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A FOREWORD.

IT is usual for the writer of a local guide to be picturesque rather than practical. Historical associations and scenic charm are made much of, and more material considerations sometimes overlooked. Yet it is the latter by which most places measure their prosperity, and in which the intending resident, if not the chance visitor, takes the livelier interest. Without ignoring its ancient history or its many natural beauties, I will endeavour to show that Woking has moved and is still moving with the times, and that it can hold its own with any similar town in the Kingdom in regard to those advantages and amenities by which the modern community must stand or fall. If I do this, and so help to make better known the attractions of the district from a residential as well as an antiquarian and aesthetic standpoint, the purpose of this booklet will be served, and I, at any rate, shall be well content.

WOKING, OLD AND NEW.

At the outset, it should be understood that there are two Wokings. One is the comparatively small, though by no means sleepy community known as Old Woking or Woking Village, with its quaint straggling High Street and grey-towered Parish Church. This is the Woking of history. The other is the thriving town which in the last half-century has sprung up around

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the railway station. In size and importance the offspring has long over-shadowed its venerable forebear. The Woking that the outsider knows, or has heard of, is the new Woking, which owes its existence to the L. & S. W. Railway, and has come into being within living memory. Previously, the old village, two miles distant, with the hamlet of Little Housen and Mayford and the Sutton Estate, formed all there was of the name. What is now the busy town and favourite residential neighbourhood was in those days known as Woking Heath or the "Black Forest." Between Kingfield and Horsell there were perhaps half a dozen squatters' cottages; a track along what is now Maybury Road took one to a few more at Maybury; and the only means of communication between Woking and London was by farmer's van or stage coach. This latter ran from London to Portsmouth, via Ripley and Guildford, and another route was from London to Chertsey, through Horsell to Bagshot, and thence into Berks and on to Basing. But with the advent of the London to Southampton Railway, a movement towards life and business began.

A DOMESDAY RECORD.

I must here pause to pay age its proper tribute of respect by making a brief historical digression. Woking is sometimes taunted with being a place without a history—and so far as the town itself is concerned that is undoubtedly true. But the manor of Woking, then called Wochinges, formed part of the demesnes of the Crown under Edward the Confessor, and it belonged to King William at the time of the Domesday Survey. As the majority of my readers probably do not possess a copy of this document, I quote the reference: "There are six carucates of arable land. In demesne is one carucate; and thirty-three villains, and nine bordars, with twenty carucates more. There is a church held

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by Osborn (Bishop of Exeter); and a mill worth 11s. 4d. yearly; and thirty-two acres of meadow; and woods that yield one hundred and thirty-three swine. Of this land, Walter Fitz Other holds three virgates, which in the time of King Edward, who detached this estate from the manor, was held by a certain forester; there is no stock upon it. In the time of King Edward, and subsequently, this manor was valued at £15 a year by tale. It is now valued at £15 by weight, and to the Sheriff 25s."

Henry II. in 1154 afforested Woking. The manor of Sutton is supposed to have been constituted by lands granted to Earl Warren. In 1168 Matilda, Henry's eldest daughter, was married to the Duke of Saxony, and a public tax to furnish her dower being levied, the tenants of this manor paid towards it the sum of 56s. 8d. Henry VI. granted the charter for a fair to be held at Woking on Whit-Tuesday. Henry VII.'s mother, Margaret Beaufort, made this her principal place of residence, and several treaties made by that King are dated from Woking, which he evidently frequently visited. Henry VIII. became owner of Woking in 1509, on the decease of his grandmother, and was an occasional resident. "In the middle of September, 1515, he came to his manor of Okyng, and thither came to him the Archbishop of York (Wolsey), whom he heartily welcomed, and slewed him great pleasures." Grafton's Histories. Edward VI. was in residence at "Okyng" in 1550.

FROM CROWN TO COMMONER.

The Manor was alienated from the Crown by James I., who in 1620 granted it to Sir Edward Zouch, marshal of the Royal Household, to hold by the following services: "That on the feast of St. James he and his heirs should carry up the first dish to the King's table and that of his successors, at dinner on that day, whosoever he should be within the realm of England; and at

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High Street, Woking.

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Public Buildings, Woking.

