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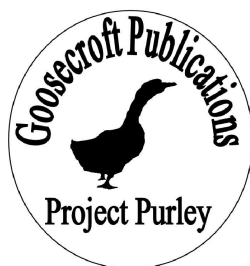
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Chairman's New Year Message

Happy New Year to you. As I write, I'm in the throes of preparing for Christmas. Most of the cards are written, presents have been bought, although not yet wrapped, and food is being prepared. So far the tree has been up three times and down twice, courtesy of my by-now over-excited cats, and it's still only the 13th. Goodness knows what state it will be in by the 25th. I do hope that you had a lovely Christmas.

I also hope that you have enjoyed the past year with Project Purley. The speakers have covered an interesting range of topics which has certainly enriched my understanding of their subject matter. I was disappointed to miss Jean's trip to Salisbury, which went very well and seems to have been thoroughly enjoyed. The generosity of our hosting cottage-owners during our Purley walkabout was incredible, and it was a privilege to have access to areas of the village very few get to see. And handy for solving Jacky's excellent quiz at the Christmas party too! As usual thanks go to Dorothy and Ben Viljoen for hosting us for the annual BBQ, and to David for arranging two more superb performances by the Rain or Shine Theatre Company, their Christmas performance, in my view, their funniest and best to date. Ann and John have given us three more excellent journals, whilst Gillian and John have made good progress with our website and the steps we need to take pre-Brexit (assuming there still is a Brexit when you read this).

Commemorating the centenary of the Armistice has quite rightly dominated our year though. One of Project Purley's aims is to help people discover more about the rich history of Purley and I hope that the events we organised, and helped to organise, went some way in achieving that objective for the First World War period. We also now have a better understanding of another period in our history, and more material to continue to share, more key aims.

Thank you to my wonderful fellow committee members who have made all of this happen.

Catherine Sampson

Purley Parish Council Part 2

by John Chapman

The story of Purley Parish Council is recorded in the minute books now lodged with Berkshire Record Office. CPC/93/1/1 is a bound volume covering the formative years 1927-1955.

The new Parish Council first met at the schoolroom on Monday 28th March 1927. It comprised: The Revd C H Coe, Mr C E Hodgkin, Mr H A Tidbury, Mr H Pocock and Mr S Anderson. Two other parishioners attended as well. The Revd Coe was elected Chairman, but within days he was moved to Windsor by the bishop after some rather unsavoury events. Horace Turner was appointed Clerk at a salary of two guineas per annum. At the next meeting Miss Caroles-Jones took over the chairmanship and at the following one Ernest Hodgkin was elected, but was absent at the following meeting which was chaired by Horace Pocock; but Hodgkin returned to stay as chairman until his death.

For the first 30 years there were two topics that came up at almost every meeting. Footpaths and roads. One might get the impression that every landowner was intent on obstructing or denying footpaths and Brownyard footpath was reported as having been damaged by a timber wagon. So in 1934 they produced a list of 14 footpaths and bridleways and set about convincing the County Council to agree. A need for fingerposts to direct walkers was recognised and installed in 1929 but in July it was reported that one had been sawn down. Later George Aberly from Long Lane admitted to sawing and burning it so was ordered to pay £3 to replace it. He never did! The roads were always being reported as in bad condition and needed tarring and ire was directed toward the County Council.

Gradually as the 1920s turned into the 1930s other issues arose. One key one was the building of Council houses in Glebe Road and the Parish Council were lobbying Bradfield RDC to reserve at least four of them for Purley residents.

Houses were springing up along the Oxford Road and Long Lane and there were complaints about the poor postal service they received as the postman had to walk from Pangbourne to the

Roebuck then back and up Long Lane and then back to Pangbourne with a lot of wasted mileage so after talks with the postmaster it was agreed that the area would be served from Tilehurst so the postman could walk along the Oxford Road, up Long Lane and back to Tilehurst. The end result has been the southeastern quadrant of Purley is now RG31-6 and called Tilehurst while the rest of Purley is RG8-8.

As time went by the Council were asked to nominate members to various outside positions to represent Purley and this established many connections with neighbouring parishes especially Pangbourne so, for the celebrations to mark King George V's Silver Jubilee and King George VI's Coronation, Purley joined with Pangbourne but they broke away for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth. Purley received the money for a lifebelt from the Jubilee fund.

