

Pictures Wanted

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 5th October, 2012)

I mentioned at the end of last week's article that I am intending to do a series of talks next April on Woking in the 1960's and 70's (and later), and that if anyone had any photographs of that period I would be delighted to hear from them. I thought it would be helpful to list some of the places that I would most like to find pictures of, although 'before', 'during' and 'after' photographs of almost any development of that period would obviously be welcome.

There are many views of the old Albion Hotel opposite the station, and several of the new Albion House that replaced it, but I have only managed to find one of when it was being built. Having said that it is one more than I have of either Ryde House in Chobham Road, or Premier House in Commercial Road during their construction in the early 1960's, or for that matter



A winter's scene of the 'old' 1970's Brook House just before it was demolished in the 1980's, but has anyone got any views of when it was being built (or what was there before)?

Another example was the row of late 1960's offices (now the Job Centre) in Goldsworth Road that had a complete makeover in the 1980's. And whilst talking of that road has anybody a photograph of the Tile Centre from the 1960's or 70's, or indeed the buildings that were on the site beforehand?

I should point out that I am not just interested in Woking Town Centre and would particularly love to find photographs of the housing developments of that period – of which there were many. Places such as the 'Birds Estate' in Knaphill, The Hermitage in St Johns; and the 'high density' areas around Maderia Road at West Byfleet and Heathside in Woking to name just a few.



There are plenty of pictures of the old 'Albion Hotel' and more modern ones of the present office building, but has anybody got a picture of it being built?

of any of the 1970's office blocks such as Crown House in Chobham Road or the original Brook House in Chertsey Road (shown here soon after construction).

It is remarkable how quickly some 'new' buildings in Woking were pulled down or 'modernised', Premier House being just one example of the latter whereby the old 1960's shell was re-clad in the 1980's and then renamed 'Globe House'.



A 1980's view, this time of Crown House – but photographs of it, or the Bhs building and 'Fine Fare' building nearby being built, would be of great interest.

Woking's New, New Town Centre
 (copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 12th October, 2012)



I am not an economist and I know 'nothink' about politics, but if the country (or indeed the World) was run on the same lines as Woking, I am sure we would not be in the same mess that we are now.

'People are getting wet walking out of the station into town' – build a lovely glass canopy, but be environmentally friendly by covering the glass in photovoltaic cells.

'Houses are getting flooded in the Hoe Valley' – chop down all the trees and build new flood defences, and in the process why not relocate some local community groups from shabby little huts into brand new state-of-the-art buildings.

'The shopping centre needs reviving' – just buy it, pay for expensive renovations and then propose to build yet another one next door.

Problems solved. The government might not believe in spending our way out of recession, but what do they know.

In the 1970's Woking Council had a vision of the future – build a new shopping centre and people will come.

And then there is the cost of access so that affordable houses can be built in Westfield; the price of a new fire station (with training facilities apparently); and finally (although I am sure it will not be the end to our little spending spree), there is the cost of renovating a leisure centre's outdoor pitches (with car parking).

Of course nobody could have predicted that the canopy would go over-budget. The houses that will be built off Westfield Avenue will pay for all the work in the Hoe Valley – eventually - (unless of course someone comes up with a brilliant idea of Woking Council paying for the whole site to be turned into a large car park to for the football club). And by owing the 'asset' that is Wolsey Place (and presumably the new 'Marks&Sparks Centre' when it is built), Woking is 'investing' in the future – assuming that is that 'town centres' have a future in the 21st century with internet shopping etc.

But, we are assured, when the World finally comes out of recession, the shining new Woking will apparently already be there waiting for it. I really am so proud to be living in Woking.



In the 1990's Woking Council had a vision of the future – build a new shopping centre and people will come.

In the 2010's Woking... (you've got the idea!)



More Photo's Please

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 19th October, 2012)

A couple of weeks ago I appealed for pictures of Woking for a series of talks I am giving next April in aid of the Woking Hospice. The first talk will be on 'Woking in the 1960's' (on Tuesday 2nd April) with the second on the 1970's on Friday 5th and the final talk on the '80's and beyond' on Tuesday 9th April. Tickets are not quite ready, but when they are, I will let you know.

I have a large collection of views from around Woking Town Centre, but I would particularly like to find more photos of some of the outlying areas from the 1960's and 70's.

