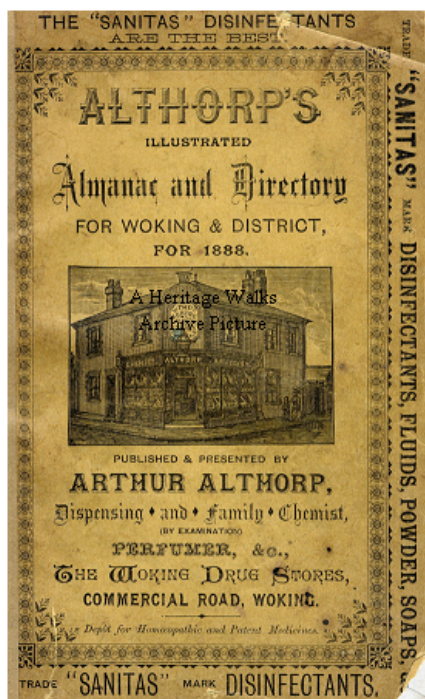


Website & Chemists

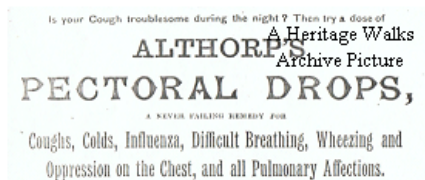
(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 13th January, 2012)



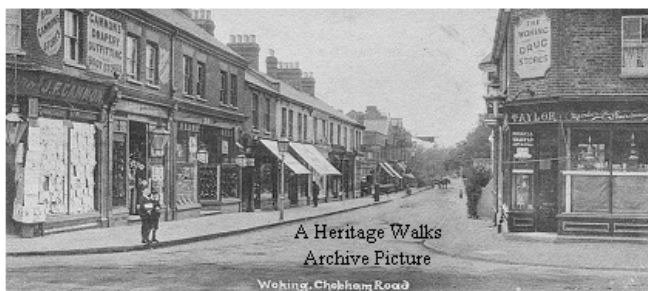
In 1888 Arthur Althorp opened his chemist shop on the corner where the Royal Bank of Scotland is today.

With a few days off between Christmas and New Year I have finally managed to get up and running a website for my Heritage Walks, Books and Archive of material I have of Woking Memorabilia. In fact I have actually managed to sort out two sites, as several years ago I created a page on the 'windowonwoking.org.uk' site, but then promptly forgot my username and password, so that all it contained was out-of-date details of the walks I was doing in 2006! That has now been resolved with the current diary of walks and a list of all my publications – enter 'heritage walks' in the 'search organisation' and you should find me.

The diary of walks is also on my new website 'heritagewalks.org' where in future I intend to place copies of some of my out-of-print publications as well as new 'on-line-only' books, such as more Self-Guided Heritage Walks around Woking.



If only they were still available today!



Althorp's later became 'Taylors' before being taken over by Wearing's (who some of the area's older residents may still remember).

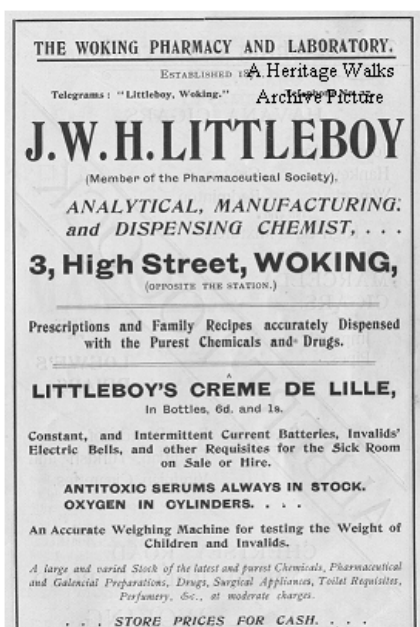
But the main aim of the 'heritagewalks.org' website is to allow me to make available to everyone, copies of some of the hundreds of items of research that I have used over the years.

In the past few weeks we have looked at some of shops and traders that could once have been found in the area – such as bakers, greengrocers and toy shops. This week I want to look at local chemists, because one of the oldest items that I have managed to copy (and put on my website) is part of the 1888 Arthur Althorp Almanac & Directory.

Arthur Althorp set up the Woking Drug Stores on the corner of Chobham Road and Commercial Road. He wasn't the first chemist in the town (see JWH Littleboy's advertisement), but it was not long before he was firmly established in the town.

Publishing the directory was a clever move as it immediately meant he had contact with most of the other traders in the town, and from our point of view the 'testimonials' and advertisements make wonderful reading.

Woking's first chemist shop (indeed one of its first shops) was Littleboy's in the High Street (next to the Nat West Bank).



