

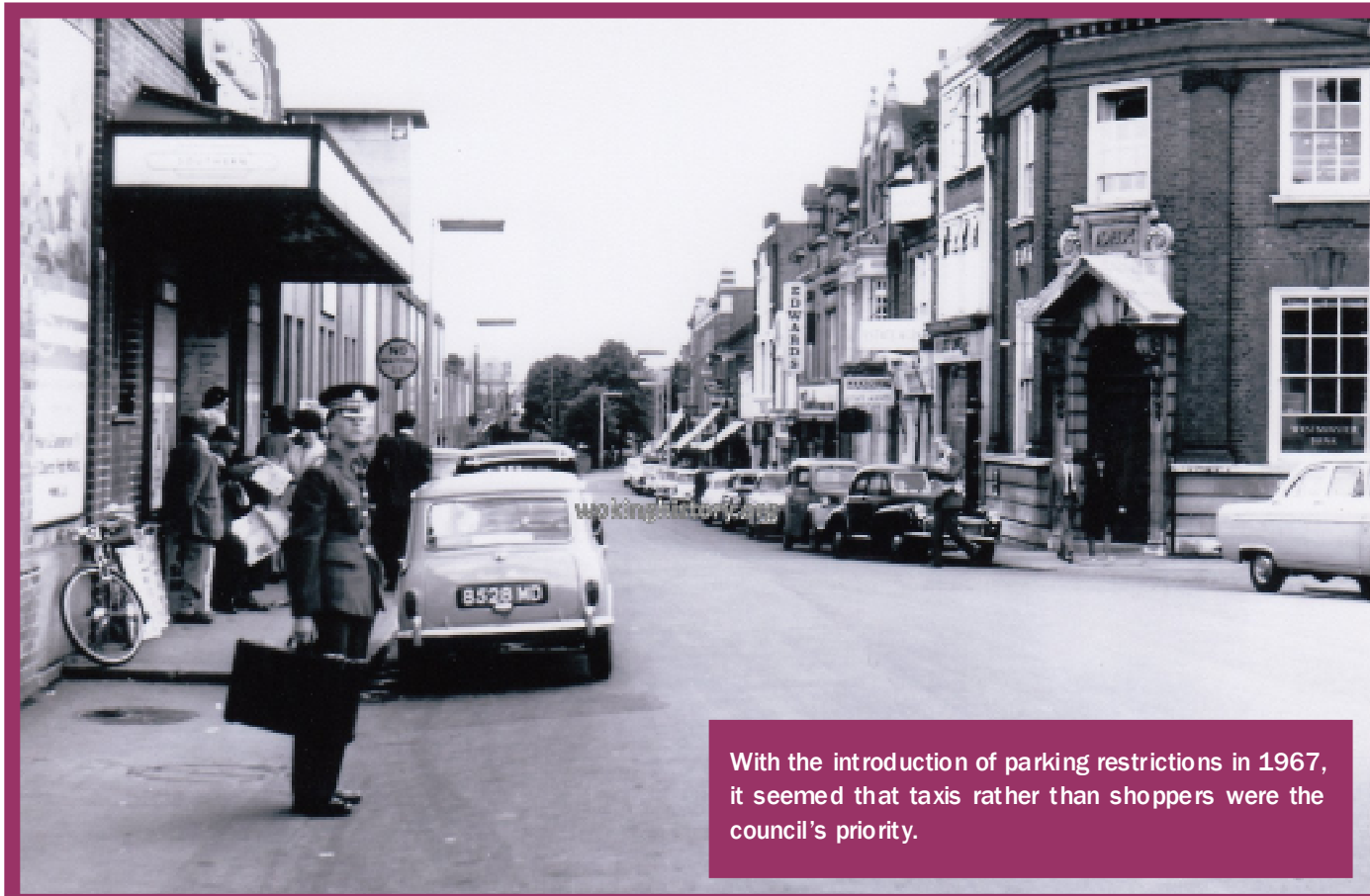
PARKING PROBLEMS IN WOKING & WEST BYFLEET

Iain Wakeford 2018

In January 1967 a petition from traders in Woking High Street was handed into the council claiming that parking restrictions 'were robbing them of trade'. New yellow lines to prevent congestion near the station were instead causing chaos, and according to one local Labour councillor would 'discourage people from shopping in Woking and drive them to other towns'.

