

NEW SHOPS FOR KNAPHILL

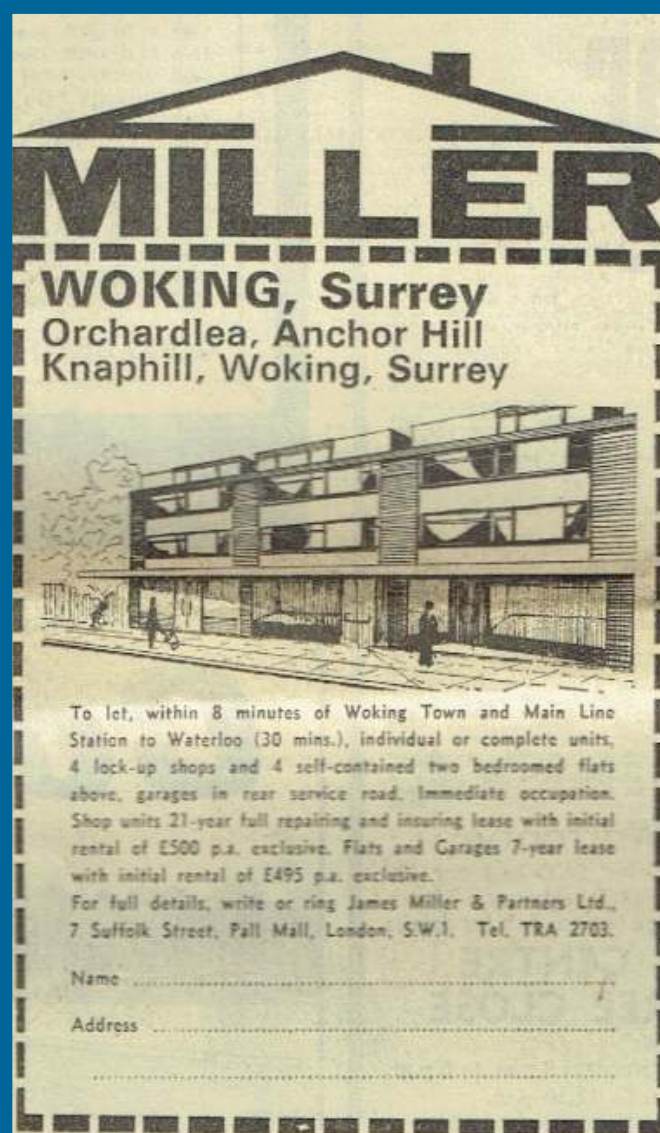
Iain Wakeford 2019



Since Victorian times, when the Woking Prisons and Brookwood Asylum had opened in the area, Knaphill had been the main shopping district for the west of Woking. In the Broadway and nearby High Street the village's shopping centre had developed, although numerous corner shops and other isolated developments meant that there was no real coherent 'core' to its commercial centre.

By the middle of the 20th century odd Victorian premises (often in converted cottages), were gradually being joined by more modern developments with a row of shops at the junction of Lower Guildford Road and Victoria Road, stretching the shopping centre to the top of Anchor Hill, and later developments beside the Crown public house, pulling it in the other direction.

On Anchor Hill, late in 1949, the council agreed to contribute £323 towards the cost of constructing a 'standing bay' outside the shops then being built at Creswell Corner – an early concession to the slowly increasing motorists of the area. By the late 1960's that bay was being increased down the hill in front of the new 'Orchardlea' development.



Orchardlea on Anchor Hill in November 1969

In the late 1950's and 60's shops at the junction of Lower Guildford Road and Victoria Road, stretched the shopping centre to the top of Anchor Hill, with those beside the Crown public house, pulling it back in the other direction.

Early in 1967 the Estate Agents, Gascoigne-Pees, were 'pleased to announce' that they would soon be able to offer these five new shops 'either as lock-ups or with self-contained flats over', but not only were consumers shopping habits changing at this time, so was the management of many local shops, with fewer family-run businesses requiring accommodation over the premises.

The estate agents predicted that a rent of £750 per annum for 7 or 14 year leases, could be combined with a lease of £312 per annum for one of the 'ten self-contained flats, each comprising two bedrooms, living room, kitchen, bathroom etc.'

Those prices had evidently altered by the time the development was actually ready for occupation and in the autumn of 1969 it appears that only one of the five units was occupied with new agents, James Miller & Partners Ltd of London, advertising four of the lock-ups on a 21 year lease at an initial rental



of just £500 (although a seven year lease on the flats and garages was now £495 p.a.).

