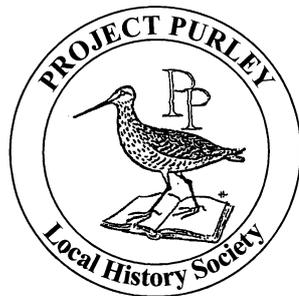


Parish of Purley on Thames
Berkshire

Beating the Bounds Millennium Walk

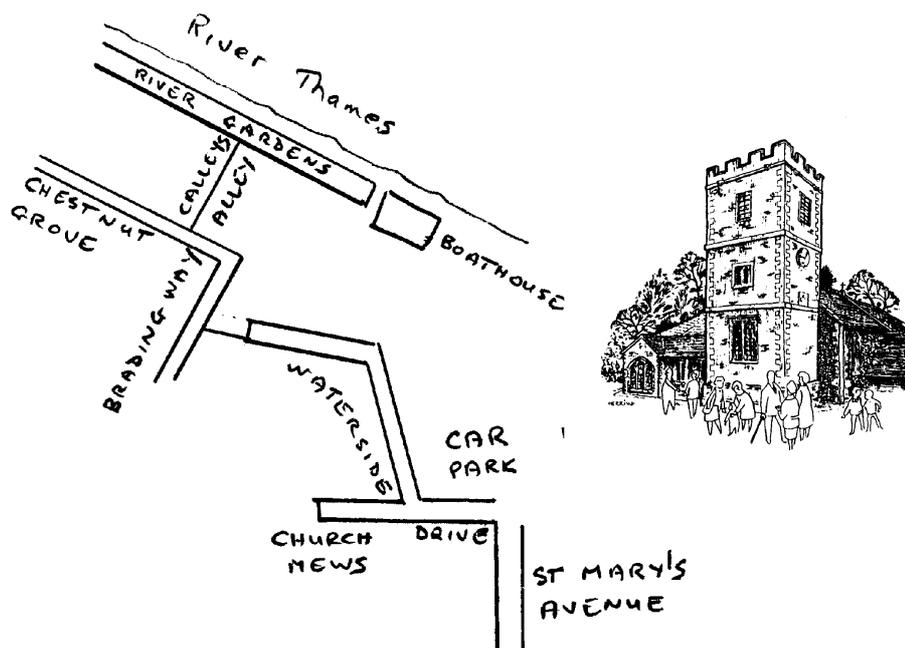
Beating the Bounds

Beating the bounds was an ancient custom of walking the parish boundaries to make sure that everyone knew where the boundaries were and to which parish the annual tithes had to be paid. Over the years parish boundaries have changed several times and with today's boundary it is impossible to follow the actual line as often it goes along the back garden of houses or across private land. However the route we have set out below is as close as we can get to the boundary of Purley on Thames and makes a quite pleasant seven mile walk which can be cut short at several points. - During millennium year we hope that many parishioners and visitors will take the opportunity of following the walk. - Good walking.



START: We start at **St Mary's Church** where you can park quite safely. The church dates from the Saxon era, although the buildings you see now are more recent. The tower dates from 1626, the Nave and Chancel from 1870 and the hall and vestry from 1983. To the south is the **Purley Marina**. *Please be sure you do not block the entrance gates when you park.* This was once the site of the ancient manor house of Purley Magna. The barn (now at the recreation ground) stood adjacent to the south churchyard wall.

Stage 1 - takes you along **Waterside Drive**. These houses are built on what used to be the kitchen garden of the Purley Park Estate. At the end you come to a footpath which leads into Brading Way. You are now in part of the **Purley River Estate** which was founded in the 1930s when plots were sold off for £5 to provide accommodation for anglers and campers. Many people moved down here permanently during the Second World War and over the years the estate has been redeveloped several times. Turn right and as you come to **Chestnut Grove** you will see a footpath ahead of you leading down to the river. This path is known as **Calley's Alley** after the gentleman who established it.

