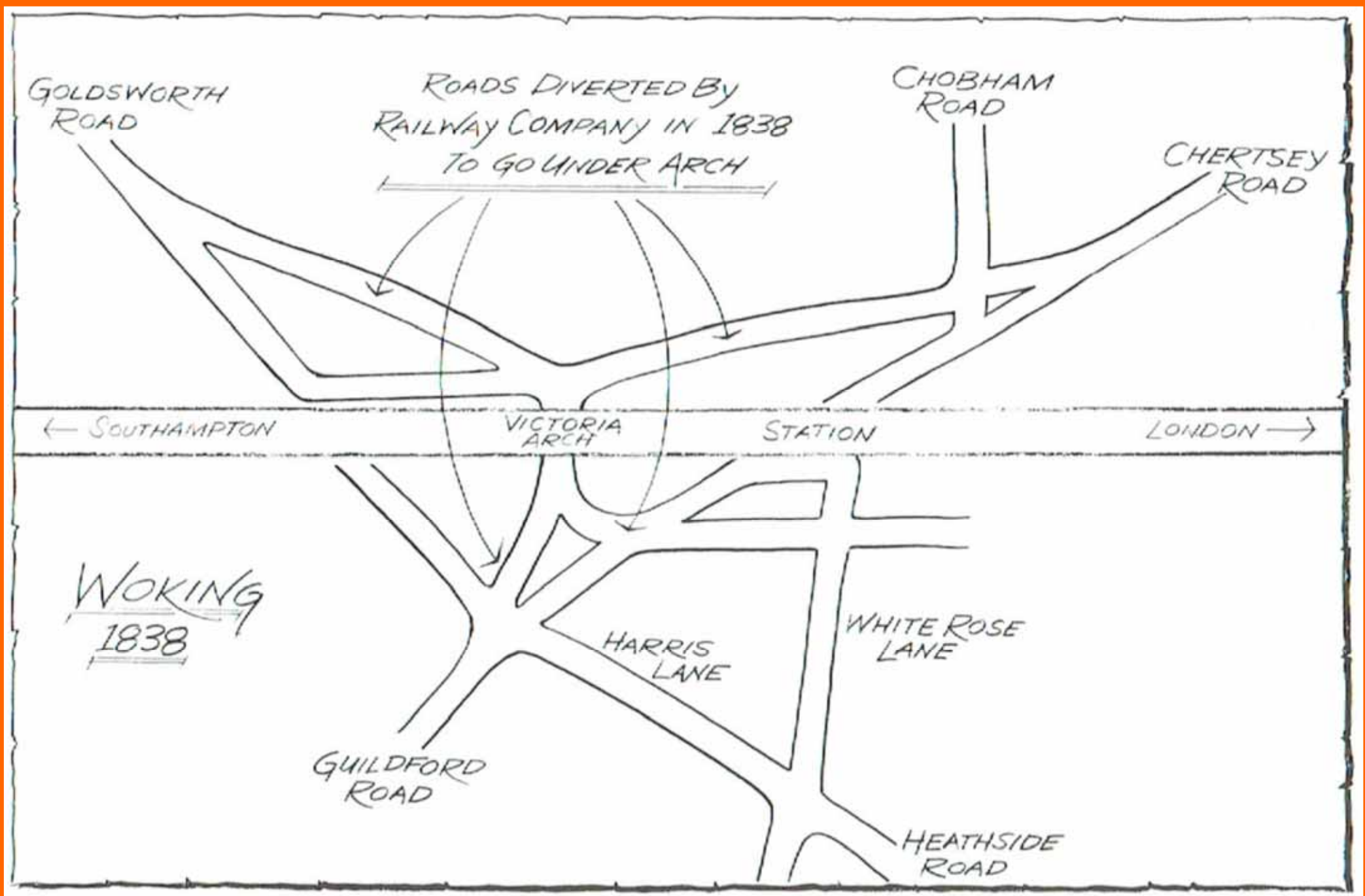


THE WIDENING OF COMMERCIAL ROAD

Iain Wakeford 2017



When the London to Southampton Railway was built in the 1830's there was so little traffic on the roads that the station was actually built where the main Guildford to Chertsey Road crossed the line. Any coaches that wanted to go between the two towns were diverted away to the west along a new stretch of the Guildford

road to what was later called 'Victoria Arch' and then along another new road (to be called Commercial Road), back towards the Chertsey road a few hundred yards north of the station.

