

WESTCOTT POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE EXCHANGE

A History compiled by Westcott WI in mid 1960's

We can find no records as to when the Post Office started in Westcott, but there was certainly one by 1894. It was first carried on at Bay Tree Cottage; then at Johnson's successively where now stand Partons, Gears and Constance. In 1905 it moved to the Surrey Trading Company (now Forrest Store); in 1945 to Heath Cottage under Mr. Gadd; back to Gears in 1952 and to Forrest Stores in 1957. Now in 1962 the Post Office is at Balchins Stores, and Mr. Ommanney is the Sub-Postmaster.

Before there was a Post Office at Westcott, the Postman would use his horn on the Green to announce the arrival of the post.

The Telephone Exchange was started in 1912 and was housed at the Surrey Trading Co., and run in conjunction with the Post Office. By 1920 there were approximately 38 subscribers. In 1923 a new switchboard, holding up to a hundred lines if needed, replaced the old "magneto" switchboard. By this time there were about 71 subscribers. In 1926 the telephone exchange had moved to its present address at Alpine Cottage, Main Road, and a new switchboard was installed. From 1920 to 1937 the caretaker-operator was Mr. T.R. Davies. From 1920 to 1926 he was manager of the Surrey Trading Co., and from 1926 he ran Ye Olde Westcott Bakery next door to the telephone exchange. The ovens are still in the cellar of Alpine Cottage and the entrance to the ovens is behind the refrigerator in Butcher White's shop.

From 1937 to 1954 Mr. Walker was caretaker-operator, and from 1951, to the present day Mr. Davies' daughter, Mrs. Millington, has been in charge. Subscribers have risen from approximately 128 in 1936 to 341 (including party lines) in 1962. The operating staff, day and night inclusive, is six.

The first public telephone inside the post office and worked by the operator, appeared in 1920. In 1926 there was an "attended" call box in the hallway of Alpine Cottage. The first unattended public call box was built in 1934 and a more up to date model replaced this in 1955.