Woking's 'Tele' Shops

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 20th January, 2012)

I don't consider myself to be 'old', but visiting a museum the other day certainly made me feel it. There were re-created shops like the Co-op with the man behind the counter ready to weigh and pack your purchases, an office with a computer that I can well remember struggling to get my head around when I first started work, and an exhibition of 'toys' through the ages that even got my daughters reminiscing about their childhood! But it was a chance remark I made about the television repairman that made me really think about how things have changed since 'my day'.

YOU CAN AFFORD TELEVISION FROM AERCO
LATEST 13-CHANNEL DAYLIGHT VIEWING TV

RENT from
£5 DEPOSIT
including E10-10-0 AERIAL

★
FREE VALVES, TUBES AND SERVICE

★
LOW WEEKLY PAYMENTS
falling to 7/6

★
CASH PRICE 64 gns.

ASK OUR REPRESENTATIVE TO CALL AND ARRANGE PROMPT INSTALLATION

AERCO **171b CHURCH STREET, WOKING**
(1/2 minute from Ritz Cinema)
AND AT ADDESTONE

OR BUY
ON USUAL H.P. TERMS
from 10/6 WEEKLY



A Heritage Walks
Archive Picture

Some of the televisions in the display were a little before my time, but I can just about remember the old black & white 'Bush' television, with its polished wood surround, that we had in the mid-to-late 60's. My mum rented it, I believe, from Trotman's or Maxwell's or one of the other many electrical shops we had in the town, preferring that route rather than 'H.P.' (which I had to explain stood for 'Hire Purchase' – not a type of sauce).



Maxwells are probably best remembered as a record shop or for selling piano's and organs from their Station Approach shop (on the corner with Heathside Road), but they also had a shop at 48 Chertsey Road where televisions and radios were obviously sold.

Aerco's, on the corner of Church Street and Chobham Road (opposite the Ritz cinema) is probably best remembered as a record shop, but when they first opened in 1956 they also sold televisions

AEG TELEFUNKEN
COLOURVISION

CASH PRICES
22" MODELS 629T 639T E355
25" MODEL 719T E381

Made by the people who devised the European Pal-colour system

HIRE PURCHASE TERMS
22" MODELS 629T 639T
25" MODEL 719T

TELEFUNKEN TRUE-TO-LIFE COLOUR
YOU KNOW ITS' THE BEST

TRIDENT SERVICES LTD.
94 HIGH STREET, HORSELL Tel. WOKING 65929

WITH THE EXCLUSIVE PAL-COLOUR MARK

DEPOSIT £118
12 Monthly Payments of £22-2-5
18 Monthly Payments of £15-10-9
24 Monthly payments of £12-4-11

DEPOSIT £127
12 Monthly Payments of £23-14-2
18 Monthly Payments of £16-13-1
24 Monthly Payments of £13-2-6



A Heritage Walks
Archive Picture

There was probably a television shop in most local villages. Trident in Horsell, Cawsey's at West Byfleet, Burden & Bates in Kingfield, Hughes at St Johns and Knaphill – buying a television was even then often an 'out-of-town' shopping experience.

Things have certainly changed when it comes to electrical goods, as have the shops that used to sell them.

Woking's Garages—Part One

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 27th January, 2012)

Last week I commented on how easy it was to repair televisions when they had just wires and valves instead of circuit boards and microchips, but it struck me the same probably applies to cars as well. Where once you were able to repair your car yourself, now you almost always have to go to a garage and in some cases it cannot be just any garage, it has to be a 'main dealer' who is the only one with the right equipment to test or re-set the little 'thing' that has completely immobilized the whole electrics.

One day my old boss was proudly showing off his new car complete with central locking (when such a thing was rare). He got out to show us around the outside, leaving the engine still running and forgetting that the spare set of keys were still on the passenger seat. As he closed the door, there was a loud 'click' and although we all found it quite amusing, he was not too pleased when the AA man eventually came and suggested the only thing to do was to break a window. The car kept on having electrical problems and was constantly having to be taken back to the garage to be put on 'the machine' to see what was wrong.


I must admit I thought that such diagnostics were a relatively recent invention, until I saw the advert for the Boundary Road Garage in the 1963 Woking Guide Book (that I am currently scanning to put on my website). I don't know how 'scientific' it really was, but I expect it looked quite impressive at the time.




A Heritage Walks
Archive Picture

Next door to the Railway Hotel (or the Sovereigns for those new to the area) – now part of the site occupied by Tesco's Express!

Boundary Road Garage were just one of many 'Motor Engineers' and garages in Woking Town Centre at that time. In the heart of town were Haslemere Motors in Commercial Road, with Bond's Garage in Church Street and Boorman's in Guildford Road (to name just a few). Gradually with redevelopment they all got pushed further and further out of town (or out of business), with Boundary Road Garage ending up, I believe, in Goldsworth Road.





