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# Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society

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(incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological Society)

Volume XCVI  
for 2007



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## West Cambridge 1870–1914: building the bicycle suburb

Philomena Guillebaud

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*This third article in a series about landscape and land-use changes in west Cambridge describes the creation of the residential suburb in that part of the Parish of St Giles nearest to the town centre. While this took place largely after 1885, it was preceded by the introduction of three new academic institutions: Newnham College, Ridley Hall and Selwyn College. The long-standing resistance by most college landowners to allowing building west of the Backs collapsed before the need to find alternative sources of revenue to offset the impact of the agricultural depression from the late 1870s on, while abolition of restrictions on the marriage of dons created new demand for houses. However the stringent conditions laid down by the colleges, who owned 90% of the area of the suburb, delayed by several years the take-off of a development whose character reflected unwritten agreement among the colleges that the suburb should consist of exclusively middle- or upper middle-class houses in spacious gardens, interspersed with academic buildings, playing fields and nurseries, devoid of commercial or community facilities. By 1914, Grange Road had been fully developed, the eastern end of Madingley Road partly so, and a number of subsidiary roads had been built. While there was little change in the most westerly parts of the parish, which remained largely arable, changes in landownership at the expense of an already very small private sector resulted in an increase in college and university ownership in the parish as a whole from 60% at the time of enclosure in 1805 to about 85% by 1914.*

This is the third of a series of articles tracing the development of the former medieval West Fields of Cambridge and the impact of enclosure upon them. These Fields were one of the two medieval great fields that, together with the town itself, composed the Borough of Cambridge. The unit of parliamentary enclosure was the parish, and the 1361-acre parish of St Giles encompassed the whole of the West Fields and two small long-established population clusters, Castle End/Pound Hill in the north and parts of Newnham village in the south. The first article examined the process of parliamentary enclosure of the parish between 1802 and 1805, the roles played by the Cambridge colleges in that process and the ownership

pattern which emerged from it, by which almost all the land closest to the town was in the hands of the colleges.<sup>1</sup> The second described the transformation of the agrarian landscape between 1805 and 1870, with particular attention to that area closest to the river, which would later become what, for convenience, I have called the west Cambridge suburb.<sup>2</sup> It explored the long lull that left this a largely green area of college playing fields, pleasure gardens, nurseries and pastures while in the same period massive housing development was taking place east and south of the town in the former East or Barnwell Fields.

Without ignoring the more westerly parts of the parish which would subsequently figure largely in the future of both colleges and university, the present article focuses primarily upon the initial development of the suburb with its mixture of new academic institutions and upper-middle- and middle-class housing largely geared to the university community, and the ways in which the ownership patterns established at enclosure influenced the development that took place. There is a widely held belief that the development of the suburb was triggered by the abolition in 1882 of the requirement that college dons must remain celibate to retain their fellowships. In describing developments between 1870 and 1914, it is hoped to show that this was only one element in a more complicated picture and, in terms of timing, not the most significant.

### **The timing and sequence of suburban development 1870–1914**

Following enclosure, ownership of the land in the area of the future suburb (some 200 acres, roughly bounded by Queen's Road, Newnham and Barton Roads, Grange Road and Madingley Road; see Fig. 1) was divided among eight colleges, two churches, Cambridge Corporation and a few private persons. The colleges held about 90% with St John's much the biggest landlord. This distribution remained essentially unaltered for the next century and a half.

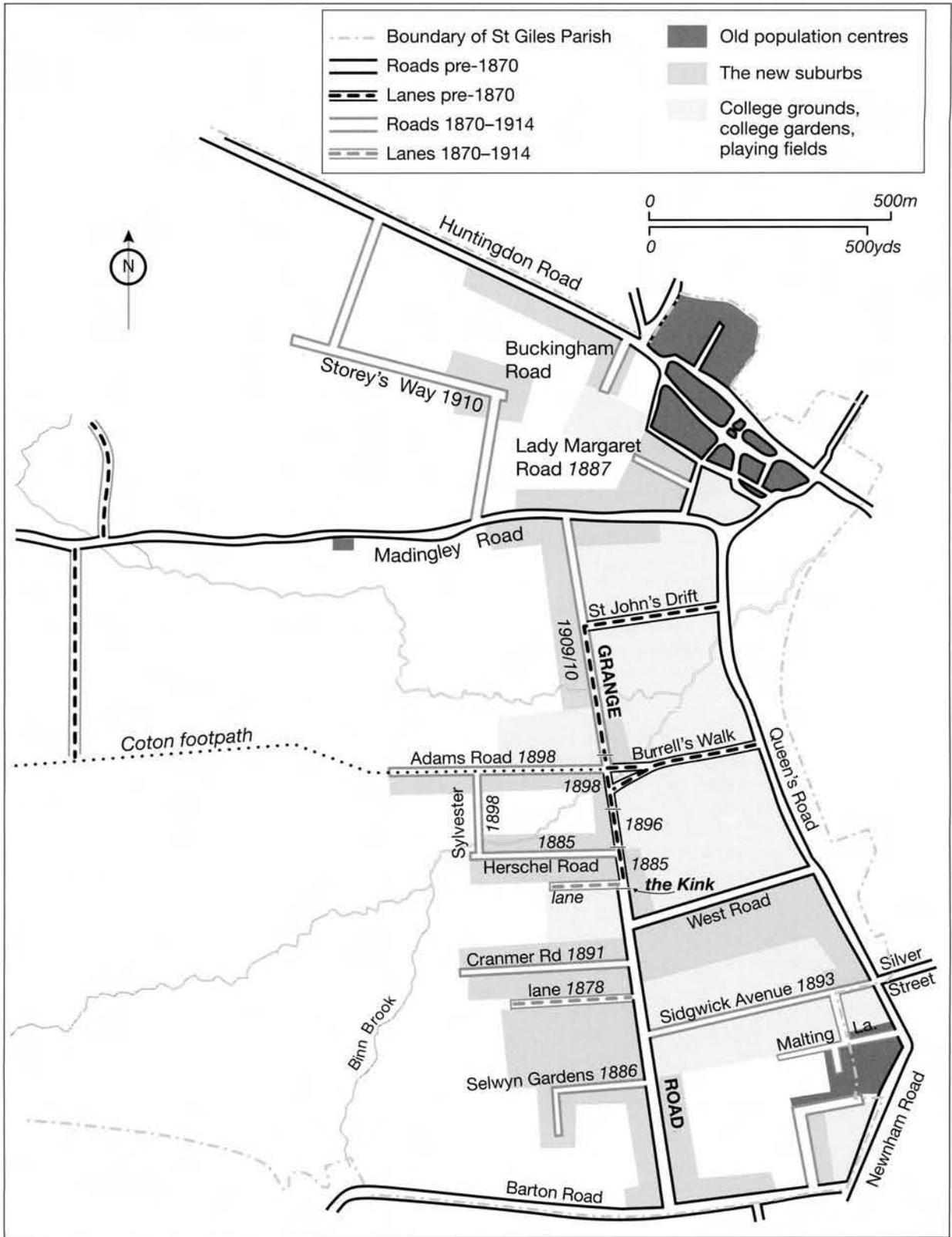


Figure 1. The suburb of west Cambridge, showing development to 1914.

Given this picture, it is not surprising that there was no master plan for the suburb. Certain minimum requirements were laid down by the municipal by-laws governing such matters as structural or sanitary standards for individual buildings and roads, but beyond that each landowner had a free hand. St John's College, which dominated the scene, decided in 1885 to divide into two estates the land it planned to develop, one with larger plot sizes and higher minimum house costs than the other. As far as can be judged from the records, planning was limited to laying out the plots in the light of that decision, and to designing two feeder roads, one in each estate, to increase plot numbers. There is no evidence that any broader issues were considered by the other landlords who participated in developing the suburb.

Figure 2 shows, at five-year intervals, the appearance of new houses or at least of building leases. (The term 'gentry houses' is used as shorthand for upper-middle- and middle-class housing.) The data must be treated as approximate, because they derive from multiple sources. Where the ground landlord was a college, it has in almost all cases been possible to find a lease, but leases bear two dates: the date from which the lease duration is calculated, always specified in the text, and the date of signature, usually one or two years later and in some cases as many as eight or ten years later. Given the arbitrary time lag, I have been obliged to use the first of these dates, although it generally predates the actual house construction by six to 18 months. Sometimes the existence of a building agreement has made greater precision possible. In the case of private owners, the principal source has been Spalding's Street Directories of Cambridge. Since these were initially published at three-year intervals from 1874 and annually only from 1910, in some cases all that is known is that a given house was built between 1884 and 1887, because it is listed in the

Directory for the latter year and not for the former. In those cases I have taken the year before the house first appears in Spalding. Finally, there are the decennial censuses, in a few cases the only source for the period before the mid-1870s.

Only three new leases appeared between 1880 and 1884. The next five years show the first jump, to 19. Although these houses were scattered from Barton Road to Huntingdon Road, all but four were in the Grange Road/Madingley Road area, and in part reflected the initial impact of building two new roads westwards from Grange Road (Herschel Road and Selwyn Gardens) and one north of Madingley Road (Lady Margaret Road). The peak in the period 1890–4 was also associated with new road construction: Cranmer Road was built by Jesus College from 1891. The drop between 1905 and 1909 reflected a nationwide building slump which in most other areas had developed earlier<sup>3</sup> and the final peak before 1914 reflects *inter alia* the beginning of the estate along the newly-built Storey's Way.

