

The History of Midsummer Common

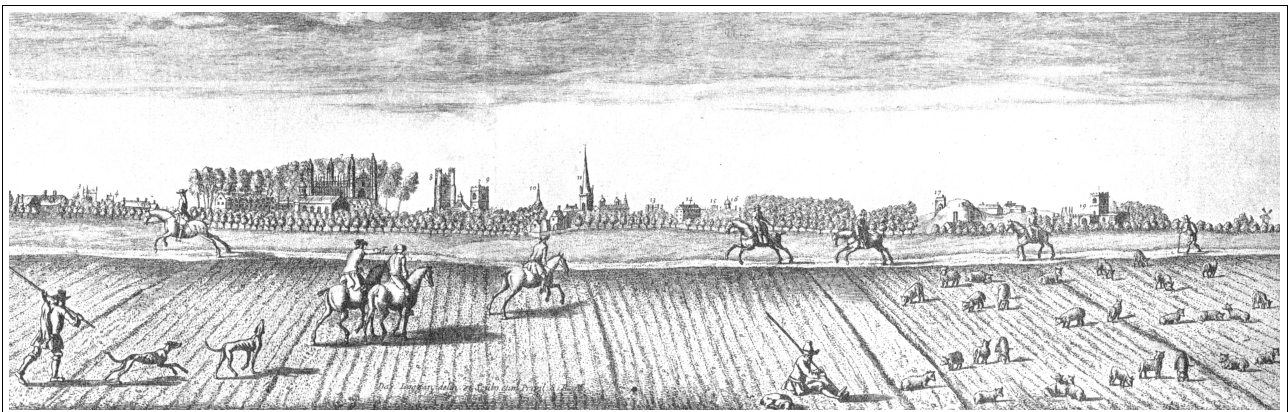
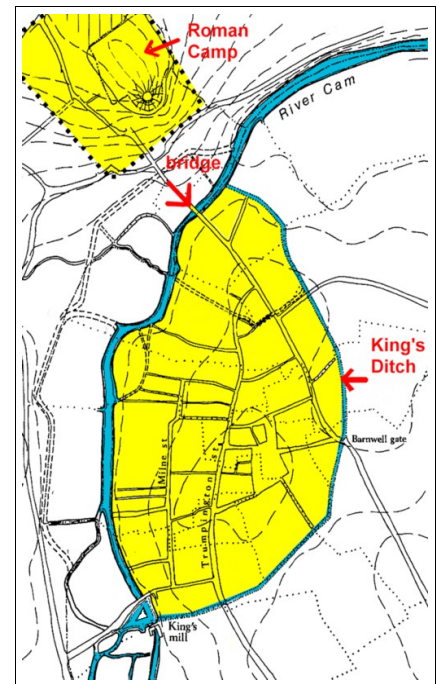
Early Cambridge was located at the lowest and easiest crossing point of the river Cam before it flowed into the fens. In the words of the Royal Commission¹ it was "a nodal point of east-west land traffic and one of the chief terminals of water traffic". The Romans established a fortified encampment on a prominent spur of land on the north bank of the river, now known as Castle Hill, which guarded a bridge over the river².

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 875 refers to the town as *Grantabrycg*³. By Edgar's reign (956-75) it had become an established part of the national scheme of government⁴ and was becoming a prosperous port and trading centre⁵.

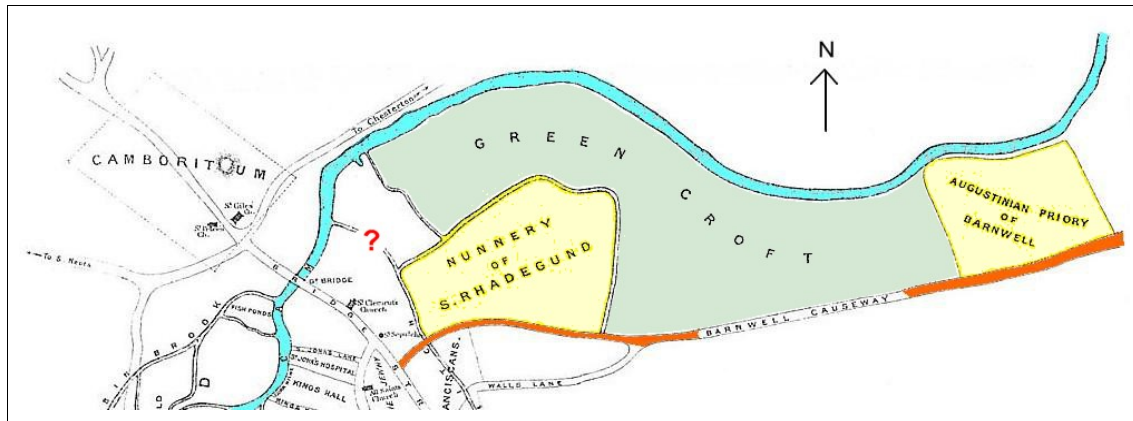
By the time of the Domesday Survey⁶ (1085-6) it had become a settlement on both sides of the river. The area inside what was later the King's Ditch, ordered by Henry III in 1267, becomes the main focus of the town⁷ (see map to right). But it was still a small town surrounded by green fields. Maitland describes the scene⁸:

"Besides fields, Cambridge had meadows or keys which during a part of every year were commonable. Also it had pasture-land which was never inclosed or enjoyed in severalty, 'the green commons of the town'; for the more part they are green and open still."

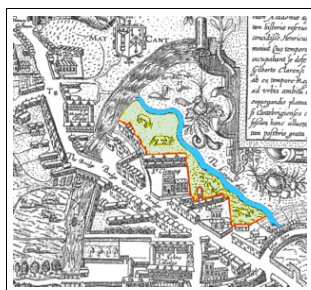
It all remained open land throughout the Middle Ages. David Loggan⁹ sketched a "Prospect of Cambridge from the East" in 1690 (see below). We can see in the background the houses, the colleges and churches, the castle-mound and the remains of the dismantled castle and in the foreground lies the open field - a long, originally unbroken strip of low-lying riverside pasture outside the town to the east. Herdsmen on horse and foot tend their cattle. A future Midsummer Common was to occupy part of this pasture land.



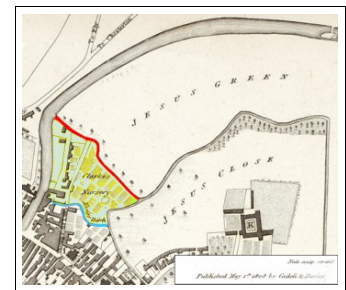
An earlier map¹⁰ (see below) shows the above scene bounded on the left by Barnwell Causeway running east west away from the town and on the right by the Cam river flowing towards the fens. The green pasture land between this causeway and the river became known as *Green Croft*.



The eastern boundary was clearly defined by the walls around the Augustine Priory of Barnwell but the western boundary was not so well defined at this time. The walls of the Nunnery of St. Rhadegund formed part of this boundary but left questions elsewhere. The *Rotuli Hundredorum*¹¹ implies that the King's Ditch, marked the western boundary of *Green Croft*.



But an extract from the 1547 map by Richard Lyne¹² (see left) shows animals grazing in the green coloured area west of the "diche" whereas the 1808 map published by Cadell & Davis (see right), following "enclosure" (see later), is one of many¹³ that shows the boundary east of the "diche". Corporation records at the time fail to clarify the situation¹⁴ but later records report a progressive expansion of town buildings into the coloured area. Both the Nunnery and Priory are important features in the development of *Green Croft* so they deserve our further attention.



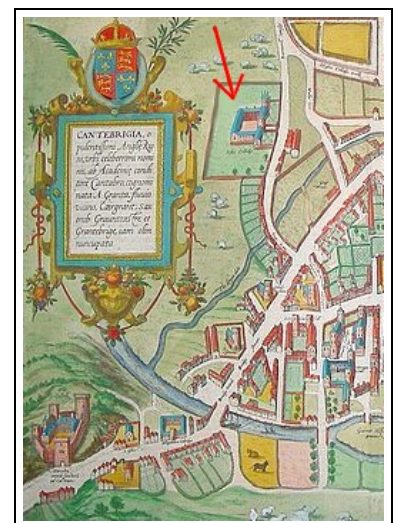
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The Nunnery of St. Rhadegund

The Nunnery dedicated to St Radegund and St Mary was founded about 1133¹⁵ and dissolved in 1496. Maitland¹⁶ says:

"It is not certain that the site of St. Rhadegund's Nunnery came out of the green. King Malcolm [IV of Scotland] gave 10 acres next Greencroft (Midsummer Common) reserving a rent of two shillings. Bishop Nigel of Ely gave four acres next Malcolm's ten".

In 1496 its buildings and grounds were taken over by the newly-founded Jesus College¹⁷ which is shown arrowed on part of the 1575 Braun and Hogenberg's map of Cambridge¹⁸ (see right). One of the first acts of the College, when it took occupation, was to sell the nuns' farming implements and lease some of its land, closes and sheepwalks.



The change of ownership appears not to have affected the boundary with the *Green Croft* land. But designated names for the land have changed through time. The adjacent northern part of *Green Croft* became known as *Jesus Green* or *Jesus Common*. A small part close to the Nunnery and Barnwell Causeway came to be known as *Butt Green* or *Butt's Green* in the late Middle Ages from its use for military purposes. The remaining part was variously called *Midsummer Common*, *Midsummer Green* or *Midsummer Fair Green*

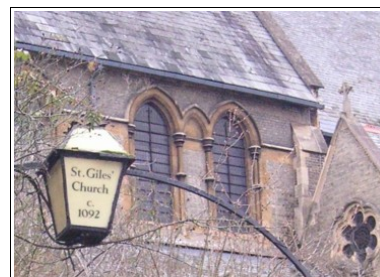
(from its association with the Midsummer Fair). These names were not always used in a consistent way. The Ordnance Survey, for example, applied the name Midsummer Common across all parts until 1951.



Recent archaeological excavations in the College (see left) have revealed a wealth of finds spanning centuries, including previously unknown details about the medieval Nunnery that once occupied the site¹⁹. It is hoped this project will provide a rare opportunity to analyse two different self-contained single-sex communities: the all-female medieval Nunnery spanning 363 years followed by the originally all-male College spanning 483 years (until females were first admitted to the College in 1979).

The Augustine Priory of Barnwell

The Priory was the eastern boundary of *Green Croft*. But the true history of Midsummer Common can be traced back to earlier times. In 1092 the Norman-born Baron Picot, who had been made the first sheriff of Cambridgeshire by William the Conqueror²⁰, dedicated a church near the castle in honour of St Giles and established six canons there with Geoffrey of Huntingdon as the first prior. The church is still standing there today (see right).



The monks describe Picot as a hungry lion, a prowling wolf, a crafty fox, a filthy swine, and a dog without shame, who stuffed his belly like an insatiable beast as though the whole country were a single corpse²¹. He was removed from office when he was found to be depriving the burgesses of the common pasture land to his own advantage²².

Pagan (or Pain) Peverel then appeared on the scene. His background is obscure but he was probably the third son of Ranulph Peverel who, the story goes, made his fortune by marrying a Saxon concubine of Duke William of Normandy and bringing up her sons by the duke as his own²³. He was a soldier and acted as a standard bearer on the First Crusade²⁴. On returning to England he was granted a barony by King Henry I and became the second sheriff of Cambridgeshire.

Peverel decided to move the canons from St Giles, where there was a shortage of fresh water, across the river Cam to the village of *Beornewelle*²⁵. Addison²⁶ describes *Bernewelle* as the site of an ancient fair that sprang up spontaneously where athletic feats were performed annually at the burial place of a hero. This customary meeting of tradesmen became known as Midsummer Fair (see later). Peverel gave the canons 13 acres of land around the village springs which had previously been the home of a religious recluse named Godilo²⁷. This site had pre-Christian origins and had been used for semi-pagan festivities around the wellhead once a year on Midsummer Eve. Maitland describes it as "a piece of the green common of the town"²⁸.

They moved there in 1112²⁹, adopted the Rule of St. Augustine, and the household became a Priory. Its walls formed the eastern limit of Midsummer Common. Peverel endowed it generously with precious relics set in gold and topaz, which he had acquired on his travels to Antioch. He left *Beornewelle* when he inherited Whittington Castle in Derbyshire from his father³⁰. Initially the new foundation prospered and developed into Barnwell Priory as a notable House of Augustinian Canons. While it was still powerful it attempted to acquire the area of 'common land' between the Priory and the river shortly before 1381 and the newly erected fences became a target during the Peasant's Revolt that year³¹. The suppression of the revolt by the Crown left the Priory in possession of the land, which later went to secular purchasers following the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

A magnificent vellum manuscript begun in 1295³², *Liber Memorandum Ecclesie de Bernewelle*, describes in great detail the foundation of the Priory and the rules governing it. Clark³³ has translated this manuscript

and given a full historical account and map of the area. He tells us that the eastern fields beyond the Priory, commonly known as the Barnwell Fields, were four in number: Middle Field, Bradmore Field, Ford Field and Sturbridge Field. The area where the springs were located, where the young folk had their sports and pastimes, and where the traders held their fair each year, was on the common pasture of *Green Croft* to the west of the Priory.

There was a pond on the Common associated with the western edge of the Priory precinct. It is clearly marked on the early maps of the area and shown, but not named, on Baker's map of 1830. It is shown to the east of Walnut Tree Avenue and named both Abbey Fish Pond and Page's Pond on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map. By 1903 the pond was replaced by a cross on the map and the name became "Abbey Fish Pond (supposed site of)". By 1927 the cross had disappeared under the houses but the name remained but as "the probable site of" (see right).



As soon as the Prior and canons took over this site, they began an ambitious building programme. A church was built in the Priory grounds and consecrated by the Bishop of Ely in 1190³⁴. At a slightly later date another small church (see left), known as the Abbey Church but more correctly as St. Andrew-the-Less, was built adjacent to the Priory Church. This building survives alongside the Newmarket Road but is in bad condition and been "declared closed for regular public worship"³⁵.

The rest of the monastic buildings were built or rebuilt at intervals up until 1270³⁶. Maitland³⁷ observes that "In the thirteenth century a suburb, well outside the ditch, had grown up around the by no means ancient Priory of Barnwell". Apart from the Abbey Church, all that remains of the Priory today is the small but nicely vaulted Chequer's Hall (which was used for the financial business of the Priory). This building³⁸ (see right) sits at the corner of Beche and Priory roads. In the 13th century 5 acres of land in Barnwell Fields were given to the nuns of St. Rhadegund in exchange for 3½ acres of land in Swinecroft as part of the rationalisation of land in some of the open fields³⁹.



The Priory grew in size and stature. Clark says that there were 30 canons in the 13th century, including 17 officers. The clerical subsidy of 1379 indicates 17 canons including officers and at the time of the Poll Tax of 1512 there were 11 servants⁴⁰. Records⁴¹ show that King John stayed at the Priory in 1203; Henry III stayed a number of times; Edward I visited in 1293 and 1296; and Edward II in 1315 and 1326. Parliament met there with Richard II in 1388 and Henry VI stayed in 1438. The Priory became very important within the diocese of Ely and it hosted various diocesan synods.

The priory, town burgesses and commoners were frequently in conflict over commoners' rights. In 1381 there was a serious riot when the mayor was compelled to assert the rights of commoners to pasture cattle in meadows which the "prior had fenced and planted with trees"⁴². As late as 1501, the Treasurers' Rolls show that the town sold to the Prior a parcel of "the common of the town, called Midsomer-green" for £2 0s 0d⁴³ and this land was enclosed with a "brike wall".

