

## 9 Into the Twentieth Century

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### **The Height of Empire**

The latter part of the 19th and the earlier part of the 20th saw Britain at the pinnacle as a world power. British explorers and merchants were opening up world trade and where they went, missionaries soon followed

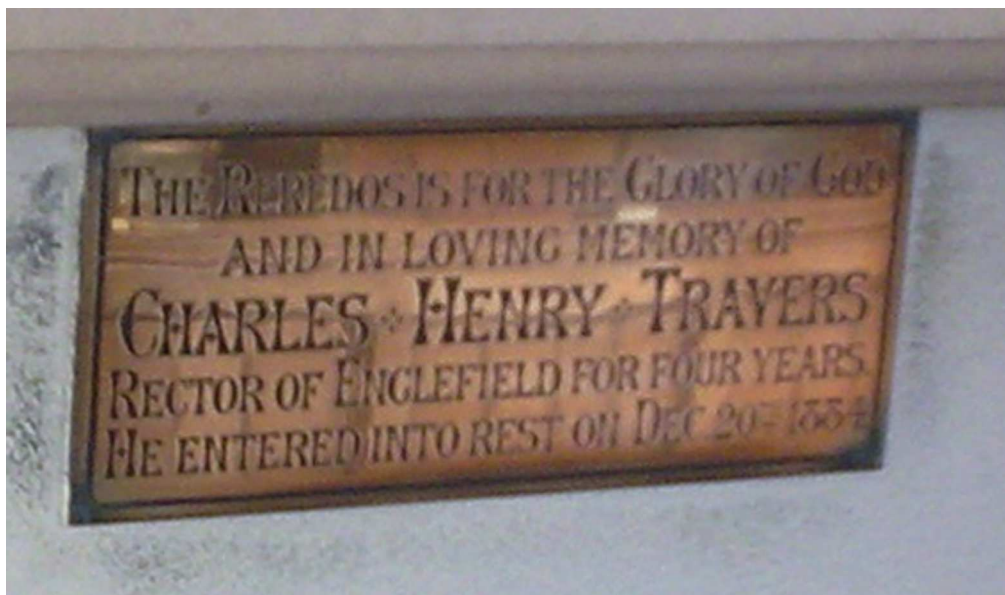
The Oxford movement had revitalised the Church of England and the number of services held increased steadily in all churches. Saints days and other festivals began to be observed again and Holy Communion became a frequent event rather than a four times a year observance.

By 1875 the State had begun to take a serious interest in education and was supporting and encouraging the opening of schools. The changes in social policy which had been given impetus by the 1832 Reform Act, gave birth to local authorities and the separation of the civil and ecclesiastical functions of the parish vestry. From 1894 the vestry was left with only a limited number of strictly church matters to deal with.

### **Charles Henry Travers 1875-1881**

Charles Henry Travers was born in 1821 on board HMS Minerva whilst it was near St Helena. He was the son of Sir Thomas Otho Travers and was educated at Queens College Oxford, taking his BA in 1845 and MA in 1849. He was vicar of Stewkley in Buckinghamshire from 1859 to 1870 when he became vicar of St Giles, Reading, a post which he still held until he was inducted to Purley at a ceremony in Thatcham on 8th December 1874.

After the estate of his predecessor had been settled he was presented with the land upon which the school and school house was standing by Richard Palmer's sister. Negotiations for the sale of 22 acres of Glebe land to Major Storer started in 1874. This represented two fields out of the five remaining to the glebe at that time. The patron, the Lord Chancellor, was concerned that it would reduce the value of the living too much and he suggested that in part exchange the rector



*The Memorial to Charles Henry Travers in St Mark's Church Englefield [M20143]*

should get the meadow opposite the rectory. Major Storer however stated that the land was entailed and he was not able to dispose of it. The Lord Chancellor was also concerned that the price of land was liable to rise. However in the end he relented and authorised the sale. He forbade the use of the £2000 proceeds being put towards paying off a loan to Queen Anne's Bounty and he ruled that it must be invested to yield income in perpetuity. He relented again on this point and when eventually in 1879 the sale was finally concluded, £575 was used to pay off the loan and the balance of £1425 was invested on behalf of the benefice by the Church Commissioners. A year later he sold off further land to the GWR for the widening of the railway between Reading and Didcot.

Also in 1879 he and his Churchwardens Thomas Barnes and Anthony Storer fixed new fees. The fee list was found when the church was spring-cleaned in May 1976. The standard burial fee was 1 shilling to the rector and 3/6 to the sexton. For one guinea you could have a brick grave or one with head and foot stones. For two guineas you could get a vault.

