

## **Edwin Bays (1843 – 1909)**

Edwin Bays was born in 1843 in Cambridge, Cambridgeshire.<sup>1</sup> He was the fifth of nine children born to Charles Bays (1804 – 1877) and Mary Bays (*née* Bradshaw) (1810 – 1882). Charles was a hatter as was his father (Edwin's grandfather) before him, and he ran his business from 11 King's Parade for 36 years. When Edwin's father died his older brother, William Bays (1836 – 1885), took over the family business. Edwin's parents together with three of his siblings (William, Agnes Mary, and Charles Frederick) were all buried in Mill Road Cemetery.

### **Apprenticeships**

By the time Edwin was 18 years old he was a grocer's apprentice in Broad Street, Eye, Suffolk, for Henry Bishop, a grocer and earthenware dealer. However, by the time he was 25 years old he had returned to Cambridge, and he was apprenticed to Mr William Milner Fawcett MA. F.S.A. F.R.I.B.A (who was buried in Mill Road Cemetery). Edwin was also employed as Clerk of Works at Cambridgeshire County Gaol (which stood on the site of Shire Hall at the top of Castle Street) in 1868. Mr Fawcett had been engaged to carry out a major renovation of the Gaol with a budget of £8,000.<sup>2</sup> A year into his apprenticeship Edwin put forward a plan to extend Peterborough Corn Exchange but unfortunately someone else's plan was selected.

### **Overview of practice**

At the end of his two years' apprenticeship Edwin moved into his own premises at 7 Downing Street. Edwin's practice appears to have been a mix of commissions both non-residential and residential, his own developments, projects for local authorities, appearing as an expert witness/surveyor in court cases, and acting as an agent in the sale or purchase of land both freehold and leasehold. Later in life he also acted as an agent for Hand-in-Hand fire insurance.<sup>3</sup> Throughout his life Edwin maintained offices in both Cambridge and London and his work was focussed in both of those places together with the surrounding villages and suburban areas.

### **Early years of practice**

In his first year of practice Edwin was commissioned to restore St Mary Coslany, Norwich, Norfolk.<sup>4</sup> It is the only surviving example of a round tower church in Norwich, dates from the Anglo-Saxon period, and is now managed by Norwich Historic Churches Trust.<sup>5</sup> In the same year Edwin advertised plans for cottage hospitals, artisans' dwellings and rural cottages in a local newspaper;<sup>6</sup> he acted as an

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<sup>1</sup> Any further locations without a reference to a city or county refers to Cambridge or Cambridgeshire.

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Chronicle and Journal, Saturday, 16 April 1870; Building News, 22 April 1870.

<sup>3</sup> Haverhill Weekly News, 2 November 1889.

<sup>4</sup> CC&J, Saturday, 3 December 1870 & Building News, Friday, 16 December 1870.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/norwichmarycoslany/norwichmarycoslany.htm>

<sup>6</sup> CC&J, Saturday, 21 January & 4 February 1871.

expert witness in an arson case in Coton<sup>7</sup> and in a committal for attempted murder in Harston;<sup>8</sup> and he was the architect for a villa residence in Newnham Croft for a Mr Floyd and Middleton Cottage, Sidgewick Avenue, for a Mr Dobbs.<sup>9</sup>

In 1872, year two of his practice, Edwin moved to new premises at 5 Sidney Street, where he would stay for the next sixteen years. This coincided with his first major municipal project, which was the new infectious diseases hospital on Mill Road (now Brookfields).<sup>10</sup>

### **Local arbitration**

Between 1875 and 1876 Edwin entered into a local arbitration with a Mr William Farren.<sup>11</sup> The case had been referred from the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice by an order from Mr Justice Field. Edwin's claim was for '*...£69 18s. 6d., for plans and specifications supplied, and professional attendance rendered...to...William Farren, photographer, of Huntingdon-road and Jesus-lane, in respect of buildings proposed to be erected on a site in Market-street...*'<sup>12</sup> Mr Farren's studio had burnt down hence needing to find another site. Mr Farren approached the Corporation (local authority) and negotiated a lease of forty years at an annual ground rent. It was then that he instructed Edwin to draw up plans for the site. He said that he told Edwin that his budget for the build was £1,200. Also, that he agreed to pay Edwin five guineas if the plans were not accepted by the Corporation but that if they were Edwin could charge the usual commission allowed architects. The Lease Committee accepted the plans. However, after the plans were accepted Mr Farren asked Edwin to make a series of alterations including adding two rooms, which must have seriously increased the costs. Mr Farren and Edwin also visited several studios in London for which Edwin charged the rate sum of 7s. 6d. After the changes to the plans Edwin invited builders to tender for the project, which came in over what Mr Farren said was his budget. Despite efforts at that point to reduce the cost Mr Farren decided not to go ahead with the build and asked Edwin to send in his bill. Mr Farren did not agree with the bill hence the arbitration. The arbitration started on 14 March 1876 before the arbitrator, Mr J Edmiston, at the Guildhall. Mr J. W. Cooper (instructed by Messrs Wallingford and Day, of St Ives), was for Edwin. Mr Cockerell (instructed by Messrs Eadens and Knowles), was for Mr Warren. The arbitration lasted until May and involved a number of witnesses from both sides. The arbitrator then adjourned the case to make his findings. In June it was reported that the arbitrator had found in favour of Edwin but disallowed part of his claim.