On the dissolution of the monasteries, Barnwell Priory was surrendered to Henry VIII in 1538⁴⁴. John Badcock supervised the dissolution and Commissioners Legh and Cavendish stripped the buildings of their possessions and left them roofless. The sale of the Priory contents and payments made to the canons and others is well documented⁴⁵. The library was dispersed (the main books have been traced) and the Cromwell family took a gilded ceiling to Hinchingsbrooke House (where it can still be seen).

In 1279, the prior of Barnwell was said to have held 391 acres of land. On the dissolution, this land was appropriated by the colleges and private individuals. In 1550 the largest stake was acquired by Sir Anthony Browne. This passed to the Wendy family in 1553 and, in 1578, they gave 182 loads of stone from the old priory to build a new chapel at Corpus Christi College⁴⁶. By the end of the 16th century much of the Barnwell Priory site was used as a quarry and later as a brickworks. In 1655 the land passed to the Butler family; then to the Riste family; and in 1763 to the Panton family. Thomas Panton II inherited the property in 1782.

Midsummer Fair

The majority of fairs held in England trace their ancestry back to charters and privileges granted in the Medieval period. In the 13th century the creation of fairs by royal charter was widespread with the Crown making every attempt to create new fairs and to bring existing ones under their jurisdiction. Over fifteen hundred charters were issued in that period⁴⁷. Fines and stall holders' fees made a charter a valuable possession.

Nobody knows when fairs first started in the Cambridge area. There were four annual fairs of significance that date from the Middle Ages: Garlic Fair, Reach Fair, Stourbridge Fair and Midsummer Fair⁴⁸. They all started as places of revelry. Then trade became dominant - Cambridge held a strategic location at the head of the fenland river system with good land routes to East Anglia, the East Midlands and the London area. The trade element then declined as communications improved elsewhere and other towns developed their own commercial facilities. Those fairs that remain today have reverted mainly to places of entertainment.

Addison⁴⁹ traces the origins of Midsummer Fair to the village of Bernewelle. An extract (translated) from *Liber Memorandum Ecclesie de Bernewelle*⁵⁰ sets the scene:

"From the midst of the site there bubble up springs of fresh clear water, called by the English Bernewelle, the children's springs, because that once a year, on the Eve of St. John the Baptist, boys and lads met there, and amused themselves in the English fashion by wrestling matches and other games, and applauded each other in singing and playing on instruments of music. Hence, by reason of the crowd of boys and girls who met and played there, a custom grew up that on the same day a crowd of buyers and sellers should meet in the same place to do business."

The first formal recognition of the Fair came in 1211 when King John (see right) granted the Midsummer Fair to Barnwell Priory. For the next 300 years the Fair belonged to the Priory. At the same time Stourbridge Fair was granted to St Mary Magdalen of Steresbrigg on behalf of the nearby hospital "for the use and subsistence of the lepers dwelling therein"⁵¹.



Ownership of Midsummer Fair enabled the Priory to take advantage, financially and socially, of the midsummer celebrations under a respectable religious veneer. Henry III confirmed the grant by Letters Patent in 1229⁵² and allowed the Fair to be held over 4 days from the feast of Saint Etheldred (the day before mid summer):

"... deo et Ecclesie beati Egidii de Bernewelle et Priori et canonicis ibidem Deo seruientibus, quod ipsi et successores eorum habeant in perpetuum unam feriam apud Bernewelle singulis annis per quatuor dies duraturam, videlicet, in vigilia et in die Sancte Etheldredae virginis in aestate et per dies duos proximos sequentes ..." ⁵³.

Disputes then arose between the town and the Priory over money. An agreement was reached in 1232; the town would receive compensation (half a mark annually) for an event held on common pasture land from which the Priory drew profit to the possible detriment of the common users⁵⁴. As early as 1287 it was reported that wood for the Castle tower was purchased from the Fair and, in 1288, iron and steel was bought at the Fair for building the Castle prison and locks and keys were purchased for 4s 10d⁵⁵. In 1324 it was

reported that the carpenters of Ely Cathedral bought timber from the Fair⁵⁶. In addition to serious trade, the Fair became a place for the hiring of labourers and servants. Some of these were absenting themselves from other employment. In 1295 three men were fined 3d a day for having been away from work for 3 days whilst enjoying themselves at the Fair⁵⁷. By the end of the 14th century the Fair had grown to become one of the most important in the country (although not in the same league as the nearby and internationally famous Stourbridge Fair).

At this time the Fair must have been held on the town's common pasture of *Green Croft* west of the Priory because the Priory was repeatedly asked to pay for its use. This is reinforced by Clark who describes what was seen by somebody walking from the town to Barnwell Priory in the 13th century⁵⁸:

"... he would soon reach the Franciscan House at the corner of S. Radegund's Lane. Turning into this lane, and crossing the bridge over the King's Ditch, he would see on his left the boundary walls of the Nunnery of S. Radegund founded 1133. After passing this, as he pursued his way to Barnwell Priory, he would have on his left the Green Croft, an open space of pasture, on part of which, nearest to the Causeway, the fair called Midsummer Fair was held."

The Fair probably remained in this location into the 18th century.

About 1294, the University claimed jurisdiction over the Fair but the Bishop of Ely refuted this claim⁵⁹. In the same year, the mayor and prior fell out over the ownership of goods left at the fair by a felon⁶⁰ which led to a sealed "Composition between the Prior and Cannons of Bernewell and the Burgesses of Cambridge touching the Fair"⁶¹. In 1299 the prior of Barnwell was summoned before the Justices to show by what title he held a fair. He produced the charter granted by Henry III which had been given to the Priory by Pain Peverell and the case was dismissed⁶². In 1394 King Richard II received notice from the prior that commoners and students had caused nuisance at the Fair. As a result, the sheriff was instructed to make a proclamation and arrest delinquents⁶³. Richard II extended the duration of the Fair to 14 days⁶⁴.

Control of Midsummer Fair gradually shifted from direct management by the Priory to that of the town. In 1483 Richard III granted a charter to the prior of Barnwell respecting the Fair at that place⁶⁵. In 1496 and 1498 the Priory leased the Fair, which now lasted for 14 days⁶⁶, to the town mayor and bailiffs⁶⁷. In 1505, after great disputes between the Corporation and the prior, a composition gave the Corporation a perpetual right to Midsummer Fair, the Corporation paying 4 marks annually⁶⁸. In 1506 there were disputes between the University and the Priory regarding the privileges of the former⁶⁹. One of the privileges the University proctors claimed was the right to search the Fair for beggars, vagabonds and lewd women; the council members hotly disputed these rights. In 1516 an Award was made for the adjustment of various disputes between the prior and the mayor, bailiffs and burgesses⁷⁰. Following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538, disputes between the Priory and town ceased and the town took full control of the Fair.

Records show that goods were still brought to the Fair by river and unloaded onto the "Greencroft or Midsomer greene" riverbank in the 18th century⁷¹. Once the railway came to Cambridge in 1845 it was no longer necessary to land goods from the river and so the Fair moved from the narrow eastern part of the Common westwards onto the main body of Midsummer Common. Nevertheless the Ordnance Survey map of 1889⁷² still shows a wharf on the river Cam where goods were previously unloaded.

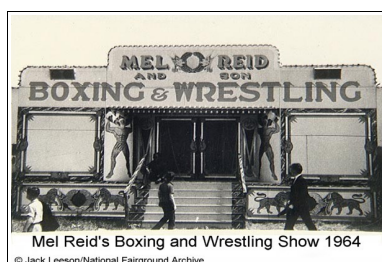


Corporation minutes for 29th May 1739 state⁷³:

"Agreed and ordered that the Builders of that part of Midsummer Fair usually built on Midsummer Green shall for the time to come hereafter build the Booths on that part of the

same Green on this side of the Spring and upon no other part of the said Green that being the most commodious place, upon pain of forfeiting to the mayor, bailiffs and burgesses of the Corporation five shillings per foot for every Booth built contrary to this Order and that Builders do pay the bailiffs of this Corporation for their use four pence per foot in length of such Booths".

In the 18th century the Fair was commonly known as the Pot Fair due to the large quantities of china and earthenware which were on sale there to the housewives of Cambridge⁷⁴. Henry William Bunbury (1756-1811), known as the "gentleman draughtsman", was a graduate of Cambridge and one of the most popular caricaturists of his time. He drew many pictures of social life showing wit and insight and in 1777 the Pot Fair caught his fancy as shown above. A more realistic but dated picture of the Poy Fair is shown on the right. The Pot Fair remains an element of the main Fair today but is kept to a single day⁷⁵.



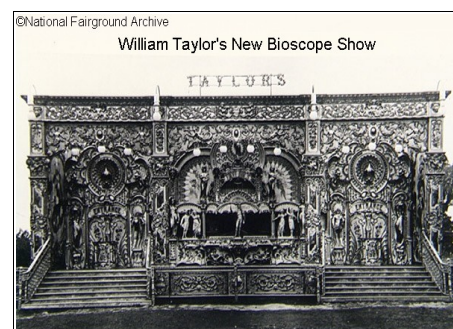
Midsummer Fair has long had an entertainment element - it was there from the outset. Wrestling, singing and music was always present. In 1714 the Fair included Punch, a giant, a dwarf, wild beasts, dancing dogs, three legged cats and a female rope dancer. Freak shows, moving pictures, wrestling and boxing were all part of the amusements according to the reports of the times⁷⁶. A newspaper description in 1901 commented on the level of "the stir, the noise and the mirth making" and these are things that have not changed⁷⁷.

The introduction of steam to the Fair in 1870 enabled the rides to become more exciting and adventurous. The steam engines themselves became a notable feature of the Fair as they became grander in design and function.

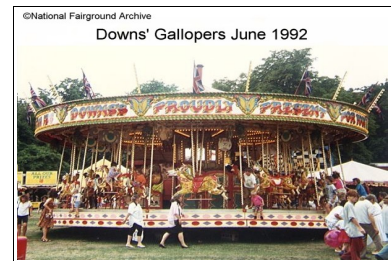
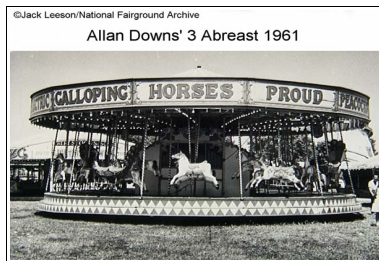


Horses and cattle were once a major feature at the Fair. The buying and selling of horses remained important till the end of the 19th century⁷⁸. In 1900, animals of all sizes were put through their paces on the sodden grass. Business was brisk, cart horses and nags forming the major portion of the stock⁷⁹. June 24th was the date for horse sales⁸⁰. Lance, a fifth generation showman, has shared his memories of Midsummer Fair and his family connection to the ancient event⁸¹. The horse sales and Pot Fairs help explain the annual reunion on the Common of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. In 2020 they turned up in large numbers even though the Fair itself was cancelled because of the Coronavirus pandemic. They did the same again in 2021.

Charles Thurston's No 1 show first appeared in Cambridge in 1902. It was of the two-wagon front type with a rather small but very sweet toned Gavi organ and was attached to a Burrell engine. Like all shows at this time, there was no cover over the front stage⁸². According to reports it was "England's Greatest Show". Taylor's Show of the same time had a projector, organ and light engine. Reports said that "the lovely Marengi organ was fitted with hundreds of coloured electric lights which changed with the music of the two figures playing the drum".



It is hard to say when riding machines first came to Midsummer Fair. It is known that such machines existed in this country about 1800, so it can be presumed that some of them found their way to Cambridge⁸³. Before 1906 Henry Thurston & Sons brought his 4 abreast Gallopers to Cambridge. Steam-driven switchbacks were brought by John Barker in 1907 and by Charles Abbott in 1911 and 1919⁸⁴. Charles Thurston brought The Golden Dragon Scene to the Fair in 1920⁸⁵. It was claimed that it was the most beautiful machine that travelled this country⁸⁶.



The Merry-go-Round magazine⁸⁷ describes the Fair in the war year 1941:

"The firm of Chas Thurston and Sons have brought to Cambridge nearly every kind of ride that ever existed, including flying pigs, waltzing balloons, bicycles, gallopers, cakewalk, tower slip, joy wheel, steam motors and dragons, chair-o-planes, electric dragons, peacock scenic, swirl, Noah's Ark, dodgems, waltzer and electric speedway."

Two years later they introduced "Bioscope Shows" with moving pictures⁸⁸. Today the Fair attracts large numbers of people each June to its various rides, stalls and sideshows.

Midsummer Fair was not always an orderly event. In 1905 it was described as a "Bacchanalian orgy" as people were behaving "like maniacs". There were 14 tents supplying intoxicating liquors and the behaviour in the tents was "indescribable". Five perambulators were seen standing unattended outside one tent. A letter that year⁸⁹ complained that Travellers were profiting too much from the Fair, gaining an average of £650 per evening:

"Sir – every year our Midsummer Fair is visited by a number of itinerant merchants selling pots, pans, linoleum, furs, drapery and various oddments. They pay little rent and no rates and taxes and yet they take away hundreds of pounds which are to be spent in local shops. In many cases, people actually pay more for the goods at these mock auctions than they would in a proper shop."

But it was not until 1954 that the Council decided to prohibit "drinking booths" as it was considered they were the cause of excessive drinking on the fairground.

Legislation has reinforced the Council's ownership and focussed on the duration and location of the Fair. The *Cambridge Corporation Act 1850*⁹⁰ reduced the Fair back to 4 days, saying that "The Fair of Barnwell commonly called the Midsummer Fair shall commence on the 22nd June and continue for 3 days (exclusive of Sunday)". The *Cambridge City Council Act 1985*⁹¹ then extended the Fair to 5 days:

"The fair of Barnwell commonly known as the Midsummer Fair shall commence at 2.30 o'clock in the afternoon (or such earlier hour as may be proclaimed by the mayor of the city) on the third Wednesday in June, or, if the third Wednesday falls on 15th, 16th or 17th June, on the fourth Wednesday in June and shall continue for the four days (exclusive of Sunday) next following the day of commencement and no longer."

In the year 2000 the Sunday exclusion was removed and the Fair was extended to 6 days in total⁹² and in 2019 the Council transferred the organisation and management of the Fair to the *Showmen's Guild*.

Although the Fair has been going for over 800 years, that is not to say that it has been held every year in that period. For example, the Fair ceased to function during the war years 1939-42 but John Carey, a Traveller who has attended every year in his life, said that "During the Second World War there was one rock stall here every year just to keep the fair Charter going as many of the Travellers were fighting in the war"⁹³. The Fair resumed in 1943⁹⁴. The Fair was cancelled in 2020 and 2021 because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

For over 100 years the Fair has been free to move away from Midsummer Common. The *Cambridge University and Corporation Act 1894*⁹⁵ empowered the Council to "specify and define the Common or open space within the borough on which the Midsummer and Sturbridge Fairs ... shall be held". One such relocation is recorded. Early in 1931 silt was spread over Midsummer Common and grass seed sown. To give it a chance to grow, the Council decided to move Midsummer Fair to Stourbridge Common. The showmen refused this location and rented Cambridge United Football Ground instead. However, to preserve the charter, the Fair was proclaimed on Stourbridge Common but with only 1 stall - a nougat vendor. The Fair was back on Midsummer Common in 1932. The *Cambridge City Council Act 1985*⁹⁶ renewed this location flexibility in stating that "The Council may from time to time specify and define the Common or open space within the city on which the Midsummer Fair or some part thereof shall be held".

Midsummer Fair remains one of the most popular events in Cambridge. Rides are bigger and noisier and the crowds more colourful. Its future rests with the Council and Showmen's Guild. The mayor and other members of the Council still continue the tradition of parading and declaring the Fair open to the crowd.