Charles Travers moved to Englefield in 1881 where he remained as rector until he died on 20th December 1884.

### **Matthew Powley 1881-1899**

Matthew Powley was the son of John Powley of Longwathby in Cumberland and born around 1827. He was educated at Queen's College, Oxford taking his BA in 1849. He was ordained the following year and served from then until 1859 as curate of Wallasey. He then moved to Malaga as chaplain to the British Community. The British Consul at Malaga was William Mark who had been born William Winslow. He had been assistant secretary to Nelson in 1803 and later Prize Agent at Gibraltar. His youngest daughter was Mary Anne Fernadino Mark and she married Matthew around 1862 and died in 1863 giving birth to their son Herbert. He remarried to Louise Jane soon after and Matthew moved to Gibraltar in 1866 where he was made a canon.



*Matthew Powley [M01238]*

He was the Spanish editor for the Anglo-Continental Society for many years and returned to England in 1869. He served as vicar of Christchurch, Whitley, Reading from 1869 until his induction to Purley on March 17th 1881 as part of a triple exchange between Purley, Englefield and Whitley.

At the April 1891 Census he was recorded as being aged 66 and living with his wife Louisa, aged 53 and their children, Margaret H aged 20, John Richard aged 13, Clement E aged 12 Allan D aged 10 plus three servants, a cook, a parlourmaid and a housemaid. His son Herbert (1863-1936) married Caroline Eva Henrietta Sykes (1872-1951) the daughter of Sir Frederick and Lady Sykes of Basildon Park and later of Westfield, Purley around 1870.

His son, Second Lieutenant Allan D. Powley of the First Battalion, Kings African Rifles, was killed in the First World War leading his men in a charge in German East Africa. He had been an actor until he joined

the army at the start of the war. He died on 10th June 1916 and is buried at Kiringa in what is now Tanzania.

Matthew and Louise also had four daughters: Margaret, Frances, Phyllis and Daisy. Margaret Helen (b 1871) married Lieutenant John Arthur Tapman of RMLI Gravesend on 4th August 1896 at Purley. Their daughter Marjorie was baptised at Purley on 17th October 1897. Frances Grace (b c1873) married Sydney Henning Belfrage (b c1871) at Purley on 7th September 1899. Phyllis Mary was baptised at Purley on 23rd April 1882. Daisy married Mr J. Seton Henderson and lived in Reading.

Matthew retired in 1899 but he continued to officiate until Easter 1800. He died on August 24th 1904 aged 78 and was buried at Purley. A plaque to his memory was erected in the chancel in 1946. His widow Louise moved to live in Southcote Road in Reading but she was always given the first crop from the asparagus beds at Purley Rectory until she died on 10th April 1922 aged 82.

Purley retained the Gibraltar connection for many years after Matthew's death as up to 1924 regular contributions were made to various charities administered by the Bishop of Gibraltar.

During the inter-regnum Purley was served by a number of local clergy. The longest spell was by Albert Ennor who was officially curate of North Stoke at the time. Albert had been ordained in 1873 and served as curate at Holcombe Regis in Devon until 1874 when he was appointed rector of Ubley in Somerset. He served there until 1893 when he moved to be rector of Crowmarsh-Gifford. In 1898 he emigrated to California to be rector of Los Gatos returning to England in 1900. He then served at Purley from September 9th 1900 until New Years Day 1901. The other clergy included G H Gwilliam who served from 29/4/00 to 30/5/00 and from 29/7/00 to 8/7/00; W S Wrotham 6/1/01 to 28/4/01; Edgar Priestley 17/6/00 to 22/7/00 and Henry Lancelot Warneford 12/8/00 to 2/9/00.

### **John Henry Dudley Matthews 1902-1914**

John Henry Dudley Matthews was the only son of Charles Matthews of Bradnich, Devon. Born in 1844 he was educated at Rugby School under Dr Temple and at University College, Oxford where he took his BA in 1866. He took his MA in 1869 from Christs College. He was a good oarsman and rowed for his college. Ordained in 1868 he became Tutor and Assistant Master at Wellington College from 1868 to 1884 when he was made Headmaster of Leeds Grammar School. While Headmaster he held a General Licence to preach in the Diocese of Ripon. In 1871 he married Edith Selfe, daughter of a former magistrate and they had five sons and four daughters. His daughter Rose later wrote an article for the Parish Magazine on her first impressions of Purley.

Almost immediately upon his arrival in Purley, the Lord of the Manor, Major Storer died and John assumed his mantle as the leading light in the village and chairman of the Parish Meeting. He found life somewhat difficult as Major Storer's daughter, Mrs Leila Downing-Fullerton made several attempts to run the village as the old Major had done. She tried valiantly to get the bells rung for her daughter's wedding but John refused on the grounds that they were unsafe.

