

WALTER CHARLES SLOCOCK – BUSINESSMAN



As has been noted before, Robert Clamp either sold the old cottages, or at least the land they stood on, to Walter Charles Slocock in 1906 for £150¹. Slocock, ever the businessman, then sold the property a year later to Alfred Butt, the builder, for £325².

His brief interest in this site, warrants just a brief note here, but as I have often commented elsewhere on Slocock the nurseryman, I want to just concentrate on him as a businessman in this essay.

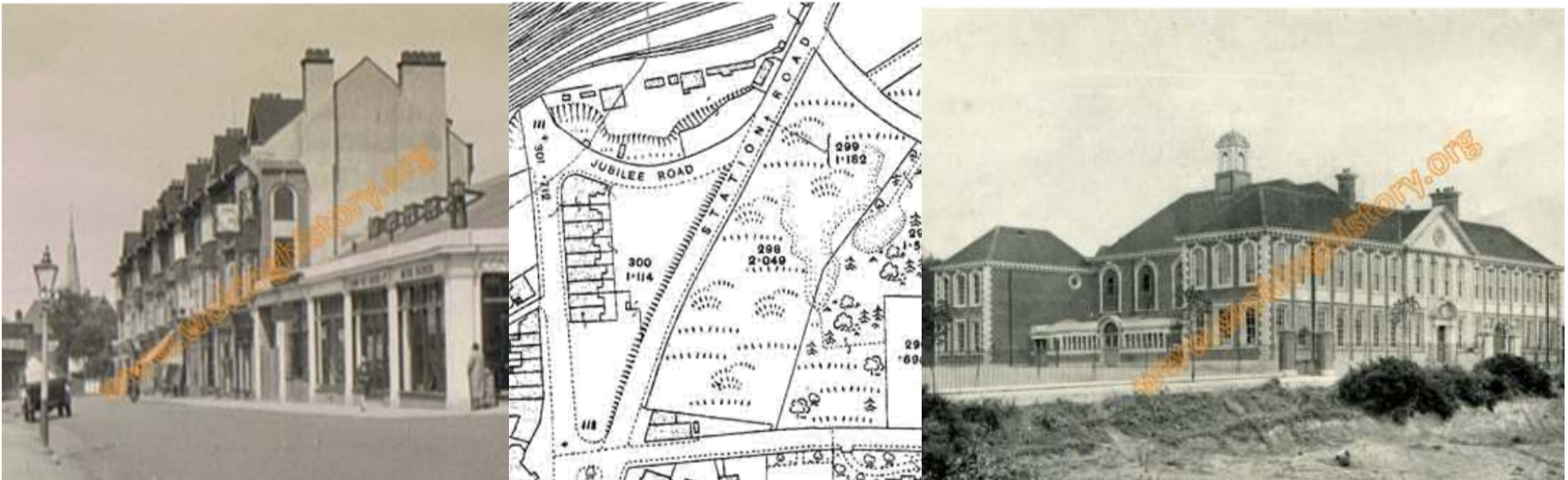
Walter Charles Slocock came originally from Wraysbury, and as a young man first came to this area to train as a nurseryman at Waterer's Nursery in Knaphill. In 1877, after a short while abroad, he returned to this area and purchased the stock and goodwill of Goldsworth Old Nursery for £1,750, with £1,550 borrowed for working capital³.

In Frederick Street's book 'A History of Goldsworth Nursery'⁴ he notes 'Walter Charles Slocock was an exception to many rules. Above all, he was different in always retaining his spirit of financial adventure. Most men who earn their living from the land on their own account are more concerned with nursing a nest egg against bad times than they are with spreading their wings to expand. All his life, he believed that the money should work for him - and not the other way round. He was never afraid to have an overdraft and his success in business enabled him to become a dictator of terms to the bank rather than a humble supplicant for favours'.

Street went on to note, 'he has become more famous for his business acumen than for his ability as a nurseryman' - 'buying and selling land at a profit'.

The year before purchasing our site, Slocock was one of the main buyers of land in Woking following the death of George Rastrick, of Woking Lodge (Oriental Road). The auction at the Albion Hotel apparently realised £16,480 in just ninety minutes⁵ - Walter Charles Slocock contributing almost half that figure - £8,350!

He 'paid £3,000 for the triangular piece of land bounded by Guildford, Station and Jubilee Roads, with respective frontages of 400ft, 485ft and 258ft, and containing 1a.3r.27p. This lot was sold subject to a strip of land being dedicated to the Urban Council for the construction of a footpath in Guildford Road. The same buyer secured for £1,300 an enclosure of 1r.38p in Goldsworth Road with a frontage thereof of 164ft. He also paid £3,100 for a site of 2a.1r. with a frontage of 620ft to the Station Road and return frontages of 200ft to Heathside Road and the Crescent'. He also acquired several plots in Heathside Road. 'The first with a frontage of 82ft and of diminishing width, was knocked down to Mr Slocock for £215.' With similar plots bought by him for £365 and £370.



The £3,100 plot in 'Station Road' was later acquired for the site of Woking's Boys Grammar School (later the Police Station and Court site - above right) begun in 1914. How much the Woking Education Committee paid Slocock for the site I do not know, but I suspect he made a good profit - as he undoubtedly did when he sold the other plots of land for development. Part of the 'triangular piece of land' (opposite the Grammar School site) facing the Guildford Road, was quickly sold for the shops to be built (above left), but how long he held onto the rest (where Lynton House, Jubilee House and Southern House were later built), I do not know.

In August 1926 Slocock had a couple of operations on his leg, which became poisoned. The result was that the leg had to be amputated. It was as a result of this second operation, on the 31st August, that he died (although local historian Alan Crosby claims that he survived another three years⁶). At the time of his death, according to the probate inventory, he left an estate valued at £244,398 - a quite considerable sum in those days (£175 of that coming from the profit from the sale of our site). He was buried in St John's Churchyard⁷ on the 3rd September 1926.

¹ SHC 3468/2/2

² SHC 3468/2/4

³ Nurserymen to the World, E J Willson, 1989, page 42?

⁴ A History of Goldsworth Nursery, Frederick Street,

⁵ West Surrey Times, Saturday 22nd July 1905, page 7

⁶ A History of Woking, Alan Crosby, Phillimore & Co Ltd, 1982, page 38 and his revised edition of 2003, page 54.

⁷ SHC WOKJ/4/6