

Local Government & Services.

In 1841 the population of Woking was 2,482. The railway had come to Woking Common, but little further development had taken place. In 1861, a few years after the first land sales by the Necropolis Company, the population had risen to 3,819. By 1881 it had more than doubled to 8,544 and by 1891 it was 9,776. By comparison, the population of Goldsworth Park in the early 1990s was nearly 12,500!

In the late 1860s Woking was allocated 'three wheelbarrows, three rakes, four scrapers and one pump' to maintain all of the public roads in the area. The 1870s saw a number of outbreaks of cholera and typhoid caused by polluted wells and water supplies. In the 1880s the Railway Company were fined for emptying their cesspool into the street and by 1891 Woking still had no public gas supply, no street lighting, no sewage system nor many of the other services we would consider essential today!

There had been plans as early as 1869 for a gas works to serve the town, but they came to nothing and it was 1881 before another scheme was announced - by the Woking Gas and Water Co. In the end, however, although they quickly began supplying piped water (in 1883), they never built their gas works (at Kingfield) and it was left to another company to build Woking's first public gas works - opening in 1892 at Boundary Road.

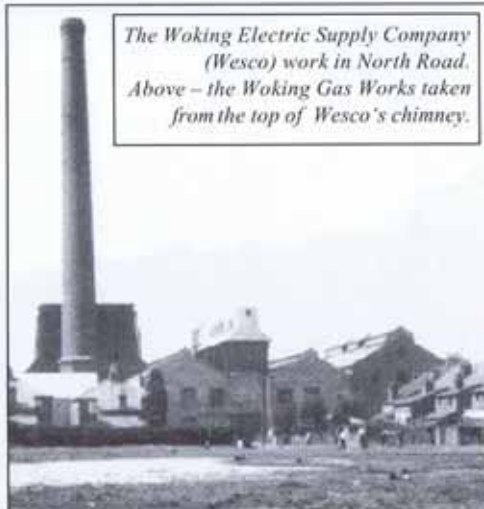


The various delays meant that Woking was one of the last towns in the country to be supplied with gas, but in the meantime it had become one of the first to have electricity (Godalming was actually the first).

The Woking Electric Supply Company (Wesco) was incorporated in 1889, with a power station built in Board School Road (hence Wesco Court there). They originally served only the central part of the town and, as the electricity was used just for domestic lighting, the generator operated only during the hours of darkness. By 1895 fewer than 180 users had bothered to be connected.

But at least Woking now had access to the benefits of modern electricity, gas and fresh piped water. The state of the roads and the lack of adequate sanitation were not so easily solved!

Part of the problem was that there was no 'local' government at that time - at least not as we know it. Woking was part of the Guildford Rural Highways Authority, who were responsible for looking after the roads (it was they who supplied the wheelbarrows and other equipment mentioned above). Woking was also included in the Guildford Rural Sanitary Authority, who were supposed to deal with 'sewerage, drainage, lighting, building regulations and public health.'



The Woking Electric Supply Company (Wesco) work in North Road. Above - the Woking Gas Works taken from the top of Wesco's chimney.

Both authorities were ineffective as far as the urban areas were concerned. To be fair, the Highways Authority did recognise its inefficiency and in 1873 voted for its own abolition. It was refused. In 1880 the Sanitary Authority set up a 'Woking Committee' with delegated powers, but the Local Government Board overturned its decision and ordered the Committee to be disbanded. In 1890 Woking Vestry asked for the area to be given urban status, but again this was refused and it was not until October 1893 that the Woking Urban Sanitary District (otherwise known as the Woking Local Board) was allowed to be formed.

By now the problems had mounted, the main one being the provision of a sewerage system. In 1890 the Guildford R.S.A. had proposed using land north of Elmbridge for a works serving the station area only. In March 1892 the Local Government Board turned this proposal down. In 1893 the Woking Local Board set up a competition and although the first prize was given for a scheme at Harelands Farm (on the canal at Goldsworth), they actually approved the plans for the second placed scheme - at Scotcher's Farm in Horsell.

Horsell at that time was still in the Chertsey Rural Sanitary Authority's area. Woking was going to get rid of its sewage by pumping it into the neighbouring district!

In 1894 Parliament abolished the old Vestries, Highways Boards and Sanitary Authorities and set up District Councils - either Rural or Urban. In Woking's case, the Woking Urban District Council took over from the Local Board on 1st January, 1895.

The new U.D.C. decided to scrap the Scotcher's Farm scheme and voted instead for a works at Carters Lane in Old Woking. It was opened in November 1899.

The Council inherited other problems from the Local Board. In November 1893 the Board had sought tenders for the provision of 100 street lights. In July the following year they awarded a seven-year contract to the Woking Electric Supply Co.

The cost was £513.15s.00d. for installation and £310.16s.00d. annually for lighting and repair. The price seems quite small until you realise that the lights were only on in the winter and even then just from sunset until midnight. Matters became worse when it was discovered that the service was unreliable as well. When the lights came on again in October 1895, only 21 of the 111 lamps were alight and in December the entire system failed!

In 1898 the Council actually considered buying the electricity company and in 1900 they decided that, when the contract came up for renewal, they would go to the gas company instead. So in 1902, when almost every other town in the country was switching from gas to electric street lighting, Woking turned from electric to gas! It was not until 1931 that electric lamps returned to the streets of Woking.

The third major problem for the new Urban District Council was the roads. In the mid-1880s several of the main streets in the town had been adopted as public highways, but by 1894 only three of these had actually been made up. The council soon set about improvements and by 1914 no less than seventy roads had been adopted and repaired. By then another problem had emerged.



The 'Triangle' at Goldsworth before widening by the Council in the 1920s.



The original Wheatsheaf Bridge before rebuilding in 1913-14.

Woking town centre is sandwiched between the canal and the railway. Even today this causes problems, as Victoria Arch is the only route under the railway in the centre of town. But whereas now the Arch carries three lanes of traffic, up to 1906 it carried just one. The canal bridges were of a similar width and with the canal company in liquidation there was nobody around to repair them, let alone widen them. In the autumn of 1906, Chertsey Road Bridge and Arthurs Bridge were in such a bad state that they had to be closed completely. The only way from Horsell into town was over the 15ft-wide Wheatsheaf Bridge.

The story of how the bridges eventually came to be rebuilt is long and complex (involving court cases against the canal owners and an Act of Parliament), but gradually the bridges were reconstructed (Wheatshaeaf Bridge in 1913, Chertsey Road Bridge in 1922 and Monument Bridge completed in 1940).



