

# WHAT THE CENSUS CAN & CANNOT TELL US ABOUT WOKING IN 1871

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**1**871 was not a good year for Woking's roads. Up until the early 1860's the parish roads were the responsibility of the local vestry, but in 1862 the government had introduced the Highways Act which in 1864 put Woking under the control of a new authority known as the Guildford Rural Highways Board. The new town of Woking was only a small part of that district, which included areas such as Send and Ripley, Worplesdon, Pirbright and Stoke-Next Guildford, but not the town of Guildford itself.

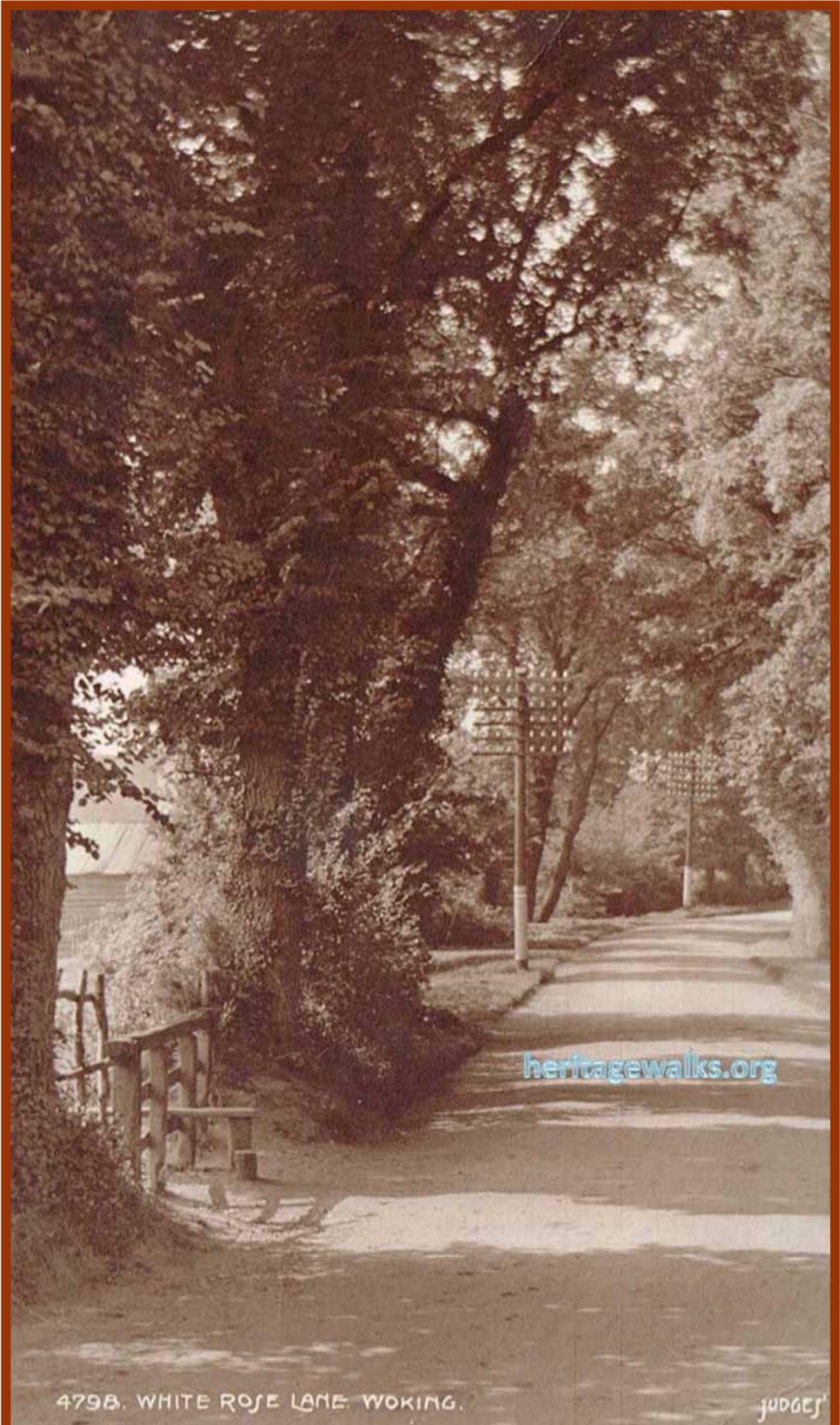
In 1869 the Rural Highways Board had allocated just three wheelbarrows, three rakes, four scrapers and a pump for all of the public roads in Woking. On the plus side (if you can call it that) there were only about forty-five miles of adopted roads in Woking at that time, but even so the amount of money and provisions for the fast expanding town was (as you might suspect) pitifully small!

