

Monumental Inscriptions

In

Purley on Thames Berkshire

Part 9

MEMORIAL HALL
AND OTHER SITES

Project Purley Publication L500043

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The Memorial Hall is a registered war memorial

The Memorial Hall

The Memorial Hall was built as Purley's War Memorial and is in fact a registered War Memorial. Its origins go back to the deaths of young men from the village who died in WW2 and their families who were active members of the village community. They were keenly aware that there was nowhere in the village for communal activities.

There was a social club on Wintringham Way but it was still very much the preserve of the River Estate Plot Holders, there was the church but this was filled with pews and not suitable for social events. It was the village school where most such activities took place including meetings of the Parish Council.

Bert Nichols, who lived on Glebe Road, was a builder and was keenly aware of the loss of his nephew Flight Sergeant Barrie Nichols. His family had moved to Burghfield before the war so he did not appear on the memorial plaque placed in the church. Fred Rawlins was the Sexton at the church and had lost his son Raymond. A site on Glebe Road seemed to be available so the idea of building a community hall in their memory was mooted.

It seems appropriate to tell the story of the hall first before we deal with its memorial plaques. And we use the version compiled by Denys Hutchings around 1970.

Purley Memorial Hall is located in Glebe Road on a parcel of land originally forming part of the yard of John Purvey and Sons. It is of brick construction and consists of a main hall with a small extension to the east, a kitchen in the south east corner, toilets in the south west corner, a dressing room on the west side, a store room on the northeast side and a basement room to the north. Within the same complex are a number of outside store rooms for users of the hall and a building to house the Horticultural Society shop.

The car park can accommodate about thirty cars and there is about an acre of grass. The Hall was built by voluntary effort in the early 1950's and has been managed as a Charitable Trust.

Denys Hutchings was very much involved in the Hall's affairs, was a Parish Councillor and his wife Jo was Secretary to the Hall Committee for many years.

Getting the Project off the Ground

Our village hall was a thought which developed into work and started by about 1000 inhabitants paying 1d per week. Beetle drives, Concerts etc were held to raise funds. In October 1947 a plot of land was found with a nice view of the Chilterns and was purchased for £120. The next year was taken up with filling forms and getting licences, while gradually money was coming in for materials.

In the village at the time was living an architect Mr L Travers and he designed the hall and was available for consultation. A Management Committee was formed; Mr Bert Nicholls was approached and gladly took over the building operations. A volunteer building committee was set up and in November 1948, with £1100 to start, the foundations were laid. With a Ministry of Education grant there was still £710 in hand. Mr Theobald, Chairman of the Hall Committee said a further £1500 had to be raised. The target was to get the hall finished by the 1953 Coronation.

A lot of effort was put in by the Committee, the Building Committee, the builders and individuals collecting in the village. The women also helped by cleaning and painting metal work, making tea etc. At this time building materials were very difficult to get which often held things up. A total of 40,000 bricks were laid by Mr Nicholls, and general work was carried out by Mr F Rawlins and Mr R Winters. Mr Harris was in charge of the electrical installations, with the help

of others too numerous to mention. The then secretary was the late Mrs Goodwin, who was untiring in her efforts. The hall was completed by Coronation year, an achievement of which the Parish can be proud.

The Opening

After seven long years of hard work and money raising events, the day drew near to the official opening of the hall. It had been arranged that Dame Florence Horsbrugh from the Ministry of Education was to open the hall, but owing to a family bereavement she was unable to be there.

At short notice however, Mr Anthony Hurd MP for Newbury was able to open 'Purley Memorial Hall' on Wednesday 14th October 1953. The hall was packed to capacity with Humphrey Legge (Chief Constable of Berkshire), Mrs Hurd, Miss M McCullough (HM Inspector of schools for Berkshire and Oxfordshire)

A vote of thanks to Mr Hurd was proposed by Miss Scott-Stokes OBE Vice chairman of the Parish Council and seconded by Mr J Emerson of the National Council of Social Services. Mr Hurd said in his speech "The village will find fuller enjoyment in life by having its own social centre, it is a good thing to keep alive and foster the community spirit"

Mr Theobald, Chairman of the Hall Management Committee read a letter from Miss Florence Horsbrugh saying " I know something of the splendid effort made by so many people to construct this hall which will, I am sure, prove so valuable to the village. It is a in carrying it through" These speeches were reported with pictures in the national press and local papers, in which they said "The finest village hall built by voluntary effort since the war" It was a memorable occasion.