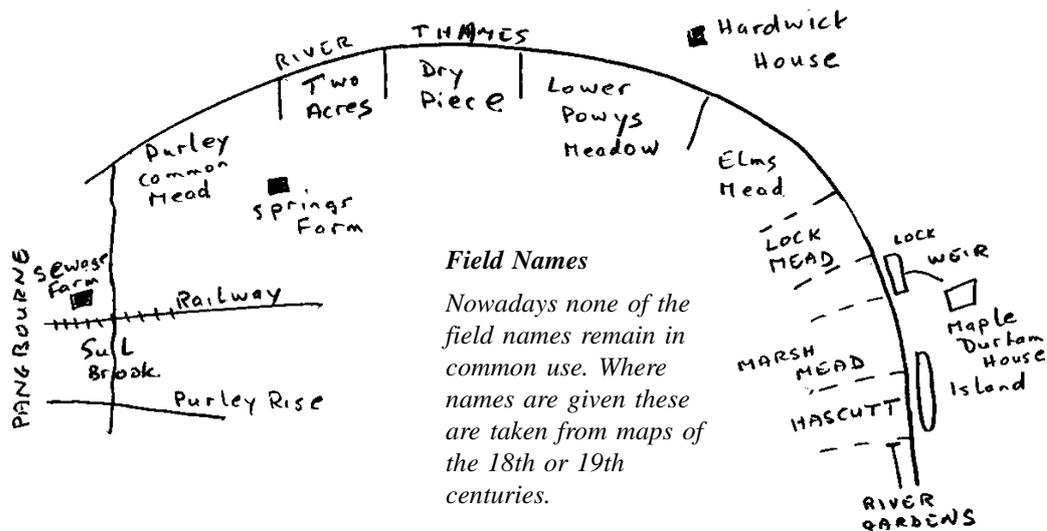


Stages 1 and 2

Stage 2 - As you reach the river turn pause and look right. You are now on the ancient **tow path** on the bank of the Thames where horses used to pull barges up and down the river. You will see where the towpath ends at a fence. Beyond this is the **Boathouse** where the chain ferry started. This took horses across the river to bypass an impassable section of the bank There was a return ferry just upstream of the Roebuck Inn. Now turn left and walk along **River Gardens**. Most of the former chalets have been developed into fine river-side dwellings but there are still a few of them to be seen. You will pass **Wintringham Way** on your the left. At the end of River Gardens you come to a kissing gate leading to the meadow.

Stage 3 - Follow the footpath across the meadow alongside the river. This meadow used to be very marshy and was known as Purley Marsh. When it was drained it was divided into two fields, the first was called **Hascutt** and the second **Marsh Mead**. There is an island to your right, at the end of which you begin to get views of **Mapledurham House** on the Oxfordshire side of the river. Pause to study the weir; it is quite interesting with almost all varieties of weir control used, from paddle and rimer to modern computer control. There is a salmon leap in the middle. Go through the gate into **Mapledurham Lock**. You might like to pause here to watch the boats or have a cup of tea.

Stage 4 - Go through the gate into the first meadow beyond the lock. This was called **Lock Mead**. The next meadow was called **Elms Mead**. As you cross into the next field called **Lower Powys Meadow** you are leaving Great Purley and moving into Purley Parva, owned for many years by the Hardwick Estate. As you pass through Powys Meadow you get a good view of **Hardwick House** across the river. On your left you begin to see the fences around **Springs Farm**. The next meadow was called **Dry Piece** then **Two Acres** and finally as you enter **Purley Common Mead**, on your right is the outfall pipe from AWE Aldermaston. As you approach the **Sul Brook** you will see a bridge leading across into what is now Pangbourne. Until 1990 this was part of Purley and was managed at one time as a water meadow. If you look into the river by the bridge you will probably see a lot of water lillies. These have grown from seeds which have floated down the Sul Brook from Purley Hall.



