

CONSTRUCTING WOKING'S NEW LIDO IN 1934-35

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A couple of months ago I reported on the proposal in the early 1930's to build an indoor swimming pool in Goldsworth Road following the closure of the original open-air pool in Woking Park. We left the Recreation Committee of Woking Council dithering on whether to build the indoor pool or a new outdoor one in the park, and early in 1933 the Ministry of Health was approached about loaning the council the money for the latter scheme.

In July that year the Recreation Grounds Committee reported that as a result of an interview between the Chairman and an Officer of the Ministry 'there was every likelihood that if the scheme for an open-air swimming bath were submitted at the present time, it would be favourably considered' and consequently the committee unanimously recommended that the council prepare plans for a 'swimming bath with café etc.' not exceeding £13,500.'

The man from the Ministry (and the majority of the council) may have approved, but the man in the street doesn't appear to have been quite so convinced. One local newspaper organised a referendum asking whether their readers would prefer the open-air pool in the park or an indoor pool, and perhaps not surprisingly they voted 601 to 312 in favour of the covered pool (with 114 against both)!

Nevertheless, when in August 1933 the Council exhibited their plans for the outdoor pool, it

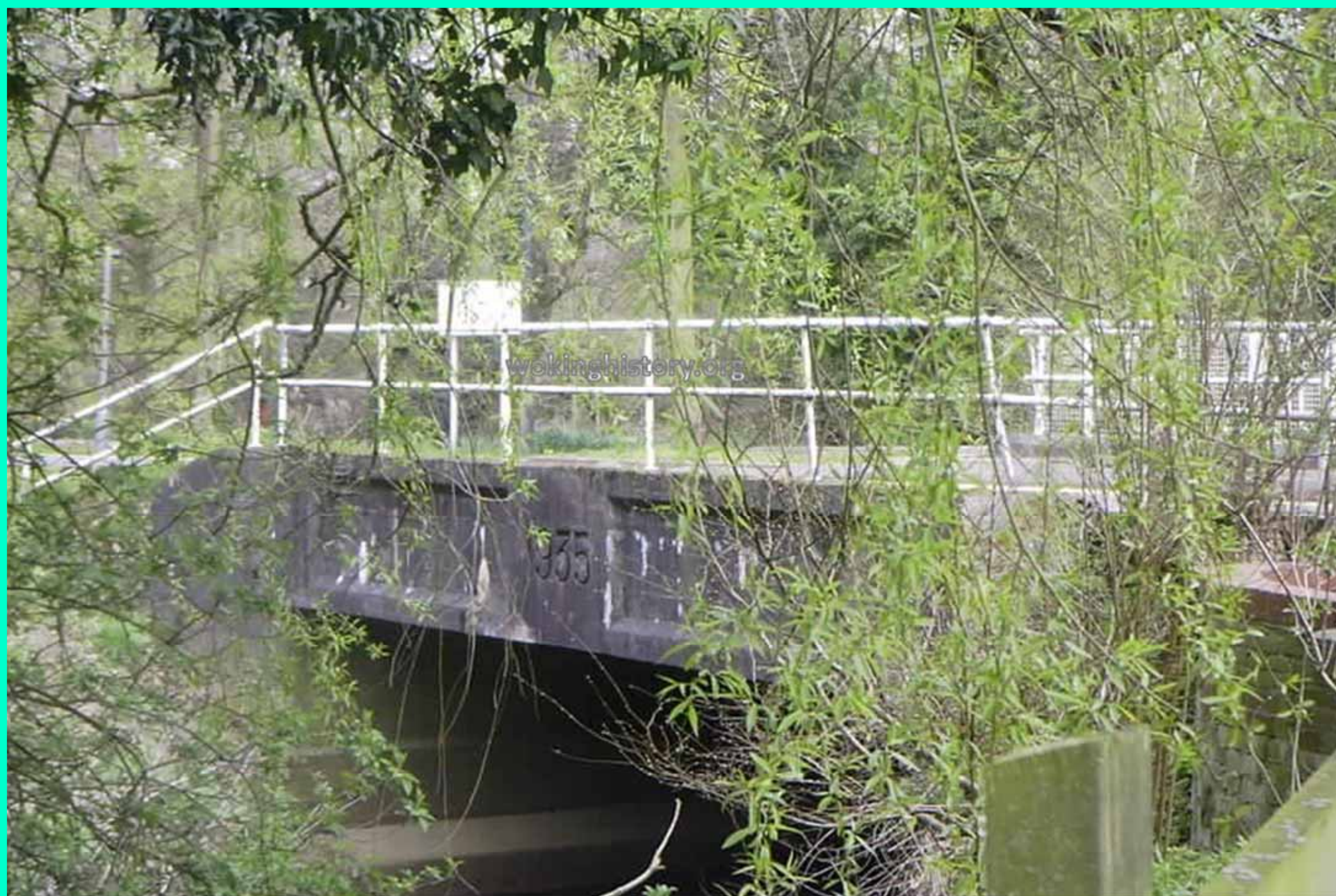
appears to have received some praise with the local press noting 'approval of a scheme to provide the town with a Lido seems to be about as popular a decision as any it has ever made'!