For the first seven years of my life I lived in Cherry Street, off Poole Road, and although I have recollections of some of the buildings in the street I would dearly love to see some pictures of the old Home Counties (or Unigate) milk depot or Price's Bakery that used to be on the corner with Snelgar Road.

The old Goldsworth Arms is still around – for the time being at least – but what of the other junction of Poole Road and Goldsworth Road. Has anyone got photographs of the houses and shops that used to be on the corner before the new offices were built in the 1980's (or even the site of the Tile Warehouse before that was built in the late 1960's). I must have been pushed past the site almost every day when my mother took me into town to buy the groceries, but I cannot remember what the buildings looked like.

Likewise, having moved to the Bullbeggars Estate in the early 1970's, I must have seen Horsell High Street being developed with the shops opposite the Co-op – but I cannot remember what was there before.

Sometimes it is amazing how much we can remember about the past, but also incredible how much we forget, or is it that we just didn't take much notice of the changes at the time.



The houses of Cherry Street (and the railway embankment) can clearly be seen in the background of this photograph of my brother (Neil) and myself with our peddle cars, but has anyone any pictures of across the road with Goldsworth Engineering, the dairy and Price's?

The 'new' shops of Horsell High Street were built within my time in the village but somehow have managed to avoid my memory.



Bradfield House

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 26th October, 2012)



Many of the 'older' residents of Woking can remember Boorman's Garage and the shops that once stood more or less where 'Tesco' is now.

I have said it before, but it is amazing how quickly people forget about things. I was talking to a long-time resident of Woking the other day about the 'New Central' development in Guildford Road. We were reminiscing about the buildings that were on the site – not just the ones that have only just been pulled down, but also the shops and garage that was on the site of Meirion House before it was built in the 1980's. The lady in question could remember them well (much better than I) and managed to reel off the names of previous occupiers (including, of course, Boorman's Garage that was one of the main occupiers of the site).

We then started talking about Coronation House closer to Victoria Arch, but when I asked her for her memories of Bradfield House, she looked at me as if I was talking nonsense. It is not

Does anybody know why a cannon was pointed at the new development in the 1980's?

How many can remember the offices on the site behind Coronation House?

unknown, but on this occasion I fortunately had photographic evidence to back me up. She had completely forgotten about the place.

In the 1960's there were several applications to build offices on the site, but the council, I believe, had once been offered the site as a car park, so the solution the developers came up with was to build the offices on 'stilts'. Car parking was maintained, but offices also provided – a 'win win situation' – the only downside was that the offices were used by the 'taxman'!

When Meirion House was built the developers there, for reasons I do not know, placed a cannon on a plinth pointing to the H.M. Customs building. They denied it, claiming it was 'aimed' at their own building, but it was an amusing talking point for a time.

My elderly friend can remember the story (and the Cannon) but had somehow managed to blot Bradfield House out of her otherwise crystal clear mind. A case of wishful thinking perhaps!



St John's Post Office & Seasons Coffee Shop & Deli
 (copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 2nd November, 2012)



A couple of months ago I was contacted by the owner of Season's Coffee House and Deli in St John's, a new venture that took over the site of the old Post Office back in the summer (if you can call what we had this year a 'summer').

Henry Knight Jolliffe set up the Post Office on this site in 1903.

probably date back to when the property was first built. One is the 'transfer of Mortgage, dated 1878; with conveyances for the shop from 1893, 1896, 1899 & 1903 also part of my collection.

Several customers had been reminiscing about the 'good old days' and she wondered if I would be able to give an illustrated talk on the history of the village at her shop. The talk, or should I say talks, are taking place next Thursday (8th November). Places are quite limited, and entry is by ticket only, but the events are designed to help raise money for the 'Help for Heroes' charity, so hopefully they will be well attended.

It was in 1903 that Mr Henry Knight Jolliffe took out a mortgage (for £622.15.0) from the West Surrey Permanent Mutual Benefit Society, to buy the property and open the post office. The conveyance that went with it is quite interesting as it shows that he bought it from an auctioneer by the name of Alfred Herbert Jolliffe (a relative, perhaps).

As well as giving the talk, I have also been able to supply the shop with a copy of one of the original deeds to the property, as several years ago I was given a pile of papers (and parchments), that

A postcard sold by Jolliffe's in the early 20th century calling St Johns Road, the 'High Street'.

