

## Mill Road History Society 2019-20

### Chair's Report

We had a successful and busy year with a full programme of talks, workshops, walks, music and drama and the publication of a couple of substantial new reports: Sheila Cane has researched and published the history of *186 Gwydir Street, David Parr House*, where David Parr and his family lived. Allan Brigham has completed *The Mill Road Depot*, a comprehensive report on the history of the plot of ground which was once Headley's Foundry, then the Corporation/City Council Depot and now the housing development called Ironworks. Both are published on the Capturing Cambridge website <https://capturingcambridge.org>

The committee is pleased to have been joined by Sophie Smiley who is a Green Badge Guide in the city and brings her interest in history and extensive local knowledge to the society. We continue to create an annual programme that covers a wide range of topics and it's usually not difficult to find a connection with the Mill Road area. Sometimes we can focus directly on Mill Road itself, as when the representatives of the Spence Group gave us a fascinating illustrated talk about their engineering works under Mill Road bridge – an innovative project which involved widening and raising one of the arches to allow more trains through.

The closure of the bridge for these works gave us a great opportunity to take part in a History Happening day, along with others including the David Parr House, guides in Mill Road cemetery, a 'Victorian' photographer and a vintage tea party in the Bath House. With Helen Weinstein and her team at Historyworks, we assembled software and street directories to enable people to look up who lived in their house 100 years ago. This proved hugely popular and we would like to thank Mary Naylor for leading this and running further workshops on this topic. We would also like to thank our local City Councillors for all their work during the Mill Road Bridge closure, which enabled the History Happening day to happen. Our thanks also to Shapour Meftah for generously enabling us to use his shopfront space at Cantab Millenium, Mill Road, to run the event, and to Helen Weinstein and her team for their collaboration.

We hosted a music duo, Na-Mara, with the Cambridge Folk Club. They entertained us with songs and a talk about the 1937 Basque refugees who were brought to several places in England, including Cambridge. We were delighted to have a special guest who was one of those children, with some of and her family. For the CU Open Cambridge festival we organised walks in Petersfield, Romsey and the cemetery, and for the Festival of Ideas we would like to thank Julia Ewans for her entertaining illustrated script *Miss Jebb Revisits Mill Road*, based on Eglantine Jebb's 1906 publication *Cambridge, a Study in Social Questions* – which we have had invitations to perform elsewhere.

People continue to get in touch with us about Mill Road History and increasingly engage with the website Capturing Cambridge (now hosted by the Museum of Cambridge). This is the website where we place Mill Road History Society publications, and people now post material from all round the City. The site was built by the HLF funded Mill Road History Project and continues to grow significantly. It has a local and international following, and is becoming a significant window onto the history of Cambridge places and people.

We try to take part in most of the public community events in the Mill Road area, and keep everyone informed via our monthly digital newsletters, thanks to our IT guru Simon Middleton. We would like to thank our collaborators including the Cambridge Folk Club, the Green Badge Guides who generously donate a % of their proceeds from Mill Road walking tours, the Mill Road Winter Fair team and St Barnabas Church, the Cambridge University Public Engagement team [Office of External

Affairs and Communications], Cambridgeshire Headway and Petersfield Area Community Trust. We would also like to thank all our speakers and contributors to workshop events, and Bridget and Steve at Elitian for designing and printing our leaflets and posters, to Lifecraft and The Bath House Trustees for the room we use for workshops and committee meetings, and Romsey Mill for the use of Ross Street Community Centre for our talks.

From March 2020 our activities have sadly been curtailed by the devastating Covid-19 pandemic, and we don't know when people will begin to feel confident about gathering together again. We did not run our AGM scheduled for May, but we are beginning to develop online activity and will continue to keep you posted with our digital newsletters. Our first two 'virtual' events were 'Show an Object, Tell a Story' to commemorate WW2 and VE Day, on June 9<sup>th</sup> and 'Tales from Mill Road Cemetery' on July 14<sup>th</sup> – quite a few people attended and took part, and we thought it worked well. Hence, we have decided to hold our AGM online this year, as well as including this report and our accounts in the Newsletter.

We do ask that if anyone has a comment or suggestion for a future event, please email us on [millroadhistory@gmail.com](mailto:millroadhistory@gmail.com). Please also visit our website for further information <https://millroadhistory.org.uk/events/> and encourage anyone you think might be interested in our events to sign up to our mailing list on the website.

Finally, I would like to say a big thanks to those of you who generously support the Society and attend and help out at our events. The Society would not exist without you, so please keep letting us know what you would like us to include in our programme.

**Lucy Walker 26.07.20**