The Plague on Midsummer Common

The plague wrought inconceivable devastation throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. There were four major epidemics and many smaller ones. The Black Death was part of the second pandemic. It entered England through Weymouth early in August 1348. By the end of 1349 it had spread all over the country. Williamson⁹⁷ has given us a good picture of its impacts in Cambridge.

Cambridge was in a very insanitary state at the time. Many of the streets were unpaved and drainage was through ditches running into the river. Refuse of all sorts was thrown into them and allowed to accumulate. Cattle, swine and horses were brought into the town at night, and turned out in the morning for the common herdsman to lead them to pastures outside the town. Heaps of dung and other refuse accumulated in the streets outside the stables and the cow-sheds.

Conditions were slow to change. On 12 August 1388, in preparation for the meeting of Parliament at Barnwell Priory in Cambridge, the King sent a writ to the Chancellor of the University requiring him to "remove from the streets and lanes of the town all swine, and all dirt, dung, filth and trunks and branches of trees, and to cause the streets and lanes to be kept clear for the future".

Conditions were still slow to change. In 1574 Doctor Perne, who was then Vice-Chancellor of the University, wrote to Lord Burghley the Chancellor in London saying that one cause of the plague was "the corruption of the King's Ditch which goeth through Cambridge and especially in those places where there is most infection". He goes on to say that he will "have it cleansed as soon as there is any hard frost".

- All public meetings banned;
- Fairs cancelled;
- Streets and alleys to be cleaned;
- No dogs, cats or pigeons allowed on the streets, any found to be killed; and
- The infected to be isolated in a pest house or shut up in their own homes with doors and windows nailed shut and a red cross painted on the door.

- Those badly infected were taken to a pest house to recover or die. The earliest recorded pest houses in Cambridge were erected on Midsummer Common. They were simple wooden sheds covered by thatch. The following items were quoted in the Corporation Treasurer's account

1645. Item, to Hamond Tanne for thatch and other work at ye pest houses. 14s.0d

Item, for a new doore and lock at ye pest house. 9s.5d.

1659. Item, to ye Towne Clerk for entering a long order of Sessions about ye charge of building ye pest houses and ye disposing thereof according to ye said order made at ye Gen. Sessions. April the 26th 1658 by order of ye Court. 4s.6d.

1663. Item, paid to Mr. Bailiffe Addams and Thomas Hutton for work done at the Pest house and Gaole. £13 1s.8p.



1603-1604. During the very severe epidemic of 1630, when 347 people died, there

¶ There Died in *Cambidge* of the Plague and of other Diseases from
July 3^d 1664 to March 17th 1666. 366

Whereof of the Plague. 371

A G E N D A L B I L L.

Of all those that have died in *Cambidge* of the Plague, or of
other Diseases, from *June* the 3^d to *January* the 1. 1666

All the Colledges (God be praised) are and have continued
without infection of the Plague.

	<i>Wen.</i>	<i>Thurs.</i>	<i>Infected</i>		<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Wen.</i>	<i>Infected</i>
<i>S Andrews</i>	166	139	<i>Reverend</i>	<i>S Giles</i>	137	015	<i>Reverend</i>
<i>Cambidge</i>			120	<i>S Maries</i> {			010
				<i>Gene.</i>	048	011	010
<i>S Andrews</i>	063	051		<i>S Maries</i> {			
<i>Burwell</i>				<i>Lefy.</i>	044	011	008
All-Sains	097	090		<i>S Michael</i>	019	011	008
<i>S Beannes</i>	014	031	011	<i>S Petrus</i>	011	003	001
<i>S Bouch</i>	001	041	009	<i>S Sepulchris</i>	034	017	008
<i>S Clements</i>	011	012	006	<i>Trinity</i>	171	038	009
<i>S Edwards</i>	006	006	006				

The total of Burials in the fourteen Parishes 718

Whereof of the P Lague 594

And at the Pethouse 157

In all of the Plague 749

Persons infected that are recovered 584

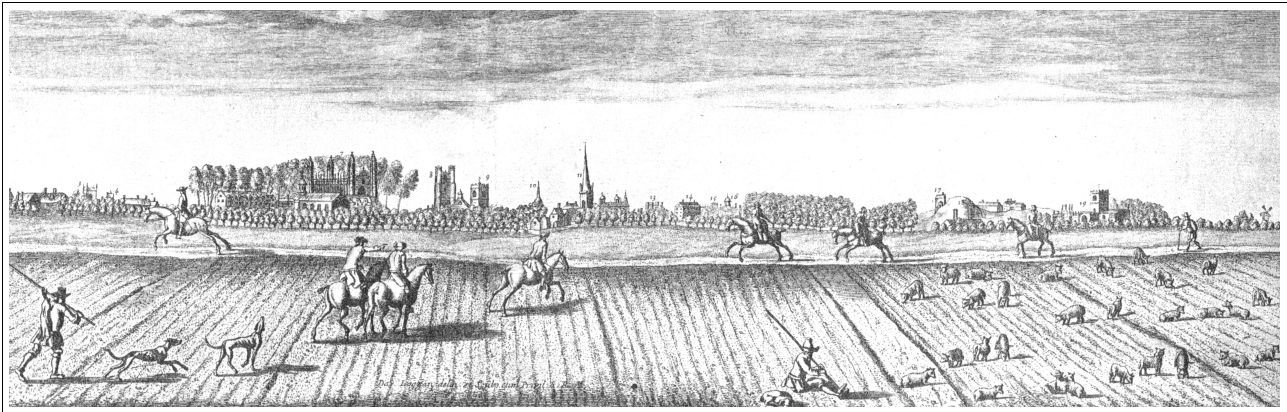
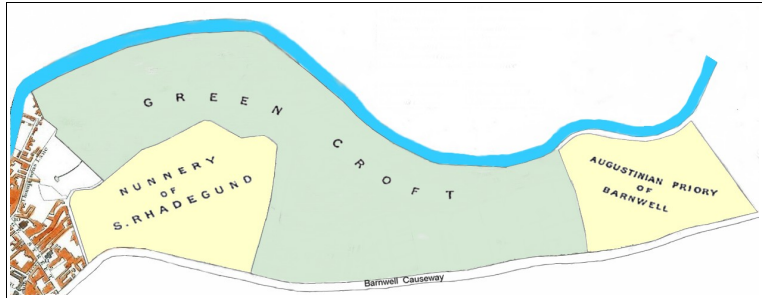
The total of Burials in both Visitation 1114

Whereof of the Plague 6910

Francis Willford *Wice-chancellor.* John Herring *Magisr.*

Enclosure of Midsummer Common

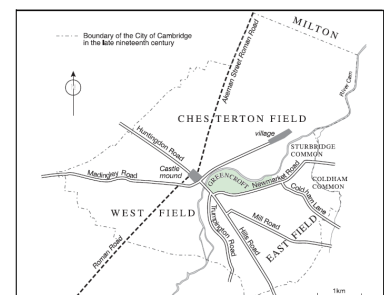
A Cambridge landscape which had not changed much for over 500 years was transformed in less than ten by the enclosure of commons, wasteland and open fields so depriving commoners of their rights of access and privilege. Back in the Middle Ages Midsummer Common was known as *Green Croft* - a long unbroken strip of low-lying riverside pasture bounded by the river Cam to the north, Barnwell Causeway to the south, a priory to the east, and a nunnery and town buildings to the west (see right⁹⁸). David Loggan⁹⁹ sketched the scene looking westwards from the Priory towards the town with the open field where herdsmen on horse and foot tend their cattle (see below).



Enclosure changed this scene. Although enclosure began in the medieval period, it was not until the 18th and 19th centuries that the practice became more widespread. Jesus College made an early declaration of intent in 1769 by seeking support for a Parliamentary Bill¹⁰⁰:

"We the owners and persons interested in Lands in the Common Fields on the west side of Cambridge are willing that the said should be enclosed ... and ... we are willing that one seventh part in Value of the Lands be assigned in lieu of tithes."

This initiative came to nothing but enclosure was thought to be both necessary and desirable; the Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Cambridge said that enclosure "would make it more convenient for those living in Cambridge to keep cows and horses"¹⁰¹. In 1801 Parliament passed the *Inclosure (Consolidation) Act*¹⁰² which opened the way for local legislation. Two statutes followed in Cambridge: for the West Field in 1802¹⁰³ and for the East Field in 1807¹⁰⁴. The West Field was more important in the development of the University whilst the East Field was more important in the development of the town. *Green Croft* lay within the East Field (see right¹⁰⁵).

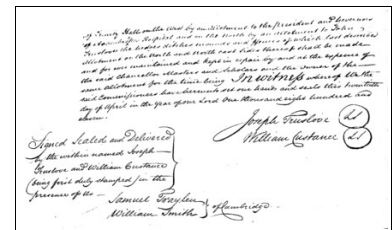


There is a good published description of the enclosure process in the West Field¹⁰⁶ but nothing similar for the East Field. However, key documents are held in the Cambridge University Library and Cambridgeshire Archives. The starting point is the so-called *Barnwell Inclosure Act*¹⁰⁷ which was passed by Parliament in 1807. The second page of the *Act* lists those with prime claims to land and property in the East Field. Thomas Panton and the Town of Cambridge both claimed to be owners of the soil, the waste lands, commons and common balks within Barnwell. Three Colleges (Jesus, Corpus Christi and St Peter's) and two churches (Saint Botolph and Great Saint Andrew) claimed rights to keep their tithes. These appropriations deprived others of their rights; they had to make a claim to retain them (or be compensated for their loss). Over 300 claims were made¹⁰⁸.

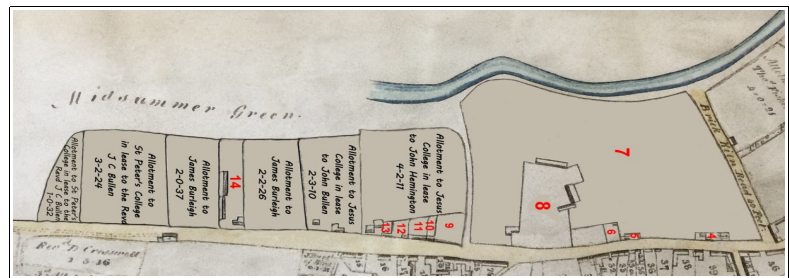
Deciding who should retain access, keep a parcel of land or property, or be compensated for their loss, needed someone to negotiate the claims. Parliament designated Commissioners for this purpose and gave them rules of engagement¹⁰⁹:

"And be it further enacted, That the said Commissioners shall in the next place set out, allot, and award, as and for a Common Pasture to be used and enjoyed as hereinafter mentioned, out of the Lands and Grounds hereby intended to be allotted and divided, such Plot or Parcel of Land or Ground as shall, in the Judgment of the said Commissioners, be a full Equivalent, Satisfaction, and Compensation for such Rights of Common or Stray as the Owners and Proprietors of Messuages or Cottages ... have exercised over the Lands and Grounds"

The Barnwell *Act* named two Commissioners to negotiate the claims: Joseph Truslove, a surveyor based in St Andrew's Street, and William Custance, an architect, surveyor and map maker from Chesterton¹¹⁰. The Commissioners held a series of meetings with claimants at the *Eagle and Child Inn* (now called the Eagle public house). The first of these meetings was held on 26 September 1807. The final meeting took place four years later on 17 April 1811 and the minutes say that "At this meeting the Commissioners Executed their *Award*" (see right). The Minute Book, the List of claims for Rights of Common and the Minutes of evidence are held in the Cambridge University Library¹¹¹.



The scripted *Award*¹¹² gives the names of the designated land and property owners and the areal extent and tenure of their allotments. Areas are given in acres, roods and perches where an acre is just over 4,000 sq metres¹¹³. The *Award* is accompanied by a *Map*¹¹⁴ showing the boundaries of the enclosed lands with their area and ownership together with numbered properties. An edited portion of this *Map* (see right) shows the allotments made on *Green Croft*.

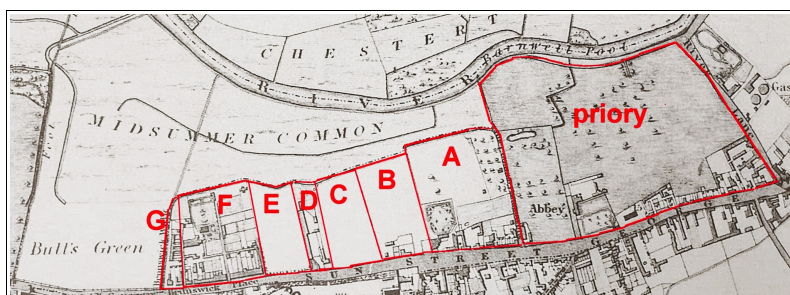


This story is better told if the enclosed parcels are shown on a more recognisable and detailed map. Sadly, maps of this area and time are rare¹¹⁵ and stop short of covering Midsummer Common. It was not until 1830 that Richard Grey Baker produced and published his acclaimed map of Cambridge¹¹⁶ and part of this map does cover Midsummer Common (see right). It shows the enclosed land stretching west from the Priory site to Butt's Green and on to the western limit of Jesus Green and the old Nunnery.



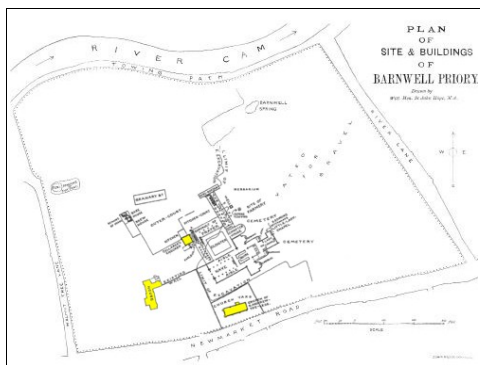
At this point, it is worth saying something about the geology of the Common. The river Cam rises from springs along the Cretaceous chalk ridge south-east of Cambridge. The river has undergone significant remodelling and canalisation since the early medieval period but is now firmly established as the northern boundary of the Common. The Common itself is a floodplain with its surface comprising alluvium and gravel. The gravel is mostly 1st River Terrace Gravel but there is a small area of 2nd and 3rd River Terrace Gravels on the higher ground in the south. The height of the land rises from approximately 4.9m OD on the flood plain to 12.7m OD on the Newmarket Road. The solid geology on the higher ground is Gault Clay. Developments have respected this geology.

What does the *Enclosure Award* tell us about land and property ownership and development in this part of Cambridge? When the *Award* was made, parcels of land on the Common were allotted to two Colleges (Jesus and St Peter's) and two private individuals (Thomas Panton and James Burleigh). Baker's map overlain with the *Enclosure Map* boundaries (see left) shows Panton allotted the old Priory site, Jesus College allotted land parcels **A** and **B**, James Burleigh allotted land parcels **C**, **D** and **E** and St Peter's College allotted land parcels **F** and **G**.



The *Enclosure Map* includes a Reference table containing a list of individual property allotments. Properties in our area are collated (see right) and show the site ownership and the names of proprietors together with a description of their property. Further examination of these land parcels and properties is revealing.

The **Priory** site



The dissolution of the monasteries in 1538 led to the demolition of the Priory church and the claustral buildings under the authority of the Wendy family¹¹⁷. Only the Cellarer's Chequer building and the church of St Andrews the Less remained. The Abbey House was built on the Priory site in the late 16th century. A historic plan of the site is shown on the left¹¹⁸.