Within two years he had sold off the old and curious piece of tapestry which had been used as an altar covering to the Victoria and Albert Museum for £60.

A few years later he achieved notoriety for his part in what became known as 'The Purley Incident'. Mrs Moule had been mistress of the school for twelve years and her daughter had become pregnant and was rushed into marriage. This did not last and the daughter came back to live with her mother in the school house bringing her baby with her. This outraged the Reverend Matthews and he ordered Mrs Moule's dismissal after conducting an enquiry later condemned by the County Council as being 'in the worst traditions of the inquisition' He was particularly incensed that she had sought the aid of the National Union of Teachers and was



*John Dudley-Matthews with his carriage outside the Old Rectory [M50008]*

adamant that she could not be re-instated despite widespread criticism and having the matter raised in Parliament.

The outbreak of war in 1914 evoked a generous response from Purley. In the first year a donation of £3-17-6 was made for the aid of Belgian refugees and £5-16-10 to the Prince of Wales' Fund. Throughout the war there were regular donations to the Red Cross and occasional donations such as £3-6-7 to Lord Kitchener's Memorial Fund and £2-11-5 to support war blinded soldiers' children.

On December 20th 1914 John was drowned in the Thames after helping out his old friend, J St J Thackery by taking evensong at Mapledurham Church. His boat was swept away as he tried to re-cross the river and his body was eventually recovered near Henley five weeks later. He was buried near the porch on January 26th 1915 and a memorial was erected to his memory in the chancel. At his memorial service on 30th December 1914 the choir from St George's Tilehurst accompanied and the service was conducted by the Reverends W.J.Conybeare (Rector of Newington), E.J.Norris (Rector of St Bartholemew's in Reading) and H.Wilder (Rector of Sulham)

## **Between the Wars**

In many ways the First World War was a watershed. It forced many social changes and brought home to most people the reality and horrors of modern warfare. The cosy assumptions of the Victorian and Edwardian periods vaporised and the real nature of the social divisions in Britain were exposed.

Glebe lands were sold off piece by piece and eventually the assets of the church which had been land and produce based (and hence inflation proofed) were converted to cash whose value could be wiped out at a stroke or eroded by inflation. Fortunately Britain did not suffer the hyperinflation or revolution which afflicted many countries, but it did suffer the depression.



In the religious field the impact of universal education, the rise of science and the improvement in communications caused many to regard the church as irrelevant and attendances dwindled. The landed gentry no longer saw it as their duty to maintain and support the churches and while many did, most did not. Purley had lost its Lord of the Manor with the death of Major Storer in 1902 and no-one really took his place.

### **The End of Tithes**

The inter-war period saw the end of tithes. They had been converted to an annual rent by the Tithe Act of 1836 and many landowners took the opportunity to commute their tithes to a fixed sum. This had happened for example with the railways, although they had not redeemed all their land. In 1921 they redeemed parcel 140 (which had been assessed at an annual charge of £6-2-6) by purchasing an annuity of £6-12-6 payable to the rector. Mr Wilder did likewise in 1922 in respect of parcels 187, 2, 188, 189a and 211 etc for which the charge was £43-9-11. This was equivalent to a capital sum of £817-16-10.



*The Good Shepherd window and a oil lamp in the 1920's*

By an Act of 1936 tithes were finally abolished and landowners had to pay a final commuted sum which was handed over to Queen Anne's Bounty to administer and share between parishes. The last parcel recorded for Purley was 225H charged at 2s 2d which was redeemed on 5th July 1935 for £3-6-5 but this had to be handed to Queen Anne's Bounty.

### **Richard H. Pring 1915-1924**

Richard Pring was instituted as rector of Purley on the 4th April 1915. He had obtained his BA in 1884 from Trinity College, Dublin and had been ordained in 1887. His spells as curate were at Rumboldswyke, Sussex (1887-91), South Hackney (1891-93) and St Ann's Brookfield, Highgate (1893-95). He became vicar of Morton in Cheshire in 1895 but returned to St Ann's to retake his job as curate in 1902. In 1907 he was appointed chaplain to the British Legation in Berne and moved on to a similar post in Algiers in 1914 where he stayed until his appointment to Purley.

As had his predecessor, he became chairman of the Purley Parish Meeting. The Minute Book which he kept gradually became more informative about the affairs of the Parish than it had under his predecessors.

