

THE NEW CHURCH OF ENGLAND WAIF'S & STRAY'S SOCIETY, ST NICHOLAS' HOME AT PYRFORD

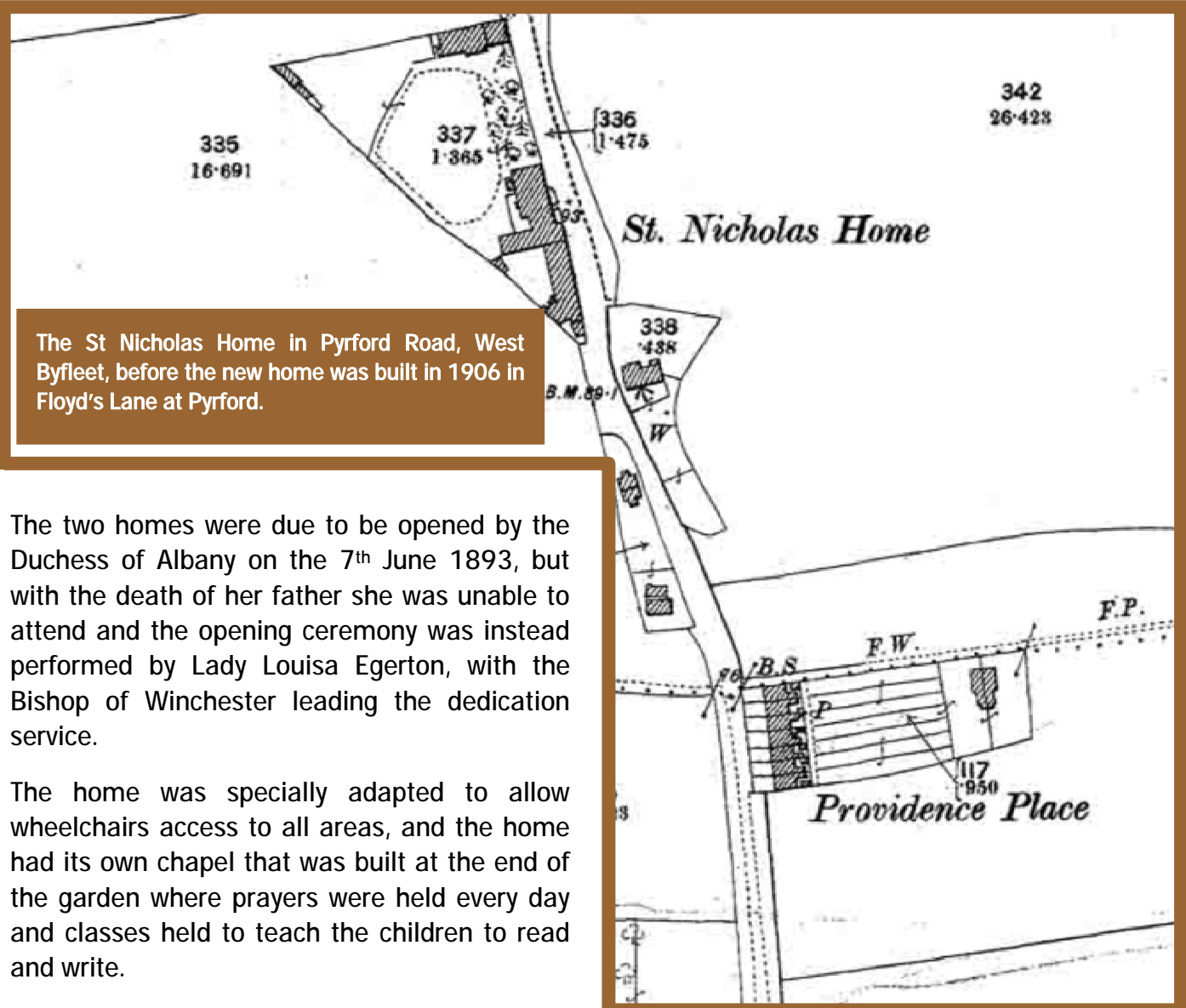
Iain Wakeford 2015

In 1887, to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria, a gentleman called Edward Rudolf launched a campaign to establish a home that could cater for some of the country's poorest children. It became the Church of England Waif's and Stray's Society and the first home he founded in Tooting was known as the 'St Nicholas' Home'.

