

HORSELL'S AMALGAMATION WITH WOKING & THE BUILDING OF THE PARISH HALL

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For centuries the village of Horsell, together with Pyrford (under whose manorial boundaries the village once was), were held by Westminster Abbey, although their chapels were often associated with Newark Priory or St Peter's Church at Old Woking. It is perhaps odd then that since Medieval times the villages should have formed part of the ancient 'Hundred of Godley' – an administrative area based loosely on the lands of North-West Surrey belonging to Chertsey Abbey.

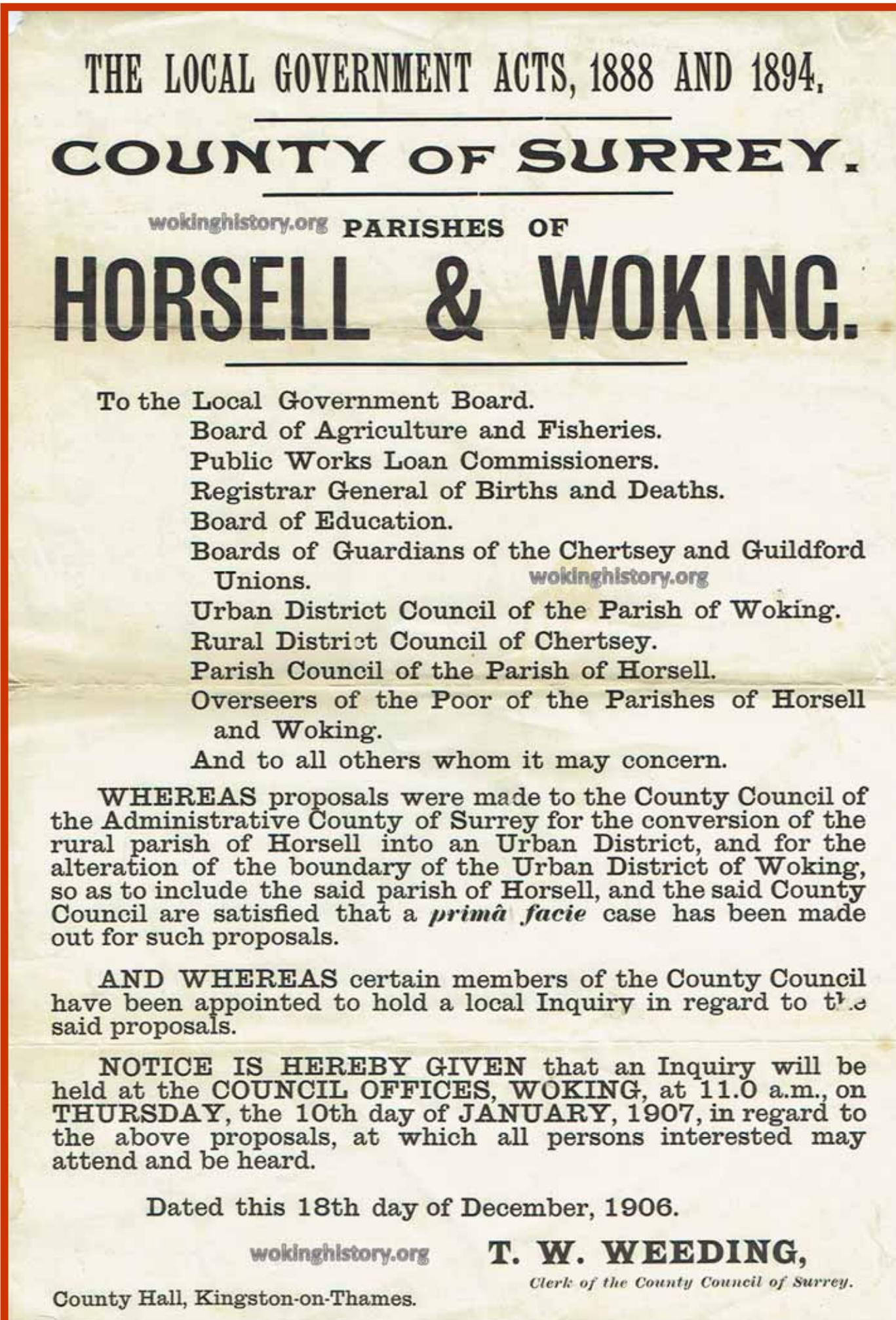
Chertsey's influence on the area continued long after the dissolution of its monastery in 1536 and in Victorian times when district councils were formed Horsell, Pyrford and Byfleet became part of the Chertsey Rural District, whilst Woking became its own Urban District.