In 1915 a working party was set up at the rectory to make surgical necessities for the wounded under the auspices of Reading War Hospital's Supply Depot. Money for the material came from collections at the Friday Evening services. The church also purchased six 15/6 War Savings Certificates and one £5 War Bond. Donations to the various war charities continued until well after the war was over.

In 1917 J.R.Wright, who had held the post of organist since 1887, resigned.

Leila Downing-Fullerton, Daughter of the late Major Storer of Purley Park, died in 1918 and left £300 to the Churchwardens to be invested for the upkeep of the church. The money was invested to purchase 5% War Stock 1929-47 and yielded £15-5-2 pa interest. The next year her four children installed the clock on the south face of the tower in memory of her and her husband George. The mechanism was manufactured by Gillett & Johnson Ltd of Croydon, Surrey. One of their daughters, Myra, had given a paten to commemorate the end of the First World War in 1918.

The bells had been put back into commission and a group of ringers was established at the church. Several certificates survive which record membership of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers.

In 1920 the question of a War Memorial was discussed at a special Parish Meeting on Nov 16th. The meeting considered a report from a special committee and agreed to a tablet being erected at the church at a cost of no more than £80. The order was placed with Messrs Millwall Bros of London.

Richard Pring resigned the living of Purley in 1924 to become chaplain to the SPG at St Andrew's Pau. In 1930 he moved to St. Jean de Luz in France, still with the SPG.

### **Charles Henry Coe 1924-1927**

Charles Coe was instituted rector of Purley on December 27th 1924. He had obtained his BA degree from St John's College Cambridge in 1893 and was ordained in 1895. He served as curate successively at St George's, Altringham (1895-1902); Knighton, Radnorshire (1902-03); All Saints, Maidstone (1903-07); Mereworth (1907-12) and Speldhurst (1912-14).

From 1914 to 1924 he was Rector of Offham and Chaplain to Malling University.

The old rectory was sold to the Lister family in 1926 for £3000, following a proposal to build a new rectory to the south of the railway. A Parsonage House Delapidation Fund had been started in 1925.



*The sanctuary lamp believed to have been brought back from France by Cecil Aldin when visiting his son's grave. Inside it is the smaller lamp donated by Nelson Cooper. [M20116]*

1926 saw the General Strike and the miners stayed out on strike long after everyone had gone back to work. There was widespread hardship and Purley had three special collections for the Miner's Distress Fund in 1928 which yielded £9-16-9.

The Churchyard was extended in 1926 when an additional fifth of an acre to the north was donated by Mr. Farmiloe of Purley Park who also contributed £20 towards the costs of the necessary levelling and fencing works.

Charles became the first Chairman of Purley Parish Council when it was formed in 1927. However he was soon caught up in a scandal which involved choirboys and he was hastily removed by the bishop. He left Purley in the middle of 1927 to become Rector of Ladbroke with Radbourne. He was then successively incumbent of Boughton Malherbe, Kent (1932-36); Preston Bagot (1936-39) and Nunstead from 1939 to some time after 1947 when it is believed he died.

### **Arthur James England Harris-Rivett 1927-1931**

Arthur Harris-Rivett was inducted as rector of Purley on 13th November 1927. He had been ordained in Australia in 1901 and was curate of Glenraven, Victoria from 1901-2. He came to England briefly to serve as curate of St. Michael's Stockwell from 1902-3 and returned to Australia as Minister of Rutherglen, Victoria from 1904 to 1907.

He was appointed vicar of Streatham in 1907, rector of Graffham in 1909 and then served as vicar of Seaview, IOW from 1912 to 1913. He spent the war in South America being Archdeacon of the Falklands from 1913 to 1915 and Archdeacon in Brazil from 1915 to 1919, during which time he served as Chaplain to the British Embassy in Rio De Janeiro. He returned to England as Vicar of St Mary's Southampton from 1921 to 1924 when he resigned. He was 'Permitted to Officiate' at St John Langton from 1925 to 1927 before being appointed to Purley.

The new Rectory had not been completed when he arrived and so he had to go and live in West Lodge Cottage for a while. This was one of a pair of cottages that used to form the gatehouse for Purley Park, although on the Southern side of the Oxford Road.

It was during his incumbency that in 1930 the organist, Nelson Cooper, and his wife gave a new sanctuary lamp. This small lamp sat inside the old lamp, which had been brought to Purley from a ruined French church during the war. The old lamp burned large quantities of an oil which smoked very badly. The new lamp was given to commemorate the Cooper's newly born son and burned a smokeless oil which was also much more economical.

Arthur resigned the living in 1931 moving to be perpetual curate of Braywood near Windsor until 1937 when he was reappointed rector of Graffham in the Ely Diocese. He died in 1946