Among the joint enterprises was Pangbourne Fire Brigade toward which Purley paid £12/5/0 every half year with Horace Pocock serving as representative. This continued until January 1939 when Bradfield RDC took over responsibility. Two members had to serve on the rates assessment panel.

One of the odd allocations of responsibility placed on Parish Councils in 1892 was the Parish Clock. Purley's had stopped working and in 1952 they tried to get it working again. A parishioner offered to pay the cost but the then chairman, A W Bucknell objected to the noise, claiming all that had gone wrong was that someone had stolen the lead weights. However he seems to have been over-ruled.

The first hint of war came at the meeting of 28th March 1938 when they were ordered to begin Air Raid Precautions. A Head Warden for the area had been appointed and the Council had to provide wardens. However on the 28th July 1941 all the wardens turned up at the Parish Council meeting because the Head Warden Mr Stocks had resigned and been replaced by a woman, Miss Ashloss. They demanded that the PC support them in opposing this but the Council said it was not their business, so all the wardens resigned. The second issue was the provision of a shelter which the Council wanted in the School grounds but the rector, Revd Skuse objected and an alternative option for a hut on the River estate was

ignored so the matter was dropped. Later in August 1942 they were issued with instructions on how to welcome American troops.

In September 1936 the Council sought to buy land for a village hall but although various sites were suggested, nothing came of it. Then after the war, in June 1946, Mrs Goodman revived the idea and joined it to a need for a war memorial. This resulted in the building of the Memorial Hall. While the Council fully supported the scheme it was felt better to let the Memorial Hall committee get on with it with the Council merely nominating one member.

The next big demand was for a recreation ground. The Revd Skuse first offered a site for the village hall in an acre next to the rectory and then extended the offer to two acres to provide a recreation field. This was rejected as being too small and land was sought both from Home Farm and Westbury Farm also from Trenthams on land adjacent to Long Lane. After much to-ing and fro-ing with the planning authority, the National Playing Fields Association and the newly formed Sports Club, it was decided to seek six acres from Sulham Estate and the Revd Wilder offered a seven year lease on land adjacent to Beech Road which was agreed. The Parish Council paid £15 for fencing (2s 7d per post) and the sports club offered to level half of it and lay it out for organised games. There were lots of arguments about whether the Sports Club should rent the pavilion from the Parish Council or take a direct lease with Sulham Estate. Eventually however it all got sorted and when the lease expired the Council bought a slightly different area of land from Sulham Estate.

The Council was very active in persuading utility companies to serve Purley. They joined forces with Pangbourne PC to get more favourable terms from the water company and did a survey of residents to try to get electricity but it took some time before enough residents agreed to take electricity before the company would lay a cable from the mill at Whitchurch.

There were many concerns about the river estate. It was first mentioned in January 1936 when the council called for the 'camping estate' to be closed down. During the war its nature changed completely and it had become a permanent home to many people. There was much ill feeling between older residents and the newco-

mers until the estate dwellers realised that, as they were on the electoral register, they could summon up enough votes to have their own parish councillors and after this relations improved markedly. By June 1947 the Parish Council were supporting a public telephone for the estate and for Bradfield District Council to improve sewage and refuse services.

Another campaign the Council sponsored was a move to get the ferry moved closer to the lock so that Purley could be closer to Mapledurham. The matter was raised in October 1938 but this was the last thing the owners of Mapledurham House wanted. Instead soon after the ferry itself was closed.

Planning matters began to be considered after the 1948 Act but it was not until July 1952 that they were consulted on a number of issues eg an application to site a caravan at 17 River Gardens and for a proper caravan to replace an old van at 33 Oak Tree Lane.

Purley faced two threats during this period. First Reading Borough Council moved to incorporate Purley in October 1947, then in July 1953 Pangbourne proposed taking over the Bourne Road area. Both were vigorously opposed although the latter did succeed much later.

Transport was a big issue. In January 1932 the Council were incensed to learn that the fares for the Thames Valley bus service to Oxford were the same from Reading to Pangbourne as for Reading to Purley. Complaints were made to the bus company who pointed out that fares were set by the Traffic Commissioners and a combined deputation to them eventually, in July, resulted in a slightly cheaper fare for Purley. During the war there were complaints that Purley residents were left standing in the mornings due to overcrowding. After the railways were nationalised in 1948, in May 1949 the Council demanded a halt be provided at Purley but the British Railways Board rejected it out of hand.

