



## *Account of Purley on Thames* Chronicles 1940-1949

### **1940 4/5 Geo VI**

At the Parish Meeting of 27th March a precept of £10 was agreed for 1940/1 (ref 25)

On 29th March the Parish Council were asked by Bradfield RDC if there was anywhere suitable to accommodate bodies. It was recommended that the Recreation Hut on the River Estate should be used (ref 4)

On April 24th the Parochial Church Council considered a petition from Sir Charles Marston on the mobilisation of Spiritual Forces. It was finally agreed to sign it as requested (ref 76)

At the PCC meeting on 22nd May the distribution of members of the church electoral roll was given as:-

Purley Street 18

Oxford Road 15

Westbury, Westbury Lane and Reading Road 15

The Park Estate 14

The Kennels and Beechwood Estate 12

Long Lane 10

Purley Rise 10

Council Houses 10

extra parochial 6

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Total 134

On June 17th twenty four more evacuee children from 'dangerous areas' were admitted to the school. They were accompanied by two teachers who assisted at the school. (ref 184-21)

At a general Parish Meeting Kennelgates was nominated as a hostel for evacuated children, despite a warning from the Pangbourne Fire Brigade that work needed to be done on fire escapes. (refs 11-35 & 59)

Civil Defence in Berkshire was organised in six areas. One covered the territory of Bradfield RDC and had its reporting centre at Sulhampstead. (ref 320- 1940- 126)

By August 3rd there were 54 children at the school of whom 30 were evacuees (ref 184-21)

Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose passed Purley on a steamer on the Thames on 21st August (ref 184-21)

At a general meeting of ratepayers, a resolution was passed urging that a shelter should be provided for the school, which had 62 children under 8 years of age. The Rev EE Skuse spoke against this and pointed out that the village had been scheduled as a reception area and that experts who had examined the school were satisfied that the present arrangements were satisfactory. The Parish Council decided on 16th July not to support the resolution but to ask for five stirrup pumps to be provided for the village (ref 4)

The siren at Pangbourne could be heard easily all over Purley, it was reported to the Parish Council on 21st October. (ref 4)

On 27th November the PCC stood in tribute to Mr G Price who had died recently. He had been secretary to the PCC for several years. (ref 76)

On December 2nd it was announced that Summer Time would continue throughout the winter. (ref 184-22)

## **1941 5/6 Geo VI**

The PCC considered on 20th Jan that the rectory with 3.5 acres of ground was too large. Messrs Nicholas had valued the house at £2750 and it was resolved to sell it at the earliest opportunity.

On 24th March the Parish Council considered a request from Bradfield RDC for information about alternative water supplies. The Parish Council instructed the clerk to send them a list of wells. (ref 4)

On 24th March at the Annual Parish Meeting a precept of £10 was agreed for the year 1941/2 (ref 25)

On 22nd April Mr J Purvey of Pangbourne offered the church an acre plot of land on the Oxford Road for £165. The PCC considered this too dear and decided that three quarters of an acre, as prescribed by Queen Anne's Bounty was sufficient.

By July 25th there were 68 children at the school of whom 14 were local, 21 were self evacuees and 33 were government evacuees. (ref 184-22)

The Pangbourne Head Warden (Mr Stocks) had resigned and a Miss Ashlow had been appointed in his place. The other wardens protested to the ARP Controller that she was only an administrator and ought not to be appointed Head Warden. The complaint was dismissed and Mr Stanley (the Purley warden) joined with his colleagues from other areas and resigned en-masse. Purley was put under the direct supervision of the Chief Warden (Mr Sims) who ordered that all equipment issued to the previous wardens should be returned. The Parish Council was so alarmed that it asked that all the facts be put before the County Controller, Sir George Mowbray. (ref 4)

Bradfield RDC announced it would stop collecting refuse as of XXXX and concentrate on collecting salvage instead. A notice was issued to all households detailing how things were to be separated and what to do with refuse such as coal ash which would not be collected. The Bradfield Scheme, devised by Mr Wintle was so successful that it was adopted as the national model. (refs 4,?)