The Cellarer's Chequer is constructed from Barnack stone with a tiled roof. It is in Early English style and still retains its

Land parcel	Names of Proprietors and Description of allotment
Priory site	4. John Preston: Cottage and Yard.
	5. Ripshaw Bird: Cottage and Yard.
	6. Olivia Palmby: Cottage and Yard.
	7. The Person etc. entitled to the Estate of the late T Panton: Horse Fair Close, Hog Yard, Sedge Yard, etc.
Jesus College site	8. The Person etc. entitled to the Estate of the late T Panton: Abbey Farm House, Garden, Yard, etc.
	9. Jesus College in lease to Elizabeth <u>Hemkins</u> : Cottage and Garden.
	10. Elizabeth <u>Hemkins</u> : Messuage and Yard.
	11. Jesus College in lease to Stewards and Cotton: Cock Public House and Premises.
Burleigh site	12. Bryant Coulson: Cottage and Premises.
	13. Jesus College in lease to John Hemington: Messuage and Premises.
	14. James Burleigh Farm House and Premises.

13th century doorway (see right), several windows and a fireplace. Inside it has a stone, vaulted ceiling supported by a central pillar, and there are fragments of carved masonry, coffins and lids. The City Council owns it.



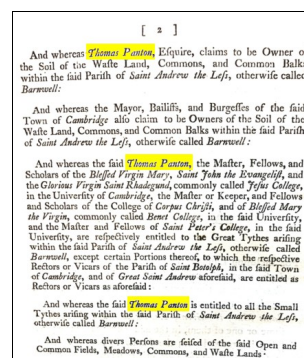
The church of St Andrew the Less is a tiny building - just a nave and a chancel (see right). Although much of the building is 13th century, the whole of the north side is rebuilt, and the windows on the south side are all neo-Gothic. The vestry and organ chamber were added in the late 19th century. The south doorway is transitional, but the porch that shields it is from the 1920s. In the west wall there are some original lancet windows, and above them the bells hang in a little double-lancet at the apex of the wall. Safety issues have forced the church to close.



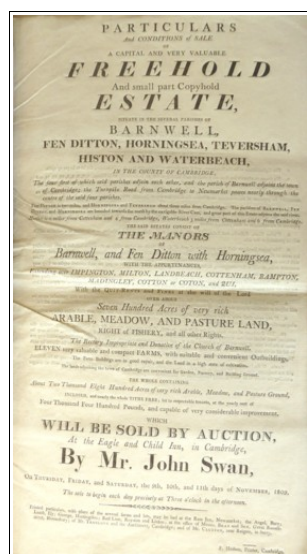
The Abbey House (see left) was known as Barnwell Farm House when it was built after the Priory was demolished and the site became pastureland. When built it was T-shaped with a rectangular main house and an abutting staircase flanked by two large chimney stacks the northern most of which has been partly concealed by the extension of the staircase wing in the 18th century¹¹⁹. Some of the original 'jewel and strapwork' parquetry is still visible behind the lower south-west brick facade. In 1703 the house exterior was unified by brick refacing over the original structure making it flush with the newer parts of the house. The interior parts of the

house were oak panelled at this time¹²⁰. The original timber and plaster structure plus decorative paintwork can be seen in one of the upstairs rooms. Ownership has changed through time.

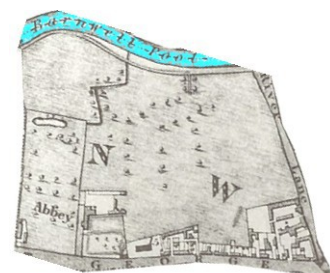
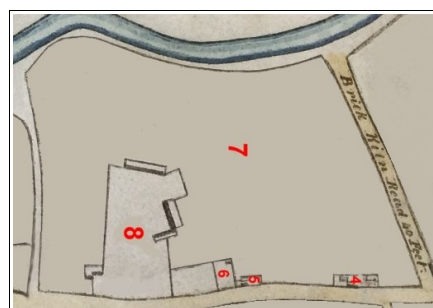
Over two centuries elapsed before Timothy Panton, a wealthy landowner, acquired the Priory site in 1763. He died in 1782 and ownership passed to his son, Thomas Panton. The Panton family owned a lot of land and property in Cambridge although they lived in Newmarket¹²¹ and their principal interest there was horse racing. The father was master of the king's running horses and the son owned a horse that won the Derby. Thomas Panton became actively involved in preparing his Cambridge land holdings ready for enclosure¹²² and was named as a major land claimant in the 1807 *Barnwell Inclosure Act* (see right). He acknowledged that fencing his holdings and compensating those deprived of their right of access would be a costly undertaking.



So in 1809 he put his Barnwell Abbey farm - which included the House, the Priory site and rights to hold 500 sheep on various commons in the city - up for auction (see left) at the Eagle and Child Inn with an asking price of £25,000. The sale did not go well. Only 7 acres of the Priory site were sold - land on the Newmarket Road frontage to the east of the church - leaving around 19 acres of rough pasture unsold. The House with formal gardens, outbuildings and yard also failed to sell. To add to the gloom, Thomas Panton died in Newmarket on the day of the sale!



In 1811 the *Enclosure Award* was completed. An extract from the *Map* (see right) shows only 5 allotments on the site: 3 cottages and yards allotted to John Preston (4), Ripshaw Bird (5) and Olivia Palmby (6); the Abbey House, Garden and Yard (8) and the rest of the site including Horse Fair Close, Hog Yard, Sedge Yard etc (7) allotted to "The Person etc. entitled to the Estates of the late T Panton".



The *Award* makes no mention of the land that was sold off in the 1809 auction but in 1813 this land and Abbey House was bought by Dr James Geldart. He sold 7 acres east of the church for residential buildings along the Newmarket Road. By this time the House was no longer a farmhouse but a tenanted property probably split into three parts. Baker's map (see left) shows the 1830 layout of the site; Horse Fair Close is more evident than on the earlier *Enclosure Map*.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1888 (see right) shows the Priory site little changed from that in Baker's 1830 map: a gravel pit replaces rough pasture, the site is further subdivided by various walls, a 'ruin' appears behind the Newmarket Road frontage midway between the church and River Lane, and Page's fish pond and Brunswick School are named. In 1886 Joseph Sturton had bought the 19 acres of rough pasture for £7,750 and divided it into residential plots with street names commemorating the history of the site (see left). These developments between 1880 and 1910 were to permanently sever Midsummer Common from Stourbridge Common. Abbey House passed through a number of owners before being bought by the Windhorse Trust (a Buddhist charity) in 2002.



The Jesus College site - parcels A and B

The *Enclosure Award* (see below) gave two parcels of land between the Priory site and Auckland Road to Jesus College as compensation for the loss of open-field land and rights of Common.

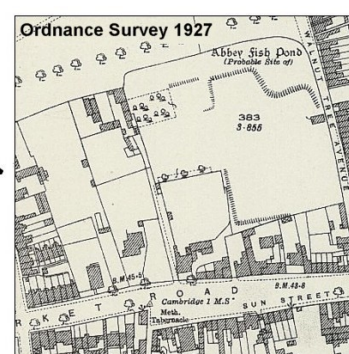
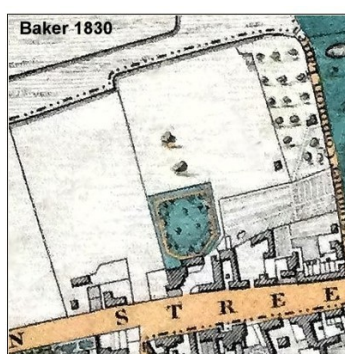
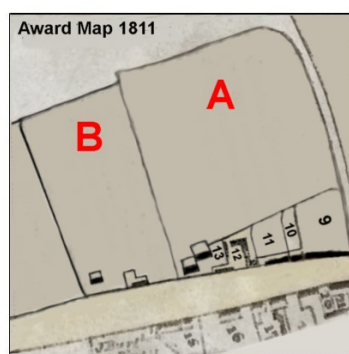
*Jesus
4th Allotment
2. 3. 10*

[B] *One other piece or parcel of Land or Ground being a Close called Hazle Close containing two acres three roods and ten perches bounded on the north east by another Allotment and an Homestead belonging to the said Master Fellows and Scholars of Jesus College on the south east by the Town Streets on the south west by an Allotment to James Burleigh and on the north west by Midsummer Green the hedges ditches mounds and fences of which last described Allotment against the Town Street the Allotment to James Burleigh and Midsummer Green shall be made and forever maintained and kept in repair by and at the expense of the said Allotment for the time being*

*Jesus
5th Allotment
4. 2. 11*

[A] *and for the said Master Fellows and Scholars of Jesus College in lieu of and as a compensation for all their open field land and rights of Common in lease to John Hemington One piece or parcel of Land or Ground being a Close called Woolpocket Close containing Four Acres two roods and eleven perches bounded on the north east by a lane on the south east by Homesteads belonging to Elizabeth Howkins Bryant Coulson and the said Master Fellows and Scholars of Jesus College respectively on part of the south west by another Allotment to the said Master Fellows and Scholars of Jesus College and on the remaining part of the south west and on the north west by Midsummer Green the hedges ditches mounds and fences of which last described Allotment on all sides thereof (especially against the Homesteads) shall be made and forever maintained and kept in repair by and at the expense of the said Master Fellow and Scholars of Jesus College and the Owner of the said Allotment for the time being*

The *Award* allotted two freehold properties in parcel A - 10 (a messuage and yard) to Elizabeth Howkins and 12 (a cottage and premises) to Bryant Coulson. The *Award* allotted the rest of parcel A to Jesus College and they leased homestead 9 (a cottage and garden) to Elizabeth Howkins, property 11 (the Cock Public House and premises) to Stewards and Cotton, and homestead 13 (a messuage and premises) and the rest of the land in the parcel to John Hemington. The *Award* allotted the land in parcel B to Jesus College and they leased it to farmer John Bullen as pastureland. These allotments are shown in the *Award Map* (see below left). Baker's map shows this better and the 1927 Ordnance Survey map shows the slow extension of buildings into this Jesus College site.



Contrary to what is shown in Loggan's sketch of the Common, Jesus College records¹²³ show buildings in this area. The first complete catalogue of property deeds held in the College archives are dated in the 13th century when the Nunnery dedicated to St Radegund and St Mary occupied a site at the western limit of *Green Croft*. The Nunnery was founded about 1133 and dissolved in 1496 when its buildings and grounds were taken over by the newly-founded Jesus College. So we are talking about deeds of properties owned at the time by the Nunnery. The picture is confused by the Priory owning some properties in the area and rights to rental payments being disputed¹²⁴.

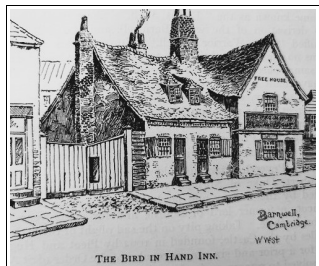
A distinction is made between charters of Barwell properties and land holdings in the Barnwell fields, which were part of the Cambridge field system. The Barnwell charters refer to two dwellings and two crofts (the

croft is the adjoining plot of land used for pasture or arable). The Nuns granted them leases rather than feudal tenure because the landlord could obtain a rent more in accordance with the rise in land values. In 1389, William Rolf of Ixning gave the nuns five tofts abutting the highway (a toft refers to land on which a house was built). This land would have been meadowland in strips, enclosed by the owners. At the time the suburb of Barnwell was developing and houses were built along the road frontage, there was no public objection to land enclosure by owners. Account Rolls held by the College show how these properties changed hands through the centuries up to the time of exposure.

The *Award* lists 5 properties in parcel **A**. It describes property **13** as a "messuage and premises". It has a long history under ownership by the Nuns and College. In the mid 17th century John Hill, baker, leased the site and undertook to replace the demolished building with a house to the value of £40. In a lease of 1759 it is described as "a parcel of ground with a messuage ... together with a malting, stables, outhouses, yards and a garden". Later plans show that these outbuildings were at the far end of the site, abutting on the Common. In 1773 the lease passed to Thomas Cheetham and then his widow, Mary. The house stood well back from the road and had a small garden in front with a carriage drive to Woolpocket Close behind. The Cheethams held a second College lease which included the whole of the close, out of which they cut a portion of about half an acre for a kitchen garden and planted an orchard on much of the remainder. Baker's map shows these features clearly even though both leases had passed to John Hemington.

Property **12** was a freehold house which stood on a small site by the roadside. In the 1780s it was owned by the notorious mayor of Cambridge, John Mortlock. The *Award* describes it as a "cottage and premises" belonging to Bryant Coulson.

Property **11** was the "Cock Public House and premises"; it had a taproom, two parlours, kitchen and dairy with two rooms upstairs and a large yard at the back with a brewhouse, stable, sheds and a carpenter's shop. It had been called the Saracen's Head and the Hobby family held a sixty year lease on it which would expire in 1562. This was the period when Fellows of colleges, in order to keep up with inflation, were buying leases whenever existing leases expired or were near expiry. The Saracen's Head lease came into the hands of the bursar of Jesus College. It stayed that way for successive leases during which the name was changed to the Cock Inn. Legislation imposed rent controls and by 1809 the rent was £35pa. In 1853 the lease expired and the tenant would only take it on a short lease of £16pa pleading "almost entire loss of trade as a public house owing to immense competition". In 1872 the pub, now called "The Bird in Hand Inn" (see left), was



surveyed and described as being of "brick to the first floor and lath and plaster above"; the two bedrooms had been divided up into four and the shed had been converted into a blacksmiths. The building was rebuilt over the years and at the time of writing it still stands (see right) but is destined for demolition soon. Property **10** east of the Cock was the other freehold site owned by Mrs Howkins; she had lately built a new house there. The *Award* describes it as a "messuage and yard" and because it was a small site



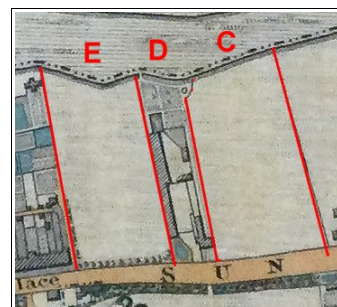
for a house of this character, the College sublet an acre of their land to her. The *Award* calls this land property **9**, describing it as a "cottage and garden". Along the street frontage to the east was a row of nine cottages which are shown clearly on Baker's map. The laying of the turnpike road to Newmarket, known in this section as 'The Mile', improved the value of these cottages.

Parcel **B**, called Hazle Close, was pastureland at the time of enclosure. Its only distinctive roadside feature today is Emmanuel College's Barnwell Hostel (see right) a substantial, if somewhat oppressive, three storey 19th century building of local historic interest. It has a mix of features, crow stepping, Venetian windows, Dutch gable and limestone parapet copings. To the rear is a modern building, incorporating a glazed tower and copper dome, which forms the main body of the hostel. To the front is one of the few remaining London plane trees. To the rear is the Community Orchard and views from the river terrace across Midsummer Common to the river.



The **Burleigh** site - parcels **C**, **D** and **E**

James Burleigh flourished in Cambridge during the reign of George III. He farmed his land and followed the remunerative calling of carrier. During the stirring times of the Napoleonic menace, he was accorded public thanks for his patriotic offer of sixty horses and eight waggons for general service in the event of an invasion. The *Award* allotted him three parcels of land (see right); **C** and **E** being pasture land and **D** his "farm house and premises". He lived there in what is now called Burleigh House at 13 - 15 Newmarket Road.



