

**MILL ROAD HISTORY SOCIETY
BUILDING REPORT**



Mill Road Bridge Cambridge



Caroline Wilson

Abbreviations

CA:	Cambridgeshire Archives
CC:	Cambridgeshire Collection (Central Library)
<i>CCh</i>	<i>Cambridge Chronicle</i>
<i>CIP</i>	<i>Cambridge Independent Press</i>
<i>CN</i>	<i>Cambridge News</i>
<i>CWN</i>	<i>Cambridge Weekly News</i>
ECR	Eastern Counties Railway
GER	Great Eastern Railway
MRWF	Mill Road Winter Fair
SO:	Suzy Oakes Collection (for further information, contact the Mill Road History Society)

NOTE

This report was produced by Caro Wilson, resident of Petersfield, Cambridge, and volunteer for the Mill Road History Project and Society. Significant contributions have been made by Allan Brigham, Barry Hurst and Tony Kirby, also by Ian Bent, Simon Middleton, Mary Naylor and Lucy Walker. These are gratefully acknowledged, as is the generous help provided by the staff of the Cambridgeshire Archives and the Cambridgeshire Collection. The focus of the report is the Mill Road railway bridge and the earlier history of that part of the road.

Location

The bridge crosses the Cambridge-to-Norwich railway line and marks the boundary between the wards of Romsey (to the south-east) and Petersfield (to the north-west).

National Grid reference

52 11'55.08" N and 0 8'27.70" E
Latitude: 52.198546 Longitude: 0.14106274

First edition: 2018

Cover picture: Top of Railway Bridge looking towards Petersfield (photo: Mary Naylor, 2018)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	5
2. The Crossing	7
3. The Footbridge	13
a: Debate within Cambridge	16
b: Debate in Parliament	23
c: After the Parliamentary Hearing	25
d: The Farrant Case	29
4. What was the Footbridge like?	32
5. The First Road Bridge, 1889	35
a: Background and Preliminary Negotiations	35
b: Preparations for Parliamentary Hearing	40
c: 1887 Railway Plans with Proposed Diversion	43
d: Decision and Aftermath	47
6. What was the 1889 Bridge like?	56
a: The Photographic Record	56
b: The Anecdotal Record	64
7. From 1889 to 1962	66
a: Second World War Bombing, 30 January 1941	66
b: The 1957 Railway Plans	68
8. The 1980 Bridge	70
a: Memories of the Demolition and Rebuilding	84
9. Post-1980	87
a: The Traffic Lights Project, 1981–84	87
b: The 1985 Mural	97
c: Reclaim the Streets, 1996	101
d: The 1997 Mural	105
e: The 2006 Mural	107
f: Mill Road Winter Fair 2005 to Present Day	111
g: The Olympic Torch, 2007	115
h: Visualising Mill Road, 2013	116
i: A Bench for Suzy, 2015	117
j: Protest March, 2016	119
k: A Plan for the Future: the Chisholm Cycling Trail	121

CONCLUSION	124
BIBLIOGRAPHY	125
APPENDICES:	
1. 1887 debate about diversion of Mill Road	126
2. An alternative design for the 1889 bridge	130
3. A Mill Road Story from 1959	131
4. Barry Hurst: The demolition	132
5. Reclaim the Streets, 1996	135
6. Sharon Kaur's article, 2009	137
7. Some Argyle Street murals	139
8. From the Mike Petty Scrapbook	141

1. INTRODUCTION



Figure 1 — The railway bridge looking towards Petersfield 2013 (Caro Wilson)

The bridge has been selected for research for the Mill Road History Society mainly because it is the symbol of the railway, whose coming to Cambridge in 1845 can be said to have created Mill Road. From the very start, the crossing, which predated the bridge, brought changes to the lives of the people using what was then a country track; the various bridges whose history will be outlined here did the same.

It is impossible to ignore the bridge on Mill Road; indeed, it is something of a defining landmark. It both divides the two wards of Romsey and Petersfield (often seen as very different in character) and also unites them. As such, it is a key part of the logo of the website www.mill-road.com created by the late Suzy Oakes, whose life is commemorated by a bench on the summit of the bridge (see chapter 9, section i).



Figure 2 — Logo of www.mill-road.com from that website

The community organization Mill Road Bridges (which facilitated the original Mill Road History Project), uses as its logo an artwork created by local artist Sam Motherwell

featuring the bridge. The name of the organization carries connotations of the words 'bridge' and 'bridging', thereby exemplifying the aim of the organisation to 'grow and maintain the community spirit, heritage and rich cultural diversity of the Mill Road area by improving the flow of information between and about individuals, businesses, voluntary organisations and local stakeholders'.



Figure 3 — The logo for Mill Road Bridges, to be found on www.mill-road.com, the Mill Road Newsletter, and in other communications

2. THE CROSSING

Before 1845, the road we now know as Mill Road was little more than a cart track leading to Cherry Hinton, as the 1830 Baker Map of Cambridge shows.



Figure 4 — Mill Road in 1830: Baker's map of Cambridge (CA: KP79/28/2)

Readers wishing to know more about the development of the road in these early days are referred to Allan Brigham's report on Mill Road between 1832 and 1851.¹

Brigham quotes a newspaper report from 1842 (*CIP* 2 July 1842) about a runaway horse charging along Mill Road until it was 'stopped by the white gates'. It is not known where these gates were, nor how they had come to be built, but there seem to have been no other obstructions across the road, other than the inevitable ruts and mud which were frequent hazards along unmetalled roads.

The coming of the railway to Cambridge in July 1845 changed all this. Thanks to the controversial siting of the station away from the city centre, the main Eastern Counties Railway line from Cambridge to Ely and Norwich was built running right across what we know as Mill Road, but which at the time was considered no more than a rather insignificant country track.

¹ Allan Brigham, *Mill Road, Cambridge: 1823-1851: 'What was here before the all the houses?' The Early Development of Mill Road – A Narrative from the Newspapers* (Mill Road History Project Building Report, 2nd edn, Sept 2015), downloadable from www.capturingcambridge.org.

That the track was not deemed a highway may explain why at first no manned gated crossing was built at the same time as the track was laid. In his book *Along the Line*, David Occamore quotes from The Highways (Railway Crossings) Act of 1839 (amending the Highways Act of 1835), which stated that whenever a railroad crosses any highway the railway company must make and maintain 'good and sufficient gates' and employ 'good and proper persons to open and shut them';² but it would appear that it was some months before such gates were installed in Mill Road.

The coming of the railway caused great excitement in the city, and crowds flocked to places from where it was easy to see the trains. Mill Road would have been an obvious such place, and certainly by early September, two months after the official opening of the line, members of the Paving Commissioners (one of the many civic bodies that preceded the Highways and Planning authorities) were arguing at a meeting on 6 September 1845 that, because traffic was increasing so greatly ('because of its great thoroughfare'), proper gates were required:

Mill Road

Mr. Cooper in drawing attention to the footpath leading to Cherry Hinton and Mr. Favell's property on Mill Road said the Railway Company had acted to the letter of the law in having gates each side of the road; but he really thought it a place, owing to its great thoroughfare that required a gatekeeper's lodge and gates like those at Coldham's Lane. Mr. Cooper thus proposed the following resolution, which was seconded by Mr. Favell:

'That this Board desire to express an opinion that it is absolutely necessary for the safety of the public that gates, closing on the railway, should be put across the Mill-road by the Great Eastern Railway Company and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Secretary of the Company, by the Clerk of this Board'.

The resolution was seconded by Mr Favell and carried unanimously. (*CIP* 6 Sep 1845)

The nature of 'the gates each side of the road' which were 'already in place' is not clear, though it is possible that they closed on the track not on the road. Hylton points out that a rule existed until The Regulation of the Railways Act of 1844 whereby 'gates had to be provided wherever a railway crossed a road – but to stop the train, not any road traffic. It was the train driver's duty to stop the train, open the gates and close them again after passing through. Failure to close them could incur a fine of 40s. half of this sum going to the witness who informed against the driver and half to the poor of the local parish.'³

Whatever their nature, 'the gates each side of the road' at the Mill Road crossing point seem not to have provided any protection at all to the crowds surging forwards to view the trains as a local newspaper reported:

...On Saturday last ... on the Croydon Railway ... a labourer was run over and killed on the spot. His name it appears was Michael Murphy, and he, with others, had been cautioned relative to standing near the rail. It is not improbable that accidents of a similar nature will appear on the Eastern Counties Line at Cambridge. It appears impossible to keep people off the line. On Sunday, upon the Mill Road, there are sometimes between two and three hundred persons waiting

² Occamore (2010), p. 29.

³ Hylton (2007), p. 71.

to see the trains, including a large number of boys and girls, and despite the expostulations of the Company's policeman, and another man, the people will keep crossing the line, immediately before the passing of the trains, in order that they may gain a better view of them.

The engineers, seeing the danger of the persons thus densely assembled, previous to coming near them, let a quantity of water out from the side of the engines, which is ejected as from a syringe, and this has the effect of clearing the people from the rail. Parents who allow their servants to walk children out on Sunday will do well to profit by this hint, and direct them not to go beyond the gate leading to the line; or to abstain from the road altogether. (*CIP* 13 Sep 1845)

The article concludes by saying:

We perceive that the Company have adopted the recommendations of the Littlebury and Cambridge juries and have caused conspicuous direction posts to be placed at the different inclines. There is one near the Mill-road with two arms, one placed horizontally while the other points downwards at an angle corresponding with the incline. (*CIP* 13 Sep 1845)

It seems likely that this 'conspicuous post' must have been to warn the train drivers of the proximity of a crossing and an incline; it can have been of no protection to pedestrians.

A week later, on 20 September, a letter to the Editor of the *Cambridge Independent Press*, written two days before, was published:

The Mill Road

To the Editor

Sir. The strong observations which you have made upon the neglect of the managers of the Railway as to the crossing at the Mill Road are entitled to the thanks of the public. Allow me (to show the justices of your remarks) to mention a fact which occurred last Sunday.

A large concourse of people, as usual, was assembled to see the trains; the children were playing on the rails, when a little child of six years old got its foot entangled in the rails, and it took the Constable about five minutes to extricate it.

Fortunately, the train had not started. If it had no power on earth could have saved the life of this child.

I make no comment on this, only saying that similar things will no doubt occur and if a fatal accident happens I hope the jury will punish these obstinate gentlemen by a deodand⁴ of not hundreds but thousands.

It would seem as though they defy public opinion, for actually the constable who was placed there is now discharged and there is now no one even to caution.

I am sir, your obedient servant, Prudence
Cambridge Sep 18 1845. (*CIP* 20 Sep 1845)

That Sunday, 14 September, seems to have been a particularly bad day, for the same paper reports:

Sunday Amusement

On Sunday evening a man named Harry Bailey amused himself with shooting bats on the Mill-road near the railway to the great annoyance of persons walking that way. A policeman took him into custody and a struggle ensued for the gun, which went off, fortunately without doing

⁴ deodand: something forfeited, thus a fine.

the policeman any injury although the muzzle of the weapon was very near him. The case was heard on Tuesday at the police court. (*CIP* 20 Sep 1845)

We should note mention here, in the article of 13 September, of 'the gate leading to the line' and of 'the Company's policeman' as early safety measures at the junction. All railway companies employed 'constables' or 'policemen' whose job consisted not only of attempting to prevent trespass and enforce regulation but often also of acting as track inspector and early signalman by waving flags to an agreed system. This must have been a very hazardous enterprise given the inefficiency of early train braking systems.

On 29 September 1845, the newspaper reported, word for word, the same incident about the six-year-old child, presumably to continue to add weight to the argument that 'something should be done'. Finally, on Saturday 11 October 1845 the same newspaper announced, with some self-congratulation, that the directors of the Great Eastern Railway would now proceed to build both gates and a Gatekeeper's lodge:

The Mill Road. In compliance with the request of the Paving Board the directors have agreed to erect gates and a lodge on the Mill-road leading to Cherry Hinton. We have on former occasion directed public attention to the danger of this particular spot as hundreds of people frequently congregate there to see the trains pass. (*CIP* 11 Oct 1845)

The exact date of the installation of the gates is not known but it seems likely to have been later that year or in early 1846. The following photograph is of the crossing in Cherry Hinton, but the style of gates and the surface of the road may well be similar to what was in Mill Road, although in Mill Road the only building likely to be visible was the Gatekeeper's house if it was indeed built then as had been promised.



Figure 5 — High St, Cherry Hinton (CC: Y.Cherry.K1. 21661)

Richard Rowe's survey map published in 1858, some thirteen years later, shows the Gatekeeper's house next to the track, beside the Railway Cottages (which might well have been built at the same time).



Figure 6 — Rowe's survey map, 1858 (CA: R CB4/19/ 1/XIX)

A detail of the map shows clearly the gates in closed position on both sides of the track with presumably the hinge/closure at the side. It is not clear what is represented by the extended line on the Romsey side. The gates are clearly now designed to stop road traffic crossing the tracks.

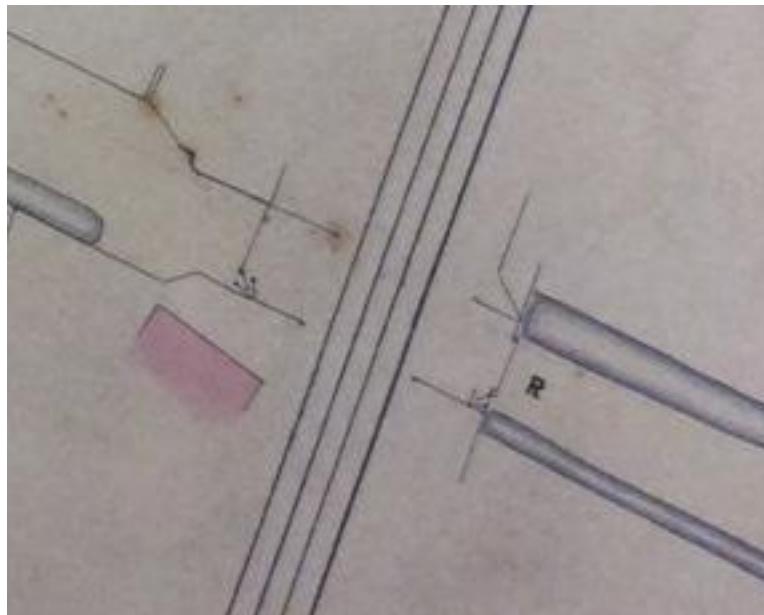


Figure 7 — Detail from previous figure

The duties of a Gatekeeper in the 1840s are described by Occamore in some detail:⁵

In The Eastern Counties Rule Book of 1846 Rule 98 for Gatemen states 'The gates are always to be kept open for the railway and shut across the road except when required to be opened for the road, and they must then be again closed across the road as quickly as possible.' and goes on to say 'The gates are never to be closed across the railway when a train can be seen or heard approaching and in such cases the gateman must not allow anything to cross the railway until the train has passed.' Crossing Gatekeepers were usually on duty from the first train in the morning until the last at night, leaving about six hours' free time before the next day's work began. If the gates were left closed against the road, drivers wishing to cross would wake the gatekeeper at any hour of the night. As well as opening and closing the gates, the gatekeeper also filled the gate lamps with oil, lit and extinguished them since the gates were illuminated during the hours of darkness and in fog or falling snow, they trimmed the wicks and polished the bulls eye lenses. At some crossings there were levers to pull to release and lock the gates.

⁵ Occamore (2010), p. 29.

3. THE FOOTBRIDGE

Housing and business development in Mill Road from 1845 to the early 1870s was constant, though perhaps not as great as in the 1880s.⁶ Road traffic, both pedestrian and horse-drawn, would of course have increased in proportion and it must be remembered that the level crossing, though no doubt a welcome safety measure, would also have caused considerable delays and disruption. Not only would the gates be closed against mainline trains, but they would also be closed to allow the frequent shunting that was necessary to get engines and carriages into the right position. Sometimes delays because of shunting lasted for more than half an hour several times a day.

Current research shows no changes to the crossing or the Crossing Keeper's house before 1874, but in November of that year, the Great Eastern Railway Company applied to lay two new tracks beside those already running from the station across Mill Road. Whenever a railway company sought to make changes such as these they had to present a bill to the House of Commons. The final decision would rest with a select committee of the Commons, which would hear representations from the railway company and from, in this instance, the Cambridge town authorities. In the 1870s the town committee that took the lead on this was called the Improvement Commissioners, who would of course hear from paid town officials such as the Surveyor, as well as from local residents and business owners.

The *Cambridge Chronicle* reported on 14 November 1874 that the railway company's solicitor had submitted such a bill to Parliament.

Dated 11 November 1874

W.H. Shaw, solicitor for the Bill

Sherwood, Grubbe, Pritt and Cameron, Parliamentary Agents.

A plan and section of each of the intended Railways and Works, a plan of the lands which may be taken, under the compulsory powers applied for by the intended Act, a book of references in each such plan, and a published map [...] will be deposited for public inspection [...] with the Clerk of the Peace at the County of Cambridge at his office.

Notice is hereby given that Application is intended to be made to Parliament in the next session to authorise the Great Eastern Railway (hereinafter called 'the company') to make and maintain, with all necessary and convenient stations, approaches, works, and conveniences connected, there with respectively, the following Railways and works, or some of them (that is to say) –

[...]

Point 6. The crossing on the level with two additional lines of railway of two public roads in the parish of St Andrew the less, in the county of Cambridge, known respectively as Mill-Road and Coldham's Lane, such crossings to be adjacent to the existing crossings of the Cambridge and Ely lines over such roads respectively.

⁶ For further information, see Brigham at http://www.capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Mill_Road_Early-Development_1823-1851_2nd_edn.pdf.

7. The alteration of the bridge in the parish of St Andrew the less in the county of Cambridge, carrying the Hills Road over the main line of the Company and the substitution of a girder bridge for the existing bridge and the widening of the railway thereunder. (CCh 14 Nov 1874)

Importantly, application was also made by the railway company to 'abolish, alter or modify' tolls that the company still had to pay on 'animals, vehicles, goods and other things brought into Cambridge Station or into the Borough of Cambridge'. These tolls amounted to £1,000 a year.

Railway plans in the County Archives, though dated 1875 rather than 1874, are likely to be the ones referred to:

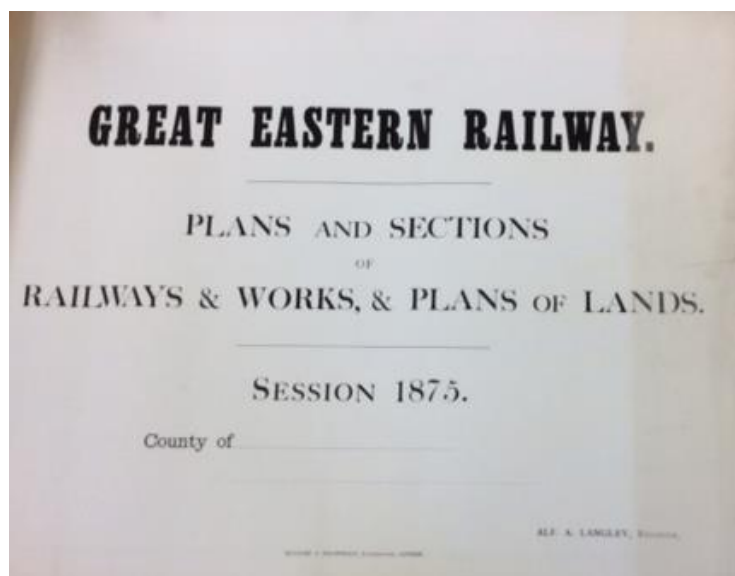


Figure 8 — Frontispiece (CA: Q RUm 77 1875)

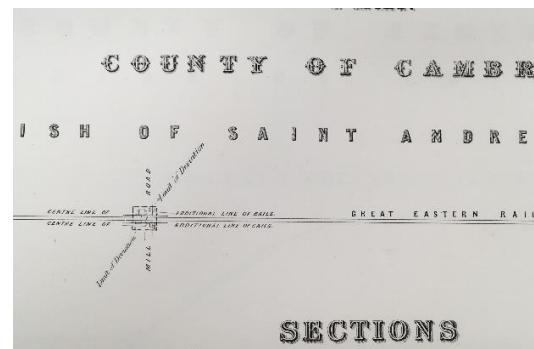
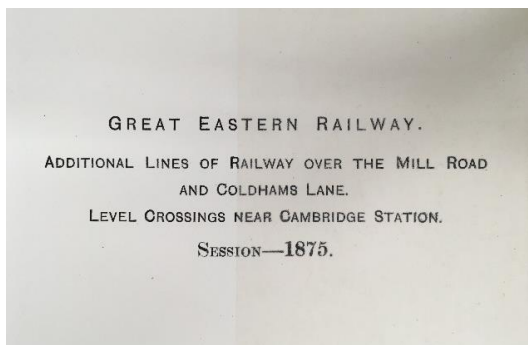


Figure 9 — Plan and detail for Mill Road (CA: A RUm 77 1875, p. 21)

A plan dated 1875 also exists in the Cambridgeshire Archives for a proposed carriage bridge over the Mill Road tracks. As we will see, this was much debated although never built, but it did follow the lines of the bridge eventually built in 1889.

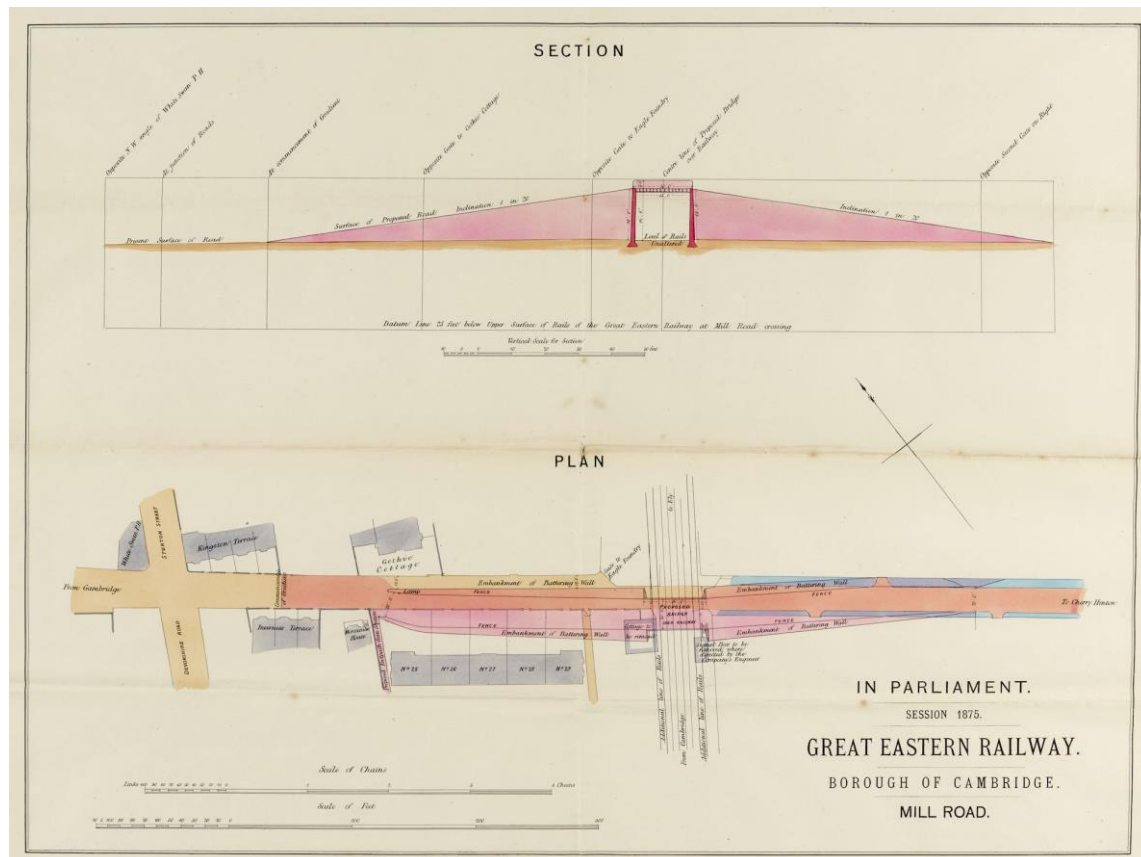


Figure 10 — Plan and section GER Proposed Bridge at Mill Road 1875
(CA: CB.12.CL.10.17.63)

The first decision to be made by the Cambridge authorities was whether or not to spend public money opposing the bill. Researchers are fortunate in that the whole issue was discussed in great detail in the newspapers, which, it should be remembered, were the only means by which any news such as this could be disseminated. Meetings were frequent and lengthy, particularly at the beginning of the year.⁷

⁷ Readers who wish to follow the discussion in detail are referred to *CIP* 23 Jan 1875, *CCh* 10 Apr 1875, *CIP* 17 Apr 1875, *CIP* 24 Apr 1875, *CCh* 8 May 1875, *CIP* 17 Jul 1875, *CIP* 4 Sep 1875 and *CCh* 11 Sep 1875.

a: Debate within Cambridge

In January 1875, the Town Council announced its proposed opposition to the bill:

The Town Council, in the interests of the ratepayers, propose to oppose such extension [of the tracks] unless due provision for the safety of the public is made by provision of a bridge [...] At Mill Road difficulties exist which would render the erection of anything more than a footbridge a condition too onerous reasonably to expect a Parliamentary Committee to grant. (CIP 23 Jan 1875)

The prospect of losing £1,000 a year in tolls 'is a very serious matter to the Commissioners[, to] whose impoverished state the condition of the roads and streets testify' (CIP 23 Jan 1875). They concluded however that total opposition to this part of the bill was very unlikely to succeed, and proposed a compromise whereby the company would pay tolls for another three years only. The purpose of this announcement is to invite all 'owners and ratepayers' to a public meeting to debate the issue.

At that public meeting in the Guildhall, held on Wednesday 27 January 1875, the attendees supported the Town Council in its resolution to petition the House of Commons (via the Board of Trade) to oppose the Bill.

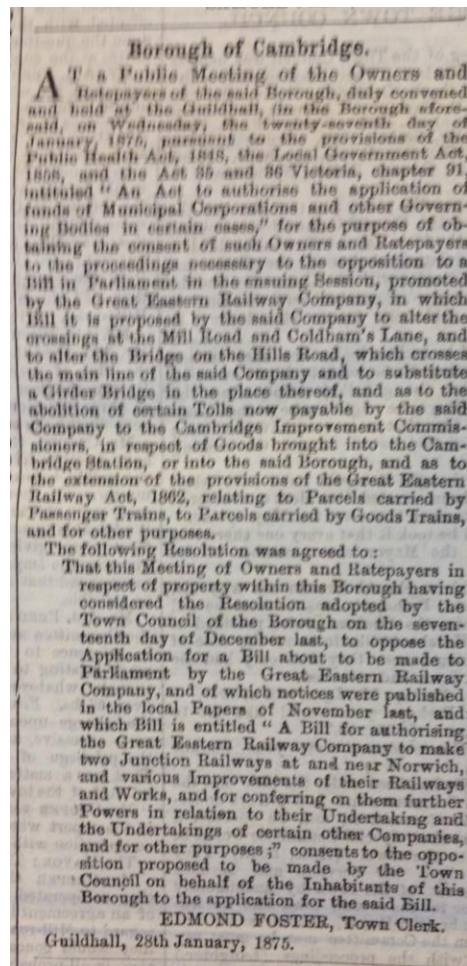


Figure 11 — Resolution to Petition (CCh 30 Jan 1875)

The County Archives hold the handwritten draft of this petition, drawn up by F. Barlow, Clerk on 12 February 1875.

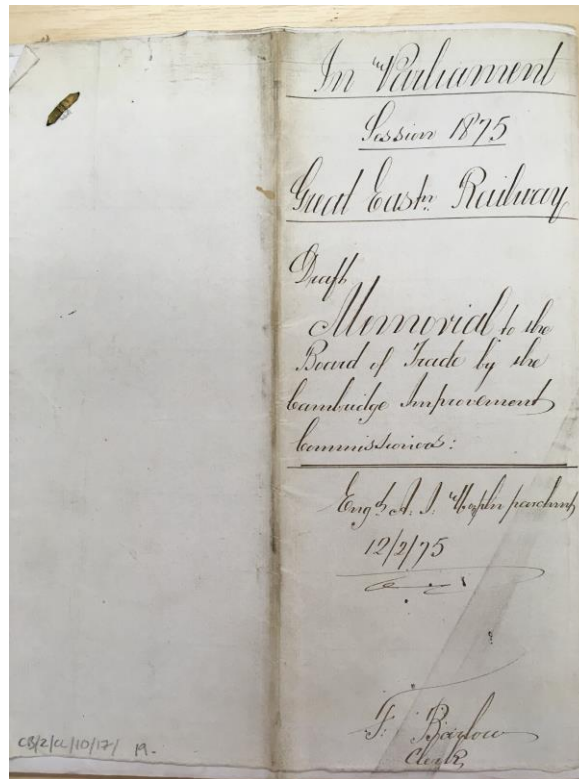


Figure 12 — Petition of 12 Feb 1875 (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17)

A paragraph on p. 4 of this document reads:

The traffic passing along Mill Road and Coldham Lane (in the bill called Coldham's Lane) is very considerable and the present level crossings which are situate within the Town of Cambridge are at present a source of great inconvenience and danger to the Passengers passing along that road and Lane and particularly so with reference to Mill Road which is an important thoroughfare in consequence of the laying out of new Streets opening into such Road and the erection of some hundreds of new houses in the neighbourhood. The proposal therefore to lay down two additional lines of Railway across such thoroughfares will be attended with still greater inconvenience and danger. The additional lines will also prove a serious inconvenience in the draining and sewerage of that part of the town. (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17)

In a document filed with the above, a table drawn up by Mr Barlow characterizes both Coldham's Lane and Mill Road as 'metalled and fenced'. The nature of their traffic is described as 'Farming, Coprolite, Coal, Gravel and general Cart traffic'. The table records that there are 'At Coldham's Lane from 80-90 Carts per day beside foot passengers. At Mill Road less Cart traffic but a large number of foot passengers pass every hour'. He clearly uses this table to summarise his findings, as recorded below.

1875

Table of Carriage Roads proposed to be crossed on the Level by two Additional Lines of Rails by the Great Eastern Railway Plans.

Number of Road as Represented Here	Parish, Township	Character of Road, whether metalled or unmetalled, paved or unpaved	Nature of the Traffic passing along each Road	Approximate amount of Traffic passing along each Road daily, and on market days	To state here the nature of the Objections anticipated, if any, to the proposed Level Crossings by the Additional Lines of Rails.
Level crossings					
2 St. Andrew the Less		Both metalled and fenced	Tanning, bogholts, coal, gravel and general cart traffic. At Mill Road a large foot traffic.	At Colburn's lane from 80 to 90 carts per day, besides foot passengers. At Mill Road less cart traffic, but a large number of foot passengers pass every hour.	The great danger and inconvenience which will be caused thereby to the inhabitants of the Town generally, and of the numerous populated localities in particular.
7	do				

Dated the tenth day of February 1875-

Frederic Barlow

Signature of Clerk to the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners.

