

A TROUBLED CHILD

The History of

WOKING FIRE BRIGADE

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
THE GROWTH OF WOKING.....	1
The Canal.....	1
The Railway.....	1
The Necropolis.....	1
PRE-NATAL: EARLY FIREFIGHTING	4
Ancient times	4
Fire Insurance Companies	4
A DIFFICULT BIRTH.....	5
Torchlight Society & the Local Board	5
Woking Urban District Council	8
TEETHING TROUBLES.....	9
Priorities & disagreements	9
Fire at the Council Offices	16
The engine arrives	17
COMING OF AGE	21
A new station	22
World War II.....	26
Post-War	28
Another new station	32
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY	34
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	36
INDEX.....	37

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Land purchased by London Necropolis Company	1
Figure 2. <i>London Gazette</i> 17 November 1868	2
Figure 3. 1857 plan for land sales by the Necropolis Company	3
Figure 4. Hand in Hand and Sun fire insurance marks.....	4
Figure 5. <i>West Middlesex Herald</i> 1 October 1894.....	6
Figure 6. Charles Sherlock (1856-1932)	6
Figure 7. Central Station Section of fire brigade, 1895.....	7
Figure 8. St John’s fire appliance hut.....	7
Figure 9. Knaphill fire appliance hut	8
Figure 10. Gustav F Wermig (1852-1928)	9
Figure 11. Robert Mossop (1860-1928).....	9
Figure 12. Unwins’ fire brigade c.1909	11
Figure 13. 1897 advertisement	11
Figure 14. <i>West Surrey Times</i> 12 March 1897	11
Figure 15. <i>Woking News & Mail</i> 11 November 1898	14
Figure 16. Fire at Council Offices	16
Figure 17. Superintendent Wright’s report.....	16
Figure 18. <i>West Surrey Times</i> 11 August 1899.....	18
Figure 19. The new fire station (1899) and engine.....	19
Figure 20. New Council Offices, built in 1906.....	19
Figure 21. The brigade outside the council offices.....	20
Figure 22. 1920 Dennis ‘N’ Type fire engine.....	21
Figure 23. Plan for development of St Dunstan’s Church site, 1925.....	22
Figure 24. Fire Station, Church Street, c.1928	23
Figure 25. Fire Brigade, Church Street, c.1928.....	24
Figure 26. Areas served from Woking, 1929.....	25
Figure 27. The brigade outside Christ Church, 1938	26

Figure 28. National Fire Service badge.....	26
Figure 29. Dennis trailer fire pump	27
Figure 30. Fire-boat No. 1 (Leicester)	27
Figure 31. Company of NFS Fire Force 32 (Woking)	28
Figure 32. Surrey Fire Brigade badge	28
Figure 33. Fire stations in Surrey, 1948	29
Figure 34. Fire engines, c.1950	30
Figure 35. Church Street station surrounded by desolation c.1973.....	31
Figure 36. Church Street station c.1979.....	31
Figure 37. Church Street station, rear & training tower, c.1979.....	32
Figure 38. New Church Street station, built 1981	33
Figure 39. Goldsworth Road station, 2025.....	34

INTRODUCTION

THE GROWTH OF WOKING

The Canal

The Basingstoke canal was built to connect Basingstoke with London. It cut across the Woking heathland (which was cheap to purchase). The Act of Parliament to permit its construction was passed in 1778 and the canal completed in 1794.

The Railway

The modern town of Woking in Surrey did not exist before the 1850s. When, in May 1838, the London to Southampton railway first opened, early passengers would have looked out of the train windows upon wide stretches of heathland. The railway station, originally named Woking Common, was built on the southern side of the line to serve the coaches from Guildford and Ripley which brought and collected the mail. The London and South Western Railway Act 1834 received royal assent on 25 July 1834.

The Necropolis

In 1850, London had a problem; its ever-growing population was filling all of the church graveyards.

The London Necropolis and National Mausoleum Company was formed and proposed a solution. A huge cemetery would be built some distance from London, where everybody (and every body) in the country would be buried.

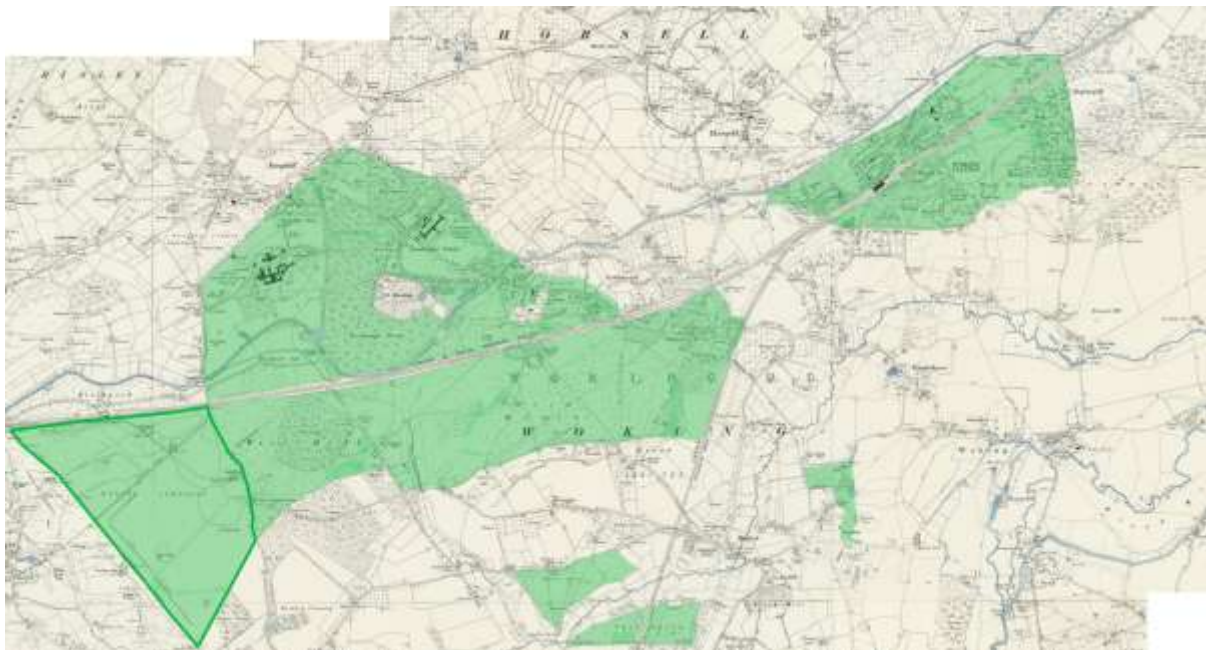


Figure 1. Land purchased by London Necropolis Company

An Act of Parliament was passed which authorised the purchase of common land within the parish of the village of Woking (now Old Woking). The plan

drew considerable criticism. Many thought that the 2600 acres authorised to be purchased was far in excess of what would be needed and that the whole scheme was no more than land speculation.¹

A cemetery of 400 acres was set out, as a first phase (in that corner of the land purchased farthest from London and the station of Woking Common - bounded by the dark green line in Figure 1). This cemetery is now Brookwood Cemetery - at the time the largest cemetery in the world and still one of the largest in Europe.

Before the first phase was complete, the Necropolis Company was petitioning Parliament for a second Act which would allow them to sell off any surplus land for development.

Some of the first land sold was for institutions: The Woking Prison for Invalid Convicts, later to become Inkerman Barracks; the Surrey County Asylum for Pauper Lunatics, better known in more recent times as Brookwood Hospital; the Dramatic College for out of work actors, later the Oriental Institute.

The Company, however, had plans for a new town to be built around the station at Woking Common. It was the land sales policy of the Necropolis Company which ultimately saw the commercial centre of the new town grow up sandwiched between the railway and the Basingstoke Canal.

Their company architect, Henry Abraham, drew up a rough scheme which made no attempt to produce a sensible road network. It merely added to the existing tracks which had crossed the common, despite these having been cut and diverted by the canal and railway. North of the railway, the land was divided into small plots which were relatively attractive for commercial use, whereas south of the railway the plots were larger, allowing expensive houses to be built where they had nice views across towards Guildford and the Hogs Back. There was of course no local authority at this time to oversee matters, the Woking Local Board not being established until 1893 and Surrey County Council only created in 1889.

In Parliament—Session 1869.

**London Necropolis and National Mausoleum.
(Repeal of Restrictions as to the Sale of Surplus
Lands; Amendment of Acts.)**

NOTICE is hereby given, that the London Necropolis and National Mausoleum Company (hereinafter called the Company) intend to apply to Parliament in the ensuing session for leave to bring in a Bill and to pass an Act for the following, or some of the following purposes, that is to say:—

1. To enable the Company to sell, lease, and exchange the whole or any part of the lands purchased and acquired by them in the parish of Woking, in the county of Surrey, which have not been set apart as a cemetery or burial-ground, and which are not required for the purposes of the Company's undertaking; and to authorise the erection of houses and buildings upon such lands,

