

## **ASHTEAD 1900 / 2000**

### **TRANSPORT, SERVICES, INDUSTRIES**

#### **RAILWAYS**

The railway came about 1859 with the line from Epsom to Leatherhead. The Chairman of the railroad construction company was Mr Thomas Grissell, who lived at Norbury Park. In 1867 the line was extended to Dorking, crossing Mr Grisell's land and when he gave permission he laid down a number of conditions, i.e. that the line had to be in a tunnel, that there should be a level crossing where the drive to the house crossed the line, that all new buildings had to be painted green, that a station had to be provided at Westhumble and that the station had to be positioned so that it could not be seen from the house at Norbury Park. Use of the railway continued to be successful up to present time.

#### **BUSES**

Bus services arrived in the area early 20th century but over the years use declined as people acquired their own transport. Prior to the arrival of trains and buses the only means of travelling long distances was by stagecoach, but some people still retained private coaches. From about 1920 the local buses were garaged at the Swan Hotel and later at the Bull. From 1924 to 1999 buses were garaged at Guildford Road, when Arriva took over local bus services in the area.

#### **FIRE SERVICES**

In the early 20th century fire services were provided by horse drawn fire engines. By 1926 a new motorised appliance was purchased, with a second in 1932 and they were kept at Belmont Road station. In 1969 a new fire station was opened in Cobham Road and the old one demolished to make way for residential buildings known as Holly Court.

#### **WATER**

The first public water supply arrived in the area about 1884 when a pump house was built between Waterways Road and Bridge Street. A borehole was sunk and water was pumped about 210 feet to a reservoir in Reigate Road until it was replaced by the Highlands Road reservoirs. A second pumping station was built in 1935 and it survived until 2005. The then Water Company was absorbed into the East Surrey Water Co. in 1927. The old works were replaced with the housing development in Wallis Mews.

#### **ELECTRICITY**

Leatherhead and District Electricity Co. built their first power station in 1902. The DC supply was originally only to Leatherhead but later extended to Ashtead, Fetcham, Mickleham etc. From about 1913 the Company supplied AC currents to most of the surrounding districts until about 1941 when the area was fed bulk supply from the national grid.

## INDUSTRIES

Although Surrey is not thought of as an industrial county there was a surprising amount of industrial activities going back to the Roman era.

In 1923 Ashtead Potters Ltd. Began business in Ashtead Village but lasted for just 12 years, closing in 1935. The company was set up mainly to provide employment to disabled servicemen returning from the 1914/18 war. The company produced a vast range of figurines, commemoratives and everyday cooking items. The great depression increased competition and the untimely death of the driving force in Sir Lawrence Weaver led to its closure in January 1935.

Another well known local firm is Ashtead Group Plc, a leading provider of non-manned equipment rental service. Founded in 1947 the company concentrate mainly in providing equipment rental, often referred to as 'plant hire', to the construction industry. With headquarters in Leatherhead and the acquisition of BET USA their core business is in the UK and America.

The Greville Works was started about 1890 as Mawson & Swan Photographic Co. and within about 5 years two new factories, Crampshaw Works and Victoria Works were completed. By 1908 the operations were moved to Harrow. The works premises was then operated by Brifco Ltd and from 1930 by Brifex Ltd. In 1972 Brifex closed down and the premises were converted to offices for W S Atkins, Civil Engineers. When Atkins left the buildings were demolished and the site used for housing, now Clarendon Mews.

Rosary Leather works south of the railway by Woodfield was another industrial activity in Ashtead. The factory began in the early 20th century, being concerned with skin bleaching by the sun, which was considered superior to chemical bleaching. The site of the old factory is now Woodfield Close.

From about 1926 artificial silk was produced at the Rayon Manufacturing Works in Ermyn Way but had to close because of water shortage. In 1938 the British Vacuum Cleaner Co. moved into the factory to make Goblin cleaners and appliances. They were the first company to manufacture suction cleaners in the UK. The company also manufactured fixed plant cleaners which were installed in Hospitals, power stations and even the Palace of Westminster. As well as vacuum cleaners Goblin became well known for the Teasmade Automatic Tea Maker. By 1982 the company transferred their operations to Gosport and the works was demolished in 1984. In 1990 the new Esso Petroleum Co. opened their headquarters on the site and is one of the biggest employer in the area.