

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## A Bit of a Tell by Rita Denman

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Hello again. If you are walking down the lane I'll walk with you. The view of the railway from Purley Lane has changed drastically since the recent Network Rail electrification of the line but this area has a long history of change. At the bottom of the hill is a Queen Anne house built on much older foundations. The former house had connections with the Great Abbey at Reading founded by Henry 1st in 1121, and Purley appears in the Abbey records. The land on the Pangbourne side of the lane belonged to this house and extended to the top of the hill.

Brunel's railway link from London to Bristol was mooted in 1824 but due to all the problems of land ownership and construction the opening of the line from Reading to Steventon didn't take place until 1840. There were no mechanical diggers of course and the arrival of the railway navigators, or navies as they became known, who dug the cutting by hand must have had a big impact on such a small village as Purley. Eventually everything settled down and today we are very proud of our Brunel bridges.

The road has been made and is a lot higher than it used to be but otherwise the old village street is still recognisable. We are fortunate that the owners of the cottages go to great lengths to retain the historic elements and it is a great pleasure when the owners of the modern houses keep the village atmosphere. Modern transport can cause minor havoc when juggernauts from the motor way have to negotiate the bend at the bottom of the hill. There have always been such excitements in Purley and one was described by Fred Rawlins when he wrote " Wandering down the village one day we had to take to the ditch. Careering down the street reins trailing tailboard dragging and mangolds scattering over the road came Violet, a large dapple grey cart horse who deciding she had had enough for one day had bolted for home"

Mind how you go and I will look out for you again.







