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## INTRODUCTION

**W**OKING is an attractive residential centre approximately 26 miles from London, seven miles from Guildford, 15 from Windsor and within easy reach of the South Coast. Pleasantly situated in the county of Surrey, with a good railway service and easy of access by road, Woking has many open spaces and beauty spots. It is a popular shopping centre and attracts trade from the surrounding districts.

The town is administered by an Urban District Council with responsibilities in accordance with the appropriate municipal acts. In addition it has delegated powers for personal health, welfare and education matters.

The surrounding countryside with its luxuriant pine and fir plantations, the abundant growth of gorse and heather and the natural colours of the countryside make Woking an area desirable as a place both to live and to visit.

The area comprises the civil parishes of Woking which includes Knaphill, and Brookwood, Byfleet, Horsell and Pyrford, all of which have long associations with the past. All bring some special contribution to help make Woking popular and attractive. In addition there are many beautiful places to visit within a short distance of the town. Ripley with its village green, stately manor and its gabled houses, Pyrford and its Tudor mansion, the lovely lake and common at Wisley made known by the famous gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society, the old village of Chobham with its ancient church and the many pleasant spots along the River Wey, are just a few examples. Bisley Common, near to the western boundary, is famous for its camp of the National Rifle Association and the annual shooting competitions.

During past centuries many royal personages and famous historical figures have lived or stayed in the neighbourhood. In more recent times the following are numbered among its past and present residents: The Duke of Sutherland, K.T., The Dowager Duchess of Manchester, the Earl of Balfour, the Earl of Iveagh, the Rt. Hon. Alfred Lyttleton, the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Dilke, Sir Joseph Leese, Mr. W. S. Penley, Mr. George Bernard Shaw, Mr. H. G. Wells, Dame Ethel Smyth, Lord Northcliffe, Madame Adelina de Lara and Mr. Paul Getty.

One of the interesting aspects of a town is its development over the years. As a guide to this the following brief outline of the history of Woking is given in the hopes that it will

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enable readers to know a little of its history. Within the compass of the guide such an article must be limited but it is hoped that some readers will be encouraged to delve a little deeper into local history.

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**NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF WOKING**

by E. R. Gamester

In common with most other residential areas development has been limited to more recent times and in particular to the last one hundred years or so. The coming of the railway system brought about an extension of communications and the ability to travel from one place to another in much shorter time. As railway lines were laid and stations provided at places within the area around London the business man no longer found it necessary to live close to his work. He built his house in more pleasant surroundings and travelled to and fro. With the improvement in social conditions this applied to more and more folk. Builders and estate developers quickly recognised this new market and more houses became available.

Here in Woking, after some delay due to legal difficulties, the development began round the north side of the railway station which the London and South Western Railway established about 1838. The station was built on heathland, known locally as the Black Forest. Gradually the character of the place began to change. The old market town, described by Daniel Defoe in 1724 as "a country market town so out of the way that 'tis very little heard of in England", began to disappear as houses were built in the neighbourhood of the station. The old houses were in the village known as Old Woking which consisted of one street with some good examples of mid 17th and 18th century properties.

In early records the name of Woking is known to have developed from Wocingas in the 8th century, Wochinges in the 9th, Wockynge and Wochynghe in the 12th and 14th centuries to its present form. It is situated in the Hundred of the same name and the River Wey runs through the district. The Basingstoke Canal also passes through the town. The canal was constructed in the later years of the 18th century. The Wey Navigational Canal which forms the boundary between West Byfleet and Byfleet was built at an earlier date. It continues on through Pyrford and Guildford.

In that most famous of surveys, the Domesday Book of 1086 the following description of Woking is given:

"There are six caracutes of arable land. In demesne is one caracute; and thirty-three villeins, and nine borders, with twenty caracutes more. There is a church, held by Osbern (Bishop of Exeter); and a mill, worth 11s. 4d. yearly; and

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thirty-two acres of meadow; and woods that yield one hundred and thirty-three swine. Of this land, Walter Fitz-Other holds three virgates; which in the time of King Edward, who detached this estate from the manor, was held by a certain forester; there is no stock upon it. In the time of King Edward, and subsequently, this manor was valued at £15 a year by tale. It is now valued at £15 by weight, and to the sheriff 25s."