Before long other homes opened including the St Nicholas' Home at Byfleet Corner, and the Byfleet Receiving Home in buildings that had previously been used by the Surrey Industrial School (before it transferred to Mayford).

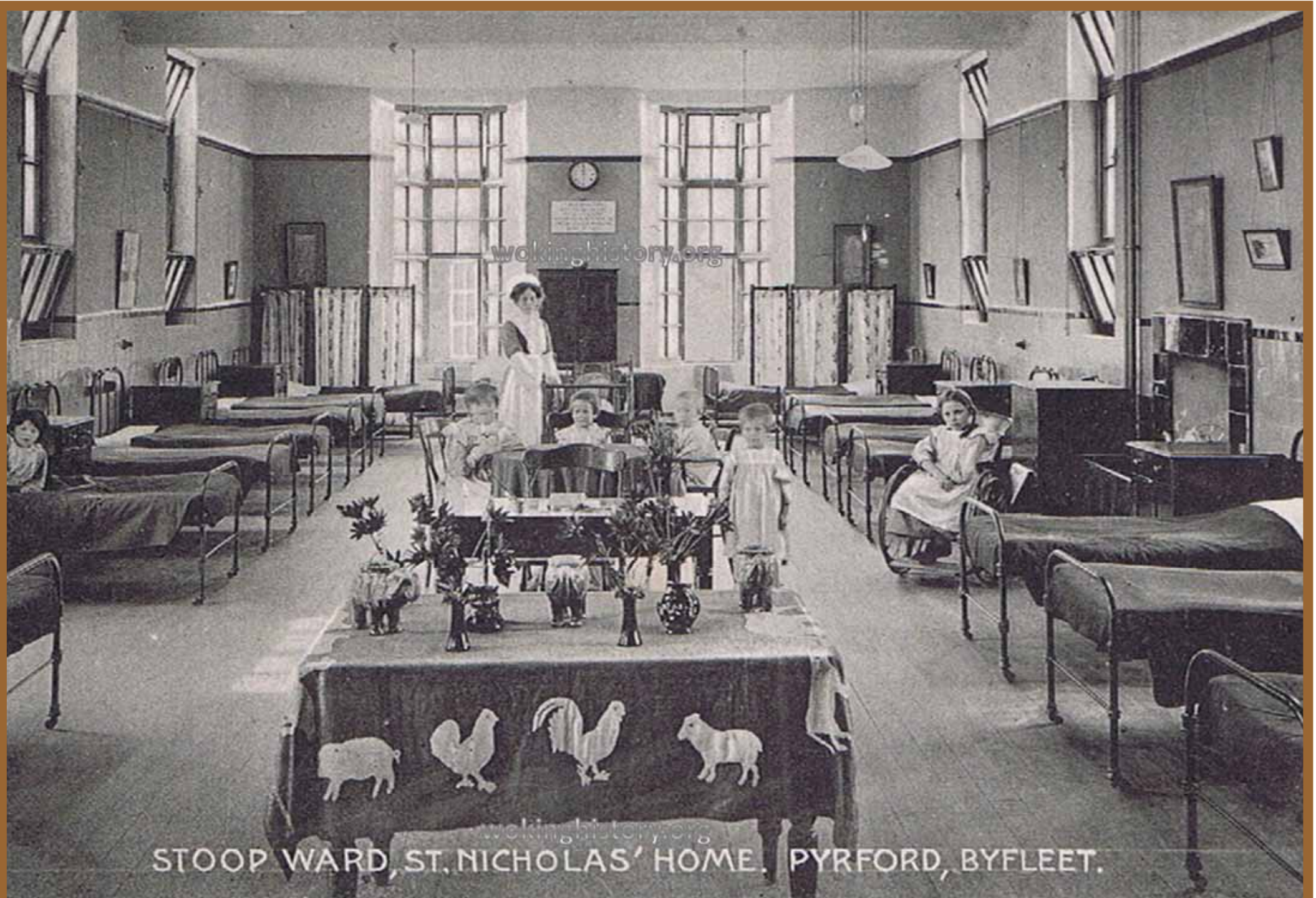
The Receiving Home took in children for a short time until a more permanent home could be found for them – either in another institution or in a foster home (at that time considered to be a highly innovative initiative). The number of children in the home obviously varied depending on how many children were taken in, but it appears that in the eleven years that the Receiving Home was open, the maximum at any one time was probably just eleven.

