

FURNISHING THE NEW HOMES OF WOKING

Iain Wakeford 2019

Some say that the High Street is dead, but I wouldn't agree. We buy most of our meat from local butchers (either in Horsell or West End or Kingfield), our bread from either Heater's or Christmas', and our fruit and veg from Boz's (other local suppliers are available). True, most of our groceries my wife picks up from where she works at Brooklands, but even then the occasional forgotten item will be bought from local convenience stores, and when we are away on holiday we usually manage to find a local farm shop or village store to supply all we need.

Our 'local' shopping habits don't stop there though. A few years ago we wanted to buy a new three-piece suite. Having looked around the usual out-of-town outlets (most well and truly out of this town), we ended up in Ash Vale, at a shop that had exactly what we were looking for. The same applied recently when we were looking for a new mattress, which again we bought from a local High Street store where the service was excellent and the price no more than we would have paid in some faceless, national, 'sales all year round' establishment.

The best 'High Streets' it seems are constantly adapting, and the best local businesses will always find ways to survive - although looking back through my old newspapers it is remarkable how many once familiar names in the furniture business are no longer with us.

In 1967 the local furniture store of Campbell & Allen in Duke Street shut up shop for the last time. Mr Charles Allen, blamed the 'lack of imagination by local authorities in expanding

Robertson's started out in 1909 in Maybury Road, closing almost exactly sixty years later, their old, tied decor (if not furniture) no longer popular with the modern Woking shoppers.



Our solidly-built second-hand oak bedroom and dining-room furniture came originally from Colman's - an old friend of a friend having bought it there in the 1930's, before selling it to us shortly before we were married some fifty years later.

and developing Woking' as the reason for the firm moving to Haslemere, labelling Woking a 'ghost town' - a sentiment echoed the following year by Mr Laurie Colman, whose sixty-year-old family furniture business was then closing in the High Street.

Another local furniture firm that had been in business for sixty years closed its doors for the last time when Robertson Brothers decided to shut up shop in April 1969, and a couple of years before that Scotts of Woking (Furnishers) Ltd must have quietly closed down as in December 1968 their old shop at 6 Commercial Way was turned into a new branch of the Midland Bank.

This is the big new furniture store in High Street Woking!

NOW OPEN!



EASIEST H.P. TERMS!...

Pay as you go at Courts. Plan your way through the store with just the minimum deposits and small monthly payments you can afford.

This is COURTS, Woking's newest, biggest, best, and most exciting furnishers

But it was not all doom and gloom. Luckett's, whose shop in Walton Road had been compulsorily purchased to make way for the new Stanley Road extension, quickly moved to Goldsworth Road in February 1969, and in June

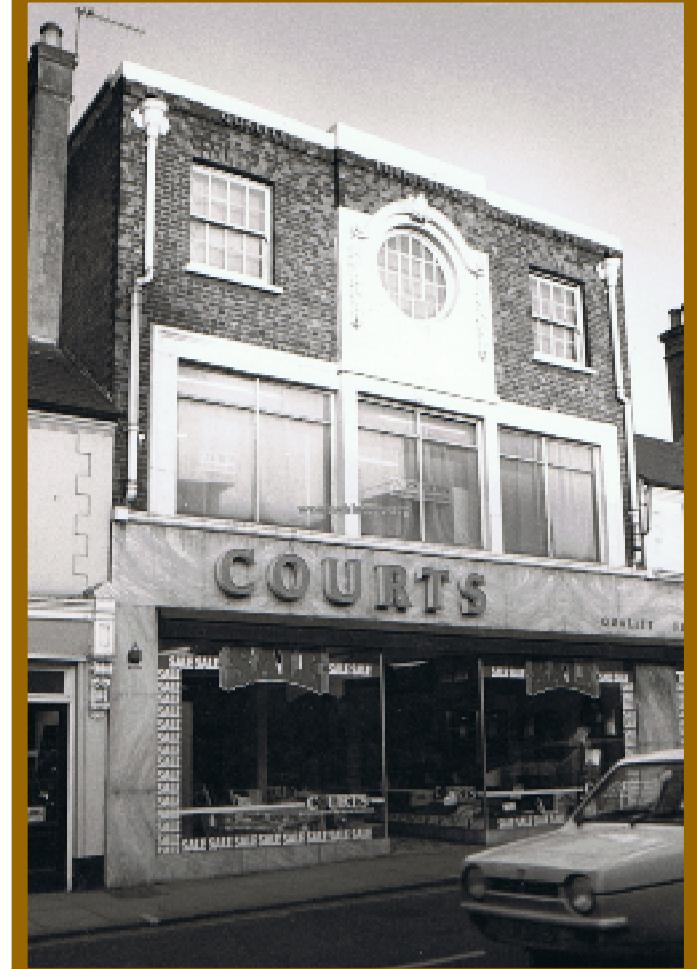
Luckett's moved from Walton Road to Goldsworth Road when their old shop was demolished.



that year the international firm of Courts Furnishers opened their large new shop in the High Street, one of over sixty in the UK at that time (with others in the Caribbean)!

The mid 1960's had also seen the opening of Maples in Premier House, Commercial Road, so that together with Perrings just around the corner in Goldsworth Road, Woking at that time was actually well-served with modern furniture businesses! And you don't need to look too hard through the pages of the local newspapers to discover why - the number of new developments around the town meant many new occupants were eager to furnish their new homes.

That trend would off course continue into the 1970's (and beyond) until changing shopping habits in the 1980's and 90's meant the demise of first Perrings (1993), then Maples (1997) and finally (in the early years of this century) Courts - all of which had long deserted Woking before their final stores closed.



Although the UK branches of Courts have long gone, their Caribbean counterparts still apparently survive.

Now there are just a few small independents left in Woking, but if you look hard enough in the town and surrounding villages you can probably still find exactly what you are looking for - often of better quality than you would find in large retail outlets on the outskirts of neighbouring towns, and when you take into account the benefits to the local economy, far better value than buying online.

Perrings were perhaps the longest surviving 'local' furniture store, later moving to between Chertsey Road and Church Street in the 1980's, before finally closing down.

