

**MILL ROAD HISTORY SOCIETY**  
**BUILDING AND SITE REPORT No. 17**

# The Mill Road Depot

The Wharf — The Eagle Foundry (1846/47–1887) & The Limes (1846–1967) —  
The Workhouse 'Industrial Training Ground' (1853–87) — Allotments (1807–1904) —  
The Corporation Storeyard & Cambridge City Council Depot (1904–2018)



**Allan Bringham**

**2<sup>nd</sup> edition**

This report is published in hard copy and on the website *Capturing Cambridge*.<sup>1</sup> It is a late product of the Mill Road History Project, which ran from 2012 to 2015 and was funded by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Project's purpose being to study the heritage of Mill Road, its sites, buildings (residential, commercial and industrial), institutions and community – work that the Mill Road History Society now continues.

Second Edition - August 2019

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*Cover pictures: 1: The Eagle (National Rail Museum); 2: May 2018: The Final Day at the Council Depot (Phil Mynott); 3: 16 April 2015, 6.00a.m.: Dustcarts leaving the Depot (Elena Moses)*

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<sup>1</sup> *Capturing Cambridge* (<http://www.capturingcambridge.org/>) was the principal vehicle for the work of the Mill Road History Project. Since the latter's conclusion, the website is now managed by the Museum of Cambridge.

## Mill Road History Society Building and Site Reports

1. 44a Mill Road *Ian Bent and Kieran Perkins* (2014; 3<sup>rd</sup> edn 2015)
2. East Romsey Town Cement Works *John McGill* (2015)  
Pre-industrial – Cement Production – Post-industrial – Search for New Uses
3. Mill Road Windmill *Allan Brigham, Gordon Clark and Peter Filby* (2015)  
Post Mill – Brick Tower Mill – Residential and Commercial Properties
4. 85–89 Mill Road *Simon Middleton and Allan Brigham* (2015)  
Sturton Town Hall – Empire – Kinema – Scholars House
5. 124–134 Mill Road ('Railway Cottages') *Caroline Wilson* (2015; 3<sup>rd</sup> edn 2016)  
Accommodation for Railway Workers – Temporary Housing – CHS Group Flats and Hostel
6. 186 Mill Road *Katie Blyth* (2015; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn Sept 2015)  
Bootmaker and Undertaker – Watchmaker – Charity Shop – Cycle Shop
7. Mill Road, Cambridge: 1823–1851 *Allan Brigham* (2015; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn Sept 2015)  
The Early Development of Mill Road — A Narrative from the Newspapers
8. 206 Mill Road *Katie Blyth* (2015; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn Sept 2015)  
Private Dwelling – Pharmacy – Antique Shop
9. 81a Mill Road, Part I *Ian Bent and Allan Brigham* (2015)  
Cambridge Union Workhouse – Cambridge County Infirmary
10. Bath House, Gwydir Street *Julia Ewans* (2015)  
Gwydir House – Public Baths — Neighbourhood Centre
11. 175 Mill Road *Katie Blyth* (2016)  
Corn Merchant – Brewer and Beer Seller – Fruiterer and other Retailing
12. Romsey Town Labour Club *William Ingram* (2015; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn Sept 2015)
13. Donkey's Common and Adjacent Land *Allan Brigham and James Ingram* (2017)  
Town Gaol – Queen Anne Terrace – YMCA – Kelsey Kerridge – ATS Huts – Parkside Swimming Pool
14. 299–349 Mill Road, Romsey Town *John McGill* (2018)  
Development of the 'Magnet' and 'Holland Motors' Sites
15. Mill Road Bridge *Caroline Wilson* (2018)
16. 186 Gwydir Street *Sheila Cane* (2019)  
Home of the Parr and Palmer Families – The David Parr House
17. The Mill Road Depot *Allan Brigham* (2019); 2<sup>nd</sup> edn Aug 2019)  
Wharf – Eagle Foundry – Workhouse 'Industrial Training Ground' – Allotments – Corporation Storeyard – City Council Depot

### *Also published by the Mill Road Society:*

- A Guide to Researching and Writing a Building or Site Report for the Mill Road Area  
*Ian Bent, Katie Blyth and Allan Brigham* (2017)  
 [includes 'Glossary of Useful Architectural and Building Terms for local historians working in the Mill Road Area']

## Abbreviations

CA: Cambridgeshire Archives  
CC: Cambridgeshire Collection  
CCArch: City Council Archives  
CCh: *Cambridge Chronicle*  
CDN: *Cambridge Daily News*  
CEN: *Cambridge Evening News*

CIP: *Cambridge Independent Press*  
CN: *Cambridge News*  
GER: Great Eastern Railways  
ibid.: the same as previous reference (ibidem)  
OS: Ordnance Survey

## Note

This Report is not a comprehensive history of the 'Depot' site in 2018. The work is based on records available at the Cambridgeshire Collection in the Central Library, the Cambridgeshire Archives, Cambridge Newspapers Online at the British Newspaper Archives, and interviews by Allan Brigham for 'Cambridge 1979–2001: A Trade Union Story: Litter, Politics and Cambridge City Council', and for the Mill Road History Project (see p. 2 above) by Shelley Lockwood, who also recorded conversations with staff whom she met during two mid-morning site visits in 2015 accompanied by Allan Brigham and photographer Elena Moses.

The section on the Industrial Training Ground and the Allotments was co-authored with Ian Bent. The section on the Eagle Foundry draws on Peter Filby's invaluable research, with his generous permission. The Mill Road History Project received permission from Cambridge City Council to photograph the Depot in April 2015. Over 300 images were taken by Elena Moses in the course of four site visits in summer 2015, and vividly capture the site and the early morning atmosphere. All uncredited photographs were taken by Allan Brigham.

The complete set of interviews and photographs can now easily be accessed at <https://capturingcambridge.org/mill-road/the-mill-road-depot>

Allan Brigham worked in the Cleansing Department (Refuse and Street Cleaning), and later as part of 'Streetscene' (Open Spaces and Street Cleaning), of Cambridge City Council from 1974 to 2011. He was employed as a street cleaner, and later also delivered workshops on recycling to local primary schools. Allan was based at the Mill Road Council Depot, and lived in Romsey Town. This led to his interest in the origins and development of the site.

### Location of the site

The former Cambridge City Council Depot is a 6.6-acre site on the north side of Mill Road in Petersfield, Cambridge, bounded by Mill Road to the south, Kingston Street to the west, Hooper Street to the north, and railway land to the east. Until 2018 its postal address was:

City Council Store Yard  
119 Mill Road  
Cambridge CB1 2AZ

### National grid references

TL 46332 57829  
Lat: 52.199276 Lon: 0.1397113  
546332 (easting) 257829 (northing)



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## INTRODUCTION

Cambridge City Council's Mill Road Depot (see Figure 5) opened in 1905 as the Corporation Storeyard. The original site was far smaller than the area that is being developed for new housing at the time of writing and after the Depot was closed in 2018.

The site is shaped by the railway. In 1845 the new station was opened on the outskirts of Cambridge. It transformed the town. Heavy goods, which for centuries had been transported by water, could now be moved around the country by rail, and with new employment opportunities new housing was built in the fields off Mill Road. By the end of the 19th century this former country path had become the spine of a new town, and the railway tracks cut across the fields creating new boundaries where there had been only hedges and ditches before. This plot of ground was shaped by the line of the tracks, while the proximity to the railway led to the first development on the site, the Eagle Foundry (Figure 6). Access to railway sidings also later made it an attractive site for the Corporation Storeyard.

This report starts by recording the history of the Storeyard site, and of the two adjoining landholdings that were acquired by the City Council during the 20th century. Although they became fragmented, each of these originally ran from what is now Hooper Street southwards to Mill Road.

The report begins next to the railway with the Wharf, a triangular wedge of land (Figure 2). It progresses to the first site to be developed in the mid-1840s, the Eagle Foundry and The Limes. It concludes with the area that became the Corporation Storeyard, between the foundry and the boundary of the adjoining Kingston Street gardens.

In 2018 there is access to Hooper Street from the Depot, but garages run along part of this boundary and are not part of the proposed redevelopment. There is also access from the main Mill Road frontage, entering the site past the Gatehouse, and from the track that runs towards the railway, parallel with Mill Road in front of No. 119 Mill Road.

The former Free Library was built in 1897 on land owned by the previous owners of the Storeyard site, the Cambridge Board of Guardians. It is not part of the Depot, and is now owned by Cambridgeshire County Council. The building that is now No. 119 Mill Road (in 2019: The Regent Language School) was built by 1851.<sup>2</sup> It had probably once been part of the same landholding as the Storeyard, but had been sold earlier as it was a valuable site next to Mill Road. Neither the history of the Free Library nor No. 119 Mill Road is included in this report<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> 1851 census

<sup>3</sup> See Tribe (1997)

## A : THE WHARF

Date	Owner	Description	Size
25 Sep 1838	Under will of James Geldart, Dr of Law, Rector of Kirk Deighton, Yorks	Land in parish of St Andrew the Less, in Sturbitch Field and Home Close. Lots 30–36; 40–42; 44–51	71 acres 3 rods with the Manor of Barnwell, the Abbey House and all dwellinghouses and out-buildings <sup>4</sup>
9 Dec 1879	Rev James William Geldart, Henry Charles Geldart, Rev Richard William Geldart, Rev James Geldart to Messrs Coote & Warren ( later Charingtons)	Plot of freehold land in Hooper Street <b>Lot 30</b>	Triangular piece of land with 113 feet to Hooper Street <sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1 – The Wharf: known ownership**



**Figure 2 – left:** 1879: the site, bordered by the GER and Jas Headley Esq. (CCArch)  
**right:** date unknown: the site highlighted in green and red (CCArch)

Spalding's street directories first record the occupier of this site in 1923 as 'Coote and Warren, Coal Depot'. It was accessed from Hooper Street. By 1957 it had changed to 'Scrap Metal & Rag Reclamation Co. Ltd', while from 1968 to 1975 it was occupied by 'D & H', Builders.

<sup>4</sup> For a brief history of the lands belonging to Barnwell Priory, in particular those in Petersfield, see Mill Road History Society Report No. 16, Sheila Cane, 186 Gwydir Street, 'Pre-History of the Site'.

<sup>5</sup> Sale detail, Geldart family to Messrs Coote & Warrington [later Charingtons] 9 Dec 1879 (CCArch).

Deeds record the sale of the site on 9 December 1879 by the heirs of James Geldart to 'Coote and Warren'. Written on the documents is 'Lot 30'. Geldart was the original owner of the land after enclosure in the early 19th century. He had probably also owned both the site that became the Eagle Foundry, and the adjoining site that became the Corporation Storeyard, but no records of ownership have survived. This site, with a frontage to Hooper Street of 113 feet, tapering towards Mill Road to the form the tip of a triangle, may have remained unsold because of its irregular size.

In 1946 Coote & Warren became Charingtons, Coal Merchants. At some point the site was acquired by Cambridge City Council, and was incorporated into the Depot in the 1990s.

In 1987 the building on the part of the site nearest to Hooper Street became the Women's Resource Centre.<sup>6</sup> Its lease ended in 2013 and the building was demolished in 2018 so that the land could be included in the proposed new housing project.



**Figure 3** – 2018: *left*: Women's Resource Centre; *right*: demolition; *below*: signage

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<sup>6</sup> The Cambridge Women's Resource Centre was started in 1982 at 7c Station Road.

## B : THE EAGLE FOUNDRY

### 1. Introduction

#### Foundry, Engine Building, and Railway Work

On 12 June 1847, J & E Headly announced in the *Cambridge Chronicle* that they had disposed of their ironmongery business, and that they were taking:

the present opportunity of thanking their friends and patrons for their past favours, and to inform them that their attention will now be given to the Foundry, Engine Building, and Railway Work, (including Railway Carriage and Truck Building) for which they solicit their orders. Orders addressed to *Mill Road, or 16 Regent Street, Cambridge*, will meet with immediate attention.

The site on Mill Road was near to the railway line opened in 1845 on a plot that was later part of Cambridge City Council Depot (Figures 5 and 6). It was the first part of this site to be developed while the rest remained fields as they had for centuries.

Date	Owner	Description	Size
March 1846/June 1847–52	James & Edward Headly [did both brothers own the premises?]	Foundry, Engine Building, and Railway Work <sup>7</sup>	
1852–58	James Headly [John Manning was partner in the business - did he jointly own the premises?]		
1858–87	James Headly	The Eagle Foundry	
7 Nov 1887	James Headly sells to GER	'Messuage [...] and other buildings commonly known as The Eagle Foundry'	2 acres 1 rod 28 perches <sup>8</sup>
22 Jun 1968	British Railways Board sells to Corporation of Cambridge		1 acre 3,510 sq yards <sup>9</sup>

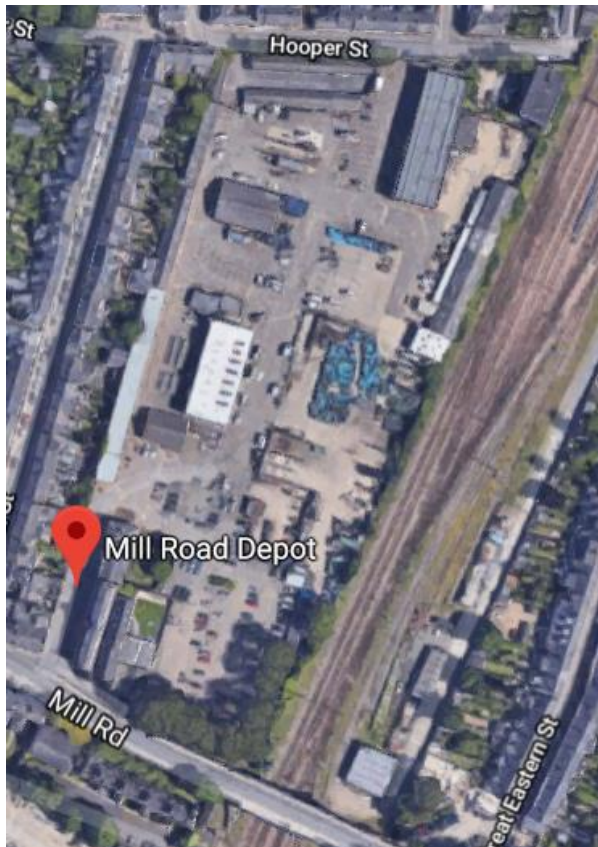
**Figure 4** – The Eagle Foundry: known ownership

<sup>7</sup> CCh 12 Jun 1847

<sup>8</sup> Sale details of the Eagle Foundry to GER, 7 Nov 1887 (CCArch)

<sup>9</sup> Sale detail, British Railways Board to Corporation of Cambridge, 9 Aug 1968 (CCArch). The mixed measurement is peculiar; 3,150 is equivalent to 116 square rods.





**Figure 5** – Mill Road Storeyard, bordered by Mill Road, Kingston Street, Hooper Street and railway (Google Earth, 2019)



**Figure 6** – the Eagle Foundry (pink) occupying the central part of what was to become the Council Storeyard. Land to left between Foundry and rear gardens of Kingston Street houses, and to right between Foundry and railway, under different ownership (1886 OS map)

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## 2. Background

There are references to the Headly family working as ironmongers in Cambridge from at least the 1770s.<sup>10</sup> By 1805 Henry Headly was recorded at Market Hill on the site now occupied by Marks & Spencer.<sup>11</sup> He was followed by his son Robert, who took over the business two years later, and was to start casting iron on the same crowded town centre site.<sup>12</sup>

Ironmongers had a long history, but the mass production of cast iron goods had only become feasible after Abraham Darby's discovery in 1709 that it was possible to use coke rather than charcoal to fuel furnaces.

Techniques developed in the 18th century, culminating in the building of the first iron bridge in the world in 1781. This acted as a symbol to all that cast iron could be used not just to make pots and pans but for structural purposes and for making engines. Robert Headly worked with his sons James Ind Headly and Edward Ind Headly as 'Headly and Sons'. This partnership was dissolved in 1843 when Robert retired and the business was transferred to 'James and Edward Headly', who trusted 'by strict assiduity and attention to merit a continuance of public patronage and support' [*sic*].<sup>13</sup>

At the same time the works, known as the Eagle Foundry, seem to have been expanded from Market Hill back to the boundary of Trinity Churchyard. They were described by the *Cambridge Chronicle* as being 'surrounded on all sides by valuable property much of which is built of wood [...] immediately adjoining them on one side is the establishment of Messrs Warren and Baker, filled with tallow, fat, turpentine, oil, gunpowder and all such combustibles'.<sup>14</sup>

The newspaper continued:

In the very midst of this sort of property, shut out from the street and difficult to access, was placed the large iron foundry of Messrs Headly, a nuisance at all times to those unlucky enough to live within earshot of its steam engines or reach of its 'blacks', and at all times too, far worse than a nuisance, namely a source of danger, keeping everybody in the neighbourhood in a state of constant dread of that which has at last taken place.

The 'constant dread' was of fire, which did indeed break out on the evening of Saturday 21 February 1846. The *Cambridge Independent* described the scene at the foundry as a 'burning chaos', with:

fragments of machinery, broken and distorted into all manner of shapes, and glowing with red heat – wheels revolving round, like some gigantic firework, falling beams, and the high iron chimneys white with heat, like tall specters, presented a spectacle it has seldom been our lot to witness.

Presently the tall massive brick chimney fell with a tremendous crash, and was followed by the iron one belonging to the smithy. For an instant the flames appeared to subside, and dark volumes of smoke rose to the sky. These rolled away and the flames burst forth with renewed vigour, accompanied by showers of burning flakes.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the fury of the blaze, the efforts of the firemen and luck with the weather prevented a far greater catastrophe. Josiah Chater, a 16-year-old apprentice from William

<sup>10</sup> Alger, Brigham, Hockley (1996)

<sup>11</sup> 5 Market Hill (2018). Market Hill was the roadway on the east side of Market Square.

<sup>12</sup> *CCh* 1807 in Alger, Brigham, Hockley (1996), p.44

<sup>13</sup> *CCh* 28 Jan 1843

<sup>14</sup> *CCh* 28 Feb 1846

<sup>15</sup> *CIP* 28 Feb 1846



Eaden Lilley's nearby drapery store in Market Street, recorded the events of the evening in his diary. He had been woken by the commotion and stayed up until 3a.m., when the flames were finally brought under control. Four hours later he got up to investigate the scene, and wrote that 'it certainly was a miraculous escape for Petty Cury, for had the wind been in the north it would almost certainly have come down'.

The fire led to calls for the Headlys to move their business from the centre of the town. The *Cambridge Independent Press* report was followed by a letter signed by thirty-one owners and occupiers of adjoining properties. They stressed their concerns about the recent extensions to the foundry, and:

the carrying on of such business in so confined a space of ground in the centre of our properties. At the same time we beg to state that the very nature of your business is attended with serious inconvenience and annoyance to us residents in its immediate vicinity.

They continued with the threat of 'hostile steps' if they were ignored:

We feel bound not only for the better security of our lives and to prevent annoyance to ourselves and injury to our property, but also for the whole neighbourhood, to protest against the re-erection of any buildings for the purpose of which those lately destroyed were applied, and we sincerely trust that this representation will prevent the necessity for any unpleasant or hostile steps to ensure the future safety of the whole neighbourhood and for the prevention and consequent injury to the property.

The Headlys' loss was estimated at £3,000 in the newspaper accounts, including warehouse, smithy, fitting shops, model loft and models, although the Norwich Union paid out only £2,300 for the damage.<sup>16</sup> Initially they did not appear keen to move, announcing in the *Cambridge Chronicle* that 'the Foundry will be rebuilt as speedily as possible, and the business generally resumed in a few days'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Norwich Union Fire Insurance Society, minutes 23 Mar 1846 (Aviva Archive, Surrey House, Norwich)

<sup>17</sup> CCh 28 Feb 1846



**Figure 7** – Fire at Eagle Foundry, Market Hill (CCh 28 Feb 1846)

However the pressure from former neighbours continued, and it was reported to the Paving Commissioners in March 1846 that Mr Headly was prepared to move if a suitable site could be found:

Paving Commissioners: [Messrs Headly's Foundry] had been informed by Mr Headly that there was a piece of land near or adjoining the railway, by the Hills Road, belonging to the Corporation, the lease of which expired at Michaelmas next; if it could be sold to Messrs Headly they would not object to moving the Foundry from Market Hill and so [avoid] further annoyance to the neighbourhood. (CCh 21 Mar 1846)

This site must have proved unavailable on the right terms, but it indicates that the Headlys were responding to the concerns of those who lived on Market Hill, and eventually this led them to a new, and far more suitable, site on Mill Road.

**EAGLE FOUNDRY,  
MILL ROAD, CAMBRIDGE.**

**J. and E. HEADLY** beg to announce to the Nobility, Gentry, and inhabitants generally of Cambridge and its vicinity, that they have disposed of their Ironmongery business to Messrs. SCARBOROUGH and BROTHERTON, for whom they respectfully solicit that patronage so liberally bestowed upon them.

J. & E. H. take the present opportunity of thanking their friends and patrons for their past favours, and to inform them that their attention will now be given to the Foundry, Engine Building, and Railway Work, (including Railway Carriage and Truck Building,) for which they solicit their orders.

Orders addressed to *Mill Road*, or *16, Regent Street, Cambridge*, will meet with immediate attention.

—♦—

**MESSRS. SCARBOROUGH & BROTHERTON**

In soliciting the patronage of the Nobility, Gentry, and inhabitants generally of Cambridge and the surrounding districts, and more especially of the old and respected connection of their predecessors, would beg to assure them, that from their long and intimate acquaintance with the Manufacturing districts, and consequent knowledge of the best markets, they will be enabled to supply them on the best possible terms, and hope, by attention and strict integrity, soon to gain their confidence.

Experienced Smiths, Bell-hangers, and Tin-plate Workers will be employed on the premises, and, in a few days a more extensive and choice assortment of Papier Maché Goods, Cutlery, and general Furnishing Goods, will be added to their Stock,

*Cambridge, June, 1847.*

**Figure 8** – First reference to the Eagle Foundry at Mill Road (CCh 12 Jun 1847)

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### 3. The Eagle Foundry, Mill Road

1847–52 : J and E Headly



Figure 9 – The Barnwell fields in 1830, Baker map (CA: KP79/28/2)

In Figure 9, the future site of the foundry in 1847 was located in part of the field beneath the second 'L' of (BAR)NWELL and Mill Road. This field was later crossed by the railway.

In the mid-1840s Mill Road was still a private road crossing the recently built railway before terminating in a footpath leading to Cherry Hinton, little changed from Baker's map of 1830. The 1841 census had shown just seven houses on the road but the proximity to the railway that opened four years later prompted the building of a number of new houses. Curious to see what was happening, Josiah Chater walked from Market Street to Mill Road in 1847, and wrote in his diary that 'they are getting quite a little town in that part of the world'.<sup>18</sup>

Chater, as already quoted in section B2 above, had witnessed the fire at the old foundry, and until then his world had been the crowded area around the market where he lived and worked. What he witnessed on his walk was the start of the expansion of Cambridge beyond these medieval confines, and the Headlys, if originally reluctant, were a part of this.

<sup>18</sup> Porter (1975)



**Figure 10** – The Eagle Foundry adjacent to the railway  
Monson (Cambridge, 1859) (private collection)

The Headlys' house, The Limes, can be seen in Figure 10 backing on to the foundry in the plot leading from Mill Road. The new foundry site next to the railway crossing was set in open countryside with no neighbours to upset. The move showed that people recognised that the river had been replaced by rail as the best way of moving heavy goods and raw materials around the country, while the Headlys' advertisement announcing that they were 'giving their attention' to 'Foundry, Engine Building, and Railway Work, (including Railway Carriage and Truck Building)' indicated that they saw the new location as an opportunity to tender for contracts with the railway companies.<sup>19</sup> Soon after moving, these hopes were realised and they entered an agreement with Eastern Counties Railway to repair the latter's locomotives and rolling stock, and to build equipment for them. A railway siding was also run into the foundry site.<sup>20</sup> None of this could have happened at the Market Hill foundry.

The ironmongery business was disposed of, but the name 'Eagle Foundry' followed the business to Mill Road and advertisements soon started to appear in the local newspapers. By June 1848 'Messrs J. & E. Headly of the Eagle Foundry' were exhibiting a 'portable steam engine upon a new principle, for thrashing corn' on Midsummer common for 'agricultural friends'. Sales appear to have been successful, for in November they were announcing that a further steam engine was about to be completed and encouraging those interested to visit the foundry as it 'will remain here but a few days'.



**Figure 11** – Portable Steam Thrashing Engine (CCh 4 Nov 1848)

<sup>19</sup> CCh 28 Jun 1847

<sup>20</sup> Information from Peter Filby



Another report in August 1850 highlighted the strengths of the steam thrashing machine compared with older machinery. Having witnessed the machine at work on Mr George Franklin's land at Chesterton, the newspaper stated:

This is certainly an improvement on the old four-horse machine. The produce of nearly an acre of wheat and upwards of half an acre of barley were thrashed out in the short space of an hour and a quarter. What greatly recommends the engine is that the straw was no more broken than if thrashed by a flail.

Without looking like paid advertising, the report ends with the statement that firmly points to where the machine can be purchased: 'The engine is the manufacture of Messrs Headly, of the Eagle foundry, Mill Road'.<sup>21</sup>

As well as focusing on the traditional agricultural market the Headlys realised that steam power was a far more efficient means of keeping the nearby fens drained than the traditional windmills. In January 1849 they were reported demonstrating a 50-horsepower steam engine to about thirty District Commissioners at Stow Bardolph, together with a large group of spectators. The engine was started 'on Wednesday last', and:

So great is the advantage derived from steam power that by 12 o'clock the water in the drain had fallen 12 inches – another proof of its immense superiority over the old system which was entirely dependent on the caprice of the wind. The whole of the works were completed by Messrs J and E Headly, of the Eagle Foundry, Cambridge, in less time than any engine in the Fens. With which the Commissioners were so well pleased that their support was promised in any future undertakings of the kind.<sup>22</sup>

The following month the Headlys advertised:

the improvements they have made in the Steam Engine and Water Wheel as applied to Drainage, which they have erected to the power of 170 horses, and to which they can in all cases give reference. They do so more particularly to one of their Patent Engines just started, which, for moderate power, is likely to be extensively used, the Machinery as well as the House and Wheel Race being wholly of Iron which not only reduces the cost but has several advantages. Orders to view can be obtained by applying to the Works.<sup>23</sup>

It was a competitive market, and increased efficiency as well as price were strong selling points. In May 1851 the Headlys were calling for the attention of Drainage Commissioners, Millers and Owners of Steam Power to their 'improvements in Steam Power, by which a great reduction of fuel is obtained, as well as an increase in power'. One of these engines was working daily at the Eagle Foundry, and interested buyers were invited to visit, lured by the statement that they were confident it 'will not be surpassed for economy of fuel etc'.<sup>24</sup>

Later that year a letter from J & E Headly in the *Cambridge Chronicle* discussed the efficiency of the Appold Pump, recently exhibited to much acclaim at the Great Exhibition in London, and used to drain Whittlesey Mere. The letter shows that the brothers were testing their scoop wheels against Appold's pump, and also claims that they were 'the largest makers in England (excepting perhaps the Butterly Company)'. It was a big claim, qualified by 'perhaps'. But it was a reminder that Headlys were well positioned to serve the nearby Fen farmers, who were dependent on keeping the land drained before they could grow crops.

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<sup>21</sup> *Cambridge General Advertiser* 28 Apr 1850

<sup>22</sup> *CIP* 27 Jan 1849

<sup>23</sup> *Cambridge General Advertiser* 28 Feb 1849

<sup>24</sup> *CIP* 21 May 1851

**Appold Pump: Applied to drainage of Whittlesey Mere.**

Sir - Will you be kind enough to give us space for a few remarks upon the Appold Pump, which, if unnoticed, may lead many of your readers to suppose it is the best machinery introduced for this purpose.

From the satisfaction expressed in the statement given of the amount of water delivered at the trial, many persons would naturally suppose it was an *excess* of duty for a 25 horse power engine, which we contend is *not* the case, but otherwise. And we draw our conclusion from what we can and have done from the *scoop-wheel*, which *supposing* it was equal to delivering so much water, has very many advantages in other respects, as time will prove.

This opinion is the result of practise, as we introduced two of these wheels or pumps for drainage in 1850, when our attention was called to them; and being perhaps the largest makers in England (excepting perhaps the Butterly company), we were naturally anxious to introduce any improvement that might come out: consequently we put down two in accordance with Mr Appold's plan (and to whom we are much indebted for affording us every information we required), and we ground our opinion from these trials.

As to the economy of fuel spoken of in the engine in question, we contend there is no *real* economy in setting up a compound engine (at an *additional* cost) for drainage purposes, which very often do not work for ten days in the year. Consequently they may stand for a century before the saving in fuel will pay the additional cost in first outlay.

Trusting that some of your readers may reap the benefit of our experience.

J&E Headly

**Figure 12** - The Appold Pump Letter from J & E Headly (CCh 29 Nov 1851)

How successful the brothers were at breaking into the railway truck and carriage business is not clear, but in 1849 they made the first steam locomotive to be manufactured in Cambridge. The small engine and tender were in one, measuring 9 feet, weighing less than three-and-a-quarter tons, with a fuel consumption calculated to be 4lb per mile. The compartment at the rear was added later, but even without this it was capable of carrying up to four people on line inspections. Unfortunately in 1850 it ran over the Norwich District Inspector at Haddiscoe, after which its fate is unknown.<sup>25</sup> Optimistic claims that the engine 'from the speed which she is able to attain and the small and economic style in which she is built will probably soon become in more general use' proved to be unrealised, and this remained the only locomotive to be made in Cambridge.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/c/cambridge/index1.shtml> (Grace's Guide to Industrial history. Disused Stations, Cambridge)

<sup>26</sup> CIP 26 May 1849



**Figure 13** – The Eagle: the carriage was added later. See 'The Eagle' embossed on large wheel  
J & E Headly 1849 (National Rail Museum)

The breadth of works supplied by the foundry was illustrated in 1850 when they advertised that they attended the Corn Exchange every Saturday, and Lynn on the first Tuesday of each month, to take orders for:

Steam Engines, Mill Work and machinery of every description, Brewery fittings, Pumps, Tanks, Refrigerators, Mashing Machines, Engine Boilers, Gasometers, Purifiers, Retorts, Pipes, Wrought and Cast Iron Fencing, Press screws; Plattens[?] planned.

Churches, Chapels, etc heated with Water on the newest plan.

Orders by posts are received at the Works as early as Eight in the morning, and three in the afternoon. (CCh 2 Feb 1850)

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## 4. 1852–58 : Headly & Manning

The 1851 census records James and Edward as both living at the foundry with their families, presumably in the house later known as The Limes.<sup>27</sup> For unknown reasons the following year they dissolved their partnership and Edward established himself as an ironmonger and agricultural implement maker in Corn Exchange Street.<sup>28</sup>

James remained at The Eagle Foundry and now went into partnership with John Manning. This was announced in April 1852, together with a long list of the products that could be made at the foundry. They described themselves as 'Engineers, Millwrights, Boiler Makers, Iron and Brass Founders' capable of making foundry castings to order, before going on to specify in more detail what they manufactured. This included engines for use on the land or for fen drainage; gearing for mills; wrought iron boilers; gas works; brewery fittings; bridges made from wrought or cast iron, roofs and 'railway work of every description'.

It was an extensive list and depicts a mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century rural landscape being rapidly changed by mechanisation, where wind and water power was being replaced by steam engines, and where wood had been replaced by cast iron for bridges and buildings. At the centre of this was the skill of the engineers and their staff working in the dirty, noisy surroundings of a foundry. It was no rural idyll.

Headly and Manning concluded the announcement of their new partnership by reminding readers that they continued to innovate, requesting all those requiring agricultural engines to consider the 'improved description' they made 'in which the objection of many small tubes crowded into a narrow space is entirely avoided. This Boiler is easily cleaned, much less liable to corrosion and the emission of sparks, more durable, and quite as economical as any hitherto in use'.<sup>29</sup>

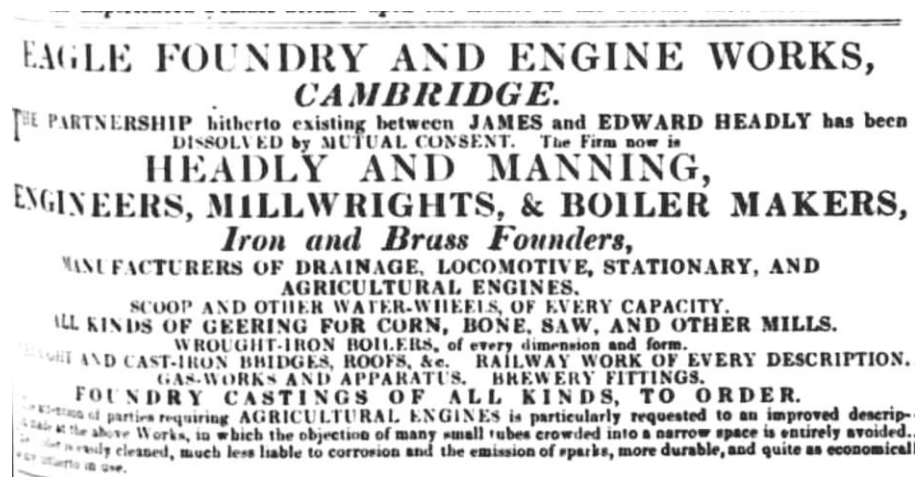


Figure 14 – Partnership of James and Edward Headly dissolved 'by mutual consent' (CCh 3 Apr 1852)

The scale of this enterprise was illustrated ten months after Manning came to Mill Road when a 'huge iron girder' was made at the Eagle Foundry, the largest to have ever been

<sup>27</sup> The date 1846 was on the building (now demolished). This was when the business relocated to Mill Road from Market Hill.

<sup>28</sup> In 'Cambridge Ironfounders' it is claimed that the brothers quarrelled, but the source for this information is not referenced.

<sup>29</sup> CIP 24 Apr 1852

made in Cambridgeshire: 'up to six tons of iron were in liquiform condition at one time, and by the aid of proper machinery the molten mass was safely poured into the mould in the presence of many spectators'. The girder was for a bridge spanning the Newmarket Extension Line at an oblique angle, and the size was obviously impressive to the spectators. But the real message was that the proprietors were at the forefront of technological improvements:

We mention this with particular satisfaction as it is by far the largest casting yet made in this county, and it shows that our townsmen keep pace with the times, and avail themselves of all the modern mechanical and scientific improvements as they arise. (CCh 5 Feb 1853)

The firm's letterhead, shown below in a bill to Messrs Gurteen of Haverhill, towards the end of the partnership, displays their pride in their products. Dated 1857, it shows a steam engine, a stationary machine with wheel, and a flying eagle above the word 'Foundry'.<sup>30</sup>



Figure 15 – Letterhead on bill to Messrs Gurteen & Sons, Haverhill. 1857 (Peter Filby Collection)

## The Workforce

The staff who actually made these steam engines and girders can only be glimpsed in census returns or newspaper reports. In the 1851 census 39-year-old blacksmith (Foreman) David Waites was recorded living on Mill Road in the house to the railway side of the Eagle Foundry. Presumably he worked at the foundry, as did engine smith Thomas Blewett who was living there in 1861. Both men appear to have moved to Cambridge to work at the Foundry. Waites was born in New Buckenham, Norfolk, and Blewett and his wife came from Gwennap, where perhaps he learnt his trade in what had been called the 'richest copper mining district in Cornwall'.<sup>31</sup> The latter was still recorded there in 1884, shortly before the Foundry closed, and by then described as Manager.

Others living on Mill Road in 1851 who possibly worked at the Foundry include five blacksmiths, three millwrights, one engineer, one engineer moulder, one ironmonger and one model maker. Most of these are not trades traditionally associated with Cambridge. Nearly all were young men under thirty who had been prepared to travel to find skilled employ-

<sup>30</sup> Peter Filby Collection

<sup>31</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20090612113705/http://www.cornish-mining.org.uk/sites/gwnnppt.htm> (Cornish Mining World Heritage)

ment. Seven came from Norfolk, one from Surrey, one from Leicestershire and one from Sunderland, with only three born in Cambridgeshire.

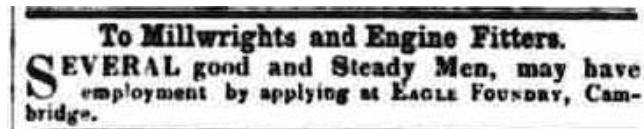


Figure 16 – Advertisement in 1853 (*CCh* 22 Jan 1853)

Proximity to the Foundry was important when walking was the only means of getting to work. But these Mill Road residents were only a small part of the workforce at the start of the new partnership, which stood at 'upwards of seventy hands [...] with a certainty that very soon a much larger number will be employed'.<sup>32</sup> This made the Foundry one of the larger employers in Cambridge, and when Headly and Manning reduced the time the staff had to work by half an hour in 1852 the *Cambridge Independent Press* used it to set an example to others:

Messrs Headly and Manning have generously remitted half an hour of the time, previously worked on Saturdays, by those in their employ in order that the men may have better opportunities for self improvement, and that their families may possess more available time to make the necessary market purchases [...] We think the boon is a sacrifice by the employers which ought to be appreciated by the workmen in the proper spirit. We hope also that this example of generous sympathy with their workpeople will not be without effect on other large employers in the town.<sup>33</sup> (*CIP* 24 Apr 1852)

Whether the workmen did use this extra half hour for self-improvement or simply enjoyed a little more relaxation is unknown, as is whether it also led to the loss of half an hour's wages. But the demonstration of paternalistic responsibility was repeated by Headly and Manning in 1858 when they contributed towards the expense of establishing a forerunner of the adjacent Free Library 50 years later at the works by helping to buy books. These were acquired at half price from the Society for the Promotion of Pure Literature among the People 'to promote the mental and moral culture of the workmen on this firm'.<sup>34</sup>

This paternalism was also reflected in cricket matches played on Parker's Piece against mechanics from the Eastern Counties Railway. A match in 1853 included both James Headly and John Manning in the team. Embarrassingly Headly was bowled out for no runs, but Manning redeemed the management by getting nine.<sup>35</sup> Presumably the team, if not all the staff, were given the time off work as at a previous match in 1850, when it was specified that the Foundry had closed:

in order that all their workmen might have an opportunity of enjoying the sight of this match, or indulging in any recreation more enjoyable to them [...] and though several preferred a trip down our neat little river, yet the majority preferred the friendly conflict on Parker's Piece to the attraction of Upware.

Amongst The Eagle team the bowling of Simpson stood out. Described as 'a young unfinished Hampshire millwright' he had, like others of his colleagues, travelled a long distance to find employment. The match finished at 7 o'clock, and afterwards there was supper with toasts and songs, finishing at 3 o'clock with the party singing *God Save the Queen* 'with the greatest enthusiasm'.<sup>36</sup> The gusto of the singing suggested good camaraderie amongst this

<sup>32</sup> *CIP* 24 Apr 1852. The 1851 census recorded that Edward Headly at the Eagle Foundry employed 80 staff.

<sup>33</sup> *CIP* 24 Apr 1852

<sup>34</sup> *CCh* 24 Apr 1858

<sup>35</sup> *CCh* 13 Aug 1853

<sup>36</sup> *CIP* 10 Aug 1850

group of workers but casts doubt on how productive those involved would have been at work the next day. However, it would be a mistake to assume all relationships at work were always as amicable as those amongst the cricket teams. A short report in the *Cambridge Chronicle* in January 1855 records Vincent Adams, a moulder, charged with using threatening language and throwing snow balls at Uriah Marshall, also employed at the foundry.<sup>37</sup>



**Figure 17** – The water pump that stood on Peas Hill (picture: CC), made by Headly and Manning in 1853 (artefact: The Museum of Cambridge)

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<sup>37</sup> CCh 27 Jan 1855

## 5. 1858–87: James Headly

Headly and Manning dissolved their partnership on 31 December 1858. Why Manning left is not known, but he became a brass founder in the Midlands.<sup>38</sup>

NOTICE is hereby given, that the Partnership which has for some time past been carried on by us the undersigned, James Ind Headly and John Manning, under the firm of Headly and Manning, at Cambridge, in the county of Cambridge, in the trade or business of Ironmongers, Ironfounders and Engineers, was on the 31st day of December last, dissolved by mutual consent.—As witness our hands the 31st day of January, 1859. John Manning. J. I. Headly. (*London Gazette* 8 Feb 1859)

James Headly continued to run the business alone for another twenty-nine years. The Foundry continued in production, and a year after Manning left he was promoting his improvements to a portable steam engine to millers, 'which can be put down at very small cost and guaranteed as the most economical in fuel of any yet out'.<sup>39</sup> He was also recorded supplying the ironwork for the new Town Hall in 1862.<sup>40</sup>

But a year earlier in 1861 he had been advertising a completely different product for sale to a completely different market far from Cambridge. In a small advertisement in the *Leeds Mercury* of 27 July 1861, J I Headly announced to Yorkshire 'manure manufacturers' that he was 'working many veins of coprolites and can supply whole or ground of best quality and any quantity'.



Figure 18 – *Leeds Mercury* 27 Jul 1861

A few years earlier few farmers would have heard of coprolites. Now they had become the new 'gold'.

### Coprolites

*'Not a gold-mine, indeed, but a food-mine'*

John Henslow<sup>41</sup>

Coprolites provided another source of income for the Eagle Foundry, first through orders for machinery and later through the output of a new coprolite mill. Coprolites are small, hard nodules of phosphate. They became the basis of the world's first artificial fertiliser. The name originated in the early 19th century when they had been found in geological strata including dinosaur remains. Thought to be fossilised dinosaur dung, they were called 'coprolites', derived from the Greek word *kopros*, meaning dung, and *lithos* meaning stone.

<sup>38</sup> Information Peter Filby (unpublished)

<sup>39</sup> *CIP* 5 Mar 1859

<sup>40</sup> *CIP* 10 May 1862

<sup>41</sup> In Bernard O'Connor, 'The Fossil Diggings on Quy Fen' (author, 2011, ISBN-10: 1470919044 ISBN-13: 978-14709190470, p. 14. O'Connor records a local farmer showing Henslow some fossils dug up on his land.

