

# THE PROJECT PURLEY JOURNAL



*This Journal is published by  
Project Purley  
The Local History Society for  
Purley on Thames, Berkshire*

*Printed by The Print Room, Portman Road, Reading*

*Editor: Ann Betts*

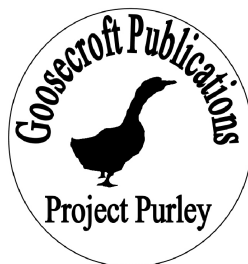
*Designer: John Chapman*

*The contents of this Journal are protected by copyright and nothing may be reproduced without prior written permission from Project Purley*

*© 2011 Project Purley and the Authors*

*ISSN 1754-677X*

*For more information about Project Purley visit our website  
[www.project-purley.eu](http://www.project-purley.eu)*



## *Chairman's New Year Message*

Another very successful year for Project Purley has passed. Our first meeting in January had to be cancelled owing to the terrible weather, but the programme thereafter has been full and varied with talks on Pangbourne, Humphrey Repton and the Great Western Railway before we ventured out for the summer visits. Both the visits to Didcot Railway Centre and Littlecote House were well attended and the BBQ was its usual great success. After the recess we have been entertained by talks on Deception in WW2 and John Betjeman.

However the highlight of the year has been the launch of the book "Purley in Old Images". A small committee have been working on this for 18 months under the leadership of Catherine Sampson and when it was launched on September 17th the village was taken aback at such an entertaining and quality production. The first printing sold out within two weeks and we are now into the third printing. At the launch we were graced by our Lord Lieutenant, who wrote the foreword and numerous guests. We owe a great thank you to the Women's Institute who provided tea and cakes.

I would like to thank the Executive Committee who have worked very hard over the past year, but particularly to David Downs for organising two performances by the Rain or Shine Theatre Company and writing the meetings reports; also to Ben Viljoen who has been our Treasurer for several years as well as designing the Journal. Ben is stepping down due to other commitments.

Finally I would like to appeal to any members who could possibly put pen to paper, after doing a bit of research to let us have the benefit of your talents.

## *My Memories of Purley from 1940*

**by Frances Butler**

*Frances Wright was brought up in Purley along with her two sisters. She recently received a copy of Purley in Old Images and it stirred her memory.*

Mrs E Tidbury - head mistress of Purley Church of England School, had a box full of "Goodies", toys etc. When it was your birthday you could choose one item from this box. I coveted a large magnet but Marjorie Hawkins had a birthday before me so got there first. I was only about 6 years old - but I was gutted. Margaret (Mrs Tidbury's granddaughter) started school just before me, and although she now lives in Spain, we have kept in touch for over 60 years. On page 36 in the "Purley in Old Images" book - halfway up the path was a walnut tree whose nuts we all enjoyed (before 1958)

My sisters, Barbara, Linda and me Frances were normally referred to as the Wright girls. We all went to church every Sunday (Bill Fisher took us in his car) and Sunday School. We were in the Church Choir and I used to pump the organ at numerous weddings for the princely sum of two shillings and sixpence (a fortune in those days). We had a wonderful childhood in Purley, the freedom to go anywhere. We learnt to swim in the river, climb trees in Sulham Woods. We could go off for the day with a bottle of water and sandwiches and feel quite safe. Three people who made a difference to our lives were:-

**Lynne Barnes** who took us on hikes to Streatley, Yattendon and over the Downs - sometimes 10 or more children for the day.

**Mrs Richards** who started the children's choir and took us to sing at care homes and over 60's clubs in and around the Reading area. We loved it. It was an adventure.

**Mrs Pryor** - who was a real 'lady of the manor'. She was so good to the village children. We had a whale of a time picking chestnuts in her garden. On Easter Sunday a topiary chicken/cockerel laid chocolate eggs in her garden for us to collect, which for children who didn't have many sweets was magic. At Christmas we sat in her kitchen making home made cards with ribbons, material and cut out shapes she provided. When I got married she gave me a vanity case which I still have 46 years on.

When I became a Sunday School teacher I was asked to bring two little boys with me. They were Colin and Paul Schofield and I have been friends with the family ever since, in fact it was Margaret and Gerald Schofield who sent me your book "Purley in Old Images". It brought back lovely memories for me (and a few tears as well)

I left Purley when I married and went to live in Tilehurst, but went back to sing with the Thames Vale Singers after I had my children. My dad (a widower) and my sisters moved away when he remarried.

My gran (Mrs Stubbs) lived in Long Lane until she died in 1972. She was quite a character. My grandad also was very much a part of the village. They lived in Kennel Cottages before moving to "The Reach", Long Lane where he died in 1953.

On the Preface in the book you said you welcomed any corrections (or observations):

Page 30 - Church Choir 1962 - Left to right - standing  
Linda Wright - not Teresa

Page 31 - Harvest Festival 1964 - Miss Gorman standing next to Edith Tidbury.

