

THE PROJECT PURLEY JOURNAL

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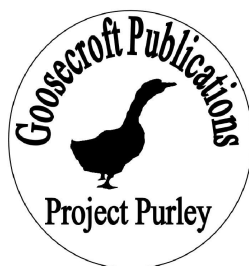
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A Message from our Chairman

by Catherine Sampson

In the surreal and scary world of Covid-19 in which we are now living, I hope that you and your family are keeping well and safe.

As I write this, the country is still in partial lockdown and our Prime Minister is in intensive care. The experts are predicting the peak within the next week or so, and plans for the lifting of the lockdown remain pure speculation. This is the world of April 8th, by the time you read this things will have changed again, I hope for the better.

Project Purley's committee responded early to the developing situation and made the decision to postpone all planned events from March to June. Hopefully, you all received an email or note to that effect at the time. Such a drastic step is a first for the society. In the message, I asked if you could keep diaries during the lockdown and also record your early memories of Purley for the society. A number of you responded in the affirmative, thank you, please do keep these going as they will be enormously important.

Whilst normal society activities have largely halted, we remain focused on the calendar ahead. The committee has now held its first mini-meeting online. And hopefully, by the time you read this we will have had, or are about to hold, our first online talk. If that goes well – we will organise other similar activities, until we can safely venture out once again. We also have a new date in the diary for Rain or Shine's She Stoops to Conquer – Friday 24th July. Fingers crossed that date stays.

This edition of Project Purley's Journal comes to you in full colour and with more pages than usual to give you more of a read. We hope that you find the range of articles interesting. Thanks go to Ann and John for their work in compiling this. Many of you may be receiving this journal electronically initially. That decision is another which can only be made at the last moment, but we will make sure you receive your hard copy as soon as it is practically possible.

Take care and keep safe.

Purley Parish Council part 5

by John Chapman

This final part of the history of the Parish Council covers the first six years of typed minutes, to be found at the Berkshire Record Office as CPC 93/1 sections 4 to 10 and the years 1967 to 1973. For all of this period Ray Fulbrooke was Clerk and Bernard Theobald was Chairman.

Compared with previous parts the issues were mostly quite different. The only mention of footpaths concerned obstructions on Bridleway 6 (leading from Oxford Road to Fulbrooke Crescent) and the making of a public rights of way map in conjunction with Tilehurst Parish Council.

Bus services got no mention in the minutes, although there were debates about providing bus shelters and where bus stops should go. Two shelter sites were proposed, one to serve the Bourne Road area opposite Sulham Lane which was postponed and one in St Mary's Avenue (now Purley Village), opposite Lister Close which was built at a cost of £90 but has now been removed. Two bus stops on the A329 were merged (now by Nursery Gardens) and a new one by the top of New Hill for which the Parish Council wanted a lay-by.

There were continuing concerns about the size of Long Lane School, supported by Tilehurst PC as many of their children would attend. Eventually a Terrapin was obtained in 1969. There were proposals to close the C of E School but nothing happened. Attempts to recruit a crossing warden at the junction of the A329 and Long Lane met with zero response.

The big road issue was about the Purley/Pangbourne by-pass. There were proposals to provide only the Pangbourne section to which Purley objected and consideration of the whole scheme was deferred.

The Redciffe-Maud report on the future of local government was published in 1968. In 1971 after a general election the Local Government Commission proposed unitary districts with the abolition of Parish Councils. There were three proposals affecting

Purley, Plan A suggested merging Henley Borough, Henley RDC, Bradfield RDC and a few other bits. Plan B suggested merging Bradfield RDC with Newbury and Hungerford Boroughs and RDCs and a bit of Wantage RDC. Purley PC preferred Plan A and supported Ashampstead PC's petition for the retention of Parish Councils. We finished up with plan B and a success for the petition, although Berkshire County Council was retained. The bigger threat however came from Reading who wanted to incorporate Purley; but after a poll of parishioners who voted 790 against, 158 for Reading's proposals with 10 don't know that was dropped.

There was an ongoing dispute with Pangbourne PC over the Bourne Road area which Pangbourne wanted but in July 1972 Berkshire County Council told them to forget it.

The new recreation ground came into use although there were concerns about the sharp flints that kept coming to the surface and persistent flooding. The latter was addressed by a mole drainage contract. During the summers, only Purley Cricket Club got to use the ground but the two football pitches were rented out to a number of different clubs including an under 13 club on both Saturdays and Sundays. Little Heath School made use of the ground for 2-3 years from December 1969 while their playing field was being prepared.

The pavilion took a long time to build and even more to decorate. Furniture was bought from the Wintringham Way Community Association which was closing. It was used for Parish Council meetings on the 31st January 1972 but they had to go back to the Memorial Hall when it got cold and when they installed a night storage heater it didn't work and Southern Electricity had to be called in to try and fix it.

The availability of facilities prompted the formation of new clubs. There was a tennis club, an archery club and the Sports and Social Club all emerging in 1972. Purley Rep hired the pavilion three evenings a week for rehearsals but were reminded that they must continue to use the Memorial Hall for performances. A Young People's Club was formed in October 1969 and the council gave them £20 for equipment.

