

# BUILDING IN BROOKWOOD

Iain Wakeford 2017

Walter Deakin was busy developing estates all over Woking, with Connaught Crescent at Brookwood being one of his larger developments at that time.



BKD.38. Connaught Crescent. Brookwood.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Necropolis Company were selling off their surplus land throughout the Woking district, numerous little local builders bought plots upon which to erect one or two houses – either renting them out or selling them to other local businessmen who often did the same.

Just before the First World War the 'garden suburb' movement had influenced some of the first 'social housing' in the district, with the local Co-operative Society building workers cottages off Well Lane at Horsell, and others developing the Birchwood Estate at West Byfleet.

After that war, Woking and Chertsey Rural District Council's set to work building the first council houses in the area, whilst in the late 20's and 30's there was a gradual increase in the number of small local building firms constructing small private estates on what had once been the fields and farms of the villages surrounding the town.

The Second World War stopped those developments in their tracks, and in the immediate aftermath of the war, with materials (if not manpower and money) in short supply, construction was slow to start up again.

Again the local authority set to work building 'homes fit for heroes', with some local builders finding it advantageous to offer to construct

council houses on their own land - getting a return on their investments whilst at the same time keeping their workforce employed.

The result was that when building restrictions were lifted in the late 1950's, companies such as A & J Simmons, W Deakin & Co, and E P Wicken & Sons (who had all been commissioned by Woking Council to help build their new 'farm estates' in the early 1950's) were now in a strong position to again build private estates throughout the district.

The Simmons Brothers, who had started out building places such as Shackelford Road and Rydens Way in Old Woking, were by 1957 developing the Firbank Estate at St John's Hill - whilst just across the railway cutting Wicken & Sons were building new detached houses on the St Catherines Estate at Hook Heath.

Walter Deakin (as we shall see in the coming weeks) was busy all over the area, with Connaught Crescent in Brookwood being one of his major new developments at that time, but



BKD.37. The Village. Brookwood.



BKD.43. Heath Drive Estate. Brookwood.

not all applications for new housing were approved by the council, as Classic Homes Ltd found out when they asked to build eighty-eight houses on eleven acres of land at Shrubbs Copse on Sheets Heath (although they did get permission to build Riverside Close to the rear of what was then the Methodist Church in Connaught Road).

A company called Brookwood Estates Realisation Ltd were also unsuccessful in

A slightly smaller development than Connaught Crescent, Heath Drive was also developed in the late 1950's/early 1960's.

getting permission in 1957 to build on almost seven acres of land at the junction of Heath House Road and Bagshot Road (at density of approximately two houses per acre). The problem from the Council's point of view was that at that time the new Green Belt around London did not extend as far as the western

part of Woking, so restricting development could be an uphill battle. The late 1950's and early 60's saw numerous applications for estates around St Johns, Knaphill and Brookwood, and whilst the latter did manage to maintain a degree of separation from the other two, it was not long before the housing of Knaphill was merging with that of St John's, which in turn was becoming more and more part of the urban sprawl of Woking.

A lot of development in Brookwood was infilling between and behind the old houses of Connaught Road on land that had once been part of the local heath.



Brookwood.

Connaught Road, West View.

Blackaby, Post Office, Brookwood.