The composition of coprolites is more varied than originally thought, and while real fossilised dinosaur dung has been found, this description explaining how the local coprolites were formed is more up-to-date:

Coprolites of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire are nodules of phosphate-rich Cretaceous sediment, often containing fragments of fossils.

Rising sea levels due to global warming in the Lower Cretaceous period created a seaway running southwest from the Wash across Bedfordshire and on toward the Isle of Wight. The currents and tides in the seaway washed ammonites and many other fossils out of the Jurassic clays and rolled them back and forth across the new seafloor. Worn, rounded fragments were transported to areas of deposition with high levels of phosphate from dead shellfish and other animals. The nutrient-rich sediments coated these *derived fossils* (so known because they're derived from other sediments) to form *concretions* while calcium phosphate slowly replaced the calcium carbonate of the fossils. Burrows of animals living in the seafloor filled with sediment: the casts are known as *trace fossils*. Both trace and derived fossils are known as coprolites.<sup>42</sup>

When John Henslow, Professor of Mineralogy (1822–27) and later Professor of Botany (1825–61) at Cambridge University was shown coprolites, one of his students recorded that he recognised 'they were not, as fossils usually are, carbonate of lime, but phosphate of lime – bone earth. Henslow went on to exclaim they were 'a treasure – not a gold mine but a food mine'.<sup>43</sup>

With an English population that was to double in the first half of the 19th century, demand for food grew, and farmers (many of whom had recently acquired their fields as part of the enclosure of the Open Fields) were keen to increase their yields. Fields were traditionally fertilised using seaweed, lime and crushed bones, while from 1838 bird droppings known as guano were being imported from as far away as South America. But in the 1840s, when it was realised that ground coprolites mixed with sulphuric acid formed a cheaper fertiliser, there was a rush to extract them from the ground.

One of the main sources was South Cambridgeshire. They were first dug up in deep trenches under the Cambridgeshire greensand at Burwell in 1846. In Cambridge itself they were found amongst the brickworks in Chesterton in 1849, and along what was to become East Road. This is because the coprolites were formed in the local gault clay, which was the source for the Cambridgeshire 'whites', the characteristic local bricks. Digging for coprolites subsequently became a huge industry and went hand in hand with the 19th-century expansion of Cambridge and rural towns and villages, with roads and streets of new 'white' (actually yellow) brick housing.

John Mann took advantage of these local resources to establish the Cambridge Manure Company on Histon Road in the 1850s, and the manure he made was known as 'superphosphate of lime'. The business proved successful, and between 1856 and 1857 the Company expanded. They built a new shed and mixing plant, ordering the engineering from the Mill Road foundry, while John Manning was still a partner.<sup>44</sup>

Before Manning left the partnership James Headly had independently become a coprolite merchant. In 1857 the Earl De La Warr, a local absentee landowner, wrote to Rev Adam

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.bedfordshiregeologygroup.org.uk/leaflets/BLGGCoprolites.pdf> (Bedfordshire Geological Industries: Coprolites: Fossil Fertiliser)

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous note in Ipswich Museum. Coprolite File. Recorded in Bernard O'Connor, *The Dinosaurs on Coldhams Common* (Sandy, Beds: author, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10



Sedgwick asking for advice on a project that he suspected might be 'purely visionary – like so many others of the present day':

Mr Headly of Cambridge has it seems embarked on a somewhat extensive 'Coprolite' speculation and has asked permission to prosecute to a search for the fossil matter upon my property in the village of Haslingfield near Cambridge.<sup>45</sup>

The details of the Haslingfield contract are not known, but Headly was shortly digging in the area.<sup>46</sup> He also won the license to dig for coprolites in a field next to land owned by his family in Coton in 1858, and was later recorded to work land in Grantchester (1859), on Coldham's Common (1860), Barton (1861), Guilden Morden (1868), and Haslingfield (1870),<sup>47</sup> with large sums of money changing hands. This is illustrated by a court case in 1867 when it was revealed that Headly had paid his agent, Mr Mason, £43,000 (equivalent to £4.5 million in 2018) to dig, wash and carry coprolites to the railway over the previous six to seven years.<sup>48</sup>

At an unknown date in these years Headly realised it was advantageous to add a coprolite mill to his own foundry to grind the nodules. This was probably before 1861, when he had been offering ground coprolites for sale to Leeds manure merchants.

Through the following decades coprolites became an important part of the Mill Road business. They would have been brought to the mill for grinding, while the foundry made the engines, pumps, spades, shovels and pickaxes to extract the nodules from the pits being dug by Headly and many others. His advertisements used his experience at his own works to sell his machinery to others as 'the best':

all machinery in connection with Coprolite Works, which his own experience in his own works leads him to believe he can supply of the best description. (CCh 5 Jun 1869)

It was a 'speculation' that proved far more than 'visionary', and Headly was recorded advertising as far north as Yorkshire again in 1864 with an advertisement in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*:



Figure 19 – J L Headly advert, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* 30 Jun 1864

Headly transported his coprolites by water and by rail. Although the railways had been supplanting river trade ever since the Eagle Foundry moved to Mill Road, boats continued to ply from Cambridge to the coast, and in 1871 a Mr Brown, lighterman on the river for 50 years, stated: 'I know Mr Headly of Mill Road and have carried thousands of coprolites for him'.<sup>49</sup> However perhaps from the early days of the Foundry, a siding ran into the Eagle site from the adjacent railway, and as well as being used to transport castings this could also have been used to transport the crushed coprolites from the mill. An advertisement from 1872 during the period when James Headly was running the Foundry alone (1858–87) confirms the existence of the siding:

<sup>45</sup> Cambridge University Library. Add.7652.11/c/4. In Bernard O'Connor, *Hauxton Fossil Digging* (Sandy, Beds: author, 2011), p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*, p 32

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.bernardoconnor.org.uk/Coprolites/Bedscoops/Landowners.htm>

<sup>48</sup> CCh 28 Dec 1867. This figure appears large, but is repeated in the *Cambridge Independent Press*. If it is a misprint for £4,300 it would still be £45,000 today.

<sup>49</sup> CIP 18 Dec 1861

A siding running into the Works affords great facility for Repairs of Heavy Engines and Machinery.<sup>50</sup>



Figure 20 – J I Headly advert (CIP 29 Jun 1872)

## The Foundry

Unfortunately there are no known surviving accounts for Headly's business, and newspaper reports are scarce after Manning left. But the Foundry continued successfully, with Headly being described as 'a large ironfounder' in 1867 despite competition from others locally.<sup>51</sup>

He was still selling whole and ground coprolites, and 'all kinds of machinery for manure works' in the mid-1870s, as well as a 'Double Roll Bone Mill'.<sup>52</sup> While in 1877 the Eagle Foundry provided a new engine for the Cambridge University & Town Waterworks.<sup>53</sup>

In the same year Headly wrote to the *Cambridge Independent Press* stating that 'I am now engaged in draining my 19th district'.<sup>54</sup> The letter was a reminder that fen drainage remained an important market, and continued the debate that had started nearly thirty years earlier about the comparison between the scoop wheels that Headly manufactured, and centrifugal pumps like those made by Mr Appold. He illustrated his argument with an example from Ramsey:

About 26 years since I put up the Ramsey Holton engine and scoop wheel, the power of the engine being 25 horse power and the scoop wheel 26 feet. This engine is capable of lifting 87 tons per minute, a fact, I think, which very clearly demonstrates the superiority of the scoop wheel over the centrifugal engine. The 25 horse engine and scoop wheel doing as much with half the power[....]

He added: 'As to cost I should think there is no comparison between the two', qualifying his argument by noting that the only exception was in special circumstances like Whittlesey Mere. Headly concluded:

After 40 years experience I do not hesitate to say that an inferior scoop wheel is better than the best of pumps. (CIP 1 Dec 1877)

<sup>50</sup> CIP 29 Jun 1872

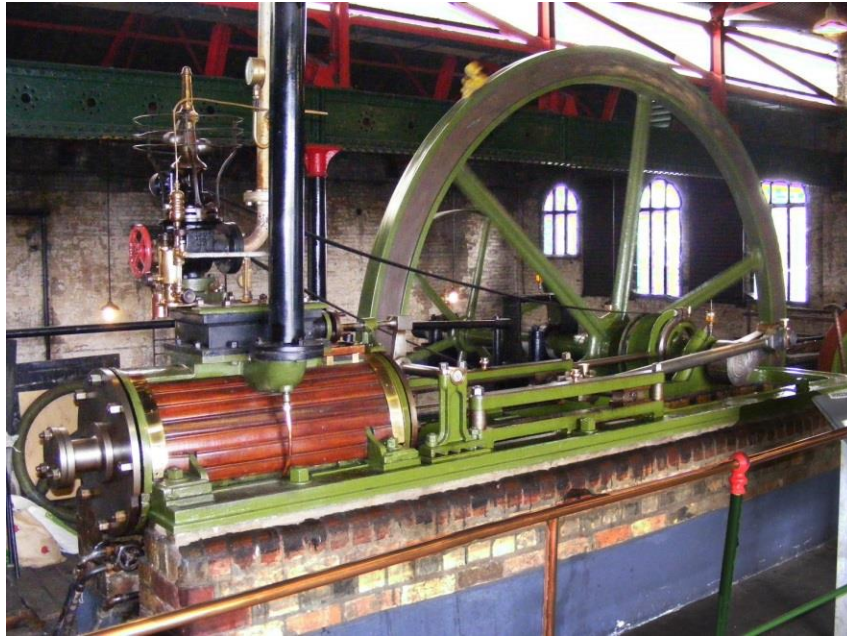
<sup>51</sup> CCh 28 Dec 1867, arbitration case against Mr Mason

<sup>52</sup> *Chemical News & Journal of Industrial Science*, vol. 33 (5 May 1876)

<sup>53</sup> CIP 2 Jun 1877

<sup>54</sup> CIP 1 Dec 1877





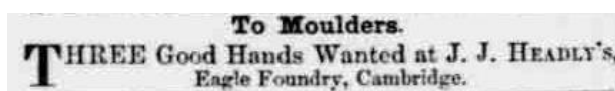
**Figure 21** – Horizontal mill engine (photo and information Cambridge Museum of Technology)

The horizontal mill engine in Figure 21, a type of engine commonly used in small factories and mills around the mid-19th century, was made by J I Headly. It is probably the last engine to have been cast at the Eagle Foundry. The engine spent its entire working life at Thomas Evans' Leather Works (1860–1968) in Sawston, where it was used to run the stocks and splitting machine. The power was transmitted from the engine to the machinery via a system of flat, leather belt-driven line shafting. Evans stopped using it in 1968 when they modernised their works.

## The Workforce

In 1852 it was claimed that 'upwards to seventy hands' were employed at the Foundry.<sup>55</sup> It is likely that many were employed only when they were needed, and by 1861 the census recorded that James Headly was a civil engineer employing just thirty-four men and three boys.

Physically exhausting tasks would have occupied many of these employees at the foundry, and at the mill. But skilled workmen were also required, and occasional advertisements in the local newspapers indicate the trades that Headly was looking for. These included moulders (*CIP* 11 Jun 1864), and experienced turners and fitters (*CCh* 13 May 1871).



**Figure 22a** – *CIP* 11 Jun 1864



**Figure 22b**– *CCh* 13 May 1871

Wages are unknown, but a court case in May 1883 reveals that Joseph Pitman alias Pickman, living nearby in Sturton Street and employed since the previous October, was earning 16 shillings a week as a labourer. It also showed him 'stealing iron, brass and lead from Ea-

<sup>55</sup> *CIP* 24 Apr 1852

gle Foundry during last 4 months', as well as three coprolite bags, and various tools, a reminder that some employees felt they had a right, or a need, to supplement their wages through theft when possible.<sup>56</sup>

Pitman's case was probably not the only example of pilfering, but despite this the paternalism that had been displayed in cricket matches on Parker's Piece in the 1850s continued after John Manning left the partnership, although by the 1860s this had become a more ambitious river excursion to Clayhithe. In 1864 this was described as 'a holiday and a treat', involving a 'substantial dinner' provided by Mr Worts, followed by adjournment to the fields for enjoyment 'as taste and opportunity permitted'. Amidst this there were toasts and 'acknowledgements for Mr Headly's ample liberality', significant in an era when Sunday was often the only day off work, and Bank Holidays had yet to be introduced (in 1871 the Bank Holiday Act introduced four Bank Holidays).

*Commendable Liberality.* — Mr. J. I. Headly, on Wednesday last, gave to his workmen employed at the Eagle Foundry, a holiday and treat. The festivities took place at Clayhithe, where the Company arrived about 11 o'clock, by Mr. Foster's boat, the *Victoria*. A substantial dinner was placed on the table by Mr. Worts, in his best style, to which we need scarcely say, ample justice, was done, after which suitable toasts were drank, and acknowledgements made for Mr. Headly's ample liberality. The company then adjourned to the fields to enjoy themselves as taste and opportunity permitted, until time to return homeward. The presence of R. Fielder, Esq., better known as the "King of Upware," at the dinner, and subsequently was a source of pleasure and merriment that will not soon be forgotten by many.

Figure 23 – 'ample liberality': day-trip to Clayhithe (CIP 6 Aug 1864)

By 1867 this river journey was described as an annual excursion, with a reminder that it was founded by Mr Headly, and that the 'Treat to the Workpeople' was again dependent on his liberality. The dinner was once more followed by playing cricket and other sports, and the whole day was seen to have reinforced the bonds between employer and employee:

The afternoon was profitably spent in the physical and social enjoyment derived from active engagement in cricket and other outdoor sports, and after all was over the general feeling was that the bond between employer and employed had been strengthened by the event of the day. (CIP 3 Aug 1867)

The 1870s saw the day-out embedded in the annual Foundry calendar, but now by rail to the Norfolk coast. In 1870 a dinner was provided at *The Golden Lion* in Hunstanton, 'the health of the respected donor of the feast was drunk with three times three', and the officials of the Great Eastern Railway were thanked for their courtesy in 'providing every facility for the conveyance of the men'.<sup>57</sup> A similar excursion in 1872 records that those employed at the Eagle Foundry numbered 'upwards to sixty', and it is likely that the courtesy of the railway company extended to dealing with a possibly excited and noisy crowd.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> CIP 18 May 1883

<sup>57</sup> CCh 23 Jul 1870

<sup>58</sup> CIP 13 Jul 1872

**Treat to Workpeople.**—On Thursday, the 14th July, through the kind liberality of J. I. Headly, Esq., the employes engaged in the Eagle Foundry enjoyed a trip to Hunstanton. A capital dinner was provided at the Golden Lion Hotel, to which ample justice was done. The health of the respected donor of the feast was drunk with three times three. Thanks are due to the officials of the Great Eastern Railway for their courtesy in providing every facility for the conveyance of the men. From first to last the day was one of thorough and hearty enjoyment.

Figure 24 – Trip to Hunstanton (CCh 23 Jul 1870)

In 1875 the excursion reverted to the river trip to Clayhithe, and reveals a little about the management of the business. After the dinner toasts were drunk, as normally to Mr Headly, 'with musical honours', but also to Mr Laurence Headly, and to 'the Foreman', Mr William Scott.<sup>59</sup>

William Scott was 51, and had been working as an engineer at least since 1861 when he is recorded living in Albert Street, Chesterton. The 1871 census describes him as a 'metal turner at (iron) factory', while in 1881 he is described as 'engineer' again. He may have worked for other foundries in Cambridge, but it is possible that he had risen to become Foreman through long-term service to James Headly.

Laurence Headly was 26 and James Headly's nephew, the son of his brother and former business partner Edward. After the brothers went their separate ways, Edward had established himself as an ironmonger in Corn Exchange Street, his firm by 1870 becoming known as The Exchange Ironworks. Edward worked first on his own, then with his eldest son Edward (until 1873), and later with his second son James, trading as Edward Headly & Son. The third son, Laurence, had been apprenticed at his uncle's Eagle Foundry, and from the toast at Clayhithe appears to have risen to a position of responsibility.<sup>60</sup> The mention of Laurence in the report of the river excursion is a reminder that family connections remained close despite the split between the two original founders of the Mill Road Foundry.

Although not mentioned in these outing reports, Thomas Blewett was described as 'manager at foundry and engine works' in the 1871 census. This can only have referred to the Eagle Foundry, and was a position he still held at the time of the 1881 census ('engineer & manager'). In both documents his address was given as 'Swiss Cottage', which was a detached house on the corner of Mill Road and Tenison Road, very close to the works.

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<sup>59</sup> CIP 31 Jul 1835

<sup>60</sup> Algar, Brigham, Hockley, Wilkinson (1996), p. 46

## 6. The 1880s

Regular advertisements in the 1880s showed Thomas Blewett representing J I Headly at the Corn Exchange on Saturdays, with offers of 'SPECIAL RATES for Casting in quantities represented by Mr. BLEWITT, at Corn Exchange'.<sup>61</sup>

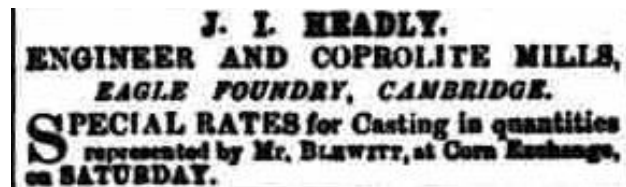


Figure 25 – Headly advert (CCh 6 Nov 1880)

Headly was still making coprolite mills, but American phosphates were being imported and profits from coprolites were going into decline. This is probably why the Meldreth Mill was offered for sale in 1882, and the details reveal some of the machinery that had been made at Mill Road:



Figure 26 – Sale: Coprolite and Bone Crushing Mill. Meldreth, Sep 1882, including machinery made by J I Headly (CIP 9 Sep 1882)

Three year later, in February 1885 when he was in his early seventies, Headly announced that he was retiring and that 'The OLD ESTABLISHED Engineering and Coprolite Mill, known as EAGLE FOUNDRY and Engineering Works, Cambridge' was FOR SALE as a going concern<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> CCh 6 Nov 1880

<sup>62</sup> CCh 7 Feb 1885



Figure 27 – Eagle foundry for Sale. J I Headly 'who is retiring' (CCh 7 Feb 1885)



Figure 28 – Cambridge Cattle Market, showing cast iron posts and bars used to fence cattle. Many of these were made by J I Headly at Mill Road, 1880s.



Figure 29a – 'J I Headly Mill Road'. Posts at Cattle Market, 1880s



Figure 29b – Post pattern 'Mill Road Cambridge' (Museum of Technology) (picture: Peter Filby)

James had no children, so there was no obvious successor. However there were no immediate offers, and the Foundry was still for sale two months later.<sup>63</sup> In the meantime Laurence

<sup>63</sup> CCh 5 Jun 1885



Headly, who may have been a prospective heir, had gone to work with his father Edward. Together they established the Exchange Ironworks on Newmarket Road as an iron foundry; and after Edward retired in 1885, Laurence went into partnership with Arthur Edwards as Headly & Edwards. Their fence posts can still be seen around the streets of Cambridge.

James's plans to retire in 1885 appear to have been frustrated, and the Foundry continued in business, casting amongst other things iron work for Hildersham bridge in 1886 (see Figure 30), and for Robinson Crusoe bridge in Cambridge in 1887.



**Figure 30** – Hildersham Bridge, Cambs, 1886. Peter Stokes. (*Hildersham Express* Nov 2005)

The Foundry site was offered for sale again in June 1887, and on 9 July 1887. Details stated there would be an auction during that month comprising the Eagle Foundry together with the Coprolite Mill & Building Ground, a frontage to Hooper Street, Cambridge, and a siding to the Great Eastern Railway.<sup>64</sup> Also to be auctioned was Headly's adjoining home, The Limes. The sales details include the first mention of a 'Portland Cement Works', possibly linked to the coprolite mill, indicating that Headly was still expanding as new opportunities opened up and the coprolite market shrank.

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<sup>64</sup> CCh 17 Jun 1887; CIP 9 Jul 1887

NOTICE OF SALE.  
**THE EAGLE FOUNDRY,**  
 Engineering, Coprolite, and  
 Portland Cement Works,  
 Mill-road, Cambridge.  
**JOHN SWAN and SON**  
**A**RE instructed by Mr. James Ind Headly  
 TO SELL BY AUCTION, during the present  
 month, the  
**Valuable Freehold Estate,**  
 containing 2a. 1r. 28p.,  
 situate in the Mill-road, Cambridge, and known  
 as the  
**"EAGLE FOUNDRY,"**  
 WITH THE  
**Coprolite Mill & Building Ground,**  
 with a frontage to Hooper-street, Cambridge, and  
 having a Siding to the Great Eastern Railway;  
 also the  
**FREEHOLD RESIDENCE,**  
 With Gardens and Vinery, now in the occupation  
 of the Proprietor.

Figure 31 – Notice of sale for the Eagle Foundry (CIP 9 Jul 1887)

There were no further notices of the auction date in the newspapers, and on 30 July Headly announced that the premises had '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 Ind Headly,  
**HAS BEEN DISPOSED OF BY**  
**PRIVATE CONTRACT.**  
**THE PLANT, MACHINERY & STOCK**  
 Will shortly be SOLD BY AUCTION.  
 Further particulars will appear in future Advertisements.  
 Auction Offices—19 Sidney Street, Cambridge.

Figure 32 – Eagle Foundry: disposal by private contract (CIP 30 Jul 1887)

In August the auction on the premises of the 'Plant, Machinery and Stock' at the Eagle Foundry was announced for the next month.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> CCh 5 Aug 1887

**MILL ROAD, CAMBRIDGE.**  
**Messrs. JOHN SWAN & SON,**  
**HAVE** received instructions from Mr.  
 James Iod Headly, 10 SKILL of AUCTION,  
 on the Premises, in September next,  
**THE PLANT, MACHINERY & STOCK,**  
 AT THE  
**EAGLE FOUNDRY,**  
 Engineering, Coprolite and Portland  
 Cement Works.  
 Further particulars will appear in future Advertis-  
 ments.  
 Auction Offices—19 Sidney Street, Cambridge.

Figure 33 – Auction of Plant, Machinery and Stock (CCh 5 Aug 1887)

A couple of weeks later, the date of the machinery auction was announced as 6 and 7 September, along with a list of what was for sale. This list affords a glimpse of what was required to run the business. It included machinery ranging from a crushing mill to shaping, slotting, drilling, punching, shearing and bending machines, a steam hammer, circular, table and band saws, lathes, and cranes, as well as models and moulders for making cast iron items.

Also included were the 'chestnut cart gelding, tumbrel cart, waggonette and 4-wheel pony phaeton'. James Headly and his wife Mary would presumably have used the phaeton – an open carriage – for their journeys from The Limes into Cambridge and further afield.

**MILL ROAD, CAMBRIDGE.**  
**THE EXTENSIVE AND VALUABLE**  
**ENGINEERING PLANT, MACHINERY**  
**AND STOCK,**  
 AT THE  
**EAGLE FOUNDRY,**  
 COMPRISING  
**FIVE LATHES,**  
**TWO PLANING MACHINES,**  
 Shaping Machine,  
 Slotting Machine,  
**2 DRILLING MACHINES,**  
 BORING MACHINE,  
**15 Cwt. Steam Hammer,**  
**4 Punching and Shearing Machines,**  
 Boiler Plate Bending Machine,  
**CRUSHING MILL,**  
**4 PORTABLE ENGINES,**  
 VERTICAL BOILER,  
 4 HEAVY CRANES,  
 Circular Saw, Table and Band Saw,  
 Large quantity of Models, Moulder's Boxes, old Scrap  
 Iron (both cast and wrought), numerous Tools and  
 Trade requisites;  
 Chestnut Cart Gelding,  
 Tumbrel Cart and Harness,  
 Waggonette, 4-wheel Pony Phaeton,  
 HARNESS & STABLE UTENSILS,  
**TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY**  
**JOHN SWAN & SON,**  
 On **TUESDAY** and **WEDNESDAY**, 6th and 7th, 1887, at 11 o'clock each day punctually, by  
 direction of Mr. James Iod Headly, the proprietor.  
 May be viewed the day previous and mornings of  
 each. Catalogues are preparing and will be forwarded  
 on application to the Auctioneers, 19, Sidney Street,  
 Cambridge.

Figure 34 – Sale of engineering plant, machinery and stock (CCh 19 Aug 1887)



Two months after the auction of the Foundry had first been announced the mysterious buyer was revealed in an advertisement in the *Cambridge Chronicle* as the Great Eastern Railway Company. Owners of steam power and machinists were informed that:

Having disposed of his works and foundry to the Great Eastern Railway Company, and having made over the goodwill of his business to his nephew (Mr Laurence Headly), of the firm Headly and Edwards, Corn Exchange Street, Cambridge, Messrs Headly & Edwards [...] have at their works, on the Newmarket Road, machinery with the latest improvements and a staff of experienced engineers and workmen capable of carrying out any work that may be entrusted to them.

**TO OWNERS OF STEAM POWER  
AND MACHINISTS.**

**MR. J. I. HEADLY**, of the Eagle Foundry, Mill Road, Cambridge,  
H<sup>AVING</sup> DISPOSED OF HIS WORKS and FOUNDRY to the Great Eastern Railway  
Company, and having made over the GOODWILL OF HIS BUSINESS to his Nephew (Mr.  
Laurence Headly), of the FIRM of HEADLY and EDWARDS, CORN EXCHANGE STREET, CAM-  
BRIDGE.

**Messrs. HEADLY & EDWARDS**  
B<sup>EG</sup> to give notice that they have at their WORKS, on the NEWMARKET ROAD,  
MACHINERY with the LATEST IMPROVEMENTS and a STAFF of experienced ENGINEERS  
and WORKMEN capable of carrying out any work that may be entrusted to them.

**HEADLY & EDWARDS**  
(LATE E. HEADLY & SON),  
ENGINEERS, IRON and BRASS FOUNDERS, IMPLEMENT  
MANUFACTURERS, and AGENTS.

Offices & Show Rooms, Corn Exchange Street } CAMBRIDGE.  
Works and Foundry, Newmarket Road }

Figure 35 – Announcement of sale of foundry to GER (CCh 9 Sep 1887)

This was followed a year later, in November 1888, by a statement in the *Cambridge Chronicle* that the Great Eastern Railway Company had purchased the site with the purpose of constructing an 'intensive goods depot'. This was hailed thus:

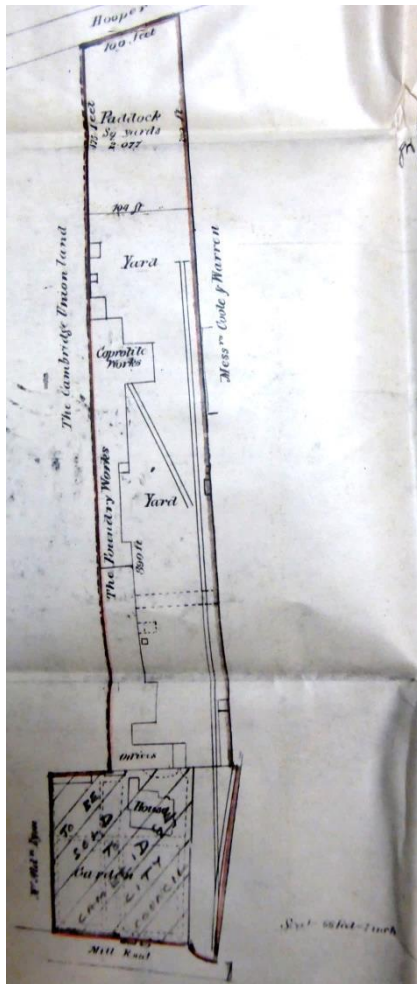
The benefit which will accrue to the public by the adoption of this step will be very great, as largely increased facilities will be afforded for the storage of goods, and their transit from the station to the centre of town.

**PROPOSED NEW GOODS YARD.**—We under-  
stand 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 Com-  
pany 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.

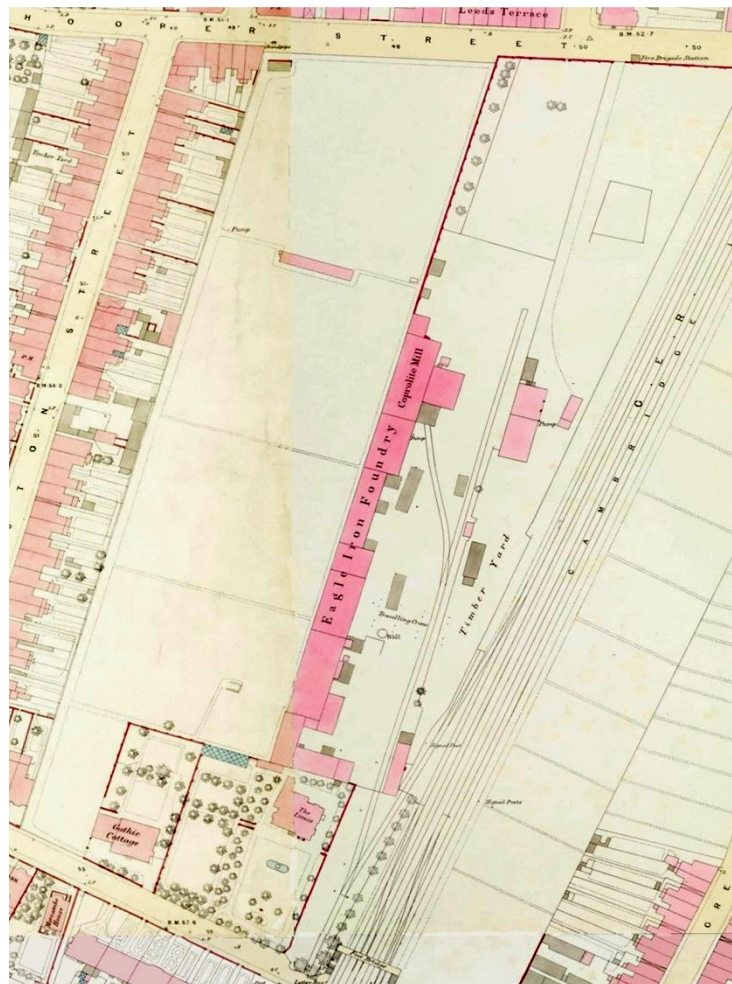
Figure 36 – Proposed new goods yard (CCh 14 Sep 1888)

The sale to the GER may have been prompted by discussions held in 1887 when the Great Eastern Railway (General Powers) Bill was before a House of Commons Select Committee. During the debate a Mr Ledgard, acting for the GER, questioned the railway company's engineer, John Wilson, about building a new bridge over the railway next to The Limes. The house was described as 'a fine place.—Yes, with very lovely grounds and nice shrubs round it', and the adjoining 'large block of property' with 'siding accommodation to the railway'

was also identified.<sup>66</sup> Later in the debate Mr Ledgard added: '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, p. 7). The implication was that if the GER wanted part of Headly's land they would have to buy all of it.



**Figure 37** – The Eagle Foundry Works, Paddock, Coprolite Mill, and The Limes (7 Nov 1887)<sup>67</sup>



**Figure 38** – Eagle Foundry : OS map 1886

The plan of Headly's site is shown in the documents recording the sale to the GER on 7 November 1887 (Figure 37). It shows The Limes fronting Mill Road, with offices, foundry works, coprolite works, yards, and a paddock running from the rear of The Limes to Hooper Street. The 1886 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 38) shows similar buildings. Both also show the railway siding and the entrance to the site from Mill Road adjacent to The Limes.

The 1887 plan identifies the owner of the land to the left of the foundry site as 'The Cambridge Union'. The land to the right of the foundry was owned by 'Messrs Coote & Warren'.

<sup>66</sup> The full transcript 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 (source: Mill Road History Society Building Report No. 15, Caroline Wilson, 'Mill Road Bridge' (2018), Appendix 1). The transcript for 21 Mar 1887 (CA: CB/2/CL/29/41) records Mr Ledgard interrogating Mr Wilson about the site.

<sup>67</sup> Source: deeds of sale between James Headly (ironfounder), London & County Banking company (mortgagees), and GER (CCArch).

The plan shows the site tapering slightly from the rear of The Limes, reducing to a width of 100 feet at the Hooper Street boundary. The sale details state that the total size of the property, including 'messuage [i.e. dwelling], foundry, coprolite mills, workshops, stables and other buildings' was 2 acres 1 rod 28 perches. The sale also confirms that the land was acquired for 'railway and works for The Great Eastern Railway' under the General Powers Act 1887. The London & County Banking Company, mortgagees since 1874, received £1,500; James Headly received £5,500. Included in the sale were the 'fixed plant fixtures and fittings in about and belonging to the said foundry'.<sup>68</sup> These were specified as:

<b>Cornish Boiler</b>	<b>One pair Crushing Rolls with gears</b>
<b>5 horsepower Beam Engine</b>	<b>Exhaust (Unreadable) Chambers</b>
<b>Drying Stone in foundry</b>	<b>Elevators and Troughs</b>
<b>Shafting, Pullies, Couplings &amp; Hangers and Fittings throughout shops</b>	<b>Bin stage and drying store</b>
<b>Cast Iron Tank and wrought iron tank on 6 Girders</b>	<b>Engine house</b>
<b>Coprolite Mill</b>	<b>(Unreadable) Cornish boilers (1?) Horse Power</b>
<b>Four pairs stones</b>	<b>Horizontal engine and Condenser</b>

**Figure 39** – Plant, Fixtures and fittings included in sale of The Eagle Foundry to GER (7 Nov 1887)<sup>69</sup>

Fourteen months later, on 22 February 1889, the GER offered the unwanted machinery and plant for sale. Together with the plant mentioned in the 1887 sale details, and that which Headly had tried to sell earlier, these lists of equipment give an idea of what it took to run the Foundry and coprolite mill.

For the Foundry it required a 30-horsepower horizontal engine, two large water tanks, a pump, a 10-horsepower beam engine, six cast-iron girders, and an overhead travelling crane.

For the coprolite mill it required four mills, four pairs of stones, crushing rolls, fan chambers, elevators, troughs, staging, etc, three cupolas, furnaces, boilers, and 100 feet of wrought-iron shafting, pulleys and supports.

ON FRIDAY NEXT.  
THE FOUNDRY,  
MILL ROAD, CAMBRIDGE.  
THE VALUABLE  
**MACHINERY AND PLANT,**  
Of the above Premises, comprising  
**30 Horse-Power Horizontal ENGINE,**  
With fittings, two large water tanks, Pump with  
gearing complete,  
**10 Horse-Power Beam ENGINE,**  
With cylinder, fly-wheels, pulleys, &c., complete; Six  
cast iron Girders, an overhead travelling Crane,  
**COPROLITE MILL.**  
With 4 Mills, 4 pairs of Stones, crushing rolls, fan  
chambers, elevators, troughs, staging, etc., complete  
and in good working order; also 3 Cupolas; several  
furnaces, boilers, and 100 feet run of wrought iron  
shafting, with pulleys and supports, which  
**Messrs. WISBEY, SON & MOYES**  
**ARE** instructed by the Great Eastern  
Railway Company TO SELL by AUCTION,  
on the Premises as above, on FRIDAY next, 22nd day  
of February, 1889, at 12 o'clock at noon precisely.  
May be viewed day prior to Sale.  
Catalogues of Messrs. Wisbey, Son and Moyes, 26,  
Trinity Street, Cambridge.

**Figure 40** – Sale of machinery and plant by GER  
22 Feb 1889 (CCh 15 Feb 1889)

<sup>68</sup> Sale details of The Eagle Foundry to GER 7 Nov 1887 (CCArch)

<sup>69</sup> Source: Deeds. The Eagle Foundry (CCArch)

### 'The First Cambridge Cement and Lime Business'

Intriguingly, two days before the sale to the GER, on 5 November 1887 a notice appeared in the *Cambridge Independent Press* stating that 'The First Cambridge Cement and Lime Business, lately in connection with the Eagle Foundry, will in future be carried on by Thomas Blewett & Company, Mill Road, Cambridge'. Blewett had been Headly's manager for many years. There are no records of the relationship between the two businesses, but Blewett & Co. later became The Romsey Town Cement and Lime Co. Ltd at 315–349 Mill Road.<sup>70</sup>



Figure 41 – Advert (CIP 5 Nov 1887)

### The Headly Family

By the time of the 1891 census James and Mary Headly were recorded living in Warkworth Street, aged respectively 78 and 72, with one 'general servant'. James died in 1893. Two years later in 1895 Mary, described as 'widow of James Ind Headly, late of The Eagle Foundry', died too. They had no children, and no records or photographs of the Foundry or of The Limes seem to have survived her death.



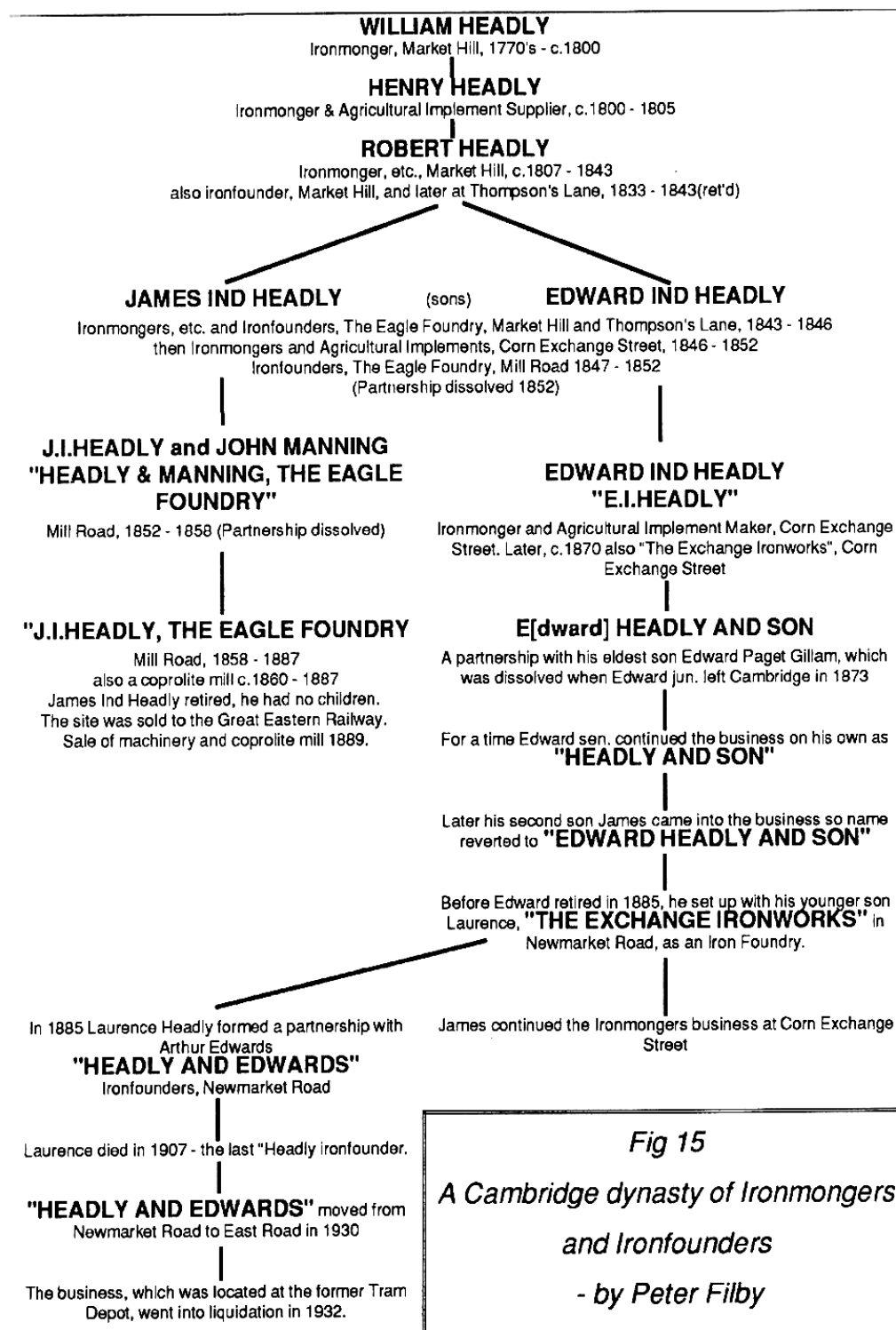
Figure 42 – Death notice, Mary Headly (CCh 1 Mar 1895)

James's brother and original partner Edward died in 1905. He was the last Headly link with The Eagle Foundry on Market Hill and its resurrection on Mill Road after the disastrous fire 59 years earlier. Originally built in the countryside, the Mill Road site was now surrounded by houses, with the new Romsey Town development just across the railway tracks. Cambridge had changed dramatically in their lifetime.

Robert Headly's grandson, Laurence, who had worked at Mill Road, kept the Headly link with iron founding alive in Cambridge. Headly & Edwards continued in business long after Laurence's death, finally moving from Newmarket Road to East Road before closing in 1932.

<sup>70</sup> See [https://capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Magnet\\_1st\\_edn.pdf](https://capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Magnet_1st_edn.pdf) Mill Road History Society report No. 14: John McGill, 299–349 Mill Road, Romsey Town: the Development of the 'Magnet' and 'Holland Motors' Sites (2018).

### Chapter 4 - The Headly family



**Fig 15**  
*A Cambridge dynasty of Ironmongers  
and Ironfounders  
- by Peter Filby*

**Figure 43** – Headly Family Tree by Peter Filby, in Alger, Brigham, Hockley and Wilkinson (1996)

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## 7. After 1887 : Successive Proprietors

In 1888 the Board of Guardians, owners of the adjoining Workhouse 'Industrial Ground' (see section D, below), discussed selling their site to the Great Eastern Railway Company (GER). It seems that the GER had already expressed interest, as Mr Rae stated that they had applied to the Guardians to sell the land by auction.