The "radar screen" of our new method of "DYNAVISON" engine testing gives a picture of what is happening inside your engine. The exact cause of any trouble is instantly diagnosed and the engine scientifically tuned after service for guaranteed top performance.

BOUNDARY GARAGE LTD.

BOUNDARY ROAD, WOKING

'Phone : 3539

COMPREHENSIVE VEHICLE REPAIRS AND SERVICING

SELF DRIVE HIRE

PRIVATE CARS—MOTORISED CARAVANS—MULTI-PASSENGER CARRIERS

In those days, Boundary Road went all the way from Walton Road, across Chertsey Road, to the junction with Chobham Road (by the Victoria Hospital), with the garage on part of the site now occupied by the Victoria Way Car Park. Boundary Lane continued along the ancient boundary between Woking & Horsell, until it reached the canal at Clarence Wharf.

★

We are proud to be connected with the changing face of Woking . . .

Over a period of twenty-seven years we have seen many changes in Woking, and have been privileged to introduce many changes of Nuffield models to Woking.

In the future, as in the past, we sincerely hope to serve Woking and its people.

★



HASLEMERE MOTOR Co. LTD.

GUILDFORD, ALDERSHOT, WOKING, HASLEMERE.

Distributors for Morris, Morris Commercial, MG, Wolseley and Riley Dealers

MORRIS HOUSE, COMMERCIAL ROAD, WOKING

Telephone Woking 1444-5-6

The property, now in Commercial Way (not Road) is still called 'Morris House'.

The Boorman's and Haslemere Motor's adverts come from the 1956 Woking Guide, which together with the 1963 Guide, mentioned above, can now be viewed in full on this website, click on 'Archive' and then 'Guides'.

Woking's Garages—Part Two

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 3rd February, 2012)



Continuing last week's theme of Garages and Motor Engineers, I want to move on to look at some in the outlying villages around Woking.

Some garages appear to have developed from village forges, such as Burden & Bates at Kingfield, or Bedford's at Old Woking (which had been in the same family since it opened in the 1660's), whilst others seem to have just sprung from nowhere, like Fleming's Garage at the junction of the High Street and the Broadmead Road. The building had once been an old coaching inn called the White Horse Hotel, but it closed in the late 19th century and was later condemned for 'road improvements' as, in the years after the First World War, buses and lorries found the narrow corner impossible to get round.

The garage was later taken over by Conway West Motors, before they moved into Guildford Road, Woking (where Blockbusters are today), and later still Leigh's.

Further down the road was the Old Woking Service Station, which was also partially built on an old village pub – The Red Lion.



I cannot find any record of Pyrford ever having a garage or petrol station, but there appears to have been quite a few in the West Byfleet and Byfleet area's in the past. I wonder whether it was the close proximity of the racetrack at Brooklands in the early 20th century that had something to do with it. Engineers would have been naturally

Many can remember the back part of the building surviving as Leigh's Garage, until it was developed with the houses of Manor Mews.

attracted to the area to work as mechanics for the various drivers, and I suspect that a large number of visitors in their posh new 'motorised vehicles' would have required petrol (and assistance) for their cars, creating a ready market in the area.



The shop on the corner of Rosemount Parade is now a cycle shop – so it has partially gone full circle with cycle wheels and tyres once again adorning the windows.

Most of the garages have now been redeveloped with houses, shops or offices, but a few still survive in both villages – which is more than can be said for some places. 'The Garage' in West Byfleet was on the corner of Rosemount Avenue and the Old Woking Road – on the opposite corner to where the petrol station is today, whilst Howard's Garage was on the corner of Lavender Park Road and Madeira Road.

SINGER £245

THE 1935 11 H.P. SALOON WITH 1936 EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING INDEPENDENT FRONT SPRINGING AND FLUIDRIVE