Figure 2. *London Gazette* 17 November 1868

¹ Hansard, HC Deb 27 February 1852 vol 119 cc925-30

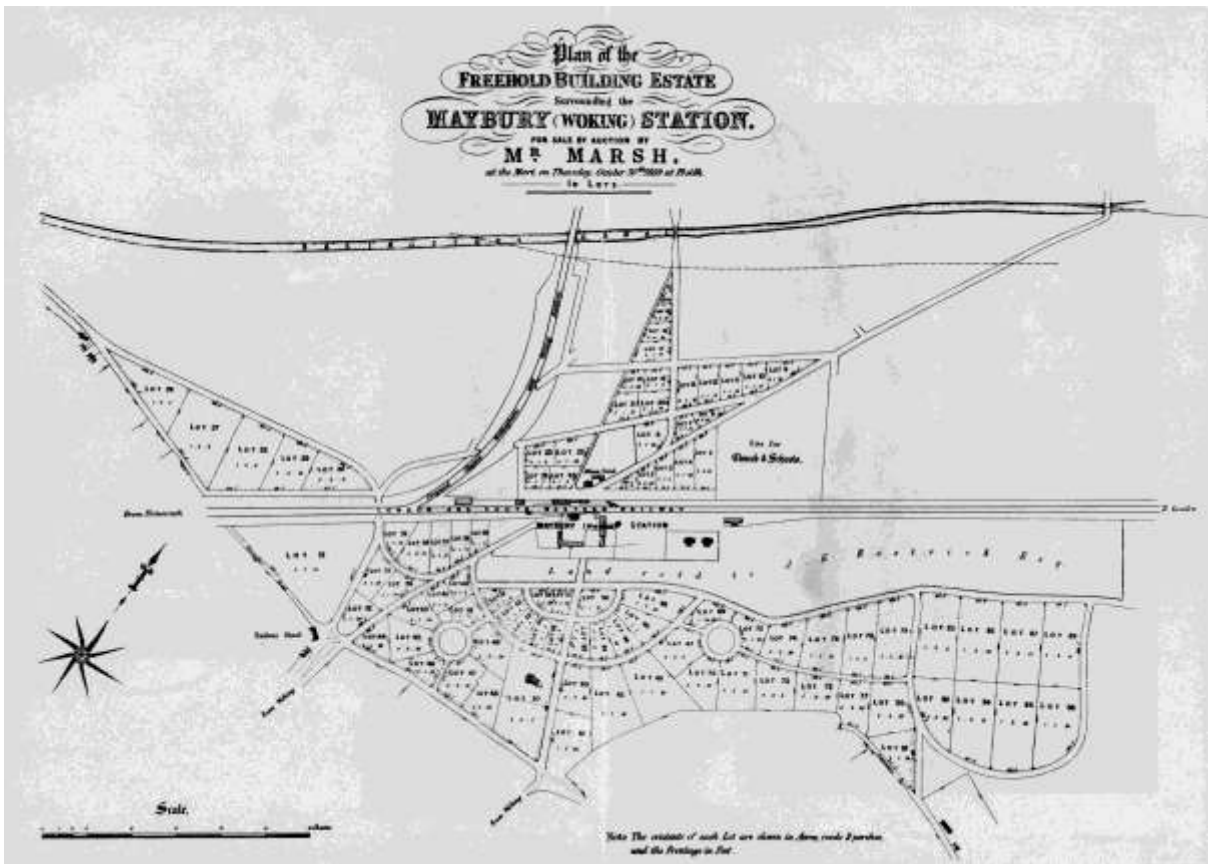


Figure 3. 1857 plan for land sales by the Necropolis Company

PRE-NATAL: EARLY FIREFIGHTING

Ancient times

The history of the firefighter began in ancient Rome while under the rule of Augustus in the 3rd Century. Prior to that, there is evidence of fire-fighting in use in Ancient Egypt.

In Britain, the first organised firefighting is believed to have originated during the Roman invasion in AD43. Even then, fighting fires was often limited to nothing better than buckets of water. Once the Romans left, firefighting took a backward step as communities fell into decline. During the middle ages many towns simply burned down due to the lack of firefighters and most buildings were easy to burn being constructed of wood. Eventually, some parishes organised basic firefighting, but no regulations or standards were in force.

The Great Fire of London, in 1666, changed things and helped to standardize firefighting. It set in motion changes that laid the foundations for organised firefighting.

Fire Insurance Companies

After the Great Fire, the first fire insurance company called “The Fire Office”, was established in 1667 by Nicholas Barbon. His Fire Brigade employed small teams of Thames watermen as firefighters. Other similar companies soon followed his lead and this was how property was protected until the early 1800s. Policy holders were given a badge, or fire mark, to affix to their building. If a fire started, the Fire Brigade was called. They looked for the fire mark and, provided it was the right one, the fire would be dealt with. Theoretically (and an urban myth perpetuated in literature) the buildings were left to burn until the right fire company attended. The Hand in Hand Fire Insurance Company was later to supersede ‘The Fire Office’ Company. Eventually, many of these insurance companies were to merge.



Figure 4. Hand in Hand and Sun fire insurance marks

A DIFFICULT BIRTH

Torchlight Society & the Local Board

In the late 1880s, it was becoming obvious to most of the inhabitants of Woking that a municipal fire-brigade was needed. The new town around the station was growing rapidly and, at over 8,000 inhabitants (plus those at the prison and asylum), the parish was the second most highly-populated in the country. Woking was fully dependent upon the Guildford and Chertsey fire brigades, which could often take well over an hour to arrive once called.

The Woking Torchlight Society² was founded in 1888.³ It raised money throughout the year to fund a torch-lit procession, bonfire & fireworks and celebration dinner. A secondary aim of the Society was to put any surplus funds towards deserving causes.

The Society had started a fund to pay for 'fire-extinguishing appliances'. In December 1893, they added £13 to the fund, making a total of £23 (about £3,840 in today's money).

The Woking Local Board had formed a Fire Brigade Committee. With funds from the Torchlight Society and pledges of support from local inhabitants, the Committee felt they had sufficient funds to purchase a hose and reel.

The Woking Local Board had formed in October 1893. Mr John Alfred Anwell, as secretary of the Fire Brigade Committee, wrote to the Board asking if they intended to form a fire-brigade as 'one was sorely needed'. This was raised at a meeting held on Tuesday 12th December 1893.

John Wenham stated that he thought if there were to be a fire brigade, it should be under the control of the Board and the question was whether the Board were in a position to take on another burden. John Orlando Law agreed; he considered that the matter should be dealt with at once and proposed that it be passed to the General Purpose Committee to be dealt with as soon as possible. John Law seconded the motion and it was carried.

The Local Government Act 1894, received royal assent on 5th March, coming into effect from December 1894. The principal effects of the act were:

- The creation a system of urban and rural districts with elected councils. These, along with the town councils of municipal boroughs created earlier in the century, formed a second tier of local government below the county councils formed by the Local Government Act 1888.
- The establishment of elected parish councils in rural areas.

² Bonfire Societies and Torch-light Societies were formed to organise annual celebrations of the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot

³ A Torchlight Society for Woking Village (now Old Woking) had been in existence from earlier

- The reform of the boards of guardians of poor law unions.
- The entitlement of women who owned property to vote in local elections

In September 1894, the Board agreed to the formation of a fire brigade and advertisements appeared in the local and regional press asking for volunteers to man it.

Figure 5. *West Middlesex Herald*
1 October 1894

WOKING LOCAL BOARD.

THE above-named Board having decided upon the formation of a Fire Brigade for the parish of Woking, are desirous of receiving the names of persons willing to offer themselves as members.

Applicants are requested to communicate with Mr. G. J. Wooldridge, surveyor to the Board, on or before October 14th, 1894, stating occupation and age, which must not exceed 40. Further particulars may be obtained upon application to the undersigned.

G. J. WOOLDRIDGE, Surveyor.
Bank Chambers, Woking, Sept. 27th, 1894.

12186

Charles Sherlock, a 39 year old clerk who ran W H Smith's bookstall on Woking Station, was appointed as Captain of the fire brigade. Each of the four districts - Station, Village, St John's and Knaphill - would have a tin hut in which to house equipment and a team of volunteers led by a foreman (superintendent at Station).

The Brigade's first fire station (which was barely deserving of the name) was a corrugated tin hut on wheels, used to store the equipment. It was sited on a patch of land at the junction of Chertsey Road and Chobham Road, where the Quadrant now is.



Figure 6. Charles Sherlock
(1856-1932)



Figure 7. Central Station Section of fire brigade, 1895
 (from left to right): Firemen G F Hawkins , S J Wright, W Abrey, E Abrey, J Harding,
 H Quartermaine (superintendent) and Charles Sherlock (captain)

The Village hut was sited opposite the White Hart Hotel in Old Woking; the Knaphill hut was on the High Street, near the Anchor Hotel; the St John's hut was sited on the edge of the Lye (where the bus stop now is).

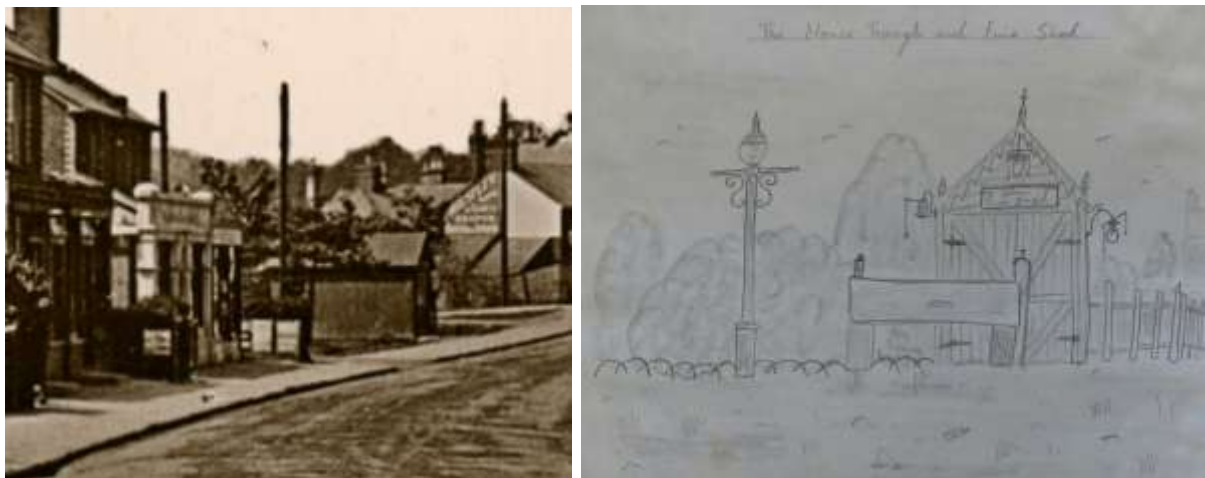


Figure 8. St John's fire appliance hut⁴

The superintendent of the Station section was Henry Quartermaine. The foremen of the outlying wards were:

- Village - J W Grantham
- St John's – George A Jackson
- Knaphill – A Gunner

⁴ The drawing is reproduced from scrapbooks held at the Surrey History Centre [SHC, 6812/6-7, *Woking and environs: scrapbooks compiled by Anthony Bathurst of Guildford*] The scrapbooks contain original postcards, photographs, cuttings and other printed material. They also include drawings of buildings no longer extant, or much changed, at the time the scrapbooks were created. It is not clear how much reliance should be placed on these drawings as an accurate record rather than an imaginative reconstruction.



Figure 9. Knaphill fire appliance hut

This photograph of the visit of the Duchess of Albany to Knaphill in 1907 appears to show the Knaphill fire appliance hut in the background (circled)

Woking Urban District Council

Under the Local Government Act 1894, the Woking Urban District Council (U.D.C.) was established, succeeding the Woking Local Board. It governed the parish of Woking as an urban district, focusing on essential local services such as water supply, sewerage, and public health, driven by rapid urbanization following the arrival of the South Western Railway in 1838.

