

# **Hemingford Road**

**1878-2016**

**The journey of a Cambridge street.**

**From a street in the fields  
- to a street in the city.**

**Allan Brigham**



1830:

**Showing Mill Road as a country track surrounded by fields - from Parker's Piece to Polecat Farm ( site of Romsey Terrace).** Baker. Cambs Archives.

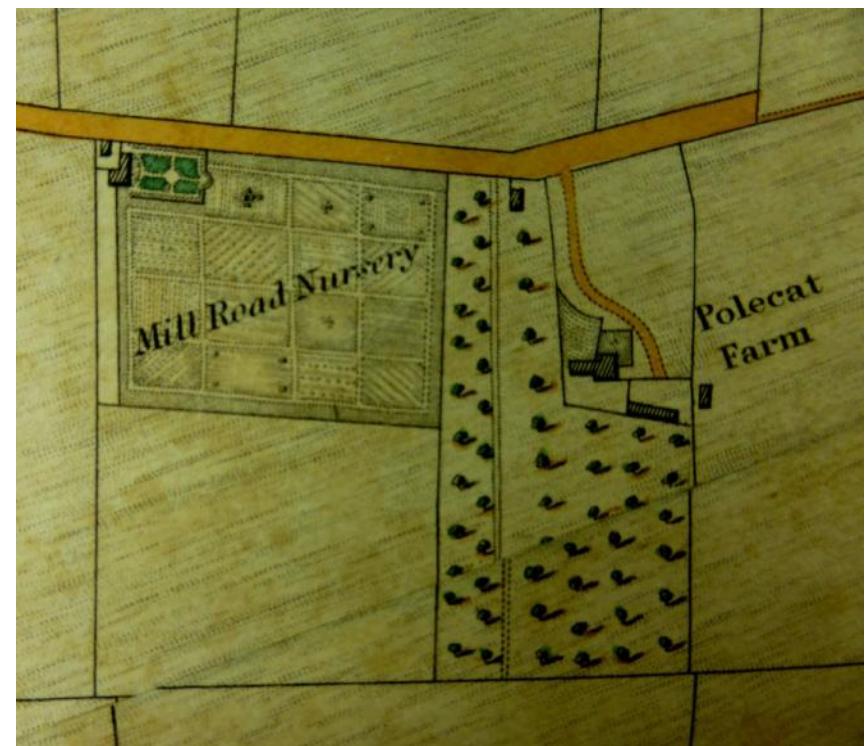


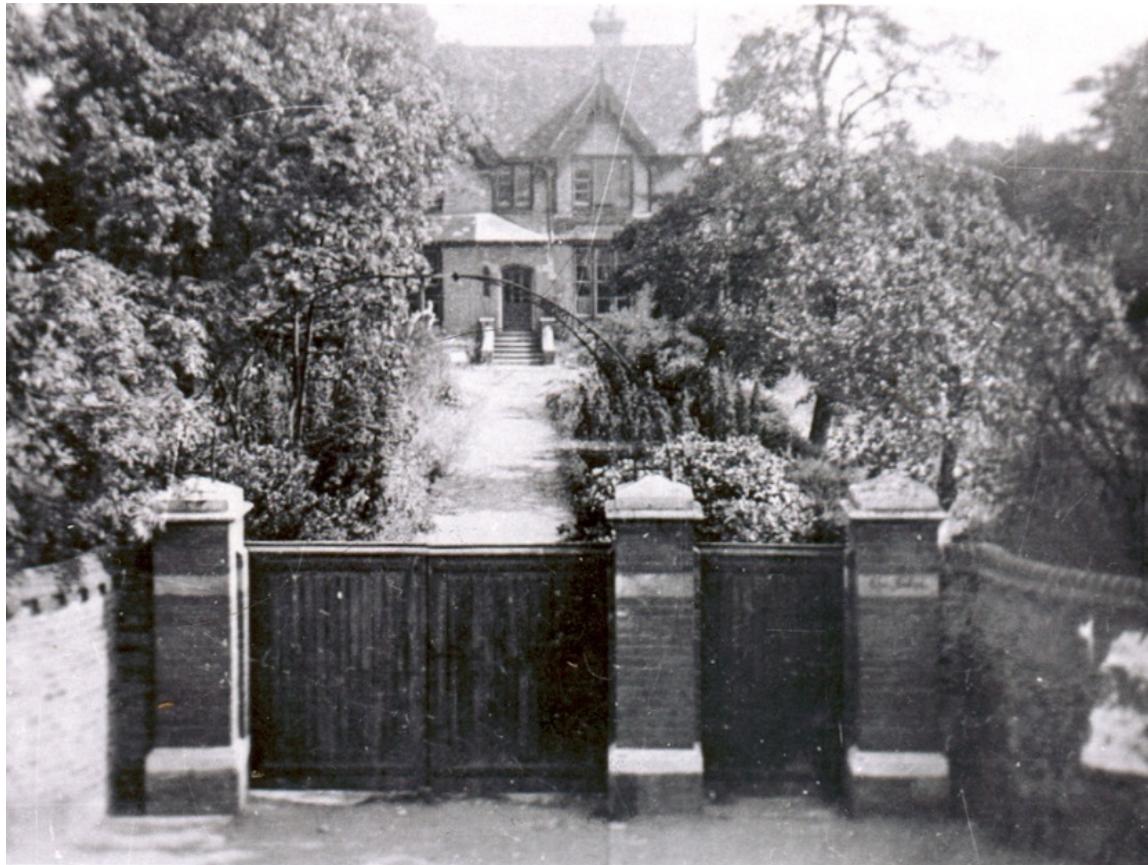
## 1830: Mill Road

**Mill Road ended in a footpath to Cherry Hinton after Polecat Farm (site of Romsey Terrace).**

### 1830: Mill Road

Mill Road was surrounded by fields. The few buildings included the Windmill near Covent Garden, the Nursery ( 2016: site of Romsey Town Post Office) & Polecat Farm (2016: Romsey Terrace).





## The Lodge

**The Lodge was one of the few houses on the Romsey side of the railway pre 1875. The house was demolished between the Wars.**

**2016: Site of The Broadway**

1885 :

Romsey Town was named after 'Romsey Cottage', one of the few other buildings standing in the area pre 1875. It was described in a 1854 sale as a 'pleasure farm' with 'offices, dairy, coach house, granary, dovecot, and 'pleasure ground with walks, shrubberies and summer house'. It was probably then that it was bought by George Johnson. Johnson was a surgeon at Addenbrookes Hospital 1830-1844, before establishing himself as a general Practitioner in St Andrews Street. Pictures show 'Old' Addenbrookes in 1766 and today ( 2016: Judge Institute)



# Romsey House: Site of Romsey Cottage.



**5<sup>th</sup> Sept 1878:  
Sale of Romsey Cottage &  
Farm in 66 Lots**

George Johnson died in 1865.  
His Mill Road property passed to a  
trust to support his widow and his  
only son, George.

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

**'With extensive frontages to Mill  
Road and to proposed new  
roads'**

Containing an area of  
**59a 3r 29p**

Cambridge Independent Press  
10.8.1878

The total sale raised £9,000,  
nearly £3.5 million in 2016.

