scribe, tested members' ingenuity and knowledge by asking them to interpret a collection of abbreviations and mnemonics. The easier ones, such as NIMBY and NATO were guessed correctly by almost everyone, but the more esoteric, NQO5 and FUNEX, proved more of a challenge.

And everyone had fun with a group of letters which, in our much younger days, appeared on the back of envelopes. Distant memories were recalled by seeing SWALK (sealed with a loving kiss) appear in the quiz, but MALAYA and OHMS proved more elusive. Fortunately only one person remembered the significance of BURMA, while PHILADELPHIA inspired some intriguing creations.

Full time for the contestants was called at 9.30 pm. and the correct answers totalled. Peter and Catherine, who had sat studiously in the kitchen in a style reminiscent of the Bletchley Park

Wartime code breakers, had combined to give Catherine a winning score of 23. She was duly presented with the prize of a bottle of wine.



So that was nearly it, and around 10 p.m. people began to drift away into the surprisingly mild night air. But no-one was allowed to depart before Ann gave us another reminder about the suitability of Project Purley Tea-towels as Christmas presents, and John had repeated his vote of thanks to our hosts. As we left the Gatehouse, some of us clutching our doggy-bags, we reflected on what a pleasant start to the Christmas festivities the evening had been.

David Downs

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