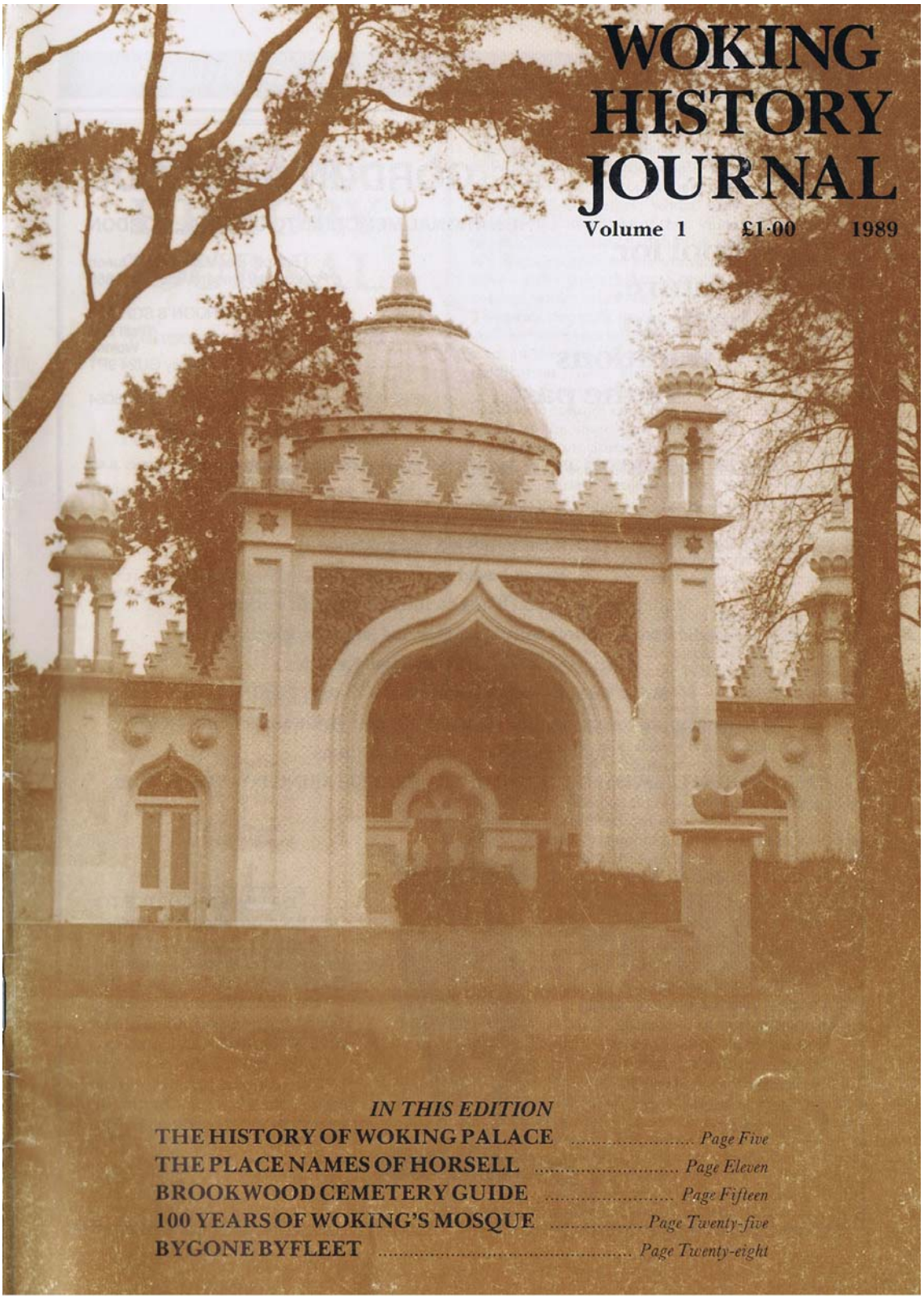

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Volume 1 £1·00 1989

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WOKING HISTORY JOURNAL

Volume 1 **1989**

The Woking History Journal is a non-profit making publication aimed at promoting Woking's Past.

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The idea of a Woking History Journal grew out of request for specialised books on certain aspects of Woking's Past. Some people wanted to know more about Woking Palace, others wanted a guide to Brookwood Cemetery, whilst some wanted to see more old photographs of their village. The feasibility of such publications depends on a number of factors. It's size depends on the amount of information we have on the subject. Some topics could fill a whole volume, whilst others could only warrant a few pages. The price depends on the number of copies printed and the more specialised the book, the less books are sold. In the end it becomes unviable as the costs of publication soar, and the potential purchasers diminish. The problem is how to produce a book that has a wide enough appeal to be financially viable, but which at the same time can cover specialist topics that would not otherwise have been published. The answer is THE WOKING HISTORY JOURNAL. By covering varied subjects from across the whole borough it will appeal to many. By containing small articles as well as large ones it will cater for all levels of local history research and knowledge. And by containing advertisements to help defray costs it can be sold cheaply, so reaching everybody who is interested.

In this first edition there is an item by John Clarke (author of the 'Brookwood Necropolis Railway') on Brookwood Cemetery. As a result of his two walks around the Cemetery for the Woking History Festival this Easter, it became clear that a cemetery guide was needed. This first 'walk' serves as part of the answer, with other guided tours appearing in later editions. An article on Woking Palace is also included, and as the main festival exhibition at St. John's Memorial Hall celebrated the 100th anniversary of the building of Woking's Mosque, there is a piece on the history of its site and surroundings too.

Other items that appear in this, and later editions, are a series of articles looking at the place names of the borough, a look at old documents, photographs, invoices, deeds and other original records, and a review of local history items in the news. The WOKING HISTORY JOURNAL can only give you a brief glimpse of Woking's past. If it encourages you to carry out your own research then why not share it, by sending us a copy for publication. If you have any old documents or photographs relating to the borough, please let us know, so that they too may be used to bring Woking's past alive.

This journal has a guaranteed circulation of two thousand copies. It is being sent free to every local library and school library, to every local barber's and hairdresser's, and to every local doctor's, dentist's and other medical practitioner's waiting room – in fact anywhere where people may gather and have a few minutes to sit and read. A free copy is being sent to every member of the local history society, to the secretary of neighbouring societies, and to other like-minded groups, in order that it may be circulated

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The story of the owners of Woking Palace is well recorded elsewhere, but the history of the building itself is not so well known. This account brings together information from a variety of sources to present . . .

THE HISTORY OF WOKING PALACE

Arthur Locke, in his series of articles for the *Woking News & Mail* (reprinted as *Woking Past*), suggests that Woking Palace is the site of the Saxon Monastery mentioned in 708-715 A.D.

"The monks lived, I believe, beside the Wey, down stream from the village; and held lands, best described as 'East Woking' and later as 'Church Manor'

The actual site – was near the present Old Hall, and guardroom by Woking Park Farm. Their minster of St. Peter was on the site of the present church."

If this is true then the Saxon Monastery of 'Wocchingas' lies somewhere beneath the Palace. Unfortunately Locke did not publish a 'list of sources', and many of his papers were lost or mislaid after his death. There might have been good evidence for his assumption, on the other hand some believe that the idea of a 'Church Manor' of Woking stems from an error in the Domesday Book, where the Bishop of Exeter's lands at East Horsley are listed under Woking by mistake. Woking Manor itself was held by Edward the Confessor before the Conquest, and in 1086 by William I. But although the Domesday Book records the Manor, it does not mention a manor house and it is uncertain whether such a building existed at that time or not. In Henry II's reign all the open lands in Woking Manor were added to the Forest of Windsor, but although he undoubtedly hunted in this area there "seems to have been no house or person in Woking that could entertain him in state." This tends to indicate that there was no large manor house at Woking.

When Richard I succeeded to the throne in 1189 he granted the Manor of Woking to Alan Basset, and although the grant records no house it does refer to tanks or reservoirs, stew ponds, fisheries and gardens. It is thought that these features are those now present at the Palace site.

Alan Basset died in 1233 and the manor passed to his brother Gilbert. Gilbert enclosed (without licence) a little park at Woking, between the site of Woking Park Farm and The Grange, but although the palings were at first pulled down by the Constable of Windsor, the King later relented and in 1236 sent Gilbert 15 does to help stock the park.

On the death of Gilbert in 1241 the manor passed to another brother, Fulk, whom it is recorded entertained Henry III at Woking Park in September 1251. But Fulk died in 1259 and a third brother, Phillip, inherited the Manor of Woking. Phillip also died without an heir and so in 1272 the manor passed to the last survivor of the Basset's, his sister Aliva, widow of Hugh le Despenser the Justiciar. It is in the grant to Aliva that we find the first positive mention of a house at Woking, simply described as a "Capital Mansion House". The park was not mentioned.

In 1282 on the succession of her son, Hugh Despenser, the manor consisted of a "Capital house, outhouses, easements, courtilage and gardens" with a "small park of 11 acres of the yearly value of 13s 4d."

Hugh Despenser set about enlarging his property and sometime before 1305 appears to have made a Great Park at Woking.

Hugh Despenser was not popular with the locals. The palings of his park were pulled down, his peacocks and deer were carried off, and when eventually he fell out of favour with the Crown in 1314, many of his manors were razed to the ground. Locke suggests that Bagshot and Sutton manors suffered such a fate, but states that "Woking Manor House may have been spared, for Edward II stayed there in 1320."