Another track across what was then just open heath was also diverted with a new road taking those from Goldsworth and the north-west of

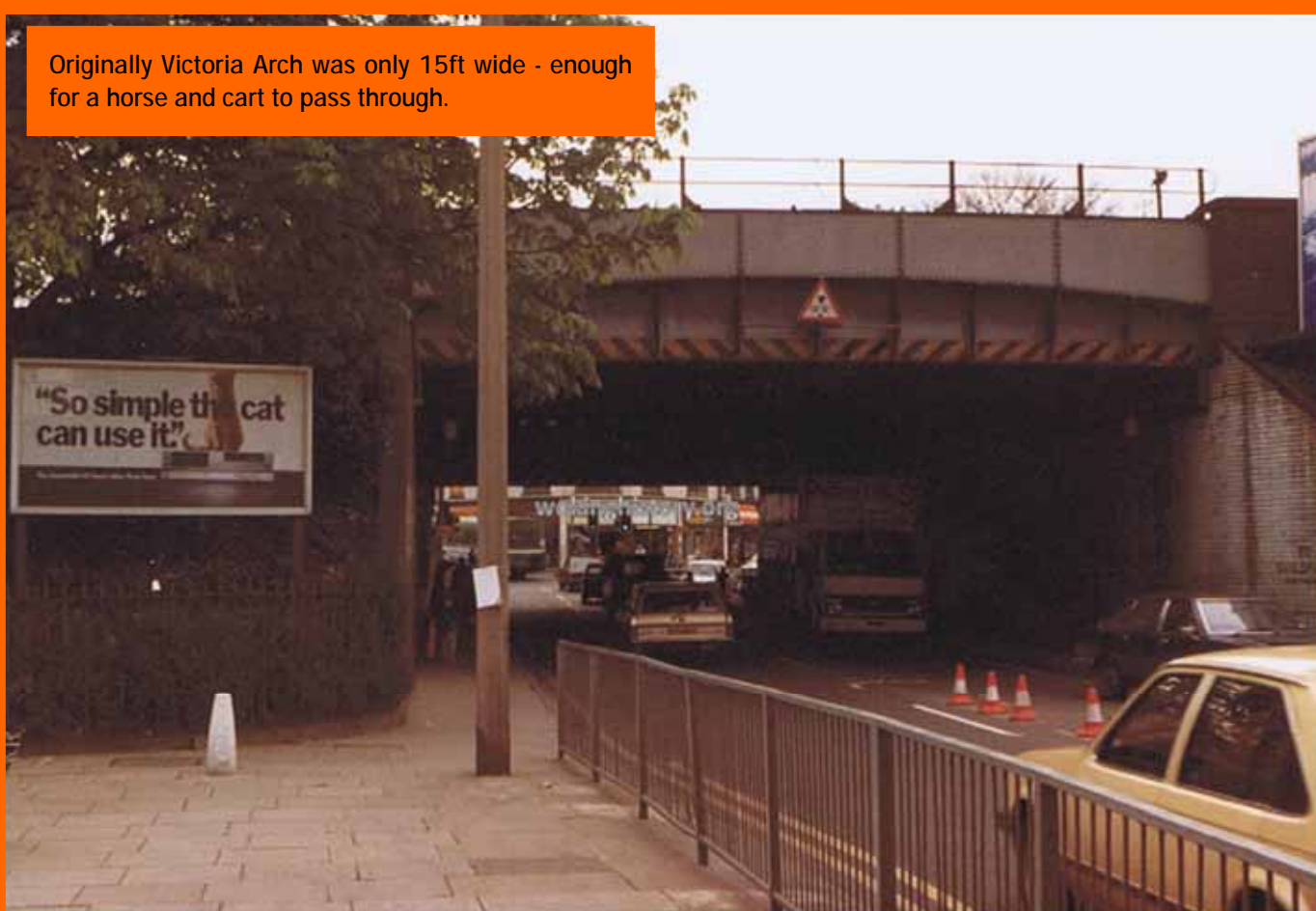
the Woking area to the new railway arch, so that they could get back on their old route at Heathside heading to the south and east of the district. The old 'Goldsworth' road became known as Poole Road and the part of the 'Heathside' road between the Guildford Road and the railway was lost altogether.

The road between (Old) Woking and Chobham was also completely blocked and instead a footbridge (later a subway) took its place across the railway – with White Rose Lane stopping at the south entrance to the station and the Chobham Road merging with Chertsey Road to the north.

All of these diversions and closures didn't matter with so few coaches (or more probably farm carts) in the area in the mid 19th century. Everything from the north of the railway to the south could quite easily go under the 15ft wide arch and the fact that several roads converged on that spot was not a problem. But as the new town started to develop around the station in the later 19th century, and the amount of traffic increased, it soon became clear that the layout of the roads was far from adequate.

In the early 20th century the width of the railway arch was doubled, and from the 1920's onwards parts of Commercial Road were widened, with several properties on the north

Originally Victoria Arch was only 15ft wide - enough for a horse and cart to pass through.





Commercial Road, with the houses of Church Street and Bath Road behind.