The highlight of the period however was the Coronation celebrations in 1953. Purley went it alone, turning down Pangbourne's offer. The programme approved in October 1952 included a TV relay of the coronation in the Memorial Hall, Sports events, aquatic events, a children's tea and a bonfire at the new recreation ground.

It all went off well and perhaps for the first time the parish council was seen to have moved from a small group, bitterly complaining about roads and footpaths, to an organisation dedicated to renewing, providing and enhancing community amenities

Commemorating the Centenary of the Armistice in Purley on Thames

By Catherine Sampson

On 13 March 2018, a meeting took place of individuals interested in commemorating the centenary of the Armistice. The idea had come from Christine Lamb, Clerk to the Parish Council, who took on the roles of liaison person and secretary, as well as Parish Council representative, in the subsequent meetings which followed. A small working group of four interested volunteers, Christine, Pam Bedd-oes, John Chapman and myself, soon began to meet regularly to pull together ideas and act as a central co-ordination point for other events organised within the village. We were later joined by Marion Maybank who was similarly motivated to mark the occasion.

John, Pam and I soon agreed to mount an exhibition on behalf of Project Purley, and John, mapped out an outline of potential boards. The last significant exhibition staged by the society was for the Diamond Jubilee in 2012, the planning for which had taken 18 months and involved research by over twenty individuals. This one was just over six months away. Nevertheless we believed it was doable, although much of the board building would be pushed to the last few weeks before the actual event. John and I divided the research between us. He would concentrate on the general narrative of the war on all its fronts. I would concentrate on Purley and its experiences during the war, including those who served. The final boards were assembled by the combined efforts of Project Purley's Committee, particularly Pam who assembled a large number of the fifty-plus boards at home.

The exhibition was to be just one part of a much broader event which we called "Purley Remembers the First World War". Christine had already received some offers of support from interested

organisations, and now we scoped the event as a whole, brainstorming ideas to include as many within the community as possible, and also to reflect as wide an overview of the war and its impact as possible. Some such as Milestones Museum in Basingstoke, and The Berkshire Medical Museum, based at The Royal Berkshire Hospital, very quickly accepted and agreed to attend, the latter confirming that they would bring with them displays on Reading's War Hospitals and original medical equipment from this period. Others weren't quite so quick in being able to commit. Three local schools, Brookfield, Long Lane and Purley Primary School, all agreed to make poppies to display in the Barn, as did the Scouts and several individuals. CJ Medals, offered to lend two cases of medals to be displayed, and also approached Angels Costumiers in London and arranged to borrow a replica First World War Soldier's uniform, which we were able to display on a mannequin in front of the poppy displays. Purley WI and Purley Horticultural Society volunteered to put relevant displays together, and began work on planning their stands. By September, Purley Players were in rehearsal for three twenty minute "Voices of the Great War" sessions which they would perform on the Saturday. This was to be the mass community event we had originally aimed for.

This however was only one of the planned events. In the meantime, planning was underway by the church and Memorial Hall committees who would be organising and hosting the events of November 11th. Singing for Fun were in rehearsals for their commemoration concert of music and singing "It's over, let's party" and Happi Feet were planning a World War One themed Tea Dance.

The Working Group's other significant deliverable was a 'soldier's trail' around the village. Various organisations were marketing soldier silhouettes, but they were prohibitively expensive, and far beyond the grant of £1,000 which the Parish Council had kindly granted to us. Fortuitously, Marion Maybank offered to attend a meeting to show her plans for a soldier figure to the group. An hour later, Marion had agreed to join the working group and also committed to asking her husband Steve if he would make not one but fifteen soldiers! Luckily he kindly agreed, and Marion volunteered



The line up of silhouettes in Westbury Lane commemorating four Purley men who died in WW1 [M030757]

to decorate them and source name plaques. Pam and I spent a morning walking round the village, earmarking potential sites near or in front of their former homes where each figure might go and, with the added assistance of Christine, subsequently obtained permission from each relevant landowner. We are very grateful that everyone agreed without hesitation.

