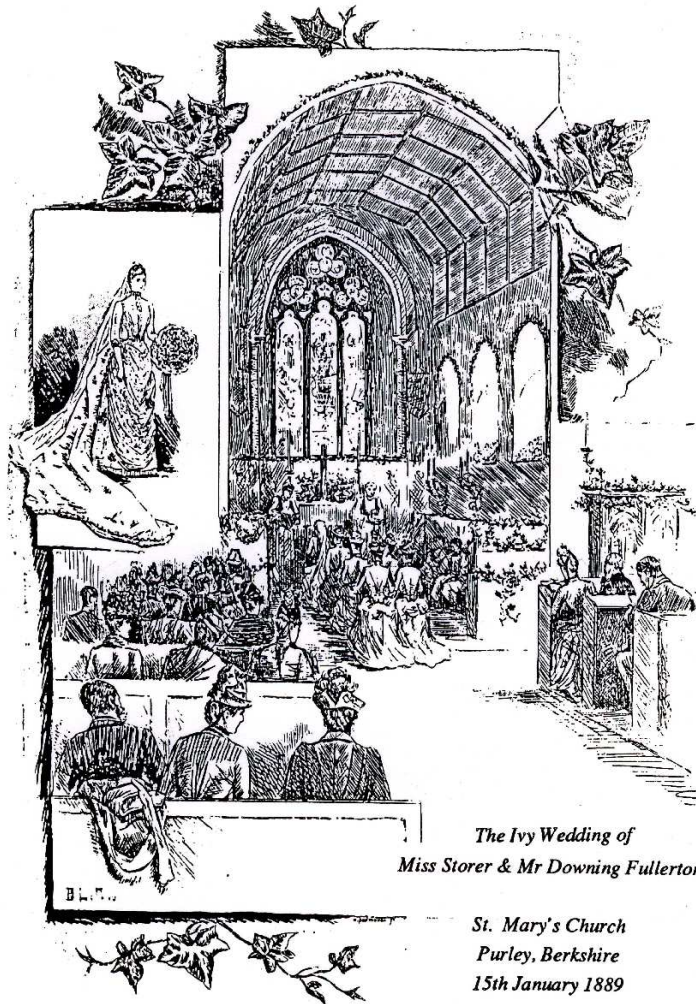


THE PROJECT PURLEY JOURNAL



*The Ivy Wedding of
Miss Storer & Mr Downing Fullerton*

*St. Mary's Church
Purley, Berkshire
15th January 1889*

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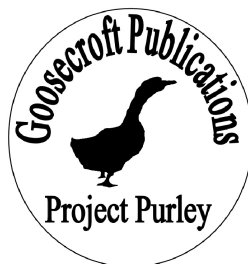
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Chairman's New Year Message

This will be my last New Year Message as my term of office will expire at the AGM in March as I was first elected in April 2006. Bear with me then if I recall the last five years of Project Purley. One of the first things we did was to rebrand the Newsletter as the Project Purley Journal after Ben Viljoen had taken over the role of typesetter from Ron Denman who had brought our Newsletter firmly into the 21st century.

We have had some memorable talks and outings thanks to some inspired programme organisers; but the one I remember most was the farewell talk by George Fielder on 20th April 2007 as he retired from his job as lock-keeper. We had 53 there that night which remains our record attendance. We have also had many performances by the Rain or Shine Theatre Company who have brought a bit of culture (?) to the village. I can say only that I had never thought of Shakespeare in the same way before. And, we raised a lot of money for charity, so a vote of thanks to David Downs for organising these.

We haven't done much in the way of exhibitions, but now we are preparing for our celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee which promises to be the best ever thanks to Catherine Sampson and our team of volunteers. Our old display stands have been turned into garden ornaments and we now have some really professional ones.

Behind the scenes we have been busy building an electronic archive of images and text to make all the material we have collected over 30 years more easily useable and easier to share. This both formed and was enhanced by the work we did to produce Project Purley's greatest achievement - *Purley in Old Images* - edited by Catherine Sampson. Not only has it been a resounding commercial success but it has brought out lots more memories and memorabilia from people we did not even know existed.

Finally I must say a big thank-you to all the committee who have supported me over the last five years; but again my thoughts are with several members who have passed away - we miss you!

And, a very happy New Year to you all.

John Chapman

Three Glorious Queens

Part 2 - Queen Victoria

John Chapman

In the second of our articles leading up to the Diamond Jubilee exhibition we deal with Queen Victoria and the period when Britain ruled a quarter of the globe.

Queen Victoria came to the throne on 20th June 1837 on the death of her uncle, King William IV. She had been born at Kensington Palace on 24th May 1819, her father being the fourth son of King George III. She married her cousin, Albert, in February 1840, being widowed in December 1861 and living most of the rest of her reign as a recluse.