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<sup>7</sup> CC&J, Saturday, 25 March 1871.

<sup>8</sup> CC&J, Saturday, 26 August 1871.

<sup>9</sup> Building News, Friday, 11 August 1871.

<sup>10</sup> CC&J, Saturday, 22 June & 13 July 1872.

<sup>11</sup> CIP, Saturday, 11 March 1876; CIP, Saturday, 18 March 1876; CIP & CC&J, Saturday, 25 March 1876; CC&J, Saturday, 20 May 1876; CIP, Saturday, 10 June 1876.

<sup>12</sup> CIP, Saturday, 18 March 1876.

After his own court case it does not appear that Edwin acted as an expert witness in any other cases.

### **Later years of practice**

Some of Edwin's projects included a number of works for the surrounding Cambridgeshire villages: additions to the Schools at Duxford (1875),<sup>13</sup> Sawston Cemetery Chapel (1881),<sup>14</sup> and Ickleton Cemetery Chapel (1883).<sup>15</sup> Within the outskirts of Cambridge, he was instructed to carry out a survey of dilapidations for four cottages on Coldham's Lane owned by the Guardians of the Industrial School (1876),<sup>16</sup> and to create an addition to Union Workhouse, Chesterton (1886).<sup>17</sup>

He also continued to appear as an expert witness including for the case of Mann v Ellison (1875),<sup>18</sup> and a fire in Waterbeach (1876)<sup>19</sup>, but as stated above after 1876 he does not appear to have appeared in any further cases.

Some of Edwin's own developments included offering leaseholds on properties on Mill Road junction with Tenison Road (1881),<sup>20</sup> offering a lease on 1 Mortimer Road (1883),<sup>21</sup> offering a parcel of land on Huntingdon Road for sale for allotments (1897),<sup>22</sup> and offering to let or sell 8-room villas in Owlstone Croft (1906).<sup>23</sup>

### **Personal life**

In his personal life Edwin was described as '*...extremely retiring in disposition, and mixing seldom, if ever, with his fellow men in social life...*'<sup>24</sup> However, he formed a relationship with Jeannette Prime (1850 – 1904). Jeanette was born in Thriplow. Her parents were Benjamin Prime (1801 – 1884) and Mary Prime (*née* Pluck) (1805 – 1881). Her father was a sawyer. Jeanette was the youngest of their eleven children. By the time she was 10 years old she was living with her married eldest sister, Mary Ling (*née* Prime) (1836 – 1839), in Haslingfield. At the age of 21 years old she was still living with her sister but she was calling herself Jeanette Bays. In the 1881 census Edwin and Jeanette were

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<sup>13</sup> Cambridge Independent Press, Saturday, 27 February 1875.

<sup>14</sup> CIP, Saturday, 25 June & 2 July 1881.

<sup>15</sup> CIP, Saturday, 19 May and 26 May 1883; Building News, Friday, 29 June 1883.

<sup>16</sup> CIP, Saturday, 13 May 1876.

<sup>17</sup> CIP, Saturday, 29 May 1886.

<sup>18</sup> CIP, Saturday, 7 August 1875.

<sup>19</sup> CIP, Saturday, 7 August 1875.

<sup>20</sup> CIP, Saturday, 30 April 1881.

<sup>21</sup> CIP, Saturday, 27 November 1883.

<sup>22</sup> CC&J, Friday, 6 August 1897.

<sup>23</sup> Bromley Journal and West Kent Herald, Friday, 30 November 1906.

<sup>24</sup> Saffron Walden Weekly News, Friday, 3 December 1909.

listed as living at Rose Cottage, London Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire. It was not until 1892 that the couple officially married in Liverpool, Lancashire.<sup>25</sup>

In the couple of years leading up to the time of Edwin and Jeanette's marriage Edwin changed his Cambridge premises three times from 5 Sidney Street to 10 Rose Crescent (1889), King's Parade (1890), and then finally settled at 61 St Andrew's Street (1892) where he would stay until the last few years of his life. His last address from about 1907 was 45 Regent Street. It is more difficult to trace his London addresses. In 1875 he was based at 27 Villiers Street, between 1900 and 1905 he was certainly based at 4 – 5 Stonecutter Street, and in 1909 16 South Place.

### **Local reforms and politics**

Edwin was also keen to progress local reforms and appears to have been the Victorian equivalent of a Freedom of Information requester writing numerous lengthy letters in the Cambridge newspapers not only on ways to improve planning but also commentary on what local rates were spent. His letters ranged from suggesting manholes be added whilst test holes were being made in any event to ascertain depth and condition of sewers (1887),<sup>26</sup> opposing the proposed use of Hobson's Conduit as a toilet (then situated in Market Square) (1891),<sup>27</sup> what the Treasurer's accounts of the Town Council of Cambridge revealed about its spending of local rates (1893),<sup>28</sup> proposal for a new street between Downing College and Market Hill to alleviate traffic down Petty Cury (1894),<sup>29</sup> complaint about Surveyor's Office not being open regularly during working hours (1894),<sup>30</sup> commenting on a proposed new cemetery (1896),<sup>31</sup> and a proposal for a light railway between Cambridge and Cottenham to transport agricultural produce and stock (1899).<sup>32</sup> In London he proposed a new street to prevent any destruction of the Whitgift Hospital, Croydon (1905), which was published in the local newspaper complete with a draft drawing.<sup>33</sup> Sadly, only his campaign to prevent the use of Hobson's Conduit as a toilet appears to have been successful.