Added to the land that the GER had already bought from Headly this would have created a significant site, and valuing the Guardians' 3 acres 35 poles at £3,500 Mr J Carter Jonas recommended they should offer the ground at that price. Hopes were raised that if the sale were agreed the railway company might move its works from Stratford in London to Cambridge, and that:

a great deal more work would be brought into the town as Cambridge was nearer the centre of the Great Eastern Railway system. If the Board missed this chance of disposing of the land to the company they would not have another as good for a long time.<sup>71</sup>

After a long discussion the Board agreed to follow Carter Jonas's advice, qualified by a reminder that they needed the permission of the Local Government Board. But hopes that Cambridge would become a major railway works never materialised, and the GER depot on the foundry site seems not to have come about.

The first recorded businesses listed between The Limes and Mill Road bridge (but situated north of The Limes – see Figure 99, below) after the sale of the Eagle Foundry are listed in Spalding's and Kelly's street directories as:

1895–1901 Girling and Coe, builders and contractors. C Dennant, manager  
 1904–14 Alfred Coe, builder & contractor. A J Nunn, manager  
 1915–33 W J Staines Ltd, builders & contractors. A J Nunn, manager  
 1934–39 A J Nunn & Son Ltd builders and contractors  
 [no directories in wartime]  
 1948–53 A J Nunn & Son, builders  
 1955–75 121a A J Nunn & Son, builders

The site adjacent to and north of the above companies was occupied from 1924 to 1968:

1924–39 The Cambridge Artificial Stone Co Ltd  
 1948 121b The Cambridge Artificial Stone Co Ltd  
 1951–53 121b The Cambridge Artificial Stone Co Ltd  
 121b British Art Tile Co Ltd, tile makers  
 1955–60 121b The Cambridge Artificial Stone Co Ltd  
 121b British Art Tile Co Ltd, tile makers  
 121b Dri-Crete Construction Co., concrete block makers  
 1962–68 121b The Cambridge Artificial Stone Co Ltd  
 1969–75 121b [—]

Writing in 2018 Mick Brown remembered the Artificial Stone Company as follows:

The production side was quite a small operation with a couple of people mixing concrete and others making moulds, others filling them and knocking out and stacking up the produce, kerb stones etc. I only worked there for about six weeks in 1966. As with several other places I worked at, I mainly remember the characters there. I left because pay was too poor. I remember telling the boss 'I can't live on £9 18s a week' and he just blinked at me.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> CIP 27 Apr 1888

<sup>72</sup> Mick Brown 5 Jun 2018, personal correspondence

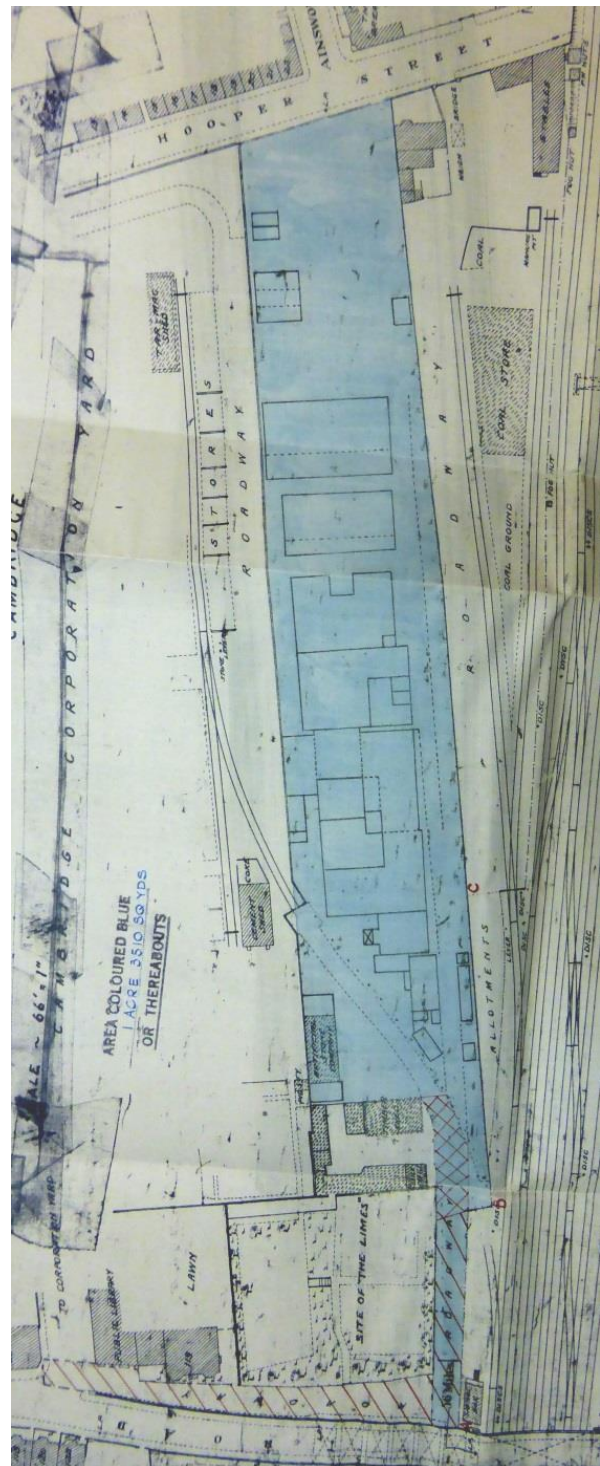


## 8. 1968 : Sale to Cambridge City Council

In 1968 the British Railways Board, the successor to the Great Eastern Railway, sold the former foundry site to the Cambridge Corporation for £20,000. The site comprised 1 acre 3,510 square yards. The Cambridge Artificial Stone Company had a lease dated 20 December 1961, valid until 20 December 1982, but they surrendered this on 20 December 1968, and no longer appear in the street directories.

A J Nunn continued on the site until at least 1975.

Figure 44 maps the area used by A J Nunn and The Cambridge Artificial Stone Company. The area coloured blue was sold by the British Railways Board to the Cambridge Corporation, plus access to site with conditions (area hatched brown). See also Figures 98 and 99 below.



**Figure 44** – Map of Mill Road Depot  
(9 Aug 1968) (CCArch)

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## C. The Limes 1846–1967

James and Edward Headly are both recorded living with their families at the Eagle Foundry in the 1851 census, and this was probably in the house called The Limes. It is likely they were living there when the Foundry opened in 1846 or 1847.

The house was a detached villa set back from Mill Road, with a stone panel on the south gable end dated '1846'. The date makes it probable that the house was built by the Headlys after they relocated the foundry from Market Hill following the fire in 1846. The tree-lined garden abutted the ironworks, and while the proximity of the industrial works to the proprietor's home would have been incongruous later in the 19th century this was not so in the 1840s.



**Figure 45a** – The Limes (OS map 1886, detail)



**Figure 45b** – Site of the Limes (CC Arc 1968 detail)

Figure 45a, OS map 1886, shows a detail of The Limes and its grounds. By 1889 part of the front garden of The Limes and the frontage of Gothic Cottage had been bought to provide access to the former Eagle Foundry site when Mill Road bridge was built. The Limes was shown in an aerial picture taken in 1962 (Figure 46), but is not shown on the 1965–67 OS map (Figure 92, below). Figure 45b shows the garden of The Limes with the house demolished by 1968. There are no other known photographs of the house.



**Figure 46** – Aerial photograph showing The Limes, 13 Sep 1962 (CC: No 566498)

Figure 46, an aerial photograph taken in 1962, shows The Limes adjacent to the railway tracks. The house was described by the Royal Commission of Historical Monuments in 1959:

Mill Road, The Limes: house, standing back on the N.E. side, 100 yards E. of Kingston Street, of two storeys, with walls of gault brick with stone dressing and slate covered roofs, is dated 1846 on a stone panel on the S. gable end. It is of some interest as an early example of the lofty, irregular-planned house of indeterminate Gothic inspiration that was soon to appear in great numbers in suburban developments in most parts of the country.

The tall gabled projections, asymmetrical on the S. and N. sides, have stone quoins and elaborate bargeboards on the steeply pitched roofs. The open timber porch has similar bargeboards and pointed openings. The windows have chamfered stone jambs and flat heads, some with moulded labels; the marginal pattern of panes in the glazing are the sole link with earlier 19th century fashion of less stylistic pedantry. Inside, the doorway to the stair hall is flanked by Gothic niches with mirror glass in the backs.

Spalding's street directories record the house as 121 Mill Road, and as being occupied in 1885 by Algernon Lyon. By the 1901 census Henry and Alice Sherlock lived there with their eight-year-old son John and ten-year-old daughter Ann, with a twenty-five-year-old cook and a sixteen-year-old housemaid. Henry Sherlock, 42, was a civil engineer, born in Worcester; Alice, 35, was born in Benares, India. Alice was still living there in 1939, aged 77, widowed, along with Alice M Tufnell-Barrett, artist, painter and engraver, aged 48.<sup>73</sup>

By 1948 The Limes was occupied by the 'LNER Workmen's Compensation & GE funds (F J Rhodes: Sec)'.<sup>74</sup> Presumably the house passed into the possession of the British Railways Board with the sale of the Foundry in 1887, and both the Sherlocks and the LNER Workmen's Compensation & GE Funds were tenants.

Recollecting his childhood in the 1950s and 1960s, Derek Smiley remembered the then deserted house as what 'we called the "Ghost House", I believe; we used to go in there and frighten ourselves, lol<sup>75</sup> would love to see a pic of it [...] sure the brickwork was black from the trains but might be wrong'.<sup>76</sup> Keith Benton added:

Remember playing on that site next to our doctors as a kid and there was nothing left of the house but the floor. And part of it was ornate tiling possibly a porch or hall. We never knew of the house.<sup>77</sup>

The house was demolished in the years immediately prior to the sale of the property to the City Council in 1968.

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<sup>73</sup> Spalding's Street Directory; 1939 National Register

<sup>74</sup> Kelly's Street Directory

<sup>75</sup> lol: slang term in electronic communications (lit. 'laugh out loud'), used to draw attention to something conveying slight amusement.

<sup>76</sup> Facebook: Town not Gown Cambridge History Tours, 12 Nov 2014

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*

## D. 1853–1904: THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING GROUND — ALLOTMENTS

Ian Bent & Allan Brigham

Date	Owner	Description	Size
Unknown–1853	William Patman	Fields	3 acres 35 perches
1853–87	Cambridge Board of Guardians	Workhouse Industrial Training Ground	3 acres 35 perches <sup>78</sup>
1887–1904  1889: Sale to GER (£850) for strip 18ft deep next to Mill Rd to provide access road to 119 Mill Rd, The Limes etc.  1891: Sale to Borough of Cambridge (10/-) for land for Free Library.	Cambridge Board of Guardians	Allotments	3 acres 35 perches  Less: 1889, 1891 Sales

Figure 47 - The site. Known ownership

### 1. 1852–53 : Background

By the early 1850s, several workhouses around the country had experimented with the practice of putting their inmates to types of work that were both *useful* and *profitable*, rather than assigning them merely routine and punitive labour.

In December 1852 the Cambridge Guardians debated the creation of an ‘industrial training ground’ in the Mill Road area close to the existing Union Workhouse – its purpose being to train young people to be *industrious*, rather than prepare them for industrial occupations. The proposer referred to ‘the moral habits and future happiness of the inmates’, but also to ‘the interests of the Rate-payers’.<sup>79</sup> It was a high priority for the Guardians that the project should be a source of financial profit for the Workhouse Union.

A striking critique of the existing system of training by the Guardians was discussed:<sup>80</sup>

The only means hitherto possessed by the Guardians [...] were employing the able-bodied men in picking oakum, and teaching some of the boys tailoring and shoemaking: in both of which occupations very little, if any benefit was derived, and no profit – independently of other considerations affecting their moral and physical condition. [...] It was also required by the regulation of the Poor-law Board [...] that pauper children should be trained to such habits of usefulness and industry as would best fit them to gain their own living.

<sup>78</sup> Cambridge Board of Guardians Minutes. Guardians’ Meeting. 9 Jun 1853 (CA: G/C/A)

<sup>79</sup> Guardians’ meeting, as reported in *CIP* 18 Dec 1852

<sup>80</sup> Guardians’ meeting, as reported in *CIP* 9 July 1853



It is hard to see why tailoring and shoemaking would be 'benefit'-less preparations for future life. The significant phrase here is perhaps 'no profit'. Saffron Waldon Workhouse was evidenced as having made nearly £20 a year out of a 2½-acre site of the sort proposed.

In July 1853 the Guardians were offered a site by Mr William Patman of 3 acres 35 perches near the Workhouse (part of a larger plot 6 acres 35 perches) at 200 guineas an acre, the purchase price being £675 18s. 9d.

While some Guardians thought buying the land was an irresponsible waste of funds, others reminded their colleagues that land near the Workhouse had earlier been offered by Dr Geldart at £400 an acre, while fourteen years ago the Workhouse site had cost £150 per acre. Both these examples made Mr Patman's offer now seem reasonable, and the Guardians agreed to the purchase.<sup>81</sup>

The Board of Guardians Minute Book described the site as being part of a 'freehold close of pasture land' abutting Messrs Headly & Manning's Foundry 'on which side the premises are bound by a brick wall of considerable height'. It extended to the gardens of Mr Headly (The Limes) and Mr Patman on the eastern side, and with a sixty-four-foot frontage to Mill Road (2018: the site of the Depot access road and the former Library), including a filled-up ditch and hedge five feet wide. Also included were the hedge and ditch abutting the adjoining estate of Dr Geldart.

The land was described thus:

Subsoil commencing at the depth of from 2 to 3 feet comprises Gravel of a similar character to that which has from time to time been excavated by the Guardians and disposed of from and out of the Garden situate at the back of the Workhouse and in the opinion of Your Committee the Supply of Gravel and Sand upon that part of Mr. Patman's Estate proposed to be sold to the Guardians would if excavated amount to a Sum of not less than £200 and that the Land would then be equally valuable for Industrial purposes.

The Report continued by stressing the additional value of the part of the land that fronted Mill Road next to Gothic Cottage:

Your Committee beg also to point out to the notice of the Guardians that if the piece of Ground situate next Mill Road (after separating Ten feet therefrom for a Carriageway for the purpose of ingress egress and regress to and from Mill Road to the remaining part of the Estate) was offered for Sale by Public Auction in one Lot for Building purposes to the depth of 142 feet as shown upon the Plan such piece of Building Ground would in the opinion of Your Committee realize a Sum of at least from £100 to £150.<sup>82</sup>

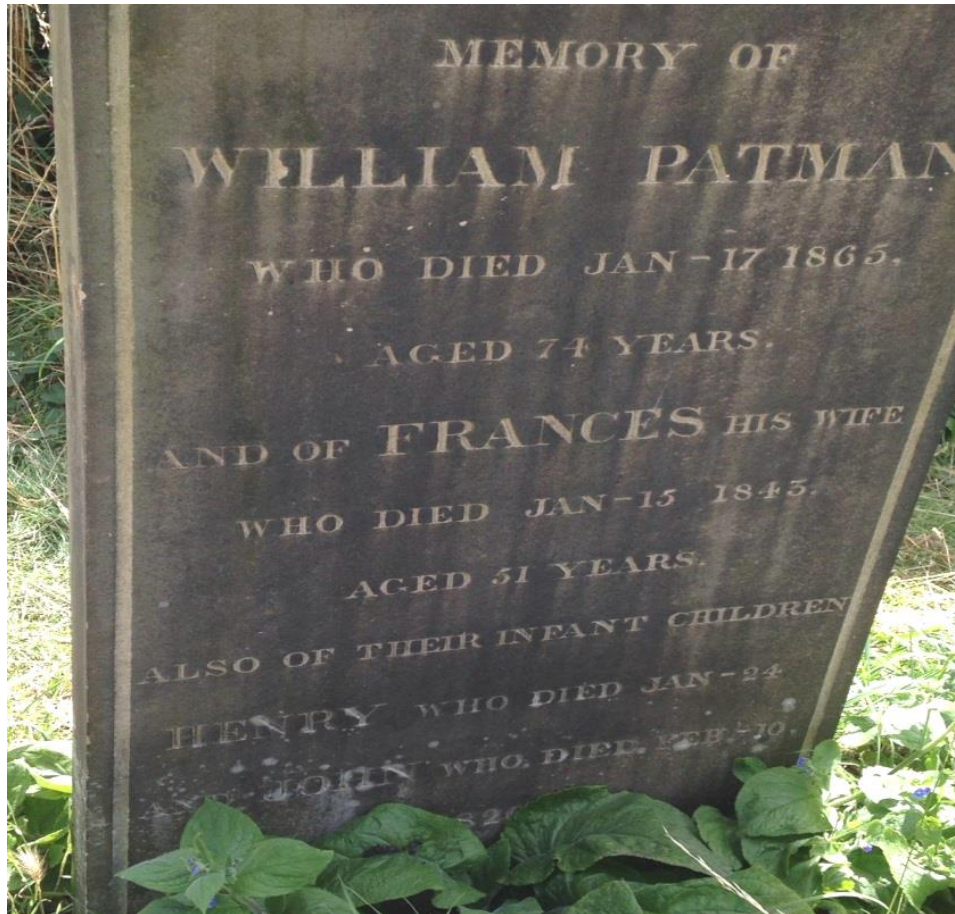
This was an opportunity that was never realised. In 1891 a future generation of Guardians sold this land to the Borough of Cambridge as the site for a new Free Library for 10 Shillings.

Patman is probably the same William Patman recorded living at Annesley Place, Panton Street in the 1851 census, aged 61, born in Downham, Norfolk and described as the 'Proprietor of houses and Land'. He died in 1865, and is buried in Mill Road cemetery (Figure 48).<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Cambridge Board of Guardians Minutes. Guardians Meeting. 9 Jun 1853 (CA: G/C/A)

<sup>82</sup> Report to Board of Guardians. Board of Guardians Minute Book for 6 July 1853, pp. 115–18 (CA: G/C/AM15)

<sup>83</sup> Gravestone on right of path as you enter Cemetery from the Lodge and walk towards central pathway. Parish: St Paul's.



**Figure 48** - William Patman, died 1865 aged 74:  
St Paul's section, Mill Road Cemetery

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## 2. 1853–87 : The Industrial Training Ground

Within three years the precise location of the site of the new Training Ground was clarified by the report of a Guardians meeting in the *Cambridge Independent Press*:<sup>84</sup>

A letter was read from Messrs. Headly and Manning, of the Eagle Foundry, complaining of a nuisance caused by a pigstye, on the Industrial Training Ground, next to their premises; the smell arising therefrom was said to be offensive.

The Eagle Foundry and The Limes (a house belonging to the Headlys) can be seen on both the 1859 plan and the 1886 Ordnance Survey map (Figures 49 and 50). In the 1850s, neither Kingston Street nor Hooper Street had yet been laid out, nor had any of the houses lining them been built. Gothic Cottage (119 Mill Road) existed, as did The Limes. So the Industrial Ground was an inverted L-shaped plot bounded by the foundry on the east, Mill Road on the south, the line of Kingston Street on the west, and that of Hooper Street on the north.

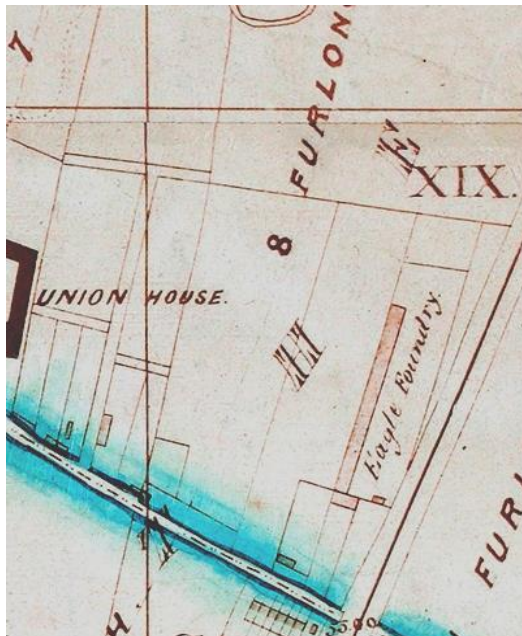


Figure 49 – Industrial Training Ground, 1859



Figure 50 – Allotments (OS map 1886)

In Figure 49 the Industrial Training Ground in 1859 is shown as a white rectangular plot to the left of the Eagle Foundry, with an entrance from Mill Road next to Gothic Cottage (Monson map, Cambridge, 1859: private collection). By 1886, the Industrial Training Ground had become Vegetable Garden Allotments with one long narrow building on the boundary towards the Hooper Street end (Figure 50). The Board of Guardians retained ownership.

<sup>84</sup> Guardians meeting, as reported in *CIP* 15 Nov 1856

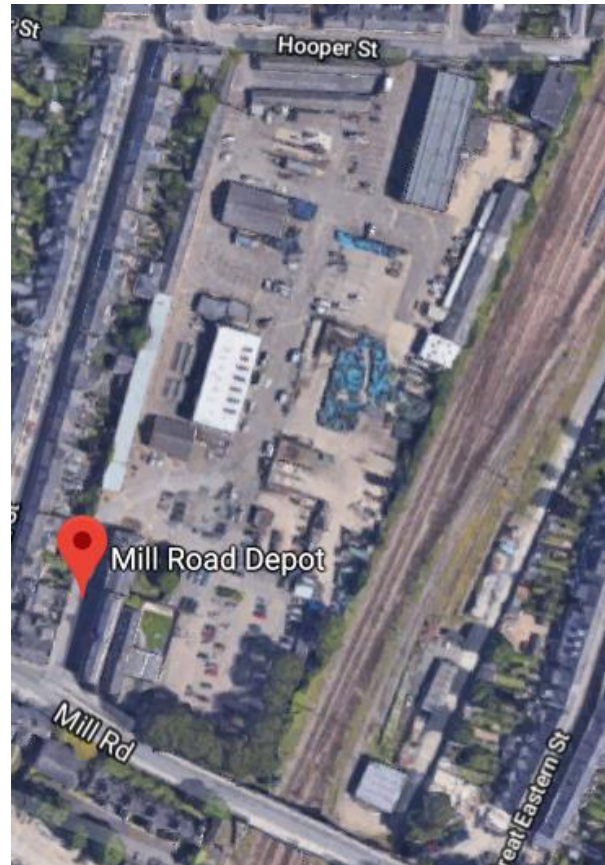


Figure 51 – Mill Road Depot (Google Earth, 2019)

The red 'pin' in Figure 51 shows the entrance from Mill Road into the site, reduced in size since the 1886 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 50) by the sale of a narrow plot of land for the new Free Library. Gothic Cottage is shown to the right of the Library, with a green garden area to the rear. The Industrial Training Ground ran approximately from the 'St' of 'Hooper Street' beyond the 'D' in 'Depot' to the end at the boundary of the garden of The Limes (by 2018 car parking space for the Depot).

The Ground is not identified in the early street directories until 1884. At that point (reading east–west).<sup>85</sup>

**Great Eastern Railway Crossing and Foot Passengers' bridge**

Eagle Foundry and Coprolite Mills, Headley, James Ind, proprietor

Blewitt, Thomas, manager

Headley, James Ind, The Limes

41 Lyon, Algernon Jasper, Gothic House, solicitor, captain Cambridge Volunteer Fire Brigade

**Cambridge Union Workhouse Vegetable Gardens**

KINGSTON TERRACE

4 Jones, Mrs.

3 Barker, Obadiah, coachman and groom

2 Hemmings, Joseph, superintendent Prudential Assurance Company

1 Chandler, Jno.

*Here is Kingston Street.*

<sup>85</sup> Spalding's Street Directory, 1884: for present purposes, the order has been reversed, from west–east to east–west.

Mathieson's directories of 1866 and 1867 show how little building there was in the area in the early days of the Ground. Nothing is recorded between Gothic House/Cottage and *The Swan* at the corner of Mill Road and Kingston Street.

Headley, I J, iron founder and engineer

Lyon, Jasper

Ward, Benjamin, *The Swan*

Putting these items together: Jasper Lyon lived in Gothic Cottage (now the English language school beside the bridge), thus was a neighbour of the Ground. In fact, he was also a member of the Board of Guardians and served as Superintendent of the Industrial Training Ground, while the Master of the Workhouse was responsible for its day-to-day running and presented an annual account of its finances, such as that for 1857.<sup>86</sup>

Gas Company by the Clerk. The Board then proceeded to consider the applications for outdoor relief.

*Industrial Ground Account for the Year 1857:*

PROFIT.		£.	s.	d.
Cash for pigs .....		64	19	0
Estimated value of potatoes (552 cwt.) at 2s. 3d .....		62	2	0
Ditto (18 cwt.) ditto, for pigs, at 1s. ....		0	18	0
Ditto (32 cwt.) barley, at 38s. ....		7	12	0
Ditto (8 ton) wurzel, at 17s. per ton .....		6	16	0
Ditto of pigs in hand (December).....		19	6	0
Ditto of manure, ditto .....		10	0	0
		171	13	0
Expenses.....		76	8	11
Estimated profit .....		95	4	1
LOSS.				
Value of sows and pigs, at Christmas, 1857..		20	17	0
Paid for pig feed, one year .....		46	16	0
Expenses of auction.....		1	7	0
Straw, one year.....		4	7	0
Small accounts .....		1	1	5
Porter (yearly allowance) .....		2	0	0
		£76	8	11

Figure 52 – Industrial Ground accounts for 1857

The profitability of the Ground rose to a peak in the late 1870s, the report for 1878 showing a profit of £205 9s 5d; but thereafter it declined, those for 1882 and 1883 being £85 and £75 13s respectively.<sup>87</sup> The principal activities of the Ground were raising pigs, growing potatoes (this supplied all the needs of the Workhouse, which sold the surplus to local trade) and the digging of gravel.

Some smart sleuthing on the part of the Master and Superintendent in March 1870 detected the theft of potatoes; the story gives us an idea of the importance of potatoes to the economy of the Workhouse, the level of surveillance that went on, and the penalty for an infraction.<sup>88</sup>

A PAUPER STEALING POTATOS. —John Gray, an inmate of the Union Workhouse, was charged by Mr. Hosegood with stealing a quantity of potatoes, value 3d., the property of the Guardians. —Mr. FETCH prosecuted. —Mr. Hosegood said: The man was employed in the industrial ground planting seed potatoes. I went in the ground during the dinner hour, and found some potatoes secreted. I marked some of them, and placed them back again. I afterwards saw some potatoes in the pris-

<sup>86</sup> Guardians' meetings, as reported in *CIP* 23 Mar 1878 and 12 Dec 1857

<sup>87</sup> Guardians' meeting, as reported in *CIP* 14 Apr 1883

<sup>88</sup> *CIP* 26 Mar 1870

oner's hand. I charged him with stealing them, and he admitted that he had. —Mr. Jasper Lyon: I superintend the industrial ground, and in consequence of some information I received, I watched the workers. I saw the prisoner stoop down close by Mr. Headly's wall and put a bundle under his arm, which contained potatoes. I asked the prisoner what he was going to do with them, and he said he was going to take them to the men in the Workhouse to roast. —He was committed for seven days' hard labour.

By 1868, preference had evidently been given to able-bodied men over boys in allocating work at the Ground, for the Guardians discussed the use of children, recommending:<sup>89</sup>

that three of the boys should be placed under the supervision of the shoemaker to learn the trade, and a like number under the tailor, and that other boys, who were of sufficient age, should occasionally be employed in the industrial training ground, circumstances and the weather permitting. [...] Mr Lyon, who lived close to the industrial ground, had promised to assist the master in looking after the boys.

Even when he ceased to be a Guardian in 1869, Jasper Lyon continued to be reappointed as Superintendant of the Ground.<sup>90</sup> There was clearly disagreement as to the extent to which boys should be used, some arguing that, as the original purpose of the Ground, priority should go to the boys, others favouring the use of all the able-bodied male inmates of the Workhouse. In 1876, it was reported that:<sup>91</sup>

All the able-bodied men are employed in raising gravel in the Industrial Ground, with two exceptions. [...] [The Chairman] had visited the Industrial Ground, and he found they had now there about 20 men employed in digging gravel, and he thought that was nearly as many able-bodied men fit for work as they could find in the House.

Building the Workhouse had revealed that the area was rich in high-quality gravel.<sup>92</sup> In 1878, Mr Lyon advocated combining old and new methods by having the gravel sent to the Workhouse so that when the weather was wet the men could break the gravel there by hand.<sup>93</sup>

By 1880, some Guardians argued that, with Jasper Lyon visiting the site less frequently, and the value of the land having increased greatly, there might come a time when it was more worthwhile to sell the land for building purposes.<sup>94</sup> Late in 1880, notice of a motion was given:

That for the better Industrial and Educational training of the Children of this Union[:]

1st It is desirable that a Building apart from the Workhouse be provided or Erected containing School, Dormitories and workshops in which the Boys may be instructed as Tailors Shoemakers Carpenters or other Employments such as Gardening and Farm Labour, the Girls Needlework and Domestic Duties so as to fit them for Situations as Servants &c[.]

2nd That a Special Committee be appointed to consider and Report to the Board upon the practicability and Costs of such Establishment and Organization.

<sup>89</sup> Guardians' meeting, as reported in *CIP* 29 Feb 1868

<sup>90</sup> Guardians' meeting, as reported in *CIP* 24 Apr 1869

<sup>91</sup> Guardians' meeting, as reported in *CIP* 29 Jan 1876

<sup>92</sup> See [https://capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/81a\\_MR-1st-edn\\_2015-10-10.pdf](https://capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/81a_MR-1st-edn_2015-10-10.pdf) Mill Road History Project Building Report No. 9, Ian Bent and Allan Brigham, *81a Mill Road, Part I, Cambridge Union Workhouse – Cambridge County Infirmary* (2015).

<sup>93</sup> Guardians' meeting, as reported in *CIP* 19 Jan 1878. The alternative was to have it broken by steam hammers in the trade.

<sup>94</sup> Guardians' meeting, as reported in *CIP* 4 Sep 1880



This innovation at the Workhouse did not materialize until 1915.<sup>95</sup>

In 1883, Joseph Sturton was appointed to replace Jasper Lyon as Superintendent.<sup>96</sup> Two years later, in 1885, one of several proposals to sell some or all of the land was made. It was recommended that the Board sell the Hooper Street frontage of the Industrial Ground (142 feet long; 70 feet deep) by auction and that the money raised be used to create separate rooms with work yards for able-bodied men in the Workhouse.<sup>97</sup> Nothing came of this, and in 2018 this side of Hooper Street remains without houses and lined with shrubs and trees (the City Council eventually built garages there, planning permission for which was granted on 9 October 1985).



**Figure 53** – The Hooper Street boundary (2018)

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<sup>95</sup> See [https://capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/81a\\_MR-1st-edn\\_2015-10-10.pdf](https://capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/81a_MR-1st-edn_2015-10-10.pdf) Mill Road History Project Building Report No. 9, Ian Bent and Allan Brigham, *81a Mill Road, Part I, Cambridge Union Workhouse – Cambridge County Infirmary* (2015).

<sup>96</sup> Guardians' meeting, as reported in *CIP* 21 Apr 1883

<sup>97</sup> *CIP* 21 Feb 1885

### 3. 1887–1904 : Allotments — Free Library

The end of the Industrial Ground came in 1887, when it was reported that there were no longer any able-bodied men at the Workhouse, and a proposal was adopted that the land should be let in lots to the public for a rent of 1 shilling a year. Accordingly in 1887 the Guardians announced that plots of garden ground were to be let, and the entry in Spalding's Street Directory for 1887 names the site as 'Vegetable Garden Allotments.' In the same year the piggeries that had been such an essential part of the Industrial Ground were hired to Thomas Haslop.<sup>98</sup>

Offers of £1,000 per acre from a Mr Catling and £2,000 from a Mr Peed for purchase of the site were turned down.<sup>99</sup> The Superintendant, Joseph Sturton was not prepared to let matters rest, stating at a meeting of the Guardians in January 1888 that the site was generating only £27 rent per year as allotments, and that the Great Eastern Railway might be interested in acquiring the land. Sturton was passionate about this, believing that the money for the original purchase came from the ratepayers, and that as the need for an Industrial Training Ground had now been met the money should be returned to the ratepayers by selling the site at its market rate and using the proceeds to reduce the Poor Rate.<sup>100</sup>

Three months later, in April 1888, the Board of Guardians agreed with Sturton. There had been an approach from the GER, who had asked them to sell the site by auction. However, the Guardians had the 3 acres 35 perches valued at £3,500, and they proposed offering it to the railway company at that price. The offer came with the hope that it would lead to major railway works being established on the site, bringing jobs and money into Cambridge. This would have transformed Mill Road. However, no more was recorded about the sale, and the land continued as allotments.<sup>101</sup>

In 1889, the strip of land at the Mill Road frontage was sold for £300 to the GER for the building of the new Mill Road bridge.<sup>102</sup>

In 1891, land at the south end of the Industrial Ground, next to Mr Lyons' house Gothic Cottage and fronting Mill Road, was sold to the Borough of Cambridge for the new Free Library. This had been under discussion since 1889, when Mr Sturton had enthusiastically raised a resolution at a meeting of the Guardians:

That the Clerk be directed to write to the Town Council stating the willingness of this board, subject to the consent of the Local Government Board being obtained, to give up to the council a piece of ground at the foot of the new railway bridge, Mill Road, for the purpose of erecting a building as an extension of the Free Library, and if the offer be entertained, the Clerk ascertain the extent of the land required for the purpose.<sup>103</sup>

This had been prompted by a talk with Mr Pink, the Council's Librarian, who had been seeking a site in the Mill Road area for a new library. Sturton felt that this was an ideal and much needed place. On the north side was the eponymous Sturton Town,<sup>104</sup> with a population of 5,000; over the bridge was Romsey Town with almost a similar number of

<sup>98</sup> Cambridge Board of Guardians, C/G/A (Administrative AP5. 1887)

<sup>99</sup> Guardians' meetings, as reported in *CIP* 18 Feb, 5 Mar and 23 Jul 1887

<sup>100</sup> *CIP* 6 Jan 1888

<sup>101</sup> *CIP* 27 Apr 1888

<sup>102</sup> *CIP* 26 Oct 1889. [https://capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Bridge-report-1st\\_edition-2018-04.pdf](https://capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Bridge-report-1st_edition-2018-04.pdf)  
Mill Road History Society Building Report No. 15, Caroline Wilson, *Mill Road Bridge* (2018)

<sup>103</sup> *CIP* 26 Oct 1889

<sup>104</sup> Named after Sturton, who had been a major developer in this area



residents; and to the south, Tenison Road and a district where many of the railway workers lived.

Sturton concluded his supporting speech to the resolution by declaring:

We had compulsory education, but it was not free, and as he looked upon free libraries as places where boys might finish their education in branches they had commenced at school, he, as a man of progress, should like to see that piece of land handed over as proposed.<sup>105</sup>

Sturton seems to have led his colleagues to agree to convey the land to the Town Council for a token payment of 10 shillings. This was a valuable plot fronting the main road, and its sale at this price was later to be questioned.



Figure 54 – Mill Road Free Library, frontage (CC: 1897)



Figure 55 – Mill Road Free Library, pediment (2018)

<sup>105</sup> CIP 26 Oct 1889

As a result of the sale, whereas the 1895 street directory has 'Garden Ground', the 1898 directory has:

121 Lyon, Algernon Jasper, Lt.-Colonel, The Limes

119 Lyon, Mrs. Ann, Gothic Cottage

**Cambridge Free Library and Reading Room** (Barnwell Branch)

Robinson, H. J. *assistant librarian*.

Though no longer recorded in the street directories, the former Industrial Training Ground continued in use as allotments.

In September 1899, a decade after the negotiations with the GER had failed, the Guardians were approached by the Cambridge Town Clerk asking if they were willing to sell the land for use as a storeyard.<sup>106</sup> Following extensive negotiations this proposal became a reality in 1904. The Storeyard survived until 2018, known as the 'Corporation Depot' or 'Council Depot' and occupying roughly the core of the Industrial Ground, the Eagle Foundry land and much of the land between the former foundry and the railway.

The Industrial Training Ground has been integral to the history of Mill Road, and the decisions that its Guardians made have proven crucial to the area's formation. This land could have been streets of terrace housing as in the surrounding area; perhaps it could have been a railway workshop. The site is in process of redevelopment as 21st-century housing.

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<sup>106</sup> CIP 1 Sep 1899

## E. THE STOREYARD : 1904–39

### 1. Introduction

*'He believed the purchase of land for the new storeyards would greatly increase the efficiency of the town in the matter of repairing and cleansing the streets. In a few years he looked forward to seeing the removal of refuse and the watering of the streets, carried out by the Council.'*

Alderman Dalton, Mayor: CIP 11 Nov 1904

Date	Owner	Description	Size
Unknown–1853	William Patman	Fields	3 acres 35 perches
1853–87	Cambridge Board of Guardians	Workhouse Industrial Training Ground	3 acres 35 perches <sup>107</sup>
1887–1904	Cambridge Board of Guardians	Allotments	3 acres 35 perches
1904–68 1889: Sale to GER (£850) for strip 18ft deep next to Mill Road to provide access road to 119 Mill Road, The Limes etc. 1891: Sale to Borough of Cambridge (10/-) for land for Free Library.	Cambridge City Council and predecessors	Council Storeyard	3 acres 35 perches
9 Aug 1968–2018	Cambridge City Council and predecessors	Council Storeyard 9 Aug 1968: Plus adjoining site (former GER property bought from James Headly in 1887) Plus The Wharf (date unknown)	Plus 3 acres, 3,510 square yards from GER (1.5 hectares approx)
2019–	joint company <sup>108</sup>	Housing	6.67 acres (= 2.7 hectares)

Figure 56 – The Depot: Known Ownership

When Cambridge City Council Depot in Mill Road closed in 2018 it measured 6.6 acres. The site stretched from the rear of the adjacent Kingston Street properties to the railway, and from Hooper Street to the rear of the then Mill Road Library and Gothic Cottage. But it was originally just half this size at 3 acres 35 perches, and occupied only the site of what had been the Workhouse Industrial Training Ground (See Figures 51, 38, above). The remaining land between the new Storeyard and the railway was owned and occupied by the Great Eastern Railway and others.

This and the following section of the report together examine how the Storeyard was used and grew in the 113 years during which it provided a base for the manual workers of Cambridge Corporation, and its successors. Few of those who worked there have left any mem-

<sup>107</sup> Cambridge Board of Guardians Minutes. Guardians meeting 9 Jun 1853 (CA: G/C/A)

<sup>108</sup> A temporary joint venture of the City Council and Hill Investment, owned by Cambridge Investment Partnership. Once built, the site will be taken back by the City Council except for the houses to be sold, roads to be adopted by the County Council and open space by the City Council. Thanks to Richard Robertson, Petersfield City Councilor 2019.

ories, hence these final two sections do not present a comprehensive history. They reflect the concerns of the senior managers that are recorded in the available archives. While this gives some insights into the tasks performed by staff based at the Storeyard, the voices of those 'on the tools' are largely absent. Nor do these sections attempt to cover every decade of the Storeyard's existence. Rather, they focus on the early years: the 1930s, the 1960s and the 1990s.

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## 2. 1899–1905: Finding a Site for the Storeyard

### E Wareham Harry: Borough Engineer and Surveyor

On 1 September 1899 the *Cambridge Independent Press* recorded that:

The Town Clerk wrote on behalf of the Paving and Drainage Committee of the Town Council to ascertain whether the Guardians were prepared to dispose of the piece of land, or a portion of it, at the rear of Mill Road library for the purpose of a store yard.

The Guardians were hesitant, but the existing Storeyard was rented from the Great Northern Railway, and in support of the proposal it was said that:

it was essential for the Corporation to have a yard of their own. It was just possible that they might have notice to quit their present Storeyard very shortly, and then they would be in a fix.

Over the next few weeks the Guardians debated the sale, culminating in a meeting reported on 29 September where Mr Brown said that

it was absurd and ridiculous to take this piece of land in the midst of a large population to use as a storeyard. If it had been required for any municipal buildings, a Technical Institute or museum, they might have regarded the offer in a more favourable light.

In contrast to these aspirations, Mr Ward stated they should not sell the land as:

in the course of a few years it might become a veritable gold mine. They could not go to the Klondike but it was their duty to make all they could of this piece of land. Rather than Municipal Buildings he felt the site would be attractive to the Great Eastern Railway for the erection of works.<sup>109</sup>

The committee agreed with these reservations, also recognising the value of the land for housing, and rejected the Town Council's request.

Two years later the Guardians reversed this decision, suggesting a price of £4,000 for the site. The proposal that the Industrial Training Ground should be leased for twenty-one years was rejected as unfair to the Council on account of the expenditure to which they were committing. This included buildings costing several hundreds of pounds, making:

a siding to the Great Eastern Railway so that road material could be loaded direct into carts and taken where it was wanted, [and to build] stables on the most recent sanitary lines so that the Corporation could use their own horses rather than hire them at present.<sup>110</sup>

The 1903 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 57) shows that while the former iron foundry on the adjoining site that was now owned by the Great Eastern Railway had been demolished, the Training Ground remained empty of buildings apart from the small range also shown on the 1886 map, probably pigsties and/or tool and storage sheds).

<sup>109</sup> *CIP* 29 Sep 1899. To 'go to the Klondike' means to join the gold rush. (Reference is to the Klondike region of the Yukon in northwest Canada between 1896 and 1899 – thus a contemporaneous allusion.)