Her reign saw huge changes in almost every aspect of life, many of which had a profound impact upon Purley. Almost coincidental with her coming to the throne, the Great Western Railway opened,



Pangbourne Station in the 1860s This was the station for Purley until Tilehurst opened in 1882

cutting the parish in half with a deep cutting and a number of new bridges, although initially a tunnel beneath the village had been envisaged. Towards the end of her reign the line was widened to four tracks at the same time as the broad gauge was abolished. The Churchwardens pulled a smart move when the railway first came as they realised it was a rateable asset and got the line assessed at £1300 per mile. By the time most of the neighbouring parishes caught on the rate for them was reduced to £600 per mile. The first few years of her reign saw the end of the stage and mail coaches as travellers transferred to the new railways.

The carriers survived and many of them continued to pass along the Pangbourne to Reading road, stopping off to pick up orders if an appropriate sign had been displayed by the roadside. Generally they would collect orders as they drove into town in the morning from their village and deliver the goods they had purchased in Reading market, charging the householder 1d in the shilling for the service on the way home.

By and large the roads had changed very little since Queen Elizabeth's day, although the main road had been substantially improved as a result of the Turnpike Acts. The Turnpike was abolished in 1875 so the road was free of tolls. The river was still a main artery for the transport of goods and there was a good towing path alongside it, except where it reached the east end of the village where the horses had to move to the north bank via the chain ferry to avoid the steep south bank where the railway passed close to the river.

There were huge changes in the social scene during her reign. Just before it started the Reform Act had been passed in 1832 and the number of people eligible to vote increased from three in 1832 to all those owning or renting land worth at least £10. By 1892 this had been extended to include all householders, but only a man who was head of the household. The Enclosure Award in 1856 deprived many people of their strips of land in the Common Field and turned them into labourers at pitifully low wages. The Union Workhouse at Bradfield was feared by anyone who fell upon hard times, especially in old age; but poverty was the lot of the majority of the population.

The Tithe Award of 1840 gives us a detailed picture of land ownership in Purley. Most of it was included in the manor of Purley Magna and under the Storer's control or under La Hyde under the Wilders. But there were several parcels of land under other ownerships and of course the roads and verges were mainly part of the wasteland of the parish. Throughout much of the reign farming was conducted by one or other of the Sherwood family who rented land from the principal landowners

Education was essentially available only to the well off. Grants had been made available to sustain small schools but the amount of grant was dependent upon inspection reports and restricted to reading, writing and arithmetic so poor students were actively discouraged. In Purley education for the poorer classes was provided by the several rectors who engaged a school mistress. Miss Mary Herridge was the mistress for many years up to 1869. In 1870 after the passing of the Elementary Education Act the rector, Richard Palmer, engaged the architect Joseph Morris to build a proper school. This was opened in February 1875. Richard Palmer had died in 1874 but his sister transferred the title to the rector, effectively cutting out the churchwardens, one of whom was the squire, Anthony Morris Storer who was perhaps the dominant personality in the village throughout Victoria's reign.

Probably the most obvious change in Purley was the rebuilding of the church. When Victoria came to the throne, the church dated mainly from Stuart times having been reconstructed around 1626 to



St Mary's Church in the 1860s

conform to new ideas of worship. It had a very cramped east end, high pews and a gallery. The Diocesan architect G E Street was engaged to produce a new design and he swept most of the old church away except the tower. He was following the new trend set by Pugin and his school of architecture to imitate the gothic style. It was begun in

1869 and dedicated on 5th October 1870.

Charles Manesty had been the rector when the reign began, he was followed by Richard Palmer in 1844, Charles Henry Travers in 1875 and Matthew Powley in 1881. They all had a succession of curates but they all lived in the parish, in sharp contrast to the mainly absentee rectors of the previous century. Another change that had taken place in 1836 was that Purley had been transferred from the Diocese of Salisbury to Oxford in 1836 and a little while later the living had been transferred from the Crown to the Lord Chancellor.

In 1892 Berkshire County Council was formed and in 1894 the Parish Vestry was abolished to be replaced by a Parochial Church Council to look after church matters and a Parish Council or Meeting to look after civil matters. Purley, being very small, opted for the Meeting. Around the same time all the lands of Whitchurch south of the river were transferred to the new Civil Parish of Purley.

Queen Victoria died on 22nd January 1901 at Osborne House being survived by 6 of her 9 children, 40 grandchildren and 37 great grandchildren. She was buried in a mausoleum at Frogmore near Windsor.



The Reverend Matthew Powley

MEETING REPORTS

*Purley Players**Jean Chudleigh & Gerry Hiscock*

The new season of talks opened on 16th September with a joint presentation by Jean Chudleigh and Gerry Hiscock to tell us all about the Purley Players and show us many photographs of their performances as well as a display of some of their costumes.