It was also said about Edwin that, '*...[u]nlike his father, Mr. Edwin Bays never took any active part in either political or municipal affairs...*', but this was not strictly true. He ran for local election at least

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<sup>25</sup> Jeanette Prime and Edwin Bays, Q1 1892, Liverpool, Lancashire, Vol 8b, p295.

<sup>26</sup> CC&J, Friday, 19 August 1887.

<sup>27</sup> CC&J, Friday, 8 May 1891.

<sup>28</sup> SWWN, Friday, 10 February 1893.

<sup>29</sup> Cambridge Daily News, Tuesday, 27 February 1894.

<sup>30</sup> CDN, Saturday, 28 July 1894.

<sup>31</sup> SWWN, Friday, 23 October 1896.

<sup>32</sup> CDN, Thursday, 6 July 1899; SWWN, Friday, 7 July 1899.

<sup>33</sup> Croydon Guardian and Surrey County. Gazette, Saturday, 8 July 1905.

three times but was never successful: Stevenage (1889),<sup>34</sup> St Matthew's Ward (1894),<sup>35</sup> and Cambridge Borough (1898).<sup>36</sup>

Edwin died on 23 November 1909 at 45 Regent Street. His obituary gives an insight into Edwin's life:

***THE LATE MR. EDWIN BAYS.***

*The death of Mr. Edwin Bays, which occurred on Tuesday of last week, at the age of 66, has occasioned sincere regret among the circle of old inhabitants of Cambridge who have known deceased and his family for many years. Personally, Mr. Bays was not known to a great many of the present generation. Eccentric and extremely retiring in disposition, and mixing seldom, if ever, with his fellow men in social life, Mr. Bays never made many friendships, and during recent years, at any rate, his life has been that of a recluse. Even with the members of his own family he held but little communications for many years. As an architect, practising both in Cambridge and London, Mr. Bays divided his time between the two places, and it was in Cambridge, at his Regent-street offices, that his last days were spent.*

*Mr. Bays was a native of Cambridge, and was the son of the late Mr. Chas. Bays, who formerly carried on business as a hatter on King's parade. Mr. Chas. Bays was a well-known figure in Cambridge, sat for many years on the Town Council, and as known as staunch Tory and member of the Church of England. Unlike his father, Mr. Edwin Bays never took any active part in either political or municipal affairs. True, he did on one occasion seek to gain election as a Town Councillor, but he was defeated, and never confronted the electors as a candidate again. He received his early training as an architect with the late Mr. Fawcett and after he went into practice for himself gave evidence of considerable ability, and prepared the plans for many of the houses erected in the comparatively modern parts of Cambridge.*

*He was a man of ideas and originality, and on one occasion he prepared plans to provide a more direct route from the railway station to Market-hill. According to these plans, which were published in the "Cambridge Daily News," the proposed new street would have been constructed to run from Downing-street right over the site of the Old Corn Exchange. One of the advantages claimed by Mr. Bays for his plans was that the traffic in Petty-cury would have been relieved. The project, however, was never taken up by the authorities. Mr. Bays had many other ideas for local reforms, and within the last month had promised to embody them in an article for the "Cambridge Daily News."*

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<sup>34</sup> Herts Advertiser, Saturday, 12 January 1889; Herts & Cambs Reporter & Royston Crow, Friday, 18 January 1889.

<sup>35</sup> Herts and Cambs Reporter & Royston Crow; CIP & CC&J, Friday, 26 October 1894.

<sup>36</sup> Herts & Cambs Reporter & Royston Crow; CIP, Friday, 11 March 1898.

*Mr. Bays was a widower, his wife having predeceased him by some four or five years, and he leaves no family. Although his life was spent to a great extent in retirement, there are not a few Cambridge residents who look back with pleasure upon long chats with the old architect, who had decided views upon religious and political subjects, although he never expressed them in public. At the back of eccentric behaviour, too, there lurked a kindly disposition, and if he had few friends he had still fewer enemies.*

*The funeral took place on Friday afternoon, the deceased being buried in Thriplow Church-yard, in the same grave in which the late Mrs. Bays was interred a few years ago. The Vicar of St. George's Church, Thriplow, officiated. The chief mourners included Mrs. Moore (sister), Mr. Bays, Cambridge (nephew), and Mrs. Bays (sister-in-law). There were no floral tributes except those sent by the family.*

*The arrangements were carried out by Mr. J. Brignell, of Newmarket-road.*

**Saffron Walden Weekly News, Friday, 3 December 1909**