Page 57 - Building of Memorial Hall. The lady holding the cup facing camera is Gladys Williams (she lived in Glebe Road)

Page 125 - Katrina and Wendy Setterfield (they lived in Westbury Lane)

The Book is a lovely keepsake for me. When my father remarried a lot of photographs and letters were lost, so all my memories are in my head. My sister Linda said I was to write them down before I got dementia (her joke as I am older than her).

*Along with the memories Frances sent us two cuttings which are worth reproducing*

### ***Obituary - Mr R Stubbs***

Mr Richard Stubbs who died at his home, The Reach, Long Lane, Purley on November 10th [1953] aged 79, had been a kennelman to the South Berks Foxhounds for thirty-four years, retiring three years ago.

Born in Snainton, in Yorkshire, he started as an apprentice to a butcher. He left butchering for the hounds, and before coming to Purley he was at Birdsall Malton Yard, with Lord Middleton's Foxhounds. At Purley he served under the late Mr Cecil Aldin, when he was Master of the South Berks Hunt, also the late Sir Eric Palmer. He loved his hounds, they were his life's interest and in his pack of fifty-two he knew each one by name, and each knew his voice and its own name.

### *Purley's 'newsgirl' is aged 80*

By the age of 80 most people are taking life more gently. They get up a little later in the mornings and regard regular work as a thing of the past. Not so Mrs Violet Stubbs. She was 80 on Tuesday and she still does a paper round at seven o'clock every morning!

She is a newsgirl for Annetts, the newsagents, of Oxford Road, Purley and come rain, snow or shine Mrs Stubbs faithfully delivers 60 papers along Long Lane, Purley, each day.

She is up every morning at 5.30 to "clear up and do the household chores". She leaves her home at "Way-bac" off Long Lane to be at the bottom of the road by 6.55 to collect the papers, then sets off to deliver them with her little trolley-basket.

"I have been doing this for 13 years now and I don't think I have missed a morning yet" said widowed Mrs Stubbs when she spoke to the "Chronicle" at her home on Tuesday. "I started doing the round as a favour to the newsagent when I was 67 and I have just carried on ever since.

"I think that it is getting up early every morning that keeps me going" said Mrs Stubbs, "and I am a keen believer in eating an



*Violet Stubbs aged 80 with her trolley basket*

apple a day to keep the doctor away. When I get back from the round I have breakfast at nine and a little rest. I then finish the housework, have another rest in the afternoon and am in bed, usually by 9.45 pm."

And the comment from the newsagent, Mrs Isobel Annetts - "She is the best paper girl we have ever had, we should never ask her to retire"

*(published in the Reading Chronicle)*



*David Downs, Ben Viljoen & John Chapman waiting for the crowds to arrive at the Book Launch*

## *Meeting Report - September 2010*

### ***The Book Launch***

Unusually Project Purley's September meeting was held on a Friday afternoon rather than in the evening. The venue was still The Barn, but the occasion was special as September 17th was the date set aside for launching Project Purley's major publication to date, "Purley in Old Images."

The gestation period for the book has been eighteen months. The driving force behind it has been its editor, Catherine Sampson, and she has been supported by an editorial and contributing panel consisting of Ann Betts, John Chapman, Cliff and Jean Debney, David Downs, Peter Perugia and Ben Viljoen.

Because of the time and effort that had gone into the publication, it was decided to hold a formal launch with invited guests. This would also serve as a major advertising opportunity with invitations to attend sent to local newspapers and radio stations. Copies of the book would also be on sale at the discounted price of £20. And to ensure that the launch would be a true community event, Purley Women's Institute was invited to provide the buffet for the 80 guests who did accept an invitation.

By 2.30 p.m. on the afternoon of the 17th everything in The Barn was ready. The W.I. ladies were all in position standing behind tables laden with every imaginable type of cake, Ben had set up his carefully designed display of extracts from the book and Chairman, John, was hovering by the doorway, waiting to greet the dignitaries who would soon be arriving.

The guests started to trickle in. Among the first to arrive was Alok Sharma, the newly elected Member of Parliament

for Reading West, closely followed by the guest of honour for the afternoon, The Hon. Mrs Bayliss. She is the Lord Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire, and has written the foreword to the book. Also in attendance were Peter Argyle, Deputy Chairman of West Berkshire Council, Rick Jones Chairman of Purley on Thames Parish Council and Peter Trentham from G. Percy Trentham & Sons, the firm on whose premises the Barn was sited before it was removed and relocated to its present position at the Goosecroft Recreation Ground.

The pleasant hum of conversation continued until 3 p.m. when Chairman John asked for quiet so that the formal speeches could begin. The Lord Lieutenant spoke first, confirming much of what she had said in her foreword. She congratulated all who had helped to make Purley the vibrant community that it has been and still is, and explained that she thought that the book was an excellent guide to the village. She acknowledged the efforts of all those in Purley who make things happen, and praised especially Catherine for all her hard work in putting the book together. Catherine herself spoke next, saying how proud she was to live in Purley, and what a fantastic place the village is. She thanked all the contributors to the book, and said how readily they had responded to the tight deadlines which had been imposed. Catherine also appealed to all those present to buy a copy!