The St Nicholas Home, next door, could cater for many more, with up to sixty sick or disabled children being housed there.



The two homes were due to be opened by the Duchess of Albany on the 7th June 1893, but with the death of her father she was unable to attend and the opening ceremony was instead performed by Lady Louisa Egerton, with the Bishop of Winchester leading the dedication service.

The home was specially adapted to allow wheelchairs access to all areas, and the home had its own chapel that was built at the end of the garden where prayers were held every day and classes held to teach the children to read and write.





The Leila Ward was named after the wife of Canon Borradaile, whilst the Stoop Ward (above) commemorated the silver wedding anniversary of the Stoop's of West Hall.

By 1906 it was clear that the old home at West Byfleet was in need of replacing so the Waifs & Stray's Society looked for funds to build a new home and acquired a large estate off Floyds Lane at Pyrford.

Lady Beatrix Wilkinson laid the foundation stone of the new home in September 1907, with the Duchess of Albany available to perform the opening ceremony the following July when the Bishop of London dedicated the new home. After the opening Lady Beatrix Wilkinson and her mother the Countess of Pembroke opened a bazaar in the building to help raise money

towards its completion. £8,000 was still needed to finish the plans, although Canon Borradaile gave £1,000 in memory of his late wife and the Stoop's of West Hall (who some say gave the Society land at Floyds Lane in Pyrford) also donated £1,000 to commemorate their silver wedding anniversary.

The home could ultimately accommodate 130 children (although one of the boys wards was temporarily used as a chapel until 1911), with wards on two floors for boys (up to the age of five) and girls up to sixteen on either side of a grand staircase. That allowed the matron and

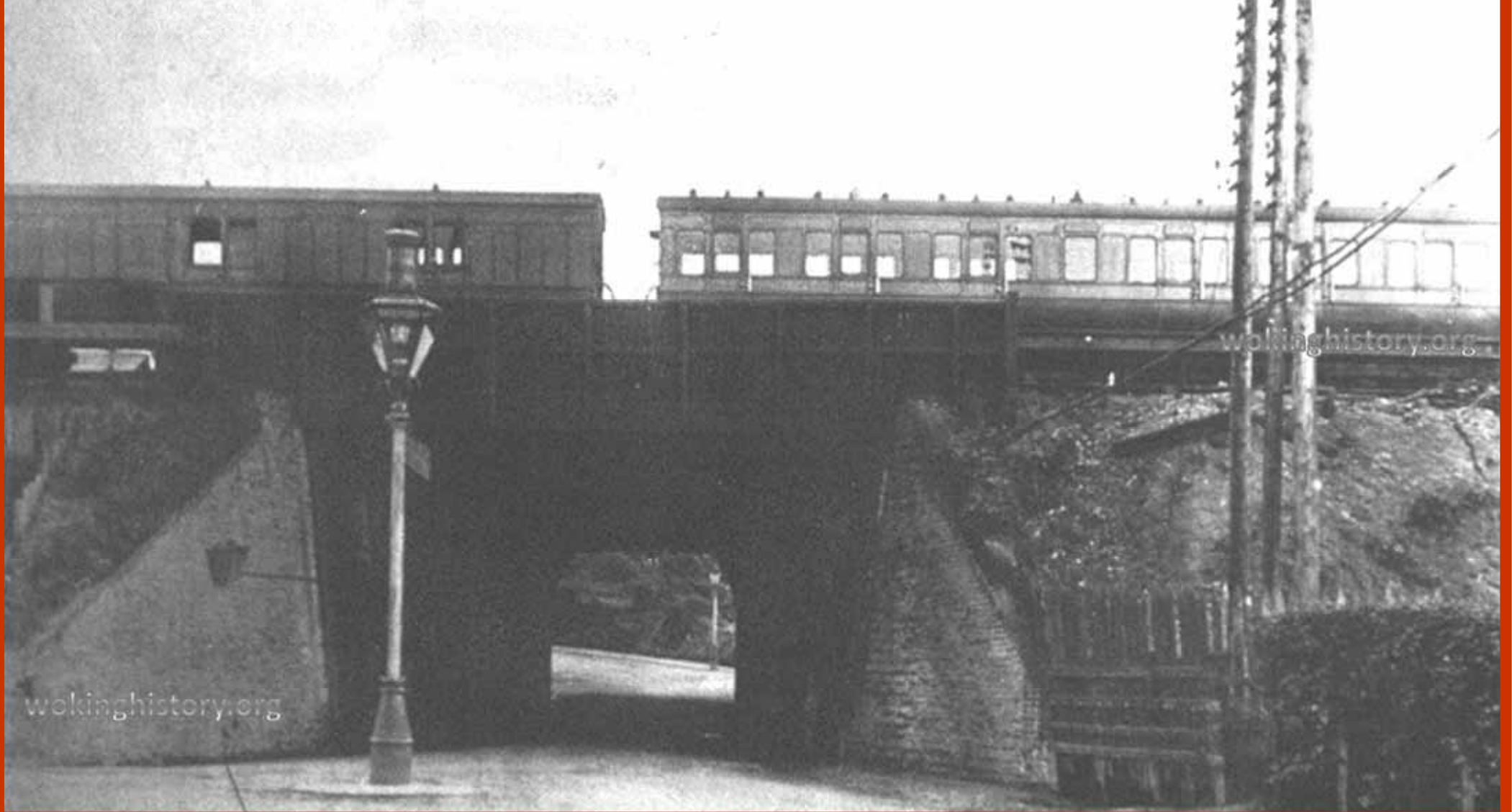
staff to easily access all the children. There were also classrooms, kitchens, dining rooms and rooms for the nurses and domestic staff. That included eleven indoor and three outdoor servants, as well as the Matron, Assistant Matron, Ward Sister and five probationers.

