

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## Project Purley Meetings 1995

### **20 Jan 1995**

The New Year's programme on the 20th January began with a talk by Leslie Cram of Reading Museum whose subject was Reading Abbey. MI

those present became thoroughly involved with the story of the great Abbey. Mr Cram had a wealth of information on this fascinating subject which he related with great humour, answering many questions as the talk progressed. We discovered the origin of the word plummery, as in the Plummery Wall surrounding the Abbey. It was not as might have been expected, to do with a plum orchard. The name came from 'plumbago' the site of the lead workings for the abbey. There was only time to show part of the slide collection, but members will be delighted to know that Leslie Cram will be returning to continue his talk and also tell us something about the preservation and future plans for the abbey site.

### **17th Feb 1995**

It is always a great pleasure when the speaker is also a Society member and on 17th February John Chapman gave an illustrated talk about The Royal Berkshire Regiment. As part of a University study group John has been researching the Regiment and has found a great deal of hitherto untapped information and the talk was based on this research. John explained that there was enough information available to fill several books and the difficulty was in editing this vast find of new knowledge to fit an hour's talk.

This was managed with great success and an introduction to the Regiment's history, the Regiment's relationship with the home town of Reading, the Regiment's engagements in the Great War (1914-18), and insights into the experiences of the men who were part of the Royal Berkshires was given. The diaries kept by the Gold brothers of Maidenhead, all serving with the Royal Berkshires were particularly poignant.

### **17th March 1995**

The Annual General Meeting was held on the 17th March. This is reported separately. The business meeting was followed by a talk given by Joyce Voysey Hon Sec. of The Ancient Parish of Whitchurch History Society. Joyce was accompanied by Mr Voysey but unfortunately, due to illness Wendy Adair, Chairman of the Society was unable to be present. Joyce gave an informal chat about the preparations and experiences of the Whitchurch Society in mounting their highly successful exhibition "Whitchurch at War". This was a trip down memory lane for all those members who remembered the war albeit in some other place, and an informative evening for the "younger set".

The evening was

Also presenting his final report after 5 years in office as Treasurer, James Heslop reported the accounts as being in a healthy state. It was pointed out that the Society was in a very fortunate position in being able to meet in the home of Jan and Rick Jones and without cost to the Society and this situation should not be taken for granted. The Treasurer's thanks were extended to Ron Denman for the computer printouts of the accounts and to Mr Francis who once again audited the accounts free of charge.

John Chapman gave an up to date report on the progress in the rebuilding of the barn on its new site at Beech Road and also on the results of the timber sample dating. One group of timbers had proved to be dated from 1509-1512 and a second group dated from 1730-1732.

Trevor Cotton placed on record his thanks for the Society Newsletter which is a very worthwhile part of Project Purley.

The following were elected for the coming year;

Chairman - Pat Deane

Treasurer - Henry Bordiss

Secretary - Rita Denman.

Committee Members - Cliff Debney, Edna Bint, Millie Bordiss, John Chapman, James Heslop, Jan Jones.

In taking office as Chairman Pat Deane thanked Cliff Debney for all the work he had done on the Society's behalf over the past 6 years. This was heartily endorsed by all those present.

### **19th May 1995**

On the 19th of May, Clive Williams visited us to talk about our neighbouring village Basildon, bringing with him his portable exhibition. We heard how the seed of local history was sown, when Clive dug up in his garden a 19th century brick made in Basildon. The brick fascinated him and he was anxious to discover more about the local brick making industry. A good deal of research was done on this topic, until Clive felt that he was able to give a talk on the Basildon Brick Makers.

One thing led to another and before long the brick making gave way to other local history, until he became totally absorbed in Basildon and its history, travelling to all parts of southern England in quest of missing links and confirmation of research. The exhibition of photographs and memorabilia was excellent. The talk, delivered with a great sense of humour was very enjoyable the basis of which is contained in Clive Williams published book, appropriately entitled "Basildon."

There will be only one run of this book, so a quick purchase was advised.