The old brick arch bridge at Chertsey Road was so bad in the early part of the 20th century that in the autumn of 1906 it had to be closed. The Council then replaced it with the 'temporary' wooden bridge (above), before finally replacing it with the current bridge in 1922.

The final major problem for the Council in the 1890s should have been the easiest to solve - certainly much cheaper than the schemes mentioned above - and yet it was this issue that almost literally destroyed the Council.

There had been attempts in the 1870s to set up a local Volunteer Fire Brigade, but without success, and it was not until 1892 that the Woking Torchlight Society suggested the idea again. The Society was set up in 1888 to run the annual 5th-of-November carnival and bonfire - famous throughout West Surrey. The Woking Local Board took up their idea and formed a Fire Brigade Committee, who recommended in May 1894 the purchase of uniforms and a steam-powered fire engine. Unfortunately the full Board rejected the proposal and nothing was done until May 1895, when the new Urban District Council voted to buy an engine. In October they reversed the decision on the engine, and the brigade was set up with just a hand-cart, ladders and a length of leather hose.

During 1897 there were protests, petitions and at one stage the mass resignation of the brigade; and in March 1898 several of the councillors who were opposed to the purchase of the engine were not re-elected in the local elections. In May the Council voted to buy an engine for £430, but because of an inquiry it was February 1899 before it could be ordered and August before it arrived.

In the meantime, Woking was still without adequate cover - as the Council found out to their cost that June, when their offices burned down!

The Council Offices, which they rented for £100 p.a., were at that time above Ashby's Bank (later to become Barclays Bank, on the corner with the Broadway and Chertsey Road). The Woking Local Board had met at various places (their first meeting being in Goldsworth Hall), but in May 1895 the newly formed U.D.C. bought some land in Commercial Road for new offices. Plans were drawn up in January 1897 for new, purpose-built Council Offices costing £6,000, but although the Council approved the scheme, it was not approved by the electorate and in January 1898 the Council wisely reversed their decision. The fire of June 1899 settled the argument and, after moving to temporary accommodation in the Broadway, the Council finally built their new offices in 1905.

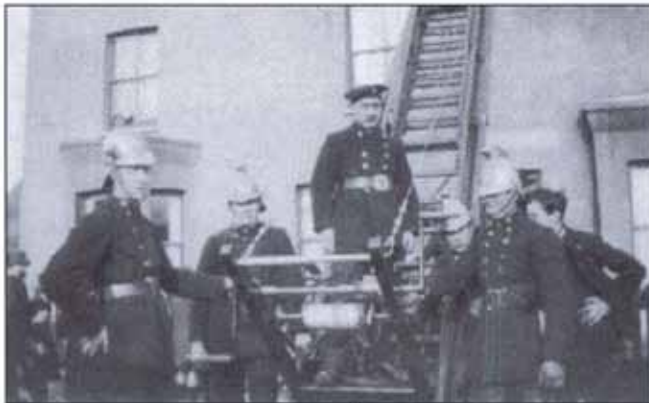
In the long run even the rate-payers gained, as the new design cost only £4,500, and to make certain that 'lightning' didn't strike twice, the Council built a new fire station as well - right in their own back yard.



The council offices were above Thomas Ashby's Bank (later Barclay's) on the corner of Chertsey Road and The Broadway.

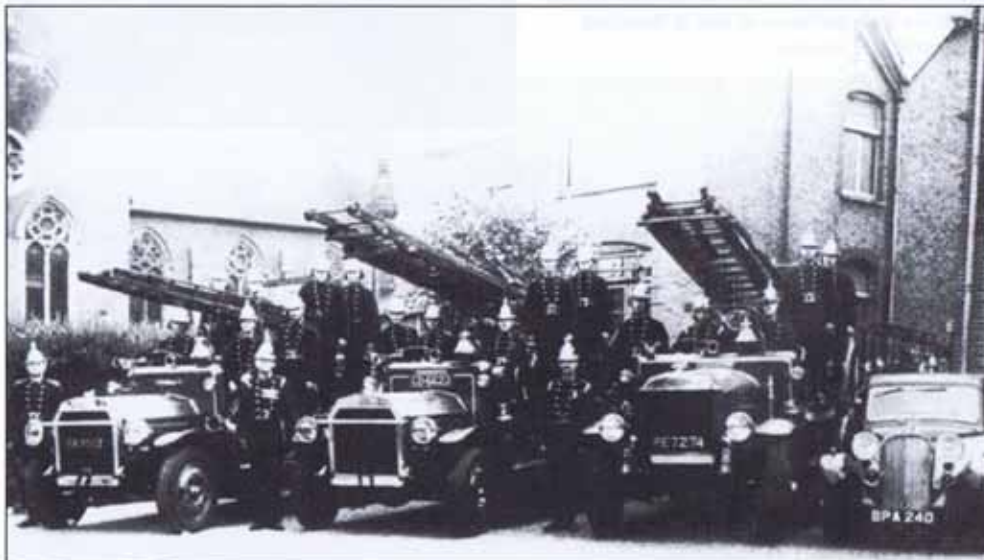


Members of the Woking Fire Brigade parade through the town past Gammon's store in Commercial Road.



Unfortunately there is not enough space to relate the many amusing stories of the exploits of the Woking Volunteer Fire Brigade, but one story that must be told is of the 'Woking Laundry fire' of April 1900. Apparently a spark from the new steam-powered fire engine set the old handcart alight and in the rush to save their own property the fire-engine ran over the hose-pipe, cutting off the water supply to the fire!

Three views from the mid-1920s, showing members of the Woking Fire Brigade and their engines. After the First World War, Woking Council agreed that the old horse-drawn steam-powered fire engine was not good enough and in September 1919 bought a new Dennis Brothers motor engine with telescopic ladder. A second engine was purchased in 1925 and a Renault car, donated by one of the Councillors, was used as a fast motor tender.



With many of the early problems solved, the Council turned its attention to more pleasant things. In 1901 it was suggested that a memorial garden be created to commemorate Queen Victoria; and in 1904 the 'Victoria Gardens' were laid out at the junction of the High Street and Commercial Road. Later that year the Council acquired land between Hill View Road and the Hoe Stream for the 'Mount Hermon Recreation Ground': in July 1905 its layout was approved and work began.

