

# THE CHANGING FACE OF ST JOHNS & KNAPHILL

Iain Wakeford 2018



Permission to build the seven shops of Graphic House was given in 1965

In recent week's we have seen proposals in the mid 1960's to redevelop Woking Town Centre, but the town was not the only place where new buildings were under construction, and in St John's, in particular, new developments were rapidly changing the face of the village.

The late 1950's and early 60's saw massive amounts of new housing in the area at the Hermitage Woods and Woodlands Estates, and in January 1965 the brewers Watney Combe Reid (Alton) Ltd sought to serve some of those new homeowners by building a public house on Hermitage Road 'nearly opposite the junction with Fiveoaks Close'.

The new pub, 'incorporating a games room and saloon bar', was later named 'The Surrey' after a competition was held to come up with a name - the rather bland choice possibly being favoured following the furore over the naming of the new 'Knaphill County Secondary School' (after Sir Winston Churchill), further down the road.

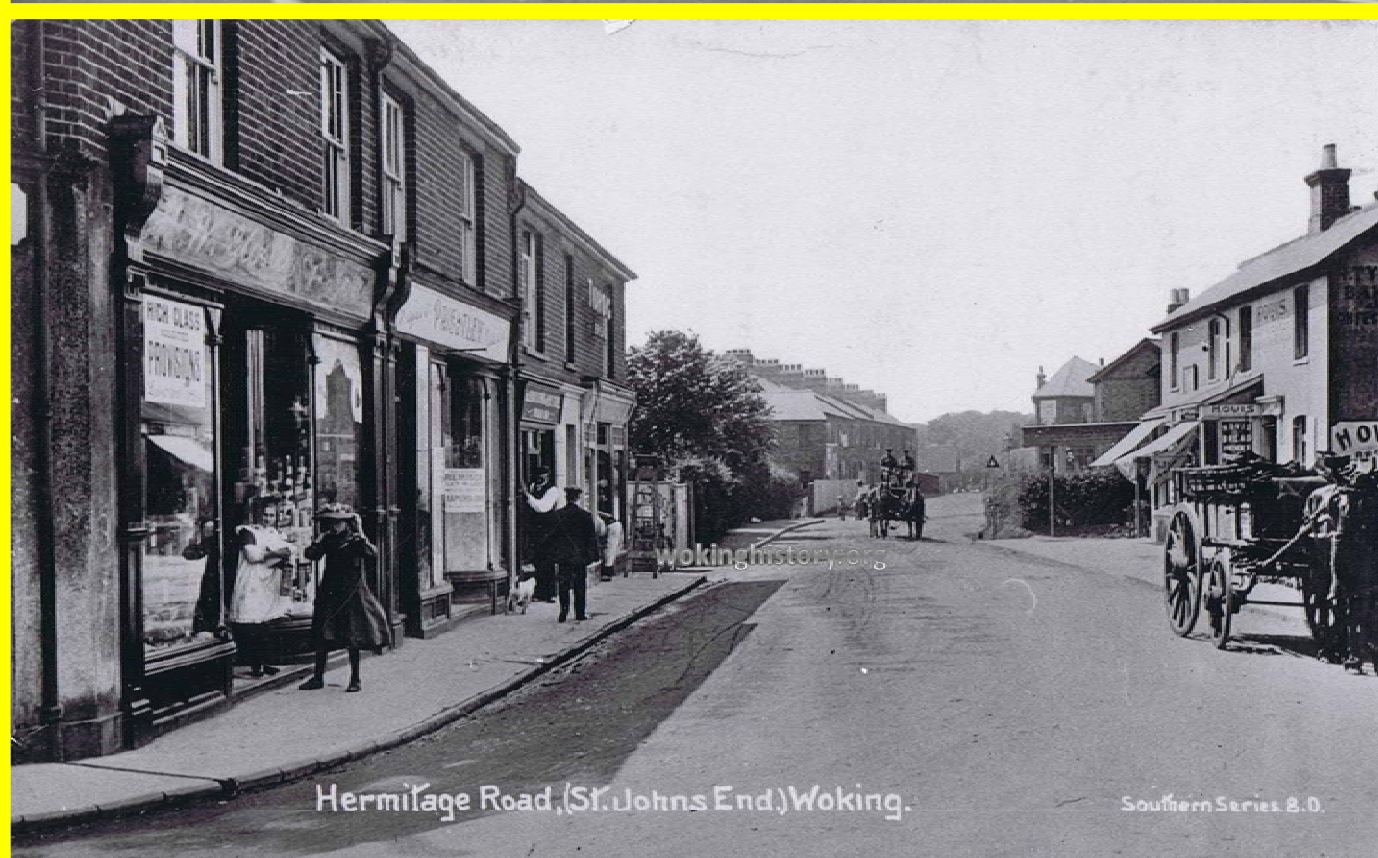
Later that year an application was lodged by the Howard Collings Group of Companies for a row of seven shops to replace a number of old properties on the corner of Hermitage Road with Barrack Path. These were evidently an investment by the pension fund of the newly merged printers trade union, the National Graphical Association - hence the name 'Graphic House' for the new development once it was complete.











Hermifage Road (St. Johns End) Woking.

Southern Series B.D.



