

WEST BYFLEET & SHEERWATER

A SELF-GUIDED HERITAGE WALK



**WITH NOTES & ILLUSTRATIONS ON THE HISTORY
OF THE AREA**

Based on the Heritage Walk on Sunday 18th March, 2012

By Iain Wakeford

A HERITAGE WALK AROUND WEST BYFLEET & SHEERWATER

This walk starts from the green opposite the Catherine of Aragon public house and includes some of the places recorded in the Self-Guided Heritage Walk around West Byfleet published in 2004 (when the Catherine of Aragon was still called The Claremont).

The Catherine of Aragon

Originally known as the Byfleet Hotel (or sometimes referred to as the Station Hotel), the pub was once re-named The Claremont—presumably as it is at the junction of Station Road and Claremont Road.

The road takes its name from Claremont House at Esher where the Duchess of Albany (a daughter-in-law to Queen Victoria) lived. The Duchess often visited the Woking area, laying the foundation stones for both Christ Church (Woking) and Holy Trinity (Knaphill), and was a patron for the building of St Johns Church, West Byfleet. Catherine of Aragon's connection with the pub is that



she was once Lord of the Manor of Byfleet, being granted the area upon her divorce to Henry VIII.



The Byfleet Hotel or Station Hotel, once renamed The Claremont and now called The Catherine of Aragon.

From the green, head west, away from the pub (and station) to Woodlands Avenue. Birchwood Road (on your right) is a conservation area (created in 1992) - details of which can also be found in the Self-Guided Heritage Walk around West Byfleet.



The opening of the Birchwood Estate in 1911

Birchwood Road

The estate was apparently developed by a company known as the Birchwood Tenants Company, set up by Mr F.C. Stoop of West Hall as a way of building well-designed 'cottage-style' affordable housing for the workers of the area.

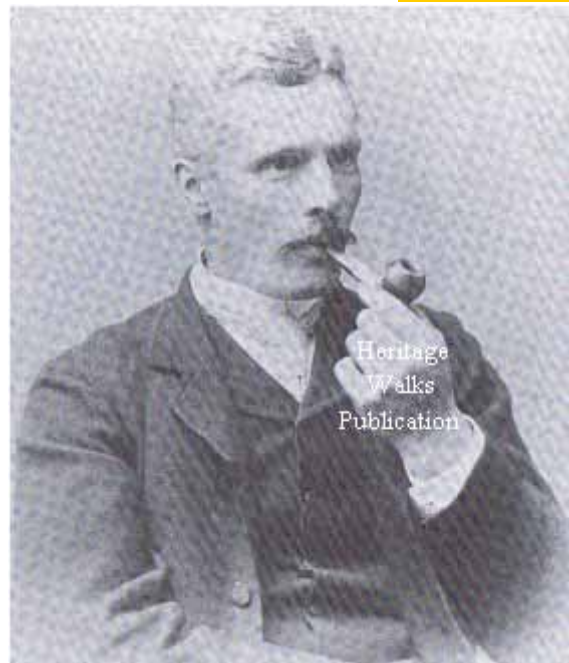
The scheme was opened on the 13th May 1911 - long before the local council provided houses to rent in the area.

develop a golf club. He had already established the 18-hole New Zealand course in 1895, but this one - called Sheerwater' (opened in 1898) only had

Hugh Foretscue Locke King

Woodlands Avenue & Hollies Avenue

The land of Woodland & Hollies Avenues (formerly part of the Sheerwater Court Estate and before that Byfleet Common) appears to have been bought by Hugh Fortescue Locke-King in the late 1890's in order to





1920, 6" OS map.

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Heritage Walks Publication (Two Minutes from Station)

