
History of PURBROOK PARK HOUSE from MANOR to GRAMMAR...

Purbrook Park School is a comprehensive co-educational secondary school situated in Purbrook, north of Portsmouth, Hampshire. The school has an enrolment number of 840 pupils, aged 11 through to 16. It became a trust school in April 2009.



History of PURBROOK PARK HOUSE...

The settlement of **Purbrook** seems to have had little recorded history before the 17th. Century, but the locality was named '**PUKEBROOK**' by the 13th century, and in 1710 was called **PURBECK HEATH**. This name means '**the Brook of the Water Sprite**' and it is probable that the present village takes its name from an area rather than a settlement, that is **Purbrook**, the land around the Purbrook, was so-called before there were people actually living there.

The origin of the brook and the springs is to be found in the light sandy deposit of the **Bagshot** sands, which here overlie the **London** clay. Rain falling on **Purbrook Heath** sinks into the sand until it meets the clay floor; the water then runs down into the natural drainage pattern of that floor, and the brook **and springs are the result**.

The real importance of Purbrook as a settlement seems to have stemmed from the fact that the Portsmouth-Sheet Bridge Turnpike Road, as formed in the early 18th. Century, came through by the line of the present A3.

In addition to this the then **Lord of the Manor of Farlington** had taken up residence '**over the hill**' whilst the fact that there was ready '**free water**' in wells by reason of the sandy soil was an added inducement, and helped the settlement to grow as one catering for travellers on the **Portsmouth Road**. Before the turnpike was made too, when the road through the **FOREST OF BERE** was still unmarked, **Purbrook** and **Horndean** seem to have been where one hired a **local yokel** to act as a guide on the rather difficult journey through the forest.

The **Lord of the Manor of Farlington** who made the change from south to north of the hill was probably **Captain Thomas Smith**. He was one of the **Commissioners** of the turnpike, and may well have started some of the agricultural innovations in the district. The preamble of the 1710 Act describes him as being '**of Purbeck Heath**'. The exact location of his house is not known, but it appears to have been to the east of the road, and to the north of the present village.

The Captain lost much of his money in the South Sea Bubble, and the estate was heavily in debt when inherited by his son, **Colonel Thomas Smith**. The latter planned to revive the family fortunes by carrying out various improvements and reclaiming land from the waste and the sea, but to what extent he succeeded we cannot be absolutely sure. **He died in 1742 and his memorial is in Farlington Church.**

In 1720 there was an incredible boom in South Sea stock, as a result of the Company's proposal, accepted by Parliament, to take over the national debt. The Company expected to recoup itself from expanding trade, but chiefly from the foreseen rise in the value of its shares. These did, indeed, rise dramatically, from 128 1/2 in January 1720 to more than 1,000 in August. Those unable to buy South Sea stock were inveigled by overly optimistic company promoters or downright swindlers into unwise investments. By September the market had collapsed, and by December South Sea shares were down to 124, dragging other, including government, stock with them. Many investors were ruined, and the House of Commons ordered an inquiry, which showed that at least three ministers had accepted bribes and speculated.

Just before he died, in 1741 to be precise, **Thomas Smith** obtained an Act of Parliament to authorize him to form a Company to supply **Portsmouth** with water from **Farlington Marshes**, a fairly sound idea. This right is believed to have been granted to him in return for his having built the sea wall around them. Whether Colonel Smith did this or one of his successors has not been definitely established, but someone certainly did build such a wall in the years between 1725 and 1755 if we interpret contemporary maps correctly, and it could have been the Colonel.

The later Smiths held the Manor as Lords until they sold out to Peter Taylor in 1769.

Taylor was a personage of consequence in Portsmouth, one who is known to have improved the farming techniques of the district, **who virtually made Purbrook by increasing its rental and prosperity by introducing new methods of husbandry**, and one who revived the old idea of supplying water to Portsmouth. Instead of using the springs in Farlington Marshes, however, he tried to dig a tunnel from **Crookhorn** under **Portsdown Hill**. He deserved to lose the money he did.

Peter Taylor also built the first PURBROOK PARK HOUSE, not so very far from the site of the present building. At his death without an heir the Estate was in debt and was administered by Trustees; so successfully had Taylor planned, however, that the debts were paid off, the new techniques of high farming brought in rich rewards, and when the Estate was sold during the **Napoleonic Wars** the principal legatee and beneficiary, **C. W. Taylor**, prospered exceedingly.

