

THE PROJECT PURLEY JOURNAL



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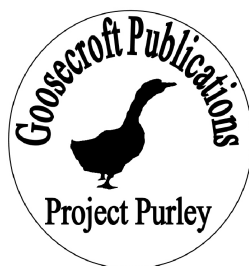
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Long Lane School 50th Anniversary

In the year it celebrates its fiftieth birthday we look back at the early years of Long Lane Primary School with articles from former staff, governors and pupils, reproduced by kind permission of Peter Thorne, headmaster of Long Lane Primary School. Many of the photographs in this section have been kindly donated to Project Purley's archive by the family of Pat Deane.

The First Years

By Pat Deane

This was originally written for the 25th anniversary in 1991, but has been slightly edited to avoid confusion over timescales.

On 26th April 1966 New Purley Primary School opened its doors to fifty five pupils whose ages ranged from five to ten years, with Mr Palmer as Headteacher and a temporary teacher. At the first Managers' meeting a month later the name was changed to Long Lane Primary School. The first stage consisted of three classrooms, two



Long Lane School circa 1994 [M050668]



Staff of the school c1970 - Bill Palmer is on the extreme right [M00328]

open areas and a temporary office/staff room (now the caretaker's room). The use of black bricks and the design, which was to include a hexagonal hall, was a talking point in the neighbourhood.

The land for the school was compulsorily purchased and the school was built on the site of the old kennels belonging to the South Berks Hunt which was part of Belleisle (originally Elyham) owned



The first intake of children 1966 [M00329]

by the Storer family. Trenthams started buying the Belleisle property in 1953 for their Head Office. The Hunt was the last section to be bought and the kennels were removed in 1960. Trenthams were good neighbours to the school – providing equipment for fetes, allowing visits to the barn and farmhouse for local studies and showing civil engineering workshops and laboratory in operation.

Initially the shouting of children at playtimes, the sound of recorder lessons and general noise gave rise to a complaint from a neighbour. However, as Long Lane had only recently been widened from a quiet, single track, tree-lined lane, this was not surprising. Many years later it has become a busy commuter route as well as a dropping-off point for two schools. The catchment area now includes several housing developments of various sizes.

Education was now going through a further period of change. Open plan designs were designed to allow co-operation between children, also the timetables became flexible. Class lessons were few and far between as children were supposed to complete work at



The school football team 1979-80 [M050325]

their own rate, finding information for themselves. This philosophy influenced the third stage of the building (completed in November 1970) where we see complete open plan areas with two tiny rooms for quiet work or story time or discussions. It was basically an open plan school incorporating team teaching, vertical streaming and an integrated day. Visitors came from many parts of the south and from abroad to see the system in operation.

The second stage was construction of the kitchen, changing room and the hall – now to be a square one due to lack of finances. The kitchen was welcomed as until then meals had to be delivered to the school from Wantage! The log book records on one occasion that the lunch was very poor and a pupil of that time remembers the food tasting of diesel! During snowy weather the food could not always be delivered so Mr Palmer and some pupils had to make expeditions to the local shop to buy whatever they could for 71 pupils and 9 adults.

By 1968 the roll had risen to 142 and a teacher recalls arriving at school on a Monday morning to find several new children added to her class. In 1969 a terrapin classroom was erected to cope with the influx. The children had become used to life with construction work going on around them. In fact some enterprising lads were quite sad when it all came to an end; they had found a little job at lunchtimes carrying buckets of water for the workmen, earning sixpence for themselves in the process!

Music featured prominently in the life of school and this aspect continues to the present time. The school has joined up with other schools for musical productions as well as regular concerts at school. A caring attitude has always been fostered so we see the children have given their time to entertaining and raising funds for less fortunate people and also wild life. Long Lane has also taken part in many sports events which have been held in the area. Residential visits to places such as Matlock and Swanage are packed with organised activities. The younger pupils are able to stay at a local venue – Ufton Court – for a few days where they are away from home without their parents for the first time. How wonderful to stay in an Elizabethan Mansion with a priest hole and a ghost. No! Just a teacher in a white kimono creeping into the room in the dark

to check that all was well!

All this is a far cry from those early days. The same may be said for the curriculum and teaching methods: there have been constant changes. When the National Curriculum was “born” in the mid-eighties little did we realise that the growing pains would last so long. Long Lane already had a curriculum and expectations of high standards. The new formats were taken on board and altered, updated, rewritten to be in line with the ever-changing ideas of the government education departments. In spite of all the pressure the school has continued to raise the standards under the present headteacher and staff. In the 1990s we had the new literacy hour and the numeracy hour to incorporate in the system. So what did the new timetable look like? Morning before break – literacy hour (English), after break – numeracy hour (maths), afternoons – all other subjects. Does that seem familiar to those, like me, who were at primary school in the thirties? Yes, in our lifetime we have gone full circle!