There is more to the story than statistics, and before discussing residential development in greater detail it is necessary to go back to the 1870s, when the first changes in the built landscape took place. Before 1875, no academic buildings had been constructed west of the river, i.e. beyond the traditional geographic bounds of Cambridge town, except for the University Observatory, the choice of whose site in the 1820s out on Madingley Road was governed by considerations of elevation and avoidance of smoke pollution. Now, however, three entirely new institutions appeared: Newnham College in 1875 with subsequent enlargements;<sup>4</sup> Ridley Hall (an Anglican theological college later linked to the University) in 1877;<sup>5</sup> and Selwyn Hostel, later Selwyn College, in 1879,<sup>6</sup> all more or less cheek by jowl, to be joined in 1896 by two more beyond the northern end of the Backs, Westminster

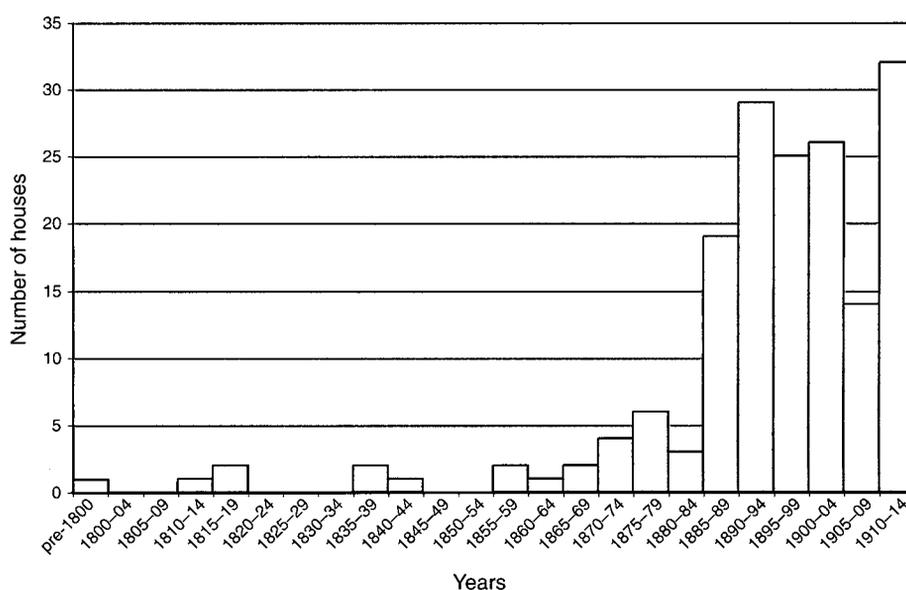


Figure 2. 'Gentry' houses built in St Giles's Parish, Cambridge, 1799–1914.

College and St Edmund's House (one a Presbyterian theological college, the other a residence for Catholic students, both likewise later connected with the University).<sup>7</sup> All but Selwyn and St Edmund's were built on land allotted to St John's College at the time of enclosure, Selwyn being built on land acquired from Corpus Christi College and St Edmund's on land initially allotted to Storey's Charity.<sup>8</sup>

It is at first sight surprising that it was St John's that took the bold step in 1875 of granting a lease of two-and-a-half acres to what would become Newnham College, one of the two women's colleges struggling to establish themselves in (or near) Cambridge at the time. The explanation lies in the Master of St John's: William Henry Bateson was both a leader of the reform party in the University and a supporter of higher education for women, his wife was a prominent member of committees promoting that cause, and two of his daughters respectively a medieval historian and an activist for women's suffrage.<sup>9</sup> Although the senior Fellows of the college were described by a younger colleague as 'a narrow-minded and bigoted clique',<sup>10</sup> Bateson was skilful enough to persuade them that the college should provide the site for this rather shocking experiment. That there were doubts about Newnham's viability is shown by the condition of approval of the design of the initial Newnham residence hall that the structure should be capable of conversion to a private residence.<sup>11</sup> (This condition was eventually dropped.)

The first, and so far only, evidence found that St John's might be thinking of changing its land-use policy in west Cambridge is a letter of 7 August 1873 from Miss Anne Jemima Clough, the future Principal of Newnham College, to the Bursar of St John's, George Reyner, inquiring about a site for her institution and saying she had heard that St John's was considering granting building leases in Madingley Road.<sup>12</sup> The Bursar suggested an alternative site in Newnham, which became the initial nucleus of the new college. In the absence of any record of their discussions we do not know why he did not offer a site on Madingley Road, but it might be because those sites were part of Grange Farm, with whose tenancy the college was currently having difficulties, whereas the Newnham site was on a short-term lease. Perhaps he also felt that the former area, relatively near the Castle End slums whose residents had an unsavoury reputation, was unsuitable for young ladies.

This initial lease of 1875, covering that part of Newnham College's eventual nine acres that was nearest the town and accessed from the very narrow Malting Lane, was followed by a second in 1879 and then a third in 1882, by which time Newnham's site bordered Grange Road. At the same time St John's sold in 1877 the two-acre site (abutting Newnham's first lease on the east) on which Ridley Hall was established, while Corpus Christi College sold nearly six acres in 1879 to the founders of Selwyn College, which again fronted on Grange Road. (That both the latter transactions were sales, whereas Newnham was granted leases, may also have reflected doubt

about the viability of the Newnham experiment. However, in 1900 Newnham successfully bought its freehold.)<sup>13</sup>

Regarding the residential development of the suburb, much of the discussion that follows is devoted to the activities of St John's College because of its dominant ownership position, but those of other land owners must also be mentioned. In 1803, the Syndicate appointed to safeguard the University's interests at the time of enclosure made certain requests to the commissioners aimed at discouraging building along or near the Backs.<sup>14</sup> (The Backs, short for the Backs of the Colleges, is a term found in Spalding's Directory of 1874 and is still used today to denote the area encompassing the meadows and gardens on both sides of the river west of the buildings of St John's, Trinity, Trinity Hall, Clare, King's and Queens' Colleges, and bounded by Queen's Road on the west.) The commissioners duly obliged, and thereafter the colleges, with two exceptions, refrained from building there for the next 70 years. The first exception was Gonville and Caius College (henceforward referred to as Caius), which slowly and steadily developed its land in west Cambridge throughout the century: one building lease was granted in 1799, three in the period 1836–40, one in the 1860s, two in the 1870s, four in the 1880s and more later,<sup>15</sup> until by 1914 its only lands in St Giles not built upon were, as they still are today, its two playing fields and its Fellows' Garden. The sites to which these leases refer lay initially on the west side of the Backs, in an old enclosure known as Butchers Closes, and then on the south side of West Road on land allotted to Caius under the enclosure award. The second, lesser, exception was Merton College, Oxford, which granted two building leases, in 1817 and 1819 respectively, for land abutting Merton Hall at the north end of the Backs,<sup>16</sup> and none thereafter.

The half-century from 1820 saw no new building leases being granted (other than those of Caius mentioned above and a single lease by St John's in Newnham in 1864),<sup>17</sup> but in 1871 Corpus Christi College made the surprising decision to lease a nine-acre plot in the middle of the undeveloped area immediately west of Grange Road.<sup>18</sup> College documents record the fact, but as usual give no explanation, and the decision remains an enigma. The plot was leased to A. A. Vansittart, formerly Fellow and later Auditor of Trinity College, who built on it a large house (Fig. 3) initially called Grata Quies and later renamed Pinehurst, which was subsequently pulled down and replaced by flats in the 1930s. Corpus Christi followed this grant in 1878 with a second lease,<sup>19</sup> on an adjacent site initially of one-and-a-half acres but soon expanded to seven acres, on which the house called Leckhampton was built. This is now a residence for that college. Between these two dates, St Catharine's College granted two leases, each of over an acre, of land on the east side of Grange Road, north of West Road, on which St Martin's and St Chad's (see Plate 5) were built.<sup>20</sup> The first is now part of King's College Choir School, the second a hall of residence for St Catharine's College.



*Figure 3. Pinehurst, 33 Grange Road, erected on land leased by A. A. Vansittart from Corpus Christi College in 1871. Demolished c. 1931. Image courtesy of the Cambridgeshire Collection.*

The mid-1880s saw St John's finally moving into residential development, with Jesus following suit from 1891, smaller developments by Peterhouse<sup>21</sup> and Magdalene<sup>22</sup> around the turn of the century and finally the start of a big development by Storey's Charity into the empty land between Madingley and Huntingdon Roads shortly before the outbreak of the Great War. Clare, King's and Trinity Hall, each with small allocations, granted no building leases, although King's built some accommodation for its choir school.<sup>23</sup> The main arteries of development were West Road, Grange Road and Madingley Road. The first two had been balks (unploughed strips used *inter alia* for taking out the harvest)<sup>24</sup> during the open field era, and the third the turnpike road leading west to St Neots. West Road is significant in the present context because it was the first to be developed, by Caius, for housing and because it was the key to the development of Grange Road. Prior to 1865, there was not a single permanent building on Grange Road. An agricultural lease of the 1850s referred to it as a lane<sup>25</sup> although it, like West Road, had been designated in the 1805 award as a 40-foot-wide 'public bridle road and private carriage road and driftway' up to a point slightly north of West Road.<sup>26</sup> Thereafter Grange Road narrowed to a 12-foot public bridle road and footpath (the point at which it narrowed is on the divide between enclosure allotments to St John's and Jesus and is shown as the Kink on Fig. 1) until it stopped at the Bin Brook and met Burrell's Walk at a right-angle. It was not extended to its present intersection with Madingley Road until 1909–10 (see below).

