

DRAFT

Mill Road History Society – notes on Eglantyne Jebb for Festival of Ideas 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

Julia Ewans revised on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Notes in green are for photos in a PowerPoint to illustrate.

Introduction ....along the lines of

*For those of you who don't know I am Mary Burgess Local Studies Officer at the Cambridgeshire Collection. One of the books we are proud to hold is called **Cambridge: A Brief Study in Social Questions** by Eglantyne Jebb which was published in 1906. . . As I'm sure you all know Miss Jebb went on to found what was to become Save the Children. But there is no need for me to say more for we are tonight, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of The Mill Road History Society, able to welcome the great lady herself. Please put your hands together to welcome Miss Eglantyne Jebb*

EJ Good evening.

My name is Eglantyne Jebb. I was born in 1876 and educated at home in Shropshire. I read History at Lady Margaret Hall Oxford and despite being a student from.....

*Chorus ..... 'the other place' ....*

EJ .....I am pleased to learn on returning after many years that I have a fan club here in Cambridge.

After Oxford and fired up partly by my family's social conscience, I decided to become a teacher but sadly discovered that I didn't like teaching children very much which considering my later career seems a little odd. I think it was the widespread poor condition of life for many children which upset me.

Having abandoned teaching, I came to Cambridge in 1901 with my mother and began a rather fun social life. My uncle was the Professor of Greek and knew a great many eligible young men. Photo of EJ

As you can see, I was thinner in those days. I was described as extraordinarily beautiful with red gold hair.

*Chorus* Time has taken its toll. What do you expect? She has been dead for 93 years.

EJ My family thought that I should be engaged in useful work and introduced me to Florence Keynes who commissioned me to research and compile a digest of the charitable work being carried out in Cambridge.

*Chorus* Oh! we know about Florence Keynes mother of John Maynard Keynes. She was one of those amazing women reformers like Ida Darwin, Millicent Fawcett and Clara Rackham. Florence was the first woman to be a town councillor, one of the first to be a magistrate and you will be pleased to learn that in 1932, at the age of 70 she became Mayor of Cambridge.

EJ I was delighted to accept the task but it was tedious work and I was aware that the writing might not be the most riveting to the casual reader. (*Chorus ..loud yawns!*) I found that many Cambridge charities were far from effective combatants of urban poverty. I began to study the lives of the people in the town and noted the massive inequalities that many academics ignored.

*Chorus.* 'Town and gown! Nothing has changed'

EJ That is enough about me. This evening is not intended to be about me. We are here to look at the Mill Road area and how it has changed since I lived in Cambridge. In 1906 wrote about Mill Road in a book "Cambridge: A Brief Study in Social Questions".

Front page of book

*Chorus.* 'Brief? It was not that brief at 260 pages!'

EJ It was my attempt to make the digest of charitable work ... well more digestible! Many of the passages of the book were written by others who had more experience of the philanthropic societies. Others made time to collect material for the book. Tonight, I will continue this tried and tested method. I have the help of the Mill Road History Society who have agreed to bring my work up to date by reflecting on my description of Mill Road and the surrounding streets and how it has changed.

We have the great advantage of this magic lantern show and the wonderful record of photographs of the area to illustrate our talk.

Shall we begin?

*Chorus. 'At Last'*

### 1830 Baker Map

EJ I observed that in 1830 there was a quiet country road leading out of Cambridge to the south-west. It was called Mill Road from, I suppose, the Windmill you passed just after leaving Parker's Piece. I haven't actually seen the Mill Road Windmill, do any of you know what happened to it?

