

## A Georgian suburb: revealing place and person in London's Camden Town



Sheldon tapestry map, 1590s: detail of London and Middlesex<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Gough Collection, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, in *London, prints and drawings before 1800*, London Topographical Society 2017.

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## **Reference abbreviations**

BL: British Library

CLSAC: Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre

KALH: Kent Archives and Local History (Maidstone)

LMA: London Metropolitan Archives

ODNB: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

TNA: The National Archives

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## **Abstract**

Camden Town, a part of inner north London, was described by architectural historian John Summerson as a Georgian suburb. London expanded both geographically and in population in the nineteenth century. Lord Camden began, from 1789, to build on the farmland of the Cantlowes demesne near St Pancras church and building continued through to the 1870s. The records of the estate demonstrate landlords, stewards and builders working together, managing disruption from canal and railway transport, creating a coherent urban form and increasing the estate's value. Camden Town's identity is traced in early records, through perceptions of writers of fiction and in Booth's survey of London. There were social organisations, of church and education, and commerce from small trades to large businesses. Residents were both artisans, across a range of manufacturing, and middle-classes, in business, arts and sciences. Planning for London in the twenty-first century seeks to retain local character. Revealing Camden Town's particularity and its place as a Georgian suburb contributes to the history of London and informs choices for its future development.

## Chapter 1 Camden Town: a Georgian suburb

### Introduction

The architectural historian John Summerson described the growth of London outside its central area as 'Georgian Suburbia'. Camden Town, built on the Cantlowes demesne near to St Pancras Church was 'filling in the wedge between Hampstead Road and Maiden Lane'.<sup>2</sup>

The Domesday Book records a Manor of Cantlowes. In the Parliamentary Survey of Church lands in 1649, the demesne of Cantlowes was described as 213 acres of land, with the manor house to the east on the King's Road and an inn, the Mother Red Caps, a 'half-way house' on the road between London and the villages of Hampstead and Highgate.<sup>3</sup>

'Camden' comes from William Camden, the Elizabethan historian, author of *Britannia*, who lived at the later part of his life in Chislehurst and whose house became known as Camden Place.<sup>4</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century, the rising lawyer Sir Charles Pratt bought the house: he chose the title of Lord Camden for the baronetcy he received when he was made a Peer – and shortly afterwards Lord Chancellor.<sup>5</sup> In 1785 he inherited, through his wife's family, the farmland that was Cantlowes demesne and in 1788 he gained an Act of Parliament to build on the land: it became Camden Town.

Within extensive work on London's economic and social history, Summerson's concept of 'Georgian suburb' has been proposed but not explored. A suburb is defined through its position: beyond the metropolis 'proper', yet linked for residence and commerce. Landlords

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<sup>2</sup> John Summerson, *Georgian London*, London (1945) 2002:336.

<sup>3</sup> London County Council, *Survey of London: Volume 17, the Parish of St Pancras Part 1: the Village of Highgate, London 1935*.

<sup>4</sup> Chislehurst Society, *William Camden*, <[chislehurst-society.org.uk/Pages/About/People/Camden\\_William.html](http://chislehurst-society.org.uk/Pages/About/People/Camden_William.html)>

<sup>5</sup> Henry Eeles, *Lord Chancellor Camden and his family*, London 1934:81.



and speculators build on open land because there is demand for housing, yielding higher returns than farming. Yet the 'Georgian suburb' has been hardly described. The term has been used only by Finola O'Kane, to describe Drumcondra, an early suburb of Dublin, in its Georgian period (Ireland was part of the United Kingdom from 1801). For O'Kane, 'Suburban environments are not necessarily inferior to those of the city. Dublin's Georgian suburbia and the role it has played in defining the city centre are barely acknowledged and little understood'.<sup>6</sup>

This dissertation seeks to reconsider the place and identity of Camden Town through its origin as a Georgian suburb – the estate's development and architectural style, the lives of both artisanal and middle class tenants, and the interactions as it developed for residence, employment and transport. As London's population continues to rise, London planning proposes development of the existing built land for greater densities of living. Uncovering the history of Camden Town can contribute to better planning for London's future and increased value to residents, businesses and visitors.

### ***Setting***

A map of main routes northwards out of London published at the end of the eighteenth century shows two main roads, from Westminster and the City, passing to the hill villages of Hampstead and Highgate.<sup>7</sup> On the west side of the Hampstead Road (now Camden High Street) are houses called Southampton Place and Warren Place, with the Southampton Arms inn, showing ownership of this land by the family of Charles Fitzroy, Lord Southampton. On the east side is Kings Road (now St Pancras Way) without housing (Cantlowes manor house

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<sup>6</sup> Finola O'Kane. 'The appearance of a continued city: Dublin's Georgian suburbia.' In Gillian O'Brien, Finola O'Kane eds, *Georgian Dublin*, Dublin 2008:110-126.

<sup>7</sup> John Cary, Survey of the high roads from London, British Library Shelfmark Maps.6.b.38.

is lost by this time). Joining the two roads laterally are Fig Lane and (unnamed) Kentish Town Road, enclosing land which became the western half of the new Camden Town.

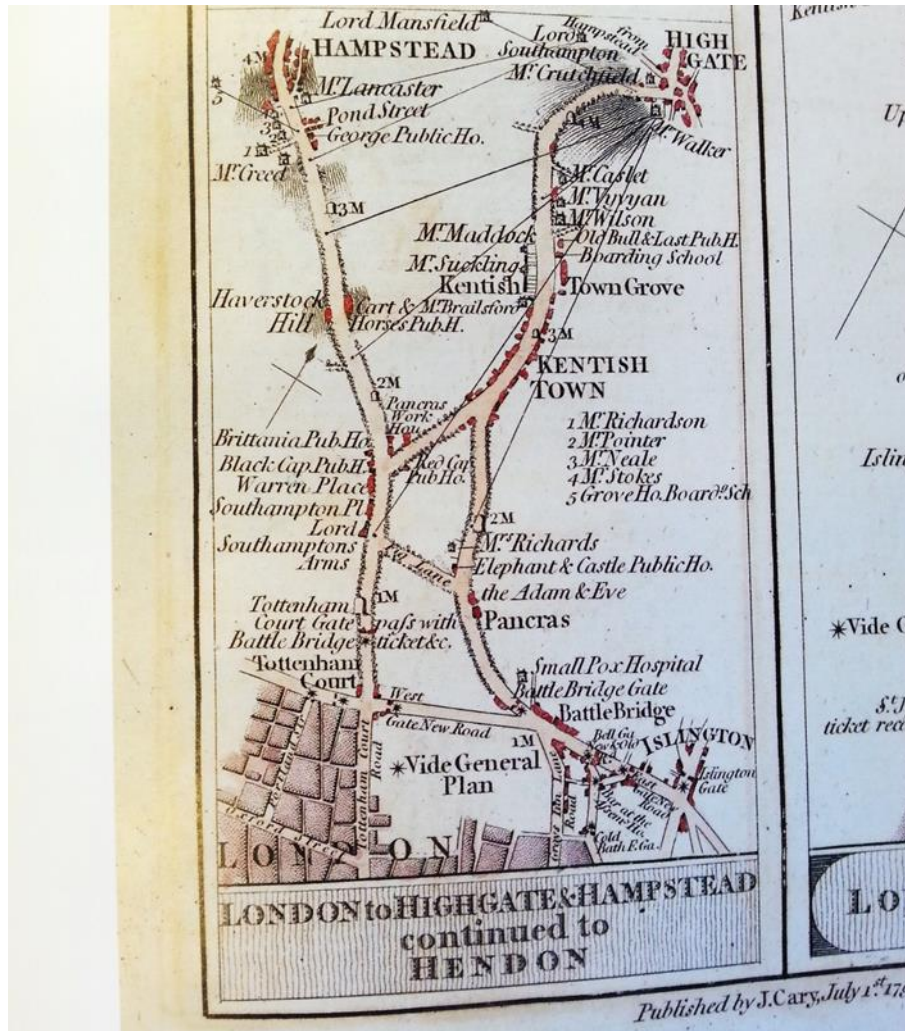


Figure 1.1 Roads of Pancras, 1790<sup>7</sup>

The map also shows the label 'Pancras', the site of St Pancras Church which at that time was in a state of decay: the church graveyard was mainly disused and the parish administration was held in inns and houses further north – the names of Pancras and Kentish Town being interchangeable. St Pancras church is, in foundation, one of the oldest churches in England, but by Norman times St Paul's Cathedral owned demesnes of St Pancras and of Cantlowes. (In the feudal system, the demesne was land retained by a lord of the manor for his own use.) The ground rents for these lands (prebends) were paid to

clergy (prebendaries) of the Cathedral, while lay authority over four estates in the parish of St Pancras was held by the Lords of the Manors.

The Church of England Commissioners' archives hold a map showing the prebendal boundaries. The demesne of Cantlowes is shown in yellow, the manor of St Pancras in blue and Lord Southampton's land (Tottenhall) in pink<sup>8</sup> (Figure 1.2):



Figure 1.2 Prebendal lands and estates of St Pancras parish)<sup>8</sup>

Cantlowes is described in the Domesday book, and there are prebendaries of St Paul's Cathedral recorded for the lands from the twelfth century.<sup>9</sup> In 1649, at the Parliamentary sale of church lands, a survey of Cantlowes demesne described farmland with just two groups of buildings – a farmhouse (perhaps the old manor house) on the bend of the road on the hill to the east of the River Fleet valley, and the 'Halfway House' (Mother Red Caps inn) to the west at the junction of the roads to Hampstead and Kentish Town. The

<sup>8</sup> Church of England Record Centre, 'St Pancras Parish – prebendal estates', c1848.

<sup>9</sup> *The Middlesex and London Domesday*, London [Alecto editions] 1991.

prebendary received an annual ground rent. The Cantlowes demesne was rented to tenant farmers and the lease could be sold. In 1682 the lease was bought by the Jeffreys family, of origin from Brecon in Wales, who were tobacco merchants in the City of London. The ownership passed (in several stages) finally by marriage to Lord Camden and, after an Act of Parliament,<sup>10</sup> became the Camden Town estate. The boundaries of Camden Town, those of the original demesne of Cantlowes, are set on a modern road map below (Figure 1.3).

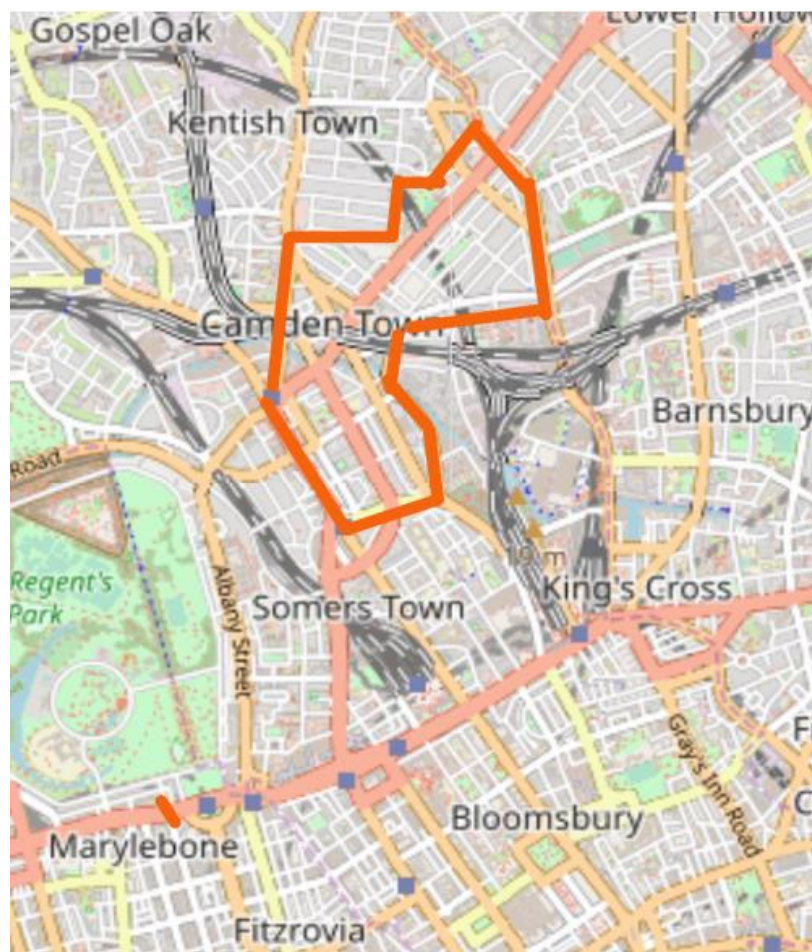


Figure 1.3 London street map showing the Camden Town estate boundaries<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> UK Parliament, 'An Act for enabling Charles Earl Camden to grant building leases of lands and premises at Kentish Town, in the County of Middlesex': 28 Geo 3 cap 41.

<sup>11</sup> Open Street Map, <[openstreetmap.org](http://openstreetmap.org)>

## Literature

### ***Camden Town histories***

The Parish of St Pancras lay to the north of London. At the time of Daniel Lysons' book *The Environs of London*<sup>12</sup> Camden Town was very new, and Lysons mentions it only very briefly. Books later in the nineteenth century with antiquarian and anecdotal writing on St Pancras, Edward Walford's *London Old and New* and Frederick Miller's *St Pancras Past and Present*,<sup>13</sup> include more of Camden Town. The *Survey of London* separates St Pancras into four volumes.<sup>14</sup> While St Pancras church and Kentish Town are in the third volume, Camden Town is given five pages in the final section of the fourth volume, Kings Cross. It summarises Lord Camden's inheritance, interprets building development from two maps (Thompson's of St Pancras, 1801 and Britton's of Marylebone, 1834), records that both Charles Dickens and painter Francis Holl lived in Bayham Street (one of the earliest roads) as children, and gives accounts of three churches, the St Martin's burial ground and almshouses and the Veterinary College.

However, Camden Town's boundaries are not agreed. Architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner included parts of Lord Southampton's land and most of Lord Camden's land (although ignoring parts also) as within 'Camden Town'. Gillian Tindall, in her celebrated history of Kentish Town, *The Fields Beneath*, drew on material from the older histories of St Pancras when the terms Kentish Town and Pancras were used interchangeably; she suggests a later railway line as forming the boundary between Kentish Town and Camden

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<sup>12</sup> Daniel Lysons, *The environs of London*, London 1795.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Walford, 'Camden Town and Kentish Town', in *Old and New London*, London 1878. Frederick Miller, *Saint Pancras past and present*, London 1874.

<sup>14</sup> *Survey of London, Volume 19, the Parish of St Pancras Part 2: Old St Pancras and Kentish Town*, London 1938.

Town.<sup>15</sup> Camden History Society has published a series of walks which describe building histories street by street: *Streets of Camden Town* includes Southampton as well as Camden land, while some areas of Camden Town that lie west of Camden Road are put into *Streets of Kentish Town*. John Richardson, former President of the Society and editor of the Newsletter, has contributed two books, *The Camden Town Book* and *Camden Town and Primrose Hill Past*, with chronologies, narratives and images, which include more of Lord Southampton's land and less of northern Camden Town. Jack Whitehead's *The Growth of Camden Town: AD 1800-2000* provides detailed accounts of the railway lands of Chalk Farm and industrial premises around the canal but does not extend across the High Street of Camden Town.<sup>16</sup>

Two academic studies on Camden's history were undertaken in the 1970s. Marian Collums traced the patterns of growth and economic development within the (then new) London boroughs of Camden and Lambeth, looking at building on two estates (although not Camden Town) in each borough. She identified 'ecological' growth patterns in concentric rings outwards as the population size of London increased. Alaric Mostyn used the 1851 census to estimate population structure by social class for 'Camden Town'. His boundaries extended westwards, into Lord Southampton's estate, rather than northwards in Camden New Town, but his focus on the area between Kentish Town and Somers Town was similar to the present dissertation. Mostyn suggested, 'Perhaps the widely conflicting descriptions of historians mentioning Camden Town is partly due to lack of precise definition'.<sup>17</sup> The present

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<sup>15</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, Bridget Cherry, *London 4: north (The buildings of England)*, London 1998:384-393. Gillian Tindall, *The fields beneath*, London 1980:36.

<sup>16</sup> Camden History Society, *Streets of Camden Town*, London 2003. Camden History Society, *Streets of Kentish Town*, London 2005. John Richardson, *Camden Town and Primrose Hill past*, London 1991. John Richardson, *The Camden Town Book*, London 2007. Jack Whitehead, *The growth of Camden Town*, London 1999.

<sup>17</sup> Marian Collums, *Residential development in London in the nineteenth century*. PhD thesis, Bedford College, 1978:257-266. Alaric Mostyn, *The social structure of Camden in the mid-nineteenth century*. Masters thesis, University College London, 1977 (mimeo: no page numbers).

study takes the boundaries of Camden Town as land of the demesne of Cantlowes, which the nineteenth century landowners' records refer to as the 'Camden Town Estate'.

### ***Coherence – managing estates***

#### *Estates*

Summerson classifies the early suburbs around London being created in four ways: village development; country-villa building; roadside [ribbon] development; and estate development. The last were 'wedges of agricultural land ... built up solid with streets and squares, set out in a tidy design'.<sup>18</sup>

In Pevsner's account of architecture in North London, 'suburban houses' inspired by Nash's Regent's Park 'expanded around the core of late 18<sup>th</sup> century developments at Bloomsbury, Somers Town and Camden Town'.<sup>19</sup> The critical element was ownership of land estates large enough for systematic new development. Pre-modern London had been built through accretion, extension or sub-division of smaller houses or as a large mansion for a single owner. Following the first planned architectural development in England, Inigo Jones' Covent Garden, much new development in London was 'speculative' – led by a builder, with loaned capital, to sell at completion – under the control of aristocratic landlords.<sup>20</sup> The new building was based on a plan, laying out roads before houses, with standards influenced by the London Housing Act of 1775. The city of Bath had taken an early lead, its grand, uniform facades hiding houses that were individually built with different inside layout and backs.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Summerson, 'Georgian London':332.

<sup>19</sup> Pevsner and Cherry, 'London, North':35-36.

<sup>20</sup> James Dyos, 'The speculative builders and developers of Victorian London.' *Victorian Studies*, 1968;11(Suppl):641–90.

<sup>21</sup> James Curl, *Georgian architecture*, London, 1993:172.

In Edinburgh, with a grid in neo-classical style, 'builders conceived New Town streets in terms of single house units, or two to three units at a time, but not in terms of entire streets and squares'.<sup>22</sup>

The landholdings of London estates were scattered across the metropolis and surrounding parishes. In Frances Sheppard's book *The Infernal Wen*, Lord Camden's land was one of 137 estates in London.<sup>23</sup> It is numbered 14 on his map, adjacent to land of Lord Southampton (no. 117) and Regent's Park (no. 31) to the west and the smaller holdings of Kentish Town (nos. 19, 34, 103) to the north and Somers Town (nos. 5, 9, 118) to the south (Figure 1.4).

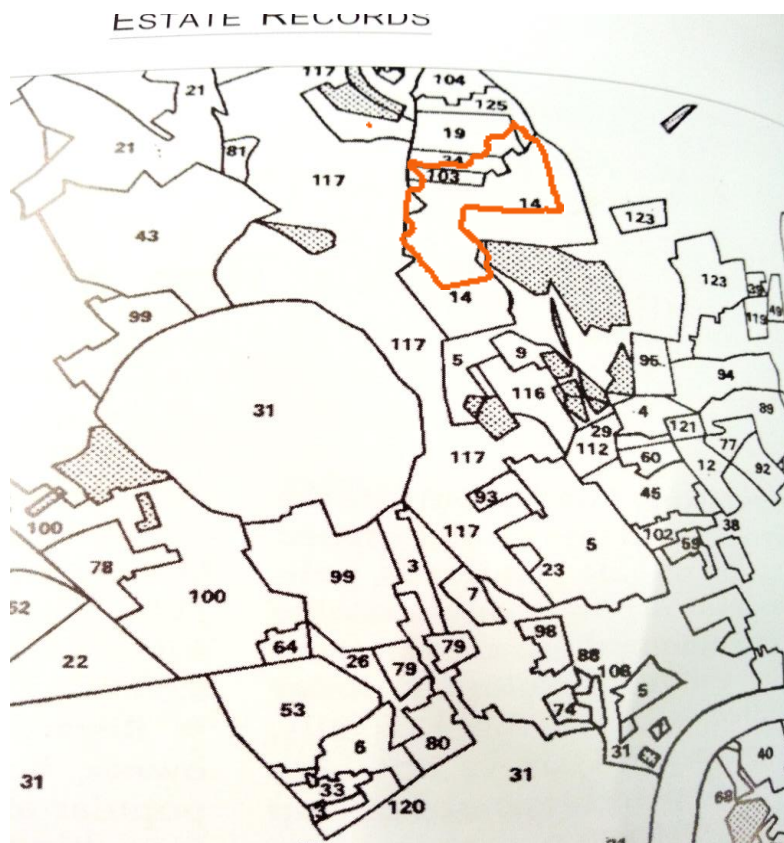


Figure 1.4 Land estates in northwest inner London: No 14, Lord Camden's, in orange <sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Lewis, *The builders of Edinburgh's New Town, 1767-95*, PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh 2006:78.

<sup>23</sup> Francis Sheppard, *The infernal wen*, London 1977:Fig.8.



The estates of north west London were drawn on Stephen Daniel's edition of John Britton's 1834 *Topographical Survey of the Borough of St Marylebone*, which included Paddington and St Pancras parishes as well as Marylebone (Figure 1.5).<sup>24</sup>

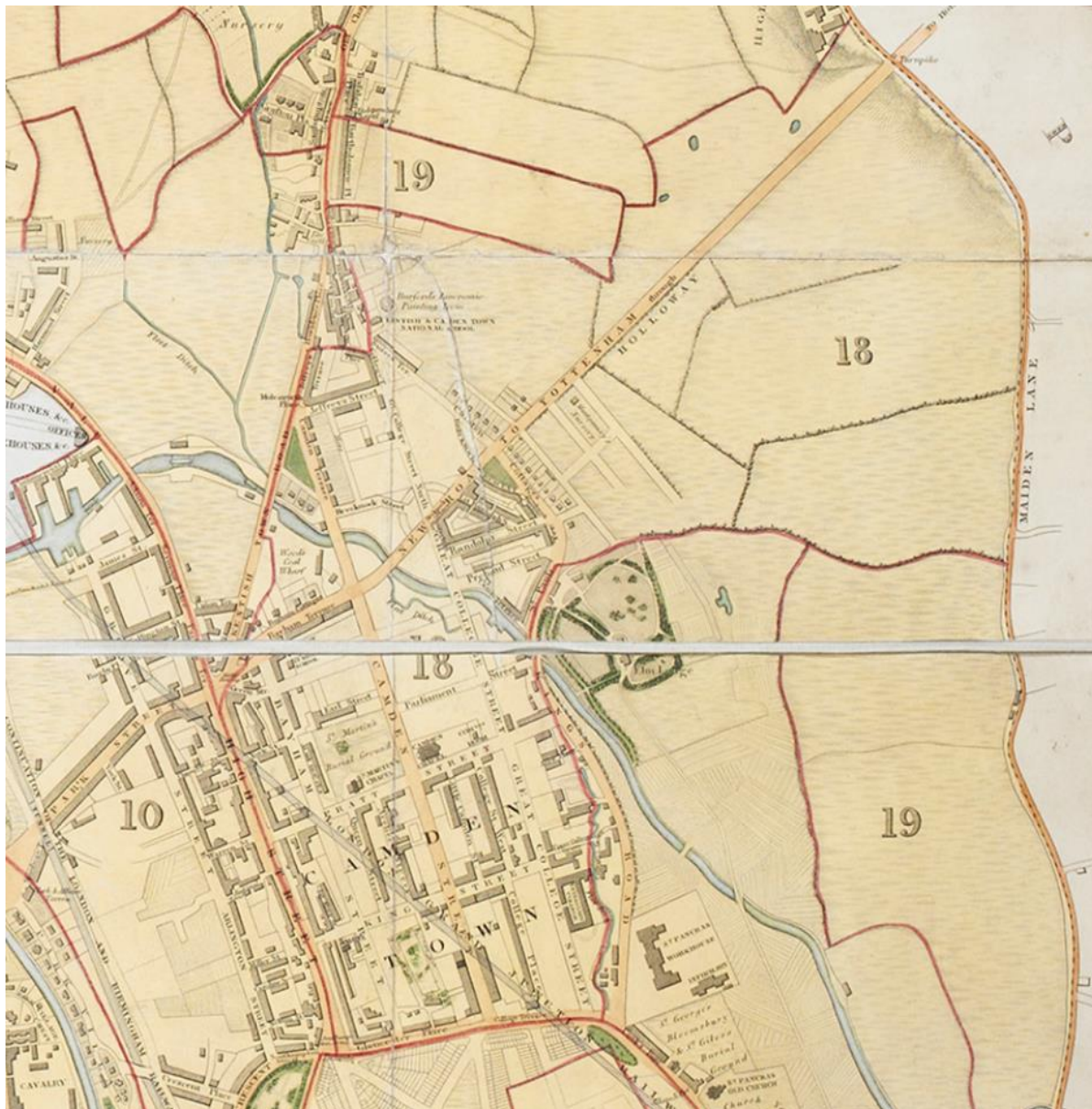


Figure 1.5 Camden Town estate (No 18) in map of 1834 <sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Daniels, Mapping the metropolis in an age of reform: John Britton's London topography, 1820–1840, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2017;56:61-82. Image from <sothebys.com> Topographical survey of the borough of Marylebone, past lots.

The literature describes varied experiences in the development of the inner north London estates. Nash, creating Regent's Park and Regent's Park Village for the Crown, is celebrated for his high ambition and financial control.<sup>25</sup> The large Southampton estate, between Regent's Park and Camden Town, had building only along the Hampstead Road in the earlier nineteenth century, with more active development of the northern section after 1840.<sup>26</sup> To the east, the Agar family retained open land around their Lodge after the Canal was built, until it was bought finally by the Midland Railway, while from 1841 the southern parts were let on short-term leases, leading to cheap houses and over-occupation of Agar Town.<sup>27</sup> Further east towards Islington and south to Somers Town, land by Maiden Lane was used for dirty trades – rubbish, tanning, kilns.

Estates neighbouring Camden Town Estate have been examined in several ways. Olsen's study of Bloomsbury considered that careful 'town planning' by responsible landlords – he included the Duke of Bedford – led to exceptional results. Landlords, in comparison with the capitalist developers, were motivated for long rather than short-term considerations.<sup>28</sup> Linda Clarke, analysing capitalism and building labour process at nearby Somers Town, describes in contrast how Lord Somers handed over control of the building to developer Jacob Leroux, placing on him the costs for infrastructures (drains, paving) as well as capital loans for construction. The resulting buildings were less generous and the small number of larger houses sold poorly. After Leroux died in 1799, the leases were put to auction and dispersed among absentee landlords and investors.<sup>29</sup> These became some of the working-class areas of later Victorian London.

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<sup>25</sup> Ann Saunders, *The Manor of Tyburn and the Regent's Park, 1086-1965*, PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, 1965.

<sup>26</sup> There is no full account of this estate. See Appendix 1 for other London studies.

<sup>27</sup> Steven Swensen, *Mapping poverty in Agar Town*, London School of Economics, WP/09/06, 2006. [includes an analysis on household incomes.]

<sup>28</sup> Donald Olsen, *Town planning in London*, London 1982.

<sup>29</sup> Linda Clarke, *Building capitalism*, London 1992:150.

### *Lords and stewards*

While eighteenth century estates were known by their titled owner, Lords generally did not run their estates: the land steward was a critical contributor. For rural estates, Gordon Mingay suggests two different types – the full-time salaried official who ran the large estate and the 'independent professional man who, for a commission, looked after small estates or the detached properties of a large landowner' – who 'came to replace the attorney or farmer entrusted with smaller properties'<sup>30</sup> These stewards oversaw direct administration, keeping accounts, tenancy agreements, surveying and legal issues – and even be the local election agent.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast, there is little written on urban land stewards. One, William Thomas, was steward of the 'Marybone' estate for thirty years 1725-1755, being the Treasurer for the Vestry and Pavements trustee. He was valued for 'enabling others' ambitions', but we know nothing of his duties or practice.<sup>32</sup> On the Grosvenor estate of Mayfair, it was Thomas Barlow, a carpenter, who set it out as 'an exercise in disciplined, straightforward planning – a grid of wide straight streets with a *grande place* in the centre'.<sup>33</sup>

### *Builders*

Building was a significant industry in nineteenth century London. It occupied 10% of the workforce, accounted for 30% of gross fixed capital and had a multiplier effect on local economy.<sup>34</sup> Builders were emerging as a profession, as individual developers, family businesses and partnership businesses. Samuel Cockerill, architect to the Foundling Hospital

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<sup>30</sup> Gordon Mingay, *Land and society in England 1750-1980*, London 1994.

<sup>31</sup> David Hainsworth, *Stewards, lords and people*, Cambridge 1992:75.

<sup>32</sup> Gordon Balderston, 'William Thomas, steward of the 'Marybone' estate', *The Georgian Group Journal* 2004;14:287-307.

