

# ***Account of Purley on Thames***

## ***Purley in 1854***

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*An article by Jean Debney in the series From my History Notebook article 68 published in PPN January 1987*

### 68. Purley in 1854

Information about Purley can be found in 3 directories published in 1854: Kellys, Billings and Macauleys. As mentioned last month, information found in these sources may vary and is not always accurate; a comparison of the entries in two are given below. Macauleys only has an alphabetical list of Berkshire residents, from which a search was made for Purley folk. Only the most important are mentioned in any directory.

#### KELLYS

PURLEY is a small village 4 miles NW of Reading in the Hundred of Reading. It is pleasantly situated on the bank of the Thames.

The living is a rectory in the diocese of Oxford and gift of the Lord Chancellor, value £300 p.a. The Incumbent is the Rev Richard PALMER, MA. The CHURCH, dedicated to St. Mary, is situate nearly a mile from the village, is of Norman architecture (1) and has a small tower.

Here is a small FREE SCHOOL built and supported by the rector. The population in 1851 was 165(2) and the area in acres 840.

#### GENTRY

Rev Richard PALMER, Rector

Anthony Morris STORER, Esq, (3) of the Bellisle House

is Lord of the Manor.

Frederick WILDER, Esq, Purley Hall (His property and residence)

### TRADERS

Mrs. Mary HERRIDGE, Mistress of the Free School  
William POCOCK, shopkeeper  
Edward SHERWOOD, farmer, Viners Farm  
John SIMMONS, shoeing smith.

### BILLINGS

PURLEY is a small Parish and retired Village, 4 miles distant from Reading.

The Lord Chancellor is patron. Rev Richard PALMER, MA, Rector. The CHURCH is a very ancient structure, situate in the Park, near which the greater proportion of the house once stood. The tower is composed of chalk, cased with brick, and contains six bells. The church contains some fine tablets and a beautiful antique font. The communion table is covered with a very old and curious piece of tapestry. Services at 11 am and 3 pm.

The FREE SCHOOL is supported by the Rector. Average number of scholars 30. In 1851 (Purley) contained 220 inhabitants.

### DIRECTORY

Rev Richard PALMER, MA, Rector, Rectory  
Alexander L. POPHAM, Esq, Purley Park  
Anthony Morris STORER, Esq, Lord of the Manor  
Frederick WILDER, Esq, Purley Hall

### TRADERS

Thomas BURGESS, Parish Clerk  
Savery GRIFFIN, steward to Mr. SHERWOOD (4)  
Mrs. Mary HERRIDGE, Free School Mistress  
Wm SHACKEL, farmer, Purley Cottage  
John SIMMONDS, blacksmith

### NOTES

(1) It is now known that although there were and are Norman features in the church, most of the fabric was of later construction. The reference to the tapestry is extremely interesting and will be dealt with next month.

(2) The population from the 1851 Census Returns was 220

(3) This is the earliest reference to the name.

"BELLEISLE" after the family's estate in the West Indies. MACAULEY's list A.M. STORER Esq as of "Ely House, Purley" also known as "ELYHAM" in other sources.

(4) MACAULEY's shows Edward SHERWOOD Esq as of "Pangbourne", where he was also known to be living in 1851. He was the tenant farmer of VINERS but his steward, Savery GRIFFIN, was resident in the farmhouse both in 1851 and 1854.

#### SOURCES

Kelly's Directory of Berkshire (1854) in Rdg. Ref.Lib.  
Billing's Directory of Berks & Oxon (1854) in  
Rdg. Ref.Lib. & Brk.Rec.Off.  
Macauley's Directory of Berks (1854) in Rdg. Ref. Lib.

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