Cllr Marsh (representing Woodham & Sheerwater) also claimed, however, that 'more people will be bringing their cars into Woking in the near future because reduced bus timetables have reduced services' and it appears he was not the only one with conflicting ideas of what would or should happen in the town.

When the scheme was first suggested a stretch of limited parking was apparently to be allowed in the High Street, but following representations from the Woking and District Chamber of Trade, that idea was dropped, although Cllr Gibson (Conservative, St Johns) pointed out - 'no objections were made by these traders when this scheme was first advertised fully in the press'.



With the introduction of parking restrictions in 1967, it seemed that taxis rather than shoppers were the council's priority.

He also claimed that the petition was started 'before the paint was hardly dry' on the road and suggested that given time the shoppers would become accustomed to the restrictions.

Sadly for one High Street trader it seems that his customers did not become accustomed soon enough, and in April 1968 the furniture shop of Colman's (established in the town for more than sixty years), announced that they were closing due to 'dithering council legislation'!

Mr Laurie Colman, Managing Director and owner of the firm, noted that 'recent car parking restrictions imposed in the High Street area have slashed my custom by over 50 per cent, and it seems ludicrous to me that there are over twenty taxis lying around the station all day long doing absolutely nothing'.

'There is no character in this town because a high percentage of its population are commuters who merely look on Woking as a place to sleep', and council policy (then, if not now) seemed to be to encourage them, with parking restrictions preventing local shoppers in favour of taxis and new car parks full of commuters' cars.

But it wasn't just in Woking that shoppers (and traders) were facing parking problems.



Colman's was started in Woking in 1904 by Mr Colman's father and uncle, R & S Colman, moving out of their store in Chertsey Road in 1926 when Woolworth's took over that site.

R. & S. Colman
Complete House Furnishers & Removal Contractors
55, 57 & 59 CHERTSEY ROAD, Woking
AND DUKE STREET

TELEPHONE: WOKING 65
SECOND-HAND DEPARTMENT: GOLDSWORTH ROAD.
IS THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF HOUSE FURNISHERS
COLMAN'S
Complete House Furnishers
AND REMOVAL CONTRACTORS.
9 & 10, HIGH STREET, Woking.
ESTIMATE.
Dear Sir (or Madam),
We have much pleasure in quoting you as below, and hope to be favoured with your esteemed order, which shall at all times have our best care and attention.



Parking charges to discourage commuters in West Byfleet also discouraged shoppers, so two hours free parking was suggested.

In West Byfleet free on-street parking was causing a problem as places were 'taken up early in the morning by commuters who drove to the station and left them in the streets all day'. Meanwhile the poor shoppers were being charged to park. A new car park had originally had free parking, but it was soon found that here too it was soon filled with commuters cars, although some local shops claimed they did notice a 'boost' to trade when it first opened.

Since the council introduced parking charges to discourage the commuters the car park was

empty, and as the Chairman of the Byfleet & Pyrford Chamber of Trade pointed out 'before charges were started the car park was full; now children go in there and play football'.

The solution, they proposed, was two hours free parking, although the reply from the council that if this was done in all car parks it would result in a loss of revenue of £10,000, was perhaps predictable. I am not certain that the alternative suggestion of closing the car park until 9.30am ('when the commuters have left the station') would necessarily have worked

either, but West Byfleet did at least have one advantage over Woking High Street – the chairman of the Highways and Works Committee on the Council was Cllr Henry Cawsey – whose Electrical shop was in Station Approach in the village!

West Byfleet's parking problems would soon be solved – in the High Street the taxis remained.

Station Approach, West Byfleet, with Cllr Henry Cawsey's electrical shop in the background.