Until 1967 street lighting had been a responsibility of the Parish Council but then Berks CC took over for most of the roads and established a common time policy of dusk to 24:00 and 05:30 to dawn. Over the period lights had been installed on the A329, Bourne Road, Glebe Road, Highfield Road and a few others. This affected speed limits and the council were always pressing for a 40 mph limit on the A329 and 30 mph on Long Lane. There were lots of arguments about making up roads. The Highway Authority insisted they could not spend money until roads had been adopted and as the developer of Westridge Avenue had gone bust there were problems there. The proposals to make up Beech Road were vigorously opposed by many householders, but a compromise in July 1972 allowed a contract for £21388 to be agreed with a hammerhead serving the recreation ground.

Litter bins were acquired from April 1969 and there were complaints about dumping litter behind Highfield Road. Dogs were a problem and bye laws were adopted to try to deal with the situations. The biggest complaints came about the poultry farm which was burning chicken carcasses and Mr Keene's promises were not always implemented.

There was a move to acquire land adjacent to the church to extend the burial ground but no agreement could be reached even though the council set aside £1000. They then tried to get a compulsory purchase order but were advised that they would have to adopt the 1852 to 1885 Burials Acts and the County Council said in 1972, forget it as the legal costs would be crippling.

There was a move to protect Purley Copse with a tree preservation order but the County Council wanted every



Purley Copse after a later attempt to fell trees to facilitate building (M002125]

single tree and bush to be identified so the proposal was dropped. The new estate on the fringe was named Theobald Drive. In August 1972 the council agreed to support the *Tree for '73* campaign and promises of trees were received from Col Duncan, Reg Ayres, John Bucknell and others. A planting session at the recreation ground was held in March 1973.

By the end of this period the council had changed from a small group of concerned citizens to a well established local authority with a hard working Recreation Ground Committee. There were many other issues which I have not been able to cover and fundamental changes following the 1972 Local Government Act which settled the role of Parish Councils. I had come to live in Purley in 1972 and by 1976 had joined the council so I will leave the story here.

Reading Football Club 150th Anniversary

by David Downs

Purley on Thames may not have an immediate connection with Reading Football Club, except that of course many local residents catch the Football Special buses run by Reading Transport to travel to and from matches at the Madejski Stadium. But there might be an opportunity for a Project Purley member to play an important part in the history of the club.

Reading's first Football League match was a Division Three fixture away to Newport County on August 28th 1920. Reading won the game 1-0, their goal being scored by outside-left Joe Bailey, who according to newspaper reports, "glided the ball delicately out of the goalkeeper's reach." Bailey was a hero on and off the pitch, having joined the Footballers' Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment during World War One and being decorated on four occasions (a D.S.O. and M.C. with two bars) for bravery in action.

Players did not wear numbered shirts in those days, though they were often allocated numbers in match programmes, with the goalkeeper shown as number 1 and outside left as number 11. Numbering of shirts did not become commonplace until just before World War Two. Nowadays, of course, players are allocated a



Reading FC for the 1920/21 season [M082016]

squad number – anything from 1 to 100+ depending on how many players have been signed – which they keep for the season and wear on the back of their shirt along with their name.

Reading F.C. had been formed as an amateur club back in 1871, well before its Football League debut and “celebrated” its centenary by getting relegated from Division Three to Division Four in 1971. The only nod to this landmark was the publication of a commemorative First Day Cover by the Post Office, though this was inspired not by the club, but by Tilehurst resident and loyal supporter Bryan Horsnell.

Now the club is looking to celebrate its 150th anniversary in a more extensive and suitable manner. No longer “The Biscuitmen” since Huntley & Palmers ceased production in 1974, but now nicknamed “The Royals” as we are the only Football League club in the Royal County of Berkshire, the club intends to mark the 2021-2022 season in style. There is much more to celebrate now of course. Not only has there been the move from a dilapidated Elm Park to an all-seater, purpose-built, multi-functional Madejski Stadium, but there

has been much greater success on the field. There have been two promotions to the Premiership, an FA Cup semi-final appearance and the establishment and growth of thriving academy and community schemes.

Nearly 2000 players from Englishman Joe Bailey to Romanian George Puscas have represented the club in first-class competitions (Football League, FACup, Football League Cup – no European competitions (not yet anyway!) and Reading hold the all-time League record of gaining 106 points in a season, a feat they achieved in 2005-06.

The challenge for the landmark season would be for an enthusiast with time on their hands to allocate a unique number to each first-teamer, starting with Syd Crawford, goalkeeper at Newport County in that victory in 1920 and ending with the last player to make his debut in the 2021-2022 season. Numbers could be embroidered on shirts, in the same way that England Test Match cricketers have a personal and unique number on their shirt under the three lions. That number stays unique to each player however many games he plays. For example Geoff Boycott will always be number 422, and the legendary W.G.Grace will always be remembered as number 24. If two or more players make their debut in the same Test, they are numbered alphabetically.

If anyone from Project Purley would like to take on this exciting (?) task of numbering Reading F.C. Players, please give me a call.

Meeting Reports

Dad's Underground Army

by Bill King

Our previous talk in November was about the brilliant planning and execution of the World War 2 rationing system. The talk on January 18th was about another WW2 detailed plan, but one which fortunately never had to be activated. It was the plan for a British resistance force, to be put into effect if the Germans invaded.