Despite the growing town providing more and more money to the authority through its rates, the number of representatives on the board remained the same, and they were continually out-voted by their more rural neighbour. The board continually refused to spend anything like a proportionate amount on making up and adopting the town's new residential streets. In December 1869 complaints were made that the Highways Act had 'not given satisfaction to the majority of ratepayers in the district'. Even main roads, it was claimed, were 'not in so good order as they were, while the bye-roads which are perhaps not of such consequence to the public have been nearly entirely neglected'. Nevertheless, they argued 'they are parish roads and are of great convenience to those who pay the rates'.

Whilst the Highways Board refused to spend money on Woking's roads, they don't appear to have been backward in coming forward when it came to prosecuting anyone who didn't meet their exacting requirements to keep the highways clear!

According to the Whitman's in their book *'Victorian Woking'* (published by the Surrey Archaeological Society in about 1970) 'for the most part those who needed to drain their land or access to it, had to apply for permission to lay down the pipes and meet the cost themselves' and 'a report of one of the waywardens to the Highway Board in 1871 - records that the Railway Company had commenced the requisite drainage on one side of the railway near the station and that if necessary the attention of the Inspector of Nuisances was to be drawn to the drainage on the other side of the railway'. The Highways Board knew how to use the 'stick' if not the 'carrot'!

Edward Ryde recorded in his diary in May 1870 that work was taking place on repairing White Rose Lane, but in 1871 it was clear that the work was not a success as at it was still described as impassable.



In the defence of the Rural Highways Board, it should be noted that sometimes the people of Woking were their own worst enemy.

Despite being repaired the previous year White Rose Lane was still described as 'impassable' in places in 1871



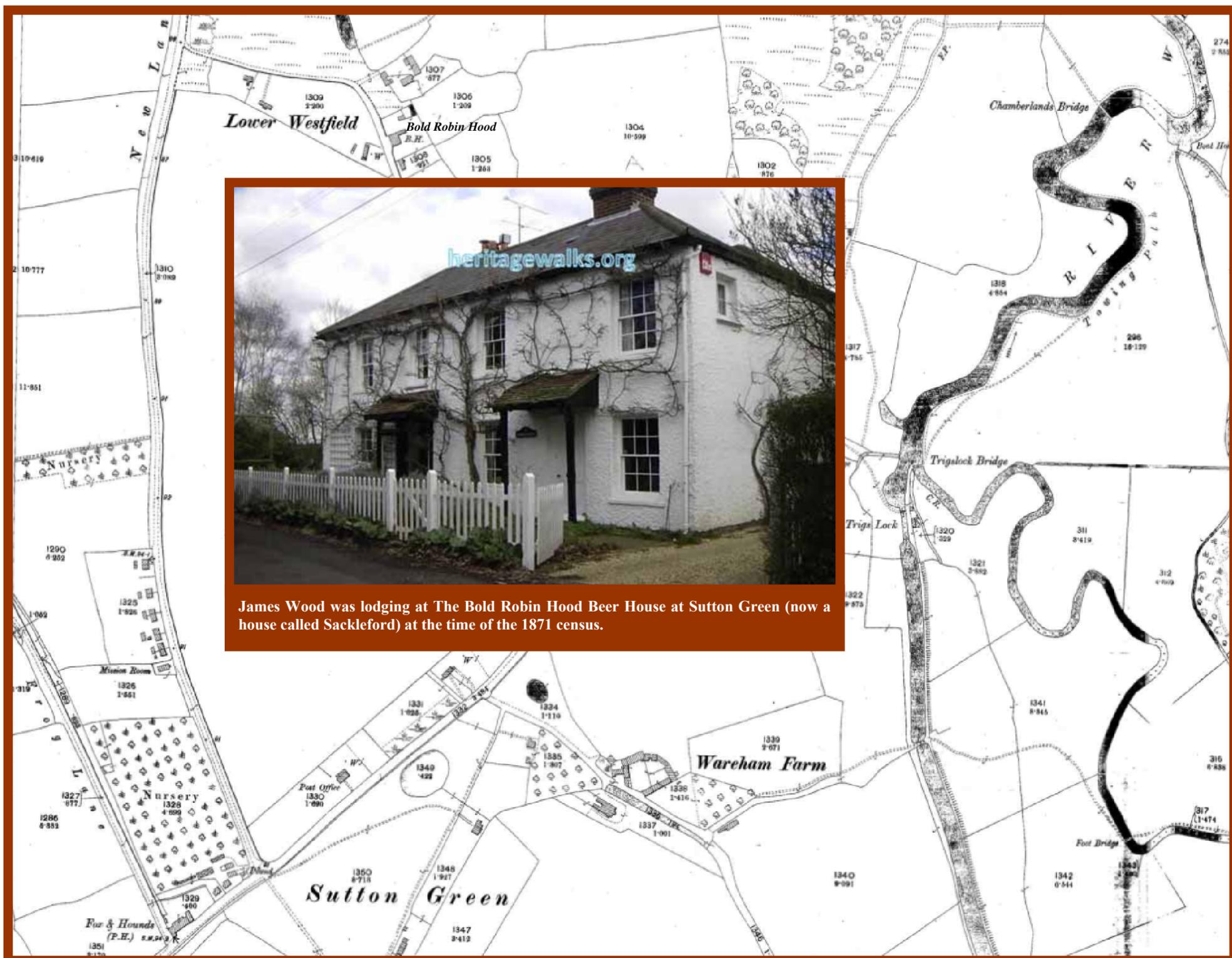
Alan Crosby in his *'History of Woking'* (Phillimore 1981) notes that in 1871 James Woods 'wanting some building materials, simply dug a large hole in Wych Hill Lane and took away a cartload of sand and gravel'.