Figure 13 — Table of Carriage Roads (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17/23)

Before the next meeting of the Improvement Commissioners in April, considerable work was undertaken by the town officials, in that traffic surveys were carried out at Coldham's Lane and at the Mill Road crossing. The Mill Road crossing survey, a remarkable document, is preserved in the County Archives:

Mill Road Crossing

Traffic commencing Feb 1st 1875

	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	TOTAL	REMARKS	
Foot	80	80	60	30	20	60	50	70	100	120	80	870	On this day the passengers were reported in great numbers at the ferry crossing over to the road bank on the following day the actual number each side will be given	
Carts	5	6	6	2	2	3	3	1	3			39		
Horses												4		
Cows					16	16						32	Between the hours of 3 and 4 a number of persons had had in the morning months that they would be much increased, and the traffic in summer is very much greater than now	
Feb 2nd	55	45	40	50	50	40	60	100	100	80		744	For a month or two the number of passengers will be more than doubled.	
Carts	3	4	3	2	3	4	3	2	3			35		
Horses	3	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1			13		
Cows					17	17						34		
Feb 3rd	40	8	26	24	50	27	55	25	70	100	100	668		
Carts	4	2	4	4	2	4	3	4	5	3		40	3	
Horses	1	2	5	3	1	2	4					18		
Cows					30							30		
Feb 4th	61	18	35	67	51	35	93	108	64	65	100	844		
Carts	2	2	3	5	5	5	3	3	3	1	1	36	4	
Horses			1			2			1			4		
Cows					16	1	16					33		
Feb 5th	49	30	50	39	41	52	105	70	75	110	100	866		
Carts	2	1	5	4	10	4	3	5	4			38	5	
Horses	1						2	5	8			18		
Cows					17	17						34		
Feb 6th	89	90	102	47	21	12	13	36	45	46	67	52	1105	
Carts	3	9	12	3	9	8	3	3	2				52	
Horses	3		1	1	3								8	
Cows					17	17							34	
Feb 7th	44	10	102	112	121	12	23	34	45	56			814	
Carts	4	5	6	17	53	106	105	153	35				34	
Cows				17	17								34	

Board passengers were the worst for drink on Saturday one woman falling over the miller in that state

On Saturday there were 59 Thainthampt the Thainthampt consists of an engine and tender crossing the road twice each hour with some coal at Thainthampt.

Figure 14 — Mill Road crossing survey (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17/27)

The survey ran from 1 to 6 February, with results recorded every hour from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. with the exception of Saturday 6 February, when the survey continued until 11.30 p.m. The following table summarises the results from the 'total' column:

	Feb 1	Feb 2	Feb 3	Feb 4	Feb 5	Feb 6 (Sat)	Feb 7
Foot Passengers	870	744	668	844	866	1105	814
Carts (horse and man)	39	33	40	36	38	52	
Horses	4	13	16	16	8	8	
Cows	32	34	30	30	34	34	34

The 'remarks' on the right-hand side of the document make fascinating reading, giving an insight into daily life in the 1870s:

On this day (Monday) the passengers (pedestrians) were registered in tens, any part of ten being carried over to the next hour and so the following days. The actual number each hour will be given.

Between the hours of 2 and 4 a number of Perambulators passed. In the summer months this traffic would be much increased, indeed the general traffic in summer is very much greater than now.

In a month or two the number of cows passing will be more than doubled.

Several passengers were the worse for drink on Saturday, one woman falling over across the metals in that road.

On Saturday, there were 59 Train Shuntings. The Shunting constitutes an engine and tender crossing the road twice each shunt with sometimes several trucks attached thereto. (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17/27)

The two surveys were summarised by Frederick Barlow (Clerk) on 10 February and presumably placed before the Improvement Commissioners. His note reads:

Two headings of interest:

Character of road: (Mill Road and Coldham Lane) Both metalled and fenced.

Nature of traffic:

Farming, Coprolite, Coal, Gravel and general cart traffic. At Mill Road a large Foot Traffic.

Nature of Objections Entertained if any to Proposed level crossings by two additional lines of rails:

The great danger and inconvenience which will be caused thereby to the inhabitants of the Town generally and of numerous populated locality in particular. (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17/23)

It is likely that Mill Road was metalled only in Petersfield, just as far as the crossing.

Also of interest is a very fragile document, CA: CB/2/CL/10/17/18, dated 10 February 1875, which is a petition to the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the Borough of Cambridge. In measured terms the petitioners state that:

We beg to submit that the Town is rapidly increasing in this direction [towards Cherry Hinton] [and] that a road is laid out connecting Mill Road with the Cherry Hinton Road near Coldhamgate and in a few years time this will in all probability become one of the most populous districts within the Borough. [...] We therefore respectfully ask that you will exert your influences to secure the construction of a Bridge or Tunnel of sufficient width to permit both foot-passengers and carriages to cross with safety at all times.

Signatories, about fifty in number, include R Jebb, fellow of Trinity College, public orator and owner of Petersfield House, a Town Councillor, a Gentleman, as well as several merchants, builders, two milkmen and a cow keeper.

At this stage, on 19 March 1875, a letter was received by Frederick Barlow, Clerk to the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners from W Shaw of the Great Eastern Railway company. In it the company makes several propositions to attempt to forestall the expenses of litigation:

With reference to the two points embraced in the petition of the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners against the Bill and with a desire on the part of the Directors to avoid unnecessary litigation and expense and to deal with the case fairly I am instructed to make the following proposition for the consideration of the Commissioners –

As to the crossing over roads — the Company will be prepared to insert a provision in the Bill that before laying down any additional line or lines of rail across Mill Road they will erect a footbridge over that road [...] (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17 29)

In the same letter, the company proposed to build a road bridge at Coldham's Lane, and in lieu of tolls proposed: 'The Company will pay down to the Commissioners a sum of cash bearing the same proportion to the amount of the mortgage debt (taken at £5100) secured on the tolls as the annual payment heretofore made by the Company (£1000)' (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17 29).

The irony of the letter is that the situation it outlines is almost exactly that in which the Commissioners found themselves after the following months of debate and litigation.

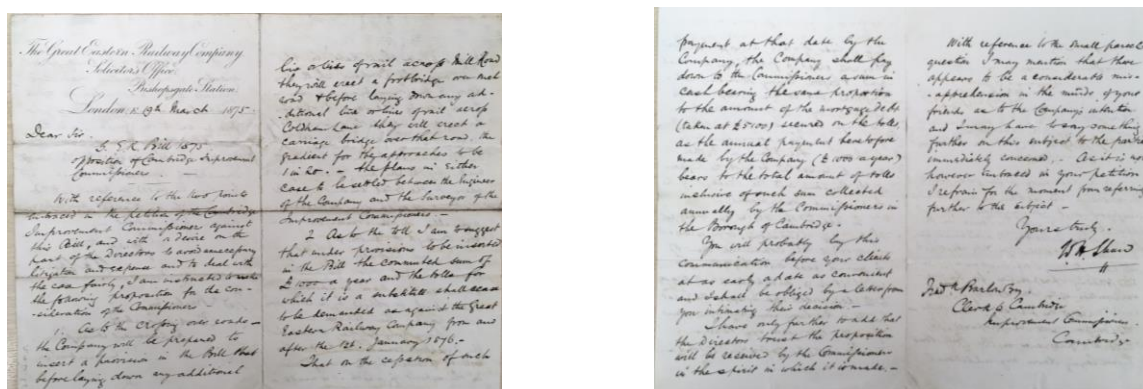


Figure 15 — Letter from GER to Cambridge Improvement Commissioners, 19 March 1875
(CA: CB/2/CL/10/17 29)

The bill was to be heard in the Houses of Parliament on 14 and 15 April, with a subsequent session on 29 April. A preparatory meeting was held in the Guildhall of the Improvement Commissioners on Tuesday 6 April. Its focus was Mill Road and whether the Commissioners should petition for a road bridge (known at the time as a 'carriage bridge') or a footbridge. The meeting is reported in full in the *Cambridge Chronicle* of Saturday 10 April 1875 (p. 6). It is useful to understand some matters in advance. At the heart of the debate is the status of Mill Road in Romsey where building and business development was still in its infancy. Unlike the road in what we now called Petersfield, which was maintained at least in part by the town authorities, the road beyond the level crossing was in contemporary parlance an 'occupied' or 'accommodation' road; there were some houses and businesses, but not in such density that the Improvement Commissioners were prepared to take on its maintenance. The burden of that fell on the residents or, importantly, those who owned building plots there.

Such a one was Henry J Wetenhall, who owned land in Romsey, all of which he planned to develop as housing. His position, and that of several others, was that a road bridge should be built to cater for what he foresaw would be the ever-increasing road traffic wanting to pass between Romsey and the town centre. He believed the cost should be borne by the railway company or the Improvement Commissioners, and foresaw a time

when the Romsey section of Mill Road would be taken over as a public road. Opposed to this view was Alderman Jasper Lyon, owner of Gothic Cottage, a house just on the Petersfield side of the railway tracks (now 119 Mill Road, a language school). His position was that a road bridge was unnecessary; it would cause great disruption to residents in Petersfield, and it would be wrong for the Commissioners to spend public money on something which would profit unfairly the individual developers of Romsey.

Alderman Peed was elected Chair. The meeting began with the Clerk reading a letter from Mr. Wetenhall dated 3 April, which included a 'resolution passed at a meeting of the memorialists last evening'. In present-day parlance we would probably speak of petitioners and a petition. The resolution, which was 'moved by Mr J. Smith and seconded by Mr J. G. Leonard', reads:

That this meeting of owners and occupiers in the vicinity of Mill Road requests that the Improvement Commissioners, in their opposition before the Committee of the House of Commons to the Great Eastern bill in Parliament, will strenuously oppose on behalf of the inhabitants of Cambridge generally, and of this neighbourhood in particular, the proposal by the Company to lay additional lines of rail at the crossing at Mill Road without suitable provision for the safety of the public by means of a carriage bridge or otherwise on account of the great additional inconvenience and danger to which the public will be exposed by such additional level crossings in this large and rapidly increasing locality.

A spirited discussion followed, with Alderman Lyon claiming that 'many gentlemen living in Mill Road' had been excluded from Mr Wetenhall's meeting and the resolution did not 'represent the feelings of the persons residing in Mill Road and he begged to present a memorial setting forth their opinions.'

Alderman Lyon's memorial stated that a carriage bridge (which today would be called a road bridge) was unnecessary and 'a great many people would be inconvenienced thereby.' He thought it a waste of public money 'since the road only led to a private road to Cherry Hinton.' The newspaper reports cries of 'No No' at this point. Lyon again asserted that:

it was most unjust and unfair for the Commissioners to spend public money to compel the Company to erect a carriage bridge and put a few hundred pounds into the pockets of a few individuals. There were a great many people who went to Cherry Hinton but it was for pleasure not for business, and a footbridge would serve their purposes. He did not consider [Mr Wetenhall's resolution] 'genuine'.

A Mr Basham spoke in favour of a carriage bridge:

The extent of the traffic was one great reason why there should be a bridge larger than a footbridge there. Half a dozen engines might be shunted at the same time and sometimes people would have to wait until all these trains were out of the way. He had frequently had to wait 15 or 20 minutes. Sometimes 20 or 30 people would be collected at the gate while the shunting was going on and some of them would go dodging among the trucks to the danger of life and limb.

Nothing daunted, Mr Lyon responded that he had 'lived twenty years in the vicinity of Mill Road and had never yet saw Mr Basham waiting to get over the crossing (Laughter).' Furthermore, returning to the resolution, he believed that the memorial formerly presented was 'not genuine in as much as some gentlemen whose names were upon it

said they had never signed the document at all'. Mr Basham's response reveals something of the class distinctions latent in the debate (and in the relationship between Petersfield and Romsey): 'Mr Basham said that the memorial and the meeting of which Mr Lyon complained were got up by Mr Wetenhall whose character and guarantee for the authenticity of the signatures stood as high as Mr Lyon's or that of any gentlemen present.'

Having established, in the face of more opposition from Alderman Lyon, that the Borough Surveyor was satisfied that it would be feasible to build a carriage bridge over the Mill Road tracks, the Chairman asked:

whether it was the desire of the Commissioners to instruct the Clerk to press for a carriage bridge or a footbridge. The directors [of the railway company] at first were prepared to give bridges at Mill Road and Coldham's Lane but in consequence of the dispute as to the £1000 tolls, they had thrown that up and now the Commissioners would have to fight them for two bridges. He begged to move that the Clerk be instructed to press for a carriage bridge at Mill Road.

The motion was carried (*CCh* 10 April 1875).

b: Debate in Parliament

The minutes of the Debate can be found in the County Archives (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17 51-55) and are reported in the newspapers in the following two weeks (*CCh* 17 April 1875 and *CIP* 24 April 1875).

From the beginning the company announces its willingness to build a footbridge at Mill Road and a carriage way at Coldham's Lane provided agreement is reached about cessation of tolls. Much of the debate pertains to this question of the tolls and the way in which the revenue of the town would be affected if they were rescinded, and much repeats the arguments from the debate about a footbridge or carriage bridge that have been outlined above. This report will highlight only those details that are most illuminating or interesting to the present-day reader:

From the debate on 14 April:

- Mr Cooper, barrister and member of Board of Improvement Commissioners, says in evidence that he knows for a fact that the Improvement Commissioners do not repair Mill Road beyond the railway: 'No cart or carriage could get along the latter part of Mill Road. The last time witness had been there he saw a rut nearly 3 feet long'.
- Mr John Death, Mayor of Cambridge, is reported as saying that 'whilst Mill Road was unquestioningly increasing [...] he still did not think the traffic would ever materially increase more than at present because the road "leads to nowhere as the saying is; it is only a footpath". Witness would not like to take his carriage down there; there was no reason for that, the road leads nowhere'.

- Mr Apthorpe, former Commissioner and Alderman, is reported as taking a different view: 'As to Mill Road he thought a road bridge would be best there as he believed before long houses would be built on Cherryhinton fields'.

From the debate on 15 April:

- Mr Basham claimed 'Mill Road is an important thoroughfare. I know that there is a project there to build on the old Rifle Butts.⁸ I have been continually stopped by the shunting of the trains. It is a favourite walk for undergraduates and also for nursemaids [Laughter]'. Questioned as to whether 'they would have perambulators with them? — Undoubtedly — A footbridge would hardly assist them much? — No'.
- Mr Wetenhall was asked about the houses being built on the Romsey side of the Bridge: 'There are no people who live on this side who keep carriages, are there?' — 'The gentleman on whom I called last evening had a carriage' — 'What is the probable rateable value of these houses that are being built here?' — 'They are houses for artisans' — 'They are not likely to keep their carriages?' — 'They are not likely to keep carriages in the sense of a carriage but they would very likely have carts come to their houses'.

At a later stage he also states that: 'On land such as mine which retires from the main road there would be houses of that kind [for working people] but the main road is a very favourite and pleasant road. Villa residences would undoubtedly be built on the main road. My friend Mr Smith proposes building such houses on his land. He told me so last night.'

The debate concluded with something of a compromise. The company would be allowed to widen the track, and would pay compensation for the cessation of tolls. With regard to the Mill Road crossing the Chairman decreed:

We are of the opinion that the Company should undertake to erect at Mill Road a footbridge but if within two months from the passing of this bill, the Improvement Commissioners will undertake to pay half the cost of a road bridge then the order of the Committee is for a road bridge. (*CIP* 24 April 1875)

⁸ The present-day Ross Street.

296

29th April, 1875.

APPENDIX (A).
Land Chutings approved of by Report of Officer of Board of Trade.

Number of Bridge	No. of Piers	Span	Remarks of Board
1	1	10 feet	Public
2	2	10 feet	Public
3	3	10 feet	Public
4	4	10 feet	Public
5	5	10 feet	Public
6	6	10 feet	Public
7	7	10 feet	Public
8	8	10 feet	Public
9	9	10 feet	Public
10	10	10 feet	Public
11	11	10 feet	Public
12	12	10 feet	Public
13	13	10 feet	Public
14	14	10 feet	Public
15	15	10 feet	Public
16	16	10 feet	Public
17	17	10 feet	Public
18	18	10 feet	Public
19	19	10 feet	Public
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96	96	10 feet	Public
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98	98	10 feet	Public
99	99	10 feet	Public
100	100	10 feet	Public

APPENDIX (B).
Land Chutings not approved of by Report of Officer of Board of Trade.

Number of Bridge	No. of Piers	Span	Remarks of Board
1	1	10 feet	Public
2	2	10 feet	Public
3	3	10 feet	Public
4	4	10 feet	Public
5	5	10 feet	Public
6	6	10 feet	Public
7	7	10 feet	Public
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99	99	10 feet	Public
100	100	10 feet	Public

Figure 16 — Minutes of Parliamentary session: conclusion
(CA: CB/2/C/10/17/53)

Some wrangling continued the following week, with the company wanting to take the cost of the bridge out of the compensation money they would be required to pay. At the final hearing of 29 April the Chairman stuck to his final ruling but later correspondence seems to suggest that the company's proposal was accepted.

c: After the Parliamentary Hearing

Alderman Lyon and Mr Wetenhall continued to air their various points with some acrimony in letters to the newspapers (*CIP* 1 May 1875, *CCh* 15 May 1875), but the next important development is to be found in correspondence between W H Shaw of the Great Eastern Railway company and G. Stephenson, Cambridge Town Surveyor.

Shaw's letter of the 3 August 1875 states:

The Company's act of Session 1875 received the Royal assent on the 19th July last.

I send you copy and desire to call your attention to the 9th clause and to remind you of the two months after the passing of that act within which any desire of the Improvement Commissioners for a carriage bridge over Mill Road is to be expressed.

I am instructed to inform you that if the Commissioners desire to enter into the matter, Mr Langely the Company Engineer will be instructed to meet their Surveyor for considering the plans and agreeing a cost of the bridge to be deducted from the £5100.

I am further instructed to mention that we refer to this now in order to meet the views of the town and it being reasonable that we should know as soon as possible before entering upon the expense of a footbridge. —

Yours truly

WH Shaw (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17/56)

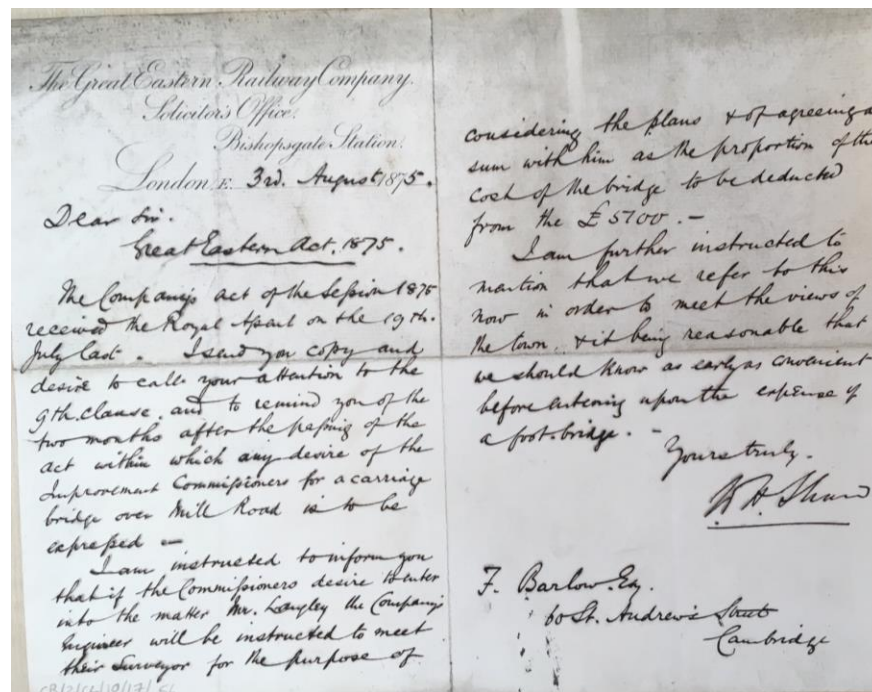


Figure 17 — Letter of 3 Aug 1875 (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17/56)

The meeting between Langley and Stephenson was clearly unsatisfactory with, it appears, the company insisting that it would be their engineers who would build the bridge, with no cost divulged until after the build was complete. Stephenson, it would seem, was concerned that under this arrangement, the town would find itself with no compensation money from the cessation of the tolls, as he wrote to the Improvement Commissioners on 30 August 1875:

Gentlemen

In obedience to the order of the Board dated to 10th August I beg to report that I had an interview with Mr Langley the Engineer to Great Eastern Company with reference to a proposed carriage bridge over the Railway where it crosses the Mill Road.

After discussing the matter in detail, I have to report that the result of our interview was far from satisfactory as the discrepancies between his views and mine respecting the cost of the proposed Bridge are so great that there appears but little probability of our agreeing upon this subject. The Company engineer is not disposed to fix any sum as the total cost of the Bridge in question but if executed the works are to be carried out by the Company's engineer and the cost ascertained after the Bridge is completed.

I have consulted with Mr R. R. Rowe and he is of the opinion that £1500 (the amount stated by me before the Committee at the House of Commons) is a close approximation to the probable cost of constructing an ordinary carriage bridge but if the Bridge in question is to be constructed for traction engines to pass over I am of the opinion that it might add about £700 to the amount stated[;] this of course is without taking into consideration claims for compensation.

Surveyor's Office,
Town Hall
Cambridge
August 30th 1875

To the Cambridge Improvement
Commissioners
Mill road Bridge

Gentlemen

In obedience to the order of the Board dated the 10th of August I beg to report that I had an interview with Mr. Langley the Engineer to Great Eastern Railway Company with reference to a proposed carriage bridge over the Railway where it crosses the Mill road.

After discussing the matter in detail I have to report that the result of our interview was far from satisfactory as the discrepancies between his views and mine respecting the cost of the proposed bridge are so great that there appears but little probability of our agreeing upon this subject. The Company's Engineer is not disposed to fix any sum as the total cost of the bridge in question but if, excepted the works are to be carried out under the Company's Engineer and the cost ascertained after the bridge is completed.

I have consulted with Mr. H. H. Howe and he is of opinion that £1500 (the amount stated by me before the Committee at the House of

Commons) is a close approximation to the probable cost of constructing an ordinary carriage bridge but if the bridge in question is to be constructed for traction engine engines to pass over it, it might add about £700 to the amount stated. This of course is without taking into consideration claims for compensation.

Should the Board decide the carriage bridge should be erected I respectfully suggest that the Surveyor should be instructed to obtain assistance and prepare the necessary plans and working drawings so that estimates may be obtained from persons willing to undertake the execution of this work.

Yours obedient servant
J. W. Stephenson
Town Surveyor

Figures 18 — Letter of 30 Aug 1875 (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17/57/1)

The Improvement Commissioners met soon afterwards on 7 September 1875. The meeting was reported in the *Cambridge Chronicle* of 11 September and Mr Stephenson's letter was laid before the Commissioners with a recommendation for a carriage bridge with £1,500 'fixed as the maximum expense of the same.' The Chairman further stated that 'the Commissioners must give notice to the railway company by September 19th whether they wanted a carriage bridge or not.' The familiar arguments were rehearsed with Alderman Lyon again stating that he had never been seriously inconvenienced by the level crossing, that traffic to and from Cherry Hinton could be sent by Coldham's Lane, and that public money should not be spent to 'improve the property of persons with property on the other side of the bridge'. He was supported by Mr Rowe, who believed 'it was very unwise to spend £1500 or £2000 on a bridge which was not necessary to the public. If the Board could spare that amount of money they should spend it on laying down a system of drainage for Sturton Town which very much required it'.

Dr Fawcett argued for a carriage bridge on grounds of public safety. He said:

He advocated the building of a carriage bridge, not with a view of trespassing on the rates, but because it was really a matter of life and death. There were many accidents at level crossings and a level crossing near the station as this was, with many people continually crossing it would be especially dangerous.

Mr Lilley, as Chairman, also spoke eloquently with a very clear eye to the future:

He hoped their successors would not 20 years hence call the present Board blockheads for not securing a carriage bridge. He would not be surprised though they did, because Cambridge was extending itself especially in areas where freehold land was to be got. [...] He was not looking to a carriage bridge for the benefit of a few individuals but of the future of the town generally [...] Was it not our duty to secure a carriage bridge in the interest of the town.

An amendment was proposed 'That the erection of a carriage bridge at the crossing at Mill Road is unnecessary'. This was passed 14 to 5, and the report concluded: 'The proposal for a carriage bridge at that crossing therefore, falls to the ground' (CCh 11 Aug 1875). — Time, and this report, will show that Dr Fawcett and Mr Lilley were both right in their predictions.

A letter dated 8 September again from Mr W H Shaw of the Great Eastern Railway to J Neville, Clerk to the Improvement Commissioners, confirms the contents of a letter received the day before. The letter reads:

Dear Sir

Great Eastern Act 1875
Mill Road Crossing

I beg leave to acknowledge receipt of your letter of yesterday's date in which you inform me that your Board have decided that a carriage bridge at Mill Road Crossing is unnecessary.

Yours truly
W. H. Shaw

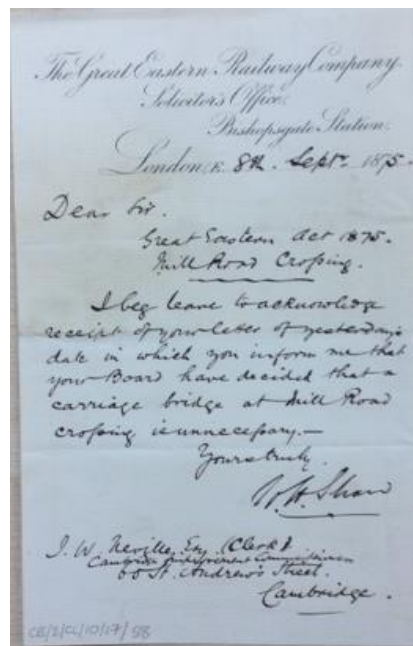


Figure 19 — Letter of 8 Sep 1875 (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17/58)

Though not directly relating to the building of a Mill Road bridge, further correspondence between Mr Neville and Mr Shaw in July 1876 shows that more than a year after the parliamentary hearing, matters between the Great Eastern Railway and the

Improvement Commissioners were still not settled as the two parties still debated the precise amount of mortgage debt the railway held.

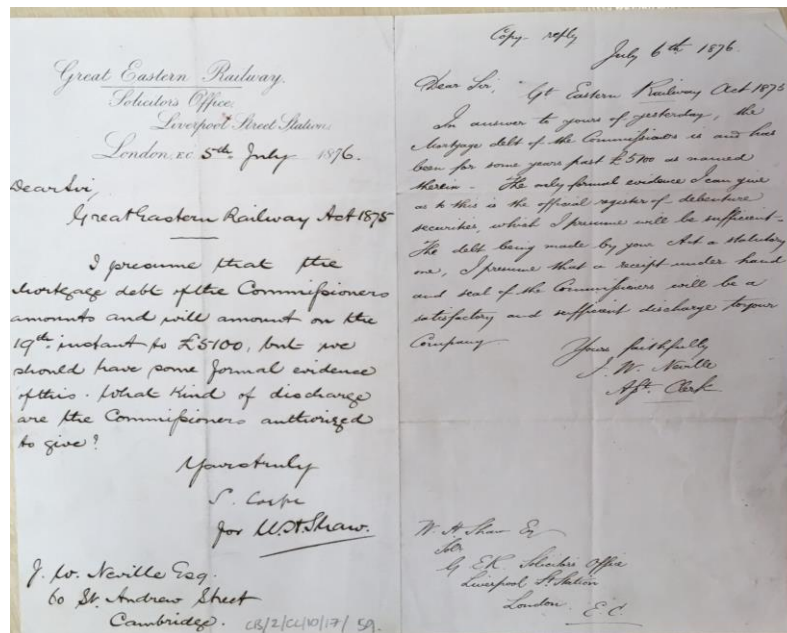


Figure 20 — Letter of 8 July 1876 (CA: CB.2.CL.10.17.59 1876)

d: The Farrant Case

As reported fully in the *Cambridge Independent Press* on 1 September 1877, on Saturday 25 August, at about 7.30 in the evening, Mrs Elizabeth Farrant, a laundress from Cherry Hinton, was walking home from Cambridge with her husband James, a labourer, as according to his evidence, she had been doing for fourteen years. Despite his calling to her not to go as a train was coming, she started to cross the level crossing with a perambulator, presumably full of washing.

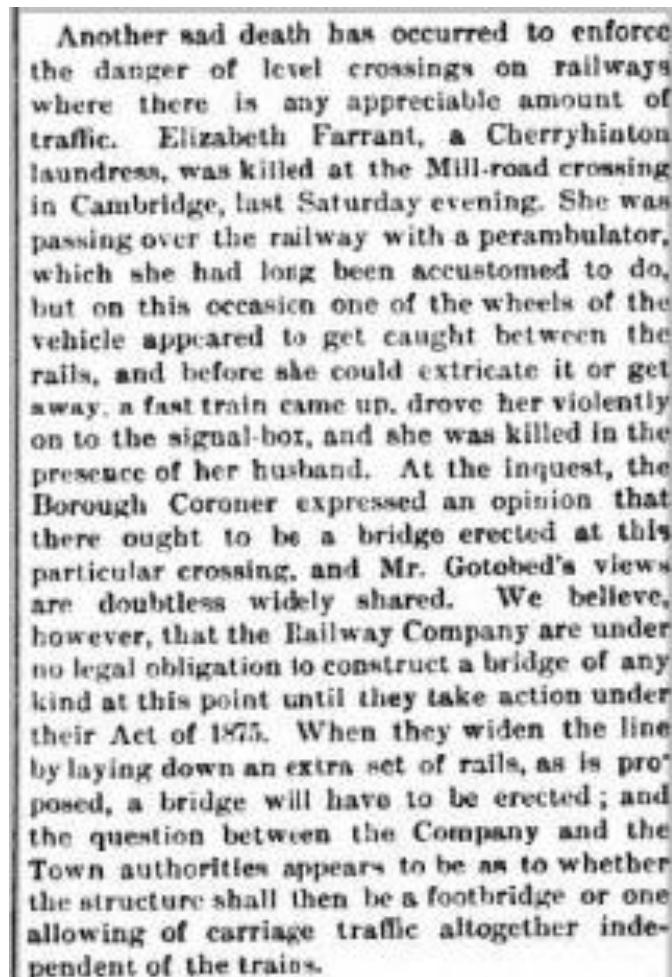
The front wheel of the perambulator got in between the metals and she could not get it out. Witness [James Farrant] called 'Throw yourself off, let the perambulator go.' The train then came up and he saw no more. As soon as the train was past he ran across the line and found his wife lying against the signal box, quite dead. The signal man, Charles Bewley explained 'There were no instructions to fasten the gates at every train. It is left to our discretion'.

