

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 September 2017

Hello, it's good to see you again after the summer break. I hope you made hay while the sun was shining.

We are fortunate that we still have a working farm in Purley and are able to follow the farming year. When the school was opened in 1875 Purley was an agricultural village and farming was labour intensive. At harvest time all the villagers including the children who were strong enough would be out in the fields helping with the hay making. This usually coincided with the school summer holiday but if the harvest was early or late, leave of absence was given. Purley Village School log book for 28th July 1876 reads 'Small attendance the whole week - children absent with leave to help their parents in the harvest field'.

In the past probably the first wild flower that children would learn to name was the buttercup when the golden cup was held under the chin 'to see if you like butter'. In the autumn, walks in the country were made interesting by gathering horse chestnuts for the game of conkers and the beautiful autumnal coloured fallen leaves were collected to press and put into a scrap book and there was always the possibility of finding a four leafed clover. In Berkshire snowdrops grow in profusion. In the old days there was a drift of these delicate winter flowers along the drive to Purley Park Mansion.

When the daughter of Major and Mrs Storer of Purley Park was married at the parish church of St Mary the Virgin on 15th January 1889, it was reported in 'The Lady' magazine. Ivy was the decorative theme and Head Gardener John Seaton and his staff built evergreen triumphal arches bearing suitable mottoes in the approaches to the house. The Church and the font was filled with ivy trails and red flowers. The long approach from the park entrance was carpeted in red. There were great celebrations at the Mansion and at 7pm all the tenants and parishioners were invited to a feast in the large barn at Home Farm, now Farm Close.

Mind how you go and I look forward to meeting you again.