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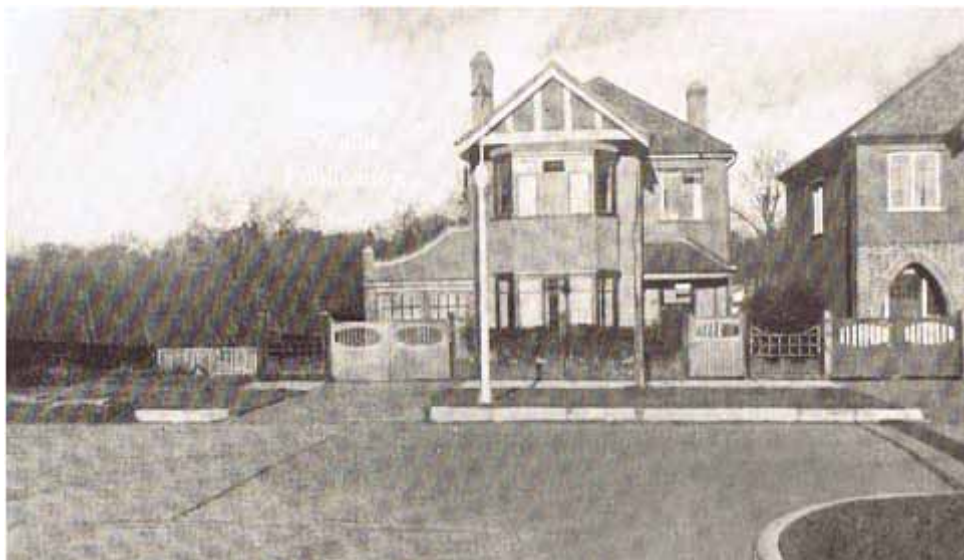
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WTB

The Woodlands Avenue/Hollies Avenue 'Sheerwater Estate' as advertised in 1934.



enough room for 9-holes. It was not long before Locking was looking to create another full-size course in the area, creating the Bleakdown Course (now West Byfleet) in 1906. At the same time, of course, he was also starting development on his world-famous motor-racing circuit at Brooklands.

Eventually the Sheerwater Club appears to have fallen out of favour and in the late 1920's the site was sold for development, leading to the 'Sheerwater Estate' (as it was originally advertised) being built by E Thomas in the early 1930's. The estate was still being developed in 1936 when the post office erected the Edward VIII

pillar box (one of only 161 produced during his short reign). Apparently only a few still bear the cipher, the doors being replaced on over half of the pillar and post boxes produced at that time.



Taken from an advertisement of the period, this photograph shows the houses of Woodlands Avenue from the junction with Hollies Avenue

1936 Edward VIII pillar box



Sheerwater Court

The large country house known as Sheerwater Court was built some time in the mid 19th century for the Ricardo (or Ricardo) Family.

Percy Ricardo sold the property in 1873 to Mr W.E. Gibb (who in 1885 paid for the tower and bells for Ottershaw's new church). The estate then covered over 100 acres.



Top:
Sheerwater
Court shortly
before
demolition.
Above: The
staff c1865.



Left: Map of
c1920 showing
the house with
its swimming
pool and
glasshouses.

The house appears to have later had a number of owners (and mortgages taken out upon it), before it was finally demolished in the late 1920's or early 1930's.



At Sheerwater Road, turn right to the traffic lights and then cross the road to Albert Drive and the Sheerwater Estate.

Sheerwater

The first record of the name 'Sherewater' appears to be in the early 17th century, although the name could be much older as

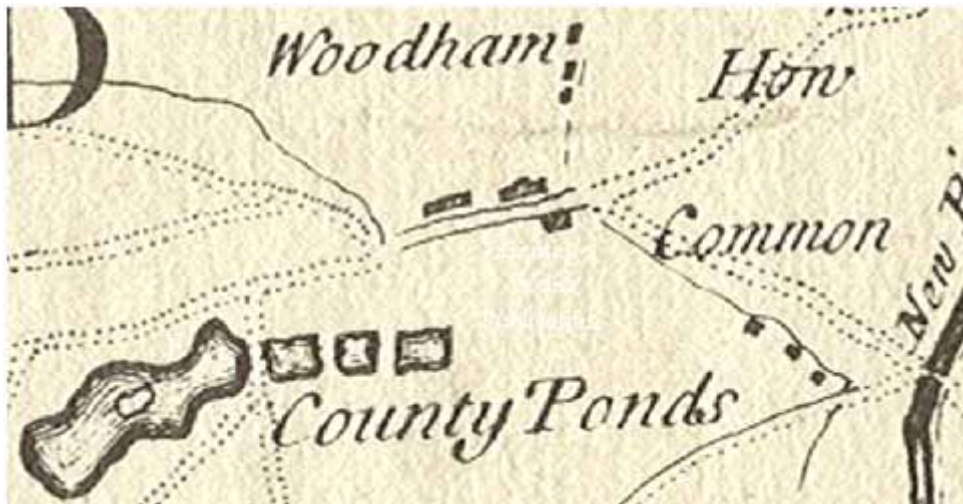
'shere' is an Old English word meaning 'clear'.

