Rather unusually, this issue of the LLHRG *Bulletin* brings together three articles on a period, rather than a theme: the 19th century. Patrick Crouch reminds us of the tremendous achievements of Victorian engineers in bringing water into the growing towns of the period and ensuring effective sewerage, and Ian Sanderson looks at some of the many railways proposed in Cambridgeshire that failed ever to get beyond the drawing board but whose plans and surveys are valuable sources for landscape historians. And at a time when extreme weather events seem to be ever more frequent (I write this in what must be the coldest and windiest April for years) Shirley Wittering takes us back to the Thriplow whirlwind of 1868.

The next issue of the *Bulletin* will appear in the early Autumn and we would greatly welcome articles on any topics in landscape and local history that you're working on, or more general pieces ('Surveys and Speculations', as the *Economic History Review* would put it) on such themes as regional identity: anyone willing to have a go at trying to define 'East Anglia' as a region? Is Cambridgeshire part of it? Or Essex? If just Norfolk and Suffolk, why?

Looking to the future, we intend to continue our regular Zoom talks, which have proved very popular, and if any readers would like to give one, please let Evelyn Lord know (evelynlord9@gmail.com). It's the ideal opportunity to test out ideas and give preliminary research findings to a friendly audience. And if you have any ideas as to other things LLHRG should be doing (an on-line 'Notes and Queries', perhaps?) let us know.

Tony Kirby

April 2024

# CONTENTS

# Water Engineers, The Forgotten Heroes of Nineteenth Century Civil Engineering

In my bookcase is a book called *Early Victorian Water Engineers* by G.M. Binnie, published by Thomas Telford, London, 1981. At the time of its publishing the author was complaining that railway, civil and mechanical engineers ere dominating the world of nineteenth-century engineering.

The early railway engineers, such as George and Robert Stephenson and Isambard Kingdom Brunel tended to be involved in both sections (civil and mechanical engineering). George and Robert in the design and construction of a practical and reliable steam locomotive the 'Rocket' which was a runaway success at the Rainhill Trials. Robert formed a company manufacturing steam locomotives, but he also built the London to Birmingham Railway. Brunel started his working life as resident engineer to the building of the first Thames Tunnel designed by his father Marc. He then went back to basics and built the Great Western Railway to a seven foot gauge, but was not successful with his Atmospheric Railway. After this he turned his attention back to mechanical engineering and shipping arguing that the future lay in large iron steam ships capable of sailing long distances with large cargo capacity thus creating large profits.

The industrial and rapidly growing towns and cities of the north and midlands, besides needing to be connected by railway lines, also needed prodigious amounts of water for their inhabitants. These needed engineers who understood the problem of water supply and storage.

Some towns were able to find plenty of water under the feet of their inhabitants. My town Haverhill with about 4,500 inhabitants in the 1890s was able to find an abundance of water underground. They assumed the population was 7,000 (providing for growth) and allowing twenty gallons of water a day for each inhabitant gave a total of 140,000 gallons. Added to this was 337 gallons in the distribution pipes, there were two settling tanks at 100,000 gallons each and a reservoir supplied to hold three days of water if the pumps broke down. The pumps raised about 343,000 gallons of water per day for a fortnight and the level of water at the bottom of the borehole had to be checked before and after the fortnight to see how much it had dropped. The Local Board moaned about the increase in population, they need not have worried, the system passed with flying colours with no drop in water levels,

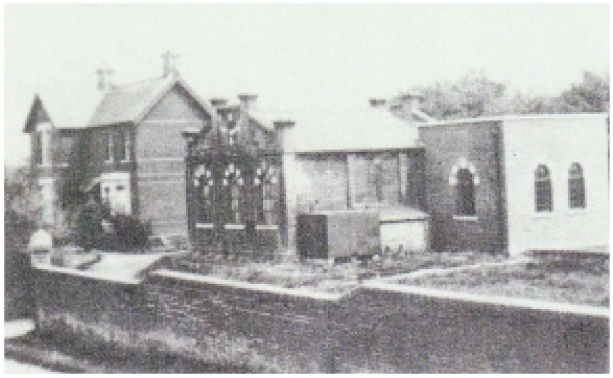

**Figure 1.** Haverhill Waterworks and Managers House, Burton End

Most of the larger faster growing towns had no underground lakes and they had to go further afield for their water. Some, in the early days used existing rivers, but with a growing population these soon became heavily polluted. In London which grew faster than most towns, the river Thames became quickly contaminated. **James Simpson (1799-1869)** who was engineer to the Chelsea and Lambeth Water Companies, successfully designed a system of slow infiltration of untreated water through layers of sand in 1828.

This appeared to be too slow to be of a practical benefit, although, at this period there had been no real evidence that the polluted Thames was the cause of the cholera epidemics. Nevertheless, Simpson moved the Chelsea Company waterworks a few miles up river to Teddington the highest point of the tidal river. Here the water was much purer and probably tasted better. The water had to be pumped back in a 'cast iron' aqueduct.

**Figure 2.** Chelsea and Lambeth Waterworks

The pressure in the mains pipe was so high so if a lot customers turned on their taps at the same time the mains pressure would not collapse. This was called a 'constant supply system'. To repressurise the water Simpson simply used steam engines of his own design – double action beam, rotative, compound engines. It was unfortunate that as soon as Simpson had finished the project, the government restricted the amount of water that could be extracted from the Thames.

Nottingham was another place where water was obtained from river. This involved one of the most eminent of water engineers **Thomas Hawksley (1807-1893),** later to become a Fellow of the Royal Society and also President of the Institute of Civil Engineers.

