

OLD WOKING'S 'GREEN BELT' GETS GOBBLED UP

Iain Wakeford 2016



Between the wars the village of Old Woking was transformed with the building of hundreds of houses, many of which were local authority ones on what had formerly been the medieval 'open-fields' to the north of the High Street and at Westfield.

The agricultural depression and the poor quality of the soil meant that the council could buy fields and farms cheap, and with government grants following the Great War, could start to build homes fit for heroes.

The houses of St Peter's Road and Corrie Road were amongst the first, with Westfield Road (Gongers Lane), Granville Road and Gloster Road following in the mid to late 1920's.

In September 1931 the Housing Committee of Woking Council approved the layout and plans for their latest scheme - 140 houses (of three types) and four shops, with a new road across Westfield Common. The common was owned by the Necropolis Company who apparently offered no objection to the new road across their land, although the following spring the council did have to get an order to allow the footpath from Downsview Avenue to Moor Lane to be 'diverted' and a 'new highway' to be 'opened in lieu thereof'.

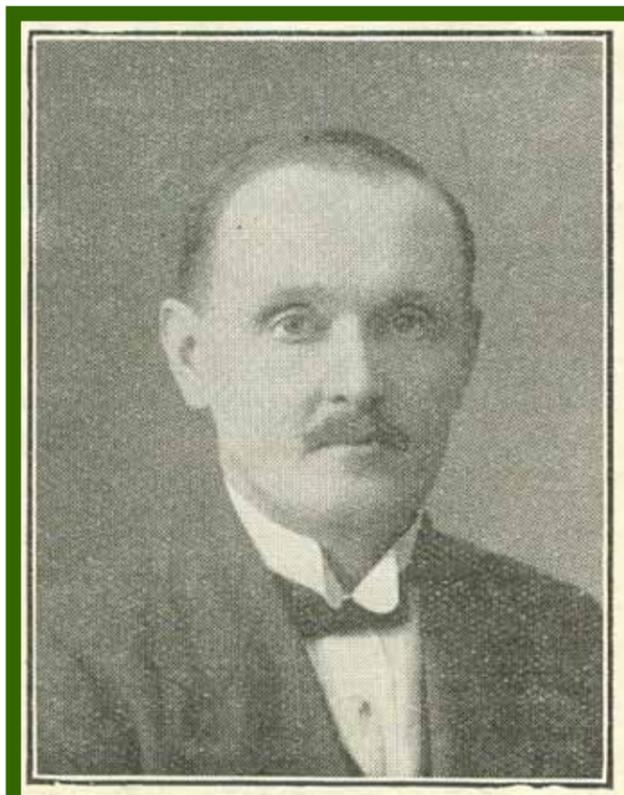
The council asked for tenders for the construction of the new roads as well as for the housing, but whilst Messrs Eadie and Co of Wolverhampton were £840 below the next lowest tender for the houses, they were just over £300 above the next lowest tender for the

road. They intimated that unless the two jobs were taken together, they would have to reconsider their figures if they were only awarded one or other of the contracts. After some discussion it was decided to accept their ultimatum and their tender of £5,892 for the roads and £45,835 for the houses, which with other costs brought the total cost of the scheme up to £55,200.

It might seem odd that at a time of unemployment in this area a firm from the Black Country should be given the contract, but then as now the Council's main consideration