In 1871, when Corpus Christi College granted the nine-acre building lease referred to above on the west side of Grange Road, access to the plot was via West Road, as was true of the two leases immediately

north of West Road granted later in the 1870s by St Catharine's, and of the second large lease by Corpus. In other words, Grange Road developed from its middle outwards: both its southern and its northern limits (meeting Barton Road and Madingley Road respectively) were the last to be developed before 1914 (Fig. 4).

### The celibacy issue

The Oxford and Cambridge Universities Act of 1877 led to major revision of the college statutes under which, in most colleges, dons had had to give up their fellowships upon marriage. That this leftover from medieval times was an anachronism had long been recognised by many within the University: Caius College had abolished it for all its Fellows in 1860,<sup>27</sup> Trinity Hall for its law Fellows in 1861<sup>28</sup> and several other colleges had relaxed the rule by exempting holders of various college offices such as tutor or bursar in the interests of good administration. Moreover professors, as holders of University posts, were exempt. Nevertheless the majority of college dons were still subject to this regulation.

The power of the belief that there was a direct causal effect between the abolition of celibacy and the development of what was to become a largely academic enclave is shown by the fact that the same is thought to have been the case in North Oxford, even though development of that suburb had begun a good 20 years before the change of college statutes.<sup>29</sup> There exists a Cambridge fable (whose source I have sadly been unable to trace) that on the day in 1882 when the new statutes took effect the railways had to put on extra trains to bring hopeful brides to Cambridge;

Ground landlord	Year	House number	House number	Year	Ground landlord
<i>Madingley Road</i>					
		11 Madingley Road	9 Madingley Road		
St John's	1932	77			
St John's	1926	75			
St John's	1912	73			
St John's	1910	71	Playing fields		St John's
St John's	1908	69			
St John's	1923	67			
St John's	1913	65			
St John's	1911	63			
St John's/Trinity		Playing fields	62	1906	St John's
			60	1906	St John's
			58	1906	St John's
			62	1906	St John's
<i>Here is Adams Road</i>			<i>Here is Burrells Walk</i>		
St John's	1885	53	Real Tennis C		
			Playing fields		Clare/King's
<i>Here is Herschel Road</i>			50	1876	St Catharine's
St John's	1884	49	48	1877	St Catharine's
Jesus		Rugby ground	<i>Here is West Road</i>		
Jesus	1894	43	42	1927	Caius/Selwyn
<i>Here is Cranmer Road</i>			40	1901	Caius/Selwyn
Jesus	1896	41	38	1901	Caius/Selwyn
Jesus	1896	39	Selwyn Coll		Selwyn
Corpus Christi	1878	37			Selwyn
Corpus Christi	1871	35	<i>Here is Sidgwick Ave</i>		
Corpus Christi	1871	33			St John's/Newnham
Private	c.1894	31			St John's/Newnham
Private	c.1894	29			St John's/Newnham
<i>Here is Selwyn Gardens</i>					St John's/Newnham
Private	c.1893	27	Newnham Coll		St John's/Newnham
Private	c.1893	25			St John's/Newnham
Private	c.1893	23			St John's/Newnham
Private	c.1893	21			St John's/Newnham
Private	c.1892	19			St John's/Newnham
Private	1958	15			St John's/Newnham
Private	1906	13	16	c.1898	Holy Sep: Ch*
Private	c.1912	11	12	1891	Holy Sep: Ch*
Private	c.1906	9	10	c.1900	Holy Sep: Ch*
Peterhouse	1893	7	8	c.1900	Holy Sep: Ch*
Peterhouse	1893	5	6	c.1900	Holy Sep: Ch*
Peterhouse	1903	3	4	1897	Holy Sep: Ch*
Peterhouse	1912	1	2	1892	Holy Sep: Ch*
<i>Barton Road</i>					

Holy Sepulchre Church\* This attribution is speculative. This strip of land was allotted to the incumbent of Holy Sepulchre Church at Enclosure in 1805, and No. 16 was sold by the then incumbent of that church. But I cannot confirm ownership of the other plots at time of sale.

Figure 4. Approximate dates of construction of houses on Grange Road.

this event was presumably followed by a stampede by their spouses into real estate in west Cambridge. Alas for the story: since the celibacy restrictions derived from individual college statutes and not from a University statute, there was no single date to trigger such an onslaught.

If we consider the data underlying Fig. 2, it will be found that one house lease was taken out in 1882 (by W. Eaden Lilley, a prominent Cambridge retailer), none in 1883, one in 1884 (by a privately wealthy don who married the following year), two in 1885 (one by a professor, the other by a long-married Vicar of Great Shelford), and even in 1886 when the building boom begins to take off, of the nine leases granted in or around that year, only four may be attributable to dons who married since the change of statutes.<sup>30</sup> The authors of a history of Jesus College reported that all its resident Fellows but one married within a year of the adoption of its new statutes, some of them within a fortnight of that event.<sup>31</sup> This may have been an extreme case, but there is no doubt that there was a rash of marriages among the newly emancipated dons.<sup>32</sup> But where did they find their first homes? The answer is in the new middle-class areas east and south of the town, such as Harvey Road, Brookside or Trumpington Street. Movement into west Cambridge, when it occurred, was often a case of trading up. The main reason for the time lag in development of the latter area lay in the policies of the major college landowners, as will be explained.

### Control of the development

Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, college revenues in Oxford and Cambridge were derived almost entirely from agricultural rents, and the third quarter of that century was an era of general prosperity. Unfortunately the agricultural depression, which set in from about 1876 and lasted, with some fluctuations, almost to the end of the century, seriously undermined the financial foundations of the colleges.<sup>33</sup> It is not strange that these institutions began exploring building leases as alternative sources of income, particularly after the passage of the Colleges and University Estates Act of 1858, which made possible the granting of 99-year residential leases. What is surprising is how long it took colleges in Cambridge to develop west Cambridge. Several colleges, notably Caius and Jesus, had been actively granting building leases in the former East or Barnwell Fields (enclosed by 1811) since the 1820s, with Trinity Hall following later.<sup>34</sup> St John's, although allotted about 80 acres in Barnwell,<sup>35</sup> chose to keep them as farms until eventually selling them off at various dates, some not until the twentieth century, while in west Cambridge, as already mentioned, it retained its lands nearest to the river as playing fields (for its own use or on lease to other colleges) and gardens until well into the 1880s. Yet this college was far from lacking experience in residential development: almost as soon as the 1858 Act took effect, it began a massive

development project based on 99-year leases on its estate in Kentish Town, on the northern edge of London as then defined, where it had received a large bequest in the seventeenth century. Over the 25 years from 1861, more than 700 house leases and almost 80 leases for shops and other purposes were granted.<sup>36</sup>

Kentish Town, however, was at a distance from Cambridge and could be regarded dispassionately as an investment. The land in west Cambridge was another matter, with the college's connections there going back to the medieval benefactions to St John's Hospital. Indeed, for all the colleges on that side of the town, it was their green belt. Nothing but economic necessity would have forced the invasion of this treasured area, and when the time came the colleges made sure that only 'our kind of people' would live there.

While there was no overall plan, there was clearly an unwritten consensus among the college landowners that residential development in west Cambridge was to be restricted to a relatively affluent market and strictly controlled to avoid deterioration of property values. Controls were exercised through the inclusion in leases or building agreements of some or all of the following conditions: minimum plot sizes, minimum house costs, deadlines for house construction, specification of superior building materials and stringent dilapidation clauses. All of the leases granted by Caius on the west side of the Backs and the early ones in West Road were for one acre or more. The only house lease granted by St John's before 1884 (in Newnham, to one of its Fellows) was for nearly two-and-a-half acres.<sup>37</sup> Mention has already been made of the two exceptionally large leases granted by Corpus Christi, that for Pinehurst (1871) of almost nine acres and that for Leckhampton of seven acres. The Pinehurst lease required the tenant to build a house valued at not less than £2000, and to complete it within seven-and-a-half years of the date the lease was signed; the lease of Leckhampton, for reasons unknown, was much more stringent: the house was to cost not less than £3000 and to be completed within 15 months.<sup>38</sup> Both of the leases granted by St Catharine's, in 1874 and 1878, were for plots of over one acre.<sup>39</sup> In the mid-1880s, when St John's finally embarked upon a programme of residential development, its policy was to specify one-acre plots with a minimum house cost of £1500 on its Grange Road estate and half-acre plots with house cost of at least £1000 on its Madingley Road estate. The college refused to make an exception even for one of its Fellows, Alfred Marshall, Professor of Political Economy, who wanted a half-acre site on Grange Road but was obliged to take one on Madingley Road where he built a house, No. 6. Carter Jonas (St John's estate agent) was 'disappointed at the smallness' of the house (Plate 6).<sup>40</sup> St John's also required its lessees to contribute to the cost of maintenance (and in some cases construction) of unadopted roads fronting their properties.<sup>41</sup> Jesus later made the same demand on their lessees in Cranmer Road.<sup>42</sup> There was one early development on private, rather than collegiate, land, which seems only partially to have followed such

policies. That was Selwyn Gardens, an L-shaped road leading from near the southern end of Grange Road (see Fig. 1) on land allotted at enclosure in 1805 to a John Kidman.<sup>43</sup> Who owned the land and developed the road 80 years later remains a mystery: all that has turned up so far is that two Trinity dons were building themselves houses there in 1885<sup>44</sup> and that the road itself, unmentioned in Spalding's Directory of 1884, appears in that of 1887, with the two houses on it. By 1914 (again relying on Spalding) there were 16 houses in the road. Lacking documentary evidence, we can only draw conclusions from the houses and plots there today, most of which are the originals. They are unmistakably 'gentry' houses, but the plot sizes vary considerably, many of them being less than half an acre.