The engine driver, Thomas Hornett, said:

He saw the woman on the line when he was about forty or fifty yards from the Mill Road Crossing [...] The whistle was open when he first saw her; they generally whistle just inside the auxiliary which is about 800 yards from the signal box. We whistle for level crossings. [...] In answer to the Coroner, Mr Sprout, District Superintendent, said that 'Nothing was settled about a bridge; it was entirely a matter which rested upon the Company and the Improvement Commissioners'. (CIP 1 Sep 1877)

The report of the same incident in the *Cambridge Chronicle* of the same date makes it clear that the Coroner stated that a bridge should be built. Comments from the editor

make it clear that the lines had not yet been widened as was proposed in the 1875 Act; he considered the question of a road or foot bridge to be still open.



Another sad death has occurred to enforce the danger of level crossings on railways where there is any appreciable amount of traffic. Elizabeth Farrant, a Cherryhinton laundress, was killed at the Mill-road crossing in Cambridge, last Saturday evening. She was passing over the railway with a perambulator, which she had long been accustomed to do, but on this occasion one of the wheels of the vehicle appeared to get caught between the rails, and before she could extricate it or get away, a fast train came up, drove her violently on to the signal-box, and she was killed in the presence of her husband. At the inquest, the Borough Coroner expressed an opinion that there ought to be a bridge erected at this particular crossing, and Mr. Gotobed's views are doubtless widely shared. We believe, however, that the Railway Company are under no legal obligation to construct a bridge of any kind at this point until they take action under their Act of 1875. When they widen the line by laying down an extra set of rails, as is proposed, a bridge will have to be erected; and the question between the Company and the Town authorities appears to be as to whether the structure shall then be a footbridge or one allowing of carriage traffic altogether independent of the trains.

Figure 21 — Farrant report (CCh 1 Sep 1877)

An indignant letter to the Editor of the *Cambridge Independent Press* the following Saturday protests that a footbridge would not be suitable: 'besides in the late melancholy case how many perambulators are pushed across every day and for the most part laden with something more precious than dirty linen'.

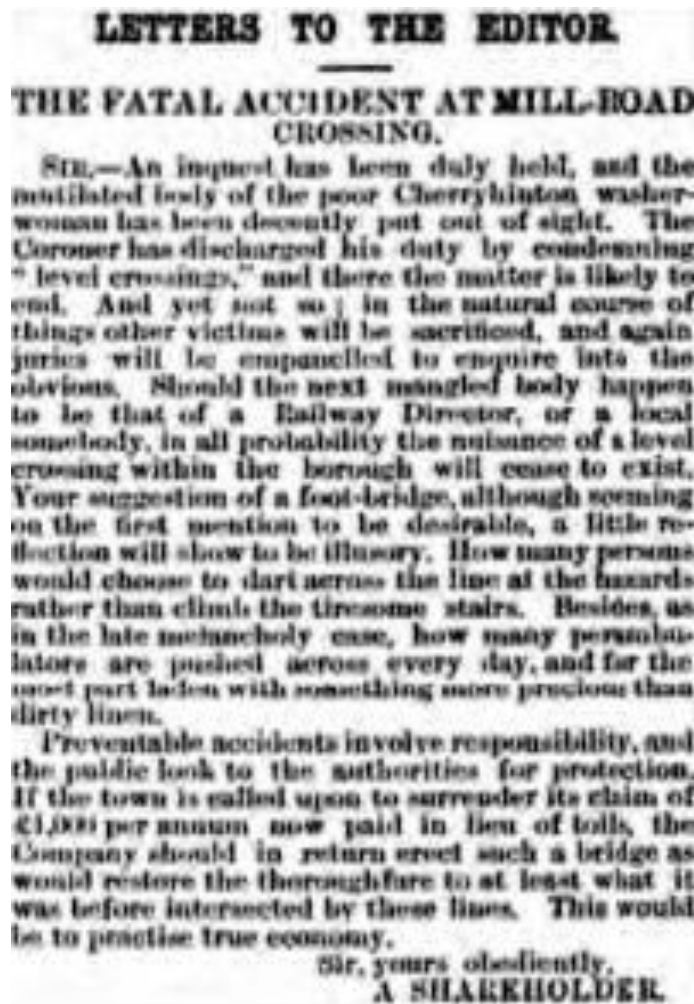


Figure 22 — Letter to Editor (*CIP* 8 Sep 1877)

It was to be hoped that this sad case would galvanise the authorities, but there is no evidence of its having done so. Indeed, there seems at present to be no evidence of when the footbridge was actually built. The *Cambridge Independent Press* of 3 April 1880 reports a speech from a Mr J Burbage at the Easter Vestries which clearly indicates the footbridge was in place by that date but had, perhaps, only recently been erected.

Mr J Burbage wished to make a few observations in which he complained that the Great Eastern Railway had not been compelled to erect a carriage bridge at Mill Road and speaking with some contempt about the footbridge which has been erected. He also charged them with stopping his watercourse and said the Commissioners did not study his benefit. (*CIP* 3 Apr 1880)

The footbridge is first mentioned in *Spalding's Cambridge Street Directory* of 1884, which states clearly 'Great Eastern Railway Crossing and Foot Passengers' bridge', and again in 1887, 'Pillar box and Foot-bridge'.

4: WHAT WAS THE FOOTBRIDGE LIKE?

The footbridge, and the aforementioned pillar box (letter box), are clearly shown on the O/S 1888 map which is itself a re-edition of the 1886 version:



Figure 23 — Railway and footbridge (CA: OS/XLVII/3/21/1888)

The footbridge is on the north side of Mill Road with what appear to be steep steps on either side; a halting place is shown midway on each. Another cartographic image of the footpath is to be found in the GER's plans to divert Mill Road in 1887 (see chapter 4):

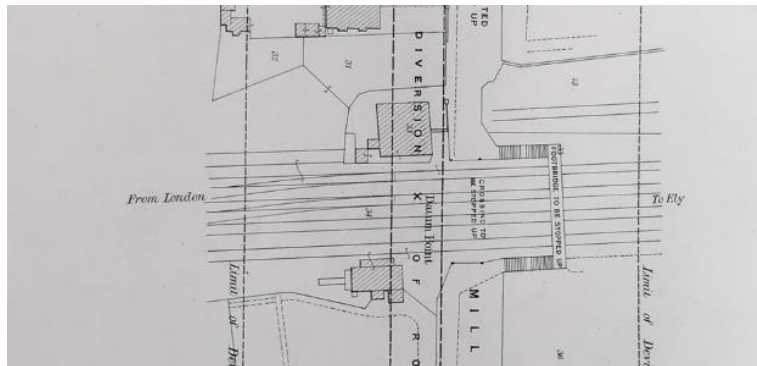


Figure 24 — Plan showing footbridge (1887) (CA: Qu RUM/111/1887)

In *The Railways: Nation, Network and People*, Simon Bradley comments on the unfamiliar height of railway footbridges:

These structures are so familiar that it is easy to forget how outlandish the type must once have seemed. Outside railway territory, any pedestrian using a bridge would expect to share it with road vehicles. These required a crossing on the level, or by an arched rise that was made as shallow as possible. Bridges carrying railways or canals needed decks that were more level still. There were also the little humped bridges on the canals, but these did not rise very high. Now the railways introduced passengers to another new kind of spatial experience, a parallel to the dislocating sense of having to climb the stairs at a station in order to travel on an elevated

line, or the still weirder descent below ground level to take the underground trains of the new Metropolitan Railway.⁹

In a section 'From the News 1935', the *Cambridge News* of 2 February 2010 quotes two letters. In the first, William Nelson is confused about dates because, as we shall see, 1889 was the date of the opening of the road bridge not the footbridge, however his recollection of, presumably, the old level crossing gate keys is worth recording. The letter of 'HDC' provides a vivid picture of the footbridge in its setting:

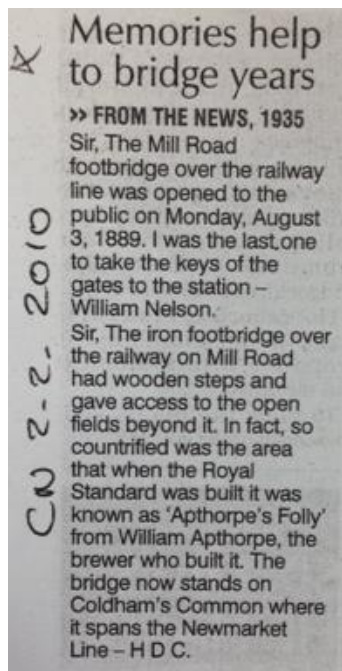


Figure 25 — Two letters (CN 2 Feb 2010)

HDC's letter perpetuates a myth that the footbridge was moved to Coldham's Common and remains there to this day.



⁹ Bradley (2015), p. 449.



Figures 26 — Footbridge at Coldham's Common
(photo: Mary Naylor, 2015)

This is a persistent rumour, but Tony Kirby, local railway historian, writes:

I've also heard the story about the footbridge being recycled, but am dubious about it. The bridges on Coldham's Common and Stourbridge Common aren't wide enough (although they could of course have been reduced in length) and the Coldham's Common one looks like a standard GER structure of the 1890s; so, from memory, was the Stourbridge Common one before it was demolished.¹⁰

Despite the rumour, there is in fact no way that the Coldham's Common bridge could be the old footbridge over Mill Road; the latter, according to all the cartographic evidence (see Figures 23, 24, 31, 32 and 39), had its steps at a 90-degree angle to the main structure whereas that at Coldham's Common had its steps aligned with the arch of the bridge itself.

Another ultimate destination for the Mill Road footbridge is propounded by John Durrant.¹¹ While mainly discussing the road bridge, he says:

The footbridge was re-erected across the Cambridge–King's Lynn line on Stourbridge Common until electrification made it unsuitable. Thereafter British rail donated it to the North Norfolk Railway at Holt.

No evidence has come to light of the footbridge having been transferred to Holt, nor is there any sign of such a footbridge there.

¹⁰ Email to Caro Wilson, 29 Oct 2015.

¹¹ Durrant (2002), p. 57.

5. THE FIRST ROAD BRIDGE, 1889

a: Background and Preliminary Negotiations

During the decade following the installation of the footbridge, development increased greatly along Mill Road, with new streets and buildings appearing on both sides of the bridge, and with, as a result, a great increase in traffic of all kinds. Though some pedestrians would have been able to use the footbridge, anyone with a handcart or a larger wheeled vehicle would have been unable to do so, nor would anyone on horse-back or with livestock to drive to or from market. For all these, the level crossing gate across the road must have been a source of continual frustration.

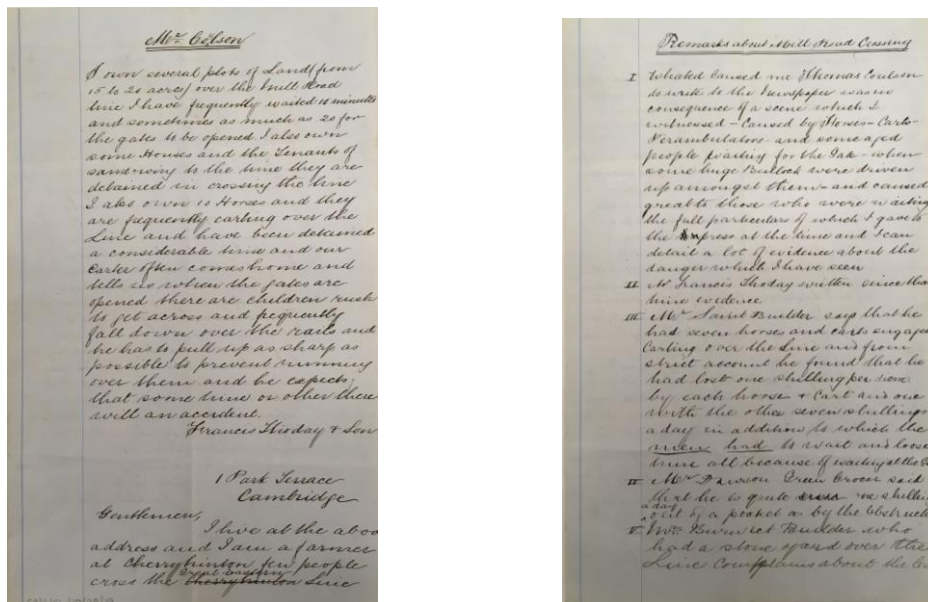


Figure 27 — 'Remarks about Mill Road Crossing' (CA: CB/2/CB/10/29/19), pp. 1–5

We gain an impression of this frustration from an undated document classified by the Archives as 'Notes as to the inconvenience of Mill Road level crossing', submitted by local inhabitants, probably to the Borough Parliamentary Committee and Improvement Commissioners in preparation for the Parliamentary Committee, where the 1887 Railway Bill would be debated.¹² The document (see Figure 27) records testimony from some ten people over five pages. It seems likely 'Mr Coulson' compiled the various testimonies.

¹² The so called Parliamentary Committee seems to have been made up of selected Borough Councilors who usually, but not always, met with the Improvement Commissioners. This does not seem to have been a standing committee, but one formed when a matter such as a Railway Bill was to be submitted to Parliament; their remit was to prepare the Council's case, by collecting evidence, gathering witness statements, etc. See p. 13, above, which explains the procedure whereby changes proposed by railway companies were decided in Parliamentary Committee. When the Borough Parliamentary Committee or Improvement Commissioners wished to send a note of their response to the railway proposals this was called a 'petition'. It was addressed to the House of Commons via the Board of Trade, with copies sent to the relevant railway company. As well as stating the Council's position, it was also at times an invitation to negotiate.

For its vivid detail, and the glimpse that it gives us into life on Mill Road in the 1880s, the document is worth quoting in full:

Mr Coulson

I own several plots of land from 15–20 acres over the Mill Road line. I have frequently waited 10 minutes, and sometimes as much as 20 for the gates to be opened. I also own some Houses and the tenants of same owing[?] to the line they are detained in crossing the line. I also own 10 horses and they are frequently carting over the line and have been detained a considerable time and our carter often comes home and tells us when the gates are opened there are children rush to get across and frequently fall down over the rails and he has to pull up sharp as possible to prevent running over them and he expects that some time or other there will an accident.

Francis Thoday and son.

1 Park Terrace
Cambridge

Gentlemen,

I live at the above address and I am a farmer at Cherry Hinton few people cross the Great Eastern line more frequently (Mill Road) than I do. The Blocks of traffic is most wretched. I scarcely ever go up that way without witnessing vehicles each side of the gate waiting to go through and the language is shameful. I own property on the Cherry Hinton side of your line. I had a house having a stable which stood empty for a year from the simple reason of improbability over your line in any reasonable time. My agent who had the letting of my house told me he could let the house to any cabman or Fly keeper if it were not for the nuisance of your gate. I have seen the cart with infected linen kept waiting a long time[.] I heard him say on one occasion he had been kept waiting there 20 minutes when he had wherewithal in his cart to give anyone Small pox or Scarlet fever[.]

I am

Yours &c.

Joseph Sturton.

Remarks about Mill Road Crossing

I. What caused me Thomas Coulson to write to the Newspaper was in consequence of a scene which I witnessed caused by Horses, Carts, Perambulators and some aged people waiting for the gate, when some huge Bullock were driven up amongst them and caused great [blank] to those who were waiting the full particulars of which I gave to the press at the time and I can detail a lot of evidence about the dangers I have seen.

II. Mr Francis Thoday [has] written since that time evidence.

III. Mr Saint, Builder[,] says that he had seven horses and carts engaged carting over the line and from strict account he found that he had lost one shilling per diem by each horse and cart and one with the other seven shillings a day in addition to which the men had to wait and lose hire, all because of waiting at the Gate.

IV. Mr Dawson, Green Grocer, said that he is quite one shilling a day out of pocket by the Obstruction.

V. Mr Burwick, Builder[,] who had a store yard over the line complains about the loss which he has to put up with in consequence of the crossing.

VI. Mr Dent, Whitesmith and co of King Street[,] complains [he has] lost [not only] money but work which he had undertaken in consequence of time lost at the gate.

VII. Mr Joseph Sturton, Gentleman, detailed some wonderful escapes during the last winter. [?] directed the Gates are opened the drivers from both sides make a rush to get across to the great danger of all who happened to be there. Mr Sturton could add to this.

VIII. Mr Negus detailed the wretched state of the wooden bridge quite spoiling the Ladies Dresses and at night it is quite a scandal through those who hang about the Bridge and it does not in any way meet the requirements of the District as there is now nearly two thousand who have to cross over the Structure or wait until the gate is open.

IX. Last Friday 27 February when the watchers were on, one or two respectable townsmen called upon me and reported that they had never seen the Gate opened as promptly before[.] An engine or train had scarcely got clear when the gates were opened and all those persons who had business over the Line remarked to each other[. W]hy could they not open the gates upon ordinary days as punctual[?]

X. A gentleman connected with Press can give evidence from particular time the gate has been closed as he had noted the same by a stop watch used specially to take time by (Hill at Express.)

XI. Mr Denson builder will give evidence of losses which he has sustained in waiting.

XII. It is not desirous to obtain more evidence made known and there are scores of tradesmen and others who would come upon oath.

XIII. I think the man who drives the Iron[?] cart with infectious articles could give evidence of the danger that the public are subjected upon the contents of his cart stopping beside the crossing.

XIV. Working men carrying goods[,] persons in ill health[,] women with children[,] aged persons and cripples all complain.

A present-day reader can only wonder why the dirty laundry from the Hospital for Infectious Diseases was being driven down Mill Road rather than being laundered *in situ*, and marvel at the thought of those hanging about the footbridge worrying about the state of the 'Ladies Dresses'.

The authorities were well aware of the problem and, unlike those in the 1870s, needed no convincing that a road bridge was necessary. Indeed, when in 1885 the Great Eastern Railway Company submitted plans to widen the track at Hills Road, they saw an opportunity to address the matter. The plans did not include changes at Mill Road, but at a joint meeting of the Parliamentary Committee of the Corporation and the Improvement Commissioners held at the Guildhall on 16 February 1885 (a meeting attended by Mr W Frances, Solicitor to the Great Eastern Railway Company):

it was resolved that negotiations be opened with the G R Ry Coy [Great Eastern Railway Company] for the purpose of procuring the widening of the Ry. Bridge on the Hills Road, and the erection of a Bridge on the Mill Road on the basis of a contribution towards the expense from the Corporation and the Improvement Commissioners. (CA: CB/2/CL/10/29/5)

The authorities would have been reassured by a report received on 23 February 1885 from Bowyer and Smith Surveyors.

According to instructions we have surveyed the sites in Hills Road and Mill Road [...]:

The present footbridge is altogether inadequate to the growing requirements of Romsey Town and the construction of a proper Carriage Bridge is deemed an absolute necessity and we are of the opinion there is very little difficulty likely to arise in carrying out the work if the Company will appropriate a certain portion of their land in front of the Cottages occupied by their servants on the South Western side of the road and remove the present Gare Lodge and rearrange the signal box on the opposite side; this plan would allow for a roadway 12ft wide being left between the retaining wall of the embankment and the boundary wall or fence of the premises occupied by Mr Alderman Lyon and Mr J Headley respectively. The approach of the proposed bridge would commence at or near the entrance of the present footway leading to the Railway Station by the side of Morcombe House and continue as shown on the red lines of the accompanying plan [*not found in the Archives*]. (CA: CB/2/CL/10/29/33)

We should note that this is in fact the way the bridge was ultimately built.

The proposal was later warmly welcomed by Richard Reynolds Rowe, with whose position we can sympathise, whilst remembering that he had opposed a road bridge in 1875 on grounds that the money would have been better spent elsewhere:

[Mr Rowe] dwelt upon the necessity for a bridge over the Mill Road, considering that if the question of a bridge there was deferred it would be interfering with the people who had property in Romsey town. He did not see why the Board [of Improvement Commissioners] should keep putting people off from year to year now there was an opportunity of getting the bridge erected which everybody admitted was very much wanted. If it had been earlier it could have been done much more easily and at very much less expense than it could now because the approach to the bridge had been increased and the engineering difficulties were increased. (CCh 1 May 1885)

Things did not however proceed at all smoothly, and the researcher is faced with two boxes of material in the Cambridgeshire Archives (CB/2/CL/10/29/1-47) all pertaining to 'The Great Eastern Railway (General Powers) bills, 1885–1893 containing minutes of committees, copies of petitions, opinions of counsels, briefs to support the petitioners' case and supporting papers, and minutes of proceedings and evidence presented to the parliamentary select committee'.

The main issue was, of course, money and who should pay for a bridge. We shall revisit this later. In the meantime, it is worth recording that CB/2/CL/10/29/34 is a copy of correspondence between the Town Clerk, Edmond Foster, and Fred Fearn, Solicitor to the GER. The tone of the letters is friendly and the researcher sometimes feels the two men, left alone together, could have sorted the issue out. Mr Fearn is anxious that there should be no petition made against the bill and proposes in February that:

The Company undertake the construction of a road bridge within a reasonable time after obtaining Parliamentary Powers for the purpose upon the terms contained in the Great Eastern Railway Act of 1875 *provided that the Corporation and Improvement Commissioners will in addition pay to the Company the extra expenses occasioned to them by reason of the Improvement Commissioners failing to exercise the powers conferred upon them by the above Act* (CA: CB/2/CL/10/29/34, p. 2).

The clause in italics is important, since it appears to mean that the cost of any necessary purchase of land or compensation should fall upon the town authorities not upon the railway.

Mr Foster's reply, whilst being careful not to go beyond his powers, does indicate that the Corporation 'entre nous will be anxious to avoid the cost of a petition'.

In April Mr Foster states:

The clause in former Act of 1875 does not include in the opinion of the Committee the cost of land or compensation but it is proposed that such clause should be revised.

[Mr Fearn replies:] I must take the instructions of my directors as to the reservation you make with reference to the cost of the land. It is the Company's intention that the cost of the land should be included in the cost of the bridge and that your bodies should pay half of its entire cost and I do not think it would be well to leave this indefinite.

In the event the Commissioners and Corporation did decide to draw up a petition. It seems likely that it is to this that Mr Foster's letter of 23 April refers: 'Herewith you have copy last report of Parliamentary Committee as to this bill. It will go before the Improvement Commissioners on Tuesday next. I confess I hardly understand the Committee's take up on this matter but this is entre nous.'

Mr Fearn replies the day after 'Much surprised at Resolution of Parliamentary Committee as to Mill Road wire me at once [...]' We must remember that from the Company's perspective the really important matter is to get agreement about the Hills Road bridge and that is his main concern. A petition is drawn up and sealed on 3 March 1885:

House of Commons Session 1885

The humble petition of the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners under their common seal

Section 8

Within the borough of Cambridge and not far from the proposed crossing at Hills Road the Company's Railway is carried across Mill Road on the level, and in consequence of the great increase within the last few years of houses in the neighbourhood this level crossing is now a source of great danger to the public.

Section 9

By the Companies Act of 1875, power was, for a limited time, reserved to your petitioners to construct a bridge with proper approaches for carrying Mill Road over the Railway, but at that time, there was not, in the opinion of your Petitioners, sufficient ground for compelling the Company to execute such work. The time has now arrived however when such a bridge is a matter of public necessity and your Petitioners accordingly ask that the power reserved by section 9 of the Great Eastern Railway Act 1875 may be received. (CA: CB/2/CI/10/29/7)

However, this petition was subsequently withdrawn, perhaps at the urging of officials, perhaps remembering the words of the Master of Magdalene College at a meeting of the Improvement Commissioners reported in the *Cambridge Chronicle* of 1 May 1885, who urged that it was 'desirable to approach the Company in a friendly spirit'.

The record of correspondence ceases in October 1885 with a suggestion that the whole issue of Mill Road be deferred to a future Parliamentary session.

b: Preparations for Parliamentary Hearing

In April 1886 a survey of traffic in Mill Road was commissioned, giving another glimpse of life on Mill Road. This survey (CA: CB/2/CL/10/29/31) refers to three ex-policemen, Arnold Thompson, Thomas Muncey and William Maltby. In the handwritten records (CA: CB/2/CL/10/29/14) they call themselves 'watchers' and detail their shifts. The three men were on duty from Monday 12 to Saturday 17 April 1886. There may be some documents missing. We know that Muncey recorded a shift from 5.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m., and Arnold Thompson from 11.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m., but there is also a document headed by all three names times from 5.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. Large folded sheets record their 'watchings and observations'.

Figure 28 — Report of 'watching and observations' (CA: CB/2/CL/10/29/14)

The same headings were used at each shift:

Column 1	No. of engines passing the crossing and returning on the main line without shunting
Column 2	No. of engines passing the crossing and shunting on the Ely side
Column 3	No. of engines and trains up and down passing the crossing
Column 4	No. of engines obstructing the crossing
Column 5	No. of vehicles crossing the Line and time of delay (if any)
Column 6	No. of persons crossing by the Bridge
Column 7	No. of persons crossing by the metals

If we compare the Survey of 1875 – some eleven years earlier (see previous chapter) – we notice it is no longer necessary to have separate categories for horses, cows or even carts and horses (though the ‘vehicles’ of 1886 would of course have been horse-drawn) – Mill Road has changed considerably.

Reading these surveys, we should do well to remember the document looked at earlier in this chapter (CA: CB/2/CL/10/29/19), which questioned the validity of the results, claiming that the gate keeper, knowing he was being watched, was working with more speed than was customary (see paragraph IX on p. 37 above).

I shall record here, together with the totals, the results from the compiled sheet for Monday 12 and Friday 16 1886:

Category	12 April	16 April	Totals for week
No. of engines passing the crossing and returning on the main line without shunting	7	8	38
No. of engines passing the crossing and shunting on the Ely side	40	35	215
No. of engines and trains up and down passing the crossing	90	94	575
No of engines obstructing the crossing	33	31	181
No. of vehicles crossing the Line and time of delay (if any)	312 (avge delay noted about 5 or 10 mins)	314 (avge delay noted about 5 or 10 mins)	1,925
No. of persons crossing by the Bridge	1,595	1,403	8,898
No of persons crossing by the metals	3,217	2,510	1,5997

The watchers’ record the times of delay meticulously:

1 from 7.25 a.m. to 7.30 a.m.

1 from 7.55 a.m. to 7.59 a.m.

4 from 10.18 a.m. to 10.22 a.m.

Given some of the comments from residents, which we have already noted, these delays, though frequent (fourteen instances recorded on Friday, eighteen on Saturday) are for surprisingly short periods given how long it would actually take the gatekeeper to work the gates.

The high number of people crossing ‘by the metals’ (over the level crossing) is striking; taken together with the high number of vehicles crossing the line, the case for a road bridge seems to be clear.

Also in the bundle is a small note from a Thomas Lonsdale to C W Palmer (Clerk to the Improvement Commissioners) about the population of the Mill Road area:

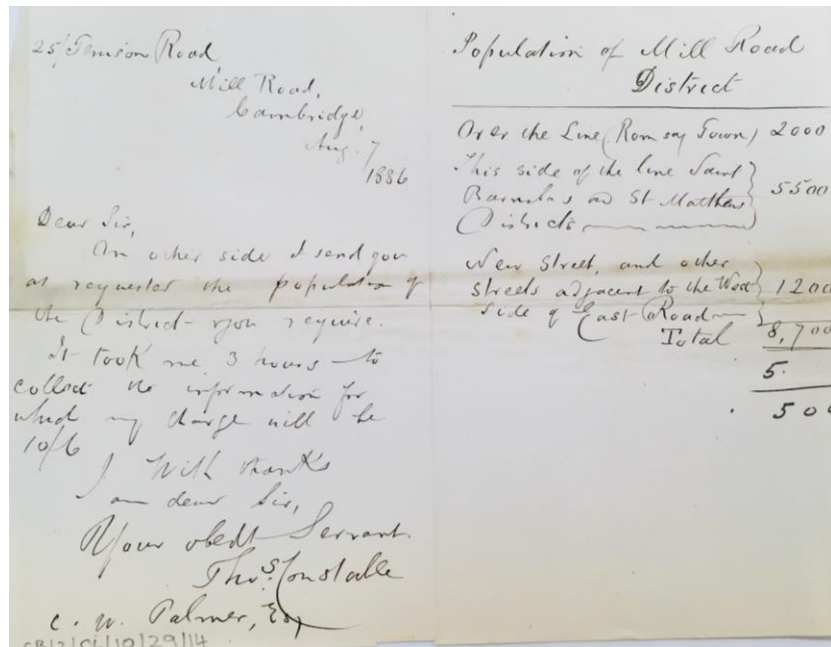


Figure 29 — Notes by Thomas Lonsdale (CA: CB/2/CI/10/29/14)

[Side 1]

25/ Tenison Road, / Mill Road, / Cambridge, / Aug. 7 1886

Dear Sir,

On the other side I send you as requested the population of the District you require.

It took me 3 hours to collect the information for which my charge will be 10/6.

With thanks, I am dear Sir,

Your obdt Servant

Thos Lonsdale

[to] C. W. Palmer, Esq

[Side 2]

Population of Mill Road District

Over the Line (Romsey Town)	2,000
This side of the line Saint Barnabas and St Matthew Districts	5,500
New Street and other side streets adjacent to the West Side of East Road	1,200
Total	<u>8,700</u>
	<u>5</u>
	500

It is not clear to what the final numbers refer; nor does Mr Lonsdale give any evidence as to the methods he used to collate the figures. (If these seem rather low, perhaps it was only the householders, not all residents, who were counted.) It is possible that Mr Palmer, the Town Clerk, wanted to know about the population in order to assess the possible rates revenue from the area.

The debate shifted a gear when on 4 November 1886 a letter was received from the railway company which stated that they 'intended to apply to Parliament for power to construct a bridge at or near Mill Road Crossing, the estimated cost of which would be £17,000', and asking if the Corporation would on their part contribute £5,000 towards the same. Members of the Committee asked for further details. On 31 December 1886, the stance hardened once more with it being agreed that the Directors be:

asked to meet the Local Authority with the view of discussing the whole of the clauses of their bill which appear to be objectionable. That a memorandum in writing be prepared by the Town Clerk to the Commissioners setting out in detail:

1. The History of the negotiations between the Company and the Commissioners
2. The objections to the proposals contained in the Bill and the deposited plans
3. The objections of the Local authorities to contributing to the costs of the Bridge.¹³

c: 1887 Railway Plans with Proposed Diversion

The Great Eastern Railway's 1887 plans were indeed lodged with Parliament and sent to the Improvement Commissioners. A pencilled note on the cover reads 'Deposited November 30 1886'.