Having said that it is hard to believe that the water of the lake was very 'clear', as it was fed by the Rive Ditch, an 'iron-stained' stream (as we shall see later in the walk) that flows from the Horsell Common area to join the River Wey at Brooklands.

It is possible that the area was originally marshy ground recorded in the 10th century bounds of Pyrford as 'Wexfenne', and that the lake was either seasonal or created in the late 17th, as it is not marked on a mid 17th century map of the Pyrford Manor estate.

The name 'Sherewater' is marked, however, below the Rive Ditch and it might be that there was a small lake there originally

The 'County Ponds' in 1729





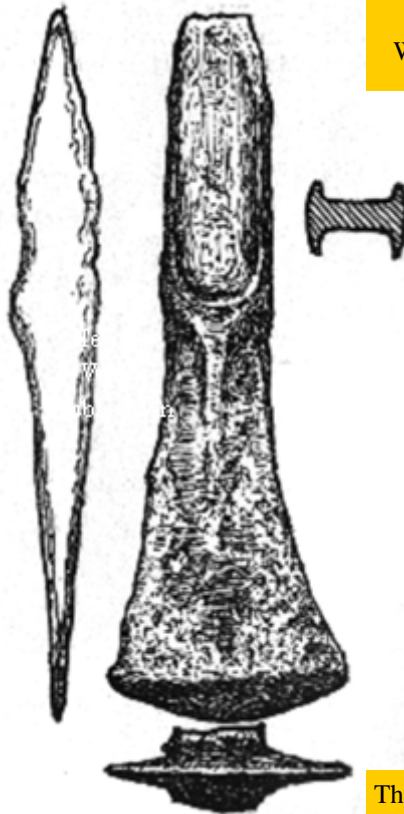
that was simply enlarged by the early 18th century, when maps certainly show a number of ponds in the area.

Indeed it has been said that the lakes were used in the 16th and 17th centuries by local merchants to supply fish to the London markets.

John Aubrey, writing in the 18th century records that the lakes covered about 110 acres and were over two miles around.

Bronze Age Palstave

When the Sheerwater Estate was being developed in the 1950's a Bronze-Age Palstave (Axe) was discovered just across the canal from where there is postulated to have been a Bronze-Age Bowl-Barrow (now destroyed by the development of Lynwood Close).



The Sheer Water c.1793

The Bronze-Age Palstave found in 1956



Albert Drive at the Sheerwater Road entrance - one of only two ways to get into (or out of, the estate

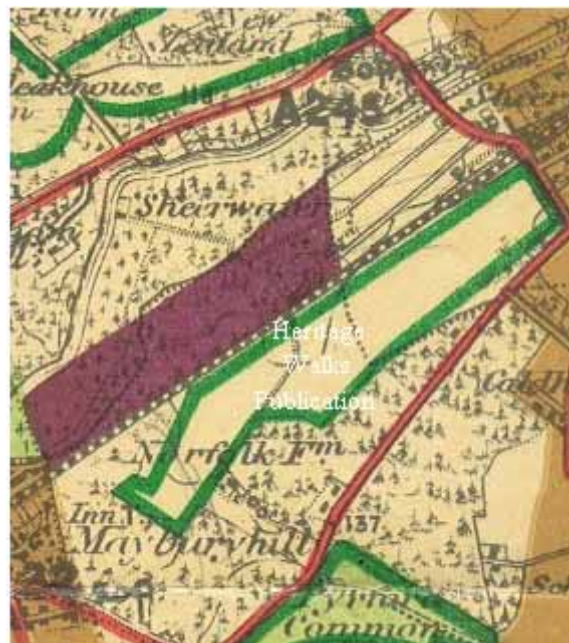
The Sheerwater Estate

As far back as 1928, when the North West Surrey Structure Plan was drawn up, part of the Sheerwater valley had been designated as suitable for industry.

By then the Sorbo Factory had already been constructed near to Maybury, where the houses of Eve and Arnold Roads stopped at the boundary between Woking and Pyrford, but the rest of Sheerwater remained largely undeveloped until the 1940's when London County Council announced they were going to build one of their 'out of county' overspill estates in the area (despite much opposition from both Woking & Surrey Council's who had plans of their own). The new estate actually won a

design award for its open spaces and retention of natural features, such as the birch and pine trees (hence the name of the estate's public house).