The lot of the villeins or serfs at Woking was somewhat easier than on other estates. Their mowing services were worth 40s. annually but later this was reduced to 10s. Their daughters were not allowed to marry outside the manor unless permitted to do so by the Lord of the manor.

Henry II afforested the parkland in and round Woking and finally declared the whole county as forest. Villagers were forbidden to allow their pigs to roam the forest in order to prevent any inconvenience to the royal visitors to the hunt. Strict regulations were enforced upon the owners of the land to ensure the utmost comfort and free passage for these visitors.

There were 105 people indicted in the county as recusants in the year 1587. Many of these were from well known families and sometimes whole families were accused. Mention is made of a family named Hobson from Woking indicted that year.

Life was fairly quiet in Woking throughout the early centuries but after the success of the French Revolution there were some difficult times in England. Wages were reduced in and around the town in common with other areas. In 1830 they were reduced from 5/- to as low as 3/- per week. This angered the people and it is recorded that great crowds gathered together to protest. These were often broken up and sometimes prisoners taken. On one occasion when it was believed that there were such prisoners at Dorking, a great crowd assembled in Woking to march there to release them. However, the crowd were persuaded this was not so and the people dispersed.

The Shah Jehan Mosque, Oriental Road, was built in 1889. Doctor Leitner took over the buildings originally opened in 1865 by the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, as a training school for actors. This was not successful and Dr. Leitner, a distinguished linguist founded the Oriental Institute there and in 1889 built the mosque in the grounds. It is still in use as the headquarters of the British Muslim Society.

The oldest school in the village of Woking was the Church School, opened in 1848.

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**MANOR OF WOKING.** From early records Woking appears to have been the property of the Crown. William the Conqueror reserved it for his own use. King John, soon after succeeding to the throne granted it to Alan Basset. His son Gilbert held it in the years 1236 - 37. Upon his death his brother Fulk who was Bishop of London, held it and when he died in 1259 it was passed to the younger brother Philip. There being no male to succeed the manor passed to his daughter Aliva.

Her son, later to become known as the Elder Despensor, upon the death of his mother became involved in some law-suits over his title to the estate. He was executed in 1326 at the time Edward II was deposed and the manor reverted to the Crown. Edward III granted it to his uncle, Edmund of Woodstock, Earl of Kent. It remained in this family with several subsequent changes due to death or execution until it came into possession of Beaufort, Duke of Somerset. It was in 1451 that Henry VI granted the right to hold a fair every Whit Tuesday to Edmund and his heirs.

Edmund was killed at the Battle of St. Albans and records show that he held the manor from the King upon payment of one clove gillyflower a year. In 1509 Margaret Beaufort died and Woking again came into the hands of the King. Henry VIII had a liking for it and he took up residence there from time to time. There are several royal letters addressed from Woking in proof of this. Also in existence is a letter to Wolsey, Archbishop of York, when he was with Henry at Woking, intimating his election as a cardinal.

James I in 1620 made a grant of the manor to Sir Edward Zouch, Marshal of the Royal Household. On his death in 1634 it passed to his son James. Sir Edward was buried at night in Woking Church in accordance with his expressed wishes. Ultimately the manor passed to James's second son, another James. He became a person of some ability and character in Surrey and was highly respected as High Sheriff of the County. He held the property for fifty years and at his death it reverted to the Crown. In 1662 he was granted a charter for a fair on 12th September and to hold a weekly market on Fridays. He built the market house in Woking in 1665. He also built Hoe Place nearby the house his grandfather had built. His grandfather, Sir Edward built a brick beacon on high ground near Hoe Bridge Place. This was used to display a light to guide

messengers to James I when he was staying there. It fell into ruins and was demolished in 1858.