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the same time should pay one hundred pounds of coined gold of the coin of the realm of England, in lieu and satisfaction of all wardships and other services whatsoever."

Sir Edward Zouch died in 1634, and by will he desired that his body might be buried in Woking Church by night, which was done. The last heir male of his family, James Zouch, held his estates for 80 years. In 1661 he obtained a charter for a fair to be held yearly on 12th September, and a weekly market on Tuesdays, and four years after he built a market house there. The reversion of the manor having been granted in 1671 by Charles II. for 1,000 years to trustees, for the benefit of Barbara Duchess of Cleveland and her children, the estate at her death in 1709 was sold to John Walter, of Godalming, who died in 1738. His son and successor obtained a grant from the Crown in fee simple of the reversion expectant on the determination of this term of 1,000 years, under the sanction of an Act of Parliament in 1748. Four years later Mr. Walter sold the estate to Richard, Lord Onslow, on whose decease in 1776 it descended to the next Earl; and the manor is now held by the present Earl.

A so-called turret, long existing on a hill to the north of Sir Edward Zouch's house at Hoe Bridge, was built, it is said, for the purpose of exhibiting a light as a beacon for the guidance of messengers who resorted to the King at night. Strictly speaking, this was not a turret, but a small octagonal tower, surmounted by a lantern. It gradually fell into a ruinous condition, and was finally demolished by a gale some forty years ago.

LINKS WITH THE PAST.

So much for Woking's historical records. Some links with the past still remain. St. Peter's Church, founded about 1100 and picturesquely situated on the left bank of the River Wey, has a Norman nave and an Early English chancel, and contains a piscina, a so-called

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Pineswoods, Woking.

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leper's window, and some interesting brasses. The registers date from 1653 and, of the six bells, one—recast in 1766—is believed to be that mentioned by Aubrey as having been brought from Newark Priory. The advowson was given by Richard I. to Lord Basset, and was afterwards held by the Abbots of Newark, until the Dissolution. The only other church of historical interest in the immediate neighbourhood is St. Mary's, Horsell, which was built at the end of the thirteenth century. It is chiefly Perpendicular in style, the tower, which was recently restored, being the oldest and most interesting feature. These registers also date from 1653.

Hoe Place, now the residence of Mr. F. H. A. Booth, is an eighteenth century mansion, occupying the site on which there originally stood a house belonging to Hugh, Earl of Winchester, in the time of Edward II., and which on his attainder reverted to the Crown. Subsequently it passed to Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII.; and it was here that Wolsey, when in attendance on Henry VIII., received a letter from Rome "certifying him how he was to be elected Cardinal." The house and manor were granted by James I. to Sir Edward Zouch, as already described. Sir Edward is said to have abandoned the old palace and built a new residence, which, after standing for a century or more, was replaced by the present mansion.

Closely associated with the ancient history of Woking are the ruins of Newark Priory, which was founded in the time of Richard I., as a house for Augustinian canons. These picturesque remains, however, are in an adjoining parish, and cannot be spared the space they merit any more than the interesting old churches of St. Nicholas, Pyrford, with nave and chancel dating from the twelfth century; St. Lawrence's, Chobham, a handsome transitional Norman building, with Early English additions; and St. John Baptist, Bisley, also of the Early English period, with its fourteenth century bell.

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SUTTON PLACE.

The only remaining link to which attention need be drawn is Sutton Place, perhaps the finest example of an old manor house in the South of England, and particularly interesting as being one of the earliest great houses not built with a view to defence—for which reason, as Mr. Frederic Harrison puts it, the building is a landmark of English architecture. Now the residence of His Grace the Duke of Sutherland, K.G., who purchased the interests held by Lord Northcliffe, P.C., at one time the occupier of the demesne. Sutton owes its existence to Sir Richard Weston, "one of those able and devoted servants of Henry VIII. who built up the elaborate fabric of administration and created the centralized power of the Tudor dynasty." Born in 1465, and dying in 1541, Sir Richard throughout his life enjoyed the closest personal relations with the "merrie monarch," whose gift of this manor he put to such good use. Built about 1523-25, the house originally formed part of a quadrangle, but the side which contained the entrance gateway, having become dilapidated, was removed in 1786. In the middle of the seventeenth century it was occupied by the founder's great-grandson and namesake, who promoted the canalization of the Wey and introduced from Flanders the contrivance of locks and flood-gates. Within, much alteration has since been made, but many of the older fittings still remain, and the house is rightly regarded as one of the most interesting and perfect examples of its kind anywhere in the country. I must not omit to add that Queen Elizabeth was entertained there in 1591.