The 1928 North-West Surrey structure plan, showing the area to be set aside for industry (purple)



A main feature of the estate was the main central road - Albert Drive - which wound its way through the area, by-passing the central shopping parade (and keeping away from the sites of the junior schools), but passing the gates of the new secondary school and the new industrial area.

This was beside the main railway line at the Maybury end, where the Sorbo factory was already situate (later redeveloped in the 1980's as the Woking Business Park).

Sheerwater was almost unique in this area - it was actually 'planned', with not just industry, schools, shops and houses, but also allotments and (eventually) recreational facilities as well.



Continue along Albert Drive to the first entrance to Lambourne Crescent, turning right into the road and passing the Scout Hut to the path (on the right) up the embankment of the canal.



Lock Six at Sheerwater Bridge where the towpath goes under the road and on towards West Byfleet



At the canal, turn right and follow the canal towpath, past Lock Six (Sheerwater Bridge), under the road, and on towards West Byfleet.

Locks Six, Five & Four

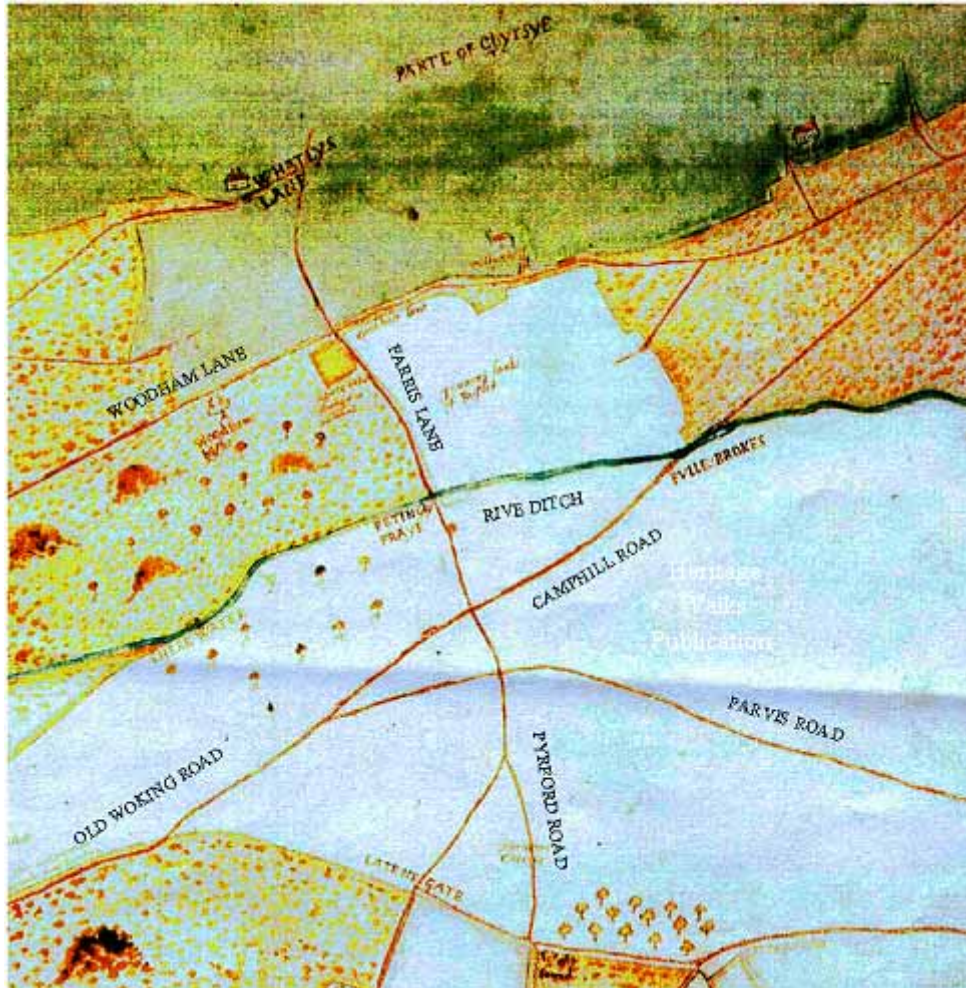
This is the top lock of the 'Woodham Flight' of locks that lifts the canal from the junction with the Wey Navigation at New Haw to the 'Woking Pound' - the next lock being at Goldsworth Park (by Langman's Bridge). A brief history of the canal is included in the West Byfleet Heritage Walks booklet, which also has notes on Lock Three and the lock-keepers cottage. The distance between Lock Six



and Five, and between Lock Five and Four is quite short, so in both instances an extra wide area of canal has been created to ensure that enough water is in these small pounds when the boats head downstream. They can also, of course, be used for turning boats, although they are not strictly 'turning bays'.

