

THE PROJECT PURLEY JOURNAL



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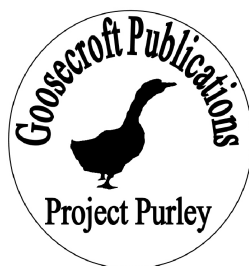
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Chairman's New Year Message

First may I wish you all a very happy new year. We have an excellent programme of talks and visits lined up ahead.

Last year's programme of talks was both varied and fascinating, ranging from the history of beekeeping to frost fairs on the River Thames. As ever our BBQ and Christmas Party were a chance to enjoy good food and company but it is almost certainly our visits, expertly organised by Val Jones, which will stick in most people's minds. It was an ideal time to visit Bletchley Park - before its planned face-lift starts to change its current intimate atmosphere - although investing in a few more road signs would not go amiss. East Hendred turned out to be easy to find in comparison, but a real hidden treasure which was splendidly brought to life by our guide Norman. More of him next year - I can't wait!

Since I wrote my last new year's message we have seen the passing of three longstanding members of the society - Jenny Chesterton, Phyllis Hasemore and Cliff Debney who are all sadly missed but remembered with great affection. The profits from the Rain or Shine performances gave the opportunity to support some of their charities and Crossroads, the Royal National Lifeboats Institute and also The Purley Barn Acoustics Fund, all benefited from a share of over £800 between them. This last year's productions were amongst the best we have seen from this talented company and thanks to David for the effort he puts into organising these each year.

2013 was also a good year for making inroads into our core commitment to researching, recording and preserving the history of Purley. Unusually we received more contributions than we were immediately able to publish in the journal - long may that continue, and thanks to Ann and John for their sterling efforts in producing such an excellent journal. We have almost completed a re-survey of St Mary's burial ground and John has made substantial progress with cataloguing the vast collection of ephemera and documents which members of the society have amassed.

Finally my thanks go to all of the committee who as ever have worked very hard over the last year.

