

Account of Purley on Thames

Frances Butler Remembers

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Frances Wright was brought up in Purley along with her two sisters. She recently received a copy of Purley in Old Images and it stirred her memory. Ex R000402

Mrs E Tidbury

Head mistress of Purley Church of England School, had a box full of "Goodies", toys etc. When it was your birthday you could choose one item from this box. I coveted a large magnet but Marjorie Hawkins had a birthday before me so got there first. I was only about 6 years old - but I was gutted. Margaret (Mrs Tidbury's granddaughter) started school just before me, and although she now lives in Spain, we have kept in touch for over 60 years. On page 36 in the "Purley in Old Images" book - halfway up the path was a walnut tree whose nuts we all enjoyed (before 1958)

The Wright Girls

My sisters, Barbara, Linda and me Frances were normally referred to as the Wright girls. We all went to church every Sunday (Bill Fisher took us in his car) and Sunday School. We were in the Church Choir and I used to pump the organ at numerous weddings for the princely sum of two shillings and sixpence (A fortune in those days).

We had a wonderful childhood in Purley, the freedom to go anywhere. We learnt to swim in the river, climb trees in Sulham Woods. We could go off for the day with a bottle of water and sandwiches and feel quite safe. Three people who made a difference to our lives were:-

Lynne Barnes who took us on hikes to Streatley, Yattendon and over the Downs - sometimes 10 or more children for the day.

Mrs Richards who started the children's choir and took us to sing at care homes and over 60's clubs in and around the Reading area. We loved it. It was an adventure.

Mrs Pryor - who was a real 'lady of the manor'. She was so good to the village children. We had a whale of a time picking chestnuts in her garden. On Easter Sunday a topiary chicken/cockerel laid chocolate eggs in her garden for us to collect, which for children who didn't have many sweets was magic. At Christmas we sat in her kitchen making home made cards with ribbons, material and cut out shapes she provided. When I got married she gave me a vanity case which I still have 46 years on.

When I became a Sunday School teacher I was asked to bring two little boys with me. They were Colin and Paul Schofield and I have been friends with the family ever since, in fact it was Margaret and Gerald Schofield who sent me your book "Purley in old Images". It brought back lovely memories for me (and a few tears as well)

I left Purley when I married and went to live in Tilehurst, but went back to sing with the Thames Vale Singers after I had my children. My dad (a widower) and my sisters moved away when he remarried. My gran (Mrs Stubbs) lived in Long Lane until she died in 1972. She was quite a character. My grandad also was very much a part of the village. They lived in Kennel Cottages before moving to "The Reach", Long Lane where he died in 1953.

Corrections

On the Preface in the book you said you welcomed any corrections (or observations):

Page 30 - Church Choir 1962 - Left to right - standing Linda Wright - not Teresa

Page 31 - Harvest Festival 1964 - Miss Gorman standing next to Edith Tidbury.

Page 57 - Building of Memorial Hall. The lady holding the cup facing camera is Gladys Williams (she lived in Glebe Road)

Page 125 - Katrina and Wendy Setterfield (they lived in Westbury Lane)

The Book is a lovely keepsake for me. When my father remarried a lot of photographs and letters were lost, so all my memories are in my head. My suster Linda said I was to write them down before I got dementia (her joke as I am older than her)