According to the Royal Commission Survey of Cambridge in 1959, it was built in the 18th century but with the front extensively remodelled in the second half of the 19th century (see left). The interior was then renovated in 2022 to give a welcoming working space¹²⁵. Burleigh's name is highlighted in the *Enclosure Award* which states:

*Burleigh House
1st Allotment
2 - 2 - 26
Freehold*

[C] For James Burleigh in lieu of and as a compensation for his freehold open field Lands and Rights of Common belonging to his freehold messuages the four following pieces or parcels of Land or Ground (that is to say) One piece or parcel of Land or Ground called New England Close containing two acres two roods and twenty six perches bounded on the north east by an Allotment to the Master and Fellows and Scholars of Jesus College on the south east by the Town Street on the south west by by the Homestead belonging to the said James Burleigh and on the north west by Midsummer Green the hedges ditches mounds and fences of which last described Allotment next the Town Street and Midsummer Green shall be made and for ever maintained and kept in repair by and at the expense of the said James Burleigh and the owner of the same Allotment for the time being

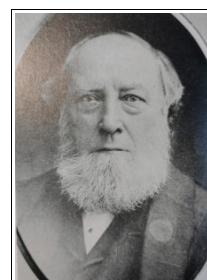
*James
2nd Allotment
2 - 0 - 37
Freehold*

[E] One other piece or parcel of Land or Ground containing two acres and thirty seven perches bounded on the North East by the homestead belonging to the said James Burleigh and on the south east by the Town Street on the south west by an Allotment to the Master and Fellows of St Peter's College and on the north west by Midsummer Green the hedges ditches mounds and fences of which last described Allotment next the Town Street and Midsummer Green shall be made and for ever maintained and kept in repair by and at the expense of the said James Burleigh and the owner of the same Allotment for the time being

Soon after enclosure, Burleigh sold part of his premises to James Twiss "for the purpose of building thereon a brewery"¹²⁶. Twiss moved his own brewery from Rose Crescent into the Barnwell area around 1822.

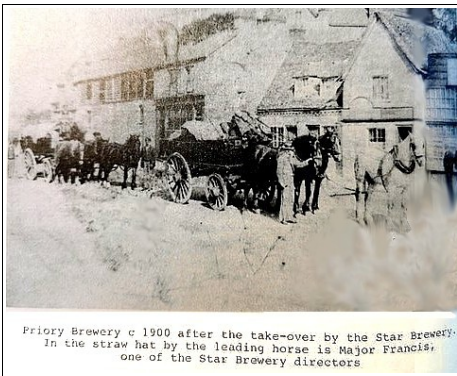


Records show that he provided six barrels of beer from the new brewery to the Queen Victoria Coronation Feast on Parker's Piece in 1838. In 1859 Twiss sold the brewery to Frederick Bailey (see right) who worked at the Malthouse in Auckland Road (see left¹²⁷) and was living at the Hope Brewery in Parsonage Street.



Frederick Bailey & Co. Ltd in 1884. In April 1889 he sold the brewery, maltings and tied pubs to Charles Armstrong. Bailey is remembered now by a commemorative plaque (see right) that is fixed to the wall of a house in Auckland Road where his old malthouse once stood.





Armstrong then acquired the nearby Priory brewery¹²⁸ (see left) and Victoria¹²⁹ brewery and remodelled them into one brewery which he registered as the Star Brewery (Cambridge) in November 1891 and the beer bottles took a new label (see right). In 1903 there were 30 public houses on the Newmarket Road. During the First World War the Star Brewery was manned almost entirely by women. It had stabling for 25 horses up to 1935. It had been a great success and was considered to be the county's 'star' brewery.



The Star Brewery, as we have said, forms an imposing block of lofty buildings, and is enclosed on its west side by several important maltings, beyond which, are the stables, coach-houses and extensive cooperages. To the right of the main entrance is the brewery house, a handsome structure, at present occupied by the late proprietor of the brewery; and on the left, the offices, occupying a semi-detached white-brick building of neat elevation. The premises cover upwards of four acres of ground, and there is also, connected with the brewery, a farm of about 100 acres, situated at Fen Ditton, two miles distant.

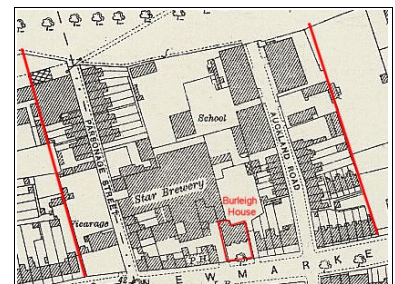
We met with a most cordial reception from Mr. Charles Armstrong, who introduced us to Mr. Pullin, the head brewer, under whose guidance we commenced our exploration of the brewery at the malt stores, situated in the top storey of the front block. The stairs leading thereto are dreadfully steep.

A revealing description of the brewery by a visitor is contained in Alfred Barnard's *Noted Breweries of Great Britain and Ireland* (see left).

In 1934 Tollemache Breweries Ltd. of Ipswich acquired a controlling share of the Star Brewery and its 144 serviced pubs in the Cambridge area¹³⁰. The Tollemache name appeared on the head office in Burleigh House (see below left). Then in 1957 Tollemache merged with

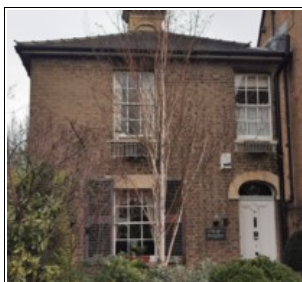


Cobbold & Co. so the Star Brewery came under the control of Tolly Cobbold. Business declined. Tolly's managing Director said at the time "there is no possibility of us leaving Cambridge. It is a very important place for us". In 1972 the Star Brewery ceased production leaving Cambridge City without a brewery. Most of the buildings were used as a storage depot until they were demolished in 1981/82. Only the 18th century Burleigh House, the Burleigh Arms pub and the Old Brewery House were left standing.



The Ordnance Survey map of 1927 (see right) shows how Burleigh's three parcels of land changed in the century following enclosure; malting and brewing had come to dominate his site.

Parsonage Street marks the western boundary of the Star Brewery and malthouses. The terraces on the east side are pleasing, and are of gault brick with some contrasting red. Number 2 calls itself 'Tolly House' and the plaque at nearby says that Fred Bailey built some of the others. Numbers 10-16 comprise a modern terrace which fits in reasonably well. Number 18 is the Old Brewery House which was attached to the Star Brewery and is a building of local interest. Only the side is seen from the street (see left). It is a 19th century



substantial house with 3 x 6/6 sash windows and a fanlight over the front door. The garden still has a well that serviced the old brewery. On the west side of the road is the 'new' vicarage built of brick set in a rat-trap bond. The old vicarage is number 73 on Maids Causeway and it is now a residence for members of Queens' College. It has immense style (see right) with a particularly ornate porch and doorway.



Auckland Road was named after the founding of Auckland New Zealand in 1840. It marks the eastern boundary of the Star Brewery and malthouses. Numbers 9-15 is an attractive terrace with Gothic brick arches with keystones over the doors and windows with moulded brickwork standing proud (see right). The 1888 Ordnance Survey map shows a 'Circus of Varieties' at the bottom of the road. Between 1895 and 1898 a Hippodrome with a small sawdust-strewn ring was built there for the use of Tudor's Circus. It was known for some years as the Gaiety Theatre with theatrical performances before it closed in 1914. This area is now occupied by modern 'mews' housing and apartments which are of little 'steetscape' value.



Brunswick Cottages is a terrace of six two-storey cottages with an adjacent house, Midsummer Limes, set above a tall concrete retaining wall and sitting on the river terrace. Probably dating from the 1930s and of grey brick and slate, they still provide an important edge to the Common.

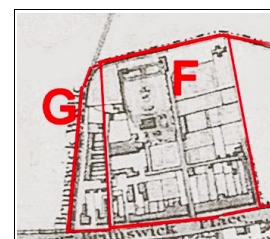
Newmarket Road proper starts at an attractive corner shop on the corner of Parsonage Street. It is followed by a terrace of two storey houses and the Burleigh Arms public house (see right). The pub has painted brickwork and tall heavy chimneys which provides a classically styled end to the row. Beyond is the decorative three storey Burleigh House set behind tall walls and shrubs with canted bay windows and alternate triangular and semi-circular details over first floor windows all in Ketton limestone with similar stone quoins, the rest being in Flemish bond gault brick. Either



side of the junction with Auckland Road are substantial mid 19th century villas, three storeys with basements and bay windows on the ground and first floors. All have names, The Laurels, Selhurst, Holdhurst, Lyndhurst on one side (see left), then Auckland Terrace on the other side.

The **St Peter's College** (Peterhouse) site - parcels **F** and **G**

Known colloquially as the Brunswick Estate, the two allotment parcels **F** and **G** (see right) were located to the east of Butt Green and continuing along Maid's Causeway almost as far as what is now Parsonage Street. The name 'Brunswick' gives the Estate a rough date of the 1820s. Caroline of Brunswick had married the Prince Regent and returned to England after he became King George IV in 1820. Her death in 1821 resulted in commemorative street naming - Brunswick Place, Brunswick Walk, Brunswick Gardens, Brunswick Terrace and Brunswick Cottages.



The *Enclosure Award* does little more than state the owner of the two parcels ("Same" referring to the Master and Fellows of St Peter's College - now Peterhouse College – which is given in the missing 1st Allotment), the area of each parcel (in acres, roods and perches - matching those given on the *Enclosure Map*), the boundaries of each parcel, and the names of those responsible for paying to maintain the hedges, ditches and mounds within the parcel.

Same
1st Allotment
3. 2. 24

[F] *One other piece or parcel of Land or Ground being a Close lying on the north east side of Butt Close containing three acres two roods and twenty four perches bounded on the north east by an allotment to James Burleigh on the south east by the Town Street and on the south west by another Allotment to the said Master and Fellows of St Peter's College and on the north west by Midsummer Green the hedges ditches mounds and fences of which last described allotment on all sides thereof shall be made and forever maintained and kept in repair by and at the expense of the said Master and Fellows of St Peter's College and the owners of the said Allotment for the time being*

same
3rd allotment
1st 0. 32

[G] And one other piece or parcel of Land or Ground being a Close called Butt Close containing one acre and thirty two perches bounded on the north east by another Allotment to the said Master and Fellows on the south east by the Town Street on the south west by Butt Green and on the north west by Midsummer Green the hedges ditches mounds and fences of which last described Allotment on the south east south west and north west sides thereof shall be made and for ever maintained and kept in repair by and at the expense of the said Master and Fellows of St Peter's College and the owners of the said Allotment for the time being

This land was lightly developed before enclosure. Legal documents held in the Peterhouse Archives show that the College leased Butt Close (parcel **G**) to the Revd Bullen for the period 1798-1820. Housing possibly existed at this time. The *Enclosure Map* shows two parcels of land (**F** and **G**) "Allotted to St Peter's College in lease to the Revd J C Bullen". A new lease issued by the College at the time of the *Award* confirms this lease and sets a revised start date of 1811 extending for 21 years. A handwritten note (see right) attached to this lease has area measurements matching those on the *Enclosure Map*.

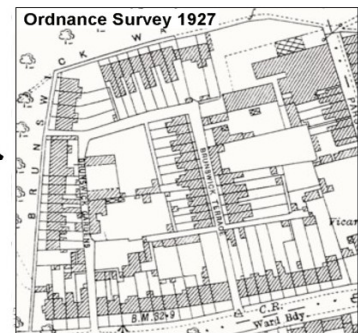
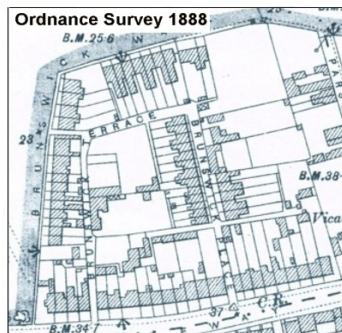
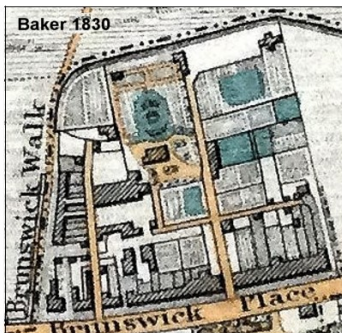
Barnwell Inclosure allotment to the Master, Fellows and Scholars of Peterhouse College and the Revd J C Bullen their before claimed

1. Allotment being a close of pasture called Butt Close containing 1a - 0r - 32p

to fence as before

2. Allotment being a close of pasture lying on the east side of allotment 1 containing 3a - 2r - 24p

The maps below show a hundred years of development in this small part of what was *Green Croft*. Baker's map of 1830 is the best we have to show the built environment at the time of enclosure. In 1860, Fellows of colleges were allowed to marry and this was a spur to housebuilding in this college-owned area of town as shown in the Ordnance Survey map of 1888. The 1927 map shows further infilling and little room for future changes. The Barnwell Estate remains a residential area with many of the houses still owned by Peterhouse College. A walk through the area recaptures the early developments after enclosure.

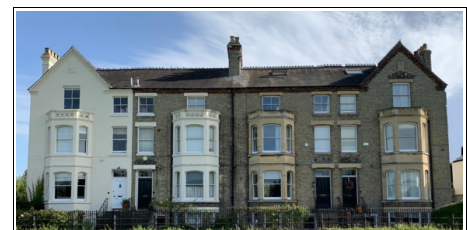


Brunswick Walk forms the east edge of Butt Green and comprises two terraces separated by a passageway (see right). The earliest terrace, numbers 1-10, dates from the early 19th century and comprises 2 storey houses, built of grey gault brick, with sash windows, panelled doors, and slate roofs. Numbers 9 and 10 (see left) are now painted



white and have plastered door surrounds and painted wooden rustic lattice porches; they once formed the Brunswick Nursing Home. They are all grade II listed

buildings. Numbers 11-14 are in a separate 3 storey terrace dated 1880 (see right) which is classed as a Building of Local Interest.



Brunswick Gardens, originally named Butt Close, is bounded on one side by the back gardens of Brunswick Walk and was once bounded on the other side by Denmore House and Denmore Lodge which occupied much of the land down to the Common. The demise of the House and its garden bordering the Common gave way to North Terrace and, more recently, a courtyard of modern houses. The Lodge (see right) remains and has been extended in recent years.



The houses in **North Terrace** (see below) frame the southern edge of Midsummer Common. A terrace of seven 19th century three storey houses is at the west end. At the east end are three staggered terraces of mid 20th century dwellings numbered 11 to 19 in a pinkish brick and with flat roofs; these are not shown on the 1927 map. In between is a solitary house, number 8, with its own distinctive style.



1 - 9



11-25

Brunswick Terrace leaves Maid's Causeway as a very narrow street. The west side terrace, Numbers 1-9, is a Building of Local Interest which dates from the 1820s. It comprises neat two storey cottages in Flemish bond gault brick with recessed windows of hung sashes (six over six panes), simple semicircular heads over the doors and slate roofs. Their quiet plainness is in sharp contrast to the fancier houses on Maids Causeway.

The rest of the street comprises later two storey terraces. Those on the west side, numbers 11 to 25, are gault brick with stone lintels above windows and some with rectangular fanlights over the front doors. Numbers 2-10 on the east side of the road have red brick arches over the windows and doors. The remaining terrace on that side of the road, numbered 12 to 26, is mid 20th and of little 'steetscape' value.

Maid's Causeway was built under a bequest from Stephen Perse who died in 1615. At the time of Baker's map in 1830 the north side was known as



2 - 10



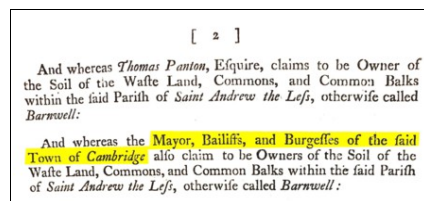
12-26



Brunswick Place. It came to be occupied by three elegant terraces (see left) with fine detailing, two storeys with basements and some with dormers to light the attics. All are in grey gault brick laid in a Flemish bond and slate roofs with hung sash windows set in four inch reveals. The windows typically have glazing bars dividing them into six panes and panelled front doors have rectangular or semi-circular fanlights above. Numbers 49 and 51 are particularly decorative with iron balconies to first floor windows and some ornate glazing bars to the fanlights.