<sup>110</sup> *CIP* 27 Sep 1901

Negotiations continued slowly until finally in January 1904 the Board of Guardians applied to the Local Government Board 'for consent to transfer the land on the Mill Road belonging to the Guardians to the Borough Council'.<sup>111</sup> Later, in May, the Council gave notice to the Great Northern Railway to terminate their tenancy on their property, although it was later agreed to continue this until Lady Day (25 March) 1905.<sup>112</sup>

At the same time arrangements were made for leaving the old Storeyard (which was in the Great Northern Railway Company goods yard, probably in the Hills Road area) and creating a replacement that was fit for purpose. The sequence of events was as follows:



Figure 57 – 1903 OS map

- In August 1904 instructions were given to the GER to proceed with the railway sidings.<sup>113</sup> This was to cost £330, with the corporation doing the excavations and ballasting, and an annual rent of 10 shillings.<sup>114</sup>
- In September 1904 the Borough Council Finance Committee reported that the Local Government Board had authorised the Council to borrow £4,607 to purchase the Industrial Ground from the Guardians, and £4,393 'for the erection of buildings thereon for the purpose of a storeyard'.<sup>115</sup>
- On 23 November plans were approved for a cement store at Mill Road Storeyard, and shortly afterwards, on 15 December, approval was given for stores, workshops, and shed.<sup>116</sup> These building were built along the Kingston Street boundary.
- In December the tender for buildings in the new Storeyard was awarded to the lowest bidder, Willmott & Sons of Hope Street, for £2,350.<sup>117</sup> Plans submitted by Ware-

<sup>111</sup> Cambridge Borough Council. Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee. 1 Feb 1904 (CA: CB/2/CL/3/16/5)

<sup>112</sup> Cambridge Borough Council. Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee. 24 May 1904 and 21 Nov 1904 (CA: CB/2/CL/3/16/5)

<sup>113</sup> Cambridge Borough Council. Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee. 15 Aug 1904 (CA: CB/2/CL/3/16/5)

<sup>114</sup> Cambridge Borough Council. Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee. 5 Dec 1904 (CA: CB/2/CL/3/16/5)

<sup>115</sup> CIP 16 Sep 1904. However, the end of year accounts recorded in CIP 24 Mar 1905 state that the Council borrowed only £4,400 'for land for a new storeyard'.

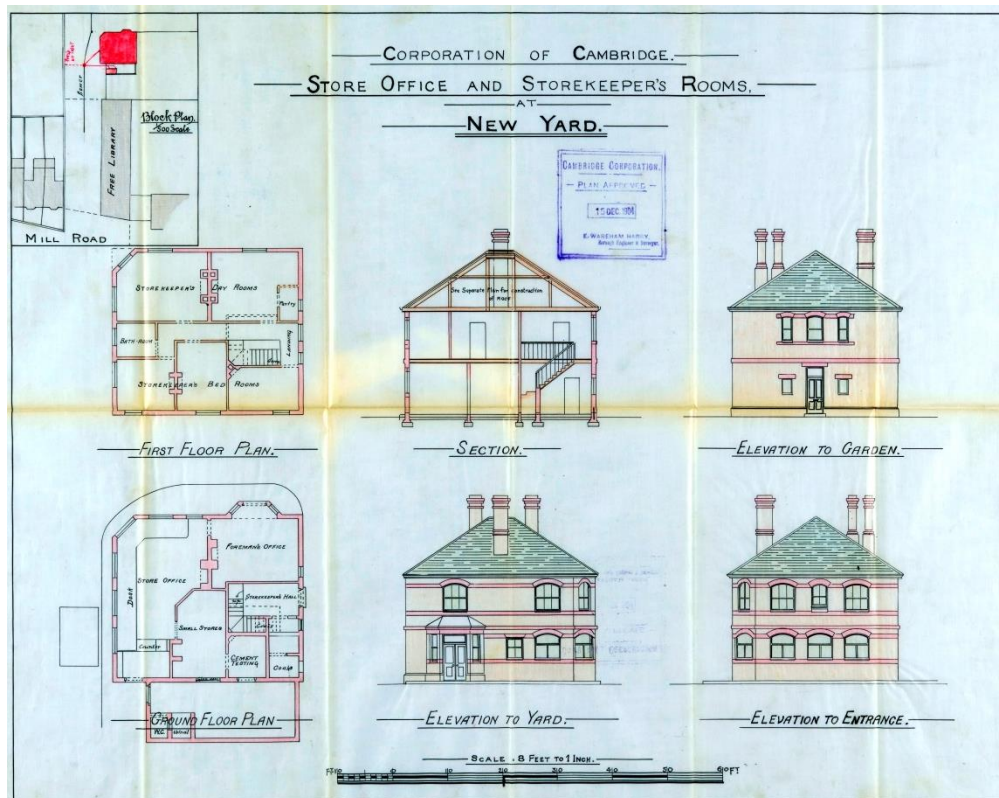
<sup>116</sup> Cement Store: Building Plans. Mill Road (CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/2425); Stores etc: Building Plans. Mill Road (CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/2294); neither of these plans have survived.

<sup>117</sup> Tender awarded. Cambridge Borough Council. Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee. 15 Dec 1904 (CA: CB/2/CL/3/16/5)



ham Harry, Borough Engineer and Surveyor, for the Gatehouse were approved on the same day.<sup>118</sup>

- On 17 February 1905 the contract for erecting 'certain buildings on a piece of land between Hooper Street and Mill Road intended to be used as a Storeyard' was agreed between the Corporation of Cambridge and Edward Willmott of Hope Works.<sup>119</sup>



**Figure 58** – Building Plans for the Store Office and Storekeeper's room at the 'New Yard', subsequently called 'The Gatehouse', Cambridge Borough Council, submitted 3 Dec 1904 (CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/2293)

- The plans for the Gatehouse show a 'Dwelling House and Offices' located just inside the Mill Road entrance to the Storeyard, a short distance from the rear of the Free Library.



**Figure 59** – Detail: location of 'Dwelling House and Offices' (red)

<sup>118</sup> 15 Dec 1904. Building Plan. Cambridge Borough Council. New Yard (CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/2293)

<sup>119</sup> 17 Feb 1905. Contract between Borough of Cambridge and Edward Wilmott of Hope Works, Mill Road (CA: KCB/2/CL/17/15 p. 479. Lease Book: 1898–1905)

- The Ground floor shows the 'Foreman's Office' facing the yard, a 'Store Office' facing the yard entrance road, a 'Storekeepers Hall' at the rear leading to the stairs to his accommodation on the first floor, with rooms for 'Small Stores', coals cement testing, and access to a WC and urinal from outside at the back.
- Upstairs were the 'Storekeepers Day Rooms', including kitchen and living room, with three bedrooms and a bathroom. Purpose-built bathrooms were a rarity in Mill Road until the late 1890s, so this was a sign that the Corporation was not stinting on the Storekeeper's accommodation. In July 1905 it was agreed that 'the Storekeeper should have cottage rent free with coals and gas and a salary of 26 shillings a week instead of the 30 shillings he was now receiving'.

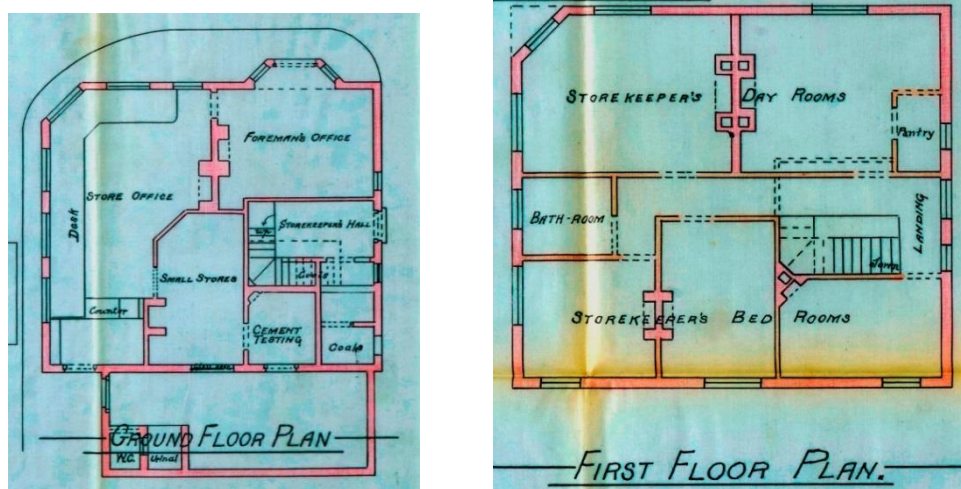


Figure 60 – Detail: ground and first floor plans (CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/2293)

- Although the interior has been altered many times, the exterior remains little changed. When the Depot closed in 2018 those entering from Mill Road would have seen a building that still resembled Wareham Harry's plans – additions have been made but the facade of the building shown in the original plans remains (see Figure 61). Typical of the late 1890s and early 1900s, it was built using Cambridge 'white' bricks with an decorative use of red brick on the elevations around the windows and on the chimney.

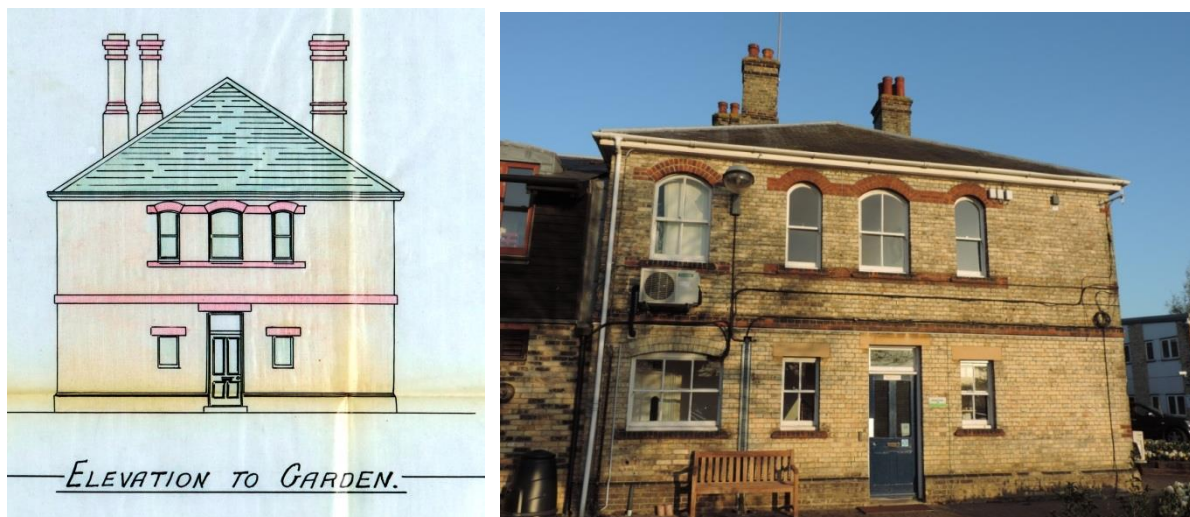


Figure 61 – left: Gatehouse, elevation to entrance (1904 building plan); right: the entrance in 2017





**Figure 62** – left: elevation to yard: 1904 building plan; right: same in 2017. Little has changed in 113 years.



**Figure 63** – left: elevation to garden (1904 building plan); right: same in 2017. Building shows additional windows to those shown in plan.

- Despite instructions to remove the weighbridge from the old Storeyard and re-erect it at the Mill Road site a new weighbridge was purchased for £74 in April 1905.<sup>120</sup>
- At the same time gates were ordered from Messrs Alsop & Son for £14.00.
- The Great Northern Railway depot on Hills Road was still not vacated in April 1905 as the newspaper reported a fire in the steam roller shed, with the steam roller inside.<sup>121</sup>
- The price for the site appears to have been adjusted as the annual accounts reported in March 1905 state that the Council borrowed only £4,400 'for land for a new storeyard'.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Cambridge Borough Council. Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee. 21 Nov 1904 and 10 Apr 1905 (CA: CB/2/CL/3/16/5)

<sup>121</sup> Banner 1. Celebrating a 100 Years. Jane Mynott for Cambridge City Council: '100 Years' event at Council Depot, 2005

<sup>122</sup> CIP 24 Mar 1905

In November 1905 Alderman Dalton, the outgoing Mayor of Cambridge, had expressed his hopes behind the purchase of the new Storeyard on Mill Road at a dinner held in his honour:

He believed the purchase of land for the new Storeyard would greatly increase the efficiency of the town in the matter of repairing and cleansing the streets. In a few years he looked forward to seeing the removal of refuse and the watering of the streets, carried out by the Council.<sup>123</sup>

'Greater efficiency' was what guided his successors, as was an understanding that repairing and cleaning the streets was central to the concerns of residents. However the belief that this public service was delivered most efficiently by directly employed public servants was still new in 1905, and would come to be challenged by the end of the 20th century.



**Figure 64** – Alderman Dalton: Mayor 1903–04. Cambridge City Council.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> CIP 11 Nov 1904

<sup>124</sup> <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/3891/cambridge-mayors.pdf>

### 3. 1905–06 : Creating The New Storeyard

*'A storeyard is the headquarters of the executive side of the Highways Department of a Corporation, the department with duties co-extensive with the town with which it deals.'*

*Cambridge Daily News 9 Dec 1905*



Figure 65 – 1905: Datestone on Depot Gatehouse

The new Storeyard opened late in 1905 and on 9 December the *Cambridge Daily News* was given a tour by the Chief Foreman, John Gambling. Alderman Dalton would have been pleased to hear that the reporter found everything lived up to his expectations. He praised the Borough Surveyor, Wareham Harry, who planned the site and had appeared to make 'organisation complete and effective'. But even more important, he told his readers ('that vigilant entity the ratepayer') that 'here at least the Corporation have observed what is, rightly, dear to his soul – true economy'.<sup>125</sup>

The report went on to describe the yard, stating: 'A storeyard is the headquarters of the executive side of the Highways Department of a Corporation, the department with duties co-extensive with the town with which it deals'. This was a place where:

Materials for the repair and making of the roads are stored and tested, vehicles housed and mended, and the various appliances kept in readiness for any contingencies that forethought may suggest. For instance, just now everything has been arranged to cope with the clearing from the streets of the first fall of snow.

With access to the railway there was a new siding:

- to bring granite, cement and other material to the Storeyard, with bays on each side of the line to empty the trucks into.

On the opposite side of the Storeyard, adjoining Kingston Street, was a 'long range of buildings, systematically arranged':

- 'At one end is an open cart shed, for containing water carts, refuse carts, and such like vehicles used in keeping the streets in proper condition'.

<sup>125</sup> *CDN* 9 Dec 1905



- Nearby was a stable, containing two stalls, and in the same building:
  - Accommodation for two steam rollers
  - A coke and coal store
  - A blacksmith's shop for the repair of tools, the construction of wheel tyres, etc.
  - An oil and lamp store
  - A repairing shop, in which the various vehicles used by the department are overhauled
  - A carpenter's shop
  - A wheelwright's shop.
- The upper part of the same range of buildings was devoted to:
  - The storing of wood, appliances such as the rotary brushes used in mechanical street sweeping and those used by scavengers
  - Tools and fittings
  - Iron piping.
- 'All these different articles are arranged in properly constructed receptacles which would allow sudden demand to be quickly met, and facilitate the work generally'.
- 'There is also a men's mess room, next to which is the pay office. The mess room is provided with two doors, through one of which on pay days the men file past a window communicating with the pay office, and out the other door'.
- 'Another part of the yard is occupied by a set dresser's shed. Here old sets are chipped, from the malformed condition into which long use has brought them and, slightly smaller in size, given a new lease of life'.



**Figure 66** - Stone Sets, Saxon Street, Cambridge. Are these the ones that were 'given a new lease of life' at the Storeyard? (photo 2017)



- 'Part of the ground near at hand is being utilised for the culture of plants and flowers that help to beautify the many open spaces in Cambridge'.
- At the entrance to the yard was the office for:
  - The storekeeper, the timekeeper and the clerks
  - The same building includes the foreman's office.
  - A room arranged for the reception of small stores, and a room in which cement testing is carried out.

In addition:

It may be mentioned that none of the unemployed are at present engaged upon stone breaking at the yard but upon different work in various parts of the town. Today there are 83 on the books, and they are receiving from 2s to 2s 8d per day. Those with families are engaged on six days, and others on about four.

It was a reminder that the Council took its responsibilities to unemployed men seriously, at a time when this was being raised nationally and had led to the Unemployed Workmen's Act of 1905.

The report concluded:

The whole place bears a striking contrast to the old yard, and should make for a smooth and efficient operation of the duties of the department.

These are words which would have pleased Alderman Dalton, with his desire for greater efficiency.

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## 4. 1908–20 : The Storeyard - Early Years

### Julian Julian: Borough Engineer and Surveyor

Wareham Harry, the Cambridge Borough Surveyor who had planned the Mill Road Storeyard, died unexpectedly just two years after it opened, on 13 March 1908. He was aged 63, and never saw his retirement, following a long career that had brought him to Cambridge in 1888 after fourteen years working in Harrogate. The *Cambridge Daily News* reporter who had toured the new site in December 1905 had credited him with making 'organisation complete and effective', and at his death the *Cambridge Independent Press* said he had 'clearly demonstrated his ability as an all-round man'.<sup>126</sup> The focus in these early years of expanding municipal responsibilities was on efficiency.

Harry was succeeded by Julian Julian, who had been Chief Assistant in the Borough Surveyor's Department for thirteen years. As Harry's deputy, Julian would have been heavily involved in establishing the Storeyard. He was now faced with many of the same issues that were to confront his successors over the next 110 years. Top of these was a regular reassessment of the cost effectiveness of equipment and staff.

### Transport Costs: Horses and Motor Vehicles

Transport costs were high on his list of priorities. Councillors were keen to know 'whether the Corporation should purchase motor vehicles, or keep a number of horses of their own, instead of depending on hired horses'.<sup>127</sup> In 1908 Julian had been instructed by councillors to attend the Annual Meeting of the County and Municipal Engineers in Nottingham to try to learn from his peers which was the more economical. He returned from the meeting 'with a decided opinion that we should not purchase horses while we can hire at the present rates'.<sup>128</sup> Perhaps surprisingly he also reported that 'One member who has seven motors was very enthusiastic about them, but he was alone. Even County Surveyors with long distances to haul their material spoke much less favourably than I should have expected'.

Did the doubts about motor vehicles reflect a resistance to change, or were the costs of motors genuinely high compared with horses? Julian's report to the Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee in 1911 outlined how prices for horse hire had risen since 1908 to 7 shillings per day for horse, harness and driver. This rose to 7s. 6d. per day when the contractor provided the cart. However, he concluded that even the higher rate was lower than in towns that had already assessed whether it was profitable to use motor vehicles. His recommendation was not that motor vehicles would never be better than horses, but that if horse hire became more expensive, and motor vehicles somewhat cheaper, then the subject should be discussed again.

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<sup>126</sup> *CIP* 13 Mar 1908

<sup>127</sup> Cambridge Borough Council, Nov 1911. Report to the Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee (CA: CB/2/CL/10/42/43)

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*

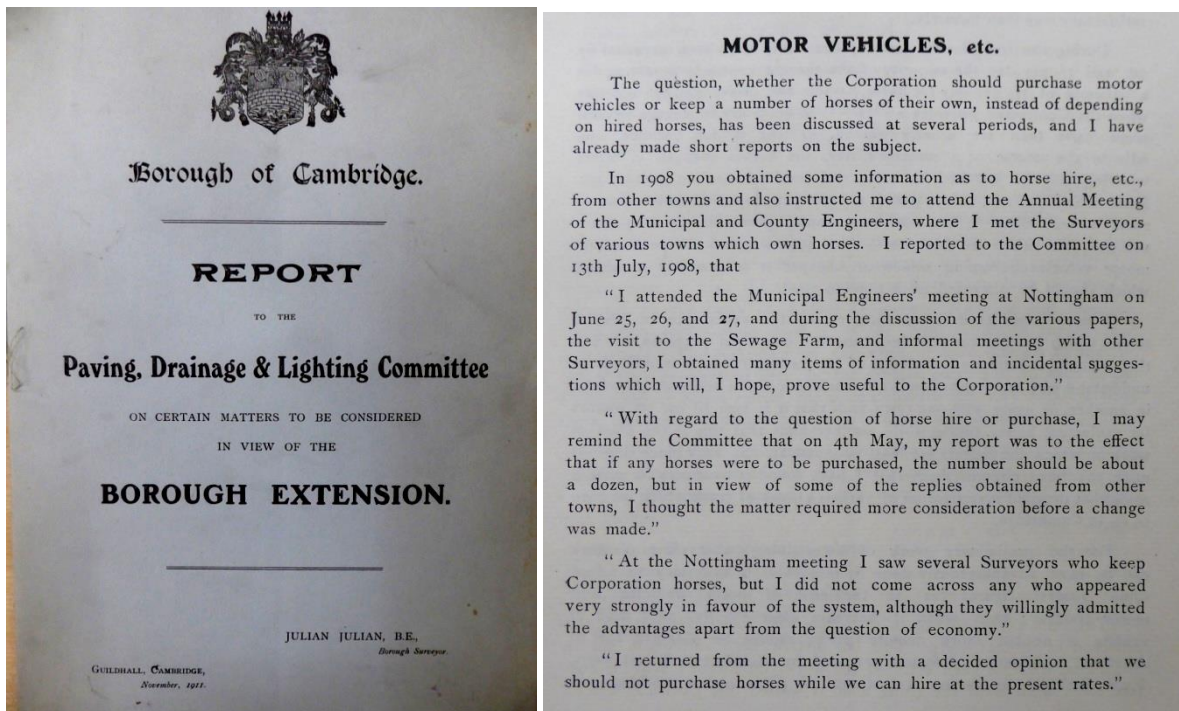


Figure 67 – Report regarding use of motor vehicles and horses (CA: CB/2/CL/10/42/43)

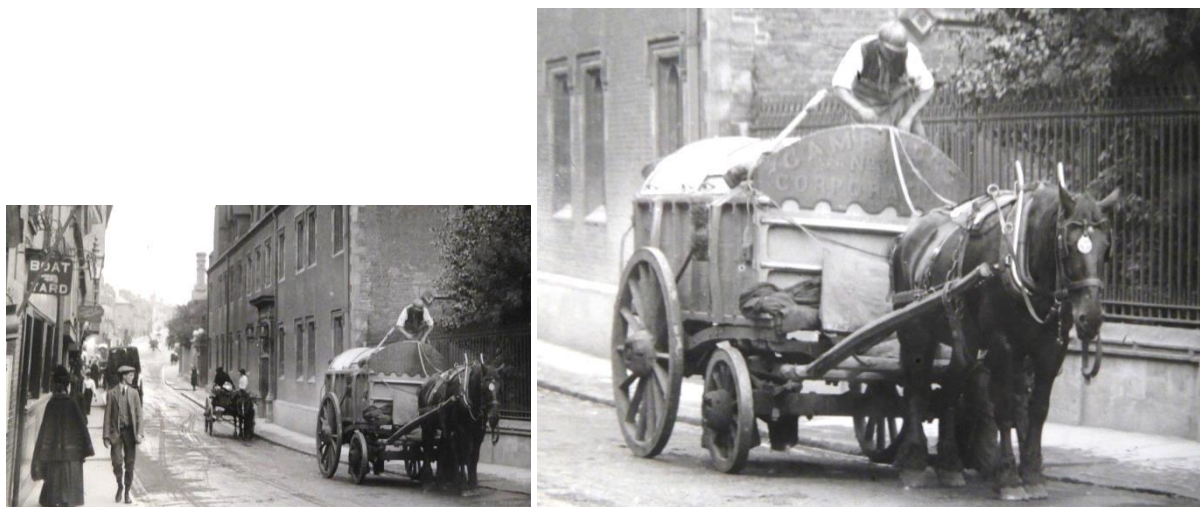


Figure 68 – Horse-powered refuse collection in Magdelene Street. 'Cambridge Corporation' is painted on the wagon. (1890–1910?) (CA: Cambridge City Council. Mill Road Depot, C116/011)

In the meantime Julian decided to establish the basic transport costs of his department in order to 'ascertain what class of work can most advantageously be done by motors'. His investigation gives an indication of some of the work that went on from the Storeyard.

The average number of horses used for haulage was 40. These were spread across different sections:

#### Number of Horses:

House Refuse Collection: 8 summer, 9 winter

Horse Brooms & Picking up Street Refuse: 8 summer, 15 winter

Street Watering & Gully Cleaning: 13 summer, 2 winter

Haulage of materials: 10 summer, 10 winter

**Sundry Work - Attending the Steam Roller, mowing grass, moving clinker at Pumping station:** 2 summer, 2 winter

The proportion of time spent loading and unloading was considered important as a motor vehicle was losing money while being loaded, which could only be made up if a larger load was carried at a quicker rate.

## Loading and Unloading times; Staffing Issues

### House Refuse

#### Horses:

3 loads a day

Journey from Storeyard to place where collection starts: 30 mins

Loading : 1¼hrs each load. x 3 loads a day = 5 hrs 15 mins

Travelling time (full or empty): 2hrs 30 mins

Waiting and unloading time at destructor (Chedders Lane): 1 hr 15 mins

**Staffing:** Usually one corporation Dustman and one Contractors Driver. Frequently a Corporation man helped load a second van while the first van goes to the destructor.

#### Motor Vehicles:

6 loads per day

**Staffing:** 4 loaders per motor vehicle van

#### Conclusion:

The cost of motor vehicles was far higher than that of using horses. [It appears that the contractor provided the horses and horseman, but the corporation provided the wagon and dustman.]

### Watering the Streets

#### Horses:

Loading time: 10 mins

Travel time: 12 mins

24 loads per day possible. Proportion of time spent loading is less than refuse collection.

**Staffing:** Driver only

#### Motor Vehicles:

Loading time: 10 mins

Travel Time: 6 mins

45 loads per day

**Staffing:** One driver. Work load expected with 'the superior class of driver and without the temptation to waste time by giving the horse its nosebag at so many standposts'.

#### Conclusion:

[Despite considering various options, Julian considered motor vehicles were not cost effective for watering.]

### Haulage

Few streets in the Borough were further than 2 miles from the Storeyard.

There were usually 6 horses per day on 3 large jobs, needing 7 or 8 loads each, and 4 horses each day on small jobs with 1 or 2 loads

No one size vehicle was suitable for both classes of work.

#### Conclusion:

If a 4-ton motor wagon were used for heavier work the cost would be 83s. 6d. for two days' work, as opposed to the present arrangement of 6 horses over two days at 90s., leaving a minimal saving of 3s. 3d. per day. The proposed use of a speedier 1-ton motor vehicle for smaller jobs would lead to unreasonable waiting time for their material.



**Figure 69** – Electric scavenger cart in 1925 (photo: CC: PC.Dus.K25.2725)

Figure 69 shows a Cambridge Corporation electric scavenger cart in 1925. In 1918 the Council had bought two electric and two motor vehicles to collect refuse on account of difficulties in getting horses and drivers because of the war.<sup>129</sup>

Julian ended his report by saying:

I have given figures to shew that at present rates the introduction of motor vehicles would not be economical for house refuse collection or street watering, but that there would be a slight saving in the case of haulage of materials when in full loads of about 4 tons. This particular section of haulage work is at present extensive enough for the employment of one motor vehicle.

The extension of the Borough will increase the amount of this work and will also increase the average distance for materials to be hauled, so that I think there will soon be sufficient work for the employment of two vehicles.

This was qualified by consideration of the capital outlay involved. Each vehicle would cost £600, with another £60 for housing it. No action was advised until next year's annual tenders for horse hire were asked for. If the hire costs had not risen Julian advised that motor vehicles would show no saving; if they had increased he 'would have little doubt that motor traction would achieve a real saving for the heavier haulage work'.<sup>130</sup>

His final comments to the committee members touched on what were seen by some as the wider implications beyond the cost of the changes he was reporting on:

It may however be claimed that from a sanitary point of view motor traction has some advantage, but that the noise and vibration are disadvantages.

Motor vehicles were eventually to supersede horses, but it was a long-drawn-out process with lorries, cars, and horses mixing on the streets of Cambridge for a generation. The horse dung and urine which would now be seen as insanitary was accepted as part of the streetscene. For Julian the important element in deciding when to change to motor vehicles was not the existence of the new technology but the point at which the costs became less than using horses. Choosing the right moment to innovate was an important test for all future managers.

<sup>129</sup> 24 Jan 1918. Council Assembly Book 1917–18 (CA: CB/2/CL/1)

<sup>130</sup> Cambridge Borough Council, Nov 1911. Report to the Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee (CA: CB/2/CL/10/42/43)



Figure 70 – Horse-drawn Cambridge Corporation Wagon No 46 in Union Lane (CC: Q.Ab.K20.5548)

## Scavenging and Street Watering

The 1911 Report to the Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee also considered scavenging and watering the streets. Both give further insight into the workings of the Storeyard staff.

Scavenging was the Committee's greatest cost, totalling £5,016 in the previous year's accounts. This excluded the cost of maintaining the vans, and included *street cleaning* – made up of nine districts; *refuse collection* – made up of seven rounds; and *street watering* – made up of eleven rounds. Julian broke the costs down to £100 per week, or £125 for each mile of road, concluding 'it represents a rate of 4d. in the £' [presumably per tax payer].

### *Street Cleansing*

The streets in the crowded town centre were cleansed continuously, some portions as often as twelve times a day. Other districts were cleansed four times a week. Weekends in the town centre saw fifteen men scavenging six miles of streets late on Saturday and early on Sunday morning. Three years earlier only six men were employed on Sunday morning.

In theory the byelaws required the occupiers of houses to cleanse the footpaths in front of their houses, but few heeded this and those who did left it until after 9.30 a.m. when the scavengers had already swept the street for the first time. There appeared to be no enforcement.

### *House Refuse Collection*

Refuse collection day was frequently controversial, with a variety of containers (pails, wooden boxes, tin pans, etc) left on the edge of pavements. It was claimed that they were rarely covered, that wind, dogs and children scattered their contents about the streets, while in hot weather the decaying refuse attracted swarms of flies.<sup>131</sup> Possible solutions were for the Council to provide a metal container, or for rubbish to be collected from the rear of properties.

Julian's investigation established that there were daily collections in the town centre, four times a week in streets close to the centre, three times a week for the majority of streets, and twice a week for the remainder. The weekly volume of refuse varied between 100 and 190 tons, with daily variations between 13 and 40 tons.

Julian also surveyed the condition of the containers in a district of 1,000 houses of various classes. 23% were bad, whether of wood or iron. This was not as many as critics suggested, but remained a large number.

<sup>131</sup> 16 Jun 1911. Cambridge Newspaper Archive. Mike Petty



A further survey of where bins were placed for collection showed that there were many houses where the bins could be placed conveniently for the dustmen without putting them on the path. But there was also a large number where the path was the only place unless the dustmen were to walk through the house. Julian's comment gives a glimpse of the conditions that the dustmen worked in:

If proper sanitary dustbins were provided in every case it might be possible for the dustmen to enter many of the houses but it is easy to understand that if the dustman has just been handling a foul and perhaps leaky refuse box from one house, he is not altogether a welcome visitor in the next house where the householder keeps both house and dustbin in good order.<sup>132</sup>



Figure 71 – Galvanised dustbin

100 years later older dustmen could still recall rats, smells and leaky bins saturating their 'Donkey Jackets' [i.e. work coats] as they placed the bins on their shoulders to carry them.

Other topics that recurred regularly over the next century were whether to charge for trade refuse, or to collect garden refuse.

### *Street Watering*

There were eleven districts for watering, and the drivers recorded the time the work was done so that Julian could respond to complaints. Some private streets were watered once a day, while the road from the station to the town centre was watered six times daily. The remaining streets were watered twice daily, with some being watered more frequently. The amount of water used had nearly doubled since 1907, when 4,279 gallons had been used compared with 8,044 gallons in 1910.

Unexpectedly, tarring of the roads had not led to a saving in watering, as people who lived in the streets that had been tarred expected the water van as frequently as when the streets were not tarred. Perhaps residents felt that they were not getting all the services they deserved for the rates they paid. Julian explained this as 'partly, but not altogether, due to dust being blown from untarred streets on to tarred streets'.<sup>133</sup> He added that there were savings to be made in watering tarred roads as they did need less water, and if the whole district were tarred it would be possible to use a finer sprinkler. However, when there was a mixture of road surfaces this was not possible.

<sup>132</sup> Cambridge Borough Council, Nov 1911. Report to the Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee (CA: CB/2/CL/10/42/43)

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*

Julian concluded his 1911 report by stating: 'Unless there is a real desire for some improvement for which the public is prepared to pay, I hesitate to advise any considerable change in the general character of work'. However, the forthcoming extension of the Borough into Chesterton Urban District Council would hopefully lead to some improvements. It would also lead to new costs, as additional vans would be needed – three water vans, two picking-up vans, five ashes vans, two gully carts, and one horse broom.

The report gives a glimpse of the services provided from the Mill Road Storeyard. Among these were street watering, horse brooms, refuse collection and street cleaning, as well as the steam roller and mowing the grass.



**Figure 72** – Road roller (date unknown)<sup>134</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly, mechanised street sweeping pre-dates the motor vehicle. Horse brooms were horse-drawn machines with large rotary brushes which had been developed since the 1850s. What type was used in Cambridge is unknown, but some pushed the refuse to the side of the road, others could collect it into a cart. But all this equipment and associated labour was not just to keep the streets attractive. They reflect the ever-expanding knowledge of health risks linked to 'dirt' as Britain's urban areas grew.

Another, feared, consequence of mechanisation was shown in the 1829 print 'The Scavenger's Lamentation; or, The dreadful Consequences of Sweeping Streets by Machinery', which depicts a scavenger in London leaning on his broom, lamenting: 'Ah! this is what comes of Improvement – this is the happy effect of the March of Intellect. No employment for Scavengers now' (see Figure 74, below).

150 years later there would still be street sweepers ('Scavengers') in Cambridge, and managers and councillors at Cambridge Council Depot would still be hearing the same lament as manufacturers promoted the superiority of their now fully mechanised machines.

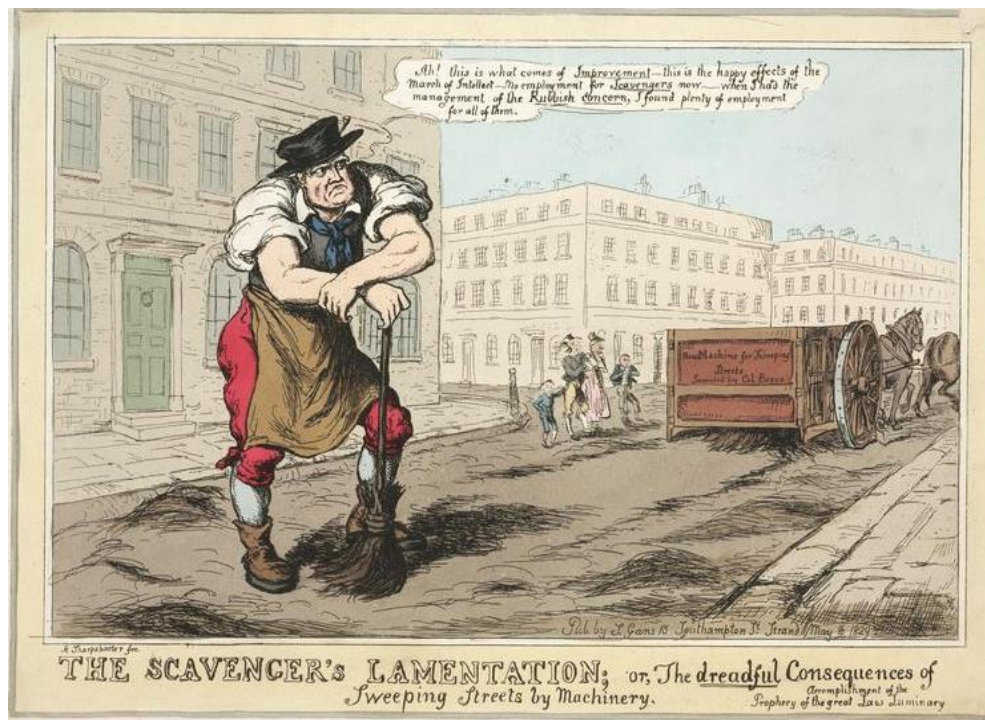
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<sup>134</sup> City Council Depot. Cambridge City Council. Depot Centenary Banner 2





Figure 73 – Horse Broom

Figure 74 – 'The Scavenger's Lamentation'<sup>135</sup>

### New Stables: 1918

The Borough Surveyor's 1911 report gives an insight into Julian's careful approach to managing his budget, and shows him keeping an eye open for necessary changes while not rushing into anything rashly. Seven years later, in January 1918, the Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee reported that the difficulty of obtaining horses and drivers meant the

<sup>135</sup> 'The Scavenger's Lamentation', John Phillips. Caricature, print, London, England, 1829. Science Museum Group (apparently no copyright)

Council should finally purchase two electric and two motor vehicles to collect household refuse, at an estimated cost of £3,000.<sup>136</sup>

Horses continued to provide most of the Council's haulage requirements. But in March the Committee were also recommending that they leave themselves less open to the vagaries of the open market by buying six horses, with harnesses, on account of a dearth of horses (see below and Figure 75).<sup>137</sup>

The shortage was dramatic, and reflected the demands of the World War. Horses were more effective than motorised vehicles at hauling equipment through the mud of the western front, and in 1917 Britain had over one million horses and mules in service overseas.<sup>138</sup> Few returned. This was something that Julian can never have contemplated in his 1911 assessment of haulage costs.

The Sub Committee have the matter before them, and from information supplied to them they find that practically all the available horses and vehicles are used in connection with scavenging work and the collection of house refuse, and are of the opinion that steps must be taken to supplement the present supply. Efforts are being made to reduce the number of collections of house refuse so as to free some of the haulage for other purposes, but it is not expected that the above efforts will result in the release of a sufficient number of horses and vehicles for other purposes.

Under the circumstances the Committee recommend the purchase of six horses and harness [...]<sup>139</sup>

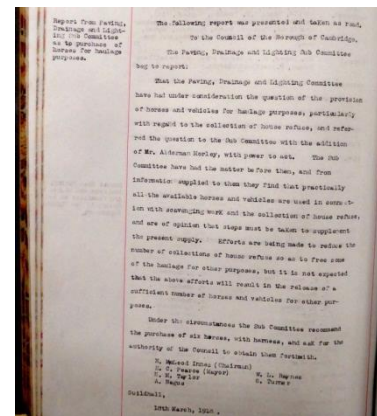


Figure 75 – Paving Committee 18 Mar 1918

Statistics showed that in 1914 the Corporation had been offered a large choice from 84 haulage horses, with the highest price of 8s. 9d. a day each. It used 63 horses that year, but by 1918 lack of availability meant this had shrunk to twenty, and in January 1919 only fifteen horses had been offered, at 18 shillings a day each.<sup>140</sup> The shortage was leading to complaints about inadequate street watering and subsequent dust.