I am not certain where in the village the post office was before. All I know is that it was run by a 'Mrs Alice Read Calloway', who in 1899 was also listed as a 'provision dealer', but after the Jolliffe's (who ran it for many years), the Post Office remained on this site until its closure a couple of years ago.



After over a century serving the village, the Post Office closed and earlier this year was converted into Season's Coffee Shop & Deli.

Woking's Post Offices (East Side)

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 9th November, 2012)



In chapter twelve, as the Narrator and the Artilleryman are escaping Maybury Hill towards Weybridge, he mentions *'at the corner turning up towards the post office a little cart, filled with boxes and furniture, and horseless, heeled over on a broken wheel.'* The cash box had been smashed open and thrown underneath the debris.

Unfortunately all too often in the past the little local Post Offices have been the victim of real 'smash and grabs', as I leaned on my walk around Pirbright the other week. The post office there closed after three break-ins in a short period of time.

Byfleet once had two post offices.

Last week I wrote about the Post Office that used to be in St Johns (where Season's Coffee Shop & Deli is today), and asked if anyone knew where its predecessor was? I haven't got the answer to that question yet, but it did start a conversation at work about other post offices in the area that have moved or closed in recent years.

Byfleet once had two post offices, one in Chertsey Road and the other in the High Road (across the road and to the east of its present site). West Byfleet too once had two, in Station Road to the north of the railway and Station Approach to the south, whilst Pyrford, as far as I can tell, only ever had its old Post Office in the little shop opposite Marshall's Parade.

The Post Office on East Hill that recently closed was a replacement for the one that used to stand on the corner of Sandy Lane and Lavender Road. That building is 'world famous' as it features in H.G. Wells' science-fiction novel, *The War of the Worlds*.



Pyrford's little Post Office is now a flooring showroom!

Next week we shall look at some more old post offices in the area, including those in Old Woking and Kingfield (amongst others).



The Post Office in West Byfleet has moved from one corner of Station Approach and Maderia Road to another, as the old one is now the Ponte Vecchio restaurant. and the new one is in the Londis Store.



Was H.G. Wells a customer of the Post Office on the corner of Sandy Lane and Lavender Road?

Woking's Post Offices (South Side)

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 16th November, 2012)



The last Post Office in Old Woking was in 'London House' – now a restaurant. In 1895 the Post Office in Old Woking was on the corner with what became St Peter's Road (see map, right), but where it was in 1851 I do not know.

As promised last week, we continue our look at former post offices, starting at Old Woking with a picture of the one next to the Old Brew House before it was turned into a restaurant. The shop was originally a drapers run by a man called Walter Kensett with the name 'London House' apparently advertising the fact that the prices were more competitive than other 'local' shops.

In 1851 Samuel Matthews, a grocer acted as the 'town's' postmaster - Old Woking then being 'Woking' as the new town had not yet started to be built on the Common.

Letters were received from Ripley at 7am and 2pm, and dispatched at 6pm each evening. Ripley was the local post 'town' with the mail coaches stopping there on their way down to Portsmouth, until an office opened opposite Woking Station (where the Nat West Bank is today) in 1865.

I don't know exactly where Samuel Matthews' shop was (other than it was in the High Street), as he is not recorded on the Tithe Map and Assessment for the area and the census for 1851 is not clear.

There was also apparently an 'office' in Sutton Green in 1851 (according to the Post Office Directory of that year), with Thomas Howard, a farmer living at what is now Sutton Green House, receiving letters at '¼ before 8 a.m., dispatched ½ before 6 p.m.'

How long his 'office' continued I do not know - it was not recorded in the 1878 directory - although by the early 1890's George Gunner was receiving letters in the village at what is still known as 'The Old Post Office' in Sutton Green Lane.



The Old Post Office in Sutton Green is a Grade II listed building dating from the 16th century.



Originally the Post Office in Kingfield was on the corner of Rosebery Crescent and Kingfield Road.

