



NEWSLETTER

September 2025, Issue 95

Introduction

My name is Gerald Sillitoe, I was born in Ruislip, Middlesex, now London Borough of Hillingdon, where I lived until the age of 23, when I married and left home.

Further education in Electrical and Electronic Engineering resulted in becoming an Incorporated Engineer (I. Eng). I worked initially as an Apprentice Electrician, with a London based company, advanced to Design Team Manager with British Telecom and finally to Project Manager with British Rail, ABB Daimler Benz and Amey Rail respectively.

My wife and I relocated to Tilehurst, where we raised our two children, moved to Theale for 10 years and then to Purley where we have been for the past 27 years.

Recently, in March of this year, I was elected as a Purley Parish Councillor where I hope to assist in helping my fellow Councillors making this Parish the place of choice to reside.

In retirement some 15 years ago I have served as a volunteer with Thames Valley Police (TVP), where two years ago I was awarded the 10-year Long Service Medal, I am still in contact with TVP and from time to time lend a hand.

Until recently I was also a member of The Institute of Advanced Motorists, Motorcycle section, where I was instrumental in advancing the standards of many young riders and preparing them for their advanced test. I still ride and enjoy the company of other like-minded riders both in the UK and Europe.

My wife and I enjoy travel, both nationally and internationally, we are keen gardeners and I am an allotment holder here in Purley, where we enjoy the fresh produce and exercise it provides.

Councillor Gerald Sillitoe

Local News

District Council Restructuring Proposals

Background

The Government wants to simplify local government in England and Wales. So that we can quickly gauge the views of people who live in the affected Parishes a short [SURVEY](#) has been created which we would ask you to complete. It should take no more than a few minutes.

At the moment, some areas have three levels of local government:

- County Council
- District Council
- Parish Councils.

The Government's aim is to move to two levels of local government, removing the County Councils where they still exist. For example, West Berkshire already has this two-level system.

They also want each District Council to cover about 500,000 people. To achieve this, District Councils have been asked to suggest possible changes.

So far two proposals have been put forward.

Proposal 1

West Berkshire proposes merging West Berkshire, South Oxfordshire, and the Vale of White Horse Councils into a new authority called Ridgeway District Council. South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are currently part of the three-level system with Oxfordshire County Council which would be abolished.

Proposal 2

Reading Council have proposed that the following West Berkshire Parishes should become part of Reading Council.

- Calcot
- Holybrook
- Pangbourne
- Purley on Thames
- Theale
- Tidmarsh
- Tilehurst

The remainder of West Berkshire should then amalgamate with the District Councils that currently come under Oxfordshire County Council.

To find out more detail read the following documents.

[Reading Proposal](#)

[Ridgeway Proposal](#)

Community Governors

Purley CE Primary School is looking for two individuals to join the governing board. We work with the Leadership Team to ensure that our pupils have the best possible experience.

Being a school governor is a challenging but hugely rewarding role. It will give you the chance to make a real difference to children, shape their future and give something back to your local community.

There is no requirement to have worked in education, just the necessary skills, motivation and some spare time. Schools need and benefit from a range of professional skills and expertise. Experience in the world of finance and business, legal skills, HR, marketing and public relations experience would be of great benefit to the school.

As a governor, you would be able to:

- Use your own experience of education and life beyond school to inform conversations
- Develop and utilise your skills in a board-level environment
- Make a valuable contribution to education and your community
- Support and challenge the school so that it improves for pupils and staff
- Bring your unique experiences, perspectives and insights into decision-making in the interests of the school community

If this something you think you may be interested in, please don't hesitate to contact me for an informal chat.

Hayley Gittins

Chair of Governors

hgittins@purley.w-berks.sch.uk

Purley on Thames Outreach Post Office

Did you know that Purley has outreach post office services from the branch in Pangbourne every Monday (except Bank Holidays) 2.15pm until 4.15pm. You'll find it in the Small Barn at Goosecroft. There's plenty of free parking outside the door or you could even walk!

This service has been in place now for more than 2 years and has proved to be a friendly, convenient opportunity to do your post office business locally. However, as The Post Office is looking to save money, the continuation of our outreach service depends on the number of local people using it! 'Thank you' if you already do but, if not, why not call in. Tell all your friends too.

Use it or lose it!

Announcement from Thames Valley Police

Tackling antisocial behaviour is a priority for Thames Valley Police and they are launching phase 2 of the antisocial behaviour campaign 'It's that antisocial'.