Needless to say, he did not reside in the district. From 1801, apparently, **PURBROOK HOUSE** was occupied by a Mr Moore, who ran it as a **seminary** for young ladies.

From 1803 to 1806 the local person of importance was **LORD ENNIS** who lived at **PURBROOK HEATH HOUSE**. Then in 1806 he sold the house to **LORD KEITH**, who was to 'reign' in the locality for about a dozen years.

In 1812, when the prices of agricultural land were at a premium, C. W. Taylor had seized his opportunity and sold.

In a copy of the **COURIER** newspaper, dated Saturday, July 25, 1812, apart from a continental despatch to the effect that **Napoleon Bonaparte** was about to leave **Poland** in order to invade **Russia**, the chief item of news for the locals was that **PURBROOK PARK HOUSE**, with 700 acres of land, was to be sold. Of the land, **315 acres** were 'in hand' the rest on leases, and the **total annual revenue was £1,400**, exclusive of the house. **This is described in the advertisement as having 6 large public rooms and 7 principal bedrooms. There were also many other outbuildings and stables for 17 horses.**

LORD KEITH bought the house and the estate and Lordship of the Manor, but not all of the farms, which went to other proprietors. For example, the great farm at **Drayton** fetched **£24,000**. In addition 7 acres of grassland at **Purbrook** went for £200 each; probably building was intended.

His Lordship only moved into **PURBROOK HOUSE** from the **PURBROOK HEATH HOUSE** in 1814 and stayed there for only four years, **during which time his rather elderly unmarried**

daughter was the belle of the local balls, having perhaps the largest fortune of any spinster in England.

In 1818 a **Mr John Walker** purchased the **PURBROOK ESTATE** from **Lord Keith**, but it was not the Manor of Farlington and Drayton as left by Peter Taylor. There is reason to believe that Walker paid an inflated price. He is called '**of Purbrook House**' in a portrait painted of him shortly after his purchase, but he was never on the spot regularly; the **Purbrook Estate** was mismanaged and by 1829 Walker was bankrupt.

The Estate was sold in small parcels to various other proprietors and Peter Taylor's mansion was dismantled, the materials being sold for what he could get for them.

The bulk of the PURBROOK PARK lands were acquired by JOHN DEVERALL, who was living in the district by the 1830s, and in 1838 commenced the second **PURBROOK PARK HOUSE, which still stands**. In 1857 he acquired the **Lordship of the Manor**, but of course as he was the actual owner of only a minor part of the land in the Parish of Farlington he could not run the district in the way the Smiths and Peter Taylor had done.

Moreover, his pre-eminence was almost entirely confined to the district '**over the hill**'; he was indeed the first **LORD OF PURBROOK**, as opposed to **Lord** of the whole **Manor of Farlington**.

The DEVERALLS continued at PURBROOK PARK until 1919, when they sold the estate.

It is an interesting commentary in the relative change of land values and rents in the 107 years between 1812 and 1919 to point out that in the former year **700 acres grossed rents of £1,400**, or roughly £2 per acre. **In 1919 the average rental was half this or less**. **CROOKHORN FARM**, for example, paid £85 per annum on 121 acres. **THE HOME FARM** of 200 acres paid £163. Most of the land now, too, was down to grass, not corn. **This is what Free Trade meant to British farming.**

One of the new developments in PURBROOK in the early years of the 19th. Century was the building of a **WINDMILL** on the top of the hill just to the north of the Village. It is not known when exactly this was built, but it was not there in 1803. In the autumn of that year a complete inventory of every seaside parish was drawn up on the orders of the **Lord Lieutenant** of the Hampshire County to enable proper dispositions to be made in the event of a Napoleonic invasion. This, of course, never came: most of the returns have been lost or destroyed. That of Farlington remains. One of the entries concerns the number of **MILLERS** in the Parish.

There was no MILL in Farlington in 1803.

This new mill must have been a great boon to the farmers north of the hill, as previously they would have had to take their grain further afield, to the **WIDLEY MILL** or the others on the top of **PORTSDOWN**, or even to the many Mills of **HAVANT, BEDHAMPTON** and **EMSWORTH**, where since the late 17th. Century the chief occupation of the farmers and merchants had been large-scale corn growing and milling for the London market, the meal going up to Town by sea in numerous small brigs and other coasting craft.