As we have seen in recent weeks, Woking in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was forging ahead with the formation of a fire brigade, road improvements and, perhaps most importantly, a sewage system for the town. Meanwhile, just across the border in Horsell, the Chertsey Rural District Council were providing next to nothing.

One historian has described Chertsey Rural District Council as a 'rump authority'. Although Chertsey was in its title (and was where the authority met), the town was part of its own Urban District (with Weybridge and Walton), with the rural district basically consisting of the 'left-over' villages of north-west Surrey.

In 1894 when the Woking Local Board was formed (the forerunner to Woking UDC), they proposed to Horsell Vestry that it should amalgamate with Woking, but for one reason or another the idea was not acted upon. Horsell contributed about 13% of the rate income to Chertsey RDC in 1895, but with the area developing rapidly because of its proximity to Woking Station, by 1902 this had increased to 18%, although what Horsell got for all that money was little. They were not alone, Windlesham Parish Council (which at that time covered Bagshot) proposed in 1903 to split from Chertsey RDC and form their own Urban District, encouraging Horsell's Councillors to do likewise and apply for their own urban status.

An inquiry was held by Surrey County Council in December 1903 at the little Institute building in the High Street. But Horsell's plans were thrown out, leading to the Parish Council eventually approaching Woking UDC in 1906 with a proposal to amalgamate (and take advantage of their neighbour's better resources). A poll on the 1st October found that 195 out of 313 voted in favour of the union, and on the 1st October the following year four councillors from Horsell (twice as many as they previously had on



Chertsey RDC) were elected to Woking UDC.

Whilst all this was going on, Horsell was still rapidly expanding. Local landowners and farmers were finding that one of the best 'crops' for their fields was housing, with Walden's Farm and Abbey Farm both selling off odd fields for development in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The local school had been added too quite regularly in recent years and in 1903 the local Boy's Club, which met at the school, held a fundraising concert in order to raise money for a new hall or room. £5 went to

the new fund which with other events such as carol singing by the end of the year stood at £60 and which by the end of 1904 was £166.

In August 1904 Horsell's Vicar, the Rev Norman Pares (the driving force behind the scheme), bought just over an acre next to the Parish Institute from Miss Rowlands of Grobars Farm, and part of this he gave for the building of the 'Parish Room' (the remainder eventually becoming the Queen Elizabeth Gardens). He also gifted £100 in November 1905 so that a local architect, Mr J B Drower (who lived



opposite the Red Lion) could come up with some plans for a brick-built hall costing £1,400, although Drower suggested that could be reduced by £110 if another site was used!

Unfortunately only £308 had been raised by then and with the Vicar offering the land (and his gift of £100), the thought of saving £110 on 'another site' was probably not considered for long. Remarkably in fact the committee quickly decided that the plans needed to be expanded with more room in the basement clubroom for a billiard table! The lowest estimate now was that £1,500 would be needed to be raised,

although this was later reduced to £1,143 with the removal of the stage and kitchen (which could be added later for a further £300).

