

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## Project Purley Meetings 1991

### **18th January 1991**

A talk about the Thames and its locks with many slides given by George Fielder

### **15th February 1991**

Michael Bayley came to speak to us on legends and language of the Thames valley and the origins of some of its place names. Michael's work started with the placenames of his homeground on the Berkshire /Buckinghamshire border, but over the years has spread throughout the counties. Michael found many connections with mediaeval Welsh so set about learning the language along with early English. The connection had come from the route taken by Welsh drovers bringing sheep to market in London as well as the survival of pre-Saxon celtic words which had been twisted to sound like Saxon names. He also managed to relate many place names to local myths and legends. It was an interesting and thought provoking evening, although some of the audience would have liked a little more evidence of the conclusions.

### **15th March 1991**

AGM followed by a browsing session. After the great success of the Open Day last year, it was decided to spend the rest of the evening browsing through some of the maps, documents and photographs held by members of the society. Newspaper clippings and photographs sparked off memories for many members but the star of the evening was the 1786 map.

### **19th April 1991**

Catherine Davis gave a talk entitled 'Rabbits Friends and relations'. Rabbit in the AA Milne stories was renowned for his numerous relations. Catherine, while studying Wills and Letters of Administration for Sutton Courtenay began to notice names cropping up as witnesses, beneficiaries or relatives in what had appeared to be unconnected families. She started to build network diagrams showing how they inter-related. It was amazing how the jigsaw began to fit together.

### **17th May 1991**

Dr Gillian Clark came to talk to us about "Nurse Childre in Berkshire". Gillian explained how thousands of babies born in London were sent by their parents to wet nurses in the country. Many of these babies died and their burials are recorded in Parish registers with extra details about their origin. By studying the IGI and other sources it has proved possible to trace details of some of the parents. She has also been studying the records of the Foundling Hospital, transcribing the voluminous archives of correspondence between the hospital, the local inspectors and, in some instances, the wet nurses themselves. Elizabeth Giles, nee Newbury, of Purley was one of these wet nurses between about 1756 and 1760 and was supervised by a Mr Marsham. Jean Debney was able to supply further information from the Project Purley archives which will be added to her files. Unfortunately the meeting was poorly attended due to a clash with the Thames Vale Singers Concert, but the few who did attend were able to conduct a lively discussion with Dr Clarke about the causes of death and the methods of looking after children in the 18th century.

### **21st June 1991**

There was a good turn-out of members for the annual walkabout when we had a fine evening for an outing to Whitchurch where local historian, Robert Noble, almost overwhelmed us with information about the village. The tour took us up the main street to the junction with Whitchurch Hill and then turned right along the road to Mapledurham as far as the new estates before returning to the village and down to the church. On the way Mr Noble paused frequently to point out the various buildings and to explain their history. In addition we were privileged to pass through a locked gate and along a private path to Whitchurch Lock where we witnessed two rather noisy disco boats sailing up the Thames. Even those who have lived in the area for some time were amazed at how much there was to see and learn and several were heard to promise themselves a return visit in the near future.

### **19th July 1991**

We met at John Chapman's home where he not only let us browse through his personal archives but produced a double-sided four page guide. His material is in nine groups, three of the source records, with maps, microfiches, books, indexes etc being separately recorded and filed. The other three pages comprise the numerical bibliography of his holdings. If the evening had ended there, the lesson on organisation was well but unconsciously given. The various sections had been laid out by John and browsing commenced.

### **September 1991**

Peter Woodage showed views of Purley and the surrounding parishes and Pangbourne in particular. Many of the slides had not been seen by members before and great interest was aroused: they were a mixture of old postcards and other photographs which added both variety and interest to the display.

### **18th October 1991**

The spritely Charles Moss showed us some of his large collection of slides, mainly of Reading. This illustrated talk took us around Reading in a logical way which enabled us all to follow the route and mentally compare the past with the present. Houses were the theme of this presentation but we also saw photographs of inns and other commercial buildings. If anything Mr Moss tried to show too many slides out of his enormous collection, with the inevitable result of lack of viewing time to take in the scene presented.

### **15th November 1991**

November's talk about the Development of Public Services in Purley was a complete change from the previous months. What sounded like a possibly dry or boring talk was full of interest for us all as John led us from the past to the present day. Transport, fuel, utilities and general local authority services were all covered in the course of a fascinating talk.

### **6th December 1991**

December brought out the mulled wine and tasty nibbles for our traditional Christmas Social Evening when we chat a lot, drink and eat a little (or a lot) and even play the occasional game or quiz. This year John Gurnett teased us with a sounds quiz which he had compiled from everyday noises in Purley plus some from radio and TV sound archives. We struggled to identify familiar sounds and others from nature and science fiction. Some guesses were even more unexpected than the answers. Rita Denman proved to have the best ears and had top marks