As the dates grew nearer, an armistice events leaflet was designed, and kindly distributed to all households in Purley by the Scouts, the Parish Council added an Armistice page to their website detailing all events, and updates were inserted monthly in the Purley Parish News. By Mid-October the promotion plan swung into place with posters, postings on social media forums and facebook, updates in the various electronic newsletters around the village, and media releases to the press and local radio stations.

Singing for Fun's "It's over, let's party" on Friday 5th and

Saturday 6th October at St Mary's Church, were the first events and performed to sell-out audiences. On the 19th, Jane Burrell spoke to Project Purley members and guests about "Poets of the Somme", a talk which deeply moved many of those present. The following day, a memorial football match arranged by Purley Jubilee Football match sadly had to be cancelled. However, the "soldiers' trail" opened around the village as planned, with accompanying trail leaflet downloadable from the Parish Council website. Facebook was soon ablaze with photographs and supportive comments. The soldiers proved very popular, the trail as a whole being completed by a good number of people, including at least one whole class from Purley Primary School, and individual soldiers also being singled out. Relatives of Frederick Mott, and William and Robert Nash made the journey to Purley to pay their respects, and flowers, poppies and poppy-decorated stones were laid in front of many of the figures in remembrance. Sunday 21st, saw another talk in The Barn, this time on "Gallipoli, a family's history" and given by David Roscoe, a former villager now living in Liverpool, and the father of Christine Lamb. Throughout the following week, poppies began to be brought into The Barn by local individuals and organisations, and on the Thursday 25th Happi Feet's WW1-themed tea dance was held there.

"Purley Remembers the First World War" opened between 11am and 4pm on Saturday 3rd November, and again the next day. We estimate that in excess of a thousand people attended, many coming both days. The exhibition was enormously well received, and meticulous research had uncovered many new stories, photographs, and details of the conflict, which were now presented for the first time. The many stands included those previously mentioned, and also ones from The Red Cross, Royal British Legion, Blue Cross, RSPCA, The Dogs' Trust, Berkshire Family History Society, Berkshire Aviation Museum, Potts Memorial Trust and the Western Front Association. Free expert advice was offered on the Saturday on antiques and collectibles by Simon Jones of Jones and Jacobs Fine Art Auctioneers, and on medals and decorations by David Downs. A reading area, complete with sofa, gave visitors the chance to browse a selection of books on the war and also to ask questions to

John, as our military expert. Floor to ceiling poppy displays dominated the large Barn, whilst the small Barn was covered in bunting and dressed to resemble a 1918 tea room, named after the famous Brown Betty teapot. This was also where the stage was set up on the Saturday for



The exhibition with viewers looking at boards which noted key figures from WW1 [M030754]

moving performances by Purley Players to capacity audiences. Milestones Museum also based here, for their 'mend and make do'



The dummy soldier set against a background of poppies made mainly by local school children [M030753]

knitting sessions. On the Sunday, three talks given by David Downs (on medals and decorations), John Chapman (on treating the wounded) and myself (on researching your First World War ancestors) were all well-attended. Whilst in the main Barn, Luiza Lale, a professional saxophonist, attracted much attention with her music of the First World War. A collection taken over the two days raised in excess of £400 for the Royal British Legion. Thank you to everyone who helped set up and run these two days.

The final events to commemorate the Armistice were held on Sunday 11th November. The church service led by Revd David Archer

and St Mary's community was held in the Memorial Hall, Purley's official war memorial. Despite both the main hall and the Nicholls Room being laid out with seating, attendance levels were such that many had to stand both in and outside. A choir from Purley Infants School sang beautifully and three children had the honour of laying wreaths in front of the memorial. Outside, the soldier figures previously scattered around the village, had been lined up in a guard of honour facing the hall. In the evening, St Mary's Church was the venue for the final event, a celebration of the end of the war with bells ringing and beacon lit, as part of the national celebration. The bells had also rung out at 12.30pm at the request of the Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire. Inside the church, Pangbourne Silver Band entertained a packed audience who accompanied them with singing and flag waving. A small section of the exhibition was on display for those who had missed it and tea and cake were provided free of charge.