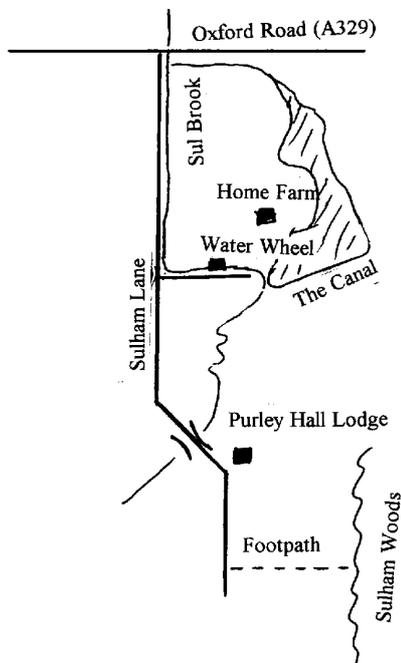
Stages 3, 4 and 5

Stage 5 - Now turn south to follow the path alongside the Sul Brook. This will in due course bring you to the main A329 Purley Rise. As you move away from the river the fields change from meadow to arable and it is almost impossible to distinguish where a large number of small fields were as the fences have mostly been removed. Moving from Purley Common Mead in sequence the old fields were called:-**The Streaks, Great Guntling, New Mead** and **Moor Knowles**. Further to the east is Lady Platt and Brier Hill Piece. Just before the railway on your right is the **sewage farm** where all Purley's sewage is treated. The **railway bridge** is in two parts. The first arch you come to was built in 1890 when the railway was widened while the second arch dates from the original GWR in 1837. Immediately beyond the railway the path takes you alongside the Sul Brook again continuing in Moor Knowles. Across the Sul Brook is the **Bourne Road estate**, now part of Pangbourne, built on a field called **Emmetts Mead**, named we presume because it was infested with ants.

This is a convenient place to break your walk. You can get a bus back to Purley Post Office from the Bus stop about 100 yards towards the centre of Pangbourne. They are every two hours on Sunday and every hour on weekdays. Alternatively you can walk back alongside the main road but please take great care.

Stage 6 - Cross over the main road and walk up **Sulham Lane**. This is a comparatively new road which runs through a field known as **Great Lodging**. The **Sul Brook** to your left forms the parish boundary. You will pass **Home Farm** to the left, which is the site of Purley's third manor, that of **La Hyde**. A short diversion along the road (which also forms the parish boundary) to your left will enable you to see an ancient **water wheel** and a few yards further brings into view the **Canal** in front of Purley Hall.

Return and carry on up Sulham Lane, over a small bridge and past the old **lodge of Purley Hall**. About 200 yards further on is a stile and signpost leading off to the left. Follow this path across a field and into **Sulham Woods**.



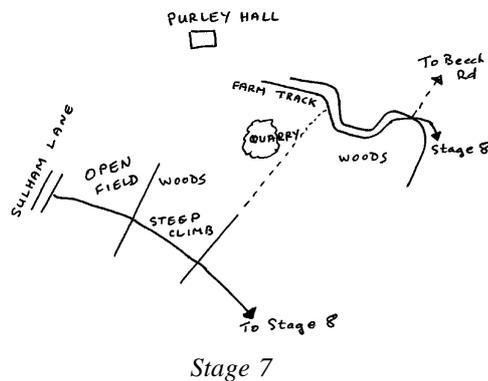
Stage 6

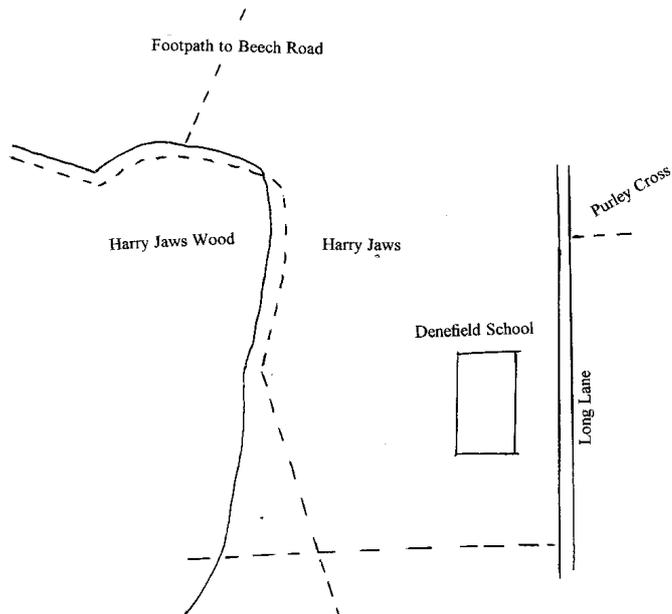
The actual parish boundary between Purley and Sulham runs along a farm track which continues from beyond the canal. However this is not a public right of way and we have to make a diversion through Sulham Woods