The planning started in 1938/39, and went as far as recruiting, training and equipping men and women to commit murder and sabotage. The recruits were doctors, miners, priests, farmers, teachers, factory workers - people who were in reserved occupations or were too old to be called up for the regular forces.

The men, in groups of five to eight, built underground hides equipped with living quarters and arms, and were trained in unarmed combat, to blow up bridges, block roads and basically disrupt the enemy advance. (The emphasis on unarmed combat may have had something to do with the lack of available armaments, after so much was lost at Dunkirk!) The women, in groups of three, were trained in communications - radio telephony and wireless telegraphy, or intelligence gathering (as barmaids, cocktail waitresses, bus conductors...), and were also allocated to underground units. All of them were told, if the coded call came, to walk away - vanish - from their jobs and families, and go to their hides. They were also told that they had a probable life expectancy of about two weeks.

Very little was known about the resistance planning until relatively recently, as all those involved had to sign the Official Secrets Act. They were nominally members of the Auxiliary Units, in Home Guard battalions, but even after the war, the Official Secrets Act kept a lid on any information about the units, and there was no recognition for any of the recruits. More than 50 years later in 1997, the powers that be relented a little, and they got a badge "Member of Aux Unit", which sounds a bit less significant than a Blue Peter badge. The Coleshill Auxiliary Research Team (CART) is trying to make up a little for the lack of government recognition, with memorials to the members where the groups were located, and open days at Coleshill, which was the big country house requisitioned from the Fry family for training.

Curiously, although we never had to activate British resistance units, apparently our preparation and training were much appreciated. Many of our recruits were allocated to other resistance movements in Europe, and were parachuted in to help, and the handbook that was produced for how to use explosives, set up trip wires, and generally create mayhem (cryptically entitled "*Countryman's Diary 1939*") was widely copied.

Bill King has helped to spread the appreciation of our WW2 Auxiliary Units, and our members all appreciated his well-researched and illustrated talk.

Gillian Wallace

Do you Know Why You are Here?

by David Downs

“Do you know why you're here?” was the enigmatic title of the talk given by David Downs at the society's February meeting. He explained that the question is one he usually puts to Detained Persons (DPs) in his voluntary role as a Custody Visitor (CV) at Loddon Valley Police Station.

David gave a brief introduction to the history of custody, or lay, visiting, which was introduced as a result of the Scarman Report into the Brixton Riots in the early 1980s. There was a widely held suspicion among the general public that those arrested may have been mistreated whilst in police custody, so volunteer members drawn from all sections of society were appointed and given authority to make unannounced spot checks, at any time of day or night, on DPs in police cells.

David has been a CV since 1999 and part of the Loddon Valley panel since 2008. Loddon Valley has a small panel of visitors, who always work in pairs and are committed to at least one pair visiting each week. CVs talk to detainees informally, explaining that they are not interested in what offences they may have committed, but want to know about their treatment since their arrival at the police station.

CVs also inspect and report on other aspects of detention, such as the provision of low bunks for suspected drunks and drug addicts, reading material, and access to shower and toilet facilities. All information gained during a visit is strictly confidential and must not be discussed outside the police station. Thames Valley Police provides regular in-service training and information.

David ended by stressing that custody visiting is not a voluntary activity that appeals to everyone. A resilient as well as compassionate attitude is needed if one is to become an effective CV and prove

Do you know why you are here?

that custody visiting is not merely cosmetic, but has an important role to play in the justice system. This interesting and enlightening talk concluded with two thought-provoking quotes:

"A society is judged by how well it looks after its prisoners."
(Dostoyevsky)

"A nation's greatness is measured by how well it treats its weakest (Mahatma Ghandi).

Catherine Sampson

The Barn at Goosecroft

by John Chapman

This was meant to be a talk at the March meeting after the AGM.

Before we can talk about our barn we need to think a bit about mediaeval wooden structures in general. Nowadays we tend to see them as historic, rooted to their site and worthy of preservation, but in days gone by they were the epitome of the portable building. They were made up of three key components - a frame, walls and roofs. It was the frame that was key. They were made to standard designs, the cruck frame was made up of two long pieces of timber which were arranged as an "A" and with two legs joined together at the top by a cross piece which made it stable. You made several of these to a standard design and then simply linked them together with joists which supported the walls and roof.

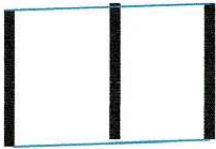
Our barn which was much more typical had beam frames with two vertical timbers joined by a horizontal beam and a mini cruck above for the roof. There were other smaller timbers which served to strengthen the structure. At



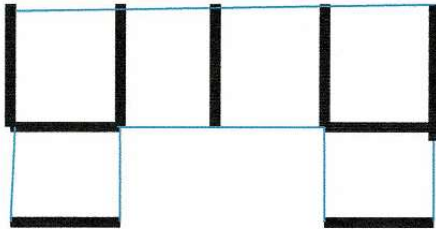
Interior of barn showing beam frames



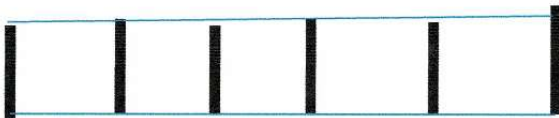
Two frames make a nice cottage



Three frames make a larger house or two semi-detached cottages



Nine frames make a large winged house



Six frames make a nice five bay barn

Some of the possible arrangement of frames to form buildings [M002340]

any one time a design was very fashionable and you can date most of the structures using these frames to within about ten years just by looking at the design.