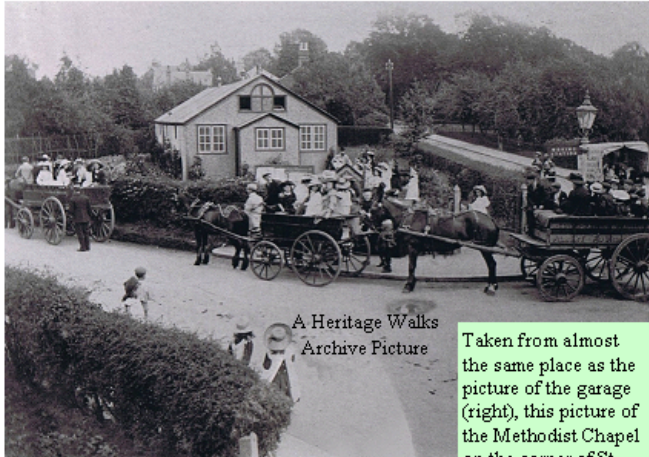
A really roomy 4-5 seater saloon with 'sparkling' sports performance. Fluidrive giving free wheeling, clutchless gear change, and a measure of pre-selection, plus independent front springing. Corners safely 10 miles an hour faster than any car with ordinary suspension. Is practically skid proof and definitely shock proof over the worst possible roads. You must ride in it before you can believe it. That experience will cost you nothing. Why not come and see it. Lavishly and luxuriously equipped throughout, £245.

HOWARD'S GARAGE
(Proprietor: HARRY HOWARD)
PHONE BYFLEET 59 WEST BYFLEET

This advertisement, from May 1935, shows that the marketing of cars has hardly changed over the years – although the style and prices have changed considerably.

The Garages of Woking—Part Three

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 10th February, 2012)



A Heritage Walks
Archive Picture

Over the past couple of weeks we have looked at some of the garages and petrol stations that sprung up in the Woking area in the early years of the 20th century. Some developed from old village forges or cycle shops, whilst others converted premises, such as former public houses for their new business. For some reason, old chapels also appear to have been a favourite, as at both College Road in Woking and St Johns Road in St Johns they were converted into petrol stations and motor showrooms. In both cases the church buildings have long since been replaced by modern forecourts, but quite why an old chapel should be considered ideal for a garage is not clear.

The Corner Garage was not the only one in St John's, there was also Cook's by Woodend Bridge, Mills' Garage in Hermitage Road, and further up the road the Mills bus depot was later taken over by the Inkerman Motor Company (where Wicks are today).

Meanwhile at Hook Heath there was George Tipping & Sons' 'Star Hill Garage' (now SMC) and the Hook Heath Garage (on the opposite of the road, near College Lane).

The motorists of Brookwood fared well too, with Erskine's by Pirbright Arch and Hill's Garage almost opposite, and the 'Connaught Car & Motor Works' on the Bagshot Road by Stumps Bridge. In contrast, the opening of the petrol station in Knaphill High Street, came very late in the villages development, and for some reason motor engineers didn't appear as prominent in

Taken from almost the same place as the picture of the garage (right), this picture of the Methodist Chapel on the corner of St Johns Road and St Johns Hill Road, long pre-dates the arrival of motorised vehicles in the village. It is believed the carts are taking the children of the congregation on their annual 'summer picnic' to the grounds of Pantiles.

The Methodist Chapel, was converted into a garage in the early part of the 20th century.

Letter-headings are not quite the same nowadays!

that village as they did in others. Not that the good folk of Knaphill had too far to travel to buy a brand new car, as Fox Garage was just across the border in Bisley.

Which brings up an interesting point. In the first article of this series I mentioned the Boundary Road Garage that later transferred to Goldsworth Road. SMC at Hook Heath was originally the 'Sheerwater Motor Company', and the Fox Garage has now vacated the site next to the pub that gave it its name and moved to Camberley.



A Heritage Walks
Archive Picture

There is a lot of 'history' to local garages, but not all of it is 'local' to where they eventually end up.

HILLMAN

Go Gay ...leap ahead with
new style-setting
colour schemes

A Heritage Walks
Archive Picture

MINK O.H.V. DE LUXE SALOON £495 plus p.t. £207.7.6d.
the luxury light car, now available
White-wall tyres, over-riders
and chromed crashbars
available as extras.

HILLMAN .. leaders in looks
.. in luxury .. in economical performance

MINK O.H.V. DE LUXE SALOON - MINK O.H.V. SPECIAL SALOON
MINK O.H.V. CONVERTIBLE
O.H.V. CALIFORNIAN - O.H.V. ESTATE CAR - HILLMAN HUSKY

Local Dealers Service and Spares

FOX GARAGE
GUILDFORD ROAD
BISLEY SURREY
Telephone Brookwood 2272-3

This advertisement from 1956 shows not only how much cars have changed over the years, but also the English language!

Customers' Cars garaged and driven at Owners' Risk
Messrs. Hugh Butcher Ltd., 26th August, 1945. Phone: Woking 1281

17 The Broadway, Woking.

DR. TO COOK'S GARAGE A Heritage Walks
(Proprietor—A. H. J. COOK) Archive Picture

MOTOR ENGINEERS
53, ST. JOHN'S ROAD, WOKING
SURREY

Horsell's Post Offices

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 17th February, 2012)



Looking down from the hill behind the Bowling Green at Queen Elizabeth Gardens onto the High Street with Benstead's Garage on the corner with Bury Lane.