<sup>33</sup> Francis Sheppard, *Committee for the survey of the memorials of Greater London*, London 1977:12.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Thompson, 'The rise of suburbia', in Robert Morris, Richard Rodger eds, *The Victorian city*, London 1993.

in Bloomsbury, wrote that, 'Mr [James] Burton has expended above £400 000 for the permanent benefit of the property of the hospital. A great part he has done personally; the other part he has done by builders engaged under him ... and has still heavy mortgages on unfinished buildings ...'.<sup>35</sup> In the boom of the early 1820s, Thomas Cubitt created a new form of business, bringing several building trades together and paying upwards of 2000 employees. From efforts to complete Burton's work on the Bedford estate, in 1824 Cubitt moved to creating Belgravia and Pimlico, and later worked extensively in Clapham. Thomas Cubitt's brother William, who was his partner in the early years, took a small holding on the Camden Town estate. Most individual builders, James Dyos found, created just a few houses each year: but, set over a period of time, the total contribution would be greater.<sup>36</sup>

### *Value*

By the 1880s there were growing pressures on London estates. In part there was the 'Land question', the linkage of land ownership with voting, although this was a more rural and provincial than metropolitan concern. With the selling of inherited lands of livery companies and charitable hospitals, 'much was municipalised'.<sup>37</sup> The question to landowners as capitalists was whether it would benefit them to sell.<sup>38</sup> While the annual land sales in England averaged around £10m before the Great War, and fell during the war, in the peace afterwards sales of estates rose again.<sup>39</sup> The details for inner London have not been investigated.

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<sup>35</sup> Dana Arnold, *Rural urbanism*, Manchester 2005:31.

<sup>36</sup> Dyos, 'Speculative builders':659.

<sup>37</sup> Roland Quinault, 'London and the land question, 1880-1914', in Matthew Cragoe, Paul Readman eds, *The land question in Britain, 1750-1950*, Basingstoke 2010:167-180.

<sup>38</sup> John Beckett, Michael Turner, 'Land reform and the English land market, 1880-1925', in Matthew Cragoe, Paul Readman, *ibid*:201-218.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Swenarton, *Building the New Jerusalem*, Bracknell 2008:41. Jeremy Whitehand, 'The makers of British towns: architects, builders and property owners, c.1850-1939', *Journal of Historical Geography* 1992;18(4):417-438.

## ***Identity – society and lives***

### *Residents – rich and poor*

In her 1962 thesis on the Regents Park estate, Ann Saunders wrote that 'The original occupants of the villas included two peers, two Members of Parliament, a scientist, a dandy, a soldier, three merchants and a builder' – and continued with accounts of their various lives.<sup>40</sup> Others have followed in considering the people who lived and worked in particular parts of London. Jeremy Boulton described the demography, kinship and social order of seventeenth century Southwark, which lay across the Thames from the City of London.<sup>41</sup> David Brown linked unique surveys with descriptions of place to determine 'the kinds of people' who lived in the Grosvenor estate in west London in the late eighteenth century.<sup>42</sup> In a micro-study of Chancery Lane, Frances Boorman used records including newspapers, guides of London, satires, poetry and prints to describe the political culture and society of London's legal area at a similar time.<sup>43</sup>

Many studies of London have been concerned with the lives of the poor, particularly in the East End in the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> Mayhew and Booth made contemporary major surveys.<sup>45</sup> Hollingshead's descriptions of Ragged London were expanded from 'ten letters' of 'London horrors' in the *Morning Post*.<sup>46</sup> Felix Driver quotes George Godwin (1859) encouraging his readers to 'dive...into the back-slums of London - the social morasses - the

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<sup>40</sup> Ann Saunders, *Manor of Tyburn*:245.

<sup>41</sup> Jeremy Boulton, *Neighbourhood and society: a London suburb in the seventeenth century*, Cambridge 2008.

<sup>42</sup> David Brown, *The impact of rivers on urban development: the Tyburn River and Mayfair in the eighteenth century* Masters thesis, University of London, 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Francis Boorman, *The political space of Chancery Lane*, PhD thesis, University of London, 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Sarah Wise, *The blackest streets: the life and death of a Victorian slum*, London 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Henry Mayhew, *London labour and the London Poor*, London 1851. Charles Booth, *Life and labour of people in London Vol 9*, London 1897.

<sup>46</sup> John Hollingshead, *Ragged London*, London 1861.

shadowy corners ... Do you ever go east, Dear Reader?<sup>47</sup> Women did, as philanthropists.<sup>48</sup> Steadman Jones read the contemporary accounts of London housing as expressing fear that overcrowding might throw the respectable working class and the residuum together.<sup>49</sup> There have been detailed accounts of employment by industrial sector, and of families managing poverty.<sup>50</sup>

### *Suburbs*

Writing on the 'suburban idea', Davison describes 'aristocrats and gentry shuttled between town and country according to the season, but the ideal bourgeois residence stood on the threshold between the two, within sight of the city, yet safely beyond its corrupting influence'.<sup>51</sup> Yet for London's inner suburbs, there has been some condescension:

First the plutocrats, then the professionals and lesser businessmen, and finally the shopkeepers quit Cheapside and Clerkenwell for suburbs ... while, pushed and shoved by central overcrowding, the poor wormed themselves into erstwhile middleclass strongholds, precipitating neighbourhood depreciation'.<sup>52</sup>

Suburban respectability was largely a matter of the right address ... until the social structure of the suburb was unbalanced by the emigration of its top people and the immigration of a different breed of people from the inner suburbs.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Felix Driver, *Moral geographies: social science and the urban environment in mid-nineteenth century*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 1988;13(3):275-287.

<sup>48</sup> Helen Meller, 'Gender, citizenship and the making of the modern environment.' In Elizabeth Darling, Lesley Whitworth eds, *Women and the making of built space in England, 1870-1950*, Aldershot 2007:13-30.

<sup>49</sup> Gareth Steadman Jones, *Outcast London: a study in the relationship between classes in Victorian society*, Harmondsworth 1984.

<sup>50</sup> James Schmiechen, *Sweated industries and sweated labour: the London clothing trades 1860-1914*, London 1984. Lynn MacKay, *Respectability and the London poor, 1780-1870*, London 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Graeme Davison, 'The suburban idea and its enemies,' *Journal of Urban History* 2013;39(5):831.

<sup>52</sup> Roy Porter, *London: a social history*, London 2000:209

<sup>53</sup> James Dyos, *Victorian suburb*, Leicester 1961:10.

The broad effect of social change was for the wealthy, the smart, the fashionable and the intellectual to retreat up the hill ... behind them, a tide of multi-occupation swept in across the low ground.<sup>54</sup>

Camden Town, an unambitious new town of the 1790s.<sup>55</sup>

Thompson called these 'backlands' ... 'socially suburban in being, for their elites, places of residence divorced from their places of work'.<sup>56</sup> Compared with the 'overgrown villages' further out, including Hampstead and Highgate, Thompson considered that, although it 'remains unresearched ... the atmosphere of these new towns was more urban and akin to other socially and economically similar parts of London'.

For Christopher French, Surbiton, a London suburb of the later nineteenth century, challenged the 'negative stereotypes' held by writers, 'including historians', towards suburbs. He quotes Thompson on role separation between genders and Raymond Cole for 'lacking in the spirit of community or in democracy or in any sort of unity save that of mere physical juxtaposition'. Instead, he proposed 'examining the reality of community life' through social organisations (recreation, cultural) 'and enlightened middle class leadership'.<sup>57</sup> His dimensions included 'the existence of clubs and societies; sporting and leisure activities; participation in cultural events; support networks when necessary; multi-class activities; and enlightened middle class leadership'.

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<sup>54</sup> Michael Thompson, *Hampstead*, London 1974.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Inwood, *A history of London*, London 1998:581.

<sup>56</sup> Michael Thompson, 'The rise of suburbia':8.

<sup>57</sup> Christopher French, 'The good life in Victorian and Edwardian Surbiton', *Family & Community History* 2011;14(2):105-120.

## **Character**

### *Local, digital and public history*

Local history, argues Tracey Jones in a prize-winning essay for the *London Journal*, is both topography, the physical elements with boundaries and 'sense of place', the wider cultural identities<sup>58</sup> – a dualism which is reflected in the present dissertation. David Dymond, considers local history research to have eight 'principle themes' - topography, population, economic, political, social, cultural, religious and personal.<sup>59</sup>

Digital sources are enabling public history to be pursued through a wider range of enquiries, such as genealogy databases and online document access. The British Association for Local History publishes a directory of on-line resources – the 797 items reflect the strength and breadth on interest. There is 'increasing popular enthusiasm for the subject ... [and] people willing and able to take on this work.'<sup>60</sup> The London and Middlesex Archaeological Society has 50 affiliated local societies, several of which produce regular publications.<sup>61</sup> Local history in London is active, with both academic theses and descriptive reports of local areas.<sup>62</sup> Historic England has research concerned with 'historic local character and distinctiveness of urban areas to inspire and guide future land use, development and design.'<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Tracey Jones, 'What factors make a particular locality historically distinctive, and how might its local history now be studied?' *Local History* 2017;47(4):324-334.

<sup>59</sup> David Dymond, *Researching local history*, Lancaster 2016:4-5.

<sup>60</sup> Colin Thom, 'Local history in London', *The London Journal* 2011;36:77-81.

<sup>61</sup> *LAMAS*, <[lamas.org.uk/affiliated-societies.html](http://lamas.org.uk/affiliated-societies.html)>

<sup>62</sup> Appendix 1: London local studies by borough.

<sup>63</sup> Historic England. 'Urban and public realm heritage' <[historicengland.org.uk/research/current/discover-and-understand/urban-public-realm/#Section4Text](http://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/discover-and-understand/urban-public-realm/#Section4Text)>



## **Research questions**

London historiography has engaged with both physical development and social conditions and also undertaken topic studies at local level. The study of Camden Town as a Georgian Suburb can use particularity to inform the general – understanding how London estates developed, the lives of residents and the businesses that were established and the possibilities of character, through local history, to contribute to present day debates. The dimensions of Camden Town's emergence and development explored here are threefold: cohesion, identity and character.

Cohesion – the development of the estate: Ownership of the land, speculation in building and rental to residents have been investigated in other London estates. Does Camden Town demonstrate these patterns? How did the relation between landlord and steward contribute to the estate? How were speculative builders, who took most of the financial risk, involved? Was Camden Town, at the boundary of the inner suburbs, affected by transport developments? And by the end of the nineteenth century, was the estate still profitable?

Identity – the lives of people: Camden Town was a suburb at the edge of rapidly growing London. How did writers present Camden Town? How did local people report on the streets and lives? How was society organised across concerns of religion and education, intellectual and cultural life? People's work was in trades, in manufacture or as professionals: what were the interests and contributions of residents of Camden Town?

Character - a public level: Local history is relevant to residents and businesses, those with relatives who lived here in the past, and those in political positions with concerns for the neighbourhood's planning. How can history contribute to conservation? What are the potential impacts of public history?

## Sources

In approaches to sources, the choice was made to focus within the Camden Town estate, and to exclude materials that mentioned 'Camden Town' but were outside the estate. The recent secondary histories of Camden, that have described other areas, were not used. Primary materials at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre,<sup>64</sup> including documents from the St Pancras Vestry, local maps and pictures and nineteenth century local newspapers have been used by Camden History Society for over fifty years. Among issues that were previously actively addressed relating to Camden Town estate and not included in the present study were the impact of the railways and the working of the Poor Law.<sup>65</sup> A hand-search of the card catalogue using the name of each street within Camden Town estate was advised by the Archivist, but little material from the nineteenth century was found. One unique resource at the Centre, however, the Heal Collection on St Pancras (donated 1913), documenting informal parts of life such as advertisements, events and news-stories, has a card-index and the microfilm (not originals) could be searched by topic.<sup>66</sup>

The present study has drawn on new sources for Camden Town's history, in national and local records and publications. The London Metropolitan Archives include a significant holding of the Camden estate – 1232 listed groups of documents, particularly deeds, and register indexes. Other materials include the Camden Town Paving Commission, the Water Boards and the Regent's Canal. The National Archives (TNA) holds state materials, including wills and probate, and private records such as deeds and indentures: these were of particular use for the study of the Jeffreys and Camden family records. The National Archives search engine *Discovery* also links with (an unknown proportion of) local public and

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<sup>64</sup> London Borough of Camden, 'collections' <[camden.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/leisure/local-history/collections](http://camden.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/leisure/local-history/collections)>

<sup>65</sup> *Camden History Review*, 7:16-20; 38:2-9.

<sup>66</sup> Ambrose Heal, proprietor of the major furniture store in Tottenham Court Road, Bloomsbury, was actively interested in St Pancras local affairs; he was a supporter of the Camden Town library.

private archives. This directs to materials from the Pratt family deposited in the 1970s with Kent County Libraries, which has an excellent digital catalogue: there is correspondence of the Lords Camden with the estate stewards and account books as well as legal records for property.

Held at the London School of Economics and now partly digitised, the 1890s Booth social survey of London has well-known maps of social grading. Some of the notebooks made at the time of the survey are available online, but visiting the archive provided access to the half of the notebooks that are not online, such as those of church ministers, with relevant material for Camden Town. Visits were also made to the Church of England archives at Lambeth Palace and in Bermondsey, with materials about the prebendary, Rev. Thomas Randolph, and the prebend of Cantlowes, including details of the division of the estate in 1875. The Bishopsgate Institute has a good digital catalogue with some materials for Camden.

The British Association for Local History has a guide to internet sources as well as its journal.<sup>67</sup> The *Connected Histories* database provided digital access to further primary sources, including Parliament, British newspapers, the Johnson collection of ephemera and the Proceedings from the Old Bailey (for time reasons not used extensively in this study).<sup>68</sup> The *Bibliography of British and Irish History* was a valuable source for identifying secondary literature.<sup>69</sup> Digital *Explore* catalogues have been introduced by the University of London and University College London libraries. The British Library, with excellent digital catalogue was used when no volumes were onsite in Bloomsbury.

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<sup>67</sup> British Association for Local History, 'Internet sites for local historians: a Directory' <balh.org.uk/>

<sup>68</sup> *Connected histories* <connectedhistories.org>

<sup>69</sup> *Bibliography* <history.ac.uk/projects/bbih>

## **Dissertation plan**

The Dissertation investigates the development of Camden Town as a Georgian suburb, its construction and life in the nineteenth century, and its relationship with conservation and choices in London's planning.

*Chapter One* has set out the broad issue of investigating Camden Town, in north London, as a Georgian suburb. The literature describes the building of other London estates, but not Camden Town; and there has not been a focus on society and lives at local level. There are sources beyond those previously used for Camden's local history. The research questions address themes of coherence, identity and character in the following chapters.

Estates provide the key to London's form. While central and outer areas have been researched, there has been less focus on the early inner suburbs. *Chapter Two* describes the development of Lord Camden's estate, how landlords, stewards and builders each played a part in its construction and the establishment of trades and business, enabling the estate's rising value.

In contrast with the built form that remains in the present century, the lives of people in the nineteenth century and the institutions that reflect social values, choices and actions had to be reconstructed from documents and writing. The identity of Camden Town is considered in *Chapter Three* through the subjective and objective perceptions of place, who and how people lived, the social structures that were created and the working lives of artisanal and middle-class people.

Local history can contribute to contemporary affairs. Historic England works with local authorities in designating buildings and settings for conservation. A significant aspect for local history is to inform public authorities and decision-makers controlling towns and neighbourhoods of the context and character of their areas. This theme will be taken up in *Chapter Four*.

## **Conclusion**

This study uses new sources to demonstrate the coherence of building Camden Town estate as a Georgian suburb and to reveal its identity through its residents, society and business. This material contributes to contemporary debates on 'character' within planning and conservation at both local and London levels.

## **Chapter 2 Coherence – building and management**

### **Camden Town estate**

The land estates forming a mosaic across London in Georgian times were in private hands, those of the aristocracy, church and colleges. The demesne of Cantlowes was a prebend of St Paul's Cathedral, leased for an annual tith: the transfer of ownership through the Jeffreys family, gained by Lord Camden, has not been previously described.

A chronology of the land's improvement can be shown through records of the Camden Town estate – the estate registers and maps. Leases on land were let from 1789. The initial building was housing along the main roads and later the bridges for roads over the Canal. The second phase came with a new road, Camden Road: there were ornamental squares and crescents, generous back gardens for the terraces and development of the wharves of the canal. The third phase included building of railways, both over and under the estate, and the extension of terraced housing to cover the whole territory.

A critical consideration for this study has been estate management. The Church of England was the primary land-owner through two prebendaries, and later by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, while three Lords Camden were arbitrators in decisions. But for the estate as a whole, the role and lives of the stewards, including their correspondence with the Lords Camden, need to be explored. The stewards, working in offices with partners, oversaw estate planning, implementation, rents and accounts. The system of 'speculative building' placed the burden of capital for materials and labour on the builder: records demonstrate how these builders also engaged with Camden Town residents and society.

Camden Town was set between main roads, on which turnpike fees were levied up until the 1850s. Across the centre of Camden Town was built first the Regent's Canal, opening in 1820, with Camden Town set between Paddington to the west and the docks to the east. And then railways arrived, running on either side of the estate. But in contrast to their impact on outer Victorian suburbs, the railways did not generate housing development for commuters but, rather, provided employment for construction and services.

Camden Town's development was part of London's expansion. From 1789 to completion in 1870s, the return on the estate's ground rents increased almost twenty-fold. But in the changing economic climate at the end of the nineteenth century, London's inner urban estates were in decline and open to realisation of the capital gain through sale.

### ***The Jeffreys inheritance***<sup>70</sup>

Cantlowes demesne was one of thirty prebends owned by St Paul's Cathedral. The leasehold of Cantlowes could be bought and sold, with annual land payments continuing to the prebendary. Richard Utber, a City draper, bought Cantlowes demense (and land elsewhere in north London) in the Commonwealth period, after the Parliamentary Survey valued it in 1649.<sup>71</sup> The prebendary rights returned to the Cathedral at the Restoration. In 1666, Joseph Sheldon, a Master of the Company of Tallow Chandlers and future Lord Mayor, sold Cantlowes to Sir George Ent, Fellow of the Royal Society and future President of the Royal

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<sup>70</sup> This is a summary of more detailed personal research, not presented here because of length.

<sup>71</sup> 'The lands of bishops, deans and chapters were sequestrated (appropriated) by Parliament from 1643, but at this stage only their revenue was put to other uses. Sales of Episcopal lands began in 1646 and of dean and chapter lands in 1649.' In National Archives (UK) leaflet: *Crown, Church and Royalist Lands: 1642-1660*.

College of Physicians. In May 1681, a new owner bought the lease, paying Sir George Ent £2,750.

The new owner was Jeffrey Jeffreys, of the Jeffreys family in Brecknockshire, south Wales. He was unmarried, of middle age and a barrister at the Inner Temple in London. But he died suddenly in the following year, and the noncupative will left his estate to his older brother, Lewis Jeffreys. Lewis learned that the funds for the lease on Cantlowes had been lent by their uncle, Alderman John Jeffreys, and Lewis therefore transferred the lease to him. Alderman Jeffreys was a very rich tobacco merchant, the land (at 'Kentish Town') forming only a small part of many property holdings which, on his death in 1689, passed to his two younger nephews and business partners, Sir John and Sir Jeffrey Jeffreys.

Sir Jeffrey's estate, on his death in 1709, was inherited by his first son, Edward Jeffreys, who was MP for Brecon but after an election defeat in 1713 went abroad (possibly to North America). Management of the Brecon lands passed to his brother Nicholas Jeffreys, who in 1717 married, at St Andrew's Holborn, in London, Frances Eyles, daughter also of City merchants. Their only son, Jeffrey Jeffreys married Mary Morrice, a relative of Frances, in 1740: but the son of this union, Edward, died in infancy; and soon afterwards, Jeffrey was committed insane, remaining so until his death in 1761. Nicholas Jeffreys died in 1747 and the inheritance from Sir Jeffrey Jeffreys was held, in trust, between Nicholas' wife, Frances, her three daughters, Frances, Elizabeth and Mary, and Mary, her daughter-in-law.<sup>72</sup>

Charles Pratt (first Lord Camden) married Elizabeth Jeffreys, the second of the three sisters in 1749; when she died in 1775, Lord Camden inherited her portion. Frances the mother,

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<sup>72</sup> Traditional statements of Lord Camden's inheritance do not describe this complex sequence. They sometimes incorrectly ascribe the inheritance to 'hanging judge' George Jeffries, and often only define Elizabeth Jeffreys, 'of the Priory, Brecon', as the heiress.



Elizabeth's sister Mary, and her sister-in-law (also Mary) all died in 1779. Lord Camden committed the final inheritor, the third sister, Miss Frances Jeffreys, as insane in 1780, while continuing a £500 annual payment from the estate, and she lived in Welbeck Street until her death in 1785.<sup>73</sup> Augustine Greenland, Lord Camden's agent, listed the family deaths in the 1785 estate accounts (Figure 2.1):

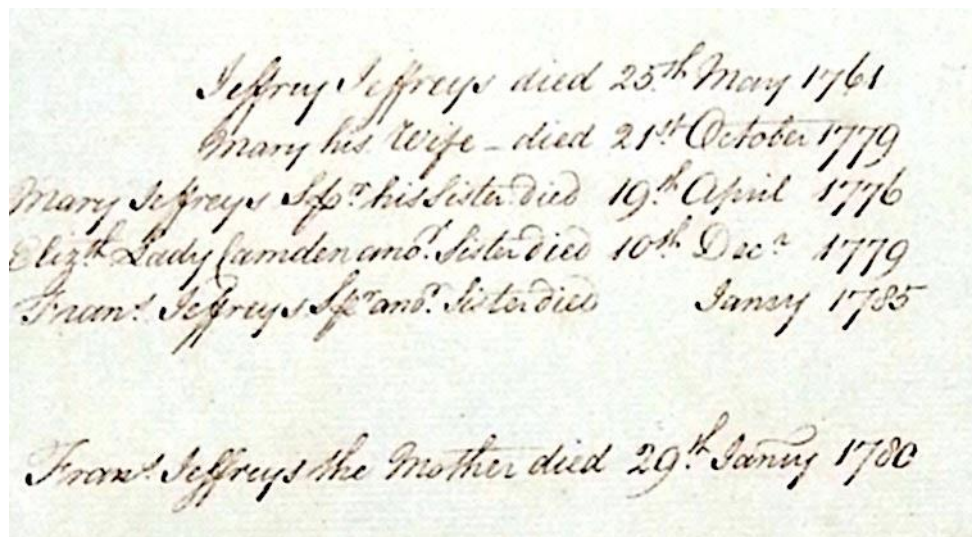


Figure 2.1 Jeffreys family inheritors listed in Camden Estate accounts<sup>74</sup>

### ***Chronology of development***

Edward Walford, in *Old and New London* (1878) describes Horace Walpole writing in his diary in 1791 that, "Lord Camden has just let ground at Kentish Town for building fourteen hundred houses". The quotation is repeated by many historians of Camden Town. However,

<sup>73</sup> The 1780 lunacy proceedings document (TNA:C211/13/J38) states: 'She [is] said to be lunatic with lucid intervals since 6<sup>th</sup> January 1766, but by what means unknown except by Visitation of God.' By chance, this is confirmed (with her name) in the record book for 1766 of John Monro, the leading private doctor for mental illness, on a visit to her in Welbeck street. See Andrew Skull, Jonathan Andrews, *Customers and patrons of the mad-trade: the management of lunacy in eighteenth-century London*, London 2000:6Jan.

<sup>74</sup> Kent Archives and Local History, Camden Estate papers.

a report in *The Times* six months earlier gives the number as four hundred rather than fourteen hundred houses. Was this exaggeration by Walpole, or poor memory?<sup>75</sup>

Lord Camden initially asked George Dance to make a plan for the estate (Figure 2.2).<sup>76</sup>

Dance was architect and surveyor for the City of London. The Pratt and Dance families were connected socially as well as professionally: George had been architect to alterations by Lord Camden's brother, Sir John Pratt, at their family house, Wildernesse, in Kent; and his brother Nathaniel was captain of the East Indiaman *Earl Camden*.<sup>77</sup> Dance's Camden Town plan had roads forming circles and squares – new for London, previously only seen at Bath.

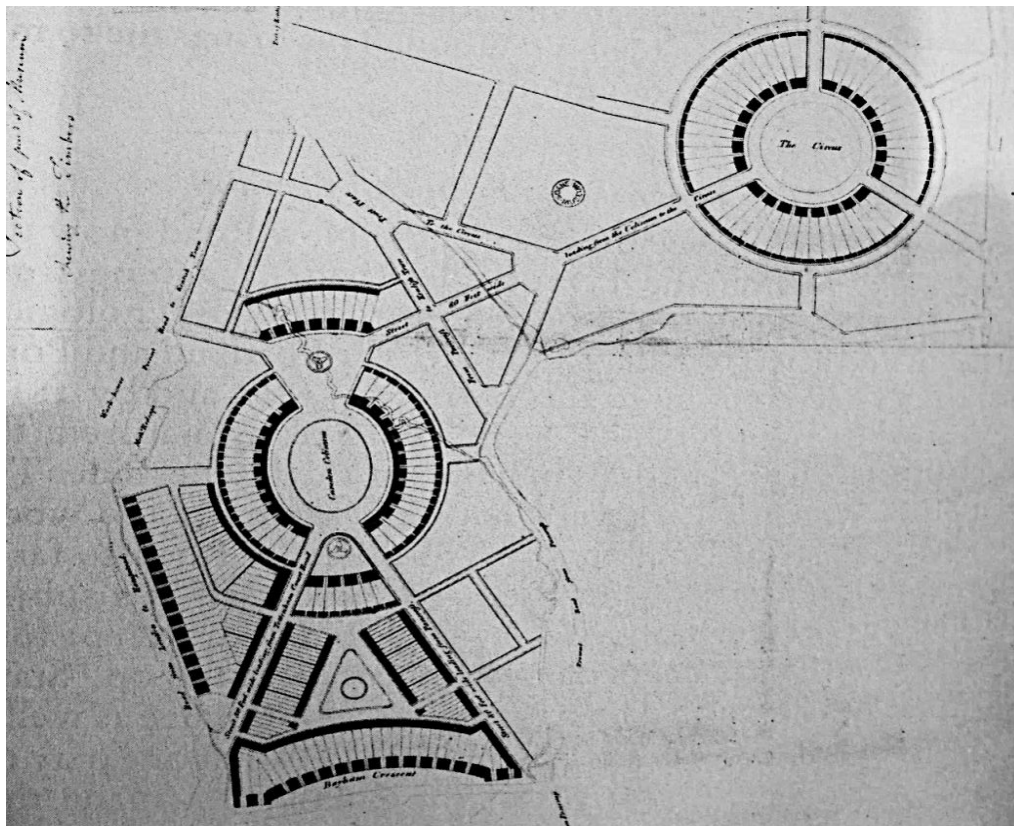


Figure 2.2 George Dance: proposal for Camden Town, 1789<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Edward Walford, 'Camden Town and Kentish Town', in *Old and New London*. The Letters of Horace Walpole, Letter 382: to The Miss Berrys. Berkeley Square, 8 June 1791. *The Times*, 10 January 1791:3.

<sup>76</sup> Dorothy Stroud, *George Dance Architect 1741–1825*, London 1971.

<sup>77</sup> Mark McCarthy, 'Camdens at Sea', *Camden History Society Newsletter* 2017;283:2-3.

<sup>78</sup> John Summerson, 'The beginnings of an early Victorian suburb', *London Topographical Record* 1997;27:1-48.

But the idea was too grandiose for the land: so many high-quality houses would have stood little chance of selling at a time of war with France, as the poor sales of the Polygon houses in Somers Town was to show.<sup>79</sup> Instead, an early plan shows an outline with three main roads and associated cross-roads (Figure 2.3).<sup>80</sup>



Figure 2.3 Plan in a lease for Camden Town, 1791.<sup>80</sup>

The first houses, named Camden Place, were built in small groups along Hampstead Road (which became the High Street) near the Mother Red Caps inn and down Hampstead Road to Fig Lane at the bottom. An early proposal was to build a new Veterinary College on land near the River Fleet, with a paddock, yielding £200 annually: the clients were highly respectable and the enterprise commercially successful.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Clarke, 'Building capitalism':157.

<sup>80</sup> LMA:E/CAM/0029, '30 acres near the Hampstead Road and Fig Lane', 1790.

<sup>81</sup> Jane Kingsley, *The Royal Veterinary College: 200 years of veterinary care at Camden Town*, London 1992.

The veterinary college was built on the east side of the estate, by the river with a new road, to become College Street, running northwards and the first cross streets, which link across Hampstead Road with Lord Southampton's terraces.

Two speculative builders, Kirkman and Hendy, took on a lease for about 90 acres covering most of the southern portion of the estate at more than £900 a year. In the difficult times following the French Revolution, however, they did not build and sell enough to cover their rental, and went bankrupt. But their backers, who wished a return on their investment, continued to support building. In 1803, four acres were laid out as a burial ground for St Martins-in-the-Fields Church (where Cantlowes' prebendary Anthony Hamilton was a Vicar), at £100 pa. Camden Town chapel in 1828 was built in Greek classical style by William Inwood. The early development of Camden Town was first captured in detail on Thompson's map of the whole St Pancras parish, 1803;<sup>82</sup> a simplified version is shown in Figure 2.4.

