

DEATH & DESTRUCTION

Iain Wakeford 2016

Two of the best known nurserymen in the Woking area in the early twentieth century were Anthony Waterer of Knaphill Nursery and Walter Charles Slocock of Goldsworth, so it was something of an end of an era when the two died within a couple of years of each other in the mid 1920's.

Anthony Waterer was the son of another Anthony who had been instrumental in developing Knaphill Nursery as one of the main growers of azaleas and rhododendrons in this country. Walter Charles Slocock had been an apprentice at Knaphill before he took over the

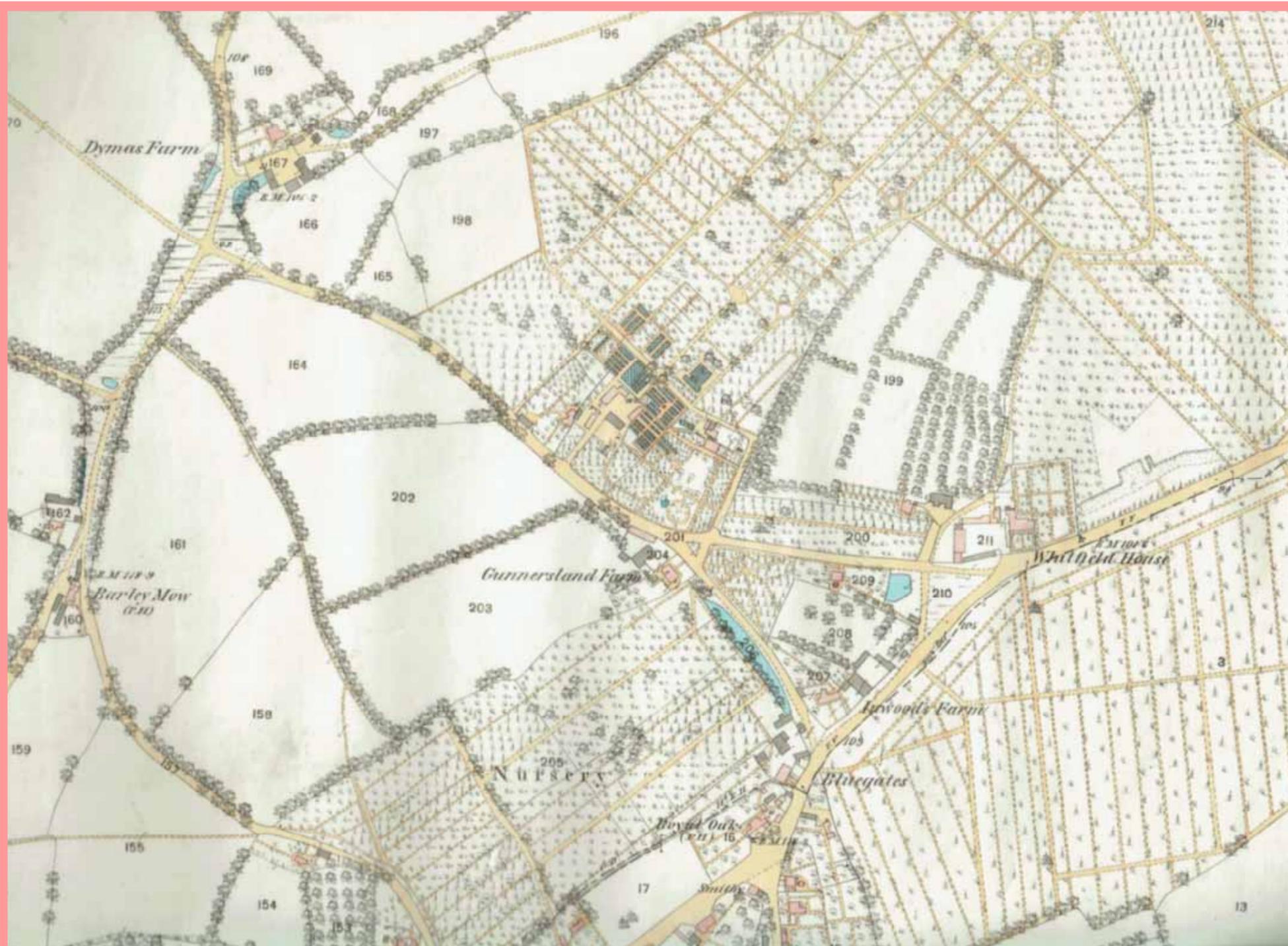


Anthony Waterer I was proud of the many varieties of Rhododendron and Azalias produced at Knaphill, some of which were planted in the grounds of the