Line up two frames and fill in between and you have a nice cottage, line up three and you get a more upmarket house. line up four and then join the two outer frames with another frame and put another frame ahead of this one and you have a winged manor house. If you just keep lining them up you get a variety of barns. Nine frames gives you an eight bay barn like ours.

If you don't like the view it is very easy to dismantle your house and erect it somewhere else, convert a barn to a house or vice versa. Carpenters could build the joints using standard methods and you could build up stocks of components and a new structure could be built very quickly. They didn't have to deal with planning permission and building regulations in those days!!

Well now back to our barn. It started about 900 years ago with young oak trees growing in a forest close to the Thames. They were felled around 1540 and used to build a manor house next to the



*Nicholas St John, later Sheriff of Wiltshire
[M002341]*

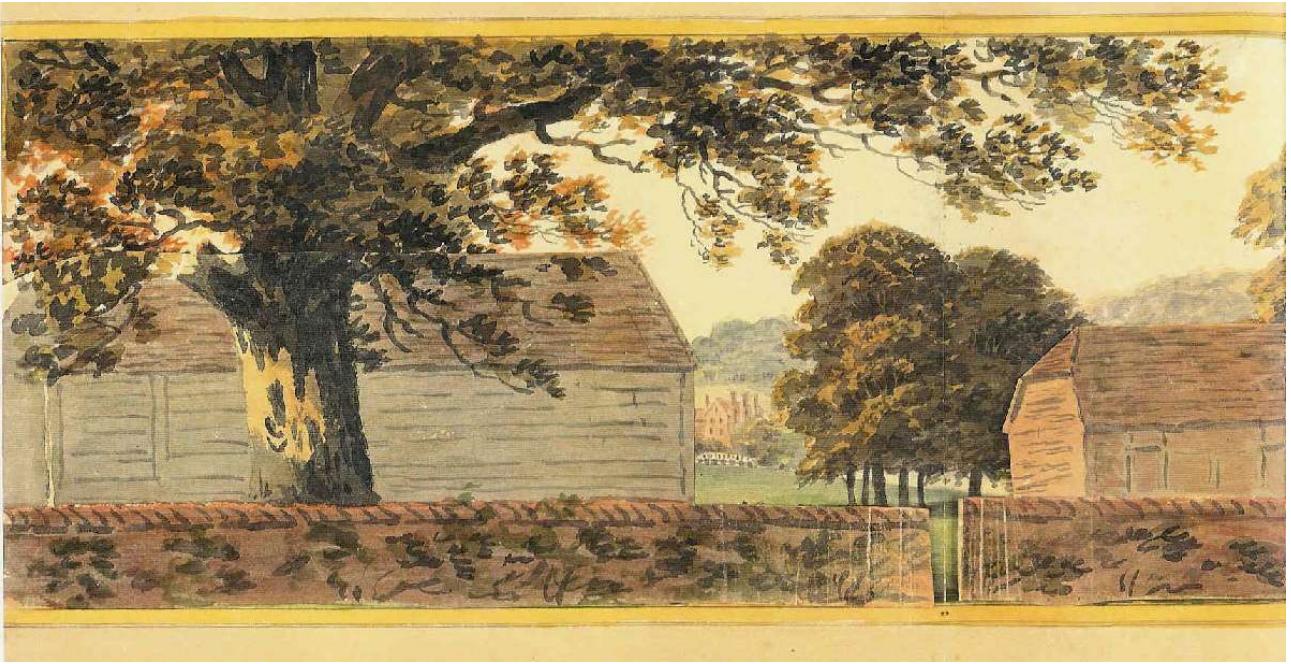
church to accommodate a couple who joined Purley with Mapledurham by the marriage, in 1548, of Elizabeth Blount the 13 year old daughter of Sir Richard Blount, lord of Mapledurham and keeper of the Tower of London to the 22 year old Nicholas St John, son of the lord of Purley Magna, John St John and his wife Margaret Carew.

You can easily recognise the timbers that were used for this house as they have lots of joint work which is no longer needed.

Around 1740 fashions changed and a timber framed manor house was very much out of fashion so it was replaced by a Georgian brick house. Rather than waste the timbers many of them were used to build three barns, an 8-bay manorial barn and two smaller ones. These buildings lasted only a few years as we were visited by Repton who wrote his Red Book for the new owner of the manor, Anthony Storer and it was agreed to move the barns to a new site roughly where Oak Tree Walk now is, as part of a new home farm where the smells would not offend the gentlemen of the main house. Then we had floods and the main house was rebuilt as Purley Park at the top of the hill and the farm moved to a site to the west of Long Lane.



*Timbers from the old manor house
with original carpentry*



An extract from Repton's Red Book showing the barn in its original location adjacent to the church. [M040192]

The farm became known as Belleisle and was rented for many years by the Sherwood family who farmed most of Purley. The Manorial Barn was relocated opposite the house across the farm yard with the other two barns making up the sides.