Julian was realistically opposed to watering the few streets that his resources allowed as he felt everyone living in the *unwatered* streets would complain. This was already happening when macadam roads had started to break up in the sun and had to be watered:

The wood paving began to shrink, and had to be watered, otherwise it would not only have been unsafe but dust would have filled the loose joints, and then after rain the blocks would swell in the centre, or push away the kerb.<sup>141</sup>

Julian's greater concern was that the number of horses available for refuse collection had halved from sixteen to eight, and that twice-weekly collections had been reduced to once a week except in a few business districts. He stated: 'I am most anxious to have two collec-

<sup>136</sup> 24 Jan 1918. Council Assembly Book 1917–18 (CA: CB/2/CL/1/39)

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Wikipedia 'Horses in World War One' (2018) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horses\\_in\\_World\\_War\\_I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horses_in_World_War_I)

<sup>139</sup> Report from Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee to Council, 18 Mar 1918. Council Assembly Book 1917–18 (CA: CB/2/CL/1/39)

<sup>140</sup> 27 May 1919. Council Assembly Book 1918–19 (CA: CB/2/CL/1/40)

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*



tions a week in every part of the town, especially during the summer months, but so far this has been impossible'.<sup>142</sup>

The solution was for the Corporation to buy its own horses instead of relying totally on the annual tendering exercise for haulage. This was a new ongoing cost for the Storeyard, but one that Julian hoped would guarantee that he could deliver the services that the public expected. £600 had been included in the annual estimates for stables and sheds, and in May 1919 Julian suggested that this be used to buy material 'for constructing stables for, say, twelve horses'.<sup>143</sup> This led to the submission of plans for stables in the Storeyard in July 1919, to adjoin the rear gardens of Kingston Street at the Hooper Street junction.<sup>144</sup>

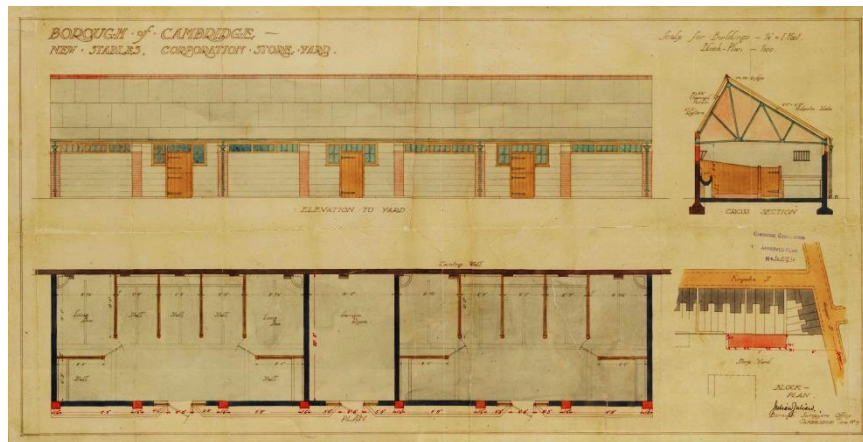


Figure 76 – Plans for stables in the Storeyard 31 Jul 1919

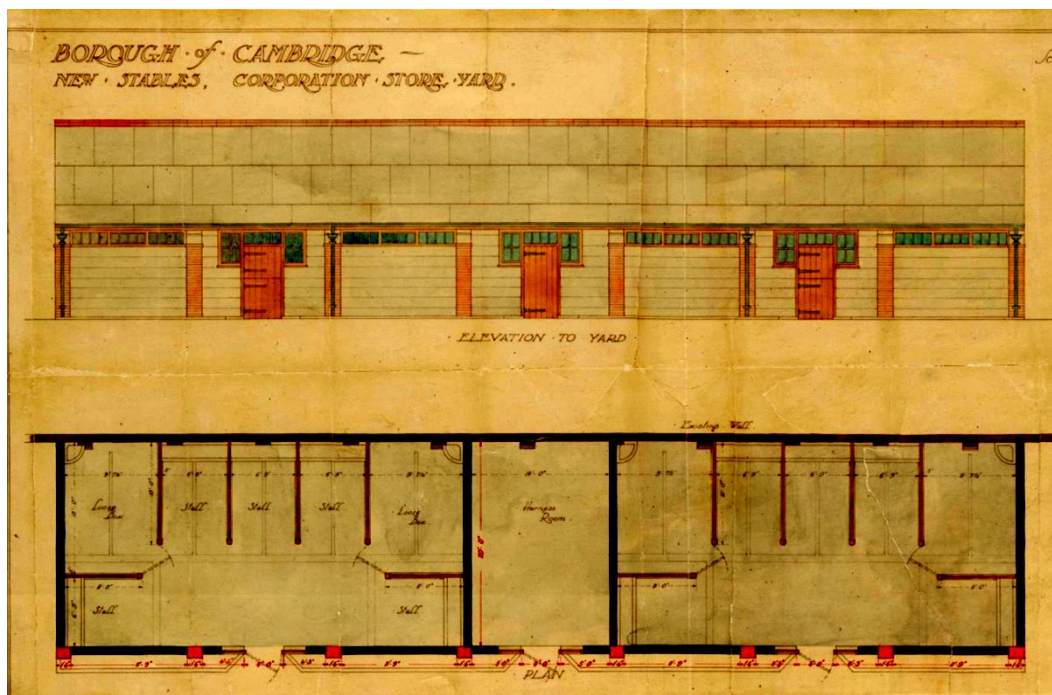


Figure 77 - Plans for stables in the Storeyard (detail)

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Building byelaw plan for stables, Corporation Store Yard, Mill Road (CA: CB/2/SE/3/9/4094)

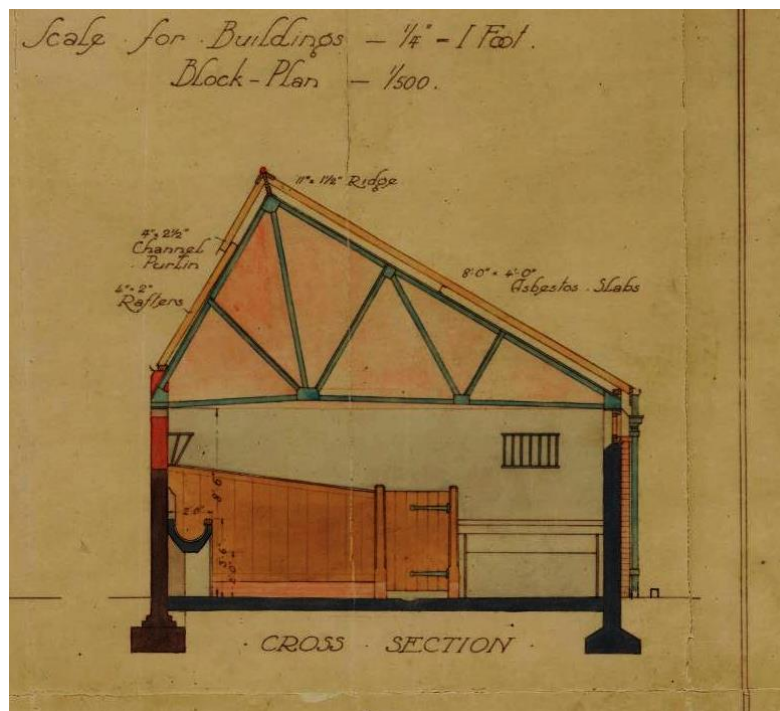


Figure 78 - Plans for stables in the Storeyard (detail)

Finally, after buying motor vehicles and horses, it was decided that the Borough Surveyor should make use of the £300 allocated to purchase a motor car, and dispense with his pony and trap.<sup>145</sup>

That in the estimate of the expenditure of the Committee for the year ending 31st March, 1920, the sum of £300 was provided by the purchase of a motor car for the use of the Borough Surveyor. At the present time arrangements are made with a Contractor to supply him with a pony and trap at a cost of £1 per week, the Corporation feeding and shoeing the pony. Your Committee consider that it is desirable that this arrangement should now cease [...]<sup>146</sup>

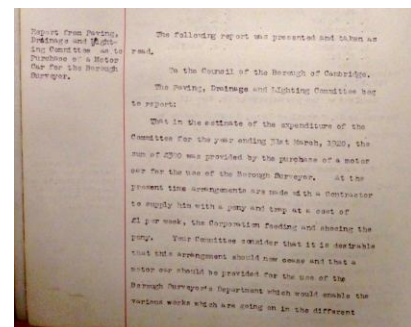


Figure 79 - Paving Committee 1 Jul 1919

## Wages

Julian was also constantly reviewing wage costs and productivity, while under pressure from the trade unions and Labour Party to ensure an adequate minimum rate. The minutes of the Paving, Lighting and Drainage Committee in the period 1912–14 regularly record entries about staff wages – entries that were to recur over the next 100 years.

In July 1912 the Committee asked the Borough Surveyor to revise his report on wages after receiving a resolution from the Cambridge Labour Party:

<sup>145</sup> 27 Jul 1919. Council Assembly Book 1918–19 (CA: CB/2/CL/1/40)

<sup>146</sup> 1 Jul 1919. Paving, Lighting and Drainage Committee, Council Assembly Book 1918–19 (CA: CB/2/CL/1/40)



that in view of the constantly increasing prices of the necessities of life the Town Council should help to raise the conditions of life in Cambridge by giving a minimum wage of 24/- a week to all corporation employees.<sup>147</sup>

On 9 September the Borough Surveyor's report was considered and a Sub Committee was formed 'to meet a deputation of the workmen on the subject of the terms and conditions on which they are employed'.

On the 27th of that month the Sub Committee met with staff representatives: Alfred Coe representing the skilled men, Albert Arch representing the general labourers, and Donald Manning representing the scavengers. The conclusion was that the workmen preferred the existing day system of pay to the hourly system recommended by the Sub Committee, and that the present system should therefore continue.

The following year the minutes record a letter thanking Julian and the Committee for a wage increase. The tone gives a hint at the relationship between employer and employees.

The signatories were the same men who had represented the different classes of workmen in negotiations about an hourly pay system. Whether they were peer group leaders or elected union representatives is unknown. If the latter, no affiliation is recorded, and the wording of the letter expresses gratitude for the increase rather than a sense of rightful entitlement that might have been expected from trade union representatives. It is impossible to know if this was genuine, but the general tone indicates on the surface at least a paternalistic relationship between Julian and the Storeyard workmen:

Sir,

The workmen have requested us to write and thank the Committee for their great kindness in granting us all an increase of wages and we should esteem it a great favour if you would express our sincere thanks to them on our behalf and we hope that every man will do his best to merit the increase and that neither yourself nor the Committee will have any cause to regret the step they have taken.

Yours obediently,

A. G. Coe,

A. Arch,

D. Manning,

G. J. Golding.<sup>148</sup>

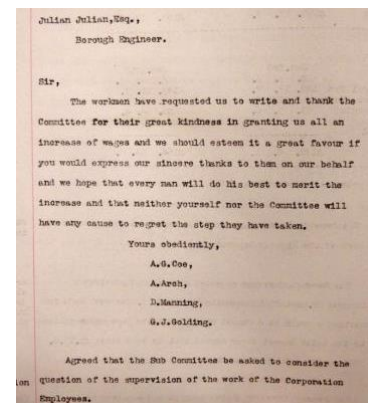


Figure 80 – Workmen's letter to Julian 14 Jan 1913

Letters from the Cambridge Labour Party, while less deferential, appear to have been taken seriously and were formally responded to. In November 1913, committee minutes reported that the Labour Party had suggested that Corporation employees should finish work at 12 noon on Saturdays, rather than 1p.m. This was firmly rejected, with the reminder that those who leave at 1p.m. nevertheless received a full day's pay. It is a small insight into the intricacies of working conditions that included Saturdays as a normal working day, but that included unworked but paid hours after 1p.m. that were in effect an over-time payment.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>147</sup> 8 Jul 1912. Paving, Lighting and Drainage Committee 1911–14 (CA: CB/2/CL/3/16/7)

<sup>148</sup> 14 Jan 1913. *ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> 28 Oct 1913. *ibid.*

Discussion of terms and conditions did not stop because of war. Grievances surfaced in 1917 from the Highways Department, some of whose men Councillors felt had not understood the agreed terms and conditions of employment.

Rather than dismiss the complaints, Councillors agreed to meet with representatives to identify the issues; they met twice, with the exception of the scavengers 'as they had no complaints to make'.<sup>150</sup>

The issues were:

1. that the men thought they were entitled to a week's notice to leave.
2. that tradesmen had been employed during inclement weather on other work at a lower rate of pay, and that some men had been stood off work.

The Council responded that it had been rare between 1903 and 1917 for men to lose time because of bad weather, and at times of frost, rain etc they were normally found other work. The recent bad weather was exceptional, and had led to twenty men being laid off, losing twenty-six days' work between them.

The representatives agreed to revised rules:

1. No more than 150 men shall be considered permanent workmen in the Highway Department. These are defined as men to whom 'Brass Tallies' are given.<sup>151</sup>
2. These men will be entitled to a week's notice except for misconduct, and will be required to give a week's notice if they choose to leave the Corporation.
3. Men will not be paid for time lost because of bad weather.
4. 'Time will be kept in quarter days as heretofore'.
5. Tradesmen unable to work at their own trades because of the weather may be offered other work, and will be paid at the usual rate for the work at which they are employed.
6. Holidays: all permanent men are to be paid full wages for Christmas Day, Good Friday, Bank Holidays and one Saturday for annual outing. Those who do not wish to go on the annual outing are entitled to a day's holiday on the following Saturday.
7. A grant of 3s. 6d. shall be made to each permanent man at the time of the annual outing
8. Timekeeping:
  - ∞ Men who are more than five minutes late in the morning shall not be allowed to start work until 7a.m. Saturdays, and 9a.m. on other days, and shall lose a quarter day's pay.
  - ∞ Three minutes to be allowed in winter when work starts at 6.30a.m. or 7a.m.
  - ∞ A man who is late more than one morning in the same week shall not be allowed to start work at all on the second morning.
9. Bank Holiday pay: men required to work up to 10a.m. on Bank Holidays will receive full day's holiday allowance plus half a day's pay for the time worked.
10. Overtime: the rate is time and a quarter; Sunday rate is time and a half.

<sup>150</sup> 5 Apr 1917. Report from Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee to Council concerning wages and terms of employment of Highways Department. 1917-18 (CA: CB/2/CL/1/39)

<sup>151</sup> For explanation of 'Brass Tallies' see section E 5 below: '1930s: The Storeyard – A View from the Gatehouse', "Starting the Working Day".

These give a fuller picture of the conditions under which the Storeyard workmen worked, with permanent staff defined by their brass tally. Overtime payments, holidays, and pay in inclement weather were all issues that mattered as they worked through the day.

By 1919 the tone on the staff side had changed. Instead of the Council asking them to select representatives to discuss grievances, or going through the Labour Party or Trades Council, the newly created National Union of General Workers was taking a more direct approach.<sup>152</sup> They asked for a 10-shilling advance to be added to all existing wage rates, that bonuses be merged into wages, that a week's paid holiday be granted each year, and that working hours be reduced to 44 a week.<sup>153</sup>

The Council's ability or willingness to respond depended on Councillors' sympathies, budgets, and other service demands, and the issues raised in 1917 and 1919 recurred through future decades.

- Holiday entitlement gradually increased, and the annual outing was dropped.
- Being late for work was always taken seriously as team working relied on all men starting together, so one man being five minutes late held back the rest of the team by five minutes too.
- Saturday working ceased to be considered part of the normal working week in most industries during the 1960s.
- Overtime payments were always contentious, while the threat of 'docking' pay was a means of keeping staff working through inclement weather. In the 1970s all dustmen and street cleaners received a 'bonus', which was regarded as part of the weekly wage, but was lost if work stopped due to rain or snow.
- By 2018 weekly working hours had been reduced to 37.

Julian's response in 1919 was, as always, cautious. But in 1920 he did diligently dismiss the growing belief 'held in many quarters that municipal employees have become infected with the 'ca'canny principles which infected other classes of labour'.<sup>154</sup> Using what the *Cambridge Daily News* called 'considerable acumen and impartiality' he scrutinised the 'amount of labour carried out and the time employed on definite and measurable work' at the Storeyard. He looked at the departments where expenditure on labour and materials was heaviest, and showed that the amount of work carried out per hour in 1919 by refuse collection and road tarring staff was more than in 1914. He also showed that the amount of work per day was maintained despite an increase in holiday and a reduction in working hours – if not as much as the union had proposed, but from 54 in summer and 51 in winter to 47 per week.

Julian's report was published in the 'Municipal Engineering and Sanitary Record', and while refuting allegations of slackness amongst his staff, he also stressed the importance of effective management. As the *Cambridge Daily News* reported:

The result, however, as Mr Julian considerably points out, was not obtained without 'management' ie continual investigations and frequent rearrangement of work so that the essential services

<sup>152</sup> The National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers, founded in 1889, was renamed in 1916 after merging with the Amalgamated Union of Machine and General Labourers as The National Union of General Workers. It was the largest 'general union' of its era. In 2018 its successor, the GMB, still represented manual staff at the Council Depot.

<sup>153</sup> 19 Jun 1919. Council Assembly Book 1918–19 (CA: CB/2/CL/1/40)

<sup>154</sup> 'Table Talk': 'No "Ca" Canny Methods at Cambridge', *CDN* 2 Oct 1920. 'ca'canny: the policy of deliberately limiting output at work': *English Oxford Living Dictionaries* <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ca'canny>

of the department could be carried on with the least inconvenience to everyone but the officials concerned'.<sup>155</sup>

## Storeyard Management

Julian led from the top, and it is disappointing that there is no picture of him driving around Cambridge in his pony and trap, or in his new car, inspecting the sites where his staff were working. But the practical day-to-day management of the Storeyard was the responsibility of John Gambling, described as 'Chief Foreman' or 'Road Foreman',<sup>156</sup> and his successors. Unlike the workmen, he was not employed on an hourly rate, but on an annual salary, and in 1918 the Council showed confidence in his abilities by increasing this from £200 to £250 a year, with a new job title of 'Inspector of Highways'.<sup>157</sup>

Gambling was recorded as living nearby in Mawson Road in the 1901 and 1911 censuses, while the Storekeeper lived on site above the offices at the Storeyard entrance. This position was held by George James Golding in 1911. The census shows Golding living there with his wife and a 24-year-old boarder, Leonard Gotobed, who was a Corporation clerk presumably working downstairs.

Both Gambling and Golding are recorded at the Corporation Storeyard in street directories until 1935 – a continuity that indicated that the posts were secure and adequately paid. They were part of the small 'white-collar' team at the Gatehouse that included the timekeeper and the clerks. Between them they managed the 'blue collar' staff who worked across Cambridge maintaining roads and paths, and collecting rubbish.<sup>158</sup>

## The Timekeeper



Figure 81 – Joe Baker, Timekeeper CIP 27 Nov 1914

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Spalding's street directory for 1913 records at the Storeyard: 'Julian, Julian, B.E., *Borough engineer and surveyor* / Gambling, J., *road foreman* / Golding, G. J., *storekeeper*'. In the 1911 census John Gambling (aged 40), lived at 97 Mawson Road with his wife (40), daughter (18) and son (14).

<sup>157</sup> 4 Apr 1918 Council Assembly Book 1918–19 (CA: CB/2/CL/1/40)

<sup>158</sup> A 'set' or 'sett' was a quarried stone used for paving roads.

The Timekeeper was the face of management for the workmen based at the Storeyard, although the managers would probably have seen him as a 'Clerk'. On 27 November 1914, just as World War One started, the *Cambridge Independent Press* published the obituary of Joe Baker, who had held this position for twenty-seven years. It gives a glimpse of the type of staff recruited, and how Baker's previous career took him from Chesterton across the world serving the late-Victorian British Empire in its heyday. It is also a reminder that Britain had maintained its global position by wars in many places before the events of 1914 brought it closer to home.

Baker was described as 'a man of strong individuality, and particularly proud of his 21 years army record and of his medals', which can be seen in Figure 81, above. Born in Chesterton in 1845, he was apprenticed to a whitesmith but without telling his parents he enlisted in 1866 in the Royal Regiment of Artillery. Two years later he was posted to India, travelling overland as the Suez Canal was not opened until 1869. In 1880 his battery was sent to Afghanistan to help relieve Kandahar during the Second Anglo-Afghan War, which saw the British and Russians contesting influence in the country and ended with the Afghans ceding control of their foreign policy to the British. This was followed in 1882 by a posting to Egypt to support British troops in the Anglo-Egyptian War, which led to Britain taking control of Egypt's internal affairs after a nationalist uprising.

Baker returned to India, spending eighteen of his twenty-one years' service overseas, before being discharged, as a Sergeant in 1887. He came back to Cambridge and was appointed Timekeeper to the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners, who until 1889 were responsible for the highways, and later continued in that role under their successor, the Cambridge Corporation. Obviously proud of his military past the obituary suggests he was probably a strict disciplinarian as Timekeeper. But his career was a reminder that while some Cambridge residents never travelled far, others might see the world. When he left Cambridge for India there was no Suez Canal. By the time he began working at the new Storeyard, nearby streets in Romsey Town had been named to commemorate the sea route across the world via British colonies: Malta – Cyprus – Suez – Madras – Hobart, Australia.

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## 5. 1930s : The Storeyard - A View from the Gatehouse

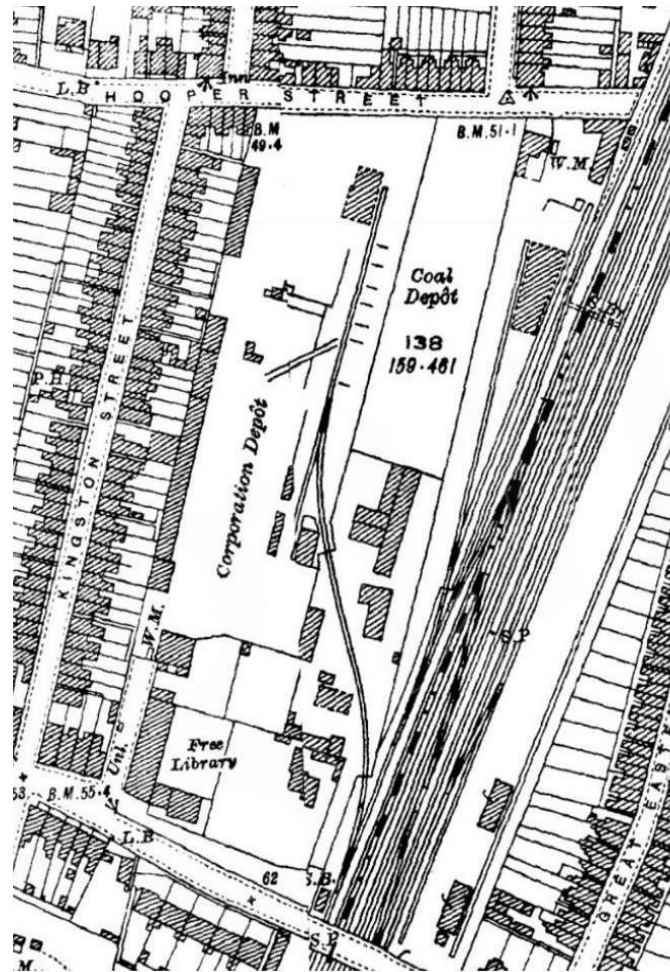


Figure 82 – The Storeyard in 1927 (OS 1927)

Figure 82 shows the Corporation Storeyard (here called 'Depôt', as it came to be known in general parlance) in 1927. The boundary of the site runs along the black line that originates at the Hooper Street end of the map, just after the final 'T' of 'Street'. The Gatehouse lies just north of the Free Library, with the weighbridge ('W.M.') to its west. The range of buildings used as stores and workshops is shown to the rear of the Kingston Street houses' back gardens. These buildings included workshops and (nearest to Hooper Street) stables. The siding can still be seen, running into the Storeyard.

The view of the Storeyard from the Gatehouse was captured in the mid-1930s by the weighbridge clerk.<sup>159</sup> Dennis Strange booked out the horse-drawn carts, and later the motor vehicles, laden with road materials, so he was a familiar face to all those who were entering and leaving the Yard.

Strange's memories span the years 1936 to 1939, and it was probably John Gambling whom he was recalling when he described the Highways Superintendant as 'old school' in manners and dress.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Dennis Strange, 'Roads of Cambridge in the 1930s', *Life Magazine*, December 1987 (CC:). With additions from a similar version titled 'A Weight on my Mind' <https://yesterdayremembered.co.uk/memory/1231/>

<sup>160</sup> Gambling is recorded in street directories until 1936/37. His successor as Highways Inspector was J W Dixon.



The Highways superintendent was very much of the old school both in discipline and dress – he wore a high wing collar Edwardian style.

Office staff had to be properly dressed at all times in suits and ties. I only possessed one suit, so in summer I left the waistcoat off!

On Saturday mornings, sports jackets and flannels were permitted – again with a tie.

Smoking was not allowed in the Yard at all. I remember one occasion when the carpenter had a half used white pencil in his mouth, deliberately I suspect, and the Superintendent went storming down the Yard to him and had the wind taken out of his sails.

‘Teases’ were part of working life. Strange’s first memory reflects a ‘tease’ from his immediate colleagues that was harmless, but nevertheless put him in his place:

On my first day at work I was sent down to the stores for a ‘long weight’. The storeman told me to stand outside and, after about twenty minutes, he said I’d had my ‘long wait’. I realised of course that I was having my leg pulled but I couldn’t refuse an order and it was a sunny day anyway so why worry?

As well as the stores, Strange remembered that:

The whole of one side of the store yard was occupied by workshops, for carpenters, painters, plumbers, bricklayers and masons. Gas brackets remained on the walls (electricity had been installed in 1930) and the carpenter still used his gas ring to heat the glue pot – he preferred it anyway.

## Starting the Working Day

Strange’s day started with the workmen depositing their brass tags in the Timekeeper’s window each morning, a process which explained the ‘Brass Tallies’ mentioned earlier. Strange said that:

Each of the workmen carried a circular brass tag with his number stamped on it which he deposited in a slot at the timekeeper’s window on arrival. The tags fell into a tin which was emptied at 7.08 a.m. The latecomers were deducted pay accordingly. A man arriving between 7.09 and 7.15 would lose a quarter of an hour.

The tags hung on a board with numbered hooks – so that the Timekeeper could see at a glance who was absent – until reclaimed by the men at the end of the working day. A clock with a large dial, its accuracy checked daily, was located by the Timekeeper’s desk and clearly visible to the men outside.<sup>161</sup>

Strange started work at the Weighbridge at 7 am:

Because of the special requirements of the job I worked from 7 am to 5 pm and from 7 to noon on a Saturday – and it was start work at 7am, not arrive at 7am, for 25 shillings a week<sup>162</sup> – with three quarters of an hour for breakfast and an hour for lunch, cycling home each time.

He cycled over 100 miles each week backwards and forwards to his home on the recently built Perne Road. Many of the Storeyard employees lived close to the Storeyard in an era before cars.

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<sup>161</sup> This sentence ‘A man arriving between 7.09 and 7.15 would lose a quarter of an hour’ is added from the web version: <https://yesterdayremembered.co.uk/memory/1231/> – ‘Yesterday Remembered’ (pubd 16 Sep 2013)

<sup>162</sup> ‘for 25 shillings a week’ added from web version.

## The Horses

When Strange began work in 1936, horses were still being used to take road materials to sites around the town:

After the carts had been loaded with the required materials for which they were allocated (eg granite chippings, tarred limestone, kerbs, gullies, glazed pipes, cement, sand etc), the horse would draw the cart on to the Avery weighbridge and I would take the reading from the dial next to my desk and enter it into the ledger and on to the driver's worksheet.

The horse itself did not stand on the weighbridge – it moved forward until it heard the cart wheels clattered on the grooved metal surface and stopped. The horse then stood motionless until the driver flicked the reins. The casual but professional way that it was done always fascinated me.

I had a list of the unladen weight of each cart and was therefore able to enter the weight of the materials and their destination in the ledger. Each two-wheeled cart was numbered and the unladen weight was stenciled on the side enabling me to enter the weight of the materials and their destination.<sup>163</sup>

The drivers with their charges would be queuing to move off as soon as they were able after 7 am having loaded as much as they could the night before.

It was hectic at first but, after breakfast, things quietened down and I would be able to price each item and extend the cost, as the Highways Superintendent required a daily running total of the amount spent on each job.

His obvious love of the horses and the bond between horse and driver was shown when he added:

The eight English Shire horses, of 17 hands, were slow but possessed great strength.<sup>164</sup> The horses were beautifully cared for – coats shining, hooves and hair trimmed and brasses gleaming.

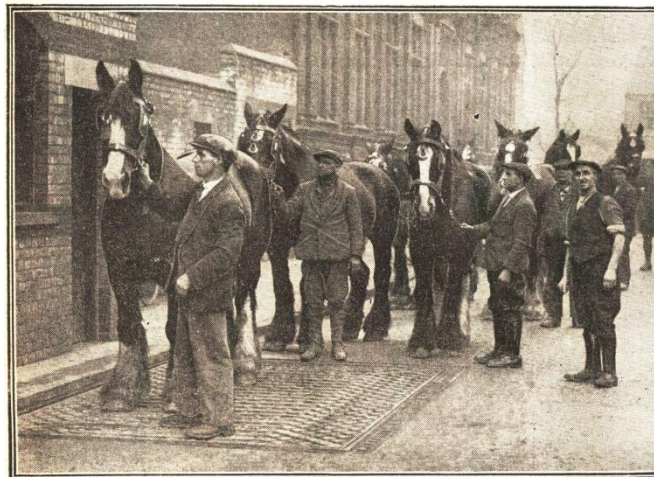
Each horse was named and one driver was responsible for one particular horse, thereby creating pride in the turnout of each vehicle, as well as the horse being familiar with his voice and mannerisms. The horses normally covered about ten miles each day and were stabled in the store yard, with a smithy alongside.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> 'Each two-wheeled cart was numbered and the unladen weight was stenciled on the side enabling me to enter the weight of the materials and their destination' added from web version.

<sup>164</sup> 'The eight English Shire horses, of 17 hands, were slow but possessed great strength' added from web version.

<sup>165</sup> 'as well as the horse being familiar with his voice and mannerisms. The horses normally covered about ten miles each day and were stabled in the store yard, with a smithy alongside' added from web version.

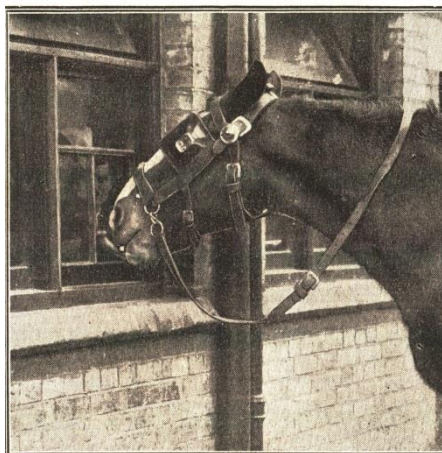
**"WEIGHING IN"**

Photo] It is the practice at the Cambridge Corporation Store Yard to weigh the horses every Saturday as a check on their condition. Here are shown some of the animals at the weigh-bridge. The horses seem to welcome this custom because they know it means a full day's rest to follow! ["Press and News"]

**Figure 83** – The weighbridge *CIP* 29 Jan 1932, p. 12

Appreciation from the weighbridge window was shown at the end of the working week:

Each Saturday when work finished at noon, all the horses came to my sliding window to be given a few sugar lumps. I had to make sure that my fingers were below the level of the window ledge. Horses have a heavy bite – I learned the hard way!

**THE SWEETS OF LABOUR**

Photo] One of the horses calls at the office for a sugar ration. ["Press and News"]

**Figure 84** – Saturday sugar ration *CIP* 29 Jan 1932, p.12

**Resurfacing the Yard — Preparations for War**

Regular maintenance included resurfacing the yard. Strange had his camera with him, and recorded what:

was then routine but is now of particular interest. The tar was heated by a coke fire in a mobile boiler and the vehicle drawn back and forth across the Yard by a led horse. The awkward areas and the join were done by hand, the boiling tar being drained into an old watering can. The granite chippings were spread by shovel from the back of a lorry and the whole surface consolidated by an Aveling & Porter 8-ton steamroller.



**Figure 85** – Resurfacing the Storeyard, 1936 (CC: B. Kings. K36.37180)



**Figure 86** – Spreading tar, 1936 (CC: B. Kings. K36.37179)



**Figure 87** – Spreading granite chippings, 1936 (CC: B. Kings. K36.37181)



Figures 85–87 show the Storeyard being resurfaced in 1936, as photographed by Dennis Strange. The mobile boiler and the shire horse with its leader appear in the foreground of Figure 85, with the brick-built workshops etc adjoining the Kingston Street rear gardens in the background. The large first-floor windows were for loading. (During the 1990s the first floor was converted into offices.) Figure 86 shows workmen spreading tar with brooms and a watering can. The motor vehicle, shovels and steam roller can be seen in Figure 87.

As the possible outbreak of another war approached in April 1938 the Highways Department created its own anti-gas team, and Strange recorded them practising washing down and neutralising the gas in the Storeyard, all suitably protected (Figure 88). With another war a reality the following year, Strange left his job at the weighbridge to serve in the RAF.



**Figure 88** – Anti Gas Team practising washing down, in 1938 (CC: S1938.37183)

The brick-built workshops and stores were later converted into offices: the attractive red brickwork features being retained.



**Figure 89** – Converted workshops and offices (2018)

### Final Days of the Horses — New Storeyard Entrance

Before he left for war, Strange recorded the rebuilding of the Storeyard entrance and the final days of the horses. It had been nearly three decades since Borough Engineer and Surveyor Julian had reported back to Councillors from the Annual Meeting of the County and Municipal Engineers (section E 4, above). Sent to assess whether his colleagues thought motor vehicles should replace horses, he had – to his surprise – found little enthusiasm, and Cambridge had continued to use horses for haulage while slowly introducing motor vehicles for refuse collection. Strange saw the completion of this very gradual process as John Gambling was replaced as Highways Inspector in the late 1930s by J W Dixon. At the same time the wall and pillar at the yard entrance were demolished, and his weighbridge replaced to weigh larger vehicles (see Figure 91):

As the 30s progressed and with the appointment of a new Highways Superintendent the horses were gradually retired. The eight horses were retired one by one and replaced by two 30 cwt. Ford lorries – end tippers, operated manually by a handle attached to worm gearing behind the driver's cab.<sup>166</sup>

The yard entrance which had previously only allowed carts to pass in single file was widened, a pillar and a wall being removed. At the same time a new weighbridge was installed capable of weighing larger and heavier vehicles than before.



**Figure 90** – Bert Cable, Foreman (photo: Cable family collection)

Figure 90 shows Bert Cable, who was Foreman in the 1940s and probably 1950s, standing by a pile of salt, and wearing the traditional dress of the era for his position: jacket, cardigan, tie, cap and polished shoes.

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<sup>166</sup> 'The eight ... one by one' and 'end tippers ... driver's cab' added from web version.





**Figure 91** – Storeyard entrance under reconstruction, late 1930s (CC: B.Kings.K36.37182)

Figure 91 shows the view from the Gatehouse looking out towards Mill Road, with the Free Library on the left. In progress is the rebuilding of the Yard entrance for lorries, and also, in the foreground next to a pile of rubble, the replacing of the weighbridge. Workmen are about to demolish the wall on which they are standing – the wall that had previously restricted entry. The Gatehouse where Dennis Strange (the photographer) worked is on the left, with the entrance facing the street. There is a brick wall, but no buildings are visible between the Gatehouse and the Free Library.

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## F. THE STOREYARD : 1960s–2018

### 1. 1960s: The Storeyard - A View from the Gatehouse

By the mid-1960s the Ordnance Survey map for 1965–67 shows the extent of the Storeyard to be unchanged since 1927. The site of the former iron foundry and the land between this and the railway remained in separate ownership and are marked as 'Builders Yard' and 'Works' (Figure 92). Mr Headly's house, The Limes, which is visible on the 1962 aerial photograph (Figure 46), has been demolished although it is not clear if this is yet part of the Storeyard.

Within the Storeyard the Gatehouse has been extended slightly towards the Library. There are also numerous sheds and workshops running from Hooper Street towards the Gatehouse parallel with the older brick buildings that adjoined Kingston Street. These are shown more clearly in the 1959 and 1962 aerial photographs (Figures 93a and 93b below).

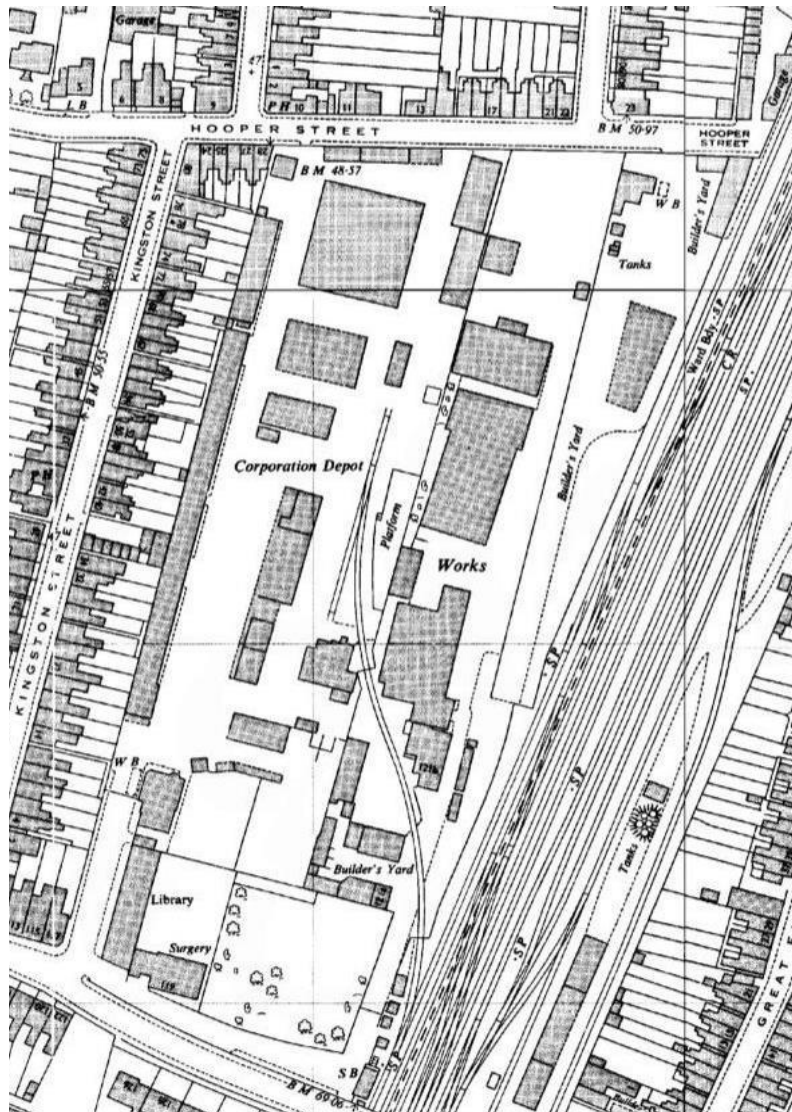


Figure 92 – OS map 1965



**Figures 93a** – aerial photo April 1959 (CC: 518021)



**Figure 93b** – aerial photo 13 Sep 1962 (CC: 566498)

The aerial photographs, Figures 93a and 93b above, both show the large shed at the Hooper Street end of the Yard. In 1974 this was demolished and a new garage was built on the adjoining land, acquired from British Railways and formerly part of the iron foundry site. In Figure 93a, taken in 1959, there appears to be a garden at the rear of the Gatehouse. The line of buildings bordering Kingston Street appears to be the same, as do the sheds and workshops shown in the centre of the site, running north from the Gatehouse towards Hooper Street. The railway siding is clearly visible, leading to the platform shown in the 1965 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 92). In Figure 93b, taken in 1962, part of the Gatehouse garden is now a car park. In both photographs, The Limes is still standing.

Many of the staff who worked at the Depot lived in the Mill Road area. Proximity to your workplace was still important at the start of the 1960s when car ownership was not widespread, personal transport was often limited to the bicycle, and public transport across Cambridge was poor, especially for those who had to be at work by 7a.m. or earlier. Dennis Strange had lived on Perne Road, the new inter-war housing at the end of Mill Road, accessible by bike. David Bradford was born and brought up even closer in the 19th-century terraces of what he called 'Red Romsey, Romsey Town'.<sup>167</sup> Like Strange, Bradford also began

<sup>167</sup> Interview with David Bradford 17 Jun 1996 (private collection, Allan Brigham). For full interview, see Brigham 1979–2001, vol. 1 (CC:). All quotations in this section are from David Bradford unless specified.

his working life in the Gatehouse. But he was already familiar with the Storeyard before being employed by the Council.

As a child Bradford had lived just across Mill Road bridge on the Romsey side, between what was then the paper shop and The Earl of Beaconsfield public house. His next-door neighbour, Albert Ladds, was a refuse driver, and the family were friends, so 'the Corporation' was familiar through proximity and connections.

Bradford could remember seeing the Storeyard (he calls it the 'Depot') before the sheds shown in the 1962 aerial photograph (Figure 93b) were demolished:

I was literally within a stone's throw of the Depot. I can remember the Depot before it was all transformed, all the old sheds for the garage, the workshops, the old stores, the old Scammell refuse freighters that they used to use with the wind-up handle as a steering wheel. I don't go back quite as far as to remember the horse and stables in the Depot.

This familiarity was a result of trips in Mr Ladd's refuse vehicle:

I used to spend some time out with Mr Ladds, although it wouldn't be allowed now. I used to wash their refuse vehicles out at the cattle market site, probably on a Saturday morning, I used to go up there just for a ride and watch them wash their dustcarts out. There were a lot of characters in those days. This had an influence on my thoughts of the Council Depot.

Ladds advised Bradford that the Council offered secure employment; and when he heard of a vacancy he went to see the Storeyard manager, Fred Tungett. He started work as an office boy on 13 November 1961, aged 16, part of a small team of about nine office staff. Among these during the 1960s was the Highways Superintendent, Ron Truelove, his team of District Foremen (Charlie Free, Herbert Geoffrey, Ernest Robbins), and Albert Ladds, who became the Refuse Foreman. Eric Brown was in charge of the Yard.

Bradford was inducted by Alan Mackenzie, who he said 'was a gentleman, and who eventually took over from Mr Tungett, and he schooled me in the right direction, and I was very thankful for his advice'.

The job as office junior led to work in the stores, and then like Strange to the weighbridge:

I well remember the weighbridge at the entrance to the Depot. We had to be certificated by the old Weights & Measures department – you had to pass a test, it was a public weighbridge, I spent a lot of time on that. And when they decided to take out the old weighbridge they even asked my advice as to where the old mechanism was.

After various other junior jobs he became Timekeeper when the post-holder Reg Taylor retired on health grounds. This was a job that had changed little since Dennis Strange described it in the 1930s, except that the brass tags were no longer used. Bradford said:

I found it very, very interesting. I used to go into work at 6.30 every morning, and I would stand in the front office [...] Under the clock was a bell. I used to book everybody in, and note down their employee number, and at 7.00 the bell used to go, and then the stragglers that came in were either docked a quarter of an hour or half an hour.

This gave me an insight into staff-related matters. The numbers were then transferred into an Attendance Book, a register that was kept.

All the timesheets were taken to the wages section at the Guildhall, and Bradford was regularly going backwards and forwards into the town centre with the paperwork:

I processed timesheets and overtime sheets, that had to be taken down to the Guildhall – the wages section operated from The Guildhall in those days. So I actually became a messenger for taking these down to the Guildhall. The wages clerks then were a Mr Horace Martin and Mr George Ralph, [...] I spent some considerable time doing this task.

This led to involvement with 'Work Study' as management methods changed, time clocks disappeared, and a greater feeling of trust developed between managers and the workforce:

When Work Study was brought into the organisation I got involved in job planning, forward planning of work, mainly in the Highways Section, and I also dealt with Bonus calculations, processing Bonus sheets, either of an incentive kind or measured day work. I spent some considerable time with that, and Time Keeping duties were being gradually phased out, the old time-clocks were removed, and there was obviously a better relationship and trust with the workforce and the Trade Unions as the years went on. It became more open and frank.

As the 1960s ended Bradford decided he wanted to progress into management. With Local Government reorganisation in 1974 he successfully applied for the new post of Cleansing Supervisor, saying 'I was very very fortunate and elated to be appointed to that post'. He worked as assistant to the Cleansing Superintendant, Les Cambridge, managing a large staff of approximately sixty-four refuse collectors and forty road sweepers.



**Figure 94** – Dustmen who worked under Bradford: *left to right: 'Banger' Day, Joe Upton, [unk], Dick Littlechild*

The new job gave Bradford:

a new insight into the organisation and the workforce; and as time went on I felt it was a job that had more pressure to it than met the eye, but I had a very good tutor in Mr Cambridge, who was a well respected gentleman [...] We had a very good understanding; I like to feel that I gave Mr Cambridge a lot of support, and he welcomed my appointment to that post.

Bradford added:

There was loyalty, a good, motivated workforce; it was a pleasure to work with those gentlemen in those days, and we did work. Whatever you say about the 'Corporation' as it was – some people still call it the 'Corporation Storeyard'.

It was a career shaped by personal contacts and trust, but also on an ever-growing, in-depth knowledge of the workings of the Storeyard, and of the staff. Interviews for promotion recognised the competence and integrity that he had demonstrated, and Bradford was to spend most of his working life at the 'Corporation', as he progressed through different posts. This culminated with his appointment as Cleansing Superintendant.





**Figure 95** – David Bradford's retirement (*CEN* 12 Dec 1995)

Figure 95 shows the retirement party held for David Bradford in *The White Swan* pub near the Storeyard entrance. In it can be seen dustmen, street cleaners and fellow managers. Graham Watts stands behind Julie Smith (Assistant Personnel Manager, in a red dress), and John Hunt (cf. Figures 138, 139) is front right. The number attending reflects the respect that the staff had for Bradford. Future retirement parties would be in the Storeyard, and alcohol-free.