Following the success of the events, Martin Bishop set up a crowd-funding page to raise money to purchase and install a commemorative memorial bench. This was very successful and the now-purchased bench will be erected in front of the Memorial Hall. In addition, a Verdun Oak will be planted in the Memorial Hall grounds, when the sapling is sufficiently established. This has been grown from an acorn collected by Project Purley members last September at Ecoivres CWGC Cemetery, near Vimy Ridge, where Dudley Aldin is buried. Money raised over the 3rd and 4th November has been set aside to pay for the planting of the tree and a plaque, and will also go towards new additional memorial plaques inside the church to honour those who died during both world wars and whose name was missed off the existing memorials. These being Alan Powley and Sidney Pinchin (First World War) and Ernest Beswick, Ernest Matthews and Barry Nicholls (Second World War). Some further research will be needed on the Second World War plaque to ensure no further names are missing. Sidney Pinchin will also be added to the Memorial Hall Plaque. Any remaining money will be gifted to the Memorial Hall towards the cost of its upkeep.

Letters from the Past

As Purley prepared to commemorate the centenary of the Armistice, Alex and Myrtle Campbell of Cecil Aldin Drive, received the incredible news that the next of kin had finally been traced for an item held in their family since 1918.

John Campbell died in 1989, aged 93, and one of the items his wife gave to her son, Alex, was a small cardboard box containing a wallet and other memorabilia that he had kept from his time in the Royal Scots.

He had been in Germany during the war, and until 1919 as part of the Army of Occupation.

In February 2018, Alex decided to have a “clear out” and came across this cardboard box again. A rather shabby, black wallet containing letters and postcards and the pay book of Reinold Kirch, made him decide to do a little research. Quite how the wallet had come into his father’s possession is unclear, in fact the only potential clue was that some of the postcards were of Euskirchen. By a stroke of good fortune, Google revealed that Euskirchen was twinned with Basingstoke.

Basingstoke Twinning Association gave him the contact details of the twinning association in Euskirchen and then began a series of emails, back and forth between Alex and Dr. Gabrielle Runger. Although no relatives of the owner of the wallet could be found immediately, Alex decided to send the wallet to Dr. Gabrielle Runger for safekeeping. With the help of the G.P.O. Gabrielle received the wallet at the second attempt.

Eventually, Elfriede Bruck, the daughter of Reinold Kirch was traced to a small town about 20 km. from Cologne.

On the 22nd October 2018, Alex received a photograph of Elfriede and her husband being presented with the wallet by the Burgermeister of Euskirchen. She tells us that the four letters were love letters from her mother to her father, before they were married in 1922.

The wallet had come to Purley on Thames via Danderhall, a

small village south of Edinburgh, but almost 100 years later was back with someone to whom it meant a lot.

Catherine Sampson

Meeting Reports

Prospect Park Mansion

Project Purley's September meeting was all about the Mansion House in Reading's Prospect Park, owned in the late 18th century by John Engelberts Liebenrood, the great nephew and heir of John George Liebenrood, a wealthy Purley merchant. John George Liebenrood, and his wife, and John Engelberts Liebenrood, and his wife, are all buried in St Mary's Church.

Katie Amos took us through the history of the house, from the romantic tale of its beginning, through its interesting collection of residents, its undignified and unloved period last century, until its current status as a restaurant. Katie is a Tilehurst native and the local studies lead at Reading Central Library, and so was able to bring both a personal and a professional perspective to the story of the building and its grounds.

Local legend has it that Prospect House (later the Mansion House) was built by Benjamin Child in 1757 on the spot where he met his wife Frances Kendrick, where she offered him the choice of duelling with her or marrying her!

The house passed to their godson James Hill in 1767, and then to his widow and her second husband until 1791, and then to the first of what would be many renters in the history of the house. It was bought by John Engelberts Liebenrood after he inherited the estate of his great uncle in 1795.

John George Liebenrood was originally from Saxony. He came to Purley to marry a local girl, Ann Allen, and they lived in Purley Lodge. There were no children, and his great nephew John Engelberts Ziegenbein inherited on the condition he changed his name to Liebenrood, the first of several inheritance issues (and name changes) in the Liebenrood line. John Engelberts duly moved to England and became John Engelberts Liebenrood. He enlarged and remodel-

led the house, and lived there from about 1797 with his wife Lucy and two children. The inheritance went through more twists and turns, including another name change for the inheritor, while the house was mostly rented, but after a few years of Liebenrood family occupancy at the end of the 1800s, the house and park were sold, and ended up with Reading Borough Council in 1902, to be used 'for the benefit of weary workers'.