Figure 30 — 1887 plans: frontispiece (CA: QRoom 111 1887)

The text in the accompanying 'Book of References Plans: delivered for the undertaking November 1886' reads:

¹³ CA: CB/2/CL/10/29/5, described as draft minutes of a meeting of the joint Parliamentary Committee of the Corporation and the Improvement Commissioners. Discussions included widening the bridge over the railway on Hills Road and the construction of a railway over the crossing at Mill Road. They are handwritten and record meetings and correspondence from February 1885 to January 1887.

Session 1887 Section 10

A diversion in the Parish of St Andrew the Less otherwise Barnwell now crossing the Company's Cambridge and Ely main line of railway on the said road 6 chains west of the existing crossing and to terminate at or near the said road 6 chains east of the said level crossing and upon the completion and opening to the public of such diversion all public and other rights of way or other rights over or affecting the said Railway at the point at which Mill Road now crosses the same on the level shall by this Act be extinguished and the Company may thereupon stop up such level crossing.

Upon completion of the diversion hereinbefore described [...] the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners and the mayor and aldermen and burgesses of the borough of Cambridge shall jointly and severally be liable to pay [...] £5000 or such less sum as shall be equal to one third of the cost of completing such diversion, such cost to include the cost of any land to be acquired [...] from and after the expiration of two years from the completion of such diversion and the approaches thereto the roadways of the same shall be repaired and maintained by and at the expense of the said commissioners and the bridge and arches of the same shall from the date of completion be repaired and maintained by the expense of the Company. (Book of References CA: QRun 111)

Page 9 appears to show the situation in 1887 with the footbridge and Railway Cottages clearly visible:

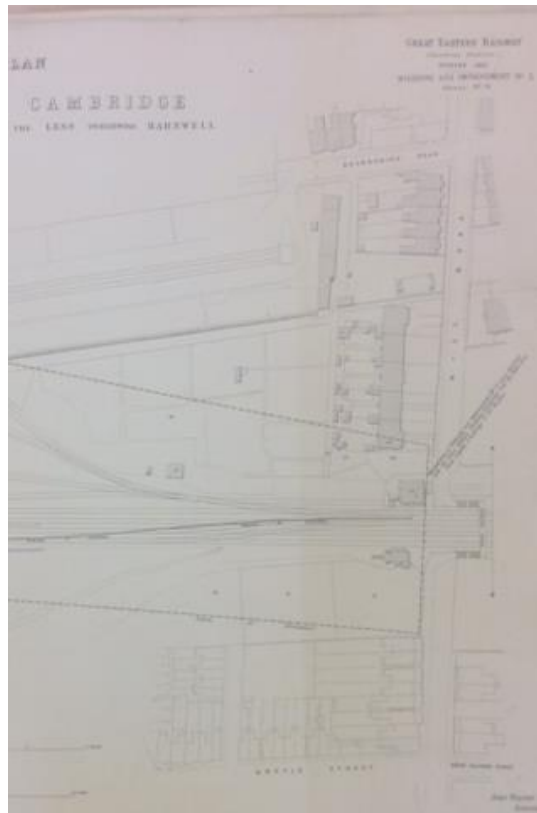


Figure 31 — Plan showing footbridge (CA: QU Rum 111 1887 detail)

The map in Figure 32 shows the surprising proposal to divert the road:

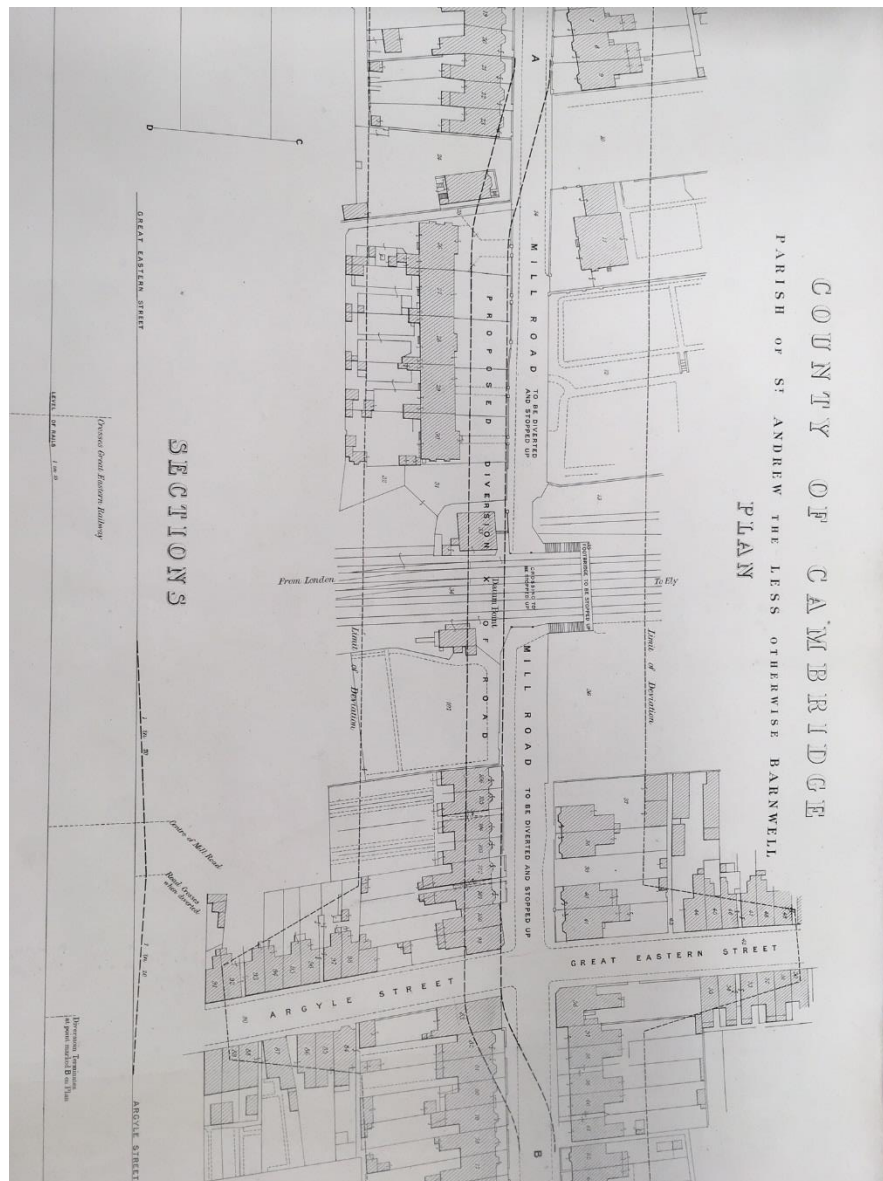


Figure 32 — Plan showing proposed diversion (CA: QU Rum 111 1887 detail)

Mill Road is shown swerving to the south just past Devonshire Road, cutting across, or maybe rising over, the garden of Morcombe House (the then Station Master's dwelling) and the front gardens of Railway Cottages. It crosses the track and then completely overwhelms Measham Terrace before swerving north again to join the existing roadway after Argyle Street, which is marked 'to be raised'. Mill Road is marked to be 'diverted and stopped up' and the crossing and footbridge 'to be stopped up'.

Lines labelled 'Limits of Deviation' can also be seen to the north and south of the road. This technical term is still in use by railway engineers: 'The limits of deviation for the surface sections of the route are a function of the extent of the proposed works and associated property boundaries, based on the design developed to the stage necessary for

preparation of the Bill [...] with allowances for contingencies, working space and similar factors'.¹⁴

The 'Book of References' lists all the properties enclosed by the marked limits of deviation. A hundred and seven properties are affected, which is testament to how much development there had been since 1877. Only about fifteen of these were already owned by the railway company. It is never entirely clear whether the Great Eastern Railway did propose to add two additional lines of track at this stage.

Further correspondence between Mr Palmer (Town Clerk) and Mr Fearn exists. On 4 March 1887, Mr Palmer warns: 'There will be opposition to the Bill. The Commissioners absolutely decline to accept the clause suggested by you [presumably the clause about the cost of land and compensation being included in the cost of bridge] and there is no alternative but to fight.' A certain sympathy can be felt for Mr Fearn, who allows himself to say: 'I was surprised to receive your telegram. It seems to me your clients hardly know their own minds'. In a later letter he asks 'whether you intend to put the Company to the trouble and expense which your opposition would occasion them'. (CA: CB/2/CL/10/29/35).

In the light of this, a note from J D Fitzgerald, barrister, at the bottom of a document about a matter of precedence reveals the nature of the negotiations being played out between the town and the railway company:

Both parties [Corporation and Commissioners] should lodge petitions against the bill as they will then be in a position to consider any proposals to procure the withdrawal of their opposition. I will prepare the draft petition as requested.

J. D. Fitzgerald, Lambs Buildings, Temple. Jan 12 1887. (CA: CB/2/CL/10/29/20)

It should be remembered that though this report is focussed on Mill Road, the Cambridge authorities and the GER were both as concerned with the proposed railway developments at Hills Road and Coldham's Common and the railway station. Both sides were seeking something of a package deal in which they would gain most if not all of their demands at the least possible cost to themselves. It is not possible to know how strongly they believed in their own arguments. Did the town authorities really believe they could get away with contributing nothing despite the precedent of the Act of 1875 and despite the evidence that they themselves actively sought to negotiate the building of a bridge in 1885? Certainly, a lot of parliamentary time was spent on the issue. Could the railway company really have believed that their extraordinary plan to divert the road and stop up parts of it could ever have been acceptable?

Papers in the Archives allow a full picture of the preparations the town authorities and their officials made for the case, and of the proceedings when the matter finally came to be debated in Parliament in March 1887. Readers wishing to follow the proceedings both within Cambridge and in Westminster are referred to a short summary in Appendix 1 or to County Archives CB/2/CL/10/29. Much of the proceedings is concerned with the

¹⁴ Crossrail website information, found at: https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=limits+of+deviation+crossrail&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b-ab&gfe_rd=cr&dc=0&ei=7LMIWpiuC6_38Ae8m7bQDA.

land adjacent to Mill Road owned by James Ind Hedly and his Iron Foundry and Coprolite Works, which would have been expensive for the railway company to purchase. For more information about this site, see Figure 39 and Appendix 1.

d: Decision and Aftermath

The Committee's final ruling is given in the *Cambridge Chronicle* of 25 March 1887. The relevant document appears to be missing from the Archives.

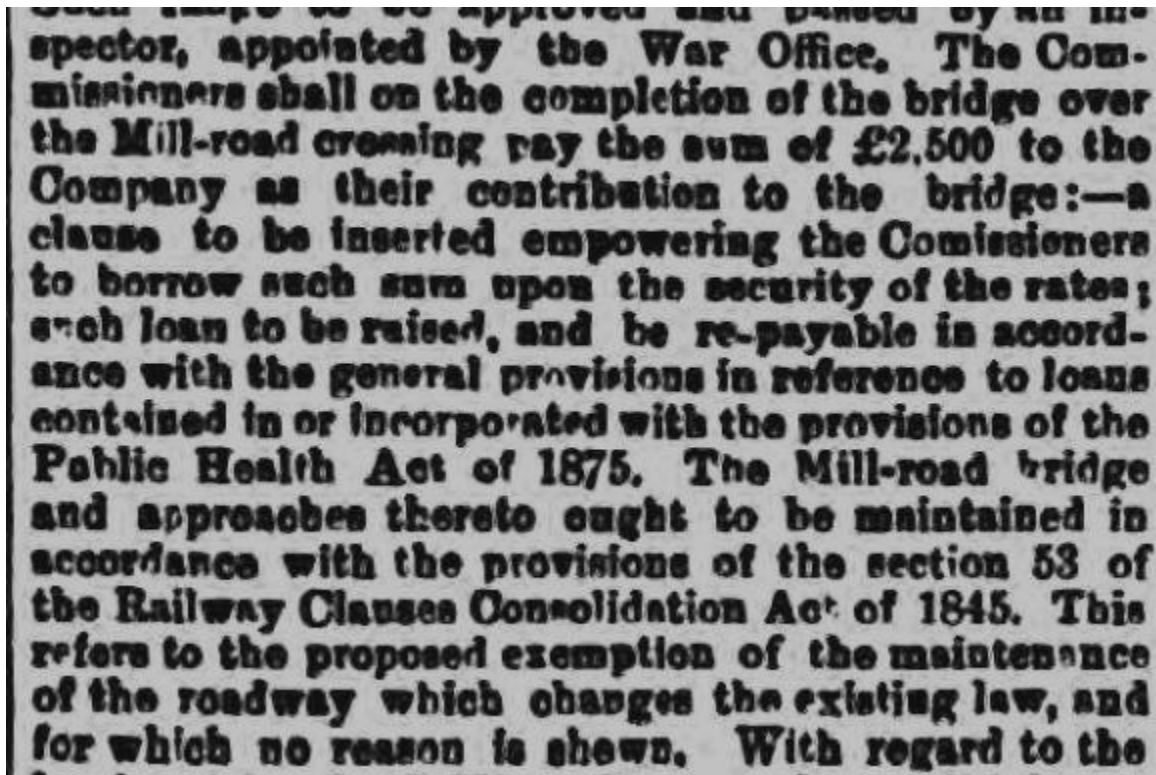


Figure 33 — Final ruling (CCh 25 Sept 1887)

The Chairman: [...] The Commissioners shall on completion of the bridge over the Mill-road crossing pay the sum of £2,500 to the Company as their contribution to the bridge:—a clause to be inserted empowering the Commissioners to borrow such sum upon the security of the rates [...]

We should note that this ruling specifies nothing about the diversion.

A folder of accounts relating to the parliamentary session exists, showing that witnesses and officials were reimbursed for railway fares, hotel or tavern expenses, and sundries. Figure 34 shows, as an example, the signed receipt from the Mayor, John Death.

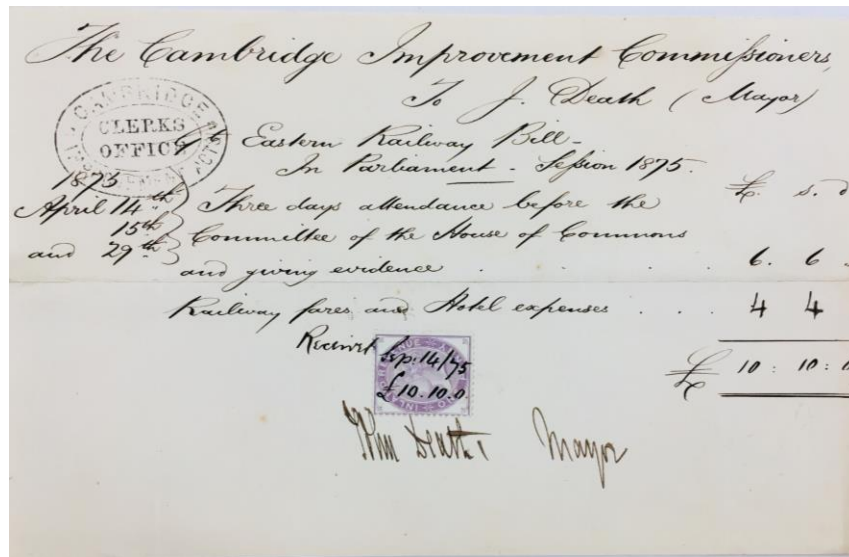


Figure 34 — Receipt for expenses (CA: CB/2/CL/10/17/64)

Back in Cambridge, this decision was not welcomed by some of the Improvement Commissioners. The *Cambridge Chronicle* of Friday 8 April 1887 reports a bad-tempered meeting of the Commissioners held in the Guildhall on Tuesday 5 April where the report of the Parliamentary hearing was received.

Mr FAWCETT proposed that the report should be received and entered on the minutes. He said he did not know that the Board could do anything else with it. Those who represented the Board before the Committee of the House of Commons had done their best and though the Board might have wished for a better result yet he did not think they had the power to do anything but to accept the result as it was.

Mr ROWE seconded the motion.

Mr GOTOBED said he did not oppose the motion but if he rightly understood the subject he would like to explain that in every single point the Board raised in their petition and which they instructed counsel to support they had been utterly beaten. The first thing they asked was that the diversion which the Company proposed to make in the road should be disallowed. It had been allowed. The second thing they objected to was a reduction of the width of the road – the narrowness of the proposed bridge. The Company were to have the road exactly as they had asked for it. The third thing they had asked for was the steepness of the gradient – one in 20 – and that gradient was granted. Another thing the Board asked was that the Company should be compelled to construct, at their own expense, a bridge to carry the road across the railway at Mill Road [...] they has been condemned to pay £2500 besides which the ratepayers were involved in he did not know what amount of costs. (*CCh* 8 April 1887)

It is hard not to agree with Mr Gotobed's conclusions here; but during the rest of the meeting, getting ever angrier and angrier, he sought to get the Board to pass a formal resolution criticising the Board's Legal Counsel for failing to carry out instructions, and insisted repeatedly that the Commissioners should contribute nothing to the cost of the bridge. His resolution failed. Of interest, though, is his assertion that, now the Great Eastern Railway are allowed to proceed: 'It was quite certain that the Company were carrying out a great scheme involving the expenditure of £180,000 and had paid £60,000 for the land [...]' (*CCh* 8 April 1887).

Whilst we cannot check Mr Gotobed's figures, we do know that the Great Eastern Railway was indeed buying land around the crossing area, and paying compensation to those who might be affected.

THE RAILWAY BRIDGE AT MILL ROAD.—We understand that the plans for the construction of the bridge across the railway at Mill Road are nearly if not quite completed, and that the occupants of several shops and houses adjoining have been invited to send in their claims for compensation for the taking of their property which will be involved in the construction of the bridge. We hear that a considerable number of claims will be made, as it is said that the Great Eastern Railway Company may avail themselves of the opportunity to lay down more metals.

Figure 35 — Compensation for property (CCh 14 Nov 1888)

One such case of a trader seeking compensation is that of Joseph Turner Bailey, owner of the *Earl of Beaconsfield* pub. A family story records:

When Mill Road Bridge was built, to replace the level crossing, in 1889 the view of the *E of B* was obscured. It is said that Joe Bailey thought this would have an adverse effect on his trade and he appealed to the railway authorities for compensation. He was offered a sum greater than he had hoped. Once again his poker face stood him in good stead and he expressed dissatisfaction with the offer. The authorities increased the offer by a considerable amount!¹⁵

Some months after the hearing in June 1887, Mr Hedley announced that The Eagle Foundry has been 'disposed of by private contract'.

THE EAGLE FOUNDRY;
ENGINEERING, COPROLITE, and PORTLAND
CEMENT WORKS,
Situate in the
MILL ROAD, CAMBRIDGE.
A DVERTISED for SALE, by AUCTION,
By JOHN SWAN & SON,
By order of the Proprietor, Mr. James Isid Headly,
HAS BEEN DISPOSED OF BY
PRIVATE CONTRACT.
THE PLANT, MACHINERY & STOCKS
Will shortly be SOLD BY AUCTION.
Further particulars will appear in future Advertisements.
Auction Office—19 Sidney Street, Cambridge.

Figure 36 — The Eagle Foundry sale (CCh 29 July 1887)

¹⁵ From a transcript made by Steve Thompson's daughter, Mary Naylor (<http://millroadcemetery.org.uk/bailey-joseph-turner/>). Steve Thompson was the nephew of Stephen (Stiv) Thompson. These are stories that he would have heard from his Uncle Stiv, who was a close friend of Joe Bailey.

It was not until 14 November 1888 that the *Cambridge Chronicle* announced that the buyer was the Great Eastern Railway Company, who planned to turn it into an extensive goods depot:

PROPOSED NEW GOODS YARD.—We understand that the Great Eastern Railway Company have purchased the premises on Mill-road, Cambridge, which formerly belonged to Mr. Headly, and that it is the intention of the Company to construct there an extensive goods depot. The benefit which will accrue to the public by the adoption of this step will be very great, as largely increased facilities will be afforded for the storage of goods, and their transit from the station to the centre of the town.

Figure 37 — The purchaser revealed (CCh 14 Nov 1888)

It is clear the GER had changed their plans but as yet no evidence has been found as to their reasons, or of the discussions that must have taken place with the Corporation and the Improvement Commissioners.

The only evidence so far found that the plan for diversion had been abandoned is to be found in the *Cambridge Chronicle* on 28 September 1888 in its report on a meeting of the Board of Guardians of the Workhouse.¹⁶ A sub-committee of its Finance Committee reported that:

they had inspected the land on Mill Road which was required by the Railway Company and they recommended that the Board should ask the Company for £170 [*illegible*] for the ground and the wall and £100 [*illegible*] as compensation for the Company's taking the land. Mr Sturton said the depth of the land required was 16ft from the street. The first 'rise' of the bridge was on the western side of that piece of land and the gradient would be 1 in 20, consequently when the eastern side was reached the slope would have risen about three feet and three or four inches. *The Bridge was not to be a diverted one, but was to be as straight as Mill Road now was.*

The last sentence is clearly the most important one.

¹⁶ The Board of Governors had since the 1850s owned a significant amount of land near the railway as its 'Industrial Training Grounds' for the more able bodied inmates. It was used principally for growing potatoes, keeping pigs and digging gravel. For further details and a map, see: http://www.capturingcambridge.org/mill-road-area/mill-road/ditchburn-place/attachment/81a_mr-1st-edn_2015-10-10/.

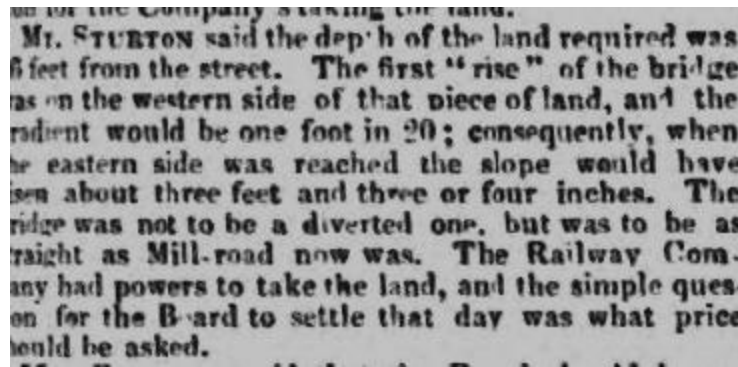


Figure 38 — The Workhouse Guardians' assessment (CCh 28 Sep 1888)

In the following discussion, during which several members kept increasing the price they thought they should charge, Mr Ward 'said he believed the Great Eastern Railway company had settled the price they were to give to the owners of such property as might be required of them on the other side of the railway *but it seemed to him the public Boards of Cambridge had thrown every possible obstacle in the way of the Company* and that the Guardians were continuing that course by asking the sum of £1500 for a small piece of land' (CCh 28 Sept 1888).

By the following month the Board had changed its mind about this sum having received clarification about the land sought and its proposed use. Since the reference here is to the design of the new bridge and to the building of the road that still (in 2018) runs in front of 119 Mill Road (formerly Gothic Cottage), past the property then of Mr Headley, and down to the railway track, the relevant passage is worth quoting in full:

The Guardians [of the Workhouse] and the Great Eastern Railway Company

The Finance Committee reported that they had discussed the price which the Great Eastern Railway Company had been asked for the piece of land on Mill Road and, it appearing to them that the sum asked for was decided upon under some misapprehension as to how the remaining land of the Board would be affected, they recommended that the Board should write to the Railway Company asking £850, being £450 for the land and £400 as compensation, in the terms of the draft letter prepared by the Clerk.

The Clerk then read the draft letter referred to which was as follows:

1. That the Company require the whole of the present frontage of the Board's land to the depth of about 18ft and that consequently the Board's frontage will be set back that distance and brought in line with the cottages adjoining.
2. That the land taken by the Company will be made into a road by the Company for the purpose of access from the Mill Road to the front part of the house occupied by Mr Lyon and continued to the property of the Company formerly Mr Headley's.
3. That such road will be upon a level with the remaining land of the Guardians and be kept in repair by the Company.
4. That the Board will have a right of way over every part of the new road to and from their old land and all along the frontage of such land.
5. That the elevation of the approach to the new bridge will commence opposite to the said new road, beginning on the level and rising to an altitude near Mr Lyon's house of between

three and four feet, and that an open fence only will be placed on the side of the approach to the bridge, next to the new road.

The Chairman said it was very evident that when it was suggested that £1500 should be asked for the land a misapprehension existed as to the use that was to be made of it. The 18 feet of ground was to be made into a road to lead to what was formerly Messrs Headley's property and that road was to pass through Mr Lyon's property. It had been thought that on the 18 feet proposed to be purchased, the land would rise immediately in front of the land left to the Guardians. But that was not to be the case. It was, now, perfectly understood that the Guardians would have the use of the road just the same as now, and the rise would begin on the high road. (CCh 28 Oct 1888)

Figure 39 shows the area in question as it was in 1886 before the road was built, with Gothic Cottage and The Limes, both labelled, and the Eagle Iron Foundry, the long block north of The Limes, all shaded pink, and their proximity to the rail track. Figure 40 shows it sixteen years later, by which time the Free Library (now Bharat Bhavan) and bridge had been built and the foundry demolished. The road in front of Gothic Cottage, turning left to the property formerly owned by Mr Headley, is clearly visible. The latter map also shows the railway tracks and bridge.



Figure 39 — Ordnance Survey map 1886 (detail)

Figure 40 — Ordnance Survey map 1901 (detail)¹⁷

Finally, on 1 August 1889, with an air of great triumph, the *Cambridge Daily News* announced, as a 'long looked-for event', the opening of the Mill Road Bridge.

¹⁷ With thanks to Simon Middleton, who digitally stitched together four sheets to form Figure 39 and two sheets to form Figure 40.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 1889.

OPENING OF THE MILL ROAD BRIDGE.

This long-looked for event took place this morning in the presence of about 200 spectators. At about half-past ten an open carriage containing Mr. C. Balls and Mr. H. T. Hall drove over the bridge towards Romsey Town, and turning back again stopped on the middle of the bridge.

Amongst the company assembled were Messrs. W. R. Bright (station master), C. W. Palmer (clerk to the Improvement Commissioners), E. W. Harry (borough surveyor), J. Wheatson, Geullond, &c.

Mr. C. BALLS, having declared the bridge open to the public for ever, briefly spoke as to the great inconvenience the people in the neighbourhood of Mill-road had endured for many years. He also mentioned a few facts with regard to the Hills-road bridge. Before long he hoped to see that bridge re-built, as it was at present in a dangerous state. He was very pleased to say that the plans for that work were placed in the office of the Commissioners that morning.

Cheers having been given for Mr. Balls, an attempt was made to return, but the horse refused to move. As the gentlemen in the carriage were in rather a dangerous position, they at last stepped out and walked to witness the opening of Tennison-road.

The bridge—the building of which was commenced at the beginning of this year—will cost about some thousands (including the purchase of property, &c). It is 300 ft. long and 30 ft. wide. The span over the railway is 81 ft., and the structure has six arches on each side. The brickwork was erected by Messrs. Holme and King, of Liverpool, under the able superintendence of Mr. Denley. Messrs. Ives and Barker, of Darlington, erected the iron work.

It is acknowledged by the Chief Engineer of the Works to be the finest overhead bridge on the G.E.R.

Figure 41 — The opening of the 1889 bridge (CDN 1 Aug 1889)

There is something rather tragi-comic about the image of the horse refusing to move from the top of the bridge, and the Chair and Clerk of the Commissioners forced to walk back to Tenison Road.

It is not until some three weeks later that the Improvement Commissioners take steps to secure:

a loan from the Prudential Assurance Company of £3300 towards the cost of the erection of the Railway Bridge on Mill Road by the Company together with the costs, charges and expenses

incurred by the Commissioners in the opposition to the Great Eastern Railway Bill (General Powers) Bill 1887 on the same terms as the £4000 required for the extension of Tenison Road.
(*CCh* 23 Aug 1889)

6. WHAT WAS THE 1889 BRIDGE LIKE?

a: The Photographic Record

In a retrospective piece in the *Cambridge Evening News* of 3 March 1984, Rodney Tibbs wrote of the 1889 bridge:

It took between six and seven months to build Mill Road bridge under the general management of Mr J. S. Winbolt, the Great Eastern Railway Company's district engineer. The bridge was 300 yards long, 30ft wide and approached up a gradient of one in 20. There were six arches on either side of the central span and although the approach roads originally had a macadam surface the bridge itself had a surface of wood.

The source for this interesting description is unknown, nor is how long it took before the top surface was metalled.

One part of the 1889 bridge is still extant at the time of writing (2018). In the photograph below, behind the woman in the white hat and scarf, between Morcombe House (now replaced by the Cambridge Housing Society flats, 124A-H Mill Road) and the houses of Inverness Terrace, can be seen a brick pier topped by a coping stone: this still remains today.



Figure 42 — Boys Brigade march on the Bridge (c.1900) (CA: RA.Boys.K0.36514)



Figure 43 — Surviving pier from 1889 bridge
(photos: Ian Bent, 2018, Caro Wilson, 2015)

It is moving, if somewhat incongruous, to see it there.

As seen in the last section, the Chief Engineer of the Works in 1889 declared the Mill Road bridge to be 'the finest overhead bridge on the Great Eastern Railway'. The following photographs do indeed show a handsome pillared rise from both Petersfield and Romsey with the rise much less steep than is the bridge of today (2018).