**Mill-road, Cambridge.  
IMPORTANT BUILDING ESTATE AND  
MARKET GARDEN GROUND.**

**T**o BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY  
**Mr. J. CARTER JONAS,**

On THURSDAY, the 5th day of September, 1878, at  
the Red Lion Hotel, Cambridge, at Two for Three  
o'clock precisely, in 66 lots, by direction of the  
Trustees of the late G. Johnson, Esq., the following  
highly valuable

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

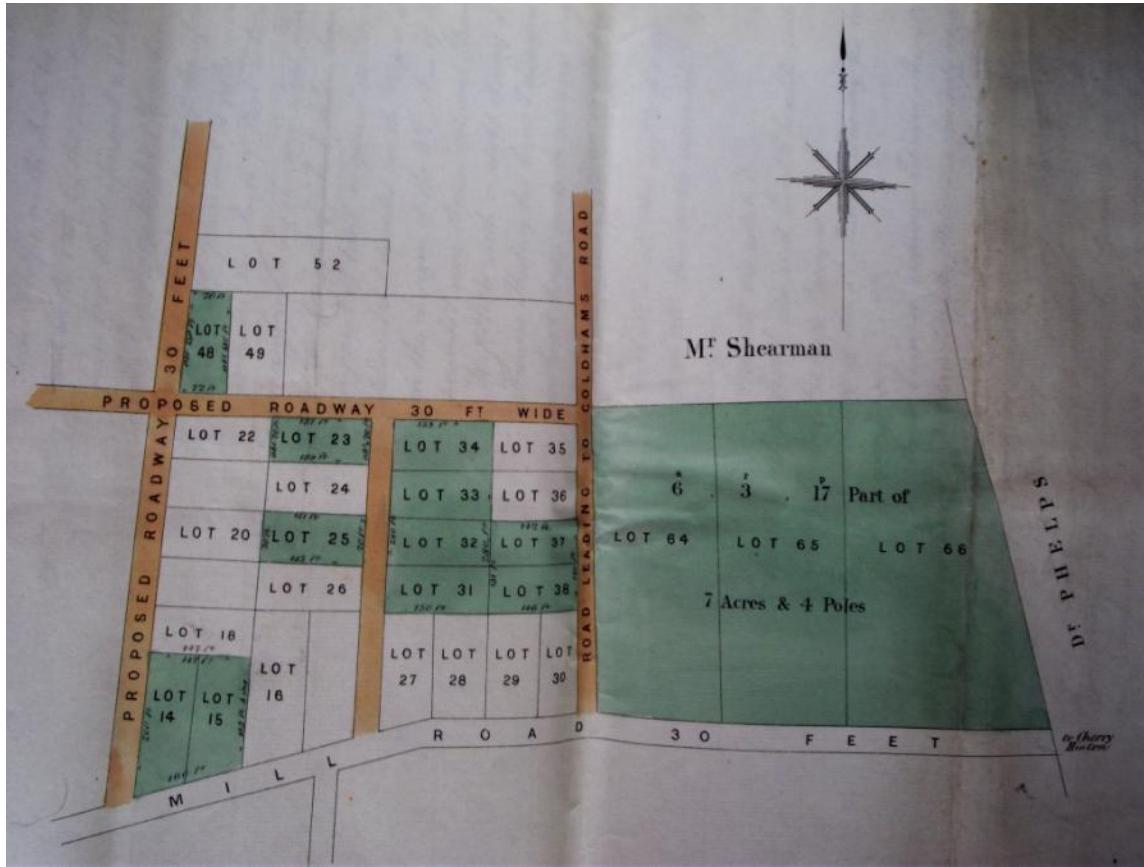
**Romsey Cottage and Farm,**  
With its ornamental and beautifully timbered  
grounds, gardens tastefully laid out and planted  
with thriving fruit and ornamental trees, farm  
buildings, and

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

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

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

Cambridge



**Romsey Cottage Estate Sale: Showing land (green)  
bought by Francis Thoday, 1879.**

The first glimpse of Hemingford Road

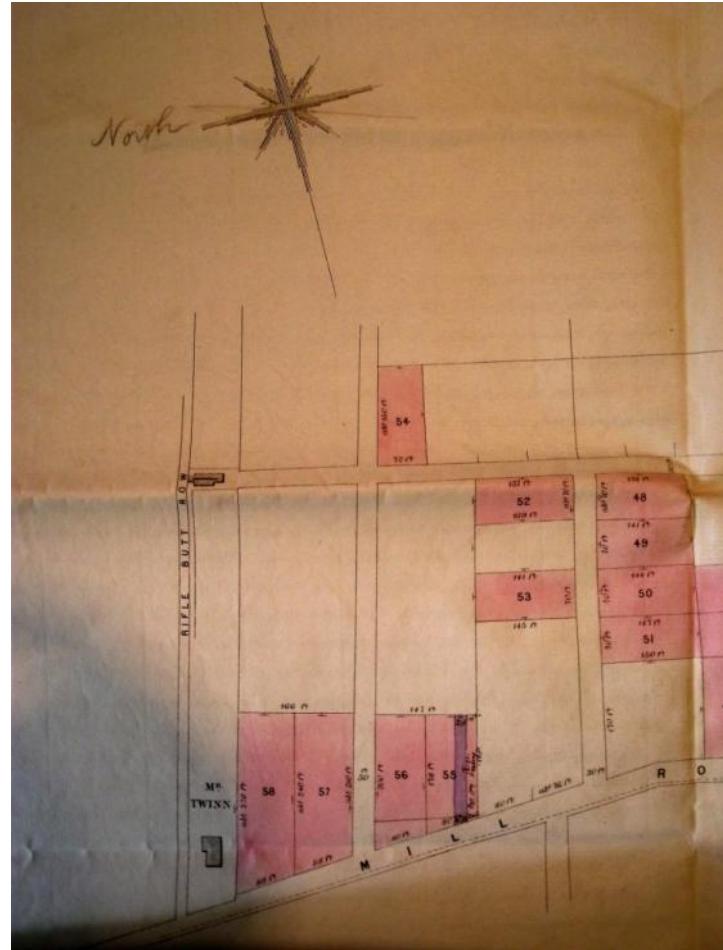
– ‘Proposed Road’ on left.

[Deeds: Hemingford House]

## Ross Street: Formerly 'Rifle Butt Row'

The first side street in Romsey Town, the earliest cottages in Ross St were built in the mid 1870s on the site of the Rifle Butts. These ( picture) are probably the oldest surviving buildings in Romsey.

This explains why St Philip's Church was built here ( map: 1870s or 1880s). The church was later moved to Mill Rd, but gave its name to St Philips Rd.



# Hemingford Road: 1881

By the time of the census in 1881 the first four houses had been built, including No 30, 36, 42. The Household Heads were described as a Joiner, and three railway workers - their occupations illustrating the variety of jobs the railway embraced a Sawyer, a Police Constable and a Railway Servant.



The first houses did not have bay windows, nor front gardens. The front door opened into the street.

Like many others coming to live in Romsey none of the household heads were born in Cambridge. They came from Cheltenham, Norwich, Walsingham and Newmarket . The wife of one , Elizabeth Page, from even further afield in the East Indies.