In 1327 the Manor reverted to the Crown, when it consisted of . . .

"A capital messuage, surrounded with moats, containing a hall, chapel, two chambers, with a pantry and buttery adjoining the hall, a kitchen, larder, bakehouse, brewhouse, poultry-house, laundry. A chapel for the household, an apartment of three lodging-rooms for the knights and esquires, treasurers, and other great officers. Two other apartments for knights and esquires, under another roof. A gate and a drawbridge."

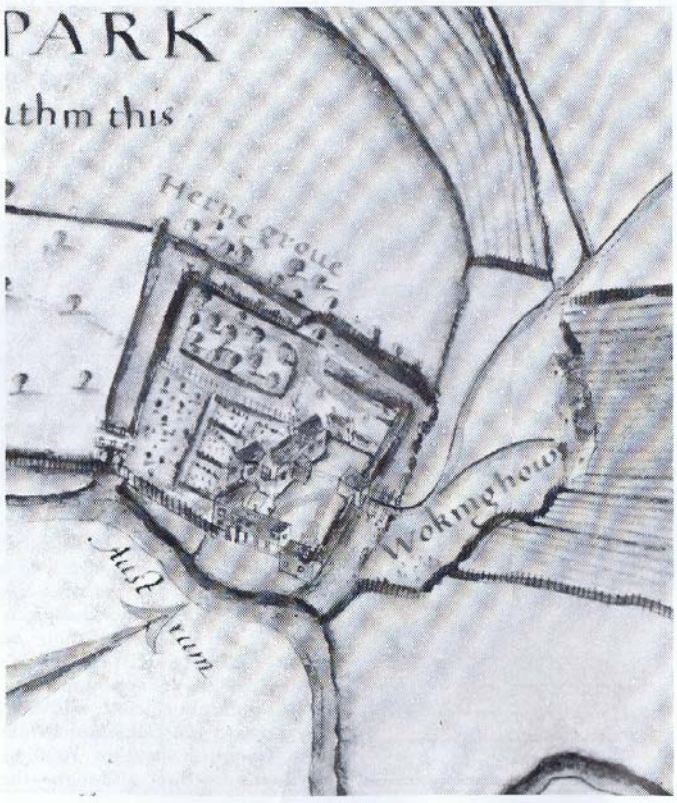
Outside the first moat there were other apartments, gardens and a reservoir, with a water-wheel used to fill the moats. Beyond the outer moat there was "a large stable for the Lord's own horses, a barton, with two granges for corn and hay, a stable for cart-horses, an ox-stall, cow-stall, cart-house and sheepcote." There was an outer gate with a chamber over it for the keeper of the house, with a stable for his horses and a house for his family.

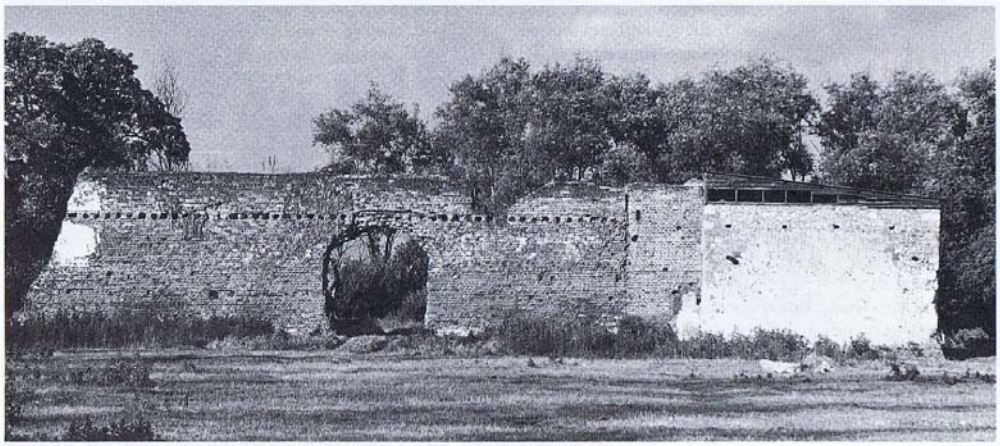
Edward III granted the manor of Woking to his uncle, Edmond Earl of Kent, from whose family the manor passed in 1416 to Margaret Beaufort, Duchess of Somerset. Her Daughter, Lady Margaret Beaufort, is perhaps the most famous woman in Woking's history, and it is to her that the remoulding of Woking's Manor House into Woking Palace is attributed.

Lady Margaret was the mother of Henry VII. He often stayed at Woking Palace, and in 1497 he signed a "friendship and non-aggression pact" with Maximillian of Austria, which became known as 'The Treaty of Woking'.

In 1503 Margaret gave Woking to her son and under Henry VII the building work continued. Over the next seven years a total of £1,400 was paid out for works at Woking and in 1508 £500 was paid for "building the new hall at Okyng." The accounts for 1511 possibly show the final part of this work with the entry to pay Barnard Flower the glazier "in full payment for glasing of the hall and other offices at Okyng."

Woking Palace in 1607





Woking Palace from the west. Before the arch to the Great Hall collapsed.

By this time both Lady Margaret and Henry VII were dead, and the Palace had passed to her grandson Henry VIII. He continued the work in rebuilding the Palace, and like his father often visited the area to hunt in the park. But in the words of Locke . . .

"The picturesque group of old buildings at Woking Park, ranging from the 12th century to Margaret's own days, were not ornate enough, and Henry began at once to extend and enlarge, spending within the year two sums, large for those days, of £80 and £100."

It was whilst staying at Woking in September 1515 that Wolsey, Archbishop of York, received the Pope's letter informing him of his election as a Cardinal. The Wolsey Place shopping centre in Woking commemorates the event.

For the next seventeen years Henry seemed content with the Palace buildings as few alterations were carried out and he still often stayed at Woking. Then in 1532 another series of major construction work was begun under the direction of James Needham. Detailed accounts survive of the work at Woking over the next ten years. A few of the more interesting accounts are reproduced here.

In 1533 tilers were repairing roofs in the King's "watching chamber and Queen's dining chamber". Carpenters were "shoring up" the great bay window in the Queen's chamber, new planking the bridge going into the court, and mending the wharf by the King's privy garden.

In 1534 bricklayers were building new ranges in the 'hall kitchen' and 'Lord's kitchen', and carpenters were . . .

"taking downe olde wharffes in the mote – takyng upe a greate grate of tymber lying in the said moote [and] takyng uppe of dyverse pyles to clenche the moote for the ronnyng water to come thorowe for barges to have passage on the este syde of the manner towards the meadys."

They were also building a bridge over the River "on the garden side into the meads". Perhaps this was the successor to the bridge built by Gilbert Basset in the 1230s into his tilting grounds on the Broadmeads. A few bricks down by the river to the south east of the Palace buildings may indicate its foundations.

This period must have been a busy and prosperous one for Woking, with food, drink and lodgings needed for the workers, and many local labourers employed on the project. Edward Lydger, a bricklayer of Woking, was paid to make 230,000 bricks in a kiln at Clandon Common, some for use in repairs, the rest to be stored for future use. Those not immediately used were stored the following year in a "long thatched shed in the courtyard of the manor."

In 1537 two areas were built for bowling. One was in the King's garden "for the King to boulle in", the other in the orchard for "the Kyng and Quene to walk in". The carpenters erected posts and rails on either side of the alley and boarded it for the "bullys to mak a jompe on."

In 1541 the chapel (recorded in 1327) had its roof repaired at the same time as the hall roof was re-tiled.

After Henry's death in 1547, Woking was only occasionally used, and little maintenance work appears in the accounts. Edward VI came to Woking in 1550, Mary seems never to have visited at all, and, according to some historians, Elizabeth "Would spend nothing on Woking House or Park, and not even stay there, or at any of her own houses, if she could possibly fix up a route which would take her from house to house of the wealthier subjects."

In 1565-7 the accounts record that a timber bridge was built costing £22 18s 6d. (thought to be Broadmead Bridge) and some minor payments were made in 1569 when Elizabeth visited the area. Early in her reign the site had been described as greatly decayed "and without present helpe past remedy."

Then in 1576-80 £2027.2s.10d was spent on alterations ad reconstruction, a not inconsiderable amount. Local people were still very much involved in the reconstruction work, and were perhaps hopeful that the 'good old days' of Henry VIII were back. In 1579-80 John Carpenter, well-maker of West Clandon, dug a well seven feet wide and twelve feet deep. Over this a well house was built with a lead cistern enclosed in timber.

Elizabeth visited Woking in 1583, on her way from Pyrford Place, presumably to view the work carried out, but although Camden (in 1586) described Woking as a "Royal Mansion", it was decaying through damp and terribly neglected.

For thirteen years there appears little in the accounts books relating to Woking and then in 1593-4 there was a scheme to modernize the outside of the building by plastering it. This last attempt to revive the old Palace did not work. The whole site was damp because of "some foolish engineer having abandoned the system of raising water for the moat by means of a wheel, and having cut a breach at the up-stream end, of the moat, which let the river water run in, even in flood."

By the time James I came to inherit Woking, the park and palace were in a scandalous condition. When James did visit he probably camped out, as there was nowhere else in Woking able to house him.