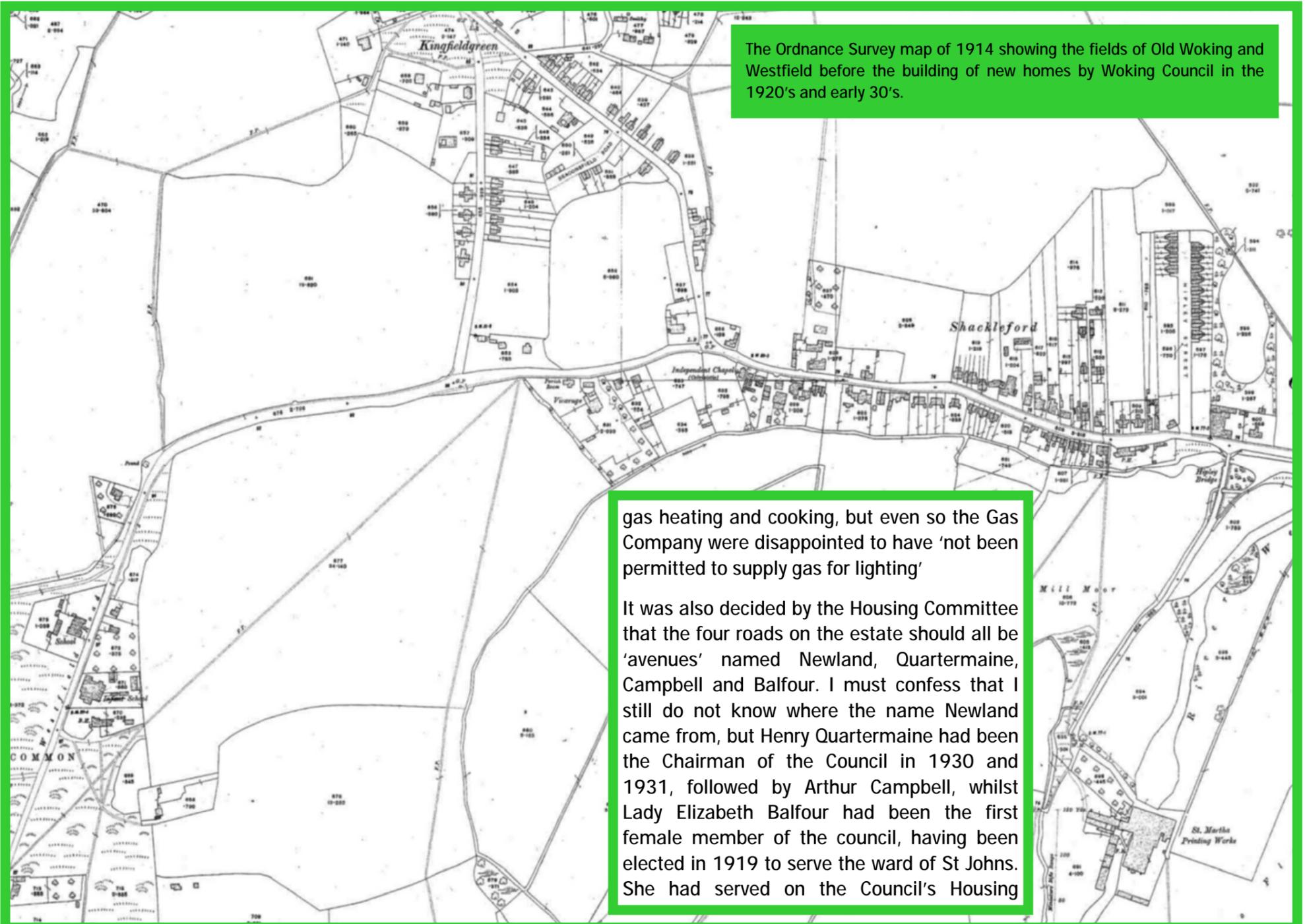
was probably one of costs rather than what was best for the area, and beside it was found in June 1932 that out of a total of ninety men employed on the site, fifty-seven of them had been taken on locally.

There were to be seven pairs of the what the council called 'E' type houses (costing £1,180 a pair), with twenty-eight pairs each of the 'C' and 'F' type homes, costing £692 and £650 each respectively, but by April 1932 it was agreed not to proceed with the proposal to build four shops and instead erect another four 'C' type houses at a cost of £1,400. All the homes had