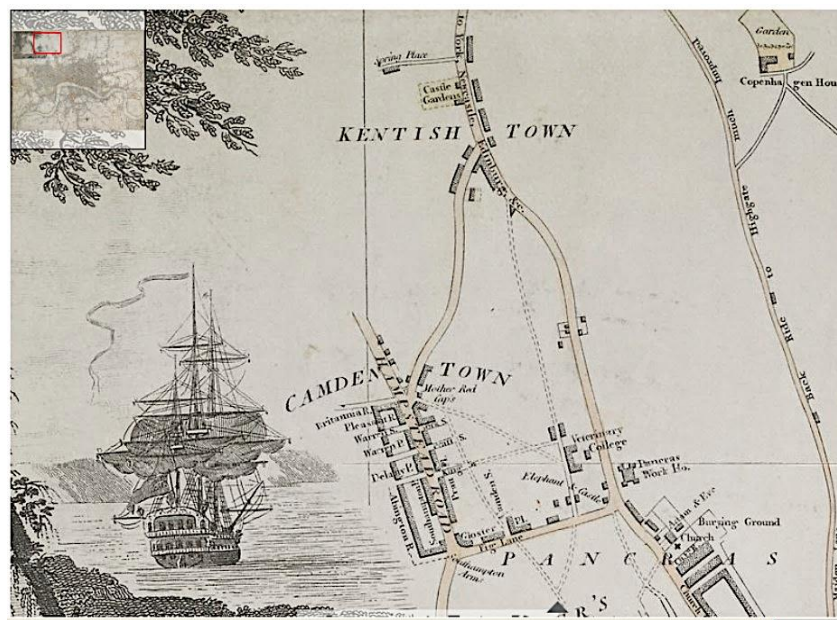


Figure 2.4 Selection from Laurie & Whittle map: London with its environs.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Anthony Cooper, *The Pancras map mystery*, *Camden History Review* 1979:26-28;

<sup>83</sup> British Library online gallery, Shelfmark Maps Crace Port. 6.199.

A second phase saw building across the middle areas of the estate. At the north west end of Kings Road, by Kentish Town, the first houses distant from the Hampstead Road were built: initially along the main Kentish Town Road, then in Camden Street as Camden Terrace and then linking, as Jeffreys Street, back to Kings Road. By 1820s there were villas along Kings Road – modestly called Camden Cottages, although some were four-storeys. And to the east, by a section of Kings Road called St Paul’s Terrace, there were side streets named Randolph Street and Little Randolph Street, after Thomas Randolph, the Prebendary. The development following completing the canal, in the 1820s are shown in this hand-drawn plan (Figure 2.5):

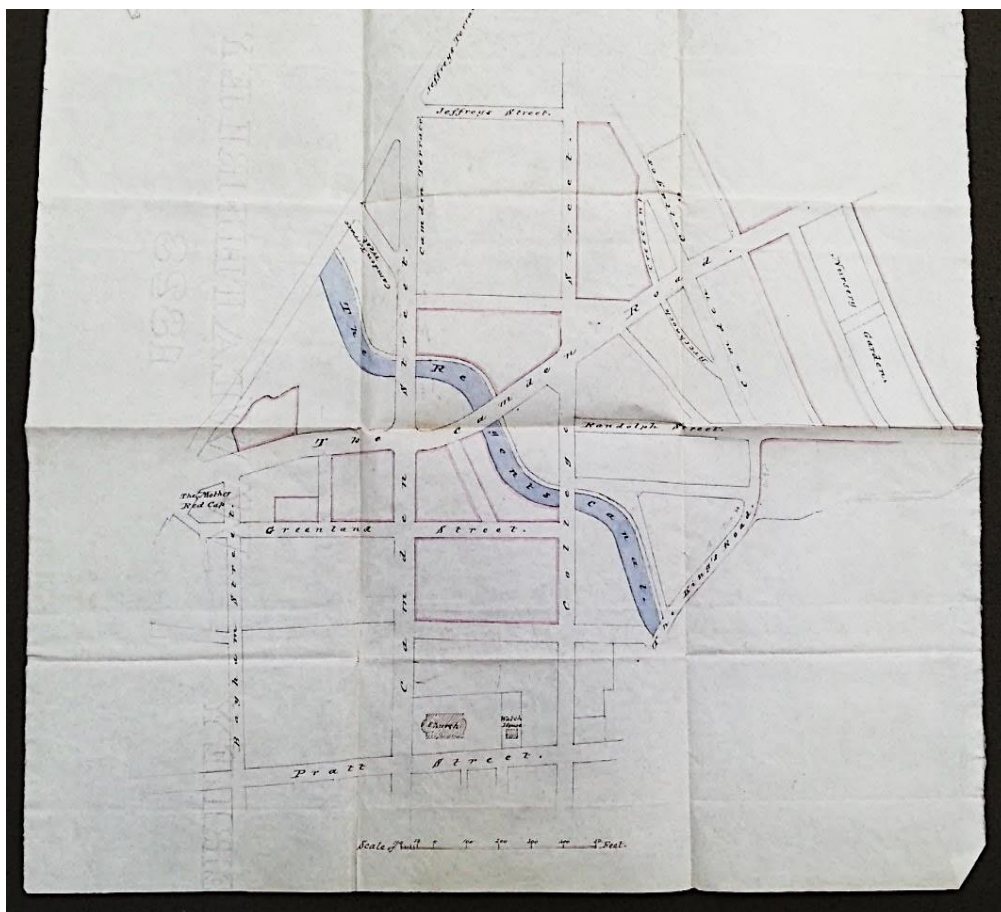


Figure 2.5 Camden Town sketch map<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup> KALH, Pratt manuscripts, miscellaneous.

In a third phase, the new Camden Road became the axis for development. To the north-east, Camden Square and surrounding streets were laid out, and on the north-west were smaller terraces and gardens, with a border curving along the boundary to Kentish Town Road. Camden Square was completed in the 1840s and land to the north, originally intended as gardens, was given by Lord Camden for a new church, called (after the Cathedral) St Paul's. A plan from the late 1840s, probably by Joseph Kay (Figure 2.6), shows roads covering the whole estate: the northern terraces continued building up to the 1870s.<sup>85</sup>



Figure 2.6 Camden Town Estate plan c1848 <sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> LMA, Marquess of Camden collection

## ***Building mix***

The estate included housing, green space and workshops. The 1774 London Building Act had set out four grades of houses, specifying qualities of structure. Landlords wanted the best return for their land, and believed that the value at reversion of the lease would be greater for a higher quality house. Nevertheless, houses were built to be sold and the high-end market was limited and competitive. Moreover, large houses needed smaller houses nearby for staff and tradespeople. In Bloomsbury, Burton's building had a balance of all four ranks of houses.<sup>86</sup>

Most terraced and villa houses were of three or four floors, with six to eight rooms, a back washroom and generous rear gardens. Some two-storey (fourth-rate) houses were built in the mews at the back of the main streets in the south – College Street and Camden Street. On the western side, between the High Street and Bayham Street, industrial uses in back yards were mixed with housing, forming complex and flexible sites for trades.<sup>87</sup> And as the nineteenth century developed, public buildings became dispersed across the estate – there were 'washhouses, churches, institutes, electrical power, entertainment, slaughter houses, school buildings, clinics' – as in the list of Michael Thompson, writing about 'the Rise of Suburbia'.<sup>88</sup> Other buildings in the same list – including 'workhouses, infectious disease hospital, lunatic care, and public administration' – were closely adjacent, on the Vestry site by St Pancras Church.

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<sup>86</sup> Dana Arnold. *Rural urbanism: London landscapes in the early nineteenth century*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005:29.

<sup>87</sup> No 12 High Street was successively a chapel, a school and a furniture workshop

<sup>88</sup> Michael Thompson, 'The rise of suburbia', in Robert Morris, Richard Rodger, eds, *The Victorian city: a reader in British urban history 1820-1914*, London 1993:149-180.

The six-foot long Estate Map of 1834 (Figure 2.8) in the London Metropolitan Archives shows the estate's mid period. The squares and crescents, and the gardens behind houses, provided a quality of views and interest of Regency times that would be later extended by Victorian urban planning.<sup>89</sup>

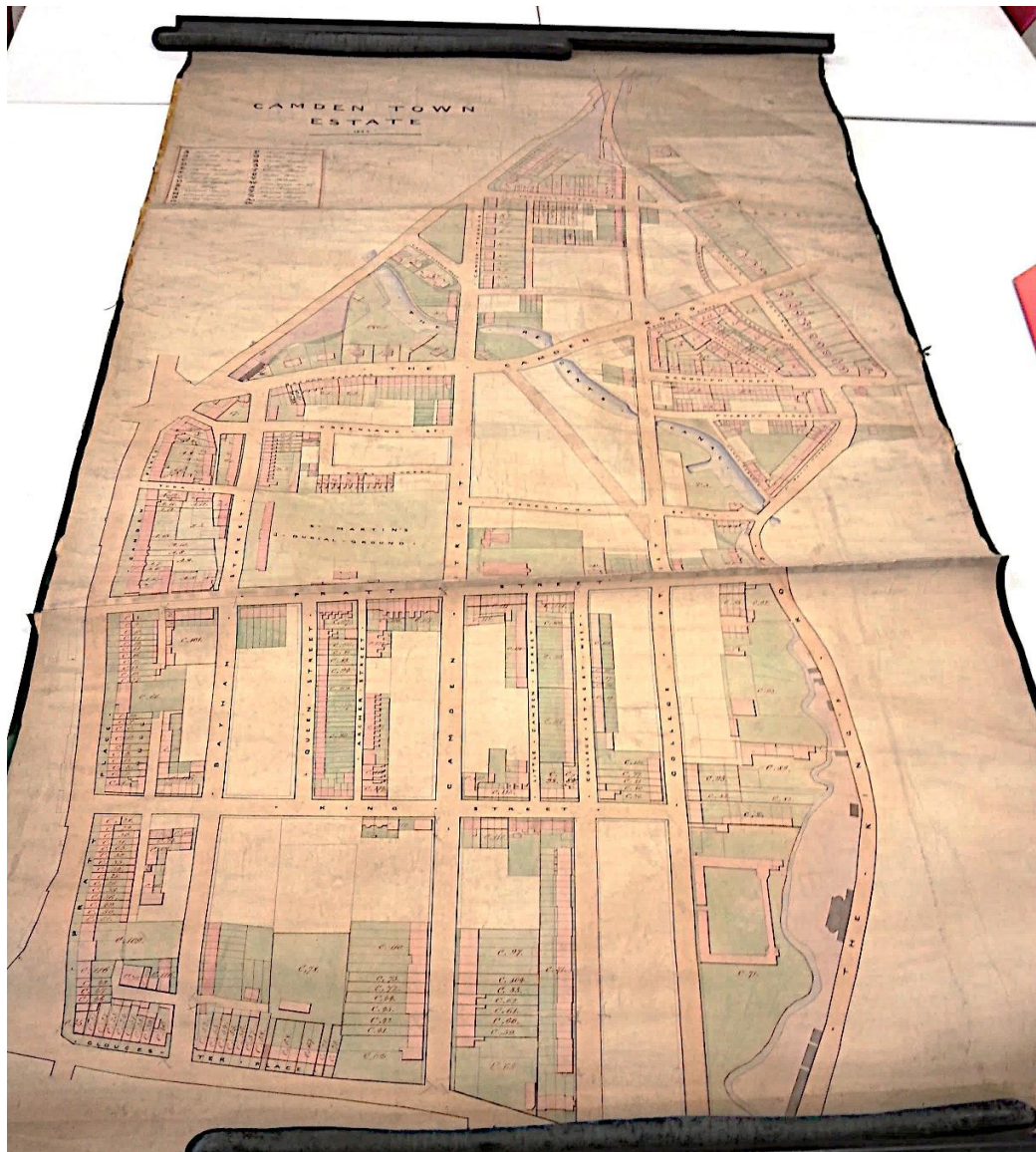


Figure 2.7 Camden Town Estate, office map 1833.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London square: "Islets in our desert of brick, slate and mud"*, LAMAS Local History Conference, November 2009: 279–86; Sarah Dewis, *The Loudons and the gardening press*, London 2016.

<sup>90</sup> LMA, Marquess of Camden collection



After the Canal was built, residual land adjacent ('Brian's Ground' in the plan below), which formed a 'triangle' with Camden Terrace and Kentish Town Road, was set out as gardens in 1818 by George Lever for £100 (Figure 2.8).



Figure 2.8. Plan for ornamental gardens, Camden Terrace.<sup>91</sup>

More green space was introduced for the north of Camden Town. A sketch, attached to a letter from the estate steward, Joseph Kay, shows Camden Cottages on the Kings Road and opposite them the two curves of Brecknock Crescent. To the east of Camden Road there is 'Camden Gardens' and on the opposite side is 'Camden Square' (Figure 2.9).

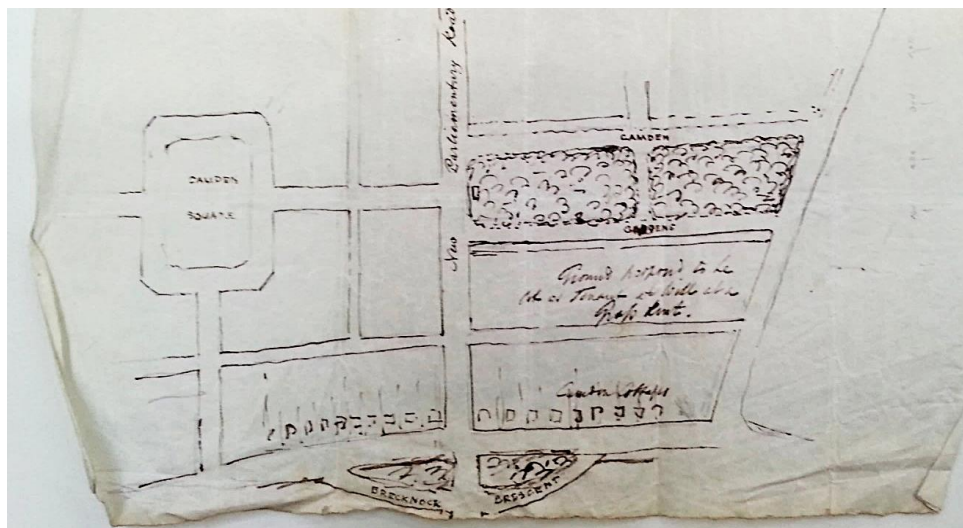


Figure 2.9 Joseph Kay, sketch map north of Kings Road<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> KALH, Pratt family papers, in correspondence to Lord Camden, 1818

<sup>92</sup> KALH, Pratt family papers, letter to Lord Camden, 11 October 1825

These areas of green emerged in due course in altered form. The gardens on the east side became a nursery, while the west side was developed, because of the estate's boundary, more as an oval than a square (it was also let out for nursery gardens).

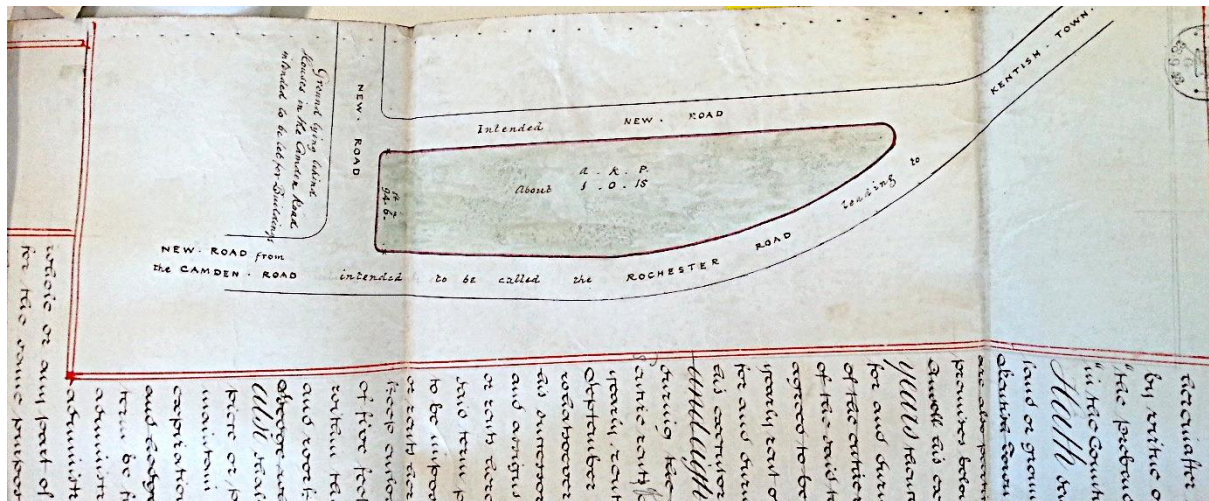


Figure 2.10 Plan of Rochester Road and gardens<sup>93</sup>

Camden Square to the east and Camden Crescent to the north west on Camden Road were added. In total, Kay created seven green spaces, each of different character, within the northern parts of the estate.

## Managing the estate

The quality of Camden Town estate depended on people. This section considers the interplay of three groups – the Lords Camden, the prebendaries and the ground stewards. Continuity in management enabled the steady development of the estate.

<sup>93</sup> LMA Marquess of Camden collection, leases and deeds

### ***Lords and prebendaries***

The direct landlords of Camden Town estate were the Lords Camden – Charles Pratt, first Lord Camden, who gained the estate from his wife Frances Jeffreys; his only son, John Jeffreys Pratt (1759-1840), who was landlord from 1793 for 44 years; and the third Lord Camden, George Pratt (1799-1870), who was landlord for a further 30 years.<sup>94</sup>

Yet Camden Town was not the hereditary home of the Lords Camden. Their family house was Wildernesse, near Tonbridge in Kent. And in London, they lived first in Lincoln's Inn, then Mayfair, and later in Eaton Square. Correspondence shows the stewards meeting with the Lord either in the London or at the country houses, and decisions, from major contracts to managing the quality of builders' work, were regularly discussed.

The St Paul's Cathedral prebendaries of Cantlowes had more influence on the finances of the Camden Town estate than its development. Anthony Hamilton was collated<sup>95</sup> to the prebend of Cantlowes in 1771, and held it to his death; he also held the rectorship of Much Hadham in Hertfordshire from 1776 and was a vicar at St Martins in the Fields. 'Noted for his preaching, his benevolence and his social popularity',<sup>96</sup> he married the daughter of Richard Terrick, Bishop of London 1774-7 and lived in London at 19 Saville Row.

When Hamilton died in 1812, the then Bishop of London John Randolph swiftly collated the prebend of Cantlowes and the rectorship of Much Hadham on his own son, Thomas

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<sup>94</sup> Henry Eeles, *Lord Chancellor Camden and his family*, London 1934. (There is no more recent family biography.)

<sup>95</sup> The bishop collates (appoints) the prebendary, who is a member of Church of England clergy receiving the income from the land (with no apparent duties). The land is the prebend.

<sup>96</sup> Cambridge Alumni Database, HMLN755A.

Randolph, who had just graduated from Oxford.<sup>97</sup> Through an Act of Parliament<sup>98</sup> he also negotiated a major revision of the Cantlowes lease: rather than the fixed annual tithes of £42, the Estate lessees (Camdens) would pay one third of all ground rents to the prebendary while keeping two-thirds. But these benefits accruing personally to prebendaries did not escape the public eye. In the 1837 *Morning Chronicle*, the correspondent A CHURCHMAN observed that the 1812 Act for Cantlowes had 'enabled him, by sacrificing two thirds of the estate *for ever*, to take *immediate* possession of the remaining third, the value of which was about £1000 per annum' (the writer's emphases).<sup>99</sup>

The few existing letters from Randolph to Lord Camden are about money. In 1827 Randolph complained that the estate steward, Joseph Kay, has been slow in paying his account. In 1844, from his home at 17 Green Street, Mayfair, he offered to contribute £50 per annum, or £100 for two years and then £10 per annum into the fund for the new church in Camden Square (Lord Camden was giving £500) – and then ends the letter wishing that Joseph Kay would be more timely in making up the accounts of the annual rents.

The 1840s Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act had reformed 'sinecure benefices' on the death of the incumbent. But Randolph as late as the 1870s, writing from 35 Harley Street, proposed that the income should be retained for the prebendary stall at the Cathedral rather than go into the general Church income.<sup>100</sup> At his death in 1875, the *Pall Mall Gazette* recorded that since 1812 he had 'enjoyed an [annual] income of £1500' as prebendary of Cantlers and '£2,147 with house and glebe' from Much Hadham.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> KALH, U840/EL13.

<sup>98</sup> UK Parliament, 53 George 3 c49.

<sup>99</sup> 'Alienation of church property', *The Morning Chronicle* 30 April 1838.

<sup>100</sup> Lambeth Palace Library, Tait / Randolph correspondence, code NA1702.

<sup>101</sup> 'Death of Prebendary Randolph,' *The Morning Post* 8 May 1875:6.

## ***Stewards***

The wider literature has not given much consideration to estate stewards, but their role appears critical for Camden Town. Four stewards (or working in partnership) created Camden Town between 1780 and 1870, each serving for around 20 years – a notable stability. It has been possible to piece together a little of their fuller professional lives – Augustine Greenland (lawyer) to 1803; Kent, Claridge and Iveson (estate agents) to about 1820; Joseph Kay (architect) from the mid 1820s to 1848; and John Shaw (architect) to 1866.

Sir Charles Pratt, when Lord Chancellor in 1757, gained the services of Augustine Greenland as a young legally trained assistant. Greenland's practice later was in Marylebone, with John Ward, and he took on the management of the Jeffreys estate until his death in 1803. He undertook the roles of deputy teller at the Bank of England and under-sheriff of Kent, in the patronage of Lord Camden.<sup>102</sup> For the first Lord Camden he negotiated the difficulty when the first main developers of the estate, Messrs Kirkman and Hendy, went bankrupt in 1793. And shortly before he died, he wrote a long account, from his own perspective, of the (second) Lord Camden's three difficult years as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland "to correct the inaccuracies of Adolphus's History of England".<sup>103</sup> Greenland lived at Carshalton in Surrey, where the parish church holds a memorial to him.

After Greenland, management of the estate passed to the firm of Kent, Claridge & Pearce. John Kent was among Society's foremost practitioners in estate improvement. His *Hints to gentlemen of landed property* (1775), with skills gained observing agricultural practice in Flanders, included suggestions for crop rotation, animal husbandry and forestry. Kent was

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<sup>102</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, Obituary, Aug 1803.

<sup>103</sup> KALH, Augustine Greenland, 'A narrative of facts political and official since Augustus Greenland went into service of the late Charles, Earl Camden', U840/F159/A/3.

retained by the King for Windsor and Richmond parks and he took on Claridge and Pearce as partners.<sup>104</sup> John Claridge continued the firm after Kent's death in 1810, moving offices to 47 Pall Mall where he was joined by John Iveson, who also became agent for the coal-rich Northumberland estates of Lady Frances Anne Tempest, a relation by marriage to cousins of the Pratts. The Camden Town Estate Act of 1812 has a schedule itemising the existing tenancies, acreage and annual ground rents written by Iveson.<sup>105</sup>

Iveson had high professional standing. He was called to give evidence before the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture at the time of the Corn Laws.<sup>106</sup> When and why Claridge and Iveson gave up the role as agents for the Camden estate is unclear.<sup>107</sup> By the 1820s Iveson had moved out of London to Wiltshire, to work for the Wiltshire Savernake estate.<sup>108</sup> From there, in 1833, he was dismissed by Lord Ailesbury. Michael Thompson wrote (in 1958) of the 'fraudulent activities of his steward, John Iveson ... who was a rascal ... [and] lived like a lord at the Marquess's expense'.<sup>109</sup> Possibly, as local agent, Iveson was a casualty of the events of the Reform Act. Yet he retained his professional integrity: in 1844 he was again giving evidence to the House of Commons, now as a Commissioner for enclosure.<sup>110</sup> And there is a respectful letter from him to (the third) Lord Camden in 1854, who had written asking for a piece of lost information from his time with the Camden Estate.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Pamela Horn, 'An eighteenth-century land agent: the career of Nathaniel Kent (1737–1810)', *Agricultural History Review* 1982;30(1):1-16.

<sup>105</sup> UK Parliament, 53 George 3 c49.

<sup>106</sup> 1821 to the UK Parliament Select Committee on the Depressed state of Agriculture.

<sup>107</sup> Eg, Claridge and Iveson report on an Essex estate in 1819, <secureweb1.essexcc.gov.uk/SeaxPAM/result\_details.aspx?ThisRecordsOffset=1&id=142699>

<sup>108</sup> Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, 9/1/472: 'About sixty-five letters, from John Iveson agent, to Thomas, 4th Earl of Ailesbury and Charles, 5th Earl, later 1st Marquess of Ailesbury, on estate affairs, 1813-1829'.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Thompson, 'English Landownership: the Ailesbury Trust 1832-56', *Economic History Review* 1958;11:125.

<sup>110</sup> Maurice Beresford, 'Commissioners of enclosure', *Economic History Review* 1946;16(2):135.

<sup>111</sup> KALH, U840/C376/18/9.

The most significant agent for Camden Town was Joseph Kay. He comes into visibility from 1823, writing to (second) Lord Camden that he would be attending the Paving Commission in discussions of the New Road (becoming Camden Road). Thereafter, through to 1848 there are about 40 letters to the second and third Lords Camden.<sup>112</sup> Although sometimes at the Naval College, Greenwich, where he also had an appointment, he mainly wrote from No 6 Gower Street, adjacent to the estate's solicitor, William Aldersey, at No 8 Gower Street, Bloomsbury. Kay had started his apprenticeship with William Porden, architect to the Grosvenor Estate, and had married Porden's daughter. He made the Grand Tour in 1803-5, travelling back with younger fellow architect Robert Smirke. He followed Samuel Cockerill as architect at the Foundling Hospital in Bloomsbury, and in 1811 designed the major terrace at Mecklenburgh Square (commended by Pevsner<sup>113</sup>). He also worked for Lord Chichester, whose estate was on the south coast at Eastbourne: Kay's masterpiece (Figure 2.11) is the arcades and St Mary's Church at Hastings sea-front, hewn into the chalk beneath the castle.



Figure 2.11 Pelham Crescent and St Mary-in-the-Castle, Hastings

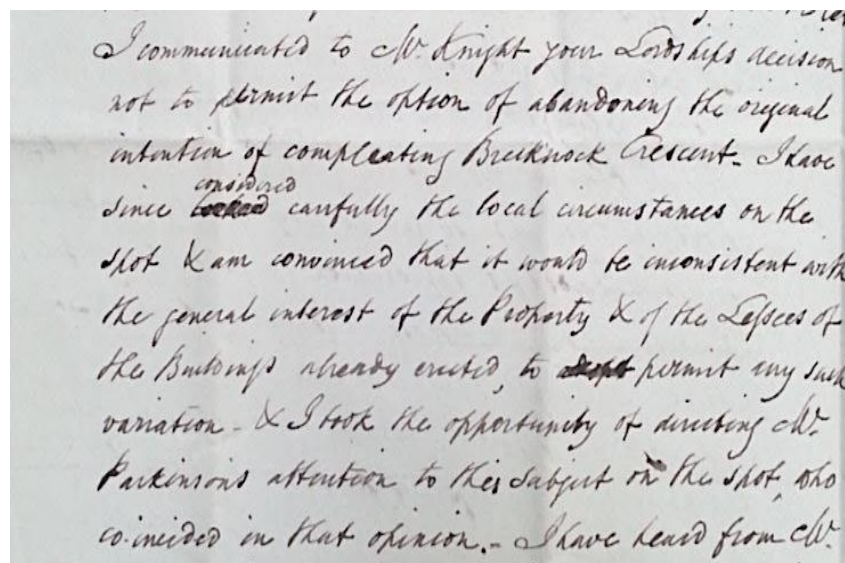
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<sup>112</sup> KALH, U840/EL15 seq.

<sup>113</sup> Pevsner, 'London North':35-36

Travelling to Eastbourne to Lord Chichester, and to his own house *Belmont* that he built in Hastings, Kay's correspondence indicates that he would also call on Lord Camden at Bayham or, by a different route, at Wildernesse. Like John Kent before, he saw his place at the table as much as in the office and through letters and visits kept his Lordships informed and in support of his work. Kay also became architect at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, contributed (now-listed) terrace houses for Lord Thornhill in Islington, and was a significant figure in the Architect's Club and vice president of the Institute of Architects.<sup>114</sup>

In Camden Town, he was responsible for development of the estate ground plan and the buildings. He oversaw a range of facades that achieved lightness and interest within the contemporary vernacular of post-Georgian brick and guttered roofs, with increasing use of plaster and ironwork. Either side were squares, with large single and paired villas in Camden Square, terraces and villas at Rochester Square and terraces broken into groups, some with a unifying stucco portico. In the non-parallel boundaries that joined the grid of roads, he created 'ornamental' gardens. An example of Kay's stewardship, in which he tries to ensure that the second Brecknock Crescent will be built, is shown in this letter to Lord Camden:



I communicated to Mr. Knight your Lordship's decision not to permit the option of abandoning the original intention of completing Brecknock Crescent. I have since ~~looked~~<sup>considered</sup> carefully the local circumstances on the spot & am convinced that it would be inconsistent with the general interest of the Property & of the Lessees of the Buildings already erected, to ~~not~~ permit any such variation - & I took the opportunity of directing Mr. Parkinson's attention to this subject on the spot, who coincided in that opinion. - I have heard from Mr.

Figure 2.12 Correspondence from Joseph Kay to Lord Camden, 29 February 1844.

<sup>114</sup> There is no biography of Kay. A folder at the Royal Institute of British Architecture has three pages.