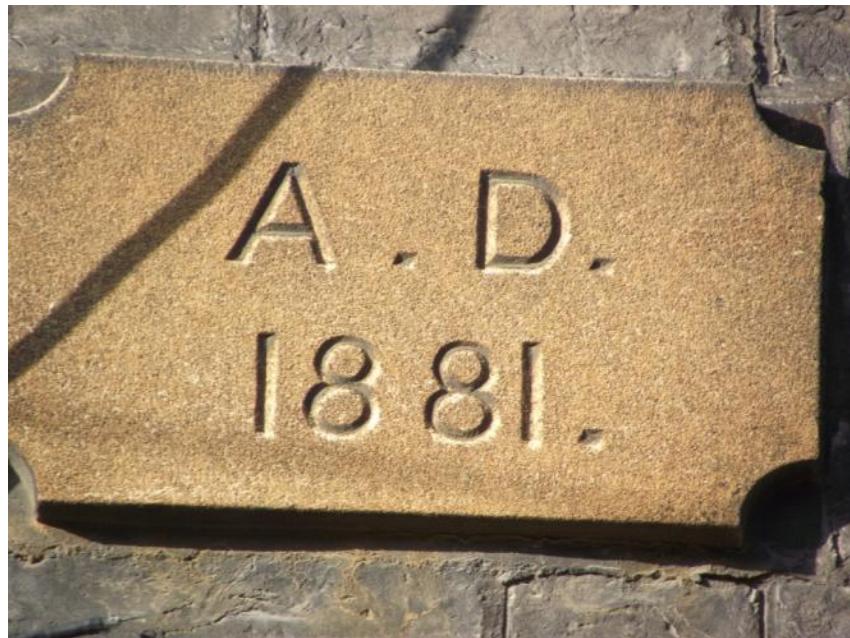


## **1885: Romsey Town**

**Romsey was a ‘new community’ and many new streets and houses were built between 1875 and 1885.**

**The first streets to be completed were those nearest to the town and to the railway where many of the new residents worked. Hemingford Road was further away from the railway bridge and was only built up slowly.**

**1881: Shortly after the 1881 census these houses were also completed.**



**The new houses had a long gardens, a big improvement on many of the older houses in the town centre.**





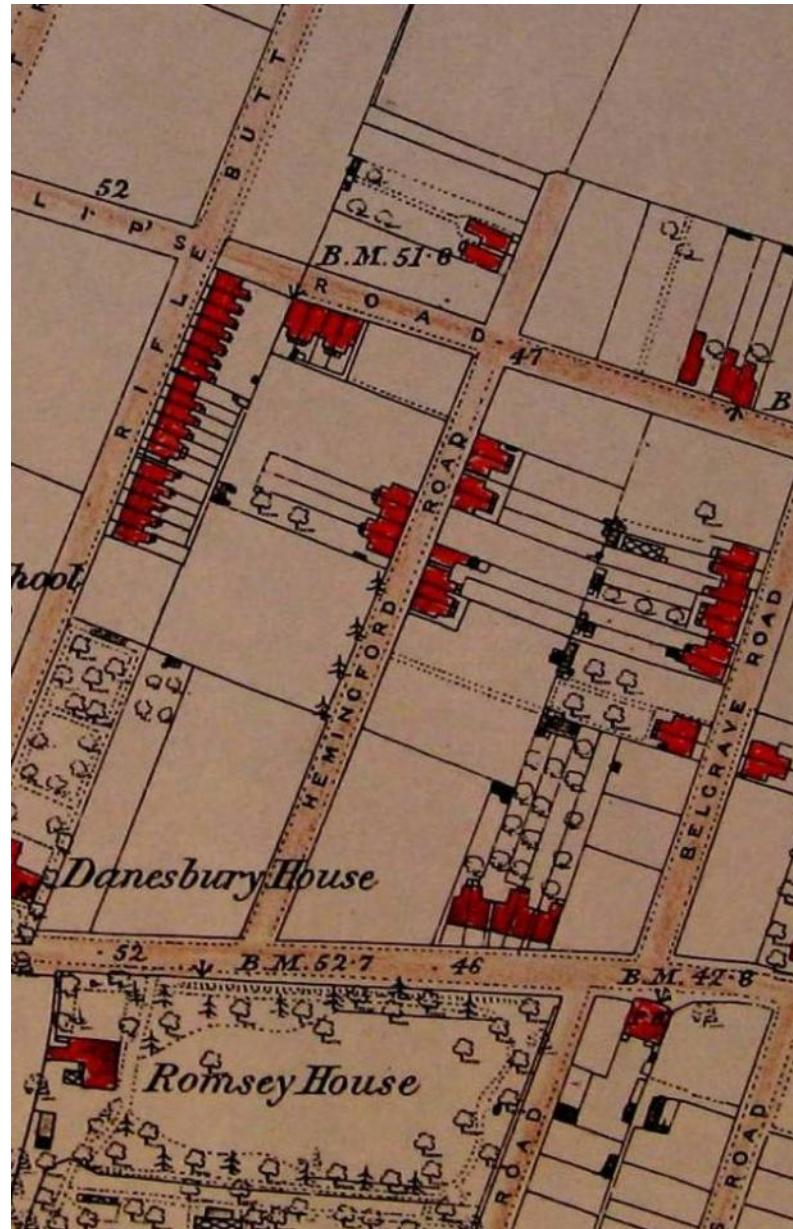
## 1885: Hemingford Rd

Six years after the sale of the Romsey Cottage estate only 14 houses had been built in Hemingford Rd.

Hemingford Road was further away than many other streets from the railway bridge and access to the town centre, and was only built up slowly.

The map shows Romsey House, still with no Coleridge Rd and with a large garden.

Hemingford Rd ends in a field shortly after No 69, at the point where the road gets wider today.



## Hemingford Road Extension: 1889

11 years after the original sale of the Romsey Cottage estate 7 more acres were offered for sale by the Johnson family. This land adjoined Hemingford Rd and Vinery Rd. The agent, Carter Jonas, stated:

'It is several years since any quantity of Building Land on the Romsey Town Estate has been offered for sale in large lots, and it has considerably advanced in value during the last few years.

The neighbourhood is fast being filled up with houses, and the present is a good opportunity for purchasing and making a good investment'.

The 7 acres raised another £1,400 for the Johnson family, or roughly £200 an acre (2016: about £72,000 an acre, with a total price of £1/2. Added to the £3.5 million at today's values raised from the 1878 sale and this means the Johnson family made the equivalent of £4million from land the family had bought as potato and barley fields .)

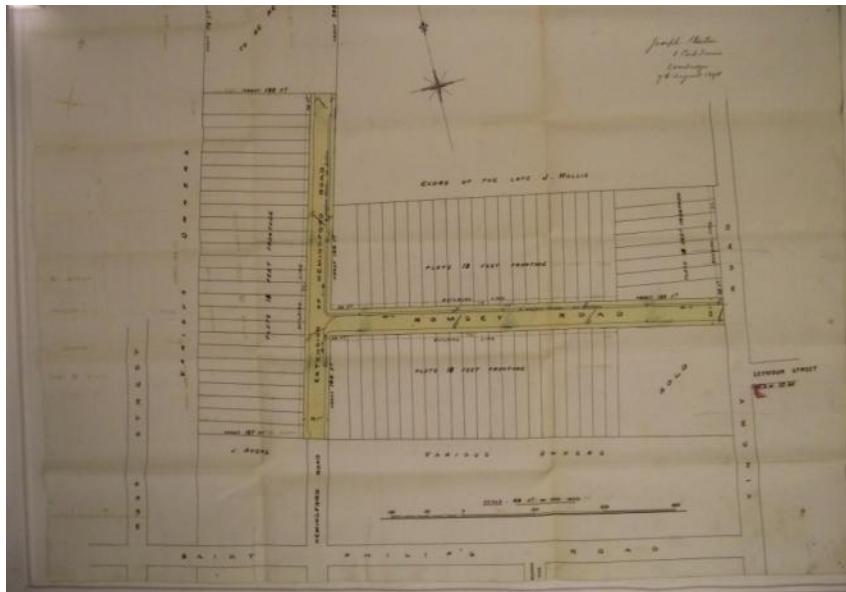
FRIDAY NEXT  
CAMBRIDGE.