Antisocial behaviour is defined as 'behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person'.

There are 13 different types of antisocial behaviour, some of which are dealt with by police and others by partnership agencies, which includes:

- **Vehicle abandoned**
- **Vehicle nuisance or inappropriate use**
- **Rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour**
- **Rowdy or nuisance neighbours**
- **Littering or drugs paraphernalia**
- **Animal problems**
- **Trespassing**
- **Nuisance calls**
- **Street drinking**
- **Activity relating to sex workers or sex working**
- **Nuisance noise**
- **Begging**
- **Misuse of fireworks**

More information on antisocial behaviour can be found on the [Thames Valley Police website](#).

Antisocial behaviour can have a significant impact on victims, and we, alongside partners, are here to ensure we use all of our powers to tackle the issue head-on. Incidents of antisocial behaviour often increase during the summer period, and in order for us to effectively tackle the issue, we need people who are affected to report it.

Reporting problems

West Berkshire Council deal with the resolution of all sorts of problems from potholes, dog fouling, streetlights, graffiti, etc. You can report any issues that you have online via the WBC website. Just follow this link: [Problem Reporting](#).

Planning Applications

West Berkshire Council invites Purley on Thames Parish Council to comment on planning applications within the parish. The Parish Council's input is not binding upon West Berkshire Council, but comments may be considered in reaching a decision.

You can also see the details of any planning application via the [Planning Portal](#) on the WBC website. If you scroll down to the bottom of the Planning Portal webpage you will find a map showing recent planning applications in WBC. You can zoom in on the map to just see Purley on Thames. Also, an orange notice should be displayed at the boundary of any property/location subject to a planning application.

Any individual can comment on a planning application, both for and against, direct to WBC by [email](#).

The Parish Planning Committee meets about every two weeks. The meeting is open to the public and there is opportunity for you to comment on any particular application. To see the agenda for the next meeting, which details the planning applications to be considered, see [Planning Committee meeting](#).

West Berkshire Council has introduced a free online service to allow residents to check to see if planning permission is required for any possible building alterations. This service will make it easier for residents to understand if they need to submit a planning application for items such as solar panels, loft conversions, adding an outbuilding or adding a dropped kerb. You can access this new service on the West Berkshire Council ["Do I need Planning Permission?"](#) webpage.

West Berkshire Council also offer planning pre-application advice service for which a fee is chargeable. More information about this can be found on the West Berkshire Council's [pre-application advice service](#) webpage.



From Your Parish Office

Don't forget the team in the Office are happy to help where we can. Office opening hours are now:

Monday 9.30 am – 2.00 pm

Thursday 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm

(except for Bank Holidays)

However, it is a good idea to phone ahead if you want to see someone to avoid a wasted visit in the event of the team having other commitments.

Alternatively, you can telephone on 0118 984 4507 or email the Clerk at clerk@purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk

Local Club Events

Project Purley - VJ Day 80th Anniversary Meeting

Project Purley's next meeting is on Friday 19th September at 7.30pm in our usual venue of the large Barn, Goosecroft Recreational Ground. This meeting will be a special commemoration of the 80th anniversary of VJ Day and the end of the Second World War. We will begin with a fish and chips supper after which Dr Richard Marks will give a talk titled "Over the Kwai: The Story of the Burma-Siam Railway in World War 2". There will also be a small exhibition on Purley in the Second World War, augmented by some of our members and guests who will be sharing the personal and moving stories of close family members' experiences in the Far East during and after the war.

This event is open to all of the community and non-members are very welcome to join us. Pre-booking is required as we need to order in the fish and chips.

To cover costs there will be a charge of £7 per member and £12 per non-member – this includes the fish and chips (or vegetarian equivalent – please ask at the time of booking). For details of how to book – see the end of this article.



Over the Kwai: The Story of the Burma-Siam Railway in World War 2

Image: Adam Jones, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

During World War 2, the Japanese Army built the Burma-Siam railway to supply their armed forces with men and material for the fight against the British and Allied military ranged against them. This was no ordinary railway. It was built through almost impassable terrain and requiring some ingenious feats of engineering. It was also constructed by forced labour who endured barbaric working conditions. This talk will look at why the Japanese needed to build the railway and why they treated prisoners of war in the way that they did.