Kay's successor, John Shaw, was also an established architect, although his preferred style was mixed Gothic and Tudor revival rather than Georgian.<sup>115</sup> He retained posts at Christ's Hospital school and Eton School and later – at the choice of Prince Albert – designed Wellington College, Sandhurst. He was also land agent for the Chalcot estate at Chalk Farm, and in Islington, both near to Camden Town. He lived in Gower Street and took over from Kay in 1848, commending in correspondence an 'ancient' plan of the Camden Town Estate that the third Lord Camden has found. He writes hoping to visit Lord Camden in the summer and expressing good wishes to Lady Camden and his family. Later, in 1864 he writes describing the offer for land made by the Midland Railway, and letters propose Mr Shaw to 'wait on' Lord Camden both in London, at Berkley Square and in Kent.

The later terraces under Shaw's direction have a heavier style than Kay's, still using London stock, with rendered window frames and raised front steps over a half-basement, and with a more uniform style. Although the New River Company's reservoir gave an open feature, on the far side of Maiden Lane, in Islington, the Metropolitan Cattle Market built in the 1860s created a new commercial zone, separating the Camden Town estate from Holloway.

### ***Builders***

The Estate plans and registers, and the correspondence, show the builders both creating and living in different parts of the estate. The Camden Town Estate map of 1833 has a key of builders to that point, with alphabetical letter on the plan (Figure 2.12):

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<sup>115</sup> Victorian web, Paul Johnson <[www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/shaw/bio2.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/shaw/bio2.html)>  
ODNB: John Shaw junior.

A	Holbrook Richard	P	Wood Edward and
B	Soyce John	Q	William
C	Hickman & Handy	R	Denton Samuel
D	Lever George	S	Brian Tho. Henry
E	Taylor Joseph	T	Denton Samuel
F	Westcott Richard	U	Fisher William
G	Lever George	V	Line William
H	Holbrook Thomas	W	Lever George the Yo <sup>r</sup>
I	Lever George	X	Dent Richard
K	Holbrook Samuel	Y	Denton Samuel
L	Holbrook Samuel	Z	Dulford Robert
M	Holbrook Samuel	Aa	Cumberland John
N	Gadby Charles	Bb	Dulford John
O	Chilly and Shires		

Figure 2.13 Builders for Estate plan, 1833<sup>116</sup>

An example of the builder's work is that of George Lever, who built No 1 Camden Street, at the north-west end of the estate, near Kentish Town. In a letter to Lord Camden of 1815, steward John Iveson writes:

I saw Mr [George] Lever on Saturday night and in selling the bargain for his building he proposes taking much of the front in Camden Street ... The ground in Camden Street I think worth 3/9d to 4sh [per foot frontage]. He is able to build a good house in the centre so as to face the other line to the Kentish Town Road – of these I will send your Lordship the ground plan and the elevations before the buildings are begun.<sup>117</sup>

The initial leases for 'Camden Terrace' propose a palace-like row of first rate houses of five floors (Figure 2.14).

<sup>116</sup> LMA Marquess of Camden collection, map 'Camden Town Estate'

<sup>117</sup> KALH Pratt manuscripts, correspondence

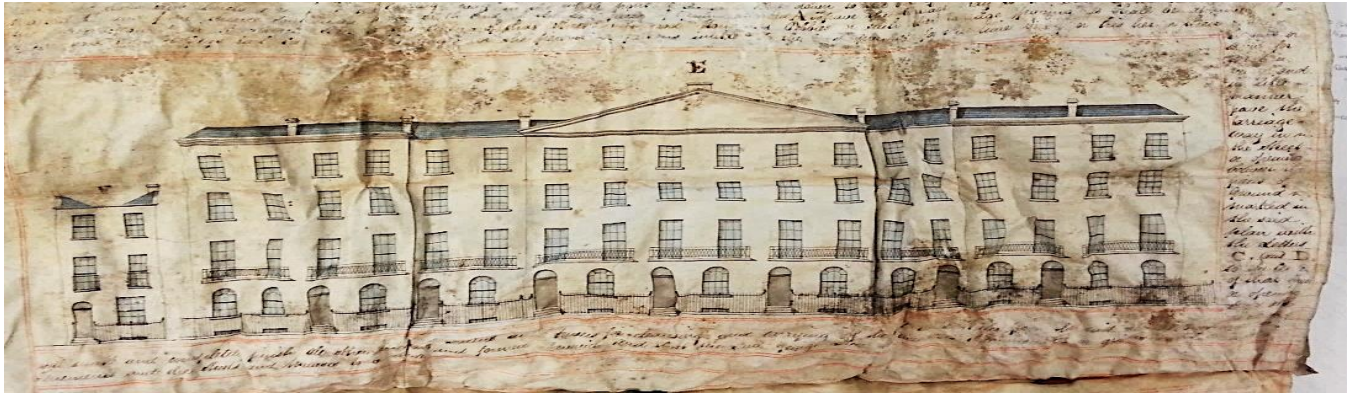


Figure 2.14. Camden Terrace: George Lever's proposed elevation <sup>118</sup>

However, the palatial terraces were not completed: only three of a terrace were built and instead Camden Terrace became paired villas. One of a pair that remains, shown K5 in the estate plan, has an added ironwork veranda and raised side extension. On the Estate map of 1837, the villas of Camden Terrace all have the letter 'K' – George Lever's holding (Figure 2.15).



Figure 2.15 Completed elevation and plan for villas on Camden Terrace<sup>119</sup>

<sup>118</sup> LMA, Marquess of Camden collection, leases and deeds.

<sup>119</sup> LMA, Marquess of Camden collection, Camden Estate map and contemporary views of 'K5'.

Builders were committed to Camden Town over long periods of time. Samuel Denton, in the period 1823-1827, contracted for 55 properties on St Paul's Terrace, Randolph Street and Prebend Street, all on the east side of the Estate at Kings Road; for six properties in 1829-1832; and then again 47 properties in 1837-43. The variation may be related to swings in the building trade economy, or to work elsewhere. He died 1847 (with his home address in Nash's Village East, Regent's Park). In his will,<sup>120</sup> he lists his holdings of 36 Camden Town properties on and near St Paul's Terrace (on King's Road), along with a similar number in Somers Town (where there was a Denton Street). His oldest son, Samuel, received leaseholds in Somers town while his two younger sons received properties Nos 10 and 13 of Canal Terrace in Camden Town.

Other houses in the Randolph Street area, on King's Road (next to William Agar's house) shown on the plan had leases to Samuel Denton (R) and William Line (V) (Figure 2.16).



Figure 2.16 Building plans for terraces at Randolph Street<sup>121</sup>

<sup>120</sup> TNA, probate and wills.

<sup>121</sup> LMA, Marquess of Camden, Camden Estate map

Several of the builders lived within Camden Town. Richard Richardson lived in College Street. George Lever's son, also George, who had lived in 1 Camden Terrace, was a builder for terraces of north College Street nearby in the 1830s. John Darlington, who took the leases around the Gardens, lived at 13 Rochester Terrace. Others were associated with the building trade. Richard Dent, a local surveyor who died in 1857,<sup>122</sup> gave to each of his four daughters one property in 7-11 Great College Street North and one in 60-63 King Street – parts of consecutive terraces. He asked to sell 29-33 Pratt St, gave (only) £50 apiece to his sons and the remainder – with 'Interests in other houses to pay off debts' – to his wife.

The later estate building was developed in larger blocks. John Darlington and Richard Richardson took the plots for St Paul's Road.<sup>123</sup> The steward John Shaw wrote to Lord Camden with an offer from William Mansbridge for the 'residue' of the estate land. 'A rent of £500 might be obtained ... I am disposed to advise your lordship to accept the offer.'<sup>124</sup>

## **Connection, disruption and development – roads, canals and railways**

### ***Roads***

Roads form the boundaries for most of the Camden Town estate: only at the north, by Kentish Town, and east along the St Pancras estate, were fields the boundaries.

The King's Road was the earliest road, beside the Fleet River, with Hampstead Road and Maiden Lane on either side. Fig Lane was the southern boundary and Kentish Town Road the northern.

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<sup>122</sup> TNA, probate and wills.

<sup>123</sup> LMA, Marquess of Camden collection, leases and deeds.

<sup>124</sup> KALH, U/840, correspondence, 4 October 1864.

Roads gave a framework to frontages of properties, with the land stretching as gardens behind. The estate stewards were concerned with ensuring quality of the roads. There was York stone and granite kerbs for the footways and quarried stone (later granite blocks on concrete) for the roads, while under the roads were water pipes and sewers. The Hampstead Water Company ran its mains supply down Kentish Town Road, serving the western side of the Camden Town estate. An agreement was made for the New River Company to serve the eastern side, and the Company had built a reservoir within the estate at the crest of the hill beside Maiden Lane.<sup>125</sup> The Fleet formed the valley for sewers. In the early days of the estate, the main roads were controlled by the Hampstead and Highgate Paving Commission. The Metropolitan Roads Commission was created by act of Parliament in 1826, covering fourteen areas of the (then) periphery of London. Each year they auctioned the tolls to private collectors. At its first meeting, the Camden Town franchise was let to Isaac Hewlings for £925 (while the Hampstead franchise was 'called in' on its reserve price when bidding stopped at £17,000).<sup>126</sup> The tolls for Camden Road defined in the 1824 Act<sup>127</sup> were

**Tolls.** For every Horse, Mule, or Ass, laden or unladen, and not drawing, the Sum of One Penny :

For every Horse, Mule, or Ass, drawing any Coach, Chaise, Waggon, Cart, or other Carriage, the Sum of Two-pence :

For every Drove of Oxen, Cows, or Neat Cattle, the Sum of Two-pence *per* Score, and so in proportion for any greater or less Number :

And,

For every Drove of Calves, Hogs, Sheep, or Lambs, the Sum of One Penny *per* Score, and so in proportion for any greater or less Number.

Which said respective Sums of Money shall be demanded and taken in the Name of or as Toll, and shall be vested in the said Trustees, and applied as herein-after is directed.

Figure 2.17 Tolls prescribed in the Camden Road Act

<sup>125</sup> LMA, 'New River Company' ACC/2558/MW/C/15/337.

<sup>126</sup> LMA, MRC/-. First meeting held at the British Coffee House, Cockspur Street, Westminster, on 31 July 1826 with no apparent representative for Camden Town.

<sup>127</sup> UK Parliament, Act 5 Geo 4 c138.

The system was managed in the interests of capital. In 1827, Charles Hodson, a horse and cart driver incurred a fine of £2 15s for not paying the toll at Camden Town gate. It was said he had 'kept the money so that he could feed his family of wife and four children'. At the Old Bailey July Sessions 1827, he was committed to seven years transportation for 'embezzling two sums amounting to 14 shillings'.<sup>128</sup>

A pencil drawing in the British Museum by George Scharf in 1844 shows the toll gate at the crest of Camden Road, outside the Brecknock Arms tea gardens, with houses under construction opposite (Figure 2.18):

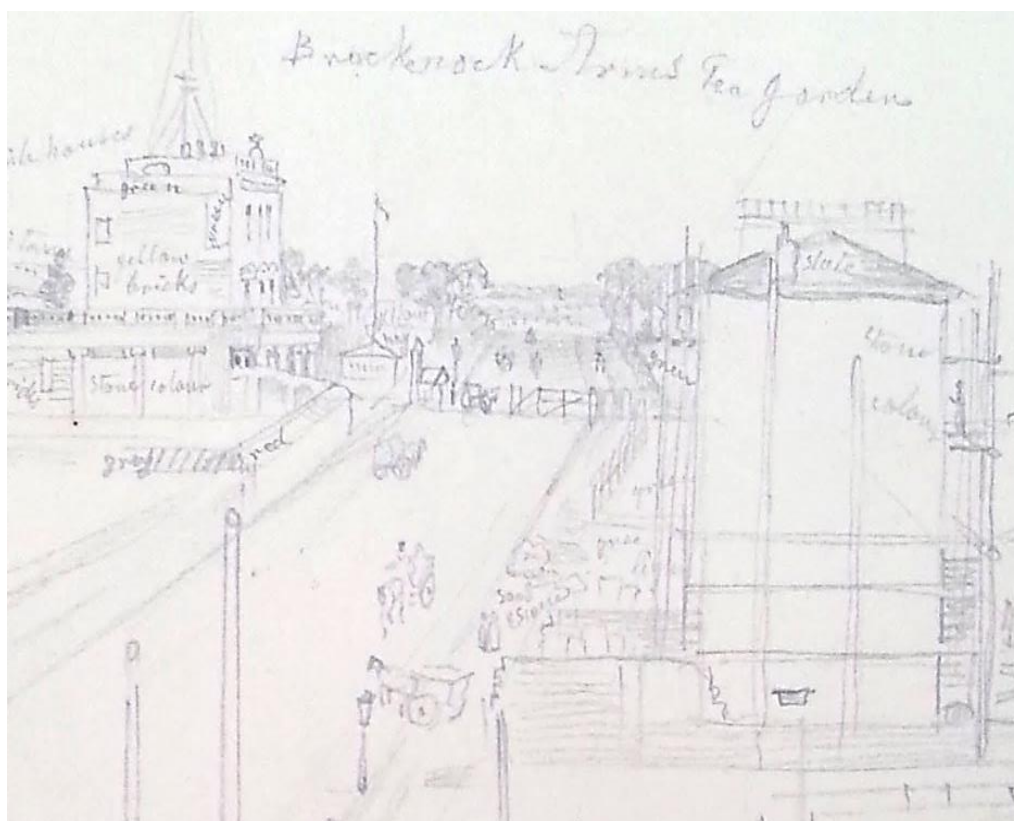


Figure 2.18 George Scharf, view of Camden Road and Brecknock Arms toll gate.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>128</sup> TNA, HO17/62/185

<sup>129</sup> Drawing photograph by author with permission, Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum

Responsibility for non-turnpike roads was less clear. In the minutes of the Paving Commission for 1829, the interests of Camden Town were raised on three occasions. A request by Messrs Denton and Barker, in May, 'that the King's road Camden town may be raised to the level of the new road' received the reply, 'May be done but the Committee will not contribute to the Expense.' In July, 'the Board being informed that the well lately dug in Camden Town by Mr Goad had no covering and was in a dangerous state' ... 'Ordered that the said well be immediately domed over and the earth removed'. In November, William Grane, complaining of the footpaths between Kings Cross and Camden Town, was informed they were kept under repair by the Parish.<sup>130</sup>

Turnpike charges on the main roads were abolished across London in 1856. Yet a Home Office survey in 1882 showed that many of the estates across London retained bars across roads. In Camden Town estate there were seven bars. Two, either end of St Paul's Road, displayed this robust notice to travellers:<sup>131</sup>

**CAMDEN ESTATE.**

**Notico is hereby given that there is no public thoroughfare through this estate. That no cattle are allowed to be driven through this estate, to or from the New Cattle Market, Islington. That no tramps, vagrants, organ grinders, bands of musicians, or disreputable characters are permitted on the estate. That no railway vans, coal waggons, beer trucks or carts, furniture vans, dung carts, or other heavy traffic, are allowed to pass through the gates of this estate, unless they have to deliver or take up goods on the estate. That no hackney coaches are allowed on the estate, except in going to or returning from the residence of any inhabitant, either to take up or set down.**

**By order of the trustees of the Marquis of Camden.**

Figure 2.19 Notice on road bars of Camden Town estate <sup>131</sup>

<sup>130</sup> LMA, 'Metropolitan Roads Commission':MRC/0003.

<sup>131</sup> UK Parliament, 'Return of all gates, bars, rails and posts situate on private property in the Metropolis,' *Journal* 1882;61:355-414(paper369).



The Estate paid £50 annually from ground rents for manning the gates. Nevertheless, a pressure group finally achieved the removal of almost all gates across London through a London County Council act in 1893.<sup>132</sup>

### ***Regent's Canal***

The story of Thomas Homer's Regent's Canal has been well told.<sup>133</sup> It was constructed from Paddington to the Hampstead Road double lock by 1815, and from the docks in east London through Islington tunnel, finally opening in 1820. The Camden Town section had not been easy to complete as adjacent landlord William Agar had fought the company, finally gaining over £15,000 in compensation. Although relatively short, the Camden Town section of the canal was complex, requiring four road bridges – for Kentish Town Road, Camden Street, College Street and Kings Road – and the Fleet sewer, all built by contractors Richardson & Want in 1819. Because the roads fan out from the junction with Hampstead Road, the canal makes several bends to be perpendicular to each road. The bridges are relatively inconspicuous: only the King's Road (called Grays Inn Lane) bridge has stylish railings, from its reconstruction in 1890. It is flanked by an 1850s canal-side public house, 'The Constitution'.

While the Canal's main goods area was west of the Hampstead Road Lock, there were several wharves between the bridges. Although there was disruption during its building, the canal benefitted Camden Town as a commercial centre. It gave access for raw materials and to send heavy goods away. For example, bricks were brought from the clay fields of

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<sup>132</sup> Peter Atkins, 'How the West End was won: the struggle to remove street barriers in Victorian London', *Journal of Historical Geography* 1993(19):265-7.

<sup>133</sup> Peter Faulkner, *The Regent's Canal*, Burton-on-Trent 2005.

Middlesex and the dust and ashes piled at Battle Bridge were returned to be used in the firing.<sup>134</sup> For pianos and furniture, wood came from High Wycombe or from the docks, and metalwork was engineered in Camden Town: the heavy pianos, beds and sofas could then be sent inland up the canal or down to the docks and across the Empire. Nevertheless, the Canal's significance diminished with the rise of the railways.

## ***Railways***

The London and Birmingham Railway was the first major engineering work of the railway age, arriving at a terminus at Chalk Farm, by the Regent's Canal, in 1834. It was completed through a cutting southwards, away from Camden Town, down to Euston terminus.

There were plans for extending the line eastwards to the City. First proposed was a "trench" below the streets of Camden Town; and then a viaduct cutting a swathe through Camden Town houses.<sup>135</sup> A petition in opposition in April 1836 collected 393 signatures: but those attending a meeting with Lord Camden at his Mayfair house, including Joseph Kay and local builders George Lever and John Cumberland, chose not to give it to Parliament. The whole affair was called a 'humbug' by Robert M'William in a 53-page pamphlet in 1838.<sup>136</sup> Weaker tenants, he argued would be poorly compensated while the non-resident rich would unduly benefit and vested interests were served. Moreover, four aristocrat Lords had been offered substantial compensation before the Act arrived at the House of Lords – the Duke of Bedford was offered a sum twenty times the price of the meadow-land based on existing rents. And for Lord Camden (and prebendary Randolph), M'William suggested that the

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<sup>134</sup> Peter Hounsell, *Brick making in west Middlesex from 1800*, PhD Thesis, Thames Valley, 2000.

<sup>135</sup> TNA: 'Prospectus of London Grand Junction Railway - to join the Birmingham and other Rail Roads at Camden Town, etc.', London 1835:95-98: RAIL 1016/5. The proposed line is seen in Britton's 1834 map of Marylebone, see Ref 27 above.

<sup>136</sup> Robert M'William. *London Grand Junction Railway, surnamed the humbug: a letter*. London 1838 (LSE Selected Pamphlets).

Railway proposed to compensate them for land that was otherwise difficult to sell because the leases were too short. Although the Act was passed in 1837, the company failed – it was too expensive to cross so much built-up land.

Other proposals, even into the 1880s, were made to build a railway along the Regent's Canal,<sup>137</sup> but none gained sufficient financial support. However, a new proposal emerged for a railway parallel with the canal, on a viaduct crossing north London to the docks. Joseph Kay wrote to (the third) Lord Camden in November 1846:

'The project of a line connected with the Regents Canal is certainly revived ... There seems nothing to apprehend in regard to your Lordship's property & the East and West India Docks and Birmingham Line are bound by the engagements they have made.'<sup>138</sup>

In contrast to the canal, which was dug before housing had been built, the railway across Camden Town caused much damage to the Estate. Around a hundred houses were lost – indeed, some on the west side of Camden Road were still in course of construction.

The line was initially conceived for goods, but it also quickly gained a passenger service: the *Illustrated London News*' correspondent celebrated leaving Limehouse and arriving at Camden Town – 'the entire journey and return being nine miles for sixpence!'<sup>139</sup> Ten years later, a second branch west was built towards Hampstead and Kilburn; and in 1870 the line at Camden Road was doubled, with the station moved to its present site and renamed

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<sup>137</sup> LMA:ACC/2423/R/055, 'Proposed railway route following path of the Regent's Canal: annotated map, 1881'.

<sup>138</sup> KALH, correspondence 24 November 1846 (U/840/EL17)

<sup>139</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 15 November 185:604

'Camden Town Station'. The North London Line was an unusual feature for suburban London, providing circular rather than radial transport. Camden Town was its central point, and the station commensurately grand (Figure 2.18):



Figure 2.20 Camden Town Station and Camden Road, 1890s<sup>140</sup>

## Accounts

The Camden Town Estate accounts were kept by the estate stewards and can be tracked from the opening accounts in 1780 up to the partition of the estate between Lord Camden and the Ecclesiastical Commission.<sup>141</sup>

In the first year of accounts, for 1779/80, as well as Cantelowes, the Jeffreys estate included a manor at Brook End (Gloucestershire), lands at Heachem (Suffolk) and Greenford (Middlesex), a wharf at Mill Bank and property at Mark Lane, Clements Lane and St Mary

<sup>140</sup> Vic Mitchell & Keith Smith, *North London Line*, Midhurst 1997:Fig56.

<sup>141</sup> KALH, Pratt manuscripts – accounts:U840/AL1-27.

Axe (Jeffreys Place) in the City. The total income was £1362, of which Cantlowes was £343 – about a quarter. The Cantlowes income was from farmland and the Mother Red Caps inn. By 1790 income from Cantlowes had risen to £668.

The Camden Town estate was described in the House of Lords, for the 1813 Act, by Joseph Ward and John Iveson.<sup>142</sup> Fifty-two acres were let for building and seven acres for streets, a yearly income of £1203, and there remained 150 acres that would bring in a further £1311.

The 1815 accounts were made up by John Iveson for Claridge & Iveson. The listing for Camden Town is alphabetical, with many of the names as single property-holders. The individual rents together total £1248 and there is also £1078 for short leases and at will, ie farmland and brickearth, of which £894 is paid by William Francis. (However, because of the agreement with the prebendary of 1813, the income for Lord Camden was two-thirds.) Rents from the land at St Mary Axe in the City of London also continued to increase, annual rental £1252, so the total rent from all Camden family property was £4040.

Accounts in 1824/5 are signed by Joseph Kay. There is a rental income of £2700 from Camden Town; other properties yield £1802, of which £1500 is from Jeffreys Square in the City – a total of £4502. Kay's final two books of accounts with George Pratt, third Lord Camden, cover the period 1840-1847. The total income (Camden Town alone) was £3870. Building sewers – in this period of sanitary reform – was a substantial outgoing in 1843: £446 for Rochester Square and £197 for Gt College Street.

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<sup>142</sup> UK Parliament, House of Lords, 'Proceedings at committees and private bills and other matters, session 1813', 26 & 29 March 1813:132-144. (Ward & Iveson's work on the Bill)

In 1875, the year of prebendary Thomas Randolph's death, the Camden Town estate gross income had risen to £6659, with a payment of £4105 to the estate and £1091 to Thomas Randolph. There was £50 for the maintenance of gates and gatekeepers for the estate roads, £14 for 'various local charities' and £2.10s for a 'silver medal' to North London Camden and Collegiate School for Girls.

Thus, over almost 100 years, the ground rent value of the Camden Town estate land rose from £343 to £6659, about twenty-fold (although not allowing for inflation). Achieving this rent required investment in roads and sewers, lighting and cleaning and consistent management from the estate, as well as the productive factors of building management, materials and labour that were led by the builders.

By the 1880s there were growing pressures on London estates. In part there was the 'Land question', the linkage of land ownership with voting, although this was more a rural and provincial concern than metropolitan. The top landlords in London, such as the Duke of Westminster with 475 acres and £400,000 annual rental income, followed by the Portman (West End) and Cadogan (Chelsea) estates each at around £200,000, the Camden estate's income of £6000 a year was modest. The question to landowners as capitalists was whether it would benefit them to sell.<sup>143</sup> Economic historian John Habakkuk relates:

It was estimated in 1880 that the estate of the Marquess of Camden which yielded £1700 pa would sell for £190000. Consols at par on that sum would at that time yield £5700. 'One man would say "I would rather have £5700 than £1700 – I would rather have money than land"; and another would say "If I have enough to live on, if

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<sup>143</sup> John Beckett, Michael Turner, 'Land reform and the English land market, 1880-1925'; also Roland Quinault, 'London and the land question, c. 1880-1914', both in Matthew Cragoe, Paul Readman eds. *The Land Question in Britain 1750-1950*, Basingstoke 2001:201-18;219-236.

I can make ends meet, I would rather have the land, and no amount of money can compensate me for the loss of an ancient estate...". [However] Chancery decided in favour of retaining the whole all the estate rather than sell some (eg Kentish land) off to pay the widow's jointure £2000 pa and maintenance of infant son [4th Marquess] for further £6000 pa; Chancery decided there was just enough available to maintain annual payments from existing rents.<sup>144</sup>

A further valuation came from the 1883 survey, when the estate properties were divided two-thirds for Lord Camden and one third for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.<sup>145</sup> The combined total, at £4892, was lower than indicated from the rents in the account books; but it was a sale valuation which reflected both falling middle class demand for tenancies as London's population moved further into the suburbs and the decreasing value of the properties as the leases drew to a close.

Annual land sales in England totalled around £10m in 1896. In the Great War the sales fell, but with the peace there was a 'frenzy' of sales – urban owner-occupiers rose from 11% in 1914 to 36% in 1927.<sup>146</sup> Camden Town was a part of the 'frenzy'. In July 1919 ground rents for 'numerous shops, factories, wharves, houses, licensed premises, situated in Great College Street, Lyme Street, Camden Road, Canal Terrace, Prebend Place, King's Road etc',

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<sup>144</sup> John Habakkuk, *Marriage, debt, and the estates system: English Landownership, 1650-1950*, Oxford 1994:641,658.

<sup>145</sup> Divided as in the 1812 Act of Parliament. The survey in 1888 by Cluttons in 1888 repeated one in 1850. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners took properties on the east side near Kings Road and St Paul's Road and west side near Camden Road; the Camden estate held the remainder. Lambeth Palace: ECE/11/ series. LMA:E/CAM/0002, 'Cantlowes Prebend Estates', 24 June 1883.

<sup>146</sup> Swenarton, *Building the New Jerusalem*:41; Jeremy Whitehand, 'The makers of British towns: architects, builders and property owners, c.1850–1939', *Journal of Historical Geography* 1992;18(4):417-438. 'The most important changes took place in the two decades following the First World War. Having had a major role in the nineteenth century, especially as providers of capital, private individuals ceased to have a significant place in urban development by the 1930s, other than in their role as owner-occupiers and owners of potential development land.'

in 151 lots, gained £39,145. In July the following year, ground rents for fifteen acres between Hampstead Road and Great College Street (including the valuable Maples furniture repository) yielded £112,000. Yet *The Times*' editorial reflected:

there is no sentimental attachment to town properties such as are now coming into the market. With some conspicuous exceptions, the great ground landlords of London have not identified themselves at all with the social life of the boroughs in which their properties lie, and except in so far as it may be possible for the tenants to acquire the freeholds it is a matter of indifference to the latter whether they pay the ground rents at one office or another.<sup>147</sup>

In the partition of the Camden Town estate, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had received mostly properties in the southern half of Camden Town. A survey for the Church Commissioners in 1937 noted leased houses 'that were not a credit: the management is from a distance ... it might be described as of the casual, detached nature...' and the Commissioners were encouraged to take the properties into direct control. In 1956 they sold blocks between Royal College Street and Camden Street totalling 316 houses, 158 flats and 30 shops to Camden Council for £258,000 – which the Council subsequently demolished to rebuild.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> *The Times* 18 July 1919:9; 17 July 1920:5;

<sup>148</sup> *The Times* 23 April 1937:9; 22 Jun 1956:7.



## **Conclusion**

The 'Georgian suburb' of Camden Town was an active estate. Its boundaries were defined by the land that Charles Pratt, first Lord Camden, inherited and shared in ownership of ground rents with the prebendary of Cantlowes (although there is no record of any landlord visiting the estate). The estate benefitted strongly from successful oversight across 90 years from four estate stewards, two of whom were senior architects, who set out the estate plan and ensured the construction of wide roads and sewers for the housing. The estate office had solicitors who maintained estate records and finance. And the builders, some of whom also took on leases and became established residents, achieved variety in form and decoration and yet uniformity in overall Georgian style. While the network of roads was created, there was attention to formal squares and crescents and open back gardens as well as the external influences of the Regent's Canal and railway lines which stimulated trade and manufacture. Although divided in a partition between Lord Camden and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, Camden Town's value increased progressively as a single estate through to the end of the Great War.

Camden Town was shaped by people and itself affected them: life within this Georgian Suburb is the subject of the next chapter.

### **Chapter 3: Identity – People and society**

#### **Participants and perceptions**

England's population grew from ten million in 1801 to almost forty million in 1901. Equally dramatic was the migration from the countryside to the towns: at the beginning of the century, four out of five people were rural, while by 1901 four out of five were urban. London grew to be the biggest city in the world. The parish of St Pancras was part of the early growth, from thirty thousand in 1801 rising to over one hundred and fifty thousand in 1851 and over two hundred thousand in 1901. Within the parish, in one decade 1841-1851, the number of houses in the electoral ward of Camden Town rose from 1800 to 2500 and the population 15000 to 21000.<sup>149</sup> From its origin as farmland, with a handful of tenants, Camden Town developed into a populous urban area.