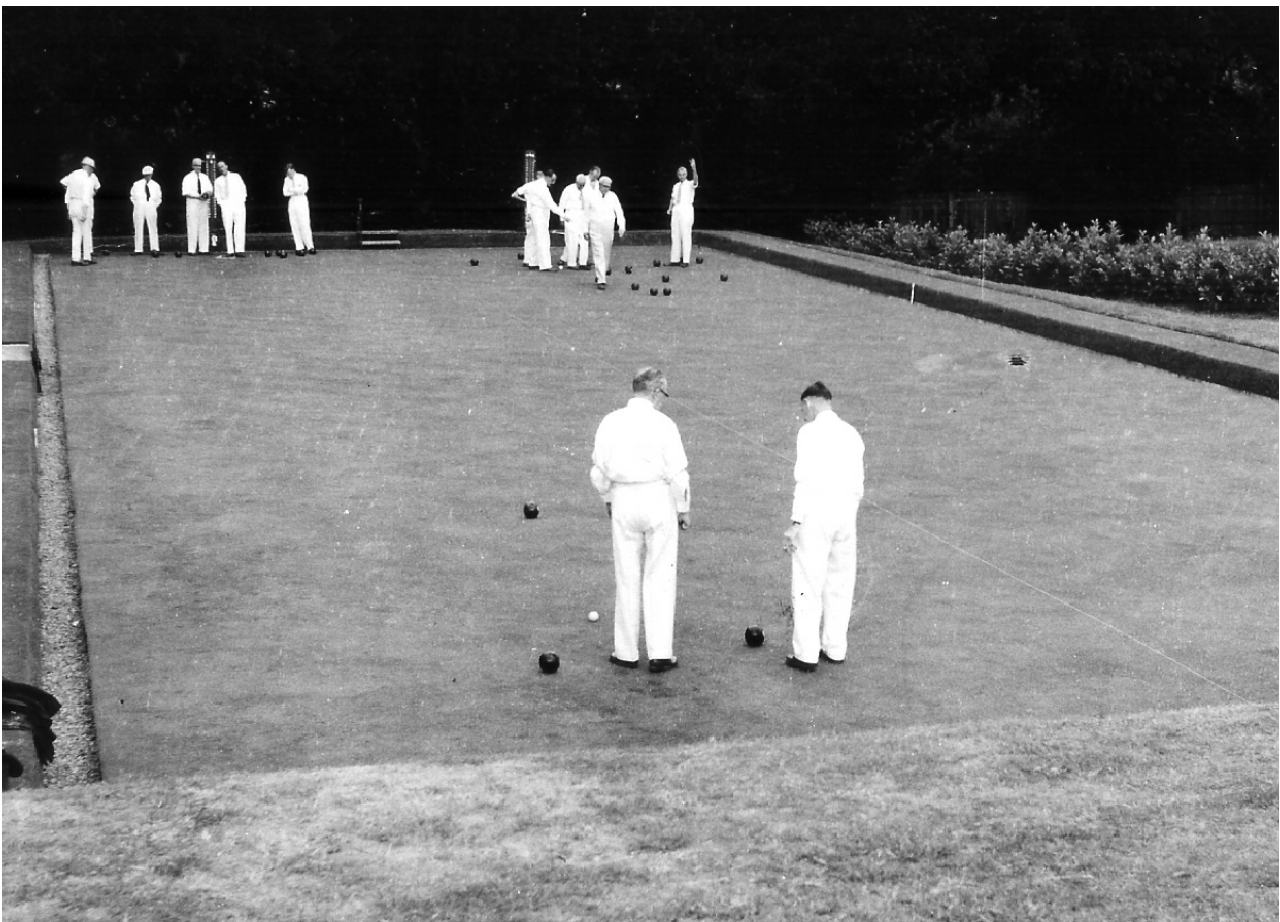
Catherine Sampson

Trentham Bowling Club

Peter Sheppard

Trentham bowling club is situated in Bowling Green Lane, Sherwood Rise, Purley on Thames. It is a friendly, mixed club, with an excellent 6 rink green plus a 2 rink practise green. Members play mixed friendly matches against other bowling clubs in the surrounding area at the weekend and on most Wednesday evenings from late April to mid September. There are also separate men's and ladies teams that compete in local leagues as well as various club and county competitions.

The bowling green was originally created in 1957 by the civil engineering company G. Percy Trentham Ltd, as a means of providing corporate entertainment by the owner as well as for the benefit of employees (as long as they did not play before 5pm!). The company was distributed right across the United Kingdom, with sites at Andover, Cardiff, Stoke -on -Trent, Rainham, and Bathgate in Scotl-



The rink about 1957

and, as well as Purley on Thames. At its peak, Trentham were the largest private contractor in the country and had several thousand employees although it was only those who lived locally who were able to enjoy the bowling facilities. The company specialised in the construction of airport runways and hangars and was involved in the development of many UK airports, both civil and military. The great hanger constructed at Brize Norton in Oxfordshire was, at the time, the largest of its kind in the world.

The development of the bowling club began with the provision of just 2 rinks (now the upper green) followed soon after by the addition of 2 more rinks, where the existing green is now situated, and along side what was then the company's vegetable garden. This is shown in the photograph taken in about 1957 and beside it a recent photograph of the same rinks looking back to the pavilion. Four further rinks were added in 1959 and the pavilion was fabricated in the Cardiff joinery department and given to the club by the



The new pavilion and the green today



Members of the Bowling Club in the late 1950s. Fred Saunders is third from the right on the front row - Can we put names to any of the others?

Chairman and erected mainly by club members /employees, in 1974. The club was later opened to non-Trentham employees and the membership increased to about 120.

By the late 1980s Trentham's fortunes had declined and the company was taken over by the Egerton Trust. It was decided to sell the Purley site to Bryant Construction Ltd for housing development. This could have meant the end of the bowling club but fortunately it was decided that the bowling club should be retained for the benefit of the local community under the terms of the Planning Permission. In order to achieve this, the bowling club had to be run by a Bowls Club, the site was then sold to Purley Parish Council for a nominal £1 on the condition that it was leased to the Trustees of the club for 40 years from 1993. The agreement also provided a capital sum given to the Parish Council to be invested so that the interest earned could be granted towards the upkeep of the bowling green.

This arrangement worked well for over a decade but more recently the increased costs of maintaining the green to the required

standard together with the fall in interest rates has resulted in a decrease in the proportion contributed by the Parish Council. An appeal by the Treasurer on behalf of the Club to the Council in September 2008 resulted in a new initiative between the Parish Council and the Trustees to encourage wider participation and enjoyment of the club by local people. Purley residents are now able to have FREE use of the upper green, equipment and coaching on 2 evenings per week and alternate Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Trentham Bowling Club has continued to develop and improve. The last few years have seen the completion of disabled toilet facilities, new kitchen and revised layout of men's and ladies changing rooms. The club is registered as a Community Amateur Sports Club and revised its rules to encourage wider membership. Our more skilful members continue to represent the club at County level.