Pat was a parent - and a teacher to 1989

A Parent's View

by Eileen Toms

As a parent I enjoyed the period when my children were pupils here and I was actively involved with the PTA.

"Those were the days" I believe they say – from King Kong touring the village in a cage on the back of a trailer on the morning of our second fete – to Ken Dodd and the Diddy Men the next – (we tried hard to get Ken Dodd to put in an appearance – instead he sent us one of his famous “tickling sticks” and apologised for his absence). Then there were the auctions at the end of fete afternoons with our excellent auctioneer, Albi Cohen, getting a good price for all the left-overs!

Coming into a new school and joining a keen new PTA team, I particularly remember the time when the late Stan Seaward was our “foreman,” and being a keen woodworker and marvellous organiser, he prepared numerous music stands, storage trolleys, cabinets, shelves etc. and each week we had a working evening at school putting the finishing touches. The ladies were given the task of varnishing – we had many laughs, in particular, when “We three” -



Alby Cohen as the gorilla in 1969 [M050702]

Dora Hope, Ann Johnson and myself left our “autographs” on the base of these pieces of equipment.

We also put in a lot of work in connection with the safety of the children travelling to and from school – a subject which is still constantly reviewed. I would like to think there is an improvement, but the volume of traffic has increased so much that we must all continually remind our children of the dangers.

To promote the 1969 fete King Kong (alias Alby Cohen) was the star feature. Tony Deane made him a cage and used Trenthams van and trailer to tour several local estates and the village. King Kong was a little too life like for some of the children! At a supermarket his antics were such that the customers pretended they hadn't seen him, they just didn't know what to make of him.

When Tony went to collect him to go to the fete, Alby rushed out of the door slamming it closed, only to find he was stopped dead in his tracks – his tail was shut in the door!! Worse still! Gorillas do not have pockets so he was without his keys and the house was empty. There was nothing for it but to give a hard tug and leave the last few inches in the door.

Remember, Remember

by John Chapman

When we came back to England and settled in Purley in 1972, Guy Fawkes' Day was the social highlight of the year in the village. The reason was the bonfire at Long Lane School.

For some time before November the Fifth people were collecting firewood and other combustables for the event. The bonfire was situated towards the western edge of the school playing field and usually reached about ten feet in height with most of the material being packing crates of which Trenthams always seemed to have an endless supply. The immediate site was cordoned off by a light fence but this did not deter adventurous children.

The Parish Magazine of November 1973 advertised the event as follows:-

There will be the usual bonfire night celebrations at the school on Monday 5th November. Individual and family tickets are available from the school. This organised bonfire and fireworks display takes away the severe risks and dangers that can so tragically ruin this custom. For safety and enjoyment please give this your family support.

This was to be my first such event and it seemed the whole village turned out as the ground was packed. My memory is a little hazy but I seem to recall food and drinks being served and after a short speech the bonfire was lit to great applause. When it had burned down somewhat the firework display started to the usual ooohs and aaahs. The celebrations went on well into the night and a good time was had by all.

The next day there was a pile of ashes to clear away and there was a



One of the bonfires under construction [M001910]

large grassless area where the fire had been which only just had time to recover before November rolled round again. The event died out a few years later after Elizabeth Burstow became Head-teacher, partly because of the damage to the field but partly because the health and safety movement was gaining momentum. The PTA AGM, held 20th September 1977, heard:-

Bonfire Night: A successful event socially, but due to the rising cost of fireworks and the diminishing quality, the PTA Committee decided that in future the Bonfire Night would not take place.

The 1976 event raised £47.62 for school funds.

John was a parent 1972-1981 and a governor 1978-2003

A Nice Little Walk'

by Tim Deane

In 1979 Mr Lambden had the joy of taking 19 of us to the Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust for three days. On the way to Slimbridge the coach called in at the Bibury Trout Farm; no one fell in for a change. We spent a peaceful lunch time eating our sandwiches in the garden while listening to the tranquil sounds of fish being slaughtered in the background. When we arrived at Slimbridge we first had to appreciate the local wildlife and understand the importance of a pecking order (we chased the ducks, the geese chased us).

Mr Lambden felt it his duty to make sure that we had a healthy appetite before our evening meal and that we would be tired out and ready for bed by 10 pm (probably so that he could catch last orders at the local). So, Mr Lambden ordered the staff at the hostel to recommend a nice little walk before dinner. They suggested going "around the block," "just keep turning right" they said, "it'll take you no more than half an hour." So, full of enthusiasm, we set off at about 6 pm.