THE BIRTH OF MODERN WOKING.

Modern Woking, as I have already remarked, owes its existence to the railway. The Basingstoke Canal, it is true, was first in the field, having been completed in 1796 at a cost of £180,000; but it had contributed little

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or nothing to the development of this particular district which, between the villages of Old Woking and Horsell, was still practically a virgin expanse of pine-wood and common when tapped by the all-powerful forces of steam and iron.

It was not long after the advent of the railway that far-seeing folk began to recognize the possibilities of the neighbourhood and to appreciate its convenient situation. In 1854 the London Necropolis Company purchased a large area of common land in the parish, under a special Act of Parliament. Part of this they laid out as a cemetery at Brookwood—which is three and a half miles by rail from Woking town, and by no means to be confused therewith—and the rest is still being utilized for building purposes. Progress for some years was slow, and from a residential point of view, perhaps, was not helped by the erection, at Knaphill and Brookwood respectively, of a convict prison and county lunatic asylum. The former, opened in 1859, has since been converted to military uses, and is now known as Inkerman Barracks. There are also a Military Hospital and a Detention Barracks within the curtilage of the Barracks, and as the Asylum, established eight years later, is far removed from Woking proper, and is reached from another station, the majority of residents are scarcely aware of its existence.

An event which brought the neighbourhood into prominence of a more desirable character was the opening by King Edward VII, when Prince of Wales, in 1865, of the Royal Dramatic College at Maybury, of which the foundation-stone had been laid by the late Prince Consort. The premises, however, did not fulfil their original purpose very long, and in 1884 they were acquired by the late Dr. G. W. Leitner, and re-named the Oriental Institute. Under the regime of that great linguist, they became a centre of Oriental learning and literature, and the beautiful mosque erected in the

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grounds in 1889—the only building of its kind in the country—was regularly used by resident and visiting Mohammedans; but upon his demise the project was abandoned, and quite recently the interesting Museum of Eastern antiquities which, during an eventful life, he had got together, was sold by public auction. At the rear of the premises there grew up, under the spirited direction of Mr. Henry Leitner, son of the famous Orientalist, a flourishing electrical business known as the Accumulator Industries, Ltd. During recent years, the works connected with this company have been overwhelmed by the extensive erections used as an aeroplane manufactory, where Messrs. Martinsydes Ltd. have at times employed 1,000 hands. Of such vicissitudes does the life of buildings, as well as of individuals, consist.

THE "INLAND BOURNEMOUTH."

While events of the kind indicated served to foreshadow an important future for the new town which was springing up, it was not until the '80's that Woking began to go ahead in real earnest. The census returns of that decade disclosed a population for the civil parish, including Old Woking, Sutton and Mayford, St. John's, Knaphill, and Brookwood, of just over 6,000, chiefly working-class, and dependent almost exclusively on the railway, the paper mill (now Messrs. Unwin's printing works) and the extensive nursery gardens which had come into existence.

About this time, the medical profession were advocating the curative and health-giving properties of pine woods, and Woking, so generously endowed in this direction, gained fame and many residents as the "inland Bournemouth," as it began to be known. An improved train service was instituted, building estates were developed, and, amid the fragrant pines and breezy

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commons of the new land of promise, houses of a good class rapidly sprang up. In 1890 the population had reached nearly 10,000, and the drawbacks of attachment to Guildford for administrative purposes began to be seriously felt. A movement to secure urban powers was started, but met with strenuous outside opposition, and it was not until 1893 that a Local Board was established.

RESULT OF HOME RULE.

