

MORE WORK ON LOCAL CHURCHES & CHAPELS IN 1879-80

Iain Wakeford 2015

The Victorians really were great philanthropists – especially when it came to building and restoring churches and chapels. At Byfleet it seems they were almost constantly at work. The South Aisle was added in 1841, the bells recast in 1853, an organ chamber and transept added in 1864, and in 1868 the tower restored at a cost of £210.

The following year St Nicholas' Church at Pyrford was restored and the medieval wall paintings revealed, whilst in 1872 a similarly sympathetic restoration at Wisley, sponsored by Mrs Buxton of Foxwarren, was also carried out.

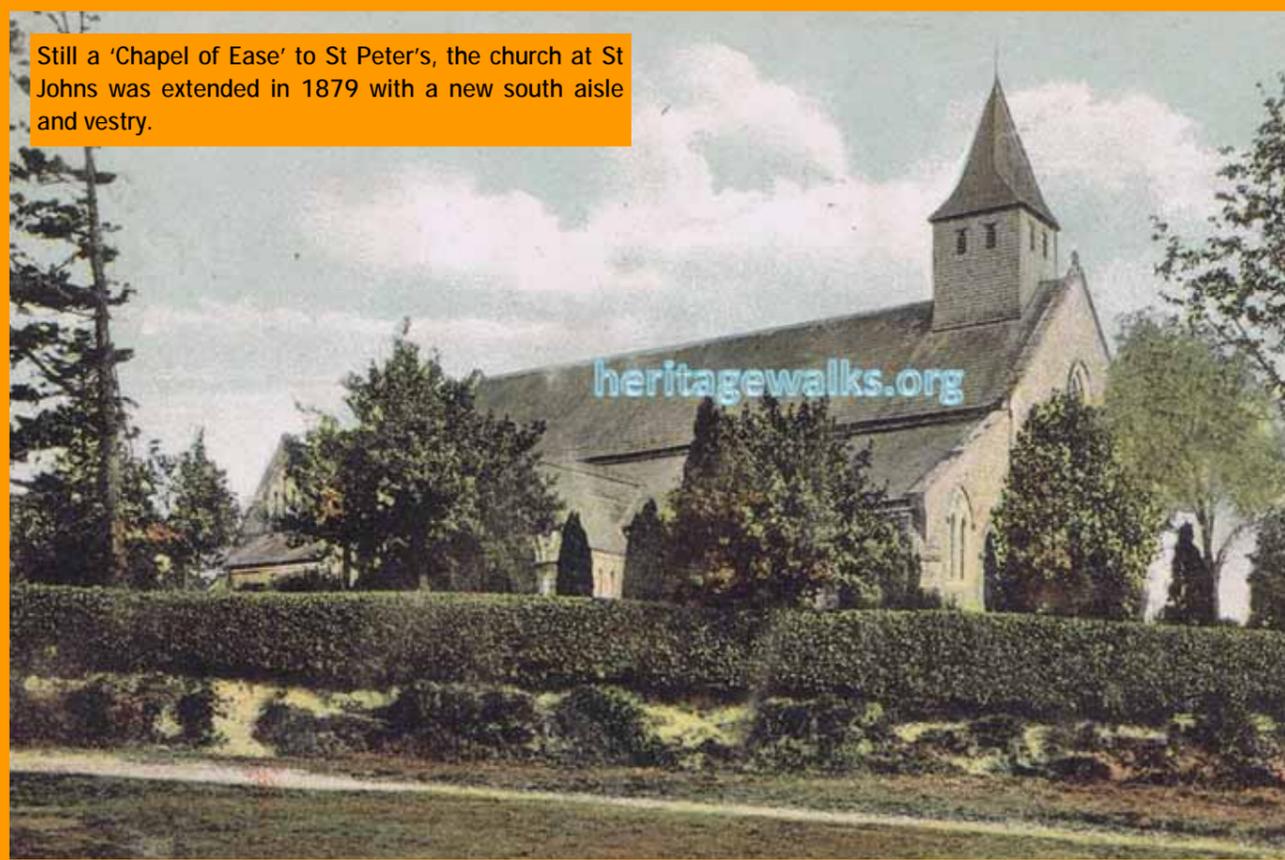
In fact every historic church in the area saw some restoration during this period – some more successful than others. At St Mary's, Horsell, the church was restored in 1871, but in 1880 the builders were back again to re-cast the tower (although that was not the last time the church would experience their work in the Victorian era); and at Bisley, St John the Baptist Church received almost total rebuilding in 1873.

Ian Nairn, writing with Nikolaus Pevsner in the Surrey edition of the *Buildings of England* thought Bisley 'a pleasant ensemble which does not stand a close look at the detail', whilst the work at Horsell they thought was 'a sorry mess of restoration and enlargement'. Byfleet's Victorian additions meant that 'all the simple village effect has gone' and even at Old Woking it was noted that the 'inside over-restored, as usual'. Only Wisley and Pyrford seem to have got any praise, although even here they couldn't resist noting that 'possibly the Surrey traveller overrates it because of its rarity'!



