

Account of Purley on Thames

The Cottages on the Purley Park Estate

R200686 21/7/2019

An article by Jean Debney in the series From my History Notebook article 49 published in PPN April 1985

49 - The Cottages on Purley Park Estate.

When Purley Park was put up for sale in 1920 the estate included nine cottages in the village. Today only three of those dwellings remain: Purley Post Office (now Lichfield Cottage), Yew Tree Farm Cottage both on the Oxford Road, and Jasmine Cottages in Purley Village. All the rest have been demolished. The Post Office and Stone Croft were the only two named in the Sale Catalogue from which this information has been obtained, the remainder were identified from the map accompanying it.

Purley Post Office, described as being "old fashioned" contained a sitting room, kitchen, scullery and cellar, 3 bedrooms and an attic, together with a "substantial" shed and a large garden. It was let to William Pocock (together with some land) for £14 10s (£14.50) a year.

Yew Tree Farm Cottage on the adjacent site was "brick, flint and thatched" in 1920 as it is today. It had an entrance porch, a large living room, a kitchen with an open fireplace, 2 bedrooms, a wash house and a store shed. Outside was a large brick, timbered and tiled barn (still there), a stable and an orchard and paddock of more than an acre. Thomas Pocock was the "very old-standing tenant" at £6 12s (£6.60p) a year, but the property was felt to be worth "considerably more".

Next door along the main road, on a site which now forms the new entrance to Beech Road, stood a large "old fashioned brick, flint and thatched double-cottage" known as Stone Croft. It had 2 living rooms and 4 bedrooms, a wash house, larder and store, with a number of fruit trees in the large garden, and was let to Horace Pocock for £10 a year.

On the opposite side of the road a pair of cottages called Well Cottages each had 3 rooms, outbuildings and "good" gardens. These were let with other land, to Robert Stevenson Saunders, a farmer in Purley, for £10 a year.

Jasmine Cottages in Purley Village were described in 1920

as being "picturesque". Each had an entrance porch, living room, 2 bedrooms and a wash house. There was an earth closet and a well. Messrs Clark and Norris were the tenants at 3s (15p) and 4s (20p) a week respectively. On the corner site opposite were a pair of "old fashioned" brick, tiled and gabled cottages each having a living room, scullery and pantry with 3 bedrooms. In the garden were brick built stores and coal houses, an earth closet and a well. A pair of modern brick houses are now on this site.

Near Purley Church and within the Park was a Gardener's Cottage with 2 acres of kitchen garden, vinery, peach and forcing houses, a potting shed, fruit and stoke houses, a vegetable house and piggeries. The whole area was surrounded by a wood. The brick and tiled cottage had a parlour, living room, 3 bedrooms and a scullery and by 1926 it also had a "WC". Church Mews and Riverside Drive now cover this area. The pair of brick, tiled and thatched Entrance Lodges to Purley Park on the Oxford Road each had a living room, 2 bedrooms and wash house (the west lodge also had a kitchen). Despite being Listed Buildings they were demolished and the site is now swallowed up by the Westwood Field estate. In 1920 they were connected to the water mains.

Historically the Blacksmith's Shop is very important to the economy of a village and in Purley it stood at the corner of Long Lane and the Oxford Road. A brick and tiled building, it had a living room and 3 bedrooms, together with a scullery, wash house and a "good smith's shop" adjoining. There was a well in the garden. In 1920 it was let to J Kirk, the blacksmith, for 5s 6d (27½p) a week and was thought to be a good site for a "motor garage or petrol station." It was eventually bought by the Council and demolished in 1936 for road widening at the junction now controlled by traffic lights.

Close perusal of the above will reveal that compared to the modern luxuries of central heating, sanitation and bathrooms, etc in Purley Park Mansion, these small dwellings had to make do with primitive wells and earth closets. How different from the amenities that we take for granted today.

Jean Debnay

