

RETURN OF THE BULLBEGGARS!

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Woking is very fortunate to have a number of very active residents associations like the Byfleet, West Byfleet & Pyrford Residents Association – formed in 1928 partially in response to proposals for new roads in the area in the North West Surrey Plan of that year. Likewise Knaphill's group (formed in 2001) began over protests about road proposals for the area, and in Mayford, I think I am right in saying that it was the proposed development of the new road and roundabout across Mayford Green that kick-started the Mayford Village Society in 1990. But in Horsell it was not roads, but houses, that appear to have been the impetus for the formation in 1965 of their Residents Association, and in particular the proposal by Woking UDC to build 825 dwellings on land at Bullbeggars Lane.

Early in 1965 the council announced it was to compulsory purchase 54 acres of land to the south and west of the lane and a further 5½ acres to the north-east for residential development (along with some shops and a new primary school). Some of the land was part of Goldsworth Nursery, but 40 acres were owned by the Roake Brothers of Whapshott Farm, who apparently offered the land for £525,000, on the condition the council did not proceed with the compulsory purchase of the 5½ acres behind their property (which the council had intended to be used for sale to people displaced by redevelopment in Woking town centre).

There had, of course, been numerous developments in and around Horsell prior to then, and it was at this time that some of the new shops and flats in the High Street were being proposed (such as Mr Holmes' plan for 94 High Street - Maple Court - that received outline planning permission in July that year), but it appears that the proposal to build so many council houses on the edge of the village was the last straw.

Several objected on the grounds of 'density' – although one cannot help wonder whether it was the density of the houses (sixteen to an acre) or the perceived 'density' of the occupiers that they were more worried about!

Back in Medieval times a 'Bullbeggar' was a sort of evil goblin who roamed around the district terrorising people, and I suspect that some in the village feared that the mythical creatures that had allegedly occupied the barns in the lane centuries before, might be replaced by their modern-day counterparts!

One Conservative Councillor probably summed up the feelings of many when he said 'he would be completely in favour of the Bullbeggars Lane development if it were for owner-occupied houses' - although few were quite so willing to publicly support his view.

Another suggested, as a compromise, allowing owner-occupied houses to be built facing the lane (at a density of seven houses per acre) and for just 400 three and four storey council flats

In Medieval times evil goblin's known as 'Bullbeggars' roamed around the area terrorising the locals, living in the barns and giving the lane in Horsell its name.





Whapshot Farm Barn, before demolition and its replacement with the new farmhouse.

and maisonettes to then be built behind - but that suggestion was also not supported as objector after objector seemed to be falling over themselves to claim that they were not opposed to council houses as such, they were just opposed to so many of them being built on the edge of Horsell.

I have to declare an interest here, for although I was only two at the time that these proposals were put forward, by the time the first stage of

the Bullbeggars Estate was complete (in the early 1970's), our family had been moved there by the council from our soon-to-be redeveloped rented house in Cherry Street, Goldsworth.

Of course not everybody objected to the Bullbeggars Estate on the grounds that it was going to be for council tenants. The Vicar of Horsell was more pragmatic, announcing that he was writing to the council pointing out that 'what we want is a top architect on the job who

will give us something we can be proud of. We want a showpiece, not just an ugly council estate'.

I, of course, am biased - I will leave you to decide whether in the end the council paid heed to his plea or not!

Despite protests from the newly formed Horsell Residents' Association, the Bullbeggars Estate was eventually built (later renamed Lakeview) - and, I would like to think, not all the new council tenants turned out to be quite as bad as some had feared.