Horsell Church was continually 'restored' by the Victorians with the tower having to be restored in 1880.

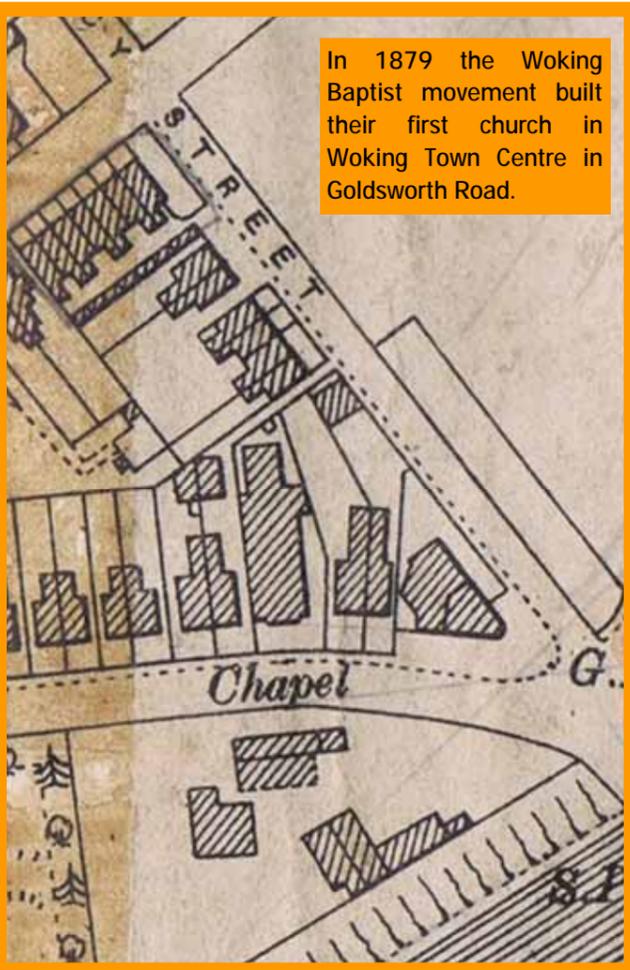
Still a 'Chapel of Ease' to St Peter's, the church at St Johns was extended in 1879 with a new south aisle and vestry.



Back in the 1870's new churches were also being built with the erection of tin churches at Byfleet Corner (St John the Baptist, 1872) and in Woking Town Centre (Christ Church, 1877) – both of which we will see being rebuilt in articles later on in the year!

And at most of the institutions mentioned in recent weeks, chapels were provided, such as at the Shaftesbury Homes at Bisley (1874), Brookwood Hospital (1867) and Woking Prisons (1859, Male Prison and 1867, Female Prison); with the prison ladies, as we have seen, providing the elaborate marble mosaic floors in the early 1870's for not just the local church at St John's, but also the tombs of Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington at St Paul's Cathedral!

Of course at this stage St John's was not actually a 'church' – it was still officially a Chapel of Ease to St Peter's – but the congregation was increasing so rapidly at this time that it had to be enlarged with the addition of a south aisle and a vestry in 1879.



In 1879 the Woking Baptist movement built their first church in Woking Town Centre in Goldsworth Road.

But the Church of England are not the only church-builders active at this time. We have seen too how the local Wesleyan Methodists held open air meetings before building their chapels at Maybury (1863), Knaphill (1867), Ripley (1869), Woking (1872), Byfleet (1875), and St Johns; and even the long-persecuted Catholic Church erected a new church dedicated to St Edward the Confessor at Sutton Place in 1876.

Now, in 1879, it was the turn of the local Baptist movement. Again we have seen in this column how the Baptists had built chapels and

even a school in Horsell and Knaphill, but in the town centre meetings were initially held in the front room of a house in Goldsworth Road before the congregation grew so much that the chapel (seen here on the site now occupied by the Co-operative Funeral Service) had to be built.

I wonder what the architect of this chapel (and all the others built in the 1860's and 70's) would think of its successor, The Coign, let alone the new building due to be built on that site?



