

# WOKING'S 'FARM ESTATES' OF THE EARLY 1950'S

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Many of the houses of the Elmbridge Estate in Kingfield were built by local builders, A & J Simmons.

**I**mmediately following the Second World War Woking Council started a house building programme to replace the few properties that had been damaged or destroyed by enemy action, but also to tackle the chronic shortage of privately available rented accommodation in the district.

Old Army huts at West Byfleet and at 'Durnford Camp' off Martyrs Lane in Woodham were used to house displaced and evicted families, but by the early 1950's that 'temporary' accommodation had been 'home' for too long for too many and with expensive repairs (sometimes necessitated by vandalism) the council were looking to phase out the camps and build more permanent homes across the district.

Estates at Byfleet, Horsell, Knaphill, Old Woking and Pyrford were commenced immediately after the war - some on sites that private house-builders had planned to develop before the war, but which afterwards they found they could not complete through lack of manpower or materials.

The government, wishing to look after the bombed out cities first, restricted the amount of scarce resources that could be made available to areas such as ours, but nevertheless with hard work and determination the council managed to add to the housing stock. Of course some of the pre-war homes were also in need of improvement, with money having to be borrowed to replace old brick coppers and ranges, install hot and cold piped water into new bathrooms and remove old outdoor loos – but at least the council were investing in the town's future.

Originally it had been intended that only local labour would be used on the construction of new houses in the area, but as the developer of the houses at Well Close in Horsell found out, it was almost impossible to find enough locally skilled men and so workers from elsewhere had to be brought in. This added to the costs that had already increased due to the high price of raw materials and the situation was not helped by reports from the council's contractors at Knaphill of 'considerable trouble from tenants' children in connection with the theft of equipment and the damage of completed paving'!

In November 1950 the council reported that of the schemes completed up to March that year (190 properties), an extra £28,131 was needed to be borrowed to make up for the difference between the original agreed estimates and the final costs.

The extra costs were as follows:-

Erection of 24 houses and 16 flats at Knaphill - £5,565.17s.3d.

Construction of roads and sewers and erection of 24 houses at Well Lane - £6,435.3s.5d.

Purchase of site, construction of roads and sewers, and erection of 12 houses at Floyds Lane in Pyrford - £1,692.5s.4d.

Ditto 98 houses on the Hoe Bridge Estate at Old Woking - £14,242.12s.4d.

Ditto 16 houses at Rydens Way extension in Old Woking - £68.8s.2d.

Total of £28,004.6s.6d., with the remaining £126.13s.6d., being the cost of the additional loan!



When it came to constructing council houses in the Old Woking area, A & J Simmons had the advantage of owning the land upon which most of the Elmbridge Estate was built.

Lack of 'normal' building materials may well have encouraged Woking (and other authorities) to look at alternative methods of construction and in the early 1950's they decided to build eighty-four 'Unity houses' (by Henry T Hill & Sons Ltd) in Rectory Lane at Byfleet. These reinforced concrete houses were later found to suffer from damp, condensation and lack of insulation, but at the time they were

considered a quick and easy way to cut down the council's long housing waiting list.

