

# PUTTING WOKING IN A WHIRL

Iain Wakeford 2019

As far back as the 1880's, the people of Woking knew how to organise an event, with the local 'Torchlight Society' apparently co-ordinating the November 5<sup>th</sup> celebrations each year (and eventually helping to set up the local volunteer fire brigade in the early 1890's).

For Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee the villagers of Horsell joined those from the town in setting up a fund to found the Woking Victoria Hospital, and in the 1920's and 30's regularly organised 'Hospital Carnivals' to help with its upkeep - and indeed expansion - electing 'Carnival Queens' and organising floats as well as processions to fun and games at Woking Park.

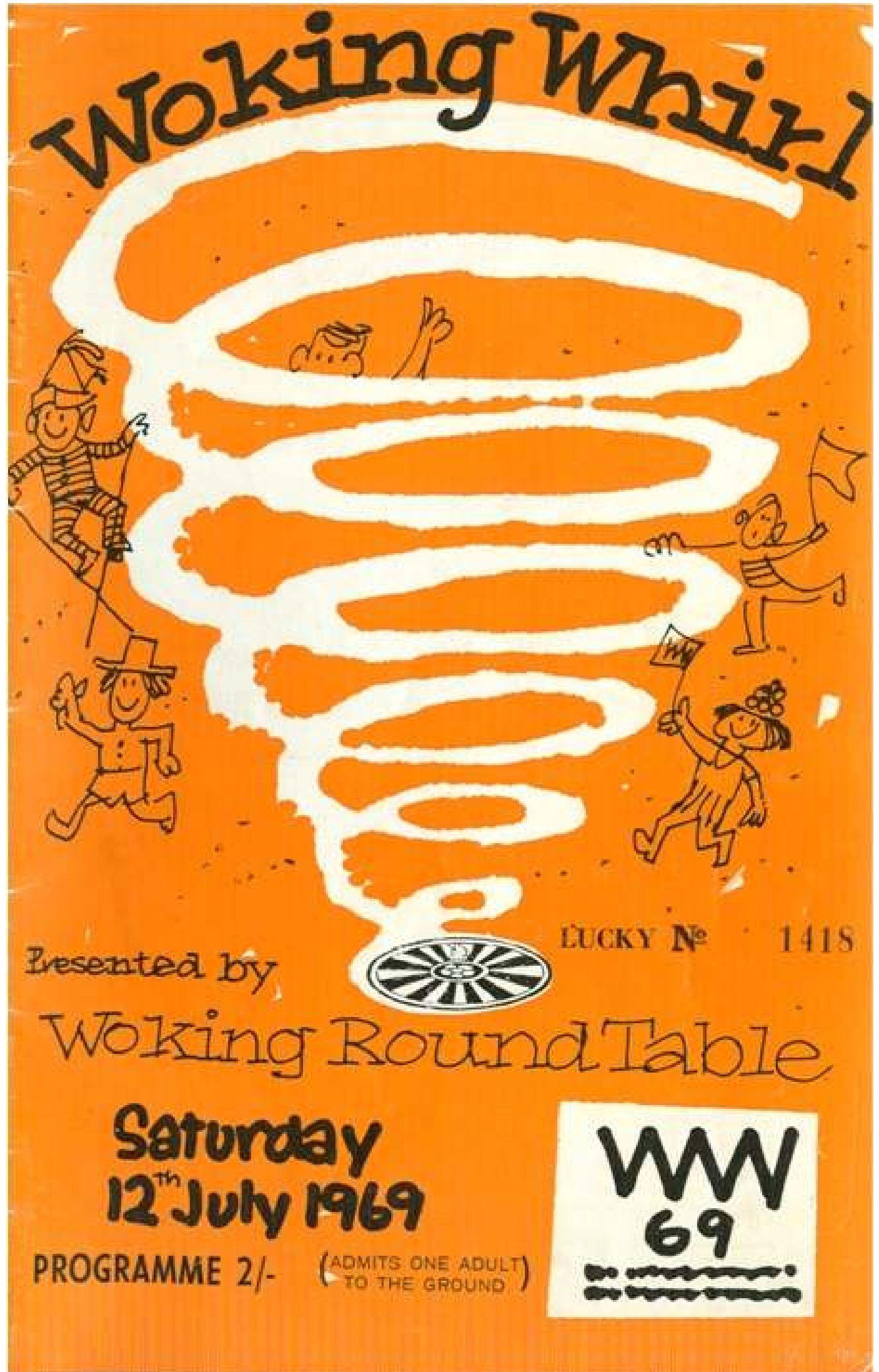
From even before the First World War there are photographs of the parades held to celebrate Empire Day (24<sup>th</sup> May), and parades by the local Co-operative movement, and when it came to the Peace Celebrations of 1919, it seems the whole town turned out to march past the public buildings in Commercial Road and under the Victoria Arch.