White House and Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC at the same time that Goldsworth Nursery was providing the plants for Brookwood Cemetery.

equally famous Goldsworth Nursery in 1877. He too developed many new hybrids of rhododendron, so I suspect that both gentlemen are now turning in their graves at the almost total destruction of the fine rhododendrons at Brookwood Cemetery – originally planted for the Necropolis Company in the 1850's by Robert Donald of Goldsworth Nursery. They were planted to divide the plots, provide solitude and a picturesque background to the graves. The wildlife organisation charged by the current owners of the cemetery with the 'management' of their estate, appear to believe that their task is to return the area back to the heathland upon which the cemetery was built – when in fact they should be restoring the cemetery to its former glory. I know that heathland is a rare habitat that should be preserved, but the cemetery is scheduled as a 'Historic Park and Garden' and those are the features that are supposed to be protected. Let's hope English Heritage wake up to the vandalism and do their duty!

In 1928, Goldsworth Nursery produced a new variety of Rhododendron named 'Souvenir of W C Slocock', with another one called 'Mrs W C Slocock' appearing the following year.





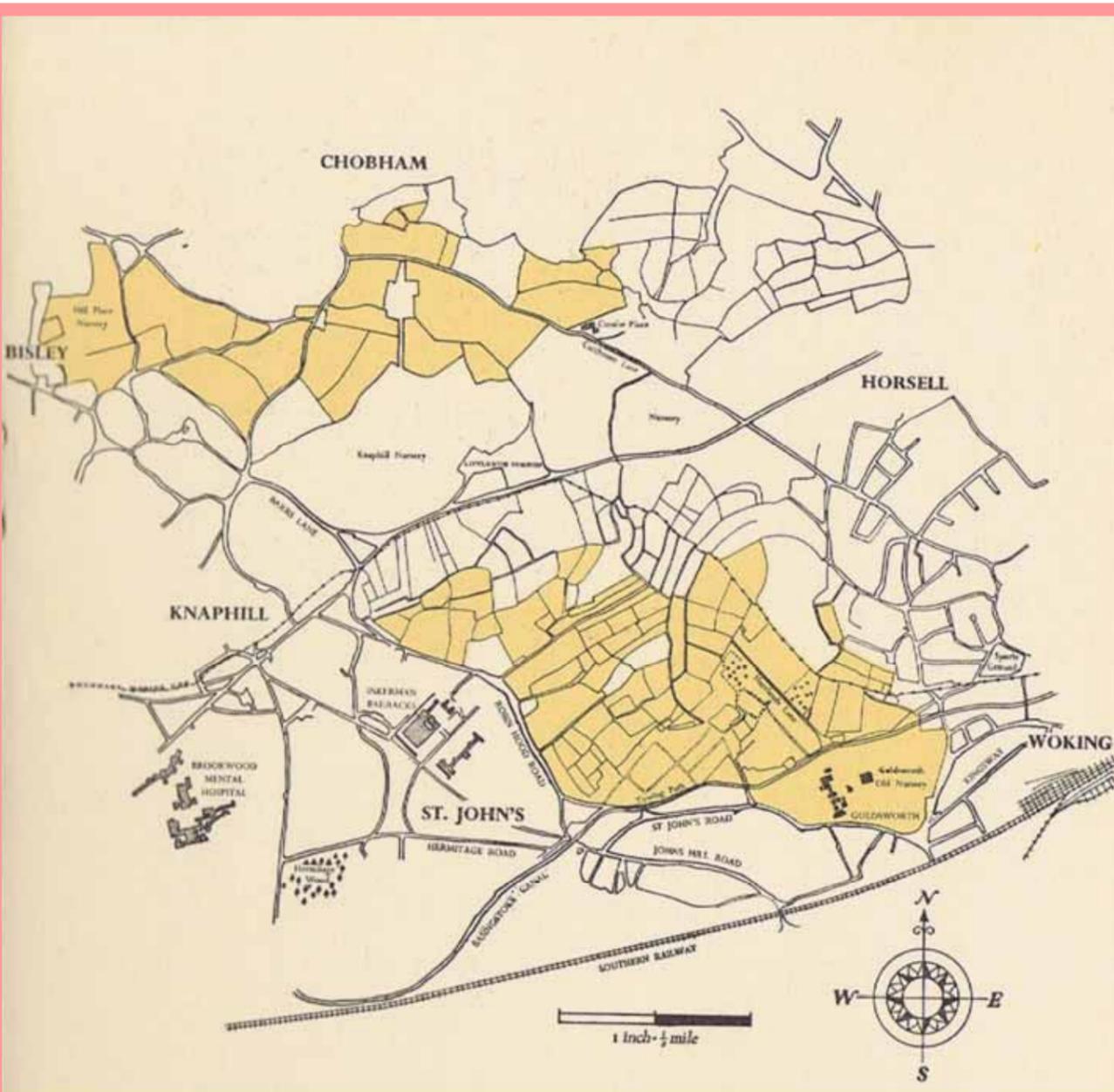
The grounds of the nursery at Knaphill were extensive, occupying the fields of several former farms such as Bluegate and Gunnersland Farm at the foot of what is now Watersers Park.

