

Ann Ashbury/Ashby and the Cambridge Spinning House

A case study in streetwalking, poverty, punishment and University discipline, 1847-1859

Source base: Compiled spreadsheet of Ann Ashbury/Ashby entries in the Cambridge Spinning House committal books. The spreadsheet records 40 arrests over 138 months and 336 days of imprisonment; all 40 apprehension rows are tabulated below.

Measure	Value
Name	Ann Ashbury / Ashby
Age range in entries	25-26
Birthplace	Haddenham, Cambridgeshire
Family/employment note	Labourer; worked for J. Drage; lived with Aunt Elwood at Trumpington two years before
Principal charge	Streetwalking
Principal address	Wellington Row, including No. 18 and No. 33 Wellington Row
Period covered by valid dated entries	21 Oct 1847 - 1 Apr 1859
Spreadsheet total period	138 months
Spreadsheet total arrests	40
Apprehension rows tabulated	40
Spreadsheet total imprisonment	336 days

1. Introduction

Ann Ashbury, also recorded as Ann Ashby, is one of the clearest and most substantial individual cases in the Cambridge Spinning House records. The spreadsheet identifies her as a woman from Haddenham, aged 25-26 in the entries, and repeatedly associated with Wellington Row in Cambridge. Between October 1847 and April 1859 she was apprehended forty times, almost always for alleged streetwalking. The spreadsheet summary records 40 arrests over 138 months and 336 days of imprisonment. The surviving tabulated rows give a detailed sequence of appearances, addresses, proctors, outcomes and remarks.

Her case is historically important because it provides a long sequence of repeated encounters with University authority. The chronology shows a progression from admonitions and warnings in the late 1840s to custodial sentences in 1849-1851, followed by further returns in the 1850s. Like Mary Ann Peters, Ashbury can be followed over time; the cumulative record makes visible the persistence of surveillance and the limits of punishment as a response to poverty and prostitution.

2. Personal and Social Background

The records name her as Ann Ashbury or Ashby and give Haddenham as her birthplace. The first entry notes that she was a labourer, had worked for J. Drage, and had lived with Aunt Elwood at Trumpington two years before. These details are important because they place her within local rural and working-class networks rather than presenting her as a wholly anonymous or transient figure. Her Cambridge address is overwhelmingly Wellington Row, sometimes specified as No. 18 or No. 33 Wellington Row. This consistency links her case strongly to one poor urban neighbourhood and allows the Spinning House record to be connected to the social geography of nineteenth-century Cambridge.

3. Statistical Overview

Category	Count / Detail
Spreadsheet total arrests	40
Rows in table	40
Spreadsheet total days imprisoned	336

Most common punishment	Admonished/discharged or released, followed by one-week imprisonment
Longest recorded sentence	Six weeks
Principal addresses recorded	Wellington Row (24); 18 Wellington Row (1); Wellington Row no 33 (1)
Number of named proctors/officers in rows	20
Outcome category	Occurrences
Admonished/discharged or released	13
Discharged by Vice-Chancellor	3
One week imprisonment	10
Two weeks imprisonment	9
Three weeks imprisonment	2
Four weeks imprisonment	2
Six weeks imprisonment	1
Year	Apprehensions in rows with valid dates
1847	2
1848	6
1849	4
1850	10
1851	10
1852	2
1855	2
1858	1
1859	1

Phase 1: repeated warnings and early punishment, 1847-1848

Date	Record	Age	Address	Officer / proctor	Outcome	Days	Remarks
21 Oct 1847	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26	Wellington Row	Baily	Admonished & discharged		
11 Nov 1847	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Baily	Admonished & discharged		
12 Jan 1848	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Williams	Admonished & discharged		
20 Jan 1848	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Williams	Admonished & discharged		
22.22.1848	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26	18 Wellington Row	Bunch	Admonished & discharged		
30 Apr 1848	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Baily	Admonished & discharged		
15 May 1848	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Williams	Admonished & discharged		
25 Oct 1848	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26	Wellington Row	Rowlands	Admonished & discharged		
9 Nov 1848	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Edwards	Admonished & discharged with threats of severe punishment if brought back again		
??.11.1848	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Edwards	Admonished & discharged		

The first phase is dominated by admonition and discharge. Ashbury was repeatedly warned rather than imprisoned, though by late 1848 the record already refers to threats of severe punishment if she were brought back again. The sequence shows how quickly a named woman could become familiar to the University authorities.