The walk was very pretty, but we weren't really finding enough right turns to make us happy. But we weren't worried 'cos teacher knew where we were going. You should have seen his face when we saw our first road sign, "SLIMBRIDGE 9." Oops!

It was by now dark; we stopped at a farm house and asked the local how to get to the hostel. He was very helpful - "I don't know. I've only lived here two years." Time to admit defeat, Mr Lambden phoned the hostel to have the coach come and rescue us. We finally arrived back at gone 10 o'clock to be greeted by the staff, "Ah yes" he said, " I forgot to say, turn left, then keep turning right, sorry!"

Ah well! The nice little walk did the trick, we were certainly ready for bed, but Mr Lambden didn't make it to the local for last orders.

Tim Deane was a pupil at Long Lane School 1973-1979

Memories of a Netball Tournament

by Michelle Palin

I started at Long Lane Primary School 1979 and left at the end of my fourth year in 1985. The fourth year was a particularly memorable year for my friends and I - because at the time we were all mad keen on Netball.



It was in this year that Mrs. Deane organised a Netball tournament, which took place at Denefield on an extremely cold Saturday morning. The team: Rowan Martin, Frances Bolam, Lee-Ann Jarvis, Tina Walters, Kelly Palin, Claire Springate and myself all knew that the competition was going to be

*The netball team 1985 l-r back row
Kelly Palin, Frances Bolam,
Michelle Palin, Claire Springate.
front row Tina Waters, A Pearson,
Lee Ann Jarvis [M050723]*

tough. We'd played most of the other schools in friendly matches earlier in the season. There was however one team that we had always failed to beat – St. Pauls.

On the afternoon before the tournament I can remember that I started to get earache, I don't just mean a little earache, I mean a really bad pain for which the doctor immediately prescribed antibiotics. We all thought that this was going to be devastating news, as being one of the tallest in my year I had been chosen to be Goal keeper because it was nice and easy for me to block the shooters. Tina's mum came up with a solution, a pair of brightly coloured ear muffs. They made me look totally ridiculous but they served their purpose.

The next day came and we were all up at Denefield for a 9.00 am start. Luckily for us we'd been drawn in Group A, which did not include St. Pauls. As the morning progressed we worked our way to the top of our Group. St. Pauls progressed to the top of their Group also. To our horror we realised that we were to meet in the next round. We thought our chances of winning were disappearing but Mrs. Deane had great faith in us and advised us to score the first goal.

The match against St. Paul's is extremely faint in my mind but according to Mrs. Deane we got the ball down to the semi-circle in two very fast passes, Frances was on the very edge of the semi-circle and took a shot. It went in!!! We went on to win the match and the tournament. We were all totally over the moon.

Michelle was a pupil 1979 - 1985

Memories of a Pupil

by Marina Conshaw (Loveday)

I first joined Long Lane Primary school in 1967, a year after it opened. Before this I had attended a large junior school in Hertfordshire. The first main difference I noticed was that you planned your own day and wrote your own timetable. We had very few structured lessons. The school consisted of about 3 or 4 classrooms with a connecting corridor, which was used as the hall. Later in 1968 the main hall and another classroom were added.

I can't remember anyone coming to school by car, or anyone being brought or collected by their parents, (though I expect some did) Long Lane was a much quieter road. The children from Purley Village were seen across the main Oxford Road by the much-loved lollipop lady Mrs. Blake (mother of Jimmy Blake).

