

Hemingford Road 1878-2012

A History: Allan Brigham (2012)

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See Also:

- 1. Hemingford Road: House Histories 1 (No 1-129) & 2 (Romsey Mill-112).**
Original building plans and first occupants of each house.
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Introduction

A proper 'history' of Hemingford Road would tell the story of the farmers and agricultural workers who worked the soil in this part of Cambridge for centuries. But we know nothing about them. This scrapbook of memories, census records and early building plans tells a little bit about the last 120 years, and how the fields were replaced by houses, streets, shops, a church and a park.



A street of building workers and railwaymen on the outskirts of Cambridge has become in the 21st century home to software engineers, university lecturers and professionals who commute to London. When Hemingford Road was first laid out the town's population was about 35,000. Today Cambridge is a city, and over 100,000 people live here. More growth is planned, and the test for future housing developments will be if they can be as successful as Romsey Town proved to be in creating a vibrant community where people wanted – and want – to live. The challenge for Romsey in the 21st century is to ensure that the character of this area is not swamped as Cambridge expands. The example of those who fought to establish Romsey Recreation Ground in the early 20th century or those who created 'Romsey Mill' in the 1980s is one we can only try to emulate.

Allan Brigham: July 2012

A work in progress

This was written for the 'Hemingford & Romsey Roads Street Party' in 2012. My thanks to everyone who spoke to me, and to those who invited me into their houses and their lives, especially Jean Turner, Margaret Squires, Brian Thompson, and the Nightingale family. I'm very grateful for help from the staff at Romsey Mill, The Cambridgeshire Collection, to Mike Petty, and to the staff at Cambridgeshire Archives who have only recently archived the early Building Plans and who could not have been more helpful. I am indebted to Hemingford Road resident Soo Martin for turning my photographs of the plans into images everyone can enjoy.

Neither the early Census returns nor the Building Plans were given street numbers. I have hopefully given the correct census details or Plan to the right house, but I may be wrong.

An updated copy of this book will be deposited in The Cambridgeshire Collection.

Sources:

All dates from Street Directories unless specified

Abbreviations

BP Building Plan

C Census

D Deeds

LV Land Valuation

SI Street Improvement Map, 1897



2nd Edition : 2013

Illustrations:

1. Colour photos: Allan Brigham 2012

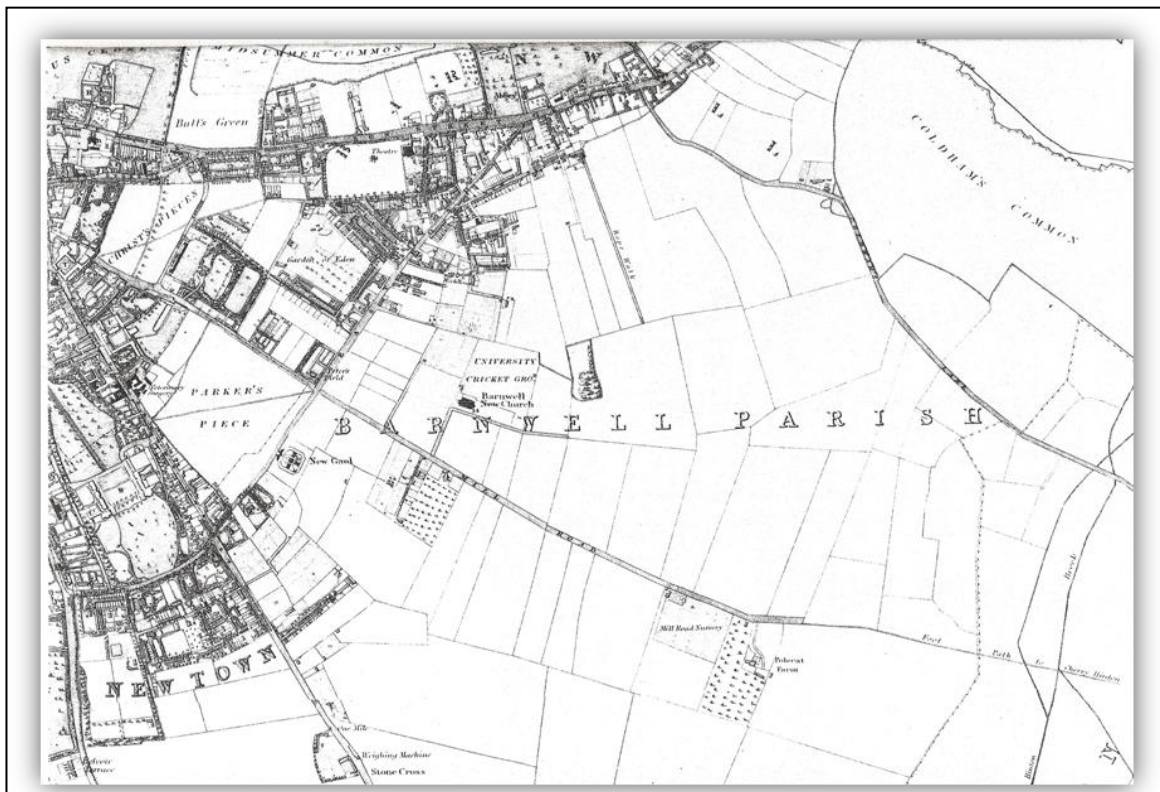
2. Black & White photos 'Family Histories' : Courtesy of - 1. Jean Turner. 2. Margaret Squires.

10. Tanya Zielke. 12. Mary Nightingale & Hilary Clark

Before 'Hemingford Road': From 'Barnwell Fields' to 'Romsey Town'

'Romsey Cottage and Farm, with its beautifully timbered grounds, gardens tastefully laid out and planted with thriving fruit and ornamental trees, farm buildings', 'Closes' of fine grass, several pieces of 'Accommodation Land' suitable for market gardening and numerous plots of building ground'.

Mill Road, Cambridge. Sale in 66 Lots: 5 September 1878



Baker's Map: 1830. The only houses on Mill Road are around the windmill at Covent Garden. The railway has yet to arrive, and the road ends shortly after Mill Road Nursery and Polecat Farm - the site of Romsey Terrace today. Hemingford Road was to be built on the fields across Mill Road opposite Polecat Farm.

In 1830 Mill Road was still a country track leading across the fields of Barnwell and ending in a footpath to Cherry Hinton. The footpath is still there, following Cherry Hinton Brook along 'The Tins' to Cherry Hinton Hall. But the fields are gone. We live on what was for many hundreds of years the town's original 'green belt', the fields now covered in houses for the ever growing population.

Like most 19th century towns Cambridge witnessed a surge in population that has continued ever since. In 1801 the population was 9,000, and the boundaries of the town were still defined by the river and the line of the medieval King's Ditch which ran in a loop up from the

river at Silver Street, up Pembroke St, down Hobson St, and back into the river at Quayside. Beyond the ditch and the river were the fields where residents grew the crops to feed their families.

Within a hundred years the population had increased fourfold to 38,000 and the fields were more profitably turned into streets and houses. Most of this expansion was in the area known as Barnwell – the Newmarket Road, East Road, Mill Road area. Once a farming hamlet outside the city, Barnwell increased in size from 228 to 27,000 in the 19th century, and was absorbed into Cambridge. This is where we live.

The Railway brings building developments

It is difficult to imagine Mill Road without the railway, but it is only here because the University resisted it being sited anywhere more central. The station opened in 1845, a mile and a half from where everyone lived. But ironically the town then grew towards the railway line, and Mill Road, once a country lane, became the central spur of a whole new town that grew up outside the historic town centre.

Mill-road, Cambridge.
IMPORTANT BUILDING ESTATE AND
MARKET GARDEN GROUND.
TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY
Mr. J. CARTER JONAS,
On THURSDAY, the 5th day of September, 1878, at
the Red Lion Hotel, Cambridge, at Two for Three
o'clock precisely, in 66 lots, by direction of the
Trustees of the late G. Johnson, Esq., the following
highly valuable.

FREEHOLD ESTATES,
Situate in the parish of St. Andrew the Less, in
the town of Cambridge, with extensive frontages
to the Mill-road and to proposed new roads, com-
prising the

Romsey Cottage and Farm,
With its ornamental and beautifully timbered
grounds, gardens tastefully laid out and planted
with thriving fruit and ornamental trees, farm
buildings, and

CLOSES OF FINE GRASS LAND,
Several Pieces of Accommodation Land,
Suitable for market garden purposes, and numerous

PLOTS OF BUILDING GROUND,
As laid out in convenient lots to suit the require-
ment of purchasers, the whole containing an
area of **59a. 3r. 29p.**

Particulars and conditions of sale, with plans,
may be had of Mr. J. CARTER JONAS, Sun Fire
and Life Offices, Cambridge; and of Messrs. E. S.
WILSON & SON, solicitors, 6, Whitefriar Gate, Hull.

Cambridge Independent Press: 10.8.1878

This included Romsey Cottage and Farm *'with its beautifully timbered grounds, gardens tastefully laid out and planted with thriving fruit and ornamental trees, farm buildings', 'Closes' of fine grass land, land suitable for market gardening, and numerous plots of building land*. The houses built on these building plots were not the first in the new 'Romsey Town' but Romsey Cottage gave its name to the new community.

The first stage of this development, 'Sturton Town' (Gwydir St, Sturton Street etc), was built from the late 1860s onwards. Initially there was little building 'across the line', and the railway tracks marked the divide between town and country. But demand for new and better housing led to the area that became 'Romsey Town' being developed after 1878 as landowners discovered houses, even at this distance from the town, were more lucrative than farms.

The fields that were to become the site of Hemingford Road had belonged to George Johnson. Johnson had been House Surgeon at Addenbrookes Hospital from 1830-1844, before establishing himself as a general Practitioner in St Andrews Street. After his death in 1865 his Mill Road property passed to a trust to support his widow and his only son, George.

In September 1878 nearly 60 acres of Johnson's estate were put up for auction.

The origins of Hemingford Road

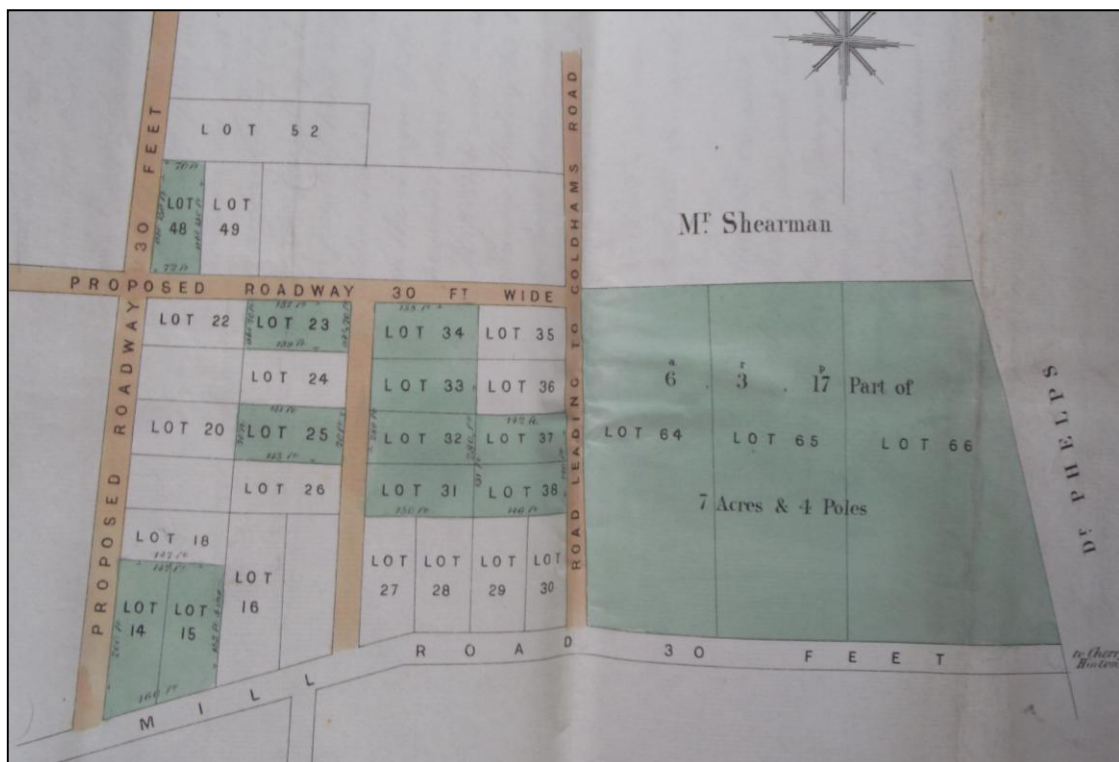
The First Phase: 1878



Romsey Cottage was transformed into a Tudor-style gentleman's residence, today Romsey House.

Across Mill Road a number of 'Proposed roadways' became Vinery Road ('Road Leading to Coldhams Road'), Belgrave Road, Hemingford Road and St Philip's Road. The 1879 map below shows how the fields that had been here for centuries were carved out into streets and building plots – the road on the left became Hemingford Road.

Romsey House:
The site of Romsey Cottage



**Estate Map 1879: Plots in green were bought by Francis Thoday, Builder for £2,185.
The future 'Hemingford Road' is the 'Proposed Roadway' left. (Deeds: Hemingford House)**

The First Residents:

1881

Many of those who bought plots of land waited to see how the demand for housing was going to develop. They were cautious - Hemingford Road was a considerable distance from existing housing in 'Sturton Town' on the other side of the railway. Some, like Francis Thoday, subsequently sold or divided their plots.

But by 1881 the Census shows that since 1878 a surge of building had enveloped the fields 'across the line' off Mill Road. New streets, filled with families, had appeared - Great Eastern Street, Cavendish Road, Catherine St, Romsey Terrace, Rifle Butt Row (now Ross St). And the first residents of Hemingford Road were recorded (See next page). The four houses are not numbered in the Census, but three can possibly be identified from the 1884 and later Street Directories as Nos. 30,36,42.



No 30: 1884 Stephen Page



No 36: 1884 Joseph Thorogood



No 42: 1884 James Harvey

The 1881 residents were a Joiner, James Harvey; and three railway workers: Stephen Page, Joseph Thorogood and James Watson – as 'Sawyer', Police Constable' and 'Railway Servant'. They were typical of the first residents of the area, many of whom worked on the railways or in the building trade.

They were also typical because their birthplaces indicate that they were part of the influx of new residents into Cambridge in the 19th century. None were born in Cambridge, they came from Cheltenham, Norwich, Walsingham and Newmarket - and Elizabeth Page was born even further afield in the East Indies.

1886-1888: OS Map

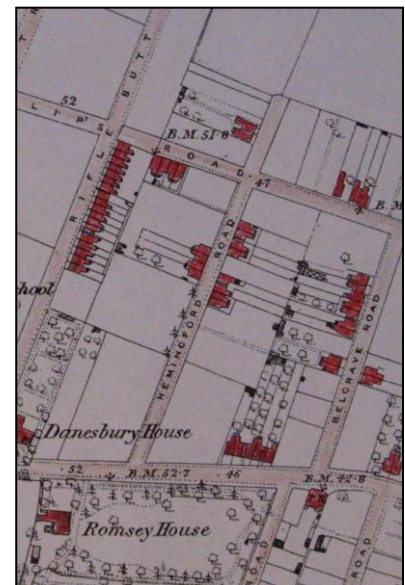
By the late 1880s fourteen houses had been built.

On the right:

No 24 & 26; No 28 & 30; No 36 & 38; No 40 & 42

On the left:

No 33, 35, 37 & 39; No 67 & No 69.



The road ended in fields shortly after No 69 – at the point where it becomes wider today.

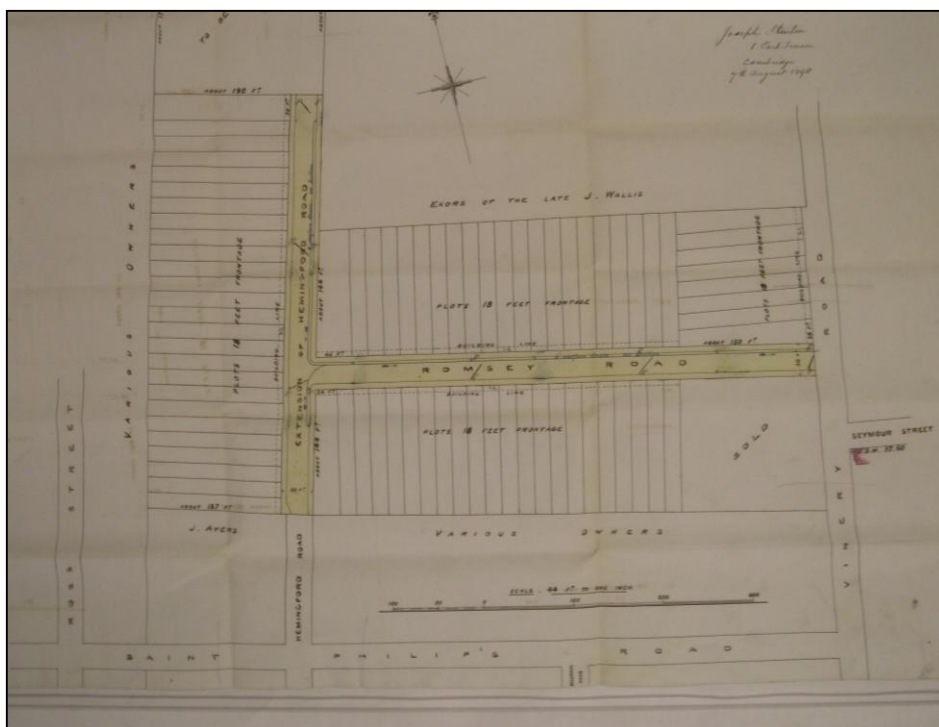
Hemingford Road: The First Residents

1881 Census

Harvey	James	Head	54	Joiner	Norfolk, Walsingham
	Sarah	Wife	56		Rutland
	Alfred	Son	16		Norfolk, Reedham
	Ethel	Dau	10	Scholar	Cambs, Trumpington
Smith	Joseph	Boarder	22	Engine Cleaner	Cambs, Trumpington
Thorogood	Joseph	Head	30	Signal Fitters Labourer	Cambs, Newmarket
	Sarah	Wife	23		Cambridge
	Flora	Dau	3		Cambs, Cherry Hinton
	Violet	Dau	2		Suffolk, Dalham
	Joseph	Son	6m		Cambridge
Warwick	James	Father in Law	63	Sawyer on Railway	Suffolk, Dunwich
Burling	Jemima	Visitor			Suffolk, Lidgate
Page	Stephen	Head	46	Police Constable,GER	Cheltenham
	Elizabeth	Wife	40		E. Indies, British
Watson	James	Head	40	Railway Servant	Norwich
	Ellen	Wife	26		Cambridge
	Edith	Dau	10	Scholar	Norwich
	Ernest	Son	9	Scholar	Cambridge
	Charles	Son	7	Scholar	Cambridge
	Florence	Dau	1		Cambridge

The Second Phase: 1889

In June 1889 Joseph Sturton bought from the Johnson Trustees the fields at the end of Hemingford Road for £1,400. Sturton had been responsible for much of the development on the town side of the railway known as 'Sturton Town'. Thirteen months later in September 1890 Sturton submitted plans for new roads on this latest acquisition.



Building Plan for new roads showing the extension to Hemingford Road, and Romsey Road. Submitted by Joseph Sturton: 11.9.1890 (Plan 343)

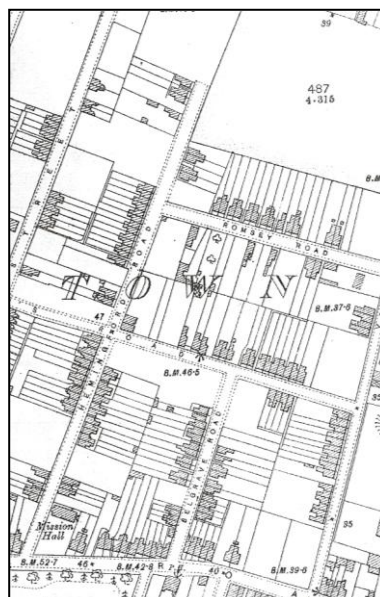
The 'new' road was wider, and extended from No 77 and No 68 to the fields that are today Romsey Recreation Ground. Romsey Road was also laid out, linking Hemingford Road with Vinery Road, with a resulting direct link through to Coldhams Lane at a time when all the other Romsey streets were still cul de sacs.