John Chapman concluded the formal part of the afternoon by presenting copies of the publication. The first went to the Lord Lieutenant, then there were presentations to Heather and Henry Scutt, descendents of the Wilder family, to Peter Fullerton, a descendent of the Storer family (who in turn thanked Cliff and Jean Debney for awakening his inter-

est in family history) and to Ian Nash who had provided some of the photographs in the book.

John finished by saying how grateful we should all be to the ladies of the W.I. led by Daphne, Dorothy and Marion for their strategic planning which ensured that everyone had enjoyed at least one slice of cake, plus a cup of tea and/or glass of wine. The event had served to emphasise what a superb community Purley on Thames continues to be.

Guests sat around chatting and discussing the book until 5 p.m., by which time most had departed and there was only the tidying up left to do. At the bookstall Ann and Catherine reported that over 50 copies had been sold during the afternoon and another 30 had been ordered and await distribution. If anyone else would like a copy of "Purley in Old Images," please contact Ann Betts on 0118 942-2485 or Catherine Sampson on 0118 942-2255. Lavishly illustrated with 250 images relating the life and times of our village, the book is an excellent investment.

*David Downs*



*The ladies of the WI with their spread of cakes at the book launch*

*Meeting Report - October 2010*

## ***The Art of Deception in WW2***

**by Hugh Granger**

Hugh began his talk by explaining that courage alone would never be sufficient to win a war. Guile and slow cunning were also necessary, as well as excellent security, and this became apparent on the Home Front in 1940 when England was regularly subjected to intense German bombing raids. Diversions for the Luftwaffe had to be created. These took the form of "Starfish" made of pieces of steel mesh, and set alight at the appropriate time and built away from the real factories, to make the Germans think that their pathfinder aircraft had found the actual target. The following waves of bombers would then drop their bombs on the simulated factories.

So "Starfish" was the first deception of the war, with its three arms filled with petrol and creosote, and which needed to be relit by volunteers during the night if necessary. They were used all over the country and "Starfish" became so successful that it contributed significantly to the defence, in particular, of Bristol Docks, Cardiff and Portsmouth. Eventually there were 235 "Starfish" sites in England. They were also used to protect important buildings abroad later in the war.

Deception was also used to protect our airfields; "Q" sites were constructed, designed to be visible at dusk, with vehicles following wires along flare paths to imitate planes landing. Over 100 "Q" sites were eventually used and their success in deceiving German bombers was a major factor in enabling the Royal Air Force to win the Battle of Britain.

On the battlefield one of the great unsung heroes of



*Winston Churchill inspecting a gun emplacement near Hartlepool which was disguised as a seaside roundabout (IWM H2639)*

deception was a pre-war music hall magician and illusionist called Jasper Maskelyne. Field Marshal Lord Gort was so impressed with his ideas that he appointed him head of the Camouflage Corps and posted him to the Middle East with a small but talented group of officers and men who soon became known as “The Magic Circle.” This group built dummy tanks at the rate of one every six minutes, and used camels to drag chains across the desert to create the illusion of an army on the march, as the dust clouds billowed. All the tanks made by “The Magic Circle” were flat-packs Mock-Up For Infantry (the wartime equivalent of MFI), but the deception was so successful in distracting the main thrust of the Italian army that it was defeated at Sidi Barani and 130,000 prisoners taken.

In 1941 Maskelyne was asked to conceal the vital supply line of the Suez Canal. The Germans had already sunk one ship in the canal and now wanted to bomb and close it completely. Maskelyne and his men set out to dazzle German pilots. He placed searchlights, their powerful beams deflected by petal-shaped shields round the light,

along the canal, with the result that the pilots bombed the searchlights instead of the canal, which remained open. Despite his major contribution to the war effort, Maskelyne's expertise was never officially recognised by any award or decoration.

General Montgomery also needed deception to help him win the desert war against Rommel's Afrika Corps. Stocks of food, petrol and water had to be hidden from view, so a small group of 80 Australian troops built a dummy encampment, using tents and lorries and surrounded by a long slit trench. The slit trench was used to hide supplies including 50,000 gallons of petrol, and although the local Arabs used the camp to collect food from time to time, the Germans never knew that it also held the fuel for Monty's tanks and the depot was never attacked. In Operation Diamond, a fake railway line was built by the British leading to dummy tanks, so that the real reservoir of water was protected. The Germans needed two gallons of water per man per day to fight in the desert and, because their supply was less plentiful than the British Army's, this had a significant effect on morale.

Montgomery's army used artillery dummies to split Rommel's forces, with 30,000 soldiers of the Afrika Corps stationed in the south of the desert for an attack which never came, but one of the cleverest deceptions involved the use of just two scout cars. The Germans were desperate to get their hands on the maps used by the Allies, which were colour-coded and showed the wadis and also the quicksands which were so dangerous for the tanks and their crews. These maps had been drawn by the British Long Range Desert Group, the forerunner of the SAS. The Allies produced a fake map, with safe marked as unsafe and vice-versa, put it

in a haversack and sent out the two scout cars towards a German position. One of the cars crashed deliberately into the minefield, was blown up, though its crew escaped in the second car. The haversack and map fortunately survived, the map was rescued and interpreted by the Germans, with the result that many of their tanks were bogged down in quicksand and the progress of others slowed.