Briefly continuing the 'Garage' theme of the last few weeks I wanted to note that Archie Benstead (whose Petrol Station will feature as part of my walk around Horsell this Sunday) was apparently a mechanic on John Cobb's world record-breaking car at Brooklands in the early part of the last century.

The 'garage' is still to the side of the cottage, but the old pumps in the front garden are just for show – a unique and fitting addition to this locally listed building.

The cottage dates back to about 1830 and was at one time the village post office, run by a Miss Sarah Spooner. In those days letters were not actually delivered to your door, but had to be collected from the post office, but with three deliveries (and collections) each day in 1888, the 'postal service' was evidently not all that bad. Mail was even received from Woking Station at



The garage just before it was converted back into a residence.

6.45 on a Sunday morning (and collected for delivery to the sorting office in Woking at 10.50 that day).

Nowadays the Royal Mail is not a 'service' but a 'business', and quite a few of the little 'sub-post offices' we had in the area have closed.

The post office has moved around Horsell a number of times since Miss Spooner's day. In the early 1920's you had to go to Archie Claydon's shop in South Road for your post, but later it transferred to John Brownjohn's grocery shop (near the Crown), where a post box can still be found in the wall of the building. Later still it moved closer to what would become the village's main shopping area, before crossing the road to where it is now in the Spar shop.



Horsell's Post Office has moved around quite a lot in the past hundred years or so.

But can anyone remember the sub-post office at Anthony's? I must admit I know very little about it myself. All I know is that it was classed as the 'Woodham' sub-post office and was a few doors away from the Baptist Chapel that used to be on the track, just off the Chertsey Road. According to my copy of the Horsell section of the 1916 Street Directory it was run by a Mrs M Eldridge (who was still there in 1937), but by 1948 a Miss L.F. Eldridge is listed (presumably her daughter). She is still there in 1957, but by 1964 (the next directory to be produced) the post office had obviously closed.

Any photographs of the Anthony's office (or any others in the area) would be gratefully received.

Anthony's Baptist Chapel

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 24th February, 2012)

I have had a few people contact me about the Post Office at Anthony's that I mentioned last week, but unfortunately (at the time of writing) nobody has been able to come up with any photographs or extra information on the history of the place.

It has prompted discussion, however, about the history of the Baptist Chapel and Bleak House, which I would now like to share.

In the mid 1830's the local Baptist ministry started to hold 'cottage meetings' and a Sunday school in the area, and in 1837 a Mr J.H. Smith (who lived near the Bleak) allowed a small chapel to be built in his back garden. The house is still called Chapel Cottage and is a few doors along from the public house.



It is hard to believe that all those people could actually get inside the chapel, but with several services on a Sunday the place was obviously popular.

It wasn't long before the congregation had expanded in numbers and in 1890 a new purpose built chapel was erected on the other side of Chertsey Road, beside the track that leads to the Sandpits. It was financed by the Rev Tarbox and opened in 1901 by the Rev C Spurgeon.

By then All Saints Church at Woodham (the one at this end of Woodham Lane) had begun to be built and eventually the numbers visiting the Baptist Chapel dwindled. Having said that, it



The opening of All Saints Church at Woodham Lane (seen here on the right, before the steeple was added) meant a drop in numbers attending the nearby Baptist Chapel.

remained in use until the 1980's when it was finally sold and converted into a house.

As for the Bleak House, one question often asked is why the 'Bleak House' – did Dickens have some connection with the area?

Dickens was, of course, a trustee of the Royal Dramatic College at Maybury (opened in the late 1860's), but the public house had been in existence long before then.

'Bleak House' was published as a series of articles in a monthly magazine, starting in March 1852 and finishing in September 1853. Coincidentally the first reference I have found to the pub comes from a lease dated the 29th September 1853 when "all that messuage lately erected on the parcel of ground called Bleak House" was leased for 28 years to Thomas Taunton, a brewer of Guildford.

Perhaps the builder, Arthur Smithers, was a fan of the series – although (as I will explain next week) there could be a more obvious reason for the name!



In the 1980's the chapel was sold and converted into a private house.

The Bleak House

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 2nd March, 2012)



Last week I suggested that the name of the 'Bleak House' public house at Anthonys could have come from the Dickens novel of 1853, but I think a more likely suggestion is that it is simply descriptive of the area, as in the past (before the pine trees started to invade the heath in the late Victorian times) the commonland around the pub would have been more open and 'bleak'. Another possible explanation is that it had some connection with the Bleek family of Woking, as a John Herbert Bleek is recorded in 1907 as owning land on the 'Horsell Common Estate'.