*Chorus*

*Yes, I do. It stood somewhere behind 56 Mill Road. You know....where the Pharmacy is.*

### Map showing windmill and Covent Garden

*I read up about it in the article written by Allan Bringham, Gordon Clark and Peter Filby. They say there may have been a windmill here in mediaeval times. There was definitely a post mill which was demolished in 1786 and replaced with a tall brick tower mill in 1793.*

### Cricket match on Parker's Piece

*Look you can just see it in this picture of cricketers on Parker's Piece. By 1840 it ceased to work having lost its sails in a storm. It was demolished in 1844. We have looked for traces of it behind the shops but there is nothing left.*

### 1840 Map

EJ There were no houses along the road until you came to an isolated farm with the picturesque name of Polecat Farm, standing in fields and sheltered by a little copse. Past it the road ran on between hedges through green fields, sloping gradually down to where a brook wound its way through a valley which had not long since been a nearly impassible fen. On the other side of a bridge a little footpath led up hill to Cherry Hinton

*Chorus. Kay Oh that's Snaky path –*

*Mary - my Mum pushed my pram along there – I thought snakes lived down there.*

Map of early streets

EJ By the time I wrote my book Mill Road had become a main street through a populous district. A great cemetery extends upon your left, where an army of tombstones has advanced over most of the ground.

Map of cemetery

Gravestones

Chorus *V1. The cemetery is a lovely space now. Filled with trees, birds and flowers. Lovely statues to celebrate the bird life. The friends of the cemetery look after it well and there is a website which tells you all about it.*

Art work

*V2. Bit too much wildlife if you ask me. So very sad to see the gravestones damaged.*

in quick succession Slides of Ditchburn, Library, Hospital –.

EJ Next you pass the Workhouse and the Free Library and further along come to the Infectious Diseases Hospital.

Chorus *Hey! slow down. You are walking far too fast for us and there are many good stories to tell along the way.*

Quiet street scene

*Here's Mrs Hosegood to tell us about the Workhouse*

*Kay – Monologue*

### **Emma Hosegood (1849-1913)**

Thirty six! Just a number you may well think, but 36 is the amount of years that my dear husband Luke and I served in the Cambridge Workhouse, on Mill Road. (*Contemplates*) Ditchburn Place is what it is called now.

Master and Matron! Master Hosegood, that's my husband, was in charge of the boys and I, Mrs Hosegood (nee Porter) was in charge of the girls and between us we worked very hard. Working with the young and elderly.

Keeping house and teaching! Oh, think what you may, but it is more than a job, it is a vocation, it is life changing, it is a calling! I can assure you that we were dedicated to our roles and may I say honoured to be at the forefront of educating the youngsters at the workhouse.....unlike you Miss Jebb!

We were trusted back then. Trusted to simply get on with our jobs.

Efficient Mrs Hosegood, efficient that's what the school inspector said to me and my Luke back in November 1873. He said that we had done a very good job.

Good with Outstanding features, some might say today!

And it wasn't just the youngsters that we worked with back then, oh no, it was all ages. My Luke was outstanding. He could turn his hand to any age group. I remember that April day, back in 1883 when he was the 'hero of the day' – when a fire broke out at the back of the Workhouse.

My Luke had determination in his eyes as he 'plunged' himself back into the flames rescuing the elderly inmates. He was quick of the mark I can tell you and he risked life and limb to save everyone.

Master and Matron of the Cambridge Union Workhouse, Mill Road, Cambridge for 36 years!

Ditchburn exterior

Ditchburn Interior

*V1. We've lost you Miss Jebb. Have you crossed the railway bridge yet? You're lucky; by 1889 we had a handsome road bridge after 30 years with just a level crossing and then another ten with the crossing and a wooden footbridge*

Various slides of bridge then and now

*V2. I'm Mr Negus and in 1886 I signed a petition for a new bridge. I wrote about the wretched state of the wooden bridge quite spoiling the Ladies Dresses and at night it is quite a scandal through those who hang about the bridge and it does not in any way meet the requirements of the district as there is now nearly two thousand who have to cross over the Structure or wait until the gate is open*

*V1. We were back to just a footbridge in July and August this year, weren't we? And that wasn't always open..... but we did have some fun with the road closed and hardly any traffic.*

## Street scene of the closed road in 2019

### Aerial view of streets

EJ After that welcome interruption lets get back to 1906 where I observed on each side, at right angles to Mill Road, branch off little streets of small houses, some presenting a giddy monotony of a long succession of bay windows with here and there an attempt at an ornament,

### Street scene

### Bay window

### House front

### Detail of Stone Cottage

a row of holes pierced into a parapet or even a miniature Corinthian column dividing its front lights. Other streets are without bays, more severe and of equal uniformity, terminating in a general shop at the street corner.