The park has certainly fulfilled the conditions of sale, but the house has been through a number of different uses and abuses since then, and perhaps only since the early 1980s in its current use as a restaurant, and its most stable period of ownership, can it come close to qualifying, as it is at least open to everyone!

The history of the Mansion House struck a chord with everyone who has used Prospect Park over the years, and Katie's talk was greatly appreciated by all.

Gillian Wallace

Early Closing Day: Air Raids on Reading in WW2

Mike Cooper's talk centred on the bombing raid in Reading on 10th February 1943, when the People's Pantry restaurant, in the Market Arcade in Friar Street, was hit when four bombs fell in the centre of town, and 41 people were killed and 150 injured.

Although the war memorials in and around the town bear witness to the many battle casualties of World War 2, this was perhaps the incident that brought home the brutal realities of war to the people of Reading. The set of four bombs badly damaged the Town Hall, demolished the old solicitors' offices next door, blew the spire off the tower of St Laurence's Church, and hit the back of the Market Arcade.

Apart from the railway, Reading had little visible to make it a target, as was shown in an old aerial photograph used by the Germans. The airfield at Woodley was a likely target, as were Burghfield and Arborfield, but they were not near the centre of town. Nevertheless, Reading had a very active civil defence force,



The scene outside St Laurence's church after the raid which killed a resident of Beech Road, Mr E M Beswick [photograph courtesy of Reading Museum (Reading Borough Council) :

<https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/blog> [M080125]

and air raid preparations were made very early on. The Mayor produced an Air Raid Precautions leaflet for all households, McIlroy Park had anti-aircraft guns, and by 1941, 90,000 private and public air raid shelter spaces had been provided for the population of 100,000 people, along with provision for gas masks and food.

The People's Pantry was one of the six 'British' restaurants set up as part of the war effort, in addition to emergency feeding centres. These restaurants provided lunches to supplement rations. The People's Pantry served up to 1,000 meals a day, and within half an hour of the bombing the Women's Voluntary Service installed one of their mobile canteens on the site, which stayed for about a week.

Reading was bombed about 20 times during the war, but until 1943 had no fatalities - only a few injuries and some property damage. These were all single plane attacks, and most are likely to have been random - a lost or damaged aircraft shedding its load before trying to get back to Germany. Whether or not the town centre attack was random, it was sheer luck that far more people were not killed. 10th February was early closing day, and the bombs were dropped soon after 4 pm. The local schoolchildren had already passed through the area, the shoppers had gone home, and the People's Pantry had only a fraction of the usual number of customers.

Only the shrapnel scars on the walls of St Laurence's Church remain as a physical reminder of the bombing, but there are still memories alive from the time, and a few of the audience in the Barn were able to share memories of their own or of their relatives who were affected.

Many of us hearing of the events of the day will be thinking of it each time we walk through the square, and all of us greatly appreciated the talk, with the maps and photographs that showed Mike's careful and comprehensive research.

Gillian Wallace

Sherlock Holmes and The Curious Case of Dr. Jekyll and Miss Hyde

The game was murderously afoot at The Barn on Friday evening, November 30th, when Rain or Shine Theatre Company presented Sherlock Holmes and The Curious Case of Dr. Jekyll and Miss Hyde to a capacity audience.

The play, set in 1886 in darkest London and described as "Hilarious, Multi-Role Madness," was specially written for Rain or Shine by Tom Jordan, who also directed, and it proved to be everything the advertising blurb promised. It's a play within a play as everybody's favourite detective and his sidekick attempt to counter the hidden and evil aspect of the good doctor's personality.

As a result of this cross-fertilisation of classics, the inevitable was a harum-scarum romp around the precarious 221B Baker Street setting in almost pantomime style. The cast of four multi-rolled in typical Rain or Shine style and, although the story was a little too intermingled and complicated at times, everyone appreciated and applauded the sheer energy, verging on athleticism, of the actors.