The original bridge, like Scotland Bridge, was a simple brick arch





Petingly Prae & Fullbrook

The bounds of Chertsey Abbey, allegedly dating from about 675 A.D., but almost certainly forged (or reproduced) in the 13th century, mention an area called 'Fetinglye' immediately after 'Fulebrook' (the 'foul' or dirty brook—i.e. Rive Ditch), before going onto the 'boundary stone', thought to have once been

located in what is now the Sheerwater Estate where Chertsey, Horsell, Woking and Pyrford Parishes once met. The mid 17th century map, above, shows Petingly Prae where the path from Pyrford to Woodham crosses the Rive Ditch (near Lock Three), and a field to the north-east of this area is apparently marked on the

Mid 17th century map of the Manor of Pyrford (with modern road names added) showing the site of Petingly Prae where Farris Lane crosses the Rive Ditch.

Chertsey Tithe Map as 'Petty Lee' in the 1840's.

Whilst Fullbrook has been preserved (giving its name to the nearby school), Petingly (or Fetinglye) has not.

Woodham

The name Wudeham is also recorded in the bounds of Chertsey Abbey and means simply a settlement within the woods.

It was recorded as a 'township' in 1402 and was a separate manor and tithing of Chertsey. Indeed in the early 18th century seventy houses were recorded in the Woodham tithing as opposed to 61 at 'Bottle' (Botleys), 57 at Addlestone, and 47 at Lyne—

making Woodham second only in size to Chertsey itself within the area.

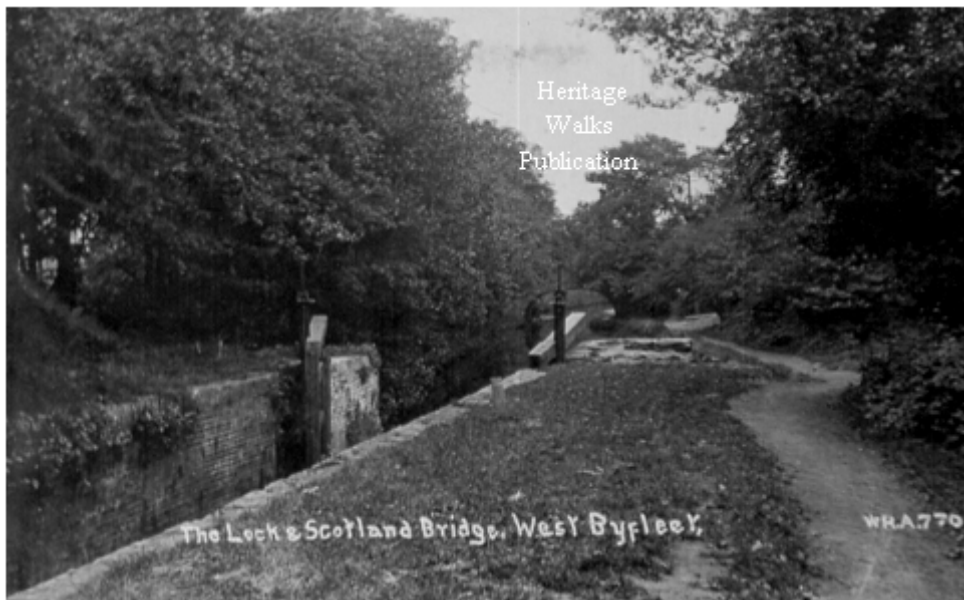
Scotland Bridge & Lock

The bridge over the canal is one of the few original brick arched bridges (although it has been repaired on numerous occasions).

It is sometimes known as Fullbrook Bridge as in September 1913 when Byfleet Parish Council recorded that the single arched bridge could 'collapse any minute'.

