

# WEST WOKING'S SHOPS IN THE EARLY 1960's

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The 1960's saw the village of Knaphill gradually assert its authority in West Woking as the major commercial centre for that part of the district – although with numerous corner shops all over the place, it would be hard to define anywhere as the real 'centre' of the village's shopping experience.

By the start of the decade a small row of shops had been built on the slopes of Anchor Hill (at its junction with Barley Mow Lane), and at the top of the hill three new units had been built in the High Street between Highclere House and Rice's Store (where Tesco is today), but on the other side of the road, there was nothing between the Anchor Hotel and the little Surrey County Council branch library, in the former YMCA hut.

A few new shops had been built in the late 1950's between Highclere House and Rice's Store (the creeper-clad building in the background).



Apart from the shops at the beginning of the Lower Guildford Road, there was no shops on the Anchor side of the street until Barclays Bank - beyond the Library.



Further up the High Street, plans were passed for four new shops to be built next to The Crown public house, but in the end five were actually built, including The Shoe Box, Taylor's tobacconist, Hughes radio & TV shop, John Langton fruiterers, and Sims hardware store. In June 1961 another six shops were planned next door, taking over the shop and garden of Madden's Post Office (up to the site of the new Knaphill Service Station), but it would take a few years before they were finally built, and when they were only five (known as Albion Parade) were constructed.



An Orchard occupied the site where the shops next to The Crown were built.



With the new Woking Co-operative store on the opposite side of the road (eventually replacing the little corner shop that had been constructed in 1913), the High Street was beginning to usurp the Broadway as the village's main 'shopping street' – although even the Broadway saw some development with Ashley Cook's opening a branch of their dry cleaners in the road in February 1962, and Lloyds Bank occupying a building on the opposite side of the road to where they are now.



In the early 1960's five new shops were constructed between Madden's Post Office and The Crown



In Brookwood most of the village shops appeared to be converted old houses, with perhaps just the ones on the corner with Smarts Heath Lane being especially built, but Brookwood too would see the number of purpose-built shops increase throughout the 1960's, with Mac's grocer's stores (at 196a and 196b) becoming the 4,000<sup>th</sup> store in the MACE co-operative of independent grocers in November of 1962.

The early 1960's could have seen even more development in Brookwood had the Friary Brewery gained permission to develop the garden of the Brookwood Hotel with six lock-up shops, but in the end the garden survived – although now, of course, the hotel hasn't with its conversion a few years ago into offices taking away one of the villages oldest commercial establishments.

In St Johns, the increase in housing during the early 1960's does not appear to have been immediately matched with a corresponding increase in the villages shopping facilities. It is true that at the new Hermitage Woods Estate

six new shops had been provided (with four more on the left of the entrance to the estate off Hermitage Road), but in the village itself very little change had taken place – although the small lock-up shops facing the Lye were built in this period, adding a little to the offer in the village.

There can be little doubt, however, that by the mid 1960's it was Knaphill that was fast becoming the major shopping centre for the west of Woking, with a fishmongers, butchers, green-grocers and ironmongers, as well as

Macs stores in Connaught Road, with the later 1960's shops of Davisons wine merchants and Emma's hairdressers in the background.

more than one baker, ladies fashion shop and small, independent, grocers to choose from. In fact looking through the street directory for the period, the most remarkable difference from today is the lack of charity shops, fast-food outlets and restaurants (although book-makers and hairdressers appear to be equally well represented)!



Apart from a few lock-up shops on St Johns Lye, the shops of the Hermitage Estate were the only additions to the commercial premises of the village in the early 1960's.