At least two Purley men died in prisoner of war camps in the Far East during the Second World War, one of whom, Edward Reed, ended up as forced labour on the Burma-Siam Railway. So, this talk has deep local resonance for us. Before the war, Edward lived on Glebe Road with his parents and siblings and sang in the choir at St Mary's Church. We will remember Edward and the rest of Purley's wartime community in the exhibition on the 19th.

To book a place at September's VJ event – please email Jean Chudleigh at jeanchudleigh@btinternet.com

Berkshire Family History Society

Catherine Sampson

With the relocation of Reading Central Library to a new extension off the Civic Offices in Bridge Street currently due to open in the early summer of 2026, our Heritage Centre will be relocating soon to a new location in Reading. We have found a suitable premises near to the Royal Berkshire Hospital and are currently going through the necessary legal stages. So, as I write we are still open on the second floor of the library and enjoying lots of visitors, but if you are planning on visiting – keep an eye on our website to avoid a wasted journey.

As usual we have a busy events programme ahead, although in quarter four we will be taking a short sabbatical on face-to-face advice sessions and talks in our Heritage Centre due to the move. We continue to have a packed programme of online talks, workshops and advice sessions and also our usual walks and tours.

Our last face-to-face talk in the Centre in Reading Library will be:

Thursday 11th September 2-3.30pm, “Reading’s Trolleybuses” with Dave Hall.



This talk looks into the early days of public transport in Reading from the decision in 1934 to replace the remaining tram routes with trolleybuses to the end of operations in 1966. In the post war years, further routes were converted to trolleybus operation, and the talk includes many photos showing both the trolleybuses and various shops/buildings and cinemas that have long since disappeared. Finally, we take a brief look at those Reading trolleybuses that are

preserved and operate at The Trolleybus Museum at Sandtoft, North Lincolnshire. Tickets cost £5 and can be pre-booked or

you can pay at the door, subject to space. The price includes tea/coffee and cake after the talk.

September’s online talk is:

Thursday 25th September 2-3.15pm, “Chimney Stacks and Climbing Boys: the art of chimney sweeping” with Claire Moores.



This talk follows the evolution of chimney sweeping over more than 500 years, including changes in building materials, and architectural design as well as increased public health awareness which all played their part in changes in legislation and prevailing attitudes. We look at the everyday life of a chimney sweep, with particular attention given to the experiences of young male apprentices, who were a vital part of this dangerous

occupation. Claire will reveal emotive and scandalous real-life stories of backbreaking work and of some who never came home. Tickets cost £5 and must be pre-booked so that we can send you the Zoom link.

You can find out more about all of our events and pre-book places via our website: berksfhs.org

We would like to provide information of any activities that local clubs or societies are undertaking within the village or that might be of interest to residents of Purley on Thames. These can be regular or one-off events. If you would like us to include a bit about your event, please email Cathy our Administrative Clerk with the details.

Other Events



Breast Walk Ever

AG INST
breast cancer

WALK FOR BREAST CANCER RESEARCH
Everyone can help find a cure for cancer

**14th
SEPT 2025**

Wallingford
Oxfordshire

www.breastwalkover.org

REGULATOR

Scan the QR Code
for info & to sign up



**PHS Gardening Club
&
Purley WI**

Late Summer Show

**Saturday
6th September 2025
2:30 – 4:00pm**

(after the PSG Community lunch in the Memorial Hall grounds)

**Open to the public
Refreshments available**

**Purley Memorial Hall
Glebe Road**

Show schedules/entry forms available
via
www.purleyonthames.org.uk/PHS/
Closing date 2nd September



PSG PURLEY SUSTAINABILITY GROUP

OUTDOOR COMMUNITY LUNCH

SATURDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER | 12 NOON ONWARDS

MEMORIAL HALL, GLEBE RD, PURLEY ON THAMES

Purley Sustainability Group are delighted to invite you to join us for a community lunch before the Purley Horticultural Show*. We will serve dishes created using produce grown on our allotments.

You can learn more about PSG and see the allotments.

*Show starts at 2.30 pm

www.purleysustainability.co.uk
info@purleysustainability.co.uk

Donations welcome to support other local projects

Please walk or cycle as **parking** is limited

If able, please bring a picnic blanket/chair and a reusable cup



Purley Sustainability Group - Think Ahead, Waste Less, and Cook Smarter

As part of the PSG series of sustainability, here are some ways we can be more sustainable when we cook at home.

1. Use What You Have

Before shopping, check your fridge and cupboards. Do you already have food that needs using up? Avoid waste by planning meals around these items. Use recipe websites that let you search by ingredient to inspire creative cooking. Use ChatGPT to explore recipe options – it can be fun and adventurous!

