

Account of Purley on Thames

Project Purley Meetings 1988

15th January 1988

We were treated to some wonderful slides from Ken Major showing different building methods and architectural styles used in the past. We studied the cottages and houses of the middle class and Ken told us of some rescue missions he has taken part in. Our Village rambles are much more informed now.

12th February 1988

Dr Hopkins spoke on Purley beneath our feet, and gave a history of the geology of the area. Dr Hopkins was a wonderful speaker with a unique ability to involve the audience. At the end of the evening we all thought we had learnt so much about what Purley is at is and we had fun into the bargain.

11th March 1988

The AGM was the fastest on record and was followed by Mike Sheppard and Jean Cole (of Family Tree Magazine fame) acting out a census interview from the last century. This produced many a chuckle and was followed by complete chaos when we tried to have a go at interviewing each other. We all promised not to swear about the handwriting in old census documents but rather to sympathise with their difficult task.

15th April 1988

Denys Hutchings joined us with his fascinating slides of Purley. They form a detailed record of the changes over the last thirty years and refreshingly record how little has changed on the northern panorama. Many members spotted friends and neighbours in the pictures of Purley School fetes which sparked off a lot of memories.

13th May 1988

Paula Cox spoke on Bats in Your Belfry at John Chapman's home on Cecil Aldin Drive. She is from the Berkshire Bats Group. After the lecture it was out into the garden to go bat spotting and just as John had promised there were plenty of bats around. Paula's bat detector was a source of great amusement although it was picking up only the pipistrelles. The evening finished with a few more of us converted to loving bats.

10th June 1988

Members visited Blakes Lock Museum in Reading. Many members had said they always intended to visit the Museum but hadn't quite made it in the past. They were so glad that Project Purley had put this right for them, as it is truly a fascinating museum with its displays of local trades and industries.

July 1988

Walkabout to Mapledurham - the weather was good enough for some photography as well although a mite muddy underfoot. We followed the path from Whitchurch up through the woods to the top of the hill where we had a splendid view of the whole of Purley. The successful evening culminated in a field full of wild flowers.

16 September 1988

Dr Andrew Marshall-Barr joined us to talk on the History of the Royal Berkshire Hospital. I think all agreed it was one of our best meetings with some wonderful reports of early and quite gruesome operations and some very moving quotations from the diaries of medical staff. The hospital obviously has a wealth of material in their archives which, many of us regretted, are not open to the public. However they are clearly safe in Dr Marshall-Barr's protection. At the end of the meeting there was a collection for the Hospital Appeal, raising a total of £41.65.

14 October 1988

Mary Southerton an expert on Reading photographers, brought along many photographic treasures to share with us. Though Mary was mostly concerned with the photographers' marks on the back, several of us were enthralled by the fascinating subjects of the photos. Much discussion ensued on changes in fashion, both of clothes and style of poses.

11 November 1988

Robert Noble impressed us all with his knowledge of the history of Whitchurch. He traced the ownership of the manor back to the early middle ages. Although the manor has had some very illustrious owners, it was the facts of the more immediate past that caught our imagination. Mr Noble took us on a guided tour of the High St by slides, giving details of the builders and owners of many familiar buildings.

16 December 1988

All joined in the fun of dressing in Victorian costumes up for the Christmas party and Cliff and Jean Debney put on a magic lantern show. They had inherited a Victorian Magic Lantern and a large number of glass slides. There were some splendid costumes, both hired and home made, but Cliff certainly stole the show in his smoking jacket. He really looked authentic as he operated the lantern with its quite magical slides, many of them hand coloured with great skill. The choice of food had Victorian influences and was again crowned by Jean's superb hot punch.

