

Bridge Street, Cambridge in the last century by Enid Porter

It is always interesting to walk along an old street and, ignoring the modern shops and new buildings which may now occupy it, try to recall what once stood in their places. Bridge Street, in Cambridge, is especially worth such a mental exercise, for it retains much that is old as well as much that belongs to the present century.

On its east side the street begins at the corner of Jesus Lane. Here, at Nos. 1 and 2 is the motor accessories shop of Halford, Ltd., which, until only a few years ago, formed, with Nos. 3 and 4, the motor showrooms of Messrs. King & Harper. But long before that, No. 3 (now Jaeger's) was the Crown Inn, licensed as early as 1588, while No. 4 (now Record Fayre) was the Hoop Inn, renowned in coaching days.

On this same side of the street, adjoining the Round Church, were built, in 1866, the University Union Society's rooms, on the site of a courtyard surrounded by a dozen or so old houses known locally as "Parker's Rookery". The man who gave his name to the tenements acquired them some time after 1810, up to which year a Jewish service was held weekly in the courtyard in front of them.

The Union Society was enlarged in 1885, which meant the destruction of the George Hotel in Round Church Street, and of the Prince Albert which stood at the corner of the same street. The George Hotel had replaced an earlier inn of the same name at No. 12 Bridge Street, now part of P. H. Allin & Sons' cycle and electrical shops which, today, extend from No. 10 to No. 15. These buildings date from the 16th century and their future has been causing some concern to those interested in preserving what can be saved of early domestic architecture in Cambridge. Behind them is the functional but un-beautiful multi-deck car park, for the building of which Ram Yard and Round Church Street were much altered, and ancient houses in Jordan's Yard, between Nos. 13 and 14 Bridge Street, were demolished.

Along this part of the street, between the Round Church and St. Clement's, the hay market was held

until 1819, when it was moved to a piece of ground near Pound Hill.

No. 17 is now the Mitre Hotel, on the site of two former inns—the Blackamoor's Head and the later Cock and Magpie. No. 19, the Baron of Beef, is separated from the Mitre by the yard known as Blackmoor or Blackamoor Head Yard, the first name being the more correct since it perpetuates, doubtless, that of Robert Blackmore, a medieval chantry priest of nearby St. Clement's Church. Eleven houses were once crowded into this yard of the old Blackamoor's Head Inn, and 400 years ago a brewery stood in it.

At the corner of Portugal Place, today, is Wilson's tobacco shop, but on this site, and extending to the churchyard, stood, in the 15th and 16th centuries, the university hostel of St. Clement. It was inhabited, mainly, by students of law who seem to have been often involved in brawls and disputes with the members of St. Nicholas' Hostel, near Christ's College, and to have been fined by the proctors for disturbing the peace. In the 1840s' and 1850s' this corner site was occupied by the Salutation Inn.

Home of William Cole.

No. 21 Bridge Street—Lombard House—on the corner of Thompson's Lane, has, for over a century, been occupied by a succession of pawn-brokers. For many years it was the home of the family of William Cole, the antiquarian; indeed, in 1715, at the age of 14 months, he was sent to stay here with his grandmother when his eldest sister was born, and he remained for about four years. It was by Cole's bequest that the tower and spire of St. Clement's church were built in 1821; the Latin inscription above the door—*Deum Cole* (worship God)—neatly perpetuates his name.

In pre-railway days, when Quay-side, by Magdalene Bridge, was an unloading and distributing centre for the river trade, Bridge Street had almost more than its fair share of inns and alehouses, serving the needs of the bargemen, bridge porters, waggoners and other workers. Nos. 24 to 27, occupied today by part of John's furniture shop and by W. Stockbridge's antiques shop, were all, until the 1850's, licensed houses—the Black Swan at No. 24, the Barley



The row of shops in Bridge Street which were pulled down in 1937-9 to make way for the new buildings of St. John's College.

Mow at Nos. 25 and 26, and the Spotted Leopard at No. 27. Nos. 25 and 26 became, later, an eating house run by J. B. Sebley. He had worked at the Baron of Beef where, presumably, he must have learned the art of carving, for it was always said that he could slice ham so thinly that he could cover Parker's Piece with a pound of the meat.

On Quayside itself, where this east side of Bridge Street ends, stood, until it was pulled down in 1875, the 15th century Half Moon Inn, on the site of the modern premises of W. H. Smith's wholesale department. Facing the river was a cluster of small alehouses—the Anchor, the Jolly Waterman, the Ship and others—replaced, in the 1860's, by Potts' brewery. Nearby, until demolished in 1924, was the Sedge Hall in which was stored the fenland sedge when it was unloaded from the barges, ready for the poor of the town to come along and tie it into bundles ready for sale as kindling for fires. The narrow passage through which one can still gain access to Thompson's Lane was named Sedge Yard Lane.

Major changes on West Side

The west side of Bridge Street has seen two major changes, one in 1863 and the other shortly before the second World War. By the bridge stands, today, Moore's music shop at No. 33, set back in 1939 on a new building line but formerly, with the adjacent property, standing flush with the bridge railings. In the 18th and 19th centuries, No. 33, with No. 34, was occupied by traders in corn, wine and other merchandise which was brought to the bridge by river and there unloaded into the large warehouses which still exist at the back of the premises. At No. 37, now part of one of John's shops, was the Marquis of Granby public house.

In 1863 the Master's Lodge of St. John's College was built, which led to the demolition of Nos. 38 to 43 Bridge Street. On the site of the Lodge and of the new Chapel, begun in 1863, had once stood the iron foundry of Charles Finch who, in 1823, cast the railings of Magdalene Bridge. His nephew and successor, Swann Hurrell, built another foundry in Thompson's Lane in the 1860's.