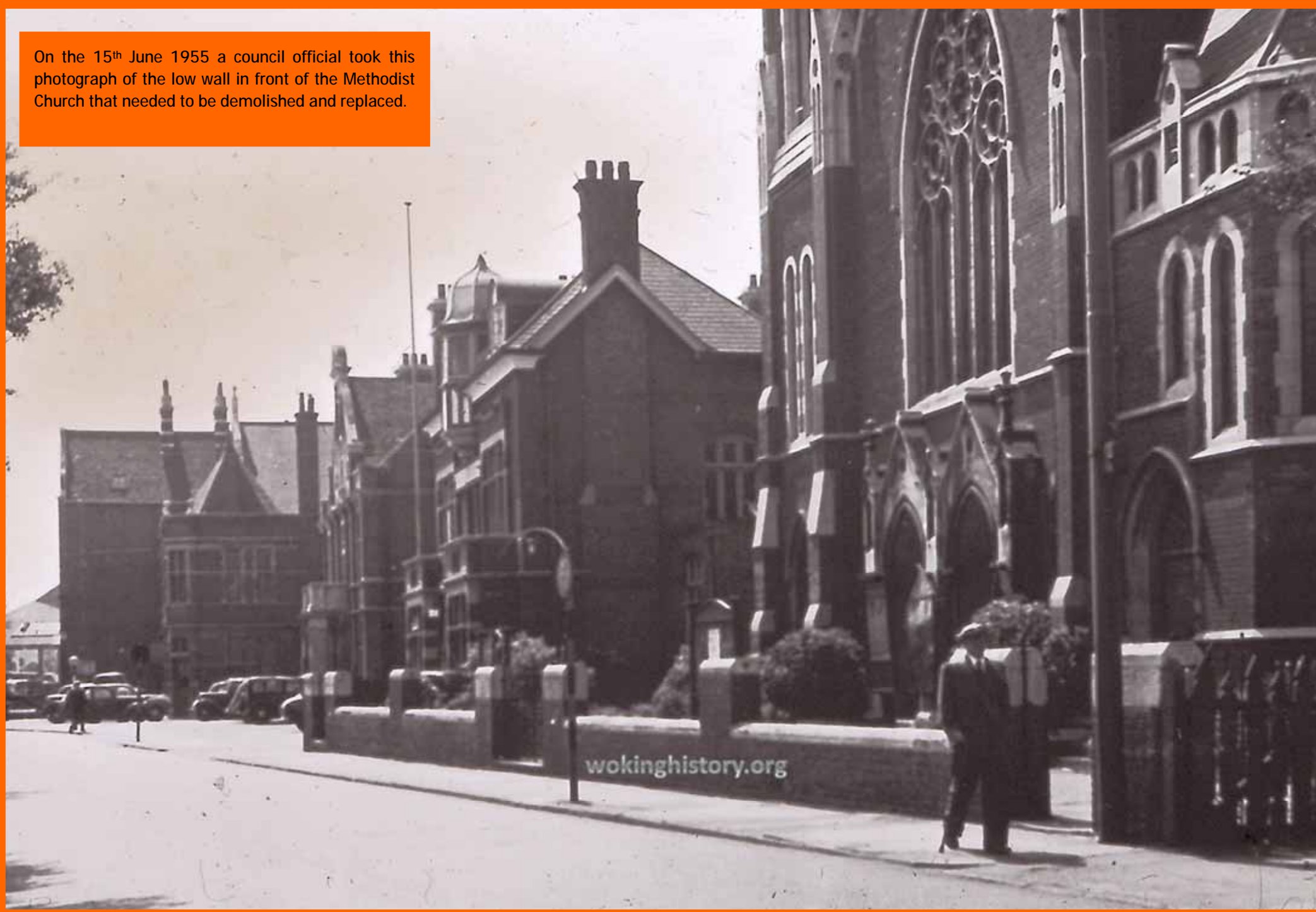
side of the street (to the east of Bath Road) being bought and demolished - creating a car park on the rest of the land once the street had been widened. But to the west of Bath Road, garden walls and other features still stood in

the way of the council's plans and negotiations began to try to buy the land necessary to make Commercial Road the proper thoroughfare it was originally supposed be.

In 1954 the council agreed a price of £500 for

a 'large portion of the front garden of No 17 Commercial Road' and £600 for the forecourt to No 19, whilst in October 1955 they agreed a price for the demolition and re-instatement further back of the 'dwarf-wall' outside the

On the 15th June 1955 a council official took this photograph of the low wall in front of the Methodist Church that needed to be demolished and replaced.





Once the Registry Office for Woking, the front garden of Rosslyn was lost to road widening in 1955.

Trinity Methodist Church (£200 for the land plus £212 for a new wall). A new wall was also required outside Rosslyn (No 15 Commercial Road), costing £450 altogether and £200 was the price agreed with the Constitutional Club in June 1956 for a portion of their forecourt.

By then it was probably all the more important that the transport network of the town was as

up-to-date as possible as our Member of Parliament – Harold Watkinson – had been created the Minister of Transport in Sir Anthony Eden's Government in December 1955!

It is doubtful, however, that the MP's new position had anything to do with the Council's plans as negotiations had begun long before then – but I cannot help wonder whether talks between the Council Clerk and the 'men from the Ministry' were smoother as a result.

Of course the widening of Commercial Road in the late 1950's didn't alleviate the situation for long, and by the 1970's it was decided to divert traffic away from the road with the new Victoria Way and Cawsey Way eliminating the need for a complex set of traffic lights by Victoria Arch – Ah progress!

The awkward junction of the High Street and Commercial Road with Percy Street and Goldsworth Road at Victoria Arch caused all sorts of problems in the past.

