

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## Some Naughty Boys

R200625 3/7/2019

*An article by Jean Debney in the series From my History Notebook article 27 published in PPN September 1982*

### 27: SOME NAUGHTY BOYS

The School Log Book is an interesting source of reports on boys' misbehaviour and the teachers' attempts at discipline as the following selected entries show:

14 June 1876 - Several children absent in the afternoon through Thomas Weller and William Pocock taking an untrue message to the Rector respecting a promised half holiday.

30 June 1876 - Two boys kept in the whole of the dinner hour for playing truant.

12 December 1882 - Boys kept after school for throwing stones.

12 May 1892 - On Tuesday morning during playtime some of the boys quarrelled and fought. Their mothers who live opposite came and took two of them home. Their mark was cancelled in consequence.

30 September 1892 - Inflicted corporal punishment on five of the bigger boys for wilful disobedience and causing damage to the shrubs in the playground.

21 September 1892 - Thomas Burgess (aged 11) was very disobedient, he absolutely refused to stand out of his class; after using all other methods the Mistress was forced to resort to corporal punishment - he was very violent, threatening to kick the Mistress and struck at her with a ruler. He was shut in the class room for

one hour alone, where he resorted to a filthy trick.

23 September 1892 - Thomas Burgess has been most exemplary in his behaviour since Wednesday ....

From another source I found the story of a case of naughtiness with more serious consequences when 13 year old George Hamblin was brought before the Magistrates in the Quarter Sessions Court on Saturday, 12th April, 1851. The case was reported in the Berkshire Chronicle, which described him as a "Ragged little urchin, with the appearance of a 'soft place' in his head". He was born in the village in 1837, the 5th of eight children of Matthew and Sarah Hamblin. By 1851, George was earning a living as an agricultural labourer and still lived with his parents in the "Old House, Purley Village". (I have not yet been able to identify which house this is for certain).

On 10th April, he had placed an "iron joint plate and two stones" on the railway line at Purley, "thereby endangering the safety of persons conveyed thereon". George admitted the offence and the iron plate was produced in court: it was "completely severed in two... probably the 'Express' had passed over it, for had it been an ordinary train, no doubt it would have thrown it". He was fined £5 with 8s 6d (42½p) costs, which he was quite unable to pay and so was "committed for six weeks" - i.e. he was sent to Reading Gaol where he would have mixed with hardened criminals, which is not a very good start in life for a boy who seems to have been somewhat retarded.

Jean Debney





