Phase 2: escalation into imprisonment, 1849-1851

Date	Record	Age	Address	Officer / proctor	Outcome	Days	Remarks
7 Feb 1849	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Edwards	Two weeks	14	
24 Oct 1849	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Marsh	Two weeks	14	
7 Nov 1849	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Latham	Three weeks	21	
24 Nov 1849	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Latham	One week	7	
8 Feb 1850	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Middleton	Two weeks	14	
15 Feb 1850	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Latham	One week	7	
23 Feb 1850	Vol. 2 / No. 754	26		Theed	Four weeks	28	

22 Apr 1850	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Theed	One week	7	
14 May 1850	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Marsh	Discharged by VC		
12 Oct 1850	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row no 33	Thacker	Discharged by VC		
14 Oct 1850	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Emery	Two weeks	14	
1 Nov 1850	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Emery	One week	7	
9 Nov 1850	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Fenwick	Two weeks	14	
11 Dec 1850	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Munro	Discharged by VC		
3 Feb 1851	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Fenwick	One week	7	
27 Feb 1851	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Thacker	Admonished & discharged		
4 Mar 1851	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Emery	One week	7	
13 Mar 1851	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Fenwick	Two weeks	14	
5 Apr 1851	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Fenwick	One week	7	
7 May 1851	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Emery	Two weeks	14	
5 Jun 1851	Vol. 3 / No. 26	25	Wellington Row	Munro	Six weeks	42	Made resistance to the proctor

By 1849 the pattern hardens into repeated imprisonment. Sentences of one, two, three and four weeks appear before the second volume sequence gives way to a further series of entries in Volume 3. The year 1850-1851 was the most concentrated period of recorded intervention, with multiple sentences and several discharges by the Vice-Chancellor.

Phase 3: later recurrence and continuing surveillance, 1851-1859

Date	Record	Age	Address	Officer / proctor	Outcome	Days	Remarks
20 Oct 1851	Vol. 3 / No. 69	26	Wellington Row	Adams	Admonished & discharged		
13 Nov 1851	Vol. 3 / No. 69	26	Wellington Row	Barnard Smith	Three weeks	21	
27 Feb 1851	Vol. 3 / No. 69	26	Wellington Row	Bainbridge	One week	7	
16 Mar 1852	Vol. 3 / No. 69	26	Wellington Row	Bainbridge	Two weeks	14	
22 Nov 1852	Vol. 3 / No. 69	26	Wellington Row	Clark	One week	7	
23 Feb 1855	Vol. 3 / No. 69	26	Wellington Row	Drake	Four weeks	28	Came very quietly
8 May 1855	Vol. 3 / No. 69	26	Wellington Row	Luard	Two weeks	14	
30 Oct 1858	Vol. 3 / No. 69	26	Wellington Row	Williams	Admonished & discharged		
1 Apr 1859	Vol. 3 / No. 69	26	Wellington Row	Robinson	One week	7	

The later sequence shows persistence rather than resolution. Ashbury continued to be apprehended after the most intensive period of 1850-1851, including a four-week sentence in 1855 and further entries in 1858 and 1859. The note that she came very quietly contrasts with the earlier reference to resistance and gives a rare glimpse of the manner of arrest.

4. Remarks and Qualitative Evidence

Date	Outcome	Remark
5 Jun 1851	Six weeks	Made resistance to the proctor
23 Feb 1855	Four weeks	Came very quietly

The remarks are limited but important. The earliest biographical note links Ashbury to Haddenham, J. Drage and Aunt Elwood at Trumpington. Later remarks record two very different moments: in June 1851 she 'made resistance to the proctor', while in February 1855 she 'came very quietly'. These small details move beyond the formulaic language of the committal books and preserve traces of confrontation, compliance and institutional familiarity.

5. Addresses and the Geography of Surveillance

Ann Ashbury's record is especially valuable because of its consistent association with Wellington Row. Throughout the surviving entries she is linked to this neighbourhood, with specific references to No. 18 and No. 33 Wellington Row. The repeated appearance of the same address in a long sequence of apprehensions connects the Spinning House records to the social history of one of Cambridge's poorer districts. The geography

of arrest was not random: the University's efforts to regulate streetwalking focused on areas where poor working-class women lived and where casual lodging, insecure employment and vulnerability were likely to be concentrated.

6. Punishment, Escalation and Recurrence

The chronology shows a familiar rhythm: initial admonition and discharge, repeated one- and two-week sentences, occasional longer sentences, and later recurrence after periods of absence from the record. The spreadsheet total of 336 days in custody shows the cumulative burden of what may appear, in isolation, to be short sentences. One or two weeks could be treated administratively as a minor punishment; repeated across more than eleven years it amounted to nearly a full year of imprisonment.

The recurrence of apprehension also points to the limited effectiveness of the system. If the object was deterrence, Ashbury's repeated returns suggest failure. If the object was removal from public space, the effect was only temporary. The system punished repeatedly but did not resolve the social and economic conditions that made repeated arrest possible.

7. Gender, Poverty and Town-and-Gown Discipline

Ashbury's case illustrates the gendered character of the Spinning House. The charge is almost always streetwalking, and the records show the University acting through proctors, officers and the Vice-Chancellor to police women in public space. The burden of discipline fell on the woman accused of soliciting or being visible in places associated with prostitution, while male clients or gownsmen are largely absent from the record. The entries therefore expose the unequal moral economy of the University town: poor women were named, counted, admonished and imprisoned; the men involved were not documented in the same way.