Likewise V.E. Day celebrations after the Second World War, and the Coronation Celebrations of 1953 - but after that it appears the excuses to celebrate (or the enthusiasm to organise a celebration) died down - until 1969 when the Woking Round Table decided to arrange the first 'Woking Whirl' to help raise money for local charities.

On Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> July that year a procession of over forty floats, marching bands and local groups, set off from the assembly point at Brewery Road Car Park at about 1pm to head towards Chobham Road, over Wheatsheaf Bridge, and into the town. At the junction by the Ritz Cinema they ignored the one-way system (and traffic lights), to go the wrong way up Chobham Road to Gammons Corner and then on to the main shopping street of Chertsey Road.

Led by the band of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion the Light Infantry, the procession proceeded up towards the station and then down the High Street, before turning under Victoria Arch in Guildford Road.

Many local businesses decked out floats advertising their wares, or loaned their vehicles to local charities whose volunteers held out buckets to raise funds for their causes. A horse-drawn carriage carried the 'Carnival Queen' all the way to the parade ground - not in Woking Park, but in Egley Road - in the field just beyond the relatively new development of 'Hillside' (some of whose residents objected to the noise of the fun-fair and other entertainments that kept them awake late into the night).



As well as the fun fair (which because of objections was only allowed on the Saturday night), there were other amusements for the kids, such as Punch and Judy, and for the adults and older children the 'Black Knights Free Fall Display Team', of the 7<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, dropped in on the show at about 3pm, from a height of about 10,000 ft.

That was followed by another military

Unfortunately my two shilling (10p) programme, No 1418, was not the lucky one that won the massive £5 prize!

demonstration by eight members of the 'A' Company of the 5<sup>th</sup> Queens (Volunteers), who disturbed the afternoon slumbers of the showground's neighbours even more, with a 'mortar demonstration' with rapid fire.



Unfortunately my parent programme, 'Lucky No 1418' was not that lucky, but from what I can remember it was a great afternoon event and according to the newspaper reports, over 8,000 people attended, raising in excess of £750 for

the White Lodge Centre at Chertsey and the Woking Society for the Mentally Handicapped.

The 'Whirl' came to an end with the band of the Light Infantry playing to the crowds once more.

The floats made their way around the streets of Woking to the Egley Road Showground, where volunteers from the Woking Round Table (and other local organisations) helped direct the crowds and ensure that fun was had by all.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

<b>ADMISSION</b>	Adults: 2/- or programme Children under 14 years: free.
<b>CAR PARKING</b>	A large car park is available adjoining the Show Ground. (Entrance adjoining Jackman's Garden Centre.) Fee: 6/- (credit given for programmes produced by occupants).
<b>FIRST AID</b>	A First Aid Station will be manned throughout by British Red Cross Society.
<b>PROGRAMME</b>	The Promoters reserve the right to change any part of the programme without notice as may be necessary due to the weather or other conditions or circumstances.
<b>ACCIDENTS AND LOSSES</b>	The Promoters accept no liability for any accident or loss that may be sustained howsoever caused.
<b>LUCKY NUMBER PROGRAMMES</b>	A prize of £5 will be presented to the holder of the lucky number programme.
<b>COVER DESIGN</b>	The Promoters are grateful to Mr. Michael James, Graphic Designer, 79 Wigmore Street, London, W.1, for his design of the programme cover.
<b>SHOW GROUND</b>	The Promoters are indebted to Gilbert Ash Limited, of Woking, for making the Show Ground available.
<b>SECURITY</b>	Show Ground security has been provided by Securicor Limited.
<b>WOKING U.D.C.</b>	The Promoters acknowledge with grateful thanks the advice and assistance received from the Members and Officers of Woking Urban District Council.
<b>WOKING REVIEW LTD.</b>	The Promoters acknowledge the assistance given by Mr. H. C. Pring, Director, in the production and printing of the programme.
<b>TOMBOLA</b>	The Promoters thank Messrs. W. D. & H. O. Wills and all others who have donated prizes.