

OLD WOKING & INDUSTRY

Iain Wakeford 2017

Last week I briefly mentioned (and illustrated) the Britax Company at Byfleet who in 1960 took over Cyclomaster in Chertsey Road - later going on to sell thousands of car seats and seat-belts before moving away to Hampshire. But they were just one of many industries at that time that no longer call our area 'home'.

James Walker's at Maybury was once one of this area's major employers making packings and seals in their Lion Works factory. It had moved here from London in the 1920's to the site formerly occupied by Martinsyde's Aircraft and Motorcycle works (and before that the site of the Oriental Institute and the Royal Dramatic College). Whilst their 1960's offices still remain by the Lion Retail Park, their 'Lion Works' and other satellite factories in Old Woking have long gone.



taste
real roasts
for the very
first time
with a
Kenwood
ROTISSERIE

just **25 GNS**
TECHNICAL INFORMATION
Line: 228 watts. Mod: 100 watts. High: 1,120 watts. The motor is 1/2 P. maximum.
Type: temperature of roast with glass door closed - Line: 228 W. Mod: 100 W. High: 1,120 W. Voltage range: 240/220. 230/220. 220V. A.C. only. 50 cycles.

MEASUREMENTS OF ROTISSERIE
Width: 21" (53.34 cm). Width with spits: 24 1/2" (62.19 cm). Depth: 13" (33.02 cm). Weight: 22 lbs. (10.01 kg).

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makes everything
else out of date!

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McEWAN'S FOR ALL KENWOOD APPLIANCES



Also in Old Woking in the late 1950's and early 60's was the Kenwood Manufacturing Co Ltd, originally founded in a shed off Goldsworth Road by Kenneth Wood. A blue plaque has recently been unveiled there to commemorate him and his world-famous food-mixer (The Chef). It was just one of the many innovative products produced at his factory in Hipley Street, Old Woking, where in March 1959 a new office was officially opened, with the works then employing about 120 staff. Sadly it wouldn't be too long before Kenwood's outgrew their accommodation here and by the end of the decade they too would move away to Hampshire.

By the end of the 1960's Kenwood's had outgrown their new factory and offices at Old Woking and moved to Havant in Hampshire



Further up the High Street, S Murray & Co Ltd have remained in the factory they built here in 1959, having first moved part of their operation to Woking during the Second World War from London – but I fear Murray's continued presence in the area is very much the exception, rather than the rule.

Just after that war Cartbridge Laundry Ltd and Verstage Brother's Printer's of Odiham were granted permission to develop the site of Ford Farm in Old Woking with new factories, and in the late 1950's the Manor Way Industrial Estate was created by Woking Urban District Council. Like the Monument Way Industrial Estate in Maybury it was mainly to accommodate

S Murray & Co Ltd, started out in Campden, London during the First World War but during the Second World War part of their operation moved to Woking where they occupied a number of town centre sites until finally locating their entire business in Old Woking in 1959.





Maurice Gomm's, Metal Developments, in Manor Way, Old Woking, were one of the first firms in this area involved in the motor-sports industry

industries forced to vacate premises in the town centre, but new industries were also attracted to Woking such as Teeleze Products (an early manufacturer of Perspex) and Maurice Gomm's Metal Developments - one of the first in a long line of firms involved in the motor-sports industry in this area (long before McLaren's moved to Woking)!

I remember many years ago the Old Woking historian Tom Harding telling me of a conversation he had with a local councillor about the 'dumping' of so many industries (and before that council estates) in the village. The councillor – 'a true-blue Tory' - noted that 'it was Old Woking's own fault – it will keep voting Socialist!' The gentleman may have been joking, but it was certainly true that most of the less industrialised parts of the district were the more 'right-wing' areas, and the chances of Industry being allowed in The Hockering or Hook Heath was practically zero.

In truth, of course, industry couldn't afford to develop in those parts and the cheaper land at places such as Old Woking, Byfleet and Sheerwater meant that most businesses were concentrated in little 'estates' all over the district.

Other small industrial sites had become established in St Johns and Knaphill where former brick-making sites off the Robin Hood

S Murray & Co produce surgical, medical and scientific instruments – with a factory in Sheffield as well as their Head Office here in Old Woking



Road and Lower Guildford Road were developed by firms such as Crater Control Products, whose factory on what later became the Lansbury Estate, burnt down in April 1960 (with damage estimated at between £20,000 and £30,000). Fortunately by September that year it was up and running again with expanded facilities to make their switches and electrical components (only for another fire in 1972 to effectively bring an end to the company).

Arthur Craven (one of the founders of Craters) later went on to establish Medelec Ltd, who had small factories at St Johns Lye and in Manor Way at Old Woking – but perhaps that was part of Woking's problems, the industrial areas

were too small and widespread to encourage large industrial concerns to come or stay in the district.

The high value of land for housing (or in the case of James Walker's, shopping), meant that industrial employment in Woking soon declined. Even the large industrial areas at Sheerwater and Byfleet have seen offices, showrooms and warehouses replace what were once workshops and factories.

Woking is rightly proud of Mr Wood and his mixer, but perhaps it is time we celebrated some of the other pioneering products developed in our town and encourage more manufacturing industries in our area!