“Operation Mincemeat” was eventually made into a film entitled “The Man Who Never Was.” This deception was the brainchild of Lieutenant-Commander Montague of the Royal Navy. The Allies intended to invade Sicily in 1943, but wanted to deceive the Germans into thinking the invasion would take place along the Greek coastline. The intention was to use a corpse dressed in Naval uniform and carrying a briefcase containing maps showing the invasion planned for Greece. A suitable body was found and a submarine dropped the uniformed body off the coast of Spain. To complete the illusion, the briefcase, chained to the corpse’s wrist, also contained London theatre tickets, love letters written by WAAFs, and letters signed by Lord Mountbatten. The body was caught in a fishing net from a Spanish trawler, and although its innards were still partly frozen, not examined by Spain before it was handed over to the Germans. The Germans were sufficiently deceived to direct several army divisions to Greece for an attack which never materialised, and the Allies landed on Sicily almost unopposed.

The D-Day invasion of Normandy, planned for June 1944 and codenamed “Overlord,” had to work first time because men coming ashore in landing craft were easy targets for the German defenders. It was also necessary to prevent Stalin and the Russian army, advancing from the

east, from conquering the whole of Europe bar the United Kingdom. So the plan was to deceive the Germans into thinking the invasion route would be the shortest and most obvious one, from Dover to Calais. Accordingly a dummy fleet plus fake harbours and jetties was assembled at Dover. Rommel, now back in Germany, realised the extent of the deception, but was not listened to because of his involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler. The two most important German spies in England, codenamed "Garbo" and "Brutus," had been captured and "turned," ie used to send false information back to Germany.

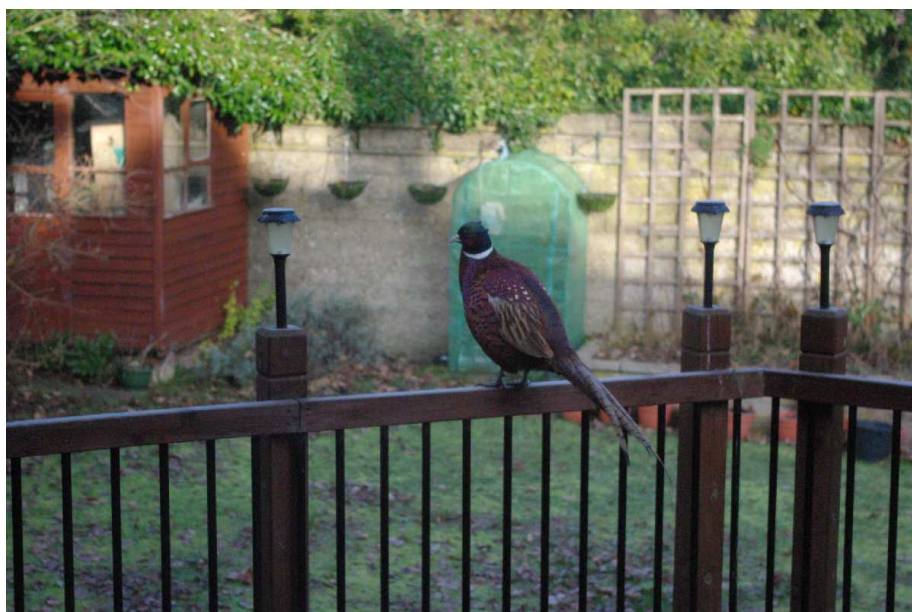
While all this was happening the Americans were building inflatable rubber tanks - each one guarded by a minder with a puncture outfit - and stationing them in and around Dover to add to the illusion that would draw German attention away from Normandy. Not all such deceptions were as successful however; but the use of actors to narrate an invasion script on a wavelength which could be monitored by the Germans was a successful ploy, as was that of generators set up on unused beaches to replicate the sounds of an invasion.

Hugh Granger brought his fascinating talk right up to date by explaining that he first prepared it 17 years ago, but that he is constantly adding to it as more and more World War Two secrets become declassified. And we should remember that deception is not the prerogative of the British. As recently as the Iraq war, the Iraqis not only built dummy aircraft as targets for the RAF, they fitted and lit gas stoves inside them to attract heat-seeking missiles. The art of deception in wartime lives on.

*David Downs*

## *Unusual Visitors*

We get all sorts of birds and beasts in our back garden but in the cold snap in November last we had a new one - a pheasant. He was prowling around our rear deck looking for food and when I opened the door he gave me a real



hungry look so I threw him a few nuts. While most creatures run and hide while I am doling out the food, this one just stood and glared at me. After eating all the nuts he perched awhile on

the railings and then came back and tapped on the window for more.