Chorus *If only she had known then what we know now. Have you seen the prices of these terraced houses off Mill Road? .... £475,000 and only 2 bedrooms and not much of a garden. Our neighbours have a studio in what was the garden and they are letting it out on Air B & B.*

EJ The whole activity of the neighbourhood appears to concentrate itself in the long main street. Here are two churches a Baptist Chapel, the Salvation Army, a school, a working men's Liberal club, a working men's Conservative club.

Chorus. *Pity you didn't see the working men's Labour club, the Bath House, the Methodist Chapel, the cinemas ....all now being 'repurposed' for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

### Labour club, Bath House, Romsey Mill, Cinema, Cinema

EJ The principal shops are all here displaying their goods conveniently for inspection in the street. You can get astonishing bargains in furniture and smart attire.

## Various shop fronts

*Chorus        You still can. Have you counted the charity shops?*

EJ     If your purse is empty the loan of money 'on easy terms' is proffered not far away.

*Chorus        Not the case now. There is no bank or building society to be seen.*

EJ     Cook-shops were numerous and to judge from the rows of glass jars standing above the oranges, the children of the neighbourhood lived chiefly on sweets. It is surprising what very large ones you could get for a penny.

## Jar of Gobstoppers

*Chorus        She means gobstoppers.*

EJ     As you passed down the street the shops become fewer and smaller and you came to a region of quite different character. A greyish region where a whizzing sound disturbs the heavy atmosphere. There was great lime and cement works on your left.

## Cement works, x2

*Chorus        And have you seen what's there now...it's one of the biggest changes Mill Road has seen in a long time...Now it's the amazing new Mosque and the Foundry is guess what?...more student accommodation!*

## Mosque x2

## The Foundry

*Jo as Student with white flag                    Hang on we have to live somewhere!*

EJ     The houses ended abruptly at the foot of the hill and you looked across a bare field to an irregular stack of buildings piled high with tall chimneys, more cement works. The whole place seemed enmeshed in railway lines and the puffing of trains and screaming engines broke in upon the vibrating hum from the works.

*Chorus        That part of the railway has gone now....they built Mamora Road over it*

*Chorus And whose idea was it to put a hospital down here next to heavy, dirty industry?*

*EJ The brook was still there; a rather dirty ditch with tins and broken pottery amongst its weeds and with a large notice on its bank prohibiting rubbish from being thrown in. The footpath still led up the hill, but it was confined between black palisades.*

*Chorus Kay -I told you Snakey Path Ooooooh creepy.*

*Mary -The brook is better now some might say pretty although still the target of fly tippers.*

[Brookside today x2](#)

*EJ What had become of the orchards and the flowers? Wandering down the side streets in 1906 I could catch glimpses of back gardens cramped between the smoke coloured walls, store yards with stacks of wood or tiles and rusted iron, untidy heaps of debris , here a pile of old doors, there a mass of wheels, iron roofed sheds with broken window panes, battered black palings and on every side houses a sooty yellow.*

[Street scene \(grim!\)](#)

Occasionally you found a real garden -not a drying ground strewn with dented tins- but a tiny country garden with lilac and fruit tree blooming against a dingy wall.

[Colourful photos of gardens](#)

*Chorus V1- Very different today. There are some beautiful gardens. Have you seen the lovely pictures Allan takes of the well-tended front gardens of Romsey Town?*

*And here is Allan's back garden. I stole the photo from Facebook*

[Allan's back garden](#)

*V2 -Street parties have been and still are a great tradition. Here is Gwydir Street on VE day*

[Street Party](#)

*And Hemingford Road in 2019*

[More street party](#)

EJ Cambridge was growing on all sides. I thought that the town to the east of the railway would equal the extent of the medieval city. Or perhaps it would be truer to say that side by side with the beautiful mediaeval city, so dear to the hearts of successive generations of Englishmen, another town had grown up, one with a population four times as great and covering a much larger area. In my book I estimated the population to be over 53,000.