The fire brigade was made up of volunteers. They were allowed £1 per man in lieu of boots. They also received a payment for attending fires – presumably as compensation for lost wages incurred whilst not at work.

Now began the political fight to ensure the embryonic fire brigade was properly equipped.

TEETHING TROUBLES

Priorities & disagreements

The new town of Woking had grown up with very little planning, organisation or oversight. The Woking District Council came into being faced with a number of problems to solve:

- The electricity, gas and water supplies were primitive, unreliable and coverage was limited; there was no street lighting.
- There was no proper drainage system and cesspools were overflowing into the streets.
- The streets were unmetalled (i.e. earth); in dry summers they were dust bowls, that required frequent watering, and the rest of the time were quagmires.
- The Council had no offices of their own.

The inhabitants of the parish did not like the idea of new or increased rates to pay for everything, especially in the outlying villages of Old Woking, Mayford, St John's and Knaphill, who thought they were being asked to subsidise the new central town. Funds were limited and, for some councillors, a fire brigade was a low priority.



Figure 10. Gustav F Wermig (1852-1928)

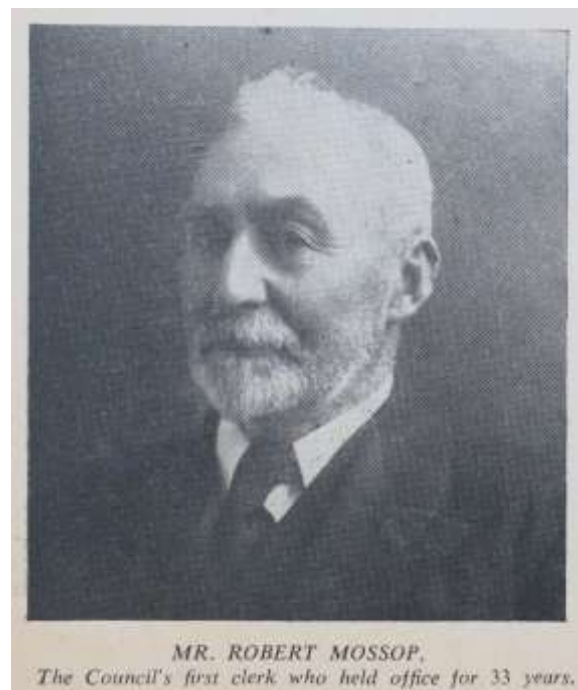


Figure 11. Robert Mossop (1860-1928)

A Steam Engine

In 1894, The Fire Brigade Committee recommended to the Local Board that they purchase a steam powered pump engine (a 'steamer'). However, in August, the Board voted **not** to purchase at that time.

The new Council reversed that decision at a meeting held in May 1895 and provisionally accepted a tender for the purchase of an engine and accessories. However a vote to ratify that decision in October was defeated. Just £300 was spent, to provide each of the four sites with: '1 jumping sheet, 1 35-foot ladder and 2 short ladders'.⁵

The main voice of opposition was that of James Kittredge, a Councillor for Knaphill and Brookwood ward, who was also a member of the Knaphill Ratepayers Association and chairman of the Fire Brigade Committee. As a representative of the Knaphill ratepayers, he was generally averse to any substantial expenditure (although he was in favour of spending £6000 on new Council offices).

He argued that Knaphill did not have need of the new engine as, provided the Water Company maintained a decent flow through the mains, the hydrants were adequate and besides both the asylum⁶ and military⁷ had their own forces which would come to their assistance⁸. There were unlikely to have been Fire Insurance Company forces in the district⁹.

Mains Water Supply

It was generally accepted that a pressure, provided through the water main, of 100lbs per square inch (psi) (equivalent to 6.9 bar) measured at the hydrant, was required for fighting fires effectively without the use of an engine.

In December 1897, it was stated that the best pressure obtainable in the central district was 80lbs, at St John's and Kiln Bridge 60lbs and at Brookwood Asylum 50lbs. In January 1898, the mains were tested with the following results: Commercial Road 84lbs, St Peter's Home 65lbs, Woking Village 100lbs, Claremont Avenue £100lbs, Cross Lanes 100lbs.

During a dry spell in August 1898, Knaphill (the highest point in the district) was without water for three days. In December 1898, the pressure in Knaphill varied from 35lbs to 45lbs; in a test made at Unwin Brothers, where the pressure was 100lbs, the water had to be taken through 1,600-1,800 feet of hose reducing the flow to an ineffective level.

Unwin Brothers, publishers, had not made a claim on their fire insurance in 62 years of business. Then, within the space of twelve months, they suffered two devastating fires. In December 1894, the upper two floors of their premises at Ludgate Hill, London were gutted and part of the roof destroyed. In November the following year, their printing works at Chilwell were destroyed, forcing them to relocate to Woking mill, in 1896.

As a result of these two fires, Unwin Brothers created their own fire-fighting force.

⁵ Woking U.D.C. (Fire Brigade Committee) 6 September 1895

⁶ Surrey County Asylum for Pauper Lunatics (aka Brookwood Hospital)


⁷ The resident infantry battalion at Inkerman Barracks

⁸ It is likely that these forces were equipped with a 'Manual' pump and hoses, as in Figure 12

⁹ These had been withdrawn as districts got their own municipal brigades; in January 1899, the Phoenix Fire Office offered the Council £20 for the services of the brigade at a fire at the Gas house in St John's. [*West Surrey Times*]



Figure 12. Unwins' fire brigade c.1909



SUN
INSURANCE OFFICE

Sum insured in 1896 — £388,952,800.

For all particulars apply to the following agents:

WORKING.—Mr. Joseph Laker.
CHERTSEY.—Mr. Henry Wetton.
RIPLEY.—Mr. Richard Green.
BAGSHOT.—Mr. Richard Clementson.
PIRBRIGHT.—Mr. H. M. Briant.

A SMART TURN-OUT.—The Urban District Council were in a mischievous mood on Wednesday evening, and readily accepted Mr Gloster's proposal to give the Fire Brigade a test call. At the close of the meeting, therefore, Mr Woodridge gave the alarm from the central station by ringing the electric call which communicates with Captain C. Sherlock's residence, and with that of Mr H. Quartermain, the superintendent. At the same time, telegrams were despatched to Woking Village, St. John's and Knaphill, the fire being supposed to have broken out in the Star Hill district. Mr H. W. Gloster, C.C., and Mr T. A. Martin drove to the scene at once in a cab, and awaited the arrival of the detachments. The first to appear were the St. John's men. The central station detachment were second, the Village third, and Knaphill fourth. The men were complimented upon their sharp turn-out, and particularly the St. John's detachment, who arrived in very good time indeed.

Figure 13. 1897 advertisement

Figure 14. West Surrey Times
12 March 1897

It did not help matters that there grew genuine animosity between James Kittredge and the Captain of the Fire Brigade, Charles Sherlock. Charles Sherlock had inadequate equipment, his men were untrained volunteers and the manual pumps were inefficient. In each report he submitted to the Fire Brigade Committee, he bemoaned the lack of an engine.

In August 1897, the Committee rejected a petition from the entire brigade asking for a steam engine to be bought. In November, Captain Sherlock and 17 of his firemen resigned, leaving the town without a fire service. They were persuaded, reluctantly, to return by the intervention of the Clerk of the Council, Robert Mossop, whilst reiterating their belief in a steam engine as

the only means of providing adequate fire protection. Incredibly, the Fire Brigade Committee gave them a public reprimand; the Knaphill section promptly resigned again, this time permanently.

Relevant Members of Committees		
Torchlight Society	Fire Brigade Committee	Woking Board¹⁰
John A Anwell (chair) Arthur Althorp Edward Head Henry William Gloster jun Charles Dyson (hon sec) Charles Sherlock George Harris James Whitburn <i>others</i>	John Orlando Law (chair) James Kittredge (later chair) John A Anwell (secretary) Arthur George Clinton	William M Corrie J.P (chair) William C Storey (vice chair) John Wenham Sparkes Cornelius Knight John Orlando Law Hugh Dalziel George B Smallpeice Arthur Jackman Arthur Lyon Ryde William John Butt George Harris William A Clifton David Stevens John Davies Robert Mossop (clerk)

Woking Councillors January 1895	Knaphill Ratepayers Association
<u>Woking Station & Maybury</u> Dr Henry J Howlin Henry William Gloster Thomas A Martin (vice chair) William John Butt Edward Weston John Wenham	Arthur Briant (chair) James Kittredge R Carter I Gunner J Harding J Sutherland W Collie J Rice A Norman J Gay Mrs Pearce
<u>Village & Mayford</u> Robert Holmes Gustav Friedrich Wermig (chair)	
<u>Sutton & Bridley</u> William Bulbeck John Davies	
<u>St John's & Goldsworth</u> Arthur Lyon Ryde John Orlando Law George Waterer	
<u>Knaphill & Brookwood</u> Arthur Briant James Kittredge John Webster Robert Mossop (clerk)	

¹⁰ Those who attended the meeting on Tuesday 12th December 1893

In December 1897, a public meeting was held at which the townspeople overwhelmingly gave their support for the purchase of an engine. That same month, Woking was offered an engine, for two years at nominal cost, by Superintendent Young of Weybridge Fire Brigade. He had purchased the engine from Windsor Fire Brigade and offered to put it in thorough repair at his own expense.¹¹ The Council did not accept this offer – probably on the grounds that they as yet had nowhere to house it.

In January 1898, on a recommendation from the Fire Brigade Committee, the Council decided to split the Brigade into four, with responsibility for fires in the four wards resting with the superintendent at each location. Mr G Wooldridge, the district surveyor was proposed as the new captain. The following month, Mr Wooldridge declined on account of his being too busy and Captain Sherlock was reinstated, with overall command of the Brigade.

At the Council elections of March 1898, whether or not to purchase a steam engine was the dominant issue. Several anti-engine candidates were defeated and James Kittredge later lost the chairmanship of the Fire Brigade Committee.

At the Council meeting in May 1898, Mr Sawyer (the vice-chairman) had ventured to suggest that an engine could be purchased for £400. He was ridiculed by Mr Webster who suggested £1000 and Mr Kittredge who opined that £1500 was nearer the mark. Nevertheless, purchase of an engine was approved by a majority vote.