The Town of Cambridge

Page 2 of the *Barnwell Inclosure Act* lists those with prime claims to land and property in the East Field. The Town of Cambridge claimed to be one of the owners of the soil, the waste lands, commons and common balks within Barnwell (see right). The *Enclosure Award and Map* shows parcels of *Green Croft* land allotted to Thomas Panton, James Burleigh and two Colleges. The rest was left with The Town.

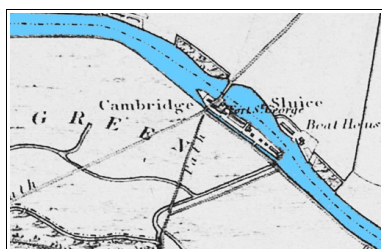
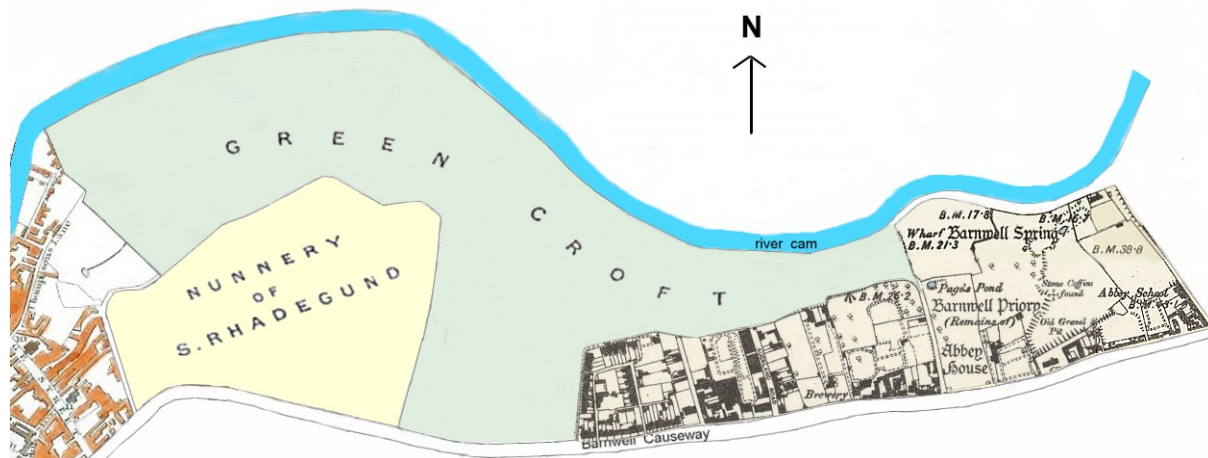


In 1850 it was proposed to Council that a Parliamentary Bill be framed that would extinguish all rights of access over Midsummer Common. This was narrowly defeated by 11 votes to 10. But the proponents were not to be defeated. A year later, in 1851, the Council approved a set of Commons byelaws and another set in 1880 both of which remain in force to the present day. Any person beating or shaking a carpet, rug or mat or gambling, betting or playing with cards, dice or any other article on Midsummer Common can still be fined forty shillings!

In 1859 the Council again tried to abolish rights of common. Committees and sub-committees were formed and met for over a decade. In 1870 the Committee made recommendations for "improving the finances of the Corporation ... through houses erected on but a small portion of the Commons". It was proposed that 17 houses be built along the road on the South side of Butt Green¹³¹ but without the authority of Parliament the plans could not be taken forward. This failed proposal might explain why house numbers start at 27 on the north side of Maids Causeway (see right).



By way of a conclusion to this examination of the 19th century enclosure process on what is now Midsummer Common, it is interesting to look back at the opening map of *Green Croft* and see what green space enclosure has taken away at its eastern end.

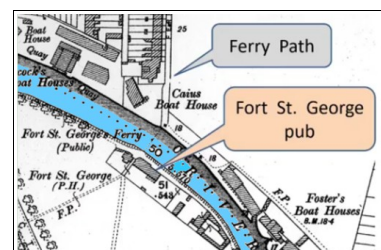


Further boundary changes to the Common

Enclosure took a huge chunk of land away from *Green Croft* thus reducing public rights of access to open space. Other actions reduced those rights still further. A portion of Baker's 1830 map of Cambridge shows the Fort St. George public house located on an island in the river Cam (see left) with a sluice across the river's main channel. The island

was once occupied by a mill and boats holding grain plied their way down the rivers Cam and Great Ouse to reach Lynn (now Kings Lynn) and the sea. During the 14th century, Lynn had ranked as England's most important port. This island, and the pub thereon, was not recognised on the earlier *Enclosure Award Map*.

An Act of Parliament in 1813 gave the Cam river Conservators greater powers and the *South Level Act* of 1827 created Commissioners with responsibility for the river. The Commissioners gave the Conservators permission to build a lock by Jesus Green, remove the sluice at Fort St George and fill in the narrow stretch of river between the island and the Common. The map on the right shows the Fort St George relocated onto the Common.

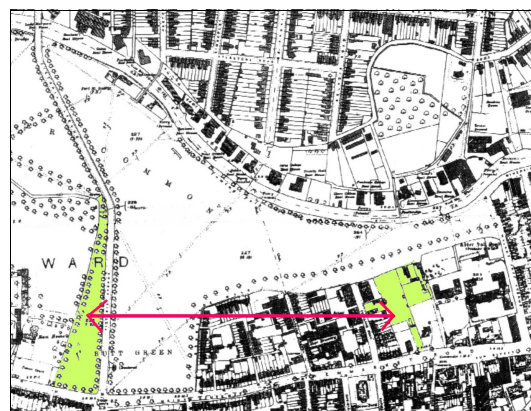


By the pub there was a public ferry crossing the river to join Ferry Path leading into Chesterton. The loading points on both sides of the river are still visible. The ferry man was on permanent call to take pedestrians and luggage across the river (see right). He lived in Ferry House next door to the pub; a building dated 1894.

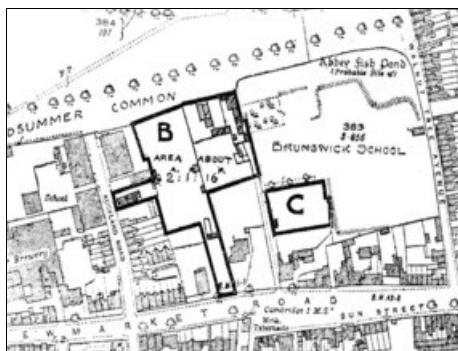


In 1888 the Council had a Parliamentary Bill to construct Victoria Bridge over the river and Victoria Avenue across the Common. The bridge and road were built in 1890 and the ferry lost its trade and the ferryman his job. Victoria Avenue divided the Common into two halves. The Council planted 85 chestnut trees on either side of the new road (see left). Many of these still survive.

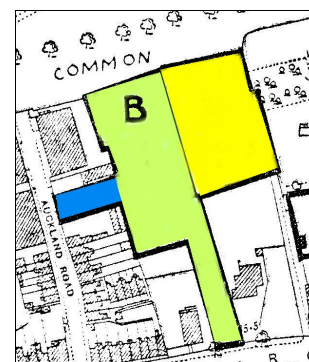
In 1930 the Council agreed to give Jesus College the strip of Butt's Green to the west of Victoria Avenue for the expansion of College playing fields. In return, the College agreed to give the Council land it owned one patch being land on the edge of the Common that the College had acquired under the *Enclosure Award*. These changes are shown (see right) on the 1920 Ordnance Survey map¹³².



This exchange proved controversial and led to a public inquiry and much legal argument. The Minister finally approved this transfer subject to what was the College land becoming 'common land' and forming part of 'Midsummer Common'. The Minister also insisted that the buildings on this site be demolished.



The boundary of this site **B** is clearly defined in the legal papers (see left). During the war, the yellow-shaded part of the site (see right) was given over to allotments under the "Dig for Victory" campaign and it remains in use as allotments to the present day. This change of use did not stop it being 'common land'. In 1949 the City Council gave 'period consent' for the placement of a Yasume Club building on the blue-shaded part of the site. City Council papers show that the Minister gave



approval "to the inclosure of the said land and the erection thereon of the social club building". This did not stop it being 'common land' and the City Council respected this status by keeping it open to public access at all times. The Yasume Club building was removed from the site in 2011. The green-shaded part of the site remained as public open space.

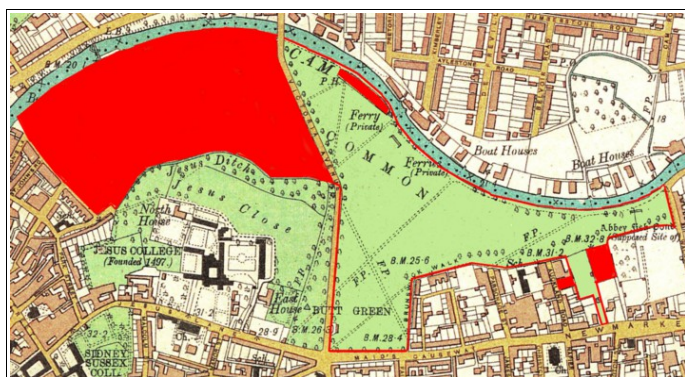


The red line on the map to the left shows the boundary of Midsummer Common as it was in 1931.

This boundary would change again, by mistake, when the Government enacted and enforced the *Commons Registration Act 1965*. This *Act* established statutory 'registers' of 'common land' in England and Wales. Each area of 'common land' is given a unique 'unit number' against which is recorded:

- Land - this includes a description of the land, who registered it and when it became finally registered. There are also maps showing the boundaries of the land;
- Rights - this includes a description of the rights of common, over which area of the Common they are exercisable, the name (if known) of the person who holds those rights, and whether the rights arise by virtue of a separate land ownership by the commoner; and
- Ownership - this includes details (if known) of owners of 'common land'. However, entries in this section of the registers are not held to be conclusive.

On 26th June 1968, John Elven (Town Clerk) passed information to the County Council in order to register Midsummer Common under the *Act*. It entered the Register¹³³ on 2nd February 1970 and is described therein



as "Land known as Midsummer Green or Jesus Green and Butts Green". There is an accompanying map¹³⁴ showing its boundary. Unfortunately mistakes were made by the County Council draughtsman and Jesus Green (to the west of Victoria Avenue), the allotments, the Yasume site and buildings around the Fort St George were left off the map. These omissions are red-shaded in the map (see left). The *Commons Registration Act 1965* does not allow corrections to be made to units already in the Register.

In 1970 a Cambridge citizen took exception to the exclusion of Jesus Green from the map and took the matter to court. The Chief Commons Commissioner decided that the 1965 *Act* gave him insufficient powers to correct this mistake. A similar case in Oxford was taken to the House of Lords¹³⁵ with a similar outcome but Lord Hoffman drew attention to what had been said by the Royal Commission on Common Land¹³⁶ that "as the last reserve of uncommitted land in England and Wales, 'common land' ought to be preserved in the public interest". Jesus Green was reinstated as 'common land' when the mistake was corrected years later in the *Cambridge City Council Act 1985*.

Council papers show that in February 1971 the City Council had asked the County Council why the allotments and Yasume sites had also been left off the map. The County Council said that "the omissions were the result of a misunderstanding on the part of the draughtsman" and it was too late to correct the mistakes¹³⁷. The mistakes should have been corrected (see right) a year earlier when correcting the Jesus Green omission from the definitive map.



In 2011, the City Council decided to sell the Yasume site and gave planning permission for a building to be erected thereon. Questions were raised about the legality of giving permission for a building to be erected on what was 'common land'. The Ministry was approached¹³⁸ and first took the view that "the fact that 'common land' is not in the register does not mean that it is no longer common, particularly when there was a clear intention that it should be and the only reason it is not is due to incorrect transcription of the boundary on the map". On being challenged¹³⁹, the Ministry changed its mind in saying that under section 1(2) of the *Commons Registration Act 1965* "the land ceased to be 'common land' for want of registration ... and the map must be taken to be conclusive of what is registered".

This story is not yet finished. The Ministry has pointed out that "there is scope to correct certain errors in the registers under Part 1 of the *Commons Act 2006* when that Part is brought into force in Cambridgeshire". Under section 19(1) "A commons registration authority may amend its register of 'common land' or town or village greens for any purpose referred to in subsection (2)" which includes "correcting a mistake made by the commons registration authority in making or amending an entry in the register". The County Council will be able to correct the mistake "on its own initiative or on the application of any person" once it has implemented this part of the legislation. Eighteen years later and we are still waiting for section 19(1) to be implemented in Cambridgeshire! However, the Ministry points out that the likelihood of amending the register might be reduced where land has been developed. Once the approved synagogue was built on the site there is little chance of recovering its 'common land' status. But there is nothing to stop the allotments reverting to their 'common land' status.

Part way along the river bank are 3 buildings and a walled garden which were also left off the map of 'common land' by the draughtsman. The first of these buildings is Ferry House, the second is the Fort St George public house, the third is the Midsummer House restaurant. All three are now in private ownership. The fourth is a walled pound still owned by the City Council. It is questionable whether these sites could be returned to their correct 'common land' status.

Grazing on the Common

At one time nearly half of the land in Britain was 'common land' but it now accounts for only 3% in England. 'Common land' traditionally sustained the poorest people in rural communities by providing them with a source of wood, bracken for bedding and pasture for livestock. Giving local people in a community the right to graze livestock on a shared piece of land without fences or boundaries between them dates back to the Magna Carta in 1215. Midsummer Common has provided grazing for animals since that time.



In 1624 the Vice-Chancellor of the University and the Mayor of the Borough issued an ordinance touching on the Commons of the town. In Maitland's words¹⁴⁰:

"Every occupier of an ancient tenement having of old time broad gates may turn out two head of cattle. Every occupier of other tenements and cottages may turn out one. Every person having six score acres of land in Cambridge field may turn out six, and so in proportion for any greater or less quantity of land".

It was shared pastureland. Cattle owners had to mark their own cattle. At the start of the 19th century, the Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Cambridge said that enclosure "would make it more convenient for those living in Cambridge to keep cows and horses"¹⁴¹. Maitland saw problems¹⁴²:

"the corporation shamefully neglected the Commons; anybody and everybody seems to have turned out any beasts that he had, unless indeed he feared having to haul them from the mire. In 1833 it was said that the mayor, who lived opposite Butt Green, would have been dead of cholera long since, had he not been of a strong constitution. One theory seems to have been that all the inhabitants had the right to turn out beasts; but there was a tradition which would have confined it to the freemen and 'the inhabitants having gable gates'".

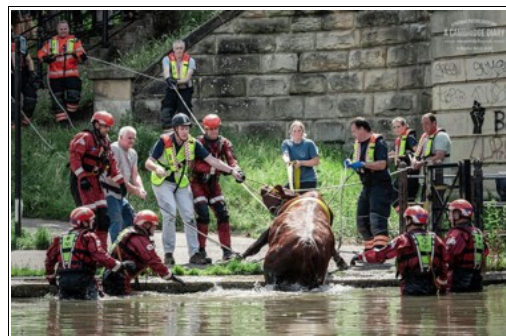
Enclosure in the Cambridge East Field led to the fencing of 'common land'. In 1841, proposals for the inclosure of certain parts of the greens were mooted. Between 1841 and 1876 various attempts were made to resolve the problems caused by the overuse of the Cambridge Commons by those who had no legal rights to graze them¹⁴³. A committee of the Town Council reported that "the legitimate right to use these Commons at all was centred in comparatively a very few individuals and that such rights were rendered absolutely valueless by other people trespassing most unwarrantably upon that which does not in any way belong to them". Attempts to trace the true holders of grazing rights proved too difficult.


