

Account of Purley on Thames

The Turnpike

R200140 28/2/2017

The Main Road

Purley is bisected by the Reading to Pangbourne Road which was named variously 'The Highway', 'The Reading Road', 'The Turnpike'. In later years it became known as the 'Oxford Road' and was numbered A42 in the Road Classification scheme of 1920. After the Second World War it was de-rated and renumbered A329 and named 'Reading Road' from its junction with Long Lane to Pangbourne as an extension of the Reading Road there, and as the Oxford Road from the Boundary with Reading Borough to the Long Lane Junction as an extension of Reading's 'Oxford Road' This was always regarded as od because the Reading Road led to Oxford and the Oxford Road to Reading.

When street numbers were introduced the numbering scheme for Reading was continued a mile into Purley. Following an attempt by Reading to incorporate Purley in 1983 the Parish Council responded by renaming the Reading Road as Purley Rise. This latter name had been in use for a short part of Reading Road since the 1920s when what was known as the Purley Rise Estate was built. The unofficial renaming ceremony was covered by Regional Television, both BBC and ITV and was followed shortly by the official procedures through Newbury District Council and the London Gazette. At the same time the opportunity was taken to number the properties.

When Repton drew up the plans for a new mansion for Anthony Gilbert Storer around 1795 he suggested that the turnpike be diverted southwards so as not to be so obtrusive from the house. As it turned out the new house was not built on the proposed site by the river and the new site lay astride the turnpike so the need to divert the road became even more acute. This is what happened and a new road was constructed which ran about 300 yards south of the new house. It was bounded by a six foot flint and brick wall in traditional Berkshire style and the opportunity was taken to close off the old road to the village and construct New Hill.

Over the years traffic flows have increased substantially. They were running at around 9000 vehicles per day in 1979 and had risen to around 13,000 by 1990. Roundabouts have been built at the junctions with Knowlsey Road and Sherwood Rise and traffic lights installed at the junction with Long Lane. From the Roebuck to just past Westbury Lane it had a 40mph limit but this was reduced to 30 mph around 2012. There have been many accidents and a number of deaths as it is quite unsuitable for the volume of traffic and motorists are very inclined to speed.

Over the years it has been widened and land taken from adjoining properties. It has a footpath of sorts for all its length but the section between Westbury Lane and Pangbourne can be hair-raising for pedestrians.

In 1910? the County Council were getting very upset over the damage done to the road by traction engines towing trailers loaded with bricks from the Tilehurst brickworks to the developments in Pangbourne. It became particularly troublesome when the Chain Arches bridge over the Sul Brook collapsed and had to be rebuilt. As a consequence the County Council were in the forefront of the move to force road users to pay a road tax to contribute toward maintenance.

The Turnpike

The road from Shillingford Bridge to Reading became a Turnpike in 1763. It followed the course of

the present A329 for most of its path except for the section from New Hill to the Roebuck.

The turnpike ran fairly straight from the Roebuck to Long Lane, but when Repton came to advise on a new mansion for the new Lord of the Manor in 1793 he advised building it on the line of the turnpike and diverting the turnpike to the south so that it was out of sight of the house. This was duly done and the road adopted roughly its present alignment leaving the old route redundant. It was used as the eastern drive for while but that was abandoned in favour of a new drive leading from the Lodge gates.

The Stretches

It is convenient to consider the road in a number of stretches as follows:-

- A Pill Box Area
- B Pill Box to Theobald Drive
- C Theobald Drive to Knowsley Rd
- D Knowsley Road Roundabout
- E Roundabout to Long Lane
- F Long Lane junction and Traffic lights
- G Traffic Lights to Sherwood Rise
- H Sherwood Rise Roundabout
- J Sherwood Rise to Glebe Road
- K Glebe Road to Westbury Lane
- L Westbury Lane to Purley Grange
- M Purley Grange to Sul Brook
- N Sul Brook to Dunluce Gardens.

A - Pill Box Area

B - Pill Box to Theobald Drive

C - Theobald Drive to Knowsley Rd

This road was constructed when the County Surveyor decided that there were too many accesses onto the main A329. It cut across the fronts of nos 1085 to 1113 Oxford Road and all residents were granted a right of way. A single access was constructed between 1087 and 1091 but a second access was opened at the west end to make it easier for refuse collection vehicles. When Goodliffe Gardens was constructed the two most westerly properties had their access reversed and became 19 and 20 Goodliffe Gardens. Bitter inter-neighbour disputes have resulted in further private accesses being constructed.

D - Knowsley Road Roundabout

E - Roundabout to Long Lane

F - Long Lane junction and Traffic lights

G - Traffic Lights to Sherwood Rise

H - Sherwood Rise Roundabout

J - Sherwood Rise to Glebe Road

K - Glebe Road to Westbury Lane

L - Westbury Lane to Purley Grange

M - Purley Grange to Sul Brook

N - Sul Brook to Dunluce Gardens.

