

1887 - THE NEW CHRIST CHURCH

Iain Wakeford 2015



In 1877 a small Chapel of Ease was erected in what had apparently once been called Providence Street – now known as Church Street. It was a simple Iron Room capable of seating just 400 people, and within a few years was found to be totally inadequate for the rapidly increasing population of the new town growing up around Woking Station. In February 1885 the new Vicar of St John's, the Rev. F C Littler, presided over a public meeting to discuss the future of the Iron Room. Not only was it too small, but the roof was leaking, the walls were rusty and it was probably draughty and cold. The question was whether to repair the iron church at an estimated cost of perhaps £400, or whether to build a proper brick built Christ Church for about ten times that amount. On a show of hands forty-two voted in favour of the new church with just two putting their hands up against. A Committee was appointed with the power to add members when required and seven days later they met with Rev Littler as chairman.

When the Necropolis Company had sought permission to sell off their 'surplus' land around Woking Station, Parliament had insisted that land be set aside for a church and school near the station. The land sales map of 1855 shows the area now occupied by Dukes Court as the dedicated land, but in the end that was not to be and instead the school was built in what became Board School Road and the church was given three acres of land in what became Onslow Crescent – the Providence Road site being later acquired from the Necropolis Company in 1861 and conveyed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1870.

In 1885 there was a suggestion that the three acres south of railway could be sold for about

£800 to £900 to provide the nucleus of the building fund, but that was easier said than done and when it was discovered that purchasing another desirable site for the new church would cost over £1,000 an acre, it was quickly decided that the Church Street site was ideal after all, and work started in earnest on trying to raise the necessary funds.

One thousand leaflets were rapidly printed appealing for 'pecuniary aid' and distributed to all the residents in the area. A bank account was opened with Thomas Ashby & Co (at that time Woking's only bank), with the Manager, Mr

Alfred Wright, also joining the church committee. But the letter only produced sixteen responses with just £400 raised or promised for the fund.

A year after the initial meeting that had risen to almost £1,000, although the actual money in the account was less than half that and the project was in danger of stalling. In 1886 the Rev Littler was replaced as Vicar of St John's by William Frederic Tucker Hamilton and on the 22nd December he reconvened the Building Committee with a suggestion that if £3,000 could be raised then the Nave at least of the





new church could be completed the following year to seat about 600 people, with the rest of the church following as soon as the money was raised.

