

INDEPENDANCE FOR WOKING IN 1893

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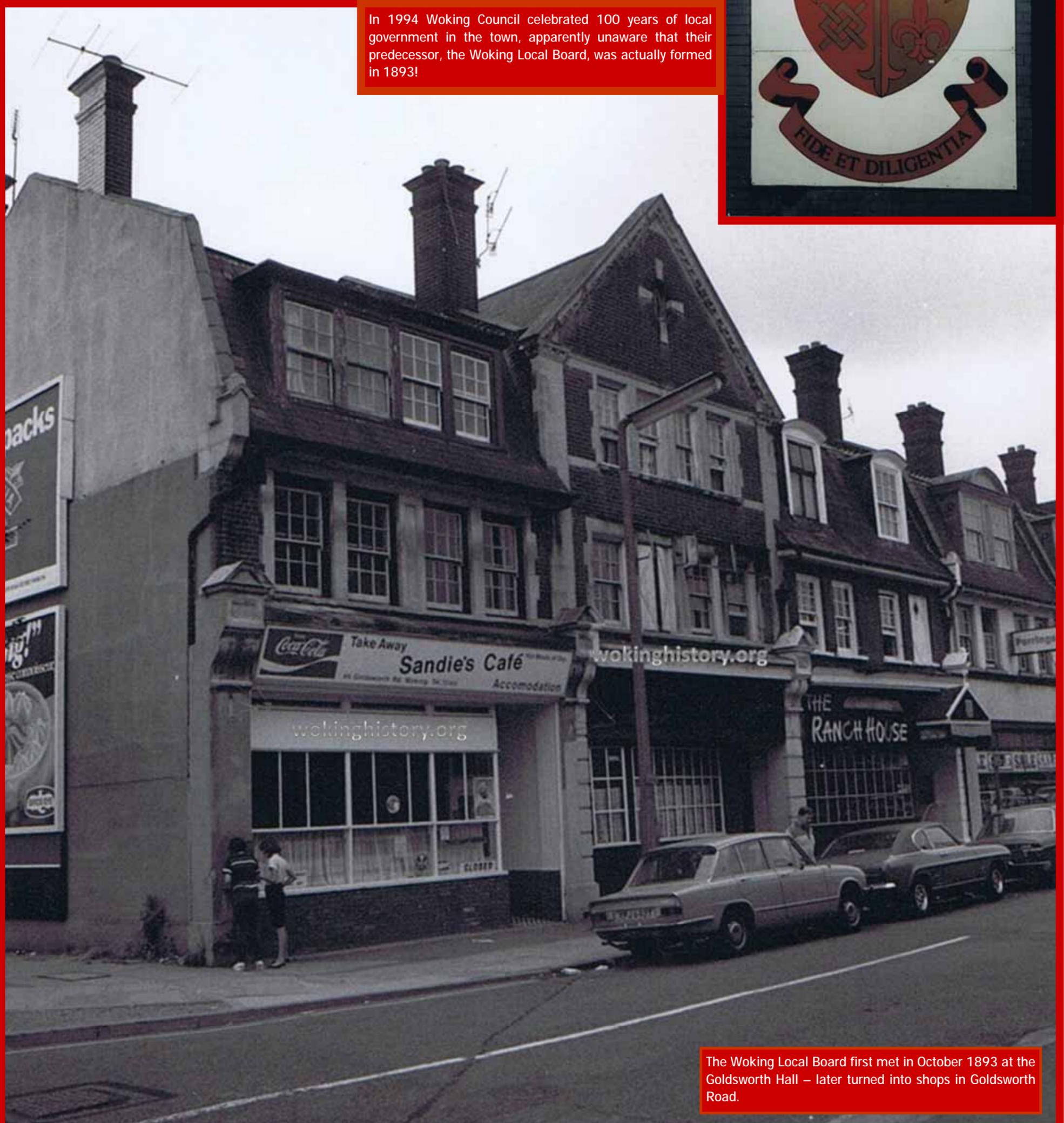
Just over twenty years ago Woking Council celebrated 100 years of local government in Woking by erecting (amongst other things) an enamel sign under Victoria Arch with the Borough's Coat of Arms and the date '1894'. They were only a few months out, as the first meeting of the Woking Urban Sanitary District – or Woking Local Board (the predecessor to the Urban District Council) was held in 1893, on the 4th October at the Goldsworth Hall.