By 1901 (OS map) twenty one new houses had been built in this new extension, as well as eighteen houses in Romsey Road. But there were still many vacant plots.

OS Map: 1901.

New houses built on J Sturton's land 1890-1901:

- **Right:** No 106 & 108; No 110 & 112
- **Left:** No 77; No 79-101; No 121; No 125 & 127; No 129



Residents 1901

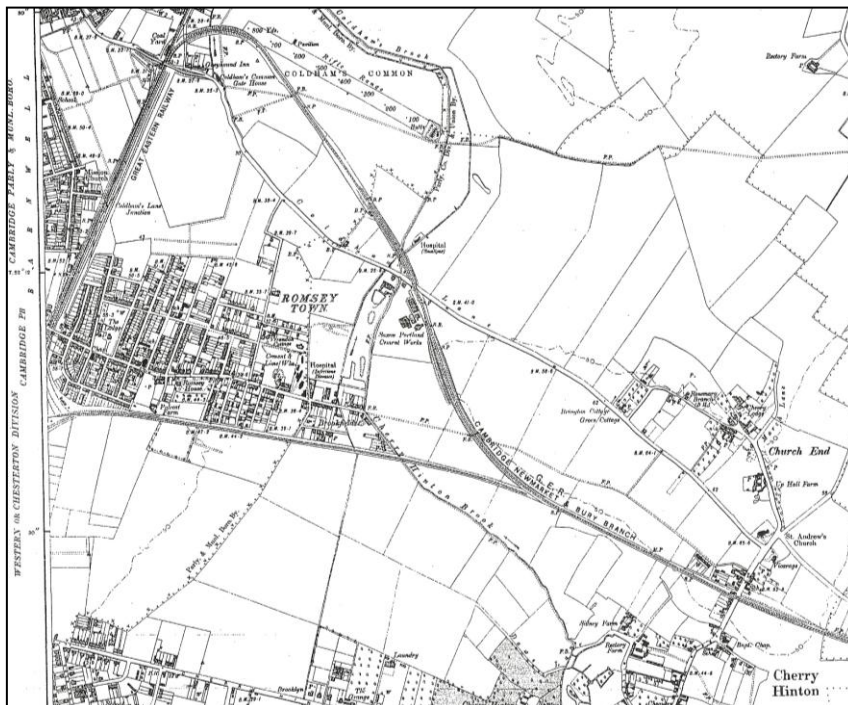
Twenty years after the first houses were built in Hemingford Road the 1901 census records only forty seven occupied houses, with one being built (No 106). Many of the plots fronting the street were gardens or allotments. James Harvey was still living at No 42, but none of the other three families recorded in 1881 still lived in the road.

Nearly all the heads of household were in manual trades apart from a College Clerk, an Assurance Agent, a Draper's Clerk, a Grocer's Manager and a Provision Dealer.

The majority – eighteen – were in the building trades: Carpenters, Joiner, Bricklayer, Stonemasons, House Decorator, Plumber. Eight worked on the railway as Driver, Shunter, Signaller, Guard and Porter. Only two – the College Clerk and a College Porter – worked for the University.

The majority (24) of these had moved to Cambridge, nearly all from neighbouring counties. Nearly a quarter were from rural Cambridgeshire villages. Only eleven were born in the town.

This breakdown of jobs and birthplaces would probably be repeated in many other Romsey streets, and reflected the employment opportunities in Cambridge as the 20th century opened.



1904 OS Map: Showing 'Romsey Town'. Today it would be called an 'urban extension', stretching into the countryside towards Cherry Hinton. Mill Road is still a cul de sac, ending in the footpath shown on Baker's 1830 map.

By the opening of the 20th century, 22 years after the fields of Romsey Cottage Estate were offered for auction, farm labourers had been displaced and a new community had been created. 'Romsey Town' was defined by the railway – it was a major employer in the area,

and the railway tracks defined the boundary to south and east. But surrounded by fields and allotments links with the countryside still remained, - urban but also rural. Sid Christian, brought up in the Brookfields/Cherry Hinton end of Mill Road before 1914, gave a flavour of how close the countryside was to the rows of terraced houses in Romsey:

My Cambridge: A walk from Brookfields to the Market Square

'What a nice walk from Brookfields to the Market Square leaving behind the green fields that led down to Cherry Hinton village, through the 'Tin Walk' past the cement works, the narrow path lined with red poppies and backed by huge fields of golden buttercups and picked out here and there by clumps of Dog Daisies, their white faces with their lid eye turned to the sun, as though giving thanks for its warmth.

Just fifty yards (the other way towards town) and you were among the shops passing two pubs in that short distance, then the fever hospital from where many did not return in those day. Reaching 'The Royal Standard' public house where Mr Fletcher the landlord used to stand outside and play his accordion on certain holidays.

Oh the sweet memories of when I climbed onto the high front seat of the horse drawn bus and Ginger would let me take the reins of sometimes two horses and I guided them all the way to the Bank near the corner of Petty Cury, pushing that large wooden block with my foot to put the brakes on, stopping to pick people up, and others getting off, how important I used to feel, especially when going over Mill Road bridge and passing the Ortona motor bus stuck half way up, Mr Walford putting a large wedge of wood on a chain under the back wheel to stop it running backwards, how I used to cheer when I swept by.

It used to take an hour to walk to the town centre.

Gone now is the waste ground where we used to pick blackberries, now the site of the Labour Club; all the allotments down Malta Road, some built on as Coleridge Road; Mr Newman the Undertaker at the corner of Ross St, always reserved with its high fence and hedge; Polecat Farm, just down Romsey Terrace; Daddy Dawson at the corner fruit shop, with his high hat and tight whipcord trousers he looked as though he had stepped out of the Pickwick Papers; Mrs Anderson the Bakers, they had an old white horse, how well I remember the Blacksmith at Mr Watts the wheelwright filing the horses teeth so he could chew his food; Smiths Lodge between Sedgwick St and Cavendish Road, all walled in but not high enough to stop us lads from ripping over and borrowing his Williams pears and throwing the cores back over the wall; the Tracy Hall in Cockburn St where we used to spend the evening watching a magic lantern show and having a cup of tea and a currant bun for 1d.

What fun those days. People seemed more contented although they had less than the people of today.'

Romsey has changed. It is no longer on the edge of Cambridge. But the green spaces are still there – Coldhams Common, where you can get lost for an afternoon, and 'The Tins', which take you to Cherry Hinton Hall. As well as two well used parks – Romsey Rec, and Coleridge. We are lucky:

'I love living here because it feels like a village - but I still have all the advantages I love about living in a City.' Bridget Hardy 2006

How old is your house?

The Building Plans indicate when planning approval was given. Paper copies only exist for houses built after 1889. Although often the front elevation of houses that were built don't look like those on the plans!

The insistence on Building Plans reflect the standardisation of building regulations across the country in the late 19th century as overcrowding, inadequate water supply and inadequate sanitation came to be linked to poor public health. Because houses built in Romsey were of a higher standard than older properties in the town centre rents were often higher. This meant the area attracted skilled tradesmen or those in secure employment like that offered by the railway. To protect their standard of living many of these were members of Trade Unions and resisted attempts to reduce their wages in the 1920s. This led to the Master of a Cambridge College referring to the residents as 'Bolsheviks', and the name 'Little Russia' or 'Red Romsey' being adopted by the area.

No [Not numbered on Building Plans, so deduced. Could be wrong]	Plan No	Date	Owner	Address
28,30 (1879-84). 36,38 (1879-84) 40,42 (1879-1884) 33,35,37,39 (1881-84). 69 (1881-64). 20,22 (1887-91). 24,26(1881-84).	None	1879-1886		
20,22 (1887-91).	None	1887-1891		
16,18 (1901-10).	None	1901-1910		
67 [Improvement Commissioners, Committee Report Book 9. Ref]	None	4.6.1886	D Philips	
1,3	232	18.6.1889	Stanley, NW	Cavendish Rd
2, 4, 6	266	12.12.1889	Webb, WJ	Brookfield, Mill Rd
Hemingford & Romsey Rds	343		Sturton, J	1 Park Terrace
9	400	19.03.1891	Harvey, Alfred Edward	
Mission Chapel	473	14.10.1891	Trustees. Sec: Wm Jacob	56. Hills Rd
32, 34	588	15.12.1892	Crown, David	Catherine St & Mill Rd
Mission Class Room	1016	16.04.1896	Trustees.	
79-89 (+ 6 Ross St)	1122	08.09.1896	Stevenson, SJ	Hills Rd
125, 127	1171	18.02.1897	Mortlock, GB & Pyle, Wm	GBM: 40 Hemingford Rd.WP: Mill rd
129	1205	18.03.1897	Chapman, HA	66. Gwydir St
110, 112	1247	20.05.1897	Humphreys & Warner	AH: Walnut Tree Ho.
5	1231	20.05.1897	Thompson, WJ	2 Hemingford Rd
41, 43, 45, 47	1314	09.11.1897	Barnard, TJ	
79-89	1482	19.01.1899	Stevenson, SJ	Hills Rd
106, 108	1507	20.04.1899	Morley, Alfred & Walter	AM: Argyle ST. WM: Mill Rd.

(61, 63, 65) OR (46, 48, 50)	1582	17.8.1899	Kingston, T	Rivar House, Sleaford St
91-101	1611	19.10.1899	Stevenson, SJ	
121	1615	23.11.1899	Ward, Wm	131. Sturton St
119 ? Stables	1714	1.8.1900	Ward, Wm	Bluefield House, Hemingford Rd
77	1812	16.5.1901	Beekan, G	(46?) Chadwell Heath, Essex
103-113 ?	1833	20.6.1901	Stevenson, Samuel	Poplar Villa, Hills Rd
52	1844	18.07.1901.	Lucas, Fred	4. Prory Terrace, Huntingdon Rd
54-64 ?	1958	17.4.1902	Watson, AJ	Mawson Rd
11, 9,15, 23	2050	11.12.1902	Mortlock, G; Sergeant, E	Romsey Rd
25, 27, 29, 31	2053	11.12.1902	Pamphilon, Horace Edward	59 Gwydir St
61, 63, 65	2059	22.1.1903	Bennett, JR	Builder, Gwydir St
44, 46, 48, 50	2108	18.6.1903	Starr, R	74 Burleigh St
Hemingford House	2365	14.6.1905	Bailey, Henry B	39 Cavendish Rd
100, 102, 104	2408	28.9.1905	Starr, J	58 Argyle St
Wesleyan Chapel	2468	19.4.1906	Trustees: Charles	Hill Av
68- 84	2528	25.10.1906	Crown, David	42. Warkworth St
71, 73, 75	3301	13.6.1912	Starr, J	100.Hemingford Rd
66 ?	2970	24.2.1910	Hayward, Thomas	Regent St
115, 117	3049	29.9.1910	Crown, David	42 Warkworth St
119	4819	19.4.1923	H Thurlborne	96 Ross St

It was over 30 years before the street as we know it today was completed, with most houses built by the outbreak of World War One in 1914 (No 119 was later, in 1923). So for a long time there were many vacant plots, and residents would have been surrounded by gardens or allotments - the last new house to be built on an empty plot was No 123 in the 1990s.



White Brick:
1881

The first houses to be built in the road in the 1880s had been constructed using Cambridge White bricks. Those built on Joseph Sturton's extension during the 1890s started to experiment with bay windows and the decorative use of red bricks:



Red Brick Decoration:
1899-1901



No 125 & 127; No 110 & 112: 1897-1898

Romsey Wesleyan Chapel to Romsey Mill

Methodist Church

1892

Wesleyan Mission Hall opened:

'Services will be held every Sunday at 3.00 and 6.30.

A Sunday School will shortly be established and various week night meetings will be held.



There are other and larger places of worship in your neighbourhood, but we believe that our Mission Chapel may be filled without interfering with other Churches.

We begin, and hope to continue our work, not in a spirit of rivalry but with a desire to magnify Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, and to promote the religious welfare of the people.

If you are not a regular worshiper elsewhere, we cordially invite you to come to our services and to help us in establishing a vigorous Wesleyan Methodist Circuit.'

1896

Wesleyan Church opened

Afterwards tea provided for 300

Architect: W Wren

Builder: Messrs Coulson & Lofts



Recollections of Romsey Town Methodist Chapel: Milly North

'When my family moved to Cambridge in 1927 we joined Romsey Town Methodist Church, as we were Methodists and it was near our home.

To appreciate the importance of the church, it has to be realised that Romsey Town at this time was very small, mainly Mill Road with small side streets running off it. There were no houses in Coleridge Road, beyond Romsey Junior School, and no Council houses in Suez Road and Hobart Road, as the railway line to the cement works had only recently been discontinued. The older houses were there, but the land over the railway line was allotments.

Similarly there were no Council houses in Vinery Road, Ross Street, Coldhams Lane and Stourbridge Grove.

There was a fence across the road at the end of the old houses in the side streets off Mill Road, and all the land behind the fence was given over to allotments, which were

principally worked by railwaymen. Romsey Town was mainly inhabited by railway families. I have been told that during the 1926 Romsey Town Methodist Church was opened each day at 12.00 for a Service for the men on strike and the Church was filled to capacity each day.

In the 1920s and early 1930s the area was developed, and the Council houses were built in all the areas around the Church. They became first homes for young married couples, and gradually over the years the children started to come to the Sunday School, and some of the parents came to the Church. Soon there were 200 children on the Sunday School register; with an average attendance, each Sunday, of about 100 children between the ages of 8-14 years who met in the schoolroom, plus 50 infants under 8 who met under the gallery at the back of the church.

There were few cars at this time, so most people walked to and from Church for fear of creasing or spoiling our best clothes,.'

'When the War was over, and the men were discharged from the Forces and returned home, families preferred to stay at home together; as the older members died the attendance at the Church declined. The motor car became more available, and visits to the sea side or to see friends and relations on Sundays, became the popular thing to do.

With the advent of television the attendance at the Sunday School and Church decreased until both were closed, and the remaining members joined neighbouring churches.

The buildings were refurbished by the United Churches of Romsey Town, and Romsey Town Methodist Church was opened as Romsey Mill.

These are my memories.'

Romsey Mill

1980s

The transformation of Romsey Methodist Church into Romsey Mill was largely due to the vision of Peter Phenna, a local church minister, who sought to address the needs of the young people of the Romsey and Coleridge wards of east Cambridge.

This was not without controversy in Hemingford Road, with fears of noise and disturbance from neighbours.



'Peter Phenna got together a 'Joint Council' of local churches - Anglican, Methodist and Baptist to own and develop the vision. An under-utilised Methodist chapel on the interface between these two wards became available, offering a suitable base for community activities. Major conversion work was carried out and in 1980 Romsey Mill - the Romsey Town Churches Youth and Community Centre, opened.

Over the years we have made a gradual progression from informal, drop-in youth clubs to specialised work with the most 'hard-to-reach' teenagers. We have developed outreach work, leading to activities based around young people's interests with embedded learning and personal development.'

Romsey Mill: 2009



Romsey Recreation Ground

'The sun always shone on Romsey Road Rec!'

Jean Turner



The 'Rec' defines Hemingford Road. Other streets in Romsey stretch on indefinitely. Hemingford Road ends with the green privet hedges, glimpses of tree tops, and the open gate that leads into another world. An oasis of greenery.

Residents past and present all comment on the Rec. Jean Turner(No 18) remembers playing tennis on the now lost tennis courts in the 1930s: *'And the Custodian was a Mr. Prior, a very forbidding man. And woe betide you if you trod on his garden to retrieve a ball! The garden, with flowers, was all round the Rec'.*

Margaret Squires also recalls the 1930s, wistfully watching others play on the tennis courts from her bedroom window at No 119: *'Sometimes of an evening, maybe on a Saturday, after we'd gone to bed, my brother and I, we'd stand in the window, because there was the two tennis courts there, lovely tennis courts, the hard one and a grass one, and there was always people playing tennis, and there were all the children out there. But of course we always had to be in bed!'*



Romsey Rec: Tennis - 1930s. Jean Turner (nee Holder) left

Eighty years later residents are just as enthusiastic. Soo Martin, next to the Rec, says: *I love the green space that surrounds our house on three sides. It's like living in the country but with all the benefits of being in a vibrant part of the town.*

I love the peaceful nights followed by the bird song in the morning and the sound of the kids playing in the park next door. There is a wonderful variety of trees all around us and I enjoy the local nature walks. The views from the upstairs window over the park are stunning especially at sunrise.'

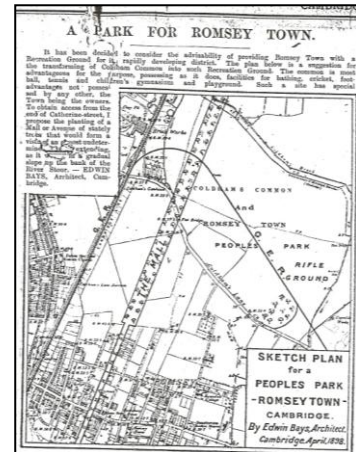


History

The Search for a site: 1898-1912

The 'Rec' that we all take for granted today only exists because others fought long and persistently for a public open space in Romsey Town. It could easily have been covered with houses, just as the surrounding area was to be.

In 1898 Romsey Councillor Mr Negus called for possible sites to be examined *'before the land was all cut up into small plots, a little kindness and consideration to Romsey would tend to do away with any friction which might have existed in the past'*. And the architect Edwin Bays went so far as to produce a plan for a 'Peoples Park' on Coldhams Common, with an 'avenue of stately tees' extending from Catherine St to the banks of Coldhams Brook.



A People's Park: 14.4.1898

Fourteen years later in 1912 Romsey was still being ignored and residents petitioned the Town Council for a site that was for sale on the corner of Coleridge Rd and Mill Road:

'Owing to extensive building operations the present opportunity seems one of the last chances of securing an open space, we therefore beg your consideration. The distance from Parker's Piece prevents many from enjoying the benefits of the town side, and the extensions of the Cement Works has made the countryside more distant from the inhabitants.'

The children of Romsey town are on the whole healthy and strong at present, and we desire they, as well as their seniors, may have an opportunity of breathing fresh air on this open space'. Like the 'People's Park' on Coldham's Common, residents' wishes were ignored. But the obvious local need, and popular pressure didn't go away.

Vinery Road: 1912

'After hearing the views of these gentlemen, the Sub-Committee suggested to the Committee that if a recreation ground was to be provided steps should be taken to acquire about five acres of land, having a main entrance from Vinery Road, and also an entrance from Hemingford Road.'

The Committee adopted the suggestion of the Sub Committee, and ascertained that if the land was to be used as a recreation ground the owner would be willing to accept £1,875 for it.' Cambridge Independent Press: 8.11.1912

Finally the purchase of land went through successfully and Romsey got a Park –though in Vinery Road not Coleridge Road. Council records for 1914 state that £500 was agreed for laying out the park. The park must have opened that year or in 1915 as by June 1915 the fences are having to be repaired to prevent access from the neighbouring allotments.

Romsey Recreation Ground Today

Emma's story

'Without Vinery, I don't think I'd have as much freedom as I do now'



'I've been going to Vinery Park for most of my life. It has changed a lot, most of all at the times when i was gong most. Without Vinery, I don't think I'd have as much freedom as I do now.



I started going when I was very young , as I only live a few streets away. It's a very family friendly park, which is why we all went so often. I can remember it snowing, and us all trudging down there, Also, my nursery was down the road from the park, so we visited it a lot then.



As I got older, and joined Primary School, Vinery became a bigger part of my life. On my way to school, we'd go through Vinery, like many others. During school Vinery would also be part of our day. As my Primary was so close, we would often hold many sporting events or PE lessons on the field or we'd hold After School Clubs there Sometimes we'd even go there on an afternoon if we'd worked hard enough in the previous weeks. The strangest time we went was for a Science lesson. We were studying push and pull forces. We walked over to Vinery and played on the equipment, deciding if it is push, or pull.

At about half past three on a weekday, the park would be full of children in navy blue jumpers and white polo's. At the end of the School day, the School would empty out and Vinery would be a hive of swarming children. Some were more deserving of the park than others.....

