

Account of Purley on Thames

Our Anne Hyde

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An article by Jean Debney in the series From my History Notebook article 13 published in PPN August 1981

The Royal Wedding this month (July 1981) of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer has prompted the media to discover that the last English bride of a future English King was Anne Hyde who married James II while he was still in exile on the Continent. She bore him two daughters, Queen Mary, and Queen Anne. This Anne Hyde was the daughter, by his second wife, of Edward Hyde: who later became Lord Chancellor and the 1st Earl of Clarendon. It was Edward Hyde's first wife who was "Our Anne Hyde" and whose memorial is in the church.

Our Anne Hyde had a short and tragic life. Born early in the 17th century, the daughter of Sir George Ayliffe of Grittenham, Wilts, and Ann (nee St John) she was married during the winter of 1642 to Edward Hyde then 23 years old, and the son of Henry Hyde of Dinton, Wiltshire. Six months later, the now pregnant Anne and her husband were travelling to Wiltshire when she was taken ill with smallpox. Tradition says that she was taken to her relative's house, Hyde Hall (now Purley Hall) where she died on 2nd July 1632 aged 20, giving birth to a stillborn child. It is also possible that she could have been taken to St John's Farm, near Purley Church which belonged to her mother's relatives.

Anne was buried in the Chancel at Purley and her elaborate memorial depicts her lying stiff and recumbent, her arm resting on a skull and holding her child, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Above the inscription are the arms of Hyde, Ayliffe & St John. At first this memorial was set "into the south wall of the east window" of the chancel; later-it seems to have been moved on to the north wall of the chancel, and in 1870 it was placed into its present position hidden away on the south wall inside the tower,

Although apparently alone in the tower, Anne is surrounded by the memorials and gifts of her mother relatives and ancestors. On her left is a large gable with an almost illegible inscription in Latin - this early 16th century memorial to the Iwardbys and St Johns. Of the six in the tower, three are almost

ly-the-gifts, c5f the St. John family (two are dated and the third 1635) Who Were then Lords of the Manor Purley Magna. The coat of arms on the north exterior of the tower: dated 1626 are thought to be those of St John (Anne's Uncle) who lost three of his sons the King's service during the Civil War.

St John family were in possession of the Manor for 300 years; it was subsequently sold to

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