Another visitor to be on the look out for is the oak processing moth which has now been spotted in Pangbourne. The problem is with their caterpillars which can be found on oak trees in late spring and early summer. If you touch one, their hairs can cause itching and rashes and you should go and see your doctor. At the caterpillar stage the infected tree should be sprayed with deltamethrine. If the caterpillars pupate, their web-like nests should be removed and burned. However do not try and do any of this work

yourselves - you need a trained and experienced contractor.  
West Berkshire Council can provide suggestions.

*John Chapman*

## Meeting Report - November 2010

*John Betjeman*by **Roy Denison**

Roy Denison is Chairman of the Wantage Branch of the John Betjeman Society, and came to The Barn on Friday evening, November 19th to talk about the life of the former Poet Laureate.

John Betjeman (1906-1984) was an only child, born in Highgate Hill, and looked after in his early years by a nurse called Maude, whom he detested. He attended Byron House School, where he was blissfully happy, and during school holidays travelled with his parents by train from Waterloo to Padstow for their vacation. The journey then took six hours, and so began his love affair with railways and railway engines, as well as Cornwall where he is now buried. He was entranced by the beauty of the Cornish coastline, and at Wadebridge, where the train crossed the bridge, the former railway station has been redeveloped as the Betjeman Museum and Day Centre.

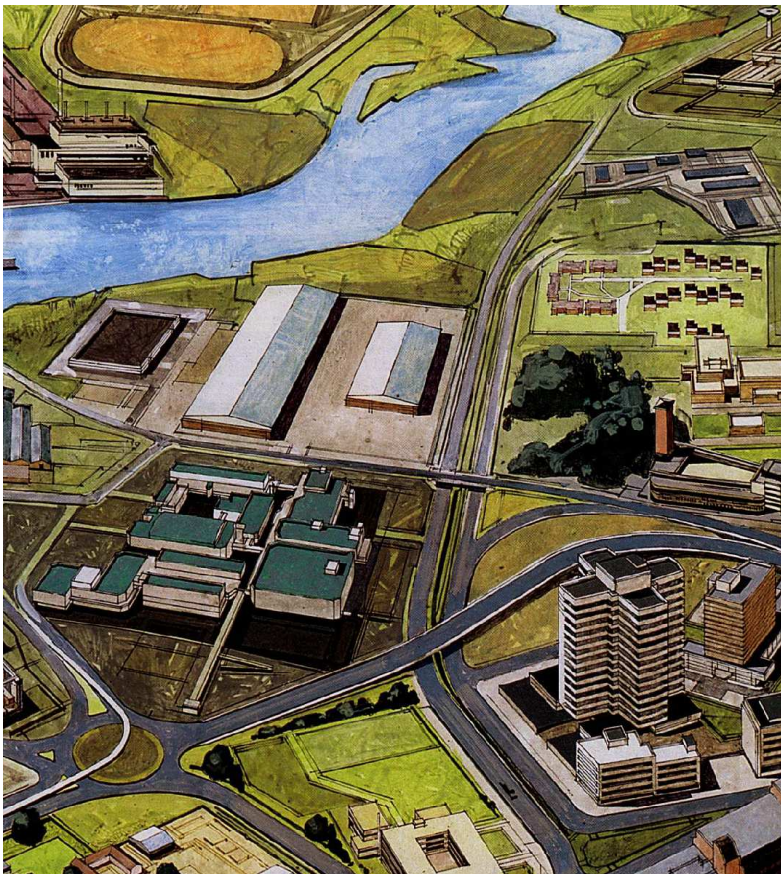
After Byron House, Betjeman was sent to the Dragon School at Oxford as a boarder, then moved on to Marlborough where he acquired his love of churches, and became a High Anglican, remaining thus throughout his life. Next came Oxford University, where he partied incessantly, did very little work and failed all his exams. His parents were horrified, but he told them he wanted to just be a poet. He wrote poems and prose about railways, but by this time had also discovered an interest in architecture, leading several campaigns to save old buildings due for demolition.

But he needed a steady job, and despite being useless at all sports (except possibly golf) became a cricket master at a

prep school. This did not last long, so he went into journalism as a film critic, though his reviews suggested he slept through most of the films he attended. He also wrote, more diligently, for the *Architectural Review*, and about this time met and courted Penelope Chetwode before marrying her in secret. The couple bought Garrad Farm, their first house, at Uffington and stayed there until the outbreak of World War Two. A blue plaque commemorating Betjeman's stay now adorns the front of the house.

During World War Two, Betjeman, who confessed he could not tell one end of a rifle from the other, was sent to Dublin as a press attaché, a posting he enjoyed because there was no rationing. He and Penelope returned to England and the Wantage area, though moving from Garrads to the Old Vicarage at Farnborough, where Penelope would often allow her favourite horse inside the house, much to John's disgust.