Under an 1861 Common Seal of the Borough, the Rights of Common on Midsummer Green or Jesus Green were for geldings, mares and cows from Old May Day to Old Candlemas Day and a small piece of land is 'commonable' for 2 days before Lady Day but in the day time only. In 1904 Spalding published a Directory giving Commoners' grazing rights on all the Commons in Cambridge (see right). In 1923 the Council decided to exclude animals from Jesus Green. It shows separate rights for grazing on Butt's Green which must have been fenced off at that time.


NAME AND SITUATION.	ESTIMATED EXTENT.			RIGHTS OF COMMON.
	A.	R.	P.	
Coldham's Common ..	98	1	36	For geldings, mares, and cows, from Old May Day to old Candlemas Day. Cows not allowed between sunset and sunrise.
Sturbridge Green ..	42	1	4	For geldings, entire horses, and cows, from Old May Day to Old Candlemas Day. Cows not allowed between sunset and sunrise.
Midsummer Common & Jesus Green ..	57	2	1	For geldings, mares, and cows, from Old May Day to Old Candlemas Day. A small piece of this land is commonable for two days before Lady Day, in the day time only.
Butt's Green ..	7	1	13	For geldings, mares, and cows, in the day time only, from Old Lady Day to Old May Day, and from Old May Day to Old Candlemas Day, by day and night.
Queens' Green ..	4	1	10	For geldings, mares & cows, from Old May Day to Old Candlemas Day.
Laundress Green ..	0	3	2	For horses, mares, geldings and cows of S. Botolph and S. Mary the Less, all the year on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, from sunset to sunrise.
Sheep's Green ..	22	0	20	For sheep of butchers (freemen) all the year; for cows of S. Botolph and S. Mary the Less all the year on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays, from sunrise to sunset.
Coe Fen ..	13	1	22	For cows, geldings, and mares, from Old May Day to Old Candlemas Day. Cows not allowed between sunset and sunrise.
Coe Fen Straits ..	1	1	28	
New Bit ..	4	2	10	
Empty Common ..	5	0	9	For mares, geldings, and cows, all the year, by day and by night.


Registration of Midsummer Common under the *Commons Registration Act 1965* says that persons residing, owning or occupying land in the City of Cambridge have the right to graze geldings, mares and cows from 1st April to 30th November in each year to a total of 20 beasts over the whole of the land known as Midsummer Green. The *Cambridge City Council Act 1985* allowed the Council to set procedures for the registration of commoners entitled to graze animals, to set the location and number of grazing animals, to impose a reasonable charge and to make related byelaws. Earlier, in 1969, the Council had enacted a byelaw saying that "no person shall offer food or drink of any kind to any animal depastured upon any 'common land' " or be fined for the offence. And in accordance with section 7 of the *Animals Act 1971*, the Council may detain and sell any animal that is found grazing on the 'common land' without its consent. All these powers give the Council great scope for managing animals on Midsummer Common.

Grazing animals are both popular with locals and can be entertaining. Records show that 16 horses grazed Midsummer Common in 1956. In 1975 nine heifers escaped from the Common and set up camp on the four lamps roundabout - it took a gang of local citizens to drive them back onto the Common. FoMC Committee members have frequently been called into action to recover straying animals. Many local gardens have been harvested by intruders. In 1971 the fire brigade was called out on 4 occasions to rescue stock that had fallen into the river. A recovery in 2020 shows the manpower involved (see right). Cattle were absent from the Common from the early 1980s until 1994¹⁴⁴ and in the early years of this century when foot and mouth disease and BSE became prevalent.




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SILVER AWARD




Angelika Von Heimendahl
 Camcattle, Cambridgeshire

Cattle had not been grazed here since the foot-and-mouth outbreak, and setting out to rectify this Angelika was granted grazing access to the common in 2007.

To begin with she bought eight Red Poll steers, which she grazed from April to November that year, selling meat to friends and neighbours during the autumn months.

Now she grazes between 60-90 Red Polls on Grantchester Meadow which belongs to Kings College, and several other nature reserve around the area. Meat is sold at seven Farmers Markets a month under the CamCattle brand, and via a local butcher.



SILVER WINNER FOR BEEF
 INNOVATOR
 OF THE YEAR

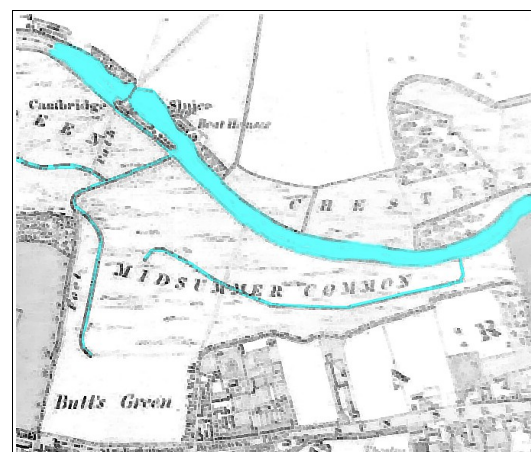
In 2007 a commoner introduced a small herd of Red Poll cows to graze the Common and this practice has been repeated. The Red Poll is derived from the original cattle of Norfolk and Suffolk - the Norfolk cow was crossed with the Suffolk polled bull. In the first half of the last century it was one of the dominant breeds in English dairy farming. It still maintains the dual purpose characteristics which now give the Red Poll such a valuable niche role in today's quality beef production. The owner (see left) won a British Farming Award for her efforts.

Happenings on the Common

The public record shows many happenings on the Common over the last two centuries¹⁴⁵. Mr Wentworth was fined 6 shillings and 8 pence in 1811 for "digging and carrying away the bank next the river". In 1817 it was decided that a person of the name of Willis and a gardener employed by Mr Deighton were to explain why they had dug up and carried away a quantity of earth from off Midsummer Common. In 1821 the Corporation allowed someone to build what is now thought to be Brunswick Walk on the Common. In the very next year the Corporation insisted on the removal of Rope Walk because it encroached on the Common. Yet two years later the Corporation approved the building of a footpath no wider than 15 feet "from the corner of Jesus College Wall by the side of Midsummer Common ... unto the south east corner of the said Common called Blackless Corner".

In 1815 it was ordered that two or more bridges be laid across the ditches on Midsummer Common. Mr. Dogget was paid 10 guineas to erect a bridge 13 feet wide with an arch of 2 feet 6 inches between Butt and Midsummer Greens. In 1822 the ditch between Midsummer Common and Jesus Close was cleaned with the costs shared between the Corporation and the College. Other ditches on the Common were cleaned about the same time. In 1823 permission was given to the Commissioners of the Paving Act to "open the soil on Butt Green and Midsummer Common to carry the intended Barrel Drain". In 1825 leave was given by the Corporation to "remove the hills on Midsummer Common".

Baker's 1830 map of Cambridge shows two small tributaries crossing Midsummer Common and flowing into the river Cam (see right). One of these flowed eastwards across Jesus Green with its own tributary coming from across Butt Green and joining the Cam near the Fort St George. The other started on Midsummer Common and flowed eastwards joining the Cam near Walnut Tree Avenue.



In 1837 the Chronicle reported that at a meeting of the Town Council "... a few observations were made respecting the state of the Common, which it was thought required active attention on the part of the committee and Mr Wells regretted to be compelled to acknowledge that there had been both carelessness and neglect on behalf of those who acted with him on the Commons Committee. For the sake of saving a few shillings a week he feared those pieces of ground would soon again be in a very bad state". In 1841 the Council appointed a Special Committee "to enquire into the extent and present condition of the 'common lands' and as to the best plan to be adopted with respect to them for the benefit of the Town". Enclosure was proposed but "the proceedings at this meeting were characterised by extreme noise and tumult". The Council took no further steps to carry out the proposed enclosure.

In 1841 proposals for the enclosure of certain parts of the greens were mooted. Between 1841 and 1876 various attempts were made to resolve the problems caused by the overuse of the Cambridge commons by those who had no legal rights to graze them¹⁴⁶. A committee of the Town Council reported that "the legitimate right to use these commons at all was centred in comparatively a very few individuals and that such rights were rendered absolutely valueless by other people trespassing most unwarrantably upon that which does not in any way belong to them". Tracing the holders of grazing rights proved too difficult.

In November 1844 Van Ambury built a large brick place on Midsummer Common for the keeping of his wild beasts and to show off his horsemanship. A year later Wombwell's wild beasts are on the Common. and in May 1847 Hylton's menagerie was in town and had "sent the elephant round this morning with a girl riding on its back". In August, Cook's Riding Circus turned up.

In 1850 it was proposed to Council that a Parliamentary Bill be framed that would extinguish all rights of common. This was narrowly defeated by 11 votes to 10. But the proponents were not to be defeated. A year later, in 1851, the Council approved a set of Commons byelaws and another set in 1880 both of which remain in force to the present day. They regulated the rights of common. Any person beating or shaking a carpet, rug or mat or gambling, betting or playing with cards, dice or any other article on Midsummer Common can still be fined forty shillings!

In 1859 the Council again tried to abolish rights of common. Committees and sub-committees were formed and met for over a decade. In 1870 the Committee made recommendations for "improving the finances of the Corporation ... through houses erected on but a small portion of the Commons". It was proposed that 17 houses be built along the road on the South side of Butt Green¹⁴⁷ but without the authority of Parliament the plans could not be taken forward. This might explain why there are missing house numbers on the north side of Maids Causeway.

In 1876 there was a terrible murder on Butt Green. At 9.30 in the evening Emma Rolfe, aged 16, met up with 25 year old Robert Browning at the Four Lamps on Maids Causeway. Emma was known to offer her favours for a shilling. Robert, who was a local tailor, took her onto Butt Green and slit her throat. He had been drinking at a pub in Fair Street and after committing the dastardly deed he went back to the pub to finish his drink. He left and came across PC Wheel who had rushed to the scene after hearing great cries. Upon seeing the constable, Robert gave himself up and was promptly arrested. The body of poor Emma was taken to the Fort St George pub and Robert was subsequently hanged in Norwich Gaol.

In the same year the *Commons Act 1876* arrived on the scene. In 1878 the Committee took advantage of this Act to draw attention to measures that would improve the Commons generally. Establishing footpaths was one recommendation that the Council accepted. The iron fence next Butt Green and Midsummer Common was another outcome.

In 1888 the Council promoted a Parliamentary Bill for the construction of Victoria Bridge over the river and Victoria Avenue across the Common. When built in 1890, Victoria Avenue divided the Common into two halves as shown in the following map of the area¹⁴⁸. The Council planted 85 chestnut trees on either side of the new road, many of which still survive.

The *Cambridge University and Corporation Act 1894* gave the Council powers to:

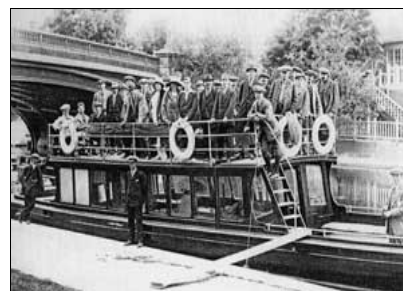
- improve the Commons or some of them so far as may be necessary or desirable for the purposes of health recreation and enjoyment;
- make and maintain roads footpaths and ways;
- plant trees and shrubs for purposes of shelter or ornament and fell cut lop and manage the same and any other trees plants and shrubs on the Commons and make and maintain so long as shall be necessary temporary enclosures for the protection of trees shrubs and turf; and
- erect baths wash-houses and lavatories (provided that baths and wash-houses shall only be erected on the banks of or within thirty yards from any stream and shall be constructed of wood).

The *Act* also gave the Corporation power to enclose parts of Midsummer Common for certain purposes and with certain safeguards.

Mr E H Parker was the High Steward of the borough and Mayor in 1894 when the Royal Agricultural Society returned to Cambridge. On the 26 June 1894 the Chronicle reported: "Once more, after a lapse of 54 years, Cambridge welcomes the Royal Agricultural Society of England. Fifty-four years ago, five acres of Parker's Piece was sufficient ... this year the 64 acres afforded by Midsummer Common ... ". The Prince of Wales visited the show. In 1895, residual Roman and Anglo-Saxon pottery was found during the construction of a sewer across Midsummer Common¹⁴⁹.

In June 1897 there was a fête on Midsummer Common with shooting galleries, coconut shies and one of Thurston's steam roundabouts. During the afternoon a fancy dress bicycle carnival took place with handsome prizes for the best costumes. The first prize for the ladies was a diamond and ruby brooch, which was won by Miss L Unwin. She was dressed in a helmet, breastplate, shield and trident and made a "dignified Britannia". She received a "King of the Road" lamp and a "baby bell" from the Humber Cycle Co.

In 1898 Barnum & Bailey's Circus came to the Common. It arrived in 74 railway cars at the station. Elephants walked from the station down the High Street to the Common where 14 tents were erected. At the turn of the century, local dignitaries were photographed on the river (see right) with the new Victoria Avenue bridge in the background.



In May 1900 a huge bonfire was erected on the Common to celebrate the relief of Mafeking (see left - a posse of police constables was stationed on the Common to ensure that it was not lit before the event. In 1900 Lord John Sangers Circus was sparsely attended because of an outbreak of diphtheria. This was in spite of a football match between a "centre forward" elephant and a Cambridge footballer! On June 22nd 1900 the Midsummer four-day fair was opened. There were "roundabouts a plenty" and two resplendent switchbacks. There was a menagerie and a cinematograph exhibition and "no less than 15 refreshment saloons, some of

which serve a double purpose of supplying liquor and accommodation for dancers".

In 1901 a cremation site with associated pottery, a bone, ivory or horn object and pottery was found on Midsummer Common¹⁵⁰. In the same year, the Cambridge British School (founded in 1840) moved from Fitzroy Street to Brunswick Terrace and accommodated about 700 pupils. Subsidence of the premises resulted in a further move in 1929¹⁵¹ to what became the Cambridge Regional College and now Berkeley Homes.

In 1904 the Cambridge undergraduates held ratting parties on the Common. Rats were offered to the undergraduates by dealers at a "bob apiece" they were then released, given a dozen yards start and then the dogs were released to "course" it to death. The Cambridge Mammoth Show (see right) was held for the first time on Midsummer Common on August Bank Holiday 1904. In 1905 an attendance of 25,000 was reported. Around 30,000 attended in 1906 when there was also a horticultural show, dog show, exhibitions of poultry, cats and mice, an athletics meeting as well as sideshows. However, the event caused some controversy when the financial deficit was revealed the following year.



In 1905 Midsummer Fair was described as a "Bacchanalian orgy" as people were behaving "like maniacs". There were 14 tents supplying intoxicating liquors and the behaviour in the tents was "indescribable" - 5 perambulators were seen standing unattended outside one tent. In 1911 there was a military tattoo on the Common to celebrate King George V's Coronation. An area was set aside for bayonet practice and a Gallows was erected on Butt Green. In 1921 the Common caught fire because of the intense heat!

In 1929 a young lady making a short cut across the Common became embedded in silt and mud thrown up by a dredger; another lady who went to her aid suffered a similar fate, but three young men waded out to them and others formed a human chain and they were saved.

On 2nd November 1939 the Cambridge Daily News carried a photograph of air raid shelters being constructed in the bank bordering Midsummer Common next to Brunswick School (see right). For the next six years these were in regular use by the staff and pupils of the school. The Common became a military training camp during the war.



June 1974 saw the first Strawberry Fair held on the Common. It has been held annually since then with a few exceptions - 2010 (because of drunkenness and drug taking the preceding year) and 2020/21 because of the coronavirus pandemic. A range of musical genres are represented at the fair across several music stages. There are activities for the kids and stalls selling food and goods from all over the world.