A.D. CAMPBELL

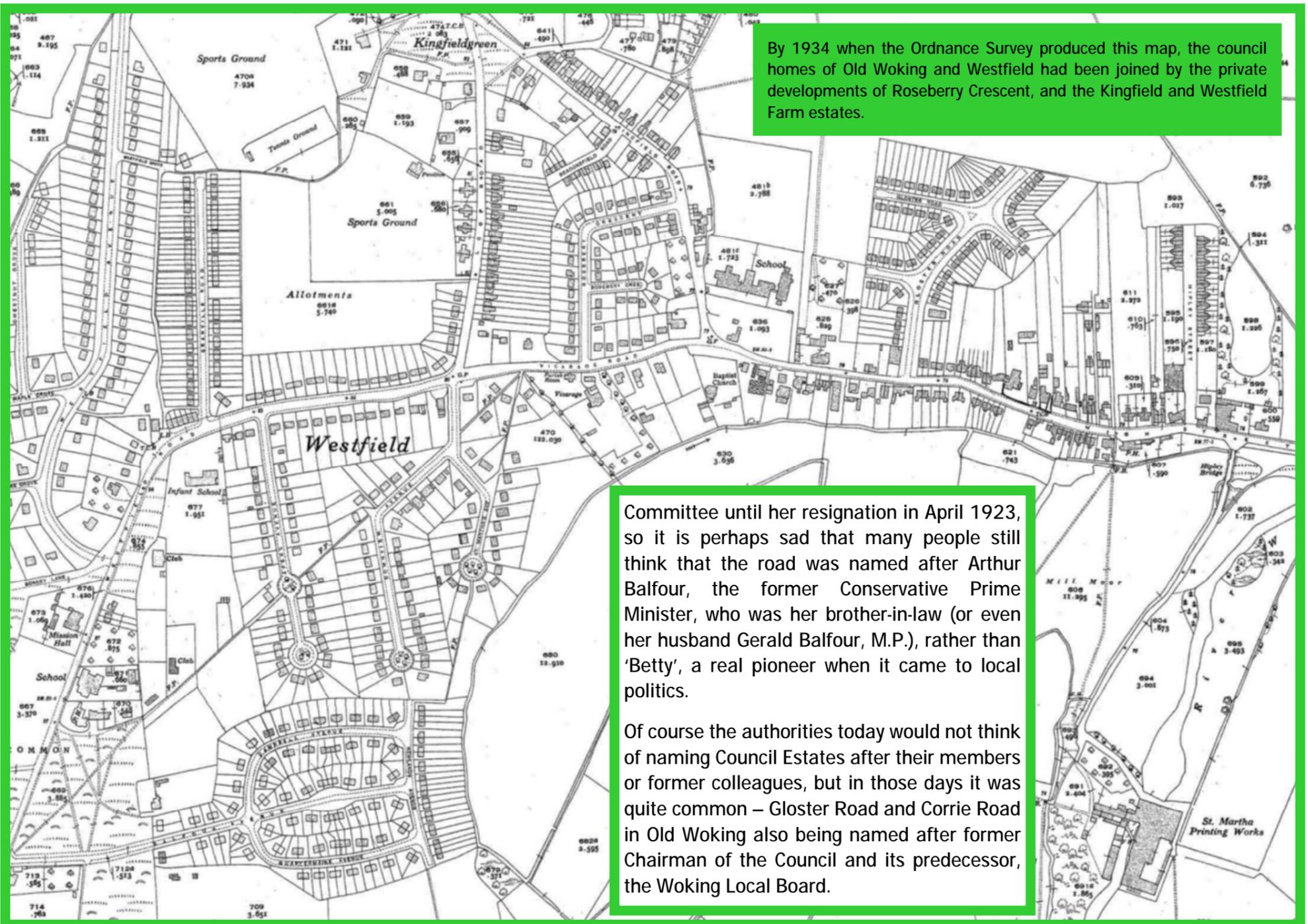
Arthur Duncan Campbell came to Woking from Cambridge in 1915, and in 1921 was appointed the second master of what was then the Woking County School for Boys. He was a choirmaster at Woking's Baptist Church in Goldsworth Road from 1923 to 1927, and in 1924-5 was Chairman of the Woking Labour Party - laying the foundation stone of the new Labour Hall in Clarence Avenue in 1926. He later helped set up the Woking Ratepayers' Association in 1928 and in 1929 he was elected to represent them for the Goldsworth Ward on Woking Council, (having unsuccessfully attempted to gain a seat on the council as a Labour Candidate for Horsell South in 1924).