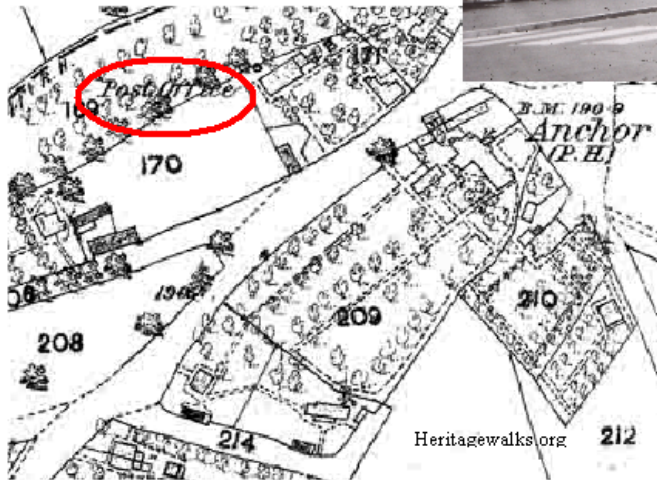
It is not until much later that the post offices opened at Westfield and Kingfield (the latter subsequently moving to the New Life Church), but the post office at Mayford is almost unique in this area as it has operated from the same building since it opened in the late 1880's.



Knaphill's Post Office

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 23rd November, 2012)

I want to conclude the recent series looking at old post offices in the area in Knaphill. Until recently I thought that the present site was only the third location for the post office in the village, but I have now discovered a fourth location (or should I say the first one) from an old map dated 1870. It shows the Post Office between the High Street and Highclere Road, somewhere in the area of the pet shop. That was originally Highclere Farm, I believe, so whether the original post office started out in one of the outbuildings I do not know.



1870 Ordnance Survey Map of Knaphill.

Later on it transferred to what became a cycle shop on the corner of the High Street and Englefield Road (now part of the site of the Co-op), before moving across the road to a shop more or less where RSM are today.

In 1899 Miss Mercy Joy is recorded as the sub-postmistress for 'Knapp Hill', which was then a 'Money Order and Telegraph Office, and an Express Delivery and Parcel Post Office' as well. Letters were not delivered to your door in those days but had to be collected from the shop, but



The shop on the corner with Englefield Road was the second site of the Post Office in Knaphill.

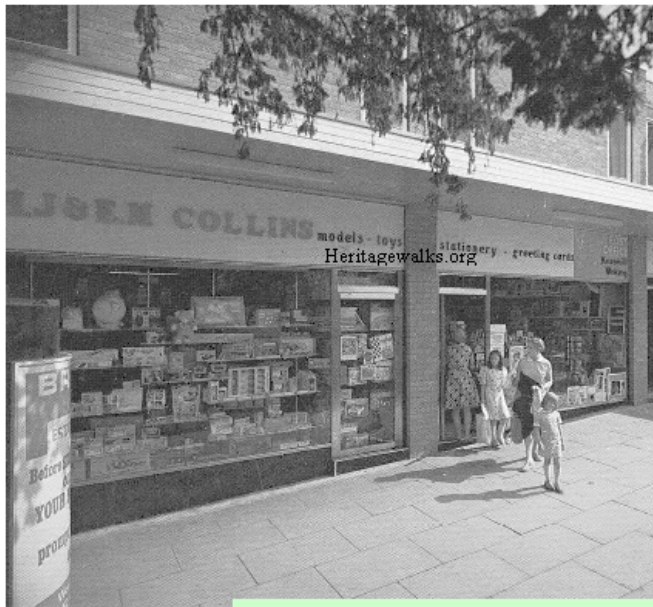


Heritagewalks.org

Later it moved across the road to the site now occupied by RSM

there was just the one (at 7.15 am), the 'service' was possibly better than it is today. Letters were also dispatched to be sorted at Woking three times a day and once on Sundays, and it is remarkable how many old Victorian and Edwardian postcards that can be found with notes like 'meet me from the 5.15 train this afternoon' written on them (which presumably arrived in time).

The post office moved to the present site on the 25th August 1969; H. J & E. M Collins being one of the first of the 'new' shops to open in the Anchor Parade Shopping Centre built by Courage and Barclays Brewery together with City Developers Ltd.



It moved to its present site in 1969

War Memorials

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 30th November, 2012)

I was instructed the other week by a prominent member of Woking Council, to take a fresh look at the new 'Town Square' (sic). I sensed he was not too happy with some of my comments in the past about the changes that have taken place in the area, and wanted to point out that whilst many towns were seeing shop after shop close, in Woking recently several new shops have opened. I hope that trend continues.

