

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## A Bit of a Tell

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*This is one of a series of short articles written by Rita Denman for the Purley Parish News November 2016*

Hello again. The last time we met we spoke of the St John family who were Lords of the Manor of Purley Magna. Through careful management and judicious marriages the St Johns flourished for many years, until Frederick 2nd Viscount Bolingbroke came into the inheritance. Born in 1732 Frederick was a wayward child and as he grew his waywardness became more serious and he was known as a spendthrift and gambler Frederick loved horse racing and he has a claim to horse racing fame as he owned Gimcrack the horse for which the Gimcrack Stakes at St Leger was named. Family estates were gradually sold off to pay for his debts and in the last quarter of the 18th century Purley Magna fell too. Frederick was a member of Whites Club in St James London and the Manor of Purley Magna passed through the hands of members of this club. Robert Mackreth the owner of Whites commissioned a map of the Manorial estate in 1786 and a copy, which is a wonderful illustration of Purley at that time, is in the Project Purley archives.

Eventually Purley Magna was acquired by Anthony Morris Storer also a member of Whites Club. His family owned sugar plantations in Jamaica. Belle Isle was the name of their estate in Westmorland and Jamaica and was used as the name their new farm house in Purley which still stands on the main road. Anthony Morris envisaged a more elegant residence than the farm and farmhouse by the river and was also concerned about flooding. The new mansion at the top of the hill was designed by James Wyatt. Storer wanted it to be finished with Portland Stone in imitation of Basildon Park. Due to the site of the mansion the turnpike road was pushed further south and two thatched lodge gates were built on the south side of the road. We believe that it was at this time that the Purley ale house, The Red Lyon was demolished.

The new mansion was built after the death of Anthony Morris between 1800 and 1805 but to his specifications. It was inherited by Anthony Gilbert Storer. Purley Magna remained in the Storer family until the 1920s. Major Storer was Lord of the Manor at the time the village school was built. His irascibility is legendary although a different description was probably used at the time. He was very active in keeping trespassers off his land. A well known anecdote concerns the village ladies who were enjoying a genteel picnic by the river. He happened to pass as they were there and berated them for trespassing. Gathering up in the cloth all the picnic food, cups saucers and paraphernalia he threw the whole lot into the river The ladies, somewhat surprised by this outburst asked him to kindly thank his wife for the loan of her china. I hope you have enjoyed this peep into the past and look forward to meeting you again. Mind how you go