Charles II leased the manor to Lord Grandison for a thousand years for the benefit of his cousin Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland and her children. She died in 1709 and seven years later the trustees sold to John Walter. His son Abel Walter succeeded him and in 1748 an Act of Parliament replaced the thousand year lease granting him the fee simple. Four years later he sold the estate to Richard, Lord Onslow in whose family it still remains.

In an early document there is mention of a fulling mill in 1271 and a water mill at the end of the 14th century, both belonging to the manor. Fulling is a process in the manufacture of cloth. Henry VIII leased the mills to a Thomas Spencer.

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St. Peter's,  
Old Woking

(Photo by  
The County  
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**WOKING PARISH CHURCH.** The Church of St. Peter dates from the beginning of the 12th century, if not perhaps a little before. It was restored in 1878 and in 1888. Two walls of the ancient building still stand. The north wall, built of whole flints and pieces of ironstone conglomerate is a good example of



Presbyterian Church, Woking

(Photo by The County Press, Woking)

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Trinity Methodist Church, Woking

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such early masonry. Much of the west wall is hidden by the tower, beneath which is the only present available entrance. The lower part of the tower dates from about 1240 and some hundred years later the stone addition was built. The wooden door is the original Norman door made of oak planks bound together by iron straps.

The gallery at the west end was erected in 1622 and was provided by Sir Edward Zouch, Kt., Lord of the manor, according to the description which it bears. The six sided pulpit dates from the same time. There are eight bells in the tower, two of them being added in 1929. Five of the old ones are dated 1684 but one was recast in 1187. The other bell is dated 1766 and has the initials I.F. The parish registers date from 1653.

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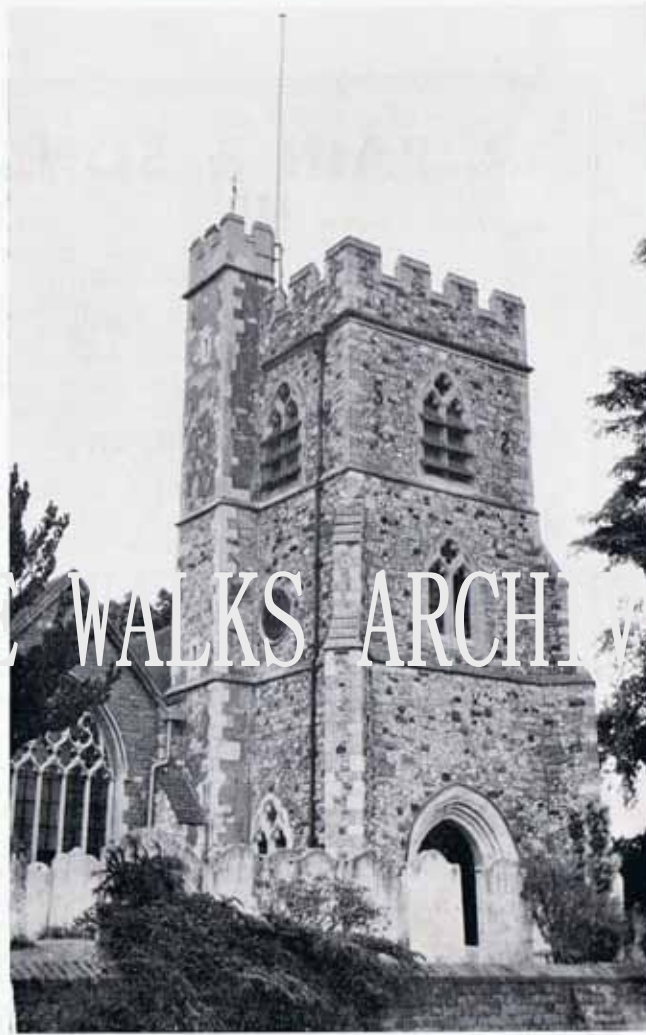
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St. Mary's  
Church,  
Horsell

(Photo by  
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**HORSELL.** The chapter of Horsell was originally in the possession of the Monastery of Westminster. In 1258 the Abbot granted the advowson together with that of Pyrford to the Priory of Aldbury later called Newark. Four years later they were both annexed to the Church of Woking. There is no



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mention of Horsell in Domesday Book as it came within the manor of Pyrford. In 1291 the chapels of Horsell and Pyrford were valued at £10.

