

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## Maps and Aerial Photographs

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### *Introduction*

Maps serve many purposes and although they purport to show what the terrain looks like at a given time it can be a very dangerous assumption that the information is necessarily accurate even if it comes from an otherwise unimpeachable source. Before one can put credence in a map one must ask 'why was it produced'. An aerial photograph on the other hand does give an accurate portrayal of the terrain at the time the photograph was taken, but photographs are not easy to interpret and features are not neatly identified as on a map.

They will be dealt with in this article under a number of headings:-

- Ancient maps
- Estate maps
- The Ordnance Survey
- Specialist maps
- Topographical and Street Maps.

Further sections will deal with:-

- Map scales
- Aerial photographs

A catalogue of maps which show all or part of Purley is available - [click return](#)

Copies of almost all of these maps are held in the Berkshire Record Office and the Project Purley Archive holds many copies.

### *Map Scales*

Not all maps are drawn to an accurate scale and when they are photocopied or traced many further inaccuracies can creep in. For most of the ancient maps the original scale has long been lost as they are reproduced to suit the page size of a book or to fit a particular frame size.

With the establishment of the Ordnance Survey a series of map scales based upon so many miles to the inch or vice versa were agreed upon and were in common use until the 1970s when changes were made to adopt metric scales. Thus the early Ordnance Survey maps were based upon scales of:-

- 1:625000
- 1:250000 - quarter inch to the mile
- 1:63350 - one inch to the mile
- 1:10560 - six inches to the mile
- 1:2500 - twenty five inches to the mile

Following metrication the following scales were adopted for the main purposes indicated:-

- 1:625000 large area motoring and flying maps
- 1:250000 detailed motoring maps
- 1:50000 general purpose maps

1:25000 walkers maps  
1:10000 planners maps  
1:2500 large scale rural maps  
1:1250 large scale town maps  
1:500 building estates

## *Ancient Maps*

### *Estate maps*

The earliest estate map that we are aware of was prepared in 17.. to show the proposals for landscaping Purley Hall by Bridgeman. Further maps include the Tithe Map of 1840 and the Enclosure maps of . These all show a great deal of detail and, so far as we can judge are reasonably accurate. The map for Sulham extends well into Purley.

A further series of maps emerged starting around 1920 when the Purley Magna estate was put up for sale. Thereafter we have seen similar maps for Home, Scraces and Westbury farms.

### *The Ordnance Survey*

The Ordnance Survey was established after the Jacobite rebellion in 1745 when it was decided to provide a complete set of maps of Scotland at a scale of 1000 yards to the inch. The work was continued in England by General William Roy until his death in 1790. In 1791 a survey office was established at the Tower of London to oversee the work of the surveyors.

The first Ordnance Survey maps of England in the one inch series were published as a four map set for Kent in 1801 as a response to the threat of invasion by Napoleon. The whole country was completed by 1870. While this was going on further surveys at six-inches (1846-96) and 25 inch (1846-93) were being done for England.

### *Specialist maps*

#### *Topographical and Street Maps.*

Many companies have produced street maps of the area, aimed mainly at motorists and Purley parish Council commissioned two maps showing all the streets of Purley.

### *Aerial photographs*

The first aerial photographs of the area were taken by the RAF before the Second World War. They were not taken very systematically and it is very difficult to reconcile scales and to allow for edge distortions. These are obtainable from the RAF.

During the War a large number of photographs were taken by the Luftwaffe but these fell into the hands of the Americans after the war and are now housed at the National Archives in Washington.

There were several series of aerial photographs taken for archaeological purposes. The main ones by Professor St Joseph of Cambridge University and a further series which is now in the National Monuments Record. In the Purley area these mainly concentrated on the western part of the parish where there are distinctive crops marks in the fields on either side of the railway indicating a possible neolithic settlement there.

From 1964 Berkshire County Council undertook a regular series of comprehensive photo-mapping of the county. Flights were made by Hunting Aero-surveys and some years they flew east west and other years north south. They flew on tracks which gave a fifty percent overlap, ie they took one

series and then the next track followed the edge of the previous series of photo. Each photo was taken so that it was centred on where the edge of the previous photo cut the flight path.

Surveys were taken in the years 1964, 1968, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996 and 2003 with the later series in colour. The enprints are 10 inches square and recent ones have been to a scale of roughly 1:10,000 at the centre with the earlier ones around 1:12000.

The Project Purley Archive contains copies of at least one map covering Purley for all the years up to 2003. Thereafter Google Earth had made the demand for such photos so minimal that the service was discontinued.



