

Elizabethan timber framed building  
now called

# 44 and 46 High Street, Coton

Photographs from  
Victorian times to 2000



In 1930 this building was called 1-4 Farmview, High Street, Coton, alternatively occasionally called 1-4 Fairview Cottages.

**Christine Fox**

2003



Photo 1. Nos 1-4 Farmview Cottages. High Street, Coton, in 1960.

Photo 2. After renovation in 1964, and now known as Nos 44 & 46 High Street, Coton.



The Cambridge Preservation Society owned Nos 1-4 Fairview cottages since 1930, these had by 1960 become condemned.

The central timber framed section with 2 storey porch is reported as built in early Elizabethan times, possibly as a farm house, within the Lordship Farm Estate around the 1550s. Later two extensions were built at each end, the western side incorporating brick work revealed in photos 1 & 2 to repair rotten timber but preserving the roof and an upstairs painted fireplace. These extensions were further developed during Victorian times.



Photo 3. Taken during 1970.

The land known as the Lordship Estate of Coton was owned since 1513 by St. Catherine Hall and St. Catherine's College today holds the Coton Lordship Deeds dated 1479-1770 for the area, which show evidence of the College leasing lands to a variety of wealthy families. One such family, the Angiers, engrossed lands both from

King's College and in 1551 from St. Catherine's College which included the Lordship Estate. The Angiers finally "controlled most of the land in the parish" [Wetherley Hundred. Coton, p. 193 of The Victoria History, Counties of England]

In the 1880s St. Catherine's Farm opposite was built by enlarging ancient foundations, when Lordship Estate was then owned by St.

Catherine's College. This enlarged farmhouse would have enabled the Elizabethan building to be converted into four cottages suitable for farm labourers, including the blacksmith who worked in the existing barn on the East side across the track.

I purchased the condemned row in 1963 and removed the roof and all external plaster to reveal original beams and hidden tudor-style windows, replacing the Victorian sash windows with earlier side opening windows in the timber section of the building, also replacing terracotta tiles by purchasing more at Solar Park, Pampisford.

The original oak door on the south side of the porch was discovered under wattle and daub, with tudor-style window above and on the 1st



Photo 4. No. 3 Fairview Cottage during Victorian times from Cambs. Collection.

floor with collapsed wooden shutters above, possibly giving granary storage to the upper floor.

Access from the porch to No. 3 Farmview was obstructed by a large Victorian bread oven. It was at this time I

became aware that the building could have originally been built as one unified building or farm, for hidden doors had become revealed.

Four slate-roofed Victorian "kitchens" at the back were removed. here hand-pumps draw water from wells and old sinks drained into external soakaways. Four sets of disused and encrusted back-to-back lavatories were removed and rebuilt with pantile roof and wooden walls as what has been developed as the music room for No. 44 High Street. Four further Elsans – still full – were removed. A septic tank was dug, which in 1981 converted into my pond for No. 42 High Street as main drainage had been brought to Coton. The workmen were then able to construct a bathroom and toilet and a small kitchen within No. 3 Farmview and replastered where necessary. They removed and repaired all internal loose plaster throughout the building enabling me



Photo 5. Demolition 1962.



Photo 6. 1963.



Photo 7. Rear view from garden, 1964.

to move in with my daughter during 1964. I slowly built banks at the bottom of the garden with all the broken farm and blacksmith's implements, also the rubble and earth to make undulating areas, now covered with snowdrops, crocuses and jonquils. The dead walnut tree, which was said to have "died through too much thrashing" was replaced and is now taller than the surrounding houses, and again needs thrashing to compete with the flourishing squirrel population.

It took me many years to reveal the wealth of internal beams, scrubbing these yet aiming to leave traces of the early pale distempers. When I had saved more money the workmen returned, enabling me to confirm that the house had started out as one dwelling, later divided centrally by the Victorian bread oven which hid



Photo 8. Clearing rubble in No. 46 High Street, that revealed hidden door on left with arched top.

an infilled door. They cleared out this oven and a Victorian brick boiler for washing clothes, also clearing rubble infill from the two original inglenooks. They gave me a second more lavish bathroom and kitchen enabling me to divide the house into Nos 44-46.

I was still making discoveries, two recesses in the back of each inglenook, perhaps for salt or bible warm-storage, and two layers of frescoes on a third upstairs fireplace in No. 46 with different formal flower designs. But I decided I wanted more sunlight through larger windows and more time for sculpture, so in 1981 I sold No. 46 to Ben Grove who planted many magnificent trees and built a modern extension with the architect David Haven. David and I also I designed and built my new Studio House No. 42 High Street, into which I moved in 1985. Two archaeologists Judith Robert and Chris Scarre purchased No. 44 soon after.

I have since extended my studio beyond its original barn and



Photo 9. Corner of the smaller cleared inglenook at No. 44, showing salt recess and holes in the beams to support cooking pots and meat on spits.

built the garden banks higher to resist floods that pour off the southern slope of Madingley Hill owned by Cambridge Preservation Society and recently set-aside and so sprayed twice a year to kill off growth according to regrettable Government regulations. I sorely miss the golden crops and seasonal activity of the farmland. However, my work still progresses with sculpture, planting of trees, and placing fritillaries in the banks. Primroses of the palest yellow have naturalized and spread everywhere and I have a variety of birds that is surprising so close to Cambridge. This area of Coton still remains at peace, despite M11 built so close and doubling numbers of Coton houses. But the planned Coton Farmland Park will perhaps give us a safety net from large scale developments.

Christine Fox, May 2003.



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