2. Plan Your Meals

Planning what you're going to cook helps you save money, reduce waste, and possibly avoid extra shopping trips. A written shopping list keeps you focused and stops impulse buys—only buy what you need.

3. Mind Your Portions

Overcooking is common—especially with pasta. Use kitchen scales to help reduce leftovers and food waste.

4. Shop Local and Smart

Support local shops and markets when you can—it saves fuel and reduces your carbon footprint. Don't forget to bring reusable bags instead of buying new plastic ones.

5. Choose Seasonal Produce

Buying seasonal fruits and vegetables often means fewer food miles, less packaging, and fresher, tastier food.

6. Store Food Correctly

Proper storage can extend the shelf life of your food. Some items keep longer when refrigerated or stored in glass containers. Use your freezer to save leftovers or surplus ingredients for later use.

7. Buy Sustainable Products

There's a wide variety of fish, meat, and egg options. Choose the ones that align with your values—some are far more sustainable than others.

8. Try Preserving

Turn surplus fruits and veggies into jams, chutneys, or pickles. It's a fun and practical way to make the most of excess produce.

9. Cook Efficiently

Use energy-efficient methods like air fryers (for small quantities), pressure cookers (to reduce cook time), slow cookers, or microwaves. If the oven is on, cook multiple items or batch cook to maximize energy use.

10. Be Water Wise

Boil only the amount of water you need, whether in a kettle or cooking pan—saving both water and energy.

11. Grow Your Own

If you're new to gardening, start small—perhaps herbs on your windowsill. It's a great way to save money, reduce packaging, and enjoy fresh flavours.

12. Reduce and Reuse Packaging

Homemade meals like pizza not only taste better but avoid excess packaging. When buying packaged items, consider how you can reuse containers—yogurt pots and takeaway tubs often make great storage solutions.

13. Eat More Plants

Nutritionist Tim Spector recommends eating 30 different plants per week. They're rich in polyphenols, flavonoids, fibre, protein, and vital nutrients. A plant-rich diet supports digestion, immunity, and reduces the risk of chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.

14. Cook in Batches

Batch cooking can save time, reduce energy use, and create opportunities to share food with friends or family—turning mealtime into a social experience.

15. Compost Your Scraps

If you have food waste, compost it or use your local food waste bin to keep it out of landfill.

Finally... Enjoy Your Food

There's no point buying something just because it's trendy or someone else recommends it. Choose foods you enjoy. That said, don't be afraid to experiment—try swapping meat for pulses occasionally to save money and expand your cooking skills.

Dates for the diary:

Community Lunch – Saturday 6th September, Memorial Hall, noon onwards

Recycling/ Terracycle – Sunday 7th September at 7 Beech Road.

Repair Café – Saturday 13th September 3pm to 5pm at The Mad Duck, Wintringham Way.

Purley Bat Walk with Wild Tilehurst– Thursday 18th September – 7.00 pm Bucknells Meadow,
Mapledurham Drive

PAWS Apple Pressing – Sunday 21st September, 2pm – 4pm Whitechurch Maze, Whitchurch-on-Thames,
Reading RG8 7HW

Purley Sustainability Group (PSG) is a community sustainability group for Purley on Thames. We are passionate about enhancing community wellbeing through projects that bring people together to improve our local environment and encourage sustainable living.

For more information:

www.purleysustainability.co.uk

info@purleysustainability.co.uk

Facebook – Purley Sustainability Group & Purley on Thames Repair Café

Please do get in touch if you want to learn more or become a volunteer at the allotments, or at the repair café or want to subscribe our newsletters and keep abreast of events.

Wild Tilehurst www.wildtilehurst.org.uk

Repair Café



You can find further information regarding dates and times for the [Repair Café/Other Events](#) and [Recycling](#) on the PSG website.

If you have feedback to give Your Parish Council or wish to provide an article on what interests you: an item or person of interest, a plea for a Charity or not-for-profit business but not a commercial business, your input would be most welcome, subject to editorial rights. It would be very helpful, if possible, if you could supply any copy in Word (12 pt Calibri) and/or picture format. Submissions as pdfs may be rejected. Please email your copy to [Cathy](#) by close of play on the 20th of the month.

Many thanks - Editor

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The Editor is Cathy Gainsford – Administrative Clerk, Purley on Thames Parish Council