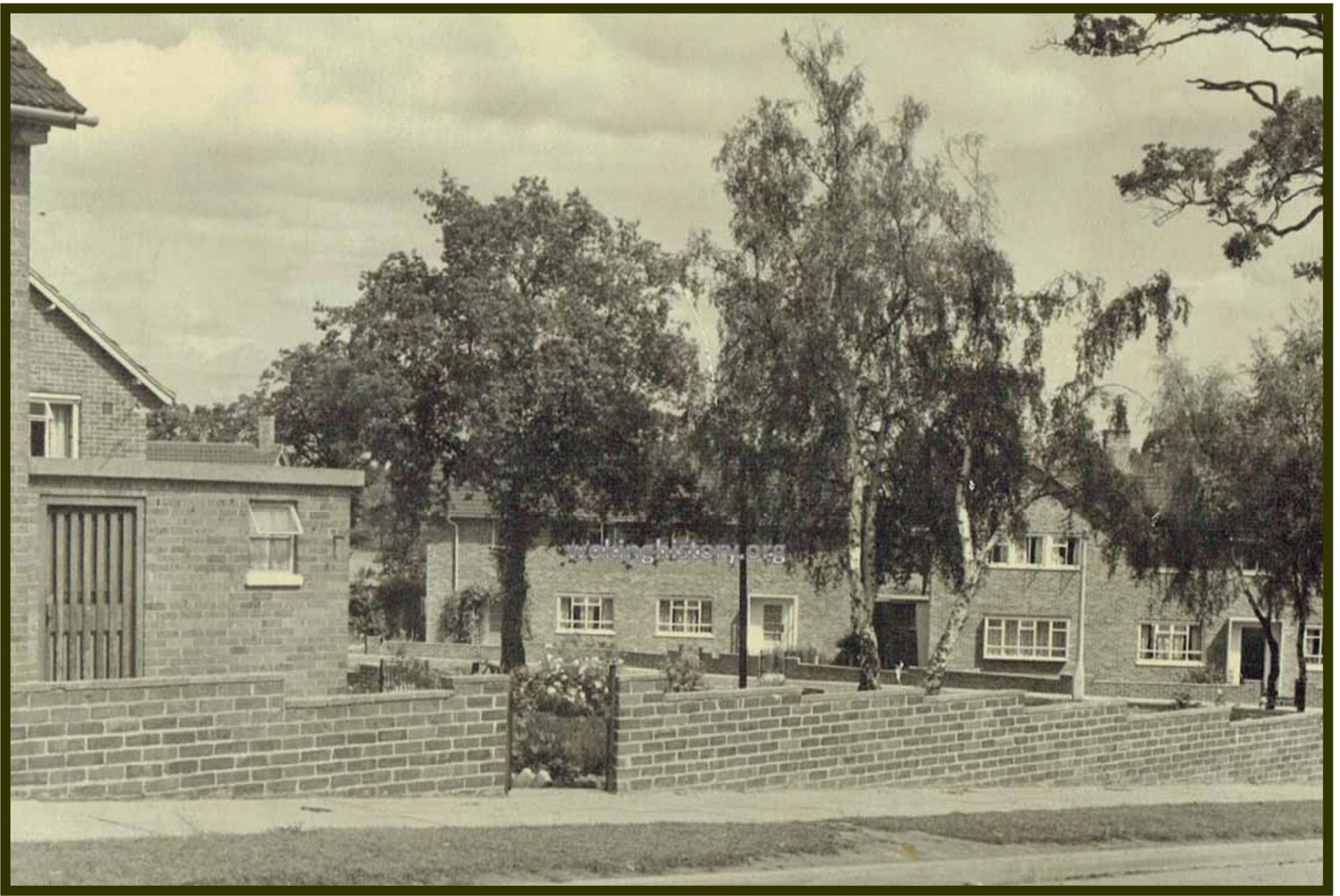
Elsewhere in the district London County Council had started their vast Sheerwater Estate and Woking Council too were looking to develop what would become known as their own 'farm estates' - the Elmbridge, Maybury, and later the Barnsbury Estate off Egley Road.

Both the Elmbridge and Maybury estates were built in two phases, with the council deciding in 1950 to relax its previous policy of restricting tenders to firms within seven miles radius of

