

Account of Purley on Thames

Medical Services

R200151 1/3/2017

Introduction

So far as we are aware there has never been any form of surgery, hospital facility in Purley. Thus all Purley's medical needs have had to be satisfied either by visits by or to practitioners in Reading, Tilehurst or Pangbourne, or in some cases to much farther afield.

Prior to 1948 all health care had to be paid for by the patient and there were many schemes for pre-paying on an insurance basis.

The National Health Service

Following the publication of the Beveridge Report in 1943 the principle of establishing a National Health Service was generally accepted. There was fierce debate as to how the scheme should be put into effect and it was not until the first post-war Labour government with Aneurin Bevan as Minister of Health that the scheme was finally brought into effect in 1948.

The Insurance principle was accepted at first and all people were obliged to pay a National Insurance contribution which was deemed to be used to pay for the Health Service, as well as Social Security Benefits. However the charade did not last for long and the Health Service has effectively been paid out of general taxation with no account taken of a contribution record. The Country was divided up into Health Regions with a Regional Health Authority (Purley came under Oxford) This was then split down into Area Health Authorities (Purley coming under West Berks) and then Districts. They had responsibility for all hospitals and clinics and for paying General Practitioners, Dentists and Chemists for services rendered.

In recent years the Districts were abolished and at the time of writing (1990) major changes are in progress.

Doctors

Doctors have been a well established part of community ever since they broke away from the combined profession of barber and surgeon in the 16th and 17th centuries. There have been many practitioners based in Pangbourne and nowadays for the most part Purley is served by the Pangbourne Surgery, although for a time they were forbidden to take on any additional patients in Purley by the Local Family Practitioner Council.

There are several practitioners in Tilehurst who look after patients in Purley and one has tried several times to get funding to establish a surgery in Purley but to no avail.

Chemists

The nearest chemists to Purley are in Pangbourne and Overdown Road in Tilehurst, although a lot of Purley prescriptions are filled in Reading. At one time the Pangbourne surgery was able to supply drugs etc to people in Purley as they were deemed to be more than one mile from a chemists. However following a complaint from the chemist on Overdown Road, which hardly anyone from Purley patronised anyway, the Family Practitioner Council forbade Pangbourne surgery from supplying drugs to Purley residents. The chief beneficiaries however seem to have been the chemists in

Pangbourne.

Dentists

There are dental practices in Pangbourne associated with the Pangbourne surgery. There are also many practices in Reading and at the Triangle in Tilehurst. In recent years Sheila Mason has established a surgery in Upper Long Lane which is well used by Purley people.

Hospitals

Purley has been served by the hospitals in Reading for the most part. The local health board established a fever hospital at Fair Mile near Wallingford which was used for all patients with infectious diseases.

Ambulance services

Clinics

For many years a well baby clinic has been held at the Purley Memorial Hall. A second clinic is now held at the church.

Home Nursing and Midwifery

Traditionally each village had its own midwife, sometimes several. These were usually women who had themselves borne several children and who passed on their experiences and advice to pregnant women and who were called in at the time of birth to assist in the delivery. The idea that a doctor should be involved was not considered as birth was simply not seen as a medical condition.

A Trust was established in the early part of the 20th century to provide a permanent midwife and home nursing service. This was the Kemp Nursing Trust, otherwise known as the Pangbourne and District Nursing Association. It covered the parishes of Pangbourne, Purley, Sulham and Tidmarsh. Money was raised from the interest of the Trust's capital, from County Council Grants, from fees charged and from regular subscriptions from members. In its annual report for 1938 The nurse was Nurse Haslam who had been granted six month leave of absence in order to qualify as a Queen's Nurse and in her absence Nurse Howell was standing in. 3099 visits had been made of which 2268 were for general nursing, 451 to do with maternity and 340 for infant care. The Nurse was paid 73 although this seems to be only for a half year.

Mrs Hodgkin was the collector of subscriptions for Purley (District G) and it is interesting to note the list of subscribers. Subscriptions varied from 2/6 to 10/-

Mrs Tidbury - Upper Hide, Oxford Road

Mrs Rodell - 1 School Cottages, Purley Village *

Mrs Sheppard - Corner cottage, Purley Village *

Mrs Tomlin - 6 Kennel Cottages *

Mrs Foster -

Mrs North

Mrs Nicholls - Glebe Road *

Mrs Gibbons - 7 Glebe Road *

Mrs Williams - 12 Glebe Road *

Mrs Stevenson

Mrs Clark - 10 Glebe Road *

Mrs Newton - Belle View, Oxford Road *

Mrs Kirton - Yew Tree Farm, Oxford Road *

Mrs F Rawlings - 2 School Cottages, Purley Village *

Mrs Allum -
Mrs Fothergill - Bowerleigh, Oxford Road *
Mrs Annetts -
Mrs Higgins - 8 Glebe Road
Mrs Farmiloe - Purley Park *
Mrs Lister - Old Rectory, Purley Village *
Miss Palgrave - Lane Cottage, Purley Lane *
Mrs White - Westfield, Purley Lane *
Mrs Hodgkin - Purley Lodge, Purley Lane *
Mr Hodgkin - Purley Lodge, Purley Lane *
Miss Fleming - Oak Cottage, Brading Way
Mrs Hearne - Collingtree
Mrs Smith - Victoria, Westbury Lane
Mrs Wells - Hedgerows, Long Lane
Mrs Stevens - Old Timbers
Mrs Fleet -

(NB Addresses are taken from 1949 electoral register and may not all be accurate. Those starred are reasonably certain.)

When Nurse Haslam retired in there was a public collection. She died in and is buried in Pangbourne Churchyard.

