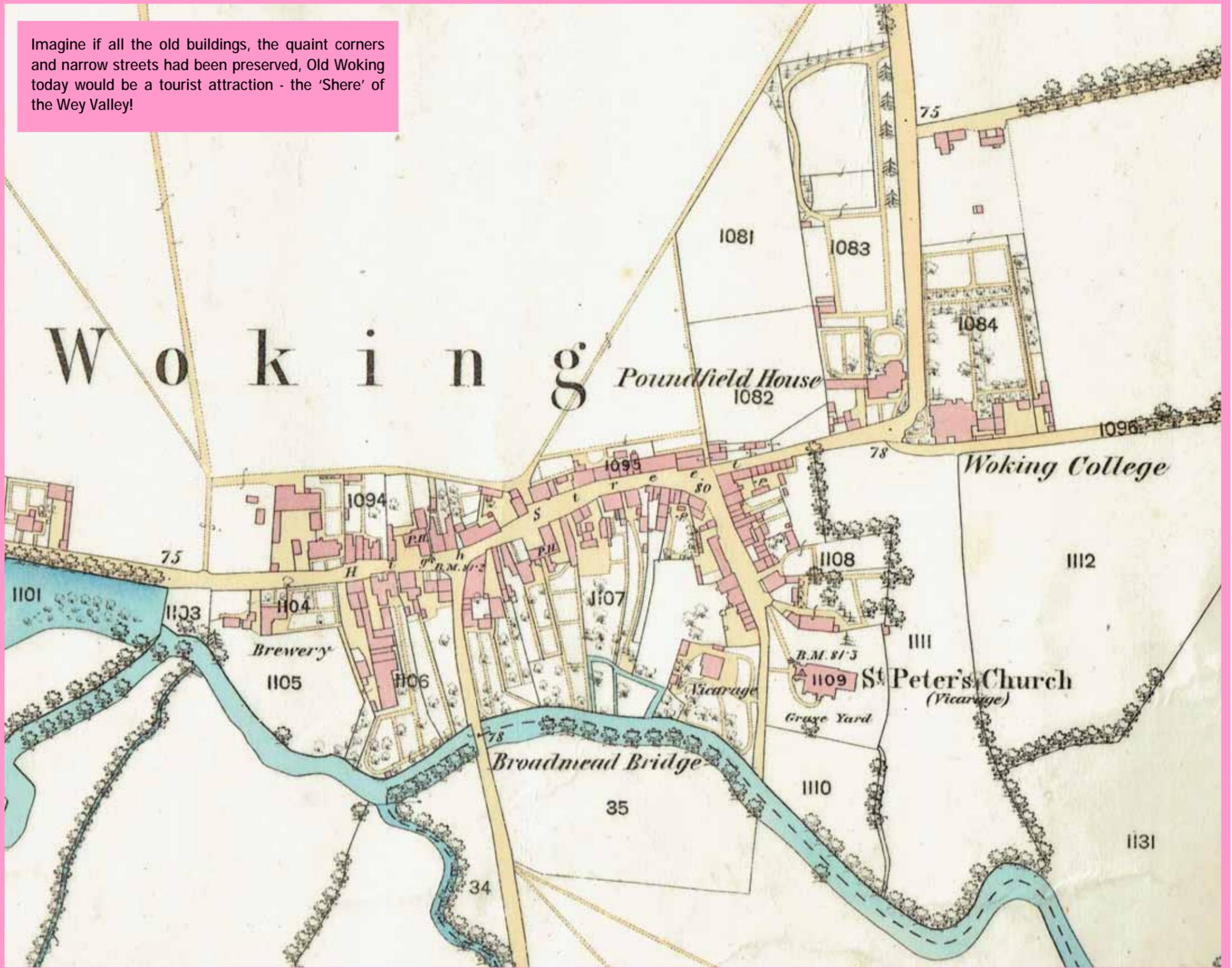


THE COTTAGES OF OLD WOKING CONDEMNED BY THE COUNCIL

Iain Wakeford 2018

Imagine if all the old buildings, the quaint corners and narrow streets had been preserved, Old Woking today would be a tourist attraction - the 'Shere' of the Wey Valley!



Has anybody got a photograph of Poundfield House in Old Woking – a large Victorian property that until 1960 stood opposite The Grange on the corner of the High Street and Old Woking Road? It was the home of Edward Ryde, a surveyor who made his fortune drawing up plans for various railway companies, and who also compiled maps, such as the tithe map for Chobham in 1845 and another large scale map for Horsell in 1851. For most of his professional life he kept a diary, not just recording his business affairs, but also family occasions and notes on the social side of life around Woking and North West Surrey. Those diaries are safely ensconced in the Surrey History Centre in Goldsworth Road, and are an invaluable source for local historians when it comes to studying the late Victorian history of this area.

Edward Ryde died in 1892 and a number of his properties around the village were sold off, but it was not until 1957-58 that the garden of his house was developed with the bungalows of Poundfield Gardens and a couple of years later that the maisonettes of Poundfield Court replaced the house itself – so presumably somebody somewhere could still have a picture of the property. All that remains today is the stable block, which some have likened to an old railway building (which given Ryde's work on the railways is perhaps not surprising).

The loss of Poundfield House was a sad day for the village of Old Woking, which by the early 1960's had already seen a large number of its old properties swept away to make way for road improvements. Most of these were around the junction of the High Street and Broadmead

Road, where since the early 1920's shops and cottages had been demolished for road widening, before plans were drawn up in 1928 for a by-pass to the village. That was part of the larger 'Southern Woking By-pass' along the central reservation of Rydens Way, which would have continued across the meadows towards Woking Palace and then on to the A3 at Ripley.

That never came about, of course, but by the 1960's a more modest Old Woking By-pass (utilising the Rydens Way part of the route) was still on the cards, although whether you could actually describe it as a 'by-pass' is debatable. In reality the spur down to the Broadmead Road junction would have split the ancient village in half, cutting off the properties of The Old Manor House, Old Brew House and London House, from the rest of the village centre. The road was



never built, of course, but the scars its planned route left do still remain in the mini-roundabout and car parks to the north of the Send Corner turning.

Luckily most of the Old Brew House did somehow survive.

But the council's desire to 'improve' Old Woking did not stop at road works. In the early 1960's Woking UDC decided to condemn a number of buildings on the corner of the High Street and Church Street as 'unfit for human habitation', and when the owners failed to bring the

Sadly Ivy Cottage (on the corner with Broadmead Road, where the Village Sign now stands) did not survive the 1950's either.

properties up to scratch, they forced them to be demolished.





If the demolition of the buildings around what was known as Send Corner had ripped out the 'heart' of the village, the knocking down of numbers 1 & 2 Church Street, and 178-182 High Street was the start of destruction of the village's 'soul'. Together with the demolition of a number of properties on the other side of the High Street (up to the entrance of St Peter's Road), the loss of all these properties would almost make the granting of Conservation Status to the village in the 1970's a joke.

By then most of the old buildings that the Conservation Area really should have conserved, had already been deliberately destroyed by the very authority that should have been preserving them, and the future of others, such as the Old Brew House, was even in the balance.

The perfect picture-postcard village of the past has long since been lost (if not forgotten).



On the northern side of the High Street, only a few of the old buildings managed to survive the 1960's.

In May 1963 the Council served a Demolition Order on Nos 187-189 High Street giving the occupants ninety days to leave and then the owners six weeks to demolish the properties (or the Council would make the arrangements and recover the costs).