In my last 2 or 3 years of Primary, Vinery was the only place we went. I say 'we', my friends and I. We wouldn't even have to say anything; we knew we would go and we knew where to meet. We even found quicker ways to get there: cutting through 'the passage' that ran between and behind two houses and the back of the park, We had names for certain parts and we really did feel like we owned it.



There was a mutual understanding that when you got to Year 6 in our Primary, Vinery became yours. If you didn't go to our school, you didn't count at Vinery. I remember some older kids creating 'The Vinery Crew'. It really was our life; we spent all day everyday there in the summer. Even in the winter we'd spend our short, dark hours playing in the snow. I had several friends that live in the bordering streets so we would go and warm up with hot chocolate at their houses before we split up and left.

Some of my biggest childhood memories happened at Vinery. I'm not sure where we would go or what we would do if it wasn't there. It only really became important when they rebuilt most of it and added some new equipment. That brought so many more kids to the park.

It's been such a big part of my life, I'm glad it's there and I hope it will be for much, much longer.'

Debbie and Seamus' story:

'The park is that rare thing - a space where people of ages, irrespective of their race or religion or wealth, can meet and use a common good as equals. In a time when developers squeeze as many properties as possible into new developments, when new parks are not being built, it is a precious resource that we should all treasure, care for and defend.'

'We moved to Cambridge in 2001. At that time our children were aged one and seven. Our new house had been built in 1999 and like a lot of new houses has a very small garden, but a big attraction for us was that it backed directly onto Romsey Recreation Ground.



We used the park a lot during the first year in Cambridge. We walked our daughter around the green in her push chair, we met other parents of young children, we used the kiddies play park. We organised and attended children's birthday parties. It was a great space to make new friends and relax, right on our doorstep.

As our children grew up the park provided them with a safe space to meet friends and play independently. Our son would meet friends to use the play equipment or play football. Now it is our daughter who meets her friends in the park to socialise and chat.



And our children have been able to watch the seasons change first hand. From our house they can watch the trees shiver and lose their leaves in autumn, winter snow provides an arena to build snowmen and have snowball fights, spring brings the first signs of rebirth, summer bring flowers and trees in full leaf.



Then there are the sounds from the park. We enjoy a dawn chorus in spring and summer, and in the afternoon or on a warm summers evening we can sit out in our garden and hear the sounds of children playing.'

Niamh's story (age 11):

'The earliest memory that I have of the park is learning to ride my bike without stabilisers. My mum pulled them away from the ground and she told me to start riding across the grass. I would fall off but I never gave up, I just got back on and kept riding until I could balance without stabilisers.

My birthday is in July and I remember having birthday parties at the park, having a picnic, playing on the swings and climbing frame and getting lots of presents.



When I was at St Philips we would sometimes have PE lessons at the park and we played rounders and cricket and other games. I played in goals for the girls' football team and my Dad would help me practice in the park. I am at secondary school now but I still go to the park with my bike and meet up with friends. We play games, ride each other's bikes around the park sit and chat about things.'

Amanda's story: Aged 12

'One of my earliest memories about the park was when I was in year 2, and everyday after school me and my friends used to have mini wars with the year below us. We used to ambush each other's dens and steal things that they had found around the area like sticks and little pieces of metal.'



More recently I spend a lot of my time playing football and man hunt, man hunt is a game where there are 2 teams and each team has to catch one another it's really fun.



Sometimes I also like going to the park by myself to calm down and chill out. I've visited the park since I was a young toddler, and I remember always climbing trees and collecting cherries with my brother, Martin. I also remember going to nature activities with my Grandma, we used to collect bugs and examine them from a poster. One of my favorite memories was when everyday I went to school I used to play around with Rosie the dog and throw the ball to her.



It's great to have this park at your door step, and its always been a major part of my life.'

Dan's story

'My earliest memories of it go back to 1991 when my mother and her partner moved here. I can still just remember the allotments and bowling green. It always seemed very quiet, green and spacious compared to the bustling city life of Valencia, Spain, where I lived and worked until 2004. One of the attractions of returning to the UK for breaks was the chance to walk the dog on the "rec" and get one's thoughts in order!'



From 2000 it acquired renewed importance as a place to take our first children, Amanda and Martin, who loved the "infant" park and, later when we came to live in Romsey, a place for them to get away from grown ups among the hawthorns and other trees, where they could build dens and play games. Likewise, it has always been great for us parents to be able to meet and chat to other grown ups in the kind of safe, outdoor space which is quite rare in cities today.



With the arrival of our twin girls, Gabi and Sara, in 2006, the space became even more important. Both Malli and I sometimes feel as if it has become our second home. Now they are getting close to the "den building" stage, Martin and Amanda seem to spend most of their free time there, meeting mates and playing football. Going to the "rec", whether for a picnic, a game of soccer or a quiet walk is our default - and completely free - activity when we are in Cambridge during the weekends or holidays. It is great to watch the seasons change and makes for a quiet interlude on the way to and from school in the morning: I never get tired of it no matter how many visits I make!'





Our Park: The best 'Community Centre' Romsey Recreation Ground, Cambridge.

In praise of Cambridge City Council and its Councillors – past & present

Allan Brigham: 2008



Our park was my saviour and my sanctuary when I emerged from three long weeks in the local hospital. Everyone should have one within five minutes walk of where they live.

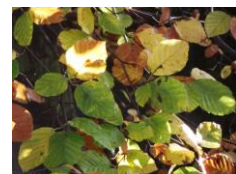
While I recovered I was pedestrianised, with a ban from the Doctors on driving or cycling. Used to 'home' being a retreat for evenings and weekends, 'home' now became the centre of my very shrunken world. I couldn't go far - it hurt! And I didn't want to go far –the busy main streets full of jostling people, noisy traffic and erratic drivers were scary.

From being fit and in a hurry, I suddenly became one of the people who I'd always rushed past before. The elderly, the disabled, young parents with small children - all can be invisible to the active. Their journeys are often by foot, and local. Now I joined them. The pavements, not the road with no horizon, became my way of moving around, and everything was very, very different.

The nearby park was my daily excursion beyond the security of the front door. I could reach it without crossing a main road, and it became the destination for a walk, to see people, for a sight of the sky, and for a sense of space in a very urban environment of terraced housing.

Go through the park gate, past the hedge with the small protruding tree that succeeding generations of children clamber to the top of, and there is a large square of grass. It is used for informal games of football, and by adults throwing balls for their dogs with varying degrees of vigour while they stand chatting. Ball games were beyond me, but it was liberating in the early months of the year to be in a wide open space and to sense the winter light, away from the confines of small houses and narrow gardens. It made me feel good.

The path around the central square of grass became my daily route, shared with the occasional jogger or passer-by to whom I could nod, or have a brief conversation. It provided contact with people again, with the knowledge that I could always get home if needed. Walking round once was a triumph. Slowly it reached five circuits and then five circuits twice a day. It takes being unable to walk to appreciate just how good it is to be able to do this.



There would always be someone in the park, whatever the weather.

Children on the way to and from the local Primary School, teenagers playing basketball, or once a week a group of young mothers who left one of their number guarding their parked buggies while the others went running together.



Low railings surround a fenced off children's play area which even in the depths of winter was frequently alive with pre-school children and their parents. Not so long ago this was the bowling green where older men and women in immaculate 'whites' patiently rolled their bowls in a captivating ritual. Next to it is the remains of the tennis court where they now play basketball. Beyond lie the former allotments which have been transformed into an informal 'wildlife' area of trees and brambles where dens are made in the bushes and where you can sit quietly and not see a single house or roof top.

The discarded beer cans which I found myself picking up at weekends were evidence of nocturnal use by local teenagers. Tolerated as long as remaining within certain (unspecified) limits, they must get cold.

The park looks like many others. It's kept clean, the kids use the playground equipment, the grass is cut regularly and the trees are maintained. It could be better. Why the park isn't cleaned at weekends when it is most busy remains a mystery. Now the bowling green is gone, what is provided for the elder generation? The basketball has been a real success, but perhaps some would still like to play tennis. Would both be a better option? The playground equipment could be modernised, new tree planting would be good, and so would be some colour – flower beds can't cost much, more spring bulbs would be a start.



Hopefully these improvements will happen. But for now this is no Victorian gem. It is a very ordinary 20th century 'Recreation Ground'. But for me, walking round in the winter months, this was a very special place.

Being outdoors, surrounded by green grass and trees, and seeing the sky, the clouds, and the sun on its all too brief appearances, all made me feel much, much better. Seeing and chatting to people helped me reconnect with the world.

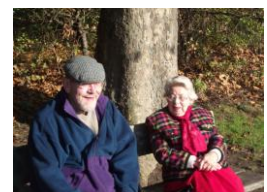
I still visit the park daily, much better and walking with ease. I have never appreciated spring so much before, seeing the leaves appear on the trees that had seemed bare for so long. Summer is passing now, the leaves have dulled and some are already falling. I think I will remember this year and those trees like no other.

It is easy to take for granted what we have. But I'm immensely grateful to those long dead councillors and local people who fought to establish this park. And to those who have maintained and refurbished it over the years. It is here because people argued and lobbied for it. It could have been used for housing. Today it probably would.

The new developments I see have only token play areas, no where big enough for football, or for my daily perambulations, or to sit undisturbed amongst the trees away from hard surfaces and buildings. But we need all these. Not a car-journey away, but close to home so that children and the elderly (or recovering hospital patients) can get there safely on foot.

Today 'high density' housing is the mantra of the planners and the delight of developers. But to make it work we need well maintained, easily accessible, attractive open spaces too.

Others fought for these in the past. We need to leave our mark for the next generation. The developers leave us 'Community Centres' but probably the best, most accessible 'community centre' is a well designed park. You never know when you will need it yourself. I do now.



1. 1900-1940: No 18 - A Railway family

'Road travel seemed a thing of the past' – Florence Ada Keynes

Harrison (1875 -1945) and Jean Holder (b.1921)

The Railway

The railway arrived in Cambridge in 1845. Almost immediately the London stagecoaches found they had no passengers, and the 1,000 year old river trade went into irreversible decline. Within a generation it was possible for Hervey Road resident Florence Ada Keynes to say that the approach to the town **'was by rail; there was little or no road travel, which then seemed a thing of the past, not the future'**.



Harrison Holder as a young man working on the railway (right). 1890s?

The new technology brought new employment opportunities, and by 1901 the census recorded 648 local people working for the railway companies, most living in the Mill road area and many living in the newly built Romsey Town. The wages were not high and the conditions of employment were almost militaristic, with a strict hierarchy and a shift pattern that was often difficult to fit around family life. But in return staff had guaranteed work, a known income with the possibility of overtime, possibilities for career advancement, and of a pension.

Harrison Holder was one of these 'Railway Servants'. In the 1901 census he was recorded as a 26 years old Signaller, living in Argyle St with his recently married wife Thyryza and their new born son Harold. Soon after (by 1904) the family moved to No 18 Hemingford Rd, probably the first residents of the newly built house.



Harrison's grandparents had moved to Cambridge from rural Huntingdonshire as the town started to expand in the early 19th century. His father became one of the first generation of railwaymen, working for the Great Eastern Railway (GER) for over 50 years as a Shunter, Yard Foreman and finally, in his late 60s, as a Fireman Porter. Three of Harrison's five brothers also joined the GER, as Stoker, Guard and Engine Foreman. The job titles indicate the range of employment opportunities that the railways offered, and the variety of tasks involved in keeping the trains running.

'The development of Romsey Town ran parallel with the development of the railway system. The railways were very hierarchical – the Drivers were the top, ASLEF was the top Union. The NUR was the Guards and Signal people, which was much bigger in numbers..... And where they lived was a bit like that, hierarchical. If you were a Driver you could afford a bay window at the front. The Drivers were a little bit superior.' (JB)



John Holder (centre)

Railway staff at Cambridge Station. c.1910

John Holder (Harrison Holder's father): second row, third from right.

Harrison worked at the signal box on Mill Rd until illness led to him being relegated to Barnwell Junction, where he worked until his retirement. He had to get up early for work. And walk via Coldhams Lane and Coldhams Common - he didn't have a bike.

The shifts were not very compatible with family life – 6.00-14.00 or 14.00-22.00 – and his daughter Jean remembers going to see him at work: *'As a child, I used to walk across Coldhams Common, to visit him in the Signal Box – don't tell British Rail this will you!. And he had a billycan of tea, which he warmed upon the fire in the signal box, and we used to make toast. And he used to let me ding the bells.'*

The Family



Harrison Holder
Aged 41: c.1916

A second son, Leonard, was born after the family moved to Hemingford Road. But Harrison's wife Thyryza died, leaving him with the two children.

In 1916 Harrison re-married, to Ada Thurley. Ada's parents, the Lanks, lived nearby in Belgrave Road, where she had been brought up in the early 1880s amongst the first residents of the newly built street.

Ada's first husband Philip, a carpenter, had died five years earlier leaving her a widow with a one year old daughter:



'Then she left her daughter with Granny Lank in Belgrave Rd, while she went away and worked and could send home money. Because widows didn't have anything to live on, did they?'

Perhaps this proximity explains how Ada first met Harrison. Or perhaps he knew her father from work. Like the Holders, the Lanks had moved to Cambridge from the countryside, where Ada's father had started his working life as a ploughman in rural Lincolnshire. But after his marriage he had moved to Cambridge in search of better prospects with a job as a Railway Guard. Both families were typical

Ada Holder (nee Lank) of many others moving into the new community of Romsey Town. 1885-1921

'My mother died when I was three weeks old. Leaving my half sister with a new father and two step brothers. Terrible for my father! He went from housekeeper to housekeeper. But when I was very young I was looked after by my aunt, Mrs Sanders. I was very frightened of her husband! He was a Yorkshire man, and he was a huge, forbidding policeman. With an equally huge bicycle. And a very heavy hand!' JT

Ada and Harrison lived at No 18 for five years. Then in 1921, three weeks after giving birth to a daughter, Ada died. At 46 Harrison was a widower again, looking after two sons from his first wife, Ada's step daughter, and a new born baby.

Harrison still had to go to work to earn a living, so the baby, Jean, was at first looked after by her mother's sister, Mrs Sanders, who lived close by at No 48 Hemingford Rd. There then followed a succession of housekeepers:

'Well, the first Housekeeper he had, when I was about a year old, took me up to Yorkshire for a holiday, and she died. She went up to stay with relatives. I suppose I was shuttled back to Cambridge.

And then Father had various housekeepers. And married again when I was nearly four – he married a Miss Brown, whose Father became Station master at Woburn Sands. He married for the last time in 1924. And she died when I was 18.' (JT)



Ada Holder: At back gate of No 18.

These early deaths, and the family units made up of children and step children, were part of life in inter war Romsey. The support system provided by extended family relationships in the neighbourhood provided practical help and emotional support. But in 2012, ninety one years after her mother's death, Jean still wonders what she was really like – *'because I was an orphan I was only told good things'.*

The House

Downstairs: The Front Room.

No 18 was typical of many of the houses in Hemingford Rd. There was a small front garden, with an entrance passage leading from the front door to the stairs, where a door opened into the back room and kitchen beyond. The rents and the dimensions were slightly higher than some of the smaller houses in Romsey streets nearer to the bridge where the front door opened directly from the pavement into the front room.

The front room was distinct from the rest of the house, and was only used on a Sunday when friends and relatives came round for tea. As a child Jean remembered the room always smelling musty. Inside was a piano. And on Sunday nights, when the family didn't go to Church, there was a was sing song round the piano. As a young girl Jean in the 1930s wasn't impressed:

'I'd much rather go to tea to the Hibbins family across the road (No 23). Because they weren't Churchy. And they had fish paste for tea. And also they were allowed to listen to Radio Luxembourg!'

The Back Room

The 'Back Room' was where the family sat. There was a dining room table, chairs and a fire in winter. On the fire was a trivet, with the kettle always on it, *'black as a witches hat'*, to keep a supply of warm water for the household. There was also a treadle sewing machine, and a radio and gramophone.

The radio was powered by an 'Accumulator' and the young Jean had to take it every week to be recharged at Bert Wheeler's workshop at the back of Hemingford House next to the Wesleyan Chapel. Jean was dismissive of the radio: *'They didn't have any children's programmes, it was all grownups. If you could hear it! It was wires dangling all over the place. It was crackle pop!'* But she remembered her brother Leonard playing the Gramophone: *'I was intrigued by the dog, HMV. And the big horn. My brother played continuously Earnest Luff singing 'Oh for the Wings of a Dove'. Which was the choir boys' top song. Because he was Choir boy at St Philips.'* The song was HMVs biggest seller in 1927.

Later the Gramophone passed on to her sister Edna: *'when she was courting she continually played 'The Indian Love Call' by Jeanette Macdonald and Nelson Eddy. That was her favourite.'*

The Kitchen

The 'Back Room' led to the Kitchen. It was a small room, with no table, but an old gas cooker, a very small sink in the corner with only a cold tap, and a 'Copper' in the corner.

The Copper

'A copper is a brick built edifice in the corner of the kitchen. And it had a place for you to light a fire in it. And a big zinc tub which was filled with water. And that was heated for wash day on Monday. Heated with coal. I don't know what time they had to light it – I never did it. Father probably did it before he went to work'. (JT)

The 'copper' was lit on Mondays for the weekly wash, and then again on Friday for bath night when the tin bath was brought into the kitchen from the shed outside. Everyone shared the same water – Jean, as the youngest, and a girl, went in first: *'Then came the dose of Syrup of Figs. My sister by this time was at work. And she used to bring me a cream walnut as a treat, to eat after the syrup of figs.'*

Harrison washed and shaved at the kitchen sink. It was the only sink in the house, and *'everything happened at the sink in the kitchen. As there was no bathroom, so the kitchen served as the bathroom'*.

The Toilet and the Chamber Pot – 'Gazunders'!

You had to go outside to get to the toilet. *'And if you wanted to go in the night – gazunders!. As we called them – 'goes under the bed'.*

Lighting

Most houses in inter-war Romsey were lit by gas, but because Harrison's eldest son Harold worked for the Electricity Board No 18 was one of the first to be converted to electricity. Down the road at No 48 Harrison's sister-in-law Jessie Saunders was still using the old the gas mantles in 1945.

Shopping & Meals

Jean recalled meals as a child in the 1920s: *'Oh, my step mother wasn't a very good cook. Suet pudding with lumps in it! Rabbit. Vegetables from my father's allotment, seasonal vegetables, nothing else. Except on Sundays you might have a tin of fruit. Or a tin of salmon. Great luxury. Or meat paste if you crossed the road to the Hipkins!'*

But she added: *'My father cooked gorgeous baked onions in their jackets in the fire, and he served them up with a big lump of butter.'*

The main meal was at midday and called 'Dinner'. Only in middle class houses was 'Dinner' in the evening. Later in the day there was 'Tea' – bread and jam and perhaps cake. Then before bed there was a 'Supper' drink, or a baked onion!

Home Deliveries Before Internet Shopping

'First the milkman, Tom White from Fulbourn, with his horse and cart. He brought a churn of milk to the front door, and you brought a receptacle to the door, and he filled up your receptacle and charged you accordingly.

Then there was the paraffin man, Browns, from Sturton St. Now he did have a van. He came round with paraffin and all sorts of interesting things like household brushes.

And then there was the Muffin man. Now the Muffin Man walked round with a big tray on his head of Muffins, covered up with green baize, and ringing a bell. It really happened.

And then there was 'Blind George'. He came round with a handcart with an old gramophone on it. And he sold parabolic sweets in bags. Yes, he frightened the life out of me! He was scary.... Well, he wore wellington boots..... And because he was blind.

And then there was the knife grinder. Who came round with a grinding machine on his cart, and he worked it with a treadle.

And the Baker. Now the baker had a van, but he used to come to the door with a huge basket of assorted bread over his arm, from the Co-op.' (JT)

Note:

Tom White's dairy was at No 35 Romsey Road before moving to Fulbourn. Parabolic Sweets were hard black Liquorice sweet: 'Unusually soothing'.