The new houses at Camden Town attracted people with a trade, business or profession as well as those with clerical skills or manual employment. In the first half of the century most people would walk to work.<sup>150</sup> Transport later increased, with horse-drawn buses and trams, so that employment in central London was accessible from Camden Town. The larger middle-class houses of northern Camden Road were built for a single family but there was a change over time from large families with servants to houses with lodgers, or multiple occupation by families.<sup>151</sup> The older houses in southern parts of Camden Town provided homes for second and third generations of families. There would still be work in central London for clerks and shop assistants, and manual labour on the railways or in stables; and Camden Town itself had

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<sup>149</sup> Appendix 2. National Census, Pancras Parish, 1801-1851.

<sup>150</sup> G. Steadman Jones. *Languages of class: studies in English working class history 1832-1982*. Cambridge, 1983.

<sup>151</sup> Reported in Charles Booth *Survey*, Notebooks, South west St Pancras (District 18):149.

skilled employment - the piano and furniture trades, technical equipment and coachbuilding. This chapter considers the social life of nineteenth century Camden Town thematically in three ways. First, there are early records when named residents are described; the perception of Camden Town by writers of fiction is drawn from literature; and a contrast, of more objective perceptions, is given through the street reports in Booth's social survey. Second, the development of social organisations is seen through the churches, schools and adult literary institutions. Third, Camden Town supported businesses, some large and many small, and both artisans and professions in particular fields, whose lives are recalled. These themes are evidence both of a complex, mixed society, of trade and professional lives, and also a celebration of human presence and activity – the particularity of Camden Town. The purpose is to reveal and portray the past and to show associations and patterns within the social world.

### **In the beginning**

A little of the early life of Camden Town can be discerned from primary records. When Lord Camden became the landlord of the Cantlowes estate, the account books show just four tenants (Figure 3.1).<sup>152</sup> William Morgan held 'diverse lands with a barn therein', 110 acres, paying £288 annual rent: the Morgan family were also landholders in south Kentish Town. Thomas Rhodes held 'diverse lands': 68 acres paying £163 annually: the Rhodes family also farmed near Somers Town and had developed brick-making using brickearth of the fields.<sup>153</sup> Third was William Frances – again, 'diverse land and a barn' – 27 acres paying £75, the land of 'Pancras Wash' between Morgan and Rhodes near the River Fleet. Lastly, David Jones paid rent for the Mother Red Caps inn & garden, 2 acres at £16.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> KALH, Pratt Manuscripts – accounts:U840/AL1-27

<sup>153</sup> Tindall, 'Fields beneath', includes both Morgan and Rhodes families

<sup>154</sup> KALH Account of the estate of [Frances] Jeffreys, spinster:U/840/A25.

An Account of Monies received allowed & paid by Augustine Greenland for the Year  
 1779  
 Siffrey Spinster a Lunatic of whose Person & Estate the said Charles Lord Camden is  
 Lord of Gloucester & Suffolk & in the Cities of London & Westminster & on other

No. of Tenants	Tenants Names	Premises held	For what Term	Quantity of Land	Annual Rent
	Kentish Town, Middlesex The following Estates came to Lord Camden and Siffrey Esquire deceased) who died 21 <sup>st</sup> Day of October 1779.				
1	William Morgan	Divers Lands with a Barn thereon	Tenant at Will but had a lease from Mr. May, which expires on the 26 <sup>th</sup> Day of April 1785	110	1 <sup>s</sup> 2 <sup>d</sup> 0 <sup>d</sup>
2	Thomas Rhodes	Divers Lands	The same had a lease till the 25 <sup>th</sup> Day of Dec. 1785	68	2 16 <sup>d</sup>
3	W <sup>m</sup> Francis (late John Turner)	The same in Barn	The same had a lease till the 25 <sup>th</sup> Day of Dec. 1785	27	7 <sup>d</sup>
4	David Jones	A Cottage called Mother Red Caps Garden Land	For 37 Years by Lease - 1789	2	3 18 3 6
	Brook End Gloucestershire	A Mease & Town	Tenant at Will had a lease from Mr. Chauncy Esq <sup>r</sup>	140	

Figure 3.1 Camden Estate account book showing first tenants at 'Kentish Town, Middlesex'.<sup>155</sup>

The 1790 accounts show the rent for Mother Red Caps paid by William White, while tenants of houses were John Joyce, Richard Holbrook and William Massa. John Joyce held cottages near the Mother Red Caps and in Kentish Town, where he had two 'inmates' for which he paid 5/- tax for each; he was also the local tax collector.<sup>156</sup> Richard Holbrook was the first named developer of houses on the new estate, taking plots on the corner of the High Street next to the Mother Red Caps and down along the High Street – the row was called Camden Place.<sup>157</sup> William Macca built double villas on the north side of the Regent's Canal, seen on later maps as 'Macca's cottages'.

William White appears a significant figure in the early years of Camden Town. At the Middlesex Sessions in 1796, he was recorded as one of six Inspectors of Weights and Balances 'under the late Act of Parliament and to serve therein gratuitously and for the

<sup>155</sup> KALH, Pratt family papers

<sup>156</sup> LMA, Land tax assessments:MR/PLT/4264-4265.

<sup>157</sup> LMA, Registers of leases:E/CAM0003-0004.

benefit of the poor'.<sup>158</sup> In Land Tax assessments of 1806, William White held title to the Mother Red Caps, for which he paid £30 rent, and also has a house and land 'of Lady Jeffries' [sic] that is leased to Mr Morgan at £17.<sup>159</sup> At the 1825 Court of the Manor of Cantlowes, William White was one of two Camden Town residents sworn in. At the sessions, Richard Morgan, for 5 shillings, transferred to his son a house which he himself received from his father, William Morgan, who had been one of the original three tenant farmers in 1790. And permission was sought to pull down the three houses next to the Mother Red Caps, "where William White, Elizabeth Reece and Anthony Lock lived", to start building the new road from Camden Town to Holloway.<sup>160</sup>

St Pancras was a large parish, extending from Holborn to Highgate, with many political interests. The Vestry, the local political body for most of the nineteenth century, was subject to changing national regulations.<sup>161</sup> In 1830, when there were 120 Select Vestrymen, Camden Town was represented by only three people.<sup>162</sup> In the same year, Samuel Denton, "from the Commissioners for paving, &c. the Camden Town District", who was then building houses at St Paul's Terrace, presented to Parliament the accounts for the Commissioners for South West St Pancras.<sup>163</sup> But in 1831, 'A Rate Payer' writing in the Times criticises the Camden Town Paving Commission, which 'raises local taxes yet the streets are muddy, ill-light and ill-kempt' while opposite Camden Terrace, the pavement 'is half grown over with grass, upon which donkeys cows and horses may occasionally be seen grazing': and, the

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<sup>158</sup> Middlesex Sessions, 4 April 1796 <londonlives.org/browse.jsp?div=LMSMGO55611GO556110028>

<sup>159</sup> LMA, MR/PLT/4264 north; /4265 south.

<sup>160</sup> LMA, Prebendal estate minute book:CLC/313/N/001/MS14221/002-3

<sup>161</sup> Francis Sheppard, 'St Pancras' in David Owen, *The government of Victorian London 1855-1889*. Cambridge (USA) 1982:284-303.

<sup>162</sup> Edward Coleman, Veterinary College; Richard Jeffreys, 2 Gloucester Place; John Rigge, 46 Camden Street.

<sup>163</sup> House of Commons, *Journal*, 1830;85:657-658.

writer jibes, the Commission have built, for £3,000, their own 'handsome house' in Pratt Street 'in which they hold their secret court'.<sup>164</sup>

By the 1840s building a new church showed the level of middle-class engagement around Camden Square. Samuel Denton wrote in 1847, as 'honorary secretary', to residents about a meeting the coming week in the Temporary Church, with Rev Thomas Dale (Vicar of St Pancras Parish) taking the chair, 'having for its object the immediate completion of the church'.<sup>165</sup> Attached was a printed list of 100 names, addresses and subscriptions approved, mostly at £1 or 10s. Denton, with address of 8 Camden Cottages, on Kings Road, is listed paying 1gn. Payments are registered of £500 from Lord Camden and £500 (Prebendary) Thomas Randolph. Vincent Bellman,<sup>166</sup> a churchwarden living on Camden Road, gave 50gns and from the estate office, solicitor William Aldersey and architect Joseph Kay each gave 20gns. A Memorial from residents about the church also includes names of several builders – Richard Richardson of south Camden Town, John Darlington (building Rochester Road, west of Camden Road) and Pearse and Guerrier (who were building at the Crescent on Camden Road, the earlier proposed site for the church); and Robert Pulford, a Camden Town lessee who was also a 'government tailor' in the West End.<sup>167</sup>

## **Literary accounts**

Contemporary nineteenth century literature has not been previously explored for its accounts of Camden Town, portrayed both directly by name and by association. There are

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<sup>164</sup> A Rate Payer. 'Camden-Town District', *The Times* 19 November 1831:3.

<sup>165</sup> KALH, correspondence:U840/EL3-4.

<sup>166</sup> The Fitzroy Square company of Bellman, Ivey and Carter gained a royal warrant as scagliola marble manufacturers to Queen Victoria in 1879.

<sup>167</sup> KALH, U840/EL18

varied styles – satire, realism, tragedy, humour – with writers drawing on their own direct experiences. Yet Camden Town also is used as reference for ‘otherness’ – a place for people whom the reader might not normally meet or a lodging for someone on hard times.<sup>168</sup>

George and Weedon Grossmith, who together wrote the satirical novel of suburban life, *The Diary of a Nobody*, knew Camden Town well. As children, they lived in Mornington Crescent and went to the North London Collegiate School (for boys) in Camden High Street. George married Emeline Noyce, daughter of a north London doctor, at St Stephens’ Church in Camden Town. The church setting plays a cameo role in the novel:

November 26 Sunday ...A rather annoying incident occurred, of which I must make mention. Mrs Fernlosse, who is quite a grand lady, living in one of those large houses in the Camden Road, stopped to speak to me after church, when we were all coming out. I must say I felt flattered, for she is thought a good deal of. I suppose she knew me through seeing me so often take round the plate, especially as she always occupies the corner seat of the pew. She is a very influential lady, and may have something of the utmost importance to say, but unfortunately, as she commenced to speak a strong gust of wind came and blew my hat off into the middle of the road. I had to run after it, and had the greatest difficulty in recovering it. When I had succeeded in doing so, I found Mrs Fernlosse had walked on with some swell friends, and I felt I could not well approach her now, especially as my hat was smothered with mud. I cannot say how disappointed I felt.<sup>169</sup>

Some writers who were contemporary with the Grossmiths were critical of suburbia for its ‘small minded conservatism’ ‘sedulously aping the décor of those who come from a more

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<sup>168</sup> A short search of period fiction in the British Library showed many brief mentions of Camden Town.

<sup>169</sup> George and Weedon Grossmith, *The diary of a nobody*, Oxford 1995:67.

leisured class'.<sup>170</sup> The Grossmiths took a more sympathetic approach: suburbia may be stuffy but it is also safe within a world of changing social values. In *The Diary of a Nobody*, Mr Pooter is a 'new man' of the time, with home interests of interior decoration and gardening. Drama comes through oppositions – his son Lupin's 'modern' attitudes, his two neighbours Mr Cumming and Mr Gowing and the power of his employer, Mr Perkupp.<sup>171</sup> The Grossmiths' Pooter was a forerunner of tolerance, for his small but understandable aspirations and recognisable social mistakes: *The Diary of a Nobody*, written for *Punch* to amuse, suggests that Camden Town might hold a distance from the heavier moralism of Victorian England.

George Gissing came to London from the north of England. Believing himself too poor to marry an educated woman, he chose Edith Underwood, daughter of a Camden Town shopkeeper, whom he had met in a café near his Marylebone Road flat. According to his friends, she was 'common'.<sup>172</sup> *New Grub Street*, the novel for which he is best known, includes a fictionalised account of Edith's parents house in St Paul's Crescent (in Camden Town, near present Agar Grove): 'a quiet by-way, consisting of small, decent houses. That at which she paused had an exterior promising comfort within: the windows were clean and neatly curtained, and the polishable appurtenances of the door gleamed to perfection'. Nevertheless, Gissing's descriptions were objected to by real clerks in letters to newspapers at the time: 'Mr Gissing's picture of our home life is as strikingly inaccurate as the rest of his descriptions'.<sup>173</sup>

Charles Dickens mentions first 'Camberling Town' and then Camden Town by name in his portrayal of the vast excavations in *Dombey and Son*.<sup>174</sup> Yet the cutting for the London

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<sup>170</sup> Kate Flint, 'Introduction', In *Ibid*:vii-xxiii.

<sup>171</sup> Stephen Wade, *A Victorian somebody: the life of George Grossmith*, Gosport 2015:151.

<sup>172</sup> Jacob Korg, *George Gissing: a critical biography*, London 1975:151.

<sup>173</sup> London Literary Society <[literarylondon.org/the-literary-london-journal/archive-of-the-literary-london-journal/issue-9-1/the-use-of-london-lodgings-in-middlebrow-fiction-1900-1930s](http://literarylondon.org/the-literary-london-journal/archive-of-the-literary-london-journal/issue-9-1/the-use-of-london-lodgings-in-middlebrow-fiction-1900-1930s)>

<sup>174</sup> Dickens books report this and his family house in Bayham Street, but less Little College Street.



Junction Railway extension to Euston was on Lord Southampton's land at Chalk Farm, rather than in Camden Town. The Dickens family did live at 16 Bayham Street, adjacent to Camden High Street, in 1822. William Matchett, writing in *The Dickensian* in 1911, imagines, in the attic room, Dickens' 'first real beginnings in authorship, which he regarded as "extremely clever" but was too bashful to show anyone'.<sup>175</sup> The house was, perhaps, a model for the Cratchits' home in *A Christmas Carol*. It was in Dicken's mind: a clerk in Christmas Carol, to whom Mr Scrooge had reluctantly given a day's wages (2/6d) runs home to Camden Town; and the prize turkey for Bob Cratchett, later in the story, is sent by cab to Camden Town.

For a short while in 1824 Dickens lodged in Little College Street, on the east side of Camden Town. This memory is unhappily portrayed in chapter five of *David Copperfield*.<sup>176</sup>

"Traddles ... lived in a little street, near the Veterinary College at Camden Town, which was principally tenanted, as one of our clerks who lived in that direction informed me, by gentlemen students, who bought live donkeys, and made experiments on those quadrupeds in their private apartments ... The inhabitants appeared to have a propensity to throw any little trifles they were not in want of, into the road: which not only made it rank and sloppy, but untidy too, on account of the cabbage leaves ... An indescribable character of faded gentility that attached to the house I sought, and made it unlike all the other houses in the street..."

The house, as with Bayham Street, is now demolished.

In suburbia, Kate Flint, has suggested, 'one is buying oneself, at least in the imagination, into the culture of the aristocracy'. From the 1890s, 'a distinctive fiction of suburbia appears'. The protagonists remain middle class – although a clerk rather than businessman

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<sup>175</sup> Willoughby Matchett, 'Dickens in Bayham Street', *The Dickensian* 1911:181

<sup>176</sup> Julian Wolfreys, *Dickens's London: perception, subjectivity and phenomenal urban multiplicity*, Edinburgh 2012:63-64.

or professional and 'very seldom do we read of members of the working class: poverty tries to hide itself with Venetian blinds ... a casual labourer would be surprising'.<sup>177</sup> Similarly, Ged Pope suggests 'The suburb is predicated on offering a clear sense of order and homeliness'.<sup>178</sup> And Michael Heller argues that 'authors such as Keble Howard, Shan Bullock and William Ridge praised suburbia, its denizens and its way of life'. Ridge's novel, *A Clever Wife*, for example, ends with Cicely confessing to Henry that 'I had no idea that the suburbs could contain such joy'.<sup>179</sup> Another describes 'the rise of a 'cockney assistant head clerk in a railway company to debonair superintendent of the line' – of relevance to local employment in Camden Town – and 'suburbia and domestic stability featured throughout the novel as strong factors in his rise'.<sup>180</sup>

But there is a contrary narrative. The narrator in Wilkie Collins' novel *Basil: a Tale of Modern Life*, with 'Regent's Park close at hand', strays into 'unfinished streets, unfinished crescents, unfinished squares, unfinished shops and unfinished gardens'; '...neither the main character, nor the reader, has much idea of what is actually happening in these opaque north London suburbs ... 'full of secrets and shocking revelation: suppressed passion, secret marriages, criminal impersonations, disavowed affairs, complex and obscure family relations'.<sup>181</sup> Similarly, Arthur Machen's narrator sets out to explore '...unknown unvisited squares in Islington, dreary byways in Holloway, places traversed by railway arches and viaducts in the regions of Camden Town'.<sup>182</sup> Machen's world is filled with suburban anxieties, a 'city of nightmares'.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Kate Flint, 'Fictional suburbia', *Literature and History* 1982;8(1):70.

<sup>178</sup> Ged Pope, *Reading London's suburbs*, London 2015.

<sup>179</sup> Michael Heller, 'Suburbia, marketing and stakeholders: developing Ilford, Essex, 1880–1914', *Urban History* 2014;41(1):62-80.

<sup>180</sup> William Ridge, *Sixty-nine Birnam Road*, London 1908.

<sup>181</sup> Wilkie Collins, *Basil: a Tale of Modern Life*, Oxford 2000:25 and 51-52.

<sup>182</sup> Arthur Machen, *The London adventure*, London 1924:11.

<sup>183</sup> Amanda Caleb, 'A city of nightmares: suburban anxiety in Arthur Machen's London gothic', In Lawrence Phillips, Anne Witchard, *London gothic: place, space and the gothic imagination* London, London 2010:41-49.

A mixture of these views is held by a young middle-class man in Compton Mackenzie's successful novel *Sinister Street*, published in 1914.<sup>184</sup>

'Presently upon an iron railway bridge Michael read in giant letters the direction Kentish Town behind a huge leprous hand pointing to the left. The hansom clattered ... past the dim people huddled upon the pavement, past a wheel-barrow and the obscene skeletons and outlines of humanity chalked upon the arches of sweating brick ... and, just beyond, three houses from whose surface the stucco was peeling in great slabs and the damp was oozing in livid arabesques and scrawls of verdigris'.

Yet returning later to Camden Town, his mood improves:

'When he began to examine the Camden Road as a prospective place of residence, it became suddenly dull and respectable ... chatting nursemaids, a child throwing a scarlet ball high into the air...'

Two writers of international stature lived for a period in Camden Town (Figure 3.2), putting their experience more generally into their work. Theodor Fontane spent his earlier years as London correspondent to a Berlin paper, living at 6 St Augustine's Road. His writing included *Ein Sommer in London* (1854) and *Aus England, Studien und Briefe* (1860).

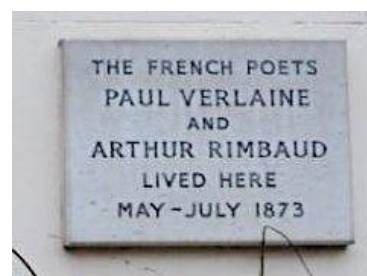


Figure 3.2. Plaques in Camden Town for Fontane, Verlaine and Rimbaud<sup>185</sup>

<sup>184</sup> Compton Mackenzie, *Sinister street*, London 1916. Quoted by Tindall, 'Fields beneath':206-7 and *Camden History Review* 1983;7:9.

<sup>185</sup> Author's photographs.

Arthur Rimbaud took lodgings with Paul Verlaine at 8 College Street, near to the Veterinary College. The two poets had been living in London from April in 1873, slipping in and out of the British Museum library and advertising to teach French.<sup>186</sup> Rimbaud wrote *A Season in Hell* during the summer, and partly prepared *Illuminations*, to be published the following year. The trace of London hovers in the works, mixed with his home town of Charleville on the Belgian border in France. The young German bourgeois journalist living near Camden Square and the young French poets in lodgings to the south indicate the mix of Camden Town. At other times they lived elsewhere in London also: Camden Town was often a place of transit.

### **Objective accounts**

Charles Booth recorded the social character of London in the 1890s. He made street-by-street analyses: notes were taken from local policemen as they walked their districts; interviews with Church of England clergy by parishes and in dissenting chapels. The results were summarised in maps, colour-coded in social scale and with parish boundaries.<sup>187</sup>

Booth considered that, moving anti-clockwise across North London from Stepney to Paddington, society changed from two groups (poor and destitute) to five groups (destitute to rich). St Pancras lay in the 'four groups' part of the arc, with the poorest in the south between St Pancras Station and Hampstead Road. With the arrival of railways, some of the poor from this housing were displaced: but, Booth observed, it was 'not in Camden Town near by, but in Kentish Town that the evils reappear, [in] the unfinished and unoccupied streets of new districts'.<sup>188</sup> The result, if not the movement, in St Pancras can be seen in the map, Figure 3.3,

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<sup>186</sup> Graham Robb, *Rimbaud*, London 2000.

<sup>187</sup> Charles Booth, *Life and labour of the people of London. Vol 2 Streets and Population classified*, London 1892.

<sup>188</sup> Booth, *Ibid*:190.

accompanying Booth's chapter for North West London. Booth's hierarchy runs from golden and red, through pink and magenta to blue, green and black. Somers Town is magenta and blue, south Camden Town is pink, and there is red around Camden Road. Blue emerges again further west of Kentish Town.



Figure 3.3. Booth's classification of streets in north west London, 1900<sup>189</sup>

<sup>189</sup> London School of Economics <booth.lse.ac.uk>

Booths' surveyors walked with Inspector Bowles, of the Somers Town police district, in south Camden Town on 18 November 1898.<sup>190</sup> On Pratt Street was St Pancras Liberal Club and behind it the recreation ground – the former St Martin's burial grounds. Camden Street was a 'mixture of working and middle class', with adjacent St Martins Place 'quite respectable – police etc living here'. In Georgiana Street, 2-3 rooms let for 6/6d to 9/- – 'decent'. Lyme Terrace is a 'quiet spot', children in Little Randolph street 'poor and not poor, playing about'. On the King's Road, No 80 was 'recently vacated by Marie Lloyd' [a music theatre actress still early in her career]. Further south on the Kings Road, on the east side, houses semi-detached, with tiny sloping gardens in the front, were "a perfect picture in the summer".

In Little Camden Street, Maples Depository and Humphreys American Gun Factory were noted. College Place, 'having been rebuilt, with bay windows ... superior' [it was in latest Victorian style rather than the earlier Georgian] – Bowles himself lived there and other officers from Marylebone. At the south east end of Great College Street was 'S. Pancras Labour Bureau: about 30 men reading the papers on hoardings or standing on the kerb'.

A walk again with Inspector Bowles a week later started at York Road, the north of the Camden Town estate, where shops 'rapidly deteriorate' away from Camden Road. In Clifton Road, the houses were 'apartments ... getting decidedly shabby'. This part of the 'Camden Estate ... has been affected by the removal of gates a few years ago by the L.C.C., by the building of a Board School and by the proximity of the [Caledonian] Cattle Market'. Bowles remembered from his youth a saying that 'it stinks like Belle Isle' – the name of the land where the cattle market and slaughterhouses were built. St Paul's Road 'had gone down considerably ... only three families in the road kept servants now'. With rents at £45 'this necessitates sub-letting'. But Camden Square's 'respectability still protected by a Square keeper'. Nearby Wrotham Road is considered 'working class throughout'.

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<sup>190</sup> Charles Booth's London, *Police notebooks* <[booth.lse.ac.uk/notebooks/police-notebooks](http://booth.lse.ac.uk/notebooks/police-notebooks)>

A third walk, with Inspector Tompkin from Kentish Town, entered Rochester Road, Rochester Terrace and Wilmot Place, 'a wonderful quiet neighbourhood giving no trouble'. Of the 'artisan's dwellings' at the junction of College Street and Kentish Town Road, asked if any casual labourers occupied the dwelling, Tompkin said he thought not: mainly mechanics: they were 'pretty strict'. And Jeffreys Street, 'a quiet working class street'.

Booth recorded dissatisfaction with St Pancras Vestry after the 1894 reforms of local administration, with its greater numbers of members and wider voting franchise. He quoted local views: 'not quite the right people'... 'either small property owners or agents'... 'publican's influence rules' ... 'trade union men fight solely for their own hand'. Yet, he says, 'In the supply of electric lighting there has been bold, and successful, enterprise; there were baths and wash-houses, 'liberal and economical'; environmental health matters were 'well attended to'; and of housing the difficulty was 'lack of any definite principle to act.' He reflected on the new borough: 'the condemnation of the authorities is perhaps unfair ... whatever its faults, its predecessors were no more successful'.<sup>191</sup>

## **Social organisations**

The formal organisation of Camden Town society may be tracked in two aspects – religious and educational. There is an increase and range of provision, responding to the local population, with more for working class people to the south and more for the middle classes to the north.

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<sup>191</sup> Booth, 'Life and labour':193.

## ***Churches***

Until reforms of the 1850s, St Pancras Parish stretched from Holborn to Highgate. Camden Town had dissenting churches as well as the Church of England, and some churches also had outreach in missions. Booth's surveyors spoke with several of the ministers. There is also material within the records of Church of England visitations.<sup>192</sup>

The three Church of England churches reflect the social mix of Camden Town. Camden Chapel, built in 1824, held a central position on College Street in south Camden Town. At its start it had prestigious officers – Samuel Wesley as organist and Alexander d'Arblay, son of society writer Fanny Burney, as priest. But by the time of visitation in 1857 the prestige had gone. The 16000 population whom the minister, John Fitzgerald, considered he served, were three-quarters 'labouring poor': 'There are no church rates in any part of St Pancras' and parochial relief was 'unknown'. His congregation varied from 177 at Easter to 20 on an ordinary midday.<sup>193</sup>

The new church for the north of Camden Town, St Paul's, opened in Camden Square in May 1848. The consecration sermon was given by the Bishop of London, although there is no record of either Lord Camden or prebendary Thomas Randolph attending. Here the majority were middle class: the three churchwardens, Vincent Bellman, Samuel Denton and John Darlington, were builders and property holders on the estate. At a visitation, in 1862, incumbent Arthur described the pew rents of £800 per annum.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Lambeth Palace, *Visitation returns*

<[archives.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/CalmView/Overview.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog](http://archives.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/CalmView/Overview.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog)>

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, Visitation: 'Camden Town, Parish chapel'.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, Visitation: 'Camden Town, St Paul's church'.



The Reverend Robert Clemenger had gained a reputation in Agar Town for the energy and charity of his ministry. When Mr Agar's land transferred to the Midland Railway, a church was built in Wrotham Road for people living north of the railway lands. Clemenger wrote at the visitation: 'Last summer persons went about preaching in the open air ... of various denominations – I am inclined to think highly of such preaching.' Most of the population were 'labouring classes and extremely poor ... quite careless and indifferent about religion.' 'The very moment the children are able to earn a few pence, they are sent to work.' There was 'a great deal done for the poor – soup kitchen, mothers meetings'. A Provident society flourished: 'fully a third are daily on parochial relief'.<sup>195</sup>

Booth's Survey also describes a less formal religious setting:

Mission Room at 78 Kings Road will hold 60 places. It is one of the strangest places I have seen. A lady has placed her back drawing room at the Missionary's disposal. .... Miss Caesar is a bright cheerful middle aged woman. Women attending... were mostly widows and elderly people with little or nothing to do – working women could not afford the time... Weekly service (Friday dinner hour) at Idris' [soft drinks] factory and an annual meeting for their employees, with attendance 250. <sup>196</sup>

Churches were built for the growing population. Were they used? The religious survey of London in 1903 reports 1132 people attending four Camden Town parish churches for Sunday morning service and 1303 at evening service. The five dissenting churches within Camden Town estate (Wesleyan, Baptist and Presbyterian, Primitive Methodist and Brethren) altogether had 923 in the morning and 1141 in the evening. There were also attenders at missions of various churches.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid: Visitation 'Camden Town, St Thomas' Church'.

<sup>196</sup> Booth, 'Survey' *St Stephen's Church*:213:77-79

<sup>197</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith, *The religious life of London*, London 1904:175.

## **Education**

Schools in nineteenth century suburbs started through private support.<sup>198</sup> Camden Town Ragged School, for poor children, opened in 1848. The first annual meeting of friends and subscribers was held at the Hanover Square Rooms, W1. The chairman, Lord Ashley, spoke of 'children roaming the streets of the metropolis, who were habitual professional vagrants and who had no calling or pursuit ... forgotten creatures ... unless they were reclaimed and brought within the fold of the gospel, they might hereafter cause wide-spread desolation in the land'.<sup>199</sup> (It was the year after the largest Chartist marches). The Camden Town premises were quite constrained, behind terraces near King Street (Figure 3.4).