Then around the turn of the century the Storers sold the farm and its site (Elyham) to the South Berks Hunt and the house was occupied by the artist Cecil Aldin who became Master of the Hunt. He used the barn as a remount depot in WW1 and employed fellow artist Alfred Munnings as his assistant.



At Trenthams the barn was covered in ivy [M002216]

In 1950 the whole site was sold to G Percy Trentham Ltd who used it as the base of their civil engineering company. They replaced the east side barn with offices and used the west side barn as a canteen. The main barn was used variously as a storehouse, workshops and tractor shed.

The Barn at Goosecroft

Donald Trentham died in November 1983 and everything changed.

(to be continued)



*(above) The west barn used as a canteen [M001330]
(below) the rear of the barn at Trenthams [M000517]*



Church bells and bell ringers

by Gillian Wallace

The sound of church bells on Sunday, or for a wedding, is something we almost take for granted. It's one of those quintessentially English things, like cream teas and cricket. But in Purley on Thames, with St Mary's beautiful old bells that were refurbished for the Millennium, we are in danger of losing the sound, as there aren't enough experienced bell ringers.

Bell ringing is a real team activity, and like dancing, it's great physical, mental and social exercise. Learning to control a swinging bell that could weigh a ton or more needs a lot of practice, but is immensely satisfying when you get it right. Learning can go on for years, with different techniques to speed up and slow down the individual bells, so that the ringing order can change, while keeping

the space between the dings the same. There are also lots of different ringing patterns, or methods, which have to be learned by heart, and by ear. Anyone living close to St Mary's will have heard the regular Thursday evening ringing practice, with the attempts of the novices to ring the bells, and the interesting noises when it all goes wrong!

Experienced ringers can be quite competitive, with events round the country pitting ringing teams against each other for the best technique, or the most complex methods. But it's also very social, with ringers visiting other bell towers to join in for a session, or to ring a peal - an



The bells of St Mary's when they had been removed for refurbishment (M000103)

hour-long ringing pattern - for a special occasion, or just for fun.

The bell ringing we hear in Britain - the traditional “ding ding ding ding, ding ding, ding ding (or more dings if there are more bells in the tower) is a technique called, appropriately, English bell ringing, or full-circle ringing. In other traditions, the clapper is swung against the inside or outside of the bell, or the bell is swung from side to side. The ringing is melancholy or joyful, but not really tuneful.

In full-circle ringing, each bell is set into a wood, or wood and steel frame, that allows it to be balanced upside down. To ring it, one pull on the rope brings it off the balance to swing down and back up to the top again. The frames are very solid and the bells are heavy, so it doesn't take much effort to keep the bell swinging once it has started, and small changes in pulling the rope speed it up or slow it down so the ringers can keep time with each other, or change the order of the bells as they ring.

The dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII was one of the drivers behind the spread of English bell ringing, as so many churches were sacked or destroyed and their bells removed. When the churches were restored, new bells were installed in the new full



*Ringling in the
Armistice at
St Mary's in
November
2018
(M051465)*

circle ringing frames, and the tradition has spread since then.

It would have been good to have an up to date photograph of St Mary's bells in their frame, but the climb up two interesting ladders up to the bell chamber is quite nerve-wracking, and remembering the camera isn't the first thing on your mind! But there is a lot of information about our bells on the Project Purley Website.

Some other local churches have big teams of ringers, and regular training sessions. At St Michael's in Tilehurst, the Scouts and a few parents had a go on their bells last December.

But you don't have to start young. It's good fun at any age, and the beautiful bells at St Mary's could do with a few extra hands to pull the ropes! I can pass on details if you want to have a go.

Obituaries

We have to report three deaths of long standing members.

Edna Bint

Edna was a very early member of Project Purley and served on our committee from 1993 to 1997. She was born Edna Louise Hazell in 1929 and married Arthur Bint in 1955. Arthur was a noted motorcyclist who participated in the Isle of Man TT and later lost an arm in an accident there. When we went to her funeral on 14th February the waiting crowds were taken aback by the outriders of 15 very loud motorbikes escorting the hearse. This is the first funeral I have been to where the deceased sang to the congregation during the very moving and crowded ceremony.

Edna was very well known in the village as a former President of the Women's Institute who always ended meetings with a joke and the Thames Vale Singers for whom she was a soloist, but very much for her skill as an accordionist who played at many village events including the *Pig and Whistle* which ran for several years at the Memorial Hall. She was a member of the Purley Village Book Club, and also involved in flower arranging and with the Reading Toy Run which collected toys and raised money for children at Christmas time.

Edna and Arthur built their house in the grounds of Purley Lodge and had close family ties to the Edwards who lived at the Coachhouse. They had two sons Graham and Greg, the former moving to Australia a few years ago.

In recent years, following the death of Arthur in 2004, Edna's health deteriorated, but she remained always cheerful and helpful. We will miss her.

John Chapman

John Devine

We are very sad to report the death of John Devine at the beginning of February. Some years ago he was a Parish Councillor, during which time he chaired the Barn Committee. He was also a Committee Member of Purley Horticultural Society and Chairman of the Memorial Hall Trustees for 15 years; he was made President of the latter at the last AGM. In 2017 he was awarded Villager of the Year in recognition of his long and continuing contribution to Purley. John and his late wife Kath were valued members of Project Purley and our sincere condolences go to his family.

