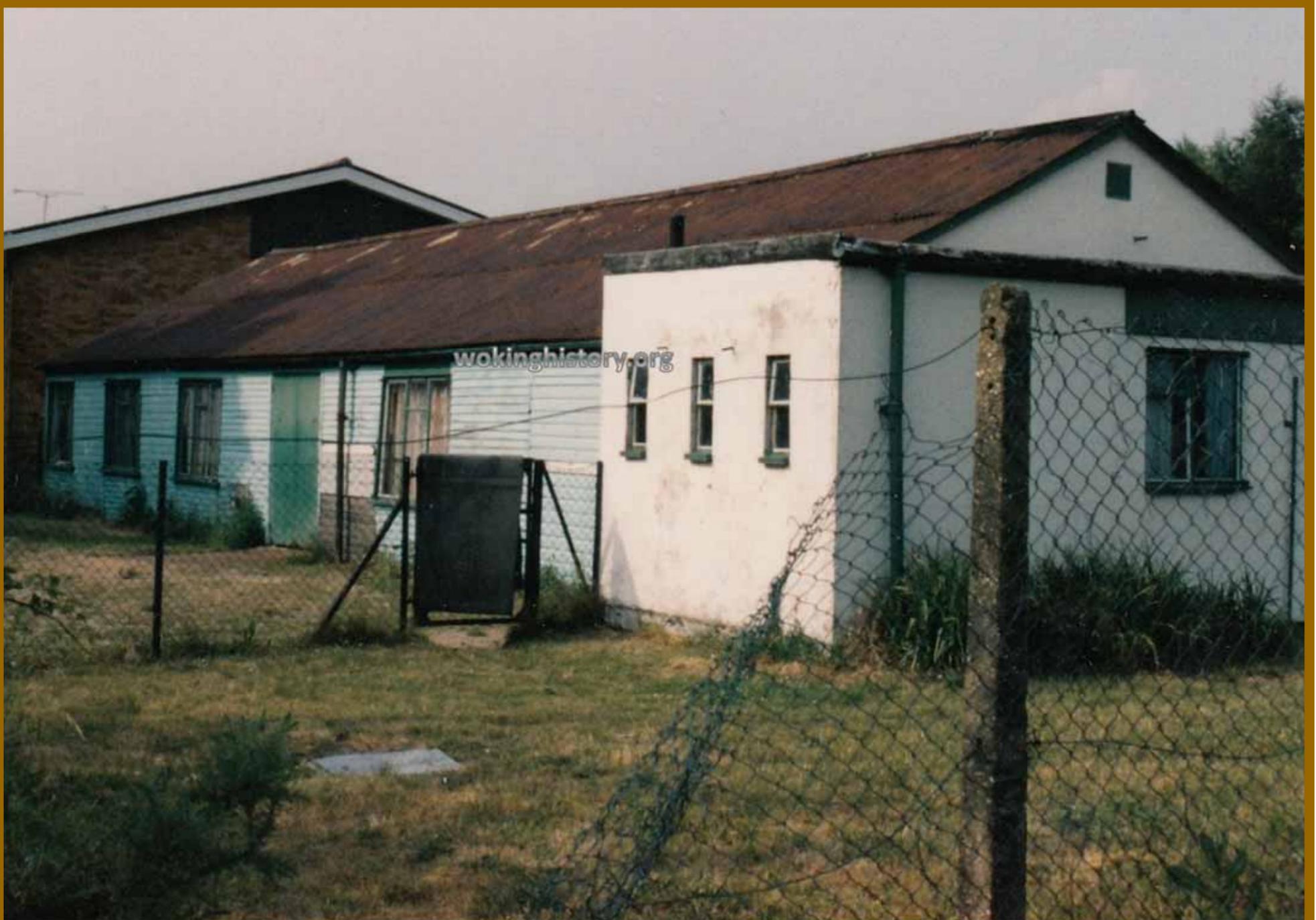


# DIG FOR VICTORY

Iain Wakeford 2017



**W**ithin a few weeks of the outbreak of war the government set up the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. Woking Council's 'Allotment Committee' co-ordinated the scheme to increase the amount of land under cultivation in the district – their minutes making interesting reading (especially the bits 'between the lines' when it came to local support - or otherwise).