The other significant non-college development, Storey's Way (see Fig. 1) was much later, begun in 1910 and interrupted by the outbreak of war, by when only 11 houses had been built. Originally designed to have over 70 houses<sup>45</sup> it envisaged the sale, not lease, of plots ranging from one acre – a few at the south-eastern end – to a much larger number of smaller plots at the north-western end, of not much more than a quarter of an acre, because by this time there was increasing demand for smaller houses. Houses built towards the end of the century on church land on the east side of Grange Road near Barton Road also occupied less spacious plots.

Burnett, referring to building costs in about 1906, states that £1000 was well above the price of 'a substantial suburban villa'.<sup>46</sup> In the late nineteenth century, the income of a don who did not hold a professorship was composed of up to three elements: the dividend he received as a Fellow, teaching fees and, if he held a college office such as bursar or steward, the stipend for that office. 'It seems that the dividend was still in 1870 a reasonable wage for a bachelor enjoying free meals in college; but from the late 1870s, as estates became less profitable, the dividend tended in most colleges to decline'.<sup>47</sup> To cite St John's, perhaps an extreme case, the dividend was maintained at £300 *per annum* from 1872 to 1878 – longer than it should have been in view of the state of college finances – fell progressively to reach only £160 in 1886 and then, after a brief recovery, plunged to its nadir of £80 in 1894 and 1895.<sup>48</sup> College stipends were equally linked to the overall financial health of each institution, and while teaching fees were less directly affected, the 1880s was not a period of rising academic incomes. (The stipend attached to a professorship, which might or might not be held simultaneously with a college fellowship, remained less affected since each was financed by a separate endowment, which is not to say that there were not wide discrepancies between the stipends of different chairs.)

The net result was that the cost of moving into the area was evidently beyond the means of the majority of the newly-married dons. However, in the years after 1877 there was a rapid growth in university appointments, from 33 professors and four others listed in the University Calendar for 1871 to about 180

professors, readers, lecturers and demonstrators in 1913.<sup>49</sup> This combined with the growth of the non-academic professional population of the town to fuel the longer-run demand for middle-class family homes. Ascent of the academic income ladder, resort to mortgages or help from parents gradually made the move to the new suburb feasible for dons.

A previous article contrasted the early growth of the population of St Giles's Parish with that of its companion St Andrew the Less, the former East Fields of Cambridge, of similar size and enclosed only five years later than the West Fields.<sup>50</sup> By 1861, St Giles, with a population of 2084, had barely doubled since 1801, while St Andrew the Less had shot up from near-zero in the earlier year to almost 12,000, accounting for virtually the entire population growth of the town to 1861. In the period with which the present article is concerned, St Giles grew by about 35% between 1861 and 1911 but the population was still only about 3000 (change of census boundaries makes the exact figure uncertain), while St Andrew the Less grew another two-and-a-half times, reaching over 30,000 in 1911.<sup>51</sup> There can be no doubt that without the restrictive effect of college policies, the population of St Giles would have been far higher.

#### *The influence of St John's College*

Within the above general context, we turn now to St John's, the prime mover in developing the suburb. Despite Miss Clough's letter of 1873, which indicated a belief that St John's was at that time contemplating granting building leases in Madingley Road, it was more than ten years before the college granted one. Why the delay, and what made St John's finally change its mind? I suggest there were a number of factors, among them changes of Senior Bursar and problems associated with Grange Farm, its biggest property in the Cambridge area.

In this period there were three senior bursars: George Reyner 1857–76, John Pieters 1876–83 and Robert Scott 1883–1908. The initial lease to Newnham was negotiated by Reyner, who died in 1876 at the end of a long period of college prosperity. When Pieters took over, the agricultural depression had seriously begun to bite. His term of office was blighted not only by shrinking revenue, but also by inheriting a large debt consequent upon the building of the new Chapel and Master's Lodge, for which the funding had not been soundly established. To quote his obituary in the college magazine, 'disappointments over what seemed like constant failure, rents subject to constant revision and reduction with frequent changes of tenancy, weighed heavily on Mr Pieter's spirits and he resigned his office in 1883'.<sup>52</sup> Apart from the distress he suffered in dealing with the farm tenants, he made heavy weather of the negotiations with Newnham College for their second and third leases, which might have discouraged any interest he had in building leases.<sup>53</sup> Both Reyner and Pieters had been trying to resolve the problems of the 290-acre Grange Farm, whose tenants from 1830 had been successive members of the Toft family. In May 1874, after Carter

Jonas, the college's land agent and surveyor, reported that the farm was in a poor state and that the tenant had insufficient capital to operate it efficiently,<sup>54</sup> the Tofts were replaced by a new tenant, Swan Wallis. His tenure was no more successful: by 1883, with the worsening of the agricultural depression, he was behind in his rent.<sup>55</sup> The college considered whether to take the farm over and run it itself, but concluded that this would be even worse.<sup>56</sup> A report by Carter Jonas in 1885 stated: 'When Wallis hired the farm it was in a wretchedly foul state all over, so that I consider the present tenant has never had the chance of getting the land into condition'.<sup>57</sup>

Overshadowing these two factors was the deteriorating condition of the Fellows' dividend. Robert Scott took over from Pieters as Senior Bursar late in 1883. A lawyer and Fellow of St John's but without prior bursarial experience, Scott became one of the college's more esteemed and capable Senior Bursars and eventually Master. In May 1884, when the Senior Fellows were already greatly exercised by the progressive cuts in the dividend, he proposed and was authorised to prepare a scheme, in consultation with Carter Jonas, to develop the college's land in west Cambridge for residential purposes as a means of offsetting the decline in income from agriculture. Much of this development was to take place on land taken from Grange Farm, but some was taken from smaller farms and nurseries established after enclosure in the vicinity of Madingley Road. The first major action was to open up the Grange Road estate in 1885 by building a new road (Herschel Road) running west from Grange Road towards Grange Farm, thereby serving the double function of creating more building sites and improving farm access. It is evident that the college considered its so-called 'Madingley Road estate' as less desirable, possibly because it abutted on the working-class neighbourhood of Castle End, and priced it accordingly. This had the unintended consequence that initially all the applicants for leases preferred the less expensive sites on the Madingley Road estate, and it was not until 1888 that the first site on Herschel Road was taken up. On the Madingley Road estate, the building of a new road was less

urgent since the initial building sites were already accessible either directly from Madingley Road or from the roads bordering the estate on the north and east, then known as Mount Pleasant and Bandy Leg Walk; a new road named Lady Margaret Road was inserted in 1887 (see Fig. 1).

The first building lease granted by Scott was in 1884 on Grange Road, to W. W. Rouse Ball, a mathematician of Trinity,<sup>58</sup> and in his inexperience the former took a rather hands-off attitude to the preparation of the lease with results that were to haunt him for the next 25 years and can still be seen today in the kink in Grange Road opposite the access lane to the old Rifle Range (see Appendix). Between 1884 and 1914 the college granted more than 60 building leases in St Giles to private individuals, and also leased land to other colleges for playing fields. Because of its geographical dominance, and the fact that most of its early building agreements specified the use of red brick with tile roofs, it was therefore St John's that largely determined the appearance of the growing suburb, despite its early hesitation in granting building leases.

### The development of new roads

Development on the scale described was only made possible by the building of new roads, including the extension of Grange Road. The approximate dates of construction of the roads are shown in Fig. 5. Because many of them were built in stages, the date in Fig. 5 is that of the first part to be built. The date must also be regarded in some cases as approximate, as the same difficulty regarding sources and dates applies for roads as it did for dates of house construction. Of the new roads, five were built by St John's, one each by Clare, Jesus and Magdalene, one by Storey's Charity, one – Selwyn Gardens – by so-far unidentified private parties and two – Sidgwick Avenue and Ridley Hall Road – by Cambridge Corporation (but largely financed by Newnham College) on land acquired from four colleges.<sup>59</sup>

Most of these new roads (Herschel Road, Selwyn Gardens, Cranmer, Adams and Sylvester Roads) were

Figure 5. Approximate dates of new roads constructed after 1880.