For centuries people had had the right to take sand and gravel from the local common land for their own or public use. Indeed the Highways Board's predecessor, the Vestry, used local

sand and gravel to repair the parish roads and most of the pits marked on local maps at that time were probably dug for that purpose.

But who exactly was James Woods? Was he James Woods a coal merchant recorded as living in Westfield in the census taken in 1871, or perhaps his son James who at eighteen years of age worked for his father. Perhaps more likely, however, it was the twenty-six year old James Woods, a farm labourer who at the time

of the 1871 census was lodging at the Robin Hood Beer House in Westfield (later known as the Bold Robin Hood), a building that still stands at the Westfield Farm end of Robin Hood Lane at Sutton Green (now known as Sackleford). Unfortunately we will probably never know which James Woods it was, but his story just goes to show that it is not always the local authority who are to blame for potholes appearing in local roads!

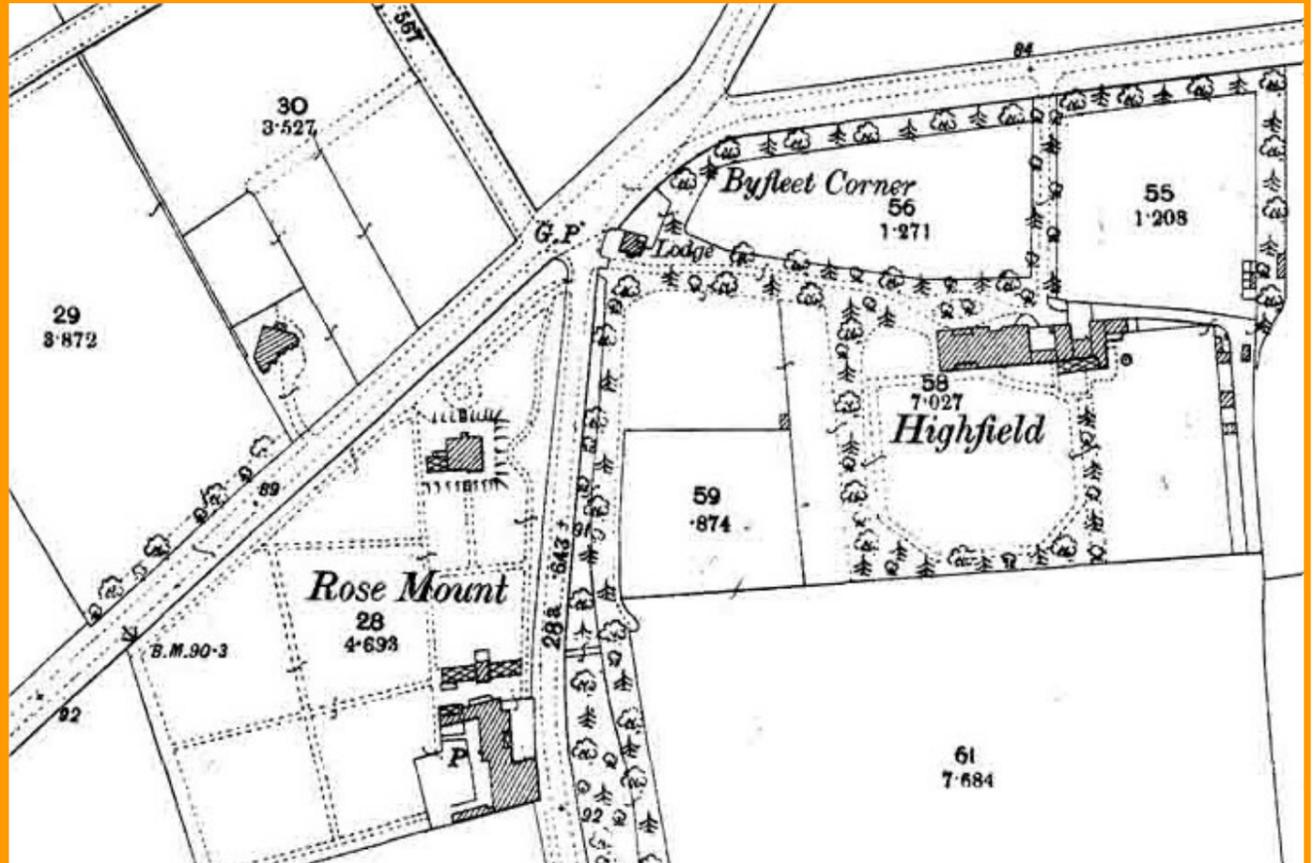


# THE CERTIFIED SURREY INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL AT BYFLEET CORNER

In the census for Byfleet is an entry under 'Byfleet Corner' with John Leyland (aged 55), with his occupation listed as 'income from land and houses'. Those of you with a good memory may recall in my article on 'Cottage Industries' in October last year that I noted John Leyland as occupying the 'rose-water and essential oil distillery' at Byfleet Corner. The Byfleet historian, Howard Cook, noted that 'Leyland lived in a house called Rose Mount, the lodge of which was where Barclays Bank now stands'. This obviously ties in with the 1871 census.

The problem is that the entry for Leyland doesn't mention anything about the distillery, which we know from various directories he continued to operate until 1882 when John Newland evidently took over (although Alan Crosby erroneously notes that a Newland operated the building 'from 1872 until its closure in about 1905').

