Account of Purley on Thames
A Bit of a Tell by Rita Denman

Hello again. The year seems to have passed quickly and once again we are preparing for Christmast-ide. In the 19th century Purley was a very small community but although life was hard they got together for various festivities. When the school was built it became the venue for village gatherings. The following are events that have been recorded.

In February of 1879, five years after the school was built Rev Travers organised a concert to be held in the schoolroom. The Log Book records the preparations and rehearsals that were held. Many of the participants were friends of Rev Travers, singers, pianists and a choir. He introduced each item with his own composition in the form of a monologue and in this he noted that visitors had to brave the waters surrounding Purley. Not an unusual event.

On the 18th January 1889 the only daughter of Major and Mrs Storer of Purley Park was married at St Mary's Church .It was a lavish affair and a full account appeared in 'The Lady' magazine. It was reported that the church was filled with ivy trails and red and white flowers. The wedding party returned to The Park for luncheon and at 7pm all the tenants and parishioners were invited to dinner in the large barn at Home Farm which at that time was situated on the site of Farm Close. The feast was followed by dancing and a miscellaneous entertainment of comic dancing.

In 1924 a village fancy dress party was held in the schoolroom. Guests of honour were Cecil Aldin and his wife Rita. The head huntsman of the West Berkshire Hunt who lived at Kennel Cottages was Mr Sheffield known in the village as Ikie. He attended in his huntsman uniform complete with hunting horn. A photograph taken of the event shows the villagers in their fancy dress. It is interesting to see the schoolroom as it was when it was built.

I hope to see you again in the New Year. In the meantime have a Happy Christmas and mind how you go.