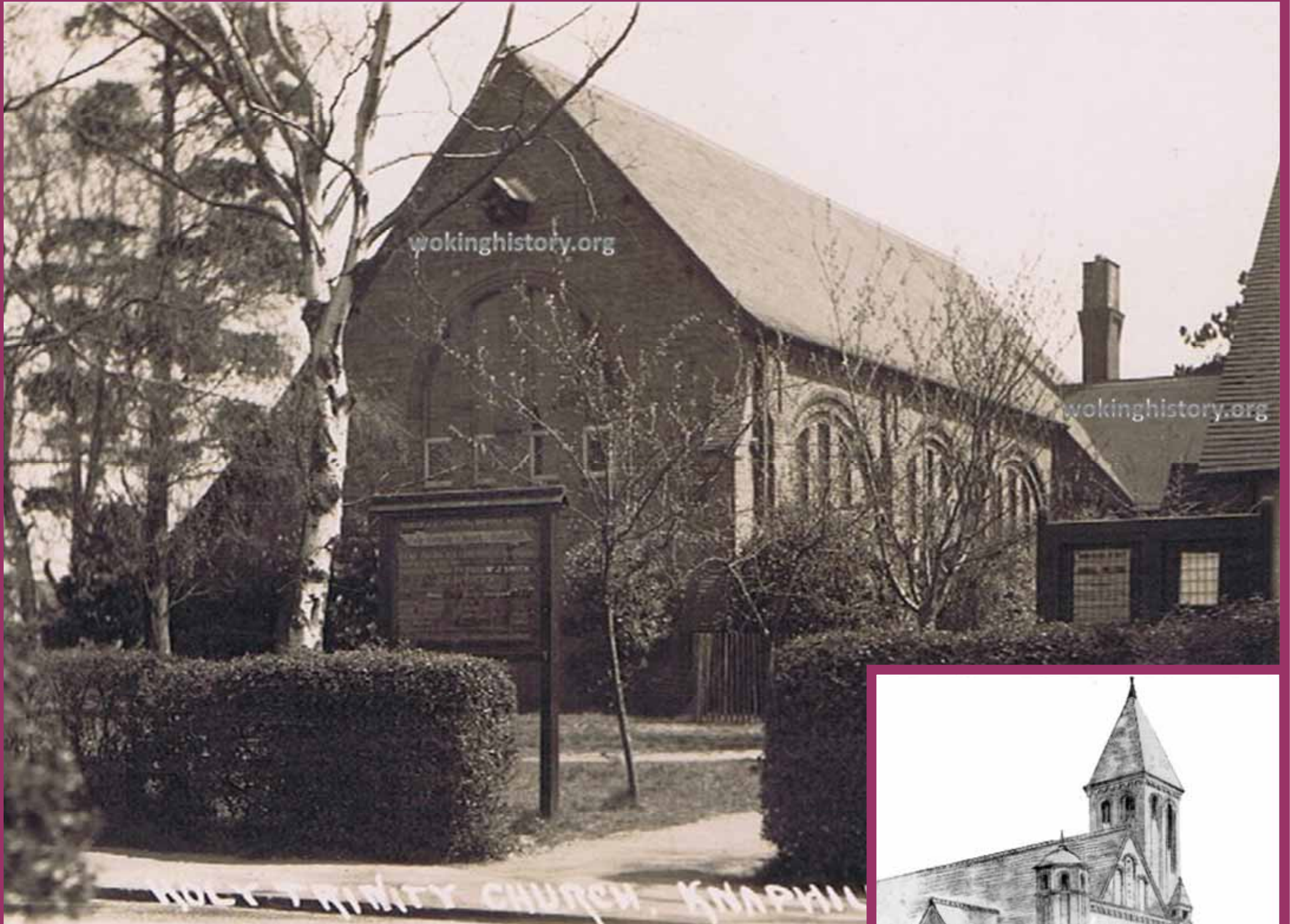
Work began later in 1906, but with heavy rain (and heavy going on the fundraising), work was slow, although in June 1907 it was optimistically announced that the hall would be finished by the end of July. £920 had been raised by March with the Rev Pares promising to meet any shortfall (allowing for a £500 mortgage), but with most of that money having been paid to the contractor – Mr Roake – disaster struck when he was declared bankrupt

and all labour was withdrawn. This situation was only saved when the local firm of Drowley & Company stepped in with a tender of £760 (later reduced to £700) to complete the job.

By the 21st September work was complete, although the overdraft was now £367 and a further £276 was required to pay for the furnishings and fittings. The final cost (which wouldn't all be paid off for about ten years) was £2,084.18s.8d., with the official opening (delayed from July), finally taking place on the 2nd November 1907.