Our hope for the future is that we can promote greater participation in the sport of amateur lawn bowls by the residents of Purley on Thames. Bowling is an easy sport to learn, but never quite mastered. It provides healthy physical exercise and the opportunity for competition and social activity in very pleasant surroundings. If you are interested why not contact our Hon. Secretary, Gordon Simmonds (0118 926 7581) and come and give it a trial?



The Bowling Green from the air

Reminiscences

This month we have a few reminiscences that turned up as we were reviewing old letters and notes for our Archive

John Sherrott

John came to Purley in 1940 to live with his grandmother. In 2008 he sent us some of his reminiscences of life in the village which were published in the May 2008 edition of our Journal. Later he added a few more thoughts by e-mail from Australia.

I remember the gate to the River Estate which was closed once a year by the Purley Park Plot Holders Association to keep the estate private. Yes I do remember the Rawlings and I think it was one of them who sang in the choir. He had a beautiful tenor voice almost like an alto. I also remember Hugh Lister who was killed and John Bucknell who also used to sing in the choir. Mr Bucknell (his father) was quite funny at times. We were planting potatoes one day and he said "I want them 18 inches apart: That's one of your feet and half of one of your feet"

Bill Fisher

Bill was a founder member of Project Purley and lived in Glebe Road. He left us with many memories of Purley in the 1930s and 1940s.

I forgot to mention that that Mr Sewell of Purley Rise Stores only opened his shop between Mapledurham Drive and The Pond because the new shop just inside the River Estate had opened and he felt that this, in opposition, had reduced his trade.



Hugh Lister

Mapledurham Lock

by George Fielder

The following has been received from George Fielder, who is an honorary member of the Society and former lock-keeper at Mapledurham lock in response to John Chapman's article in the May edition of the Project Purley Journal:

I was delighted to read John Chapman's historical account of Mapledurham Lock and would like to add a few more facts for your record of the lock.

The photo of the old boat winch on page three of Journal No.92 is in fact one I was given by an old friend of mine from Staines back in the 1980s. I thought it would make a nice garden ornament for the lock side. When I retired in 2007, I took the winch with me and it



is now a garden feature in my son's garden. Before the building of the pound lock in 1777, the winch for hauling barges through the flash lock would have been on the Mapledurham bank not far up stream of the lock. In a copy of the Mapledurham Mill guide book I bought in 2004 there is a map showing the position of the winch. There is one such winch or capstan still in existence at Hurley.

George wielding a paddle which he is just going to insert into a rymmer



Mapledurham weir uses a wide variety of controls. In this picture taken in 2002 you can see paddles in the paddle and rymer section, the salmon leap and part of the hydraulic powered weir.

It was refurbished a few years ago, but is not easy to view as it is on private land. There is a lovely old painting in Henley Museum of a barge that has just passed down through the flash weir at Marsh, Henley, which clearly shows a rope attached to the stern of the barge, suggesting that large barges were lowered down through these with some care. Up to two hundred tons could be carried by one of these barges on the Thames as far up stream as Reading and one hundred tons to Oxford.

When I first started working on the river in 1972 as a relief lock-keeper above Oxford, there were still a few old boaters that remembered using these flash weirs, as some were still in use above Oxford until the 1930s. The last survivors of these medieval structures lasted until 1937 at Medley and Eaton Hastings. Paddle and rymer weirs have a similar construction to a flash lock, except they have a fixed beam across the opening. Many of these weirs have now been rebuilt with modern sluice gates. Mapledurham paddle and rymer weir, which stood on the site of the old flash weir, was rebuilt just two or three years ago. This now leaves just two paddle and rymer weirs above Oxford, one at Rushey Lock and the other at Northmore Lock. English Heritage has helped to save them from rebuild.

Closer to Purley at Goring Lock, there is a small paddle and rymer weir above Goring Millrace. This and the two weirs above Oxford are worth going to see as a better idea of their construction and operation can be had. Goring has one other paddle and rymer weir at Streatley on the site of Streatley Mill, but it is on private land and can only be viewed from Streatley Bridge.

Mapledurham Lock Rebuilds

Originally built in 1777, the lock was built of timber and, as a consequence, needed very heavy repair or partial rebuild on several occasions in 1832, 1868 and again in 1888. The old photo in the Journal was most probably taken in 1888.