Early records show the name Horishull in the 13th century and Horshill in the 18th.

The Parish Church of Horsell, St. Mary the Virgin, was built in the early part of the 14th century. The north wall dates from this period. The tower was added in the 15th and the south aisle early in the 16th. The windows in the north wall are of differing dates. There is a 15th century two-light window, another 15th century one very much restored, one probably from the original building and a modern two-light window.

The nave has some old oak timbers with large tie beams in the roof. The oak pulpit is from the 17th century and has panels carved in a diamond pattern. There are several memorials and brasses.

The Rev. John Back, uncle of a later vicar, was appointed in 1878 and the restoration of the church was due to his efforts and generosity. The east window commemorates his gift of the chancel and a mosaic pavement of Italian workmanship, a great improvement in the former brick building.

The end of the south aisle became the Chapel of the Holy Trinity and seating capacity was increased by the addition of the north aisle. The Rev. F. R. Cocks gave the beautiful Baptistry at the west end of the south aisle as a war memorial to his youngest son killed in World War I.

There is a number of interesting objects, one of which is described in an inventory from the sixth year of Edward VI's reign as a "broche". It is 11 ft. 7 ins. in length and originally there were two. Coupled with these in the inventory is a cauldron. It could be that these were used at parish festivals but for what purpose is not apparent.

The present bells date from 1741 and were rung for the first time on 14th December of that year. The registers date from 1653 and contains some interesting entries. The following are two examples:

October 6th 1677. "Collected then towards the dismall fire in the market town of Newport in the County of Salop the sum of 4s."

March 19th 1670. "Collected then towards the Ransom of Michael Kys and Peter Kys, Hungarians, who were taken and imprisoned by the merciless Turks, 3s. 6d."



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**PYRFORD.** As mentioned previously the manor included Horsell. The Pyrford Stone standing not far from the Warren is a sarsen stone from the Bagshot beds. Nothing is known of its erection at this spot. A few paleolithic and neolithic flints have been found in the area.

It is interesting to note that in William the Conqueror's charter to Westminster, Pyrford was included in Windsor Forest. Domesday records that three hides were forest land. Ecclesiastically it was in the parish of Woking and in Domesday it was in the Godley Hundred.

Pyrford was held by Harold under King Edward. He evidently thought highly of it as he reserved the area for his own use. Later he granted the manor to the monastery of St. Peter at Westminster where it remained until the Dissolution. Queen Mary granted it in 1558 to the new priory of Sheen but a year later it was once more annexed to the Crown.

Queen Elizabeth granted it to the Earl of Lincoln, Lord High Admiral in 1574. The manor changed hands a number of times and in 1628 Sir Robert Parkhurst purchased it from Sir Arthur Mainwaring. Denzil Onslow bought it from the Mainwaring family in 1677 and later it passed to his great nephew Thomas, Lord Onslow and it has descended through to the present family.

The house was demolished by Robert, Lord Onslow when he came into possession in 1776. Queen Elizabeth's summer house at Pyrford Place said to have been used by her is preserved as a building of historic appearance.

Dr. Donne lived here when he married the daughter of Sir George Loseley. Pyrford Park, situated in the three hides of land reserved for William's use in the first charter, eventually became the property of the Lord of the manor. Lord Onslow turned it to farm use in 1776.

John Evelyn visited "Purford" as a guest of Denzil Onslow. He wrote in his diary that he sat at the table with "venison, rabbits, hares, pheasants, partridges, pigeons, quail and poultrie, all sorts of fowle in season from his own decoy near the house and all sorts of fresh fish . . ."