Work on the new swimming pool in Woking Park began in November 1934 with Councillor Conrad Samuel cutting the first turf, and was opened by the Duke of Sutherland in the Spring of 1935.



Councillor Conrad Samuel, does the first bit of spade work at the Ceremony of Cutting the first Sod.

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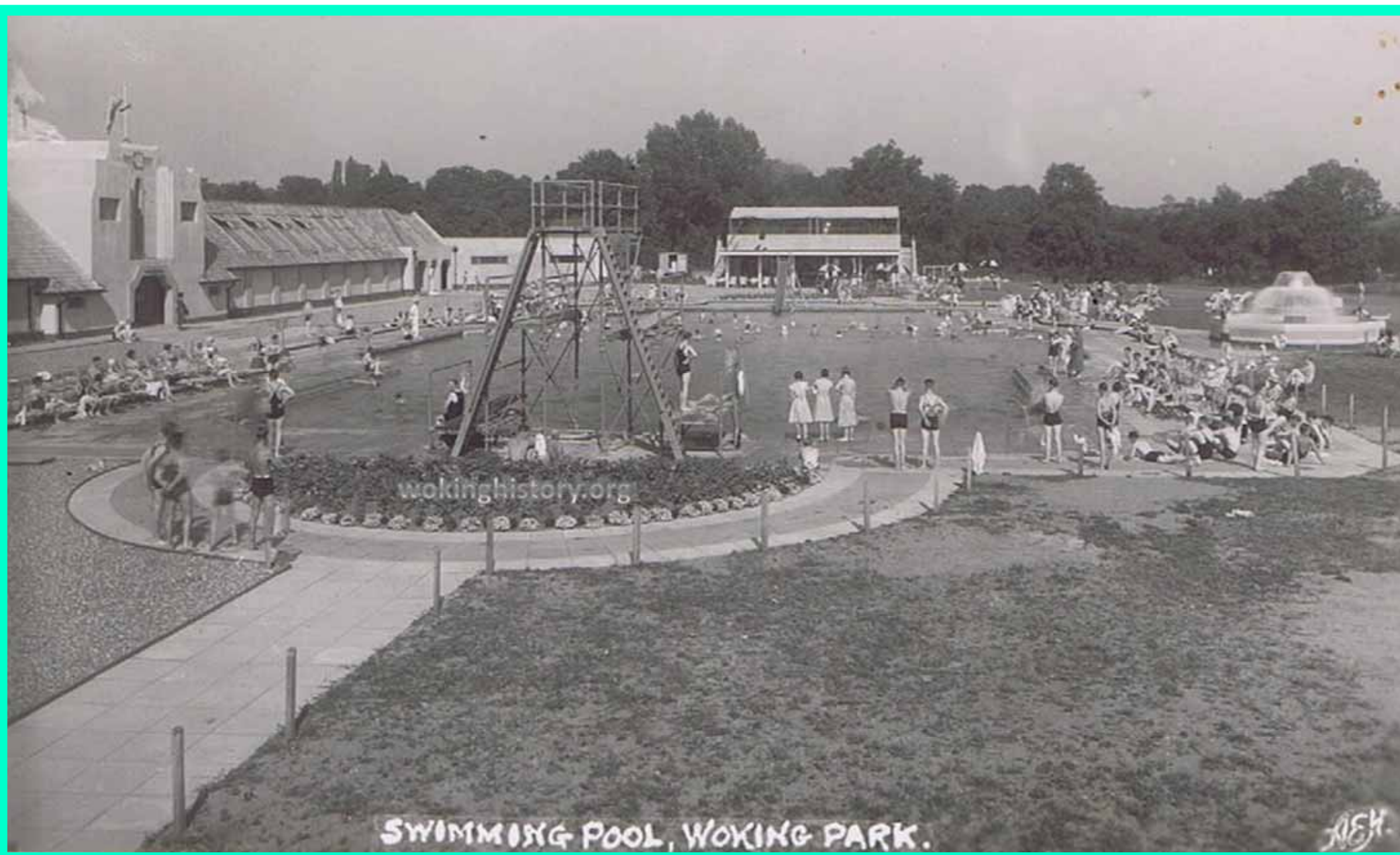
It was reported that it would be constructed of reinforced concrete on a pile foundation, with the latest type of filtration plant installed and 'shower baths, under which every bather will be required to pass before entering the pool'. There were to be 'spacious galleries for bathers and spectators running along both sides of the