Norden's survey of the Palace in 1607 shows no sign of the medieval moat (partially filled in 1580), but shows the whole site surrounded by a single moat. The view shows the hall (probably on the site of the ruined barn) and a gallery (possibly the one built in 1576-7). The park boundary is also shown. In all it took five-and-a-half miles of paling and contained "160 Deere; 30 of Antler and about 15 Buckes."

In 1608 Sir Edward Zouch, a favourite of James I, built himself Hoe Place. On the 9th May 1609, James made Zouch steward of the manor of Woking and keeper of the park and on the 13th June, Zouch submitted estimates for repairing the Palace. The pales and Town bridge were repaired, but nothing was spent on the house, and when eventually James I granted the manor to Sir Edward in 1620 much of the old Palace buildings were in ruin. Zouch completed his job, pulling down what was left and using the material elsewhere.

By the reign of Charles I all that was left of the Palace were "some pieces of walls", and after the Civil War the park pales were removed, never to return. The history of Woking Manor from then on is the history of Hoe Place, and the remains of the Tudor Palace were left to rot in peace. Few knew of their existence, and few cared. Historians noted its past, but few had much to say about its present state.

The "bakehouse" taken from across the River Wey.

In August 1874 some members of the Surrey Archaeological Society visited the Palace, but what condition the buildings were in at the time is not recorded. A plan was made of the "massive foundation", by Mr Austen and drawn by Lieut. Wynne, R.E. They were reproduced in the Society's 'Collections' of 1878, but it is not made clear which buildings were extant and which were just foundations.

In 1911 the Victoria County History records . . .

"In what is now a farm building is a brick gateway of the earlier 15th century, much dilapidated, leading into a building with a barrel vault of small bricks of a rather later date, and communicating with what is now a barn of old chalk, brick and timber work. But the whole is in very bad repair."

About 1912 an excavation was carried out on the site by the second Earl of Iveagh, owner of the Palace site, but although a plan of the excavations has survived a full report of the excavation has not been found. What material was unearthed and where (indicating possible use for each building) is unknown, and the disturbance to the site caused by this early excavation could cause problems for later 'digs'. But a note in Locke's 'Woking Past' does give us some idea of what was found . . .

"The great open-air hearth, on which carcasses could be roasted whole, is still there, overgrown with grass, and the ashpit not far away was found to contain wood-ash, bones and boars' tusks."

A small 'museum' at the Palace, presumably including material found on the dig, was on show at the site for some years but has now vanished.

In 1957 a report in the Surrey Archaeological Collections recorded the details of the old Palace remains.

"Practically all that now remains is a small building about 30 feet by 18 feet with one window and two doors, which adjoin a dilapidated barn." It "is surrounded by traces of the foundations of other buildings; the whole embraced by a shallow depression which was once the moat."

The small building remains today in much the same state, but the 'dilapidated barn' no longer exists. We do, however, have photographs taken in the 1940s showing both the exterior and interior of the building. Only a few walls remain.

"The materials from which this building was made were chiefly flint with ashler stone; while the arches and the groins of the roof are of clutch chalk. Here and there it has been patched with red bricks of tudor type. One doorway stands in the east wall and would appear to be part of the original Palace of the Plantagenet Kings.

The second opening is at the N.E. corner and must have been an inner door leading into another chamber." "In the north wall are two deep flues with wide splays which suggests the building was the bakehouse."

The bricks used to patch up the building could possibly be those made by Edward Lydger in 1534, as many of them match the precise dimensions he was given.

"The window in the S.W. corner seems to have been cut at a much later date and is plainer and more utilitarian in appearance than the doorways. The west wall consists of a finely built piece of barrel-vaulting, which suggests an upper story of considerable weight must formerly surmounted this chamber. The flooring has completely disappeared, although the fragments of tiling which have been unearthed indicate that the whole place was paved."

H.M. Colvin, in 'The History of the King's works' (1982) suggests that "the building may well have formed part of Henry VII's works" as the "details are early Tudor in character".

The site is now owned by Woking Borough Council, but it is not open to the general public. Anybody wishing to visit the Palace can do so in organised groups only, such as the walk this Easter lead by Tom Harding for the Woking History Festival.

The chief works consulted for this article were . . .

R.A.C. Godwin Austen *Woking Manor* SyAC 7, 1880.
Victoria County History of Surrey Volume 3. 1911.
A. Locke *Woking Past.*
D.J. Haggard *The Ruins of Old Woking Palace* SyAC 55, 1958.
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N. Hawkins *Woking Palace or Old Hall, Old Woking* SyAC 77, 1986.

In the first of this series of articles looking at the Place Names of the area, we are going to look at . . .

THE PLACE NAMES OF HORSELL

The obvious place to begin is with the name "HORSELL". The problem with Horsell is that the oldest surviving record of the name only dates from the 13th century, and by then it had reached a well developed form of a much older name. There are several possible origins of this older name. We shall begin with the most generally accepted form first, before going on to the others.

1. The name is made up of two Old English elements, "HORH" meaning 'foul or dirty' and "SCYLF" meaning 'shelf or ledge'. HORHSCYLF (muddly ledge).

2. Another suggestion is that the second element is not "SCYLF", but "(GE)SELL" meaning 'a shelter for animals' or 'herdsmen's hut'. HORHSELL (shelter in a muddy place).

3. The third suggestion is that it means "HORSE HILL" or 'a hill where horses are kept', but there is little evidence to support this.

The most likely explanation is that Horsell – centred on the hill (or ledge) upon which St Mary's Church stands – means muddy hill. Not too difficult to imagine in times of bad weather and before the roads were made up.

The spelling of the name has altered over the years. The first record, in 1232, shows it as HORSHELL, but as few people could write in those days the spelling varied.

In 1237 it was HORSULL . . .
1255, HORISELL,
1258, HORSILL,
1270, HORESHULL,
1279, HORISHULL,
1316, ORESHULL,
1317, HORESULLE,
1348, HORESWELL,
1487, HORSELL,
1595, HORZELL.

The origin of some other places in Horsell are also of interest and some go back a long way.

BONSEY'S FARM was the home of "RICHARD BONSYE" who acquired the land in 1615. In 1823 it was recorded as "BONCESS FARM". The land was originally known as "TWICHEN" (occasionally the manor of Twichen), and comes from the Old English "TWICENE" meaning 'meeting of the ways'. It was first recorded in 956 as Twicene and later as Twichene, 1446; Tonching, 1540; Tuzchyn, 1558; Towchen, 1607 and Twitching, 1719.

CHERTSEY ROAD obviously goes to Chertsey (Cerotus' island, first recorded in 675). The road was in use before 889 as DURNFORD was recorded then as "DERNEFORDE". "DERNE" is Old English for 'secret or hidden'. A bridge has been on this site since at least 1605 when it was recorded as "DERNEFORDE BRIDGE".

CHOBHAM ROAD goes to CHOBHAM (Ceaba' village, first recorded in 675). The road was in use at that time as MIMBRIDGE was also recorded in 675 as "MIMBRUGGE". Nearby was a field called "MIMFELD", meaning 'a field where mint grew'. Mimbridge is the oldest recorded bridge in Woking.

KETTLEWELL HILL is recorded as "KITTLEWELL" in 1615 and may derive from the personal name "KETIL". Presumably 'Ketil's Well' is somewhere in the area. The 'legend' that Ketil founded the Wheatsheaf Hotel back in Norman times is a good sales gimmick, but unfortunately untrue.

LITTLEWICK ROAD goes through LITTLEWICK. The name first appears in 1345 as "LYTLEWYK", but was probably the home of "ROBERT ATE WYK" in 1332. The word "WIC" means 'dwelling or farm' (usually 'dairy farm'). Littlewick is therefore a 'small dairy farm'.

PARLEY FORD (BRIDGE) was first recorded in 1229 as "PARLINGEFORD" and probably represents the Old English "PERLEAGINGA FORD" mean-

ing 'the ford of the men of Parley'. PARLEY was first recorded in 956 as "PER LEAGE". The first element "PERU" meaning 'pear' and the second element "LEAH" meaning 'clearing'. The clearing where pear trees grew.

VIGGORY (LANE) STREAM comes from "WYGERYTHE-BREGGE", first recorded in 1412. It probably means 'Wicga's streamlet'.

WHOPSHOTT FARM was originally called BULBEGGARS, but later became the home of the WAPSHOTT family, who came from WAPSHOTT HOUSE on Horsell Common. The name "WAPSHOTT" was first recorded in 675 as "WOPSHETE" and comes from the Old English "WOP", meaning 'weeping' and "SCEAT" meaning 'corner or strip of land'. Why this part of Horsell was known as 'weeping corner' is uncertain. The farm in Bullbeggars Lane has given its name to WHOPSHOT CLOSE, WHOPSHOT AVENUE and WHOPSHOT DRIVE.

WOODHAM ROAD goes to WOODHAM (meadow or enclosure, within a wood, first recorded in 675). The road is relatively modern, being built during Victorian times and originally called "PALMERSTON ROAD". The old name is still preserved in PALMERSTON CLOSE.

Many roads have been named after the farms, farmland or houses they have replaced, such as . . .

ABBEY FARM. Has been replaced by ABBEY ROAD.

CASTLE HOUSE. Although the house still remains, CASTLE ROAD was built on its land.

EMMETT'S NURSERY. Has been replaced by EMMETTS CLOSE.

FENN'S FARM. Has been lost and FENNS WAY built.