Upstairs

There were three bedrooms upstairs. The large one at the front was for Harrison and his wife; in the small middle bedroom Jean shared a bed with her sister; and the back bedroom was used by her brother Leonard. There was no heating upstairs. Jean recalled chilly mornings as a child in the 1920s:

'There were fireplaces, but they were only lit if you were ill in bed. Cold upstairs in winter! You used to get out of bed in the morning and hop on the cold lino, and go to the windows and draw pictures on the frost. There was a rug on the bedroom floor, so you hopped onto that as soon as you could.'

The morning wash was in cold water as there was no bathroom in the house.

' You had a wash stand upstairs, with those jugs and bowls on it. The jug of water was kept upstairs.'

The Garden



**No 18: Back gate
& Jean's dog**

A passage from the street next to No 16 gave access to Nos 18 and 20 as well. This shared back entrance meant that all comings and goings were through each others gardens. There was a lack of privacy but with it came the security of watchful eyes that allowed back doors to be left unlocked.

Despite the impression from the road of terraced houses densely packed together, the gardens were long and unenclosed with the low fences that gave a liberating sense of space stretching towards the backs of the houses in Belgrave Road.

In the garden there was a shed. Then the vegetable patch, which supplemented the vegetables that Harrison grew on his allotment in Coleridge Road

And finally came the chicken house
– one always to be fattened up for Christmas!



**Jean Holder (front) with
her sister Edna Thurley
in the garden Of No 18:
Early 1920s**



**The Potterill sisters keeping a watchful
eye: Next door at No 20: 1930s**

Play - Marbles, Cherry Knock & Bombs

'Oh, we played in the street in those days.'

If the weather was bad children played in the garden sheds. Otherwise their playground was the street. In the 1920s no-one guessed that it would one day be full of parked cars.

Jean recalled seasonal games: *' In the summer it was Marbles, in the gutter, because there were no cars... And Hops Scotch – chalking on all the pavements. And Hoops in the winter*

because it was cold, with a stick, round the square - Hemingford Rd, St Philips Rd, Belgrave Rd, Mill Rd, back to Hemingford Rd

And when feeling mischievous there was 'Cherry Knock': 'If we had someone we didn't like very much - If they wouldn't give you the ball back - we used to 'Cherry Knock' them. You knock on someone's door and run away quickly and hide, and watch them come to the door and look up and down the road!

Her companions were neighbouring children - Ralph Ward (No 26), Hugh Snazle (No 38), Percy Gooch. The boys taught Jean to make 'bombs'. Filled with caps, they were meant to explode on the pavement but : 'the boys would teach me how to swing these things round, and I let go too soon by mistake, and it went sailing through Mrs Odom's window (No 27). It smashed the window. She went to see my father and I had some sort of punishment! But I only got a smack very occasionally. I was very close to my father, and was rather spoilt, because I had lost my mother. And my sister spoilt me too, and my elder brother. I was very, very close to my half sister.'

Holidays – 'It never rained in Gorleston!'

There was no foreign travel and only one family holiday a year – a week in Gorleston, Norfolk: 'Because father was a railwayman he had a pass. And we used to go by train to Gorleston every year. And we stayed with the widow of a fisherman.

And in those days you took what food you wanted in, and she cooked it. It wasn't the other way round. Of course you sat on the beach all day. You could obtain ice-cream cornets for a half penny. And the high-light of the holiday was a visit to 'the pops', the concert party. It never rained!.'



**In the sea with woollen costumes!
Basil Scarff (left); Jean Holder (right).**



**On the beach wrapped up
Mrs Scarff (left); Mrs Holder (centre).**

Hemingford Road residents at Gorleston 1920s: Holders & Scarffs (No 44)

Romsey Town

Family

Jean's world as a child in the 1920s and 1930s was very local. And visited on foot.

Unlike many families today she had aunts, uncles and cousins nearby. Her grandmother Lank continued to live in Belgrave Road, while both her mother's sister's were living in Hemingford Road when she was born - Lucy Carpenter was recorded in Street Directories at No 91 from 1913 until the 1950s, while Jessie Sanders, who looked after her as a child, was at No 48 from 1910 until the 1960s.



Further afield her grandfather John Holder had moved to Cavendish Road, where one of Harrison's brothers continued to live.

Two other brother's, both engine drivers, lived in David Street and in Ross Street with their families.

The Holders: A Railway Family - Sons and Daughters (c. 1916)

Back centre: Harrison . Front centre: John (b.1843) & Sophia (b.1844)

Christmas

'Christmas was fantastic, because the Holder family gathered mostly at Uncle George's in Cavendish Rd, and we had fantastic games like Spin the Plate, and if you dropped it you had to do a forfeit.

A huge family. And huge meals. Christmas chicken of course, and a big beef and a ham, for lunch. And then tea, and Auntie Tilly made the most lovely coconut pyramids, she was renowned for her coconut pyramids. And then a bit later on the kids were all put together in one bed – there were about 6 of us. We were so tired we just all fell asleep.

We didn't go home that night – well the men were on the beer I suppose, and up to no good!' (JT)

School: Jean went to St Philip's Infants School in Catherine St (2012: School Court), and then Romsey Junior School in Coleridge Rd. From there she got a scholarship to Cambridge and County High School for Girls in Mackenzie Rd.

Church: Every Sunday she walked to church with her parents at St Philip's on Mill Road: *'I went to Church every Sunday. Sunday School in the morning, Sunday School in the afternoon. And sometimes Church with parents in the evening. My father used to pass me peppermints to keep me quiet! Sermons were a bit long in those days!'*

The Kinema: It was a world without TV where a trip to the cinema offered magical entertainment: *'To my surprise my Father said we were going out one Saturday afternoon, and he took me to The Kinema. It was a Charlie Chaplin film. He was fantastic. I was absolutely gobsmacked. And from then on they had children showings in the morning. They had cowboy films. It was pretty rowdy!'*

Shops: Most shopping was done at the Co-op, or from home deliveries. But for small items and children's treats 'Wigy' Searle ran a 'Grocer's and General Dealers' at No 52 on the corner of Hemingford Road and St Philips Road : *'He was so called because he had a toupee! He was very adept at making cone bags with blue sugar paper, into which he measured a bit of sugar or whatever – because nothing came in packages. Nothing was packed in those days. So he had big tins of biscuits, and you could often buy a cone of broken biscuits'*

'But he was deemed to be a bit mean. So with our Saturday pennies which I got for my chores, there was a little shop run by Miss Blackwell half way between 'Wigy's' and Vinery Road. And she was a spinster lady, with a sweet shop in her front room, with all these lovely jars of sweets, which when they got nearly empty towards the end of the week, she would empty the sweets into half penny bags. They were a delight, because you never knew what you were going to get in your halfpenny bag.'

The other halfpenny I perhaps spent on a gob sucker, because gob suckers changed colour and you had to keep on taking them out to see what colour they were.'

Pocket Money Jobs

'Well, if it was bad weather, perhaps I'd clean the silver, cutlery ready for Sunday. You weren't allowed on the living room floor on a Saturday because the lino was polished. Newspapers were laid down ready for Sunday. My brother was very fussy about his shirts when he used to work at The Fitzwilliam, and I used to take his shirts to be done by a Mrs Firley. You came down Hemingford Rd and along St Philips Road towards Vinery Rd. Right on the corner of Vinery Rd she lived. But her little laundry was in St Philips Rd.'

The other thing that I had to do was go up to Sennett's on Mill Rd to get his special sausages for Saturday, and when I did that I had to call on my father's brother in Cavendish Road to pick up the football. He ran a football club, they had little tickets and put them in a hat, and someone drew out, and perhaps you won some money.'

So those were my Saturday jobs to earn my penny.'

Leaving home

Jean left school at 16 in 1937 to work in the Telephone Exchange.

When war broke out she joined the Women's Army (ATS) and left home for Carlisle.

But after the war she married Dennis Turner, son of a railwayman from Romsey, and the young couple moved back to a rented house in Hemingford Road – No 89.

Later they bought their own, new home on Queen Edith's Way, where Jean still lives today.

Her father, Harrison Holder died in 1945.

Then & Now: 1920s & 2012

'How frail life was in those days – what was taken for granted was early death, all these different relationships.

Things are different now. But things that happened in the first half of the 20th century would be unthinkable now – like death in childbirth. That is so rare now.

My mother being orphaned, losing her father at about the age of 4, and her mother at the age of 11, had a profound effect in all the rest of her life. And that sort of thing happened all the time. Illnesses that we now treat with a couple of pills and a few days off could be fatal.' (JB).

'Yes, it did. Women expected to lose some of their children'. (JT)



Note:

All quotes Jean Turner unless specified.

JT: Jean Turner (nee Holder)

JB: John Bartholomew (son of Jean Turner's step sister Edna Thurley)

2. 1923-1960: No 119 – ‘Much more modern’

‘I daren’t tell them we had a car and a bathroom!’

Harry (1892-1962), Kate (1898-1976) & Margaret (b.1929)
Thulborn



1930s



1960: The garden

‘All the other houses had a half wall, and then railings the other half - with the gate. All the railings were taken down in the war, and my father had the brick wall built.Mother always kept her windows lovely, with net curtains’.

‘Brighton Villa’

‘My grandmother was a Cambridge person. But she went to Brighton to work in service. And she met and married a policeman. So my mother was born in Brighton.

But when my grandfather retired, my grandmother always wanted to come back to Cambridge. And they came back to 117 Hemingford Road. But OUR house wasn’t there then.

When my parents got married...it appears they went back to Brighton and my father started up a coal business.

Then they seem to have come back from Brighton, and my father bought this piece of land off the laundry people (No 121), and had that house built.’

Margaret Squires (nee Thulborn)

No 119 was completed in 1923 on one of the last vacant plots remaining in the road. Built forty years after the first Hemingford Road terraces, in a new inter-war style, it can no

longer can be described as 'Victorian'. It is the only house with a double bay reaching up to the first floor bedroom, and the mock castle crenulations that adorn all the neighbouring bay windowed houses have been replaced with slate. Standing apart from its neighbours, it is distinctive because it is detached. Because it had a bathroom. And because it was owner occupied.



1923: Wedding party of Harry Thulborn & Kate Rattley in garden of No 119. The Laundry at No 121 visible behind.

No 119 was built by Harry Thulborn, a 31 year old self employed window cleaner. Like the Holder family seventy years earlier, he was part of the continuing migration into Cambridge from the surrounding rural hinterland. Brought up at Ten Mile Bank in the middle of the Norfolk fens, he had started work before the First World War as a farm labourer. An agricultural accident had led to a long stay in Addenbrookes Hospital and it is probably then that he met his wife, Kate Ratley.

Harry Ratley, Kate's father, a former Brighton policeman, was custodian of the recently opened 'Romsey Town Recreation Ground' and lived at No 117 Hemingford Road. The land that No 119 stands on had previously belonged to the Ward family who ran the '*Bluefield Laundry*' at No 121, and presumably



**'Bluefield Laundry' Stables:
Building Plan: 1.8.1900**

informal contact over the garden fence led to Harry Ratley's new son-in-law acquiring the vacant plot between No 117 and No 121 where the now redundant laundry stable stood. Harry Thulborn had the house built, probably by Sparkes in Devonshire Road, and lived there until his death nearly forty years later in 1962.

Tenants not Owner Occupiers:

Owning the house that you live in is a very English and comparatively recent phenomenon.

Most of the early residents of Hemingford Road rented their houses - by 1910, when nearly all the original plots had been built on, the vast majority of the houses were lived in by tenants (72 out of 99 houses: Land Valuation Records)



**1923: Rear. Unknown.
Harry & Kate Thurlborn.
Harry Rattley**

The Family

'Mother didn't mind anybody, she never got ruffled or anything!'

The house was always full.

Kate's father Harry Ratley lived with them until his death in 1943, while Harry and Kate had two boys and two girls of their own. As well as this immediate family they took in first Harry's niece, and then Kate's niece too.

Margaret, born in 1929, remembered that her mother *'never got ruffled'*, and the image of a large, happy extended family may be the envy of many today. But the stories behind how both nieces ended sharing their aunt's house in Cambridge is one of broken families elsewhere, and minimal state support – Harry's niece was rejected by her mother, while Kate's niece came to Cambridge from Brighton because both parents had died, and in the process she had the additional loss of being separated from her sisters. Both were lucky and grateful that Kate gave them a home.



Harry Thulborn with Margaret: 1929



Margaret & her grandfather in the garden of 119 Hemingford Rd: 1930s

Harry worked hard. Although he had a car, this was strictly for pleasure – he used to cycle off to his jobs with a ladder over his shoulder.

The Car

'I think we were the only one with a car in that part of Hemingford.

You didn't have all these people rushing in a car off to town, we had to walk. The car was for pleasure. It was kept in pristine condition. Cleaned every week. He took a pride in everything

And we used to go to Hunstanton in the 1930s. No-one else did

And in the autumn, when it got a bit cool, we used to go to Royston Heath and have a picnic every Sunday.

That was my mother's pleasure, to get out. She used to pack up overnight. She used to cook new potatoes, corn beef, ham, we'd sit on the green there and have our dinner. It was a wonderful family life.'

The House

'We weren't rich and we weren't poor'

Downstairs: The Front Room

Unlike many of the older houses in the road, the front door in Harry Thulborn's new house opened into a hallway that ran directly to the kitchen, without going through the 'back' downstairs room. This potentially gave two rooms where members of the family could seek some privacy, separated from the household comings and goings. But as at No 18 in the 1920s, the front room was rarely used except for ceremonial occasions when the family were on their best behaviour. All other activities took place in the kitchen, the only warm room in the house, and privacy was not normally expected nor desired by members of the family.

'The front room was for high days and holidays. Christmas we used that. My mother saved up, bought a nice hide suite you see – it wasn't very comfortable, it was cold!

But we used to have a lovely fire in there all over Christmas, that was the best room you see, if you had visitors, that's where people came.'

The Middle Room

'We did it all up nice, and we were quite comfortable there'

The back room – known as the 'Middle Room' – became a bedroom. In the 1930s it was occupied by Kate Thulborn's niece, and in the late 1940s with the post war housing shortage it became the first home for Kate's daughter Margaret and her newly wedded husband Eric Squires. Margaret's brother fitted a sink into a corner of the room, which allowed them to wash in privacy, away from the eyes of the rest of the family. And it was here that their son was born:

'Eric decorated, and my brother, the eldest one, he was in plumbing and heating then, so we got him to put a corner basin in. You see we hadn't got a basin in the bathroom then, and we always had to wash in the sink in the kitchen. Like you did then. So we did it all up, and we were quite comfortable there But then I had my son, two years later. We were a bit cramped.'

Margaret and Eric moved to Romsey Road in 1953



Early 1950s: Newly married. Margaret & Eric outside their room at No 119.

The Kitchen

'We were much more modern.'

The family lived in the kitchen, which had been extended into the scullery to create a large room where they cooked, ate meals together, sat and talked. And where the coal fire would be lit in winter - the only heating in the house: *'when it was really cold, we used to get undressed in front of the fire and go up to bed'*.

There was a gas cooker, a sink and a kitchen cabinet, with a white wooden table with wooden chairs. The table required regular scrubbing to keep it clean.

'We didn't have hot water, you just heated up a big old iron kettle to wash up. Just cold water in the kitchen. And the gas geyser in the bathroom. Cold water came out of the bath tap'

Kate Thulborn didn't have a fridge until the 1970s, although there was a 'Meat Safe', with a wire mesh grill to keep the flies away, outside in the shade, where it didn't get the sun on it. So all the food had to be brought daily:

'You bought your stuff more or less fresh every day. The milk was delivered daily. The Butcher was 'Baron & Harris' on the corner of Romsey Terrace. It was all our turns to go up there before we went to school. So that was all fresh. And mother used to go into town on the bus, about three times a week, to Sainsbury's, to get butter and bacon, and we used to go with her.' Fresh eggs didn't have to be bought: *'We always had a cooked breakfast! My mother kept chickens all through the war. We had egg and bacon through the war'*

Harry Thulborn left for work between at 7.30 and 8.00, working long days. But he always came home for a cooked dinner at midday – meat, vegetables, Yorkshire puddings, pies, and a desert as well. This was the family's main meal of the day, and all took a lot of preparation.

In the evenings, once the girls had washed up after tea, everyone sat around the fire. Margaret remembered *'we would sit round the fire, on these hard wooden chairs, you didn't think anything different then. I don't think fireside chairs came in until after the war.'*

There was no electricity in the house until 1945, so the kitchen (and all the other rooms) was lit by gas: *'We had the two gas mantles over the fireplace, where we used to sit and read - we had two newspapers every day, which weren't expensive like they are today'*.

Entertainment was provided by the Radio: *' We were allowed to stay up later on Saturday night for 'In Town Tonight' at 8.00. Well, that was a musical – singing, all that sort of thing, comedians. It was in London. Otherwise we had to be in bed at 8.00.'*

'And we used to sit knitting. Mother taught us all to knit. Monday night you had to darn socks and things like that. And we'd knit jumpers. I can remember that I wanted to knit my new brother a little knitted suit, he was about two by then. My mother let me go up Mill Road, get some needles and pattern, and I knitted this little suit for him. I was about ten.'

Toilet

The toilet was outside. As far as Margaret was concerned this was normal, even in the 1940s – everybody else's was too. And compared to family visits to her Uncle out in the fens, having a flush toilet, even if it was outside, was a luxury: *'They didn't even have a kitchen. It was the front room, and then the living room, with the fire. But the tap was outside. And the toilet was outside, with a tin bath, in the outhouse. But in those days they used to have the pail under the bed. And that was good experience for us, because that was going back in time, we were much more modern.'*

Upstairs: Bathroom

Upstairs were three bedrooms, and a bathroom. Baths were every Saturday night for all the family: *'And then we were allowed to stay up to see 'In Town Tonight' at 8.00, and then you had to quickly get up to bed. You didn't hang about, because it was so cold. We had hot water bottles, because it was freezing.'*

'We also had a bathroom, which nobody else had, although we didn't really know at the time. Years later, my cousin who had lived with us, she used to say where she worked, people used to talk about having no bathroom and that. She said 'I daren't tell them we had a car and bathroom!'

There was no heating in there, no basin. There was a geyser, which used to frighten us to death. My mother used to pull this thing out, and then put a match to it, and 'Oh!', we used to be worried to death!'

Bedrooms

Grandfather Ratley lived with the family until his death in 1943. He had the 'back bedroom'.

Kate and Harry occupied the largest bedroom at the front, while the three children had the 'middle bedroom'. Margaret and her sister Betty slept in a four foot bed, with their brother Graham in a single bed. For storing their clothes they all shared an inherited chest of drawers, and reflecting on her childhood Margaret commented on just how few possessions they had compared with today's children.

'There was nothing in the bedrooms. We didn't have all the books they have today. We had books – we always had books for Christmas. But we didn't have anything – we just had one present for our birthday through the year.

So you didn't go up to your bedroom to read – for one thing it would be too cold most of the year! You went to your bedroom to sleep.'

Garden & Allotment

There was a big garden, and Harry grew a lot of vegetables, while Kate looked after the chickens. Harry had also two allotments in Vinery Road : *'He used to bring this great big pail*

full of peas and whatnot on a Saturday night. And when we were going to Hunstanton the next day my mother would cook peas, and new potatoes, all came off the allotment. That's how it was – my father worked hard. Thrifty! I mean we weren't rich and we weren't poor. We didn't have abundance. But we had good quality food and clothes. But not a lot of them!

Relations

Kate liked visitors coming to the house. And she made regular trips to see her Aunts. Once a month she visited her father's aunt in Trafalgar Road, while she visited her uncle's wife in Sedgwick Street every Monday for tea. She was like a grandmother to the children, who had never known either of their own grandmothers.

Play

Margaret recalled that as a child in the 1930s everyone congregated in Romsey Road in front



of the garages next to No 35. Children would come from Vinery Road and the top end of Hemingford Road, and they'd play tig, or marbles, or ball games, until they had to go home for tea at 5.30.

Hemingford Road: 1930s
Children could play on the street when there were only toy cars!