There had been calls for the Woking area to be given its own local government for many years, following the obvious inadequacies of the Rural Highway and Sanitation Boards based in Guildford, and the establishment of the Woking Local Board was to be the first step.

There were eighteen members of the board, with six representing the Woking Station and Maybury ward, and three each representing the wards of Woking Village & Mayford; Sutton &



In 1994 Woking Council celebrated 100 years of local government in the town, apparently unaware that their predecessor, the Woking Local Board, was actually formed in 1893!



The Woking Local Board first met in October 1893 at the Goldsworth Hall – later turned into shops in Goldsworth Road.



Bridley; St Johns & Goldsworth; and Knaphill & Brookwood.

The Woking Local Board immediately set about trying to solve some of the town's problems. They held a competition to find a suitable site for a sewage works, but in the meantime employed a man called John Brown on a six-month contract for 'scavenging and cesspool emptying', with apparently local residents being given disinfectant to help mask the smell of local refuse.

Unfortunately the competition for the sewage works didn't go quite to plan. There were twenty-three entries to look through with the adjudicators awarding first prize to a gentleman called Maxwell Lawford whose scheme was for a works at Harelands Farm (where Bankside on Goldsworth Park is now). The outfall would have been into the canal, but when it came to the vote, the Local Board was split between this

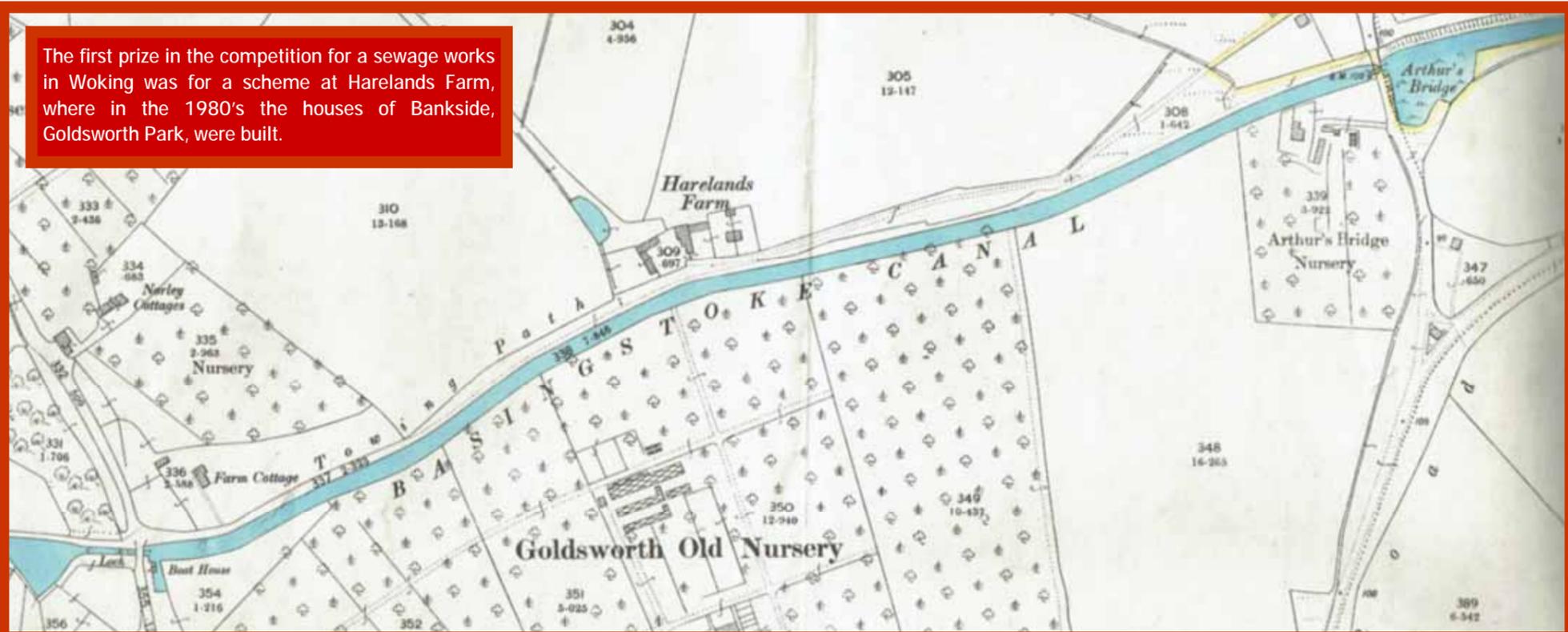
scheme and the second-placed one designed by G.H. Radford for a works on twenty-eight acres of land near Durnford Bridge (more or less where McLaren's factory is today). On the casting vote of the Chairman, Mr W.H. Corrie (after whom Corrie Road in Old Woking is named) they plumped for Radford's scheme, even though it would still have required all the sewerage from town to be pumped up to the site of the works. Even worse was that the Durnford site was in Horsell – then still part of Chertsey Rural District (along with Pyrford and Byfleet) – so that Woking was effectively going to 'export' its sewerage problem to its neighbours!

