

# *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 June 2017*

Hello again, By the time you read this it will be almost midsummer, but at the time of writing it is mid May. Have you heard the cuckoo in Purley this year? Have I just been unlucky not to have heard it? Just a few years ago, April 15th or thereabouts was the time to be able to stand in the garden to hear the cuckoo call. but it has been getting later and later.. At school in Sussex I learned about the manuscript of 'Sumer is Icumen In, sing cuckoo' which was found at Reading Abbey in the 13th century. The cuckoo's call and the herald of summer has been eagerly awaited for generation upon generation. Sadly the cuckoo call is not the only bird song that is being heard less frequently, if at all.. I was assured by the late Fred Rawlins that there were always nightingales in the scrub that grew near to the church until the 1960s.. Before the second world war, the BBC regularly broadcast the song of the nightingale accompanied by a lady playing a cello. When I came to Purley I was told that this event took place at Tutt's Clump not far from here. I have never seen a glow worm but it seems that they too lighted the Purley waysides.

Swallows were particularly attracted to the bell tower that was originally on the old school roof. Unfortunately the space for the bell rope also let through the bird droppings and the little bell tower was eventually taken down. However the old bell is in safekeeping in Purley. At one time the last field on the right as you go into Pangbourne was always full of lapwings. Have you seen them there recently with their handsome head feathers and distinctive call?

There are many aspects of a place that make it memorable. Past residents and children who grew up in Purley will remember different things. Perhaps the people or the school and church and houses. For others it will be the river and the countryside and warm summer evenings spent outside listening to the sound of the church bells coming across the meadows, or watching the bats fly until the the stars come out. We are fortunate that so many of these aspects are still here to be enjoyed.

There are blackbirds joining in the dawn chorus in my area and gold finches add their colour to the garden. They are definitely encouraged by the teasels I sowed in a wild area. Primrose yellow and the bluebells of spring are turning to summer white with hedge parsley and hawthorn in blossom. I hope that you will enjoy something memorable this mid summer time and I'll look out for you again. Mind how you go.