At Uffington, John



*In October 2010 Peter Trentham donated a painting to the Parish Council which has been mounted on the wall facing the doors of the large hall of the Barn. The painting was commissioned to celebrate the first sixty years of Trenthams and depicts many of the construction projects the company completed in those years. Left is a vignette from that painting showing a cruciform office block built in Cardiff and the town centre of Merthyr Tydfil*

*In the May Journal there will be an article telling something of Trentham's story.*

became a church warden, and his dedication to the church and church buildings is celebrated by John Piper's stained glass window at Farnborough. The next move saw the Betjemans leave the Old Vicarage for The Mead in Wantage, a beautiful country house where the Wantage Branch holds regular social events. It was here that Betjeman wrote his *Shell Guides*, as well as his only book for children entitled "Archie the Bear." He now attended the Parish Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Wantage, walking down from The Mead past Letcombe Brook, picking up the Saturday evening fish and chips wrapping papers as he did so.

Now he was working in the City, still writing poetry, but a founder member of the Victorian Society, dedicated to preserving old buildings and making films, including the celebrated "Metroland" for BBC Television.

Towards the end of his life he developed Parkinson's Disease, and returned to his beloved Cornwall to finish his days. He was laid to rest in the churchyard of Saint Enodoc, across the bay from Padstow. The gravestone at Saint Enodoc is considered by some to be rather ornate for such an essentially modest man. A rather more fitting tribute can be found in the Betjeman Millennium Park at Wantage, which is dedicated to "The bonus of laughter."

Roy, who once told off John Betjeman for eating a baguette outside the Saint Pancras Station Hotel because he was dropping crumbs on the new carpet, received loud applause from the 44 members who attended. During and after coffee he spoke to several of us, providing even more information about JB.

*David Downs*

## *Purley in the Religious Census 1851*

by Jean Debney

On 30 Mar 1851 the population census of England and Wales recorded more information about each person than in any previous census<sup>[1]</sup> and, on the same day, the only religious census was also taken. The latter was to investigate how many of the population attended a religious establishment, was there an increase in Catholicism, what was the provision and attendance between the established church and its rivals and, also, was there sufficient provision in towns - which were seen as "abodes of the godless" i.e. "bums on seats" - for those who might wish to attend.

It was originally intended, as in Ireland, to include a question about everyone's religious affiliation but this caused such an uproar it was dropped. There was also strong opposition nationally to any religious census by Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, whose brother had recently become Catholic. In the end the questions were so vague and confusing that the answers were and are almost impossible to interpret. When it received the go-ahead, he gave the clergy the option of not filling in their returns which left many local enumerators with the additional task of compiling answers on the blank forms as best they could. Wilberforce's influence probably accounts for the high number of forms in Berkshire signed by the enumerator.<sup>[2]</sup>

The report, which appeared some years later, left many anomalies. Congregations may have been larger than usual as it was Mothering Sunday and an unknown number may have attended more than one service and were therefore counted two or even three times. Some totals are suspiciously rounded and some may have been inflated to boost a church or chapel's importance in the community.

Berkshire had 448 returns which included 203 from Anglican churches. They were followed by 122 Methodists (69 Wesleyan, 52 Primitive and 1 Calvinistic), 7 Quakers, 6 Catholic, 2 Mormon (Newbury and Reading), 1 Brethren and several others such as mortuary and hospital chapels.

In the 1820s there was an evangelistic campaign by the Primitive Methodists across Berkshire. By 1851 they had chapels, etc. in 53 places and, together with the Wesleyan (75) and Calvinistic (1) Methodists, were second only to the Church of England. Next came the Congregational and Independents (34), Catholics (6), Quakers (4) and Mormons (2), plus a few miscellaneous places.

Berkshire had 192 Sunday Schools. These included the Bethesda Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel where the signatory, John Dance of Theale, the chapel deacon, seized the opportunity to complain "There would be more Sunday scholars were it not for the National School<sup>[3]</sup> denying them the privilege of their tuition on the week days."

The overall results suggest that at least a third of the population did not attend any religious establishment. Some may have had a very good reason for this but there was thought to be a degree of religious indifference especially amongst the urban working classes. Attendance by all classes in the established church was highest in rural areas where employment and housing was important to the labourers.

This is the entry for Purley with those of the adjacent parishes of Pangbourne and Sulham for comparison.

*PURLEY*

ST MARY'S PARISH CHURCH. [TNA Ref: HO 107/226/44]

An ancient parish church. *Endowed* tithe £300, glebe £50. *Free*

*sittings* 60. *other sittings* 36. *On 30 March*: morning general congregation 60; Sunday scholars 25; afternoon general congregation 22; Sunday scholars 19. *Average attendance during 12 months*: morning general congregation 55; Sunday scholars 20; afternoon general congregation 25 Sunday scholars 20. Signed Richard Palmer, Minister, Purley Rectory, Reading. 30 March 1851

### SULHAM

ST NICHOLAS'S PARISH CHURCH [TNA: HO 129/126/38]

An ancient parish church. *When consecrated* - before 1800 but partly restored 1838. *Endowed* tithe net £147, glebe £38, fees 10s. *Free sittings* 110. *On 30 March*: morning general congregation 54; Sunday scholars 35; afternoon general congregation 55; Sunday scholars 35.