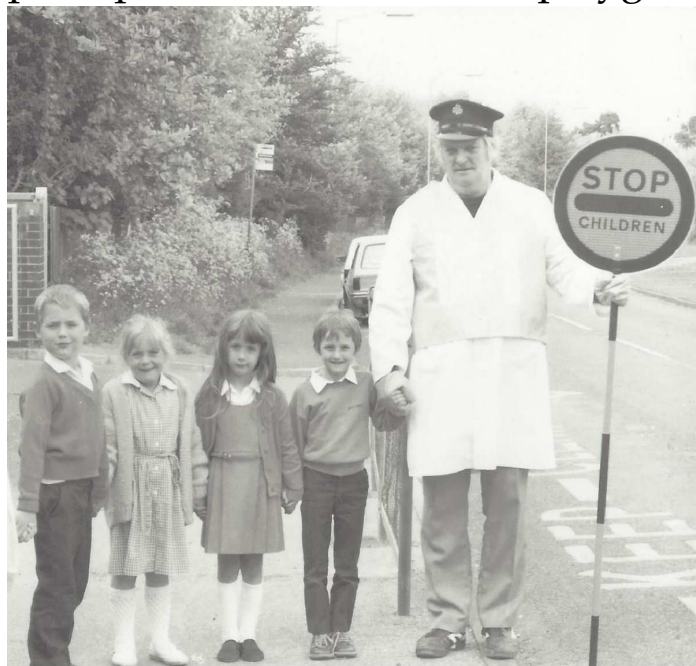


*Mrs Horwood operates the till at lunch time
[M050676]*

A lot of the children came from Purley Village and lived in wooden chalets, the ones nearest the river being built on stilts, as the river sometimes flooded. (Almost all of these have now been replaced with new houses). I remember once when the river flooded some of the children had to come out of their houses in boats in order to get to school.

We spent our playtimes having running races, skipping, doing handstands against the wall, and playing games like "British Bulldog," "Hopscotch" and "It."

Mr. Palmer the Headmaster bought a thermometer which we put up on the fence in the playground. Each day two of us were



allowed to go and read the thermometer, recording the minimum overnight temperature, and the maximum temperature during the day. We kept records of the weather for quite a long time.

Marina was a pupil 1967-

*As well as being school caretaker,
Mr Ankinson also serves as
Lollipop Man [M050678]*



The Infants class of 1967, left to right Richard, Gillean, Claire, Hazel, Jane, Donna, Mark, Wayne [M050704]



Two of the pupils dressed for the Elizabethan Assembly in 1984 [M050780]



Debbies Garden. - Debbie Fisher was a pupil who died in tragic circumstances. In her memory a Tranquil Garden was created which allowed many of her friends to grieve [M050795]



Tim Kuhles (headteacher) discusses school matters with Mrs Sheikh from Berkshire County Council's Teaching Support Service [M050669]

*Meeting Reports**Sudeley Castle*

Forty-four Project Purley members and guests visited Sudeley Castle on 16th May 2016. This is a 15th century former royal castle in Gloucestershire with beautiful gardens and parklands.

The weather was lovely, and after an entertaining half hour talk on the history of the land, the house and their owners, the group was free to choose when and where to explore, inside and out. The scope for outdoor exploration has been curtailed a bit over the years. The original 12,000 acres of land given by Ethelred the Unready to his daughter Goda on her marriage 1000 years ago has now reduced to a mere 1,200 acres. But the 1,200 acres still includes the stunningly beautiful grounds, looking like the best that nature can offer, but in fact entirely sculpted by man.



In the garden of Sudeley Castle l-r Marion Dabbs, Ann Chapman, Dorothy Viljoen, Janet Southall, Lee Hall [M001907]

The castle must have been similarly spectacular. The remains of the state rooms of the castle are massive, and still show the scale of the construction, and some of the intricate stonework. It was built in 1442, funded largely from ransoming prisoners during the 100 Years War - obviously a lucrative trade. This half of the castle was destroyed - or at least de-roofed - in 1649 on the orders of Oliver Cromwell after the owner (Lord Chancellor Baron Chandos) chose the wrong side in the Civil War. Even before 1649, the maintenance funds were running low, as Elizabeth I came to visit with 300 or so attendants. Nominally this was to celebrate the anniversary of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, but possibly it was part of her strategy to ensure that the aristocracy were kept too poor to raise any rebellion.

The remaining half of the castle, originally offices and servants' quarters, was left standing but largely derelict for the next 200 years, occupied at times by a pub and farmers' rooms. When the Dent family (glovemakers then and now) bought the property in 1837, it was this part that was lavishly restored and furnished. Emma Brocklehurst, of the Macclesfield silk weaving family, married the Dent heir, and she continued the refurnishing and arranged the laying out of the gardens in 1859. This family, now the Dent-Brocklehursts, still own and actively manage the house and gardens, but much homage is paid in the public rooms to its most famous resident, Katherine Parr. Katherine was Henry VIII's last and surviving wife, who soon after Henry's death married her first love Thomas Seymour, owner of Sudeley Castle (a gift from Edward VI), and died at the castle a few days after giving birth to his daughter. She has a tomb in the church, where her remains finally lie, after her alabaster and lead coffin was uncovered (and opened!) by one of the many tourists who came to view the picturesque ruins in the 18th century.

Hopefully the current crop of tourists is a little more respectful, but the ruins and the gardens are still extremely picturesque, and the Project Purley tourists had an excellent day out. Many thanks are due to Jean Chudleigh, who organised the trip.

Gillian Wallace

A Surfeit of the Sweetest Things

The line from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" describes perfectly the performance of Shakespeare's comedy by Rain or Shine at The Barn on Friday, June 10th. The eight-strong actors line-up is much changed from their previous visit, and the agility and vibrancy of the newcomers shone through as they cavorted and tumbled across their extended stage to entertain an appreciative audience.

