

Account of Purley on Thames

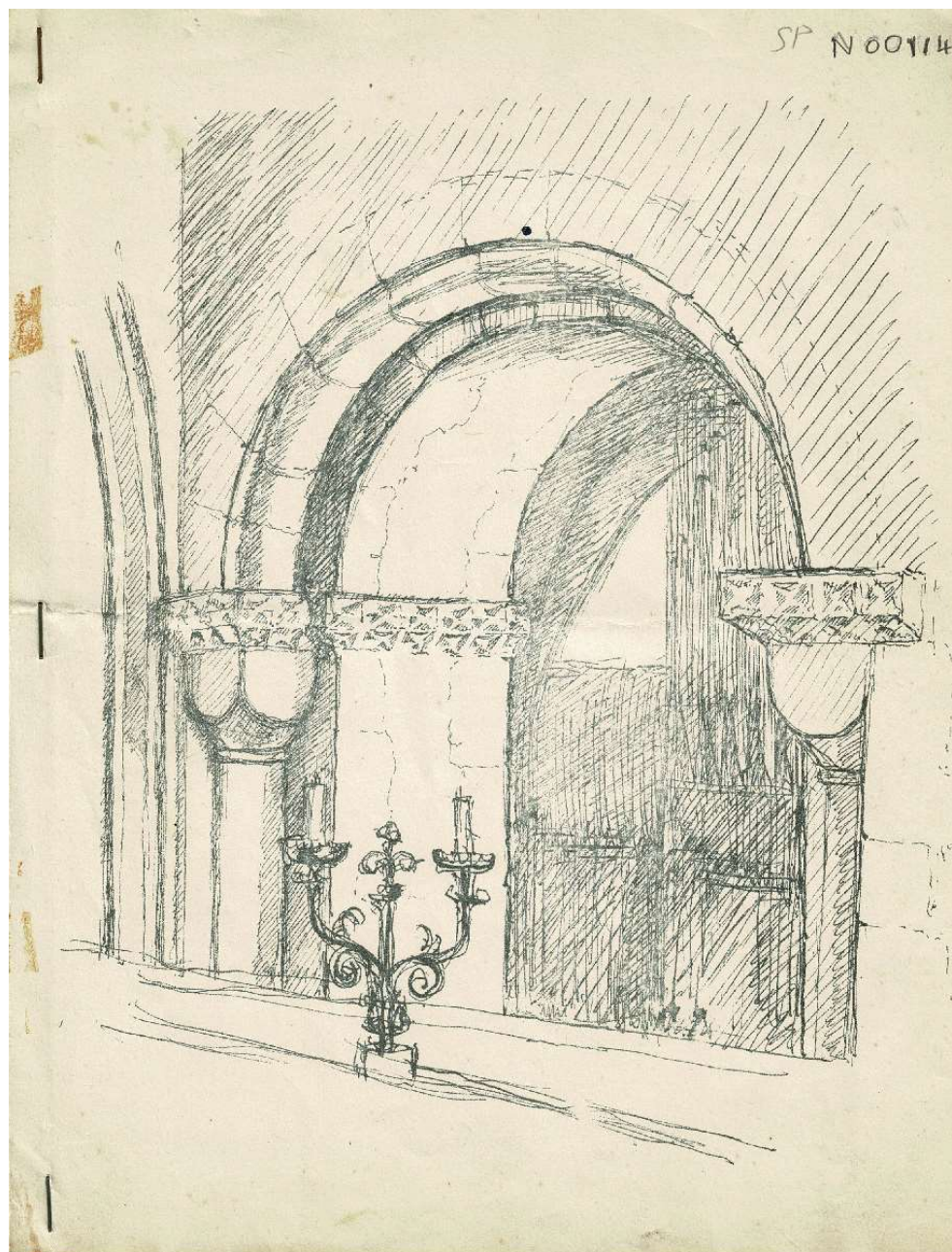
A Short History of St Mary's Church

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By The Reverend Harold Hawkins 1962.

This incorporates two drawings by Sybil Pryor - of the Norman Arch (M061403) and the Norman Font (M061xxx)

The original is stored as N001148



A SHORT HISTORY OF THE
PARISH CHURCH OF
ST. MARY, PURLEY.

FOREWORD

Mr. William R. Fisher, when he was Secretary of the Parochial Church Council obtained much of the interesting information contained in this short History of St. Mary's Church, Purley, and we both hope that it will be useful and of interest to visitors to our ancient and lovely Church, as well as to those who live in Purley.