John Murphy

Later in February we heard of the death of another valued member of Project Purley, John Murphy, following a short illness. Another well known member of the community, he was Honorary Allotments Manager for a number of years, as well as being a Committee Member of Purley Horticultural Society and a Trustee of the Memorial Hall. John wrote the history of the Memorial Hall which can be found on its web site. Prior to his involvement with the Horticultural Society and Memorial Hall, John enjoyed a long career with the John Lewis Partnership under its varying brand names, mainly in London, but travelling extensively. At his funeral the speakers affectionately remembered his larger than life personality, his keen sense of humour and the constant smile on his face. Our thoughts are with his wife, Glynis, at this very sad time.

The History of Thames Vale Singers

by Mike Adnett

The first green shoots of Thames Vale Singers appeared in the late forties as a choir formed by Mary Richards from Women's Institute members.

By 1953 the WI were meeting in the newly built Purley Memorial Hall and as time went by Mary decided she would like to expand the choir's repertoire by getting some men involved. In 1958 the first men were recruited and the choir was given a name, Thames Vale Singers. The name was chosen because of the view from the window of the Memorial Hall across the Thames valley.

In these early days the choir performed full versions of musicals by Gilbert and Sullivan, in costume, on a small stage at the rear of the Memorial Hall. The line of the stage curtains is still in place today.

After 1975 the choir performed concert versions of the Gilbert and Sullivan musicals. Throughout these years Mary Richards continued to conduct the choir but outside producers were brought in to organise shows.

Records show that in 1970 the choir had a formal set-up with Mary Richards as President with four Vice Presidents. None of the Vice Presidents appear to have had a contributing role to productions.

From the late 1970s the choir started performing more song based concerts in addition to concert versions of Gilbert and Sullivan. While the G&S concerts continued to be held at Purley Memorial Hall the choir was starting holding its other concerts further afield. The last performances of Gilbert and Sullivan were of HMS Pinafore on the 8th March 1994 at the Tilehurst Methodist Church and Trial By Jury and HMS Pinafore on 21st May 1994 at Purley Memorial Hall.

From 1994 things changed and the choir's repertoire has now a much broader base which includes part songs, spirituals, madrigals, popular music, sacred and classical - almost anything in fact.

Over the years there have been a number of Musical Directors, each making their own contribution to the choir. Since 1975 these

have included: Brian Joll, Mary Harwood, Jess Lawes, Alex Taylor, Tony Mercer, Dr Derek Watson, Bernard Soper, Max Fane.

The current Musical Director, a GP Dr Timothy Robson, joined the choir in September 2017. With a family background in choral music he has brought his own character and expertise to the choir.

Peter Bernard, the accompanist and Assistant Musical Director, has been with the choir since 1980. His expertise as accompanist or soloist on piano, electronic keyboard and traditional organ is a major asset to the choir.

Our base continues to be Purley Memorial Hall and we rehearse there from 7.50pm to 10.00pm on a Tuesday night. We believe in open access and require no auditions or demonstration of previous musical experience from potential members. The choir continues to be a welcoming group.

The Secret is out

By David Downs

The photograph on the front cover of Project Purley Journal Number 112 showed the Royal Berkshire Regiment (TA) parading outside Saint Mary's Church in 1961. The current Project Purley member in the photograph is David Downs (second in the lefthand file of soldiers).

Football Focus

by David Downs

The coronavirus has meant the postponement of most outdoor sporting events, including all Premier and Football League matches. The only similar hiatus to the football calendar I can remember was in the 1962-63 season, 57 years ago. I was watching Reading play Bristol Rovers at Elm Park on Boxing Day. Reading were leading 1-0 when snow started to fall and the referee was forced to abandon the game.

It was the winter of the big “freeze-up” and Reading did not play another match until February 23rd. At the time I was a student at Leicester University and when I returned after the Christmas holiday, I was pleased to see that Leicester City F.C. was able to

carry on playing home fixtures as the club had the foresight to erect a hugh air balloom over the playing area which protected the pitch and meant matches could continue.

As all our university soccer fixtures were cancelled, I was able to go and watch Leicester City's matches at Filbert Street. I was expecially fortunate to be able to study City's goalkeeper, the late, great Gordon Banks, who went on to play for the England team which won the World Cup in 1966.

Every snow-cloud has a silver lining!

Purley in the News

by Catherine Sampson

Purley has featured in newspapers and periodicals on a regular basis over the years and newspaper cuttings mentioning Purley form part of both our physical and electronic archives.

In recent months, with good access to the British Newspaper Archive online, I have been scanning articles not yet catalogued in our archive. I thought in each journal, it might be of interest if I shared some of the items that have caught my eye, and begin with a custom apparently enacted in Purley on Shrove Tuesday each year.

Shrove Tuesday is associated with a multiple of old celebrations, but Purley's gets a mention in the Newbury Weekly News in November 1895. The article in question was penned by the Rev. P H Ditchfield, FSA, a Church of England priest, historian and prolific author, most notably remembered for having co-edited three Berkshire volumes of the Victoria County History. Ditchfield notes, in 1895, that the children of Berkshire still have their rhymes which they sing on Shrove Tuesday, and after which they "receive their customary bribes". Purley is specially mentioned, as here apparently, the children were saying:

"Knick-knock, pan's hot.