*Chorus Don't be too shocked, Miss Jebb. The city has grown and is still growing. The estimated population is 145,000 but this is difficult to measure because at least 25,000 are students.*

EJ Ah yes, the university. It was expanding rapidly at the beginning of the 20th century and extensive building operations stimulated the building trades which attracted many working men who came from a distance to settle in Cambridge. I predicted that this growth would not continue unless some unforeseen millionaire enabled it to do so. I said that it was not likely that the University or the population of the town would increase in the future. It seems that I may have been wrong.

*Chorus You certainly were. Money has poured in from philanthropists like Cripps, Robinson and Edwards and the multinational corporations like Microsoft and Astro Zenica.*

Traditional photo of university

Modern college

EJ Let's talk politics.

*Chorus Do we have to? There is an awful lot of it about at present.....*

EJ I mean local politics and the decisions made by local politicians which I refer to in my book as having shaped the city. Cambridge was a borough in 1906 led by a mayor and councillors elected by the rate paying Burgesses. They were entitled to vote in municipal elections, and they were, except for women, qualified to hold office.

*Chorus shouts of 'Votes for Women'.*

*Hang on a minute even while you were writing this there were some women Suffrage meetings taking place in Mill Road... at The*

*Lodge now known as the Broadway and the Petersfield Surgery 25 Mill Road*

EJ There were ten wards, 49 council members made up of 36 councillors, twelve aldermen and the mayor.

Chorus *Today we have 14 wards and 42 councillors for a much greater population. The mayor's role is now only ceremonial. Very useful if need a ribbon cut. Cambridge was granted city status in 1951. Until 1950 the University still sent two MP's to Parliament. Women were not awarded degrees until 1948.*

EJ In my book I wrote that 'The iron hand of the byelaws began to force the disorderly growth of the town into some sort of symmetry. The later streets branching off the old country roads were laid out at intervals more monotonously regular, at angles more cruelly exact. The poet Gray, when he spoke of 'the quiet ugliness' of Cambridge, might have been speaking in prophecy about the new Cambridge of the era of byelaws.'

Chorus *Miss Jebb may have been mistaken. What is interesting is that while her comments about poverty may be correct, using the houses in Romsey to illustrate this tells us more about her than the residents -*

*Plan of housing land  
Bill of sale*

*these houses were new when she was commentating, the rents were higher than elsewhere because they had better facilities such as an indoor tap and a lavatory attached to house if accessible only from outside. They are still standing, and with colourful paint, en-suite bathrooms and rooms in the roof are now amongst some of the most sought after and expensive per square meter in Cambridge.*

*Romsey street scene.*

Chorus *We do our best to keep an eye on what is being built around here, but it isn't easy. Some local people feel beset by modern planning laws. Student accommodation seems to rise everywhere.*

*The Foundry*

*Student still waving white flag.....'we have to live somewhere'*

EJ I noted in my book that the Town Council had also done a great deal to improve the sanitation in the town. I mentioned this to the Mill Road History Society who were not impressed.

Chorus *We have published a report on the Bath House, but Miss Jebb you would not have known about that as it did not open until 1927. That is a long time to go without a bath.*

*David Parr in his little house in Gwydir Street managed an indoor toilet quite early. It was in 1913 that the sanitary committee decided all toilets needed a stench pipe so he had to smash up the work he had done in 1898 and put one in. He was a bit cross.*

Bath House

EJ In my book I wrote about the many charitable organisations which worked to support the poor and uneducated of Cambridge. I would like to tell you about one which is particular to this area.

Something to represent charity work

In Romsey Ward one winter a house-to-house visitation was organized with the purpose of collecting from those in work and relieving those who were not.....The idea originated with a man who had observed for himself how various charities had been abused, how money intended for the suffering poor and unemployed had found its way into the pockets of men earning good wages....how the wrong people had been helped and the right people neglected. He thought that the poor should help the poor and that men should be relieved by friends who knew their character and antecedents and could help without discrimination.