Signed John Wilder, Rector, Sulham near Reading [undated]

And, with less detail, John Butler, the Enumerator signed the following undated returns:

### PANGBOURNE

PARISH CHURCH [TNA Ref: HO 129/126/45]

*Endowed* tithe about £500, glebe £5. *Free sittings* 100; *other sittings* 300. *On 30 March*: morning general congregation 200; afternoon general congregation 100.

INDEPENDENT CHAPEL [TNA Ref: HO 129/126/46]

*Erected* previous to 1815. A separate building used exclusively for worship. *Free sittings* 100; *other sittings* 100. *On 30 March*: morning general congregation 50; evening general congregation 200.

### SOURCES

Kate Tiller (ed), 'Berkshire Religious Census 1851', Berkshire Record Society, Vol.14, 2010.

Kate Tiller, 'Berkshire People in the 1851 religious census', Berkshire Family Historian, vol.31 (Mar 2008), 8-11.

## NOTES

[1]: *Census returns 1801-1831 were numerical only & 1841 had bare details of individuals.*

[2]: *Purley and Sulham were signed by the rectors but Pangbourne was not*

[3]: *Under the control of the Established Church of England.*

*The original returns are at The National Archives. Microfilm copies are in the Berkshire Record Office.*

## *Nature Notes*

### *Mid-August to Mid-December 2010*

**by Jean and Cliff Debney**

As we write this report in mid-December we look back over the past year as well as the recent months since our last notes written in mid-August.

The overall temperatures in August were below average but they perked up briefly with a heat wave on the 18th to 23rd when the temperature reached 26°C before eventually falling to under 20°C. Meanwhile 31mm (about 1.25") fell on 22nd and a couple of days later 23mm (just under 1") fell - but at least the plants and grass benefited even if the rest of us didn't! The total rain during the month was over 100mm (4").

One day towards the end of the month Cliff was cutting the grass in the back garden and disturbed a small frog when mowing the long damp grass round the patio. Instead of hopping quickly away it just sat there motionless, blinking vaguely. Let's hope he was consuming some of the oh! so numerous slugs that infest our garden.

September began with temperatures around 20°C before cooling down a little to a welcome mini 'Indian summer'

towards the end of the month when daytime temperatures again reached the upper teens. Rain was scarce and only 44mm (under 2") fell leaving plants suffering and our water butts empty (again).

As usual our shiny windows attract birds every now and then and, on hearing a small thud on our back bedroom window and, on looking out, I saw a small greenish bird with a pointed beak lying stunned and motionless on the patio below. After about five minutes he recovered sufficiently to fly away apparently unharmed (but probably suffering from a headache). From my description, Cliff thinks it was a wood warbler (although I had thought, after looking in our bird book, that it was a chiff chaff - not green enough said Cliff!)

Saturday 22nd was warm and sunny so I took the opportunity to plant out some of our newly purchased plants into pots for the patio and spotted a very out-of-season cowslip and a yellow snapdragon (*antirrhinum*) flowering in one of the pots plus a large, but unripe, wild strawberry in another one. The latter flourish in different parts of our garden each year and we always enjoy eating them in June. Another day Cliff spotted a pair of pied wagtails as they flashed across our front garden.

Although October opened with relatively warm weather this had disappeared by the third week as temperatures fell to 7°C; they rose again in the last week. Some rain fell in the early days but was followed by many dry days with just the very occasional shower: the month's total was 75mm (about 3").

As the weather cooled off we decided to hang the seed feeder and fat block in their squirrel-safe containers out again on the washing line. They were brought in during the

summer months when there was plenty of natural food available. It is a joy again to look out of the kitchen window and watch the birds flying in and out of the shelter of a nearby buddleia bush to enjoy their feast. The nuthatch is a regular visitor together with the great, long-tailed and blue tits and dunnocks (hedge sparrows to you and me!). By flapping his wings madly the robin also manages to hang on to the fat feeder for a couple of seconds while he snatches a few titbits. As usual, the ubiquitous wood pigeons and grey squirrels clear up the bits under the seed feeders as well as the crumbs from our tablecloth. Ginger tom often lurks under the lonicera hedge close by but, despite several attempts, does not appear to have caught anything - yet!

As November opened the leaves were constantly drifting down off our trees and, during a very wet and windy night, the ash trees near the railway embankment were stripped almost bare. Bonfire night, Friday 5th, was a washout as it rained constantly - 7mm fell - and Saturday was not much better with 8mm of rain. But, from the 9th we had many dry days and only had 37mm (less than 1.5") during the whole month. In the last seventeen days of the month the temperature stayed below 10°C and 6mm of rain fell.

Temperatures fell dramatically on 6th of November to 11.5°C, and have stayed low since, with 0°C recorded on the 28th November during the day. A brief but unwelcome shower of snow on Saturday 27th soon disappeared.