Romsey Cottage Estate, Mill Road.  
TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION BY  
MR. J. CARTER JONAS,  
On FRIDAY, the 26th of April, 1889, at the Red Lion Hotel, Cambridge, at Five o'clock punctually, all that  
**FREEHOLD BUILDING LAND**,  
eligible situate adjoining the Vinery and Hemingford Roads, leading from the Mill-road, having an extensive frontage to the Vinery-road, and abutting upon the Estates of Corpus College, J. Wallis's Executors, J. Leonard, Esq., and others, containing altogether about  
7a. 1r. Op.  
It is several years since any quantity of Building Land on the Romsey Town Estate has been offered for sale in large lots, and it has considerably advanced in value during the last few years. The neighbourhood is fast being filled up with houses, and the present is a good opportunity for purchasing and for making a good investment.  
The Land will be first offered for sale in One Lot, and if not so sold, will then be offered in Ten Lots.  
Particulars and conditions of sale, with plans, may be had of Mr. PEED, solicitor, Cambridge; and of Mr. J. CARTER JONAS, Sun Fire and Life Offices, Cambridge, and 3 Old Serjeants' Inn, Chancery-lane, London, W.C.

**Joseph Sturton bought the land offered for sale on the Romsey Cottage Estate in 1889. Sturton had already developed much of the land on the other side of the railway ( today Petersfield), which became known as 'Sturton Town'. Hence 'Sturton St'; 'Sleaford St' (his birthplace); Hooper St (the maiden name of his first wife).**



**1896: Sturton's extension to Hemingford Rd.**  
**Between the first sale of the Romsey Cottage Estate in 1878, and 1896 only 28 houses were built in Hemingford Rd. The road remained in the country, surrounded by fields and allotments.**



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

Particulars and Conditions of Sale  
OF  
72 FREEHOLD PLOTS  
OF  
VALUABLE  
**BUILDING LAND**  
SITUATE IN THE  
HEMINGFORD, ROMSEY & VINYER ROADS,  
With frontages thereto ranging from 18 feet and depths from 100 to 160 feet, including a PIECE OF  
ACCOMMODATION LAND in the Hemingford Road of about an Acre.  
On the ABBEY ESTATE in RIVER LANE,  
A PIECE OF BUILDING LAND  
With frontage of 35 feet 6 inches thereto and depth of 115 feet.  
FREEHOLD  
**BUSINESS PREMISES**  
Corner of Newmarket and Godolphin Roads, consisting of  
BAKER AND CORN MERCHANT'S SHOPS  
With Dwelling House, Ovens and Stabling, let to Mr. H. Lowe, at the annual rent of £45.  
**TWO FREEHOLD VILLAS**  
Known as Nos. 6 and 7, Cornwall Terrace, Walnut Tree Lane, overlooking Midsummer Common.  
**FIVE 210 SHARES IN THE  
CAMBRIDGE STEAM LAUNDRY COMPANY,**  
Last Dividend 10 per cent., which MESSRS.  
**WISBEY, SON & MOYES**

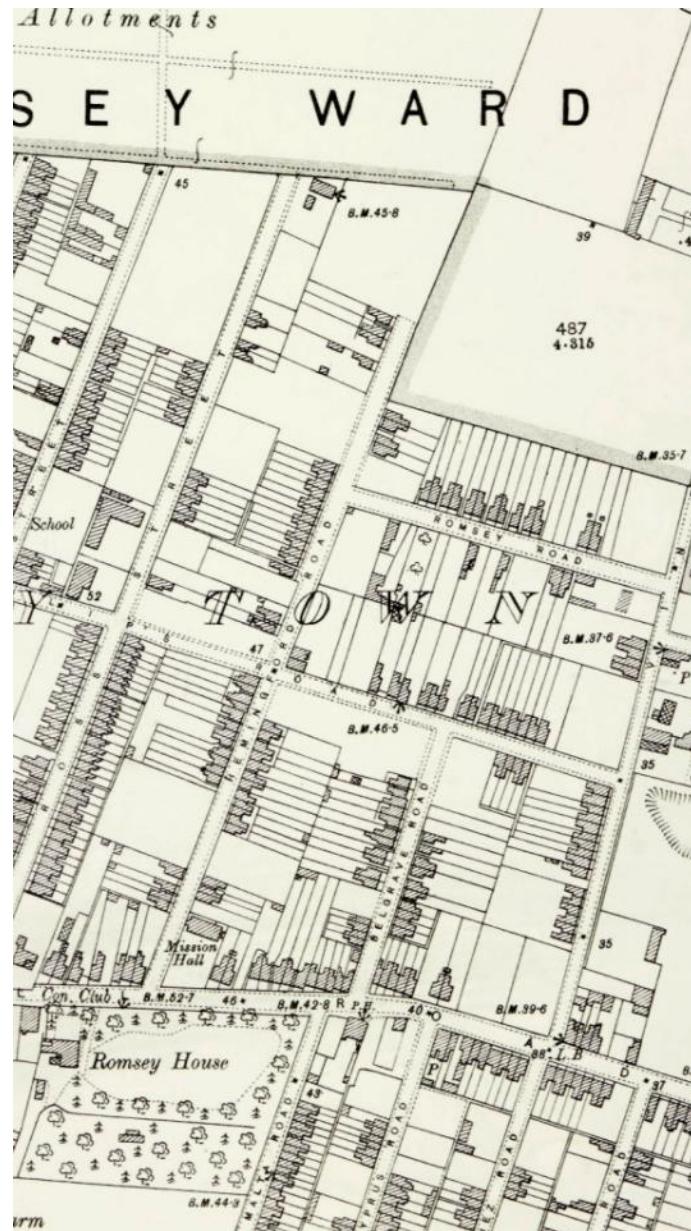
Are instructed by Mr. Joseph Sturton TO SELL BY AUCTION, in a Marquee on the Romsey Town Property,  
On FRIDAY, the 21st day of August, 1896,  
At SIX o'clock in the Evening.

Plans, Particulars and Conditions of Sale of Mr. PEED, Solicitor, 62, Sidney Street, Cambridge, or of  
Messrs. WISBEY, SON & MOYES, Auctioneers, 26, Trinity Street, Cambridge.  
A. T. Naylor, Printer and Publisher, "Chronicle" Office, Market Hill, Cambridge.

## 1903: Hemingford Rd

Between 1897 & 1910 94 houses  
houses were built in Hemingford Rd.  
For 13 years the street must have  
been like a building site.

The map shows the road in 1903, still  
ending in a field rather than the park.



## Romsey: 1904

By 1904 most of the streets in Romsey Town were nearly fully built. But the area was still surrounded by countryside – very urban and very rural at the same time.

Mill Rd remained a cul-de-sac, still ending in a footpath to Cherry Hinton as in 1830. The only way into Cambridge was over the railway bridge.