Under "Home Rule" the town went ahead with a rush. A £100,000 drainage scheme was carried out, public lighting and watering were undertaken, roads and paths were made up, and in many other directions the newly-constituted authority—which automatically became an Urban District Council on the passing of the Local Government Act—found ample outlet for its energies. Already the supply of water, gas, and electric light had been undertaken by private companies, and there was now nothing to retard the full measure of progress to which the district lent itself. The whole of the residential area south of the railway was gradually opened up, many shops and innumerable villas and cottages were built, and eventually it was found desirable to absorb into the urban district the adjoining parish of Horsell, which, hitherto administered from Chertsey, had suffered from neglect much as Woking itself had done when tied to the apron-strings of Guildford. Though still situated in different poor-law unions, the two parishes since 1907 have been united for all municipal purposes, and together they form one of the largest urban districts in the country (Woking 8,907 acres, Horsell 2,919).

WOKING OF TO-DAY.

Thus, in the last quarter of a century, the march of progress has been extremely rapid. Farm lands, forest,

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Photo by

W. H. Smith & Son
The Mosque, Woking.

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wilderness-all have had to bow to the inexorable demands of an ever-increasing population. Instead of 3,000, the figure at which it stood for many years, the population of the combined district is probably well over 28,000, the 1911 census figures being: Woking 21,782, Horsell 3,026. The rateable value is over £200,000, and the assessable value £177,700, and the outstanding loans amount to only £88,000, leaving an ample margin for future contingencies. The general district rate within the drainage area is 3s. 9d. in the £, and outside it 1s. 11d. and the poor rates in Woking and Horsell are 3s. 9d., and 3s. 6d. respectively. The total rates, therefore, even in the town itself, amount to only 7s. 6d. in the £ per annum, which compares favourably with most places the same distance from town, and possessing similar advantages.

SHOPPING FACILITIES.

Residents are provided with good shopping facilities. In addition to numerous local retail shops of all kinds, many well-known multiple firms have branches in the town, also several of the leading London Stores make periodical deliveries in the district.

RAILWAY FACILITIES.

There are three railway stations at different extremities of the urban district—Woking Junction, where the staff numbers nearly 250, Brookwood, also on the S.W. main line, and Worplesdon, on the Guildford and Portsmouth line. From the junction, the service of trains is particularly good, and residents who have business or pleasure in London can take their choice of fifty or more each way, several making the journey of 22 miles in just over half an hour without a stop. Motor and horse buses run between the station and the outlying portions of the district, and there is a plentiful supply

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of taxi and other cabs. Some few years ago a private company obtained powers to construct a light railway to Chobham and Sunningdale, and to provide Woking with a tramway system in connection therewith; but for some reason the project fell through.

Quite recently there was talk of the Central London Railway, in their Thames Valley extension scheme, joining up with the S.W. main line at Woking by means of a branch from Shepperton. In their present Bill there is no mention of such a plan; but what does seem assured is that the L. & S.W.R. Co. will at no distant date electrify their system as far as the junction, if not beyond it, and in that event the neighbourhood will become more popular than ever with City men and others whose occupation takes them regularly to town. Season tickets at a very low rate being issued by the Railway Company.

WOKING'S BILL OF HEALTH.

In order that my readers might have absolutely authoritative information on a subject of paramount importance to intending residents, I applied to Dr. R. W. C. Pierce, district medical officer of health, for a few facts about Woking's natural advantages and general healthiness. He tells me that this may be regarded as an exceptionally healthy locality. It has a subsoil of Bagshot sand, which ensures rapid drainage into the Wey and a consequent freedom from dampness. Everywhere there is plenty of pure air, for the urban district is of very great extent in proportion to its present population, and large areas are covered with pine trees and heather, while nursery gardens are numerous and manufacturing industries conspicuous by their absence. The climate generally is mild, and fairly bracing on the elevated parts. The average mean temperature is 49.88 deg., with an average maximum of 57.42 and an average minimum of 41.43, while the

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Woking Golf Club House, South Front.

Photo by

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average rainfall of 24 inches is very low. Efficient sewers are laid throughout the urban area, except in a few portions of the thinly-populated outlying districts, and the Woking Water Co. provides a constant supply of good water, which is periodically analysed.

A LOW DEATH-RATE.