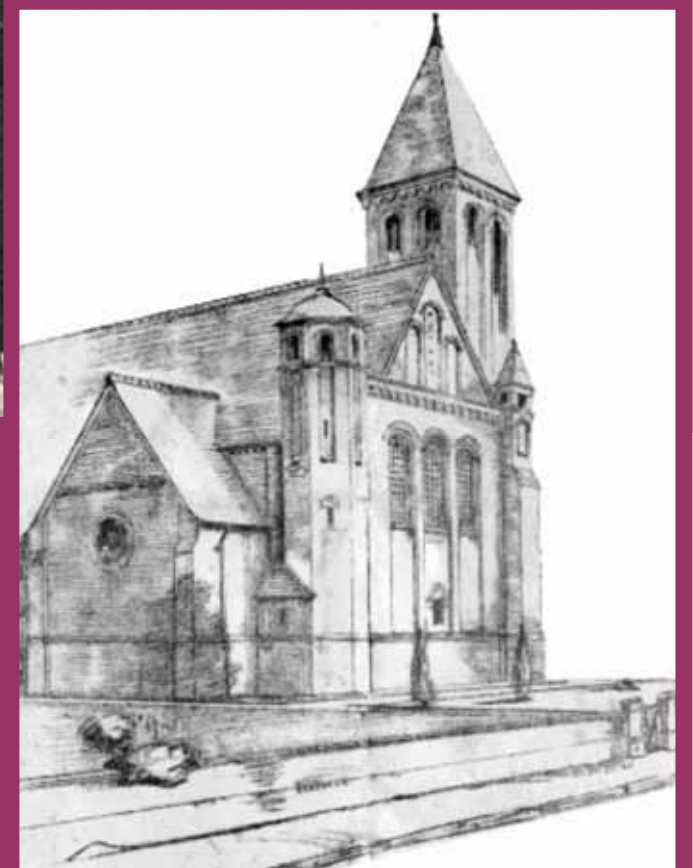


KNAPHILL WELCOMES THE DUCHESS OF ALBANY TO THE NEW HOLY TRINITY CHURCH



Whilst the Vicar of Horsell was busy providing a Village Hall for his parish, the Vicar of St John's was preoccupied with providing a new church for his parishioners in Knaphill.

The original Holy Trinity Church in Chobham Road was a small tin building erected in 1885, but in 1893 the architect J Henry Ball was appointed to come up with plans (right) for a new brick church that was originally estimated