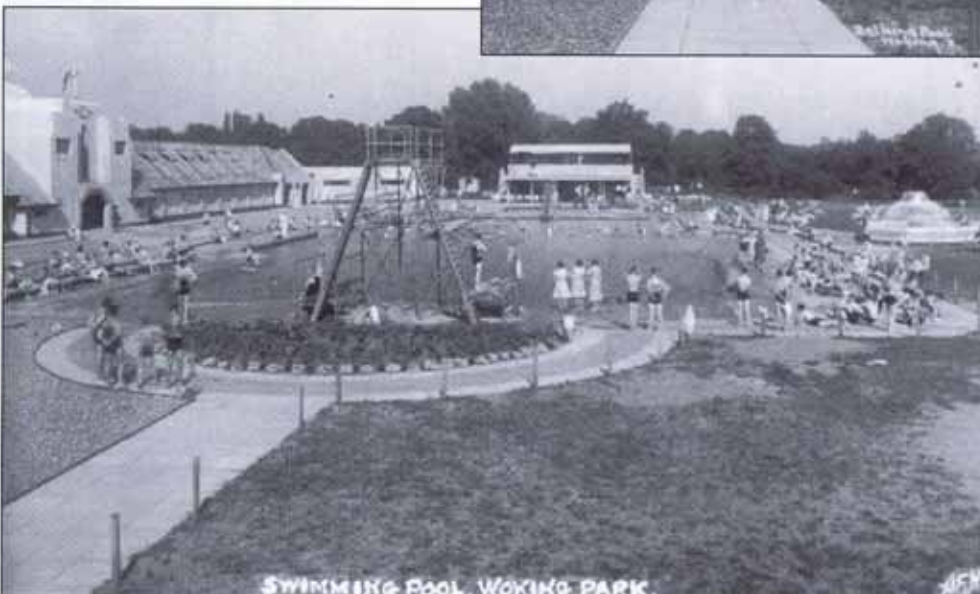


PUTTING GREEN, THE PARK, WOKING.

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The putting green in Woking Park was laid out on land that had at one time been part of the town tip.

Woking's first swimming pool was built in the 'rec.' in 1910, and in 1927 the area was officially renamed 'Woking Park'. By then the original pool had closed and in 1932 the Duke of Sutherland (a tenant of Sutton Place) officially opened the new outdoor pool on the land that had, since 1907, been used as the town's rubbish tip! A new tip was then created on eleven and a half acres of land at Westfield (beside the Hoe Stream).



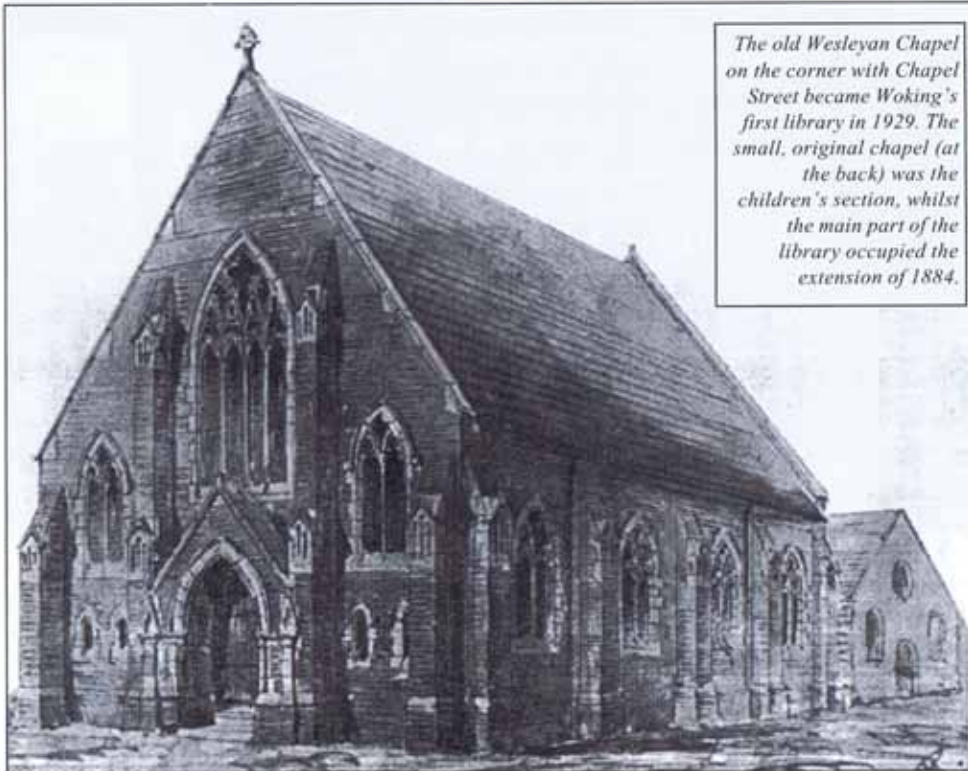
SWIMMING POOL, WOKING PARK.

The original pool in the park was just a hole in the ground, lined with planks, and filled with water pumped from the nearby Hoe Stream. The pool pictured above was built in the early 1930s.



Members of the
Woking
Swimming Club.

Culturally speaking, Woking was not so well catered for by the Council; and although they debated applying to the Carnegie Foundation in 1902 to set up a free library in the town, in 1903 the full Council rejected the idea - despite an offer from Carnegie of £5,000. It was not until 1929 that Woking's first public library opened!



The old Wesleyan Chapel on the corner with Chapel Street became Woking's first library in 1929. The small, original chapel (at the back) was the children's section, whilst the main part of the library occupied the extension of 1884.

By then, Woking Urban District included the parish of Horsell (which broke away from Chertsey Rural District in 1907). Up until then the area under review was mainly covered by the 'Station and Maybury' Ward which, although it included 55% of the population and provided 53% of the rateable value, had only 33% of the District's Councillors. When Horsell was added, this Ward was sub-divided into four Wards - St. Johns; Goldsworth; Chertsey Road; and Maybury and Mount Hermon.

From 1928 onwards there was further talk of boundary changes and in 1933 Byfleet and Pyrford joined the Urban District of Woking. Two years later Woking sought borough status, but in 1937 the petition was put on hold for five years (to allow the area to develop closer links), and with the coming of the war it was 1974 before Woking Borough was formed.

By the 1930s Woking's streets were seeing a vast increase in motorised transport, both public and private. Several local bus companies were formed in the 1920s, vying for trade - and with no regulations or timetables, acted more like taxis than buses. Woking Council set up a committee - unique in this country - with neighbouring Councils to advise on bus applications to avoid duplication of service and approve licences.



