

Account of Purley on Thames

A History of Purley Parish News

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By John Chapman - published in Purley Parish News Feb 2017

The first Purley Parish News appeared in 1933 under the Revd Ernest Skuse but lasted only a few years until 1938. It was revived by the Rev Harold Hawkins in 1960 and turned into a community magazine by the Revd Dereck Taylor in 1971. By some miracle, copies of the earlier editions have survived. The Berkshire Record Office holds copies of most of the issues and we were supposed to pass them a copy when a new edition came out but I don't know whether this has been kept up in recent years. Project Purley have an almost complete set and are attempting to scan each edition to place on their website.

It is interesting to read Ernest Skuse's leading article in the January 1933 edition:-

Among your New Year's good wishes we want you to include a sheaf for our Parish Magazine, which begins its life on the first day of January, 1933. Whether it will survive that day of birth depends on you who read this number. It is for that reason that we emphasize the possessive "our" in the opening sentence. Some of our reader will soon perhaps be writers in these local pages. Others - if the interest grows (like Topsy) - may be sending us contributions to a correspondence column. But all can be eager and even enthusiastic sharers in our new enterprise, the purpose of which, briefly stated, is to provide members of our community with a tangible link connecting us with each other and with our place of reverent, common worship to the glory and honour of Almighty God.

He goes on to note that Mr and Mrs Cecil Aldin have moved on, that Mr Day and Mrs Anderson have passed on and welcomes the new inhabitants of the Council Estate (Glebe Rd). We get information about the Mothers' Union, the Girl Guides, the School and the Church Choir who have had outings to the Zoo and the Isle of Wight. It ends with a list of Baptisms Funerals and Marriages in 1932.

The editions in the 1930s were typeset and printed locally on four, roughly A4 sized, sheets using a template provided by 'Homewords' which was a national magazine published by the Church of England on a monthly basis, copies of which were distributed with the Parish Magazine.

The magazines between 1932 and 1938 provide a fascinating record of goings on and personalities in Purley during a very peaceful period in our history.

The revival came in 1965 when the Revd Harold Hawkins re-started the magazine (185mm by 120 mm) with three sheets stapled together. It was cyclostyled with a hand drawn cover depicting a view of the church on the front and adverts on the back. As they had to use the same flimsy for every edition they had to handstamp the date on every copy. It had to be redrawn for the December 1969 edition as the Rector's phone number changed and the price was reduced from 5d to 4d. The contents were almost all about the Church with very little about the community and Home Words was included.

When Dereck Taylor arrived as Rector in January 1970 he set to re-launch it as an A5 Community magazine priced as 6d or 2 1/2 new pence. His first edition came out in March 1970. It was still cyclostyled but contained many more pages full of information about local societies and goings on. There was an immediate surge in readership with a distribution network of volunteers covering most of the parish. The price was rounded up to 3p and Dereck was always listed as the

editor although in fact Joan Wilcox, the church secretary did most of the work. When David Evans took over in 1975 Joan was officially listed as the editor and continued in this role until 1986 when she retired to live in St James Close in Pangbourne.

By the time Paulene Manning took over as editor from August 1986 the printing was being done professionally with a different black and white drawing on the cover done each month by Ray Herring. By 2001 the price had risen to 35p. From March 1986 the cover design was changed to a photograph of the church and from March 1989 a new photograph was used each month. A new church picture was reintroduced in February 1990 and this continued in use until December 1996 when new drawings were used.

Paulene Manning continued as editor from August 1986 to December 2002 when Matthew Slingsby took over. When he retired a number of guest editors were used until David Jordan took over in 2016.