No-one was safe from the heinous intentions of the demonic Miss Hyde - I calculated that she committed five murders in the ninety seconds at the start of Act Two. That part was taken by Pippa Meekings, who doubled as Dr. Jekyll and trebled as Mrs. Hudson, the housekeeper. It was a remarkably energetic performance as she

bounded around the boards, especially considering she had been laid low with a stomach virus only a couple of days previously.

The facial expressions of the actors and the way they hammed it all up was brilliant. But for me the highlight of the show, fast moving as it was, was the furious carriage ride which somehow ended without mishap. It was the kind of manic chase seen in old black and white cowboy films, and the cinematic connection was emphasised by the use of a clapper board to introduce scenes and retakes.

Of course a Christmas show had to have a happy ending, so the play ended with Holmes, Watson and Mrs.Hudson all safely ensconced back at 221B. But will the villainess return? No doubt a case of Hyde and seek!

I record my thanks to all those who helped in any way towards the success of the evening. Project Purley's share of the ticket sales, plus the very generous leaving collection, means that we can donate £500 towards Alzheimers Research U.K.

Rain or Shine will return to The Barn on Friday, June 7th 2019 when they will perform William Shakespeare's comedy, "As You Like It."

David Downs.

Christmas Party

The party was held in the Barn on Friday 14th December, with the Barn Christmas tree already up and decorated, and more decorations and lights put up by the committee.

Members came with plates for the communal table, and there was a great variety of dishes to choose from, though perhaps a bit of competition for the well-known specialities of one or two of the expert cooks!

A table quiz with photographs from around Purley was organised by Jacky Brown. The group who won had a very impressive score of 18 out of 20, and there were token prizes for everyone at the table.

It was a really good end to what has been a very busy year for

Christmas Party



The sumptuous table of good fare [M030755]

Project Purley, with all the Armistice events. Thanks are due to all the committee and members who helped with the organisation, and the Barn set up and clearing up.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our members, and we hope to see you at the meetings and events during 2019.

Gillian Wallace



and some of the members enjoying themselves [M030756]

Nature Notes

by Rita Denman

3rd Aug. 2018. At the beginning of the week we enjoyed some slightly cooler weather but it was windy with gusts of 40-50 mph expected. This wind brought down a lot of crab apples and apples. Large fruits but still green. Tim has been busy bringing in the harvest. Due to the field rotation system most of the grain fields are at present out of my view and the local fields are in the pasture phase which may be why there have not been as many pheasants in the meadow.

The garden borders are a sorry sight and it is hard work keeping the pots and containers, the tomatoes and beans hand watered. but there are tomatoes ready for picking every day and there will be runner beans for Sunday.

A family picnic in the meadow attracted very many wasps and since then I have discovered a nest on the bank between the garden and the meadow. A call to a local pest controller and he was here within the hour and all done and literally dusted. He said that it is a very bad year for wasps.

10th August. The hoped for cooler weather arrived with temperatures a good 10 degrees lower than in recent days. I have been watching the bees on various flowers in the garden. They are always very busy and buzzing away but the bees on the Japanese anemone are almost frenzied. The cup shaped flower increases the volume but the way they wriggle and really go at it is striking. On the way to Pangbourne yesterday I noticed that the big chestnut trees along the main road are looking dead. There has been a problem with chestnut trees in the last year or two. I hope the drought hasn't finished them off.

I gathered the first harvest of damsons from the tree in the meadow this week. When they are on the tree they are an intense blue with a beautiful bloom on them. There are still plenty of walnuts on the tree but I know little about harvesting them. A quick consultation of 'the oracle' and I discovered that some people are allergic to the husks, so that was worth knowing.

18th August. It has been an overall grey day and much cooler. It isn't really light until after 5.30am and the evenings are beginning to draw in. It seems only a few days since I was waking before 4.30 am to listen to the dawn chorus. This week the earliest bird chorus has been a flock of a couple of hundred geese which straggle up and down the river in no sort of order. There is an autumn look to the meadow. The abundant crab apples are ripening and giving colour and the grass is recovering from the dry weather.

31st August. Tomorrow will be the first day of the meteorological autumn. The garden has almost recovered from the extreme heat. There have been more small birds about and blue tits and goldfinches have returned to the front garden. After a few good downpours the fields are beginning to look more like England's green and pleasant land again although Tim is bringing out hay bales for the cattle. Various kinds of fungi are growing in the meadow and a fox is making its presence known noisily.