Pyrford Church, dedicated to St. Nicholas, stands on a knoll above the meadows by the River Wey and overlooking Newark Priory. It was built, with walls nearly three feet thick, about the year 1150 and is a good example of Norman architecture. Its restoration and preservation is excellent. Inside the

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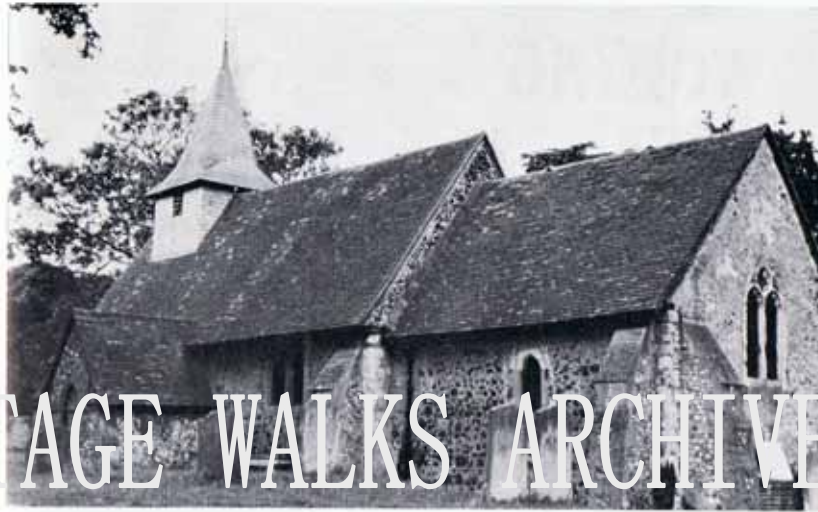
COBHAM

YATELEY

# 50

YEARS YOUNG





St. Nicholas Church, Pyrford

(Photo by The County Press, Woking)

church are three consecration crosses, two in the chancel and one on the west wall of the nave. The Jacobean pulpit, with its sounding board made of different kinds of wood, bears the date 1628 and the initials N.B. These are believed to be those of Nicholas Burley who lived in the Old House in Pyrford in the 17th century. The buttresses are of sarsen stone, a geological rock formation found in Bagshot.

The church is noted for its wall paintings. One dates from about the time the church was built. The other is in outline dating from 1200 or thereabouts. When some restoration work was being carried out to this in 1967 the earlier one was discovered beneath it. The outline painting shows two scenes from the Passion of Christ. One shows the scourging, the executioner using the flail. The hands and feet of Christ are tied to a pillar. The other scene shows a building and the figure of Christ in a robe with a criss-cross pattern.

The earlier painting, or fresco, is the remains of a psychomachia or battle of the vices and virtues, the only type of medieval church painting depicting secular subjects such as

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mounted horsemen fighting with spears. An interesting feature is the procession of figures carrying staves and wearing conical hats. Experts have not been able to identify this as it appears to be unique.

The church commenced the restoration and repair of the murals in February 1967 and it is hoped that funds will be available for the consecration crosses to receive attention.

The other parish church, of Wisley-cum-Pyrford also built in the 12th century, is smaller than St. Nicholas. The benefices were combined in 1631. The new Church of the Good Shepherd was dedicated in 1964 and serves the larger population. All these churches are supported by the parish and services are regularly held in each.

The Church of England Waifs and Strays Society built the St. Nicholas Homes in 1906 to accommodate crippled children. Nine years later an adjoining Home, St. Martins, was built. Soon after the end of World War I Mr. Rowley-Bristow, Orthopaedic Surgeon at St. Thomas's Hospital, took an interest and began treating and curing youngsters in these homes who otherwise would have been condemned to a life of helplessness. In nearly twenty years the treatment had become so



Church of the Good Shepherd, Pyrford

(Photo by The County Press, Woking)

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effective and successful, the homes began to accept adults for treatment. During World War II casualties were also treated. At his death in 1947 the homes were re-named the Rowley-Bristow Hospital to commemorate his great work.