The children also spent a lot of time on the nearby Recreation Ground, and sometimes

they took their tea there: *'There was always people there from school. And when you went in the gate, if you turned left, the Bowling Green was there, and there was this wooden shed, a summer place, with a bench round it. And we used to sit in there, especially if it was a bit wet, and we used to play in there. Or talk. Or how you mess about'.*

Margaret also remembers looking out the bedroom window watching other children play while she had to adhere to strict bedtimes: *'Because we overlooked the Rec sometimes of an evening, maybe on a Saturday, after we'd gone to bed, my brother and I, we'd stand in the window, because there was the two tennis courts there, lovely tennis courts, the hard one and a grass one, and there was always people playing tennis, and there were all the children out there. But of course we always had to be in bed! A lot of the children from Ross St, they were allowed out till any hour!'*

Neighbours

Mr Matthews, an electrician lived next door at No 123. He had converted the old Laundry into a workshop, and Margaret and her brother would play there with his two daughters.

Nearby at No 103 was a sweet shop run by Mr and Mrs Reed. Mr Reed was a railwayman, and wasn't allowed to have another job. So his wife and her sister ran it. Later, the Reeds took over the bigger corner shop on the corner of Hemingford and St Philips Road. Known as The Handy Shop, it sold groceries as well as sweets.

Margaret also remembers Goodrum's Dairy, with its bottling plant behind No 75, and Ralph Goodrum coming round with his horse and cart delivering the milk even in the 1950s. The horses would be put in the field in Seymour Street each night (now the site of Seymour Court) - in those days the road ended at the field, with no continuation round to Mill Road. And the children would go fishing in the nearby brook.

'Old Mrs Goodrum, oh she was a battle axe, tough old bird!'

1940s: 'And then I'd grown up'

Friends and family still remained local. As a young girl in the 1930s Margaret used to help wash down her father's car in Charlie Squire's yard nearby in Romsey Road (No 35). The house and yard had formerly been 'White's Dairy' and Charlie had converted the cowsheds into garages in 1929 to rent to those who didn't want to leave their cars parked on the road. The water for washing the cars came from the well once used for the cows. Charlie's son Eric was a few years older than Margaret, and they'd meet as she washed the car. But with the outbreak of war in 1939 he disappeared from her life for five years:



Margaret 1948 : In Garden of No 119. Former laundry behind.

'Then, when he came back, I think I was down the yard washing the car when he came up and chatted to me. And then the next thing, my father said ' Would you like to come round, I like music'. We had a piano in the house - everybody had a piano.....So he came round, and he started playing this piano to us, and then



c.1953: Margaret's son Russ being looked after by her sister in law at No 119 while she was in hospital with her second child

he said: ' Would you like to go the pictures with me', and it all started from that.

It was just before my 18th birthday. I was only 12 or 13 when he went away,... and then I'd grown up.

So that's how it was...within a few months he asked me to marry him. We were married in April 1949.'

Margaret and Eric lived at 119 Hemingford Road until 1953. They then bought No 6 Romsey Road, where they lived until moving to Perne Road in 1960.

Note: All quotes are from Margaret Squires (nee Thulborn)

Postscript: 2006 - No 119

'Modernisation' again !

- Loft Conversions & Extensions

Leigh Chambers & Alex Plant



'Everyone was so friendly'

'We moved to Romsey from London over two years ago. We knew we wanted to live in Cambridge but didn't know the city very well and ended up discovering it through a year's worth of house hunting.

We very quickly became interested in Romsey, not just because it's close to the station (which was one of our criteria) but because we liked the feel of it.

When we looked for the first time at our property on Hemingford Road we took our then two year old to Vinery Park afterwards and were really impressed with the number of young families there.

And everyone was so friendly - we, in fact, ended up chatting with our future next door neighbours.

So, likes about the area, very clear - the community feel to it, Mill Road - the convenience and hubbub of it. Dislikes - it sometimes feels a bit cramped, houses very close together, wheelie bins everywhere.

We made (and are still making) quite a lot of alterations to our house - had a loft conversion, increased the size of the kitchen, knock through from living room to dining room etc. It's been hell, especially as I was pregnant at the time, and we knew it wouldn't be pleasant but were prepared to make the sacrifice because we liked the house and the area.

Definitely feels different 'over the bridge' - it's a bit more 'in your face' nearer town and just feels busier, perhaps because the pavements are smaller.'

Leigh Chambers: 2006

3. 1960s to present: Red Russia, Good Neighbours - & Central Heating

'Then we went upmarket and had gas central heating put in'

Alan Fraser: 1963 to present

Interview: 2006

Romsey Town

'The neighbourly thing was good - people in those days could go out, leave your windows open, leave your doors unlocked'

'When I first went to work on the University they asked where I lived. I said 'Romsey Town' and the boss said 'Oh, Red Russia girl!' (Marlene Fraser)

Alan Fraser has lived in Romsey Town all his life and seen many changes. His father's job as a bricklayer on the railways brought his parents from March to Cambridge, and like many other railway families they lived close to work in Romsey Town.

Allan was brought up in Ross Street, and went to school at St Philip's just across the road. When he left school Alan started working for the railway as a bricklayer.

As a boy and young man Allan and his mates were 'sport mad' - football, cricket, billiards and table tennis. Several of them played football for the county youth side, and Romsey Rec was their home ground:

'They used to lock the Rec gates then. The only naughty thing we ever done, when we all got selected for the county youth side, we climbed over the fence at night to run and train on the Rec.'

'Our time did come...we all got county colours, our first match was played on the Rec, I always remember that because my dad came to watch me, then we played up United'

'You wasn't allowed to ride your bike on that Rec. We had a full time custodian and assistant. Taffy, and before that Tom Farthing. If he saw you ride a bike through there he'd shout at you. He'd have your guts for garters.'

'That was the best bowling green in Cambridge. They used to play county matches there'.



Alan met his wife Marlene on the Recreation Ground. Marlene recalled that: *'Alan was playing football, I'd got my little cousin on the swings, he waved at me, and I waved back, and that was sort of it.*

I was 15, he was 20! Engaged when I was 16 and married when I was 21'.

Railway Town & Red Russia

'The only people that I can recollect having baths when we were young in the 1940s, they obviously had a lot more money. I found then that there was a big gap between the lower class and the upper class, and the upper class had a lot better things.

'Romsey itself was called Railway Town; Red Russia was another name it got.

The air's lovely and fresh, but you used to just get that sulphur smell And the smoke used to wallow as you went down Mill Rd.

In Romsey a lot of people worked on the railway. I used to go to work 5.00, 6.00 in the mornings, and I used to see the engine drivers, and the guards, with their old billy can hanging on their docky bag on their back - the engine driver used to heat his water on the footplate.

Most of the old railwaymen have died. There used to be loads of them in Vinery Rd. One in particular, Vic Collins, he was a Royal engine driver, always drove the royal engines..... People were different then.'

The House

'We got a mortgage.'

The engaged couple wanted to buy a house, rather than rent. Marlene's parents rented a council house in Hobart Road, and Alan's parents rented privately in Ross St. Advice on this big step was conflicting: *'my father always said you don't want to rent, it will never be your own. But then you got on the other side of the coin, people used to say 'oh, you ought to get a council house, they do all your repairs for you'. But we went with our parents. We got a mortgage.'*

At a time when 100% mortgages were unthinkable, buying the house meant putting all their savings down on a deposit. It left nothing for a wedding, or for making alterations to the house, so they waited a year to get married:



'When we moved in here we didn't have any carpet. If we had people come round one night, we had to sit on the floor. I only had two little fireside chairs. We had a second hand sideboard. We had bare boards in there. And a bit of lino on the floor. We had my Mum's second hand cooker. Only a spin drier, everything washed by hand, sheets and everything.'

Slowly, as they saved some money, Alan made changes to the 60 year old house:

'It wanted decorating right through. The bathroom was in the kitchen. Sliding door, not even a double door from the kitchen to the toilet and the bathroom. What I did, before building the extension, I knocked the bathroom out and took part of the back bedroom and put a bathroom up there.

Then I put in a gas fire in the living room, and put a back boiler in the other fireplace which gave us hot water for the bathroom upstairs.

Then we went upmarket and had gas central heating put in.'

Improvements have continued over the years. The two downstairs rooms were knocked into one, and an extension was added to the kitchen. Neighbours were making similar improvements in the 1960s and '70s, and they helped each other out.

'We were neighbourly'

'I didn't do John's for money, I helped him do it. I helped Keith Wadham. We put windows in John's place, we put fences up.

My mates all lived round here, if one was a plumber, I'd go round and do their brickwork and they'd come round to do my plumbing.

You never mentioned money. Everybody kept to their promise, they didn't let you help them and then not turn up at yours. That's how it was'.

Work: From Romsey Town to the University

Alan left the railway in the late 1970s to work as a self employed builder. Much of his work was local. The housing stock in Romsey needed modernising if it was going to have a longer life, but many of the older residents couldn't afford the work that was required. The General Improvement Area helped to make this possible with grants towards improvements - installing new bathrooms, creating internal toilets, insulating roofs, providing damp proof courses.

Improvement Grants

'You had to apply to the council, you only got so much. A lot of the property in Romsey in them days, there's still some now, they had an old coal shed built on the back with a door to an outside toilet too. Well, a lot of people had that knocked down, then an extension put through to the kitchen. A lot of the people where I went had a bathroom built. But these houses in

But although he was never out of work, without capital it was always difficult balancing the books: *'I couldn't get my money in quick enough. A lot of the jobs I did was council grant jobs, well, you'd got to wait for your grant from the Council before you could pay me, and sometimes the Council weren't too swift, not in them days, and I'd got to lay out maybe a couple of thousand for the next job, the job profit was gone.'*

So in the 1980s Alan went to work for the University as chief maintenance technician to the Maths Dept, a job he enjoyed until his retirement working for 'a professor who was a great man. I would have worked 24 hours a day for him. He was fantastic'.



Change

When Alan was younger cars were few, money was tight, and life was much more local. It meant that people knew and cared for each other in a way that he feels is missing today:

'My job in the morning, we've always had a dog, I used to walk the dog through the Rec, walk up Ross St, see to the tables for Marlene's aunt, see if my mum was alright, then come round the block to St Philips Road, back again, and then to work. The neighbourly thing was good, you can see a big gap, there is a big gap.'



The growth of the 'Buy to Let' market with its absentee landlords, short term contracts and rapid turn- over of tenants has changed this. None of this is new, but in the most tenants in the road shared similar backgrounds, and were families. No one ever imagined that students would be living in the area. But the dramatic



past

transformation of The Cambridge College of Arts & Technology, serving local residents, into Anglia Ruskin University attracting students from all over the world has put huge pressure of the local housing market and pushed students 'over the bridge' in the search for accommodation.

'This was a Terrific Area'

'This was a real classy area, even allowing for the dairy and the horse and carts, this was a real sought after area. If you bought a property in Hemingford Rd they used to say 'You've got some money'. But you hadn't! That's how people spoke. This was a terrific area. But as soon as you got the 'Student Lets' its just gone down.

I like my garden, John likes his garden. In one Let House we had 16 stinking black bags of rubbish out the back because they weren't educated enough to put them in wheelie bins. The grass was all uncut, there are trees there too big for these gardens. I had a nice lawn, but it never got the sun because of the trees next door, so I took it all up and put a patio down.

There was a letter in the paper the other day about people who buy these houses up, let them, and forget about them, and how degraded that has brought the area down. That man in my mind should have got the OBE! He spoke the truth. They don't bother.'

For older residents who are at home all day it can be disconcerting not knowing who lives next door, and upsetting if they have been disturbed by late night parties. Frequently the problem is poor property management by landlords. Increased regulation is a politically charged issue, but ensuring that older residents aren't alienated by change and feel at home in their own neighbourhood are issues that need grappling with if Romsey is going to remain a mixed community.

4. A 1950's Journey : No 89

Caravan to house..... tenants to owner occupiers

Pam and Keith Wadham

'Living like Gypsies' – Post War Housing Shortage

'I came to Cambridge from Sutton in Surrey in September 1951 when I married as this was where my husband's job and home was. We couldn't find anywhere to live so we brought a caravan and had it on a site at Milton. My poor Gran, who had brought four of us up after our parents died in 1941, thought we were going to live like Gypsies and sent my mother's single sister Aunt Elsie (who was also our legal Guardian with Gran) to Cambridge to inspect it. She found everything satisfactory as we had brought a Barclay Courier Caravan which as a fairly good one in 1951.



The site was owned by Mr & Mrs Day – a Salvation Army couple- who divided their large garden into four plots for four caravans.

The House: Paying Rent



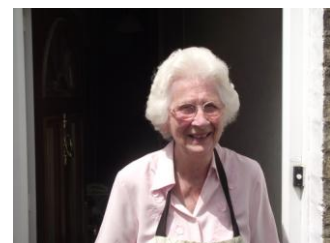
We lived in Milton until Dec 1953 when we were offered 89 Hemingford Road to rent. This was wonderful news as we had just had our first child and it was a bit cramped in the caravan. We moved in when Neil was five weeks old. There was no bathroom.

All the neighbours were wonderful in the road in fact Joan and John Curtis were already in No 87 and were our neighbours for 54 years. Mr and Mrs Kedsierski at No 91 moved in one month after us and were our neighbours over 40 years. They were like grandparents to our two children. We now have their granddaughter living at No 91 so that is nice. Everyone knew all the folk who lived around you and the younger folk looked after the older ones with shopping and odd jobs.

The House: Paying a Mortgage

'What joy to have an inside toilet with two young children'

We were able to buy our house in 1960 as the Landlord Mr Murphit had died. We were able to get a grant from Cambridge City Council to help pay to have a bathroom installed. What joy to have an inside toilet with two young children'.



Pam Wadham: 2012

5. A Railway Family in 1986: N0 87

'My father was a guard for 51 years, and he did his best to put me off, it was mainly the unsocial working hours, but I've always loved the railways' (Cambridge Weekly News: 12.6.1986)

John Curtis: late 1950s - 1990s

Tales from the days of steam railways

JUST THE JOB

by
Philippa Danks

ALTHOUGH he has been driving trains for more than 30 years, John Curtis is very fond of a train journey up to Scotland and back on his day off.

As a passenger he has the time to appreciate this rather cinematic version of seeing the scenery, and he can sit back and focus properly on the "moving screen" in a way that's impossible on, say, his second journey of the day down to Liverpool Street.

John loves the railways and says quite openly he would gladly do his job all over again.

"If somebody said to me 'would you go on the blessed railways again?' I 'hould, say 'yes' because 're enjoyed every minute of 'and that's no bulling," said John whose career began with the then LNER 43 years ago when he took a job as a cleaner at 15½.

Training

He was probably a classic little boy with a train set and when I asked him about this he said he had had no son himself but he had bought train sets for his two daughters who had loved them. They now bring their own children to give him a wave from Mill Road bridge.

In those days there were no organised training courses. Instead older and experienced drivers used to volunteer to run "Mutual Improvement Classes" for the younger lads to get the hang of driving.

They were held in the Old Band Room at Fletchers Terrace under Mill Road Bridge and the railway would lend bits of equipment.

He in turn taught for five

"Say if I was driving the London train and people saw me slumped collapsed in the driver's cab, all they'd think would be 'hope they get another one on,'" said John, a trifle grimly and showing the effect of commuters on a driver's sense of connection with his train.

When you think how long John has worked on the railways, the days when he shovelled fuel with "muscle power" are in sharp contrast to his stressful 90 mph journey, sometimes twice a day, up and down to Liverpool Street or King's Cross.

Feeling

On the one hand his years as a driver have given him valuable confidence in the driver's cab and on the other the older he gets the more he looks back nostalgically to his early days on the railways.

His talk with me was peppered with tales from when he worked before the war — how his eggs and bacon went up the chimney one day (when the driver and fireman used to cook their breakfast on the hot shovel); and how he once travelled from Yarmouth to Norwich through such a thick fall of snow that he couldn't see the tracks ahead.

"That was one of the earliest journeys I've ever had. Can you imagine the feeling of the train plunging into nothingness," he smiled. He also enjoyed the early morning trips to Yarmouth with dawn breaking on a fine summer's day.



It's a different world now but John Curtis is still in love with the world of trains.

must be the fact that his career spans such a changing era on the railways. When he started there were 123 steam engines in the yard at Cambridge and he remembers, say, journeying to March and bringing 80 back loaded with coal at 15 mph.

These days he is fully conversant with nine different types of engines — and he is about to add another two to his repertoire. John speaks about train engines in an affectionate way and refers to "my loco" as opposed to the rest of the engine.

"And it's only children and pensioners who still talk to the train driver," said John who feels that with the growth of commuting, passengers see the driver as an automated part of the engine.

Enjoyment

It was always his intention to be a train driver and at 15 this was the way he could work his way up.

"My father was a guard for 51 years and he did his best to put me off, it was mainly the unsocial working hours, but I've always loved the railways," said John.

Part of his enjoyment

6. 1980 -1990: No 77 The General Improvement Area

'Not the most favoured area of Cambridge'

Merryn & Guy Grimley

Merryn's Story

Moving in

'Houses full of books and musical instruments, but not a lot of money'

'When we moved into our house in Hemingford Road in February, 1980, it was very cold.

We had not yet had the central heating installed; the floor in the kitchen had been re-concreted, so we were not allowed to walk on it; and the boiler burst the first time we turned it on, following a very cold snap when the house had been empty and it had frozen solid. I had a lively two-and-a-half year old to attend to in all this and was six months pregnant with my second child. I do remember bursting into tears on my first evening, when something went wrong with the dinner I was attempting to cook in our non-existent kitchen – the last straw! - but I also remember that I instantly felt at home both in the house and in the area.

We had moved to Cambridge from London. My husband had been appointed Head Teacher of Little Thetford Primary School and for our first months we lived in East Chesterton, off Green End Road. That part of Cambridge felt bleak to me. It also felt like it could have been anywhere – any suburban development on the outskirts of any English town.



Romsey had a totally different feel to it. It had 'character'.

The old Cambridge brick houses were huddled together in a way which made you feel it would be impossible not to be neighbourly here and there was a pleasing uniformity of style about the architecture. The house we had bought had some fine Victorian features, including a lovely open fire-place with picture tiles dating from perhaps the 1920's, the original wood panelled doors (which we lovingly stripped by hand over the years, leaving them with a warm golden glow) and a nicely patterned tiled floor in the porch. The house had been bought and done up (badly) by a firm of builders.

We spent the next few years improving it and creating a small garden for the children out of the rubble they had left behind.



Romsey

'We liked the idea that we were living in Romsey Town – separate from Cambridge, with its own particular character'

I also remember going shopping on my first day and being struck by how friendly and chatty the shopkeepers were. This I had not found in the area we lived before – in fact I had been beginning to develop the view that Londoners were a lot more friendly than Cambridge people.

In Romsey at that time there were still quite a few local shops, small well-established family businesses.

Amongst these were the butcher's on the corner of St. Philips and Catharine St., and, opposite them, the Fish & Chip shop. There was also a proper corner shop at the Ross St. / St Philips junction, as well as a friendly greengrocer's and baker's on Mill Road. They made it their business to get to know their customers and were always ready to have a chat about themselves and their families. We liked the idea that we were living in Romsey Town – separate from Cambridge, with its own particular character.



Another pleasing thing that we soon discovered was that there appeared to be a lot of young families rather like ourselves moving into the area, i.e. teachers, social workers, university researchers – educated, middlish class, leftish wing, with houses full of books and musical instruments, but not a lot of money.



The estate agent had described Romsey, I remember, as 'not being the most favoured area of Cambridge' – this in answer to a query about why virtually the same house in, say, Petersfield or Newnham, was so much more expensive – but it suited us perfectly and was what we could afford. And we found we were surrounded by like-minded people.

General Improvement Area

Around this time, Romsey was declared a 'General Improvement Area'. The city council had identified a number of districts in the city which were in need of a bit of bucking up. In practical terms this meant grants for housing improvements, and some small scale community schemes.

Richard Darlington, who headed the council team, was keen to involve local people in decision-making and felt it part of his brief to foster and support community activities. Residents were invited to come to meetings in the St. Philips Church Hall and ideas were put forward and implemented: minor road improvements, the planting of flower beds and bushes on some street corners, play equipment on the corner of Cavendish Road, for example. I don't think there was a lot of money to spend. He set up a system of street reps in an effort to involve as many local people as possible.

I was certainly affected by the positive encouragement Richard Darlington gave to the community projects we started. I think he wanted the improvements to be for the whole community, not just middle class house-buyers. I think that kind of support is very important in empowering people to take action. It validated what we were doing and gave us the impetus to continue.

