

Account of Purley on Thames

The Herridge Family

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Two articles by Jean Debney in the series From my History Notebook articles 76 and 77 published in PPN November and December 1987

76. The Herridge Family of Purley

Ten years after the upheavals caused by the enclosure of Purley Park new families began to move into the village, one of whom was the Herridge's. Although their family tree has been traced through 4 generations in 19th C Purley, this family only retained links with the parish during the lifetime of the original couple.

On 25th March 1806 William Herridge from Hampstead Norris and Leah Simpson were married in Purley. Neither could sign their name in the register. They had 10 children baptised in Purley: the first, Sarah, in June 1806 was followed by Hannah in 1809, Elizabeth 1811, Richard 1814, Edward 1816 died aged 10, William 1818 died aged 28, Ann 1821, James 1824, Thomas 1827 and John 1830. Leah was 45 years old when the last baby arrived. Of the surviving children, records exist only for Richard and Thomas.

After his marriage, William moved from Hampstead Norris and was listed as an inhabitant of Purley from 1808 until the Court Leet records ended in 1847. His sons were also listed, usually at the qualifying age of 12 before leaving the parish for work: Richard in 1827, James from 1837 to 1840 (when he was 16) and Thomas in 1839. William was a farm labourer, did not serve in any parish office and in 1851 was living on the Oxford Road, possibly in a tied cottage of his employer, Farmer Sherwood.

In August 1837 William, then aged 54, injured himself in a fall. His wife, Leah (52) was reaping, his sons

James (12) earned 3s a week and Thomas (11) 2s 6d; John the youngest was 7. He applied to the Poor Law Guardians for relief but, because he belonged to a "Medical Club" the details of which are not known, they only offered a loan of 4s 5½d which he reluctantly accepted and took 5 months to repay by occasional 1s instalments.

Their 4th child, Richard a farm labourer like his father, left the village in 1827 and returned by 1839 to marry Mary Green, who was also born in Purley. They rented half of "Martin's Tenement" (later called School Cottage and then Hemington) from the rector, Rev. Charles Manesty, from at least 1845. They had 5 children, 4 baptised in Purley (did the rector forget to enter the 5th?) Although she also worked as an agricultural labourer, Mary was the first known mistress of Purley Free School from about 1845 until 1871. Richard was only 53 years old when he died of "diseased lungs" on 14th May 1868, a few months before his mother.

Early in 1827, William and Leah's 9th child, Thomas was delivered by the parish midwife who was paid 5s. Thomas also married a Purley girl, Eliza Josey, and in 1851 the couple lived with their 4-year-old daughter and Eliza's brother in Garlick Hythe in the City of London. Thomas was a carman. Ill health may have caused him to return to Purley where he was buried on 5th August 1861 aged only 35.

An inquest held after William died suddenly on 12th January 1867 found that he had died of "natural causes". He was 83. His widow, Leah, died two years later aged 84 on 3rd February 1869 of "decay of nature with effusion of the brain". Both were buried in Purley churchyard but no stone marks their grave.

Although in 1870 a grandson, Charles, return to Purley for the baptism of his daughter and a grand-daughter Ann was living in Purley Street in 1871 with her widowed mother Mary, there are no further references to the family in the parish records after this.

Jean Debney

77. Some Descendants of William Herridge

As I was preparing last month's story about William Herridge I met Kevin, a direct descendant of William and Leah's 9th child Thomas, and he has just sent me information about the next five generations of this Purley family.

As mentioned before, Thomas Herridge, born in Purley in 1827, was living in St. James Garlickhithe in the City of London in 1851 and returned to Purley where he was buried in 1861 aged only 35. It is now known that he married Eliza Josey from Purley at St. Johns Paddington on 3rd February 1850 when he was a labourer and they were both living in Praed Street. Later he worked as a carman, or carter, in the Queenhithe Docks near Southwark Bridge and the family lived in the dark and narrow wharf lanes that ran between the river Thames and Upper Thames Street. They had 5 children including Elizabeth Ann ?1847, William Thomas 1852, John 1853, and Harriet Sarah 1859.

Further research is necessary to discover the reason for Thomas' return to Purley and what subsequently happened to his wife and children. It is possible that Harriet, who was only 2 when her father died, remained with relatives in the parish and may be the unmarried girl aged 21 who was listed in the Bradfield Union Workhouse in 1881.

Thomas and Eliza's 3rd child John who was born in Kennet Wharf Lane, Upper Thames Street, London on 11th December 1853, may have returned to Purley with his

parents in 1861 but nothing is known about his movements until he married Louise Foreman from Laxfield, Suffolk, on 3rd November 1874 at St. Mary Magdalen, Peckham, Surrey. He was a labourer from Nunhead and later an "engine driver stationary". John and Louise had 5 children, Alice Louise 1874, John Thomas 1881, Beatrice Sophia 1884, William 1886 and Alfred Alexander 1887; by 1885 the family were living in Plaistow, West Ham.

Kevin's grandfather, John Thomas Herridge, married in 1906 to Violet Mary Gent at West Ham Registry Office. He has traced her family back to a marriage in 1767 in Heigham, Norfolk. Between 1907 and 1932 John and Violet had 12 children, of which the two eldest died young and the 7th was Kevin's father.

John Thomas was a crane driver for the Port of London Authority but lost his job for drinking rum at work and then, because he was "blacklisted", could only get casual dock labouring work for the rest of his life. The family suffered appalling poverty in the struggle to bring up the remaining 10 children. They lived in the top half of a house in Canning Town where three of the boys shared a double bed with only coats for blankets. It is only recently that Kevin's father has felt able to talk about his childhood experiences, although his brothers have been more forthcoming.

During the London Blitz, John Thomas and his 15 year old daughter Violet Ann were killed by a bomb in October 1940. The rest of the family survived but had to be dug out of the air raid shelter and were later re-housed in Hornchurch, Essex. His widow, Violet Mary, remarried. All the surviving children married and had families as did their children - so Kevin tells me that he now has a large and complicated number of cousins scattered around, all of whom are descendants of William and Leah of Purley.

Jean Debney