Two early motor-buses in Woking. Above: an eight-passenger bus of 1904, with below: one of the 'Woking District' buses run by J.R. Fox & Sons.



The increase in traffic brought about calls for road 'improvements', such as the widening of The Triangle and Triggs Lane in the early 1920s. If the plans of the North West Surrey Regional Planning Scheme of 1928 had been adhered to, Woking would have had a new 'western by-pass', cutting across the Mount Hermon area from Turnoak (over Twin Bridges) to Arthurs Bridge Road and Horsell. Although this part of the scheme was not carried out, other parts were, with Westfield Avenue (built in 1934) being one of the proposed new roads at that time.

The 1930s also saw the creation of Woking's first one-way system and the introduction of the town's first roundabout at 'Turnoak Corner' in 1934.

In 1925 the Council debated building a car park in Duke Street (at a cost of over £1,000), but the following March rejected the scheme and it was not until the mid-1930s, after pressure from the local Chamber of Trade, that the Council eventually provided a car park in Goldsworth Road. This was quite a long way from the main shopping area of Chertsey Road, but in 1937 another car park was provided closer to town, after the demolition of houses in Commercial Road (between Church Path and The Atalanta Ballroom).



Eventually the Council did build a car park in Duke Street, behind the Odeon Cinema.



The headmaster's house in Board School Road.

The Council, of course, was not the only elected body in the area. As early as 1874 elections were held for the Woking School Board. In May that year the Board bought an acre of land from the Necropolis Company in what was to be named 'Board School Road' and the following year the town's first school was provided, with room for 700 infants and 180 older children.

It appears that the elections for the School Board were quite eventful, with one gentleman, Ebenezer Smith, topping the polls in 1877 with almost a hundred more votes than his nearest rival. This was despite reports the previous year that Mr. Smith attended a meeting of the Board 'in a state of unmistakable intoxication'!



The original Board School in Board School Road was extended in 1881 to cater for an extra 200 pupils.

In the 1890s one local rate-payer considered that 'the only use for Board Schools was to teach children to kick tin cans about', but by the end of the decade the School Board was again hard at work organising the building of a second school for the district, at Goldsworth, opened in 1898 at a cost of £6,362. The Monument Hill School was also built about this time.

Meanwhile, in the early 1880s (and again in the early 1890s) they had enlarged their original school at Maybury and in 1893/4 began evening and 'technical' classes on the site. They also urged the County Council to provide secondary education in the district and in 1909 Surrey County Council bought land to the south of the railway for the Boys'



The Boys' Technical School was built in 1914.



The original Woking Police Station was opened in 1887 at a cost of £2,750. It had room for just three police officers and cells for four inmates. Not surprisingly, it wasn't long before it had to be extended!

Secondary School and Technical Institute. By the time it opened in 1914 the Woking School Board had been abolished and the 'Woking Education Committee' formed. It was they who were responsible for the establishment in 1922 of the County Girls' Grammar School in Park Road.

The local police came under the jurisdiction of the Surrey County Justices who, in the 1850s, had formed the Surrey Constabulary. In 1871 the entire Woking area was served by just three policemen, and it was not until 1887 that a proper Police Station was built for them - on land purchased in 1886 for just £300. The building itself cost £2,750 to build and had just four cells. The Court-House, in Heathside Road (behind the original Police Station), was built in 1904, with the Woking Petty Sessional Division formed two years later.

Woking's first hospital (a voluntary cottage hospital) was opened in Bath Road in 1893 with a medical staff of eight. In 1897, to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, the town decided to build a new hospital. In September 1899 a new thirteen-bed hospital - the Victoria Cottage Hospital - opened on the corner of Boundary Lane and Chobham Road (actually in Horsell), beside Wheatsheaf Bridge.



The Victoria Hospital, soon after opening.



The Victoria Cottage Hospital was opened in 1899 at a cost of £4,200. It was extended in 1901-3 and again on several occasions during the inter-war years – notably in 1924 as part of Woking's War Memorial.



THE QUEEN WOKING

Between the wars 'Hospital Carnivals' were regularly held to raise money for equipment and new wards at the Woking Victoria Cottage Hospital.



WOKING CARNIVAL THE PROCLAMATION





The Woking Health Society's Maternity Hospital in Oriental Road.

The hospital was extended (with an outpatients' department) in 1901-03 at a cost of £7,000 as part of Woking's memorial to the Queen. In 1924 further alterations were made (at a cost of £20,000) with the excess money raised for Woking's War Memorial. These additions included four public wards and a new outpatients' department. Four years later a new children's department was added (replacing the temporary 'hut' erected in 1919), together with a casualty department below. Between 1936 and 1939 the hospital was further enlarged to include 100 beds, but by then plans had already been drawn up to build a new hospital in Kettlewell Hill in Horsell. The coming of the war, however, interrupted these plans.

Woking's other hospital at that time was the Maternity Hospital, run by the Woking Health Society. The original hospital, in Oriental Road, opened in 1921 with 10 beds. This was enlarged in 1936 to accommodate 24, but whilst the Victoria Hospital was planning its move to Horsell, the Health Society launched their own scheme for a new Maternity Unit in Heathside Road. This was built early in 1939, with 36 beds, but with the outbreak of the war it was soon increased to cater for 54!



Part of the Heathside Road Maternity Hospital after it had been converted into a geriatric hospital and shortly before it was demolished.

Woking at War.

In early September 1939 the first wave of evacuees arrived, but apparently not enough places could be found in local homes and in January 1940 the Council agreed to provide two hostels (one for boys, one for girls). They also considered bringing in compulsory billeting powers if enough voluntary billets could not be found, whilst at the same time trying to reassure people that the area was relatively safe and that 'there was no justification for the rumour that the area would not remain a reception area for evacuees'.

Whilst the evacuees were moving in, others were moving out. The Ministry of Health took over the Orphanage in Oriental Road for a War Hospital and the orphans moved to places such as Guildford and Basingstoke. Other local properties were also taken over for the war effort. The NAAFI took over Mayhurst at Maybury Hill, whilst Surrey County Council converted Lismore in Heathside Road into a hostel in 1941, and in 1944 St. Fillian's (Maybury Hill) and Penlea (Claremont Avenue) became 'Day Nurseries'.

Local children and those evacuated to the area were immunised against typhoid in late 1940 and diphtheria the following summer, but still outbreaks of these and other infectious diseases occurred.