September 7th. It was confirmed this week that the heatwave had equalled that of 1976. The week began with rain but Monday brought blue skies streaked with pink and a mist on the river. The small birds are twittering and singing in the hedgerows.

September 21st. Although temperatures are much nearer to normal a series of storms has brought wind and rain to many parts of the country in varying degrees of severity. Purley has experienced high winds and very heavy rain bringing down tree branches. Tim has spread the cattle around the fields and installed unaccustomed feeders.

September 28th. We have passed the Autumn Equinox. A couple of cold mornings bordering on frost and the planting in the tubs and containers is gradually going over.

My star plant of the year was a nicotiana which I planted in the garden just as the heatwave began. The first set back was that despite surrounding it with sand, overnight the slugs eat the leaves to the skeleton veins and all that was left was a tiny bit of green at the heart of the plant. I cosseted it and very slowly it recovered despite the scorching heat. It grew but did not reach its full stature but nevertheless eventually proudly bore a beautiful flowering head. Such is the persistence of nature.

October 5th. Ian has been out ploughing at Home Farm. The tractor had to cope with some stony areas and there was a lot of dust. Late afternoon was pleasantly warm and I took a break from gardening just watching the tractor steadily working up and down the rows followed by a flock of gulls which touched down straggling along the furrows as the plough shears turned the soil. At the end as Ian made a turn they all rose up at once and swirled around with the tractor. As autumn takes hold there are fleeting moments of beauty which it is hard to describe, as in the half light of morning, just before the sun is up and the turning leaves of the field maple trees radiate their own golden glory.

October 10th was officially declared an Indian Summer Day. I enjoyed it with a comfy chair in the garden facing the warming sun with closed eyes just taking in the scents and sounds of nature which encouraged deep breathing and letting go of aches and pains and needless worries.

October 13th. In view of the recent weather patterns we have been extremely fortunate in Purley with only a few really heavy rains and moderately gusty winds.

October 19th. Heavy rain has drenched everything weighing down the tree branches that drip rainwater long after it has stopped raining. The combination of a wet atmosphere and warm temperatures have created a lot of mist that has been upgraded to fog and closed Heathrow and other airports. There is strong growth in the grass and new buds on the rose bushes.

October 26th. The forecast is for a sudden drop in temperature over the next few days. It has been a week for leaf raking. It has also been good growing weather.

The recent seeding at Home Farm is germinating and there is a green tinge over the field. Perfect autumn weather has coincided with half term. Traditional mist in the mornings has developed into warm sunny days and ended with bright moonlit nights, shining as bright as day.

November 17th. For day after day we have enjoyed a glorious late autumn painted in the artist A R Quinton colours. Occasional showers have not spoiled the tree display or the crunchy fallen leaves.

The most beautiful trees were the last to turn colour and are the last to lose their leaves. A family of pheasants have been foraging in the meadow. The fallen crab apples and acorns from the Millennium Oak are disappearing. The purpose of the meadow is to encourage wild life great and small and it is working.

November 23rd. We knew it would happen. The winter has arrived and we are looking back longingly to the days when it was so hot we hardly knew what to do with ourselves. Mornings have been white with frost with a temperature of -6°C in Oxfordshire. A cold white mist has shrouded skeleton bare trees creating a stark beauty.

Even so, by 9am the sun has appeared slanting low through the bare trees and sending shafts of light through the thick carpet of russet leaves. Despite the poor conditions earlier in the year there is a good crop of pyracantha berries on the garage wall. This attracts the blackbirds who perch on garden posts working out the best flying angle to get at the berries. We will be rewarded with the blackbird's song.

November 30th. Now that the weather is getting colder the small birds are coming nearer to the houses. At the present there is plenty of natural food about, but soon filling the feeders will be a regular task. Days have mainly been dark dreary wet and windy with very occasional bursts of sun. It is dark early and Betty and Flo spend most of their time curled up in a deep sleep in the comfort of the house. It was a beautiful autumn with the last rays of the sun setting the valley afire. Just a memory now that all the leaves are down and it is a stark winter scene.



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