The proceeds from the sale of this booklet will be given to our Church funds, and I hope that those who read it will come to our Church when possible to join with us in the worship of God.

Will you please remember that it is God's house and churchyard, and say a prayer for us and for yourselves before leaving.

May God bless you always.

H.F. Hawkins.
(RECTOR.)

1962.

PURLEY PARISH CHURCH

The Parish of Purley according to statutes of the Board of Agriculture, 1905, consists of 862 acres of land, which at that time comprised 471 acres of arable land, 375 acres of permanent grass, and 15 acres of woods. The Common Land was enclosed in 1856.

The derivation of the name "Furley".

In the 11th Century	it was known as	Forlei
" " 12th	" " " "	Furlai
" " 14th	" " " "	Furle
" " 16th	" " " "	Purlew
" " 17th	it came to be known by its present name	of Furley.

Purley Parish lies west of Pangbourne and is bounded on its northern and eastern sides by the River Thames. The nearest Railway Station is at Tilehurst.

Purley Park is divided into two parts by British Railways. The house is a large Georgian building of Portland stone in Italian style. The Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin is situated in the park just above what used to be a ferry called Furley Ferry.

The other large house in the Parish formerly known as Hyde Hall, now known as Furley Hall is partly situated in the Parishes of Purley, Sulham and Pangbourne, and used to belong to a former Rector of Sulham, Rev. H.C. Wilder, but has now been sold. It is an early 17th century mansion of brick and stone and the famous Warren Hastings stayed there whilst awaiting his **trial** for impeachment.

The Church of St. Mary consists of a modern chancel with north vestry and organ chamber, nave, north aisle, a 17th century West Tower measuring internally 9'6" by 9'8" and a modern South Porch.

The Church was entirely rebuilt in the year 1870, with the exception of the tower. The materials of the church are flint with stone dressings. The early 12th century chancel arch of the former building has been reset and incorporated into the

north wall of the chancel, and it now spans the opening into the organ chamber (see illustration). It is of two square orders on the south face, the soffit of the outer order being moulded with a half round, and the jambs have shafts with moulded bases, cushion capitals and chamfered abaci carved with the nail head.

Some fragments of original 13th century work survive in the lancet window at the North East of the Chancel, and in the North doorway and window of the vestry and organ chamber. A late 15th century window of three cinquefoiled lights under a four centred head, now serving as the East window of the vestry completes the catalogue of the structural survivals from the former Church.

The West Tower dated 1626 is of stone faced with red brick, with external dressings of stone. It is in three recessed stages with an embattled parapet and moulded cornice; on the East, South and West faces of the cornice respectively are two gargoyles, and on the North face is one gargoyle only placed centrally.

The tower arch is two centred and of a single chamfered order.

The West window of the ground stage is of two uncusped lights within a square head.

The ringing stage is lighted on the West by a modern window of two trefoiled lights. The belfrey is lighted on all four sides by plain square headed openings.

In the exterior of the South wall of the ringing chamber is a stone slab on which is carved the date 1626, and a quartered shield of the arms of Sir John St. John, which are St. John quartered with Poynings and Tregoze.

The Bells

There is a ring of six bells.

Treble by Thomas Ganaway, 1778.

The Second is inscribed "Prayse ye the Lord", and is dated 1635.

The third is inscribed "Prayse ye the Lond", and is dated 1629.

The fourth is also inscribed "Prayse ye the Lord", and is dated 1627.

The fifth was recast in 1787 and the tenor is inscribed "Lord Grandeson", and dated 1629. S.R.O.S.

Brasses and Mural Tablets

In the East wall of the organ chamber is a brass commemorating William Noble, son of Thomas Noble of Rearsby, Leicestershire. The inscription states that he was late parson of Brooksby and Vicar of Queensborough, Leicestershire, and that he died 6th October, 1644.

In the North wall of the Tower is an elaborate mural tablet to Anne, the wife of Edward Hyde, afterwards Lord Clarendon, and **daughter** of St. George Ayliffe, Knight of Grittenham, Wilts. She died 2nd July, 1632, aged 20. Above her is a shield of arms, and she is holding a baby in her arms.

In the same wall is a tablet to Jane, daughter and heir of John Iwardby, wife of John St. John.