Road	When started	Ground landlord and financier
Herschel Road	1885	St John's College
Selwyn Gardens	c. 1885	Private
Lady Margaret Road	1887	St John's College
Clare Road	c. 1888	Clare College
Cranmer Road	1891	Jesus College
Sidgwick Avenue	1893	Four colleges/Cambridge Corporation
Adams Road	1898	St John's College
Sylvester Road	1898	St John's College
Wordsworth Grove	1899	St John's College
Ridley Hall Road	c. 1900	Ridley Hall/Cambridge Corporation
Buckingham Road	c. 1909/10	Magdalene College
Storey's Way	1910	Storey's Charity

westward turnings off Grange Road or connections between such turnings; those involving St John's were linked to the progressive northward widening and then extension of Grange Road, which was finally connected to Madingley Road only in 1910, each extension being accompanied by the granting of new building leases. Lady Margaret Road provided more building sites on St John's Madingley Road estate, while Clare Road and Wordsworth Grove, built respectively by Clare and St John's Colleges, opened up areas in Newnham for gentry houses. The controversial Sidgwick Avenue, the sole new eastward turning off Grange Road, was not built with the primary aim of providing house sites (see below), nor was Ridley Hall Road, a minor connection between the new Sidgwick Avenue and the long-existing Newnham Walk. Buckingham Road is a short cul-de-sac leading off the southern tip of Huntingdon Road, while one important new road, Storey's Way, linking Madingley and Huntingdon Roads, was constructed in 1910 by Storey's Charity. This charity, the only significant corporate landowner in St Giles other than the colleges, acquired at enclosure an L-shaped allotment partly abutting upon Huntingdon Road,<sup>60</sup> and later obtained from St John's in 1906 a right of way permitting it to link the south-eastern end of that property to Madingley Road:<sup>61</sup> hence the two right-angles in the road (see Fig. 1).

Caius did not impose on its lessees any obligations with respect to roads contiguous to their plots; St John's, however, followed the advice of its land agent, Carter Jonas, in requiring lessees to contribute to the cost of constructing new roads and widening existing ones where undertaken by the college or, if the road already existed, paying for the cost of maintaining half the width of their road frontage until the road in question was adopted by the City Corporation. This policy, also followed by Jesus College when it built Cranmer Road, was the source of friction with lessees, and it is notable that although such maintenance charges were still being included in St John's leases written in 1898, when the college came to lease plots on its newly-built Adams Road from 1899 onwards this provision was dropped.<sup>62</sup>

At the time of enclosure, road construction was limited to grading and gravelling. By 1885, when Herschel Road was built, the standard had improved, but not greatly: the specifications provided for a nine-inch base of 'burnt ballast' (clay dug from adjacent property and fired in temporary kilns) and a six-inch coating of gravel.<sup>63</sup> Since this road provided convenient access to Grange Farm, the passage of farm carts, and later of construction vehicles as new houses came to be built, rapidly cut up the surface and gave rise to complaints from the neighbours. Lady Margaret Road, built in 1887 as a means of increasing the number of plots in the Madingley Road estate, was still surfaced with gravel.<sup>64</sup>

Some idea of the state of the roads in west Cambridge can be gathered from correspondence. Carter Jonas reported to Scott in 1888 that Herschel Road 'is getting down very much in the centre and

ruts are being formed in some places eight or nine inches deep. It wants a man to rake the gravel into the ruts from the sides'.<sup>65</sup> In a letter from a Jesus lessee in 1892 about Cranmer Road, reference is made to the need to keep the road 'weeded and raked'.<sup>66</sup> The Corporation was responsible for maintaining Grange Road south of the point marked as 'the Kink' on Fig. 1 and in January 1896 that section was so neglected that five of St John's lessees wrote a joint letter to Scott urging him to intervene with the Corporation to point out that, 'the road is now almost impassable both for carriages and foot passengers. Mud and slush are continuously carried by carts and carriages to private roads on your estate to the annoyance and injury of your tenants'.<sup>67</sup> Scott wrote to the Town Clerk suggesting that: 'A few loads of gravel judiciously put down would effect a great improvement. If the road were even scraped and cleaned it would be something but there are many hollows both in the carriageway and footway where the water rests in wet weather'.<sup>68</sup> That his tone was not more vigorous reflects his continuing difficulties with the Corporation, as described in the Appendix. The Town did nonetheless accept responsibility for the stretch south of 'the Kink' and made some repairs.<sup>69</sup>

The first use of harder surfacing that can be documented in west Cambridge is in the 1898 specifications for the construction of Adams and Sylvester Roads and a short extension of Grange Road, all built by St John's.<sup>70</sup> These provided for 'a nine-inch consolidated bed of large ironstone slag ... or other approved material, a two-inch consolidated bed of similar but finer material and a two-inch consolidated bed of granite broken to pass through a two-inch ring and mixed with sand as a binding material.' Even this, as will be seen, failed to satisfy the Corporation when St John's sought to get the roads adopted three years later.

By and large the construction of new roads gave rise to little or no controversy, but this was not the case for Sidgwick Avenue, whose construction was the result of a campaign by Newnham College to close the public footpath, running from the end of Malting Lane through to Grange Road and enshrined in the Enclosure Award, which bisected its site. This footpath was highly inconvenient for the college, and could only be closed if an alternative route were offered; the obvious solution was to build a road linking the western end of Silver Street to Grange Road, something which had been urged by St John's estate agents as long ago as 1885 as a way of opening up that college's estate. Unfortunately this involved not only obtaining the consent of three other colleges (Caius, Corpus and Selwyn) to give up strips of land and overcoming the vehement objections of Professor Richard Jebb, lessee of Caius, whose garden was to be seriously curtailed, but also defeating determined opposition by a number of existing occupants of Grange Road and a section of the Town Council. The opposing residents felt that the road was unnecessary and that access to Grange Road via West Road or Barton Road was sufficient; the opposing Councillors argued that building the road

was a misallocation of scarce resources for the benefit of the rich, when the older and poorer parts of Cambridge were in serious need of road improvements.<sup>71</sup> A furious newspaper campaign was waged<sup>72</sup> and the fact that the Council eventually dropped its opposition and built the road in 1893 is largely explained by the payment by Newnham College (in effect mainly by Professor and Mrs Sidgwick augmented by a college fund-raising effort) to Cambridge Corporation of £1400 to build it.<sup>73</sup> St John's College contributed an additional £150,<sup>74</sup> and whether the Corporation made any financial input at all has not been determined.

In March 1901, the Senior Bursar of St John's wrote to the Town Clerk asking under what conditions the Corporation would be willing to adopt Adams, Sylvester and Herschel Roads and previously unadopted sections of Grange Road, as well as Lady Margaret Road on the Madingley Road estate.<sup>75</sup> This matter lay within the purview of the Borough's Paving, Drainage and Lighting Committee, which requested the Borough Surveyor to carry out tests on those roads or sections of roads built by St John's in the summer of 1898. The latter's report giving the results of 60 test openings found most of them unsatisfactory and concluded that all the roads required remaking before they could be taken over, and in particular that Grange Road needed to be widened above the point marked as 'the Kink' on Fig. 1.<sup>76</sup> The college protested that the Corporation had approved the specifications for the respective roads at their time of construction, but it took the former nearly two years to recruit a consultant surveyor, Richard Parry, to assess the Borough Surveyor's report and make further tests. He did so but his report submitted in June 1903,<sup>77</sup> while disagreeing with many of the detailed criticisms in the earlier report and with its conclusion that all of the roads needed to be entirely reconstructed, nevertheless concluded that the Corporation was within its rights in demanding a higher standard of road construction than had prevailed at the time of the original construction and furthermore that the college had no case against its contractors.

Before his report was received, the waters had been further muddied by a decision of the Paving, Lighting and Drainage Committee that before the roads in question could be adopted all the existing gravel walkways had to be replaced by granolithic (a kind of concrete) paths at the expense of the local residents. These pavements had been introduced in Romsey Town (an impoverished area of south Cambridge) and the Council was insisting on a similar standard for other parts of town. To quote a member of the Committee, who happened to live in Adams Road, 'I did my best to persuade them that such a footpath was quite unsuitable in a district of this kind, but the reply was that if the poor of Romsey Town were obliged to put it in, the rich of Newnham ought to do the same.'<sup>78</sup> Debate was acrimonious and it was evident that the ill feeling generated in the Council by the Sidgwick Avenue controversy had not died down.

In September 1908, the Corporation finally agreed to take over Grange Road, including the part linking it to Madingley Road that was not to be built until 1909–10, the college having agreed to pay to upgrade to an acceptable standard those parts it had constructed in 1898 and 1906. The problem of the pavements had apparently been resolved in 1908 with an agreement to use 'tar paving', evidently less expensive than granolithic.

But the vexed issue of adoption of Herschel, Sylvester and Adams Roads was not finally resolved until 1912, when St John's finally swallowed its pride and agreed to pay the Corporation £1300 for upgrading them to an acceptable standard.<sup>79</sup> Considering the inconvenience and expense for the lessees of St John's and the fact that most of them were senior members of the University and some its own Fellows, it is astonishing that this issue should have dragged on for more than 25 years. (The date of adoption of Selwyn Gardens has not been ascertained, but Cranmer Road was not adopted until 1929 and Clare Road is still private.)