When the flash weirs were superseded by the pound locks in the 1770s, the weir owners were compensated by the then Thames Commissioners for the loss of tolls and the flash weirs passed on to the ownership of the Commission to be used for water level control as a fixed beam paddle and rymer weir as we know them today. Of interest is the account of Mr.C.Blount of Mapledurham in 1868 disputing the compensation for the flash weir, as the ownership of the weir was again queried by the estate in the 1990s. The River Authority was able to prove ownership dating back to the 1770s and the question of the river bed ownership at Purley rumbles on to this day.

Mapledurham Lock was the first lock on the Thames to be mechanised in 1956 with electro mechanical equipment. Cookham was also converted the following year. The system proved troublesome, so a hydraulic system was tried with success at Shiplake and Mapledurham was converted to the hydraulic system in 1974. All locks below Oxford were mechanised during the 1960s while the ten locks above Oxford remain beam operated to this day.

The huge rise in pleasure boat traffic through the locks in the 1960s and 1970s reached a peak in the early 1980s when a slow decline in the holiday hire trade set in, brought about by cheap package holidays in the Mediterranean and the sun became the fashion. The number of boats for hire at its peak in 1980 was about 800. This number fell to a low of just 80 in the late 1990s, but has increased slightly since. The number of private boats has continued to increase over the years, especially the ownership of narrow boats.

At its peak, boat traffic through the lock during the eight weeks of July and August would have been about eight thousand craft. It now takes a whole year of traffic to reach this number.

Sadly the river has been hit hard by the economic downturn and staff are not being replaced as people retire. Only temporary and voluntary staff are now taken on. There is also the threat of the lock houses being sold off or rented out as they become vacant, but access rights to the locks are often over private farm land. Mapledurham Lock is no exception to this, with no less than three separate ownerships of the track to the lock. The Bucknell Trust in Mapledurham Drive, Mapledurham Estate to the cattle grid and Tim Metcalfe owns the track across the field. This has luckily made the sale or rent of these properties almost impossible at most lock sites.

The postcard at the top of page eight of the Journal is in fact a view of the old lock before its rebuild in 1908.

The lock house can be seen in the trees, the foundations of which are still in the lawn on the lock island by the pampas grass. Items in the picture that were still at the lock when I retired were the enamel sign on the fence (which refers to the public using the tow path at their own risk), the conical topped sand bin (the sand was for putting out fires), and the mileage sign giving the distance by river to Oxford and London. All locks had these signs at one time, but I believe that only Mapledurham and Marlow locks now have one. A new sign was provided by Purley Parish Council in 2007 to replace the old one which had become badly rusted.

The little wooden lock keepers offices were replaced by modern timber buildings when the locks were mechanised. Some of the old ones remained in use on the manual operated locks above Oxford until the 1980s. They were cold and draughty places in winter; one ton of coal was provided to heat them, but the relief keeper would be lucky to find any coal, as the resident keeper would as often as not have used it in the lock house. Many locks had no electricity until the 1960s and no mains water until the 1970s. Mapledurham got electricity when the lock was mechanised in 1956 and mains water did not arrive until the mid 1980s. Until then domestic water was drawn by an electric pump from a bore hole and stored in a large tank in the loft.

The Purley Ferries.

In 1794 a double ferry was established at Purley, one at the downstream end of River Gardens, and a second ferry at the Roe Buck (the ferry house is still there a short way up stream from the Roe Buck foot bridge). This came about because a Mr. Worlidge refused to allow a tow path on his land at Purley, so the tow horses had to be ferried to the Oxfordshire side for half a mile and crossed back again. I found that many local people were of the opinion that the building of the railway in 1835/4 had severed the tow path at this point when, in fact, Brunel found his way clear to build along the river bank. This reminds me of my very early days at the lock in 1976. One old timer who had lived on the Purley estate since the second world war was keen to tell me the history of the place. He was adamant that the railway had blocked the tow path and what would a new-comer like me know about it? I politely showed him my copy of Thacker's *Thames Highway* - he was one of many who had made the same assumption.

Past Times

You may notice that we are starting again to submit historic articles about Purley to the Parish Magazine. We would like these to come from a wide variety of our members (and even non-members!) We have a huge archive of material for people to work on but we do need a number of volunteers to sort through the material and put pen to paper. We will be looking for relatively short articles (500-800 words) which can be on any aspect of Purley's history. For example a story about a particular person or event, the history of one of our many clubs or societies. We will have available a list of potential titles and anyone who can write a long letter is more than capable of producing an article. So how about it folks?