Anthony Waterer certainly knew how to do his duty. When he died in 1924 (leaving a personal fortune of over £72,000), he left fourteen and a half acres of it to Woking Council to be turned into a recreation ground that still bears his name. Walter Charles Slocock likewise had been a great benefactor to the area, buying the land upon which the Boys Grammar School (now the Police Station in Station Approach) was built in 1909.

When he died in 1926 he left property valued at £244,000 in his will – not bad for a gentleman who almost fifty years before had leased just 24 acres of the Goldsworth Old Nursery, paying £1,750 for stock and goodwill and borrowing a further £1,550 for working capital. By the 1890s he had increased the area under cultivation to 300 acres with sales of nearly £14,000 per annum.

The nursery was inherited by his sons Walter Ashley and Oliver Charles, whose sons (John and Martin) later joined the family firm, taking over after their father's deaths in 1963 and 1970 respectively.

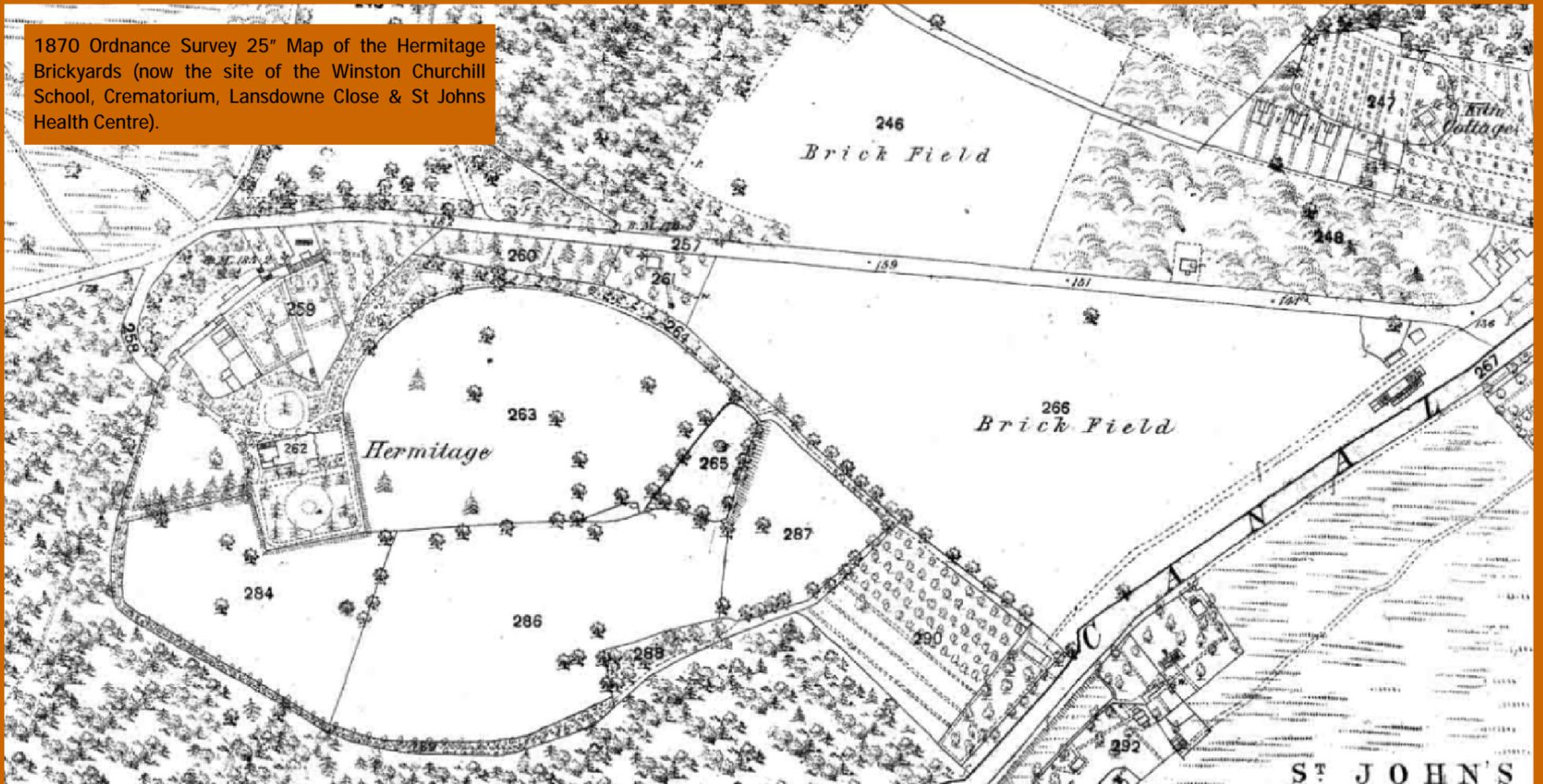
John later took over the 'Charles Hill Nursery' at Tilford, whilst Martin looked after Goldsworth until 1976 when he moved to Knaphill Nursery upon the sale of Goldsworth for development as Goldsworth Park – but that story will have to wait for another day in our chronological history of Woking.



The land of Slocock's 'Goldsworth Nursery' continued to expand, so that by 1960's when the nursery was celebrating its bi-centenary, it covered most of what is now Goldsworth Park as well as tracts of land in Horsell and Bisley

THE END OF ANOTHER ERA - THE CLOSURE OF COOK'S BRICKYARD AT ANCHOR HILL

1870 Ordnance Survey 25" Map of the Hermitage Brickyards (now the site of the Winston Churchill School, Crematorium, Lansdowne Close & St Johns Health Centre).