GROVE BARRS FARM. Has been replaced by GROBARS AVENUE.

GUERNSEY FARM. Has been replaced by GUERNSEY FARM DRIVE.

HORSELL GRANGE. Again the house still exists, but GRANGE ROAD occupies part of its land.

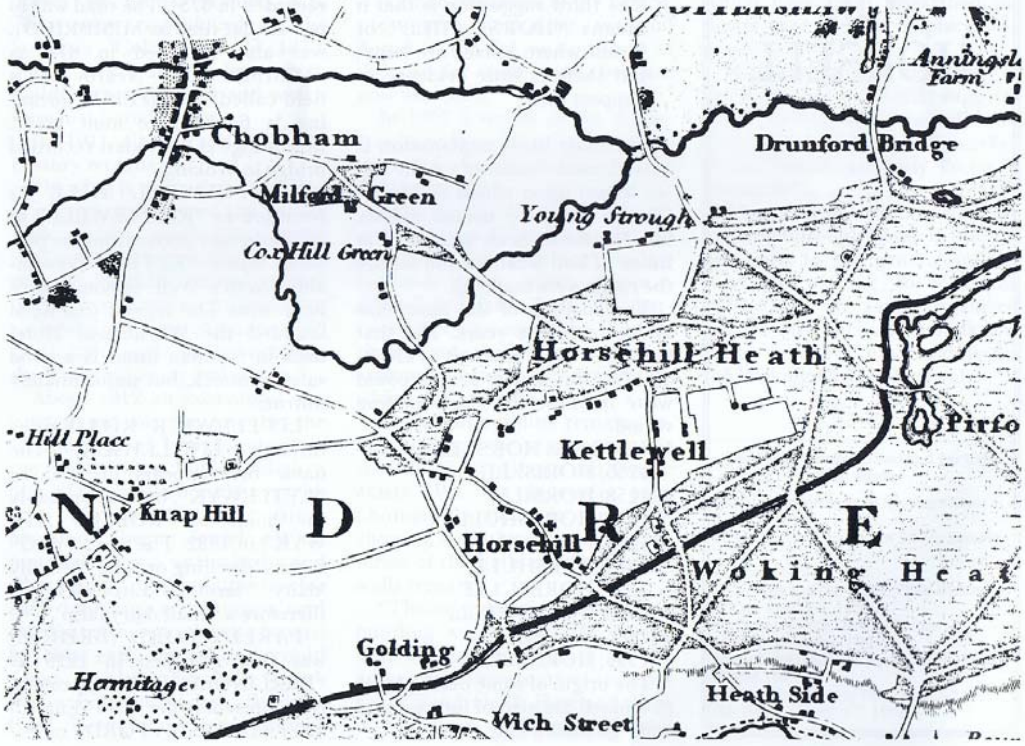
OLD MALT FARM. Has given its name to OLD MALT WAY.

THORNASH FARM. Has been replaced by THORNASH ROAD, WAY and CLOSE.

WALDENS FARM. Has been replaced by WALDENS ROAD and WALDENS PARK ROAD.

There are a few roads connected with the common, such as, HORSELL COMMON ROAD, HORSELL MOOR AND HORSELL BIRCH, which all cross or border the ancient heathlands of Horsell, and HEATH ROAD, COMMON CLOSE and PINEWOOD CLOSE, were all built on former common land.

Late 18th century map showing some of the place names of Horsell and the surrounding districts.



Roads can also recall features that exist, or at one time existed in the area. CARTHOUSE LANE was so named in 1844. WELL LANE, CLOSE and PATH, are obviously connected with WELL FARM, and BRIDGE CLOSE is near Arthurs Bridge. BREWERY ROAD was named after the brewery of John Steadman which operated in the road from the mid 19th century until the First World War.

Other road names recall the former use of the land such as, LITTLE ORCHARD, ORCHARD DRIVE, HOPFIELDS, and NURSERY CLOSE. Also included in this section is ROSEHILL AVENUE, which recalls the growing of roses by Cobbett's Nursery, before the road was built.

CHURCH ROAD, CHURCH CLOSE, LYCH WAY, TOWER CLOSE, and ST. MARY'S ROAD are obviously connected with the parish church on CHURCH HILL, and PARES CLOSE and HAMMOND ROAD recall former vicars.

THE PLACE NAMES OF BULLBEGGARS ESTATE

On the Bullbeggars Estate are a collection of old field names. "BROOKSHOTE" (recorded in 1345) is now BROOKFIELD, "HERTESHILL" (recorded in 1474) is HARTSHILL WALK, and the land of "WILLIAM LE FRENCH" (recorded in 1332) is FRENCH'S WELLS. TRACIOUS CLOSE is named after TRACIOUS COPSE, which was recorded in early 19th century deeds as "TRAISHES COPPICE". COBBETTS CLOSE and COLLIERS CLOSE, record two old Horsell surnames of COBBETT and COLLYER.

SYTHWOOD is the oldest name on the estate and was first recorded in 675 as "SITHUUODE HAGAN". It is difficult to be certain of its origin, but it possibly comes from the Old English word "SIGTHE" or "SITHE" meaning 'scythe' and means a 'wood in the shape of a scythe'. The exact location of the original 'Scythe-wood' is unknown, but it was somewhere by the Western boundary of Horsell, near Knaphill & Bisley.

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY

by John Clarke

John Clarke, the leading authority on the history of Brookwood Cemetery, guides us around the Nonconformist Section in the north-east of the Cemetery, in this, the first of a series of tours around the 'London Necropolis'.

INTRODUCTION

Brookwood Cemetery is the largest cemetery in Britain and remains as one of the great Victorian burying grounds. However it is overshadowed by the interest and enthusiasm spent on the more London-based cemetery showpieces like Highgate or Kensal Green; even locally it is only appreciated and visited by the more dedicated.

In recent months interest has increased, however, due to concern over the actions of the present owner. It is not the purpose of this Journal to give judgement on the present state of affairs. You can judge that for yourself by visiting the cemetery. But it is hoped that by encouraging a greater awareness of its historical importance we will help to secure the cemetery's survival in the future. It must be remembered that the cemetery is private land, and that permission should be sought from the owner before visiting.

The purpose of this series of articles is to record the guided tours I undertook for the Woking History Festival last Easter. Each article will cover a substantial portion of the cemetery and will record graves, buildings and other items of interest. It is necessarily a selective guide, concentrating on the major points I have discovered during many years exploration of the cemetery grounds. This series does not pretend to be exhaustive and I would be particularly interested to hear of other graves or other items that could be included in a future, more definitive guide to the cemetery.

The approximate route of this cemetery tour is shown by numbered points on the accompanying map. Each number is more fully explained in the text. I would suggest that your own tour starts from either the offices of Wooton Jeffries (number 3 on the map) or from Brookwood Station. Car parking is available at both sites. If you arrive from Brookwood, I suggest you turn left after emerging from the subway under the railway and follow the path – which is the trackbed of the cemetery railway – and you will soon reach number 21 on the map.

From either of these starting points the nature and extent of your tour is entirely up to you. I estimate that with a brisk pace and covering all 21 items, this tour should take about 1½-2 hours. Please note that the location of graves is only approximated on the maps, whilst the inexorable growth of shrubs and bushes may make the identification of particular graves somewhat difficult. However I hope these notes will encourage you to visit and return again and again to Brookwood Cemetery, which remains a place of great beauty, charm and character.

GUIDE TO THE MAP OF BROOKWOOD CEMETERY

Brookwood Cemetery was devised as a solution to the problem of burying London's dead. It was unusual in having a private railway line running through its grounds by which funeral parties and visitors could travel down to the cemetery from central London. The site of the cemetery was cleared, drained and planted in 1854 by the London Necropolis & National Mausoleum Company (hereafter LNC). The cemetery was consecrated by the Bishop of Winchester on 7 November 1854 and was opened to the public on 13 November 1854, when the funeral trains began to operate.

Brookwood was originally known as 'The London Necropolis' or 'Woking Cemetery'. Only from the turn of the century was 'Brookwood Cemetery' commonly used.

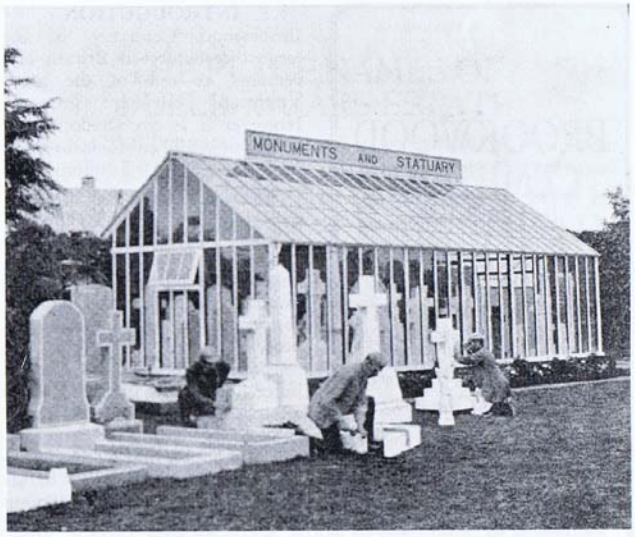
Brookwood Cemetery is divided into two parts by Cemetery Pales (number 1 on the map). The southern half is the consecrated portion, originally reserved for Anglican funerals, whilst the northern part remained unconsecrated and was reserved for the burial of members of other religious denominations. This article concentrates on the eastern part of the northern or unconsecrated area of the cemetery.