### The 'Sordid' Workshops

By the end of the 1960s many of the old sheds that David Bradford had seen as a teenager and worked amongst since his appointment were ready for replacement. City Surveyor Geoffrey Cresswell claimed that this was never prioritised by Councillors, but in 1972 a budget of £120,000 was agreed for new workshops.<sup>168</sup> Their condition was described by Alderman Jack Warren, Chairman of the Public Works Committee, as:

[...] so bad down there that we cannot possibly use incentives to attract men to work there. The workshops are deplorable. They are sordid, with leaking roofs and lots of other shortcomings. It is a horrible old leaky place and the sooner we replace it the better.<sup>169</sup>

Supporting the expenditure, another Councillor said: 'We owe a debt to our employees. They are having to work under medieval conditions.'<sup>170</sup>

The garage was among the sheds in the worst repair. It was described in a report published on 18 December 1972 in the *Cambridge Evening News*:<sup>171</sup>

Without the garage the Council's wheels would quickly grind to a halt. Apart from the 120 vehicles serviced there the men also maintain 350 pieces of equipment ranging from compressors to grass mowers. Most of the work is done in a group of corrugated iron huts that are at least 50 years old. They were once painted green but the predominant colour is now dirty rust red with green patches.

The window frames are warping, much of the glass is either cracked or broken and some of the gutterings are so rotten bits have fallen off. The smaller workshop is the cosier of the two. It has a false

<sup>168</sup> *CEN* 18 Oct 1972

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *CEN* 5 Dec 1972. Stanley Bowles (Con)

<sup>171</sup> From *CEN* cuttings file in CC (no attribution).

roof and is warm. It might also be fairly dry if it wasn't for the adjoining garage that has a roof that is riddled with rust holes.

The report continued by saying that the small workshop could not hold the large modern refuse lorries, which had to be serviced outside. But the biggest problem was drainage, with the gratings in the yard connected to soakaways rather than the mains sewage, those soakaways often proving inadequate and the ground becoming soaked, with the consequence that the men who were lying under the vehicles parked outside to repair them were often lying on ground that was wet.

Two years later replacement workshops had been completed, and were visited by Council-lors from the Public Works Committee. They saw a transformed Storeyard, with:

specialised equipment [...] housed in the workshop to provide a modern maintenance service for the Council's fleet of 120 vehicles and hundreds of other items ranging from compressors to grass mowers. Brake testing equipment and adjustable hydraulic hoists which can take up to 16 tons were demonstrated to the visitors.<sup>172</sup>



**Figure 96** – Storeyard from the Gatehouse, with new garage top-right (mid-1970s) (photo: private collection, Bob Matthews)



**Figure 97** – Storeyard after acquisition of Foundry/GER site, stores front-left, wood store centre (mid-1970s) (photo: private collection, Bob Matthews)

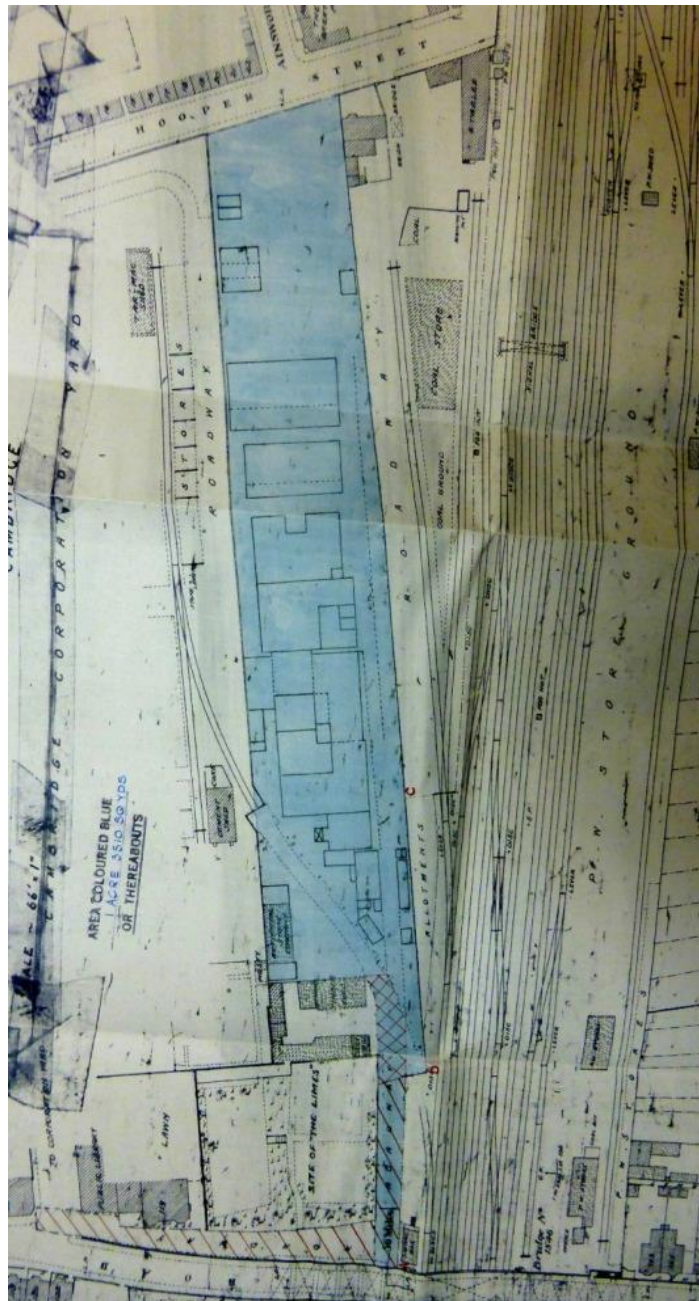
<sup>172</sup> CEN 6 Feb 1974

## 2. 1968: The Storeyard Expands

On 9 August 1968 the British Railways Board sold the site adjoining the Storeyard, to the east, for £20,000 to 'The Mayor, Aldermen, and Citizens of the City of Cambridge', acting for the Council. The land measured one acre, 3,510 square yards, and had originally been the site of The Eagle Foundry (see Figure 98, below, land coloured blue).<sup>173</sup>

In Figure 98, the former Foundry site sold to the Council by British Railways in 1968 is shaded blue. Not included in the sale was the land used by the Cambridge Artificial Stone Company adjacent to the rear of The Limes, which was subject to a lease between the British Transport Commission and the Artificial Stone Company for twenty-one years that dated back to 21 December 1961. This included a right of way for the Railways Board over the roadway between the rail company's land and The Limes (single-hatched brown in Figures 98 and 99). It also reserved to the Board the right of way with vehicles, at day or night, to the builders A J Nunn & Son and the Artificial Stone Co., over the roadway coloured blue and cross-hatched brown (granted on 2 December 1966).

The site of property formerly known as The Limes was not included in the sale according to the map.



**Figure 98** – Storeyard after acquisition of Foundry/GER site (9 Aug 1968) (CCArch)

<sup>173</sup> The Foundry site was sold by James Ind Headly to GER on 7 Nov 1887.



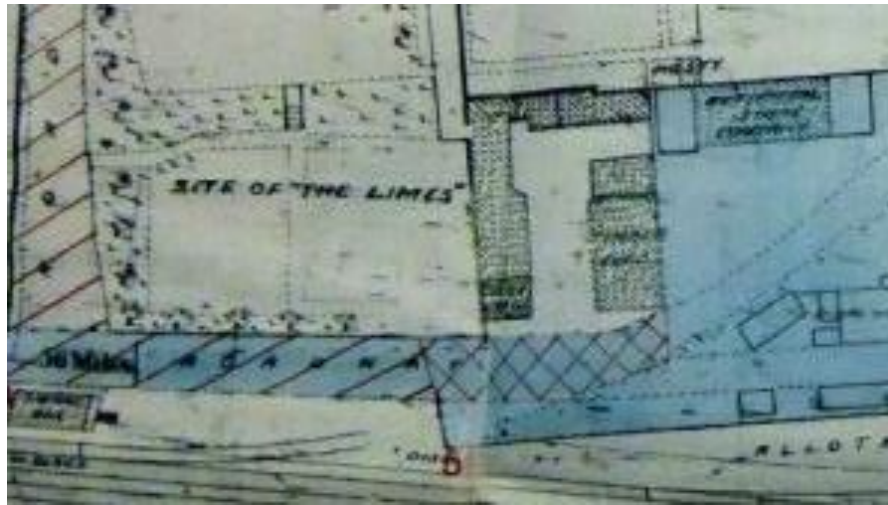


Figure 99 – A J Nunn and Artificial Stone Co. (= Fig. 98, detail, rotated)

Figure 99 shows the site of the former house The Limes (demolished in 1967). The area to the north of it (i.e. to the right on this image), containing sheds (one labelled 'Timber shed') must have been the land leased by A J Nunn (the 1965 OS map, Figure 119, marks the area 'Builder's Yard'). Part of the area further north still must have been that formerly leased by the stone company, since the shed is labelled 'Artificial Stone Company'. The white area east of (below) the blue road belonged to the railway, as the building labelled 'Signal box' confirms. The hatch markings signify access: the single-hatched stretch of road prescribed access by the railway company, and the cross-hatched stretch access by A J Nunn and the Artificial Stone Co.<sup>174</sup>

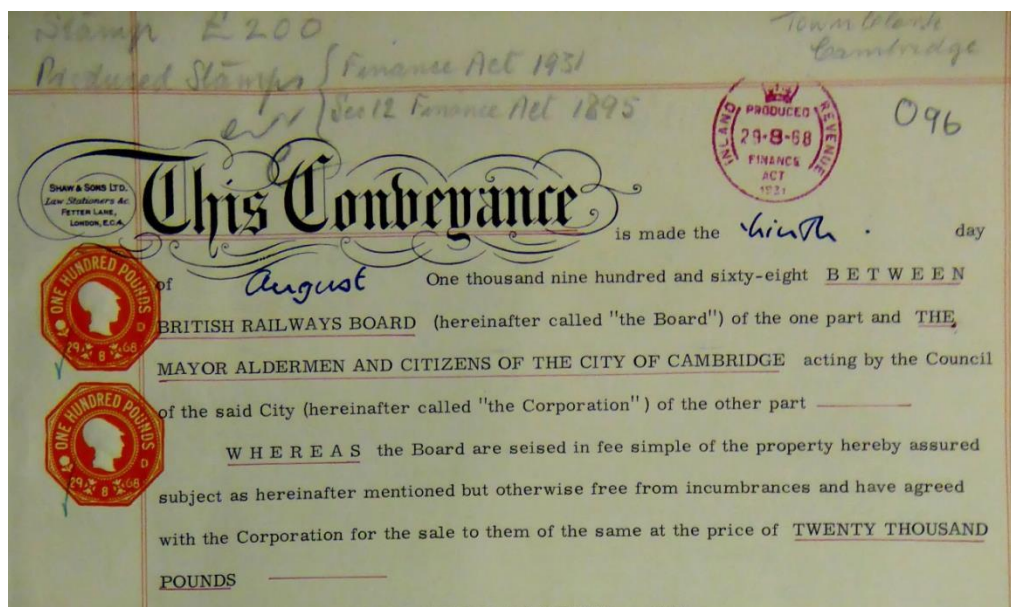


Figure 100 – Conveyance for sale of former Foundry site (9 Aug 1968) (CCArch)

<sup>174</sup> For more about the building of Mill Road bridge and purchase of the land around The Limes, see <https://capturingcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/bridge-report-1st-edition-2018-04.pdf> Mill Road History Society Building Report No. 15, Caroline Wilson, *Mill Road Bridge* (2018).

### 3. 1978–79 : The ‘Winter of Discontent’ — ‘The Strike’

*‘Basically scrimping and saving, scratching about to make a living, worrying about the kids at Christmas, things like that.’*

John McClean, dustman, GMB Union Rep.

The 1980s were shaped by the inflation of the 1970s. This had peaked at 26% in 1975, and was still 10% in 1978. The government response was an incomes policy which saw the buying power of wages decline, culminating in mid-1978 with a proposed 5% guideline for annual wage increases. The trade unions saw this as an attack on the standard of living of their members, and it triggered a series of strikes across numerous industries in late 1978 and the early months of 1979. This became known as ‘The Winter of Discontent’.

It was a label that was still being used in the national press over thirty years later, reinforced by the repeated use of images from the local authority strikes that had left piles of rubbish on pavements, or the threat of grave diggers refusing to bury the dead. Some used the pictures to illustrate the need to reduce ‘the power’ of trade unions. Others claimed they were part of an orchestrated attack on ‘the rights’ of trade unions.

In Cambridge nearly 300 local authority workers went on strike, and uncollected refuse sacks became a common sight around the city. The dispute was centred on the Storeyard, which had the largest concentration of manual staff, and especially on the refuse staff, who were nearly all solidly in favour of the strike.

The Branch Secretary of the manual workers trade union, the GMWU (General and Municipal Workers Union), was Andrew Murden. John McClean, a refuse loader at the time, remembered Murden as a young member of the Parks staff who had become involved in the Union in the mid-1970s, and who replaced the previous Branch Secretary after a vote of no confidence later in the decade. McClean remembered him as ‘very bright’, but also said: ‘He was quite a radical. And, as I say, for those times he probably was. But some of it seems a bit polemical now[....] There’s no flexibility, there’s no pragmatism there’.<sup>175</sup> But Murden’s commitment to representing his members refreshed the Union structure, encouraging new, younger shop stewards and introducing a more professional relationship with management.

McClean was one of those who became a union activist under Murden. He had come from what he described as a working-class/lower-middle-class background in Northern Ireland to attend ‘The Tech’ (Cambridge College of Arts and Technology). After finishing his course he was unsure what to do next. By chance he spoke to someone who used to come into the pub on Mill Road where he often drank at lunchtime, *The Locomotive*:

He was working on the Council as a student, and he kept on coming in at dinner time. I assumed originally that he was coming in for a bit of a break before going back to work, but then found out he’d actually finished for the day. And he used to come in with things like records and books and bits and pieces, and I thought ‘My God – that sounds like a really good job.’

<sup>175</sup> Interview with John McClean, refuse loader 1976–90, GMB Branch Secretary 1990–93 (private collection, Allan Brigham). For full interview, see Brigham 1979–2001, vol. 1 (CC:)





**Figure 101** – John McClean, from dustman 1970s to National GMB Health & Safety Officer

McClean went to the Storeyard in August 1976, met with Les Cambridge, the Manager, and was told that if he wanted a job he could start the following Monday. He described the new colleagues whom he slowly got to know:

There was four in a crew, plus a driver. We used to fetch everything out for people. I enjoyed it. [...] One of the strange things when I started, the people that I knew at the Tech, assumed I was earning fantastic amounts of money; there was always this myth about dustmen earning lots of money. When I showed them my wage packet – originally I think it was 30, 40 quid I took home, and we're back in 1976 – I think they were quite amazed. This perpetuates the myth I suppose of high-paid – so-called high-paid – secure jobs in public services even then. It wasn't a truism.

I enjoyed the bins. I was reasonably strong, luckily, that's the way I was. I was young; I didn't have any ties at the time; I didn't have any real settled place; Cambridge was as much a home as anywhere.

I enjoyed the camaraderie. People say – a lot of people I meet say – that Cambridge people can be a bit cold and stand-offish and what have you. I have to say most of the people on the bins I found warm, in their own way. It took a while to get to know you, but when they did [...] and I suppose maybe coming from a different environment and culture maybe helped in a way – I was red-haired, and reasonably big, and could do the job OK without too much hassle. And I think I've got a reasonable sense of humour, which is one thing I think as a dustman you needed. I don't know about so much now, but you did then. [...] I made some really good friends, people I'll never forget, on there.

McClean described the financial constraints that some of his colleagues worked under:

I don't think there's any such thing as an 'average' person on the Council. I don't want to be too stereotypical. Some people did do other jobs, some people mended cars, some people did little jobs on the side. Other people, especially single blokes, maybe lived with their mums and went boozing.

There's no such thing as a typical anything when you get down to it, but yes, some people did have trouble making ends meet. And their wives would often work from one part-time job to another, fitting in with the kids, fitting in with how their husband worked, or fitting in how their other partner worked; we don't have many women on here, there are a few toilet cleaners, but effectively that's how it was, it was trying to fit things round, and it was basically scrimping and saving, scratching about to make a living, worrying about the kids at Christmas, things like that.

Nobody ever had lots of money. This is a myth about a secure job, lots of pay, certainly amongst the manual jobs 1 to 6, or A to G as they used to be.

'The Strike', as it was later referred to by staff, started almost by accident, and it was how McClean first became involved with the Union:

It wasn't really until 'The Winter of Discontent', which in a sense happened in an *ad hoc* sort of fashion. In January 1979 there had been a whole spate of public sector strikes, principally the fire fighters, before that the journalists (who aren't public sector). There was a whole series of strikes '78, '79, and Callaghan – even at the time, people said he should have gone to the country in October – decided to hang out till the following year with a pay policy which was nearly as bad as

the pay policy that we have now, but the wages were that much lower, so in percentage terms it was even worse. [...]

The main grievance was the wages. Inflation was running I think around 5% and they offered us 2.25% to start with. Which in them days – as I said, you're on below £50 a week or something like that – you're talking about a couple of quid. This was a national agreement.

In Cambridge McClean remembered that the strike began as a 'day of action' on 22 January 1979, which then escalated almost accidentally:

Andrew [Murden] co-ordinated the strike, but I think he actually turned up the first day [*sic*] [...] Everybody suddenly decided it was a cold, grotty day, they'd had a day's strike the day before, which I think had been solid, all the public sector workers to my knowledge, but certainly the dustmen, and next day, when you're supposed to go back to work and everything, for some reason a few people – I can't remember who they were – they got in the mess hut and said 'We're not going out today', and before you knew it there was a mass meeting and we were on strike unofficially.

The action drew McClean into attending union meetings, and into becoming a Health & Safety Representative in 1980 after the strike was over:

There was a one-day strike that effectively escalated into a 6-week action. I took my turn on the picket line, did night shifts, my wife was quite supportive, people in the pubs were supportive, people were supportive[....] There was a mood at the time that the government were just taking the mickey out of public sector workers. I got sort-of semi-politicised then, I started going to Branch meetings, the Health & Safety rep left, I became the Health & Safety rep in 1980.

'The Strike' wasn't solid across the Council, and those staff who didn't report for work at the Storeyard were more likely to carry on working. Street Cleaning in the city centre was not affected, and there were tensions after the dispute was over against the Parks staff based at Cherry Hinton Hall, who had crossed the picket line.

For those who went on strike it left bitter memories of not being paid while they subsisted on £10.50 a week union strike pay; of a government who did not back down; and of a soup kitchen in the Labour Party offices at Alex Wood Hall in Norfolk Street.

It terminated in March 1979 after a settlement of the local authority workers' dispute was agreed. This gave workers an 11% rise, plus £1 per week, with the possibility of extra rises should a pay comparability study recommend them.<sup>176</sup> This was less than amounts won by employees in some private sector companies, where 20% pay rises were achieved in a number of sectors.

Whether the unions 'won', or whether the strike helped the Labour Party lose support in the next general election and led succeeding Conservative governments to use 'The Winter of Discontent' to reduce employment rights, remains undecided. But it was the local authority workers who had attracted the greatest number of negative newspaper headlines, and it encouraged the Conservative government to try to reduce the number of employees in the public sector by forcing local authorities to privatise services by putting contracts out to competition.

Andrew Murden accused the Union leaders of 'selling his men down the river' by recommending that the pay deal should be accepted when the strikers had been seeking 40% to make up for the impact of inflation over earlier years.<sup>177</sup> John McClean's final comments were:

<sup>176</sup> *wikipedia* 'Winter of Discontent' [consulted 5 Oct 2018]

<sup>177</sup> *CEN* 1 Mar 1979

With all that's happened subsequently I have to say that it maybe wasn't as bad as we thought at the time, but at the time it seemed relatively bad. And as I said the strike sort of happened *ad hoc*.

Cambridge  
Evening News

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 1979

No 27,793

Price 9p

**'CITY MEN 'TO  
END DIRTY  
JOBS STRIKE'**

By our municipal correspondent  
**PETER HOSKISON**

The 200-plus Cambridge "dirty jobs" strikers are almost certain to return to work on Monday.

Today, the strike leader, Mr Andrew Murden, forecast a quick ending to the dispute — now in its sixth week — because the strikers are now suffering severe hardship.

And he accused the unions of "selling his men down the river" through urging them to accept the £4.50 weekly increase (about 11 per cent) being offered by local councils — when the strikers were seeking at least 40 per cent.

Many of the strikers...

their families on the £10.50 a week union strike pay and meagre allowance in some cases from Social Security.

The strike committee is meeting tonight to consider the situation.

Because of the hardship pleas and the fact that the unions are unlikely to force a bigger rise from the local councils, the committee will almost certainly recommend a return to work.

**CONFUSED**

If it does, this recommendation will be discussed at a mass meeting of the strikers in Cambridge tomorrow.

The man...

Municipal Workers Union — to accept the pay offer.

Because the meeting was private, union officials have been reluctant to talk about the vote — though they admit the situation that has arisen.

Officials say confusion arose over the issue, because many of the strikers did not vote — while union members who are not on strike voted to accept the pay offer.

Mr Murden today criticised the GMWU for its handling of the strike.

"There are many members who want to return to work because of the national and financial situation and...

in the way they have handled things...



Andrew Murden.

And Chief day th ority s prosec to rep But tain th legal p started. In pa dence t sion on dealing process, gested departm the polic by the

Figure 102 – CEN 1 Mar 1979

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#### 4. 1980s: Compulsory Competitive Tendering

*'So the Council's case is that in Cambridge [...] the Government's proposals are unnecessary [...] But if the Council's representation is unsuccessful it will require the support and co-operation of all staff to meet the challenge. Changes in managerial practice will be required. Organisational change may be needed. Staff will have to adapt to new working methods.'*

Geoffrey Datson, Chief Executive Cambridge City Council. City Scene. June 1985

##### John Delderfield

January 1980 began in the Storeyard with the appointment of John Delderfield as Works Manager. He described it as a political appointment made by the Conservative group who led the City Council rather than the Department Chief Officer Geoffrey Cresswell, the City Engineer and Surveyor, who was responsible for a wide range of Council functions:

I came here on the back of a Conservative Council who were pretty brassed-off with an appalling organisation as they saw it in the shape of the Storeyard, as people used to call it. And I was appointed to strengthen the management of the organisation and bring some changes about which the Conservative Council – and this is an important point – had seen as necessary.

Just as an aside, I came here because I'd dealt with local government reorganisation in 1974. I'd seen the challenges through at Dartford and I wanted another challenge in my life if you like. So I didn't come here for money, I came here for [...] a better quality of life. I think it is fair to say that I was appointed over the Chief Officer's head. I was a member appointment: he didn't want me, and certainly that feeling was so strong that I knew we wouldn't hit it off.<sup>178</sup>



**Figure 103** – John Delderfield in Gatehouse, 1980s  
(CA: Cambridge City Council. Mill Road Depot, C116/011)

Delderfield was a strong-willed, very able manager who was not afraid to 'speak his mind'. He was intent on retaining services 'in house' (managed by the local authority), but, given external competition, he knew this could be achieved only through greater efficiencies. His desire to achieve these efficiencies put him into conflict with Cresswell:

<sup>178</sup> Interview with John Delderfield 5 Sep 1991 (private collection, Allan Brigham). For full interview, see Brigham 1979–2001, vol. 1 (CC:) All quotations in this section are from John Delderfield unless specified.

I saw that he had a strategic role to do and I would deal with the details, and we never resolved that, right until the day that he retired. We fell out constantly about my position in the organisation vis-à-vis him.

It also put him in conflict with staff, who saw this strategy as a threat to their terms and conditions of employment.

His situation was further complicated in May 1980 by the Labour Party victory in the local elections. This changed the internal dynamics of the City Council. Instead of Conservative Councillors operating in what some saw as a cosy environment with like-minded Chief Officers the new Labour Group took power with a clear agenda that would challenge the way that the Council had operated. Delderfield felt that they were:

a group of young, articulate, [...] left-wing Labour politicians, who took power and intended to turn that power very strongly into them managing the organisation, and I think managing in every way if they possibly could, because I think they felt that the 'Conservative' Chief Officers were not, or could not, or would not, carry out the policies in the way that they wanted the policies carried out.

There was further change when Delderfield attended a seminar in London about the Planning and Land Act and heard that the Conservative government intended to bring local authority building and civil engineering services into competition with effect from 1 April 1981. He considered that neither local political group was ready for this, stating that the organisation 'hadn't moved since the 19th century in lots of respects'. And he felt his own ability to manage the necessary changes was hampered by the absentee Borough Surveyor in the Guildhall and by the trade unions. He thought that the building trades who maintained the post-war Council housing stock and were managed from the Storeyard were particularly difficult:

The trade unions ran this yard, in the sense that the labour force, particularly the building workforce, wouldn't work after about midday on Wednesday; they'd completed the maximum bonus they could enjoy; there was a great deal of reluctance to do any work after that period of time. There were 12,000 outstanding jobs apparently for building maintenance work – it was a bloody shambles, the whole place was totally and utterly unmanaged.

Delderfield's appointment coincided with a review of the building trades' Incentive Bonus Scheme. He felt he had been employed to provide stronger management, but described the negotiating committee as 'ballroom dancing', threatening that he would rather take up golf than attend further meetings:

I went to a negotiating meeting on the plumbers' Incentive Bonus Scheme in the Committee Room in the Guildhall. I'd been used to directly negotiating with the trade unions and the individuals concerned – a plumbers' representative, the area official, the plumbers' supervisor and myself would deal with the plumbing issue where I came from. I came here and *everybody*, the world and his wife, sat round the table to take part in negotiations [...] and that's just the management side.

Then on the trade union side you had a representative from the plumbers [...]. You had old Ernie Sterne, who was the plumbing overseer, there was Arthur Langley, [...] the area official for EETPU – they weren't satisfied with that so though the plumbers were virtually all represented by EETPU, Andrew Murden was always present representing GMB, and so was sometimes Tom Ross (GMB full-time officer), and so was Trevor Utting representing UCATT.<sup>179</sup>

So you didn't have a negotiating committee at all, you had what I call 'ballroom dancing' – two steps forward and three steps back. It never got anywhere at all.

<sup>179</sup> EETPU: Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union; GMB: General Municipal Boilermakers; UCATT: Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians.





**Figure 104** – Geoffrey Creswell, Engineer and Surveyor 1966–88 (CN)

Figure 103 shows Geoffrey Creswell looking over the Market Square from his offices in The Guildhall. Cresswell was responsible for the Direct Works Division at the Storeyard. John Delderfield considered he was an 'absentee' manager, based too far from where the blue collar staff workers.

The following years saw Delderfield trying to take control, but never quite feeling that he had achieved it. This took place against a background of working with a Labour-led council, amongst whom were Mark Todd, Frank Gawthrop and Jill Tuffnell. He considered they were assertive, verging on aggressive, wanting change, but not knowing how to bring those changes about, and that their mistake was not to change the senior management team in the early 1980s. This meant that when the Green Paper on further competitive measures came out in 1987 the Council had failed to learn from the lessons of the early 1980s, while there was much distrust, not only between members and the Chief Officers, but between the senior officers in the organisation who felt that they were often cut out of the process of managing change:

For example the consultation period with the trade unions: it's important to have a consultation period, but [...] we had meetings at 6.30 and 7.30 in the morning in 1987, involving the then leader of the Council, and Michael Ball and Geoffrey Cresswell and Alison New and Uncle Tom Cobbley and all telling a totally bemused workforce about how their jobs would be in jeopardy – against my advice – I was saying: 'Too early, you don't know enough about it, there's far more that has to be done'.

So the whole system to me was one that had become fragmented. The intentions were very honourable, there was no doubt in my mind that the Labour Group perceived that if you take the labour force along with you in its entirety that you've got a very good chance of success.

But in so doing they ostracised very influential senior managers in the organisation because they effectively cut them out of the process, in my view, when in fact they walk away from the problem once it starts and leave the senior managers to deal with the issues – typical, typical of councillors, I mean it's absolutely typical, power without responsibility if you like! And that's the thing that I find [...] I'm a bit of an old sceptic about Councillors over the years, of whatever political persuasion.

Despite being sceptical about councillors, Delderfield was not enthusiastic about the government's attempt to force competition on councils:

I mean quite frankly I feel that politics and competition don't mix with each other very easily, comfortably; and in a sense, perhaps ironically, or deliberately, it's that issue that has driven the enormous financial wedge into local authorities. There is an irreversible trend now in my view to move towards 'enabling authorities'. What the Conservatives mean by an 'enabling authority' is a very small staff in the organisation, providing services by contracts for other people.

June 1985  
Issue 3

# CITY SCENE

## PRIVATISATION PROPOSALS. New Challenge to meet Governments threat to jobs.

The Government's proposals to extend the areas where councils are compulsorily required to put services out to tender could affect staff in all departments of the Council both manual and non-manual.

Refuse collection, street cleansing, the cleaning of buildings, grounds and park maintenance, vehicle maintenance and catering services are likely to be the first services to have to go out to tender. In addition the Government state that much greater use of the private sector could be made in the area of professional services generally including architectural and legal services, together with the management of leisure facilities, car parking, data processing and printing. In the first place these would be subjected to public comparison with the cost of private provision but the Government propose to take power to add to the services which are subject to compulsory tendering.

And it is not only those staff directly concerned with the provision of services who could be affected. The cost of all back-up services in central departments - eg finance and computer, legal and administrative, personnel and work study - will be subjected to greater scrutiny and will need to be fully justified - we are in any event beginning to do this as we review base budgets and make managers more cost conscious and accountable.

There may also be an effect on terms and conditions of employment. The Council sets out to be in the forefront of good employers but its ability to do this in future must be in doubt as the Government propose to outlaw the imposition of conditions on tenderers which are unrelated to the contractor's ability to do the work. Depending on the final wording of the rules the choice may then lie between altering the Council's employment conditions (some of which are imposed nationally) or losing tenders to employers offering protection to their staff.

If implemented, the new proposals could mean the

loss of the ability to provide services on a co-ordinated basis and to respond to seasonal changes or emergencies. What would be the effect on the economic operation of the other activities at the Storeyard if the cleansing services were privatised? Or to the parks service generally if the ground maintenance were undertaken by private contractors? Would the Council be able to provide as good an emergency service if its own labour force was substantially reduced? Would a private firm be able to ensure that grass cutters and refuse vehicles were repaired ready for the next day's work? And, once a

direct labour organisation has been dispersed it would not be practicable for it to win contracts in future because, unlike private firms, it cannot tender for other work. Is this "fair competition"? There could also be major problems - as the health service has found - in controlling and maintaining standards of service.

The Council has registered its objection to the proposals, and in particular to the concept of compulsion implicit in the Government's proposals and to the greater centralisation of control which would follow. It considered that councillors democratically elected are the best people to judge where the balance should lie between provision in-house and by the private sector which already undertakes a fair share of the Council's work. The Common Law and the Audit Commission - not to mention the ballot box - provide sufficient protection to ensure that Councils do not step too far out of line.

Of course the Council is not complacent. For years it has committed itself to securing the maximum value for money from its services. To take but one or two examples - our refuse collection system has already been studied and revised with the co-operation of the workforce; the DLO has been successful in winning tenders for most of the maintenance of

council houses and other work which is already required to go out to competition. Our architectural service has for years compared its performance against the private fee scales and we are also planning to cost more accurately our legal services. So the Council's case is that in Cambridge and many similar authorities the Government's proposals are unnecessary. They would be counter-productive in terms of the resources which would need to be spent in complying with the new regulations; and in the event of in-house tenders being lost there would be dire effects on staff, and the Council's ability to provide the services it sees to be required by the public. But if the Council's representation - backed up nationally by the ADC and many Trade Unions - is unsuccessful it will require the support and co-operation of all employees to meet the challenge.

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HOW TO MAKE MARY LAUGH  
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### PRIVATISATION PROPOSALS.

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Changes in managerial practice will be required. Organisational change may be needed. Staff will have to adapt to new working methods and lessons will need to be learned from the successful practices of the existing DLOs.

We have already begun to consider what will be required and the City Board has set up a Working Party of members to oversee the exercise. The Chairman of the Staff and Direct Works Panels, Councillor Mark Todd, has promised full consultation with Unions and employees at all stages. He says, "We need to get across to the public the importance and excellence of the services provided by the Council staff. They tend to take these for granted. Staff at all levels must work together to ensure that we can continue to provide these services - and even extend them - whilst giving the public good value for money into the bargain".

Geoffrey Datson  
Chief Executive.

Figure 105 - Privatisation Proposals, *Street Scene* June 1985 (City Council publication)

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## 5. 1988: Establishing 'City Services' at the Storeyard

### Graham Watts

Compulsory Competitive Tendering had already had an impact on the City Council's building services. The 1987 legislation required that this should now extend to all the 355 manual staff.<sup>180</sup> These included 270 staff based at the Mill Road Depot working in:

Maintenance of roads, pavements, street lights, traffic signs

Maintenance of large transport fleet (garage)

Cleaning Public Conveniences

Maintaining Sewers

Refuse Collection

Street Cleaning

*plus:*

85 Parks staff based at Cherry Hinton Hall maintaining parks, commons, cemeteries and the crematorium, housing estate open spaces.<sup>181</sup>

In 1985 Delderfield had written a paper recommending that a separate 'Works Organisation' should be set up, independent of the Borough Surveyor. However, it was not until Geoffrey Cresswell retired in 1988 that this was acted on.

The Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) based at the Storeyard came to be renamed 'City Services', and was expanded to include all those manual workers delivering direct services to the public - including the Parks staff, Swimming Pools and Technical Services.

Leading the new organisation was seen as an important position, managing a turnover in excess of £12 million. Delderfield considered he was qualified for the post, but saw himself squeezed out by the politicians:

Mark Todd made it very clear to me, that they didn't like my management style, the trade unions didn't like me, the labour force as a whole didn't like me, I mean this was the way the message came across to me if you like.

I've never set out to win any popularity contest, I've never seen that as part of my job, I've actually seen that I've had a tough job to do in very difficult circumstances, and as a professional I know that you're not going to win friends and influence people. I didn't lose any sleep over it, that's what I get paid for. So in essence it didn't come as a surprise to me. What came as a surprise to me was that the reason for not appointing me was *that I wasn't actually liked*.

I actually don't believe that to be an issue. What is an issue is – What are the results?

How do you achieve changes? How are they done? Do you make changes last? Those things seem to be tossed out of the window completely, like the baby with the bathwater.

GMB Branch Secretary John McClean commented on Delderfield's approach:

John Delderfield felt he was progressive. In some ways he maybe was. He was certainly pretty sharp in many ways, but he was also complacent because he felt he knew better than anyone else that no one could tell him anything at all. That was his downfall at the end of the day, I think.<sup>182</sup>

Delderfield was competing for the new post as head of what became City Services against Graham Watts, Head of the Council Parks Service, and two others. He was expected to become the leader of the new department, but to his and everyone else's surprise Watts was the successful candidate:

<sup>180</sup> The total City Council staff numbered 1,000, making it a significant local employer.

<sup>181</sup> From 'Focus on the Direct Works Panel', *CEN* Aug 1987 (CA: Parks Scrapbook)

<sup>182</sup> Interview with John McClean (private collection, Allan Brigham)

There is no doubt that Graham had no ambitions at all in the directions that I was heading. Until he was courted – I think it is a word that we can use, an old fashioned word – until he was courted it never had occurred to him – he's a horticulturalist, it never had occurred to him at all, and he would have been flattered, so would anybody have been flattered in the circumstances, I feel sure.<sup>183</sup>

But in his own defence Delderfield stated that he had not been given credit for what he had been trying to achieve, nor that he worked under a 'dictatorial Chief Officer' who never listened to him. In contrast Watts had worked under John Wilkinson, who was 'about as laid-back as you can get. John didn't give a tinker's-cuss what Graham did; Graham went about and did his own thing in his own way'.



Figure 106 – Graham Watts (*Town Crier* 8 Jun 1985)

<sup>183</sup> Interview with John Delderfield 5 Sep 1991 (private collection, Allan Brigham). For full interview, see Brigham 1979–2001, vol. 1 (CC:)





Figure 107 – Appointment of Graham Watts CEN 9 Dec 1988

Graham Watts's explanation of how he came to be Director of the new department was not dissimilar to that of John Delderfield:

But the politicians, I think, they had an agenda. And so it wasn't actually terribly fair competition for John, probably not for the pair of us in a way, because John Delderfield had, in his role, in the early stages of competition for building and highways services, so he had competition experience, successful competition experience.

I think he had rubbed a number of the politicians up the wrong way, in the sense that, you know, I'm a contractor, I'm running the show, you may be there, but you're nothing to do with me really, except when I want you to do something for me. And that made them a little bit jittery, because it was a highly unionised workforce, particularly in all cleansing services; everyone was the GMB, and of course competition was a big threat to them, and made them very anxious, and being a Labour authority with strong affiliations to the trade unions, it made them extremely anxious.

And I was unaware of this at the time, and so was John; John was blissfully unaware of it, as to how this had been stacked up. So I got the feeling that even if I had answered nonsense to the questions at the interview it would have [...] actually at the time I was suffering from 'flu, so I managed to turn up at the interview in one suit jacket and another pair of suit trousers, and it was only after I got home that my wife said to me after she took my temperature that I'd got a temperature of 102, so I'm not sure what I said in the interview. As I said, I don't think it would have mattered that much.



And I got the job [...] that was in November 1988, and that was a real shock to most people except the members doing it and the Chief Executive. And it was a shock for me, because I thought you just went along sort of to make up the numbers.

And it was an incredible shock to John. He was a good friend, and that was one of the saving graces of this, because unlike the private sector, where the person who had been unsuccessful in that interview would have been 'Thank you very much for everything you've done, here's a golden handshake, goodbye'. Local authorities don't – well to my knowledge local authorities don't – give golden handshakes, and John was going to be my deputy. They'd immediately created potentially a major problem because John had the majority workforce, I was going to the table with perhaps 80 people, and he had something in excess of 400. So that had all the portents of disaster.

Oh, and from the beginning of '89 to the end of '91 two-thirds of City Services turnover was subjected to Compulsory Competitive Tendering. So it could be the shortest-lived department in history if we didn't all get our acts together.<sup>184</sup>

Delderfield worked with Watts until 1991, and at his leaving he defined his achievements at the Depot and the impact of Compulsory Competitive Tendering:

Ten years ago I was not proud to be in charge of a Direct Works Organisation. Proud would have been the wrong word. Other people would have looked upon it as me presiding over a bunch of people who were leaning on their shovels waiting for retirement – who spent their time drinking tea, who weren't interested in productivity. It's too easy to say that that was true, though it is easy to say that when I came here there was a very large element of that operating – and we were all being paid public money.

And in that sense the introduction of the right-wing legislation – and incidentally, I think that's coincidence only, the right-wing legislation, because the building sector, ever since the last war, has been trying to bring successive governments into letting them, in the building sector, have a share of the cake of building works. In my experience, since the last war, in the recessions that we've had, and there's been about four [of them] – four major ones anyway – it is the building industry that always is the barometer, always suffers first, always goes down the moment that the recession begins to take its downward spiral, and the building industry is almost the last to recover. They could see local authority Direct Labour Organisations going on regardless, housing repairs etc, often very inefficiently, and they have brought pressure on Conservative and Labour ever since 1945.

Probably it was a dominating personality like Thatcher who was able, with the majority that she'd got, to make those kind of changes. It could have been a dominating personality on the left side, and I think in a different way they could have brought those kind of changes about as well.

Whoever did it, the populous should be eternally grateful, and so should we, the people working in that arena, because I think at last there is a regard for what we do, that we are *truly* competing for work, and it's a dangerous world in which we are doing it, we can't afford to be complacent about what we're doing, and as a manager I think that's an important point about actually making things happen. So yes, I think that the legislation has been very important.

But I also think that the legislation has brought about the reverse of that in a sense. It has diminished 'public service', the caringness. For example, if someone dropped a bunch of keys out of their car down a drain ten years ago, half a dozen of us would have organised all kind of things to have got them out for them – no charge! Now, we'll get them out for you, we'll get them out quick, but you'll pay through the bloody nose for doing it because it costs a lot of money.

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<sup>184</sup> Shelly Lockwood: Interview with Graham Watts for Mill Road History Project. 17 Jul 2015

## Trade Unions

# Funeral of union chief killed in crash

CONINGTON church overflowed with about 250 friends, workmates, trade union colleagues and relatives of 30-year-old Andrew Murden who was buried yesterday.

City council engineer Mr Geoffrey Cresswell paid his own tribute to the trade union official in an address to the congregation at St Mary's.

Mr Murden was area secretary to the General and Municipal Workers' Union — to which most council manual workers belong.

"Andrew was a special young man who had many talents which he used to advantage in all aspects of his life," he said.

"He was blessed with natural ability, common sense, intelligence, determination and personality which could have easily gained him promotion in the supervisory staffs in which he worked."

But, said Mr Cresswell, he sacrificed this for his commitment to union work.

He described Mr Murden, who was killed in a road accident while cycling home, as a "formidable but genuine" negotiator.

Mr Murden, a member of the Labour Party, worked for Cambridgeshire County Council and was a cycling enthusiast. He lived with his parents at 4 School Lane.

An inquest into his death is due to be resumed.

## Tributes from the council

LEADING Cambridge councillors joined last night in paying tribute to Mr Murden.

Many city councillors attended Mr Murden's funeral yesterday — and the councillors later attended a meeting of the council's "inner cabinet", the City Board, where tributes were paid to him.

They were voiced by the Labour administration's staffing supremo, Coun Mark Todd (Coleridge).

Coun Todd said that everyone had respected Mr Murden and the forceful way he spoke up on behalf of his union members.

Coun Todd added: "Mr Murden's word could always be relied upon and his tragic death is a sad loss to all of us."