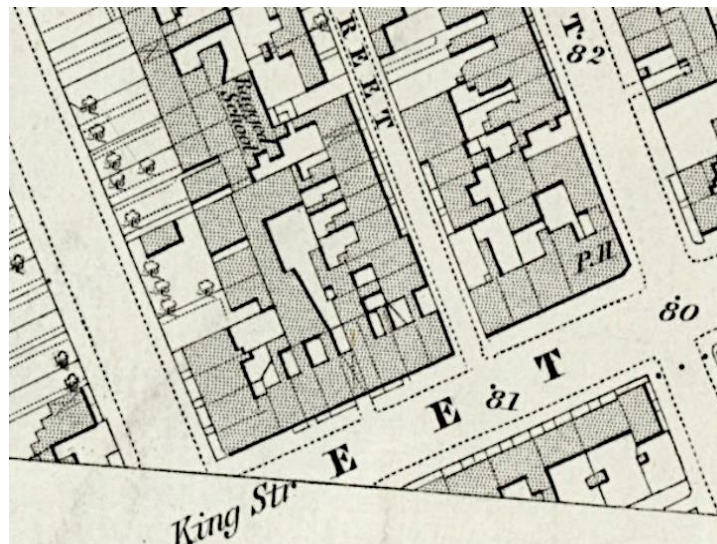


Figure 3.4 Ordnance survey map of Camden Town showing Ragged School location<sup>200</sup>

In 1849 there were 60 boys, who were taught tailoring and 40 girls, taught needlework. By 1855 the numbers had risen to 410 attending the 'infant and juvenile day schools', 35 boys and 40 girls attending evening school and 24 'boys industrial classes'. Each place was estimated to cost three halfpence a week, or six shillings a year. Of six named sponsors,

<sup>198</sup> Margaret Bryant, *The London experience of secondary education*, London 1986.

<sup>199</sup> *Daily News* 18 April 1849.

<sup>200</sup> Ordnance Survey through [digimap.edina.ac.uk](http://digimap.edina.ac.uk)

only one lived directly in Camden Town. At the meeting was recited a nine-verse poem with the title '*Christians of Camden Town, come to the rescue!*'<sup>201</sup>

Camden Town National and Infant Schools, by contrast, was much more the concern of Camden Town middle class residents: of the eleven (male) Committee of Management members, all except one lived within Camden Town - four on Rochester Terrace and five in Camden Street, Queens Road and Georgiana Street.<sup>202</sup> Lord Camden, Prebendary Thomas Randolph, William Agar and Rev. Hannam, vicar of St Pancras, were patrons. The schools' daily attendance had grown to 250 pupils and it was 'animadverted' by Her Majesty's Inspectors that more space was needed, particularly a new class-room for girls. The Committee sought funds for building, stating:

The Committee deem it right to remark, in conclusion, that these Schools are not exclusively confined to the district of St Stephen's in which they are situated, but are open to and largely used by children who reside in other Districts, especially in that of St Paul's, Camden New Town, where no school exists. Upon the Christian sympathy of the District, in particular, the Committee feel that they have some claim. ... The Committee would respectfully but earnestly urge ... a peculiar tie between the two Districts, and giving to the poorer one [from] its richer and far less heavily burdened neighbour.

North London Collegiate School was a school for boys, established at a public meeting in 1850, with the headmaster the Reverend Williams at 6 (later 12) High Street Camden Town (a building previously a piano factory, non-conformist chapel and Anglican church).<sup>203</sup> By 1869 there were 400 pupils (the majority learning classics rather than commerce) with fees

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<sup>201</sup> KALH, Camden Town Ragged School, *Daily News* 18 April 1849; Camden Town Ragged School, 7 June 1855, annual meeting (pamphlet):U840/EL17.

<sup>202</sup> KALH, Camden Town, national infant schools:U840/EL26.

<sup>203</sup> Bryant, *secondary education*:188.

of 9 pence a year. Williams refused sons of 'rising artisans, such as drivers and proprietors of omnibuses', for whom from 1866 there was a Middle Class Commercial School, built by Thomas Lever, in Camden Street and in 1871 'North West London Collegiate School' (for boys) at 1 Rochester Villas, adjacent to Camden Road.<sup>204</sup> In 1863, College Hall at 230 College Street was a 'Middle Class Commercial School', and from 1872 became a National Board School. Finally, in 1908, on the nearby site of the former Wallis organ factory building, in King's Road, the 'finest LCC school in London' was erected, with Edmund Barnes, resident of Camden Square and the first Mayor of St Pancras in 1900, Chairman of the School.

Of greater long-term importance was the North London Collegiate School for Ladies, founded by Frances Buss after the same public meeting as the boy's school. Buss had assisted at her mother's school in Kentish Town since 1845. She started the new Collegiate School at 46 Camden Street: by 1865 there were 200 pupils and in 1870 the school moved to premises at 202 Camden Road, where it continued to be highly successful. Meanwhile Buss opened a new Camden School for Girls, 'offering more affordable education' at 12 and 14 Camden Street (Figure 3.5).<sup>205</sup> Later, the Collegiate school moved first to Sandal Road, on Camden Road, and then to Edgware, and the School for Girls moved into Sandal Road. Through Buss's particular educational practice, both schools became, and remain, among the top schools in the country.

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<sup>204</sup> W C Williams, *A plain English grammar: for the use of the North-London Collegiate School, High Street, Camden Town*, London 1851. Phyllis Willmott, 'Schools for the 'New Middle Class' in Camden, 1850-1890', *Camden History Review* 2000;24:2-5.

<sup>205</sup> Mary Gurney, *Are we to have education for our middle-class girls? or, the History of Camden Collegiate*, London 1872. Nigel Watson, *And their works do follow them: the story of North London Collegiate School 1850-2000*, London 2000. Photographs, the same source.



Figure 3.5 North London Collegiate School for Girls, 46 Camden Street, and pupils <sup>205</sup>

### ***Adult learning***

Education and learning was also for adults, and events in Camden Town complemented movements in central London. The Camden Scientific and Literary Institute held 3 lectures initially in the Castle Tavern, adjacent to Jeffreys Street, in 1835, and from 1836 at 56 Pratt Street. The topics included: 'Structure and history of corals'; 'Nature and revolutions of the heavenly bodies'; 'Divine creation compared with human ingenuity'.<sup>206</sup> Further speakers included George Birkbeck on 'Mechanisms of the human body', William Holt Yates on 'Monuments of ancient Thebes' and Nathaniel Rogers on Mythology of the Ancients.<sup>207</sup>

In a lively talk, local zoologist James de Carle Sowerby described family life with a tame bat:<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> CLSAC, Heal collection:A/8/38.

<sup>207</sup> Birkbeck: a founder of London University and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge; Yates: a physician and Egyptologist; Rogers <[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathaniel\\_Rogers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathaniel_Rogers)>

<sup>208</sup> James Sowerby, *London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, Third Series* April 1836:265-6.

LIII. *Observations upon the Habits of the Plecotus auritus, or Long-eared Bat.* By J. DE C. SOWERBY, Esq., F.L.S.\*

ABOUT the beginning of August last, a living specimen of the Long-eared Bat was given to my children. We constructed a cage for him by covering a box with gauze and making a round hole in the side fitted with a phial cork. When he was awake we fed him with flies introduced through this hole, and thus kept him for several weeks. The animal soon became familiar, and immediately a fly was presented alive at the hole he would run or fly from any part of the cage and seize it in our fingers, but a dead or quiet fly he never would touch. At other times dozens of flies and grasshoppers have been left in his cage, and waking him by their noise, he dexterously caught them as they hopped or flew about, but uniformly disregarded them while they were at rest. The common Blatta, hard Beetles, and Caterpillar he refused, even after he had been induced by their moving to attack them. As we became still more familiar our new friend was invited to join in our evening amusements, to which he contributed his full share by flitting round the room, at times settling upon our persons and permitting us to handle and caress him. He announced his being awake by a shrill chirp,

Figure 3.6 Text from James de Carle Sowerby talk, 1836.<sup>210</sup>

In 1850, the North London Schools of Drawing and Modelling (Figure 3.6) was set up to provide skills of design and trade in 'a locality favourable as the residence of a superior class of artisans'. Ford Maddox Brown was on the Committee.<sup>209</sup>

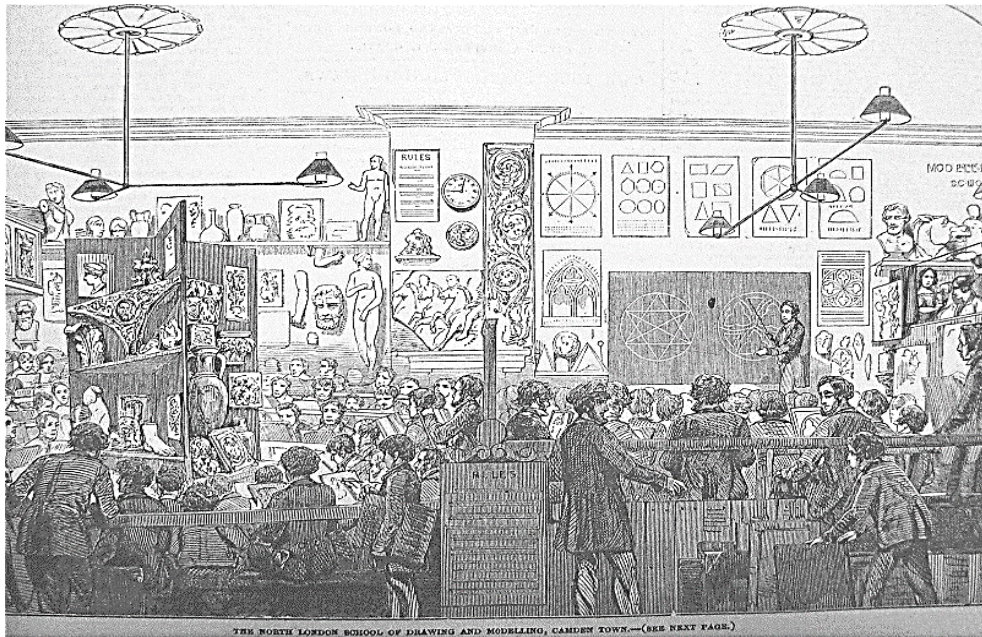


Figure 3.7 The North London Schools of Drawing and Modelling.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>209</sup> CLSAC, Heal:A/8/4. 'Suburban artisan schools', *Illustrated London News* 17 January 1852:4

For a broader audience, there was also the Camden Town Working Man's Club and Institute, from 1866, with lectures each Tuesday evening at 8.30 and titles including 'A budget of jokes' and 'A history of Lucifer [friction] Match'. The subscription was 1d per week, or 2d to use the reading room. Instruction included arithmetic, writing, shorthand, singing, history, elocution, French, chemistry, minerology, drawing and 'an instrumental band'.<sup>210</sup>

Camden Hall in Pratt Street, apart from entertainments, held meetings and talks. Three were published as pamphlets-

12 August 1858: 'The bright side of Calvinism', by the Rev. Benjamin Davies, in reply to lectures on 'The dark side of Calvinism' by Mr. Jabez Inwards.

18 December 1865: Rev. Charles Lee's objections to total abstinence answered by the Rev. Dawson Burns in a lecture.

21 November 1875: 'A neglected view of education' by Mr. M.D. Conway.<sup>211</sup>

By 1883, a Free Library is recorded at 29 Camden Street, with Canon Spencer, vicar, as President and from 1888 Ambrose Heal on the committee. There was a call for free public libraries elsewhere in the borough in 1894, rather than 'numerous subscription libraries attached to shops which supply the worst class of fiction at high rates'. The libraries, it was claimed, would be 'a formidable competitor to the public house and prison'.<sup>212</sup>

The Veterinary College, which had opened in 1791, sustained academic activities at the bottom of College Street, near the Vestry. And in 1904, The Working Men's College, with supporters including John Ruskin and William Morris, moved from Great Ormond Street to a site at the south end of Camden Street, where it flourishes as The Camden College.

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<sup>210</sup> CALSC, Heal:A/8/19. 'Penny readings': Brad Beaven, *Leisure, citizenship and working-class men in Britain, 1850-1940*, Manchester 2005.

<sup>211</sup> British Library: pamphlets collection.

<sup>212</sup> CALSC, Heal:A/8/24b

## Recreation and work

### Leisure

Leisure was enjoyed across classes.<sup>213</sup> A print from 1803 in the British Museum (Figure 3.7) shows a mixed audience at a donkey race in front of the Mother Red Cap inn:

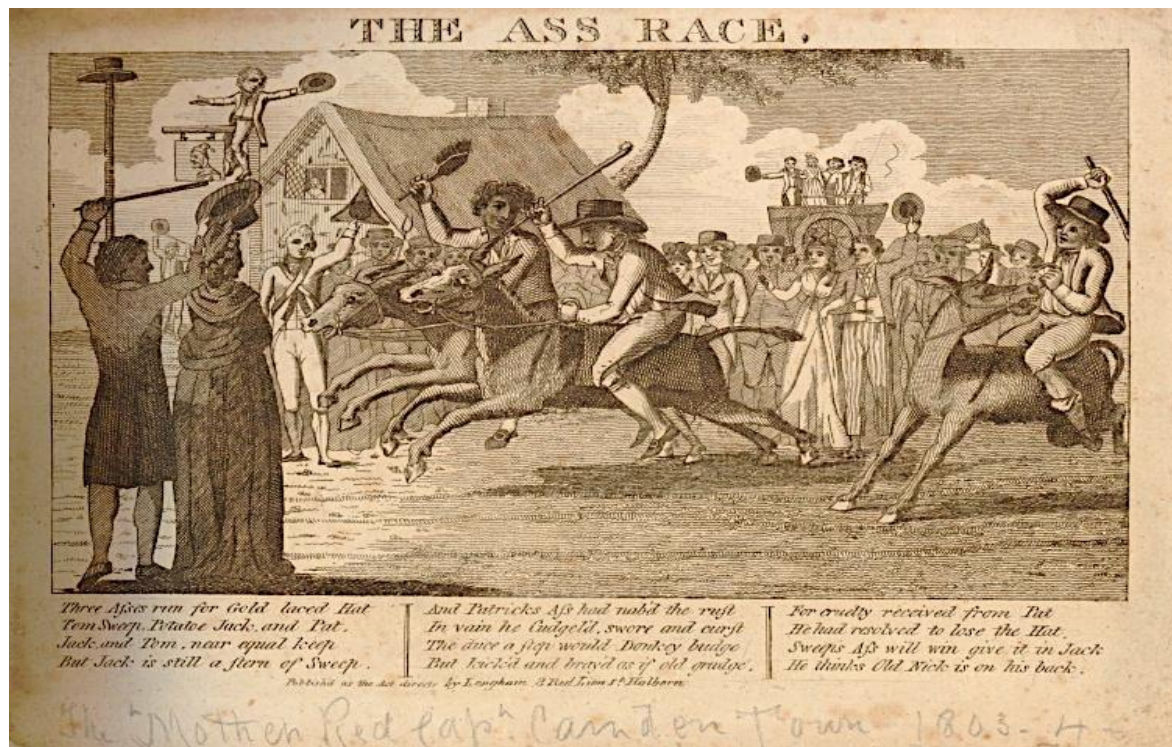


Figure 3.8 Races at the Mother Red Cap Inn, 1805 <sup>214</sup>

Fredrick Miller, in *Saint Pancras past and present*, draws on memories from the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>215</sup> He describes 'gala days' in 1825 when there was a balloon ascent, from the Bedford Arms in the High Street, 'the fields around crowded with sight-seers'; how 'some people still remember gambols and kite-flying' in Rhodes' fields near Fig Lane; cricket on the village green near Kentish Town Road; and the gardens around the Mother Red Cap before rebuilding in 1809.

<sup>213</sup> Dion Georgiou, Leisure in London's Suburbs, 1880–1939, *The London Journal*, 2014;39(3):175–186. Hugh Cunningham, *Time work and leisure*, Manchester, 2014. Peter Borsay, *A history of leisure*, London 2006.

<sup>214</sup> British Museum, online collection, 1927,1126.1.23.58.

<sup>215</sup> Miller, *Saint Pancras*:237.



In 1848, at the north boundary of Camden Town, the Brecknock Arms hosted Devonshire wrestling in its gardens<sup>216</sup>, where some years before had been the last fatal duel in England.<sup>217</sup> In 1848 also, Tom Sayer came to work as a bricklayer and stayed with his eldest sister who had married a Camden Town builder. Sayer became a celebrated prize-fighter, and in retirement, lived in Camden Street at his 'cottage and garden ... [where b]usts of Lords Palmerston and Russell were placed on pedestals at the entrance'. He died with consumption (and dementia) at the house of Mr Mensley, 'who had always made his fighting boots', in the High Street, where there is now a blue plaque.<sup>218</sup>

The Rev. Conyers Morrell, Vicar of St Thomas' church, relates memories of Camden Town in the nineteenth century:<sup>219</sup>

Another old resident, who remembers the tollgate and the carriages and horses coming out of 'Wrotham Hall' [Mr Agar's house], likes to tell about the days she lived at no. 4. It was one of those little houses down where the Dust Destructor [St Pancras electricity generator] is now: all down that side of King's Road there were houses with long gardens behind. We used to go into the field opposite and play all sorts of games, jumping and romping about. Dad was a well-known farrier and my husband was a farrier. His mother used to pump up the forges for him and I used to do it sometimes when he was shoeing a horse. We went to St Thomas' Sunday School down King's Road.

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<sup>216</sup> *Morning Advertiser* 15 June 1848. [Devonshire wrestling is between two men in jackets. Opponents seek to hold the other's jacket and pin him to the ground on his back. They cannot hold breeches or belt. They must touch the opponents back on the ground first, before shoulders, and cannot at any point place their own body between the opponent's and the ground.]

<sup>217</sup> <[archive.spectator.co.uk/article/8th-july-1843/5/a-duel-with-fatal-result-took-place-at-camden-town](http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/8th-july-1843/5/a-duel-with-fatal-result-took-place-at-camden-town)>

<sup>218</sup> Henry Miles, *Tom Sayers: his life and pugilistic career*, London 1866.

<sup>219</sup> R Conyers Morrell, *The story of Agar Town: the ecclesiastical parish of St. Thomas', Camden Town*, London 1935:34,64.

## ***Women's work***

In Camden Square there were two servants in most of the houses and three in some:<sup>220</sup> a young servant, often coming from a country background, and older cook who assisted the family would live in, with 'episodic' help from chars and laundresses. In working-class Somers Town in 1881, 38% of employed women were in domestic service, and 22% in clothing.<sup>221</sup>

Factories employed both men and women: an informant for Booth's survey, in the 1890s, described a Christmas service held at the Idris soft drinks factory in College Street having 200 women compared with 50 men. Goodall's card factory in College Street had women in trades including sorting and packing. The North London School of Telegraphy at 41-43 Camden Road is mentioned in the papers 1890-1892 of suffragette Millicent Garrett Fawcett.<sup>222</sup> An early film clip titled 'London. Factory girls on strike' (Figure 3.8) shows workers marching in St Pancras Way near to the (then) Vestry house.<sup>223</sup>



Figure 3.9 Workers on strike, Kings Road, 1911 <sup>225</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Camden New Town

<[camdennewtown.info/B/Internet/Camden%20New%20Town/People/Servants.html](http://camdennewtown.info/B/Internet/Camden%20New%20Town/People/Servants.html)>

<sup>221</sup> Andrew August, *Poor women's lives*, London 1999:153

<sup>222</sup> Manchester Archives and Local Studies, (microfilm) M50/3/22/1-10

<sup>223</sup> 'Factory girls of strike, 1911' <[britishpathe.com/video/factory-girls-on-strike/query/Camden](http://britishpathe.com/video/factory-girls-on-strike/query/Camden)>

Across London, women let out properties, both as landladies and in their own homes.<sup>224</sup>

Middle-class women took employment, although remaining 'respectable' was an important consideration. It was more often done from within the home, maintaining independence and drawing on networks. Enterprises included dress-making, provision of lodgings and education for children.<sup>225</sup> Scientist Oliver Heaviside's mother Rachel, who had herself been a governess, opened a small school for girls in 'the best part of the house' at 55 King Street;<sup>226</sup> and Charles Dickens' mother had a school in (North Gower Street) when the family lived in Bayham Street.<sup>227</sup>

### ***Construction and skilled trades***

Employment for men in the first half of the nineteenth century included construction of housing, the canal and railways. At Bangor Wharf, on Regent's Canal, were builders Mansbridge & Mansbridge; at Kentish Town Road Wharf, Grover & Grover. Wood and Co. at Camden Town wharf were named as 'very respectable' in evidence to the House of Lords' enquiry on the coal trade.<sup>228</sup> Pubs along the High Street, Pratt Street and Camden Road would have acted as 'houses of call' for these working men.<sup>229</sup> In the later half of the century, the railways gave employment both for the passenger and good services and in offices at the main termini.

The Regent's Canal enabled wood to be brought from High Wycombe and iron from the Midlands, and heavy finished products transported to the London docks. While some histories

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<sup>224</sup> Alison Kay, 'A little enterprise of her own: lodging house keeping and the accommodation business in nineteenth-century London', *The London Journal* 2003;28(2):41–53.

<sup>225</sup> Alison Kay, *The foundations of female entrepreneurship*, London 2009:134. a

<sup>226</sup> Basil Mahon, *The forgotten genius of Oliver Handiside*, London 2017:26.

<sup>227</sup> Frederic Kitton, *The country Dickens*, London 1905.

<sup>228</sup> UK Parliament, House of Lords, 'Coal trade: minutes of evidence', *Journal* 1830;62:1466-72.

<sup>229</sup> David Green, *From artisans to paupers*, Aldershot 1995.

of piano manufacture have focused on the circular factory of Collard and Collard in Chalk Farm, which memorably had a fire, the industry was widespread across Camden Town and included the circular Willis' organ factory in Rochester Place. At the time of the 1870 Paris Commune, an instrument-maker in Georgiana street employed 15 exiles.<sup>230</sup>

Furniture-making, although mainly centred on Tottenham Court Road, extended into Camden Town, as did coach-making firms<sup>231</sup>. Oetzmann & Co, with their retail store near Tottenham Court Road, had their 'works' at 12 Camden Town High Street, and Maples had storage and deliveries in Camden Street. Furniture-makers also provided additional trades – cleaning, repairs and alterations; decorating and furnishing; caretaking, house-letting and advertising for rental; and funerals – even tombstones.<sup>232</sup>

### ***Engraving and printing***

Many engravers lived in Camden Town – for example, Richard Rhodes living in Gloucester Place, Samuel Freeman in Jeffreys Street, Benjamin Cranwell in College Street,<sup>233</sup> and the fathers of educationalist Frances Buss and scientist Oliver Heaviside were both engravers. David King Dyer, a miniature painter, lived at 1 Canal Terrace (and also owned the property of 4 to 6 Canal Terrace).<sup>234</sup> George Hawkins was a lithographic artist living at 116 Camden Road Villas, while John Hosmer, 103 Camden Town Villas, and Richard Dent were draughtsman – Dent was the Camden Town surveyor from 1810 to 1850.

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<sup>230</sup> Piano manufacture in Camden Town <[locallocalhistory.co.uk/industrial-history/piano/page1-m.htm](http://locallocalhistory.co.uk/industrial-history/piano/page1-m.htm)> Alastair Lawrence, *Five London piano makers*, London 2010. Thomas Jones, Robert Tomb, 'The French left in exile', in Debra Kelly, Martyn Cornick eds, *A history of the French in London*, London 2013:180.

<sup>231</sup> Peter Hall, *The industries of London*, London 1962:71-95.

<sup>232</sup> Akiko Shimbo, *Furniture-makers and consumers in England, 1754–1851*, London 2015:158.

<sup>233</sup> TNA, Rhodes:PROB11/1903/142; Freeman:PROB11/2249/141; Cranwell:PROB11/2246/237.

<sup>234</sup> TNA, Dyer:MS11936/558/1298304.

Edward Whymper, in his diary, 1856-1859,<sup>235</sup> describes his visits to Camden Town – ‘to Mr Pickersgill’s, R.A.’<sup>236</sup>, ‘to Millers’ for optical diagrams and to ‘the Camden locomotive works’ where he ‘sketched one of those magnificent monuments to the name of Stephenson’. Using his own income, Edward Wymper went on to become famous as a mountaineer, leading expeditions in the Alps and Greenland.

The Whymper firm of Lambeth were in good standing with engravers and printers the Dalziell brothers who, producing illustrations for magazines and books, had their business at 53 (now 110) High Street from 1858 with the title The Camden Press.<sup>237</sup> Examples of their work are in the Victorian and Albert Museum. Among the artists whose work they printed were Holman Hunt, Millais, Rossetti and Whistler. They cut the illustrations for Edward Lear’s *Book of Nonsense* (1862), and Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*.

Charles Goodall started in business printing playing cards and message cards in Soho, central London, in the 1820s. Larger premises in 1830s were found in College Street.<sup>238</sup> With the Goodall sons in the family firm, the company came to lead the national market, and continued through to the World War. A new factory in 1868 (Figure 3.9), extended products into stationery, games and toys, pens and toilet paper, and employed men and women across a range of skills of design, printing, production and distribution.

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<sup>235</sup> Edward Whymper, ‘The apprenticeship of a mountaineer’, in Ian Smith, *Edward Whymper’s London diary, 1855-1859*, London 2008:39-62.

<sup>236</sup> Frederick Richard Pickersgill 1820-1900, painter and book illustrator  
<[avictorian.com/Pickersgill\\_Frederick.html](http://avictorian.com/Pickersgill_Frederick.html)>

<sup>237</sup> The Brothers Dalziel, *A record of work, 1840-1890*, London 1901.

<sup>238</sup> Michael Goodall, *The family and the firm 1820-1922*, [no place] 2000.



Figure 3.10 Die-stamping works, Goodall's card manufactory, nineteenth century<sup>226</sup>

### **Photography**

Photography emerged as practical technology in the 1850s and Camden Town with its new buildings and growing population attracted innovators. The main streets provided studio premises, while photographers also lived in Camden Town. Portrait photography – family groups and the *carte de visite* – led the commercial field, while landscapes and street scenes were favoured for art photography. There were two photographers of national standing who made technical and artistic innovations. Valentine Blanchard had his studio at 128 Camden Road, a four-storey house beside the gardens of Brecknock Crescent, and he lived opposite at 12 Camden Cottages on Kings Road (now St Pancras Way). He made successful stereoscopic photographs of London streets in the 1860s, and then turned to studio portraits.<sup>239</sup> Francis Bedford, who lived at 22 Camden Road Villas, gained commercial success when he accompanied the Prince of Wales on a visit to Egypt and Palestine in the 1860s. His studio is described by Pritchard in a book of 'elite photographers in Europe'.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>239</sup> Valentine Blanchard <[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentine\\_Blanchard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentine_Blanchard)>

<sup>240</sup> H. Baden Pritchard, *The photographic studios of London*, [London 1882] reprint Edinburgh 2013.

There were commercial photographers, some as business chains, in shop premises in the High Street and College Street, while many had studios in their own houses. Edgar Prout was born on Euston Road and married in St Pancras church. After briefly working at a studio in Regent's Street, perhaps to learn the trade, he had his studio from 1868 at 13 Murray Street, by Camden Square (see portrait, Figure 3.10), and from 1887 through to his death in 1900 at 76 St Paul's (late Augustine's) Road – beside the cutting of the London Midland Railway line, looking down towards St Pancras Station and Euston Road.



Figure 3.11 Edgar Prout, *carte de visite* of Edith Hunt, 1867 <sup>241</sup>

There are few women photographers in existing records, but at 291 College Street on the northern edge of Camden Town, Alice Maud Barker and Albert Oskar Mohr had studios of the Merchants' Portrait Company. Their portraits included leading suffragettes Catherine Despard and Emmeline Pankhurst. Their lapel badges for the Womens' Social and Political Union are in the Museum of London and were shown in an exhibition at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, June-September 2018 (Figure 3.12).

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<sup>241</sup> © National Portrait Gallery, London, No. 18681.

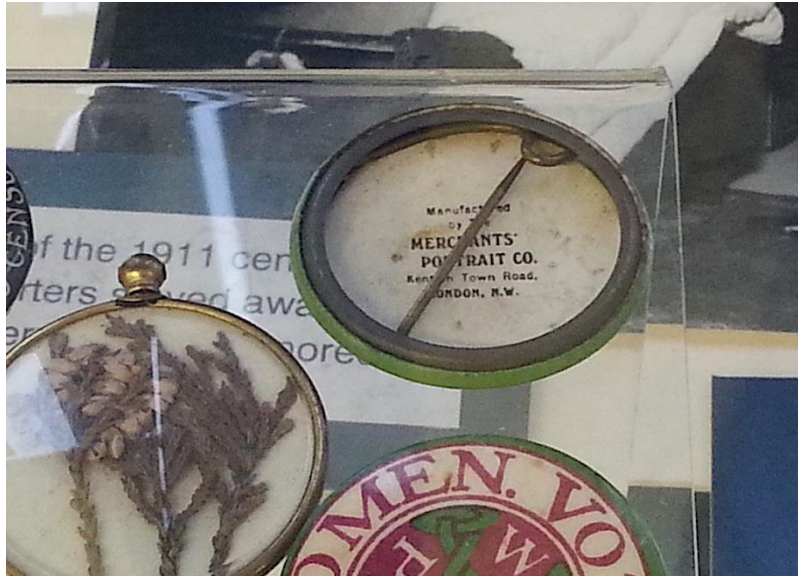


Figure 3.12 Lapel badges created by the Merchants' Portrait Co. in 1911<sup>242</sup>

### ***Engineering***

The brothers Adam and Otto Hilger came from Germany to London in the 1870s making precision optical instruments in Tottenham Court Road. In 1900 they moved to 77-79 Camden Road, and Rochester Mews behind. They were joined in 1898 by Frank Twyman who from 1902 became manager and made innovations in spectroscopes and prismatic equipment. Twyman was elected Fellow of the Royal Society and led the company until 1946, when its workforce – from making wartime equipment – had risen to four hundred.<sup>243</sup>

Schemes to generate electricity privately in London developed from the 1880s: St Pancras Vestry was the first public authority to develop its own production. Sydney Barnes came to St Pancras in 1895 as chief electrical engineer and saw the opportunity for public use in lighting and cheaper power for manufacturing. Following an initial site at Stanhope Street, near Regents Park, a larger plant was built in Kings Road in 1896, adjacent to the Regent's Canal

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<sup>242</sup> Author's photograph, Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, Suffragettes exhibition, September 2018.

