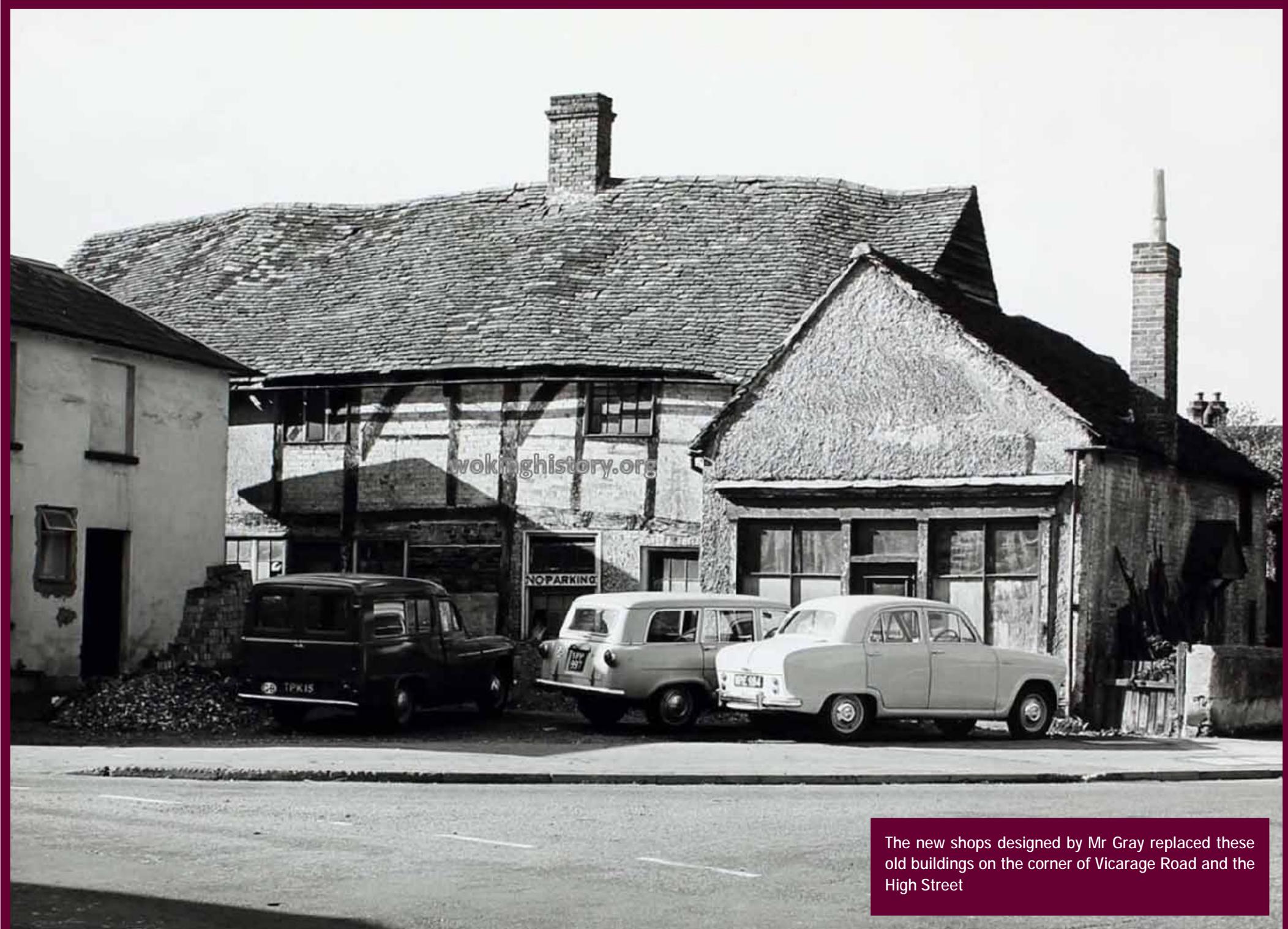


CHOBHAM'S CHANGING SHOPPING SCENE & THE RISE AND FALL OF VILLAGE BANKS

Iain Wakeford 2017



The new shops designed by Mr Gray replaced these old buildings on the corner of Vicarage Road and the High Street

In recent years Chobham has seen several changes, with the moving of the Post Office, the opening of the Co-op and Tesco's convenience stores, and the closure of the little supermarket in the High Street (that has, thankfully, been tastefully converted and restored), but change is nothing new to Chobham and in the 1960's some may have been forgiven for thinking that change was coming too fast.

The Kings Head at Chobham was replaced by Kings Court later in the 1960's



One of the first was the building of the shops on the corner of the High Street and Vicarage Road, which according to one report in the local press in February 1961 took full advantage of the spaciousness of the site with 'a lay-by constructed in the front of the shops [to] provide ample parking space' and an access road at the rear 'to avoid any congestion when deliveries are being made' (Chobham and congestion even then being constant bedfellows)!



The three shops with flats above were designed by local architect Mr L.H. Gray of Sunningdale, with 'mellow face bricks' and dark tiles, 'designed to harmonise with the rest of the village centre'.

I am not too certain that Mr Gray entirely succeeded, but at least it was more harmonious than the development at the other end of the High Street - near to its junction with the Guildford Road. Here later in the 1960's the old Kings Head public house would be demolished to make way for the shops and flats of King's Court.



CHOBHAM. HIGH STREET. "WINTER".

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At one stage there were four public houses in the High Street, but within a few years that number would half with the closure of not just the Kings Head, but also the Horse & Groom on the opposite side of the High Street.

When the Horse & Groom closed in the late 1950's the old building was at least retained

The Horse & Groom public house can be seen on the right of this snowy scene, and below just before it closed and was converted into the Westminster Bank

and converted into a branch of the Westminster Bank, opened in February 1961.

The early 1960's appears to have been the

heyday for bank branches – before the introduction of automated cash machines and the widespread use of credit cards (let alone internet banking) – with most villages in the area having at least one of the big four banks.

Chobham actually had two with Barclays further up the High Street, with Horsell about this time

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gaining their Barclays branch, Kingfield having a branch of Lloyds in the new Ashcombe Parade and Knaphill adding to the Lloyds branch they had had for some time with a new Midland Bank in the shops built in the late 1950's between Embleton's Bakery and Rice's Stores (and later a new Barclays opening in the village as well).

Meanwhile in Byfleet, a village where there was once no banking facilities, suddenly found itself in the mid 1950's with three – Lloyds opening in Petersham House, Barclays in Hopfield Parade and the Midland just around the corner, opposite 'Byfleet Green'.

West Byfleet, within a few years would soon gain the 'full set' with the construction of the Sheer House development - although we are now perhaps getting too far ahead of ourselves



The Westminster Bank at Chobham (top), with Lloyds Bank in Ashcombe Parade built in the late 1950's (above) and the Midland Bank at Knaphill—also built in the late 1950's (below left).

Only Lloyds now remain in Byfleet where once there was a Barclays in Hopfield Parade and the Midland Bank (below right).

in this chronological history of the area.

Now, of course, local banks are following in the footsteps of local pubs and are closing left right and centre – the Westminster and later Barclays in Chobham going the way of the Horse & Groom and the Kings Head, with Horsell and Kingfield long since seeing their banking facilities close (if not their pubs)!

Soon only Lloyds will remain in Knaphill and Byfleet, with HSBC and soon the NatWest closing in West Byfleet – prompted no doubt by the imminent redevelopment of the Sheer House site. With controversial proposals to build a new public house on part of the recreation ground, West Byfleet may soon, for the first time in many years, find itself with more bars than banks!

