

Account of Purley on Thames

Long Lane Primary School

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Early Days

An article by Pat Deane Ex R000023 published in Purley Parish News June 1999 and Project Purley Journal no 96

On 26th April 1966 New Purley Primary School opened its doors to fifty five pupils whose ages ranged from five to ten years, with Mr Palmer as Headteacher and a temporary teacher. At the first Managers meeting a month later the name was changed to Long Lane Primary School. The first stage consisted of three classrooms, two open areas and a temporary office/staff room (now the caretaker's room). The use of black bricks and the design, which was to include a hexagonal hall, was a talking point in the neighbourhood.

The land for the school was compulsorily purchased and the school was built on the site of the old kennels belonging to the South Berks hunt which was part of Belleisle (originally Elyham) owned by the Storer family. Trenthams started buying the Belleisle property in 1953 for their Head Office. The hunt was the last section to be bought and the kennels were removed in 1960. Trenthams were good neighbours to the school - providing equipment for fetes, allowing visits to the barn and farmhouse for local studies and showing civil engineering workshops and laboratory in operation.

Initially the shouting of children at playtimes, the sound of recorder lessons and general noise gave rise to a complaint from a neighbour. However, as Long Lane had only recently been widened from a quiet, single track, tree-lined lane, this was not surprising. Thirty years later it has become a busy commuter route as well as a dropping-off point for two schools. The catchment area now includes several housing developments of various sizes.

Education was now going through a further period of change. Open plan designs were designed to allow co-operation between children, also the timetables became flexible. Class lessons were few and far between as children were supposed to complete work at their own rate, finding information for themselves. This philosophy influenced the third stage of the building (completed in November 1970) where we see complete open plan areas with two tiny rooms for quiet work or story time or discussions. It was basically an open plan school incorporating team teaching, vertical streaming and an integrated day. Visitors came from many parts of the south and from abroad to see the system in operation.

The second stage was construction of the kitchen, changing room and the hall - now to be a square one due to lack of finances. The kitchen was welcomed as until then meals had to be delivered to the school from Wantage! The Log Book records on one occasion that the lunch was very poor and a pupil of that time remembers the food tasting of diesel! During snowy weather the food could not always be delivered so Mr Palmer and some pupils had to make expeditions to the local shop to buy whatever they could for 71 pupils and 9 adults.

By 1968 the roll had risen to 142 and a teacher recalls arriving at school on a Monday morning to find several new children added to her class. In 1969 a terrapin classroom was erected to cope with the influx. The children had become used to life with construction work going on around them. In fact some enterprising lads were quite sad when it all came to an end; they had found a little job at

lunchtimes carrying buckets of water for the workmen, earning sixpence for themselves in the process.

Music featured prominently in the life of school and this aspect continues to the present time. The school has joined up with other schools for musical productions as well as regular concerts at school. A caring attitude has always been fostered so we see the children have given their time to entertaining and raising funds for less fortunate people and also wild life. Long Lane has also taken part in many sports events which have been held in the area.

There are two further articles R000472 describing the Silver Jubilee of the school and R000479 entitled Long Lane School hits the trail for which we do not have digital copies.

Also se R200310 for information about the PTA