1. ***Cemetery Pales:*** The name of the road running between Pirbright and the West Hill Golf Club probably comes from the original 'paling' or wooden fencing of the cemetery as required by the LNC's Act of Parliament (1852). This paling was subsequently replaced by the brick and pebble dashed boundary walls, built 1902-1903, which remains today.

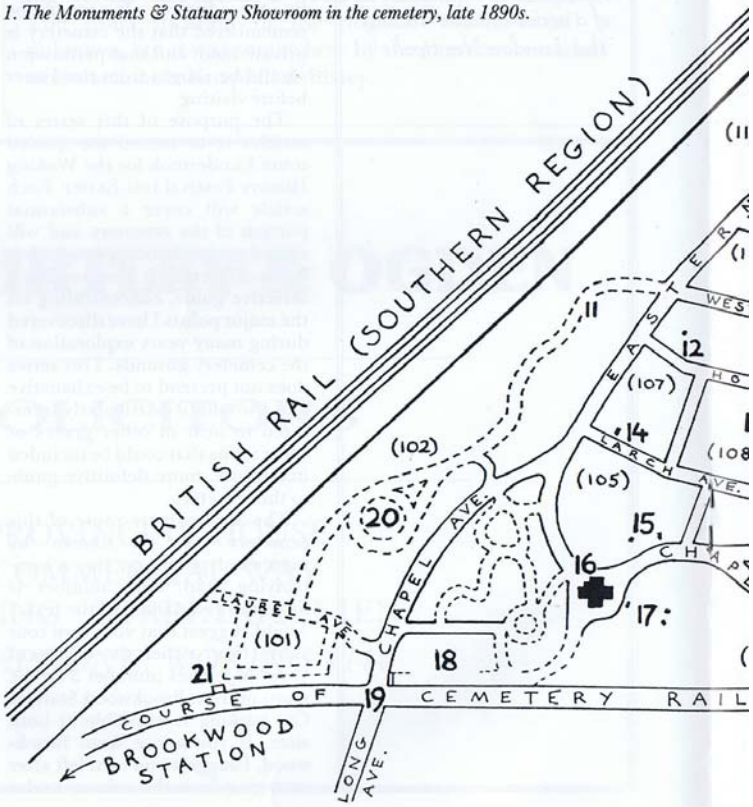
2. ***Level Crossing Site:*** A bump in Cemetery Pales at this point denotes the course of the private railway through the cemetery as it crossed the road. The present layout of the grounds outside Wooton Jeffries dates from after World War II. Prior to that the cemetery roadways ran both sides of the railway at this point. Wooden level crossing gates were provided to protect the road and railway, but it is understood that they were removed some time before the regular train service ceased in 1941. The crossing was then protected by a footman with a red flag.

In September 1945 the Directors of the LNC proposed changing the layout of the cemetery and suggested the construction of new semi-circular access roads into the cemetery on both sides of Cemetery Pales, areas for car parking, new offices, the removal of the railway track, and its replacement by a main avenue running from Brookwood Station to Cemetery Pales and through to South Station. These plans never materialised except in the semi-circular access road laid out as an entrance to this part of the cemetery and in the removal of the railway (c. 1947-48).

3. ***Wooton Jeffries' Offices:*** This range of buildings was the Cemetery Superintendent's Offices immediately prior to its occupation by Wooton Jeffries. The Cemetery Superintendent's Offices then moved to Glades House, which is situated at the entrance to the Glades of Remembrance.

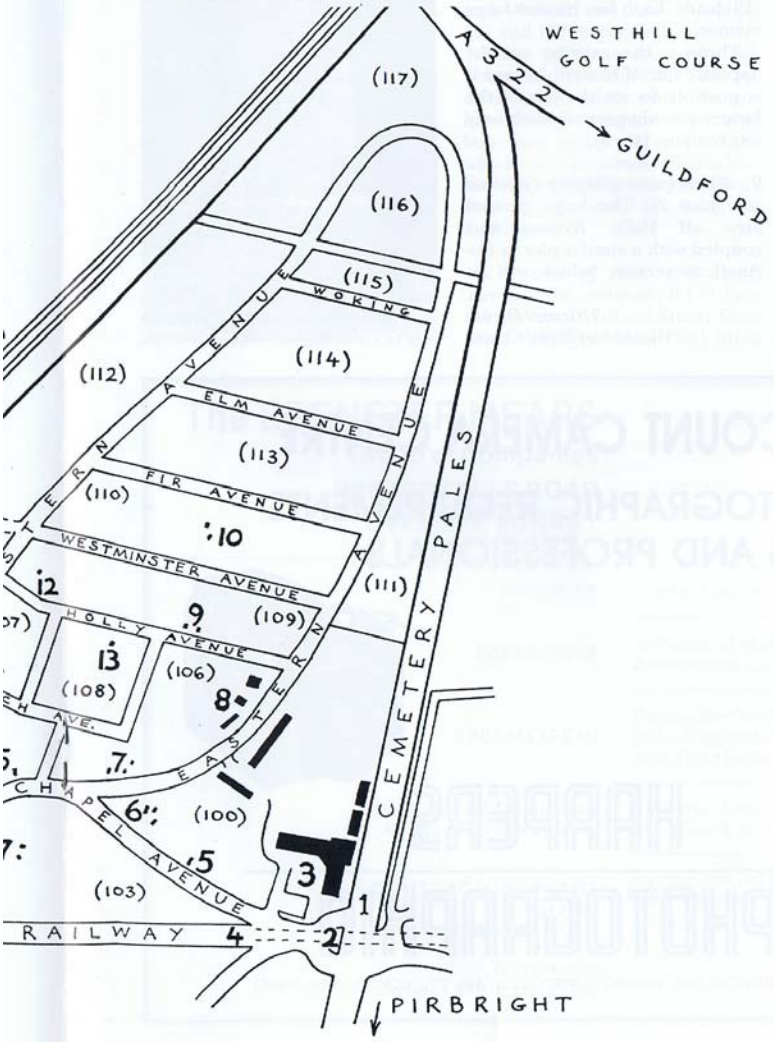


1. The Monuments & Statuary Showroom in the cemetery, late 1890s.



The buildings have been altered and extended over the years. Probably the original Cemetery Superintendent's house, designed by the LNC's Architect, Sydney Smirke, stood on this site, but it is not known if there are any remnants of this building still surviving.

The outbuildings attached to the offices comprised stores; stabling for horses, machinery and hearses; an extensive range of greenhouses; and, from the mid-1880s, the LNC's Masonry Show Room (see *plate 1*). The greenhouses provided plants and shrubs for the cemetery and floral tributes, etc. It should be remembered that at the turn of the century, the LNC employed over 100 gardeners to tend the cemetery grounds. Most of these outbuildings have been demolished and the space used as a private car park for Wooton Jeffries.



4. ***Site of 1928 Railway Accident:*** On 26th October 1928 the Necropolis funeral train, hauled by 'M7' class 0-4-4T No. 33 proceeding at a walking pace from South Station towards North Station, collided with a Daimler where the line crossed Western Avenue. The accident happened at 2.17pm and resulted in the engine's steps being twisted and the car being badly damaged. There were no injuries. The car contained four Australian ladies (who had been visiting the War Graves section of the cemetery) and their chauffeur; they returned to London on the Necropolis Train. The driver of the train requested a replacement engine to be attached at Woking because the steps on No. 33 were touching the coupling rod. The accident was blamed on the chauffeur who was driving too fast at a point where the railway was partly obscured on either side by trees and shrubs. He was also contravening the notices which were displayed at the entrances to the cemetery that stated 'Motors in the cemetery must proceed at a walking pace'. Subsequently notices were erected at the level crossing stating 'Special caution: Level Crossing'.

5. ***Grave of George Barratt:*** George Barratt was for many years Cemetery Superintendent; he died in 1927. There are many employees of the LNC who chose to be buried at Brookwood – see 15.

Note how walking along Chapel Avenue the land rises towards the area known as Chapel Hill. The naming of the cemetery avenues and other areas was undertaken by one of the LNC's General Managers, Cyril B. Tubbs, from 1888.

6. ***Graves of Kinkel, Jackson and Bailliu:*** Further along Chapel Avenue, on the right and in the trees, are three interesting graves. The monument to Johanna Kinkel includes a bas-relief portrait on the base. Some German graves lie behind this.

The grave of William Myles Jackson (died 1899) comprises a pink granite obelisk. Jackson was a solicitor.

The memorial to Maria Anna Pauline Bailliu (died 1899) is surmounted by a classical style urn.

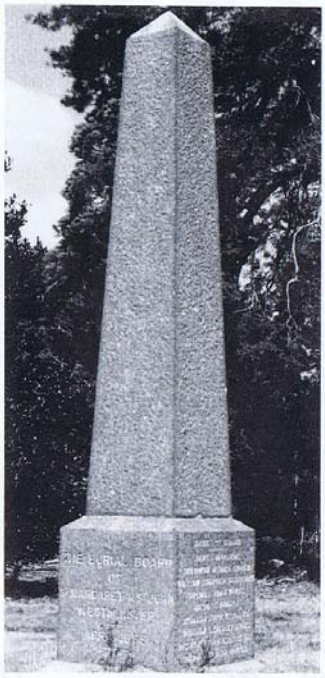
7. ***Some Early Graves:*** At the top (chapel) end of Eastern Avenue is a group of early graves. The monument to John Parsons (died 30 May 1869, age 66) is in the trees and has a large urn on top. Close by is the grave of Elizabeth Waldeck (died 1 August 1859), who is buried with her daughter and two sons, and the grave of Thomas Osborne (died 30 April 1856).