### Transport

It is often forgotten that Cambridge once had horse-drawn trams, but the closest to the new suburb that any of them ran was the east end of Silver Street.<sup>80</sup> Few families lived near enough to that point to derive any benefit from the service, which started in 1880 but by 1905 was increasingly replaced by motor buses. Talk of an electrified line came to nothing, and the suggestion that it be built along Silver Street and the Backs was met with a petition by local residents against it.<sup>81</sup> By 1910 there were four bus services concentrated in the more densely populated eastern and southern parts of Cambridge, although one of them did extend as far as the southern part of Huntingdon Road.<sup>82</sup>

Thus when the first houses were built in the suburb of west Cambridge, people walked or used carriages, either their own or hired: just a few of the larger houses had stables. Gwen Raverat wrote: 'There were not many people in Cambridge who had carriages, apart from the doctors, who drove about in broughams ... But for the most part people depended on flies – [hired] four-wheelers – until first the tricycle and then the safety bicycle came in: and then bicycles gradually became the chief vehicles for ladies paying calls.'<sup>83</sup>

But it is the bicycle that transformed the town, and eventually influenced house design in the new suburb. The first to be seen in Cambridge, in the mid-1860s, were unwieldy, uncomfortable and required considerable agility, and thus appealed mainly to young men. A brief collegiate craze for track racing has even left its mark on the landscape: a circular racing track of 440 yards circumference with an average width of five yards was built by the University Bicycle Club on land leased by Trinity from St John's on the west side of Grange Road. The club went into

debt and was unable to pay for demolishing the track and finally, in 1898, Trinity paid St John's £100 in compensation for not restoring the land to its condition before the track was built.<sup>84</sup> The whole track still shows as a prominent feature in Spalding's 1904 map of Cambridge and a small section is still recognisable in the back garden of 1 Clarkson Close.

'After the pneumatic tyre was introduced around 1888, cycling grew quickly, starting with middle-class men, then women, and then the working classes as the price of bicycles fell and the second-hand market grew.'<sup>85</sup> By the turn of the century the use of the bicycle had not merely become universal among the young males of the town (in 1898 St John's was obliged to build a bicycle store in First Court 'to relieve congestion in the rooms and on staircases')<sup>86</sup> but had spread to all ages and both sexes. Gwen Raverat's *Period Piece* is an invaluable source of information and includes three useful drawings. Born in 1885, she writes, 'By the time I was 11 or 12 I was even allowed to bicycle alone down the Backs after dark, when I came home after having tea with my cousins,' who lived in Huntingdon Road.<sup>87</sup> One thing this conveys is the improvement in the quality of road surfaces in west Cambridge: roads and footpaths whose gravel surfaces had to be raked were not very suitable for bicycles. Given the concern of the authorities of the women's colleges that their students must do nothing to attract the odium of the University, it is testimony to the social acceptability of the bicycle that Newnham laid down regulations for its use in 1894.<sup>88</sup>

### Architects, architecture and gardens

In terms of English architecture, the era from 1870 to 1914 is best known for the development of 'Queen Anne' and 'Arts and Crafts' styles. In Cambridge, it is possible to see the adoption of these styles for collegiate architecture in Newnham and Westminster Colleges, and to see them competing against the Tudor/eclectic style chosen for Ridley Hall and Selwyn College. These styles are also found in domestic buildings. That the visual impact of the Cambridge suburb does not resemble North Oxford<sup>89</sup> is mostly an accident of timing: the enthusiasm for neo-gothic had reached its exuberant peak in the 1860s, and by the time the west Cambridge suburb began its rapid expansion fashion had changed to such an extent that there are few examples of domestic neo-gothic there.

The majority of houses built in the suburb up to 1914 were of red brick with tile roofs, the dominance of these materials explained by the initial insistence by St John's College on their use, which was followed by others. Indeed, it is notable that the houses built on property owned by Caius on the Backs and West Road, which precede the spate of building on land owned by St John's where the college placed no restrictions upon the type of building materials, were almost all built of local brick, the so-called Cambridgeshire white brick (Plate 7).

As a result of the conditions set by the ground landlords, a typical house was free-standing, of two or three storeys, in a large and well-tended garden. There were a few semi-detached but sizable houses, and one terrace of four houses (in Grange Road). Many of these houses stand to this day, albeit often converted for use by university departments, college hostels or (awkwardly) into flats. Almost all the architects chosen were based in London, the only popular local architect being W. M. Fawcett, dismissed by Pevsner as 'not a man of much talent'.<sup>90</sup> In terms of reputations that have lasted until today, the most prestigious architect was M. H. Baillie Scott, who designed nine houses in west Cambridge, four of them before 1914.<sup>91</sup> J. J. Stephenson, E. S. Prior and Ernest Newton were other architects of note, working generally in the Arts and Crafts style.<sup>92</sup>

The censuses of the period show that most households had a minimum of two servants living in, and more if there were young children. Some houses had stables but precision is difficult: some leases make specific reference to stables, but most talk generally of outbuildings and other premises. Stables are more readily identified in houses on sites of an acre or more and in houses built before 1890, although some are later. For example, Pinehurst, built around 1871, had both a coachhouse and a gardener's cottage, and the banker Edmund Parker's house, 4 Herschel Road, built about 1896, had stables and a coachman's cottage.<sup>93</sup> But it was more common for the coachman (when there were stables) or the gardener to live out.

The almost-universal adoption of the bicycle by the turn of the century had an impact on the dimensions and design of new houses. Not all servants had to live in: the cook might do so, but the housemaid could bicycle in from Coton or Grantchester (each about two-and-a-half miles away) or from even further afield. This, combined with a decreasing family size, led to a demand for smaller houses, as shown by those at the southern end of Grange Road or at the northern end of Storey's Way. The carriage was becoming unnecessary, and even the arrival of the motor car had remarkably little impact on the average west Cambridge household: for special occasions there were taxis, and for the rest the bicycle sufficed. However, by 1910 there were requests to the ground landlord to agree to the building of 'motor houses' or the conversion of stables into garages.<sup>94</sup> The general standard of gardens was high. College Fellows' Gardens vied for distinction, and among private owners it was fashionable to have a well-laid out and well-tended garden: gardeners were available at affordable wages, and even where the householder was not personally interested in the garden the ground landlord insisted on a high standard of maintenance. Given the popularity of tennis and croquet as social activities in the period, many gardens had either a tennis court or a croquet ground, and some had both.

Mention was made in an earlier article of the existence before 1870 of several clusters of small private leisure gardens.<sup>95</sup> Almost all of these were slowly taken over for building plots, until by 1914 only one

group of these small gardens was left, off Grange Road opposite Newnham College.<sup>96</sup> The same was the case for the nursery gardens that had existed on the south side of West Road and for most of those north of Madingley Road. But large areas of playing fields remained interspersed among the houses, which combined with the generous spacing of the houses themselves to give a generally verdant feel to the area.

### Present and absent

So far, we have described what was created. Now it is time to consider what was not. Almost no working-class or what might be considered social housing was erected in the new suburb, and none whatsoever by the colleges with the minor exception of Caius, which moved the Perse almshouses in 1885 from Free School Lane – in the town centre – to Newnham when it sold their original site to the University for laboratories. This was not because of lack of demand. There were two long-existing populated areas in or on the edge of the parish of St Giles: Newnham in the south-east and Castle End/Pound Hill in the north-east. Examination of Spalding's Street Directories for the years before and after 1900 shows a highly concentrated working-class population in both places, as well as the existence in both of the courtyards so characteristic of Victorian slum areas.<sup>97</sup> These, accessed by gaps in the frontage on the main thoroughfares, mingled workshops with dwellings. For example, Anderson's Courtyard near Newnham Mill, entered through an archway from Newnham Road, listed seven houses, whose residents were described as dairyman, milkman, photographer, plumber's labourer, gardener (2), carpenter, confectioner, dressmaker.<sup>98</sup> Several, including Anderson's, exist today, the original buildings largely swept away in slum clearance activities in the twentieth century and replaced by lock-up garages, student accommodation or offices.

The nucleus of the old village of Newnham was its mill, and both the built-up area and the land immediately surrounding it was a patchwork of old enclosures, untouched by the work of the Enclosure Commissioners, and owned by Caius, Clare, Corpus Christi, St Catharine's and St John's Colleges as well as by various private parties. Further complicating the situation was that the village was divided between the parishes of Little St Mary, St Botolph and St Giles, with little of the built-up area within the last-named. In the context of the present discussion, it makes sense to ignore the parish boundaries and consider the village as a whole. Congestion was somewhat relieved by development, from the 1860s, of a new area of working-class housing south of Barton Road, then part of Grantchester Parish, (separated from the old village, as it still is, by Caius College's playing fields and the Lammis Land open space), and also the building of Summerfield, a row of small terraced houses on the west side of the old village without vehicular access but reached by a footpath. The

1871 Census lists five houses there occupied respectively by a printer, a college servant, a college porter, a blacksmith and a gardener, and another six were added later. It is significant that both these developments were on private land. Not only did the colleges build no working-class housing, but in 1897 St John's bought part of the land owned by St Catharine's in Newnham precisely because it feared that the latter might be thinking of selling it to a speculative builder who would erect cottages 'and thus produce deterioration of the district'.<sup>99</sup>

The situation in the Castle End/Pound Hill area, remnants of the old medieval town near the castle, was similar. Conditions in some parts were said to be 'almost as bad as it was in Barnwell', and in 1884 the Cambridge Improved Industrial Dwellings Company, set up by a group of town and gown residents to address some of the worst slum conditions, built 18 cottages in Castle End, with more later, to help relieve some of the worst conditions. Once again there was no college involvement, although Clare, St John's and Magdalene all had land in the area.