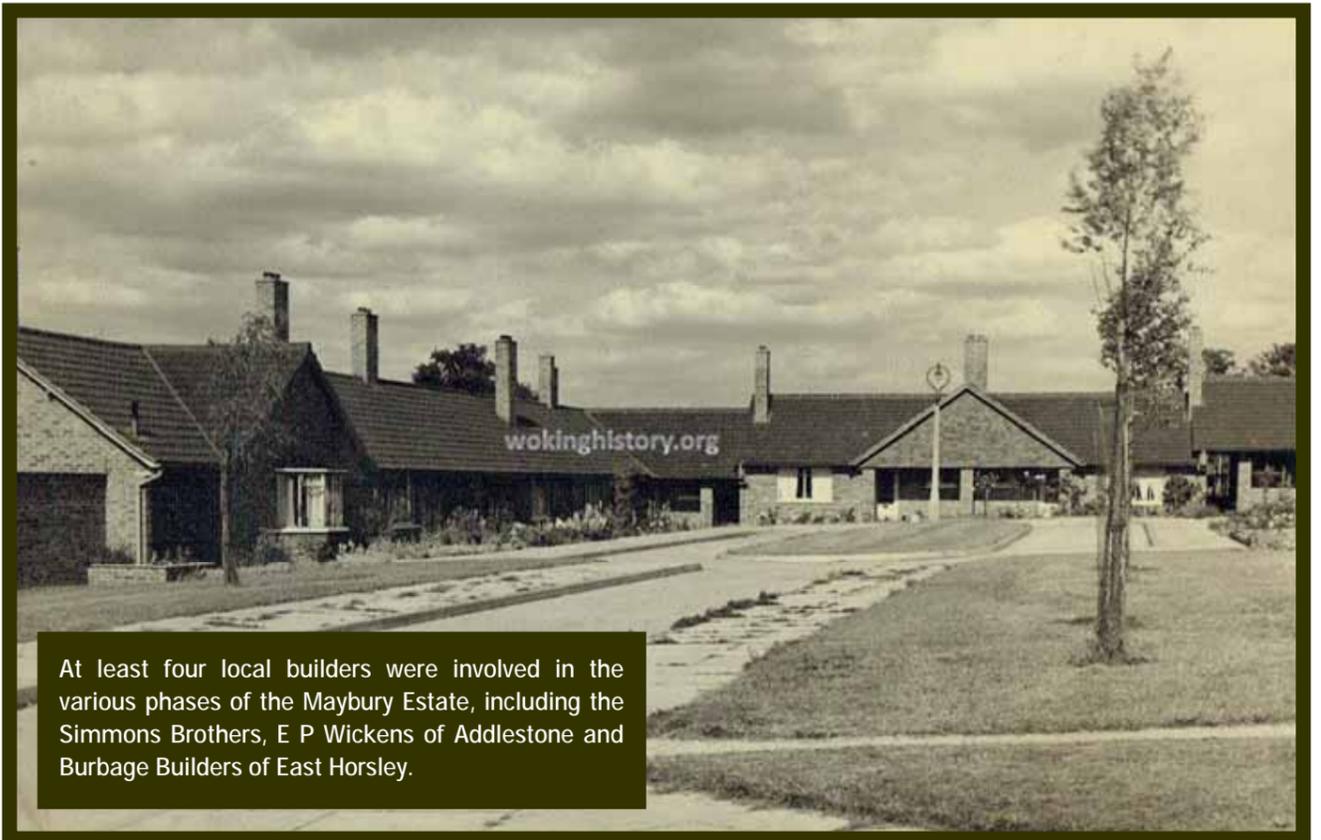
the district. Nevertheless they still stipulated that they were not prepared to pay building industry rates higher than those obtainable locally, with the result that many of the contracts over the next few years still went to local companies, notably A & J Simmons, W Deakin & Co (both of Woking) and Burbage (Builders) Ltd of East Horsley, and E P Wickens & Sons of Addlestone.

The Old People's Bungalows of the Elmbridge Estate were actually part of the 'second-phase', on the land of Howard's Farm

