

Account of Purley on Thames

Yew Tree Cottage

R200094 28/1/2018

Yew Tree Cottage stands on the South Side of Purley Rise adjacent to Goosecroft Lane.

David Roscoe Recalls

Published in Project Purley Newsletter 38 in 1995

On the 12th July 1994 my wife Hazel and I celebrated our Silver Wedding. We had a party with friends and family that was a truly memorable occasion. Little did we know then that only seven weeks later we would be living in a 220 year old Grade two listed thatched cottage. After all we were not even looking for another house! The story of how it all happened is too long for this short piece but is an interesting tale and had all the magic about it that is Yew Tree Cottage.

On moving in we quickly realised that there was nothing available to us about the history of the cottage. The deeds dated only from 1979 when Joseph Kirton sold Yew Tree Farm Dairy to a development company. Houses were built on the dairy land and the cottage sold to a "restorer". The restoration that was done was really just a modernisation and whilst we have modern wiring, modern plumbing and gas fired central heating almost nothing is left to tell us what the original interior was like. All floors, doors, windows, plaster work and staircase are new, with the upstairs the floor plan unrecognisable from the original. Luckily the exterior of the cottage was Grade 2 protected and was not damaged and still displays all the charm that it was built with. The years from 1979 to 1994 were ones of default for Yew Tree Cottage with result that we bought a rather jaded and shabby little house. However Yew Tree Cottage has special magic about it that we couldn't resist and since we moved in we have begun a programme of sympathetic redecoration and furnishing that will restore the cottage to its former glory.

With the cottage came the barn. Looking very ramshackle, dilapidated and uncared for it still managed to charm the surveyor into passing it for the mortgage. His report said that it had character! Having replaced the windows, re hung the doors and re-clad two sides. the barn is now coming back to life. Incidentally it was never a barn but a work building almost certainly built by carpenter and wheelwright William Pocock who lived at Yew Tree Cottage with his family after 1940.

Learning about the history of Yew Tree Cottage has been a very interesting exercise and here I must thank Jean and Cliff Debney who have been so helpful in providing information. We now know who lived in the cottage - with a couple of gaps - and have discovered almost beyond doubt the date when it was built - 1786.

Recently I said to my wife Hazel "You know, it wasn't us that chose Yew Tree Cottage. It was Yew Tree Cottage that chose us!" Such is the charm of this little house with its strong warm and welcoming presence.

David Roscoe

10th May 1995

From a Talk by Rita Denman

Extracts from the report of the Project Purley Meeting at which Rita Denman described some of the cottages of Purley - ex R000187

Yew Tree Cottage, Oxford Road: Thought to be built in 1786. In 1840 William Pocock, carpenter and wheelwright lived here and it is likely that he built the adjoining workshop.