<sup>243</sup> Alexander Menzies, 'Frank Twyman,' *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society* 1960;5:269-279.



for coal fuel and water cooling.<sup>244</sup> The St Pancras service was notable also for linking electricity production with burning refuse – in a ‘Dust Destructor’ (refuse burner) – that had for many years been collected nearby at the ‘dust’ fields of Battle Bridge and Somers Town.

Other innovative engineers also lived in Camden Town. John Seaward, at 20 Brecknock Crescent, and his brother Samuel, were the first to develop steam engines for naval use, as well as designing swing bridges, dredging machines, cranes and machinery for saw and sugar mills.<sup>245</sup> Walter West, who lived at 9 St Paul’s Road, was part of a family making equipment for cotton presses in north-east India (‘West’s Patent Press Company 1874-1911’). His correspondence includes accounts of journeys in Europe and a proposal for improving the water supply of Bombay.<sup>246</sup> Eugenius Birch was brought up on Euston Square. Between 1853 and 1884 he built 14 seaside piers (including Brighton and Hastings, Figure 3.12), based on his innovations in design. Perhaps the stucco style of the south coast resorts influenced the choice for his Italianate house at 6 Rochester Terrace.<sup>247</sup>



Figure 3.13 Hastings Pier by Eugenius Birch, opened 1872<sup>248</sup>

<sup>244</sup> LMA, ‘St Pancras electricity’: LMA/4278/01 series

<sup>245</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: John Seaward.

<sup>246</sup> LMA, ‘West family’: F/WST/- series.

<sup>247</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: Eugenius Birch.

<sup>248</sup> Hastings pier <[miss-ocean.com/Conferences\\_Exhibitions/Eugenius\\_Birch.htm](http://miss-ocean.com/Conferences_Exhibitions/Eugenius_Birch.htm)>

## ***Sciences***

The lives of scientists in Bloomsbury have been recently described.<sup>249</sup> In Camden Town, several scientists worked from their homes, keeping links with the scientific colleagues through the Institutions of their disciplines in London. Some had an interest in popularising knowledge, through public associations and writing.<sup>250</sup> Some are noted for collaborating with their wives, but no independent woman scientist is yet recorded in this period.

Oliver Heaviside is the only native son of Camden Town to become a Fellow of the Royal Society. Born at 55 King Street and attending local schools,<sup>251</sup> he recounted his early life as 'in a very mean street in London, with the beer shop and baker and coffee shop right opposite ...' His father was an engraver and his mother converted their home into a small school. His aunt was first the governess and then wife to Charles Wheatstone who lived in a large house nearby Regent's Park. Wheatstone had invented the telegraph, and Heaviside went to work with an electrical cable company, first in Denmark and then Newcastle. Self-taught, his work on the mathematics of electricity included showing that electrical power does not flow within a wire but in the space along side it. The Heaviside family had moved from King Street to College Street in 1863, and in 1875 moved again to 3 St Augustine's Road: and 'it was here, over the next fourteen years, that Oliver produced a brilliant succession of startlingly original papers'. In 1889, colleagues George Fitzgerald and William Lodge visited him at his home, to talk about his findings. Yet, still without formal employment, that year he moved with his aging parents to live with his brother in the West Country, where he remained for the rest of his life.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Michael Boulter, *Bloomsbury scientists*, London 2017

<sup>250</sup> Bernard Lightman, *Victorian popularisers of science*, London 2007:15;

<sup>251</sup> Basil Mahon, *The forgotten genius of Oliver Heaviside*, New York USA 2017.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid*, 'Heaviside':147ff.

Augustus de Morgan, who was professor of mathematics at the University of London from its foundation in 1828 through to 1866, from 1844 lived at 7 Camden Street with a family of seven children. 'An inveterate Londoner, he loved the town, and had a humorous detestation of trees, fields, and birds.'<sup>253</sup> Through his wife's social connections with the Byron family, de Morgan was tutor to Ada Lovelace 1840-1842.<sup>254</sup> Also with his wife Sophia he became interested in spiritualism and carried out paranormal investigations in his own home with the medium Maria Hayden.<sup>255</sup> De Morgan was followed at University College by Olaus Henrici, who in the 1881 census lived at 21 South Villas in 1881. He became Fellow of the Royal Society in 1874 and was President of the London Mathematical Society – which Augustus de Morgan had founded – in 1882-1884.<sup>256</sup>

From 1831, at 5 Camden Terrace West (in 'Mocca's Cottages') lived James de Carle Sowerby.<sup>257</sup> A zoologist and scientific artist, he worked with his father on the authoritative book on fossils, *Mineral Conchology* (1812–46) and created many publications – Charles Darwin wrote 'I picked him out as most capable of doing the work'.<sup>258</sup> As well as active with the Camden Town Scientific and Literary Society, he founded the Botanical Society of London in the inner circle of Regents Park, which later became Queen Mary's Gardens. John Salter, son of a bank clerk of Kentish Town, was his apprentice and lived at his house. Salter contributed drawings and engravings to many of Sowerby's publications. He was appointed to the Geological Survey in 1846, when he married Sowerby's daughter Sally, and became the leading authority on trilobites. He suffered, however, from depression and died from

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<sup>253</sup> ODNB: Augustus de Morgan.

<sup>254</sup> Christopher Hollings, Ursula Martin, Adrian Rice, 'The Lovelace–De Morgan mathematical correspondence: a critical re-appraisal', *Historia Mathematica* 2017;44(3):202-231.

<sup>255</sup> Janet Oppenheim, *The other world: spiritualism and psychical research in England, 1850–1914*, Cambridge, 1988:335.

<sup>256</sup> Olaus Henrici <[www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Henrici.html](http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Henrici.html)>

<sup>257</sup> Royal Society, London, correspondence MS/682.

<sup>258</sup> ODNB: James de Carle Sowerby.

suicide, jumping overboard when travelling home by boat with his son from Margate.<sup>259</sup> The printing of plants and molluscs required fine skill. James Edwards, living at 69 Camden Road Villas led the firm Savill, Edwards & Co,<sup>260</sup> whose publications included *Conchologia iconica*, by Lovell Reeve, which from 1843 – 1878 went through 20 editions.

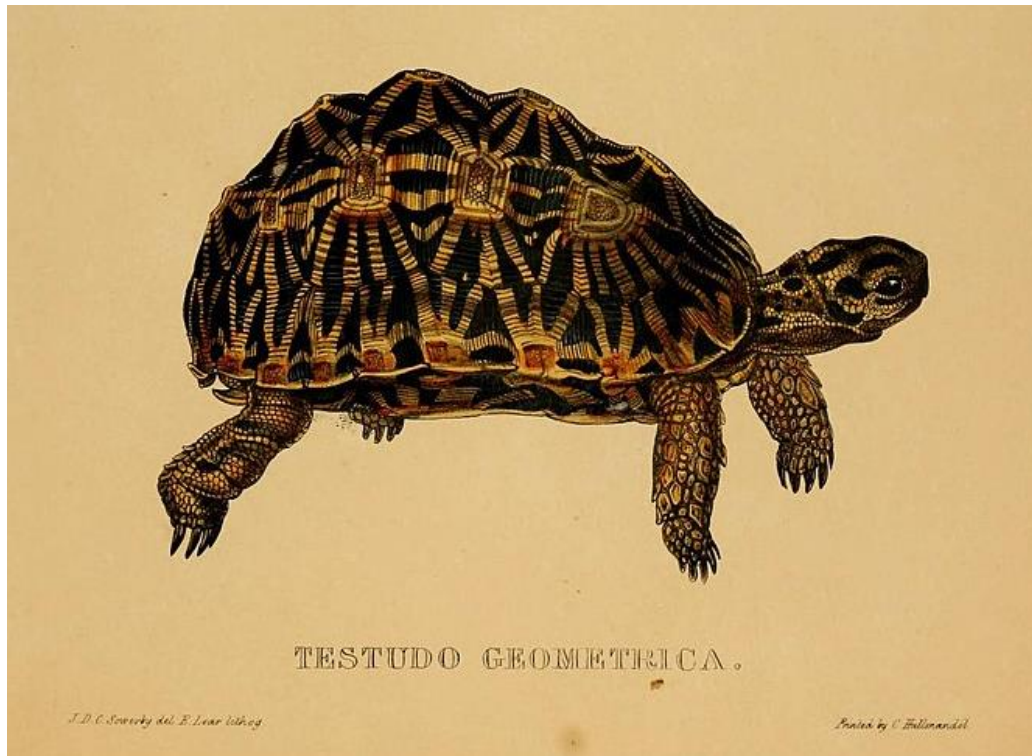


Figure 3.14. Tortoise drawn by James de Carle Sowerby and engraved by Edward Lear<sup>261</sup>

Directly next door to the Sowerby family, at 4 Camden Terrace West, lived James Buckingham. He had worked as a journalist in India and was an MP in the Reform Parliament of 1832-7, with a strong interest in social affairs. In 1842 he published a two-volume 1500 page study *The Slave States of America* with a dedication to Prince Royal.<sup>262</sup> Dr George Swiney (c1786-1844), an eccentric physician lived, in some seclusion, at one time

<sup>259</sup> ODNB: John Salter. James Secord, 'John W Salter: the rise and fall of a Victorian palaeontological career', *Archives of Natural History* 1985;1(1):61-75.

<sup>260</sup> LMA:MH13/268/259.

<sup>261</sup> John Gray, James De Carle Sowerby, Edward Lear, *Tortoises, Terrapins, and Turtles drawn from life*, London 1872.

<sup>262</sup> James Buckingham, *The slave states of America*, London 1842.

in Molesworth Place on Kentish Town Road, next to Camden Terrace. He was buried in the St Martin's cemetery, Pratt Street, directing that 'the coffin be covered with bright yellow cloth, and that the pall and the mourners' cloaks be the same material'.<sup>263</sup> In his will, he established two lectureships, at the Society of Arts and the British Museum. George Symons, created the British Rainfall Organisation to collect meteorological data across Britain 'a mass of data of standard value, unmatched in any other country'. His house at 62 Camden Square still has, in the back garden, the flag pole topped with instruments where he made an unbroken series of observations for forty-two years, assisted by his wife Elizabeth until her death in 1884.<sup>264</sup>

### **Art**

Painters of high repute also lived in Camden Town. An early resident in King's Road (now 135 St Pancras Way, and with a blue plaque) was William Daniel, a painter first of India and later of the English coast. A contemporary was the much more capricious George Morland, who at times lived on Camden Town High Street (although on Lord Southampton's land), and frequented the Mother Red Caps.<sup>265</sup>

There were prominent Academy artists associated with Frederick Goodall,<sup>266</sup> whose house at 4 Camden Square became the studio for his younger colleague, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, and then Frank Holl (who had his childhood in Bayham Street).<sup>267</sup> Ada Reynolds, Holl's daughter, in a memoir describes

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<sup>263</sup> 'George Swiney', *Gentleman's magazine* 1845:133-5. "He lived in the greatest seclusion, not going out of doors more than five or six times during an entire year. He had not shaved for the last two years, and his beard extended nearly to his waist ... for the last month he peremptorily refused to allow the slighted nourishment to pass his lips, excepting small quantities of cider and water."

<sup>264</sup> Jim Burton, 'Pen portraits of presidents – George James Symons', *Weather* 1993;48(3):75

<sup>265</sup> Marian Kamlish, *George Morland: a London artist in eighteenth-century Camden*, London [Camden History Society] 2008.

<sup>266</sup> Frederick Goodall, *The reminiscences of Frederick Goodall*, London 1902.

<sup>267</sup> Neil Slarke, *Frederick Goodall RA*, Oundle 1981. [He was not related to the Goodall card family.]

Camden Square ... then one of the finest studios in London. It was ideally situated. At the end of the garden, away from the noise of the road, backed by a quiet mews, then more gardens – it was a real retreat so far as any London studio can possibly be such. ... It was connected to the house by a long glass corridor, filled with flowers, half conservatory, half vinery, with a little fountain at one end, sunk in a dell of ferns and mosses, where the water tinkled musically as it rose in a thin spray, scattering its diamonds over the green and mossy banks of its setting. Here my mother kept gold fish, which were an irresistible magnet to us children... The winter of 1878 we held our first children's party at Camden Square ...winter after winter until we left it to go to Hampstead. The Grossmiths, George and Weedon, were always first and foremost in the fun. <sup>268</sup>

At No 1 Camden Cottages lived Albert Ludovici, a successful Royal Academician and referred to as 'a friend of Whistler'. His family home had been in Mornington Crescent and he had gone to North London Collegiate School, in the High Street opposite, contemporarily with the Grossmiths and Holls.<sup>269</sup>

While Camden Town was the residence for several significant artists of the nineteenth century, it is nowadays best known for the 'Camden Town Group', a name chosen by Walter Sickert to display their work at three shows in London in 1911-1913.<sup>270</sup> Artistic values had changed with the influence of French impressionism. Since the 1880s, Sickert and others had painted in London theatres and music halls, including the Bedford on the west side of Camden Town High Street. In 1907 he brought together painters initially under the title the Fitzroy Square Group – his studio was there, near to the Westminster school of art where he

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<sup>268</sup> Ada Reynolds, *The life and work of Frank Holl*, London 1912:61. Holl was born in Bayham Street.

<sup>269</sup> Albert Ludovici, *An artist's life in London and Paris, 1870-1925*, London 1926.

<sup>270</sup> Wendy Baron, *Walter Sickert: paintings and drawings*, London 2006.

taught. Already painting female nudes on beds, he entitled a series 'The Camden Town Murder', after a real event and sensational trial of the murder of a prostitute in St Paul's Road, Camden Town. Yet for his settings, Sickert sought out more seedy interiors than the real house, and finally chose a back room in Warren Street, near Fitzroy Square.<sup>271</sup> From 1910, Sickert and Gore had rooms in Mornington Crescent and set up a teaching studio, Rowland House, in Hampstead Road – both to the south of Camden Town itself.<sup>272</sup> Sickert had many studios, including Kensington and Brighton, and spent much of his time in Dieppe. He lived only briefly at 81 Camden Road (since demolished) and even more briefly had a studio at 5 Witcher Place near Camden Road. Neither he, nor other artists associated of the Camden Town Group, it would appear, actually painted Camden Town.

### **Music**

A musician often celebrated for Camden Town is Charles Dibdin, who was buried in the St Martin's burial ground in 1814: he had lived the last part of his life in Arlington Road, on the west side of Camden High Street. Dibdin was both a performer and composer – first for the Italian Opera, Covent Garden and later in one-man shows where he sang his own songs, played the piano and added percussion with his feet – a predecessor music-hall act. His songs were often nautical, including *Tom Bowling* for which he was best known.<sup>273</sup>

Professional players could readily get from Camden Town to the West End, to perform in pit orchestras or concerts halls. Samuel Wesley, who also lived 1806-1810 in 9 Arlington Street, was from 1824 organist to the new Chapel in Camden Town.<sup>274</sup> Wesley was a composer, close friend of Novello the music publisher and an organist capable enough to be

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<sup>271</sup> Sickert '... rapped on endless doors, dived under greasy curtains in narrow halls, climbed rickety stairs to third floor backs ... At last, however, he came upon his treasure trove. A crooked room at the top of a crooked house in Warren Street [near Fitzroy Square]': Marjorie Lilly, *Sickert: the painter and his circle*, London 1971:42-3.

<sup>272</sup> John Yeates, *N.W.1 The Camden Town artists: a social history*, London 2007:140.

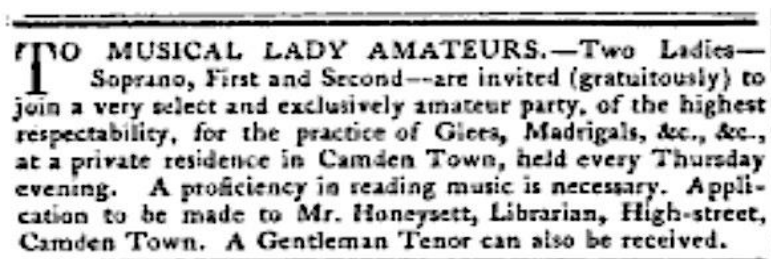
<sup>273</sup> ODNB: 'Charles Dibdin'

<sup>274</sup> Philip Olleson, *The letters of Samuel Wesley: professional and social correspondence 1797-1827*, Oxford 2001.

praised by Mendelssohn. John Addison, who died at Camden Town in 1844, 'played the double bass for many years at the opera ... besides achieving some success as a teacher of singing'.<sup>275</sup>

Music was a form of leisure in both public and private settings. At the corner of Camden Street with King Street was Camden Hall. In the year of the Great Exhibition, 1851, there was advertised a concert by 'G Field and M Morgan of Royal Italian Opera', with '25 person Chorus'. The fare would include a 'selection of oratorios from *The Messiah*', as well as glees, madrigals, duets – held in the Large School Room, King Street. Tickets were on sale at Barratt's Music Warehouse, High Street, Mr Hart's Classical and Commercial Academy, King Street and Mr Morgan, 25 Kings Road.<sup>276</sup>

In 1812, Mrs Kenney advertised a school at 6 Camden Street for young ladies. Frances, her daughter, 'who was several years the pupil of Clementi, superintends the musical accomplishment'.<sup>277</sup> There were opportunities for private singing:<sup>278</sup>



**TWO MUSICAL LADY AMATEURS.**—Two Ladies—Soprano, First and Second—are invited (gratuitously) to join a very select and exclusively amateur party, of the highest respectability, for the practice of Glees, Madrigals, &c., &c., at a private residence in Camden Town, held every Thursday evening. A proficiency in reading music is necessary. Application to be made to Mr. Honeysett, Librarian, High-street, Camden Town. A Gentleman Tenor can also be received.

Figure 3.15 Advertisement in the Musical Times, 1858 <sup>280</sup>

John Bond sold musical instruments – and likely music as well – at 5 King Street.<sup>279</sup> And there was street music. Theodore Fontane, who lived in St Augustine's Road, wrote of his

<sup>275</sup> ODNB, 'John Addison'.

<sup>276</sup> CLRAC, Heal:A/8/38.

<sup>277</sup> *The Times* 9 July 1812:1. Clementi's reputation as a performer and teacher was second only to Joseph Haydn. He worked with piano-makers Collard & Collard, who were for a period at 6 High Street, Camden Town.

<sup>278</sup> *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 1858;8:165-166.

<sup>279</sup> LMA, 'John Bond':MS11936/552/1228313.



'Summer in London': 'Having got up, and unprepared for any surprise attack, I sit having breakfast and reading The Times. Then a twanging and strumming approaches ... It is the *povero italiano* ... he is a devoted soul, as devoted and unchanging as his tunes...' <sup>280</sup>

Music hall saw Camden Town light-heartedly. The first verse for Frank Bell's *Camden Town* starts:

One Monday morning I went out and knew not where to go,  
The idea flashed across my mind to toddle off to Bow;  
To the Railway station I went and took a ticket down,  
In the same compartment was a nice young Girl;  
That was going to Camden Town...



Figure 3.16 Cover for Frank Bell's music 'Camden Town' <sup>281</sup>

<sup>280</sup> Theodore Fontane, translated by John Lynch, *A Prussian in Victorian London* ['The music-makers', 22 July 1852], London 2014:78.

<sup>281</sup> Frank Bell, *Camden Town*, London 1864: permission of British Library, shelf-mark H.1772.c.(9.)

## Conclusion

The Camden Town estate changed from a few scattered houses to a 'new town' of complex social and economic organisation. The written records available were predominantly created by, and therefore reflect, the middle classes and also men rather than women or children - a regrettable bias. With further time, sources that could be investigated further include the database of the Old Bailey, providing new evidence about social circumstances as well as individuals;<sup>282</sup> the British slave-owner database, demonstrating links of middle class families with Caribbean populations;<sup>283</sup> digital versions of the decennial census and the annual Post Office directories, providing names, occupations and domestic structures;<sup>284</sup> and national and local newspapers reporting public and personal events.

Literary London shows Camden Town perceived as 'other' by the upper-middle classes from their inner London homes: one knew of it, one might have need to go there, if necessary and (hopefully) come back again. It was on the edge – not a distant suburb needing a railway journey, but just a little way on the other side of Euston Road. Walter Sickert and friends chose to paint working class life at the edge of Camden Town, in contrast to Fitzroy Square and Bloomsbury, although not penetrating too deeply.

Yet the narrative of this chapter shows Camden Town as it evolved to be a Georgian suburb – a mixed society of labourers and servants, artisans and middle classes. Employment was local for some and more distant for others, in service, trades and enterprises. In the Booth surveys at the end of the century, the moral concerns of the times – of drinking, prostitution, criminality – were rarely mentioned. Camden Town was a place of respectability, where police officers, landladies or professors could choose to live and work.

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<sup>282</sup> London lives <[londonlives.org](http://londonlives.org)>

<sup>283</sup> Legacies of British slave-ownership <[ucl.ac.uk/lbs](http://ucl.ac.uk/lbs)>

<sup>284</sup> Used by Camden New Town local history group <[camdennewtown.info](http://camdennewtown.info)>

A full century has passed since the sale of houses by the Pratt family and the Church Commissioners after the Great War, yet much of the original ground plan and fabric remain. How the life of nineteenth century Camden Town can contribute to understanding its place in the twenty-first century is the subject for the final chapter.

## Chapter 4 Public history and local character.

The building of Camden Town and the people who lived there were the focus for Chapters Two and Three. This final chapter looks more broadly at local history, to consider its place in contemporary London and Camden Town's future.

### Local history and place

Michael Thompson published in 1974 a history of Hampstead:<sup>285</sup> Lawrence Goldman recently considered the book 'as full of fascinating details and historical byways as is the place itself'.<sup>286</sup> When researching Kentish Town, people suggested to Gillian Tindall that 'surely the only places whose local history is worth going into in depth are 'interesting' areas – 'historical' ones like Hampstead or Greenwich, or York or Bath'. But she wrote, in 1976, that 'in an accredited "historical" area ... what is still hidden has been so fully documented already by a series of scholars, plagiarists, bandwaggoners and chatterboxes, that little discovery remains to be done ... Books on areas like Hampstead are legion.' Tindall subtitles her book 'The history of one London village', which she 'has taken as a subject, not because it is special but because it is archetypal'.<sup>287</sup>

Local history is not usually concerned with comparison: it seeks to know how this particular place became what it is. (Equally, histories of London – or indeed Britain – take the location for granted.) The sense of place, Thomas Gieryn proposes, is because it is *remarkable* (his

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<sup>285</sup> Michael Thompson, *Hampstead: building a borough, 1650-1964*, London, 1974.

<sup>286</sup> Lawrence Goldman, *Michael Thompson* <[history.blogs.sas.ac.uk/2017/08/professor-michael-thompson](http://history.blogs.sas.ac.uk/2017/08/professor-michael-thompson)>

<sup>287</sup> Tindall, 'Fields beneath':14-18.

emphasis), held through experience and shared record.<sup>288</sup> A place has 'spatial form and social content' – and each will affect the other. Place is people's interpretations as well as the physical aspects themselves. And while the boundaries for a place provide its definition, these boundaries may be contested in the definitions of others. The identity of place comes from internalisation of interactions with 'the outside'.<sup>289</sup>

Similarly, the meanings of a place and the criteria for valuing place may differ both between individuals and between groups. The ways that perceptions of place can be influenced are also varied – perhaps by a symbol, such as on a transport map, perhaps by association with events in media reports, perhaps by public authority jurisdictions. It is not just about scale – a 'local history' may be small or large – a house, a street or the several points on a railway line.<sup>290</sup>

Connotations from the past transform space into place: the past can explain buildings and open areas, giving them context such as in architectural history. Gieryn proposes three requirements of place: a geography (ranging from armchair to region) expressed through location, height and climate; a material form that may be natural or humanly created; and an investment with meaning and value through people and cultures over time. Place 'sustains difference and hierarchy' by 'routinizing daily rounds ... and segregations', feeding into the complementary value of identity. Place may also have an active effect: in discussion of 'urban agency', there is the idea that form can contribute to peoples' experience and indeed values.

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<sup>288</sup> Thomas Gieryn, 'A space for place in sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology* 2000;26:463-496.

<sup>289</sup> Identities 'formed by the juxtaposition and co-presence of particular sets of social relations' are 'forever open to contestation': Doreen Massey, *Space, place, and gender*, Minneapolis (USA) 1994:167.

<sup>290</sup> See Gillian Tindall, *The house by the Thames*, London 2006. Jerry White, *Campbell Bunk: the worst street in North London between the wars*, London 1986. Gillian Tindall, *The tunnel through time*, London 2016.

Robert Lewis has argued that there is an 'appeal' of a suburb's physical layout and homes which attracts people living and working there, creating a 'network of relationships bound up with a particular setting':<sup>291</sup> the same as the nineteenth century squares and terraces that were the ambition for the new middle classes of Camden Town. Similarly, there is debate on how physical form and people's perceptions affect behaviour, such as either public service or criminality; and how social norms and proscriptions affect people's experience of place.<sup>292</sup> Nevertheless, the theoretical discussion of place is not usually linked with local history.

The purpose of the local history is both to demonstrate uniqueness and to place the record within a more general framework. David Dymond describes how the local historian, after reviewing previous work and describing both primary and secondary evidence, can 'change the focus from the personal and local to the regional and national (and back again) ... and draw her own conclusions'.<sup>293</sup> Local history happens in many places – the studies of Georgian Edinburgh New Town and Drumcondra in Dublin complement those of Summerson's London. There can be extension by comparison – Shane Ewen, in a recent student text on urban history, includes India for the post-colonial studies that have widened British history;<sup>294</sup> or local case study can be set within a multi-country study, opening new areas for comparisons.

All these differing histories can be drawn into reconsideration of London history. The authors of popular histories take up others' work and synthesise it into new formats, taking a mixture of topic and place. The London's west end is understood through the development of the aristocratic estates and sovereign land such as the Royal Parks; London's east end is

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<sup>291</sup> Robert Lewis, 'Comments on urban agency: relational space and intentionality,' *Urban History* 2017;44(1):137-144.

<sup>292</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The power of place: urban landscapes as public history*. Cambridge (USA) 1995.

<sup>293</sup> David Dymond, *Researching and writing local history*, Lancaster 2016.

<sup>294</sup> Shane Ewen, *What is urban history?* Cambridge 2016:83.

described for its overcrowding resulting from waves of migration through the docks. The north of London has Hampstead and Highgate as villages and suburban development between. More can be learned of these – now – inner suburbs to balance the presentation, to reflect more broadly the range of London’s places and people.<sup>295</sup> The idea of a general pattern may be drawn from a particular example; and the individual report may be all that is left. But in some places there are separate bits of information that are viewable together in a new light. And these may link the local area to wider national and international perspectives. For example, the growing interest in local history from the 1960s led to changes in planning law and greater investment by local authorities in area conservation.

## **Conservation and planning for Camden Town**

### *Locating Camden Town*

The boundaries of Camden Town remain contentious. A recent (2012) from the Museum of London places **Camden Town** in bold lower case, similar to **Kentish Town** and **Kings Cross**, with ST. PANCRAS centrally and stations – North London Line and Underground – in smaller type (Figure 4.1). This map is chosen here, however, also because it has the outline of the postal district NW1 in light shade and other postal areas in darker shade. The northern and eastern boundary of NW1 follows the boundary of the Camden Town Estate, the fields that separated Lord Camden’s land from Kentish Town.

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<sup>295</sup> See Peter Ackroyd, *London – the biography*, London 2000. Roy Porter, *London – a social history*. London, London 1994. Peter Thorold, *The London Rich*, London 1999. Jerry White. *London in the nineteenth century*, London 2010.

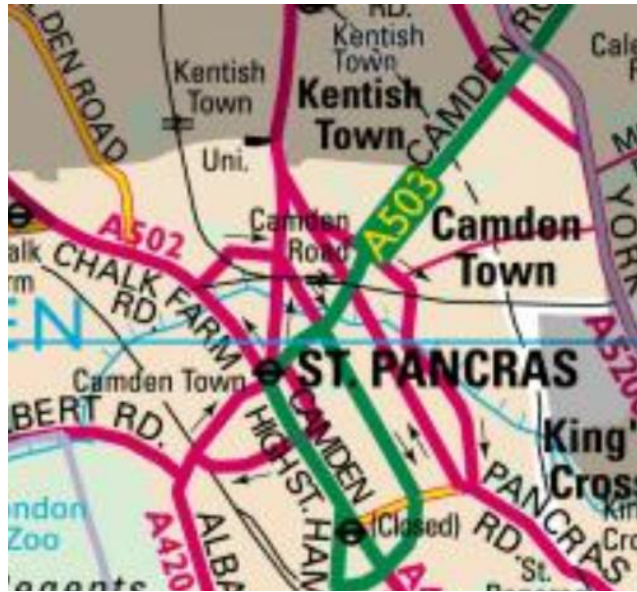


Figure 4.1. St Pancras, NW1 postcode area<sup>296</sup>

Contrast two maps of the London Borough of Camden. Figure 4.2, a map of 'development areas', divides Camden Town: Camden Town North is joined with Chalk Farm and Camden Town South overlaps Kings Cross, but leaving much of Camden New Town out of either.