'Romsey Neighbours'

'We were, of course, the 'incomers' and were well aware of the fact that there was already an established community here into which – by reason of education, interests and lifestyle - we did not really fit and who probably resented the fact that they and their families were being priced out.

At the same time, it was this feeling of community that we particularly valued in Romsey and we were anxious to be an accepted part of it.

Shortly after I moved into the area, I was invited to come to a meeting of 'The Romsey Neighbours', which had been recently set up by a number of 'incomer' housewives. Bea Doubleday, who also lived in Hemingford Road (now, with her husband Chris, wardens of the Quaker Meeting House in Jesus Lane), was a leading light in this and meetings were held in her house. It was a kind of 'good neighbours' scheme.

We used to visit new families when they moved into the area and give them tips about local facilities; working with social services, we also visited elderly residents and helped them with practical things like shopping, gardening or redecorating their houses, roping in our husbands to assist'.

Community Activities

In the early 1980's Romsey was a-buzz with community groups. Apart from Romsey Neighbours & 'Over the Bridge' (a local Newsletter supported by the GIA), the local political parties, (Labour & Liberal – not many Conservatives about) were very active, there was CND, Mums & Toddlers, Babysitting Circles (2), a toy library and a 'skills swap' scheme where people offered to do jobs for each other for tokens rather than money (a bit idealistic that one – it didn't last long).

It's true that you generally saw the same faces everywhere you went, but they were not all middle-class incomers. The residents of Ross Street set up a group and organised a street party to celebrate the Charles/Diana wedding. They also wanted to organise a disco for young people on the Rec. The Council refused them permission for this on the grounds that the noise would disturb the local residents, so some of us local residents got together and wrote a letter to the Cambridge Evening News in support of the Ross Street residents and upbraiding the Council for being such a kill-joy. We assured them we would not complain. I remembr that we earned editorial praise from the C.E.N. and the disco went ahead.

Romsey Fair

'The first community fair was held in late September 1982. There were stalls representing local schools, political parties, CND, Mums & Toddlers groups, with local musicians performing, fancy dress, tug-of-war and a harvest produce competition.

It was supposed to be on Romsey Rec, but it bucketed with rain, so was quickly moved to the Romsey Mill. Despite the weather, it worked well and it was decided to make it an annual event. but move it to July when we could hope for better

Moving on

In 1985 I went with my family to work in Italy for a year. I had recently trained as an EFL teacher and decided to try my luck abroad. I had had seven years at home with the children. Projects such as the Romsey Fair and 'Over the Bridge' had provided me with invaluable, albeit unpaid, experience in organising others, teamworking, meeting deadlines, keeping within budgets. All these skills came in useful in my future job as Director of Studies at a busy language school.

Changes

'The horrendous rise in house prices'

I am out of touch with what has been happening in recent years. My impression is that the area has been increasingly taken over by middle class professionals, but necessarily of a higher income bracket. This, of course, is due to the horrendous rise in house prices.

It seems to me also that, unlike the families of the 1980's, for one partner (and it was not always the wife – there were a number of fathers who were taking on the role) to stay at home with the children, while the other works, is no longer a realistic option. In order to pay the mortgage, both partners need to be in well-paid, full-time jobs and therefore have less time for the community.

Merryn Grimley: Seymour Street 2006

Neighbours: No 81 *'A special time'*

Maire Downie/Mccarthy: 1979-1985

'We moved to 81 Hemingford Rd in Sept 1979. The house I think cost £16.000 and we had to borrow money from a relative for the deposit.

On our right side were the Jolley family and on the left Gwen Bottle, who lived alone and may have even been born there. Merryn and her family had moved in at around the same time to one of the refurbished houses once owned by the Dairy that had operated from there. In another ex dairy house a family from Glasgow, the Carberrys, had also recently arrived.

We were all to become good friends and our children grew up together, usually playing out on the street with bikes and prams and the freedom to explore.

Bea Doubleday (No 93) opened a small playgroup in her house and the toddlers would go one or two mornings a week. Bea was also instrumental in starting the Romsey Neighbours scheme, which offered help to elderly and vulnerable residents as well as young people. It was well supported and encouraged a real sense of community. We also had a car sharing scheme going, well ahead of the times and of course the babysitting circle and the token method of payment.

I would say those first few years in Romsey were really involving and friendships were made for life.

Add in the Over the Bridge newspaper and the annual Romsey fair on the rec and you could see the attraction of living there, in a time when most of us had no relatives nearby and we were reliant on friends and neighbours for so much.

We moved to Romsey Rd in Sept 1985, to accommodate our growing family, but I really missed my lovely house in Hemingford Rd and the many happy memories of a special time spent there.'

Maire McCarthy: Ross St 2012

7. 1983 - Present: No 115

'our staying there for thirty years is very much a positive choice'

Helen and Stephen Hills

Helen & Stephen's Story



Why Hemingford Road?

'When we were looking for our first house in late 1974, preparatory to getting married in January 1975, we could have ended up anywhere in the City, although the nature of the housing market meant that several of the possibilities were in Romsey - which had only recently emerged from planning blight as an area building societies were prepared to risk granting mortgages in.

The house we most liked the look of, and were lucky enough to secure, was in Suez Road. By the time we felt ourselves, with two young children, ready to move on to somewhere rather bigger (1982), we were quite sure we wanted to stay in the area.

We appreciated the self-sufficient shopping opportunities (there were rather more independent corner shops, greengrocers, butchers and bakers then), the sense of community (these were the days of the G.I.A., the local community paper *Over the Bridge*, and, more personally relevant, a flourishing babysitting circle) and we were within walking distance of the city centre and (in Stephen's case) work.

Larger properties were not that easy to come by and we had made unsuccessful attempts on houses in Burnside, Romsey Road and Mill Road itself before the Hemingford Road opportunity arose. We knew the street from our use of the Romsey Rec but it is probably fair to say we didn't appreciate the full advantages of the location until we had moved in.

Nestling in the cul-de-sac between Romsey Road and the Rec, we were relatively untroubled by passing traffic (although dramatic congestion could occur when there were matches on the now defunct bowling green) and the Rec itself was a very convenient play space for growing children.



We were (and are) very fortunate in our friendly and helpful neighbours (and as our garden extends beyond the one next door to overlap with back gardens in Ross Street, these included "back garden" as well as next-door neighbours).

While there was an inevitable element of chance in our moving to Hemingford Road, the fact of our staying there for thirty years is very much a positive choice.

'Modernisation': House to Flats..... & back to a House

Although the house had been in single occupancy for two sets of owners before us, in the late 1960's it had been converted into two flats. The evidence of this remained in blocked off doors and substitute openings made elsewhere (with some brutal hacking off of moulded plasterwork to accommodate the changes). A bathroom, which the original design did not include, had occupied more than one position upstairs over the years. Some modifications had been made to the downstairs lavatory resulting in a protuberance off the kitchen which blocked access to the garden from the middle room where the back door had originally been. This was now relocated in the kitchen, which seemed, being rather cramped and institutionally tiled, a fairly authentic survivor of earlier, if not absolutely original, days.

At some stage, probably the first post-flat ownership, the two middle living rooms had been knocked through into one, making quite a spacious area but preserving the front room as a separate entity. Most of the fireplaces disappeared at the same time and central heating was installed.

Our first task, in 1983, was to replace the kitchen, extending into the garden although not quite as far as our adjoining neighbour had already done. Apart from some cosmetic work over the years on first floor partition walls, our only other structural change has been the inevitable 1990's loft conversion providing, at the time, probably the best bedroom in the house, for our daughter. The original residents, therefore, would find a living space extended rearwards and upwards, and the proportions of internal spaces rearranged. They might be baffled by the superfluous addition of a bathroom and the removal of essential open fires with the coal storage areas these implied.



Neighbours

In our earlier years in the street, there were quite a few people near us who had lived in their houses all or most of their lives, or, in some cases, since the houses were built. Mr and Mrs Plumb lived at no. 111; they were in their 80s. Mr Plumb had been a milkman, probably for the dairy which had been further up Hemingford Road, where the bungalow behind no. 77 is now, and may well have lived in no.111 all his life.

Reg Starkey who lived in no. 109 had certainly lived in his house all his life as he had been born there (along with one or two siblings) and had lived there with his mother until she died, and then on his own until he moved away about 1990, when he was in his late 70s/early 80s.

Dorothy Morley lived across the road at 108: she had moved in there, possibly with her brother Frank, in her twenties, and died aged about 90 in 1994/5.

Further up the street John and Joyce Curtis were also long-term residents; they lived in their house for about 50 years before moving to Burwell about 4 years ago; and Pam Wadham their next door neighbour is still living there after 50 plus years!

Laurence and Mary Nightingale lived at no.127, and Doris (whose surname we never knew) at no.125: there was an empty plot belonging to Doris where what is now no.123



has been built, which was probably part of the orchard that had originally been at that end of the street.

Graham Maltby was living next door in no. 117 with 2 of his sons when we moved in in 1982: he had lived there for some time before that, and had also, I think, lived further up the street as a boy. He ran his sign-writing business from a studio in the back garden, which he and Alan Fraser **Mary Nightingale. No 127.** (another long-term resident of the street) had created by enlarging his shed. He had also considerably altered the ground floor of the house, knocking the front and 2nd room into one, and then the 3rd (breakfast room?) into the kitchen, taking down a large chimney between those 2 rooms in the process (fortunately before we moved in!), and then building a flat-roofed extension onto the back.

Glynn and Barb Gorick moved into no.113 about 5 years before we came to the street, and



have been the nicest neighbours anyone could have! Their son Jess was a role-model for our son Jim; they have both pursued artistic careers and they are still friends and keep in touch.

Win and Sid Griggs lived at no.112, and Bill and Hazel Evans at no.110; both couples must have lived there for some time as they had each brought up their children there, who were in their late 20s/early 30s in

1982.

In 1982 there was still a high fence right round the Rec and Taffy the park-keeper locked the gates at night. As Stephen has noted above, there was a bowling green where the toddler play area now is, which was well used, until repeated vandalism of the club hut forced its demise. Except on bowls match nights the street was relatively car-free; between Romsey Road and the Rec there were usually less than 10 cars parked!

Helen & Stephen Hills: 2012



8. 1980s & 1990s: No 129 – *'It felt on Cloud 9!'*

Josy's Story

Josy Fairbains: 1983-1996

'My family moved into 129 Hemingford Road during 1983/4 from Coldham's Lane and felt on 'Cloud 9' as Romsey Recreation ground adjoined our garden and promised to be a lovely place for our children to enjoy.

I believe we were only the 2nd owners of the property with the Cook family being the first! The house was beautiful but needed updating and we did the best we could, putting a bathroom in upstairs and a loft conversion.

During our time living here, we became involved with the Romsey Rec fair, being one of the closest we provided (to some) electricity and water. It was great fun and very exciting to be part of setting up the fair first thing in the morning – I can only remember sunny days!

As dog walking friends, Shirley Bloxham and myself took it upon ourselves to open and lock the 'rec' toilets every day in order to keep them useable. They had been threatened with closure as there were fears that if they were kept open overnight, they could be used for illegal purposes. Shirley and I felt that closing them would be unfair to the local children who used the 'rec' every day. It's really good to see a state of art toilet now in place.

As our children got older and left home I decided to move to a smaller house a couple of streets away in 1996 but still walk through the recreation ground almost every day. It's lovely to see it being enjoyed by so many and great that the Council keep it upgraded and in good condition.

I asked my son about his memories of our time there and he wanted me to say the following:

"When I was a child I lived at 129 Hemingford Road with my parents and sister and I remember vividly the aftermath of the great storm in 1989(?) The recreation ground was full of blown down branches and leaves and there was at least one large tree which must have been at least 50 years old destroyed, leaving a stump. This was then taken out of the ground as the damage was too bad for it to be re-grown. Also, on the road itself, many tiles were blown off roofs and some were left strewn on the road. All in all, I had a great time when living in this house."

Josy Fairbains: 2012



Postscript: No 129 - 2012

'It's like living in the country but with all the benefits of being in a vibrant part of the town'



Soo Martin



The Road

'It is definitely one of the best roads I have lived on in Cambridge. I love the green space that surrounds our house on three sides. It's like living in the country but with all the benefits of being in a vibrant part of the town.

I love the peaceful nights followed by the bird song in the morning and the sound of the kids playing in the park nextdoor. There is a wonderful variety of trees all around us and I enjoy the local nature walks. The views from the upstairs window over the park are stunning especially at sunrise. Also, I use the park instead of paying for gym membership!

When we were selling our house in Gwydir Street to try and find a house which was a little larger, in a quiet area and with a garden larger enough to have a veg plot we looked at many houses all over Cambridge. In the end we decided that we really did not want to move away from Mill Road and most of the houses we had viewed did not have a big enough garden. We had been looking for nine months when our estate agent suggested we keep an eye out for properties on Hemingford Road as their gardens were larger.

It was sheer luck that the house at the end of the street came on the market. It was ideal in so many ways. The garden was already subdivided into flower and veg gardens and it even had a greenhouse. There would be no cars hurtling down the street as it is a cul-de-sac. This was perfect as we were concerned about moving to a busy street as we have two cats.

The House

The original occupants would have been amazed at the light and airy kitchen without its chimney breast.

The pantry, coal store and privy have been knocked through and we now sit down to our evening meal and look out at the garden through the large patio doors. However, one thing pays homage to the past; Pippin's litter tray now occupies the area where the WC used to be!

Many other changes have been made. The first owners would have entered the kitchen by a side door which is now bricked up and fitted kitchen cupboards surround the walls replacing the need for a pantry. The two downstairs rooms have been opened up and two glass doors have been installed. The most radical changes are upstairs. A partition wall subdivides one of the bedrooms and a bathroom has been added. A staircase has been built to access the loft conversion which has created a stunning room overlooking Romsey Rec'.

1985: Upstairs bathroom and the single storey kitchen extension

1990: The loft conversion to form one room

1998: The opening up of the wall between the lounge and the dining room

2001-2006: Kitchen chimney breast removed and French doors installed in the kitchen.

Soo Martin: 2012

9. 1990s: No 25 *A garden & a shower room in the attic*

Elena Moses 1992-2008

Elena's Story

'I lived in 25 Hemingford Road from 1992. I know it was late August , early September, as I knew I could work on the garden while arranging for builders to start on the house transformation I had in mind.

I knew the couple selling - Yvonne and Ian were previous work colleagues. They had failed to get permission in time from the ombudsman to convert the attic, and with growing-family pressures they decided to move to Girton. By the time I had bought the house the permission came through.



The House

'I converted it from a modest 3 bedroom small terrace house into a bigger family home, by adding a bedroom and shower room in the attic, and extending the kitchen.

I hate flat roofs so had a balcony built on top of the kitchen roof, and framed it all with deep blue wisteria.

The council stopped me from being over-Italianate in my endeavours and refused to allow me to have a beaten lead canopy over the doorway from the back bedroom leading on to it. This room was my working office (I worked in Health Promotion and Education in NHS and then went freelance in 1996) and it gave me a wonderful view of the 120 ft garden.

I re-landscaped the garden within the first year from a long narrow strip of grass into 3 interconnecting rooms with a vegetable and fruit garden at the bottom. It was my pride and joy for all the years I was there!

Romsey

The range of shops in Mill Rd in the 90s was fantastic. Less so now I think, but then you could get almost everything you needed along that road. Romsey was more working class than W Chesterton where I had lived before, and people were friendlier (mainly). The other difference is that it was Red Romsey, whereas W Chesterton had been very blue with yellow stripes, and only the occasional red dot when I lived there. I got more involved with local politics when I moved to Romsey.'

Elena Moses:2012

10. 1954 - Present: No 91

A journey from Poland: Three Generations at No 91

Tanya Zielke

No 91: 1996-present



I'm the 3rd generation in this house in Hemingford Road, but I never wanted to live here. I call it destiny, but you may call it something different.



I grew up in another part of Cambridge and then moved to Liverpool to do my degree in Graphic Design and ended up staying there well after I achieved my degree. Unfortunately due to circumstance, I ended up back in Cambridge.

When, finally, I could afford a deposit for a house my partner and I visited many houses around the Mill Road area settling on one we loved, got our mortgage and then got gazumped that same afternoon. We were beside ourselves, it was hard enough to find a house in our price bracket, but finding one we could call home was even more difficult. Then my parents came up with a solution to buy them and my brother out of my grandparent's house that had been left to us all. That and my inheritance, made it completely viable and a very generous option.



You'd think it would be a no brainer, but for me it was an extremely hard decision. Why would I want to live in my grandparents/mother's old house? It wasn't exactly moving forward and standing on my own two feet. A lot of the residents knew me from the moment I was born. Would I be able to live up to my grandparents and mother, would I be judged and would they report back to my parents?

Well, I'm not sure I have lived up to them, but I love living here and have made good friends in the community.

When I finally moved in practically the whole of the garden was a vegetable patch. That had to change, growing your own veg: 'Why?!'

As it is I have now had an allotment for 8 years and understand the want to grow your own.



**1970s: Tanya visiting her
Grandmother at No 91**

Oh, the decor – 70's gas fireplaces and 5 layers of bizarre wallpaper which should be in a museum – no thank you!

Actually, I have kept samples of each piece of wallpaper and will one day frame them, because now I realise elements like these are all part of my memories, part of my growing up. The disgusting wallpapers remind me of the happy times I had in this house while growing up and the frustrating times as a selfish child.

I am very fortunate my family gave me the opportunity to buy this house and even after my partner and I went our separate ways I did everything I could to stay here, luckily it worked out. It may sound silly to some, but certain places/sounds and smells in the house still take me back to when my grandparents were here. How lucky am I!?

It's a great area and I maybe speaking out of turn saying this, but I think Romsey Town is quite unique in Cambridge, as much as there are lots of students here now (for me it's a good thing, it keeps the street vibrant), there are also many of the old clan and new young families who have chosen to be here because of its community atmosphere.



I'm hoping, and I think it will continue in the same vein. I've realised now that there's nothing wrong with people asking you what you're up to, or where you've been...OK, there's an element of 'nosey neighbour', but actually it's great to know people know who you are, interested in what you're doing and in some way miss you when you haven't been around.

Tanya Zielke: 2012

Irmgard Zielke (nee Kedzierski)

No 91: 1954-1964

Poland

I was born in Poland in 1942. Whilst my father was serving in the army abroad my Mother was forced to flee Poland with me and a few scant possessions. I was just able to walk and talk.



**Rear No 91. R-L: Mrs & Mr Kedzierski;
Mrs K's brother & Sister in Law**

We managed to escape to Germany by being smuggled over the border and onto Refugee Wagons. After living in refugee camp in Germany we were transferred to Army Barracks in England and were reunited with my Father who was serving in the Polish Arms in Britain.



Front No 91 - The Old Wall.
R-L: Mrs Kedzierski;
Mrs K's brother & Sister in Law

We then moved to Surrey to a large house where my Mother and Father became Housekeeper and Gardener to the seemingly wealthy occupants. We were then enticed to come to Cambridge by an Army Chaplain – Pastor Cimata.

I was seven years old when I came to Cambridge and lived with my parents in one bedroom with only a small electric ring for cooking and heating. My parents worked all hours that they could at Addenbrookes Hospital and by 1953 had saved a deposit for a houses. We moved into Hemingford Road in January 1 1954. I was then 11 years old.

Hemingford Road: 1954



Front No 91: The New Wall.
R-L. Mrs Kedzierski & Gt Niece

My first impression of the house in Hemingford Road was of how much room there was, and I still see the little ceramic souvenir Elephant left behind by the former owner sitting on the shelf above the fireplace in the little bedroom. The smallest bedroom was always known as 'The Box Room'.



There was an open fire in every bedroom, as well as the rooms downstairs apart from the kitchen which had a Gas Cooker. All the woodwork was very dark brown and I still remember my parents scratching and scraping the paint off till late at night. They redecorated and modernised the house well for that era. Wallpaper was very fashionable, the brighter and bolder the better! Central heating was added in the 1970s but double glazing was not put in until the early 1990s.



No 91 1965: Wedding Reception
'Bright & Bold' wallpaper!

Unable to find a decent venue my husband and I had our Wedding Reception in the house in 1965. Both downstairs rooms were laid out with tables and over 50 guests fitted into the house and garden to enjoy a happy day.