It all started in 1993 when a group got together to put on an *Old Tyme Music Hall* to raise funds for the church roof. The group had such fun working on the production that they decided to put on some more similar shows in succeeding years, culminating in a show in aid of the Royal British Legion in 2001.

By now they were getting more and more adventurous turning more towards Musicals but when it came to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002 they moved to the Barn and adopted the name Purley Players with a revue of the Queen's reign. The next year, back at the church came the first pantomime *Cinderella* and next year *Caper at the OK Corral*.

They were now getting into some difficulties as they were acquiring costumes and needed to purchase staging and lighting and have a place to store it, so after an approach to the Parish Council a



Jean Chudleigh with husband Ron and Liz Kleiner in 'A spot of bother' - last year's performance

A big kiss from Barbara Buckner to Jeff Williams in Purley Players' first drama. "He's in the Cupboard" Looking on are Mike Adnett, Doreen Akers and Marjorie Butler



permanent move to the Barn was agreed in 2005. The farewell performance at the church was *Murder, Mystery and Supper* which set the scene for a new direction of more serious drama, although there were still plenty of laughs.

The second debut at the Barn was the pantomime *Aladdin*, followed by *He's in the Cupboard* a spoof on a TV show. Since then they have put on regular pantomimes and murder mysteries to packed houses and have set a standard for amateur dramatics of which everyone can be proud. Finally let me remind you of the Diamond Jubilee coming up - Purley Players have some great ideas for celebrating this.

John Chapman

The cast of "A show to die for" - this was Purley Players first murder-



"Caper at the OK Corral" with Gerry Hiscock, Jean Chudleigh, Chris Lang and Baz Breadmore

Ashmolean Museum

Julie Hurst

In October, Julie Hurst spoke to the Society about the Ashmolean Museum. Julie has been a guide at the Museum for 16 years and is also a steward at Kelmscott Manor, once the home of William Morris.

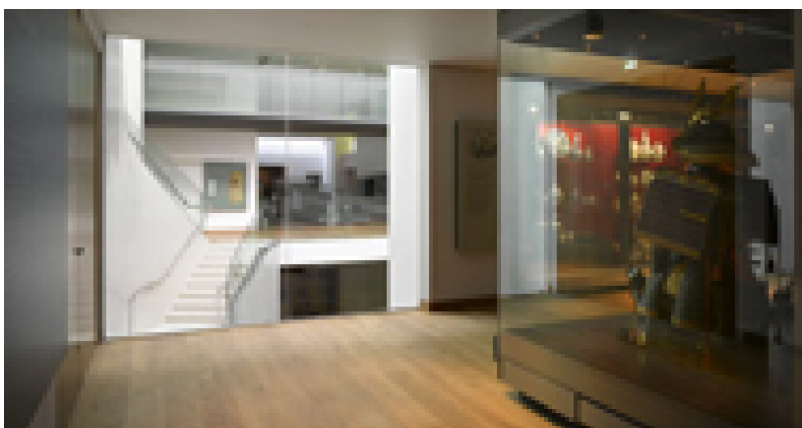


She told us that the first museum was built in 1678-1683 to house the curiosities of Elias Ashmole that he gave to Oxford University in 1677, together with works he had acquired from gardeners, travellers and collectors, John Tradescant the elder and his son of the same name. The original

museum was in Broad Street, but the collections were moved to Beaumont Street where the present building dates from 1845.

The interior of the Ashmolean has been extensively modernised in recent years; the Sackler Library incorporating the older library collection opened in 2001 and between 2006 and 2009 the museum was rebuilt and expanded. The rebuilding resulted in five floors instead of three, with a doubling of the display space as well as new conservation studios and an education centre.

During her talk, Julie Hirst showed slides of a selection of the exhibits and ended by reading out amusing extracts from letters received from children who had visited the museum. This was the second time Julie had spoken to the Society and we look forward to another visit from her in the future.



Ann Betts

The new interior

Candles and Candlesticks

Trevor Ottlewski

I doubt anyone can imagine what life was like before electricity and gas. No light glare over towns at night - just utter darkness if there was no moon or it was cloudy. About the only way you could get some light at night was by burning something. In ancient days the best thing to burn was oil or wax so Trevor explained to us how twigs dipped in wax or Roman oil lamps worked and pointed out that you had to be pretty well off to afford such luxuries.

For the vast majority of the population about the only thing you could do when it got dark was to go to bed.

Trevor then explained how candles came about and went through some different ways of making them, but then he solved the problem of how to hold candles - with candle sticks. He went through the technology of spikes and sockets and took us through the evolution of candlesticks from the 13th century to date. There were lots of photos but more importantly he brought along some samples from his large collection. This was supplemented by examples from several Project Purley members.

