

Account of Purley on Thames

Purley Horticultural Society

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Promoting interest in gardening activities through spring and summer shows, visits to gardens of interest, monthly evening talks (open to all). Trading Store with supply of gardening requisites at competitive prices – open Sat/Sun 10-11am, Feb-Oct. New members welcome – £3.00 per year. Join at Trading Store during opening times.

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A Brief History

The horticultural interests of the residents of Purley on Thames (and of certain adjacent parishes) have, for many years, been catered for by the Purley Horticultural Society, whose main aim is to promote interest in gardening activities by arranging talks, flower and vegetable shows, visits to gardens and supply of a wide range of gardening requisites. This Society, with a current membership of over four hundred households, dates back to 1969, when it began its existence under the aegis of the Memorial Hall Management Committee and its governing body was initially a Sub-Committee of the Hall Management Committee.

With an opening membership of 91, the Society started its trading activities in one of the storage buildings adjacent to the Hall and its first funds with which to purchase its opening stock were derived from loans by members. By 1978, the Society's activities had become sufficient to warrant the holding of a first annual general meeting of members.

As trading activities increased and membership grew, it became evident that better accommodation was needed for storage and plans were drawn up for a purpose-built trading store. Concurrently various fund-raising events were organised to raise the necessary cash. By 1980 sufficient money had been accumulated to proceed with the erection of a new storage building at the eastern end of the Hall car park. This would provide at least double the space the Society had hitherto been occupying in its original shed, but even so within a few years it became necessary to extend this new building by about 50%. The Society became a separate body with its own constitution, independent of the Memorial Hall, in 1982, but it still maintains close links with the Hall Management Committee on which it nominates a representative annually.

However, trading in horticultural items for its members is not the Society's only activity. The profits are ploughed back for the members' benefit, and during the winter months there is a regular programme of lectures provided free of charge to members, and a popular social evening in November. Flower and Vegetable shows, in conjunction with the Purley Women's Institute, open to members only, have been held twice a year since 1984. The Spring Show is held in April with classes for flowers, pot plants, floral art, cookery and handicrafts. The Late Summer Show, held in early September, has classes for vegetables and fruit in addition to the same groups of classes as in the Spring Show.

Any history, however brief, of the Purley Horticultural Society, would be incomplete without reference to the devoted and untiring efforts in its formative years of the late Reginald Ayers. He

was, until his death in 1989, the Society's Chairman and latterly its Life President, and in his memory a Challenge Cup bearing his name is competed for each year by the exhibitors at the Society's shows in the Memorial Hall. Thanks are also due to the many people who have helped in the running of the Society over the years, particularly George Critchell (Treasurer and Life President) and Bob Hawkins (Trading Secretary), as well as all who have helped in the Trading Store and at Shows, as exhibitors and stewards.

References

[1] (ref 8-18/4/08)

[2] Purley Parish News 7/70)

[3] PPN 2/75

[4] PPN 3/88

[5] PPN 12/84