I'm come a-shrovin:

Hit a bread and a bit of cheese.

That's better than nothing.

Last year's flour's dear.

That's what makes poor Purley children come shroving here.

Hip, hip, hurrah!

Up with the pitcher and down with the pan,

Give me a penny and I'll be gone."

In 1905, the Newbury Weekly News repeated part of Ditchfield's article, but by then the Shrove Tuesday chant at Purley is noted to be no longer in use. It is possible therefore, that we can date the end of the saying to the closing years of the 19th century and opening years of the 20th century, although that seems a little too convenient. Possibly, it had already fallen into disuse by 1895, but evidently at that stage was still remembered and still quotable. I'm suspecting though that this is one old custom unlikely to be resurrected.

An Appeal

Our archive contains a very large number of press cuttings from the mid 1700s to date. Most of them are just images or pasted cuttings; but a few have been transcribed so that they can be used elsewhere. So, while you are all sitting at home with nothing to do, why not take on a bit of transcribing! What we can do is send you an image of a press cutting and we ask you to transcribe it so we hold an electronic version that can easily be included in future Journals. We will start out with five items and some basic instructions so if you are happy with that we can increase the number of items later. We will do it all by e-mail so please send your offer to john.chapman458@gmail.com

Here is an example of the output we will be looking for.

From the Reading Mercury of April 22nd 1776 (P020040)

Saturday evening, about nine o'clock, Farmer Scrace of Purley was attacked by a footpad dressed in a smock frock, near Purley Hall, who robbed him of three guineas and his watch, with which he got clear off.

Nature Notes

by Rita Denman

December 6th The frosty and foggy days of November continued into December. A small flock of constantly twittering hedge sparrows and a few blue tits have been very busy at the feeders in the front garden. It is difficult to see how many there are as they hardly seem to be still flying from tree to hedge to feeders in all directions

Robin is not in such a hurry and sits on a prominent bough taking his time. One large wood pigeon lumbers about on the ground pecking up anything that the other birds drop or dislodge, disturbed only by the appearance of a cat or humans when it takes off with a noisy flapping of wings.

At 7am it isn't fully light and the first impression of the day is of bands of merging colour across the sky and fields. Winter trimmed hedges are capped with white frost and the fields appear as white and smooth as a skating rink. A dark band of trees and hills is enveloped in thick fog and overall is a sky faintly tinged with sun.

December 13th Generally it has been wet, cold and foggy but today has been bright and cold. The full moon rising in a dark sky behind a filigree of bare tree branches has been spectacular. There have been many small birds everywhere, with red kites and a pair of swans that have been flying up and down the river course.

January 3rd 2020 Although the effect of climate change in the UK is less dramatic than in some other countries it is causing some marked changes in our seasonal weather. The four distinctive seasons as we knew them are becoming blurred. At the moment there are many summer roses still in bloom and the spring rose, primrose, has hardly stopped flowering all the year. The birds are singing a mini dawn chorus and continuing almost the whole of the day.

Tim and Ian have been out in the fields testing the ground but nothing came of it and I expect that it is too wet to do anything. Betty and Flo followed me around the meadow to see if there was any standing water. It was not as bad as I thought it might be but still very soggy.

January 17th Storm Brendan blew in on Monday followed by bands of rain, soaking rain that lasted on and off for the rest of the week

January 24th It is a dreary winter in Purley. Foggy and dark with few hours of good daylight. Very occasionally there is some blue sky to lift the spirits.

February 7th Daylight hours are lengthening and more birds are beginning to sing. A red kite chick has been calling to the parent bird from the safety of a group of ash trees. There has been fog but clearing to springlike days but there is rough weather out in the Atlantic heading our way and will reach us in the form of storm Ciara.

February 14th Ciara passed over Purley without too many problems. A few trees down and fences weakened but storm Dennis was hot on Ciara's heels with more rain than wind forecast. It was not good news for the areas that had already had so much rain and suffered widespread flooding. It isn't gardening weather, but I have walked around the meadow a few times and when the sun is out it is pleasant and the fresh air very welcome. The first tree in the meadow to flower is always the mirabelle plum. It is in beautiful full blossom now. The miniature daffodils are coming into flower in the garden.

February 21st Conditions in some parts of the UK could become worse as the full force of the heavy rains becomes apparent. The buildup of groundwater through the autumn was unusual and storm Dennis has been the last straw. Many farmers have lost their fields of winter sown crops and fields of root vegetables are water logged.

The effects of Dennis have continued into the week and yesterday, Thursday, was atrocious. The fields in the area are more like lakes, but spring is beginning to appear with daffodils opening in gardens and on traffic roundabouts and in the countryside verges are thick with snowdrops.

February 28th These are cheerless days for the poor folk in the north and west of the British Isles. There is no let up of rain and its after effects on flooded homes and fields that were saturated weeks ago and rivers that can hold no more water. Yet another storm, Jorge, is now expected. We can only hope and pray that the water levels will

have subsided enough to take the next rainfall.

On the way home from shopping last evening (27th Feb) at about 6.30pm Susan and I enjoyed the beautiful sight of the waxing crescent moon with Venus at her brightest light.

March 6th The weather has been petulant, from sunny smiles to howling blizzards and constant rain but there are bumble bees in the meadow and the pink flowering trees are coming into blossom. The seed feeders are attracting many blue tits and robin is waiting expectantly for fallen seed. On March 1st we entered into meteorological spring.