On the South wall of the chancel is a plate to the memory of a Rector - the Rev. John Henry Dudley Matthews, M.A., who was drowned on 20th December, 1914, whilst crossing the Thames above the weir at Mapledurham lock late one Sunday evening when he was returning home after preaching in Mapledurham church.

Another mural tablet is to the memory of Edith Sherwood of the China Inland Mission who was killed in the Boxer rising at Chekiang in 1900.

From another age comes a sculptured group by Joseph Mollekins in memory of one who died in the Bahamas.

Cecil Aldin, a well known painter of hunting scenes who lived from 1870 to 1935, is commemorated on a brass plate on the South wall of the church.

In the churchyard, and to the North and West of the Tower is the tomb (surrounded by railings) of Thomas Canning 1755 - 1825, brother of the Prime Minister, George Canning.

An Almsdish inscribed the gift of Frances Twysden, spinster, daughter of Sir William Twysden, Baronet, of East Peckham in Kent, to the Parish Church of Furley, Berkshire 1735, bearing the date letter of 1683, and there is a flagon of 1871.

Patronage. The Advowson belonged at first to the Lords of the Manor. Purley Magnor (Great) Manor belonged to Edward the Confessor.

1042-1066 it was held in fief by Eristleward on payment annually of 20/- to Edward at Windsor Castle. It was held by Theodoric the Goldsmith at the Doomsday Survey 1086.

The Advowson was valued at £4. 6s. 8d., in 1291, the Abbot of Reading receiving 2/-. In the 14th century the Patronage belonged to the College of St. Edmund of Salisbury. In 1539 approximately, the Advowson was taken into Henry VIII's hands at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries when the living was worth £17. 17s. 3½d., and the Provost of the college paid a pension of 20/-. In 1546 it was given to William St. Barbe. In 1595, the Church was described as a Parsonage inpropriate, sometime belonging to the dissolved college of St. Edmund.

In 1623 the Living was a Rectory. The Patronage upon the demise of St. Barbe reverted to the Crown until 1822. In 1822 the Patronage was given to the Lord Chancellor who is the Patron at the present time.