All in all it was a fascinating talk which stimulated a considerable interest in a subject which few in the audience had ever thought of before.

John Chapman

The Christmas Party

On the 16th December, thirty-seven members and guests turned out on a miserable night amongst all the traffic confusion caused by the rebuilding of New Hill bridge. However it was one of the best Christmas parties ever, everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, there was a delicious spread, which I thought was far too much, but most of it got eaten and thoroughly enjoyed, so a big word of thanks to all those who brought party fare along.

The quiz this year was very different. Everyone was given a sheet of paper and asked to write three facts about themselves and



Enjoying the mulled wine

one lie, then the papers were passed around and the rest of the crowd had to guess which was the lie. It was won by Jan Page, who managed to fool everyone with the lie that she was in a winning netball team. Some remarkable facts emerged about our members. Here is a small sample:-

My two youngest brothers have been Chief Constables - *Nicki Woodward.*

I purchased a car because my wife liked the shape - *John Murphy.*

My grandfather spent his 6th birthday in an English Concentration camp - *Ben Viljoen.*

I am frightened by rabbits - *Pam Maddock.*

Was brought up in a cinema - *Margaret Smith.*

I took a lethal weapon into



Jan Page receiving the prize from David Downs

Tito's bedroom in the middle of the night - *Val Jones*.

I took cover from German machine gunning. - *Rita Denman*.

We are grateful to Val and Rick Jones for their hospitality and to everyone who helped make the evening such a great success.

John Chapman



More happy party goers

Our web-site

Project Purley runs a website at www.project-purley.eu This replaces our old site and we hope it is a great improvement. It contains lots of interesting information about Purley on Thames, but there is still a lot to do. In particular we are looking for people who can put pen to paper and come up with some of the sections that are missing. These include:-

Buildings - describe them, tell when they were built or altered and something about the people who lived in them.

Families or individuals - when they first came to Purley, who they were, what they did and any interesting snippets of information about them

Clubs and Societies - sports clubs, youth clubs, social clubs - when they started what they did and who were involved.

You can start off with the barest minimum of information and then gradually add information as you discover it. Don't wait until you do a perfect job or else it will never get published.

Please, just give us the text and some pictures and we will do the rest. Please do not try to lay it out using spaces or tabs or anything like that - just words. We will arrange it on the web site for all to see.

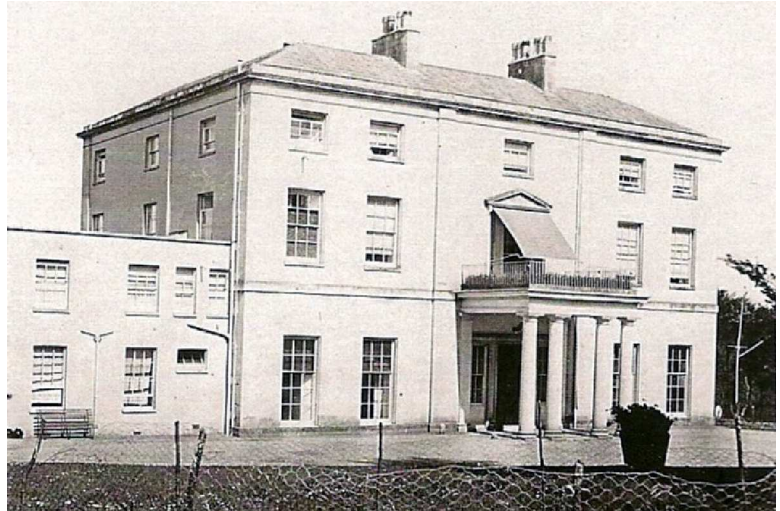
John Chapman

BIOGRAPHY

Anthony Morris Storer

Anthony Morris Storer was perhaps Purley's most notable Victorian. He was born in 1813 the son of Anthony Gilbert Storer who had inherited the Purley Magna estate from his uncle, another Anthony Morris Storer, who had made his money in the sugar trade based in Jamaica.

Young Anthony inherited the estate when his father died in 1818 and he was only 5. By that time the old manor house beside the church had been demolished and a new mansion built by Wyatt on the brow of the hill to avoid flooding. At the same time the farm business had been moved to a site by the turnpike



Purley Park

just west of Long Lane and the turnpike itself diverted to the south to avoid the mansion which seems to have been built on the foundations of the former Red Lyon Inn. The old road which led from the Roebuck down to the village had been closed off, to be replaced by New Hill and all the land to the east of the line of New Hill and what is now Mapledurham Drive was cleared of houses and turned into a pleasure garden with the public specifically excluded except on Sundays and some other special days when they were allowed to use Church Walk to attend the Parish Church.