The scheme cost £21,600, of which £1,200 was for a new entrance from Kingfield road and a bridge over the Hoe Stream.

pool, while provision has been made for a spacious lawn for sunbathing' as well as a 'chute and a four tier diving platform'. The

needs of school children was also to be met with a 'large dressing room for boys' at one end and 'a room for girls' at the other!

But universal support for the scheme was short-lived. In November it was reported that £220 would have to be expended on pile driving on





The new pool remained in use until the 1980's before being replaced on the same site by the current Pool in the Park.

the site, and the Woking Boy Scouts' Association, the Woking Ratepayers' Association and even the Westfield and Kingfield Women's Institute, wrote to the council asking them to reconsider.

The Council, of course, ignored them all and went ahead even though it was becoming increasingly obvious that the original budget would not be enough.

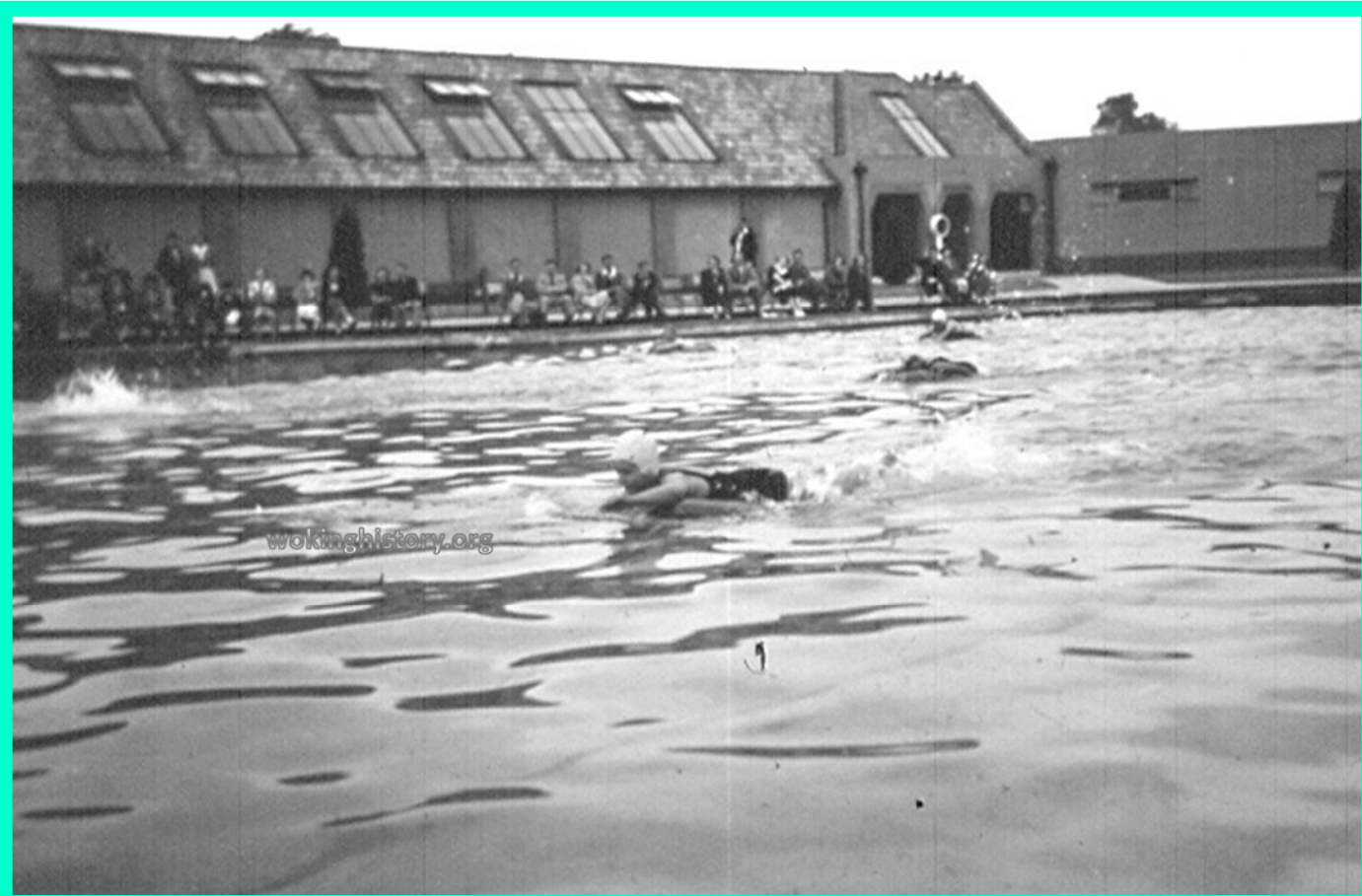
At a meeting of the Ratepayers Association early in 1934 Mr E W Shipton is reported to have stated that 'the Council knew only too well that the figure they had put forward with regard the Lido in the Recreation Ground would not hold water' – a pun that evidently proved substantially true.