**BYFLEET.** Domesday Book records that Byfleet possessed a church and among other items, a mill worth five shillings and some eel fisheries. The manor at this time was held by the Abbey of Chertsey and remained so for some time. In 1312 it was in the possession of the King with overlordship still vested in the Abbey. Edward II and later Queen Elizabeth were frequent visitors. The Black Prince held the manor until he died and was succeeded by his son. Richard II made a grant of it to the Earl of Northumberland in 1389. There were other grants until the end of the 14th century when Parliament annulled the grants made by Richard. The manor was then vested in his son Henry. The eldest sons of the kings were granted Byfleet until Henry VIII when he granted it to Katharine of Aragon in 1533.

Chertsey Abbey was surrendered to the Crown in 1537. James I granted the manor to the Prince of Wales and later to Anne of Denmark who commenced building "a noble house" which was completed by Sir James Fullerton. This house is mentioned by Evelyn in his diary in 1678. It was rebuilt about 1724. There were several changes in subsequent years. Frederick, Duke of York purchased the state in 1804.

The nave and chancel of St. Mary's Church were built in the 14th century. Whether this church stood on the same site as the earlier one mentioned in Domesday is not known for certain. The chancel roof is gabled and has a panelled ceiling. Above the north entrance is the outline of a mural painting. It depicts a king sitting under a canopy and may be a representation of Edward I or II. The painting was uncovered in 1853 and is probably from the 14th century.

An interesting story is that of Stephen Duck, a Rector of Byfleet in 1752 - 56. He was a Wiltshire labourer who, by his poetry attracted the attention of Queen Caroline. He received her benefit and was made Keeper of her library at Richmond. He was ordained after learning Latin. For some reason he suffered from melancholia and in a fit of depression drowned himself in the Thames.

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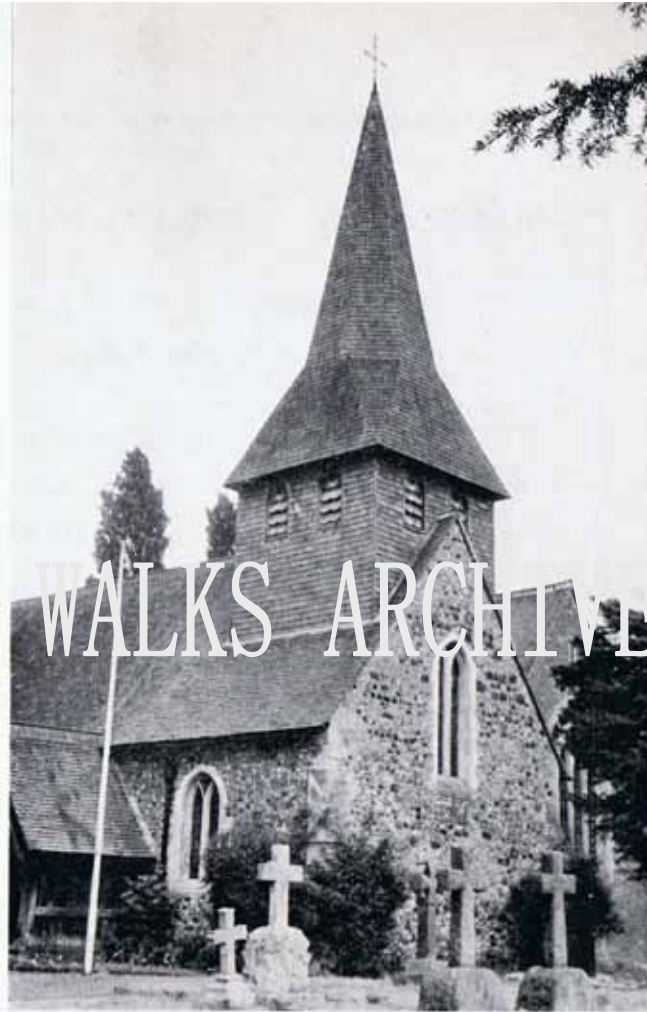
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# HERITAGE WALKS ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

St. Mary's,  
Byfleet

(Photo by  
The County  
Press,  
Woking)



The memory of Canon Tayler, Rector from 1454 - 1489, is perpetuated by a memorial brass. Some pieces of medieval glass, originally part of the east window, have been re-set in the north wall of the chancel.