The Ordnance Survey map of 1914 showing the fields of Old Woking and Westfield before the building of new homes by Woking Council in the 1920's and early 30's.

gas heating and cooking, but even so the Gas Company were disappointed to have 'not been permitted to supply gas for lighting'

It was also decided by the Housing Committee that the four roads on the estate should all be 'avenues' named Newland, Quartermaine, Campbell and Balfour. I must confess that I still do not know where the name Newland came from, but Henry Quartermaine had been the Chairman of the Council in 1930 and 1931, followed by Arthur Campbell, whilst Lady Elizabeth Balfour had been the first female member of the council, having been elected in 1919 to serve the ward of St Johns. She had served on the Council's Housing



By 1934 when the Ordnance Survey produced this map, the council homes of Old Woking and Westfield had been joined by the private developments of Roseberry Crescent, and the Kingfield and Westfield Farm estates.

Committee until her resignation in April 1923, so it is perhaps sad that many people still think that the road was named after Arthur Balfour, the former Conservative Prime Minister, who was her brother-in-law (or even her husband Gerald Balfour, M.P.), rather than 'Betty', a real pioneer when it came to local politics.

Of course the authorities today would not think of naming Council Estates after their members or former colleagues, but in those days it was quite common – Gloster Road and Corrie Road in Old Woking also being named after former Chairman of the Council and its predecessor, the Woking Local Board.

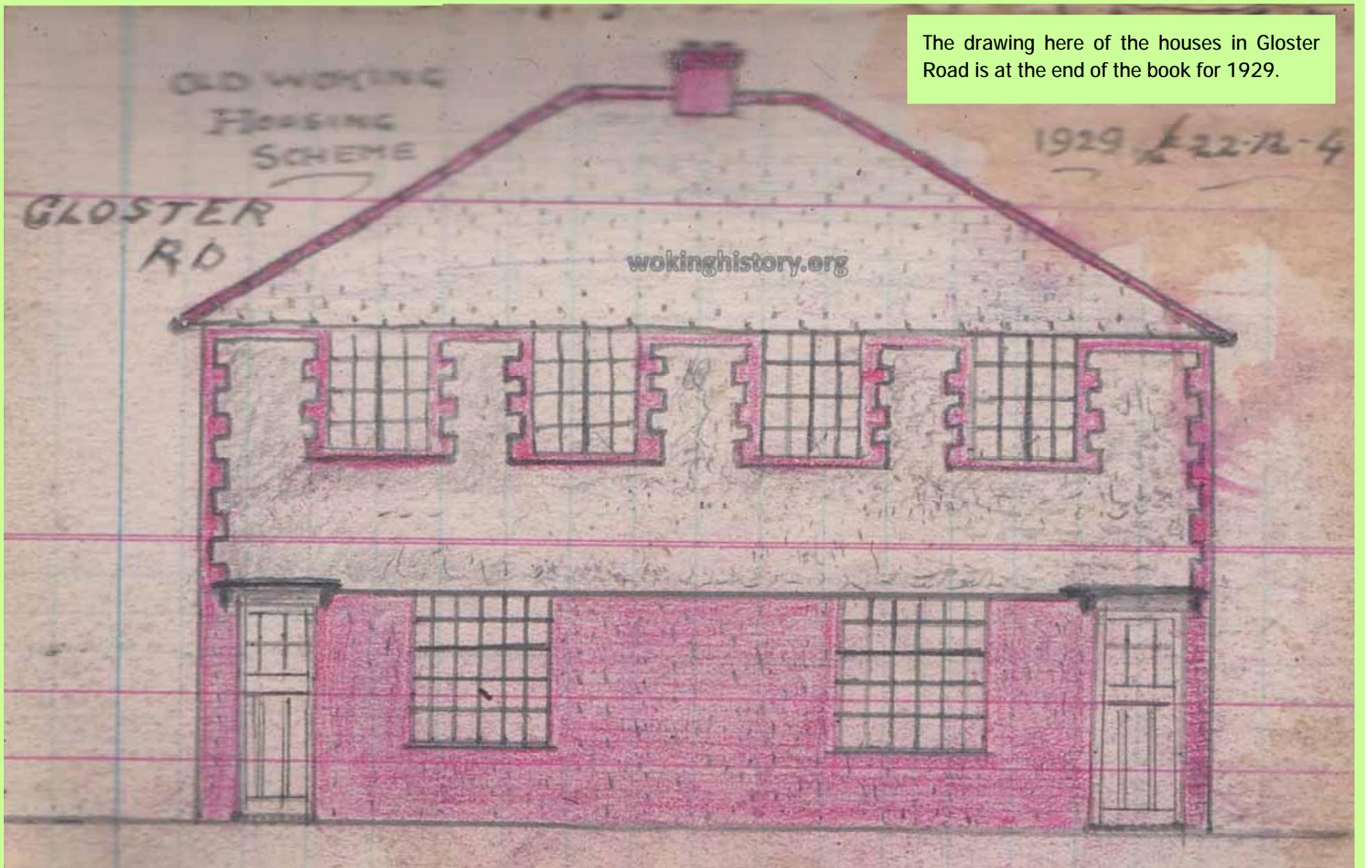
ALBERT ERNEST RUSS - PAINTER & DECORATOR

