



Account of Purley on Thames

Chronicles 1100-1199

1121 (Henry I)

King Henry I founded Reading Abbey as a Priory following the Cluniac observance. It was richly endowed and its initial endowments included the manor and church of Pangbourne. Later the manor of Tilehurst was also added

1123 (23/24 Hy 2)

Henry I added the pensions from several local churches, formerly payable to the Church of St Mary le Butts to the endowment of Reading Abbey. Among these were 2s from Purley and 4s from Sulham This was confirmed by Roger as he took office as Bishop of Salisbury.(477-144)

1136 (1/2 Stephen)

King Henry I was buried in January at Reading Abbey. He had died in France and brought back to Reading sewn inside an oxhide. His death marked a real turning point in the affairs of England as he had exercised strong central control and had kept the barons in check. After Stephen came to the throne the country experienced a protracted period of civil war and anarchy.

1138 (3/4 Steph)

It appears highly likely that around this time Purley Church was burned down and the village pillaged as part of Matilda's campaign to wrest the throne from Stephen. She was ensconced at Wallingford and her knights roamed the area nominally beseiging Reading but under little or no control. There is a graphic description of the sacking of Purley, Tilehurst and Theale etc in the novel 'A Legend of Reading Abbey' which, although fictional, contains more than a grain of truth. It would certainly explain the need to rebuild the church in the mid 12th century.

1150 (15/16 Steph)

Jocelyn de Bohun, Bishop of Salisbury, issued letters recording that it had been proved in his presence, of sufficient testimony of reliable persons, that the Church of Purley should pay 2s annually to the Abbot of Reading. (477-i-146) (dated 1142x84)

Around this time the church at Purley was rebuilt in the Norman style. The font and the chancel arch survive and their design can be closely dated to this period. It also seems very likely that the church was rededicated when it was reopened, to the Virgin Mary. This was a very common practice which arose partly from a wave of popularity for the Virgin and partly from a desire on the part of the authorities to remove dedications to Saxon saints.

1160 (6/7 Hy II)

William de Sifrewast was recorded as a Berkshire landowner(110-23, 26-iii-420)

1166 (12/13 Hy II)

Three knights fees were held in Berkshire under the Honour of Wallingford by Gilbert Huscarle, one of which may have been the manor of Purley Magna (110-309, 26-iii-418)

1167 (13/14 Hy II)

William de Sifrewast was still a landowner, having paid one mark re his lands in Berkshire (110-45)

1171 (17/18 Hy II)

William de Sifrewast paid twenty shillings re his lands in Berkshire (110-50)

1176 (22/23 Hy II)

Richard Huscarle, believed to be the son of Gilbert Huscarle, was in possession of the manor of Purley Magna. He was due to pay a fee of 5 marks but he paid only 2 ½ marks and owed the rest. (26-iii-418, 111-134)

1180 (26/27 Hy II)

Roland Huscarle gave four parcels of land and their rents to the monks of the Abbey of Thame. They were:- One virgate tenanted by Nicholas Esperner for 50/- pa; Half a virgate; six acres leased to Thomas Stone for 4/- pa; one acre held by Geoffrey Hosier for 12d pa. (521)

1186 (32/33 Hy II)

William de Sifrewast had been succeeded as Lord of the Manor of Purley Parva by Halnoth de Sifrewast, possibly his grandson. He was recorded in the Red Book of the Exchequer as paying 20s (110-67, 26-iii-420)

1190 (1/2 Rich I)

Halnoth de Sifrewast paid 10s and one knights fee in Berkshire (110-73)

1194 (5/6 Rich II)

Halnoth de Sifrewast paid 20s and one knights fee in Berkshire. His lands (in Purley, Aldworth and Hampstead Norris) were temporarily forfeit. (110-93, 477-ii-1, Curia regis-i-80)

Isabella de Sifrewast, with her husband Michael de Baseville, brought an action in Dorset against Richard de Sifrewast concerning the dower given her by her former husband, Simon, son of Robert Sifrewast (477-ii-107, Curia regis i 81-2)

1195 (6/7 Rich I)

Ralph of Purley paid one mark which he owed to William de Sifrewast (111-1195)

Isabella de Sifrewast gave the monks of Reading Abbey half a virgate of land in Purley, for the souls of among others, her husbands who lay buried in the Abbey. The land was held in villeinage by Osbert, son of Godwin the fisherman. The monks were left to decide whether Osbert and his offspring remained in villeinage or paid an annual rent for the land (30-13, 172-146, 156-1708-63, 477-ii-105) (dated 1194x1217)

1196 (7/8 Rich I)

Halnoth de Sifrewast paid 20s and one knights fee in Berkshire (110-107)

1199 (4 Rich I/1 John)

Roland Huscarle, the heir to Richard Huscarle, was in possession of the manor of Purley Magna, part of two knights fees held in Berkshire (curia regis ii 49-79, 26-iii-418, 110-127)