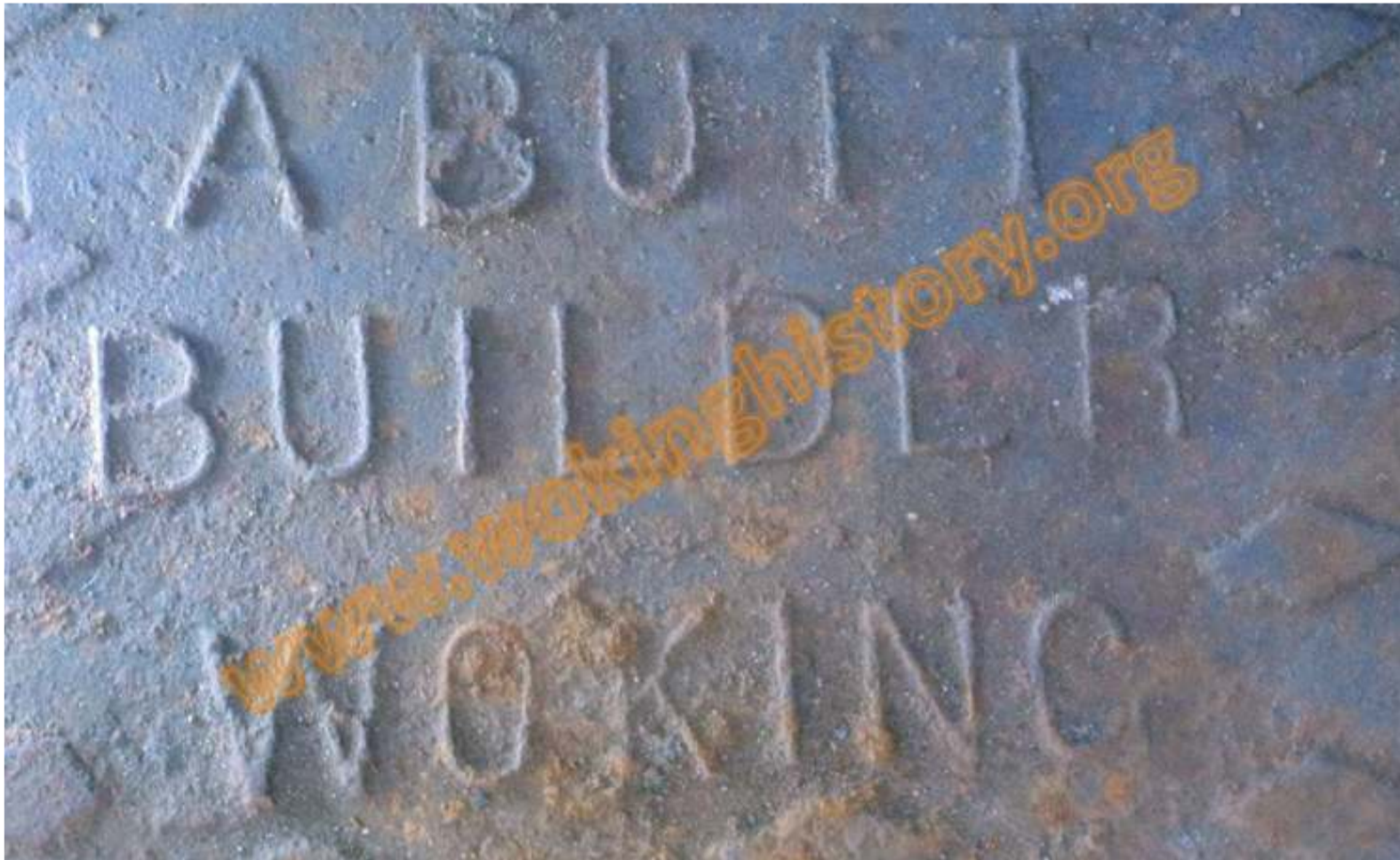


ALFRED BUTT, THE BUILDER



Alfred Butt's manhole cover above the drain in the back garden between our house and 168 High Street

I guess the story of our house (166 High Street, Old Woking) really starts on the 14th February 1907 when Alfred Butt, the builder, agreed to pay £325 for the site, apparently on a mortgage taken out the following day from the previous owner, Walter Charles Slocock. His plan was to build 'four houses and a shop' on the corner of Old Woking High Street and Church Street.