These early graves are shaped headstones, and this seems to be the usual form of gravestones at this time. Crosses were not a popular choice for graves until the end of the nineteenth century, when 'celtic' crosses were much in vogue. Thus at Brookwood we can discern changing tastes and styles in funerary monuments.

8. ***Mass Graves:*** Brookwood was always – and still is – sufficiently large to accommodate mass graves. These are usually human remains removed from old London churchyards, but in this section off Eastern Avenue there are three mass graves commemorating the dead of three air disasters: one in Spain on 19 August 1959 (27 dead), one in France on 3 June 1967 (25 dead), and one at Fernhurst, Sussex on 4 November 1967 (19 dead). Each has its own large memorial.

Through the gateway on the opposite side of Eastern Avenue it is possible to see the site of the former greenhouses of which only one remains (see 3).

9. ***Westminster Burying Ground:*** (see *plate 2*). The large grassed area off Holly Avenue was coupled with a similar plot in the Anglican section (which will be



2. Granite Obelisk
Westminster Burial Ground

described in a later edition). It contains many hundreds of paupers from the parish of St Margaret and St John Westminster, whose Guardians of the Poor contracted with the LNC for the removal of these bodies from London to Brookwood. This arrangement began very soon after the cemetery opened. This was only possible after the passage of the Metropolitan Interments Act (1852) which allowed the Vestries of London parishes to elect their own Burial Boards empowered to either open and manage their own cemeteries outside central London (like the City of London's cemetery at Little Ilford) or to contract with cemetery companies (like the LNC) for the burial of their dead elsewhere.

There are many of these parish plots surviving as grassed or very overgrown areas at Brookwood. There are no memorials because these were not allowed to be erected for pauper burials. Instead there are monuments at the entrances to the grounds which mark the boundaries of the plot. The Westminster area has two granite obelisks off Holly Avenue which mark the entrance to this ground.

These obelisks record that the plot was opened in April 1855, the name of the parish, and the names of the members of the Burial Board.

The plot covered 2 acres and extended either side of Eastern and Western Avenues into plots 111 and 112 respectively.

Some of the overgrown plots nearer the West Hill Golf Club are other parish plots which do not have any surviving monuments or boundary stones. Other parishes which used Brookwood included: Bermondsey, Chiswick, St Giles'-in-the-fields and St Saviour's Southwark.

10. ***Graves of Ross and Deal:*** Towards the centre of plot 110 are the graves of William Stuart Ross (died 1906) and John Deal (died 1882). The inscription on Ross's memorial describes him as 'champion of mental freedom' and the gravestone incorporates a bas-relief portrait. Deal's memorial is a broken column.

11. ***Cemetery Name:*** In the extensive shrubs off Eastern Avenue is the ironwork which used to support the letters spelling 'Brookwood Cemetery'. This hoarding was for the convenience of railway passengers. The ironwork is now very dilapidated and has many letters missing. The structure was painted green, whilst the letters were painted white.

12. ***Viscounts Haberton:*** At the edge of plot 109 is the family grave of the Viscounts Haberton. Buried here are John Spencer, Viscount Haberton (23 November 1836 – 4 December 1912); Ralph Legge, 8th Viscount Haberton (31 December 1869 – 4 July 1954); and Henry Ralph Martin Pomeroy, Viscount Haberton (12 October 1908 – 26 May 1980).

13. ***Charles Bradlaugh:*** This is the most famous person buried in this part of the cemetery. Bradlaugh (1833–1891) was a radical 'freethinker' and is chiefly remembered for claiming the right to affirm the oath when taking a seat in Parliament rather than swearing the oath. He died on 30th January 1891 and his funeral took place on 3rd February. On 2nd February his coffin was taken from his house in St. John's Wood to a private mortuary in the LNC's private station just outside Waterloo. Here the coffin was watched over day and night by a Marshal of the Secular Society. The coffin was conveyed to Brookwood the next day by the usual funeral train. Meanwhile over 5,000 mourners, from all over the country and from all walks of life, turned up and jammed the approach roads to Waterloo in an attempt to travel down to Brookwood to attend the funeral. During the early afternoon three special trains were required to accommodate those wishing to travel to Brookwood. The funeral was notable for the absence of conventional mourning dress (only Mrs Besant arrived in black and heavily veiled) and the lack of any formal graveside ceremony, whilst among the Indian mourners was one Mohandas Gandhi (see also 18). Bradlaugh is buried with his wife, sister-in-law, grandson and daughter. The monument comprises a pink granite pedestal edged by cast iron standards and chains. Originally a bronze figure surmounted the pedestal, but this was vandalised and removed some years ago.

14. ***Grave of PC Ford:*** There is an interesting grave in plot 107 which explains that PC David Fleming Ford, a member of L Division of the Metropolitan Police, 'died by falling through a glass roof while in the pursuit of criminals' on 14 March 1929. The memorial was erected by officers and men of the Metropolitan Police force.

15. ***Grave of Joseph Ivimey:*** Moving towards Chapel Hill there is the family grave of the Ivimeys. Joseph Ivimey, who died at New Lodge near Lymington, Hants., was one of the original Directors of the LNC. He was a solicitor and was one the promoters of the Anti-Corn Law League (1839-1846). Ivimey died on 4 October 1878 and is one of several officers or employees of the LNC buried at Brookwood (see 5 above).

Nearby is the grave of Sir James Brunlees (born 5 January 1816, died 2 June 1892) who is buried with his wife.

16. ***Noncomformist Chapel:*** *(Plate 3 & 4).* This is one of two similar chapels designed by the LNC's Architect, Sydney Smirke, and built in 1854 by Messrs Lucas. It is now in a private section of the cemetery fenced off for use by the Najmi Baag.

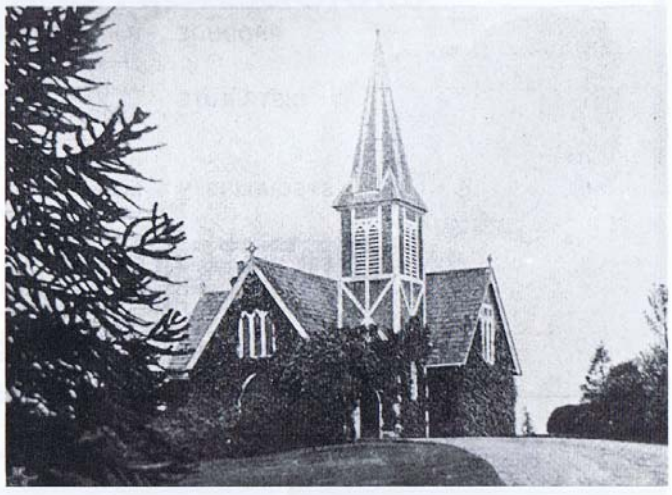
The chapel is of cruciform plan, with a bell tower in one corner of the cross. It was cheaply constructed of brick, wood and slate. The bell tower, which has only recently been truncated, was easily visible from the railway and from this part of the cemetery. Note the path leading directly down to the platform of North Station (see 18).

This chapel was very similar to the Church of England one built at the same time beside South Station. There were differences: the Nonconformist chapel has narrower double entrance doors, pairs of windows in the side walls, detail differences to the tops of the triple windows in the gable ends, a surviving external chimney stack, and latterly wooden cladding to the bell tower. In addition, the roof of the bell tower was latterly covered in lead whereas the Anglican chapel tower's roof was always of slate.

In contrast to the other great Victorian cemeteries, the buildings at Brookwood were cheap and modest, probably because it was intended that in due course receipts from undertaking would eventually help pay for more grandiose and permanent structures.

This chapel was used for all Roman Catholic, Jewish, Parsee and other Dissenter funerals until other chapels were provided in the cemetery. Funeral parties would be met at North Station by staff of the LNC who would escort

3. The Noncomformist chapel as seen from Chapel Avenue, late 1890s.



mourners to the appropriate chapel or waiting room. Meanwhile the relevant coffins were unloaded from the hearse carriages in the train, placed on a special hand bier, and wheeled to the chapel or the graveside. The LNC's Nonconformist chaplain and other clergy requested to officiate at the last rites would also alight from the train.

It was left to the family of the deceased to decide what kind of service they desired and could afford. Usually each party had a brief service in the chapel (3rd class or pauper funeral services were conducted *en masse* in the chapel) followed by the brief ceremony at the grave itself. Sometimes, especially if a service had previously taken place in London, the service in the cemetery chapel was dispensed with and the coffin was taken directly to the grave. Occasionally a more elaborate and expensive private service was held in the chapel, for the wealthy or famous, followed by the graveside ceremony.

4. Noncomformist Chapel, late 1980s.

17. *Chapel Hill:* The area adjacent to the Nonconformist chapel is known as Chapel Hill, and it contains few graves. Exceptionally, the grave of Albert Gustavus Jeffress is a prominent granite memorial very close to the chapel.

Through the trees which screen Chapel Hill from the direction of Cemetery Pales is the family grave of Robert Londale (1832-1903) whose monument comprises a celtic cross and angel.

