

Account of Purley on Thames

Project Purley Meetings 2000

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January

The Cottages of Purley ex 200187

The first of the Project Purley Millennium Lectures, by Rita Denman, was held on Saturday 22nd January. Rita set the scene by showing us old maps of Purley, of particular importance being the Moss survey of 1786 that shows the cottages, tenants and property belonging to the Manor of Purley Magna.

Then we were taken on a walk around Purley by means of early photographs. This included a photograph of the Oxford Road, narrow and heavily wooded, the old Smithy that stood on the corner of Long Lane and the Oxford Road and a lovely rural scene of the village pond into which farm carts were driven on Saturday afternoons to be cleaned. Also shown were early photographs of the cottages many of which included the tenants that Rita has identified.

Rita then gave an account of the history of specific cottages. Here is a selection of the points that she made. (I have asterisked the cottages that have not survived).

Yew Tree Cottage, Oxford Road: Thought to be built in 1786. In 1840 William Pocock, carpenter and wheelwright lived here and it is likely that he built the adjoining workshop.

Lichfield Cottage, Oxford Road: Where the first Purley post office was set up.

Well Cottages*, Oxford Road: A pair of tiled-roofed one-up and one-down dwellings with lean-to kitchens that stood where the entrance to Nursery Gardens is now. In the 1920's there was a well with a decaying lid and wobbly windlass in front of the cottages: their only supply of water.

Purley Lodge Cottage, Purley Village: An early resident was Mr Leath, the gardener for Miss Ella Baker who moved into Purley Lodge in 1896. The cottage had by then only recently been built and consisted of two rooms up and two down with a central fireplace.

Jasmine Cottages, Purley Village. Probably built in the mid 17th century. Stories of headless horseman and tunnels are associated with it which is not surprising as it was in existence during the period of the civil wars. These stories were fuelled by the discovery of a musket and sword buried in the garden. To the annoyance of the Leaths who lived next door in Purley Lodge Cottage, a past resident of Jasmine Cottage used to parade down the garden to the privvy each morning with a chamber pot balanced on her head!

Old Cottage* , Purley Village. Stood where The Mimosas, the home of Rita and Ron Denman, now stands. Rita has an old postcard that shows the pretty thatched cottage.

The Cottage, Purley Village. Difficult to date, now evident that much of the timbers and bricks were re-used from earlier buildings. Was a tied cottage to Westbury Farm and when Westbury Farm was sold by the Hardwick Estate, there was a very real danger that the cottage may be demolished for redevelopment. Instead the present owners who purchased the cottage have lovingly restored it and preserved the external appearance of two cottages by keeping a false second front door.

Rita tells of a former tenant of one of the cottages which stood where Wisteria and Cherrymill are now, who in his old age frequently used to sit on his doorstep crying and saying that he didn't want to

die. His wife, when asked what was wrong, replied "No, of course he doesn't want to die. He's frightened to meet his Maker"!

Ivy Cottage, Purley Village. Known as "the old house" but no record yet found as to when it was built. Occupants can be identified as far back as 1731. Originally built as a small farmhouse and later divided into two dwellings. The present owners have returned it to a single dwelling and have continued the restoration and enhancement of this beautiful cottage.

Hemington, Purley Village. History can be traced back to 1733. Around 1800 the cottage was divided into two and a small free school was established in one half of the cottage.

February

March

April

September

October

November