In February 1940 they agreed to turn part of the former refuse tip in Westfield Avenue into allotments, negotiating the use of former sand-pits near Durnford Bridge in Horsell (at a cost of twenty-five shillings a week) as a replacement.

Later in the war the Kingfield Platoon of the Army Cadet Force asked for permission to temporarily erect an army hut on another part of the old Westfield tip site – permission being granted for the duration of the war, but eventually being extended and extended (with other huts joining them as well)!

Meanwhile other land at Boundary Road was turned over to cultivation and the Southern Railway allowed land between the two main lines at Twin Bridges to be divided up into plots.

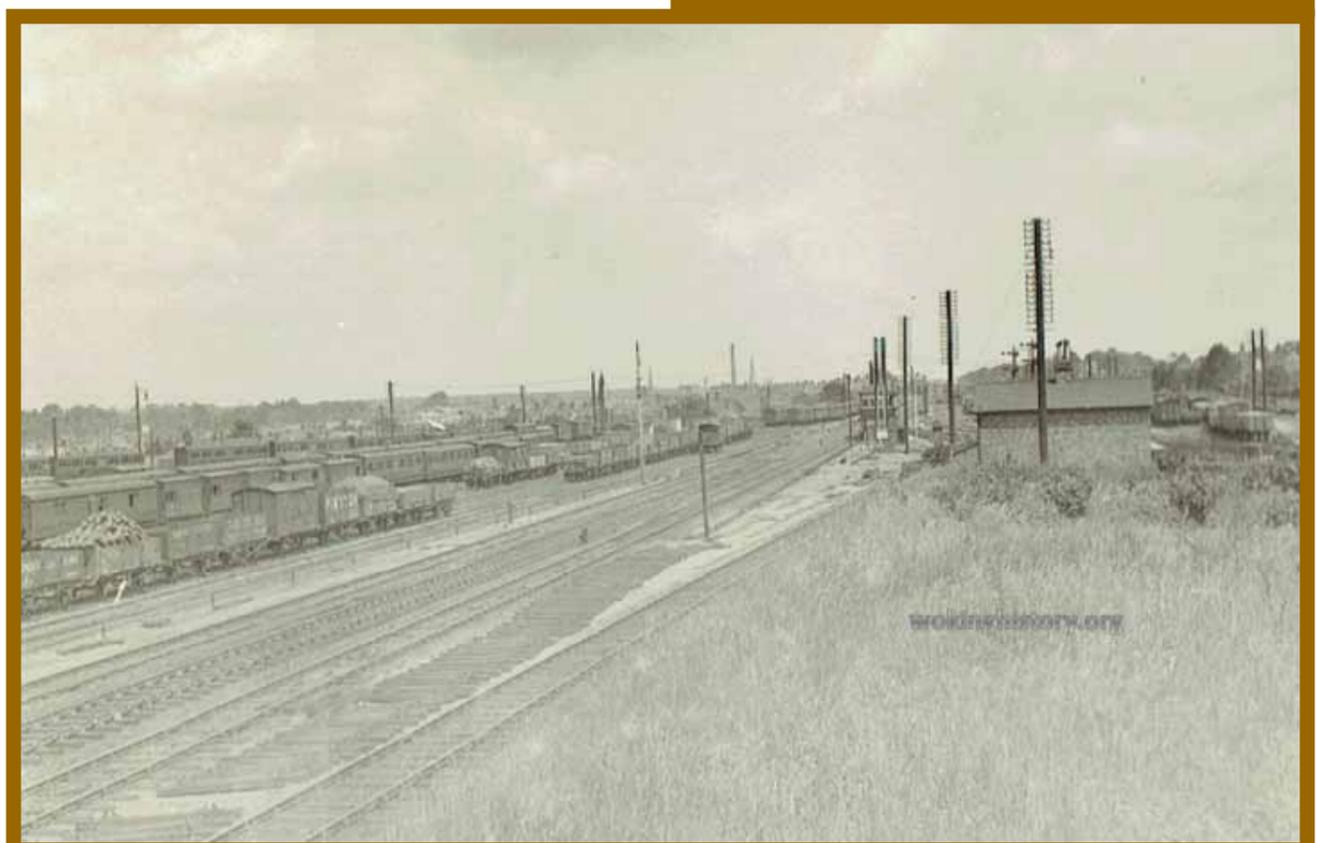
The Council-House 'garden prize' scheme was altered so that prizes were no longer given for flowers, just vegetables, and in May 1940 the Council's Surveyor was instructed to 'approach