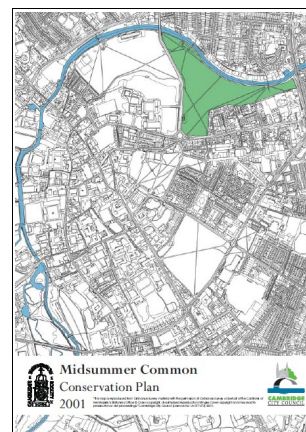
In 2001 Cambridge City Council approved and then published a Conservation Plan for Midsummer Common (see right). It provided 3 conservation policies for the Common:

- conserve and enhance the relationship between Midsummer Common and its surroundings;
- improve Midsummer Common as a high quality space; and
- maintain the informal character of Midsummer Common.

It went on to say how these policies might be implemented.

In 2003 the County Council adopted the *Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan* which, amongst its policies, states¹⁵² that:

- "No new development will be permitted within or which is likely to adversely affect:
- functional flood plains or other areas where adequate flood protection cannot be given and/or there is significant risk of increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- Development will be restricted
- where there could be damage, destruction or loss to areas that should be retained for their biodiversity, historic, archaeological, architectural and recreational value."



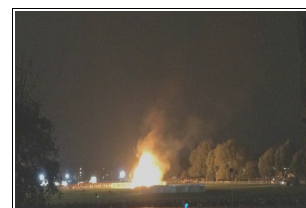
In 2006 the City Council adopted the *Cambridge Local Plan* in which chapter 4 (on Conserving Cambridge) set three objectives:

1. to ensure that the ... character of its ... open areas are safeguarded and maintained for the future;
2. to ensure the City has a strong green structure with an accessible network of green spaces rich in biodiversity; and
3. to protect open spaces ... which contribute to the setting, character and enjoyment of the City.

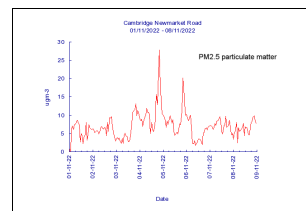
In 2008 the Cambridge City Council engaged the *Wildlife Trust* to prepare a Management Plan for Midsummer Common. This Plan set the Council 7 main objectives:

1. to enhance the species richness of the grassland to achieve a more natural floodplain grassland habitat;
2. to maintain and enhance the overall habitat diversity of the Common;
3. to maintain the trees so as to contribute to the character of the Common and its value for biodiversity;
4. to enhance the Pound through the creation of a community orchard;
5. to maintain and improve the site infrastructure;
6. to enhance the visitor experience; and
7. to put in place administrative arrangements to ensure the coordinated implementation of this management plan.

By this time, the state of the 'environment' and 'climate change' had become international issues. Cambridge City Council responded when saying that *"We are committed to reducing carbon emissions and climate change impacts, and promoting a high-quality, sustainable environment in the city"* and sharing central government's policy to *"reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions on the decarbonisation pathways to net zero"* and wants *"Cambridge to be net zero carbon by 2030"*¹⁵³. Yet, in 2022, the Council contravened its own policies and lit a bonfire on Midsummer Common (see right).



The Council had broken its own byelaws¹⁵⁴ which make it an offence to *"burn wood, brushwood or other article"* on the Common. The Council had also ignored its own smoke pollution policy which asks everyone to *"Please consider the health of local residents and ... do not start bonfires"*. The wood assembled for the bonfire (see below) included many polluting items; the Chief Executive had written saying the pallets *"are unsuitable to burn"*. But they were burned and Council records showed a sharp peak in pollution levels around Midsummer Common (see right). The incident was reported in the local Press and a complaint was lodged with the Local Government Ombudsman. There was no bonfire in 2023!



Friends of Midsummer Common



It was the poor state and declining number of trees on the Common that led to the formation of **Friends of Midsummer Common (FoMC)** in 2006. FoMC worked with the City Council in formulating the 2010 Plan which called for 50 new trees and 10 replacements. FoMC members helped buy some of these trees and have since kept a wary eye on the Council's management of trees on the Common whilst keeping in mind the 2001 Conservation Plan's Guiding Principles. At the same time, FoMC volunteers set about planting an orchard on part of the Common.



This orchard was to implement one of the *Wildlife Trust's* main objectives (see right). The area chosen (see left) was close to where, at the time of enclosure, there



had been a small orchard in what was Thomas Cheetham's property. The City Council's 2001 Conservation Plan for Midsummer Common¹⁵⁵ called for new tree plantings to be of native species and local provenance. A mix of fruits - apples, pears and plums - seemed a sensible starting point.

3.2.4 Objective 4:
To enhance The Pound through the creation of an orchard.

Rationale:

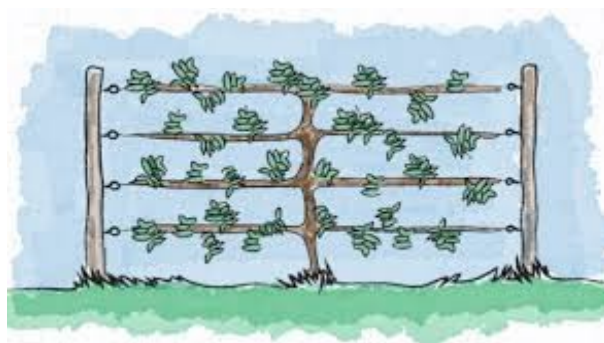
Although part of the common, The Pound is not utilised for grazing or events and is merely a link to Maids Causeway. This relatively small area of grassland has great potential to be the location for a more positive use such as a community orchard. This change in land use would link well to the adjacent allotments and would act as a demonstration of locally produced fruit. Fruit growing plays a significant part in the heritage of Cambridgeshire and it would be apt to reflect this on the common.

Ease of cultivation, climatic tolerance, and the range of flavours and uses have made apples the world's most cultivated fruit. The *East of England Apples and Orchards Project* lists 12 dessert, 5 culinary and 2 dual purpose apple varieties native to Cambridgeshire. Two of the eaters are local to Cambridge: the **New Rock Pippin** which has a spice-like sweet flavoured yellowish fruit for picking in late October and eating in January to May, and the **Wayside** which has a distinctive fruity-tasting crisp sweet fruit for picking in late September and eating in October and November. Another eater, the **Histon Favourite**, has a sharp and crisp flavour when picked in late September for eating into December. All three are good for juice. Culinary apples are used primarily for cooking. One of these, the **Jolly Miller** apple, has a greasy yellow skin with reddish flush ready for picking and cooking in late September. All four are grown on a MM106 rootstock and reach a height of 3.0-4.6m with a spread of 3m.



One plum and two gage trees are local to Cambridgeshire. The plum, **Wallis's Wonder**, flowers early and yields a medium/large yellow red-flushed sweet fruit for picking in late September or October. The two gages flower later but are partially self fertile. The **Cambridge Gage** is one of the most popular and reliable of the greengages ready for eating and cooking in mid/late August. The **Willingham Gage** produces a good crop of excellent quality flavoured fruits which ripen in late August or September. All three are grown on a St. Julian 'A' rootstock and reach a height of 2.7-3.6m with a spread of 3m.

No pear variety is local to Cambridge but the **Warden** was found nearby. It produces large green flushed brown sweet fruit for picking and culinary use in October. A suitable pollinator is the **Laxton's Foremost** dessert pear which is a large yellow pear with a reddish flush and a few red stripes. The flesh is buttery and sweet for picking and eating in early to late September. Both are grown on a Quince 'A' rootstock and reach a height of 2.7-3.5m with a spread of 3m. It was thought best to plant them as espaliers by way of variety.

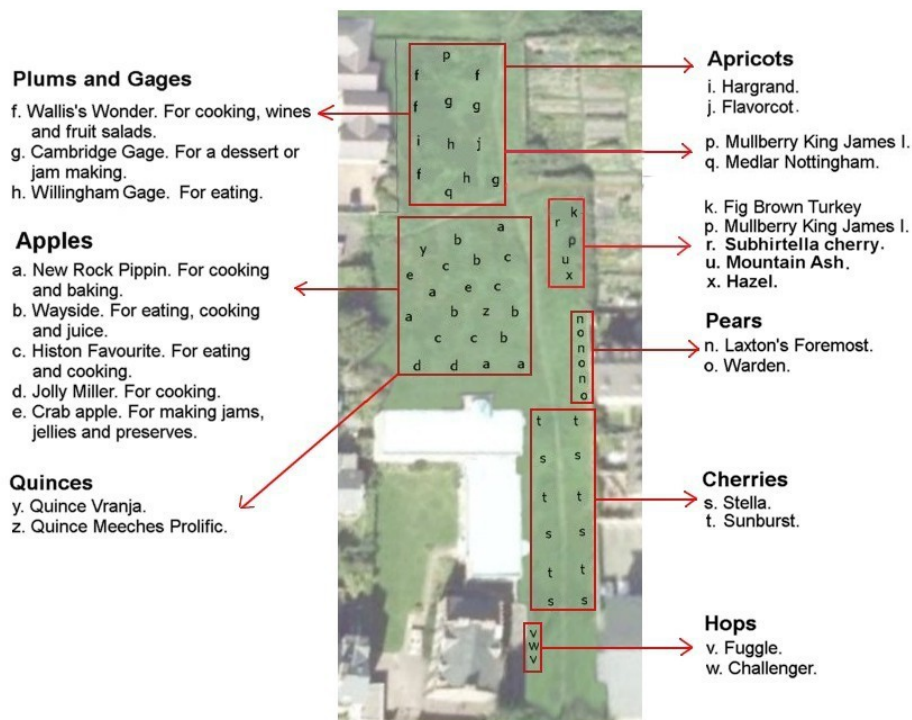


These 30 trees were initially proposed for the Orchard but no sooner had they been planted than other trees started arriving, mostly donated by followers. Space was found to plant 4 crab apples and 2 quince trees in March and September 2010, a medlar shrub in 2011, 6 stella and 6 sunburst cherry trees in December 2012, a winter cherry tree in 2013, 2 apricot trees in 2015, a mountain ash and hazel in 2015, a mulberry tree in 2016), and a fig tree in 2020. So the total became 56 trees. A year after the trees were planted someone thought it would be a good idea to have a beehive in the Orchard; colonies of bees were disappearing around the country and we should do our bit to help them recover. And they are important pollinators for flowers, fruits and vegetables so would benefit our fruit trees. Our bee keeper suggested we plant some hops for the

benefit of his bees. Others thought they might find their way into some local beer! Volunteers turned out to do the digging and pruning. Some built espalier and hops supports and the beekeeper gave a tutorial.



At the time of writing the Community Orchard is thriving with all the trees still alive in their designated locations (see below). Volunteers turn out to cut the grass and keep the hedging under control. Brambles, thistles and nettles invade recreational areas and need clearing.



Whilst trees brought FoMC into existence, other issues on the Common have kept it alive. Foremost of these are the holding of events throughout the year. Midsummer Common is home to the three most popular events in Cambridge - Midsummer Fair, Strawberry Fair and fireworks night. Midsummer Fair has held on the Common for over 800 years. Strawberry Fair is a 1-day event that has grown in ambition and changed its style since its inception in the 1970s. In the words of the organisers it is now "a free performing arts fair" that takes place on Midsummer Common in the first week of June each year. A fireworks display attracts the largest crowds each November. A circus tent shows itself in most years - with elephants in times past - and the Common is the start or finish of running and cycling events. FoMC frequently helps in the organisation and running of these events. It also reports complaints from local residents about noise from fairs and anti-social behaviour in the surrounding streets.



FoMC's mission is to help preserve this green space and discourage the spoliation or inappropriate use of Midsummer Common by individuals or organisations. Any developments and improvements should be within the law and sympathetic to the nature, characteristics and qualities of this ancient Common. Some users of the Common leave litter or do not clear up their dog mess. Heavy vehicles damage the footpaths, grassland and tree roots; they also compact the soil which results in poor drainage and surface water. The utility companies have a right to dig up the Common to lay pipes and cables. With all of this going on, the Common can easily have a "neglected feel". FoMC sets out to improve the management and condition of the Common by working closely with the City Council.



Parking of vehicles on the Common was another of the issues that brought FoMC into existence. There are laws governing the driving and parking of motorised vehicles on common land in England. The Council notice (see right) makes the law clear but it is not enforced. Back in 2011 the Council wrote saying "a meeting was held with our legal representative who has advised us on how to carry out prosecutions for unauthorised parking. This meeting has identified that we must follow our published enforcement policy and have a clear working procedure". The Council's *Procedure for dealing with unauthorised driving and parking on Common Land* states that:

It is an offence to drive on or park on the Common
There is no vehicular access or parking for customers
of Midsummer House Restaurant or the Fort St.George
Public House on the Common.
Offenders will be prosecuted.

"When evidence of an offence has been gathered (subject to the enforcement policy), a prosecution file will be raised and submitted to legal services who will make a legally privileged decision on a case by case basis whether or not to pursue the matter in the Magistrate's Court."

The Council then qualifies this by stating:

"A decision to prosecute for a criminal offence is significant and could have far reaching consequences for the offender. In deciding whether to prosecute the Council considers:

- whether the standard of evidence is sufficient for there to be a realistic prospect of conviction and
- whether the prosecution is in the public interest.

Even where there is sufficient evidence the Council must still decide whether prosecution is in the public interest. In considering this the Council will look at the seriousness of the offence, the harm that has been caused, the impact on the community and whether prosecution is a proportionate response."

The pictures below demonstrate reality. Evidence of parking is clear but the Council's judgement is that prosecution would NOT be in the public interest. So vehicles continue to park unlawfully on the green space that is Midsummer Common. A sad way to end this history of Midsummer Common.



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1 January 2024

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110. Cunstance surveyed and drew the 1798 map of Cambridge. He was also a Commissioner for the West Field (Saint Giles) enclosure.
111. Held in the Cambridge University Library under MD Add 6018, MD Add 6019 and MD Add 6020.
112. Enclosure Award is held in the Cambridgeshire Archives.
113. An acre contains 4 roods each of which contains 40 perches. An acre is 10 sq. chains where a chain is 66ft.
114. Enclosure map is held in the Cambridgeshire Archives.
115. Thurlbourn & Woodyer produced a "Plan of Cambridge" in 1763 (CUL Maps.53(2).76.1), William Cunstance surveyed and drew a map of Cambridge in 1798 (CUL Maps.bb.53.79.1) and Cole drew a map of Cambridge in 1804 (held by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society and Cambridgeshire Archives under 372/P1).
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117. Thomas Wendy was Royal Physician to the Tudors. His brother's son William inherited it and he passed it on to his brother's son who was High Sheriff and an MP.
118. Abbey House Cambridge, Report on its Significance and Future, Cambridge City Council, January 2002.
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120. The Bullen family were tenants in the Abbey House and took pride in its maintenance moving the square freestone pavement from the Priory ruins and installing it on the ground floor of the House and installing 17th century oak panelling on the first floor.
121. At Panton House (containing Milton House, Stamford House and Cardigan Lodge), 105-113 High Street, Newmarket.
122. He sold a small part of his estate to Downing College in 1808 to off-set some of the Enclosure expenses.
123. Jesus College Property in Cambridge: Barnwell. 1978.
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128. In what is now Kingsley Walk. Alfred and Charles Wisbey had moved there from the Hope Brewery Priory in 1866. It was then sold to George Bullock in 1874 before being sold to Charles Armstrong in 1891.
129. Off Napier Street. The owner of the Victoria Brewery had been William Henry Apthorpe who became an alderman in 1858. He retired and passed the brewery on to his son who sold it to Richard Holmes in 1875 who sold it to Edward Pryor in 1879 who sold it to George Gibson in 1881 who sold it to Charles Armitage in 1891.
130. See [http://breweryhistory.com/wiki/index.php?title=List_of_Star_Brewery_\(Cambridge\)_Ltd_pubs](http://breweryhistory.com/wiki/index.php?title=List_of_Star_Brewery_(Cambridge)_Ltd_pubs).
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