The name derives from the fact that much of the land around New Haw was part of the Onger Place Estate, owned by Robert Fitzpatrick Escott - 'Escott's Land'.

Scotland Lock and Bridge in need of 'TLC' in the early 20th century.



At Scotland Bridge, turn right onto Camphill Road and then right again into Station Road to take you back to the start of the walk at the Catherine of Aragon public house.

Station Road

The land of Station Road (and Claremont Road) was once part

of Byfleet Common, and remained mainly unenclosed until the opening of Byfleet & Woodham Station in the 1880's. There were a couple of fields at the far end of the site (nearest the station) which are marked on the Byfleet Tithe Map of 1843 as 'Heathy Brook Pasture' (owned by Frank Capel Bellis and

PROPOSED NEW HALL AT WEST BYFLEET.

Heritage Walks Publication THE GOSPEL HALL, PYRFORD, SURREY.

November, 1928.

Dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus.

A small company of Believers have laboured in the above Hall (situated in an isolated position) for the last 30 years. For a long time the Meetings have not been locally supported, and it has been felt desirable to remove to **WEST BYFLEET**, where there is a larger population, and a greater need for Gospel Testimony.

Resulting from much Prayer and dependence on the Lord, **a suitable Plot of Land has been secured in STATION ROAD**, and we are seeking to raise sufficient money to erect **a New Hall**.

It is estimated that the **cost of the Land and Hall** will be approximately **£400**. May we appeal to you for Prayer, Fellowship and practical help in this matter?

Any gifts you may be led of the Lord to send us will be heartily appreciated. Please look upon this as giving to the Lord, and in so doing fruit shall abound to your account.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Yours in His service,

On behalf of the Assembly,

P. WRIGHT, H. GUBBINS,
H. WOODMAN, H. LAMDIN.

Communications may be addressed to:—

H. LAMDIN,

"Glengarry,"

West Byfleet, Surrey.

Letter for the establishment of the Gospel Hall in Station Road.

farmed by Henry Unwin), which paid eight shillings, nine pence, ha'penny to the church as tithes, but the remainder of the land appears to have later formed part of the Sheerwater Court Estate (as mentioned above).

Documents bundled together with that estate's papers refer to the 'Station Estate' in the late 19th and early 20th century, when most of the houses appear to have been built (apart from some later 'infill' and a few modern replacements).

Gospel Hall & Congregational Chapel

The Gospel Hall (as can be seen from the letter, on the previous page) was built in the late 1920's/early 1930's near the Camphill Road end of Station Road, whilst the Congregational Chapel (now a Children's

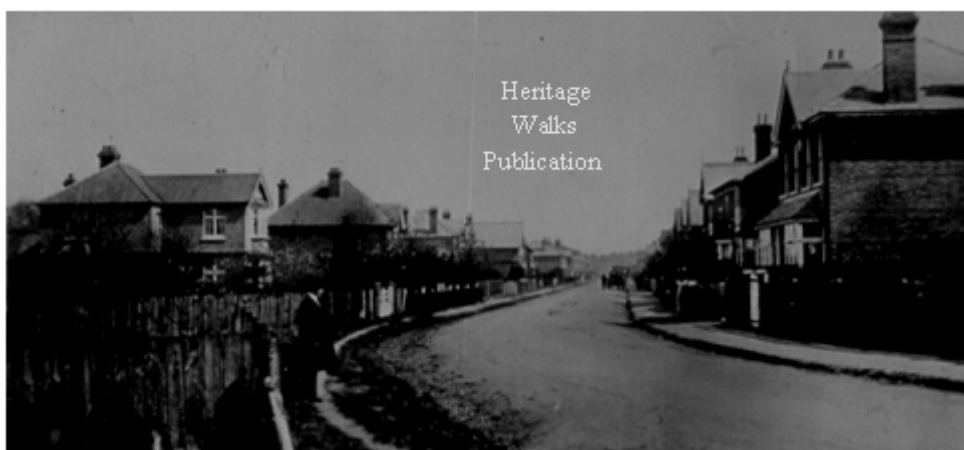
Nursery) was built in 1902 closer to the station end of the road. It apparently had seating enough for 100 people.

