

THE HIGH COST OF LAND IN THE EARLY 20th CENTURY

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Earlier this year I described how George Rastrick had been blamed for Woking being built 'back to front' when he refused to sell his land to allow the new town to develop to the south of the station. He was an eccentric gentleman, ill at ease with his fellow townsfolk and was an easy scapegoat for the local authority and the Necropolis Company anxious to shift the blame for the town being badly built on the poorly drained land to the north of the railway.

It was the Necropolis Company that had sold George's father, John Urpeth Rastrick, the land immediately to the south and east of the station, and it was their desire to make as much money from their land sales in the 1850's that resulted in the town being squashed between the canal and the railway.

The well-drained land to the south commanded good views across the Wey Valley, so could be sold off in large expensive plots encouraging large expensive houses to be built. But the land to the north was not so popular, so cheaper smaller plots encouraged low-class and commercial development to take place.

George Rastrick had bought one plot of land to the north of the railway, on the corner of Chertsey Road and Maybury Road, but the story goes that he had been tricked into selling it only to see it immediately sold-on at vast profit and Ashby's Bank built on the site. He then vowed



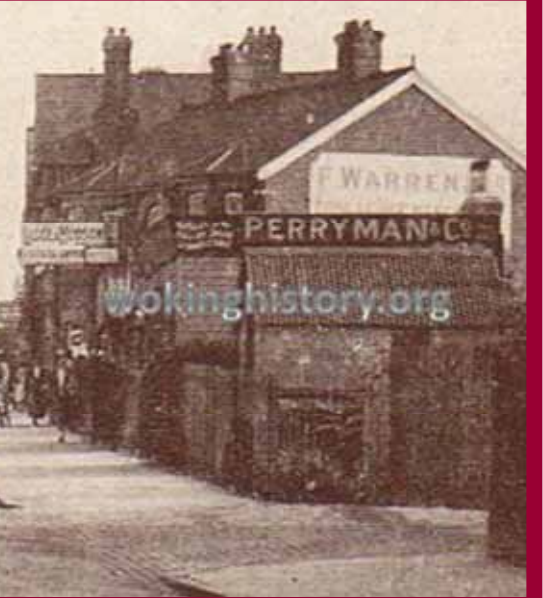
The plot Mr Rastrick sold leading to his vow never to sell again was eventually developed with Ashby's, later Barclay's Bank.

never to sell any more land for the rest of his life, dying in 1905 having lived up to that promise.

The shops of Guildford Road were built on a plot sold after George Rastrick's death for £3,100.

The Rastrick's, built Woking Lodge, more or less where Oriental Close and the commuter car park are now. There was a lodge on Oriental Road and another where the shops are now on the corner with White Rose Lane. They planted a neat little holly hedge surrounding their property, but over the years it had grown uncontrolled and by the time of George's death it had reached a massive height. Remnants of tall holly hedges in the Heathside area may still mark the boundary of former Rastrick land.

Part of that land was in Guildford Road where soon after George's death shops were constructed at its junction with Victoria Road – a site that is thought to have cost the then record sum of £3,100; just part of a sale handled by local auctioneers Alex Turner & Co., which apparently raised almost £16,500 in just an hour and a half!





THE 1907 STORM

The shop on the corner of Boundary Road and Omega Road had to be rebuilt after it was hit by lightning on the evening of 30th June 1907. Fortunately nobody appears to have been hurt, but the event appears to have caused quite a storm (if you will pardon the pun), with this postcard being sold and another showing a large tree on St John's Lye that had been shattered to splinters by another lightning bolt the same night.

WOKING'S FIRST ROUND F.A. CUP DEFEAT OF 1908

Back in June I noted how Woking F.C. were formed in 1888, playing their first matches in Horsell rather than Woking. But in fact a match was played between a side from Woking and one from Chertsey the year before - a game Woking won 6-2 or 6-1 depending on which newspaper report you read. The early history of the club is fascinating (and is covered in far more detail on my website www.wokingheritage.org) but progress was quite slow and it was some time before the town could really find much to cheer about.

The club faced many ups and downs (just like today), but one of their first major 'ups' came in 1908 when on the 11th January they played Bolton Wanderers (at the time in the top division of English football) in the first round proper of the F A Cup. The game was played at the Lancastrian club, but this postcard of the match is still very much part of our history. Unfortunately, Woking lost 5-0, but I suspect the few Woking fans that made the long journey north still enjoyed themselves, and the club certainly gained from the experience.