At the crossroads of Hemingford Road and St Phillip's 'Road there used to be a hairdresser on the corner where I and my Bridesmaids had our hair done on my wedding day. They were so slow that I only just had time to get into my dress before the Taxi arrived to take me to church! I also had my 21st Birthday Party at the house (18th Birthdays were not recognised as Coming of Age).

In the early 1950s I still remember Goodrum's Dairies a few doors away and the clanking of the milk crates. I seem to remember milk being delivered by horse and cart before the milk floats arrived. Horse manure was collected for the gardens and the street was always neat and tidy. People had time to stop and chat in the street and everyone looked out for each other. There was plenty of room for car parking – my husband's little Fiat 600 was one of only two in the street!

The house that I lived in is still in the family – the third generation now and there are still one or two people living in Hemingford Road whom I knew in the 1960s.



No cars parked on the street!
Early 1960s: Rev Cimata's Car.
R-L: Irmgard Kedzierski, Otto (Mrs K's brother), Mrs Kedzierski, Rev Cimata, Alma (Mrs K's sister in law).



Garden: lawn, deck chair, washing line and vegetable patch. No high fences.

My ties with Hemingford Road remain from 1954 until the present. Although my husband and I owned the house for a very brief period in 1996 after my father died, it is no longer ours but belongs to one of our children.

My parents loved their house and loved Britain, and became British Citizens. I became British as soon as I was old enough to take the oath.



How I wish though that I had kept that ceramic elephant.



Neighbours: Mrs Kedzierski over the garden fence.

Irmgard Zielke (nee Kedzierski): 2012

11. 2000- Present: No77 *Paul's Story*

'We went down Mill Road for the evening, and we decided there and then the area was for us'

Paul Gilliland

Arriving

When we moved to Cambridge in 1993 we took a flat in Coleridge Road. The first weekend a friend came to stay to introduce us to some people he knew in Vinery Road , we went down Mill Road for the evening, and we decided there and then the area was for us. Our first house was just over the bridge (Hooper St) but with the arrival of our daughter and the need for a bigger house we moved to Hemingford Road in Jan 2000.

The summer before was not a good time to be looking for a houses, the market was crazy. We looked at 59 houses in all, missing out on quite a few. We'd seen several in Hemingford Road and liked it. We'd pretty much given up and went for a late deal week away in early Oct. On our return we sat in the 'greasy spoon' on Norfolk Street (alas now gone) with local papers and found not 1 but 4 houses for sale in Hemingford Road! Thinking we'd missed the boat, we followed up all 4 immediately– two had gone but we managed to view 79 and 77. We've been eternally grateful to Merryn, the previous owner, that she accepted our offer for 77; it was more than we could afford but the same as another offer but she chose us as we clearly wanted to bring up a family there – indeed our son arrived 10 months after moving in.



DIY and all that

We didn't need to do too much to the house but we did need to do some of it quickly (partly spurred on by the imminent arrival of child no. 2).

We modernized and opened up the kitchen a bit by moving the (brand new!) boiler to what we grandly call the utility room (the old toilet/lean too at the back) and opening up the fireplace and an old cupboard which had been bricked up. When we took the skirting off the back room were met with earth worms – the soil was at a higher level than the airbricks.

The other thing we had to crack on with was the garden – it was surrounded by a low picket fence that was easily scalable for 2 year old, with access from there onto the road. We also had a lovely 'stags horn' tree whose runners and root system had taken over the entire (albeit tiny) lawn, making it like an assault course. It took a year's campaign to get rid of the tree as well as putting in a sidegate to the side passage, new fences, absorbing what was an overgrown car parking space into the garden proper etc.

Since then we've done the usual modernising, including to gut and replace the bathroom. Otherwise, it was mainly cosmetic, eg slowly removing the wall paper that covered everywhere (revealing some garish fashion tastes from years gone by), refurbishing the front room (stripping floorboards etc – but we'll never again strip artex off a ceiling again!), removing shelves, putting up shelves etc. Our loft was already converted (albeit an old and slightly odd configuration).

Meeting the Neighbours

The other almost immediate DIY was fixing the front wall. I could see it was wobbly but thought we could leave repairing it for a while. A week after we moved in, we were woken in the middle of the night by what sounded like an earthquake. On opening the front door was confronted with a man wielding what looked like a baseball bat. I abruptly enquired what he was up to when I heard a moaning noise from our front 'garden' and noticed that the wall was gone. Within a minute police



cars came screeching along the road from each direction. Windows were opening all around, our new neighbours must have thought trouble had moved into the street. It transpired the man with the bat, staking out Ross Street following a series of car break-ins, had chased a thief, catching up with him in front of the house and pushing up against our garden wall, which had promptly collapsed, leaving only the base row of bricks.

The incident had two positive outcomes (aside from getting the wall fixed). Firstly, I learnt some history - as I was trying to clear up the next day, someone walking past (a builder it turned out) informed me that the bricks were 'Cambridge Whites', that that they were hard to get hold of and expensive, and I should hide them away; I subsequently learnt that they were probably made in the brick works on Coldhams Common (long gone) using local material and that they were a superior brick which were used in their own right only for higher spec houses (such as ours) whereas they were mixed with red bricks in other houses (personally I think the houses on the other side of the road which are a mixture are more attractive).

Secondly, we got to meet some neighbours – they stopped by as I spent the weekend with a hammer and bolster cleaning off mortar and trying to rescue as many bricks as possible, including the people from no. 81 who became good friends (although they have returned 'home' to Glasgow). A brick layer from Vinery Road rebuilt the wall (still standing though part hidden under ivy), I got him to lay one brick 'inside out' so we can read the label 'Cambridge' which is embossed in each one.

Living here: Romsey Rec

Our initial instinct was right – we took to the street and area. Having Romsey Rec nearby is great – a perfect distance for a toddler to wander to with plenty of space and toys (the 'new' ones are fabulous but the previous ones were engaging too) and, subsequently, for the kids to tear around as they have got older, playing sports, building tree houses and who knows what else off out of sight, I taught both of them to cycle down there. For several years it's been the children's route to the wonderful school at St Philips.

In the early days we would walk them there in the morning. We love the fact that it's near enough to wonder down there with a cup of tea. The 'refurbishment' has generally enhanced the place but we're v. happy the council listened to residents' views and didn't tamper with it too much (shame they don't do the same when their 'management' means unnecessarily chopping down trees).

Talking of tea, having a low flat topped wall (although it's a shame the original iron railings went in in the second world war), means we sometimes can sit out there with a cuppa chatting to people. Seems to happen less now. But the road and the area definitely have some kind of 'community' feel where many people seem to know each other AND are friendly without being overly nosy. We knew this already but appreciated it more when we recently lived away for a year – and the Italian family that rented our house here loved the place.

Romsey

Being close to Mill Road, the shops, the various amenities, the best independent gym around (until a couple of years ago), two fish & chip shops, and both a decent pub and decent curry take away just around the corner, is a real plus – what's not to like.

The Ross Street community centre was a real boon for us, as we could nip round there (usually at a dash, running nearly late) to pick up one child from Patacake nursery (moved now but still not far away) and one (and, in time) both from the after school club, all car-free. And both there and Romsey Mill have been the location for several children's birthday parties.

That's not to say the area is idyllic. The streets can feel too narrow and crowded (although, as daughter remarked when she was younger 'it's nice and cosy'), the state of the roads and pavements is shocking, Mill Road now feels too busy with traffic of all kinds (especially since we returned from Newcastle), our road is sometimes a rat run – not for traffic but unruly youngsters wondering back up through the park on a Friday and Saturday night but on the whole they're harmless – and perhaps there are too many rented properties (although the student inhabitants are generally fine).

All of that said, the upsides far outweigh the downsides, and nowhere is perfect. A year and half after we moved in the last street party was held (in Romsey Road) – it reinforced how unusual and special the area is, hopefully the next one will do the same.

Paul Gilliland: 2012

12. 1897 – 2012: No. 125 & No. 127

*Houses with a View:
From fields to park, rural to urban*



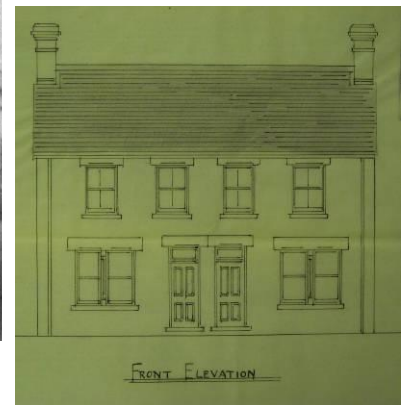
c.1902: No 125 & 127

Recently built houses with the first occupants, William & Mary Pyle and children.

- Note fields & allotments behind, today Ross St.
- A reminder that transport was by horse lies in the road.
- Who is peering round the corner of the house: George Nightingale?



2012 : Nos 125 & 127:
110 years later – with
transport now by car
not horse.



18.02.1897

Building Plan – 2 houses
For: G Mortlock & W Pyle

Introduction: Jan 1897

No 127

On 23 Jan 1897 George Mortlock bought a building plot in Hemingford Road from Joseph Sturton, of 1 Park Terrace, Cambridge for £40. [Info from Deeds:No127]

- The plot was 20ft wide and 160ft deep, and became No 127 Hemingford Road, 'Cherry View'.



No 125

The adjoining plot, had recently been bought from Sturton by William Pyle Ransom.

- This became No 125 Hemingford Road, 'Vine View' – possibly named because it looked across to Vinery Rd?

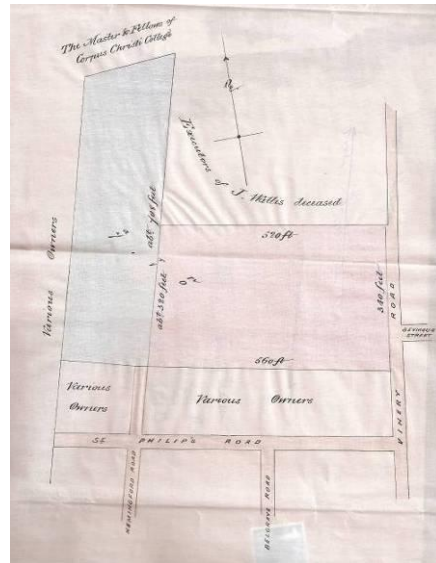


The Developer: Joseph Sturton

1889

Joseph Sturton was a successful Cambridge retailer. He had seized the opportunity created by the demand for housing with the arrival of the railway (1845) to invest heavily in buying and developing the fields off Mill Road for later sale to builders. It was over seven years since Sturton had acquired the land where Mortlock and Pyle now acquired their adjoining plots.

He had bought the fields at what had then been the far end of Hemingford Road for £1,400 in June 1889 from the Johnson Trustees, who had earlier sold the land which had become the first part of Hemingford Road in 1878 (see Introduction).



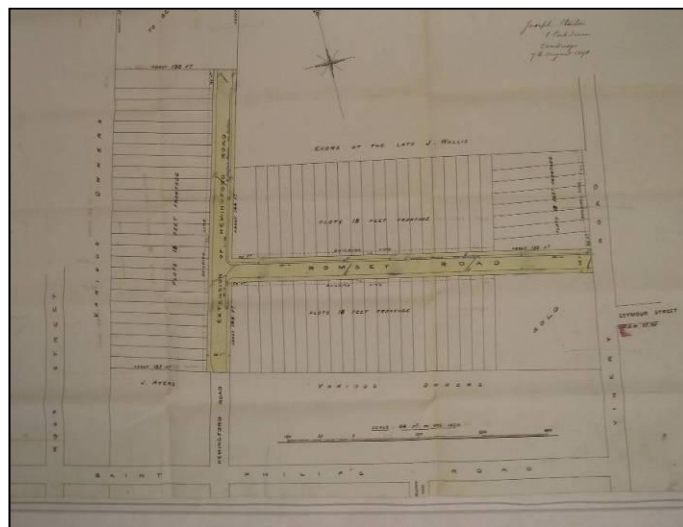
Land bought by J Sturton. 24 June 1889. Price: £1,400.
Bluefield Lodge (No 121) is named after the 'blue field'. Deeds 17 Romsey Rd

1890

In September 1890 Sturton submitted plans for new roads on this latest acquisition

The 'new' road was wider, and extended from No 77 and No 68 to the fields that are today Romsey Recreation Ground.

Romsey Road was also laid out, linking Hemingford Road with Vinery Road, with a resulting direct link through to Coldhams Lane.



Building Plan for new roads showing the extension to Hemingford Road, and Romsey Road.
Submitted by Joseph Sturton: 11.9.1890 (Plan 343)

ROMSEY TOWN, MILL ROAD,
AND
ABBEY ESTATE, NEWMARKET ROAD,
CAMBRIDGE.

Particulars and Conditions of Sale
OF
72 FREEHOLD PLOTS
OF
VALUABLE
BUILDING LAND
SITUATE IN THE

HEMINGFORD, ROMSEY & VINERY ROADS,
With Easements thereto ranging from 18 feet and depths from 100 to 150 feet, including a PIECE OF
ACCOMMODATION LAND in the Hemingford Road of about an Acre.

On the ABBEY ESTATE, in RIVER LANE,
A PIECE OF BUILDING LAND
With Easements of 40 feet 6 inches depths and depth of 115 feet.

FREEHOLD
BUSINESS PREMISES
Corner of Newmarket and Gosden Roads, consisting of

BAKER AND CORN MERCHANT'S SHOPS
With Dwelling Houses, Ovens and Stabling, let to Mr. H. Love, at the annual rent of £45.

TWO FREEHOLD VILLAS
Known as Nos. 6 and 7, Grosvenor Terrace, Walnut Tree Lane, overlooking Millman Common.

FIVE 210 SHARES IN THE
CAMBRIDGE STEAM LAUNDRY COMPANY,
Last Dividend 10 per cent, which MESSES

WISBEY, SON & MOYES
Are instructed by Mr. Joseph Sturton TO SELL BY AUCTION, in a Market on the Romney Town Property,
On FRIDAY, the 21st day of August, 1896,
At SIX o'clock in the Evening.

Plans, Particulars and Conditions of Sale of Mr. J. Sturton, 52, Vinery Road, Cambridge, or of
Messrs. WISBEY, SON & MOYES, Auctioneers, 28, Trinity Street, Cambridge.

A. F. Naylor, Printer and Publisher, "Chronicle" Office, Market Hill, Cambridge.

1896

Six years later, in August 1896, Sturton offered 72 plots of 'Valuable Building Land' for sale in Hemingford, Romsey and Vinery Roads.

1896: Sale by J Sturton of 72 plots in Hemingford, Romsey & Vinery Rds. (Deeds: 34 Romsey Rd)

The First Owners

The Building Plots

1. George Mortlock (No 127):



George Mortlock was 25 and living at 40. Hemingford Road when he bought the plot from Sturton.

He was born in 1871 at Pinchbeck near Spalding in Lincolnshire. His father came from Swavesy in Cambridgeshire, but seems to have travelled around Lincolnshire working as a Master Bricklayer – the 1871 census describes him as a ‘Bricklayer Master, employing 4 men, 1 boy’ , while in 1881 the family had moved to South Kyme near Sleaford and he is recorded as a ‘Bricklayer employing 1 man’.

The family’s origins in Cambridgeshire are still commemorated by the Hale Road windmill in Swavesy, rebuilt in brick in 1866 to replace a burnt-out wooden stump mill, and bearing the inscription ‘Mortlock’ on the tower. This was probably George’s father, John, who in his 50s returned to the village, where he is described in the 1891 & 1901 census as ‘Builder, Farmer and occasional Baptist Minister’.

By 1891 George was working as a bricklayer himself and had moved to Cambridge, where many new houses were being built. He and his brother, also a bricklayer, were lodging at John Williams’ grocers shop in York Street. John Williams was born in Swavesy, so may have been a family friend or relative (1891 census).

George must have prospered. In the 1890s he married Lydia Webster from Swavesy, and at least five children had been born by 1901, when they were living at 14 Romsey Road in a new, bay windowed house that he had probably recently built himself – he submitted plans for what are now No 14 & 16 Romsey Road in 1898.



By 1901 George was no longer calling himself a bricklayer, but a ‘Builder’, and a year later, in 1902 he and Ernest Sergeant submitted plans for four bay windowed houses in Hemingford Road, No.11-19-15-23.

11-23 Hemingford Rd:
Mortlock & Sergeant: 1902-1904

By 1911 the family had moved to Tenison Road, and later in life were living in Milton Road, each move a sign of increasing prosperity



121-127 Ross St:
Mortlock: 1904

2. William Pyle (No 125). Also known as William Pyle Ransom

William Pyle was 32 when he acquired his plot from Sturton, and already living in Romsey Town – probably on Mill Road, the address he gave when he submitted plans to build on the plot (Building Plan: 1171).

He was born in 1864 in Cambridge, and spent his childhood in Russell Street. His father, like George Mortlock's, was a bricklayer, although he is only described in the census returns as 'Bricklayer' rather than a 'Master Bricklayer'. In 1878 when William was 14 his father died, aged only 40. His mother was left a widow with five children, and she remarried. In the 1881 census she is described as a Laundress, her second husband as a Fly Driver. William, then aged 17, was a living at home in Russell Street and described as a 'Gardeners Labourer'.

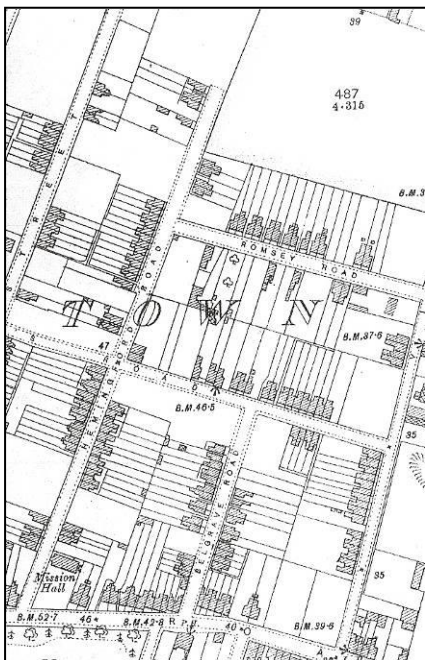
William married Mary Saunders, a dressmaker, in 1888. By 1891 they were living in the recently built Great Eastern Street with a newly born child, and a lodger, William's brother. William was no longer working for a gardener but was recorded as an Apprentice Bricklayer. At 27 this was late in life to be an apprentice.

Building a Profit and Building a Home

George Mortlock's family background as small employers probably gave him the aspiration and perhaps the capital to work as a builder himself. His £40 investment in the plot that became No 127 was a stepping stone in his career, rather than for a home. Although he is recorded in the 1898 Street Directory as 'Occupier' of the newly built house, by June 1898 he had already sold it to Alfred Clark for £290. £225 of this went back to Sturton who had loaned the money as a mortgage to pay for the building costs (and for the £40 cost of the land?), the interest repayments having been paid by Mortlock. £65 went to Mortlock.

William Pyle seems to have remained a bricklayer, working for others, and No 125 became the family home for the rest of his life. He may not have had the same opportunities or aspirations as Mortlock, but nevertheless as an owner occupier he still stood out in a street where many of his neighbours were tenants.

1901



By 1901 (OS map: left) twenty one new houses had been built in this new extension, as well as eighteen houses in Romsey Road. But there were still many vacant plots.

No 129 is on the left, at the end, with No 125 & 127 next. The site of the park is still a field.

The extended road 2012.