By contrast, the new suburb as it existed by 1914 consisted almost entirely of middle-class housing and contained no community facilities: while there was one specialised school (King's Choir School) and a new cemetery (St Giles/Ascension cemetery, accessed between 145 and 147 Huntingdon Road near Storey's Way), which now contains the bodies of 39 people listed in the *Dictionary of National Biography*,<sup>101</sup> there was no new church, and no shops. This was in contrast to the equivalent suburb in Oxford whose 400 acres were under the single ownership of St John's College, Oxford. This college adopted a conscious policy of developing a part of the city to include both working-class and middle-to-upper class residential areas, though admittedly these were carefully separated. Moreover, thanks in part to active concern by the Bishop of Oxford, three new churches were established, within and not on the periphery of the area.<sup>102</sup> North Oxford was, however, double the size of the original west Cambridge suburb, and the variants of Anglican worship were a more burning issue in Oxford, but there is no evidence of interest on the part of the Bishop of Ely or any other ecclesiastical figure in the spiritual welfare of the new residents in west Cambridge. St Mark's Church south of Barton Road, built in 1877, was initially a mission church of Grantchester parish designed to serve the needs of the working-class area recently developed there, without reference to the gentry suburb to the north. There the resident, if he was a church-goer, took his family to one of the town churches or to a college chapel. The lack of shops seems not to have been a hardship. As the advertisements in Spalding's Directories in the 1890s make clear, the milkman and the baker made daily rounds with horse and cart, and shops delivered other provisions. By 1892 the telephone had arrived, and thereafter it became increasingly unnecessary to send one of the servants into town with the orders.

In the absence of any contemporary records on the subject, one can only speculate about why the

colleges created the kind of dormitory suburb they did. First and foremost, the reason was clearly economic: given that the agricultural rents upon which they had depended for centuries now failed to provide the income the colleges were used to, they were looking for the most reliable alternative, and what more reliable to the academic mind than to lease land to other academics or persons of similar background and standards? Housing for the working-class offered no such security: it deteriorated, it damaged property values in adjacent areas, and it was not a good prospect in the long run. Moreover the creation and maintenance of a one-class suburb reassured the lessee, who 'could be confident that neighbouring land would be developed to a consistent quality, a most important consideration in late Victorian England with its sensitivity to social gradations'.<sup>103</sup> Nor were the colleges in any way unique in adopting this policy: to give only one example, when the much larger Birmingham suburb of Edgbaston was initially developed in the mid-nineteenth century, it too had almost entirely middle-class housing and no community facilities but here the ground landlord, unlike the colleges, proved unable to maintain control in the long run.<sup>104</sup>

#### Developers: three dons and a professional builder

The literature on suburban development in the nineteenth century is replete with references to the activities of speculative builders who leased or bought tracts of land and built numerous houses on them. This did not happen in west Cambridge, where it was the landlords' policy to handle individually each lease of a house. The great majority of building leases were taken up by individuals who built houses for their own occupancy, but there were exceptions, three of them dons. The first, in terms of chronology, was the Reverend John B. Lock, Senior Bursar of Gonville and Caius College.<sup>105</sup> On the site he leased from St John's in 1888 (the first one taken up in Herschel Road) he built his own residence,<sup>106</sup> but from 1891, when Jesus College decided to construct a new road leading west off Grange Road, he took out a series of leases there as speculative ventures: two house sites in 1891 (3 and 5 Cranmer Road, to give them their modern numbers), two in 1892 (7 and 9), one in 1894 (11) and three in 1896 (2, 4 and 13).<sup>107</sup> For some of the houses he commissioned he used almost identical designs. He was negotiating with St John's in 1913 to acquire two sites in Sylvester Road, but did not carry this through.<sup>108</sup>

His example was copied on a more modest scale by the Reverend Thomas Orpen, in the later part of his career Tutor of Selwyn College and Vicar of Great Shelford.<sup>109</sup> Having built a house on a Grange Road plot leased in 1885 from St John's (Binnbrooke, No. 53 between Herschel and Adams Roads) to which he moved his residence from Newnham,<sup>110</sup> he then leased a site from Jesus in Cranmer Road in 1896 on which he built numbers 6 and 8, a double house.<sup>111</sup> Next in 1898 he leased from St John's the site of 3

Adams Road, where he built a house that he sold on<sup>112</sup> and for a number of years he also held the lease on 5 Herschel Road, although he was not the builder of the original house.<sup>113</sup>

The third don with a similar building interest was Sir Donald MacAlister, Senior Tutor of St John's and an eminent medical man, Chairman for years of the General Medical Council and eventually Rector of Glasgow University. Unlike the other two, his area of activity was Madingley Road. In 1894 he acquired his first lease, on which he built the house (Barrmore, between Madingley Road and Lady Margaret Road) in which he lived for as long as he stayed in Cambridge.<sup>114</sup> Thereafter he leased four successive sites on which he built houses (Strathaird on Lady Margaret Road in 1897 (Plate 8) and 9, 7 and 13 Madingley Road in 1901, 1902 and 1903 respectively), and eventually sold all of them.<sup>115</sup>

The final developer to be mentioned is William Sindall, a builder whose yards were located in Newnham. Apart from the numerous houses in west Cambridge which he was hired to build, he also branched out on his own as a developer, primarily in Wordsworth Grove (a new road in Newnham) and the northern end of Grange Road. In each case the landlord was St John's College, and Sindall took out five leases in the former in 1899, as well as numbers 60 (Plate 9) and 62 Grange Road in 1906 and 63 and 67 Grange Road in 1911.<sup>116</sup> Except for one house in Grange Road for which the lease was acquired by another building firm, Coulson & Loffts,<sup>117</sup> Sindall was the only professional builder involved in such activities.

#### Changes in land ownership

Because the leasehold system made possible the long-term control by the landowners of the nature of the suburb, the emphasis of much of this article has been upon leasehold development, but outright changes in ownership also occurred which, though without any contemporaneous impact on the landscape, were to be of significance for much later developments by the University.

The first and biggest of these concerned undeveloped land in the extreme north-west of the parish. Admiral Sir Charles Cotton, Lord of the Manor of Madingley, was the largest private landowner in St Giles Parish after its enclosure. His 141 acres, adjacent to his larger estates in Madingley and Girton, constituted more than 10% of the area of St Giles. When he died in 1812, his property was inherited by his son, Sir St Vincent Cotton, a compulsive gambler who dissipated his whole inheritance.<sup>118</sup> Much was sold off piecemeal, but his estate in St Giles was acquired intact in 1855 by his sister Philadelphia Cotton when she took over the mortgages.<sup>119</sup> She in turn left it to a nephew, William Affleck King, whose executors sold it in the period 1894–6 to an enterprising merchant, Fred Crisp. Born near Cambridge, Crisp is said to have built up a chain of 26 drapers shops, mostly in

north London, and decided to become a gentleman farmer on a large scale.<sup>120</sup> Not only did he buy the former Cotton lands in St Giles but also in 1899 the adjacent 101 acres immediately east of them, Gravel Hill Farm, part of what had been assigned to the Bishop of Ely as tithe compensation at the time of enclosure.<sup>121</sup> Unfortunately for Crisp, by the turn of the century both his commercial and his farming ventures were in trouble, and in 1903 his entire holding in St Giles was put up for sale and bought by Trinity College as an investment.<sup>122</sup> In 1923, that college, though retaining a long strip on the south side of Huntingdon Road for residential development, sold the rest of it to the University for its University Farm. It is this area, between the Huntingdon and Madingley Roads, which is now the North-West Cambridge Sector, designated in a recent planning document as 'predominantly for Cambridge University-related uses, including key worker housing for university staff, student housing, and new faculty buildings and research facilities'.<sup>123</sup> Another, lesser, change in ownership was Trinity College's successive purchases from the 1850s of property previously in private hands north of Madingley Road, adjacent to the spring feeding the Conduit that supplied the fountain in the Great Court.<sup>124</sup>

The consequence of these changes was that the future of the St Giles Parish was to be more than ever entwined with that of the colleges and University: when enclosure was completed in 1805, these owners held 60% of the land,<sup>125</sup> and by 1914 this had grown to roughly 85%. Almost all the rest was owned by Storey's Charity, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and other corporate bodies; land in private hands had shrunk to less than 5%.

## Conclusion

By the time that peacetime building came to a halt with the outbreak of war in 1914, the basic outlines and characteristics of the west Cambridge suburb had been established. The stock of residential housing – interspersed with new academic buildings and open land in the form of playing fields, gardens and pasture – consisted of many dwellings that were too big for the needs or resources of the post-war generation and often difficult to convert. It was a single-purpose suburb, geared to a narrow market and devoid of community facilities, and it continued to show those characteristics. Developments in the twentieth century saw new colleges, new roads created either by infilling or by encroaching on the farming area to the west, and smaller house plots and houses, but the basic character of west Cambridge remained unchanged. Until the Leasehold Reform Act of 1967, the colleges held the freeholds and so were able to maintain their vision of the suburb, and in this they were followed by the non-collegiate minority of landowners. It was the increasing obsolescence of that vision which was to lead to the conflicts on land-use that engage west Cambridge today.