The Bard's comedies are always open to interpretation, and the introduction of pre-show entertainment by some dancers and rather amateurish jugglers heralded an evening where many liberties were taken with the original script. But the director, Tom Jordan, had placed more emphasis on developing the characters in the first half of the performance and leaving most of the slapstick until the second half.

Bright costumes, strident voices and acrobatic movement, but not too much direct humour, were much in evidence to start with. However the actors really let rip with the comedy after the interval. We watched a wonderful bout of all-in wrestling and all-out hair pulling between the two female leads, a stuffed dog that cocked its leg against several members of the audience as it was walked through The Barn, Bottom's ears which seemed to have a separate existence of their own, swords made rather paradoxically of bursting balloons, and a potentially beautiful musical interlude cut rudely short by a trumpeting herald.

But most of all there was Bottom, played provocatively by Rob Leatham, and who utterly dominated the final 20 minutes of the play. Rob, according to the programme notes, has a part-time occupation as an armed robber (he does this while role-playing for a UK security company)! He certainly milked the audience for all they were worth as he strode about the stage, hamming it up so much that even his fellow performers were finding it difficult not to laugh, then having the effrontery to take three curtain calls of his own before joining the rest of the cast for the final bow.

Of course the audience loved it, to the extent that the leaving collection amounted to £250. Together with the bar profit and our

share of ticket sales that means that Project Purley, who undertake the organisation and running of the event, can, on this occasion, donate £600 to the Intensive Care Unit at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

I thank everyone who helped towards the success of the evening. In particular I am grateful to Catherine Sampson who arranges refreshments, and the families of Pat Taylor, Marion Venners and Ben Viljoen, who hosted the actors overnight and made them so welcome. I am also in debt to our lovely audience, who obviously enjoyed themselves and clapped so enthusiastically in all the right places.

You will be interested to know that Rain or Shine will return to The Barn on Friday, December 9th to present Conan Doyle's thriller, "The Hound of the Baskervilles." Look out for a special guest appearance during the evening!

David Downs.

The Barbecue

On Friday, 17th June members of Project Purley descended on Dorothy and Ben Viljoen's garden for the Society's annual barbecue. The weather forecast hadn't been very promising but, in the event, it remained dry for the whole evening and a good time was had by all. It was the thirteenth time that the barbecue had been held in the garden in Beech Road and, as usual, Dorothy and Ben made us very welcome.

Ben and David Green were our chefs for the evening and cooked the burgers, sausages and chicken to perfection. The meat, together with the savouries, salads, desserts and cheese provided by the members, ensured that no one went hungry and the chatter and laughter continued until the sun went down, candles were lit and people finally drifted away home.

Our thanks go to Dorothy and Ben for allowing us once again to use their garden for this annual event and to Ben and David, our excellent chefs.

Ann Betts

Hughenden Manor Visit

The visit, on Monday 18th July 2016 by Project Purley to Hughenden, situated as it is, just to the north of High Wycombe, made it possible to be reached individually by car rather than as a group travelling by coach. Apart from the encumbrance of High Wycombe itself with its town centre traffic flow pattern, all was achieved in sweet harmony with my two lady passengers, one being my wife who, on this occasion, curtailed her sharp criticism of my driving to a bearable limit.

Indeed the journey took hardly one hour, with easy parking awaiting us, and a short downhill walk alighted us upon the impressive lawn fronting a house that perhaps failed to achieve an appearance of great beauty, but was certainly awe-inspiring within its setting and magnitude.

Four guided tours or talks were offered by a host of guides located throughout the three floors of the house as well as the gardens, and the National Trust have preserved and maintained the house in a condition reminiscent of the times of the 19th century when its most famous owner, Benjamin Disraeli both Chancellor and then Prime Minister resided, and where Queen Victoria visited on two occasions.

The 1st Earl of Beaconsfield and his wife purchased the house in 1845, he concentrating on extending and redesigning the house by demolishing the stucco finish to reveal the attractive brickwork, and she designing the beautiful parterre and pleasure gardens. They lived in the house in great happiness until Mary-Anne's death in 1872; Benjamin Disraeli continued living there until he died in 1881. Paying as they did £36,000 for the property caused them to live in great debt for much of their life there, but this was a situation not new to Disraeli, who exuded flamboyance in much of his lifestyle.

Following the introductory talk, a further talk and tour called Operation Hillside described the remarkable role played by Hughenden during the War of 1939-45, and during early afternoon there was a chance to find out about the formal gardens designed by Mary-Anne Disraeli.