Chorus *The inequalities which Miss Jebb identified are still here today. In 2017 Cambridge has been identified as the UK's most unequal city. Residents' income was the least evenly distributed of 57 British cities measured, with its top 6% earners accounting for 19% of its total income and the bottom 20% for only 2%. In Miss Jebb's day Mill Road was one of the poorest areas. Now it is one of the wealthiest. Poverty has moved away.*

*You will be pleased to know that there is a great deal of community and charitable work still undertaken in the area. For*

*example, in the former Bath House is a self-help mental health charity called Lifecraft. Romsey Mill in the old Methodist Chapel works with children, young, people and families. There are many others....the Salvation Army, the churches, the mosque, Bhavat Bhavan, the charity shops, Dhiverse, The Kite Trust,..... ..*

*Whilst they are better regulated than in your time Miss Jeb, they still struggle for funding and recognition.*

EJ I must turn to the subject of alcohol. This drink habit, so serious in its results, had a strong hold on our town.

Demon drink

Back in 1906, the proportion of licensed premises to people in England and Wales was one to 230. Here it was one to 138. The distance the east side of Wellington Street to Hutchinson's Court on the southside of Newmarket road is 796yds. In this length of road there were 22 public houses i.e. one every 36 yards.

*Chorus That is a little more than the length of three double decker buses.*

Three buses

*No that's not what I mean.*

Three more buses

*Nor is that*

EJ Do stop interrupting. I am being serious here.

....it may be safely laid down that supply goes a long way to increase demand....many people do not particularly wish to drink but will do so if temptation is thrust upon them....there is nothing improbable about the old story of a man being able to pass one public house but not two.....many a man might go 100 yards for a drink but would think twice before he went 200 yards more.

Poster

Mary, I am told that you know a lot about Mill Road pubs. How many are there now?

*Chorus V1. Well there were not that many pubs actually on Mill Road*

*The Windmill, The Locomotive and the Crystal Palace at the town end, The Durham Ox and the White Swan in the middle, then the Earl of Beaconsfield and the Royal Standard over the Bridge.*

Various pubs

*And the Sally Army had a strong presence - they had rooms at Sturton Town Hall.*

*V2. I am surprised you did not notice the temperance hotel on the corner of Devonshire Road It was there until 1915.*

Temperance Hotel and White Swan

EJ Were there not quite a few public houses in the side streets?

Chorus *Er.... well there may have been a few. The Six Bells and the Dew Drop where proper pubs and some people made a few extra pennies selling ale from their houses. I'm not saying people in the area went thirsty. But we never had such a problem as they did over in Barnwell –*

*Back in the 1860's that little slip of a woman Jane Ellice Hopkins made a valiant effort to reform some of the "rough" working men often going into public houses in the poorest parts of Cambridge. She urged them to seek help from the Lord in becoming more moral characters.*

*Jo - Ellice Hopkins Monologue*

**Ellice Hopkins performance insert:**

Well someone had to do this work and I was willing to do anything I could to change those rough working men. I was determined. Yes, determined to guide them....to help them....to make them see the error of their ways. And if they weren't prepared to come to 'our place of worship' – I knew that we simply had to go to where they would frequent. To visit their place of worship, where they would more often than not be found standing, propped up by a bar with a glass of ale in hand.

Saturday night visitations in public houses became part of my routine, devoting an hour and a half to this work –from six to half-past seven.

Although this was only part of my work and a part that I never could overcome my intense repugnance....I would still urge others to partake in this missionary work, oh yes, Cheers to that and Amen.

I wasn't scared about visiting some of the poorest parts of Cambridge and those 'men', oh those poor lost souls.

Why would I be scared, I wasn't alone...I had Christ and the clergymen on my side.

The results of my work saw flocks of working men feeling guilty and unconsciously turning to my kind of worship, instead of their 'beer' worshipping ways....beginning to embrace Christianity and changing, yes changing.....Hallelujah!

Sketch of Ellice

Moral poster

Book cover

EJ Alas, we have reason to believe that not all the alcohol available on Mill Road was strictly legal.....