The inscription above the entrance to the hall. It had to be re-engraved to change the name of the opener to Anthony Hurd from Florence Horsbrugh

After the opening in 1953 the hall became the place where people could meet for the first time. The villagers had now to work to keep it clean, such as polish the floor on their hands and knees, as funds had to be raised for furnishings such as chairs, polisher etc. The hall was now run by a management Committee who put on events and ran them - this included things like the whist drives, dances, jumble sales etc. The Women's Institute choir who bought the piano for the hall, is now a separate organisation known as the Thames Vale Singers. The Purley Sports Club organized many events, among them the very successful dances. Up to this time these were some of the most reliable bookings and the hall existed from income this way.

It was not all plain sailing as the financial side did not cover the cost of running the hall, for in about 1957 the plight was becoming serious and it was found necessary to form a 'Friends of the Hall' (people who were willing to give 6d a week to keep the hall going) This was a time when people were afraid of losing the hall and collectors soon tired of begging. Drastic changes had to come First came the installation of central heating. This created a new lease of life and made the hall a nice comfortable place to visit; many more bookings were made and a new era this was not completely successful, the Purley Tennis Club was formed from this and was a going concern for ten years with a twice weekly booking which brought in money so urgently needed.

During this time also the hall was let for three hours daily to the Collegiate School for two terms. This enabled the hall to spend money on the building which was badly needed at this time, brickwork, repointing, painting inside and out and a garage store room. This was the turning point in the history of the hall.

Adding facilities

After the hall had central heating installed it became more comfortable, but at this time television had come which kept people at home. Despite this however lettings increased. Bingo was a weekly attraction and the Thames Vale Singers, Tennis Club, Youth Club, Welfare,

Library, occasional whist drives, twenty-first parties and wedding receptions kept the hall going.

The parking of cars became a problem. There was a large mound of earth in front of the hall main entrance allowing only eight cars to park. It was decided to have this removed and have hogging rolled in to increase the parking by twenty. This was done but no sooner completed when after so many years of waiting the sewerage scheme was finally approved and was at last to come to Purley. Yes! this main pipe-line would come right through the new hall car park to a depth of 15 feet!. During the excavation the main water pipe was broken and the hall flooded causing a lot of damage to the parquet floor. Also the main gates were broken down. Eventually everything was put to rights and the hall connected to the mains. The old soakaway was filled in, the grounds bulldozed flat and grass sown. This made the grounds more attractive although we still have a problem getting the grass cut each year.

Things were getting worn at this time. The toilets had to be replaced with more modern suites and redecorated. Also an outside door and porch was built for the use of people using the annexe.

The hall was gathering momentum and more money was coming in, but storage now became a problem. The committee decided to start a plan to build three store rooms. The Thames Vale Singers donated 100 towards the cost of a room for their use and the Westwood Farm Pre-school Play Group also helped towards the cost of theirs. These people have sole use of the rooms to store their room for store room /workshop. This work was completed in 1969 - two years and not three as at first anticipated.

After the three new storerooms had been built, the dressing rooms on each side of the stage could be emptied. The kitchen was the next item for attention - everything has been taken out, even the tiling on the walls. A new stainless steel double bowl, double drainer sink unit has been installed with concealed internal trap under the floor. A three cupboard unit with working surfaces in formica and wall cupboards to match in blue and white have been installed. A new window has

been put in and nearly all the wall has been re-tiled. In the near future it is hoped to have the old gas stove replaced with an electric cooker.

The Purley Memorial Hall Management Committee have put in many days of work on this project alone, this work will match in with the new extension of the kitchen and main hall which has been planned. If and when these plans are passed it is hope to commence this work this year and finish in 1971.

The Memorial Hall is almost fully booked and in one normal week some 440 men, women and children use the hall regularly. The figure of 4-500 persons using the hall each week indicates that it is the most focal point in Purley's social life, as was intended when it was built.

The Purley Memorial Hall Management Committee have many details to attend to - meeting hirers' requests, general maintenance, new additions, storage and expenses to do with heating, lighting, insurance, licences etc, all of which are dealt with at their meetings. Here I would like to say that all officers and committee members do all their work voluntarily and give up many hours to help in maintenance and re-decorating. The hall would not run so smoothly if we did not have the co-operation of the hirers who clean up the hall after they use it in readiness for the next hirer. The committee do employ a cleaner who does the general cleaning.

