

Account of Purley on Thames

Cecil Aldin (1870-1935)

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Cecil Aldin was a noted artist who lived for many years at Kennelgates - now Bowling Green Farmhouse. He was Master of the South Berks Hunt and was particularly known for his drawings of dogs and horses and also for his scenes which were used to illustrate Christmas cards. Here are some articles about him.

PURLEY THE VILLAGE OF ARTISTS

Article in Purley Parish News March 1967 - anon

Let's be proud; Three artists of renown have lived in the village during this century . Bravo the Parish Council, which has honoured CECIL ALDIN by naming the new turning (1st left up Long Lane) Cecil Aldin Drive.

How many people in the village are familiar with the mural tablet in our church placed there to commemorate Cecil Aldin "and his great art"? Cecil Aldin lived at Kennel Gates and was Master of the South Berks Hunt. He was born in 1870 and died in 1935. His 'great art' consisted largely of Hunting and Coaching scenes and studies of dogs, the latter equalling the popularity of Louis Wain's cats. He also illustrated Kipling's Jungle books. Carry on Parish Council.

Give us Menpes Way and Hodgkin Hill (Instead of Purley Lane)

I REMEMBER CECIL ALDIN

By Phyll Rawlins published in Purley Parish News

Yes, I remember Cecil Aldin - a short, grey haired gentleman who used to walk down by the Post Office, round the path and back up the hill from the village with about a dozen dogs of all breeds, from a Wolf Hound down to a small Cairn, each one walking without a lead, but all staying to his heels.

Each year he held a Comic Dog Show in the field which is now Mr. Trentham's. He was also Master of the Berks Hunt. As a child I was sent with notes from Mrs. Hodgkin to Mrs. Aldin, and if I was lucky I was allowed to stay and see the dogs have their meal, each one knowing his or her own bowl. There was no fear in those days of being run over on the main road while I was on my errand, only by a herd of cows being driven to Reading Market or the horse drawn cattle cart carrying one cow.

Once I was allowed to go to the Studio to watch Mr. Aldin paint. It was a painting of "Crackers", a bull terrier, being warned beforehand "You must not speak but keep quiet."

His only son was killed in the First World War and he had a daughter called Chrissie. I have a photo of Mr. and Mrs. Aldin attending a fancy dress party in Purley School, also a book written by him.

Phyl Rawlins

Trenthams and Cecil Aldin

An article published originally in Trenthams News of June 1968 and reproduced in Purley Parish News

On the main Oxford Road in Purley, stands an immaculate maintained, attractive Georgian house with white walls and a grey slate roof. A decorous notice board at the main entrance announce G. Percy Trentham, Ltd.

The Company bought the 15 acre site in stages between 1951 and 1958 and has, since extended and modernised the buildings, replacing some with completely modern structures. These have been designed to harmonise with the older properties so that each sits easily amongst its neighbours whatever its age.

The previous owners were the South Berks Hunt and they called the place: "The Kennels" as it was here they kept their foxhounds, A little terrace of cottages where the Hunt servants lived recall the past. With their present name, Kennel Cottages. They were built of local brick in 1902 when the hounds were first moved here from a place with the unlikely name of "Worlds End", and only recently have their slate roofs been replaced with red tiles.

In 1914 the Master of the South Berks Foxhounds was one Cecil Charles Windsor Aldin, an artist, who earned his living largely through sketching animals and inns. Many a country pub has one of his prints on the wall and his fox hunting pictures tingle with reality. Devoted to hunting, Cecil Aldin took up residence at "The Kennels" shortly after becoming Master, the better to look after his hounds.

The World War was soon to break out and, as we tend to forget in these days of troop transport Planes and personnel carriers, the prime means of transport for the world's armies in 1914 was the horse. In the months leading up to the outbreak of the first World War each regiment appointed a number of Remount Purchasing Officers whose duty was to find and despatch a sufficient number of mounts to keep their regiment on the move.

Cecil Aldin was an R.P.O. and he set up "The Kennels" as a remount depot. Before long he had charge of several depots and, at one time, had 500 horses and mules available. One of his assistants was a certain Alfred Munnings who could not only look after horses but could paint them as well.

As the war dragged on and men became scarce for this kind of work, he took an exceedingly bold step of initiative. He persuaded some of the "huntin' ladies" of his acquaintance to keep their hand in and "beat the Kaiser" by acting as grooms at the remount depot. Before long the place was almost completely run by women and run most successfully.

Cecil Aldin continued hunting until prevented by arthritis. Then he moved to Mallorca where he sketched and wrote until his death in 1935.

In the Imperial War Museum are two magnificent canvasses by Cecil Aldin. One shows the interior of one of the oldest buildings in Purley - the tithe barn which is at least 500 years old, and stands on the Trentham estate. Tradition has it, however, that this, barn once stood down near St. Mary's Church near the Rector's house. At harvest time each cart passed through its two open doors to leave a tenth of its load as the Great Tithe.