## **121 Hemingford Rd:**

**One of the new houses built between 1899-1901 was the Laundry (picture of Laundry at rear of house).**

**Owned by Mrs Caroline Ward, it is a reminder that many women earned their living washing clothes.**



# 121 Hemingford Road: ‘Bluefield Lodge’

The house is named after the ‘blue field’ shown on the sale details when Sturton acquired the land.



**By the outbreak of World War One in 1914 the road was almost fully built. It had taken a generation – 35 years.**

**At first glance all the houses look similar – most terraced, most 16ft wide.**

**But styles did change and red brick became more fashionable.**

**The first houses built in the 1880s used white brick with stone:**

**No 33-39: 1881-84. No 67: 1886-87.**



**From the late 1880s red brick started to be used decoratively on street frontages:  
'Fern Cottages', No 2,4,6 – built 1890.**

**Built by William Webb (b.1823), who in 1891 was living in No 6, the largest cottage.**

**Webb died in 1898. His wife Ruth was much younger (b.1862) and subsequently married two older men:**

**1. 1898. Henry Wheeler, b.1846, Carpenter, Cavendish Rd. Died 1903.**

**2. 1905. Henry Bailey, b.1844, Blacksmith, Cockburn St.**

**1905: Ruth Bailey, wife of Henry Bailey, buys the land adjoining 'Fern Cottages' to build 'Hemingford House', with attached 'Smithy'.**



# Red Brick: 1890. 'Fern Cottages'



# **Building Plans: ‘Hurrah for Regulations’!**

## **Exist in Cambridge from 1887**

**Building plans were only required after the 1875 Public Health Act specified new minimum standards. Earlier houses often built to very low standards.**

**The Act required urban authorities to make byelaws for new streets and buildings with respect to: structural stability, prevention of fires, ventilation, drainage of buildings, provision of water closets, and closing buildings deemed unfit for human habitation.**

**To support Local Authorities model byelaws were designed by the Local Government Board, a copy of these byelaws as adapted by the Cambridge Improvement Commissioners, 17 Sep 1875.**

**They outline materials to be used, detail specifications for ventilation of pipework and water-closets, and construction of cesspools.**

**They also require detailed scaled drawings of intended works to be deposited with the office of the Surveyor, provide notification before works begin and an inspection to be conducted by the Surveyor before a property is inhabited.**

**Melissa McGreechan, Cambridge City Archivist**

# **'Fern Cottages':**

**Building Plan: 12.12.1889. By Ambrose Miller, Builder, Belgrave Rd.**

**Cambridgeshire Archives.**

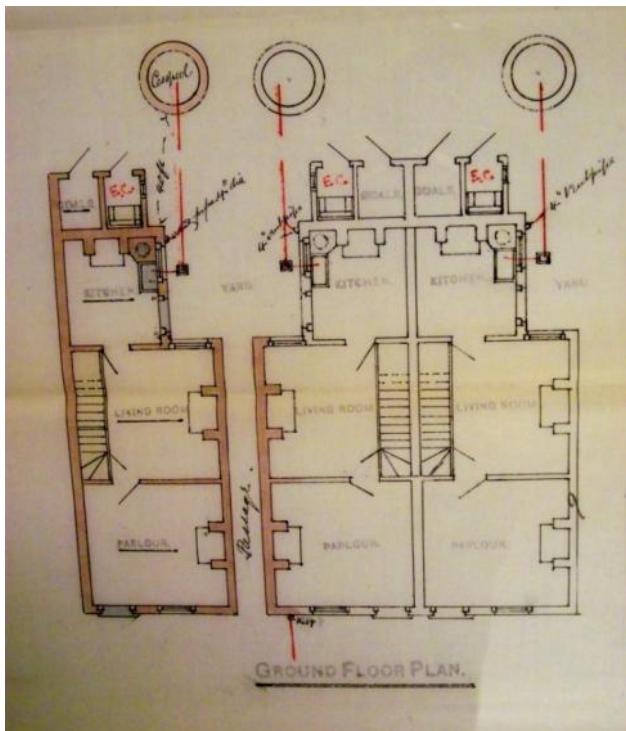


# 'Fern Cottages'

Building Plan: 12.12.1889. By Ambrose Miller, Builder, Belgrave Rd.  
Cambridgeshire Archives.

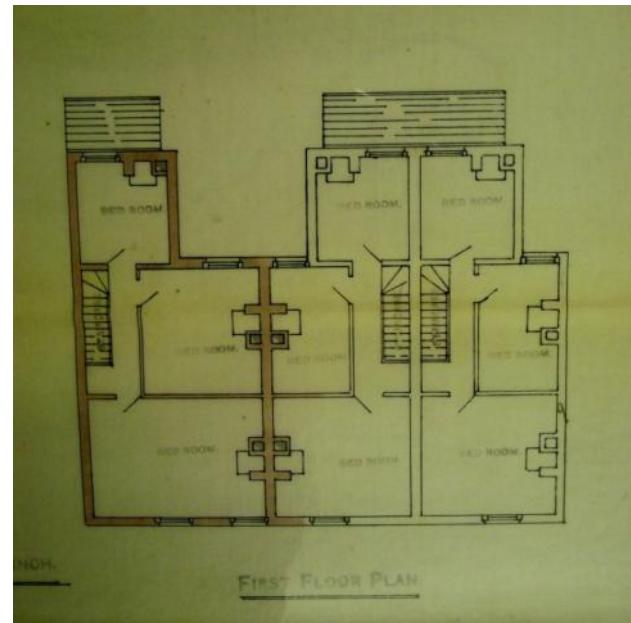
## Ground Floor:

- Front door opening into Parlour.
- Toilet accessed from outside.



## First Floor:

- Three bedrooms.
- No bathroom.



Many older houses were built to a lower standard than those in Hemingford Road, with shared yards not gardens.



# **Red Brick: No 123-125 (1897-98) & No 110-112 (1897-98).**

**Plans for both by R Slingsby, Cross St.**



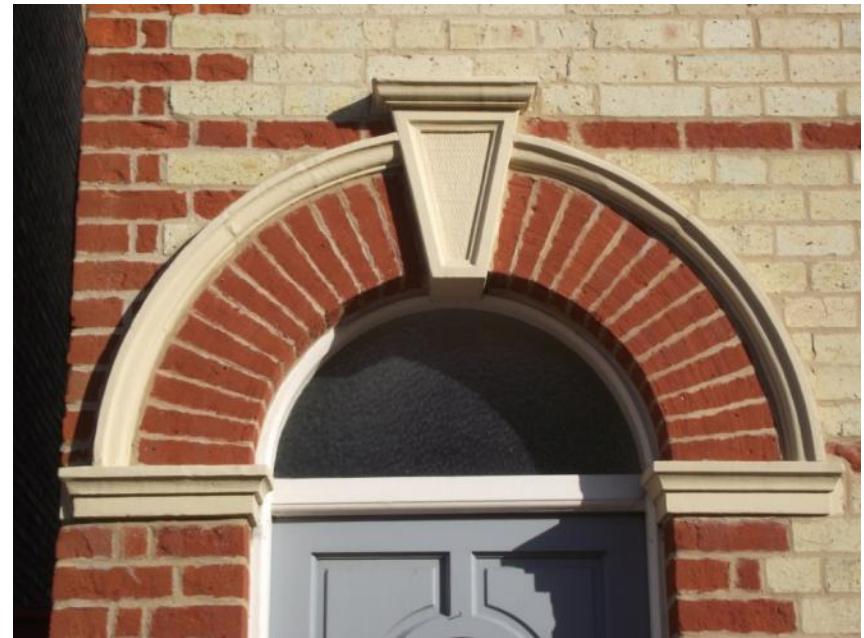
# Red Brick: 1897-98 (No 110)