A new station

In February 1895, the Council had purchased a plot of land in Commercial Road, from Hugh King for £450. The intention was to build new council offices on it. Following protests at the public meeting in December 1897, they postponed their plans and instead continued to rent two small offices and a committee room above Ashby's Bank.

The next decision that had to be made was where to house the new engine. The Council was divided; those councillors who had championed the need for the engine thought it needed to be located near the centre of the town (where most of the property was – and most of the fires) and suggested the rear of the plot for the new offices; those who were against the purchase of an engine thought it should be housed at the Council Depot in Goldsworth Road as this was more central to the district (closer to Knaphill and Brookwood, where they had said it was not needed).

¹¹ *Woking News & Mail* 10 December 1897

AN ALARMING FIRE.

Buildings and Ricks Destroyed.

A fire, by which four ricks of hay were practically destroyed, a large shed burnt to the ground, some farm implements rendered useless, and part of an adjoining cottage injured, occurred on Saturday at St. John's, near the Robin Hood Inn. The cottage and outbuildings are situated upwards of 200 yards from the Robin Hood; they belong to Mr. Chandler, of Knaphill, and are tenanted by Mr. W. C. Slocock, of the Goldsworth Nurseries. In the cottage resides Mr. Slocock's foreman, named Shurven, and with him his grandson, a boy 14 years of age. On Saturday the outbuildings were being newly thatched, and underneath and near the eaves of the roof, which reached some way towards the ground, were two or three big heaps of straw. Between twelve and one o'clock the boy was burning rubbish, when the fire got beyond his control, and, blazing up, ignited the thatched roof, and the whole outbuilding was on fire. It was not until ten minutes to two o'clock that Mr. Slocock became aware of the conflagration, and then he immediately telephoned to the Woking Fire Brigade for help. In the meantime the military at the Inkerman Barracks had notice of the outbreak, and they were soon on the spot with their manual, and obtaining water from a disused gasometer tank near by, quickly played upon the flames, but without much effect, for by this time the fire had gained a strong hold of the building, and it was nearly razed to the ground.

Four ricks containing about 100 tons of hay immediately adjoined the outbuildings, and the flames spread to them, and it was not long before a great blaze resulted. The Woking Fire Brigade received the call at a few minutes past two o'clock, and as soon as possible afterwards Captain Sherlock and 16 men were at the scene of the outbreak. More water from the tanks and mains was poured on the flames. By the time the Woking Brigade arrived, however, the outbuildings and the implements contained therein were practically destroyed, and attention was turned to the ricks, and the fire kept in check. The cottage was not allowed to escape untouched by the flames, for one end of it was burnt and the inmates soon cleared out, and removed their furniture to a place of safety. The Guildford Fire Brigade with their steam engine, under the charge of Supt. Hooke and Foreman Peto, were called by Mr. Slocock, and arrived in good time after being summoned.

Working from the canal, they found their hose insufficient, and additional lengths were lent them by the military authorities and the Woking Brigade. Some of the Guildford hose, however, proved defective, and to remedy the leakage, other lengths were introduced as far as possible, but yet the waste went on, and eventually recourse was had to the gasometer, which still held some thousands of gallons of water. Two strong jets were obtained by this means, in addition to that supplied from the main through the Woking Brigade's hose. The supply, however, at last gave out, and then, early on Sunday morning, the Guildford steamer had to fall back upon Woking's hydrant. Instead, however, of getting one weak jet, the steamer furnished two strong ones, the pressure in the main, although in itself inadequate, providing ample water for the purposes of the engine. Work was continued until six o'clock in the evening.

Great difficulty

Great difficulty was experienced in getting the fire under in the ricks owing to the peculiar construction of the latter. Every now and then some sparks were found to be smouldering, and the Brigade had to be on the alert to prevent a fresh outbreak. The ricks required continual watching for some time, and the local brigade were on duty from three o'clock on Saturday afternoon until six o'clock Sunday evening. Even then it was not thought safe to leave, and up till Tuesday evening two men were engaged to deal with any further emergencies that might arise, but their services were not required a great deal. The Guildford Brigade, too, who rendered most useful service, did not leave until Sunday was well advanced. Credit is due to the military for the assistance they rendered, and to the Woking Brigade for their indefatigable and prolonged efforts effectually to master the flames. As to the loss, Mr. Slocock estimates it at between £600 and £700, but fortunately both he and Mrs. Chandler are fully insured. About a fifth part of the hay was saved, but it will not be of much use.

An accident occurred to Fireman Bigwood, of St. John's, on Monday morning. He fell from one of the ricks, and cut his knee, and injured the toes of one foot rather badly. Though he continued to work for a time, his knee became so painful that he had to have it dressed by Dr. Todd, and so on his club. The brigade were recently insured, but, although the first premium had been paid, the period before the members were entitled to benefit had not then expired, and so compensation cannot in this case be claimed.

The boy, James Shurven, was taken into custody by the police on a charge of having caused the fire. On Monday morning, at the County Police headquarters at Guildford, he was brought before Lieut.-Colonel Tredcroft, J.P. The only witness called was the prisoner's grandmother, and her evidence went to show that the fire was purely and simply the result of an accident. The boy was burning some rubbish, when the flames got beyond his control. As soon as he saw what had happened, he did all he could to obtain assistance.—He was discharged.

Figure 15. *Woking News & Mail*
11 November 1898

Mrs Elizabeth Plumer Daws, widow, died in July 1897. She owned substantial property in the area of (and including) the Red House Hotel. Part of her property was the plot of land on which the Fire Brigade hut stood. In 1898, her executors were desirous of developing this site and gave the Brigade notice.

In June 1898, following a long, and sometimes heated, debate the hut was towed to the Council's plot of land in Commercial Road. In July, agreement was reached with the Public Hall Company (owners of the adjacent plot) for a 10ft wide accessway to the rear of the plot. This effectively decided the location for the new station to house the engine.

The following tenders for the new engine & accessories, hand cart & accessories, and canvas hose were received in August 1898.¹² The Council voted to accept the tender of Mess^{rs} Rose & Co. of £430 to supply the engine handcart and hose, as a package. Subject to the agreement of the Local Government Board, they would borrow the money.

Supplier	Engine	Handcart	Hose
Shand Mason & Co.	£427 14s	£41 3s	£95
Merryweather	£350 or £315 [†]	£36 18s 8d	£78 10s
McGregor	-	£31 1s	£68 15s
Rose & Co.*	£370	£32 12s 6d	£65
Watkinson	-	£130 8s 6d	
Bailey	-	£33 0s 6d	-
Richard Isaac	-	£40 1s	£75
Norris & Co.	-	-	£72 12s 6d

[†]Presumably two options were offered * £430 for everything

In January 1899, Mess^{rs} Rose & Co. wrote asking when the Council would be ready to accept the new engine. The Local Government Board had said they saw no objection to the borrowing of the money but would defer a final decision until they were assured that provision for the housing of the equipment had been made. It was planned to keep the engine in the old wheeled tin hut until the new station was built.

By March 1899, plans were prepared for the construction of a new fire brigade station, together with a water tank to be erected over the same to hold 10,000 gallons of water to house the engine and equipment. On the ground floor, the engine house was to be 26ft by 13ft, 12ft high and with wood block flooring. It would be heated by gas. At a meeting held on the 9th, the surveyor informed the council that work had begun on the roadway from Commercial Road to the site of the proposed building.

The surveyor also stated that he had had an interview with Mess^{rs} Rose &

¹² These tenders proved that the amounts suggested by Mr Webster and Mr Kittredge at an earlier meeting were highly exaggerated

Co. The engine originally constructed for the Council, because of their indecision, had since been lent to the Ipswich Town Council. It would be six or seven weeks before a new engine could be built. It was agreed to contract with Mess^{rs} Rose & Co. for the engine to be delivered within two months. The proposed building was to be put in hand as soon as possible so as to avoid the cost of alterations to the tin hut as a temporary shelter.

Fire at the Council Offices

On Tuesday 6th June 1899, a fire broke out in the Council Offices, rented from Ashby & Co., above Ashby's Bank. The fire was discovered at about 4.15 by the surveyor, Mr Wooldridge, who was in the building, along with three clerks.



Figure 16. Fire at Council Offices

The fire brigade arrived just after 4.30 and ran hoses through the building to the fire. Despite their best efforts, the Council offices were completely gutted.

THE COUNCIL AND THE RECENT FIRE.

A Lively Discussion.

The Fire Brigade Committee met on Monday, when there were present: Messrs Clinton (who was elected chairman), Harris, Aird, Bulbeck, Butt, Hutton, and Kittredge. Captain Sherlock's report, dated June 12th, and enclosing Superintendent Wright's report, re the fire at Bank Buildings, was read. Superintendent Wright reported as follows: I received a call about 4.30 p.m. to a fire at a building known as Ashby's Bank, near the Railway Station, and arrived at the scene of the fire about three minutes later. The first line of hose was laid from the hydrant opposite the Albion Hotel, up the main staircase into the surveyor's office. The branch was got to work on to the seat of the fire through the case known as the clock-weight case. The second branch was worked from the hydrant opposite Messrs Tibbenham's, on to the roof near the party wall of Mr Tyler's wine and spirit stores in Chertsey Road. The third line of hose was worked from the hydrant in Maybury Road, up the back staircase leading to the caretaker's quarters, and then on to the lead flat where we had command of the whole roof, especially near Mr Tyler's premises. We had some delay in getting this hydrant to work through someone running a second line of hose from the Chertsey Road hydrant, and also through the public getting a hose tangled in the Maybury Road, and further through hauling on the hose and buckling the standpipe. We were very much handicapped through not having more help at the time when it was much needed. Practically speaking, we had to get the first two lines of hose to work with two firemen and myself. I hope you will see your way clear to ask the committee to strengthen this section of the brigade.—S. Wright (superintendent).

Figure 17. Superintendent Wright's report

At the next meeting of the Fire Brigade Committee, Arthur George Clinton was elected chairman. It was acknowledged that the first 30 minutes after a fire started were crucial in saving a building; it was decided to ascertain costs of erecting telephone communication with the foremen of all the fire stations and with the central police station.

Mr Clinton said that he had received a letter from Mess.^{rs} Rose & Co. who asked to be allowed to retain the engine until the end of July, as they wished to exhibit it at Birmingham. This was agreed to.

The engine arrives

In August 1899, Woking finally took delivery of its long-awaited steam engine pump. This also did not go smoothly.