Stage 7 - You are in the parish of Sulham. The path climbs steeply in the wood to a point where a major track crosses at right angles. (If you wish to follow a slightly shorter route carry straight on and as you emerge from the wood you join stage 8) Turn left here and follow the footpath. This is fairly easy going except where there is a fallen tree. You will meet another wide track coming in from the right and going downhill. Cross this track and follow the path. You will pass a **quarry** and get a nice view of **Purley Hall**. You will also pass the remains of a plinth which once held a **statue of Hercules and Antaeus**. Almost at the edge of the wood you reach another track, turn right and follow the edge of **Harry Jaws Wood** which is the parish boundary. Pause where there is a path to your left leading into the open field to admire the view; on a good day you can see the cooling towers of Didcot Power Station.

At this point you can cut the walk short and return to the church via Beech Road.

Carry on around the outside edge of the wood climbing through a field known as **Harry Jaws**, until you encounter the path emerging from the wood to your right. This junction is marked by a post.





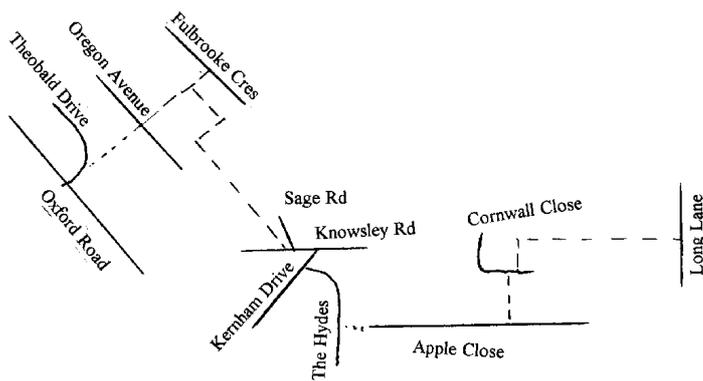
Stage 8

We have to make another diversion at this point as there is no way across the Denefield School playing fields to Long Lane

Stage 8 - You crossed into Tilehurst as you passed **Denefield School** across the fields to your left. Turn around and look back at the view to see the Goring Gap to the north west and the Chilterns to the north. At the cross roads in the footpaths turn left passing **Stoneham Farm**, head towards **Ridgemount Close** and emerge on **Long Lane** at its junction with **Dark Lane**. Turn left staying on the west side of Long Lane passing **Denefield School** until you come to the **Purley on Thames sign**.

Stage 9 - The point you have reached was known as **Purley Cross** as here there used to stand a cross marking the boundary between Purley and Tilehurst. Cross the road. Between **Carew Close** to your left and the gardens of **White Lodge Close** to your right, there is a narrow footpath running eastwards on which there is an **ancient parish boundary bank**. Follow this through to **Cornwall Close** and turn left leading into **Apple Close**. Follow Apple Close to the far end and take the alley into **The Hydes**. Turn right at the end and follow The Hydes and **Kernham Drive** until you come to **Knowsley Road**.