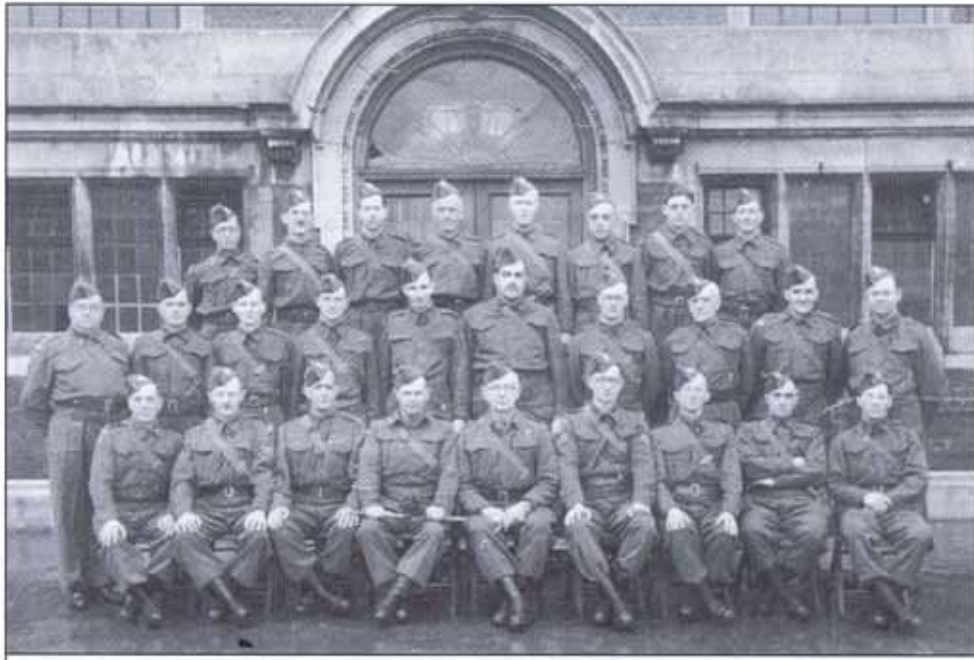
The Medical Officer also had to worry about gas attacks. Everyone had gas masks, and 'decontamination posts' were built at various places in the district, but fortunately the predicted gas attacks never materialised. Occasionally bombs did come. By October 1940 it was rumoured that Woking was the most bombed rural district in the country. Whether that was actually true or not is doubtful, but it certainly gained enough credence locally for Mrs. Maude Ceely to record the 'fact' in her diary (published in 1993 as 'Woking - A Wartime Diary').

In June, Woking Council had approved the construction of a 100-person air-raid shelter in Commercial Road, and in October another was provided on the nearby Wheatsheaf Recreation Ground. It is, however, uncertain how cost-effective these measures were, as in November 1940 a survey in London showed that only 40% of people used the shelters provided and at night only 9% entered the public shelters. We do not know what proportion of Woking people used the local shelters.

The blackout brought its own problems. It lasted from 1st September, 1939, until 17th September, 1944, during which time many accidents occurred, with drivers unable to find their way in the dark. In January 1940, the local Chamber of Trade suggested whitening the kerbs, but the council rejected this idea and instead asked the Woking Electric Supply Company to install six special lamps as an experiment. The experiment was obviously a success, as eventually a hundred lamps were converted by the company, cutting down glare, but still allowing sufficient light for the motorists to see.



The large family home of Lismore was taken over by Surrey County Council during the war for a hostel. After the war it was used as offices for the Education Committee before being sold by the council for development.



Members of Woking's Home Guard outside the Boys' Technical School (later the Grammar School) in Station Approach. Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for War, announced the formation of Local Volunteer Defence Squads on 14th May, 1940, and before the day was out 70 men had signed up in Woking.

Others succumbed to the eagle eye of the Warden. In the Council Minutes of October 1940 we find that a stretcher party had been fined £2 for a black-out offence. The Council voted to pay the fine 'in view of the special circumstances' (whatever they were), but they were obviously more special than the Assistant Librarian's offence the following year, as on that occasion the Council only paid a little over half of the £5 fine!

Bombs continued to fall every month until early 1941 and, according to one source, seven people were killed in an air raid on the town in January 1941.

More shelters had to be provided and in January 1941 the Council agreed to provide a public shelter in Victoria Gardens - designed so that it could be converted into an open-fronted shelter after the war.

The Council were not the only ones looking ahead and in May that year Mr. Broderick of 41, Mount Hermon Road, asked for permission to erect his own shelter, to be converted into a garage in peace time. Shortly after, however, there was a lull in attacks - until the spring of 1942 - followed by sporadic raids for the next twelve months.

Meanwhile the locals, evacuees and the troops stationed at nearby Inkerman Barracks could look forward to new 'Sunday entertainment', with local cinemas showing films and a fun fair being set up in Duke Street.

In the summer of 1940 it was reported that troops billeted in the area could use the pool for just 1d. each, but for those seeking a good book to read it was slightly more complicated. The Library Committee decided that members of H.M. Forces should pay a deposit of 25s before they could borrow any books and a further deposit equal to half the value of any non-fiction books costing over 10s.

Whether any troops bothered to take up the latter offer is not recorded, but men stationed at Inkerman certainly crowded into town and in July 1941 the Council decided to remove the trees lining The Broadway to allow extra room for those queuing for the St. Johns and Knaphill buses.

Firms such as Vickers Armstrong and G.Q. Parachutes were busy expanding their operations - G.Q.'s Portugal Road premises being erected in early 1940. Vickers had workshops all over the district and hardly a month went by without permission being given for new stores. In the diary of Mrs. Ceeley, however, we discover just what conditions were like, when in June 1941 she left Vickers to start work for the General Aircraft Company in Goldsworth Road.

"I have at last got a war job, rivet making, starting at nine and three-farthings per hour, 47 hours a week. Previous to this I worked as cook in a canteen at one of Vickers' works, but I was so disgusted at the methods used that I gave it up. Half milk, half water for puddings. Gravy made only with greens and potato water. Greens and potatoes left over from the day before served up. A disgusting way to feed men and women doing hard work."

After working at General Aircraft (until September 1942), she moved to G.Q. Parachutes and then back to making rivets at Goldsworth before going on to James Walker's in August 1943. "I started this diary with the object of showing how this war affects me. It has certainly improved my education as I have learnt metal work, electric sewing machine and am now learning quite a bit about making rubber articles - and I shall be 50 next Wed."