Figure 44 — The Bridge looking towards Romsey Town (1910) (CC: B-MILL-K1-7603)

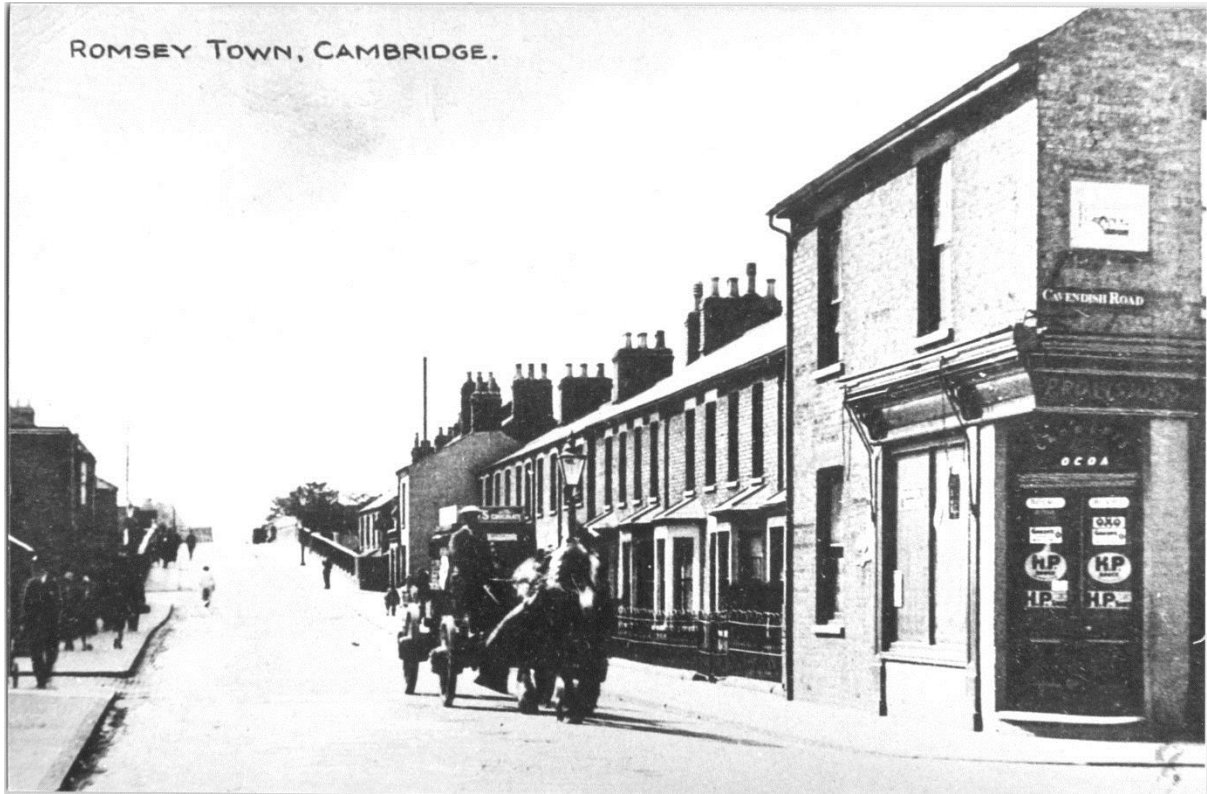


Figure 45 — The Bridge from the Romsey side (c.1900?) (CC: B-MILL-KI-7602)

In both the above photographs the horse and cart appear to be making easy progress, as does the hearse and pedestrian procession in the photograph below.



Figure 46 — Funeral Procession passing Railway Cottages on the Petersfield side
(c.1900?) (CA: VS KO 18402)

The railings are of iron set between stone pilasters, with brick piers marking the entrance to the steps down to the track and to the now demolished Measham Terrace (Figure 49) and the cottages opposite (Figure 48).



The view from Mill Road bridge looking towards town in January 1963. The library on the right (the librarian was then Sidney Cable) closed in March 1996 despite public opposition. Beyond was Arthur Webb's hairdresser, I.B. Davies' scooter repairs, W.G. Lewis' hardware store and J. Payne's shop.

Figure 47 — The Bridge looking towards Petersfield (1963)
(From Petty (1999), p. 113)



Figure 48 — Cottages NE side of bridge
(CA: X-20-332)



Figure 49 — Measham Terrace
(SO: CP-H219)

Both the above photographs are clear evidence of how much the tenants in these cottages would have been affected by the bridge.

Perhaps the photograph which shows the full range of the 1889 bridge most clearly is, ironically, one taken shortly before its demolition.



Figure 50 — The bridge from Great Eastern Street looking towards Petersfield
(photo: John Hullock: SO: 191-jh-bridge-works) (CEN 20 June 1980)

This shows the elegance of the railings and also of the design, which would allow clear views of the track and trains beneath. A photograph, also probably from 1979 or 1980, from Mill Road History Project correspondent Barry Hurst, shows the span of the railings from a different viewpoint.



Figure 51 — The 1889 bridge from Argyle Street, prior to demolition
(photo: Barry Hurst: SO: 192-bh-bridge-from-argyle-street)

We shall have cause to refer at a later stage to the green arched sheds beneath the bridge. Visible here is the central span, apparently of metal, which is also shown in the following photograph taken from the railway track, at a date before the signals were removed.



Figure 52 — Central span viewed from the tracks (c.1969) (Occamore, 2010)

The photograph below, sent to the Mill Road History Society by correspondent Robert Webb, also shows the central section of the bridge, taken from the top of the steps on the Argyle Street side of the bridge. It is gratifying to see 'The Works' (the one-storey building beside the tracks) in good condition as a presumably still functioning workplace.¹⁸

¹⁸ For more about 'The Works', see http://www.capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/124-134_Mill_RoadCottages-3rd_edition-2016-01-31.pdf, pp. 16–18.



Figure 53 — The Bridge, the Works and Railway Cottages (1978)
(photo: Robert Webb)

The last photograph in this section, sent by Facebook correspondent Tom Freeman, shows not only the elegant wrought-iron railings which allowed a full view of the track, but also how a child's head could all too easily get stuck between them, as happened to one other correspondent to the Mill Road History Society (see section b of this chapter, below).



Figure 54 — Railings of the 1889 bridge (c.1980)
(photo: Tom Freeman)

b: The Anecdotal Record

On 6 August 1960, Sarah Payne published an article entitled 'Memories of Mill Road Bridge'. By mistake the wrong photograph was published to accompany the article, but the memories of one 'Mr P J North, the well-known chiropodist [...] of Newmarket Road, Cambridge' are still valid and deserve inclusion here. He well remembers playing under the bridge arches during the 1890s, and tells us:

We used to live in South Street then [...] and we used to go up to the new bridge and play under the arches when they were being built. There was a level crossing over the railway then but, of course, it was not much used because there was hardly any traffic.

In those days the bridge was right on the outskirts of the town – there was not much over there then. Great Eastern Street, Argyle Street and that area were just ballast pits for the railway, and the only house there was a large one near where the Broadway stands today. After that there was just one pub in the distance. Beyond that were fields to Cherry Hinton – no cement works in those days.

Mill Road, too, was a bit bare. Where Glisson Road and those other streets are these days, there used to be tennis courts and a small shop used to stand where the old Playhouse cinema now is. (CEN 6 Aug 1960)

Cyril Stannard, a retired train driver and relief foreman interviewed by the Mill Road History Project, says in his second interview:¹⁹

There was Dr Grange at the bottom of the bridge, he was a GP, he was just in that – where it says 'English' by the Library, he was very useful he was, specially for the railway, *because underneath the arch, they used to leave that open for Dr Grange to come quickly and the ambulance*, because one or two people had been killed there – they had one or two nasty [incidents], people been killed there – the old night mail one night caught three of them; they were Stratford men, just got the lead one on the goods road ahead, they come across, they didn't hear the express coming up, the night mail coming up, and of course that killed them and, and Dr Grange had to get in quick sort of thing. He was a very friendly doctor for the hospital for accidents and that sort of thing.

A more cheerful memory is to be found in the delightful story sent to the Mill Road History Society by John Sansom who recalls an incident in 1959 (see Appendix 3).

Three Facebook correspondents to 'Cambridge in the Good Old Days'²⁰ have also shared their memories of the 1889 bridge:

[JK:] I remember being able to see up the train tracks.

[JB:] My mum (long gone now) used to walk over the bridge with her older sisters; she would send them ahead to make sure a steam train was not coming. This was probably more than 80 years ago now. They would wait and call her over at exactly the time a steam train was coming to scare her. They apparently did it more than once, which says a lot about my Mum I suppose, or the persuasiveness of older siblings.

¹⁹ For excerpts from Cyril Stannard's interview, see <http://www.capturingcambridge.org/mill-road-area/mill-road/cyril-stannard>.

²⁰ (https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=cambridge+in+the+good+old+days&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b-ab&gfe_rd=cr&dcr=0&ei=L_qNWtisG8LHXtDnhagP).

[DH:] The old bridge had cast iron sides with a large hole as part of the decor, as a child I got my head stuck. I had forced my head through to watch the trains and got stuck, the firemen had to put grease on my head to get me out.

Robert Webb who took the photograph of the centre section of the bridge from the steps on the Argyle Street side of the bridge contributes the following:

The bridge featured heavily in my youth. I grew up just off Coleridge Road and so had to cross it to get into town. In the late 70s this was pretty much every day. In fact I was born in Mill Road Maternity Hospital so it must have been the first bridge I ever crossed!

Often when I crossed, there was a boy standing [at the top of the steps on the Argyle Street side], looking out over the tracks – I think he always had a bike with him. I assumed he was train spotting. Always in the same spot at the top of the steps on that side. He couldn't have been much older than me (I was in my late teens in the late 70s). I don't think he was a ghost but he looked sort of 'old fashioned' in appearance – not very 70s! No idea who he was but for some reason he's always stuck in my mind.

My great grandfather worked on the railway and lived in Catharine Street in the 1900s so he would have presumably crossed it every day too to get to work, like hundreds of other railway workers in Romsey I imagine.

7. FROM 1889 TO 1962

In his *Mill Road Scrapbook 1897–1990*,²¹ quoted in Appendix 8, Mike Petty mentions three incidents relating to the bridge before the Second World War. One other has come to light thanks to a 'From the News' item in the *Cambridge News* of 7 March 2017:

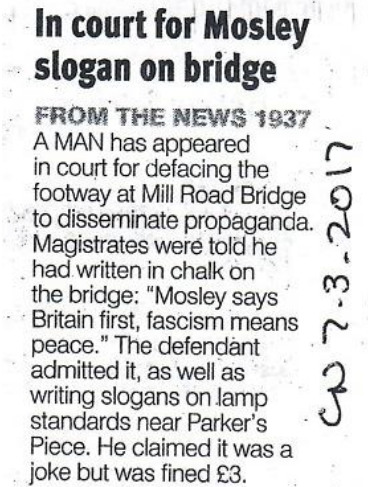


Figure 55 — Fascist slogan (CN 7 Mar 2017)

This incident fades into insignificance in comparison with the event a few years later on 31 January 1941 when, in the third year of the Second World War, the bridge area in Mill Road was bombed.

a: Second World War Bombing, 30 January 1941

Although Cambridge was not a major target for German bombers, 1940–41 saw a series of attacks several of which would seem to have the railway station and railway line as their target, presumably because the railway was a major means of supplying the airfields and anti-aircraft batteries in East Anglia. On 30 January 1941 a Dornier aircraft dropped a stick of bombs which landed on the Railway Cottages (124–134 Mill Road) to the south side of the bridge in Petersfield.

²¹ See https://archive.org/stream/CambridgeshireScrapbook18971990/Cambridgeshire%20Scrapbook%201897-1990_djvu.txt.



Figure 56 — Scenes of the 1941 bombing (CC: S1941 2685)

The top right-hand photograph shows pedestrians peering over the railings of the bridge to see the damage.²² Two of those interviewed by the author for the above report, Roger Simkins and Eric Leeke, commented on the damage done to the bridge:

[RS:] The houses were left derelict a long time and where the bomb went through the bridge, where there was all the railings all up the side, there was this big old cast-iron metal plate bolted over it to stop the people going through it I suppose. It was there for ages. I wasn't very old at the time. I don't know how many years they left it like that.

[EL:] One of the bombs blew a great big hole on the side of the bridge; it took out several up-rights, and there was a large iron piece put in the gap that had been left to stop people jumping down on to the cottages, which were very badly damaged.

It sounds from Roger Simkins's account as if the metal plate was in place for some years, but eventually both the bridge and the Railway Cottages were restored by the railway company, probably between 1948 and 1950.

²² Readers wishing to find out more about this incident are referred to http://www.capturingcambridge.org/mill-road-area/mill-road/railway-house/attachment/124-134_mill_roadcottages-3rd_edition-2016-01-31/.

b: The 1957 Railway Plans

A remarkable document can be found in the Cambridgeshire Collection catalogued as *The British Railways Plan, Cambridge Station. Sheet 2, 1957*. The sheet is large and shows the area north of the station, including the Argyle Street area, the Depot, and the land between Devonshire Road and the tracks (an area commonly called 'The Works'). The sheet also shows a detailed diagram of the 1889 bridge.

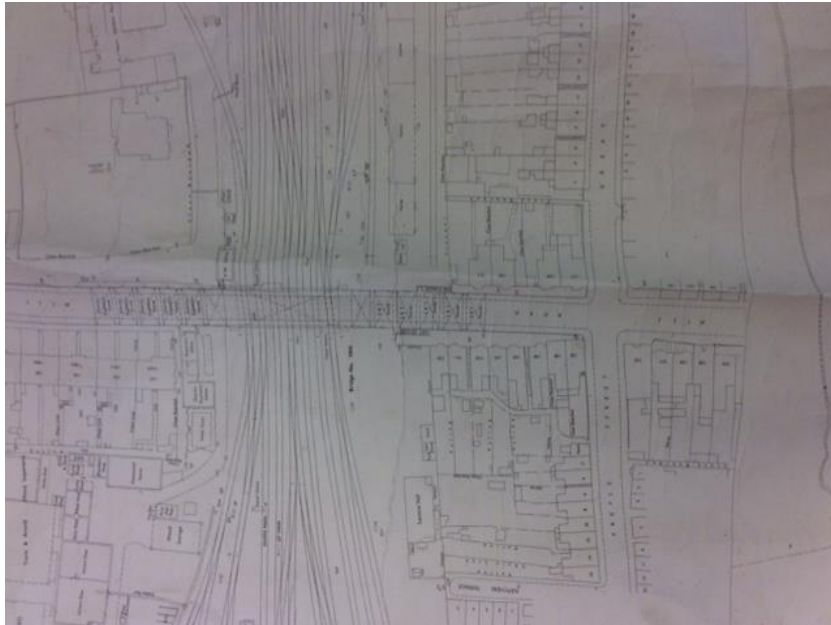


Figure 57 — British Railways Plan. Cambridge Station. Sheet 2 1957 (detail: CC)

Figure 58 below enlarges the central detail of the above, and turns it through 90° for legibility.

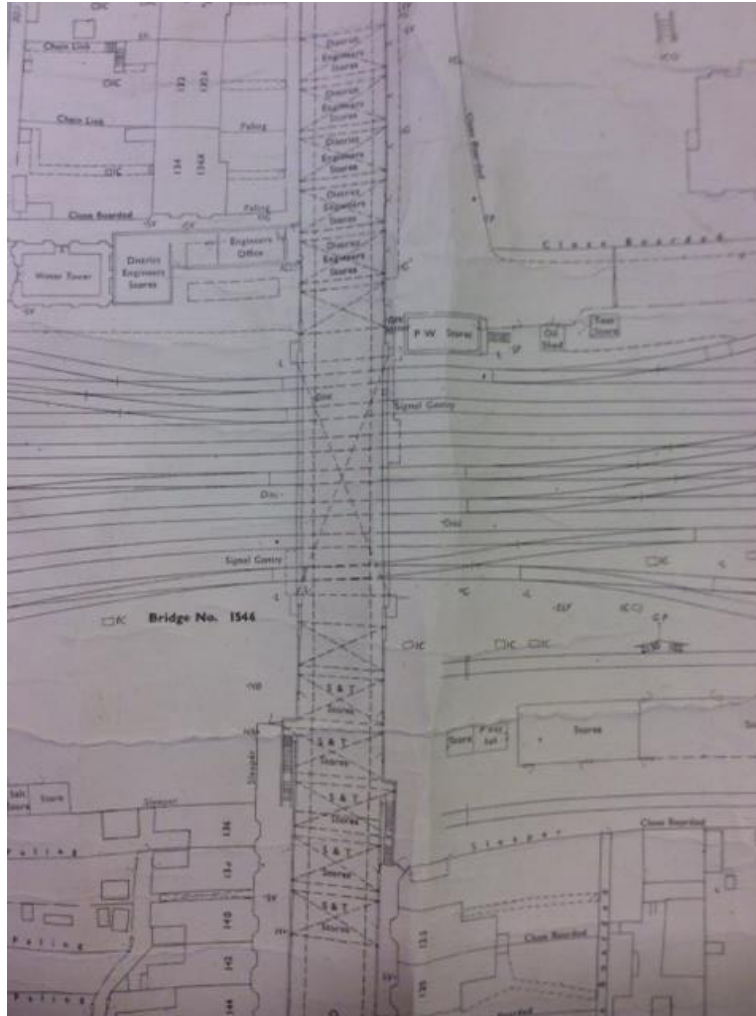


Figure 58 — British Railways Plan. Cambridge Station. Sheet 2 1957 (detail: CC)

Storage areas are shown under the arches of the bridge: the five on the Petersfield side are marked as 'District and Engineering Stores', the five on the Romsey side (including that shown in the Barry Hurst photograph above) are shown as 'S[ignal] and T[elegraph] Stores'.²³ The area known as 'The Works' to the west side of the tracks shows more engineering stores, two joinery shops, wood storage, a paint shop, a work shop, a first aid post, a water tower and cycle sheds.²⁴ All in all, a picture is given of a lively, well-ordered work area of a prosperous railway company.

All this was soon to change as the *Cambridge Evening News* would announce on 19 December 1962.

²³ Cf. Cyril Stannard's reference to one of these arches in chapter 6b, above.

²⁴ For more about 'The Works' see <http://www.capturingcambridge.org/mill-road-area/mill-road/railway-house/> Downloadable report Page 16).

8. THE 1980 BRIDGE

In an article of 19 December 1962, the *Cambridge News* announced that the Ministry of Transport considered that at some time the rebuilding and widening of Mill Road Bridge would become necessary, and that the British Transport Commission was looking to sell to the Council 'certain properties' near the bridge that had become 'surplus to the Commission's requirements':

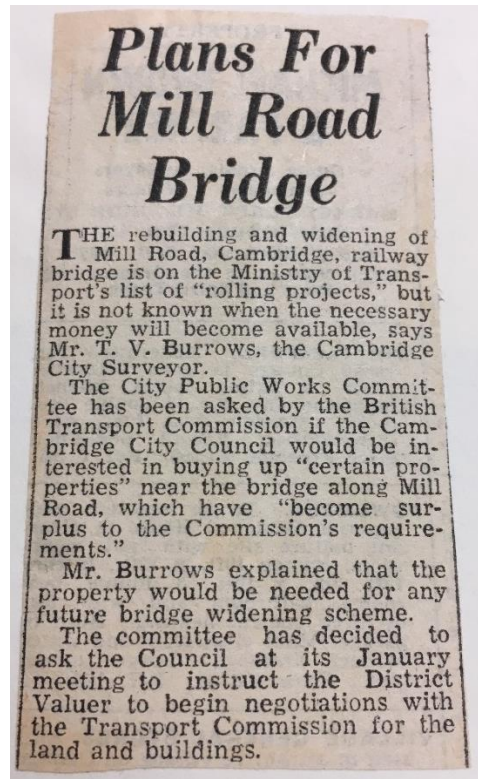


Figure 59 — Rebuilding plans announced (*CEN* 19 Dec 1962)

The City Council did indeed wish to acquire some of the surplus land, as is shown in the following map made available to the Mill Road History Project in 2016 by the Cambridge Housing Society.

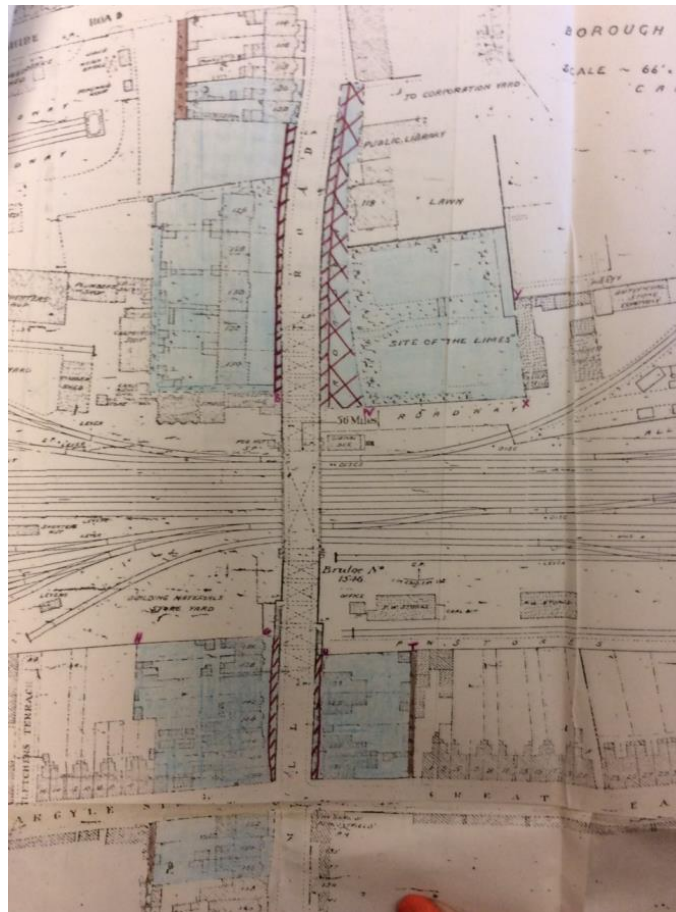


Figure 60 — Schedule Map for development of Bridge (18 Oct 1965)
(Cambridge Housing Society Papers)

The land and properties coloured blue show those acquired by the Council. They include, in Petersfield: the site of The Limes, that parcel of land which was the subject of such vigorous debate in the planning of the 1889 bridge; the Railway Cottages (124–134 Mill Road), which were subsequently acquired by the Cambridge Housing Society; the site of the old Station Master's House, which is now a block of flats; and the first two houses in Inverness Terrace; in Romsey: Measham Terrace, now the site of the Argyle Street Housing Co-operative; and the row of houses that used to front Mill Road between Great Eastern Street and the bridge, which were demolished to make way for the Great Eastern Street car park.

A Conveyance Document accompanies the map which states:

This Conveyance is made the thirteenth day of March one thousand nine hundred and sixty six between British Railways Board (hereinafter called 'The Board') and the Mayor, Aldermen and Citizens of the City of Cambridge acting by the Council of the said City (hereinafter called the Corporation) of the other part. [The properties conveyed are:] all those five pieces of land containing together eight thousand eight hundred square yards or thereabouts situate fronting Mill Road in the city of Cambridge as the same are more particularly delineated on the plan hereunto annexed and thereon coloured blue [and the conveyance is:] in consideration of the sum of twenty one thousand, four hundred and twenty pounds [£21,420] paid by the Corporation to the Board (the receipt of which sum the Board acknowledges).

It is not known how much the City Council's willingness to purchase so much land and property had to do with an ambitious scheme that the County Council was known to have had to widen Mill Road and make it a major road linking to the Newmarket Road. Such a scheme would certainly have affected the whole area. It must have been clear to both councils that the need for British Rail to electrify its lines would mean that sooner or later the Mill Road bridge would face demolition, and a new higher bridge would need to be built to accommodate the overhead electric lines.²⁵ This would have been a good time for negotiations with both British Rail and the British Transport Commission.

The *Cambridge News* announced that though 'British Rail has to replace, at its own expense, bridges which are modified to accept electric wires', the Cambridgeshire County Highways Committee decided to spend £43, 000 to allow British Rail to widen the bridge at the same time. This was in order to reduce accidents at the site, and to 'save the substantial cost of erecting a temporary bridge [...] while reconstruction takes place'.

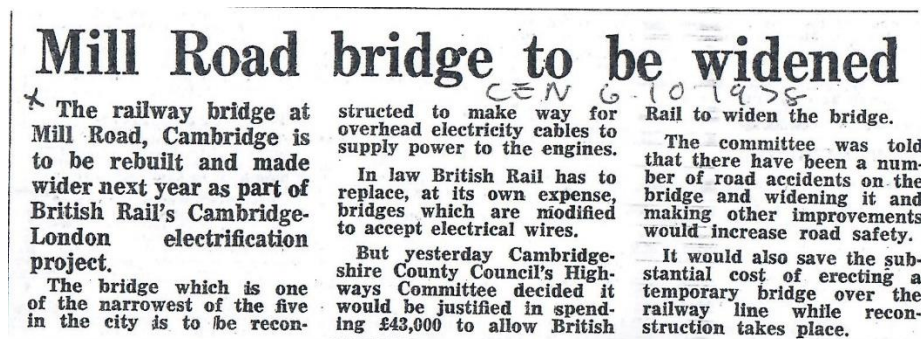


Figure 61 — Widening plans announced (CEN 6 Oct 1978)

There were delays, as there were at every stage of this history of the bridge, but on 28 February 1979 the *Cambridge News* announced that British Rail hoped to begin work in July. It was reported that:

A one-way traffic scheme will be in place during much of the building work, but British Rail are hoping to avoid major diversions. An eastern region engineer said that it should be possible to keep one track open for most of the time and major reconstruction will be done at off-peak road traffic periods (CEN 25 Feb 1979)

In March of the following year it is reported that five Labour Councillors, believing that the road would not be widened significantly, were, with what a present-day reader might consider admirable foresight, calling for a separate lane or specific cycleway for cyclists. We might look back to the watchers of 1875 counting horses and cattle, and those of 1886 counting horse-drawn vehicles, and realise how difficult it is to plan for an unknown future; none of them would have predicted a problem with cyclists.

²⁵ Readers wishing to know more about the electrification process and its history may find this website useful: <http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/c/cambridge/index19.shtml>. The present report will focus on planning of the new Mill Road Bridge as charted in the pages of the *Cambridge News*.

Councillors call for cycleway on bridge

CEN 8.3.1979

Five Cambridge councillors want British Rail to incorporate cycleways and footpaths in the Mill Road railway bridge scheme.

The councillors, all Labour, have asked the city planners to make it a condition of giving British Rail planning permission.

British Rail is to increase the height of the bridge and to make structural improvements as part of plans to electrify the main

line rail system around Cambridge within the next three years.

Cambridgeshire County Council, the local highways authority, has agreed to widening work to be carried out at the same time to avoid the work having to be done later.

Mill Road bridge has long been a major traffic bottleneck and a hazard for cyclists and pedestrians.

Now the five councillors — Peter Wright, Bob May, Terry Sweeney (all Romsey), Frank Gawthrop and Roger Thornely (Peters-

field) — want to see conditions improved for cyclists and pedestrians.

Coun Wright said: "We have asked the planners to insist on cycleways and adequate pedestrian facilities being provided."

"We do not believe that the roadway itself is going to be widened very much so things will not be much safer for either cyclists or pedestrians — that's why we want separate facilities for them."

The councillors also intend to keep a close watch on the rebuilding work to

ensure that inconvenience and disruption of traffic is kept at a minimum.

"We understand that temporary facilities will be provided for cyclists and pedestrians when road traffic is restricted — so British Rail might as well build permanent facilities."

The planners and British Rail are circulating details of the widening scheme to people and organisations in the Mill Road area for their comments.

The widening work is expected to start later this year.

Figure 62 — Call for a cycleway (CEN 8 March 1979)

Unfortunately, not only was no separate provision made for cyclists, but when British Rail engineers 'found that different building materials needed to be used and the cost of some materials [had] gone up,' British Rail asked the County Council for an extra £12,000 to continue with the plans hitherto agreed.

Under the headline 'Mill Road railway bridge project refused extra cash', the *Cambridge Evening News* reported that 'County Council engineers have advised councillors not to pay the extra money and British Rail has been informed'. It appeared some money could be saved by reducing the cost of road schemes elsewhere, but 'It has been decided to divert some of this money to the Great Shelford bridge project' (CEN 7 July 1979). This decision cannot have pleased residents of Mill Road or anyone using the bridge.

The plans were eventually passed on 25 May 1978 with building expected to start the following year. We note that 'the bridge will be slightly wider than the present one as a safety measure'.



Figure 63 — Plans approved (CEN 24 May 1979)

Nearly a year later, on 17 May 1980, the public were warned that there was likely to be five months of disruption. Motorists were advised to find alternative routes, and pedestrians and cyclists were encouraged to 'make use of the temporary footpath provided':

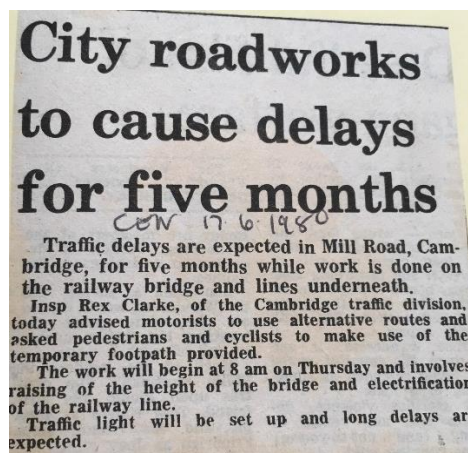


Figure 64 — Warning of delays (CEN 17 June 1980)

It appears that work began simultaneously in both Romsey and Petersfield. The builders were Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.²⁶ Just eleven days after the previous article the

²⁶ For further information on this company, see <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/fairclough-construction-group-plc-history/>.

headline in the *Cambridge Evening News* was 'Mill Road's new rail bridge takes shape'. The article reads:

Work has started on rebuilding the railway bridge at Mill Road Cambridge, an accident black spot. The new bridge is being built alongside the existing one and then will be slotted into the place of the old bridge once that has been moved. The changeover should take place in November and British Rail hopes there will be minimal traffic disruption. The new bridge will be higher than the present one so there will be space for the overhead electricity wires forming part of the electrification of the main line. (CEN 28 May 1980)



Figure 65 — New Mill Road bridge being built along side the old one (29th May 1980)
(CC: B.MILL.K80 19809)

As promised, a temporary footpath was built alongside the old bridge. The photograph below, in a version from the Cambridgeshire Collection, first appeared in the *Cambridge Evening News* of 20 June 1980. The headline together with the photograph leads to wry speculation about how welcome a separate cyclist/pedestrian route would have been, and still would be: 'New bridge takes cyclists past the traffic jams.' The text reads:

The new temporary bridge for cyclists and pedestrians over the railway line at Mill Road Cambridge is now open. It has enabled British Rail engineers to close one of the traffic lanes over the existing road bridge as part of the plan to rebuild the whole structure. One-way traffic flow, controlled by lights, is allowed over the remaining lane of the bridge. [...] The work will take about a year to complete. Part of the new structure can be seen taking shape at the top of the picture. This section will eventually be slid into place. (CEN 20 June 1980)



Figure 66 — The bridge from Great Eastern Street looking towards Petersfield
(photo: John Hullock: SO: 191-jh-bridge-works)

In November 1980 work began dismantling the old bridge 'with the aid of a 200ton crane'. Those who had celebrated the building of 'the finest overhead bridge on the GER' would have been sad to know that 'the bridge, built in 1889, will be broken down into pieces for scrap'.

Mill Road bridge is dismantled

An era ended at Mill Road, Cambridge, over the weekend when the old bridge, which is being replaced, was dismantled with the aid of a 200-ton crane.

The bridge, built in 1898 with wrought iron, will be

broken down into pieces for scrap.

Work on dismantling it started at lunchtime on Saturday and took 22 hours. It carried on all night through the rain.

