

# THE DIARY OF A COUNTRY SURVEYOR

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I have often quoted extracts from the diaries of Edward Ryde (held at the Surrey History Centre in Goldsworth Road), but it occurs to me that I have not gone into any great detail about the man himself.

Edward Ryde was born in Woking in 1822, the eldest son of the miller, Edward Ryde and his wife Maria. He went to school in Windsor until 1837, when he 'left my father's house in Woking village and went into the office of Mr James Sanderson (a surveyor) of Sunbury as an articulated pupil'. An entry in his diary in May 1869 recalls how he had first met Mr Sanderson in May 1837 at Chertsey Fair where he had gone with his father.

His diaries apparently began in 1839 (although only those from 1844 survive). They contain numerous notes on his work, both local and national, and on his personal life up in London and in Woking. After setting up business on his own as a surveyor, land agent and valuer, he worked for several railway companies, including the section of what became the Portsmouth Main Line from Godalming to Havant in 1859, and later with the South Eastern Railway Company.

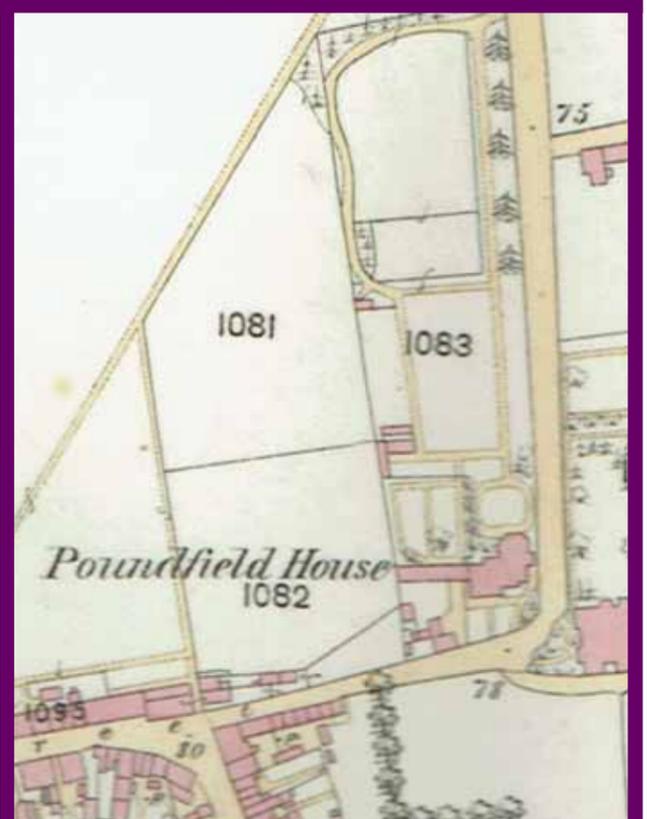
In August 1865 he bought what became Poundfield House in Old Woking, on the corner of the High Street and Old Woking Road (opposite The Grange), living there most summers until 1878 after which it became his main home. Unfortunately nothing now remains of the house itself, but the stable block that he built has survived having been turned into a house.

I mentioned a few weeks ago that Edward Ryde was a 'farmer of 100 acres' in the 1881 census - the farms being 'Mr Halsey's Farm' in Woking Common Field (evidently Ford's Farm) which he bought in November 1870, and Parsonage Farm (which he leased in January 1880), before buying the freehold for £3,225 from Mr Halsey in March 1886.

A few years earlier, whilst suffering from an accident to his knee, he was forced to stay at home, and with the help of his daughter Ada wrote a 'History of Woking' (including a description of the Woking of his youth). His history (and his diaries) contains many facts about local farming practice that cannot be found elsewhere. He notes, for instance, that 'some of the land such as parts of the Woking Common Field and Hoe Bridge Farm, which

Edward Ryde can be seen in the centre of this picture, showing the staff of Poundfield House

Poundfield House stood on the corner of Old Woking High Street and the Old Woking Road (opposite what is now called The Grange). Poundfield Gardens now occupies the site of the house.



The fields of Ford and Parsonage Farm, owned by Edward Ryde, are now covered by the houses.



may be styled sandy loam, often produces, under generous treatment, a load of wheat to an acre, and six quarters of Barley to an acre'.

He also notes the growing of swedes and turnips and talking of the rotation of crops fifty years earlier, under the 'four course shift' he goes on to say that 'the change which has taken place is the abandonment of the summer fallow and also of the objection to take two