the military authorities and ascertain if the large quantity of manure now at Inkerman Barracks was for sale, and if so upon what terms'.

In March 1941 the Clerk reported on a number of sites that were to be rented as war-time

The dump at Westfield was closed at the start of the war and partially turned into allotments, with the Army Cadet Force (and others) later getting permission to erect temporary huts on the site nearest Elmbridges.

Land at Twin Bridges was provided by the Southern Railway for use as allotments during the war.



allotments, ranging from just over an acre of land at the rear of Horsell Parish Hall that was 'shortly to be transferred to the Council' to about six-and-a-half acres of land at White Rose Lane 'belonging to Mr Derry'. It appears that Frank Derry's land was donated 'free of charge', but other landowners were not quite so generous. Mr R O Garrard (the developer of Wych Hill Way) offered the council 1.6 acres on the site for one shilling per annum, whilst at the other end of the scale Messrs Smith Brothers (who before the war had started development at their Floyds Lane site in Pyrford) were asking for £5 per annum for about 2 acres of land! Mr A Harding at Highclere Road in Knaphill also offered almost three acres for £5 per annum, whilst the Vicar of Byfleet offered three-and-a-half acres at Rectory Lane for the same amount.

By June 1941 it was reported that the council were growing vegetables in Woking Park, some of which went to local hostels and the newly set up 'British Restaurant' in Commercial Road (Byfleet's British Restaurant being located at the Village Hall). Here army personnel could get a decent meal and from the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1944 a special committee of Woking Council voted that 'Old Age Pensioners be supplied at the Woking British Restaurant with a main course and sweet for the inclusive price of 6d upon production of Pension Book and Identity Card'. The Byfleet British Restaurant was asked to 'inaugurate and administer the scheme on the same lines'.

In Byfleet the council anticipated in 1941 that the military authorities would requisition the recreation ground, but in the meantime they accepted an offer made by Councillor Lloyd Derisley (one of Byfleet's butchers) to pay the council ten shillings a week to graze his sheep on the ground until such time as the land was



required. This is in contrast to the council's reaction a year before to not allow Mrs Tanner of the White Hart in Chobham to graze 200 sheep on the recreation ground at Knaphill. They initially suggested in that the Anthony Waterer's Recreation Ground might be more suitable, but in April 1940 they even withdrew that offer following objections – presumably from local residents.

Private individuals did do their bit to help. Ron Stillwell, who moved to Rydens Way just before the war, recalled his father throwing himself into the 'dig for victory' campaign. They had a long back garden with a small lawn – 'the rest being taken up with a very productive vegetable

In Woking the council established a 'British Restaurant' in Bath Road (more or less where Middle Walk of the Wolsey Place Shopping Centre is today), with a similar venue being provided in Byfleet in part of the Village Hall.

plot'. His sister, Jane, collected mushrooms from local fields and queued at the market garden in Kingfield for tomatoes, but the family also kept rabbits in a pen at the bottom of the garden and Ron recalled one that was his sister's favourite that she called 'Butterfly' because of the markings on its face. When Butterfly 'went up to the see the Great Bunny in the Sky' she was apparently offered a pair of rabbit-skin gloves – although what her reaction to wearing her favourite pet's pelt was, I do not know!