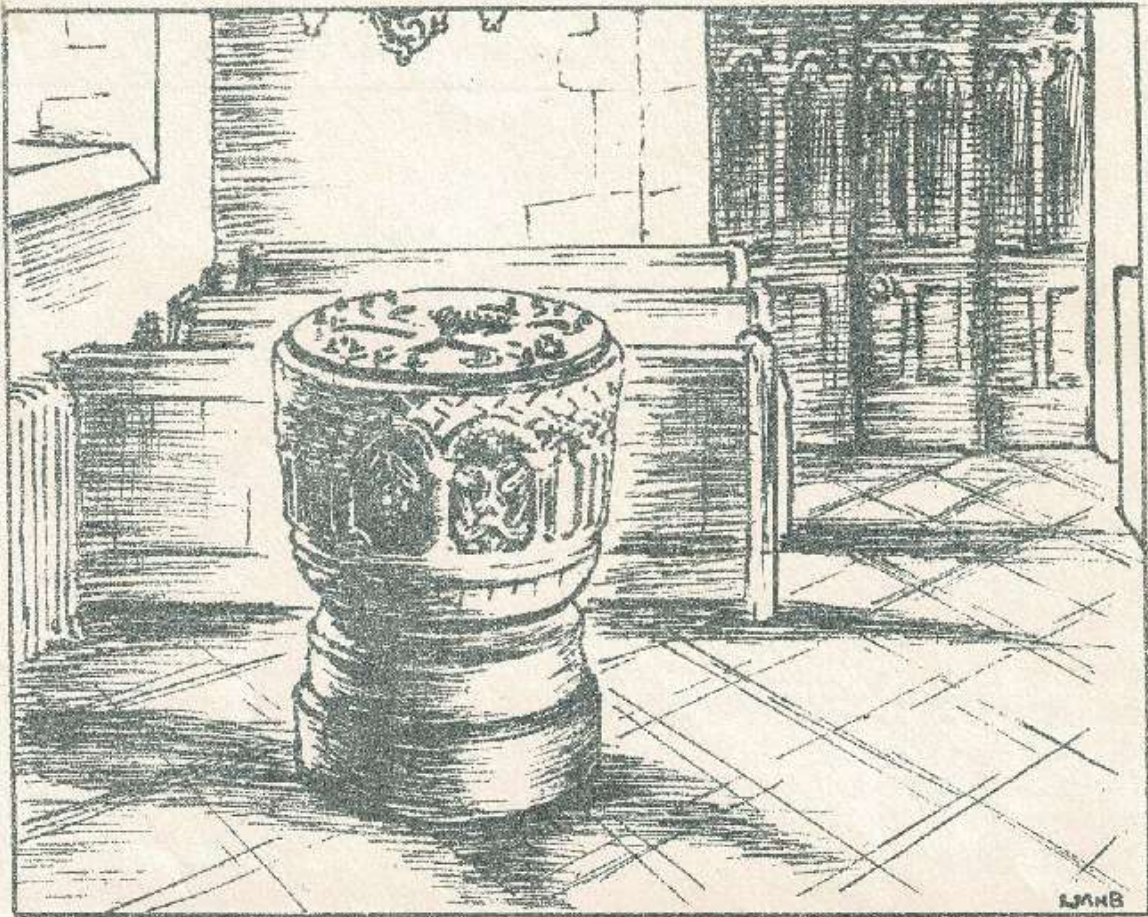
Registers

The older Registers are kept in Berks Record Office, Shire Hall, Reading.

Registers of Baptisms, marriages and burials 1662-1773, marriages 1622-1754. At the front there is a list of "Trophy Money" collected in 1707; a full list of churchwardens and overseers 1662-1773. Three volumes in all, 1663-1908. Accounts, overseers, surveyors, one volume 1825-1914. In 1711 there is an interesting memo of a case brought against the Rector by George Blagrove "in a pique for not keeping and Bull for ye use of ye Parish".

The most recent registers in the Church safe are as follows :-

<u>Baptisms</u>	One volume 1813 - 1948
	" " 1948 - still in use at the present day.
<u>Marriages</u>	One volume 1813 - 1839
	" " 1838 - still in use at the present day.
<u>Burials</u>	One volume 1814 - still in use at the present day.



The Stone Font is very unusual (see illustration). It is of the early 12th century and is tub shaped with a moulded base. Surrounding the bowl is a highly enriched arcade of semi-circular interlacing arches with a narrow band of chevron ornament above. In the centre of the east side two wider bays are formed in the arcading by the omission of the alternate pilasters with their arches. In one of the panels thus formed is a head, probably intended for the head of our Lord, and another panel is filled with interlaced work.

The Holy Communion Plate consists of a chalice and paten both inscribed. The gift of Frances Hawes to the Parish of Purley in Berkshire 1733, and bearing the date letter of the same year.

Roll of Parsons and Rectors of St. Mary the Virgin, Purley.

- 1566 Richard Boston.
1623 Randall Wright (died).
1623 Richard Watts
1661 Daniel Reynor
- 16.12.1662 to 14. 9.1670 Thomas Blagrove (died)
15. 9.1670 to 20.11.1684 Thomas Blagrove, Jr. (died)
27.11.1684 to 24.10.1719 William Gotswicke, A.M. (died)
(No record of Rector 1719 - 1723).
1719 to 23.12.1723. Thomas Toovey, S.F.B., exchanged
living for Swincombe, Oxon.
- 24.12.1723 to 29. 8.1741 James Harrison (died). He built
the Parsonage House (now the Old Rectory).
30. 8.1741 to 15. 4.1766. Christopher Wells. B.D. (died)
10. 6.1766 to 3. 3.1787. Benjamin Skinner. A.M. (died)
1. 6.1788 to 1800. John Cooper (resigned)
23. 8.1800 to 11.11.1844. Charles Manesty (died)
28.12.1844 to 1875. Richard Palmer
1875 to 1881 Charles Henry Travers.
17. 3.1881 to 1899. Matthew Fowley.
- No rector appointed until 1902.
- 1902 to 20.12.1914 John Henry Dudley Matthews. M.A.
(Drowned in the Thames while crossing, see page 3).
4. 4.1915 to 1924. Richard H. Fring.
27.12.1924 to 15. 5.1927 Charles H. Coe (He sold the Old
Rectory and built the new one).
- 13.11.1927 to 21.12.1931. A.G.E. Harris-Rivett. (Exchanged
livings with Rev. E.E. Skuse).
22.12.1931 to 1956. Ernest Edwin Skuse Lth.
7.11.1956 to 21.11.1960. William Henry Morton, B.Sc.
1. 6.61. Harold F. Hawkins, Lth. Hon. C.F.