On 25th August Mr A W Bucknell of Home Farm was co-opted onto the Parish Council to replace Mr Walden who had recently died. (ref 4)

On the instructions of Berkshire CC, a local Defence Committee was established by the Parish

Council on 25th August. It consisted of Messrs Hodgkins, Pocock, Harvey, Bucknell and Tidbury, with powers to co-opt (ref 4)

By Sept 16th the number of children in the school had dropped to 64, but only two teachers remained (ref 184-22)

At the Parish Council meeting on 13th October, the chairman, Mr Hodgkin, reported that he had been endeavoring to get the wardens to withdraw their resignations, but only Mr Webb had done so. (ref 4)

## **1942 6/7 Geo VI**

By 30th March Mr Skidmore had been appointed Chief Warden and the service had resumed. (ref 4)

The precept for 1942-43 was set at £10 on March 30th (ref 4)

On 22nd April it was reported to the PCC that the trapdoor leading to the roof of the church tower had been wrenched away and the lead covering severely damaged. It was resolved to get a new sheet of lead three feet by four (ref 76)

On 24th June the PCC were informed of a letter from the bishop giving guidance on the removal of iron railings from churchyards for the war effort. It does not appear that any of the railings round the graves in Purley churchyard were in fact donated (ref 76)

The bequest of £25 from the will of Mr G Price was put into a fund to provide electric lighting for the church. There was some dispute as to whether this fund should be administered by the PCC or the churchwardens. It was finally agreed to leave it with the PCC and invest in Savings Certificates until it needed to be spent. (ref 76)

On 6th August Mr Rixon was asked to fill the vacancy on the Parish Council caused by the death of John Rain. However he was never recorded as having attended any meetings of the Parish Council. (ref 4)

Bradfield RDC sent out a circular on how to entertain American troops should any be stationed nearby. (ref 4-8/42)

On the 29th September some damage to the coat of arms on the church tower was reported to the PCC (ref 76)

## **1943 7/8 Geo VI**

The precept for 1943-44 was set at £25 at the Parish Meeting held on 31st March (ref 4)

Westfields was occupied by the examinations department of the Royal Society of Arts (ref 184-40)

The church clock in the tower had not been working for some time so on 5th May the PCC resolved to get someone to look at it and report back (ref 76)

Work started in June on a 20 inch pumping main drain from Pangbourne to Tilehurst (ref 309-43-1)

On 29th September the matter of right to be buried in the churchyard was raised at the PCC. It was confirmed that only parishioners or people with a direct connection with the Church were so entitled. (ref 76)

John Gulliver was killed in action over Germany. He was the rear gunner of a bomber based at Abingdon. His plane managed to get back to base but he was found dead in his turret.

### **1944 8/9 Geo VI**

Hugh Evelyn Lister was killed in action in Belgium on 9th September. A priest he had joined the Welsh Guards and had been awarded the military cross. He had formerly lived at the Old Rectory (refs 12, 76)

The precept for the year 1944/45 was set at £25 on March 28th by the Parish Council (ref 25)

A survey of the Purley Rise Estate was undertaken following certain reports of a County Court Judge at a hearing for possession. (ref 25)

The District Council were seeking suitable sites for post-war housing (ref 25)

### **1945 9/10 Geo VI**

On 26th March complaints were made to the Parish Council about the primitive sewerage system for the council houses on the Purley Rise estate. Most houses had to use buckets with four houses having to use one soakaway for both surface and sink water. It was resolved to press Bradfield RDC for a more modern system (refs 4, 25)

There was criticism of the inadequate bus service as most buses were full to capacity before entering the village. The Parish Council were asked on 26th March to press for a special bus for Purley on two days of the week. (ref 25)

No precept for 1945/46 was required (ref 25)

By April the number of evacuees at the school had dropped to 24 and there were 10 local children. (ref 184-22)

Ronald Rawlins was killed in action east of the Rhine. He had been a choirboy at the church (ref 76-4/45)

On May 8th & 9th there was a two day holiday to celebrate the Victory in Europe (ref 184-22)

### **1945 10/11 Geo VI**

Arthur Harris-Rivett died. He had been rector of Purley until 1931.

On 12th March Mr C E Hodgkin resigned as chairman of the Parish Council due to advancing age. (ref 25)

At the same Parish Meeting there was an election for the Parish Council and H Haworth (46 votes), W J Halsey (55), T J Rackcliffe (46), A W Bucknell (42) and H A Tidbury (33) were elected. Not elected were H Pocock (10), L Harvey (6) and J W H Venners (5) The Council met for the first time on 23rd April and elected the Rev EE Skuse as chairman. (refs 4, 25)

No precept for the year 1946-7 would be needed, it was agreed at the Parish Meeting on 12th March (ref 25)

The salary of the Parish Clerk was increased from five guineas to ten pounds effective 1st April (ref 4)