Two inns disappeared in the demolition of 1863—the New Red Lion at No. 38, and the White Bull at No.

43; for a time, however, the new Red Lion moved across the road to No. 29, where G. Nichols, the jeweller, now has his shop.

With the erection, in 1938-9, of the North Court and Chapel Court of St. John's College, the rest of the old property on this side of Bridge Street—Nos. 44 to 61—from the Lodge to St. John's Street, disappeared. Demolition of the premises, which consisted of shops, with living accommodation above, divided by narrow yards containing houses, began in 1937.

Nos. 45 and 46, with a modern window on the ground floor, were last occupied by C. T. Aves, tobacconist. The modern front replaced the 18th century bow window, removed when the shop ceased to be a butcher's and preserved, now, in the

No. 51 Bridge Street, before it was pulled down, was R. H. Baynes' grocery shop, but in the last century it was occupied by another grocer, William Warren, mayor in 1850, who gave his name to the yard, with three houses in it, which ran beside the shop. Another yard, between Nos. 53 and 54, with four houses in it, was named after a 19th century fruiterer, George Sussum, whose shop was at No. 54. This, at its demolition in 1938, was occupied by a baker, H. Kittridge, with the Bon-Bon sweet shop, kept by Miss Richardson, next door. In No. 3 Sussum's Yard was a fine, carved mantel piece which now stands in the Combination Room of St. John's College. At No. 55 Bridge Street, Foster's Bank opened on 11th November, 1813; it stayed there until 1836 when it



The Old Red Lion Yard, off Bridge Street. Its site is now occupied by St. John's College buildings erected 1939.

yard of the Folk Museum. By the side of No. 46 was the Old Red Lion Yard in which were four houses and even, early in this century, a small pickle factory. The Old Red Lion itself was at No. 47, occupied, in 1938, by Biggs the florist.

No. 49 had been built in the 18th century for Alderman James Nutting, a coal, corn and timber merchant. In its last days the house was used as a lodging house, but many well known local people once lived in it, among them Francis Gunning, Town Clerk of Cambridge from 1836 to 1840. Behind it were Cox's livery stables, approached by a passage known as Cox's Yard which, by 1938, had become somewhat derelict.

moved to Trinity Street and, from there, to the site of Lloyds Bank in 1894.

In 1937, when it was demolished, No. 56 was a tailor's shop (Richardson & Son), although, until the end of the 19th century, it had been the Globe Inn with a passage beside it, closed in 1862, in which had stood the brewhouse of St. John's College. No. 61, Singer's Sewing Machine shop, was at the end of the row of shops pulled down between 1937 and 1939, but the widening of St. John's Street in 1863, and the building of the new college chapel, had already led to the disappearance of No. 62 to No. 64 Bridge Street, properties

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which, like most of those demolished from 1937 onwards, dated from the 16th century.

The last part of Bridge Street lies between St. John's Street and All Saints Passage. The Eastern Electrical Company's shop, on the corner, has only comparatively recently absorbed a small tobacco shop at No. 65. Next door, No. 66 has been occupied by the gunmakers, Gallyon & Sons, since 1832, but the property is far older than that and is in an excellent state of preservation.

Between Nos. 67 and 68 is an archway leading to the old bakehouse of St. John's College, now used as a book bindery. No. 67 was, until c. 1870, the Bell and Crown public house. No. 68, which many people may remember as Mr. Whitaker's fascinating print and curio shop, was incorporated, in the 1950's, into No. 69, now a hostel of St. John's College. This house is a fine example of town architecture dating, mainly, from the early 18th century, though there are traces in it of earlier brickwork. The fact that the price of £2,000 was paid for it in 1793, when it was bought by Sir Isaac Pennington, M.D., gives some idea of its importance.

No. 70 Bridge Street lies at the end of a passage. In its time it has been an inn licensed under four names: the Wild Man, the Flying Stag, the Royal Oak and the Freemasons Tavern. It became eventually, a private house—Lindum House—inhabited first by a tobacco manufacturer and then by two successive masters of St. John's Choir School. The present occupant has given the house one of its old names once more—the Flying Stag. Next door, No. 71, into which H. Coulson and Sons, the chemists, moved when their old premises at No. 44 were demolished in 1938, was, with No. 72 (Stearn's photographic shop), the Union Coffee House in the 18th century.

Demands for new bridge.

Nasty, narrow, overcrowded, noisy, dangerous—these were some of the adjectives applied to Bridge Street in the early 1870's when demands were being made for a new-traffic-carrying bridge to be built over the Cam at Chesterton which might, it

was argued, relieve the congestion in the street. But the Bridge Street shopkeepers opposed the scheme, fearing it might deprive them of trade by diverting traffic; they little thought the day would come when many of their shops would be swept away to make room for college buildings. In the end, the bridge, with the new road to it—Victoria Avenue—was not built until 1889, and it had no disastrous effect on Bridge Street commerce—less, in fact, than the ending of the river trade had brought.

Narrow and noisy the street certainly remains today, especially at its southern end. The recent temporary closure of this section, for sewer laying, made the advantages of the provision of a relief road very obvious, for the peace brought by the cessation of traffic seemed little short of miraculous. At its northern end, Bridge Street is wider and more spacious than it was before 1939, but there are many who still look back with affection on the small, extremely useful though, in some cases, admittedly rather dark shops which contributed a certain liveliness to the street scene which institutional buildings are incapable of giving.

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