

THE ART-DECO BATHS WE NEVER HAD

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The Woking Swimming Club had been formed before the pool was opened in Woking Park in 1910 (below).

On the 10th July 1931 the Public Baths Committee of Woking U.D.C. read a letter from the Clerk of the Woking Education Committee reminding them of the recent fatality of a boy from the Secondary School who drowned at Trigg's Lock and highlighting the 'urgent need that existed for the provision of a Swimming Baths for the District'.

On the same day that the letter was written (18th June) the Secretary Superintendent of the Southern Railway Servants' Orphanage also wrote, stating that the Board of Management of the Orphanage were interested in providing a pool for the use of the children at the orphanage, but 'before going further with regard the plans he was requested by those concerned to write and ask what the prospects were with regard to the suggested Town Bath' and that if 'it was to be within reasonable distance from the Institution it would be unnecessary and undesirable to proceed with their plans'.



The town of Woking had had an open-air pool in Woking Park since 1910, but in reality it was just a hole in the ground, lined with old railway

sleepers, with water pumped into it from the nearby Hoe Stream. The iron-stained waters of the stream meant that many swimmers left

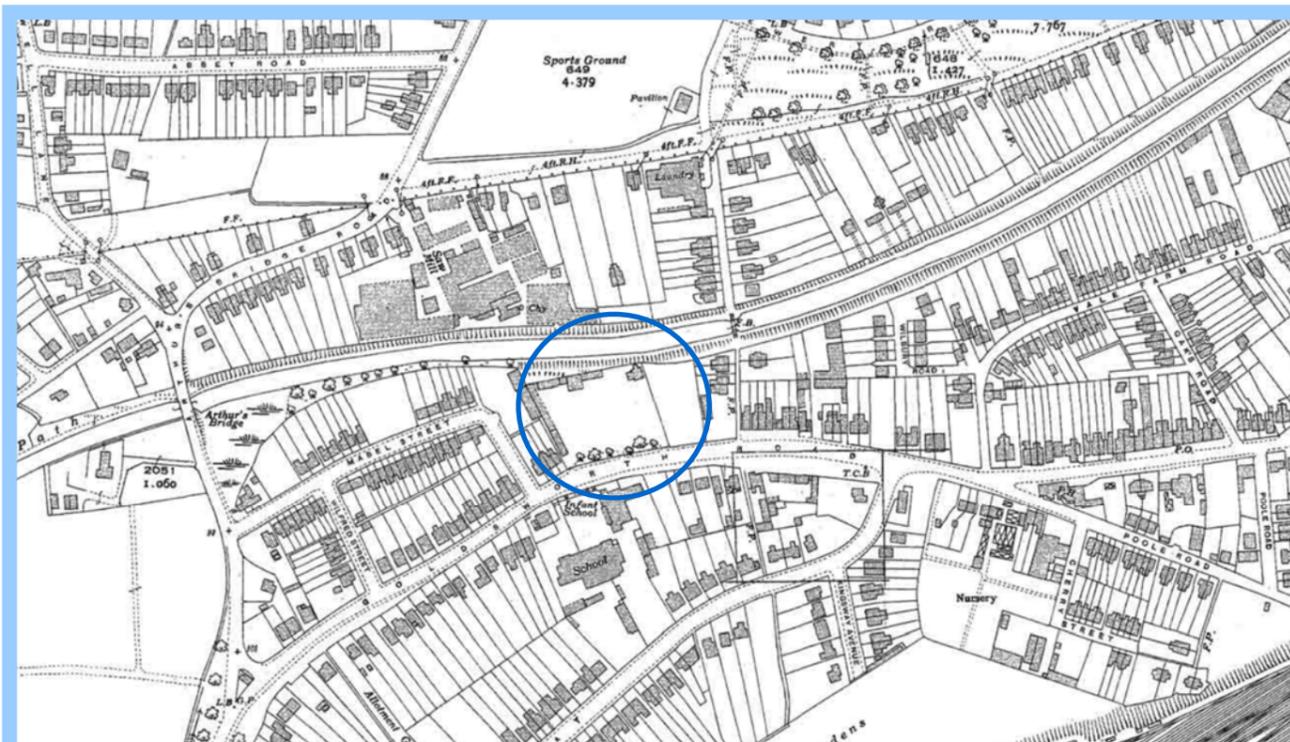
with what appeared to be a wonderful tan – although in order to not have a ‘tide-mark’ you had to make certain that at one stage you were fully submerged, a feat that I assume few were entirely happy about performing.