It was reported on 23rd April to the Parish Council that the village school was in danger of being closed. The County Councillor, Mr W W Harle was asked to ensure that it remained open. He reported back on 25th November to say that under the current education plan the school would close in 1954 and all children would have to go to Pangbourne (refs 4, 25)

On 17th June the Parish Council decided to set up a special meeting to consider the provision of a war memorial. This meeting was duly held on July 15th. It was suggested that a village hall should be provided and a committee was formed consisting of Miss Scott-Stokes, Mrs Goodwin, Messrs J Melville, G Warwick, H A Tidbury, H J Halsey and R S Fothergill. A second meeting was held on July 29th at which the rector offered an acre adjoining the rectory and it was stated that an appeal would be made to the Carnegie Trust (ref 4)

The school outing to Southsea on July 12th had to be made by train because of petrol restrictions. (ref 184-22)

On 16th September there was considerable debate as to whether or not the Parish Council was responsible for the proposed Memorial Hall. It was resolved that all matters should be left to the committee (ref 4)

A new sewerage scheme for the village was outlined to the Parish Council on 25th November. (ref 4)

The church stack pipes and lych gate were in need of repair. An estimate of £15 from Francis Bros of Tilehurst was accepted by the PCC in April (ref 76)

The Sexton, Mr F J Rawlins, was injured while working in the churchyard. An application for compensation was made by the PCC to the Ecclesiastical Insurance Office. (ref 76)

A plaque in memory of Canon Powley was placed in the chancel. (ref 76)

A suggestion that a list of rectors be displayed was adopted by the PCC and promptly shelved. (ref 76-6/76)

An attempt was made to purchase land for an extension of the churchyard to the north (ref 76-9/46)

An attempt to revive the Church Magazine was not well received by the PCC (ref 76-12/46)

## **1947 11/12 Geo VI**

There was a very high flood from March 14th to the 21st and people from the River Estate had to be evacuated. At first 30 slept at the school but they were later moved to Kennelgates (Belleisle Farm) (refs 184-22; 25; 309-47-16)

The Reverend EE Skuse resigned from the Parish Council on 28th April and Mr A W Bucknell was elected chairman in his stead. (ref 4)

In April there was considerable concern about the status of the village school. The recent Education Act had resulted in it being listed for disposal. (ref 76-4/47)

At the meeting of April 30th, the clerk, Mr H J Turner announced that he was leaving the district. Mr John Dare was appointed to replace him at the same salary of £10 pa (ref 4)

In June the salaries of Church workers were increased. Cleaner £7-15s to £10; Sexton from £26 to £35 and organist from £30 to £40 (ref 76-6/47)

There was a proposal to erect a tablet to the memory of William Whiteley in the church. A faculty was applied for in June but the tablet was never erected (ref 76-6/47)

At a special meeting of the Parish Council on June 30th, the plans for the Memorial Hall were discussed. It would cost around £1000 and would have to be built using volunteer labour. The plan was approved subject to there being no cost to the ratepayer (ref 4)

A public telephone for the River Estate was requested by the Parish Council on June 30th. (ref 4)

By October a plot of land for the proposed village hall had been identified and £120 had been raised.

The Borough of Reading had come forwards with a proposal to take Purley into the Borough. The Parish Council held a special meeting on 6th October and there was a special Parish Meeting on 14th October to discuss the matter. The proposals were to be vigorously opposed. (ref 4)

There was a school holiday to commemorate the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten on November 20th (ref 184-23)

Bradfield RDC had made proposals for street lighting in Purley, but the Parish Council, at a meeting on 23rd December, decided that this was not an opportune time for embarking on such a project (ref 4)

The County Planning Committee considered the problem of uncontrolled developments on the River Estate. They decided to acquire the whole area, clean it up and install water and sewage services. However the cost of sewage alone was estimated at £40,000 and the County Council did not carry out their proposals because of the costs. (ref 184-50)

During the year 424 yards of four inch spun iron gas main was laid in Beech Road and the main in Glebe Road was extended (ref 185-2)

## **1948 12/13 Geo VI**

School dinners began at the school on March 1st (ref 184-22)

The Local Education Authority had refused to make a grant to renovate the school, the PCC were told in April. (ref 76-4/48)

On 20th April the Parish Council decided to join the Parish Councils' Association (ref 4)

There was a holiday at the school on April 26th for the Silver Wedding of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (ref 184-23)

The school outing was on June 10th and was to Hayling Island (ref 184-23)