Marmion & the Evacuation Hostel

The 1947 Street Directory lists Marmion, a house that used to belong to the Rev G.H.B. Barton, as an 'Evacuation Hostel' run by Woking Urban District Council. It was presumably to here (and a few other large houses in the village) that the children of Southfields and Bradlelaw Road Schools (and others) were billeted in 1939 upon the outbreak of the Second World War - as recorded in the log book of West Byfleet Secondary School.

The log book (extracts of which are on the next page) make interesting reading!

Station Road,
showing
'Marmion',
the first house
on the left
hand side.



The first coach containing 25 boys and 4 masters and helpers from Southfields Secondary school Wandsworth arrived at school at 10.00am. The method of reception in this and all following cases was as follows. The evacuees entered the school hall where they deposited their personal belongings. They passed then in order to a rest room, medical inspection room and a billeting room where billets were arranged by Mrs. Romanes, Billeting Officer for West Byfleet. On allotment they recollected personal belongings, were handed rations for two days and then escorted to their billets by members of the WVS. [...] The second coach arriving at 10.30 contained children from Brandelaw Road School Fulham. Miss George H.M.I. visited the school about 10.50am. It was obvious that then a serious mistake was being made at the rail head – Woking in breaking up the evacuated schools into groups and dispensing these groups into different parts of the Woking area. I asked Miss George to go to the railhead to see if the evacuation officer would arrange for complete schools to be sent to one district. Later Miss George returned with the information that the Evacuation Officer or authority could not or would not alter the organisation which was being carried on. The last coach arrived at about 4.50pm.

Friday 1st September 1939

Reception of evacuees continued throughout the day. Each coach containing children from a different school. I visited the railhead personally but could not get any satisfaction for altering the procedure.

Saturday 2nd September 1939

Reception continued throughout the day. **War declared on Germany at 11.00am.** This was received by wireless in school at 11.15am. The last coach reached the school at about 4.45pm.

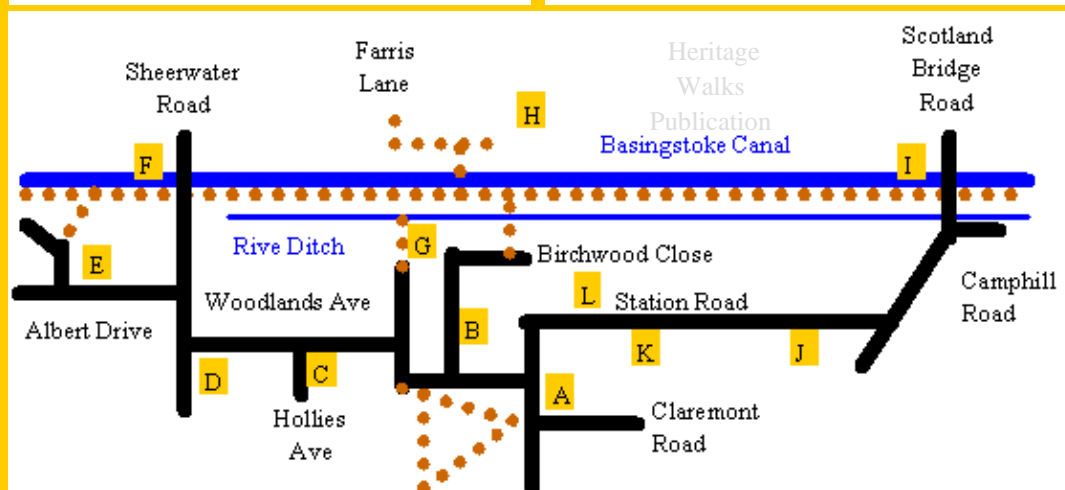
During the three days of evacuation 257 children from 17 different schools with 29 teachers or helps including 7 head teachers, mothers and children under school age were received and billeted in the district.

Sunday 3rd September 1939

WEST BYFLEET & SHEERWATER

A - Catherine of Aragon public house
B - Birchwood Road
C - Sheerwater Golf Club (Woodlands Avenue & Hollies Avenue)
D - Sheerwater Court
E - Sheerwater Lake, The Bronze Age Palstave, & the Sheerwater Estate

F - Basingstoke Canal Locks
G - Petingly Prae
H - Woodham & Fullbrook
I - Scotland Bridge
J - Gospel Hall
K - Congregational Chapel
L - Marmion - Evacuation Hostel



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Published by Alfred Arthur Wakeford, 166 High Street, Old Woking, GU22 9JH

GUIDE
No 9

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