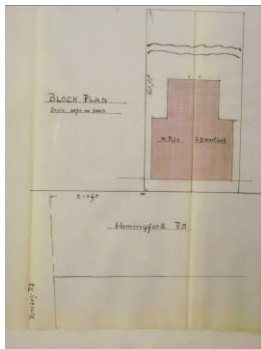


Still with a green ending as in 1901, but today a park, not fields

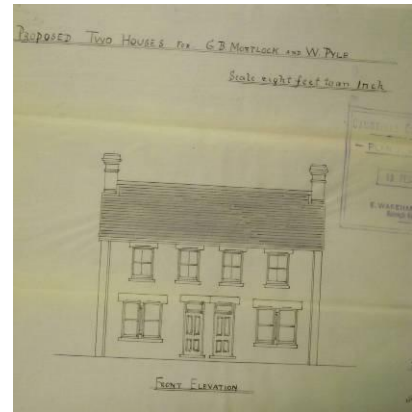


The Builders: G Mortlock & W Pyle

Feb 1897



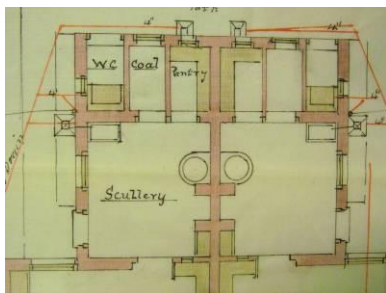
Plans for the two houses that are now No 125 & 127 were dated 8th Feb 1897, and submitted by George Mortlock and W Pyle (also known as William Pyle Ransom).



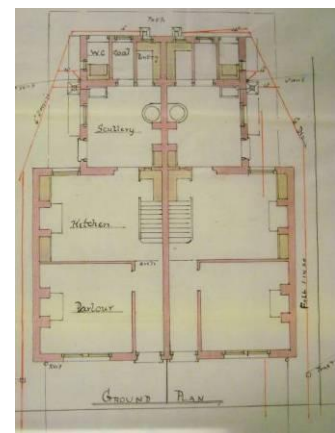
Not all pairs built in Hemingford Rd were the same, but both of these houses were identical.

Downstairs the plans show the front door opening onto a corridor that leads to the stairs and kitchen.

Off the corridor a door opens onto the front parlour.

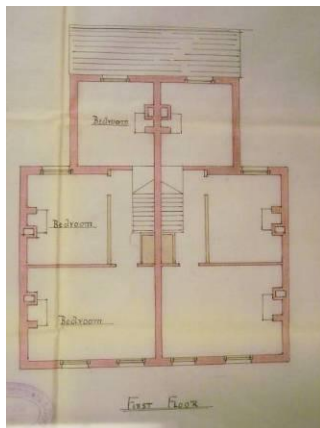


At the rear of the houses, beyond the kitchen, there is a scullery with the only sink in the house, and access to the pantry and coal store.



The WC is only accessible from outside.

Upstairs there were three bedrooms.



There was no bathroom, although by this period they were making their first appearance in some of the new houses being built in this area.

Perhaps Pyle and Mortlock knew each other and decided to work on this joint project together. Perhaps they worked on the houses themselves - or perhaps they contracted others. The houses they built resemble the plans, although the attractive use of red brick on the front elevation seems to have been an afterthought, along with the arched light over the door. No 110-112 across the road were being built at the same time, and share the use of red brick, and possibly the same builders.

No 125 & 127
1897-1898



No 110 & 112
1897-1898



The Residents

No 125: 'Vine View'

A house in the countryside

The Pyle Family: 1898- 1995

The building plans for the two houses are dated 8th Feb 1897. They must have been completed in late 1897 or early 1898, when the Street Directory records William P Ransom living at the as yet unnumbered 'Vine View'.



At some stage William seems to have dropped the 'Ransom' and become William Pyle.

The picture shows the Pyle family standing outside the newly built 'Vine View', probably around 1902. Today Hemingford Road is considered part of the inner city, but when the Pyles moved here this was on the edge of the expanding town, with a vista of fields across the road from the house, and more fields and allotments visible behind. It was a rural setting.



William Pyle was 38 in 1902. The picture shows him standing at the front door, in his best suit, waistcoat, white shirt with ironed collar and trilby hat. He seems to have a slight swagger, or was he supporting himself ?

The children at the front gate are probably Sidney, 2; George, 6; and William, 12. Next to the side gate is Mary Pyle, 38, and Robert, 8. They

were all born in Cambridge. All are wearing their best clothes – a photographer must have been hired for the event.

Nine years later, the 1911 census shows all the Pyle family still living here. William, the eldest son, was 20, and a 'Motor Cab Driver'. Robert, 16, was a 'Carpenter's Apprentice', George, 15, was described as a 'House Boy', and Sidney, 11, was still at school. There was now a fifth child, the baby Dorothy, ten years younger than Sidney and born when her mother Mary was in her mid 40s. Mary had had a total of seven children - two other unrecorded children had been born alive but subsequently died.

William was recorded as 'Formerly Bricklayer', and had been totally blind since he was 44, two years earlier. William died in 1924, aged 60. He had been blind for 16 years, and Mary must have had to look after him. Mary died nine years later, aged 66. William and Mary's son Robert Pyle remained at No 125, and his youngest sister, Dorothy



**1990s: Doris Pyle, born 1910
in her bedroom**

(known as Doris) came back to live with him in the 1950s after her marriage to George Fowler, a fireman, broke down.

'Bob lost his legs in the war and drove about in a blue bird 3 wheel invalid carriage if you can remember them they had handle bars instead of steering wheel and he had more accidents in it then I can remember'. Peter Nightingale (Neighbour: No 127).

Robert died in 1972, and Doris continued to live alone in the house until her death in 1995.

The house built by William Pyle in 1897 had provided a home for his family for nearly 100 years. In the lifetime of William and his children the house on the edge of the countryside in a town with a population of 40,000 had become part of a city with a population of 100,000. The fields behind the house became a Council estate in the 1930s. The field opposite the house became a public park in 1914/15.

1996-2012: The Student Rental Market

Neither Robert nor Doris had children, and the house and adjoining orchard plot were inherited by distant family members. No 125 was acquired by Hertfordshire Estate, a company who specialised in finding overseas investors to buy properties for the Cambridge rental market.

No 123 was built on the adjoining the orchard site. The design was by Malcolm Walton International of King's Parade, Cambridge; the client was Cranston Construction.



No 123: Built 1996
The quality of the Bricks fail to match No 125.

Both No 123 & 125 have been let to a succession of tenants since 1996. An application to turn them into HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation) was refused by the City Council in 2003 on the grounds that this was unacceptable in a predominantly residential area and that the likely noise and disturbance resulting from the intensified use of the site would have an adverse effect on neighbours.



No 123: Glass still missing from door light in 2012.

Plans were also submitted to extend the properties at the rear. The owners claimed that this would create an 'attractive communal courtyard' and 'make use of their neglected garden space', which had suffered from lack of maintenance since the houses became short-term rental investments. They stated that this would provide much needed student accommodation. Despite going to appeal, this was also refused.

2003: Report by Planning Inspector, Nigel Burrows.

'I consider the benefits envisaged by the appellants would be outweighed by the adverse impact the proposal would have on the character of the site and its surroundings.' He added: ***'The adjoining residents state that on occasion they have experienced a degree of noise and disturbance from the use of the existing properties. The proposal would increase the concentration of students on the site...which would further detract from their living conditions'***

The demand for accommodation for young single people has made Hemingford Road an attractive investment option for landlords.

The Inspector's Report makes clear the potential tensions that this can lead to. With demand and prices now high for family housing in this area, some landlords are selling up and reinvesting elsewhere. Perhaps this will happen here. But students do need suitable accommodation somewhere.

William Pyle would certainly be amazed if he knew that university students were living in Romsey Town.

No 127: 'Cherry View'

Alfred Clark: June 1898- May 1901

If George Mortlock lived at 'Cherry View', it was only briefly. The house cannot have been completed until late 1897 or early 1898, and on 24 June 1898 thirty six year old Alfred William Clark paid George Mortlock £290 'for the purchase of Messuage known as 'Cherry View'. His neighbours were William and Mary Pyle.

Alfred Clark had been brought up in the 1870s in the then newly built Gwydir St. After he married he continued to live in the same street, and like many neighbours joined the Great Eastern Railway, progressing from being a seventeen year old 'Railway Servant' in 1881, to 'Fireman' in 1891.

When he moved to Hemingford Road with his young family Alfred had risen to 'Engine Driver', and was a member of the railway elite. He and his wife Elizabeth had three surviving children – twins Frances and Alfred, and Henry. But within two years the Clarks had sold the house, and by the 1911 census were back across the railway bridge at 62 Ainsworth Street.

The Nightingale Family



No 127: c 1902

George & Elizabeth Nightingale;
son (George?)

May 1901- 28th Sept 1987

George Nightingale bought 'Cherry View' on 17 May 1901. The house was less than four years old and was still set on the edge of the countryside with fields and allotments at the bottom of the garden (now Ross St), and with a 'view' of fields at the front beyond Hemingford Road.

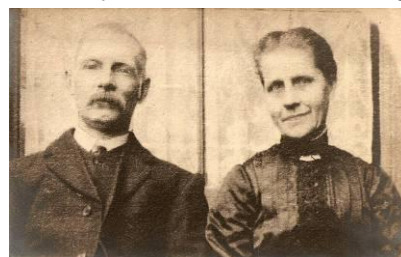
This end of the road was now being developed. Neighbours included Henry Chapman, House Painter, at No 129; the Pyles next door at No 125, and the Wards beyond an empty plot (now No 123) at the recently built 'Bluefield Lodge' with its laundry (No 121) - the name probably comes from the 'blue field' shown on Mr Sturton's original sale details.

On the other side of the road next to the field (now the park) Albert Willson, Millwright, lived at No 112; in the adjoining house, No 110, lived Arthur Humphrey, Grocer's Manager at the Co-op; and at No 108 was Alfred Morley, House Decorator. There were young children in all these

houses – eight at the Morleys, although this was exceptional. But beyond No 108, stretching up towards Mill Road, there was still much open land.

No 106 was still being built at the time of the 1901 census in March, and the next house was near the junction with St Philips Road.

George & Elizabeth Nightingale



George Nightingale was a railwayman like Alfred Clark. But unlike Clark, whose father was a police constable, he was the second generation of his family to work for the railway. His father, Askew, had been born in Trumpington, and at the time of the 1851 census was working as a 14 year old Agricultural Labourer. But ten years later he had left the land and was described as a 'Railway Servant', living in Russell Street with his wife and one year old son, George. By 1881 Askew was an 'Engine Driver', and he had probably helped his two sons find employment too – 21 year old George was a Railway Porter, and 15 year old Frederick was a 'Railway Messenger'.



George subsequently rose to being a signaller, and worked in March for nearly ten years, where his four children were born. But by 1901 he was back in Cambridge and living at 38 Sedgwick St.

George was 41 when he moved to Hemingford Road. His wife Elizabeth was three years older. Unlike many other families all four children survived their early years – Frederick, 14 and already working in a Booksellers Shop; Winifred, 13; George, 9; and Harry 6.

The picture of the Nightingales outside their new home was probably taken about 1902, at the same time as that of the Pyle family next door. Elizabeth has her best dress on, standing with her son by the gate, while her husband George in tie, cap and jacket firmly grasps the railings with a determined look.

The boy in the picture is probably George, and the house eventually passed to him in 1920 for £300. He became the third generation Nightingale to work for the railways, becoming a signaller like his father.

George later moved to Essex, and the house was rented to his cousin Kate Morley (nee Freestone) from 1940 to 1961. Perhaps Kate's husband Alfred was related to the Morley's who still lived in Hemingford Road. During these years George's son Laurence, a motor engineer, was living nearby at No 26 Romsey Road. In 1961, after his father's death, Laurence returned to No 127, the house where he had been born forty years earlier in 1920.



Laurence and his wife Mary brought their three children up in the old family home, and lived there for twenty six years until 1987 when they moved to Bottisham to be near their son Peter.



The Nightingales connection with 'Cherry View' lasted nearly ninety years, and spanned four generations. Back in 1901 George Nightingale would never have believed that his grandson would sell the house for £59,500 (left).



**No 127: Mary Nightingale.
Ross St Children's Home
at end of garden (bottom)**

Hilary Clarke: 1987-1997 - 'A light and happy atmosphere'

The 1980s: The Money - Grants, Tax Relief and Mortgages



I bought Cherry View, Hemingford Road in 1987 with a friend and colleague, Carol Joughin.

I was 31 and Carol was 27. We were both nurses at the time, and had been sharing a rented house in Fulbourn so knew each other well. We both wanted to have our own home, but couldn't afford to buy on our own on a nurse's pay. I was a staff nurse in Paediatric Oncology at Addenbrookes Hospital earning about £3,000 a year, and Carol was a District Nursing Sister based in Saffron Waldon, earning around £4,000 - so neither of us would qualify for a large enough mortgage on our own.

Hilary Clarke: 1988, with

door opening into garden

The house was on the market for £62,000 and we paid. £60,000 - right at the very top of our budget. My parents were able to give me £5,000 as part of the deposit, and Carol's gave her £6,000.

I borrowed £1,000 from a generous friend, on the understanding that when the house was sold I would pay her back, plus interest at the percentage increase in the value of the house. She didn't mind how long it would take to pay her back.

We had a mortgage of £24,000 each, which seemed a huge amount of money, and it was to be repaid over 25 years.

There was tax relief on the mortgage available to both of us, And I think we paid around £120 to £140 per month .

We bought the house from Mr and Mrs Nightingale who had lived there all their married lives I think.

The House: Deck Chairs & Dust

The house had a very light and happy atmosphere, but I remember thinking how old fashioned it seemed on the first day we moved in.

The original doors had been panelled over (very popular in the 60s - to avoid dust gathering on the mouldings - as demonstrated by Barry Bucknall in his DIY TV show), and there was carpet on the kitchen floor and on the bathroom floor. The wallpaper in the sitting room had a bamboo pattern on it.



Carol Joughin: 1993.

With Hilary Clarke's parents, Don & Betty Clarke.



1990s: The living room

We knew we wanted to completely redecorate, put in a new kitchen, and we knew from the survey that we would need a new roof. The council were giving grants for that kind of work, and so we applied and qualified for the roof to be fixed. The house also needed rewiring. We had no furniture to speak of, so sat on deckchairs in the evening. We had not anticipated how much dust and dirt there would be with the work, and got very fed up living in a building site - especially when we had no kitchen and so couldn't cook.

Neighbours – the Park, the Fairbains and Doris



The house is opposite the park, which was a lovely outlook, but over the time we were there the council stopped paying for a park warden and the space started to deteriorate. The bowling green was not maintained by the council, and children started to climb on the walls at the bottom of our garden and shouted at the man in the house next door, which felt rather intimidating.

Our neighbours on one side were a family with two children whom we were very fond of (Josy & Robin Fairbain). When my father paid to have the outside loo fixed, they came round for the 'opening ceremony'. My mother cut a ribbon across the door, we had champagne, and next doors brought us gift wrapped loo paper!



Garden: Josy & Robin lived over the fence

On the other side was an old lady called Doris, who lived alone. On our first day of moving in, she came by with a sausage and liver casserole for us. We really enjoyed it - but were disconcerted when we went into her house a few weeks later and saw the state of her kitchen and that she had no fridge! We talked to her a lot over the fence, and picked her up a few times when she fell over in her garden. She was burgled and took to sleeping.

Not long afterwards she died, and we felt strongly that the **burglars** had contributed to her death.

15% Interest Rates & a Lodger

A short time after we moved in we experienced 'Black Wednesday' when interest rates went up almost weekly until we fell out of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

We ended up with interest rates at around 15 per cent, and we really struggled to pay the mortgage, and to do the renovation work that was necessary.

We couldn't really afford paint any more.

A friend of mine who was a postgrad came to live with us, and his rent of £80 per month made a huge difference.

1990s: Commuting, Renting and Sitting Tenants

In 1990 I got a job in London, and commuted weekly between London and Cambridge. Carol eventually decided that she would like her own place, and I bought her out. Prior to the



purchase we had a closely drawn up legal agreement between us, and many people had said that we would be bound to fall out over the finances. However, I can honestly say that we had no arguments about anything more serious than the temperature of the central heating! I think we agreed on a price of £86,000. We are still very close friends to this day.

I continued to commute weekly to London. I rented the house to another lodger, and later to him and his girlfriend and was very happy sharing with them when I came home at weekends. They are still my dear friends, and I am godmother to their second daughter.

When they moved to America, I was able to get a second mortgage and buy myself a flat in London. I rented the house to colleagues from a co-operative publishing company I had worked at previously.

Finally I decided to sell the house - and for a while they refused to move out, saying that they were now sitting tenants. I felt this was a sad betrayal of my trust. However, in the end I decided to accept their offer to buy the house, and I think they paid £100,000. I was able to repay the friend who lent me the £1,000 plus the large percentage increase in the value of the house.

The last episode of the 'sitting tenants' aside, I have very happy memories of Cherry View and its beautiful garden.



I hope the Bramley apple tree is still standing outside the back door. I have photos of my father climbing up to pick apples - he would have been in his early 70s!



12. 21st Century: No 127 *Paul's Story 2012*

'Tinkering' over 100 years leaving a 'very comfortable homely space with odd quirks'

Paul Aston & Germaine Varney



'The architect Le Corbusier wanted homes to be 'machines for living in'. Our house has been tinkered with by the machine operators for over 100 years now leaving a home shaped by family needs and desires. Edges have been knocked off, bits have been lost, others gained resulting in a very comfortable homely space with odd quirks.'

The House

The house is largely recognisable from the original drawings commissioned by George Mortlock in 1898. It has the same footprint as then without extensions in any way. Previously the land had been a garden and we do have a large old Bramley Seedling apple tree. It could have been there before the house or perhaps the first occupants, the Clark family, planted it on their arrival. There are some features that the Clarks wouldn't recognise. Thankfully the outside toilet has been brought into the house although the footprint of it can still be seen in the tiles on the kitchen floor. The arrangement of the doors into the back garden has changed with big French windows opening onto the garden filling the kitchen with light and a green view.

Light fills the two front rooms which have been knocked through to form one continuous living space. Fires have been replaced with central heating, sash windows replaced with modern double glazing and formerly carpeted floors changed for polished floorboards. Yet some features from 1900 remain; we still have some ceiling mouldings and a beautiful bit of stained glass over the front door. You always know if the sun is out by the colourful projections on the wall as you walk downstairs in the morning. Faded but still legible is the house name 'Cherry View' in lead paint on the glass.

Upstairs the bedrooms have been altered to accommodate a larger bathroom but otherwise it is essentially the same with one of the original fireplaces remaining and no doubt a recognisable view into the park from the front bedroom. One of the joys of living here is waking up at the weekend and having a cup of tea in bed looking out over the Rec.

There are huge differences between our lives and the Clarks. We have the telephone, television, the internet and copious electrical devices. The beheaded gas light on the corner of the park has been replaced with the alien orange glow of electric street light and even our



ancient Vauxhall Cavalier would have been a fascinating object to Alfred Clark who was a railway engine driver. The way we use the house may have rituals and practices familiar to him. Most evenings we eat together around the kitchen table and discuss our days. My job as a gardener and Germaine's as a teacher would have existed in 1900. The bicycle as our main mode of transport wouldn't have changed since then.

It is not clear from the census if Elizabeth Clark went out to work or not. She would probably have had a huge job maintaining the household without the dishwasher, washing machine, gas cooker and other white goods we take for granted. The thought of endless hours spent boiling up water probably heated by coal, starching, mangling and ironing just to clothe the family stops us from hankering after the good old days.

For entertainment we all love the cinema which would have been starting to emerge as a popular form of entertainment. It is funny to think that the television that would have amazed them has been superseded by the iplayer and the gramophone by the ipod dock. One form of entertainment they may have recognised is borrowing books from the library. Most evenings involve someone playing the piano and the cello which may have been the focus of the household at the turn of the 20th Century.

The 1911 census had the Nightingales living here. Harry, the 16 year old son had already left school and was a bookbinder's apprentice. Universal access to schooling until 16 for later generations has opened up fulfilling life options for our daughters who we hope will stay on at school until 18. Schooling is hugely important to us and excitement as well as anxiety about our children's education occupies our thoughts often.



The Neighbourhood

There is a strong community atmosphere down our street. We know many of our neighbours and children from the street meet up in each others' houses and are now old enough to play in the park unsupervised.

The freedom that existed for children even 30 years ago doesn't exist now. Public perception of "stranger danger" and increased traffic has perhaps made us over cautious.

Our oldest daughter will have to cycle to her secondary school in September which will be one of the first bits of true freedom and self reliance that she will experience. Romsey Mill at one of the street and the park at the other have made this an excellent street in which to bring up children. We see people from the street socially at meals and play-dates, we are involved with a baby-sitting circle and book groups which help to link and embed us into a very welcoming community.'



Paul Aston: 2012