His mother was embroiled in a very nasty court case in 1825 when she was accused with her butler, Robert Stewart, of flogging Philip Thompson a former slave with a hunting whip and imprisoning him. She was found not guilty but the butler was convicted.

As soon as he came of age he took steps to cancel the entail on the estate so he could do what he liked with it. One unexpected

consequence was that it meant he could sell land to the Great Western Railway which he was obliged to do. But Brunel had to come down to Purley Park in person to sort out all the details and Storer finished up with £10000 in compensation and a gold pass which gave him first class travel on the railway for life.

Anthony finally moved back to Purley Park when he married in 1863. They maintained a household in keeping with his wealth and status with a full complement of servants. He became a Major in the Oxfordshire Militia and a Justice of the Peace. He served as churchwarden from 1867 and was Chairman of the Parish Meeting from 1894, both until his death.

His daughter Leila was married to George Downing-Fullerton in 1889 at St Mary's Church in what the papers referred to as a fashionable and very pretty little wedding. The gardener built a series of triumphal arches from the railway underbridge to the church and the church itself was lavishly decorated with ivy. There was a reception for 900 guests and in the evening after the couple had departed by train from Tilehurst station there was a feast for 200 villagers in the barn at Home Farm.

There are many tales of his irascibility and stubbornness but when he died in 1902 he had never used the railway pass given him by Brunel, so much had he loathed the railway. His funeral cortege was crossing the bridge on New Hill when a train ran beneath it and whistled. This startled the horses who galloped all the way to the church - as one old timer remarked *That was the fastest the old b.... had ever travelled.*



Anthony Morris Storer

Nature Notes

Rita Denman

AUGUST

6th. The Bank holiday was a hot and sunny one just right for Tim at Home Farm to harvest the wheat. The grain was gathered, the straw stacked to dry, baled and collected before a band of rain reached this area.

12th. The weather has been sunny, cloudy, wet or windy and sometimes all in the same day. There are a number of marbled white butterflies in the meadow. Although I seldom see an owl they are in the area as evidenced by their calls just before dawn and the deer have been barking in the early morning. The fox had been in the meadow and moles busily excavating in the hedgerow. There are large green dragonflies around the garden pond and frogs of all sizes are everywhere.

19th. At the beginning of the week the stubble in Tim's field was visited by about 60 Canada geese. Arriving in small groups they were there for a few hours and took off in a great gaggle. The glory of the dawn chorus is over for another year. Now that the nights are lengthening a few birds make an effort at around 5.30 am gradually dwindling away to one bird. This contrasts by day with the increased twittering of the feathered inhabitants of the hedgerows. All work in the garden and meadow came to a standstill with 24 hours of continuous heavy rain.

26th. A female muntjac with a young one at her side has been foraging under the crab apple trees in the meadow.

SEPTEMBER

2nd. The little owl calls are more noticeable as they hunt at dawn which is now about 5.30am. The views that we can all enjoy in this part of Purley made a walk along the bridal path very enjoyable. The blackberries were not quite ready for picking although there was a general feel of approaching autumn.

9th. There are many butterflies in the garden and meadow, among them red admiral and speckled wood. The jays are making

the most of the wonderful crop of acorns on the millennium oak tree. The tree itself was a tiny seedling I found in the meadow no doubt from an acorn buried by a jay. The jays are raucous birds but welcome for the sight of their lovely blue wing feathers which the old country folk used to put in their hats.

16th. In the north of the country the remnants of hurricane Katia brought hurricane force winds. Here in the south we were fortunate to have only occasional gusty winds. The harvested farm fields and the meadow, where the long grass was cut, are turning green again. Ducks, swans and geese flying over the meadow were a sign of restlessness on the river. The resident Canada geese don't fly far away but at this time of year they have an urge to fly up and down the river more frequently.

I opened the curtains to a typical English September morning. There was a blue sky but chill air when everything was in sharp focus. A red kite circled the farm fields and the low sun highlighted the white feathers in the wings. As it slowly quartered the area its shadow glided over the fields and I watched this beautiful sight until the kite had moved across the river and away.

23rd. Tim at Home Farm is preparing to sow winter wheat within the next couple of weeks. In the meantime a large flock of geese and a few swans are making themselves at home on one of the harvested fields. It is a very good year for fungus and many kinds and of all colours are appearing in the meadow.

30th. The weather has been spectacularly beautiful and I took time to sit on the bench under the hazel tree and enjoy it. The crab apple trees all around me were laden with colourful fruit and the bumper crop of acorns on the millennium oak had fallen to the ground. There was a great excitement of calling and croaking from the huge flock of rooks in the field behind me and a family of jays in the tree tops close by were singing their un-musical song. A green woodpecker, or yaffle as it is known locally, with its undulating flight and cackling call added to the cacophony. The meadow was very green again and the plentiful crop of toadstools mingled with a late flowering of wild plants.