The heat of the afternoon was unrelenting, and thankfully shade and succour was available at the Stableyard Cafe, and an attractive



Hughenden Manor [M001908]

shop selling souvenirs and bric-a-brac, with an adjoining second-hand and bookshop.

Finally, departing from the grounds of Hughenden, there was an opportunity to pay a short visit to the church, St. Michael and All Angels, where the Earl and his wife lay at rest, together with another lady, a benefactress, who clearly commanded some respect from her fellow sojourners but whom Mary-Anne demanded be placed on the left side of her husband to perhaps suggest to visitors like ourselves, her proper place in that society.

Tony Trendle

Capability Brown

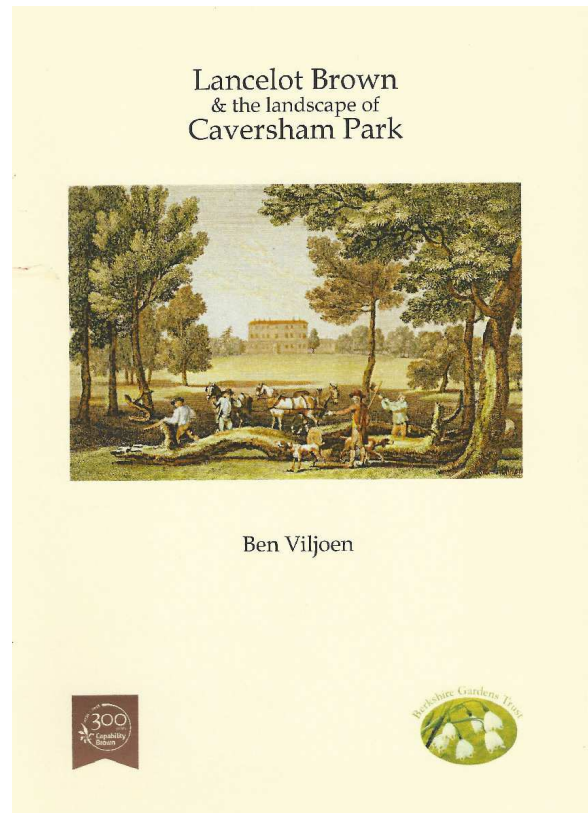
Ben Viljoen has been researching Lancelot Brown's activities in Berkshire and has been giving talks at Caversham Park etc. He has produced a little booklet recording his talk and we thought you might like to see the following review:-

This year is the 300th anniversary of the birth of Lancelot "Capability" Brown who is perhaps our best known landscape designer, and has been marked in many ways with lectures, tours and articles. There are six properties in Berkshire associated with him, one which has disappeared (Maiden Erleigh), three which are private and not open to the public (Sandleford Priory, Benham Valence and Caversham Park) one occasionally open to the public (Ditton Park) and finally Basildon Park (National Trust).

This booklet records the introductory talk given to visitors when Caversham Park, long the home of the BBC Monitoring Service, was opened as a special favour to mark the anniversary.

It covers ownership going back to Domesday and reconstructs the development of the park since 1633 when it was bought by the Earl of Craven. Sadly there are no records to go by so Ben has had to painfully reconstruct the changes based upon Rocques map of 1761 through Ordnance Survey maps going back to 1877 and finally Google Earth. Much of the estate has been given over to housing and the Henley Road cemetery; but it is to the great credit of the BBC that they have maintained the central parts and preserved the ethos that Brown created.

Copies at £3-50 (plus £1 P&P) can be obtained from the Berkshire Gardens Trust (c/o Ben Viljoen, High Veldt, Beech Road, Purley on Thames, Berks RG8 8DS tel 0118-984-3176)



The booklet [M001909]

Friends of Purley Barn Quiz

The Friends of Purley Barn held a quiz-night on July 22nd. There were lots of Project Purley members there but we also had our own team representing us. It consisted of Catherine Sampson, Lee Hall, Ann Betts, John Chapman, Margaret Cowling and Janet Brown.

I think everyone thoroughly enjoyed the evening and the fish and chip supper. The questions were challenging and for some of us came from a quite different planet from what we normally inhabit. However we managed to come equal fifth out of nineteen which was not bad considering the competition.

We believe the evening made around £800 towards Barn facilities

La Hyde

La Hyde is the name of one of the three principal manors of Purley in the early middle ages. It lies on the Sul Brook and the settlement is believed to have been roughly where Home Farm Sulham is today. It was later incorporated into the Sulham estate and joined up with Sulham and Nunhide.