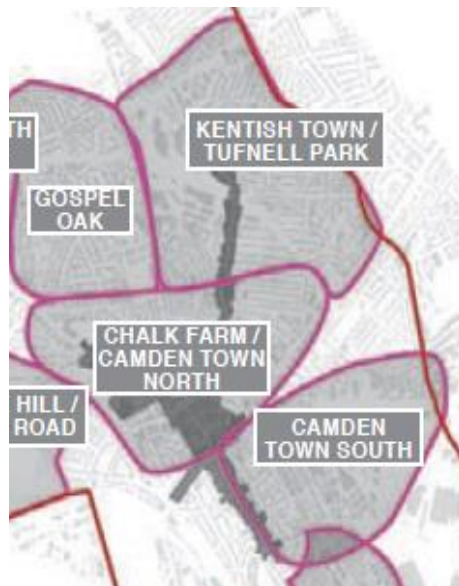


Figure 4.2 Camden Town 'development areas'<sup>297</sup>

<sup>296</sup> Museum of London, 'Postcode map' <<https://web.archive.org/web/20120814100048/http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/postcodes/places/NW1.html>>

<sup>297</sup> London Borough of Camden, Camden Character Study, 2015:Figure 5.1.



Equally, Camden Town is poorly recognised politically. Figure 4.3 shows political ward boundaries in purple, sub-divisions in mauve, the black letters are area sub-codes, with Camden Town added in orange: Camden Town divides across four wards.



Figure 4.3 London Borough of Camden central wards and Camden Town boundaries

The Borough of Camden created most of its conservation areas in the two twentieth century periods of Labour government. Larger areas of Camden Square, Kentish Town and Regent's Canal were created in the 1970s, but the newer areas from 1997 were smaller and more selective. Much of Camden Town remains unprotected, Figure 4.4:

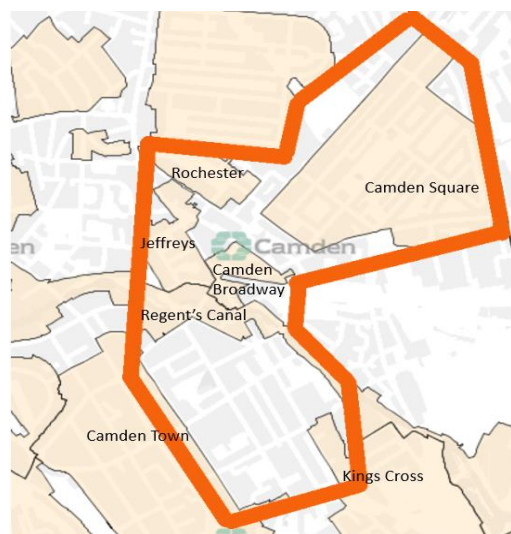


Figure 4.4. Camden Town (line) and designated conservation areas (stippled)

Conservation became a prominent approach in London in the 1960s. The post-war period had seen substantial destruction of the nineteenth century terraces by public authorities. Camden Town saw rebuilding of bomb-damaged villas of Camden Road and Rochester Square: re-named St Pancras Way estate, the six-storey Bauhaus-style blocks gained a Festival of Britain architectural award. St Pancras Borough was among the leading boroughs in new building – Figure 4.5 shows Harold Wilson, leader of the Labour Party and shortly to be Prime Minister, opening the Borough’s 5000th public-sector dwelling since 1945.

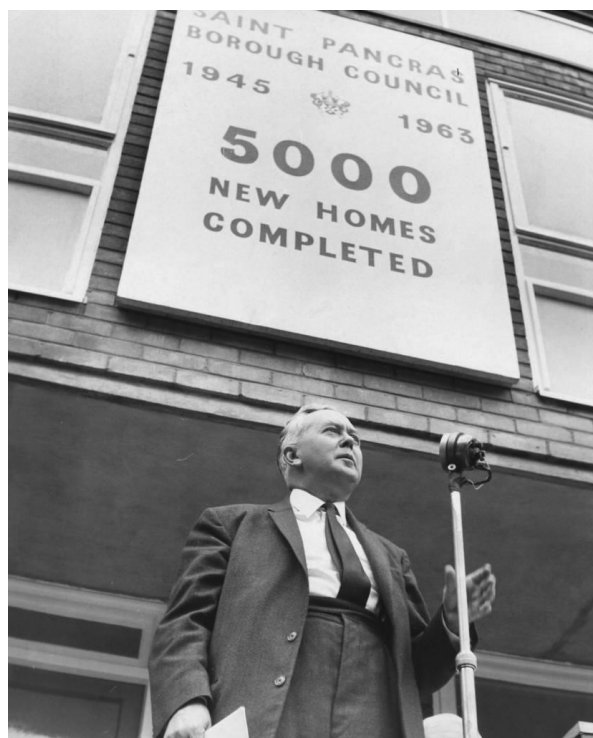


Figure 4.5 Harold Wilson, Labour Party leader, at St Pancras, 1963.<sup>298</sup>

The Labour Government from 1964 oversaw another period of demolition, this time affecting the southern parts of Camden Town between Pratt Street and Crowndale Road. Rebuilding of the small terrace and mews houses between the main roads of the original Camden Town 'grid' put front doors in the air along walkways and balconies. Yet shortly, in the period of the sixties 'counter-culture', which included the defeat of a proposed inner London motorway 'box' and a gas-explosion of a tower block in East London called Ronan Point,

<sup>298</sup> Harold Wilson <[flashback.com/on-this-day-in-photos-september-7th-in-the-20th-century-53538](http://flashback.com/on-this-day-in-photos-september-7th-in-the-20th-century-53538)>

public opinion moved strongly away from demolition – not least because it often destroyed existing communities – towards restoration of the existing buildings, of both terraced housing and reuse of industrial buildings. As a result of significant public campaigns, such as John Betjamen's for St Pancras Station, in 1970 Parliament extended the date limit for conservation from 1840 to 1939.

## **Planning London's future**

### ***Character***

The public body concerned with the interests of local history is the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England – known in short as Historic England. It is tax-funded and different from its ancestor English Heritage, which is now a charity tasked with managing the asset of 400 historic buildings and sites (and the blue plaques scheme). Historic England oversees listing of 400 000 significant sites and holds archives of seven million items relevant for local history. Nevertheless, because it is a government organisation, Historic England is not in close contact with the public (in comparison with English Heritage). Historic England works through providing advice, undertaking research and presenting the case for 'environmental heritage' in the political arena.

While Historic England is concerned with the past, its main concern is protection and enhancement for the present and future. Instead of 'heritage', there is growing use of the expression 'character', which combines understanding of period with concern about form and function. Historic England states that 'Research questions that will help our mission include ... How can we use historic local character and distinctiveness of urban areas to

inspire and guide future land use, development and design?<sup>299</sup> This forms an intersection with local history: by retelling the past in the present, historians can contribute to discussion of planning for the future.

The Mayor of London consulted on a spatial development strategy, the London Plan, in 2017. The Plan provides statutory guidance for the coming fifteen years. It continues spatial plans of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Greater London Plan of 1944, by Abercrombie and Forshaw. The Plan responds to policies and forecasts, particularly the continued high net balance of migration into London. The policy choice is for greater density of housing within London's boundaries and continued transfer of use from ex-industrial to housing and offices, while maintaining open space.<sup>300</sup>

How should new building of housing be managed?<sup>301</sup> Two reports commissioned for the Plan give contrasting approaches. The structural engineers Ove Arup recommends increased density (ie higher buildings, less open space) with greater proximity to (existing) public transport – effectively, the concentric circles of London's growth. The second, by architects Allies and Morrison, identifies areas of London related to their period of buildings and proposes development that promotes local character. The Arup approach is the current standard for London, based on business priorities – maximising commuting to work. The character approach would celebrate variety, locality and quality of life.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Historic England, 'Urban and public realm heritage'

[historicengland.org.uk/research/current/discover-and-understand/urban-public-realm](http://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/discover-and-understand/urban-public-realm)

<sup>300</sup> Mayor of London, 'New London Plan'

[london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan](http://london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan)

<sup>301</sup> See also recent essays in Peter Guillery, David Kroll, eds, *Mobilising housing histories: learning from London's past*, London 2017.

<sup>302</sup> Ove Arup for Historic England *London plan review no.2 report*, London 2016. Allies and Morrison for Historic England, *London's local character and density*, London 2016.

Historic England has promoted a character approach with the 32 London boroughs – of which 18 have made formal ‘character studies’. These borough-wide studies broadly take two approaches: a typological analysis – classifying land use, built form, townscape and historic origins; or those with an area or community-focussed approach, setting out the history and character at the local level. The study undertaken for Camden Borough took the first approach, placing a strong emphasis on existing land use but only for land outside existing conservation areas. In a delicate critique of Camden Borough’s study, the consultancy Land Use Consultants suggests “The patchwork created by excluding greenspace and Conservation Areas sometimes creates a fragmented picture that perhaps slightly lacks a common thread.”<sup>303</sup>

In Historic England’s assessment, the meaning and implications of character studies for planning are not well understood by boroughs and are insufficiently used for specific planning decisions. Allies and Morrison have taken their consultancy work further with the Boroughs of Hackney and Lewisham, for the first time including assessment of the implications of character analysis for local planning.<sup>304</sup> The London Boroughs have borough-wide local plans which regulate Council planning decisions. Planning is therefore part of a system controlling perception of character and also a framework for decisions influencing character in the future. Moreover, Historic England is (though slowly) moving from primary concern with the physical aspects of buildings, their design and how they relate to movements in architectural history towards including concern with area, place and setting, the range of dimensions of the local as well as its uniqueness.

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<sup>303</sup> LUC for Historic England, *Characterisation of London's historic environment*, London, 2016:11,74.

<sup>304</sup> Allies and Morrison, ‘Character and density research’  
<[alliesandmorrison.com/up-projects/local-character-density-research/](http://alliesandmorrison.com/up-projects/local-character-density-research/)

This offers a stronger role for the local historian whose rationale is identification of the particular within the general. Local historians are by nature archivists – most local history centres, supported by public authorities, hold local records that form the backbone of the local history studies. Local history is allied to micro-history, concerned with close reading, identifying detail and constructing new perceptions. In a recent call to reinstate thinking about ‘the public future’, Guldi and Armitage propose: “History’s power ... lies in explaining where things came from, tacking between big processes and small events to see the whole picture, and reducing a lot of information to a small and shareable version”.<sup>305</sup> The authors encourage putting history into clearer arguments and public forms, including visual and digital, and linking detailed studies with policy issues.

### ***A digital future***

The approach of Camden Borough to digital history has been cautious. Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, in a public library, retains a card index, fiches and microfilm: some material is recorded in The National Archives *Discovery* catalogue, but how much of the total is unclear. Camden History Society, whose members have researched history across the borough for fifty years, has a modern web site advertising its publications<sup>306</sup> but only the index can be searched digitally, rather than full texts. And while local societies are members of the London and Middlesex Archaeology Society (LAMAS),<sup>307</sup> there is no digital platform for sharing between local history associations in London. Thus, it is not readily possible to determine how much is being replicated across London in different places or how societies are responding to the digital challenge.

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<sup>305</sup> Jo Guldi & David Armitage, *The history manifesto*, Cambridge 2017:13.

<sup>306</sup> Camden History Society <camdenhistorysociety.org>

<sup>307</sup> LAMAS <lamas.org.uk>

The British Association for Local History publication *Internet sites for local historians* (only in printed form, currently in its fourth edition) <sup>308</sup> lists almost 800 sites. Several are mentioned as good practice: for example the guide commends the Wolverhampton History and Heritage Society site, whose Sections include buildings, history articles, people and a multi-item 'Museum'. Locally to Camden, surrounding boroughs have different approaches: Hackney and Westminster have fully searchable catalogues, while Haringey, Islington, Brent and Camden do not. A private web page for the local history of Kingston, in west London, has strong design standards:<sup>309</sup> however, the academic papers (as .pdf files) that were once on the web pages have been taken down, indicating the difficult balance of maintaining an interesting contemporary presentation as well as baseline material for visitors to the site.

While the National Archives *Discovery* catalogue is an important source for finding material held across archives, the relatively standardised system of 'Calmview', used by many local authorities (and, for the present work, Westminster, Kent and Warwickshire) would be welcome for cataloguing Camden's holdings.<sup>310</sup> It is not that all text needs to be fully digitised (which is necessarily expensive, if welcome in enabling remote access) but there would be considerable benefits through making the catalogue searchable online and converting the existing microfilm, such as the collection of Ambrose Heal of St Pancras ephemera, into digital form (even if kept for onsite viewing). As web use develops, the electronic material can diversify, and with electronic search users can quickly gain access to materials they are seeking. The present Dissertation could not have been written without the many existing digital catalogues.

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<sup>308</sup> Fillmore, *Internet sites*, 2017.

<sup>309</sup> Kingston History Research <[www.kingstonhistoryresearch.co.uk](http://www.kingstonhistoryresearch.co.uk)>

<sup>310</sup> Two local studies pages used for this work with more advanced format are: Bishopsgate Institute <[bishopsgate.org.uk/Library/Online-Catalogue](http://bishopsgate.org.uk/Library/Online-Catalogue)> and Kent Archives and Local History <[kentarchives.org.uk/our-collections](http://kentarchives.org.uk/our-collections)>

Digital presentation is taking history in new directions. *London Lives*, led by Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, brings together 15 datasets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from archives in Britain and the USA. The digital edition is searchable for names and keywords, proving of wide use.<sup>311</sup> An earlier format, *Locating London's Past* sought to locate the data onto Rocque's 1746 map, which itself was recalibrated on nineteenth century Ordnance Survey maps; but the web page has not been renewed since 2011 and functions only weakly.<sup>312</sup> *Layers of London*, using resources from the Museum of London, is digitising maps, pictures, films and stories of people who have lived and worked in London. *Layers of London* is designed for public engagement, encouraging people to submit personal memories and materials and expects to create 'heritage projects' in all 32 boroughs of London. The widely-praised work *Legacies of British Slave Ownership*, while national in scope, has a substantial proportion of data for London.<sup>313</sup>

For Camden New Town, Bev Rowe has developed a web site celebrates people, places and stories for the area, particularly Camden Square and Murray Street.<sup>314</sup> He has investigated the names of residents in the decennial censuses and annual Post Office registers. It is time-consuming work but the results have proved of interest to distant people, with relatives once living in Camden Town, as well as to contemporary residents.

Local history gains interest when people can relate to it. In family history now, with commercial programmes, a person's relatives can readily be traced through several generations. Similarly, the history of individual dwellings is popular. The Census gives both name and address for ten-yearly samples (with cut-off at 100 years past); and for London,

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<sup>311</sup> London lives <[londonlives.org/index.jsp](http://londonlives.org/index.jsp)>

<sup>312</sup> Locating London's past <[locatinglondon.org](http://locatinglondon.org)>

<sup>313</sup> University College London <[www.depts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs](http://www.depts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs)>

<sup>314</sup> Camden New Town History Group <[camdennewtown.info](http://camdennewtown.info)>



the Post Office Directories list a named householder for every address. It would be possible, using the 1890s Ordnance Survey as a base and adding data from the Camden Town estate registers, to represent the chronological sequence of building, perhaps as a 3-D representation, or for a user to find material relevant to a geo-referenced point or area.

### ***Public history and value***

Historians have a crucial role to play with communities concerned with their past.<sup>315</sup> In a review of recent PhD theses that have drawn on local heritage sites or investigated patterns of public response, Tosh Warwick argues the 'huge importance that understandings of the past play in the lives of those who live in towns and cities' and the 'opportunities for urban historians to serve the communities they study'.<sup>316</sup> There are also benefits for historians in collaboration with external partners in exploring urban heritage. The values that professionals, businesses and communities attach to heritage change over time, as do historians' interests in topics and sites, memories and interpretations.<sup>317</sup>

Hampstead in the nineteenth century was objectively an awkward village – a distant commuter journey from London, up a hill slow and steep for horses, with narrow streets and few houses. But the difficulties were balanced by assets of healthy water and clean air, views across the Thames valley, elite residents and the cachet of its name. Value is created through sense of place. Two organisations, led by developers, architects and large London land-owners, have held exhibitions and talks on the theme London's "Great Estates". They

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<sup>315</sup> Peter Borsay, 'History or heritage: perceptions of the urban past: a review essay', *Urban History* 1991;18:32-40.

<sup>316</sup> Tosh Warwick, 'Research in urban history: recent Ph.D. theses on heritage and the city in Britain'. *Urban History* 2018;45(3):549-560.

<sup>317</sup> Heritage consortium <[www.heritageconsortium.ac.uk/2017/09/14/policy-engagement-at-a-local-level-a-workshop-for-historians-by-mike-reeve](http://www.heritageconsortium.ac.uk/2017/09/14/policy-engagement-at-a-local-level-a-workshop-for-historians-by-mike-reeve)>

propose “long-term thinking and investment, high quality placemaking, on-going maintenance and careful stewardship.”<sup>318</sup>

Nineteenth century Camden Town centred around Pratt Street, College Street, King’s Road and Camden Square. Transport was from Camden Town railway station rather than the later Underground at the High Street. Through until 1919, Camden Town was a leasehold estate shared between the Trustees of the Camden and the Church of England. There are records of people from many parts of society – academicians to railwaymen; organisations from literary societies to ragged schools, churches to missions; and businesses from national printers to local photographers. Remembering and understanding this history could contribute to contemporary choices. Re-presenting the Georgian suburb in relation to its particular character enables architecture and planning, society and production from the past to be linked with debates on development for the future.

## **Conclusion**

This Dissertation has interpreted records of property, organisations and people in the Camden Town from Georgian times through the ‘long’ nineteenth century, to understand a past can be valued as knowledge of character for the present and the future. The coherence and identity of Camden Town’s history contribute to significance for us now.

Around 20 000 people live in Camden Town (the number who work there is unrecorded), about one person in 3000 in the capital as a whole. Many more are indirectly related to

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<sup>318</sup> London Society <[londonsociety.org.uk/tag/great-estates-series](http://londonsociety.org.uk/tag/great-estates-series)> New London Architecture <[newlondonarchitecture.org](http://newlondonarchitecture.org)> (The organisations have the same chairman – Peter Murray <[petermurraylondon.com](http://petermurraylondon.com)>)

people in Camden Town's past. Some people will be researching their family histories; some will be researching their houses and neighbourhood for interest; and some – including local officials and commercial developers – can use historical knowledge for decision-making.

The influence of 'Camden Town Market', the retail and tourist areas west of Camden Town High Street, is considerable. But the Market is set in the former stables and railway lands of Chalk Farm, and the wharves around Regent's Canal of Lord Southampton – it is not in Camden Town.

This dissertation reclaims Camden Town as a Georgian suburb, a defined entity with physical and social character. It presents the topography and wider social dimensions of London local history, to add value for society – residents, business, visitors and online browsers.

## **Appendix 1 London local history studies**

### ***Theses***

#### **Croydon**

CRW Cox. "Urban development and redevelopment in Croydon, 1835-1940," Centre for English Local History Thesis Collection, University of Leicester, 1970.

[Abstract: the urban growth of Croydon was influenced by its being a long-established market town.]

#### **Camden and Lambeth**

Colloms, Marian. Residential development in London in the 19th century: a comparative examination of its nature and progress within the present boroughs of Camden and Lambeth. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1978.

#### **Chiswick**

Tracey Logan. Improving Chiswick 1858-1883. MRes in Historical Research. University of London, 2014. Logan investigated Victorian Chiswick politics through records of the Chiswick Improvement Commission, 'an experimental, amateur-led organ of government'.

#### **Hackney**

Sean Gubbins. Rhodes Town: how Lamb Farm became Hackney suburbia. Masters Thesis, University of London, 2014. Gubbins looked at the building process, the appearance of the houses and the people who came to live in a speculative estate at the edge of the village at Hackney in the nineteenth century.

Juliet Davis. The making and remaking of Hackney Wick, 1870–2014: from urban edgeland to Olympic fringe. London, Routledge 2016. Planning and development in Hackney Wick, proposing a 'new local centrality in urban edgeland'.

#### **Lambeth**

David Kroll. The other architects who made London: planning and design of speculative housing c. 1870 – 1939. Ph D, University of London, 2013. In Lambeth, the Minet estate is 'typical' for its time, as not pioneering or experimental.

#### **Mayfair**

David Brown. The impact of rivers on urban development – the Tyburn River and Mayfair in the eighteenth century. MRes, University of London, 2017. David Brown used geographical information systems to analyse how building quality was associated with proximity to the local river, the Tyburn, in Mayfair;

Pamela Taylor, Knightsbridge and Hyde, Victoria County History, London 2017.

Links the changing built environment with political and religious histories from the Restoration of 1660 until 1900 in Knightsbridge.

### **Regent's Park**

Ann Saunders. "The Manor of Tyburn and the Regent's Park, 1086-1965," Centre for English Local History Thesis Collection, University of Leicester, 1965. From a hunting park for Henry VIII, to 'London's first Garden City under the genius of John Nash'.

### **South London**

David Woodward. Suburban development in five neighbouring South London parishes in the middle decades of the 19th century. Ph D, University of Kingston, 2012 Sutton and Wallington were quickly expanding while, Cheam, Carshalton and Beddington, more slowly. Selective arrival of the railways and piped water increased the disparities.

### **Richmond**

Brownlee, Mike. Economic and social change in the 19th century in south-west Middlesex and north-west Surrey: a comparative study of seven parishes bordering the Thames. PhD thesis, University of London (IHR), [Recorded talk at IHR 1 Feb 2017]

*In Michael Thompson, ed The rise of suburbia. Leicester University Press, 1982:*

### **Bromley:**

Rawcliffe. A market town: the coming of the railway. In 1841, there were 178 separate landowners, but 4 people owned together two thirds. From 1845 sold off – for the railway speculations

### **Acton**

Michael Jahn. Railways and suburban development: outer west London 1850-1900 (Acton, Chiswick, Ealing, Hanwell). (M Phil, 1971). Low-density development was characteristic of large estates whose owners could control transformation into middle-class residential districts. Railways benefited, but 'development was frequently not maintained after a relatively short period'.

### **Bexley**

Michael Carr. The growth and characteristics of a metropolitan suburb : Bexley Borough, North West Kent 1880-1963. Ph D, University of London (LSE), 1971.

## **Publications**

### **Battersea**

Keith Bailey. Aspects of Battersea History 1770-1910. Wandsworth Historical Society Paper 18 2010.

Keith Bailey. The development of building estates in Battersea 1780-1914. London, Wandsworth Historical Society, 2012.

[“On closer inspection, the average Victorian suburb was the uncoordinated product of many men” p.6. Guiding minds and controlling hands were the exception... far removed from the planned streets of Bloomsbury, Belgravia and Pimlico. Describes individual developers. It was all very fragmented ownership.]

Keith Bailey. Developing Victorian Battersea: The Story of James Lord and George Todd, Junior. The London Journal, vol 40, Page 56-79 2015

Jon Newman. Battersea’s global reach: the story of Price’s candles. Mitcham, History & Social Action Publications, 2009.

[Advances in chemistry ‘to bring cheap reliable lighting to the masses’. Yet with massive importation of palm oil, and the Wilson family owners, deeply religious, brought bible classes, schools and sports to the African tribes – much like Leer Bros later at Port Sunlight.]

### **Chelsea**

Penny Olsen. The history of the Sloane Stanley Estate in Chelsea, 2011.

[Production for local use. Divided as history and biographies.]

### **Dulwich**

Bernard Nurse. Planning a London suburban estate: Dulwich, 1882-1920.

London Journal, 1994;19:54-70.

### **East London**

John Marriott, Beyond the Tower: A History of East London. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011.

### **Gospel Oak**

Rosalind Bayley. To paradise by way of Gospel Oak: a mansion flat estate and the forces that shaped it. London: Camden History Society, 2009.

### **Hackney**

DAVIS, Juliet The making and remaking of Hackney Wick, 1870–2014: from urban edgeland to Olympic fringe. Planning Perspectives 31:3 (2016) 425-457

[A particular urban locality considered “over a *longue durée* of more than a century”, drawing on archival records. Assesses Hackney Wick’s planning and development history in relation to London more broadly.]

Isobel Watson. Gentlemen in the building line: the development of south Hackney. [UK] Padfield publications, 1989.

[P11. “I decided that the built pattern could only be understood by reference to the individual or corporate purpose behind the development of the various estates ... and the fragmented nature of local land ownership.” Part One describes development 1750s-1800 of houses along Hackney village – landowners including St Thomas’s Hospital and Cass charitable trusts. Part Two starts 1840s.]

### **Herne Hill**

Milkwood Residents Association. Milkwood Estate : the story of a Lambeth community.

London: Local History Publications for the Herne Hill Society, 2009. [

[Milkwood estate around Herne Hill, south London, was built-up to create 'decent accommodation for working people' through a company. The land had been market gardens in the nineteenth century, fertilised by 'night-soil' from the Capital.]

### **Hornsey**

Janet Owen. John Farrer: the man who changed Hornsey. London: Hornsey Historical Society, 2009.

[Farrer apprenticed to an architect, set up himself in 1877 in Moorgate and came to Muswell Hill in 1895-96. He became speculator and estate developer through to 1930, creating 1800 houses and shops in 72 roads – the redbrick gable-fronted houses.]

### **Ilford**

Michael Heller. Suburbia, marketing and stakeholders: developing Ilford, Essex, 1880–1914. *Urban History*, 2014;41(1):62-80.

[Conclusion. Ilford's success as a suburb was premised on a marketing strategy ... which targeted clerical workers and developed homes and an environment which satisfied their needs. All stakeholders discussed in this article repeated the same messages; it was healthy, respectable, convenient, economic and ideal for city workers.]

### **Islington**

Sylvia Tunstall, Patsy Ainger and Robyn Lyons. Caledonian Park and its Surroundings. £5.00 + 75p p&p, Islington Society. Available from the IAHS.

[Neighbouring to Camden Town Estate – former Caledonian Cattle Market.]

### **Kilburn**

Marianne Colloms, Dick Weindling. The Greville Estate: the history of a Kilburn neighbourhood. London, Camden History Society, 2007.

[This has a focused history of area and people, including Mortimer Road; not about the mechanisms of development.]

### **Mayfair**

David Wixon, Alison Graham. The Berkeley Square Estate : expressions of elegance and excellence / London: Lancer Property Asset Management, 2008 200 p. hb, colour.

[Berkeley Square built on 'four great houses'. Lord Berkeley dies 1678, and his younger wife Lady Berkeley 'ensured that building plots were sold leasehold and, as freeholder, she was able to define the style and quality of much...']

### **Surbiton**

Audrey Giles. The failure of a speculative builder: the downfall of Thomas Pooley of Surbiton, 1838-1844. Kingston University, Centre for Local History Studies, Occasional Papers in Local History, 2003;1:1-17.

[This paper is considered and revised by David Kennedy at <https://www.kingstonhistoryresearch.co.uk/advent-surburbia-thomas-pooley-railway-surbiton-1791-1856>]

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[... suburbs and suburban society have been characterised by a number of writers — including historians — as being dull, detached, monotonous, lacking in community spirit and devoid of cultural activity. The aim of this article is to challenge these negative stereotypes... The historical evidence for community life and identity in Surbiton before 1914 is provided by the existence of clubs and societies; sporting and leisure activities; participation in cultural events; support networks when necessary; multi-class activities; and enlightened middle class leadership.]

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[Estate owned by Courtney Warner, started late c19 as suburban.]



## Appendix 2

National census, Pancras Parish, 1801-1851

MIDDLESEX.—SUBDISTRICTS. AREA ; HOUSES, 1841, 1851 ;												[Div. I.]					
No. of District.	DISTRICT or UNION.	No. of Subdist.	SUBDISTRICT.	Area in Statute Acres.	HOUSES.						POPULATION.						
					1841			1851			PERSONS.						
					In-habited	Unin-habited	Build-ing.	In-habited	Unin-habited	Build-ing.	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	
9	PANCRAS - - - - -	1	REGENT'S PARK - - -	427	2892	133	77	3575	779	13					26488	31918	
			2	TOTTENHAM COURT - -	145	2607	146	17	2586	150	3					26800	28433
			3	GRAY'S INN LANE - -	155	2657	85	56	2946	140	1					22149	26523
			4	SOMERS TOWN - - -	184	3243	96	34	3731	115	42	31779	46333	71838	103548	28910	35641
			5	CAMDEN TOWN - - -	171	1807	43	74	2498	79	27						
			6	KENTISH TOWN - - -	1634	1560	76	55	3248	145	220						
														10398	23326		

Source: Statistical Abstract for London, 1901 (Vol. IV); Census tables for Metropolitan Borough of St Pancras

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Illustrated London News  
London Gazette  
Magazine of Natural History  
Morning Advertiser  
Morning Chronicle  
Morning Post,  
Musical Times  
Times

### ***Kent Archives and Local History***

Pratt family papers U840/- series, particularly  
U840/F159  
U840/EL/17  
U840/C376/18/9  
U840/C378

## ***London Metropolitan Archives***

Camden Estate including

E/CAM/0029

E/CAM/0041

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## ***London planning***

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### **Author's photographs**

Lapel badges created by the Merchants' Portrait Co. in 1911, on display, Holborn Library, September 2018.

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Plaques, Fontana, Rimbaud and Velaine, College Street, July 2018.