OCTOBER

7th. The return to glorious summer weather has ended and the mid to high twenties temperatures have dropped by 10 degrees. Gusty winds have whipped up the fallen leaves and the gulls which are always more in evidence during rough weather have been wheeling over the fields and following the tractor as Tim and Ian continue to prepare for the winter sowing. The soil is a rusty brown and a few roe deer were almost invisible against this back ground, only given away by their white rumps.

14th. Because the weather has been so mild the autumn colours are slow to appear and nature is very confused. Spring flowering shrubs are producing a second flush of flowers and roses which were blossoming at the end of March are still flowering. I was fortunate to be up to see a beautiful sunrise. A fiery red sky behind the black outline of an ash tree made a perfect silhouette. I always enjoy the early morning light as it illuminates in a special way, highlighting very ordinary objects. A neighbour has a pile of logs in the garden and the light intensified the colour of the cut wood and the growth rings.

21st. My window is a view onto the natural beauty of the river valley. I watched a day begin with a mist hanging over the river valley, rising, falling and moving through the trees and the fields dissipating as the sun became higher. The black Angus stood like a ghost herd in the corner of the pasture field and the resident gulls were flying in a widespread flock each on its own flight path catching the sun on their wings. The approach of geese was heralded by a loud calling and a large flock appeared out of the mist wheeling and turning together up and down the field, behind the trees and out into the sun making a constant and joyful noise until eventually they settled in the field. A single red kite came from nowhere to join in this celebration of the new day gliding and banking, showing off the red of its name and the beautiful markings on its wings. All the while the mist continued drifting to and fro as the sun rose and light increased. Suddenly as one, the geese took off, the gulls moved away and the red kite circled across the river and out of sight. The mist was gone. The sun was up and briefly everyth-

ing was still and quiet.

28th. Much of the country has been under a deluge. In Berkshire we have had heavy rain by night but reasonably fine weather by day. The garden birds are reappearing after the summer away and have decided that the cotoneaster and pyracantha berries are ready for eating.

NOVEMBER

4th. The weather continues to be unseasonably warm but there have been a few very heavy showers. The geese continue to fly up and down the valley and the roe deer are frequently in Tim's field.

11th. The average weather temperature remains at 14 °C. A beautiful yellow hunter's moon hung over the valley. We are very fortunate that there are parts of Purley that are not polluted by urban lighting and it is still possible to see the stars.

18th. The weather is so amazing that it is impossible to realise that Christmas is not far away. The leaves of the millennium oak are turning at last and it is looking very beautiful. The mahonia in the garden which usually blossoms in February attracting the early bumble bees is in blossom now. A lovely humming noise brought my attention to a bumble bee (*bombus pascuorum*) taking advantage of this unexpected bonus of nectar. There are days when nothing much seems to happen and then within half an hour there is a sudden surge in the wildlife. The roe deer appeared in the meadow, a skein of geese flew over the house followed by four swans and a very handsome pheasant with gorgeous tail feathers about two feet long haughtily picked its way up the garden.

25th. The main event has been fog. Nights are cooler but day time temperatures remain above normal. The fog almost cleared by about mid-day when the sun showed but as soon as the sun disappeared the fog returned. Now that darkness falls soon after 4 pm there have been the kind of early evenings when the imagination runs riot and sees apparitions among the trees and the hedgerows turn into crouching beasts.

Recollections of Purley 1902-1914

Rose Matthews

Rose was the daughter of the Reverend John Dudley Matthews who became Rector of Purley in 1902. Her reminiscences were published in Purley Parish News March 1975 and give a graphic picture of Purley at the end of Queen Victoria's reign.

I expect many of you have noted the grave on the left as you enter the church, to my father the Rev. J.H. Dudley Matthews, Rector of Purley 1902-1914, also the memorial in the choir which was placed there after his death.