Admittedly that land was some distance away (the estate now being known as Russell Road) and it post-dates the earliest reference we have for the pub, but old family names are often the origin for many local place names.

Take the name 'Anthonys'. Some have suggested that it derives from St Anthony, who was apparently the patron saint of pig-keepers. Pigs would almost certainly have been kept by the 'squatters' who undoubtedly first founded the little settlement on Horsell Common, but it is a bit far-fetched to suggest that they named their hamlet after their animal's patron!

The real answer to the origins of the name comes from a deed relating to the Horsell Parish workhouse, built nearby in the early 19th century. The deed mentions the freehold hereditaments

The squatter settlement was probably named after Anthony Ives, who lived in the area in the late 18th century.

In the late 19th century The Pines of Horsell Common were noted for their 'health giving properties' and a popular subject of local postcards



known as 'Anthony Ives', a gentleman who is known to have lived in the Woking area in the early 18th century.

Whilst we are on the subject, I would like to explode another local myth – the one that suggests that Martyrs Lane records the death of the monks of Chertsey Abbey who were killed in 1539 when they were fleeing to Newark Priory at Ripley (or vice versa). Firstly, when Chertsey was dissolved in 1536 they moved to Bisham Abbey on orders of Henry VIII (to pray for the soul of Jane Seymour) and secondly the monks of Newark were also generously pensioned off. The road is actually named after Martyrs Farm – which in the 19th century was owned by the Martyr family.

In the early 19th century the heathlands of Horsell Common were much more 'bleak' than they are today.



Town Circus & Morgan Mall

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 9th March, 2012)



The site of Woking's new 'square', in the mid 1980's. Woking shopping centre was obviously busy with shoppers (and shops) before it was re-named Wolsey Place.

I read in the news the other week that Woking Council have voted to give every Primary School child in the borough a mug to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen. Some have criticised the council for wasting money that could better be spent on other more needy services, but I think it is entirely appropriate.

Town 'Circus' may not have been all that attractive when it was first laid out in the mid 1970's, but at least it wasn't covered in hoardings!

I suspect it will be more a 'triangle' than a square, but the point is that no matter how much money you chuck at 'improving' the shopping experience, all most people are experiencing in Woking year after year is disruption. Surely something needs to be done to help the shopkeepers regain the customers they have lost, rather than add to their woes with yet another expensive folly.

I have lost count of how many times Wolsey Place and Commercial Way have been 'improved', if not re-named, but I hope it is just a rumour that they are planning on renaming it yet again – this time 'Morgan Mall'. I checked my diary. It is only the beginning of March (not the 1st April), so hopefully there is no substance to it.

Returning to the story of the mugs (the china ones), apparently not everyone has been too happy with the reporting of misgivings by some members of the public. Personally I am pleased we still have a 'free-press' in the town, with some papers obviously being 'freer' than others.



After all it is these same children (and their children if they can ever afford to have any) who will still be paying off the debt that the council has accrued in recent years on various properties and their 'improvements' – why shouldn't they get at least something in return?

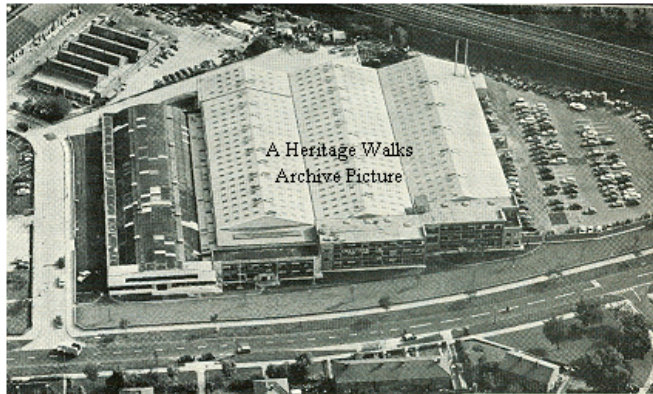
After spending a fortune on re-jigging 'Town Circus' (you can hardly call it a 'Square' any more), the proposal now is to create another 'square' at the other end of Mercia Walk. I



How many more times will Wolsey Place need to be 'improved'?

Sheerwater Estate History

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 16th March, 2012)



This weekend my Heritage Walk is around West Byfleet and Sheerwater, with many people, I am sure, wondering where the 'heritage' is going to be found on the Sheerwater Estate (as they did earlier this year when I did a walk around Goldsworth Park).

On the Goldsworth Park walk I was able to talk about objects going back to the Stone Age, and whilst there is nothing quite so old to talk about at Sheerwater (finds only date back to the Bronze Age!), the area still has an interesting past. Having said that I don't want to spoil things for my walkers, so this week I want to concentrate on the later 'history' of the 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, and 'Sheerwater' remained largely un-developed.