The main house was moved to what is now Purley Hall in 1608 and an ornamental canal was built in the early 1700s. The mill is still there but so far we have been unable to discover anything about its history as the 'headquarters' were moved to Sulham and it is what we describe as a DMV (deserted medieval village) (we have a second one at Westbury)

Recently the Berkshire Archaeological Society has conducted a geophysical survey of three fields surrounding the existing buildings. However most disappointingly they found very little. There were signs of a footpath and a strong response where the AWE pipeline and an oil pipeline crosses the area. We think the building of the canal made the most serious disturbance to the area, masking possible signs of habitation.

Does anyone have any knowledge of the history of the mill? If so we would be delighted to hear about it.

John Chapman

Nature Notes

by Rita Denman

1st April At the end of March we were hopeful that spring had at last arrived but storm Katie blew in creating havoc in the south eastern quadrant (a forecaster's expression) of the UK. Purley was well within the quadrant and for a few hours the rain fell in sheets and the wind howled and cast loose objects around and churned up the river Thames. Slowly the storm eased leaving everything calm and sunny. More calves are being born on the farm. The early ones are growing quickly and running around like puppies. The tadpoles are developing in the garden pond and if they all survive there will be a surfeit of frogs this year. The morning birdsong is beginning to gather strength and it is possible to hear a woodpecker drumming at almost any time. The red kites are enjoying the rough weather.

8th April There have been a few bright and cheerful days but also some dreary dispiriting ones with a biting wind. On a late afternoon when a flash of sunshine invited me out of doors I walked around the meadow pulling up my coat collar with hands deep in pockets followed by the cats Betty and Flo . The weather made them skittish and they hared off chasing the wind but coming back to me for a reassuring pat and off they went again. The count of new calves grows daily.

15th April The forsythia in many parts of Purley is in blossom creating its own sunshine and tulips are coming into flower in the gardens. Bluebells too are developing the flower buds and the hedge parsley is putting on growth. A female pheasant has been living dangerously; first appearing on the wall at the back of the house and transferring to the front garden where it settled in a sunny hollow in the ground. Following rain at night dawn came with a rosy sky. The scene has had a dreamlike quality of watercolour with shapes appearing and disappearing in the mist.

22nd April We believe it is spring but it is hard to tell from the temperature which varies from a daytime temperature of 14° c to 9° c. The buds have broken on most of the trees and suddenly it seems they are coming into full leaf. Flowering fruits and ornamental trees and shrubs are coming into blossom. It is a lovely time to be in the meadow. I was thrilled to see that there are some natural bluebells

appearing in parts of the meadow. It may not seem much but is an encouragement of the way the meadow is being managed. Chicks are in the rooks nests and it is the time when the red kites and rooks are in conflict. It is quite usual to hear a commotion and watch a couple of rooks harassing an enormous kite .

29th April Folk who put their winter coats away have retrieved them as even in the south of the country the week's weather has ranged from warm sun and blue skies to fog, hail, snow, bitter winds and heavy rain and back again. The grass in the garden has been strewn with tulip petals which have been ravaged by the strong wind but despite the weather buttercups are beginning to colour the meadow. A cock pheasant has been strutting his stuff and a couple of muntjak deer skipping about in the meadow.

6th May From dodging dancing hailstones to temperatures of 22° c rising to a possible 25° c , weather wise we can expect the unexpected. Insect life is gathering pace and this week has seen the emergence of butterflies, mayflies, damsel flies and hover flies. Slow worms are also encouraged to come out of the heap of old hay and bask in the sun. The cowslips in the meadow are now well established and a delight under the dappled tree shade. The battles between the rooks and red kites continue. With their huge wingspan and effortless manoeuvrability the kites taunt the rooks who keep up the chase, scolding all the while until they are well away from the nests.

13th May Spring into summer and back to winter - it happens in Berkshire within a day. When the sun is out it is strong and very pleasant. When the rain comes it is in torrents. The flowering trees are beautiful and there is a heady perfume to the May (hawthorn) blossom. Time to sit outside and enjoy it, before it rains!

15th May Whitsunday. The morning dawned sunny with a slight frost and a low mist lying over the fields. It developed into a perfect day. By 9.30 I was in the garden and heard the cuckoo for the first time this year. The meadow is at the peak of the spring display with the trees in blossom and the delicate, lacy heads of the hedge parsley filling every corner. The grass is long enough to hide the pheasants and they are heard but unseen. Long grasses sway in the breeze and the birds sing continuously.

27th May The weather was described by the forecasters as changeable. They were right. Early Sunday morning was foggy and a few birds were twittering half heartedly accompanied by the tuneless call of a pheasant. The whole weekend was mainly wet with brief sunny periods. I took advantage of a bright moment to walk around the meadow. At the farm the new mums and their calves were wandering along the farm track. I could hear the squelching as they walked and some cows, just like humans were trying to find dry patches at the side of the path to walk on. The following day was a different scene. The sky was blue and a procession of starlings, rooks and swans flew along the river valley.