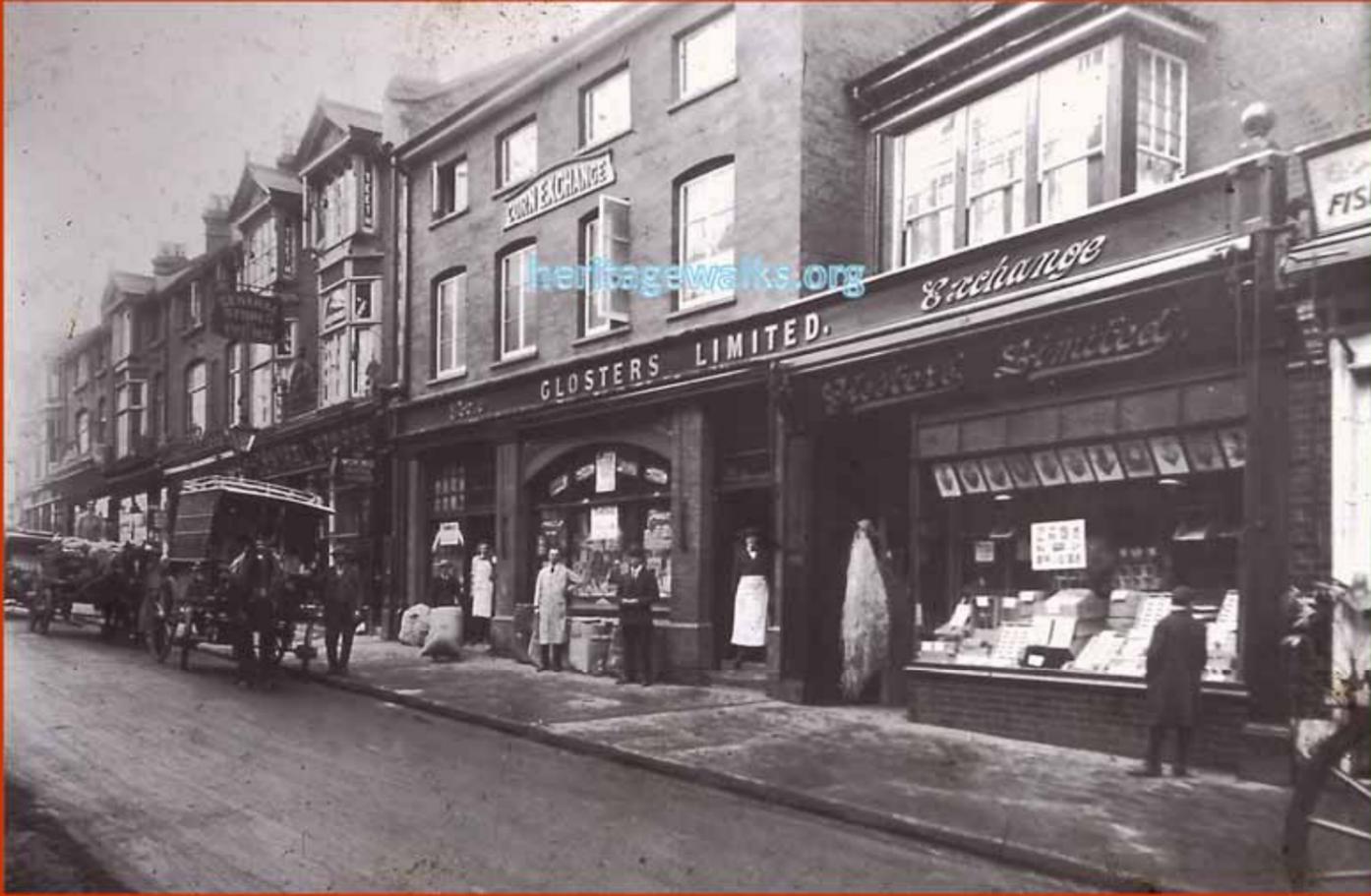
MORE ARMY LAND AT WEST END COMMON IN 1879

In 1853 Chobham Common played an important part in Britain's preparations for the Crimean War, with the mustering of over 8,000 troops on the common and manoeuvres involving 1,500 horses and 24 guns taking place. The following year Aldershot Camp was established as a permanent base for the British Army, but by the 1870's the army were expanding their operations in the area, buying 3,000 acres of Pirbright Common in 1875 and over 2,000 acres of West End Common in 1879.

The purchase of the common at West End obviously had a major effect on the local community who could no longer graze their animals there, or cut turves and gorse for their fires, but the wider consequence was the blocking of several roads and tracks across the common, leading now to many 'dead ends' such as Brentmoor Road at Donkey Town and Lucas Green Road



MORE WOKING SHOPS IN 1880



One of the people instrumental in the early days of the Baptist movement in Woking Town Centre was Henry Gloster, whom we 'met' a few weeks ago in these articles when he was one of the first people to open a shop in Chobham Road (on part of the site now occupied by Yates).

By 1880 he had obviously made his mark on the town and was ready for expansion, purchasing the garden of the original Albion Hotel (a tall square building opposite the railway station), which stretched all the way down Chertsey Road to its junction with Chobham Road and extended backwards onto Commercial Road. It was here that Gloster built the row of shops then known as 'The Pavement' – with the Central Stores and Corn Exchange buildings both being run by Henry and his family.