Sorbo produced all sorts of rubber products

The original Creators factory burned down in 1966, but was soon replaced by the factory pictured here in 1969

The Sheerwater Road entrance to Albert Drive

including the famous 'sorbo ball', but when they moved out the site was redeveloped in the 1980's as the Woking Business Park.

The main industrial area, however, dates from the 1950's when the London County Council housing estate was built – although very few original 50's & 60's factories survive (should the Wandsworth Electrical building be listed?).

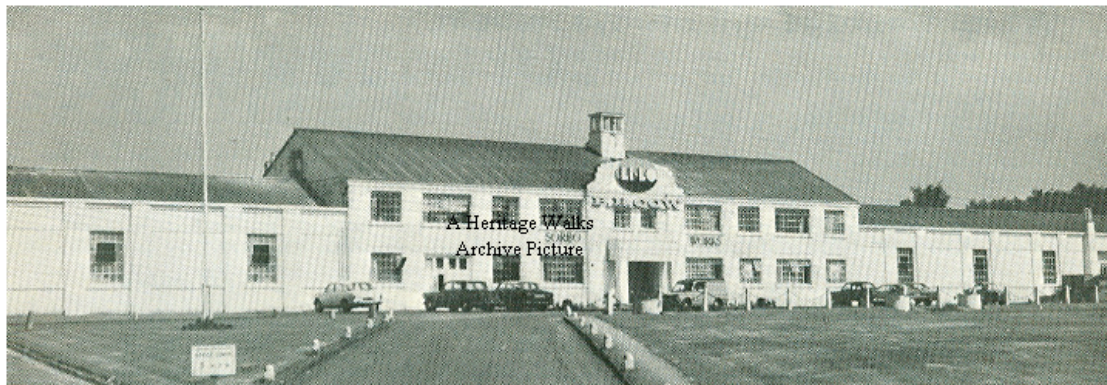
Sheerwater was almost unique in this area - it was actually 'planned', with not just industry and houses, allotments, recreational facilities and schools, but also a 'village' shopping area as well. It could almost be possible to spend your whole life on the estate and never have to venture beyond its bounds.

Of course venturing out of the estate (or into it) was a perpetual problem with just the one road (Albert Drive) into and out of the area – which to some extent may have helped to add to the feeling of isolation of the original 'London' residents, who were sadly shunned by some of the 'natives'



of the area. Thankfully things have changed since those days, although Sheerwater still manages to somehow maintain its own 'identity' in places such as the social club, pub and 'oasis' café (whose bacon, sausage, egg and chips I can readily vouch for).

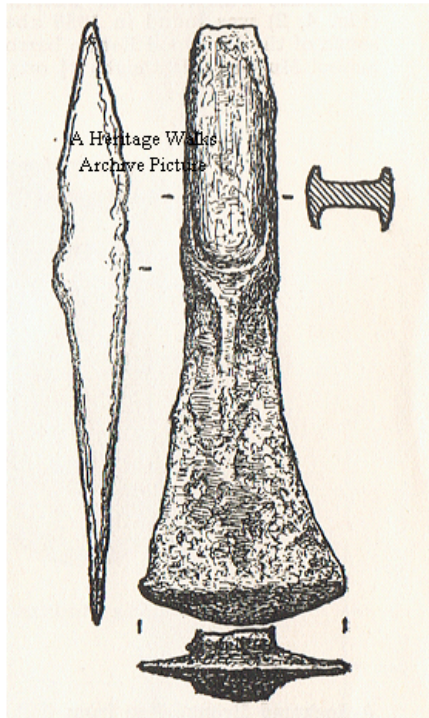
Next week I will tell about the area's pre-estate history.



P.B. Cow's 'Sorbo Works' were in a 'parkland' setting, with a putting green on the lawn in front for employees (and presumably Directors) to practice their golf (out of working hours of course).

Sheerwater's Pre-Estate History

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 23rd March, 2012)



This bronze axe was found during the construction of the estate near to what is now BDB school.

The orange 'iron' stain of the Rive Ditch can clearly be seen when the stream runs beside the Basingstoke Canal at West Byfleet.

The Rive Ditch is a natural stream ('rithe' actually meaning 'ditch' in Old English), which now flows for most of its way in pipes until it emerges to run alongside the Basingstoke Canal (or should I say the canal runs alongside the stream) at West Byfleet. Looking at the colour of the water it is hard to believe that the Sheerwater was ever 'clear', because the orange colour is not pollution, but natural staining coming from the iron ores that can be found in the subsoil of the Horsell Common area where the stream starts.