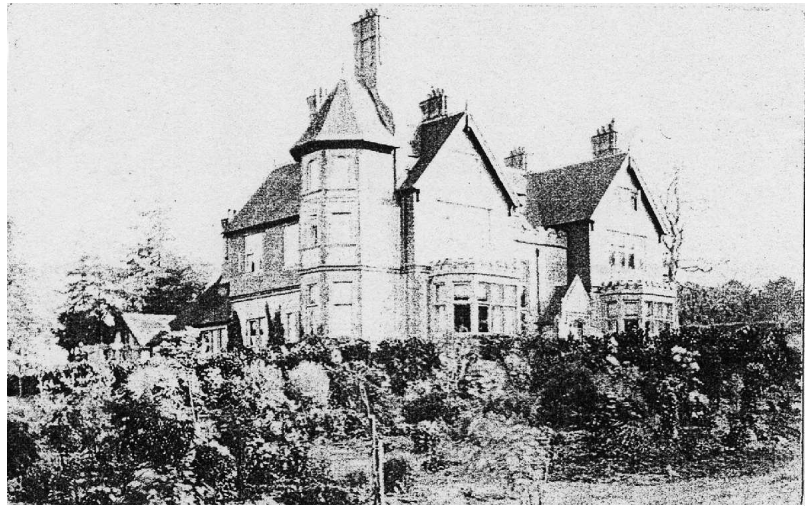
How well I remember our arrival on Maundy Thursday 1902, and spending much of Good Friday picking masses of primroses for the Easter decoration. We must have been met by an old fashioned cab (motors were scarce in those days) and I remember getting out and running down the first hill after you passed the Park gates. No houses there; but a farm house at the bottom, and to the right the Park with a path-way strictly reserved for Churchgoers and no houses at all except a cottage near the Church where the Park gardener lived with his wife and two nice little daughters.

To the left the village street - almost opposite a pond, the drive up to the Rectory with its nice garden and opposite the front door a lovely cedar tree. Beyond the Rectory a lovely walled vegetable garden with magnificent beds of asparagus, the first cutting always sent to Mrs. Powley (the widow of the previous Rector) who lived in Reading. Beyond that the school and the Headmistress's cottage and then facing the street three cottages lining the road to the second hill up to the Pangbourne Road. There were a few houses along the Long Lane and a blacksmith's forge at the corner of that and the main road.

On the other side of the village street, two cottages at right angles to the street and then four or five cottages facing it; in one lived a Mr Pinchin who earned I think only 18/- a week (plus harvest money) and worked as a labourer on the farm and whose six young children were always neatly clothed and shod. At the rectory we had three maids, a cook, houseparlourmaid and a kitchenmaid who asked the most ridiculously low wages and seemed most

happy and content. The father of the houseparlourmaid was our gardener and looked after our horse and carriage.

At the corner of the hill there was a nice house and garden occupied by Mr. Hodgkin one of our Churchwardens and a Manager of the Pulsometer Works on the outskirts of Reading. No houses up the hill until you reached a house occupied by Lady Sykes, the other Church-

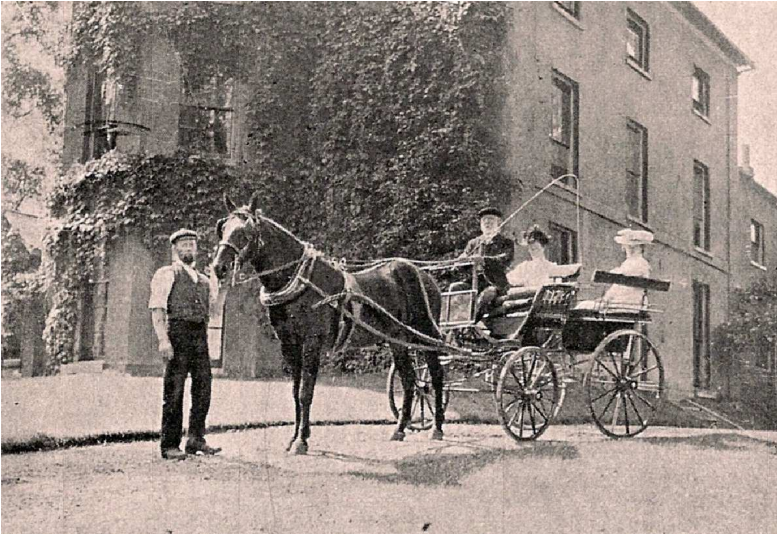


'Westfield' - the house up the hill occupied by Lady Sykes

warden, whose daughter married a Mr Petrocockino of Pangbourne. A cottage on her grounds was occupied by Mr Jarman, her coachman, his wife, son Harry (killed in the first war) and daughter Agnes who married years ago.

Turning towards Reading, no houses at all except the Park entrance, until you reached a public house (I cannot remember the name) and then Tilehurst Station and from there no more houses until you came to the Pulsometer Works and the beginning of a bus service into the town. Opposite Tilehurst Station a few private residences, but no other buildings on that side between the Long Lane and the Pulsometer Works.

