

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## Newbury District Guide

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These Guides were issued on behalf of Newbury District Council at intervals of a few years over the period from 1974. Among other information there was a gazeteer of the villages and towns in the District.

### *1976 edition*

Purley is set beside a most beautiful winding stretch of the Thames. It is not seriously spoilt by the railway and the main road except that Purley Park on its high ground was divided by the railway from the church on low lying ground, which is now set about with bungalows.

Purley Hall, nearly a mile west of the village, is an early 17th century building of brick and stone, well placed among the trees and approached by an elaborate "Gothick" lodge in flint with cobweb windows. In 1786 it was rented by the Government for Warren Hastings to live in during his seven-years trial. Purley Park was built later, a large plain white building with an entrance framed by giant pilasters, all set amid dark woods. It is now a private school.

The church of St Mary, on the north side of the railway was largely rebuilt by Street in 1870, who retained the existing brick tower and re-set the Norman chancel arch. It is a plain simple building, with quite a fine Norman font. At the west end is a group of monuments, one of 1632 with a small stiff reclining figure of Anne Hyde and her young child, and another dated 1818 in which a good Grecian family group turns towards an urn on which is a portrait of the deceased.

The village has a memorial Hall built entirely by voluntary labour after the last war, and a new Recreation and Sports Ground, completed in 1968. This has facilities for games played by all ages.

### *1982/3 edition*

A Thames-side village between Pangbourne and Tilehurst, Purley shares its rather narrow riverside site with both the main road and railway - yet remains very attractive for all that. The village, now with a great deal of new housing development on both sides of the railway has a Memorial Hall that was built wholly with volunteer labour, and a recreation ground opened in 1968.

Purley Church, on the north side of the railway, is another of Street's designs for he largely rebuilt it in 1870 although he kept the original brick tower of 1626 and re-used the Norman chancel arch. A quite plain little building the church has a decorated Norman font and a number of monuments of interest. As well as its church, the village possesses two large and quite notable houses. The oldest is Purley Hall which dates from the early 17th century although it has later alterations and additions. The entrance hall contains wall paintings in the Thornhill manner; by the lake is a late Georgian summer house and by the entrance is a 'Gothick' lodge. The house was rented, from 1786, by the Government, for the use of Warren Hastings during his seven year trial. Purley Park, designed by James Wyatt, dates from about 1800 and is large plain house of Portland stone now used as a school.

### *1986/7 edition*

A Thames-side village between Pangbourne and Tilehurst, Purley shares its rather narrow riverside site with both main road and railway - yet remains very attractive for all that. The village, now with a great deal of new housing development on both sides of the railway has a Memorial Hall that was built wholly with volunteer labour, and two recreation grounds.

Purley Church, on the north side of the railway, is another of Street's designs for he largely rebuilt it in 1870 although he kept the original brick tower of 1626 and re-used the Norman chancel arch. Considerably enlarged in 1983, the church has a decorated Norman font and a number of monuments of interest. As well as its church, the village possesses two large and quite notable houses. The oldest is Purley Hall which dates from the early 17th century although it has later alterations and additions. The entrance hall contains wall paintings in the Thornhill manner; by the lake is a late Georgian summer house and by the entrance is a 'Gothick' lodge. The house was rented, from 1786, by the government, for the use of Warren Hastings during his seven year trial. Purley Park, designed by James Wyatt, dates from about 1800 and is large plain house of Portland stone now used as a home for disabled people.

### *1992 Edition*

*Text as for 1986/7 edition*