Figure 108 – Death of GMWU Area Secretary Andrew Murden CEN Dec 1982

Delderfield had claimed that in 1980 'The trade unions ran this yard'. But he accepted trade unions as part of the management process, and offered a more measured reflection at his retirement ten years later. During these years Andrew Murden had transformed what became the GMB into a genuinely representative – and more influential – organisation.

Murden was killed cycling home on Christmas Eve 1982, an event that sent shock waves through the Storeyard. His funeral at his local church was packed with representatives from the Union, from City Council management and from Councillors. Geoffrey Cresswell, the City Engineer responsible for the Storeyard said:

Andrew was a special young man who had many talents which he used to advantage in all aspects of his life. He was blessed with natural ability, common sense, intelligence, determination and personality which could have gained easy promotion in the supervisory staffs in which he worked.<sup>185</sup>

Cresswell went on to say that 'he sacrificed this for his commitment to Union work', and added that he was a 'formidable but genuine negotiator'. These views were echoed by the Council's 'staffing supremo', Labour Councillor Mark Todd, and reflected how the 'angry young man' of the 'Winter of Discontent' had become an accepted and important part of the City Council, not 'running the yard', but a respected voice of his members. Twenty years later he was still remembered as a potential leader of his Union nationally.<sup>186</sup>

Murden's successor, blacksmith Peter Aldrich, was seen as more confrontational, and it wasn't until refuse collector John McClean was elected to the post of Branch Secretary in 1990 that Delderfield felt the Union had more 'responsible' leadership:

<sup>185</sup> CEN Dec 1982

<sup>186</sup> There is a memorial to Andrew Murden in the corner of Christ's Pieces, near the playground. For more about him see <http://www.cambstuc.org.uk/history/>

I think the Union always has some power. I think the Refuse Collectors clearly – I’ve always said – they’re a law unto themselves, always will be. Although you can remove the sting, and the claws, and a whole range of things they’re still going to be there. At the end of the day you and I don’t collect refuse, THEY collect refuse, and that’s what it comes down to, that’s what it’s about.

I appointed Andrew, I asked for Andrew to be taken from the Parks Department and brought him here. [...] He harnessed together the efforts of a range of people. He was an intelligent person who used the power properly. [...] In this place the most sad thing that happened as far as the Union was concerned was the death of Andrew Murden. Power was lost because that man harnessed power properly, and dealt with it properly.

And power was abused considerably for too many years after that. And it’s now got into responsible hands again (John McClean), in my personal view.

Of course the unions have power, provided it’s exercised properly. If that is done it is difficult from the managerial position to argue with the responsible use of power. The abuse of power is very easy to overturn. And there was far too much abuse of power for far too long in my personal point of view. For political gains rather than the benefit of the rank and file. They should be benefiting from union control, not politicians.

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## 6. 1988-1991: New management – ‘The Dripping Tap Effect’

Graham Watts’s style was very different from that of John Delderfield, as the latter recognised: ‘That’s something that I’ve learnt at an early stage: he has what I call the ‘dripping tap effect’, he gets there by a different method [...].’ He went on to define the differences more clearly. Amongst these was the nature of the staff:

Graham was working in an entirely different arena. Having that half-unionised group of gardeners, and running tea parties for them at Christmas, is a slightly different issue to dealing with a very strongly unionised refuse collection and street sweeping service, with a degree of militancy about the place as well, and with a degree of head-in-the-sand stubbornness on some issues too.

Delderfield continued:

Right from the outset we both recognised that we both had the same bottom line. The difference between us was that I would cut some of the crap and get there much quicker, but in doing so would have trodden on a few toes and so on. Graham takes a different view from that: that although we’ve both got the same bottom line, that there is more time, that he doesn’t necessarily tread on the toes but he might pour slow acid on the toes and will get there in the end. So in that sense we’ve had a good relationship. The other important thing about the pair of us is that we have great complements about each other’s skills: he’s got very great skills of diplomacy. He’s a much more diplomatic person than I am. He’s a better politician than some of the politicians are actually. But his weaknesses are detail, and the standing up to issues that need to be faced up to.

Watts explained his approach while in charge of the Parks in more detail:

I’d spend probably in total of a month during the year on the tools, all the bedding on Christ’s Pieces for example; I’d do the design and then spend three days helping the guys plant it. And then in the winter when we had projects like tree planting, I’d go out and help with that, help lead them, where we were going to put the trees and do those sorts of thing.

And you carry that style forward, you need to do it fairly consistently, and do it at your own time, otherwise the guys don’t trust you. [...] I worked with the parks guys, [...] well it was a month; we had a Countryside Commission grant to plant up Coldham’s Common with 23,000 trees, and we had to do it by Christmas Eve, and we got this money I think in the last week in November, and it was literally all hands to the pump. The only person left in the office was the then typist – you had typists in those days – Heather was left in the office, everyone else, landscape architect, all of us in fact, because it was for a month. After about a week, ten days, there was no sort of ‘Oh it’s the boss’; there was none of that, because you were all working together, eating your sandwiches, having your cups of tea, all together, and it was quite nice. Everyone was relaxed because they weren’t putting on a set of behaviours that was different to what I call indigenous behaviour, so you really get to know the people, and what they are really thinking. I think I described it as the underbelly, you really get to know that sort of thing.

This was the approach that the leaders of the ruling Labour group had found attractive, and Watts carried it forward to the Storeyard.

So yeah, I took that style in. Which I needed to do in Mill Road because there were a number of stresses. One was that they didn’t expect me to be in charge, and they think ‘He’s not going to be competent, he’s a gardener’. Extraordinary as that is, it’s long held, I mean gardening has probably come up a bit in the national psyche compared to those days, but at that time if your son or daughter couldn’t do anything else, then put them in gardening, it was that kind of end of the spectrum.

So I needed to get round, and not only just to see sort of what people are doing and get an understanding of the organisation, but also to get an understanding of what they were doing because many of these services were completely new to me. I’d never dealt with housing repairs, I’d never dealt with refuse, or even street cleansing, there are lots of services there, with their own complexities.

Mark Todd, Labour Group leader, came from a background in publishing management, and he later explained his position:

I felt it important to address workforce concerns – poor training, heavy use of temps, adversarial management style, unequal terms and conditions.

Only a reasonably well motivated work force could retain (or even should retain) these contracts. We made progress on all these points. However it was not always easy to carry management with us. What I wanted was a management leadership that was: Open; Inclusive; Strategic (ie looked beyond the day to day tasks); Politically aware; Comfortable with modern management tools.

While there was no doubt at all that there had been significant improvements in service delivery since the 1980s I felt that a step change was required and that the Depot management carried too much baggage from the past to do what I wanted. That meant an uncomfortable choice. John Delderfield was the senior manager applying for the DSO [Direct Services Organisation] management post. I had a respect for some of his attributes, but couldn't accept his – as I saw it – narrow minded focus on measurement and his seeming wish to push every issue to conflict.

Graham Watts was appointed because he was seen as having a more rounded range of skills. I had worked with Graham closely when I was Chairman of the Amenities and Recreation Committee.

I find it reassuring that John recognises Graham's strength through his understandable anger at not getting the job that he had both designed and sought. He himself says that he provided the details to Graham's bigger picture – precisely as I had expected.<sup>187</sup>

Reflecting on this period, at his departure from Cambridge City Council in 1991, Delderfield complimented Watts:

He has achieved – not alone, but through the consultation process, through working together – and I'm talking from my observation of this now – he has brought about the changes that has enabled us to win the competition – pretty tight competition in my view as well, it was very, very close indeed as to whether we would have got that, there was a lot of work by other contractors to have got that work.

However what he described as 'pretty exclusive' conditions amongst the Refuse staff were not tackled early enough:

Some things weren't tackled as full frontal as I thought they should have been tackled – some of the issues about protected pay with refuse drivers for example, some of the things about the power that the refuse collectors had built for themselves over the years, with a strong power base, they'd built conditions for themselves which were pretty exclusive. They needed tackling earlier than they were tackled in my view.

## Wheelie Bins

One of the biggest mistakes at the Storeyard in Delderfield's opinion was the introduction of wheelie bins before going out to contract:

Because that is merely throwing the advantage in the way of our competitors. The advantage we had was that we had a system that we knew inside-out. Our collectors, if harnessed in the right way, could have aided and abetted that enormously. Tactically, changing the method of refuse collection service was I thought throwing the baby out with the bath water, from the point of view of the Council winning the work in house.

However it was one of the biggest changes at the Depot, having a heavy impact on costs and on the number of Refuse staff.



Figure 109 – Wheelie bin

<sup>187</sup> Mark Todd MP, letter to Allan Brigham 14 Jan 2002. See Brigham 1979–2001, vol. 1 (CC:).



John McClean remembered when he started work at the Storeyard, as it was now known, there were over 70 dustmen. This went down to 62 or 64 after reorganisation in 1982, and to 35 by 1995. Some local authorities went from dustbins to plastic sack collection, but Cambridge dustmen contested this as unsafe if bags split.

An alternative was wheelie bins. McClean, Refuse Shop Steward at the time, commented on his dilemma as a union rep reconciling retaining as many jobs as possible with Health and Safety:

When we first had the idea of wheelie bins mooted they were a continental idea. We'd heard about it from other boroughs, councils, other districts. Some had successfully fought against it. It had gradually been introduced piecemeal. We actually went to see it in Peterborough originally, and I have to say as soon as I saw it, without being prescient or forward looking, I could see that it was going to come.

There was a lot of antagonism against them, but the main thrust of them, and from a Health & Safety point of view, we couldn't disagree with them. In terms of efficiency you'd have to say it was probably a better system, in terms of productivity, because you had less people doing it. The people didn't work any less hard, but there was[sic] less of you because the public actually did some of the work, they wheeled the bin to the curtilage of the property.

I could see that it was going to come in. It was just a matter of them negotiating how much. Unfortunately not all the workforce saw them in operation, so they tended to think – I was a [Shop] Steward at the time – that I was selling them down the river. Rumours abounded about how much money we should have got and all the rest of it. But at the end of the day they've come into many places. And I'm surprised, going round some of the London boroughs, that they still haven't got them in.

The system is healthier. The old system was bins, people used to put everything in them, people used to do their backs in, the injuries have been cut down phenomenally, there's less walking in the sense that you don't go down long alleyways or round people's houses, so the social contact is missing.

The crews have been reduced from four loaders plus a driver to two loaders plus a driver. That was done over a period of time at the introduction.

And the actual number of crews has gone down, which has its own consequence in terms of the hammering the lorries are taking, because the public, again the vast majority use their wheelie bins the way they're supposed to, but some of them, a minority, do abuse the system – bricks, car engines, rubble, chemicals, you name it they chuck it in the bins, because you don't actually know what's in them.

The system, you'd have to say, it's progress, for what it's worth, but it does lack the old sociability, everybody has to be reasonably fit now, there's no room with the numbers doing it and the amount of work that has to be done, there's no room for anyone to be carried.

The one good thing about the old councils – and the Tories demeaned them for being inefficient – you actually could find jobs for people who perhaps weren't able to get jobs elsewhere. They could still contribute something towards it, and be part of the local economy. That is just no longer feasible, but that's not just on the dustcarts, that's across most of the sections.<sup>188</sup>

The introduction of Wheelie Bins had left little room for budget savings when it came to Competitive Tendering, and the contract was nearly lost.

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<sup>188</sup> Interview with John McClean, 1995 (private collection, Allan Brigham)

## 7. 1991–2005: Compulsory Competitive Tendering – Winning Contracts

Many words have been written to describe the issues that came to dominate the 1990s and early 2000s as practical issues of service delivery fused with political positions; but in a couple of paragraphs the local newspaper had probably defined some of the central issues in August 1987:

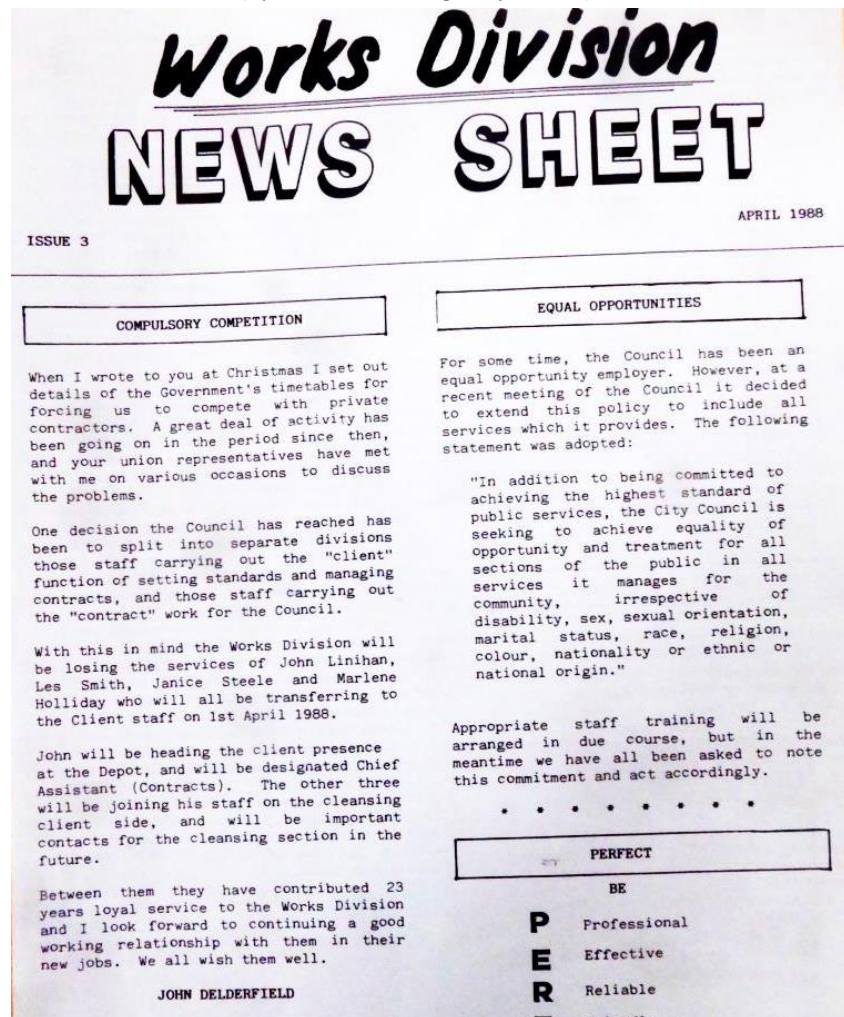
The Government says that it intends to take powers to force councils to put these services [those provided by Direct Works Departments] to competition with private contractors.

The council believe that this will cost Cambridge ratepayers money – in extra staff to make sure the work gets done –, risks damaging our quality service, and will mean that the ratepayer will not have direct democratic control, through councillors, of how services are run. Both councillors and staff are here to improve all these services [...].<sup>189</sup>

Figure 110 – Compulsory competition, *Works Division News* 3 (April 1988, Cambridge City Council)

Part of the preparation for CCT involved separating the City Council departments into those who delivered the service ('contractor') and those who monitored the service delivery ('client'). In the early years there was no guarantee that existing 'contractor' staff would all have jobs if a private competitor won the contract, and certainly no protection was offered of their wages and conditions.<sup>190</sup> For anyone with regular outgoings there was nothing but uncertainty.

The politics of these years cannot be ignored. Competitive tendering was seen by the Conservative leaders as a way of ending what they saw as the feather-bedded conditions of staff, protected by over-powerful trade unions. They thought that sympathetic Labour party-led local authorities



<sup>189</sup> 'Focus on the Direct Works Panel', *CEN* Aug 1987

<sup>190</sup> Post-2006 under TUPE legislation these staff transferred to the new employer. TUPE was the UK legislation implementation of the European Union 'Transfer of Undertakings Directive'.

were aiding and abetting this, and for many Conservatives the ultimate aim was to 'outsource', or 'privatise', the direct employment of staff.

Trade union leaders would respond that local authority manual workers were doing essential tasks that kept towns and cities working, that their pay was poor, and that while constant review should be part of any management process the wholesale assault on their terms and conditions was a political measure led by advocates of a 'small state'.

The fact that CCT was about more than creating greater efficiencies in service provision was illustrated by the reply Cambridge Housing caretaker Angie Aldrich received from 10 Downing Street in 1991. In response to her query about the extension of competitive tendering in the 'Citizen's Charter' she was firmly told :

The Prime Minister will not allow the Labour Party and its allies in the big public sector unions that have presided over all that is the shoddiest and shabbiest in the public sector, to masquerade as the protector of public service.

The White Paper places this government on the side of the public. Labour remains opposed to the principles of competition, contracting out and tough auditing of public bodies that lie at the heart of the Charter.

Stephen Yorke, Political Office,  
10 Downing Street, 10 Oct 1991<sup>191</sup>

GMB Cambridge Branch Secretary and former Refuse loader John McClean saw it differently:

CCT [...] in its crudest terms it was basically [that] the private sector were given the opportunity to bid against councils, and in effect only on the basis of money and not on service. And you can write all the specifications you like, if they put a lower price in you almost always *had* to accept that price.

And councils were at that time under pressure because of capping, were under pressure politically because government power was becoming more centralised, so CCT was intrinsically [intended] to destroy the power of the unions, and this might sound a cliché, and to drive the wages of the workers involved down [and] stop the so-called 'feather bedding' of local authorities. [...]

And also it unfairly put the onus on any local authority if they had any capital assets to make a 5% rate of return, whereas a private company can come in with a loss-leader if they wanted to sew up a region in say catering, refuse, whatever.

The whole system effectively stinks. It's no way to run efficient services. It's no way to run public-led services. But then the Tories never worried too much about that sort of thing did they!<sup>192</sup>

McClean concluded that CCT was designed to undermine local government and the trade unions. But he also recognised that the unions had to work with management, and that the more confrontational style of his predecessor, Pete Aldrich, was no longer appropriate:

You can't get away from the fact that big businesses give a lot of money to the Tory party.

And you're talking about some big employers, BET, the Hawley Group, ISS, you're talking about hospitals, local authorities, which have a lot of guaranteed money to spend. I think they just saw a way in [and] at the same time [to] undermine the power of the unions.

We had to learn to re-fight the fight as it was, against what they were bringing in. And adopt new strategies.

And this was part of the thing I think with Pete, because it was a new way of looking at things. You had to start understanding things [i.e. the issues involves], you had to start to some extent agreeing with

<sup>191</sup> For the complete letter, see Appendix 3 (Allan Brigham GMB Collection, for later deposit).

<sup>192</sup> Interview with John McClean (private collection, Allan Brigham)

management. Though management, not just here, but across the whole country, used it as a stick to beat us. Things they couldn't have got away with Refuse before, they were able to say 'It's not us doing this, it's the government'.

So there's all sorts of machinations behind the scenes. But effectively I think it was really to undermine local authorities, and the unions, and to help their own cronies.



**Figure 111** – Peter Aldrich, GMB Branch Secretary 1982–90  
*left: blacksmith; right: 'Coal not Dole' at the time of miners' strike*

Perhaps ironically one of the consequences of being forced to put contracts out to tender was that the Branch Secretary of the largest union representing the manual staff, the GMB, was given full-time release from the job to work as 'Convenor'. He or she represented staff, negotiated with managers, and at times lobbied councillors to ensure their members' voices were heard. And despite fears, contracts were won against stiff competition. However, one of the first, and most important contracts, Refuse and Street Cleansing, required precisely the more pragmatic approach adopted by McClean. McClean reports that Watts called him up and said that they needed to save £40,000 to go for the bid, and wondered how they could go about doing that.

I worked out that if you kept the National Agreement in terms of wages, knocked the bonus down to 50%, it would save them £44,000 in the bid. I suggested to Graham Watts that was the way he should say it. I suggested he put out something to the workforce.

I also said that he didn't need to do it until the contract started – we could have that money from September till just beyond Christmas, till the contract started, because the money was already budgeted for.

This he agreed to – as I say, I'm remembering this off the back of my head, I'm trying to work this out.

We had a meeting with the dustmen, I think it was on the Tuesday. He explained his position. Peter Aldrich was there for that meeting, I remember that; but I seem to remember I did a lot of talking. I said to them at the time that I thought up the deal, blame me if they wanted to, but this was effectively it, and even with taking the cut there was no guarantee of winning the contract, but what we were going to do was have a ballot and everybody would have the right to vote – anybody that was on holiday we'd try to contact them – we'd look at what the decision was after the ballot, and then we'd take it from there.

At the time there were thirty-nine ballot papers I think, and I think I got thirty-seven, [maybe] thirty-five of them back.

Basically what I said was 'Do you accept the pay-cut of approximately £20 a week to help us win the bid – Yes or No?'. It was as simple as that, no strike action or nothing. Just would they accept it.

Everybody was given an envelope, with the ballot paper, told to seal it and give it back to me, and I opened them in front of them at 6.30 on Thursday morning I think it was. A few people didn't vote, for all sorts of reasons (some people just don't like making decisions like that; they like other people to do it). The vast majority did, and I think the vote was something like 22 to 11, so effectively 2 to 1 in favour.

I read it out to them at the time. Some people accused me of stitching it up! That's to be expected; you don't take a steward's job on expecting it to be sweetness and light. We won the bid, by a very small margin, by about £7,000, that was the combined bid (Sweeping & Refuse).

The dustmen would remember and resent the pay cut for many years, but the agreement retained the service 'in house' and provided a solid base on which to build the success of City Services and the Storeyard over the following two decades. A major factor in securing this was the style of Graham Watts and John McClean and his successors as Branch Secretary.



Figure 112 – left: Watts and McClean; centre: Alan Costello; right: Richard O'Leary

## Creating 'a sense of unity': Business Plans, Marketing and the Enterprise Board

*'First thing from 1989 to beginning of '91 was to secure these services just to make sure City Services wasn't just a blip in the process of evolution, and that we had a future for a few years.'*

Graham Watts (interview: site visit, June 2015 [see p. 7 above])

Watts had to marry his soft people skills to the harsh realities of competition. During his first two years in post two-thirds of the work in the Depot was subject to competitive tender. Few in the workforce or in management had any experience of this process, but Watts was aware that while 'the private sector [...] you had to win 10% in order to service it. We were exactly the opposite. We needed to win 100% if we could to achieve the economy of scale'.<sup>193</sup>

Councillors were equally inexperienced, and one of the first steps they took was to send Watts on a course on business planning which he found 'very illuminating', an experience that led to the three senior City Services managers and the course tutor (Watts, Delderfield and Ray Purfitt) writing a book entitled *Business Planning in Local Government* (London: Longman, 1991):

Business planning was anathema to local authorities. It'd never existed, so you are not looking at some sort of template, you can't use the private sector template, which is about profitability, which doesn't ring very true with local authority and money from residents, council tax, etc. So we said we'd need to devise a business plan that suited local authorities.

First of all we did it for City Services where you set Strategic objectives for the organisation, things you must do to survive. Then as a result of that, Success Objectives, what the organisation would look like, how would you want it to be, and the values. And we thought that would work quite well, and the members, the Councillors, thought that would work quite well, and they endorsed that.

<sup>193</sup> Graham Watts, site visit, June 2015 (see p. 7 above). All other quotations in this section are from this source.



And so City Services was born. And we said we'd produce a three-year business plan with an annual review.

Writing the business plan involved a lengthy process of communicating with staff, many of whom worked away from the Storeyard, and had different start times. The Refuse men were especially difficult to reach as they left the Depot at 6a.m., and their priority was to complete their day's workload and get home. Watts recognised that he could never reach all of the staff with his message, but that it was worth getting up at 5a.m. to reach as many receptive ears as possible: 'We had to get them before they went to work, it's difficult to tell, some of it I think people participated, and others it was just like .."when do I get out to do my job, my vehicles running?".'

To support his new management at City Services Watts created the 'Enterprise Board', with representatives from across the Storeyard including the heads of each service (Refuse, Building, etc), the unions ( Unison, GMB, UCATT) and Personnel. This was very different from John Delderfield's management style; he would never have involved the union representatives, and Watts admitted it was a bit cumbersome, but it was part of his 'dripping tap' approach, slowly to create a sense that everyone had a stake in the new Department. He justified it:

because there was so much angst in the depot, and so much gossip – you know people, if they don't hear things, then let's make it up. It's much more interesting if you make it up. It's much more, you know, salacious and all the rest of it.

So I thought, well I'll get the main players round the table, and I did do that, that was part of my brief, and the members accepted that, and I don't think the other managers had much choice really, it was endorsed by members, that's where they wanted to go, and they had an open mind, I think, I hope, in most cases.

The Enterprise Board was not seen as a permanent fixture, but as a tool to weld together staff and managers, many from departments like Parks and Refuse that had not previously shared the same management, to create what Watts called 'a sense of unity':

I knew this wasn't going to be a long-term objective to have an Enterprise Board this big, but because we were going through all these difficult days of having to win all our work, the first thing I said to all the staff was: If you don't hear it here, then it's not true. We'll meet on a fortnightly basis, we'll try to slacken it out to a month, but because there was so much going on, so much change, and there's so many worries and stresses in the organisation, then we'll meet every fortnight, and what you will hear will be the truth, and that's what I want you to convey outside this room. And hopefully, in time, convey a sense of unity. Even though we may have at times disagreement here on approaches, but as far as all those people here who are dependent on it for their livelihoods we come out as unified as we can, recognising that we are going to be union and management, with some tensions.

The Enterprise Board was eventually disbanded after four years. During this time City Services successfully secured nearly all the contracts put out to tender. Many other local authorities lost contracts, and hampered by the government's refusal to allow them to tender for private sector business they also lost the associated economies of scale that allowed them to fund support services.

In Cambridge, despite what may have been the government's original intention, the workforce actually grew, as Watts sought out new, legitimate markets. While direct competition with private sector was prohibited (although this made a mockery of 'competition'), local authorities could tender for work with other local authorities. The uPVC window factory had been set up in the Storeyard to make plastic windows for the City's own council houses, and City Services went on to win contracts to supply these for surrounding local authorities

too (including South Cambridgeshire, and Forest Heath). Watts also won contracts to maintain part of the South Cambridgeshire council housing stock.

Getting the lowest price was key to winning contracts in the early 1990s. But slowly employment legislation such as TUPE, and later the Working Time Directive, originating from the UK membership of the European Union, made it more difficult for private contractors to win tenders simply by cutting wages. At the same time accidents highlighted the need for stronger Health and Safety clauses in contracts. The decade ended with the election of a Labour government in 1997 and the introduction of 'Best Value', bringing a significant quality element into the tendering process.

In 2015, looking back on his years as Director of City Services, Watts listed the key elements of his approach. These included communicating openly with the residents: 'You need the residents to appreciate you're doing a good job for them, so they support the outcome of the process and the quality of what you can do for them'.

He also stressed the support that he had from councillors and the creation of the Direct Services Board. This new council committee marked a different way of doing business by meeting at the Storeyard, with dustcarts and staff in uniform going past, rather than in the more formal surroundings of the Guildhall:

Throughout it all I had enormous support from the Councillors, we mustn't forget it was a tripartite deal really, management, unions, staff and then the councillors. And one of the gratifying things when it came to councillors was that we ended up having our own Direct Services Board, so it was a bit like a private business – a publicly quoted company, I suppose you were in a way, certainly public.

Internally his management team had to feel they could trust Watts to let them get on with their jobs, and he said:

You need leadership. And communication. You don't need the technical skills, because why do you employ people to do it: don't tread on their toes. I had to be very careful with my Parks manager, because we trained in exactly the same way, he was a parks apprentice, he went to Kew, did the diploma course, and I had to really hold back. I thought: 'He thinks I'll be looking at him all the time, and criticising'.

Watts also sought to take the workforce with him, letting it be known that he had an open-door policy at his office, talking to people when he was walking round the Storeyard, and involving the elected trade union representatives:

Well I think that the key thing was to get the trust of the workforce, and the union reps, because even if the workforce didn't trust us they trusted the union representatives, and if the union representatives were comfortable they could communicate that to the workforce, that Graham, this guy, is to be trusted. And go along with it, we support it.

So all the work that went into that in the early days, and going out with the refuse guys, seeing how they functioned, what they think. It's interesting, because in the different parts of the workforce, to see what they think. The building [staff], because they were one man – well there were no women then, it was a man in a van – his kind of view on life is quite different from the guys in a cab on refuse, and even with gardeners. So you are not dealing with the collective psyche, you have to break it down, and what best suits each area of work.

Winning contracts also helped to create trust:

So a lot of work was done, communication and that process, and trust came as well because we won, so the jobs are safe, and we haven't changed the terms and conditions, they've got the right to the same pension, still got the same pay, still got the same sort of sickness benefits, you know, well managed and monitored, but it was still there, paternity leave, all the things that make up a local authority package, which you don't necessarily see as a complete package in the private sector, or certainly not

in those days you didn't see it, all helped to give this sense of 'well, you know, things aren't so bad after all, we'll give it a go'.

Reflecting on what he was most proud of, Watts said that despite the pressures to save money, the good thing about competition was getting the workforce support, 'there was a kind of oneness' because:

we were in it together, because if it fails we are all up the creek, it don't matter if you are me, Director, a manager, or a supervisor or a person on the end of a broom, or the end of a toilet brush in the toilets, we were all in that. And I think if nothing else people understood that dynamic, and knew that, and that built up a kind of camaraderie, which I suppose I helped foster.

He saw this trust as the foundation for the complex negotiations that led to the adoption of 'Single Status'. Based on 'Equal pay for work of equal value', this ended the old white-collar/blue-collar distinctions, and addressed inconsistencies in pay grades between men and women.

[...] if we hadn't had that grounding and that trust I think that Single Status wouldn't have been achievable. I think the other part [...] of it is the diversity in the workforce, everything from introducing the mature apprenticeship scheme, which became, in a way, a way of introducing women into the front line jobs, because it was a totally male-dominated organisation, I mean 'spot the woman, oh there's one' – the only one you'd see out of 500 men. I'm not pretending now it's equal-equal, because the sort of job going, many women don't want to do them, you can't blame them for that. Some of them are extremely physically demanding still.

But there is a much greater diversity, I never thought I'd see the day on building maintenance when there was at least ten women doing trades people's jobs. Going into properties with vulnerable women. [sic]

Watts retired in 2007. Asked what he missed, he said it was the people. The job he remembered as very stressful. But with his office overlooking the Storeyard from the Gatehouse he felt very much that he was at the hub of things. This was brought home when a fellow manager based in the Guildhall attended a City Board meeting:

at the Depot, well you're at the hub of it, there you are in our conference room, and vehicles going past, you're living the piece really.

And someone came up to me, and they said: Do you know what, I came to your Direct Services Board meeting, and I couldn't tell who was a manager, who was a union representative, and who was a councillor. And I said 'That's because we're all in it together'.



**Figure 113** – Refuse crew 1990s: *left*: Alan Roberts; *centre*: Bob Skrimshaw, Tony Greenaway; *right*: Steve Stevens

## 8. 1990s: Improving the Storeyard - Plan B

*'Its a question of where did you start, because everything was terrible.'*

Graham Watts (interview: site visit, June 2015 [see p. 7 above])

The Storeyard remained at Mill Road until 2018. But the Council very nearly relocated seventeen years earlier. If this had happened, the future of the site and the shape of this part of Mill Road could have been very different:

In 1991, '92, we had to make a decision about the Depot: Do we do anything, do we look more fundamentally at the fact this estate was worth, at the time, £9 million?

I knew people at Ridgeons, and they were sitting on 17 acres of prime land, and they wanted to move out of the centre, and I said before we spend a lot of money on this, potentially, let's see if we can all move to the north of the city in Cowley Road, because the City owned large tracks of land there, have a land share with Ridgeons, they run the stores, we run the transport side etc, see anything else that would dovetail, and it would all be affordable.

We had their Directors over here. And then we had one of Margaret Thatcher's recessions. This Depot went from £9 million to £3 million overnight, which was unbelievable really. Ridgeons the same. So Ridgeons then decided they'd consolidate at Cromwell Road. And I said 'Right', Plan A is down the tubes, we've now got to sort this out. And the politicians went along with that.<sup>194</sup>

By then City Services had been very successful with its contracts, and there were surpluses to start rebuilding the Depot. Watts took a look at the site and said that despite the 1970s rebuilding:

It was a shambles, because we kept trying to portray ourselves as not only as good as the private sector [but] we think we're better – but when they actually came here it was probably no different from 1905.

### A New Uniform



**Figure 114** – Refuse staff late 1970s (protective uniform then optional)  
left: 'Banger' Day, Steve Freear, John McClean; right: Andy Fletcher, Martin [surname unknown], Steve Freear, John McClean, 'Banger' Day

Before rebuilding the Storeyard, Watts set up a working party in 1992 to design a new 'City Services' uniform for staff, who until then had worn a mixture of council-provided protective clothing – overalls, steel toe-capped boots, gloves and donkey jackets – with their own shirts and sweaters. When Labour Councillor Mark Todd had become chair of what was then the Direct Services Organisation in the late 1980s he had introduced a logo for the protective jackets and for vehicles that reflected the Labour groups priorities: 'Working for the Community'.

<sup>194</sup> Graham Watts, site visit, June 2015 (see p. 7 above). All quotations in this section are from this source, unless stated otherwise.



**Figure 115** – Strapline 'Working for the Community' (CA: Cambridge City Council. Mill Road Depot, C116/011)

Figure 115 shows Labour Group Council leader Mark Todd proudly pointing to the new strapline 'Working for the Community'. This was displayed on all vehicles, and on staff uniforms. John Delderfield (suited) is second from the right.

The new shirts and sweatshirts proposed by Watts were potentially contentious as it would be easy for staff to claim they were uncomfortable. To overcome any opposition the choice of material and colour was left to working parties led by the GMB Union representatives. Only two colours were offered as options, but staff felt that they had a choice, and the material was far better than most of the clothing any were wearing. An additional incentive to wear it was that the Council provided a free washing service so that there was no need to take dirty uniforms home. The result presented a common face to the public with staff in green or blue shirts, while the process helped embed the new culture at the Storeyard.

A new logo was now designed for the City Council showing King's College Chapel with chestnut tree. This appeared on all vehicles, and on the new City Services uniform, presenting a strong contemporary image across the areas in the city where staff were working. Watts said: 'We wanted it to be professional – I suppose it was a marketing thing to some extent. [...] I think it was one of the best things the Council ever did: we really believed in it, it carried the history, the message'.



**Figure 116** – Unveiling the new logo: Graham Watts, John Delderfield, John Woodhouse (Mayor), Laurie Weaver (CA: Cambridge City Council. Mill Road Depot, C116/011, undated)





**Figure 117** – left: 1980s logo with City Coat of Arms on litter collection vehicle (Brian Kefford); right: 1990s 'City Services' with new 'modernised' logo featuring a chestnut tree behind King's College Chapel, and a bridge over the River Cam (Arthur Knott in blue uniform with logo)

## Creating a Modern Depot

Deciding how to address the multiple needs of the Storeyard site, Watts again focused on the staff:

And it's a question of where did you start, because everything was terrible. The one thing I really, really hated was the workforces canteen, it was dire. [...] And the changing area – in the Second World War it was reputed to have been a mortuary – their rest area was an ex-mortuary. So I said the first thing we'll do is demolish that and build a decent rest room. With decent showers. I said we've got them in good uniform, with good vehicles, and then they come back each day, or they start each day, in a crap heap. So that was good, we did that.

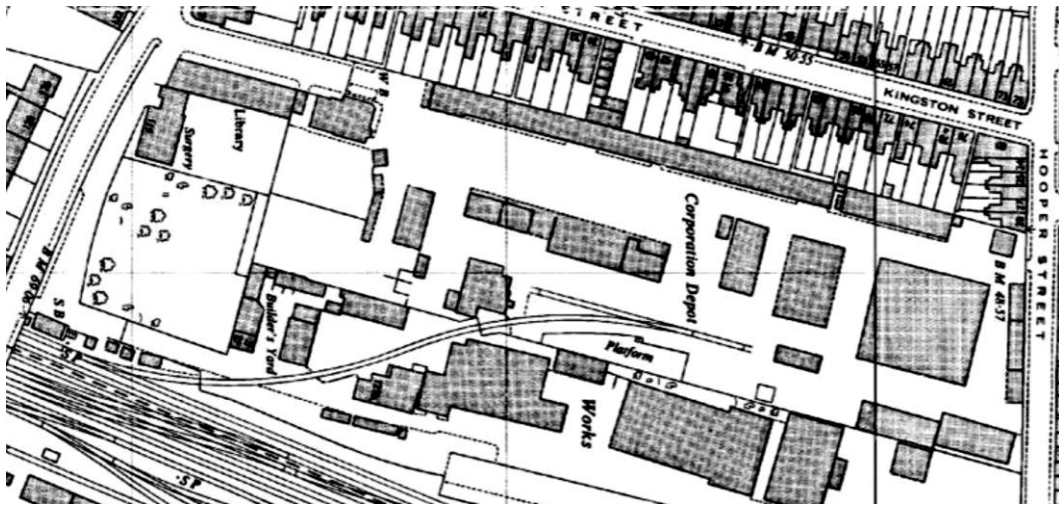


**Figure 118** – c. 1993: New mess hut/canteen/changing rooms/showers being built

Behind the new construction in Figure 118 can be seen the wooden huts that had been built during the preceding years. These were all redeveloped over subsequent years. The brick buildings on the left, backing on to the rear gardens of Kingston Street, were the earliest workshops, and they were converted into offices in the 1990s.

After demolishing and rebuilding the staff canteen, a group of temporary buildings near the Gatehouse were redeveloped. This included moving the union office from a shed next to the rear of the Gatehouse to a dedicated room in the new mess hut, providing easy access for staff to the Branch Secretary.

The old railway line that had been part of the original Storeyard plan in 1905 still ran down the centre of the site in 1989 and had to be demolished. It can clearly be seen on the 1965 Ordnance survey map, which shows it leading to a 'Platform'.



**Figure 119** – Railway siding running into the Storeyard from the railway, leading to a 'Platform' where building materials were stored (OS map 1965, detail, rotated)

The platform was remembered by Store Manager Bob Matthews as the place they stored bricks, tiles and paving slabs:

Everything is all in one stores now, other than the compound like the bricks and that, which are kept outside. 'Cos years ago they used to all be left on the wall in the open [...]. There used to be a platform – railway platform – down the middle, so you used to have all the bricks, and all the tiles and all that, obviously that all got ripped down [...] and that's when they moved it all.<sup>195</sup>



**Figure 120** – mid-1970s: raised platform adjoining the railway siding, visible in the centre of the site, storing bricks, tiles and paving slabs (private collection, Bob Matthews)

<sup>195</sup> Bob Matthews. Capturing Cambridge. Mill Road Depot, interview 5 Aug 2015

The Waste and Cleansing Department was based in what was reputed to be an old signal box linked to the railway siding, close to what would have been the boundary of The Limes garden (Figure 121).



**Figure 121** – The only building on the site to pre-date the Storeyard: the Waste and Cleansing Offices, where staff clocked in and out each day



**Figure 122** – 1980s: interior of Waste and Cleansing offices. David Bradford, Manager (left)

Figure 122 shows David Bradford, Manager, at his desk in the Waste and Cleansing offices. On the wall is a calendar that was not considered inappropriate at the time, but which would have been unthinkable as little as ten years later. No computers or mobile phones are present.

Watts moved the Cleansing Offices to buildings along the Kingston Street boundary, while the Waste (Refuse) Department offices moved to the Garage building at the Hooper Street end of the yard. Their former office was then demolished to create a car park between the Gatehouse and the railway line along the Mill Road/Gothic Cottage boundary. This was



followed by a major resurfacing of the entire Storeyard, with proper drainage for the first time.



**Figure 123** - Garage (left) and Waste Offices (right) (2018)

Having decided not to share the stores with Ridgeons, the next step was to rebuild the stores behind the mess room. The wood store, and the nearby wood mill, were now closed because all doors and windows for the council house stock were now made in the uPVC factory behind the garage at the Hooper Street end of the site.



**Figure 124** – early 1990s: City Council tradesmen at work in the wood mill: *left*: Graham White; *right*: [unknown] (CA: Cambridge City Council, Mill Road Depot, C116/011)

During the 1990s this was converted into offices after uPVC replaced wood for most tasks in the Council House stock. The blacksmith's shop was also closed.



**Figure 125** – Early 1990s: the blacksmith's workshop  
(CA: Cambridge City Council, Mill Road Depot, C116/011)

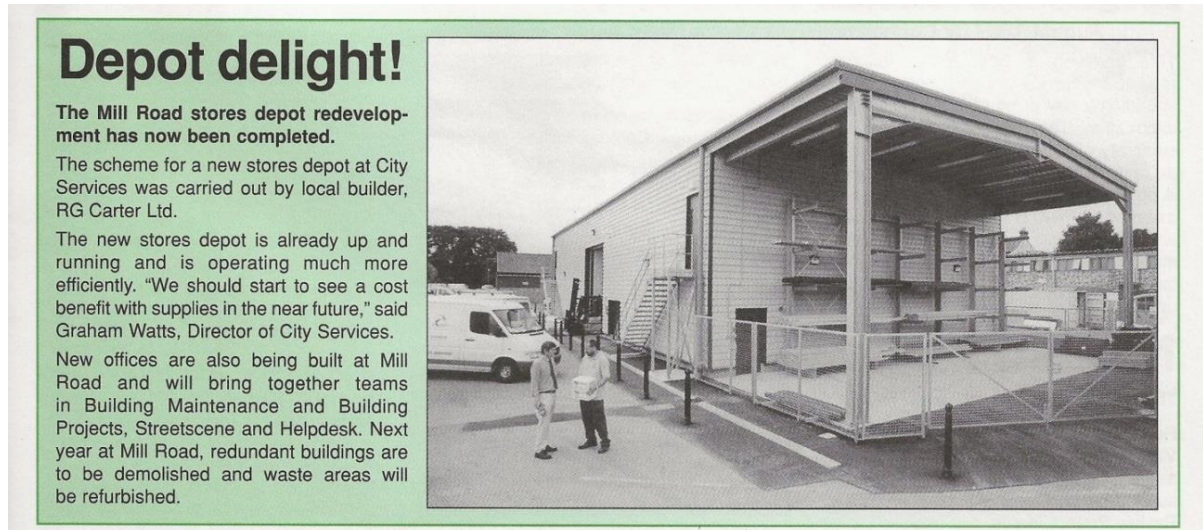


**Figure 126** – uPVC window factory (2018 )



**Figure 127** – left: uPVC factory; right: pleased City Council tenant thanking uPVC factory Manager John Rathlou for her new windows (1990s) (CA. Cambridge City Council. Mill Road Depot, C116/011)





**Figure 128** – New Stores. *City Scene* Oct 2001

The redevelopment continued with the conversion of the brick buildings along the Kingston Street boundary into offices.



