

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## Plant Life - Trees and Bushes

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Purley is richly endowed with trees and bushes. We have woodlands to the south in Sulham Woods and the A329 from the Roebuck to Long Lane has mature trees on both sides. The surrounds of the Goosecroft Recreation Ground have been planted with many trees of all species but the soil is so poor that it has taken over 20 years to establish mature trees - most died in the first season.

## An Article by Jean Debney

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### FROM MY HISTORY NOTEBOOK - 2

#### 2. Trees and Weather

The Revd. Richard Powell recorded his tree-planting activities, together with other notes some of which I wrote about last month, in the Parish Register. Here are the rest of his notes:

"1 January 1846 - I planted at Purley a cedar of Lebanon and three yew trees in the Church yard."

"1848 - After a lapse of 16 years the Cholera again appeared in London and Edinburgh and carried off many persons; it was also very fatal this year in St Petersburg and in Russia."

"1854 -- Cholera again very fatal in London.  
-- War with Russia."

"1860 -- A very wet summer. Corn all standing August 20th Great Rifle Volunteer movement." (There are no commas in the original, so it is difficult to ascertain the exact meaning here, but the Berkshire Militia may have had a summer camp about this time).

"1863 - An unusually mild winter.  
-- Civil War in America still raging.  
- I planted April 13th a Bellingtonie Gigantea in the Church yard.

-- Prince of Wales married to Alexander of Denmark March 10th.

-- An old man of the name of Dor(?) told me that he planted the larch tree and cedar tree now standing in the lawn in 1795.

-- I planted another in the autumn of the same year."

"May 1866 - Girth of Cedar 3 feet from the ground, 10 feet 6 inches. Ditto the Larch, 8 feet."

"1868 - A very dry, hot summer. Early harvest".

There is a coniferous tree growing in the front lawn of the old Rectory - now Lister Close. It has a most interestingly marked bark and was previously much taller as it has been "topped". Does anyone know the species of

this tree? Could it be one that Richard Powell planted? In Long Lane on the right hand side going south, is a very old oak tree. It is hollow and only growing on one side but must be all of 500 years old, and would have been there at the time of the Civil War in 1640.

But Purley has been here longer than the oak tree and I will tell you more about this next month.

Jean Debney