Statistical evidence of the healthiness and efficient sanitary administration of the district, Dr. Pierce points out, is afforded by its low general death-rate and freedom from infectious disease. The average death rate for the five years 1914-1918 inclusive was only 11.3, as compared with an average of 15.0 per 1000 for England and Wales. The number of cases of infectious disease notified works out at the remarkably low average of 2.2 per thousand of the population for the same five years. For the ordinary infectious diseases there is an isolation hospital situated outside the district; and a special hospital, built on an isolated common five miles from the town, is kept for cases of small-pox should they occur.

WOKING'S WEATHER.

Some additional notes with regard to Woking's weather have been sent to me by Mr. H. Horncastle, who has taken readings at "Lindisaye," Horsell, for many years past, and the mean temperature for a number of years was 49.88 degs. The average annual rainfall was 24.14 inches on 158 days, including snow and sleet. Mr. Horncastle does not record sunshine, but states that the district has a good share of sunny weather. Fogs are infrequent, snowfalls generally light, and high winds of very rare occurrence.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES.

Woking is admirably equipped both for work and play, and that equipment is being improved every year.

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Nothing, for instance, could excel its system of elementary schools, with their manual and domestic training centres; and most admirable evening classes, dealing with a wide range of subjects, are held every winter in different parts of the district. In conjunction with the Surrey Education Committee, the Urban District Council have erected a handsome Secondary School, providing accommodation for about 200 boys, on a site close to the station, and the establishment of a school for the domestic training of post elementary day scholars is likewise contemplated. There are also in Woking some first-class private schools, and altogether it is safe to predict that the town at no distant date will become one of the most important educational centres in Surrey.

GOLF, ETC.

In regard to facilities for recreation, this district is equally favoured. For example, there are five 18-hole golf courses within quite a short distance of the town, three of them being within the urban district. They are the Woking, Worplesdon, West Hill, New Zealand, and Bleakdown links, which are admittedly among the best in the South of England.

Other forms of sport are equally well catered for. Woking has one of the best amateur football teams in this part of the country, and the number of cricket and football clubs which exist in different parts of the district is surprisingly large. Hockey, lawn tennis, croquet bowls, badminton, and other games are also well provided for. There are several rifle clubs, angling societies, and the like, and indoor amusements such as chess have likewise their own organizations. Hunting, too, is popular in the district, which has its full quota of political and social clubs, literary, debating, musical and dramatic societies, etc.

A popular rendezvous at all times of the year, but

especially in the summer, is the fine Recreation Ground at Constitution Hill, with its excellent cricket pitch, tennis courts, bowling green, and swimming bath. Other open spaces which serve the purpose of public recreation include St. John's Lye and Horsell Common.

TO CONCLUDE.

The religious life of the neighbourhood has always been extremely active. All the denominations are well served, in regard both to their buildings and their ministers. Churches and schools, indeed, are among the most conspicuous architectural features of the place. There are many public institutions in and around Woking, including the L. & S.W.R. Servants' Orphanage, Mayford Industrial School, St. Peter's Convalescent Home, The Victoria Cottage Hospital, Woking Day Nursery, Woking Baby Centre, St. Nicholas' Home for Crippled Children, the Gordon Boys' Home, and the Shaftesbury and Farm Schools of the National Refuges. The many extensive nursery gardens with their display of rhododendrons in bloom attract visitors from far and near. Charming walks abound, and the characteristic delights of pine-woods and common never pall. It may be mentioned that the distance between the extreme points of the District from E. to W. is 6 miles, and from N. to S. 5½ miles.



Photos by W. H. Smith & Son
 1. Woking Golf Club House: The Last Tee.
 2. Woking Golf Club House: The First Tee.

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Chertsey Road, Woking.

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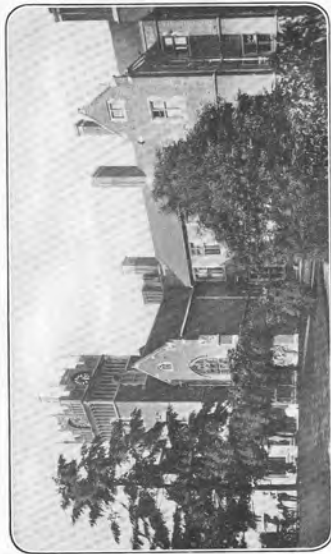


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