**Figure 129** – early 1990s : entrance to the Storeyard  
(CA: Cambridge City Council. Mill Road Depot, C116/011)

Figure 129 shows the Mill Road entrance to the Storeyard with the shuttered unloading bay on the right, for stores. This view would have greeted many when they entered the Storeyard in the 1990s.



**Figure 130** – late 1990s: entrance to Storeyard, with former stores converted to offices and shutters replaced (2018)



**Figure 131** – Former stores (left) and workshops along the Kingston street boundary, taken from the barrier by the mess hut (2018)





**Figure 132** – Continuation of the brick-built Kingston Street boundary range towards Hooper Street (2015)



**Figure 133** – early 1990s: final infill of the Kingston Street boundary range  
(CA: Cambridge City Council. Mill Road Depot, C116/011)

Figure 133 shows the final infill of the Kingston Street boundary range, looking north towards the Hooper Street exit. This was built so as to provide a workshop for the City Council printing Department. As with the rest of the range, it was later converted into offices.



**Figure 134** - Vehicle wash, with the buildings shown being built along the Kingston Street boundary in Figure 133 (2018)

While many buildings were demolished or adapted for new uses in the 1990s, one large shed remained little changed from the 1970s, although toilets and washing facilities were added for men and women working in the new offices at the Hooper Street end of the Storeyard (see Figure 136).



**Figure 135** – The 'final shed', Hooper Street end, looking towards Gatehouse, mid-1970s (private collection: Bob Matthews)



**Figure 136** – The 'final shed' as approached from Gatehouse, with toilet block added 1990s left end (Elena Moses 2015)





**Figure 137** – The ‘final shed’ used for general storage and salt for gritting (2015)

By the time of his retirement in 2007 Graham Watts had transformed the Storeyard into a carefully planned modern working environment. The office space was used by the traditional Storeyard departments, but also over the years by the Employment Foundation, Traffic Warden Service, and Taxi Licensing, all of which brought in extra revenue. Speaking in 1998 for an interview in the Council’s staff newsletter *City Scene*, he had said: ‘When I first moved to the Mill Road Depot my initial plan was to move straight out again’.

Watts then explained that the collapse in land values had forced him to decide to stay put, and that this had come with many benefits:

[...] ten years later City Services is still on Mill Road and a major force in the local economy, employing over 300 local people and generating a turnover of more than £12 million. Now they are reaping the benefit of their central location, and a total of seven businesses are located on the site; Building Maintenance; uPVC windows manufacture; Refuse; Street and Building Cleaning; Vehicle Maintenance and Repair; Stores and Supplies are all celebrating their tenth anniversary. Design and Print is a more recent arrival.<sup>196</sup>

Some City Services contracts were based elsewhere: Grounds Maintenance at Cherry Hinton Hall, and Recreation at Cherry Hinton Village Centre, while Highways and Sewage had been lost to external contractors. The winning of contracts in a very competitive market that was still based on price rather than quality had not been inevitable, and Watts explained that the success of City Services in Cambridge was the result of flexibility, a business model that allowed them to plough profits back rather than pay a return to shareholders, a multi-skilled workforce and a broad customer base:

Our flexibility has enabled us to compete and survive and make the most of our assets. We run as a business and the Council allows us to plough any profits back. This both encourages us to be more efficient and saves the Council money. Many of our employees have become multi-skilled so we are in a good position to respond to our clients’ needs. We’ve also spread our customer base. Twenty percent of the work we do is for other organisations – health trusts, other authorities or the County Council for example. This has allowed us to replace contracts that we have lost, actively chase new opportunities, and retain staff and use their skills to work on other projects.

Illustrating this was a profile of John Hunt, former dustman now promoted to Senior Chargehand for Building Cleaning and Street Sweeping. The retention of contracts and range of opportunities had allowed Hunt to move as he got older from the dirty and ex-

<sup>196</sup> *City Scene*, Sep 1998



hausting job on 'the bins' to an office job in suit and tie. As a dustman he had relied on the early finish to have a second job; as a chargehand his salary was higher and he qualified for a mortgage to buy his family council house. Like many of his generation in the Storeyard he still lived close by, in Stourbridge Grove, where he had been brought up, and still worked with colleagues from his youth. But like many others, buying his council house became a first step on the housing ladder. After his mother died Hunt sold his house near Coldham's Common to move across Cambridge to a new estate, and these old bonds based on proximity of home and workplace weakened.



**Figure 138** – John Hunt *left*: 1980s: driving litter vehicle; *right*: 1998: chargehand Building Cleaning and Street Sweeping

Graham Watts said that: 'City services' central location on Mill Road helped it become a major force in the local economy'.

John Hunt, senior chargehand and former dustman, confirmed that having all departments in proximity 'makes life easier'.

Watts concluded his interview with *City Scene* confident that the success of City Services would continue, and looked towards the future with the new government initiative, 'Best Value':

This is a trend that is bound to continue for the next ten years and beyond. Obviously we operate within a political environment, so forward planning is not as straightforward as in a purely commercial operation. We know that our range of services will continue to expand; initiatives such as Best Value will determine which services expand the most.

**Feature Focus...**

## Congratulations City Services!

"When I first moved into the Mill Road Depot my initial plan was to move straight out again", confesses City Services Director Graham Watts. But ten years later City Services is still on Mill Road and a major force in the local economy, employing over 300 local people and generating a turnover of more than £12 million.

The collapse in land prices during the early 90s, forced City Services to stay put. Now they're reaping the benefits of their central location, and a total of seven businesses are located on the site: Building Maintenance, PVC-U windows manufacture, Refuse, Street and Building Cleaning, Vehicle Maintenance and Repair, and Stores and Supplies are all celebrating their tenth anniversary. Design and Print is a more recent arrival. Some services have moved away: Highways and Sewerage were both lost to external contractors. Ground Maintenance is at Cherry Hinton Hall; and Recreation is at the Cherry Hinton Village Centre.

City Services now equals some of the largest local companies in terms of staff numbers and turnover. How has it become successful? Graham Watts explains: "Our flexibility has enabled us to compete and survive and make the most of our assets. We run as a business and the Council allows us to plough any profits back. This both encourages us to be more efficient and saves the Council money. Many of our employees have become multi-skilled so we are in a good position to respond to our clients' needs. We've also spread our customer base. Twenty per cent of the work we do is for other organisations - health trusts, other authorities or the County Council for example. This has allowed us to replace contracts that we've lost, actively chase new opportunities, and retain staff and use their skills to work on other projects."

"This is a trend which is bound to continue for the next ten years and beyond", comments Graham. "Obviously, we operate within a political environment, so forward planning is not as straightforward as in a purely commercial operation. We know that our range of services will continue to expand; initiatives such as Best Value will determine which services will expand the most."

**John Hunt**  
Senior Chargehand for Building Cleaning and Street Sweeping, with 28 years service at the City Council.

"Ten years ago I was a dustman doing rounds and litter bin collections. Back then we were entering a period of the unknown. Council services had to show they were competitive. At the time there was a lot of talk about relocating City Services to Milton but I'm glad it was decided to centralise services at the Mill Road Depot.

"I moved into an office job seven years ago and I saw the benefit of having everything on one site. When I make my weekly inspections for example at Drummer Street Bus Station, I might see that some repairs are needed. I can report them in person at the maintenance section and explain what needs to be done. It makes life easier."

**Figure 139** – *City Scene* Sep 1988: issue, interview with Graham Watts



**Figure 140** – late 1990s/early 2000s: opportunities for progression - City Services staff promoted from 'the tools'. 1. Mick Gilling (Refuse Foreman); 2. Dave Rooks (Street Cleansing Team Leader); 3. John Benson (Refuse Foreman – Right); 4. Paul Jones (Parks Team Leader)



**Figure 141** – late 1990s/early 2000s: City Services staff in the Storeyard

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## 9. 1998–2018: CCT to Best Value

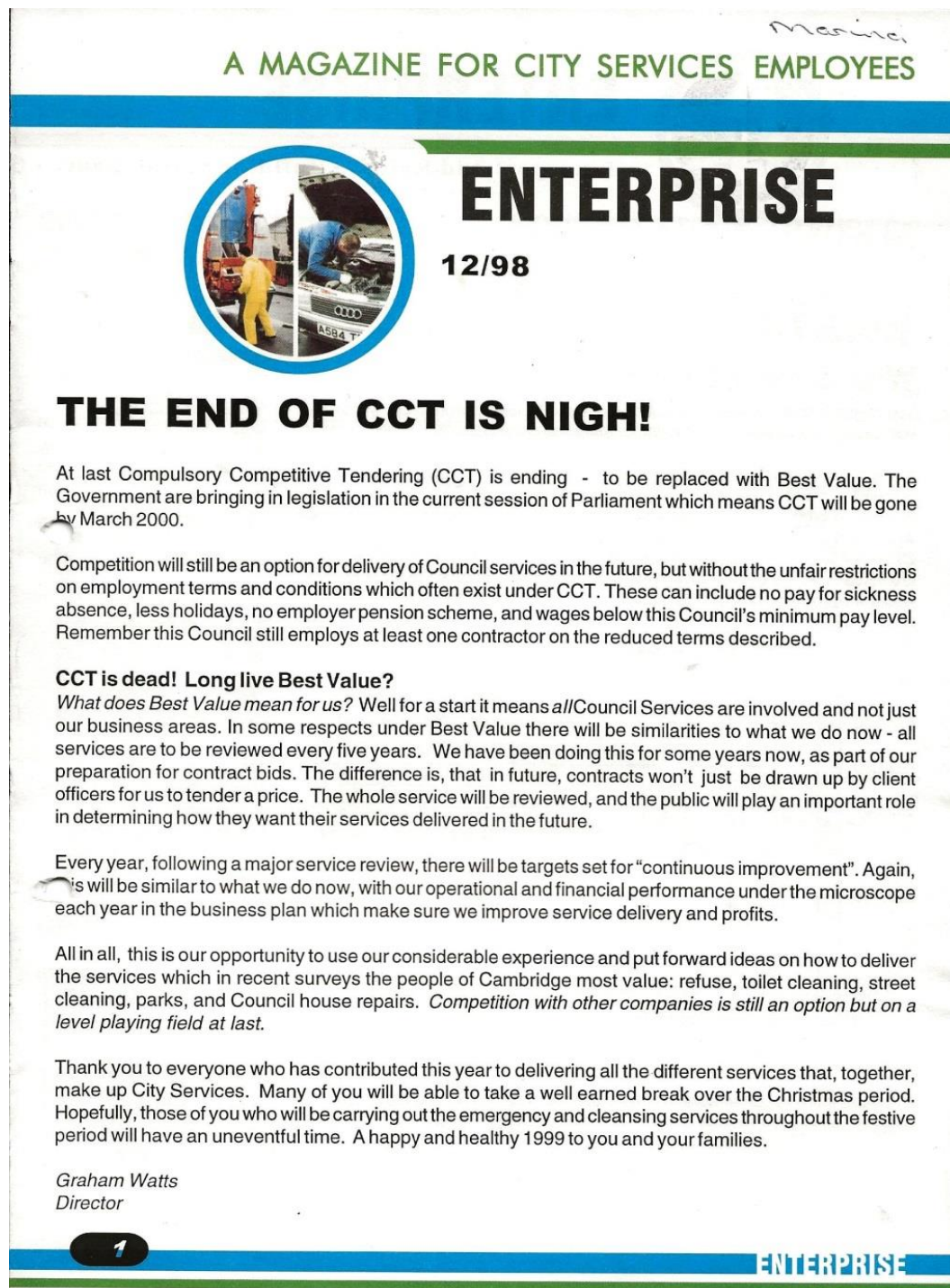


Figure 142 – Enterprise Staff Newsletter, Dec 1998 (Cambridge City Services)

CCT had shaped how the services based in the Storeyard were delivered, and had determined which services remained directly provided by City Council staff. A Conservative initiative, it was replaced by 'Best Value' after the election of a Labour government in 1997 and following a damning review from the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR):

Under Compulsory Competitive Tendering service quality has often been neglected and efficiency gains have been uneven and uncertain, and it has proved inflexible in practice.

There have been significant costs for employees, often leading to high staff turnover and the demoralisation of those expected to provide quality services.

Compulsion has also bred antagonism, so that neither local authorities nor private sector suppliers have been able to realise the benefits that flow from a healthy partnership.

All too often the process of competition has become an end in itself, distracting attention from the services that are actually provided to local people.

CCT will therefore be abolished.<sup>197</sup>



**Figure 143** – ‘Demoralisation’ (photo left: Les Skeetes)

Figure 143 shows Street Cleansing Staff awaiting notice of redundancy due to detrimental changes to pay and conditions in 1996 and 1997. This followed increased productivity and accepted contractual weekend working. Tense negotiations resolved this situation, but the threat continued to overshadow staff.

‘Best Value’ finally came into force in April 2002 and aspired to involve all council services, not just those delivered by manual staff. Regular reviews remained, but they would include the whole service and there would be targets for continuous improvement. This was welcomed by Cambridge City Council:

Since 1989 City Services has been the City Council’s in-house contractor. The introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) meant that City Services were required to compete for this work in the open market. Despite stiff competition, City Services has been largely successful in fending off the competition for more than 10 years.

City Services has for many years recognised that cost-effectiveness should not be the only indicator of success. The introduction of Best Value supports this view, with customer care, quality services, employment practices, environmental initiatives, and continuous improvement all to be considered when measuring success of service delivery.<sup>198</sup>

The following years saw ‘Best Value’ slowly implemented throughout Cambridge City Council. At the same time Labour lost control of the Council to the LibDems, who came to power on a strong manifesto aimed at cleaner and safer streets and public places. This led to the creation of a new Department, ‘Streetscene’, which brought together parks, street cleaning and building cleaning staff in area-based teams built around City Council wards. Based in

<sup>197</sup> DETR 1998, s.1.5

<sup>198</sup> *City Scene* Oct 2002



the Storeyard, this also eventually led to the demise of the separate Parks Depot at Cherry Hinton Hall, and to the Parks staff being based at Mill Road.

**ROUND THE COUNCIL — GUIDE TO DEPARTMENTS**

## CITY SERVICES

**Our name:**  
City Services

**Our address:**  
Mill Road Depot,  
Mill Road,  
Cambridge  
CB1 2AZ

**Reception tel. number:**  
01223 458217



**City Services delivers key services such as:**

- refuse collection
- street cleaning
- housing repairs
- maintenance of parks and landscaped areas

Since 1989, City Services has been the City Council's in-house contractor. The introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) meant that City Services were required to compete for this work in the open market. Despite stiff competition, City Services has been largely successful in fending off the competition for more than 10 years.

City Services has for many years recognised that cost-effectiveness should not be the only indicator of success. The introduction of Best Value supports this view, with customer care, quality services, employment practices, environmental initiatives and continuous improvement all to be considered when measuring the success of service delivery.

**AT-A-GLANCE CITY SERVICES CONTACTS**

<b>City Services Director:</b> Graham Watts	458201
<b>Assistant Director:</b> Lawrie Weaver	458202
<b>Personnel and Customer Services Manager:</b> Janet Wilson	458297
<b>Quantity Surveyor/Projects Manager:</b> David Wood	458231
<b>Cleansing and Transport Manager:</b> Jim Edmeades	458238
<b>Ground Maintenance Manager:</b> Dave Coventry	458204
<b>Finance and Information Systems Manager:</b> Yvonne Perry	458203

**TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CITY SERVICES AND THE WORK WE DO – SEE OVERLEAF**

**TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE**

City Services staff have come up with some common queries which they face in their work. This simple guide will help to direct you to the right person or section

**Problem:** I'm an OAP and I've got an old mattress I want to get rid of.  
**Solution:** We can collect bulky items from anyone. The service is free of charge to the elderly and disabled. Alan James in the Cleansing Client office is the first point of contact on ext 8284.

**Problem:** My refuse hasn't been collected?  
**Solution:** Contact the Cleansing Client reception office on ext 8282.

**Problem:** Someone has put graffiti on my garden wall. Can anyone help?  
**Solution:** Yes. We operate a free graffiti removal service to all residents and businesses. Contact John Hunt on ext 8292.

**Problem:** I run a shop in the City Centre. What do I do to get my trade waste collected?  
**Solution:** We offer competitive rates for the removal of all trade waste. Contact Alan James in the Cleansing Client office on ext 8284.

**Problem:** Is there anywhere in the Council I can get an MoT done on my car?  
**Solution:** Yes. The Transport Section has two Department of Transport registered MoT bays. To book an appointment, telephone Julie Taylor on ext 8264.

**Problem:** I'm expecting one of your plumbers today to fix my tap. Can you tell me if he's on his way?  
**Solution:** We can arrange with tenants when they would like the plumber to arrive and offer either morning or afternoon appointments. Tony, Carole or Val, the Tenant Liaison Officers, will be able to say when the plumber is on his way. Their extension is 8248.

**Problem:** There's a shrub overhanging my window. Is there anyone in the Council who can help?  
**Solution:** If the shrub is growing on Council-owned land in the North of the City, contact Joanne Smith (ext 7544) or for land owned in the South, contact Anthony French (ext 7545) who in turn contact Ground Maintenance to arrange for the work to be done.

**Problem:** The grass verge outside my house needs cutting. Can you tell me when it is due to be cut?  
**Solution:** Peter Dean, (ext 8215) in Ground Maintenance will be able to say when the grass will be cut.

Figure 144 - City Scene: Key Services, Oct 2002

Services remained based at Mill Road, but after Watts's retirement leadership under his successor was weak, while the global financial crisis led to a cycle of central government budget cuts that had an impact on basic public services. At the same time a consequence of Best Value was that Client and Contractor branches of various services merged under a single manager, and City Services as an organisation with a separate Director was dissolved.





**Figure 145** – Watts's retirement: *left*: Watts and Rob Hammond, CEO; *centre*: councillors past and present. left-to-right: Catherine Smart; Rob Drydon; Peter Cowell; David Howarth (MP); Tim Ward; Colin Rosensteil. *right*: Refuse crew

Rising land values made it difficult to justify basing staff and equipment in the heart of the city, and twenty years after Watts had first proposed to sell the site and to relocate the services, the City Council again made this a priority. For greater efficiency it was decided to merge the Waste Service with that of South Cambridgeshire District Council at Waterbeach, and for the first time in over 100 years the dustcarts and refuse staff were no longer based in the Storeyard. Other sections also moved to the outskirts of the city, and the Storeyard closed in 2018 to make way for much-needed new housing, a key Labour Party local election promise.



**Figure 146** – May 2018: the Storeyard closes - 'Last Standing': *top*: left-to-right: Kevin Roberts (GMB Branch Secretary), Antoinette Jackson (Chief Executive), Bob Matthews (Stores Foreman); *centre*: [unk], [unk], Andy Rowlinson; *bottom*: Storeyard-based female staff with Antoinette Jackson; Chris Lively (Street Cleansing); [unk], Lucy Gordon, [unk] (photo: Phil Mynott)



**Figure 147** – May 2018: the final day - City Council staff with Chief Executive Antoinette Jackson and the author, former employee Allan Brigham (photo: Phil Mynott)

## **Memories of Graham Watts: Director City Services**

### **Interviews: Capturing Cambridge. Mill Road Depot.**

#### **Site visit Shelley Lockwood, Allan Brigham, Elena Moses Pt 1 21 Apr 2015**

**Speaker 3:** He was brilliant. He was great at it. He was a people's man. He could talk to the Queen and he could talk to the toilet cleaner and he would be the same. They would both feel the same afterward. He really did have it – he was, I don't know, very good. He used to keep this yard in control but everyone respected him. It ran really, really well with Graham. I suppose that was our biggest thing, when Graham left. We all fell apart a bit.

**Speaker 3:** Yes, that was quite a sad day because it did start to fall apart after that. With him and with Rob Hammond [City Council Chief Executive] – another man who had it when he walked in a room. He could also talk with people and the reaction was the same. Graham could calm the dustmen down as easy as that and they were very good. He had a way of talking to people. I think in – especially when there's lots and lots of people, whatever business it is. That's a gift, I suppose it is, in a way?

**Linda:** He could joke with them, whatever level [they were in the organization]. He picked up on that, he did have a gift in that way, he did. He knew he could tease someone, and maybe there was someone who wouldn't like it. He knew. He knew people. He knew your name and I think for a lot of us that was very important. He knew everyone's name.



## 10. The Depot Closure and New Housing

*'Any potential re-development of the depot site should support and strengthen the character and distinctive local community of the Mill Road area'.<sup>199</sup>*

The 'Supplementary Planning Document' (SPD) accompanying the planning application for housing on the site recorded how the Storeyard was used in 2017:

Mill Road Depot is the main site for many of Cambridge City Council's services, including waste disposal, maintenance, storage, and a garage servicing centre for its vehicles. It also incorporates Council office space, commercial lettings, two community facilities and leased garages. The Council's decision in October 2014 to relocate the Depot to Waterbeach, following the creation of a single shared waste facility with South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC), has freed up the site for redevelopment.

The Council has already reduced the activities carried out on site and plans to vacate the site and build in the near future.

The SPD 'Site Description' adds:

A garage/servicing centre for council vehicles and a filling station have been relocated to other locations from the northern end of the site. A number of commercial units are still located here which are let out to private companies. In the centre are a number of warehouses and a vehicle wash-down area. The central eastern area of the site has until recently been used as a waste transfer station and is currently used for waste segregation and storage. Private garages are located to the north-western corner.<sup>200</sup>



**Figure 148** – 2018: commercial units bordering railway including former uPVC factory



**Figure 149** – early 2000s: Waste Segregation bordering railway: Barry Ives, Streetscene

<sup>199</sup> SPD 'Background', §1.1.3

<sup>200</sup> SPD 'Site Description', §2.2.3



**Figure 150** – early 2000s: Waste Segregation in the Storeyard  
*left: cans; centre: coloured glass: right: clear glass*

Not all of the site known as ‘The Depot’ was available for development:

- The majority of the site is owned by Cambridge City Council but there are land holdings on the Depot site which are occupied by the Regent Language School.
- Garages to the north-west of the site are the subject of long term leases.
- A lease ended in 2013 for The Wharf, situated to the north of the site, which is currently occupied by the Women’s Resource Centre.
- The Library building is owned by the County Council.<sup>201</sup>

Redevelopment was seen as a good opportunity ‘to provide more homes to meet the growing demand for housing in Cambridge’, and the 2.7 hectares was identified as having the potential for building 167 new dwellings.<sup>202</sup> The planning document also stressed that it was important the new houses supported and strengthened ‘the distinctive local community of the Mill road area’.

Another opportunity arising from the redevelopment of the site was that the railway boundary provided a route for ‘The Chisholm Trail’ cycle path.

The planning application later approved by the Council was for 182 dwellings, with 50% to be affordable units.<sup>203</sup> Justifying this increase, Kevin Price, City Councillor responsible for housing, said:

The housing needs register has some 2,500 people awaiting housing. That’s families and individuals. This scheme will help to ease some of the pressure on that list because we need to keep people on lower incomes living in the city. It’s a vitally important site for delivering housing.<sup>204</sup>

The number of dwellings was again raised in August 2018 after the YMCA withdrew from its planned move to the Storeyard. 40–50 units were promised, with 50% being owned by the City Council.

To deliver these houses Cambridge City Council entered a joint venture with local builders Hill Investment Partnerships, creating Cambridge Investment Partnership.

The SPD shows the site and adjoining properties:

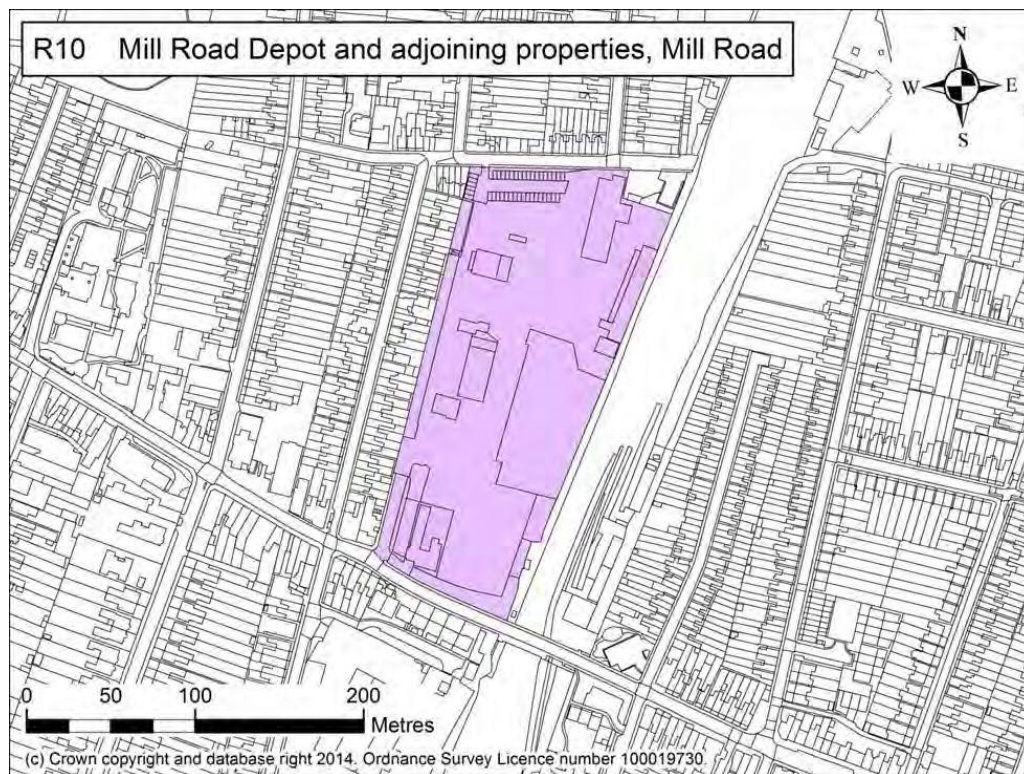
<sup>201</sup> SPD. Site Description. §2.2.1

<sup>202</sup> SPD. Background. §1.1.2

<sup>203</sup> Cambridge City Council. Planning Reference 17/2245/FUL. 22 Dec 2017

<sup>204</sup> CIP 5 Apr 2018





**Figure 151** – 2017 Mill Road Depot and adjoining properties: SPD OS map 2014

Consultation with residents highlighted these priorities:

- The need for open space and community facilities in the locality
- Building heights and density to reflect the existing character of the area
- Access to the site should be from Mill Road only.
- Consideration of the wider impacts of new residential development on the surrounding area and communities, specifically social infrastructure and traffic flows.

## Open Spaces and Trees

Open space that recognised the needs of the wider Mill Road in this area where there were few green spaces was considered important, and it was recommended that it should be 20% to 25% of the site area. Two primary spaces were identified – one on the former site of The Limes, adjacent to Mill Road and the proposed Chisholm Trail, the other near Hooper Street.

The character of the area near Mill Road was seen as 'a cornerstone of the scheme' and a 'flexible asset for the Mill Road area' as it is near the pedestrian entrance:

This space, bounded by mature trees, will be defined as an attractive formal setting with potential for a wide range of regular, or more temporary, events which appeal to new residents and the wider neighbourhood. As noted above, some interventions might be required subject to more detailed assessment of existing tree health. Replacement species should achieve a similar scale and enclosure to this important edge.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>205</sup> SPD 'Open Space Character Areas', §4.4.7



**Figure 152** – ‘Mature trees’ on the boundary of the Depot, creating a green screen for those travelling over Mill Road bridge

Another central green space, provisionally called ‘Mill Park’, was to provide ‘an attractive focal point at the heart of the development’, while the linear ‘Eagle Foundry Walk’ adjacent to Hooper Street was to form ‘a generous formal edge to the more substantial apartment buildings which form a strong urban boundary adjacent to the Chisholm Trail and the railway line’.

‘Gate House Court’ was proposed as a new local square adjacent to the retained and refurbished Gatehouse building. Depending on the exact layout and mix/disposition of uses, this could have a community focus, or take on a semi-public character with connections to adjacent community uses including a nursery.

Residents later objected that including the hard surface of the Chisholm Trail as part of the open space percentage was a sleight of hand by the Council. Children’s playspace was another priority.

The importance of existing trees was recognised, as was the need to plant new street trees:

Street trees should be planted on the primary north-south streets, the Chisholm Trail and to mark the boundaries of key open spaces. Species should be selected to establish a sense of hierarchy through the streets and spaces including larger trees on key routes, junctions and spaces. Opportunities to establish early planting regimes will be encouraged alongside other key elements of site infrastructure to accelerate place-making benefits for new streets and urban spaces on the depot site.<sup>206</sup>

## Houses

The Supplementary Planning Document stated that the initial capacity studies indicated that the dwelling would be 50% to 60% apartments and 40% to 50% houses, although this was flexible. It also added that the new residents would probably require a new community space. Rejecting objections to four-storey apartment buildings it stated that:

Aside from the Grade II listed building and Gate House building, the depot site does not make a positive contribution to the character and setting of the conservation area. It has major potential for change, and it is vital to set out a positive context for investment.

<sup>206</sup> SPD ‘Street Trees’, §4.4.3



The SPD went on to recommend that the apartment buildings could 'draw inspiration' from the scale of industrial buildings in the Mill Road Conservation area, or from former buildings on the Depot site.

An illustrative plan indicated how all these recommendations might look:



**Figure 153 – SPD illustrative plan (March 2017)**

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## CONCLUSION

Whether the Vision of the Supplementary Planning Document was upheld by the planning process is for future generations to judge:

Mill Road Depot site will become a popular residential neighbourhood, creating a network of pedestrian, cycle routes and open spaces which connect the site to the surrounding Petersfield neighbourhood, and key destinations elsewhere in the city. The development will establish a varied mix of approximately 167 new dwellings, including a significant proportion of affordable homes.

The design will respect the typical form, scale and character of buildings and streets in the Mill Road Conservation Area, exploiting opportunities to incorporate taller buildings up to four storeys adjacent to the railway at the eastern boundary of the site. The proposals will respond to the site's key opportunities and constraints, including the provision of a single point of general vehicular access from Mill Road alongside a low level of car parking provision.<sup>207</sup>

The need for affordable housing in Cambridge – if genuinely affordable – was welcomed by all. The challenge will be whether the number of homes for sale at 'market price' needed to support this has an impact on the amount of promised open space, and whether there are enough family homes to create the much needed balance that Mill Road requires to be a sustainable community in the future.



Figure 154 – 'No Unauthorised Access' – the Depot closed for new housing project

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<sup>207</sup> SPD 'Vision'



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## The Depot

Photographs by Elena Moses for the Mill Road History Project

### 1. Start of Day: 16 April 2015: 5.50 a.m.

Photos: Elena Moses for Mill Road History Project

















## 2. Support Staff: 23 April 2015



### 3. End of Day: 23 April 2015





# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

### Allan Brigham: Last Day at the Depot

*Cambridge Independent Press* 2 June 2018

Allan Brigham, road sweeper based in the Depot for many years, commented at the closure of the Depot:



**Figure 155** – Allan Brigham (left) and Trevor Seager sweeping their 'patch' around Market Hill with the first mechanised '414' sweeping machine in background (1992) (photo: CEN)

I first walked into Mill Road Depot in 1974, looking for a job. I had no intention of staying in Cambridge, and never thought I'd end up writing a history of The Depot!

Two hundred years ago this was fields in the middle of the countryside on a road that ended in a footpath to Cherry Hinton. Then it became the Workhouse vegetable garden, and later an iron foundry and coprolite mill. But it has been the council depot for a long time.

In December 1905 a new storeyard on three-and-a-half acres of land was opened behind the library on Mill Road. The whole thing, the land, buildings and the construction of a railway siding, cost £9,000. What is it worth now?

A report listed what the storeyard was for: storing materials for the repair of the roads, housing and mending vehicles, and keeping appliances in readiness for any contingencies that forethought may suggest. There were few buildings. On the railway side a siding had been built to bring granite and cement into the yard. And on the Kingston Street side of the yard there was a long range of buildings, as now, including a cart shed for water carts and refuse carts, a stable and a building for the two steam rollers, a blacksmith's shop, a vehicle repairing shop, a carpenter's and wheelwright's shop, a dresser's shed where old setts – paving stones – were chipped and given a new lease of life, a Parks section for the culture of plants and flowers that help to beautify the many open spaces in Cambridge, and a mess room.

When I walked in here in 1974 I'm not sure the depot was a lot different from the set-up in 1905. A gatehouse, buildings down one side, sheds, and parked vehicles. I'd come to

Cambridge for six months to earn some money so that I could go travelling, and didn't have much luck until I met a couple of road sweepers piling up a heap of leaves. They looked shocked when I said I couldn't find work, and said: 'You can't have tried the Council.'

There were no gates, and no job applications or references. I just walked in, asked for the sweeping foreman and got sent to a shed where the car park is now. Roy Pleasance, the foreman, took one look at me and said: 'If you are outside the Corn Exchange at 6a.m. tomorrow you can have a job. If you don't turn up I never want to see you again!' It turned out the last person he had taken on never turned up, and the one before that had left the depot with his barrow and was never seen again. They found the barrow on Parker's Piece.

Getting up for 6a.m. was a shock, but I made it, met my new mate Ernie Hart, who was a lovely man who took me under his wing, bought the tea twice a day, told me what to do, told me off if I hadn't done it, and was immensely proud that he kept the city centre clean. I thought he was old, but he was only 55, which I now think is young. Working with Ernie taught me that what makes a job is the people you work with. The laughs, the moans, the intimacies about family life.

Eight years later Ernie retired. In 2012 the city had become home long ago, and I retired myself. But in those early years my memories of the depot were few as we kept our sweeping barrows in the city centre. The depot has changed completely since then. Personally I regret the closure of the depot – it has been too much part of my adult life, as workplace and as Mill Road resident.



**Figure 156** – Allan Brigham: *left*: 'Clean Up' Campaign, with Mayor; *centre*: school workshops on rubbish and recycling; *right*: Retirement

But nowhere stays the same forever, and probably people regretted the loss of the fields, or the closure of the iron foundry back in the 19th century. There is going to be a new community there, and it is a relief to see council housing being built, not more student flats.

It is the support staff and those on the tools on the lowest pay who do the actual jobs that keeps Cambridge going. Ironically the key staff are those in high visibility jackets out on the streets – despite being dressed in bright uniform, often invisible to many.

We hear a lot of publicity about high-tech industries creating a successful city. But without those who empty bins, clean streets, maintain beautiful parks, look after car parks, neither visitors nor businesses would flock here.



**Figure 157** – Allan Brigham: *top*: 1. Sweeping; 2. chair GMB Cambridge Branch, with trade union colleagues; 3. with Graham Watts post-retirement; *bottom*: 2009, with Street Cleaning team

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## Appendix 2

### Committee Responsibilities

**1. The Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee** met monthly and discussed and resolved issues regarding the repair, maintenance and need for new paving, sewers, and lights; the removal of obstructions and the widening of roads. Issues discussed included claims for compensation for the compulsory purchase of land needed for street widening; memorials and petitions from inhabitants regarding the condition of services; legislation regarding main roads in the borough; tenders for scavenging and the removal of household refuse; permissions granted and withheld for encroachments; street numbering by the surveyor; the extraction of gravel and the supply of materials; and reports read by the Lamp Committee.

**2. The Public Works and Town Planning Committee** took over the work of the Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee responsible for similar issues including renumbering of houses, installation of new lighting, paving and roadways, widening streets, the appointment of officers such as gas examiners and the surveyor; tenders for works, claims for compensation over lost land; removal of obstructions and projections; the purchase of Corporation property; the use of signal lights to help traffic movement; and the installation of public conveniences. (from CA: CB/2/CL/3/16)

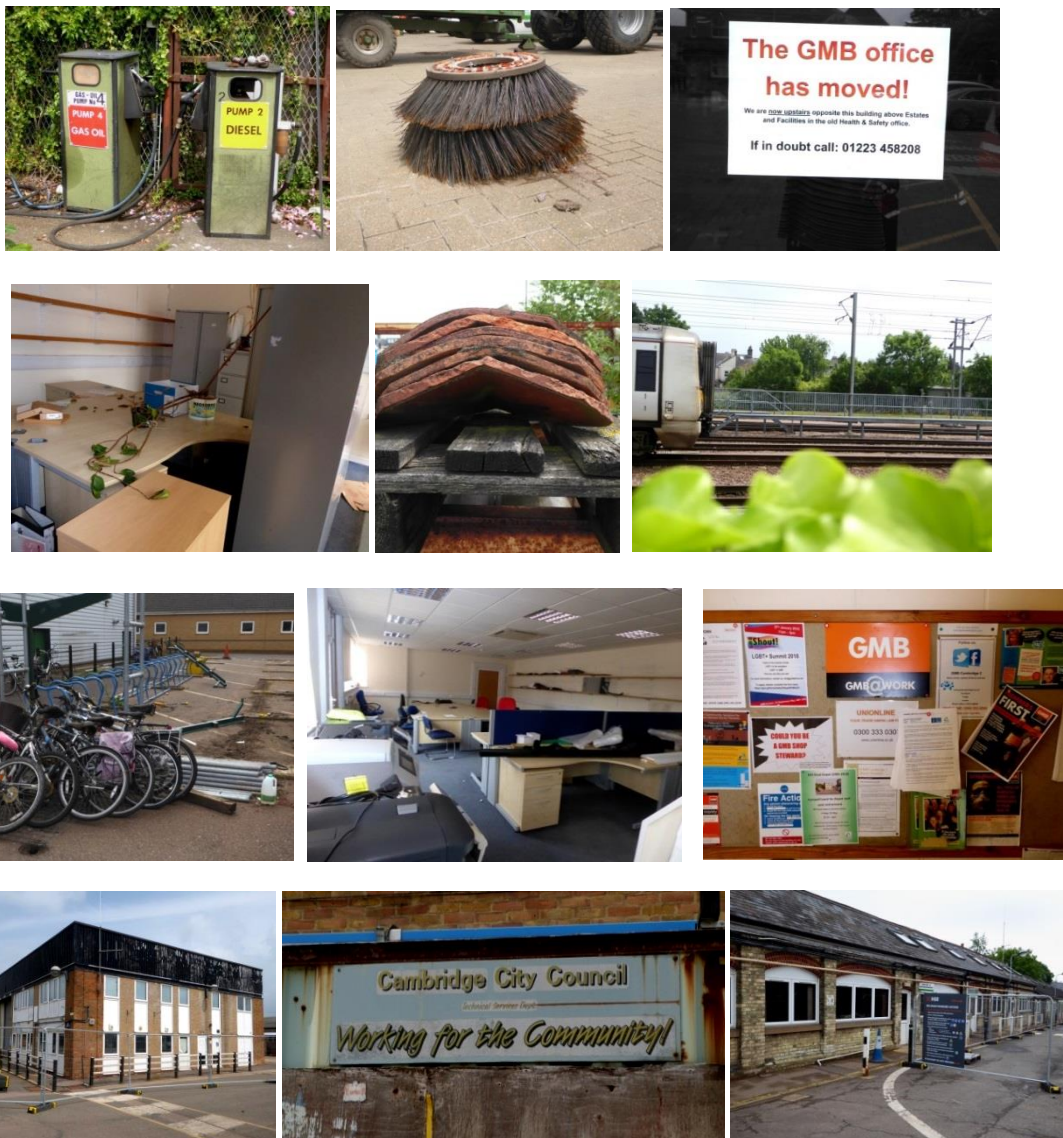


Figure 158 – May 2018: the Depot awaiting demolition

## Appendix 3

### Letter from the Prime Minister's Office to Cambridge Housing

*To:  
Mrs Aldrich  
6018 Steward  
Cambridge  
City Council*



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

10th October 1991

*Dear Mrs. Aldrich,*

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 24th July 1991. He appreciated your views and thoughts on the Citizen's Charter and has asked me to apologise for the delay in replying.

The ideas in the Citizen's Charter will appeal to people in all walks of life. It is the most radical initiative ever undertaken to raise standards of public service. It builds on the ideas that the Conservative Party pioneered in the 1980s. It sets out striking new proposals.

The Charter should not be seen as anti-public service. It is not. Mr. Major wants to see good service recognised, and, where appropriate, rewarded. That is why the Government is planning for standards to be set and performance measured openly, for new and for wider use of performance pay. But there will be no hiding place for second-rate service. That is why Mr. Major's Government will be pressing on with privatisation and competitive tendering, opening up competition, and toughening inspection, audit, and redress procedures. The package must be seen as a whole. The Government wants the taxpayers's money to be used more effectively - to raise standards and give the public the high quality services they quite reasonably expect.

This recent Government White Paper will not be a one-off event. Inside Government we will be keeping up the campaign against complacency and inefficiency. The Prime Minister has set up a special unit in the Cabinet Office to see that the measures in the Charter are carried forward. He has also appointed a team of advisers from outside Government to put forward new ideas and help chase progress.

But Mr. Major believes that it is in schools, hospitals, post offices and benefit offices and on railway stations and housing estates up and down the land that the impact of the Charter will be felt. That will not happen overnight. Many

of the measures will need legislation. All will need strong new commitments from management and staff alike.

The Prime Minister will not allow the Labour Party and its allies in the big public sector unions that have presided over all that is shoddiest and shabbiest in the public sector, to masquerade as the protector of public service. The White Paper places this Government on the side of the public. Labours remain opposed to the principles of competition, contracting-out and tough auditing of public bodies that lie at the heart of the Charter.

The Citizen's Charter is an exciting project that lies right at the heart of Mr. Major's vision for the future of our country. It is this belief that people deserve high standards from public and private services that has driven the Citizen's Charter forward.

Once again, Mr. Major thanks you for your thoughts and hopes that this letter is of some interest.

Yours sincerely,

  
22 STEPHEN YORKE  
Political Office

Mrs A Aldrich