No street lights, so we always had Evensong on Sunday in the afternoon. No village hall so any social events took place in the school and at Christmas time my family arranged an entertainment, acting or a concert, which was packed out for there was no other form of entertainment nearer than Reading. The only method of reaching Reading was by foot or bicycle except for the Carrier's cart on Saturday, but we had a wagonette and constantly gave lifts to any who could not get there otherwise. We were really like a village family in those days. Everyone in trouble came to the rectory. We had two or three serious accidents - boys on stolen bicycles from Reading coming off head first at the bottom of the hill. I remember



The Reverend John Dudley Matthews outside the Old Rectory with his wife Mary and daughter Rose

one who fractured his thigh. Of course we got a doctor and ambulance and my youngest brother accompanied him to the Royal Berks Hospital, accompanied by quite a procession of Purley people.

One of the two little side faced cottages in the village was occupied by a Mr. and Mrs. Heath, we

were all so delighted when Mrs Heath declared to my father "*My husband is all wrapped up in Miss Rose*"

The Old Purley Squire was a very irascible old gentleman. On one occasion he found some ladies picknicking by the riverside in HIS Park. Infuriated he threw all the tea apparatus into the Thames whereupon one of the ladies said "*Goodbye, Sir, and will you thank your wife for lending us her tea things!*" He died soon after our arrival. Later his daughter took over and tried to run the parish! Her daughter was going to be married and she wanted a peal on the church bells. Father had to tell her this was not possible as the bells were in a very dangerous condition. Later she told him she had been up to the belfry and discovered for herself that all was perfectly safe! Actually in the end I think only one bell could be used.

My father lost his life on December 20th, 1914 after taking Evensong at Mapledurham to help the aged and delicate Rector. He used to go straight there from our afternoon Evensong and had to row himself across the river - a crossing I always dreaded even in summer with the weir just below. He embarked just after preaching on "*The souls of the Righteous are in the hands of God*" and we never saw him again. His body was recovered near Henley, some 17 miles away, after five weeks. R.I.P.

Waitrose support for Project Purley

Project Purley was selected from hundreds of applicants from local organisations to be featured at the Oxford Road store for charity funding during August. Project Purley applied to raise funds for new display boards required by the society and received £250 from Waitrose as a result. These display boards will be visible to villagers visiting the part of next year's Jubilee celebrations hosted by Project Purley in the Purley Barn. Thanks to all who shopped and put in tokens during August 2011 to support us.



Val Jones receiving the cheque from Waitrose

Val Jones

Top Hats and Tinsel

The Rain or Shine Theatre Company made their Christmas visit to The Barn on Friday, December 2nd to present a Victorian-style evening of music hall entertainment. There was no afternoon performance for schools, but the actors arrived from Gloucester early in the afternoon so that they could carry out a full rehearsal, this being the first scheduled date of their winter tour.

Yet again the evening show was virtually sold out, with many of the audience entering into the spirit of the occasion by wearing period dress – feather boas, long dresses, top hats, waistcoats, braces and even the occasional aristocratic moustache were all in evidence.

The first half of the show comprised popular music hall songs, in which the audience joined lustily, some monologues and recitations, traditional Christmas carols and, most rapturously received of all, a hilarious Sand Dance.

After interval refreshments provided by Project Purley members, the audience returned to their seats for the second part of the

evening's entertainment, a comedy playlet entitled "Nursesey Chickweed." The five-strong cast are clearly better actors than they are singers, and obviously enjoyed romping round the stage in a farce of mistaken identity and cross-dressing. However, the enthusiasm of the crowd prevailed throughout the entire evening, and the generosity of those attending was shown by the donations received as they left The Barn.

The profit on "Top Hats and Tinsel" amounted to exactly £500, and this will be donated to the Berkshire branch of The Red Cross. Thanks go to all those who contributed to the success of the occasion.

The Rain or Shine Theatre Company will return to The Barn on Friday, July 6th 2012, when they will perform one of the lesser known Shakespeare plays, "Pericles, Prince of Tyre."

David Downs

Bracknell Family History Fair

Budding family historians and those wanting to know more, will no doubt be interested to know that Bracknell's Sports and Leisure Centre will once again be hosting what is one of the country's largest genealogy fairs on Sunday January 29th, between 10 am and 5 pm.

Admission to the fair is free to children under the age of 16 and £3.00 for adults and includes free entrance to four different talks during the day. Richard Heaton will be talking on the subject of 'How to get the most from old newspapers' at 10.45 am, Natasha White follows on at 12.00 noon on 'Using the Genes Reunited Website', Mark Stevens opens the afternoon talks at 13.45 with 'Broadmoor revealed - Victorian crime, the lunatic asylum and the records' and finally Mark Bayley talks on 'Breaking Down brickwalls in your research' at 14.45. There will also be a wide variety of stands and exhibitors ranging from specialist family tree software to old postcards and maps.

The fair is always a great opportunity to seek advice from a range of experts and an excellent opportunity to get your research moving forward whether your ancestors came from Berkshire or further afield.

Catherine Sampson