18. *Site of North Station:* This site is now part of the private burial ground which also includes the Nonconformist chapel (see 16). North Station was the first cemetery station reached by the Necropolis Train after arriving at Brookwood. Two stations were provided by the LNC to serve each half of the cemetery grounds. Both were designed by the LNC's Architect, Sydney Smirke, and both were built in a somewhat temporary manner in wood, brick and slate. They were constructed by Messrs Lucas in 1854 and both stood for over a century. North Station was directly connected by an avenue to the Nonconformist chapel.

North Station consisted of a single-storeyed range of buildings clustered around a square courtyard, with the side nearest the railway left open. From this end two wings extended, parallel to the platform edge. This plan is somewhat difficult to make out today, but parts of the foundations have been concreted over at some stage and these may be seen.

A large roof overhang on the platform side was supported by curved brackets made from lengths of rail; this made a cheap canopy. The walls were of slatted wood. Brick was only used for the foundations, platform faces and chimney stacks. Originally the station was painted drab and white, but latterly it was all white except for the drainpipes and guttering which were green.

Notice that the platform face incorporates a dip, to the depth of 1-2 brick courses and the width of the station courtyard. This was provided to facilitate the unloading of coffins from the bottom 'shelves' in the hearse carriages.

The station included a series of mourners' waiting rooms, toilets, chaplain's rooms, living quarters for the station caretaker, and a refreshment room complete with bar.

North Station was used by Roman Catholics, Jews, Parsees and other Dissenters. Details of funeral arrangements at the cemetery are described in section 16.

When Gandhi was returning from Bradlaugh's funeral (see 13) he relates in his *Story of my experiments with truth* how, awaiting

the arrival of the return train to London, an argument took place between a 'champion atheist' and one of the clergymen who was present. All this doubtless took place on the platform of North Station.

North Station remained open after the removal of the cemetery railway (c. 1947-1948) to provide refreshments to mourners and visitors to the cemetery. It also provided living quarters for one of the LNC's staff. North Station was demolished sometime in the 1960s because of dry rot.

19. ***Long Avenue:*** If you stand at the Brookwood end of North Station and look down Long Avenue towards Pirbright, you get a tantalising impression of what the promoters of the 'London Necropolis' might have achieved. Plans for a 2,000 acre Necropolis do exist and they depict huge avenues, perhaps 3 miles long, stretching from Brookwood towards Woking. All this eventually came to nothing, but this view down Long Avenue at least gives an impression of what might have been.

Note the impressive planting of wellingtonias which flank this avenue, as they flank all principal avenues (and the course of the railway) throughout the cemetery.

20. ***Plot 102:*** This is now a grassed area although many years ago it did have pathways and avenues which are shown as dotted lines on the map. Most of this plot is now a private burial area assigned to the Khoja Shia Itna-Ashri Jamaat of the United Kingdom. A few older graves survive in parts of this plot.

Those plots adjacent to the main railway line are smaller than they were in 1854. This is explained by the quadrupling of the main line, which took place between 1898-1902. The LNC sold a thin slice of its estate, from the cemetery to Goldsworth cutting, to the London & South Western Railway to facilitate this project. Some graves were disturbed by this work, and the LNC arranged for the exhumation and re-burial of these bodies.

21. ***Plot 101:*** This area is bounded on one side by the main railway line, and on another by the course of the cemetery railway as it curves to run behind Brookwood Station. Some stone steps lead up to the trackbed of the private line and a memorial nearby records that in 1975 this plot became the Ahmadigga Muslim Cemetery. A few older graves remain in sections of this plot.

Further Reading

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Curl, James S. *The Victorian Celebration of Death* David & Charles, 1972.
Polson, C.J. and Marshall, T.K. *The Disposal of the Dead* 3rd ed. English Universities Press, 1975.
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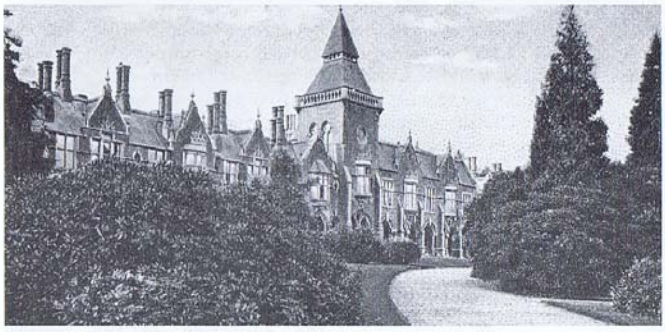
MOSQUE CENTENARY

The main part of the Woking History Festival, held over the Easter weekend at St. John's Memorial Hall, was a new display on the history of Woking's Mosque and its surroundings. The Mosque was built one hundred years ago, and was the first such building to be constructed in this country. The story of how it came to be built in Woking is recalled here.



Royal Dramatic College, now James Walkers factory

In order to understand how the Mosque came to be built at Woking, you need to know a little about the history of the site.

NECROPOLIS COMPANY & THE ROYAL DRAMATIC COLLEGE

Most now know the story of how Woking Common came to be developed as (New) Woking, and how the Necropolis Company sold their land around Woking Station, so we need not go into detail here. Suffice to say that in the early years of their land sales, the Necropolis Company had great difficulties in marketing their land, with the consequence that development was slow and profits were low. Woking Station provided easy access to the capital, just 27 miles away, but with plenty of undeveloped land closer to London the cheap Woking Common was at first not cheap enough. Institutions were the main purchasers of land, but with a prison, a lunatic asylum and a crematorium as neighbours, Woking was not attracting the right sort of development. The Necropolis Company wanted to attract a better sort of institution, and in 1860 encouraged the Royal Dramatic College to be built beside the railway at Maybury. Its location at Maybury, beside the down line of the London & South Western Railway and within easy view of all travellers from London, must have been an important factor.

The Royal Dramatic College was intended to be a school for teaching the dramatic arts, but ended up as a retirement home for actors and actresses. The college was designed by T.R. Smith, and was built in the Mock-Elizabethan style. It consisted of a large central hall with five houses on either side. Along the front of the building was an arcade, with columns decorated with scenes from English dramas. In the Central Hall, designed to house works of art and literature, there were

busts of famous actors, and two stained-glass windows depicting Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies.

By the late 1870's the College was in serious financial difficulties and the Life Governors and Subscribers decided that the College should close. On the 22nd July 1880, Messrs. Fairbrother, Lye and Palmer offered the buildings for sale, but the reserve price of £5,000 was not met, and the property was withdrawn from the auction at just £4,500. It was sold a few days later to Mr. Alfred Chabot, a property speculator, who assured the Charity Commissioners that he would try to find a suitable purchaser for the site.

In 1884 such a person was found, Dr. Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner, who was to convert the buildings into his Oriental Institute and help make Woking world famous.

DR. LEITNER, & THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE

Leitner was born on the 14th October 1840 in Budapest, Hungary. At an early age he showed a talent for learning languages, and by the age of ten could speak fluent Turkish, Arabic and most European tongues. When he was fifteen he was appointed interpreter (1st class) to the British Commissariat in Crimea, serving at the rank of Colonel. After the war he came to England to study at King's College, London.

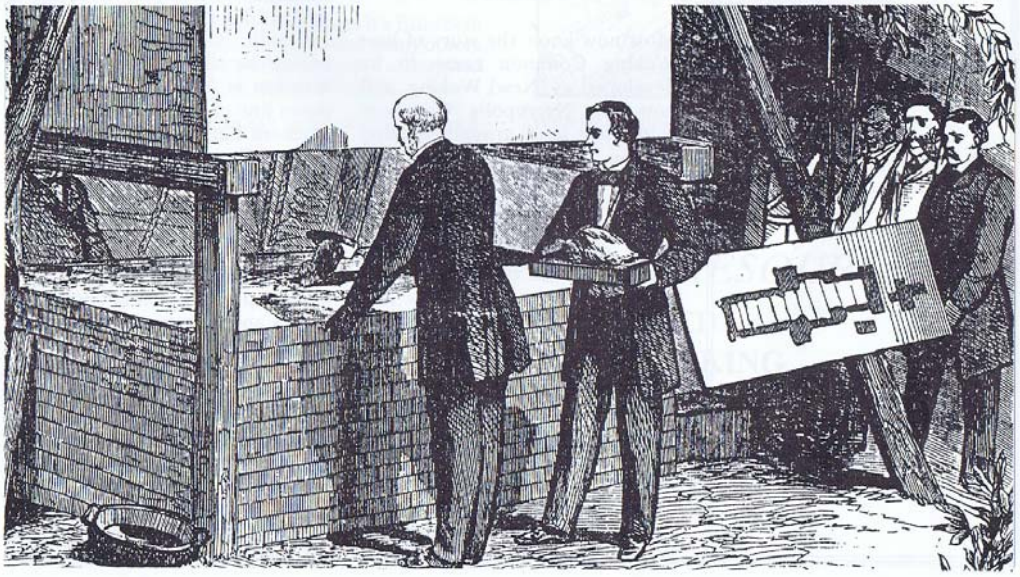
At the age of nineteen, Leitner became a lecturer in Arabic, Turkish and modern Greek, and by the age of twenty-three was appointed a Professor of Arabic and Mohammedan Law. In 1886 he went to India to take up the post of the Principal of the Government University in Lahore (now in Pakistan), later to become the University of the Punjab. Whilst in India he established several schools, literary associations, libraries and newspapers, to help in the education of the poorer classes.