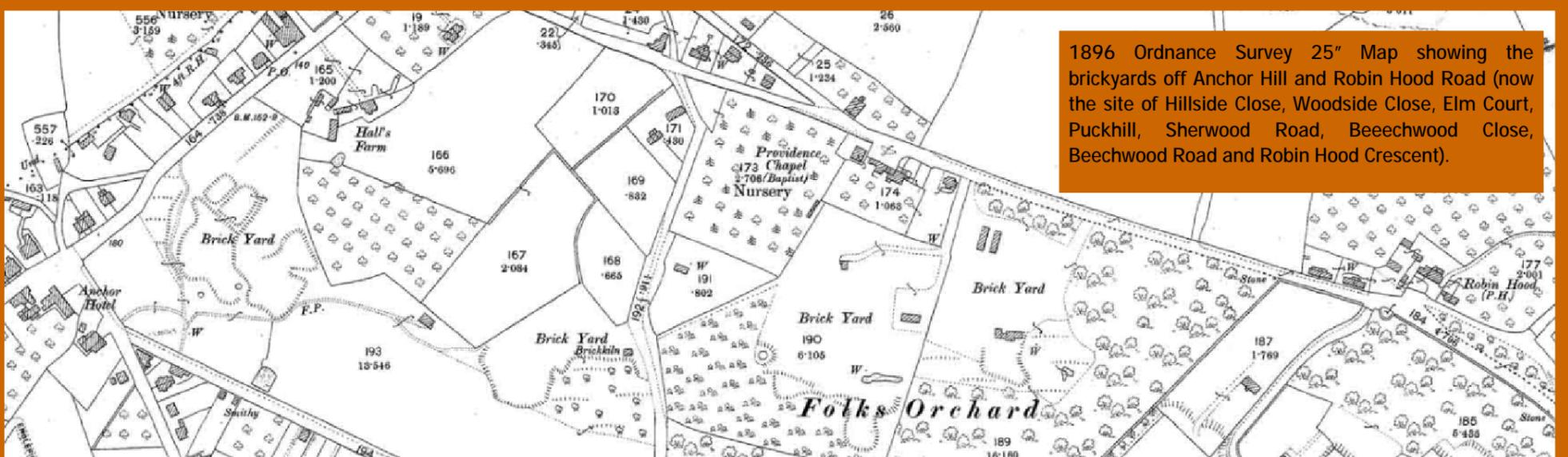


Walter Slocock had briefly been involved in the brick making business on part of what is now Goldsworth park, along with the Jackman family (before their nursery moved from St Johns to Egley Road in the 1880's).

There had been brick fields in this area since at least the 1760s – Rocques map of 1762 showing kilns across the road from The Hermitage – where the Winston Churchill School is.

Other fields were opened in the 1790's when the Basingstoke Canal was being constructed through the area, and in the 1860's works were developed off Robin Hood Road to provide the raw materials for the Convict Prison being built on what is now the Inkerman Estate (the prison was later turned into Inkerman Barracks).

The 1851 census lists twenty-one brick-makers in the area, with forty-four recorded in 1921, but in 1925 the works pictured here at Anchor Hill, run by the Cook Brothers, closed and Hillside Close & Beechwood Road were later built on part of the site.



1896 Ordnance Survey 25" Map showing the brickyards off Anchor Hill and Robin Hood Road (now the site of Hillside Close, Woodside Close, Elm Court, Puckhill, Sherwood Road, Beechwood Close, Beechwood Road and Robin Hood Crescent).

THE START OF AN ERA - THE COMING OF WOOLWORTH'S TO WOKING



Whilst the closure of the brickworks and the death of the two nurserymen was the end of an era, the opening in 1926 of a new shop in Chertsey Road was very much the beginning, as Woolworth's 3d & 6d Stores open its doors.

Woolworth's was originally an American company, but in 1909 F W Woolworth opened

his first store in Liverpool and by the outbreak of the First World War the company had forty branches in Great Britain and Ireland, mainly in the major cities.

After the war expansion continue so that in the year Woking's branch opened a further ninety stores were in the chain (expanding to 400 by the end of the decade).

Many shops were rebuilt in their distinctive art-deco tiled frontages, but Woking's store was in an old Victorian building and it was not until after the Second World War before it was rebuilt (as we shall no doubt see in this column sometime next year)!

Woking's shopping centre was really on the up by the mid 1920's.

