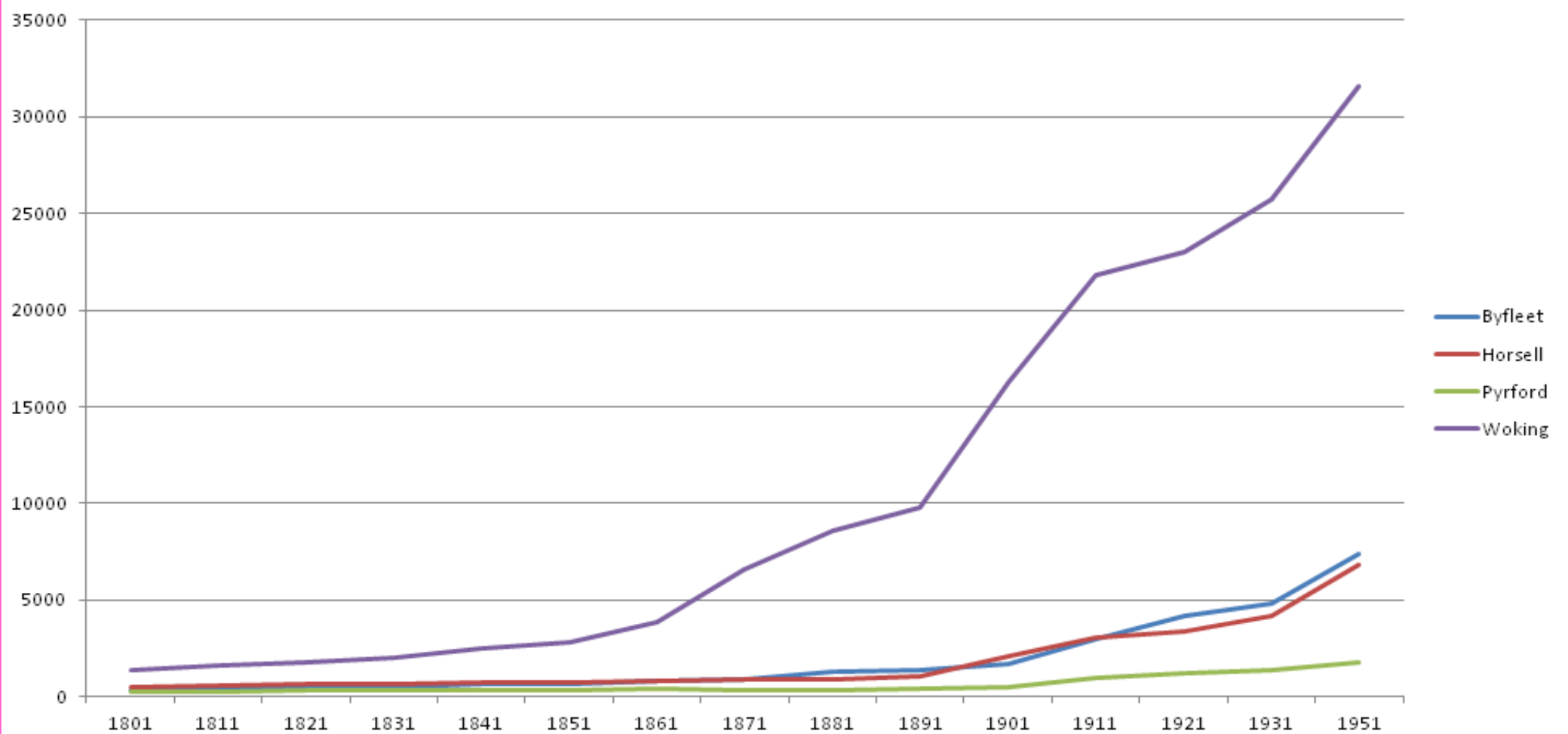


THE CONTINUING STORY OF HORSELL'S HOUSING

Iain Wakeford 2016



In 1801 the population of the ancient parish of St Peter's, Woking, totalled 1,340, by 1831 it had steadily increased to 1,975, but then in 1838 the railway came to Woking Common and by 1841 the population had soared to 2,482 – an increase in those ten years of over 25%.

The 1840's saw a slower rate of growth, but between 1851 and 1861 the population of Woking increased by more than a third, mainly in the latter part of that period following the start of land sales by the Necropolis Company (and the establishment of the Invalid Convict Prison at St Johns).

