

# SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION IN THE LATE 50's & EARLY 60's

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**W**ith the baby-boomer population growing after the Second World War – and the number of households in Woking increasing – there was pressure in the 1950's and early 60's for new school places to be provided.

Surrey County Council set upon an ambitious building programme across the county, building amongst others the new Pyrford Primary School and the Infant School in Send, but not all their plans came to fruition as suitable sites for primary schools in Hook Heath/Mayford and in

the Heathside area could not be found – the high price of land making it uneconomical.

The Catholic Church were obviously not so restricted and in September 1957 local children between the ages of five to eleven were able to attend their new St Dunstan's Infant and Junior School in Onslow Crescent. A house on the site (previously owned by the Church of England) had been used as a temporary school for a few years, but the new building (estimated originally to cost a total of £70,000) was in desperate need. The old building could only cater for about 120 children and already by July 1957 over 300 applications had been received for the envisaged 150 infant and 250 junior school places.

Pyrford Primary School (above) was replaced by a new £5.6 million prefabricated Portakabin school last year as part of a new PPI initiative that saw the old 'dilapidated' building pulled down.



The new St Dunstan's Roman Catholic Infant & Junior School in Onslow Crescent was built in the grounds of a house that had once been owned by the Church of England



Designed by the County Architect, John Harrison, the new Girls Grammar School in the Old Woking Road, sadly didn't make it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Later that year the Catholic Diocese of Southwark applied to build a two-form Secondary School on 3¾ acres of its land at Bylands in White Rose Lane (with a floor space of just 17,000sq.ft.), but fortunately that was turned down and eventually houses built on the site instead.

In 1960 permission was granted for a new Catholic Secondary School to be built at Kingfield (together with a new Boys Secondary

School – 'subject to access to both schools being made from Rydens Way'), although it would not be until the late 1960's that the St John the Baptist School was built, with the proposed 'Boys School' becoming what is now Woking College.

The new Boys Grammar School was to complement the new Girls one which had been built in the Old Woking Road at Maybury in 1958. The old site of the Girls School, between

Onslow Crescent and Park Road, then became the Park Special School, with the old damp and rotten wooden huts (that during the First World War had been the home of the Army Pay Corps), eventually being redeveloped with new school buildings.

1957-8 was also the year that Chobham's new Secondary School was built and the following year a new secondary school was erected in Westfield – the Highlands County Secondary

The new Chobham Secondary School was built in 1957-58.





School (although the official opening would not be until 1961). Like all the County Council Schools mentioned above, it was designed by the County Architect, John Harrison, in what some have described as 'reflecting the Surrey vernacular' with 'red brick, white paint and pitched tile roofs' making them quite distinguishable from the more 'modern' schools that were to follow after 1963 when Raymond Ash took over the architects department at Surrey.

Highlands was the latest in a long line of schools in the Westfield area with the first 'National School' opening its doors in the village

as long ago as 1849. That school was taken over by the Woking School Board when it was formed in 1874 and in 1879 they bought some land on the opposite side of Westfield Road from Mr Gustav Wermig for £350, upon which they built a new Mixed School – the little original school becoming the Infants Department (now St Marks Church, with the '1879' building being the Moorcroft Centre).

Further expansion came in 1896 when a third school was built opposite where the shops would later be in Westfield Road and later still an 'annex' at Kingfield was constructed to cater for the vast influx of children into the area

The Mixed School, built in 1879 in Westfield Road by the Woking School Board, is now the Moorcroft Day Centre - the 1896 buildings (opposite the shops) being demolished and replaced by housing.

between the wars with the building of new Council estates in Old Woking, Kingfield and Westfield.

The construction of Highlands Secondary replaced the old Kingfield Secondary - that building (now Kingfield School) then becoming for a time an offshoot of the new Barnsbury Primary School (like Pyrford and Send, another great Harrison design) – itself opened in April 1957.



The former Highlands Secondary School is now Westfield Primary School, with the original Westfield National School of 1849 (right) now St Mark's Church.