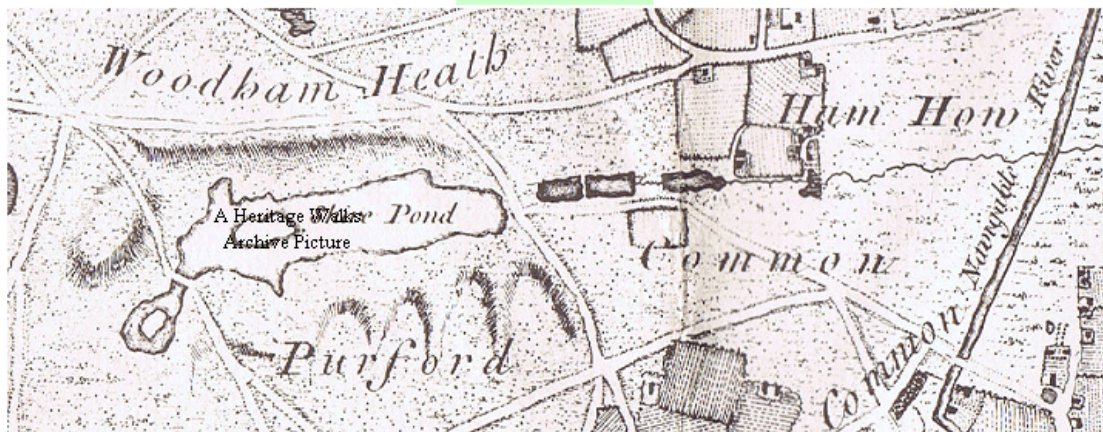
Whatever the colour of the lake, it appears that it may have been artificially enlarged (some say created) in the 16th or 17th century when it is said that local merchants supplied the London markets with fresh fish from the pond that was described as covering 110 acres with a perimeter of about two miles around. No lake of that size is marked on a map of the Purford Estate dating from the mid 17th century, although the name 'Sheerwater' is noted beside the Rive Ditch.

This week, as promised, I want to talk about the pre-estate history of Sheerwater, starting with the Bronze-Age palstave (axe) that I touched upon last week. It was found when they were building the estate in the 1950's, just across the canal from the possible bowl-barrow site on Woodham Lane (where Lynwood Close was built).

There is no evidence for occupation in the area at that time, although the 'Sheerwater' valley would have been quite an attractive place to live with the Rive Ditch probably feeding into a small lake - whose 'clear' (or in Old English - 'shere') water, would have presumably been teeming with fish.

The 'Sheerwater' lake was said to have been used to supply fish to the London markets in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Later, in the 18th century, the lake is clearly marked on maps, although it appears to have been drained in the latter part of that century and planted with trees (possibly as part of the drainage scheme). In places, however, the valley remained quite damp and when they came to build the estate in the 1950's pumps had to work night and day to try to remove as much ground water as possible.



Photography

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 30th March, 2012)



Taken on the 11th April 1978 at about 9am as I was walking to school, the number on the back of this picture tells me that this is actually the fourth picture that I ever took!

For his third birthday my grandson was given a toy camera. I say 'toy', but actually it is a real digital camera (complete with zoom) wrapped up in a sturdy blue plastic casing so that when he drops it on the ground it doesn't break. I cannot remember when my daughters got their first cameras (they had them on their mobile phones), but I can vividly remember my first 'kodak' that I was given for my fifteenth birthday. It took just twelve pictures on the '126' type cartridge. It will not surprise some people to learn that I still have some of the pictures I took with it, such as the one shown here of Tracious Lane in the snow.

It wasn't long before I progressed to a 'proper' SLR camera (the first thing I bought with my wages when I started work at 16), and the rest, as they say, is history.



This one, obviously taken with the 'SLR', shows the demolition of the houses of Butts Road, off Goldsworth Road in August 1981.

Photography nowadays is totally different from the days of actual 'film', when you had to pay for every picture to be developed, rather than just click away and select the best ones to print out (if they are ever printed out at all). And you only had 24 or 36 pictures at most to take before you had to find some dark corner where you could fiddle around to change the roll. Now you can take hundreds of pictures before you have to slot in another memory card.

My grandson's camera can take 400 pictures before its internal memory runs out, but with his idea of photography it doesn't take him long to fill it up. Most of the pictures are blurred, but some are real gems – although my daughter is slightly worried by what her son is choosing to take pictures off. On one of our first trips out with it, he was stopping at every drain hole and cover to take a picture (he had obviously seen me doing the same recently). It will not be long before I get him onto taking pictures of Woking street scenes and building sites!



The one of J.T. Huggins, builders of Woking, manhole cover, was taken by me in Knaphill, the other (actually of a hydrant cover) is one of my grandson's!