At a Council meeting held 12th July, it was reported that the Fire Brigade Committee had received letters from Mess.^{rs} Rose & Co. The Council, subject to proper examination were prepared to receive the on August 1st. The boiler was to be insured for £1000, with the National Boiler and General Insurance Company, provided the engine was properly tested. Mess.^{rs} Rose & Co. were to be asked to send a man for a fortnight to instruct the brigade.

The National Telephone Company had responded stating that it would cost £31 per annum for connecting telephones from the fire stations at Knaphill, St John's, Old Woking and the central Station to the police station.

On 1st August, the engine was duly delivered to Woking. Arthur Clinton had arranged for several experts from the Aldershot and Alton fire brigades to conduct a series of tests at Elm Bridge. A couple of minor defects were found, but overall the results were very satisfactory. The engine was temporarily stored in the yard of Mr Moore (who had supplied the horses to haul it).

A letter from Arthur Clinton was read to the Council at the meeting held on Wednesday 9th August. Due to miscommunication, no member of the Fire Brigade Committee was present at the tests. It was declared that the Committee did not acknowledge the test as it was 'not an official test of the Council'. The engine could not be used as it had not been officially received by the Council. It was agreed that the experts' report would be read to a special meeting of the Committee to be held the next evening.

The Council accepted the report of the experts; they formally took the engine over, from the manufacturers, on Wednesday 16th August 1899.

RECEPTION OF THE FIRE ENGINE.

Unfortunate Bungling.

The fire-engine has caused another discussion at the Urban Council, and after the report of the Fire Brigade Committee had been read at the monthly meeting on Wednesday, the Clerk said a letter had been received from the chairman of the committee (Mr A. G. Clinton), who wished it read to the Council.

Writing from Lowestoft, Mr Clinton said he thought it was only right that the Council should know exactly how matters stood with regard to their fire-engine. He had been absent from the last two committee meetings, the first owing to a professional engagement, and the second owing to circumstances well-known to most of them. He was given to understand that the committee instructed the clerk to write to the makers that the Council would be ready to receive the engine on August 1st, and as it had already been decided that it should be tested (before they accepted delivery) to see if it was in accordance with the specifications drawn up by Mr Folker, he undertook to see Mr Folker on the matter. He did so, but Mr Folker informed him that his position as hon. sec. of the National Fire Brigades' Union would bar him from undertaking the test, and that arrangements had better be made with Mr Marshall, C.E., of Aldershot, to form a board of practical engineers to carry out the test. He did that, and whilst making the arrangements wrote to the chairman of the Council, informing him what he was doing, and asking him if he would take the chair at a luncheon he (Mr Clinton) proposed to give at the public reception. Mr Harris replied, agreeing to the request. The engine duly arrived in his absence, and the board of engineers also arrived, but no provision was made by the committee for the test, either with regard to coal or horses, although the surveyor (fully aware of all that had passed at the committee) was specially written to by the captain of the brigade, who fully explained how he (Mr Clinton) was placed. The chairman was also in possession of what was being done in the matter, and, although he was present when he (Mr Clinton) arrived at the station, after being sent for to arrange matters, he deliberately left the yard without speaking. Worse still, the gentlemen who attended at their own expense to carry out the test and ascertain if the ratapayers were getting value for their money, were treated in a manner the reverse of courteous. He extremely regretted that he personally had for a moment exposed them to it, and also that he was unable to be present at the meeting and fully express what he felt on the subject.

The Chairman said that in order to avoid any further misunderstanding it would be as well if they heard the letter which Mr Clinton wrote to him. The letter said: 'If Wednesday, August 2nd, is convenient to you, I propose to arrange a little luncheon and public reception on the arrival of the fire engine. Kindly let me hear from you if convenient. I will arrange for a special committee meeting to be held, so that we can go into details. I shall be very glad if you will take the chair, and I will try and arrange for a board of practical fire engineers, to see that the engine is built according to specification. May I suggest August 5th if the 2nd is inconvenient? Please reply to me at your early convenience.'

The Chairman's Explanation.

The letter was written from the Fire Brigade Camp, and the Chairman said he agreed with every word in it. It was a practical, sensible, business-like letter, and if Mr Clinton had carried out what he there stated, he (the chairman) would not have had one word to say against the arrangements. He wrote Mr Clinton saying that August 2 would suit him very well, and that he would be prepared to take the chair, and do what he could to get the affair through comfortably. From that moment he never heard another word from Mr Clinton, and he had not communicated with the committee or with the surveyor. They all knew absolutely nothing of what was taking place. On the morning of the 2nd he (the chairman) having heard nothing, went to the surveyor and asked if he knew what was taking place. Mr Woodbridge said he knew absolutely nothing. They then went to the station and saw the captain of the Fire Brigade, and he said the gentlemen who were to test the engine were coming that morning, and while they were there they arrived, and they began to advise him as to the purchase of hose and other things. What he then, and what he still resented, was the want of courtesy shown by Mr Clinton in not communicating with any member of the committee or with any of the officials of the Council. They would all have been quite as anxious as Mr Clinton was to have met the experts and to have seen the test, but they were left entirely outside of it, and they only heard through the captain that the engine was to be tested that morning. He did not think that was the proper way to treat the committee; he resented it, and did so still, and it was not paying them that courtesy to which they were entitled. They all sympathised with Mr Clinton's misfortune and serious trouble, and he (the chairman) would have been willing to take the burden upon his own shoulders had Mr Clinton given him the slightest sign that he wished him to do so. The committee resented what was done without their being given any information, and it remained for them to say whether they were satisfied with the test made and whether they would accept the report that had been sent in. He had told them the absolute truth so far as he knew the facts.

Mr Weston: Did Mr Clinton take it upon himself to invite these experts?

The Chairman: 'Yes.'

Mr Butt remarked that he received a communication, but it was not until 5 or 6 o'clock on the same day that the engine was tested. He saw the test, and had a look at the engine. He agreed with the remarks made by the Chairman. On that committee, above all others on the Council, the Chairman and the members seemed to be too far distant from each other. He had always said that he would not take the position unless he was in conjunction with the other members, and that was especially needed on such an occasion as the reception of the engine and the appliances. The committee should have had a communication from the makers saying

that it was coming. The makers had been most unbusinesslike in the matter.

Mr Sawyer said Mr Butt was quite right. He believed the committee wrote to the makers that they would take the engine on the 2nd inst., and in the absence of the Chairman surely the committee could have carried out the thing. There seemed some confusion about the days. He did not see why the Chairman of the committee should be blamed.

Mr Kittredge thought that Mr Clinton had taken a very high handed action with regard to the reception of the engine. The committee fixed a day on which they would be prepared to receive it, and since then there had been no communication from the makers. He had not the slightest doubt that the makers communicated with Mr Clinton. It seemed that the captain of the fire brigade knew all about it. The whole thing was a direct slight on the chairman and members of the Council. He proposed that the report of the experts be dealt with at the next meeting of the Fire Brigade Committee.

Mr Sawyer did not see why the report should not be read to the Council.

Mr Kittredge: The committee do not acknowledge the test. We had nothing whatever to do with it. It was not an official test of the Council.

Mr Barrett inquired if the engine could at present be used in the event of a fire.

A Voice: No; it has not yet been officially received from the makers.

Mr Kittredge then proposed that a special meeting of the Fire Brigade Committee be held on Thursday evening.

Mr Sawyer, in seconding, said the Council was in a ridiculous position. The engine was there and they could not use it. Messrs Rose were unbusinesslike people in not communicating with the officials of the Council as to the delivery of the engine.

The resolution appointing the special meeting of the committee was then carried.

Figure 18. West Surrey Times 11 August 1899



Figure 19. The new fire station (1899) and engine



Figure 20. New Council Offices, built in 1906
(Fire station is to the right and rear)

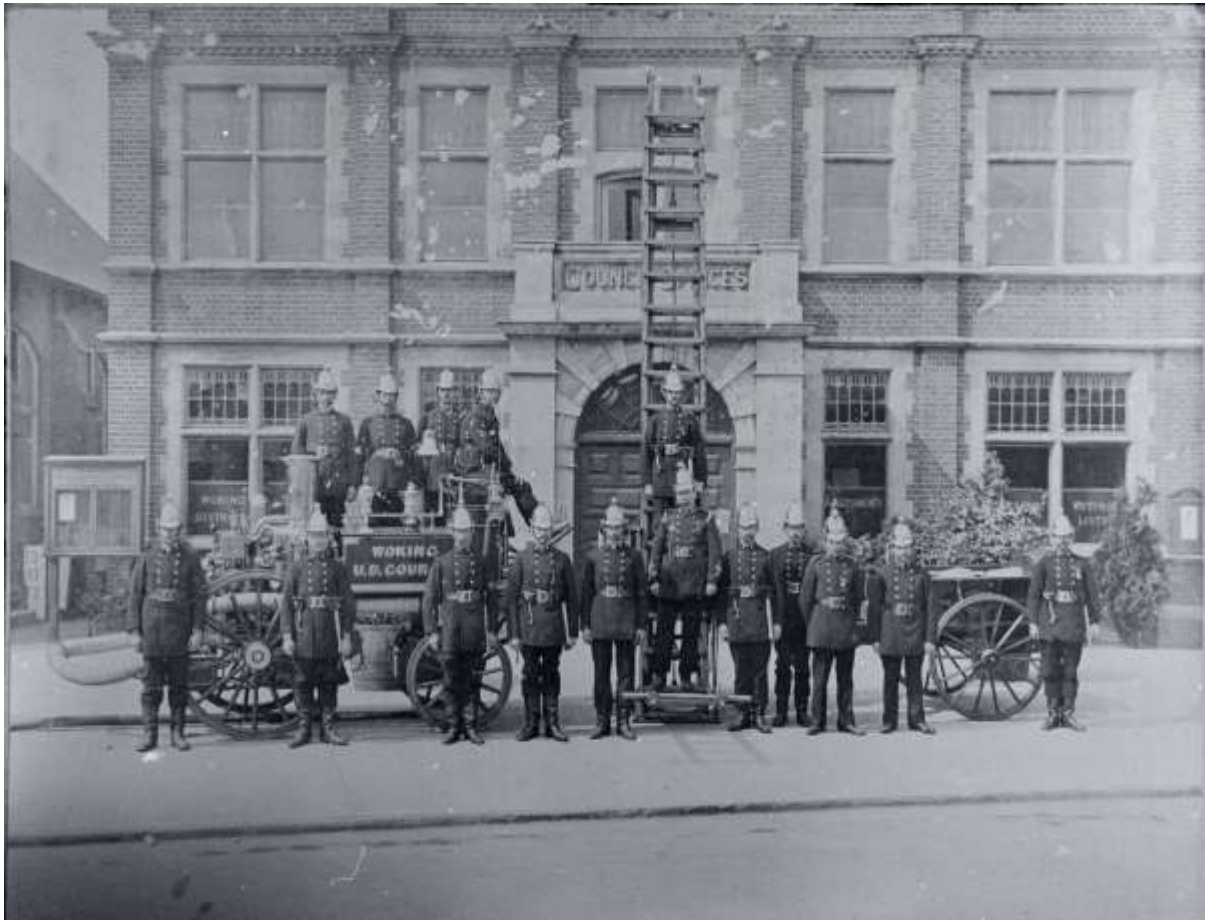


Figure 21. The brigade outside the council offices
(Courtesy of Fire Brigades of Surrey Preservation Trust)

COMING OF AGE

A volunteer brigade was formed at Brookwood in 1906; in 1912 a section of the Council Brigade was established for that district, located in Connaught Road next to the Brookwood Club.