## Appendix: The origin of the kink in Grange Road

The 1805 enclosure award laid down that Grange Road should be 40 feet wide from its southern limit on Barton Road until a point somewhat north of its intersection with West Road, when it narrowed to a bridle path 12 feet in width.<sup>126</sup> That point, marked as 'the Kink' on Fig. 1, was at the dividing line between land on the west side of Grange Road allocated by the award to Jesus College and to St John's College.<sup>127</sup> The east side of Grange Road was a continuous alignment, the narrowing occurring on the west side.

In 1875, St Catharine's College granted the Reverend Charles Graves (a Fellow of St John's) the lease of a one-acre plot bordering Grange Road on the east side immediately north of the kink.<sup>128</sup> Ten years later, in early 1884, Robert Scott, Senior Bursar of St John's, was approached by W. W. Rouse Ball, a mathematician of Trinity, who wanted a one-acre plot on the west side of Grange Road opposite Mr Graves. The building agreement drawn up late in 1884 or in early 1885 is missing, but it appears that Ball considered that his plot extended, if not as far as the 12-foot boundary of the original bridle road, at least well beyond the point which would have permitted a 40-foot road past his property (Fig. 6). That Scott had soon become aware of this, and of its implication for widening the road in the future, is shown by a sketch on a copy of a letter of his dated 20 November 1884 to a would-be lessee of a neighbouring plot,<sup>129</sup> but he seems to have believed that Ball would be cooperative in amending his boundary. This was not the case and furthermore Ball made a point of siting his house so close to what he considered his Grange Road boundary that his builder inquired whether he really meant it.<sup>130</sup> The plan contained in his lease,<sup>131</sup> dated 18 June 1886, erroneously shows his eastern boundary as aligned with the 40-foot road width to the south, i.e. with no protrusion, and the Ordnance Survey Map of 1888 based on surveys made in 1886 surprisingly seems to show none either, but the vast correspondence between Ball, the College, the Town Corporation

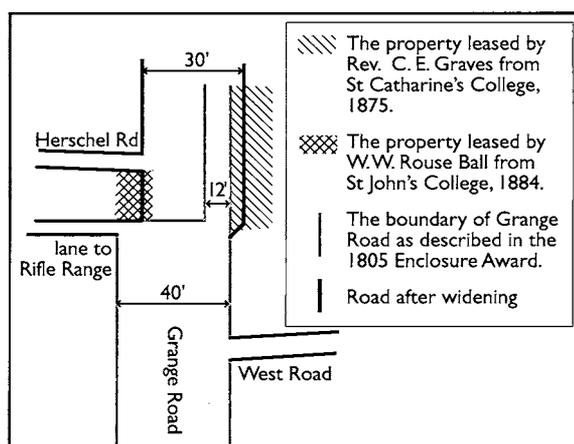


Figure 6. The Kink in Grange Road, based on a c. 1911 drawing provided by Cambridge City Highways Department.

and Ball's neighbours leaves no doubt whatever that there was a considerable protrusion.<sup>132</sup>

For the next 20 years the battle continued, Ball's neighbours clamouring to have the roads built by St John's north of the kink adopted by the Corporation so that they would no longer have to contribute to their maintenance, the Corporation refusing because that part of the road abutting Ball's house was too narrow to comply with the by-laws, and Scott hamstringed by Ball's unwillingness to yield. By 1904, the issue of road adoption had been further complicated by the Corporation's claim that the roads had not been constructed to an acceptable standard and by a further argument about replacing the existing gravel pavements with concrete, but it is possible to see the shape of the eventual resolution of the problem. The Corporation accepted, *faute de mieux*, a 30-foot width for the stretch of road outside Ball's house, and both he and his blameless and indignant opposite neighbour were obliged to give up territory to permit the widening up to this extent. Just when this took place, or whether it happened in stages, is unclear, but a drawing in the possession of the City Highways Department probably dated 1911 and showing the measured widths of the entire length of Grange Road clearly depicts the kink on both sides of the road. And finally there is the physical fact of the road as it exists today (Plate 10, a photograph taken in 2007).

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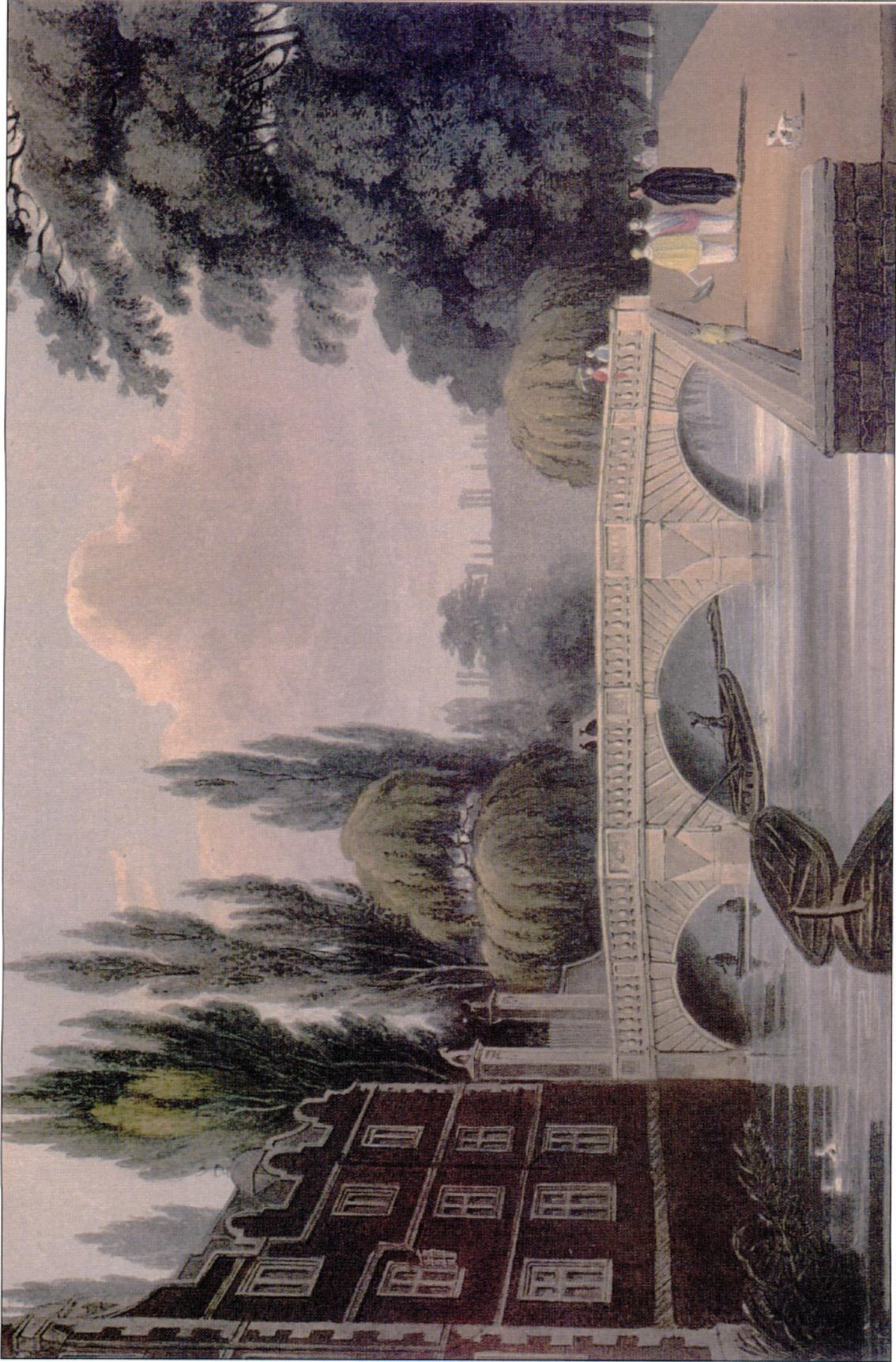


Plate 4. Cambridge 1815. St John's College from the garden. The University and the colleges would not permit a towpath along The Backs. The string of barges or lighters is being poled (Cams Collection E. SJ. 14 28213. R Ackermann History of the University of Cambridge, 1815. London: Printed for R Ackermann)



*Plate 5. Garden front of St Chad's, 48 Grange Road, erected on land leased by the Revd Robert Burn from St Catharine's College in 1877. Now a hall of residence of St Catharine's.*



*Plate 6. Garden front of Balliol Croft, 6 Madingley Road, erected on land leased by Professor Alfred Marshall from St John's College in 1885. Now the Lodge of the President of Lucy Cavendish College.*



*Plate 7. 5 West Road, erected on land leased by Captain Charles Clay, Printer of Cambridge University Press, from Gonville and Caius College in 1872. Recently housed the Institute of Criminology, and is shortly to be demolished by the University.*



*Plate 8. The garden front of Strathaird, Lady Margaret Road, erected on land leased by Sir Donald MacAlister from St John's College in 1897. Now part of Lucy Cavendish College.*



*Plate 9. 60 Grange Road, erected on land leased by William Sindall, builder, from St John's College in 1906. Despite the double front door, it was used as a single house. Now a Trinity College hostel.*



*Plate 10. The kink in Grange Road, seen from the south.*