3rd June In Berkshire the weather has been as cold as winter with gales and lashing rain. On the Continent there have been violent electrical storms resulting in death and injury. In Paris the Seine rose to such an extent that The Louvre was closed and precious stock removed from the basement.

In Purley it was an unusual sight to see five red kites 'seeing off' a buzzard, while a small flock of jackdaws raided the ash tree presumably for caterpillars or insects. They made a great commotion as they hopped and flew all over the tree.

10th June The holiday weather was warm enough to be outside without a jacket. The grain harvest was begun on the farm. I watched the tractor followed by eight or nine red kites, who seem to have ousted the gulls. It is always a thrill to watch the kites and their ability to turn almost on the spot. As the week progressed the weather became very humid and uncomfortable which triggered storms in many parts of the UK. Although the air was very heavy in Purley we escaped the storms.

17th June Wind, rain, thunder and lightening has been moving around the country and Berkshire has come in for its share of everything. With intermittent sun and warmth vegetation is growing at a tropical rate. The roses are coming into their high season but are being blown to pieces, scorched in the sun or rotting in the rain. Skies have been dramatic, full of towering white or dark grey clouds while early morning mist over the hills developed into showers and then torrential rain.

24th June Extreme weather conditions continue around the world. In Berkshire we began the week with a beautiful early Sunday morning with a mist on the hills; a blue sky and the sun shining on the gold of the ripening barley in Oak Tree Field. Astronaut Tim Peake returned to earth from his six months residence in the Space Station. It was a beautiful sunny start to the summer solstice the garden was in full bloom and a fitting celebration of mid summer, although if we are half way it seems a very short one!

8th July The weather is in a rut. Glorious calm mornings with blue skies, birds singing and everything looking serenely green changes to heavy grey clouds and rain later in the day. The following day has a miserable beginning with a beautiful end and amazing sunset. However it is all bearable and when we hear of the terrible floods and loss of life in China we know how fortunate we are that English weather is generally benign. In the meadow there was a bumper crop of wild cherries which the birds have stripped. Berries are developing on the hawthorn and the millennium oak tree has minute acorns. The barley in Oak Tree Field is now a deep golden colour.

15th July On Wednesday I was up early and watched the sunrise over the valley. It began with a small stream of sunlight which flowed across the ripe barley, widening into a river, until finally the whole valley was flooded with golden light. Not a breath of air stirred the trees or hedgerows. The only movement was that of a few early birds drifting downstream and not a sound marred the beauty of the moment.

22nd July We were forewarned that the mini heatwave was coming. For this reason I spent some time in the meadow before it arrived pulling out the ragwort which is prolific this year. This is not a welcome wild flower where there are animals grazing so I try to keep it under control by hand weeding. The top of the tall grass was at my shoulder height so my view was on a level with marbled white, small white and meadow brown butterflies as they fluttered over the meadow.

It was a truly tropical day on Tuesday with deep blue sky and

hot sun from early hours. For those able to choose it was a 'manana' day, but at Home Farm this was the day for the harvest of the barley in Oak Tree Field. A flock of pigeons had decided that the barley was growing especially for them and they rose in an indignant flock when the combine came into the field. Through the day the temperature rose reaching 34°C at the peak.

Cutting and baling the straw continued through the mini heatwave. The rhythmic tirk- trik -traak, trik- trik- traak of the baler reaching a crescendo as it neared the house the sound and machine gradually fading in its own cloud of dust as it reached the far end of the rows. The sun was beating down all day and white candy floss clouds floated on a sea of deep blue. The ever expectant red kites circled above now and again diving to earth, scooping up a morsel and swooping away all in one elegant move, never touching the ground.

The resident geese have been absent for some time but as soon as the field was cleared they lost no time in arriving in a large congregation for their share of the bounty and from early morning the sound of their noisy communication filled the air. After a couple of hours feeding they streamed away in groups large and small to be replaced by a large flock of rooks.

Once again we can give thanks for harvest home.

Congratulations

Congratulations go to our Chairman, Catherine Sampson, who graduated from Oxford University on the 7th May with a Masters Degree in English Local History. (see frontispiece)

Photographs

You may have noticed that we have included the reference for photographs in our electronic archive. You may also have noticed that many of the people in the photos have not been identified. So, if you can fill any any of the gaps we would be delighted to hear from you. Please quote the reference and identify those who you can and drop us a note at one of the Project Purley meetings.