

WISLEY GARDENS ARE IN WOKING

(AND IN GUILDFORD, AND MOLE VALLEY, AND WISLEY WITH PYRFORD, AND PARTIALLY IN OCKHAM - DEPENDING ON WHICH BOUNDARY YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT!)

Iain Wakeford 2019



Last year, in the August 'silly season', there was a row between a councillor from Guildford and a BBC weather presenter about the address of Wisley Gardens. The forecaster (and the Royal Horticultural Society) correctly stated that the address of Wisley Gardens is Woking - whilst the councillor correctly stated that the world-famous visitor attraction is within the Borough of Guildford. They were both getting their knickers in a twist over different boundaries. One was talking about those of the postal authority whilst the

other was referring to local government boundaries.

Incidentally neither correspond to parochial or parliamentary boundaries - part of the Gardens being in the parish of Ockham and part being in 'Wisley with Pyrford' (the latter of which straddles both Guildford and Woking Boroughs) - with neither the M.P. for Guildford or Woking being able to claim the Gardens within their remit, as Wisley is part of the Mole Valley constituency!

Wisley Gardens - in the Borough of Guildford, the parliamentary constituency of Mole Valley, and mainly in the parish of Wisley with Pyrford (although partially in Ockham) - but its postal address has always been 'Woking'.

Several villages in the Borough of Guildford are in Mole Valley when it comes to Westminster, with Normandy & Pirbright being covered by Woking's M.P. and Tongham and the Ash's have the honour of falling under the control of Surrey Heath's Member of Parliament (a constituency set up originally in 1970 as 'North-West Surrey', taking away Camberley and Frimley from Woking)!

Many other 'Guildford' villages have a 'Woking' postal address, as do Chobham, West End and Bisley (all now within Surrey Heath Borough and Parliamentary Constituency), whilst Byfleet (and indeed some parts of Ockham) have KT postcodes (and are within the 01932 telephonic area) - although fortunately for Byfleet it is with the rest of the Borough within the Woking parliamentary constituency.



Pirbright (and Normandy) are also in the Borough of Guildford, but represented in parliament by Woking's M.P. The Post Office, however, only associate the former with our town, Normandy's address being Guildford (unless you are in France)!



Gordon Boys Home, West End, Woking

It is all very confusing, especially as so many administrative boundaries have changed over the years – although thankfully never as much as that proposed in the late 1960's by the 'Maud Report', the result of a Royal Commission into Local Government between 1966 and 1969.

It proposed abolishing County Councils and creating numerous single-tier districts – some of which would have straddled county borders such as 'Area 53' which included the whole of North-West Surrey and North-East Hampshire!

The plan was opposed by Woking Council (and from what I can tell most other councils across the whole country), who feared that the 'voice' of their town would be drowned out by rival

centres who would not see the need for money being invested in facilities elsewhere.

Michael Shawcross, Clerk to Woking Council, claimed at the time that the authority would end up as a 'mere talking shop', noting that 'Woking would be represented on the unitary authority by perhaps six members out of a total of seventy. What influence would they have on that authority? With all these other places what incentive would there be to do anything?'

Reports in the local press seemed to think the boundary changes inevitable, blaming the 'ineptitude' of Woking Council, pointing out that 'a great many residents, and quite likely the Royal Commission, must have gained the impression that while Woking planned and dreamed, other neighbouring towns got on with the job'.

Even the vice-chairman of Woking Council seemed to agree, stating 'when officials visit Woking there is little to impress them. The council have been too weak-kneed in the past'.

An alternative to the Royal Commission's recommendation was put forward by one of its

The former 'West End' of Chobham, is in the borough and parliamentary constituency of Surrey Heath, but from a postal point of view it is 'West End, Woking' (and indeed some, but not all, of the village retains their old connection with the Brookwood telephone exchange with their 01483 area code).

members, Mr Derek Senior, who suggested a slightly different area, but still with Woking subsumed under an authority seemingly centred on Guildford.

Woking Council hit back with a suggestion of a two-tier local government covering the whole of North-West Surrey (including Camberley and Chertsey), which they assumed would have Woking as its main focal point.

Fortunately the Labour Government did not go along with Mr Senior's plan, and although a White Paper was introduced early in 1970 based on the Maud Report, opposition nationally (and a new Conservative Government later that year) resulted in the Royal Commission plans being quietly dropped – much to the relief, no doubt, of the officials at Woking Council.

Under the Maud Report (left) all District, Borough and County Councils in Surrey would have gone and replaced by two unitary authorities – the western one (53) covering parts of neighbouring Hampshire as well.

Mr Senior came up with an alternative suggestion (right), but still Woking would have ended up as just a small cog in a larger Guildford wheel (although as far as the Post Office was concerned, Wisley Gardens would probably still be in Woking).