My 'problem' with Jubilee Square is not the new shops or restaurants, it's not even its new name (although I cannot really see the point to the change), it is simply the almost continual 'tweaks' and changes that have taken place in recent years. Only time will tell if they have now got it right, but from my point of view I cannot help feel that the War Memorial lost some of its magic when it was moved from the tree-lined and grass covered serenity of 'Sparrow Park' to the concrete paved 'plaza' of Town Square. At least now the War Memorial no longer appears to be just a 'backdrop' for the circle of seats that have thankfully been moved much further away from (and more respectfully facing) the monument.

The War Memorial was first unveiled on Empire Day (May 24th), 1922, by Field Marshal, Sir William Robertson, with readings by the Rev. Forde (from the Wesleyan Church across the park); and the vicars of Christ Church and St. Mary's Horsell. The Memorial was officially for those who lost their life from 'Woking and Horsell' – the village having only been part of Woking for some fifteen years.

How the village ended up with its own War Memorial as well (whilst other villages in the area had none), I do not know, but at least it now seems that Knaphill will be able to properly commemorate its war dead, with the proposed 'Memorial Garden' on part of the site of their old Library.



In the 1970's with the building of Woking's new town centre it was proposed to move it to a new central location outside the new public library

Let us hope that it is a true 'garden' with trees and grass and flowers, where all year around people can sit and contemplate, and not just a large paved area that once a year gets a few wreaths of poppies to brighten up the village.



The War Memorial was first unveiled in Victoria Gardens (known to locals as 'Sparrow Park') in 1922 and for over fifty years was allowed to remain in peace.



Since its first move in 1975 the War Memorial has been repositioned at least once, had benches 'stacked' around it, and has seen two new libraries come and go – what are the chances of it being left alone for the next fifty years?

Woking's Post Office

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 7th December, 2012)



I know I said last week that I had concluded my look at local post offices, but I noticed last week that the old town centre one by the market is already being pulled down in anticipation, I assume, for the new development on the Cawsey Way/Victoria Way site.

Before it moved to the basement of Smith's, the post office had been on that site since 1960. Before that it was at the other end of Commercial Way – in what is now County Lettings, but which in the past has been Gloster's seed merchants, Shee's electrical and Robinson's drapers (to name just a few). The post office moved to that site in 1947 from Chertsey Road, where coincidentally Robinson's extended their department store in the 1970's. That post office opened in the mid 1890's, but before that it had moved around quite a lot with shops in Walton Road, Chertsey Road and before then on the corner of Church Path and the High Street (where the NatWest bank is now).

Woking's first post office was in the High Street before moving into Chertsey Road and then for a short time in the 1880's in Walton Road.

In the mid 1890's it returned to Chertsey Road with a mock Tudor façade above the red brick ground floor.



That building survived until the 1970's when Robinson's extended their department store onto the site. By then the post office had moved twice in Commercial Road, ending up in 1960 on the site of the old council offices.

That was Woking town centre's first post office, opened in 1865, where the mail was originally sorted as well.

Of course later the sorting office was moved to the other side of the railway on the corner of Oriental Road and White Rose Lane, where the



Jubilee Square, but there is another little War Memorial in the sorting office to the men of the Woking Post Office who died during the First World War.

Before I conclude, I should apologise for a couple of errors that crept into the recent reports on local post offices. First of all I implied that St John's Post Office had been somewhere else before Mr Jolliffe opened up in 1903 in the shop that is now Seasons Deli & Coffee shop. In fact Mr Jolliffe just took over the existing shop. Second I suggested that Mayford's Post Office has not moved since it opened in the 1880's. That is not true. The present building was not even built in the 1880's. The original post office in the village was around the corner, next to the Bird in Hand. So whilst I thought St Johns post office had moved and Mayford's had not, it was in fact the other way around.

Woking Palace

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 14th December, 2012)



The little stone vaulted building probably dates from Henry VII's time, or his mother Lady Margaret Beaufort who is credited with turning the Medieval Manor House at Woking into the Royal Palace of Tudor times.



Henry VIII often visited Woking Palace, hunting in the local park or on the 'common' where Woking Town Centre is now.

One of my 'traditions' each Christmas has been to lead a guided walk to the ruins of one of Henry VIII's favourite palaces - Woking Palace - every Boxing Day afternoon. I have been doing it for getting on for twenty years, with hundreds of people joining me over that time.