Postscript

After telling the short history of the hall, I would like to say what the plans are for its future. The Committee and many other organisations agree that the hall is too small for many of its activities. Plans have been passed to have an extension built on the east side of the hall and this will enlarge its capacity by some 450 sq. feet. At the same time the kitchen will be enlarged with an additional entrance to the hall. Some problems have arisen but these have been overcome by the architect who drew up the plans.

As well as the above extension it is planned at a later date to lengthen the hall making a wider raised stage and a large room beneath of some 30 x 50 ft. This should be possible by 1975.

The extension to the east was built as planned and named the Nicholls Room' to mark the immense amount of work done by Bert Nicholls.

The Horticultural Society operated out of the storehouse formerly used by the Westwood Farm Pre-school Playgroup after they had split up with the majority moving to the Westwood Farm Community Centre. The new society soon outgrew these facilities and built a new sales building in the east end of the car park This has gradually been extended. Additional store sheds have been built and play equipment installed in the grounds for the use of the residual playgroup.

7003 The War Memorial Plaque



Inscription

Parish of Purley on Thames

Memorial Hall

Roll of Honour

Greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friends

1914-1918

Dudley Cecil Aldin 15th May 1915

Charles Albert Clarke

Henry Robert Jarman 28th August 1915

Harry Kirk 31st May 1916

Frederick Charles Mott 28th October 1916

Robert James Nash 23rd September 1918

William Henry Nash 1st July 1916

Charles E Sheppard 7th August 1917

Edgar George Sheppard 5th November 1917

1939-1945

Hugh Evelyn Lister 9th September 1944

Stanley Pocock 23rd December 1940

Ronald William Rawlins 29th March 1945

Edward John Reed 12th June 1943

E Warburton

They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun we shall remember them.

Notes

For many years there was no plaque other than the one over the door. The present plaque was installed in 2013

7004 Mary Richards



Inscription

MARY ANDERSON
RICHARDS (nee McMURTRIE)
24th August 1895-7th August
1987)

Notes

*Located on the west wall of the
Memorial Hall.*

*Mary Richards was born into the
Sherwood family. She started the
Women's Institute choir which
later became the Thames Vale
Singers. For some years she also
ran the Thames Vale Junior
Choir and tutored many Purley
youngsters in piano*

7005 Phyllis Clarke



Inscription

In memory of PHYLL
CLARKE 1920-2000

Notes

Phyll Clarke lived on Glebe
Road and was for many years
the caretaker of the Memorial
Hall.

7006 Bert Nicholls



Inscription

The NICHOLLS Room

Notes

*Bert Nicholls was mainly
responsible for the building of
the hall and when it was
expanded eastwards the new
room was named in his honour*

7007 John Devine



Inscription

The JOHN DEVINE room

Notes

John was a Parish Councillor and chairman of the Memorial Hall Committee for many years. The changing room to the west was named in his honour.

7008 Diamond Jubilee Plaque



Inscription

Purley Memorial Hall

To commemorate the rededication and Diamond Jubilee of the hall 3rd June 1953 - 3rd June 2013.

This plaque was unveiled by the Rt Hon LORD HURD OF WESTWELL OM CBE and ALOK SHARMA MP.

Notes

Lord Hurd was the son of Anthony Hurd who opened the hall in 1953

Other Memorials in the Parish

There are memorials and inscriptions to several other people in the Parish

7101 The Culloden Memorial

The Culloden memorial is located in the grounds of Purley Hall and takes the form of a small building overlooking the lake.



There is a small plaque inside



7104 Bernard Theobald



Inscription

For over 25 years BERNARD THEOBALD served his parish and district. He will not be forgotten,

Notes

Located on a seat at the Goosecroft children's play area. Bernard was chairman of the Parish Council and District Councillor for Purley for many years. He ran Westbury Farm and became well known for his pioneering vinyard. He died

7105 Ron Jenkins



Inscription

In loving memory of RON JENKINS 9th August 2004

Forever in our thoughts and in our hearts. Cheers!

Notes

Located on a seat facing the cricket field at Goosecroft. Ron ran Purley Rise stores for many years and at one time played football for Swindon Town..

7106 Joe and Sue Nash



Inscription

JOE and SUE NASH.

In recognition of their long and dedicated service to the Putrley on Thames Parish Council and the community of Purley on Thames

1979-2016

Notes

Joe was the caretaker at Goosecroft from 1979 until he retired in 2016. They lived first in a caravan adjacent to the tennis courts and letterly in the bungalow which replaced it.