*Meeting Reports****Fairmile Revealed: the Victorian Asylum***

At the September meeting Mark Stevens, the senior archivist at the Berkshire Records Office opened the doors of the old Fair Mile Hospital to reveal life in the Victorian times.

Until the late 18th century, mentally ill people in Britain were either cared for by the community, or treated in harsh conditions in prisons, workhouses, or private “madhouses”. Attitudes began to change during the reign of King George III. Not only did the King suffer from periods of mental illness, but he was also the victim of physical attacks from subjects who were obviously ill. All these events were eagerly reported by the developing press. Around the same time William Tuke, a Quaker, revolutionised care for the mentally ill founding The Retreat in York. This institution was run under a programme of humane care.

In 1845 all counties were compelled to make residential provision for the treatment of the mentally ill and the Berkshire justices together with Abingdon and Reading made agreement with Oxfordshire in 1847 to use the latter’s asylum at Littlemore. The agreement lasted until 1867 when Berkshire, Reading and Newbury Boroughs made a new agreement to build and share an asylum. Land was purchased in Cholsey, and Fair Mile opened in 1870. At the time, it was called the Moulsoford Asylum due to its proximity to what was then known as Moulsoford Railway Station.

The first phase was designed to accommodate 285 patients but numbers soon multiplied and the hospital was further extended. The patients were mostly “paupers”, that is, their care was provided at the expense of local ratepayers. Fee-paying private patients were also admitted.

Fair Mile was almost a self-sufficient community with its own bakery, laundry, farm and gardens. The Medical Superintendent was expected to act as Senior Physician with the support of an assistant doctor and nursing staff and a wide range of auxiliary workers. The asylum also employed a chaplain and held regular services in its chapel. It had a library and offered entertainment such

as sports, music, dances and theatrical performances.

Victorian asylums were not vast prisons where people were kept locked up for their entire lives. Many patients were discharged “cured” to their friends or families and the Victorians themselves were determined to make admissions difficult. Asylum care was relatively expensive and as a result, mentally ill people, particularly the elderly, might be just as likely to endure the Spartan regime of the workhouse than be admitted to an asylum. Nevertheless, Victorian asylums tended to expand because there was a lack of effective medical treatment for mental illness and a substantial number of patients with severe learning difficulties, including children were admitted.

The Asylum’s treatment regime consisted of rest and routine. Patients were fed a nourishing diet, fresh air and exercise and kept occupied with work and entertainments. If their condition improved, they were given greater freedoms, supervised walks and outings. In keeping with the concept of the Asylum as a refuge, the Victorians also believed that admission in itself was treatment, as it would remove a patient from the causes of insanity in their day to day lives.

In 1948 Fair Mile became part of the NHS and ceased to be known as an asylum or mental hospital. This period coincided with dramatic improvements in pharmaceutical and psychological treatments for mental illness and with the modern welfare state, together with the post-war economic boom, standards of living and general health began to rise.

During the 1980s, social policy moved away from large scale residential care towards “care in the community” and Fair Mile closed in 2003.

Angela Edwards

An Embarrassment of Riches – Berkshire Archdeaconry Depositions 1558-1620

Our speaker at the October meeting was the delightful and enthusiastic Joan Dils, a well-known local historian with many publications to her name. Joan had come to give us an insight into life of ordinary folk during the Tudor and Stuart times.

An Archdeacon is the Bishop's right hand man looking after part of his diocese. They often had legal qualifications since much of their work involved matters of church law, so helping the Bishop to administer and control his flock. Courts would be held in different towns around the archdeaconry every few weeks, often a simple table set up in front of a church altar. The Archdeacon dealt with matters such as the probate of wills, granting of licences for schoolmasters and midwives. He also judged those accused of offences against church law – non attendance at church, not owning a bible or deviations from the prescribed order of service.

Many of the offenders were reported to the court by churchwardens, sometimes as a result of questions sent to them in advance of a visit from the Archdeacon. They would include the state of the church, service books and sacred vessels and also the spiritual and moral behaviour of the incumbent and parishioners. Other cases were brought by individuals complaining of libel or unfair treatment in a will and a range of sexual misdemeanours, the latter earning the courts the name 'bawdy courts'. The Archdeacon could order convicted offenders to do penance or as an ultimate penalty, excommunicate them. Brief summaries of the cases were recorded in abbreviated Latin. In some instances the evidence of witnesses for both parties was recorded in the form of written answers (depositions) to written questions. The evidence is recorded in documents called 'Deposition Books' of which six survive for the Archdeaconry of Berkshire.

