

Account of Purley on Thames

Joseph Whiting - Friend of the Road

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By Honor Gutch Published in Purley Parish News in 1977

Resulting from a quick glance over a crumpled sheet from a "Mercury" weekly newspaper wrapped around my greengrocery, a happy surprise awaited me. Hurriedly I looked out my own copy and carefully scanned the pages until I came across the article headed "Old Joe Moves inside." My eyes widened as I read on. To make a long story short

The person referred to known to us as Joseph Whiting our friend of the road with his pram, has been an annual visitor to the Purley Post Office for the past 20 years my husband giving him a welcome and, if necessary, a helping hand with small repairs to the creaking pram. I've often, wondered: just what was inside it!

During more recent years, with clock like regularity, he has appeared on a sunny August day, presenting me with two one pint bottles - one for hot tea and one for hot water, at the same time accepting his favourite bite of bread and cheese etc., to sustain him on his tramp to Henley - his favourite rendezvous for camping in his tent after working in the open.

In August 1975 he obligingly posed for a colour photo outside the Post Office, a copy of which he was looking forward to receiving on his next visit. To our keen disappointment and concern, August 1976 passed with no sign of Joseph. As time went on I felt an urge to contact that most helpful denomination, The Salvation Army, on his behalf. However, with profound thanks to Mr. Leslie Blake of Henley, and to my favourite local newspaper, that step was not necessary. Mr. Blake had persuaded "Old Joe" to spend the winter at the Blue Mountains Home in Wallingford.

So now we can look forward to seeing both him and his pram, and perhaps a new cap to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee, long 'ere the summer ends. - you never know! What a tale he will have to tell! I'm sure he will like to see himself in colour - his picture has already been shown on the screen at the Purley Slide Club - he looks quite nice!

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