The first days of December were very cold with low daytime temperatures and frosty nights when our Max-Min thermometer recorded -3.5°C. The snow in November was followed by more snow during the nights of 1st and 2nd December and this hung about during the day. We hope these events are not a sign of things to come: we think we

## *The Christmas Party*

As usual the Christmas party was held at The Gatehouse on the 18th of December courtesy of Rick and Val Jones. There was an excellent supply of food and the usual very popular mulled wine made by Jean Debney and her team of helpers. We had 34 attendees, despite the very cold weather, including several members who had joined only recently. - Good to see you!!.

After the eats David Downs gave out the quiz sheets which kept people busy for a short while. But it was the quiz decider that was the star. Nicki Woodward and Elizabeth Bowden came top and the decider was to find a caption for a photograph of the remains of an old London bus which was discovered when one of the chalets on Wintringham Way was demolished. It was Elizabeth who won the prize of a bottle of wine but, as everyone had been invited to have a go at this, David read out the suggestions. They were all so good that we are reproducing them opposite.

### *The Caption Competition*

This is the photo of the bus that people were asked to caption:



And here are the results - in no particular order and unattributed to protect the guilty!!

Air conditioning arrives at last to Purley

I am sure that these latest building regulations are a bit severe on ventilation.

As the conductor wouldn't give change the passengers helped themselves.

Told them not to eat beans for supper!

Des Res for sale - River views, mooring - great for open air types.

You wait for two buses then half of one comes along.

The only train that stops at Purley.

And when electrification comes along we can move it through the rebuilt bridge.

Well no-one said it was susceptible to flooding.

Desirable residence with modern air-conditioning.

Mind the gap!!

Move up in the world by moving to Purley.

Wish you were here!

Parish Council moved to new premises due to cut backs.

Its quicker by train from Purley

Is your journey really necessary?

Its a little draughty for bare essentials.

Estate Agent "It will offer you a great opportunity for refurbishment, sir"

The queue at the bus stop is getting longer.

Purley was confident that their new gritting lorry would keep New Hill open in this year's snow.

Darling, did you remember to put the bins out?

And now for some photographs of the party

*below Jill Oke with Pat & John Turner puzzling*



*above - Jan Page*



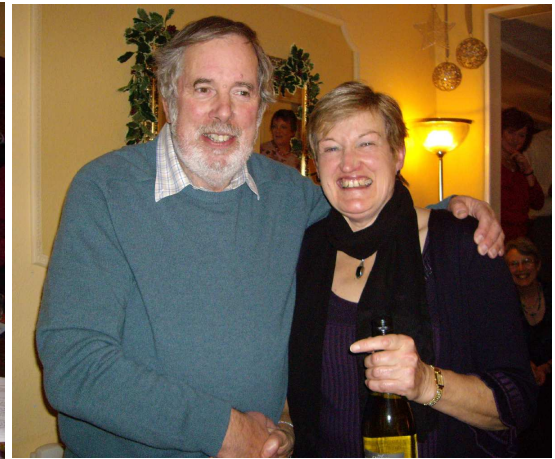
*right Annabel Mason and Catherine Sampson have cleared their plates*



*left John Chapman and Edna Bint enjoying a joke*



*The quiz keeps Margaret & Eric Smith and Elizabeth & Ian Burn amused*



*Elizabeth Bowden receives her prize from David Downs*

## *The Canterville Ghost*

This year's winter production by Rain or Shine was "The Canterville Ghost", adapted from a short story by Oscar Wilde, who of course spent time in Reading Gaol.

The matinee performance was to children from years 5 and 6 at Westwood Farm Junior School. Although this audience was much younger than ones we have had at previous matinees, they were entranced by the story and the skill of the actors. So much so that their behaviour was impeccable and led to a couple of the adult members of the afternoon audience ringing the school's headteacher to express their appreciation.

The evening performance was a virtual sell-out and again the audience was captivated. James Raynard, who directed the play and also wrote some additional scenes to extend the action, played the part of the benign and humorous, yet slightly self-mocking ghost to perfection, and a true community spirit was engendered as the audience was encouraged

to join in the carols begun by the actors during the play.

The cast took their bow to great applause at 10 pm and, as the Barn emptied, they dismantled the stage and repacked everything into their van. They had to drive back to Gloucester during the night, then leave early in the morning for a show in Great Yarmouth.

Financially the event was a great success made up of profits from the tickets and refreshments served by Catherine and her band of helpers and donations at the door collected by Cliff and Jean. We made £490 some of which will go towards purchasing some professional display stands for Project Purley's future exhibitions and the rest to charity.

*David Downs*

## *Valete*

The September 2010 issue of the Project Purley Journal was the last one for which Ben Viljoen did the design and layout. Ben has been undertaking this task for the last five years but is now moving on to spend more time with his other commitments, including his work with the Berkshire Gardens Trust.

I am sure members will agree that Ben has done a fantastic job on the Journal, bringing it into the 21st Century by using digital technology, which has greatly improved the look of this publication.

The Society owes Ben a great debt for all his hard work on its behalf and our thanks go to him with our best wishes for his future ventures.

*Editor*