Following the sightings of Zeppelins overhead, in April 1916 the Fire Brigade Committee recommended that the fire station be insured for £700 against damage by aircraft and the engine for £300.

In November 1916, Captain Sherlock wrote to the Fire Brigade Committee, announcing his retirement at the end of the year; he had served for 21 years. In December, a smoking concert was organised by the Committee, to present long-service medals and to present Captain Sherlock with a parting gift. The following medals were presented, by Mr A H Godfrey, then chairman of the Council (who in his speech expressed the wish that once the war was over Woking would purchase a motorised engine):

Foreman J Rice (15 years)
Fireman J Cook (15 years)
Fireman A V Edes (15 years)
Engineer T H Belton (10 years)
Fireman S Spooner (10 Years)
Fireman B Kates (10 years)
Ex-fireman A Shrubsole (10 years)
Superintendent S J Wright (20 Years)
Captain C Sherlock (20 years)

Superintendent Wright became the new Captain of the brigade. The war badly depleted the brigade's manpower; in July 1914, the brigade had 31 men and in June 1918 just 11.

In 1919, the brigade added a new motorised engine (supplied by Dennis Bros Ltd) to the horse-drawn steamer, both of which took part in the 'Hospital Saturday' parade on September 5th. The new motor engine, which was probably an 'N' Type, was also displayed at the L & SW Railway Servants' Orphanage Peace Day on September 20th.¹³



Figure 22. 1920 Dennis 'N' Type fire engine
(manufactured from 1911 to c.1925)
Photo: Dennis Society

The central station had been extended and altered to accommodate the new engine.¹³ A second engine was bought in 1925 and a Renault car donated by Councillor Illingworth converted to a fast auxiliary tender.

¹³ *West Surrey Times* 12 September 1919

A new station

In 1926, the Council unveiled plans for a new fire station. At a meeting held on 12th October, the Council voted thirteen to three to accept the recommendation of the Fire Brigade Committee in favour of a new fire station. The proposed building was to be built on the St Dunstan's Church site at the corner of Church Street and Percy Street. The estimated cost was £6,000.

As always, money was a major consideration for some councillors. Suggestions were made to expand the current station, delay the new station and continue with the current one for five or ten years, and to site the new station at the Council depot in Goldsworth Road. The St Dunstan's Site Development Committee's proposal also had the construction of a public library on the site. After heated debate, the St Dunstan's Site Development Committee's proposal was passed by 11 votes to 10.

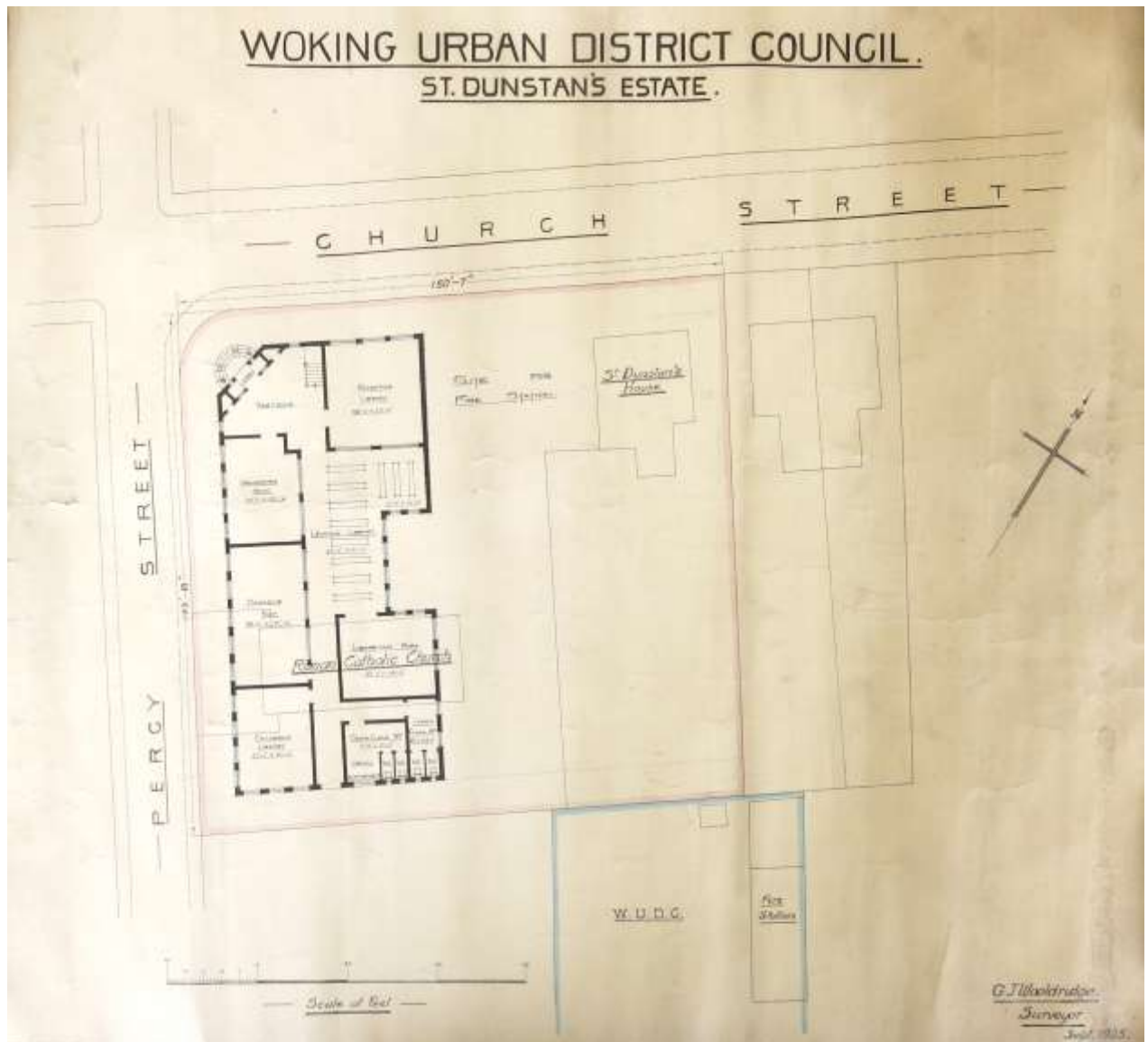


Figure 23. Plan for development of St Dunstan's Church site, 1925

The new station was completed in 1928. It made use of the old church rectory, St Dunstan's House, refurbished and augmented by extensions at a

cost of £5000. Inside, the engine house featured a durable concrete floor and spanned 53 by 36 feet, offering ample space to accommodate four motor fire engines (a third engine was subsequently purchased from Brighton Fire Brigade).

The basement of St Dunstan's House was transformed into a fully equipped workshop, along with bathrooms, lavatories, a wash-house for resident firemen, and a boiler room that supplied heating and hot water throughout the complex.

From the engine house, there was access to the ground floor of St Dunstan's, where fire call offices and various storage rooms were located – ensuring rapid response and efficient co-ordination.

A staircase from the engine house led to the first floor of the new building, which included a spacious recreation room (32 by 20 feet) for the firemen. The chief engineer's quarters comprised a large sitting room, three bedrooms, a kitchen, bathroom, and other essential facilities.

The upper floors of St Dunstan's were redecorated and converted into a residence for the second engineer, allowing two firemen to live on-site and respond swiftly to nighttime emergencies. Two fire poles were installed for rapid descent to the ground floor.



Figure 24. Fire Station, Church Street, c.1928

The brigade covered not only the Woking district but also Chobham, Bisley and Pirbright (Figure 26), by an agreement made with those parishes in 1925.

Major Charles Henry Hudson was appointed in 1929, following the retirement of William Barnes and became the Brigade's first full-time, professional, Chief Officer.



Figure 25. Fire Brigade, Church Street, c.1928
(The Baptist Chapel in Percy Street can be seen in the background)
Photo by H R Gwyer Gibbs of Pirbright

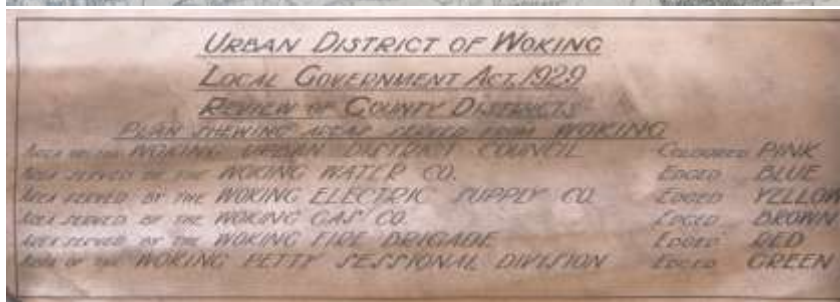


Figure 26. Areas served from Woking, 1929

At this time, the personnel establishment for Woking was 1 man full time and 20 retained. By 1938, this had increased to 3 full time members with a retained establishment. The duty system worked by these men was 8am to 10pm with 1 night off per week for a prestigious wage of £3 per week.¹⁴

¹⁴ SHC, 6198/3/Box5, *Official Opening of Woking Fire Station*, 15 October 1981



Figure 27. The brigade outside Christ Church, 1938
 (Courtesy of Fire Brigades of Surrey Preservation Trust)
 (The centre engine is the one purchased from Brighton Fire Brigade;
 the car on the right is the Chief Fire Officer (CFO)'s car and is a Triumph Gloria)

World War II

The Fire Brigades Act 1938 (1 & 2 Geo. 6. c. 72) provided for centralised co-ordination of fire brigades in Great Britain and made it mandatory for local authorities to arrange an effective fire service.