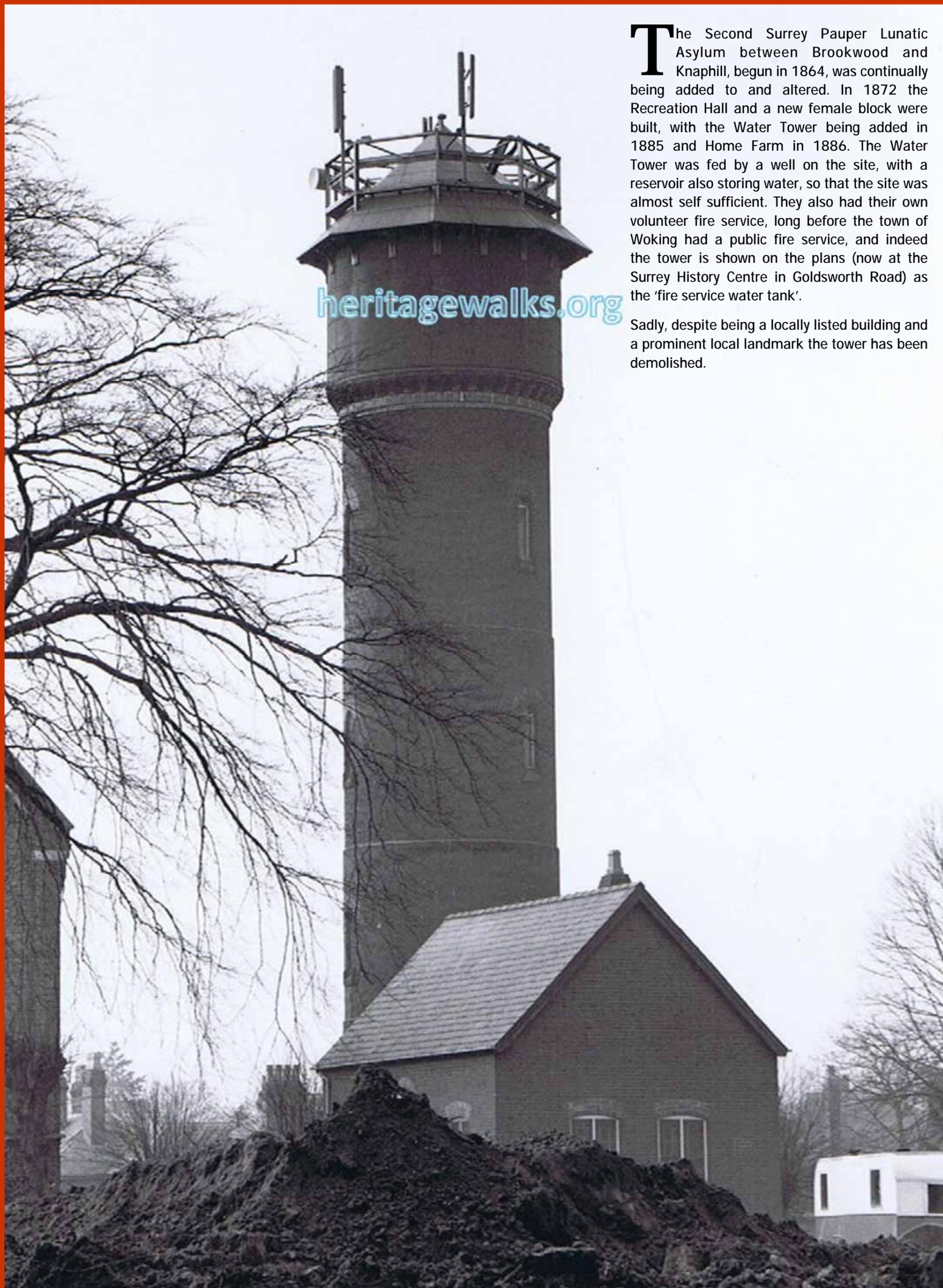
straw crops in succession. Very great alterations have been made upon all the farms in the matter of grubbing hedges and felling timber – now most of the fences are grubbed, the bank levelled, the ditches filled up and the timber cut down. Large open fields have succeeded to small ones, increasing the area of the cultivated land and letting light air and sunshine have their full and natural influence on the soil'.

He was evidently as good a farm owner as he was a surveyor and a great benefactor to Old Woking and the surrounding area. He was active in many aspects of local life in the late Victorian period, charring meetings and joining the local school board – but from a historian's point of view his largest legacy is his diaries which give a fascinating insight into local life at that time.



Ford & Farm Roads (and the Manor Way industrial estate) were later built on the site of Ford and Parsonage Farms.

## BROOKWOOD WATER TOWER (1885) & HOME FARM (1886)



The Second Surrey Pauper Lunatic Asylum between Brookwood and Knaphill, begun in 1864, was continually being added to and altered. In 1872 the Recreation Hall and a new female block were built, with the Water Tower being added in 1885 and Home Farm in 1886. The Water Tower was fed by a well on the site, with a reservoir also storing water, so that the site was almost self sufficient. They also had their own volunteer fire service, long before the town of Woking had a public fire service, and indeed the tower is shown on the plans (now at the Surrey History Centre in Goldsworth Road) as the 'fire service water tank'.

Sadly, despite being a locally listed building and a prominent local landmark the tower has been demolished.

# WEST END INSTITUTE (1886) & GORDONS SCHOOL (1887)



A few weeks ago we mentioned how in 1879 West End Common was taken over by the military for their ranges, even though some parts they acquired were evidently never going to be of any use to them. The small triangle of land (above) between the High Street and Guildford Road could not be used for training, so when the Vicar of West End, the Rev. O F Glanville, together with the Tringham family (great benefactors of the village), proposed building an Institute for the village, the War Department readily agreed to

rent (at five shillings per annum), part of that land.

The West End Institute was opened in July 1886 with two days of festivities on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of that month – a bazaar and concerts being held to raise funds for the furnishings of the two 'well warmed and lighted' rooms that were provided with 'newspapers, games and a first-rate bagatelle board'.

The following year another part of the War Department's land was used for the Gordon Boys Home and School (below) – the national

memorial to Major General Charles Gordon, who had been killed in Khartoum in January 1885. The official purpose of the school was to 'train and educate necessitous lads of the age of 14 years and upwards with a view to fitting them for service in any branch of Her Majesty's land or sea forces, or for earning their livelihood by trade and industry', with 240 homeless or destitute boys originally trained in tailoring, brick-laying, baking, saddler and boot-making - similar in fact to the Industrial School at Mayford and the Shaftesbury Homes at Bisley.