7107 Mary

Notes

A plaque on a seat at Goosecroft

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Memorials

For all the men of the war memorials the Commonwealth War Graves Commission provides either a headstone over the man's grave or an inscription on one of their memorials.

Here are the ones relating to the men from Purley

First World War

**7201-DUDLEY CECIL
ALDIN**



Son of Cecil Aldin of Kennelgates, now Bowling Green Farmhouse. He served in the Royal Engineers and died 15th May 1916 aged 19. He is buried at Ecoivres Military Cemetery near Vimy Ridge.

**7202-ALBERT EDWARD
CLARKE**

He served in the Royal Berkshire Regiment and died 2nd April 1918. He is commemorated on the Pozieres Memorial.

**7203-HENRY ROBERT
JARMAN**

He lived at the Westfield Coach House on Purley Rise. He served in the Berkshire Yeomanry and died at Gallipoli 29th August 1915. He is commemorated on the Helles Memorial in Turkey and also on the Pulsomter Pumps Memorial, now in Reading Museum.

7204-HENRY KIRK

His father was the blacksmith at the bottom of Long Lane. He served in the Royal Navy and died 31st May 1916 aged 21 when his ship HMS Black Prince was sunk at the Battle of Jutland. He was remembered on his parents gravestone in St Mary's churchyard and commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

**7205-FREDERICK
CHARLES MOTT**

He served in the Royal Berkshire Regiment and died 28th October 1916 aged 23. He is buried at Bancourt British Cemetery on the Somme.



**7206-ROBERT JAMES
NASH**

He lived at Westbury Farm Cottages and served in the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. He was taken prisoner by the Turks at Kut and died 25th September 1916 aged 24 while working on the railway at Baghdad. He is buried in the Baghdad North Gate War Cemetery. He is also commemorated on the Mapledurham War Memorial.

**7207-WILLIAM HENRY
NASH**

He lived at Westbury Farm Cottages and served in both the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry and the Royal Berkshire Regiment. He died 1st July 1916. He is also commemorated on the Mapledurham War Memorial and the Thiepval Memorial.

7208-ALAN D POWLEY

He was the son of a former Rector of Purley. He served with the King's African Rifles and died 10th June 1916. He is buried at Kiringa Cemetery in Tanzania. He does not appear on our war memorials but is commemorated by a plaque in the chancel of St Mary's Church.

**7209-CHARLES EDWARD
SHEPPARD**

He was the son of the lockkeeper and served in the Devonshire Regiment. He died 7th October 1917 aged 35. He is remembered on his parent's grave in St Mary's Churchyard and commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

**7210-EDGAR GEORGE
SHEPPARD**

He was also the son of the lockkeeper and served in the London Regiment. He died 5th November 1917. He is remembered on his parent's grave in St Mary's Churchyard and commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

Second World War

7211-CHARLES AUGUSTUS ELLIOTT



He served in the Welch Regiment and died 8th October 1942 aged 30. He is buried in St Mary's Churchyard.

7212-HUGH EVELYN JACKSON LISTER



He lived at the Old Rectory and was a priest in London before joining the Welsh Guards where he served both as a Major and the Chaplain. He was killed at Hechtel in Belgium while taking the surrender of the Germans on the 9th September 1944 aged 43. He is buried in Leopoldsburg War Cemetery in Belgium and is also commemorated by a plaque in the chancel of St Mary's Church.

**7213-BARRIE KENDALL
NICHOLS**

He served in the Royal Air Force and died 1st July 1941 aged 21. He is buried at Esbjerg (Fourfelt) Cemetery in Denmark and is commemorated on his grandparents' grave in St Mary's churchyard. His death was a trigger for the building of the Memorial Hall yet he does not appear on either of our WW2 memorials.

7214-STANLEY POCOCK

He lived on Purley Rise and served in the Home Guard. He was killed by an explosion 23rd December 1940 aged 35 and is buried in St Catherines Churchyard, Wolverton, Hants.

**7215-RONALD WILLIAM
RAWLINS**

His father was Sexton at St Mary's Church and he lived in Purley Village. He served in the Royal Tank Regiment and died 29th March 1945 aged 21. He is buried in Reichswald Forest Cemetery in Germany and is commemorated on his parent's grave in St Mary's churchyard.

**7216-EDWARD JOHN
REED**



Ted as a choirboy in 1932

He served with the Royal Engineers and died 12th June 1943 aged 27 whilst working on the Burma-Siam railway as a prisoner of the Japanese. He is buried in the Kanchanburi War Cemetery in Thailand.