March 13th At long last there have been some periods of pleasantly warm weather and the temperature has reached 16°C. There has also been a sharp wind but not the gale force of recent weeks. A pair of magpies have settled nearby. They are very handsome birds but not altogether welcome. I took a walk around the meadow in the late afternoon sunshine and noted that the damson trees were full of their delicate blossom. The millennium oak tree is looking strong and healthy and I pondered on its possible lifespan. Except for the



i *Catkins - a sign of Spring [M002342]*

hand of man there is no reason why it should not live for hundreds of years. I hope it survives.

March 20th In the last week we have seen more sun than rain and better weather is forecast. I was pleased to get out to do some gardening and although it was quite chilly the exercise soon warmed me up. The front garden is looking pretty with clumps of primroses and miniature daffodils in bloom. The malus tree has young leaves and is showing signs of the deep red flower buds which turn white as they age. The fat buds on the Japanese cherry are beginning to show pink. There is frog spawn in the garden pond. The

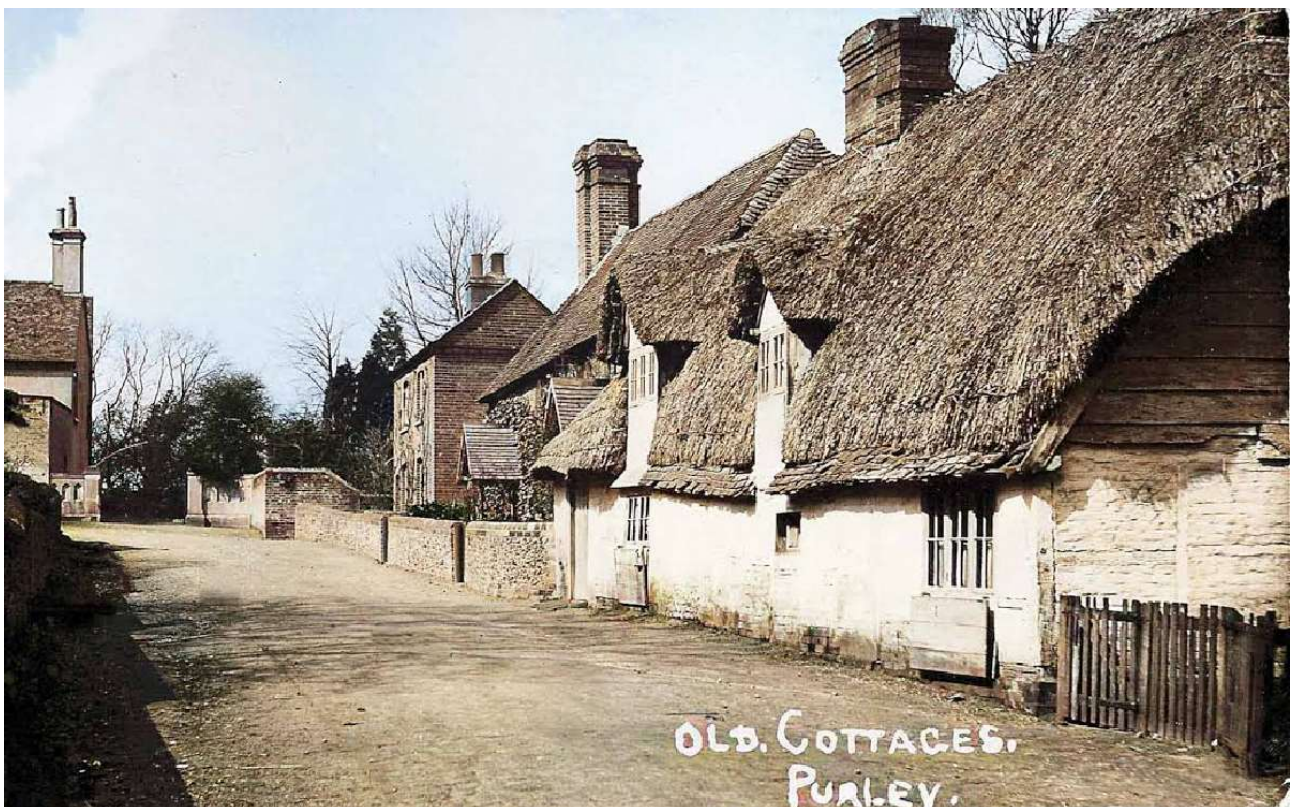
meadow is looking green and springlike and all the trees large and small are about to burst into leaf.

March 27th With three full days of gloriously sunny weather, there are bees and brimstone butterflies in the meadow and I spotted a comma butterfly. Not so welcome were clouds of midges that have flourished in the wet conditions and come out with the sun. There is more frog spawn in the pond. It was calming and peaceful to sit in the meadow and listen to the birds. Among them, blackbirds, robin, long tailed tits and a yaffle. It is good to see Tim and Ian out in the fields again.



cowslips [M002343]

Due to the covid19 emergency we are all now in isolation for an indefinite period. Normal life has come to a standstill but we can take heart that nature is on the move and we can all enjoy her wonders even at a distance.



These old cottages stood on the site of Rita Denman's present day house [M040223]