### **16th June 1995**

On June 16th a party of 19 Members and friends met at the National Trust car park on Streatley Hill ready to walk-about at The Holies. James Heslop had done the preparation in readiness for a walk over territory which was new to most of us. The entrance to The Holies was across the road, through a lightly wooded area on a slight incline. The evening was perfect for walking. As we walked we came across a variety of large patterns set out in stones and flints. Imaginations ran riot and one or two members suggested that we needed black pointed hats! The terrain became steeper until we were on quite a high level before beginning on a slight descent down the other side of the hill when the river Thames and Goring and Streatley came into view. It was a picture post card view, despite the telegraph wires and a fitting climax to the walk. We retraced our steps and decided while the light held, to continue in the other direction onto Larden Chase. After a short walk we reached a point where there was a far reaching view across the valley.

All in all it was a very interesting evening, but it was the scent of the wild honeysuckle at The Holies that I shall remember in the dark days of winter.

### **21st July 1995**

This year Ron and I were very pleased to welcome everyone to The Mimosas for the Society Summer Barbecue on July 21st. The summer had not yet developed into equatorial conditions and the evening was pleasantly warm. It was a relaxing and informal occasion when a barbecue meal was enjoyed in the company of other members and guests. The garden was at its best and everyone enjoyed the out of doors, until dark.

### **15th August 1995**

The Society's new venture this year was in the form of a summer outing. This took place on Tuesday August 15th, when Dave Roscoe led a party visit to The Watercress Line, the preserved Mid Hants Railway. It was an extremely hot day, and every little bit of shade was keenly sought.

Once Henry Bordiss and Dave Roscoe had secured our tickets and the period cloakroom had been inspected, we set off in a group to see the watercress beds. In its season, the watercress was supplied daily to Covent Garden transported on the train which came to be known as the Watercress Line. We went our own ways to explore the lovely town of Arlesford, and for lunch, meeting up again for the delights of the steam railway and all the nostalgic sights and sounds and to remember how black soot is! Whilst the grown-ups were wallowing in nostalgia, the younger set were getting all excited about Thomas the Tank Engine and his friends Henry (or was it James) and Diesel who were busily puffing up and down the line. Dave Roscoe's brief on the facts and figures of the preservation of the railway was an introduction to the talk which he will be giving in October.

### **15th September 1995**

The first meeting of the autumn programme on 15th September was local history of a different kind. We were very pleased to welcome member David Downs as our speaker, who gave a talk entitled Biscuits and Royals. David has made a comprehensive study of The Reading Football Club, and as a lifelong enthusiast he was well versed in its history and has also gathered together a considerable collection of memorabilia. We heard about the ups and downs of the club from its amateur beginnings in 1871 to date. The story behind each item of memorabilia was fascinating. The discovery of a discoloured metal disc at a car boot sale in the Midlands, which proved to be a gold Club commemoration medal was one such story. Also on display was the blue and white strip of one of the early members of the team. This was discovered underneath the bed on the demise of this particular player. There was much to interest the sporting and non-sporting among us.

### **20th October 1995**

On 20th October another member David Roscoe, gave a talk about the preserved Mid-Hants Railway The Watercress Line. This was a follow up to the Society Outing to the Watercress Line in August. To set the scene David referred to the transport of the past and the development of steam power. The Mid Rants Railway Plc is a charity which employs very few people. The Mid Rants Railway Preservation Society provides all the labour, which is voluntary, the object being to provide a pleasurable and educational experience and to preserve a tiny bit of the old railways. This is being done very successfully, as the enthusiasm of the Project Purley members can testify.

### **10th November 1995**

On November 10th Leslie Cram of the Museum of Reading, made a welcome return to tell us More about Reading Abbey. The talk was accompanied by slides of maps and pictures the object being to discover what can be learned about the Abbey from printed material. We learned of the enormous hold that the Abbey exerted over the town of Reading and the dissatisfaction felt by the burghers of the town, who railed against this restriction for many years, eventually gaining a compromise.

The daily routine of the monks and the wonder of the abbey building coming to life in our imagination never fails to hold us spellbound.

### **8th December 1995**

The Christmas Social evening was held at the Gatehouse on the 8th December. Once again the home of Jan and Rick Jones provided the perfect setting for a relaxing evening. The mulled wine, to Jean Debney's recipe was delicious, and the buffet provided by members was of the usual high standard. The 1930's parlour games were a source of great amusement and the evening was voted one of the best ever.