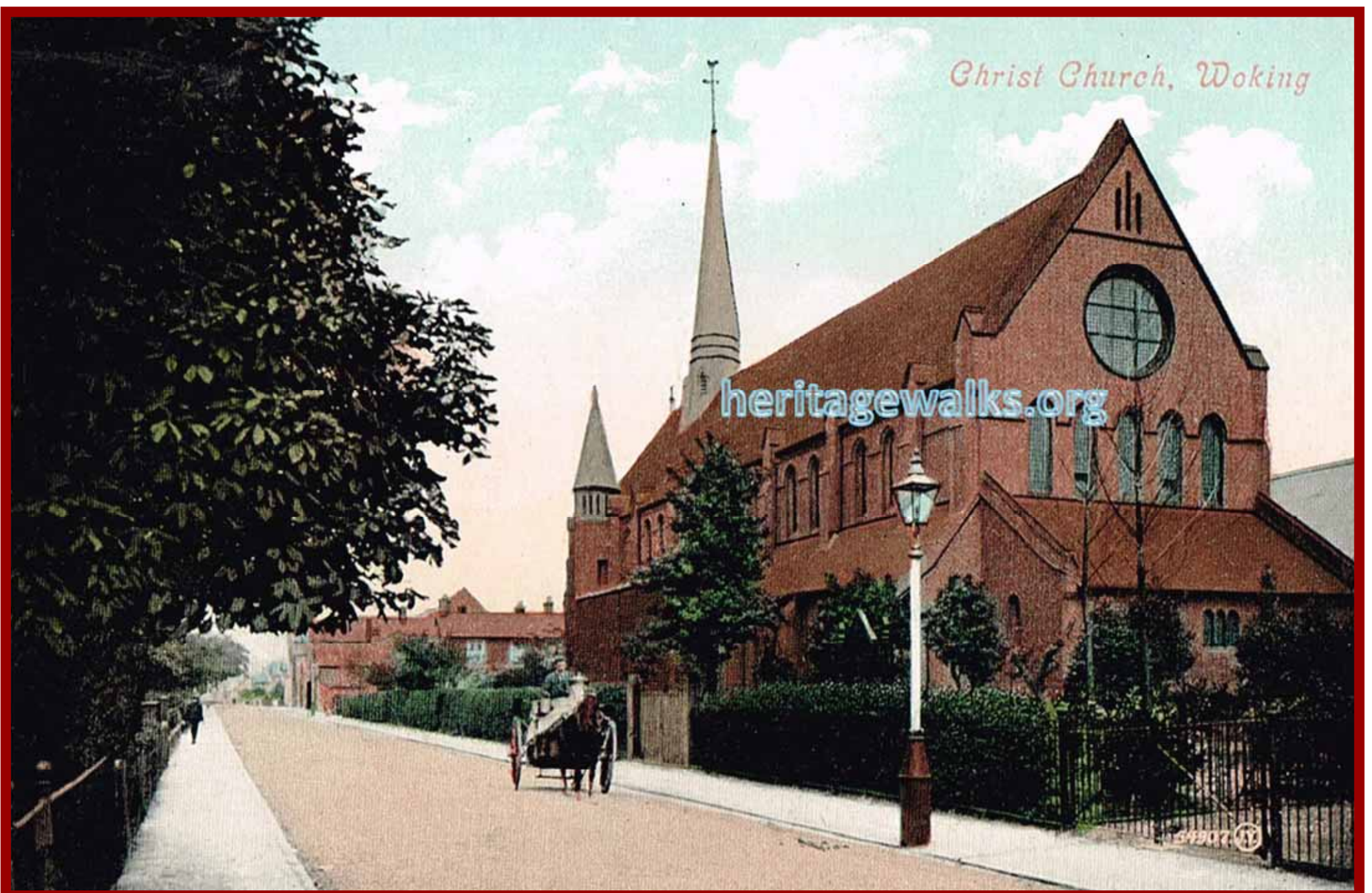
On the 5th and 6th of July the Goldsworth Hall was hired for a 'Sale of Needlework, Old China, Oriental and Fancy Goods'. The Hall was 'beautifully illuminated with fairy lamps' and 'vocal and instrumental music' was provided by Mr Alfred Wright (the Bank Manager), although the event itself only succeeded in raising £138 for the cause.

Unfortunately the plans for the church were also delayed by a muddle of the approval of an architect, but eventually the plans submitted by Mr William Frederick Unsworth were approved in June and in September the builder, Messrs James Harris & Son of the High Street, Woking, were given the contract and instructed to start work at once.

On the 10th November 1887 the Duchess of Albany (Princess Helena of Waldeck & Pymont, wife of Prince Leopold, the youngest and some say favourite son of Queen Victoria) came from

Claremont House in Esher to lay the foundation stone for the new church. A service was conducted by the Bishop of Winchester and a marquee erected to accommodate the distinguished guests and about a thousand people, including five or six hundred local children.

The new Christ Church was finally getting off the ground, although the Rev Hamilton's hopes that the Nave would be open by the end of 1887 were not met.



1887 - WOKING'S FIRST POLICE STATION OPENED



When the County Justices formed the Surrey Constabulary in 1851 there was not much need for a policeman in Woking. The nearest police station was probably at Bagshot, with Woking coming under the Chertsey Division and allocated just three constables (Horsell having one and Byfleet two).

But as the population grew, and presumably

crime increased, there were calls in the early 1880's for better provision and in 1885 the Chief Constable of Surrey received a petition from the residents of the new town asking for Woking to be made its own police division.

In 1886 a plot on land on the corner of what was then called Harris Lane (now Heathside Road) and Station Approach was purchased for £300 and by the following year a new

police station was opened at a cost of £2,750 with accommodation for three officers and four cells.

That was to remain Woking's Police Station (with several extensions and many more policemen) until 1982 when they moved into the former Boys Grammar School on the opposite side of Heathside Road – but that is a story for another time.

1888 - CHOBHAM VILLAGE HALL & INSTITUTE BUILT

The West End of Chobham built their Village Institute in 1886 (as we saw a couple of weeks ago), but in 1887, as a way of marking the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria,

the residents of the main village of Chobham decided to build their own Village Hall and Institute on the site previously occupied by the parish saw-pit in 'Station Road'.

It was completed and opened the following year and is still (with minor alterations), one of the main social centres of the village.