The new bridge is expected to be completed at the beginning of December. At the moment traffic can only cross it in one direction at a time.

Figure 67 — Dismantling the 1889 bridge (CEN 17 Nov 1980)

The Mill Road History Society holds a document written by Barry Hurst, local resident, in 2014, recollecting the demolition of the bridge. He also donated some remarkable photographs. His description begins:

Work began early in the morning of Saturday 15th November setting up the 200-ton crane and carried on throughout the day until dusk with parts of the crane, gib structures and counter weights were[sic] arriving throughout the day on lorries.

The unique sequence of photographs that follows, taken by Barry Hurst, interleaved with his commentary, shows the demolition of the old bridge and the installation of the new.



Figures 68 — Demolition of the 1889 bridge begins
(photos: Barry Hurst: SO: 191-bh-bridge-demolition4, 191-bh-bridge-demolition5)

Whilst it not always easy to work out the sequence or viewpoint of the photographs, it is clear that the above show the 200-foot crane from Romsey, on the left, and from Petersfield on the right. In viewing these photographs, we should remember that the new bridge is being constructed alongside the demolition. Barry Hurst continues:

On the bridge itself the work of cutting away the deck sections progressed. All this work was hampered by rain and sleet throughout the day. The crane was set up on the south-east side of the bridge and lines. All rail traffic was restricted all day and early evening and stopped at night. Watch was kept throughout the night by my mother and I and another gentleman and his mother – both in their '70s and '80s respectively.





Figures 69 — Dismantling and replacing the 1889 bridge (photos: Barry Hurst:
SO: 191-bh-demolition1a, 19-bh-bridge-1980-2, 19-bh-bridge-1980)

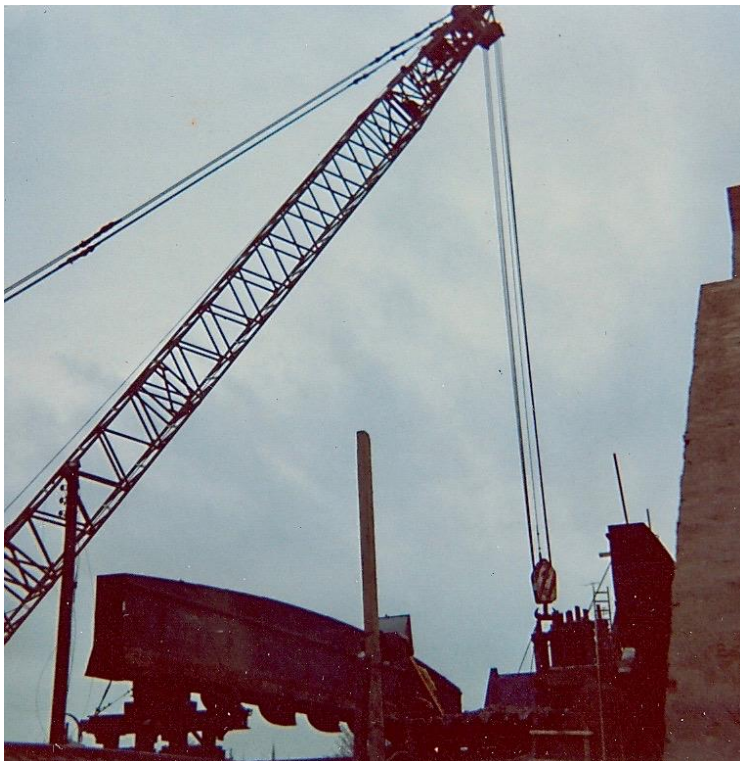
The top photograph shows most of the decking removed and the central side section still in place, the left-hand photograph above shows men at work in the central section, and the right-hand photograph shows the side section of the new bridge ready to be slotted into place. Barry Hurst continues:

Just a few people stopped and watched for a few minutes during the evening and night but the four watchers were constant. Both parties took time off to nip home for a warm, drink etc. During this time work was progressing slowly, torches blowing out in the wind, and difficulty relighting them and difficulty releasing decking and underslung girders, etc. The scene was set with lighting units and the noise of compressors and drills mingled with the great clouds of yellow sparks from the cutting torches. Tea was brought up to the bridge gang at about 3.30–4.00 a.m. – they had got about half way across, a tough job. The old girl put up a fair fight.

At 6 a.m. the first light of dawn appeared. On the bridge one and a half pieces of decking to go. Home for tea and bacon sarnies at 6.45 – back in half an hour.

Last section and under girders removed at approx. 9.00 a.m. on 16 November. Extra weights and cables fitted for this lift, and also for the sides of the bridge. A small crowd had gathered to watch the big one – rain and sleet falling fast – cold wind. Wire cable passed through lattice work of bridge approx. 10.0 a.m. – side one ready for lifting – swung up and away.

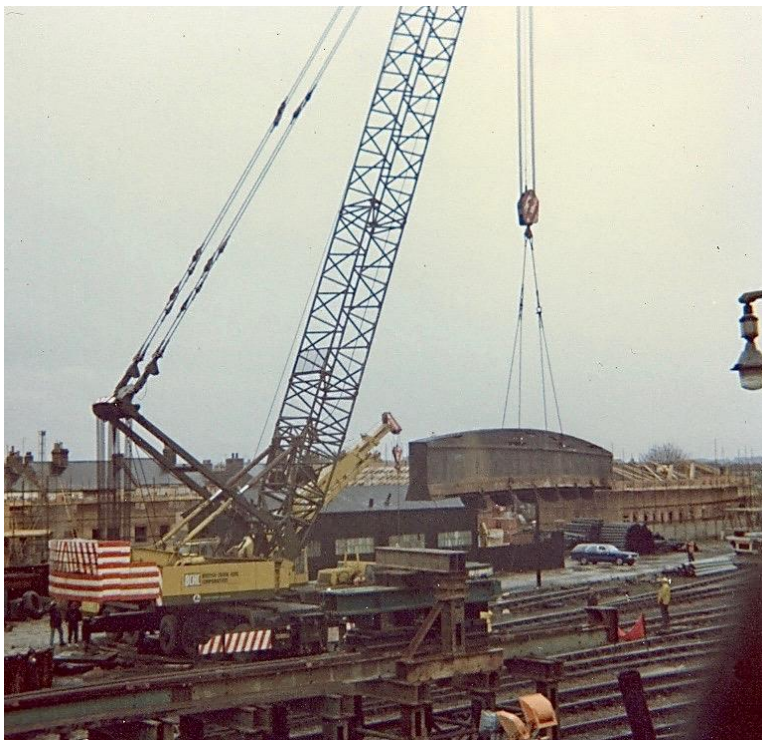
Home for a bite to eat and wash etc – back in half an hour with granny. Just in time to see side two removed. Both sides and decking were laid to rest on the ground at the side of the old band hall [now part of the Argyle Street Housing Co-operative] to await the torch. Approx. 28 hours to remove part of Romsey's past that had been a good servant for just over[sic] 100 years – still only a small crowd watched the end.





Figures 70 — Work in progress on 1980 bridge (photos: Barry Hurst:
SO: 191-bh-bridge-demolition2-1980a, 191-bh-bridge-demolition2-1980b)

The brick pier to the right of these two photographs appears to be that of the steps on the northern side of the bridge not far from Great Eastern Street.





Figures 71 — Removal of the final side piece (photos: Barry Hurst:
SO: 191-bh-bridge-demolition1d, 191-bh-bridge-demolition1c)

As the newspaper promised above: 'The new bridge is being built alongside the existing one and then will be slotted into the place of the old bridge once that has been moved' (*CEN* 20 June 1980). These final three photographs from the Barry Hurst collection show the bridge under construction at that stage.



Figures 72 — The central span of 1980 bridge in place (photos: Barry Hurst:
SO: 191-bh-bridge-demolition7, 191-bh-bridge-demolition2-1980d)

In the left-hand photograph the central span of the new bridge is in place. It is not clear what the crane is lifting. In the right-hand photograph, perhaps more westerly than the

left-hand one, the new railings on the south side are visible, as are, perhaps, Railway Cottages in the distance.



Figure 73 — The 1980 bridge completed (photo: Barry Hurst:
SO: 191-bh-bridge-demolition6)

In this final photograph, pedestrians are walking on the pavement on the south side of the bridge, rather than on the separate walkway. Railway Cottages can be seen in the distance. To read Barry Hurst's text as a complete narrative and to see more of his photographs, see Appendix 4.

a: Memories of the Demolition and Rebuilding

Robin Mansfield, a member of the Mill Road History Society, recalls that during the demolition his then wife's cousin, Yvonne Wisbey, told her two daughters the story of her uncle and aunt Conrad Shipp (1905–95) of Chesterton and Gladys Buttress (1905–92) of Catharine Street, who first met on Mill Road Bridge. Julie Wisbey, Yvonne's youngest daughter, took it upon herself to ask one of the workmen for a brick. The old couple were delighted with this wonderful keepsake. Robin says: 'I'm not sure what happened to it but it was a lovely gesture at the time and the Shipp's marriage lasted for sixty-seven years.'



Figure 74 — Conrad and Gladys Shipp (photo: courtesy of Robin Mansfield)

Three facebook correspondents to the Mill Road History Society contributed memories of the dismantling of the old bridge and the construction of the new:

'JC' recalls one of the women Barry Hurst wrote about:

On the weekend the centre section was removed there was a very elderly lady, with a blanket wrapped around herself, sat there, both days. She said that she remembered the original bridge being built and wanted to be there to see it go.

The lady must have been well into her nineties; it must have taken real determination to stay out for so long in the sleet and rain!

'TF' remembers:

They put up a sort of wooden temporary bridge on the north side for bikes and pedestrians, which I was quite taken by. My main reaction to the new bridge was that I liked trying to walk along the narrow raised strips that run along the sides of the pavements at the top. I was just about small enough to fit and big enough to know how to balance.

'BS' recalls that he:

watched the old bridge lifted out and laid at side of track to be dismantled.

Nearly two weeks before the demolition, the *Cambridge Evening News* announced 'Mill Road Bridge reopens early'. The article is somewhat misleading: what is actually being celebrated is that traffic is once more allowed to move across the bridge; there was still a month's work to be undertaken. The article is worth reading for its discussion of the complex building that is taking place.



Figure 75 — 'Reopening' of the bridge (CEN 3 Nov 1980)

This is in fact the only newspaper article to be found that in any way announces that the new bridge is open. In contrast to 1889 there is no official marking of any specific occasion. Frank Gawthrop, City Councillor at the time, thinks the reason for this lack is that the whole project was in the hands of British Rail rather than the City Council. No doubt residents and traders in Mill Road were only too pleased to be able to get back to their day-to-day business as normal. Alas, things would not be normal for long.

9. POST-1980

It seems probable that after all the bridge work was finished, and two-way traffic lanes were restored, everyone who lived or worked in Mill Road or who travelled along it must have hoped they had finished with traffic problems there for at least a few years.

It must have come as a surprise to learn from the *Cambridge News* of the 5 August 1981, less than a year after the new bridge was completed, that a whole new road scheme was being proposed.



Figure 76 — One-way street proposal (CEN 5 Aug 1981)

With this proposal, to be put to the Traffic Management Joint Sub-Committee,²⁷ began the Traffic Light saga which was to preoccupy so many in Mill Road until March 1984.

a: The Traffic Lights Project, 1981–84

The story of this project is told in a quantity of press cuttings which can be found in the 'Mill Road Folder' in the Cambridgeshire Collection. It should perhaps be remembered that, during the period in question, the *Cambridge Evening News* was published daily; its journalists and editor must have been very grateful for a story which ran and ran, and which many of its readers would follow with personal interest.

It was not until April the following year that the paper announced that a somewhat different plan had been approved. Traffic lights were to be installed for a year's trial which would only allow one-way traffic across the bridge:

The new plan was given the go ahead by the Cambridge Traffic Management team yesterday after County Council road engineers said the traffic lights would help to keep traffic away from

²⁷ The committee was made up of both City and County Councillors. Differences between the two, as well as party political differences, were to complicate all discussions over the following three years.

the area. The engineers said there was a bad accident record in Mill Road which is one of the busiest in the city. They said traffic lights would help to deter through traffic and force it to use other roads. (*CEN* 30 April 1982)

Important throughout the debate is the fact that there were no specific safety reasons for installing the lights (such as allowing safer access for traffic from side streets); their purpose was solely to discourage use of the road.

City Councillor for Romsey, Peter Wright (Labour), a member of the Traffic Management Team, welcomed the traffic lights plan, saying: 'It seems nobody is very interested in Romsey, who[se residents] have to suffer because of all the traffic going through the area'. However, the final paragraph states: 'Earlier this week the City Council's Roads and Traffic Committee voted against the plan and asked the Traffic Management plan to reject it' (*CEN* 30 April 1982).

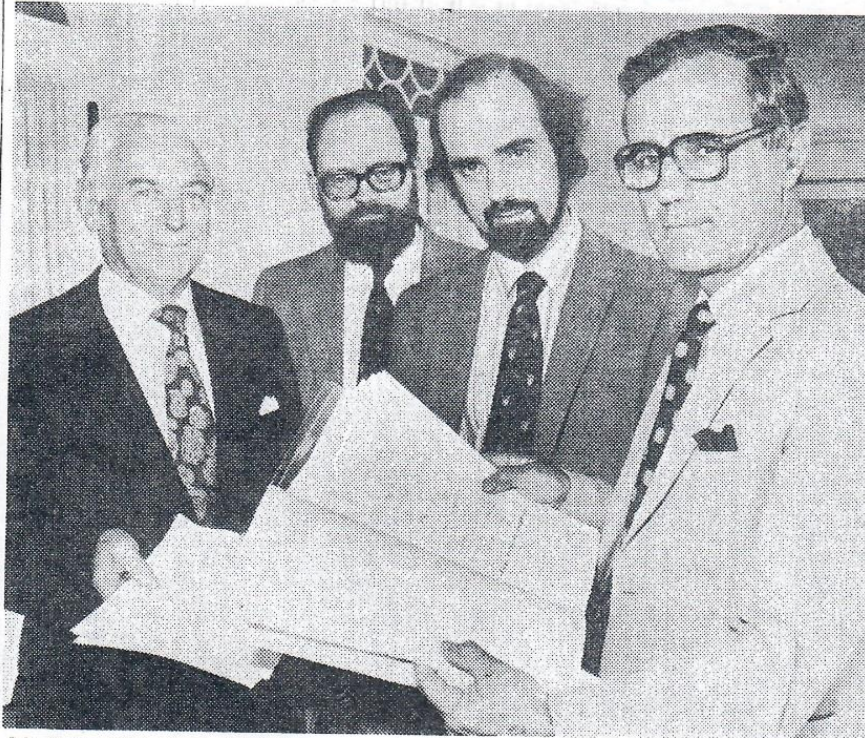
Battle lines were thus drawn up. Two months later it was reported that there had been 'objections from hundreds of city residents and traders', and Mark Todd, Labour Councillor for Coleridge, said he resented that roads in his ward were expected to become much busier as a result of the experiment. He told the committee that 'when lights were last used along Mill Road during the re-building of the railway bridge, much of the diverted traffic went on to Coldham's Lane and Cherry Hinton Road, where it made further hazards for other road users. [...] It is illogical to spend money widening the railway bridge and then prevent it being fully used.' There were other objectors, too, including the Post Office and the AA (*CEN* 18 June 1982).

The issue divided councillors sometimes on political lines, sometimes because they were contemplating disruption in their own wards where problems might occur as traffic sought alternative routes.

Councillor Edwards, one of the Conservative members for Cherry Hinton [...] fears his area will be badly beggared by the extra diverted traffic [...] Councillor Edwards said that so far only a handful of people had expressed support for the traffic lights scheme while hundreds of people were protesting against it. (*CEN* 17 July 1982)

Certainly the traders and residents of Mill Road were busy marshalling their objections.

2,000 back drive against *CEN 9-9-1982* scheme for traffic lights



Mr Brian Oldridge, right, is presented with the petition by, left to right, Mr Frank Holland, Coun Eric Barrett-Payton and Coun John Reynolds. 32758232a

✕ More than 2,000 shoppers have objected to controversial plans for traffic lights over Mill Road railway bridge.

A petition with 2,196 names was this week handed to Mr Brian Oldridge, Cambridgeshire County Council's director of transportation, by Mill Road garage owner, Mr Frank Holland, who organised the protest.

Mr Holland said he was delighted with the response.

"I think it shows very well what the feeling is against these lights because, as I said to Mr Oldridge, you don't widen a bridge to make traffic flow and then put up traffic lights at £20,000 and use the ratepayers' money to slow traffic up and cause congestion," he said.

A final decision on the scheme is expected to be taken by the joint city council and county council Cambridge Traffic Management team at its meeting today.

Figure 77 — Opposition to the traffic lights scheme (CEN 9 Sep 1982)

A day later, the paper reported that 'some of the management team warned that the petition was misleading and should be ignored', and announced that: 'The controversial scheme to deter motorists from using Mill Road Cambridge by installing traffic lights at the foot of the railway bridge is to go ahead, despite a flood of objections.' (CEN 10 Sep 1982). The banner headline reads:

Mill Road traffic lights experiment gets the go-ahead

CEN 10. 9. 1982

Figure 78 — The go-ahead (*CEN* 10 Sep 1982)

It almost beggars belief, but just two months later, before the scheme could be implemented, British Rail found that water was seeping through the road surface and penetrating an underlying waterproof membrane, which as a result had urgently to be relaid (*CEN* 26 Nov 1982). We have no way of knowing how soon after their construction the footbridge or 1889 bridge needed repair, but it still seems somewhat surprising that, less than two years after the bridge was completed, the *CEN* on 24 November 1982 reported widespread traffic chaos in Mill Road and throughout the city when temporary traffic lights were set up on the bridge while the repairs took place. A police spokesman said 'the jams are likely to continue for the next two weeks. The distance between the traffic lights has been shortened to reduce tail backs, but [...] the volume of traffic through Cambridge left few alternative routes open to motorists and delays must be expected.' (*CEN* 24 Nov 1982)

Alarm bells rang in some quarters 'because the temporary traffic lights installed [...] while British Rail carries out repairs have caused so much disruption over the whole city, the experiment to install lights for up to a year may be scrapped.' The County Council's transportation chief, Councillor Stan Hardick, said he was concerned about the current situation: 'In the light of the conditions we shall be reconsidering the experiment as a special item at our meeting next month. We might be able to save our ratepayers £60,000 if the scheme is dropped.' (*CEN* 25 Nov 1982). No explanation is given for the increase in cost since £20,000 was quoted earlier in the newspaper (*CEN* 9 Sep 1982). However, despite some councillors joining forces from all three parties to oppose it, the experiment was given the go-ahead by a vote of five to three:



Figure 79 — The go-ahead confirmed (*CEN* 9 Dec 1982)

The lights were to be installed on Sunday 19 June 1983. The newspaper headline some days before read 'Council Warns of Traffic Chaos', and the text reads:

The threat of long delays and traffic jams is being used by the Council to persuade motorists not to use the busy Mill Road, which is an accident black spot. The chairman of the Road and Traffic Committee, Councillor Violet Cane, said that in a two-year period there were 120 accidents in Mill Road and traffic congestion made living and working 'a misery'. 'We make no apology for the fact that the traffic lights are designed to slow down the flow of traffic and persuade drivers in the area to use other safer routes [...] There will be no chaos in Mill Road providing through traffic uses other routes.' (*CEN* 15 June 1983)

The day after, the Guildhall published an official statement together with a sketch map:

Mill Road is not a good through route any more

FROM Sunday, June 19, Mill Road in Cambridge will not be a good through route for motor vehicles because traffic lights controlling one-way traffic over the railway bridge will begin to operate.

THERE ARE TWO MAIN REASONS FOR THE NEW SYSTEM.

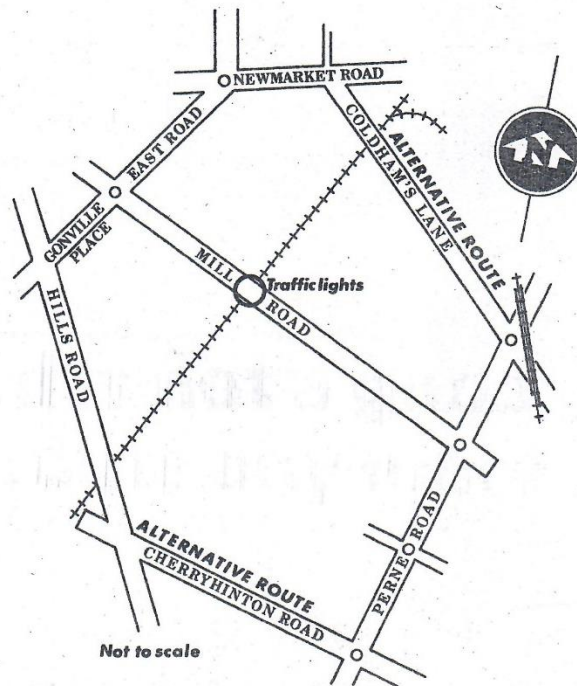
FIRSTLY, we want to make life better for the people living and working in and around Mill Road. The existing traffic congestion, subjects the people there to unpleasant noise and unhealthy exhaust fumes.

SECONDLY (but just as important) the heavy traffic has resulted in a high accident rate. In the three years from 1978 to 1980, there were 120 resulting in personal injury.

THE traffic lights are designed to slow down the traffic flow, and persuade drivers to use other, safer through routes. **THE SKETCH MAP ABOVE WILL HELP THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW THE AREA WELL TO FIND THEM.**

THE new system has been authorised initially for 12 months. Conditions in Mill Road and the alternative routes will be monitored, and any amendments needed will be made.

IF drivers use the alternative routes, they will avoid long delays and the people of Mill Road will have pleasanter, healthier and safer lives. We believe everyone will want that.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Guildhall, Cambridge CB2 3QJ. Tel: Cambridge (0223) 358977



Figure 80 — Map of traffic lights scheme (CEN 16 June 1983)

The sketch map seems to show the traffic lights actually on the bridge; a later photograph of them (see Figure 81) shows those on the Petersfield side just at the west corner of the road leading to the depot by the Old Library. Presumably those on the Romsey side were on the corner of Argyle Street and Great Eastern Street.

A day after the installation the paper's editorial was headlined: 'A dotty idea for Mill Road'. Pertaining to the bridge it stated: 'There also appears to be total nonsense in a situation where a great deal of money is spent rebuilding a bridge in order to improve both its safety and highway engineering, only to reduce its capacity by half by the use of lights' (CEN 20 June 1983). Despite this opposition, the Labour group on the City Traffic Management Team (on which they had a majority) won the vote that the scheme should continue (CEN 8 Feb 1984).

The newspaper cuttings record many different protests against the lights: taxi drivers (13 Aug 1983), traders and residents (30 Jan and 24 Feb 1984), doctors and nurses (17 Feb 1984 – ‘they hate to think what might happen if they are called to an emergency and the lights hold them up’). The city’s MP allows it to be known that ‘he is totally opposed to the traffic lights’ (7 Feb 1984). The traders called a special meeting with City Councillors at the Gonville Hotel where ‘the 30 or so traders were unanimous that the traffic lights had not reduced the number of accidents in Mill Road, and had hampered shop takings. [They] spoke of losing up to 20% of their sales [...] since the lights were introduced’ (24 Feb 1984). Their spokesman, Pat Harris, had earlier claimed: ‘Customers are constantly complaining about the delays, and everyone detests the lights [...] They don’t stop accidents – they cause them because people become more and more frustrated when they have to wait in the traffic for the lights to change (30 Jan 1984).

The point about accidents was important. On 7 February 1984 the newspaper reported that ‘County Council figures released today show that since the lights were installed there has been a 16% increase in accidents along Mill Road and in the Cherry Hinton Road and Coldham’s Lane where the diverted traffic now flows’ (*CEN* 7 Feb 1984).

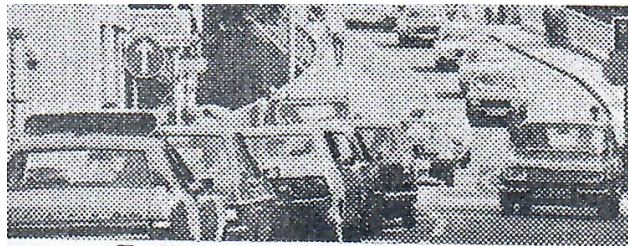


Figure 81 — Congestion on the bridge, Petersfield side
(*CEN* 7 Feb 1984)

This very small, poor-quality photograph accompanying the article is the only one in the relevant folder in the Cambridgeshire Collection to show the queueing traffic. The photograph shows the Romsey side of the bridge with a set of traffic lights on the extreme right.

However, the meeting on 8 February was divided and the tide certainly seemed to be turning: ‘Councillor Reynolds consulted County Council lawyers during the weekend and has now tabled a special motion calling for an urgent debate at the County Council rates-fixing meeting on 29 February (*CEN* 13 Feb 1984).

Just before that date, the arguments supporting the lights were expressed by Simon Sedgwick-Jell, Councillor for Romsey, who in a long article argued that a ‘return to a free-for-all is totally unacceptable to Romsey residents’. He dismissed the claim that accidents had increased, stating ‘Moreover and in spite of mistaken impressions to the contrary the accident rate has stayed static in spite of an increase in the number of cyclists (always a vulnerable group) though, of course, there are now fewer cars’. His article does however recognise that opinion is turning strongly against the scheme. ‘Perhaps at the end of the day the lights will be removed, the experiment deemed to have been a failure; but if this does happen an alternative plan has to be implemented,

one acceptable to the residents of a friendly, busy, crowded inner city area on the verge of being destroyed by excessive traffic' (*CEN* 27 Feb 1984).

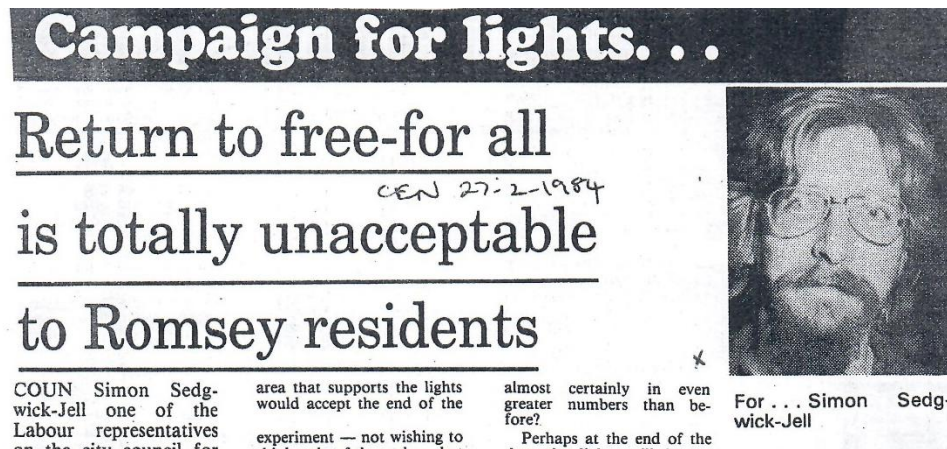


Figure 82 — Counter-argument (*CEN* 27 Feb 1984)

At the meeting on 29 February, the County Council voted 32–24 for the lights to be removed:

Conservative councillors voted en mass [*sic*] for the turn off. But Labour and Liberal opposition councillors joined forces to retain the lights – mainly because earlier the Conservatives had refused to accept their plea for an immediate review to be made of alternative methods of keeping the Mill Road side streets free of traffic. (*CEN* 29 Feb 1984)

The City Council (the agent of the County Council in traffic matters) still had to be consulted. The Council met the following day, 1 March, and 'after a two-hour heated debate' the Mayor, Councillor Betty Suckling, 'used her casting vote to get the lights switched off' (*CEN* 2 March 1984).

MAYOR'S CASTING VOTE UPROAR

Mill Road lights go out on Sunday

CEN 2.3.1984

By Peter Hoskison

THE Mill Road traffic lights in Cambridge are to be turned off for good on Sunday — thanks to the mayor, Coun Betty Suckling.

Late last night she stirred up as much controversy among city councillors as the lights have done when she used her casting vote to get the lights switched off.

Her action angered many councillors who wanted the lights to remain for the next four months to complete a full year's experiment in controlling traffic along Mill Road.

Some councillors demanded her resignation while others tried to put through votes of no confidence in her and the way she had handled a two-hour heated debate on the future of the lights.

Thank you

To the cheers of the councillors who had argued for the big switch off, Coun Suckling merely dismissed the criticism by telling the protestors:



Coun Suckling

"Thank you very much, I'm moving on to the next business."

The mayor's decision to use her casting vote came after councillors had dead-heated in a vote to have the lights switched off as soon as possible to enable traffic to start flowing freely over the bridge again.

The motion, proposed by Coun Mark Todd, also called on the city traffic management

team to look for ways of reducing the heavy traffic flows along Mill Road and its side streets — possibly by a park and ride bus system.

No political party whips were imposed during the long discussion on the lights and 18 Labour, Conservative and Liberal councillors joined forces to support the motion. An equal number voted against.

Shame

When this happens technically the motion is not carried — unless the Mayor uses her casting vote.

This she decided a short while later to do — amid cheers and cries of "shame."

For five minutes councillors shouted, tried to raise technical points of law or stood up to criticise the mayor for her action.

But she sat tight, smiling and refused to change her mind or to change her vote.

The decision means that the county council will remove the lights and obliterate the road markings during a quiet traffic period on Sunday.

Figure 83 — The switch-off decided (CEN 2 March 1984)

A delay of some eighteen days seems to have been caused by a 'red-tape tangle which surrounded the final decision' (CEN 12 March 1984), but on 20 March the white lines on the bridge were removed and the traffic lights switched off.

They're off! U-turn on lights



Two-way traffic . . . Mill Road Bridge's single lane trial ends.

11518444.

THE controversial Mill Road traffic lights have been switched off finally — and traffic flowed freely.

Council workmen spent most of yesterday finishing the conversion of traffic markings on the bridge before the ill-fated experiment finally ended.

The lights were put up last June and were intended to remain for a year in a bid to cut accidents — but figures show that accidents actually increased. *CEN 20.3.1984*

Figure 84 — Switched off at last! (*CEN* 20 March 1984)²⁸

In an editorial article two days later, the *Cambridge Evening News* published an obviously posed photograph showing traders 'taking their revenge on the hated lights':

²⁸ The photograph is of poor quality but is included here because a 'cancelled' traffic light can be seen on the extreme right of the photograph.



Figure 85 — Revenge! (*CEN* 23 March 1984)²⁹

b: The 1985 mural

A photograph posted to the Facebook group 'Cambridge in the Good Old Days' shows the central portion of Mill Road bridge as it appeared around 1984; it serves as a background to this section.