Between 1861 and 1871 the population of the parish increased by another 70% and by 1881 the number of inhabitants had reached 8,544. Within a lifetime Woking had changed from a sleepy little village on the banks of the River Wey into a fast-growing commuter town on what had once been its open common land to the north and west.

The change in population did not just affect Woking. In Horsell, between 1891 and 1901, the number of people more than doubled from 1,021 to 2,105 and by 1911 almost another 1,000 more had moved into the village. Byfleet too saw an increase in the first decade of the 20th century with over 75% more people in the parish during that period, and in Pyrford the population increased by over 85%, mainly it would seem as a result of the St Nicholas Home opening in 1906.

By 1931 the population of the Urban District of Woking was almost 30,000, with over 5,000 more in the villages of Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford (at that stage still part of the Chertsey Rural District Council area).

A large percentage of that increase between 1921 and 1931 found accommodation in the Woking Village & Mayford ward of the council (more specifically Old Woking & Westfield) where as we have seen in previous articles the council were busy building new estates. The population there increased by nearly 69%, whilst other areas that experienced council house building at that time, such as Knaphill (and Brookwood), saw an increase of over 25% with nearly 28% more people living in the 'Horsell South' ward between 1921 and 1931.

Unfortunately, because of the war, no survey of population was carried out in 1941, so we cannot know for certain how many then lived in the area, but an estimate by the Registrar

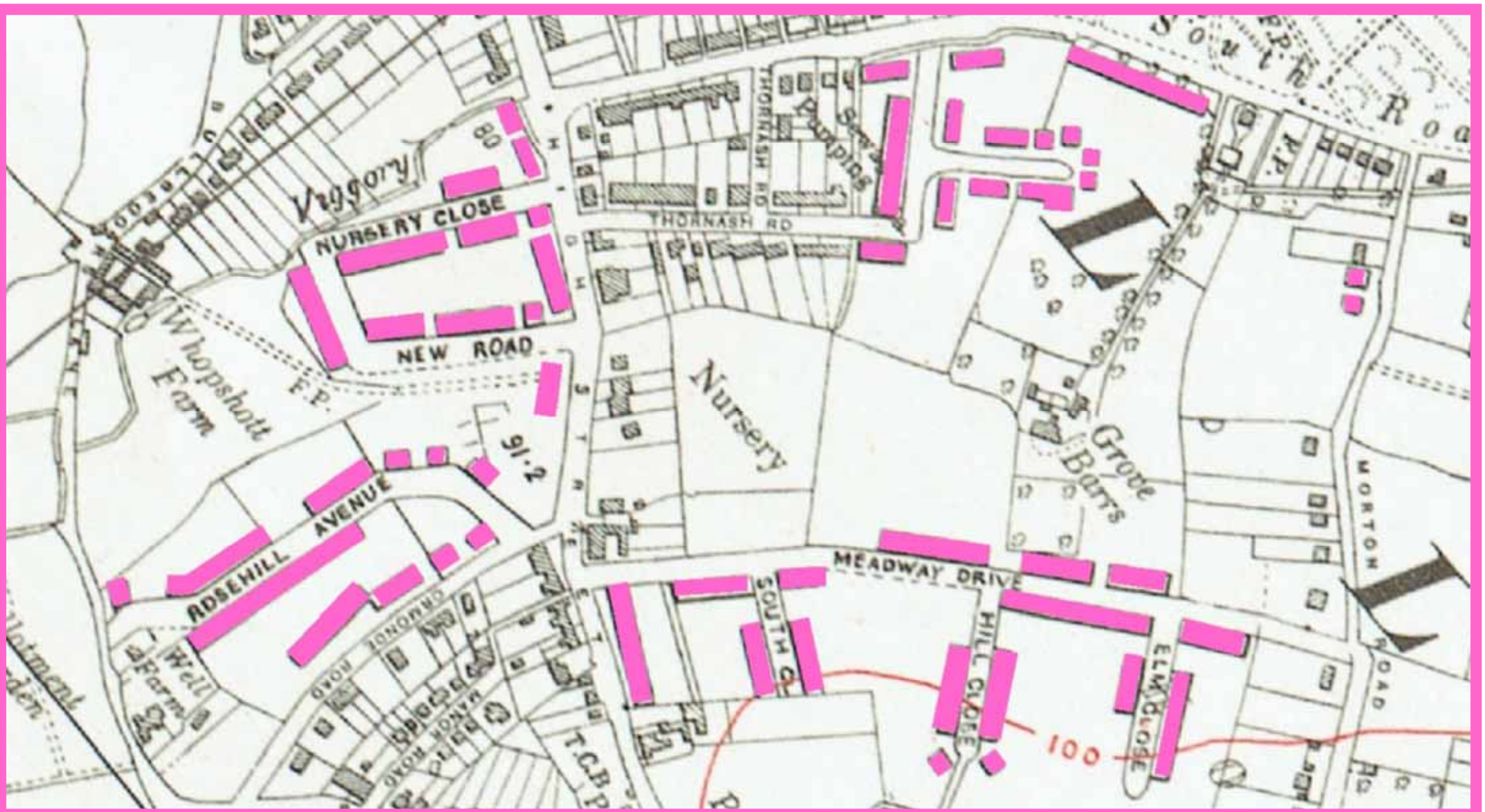
The population of the Woking area massively increased in the late 19th and early 20th century.