To help war workers, the Chamber of Trade asked local shops to stay open late on Friday evenings, but in March 1942 they noted that 'it was not taken advantage of' and so they left it to individual traders' discretion.

The return of raids late in 1943 highlighted the inadequacy of some basement shelters and in December the Council called for shelters at the Rendezvous Restaurant in Commercial Road, and at Mr. Lutley's shop in Chertsey Road, to be closed. The following February they asked for more 'Morrison shelters' to be provided for the town.

Further problems were apparently caused by dogs, with the Council taking steps in July 1944 to ban them from all public shelters. At the same time they decided that, as the public shelters in town were seldom used at night, they would remove the bunks to give more room. They may also have had to strengthen the older shelters, as it was found that the specification for the mortar used in 1939-40 was faulty and the roofs were liable to collapse if hit. Curtain walls were to be added.

To help the war effort, provisions were made for the salvage of bones, tins, bottles and metal. Railings were to be removed from the gardens of council houses in Walton Road, from the War Memorial Garden and from the island at the top of Hill View Road. The railings outside the new Council Offices in Guildford Road were also removed, as was the 'superstructure on the roof of the pool cafe and the pumping house' in Woking Park, but the railings around Goldsworth School were to remain. Keeping the children of Goldsworth School in was evidently more important than keeping the enemy out!

In July 1940 the idea of starting a 'Spitfire Fund' was announced. Other funds followed. In March 1941 the Weyside Singers performed a concert at The Atalanta in aid of the Polish Relief Fund; and in May 1942 the 'Anglo-Russian Friendship Week' was held - raising £1,500 for a mobile x-ray unit. The following year the same amount was raised for a new ward at Stalingrad Hospital.

Warship Week was held in February 1942, and in the spring of 1943 a target of £600,000 was set (and more than reached) for the 'Wings for Victory Week'. Events included an open air dance at Horsell Sports Ground, a 'Baby Show' at Wheatsheaf Rec. and a Boxing Tournament at the Grand Theatre. 1944 saw the 'Salute the Soldier Week', set up by the Woking National Savings Committee, which raised £640,000 with events ranging from the sedate 'Window Spotting Display' to a more energetic display of army equipment.

IN AID OF THE
WOKING WINGS FOR VICTORY WEEK

GRAND
BOXING TOURNAMENT

under I.S.B.I. Rules, at the
**GRAND THEATRE,
 WOKING.**

by kind permission of MR. G. H. C. DE CHATTERTON, DIRECTOR,
 General No. 1 Housing Estate, S.A.A.C., W.

Friday, March 19th, 1943.

COL. G. F. COUGH, D.S.O., M.C.,
 (see kindly mentioned to present the Prize)

Officials

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Capt. C. K. THOMPSON, M.C. | Capt. F. S. KATFE |
| Capt. S. HURST | Lord. F. PEDLEY |
| Lord. E. KEELING | |
| M.C. | S.M.T. DURRINGE, A.P.T.C. |
| Chief Whip | S.M.S. GRAY, A.P.T.C. |
| Medical Officer | Major A. E. I. PATTERSON, D.A.O., S.A.M.C. |

Price - Sixpence.

- News & Mail, Woking

The programme for the 'Woking Wings for Victory Week' Boxing Tournament held at the Grand Theatre in Commercial Road on the 19th March, 1943.

On the home front, rationing meant that there was less food available, but in February 1940 the Council agreed to turn the former tip at Elmbridge into allotments, opening a new refuse tip near Durnford Bridge in Horsell at the same time. Temporary allotments were also provided at Boundary Road and all council householders were asked to cultivate their gardens. The Southern Railway provided land at Tin Bridges for allotments as well. In June 1941 it was reported that in Woking Park the Council were growing vegetables, some of which went to local hostels and the newly set up 'British Restaurant' in Commercial Road.

The Council were also proposing to set up a market in April 1944 selling 'fruit and vegetables and horticultural produce, as well as poultry, game and fish and various un-rationed foods together with approved peddlers' wares'. The Ministry of Health, however, only gave permission for a vegetable market (to be held on a Thursday only), and in September 1944 the car park in Goldsworth Road was converted (at a cost of about £100) to accommodate the market. Residents were to be charged 4s. a week, with non-resident stall-holders charged double that. The number of takers must have been small, as in January 1945 the Council decided to close the market until the end of March 'in view of the low lettings'.

In the weeks (even months) building up to D-Day on 6th June, the railway through Woking was busy carrying materials. The local roads were also busy with lorries bringing goods to the station, as Mrs. Ceeley notes on the day after D-Day - 'The streets here seem absolutely deserted after weeks of convoys continually passing through'. The work at the station was not finished, however, as some of the wounded were brought by train to Woking to be transferred to the military hospital in Oriental Road (or to nearby Pyrford or Chertsey).

1944 saw massive attacks on London, with the first 'flying bomb' landing on 12th June. Seven days later Maude Ceeley records: "The Germans have a new secret weapon - We have had continuous raids for 3 days and nights now and have been very scared. One came over last night at terrific speed very low, and I thought it was going to hit us. I have never been so frightened before."

In October 1944 the Clerk of the Council reported...

"Up to the end of September there had been 1555 alerts in the district and as a result of 58 air raids 2 residents had been killed and 52 injured. A raid close to the boundary of the district had resulted in 13 residents losing their lives and in a large number being injured. 434 bombs had fallen in the district resulting in 2844 properties being damaged and 26 destroyed. 12 large clusters of incendiary bombs had also fallen in the district". The raid 'close to the boundary' was at Brooklands, Byfleet.

Further attacks were recorded in September and October 1944, and again on 5th March, 1945. The last bomb of the war fell in Hertfordshire just over three weeks later!



V.E. Day celebrations in Cherry Street, Goldsworth.

In April the Woking Council of Churches proposed that a special service should be held on Wheatsheaf Recreation Ground on the day after the cessation of hostilities, but it was generally thought that everyone would 'do their own thing', so the idea was dropped. The war came to an end on 7th May, 1945 and in July the Council set up a 'Victory Day' Sub-Committee, whilst communities all over the area drew up plans for their own V.E. Day celebrations. V.J. Day followed in August - the Second World War was over and in September a meeting was called to discuss the provision of a War Memorial.

Early Post-War Woking.

With little bomb damage (compared to other areas), Woking didn't need much rebuilding, but it soon became clear that the sleepy little commuter town of the inter-war years would have to change. There was pressure for new housing to be built and with it came the demand for more shops, more schools, more leisure facilities and more industry.