Attractive rubbed red brick detailing around windows



# **Red Brick & Bay Window: 1910**

**No 66: Decorative red brick covers the front of the house.**



# **What was it like living here ?**

**Jean Turner ( nee Holder) was born in  
No 18 Pretoria Terrace in 1921**



**Harrison Holder, Jean's father, moved to No 18 Pretoria Terrace when it was a new house. He was still living here when the landlord died in 1935, paying £18-7-0 pa rent. Most of the houses in the road were rented from landlords.**

**'Pretoria Terrace' is a reminder that this was the era of the 'British Empire', and that in 1901 Britain was suppressing a war of independence in South Africa led by the Boer colonists. The two 'World Wars' were still in the future.**



# 1920s: Life in Hemingford Rd

Harrison Holder, Jean's father, was a Signalman on the railway – at Mill Rd bridge, later at Barnwell Junction.  
No car or bike, so he had to walk to work across Coldhams Common.

## The House: Jean's Memories

### Downstairs:

**Front Room:** Only used on Sundays, or when relatives visited.

**'Back Room':** Where family sat. With table, chairs, fire with kettle supplying the only hot water.

**Kitchen:** Not big enough for a table. Gas Cooker. Sink with one cold water tap – the only tap in the house.

The 'Copper': used for washing on Monday. Had to light coal fire underneath tub.

**Toilet:** Outside. Very cold.

### Upstairs:

**3 Bedrooms:** Jean shared bed with her sister. Very cold – fire only when ill.

'Gusunder' under bed – chamber pot.

No bathroom.

## Play

Small Houses, so entertained themselves outside - in the garden sheds if the weather was bad, or on the street. Jean played marbles in the gutter, or Hopscotch chalked on the pavement, or in winter to keep warm they chased Hoops 'round the square - down Hemingford, along St Philips, Up Belgrave, and back down Mill Rd to Hemingford again.

And if a neighbour refused to return a ball that had gone into the next door garden they played 'cherry knock' - 'you'd knock on their door, run away and hide, and watch them open the door and look up and down the street'!

No one ever imagined the road would one day be full of cars!

# A Railway Family

The Holders were a railway family. Jean's grandfather John Holder ( b 1843) was a Shunter, Yard Foreman and in his 60s Fireman Porter. He is second row from front, third from right.

Picture Cambridge Station, c.1910. Jean Turner



# A Romsey Railway Family

- Three of Jean's Uncles also worked on the railway – as Stoker, Guard and Engine Foreman.
- The job titles indicate the range of tasks involved in keeping the trains running.
- All lived nearby in Romsey Town: In Cavendish Rd, Ross St and David St.

# The Holder Family

Grandfather John front row - second from left.  
Harrison Holder, Jean's father, back row - centre.



# The Holder Family Christmas in Romsey

- ‘Christmas was fantastic, because the Holder family gathered at Uncle George’s in Cavendish Rd, and we had fantastic games like Spin the Plate, and if you dropped it you had to do a forfeit.
- A huge family. And huge meals. Christmas chicken of course, and a big beef and a ham, for lunch.
- And then tea, and Aunty Tilly made the most lovely coconut pyramids, ....she was renowned for her coconut pyramids.
- And then a bit later on the kids were all put together in one bed – there were about 6 of us. ....We were so tired we just all fell asleep.
- We didn’t go home that night .....– well the men were on the beer I suppose, and up to no good!’

***'How frail life was in those days  
– what was taken for granted was early death'.***

***John Bartholomew, Jean's nephew ( her sister's son)***

Harrison's first wife had died young, leaving him with two boys to look after.

In 1916 he re-married. His new wife, Ada, was a widow with a five year old daughter.

Five years later she died also, three weeks after giving birth to Jean, leaving Harrison looking after two sons from his first marriage, Ada's daughter from her first marriage, and a new born baby.

His shifts didn't make this easy - he worked 6.00am to 2.00, or 2.00 to 10 at night.

Jean was looked after by her mother's sister who lived at No 48 Hemingford Rd. Eventually her father married again, probably partially to provide a housekeeper for the children. She died when Jean was only 18.

Looking back in 2013 her nephew (son of Jean's sister) said:

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

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

*My mother being orphaned, losing her father at about the age of 4, and her mother at the age of 11, had a profound effect in all the rest of her life. And that sort of thing happened all the time.*

*Illnesses that we now treat with a couple of pills and a few days off could be fatal.'*

Jean added:

*'Women expected to lose some of their children'.*

# **Jean Turner moves to the Suburbs**

- Jean married Denis Turner, son of a railwayman, after the war.
- Like her father and grandfather, they continued to live in Romsey, renting a house in Hemingford Rd.
- But Jean and Dennis's later life reflected the prosperity of the 1950s and 60s, with both the aspiration and the financial ability to buy a home of their own.
- They moved away from the Victorian houses in Romsey - with no bathroom or inside toilet - to a new house with all mod cons in the post war suburb of Queen Edith's.
  - Now in her 90s Jean, still lives today.
- She was amazed to come back to Hemingford Rd for the street party three years ago -and find the old fashioned Victorian houses she had left behind transformed
  - many now with not just one, but two toilets, -
    - with bathroom
    - and often a shower
    - loft conversions
    - and extended kitchens.

Even more amazing was the fact that these old Victorian houses were now more expensive than her 'new, modern' 1960s house in the suburbs, and to find herself talking to an archaeologist who was living in a street that had been full of railway and building workers in her childhood.

# Margaret Squires: No 119:

Built by Harry Thulborn in 1923. Photo shows his wedding party in the garden. The final house to be built in the road until the 1990s.



## **'I daren't tell them we had a car and a bathroom!'**

**The house was owned by Harry –  
many other houses in the road were  
rented.**

**It had a bathroom, unlike many  
others in the road. Harry also owned  
a car, although he cycled to work  
every day as a window cleaner.**

**The car was kept in a garage in  
Romsey Road behind Charlie Squires's  
house (No 35), regularly washed, and  
used for outings to Royston Heath for  
picnics or to Hunstanton.**

**Margaret's mother always had  
immaculate net curtains in the front  
window.**

**Margaret married Charlie Squires's  
son Eric, and they lived in nearby  
Romsey Road before moving to a  
'modern' house in Perne Road where  
she still lives today.**



## **Alan Fraser**

**Younger than Jean and Margaret,  
Alan Fraser moved from Ross St to  
Hemingford Road, and still lives here.**

**Alan started work as a bricklayer on  
the railway, and became a self  
employed builder.**

**Alan will happily tell you that things  
aren't as good as they used to be, and  
he is correct that problems with  
absentee Buy to Let landlords and  
multiple occupation can have a  
negative impact on all the Mill Road  
streets.**

**Picture - Alan talking to his neighbour,  
and Shep, the dog, looking  
desperately towards the park and a  
walk.**



## Romsey Mill

Hemingford Road is ‘bookended’ by two public places.  
Adjoining Mill Road is Romsey Mill – formerly the Methodist Church.  
**1892: Wesleyan Mission Hall. 1896: Wesleyan New Church**