General at the time put the figure for the whole Urban District of Woking at 42,000 – about a 16% increase on the combined 1931 figures.

Of that increase it is clear that one of the wards that bore the brunt of development was 'Horsell North' with plans passed by the council in 1936-7 for houses on the Grove Barrs Estate (by Davis Estates Ltd); off South Road (West Surrey Building Estates); Morton Road (E. Childs); and roads off 'The Meadway' where Mr F.D. Moffatt was planning the development of houses on the Hill Close Estate as well as getting permission for seven shops (with accommodation over) in the High Street in January 1937. These were undoubtedly the same seven shops that were later built by Davis Estates on the corner with what became known as Meadway Drive.

The seven shops on the corner of the High Street and 'The Meadway' were built by Davis Estates as part of their 'Grove Barrs' development.





This OS 6" Map shows some of the new roads and houses of Horsell (coloured pink) that were being constructed in 1938.

South of the High Street was also seeing development, with Messrs Hamilton & Hillman (later Hamilards Ltd) developing the land that had once been Cobbett's rose nursery (hence

Rosehill Avenue) and the 'Waldens Park Nursery Estate' on what had once been Spooner's 'Waldens Nursery' in Bullbeggars Lane. Even the County Council got in on the act by building four pairs of policemen's houses in Bury Close!

Meanwhile, our old friend Evelyn Ricks (who in

the early 1930's started the development of Wheatsheaf Close and Common Close), was also busy in the late 1930's, developing the 'Horsell Grange Estate' – part of which included what was to be called Kettlewell Close.

Like Woking, Horsell was gaining a thriving commuter community.



The division between Spooner's 'Walden Nursery' and the grounds of Cobbett's 'Rose Hill' nursery was marked by the small turning circle that at one time formed the end of the road (before it was quickly extended).

H W Crane was also involved in the development of houses in Rosehill Avenue and Ormonde Road.

THE WRONG WAY TO NAME BENSTEAD WAY



The road marked 'New Road' on the map was apparently to form part of a proposed 'Horsell By-Pass' with the large verge on the eastern side of the road allowing for future road widening. But with developments elsewhere, the proposed route was evidently abandoned.

What was also abandoned was a proposal that

the road should be named 'Benstead Way' in honour of Horsell South's long-serving (and well-respected) councillor, Archie Benstead - whose cycle business (and later garage - pictured below) was on the corner of Horsell High Street and Bury Lane. Unfortunately it seems that not everyone was quite so keen on the name and when opposition to the idea was

expressed not only did Mr Benstead withdraw his permission for his name to be used, he also resigned his seat on the council. That was in 1940, however, and with war taking place the council tactfully asked him to be allowed to be co-opted back on to the council, which he immediately accepted having apparently got over the previous 'insult' over what came to be called 'Horsell Way' instead.

