

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## Project Purley Meetings 1992

### **17th January 1992**

Rita Denman traced the history of Purley Church of England school. She introduced members to much material that had hitherto been hidden and her talk was profusely illustrated with slides reproducing old photographs as well as more modern material.

### **21st February 1992**

Jean Debney ran a workshop on old photographs. She showed us the commercial products of several Victorian and early Edwardian photographers and pointed out how props were used to create impressions. We then went on to look at the clues for dating old photographs from the evidence of these props, dress, fashions and poses. Several members brought examples of their own which were studied by all.

### **19th March 1992**

The AGM was followed by a presentation by Rita Denman of her album of over 350 photographs taken during 1990 to illustrate a year in the life of Purley on Thames.

### **April 1992**

Jean Skuse, the daughter of a former Rector described her life at the rectory and gave us a graphic description of the house and its design defects. Her recollections of people and events in Purley in the period just before and in the first years of the Second World war kept everyone enthralled for a lot longer than the anticipated time. We also learned a few new ways of avoiding having to attend church.

### **15th May 1992**

Bill Dear was at one time secretary to the Reading Dispensary Trust. This evening he recounted the history of the Trust and its relationship with Battle Hospital. The ensuing discussion ranged over many medical matters in the area.

Bill introduced his subject by reminding us of some of the very strange and unpleasant 'cures' used before modern medicines and drugs were available, and showing us a variety of antique medical instruments. The Reading dispensary was formed in 1802 by a group of local doctors and citizens. We learned about its success and development until the introduction of the National Health Service, when the dispensary was no longer necessary, although the Dispensary trust still remains active, supplying medical aids to the needy.

### **June 19th 1992**

This was one of the highlights of the Society year when a group of 30 visited Hardwick house by the kind permission of the Hon. Lady Rose, who conducted us round her fascinating home, commencing with a walk around the outside, where we heard about the bombardment of the South wing by Cromwell's troops who were stationed on the south bank of the Thames. The member of the family who was inclined to odd whims and fancies had left his strong mark on the house. It was suggested that this gentleman was the inspiration for the Kenneth Graham character 'Toad' of Wind in the Willows, and further, that Toad Hall was based on Hardwick House. It was an unforgettable evening

spent in the company of a charming lady.

### **17th July 1992**

The meeting was a barbecue at The Mimosas. It was with bated breath that the committee waited to see what the weather would be, the previous few days being extremely wet and windy. However, true to tradition for the July meeting, the evening was dry and the wind dropped, and a gathering of 21 enjoyed a delicious meal and the sounds and scents of a newly washed garden. Good company and good wine caused a buzz of conversation until dark when members were invited indoors for coffee and to see a display of members collections of Purley interests.

### **18th September 1992**

The Autumn programme opened with the return, in September, of Peter Woodage who delighted a well attended meeting with a further selection of his local slides. Pangbourne featured largely in this selection, and as our neighbouring village is so well known to most people who live locally, it proved to be a fascinating event.

### **16th October 1992**

At the October meeting, Mike Sheppard gave a talk illustrated with slides on the history of the National Trust and its conservation activities. The informative talk, giving the origins of the National Trust, and the work behind the scenes of the army of helpers who conserve and care for the National Trust properties and contents was accompanied by a series of beautiful slides which in itself was a mini-tour of Britain with the National Trust.

### **13th November 1992**

Neil Bucknell spoke on the birds of Berkshire and the publication of a Berkshire Species Guide which is due to be published within the next few months. Mr Bucknell explained the way in which the field workers operated and the method of gathering and processing the information. An insight into producing the book itself was given, and the ultimate problem of finding a suitable publisher and the financial restraints that had to be overcome. The publication of the book will be eagerly awaited by the Project Purley ornithologists.

### **4th December 1992**

The traditional Christmas Social Evening was held early in December to avoid clashing with Christmas events later in the month. The buffet was of the usual high standard provided by individual members. The complimentary mulled wine made by Jean Debney to her own recipe, was judged to be a 'vintage' brew. There were many items of members interests to browse through, and a raffle was held which raised £12.40, the proceeds of which was donated to Purley Park Trust. It was a relaxing and enjoyable evening which provided all opportunity to see, and think about, the local research in which members are engaged.