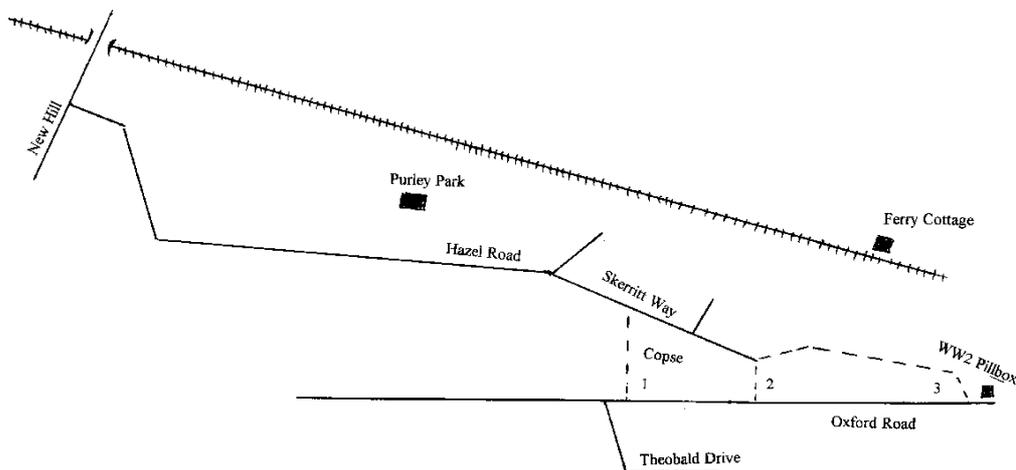
Stage 10 - You now have to cross Knowsley Road and follow the footpath which leads between **Goodliffe Gardens** and **Sage Road**. On your right is **Brookfields School** and then **Westwood Farm Schools**. Eventually you will join a footpath leading from Fulbrooke Crescent. Follow this downhill crossing **Oregon Avenue** and emerge into **Theobald Drive** to reach the **Oxford Road**.



Stages 9 and 10

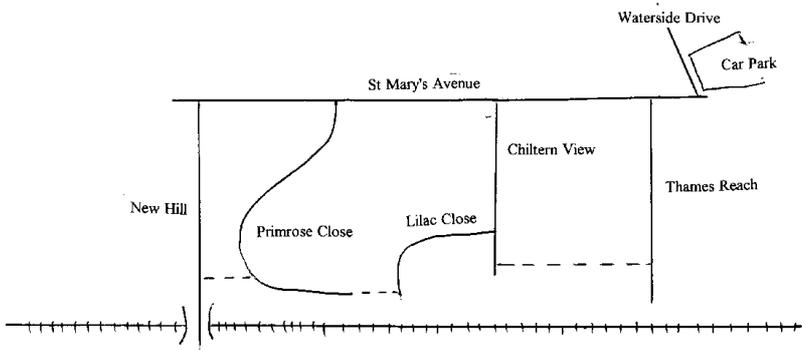
Stage 11 - Cross the Oxford Road and turn right. At this point you have *three alternatives*. *First* there is a footpath entering the **Purley Beeches estate** through a small copse. *Second* you can walk on alongside the Oxford Road to a flight of steps leading to **Skerritt Way**. *Third* you can carry on until just before you reach the World War Two pill box. Climb over the wall to your left to follow the footpath through the woods.

Stage 12 - From the pill box you have a lovely walk through the woods with the railway to your right. You can also get a glimpse of the roof of **Ferry Cottage** which is where the second chain ferry was located (*see stage 2*) You emerge at the end of **Skerritt Way** (*where you join from option 2*). Carry on along Skerritt Way passing **Marshall Close** on your right and the Copse *from Option 1* on your left. At the junction with **Hazel Road** there is a magnificent **specimen cedar tree**. Turn left into Hazel Road passing **Purley Park** mansion to your right, until you reach **New Hill**.



Stages 11 and 12

Stage 13 - the last lap. On New Hill turn right and stop on the **railway bridge**. Look at the tracks and westwards to the **Purley Lane Bridge**. The original Great Western Line to your left was built to a seven foot gauge by Brunel whereas the two right hand lines were built in 1890 to standard gauge. Note how the arches on the Purley Lane Bridge are of different sizes to reflect the different gauges. Just after you cross the railway turn right down a path into **Primrose Close**. This was an estate built upon the rubble dug out to make the Butts Centre in Reading. Carry on straight ahead and take the steps down into **Lilac Close**. Follow Lilac Close to its end, cross **Chiltern View** and take the footpath by the car park through to **Thames Reach**. Turn left on Thames Reach to **St Mary's Avenue**, turn right and you are back at the church car park.



Stage 13

We hope you have had a pleasant walk and are not too exhausted

This leaflet has been produced by John Chapman and James Heslop on behalf of Project Purley - your local history society.

Project Purley holds monthly meetings (for details see the Parish Magazine) and visitors are always welcome.