Revised plans had been drawn up to trim the costs (such as communal dressing rooms), but with road works and a new bridge over the Hoe Stream (which would cost £1,200 alone), the total price had risen to £20,300.

Mr Shipton urged that 'if £20,000 was to be spent the long-suffering shopkeepers of Woking were entitled to ask that the money should be spent on such a building and in such a position as would bring trade to the town'.

In the end the council approved in October 1934 the lowest tender (out of a dozen quotes) from Messrs Bolton & Lakin of Birmingham for £18,687.7s.9d for the complete scheme including dressing rooms, with a Clerk of the Works engaged at a weekly wage of £6.10s and the Ministry of Health asked to sanction the borrowing of £21,600 - £1,200 of which was to go towards the cost of the new bridge across the Hoe Stream and the associated new road into the park.

The first turf on the site was cut in November 1934 by Councillor Conrad Samuel and the pool finally ready for opening by the Duke of Sutherland (resident of Sutton Place) on the 27th July 1935.



THE NEW KNAPHILL METHODIST CHURCH IN 1935

Earlier this year Knaphill Methodist Church celebrated 150 years with a series of events and a new booklet – an updated version by John Mynard of earlier histories written in 1946 and 2005 by Wilfred Woolvett and Heather Wright respectively. It tells of how the movement began in the village with open air meetings before in 1867 a small flint and brick chapel was built to accommodate 240 people and then extended in 1877 and 1912, with a new Sunday School building added in 1928.

By 1935, however, it was clear that the original chapel was in serious need of repair – or more accurately in serious need of replacement. A meeting of the trustees was held on the 28th March and on the 28th April the last service in the now 'unsafe' building was conducted.

'The next day Messrs. Crosby & Co Ltd of Farnham, the contractors who were to build the new church, took possession of the old building and, in pulling it down, discovered hidden away in the walls of the building a glass bottle which contained a pland of the Guildford Circuit for May, June & July 1866. By



The old church before demolition in 1935

June the work on demolishing the old chapel was complete and the site made ready for the erection of the new church.'

This was paid for by a generous donation by Frank Derry and his wife (whom I wrote about earlier this year in connection with the building

of his home, Ashwood, in 1928 – see my website www.wokinghistory.org under the Inter-War section of the Surrey Advertiser Articles part of the site) who opened the new church on the 6th November 1935.

THE POLLENARIUM IN OLD WOKING OPENED IN 1936



Another article earlier this year looked into the Emigration Training School set up by Rupert Guinness at Woking Park Farm.

The Guinness family had extensive landholdings in Canada and Rupert was interested in agricultural improvements. He was also interested in medical research and whilst studying at Cambridge in 1900 he persuaded his father to endow the Lister Institute with a gift of £250,000. Two decades later, as a result of a meeting at the House of Commons called by Arthur Balfour, a committee was formed to further the work

being done at St Mary's Hospital in London, with Guinness becoming the chairman of the Inoculation Department Committee in 1921 (and later endowing the hospital with the gift of a ward). He was also apparently the chairman of the Wright-Fleming Institute of Microbiology (to which he presented £40,000 in 1929 for new laboratories) and was said to be a life-long friend of Alexander Fleming. Indeed it is claimed that it was Fleming who suggested to Lord Iveagh that he should set up the pollenarium on his land at Pyrford Court in 1936 in order to study the effects of hay fever and possible cures.

The unit was managed by Dorothy Noon who with her brother Leonard had started collecting pollen for clinical research as early as 1907. They developed a means of planting and picking the grass heads, drying, extracting and standardising the extracts.

The facilities off Carters Lane in Old Woking were extended in 1955 'to allow research with new types of pollen', with the work continuing to produce pollen for therapeutic and prophylactic vaccines until it closed in 1971. Sadly nothing now remains of the low concrete building that once stood beside Carters Lane in Old Woking.