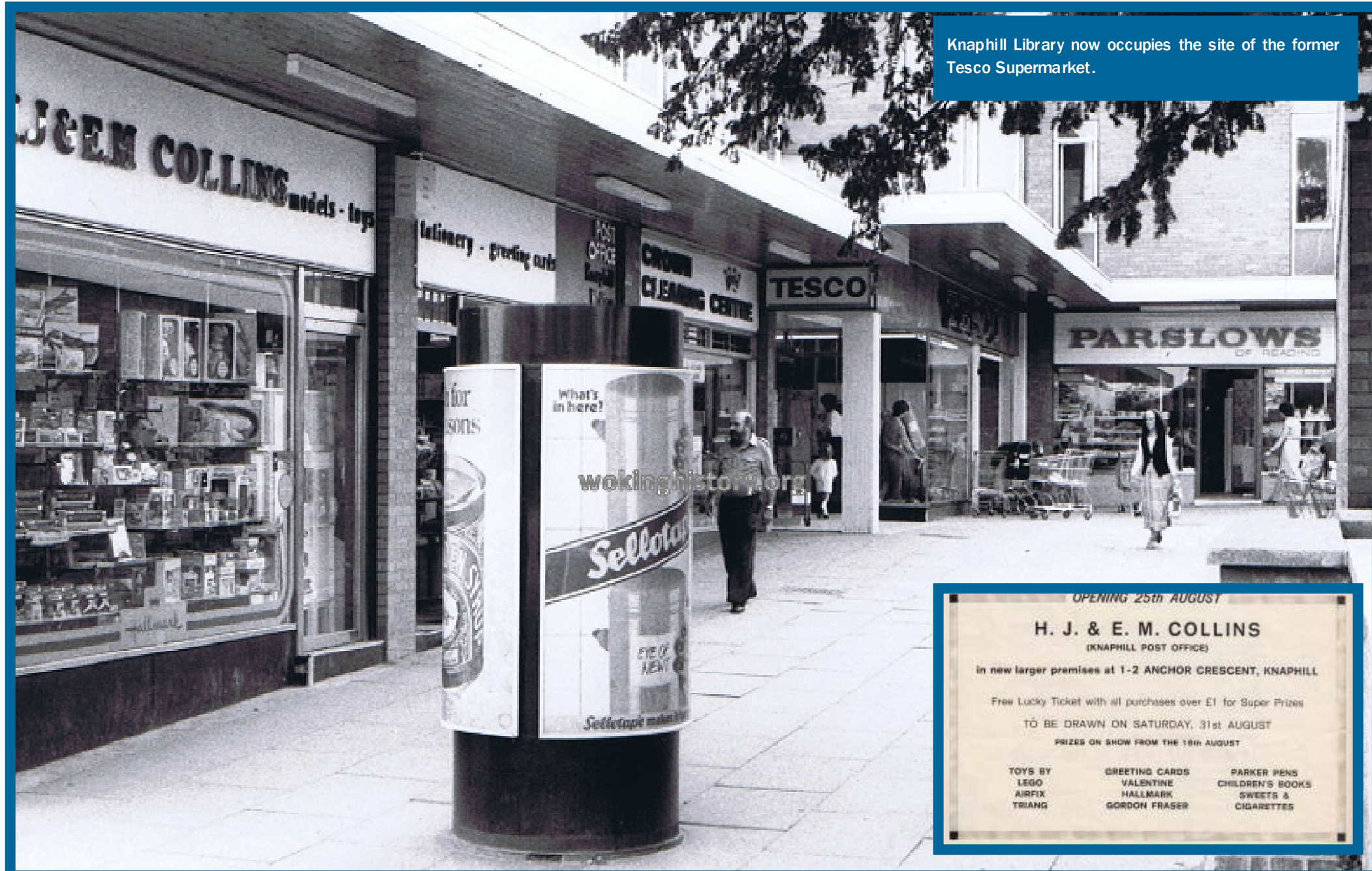
Perhaps competition from another new development at the top of the hill had hampered the initial success of the Orchardlea shops, with the opening of the Anchor Parade in the summer of 1969.

Like Orchardlea the development of these new shops surrounding the Anchor public house had taken some years to achieve, with the first proposal to erect five shops and flats on the site being rejected by Surrey County Council in November 1965 (although previously approved by Woking Council).

By the time the plans were finally passed the number of shops had increased to ten (minus the accommodation) – Knaphill Post Office moving into the new development in August 1969, with Darby's 'Baby Centre' opening the following month. In October the main 'anchor store' – Tesco – opened with offers of double

Like Orchardlea, the development of Anchor Crescent took many years to gain planning permission.





Green Shield stamps on all goods except tobacco and booze – with bottles of ‘Warninks Advocaat’ being sold for 34s.3d. (£1.71), Dubonnet Red at 20s.11d. (£1.05) and R.S.V.P.

Sherry at 12s.6d. (63p) – the 1970’s had definitely arrived.
 Since then the shops of the parade have gone through numerous tenants, with just the Post

Office remaining where it was. Tesco, of course, has more recently returned to the village further up the High Street, with the library taking over the old supermarket site.