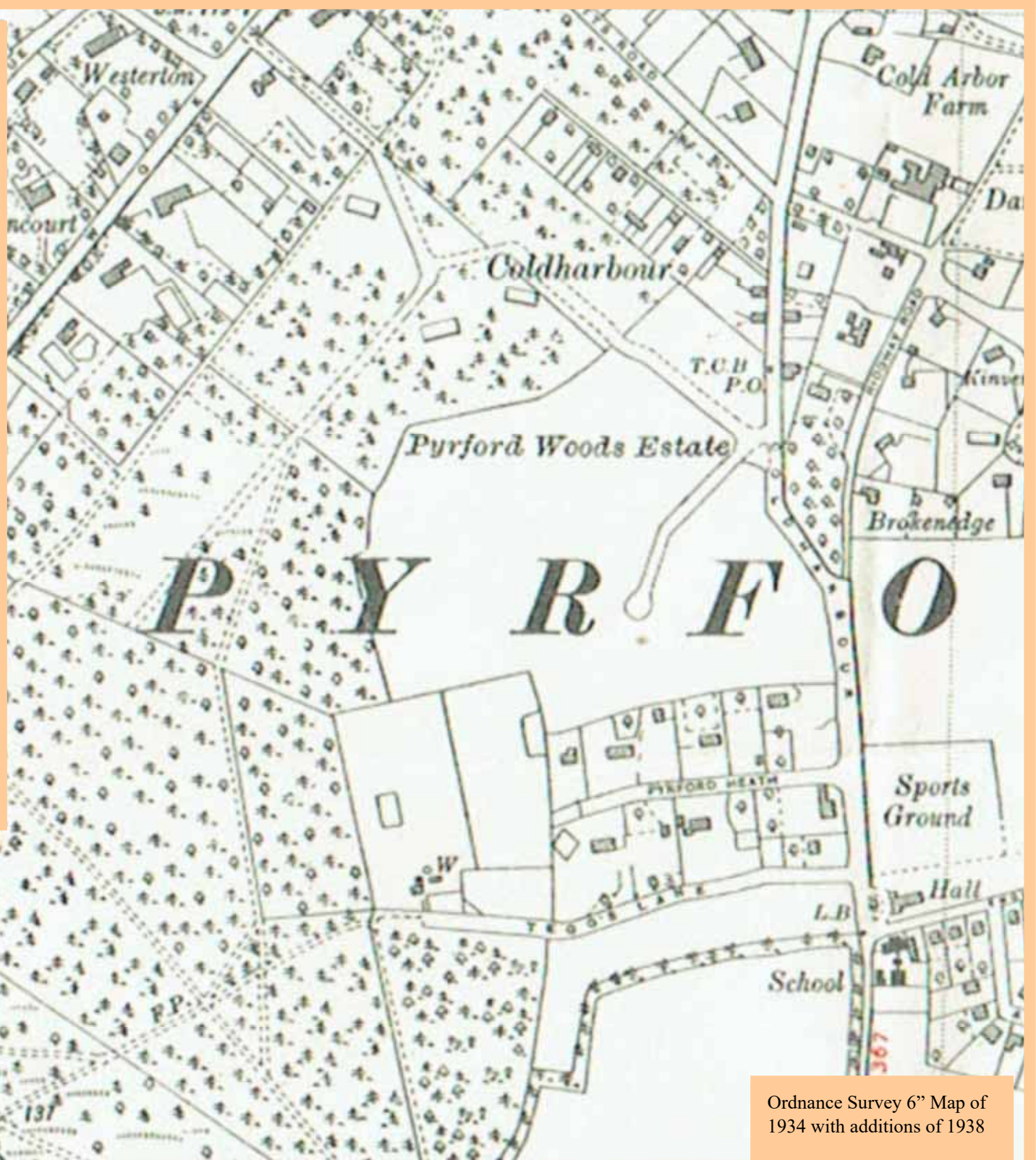


THE DEVELOPMENT OF PYRFORD WOODS



The land between the Old Woking Road, Pyrford Common Road and Coldharbour Road, was part of the Lovelace Estate (hence Lovelace Drive) and known locally as 'Pyrford Woods' a beauty spot that was claimed to be one of the last havens of the red squirrel in southern England. On the 26th March 1936 a meeting was called in the village, presided over by Sir Roy Wilson (a former Unionist MP) who lived at Wood End, when it was discovered that the woods were to be sold by Lady Lovelace to cover the cost of death duties. The heavily attended meeting lamented the imminent sale of the 109 acres, but there was little they could do.

In 1938 Councillor W G Tarrant, of Byfleet, obtained permission from the council to develop eighty houses on twelve acres of the site and outline planning permission was given for the rest of the land, but with the outbreak of the Second World War it would not be until the 1950's that the six-hundred or more houses of Lovelace Drive and its offshoots would be built.



Ordnance Survey 6" Map of 1934 with additions of 1938