**7217-RICHARD ERNEST
WARBURTON**

He served in the Royal Tank Regiment and died 10th June 1942 aged 24. He is buried in Knightsbridge War Cemetery in Acroma in Libya

Purley Street Names

A number of people have been commemorated in street names by the Parish Council mostly in one of four series for War Heroes, Parish Councillors, artists and manorial families:- To locate the roads we use Knowsley Road, Long Lane, Oxford Road, Purley Rise and Hazel Road as the main roads and the ancient village and the River Estate as areas with no main roads.

7301 Bucknell Avenue



Notes

One of the streets transferred to Pangbourne Parish. To commemorate Arthur William Bucknell who was chairman of the Parish Council

7303 Cecil Aldin Drive



Notes

One of the roads leading off Long Lane. To commemorate the artist Cecil Aldin who lived at Kennelgates - now Bowling Green Farm House

7302 Carew Close



Notes

One of the closes leading off Long Lane. To commemorate the Carew family who were Lords of the manors of Purley in the 14th and 15th centuries

7304 Clarendon Rise



Notes

One of the roads leading off Long Lane. To commemorate Edward Hyde who became Earl of Clarendon and whose first wife Ann is buried at Purley.

7305 Duncan Gardens



Notes

One of the roads leading off Hazel Road. To commemorate Colonel Hugh Duncan who founded the Purley Park Trust

7308 Huscarle Way



Notes

One of the roads leading off from Knowsley Road. It commemorates the Huscarle family who were lords of the Manor of Purley Magna in the 11th to 14th centuries.

7306 Durant Way



Notes

One of the roads leading off Oxford Road. To Commemorate Sir Anthony Durant who was MP for Purley for many years. He died in 2016

7309 The Hydes



notes

One of the roads leading off Knowsley Road. It commemorates the two Hyde families who were lords of the manor of La Hyde in the 11th to 14th centuries.

7307 Farmiloe Close



Notes

One of the roads leading off Hazel Road. To commemorate Mr Farmiloe who owned Purley Park prior to WW2

7310 Kirk Close

Notes

One of the roads leading off Oxford Road. It commemorates Harry Kirk - see page 12

7313 Marshall Close



Notes

One of the roads leading off Hazel Road. It commemorates Reginald Marshall who was chairman of the Parish Council for many years.

7311 Lister Close



Notes

One of the roads in the ancient village area. It commemorates Hugh Evelyn Lister - see page 13.

7314 Menpes Road



Notes

One of the roads leading off Knowsley Road. It commemorates Mortimer Menpes who was a noted artist and ran a nursery off Long Lane.

7312 Malyns Way



Notes

One of the roads leading off the west side of Long Lane. It commemorates the Malyns family who were lords of the manor of Purley Parva in the 14th and 15th centuries.

7315 Powley Place

Notes

One of the roads leading off Oxford Road. It commemorates Alan Powley -Who died in WW1 - see MI

7316 Pryor Close



Notes

One of the roads off the west side of Long Lane. Commemorates Sybil Pryor a local artists and village character.

7317 Rawlins Rise



Notes

One of the roads off the south side of Oxford Road. Commemorates Ronald Rawlins - see page 13

7318 Saunders Court



Notes

A block of flats at the bottom of Long Lane. Commemorates Fred Saunders BEM who lived in a house of the site and who ran Red Cross classes for Purley youngsters.

7319 Sherwood Place



One of the roads off the south side of Purley Rise. It commemorates the Sherwood family who used to farm the area.

7320 Sherwood Rise



Notes

A road joining Purley Rise at the roundabout. It commemorates the Sherwood Family who used to farm the area.

7321 Skerritt Way



Notes

A road off Hazel Road. It commemorates Robert Skerritt who was a Parish Councillor and active in the affairs of the River Estate.

7322 Theobald Drive



Notes

A road off the south side of Oxford Road. It commemorates Bernard Theobald who was chairman of the Parish Council.

7323 Trenthams Close



Notes

One of the roads off the south side of Purley Rise. It commemorates the Trentham family whose civil engineering works used to occupy the site.

7324 Wilder Avenue



Notes

One of the roads transferred to Pangbourne Parish. It commemorates the Wilder family one of Purley's major landowners.

7325 Winston Way



Notes

A road off the north side of Purley Riae. It commemorates Sir Winston Churchill a former Prime Minister whose funeral train passed the site as it was being built.

