



# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## Climate

### *Introduction*

The climate in Purley tends to be much milder than places very close to it. The village is sheltered on both the north and the south by steep hills bordering the Thames. About the only direction the wind can come uninterrupted is through the Goring gap from the north east. In winter it is noticeable that Reading and Upper Basildon can have heavy snow while Purley escapes almost unscathed.

Being in England the weather is very unpredictable and generalisations are very unreliable. However in winter the temperature rarely drops much below 20F even in the hardest frosts. It has been known to drop to around 0F but this is very rare. In the summer 85F is about the warmest it will ever get with only a few days each year topping 80F. Rainfall is about average for the area at around xx" a year with March/April and November being the wettest months.

In the river valley the morning mist is very noticeable. It rarely rises more than 50' above river level and by the time you get to the railway or to the residential areas the mist has virtually disappeared. It can be quite eerie of a summer morning to look over the valley from say the Memorial Hall grounds to see the river and the meadows gone and in their place a swirling mist extending for a mile or more across the valley bottom.

In the eighteenth century it seems to have been fairly common for the Thames to freeze over but this is unknown in recent years.

The great hurricane of 1987 barely affected Purley. One or two trees were uprooted and the top of one of the fine cedars adjoining Lister Close was blown out. Electricity service was affected for about two hours but otherwise Purley slept peacefully through a situation which caused some of the most widespread disruption in living memory within a few miles.

The bus shelter at Purley Way was blown away and had to be replaced by the Parish Council. Shortly after this was replaced the one on Purley Rise near Nursery Gardens blew over. This lay on its side for several weeks until removed by Egerton Homes prior to refurbishment and re-siting.

More damage was done in 1990 when another spate of bad weather began

on January 25th. It was mainly gale force winds at first but these soon turned to speeds of up to 85 mph and a lot of trees and roofs were damaged. 17 Long Lane had the misfortune to have their chimney fall off and through the roof into the house. Many houses lost tiles and hundreds of fence panels were blown away, very noticeably along the Oxford Road where the houses on Skerritt Way were suddenly exposed. Trees suffered very badly and many fine specimens were uprooted or broken off. A large tree at the top of New Hill snapped off and caused considerable traffic problems for several hours. About seven trees in Pike Shaw were badly damaged and had to be removed and many large branches were torn away.

The wind also caused a loss of electricity supply to much of Purley. A Parish Council scheduled for the Thursday evening was cancelled and people were strongly advised to stay indoors. Connections were eventually restored late on Friday afternoon.

A few days later Purley was featured on Television when the river estate was flooded after the Thames broke its banks. Wintringham Way and Chestnut Grove had up to three feet of water at one time. The problem was caused by torrential rain which flooded in the Maidenhead area. The National

Rivers Authority held back waters at Caversham Lock and with the surge coming from further up river it had nowhere to go except over Purley's flood plain. No sooner had the water subsided from the roads than another bout of gales struck on February 7th.

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