The clerk to the Parish Council was asked to seek a suitable site for a playing field on 13th July (ref 4)

A building licence for the new village hall was obtained in July (ref 25-4/49)

The sanctuary carpet was stolen from the church. Compensation of £25 was received and a new one purchased (refs 76-9/48 and 1/49)

The Church failed in its attempts to purchase land for an extension to the churchyard, as the owner decided to sell to a third party (ref 76-9/48)

Bert Nicholls was appointed supervisor for the building of the village hall. This was to be built with volunteer labour and in November Bert and ten helpers began to dig the foundations. The hall had been designed by Lewis Travers, an architect who lived in the village (ref 184-32)

The West Berkshire United Sanitary District was split into two and Bradfield RDC area was included in the new South Berkshire United District. A new committee was established in November with representatives from Bradfield RDC, Hungerford RDC, Newbury RDC, Hungerford Borough Council and Newbury Borough Council. (ref 309-48)

The Womens Volunteer Service (WVS) had allocated £12 profit from the pie distribution to Purley. The Parish Council decided it should go to the hall fund (refs 4, 25)

A home for handicapped boys was established at Purley Park by Colonel Hugh Duncan and his partner. Initially seven 'boys' were admitted (ref 1-11/76)

## **1949 13/14 Geo VI**

Charles Ernest Hodgkin died on 3rd March. He was born 16th January 1861 and had lived at Purley Lodge. He had been churchwarden for 48 years and a Parish Councillor from the founding of the Parish Council in 1927 until 1948, being its chairman for many years. He had followed his father as Managing Director of Sigmund Pulsometer Pumps. Later in the year a memorial plaque was erected to his memory (refs 12, 25, 76-9/49 see also RA ?)

At the Parish Meeting of 22nd March it was agreed to ask the Thames Valley Bus Company to put on relief buses for 8.00 and 8.30 am services as people were being left behind (ref 25)

There was a special Parish Meeting on April 21st to discuss the Memorial Hall. The land had been purchased and a building licence had been obtained. £206 had been raised so far (ref 25)

Following Parish Council elections the new Parish Council comprised Messrs A W Bucknell, H A Tidbury, T J Rackcliffe, L Harvey and Miss Dorothy Scott-Stokes. The new Council met for the first time on May 24th (ref 4)

British Railways were approached about building a halt for Purley. The Parish Council were told on 16th August that BR would not entertain the proposal. Ref 4)

The size of the Parish Council had been increased by two by Berks CC and so on the 16th August the Council co-opted the two candidates who had failed to be elected in May. They were H J Halsey and H Harworth. (ref 4)

At the same meeting (on 16th August) the Parish Council decided to make representations to the Post Office, because the River Estate were getting only one delivery a day. (ref 4)

Also on 16th August Bradfield RDC asked the Parish Council for a list of trees that should be preserved for their amenity value. (ref 4)

At the Parish Council meeting of 6th September, the precept was set at £30 for the year 1950/51. (ref 4)

There was a house on Wintringham Way called 'Sunray' and there was a proposal to convert this into a Social Club. This was opposed by the Parish Council on 6th September on the grounds that there was already an adequate club and a shortage of dwelling houses (ref 4)

Land for a playing field had been identified on Westbury Farm and on 16th August the parish Council resolved to ask for compulsory purchase powers to purchase it. Captain Cowley-Miller was asked to seek the advice of the Playing Fields Association. (ref 4)

The new Civil Defence Scheme was discussed by the Parish Council on 16th August. Colonel Britt was to be asked for further details and Colonel Duncan agreed to accept office for Purley. (ref 4)

The Women's Institute Choir was formed. This later became the Thames Vale Singers. (ref 1-5/67)

390 yards of new water main were laid in Glebe Road (ref 309-49-18)

Fauey found a neolithic re-chipped flint blade and scraper and borer on Westbury Farm. They are now in Reading Museum (ref 116-1041)

It was decided by the Parochial Church Council to apply for a faculty to provide modern lighting in the church in place of oil lamps and candles presently in use. The Ministry of Fuel and Power refused to sanction the Southern Electricity Board to install electric lighting so calor gas had to be used. Installation costs were estimated at £76 and cylinders of gas cost £1-2-0 for 210 cubic feet. The installation was done by Callas Sons and May and the Price bequest was used to defray the cost. The final cost came to £82-5-0 as a lamp in the porch was added (refs 76-1/49, 6/49 and 9/49)

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