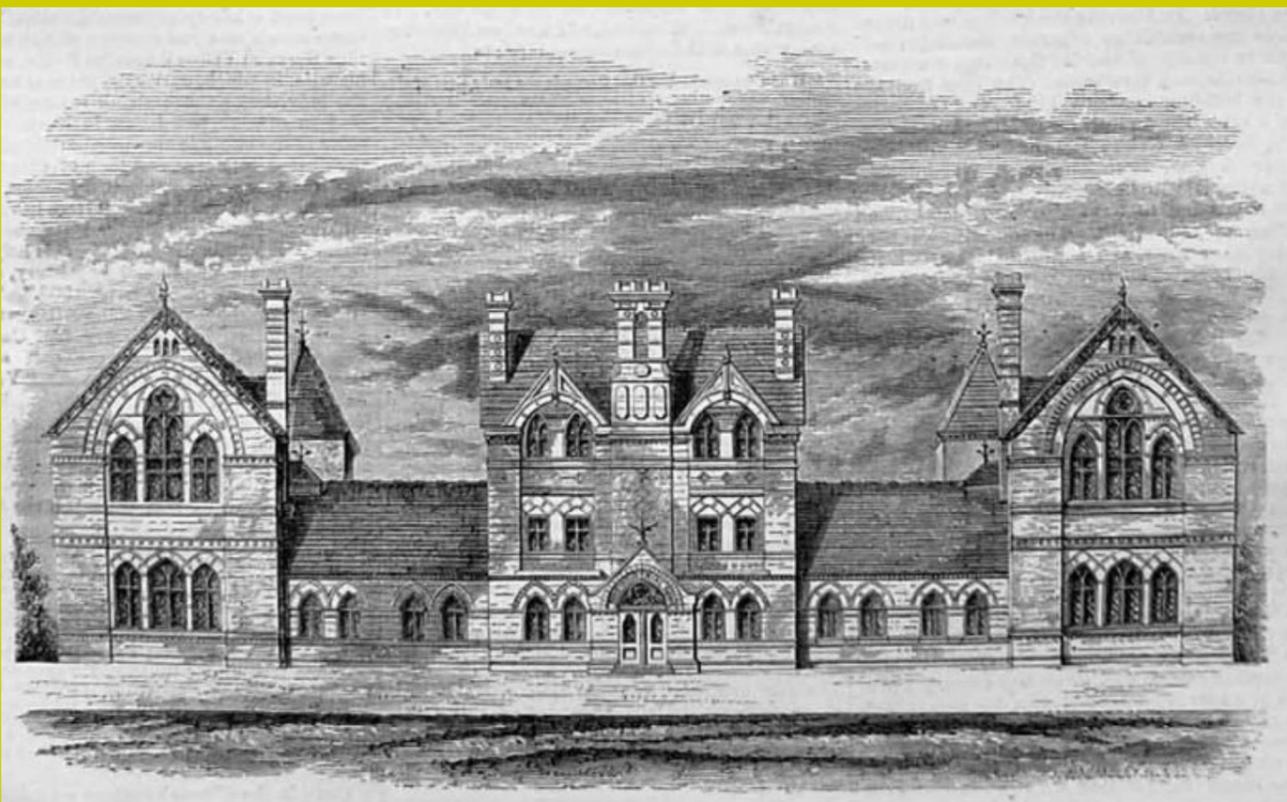
What Crosby, Cook, and the earlier Byfleet historian Leonard Stevens, failed to mention is that John Leyland moved to Byfleet from Wandsworth, where in 1867 he had set up an 'industrial school' at the behest, it appears, of the Surrey County Justices. John Felton Newland and his wife Mary (John Leyland's daughter) were originally the superintendent and matron of Leyland's school at Wandsworth, which they continued to manage after Leyland moved to Byfleet in 1871 (until Leyland died in 1882 when they appear to have moved here).



John Leyland came originally from Lancashire, but had moved to Wandsworth in the 1850's when he was manager of Miss Portal's 'Friendless Boys Home' (established in 1852) – a home for 'destitute boys not convicted of crime, who were taken off the street and taught a trade such as carpentry, shoe-making and tailoring.

It is evidently in this capacity that Leyland is listed in 1871 at Byfleet Corner, with nineteen teenagers (all but four of which came from the Greater London area) living in the same house. Was the Essential Oil Distillery just another trade that the boys were to be taught, and was that why the Industrial School opened at Byfleet Corner? I guess we will never know!

# BISLEY FARM SCHOOL



John Leyland's Industrial School at Byfleet Corner was not the only home in this area for lads from London to escape to. At the same time he was setting up his original school in Wandsworth, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury was setting up his 'Refuge Farm School' at Bisley. Like Leyland's school, Shaftesbury's 'refuge' was not for children who had committed a crime, but for those that were simply 'destitute', and like the home at Byfleet Corner the children at Bisley were given training,

although most of the Shaftesbury Boys were destined for a life in the forces, rather than simply a 'trade'.

It was perhaps with this in mind that in 1871 the boys at Bisley were given the opportunity to learn a new skill – that of telegraphy – although how many of the 128 scholars listed in the census at Bisley's 'Refuge Farm School' that year got a chance to use the new equipment is not known.

