

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## The Sanitary Board

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### *The Sanitary Boards*

The need for central direction of Public Health had been recognised since 1856 when the medical department of the Privy Council had been established under Dr, later Sir John Simon. Sanitation was beginning to be provided in some of the Urban areas but was virtually nonexistent in rural areas. Such progress as had been made was largely as a result of the Towns Improvement Clauses Act of 1847. In this local Boards of Health were established with powers to appoint 'Inspectors of Nuisances'. This act was renewed in 1855 and the Inspectors renamed 'Sanitary Inspectors' but they applied essentially only to towns.

At this time the responsible authorities in the rural areas were the Boards of Guardians of the Unions who were responsible for Public Health (as well as Poor Law matters) and designated as the 'Nuisance Authority' and the Vestries who were designated at the 'Sewer Authority'

It had been proposed to form a Local Government Board by merging the Boards responsible for Poor Law, Health and Sanitation but when this was effected in 1871 it was so dominated by the Poor Law Board and its negative attitudes that little progress could be made.

In the following year, 1872, a further Act divided the country up into Urban and Rural Sanitary Districts which covered very similar areas to the Unions. This Act in its turn was replaced by the Public Health Act of 1875 which retained the same Districts. In the Local Government Act of 1894 the Sanitary Districts were abolished and replaced by Rural District Councils and it was therefore under this Act that Bradfield RDC came into being. (ref 218)

The affairs of the Union and the District were very intertwined as, although separately constituted, the membership was virtually identical. Technically however the Unions and the powers of the Guardians remained in one form or another until 1949.

### *The Members*

For the first few years members were appointed by the Parish Vestry and were generally the same people as the Guardians.

Following the establishment of a Parish Meeting for Purley in 1894, there was an election by electors present at the meeting and the Reverend Matthew Powley was made RDC member for Purley.

The first fully elected member was Miss Tina Collins who served from 1929 to 1937 when she was replaced by Mr J Rixon. In 1944 Arthur William Bucknell became the member. He was replaced first by Peter Fitchew and then in 1955 by Claud Dunton who served until 1963. Arthur William's son John Bucknell became the second councillor for Purley when, as a result of growing population, it became eligible for a second seat. Bernard Theobald was elected in 1967 and together they saw out the remaining life of the Council until its demise in 1973.

The last actual election took place in November 1963, when there was a by-election caused by the resignation of Claud Dunton. After that the nominations were unopposed.