Figure 86 — The bridge c.1984 (posted by Sandra Bush on Facebook: 'Cambridge in the Good Old Days')

Immediately after the lights were removed, on 21 March 1984, Labour Councillor Peter Wright and 'Cambridge's Environmental boss', proposed a mural be painted on Mill

²⁹ Again the photograph is of poor quality, but it is the only extant one to show the lights on the Petersfield side of the bridge; the Old Library can be seen behind them.

Road bridge: 'Ever since the bridge was opened it has been daubed by graffiti and has been a terrible eyesore for local residents'. British Rail, who owned the bridge, had no objection, but recommended anti-graffiti coating be used (*CEN* 21 March 1984). There were no developments until a year later, when – as happened so often in the history of the bridge – cash problems were revealed as well as conflicting views about the whole project. The plan came before the City Council's Housing Improvement Committee:

Councillors of all parties [...] thought it would be a good idea to employ a special mural artist at a fee of £5000 to paint the pictures, to spend £2000 on materials and to appoint a co-ordinator who could liaise with local interests and groups about the pictures to be painted.

The cost was considered too high, and there was also a view that a mural would distract motorists. The Board's chairman said he 'thought a coat of sunshine yellow and suitable anti-graffiti paint would be sufficient' (*CEN* 1 March 1985).

A plan to get a contribution from British Rail seems to have come to nothing, but some two weeks later Councillor Richard Robertson announced a:

Hunt for Ideas on Mural Painting [...] As money is tight we are sending out a message to the schools, clubs and community groups in the Romsey area asking them if they are interested in submitting designs for the mural. (*CEN* 20 Feb 1985)

By June a £3,000 scheme submitted by Coleridge Community Council had been accepted. 'It will depict a night-and-day-changing scene of Cambridge and Romsey and feature some of the better-known buildings in the area' (*CEN* 6 June 1985).



Figure 87 — Students commissioned (*CEN* 6 June 1985)

On 20 June 1985 the newspaper allowed two fourth-year pupils to explain their design. 'We wanted to give an impression of Cambridge/Mill Road. They have a local church there, King's College to represent Cambridge as the most well-known local landmark, and some industrial buildings' (*CEN* 20 June 1985).

Pupils' design for Mill Road bridge

C.E.N. 20.6.85
COLERIDGE Community College pupils have completed their basic design for a colourful mural on Mill Road bridge.

The design, which is representative of both Romsey Town and Cambridge, has been accepted by the city council and work will begin in the school summer holidays.

Fourth-year pupils Julie Moore and Andrea McKenzie, designers of the mural, will paint both sides of the bridge with help from four other pupils.

The college's head of art, Mr

Jack Morton, who has played an advisory role only, said: "We wanted to give an impression of Cambridge / Mill Road. They have a local church, there, King's College to represent Cambridge itself as the most well-known landmark, and some industrial buildings."

Overall co-ordinator of the mural is the college's community warden, Mr Geoff Avery. He has negotiated a total of £3,000 from Cambridge City Council — the money will be spent on materials, anti-vandal paint and the hiring of crash barriers so the pupils can paint in safety.



Julie Moore and Andrea McKenzie with the draft mural.

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Figure 88 — Coleridge student designers (CEN 20 June 1985)³⁰

The article credits Mr Geoff Avery, Senior Community Tutor at Coleridge College, with having negotiated the deal with the City Council. Mr Avery shared his memories with Caro Wilson of the Mill Road History Society. He told her that an artist, Pip or Peter, had been involved with the project throughout:

The designs were first drawn-up during art classes with Pip in attendance. And when we all felt they were ok, were submitted to the Council for approval. The young people especially wanted to include as much as they could, and it took a while to get the final approval. They tried very hard to emulate a true Cambridge skyline and certainly included King's chapel, St Mary's and well-known colleges like Trinity. I'm sure we included either Queens' Bridge or Trinity Bridge and also the Round Church. Lots of Cambridge's activities like punting and sculling were also part of the plan. The Cam certainly had a high priority.

We might have walked crocodile fashion or used the minibus and parked it on the Council yard by the railway. Peter lived just off Mill Road near the bridge, and that was most helpful. My job was more advisory, although I'm no slouch as an artist.

The background was painted by Council staff so that we could follow on the next day and paint the mural.

The cost of the paint as I remember it was fearful. We were part-metric at the time and the smallest cans we could buy were five litres. So whatever colours we needed however slight that was the least we could purchase. They were bought by the Council and left at the yard for us to pick up daily. My original thoughts of £50 [mentioned to CW in a telephone call] were probably too high. But cheap it wasn't. We also had to mix some colours to create the effect we needed, but once mixed, the only way back to the original was another new can.

³⁰ This poor-quality photograph is the only one to show the students.



The murals painted by students to brighten up Mill Road bridge.

£3,000 facelift for Mill Road bridge

C.E.N. 16. 8. 85

MILL ROAD bridge has been brightened up by a colourful mural, painted by local art students.

Pupils from Coleridge Community College started work on the bridge earlier this month on a budget of £3,000 from Cambridge City Council.

The new mural has ended months of arguing by councillors about what to do with the bridge which had become an eyesore after being constantly defaced with graffiti.

The original plan to spend £8,000 on employing an artist was criticised by councillors from all parties, so local schools and colleges were asked to submit designs.

The city council's deputy Labour leader, Coun Mark Todd, who was against the idea initially on the grounds that a mural would be too expensive and a possible distraction to motorists, said: "My position has changed from being concerned to one where I am very pleased. Traffic experts have advised us that a mural will not be a hazard to road safety and it will not cost anything like as much as was originally thought."

"I think the mural is rather impressive, and I am pleased that a school where I am on the board of governors has done the work."

Night and day

The Conservatives' environmental spokesman, Coun Graham Edwards, said: "I was opposed to the initial proposal but in the end they came up with a compromise which I am happy with."

The mural, which depicts a scene of Cambridge by night and day, has been sprayed with anti-graffiti paint to stop it being vandalised like before.

Figure 89 — South side of the bridge, with Railway Cottages top-right (CEN 16 Aug 1985)

A photograph (date unknown) from the Suzy Oakes Collection in the possession of the Mill Road History Society shows the mural in colour:



Figure 90 — The first mural in colour – designed and painted by pupils from Coleridge Community College (SO: 190-mr-bridge-mural-ah)

c: Reclaim the Streets, Saturday 14 September 1996

Just over ten years later, Reclaim the Streets staged a protest event in Mill Road centring on the bridge. Reclaim the Streets is a global collective environmental organisation with a shared ideal of community ownership of public spaces. Vehicular traffic is viewed as obstructing the streets and preventing peaceful community use of the space. Non-violent events are held in which the participants take over the road space and prevent access to any traffic, other than pedestrian. The movement in the UK appears to have begun in Brixton in the early 1990s, with events in 1996 taking place in London, Brighton, Birmingham and Liverpool, as well as in Mill Road.

The Cambridge Cycling campaign was not part of the organisation, but one of its members, 'Debbie', wrote an account of her experience,³¹ which is reproduced in full in Appendix 5, below.

About five hundred people, some from as far away as Somerset [...], set off from outside the station at about 1.30, watched by interested travellers, a police helicopter and numerous officers on the ground, one of them videoing the proceedings. Led by strange creatures on stilts or with sunshine heads, we processed through the car park, along Devonshire Road and over Mill Road railway bridge, where we found someone on top of a tripod of scaffolding poles.

³¹ www.camcycle.org.uk/newsletters/8/article6.html.



Figure 91 — Reclaim the Streets event 1996
(from Debbie's report in *Camcycle Newsletter* 8)

Debbie's account continues:

The plan was apparently to carry on down Mill Road to the junction with Perne Road, but in the event those who'd gone on ahead came back, and the party took place outside the Lord Beaconsfield [*sic*] pub. People put down their rugs, cushions and even armchairs, and sat or lay down in the road; others enjoyed just walking up and down the middle of the road in safety, or the ever-popular dancing in the street. An attempt to set up a children's activities area was for some reason discouraged by the police.

Nor was the action all at ground-level. As well as the aforementioned stylite,³² later joined by a fish, several people shinned up lamp-posts to hang banners, and others danced on the roofs of houses and shops. Local residents yelled football results out of their windows to the police below. An occasional smile was even seen from these latter, although they must have been sweltering in their full riot gear and overalls as they stood shoulder to shoulder, five deep, at the out-of-town end of the party. Apparently their excuse for this massive over-reaction was that they had been warned of a right-wing counter demonstration (if so, this never materialised), or alternatively that the organisers hadn't told them how many people were coming (spontaneity? Never heard of it, madam).

³² The allusion is probably to 'someone on top of a tripod of scaffolding poles' in the previous quoted passage.



Figure 92 — Reclaim the Streets (Debbie's report)

'Debbie' claims that the police presence was heavy with 'officers [bussed] in from Bedfordshire (twelve mini-buses and a black maria were seen on the streets), Parkside police station [barricaded], and the aforementioned helicopter in the air all the night before at a rumoured cost of £1,000 an hour.'

It is this aspect of the event which concerned the *Cambridge Evening News*, whose report two days later is headlined 'MP to quiz police chief after demo'. Its report states that:

Police ended the protest by environmental group Reclaim the Streets, which saw Mill Road closed for five hours, in force. Waves of riot police charged at around 200 protestors who stayed on when asked to leave [...] Thirty-six people were arrested as police came under attack from a hail of beer cans and bottles during a tense stand off on the Mill Road Railway Bridge. [MP Anne Campbell, questioning the size of the police presence, told the *News*:] I think it highly questionable when you have only a small number of trouble makers, particularly when people are crying out for more regular policing in the city. (*CEN* 16 Sep 1996)



Tall order . . . police, demonstrators and residents mingle in the September sunshine at the demo, during which there were 36 arrests.

Picture: Phil Mynott. 71249624

MP to quiz police chief

Figure 93 — Reclaim the Streets: view from Romsey towards the bridge (*CEN* 16 Sep 1996)

The story ran for a further ten days with a balance of letters and comments from some supporting the police's actions and condemning the event, and others supporting the campaign and claiming that the report above was exaggerated, and that the 'demo was goodhearted even as riot police charged' (*CEN* 24 Sep 1996).

Two correspondents who have been in touch with the Mill Road History Society feel rather differently about the event:

[MC comments:] The bridge was blocked for hours so the buses couldn't get into town, I was marooned in my neighbourhood. Mill Road was claimed – taken over, not reclaimed – by people who had travelled in from elsewhere for the event. The result was limitation of movement for local people, much worse than anything caused by motor vehicle traffic [...] I think I tried to get over the bridge on my bike but couldn't. The atmosphere wasn't that friendly either – much more self-righteous and shouty. I wish the police had acted much sooner to clear the obstruction of the highway.

[EG recalls:] I was sitting quietly in my house when a friend called saying 'Come on, they've taken over the street!' What happened was the residents from the Housing Co-op had brought out their furniture so we sat on top of the bridge on sofas and armchairs drinking the bottle of wine she'd brought and watching everything that was going on. We went to Balv's, maybe for a second bottle of wine, and outside was a freckled American teenager holding a placard saying 'Beneath this sidewalk is the ocean.' I think of that often when I pass Balv's.

A video of the event can be found on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpgrH1I3IRI>.

d: The 1997 Mural

The year after this event, the mural on the bridge that was completed in 1985 was deemed in need of renewal. The newspaper announced that:

Mill Road railway bridge will be taking on an eye-catching 'abstract' look during the spring [...] Students from Coleridge College with a little financial help from the Council, will spend their Easter holidays painting on the metal sides of the bridge. Years ago their college predecessors did the same thing but time and the weather have taken their toll and the murals are fading. The [new] murals will be even more exciting according to Councillor Ratcliff. [...] 'It's a bit difficult to describe really but it's very bright and I suppose you could call it abstract', he said. [...] The design was chosen unanimously by a committee of councillors, Railtrack officials and Mill Road Traders. (*CEN* 6 Jan 1996)



Young artists . . . part of the college paint squad at work. From left, Becky Roach, Ruth McPhee, Laura Pearson and Helen Coyle.

Picture: Tony Jedrej. 2933974.

Figure 94 — Coleridge Community College artists at work in 1997 (*CEN* 4 Apr 1997)

The article accompanying the photograph above explains that the 'The mural is painted in the style of Spanish Surrealist painter Jean Miro. The designs celebrate science on one side of the road and art on the other. The 14- and 15-year-old pupils [...] wanted the art to recognise two subjects in which Cambridge excels':



Figure 95 — 1997 Mural: ceremony (*CEN* 15 May 1995)

The mural was 'opened' by City Planner Penelope Hird, who was faced with a lengthy problem when asked to arrange the official 'opening' of a 36-metre- (120ft-) long mural painted on both sides of Mill Road Railway Bridge. [...] 'In the end I went out and bought about 40 metres of coloured tape which can be tied at both ends of the mural.' Pupils 'received a CD/cassette player from Railtrack and some books from the City Council for use in the College art department' (*CEN* 15 May 1997).

A photograph in the possession of the Mill Road History Society shows the mural after its completion. The date of the photograph is unknown.



Figure 96 — 1997 Mural (photo: Ann Horn: SO: 190-mr-bridge-mural2-ah-0998)

e: The 2006 Mural

Just under ten years later the bridge was repainted. There are no newspaper reports of the preamble to this, and the best account so far of the painting is as follows:³³

Young people from the Castle Project (Richmond Fellowship) and the Youth Foyer (English Churches Housing) [...] both entered a design competition and the winners were chosen by members of the public in Mill Road back in July. Both the winning designs focus on diversity. Sally Parkinson (project organiser) has lived in the Romsey area for the last ten years and felt that the bridge was a great landmark and a focus point for the area, and that it needed new art work that reflected the community. Sharon Kaur, one of the artists [north side], got the idea for her design from all the different nationalities that live together along Mill Road. Gemma Crabtree said about her design: 'I just wanted to paint something that people saw in the morning on their way to work that would make them smile.'

Sally Parkinson acknowledged:

We have had great support from local businesses down Mill Road who have supplied the work team with lunches. Johnstones Leyland donated all the paint needed to paint the bridge and Travis Perkin also supplied free materials. The council have also been very supportive. Adrian Morre from Streetscene helped with the cleaning and preparation of the bridge and Stephen McGuire (Highway Maintenance) supplied us with all the paint brushes. The Project has been a great success and the team have been so dedicated to making the bridge look splendid – it looks fantastic.

³³ For the full account, see <http://www.rf-castle.co.uk/castle-service-mill-road-bridge-and-the-olympic-torch/>.



Figures 97 — Mill Road Bridge before the facelift³⁴

Sharon Kaur, mentioned above, was asked by Suzy Oakes to write about her work in the programme of the 2009 Mill Road Winter Fair; the full text can be seen in Appendix 6. She was interviewed briefly on the bridge by Caro Wilson (author of this report) before the march to oppose the 2016 City Bid proposals for Mill Road on 6 October 2016.



Figure 98 — Sharon Kaur with mural (photo: Caro Wilson, 2016)

In conversation she added that she had for personal reasons ended up homeless in Cambridge in 2006, living with the Cambridge Youth Foyer. On hearing of the project, she thought 'This will keep me grounded.' She added:

Walking around [Mill Road] I thought this is true diversity like our governments are going on about, not like places in London or Birmingham where you don't see a lot of mixture of people. [...] I really liked drawing irises at the time and I thought actually despite having different eye colours we all have the round shape, it's just on the outside we're different. I really wanted to incorporate flags so that children could point out and say 'This is my parents' flag' and people saying 'Oh we're included; we're part of the community' and so that's how I came up with the idea. I've heard other ideas, people saying what they think it is. I like that people have different ideas about what it could be. It's left open ended where everyone can see what they want

³⁴ From <http://www.rf-castle.co.uk/castle-service-mill-road-bridge-and-the-olympic-torch/>.

to see. [Recording in author's possession]³⁵



Figures 99 — 2016 artwork with artists (above: north side; below: south side)

The *Cambridge Evening News* of the 21 August 2006 reported the opening event:³⁶

³⁵ Several photographs of the work in progress are to be found on <http://www.rf-castle.co.uk/castle-service-mill-road-bridge-and-the-olympic-torch/>.

³⁶ A colour photograph of the same event is to be found on <http://www.rf-castle.co.uk/castle-service-mill-road-bridge-and-the-olympic-torch/>.

Brightening up the walk to work

CEN 21.8.2006

TEAM EFFORT: Youngsters from the Castle project look on as artists Gemma Crabtree and Sharon Kaur unveil the new-look Mill Road Bridge. Picture: Warren Gunn 355170.



YOUNGSTERS have spruced up Mill Road Bridge with a lick of paint to represent the area's multi-cultural community. Following a competition by two youth housing groups, winning artists were chosen to paint their designs. Sally Parkinson, project

organiser, has lived in Romsey for the past 10 years, and said: "I was going to work one October morning across Mill Bridge when I thought what an amazing opportunity it would be for our young people and the local community to work together to create a new look for the

Romsey area." Sharon Kaur, who painted the bridge, was inspired by the different nationalities living along Mill Road. She said: "I believe that sometimes people see too much in things, rather than thinking about what's happening in other

parts of the world. Look at life on Mill Road. There is no racism here and no chaos." Gemma Crabtree, another chosen painter, said: "I just wanted to paint something that people saw in the morning on the way to work that would make them smile"

Figure 100 — Opening ceremony (left: Gemma Crabtree, right: Sharon Kaur) (CEN 21 Aug 2006)



Figure 101 — Opening ceremony (left: Sharon Kaur, right: Gemma Crabtree)

f: Mill Road Winter Fair 2005 to Present Day



Figure 102 — Poster for the first Mill Road Winter Fair 2005 (designer unknown)³⁷

The following brief history of the Mill Road Winter Fair was written by a 'Petersfield resident' who was, in fact, Suzy Oakes, a beloved member of the Mill Road community, without whom the Fair would never have become the hugely popular annual event it now is.³⁸

During the summer of 2005 a local resident from Petersfield, a local trader who represented the Mosque, some people from the Hindu Temple at Bharat Bhavan, and a trader, and a resident of Romsey formulated the idea of Mill Road Winter Fair. It was designed to celebrate the variety of cultures represented by the residents and traders of the Mill Road area and the unique atmosphere of the place. They all met and agreed to work together as an unincorporated association and plan the union of both sides of the bridge in over a mile of events. A constitution was drawn up, a bank account opened and a Committee was formed, with representation from both sides of the bridge. The Committee successfully applied for a grant from the City Council. Work then began to try to persuade traders, residents and venues along Mill Road to participate. In the first year a local IT company donated a website, mill-road.com and the programme for the Fair was published online. On the 30th November 2005 the *Cambridge Weekly News* printed an article that contained the full programme. The first Fair stretched, even then, from Petersfield on East Road to Romsey Mill. It comprised 40 venues, 28 in Petersfield and 12 in Romsey.³⁹

For the purposes of this history of the bridge the crucial year was 2009 when for the first time a section of the road including the bridge was closed to traffic for the duration of

³⁷ From <http://millroadwinterfair.org/2005-photos/page/1>.

³⁸ Readers are referred to the website <http://www.millroadwinterfair.org> for more details and photographs.

³⁹ From <https://millroadwinterfair.org/history-2005-2009>.

the Fair. Just being able to walk across the bridge in the middle of the road was a delight to many who sent messages to the Fair committee that year.



Figure 103 — The 2009 Fair with road closure (photo: courtesy of Chris Perceval)⁴⁰

In 2011 Suzy Oakes died prematurely of cancer, and during the Fair that year the bridge was the focal point of 'Shh for Suzy', a commemorative event organised by Kay Blayney, then of Parkside School. Immediately after the opening by the Mayor, assisted by sixth formers from Parkside and the Fair committee, people were encouraged to stand in the middle of the road holding hands to form a human chain starting from the bridge and stretching in both directions towards Romsey and Petersfield. At the sound of a horn a minute's silence began, and this was brought to an end by a jazz band on top of the bridge playing 'When the Saints go Marching in'.

⁴⁰ <https://millroadwinterfair.org/2009-photos/page/3>



Figure 104 — 'Shh for Suzy', MRWF 2011 (photo: Alison McTaggart)



Figure 105 — 'Shh for Suzy', MRWF 2011 (photo: Simon Fraser⁴¹)

This section ends with some of the photographs of the bridge during the Fair up to the present day. All photographs are from <http://www.millroadwinterfair.org>. Not all photographs are attributed.

⁴¹ Simon Fraser's band played on the bridge to signal the end of the event. A video of people lining the bridge in tribute to Suzy as her funeral hearse drove by can be found on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yczob6jMbrY>.



Figures 106 — left: molly dancer, 2013; right: busking, 2013 (photos: Adam Cash, Matt Widgery)



Figures 107 — Yarn-bombing the railings, north side, 2015



Figures 108 — left: towards Romsey; right: towards Petersfield, both 2016



Figure 109 — Fire engine pull to top of bridge 2016

g: The Olympic Torch, 2012

The Olympic Games were hosted by Great Britain in 2012 with the opening ceremony held in the Olympic Stadium, London on 27 July. Leading up to this, a specially designed torch had been carried throughout the United Kingdom, starting at Lands End on 1 March.

On 20 March 2012 the *Cambridge News* announced the torch's planned route through the City of Cambridge:

The Flame will arrive in Cambridge on Day 50, the 7th of July, and will depart the following morning, Sunday 8th July. After arriving from Newmarket, the Flame will begin its route through Cambridge on the evening of the 7th of July, when it will be carried west along Newmarket Road before turning onto Barnwell Road and Brooks Road at around 6pm. It will then turn onto Mill Road to make its approach towards the city centre.

Crowds turned out on Mill Road to view the event. The torch bearer from the top of the bridge to Petersfield was Christine Ilman.⁴²

⁴² A YouTube video shot at the top of the bridge, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zfWU9zwXAY>, shows Torch Bearer 115 Christine Ilman, receiving the torch from the as yet unidentified bearer 114. The YouTube video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qC5OMFk4_i4 shows the sponsors' vehicles coming down the bridge into Petersfield, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEOSWggw778> shows Christine Ilman coming down the same route. Christine's nomination reads: **Name:** Christine Ilman | **Age:** 62 | **From:** Cambridge | **Nomination Story:** Christine was a truly outstanding breaststroke swimmer, ranking 4th in the world, representing Great Britain in two Olympic and Commonwealth Games. She won a scholarship to study under a National US coach, starting her career at the University of Alabama. On her return to the UK she taught at The Leys School for 22 years and was also Head Coach of Cambridge City Swim Club. She set up an elite squad at the club, producing a clutch of national age group champions. She produced outstanding results year after year, winning the Aldenham Cup for the school. Christine is an inspirational coach who has the ability to get the best out of all levels of swimmer from beginners to the elite. Twelve years ago

h: Visualising Mill Road, 2013

The project 'Visualising Mill Road' took place August–September 2013 in order to collect 'community data' and visualise the results as street art. It was created and run by Dr Lisa Koeman, Dr Vaiva Kalnikaite and Professor Yvonne Rogers from ICRI Cities at University College London, and involved many of the shops in both Romsey and Petersfield. Using a 'smiley voting device' on the counter of a given shop, a different question was asked every other day and customers' responses were collected, the results being chalked on the pavement outside the shop.⁴³

One of the project's aims was to explore the perceived divide between Romsey and Petersfield, the two halves of Mill Road, and ask whether the divide was real or imagined. As such it was fitting that at the end of the project the final results were painted on the pavement of the bridge which at the same time unites and divides the two wards.



Figure 110 — Results being painted on the bridge (photo: Lisa Koeman)⁴⁴

she set up a swim teaching programme at The Leys which now has over 300 children enrolled from in and around Cambridge. In her retirement Christine Ilman continues to teach and coach young people. For more details, see: <http://www.heart.co.uk/cambridge/news/cambridge-torch-route-saturday/>.

⁴³ A full report is to be found on <https://visualisingmillroad.com/> and [http://lisakoeman.nl/publications/CHI_2015 - Distributed approach small.pdf](http://lisakoeman.nl/publications/CHI_2015_-_Distributed_approach_small.pdf).

⁴⁴ From <https://visualisingmillroad.com/>.

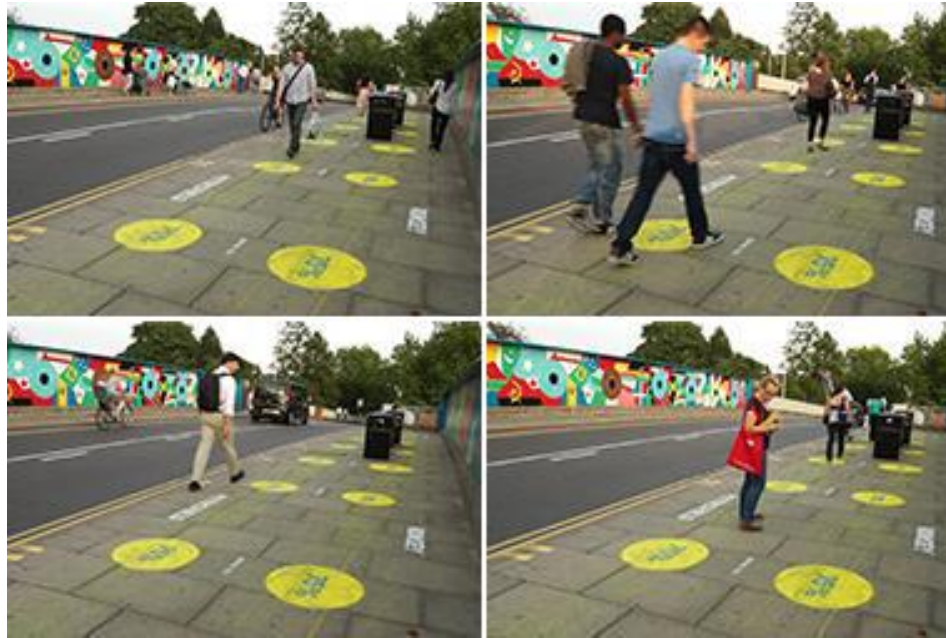


Figure 111 — Results painted on the bridge (photo: Lisa Koeman)⁴⁵

Dr Koeman writes of the results:

The perceived divide within the Mill Road community, that we originally set out to investigate, proved to be real. The votes gathered via the novel devices showed a consistent difference in answers from the Petersfield and the Romsey side of Mill Road, with Romsey continuously scoring more positively. The most striking disparity was revealed when the 'I feel happier on this side of the bridge' statement was displayed on the devices, which 63% of all voting customers and shopkeepers in the Petersfield area agreed with, compared to 87% in Romsey. These results therefore suggest that the divide between the two areas, which makes many local residents not want to cross over to the other side, is not just a perceived divide; it appears to be real.⁴⁶

i: A Bench for Suzy, 2015

On 24 May 2015, thanks to great generosity from Professor Sir Steven O'Rahilly, Suzy's former husband, and from the City Council, a bench was installed at the top of the bridge on the south side in memory of Suzy Oakes. Suzy's bench replaced an earlier one from City Council stock with no dedication plaque.

Friends, family and members of the Mill Road Community gathered to drink to Suzy's memory and to celebrate all she did for Mill Road.

⁴⁵ From http://lisakoeman.nl/publications/CHI_2015_-_Distributed_approach_small.pdf.

⁴⁶ From http://lisakoeman.nl/publications/CHI_2015_-_Distributed_approach_small.pdf.



Figures 112 — A gathering for Suzy Oakes, 24 May 2015 (photos: Steve Linford)



Figure 113 — Suzy's bench at the top of the bridge (photo: Caro Wilson 2016)

The dedication plaque reads:⁴⁷

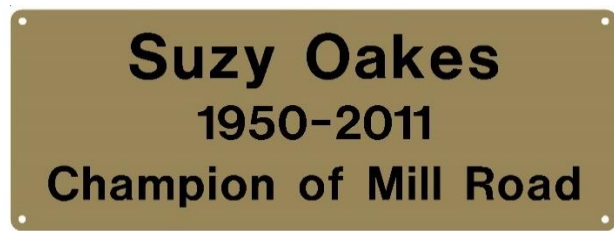


Figure 114 — Plaque on Suzy's bench (photo: Dave Bradford, 2015)

j: Protest March from the Bridge to Parker's Piece, 6 October 2016

Between 11 July and 10 October 2016, The Greater Cambridge Partnership, formerly known as the Greater Cambridge City Deal,⁴⁸ launched a consultation for their eight-point plan to tackle peak-time congestion in Cambridge. Among other ideas there were proposals for 'Peak-Time Congestion Control Points'. These were to be similar to virtual bollards or control points, which would permit only buses, cycles and taxis to pass free of charge during morning and evening peak rush hours. All other traffic would face a £60 fine each time the points were crossed. The stated aim was to allow public transport to be more reliable and to persuade through-traffic not to take any inner-city routes. One set of peak-time congestion points was to be sited on the Mill Road railway bridge. There is an extraordinary similarity between this plan and the infamous traffic lights of the early 1980s.

Many Mill Road organisations and residents were concerned about the impact this part of the plan would have on local businesses and traders, on health and social care workers, teachers, school children and working mothers, people with disabilities, home service deliverers and so on. It was particularly worrying to discover that there had been no preliminary survey of traffic in Mill Road to establish just how much 'through-traffic' there actually was. Again, the reader is reminded of the situation in the 1980s.

Soon after a public consultation meeting at the Salvation Army Centre on Saturday 1 October, the Mill Road Traders' Association, led by Shapour Mefta, Abdul Arain and Piero D'Angelico, organised a protest march starting at the bridge and ending on Parker's Piece. The march, called by some sections of the media 'The Slowdown Showdown', took place early in the morning of Thursday 6 October and was well attended. Trader and residents' groups from other parts of city also marched and met the Mill Road group at Parker's Piece.

⁴⁷ For more about Suzy Oakes, see <https://millroadwinterfair.org/suzy-oakes/>.

⁴⁸ The Greater Cambridge Partnership is a partnership of the Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridge District Council, The Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership and the University of Cambridge.



Figure 115 — Protest March, 6 Oct 2016 (photo: Warren Gunn, *Cambridge News*)

Two videos showing scenes of the march from its starting point on the bridge to Parker's Piece can be viewed at the following links:

<https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/watch-city-deal-demonstrators-take-12018299> (*Cambridge News*, 0:40)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQzEXnjyHbY> (Mill Road TV: John Caldwell, with interviews, 14:18)

When the results of the consultation were announced, it was clear that the peak-time congestion points were unpopular throughout the city. The City Deal promised it would reconsider, and the latest proposals contain no such suggestions.

k: A Plan for the Future: The Chisholm Cycling Trail



Figure 116 — Official map of Chisholm Trail⁴⁹

Writing in January 2010, Jim Chisholm, a campaigner for better transport in Cambridge, remembers writing, some ten years previously, about a plan for what he called a 'Cycle Super-highway' along the rail corridor through Cambridge. This would suggest a 'start date' for the idea of about the year 2000. Readers of this report will now recognise that there is nothing new about a long lead-in time before any plans affecting the bridge come to fruition.