Many years ago I had the opportunity to copy a series of notebooks detailing the work of Albert Ernest Russ of Mabel Street in Goldsworth. He was a painter and decorator who throughout the 1920's worked on several of the council's housing schemes in the Westfield and Old Woking area. The notebooks record the hours (often over ten hours a day, five days a week with a half day on Saturdays), that he and his colleagues worked on the schemes at Gongers Lane (from May to December 1925), Granville Road (January –October 1926), and then Gloster Road (August 1928 to October 1929). At times there were ten or more working on painting the estates, with some of his regular colleagues working on the houses of Roseberry Crescent in Kingfield between finishing Granville and starting Gloster Road.



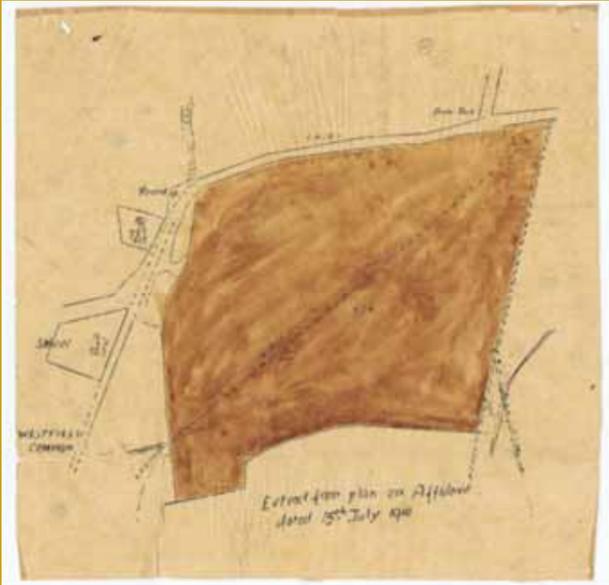
1929
Gloster Road Oct 26th

Russ	9½	5	9½	9½	9½	81/9½
Moore	9½	5	9½	9½	9½	
Gov H.	9½	5	9½	9½	9½	
Sollyer	9½	5	9½	9½	9½	
Donaldson	9½	5	9½	9½	9½	
Dugby	9½	5	9½	9½	9½	
Shupling	9½	5	9½	9½	9½	
Borner	9½	5	9½	9½	9½	
Richardson	9½	5	9½	9½	9½	
Parvey	9½	5	9½	9½	9½	



The drawing here of the houses in Gloster Road is at the end of the book for 1929.

EVELYN RICKS BUILDER OF KINGFIELD



Development in the three villages was not restricted to council housing. In 1928 a local builder from Kingfield called Evelyn Ricks purchased the land formerly belonging to Kingfield Farm (in Westfield Road) and started to lay out roads such as St Martha's and Downsvie Avenues. The deeds for the plot on the corner of the two roads (see the Old Woking page of the Archive section of this site) shows that the site was bought for £316.5s with the road being constructed by 1929.

Ricks was also responsible for Westfield Avenue and the many roads off it, all being marketed as the 'Westfield Farm Estate', as can be seen from the advertisement in the 1930 edition of the Woking Chamber of Trade's Official Guide to the town.



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