At Barricane on St John's Hill, the pupils of Mayfield, the Putney Girls School evacuated to Woking, were also doing their bit for the war effort.

'One approach to the house from the main road is by a carriage way through the home farm, so that as we push our bicycles up the hill, we can watch the progress of the hay crop, the first appearance of the long-legged young calves, or the pigs rooting under the oak trees. The house stands high and is surrounded by beautiful lawns and flower beds (many of which are now converted into vegetable plots).'

The council were also proposing to set up a market in April 1944 selling fruit & vegetables and other horticultural produce, as well as poultry, game & fish, and various un-rationed foods and approved pedlars wares'. However, the Ministry of Health 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 new war-time 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'.

Another temporary wartime measure was the establishment of a 'vegetable market' on the Goldsworth Road Car Park – simple shelters being erected at a cost of £100.



# THE Y.M.C.A. (AND Y.W.C.A.) IN WOKING DURING THE WAR



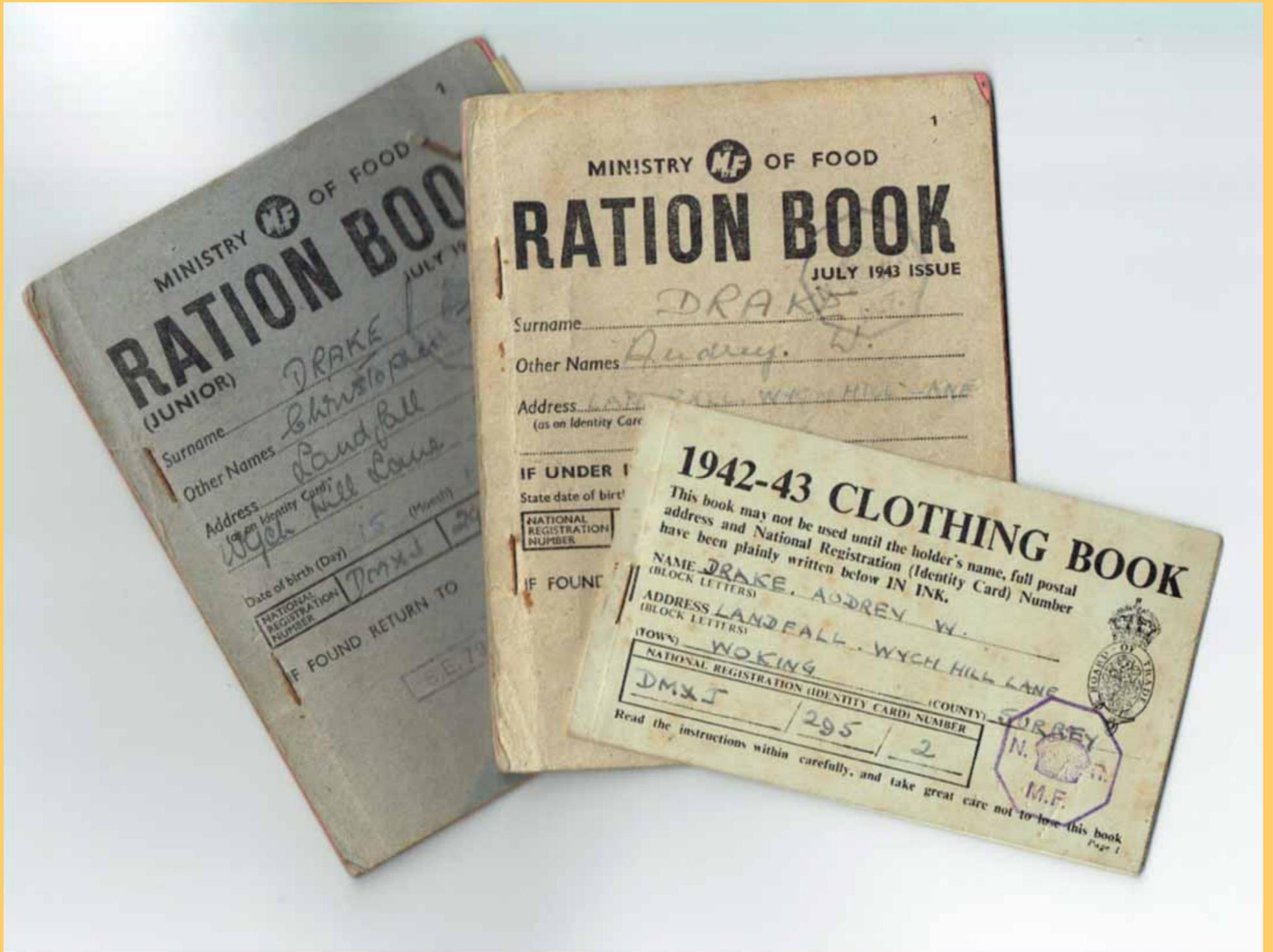
**V**oluntary organisation also helped with the YMCA opening a canteen at the end of Duke Street (opposite the Odeon) where no doubt soldiers could get a decent meal before heading back on the bus to Inkerman Barracks at St Johns. There the same organisation had a hut on the Lye (which