I know these details not from our deeds, but from the collection of papers in the Surrey History Centre¹ that I discovered relate to our house, and which forms the foundations of this story.

Slocock only owned the site for a short time, having bought it originally from a man called Robert Clamp, who in turn had purchased the original old cottages on the site from the executors of Edward Hilder, a local farmer. Whether it was Butt who demolished the old cottages or Slocock or Clamp, I cannot tell, all I do know is that it appears that Butt had built the three of our terrace first (164-168) in 1908, before going on to construct what is now 170 and 172 (the shop) by the summer of 1909.

The 1911 census lists Alfred Butt, as a 'Builder' and 'employer', living at 94 Church Street in Woking². He was aged 53, and was born in Kington Magna, Dorset, married to Edith, three years his junior, who came originally from Chobham, Surrey.

The census noted that they had been married twenty-six years and had six children (all of whom were still alive, and indeed living at home at the time of the census) - Bertha (25), Cecil (24), Bessie (22), Ethel (20), Arthur (17) and Reginald (14).

A quick look at the parish registers for Chobham³ revealed their marriage on the 30th September 1884, when Alfred was described as a 'carpenter', living in Woking, the son of Job Butt, a farmer.

Armed with the above information I was able to trace Alfred back to Kington Magna and the census of 1861⁴ (when Alfred was just three), where we find him with his parents (Job, 45, an agricultural labourer and Dorothy, 40, a domestic servant), living at 'Top of Hill' in the village - which I believe refers to Chapel Hill.

There were eight older siblings than Alfred (like him and his parents all born in the village), including William John, then aged nineteen, a shepherd.

This is where I go off on the first of many tangents in the story.



The 1886 Ordnance Survey 6" Map of Kington Magna, Dorset, showing where I believe the Job family lived, at the top of Chapel Hill

¹ SHC 3468/4

² RG14/3034/71. Strangely earlier censuses list Bertha as 'Edith', Cecil as 'Alfred' and Reginald as 'Ernest'. Edith Sarah Bertha (born 27th July 1885) was baptised at St Lawrence's, Chobham, on the 27th September that year (SHC Ref CHOB/4/3); Alfred Cecil (born 17th March 1887) was baptised also at St Lawrence's on the 22nd May 1887 (SHC Ref CHOB/4/3); and Ernest Reginald was baptised at Christ Church, Woking, on the 16th May 1897 (SHC Ref WOKCC/1/2).

³ SHC CHOB/2/4

⁴ RG9/1649/8/9

ALFRED BUTT, THE BUILDER

By 1871⁵ William John Butt had married Emily, five years his junior, from the nearby town of Shaftesbury and evidently moved at first to Hersham, Surrey, where in 1869 Emily gave birth to a son, William, followed by a daughter, Clara, in 1870.

The following year the census records them at 2 Ellen Street, Woking (Ellen Street being the old name for West Street - more or less where Woking Council Offices are today), with William senior's occupation described as a 'carpenter'.

Within the next ten years the couple had moved to Goldsworth Road⁶, with a further five boys all being born in Woking - Henry (9), Frank (7), Herbert (5), Sidney (3) and Fred (10 months).

William had also been busy in business, as in 1881 he was now described as a 'master builder, employing 14 men and 2 boys' with a Fanny Worsfold (14) being employed in the house as a 'general servant'.