In the late 1870s he returned to Europe to study at Heidelburg University, carrying out work for various Governments including the Austrian, Prussian and British. His main aim, however, was to set up an Oriental University in Europe, to help teach Asians staying in Europe the learned professions, and to allow Europeans wishing to travel East, the chance to view Oriental ways before they left. The University was also to provide a refuge for Orientals of 'Good family or High Caste' to live their own way of life without interference from European culture.

In 1881 Leitner came to England looking for a suitable site, and in 1884 he discovered the disused Royal Dramatic college buildings. Having purchased the site he then set up his centre for Oriental language, culture and history, eventually awarding degrees under the University of the Punjab, with which he kept close ties. The hope that one day Woking would become a University in its own right was never achieved.

Leitner also established a small museum at Woking, showing

Prince of Wales laying the foundation stone of the Royal Dramatic College.



Oriental art and literature. A description of the collection is contained in a letter to '*The Times*' in August 1884 from Mr. G.R. Badenoch who says . . .

"Dr. Leitner has so arranged every department that you can trace at once the influence of Greek art on the art of India. He has done this by bringing together within a chair's length the sculpture, the literature and the coins of the period."

He goes on to mention the large collection of Punjab fabrics.

". . . with reference numbers and prices attached, so that a purchaser in England for a dress or shawl, without intervention of middlemen in England or India can communicate direct with the manufacturer."

Leitner also continued to publish several Journals from Woking, including the '*Asiatic Quarterly Review*'.

During 1898, Leitner fell ill, and in January 1899 travelled to Bonn on medical advice. There he was to bathe in the famous Godesberg springs, but in February he caught pneumonia and on the 22nd March 1899 he died, aged 58. His body was brought back to Woking and buried in Brookwood Cemetery, where a memorial records his remarkable life and projects.

Unfortunately the Institute could not survive the death of its founder and in the summer of 1899 it closed. It was the end of the site's fifty year history as an institution, but not the end of the story. The Institute building still survives in the form of James Walker's factory, and perhaps Leitner's greatest monument is still very much in use – The Mosque, in Oriental Road.

Dr. Leitner. Founder of the Oriental Institute and the Mosque.

THE MOSQUE

As part of the plan to make Muslims staying in Woking feel at home, Leitner decided to build a Mosque in the grounds of the Institute. Work began early in 1889, the cost largely being met by the Begum Shah (Madam-King) Jehan, ruler of Bhopal State. Other Indian Muslims also contributed towards the cost, but the Mosque is still known by the name of its main benefactor – Shah Jehan.

The building is of Bath and Bargate stone, designed by W.I. Chambers and based on drawings of various Oriental Mosques. Many of the furnishings were provided by Leitner himself, gathered on his travels in the east. It was opened in October or November 1889, and as Britain's only Mosque (at that time) it quickly became the centre for British Muslims, not just those attending the Institute.

When the Institute closed in August 1899, the Mosque closed with it, although Muslims visiting this Country did worship there on the odd occasion. It is reported that the Shah of Persia once prayed there, and some distinguished Indian Muslims visited Woking in 1903. In 1912 the Muslim missionary, Kwaja Kamel ud Din, came to this country and re-opened the Mosque. He set up a trust to finance its running, and re-established Woking as the centre of Islamic ideas in the West.

That trust fund is now the subject of much debate, with the Mosque's affairs constantly in the local newspapers. But in all the arguements about the Mosque's future, one thing seems to have been forgotten – its great and unique past. Woking's heritage would be a lot poorer without the Mosque, as the site and surroundings have played (and continue to play) an important part in the town's affairs. It was because of the Mosque that Woking became the chosen home of so many Muslims. It was because of the Mosque that Woking became the home of Britain's first Muslim Burial Ground, built on Horsell Common. The Burial Ground's history will be recounted in a later edition, as will the story of the Institute's successors, Messrs. Martinsydes and James Walkers. But as the Mosque celebrates 100 years, it is perhaps nice to think of what might have been if the Institute had survived and became a University. Woking would then have been a University town long before Guildford, and who knows what might have happened then?

BYGONE BYFLEET

by
IAIN WAKEFORD

In this, the first of our series looking at old village views we visit the by-ways and back-streets of Byfleet and West Byfleet.

High Road, Byfleet, looking east

Rosemount Parade looking east from the corner with The Close and Rosemount Avenue

Byfleet Corner, West Byfleet, from the junction of Parvis Road and Campbell Road, looking towards Barclays Bank and Rosemount Parade

Rosemount Parade, West Byfleet, looking west. Waitrose and the car park would now be to the right of this view

The Blue Anchor, High Road, Byfleet

Oyster Lane, Byfleet, at the junction with High Road, with Byfleet Green on the left hand side

Dawson Road, Byfleet

The entrance to the London County Council's, Sheerwater Estate, Albert Drive

Church Road, Byfleet

THE WOKING HISTORY FESTIVAL

1989

This Easter, Iain Wakeford (together with his friends and family) organised the first Woking History Festival. The original intention was to persuade local business to finance the purchase of new display boards and sponsor an exhibition on the history of Woking. But with the increase of interest rates this proved impossible, as only a few of the firms contacted came forward with help. Some had already agreed sponsorship for other events, whilst others, quite naturally, didn't want to risk money on such a new and adventurous scheme. There were a few, however, who had the courage to back us, and our only regret was the almost total lack of coverage we got from the local press and media to help thank those courageous companies. The newspapers did help advertise the festival beforehand, but none sent along photographers and few reported the events afterwards.

One of those courageous companies was B.A.T (U.K. and Export), who gave £200 towards the festival expenses, whilst Woking Borough Council came to the rescue with the free loan of their display boards for the new exhibition. That exhibition, staged at the St. Johns Memorial Halls on March 25th and 26th, was based on the theme '100 years of Woking's Mosque'. An article on the display is contained elsewhere in this Journal.

Other features of the festival were the slide and film shows by John Clarke and John Myall, the walk to Woking Palace by Tom Harding (attended by over 90 people), and the two walks around Brookwood Cemetery. About 150 people joined in on the two cemetery tours, and over 600 came to the festival exhibition itself. Even the final walk, a stroll around St. Johns and Hook Heath, was attended by about 50 walkers.

Many people gave up their free time to 'man' displays at the Memorial Halls. James Walkers had a stand on the history of their firm. Mrs Keary staged a display on St. John's Church School. Several local school-children lent their history projects for display, and societies such as the West Surrey Family History Society, The Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society, The Mayford & Woking District History Society (St Johns group) and the Men of the Trees (Woking Branch), had stands.

The Letterbox Company (Woking) Limited also helped with expenses on the Mosque display, whilst Woking Arts Council gave a grant of £200 for the event. But the greatest financial boost came from you, the viewing public, who over the four day event gave over £300 in donations. To all our visitors, our sponsors, and those that helped with displays etc., we would like to offer our sincere thanks. Because of you, next years festival will be bigger and better than the first, and Woking's past will be ensured a great future.

1990

The theme for 1990 is 'Woking in Writing', with a new display on 'H.G. Well's, Woking and the War of the Worlds'. Based on the famous science-fiction novel the display will show with drawings, photographs and maps where Wells travelled whilst researching the book, and what Woking was like in the 1890s when it was written.

To start the four-day festival off there will be a walk on Good Friday looking at the places mentioned in the book. It will start at 10.30am at the Wheatsheaf Recreation Ground. There will be a break at lunchtime for sandwiches etc., at the Sandpits on Horsell Common (where the Martians landed), before continuing in the afternoon to Maybury Hill and the town. It is hoped that walkers will arrive in fancy dress based on the 'War of the Worlds' theme, as there will be a prize given for the best-dressed walker.

On Saturday, 14th April, the Festival Exhibition will begin. It will again be at the Memorial Halls in St. Johns, but will last for three days, not two (closing on Easter Monday). The exhibition will open at 10.00am each day and close at 6.00pm. There will be slide shows, talks and films every hour, and refreshment will be served. The displays are still to be arranged, but it is hoped that a number of neighbouring history societies will attend, and that the popular display by the West Surrey Family History Society can be repeated. Other displays will include features on famous Woking residents of the past, such as Dame Ethel Smyth, George Bernard Shaw, Sir Charles Dilke, A.J. Mumby and many others.

Also on Easter Saturday will be a walk by Tom Harding – 'In the footsteps of the monks' – starting at 10.30am. The 'pilgrimage' will start from St. Peters Church, Old Woking and go on to Woking Palace, Newark Priory and St. Nicholas, Pyrford. The walk will last all day with a break for lunch in the ruins of Newark Priory.

The walk for Sunday 15th April is still to be arranged, more details in the next Journal, but the Easter Monday walk will hopefully be a repeat of John Clarke's popular Brookwood Cemetery tour. Starting at the Cemetery Pales entrance at 10.30am the walk will look at the northern section in the morning, followed by the southern section in the afternoon.

The festival will close at 6.00pm on Easter Monday, although other events may be arranged in connection with the festival for the week prior to, and after, the Easter weekend. More details of the festival wil be in the next issue of the Journal.

If you would like to help out at the festival, take a stand, give a talk, or lead a walk based on the festival theme, please contact the organiser, Iain Wakeford.