

Pirbright Parish, in the borough of Guildford, has an area of 4711 acres, with about half the 4,214 population (census 2001) living in the village and outlying settlements and the remainder in the Ministry of Defence area to the north. The village green and duck pond are surrounded by heathland, woods and streams.



Pirbright Green and pond

Photograph: Pirbright Parish Council

Pirbright's name was recorded in 1166 as Perifrith, from *pyridge*, meaning peartree and *fryth*, meaning a wood or wooded country. It formed part of the Royal Hunting Forest of Windsor and remained a isolated agricultural community for many centuries.

The Manor House and Mill date from the 13th century. The present house is 16th century and was part of Catherine of Aragon's dowry when she married Henry VIII.



The Millhouse and pond, Pirbright

Photograph by John Quarendon

The Basingstoke Canal opened in 1794, which divided the Parish into two separate areas connected by bridges. The railway was built along the same route in 1839.

The Army purchased large areas of scrubland in the 1870s. Camps on the north side of the railway were canvas tents but barracks and houses for soldiers' families were built years later, increasing the Parish population from 723 (census 1881) to 1540 in 1901 and to 3273 in 1921. The National Rifle Association purchased land nearby in 1890, now known as Bisley Camp.

Henry Morton Stanley, explorer and founder of the Congo Free State, was famous for finding Dr Livingstone at Lake Tanganyika in 1871. He later became an MP and lived at Furzehill Place in Stanley Hill where and his carved initials can be seen above the gate. His grave in St Michael's churchyard is marked by a monolith inscribed 'Bula Mutari', meaning 'stone breaker'. The Congolese gave him the name in recognition of his ability to find solutions to apparently insoluble problems.



Henry Morton Stanley's grave

Photograph: Pirbright Parish Council

Lord Pirbright's Hall was built in 1899 by Baron Henri de Worms, a government minister who became Lord Pirbright in 1895. He lived at Henley Park, just outside the Parish boundary, but employed many local workers and was responsible for building many of Pirbright's houses. He was also the first Chairman of the Parish Council, which was formed in 1895.



Lord Pirbright's Hall

Photograph: Pirbright Parish Council