

Account of Purley on Thames

The Josey Family

R200659 13/7/2019

An article by Jean Debney in the series From my History Notebook article 79 published in PPN March 1988

79. The Josey Family of Purley

John and James Josey were born in Aldworth, Berks in 1797 and 1804 respectively. In 1825 John married Harriet Chapman in Purley and four years later his brother James married Ann, Harriet's sister - two the daughters of John and Phoebe Chapman who had come to Purley, probably from Frilsham, Berks about 1806. John and Harriet had five children baptised in Purley, losing one as a baby and James and Ann had six, losing three. In common with many of their neighbours, John and James were farm labourers and most of their sons also worked on the land. Although they could not write, their wives could and so could at least two of their sons. The two couples spent the rest of their lives in Purley and, like many other families at this time, their children and grandchildren only retained links with the parish while the old people were alive.

John's eldest daughter, Eliza, went to London where she married Thomas Herridge from Purley and their story has been told already (1). His third child, Thomas, became a soldier and lived for a while with his sister Eliza in London. After marrying his cousin Harriet Wickens (their mothers were sisters), he moved to Aldershot, then Ireland and was back in Purley with his wife and three children by 1871. In 1876 Thomas's children were pupils at Purley

School and Walter, the eldest aged 10, was punished, with his 2nd cousin, James Josey also 10 and Edward Kirk the blacksmith's son, for throwing stones in the playground. Two years later, although Walter (and Edward Kirk again) had recently been "punished for disobedience", he won the "Diocesan Prize" in July and the following year the Inspector commended his work.

John's youngest son, also John, married Esther Lawrence in Purley in 1863. In 1871 they lived in Purley Street with their two young children, who were baptised in Purley, plus his father and her grandmother, Caroline Lawrence, both widowed and both paupers.

In 1851, Jane aged 16, the eldest of James' surviving children, was working in Pangbourne as a housemaid while her younger brothers and sisters were at home in Purley Village with their parents and grandfather, the now widowed John Chapman.

James' only surviving son, Charles, married Jane Lawrence in Purley in 1865. Esther and Jane Lawrence, daughters of John Lawrence, were born in Padworth about 1839 and 1847 and were probably half-sisters. Esther's mother, Marianne, was buried in Purley in 1867 aged 54. Charles and Jane Josey had seven children, of whom the second, also called Charles, died of diarrhoea aged 2 with his aunt Harriet Josey "in attendance". Charles' children attended Purley School with their 2nd cousins: James, the eldest, was involved in the playground naughtiness with Walter, 8 year old Arthur's work was commended in 1879 and their younger sister Sarah Ann won needlework prizes of 2s6d (12½p) and 2s (10p) in 1880 and 1883. By 1881 James and his family had moved from Purley Street to Long Lane, Tilehurst where the youngest three children were born and 15 year old James obtained work as a carter.

The first of the old folk to die was Harriet Josey aged 61 in 1861. Her widower, John, continued to live in Purley Street with son John, wife and grandchildren until he died of "decay of nature" in January 1873 aged 75. Brother James and his wife Ann continued to live alone a few doors away and in 1881, when both in their seventies, they even had two elderly lodgers. The final months of

their lives were spent in the Bradfield Union workhouse where they died within three weeks of each other in January 1884 aged 78 and 77. All four were buried in Purley but no stone marks their graves. Some of their descendants continued to live in nearby Tilehurst and Reading, but no further links with Purley have been found.

(1) See Purley News Nov. & Dec. 1987.

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