Henry VIII, of course, is said to have been the first person to enjoy roast turkey as part of his Christmas meal, along with Peacocks and Boar and Venison (and probably just about any other meat he could lay his hands on). He often visited Woking in the winter months, enjoying hunting in the parkland where the Hoe Bridge Golf Course is now, or further a field in the 'forest' that is now Woking Town Centre.

We cook our turkey on Christmas Eve and then have a picnic on Christmas Day on the beach at Birling Gap, but for me the Boxing Day walk is one of the real highlights of the Christmas period.

In Medieval times, when few animals could be kept over-winter and fridges and freezers were unheard of, ways had to be found to store meat for long periods. Some could be salted or dry smoked, but another method that allowed for some minced up pieces of meat to be preserved, was to mix it with fruit and 'store' it in a pastry case to be served as a special treat at Christmas - a 'mince-meat pie'.

Another traditional Christmas dish also started out as a way of keeping the autumn-culled meat 'fresh' until mid-winter, by combining it again with fermenting fruit, adding a few spices (if you could afford any) and slowly cooking it as a sort of 'pottage' or 'pudding'.

I must say that I am not that keen on Christmas Pudding, but I do like the odd mince pie. It is funny how some Christmas 'traditions' have built up.



When the Palace was abandoned in the 17th century part of the palace complex became the outbuildings to Woking Park Farm. One of the old halls became a barn, pictured here in the 1940's before it too collapsed.

Picture Quiz One

(copy sent to the Woking Informer for print w/e 21st December, 2012)



Picture 1 (above)

What is here now, and what fruit would you associate with the site?

Last week I wrote about some Christmas traditions and my walk to Woking Palace next Wednesday afternoon. That is Boxing Day for anyone else who cannot believe how fast 2012 has come and gone. It seems like only yesterday that we were all looking forward to the 2012 – I am sure that there must be less days in the year nowadays (if not hours in the day)!

I wonder what 2013 will bring to Woking.

A new Market in Peacock Walk, or Church Street as it used to be called before it became the 'wind-tunnel' exit to the 'new' town centre car park in the mid 1970's. It will be good to see this 'wasted space' used for something useful at last.

We might also see in 2013 plans for a new Fire Station, the pedestrian tunnel(s) next to Victoria Arch and other works in preparation for the new 'M&S Centre'.

Then there will be the completion of the WWF's new HQ at Brewery Road. I wonder which 'Royal' we will get to officially open it – or will they go for something a bit more unusual and ship a Panda over from China to cut the ribbon?

And which empty old office block will be the next to fall under the developers axe?

You could have a fun family 'parlour game' over Christmas trying to guess which bit of Woking will no longer be here this time next year, and record each generations memories of what Woking was like 'back in my day'. Woking is changing so fast that even the children can join in.

To kick things off I have included three photographs here from three 'generations'. Try to put them into date order and identify where they are! Answers on the next page, below (so don't look until you are ready)!

Picture 2 (below)

Two 'W's' on this site but which two and what is the road in the background?



Picture 3 (Above)

The wall in the background is the back of what and from above which shop now and originally was the picture taken?

Photo Quiz Two



Picture 4 (Above)

What decade was this picture taken and of where?

The answers to last week's picture quiz are as follows.

For Picture One I asked what is there now. The answer is 'The Ship' or 'The Centrum' as it was known during its construction stages in the early part of this century. For the older residents of Woking the fruit that was once associated with the site is bananas as Fiffes once had storage shed on the site.

For Picture Two I gave the clue that two 'W's' were associated with the site. They were Woolworth's and Wetherspoons as the picture showed the development of the old Woolworth's shop in Chertsey Road in 1958. The buildings in the background were Commercial Road, which in those days used to join Chertsey Road – before the Fine Fare supermarket (now The Big Apple) blocked off that end of the road.

For Picture Three the 'back wall' was that of Boots before the Wolsey Place Shopping Centre was extended in the 1980's and the Bandstand erected. The picture was obviously taken from the car park above Toys R Us, or the RACS Co-op superstore as it was originally built.

In order of date they are thus picture two, then three and finally one.

This week I thought I would continue the quiz with three more pictures from around the villages of Woking. Answers to these on the January-March 2013 page.



Picture 5 (Above)

Who used to use this building, what was the site used for before it was built and what is it used for now?



Picture 6 (Above)

This picture was taken from the drive to a school – what was its name and therefore what is the name of the church?