8. Historical Significance

Ann Ashbury is historically significant for several reasons. First, the length and density of her record make her one of the most important individual case studies in the Spinning House material. Second, her case links rural origin, poor urban residence, streetwalking, punishment and University discipline. Third, her record connects institutional evidence to the geography of Wellington Row. Fourth, the recurrence of imprisonment over more than a decade demonstrates both the reach and the limitations of the Spinning House system.

Her record also helps to test the purpose and effectiveness of the Spinning House. The institution was capable of repeated punishment, including escalating sentences, but the repetition itself demonstrates failure as much as control. Ashbury's history is therefore not merely the record of one woman's apprehensions; it is evidence of a system that managed poverty and prostitution through repeated confinement rather than social remedy.

9. Conclusion

Ann Ashbury/Ashby emerges from the records as a local working-class woman repeatedly exposed to the coercive powers of the University. From Haddenham and Trumpington connections to repeated residence in Wellington Row, her record traces the movement of a vulnerable woman through the social and disciplinary landscape of Victorian Cambridge. The spreadsheet's summary of 40 arrests over 138 months and 336 days imprisonment makes her a major case study for understanding the Spinning House. Her experience illuminates the relationship between poverty, gender, prostitution and town-and-gown authority, and deserves to stand alongside Mary Ann Peters as one of the clearest individual examples of repeated University policing.

Appendix: Complete Apprehension Table

Date	Vol/No	Age	Birthplace	Address	Officer	Charge	Outcome	Days	Remarks
21 Oct 1847	2/754	26	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Baily	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
11 Nov 1847	2/754	26	Haddenham		Baily	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
12 Jan 1848	2/754	26	Haddenham		Williams	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
20 Jan 1848	2/754	26	Haddenham		Williams	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
22.22.1848	2/754	26	Haddenham	18 Wellington Row	Bunch	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
30 Apr 1848	2/754	26	Haddenham		Baily	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
15 May 1848	2/754	26	Haddenham		Williams	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
25 Oct 1848	2/754	26	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Rowlands	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
9 Nov 1848	2/754	26	Haddenham		Edwards	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged with threats of severe punishment if brought back again		
??.11.1848	2/754	26	Haddenham		Edwards	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
7 Feb 1849	2/754	26	Haddenham		Edwards	Streetwalking	Two weeks	14	
24 Oct 1849	2/754	26	Haddenham		Marsh	Streetwalking	Two weeks	14	
7 Nov 1849	2/754	26	Haddenham		Latham	Streetwalking	Three weeks	21	
24 Nov 1849	2/754	26	Haddenham		Latham	Streetwalking	One week	7	
8 Feb 1850	2/754	26	Haddenham		Middleton	Streetwalking	Two weeks	14	
15 Feb 1850	2/754	26	Haddenham		Latham	Streetwalking	One week	7	
23 Feb 1850	2/754	26	Haddenham		Theed	Streetwalking	Four weeks	28	
22 Apr 1850	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Theed	Streetwalking	One week	7	
14 May 1850	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Marsh	Streetwalking	Discharged by VC		
12 Oct 1850	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row no 33	Thacker	Streetwalking	Discharged by VC		
14 Oct 1850	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Emery	Streetwalking	Two weeks	14	
1 Nov 1850	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Emery	Streetwalking	One week	7	
9 Nov 1850	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Fenwick	Streetwalking	Two weeks	14	
11 Dec 1850	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Munro	Streetwalking	Discharged by VC		
3 Feb 1851	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Fenwick	Streetwalking	One week	7	
27 Feb 1851	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Thacker	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
4 Mar 1851	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Emery	Streetwalking	One week	7	
13 Mar 1851	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Fenwick	Streetwalking	Two weeks	14	
5 Apr 1851	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Fenwick	Streetwalking	One week	7	
7 May 1851	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Emery	Streetwalking	Two weeks	14	
5 Jun 1851	3/26	25	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Munro	Streetwalking	Six weeks	42	Made resistance to the proctor
20 Oct 1851	3/69	26	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Adams	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
13 Nov 1851	3/69	26	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Barnard Smith	Streetwalking	Three weeks	21	
27 Feb 1851	3/69	26	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Bainbridge	Streetwalking	One week	7	
16 Mar 1852	3/69	26	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Bainbridge	Streetwalking	Two weeks	14	
22 Nov 1852	3/69	26	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Clark	Streetwalking	One week	7	
23 Feb 1855	3/69	26	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Drake	Streetwalking	Four weeks	28	Came very quietly
8 May 1855	3/69	26	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Luard	Streetwalking	Two weeks	14	

30 Oct 1858	3/69	26	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Williams	Streetwalking	Admonished & discharged		
1 Apr 1859	3/69	26	Haddenham	Wellington Row	Robinson	Streetwalking	One week	7	