Before giving their version of events in dispute, witnesses had to provide, as proof of their fitness to appear, a brief autobiography. A typical example is Thomas Macall, aged thirty, born in Cholsey, who then worked in Dorchester and Wallingford and in 1598 was living in Sutton Courtenay, about nine miles from his birth place; or Thomas Fry of Abingdon born twenty years before but who spent

three years in London. What is striking about many of these very incomplete life histories is that many people had left their birth places, either temporarily or permanently, most moving only a short distance to take up an apprenticeship, to find work or marry. Women were just as mobile often leaving home as teenagers. The evidence the witnesses gave can be interesting but more so are the details of daily life which were the context in which they described events relevant to the case.

The rooms of Tudor and Stuart houses are familiar from wills and probate inventories. There was little privacy for anyone, few had a bed of their own, frequently referring to each other as 'bed fellows'. Formal betrothals might take place in a kitchen or garden with the poultry or pigs. Houses of craftsmen and yeomen were work places and lodgings for employees as well as homes for the master and his family. Leisure activities were simple - bowls or football on the common or a visit to an ale house, maybe just eating with friends. The everyday speech of ordinary folk; Time was not always reckoned by the clock but by activities, '*a little before milking tyme at nyght*'; '*at candle tendinge time*'. Distances were expressed by using familiar objects, he was just a bow shot away. A word that frequently occurs is 'cuckoo' used when a man was being cuckolded by an unfaithful wife. Instead of words some neighbours used actions such as putting up a pair of horns on a house where they suspected someone of adultery.

Much of the landscape and way of life which gave rise to these expressions and actions has long since disappeared but records such as Deposition Books allow us to recapture a small fraction of this lost world.

Angela Edwards

The Great Train Robbery

by Hugh Granger

It is fifty years since the Great Train robbery and at our November meeting, Hugh Granger came to lead us through the plans and execution of the robbery and the mistakes made.

The raid was devised over a period of months by a core team of criminal gang members. At 6.50 pm on the 7th August 1963 the travelling Post Office train set off from Glasgow to Euston Station. It was scheduled to arrive at 3.59 the following morning. There were twelve carriages with 72 Post Office staff who sorted the mail. The second carriage behind the engine carried the high value packages including used unrecorded bank notes which were due to be burned the next day.

Just after 3.00 am the driver Jack Mills stopped the train at a red signal light at 'Sears Crossing', the signal had been tampered with, covering the green light with a glove and connecting a six volt battery to power the red light. The train's second crew member tried to call the signalman from the trackside telephone only to find the cable had been cut. Returning to his cab he was overpowered and the driver struck from behind with a cosh rendering him semi-conscious. At this stage the front two carriages had been uncoupled in order to move the train to Bridego Bridge half a mile away to load their waiting ex-army truck with the stolen money.

A retired train driver had been hired but he proved unable to operate the newer type of locomotive and it was decided the wounded Mr Mills would have to move the train to the stopping point near the bridge. There they tried to move 120 sacks of money to the waiting truck by human chain. These were very much heavier than envisaged - some bursting open as they rolled down the bank. They then departed in two Landrover vehicles both with registration plate BMG757A and headed along minor roads to their hideout at Leatherslade Farm where they counted and divided the proceeds and played Monopoly using real money. Not all wore gloves.

They had been unaware that when the telephone lines had been cut, one of the rail staff had caught a goods train to Cheddington and raised the alarm. It was broadcast on the police radio within minutes 'There's been a robbery and you'll never believe it, they've

stolen the train'.

Another witness had overheard instructions to the postal workers not to move for thirty minutes, this being interpreted as a thirty mile radius and half an hour away in a fast car.

After hearing a telephone call from Biggs's wife to say his brother had died and remembering the vehicles they had driven to the farm had been seen by train staff the gang realised they must leave sooner than anticipated.

Following a tip from a herdsman who used the adjacent field, police called there five days after the robbery. The farm was deserted but for the truck now painted yellow and the Landrovers. Inside were Post Office sacks, packages and bank note wrappers. There were finger prints on a ketchup bottle and of course, the Monopoly board.

Bruce Reynolds, the gang leader died this year. Charles Wilson, treasurer and organiser a possible suicide in 1994 and Brian Field, key informant who held a post robbery party at his home at local Whitchurch Hill - was killed in a car crash 1979.