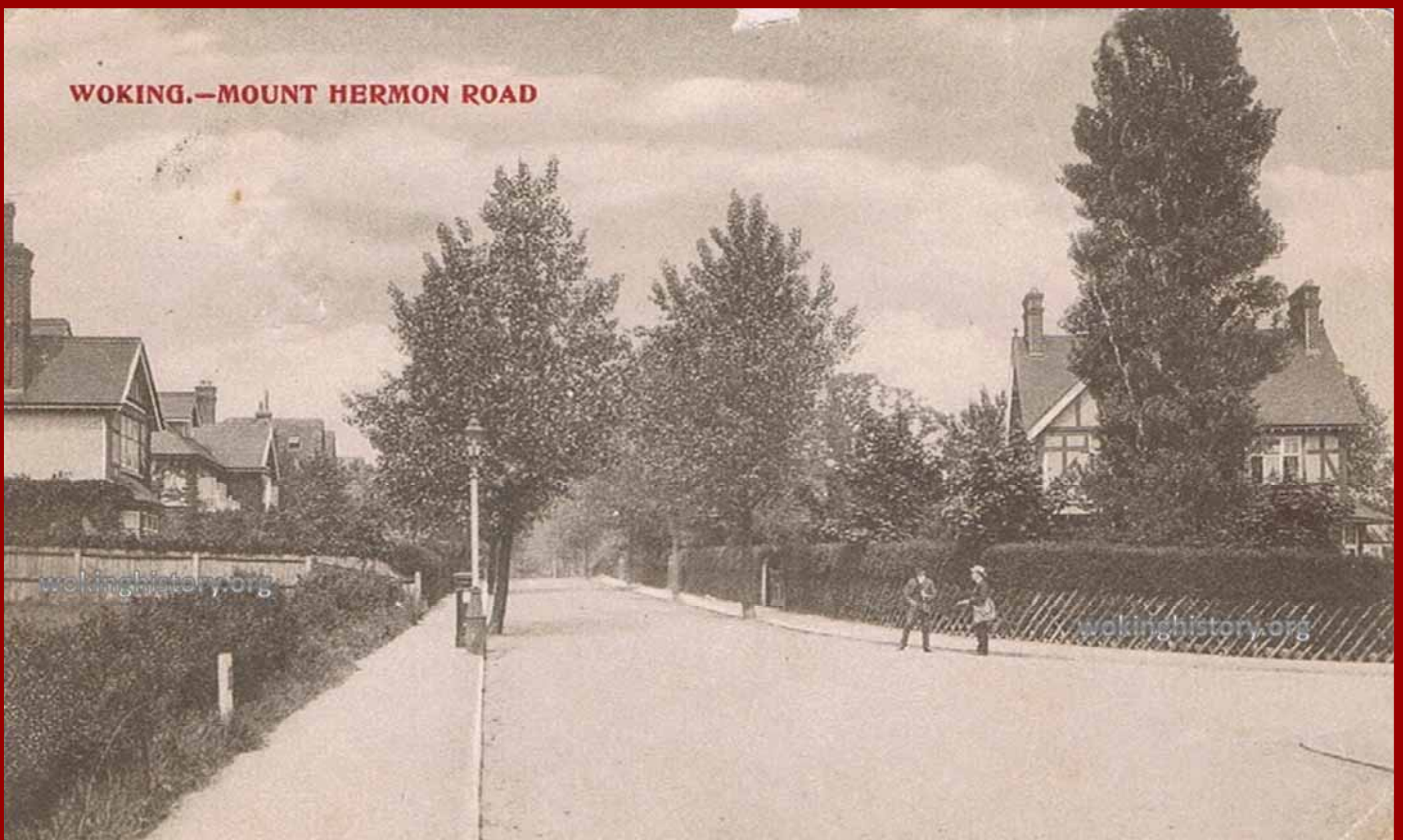
The villagers of St John's erected a floral arch over the road at Kiln Bridge to welcome the Duchess of Albany on her way to Knaphill



to cost a massive £3,445. In the meantime a small church room was built next door in 1896 whilst fundraising took place.

Everything went to plan with the first turf being cut on the site (between the new hall and the old tin church) in the autumn of 1906 and by the 23rd March 1907 everything was ready for the Duchess of Albany to come and lay the foundation stone. But by then it was clear that costs had to be cut and the plans were changed, lopping £1,200 off the bill with the church considerably shortened (different bricks being used at the 'temporary' west end of the church)! The building was finally consecrated on the 25th September 1907.

ST MARY OF BETHANY CHURCH, MOUNT HERMON



Meanwhile, perhaps not wanting to be outdone by two of his neighbours, the Vicar of Christ Church, the Rev William Frederick Tucker Hamilton, bought two plots of land (on the left of this picture) in the West Hill Park Estate at Mount Hermon in 1896, adding another plot in a further sale of 1899 adjoining the original two, but this time facing the newly laid out York Road. Here he evidently intended to build

a new chapel of ease, but in the meantime he was a bit preoccupied in building St Paul's Church at Maybury, so nothing was immediately done. Sadly his wife died in 1900 and he suffered a stroke (probably brought on with over-work and stress), so in 1905 he moved away from Woking, but gave the church his land at Mount Hermon and the money to build St Mary of Bethany.

The new church was designed by W D Caroe, and writing in February 1905 Hamilton hoped that it could be finished by the 15th October 1906 – on what would have been his silver wedding anniversary – but in the end it was only possible for him to lay the foundation stone on that date, with the final opening taking place just over a year later.