Later another home was built in the grounds to cater for older boys and later still full hospital facilities were developed on the site for the special medical needs of not just the children but adults as well – although those stories will have to wait for other articles in this series, next year.



Where possible all the children were taught a useful trade, such as needlework for the girls.

THE WIDENING OF VICTORIA ARCH IN 1906

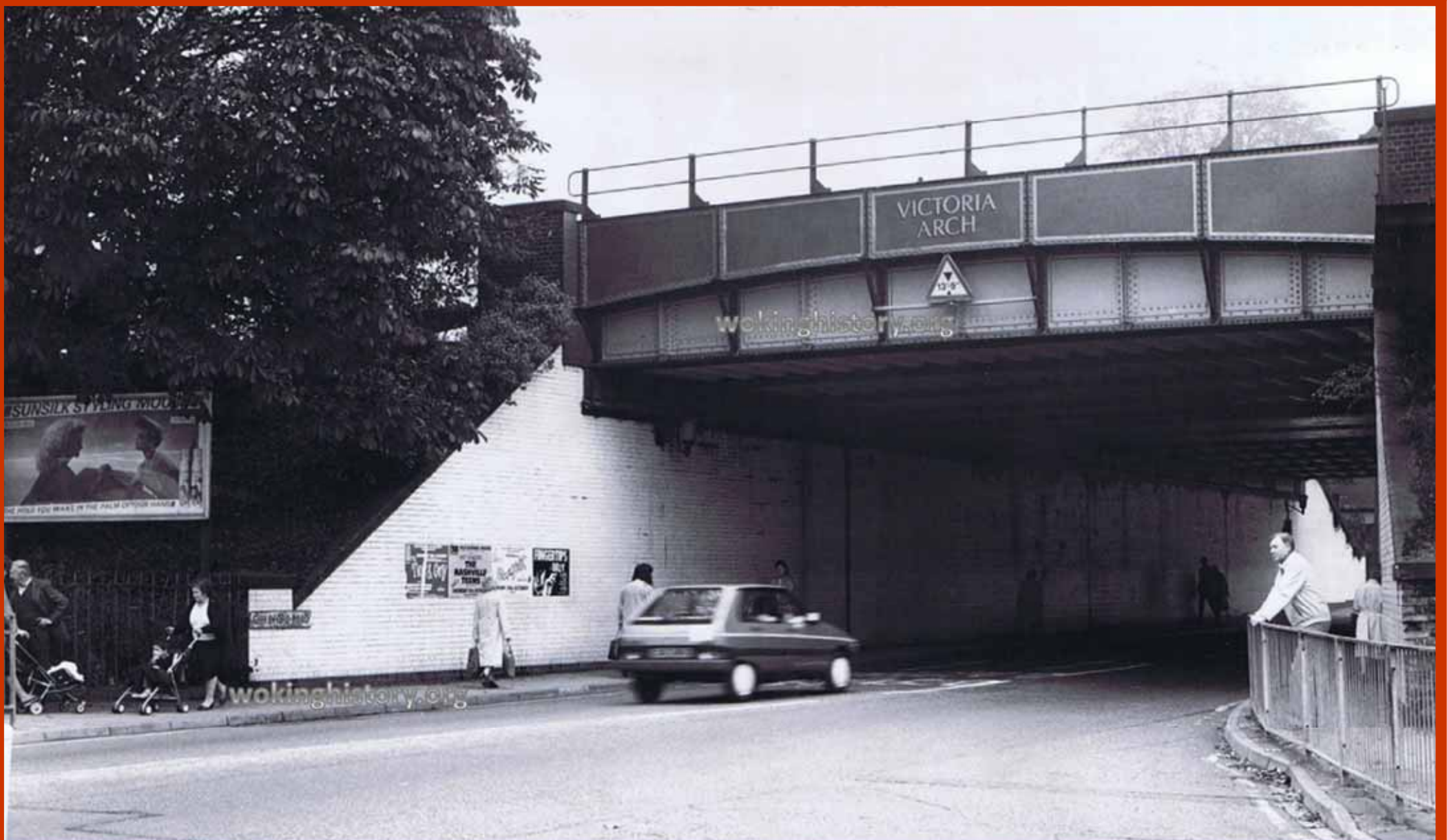


Last week we looked at the rebuilding (albeit temporary) of some of the bridges over the Basingstoke Canal, which meant that for many years heavy goods could not be brought into Woking from the north. But until 1906 Woking also had a problem with large loads not being able to

come into town from the south, as the arch under the railway was only 15ft wide and equally as low.

In that year the London & South Western Railway agreed to help rebuild the arch twice as wide so that at last two vehicles could

negotiate the crossing at once. It was whilst negotiations were taking place that it was realised that the arch didn't have a name, so at the suggestion of one of Woking's Councillors the name 'Victoria' was proposed (to commemorate the late Queen), and that name has stuck ever since.



ANOTHER UNIQUE PIECE OF WOKING'S HISTORY

- BRITAIN'S FIRST HINDU TEMPLE!



I have in my archive (elsewhere on this site) a number of guidebooks to the Woking area, including one produced in the 'Homeland' series in 1905 and one published the same year by 'Blacks' that covers the whole of Surrey. The latter appears to have been aimed mainly at the cycling public with notes on good routes to take and places to see.

Some of the advertisements in the Homeland Guide are fascinating, but one item in the Black's Guide that I found quite intriguing noted 'just short of Woking Junction a remarkable red building is passed on the left, an institution for Indian students, with a mosque at one end balanced by a Hindoo temple at the other'.

The Mosque, of course, has survived but the temple at the other end of the site, where the Lion Retail Park is now, has sadly disappeared. That is a shame as from what I can gather it must have been the first ever Hindu temple in Britain – another unique part of Woking's history that the 'powers that be' have allowed to be destroyed in the name of progress!

I would love to hear from anybody who has any more information about the temple or those that worshipped there.

Could one of these buildings at James Walker's Lion Works (on the site now occupied by the Lion Retail Park) have originally been a Hindu temple?



From A C Black's Guide to Surrey, 1905.

Just short of Woking Junction a remarkable red building is passed on the left, an institution for Indian students, with a mosque at one end balanced by a Hindoo temple at the other.