was later to become St John's Memorial Hall), with another hut at Knaphill (later to be converted into the village's library) and a canteen in the Church Hall at Brookwood. The YWCA also had a 'club room' on the corner of Goldsworth Road and Church Street (below left).

Unfortunately In December 1940 the council received a letter complaining of the condition of St Johns Lye caused by cars parking outside the YMCA hut, so they decided to look into preparing a scheme to alleviate the problem – so that in effect the car park that is there now is a direct result of the war.

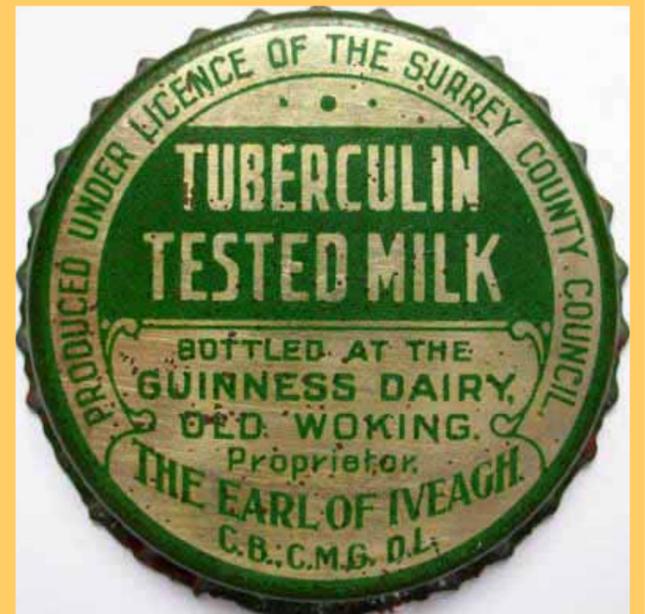


# REMEMBERING THE RATION BOOK



I have in my collection of local ephemera some ration books once belonging to Mrs Drake of Wych Hill Lane. All the food coupons have long gone, of course (although some of the clothing ones were remarkably left), but the page at the back listing 'names and addresses of retailers' makes interesting

reading. For Meat she would go to Stevens Brothers in Guildford Road, with Guinness' Dairy at Hoebridge Farm supplying her milk, whilst for Sugar, Cheese, Fats and Bacon she would have to go to the Kingfield Green Stores run by Mr Dickinson to stamp her book.



A bottle cap from one of Lord Iveagh's milk bottles - the sort that Mrs Drake (and many other local people) would have been familiar with.



If anybody has similar local ephemera that they would be willing to lend me, I would be delighted to be able to copy them for elsewhere on this website. Please contact me via email on [info@heritagewalks.org](mailto:info@heritagewalks.org) or in writing to Iain Wakeford, c/o Tavak Ltd, 5 Country Business Centre, Lucas Green Road, West End, GU24 9LZ.