Goldsworth Rd	1	William Butt	Head	Mar	27	Builder Master Employing 14 Men & 2 Boys	Dorset Kington Magna
		Emily Do	Wife	Mar	33		Do Melbury
		William S Do	Son		12	Scholar	Surrey Hersham
		Clara Do	Daughter		11	Do	Do Do
		Henry Do	Son		9	Do	Do Woking
		Frank Do	Son		7	Do	Do Do
		Herbert Do	Son		5	Do	Do Do
		Sidney Do	Son		3		Do Do
		Fred Do	Son		10 mo		Do Do
		Fanny Worsfold	Servt		14	General Serv	Do Do
1 Gunnell	1	James Moore	Head	Mar	40	General Serv	Surrey Albury
		Sarah Do	Wife	Mar	49		Sussex Rudgeford
2 Do	1	William Gibbons	Head	Mar	67	Railway Guard	Surrey Lambeth
		Ann Do	Wife	Mar	29		Dorset Kington Magna
		Emma B Do	Daughter		4	Scholar	Surrey Woking
		James Butterworth	Boarder	Mar	25	Grocer Warehouseman	Yorkth Delph
		Alfred Butt	Lodger	Unm	22	Carpenter	Dorset Kington Magna

The 1881 Census, showing William Butt and his family in Goldsworth Road, with two doors away Alfred Butt, lodging with the Gibbons family (RG11/772/47/11)

Two doors away, living as a lodger with William and Ann Gibbons, was our Alfred Butt, aged 22, employed as a 'carpenter'.

Like the Butt's, Ann Gibbons was also a native of Kington Magna - an old friend of Alfred and William perhaps?

It appears that Ann Gibbons (nee Edwards), moved to Woking in the 1860's, working as a domestic servant for Edmund Hunt at his grocer's shop in Woking High Street by the time of the 1871 census⁷. Interestingly that census records that both Edmund (30) and his wife, Caroline (28), were also born in Kington - the opening of the railway line to nearby Gillingham possibly providing the incentive for many from the village to move up the line to Woking, taking advantage of the boom in building in this area at that time.

They were evidently soon joined by William Butt, with his third child (Henry) being born in Woking in 1872.

Whilst our cottages no longer carry the 'Butt' name, the family is still commemorated in the town in Butts Road (now off Poole Road), behind the Fire Station in Goldsworth Road, where William Butt later had his builder's yard.

A few years before our house was built, William had been involved in building the extension to the Board School around the corner in Church Street⁸ (the present St Peter's Church Centre), and as a local councillor he evidently had many local contacts (including Walter Charles Slocock and Robert Clamp).

As noted above, in 1884, Alfred Butt had married Edith Sarah Howard, and by 1891 they were living at Alpha Villas in Goldsworth Road⁹.

By 1901¹⁰ they had moved around the corner into 'Hazelhurst, 201 Church Street, Woking', and as we have seen were at number 94 Church Street by 1911¹¹.

Our terrace was obviously not the only property developed by Alfred Butt, although finding reference to others that he built in this area is not all that easy to find. Only two developments by him show up in the records held at the Surrey History Centre - both relating to sites on the 'West Hill Park Estate' in 1903¹² (plot 17) and 1904¹³ (plot 93). There must be more, but despite looking at drain covers in the gardens and drives of many local houses, I have never seen another 'Alfred Butt' one anywhere. Please let me know if you have one.

Sadly Edith died at Church Street, Woking, in 1920, just a couple of days before Christmas. She was buried in the graveyard of St Lawrence's, Chobham¹⁴, where Alfred finally joined her on the 17th November 1927¹⁵.

⁵ RG10/807/26/20

⁶ RG11/772/47/11

⁷ RG10/807/24/15

⁸ West Surrey Times, Friday 5th July 1901 and Surrey Advertiser, Saturday 6th July 1901, page 3 reporting that Mr Butt's tender of £7.10s for the work was accepted.

⁹ RG12/555/62/11

¹⁰ RG13/596/85/28

¹¹ RG14/3034/71

¹² SHC 9753/14/1-4

¹³ SHC 8773/7/6

¹⁴ SHC CHOB/5/3/1

¹⁵ SHC CHOB/5/3/1. His address then being listed as 74 Chertsey Road, Woking. In his Will, he left £5,761.19s to his sons Arthur Sydney (described in the probate records as a decorator) and Reginald Ernest (a tinsmith).