

SPEAKER ON 17TH JAN – CATHERINE SAMPSON

Catherine Sampson enthralled members with a fascinating and informative talk on Purley through the period from the 1800s to the 1960s, illustrated through sepia photographs and postcards, selected from over 60,000 photo plates taken through the years. She also used pictures taken by different local photographers such as Dann and Lewis Studio [1856-1940], Rev Henry Wilder [1834- 1908], Phillip Osborne Collier [1881-1979]. Each had a different aspect which interested them, such as views along the river, people, agriculture and farming scenes, or family groupings. These were the early years of photography which also happened to coincide with a growing interest in fishing, lazing about in boats along the river and with tourism, which saw more and more folk coming out from London into the countryside. Old Purley was essentially a closed village of about 200 people in the 1860s, because most of the houses and cottages were occupied by employees of either Purley Hall or Purley Park. By the 1960s the population had risen to about 4,500. Major floods in 1947 had a profound impact on the village but it was the development of what became known as the 'shanty town' in the 1960s that changed the whole ambience of the place. London buses, railway coaches and caravans were allowed on small plots of land which in due course had bungalows built around them, many of which still exist. As shops and small businesses also sprang up a real sense of community developed. It was the telling of individual stories, both humorous and sad, that brought the story of old Purley to life for members, some of whom remembered different people and incidents. An intriguing evening.