Most of the early post-war development was small in scale - in-fill in the older urban areas - but by the mid-1950s 'green-field' sites were being sought.

*The West Byfleet end of
Albert Drive, Sheerwater,
soon after construction.*



One of the first was the Sheerwater Estate to the east of the town. It was begun in 1948 by the London County Council as an 'out-of-county' overspill area. The fact that it was built upon the bed of an old lake caused many problems and it was not until September 1951 that the first houses could be occupied. Originally there were 1,279 homes as well as shops, churches, a public house, sports and social facilities and three schools. The estate was almost self-sufficient, with a 30-acre industrial estate providing work for many of the new inhabitants.

Other industrial estates were also provided at this time, mainly to take industries away from the central area. In the late 1950s firms such as S. Murray (producers of test tubes) and Telezee (early pioneers of the use of Perspex) - both from Board School Road - moved to Old Woking, whilst other firms moved to sites at St. Johns, Knaphill or Byfleet.

Monument Way (East and West) and the Goldsworth Road area became the main industrial areas in the central part of Woking, with James Walker's 'Lion Works' being the main industrial complex to the south of the railway.

London County Council was not the only Council to build houses in the 1950s. After a long break, Woking U.D.C. also developed 'green-field' estates. Maybury and Elmbridge were both built in two phases, with their first phases due for completion in 1952 - hence the northern section of the Elmbridge development being christened 'Queen Elizabeth Way', and the 'royal' names of the Maybury Estate! The Barnsbury Estate followed in 1955.



*The flats of the Barnsbury Estate,
soon after completion in the mid-1950s.*

In 1931 the population of Woking had been 29,950, living in 6,853 homes. By 1951 the population had risen to 49,310 and by 1961 it was 67,485. Woking was growing fast.

Cavendish Road, off Triggs Lane, appears to have been one of the earliest post-war private estates (begun in the late 1940s). It was joined in the mid-1950s by other small developments such as Birch Close (off The Triangle), and Hillside and Old Hill, both off Egley Road. By the late 1950s, however, pressure was increasing for the redevelopment of large areas of urban Woking - especially in the vicinity of Mount Hermon and Heathside.

In 1958 the first major plan for 'high-density' properties was proposed, with permission being given in 1959 for 92 flats, maisonettes and town houses to replace five large houses north of Hill View Road. The award-winning scheme, named 'Hillview Court', included what was then described as an 'ultra-modern doctor's surgery'!

This scheme (as well as several others at that time) was actually contrary to the 1953 County Development Plan and it was not until 1962 that the initial 70 acres of the 'Mount Hermon High Density Area' were officially approved. This included the area between White Rose Lane, Woking Park, Brooklyn Road and Heathside Road.

In the meantime, several plans were put forward for high-density schemes. As an example, in just one month (May 1960) Woking Council had applications for a ten-storey block of flats at Thorsden, Guildford Road; another ten-storey block at St. Austin's, Mount Hermon Road; and a group of seventy flats in blocks of two, three and eleven storeys at Heathfield, Heathside Road. To the Council's credit at that time, all were refused.

By the end of July 1960, 37 applications for high-density plans had been received, only four of which had been approved. Radstone Court and Southview Court in Hill View Road were two of those which received approval.

Some sites were approved only after appeal to the Minister of Housing & Local Government. Park Court, off Poplar Grove, was one such site and 'Sandilands' in Brooklyn Road was considered by the Minister to be 'medium density', not 'high density', and so allowable.



Park Court, off Poplar Grove, was not considered to be 'high density' housing and so was allowed.

Even so, not all approved applications were finally built. In April 1962 Woking Council approved a scheme for a nine-storey block of 64 flats (and a restaurant) at Woodlands, Constitution Hill. Fortunately a later application sought only the houses that are there now!

New estates on the site of old houses came thick and fast from then onwards. It would be impossible in a book such as this to list every major development of the period but as an example, the Park Place Estate off Hill View Road was given permission in May 1963; and Moorholme (off Guildford Road) was proposed in August the same year, and even away from the designated 'high-density' area, old properties were being replaced, such as Barrons and Lingfield in White Rose Lane.

In 1966 the Mount Hermon High Density Area was extended to include all the land up to Wych Hill Lane - an area of 125 acres south of the railway. The maximum height was to be ten storeys, but in practice only one such building was originally constructed - Craigmere Tower, approved in 1963 and completed two years later.

All the above were private developments, but Woking Council, having constructed their 'farm' estates in the 1950s, moved on to build maisonettes and flats in the late '60s and early '70s. One such development was Walton Court (approved in early 1966) and described in an April 1966 edition of the Woking News and Mail as a 'paradise for children, with spacious lawns and play areas'! It was completed in 1971, by which time the population of the borough had reached 76,842.



In 1951, with people celebrating the 'Festival of Britain', Joyce Pearce and her friends invited 17 'displaced' teenagers from Eastern Europe to spend a holiday at her home, Ockenden, in White Rose Lane (left). Woking Council and the local Rotary Club supported her idea, which eventually led to the formation of the charity 'Ockenden Venture'. Over the years the organisation has helped countless refugees from all over the world, notably from Asia, Africa and the Middle East.



The Ockenden Venture had many supporters in the town, including John and Gladys Garforth, who started the Ockenden Venture's charity shop at Nos. 19 and 20, Guildford Road (above).

A street party in Courtenay Road, Woking – one of the many streets in the town that celebrated the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953.





The Kingsbury Home in Coley Avenue.



St. Columba's House, opened and dedicated in October 1968 as a retreat house in the grounds of the St. Peter's Convent, Maybury.



The Girls' Grammar School in Old Woking Road replaced the 'huts' in Park Road where the 'Park School' is today. The school, above, later became the QEII School before being demolished in the early 1990s and replaced by the houses of Martinsyde (off East Hill) and the 'Prins Wilhem Alexander' Dutch School.

The young might have been catered for in Walton Court, but the old were not forgotten. The Southern Railwaymen's Home (attached to the Orphanage in Oriental Road) began catering for retired railway employees soon after the war, whilst other homes were provided by organisations such as the Red Cross (Limerick House, Heathside Park Road); the Church Army (Kingsbury, Coley Avenue); and Surrey County Council, whose 'Heathside' (also in Coley Avenue) replaced a former private hotel of the same name.