The proposed cycle/pedestrian pathway is designed to link the new Cambridge North railway station with the main Cambridge railway station. It has become known as the Chisholm Trail, although Jim Chisholm says:⁵⁰

Of course I didn't call it 'The Chisholm Trail', which was in fact a route used to take cattle to a railhead for slaughter in Chicago, but that's what the *Newsletter* editor called it and the name stuck.

The portion of the trail that will affect the bridge is outlined in The Greater Cambridge Partnership's report 'Chisholm Trail Background', which states that the proposal:⁵¹

is to continue the path through the currently unused arches of Mill Road Bridge on both northern and southern sides, avoiding any road hazards. The route would run between the railway

⁴⁹ See 'Cambridge's cycle superhighway is almost a reality', *Cambridge News*: <https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/chisolm-trail-cambridge-cycle-superhighway-13696527>.

⁵⁰ See Jim Chisholm, 'The Chisholm Trail – ten years on', *Camcycle Newsletter* 87 (Dec 2009/Jan 2010): www.camcycle.org.uk/newsletters/87/article8.html. The original Chisolm Trail in North America was a trail used in the nineteenth century to drive cattle overland from the railway in Texas to the railway in Kansas. It was named after Jesse Chisholm (c.1805–68) who scouted out and developed the trail.

⁵¹ See <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/transport/transport-projects/chisholm-trail/chisholm-trail-background/>.

line and boundary fencing along tracks that are currently used for works vehicles. In this area, fencing and new gates for Network Rail maintenance access will be needed to ensure safety.

A photograph from the Camcycle *Newsletter* referenced above looks down from the bridge towards the land in question.



Figure 117 — Potential pathway for Chisholm Trail

The above photograph is taken from the south-western side of Mill Road bridge, looking down the restricted-access staircase, with 'The Works' and Railway Cottages on the right, and Cambridge railway station ahead in the distance. It shows the area of land directly south of the spare arch under the bridge (see Figure 118 below), which could be a valuable link on the proposed Chisholm Trail.



Figure 118 — The unused arch under the west side of the bridge⁵²

⁵² From Camcycle *Newsletter* 17 <https://www.camcycle.org.uk/newsletters/17/article15.html>.

This arch is very likely that which used to be left open for the doctor at Gothic Cottage to reach the track quickly in the event of accidents, in the days when Cyril Stannard worked on the railways (see quotation in chapter 6b, above).

It is good news that the Greater Cambridge Partnership has stated its commitment to the delivery of the Chisholm Trail and has allocated £8.4m of City Deal funding to it. Preliminary works were expected to start in March 2018, but a recent statement from the Partnership now reports:

The Carillion Tarmac Partnership is the appointed contractor to provide design and construction advice for the first phase of the Chisholm Trail and the Abbey-Chesterton Bridge ahead of works which are due to begin in March.

As a result of Carillion's collapse on 15 January, we are working to understand its impact on progress and timescales but with a view to maintaining delivery of this important scheme as swiftly as possible.

We will provide further information as soon as the next steps have been finalised.⁵³

Access to and from the trail for Petersfield is likely to be in what will be the newly developed Mill Road City Council Depot site (once the site of Gothic Cottage, The Limes and Hedley's Eagle Foundry, which featured so large in the debate about the 1889 bridge). On the Romsey side:

a new ramp might be needed to join the Trail to the Carter Bridge. Accesses to the Trail could be created from William Smith Close and Argyle Street.⁵⁴

⁵³ See <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/transport/transport-projects/chisholm-trail/>.

⁵⁴ See previous footnote.

CONCLUSION

This has been a lengthy report, stretching as it does from the 1840s to the present day. The coming of the railway in 1845 transformed Mill Road. The laying of railway tracks across what was then little more than a country path changed it for ever, giving rise to its development as the road we know today and to the communities that formed on either side of those tracks.

Each attempt to accommodate the tracks, to facilitate their crossing safely and without delay, no matter whether on foot, on horseback, with cart, by bicycle, car, van or lorry, caused lengthy planning processes and much discussion and controversy. The amount of time taken reflects the importance of what was, and still is at stake, namely the very nature of day-to-day living in this part of the city. Also reflected are the social and economic concerns of the times, whether in the 1840s, the 1870s, the 1890s, the 1980s, or in our own twenty-first-century times. In some ways those concerns differ greatly; in others they are strikingly similar.

The bridge now, and no doubt the bridges before, has become not just part of the landscape but also part of the community, affecting not just how we travel but how we think about where we live and how we define who we are.

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APPENDIX 1

The 1887 debate about the diversion of Mill Road

Note: This appendix amplifies the discussion in the main text of the proposed diversion of Mill Road, as given in chapter 5c above and portrayed in the documents CA: QRun 111 Mill Road Plans.

No evidence has been found as to the reactions of the town's authorities when they first saw what to the present-day reader are the extraordinary plans by the Great Eastern Railway to divert Mill Road in order to avoid encroaching on the Hedly⁵⁵ land.

However they proceeded to establish their case opposing the bill, and the debate in Parliament certainly covers the diversion in detail. See below.

The Parliamentary Committee (see p. 35, footnote 12) asks for a Statement of Facts, and CB/2/CL/10/29/31, dated 17 January 1887, gives a good summary of the 1875 Act and what followed, together with a summary of negotiations since that date. It concludes:

The points agreed as objectionable (inter alia) are as follows:

1. The Commissioners and Corporation object to contribute at all to the cost of the Bridge proposed to be erected.
2. Also to the diversion of the road for the proposed New Bridge.

These points are amplified in 'THE HUMBLE PETITION of THE MAYOR ALDERMEN and BURGESSES of the Borough of Cambridge in the County of Cambridge under their Common Seal'.

12. Your Petitioners very strongly object to the liability to contribute to the cost of the said diversion which will be imposed upon them should the Bill pass into law in its present form. The said diversion is proposed by the Company for the purpose of facilitating their traffic and the expense thereof ought to be borne by them. Your petitioners submit that it would be inequitable and contrary to the ordinary practice of Parliament that the ratepayers of Cambridge should be compelled to contribute to the cost of a work undertaken by the Company for their own advantage and without the consent of your petitioners.

13. The said diversion is badly designed and open to many objections. The road when diverted will be carried over the Company's line by a bridge to which on each side will have a gradient of 1 in 20 and its approaches will be less than 25 feet in width. By reason of the narrowness of the roadway and steepness of the gradient the traffic passing along Mill Road will be inconvenienced and obstructed. Your petitioners submit that the said diversion should be sanctioned (if at all) only on condition that the roadway should not be less than 30 feet in width and the steepness of the gradient should be reduced.

The petition of the Improvement Commissioners covers the same points whilst insisting the bridge should be in line with the present road and that the Great Eastern Railway should be responsible for the maintenance of the roadway as well as the bridge and its approaches. Also submitted are the summaries of evidence to be given by some of the witnesses for the Corporation and Commissioners, Mr Moyes (Surveyor), Mr Law (Civil

⁵⁵ The surname should be spelt without an 'e', but in many documents, including those below it is often mistranscribed. For the loss of some of his property, see chapter 5, section d, above, and for further information, see Appendix 2, below.

Engineer), Mr Wood (Surveyor), and Mr Maltby, whose traffic survey we examined earlier. Neither of the petitions is dated.

During the Parliamentary Hearing

The Select Committee of Parliament needed to decide in relation to Mill Road whether the necessity for the railway to build new sidings there meant that it should bear the whole cost of the bridge or whether a contribution should be expected from the Corporation and Improvement Commission because the new bridge would materially advantage the area. The Committee also needed to determine the positioning of the bridge but, on this latter point, there is no evidence as to their decision. Full transcripts of the proceedings of the Parliamentary Committee from Friday 18 to Wednesday 23 March 1887 survive as CA: CB/2/CL/10/29/39–44.

Much material relevant to Mill Road is covered as both sides present their cases and their witnesses, and as they face questioning; the history of the 1875 Act, the concerns about the current footbridge and crossing, about the proposed diversion, and forecasts as to the likely increase of traffic with the development of the Cement Works and yet more housing. This appendix will highlight some of the verbal exchanges believed to be of most interest to the general reader, but anyone requiring more detail is referred to the documents above.

On cost

On Friday 18 March 1887, Mr Saunders (for the Great Eastern Railway) rehearses the argument for thinking they nearly had agreement in 1885 and concludes:

All we say now is that they should bear one third limiting the cost to £5000. I am free to admit that the cost of improvement in 1887 will be greater than it would have been in 1875. Land has been built on since then. Land has become more valuable and will cost more money but their rating powers have increased too. Where there were 40 houses there are 500 now and it is only reasonable that as the demand for land has changed and the circumstances have changed the legislation (ie of 1875) should change and that throwing upon them one third of the cost is only a fair equivalent for half the cost of that time. (CB/2/CL/10/29/39)

On the proposed diversion

The Company was closely questioned about the proposed diversion of the road, and it becomes clear that this is solely a matter of expense to avoid the cost of compensation that would be payable to James Ind Hedly.

On Monday 21 March Mr John Wilson, the Great Eastern Railway engineer, was questioned by Mr Ledgard about the plans:

4390: Since 1875 and of late years there has grown up a very much larger amount of population in the neighbourhood than there was formerly?—Yes

4391: On both sides of the Railway?—Yes

4392: Particularly on the far side; that is on the northern side?—Yes

4393: Upon that plan all the land coloured green [south side] is the property of the railway company?—It is.

4394: What else is there on the northern side? I see a large place at the corner with hatch lines across it; that is no. 11 on the plan?—That is Mr Hedley's house – a very nice house – and also an iron foundry. It is a very extensive property

4395: It is a fine place.—Yes, with very lovely grounds and nice shrubs round it.

4395A: It has siding accommodation to the railway?—Yes

4396: What are the two properties next to them?—There is a large coprolite factory. — Is it in connection with the iron-foundry?—Yes, it is in connection with the iron foundry.

4397: Is it a large block of property running back a long depth – along way?—Yes, a considerable distance it goes back.

4398: Then again I see on the eastern side, by Kingston Street there is another block; what sort of houses are they?—Private residences, small villa residencies.

4399. One of the considerations is this; you do not interfere by the proposed diversion of Mill Road with the valuable property on the northern side.—That is so – that is the main point in fact. (CB/2/CL/29/41)

It should be noted that the Company believe that if they 'take' any part of Mr Hedly's business properties they will be under legal obligation to take (and purchase) the whole.

Mr. LEDGARD: Of course the Committee understand that if Mr. Headley chooses, he can compel us to take the whole of his works. If we touch a corner we shall be compelled, if the owner chooses, to take the lot; and you may be perfectly sure he would.

(CCh 25 March 1887)

There is some corroborative evidence for this in that the 1893 Railway Bill (about Coldham's Common) states, as if for the first time, that the Great Eastern Railway should be able to purchase only a certain portion of property if such a portion can in the opinion of the arbitrator 'be severed from the remainder of such buildings and property without material damage'. (CB/2/CL/10/29/47)

Again, on the proposed diversion:

The Chairman: I do not understand, Mr Ledgard, this point; supposing the bridge were made on a curve what is to happen to the present road?

Mr Cockerell: It is blocked up.

The Chairman: Whose property does it become?

Mr Ledgard: The level crossing will be stopped up but the rest of the road will remain open for access to the property. The diverted road will be for the through traffic across the level crossing – the level crossing will be stopped up and done away with.

Mr Blake: You make no claim to the road?

Mr Ledgard: No, we shall leave the road as it is.

The Chairman: And it will be a blind alley upon each side of the rail?

Mr Ledgard: Yes; it will be available for access to the properties upon each side but the passing traffic must go through the diverted road. (CB/2/CL/10/29/44)

The Chairman does not comment on any of the above but gives his decision on all the matters under debate (Hills Road, Coldham's Common, Mill Road) on Thursday 24 March. Unfortunately, the Cambridgeshire Archives do not appear to have a copy of the minutes of that session.

The main text takes up the history again at this point.

APPENDIX 2

An alternative design for the 1889 bridge

In response presumably to reading about the 8 April 1887 meeting of the Improvement Commissioners, a local architect, H G Elborne, wrote to the *Cambridge Chronicle* proposing his own solution. His letter was published on Friday 6 May 1887. As an alternative plan it is worth recording here, though of course none of it was ever put into effect. For the details in the third paragraph, see Figures 39 and 40 above.

Proposed Mill Road Bridge Over Railway

To the Editor Cambridge Chronicle

Sir- if you could spare me any space for a few lines on the Mill Road Bridge over the Railway I should be obliged. I have nothing to say about the disputed quota from the town towards the same; my remarks are intended to apply to the structure itself.

If I understand right, it is contemplated to divert the road from its present straight line to avoid a question or questions of damage; I think all would agree that if the present road could be retained in its directness and width it would be better for this and succeeding generations. To show that this is practical and nothing out of the common place, is my object in this letter.

When the bridge is being constructed over the present crossing on the Mill Road (should such hereafter be determined upon) let a covered way be left in the abutment of the bridge, opposite to Mr Hedley's present gate, about 10 feet wide and the same in height, and covered in with a segmental brick arch to carry roadway overhead; to accommodate Mr Hedley's traffic. Take a piece off the front gardens of the GER cottages, say 12 feet wide, to run along the embankment as a road to the foot of the incline, passing over with a crossing of granite setts; so that Mr Hedley's traffic could pass along this road through the covered way on the level. I am informed he would have no objection to this arrangement. His own private approach could be maintained by a flight of steps from a gate in the parapet wall down to the level of his garden.

Any arrangement such as the above or the contemplated diversion of the road will necessitate the purchase and taking down of Morcombe House – that seems inevitable; the land for the proposed roadway to Mr Hedley's is already GER property. The gate of approach to the villa next to Mr Hedley's will have to be shifted to the other corner of front garden, out of the way of the incline.

H.G. Elborne, Architect

APPENDIX 3

A Mill Road Story from 1959

(John Sansom sent this story, having heard about the Mill Road History Society from a friend.)

Mill Road, Cambridge, June 1959

It's a beautiful sunny evening and I'm going to take my new girlfriend for a ride in our 1935 Morris 8 which my Dad and I have bought between us for £35. I'm nineteen years old and passed my driving test last year.

We've driven through the town and now along Mill Road. Suddenly, halfway down the railway bridge, our nearside rear wheel comes off and the car drops onto the road on its brake drum. We skid to a halt. I get out hurriedly and standing on the pavement are two ladies, pointing.

'It's over there, over there, in the butcher's shop.'

The wheel has spun across the road, burst open the door of the shop and is standing up, leaning against the counter. The butcher, who has been preparing sausages out the back, appears and looks amazed.

My only cost for this incident was seventeen shillings and sixpence for a carpenter to repair the door of the shop.

Fast forward 35 years, to 1994

I am now vicar of a parish near Huntingdon. A young couple have come to see me to arrange their baby's baptism. I chat with them to help them relax and ask where they come from. We discover that we all come from Cambridge originally and the young man tells me his father owns a butcher's shop on Mill Road. Did I know it? I ask him if his father has ever mentioned the wheel of a car coming through the door of his shop. He laughs and says he's heard the story many times. I enjoy their amazement when they learn that the car was mine.

At the baptism of this young couple's baby I meet the butcher, and with much laughter and retelling of the story, we are reunited.

John Sansom

[The Mill Road History Society believes the butcher's shop in question may have been the London Central Meat Company, located at 166 Mill Road from 1928 to c. 1960, replaced by Baxter's 1962–69, and thereafter the Mandarin House restaurant.]

APPENDIX 4

Barry Hurst: The demolition of the 1889 Bridge

This appendix gives the reader an opportunity to read Barry Hurst's text as a complete narrative, and to view those of his photographs (in the Suzy Oakes Collection) that have not been used in the main report:

DEMOLITION OF THE OLD MILL ROAD BRIDGE

15TH-16TH November 1980

Work began early in the morning of Saturday 15th November setting up the 200 ton crane and carried on throughout the day until dusk with parts of the crane, gib structures and counter weights were arriving throughout the day on lorries.

On the bridge itself the work of cutting away the deck sections progressed. All this work was hampered by rain and sleet throughout the day. The crane was set up on the south east side of the bridge and lines. All rail traffic was restricted all day and early evening and stopped at night. The lift began about 8 pm and the first deck sections were removed. Watch was kept throughout the night by my mother and I and another gentleman and his mother – both in their 70 and 80's respectively.

Just a few people stopped and watched for a few minutes during the evening and night but the four watchers were constant. Both parties took time off to nip home for a warm, drink etc. During this time work was progressing slowly, torches blowing out in the wind and difficulty relighting them and difficulty releasing decking and underslung girders etc. The scene was lit with lighting units and the noise of compressors and drills mingled with the great clouds of yellow sparks from the cutting torches. Tea was brought up to the bridge gang at about 3.30-4.00 am - they had got about halfway across, a tough job indeed. The old girl put up a fair fight.

At 6 am the first faint light of dawn appeared. On the bridge one and a half pieces of decking to go. Home for tea and bacon sarnies at 6.45am - back in half an hour.

Last section of decking and under girders removed at approx. 9.00am on the 16th November. Extra weights and cables fitted on the crane for this lift and also for the sides of the bridge. A small crowd had gathered to watch the big one. Rain and sleet falling fast – cold wind. Wire cable passed through lattice work of bridge approx. 10 am – side one ready for lifting. Swung up and away.

Home for a bite to eat and wash etc,- back in half an hour with granny. Just in time to see side two removed. Both sides and decking were laid to rest on the ground at the side of the old band hall to await the torch. Approx. 28 hours to remove part of Romsey's past that had been a good servant for just over 100 years – still only a small crowd watched the end.

Barry Hurst 2014



(SO: 191-bh-bridge-demolition1b)



(SO: 191-bh-bridge-demolition2-1980c)



(SO: 191-bh-bridge-demolition3-1980a)



(SO: 191-bh-demolition3-1980b)



(SO: 191-bh-bridge-demolition3-1980c)



(SO: 191-bh-bridge-demolition3-1980d)

APPENDIX 5

Reclaim the Streets

Full text of 'Debbie's' article

The following article is accessible at www.camcycle.org.uk/newsletters/8/article6.html. The first paragraph is written by a member of the editorial team of the Camcycle organisation.

From *Newsletter 8* (September 1996)

What follows is an account by one of our members of the 'Reclaim The Streets' demonstration held in Cambridge. These events aren't 'organised' in a conventional manner, and this one certainly wasn't organised by the Campaign. However, we thought our members would be interested to hear one person's impressions.

Jonathan

The traditional warm sun (otherwise not much in evidence in Cambridge lately) shone on hundreds of merry-makers of all ages, shapes and sizes, and a ludicrously large number of police, at the Reclaim the Streets Cambridge street party last Saturday afternoon. About five hundred people, some from as far away as Somerset (and approximately one percent of them Cycling Campaign members – where were you all?), set off from outside the station at about 1.30, watched by interested travellers, a police helicopter and numerous officers on the ground, one of them videoing the proceedings. Led by strange creatures on stilts or with sunshine heads, we processed through the car park, along Devonshire Road and over Mill Road railway bridge, where we found someone on top of a tripod of scaffolding poles (another tripod having already been nicked by the constabulary). [See Figures 91–93, above.]

The plan was apparently to carry on down Mill Road to the junction with Perne Road, but in the event those who'd gone on ahead came back, and the party took place outside the Lord Beaconsfield pub. People put down their rugs, cushions and even arm-chairs, and sat or lay down in the road; others enjoyed just walking up and down the middle of the road in safety, or the ever-popular dancing in the street. An attempt to set up a children's activities area was for some reason discouraged by the police.

Music was provided by some excellent drummers, two sound systems (neither unfortunately arriving on the rumoured horse and cart), assorted whistles and horns, and a penny-whistle duet. People painted and pierced various parts of each others' bodies, and strung up banners across the road, including 'Mad car disease', 'Underneath the pavement is the beach', 'Stop the car-n-age', '<http://www.McSpotlight.org>' (an anti-McDonalds website), and 'More cars? You must be choking', this one held by two girls skipping through the throng. Others drew and painted on the road, not only slogans but flowers, leaves, footprints and a bike. The Beaconsfield and Balv's did a roaring trade,

while other shopkeepers brought chairs out into the sunshine to watch the fun (complaining the while, of course).

Nor was the action all at ground-level. As well as the aforementioned stylite, later joined by a fish, several people shinned up lamp-posts to hang banners, and others danced on the roofs of houses and shops. Local residents yelled football results out of their windows to the police below. An occasional smile was even seen from these latter, although they must have been sweltering in their full riot gear and overalls as they stood shoulder to shoulder, five deep, at the out-of-town end of the party.

Apparently, their excuse for this massive over-reaction was that they had been warned of a right-wing counter demonstration (if so, this never materialised), or alternatively that the organisers hadn't told them how many people were coming (spontaneity? Never heard of it, madam). [See Figure 93, above.]

Even so, one can hardly believe it was necessary to bus officers in from Bedfordshire (twelve mini-buses and a black maria were seen on the streets), barricade Parkside police station, or keep the aforementioned helicopter in the air all the night before at a rumoured cost of £1,000 of our money an hour. We were pleased to see they'd closed Mill Road at the swimming pool, and their presence at least looked a lot more relaxed at the town end of the proceedings, but not that only about half the officers in the human wall the other end were displaying their numbers.

It has to be said that, up until the time your correspondent wimped out at about 6.30, alas no longer able to party all day *and* all night, all the police had actually done was escort an old lady through the crowd with her suitcase, but they were certainly being there in an extremely intimidating manner. On the other hand, they responded very mildly to numerous minor attempts to wind them up. A couple of people were removed from the scene, but no arrests were apparently made.

Intimidation notwithstanding, hundreds of people had an extremely good time, and Mill Road was made a much more pleasant place for several hours. Why can't it be like this all the time? we wondered. The next morning, even Sunday now being spoiled by drivers exercising their divine right to shop, the noise and fumes and danger were back, but green banners still fluttered from lamp-posts, and smudged chalk footprints and a free-lance zebra crossing could be seen on the roadway of the bridge.

If you wished you hadn't missed it, there'll be another chance in Oxford on Hallowe'en. Meet at the Carfax Tower at 6pm.

Debby

Stop Press: It turns out that, soon after I left, the police decided it was time to stop the party, and arrested some forty people in the process. I guess it was too much to hope they might put all those resources into the day without doing something to 'justify' their presence. According to the *Cambridge Evening News* (Monday 16 September), our cycling MP is to ask the chief constable 'why the police commitment was so heavy'.

Debby

APPENDIX 6

Sharon Kaur's article in the 2009 MRWF programme

 Mill Road Winter Fa


Painting of the Bridge

BY SHARON KAUR

I moved to Cambridge on April 17th 2006. I did not know of Mill Road's existence until having walked on it. I soon realised that it was very different to other places in England. People were friendly to everyone. No matter the tone of one's skin. The manager of Cambridge Youth Foyer, where I had come to live, was encouraging the residents to try and design a mural on the Mill Road bridge. He gave me a rather long piece of paper and told me to draw on it.

For weeks I thought about what I wanted on my long piece of paper and hopefully on the bridge. I was always fascinated by wings and the iris of an eye. But what did they have to do with Mill Road? I was lost. I went into many different shops and met many nice people. All I knew was that I wanted to give a mes-

Eventually I drew the circles for the iris of the eyes. One night I sat with a night worker, Andrew at the foyer discussing the plans for the bridge, what I was going to do, and out of nowhere I just said, 'flags, I think I'm going to put flags on it,' and stunned by the idea myself, a vision began to form. That sorted, he asked me how I was going to put them on. What effects I was going to use. He suggested like a broken glass effect. That agreed, we made a list and little drawings of flags I knew of on top of my head and then we sized a few of them on to the paper. Andrew printed many different flags for me from the internet. The night staff helped me a lot during the time that I worked on it. Every morning, I would have a few pictures of flags waiting in my pigeon hole.

I was doing the Prince's Trust course at the time during the day light hours. Af-



Mill Road Winter Fair

hours every evening drawing the flags around the irises and colouring them all in as I went along. Some residents gave me colouring pencils and many encouraged me to carry on. My hands would hurt most nights as I went to bed but it was worth the effort because now it's on Mill Road.

Finally finished after two months of hard work, it was displayed on Mill Road amongst many other designs, for the Mill Road walkers to vote for their favourite design. My design got most votes. I was very pleased. I never thought that I had it in me to achieve something like that. Even today I smile when I walk on the bridge.

With the help of Castle project residents and Foyer residents, we managed to finish both sides in 6 days. They were very fun times. I would do those days over again. I tried to include every country that I possibly could. I am sorry if I didn't add a certain country. I simply had no space left.

I designed the Mill Road bridge for the people of Mill Road and surrounding areas. Something for them to smile about. We all come from some country. We are all human. We are the same. Mill Road is such a pleasant place that the bridge fits in very well. It's so different to the rest of Cambridge that the bright colours make it all the more brighter. ★

APPENDIX 7

Some Argyle Street Murals

Immediately to the southwest of the bridge on the Romsey side is the car park of the Argyle Street Housing Co-operative. The author of this report is very grateful to a correspondent, Brian Halls, who, responding to a request for material about the murals on the bridge, sent a link to this website:

https://www.google.co.uk/search?dcr=0&biw=1280&bih=551&tbm=is&sa=1&ei=JvOKWpz9JKHNgaGn7a4BQ&q=mill+road+bridge+graffiti&oq=mill+road+bridge+graffiti&s_l=psy-ab.12...6354.21604.0.25201.0.0.0.0.0.0.0..0.0....0...1c.1.64.psy-ab..0.0.0....0.KM0fADCUke8

The gallery to be found there includes some images of the painting of the 2006 mural on top of the bridge but also several from the wall of the car park. The reader is recommended to browse the website, but some photographs are reproduced here where the railings at the top serve to orientate the image. It has not been possible in all cases to date or attribute all the photographs.





Flickriver March 2016



Simonmreynolds November 2012



Stapico November 2017



simonmreynolds January 2018

Another mural (2013) can be seen behind Stumble Col in this YouTube video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbDAA7uUvBM>

APPENDIX 8

From the Mike Petty Scrapbook

This appendix presents references to the Mill Road bridge found in Mike Petty's A Cambridgeshire Mill Road Scrapbook 1897–1990, published online in 2016. The Scrapbook describes itself as presenting 'Over 3,000 pages and more than 20,000 facts, features and (occasional) fallacies reported in Cambridgeshire Newspapers between 1897 and 1990. A record of life and times in Cambridge and its region that is not recorded elsewhere.' The full scrapbook is to be found at:

<https://archive.org/details/CambridgeshireScrapbook18971990>

1909 01 22

The line near Cambridge station was blocked by a collision between two goods trains. One engine and four trucks were derailed and the goods thrown in all directions. One was completely overturned and its contents scattered over the line while others loaded with granite had the sides ripped open. The accident happened under Mill Road Bridge where a crowd of spectators watched the arduous task of clearing the line.

1914 10 23

Railway Tragedy. — A fatality occurred on the Great Eastern Railway line at Cambridge on Saturday, when a platelayer named William James Thurlow was knocked down by a truck while engaged in oiling points near Mill Road Bridge. Thurlow was working with a man named Jack Andrews, who was also knocked down and injured. Thurlow died after admission to hospital, and at an inquest the jury returned a verdict of 'accidental death.'

1926 02 26

Sir – as a business man obliged to use the railways I wish to draw attention to the lack of punctuality of trains from the St Ives branch at Cambridge station. The 8.25 pm is invariably anything from a quarter to half-an-hour late, generally waiting ten minutes at Mill Road bridge whilst room is being found to run up to the platform. There is a rumour that the Ortona Motor Bus Company is shortly linking up with the National Bus Company at St Ives. The railway companies grumble about road transport competition, but it is their own fault and they have a remedy by being more punctual with the passenger service – H.G. Parker

1934 11 12

Several hundred people joined in a peace meeting on Parker's Piece organised by the Cambridge Anti-War Council and the University Anti-War Movement before marching in a torchlight procession to the War Memorial. The procession, some 300 strong, began their march along Mill Road, increasing in size as it went along. But they missed the turning into Tenison Road and crossed Mill Road Bridge before winding its way round

the back streets to the War Memorial. They laid a wreath 'To those of all countries who fell in the last war from those who are pledged to prevent another'.

1941 01 31

Bombs next door ... Mill Road bombing – Creeping in from Ely at low level during the dull, dreary Thursday afternoon, it dropped nine 50 kg HEs at 15:57 straddling Mill Road Bridge. Bombs burst in the Corporation store yard, and No 130 Mill Road and the next house were shattered by a direct hit. Other bombs exploded in the rail yard.

Although the undershoot meant that the locomotive maintenance area escaped destruction, two civilians were killed and ten injured, for the bridge was being used by many pedestrians and cyclists at the time. (Michael Bowyer, 'Air Raid', p. 137) [In fact it is now thought that only one civilian was killed (CW).]

1952 02 09

Long before the arrival of the ten-coach funeral train bearing the body of King George VI, large crowds had gathered at the main vantage points along the line at Ely to pay their homage. At the station crossing hundreds of people assembled on both sides, whilst lines of traffic extended for some distance. Heads were bared as the train rolled smoothly through the station. Workmen who had given up part of their dinner hour and American servicemen were amongst the crowds. At the little village station of Waterbeach about 100 housewives, farmworkers and children gathered. A crowd of more than 800 people lined the marshalling yards on either side of Mill Road Bridge, Cambridge. The long black funeral coach, with all its windows blacked out, passed exactly on time. Queen Elizabeth II gazed pensively out of a carriage window as the train passed a group of railwaymen standing caps off near Hills Road Bridge.

1958 01 24

A derailment in the Coldham's Lane arrival sidings, visible from Mill Road Bridge, attracted a good deal of public attention yesterday. Engine, tender and three wagons of a goods train came off the rails while the train was moving at reduced speed into the sidings. The driver and firemen got clear but the guard suffered some facial bruises.

1984 01 30

Furious traders in Mill Road are drawing battle lines for a fight with the city council over traffic congestion. They claim trade has slumped and traffic conditions deteriorated since the council installed traffic lights at Mill Road bridge. Shopkeepers are fed up with constant jams and complaints from the customers who say it can take half an hour to drive from the old Maternity Hospital to their shops in Romsey town.

1984 02 27

The traffic lights at Mill Road Bridge could be turned off for good. It is a move which would delight thousands of Cambridge road users and please traders who claim their businesses have suffered. The lights were installed in June at the request of the city council traffic management team who were concerned about the rising accident rate.

They thought many vehicles were using it only as a short cut. But accidents have risen faster since they were put in and road users started an immediate outcry, complaining about long, frustrating delays.
