

THE INTRODUCTION OF M.O.T.'S & THE LOCAL MOTOR TRADE

Iain Wakeford 2017

As the population of Woking grew in the late 1950's and early 60's – as the number and dare I say wealth of the households increased - the number of cars on local roads began to rise too. We have seen in recent months how some local roads were 'improved' during this period by the council and the Ministry of Transport to cope with the extra traffic, but a number of local entrepreneurs also sought to help the local motorists, with the provision of new petrol stations and garage workshops throughout the district.

Not all applications to open new garages were successful. 1957 saw the refusal for petrol filling stations at Byfleet ('near Oyster Lane abutting the proposed Loop Road' by H B Kingston Ltd), and in Woking the erection of a 'travellers shop, snack bar, lubrication and service bay – with four petrol pumps and kiosk, near the junction of Blackhorse Road and Egley Road' by Captain F K Bainbridge.



How many of the second-hand motors at the Old Woking Service Station passed their ten year M.O.T?



Local businesses were not the only ones attempting to open new filling stations in residential areas, however, as the Mobiloil Co Ltd applied in August that year for a petrol filling station and garage on land near the junction of Old Woking Road and Forest Road at Pyrford. They also sought permission for a 'garage and petrol filling station near the junction of Chobham Road and Brewery Road'. The latter was actually granted permission, but for reasons unknown (at least to me) they never went ahead with the scheme.

Many new petrol stations, garages, and motor showrooms did spring up at this time, as well as alterations and additions to existing workshops. In the late 1950's Bishop & Hicks eventually received permission to extend their parking bays and forecourt in Old Woking High Street, whilst just around the corner Burden & Bates were building a new canopy over their forecourt at Kingfield Garage. At the top of White Rose Lane, L F Dove Ltd were given permission for a new garage and workshop on the corner with Oriental Road (opposite the sorting office), whilst in town N W Pearce was rebuilding his showrooms and filling station at 76-86 Chertsey Road.

New Petrol Stations were developed in Byfleet, Brookwood and Knaphill, where late in 1957 permission was given for the filling station in the High Street, and in November that year the council agreed to an 'illuminated advertisement sign at the service garage now in the course of erection' at Knaphill.



The ultra-modern service station in Knaphill (above) contrasts with the Gables Garage in Ripley (right), where ultimately the historic building that gave its name to the site would be destroyed



In nearby Bisley, however, Bagshot Council (supported on appeal by the Minister of Housing and Local Government) considered there were enough petrol stations on the A322 and refused permission for the Shaftesbury Homes to redevelop the Bungalaw Hospital at the junction with Port Lane as a filling station and garage. It was pointed out that 'there are three garages within a relatively short distance of the site' and that the 'the road carried fast-moving traffic and visibility at the site was below the standard normally required'.

On the even busier A3 at Ripley a number of petrol stations had also sprung up – including in the heart of the village The Gables Garage that

would ultimately lead to the destruction of the historic building that gave the site its name.

By the early 1960's motorists throughout the district could buy petrol and have their cars serviced in every village from Sutton Green in the south to New Haw in the north, with an abundance of choice in places such as Byfleet and Brookwood, where for one reason or another there appeared to be more petrol pumps than the population probably required (let alone desired).

The fact that by the early 1960's the Ministry of Transport were introducing a new compulsory test for all cars over ten years old may also

have contributed to the situation. Ultimately, of course, the new MOT (introduced gradually from February 1961) would condemn some vehicles to the scrapheap, although the original tests were nowhere near as stringent as they are now. When first introduced all that needed to be tested were the brakes, lights and steering. Nevertheless the high number of vehicles that failed even that simple test in the first year, prompted the Ministry of Transport to think again and by the end of the year the age at which vehicles were forced to be tested was brought down to seven years – much to the annoyance, no doubt, of some second-hand car dealers in the district!



The Rosemount Garage in West Byfleet was redeveloped in the early 1960's.