Angela Edwards

Rain or Shine - The Snow Queen

Preparations for the visit of the Rain or Shine Theatre Company to the Barn on Friday December 6th began as early as 09:00 when Ben, Charles, David and I met to set out tables and chairs. Soon afterwards Angela, Catherine and Lee arrived to organise the day's refreshments before Jean and Marjorie also turned up to provide tea, coffee and biscuits for the helpers and actors.

The five strong group of actors, all of them well known to Purley audiences, pitched up at 10:30 in their battered old transit van which, as always, contained all their props, scenery, lighting, staging and costumes. They joined us to chat informally and exchange news before building the set for the afternoon and doing their vocal warm-up whilst changing into costume.

The audience for the 13:00 matinee consisted of year 3 (aged 7-8) children from Westwood Farm Junior School with their helpers, as well as a few villagers who find it more convenient to attend the afternoon performance. This winter's production did not, as in prev-

ious years have a specifically Christmas theme, but actor/director James Reynard's adaptation of the traditional fairy tale had more than enough action, movement and comedy to keep the young audience enthralled throughout.

So slick were the changes of costume, scenery and character, that, when I asked some of the children at the end of their performance how many actors there had been onstage, answers ranged from 'five' to 'eleven' - quite a compliment for a team of four plus a narrator.

The audience for the evening performance was slightly smaller than that of other occasions, perhaps a sign of the multiplicity of events that now take place at Christmastime. But those who attended were nothing other than enthusiastic. The cast delighted us all with a play that contained not as much slapstick as usual, despite passing references in James' script to Victor Meldrew, Lady Gaga and Rod Hull and his infamous Emu, as well as some lively, chatty ornithological puppets.

The attraction is in watching, in close-up, the skill of the actors. All of them are good, though James, as narrator, does not have the opportunity to display the range we have seen from him in previous roles. But that was more than compensated for by being able to observe Pippa Meekings, the youngest of the cast. She moved seamlessly between the characters of the Snow Queen, Sorceress, Princess and Robber Girl, changing not only costume but voice, posture, facial expression and emotion, almost at the flick of a switch. Even when other characters are talking, it is difficult not to watch her as she can convey such meaning with the flick of a finger or the raise of an eyebrow.

The play and its adaptation contain fun and silliness and, as in all good fairy stories, the innocent charm of Gerda, the heroine, eventually triumphs over the elements of darkness and death. This conclusion makes for an even more enjoyable experience for the audience, who applauded the cast loudly at the curtain and who gave generously to the retiring collection.

Each visit by Rain or Shine is a win-win, grin-grin situation for all concerned. The actors are well received and feel the location is a comfortable one for them; the audience, ranging from six to eighty-

six is kept entertained and amused and, perhaps most important of all, Project Purley is able once again to support a local charity. On this occasion we shall be donating £500 to Crossroads, a voluntary organisation which offers respite time and support for carers.

I record my sincere thanks to all those who made the event such a success. Rain or Shine will return to The Barn on Friday June 6th 2014 to perform Shakespeare's '*The Merchant of Venice*'.

David Downs

Christmas Party

On the 13th December Rick and Val Jones opened the doors of The Gatehouse to enable Project Purley members to enjoy their Christmas party.

On arrival we soon tucked into an excellent supper and, with a glass of mulled wine in our hands, we embarked on the 2013 Christmas Quiz. David Downs had set us ten cleverly arranged anagrams with a Purley connection and five Christmas carols, one of which was not quite a carol. Most of us struggled along enjoying the challenge but Nicki Woodward sailed through and was the star of the evening.

There was an unusual version of Cinderella by six of our members to which the audience generously applauded and we all wished each other a Happy Christmas.

Thank you Rick and Val for sharing your home with us.

Angela Edwards



Nicki Woodward receiving her prize from David Downs



Are they solving anagrams or is it just village chit-chat?

Nature Notes

by Rita Denman

August 3rd The heat is a major concern and reached 34.2 degrees at Heathrow this week. It triggered a torrential downpour of rain. The phlox are flopping and the golden rod reeling in the heat. The grain fields at Home Farm are ripening and it is a pleasure to see the fields of gold along the river side. It has been a better week for bees and butterflies, with some brimstones and meadow browns. The bees are attracted to the golden rod where they work quietly, but those that are in the clump of Japanese anemone are very excited and noisy. I take a walk around the meadow in the late afternoon when it isn't quite so hot and every footfall scatters a few grasshoppers. There are cardinal beetles, ladybirds and many other unidentified bugs and insects, which indicates that the meadow is thriving.