The Local Government Board rejected Woking Local Board's proposal leaving the authority to go back to the drawing board, but in the meantime John Brown's contract for cesspool emptying was coming to an end with many new residents in the Maybury Hill area complaining

of his practice of often emptying his dust cart of trade waste and refuse onto land near their homes! A new contract was awarded to John Wilson at a rate of £108.10s for six months for refuse duties, with an additional £3.2s.6d paid for each cesspool that he emptied (providing, I assume, that he disposed of that waste properly)!

Many years later, looking back to 1893, the first surveyor for the Local Board, George Wooldridge recalled that 'there was no drainage, no lighting and no made roads except the main roads, the other so-called roads being mostly mere dirt tracks often used as a convenient spot to deposit the contents of cesspools'. We will look at the problem of Woking's roads and street lighting next week, but I hope the above gives you some idea of what Woking would have smelled like (let alone look like) just over 120 years ago. Apologies if you are reading this at the breakfast table!

The first prize in the competition for a sewage works in Woking was for a scheme at Harelands Farm, where in the 1980's the houses of Bankside, Goldsworth Park, were built.



WOKING POST OFFICE

Before 1865 all the post for Woking would have been delivered on foot from Ripley where the stage coaches from London to Guildford and Portsmouth would have stopped at the Talbot Hotel, but after that date the mail came by train to be sorted at a little post office and sorting room on the site now occupied by the NatWest Bank in the High Street.

In 1865 there was just the post-master, Jesse Mansell, and his sons, but before long the amount of post had increased so much that new premises were opened in a house in Chertsey Road (seen herein about 1889) before moving again to Walton Road and then further up Chertsey Road until eventually in 1895 it settled in a new 'mock-Tudor' office near the top of Chertsey Road.

Here you would have found nine clerks and the post-master sorting an estimated 120,000 letters and parcels a week, for distribution around the town centre by five 'urban postmen' and thirteen of their rural counterparts - many of which would have walked to the numerous post offices and sub offices that had already opened up all over the district.



ALL SAINTS CHURCH, WOODHAM



Pubd. by G. S. Addison, Woking. ▲ 311/297

Woodham Lane, Woking

On the 7th April, 1892, a meeting was held at the home of Robert Norton Stevens, the owner of Woodham Hall, to discuss the idea of building a new church in the area. A committee was set up and in the autumn the architect William Frederick Unsworth (who was then living at

Woodhambury) was appointed to plan a church with sittings for about 150 people. The site chosen, on the far western part of the parish of Addlestone, was given by Mr H.F. Locke-King, and the foundation stone was laid on the 11th October 1893 by Lord Ashcombe at a service conducted by the Bishop of Winchester.

By the following spring the first stage of the church was complete (at a cost of £2,683.2s.0d), with a temporary wooden building acting as the Chancel – opened and dedicated by the Bishop on the 7th May 1894. It would be several years before the church was complete to the original plan.