Before 1938, there were between 1400 and 1500 small municipal fire brigades run by local councils in the United Kingdom. In 1938, the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS)¹⁵ was created and was shortly superseded by the creation of the National Fire Service.

The National Fire Service (NFS) was created in August 1941, by the amalgamation of the wartime national Auxiliary Fire Service and the local authority fire brigades. The NFS had full-time and part-time members, male and female¹⁶. Its uniform was the traditional dark blue double-breasted



Figure 28. National Fire Service badge

¹⁵ The Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) was first formed in 1938 in Great Britain as part of the Civil Defence Service. Its role was to supplement the work of brigades at local level.

¹⁶ Though women did train, they didn't actually fight fires in the Second World War. They became fire watchers and drivers, and managed the communications networks. A rank system for women of the fire service was developed during the war to recognise their service and bravery – many were awarded for their remarkable achievements. [London Fire Brigade Museum]

tunic, and it adopted the peaked cap worn by the AFS, instead of the peakless sailor-style cap which had been worn by many pre-war fire brigades.

The NFS was divided into about forty Fire Forces, in England and Wales. The historic county of Surrey was served by two Fire Forces: 38 – Wimbledon (which came under London) and Fire Force 32, whose headquarters (HQ) were at Grange Road, Woking. Forces were subdivided into Divisions; generally, each Division had two Columns and each Column had five Companies. Fire Force 32 also covered most of West Sussex, with a division at Worthing.

The formation on the NFS would ensure uniformity in the basic equipment used by the Fire Brigades during the war, this was the busiest time ever in the history of the Fire Service. National Fire Service firefighters were even on the beaches during the D-Day landings, detailed to extinguish any fires caused by the soldiers fighting and to protect the villages.

When war was declared, the whole-time establishment at Woking was increased to 20 men and the station became part of the National Fire Service. “A” Division had its HQ at Ladymead Road, Guildford, “B” Division at Betchworth and “C” Division at Worthing. Woking, which came under “A” Division was allocated 4 sub-stations: Byfleet, Old Woking, Knaphill and Horsell. As it was (and still is) impossible to leave Woking town centre without going under an arch or over a bridge, the appliances would be dispatched to pre-designated areas when the air raid siren sounded, in case a bridge collapsed or an arch fell making the road impassable.



Figure 29. Dennis trailer fire pump
© Imperial War Museum



Figure 30. Fire-boat No. 1 (Leicester)
It is likely that “Lord Knowles”
was a similar size and design

Woking was the first fire station in the country to be given trailer pumps and, in 1941, the station personnel built their own fire boat for use on the Basingstoke Canal, christened “Lord Knowles”.¹⁷

¹⁷ SHC, 6198/3/Box5, *Official Opening of Woking Fire Station*, 15 October 1981



Figure 31. Company of NFS Fire Force 32 (Woking)

Post-War

The Fire Services Act 1947 (10 & 11 Geo. 6. c. 41) transferred the functions of the National Fire Service to local authorities. This Act was repealed entirely in England and Wales by schedule 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

Surrey Fire Brigade was divided into A, B & C Operational Districts (Wimbledon, Reigate & Guildford). Guildford District was divided into 12 County Districts and controlled 21 stations. Woking came under Guildford District, and was designated station C20.¹⁸ It operated three appliances.

Personnel were transferred to Surrey County Fire Brigade on 1st April 1948. All members of the NFS holding the rank of Section Leader and upwards received an appointment to a comparable rank. All Leading Firemen vacancies were filled by men holding that rank in the County.¹⁸

Edward William Jack McGregor was appointed as Station Officer. W Phillips and V Bowers were Sub-officers.



Figure 32. Surrey Fire Brigade badge

¹⁸ SHC, CC767/10/11/1, *Surrey Fire Service Sub-committee minutes*

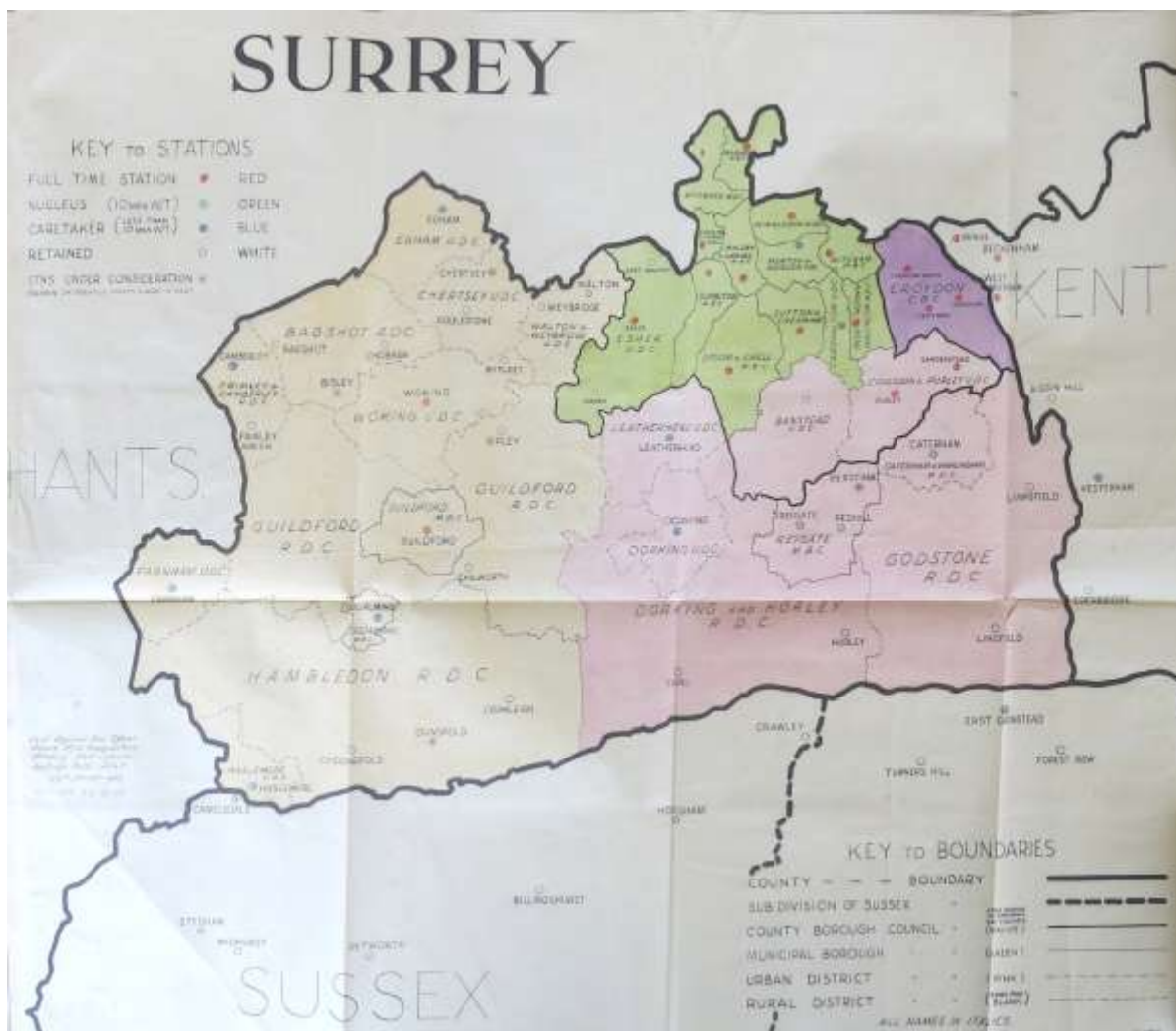


Figure 33. Fire stations in Surrey, 1948

In 1947, James Walker & Co. replaced their part-time fire unit with a full-time works brigade.

Three wartime air raid shelters were sealed and flooded proving 100,000 gallons of water. A Dennis 500 gallon per minute pump was purchased. A large Bedford van, which had been used for transporting the firm's products to London was converted into a fire appliance (right).



The brigade, one of the last remaining Works fire brigades in the south east of England was phased out as manufacturing at the Lion Works site ceased in 1996.¹⁹

¹⁹ Vigiles Issue No. 2, 1944 (Courtesy of Fire Brigades of Surrey Preservation Trust)



Figure 34. Fire engines, c.1950

During the early 1950s the roof space of the station was unofficially turned into a well-equipped gymnasium; it was visited regularly by Randolph Turpin²⁰, who lived in Royal Oak Road. His visits were reputedly stopped when it was noticed that as he punched the punch-bag, the roof of the fire station would shake. He was also reported to have fallen through the ceiling on one occasion, leaving him with a scar near his mouth (which is a more likely reason for his visits to cease).

In October 1955, the official opening of County Fire Brigade headquarters and Home Office Tactical Training Centre, St. David's, Reigate, by the Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister for Welsh Affairs, Major the Rt. Hon. Gwilym Lloyd George, M.P., took place.

²⁰ Randolph Adolphus Turpin (7 June 1928 – 17 May 1966), better known as Randy Turpin, was a British boxer active in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1951 he became world middleweight champion when he defeated Sugar Ray Robinson.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, large swathes of Woking were demolished to make way for a number of redevelopment schemes: Wolsey Place, a new library, new council offices, the Centre Halls, and a central indoor swimming pool. The fire station in Church Street was left isolated in a sea of destruction and construction (circled in Figure 35).



Figure 35. Church Street station surrounded by desolation c.1973



Figure 36. Church Street station c.1979
(Courtesy of Fire Brigades of Surrey Preservation Trust)



Figure 37. Church Street station, rear & training tower, c.1979
(Courtesy of Fire Brigades of Surrey Preservation Trust)

Another new station

By the late 1970s, it was becoming clear that the fire station in Church Street was in need of replacement. It had become obsolete and was unsuitable for the then operational needs. Its replacement with a new building, embodying the latest facilities as recommended by the Home Office and required by the Chief Fire Officer, was begun in July 1979.

