

Account of Purley on Thames

Tenants of Purley Magna in 1793

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72. The Tenants of Purley Magna in 1793

Recent access to some of the STORER papers still in the hands of the family has revealed many new details about Purley's history. When Anthony Morris STORER I bought the manor of Purley Magna in 1793, he created an estate book. In it are listed the fields of the 405 acre "Purley Farm", as it was then called, their acreage, land use and value.

Also listed as part of the farm were 8 cottages, their condition, tenants, annual rent and size of garden. Comparison of this with information in the manorial Court Baron held in October 1786 and a copy map of the same year, shows what changes had taken place in those seven years.

Of the eight cottages, seven were near the church (i.e. Oak Tree Walk and Park Walk area) and the 8th, the blacksmith's shop on site No. 1, was described in 1793 as "opposite the common field called Lutmore" (an area north of the railway between New Hill and Purley Lane): i.e. at the SE corner of Long Lane and the Oxford Road, where it is said to have stood since the early 17C until demolished for road widening in 1936. Widow SIMMONS occupied this property in 1786 and 1793; in the latter year she paid £6 rent for the house, which was in good repair, the shop and garden of 28 perches.

John GREEN, a shepherd, lived with his wife and children on site No.2. He paid £2.10s rent for his cottage which was in good repair and a garden measuring 1 rood 2 perches.

On the 3rd site John NEWBERY was the tenant in 1786 of a house and garden measuring 1 rood 12 perches. His wife Sarah died in January 1787 and he died in October 1789. A descendant of this family has told me that someone "fled to Pangbourne with only a few sheep to his name" after "losing a law-suit". Was this John's son who tried to claim the lease of the cottage as his right but was refused? By 1793 the tenant was Barnard BALLARD who paid £2 2s rent; he was first recorded in Purley the previous year.

The tenant on the 4th site is puzzling. In 1786 it was William GUTTERIDGE, but the map and 1793 survey names Benjamin GUTTERIDGE. A William lived in Purley until his death in 1789 and Benjamin may have been his son; he paid £2 rent for the 38 perch garden and house which was in "poor repair".

Widow DENCH's house on site no. 5 was in "very bad repair" by 1793. Her tiny garden measured only 33 perches and her rent was £1 15s. She had been a widow since 1776 and had probably lived there since moving from Pangbourne with her husband and family about 1752. She died three years after STORER's purchase.

In 1786 William LUKEMAN lived on site no.6 in a house and garden of 36 perches. In 1793 the rent charge was £1 10s but the cottage was described as "Late" William LUKEMAN's, "uninhabited ... much out of repair and will cost at least £20 to make it tenantable". Where William lived until he died in Purley in 1830 is not known.

Site No.7 was the largest measuring 2 roods 25 perches and was occupied by Benjamin HUMPHRIES. The house was in good repair in 1793 and had an orchard as well as a garden. Benjamin lived in Purley from about 1770 to 1811 and was Parish Clerk from 1792 to 1807.

The last site, No.8, a cottage and garden measuring 1 rood 19 perches was valued at £1 10s. In 1786 it had been occupied by Widow HAINES whose husband Thomas had died in 1785. In 1793 it was described as "late Widow HAINES" and was "almost down (with) no fence round it, will cost at least £30 to put it into repair for a tenant" and had "not been inhabited for some time". Since she did not die until 1795, like William LUKEMAN, where did she live in the meantime?

NOTE: $\frac{1}{4}$ acre = 1 rood = 40 rods, poles or perches

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