**Hemingford Road ends in Romsey Recreation  
Ground – ‘The Rec’ or ‘The Park’.  
Along with Romsey Mill it defines the road today.**



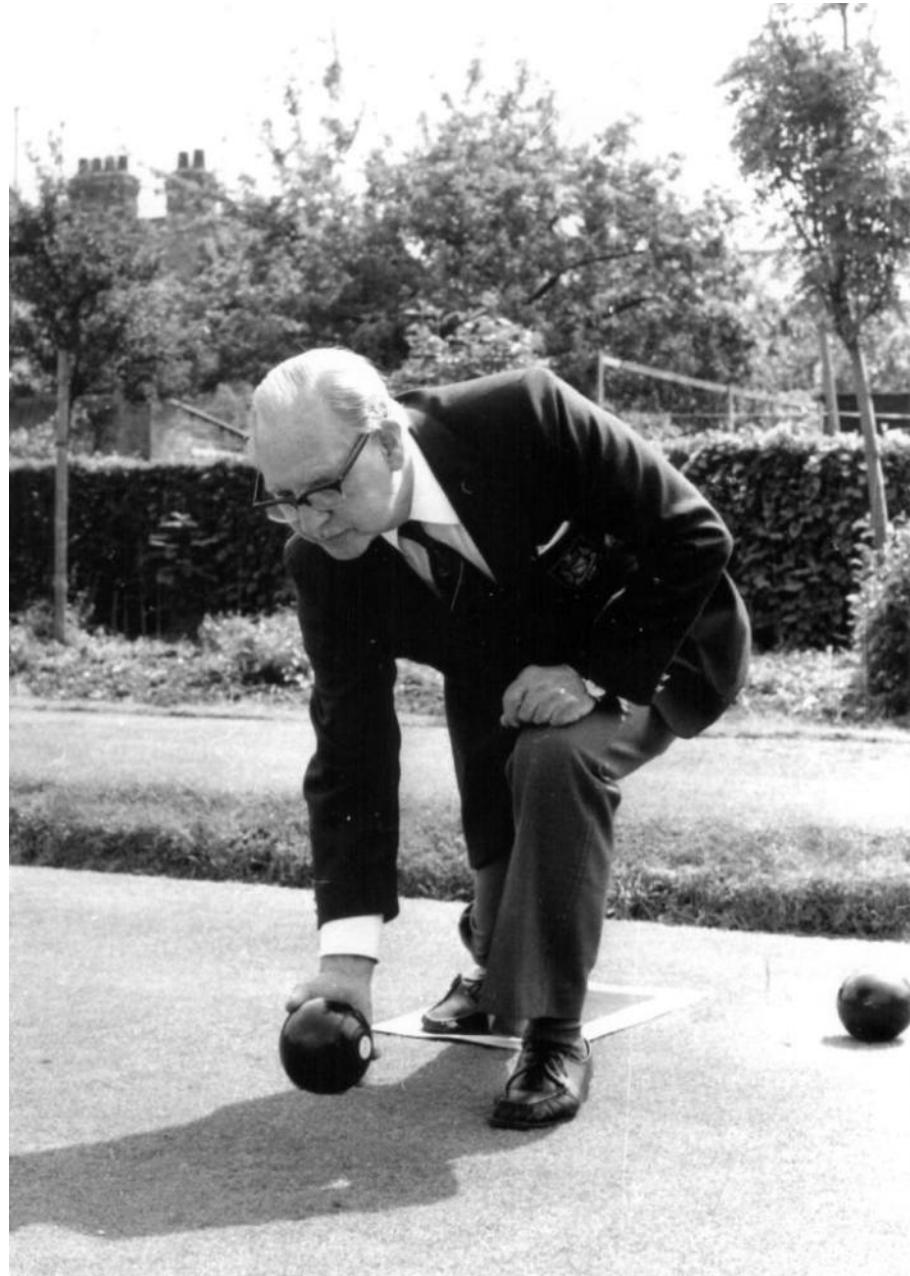
## Romsey Rec: The Long Fight for a Park

- Residents fought for 20 years to ensure Romsey had a park.
- Every time a site was located it ended being sold for housing.
- The field at the end of Hemingford Rd nearly ended up as housing too. Residents Councillors continued campaigning, saying in a petition to the Council in 1912:

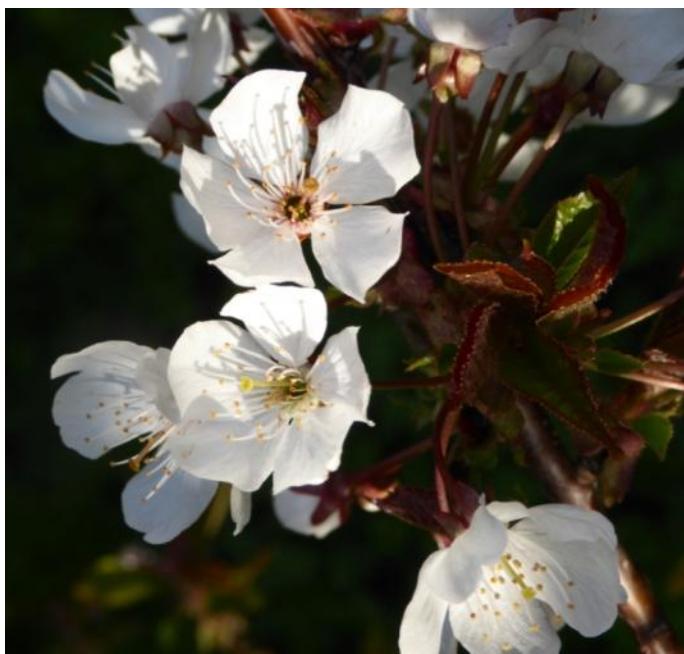
'Owing to extensive building operations the present opportunity seems one of the last chances of securing an open space we therefore beg your consideration.

The children of Romsey town are on the whole healthy and strong at present, and we desire that they, as well as their seniors, may have an opportunity of breathing fresh air on this open space'.

- How many who use the park today realise it only exists because others fought for it 100 years ago ?
- Are they campaigning for better facilities for others today as Romsey continues to grow?