By the early 1930’s the pool had closed and the people of Woking – as we can see from the above mentioned accident – were once more accustomed to swim in the River Wey or Basingstoke Canal. On the latter the stretch by Step Bridge and at Lock Nine in St Johns appear to have been favoured spots, especially in winter with the warm water discharged from the nearby Rose Cottage Laundry of Messrs Ashley Cook and the St John’s Laundry, no doubt helping to keep the waters ice-free (although once again what effect the waters of the canal had on your health must have been debatable).

But in July 1931 the Clerk to the Council was able to reply to the Education Committee and Orphanage that ‘the Committee are at present considering a Scheme for the construction of a covered and heated Bath on a site in Goldsworth Road which they are submitting to the Council in the immediate future’!

The rest of the meeting appears to have been taken up discussing advertising for designs for a concrete pool by a specialist engineer and for applications to be made to the Unemployment Grants Committee and the Ministry of Health for funding so that the draft scheme could be recommended to the full council.

What came of those advertisements I do not know. A decision on the scheme was later postponed until the Autumn of 1932, and in the meantime, in May 1932, the Recreation Grounds Sub Committee approved the expenditure of £26.5s.0d on preparing a preliminary report, plan and estimate for an open-air Swimming Pool to be erected in the Constitution Hill Recreation Ground, so that the two schemes could be viewed side by side.



That report, by Messrs, Milner Son & White estimated that a pool 120ft x 75ft would cost £9,180 or an extra £1,000 if the pool was extended to 150ft. Mr Marshland (‘out of office

The site of the proposed pool in Goldsworth Road is not recorded, although the land later used as the council’s depot (now the trading estate opposite the Surrey History Centre) is probably the most likely location.



The warm waters of the Canal by Step Bridge (left) were apparently favoured by some as a spot for swimming – especially in winter.

The canal by Lock Nine at St John’s was also a warm spot to swim – when it had water!



hours’) had also prepared his own scheme, for a pool 170ft x 65ft, that he estimated would cost £10,885, but no mention was made of the costs for any indoor pool in Goldsworth Road.

In the end, of course, the cheaper open-air pool in the park won through (as we shall see in more detail in a few weeks time), but one cannot help wonder whether in the long run the more expensive indoor pool in Goldsworth Road might have been a better option!