Surrey County Council were also building new schools for the ever-increasing population. Barnsbury School was built in 1957, with Highlands Secondary School being built on the other side of the Hoe Stream in 1959-60. Other schools built at this time included the new Girls' Grammar School on the Old Woking Road, whilst just around the corner from their old 'huts' in Park Road, the Roman Catholic St. Dunstan's Primary and Infant School opened in Onslow Crescent in 1957.

A growing population demanded a growing shopping centre. Woking in the 1950s still had mainly pre-war shops. The 'Liverpool Victoria' building on the corner of Goldsworth Road was one of the few properties to be built in the 1950s. Others included the former Employment Exchange in Guildford Road - the name 'Coronation House' giving away its age - and in 1959, the new Woolworth's in Chertsey Road (converted in the 1990s into Weatherspoon's public house).



Above – The Liverpool Victoria Building on the corner of Goldsworth Road and what is now Victoria Way (then Percy Street) was one of the first set of new shops to be built in the town after the Second World War.



The building of the new Woolworth's store (now part of Weatherspoon's) in 1958.

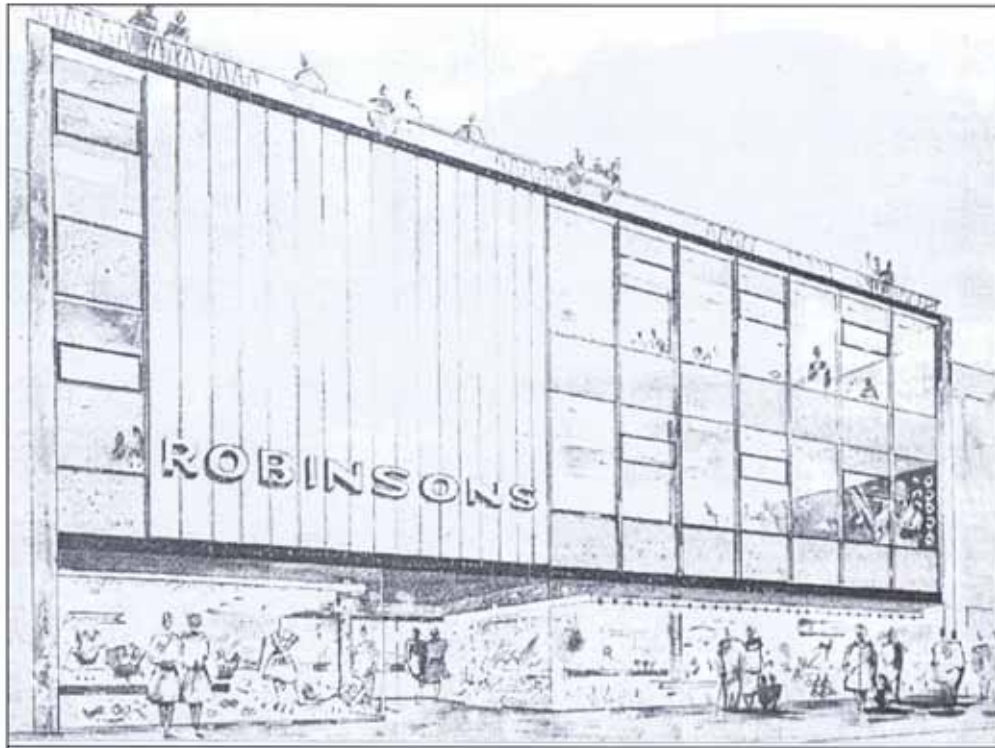
Above – looking towards Duke Street, with Edward Miller's shop on the corner with Chertsey Road.

Left – the shops of Commercial Road in the background.



Chertsey Road showing the site vacated by the Gaumont Cinema, with the Laundrette next to Tesco's (now the site of the Rat & Parrot public house) on the left.





An artist's impression of the new Robinson's store in Chertsey Road.

In the early 1960s, the old Gaumont Cinema in Chertsey Road was demolished and redeveloped with five shops, whilst just up the road Tesco's built their new 'self-service' supermarket, later converted into a furniture store and later still a public house.

Closer to the station, Robinson's had drawn up plans in 1962 for a new department store at Nos. 9-17, Chertsey Road (the ground and basement of which was later to become McDonald's).

Woking at that time had three 'department stores', with Gammon's on the corner of Chobham Road and Commercial Road, and the Co-op on the corner of Percy Street and Church Street, challenging Robinson's 'modern' store.



The Post Office, opened in Commercial Road in 1960.

The Co-op site had long been thought of as 'out-of-town', but in April 1960 the new General Post Office opened in nearby Commercial Road (on the site of the old Council Offices - vacated in January 1940) and a few years later Premier House (on the site of the Grand Theatre and Water Co. offices) seemed to confirm the west end of town's revival.

Premier House (later refurbished and re-named) was designed by a local firm of architects - Osborn & Hollis - and was

one of the first buildings in the town to be developed for the Norwich Union Life Insurance Society.

Norwich Union were also responsible for Ryde House in Chobham Road (built in 1962 and demolished less than thirty years later); and in 1965 work began on their third scheme, the £500,000 Albion House (also recently re-furbished).

Office development was at that time restricted to 'local' use only. It was not until 1969 that the Government gave a permit for general office development.

Other 1960s offices included Nos. 15-20, Goldsworth Road (built in the mid-1960s and remodelled in the early 1990s when it became the new 'Job Centre') and Lynton House in Station Approach, built in 1969 by, and for, a local firm of builders - W. Deakin & Co.

By the early 1960s Commercial Road was at last becoming more commercial. In 1960 outline plans were approved for the redevelopment of the northern part of the street. More detailed plans emerged in 1963 and these were further modified in 1965, but it was not until the end of the decade that work really began on construction.

In the meantime, five shops were built in 1964 between Church Path and Chobham Road. Two of these were occupied by the District Bank (later taken over by the National Westminster Bank - and later still by the Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society) and in the same year Lloyds opened their new branch in the road. Next door to Lloyds Bank were the Lambeth Building Society and Moldram & Wilson, Estate Agents. Banks, building societies and estate agents - the trend was being set, further confirmed in December 1968 by the opening of the new Midland Bank (later the HSBC).

By the end of the decade, however, some improvement in the shopping prospects of the street had been made, with Kibby's Supermarket (part of the Unigate Group) announcing their move to Morris House (named after the cars formerly sold on the site by Haslemere Motor Company). Kibby's later became the 'International' and the site is now occupied by Argos.



Ryde House in Chobham Road, built in the early 1960s, on the site now occupied by Victoria Gate.