

THE BUILDING OF BYFLEET'S BY-PASS

Iain Wakeford 2017



Plans for a by-pass to Byfleet High Road were first discussed in the 1920's and included in the North West Surrey Plan of 1927. After the war, plans had been submitted for a petrol station to be built as part of the Queens Road development, which although meeting no opposition from Woking Council was fortunately vetoed by the County Council.

The local residents' association were probably not too keen on the petrol station idea, but they were anxious to get the new by-pass built – pointing out how dangerous the old High Road was with its many junctions, tight corners and numerous shops and shoppers. But with so many other schemes requiring money after the war, it took until the late 1950's before work could start on building the new road.

Whether the residents were quite so keen on the cost, however, is another matter. In 1960, £19,031 of council funds was allocated to the construction of the Byfleet Loop Road (as it was then called), just a small part of what was reported to be Woking Council's £5 Million loan debt at that time (or according to one local report the equivalent of £82 per head of population). That, of course is peanuts when compared to today's estimated £1 billion worth of Council borrowing (or about £10,000 per person), but back in the 1960's, with inflation adding to the council's costs, there was serious concern about not wasting public money on schemes such as the Byfleet By-Pass.

In total the scheme for the new road was to cost about £100,000 – with the balance of the money coming from Surrey County Council and the Ministry of Transport. At the time the scheme had been approved Woking's M.P.,

The Construction of the Byfleet's by-pass (known at the time as 'Loop Road', but now just a continuation of Parvis Road, took just over six months.



Harold Watkinson, had been the Minister of Transport, but by the time it was complete he had been 'promoted' to Minister of Defence, ensuring a small but vocal group of CND protesters when he turned up to perform the official opening ceremony in July 1960.

On formally opening the road Mr Watkinson wished 'Good Luck' to all who would use the road 'but urged them to remember that a vehicle was a lethal weapon if it was misused' – a sentiment that the nuclear protestors might have pondered on.

The Rector of Byfleet, the Rev. Jones, was possibly being a bit over optimistic when he 'asked that those who used the new road would be blessed with the spirit of patience and courtesy and that they would have taken from them carelessness and the element of speed'.

Of course the fact that under normal circumstances motorists would not be careful of their speed was at that time ably recognised by a new company in the village that in 1960 had taken over the Cyclomaster company that had been operating at W.G. Tarrant's old Tudor Works in Chertsey Road since 1955.

Cyclomaster sold engines (developed originally in Germany) that could be fitted to ordinary bicycles - to effectively turn them into a 'motor-bike' - but with a change in the law these were no longer 'tax-free' (and with competition from scooters), the company had gone into voluntary liquidation, being taken over by a rival motorcycle accessory manufacturer from Germany called Britax.

One of their main products was a new 'inertia' or 'automatic seat-belt' which was revolutionising the safety of cars, and with their specially designed car seats for babies and children, they would go on to dominate the market (another local industry that we should be proud of).

If it hadn't been for a Britax seat-belt fitted to Donald Campbell's Bluebird in 1960 he wouldn't have survived his 300mph crash – not on the Byfleet Loop Road I should emphasise, but at Goodwood – although it seems there were plenty of locals who saw the new Byfleet



The Loop Road relieved the High Road of congestion (and trade)



Britax took over Cyclemaster's whose 'Proctor Works' were on the site formerly occupied by W.G. Tarrant's builders yard in Chertsey Road.

road as an invitation to try for their own 'land-speed records' at that time.

The building of the by-pass solved some major traffic problems, but caused others and it was not long before the resident's association were campaigning again - this time for a roundabout to be constructed at the junction with Chertsey Road. It wasn't long too before some of the traders in the High Road, relieved of traffic congestion outside their shops, found that they were also relieved of some passing trade! The old adage that you can please some of the people some of the time, was certainly strong in Byfleet in 1960.