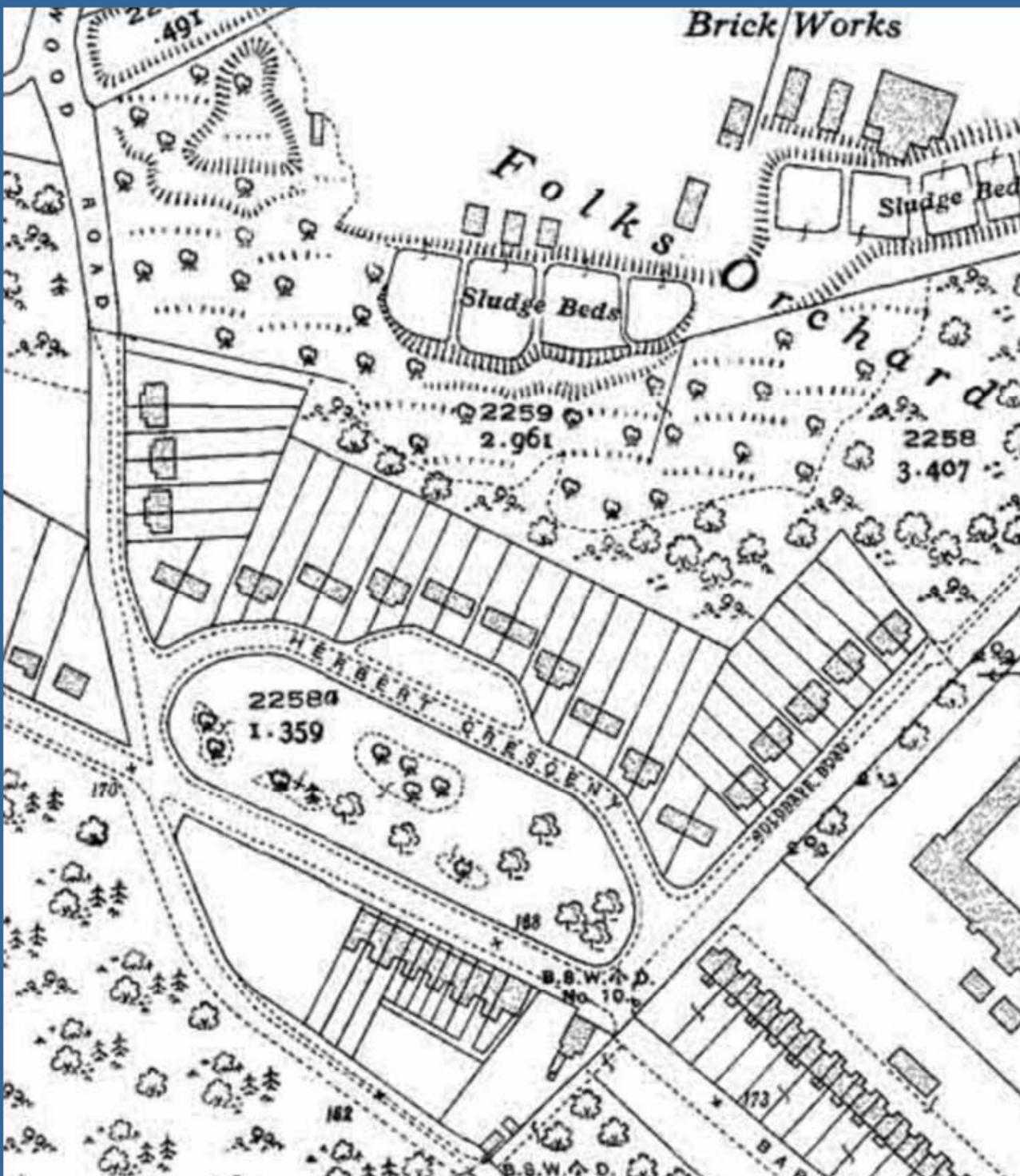
THE VICTORIA ROAD ESTATE

Last week we looked at the Council Houses of Old Woking and Westfield, but they were not the only villages in this area to welcome new 'social-housing' at this time, although unlike the villages in the Wey Valley, those in Knaphill (and Courtney Road in Woking) were built on the former common land, bought off the Necropolis Company.

In Knaphill, the Engineer and Surveyor of Woking Council submitted plans for eighteen pairs of houses on the 'Victoria Road Estate' to the Housing Committee on the 18th May 1931. He announced that estimates and the necessary forms had been sent to the Ministry of Health for a loan in respect of the work and the following month it was reported that tenders for the erection of the 36 houses had been advertised. On the 13th July it was further reported that with minor adjustment to the plans for the layout, the Ministry had approved the scheme. Four tenders had been received with that of Mr C.J. Major of Ashford being the lowest at £13,346 – two pairs of 'A' type house costing £1,498; four pairs of 'B' type at £3,028; and a dozen pairs of 'C' type at £8,820. On top of the above £2,160 was allocated for roads and drainage, £280 for fencing and gates, £250 to the Clerk of Works and £164 for loan charges, bringing it to a grand total of £16,200 for the entire estate.

That was obviously not the full cost of the scheme, however, as in March 1932 the Engineer & Surveyor was 'authorised to obtain the supply of clothes posts' and to submit 'plans and estimate of a wooden shed suitable for erection by tenants'. I don't know whether everyone went with the council's recommendation, but in April 1932 the Engineer and Surveyor 'submitted plans of a wooden shed suitable for erection by the Council's tenants' and the Housing Committee resolved that 'all tenants in future be required to comply with this design when erecting sheds'.

At the same meeting that decided the sheds they also decided that the names of the roads of the Victoria Road Estate should be known in future as Mulgrave Way and Herbert Crescent.



Two of the 'A type' houses are on the corner of Mulgrave Way and Herbert Crescent (with the other two on the corner with Beechwood Road). All of the 'B type' houses we built in Herbert Crescent, with only 'C Type' houses being built in Mulgrave Way.

COURTENAY ROAD HOUSES



In Courtenay Road the problems of building council houses appears to have been the age-old one of the weather and suitable drainage for the site.

On the 18th May 1931 the Housing Committee noted that 'since the last Meeting of the Committee, the rate of progress on the work on the estate had been improved'. Drainage work was being proceeded with and 'if the present weather held, Blocks 1 and 2 should be ready for occupation by the 25th instant and Block 3 ready by the 8th June'. First fix was in progress on block ten and completed on block nine, whilst final fixing was in progress on blocks four, five and six, and plasterers at work on blocks seven and eight.

The following month they were able to report that five houses were already occupied, with six pairs of houses complete and work on the other four pairs proceeding. All drainage was complete, 'all gates were fixed and the erection of fencing was in progress'.

Twenty applicants selected for occupation are listed in the Housing Committee minutes of the 15th June 1931, with families of mainly two or three children being allocated homes, although Mrs J Mills of 39 Boundary Road had five and H J Coultrip of 5 Common Cottage, Maybury had seven children. Most of those

listed came from the Woking area, although one, a Mr R A Cutler came from Chobham and another (A E Burrows) is listed as moving from Teddington, Middlesex. The Wheeler family's old home at 58 Gloster Road in Old Woking

was to be re-let when available to S G Evans of 99 Maybury Road

All houses were let by the following meeting in July.



The houses of Courtenay Road (like many places in Woking), didn't last long and in the 1960's were demolished to make way for flats of Walton Road.