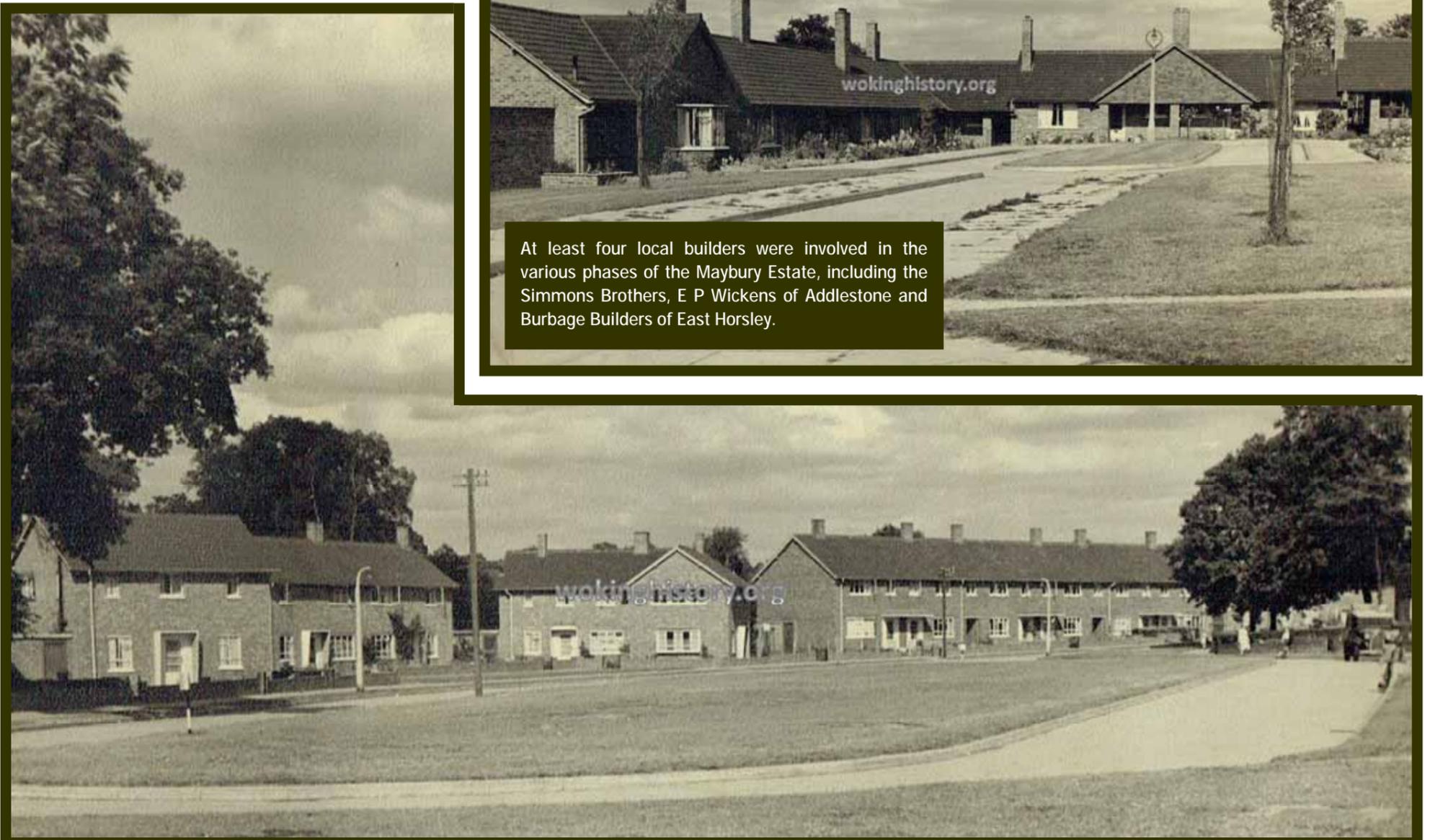




When you add together the numerous local companies and contractors supplying these mainly local builders, the council house programme of the 1950's must have been a massive boost to the local economy, as well as providing much needed relief to the local housing list.



At least four local builders were involved in the various phases of the Maybury Estate, including the Simmons Brothers, E P Wickens of Addlestone and Burbage Builders of East Horsley.



