

Account of Purley on Thames

Purley Gardens

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After the manor house was built at the top of the hill all the land to the north, except for the church and the meadows which belonged to Mapledurham House, and bounded by the Thames and Mapledurham Drive/New Hill became the private gardens of the Mansion. When the railway came a tunnel was constructed under the railway to continue providing access for the family. All this land has been referred to as Purley Gardens but its several parts have very different histories.

The major portion was intended to be sold off as a new house with extensive gardens but following a flooding incident it was split up into small camping plots and eventually became the Purley Park River Estate. The track to the church known as Church Walk became St Mary's Avenue and houses of the River Estate were built adjacent to it.

The land between St Mary's Avenue and the railway was originally crossed diagonally by a small stream emanating from the village pond and with a small pond in the centre. This was part of Bucknell's Home Farm. A caravan park was built at the western end as part of the solution to the housing crisis but Bradfield Rural District Council acquired the majority of the remainder as potential housing land.

Meanwhile a new shopping mall was being constructed in Reading which required extensive excavation and arrangements were made to dump the spoil in Purley adjacent to New Hill. When this was done Primrose Close was built on top.

Then Bradfield RDC came up with their design of a new housing estate reaching from the church to Primrose Close and this was duly constructed with Thames Reach built on the erstwhile caravan park and Chiltern View providing access to the rest. Many of the houses have been sold off to former tenants under Right to Buy legislation and the remaining former council house managed by Sovereign Housing

Where the old manor house had been was sold off as the Marina to the Unwins who also acquired the former kitchen garden and gardeners house. They eventually sold the garden for redevelopment as Waterside Drive and Church Mews.

The Bucknell's gave a small parcel of land to the church for use as a car park.

The old boathouse remained a separate house with access through the marina and was extensively rebuilt in 2010 after the death of the last owner and a subsequent serious flooding event.