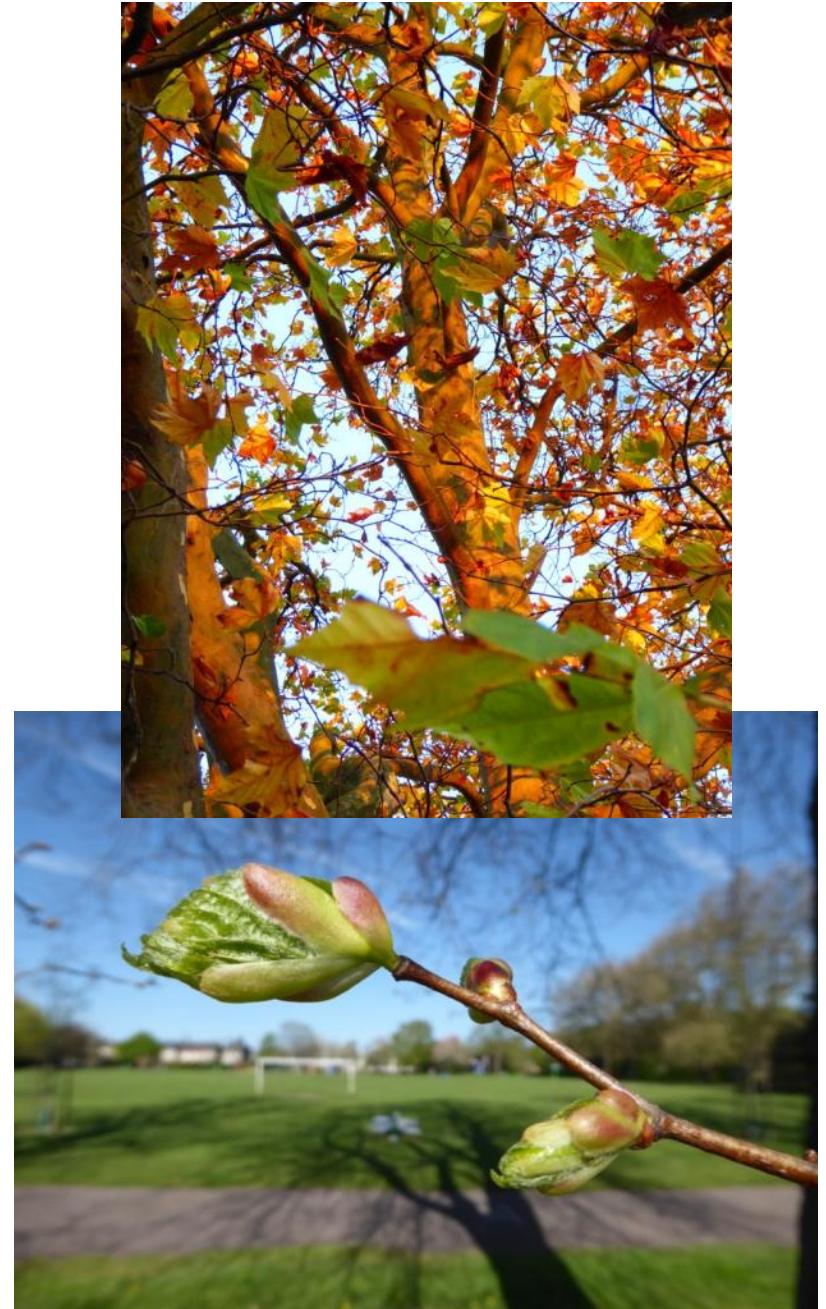
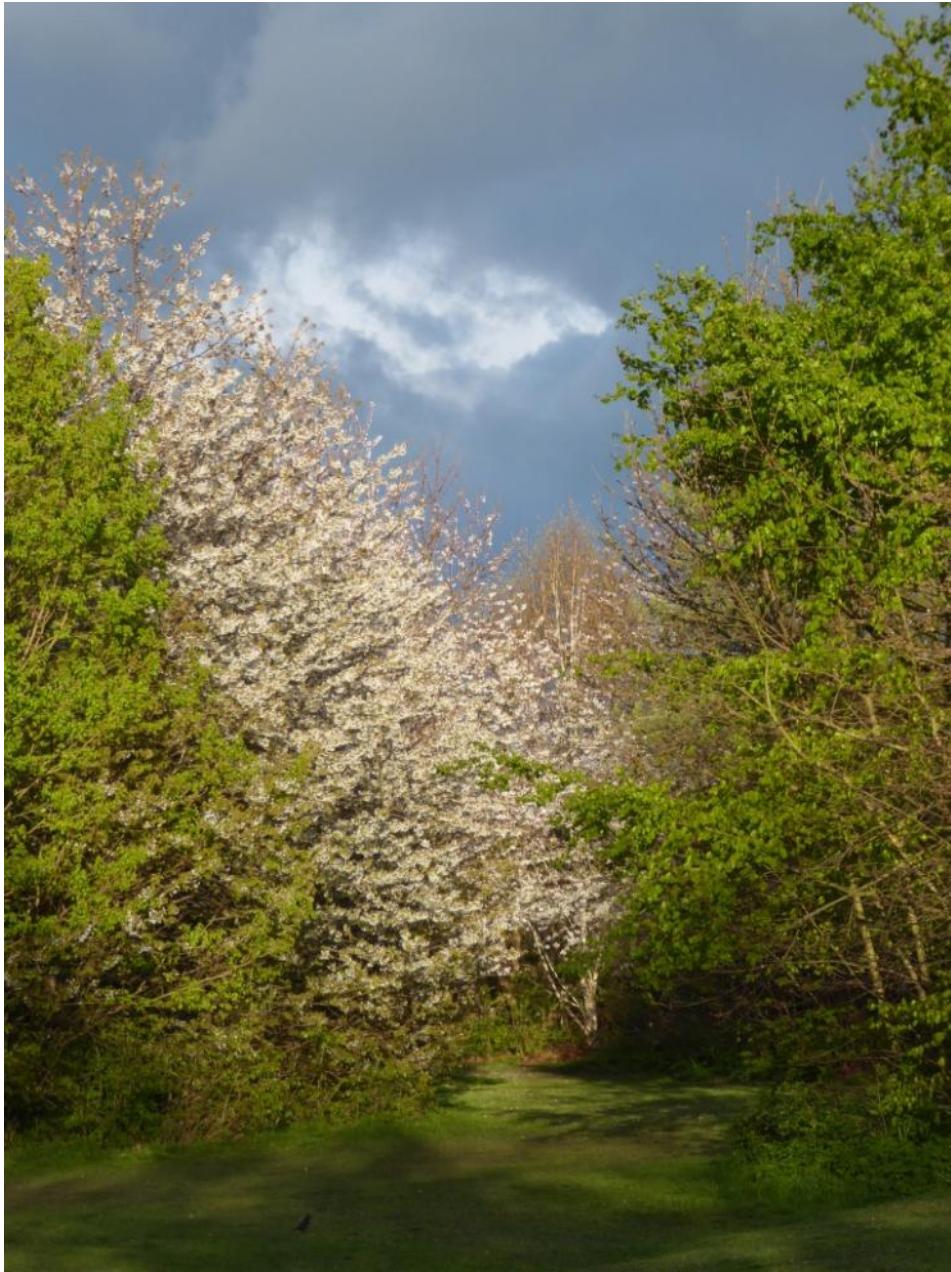












# Alan Fraser: 70 years on Romsey Rec

- from teenage footballer, to meeting his wife, to dog walker



# Hemingford Road: 1878-2016

- A street of building workers and railwaymen on the outskirts of Cambridge has become in the 21<sup>st</sup> century home to software engineers, university lecturers and professionals who commute to London.
- In 1878 when Hemingford Road was first laid out the population of Cambridge was about 35,000
- Today over 120,000 people live in Cambridge.
- More growth is planned, and the test for future housing developments will be if they can be as successful as Romsey Town proved to be in creating a vibrant community where people wanted – and want – to live.

The challenge for Romsey in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to ensure that the character of this area is not swamped as Cambridge expands.

# Hemingford Road Street Party

## 2013 & 2014





# Hemingford Rd: From early 20<sup>th</sup> century to early 21<sup>st</sup> century

1902: The Pyle family outside their new house.  
No cars, no bikes, and horse dung on the street



2013: The residents of a nearby  
house today with cars & bikes.



HEMINGFORD ROAD