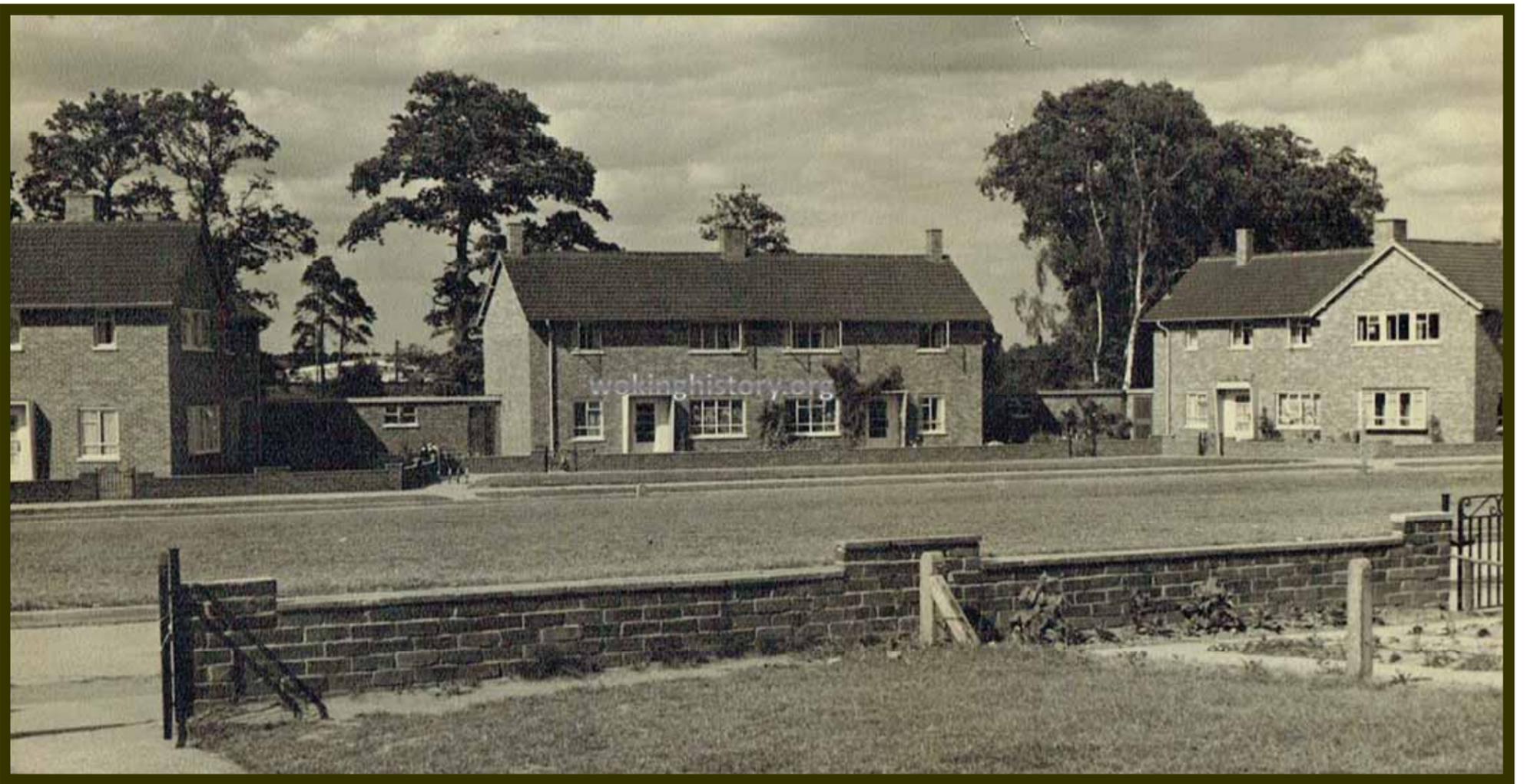


E P Wickens & Sons Ltd, of 83 Church Road, Addlestone are recorded as building the houses on the council's Anchor Hill Estate at Knaphill (Nursery Road and Beechwood Road), whilst at Horsell the 104 houses of the Grove Barrs Estate were divided into nine contracts, most of which were awarded to E Clarke & Sons, with

just eight houses going to Walter Deakin (tender price of £8,381.12s.5d.). Every contract had to be approved by the Ministry of Housing who in the case of Clarkes original estimate of £140,883, was obviously found excessive by the inspector- the price being reduced to £133,683 before work could begin.

At Byfleet the contract for constructing the first two phases of the St Mary's Estate (26 and 28 houses at £34,479.3s.0d., and £37,273.0s.0d. respectively) was awarded to Challenge Fencing Co Ltd (then of Cobham), but there is some doubt whether they were able to raise the required bond to complete the work and it





seems that Simmons Brothers took over at least part of the contract. A & J Simmons originally won the tender for nineteen houses (group 5, £25,641), whilst E P Wickens won groups three and four (22 houses for £30,054 and 16 houses for £21,181).

The Simmons Brothers obviously had the upper hand when it came to building in the Old Woking area, as most was on land they had started to develop with private housing before the war. The first phase of the Elmbridge Estate was on their land, as was the Hoe Bridge Estate were in the 1950's they agreed to build twenty-

eight houses in Winston Way for £1,340 each, adding to the houses of Ford & Farm Roads (and the adjoining houses of Rydens Way).

Simmons shared the contract for the first part of the Elmbridge Estate (Elmbridge Lane and Queen Elizabeth Way) with E P Wickens, the contract for fifty-two houses going to Simmons at £71,461.7s.2d., whilst Wickens were to build forty houses for £58,326.19s.3d.

Wickens too were involved in the Maybury Estate with contract two for 56 houses (later divided into two groups of 28) being awarded to them at a price of £75,464.8s.0d. Other

developers at Maybury were A & J Simmons who built a dozen 'aged persons' dwellings' for £11,936; Burbage (Builders) Ltd of 2 Station Approach, East Horsley who won contract three for 52 houses at £68,789.12s.1d; and H Beasley & Son who were to build the 48 houses of contract one for £63,317.12s.10d. (although that price was subsequently increased by £77.15s.1d due to increased costs).

When you add up all of the above it is clear just how much of an investment (on mortgage) Woking Council were making in the council house stock of the district at that time.