Despite the fact that by the early 19th. Century most of the population of the **Parish of Farlington** lived in **Purbrook** or in the other districts **north of Portsdown**, the only **Church** in the Parish was at **Farlington**, in the south-east corner, and thither on Sundays the faithful were expected to repair. This stringency was not so strong as it had been in earlier years when absence from Church on a Sunday could lead to a fine, but it must have been very inconvenient in the days before public transport for someone to have to walk several miles to church over muddy trackways in the middle of winter.

By the 1870s Farlington Church was almost derelict and had to be rebuilt almost entirely.

Waterloo had its church by 1830, and we read in the local paper for that year a letter commending the residents in the **Forest of Bere** for their endeavours and a plea for a similar facility in **Purbrook**.

It was not until 1843, however, that the little **Church of St John the Baptist** was started. It was not completed or consecrated until 1858. **The building apparently cost about £1,500 to erect. John Deverall never really approved of the first vicar, which is one of the reasons why the church took so long to build.**

More Recent Developments

One of the chief obstacles to progress in and around **WATERLOOVILLE** in the latter years of the last Century was the fact that the district was divided into so many different authorities, and that only the **Parish of Waterloo** was the centre of the parish it represented, for Wait Lane End, and Cowplain were both minor outposts in other Parishes which thought less of their limbs than they did of their own Centres at **PURBROOK, CATHERINGTON** and **HORNDEAN** respectively.

Nevertheless progress was made, especially in the field of **EDUCATION** where the first link-up of the areas of **COWPLAIN, WATERLOOVILLE** and **PURBROOK** was achieved. The 19th. Century was when education came back into fashion with the nobility and clergy of this country, and they all rallied around to try to provide some sort of schooling for the ordinary people.

The first school in PURBROOK provided for everybody was built in 1844 by John Deverall, Esq., the local personage, re-builder of PURBROOK PARK, and later Lord of the Manor.

Seven years later a school was built in association with the Church of St John at Purbrook and Squire Deverall's building became the reading and lecture room.

Also founded by JOHN DEVERALL was the **PURBROOK INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL** in **Stakes Road**; this came into being in 1869; White's Hampshire Directory of 1878 states that 60 to 70 boys were accommodated there. The instructors included a **SHOEMAKER**, a **TAILOR** and a **BLACKSMITH** who also taught the boys the '**use of the mast and yard**'.

It may interest present day Ratepayers to learn that **SQUIRE DEVERALL** built the school himself, gave it six acres of grounds to stand in, and even provided a Chapel. In 1876 apparently it cost just over £1,000 per year to run. If contemporary wages for school teachers at Havant are any guide the average wage for each male instructor per year would have been from £40 to £50.

That is half the money must have gone on wages, leaving £500 for all other expenses including feeding the boys, for the school was residential.

At the turn of the century the boys of this school would march behind their band to **CHRIST CHURCH, PORTSDOWN HILL**, also built by **John Deverall**, for the Sunday morning service.

A school was built for Waterlooville near **ST GEORGE'S CHURCH** shortly after the **Purbrook** area possessed one, but the **Education Act of 1870** empowered areas where schooling was insufficient to set up **School Boards** entitled to raise a rate and to provide schools with the proceeds; such a School Board was set up for the Parishes of Farlington and Waterloo with **Catherington** as a contributing Parish, and came into being in 1876.

After 1902 all School Boards were abolished and their work was taken over by the County Councils. The original schools continued in use, and further County Schools were built to cope with the increasing population.

The Greatest Advance was of course the setting up of a **GRAMMAR SCHOOL** in **PURBROOK PARK HOUSE** in the **1920s**; this as a school was really a development of the Training College for Pupil Teachers which existed for a short time at Cosham, and which had always taken senior pupils for Certificate Courses. When **Cosham** went into the **City of Portsmouth** the **Hampshire County** wished to keep its **Grammar School** in its own territory, and re-established it at **PURBROOK PARK**.

Another development, and one of great importance to us today was the building of the **Senior Schools at Cowplain** in the **1930s**; for the first time in this part of Hampshire Senior Pupils over the age of 11 were taken away from the **Elementary Schools**, where the emphasis was on the whole largely concentrated on the basic skills of **reading, writing and arithmetic**, and were given rather more advanced work and more **Technical Training** than the older type of school could provide.

This sort of education was the introduction to the even more advanced work which is now being carried out by all the Hampshire Secondary Schools with such good results.