Another aisle was added south of the original in 1843. In 1866 and in 1880 the choir was enlarged. The church remains unspoiled. It is a typical village church with nearly six hundred

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**SUTTON PLACE.** This famous house is one of the most interesting examples of important English houses built during the reign of Henry VIII. It was erected by Sir Richard Weston, probably between 1523-25. A fire damaged the north and east wings in 1560 and the north wing was later demolished in 1782.

The house, built of brick and terra cotta, is two storeys high. The present staircase dates from the 17th century. The great hall is magnificent, its principal attraction being the heraldic stained glass, some dating from the 16th century. The long gallery in the east wing dates from 1878.

Alterations were made in the 17th century when most of the fine panelling was introduced. Restoration work was done in the first decade of this century when Lord Northcliffe resided there. It is now in the occupation of Mr. Paul Getty.

**HOE PLACE.** Another house of historic interest is Hoe Place in Old Woking Road. This replaced a mansion belonging to the Zouch family and, in turn, this replaced a palace from the time of King Edward II. The mansion was demolished and the present building erected by James Zouch, a grandson of Sir Edward Zouch who received the original charter from James I.

The house dates from about the beginning of the 18th century and has a fine staircase and stair-well painted by Verrio in the style of Hampton Court. In a drawing room there is a painted ceiling commemorating the triumphs of William III, believed to be by Sir Godfrey Kneller.

**NEWARK PRIORY.** On the banks of the River Wey are the ruins of Newark Priory which has a connection with the history of Woking from its very early days. Known at the time as Aldbury in the parish of Send the priory was founded by Ronald de Calva and his wife Beatrice de Sandes in the reign of Richard I. Woking and its chapels at Pyrford and Horsell were in the control of the Priory. In 1220 the Augustinian canons who occupied the Priory received from Henry III the right to hold a fair at Ripley. There is a record that the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Peckham stayed at the Priory in 1281 and again two years later.

Just before the surrender of the Priory at the Dissolution in 1538, Richard Lipscombe was appointed Prior. The value



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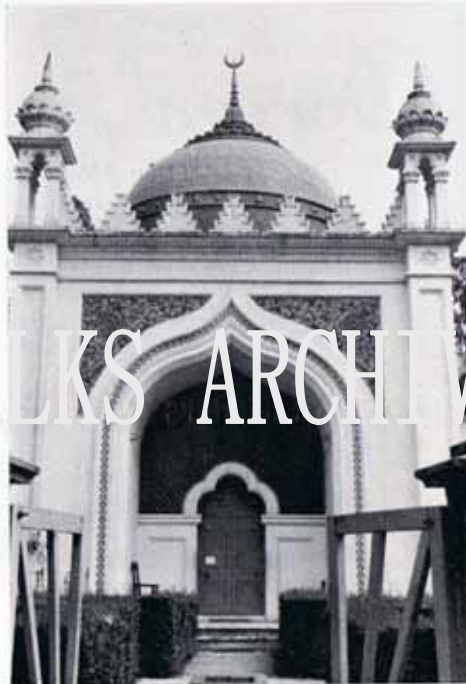
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**The Mosque**  
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at that time was £258 11s. 11½d. Taken by a Dr. Legh, an inventory dated 15th January 1539, lists items sent to the Master of the Jewels in London, which included chalices, spoons, knives, enamelled cross, bells, censers, crystal, etc. Before the Dissolution the priors were the Lords of the manor.

The Priory was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Thomas a Becket. The remains now standing include the shell of the south transept of the cruciform conventional church and parts of the chancel. The walls of the ruins are mainly rubble and flint. In earlier days much of the fallen material was used in road making but since the site came into possession of the family of Lord Lovelace, great care has been taken to ensure the preservation of what remains. The site and ruins are now listed as of historical importance.

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