

Account of Purley on Thames

Disputes

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Introduction

Disputes have been a feature of human society since time immemorial. They rage fiercest between those who would seem to be most alike and can relate to almost any subject. The dispute may be between two individuals or there may be several involved. They may also be between public bodies.

In the history of Purley there have been many disputes, the ones which tend to be best documented are those concerning land title and rights followed closely by disputes about money. In some cases however an apparent dispute which comes to court is merely a mechanism for obtaining formal recognition of an agreement, thus it should not always be assumed that the parties were sworn enemies.

In this section the recorded disputes have been arranged in chronological order with a brief index at the end which indicates the year against the parties' names.

In most cases the story has been covered elsewhere in this account and a cross reference is provided

Grazing Rights in Purley (1248)

In 1248 at the Berkshire Eyre, John Vicar of Purley was sued by Roger de la Hide for having denied him grazing rights on a quarter or an acre of land which they held in common. He claimed that John had expropriated the land for himself and had prevented Roger's beasts from entering. Roger had claimed this as a right which he had held for some time as part of his tenement of Lething. The Jury agreed with him and ordered John to give him access. John was also fined 2 pence and was held in surety by Roger of Cropton and William de Bleys of Purley. (Ref 155)

Ownership of Purley La Hyde (1304-22)

Hugh de St Philibert was one of the knights of Edward I. He had been summoned to serve overseas with the king in 1297 and in the war against Scotland the next year. He had acquired the manor of Purley La Hyde after having been left the manor of Sulham by his mother Euphemia. Both manors had been let to Benedict de Blackenham, presumably because of Hugh's long absences. It had been granted to Benedict for his lifetime but the terms of the agreement specified that if Benedict alienated the land or left it to waste, then Hugh would regain possession. Hugh died in November 1304 and his son John was made a ward of the king.

This implied that the king could collect the revenues of his estates and when he came to enquire about Sulham and Purley La Hyde it was found that Benedict had sold them to Agnes de Somery. As a result part of the manor of Sulham was taken into the king's hands.

On July 6th 1305 at his court at Canterbury a quitclaim was examined by Edward I which had been made in favour of Benedict and his heirs relating to half the manor of Sulham, also a charter made later by Benedict to Agnes and her heirs. Agnes claimed the half portion of the manor of Sulham and said specifically she had no claim on lands in La Hyde, and Tilehurst, except that she had been asked to look after them for John de St Philibert.

As a result of the enquiry the king ordered that Agnes's other lands in Purley Pangbourne and Lething which had also been seized should be returned to her. Lething seems to be an early name for

Purley Parva but this is not certain.

On July 13th 1305 King Edward asked the sherriff of Oxford to hold a further enquiry to establish the circumstances under which the Quitclaim was made. This was held on August 20th and it was ascertained that the Quitclaim had been executed at Eton on a Saturday near to November 30th and that Hugh had died on the Monday following. Both Benedict and Agnes were present and they testified that the Quitclaim had been made because Hugh owed Benedict £100 in respect of rents of £60 pa for other lands in Berkshire.

Agnes died in 1308 and she was still in possession of Purley La Hyde. It went to her son John but in the following year, 1309 John de Drakensford was appointed Guardian of John de St Philibert and specifically as patron of the living of Sulham. Sir John de Somery had been trying to install Walter Maidenhatch to this living but he had been refused by Bishop Simon of Ghent. On 11th May John Drakensford presented Henry Stately but again the bishop refused and referred the matter to the new king (Edward II) who ruled that no-one should be installed until the dispute between the heirs of Hugh de St Philibert and Agnes de Somery had been settled. (ref 115)

It would seem that an uneasy truce was entered into as in 1317 John de St Philibert obtained a grant of Free Warren in his demesne lands in Sulham and when John de Somery died in November 1322 he was still holding lands in Sulham because the king ordered that the manor of Sulham should be given to his widow Lucy as her dower. (ref 44)

Walter Fachel's Debt (1329)

Walter Fachell was rector of Purley in 1329 and owed 22 marks to James de Ispan. Bishop Martival got him to pay 1 mark. For full details see the Church History

Recovering the Parsonage House (1572)

The Parish Bull (1707)

One of the ancient customs of this part of England was that the rector was supposed to keep a male animal to service the beasts of the poor. This often meant him having to keep a bull, a ram and a billy goat.

In September 1707 at the Court Leet in Tidmarsh George Blagrove of Tilehurst was chairman of the Jury. He had been renting Mr St John's farm in Purley and suddenly denounced the rector for not keeping a bull for the use of the parish. William Gostwicke the rector was ordered to pay a fine of 50 shillings unless he provided a bull by the 10th of March next.

The rector was incensed and consulted Sir Constantine Phipps who had been one of his pupils at Reading School and who was then Lord Chancellor of Ireland. He was advised that there was no law on the subject and if such an ancient right did exist it must be recorded in the Court Roll and re-established each year before the Jury. This clearly had not been done for many years and William engaged Moses Burley, an Attorney of Reading, to present his case. The matter was dealt with and all proceedings against the rector were dropped. (ref 27)

The Tithe on a Crop of Clover (1711)

refs 1 PPN (fmhn-42) A tithe dispute about clover 1711 (Jean Debney)

Farmer Scrace (1776)

Ref 9 11/3/76

Compensation for the Weir (1868)

The Purley Scandal (1908)

see under Mrs Rebecca Moule in the people section

Rights of Way (1923)

Parish Boundary 1953

Parish Boundary 1977-1990

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44 Close Roll

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