

Account of Purley on Thames

Project Purley Meetings 1986

10 January 1986

Cliff Debney told us about the origins, development and changes in the names of Fields, woods and farms in Purley and neighbouring parishes. Names could be derived from the nature of the land, from crops grown, the name of the occupier or many other factors. Some names are of recent creation, others go back several centuries.

14 February 1986

Neil Bucknell spoke about birds (the feathered variety) which he had seen in Purley since his childhood. Until recently Neil's father, John Bucknell had lived at Home Farm). Neil admirably described the different birds that could be found by the river, on higher ground in Purley and in people's gardens. We heard of the unique sighting of a pink starling in Purley in the 1960s. It was a very enjoyable evening to which all present could easily relate, as was shown by the discussion which followed.

14 March 1986

Following the AGM there was a presentation by the Oral History Group. We were treated to selections of the recollections of Purley residents, some recorded up to ten years ago. It provided a fascinating view of the history of Purley over the last 50 years. Those attending cannot now forget 'Dan the Sanitary Man' It was obvious to all that the Group had taken great pains in the selection of items and every cassette started superbly on cue.

11th April 1986

John Chapman continued the History of Purley Church (part III). He covered the more recent history and the last two rebuildings in 1870 and 1983.

9th May 1986

Vincent West on Berkshire Tokens. These were issued in place of coinage in the 17th 18th and early 19th centuries and could be exchanged for goods and services at local shops. He focussed mainly on 17th century tokens issued by tradesmen and shopkeepers in Berkshire.

June 13th 1986

The first of this year's walkabouts. Looking at the Sulham and Pangbourne borders with Purley and the mill at Home Farm. Finishing up with a walk into Pangbourne.

11th July 1986

planned - A walkabout around Purley River Estate

12th September 1986

Planned - An illustrated talk on the history of Reading

10th October 1986

A celebration of the Bicentenary of the Court Baron of Purley Magna of 1786. It was held in the church to give added atmosphere. Many members and parishioners came in hats and shawls, some in

full costume. to represent the villagers of Purley in 1786. As they arrived each member was allocated a namecard containing a brief history of the character they were to portray. Some lucky volunteers were given speaking roles.

The scene was set by Jan Jones who with John Titterton wrote the scripts. We were gathered in the Red Lion on October 23rd 1786 where the steward from the Manor, one Matthias Deane (John Titterton) explained to the Lord of the Manor, Robert Macreth (Vincent West) the need for a perambulation of the boundaries. This was done with the aid of modern technology, ie a slide projector.

There followed various land transactions for the villagers, witnessed by the jury. As each character was introduced, Jan gave us an idea of where they lived and interesting high and low points of their lives and family, such as illegitimate children, wayward daughters criminal records, financial status etc.

We then moved on to a Court Leet commenced by all the villagers swearing allegiance to King George III. A Constable and his Tythingmen were elected and their duties explained. We were surprised at the scope of the Constable's duties which included making sure that parishioners attended church.

During the proceedings, the proprietor of the Red Lion, one John Emmons (John Chapman) served refreshments (only coffee) and generally made a nuisance of himself. The evening ended on a high cultural point when widow Dench (Pat Deane) was fined for allowing her dung heap to spread onto the public highway.

14th November 1986

planned - Purley migration to and from Tidmarsh and Sulham 1750-1850. Jean Debney spoke on the Population of Purley Sulham and Tidmarsh 1750-1850. This focussed on the relationships and connections between the peoples of the three parishes and the extent to which they moved from one parish to another.

planned - Sue Read of Reading Museum on the use of photographs as a source of information for Local History.

5th December 1986

Annual Christmas Social. John Chapman ran a competition True or False.

