

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## Purley School in the 1930s

R200465 11/1/2018

*Bill Fisher recalls Purley Church of England School from 1932*

The governors were: The Rector, Mr Charles Hodgkin and Mr Nelson Cooper. The Schoolteacher was Mrs Edith Tidbury.

The infants were taught in the small room which boasted a gas fire. The older children, up to and including eight years were located in the main room which was heated by an old-fashioned stove surrounded by a mesh which I believe had a brass rail at the top. Its efficiency did not extend to the extremities of the room and when very cold our desks were moved closer to the fire.

A greater emphasis was placed on arts and crafts than the three Rs. We became adept at caning stools and chairs and making paper beads. In woodwork I still possess a small carved box I made at the age of eight years to hold spills for lighting a fire. It is still possible to see a bloodstain I sustained when the carving knife slipped.

During mid-morning and afternoon breaks in the Autumn we collected walnuts from the tree which used to stand on the site of the present terrapin. These were shared out on Friday afternoons with the children clustered around the ancient stove. Small prizes were also distributed for good behaviour.

In 1932 the names of the children school were: Evelyn Fisher, William Fisher, Jack Iles, Robert Iles, Edward Higgins, Anthony Higgins, Christine Read, Rosemary Rodell, Barbara Rodell, Jack Witney, Joan Hope, Morris Palmer, Eileen Smith, Donald Hope, Ellen Kirk, Rita Young, Reginald Warwick, Violet Nash, Donald Carter, Mary Carter, Roy Carter, Charles Kirton, Doris Kirton, Josephine Wilkinson, Margaret Rodell, Jean Miles, Myra Hope, Jean Reed. I am not quite sure whether all were there in 1932 but they were certainly there by 1934.

Mrs Tidbury displayed a Birds Egg Collection at the school on one occasion. There were the usual well known English birds represented and also several foreign birds there on show. I cannot remember them all, but I distinctly remember the ostrich and emu. The former was a large circular egg the colour of old ivory and the latter was not so large, oval and black speckled. We were given a lesson on the respective birds and their habitat.

After children attained eight years of age they transferred to Pangbourne County Council School. Berks Educational Authority in their superb wisdom, defrayed the cost of contracting a local Pangbourne carrier to deliver the Purley children from one pick up point opposite the forge to Pangbourne School, mornings only. Mr Lea was the carrier, an ex-RSM in REME from the 1914/18 war. His vehicle also served as a furniture removal van, but when the children were being transported, boasted two long forms for seating. He was very kind and patient with the children even when some hid in the hollow oak tree on the right in Long Lane. (it is still there but very dilapidated) in an attempt to play truant. Once per year, at his own expense he provided the children with a picnic outing, either to Savernake Forest or Bucklebury Common. After school, Summer and Winter, Purley children had to walk home.

*Bill Fisher added the next sections by mistake, it was supposed to go in other sections of his notes but we will include them here.*

*The first section was intended for the Scouts article (see R200464)*

The Scouts were inaugurated I believe in 1937 and shortly thereafter, the Brownies; there were no cubs throughout the 1930s. The Rector was the nominal Scoutmaster but Alec Fagg, a Rover Scout, became Executive Assistant Scoutmaster. He lived in Hemdean Road Caversham. Unfortunately I do not think he survived the war.

We spent a summer camp together with Burghfield Scouts for a week at Bearwood Naval School in 1937 and the following Easter, Purley Scouts spent four days camping in Purley Park near the Boathouse. During the winter we occasionally cycled to the Arthur Hill swimming baths. We also held jumble sales to augment funds.

I have little knowledge of the Brownies' activities although my sister was one. I think Miss Mole was Brown Owl and certainly Mrs Walden was Tawny Owl.

*The final section was intended for the railway article (see R200463)*

I have no accurate documentation for saying that as part of the settlement for the railway wayleave through Major Storer's property, a gold pass was issued providing free railway travel on the GWR to him.