In 1980, Woking attended 770 calls:

- Grass fires - 214
- Fires involving burning rubbish, trees & derelict buildings - 64
- Chimney fires - 44
- “Good Intent” - 67
- Malicious calls - 53
- Automatic fire alarms - 71
- Special service calls (road accidents, flooding, etc) - 56
- Building fires - 201

The decision was taken to use the site occupied by the original fire station for the new station; the town centre site provided easy and quick access to all parts of the Borough²¹ by the new road system which runs adjacent to the site. This imposed several problems, not least being that of the need to continue to provide fire cover during the demolition and re-building period. This was resolved by constructing a temporary pre-fabricated station on Victoria Way; the old station closed and the 15-member firefighting team moved into the temporary buildings in May 1979.

The restrictions that the size of the site imposed dictated a solution that was in some respects unusual. The new fire station consisted of a large single storey appliance building which was top lit and capable of taking three vehicles abreast, and was large enough to accommodate the latest

²¹ Woking became a non-metropolitan district, and was granted borough status, on 1 April 1974

appliances. Adjacent to it was the three storey administrative block containing the operations centre, firemen's quarters, recreation, dining and rest rooms. Other attached buildings housed the boiler room, emergency generator and the training building, with a 54 ft drill tower.²²

The architect was the County architect, H P Chetwynd-Stapleton B Arch AHIBA, the Quantity Surveyors were E P Stevens & Co. and the contractor was Lee Bros. (Aldershot) Ltd.

The contract sum was £406,000 and the eventual cost amounted to £600,000. The building was completed and became operational in June 1981, equipped with two of the latest fire engines manufactured by Dennis of Guildford at a cost of £44,000.²²

The station was officially opened by the chairman of Surrey County Council, John Whitfield J.P., in October 1981.



Figure 38. New Church Street station, built 1981

The 48 man establishment was made up of 4 Station Officers, 4 Sub Officers. 4 leading firemen and 36 firemen. They were divided into four watches, each watch being commanded by a Station Officer.

The men worked a 42 hour week consisting of two day duties (0900-1800), followed by two night duties (1800-0900), followed by four 24-hour periods off duty. This continued 52 weeks a year.

The station provided 24 hour cover for an area of 26 square miles, plus daytime cover for Chobham. Appliances were mobilised to an incident from the central control at Surrey Fire Brigade Headquarters, Reigate.

²² SHC, 6198/3/Box5, *Official Opening of Woking Fire Station*, 15 October 1981

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, generally only applying to England and Wales.

After four decades, the new Church Street fire station was also showing its age. Woking Council was planning yet another redevelopment of the town centre and so the fire station was demolished for the development of the Hilton Hotel.

A new fire station was built at 42 Goldsworth Road. It was officially opened on Monday July 18th 2016.



Figure 39. Goldsworth Road station, 2025

The station operates one Heavy 4x4 Pump, one Multi Role Vehicle and two Water Ladder appliances.

Woking's Senior Fire Officers		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Charles Sherlock	Captain	1895-1916
Samuel James Wright	Captain	1917-1924
William Barnes	Chief Officer	1924-1929
Major Charles Henry Hudson	Chief Officer	1929-1941
promoted to	NFS Divisional Officer	1941-44
William Arthur Belton	Company Officer	1941-
J E Bennett	Company Officer	- Jan '44
T Callaghan	Company Officer	Jan '44 - Nov '44
William Herbert Reading	Company Officer	Nov '44 - 1948
Edward William Jack McGregor	Station Officer	1948-1961?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Fire Brigades of Surrey Preservation Trust
Guildford Dragon
Iain Wakeford
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INDEX

A

Abraham, Henry, 2
Abrey, E, 7
Abrey, W, 7
Althorp, Arthur, 12
Anchor Hotel, 7
Ancient Egypt, 4
Anwell, John Alfred, 5, 12
Ashby & Co., 16
Ashby's Bank, 13, 16
Augustus, 4
Auxiliary Fire Service, 26

B

Bailey, 15
Barbon, Nicholas, 4
Barnes, William, 23, 35
Basingstoke Canal, 2, 27
Bathurst, Anthony, 7
Belton, Thomas H, 21
Belton, William Arthur, 35
Bennett, J E, 35
Betchworth, 27
Birmingham, 17
Bisley, 23
Bowers, V, 28
Briant, Arthur, 12
Brighton Fire Brigade, 23, 26
Brookwood, 2, 10, 12, 13, 21
Brookwood Cemetery, 2
Brookwood Club, 21
Brookwood Hospital, 2
Bulbeck, William, 12
Butt, William John, 12
Byfleet, 27

C

Callaghan, T, 35
Carter, R, 12
Centre Halls, 31
Chertsey, 5
Chertsey Road, 6
Chetwynd-Stapleton, H P, 33
Chilwell, 10
Chobham, 23, 33
Chobham Road, 6
Christ Church, 26
Church Street, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32, 33, 34
Civil Defence Service, 26
Claremont Avenue, 10
Clifton, William A, 12
Clinton, Arthur George, 12, 17
Collie, W, 12
Commercial Road, 10, 13, 15
Connaught Road, 21
Cook, J, 21

Corrie, William M, 12
county councils, 5
Cross Lanes, 10

D

Dalziel, Hugh, 12
Davies, John, 12
Daws, Mrs Elizabeth Plumer, 15
D-Day landings, 27
Dennis Bro.s Ltd, 21
Dennis Society, 21
Dramatic College, 2
Duchess of Albany, 8
Dyson, Charles, 12

E

E P Stevens & Co., 33
Edes, A V, 21
Elm Bridge, 17

F

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, 28, 34
fire boat, 27
Fire Brigade Committee, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13,
17, 21, 22
Fire Brigades Act 1938, 26
Fire Force 32, 27, 28
Fire of London 1666, 4
Fire Services Act 1947, 28

G

Gay, J, 12
Gloster, Henry William, 12
Godfrey, A H, 21
Goldsworth Road, 13, 22, 34
Grange Road, 27
Grantham, J W, 7
Guildford, 1, 2, 5, 7, 27, 28, 33, 36
Gunner, A, 7
Gunner, I, 12

H

Hand in Hand Fire Insurance Company, 4
Harding, J, 7, 12
Harris, George, 12
Hawkins, G F, 7
Head, Edward, 12
Hilton Hotel, 34
Hogs Back, 2
Holmes, Robert, 12
Home Office, 30, 32
Home Office Tactical Training Centre, 30
Horsell, 27

Howlin, Dr Henry J, 12
Hudson, Maj Charles Henry, 23, 35

I

Illingworth, Councillor, 21
Inkerman Barracks, 2, 10
Isaac, Richard, 15

J

Jackman, Arthur, 12
Jackson, George A, 7
James Walker & Co. Ltd, 29

K

Kates, B, 21
Kiln Bridge, 10
King, Hugh Fortescue Locke, 13
Kittredge, James, 10, 11, 12, 13
Knaphill, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 27
Knaphill Ratepayers Association, 10, 12
Knight, Sparkes Cornelius, 12

L

L & SW Railway Servants' Orphanage, 21
Ladymead Road, 27
Law, John Orlando, 5, 12
Lee Bros. (Aldershot) Ltd, 33
Lion Works, 29
Lloyd George, Rt Hon. Gwilym, 30
Local Government Act 1888, 5
Local Government Act 1894, 5, 8
Local Government Board, 15
London, 1, 2, 10, 27, 36
London and South Western Railway Act 1834,
1
London Necropolis and National Mausoleum
Company, 1, 2
Lord Knowles, 27
Ludgate Hill, 10

M

Martin, Thomas A, 12
Mayford, 9, 12
McGregor, 15
McGregor, Edward William Jack, 28, 35
Merryweather, 15
Moore, Mr, 17
Mossop, Robert, 9, 11, 12

N

National Boiler and General Insurance
Company, 17
National Fire Service, 26, 27, 28, 35, 36
National Telephone Company, 17
Norman, A, 12
Norris & Co., 15

O

Old Woking, 1, 5, 7, 9, 17, 27
Oriental Institute, 2

P

Pearce, Mrs, 12
Percy Street, 22, 24
Phillips, W, 28
Phoenix Fire Office, 10
Pirbright, 23, 24
Public Hall Company, 15

Q

Quadrant, 6
Quartermaine, Henry, 7

R

Reading, William Herbert, 35
Red House Hotel, 15
Reigate, 28, 30, 33
Rice, J, 21
Ripley, 1
Robinson, Sugar Ray, 30
Rome, 4
Rose & Co., 15, 16, 17
Royal Oak Road, 30
Ryde, Arthur Lyon, 12

S

Sawyer, Mr, 13
Shand Mason & Co., 15
Sherlock, Charles, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 21, 35
Shrubsole, A, 21
Smallpeice, George B, 12
South Western Railway, 1, 8
Spooner, S, 21
St Dunstan's Church, 22
St Dunstan's House, 22, 23
St Dunstan's Site Development Committee, 22
St John's, 6, 7, 9, 12
St Peter's Home, 10
Stevens, David, 12
Storey, William C, 12
Surrey County Asylum for Pauper Lunatics, 2
Surrey County Council, 33
Surrey County Fire Brigade, 28, 30
Surrey Fire Brigade Headquarters, 33
Surrey History Centre, 7, 36

T

The Fire Office, 4
trailer fire pump, 27
Triumph Gloria, 26
Turpin, Randolph Adolphus, 30

U

Unwin Brothers, 10

V

Victoria Way, 32

W

W H Smith, 6

Waterer, George, 12

watermen, 4

Watkinson, 15

Webster, John, 12, 13

Wenham, John, 5, 12

Wermig, Gustav Friedrich, 9, 12

West Middlesex Herald, 6

West Surrey Times, 10, 11

West Sussex, 27

Weston, Edward, 12

Weybridge Fire Brigade, 13

Whitburn, James, 12

White Hart Hotel, 7

Whitfield, John, 33

Wimbledon, 27, 28

Windsor Fire Brigade, 13

Woking Borough Council, 34

Woking Common, 1, 2

Woking Local Board, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12

Woking News & Mail, 14

Woking Prison for Invalid Convicts, 2

Woking Torchlight Society, 5, 12

Woking Urban District Council, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11,
13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22

Wolsey Place, 31

Wooldridge, George G, 13, 16

Worthing, 27

Wright, Samuel James, 7, 16, 21, 35

Y

Young, Supt., 13

Z

Zeppelins, 21