*Name's John Ruffles, worked on the railway as a Platelayer and lived in Railway Cottages, I did, back in 1917. Had what I thought a bit of real luck when me and my mate Arthur Shead of Covent Garden, we (ahem) we got hold of 4 gallons of gin, 89 pounds of cheese and, wait for it, 42 pairs of ladies stockings. Amazing what you can pick up in Mill Road, aint it...*

*Course we then had the bad luck to get nabbed by Sergeant Marsh, the rotten rozzer. Well Arthur says as he found the cheese and stockings on the way home from his allotment and I swore I found the gin in some straw by the railway track near the signal box at Coldhams sidings. Must've fell off the back of a train, that did.*

*Ruddy magistrates wouldn't have none of it. Six months hard labour we got....*

EJ Talking of law and order, one of the many functions of the Town Council was policing the town. Within seven months of the creation of a Watch Committee and despite the outcries about the expense, it has

established the police force which has reached its present high state of efficiency. Here they are guarding a lamp post.

### Police men in the snow

*Chorus*      *A bit after your day Miss Jebb, in fact in the 1930's Annie Carnegie Brown was appointed one of the first woman police constables our area. Here she comes now.*

*Kay*          *Monologue*

#### **Annie Carnegie-Brown (1891-1981)**

Reporting for duty. Carnegie-Brown, Miss Annie Carnegie-Brown, transferring from the Leeds force to serve here in Cambridge. 1923.

Whew...I've just chased a man down Tenison Road, onto St Barnabus Road and then up Gwydir Street...I caught him – he was stealing 7 pears to the value of 1s 6 d from a garden.

You're under arrest!

Other cases of mine included: arresting a 'Madam' who was running a house of ill-repute and another for fortune telling, and another for stealing slippers, proclaiming that they were borrowing them...oh that old chestnut!

You're under arrest!

I didn't let many of 'them' get away. Although, I didn't manage to get that carving knife out of the hands of the fat woman in Ely who ended up stabbing me! OUCH!

It's alright, I'm fine. No harm done, only to my leather bag and woolly jumper.

Reporting for duty. Carnegie-Brown, Miss Annie Carnegie-Brown.

Working for the Cambridge Constabulary as the first Woman Police Sergeant until 1947.

### Annie C Brown in Uniform

#### Newspaper notice of spy catcher

EJ      It is obvious to those who have any knowledge of a university town that the need of saving boys from the many temptations that surround them is especially urgent. The following fact need not surprise our listeners when they remember that this town is only 13 miles from Newmarket. A Cambridge man helping in the Racing Stables Mission in Chantilly near Paris,

### Chantilly Racing stables

found to his astonishment that one half of the boys employed on the turf there were from Cambridge. A trainer explained the situation thus: 'Agents are well placed in all the principal towns to find boys aged fourteen, whose previous life had given them a taste for betting and racing and who are backward in physical development. A larger percentage of this sort of boys is found in Cambridge than in any other town in England'.

*Chorus/Mary      One such young lad was Ernest Gladstone Cooke who was born & brought up in Emmanuel St. He & his twin brother were both taken to France to train under Jo March.*

*Ernest did well and in 1889 there was a report in the Cambridge Independent Press*

*"Ernest Cooke.... Who has just been described by the journal 'Le Jockey' as the best light weight jockey in France, has recently met with extraordinary success. On Monday, 3rd June he had five mounts and was successful in riding 4 of them to victory."*

### Racing at Maisons-Laffitte

*Sadly, he died 2 years later at Maisons Laffitte, a famous racecourse near Paris. He fell from his horse and was knocked unconscious on June 12th and died 5 days later without regaining consciousness. A funeral was held in Chantilly on June 20th before his body was brought back to Cambridge and buried in Mill Road cemetery on June 26th 1901.*

### Gravestone

*In the funeral report much was made of the beautiful artificial flowers that accompanied the coffin, especially the ones in a glass case sent from The Society for the Encouragement of Improving horse breeds (which is now known as France Galop).*

*Several horse owners and trainers were at the graveside.*

*Chorus        Taking about racehorses, we had one here in Mill Road.*

*In 1988 the famous racehorse Red Rum opened the Coral betting shop which was next to Hilary's the greengrocers. He was taken right inside the shop.*

Red Rum

*Chorus;        So, what have we learnt from you tonight, Miss Jebb? That everything changes, everything changes*

EJ.        And what a good thing the Mill Road History Society is here to record our past and present for the future! Let's celebrate all of it.