August 9th A few days of more temperate weather and the garden is alive with butterflies and bees although the butterflies are mainly whites. The muntjacs are using the meadow when it is quiet but they make a quick exit when I approach.

August 16th For a few days the weather has been perfect for harvesting and Tim Metcalfe has been out gathering the wheat and barley. Most of the harvest was in and the straw baled when the valley was drenched in what were more like tropical rainstorms.

August 23rd Some of Tim's herd were calmly ruminating in the stubble when a large flock of geese arrived settling with a loud squawking and general confusion. A mother and her calf were by the water trough when they arrived. The cow looked very annoyed at this invasion and I could almost hear her saying to her calf 'Come away dear, we don't want to get mixed up with this rabble' and led the calf as far away from the geese as she could get. The day had begun with a deep blue cloudless sky and as the day wore on the temperature rose and a few white fluffy clouds appeared. In the heat of the afternoon there was little movement or noise to break the heavy atmosphere. Suddenly, out of nowhere, two military single rotor helicopters flew low over the valley, the noise shattering the silence and reverberating through the hills. A flock of pigeons were disturbed from their afternoon siesta in the cool of the trees and they took to the air in confusion flying in all directions, until the helicopt-

ers had faded into the distance when they all settled down again and the afternoon languor returned.

August 30th Following the harvest, the geese and a few swans have settled on Oak Tree field. The fields have been harrowed and the gulls are also making the most of an insect and seed bounty. The wild fruit is beginning to ripen and there will be enough for jam making.

September 6th When the weather was at the peak of heat, gardeners were requested to provide water for hedgehogs and small mammals, making sure that there was a stone or something to help them get out should they fall in the water. Although I have never actually seen a hedgehog in the meadow, I put out a tray of water. When we looked at the pictures on the wildlife camera the water tray had become the refreshment area for deer, fox and cats.

September 13th There has not been much wildlife activity that I have seen. There has been hedge cutting at Home Farm, but the most exciting activity has been a visit to the farm fields of a group of metal detectorists. Their finds are being reported and will be commented on in a future Journal.

September 20th It is the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness and muddy cat paws. The days have begun with thick mist, but developed into sunshine and mild temperatures. Tim and Ian have been seed sowing until late in the evening. It is a good year for all kinds of fungus. Large white toadstools are welcomed by the mice who nibble at them.

October 4th Many parts of the country have had a deluge resulting in flooded roads and landslides. Fortunately in this area we have escaped the worst of it. The blackbirds have been whistling their beautiful songs. The acorns on the Millennium oak are superb. No doubt the jays will spread them around the meadow. I find it a consolation that despite all that man does to harm nature, given half a chance she recovers. If the ash, sycamore, birch and oak seedlings in the the meadow were not cleared, there would soon be a mini forest.

October 18th We have heard on the nature TV programmes this week that it is a 'mast' year, when there is a bumper crop of wild fruits and berries. Oak trees have been mentioned especially. I have already mentioned that the millennium oak in the meadow has

been superb.

October 25th Torrential rain, wind and electric storms have swept the south of England.. As the grass is sodden,I gingerly stepped down the garden to open the greenhouse to find dozens of ladybirds on the door. The trees in the valley are slow to change colour but individual trees are glowing red and orange.

November 1st Following storms early in the week, we awoke to sun, mist and frost. It is very wet underfoot, and most of the trees are still green.

November 8th On calm evenings at dusk the owls have been calling and the green woodpecker is making the most of the anthills in the meadow. The seed that was sown at Home Farm at the end of September has germinated well. Trees and hedges have put on a lot of growth this year and everything is still growing.

November 22nd The wind has strengthened and the temperature at night has fallen to -2 degrees C. The leaves which are only now changing colour are being blown from the trees forming a crunchy golden carpet. Frosty mornings with blue skies with blackbirds feeding on the hedge hawthorn berries remind us that the year is drawing to a close.

November 29th The weather in our area is moving slowly into winter. Dull cloudy days alternate with bright sunshine. In the front garden there are roses in bloom together with primroses. Small leafed maple and oak trees are now in their best autumn colours. The meadow is receiving its tidy for the winter, but there is some long grass left for the benefit of bugs and insects.



Mr Fox having his lunch