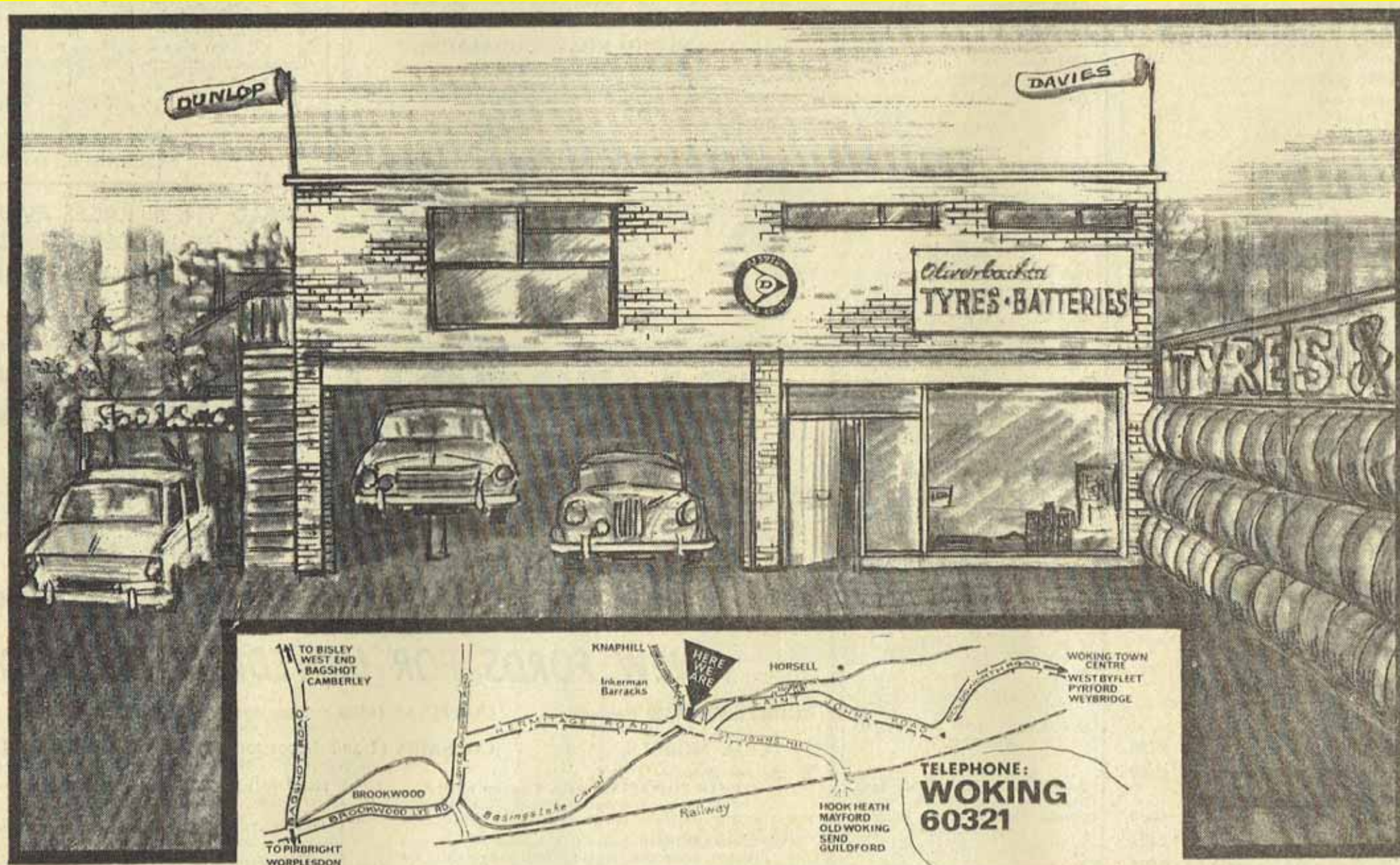




At the same time the Tyre Showroom of Oliver Cox was being constructed on the corner of Hermitage Road and Robin Hood Road.

Around the corner, at the junction with Robin Hood Road, another new development was taking place with Stoneslade Developments Ltd of Teddington constructing the tyre showroom next to Kiln Bridge for Oliver Cox Ltd. They announced the opening of their new centre at 10 Robin Hood Road early in May 1965, with new tyres costing from £5.9s.6d (£5.45 each) or 'slightly used' ones for just forty-five shillings (£2.28).

The new building included a 'modern observation lounge' where you could watch the 'bays staffed by trained specialists using up-to-the-minute equipment from both sides of the Atlantic' – 'a brand new conception of service' giving 'a new meaning to tyre servicing'!







The petrol station would have been to the left of the shops on the corner of the High Street and Sussex Road, causing a hazard for young children attending the nearby school.

Meanwhile at Knaphill, a proposal by A & J Simmons Ltd to build a petrol station with four maisonettes above near the corner of the High Street and Sussex Road was causing consternation in the village. Woking Council had passed the plans which were recommended to be approved by the County Council, but local residents (and especially parents of children going to the nearby Primary School), protested that the 'petrol filling station in the narrow part of the High Street' was a

hazard, and that a second filling station in the village was not needed when there were plenty of similar facilities nearby. In the end they evidently won and the filling station and maisonettes replacing the houses at 94-98 High Street were not built.

Another local builder, W Deakin & Co Ltd, were also at this time having trouble getting planning permission for houses at Barley Mow Cottages and The Mount at the top of Waterers Park. They had bought the land in 1964 following 'discussions' with the council regarding the possible density for the site, apparently being assured that the 'normal density control for this area would apply'. Deakins took that to be eight

houses per acre for detached and semi-detached houses, or twelve houses to the acre for terraced houses (as the council themselves had done nearby), so they were not happy when their application for terraced houses on the site was turned down by the council, partially on the grounds that the elevated site 'provided an attractive backing to Waterers Park' and was by implication too good for the type of houses Deakins had proposed.

At the appeal the following year, however, it was the access to the site off Barley Mow Lane that the inspector found wanting, noting that until Barley Mow Lane was widened 'he considered that the proposal was premature'.

