

Rotary Field history

Rotary Field was given to the people of Purley by the Purley Rotary Club in 1925. During the first half of the 19th century the "Worlds First Railway Line" ran through the ground.

Laid down in about 1803, its course from Coulsdon to Purley was parallel to the Brighton Road, near the Swan and Sugar Loaf it followed Southbridge and Church Roads to Pitlake, where it turned west and north to Wandsworth.

The Surrey Iron Railway was the first public railway in the world, and its line was intended as an iron way worked by members of the public using their own horses and wagons on payment of tolls, in a similar way to the canal system that had served the public in the past.

The wagons were drawn along iron rails, bedded on stone sleepers, one "horse-power" could pull over 50 tons along the rails, as against only one on the roads of the period. There was a surge in traffic at the time of the Napoleonic Wars when the railway was part of a system used to get supplies to Portsmouth for the fleet engaged in the battles.

Parts of the old railway, which was eventually abandoned in 1846, can be seen in the grounds of Wallington Public Library as well as Purley Rotary Field. Relics of the lines in the form of stone sleepers in rockeries and walls of gardens can be seen along the old route.