

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 2018

Hello Again, What a summer it has been. With so many events and commemorations, plus a heatwave 2018 will become a landmark year.

Many of our English garden plants have dried up with lack of rain and scorching heat but the lavender has thrived and attracted many bees. We sometimes take the wonders of the natural world for granted so it is good to help nature along by growing a plant especially for the bees at a time when their populations are suffering.

When the village school was opened in 1875 Purley was an agricultural village. Sometimes the children requested leave of absence from school and one of the reasons recorded in the school log book was 'leave to watch bees'. Many families kept bees which were a valuable asset. When the bees were about to swarm the children were given the task of watching them to see where the swarm settled so that the owner could go and collect it. It is noted in old writings that the owner of the bees should be clean, pleasant and gentle in manner and should approach the bees with a low voice.

In times past the bee was held in great esteem and it was the custom to keep the bees informed of family events. The owner would especially tell the bees about births marriages and deaths in the family. At that time it was thought that if the bees were offended they might leave the hive or fail to produce any honey. Today we have the benefit of science to understand the great importance of the humble bee. Do you have a space for a special plant for the bees in your garden?

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