**Figure 3.** Nottingham Waterworks

Although only in his twenties he was appointed to the Trent Waterworks, whose works situated on the river Trent he designed. Here the water was purified by filtration through natural beds of sand and gravel. Hawksley was a great believer in the 'constant supply systems' of the time. But he soon found ways of getting round the problem by making sure that leaks were easy to fix. The two Nottingham water companies combined in 1845 and Hawksley carried on as chief engineer until 1880 when Nottingham Corporation took over the venture.

The sinking of mines often found large quantities of ground water. The mines of North East Durham were no exception. A Sunderland Water Company was formed by Act of Parliament in 1846 to utilise this water. Hawksley was engaged and built a large pumping station at Humbleton and the area was extracting more water than expected. The Sunderland Water Company became the Sunderland and South Shields Water Company and by the 1870s Hawksley had built four large pumping stations.

Most of the other engineers, who were called to provide large amounts of wholesome water for their towns, had to look further afield for it. They were looking for uninhabited areas such as moors, infertile soils, very hilly or even mountainous countryside. By acts of Parliament these lands could be brought and with the aid of earth dams closing off the end of valleys, large amounts of water could be stored in reservois.

Leeds is an example. It had a supply of water from 1694 in the shape of the river Aire; but by the early 1800s this was heavily polluted. In 1842 the town obtained an act of Parliament for improving the health of the town, but due to arguments over costs the Town Council could not agree on the way forward. The richer ratepayers would not agree, as a few of them would be paying for a system where the majority of inhabitants would benefit, but without having to pay for it. It became obvious that there would be no progress to improve the town at local authority level. The answer was the forming of a company to provide wholesome water of which the capital sum came from the richer ratepayers, but they would get a return on their money in the form of dividends. The Leeds Waterworks Company engaged **George leatger Jnr (1801-1887)** to be consulting engineer. His father was **George Leather Snr. (1787-1810)** a prominent civil engineer having worked on early railways, canals and also designed a number of bridges. The Leather family had another civil engineers **J. Wignal leather (1804-1885)** who was the cousin of George Jnr.

The Company brought a large area of land where various springs and brooks proliferated. The scheme was to erect an earth dam across the valley and several others, and create reservoirs. A sum of money was paid out for compensating mill and landowners for their loss of water and land. Binnie calculated that the number of customers with piped water in Leeds rose from 3000 in 1841 to 22, 732 in 1852. Consumption rose form 36 million gallons to 362 million gallons. Thus a large increase in fresh water was needed and the company instructed J. Wignal Leather to search the surrounding countryside to find alternative but similar types of land with springs and brooks.

Edinburgh a thriving capital needed continuous supplies of wholesome water. From 1676 this was originally bought in from outside the limits of the city in lead pipes. In about 1790 other larger pipes were installed. Binnie states that in the Napoleonic wars, despite a growing population, nothing was done to increase the water supply, He also

mentions that the population was often 'thirsty and unwashed'. However, the inhabitants held a meeting in about 1819 with the object of supplying the city with water which was pure in quality and immense in quantity. They appointed a committee and a water company was formed to bring water from the Pentland Hills in the south of the city, and dames were used to form reservoirs. The first engineer was **James Jardine (1776-1858)** and he constructed a pipeline, twenty to twenty-five inches in diameter and eight and half miles long. These were completed by 1823 which produced a supply of MGD.

In 1842 a serious drought occurred. As it persisted the Water Company were in grave trouble as millers and land owners seemed to have an agreement of providing them with a minimum supply of water, which in this particular case was the use of a reservoir. When that dried up the company had to pay compensation of £4000 to £5000. What was needed quickly was to provide extra reservoirs, and to that end an Act of Parliament was quickly obtained in `1843, and more dams and reservoirs in the Pentland Hills were formed. Jardine retired in 1846 aged seventy, and he was replaced by **James Leslie (1801-1889).**

Dundee waterworks was form in 1844 with James Leslie as engineer. He proposed the acquiring of 3,443 acres of land, a settling basin of 288 millions and a clear water tank of 36 million gallons capacity. This was a necessary as the water was liable to turn muddy after heavy rain. There was also an aqueduct three miles long and a four mile long 15 inch diameter iron pipework to convey water to the town. These proposals were accepted. A second water main was required and a new act passed in 1866 for a new reservoir. By then the waterworks was delivering 6 M.G.D., and James Leslie was responsible for all of them.

By an act of Parliament dated 1869 the Royal Burgh of Dundee was constituted into a body of Commissioners who were authorised to take over the lands and works of the private water company. Almost immediately there was a serious drought and the new commissioners brought in **John Frederick La Trobe Bateman** instead of James Leslie. Bateman decided there was a need to produce 12 M.G.D., he also disliked 'manured ' land as the manure effected the wholesome quality of the water and he suggested water from the Grampian mountains. However, there were serious disagreements amongst the various water engineers about the route of the water main. These involved James Leslie, J.W. Steward and Bateman. Arguments amongst professional people can become acrimonious and they certainly did in the case, but eventually a route was agreed, if not be all the water engineers.

During the period these water engineers were working there was a controversy ranging over whether the disease of cholera and other contagious diseases was caused by some sort of organism in the water. During the very hot June of 1858, the occupants of the houses of Parliament found they could not use rooms overlooking the river, because the smell from the polluted Thames was so awful. This was a situation that could not be tolerated. The cause was well known. The Thames in effect was the sewer for so many of the inhabitants living in the area bordering the river. Human waste and more poured into the river from the surrounding areas of built up London. The solution in theory, was simple. Run two intercepting sewers, drains, streams even rivers discharging into the Thames, these were then discharged into the intercepting sewers. The resultant unpalatable liquid was discharged into the Thames estuary, where it was hope the tide would take it into the North Sea.

Unfortunately London had no authority controlling the whole city. It was made up of hundreds of independent parishes and small communities, many with unique Acts of

**Figure 4.** Sir Joseph Bazalgette

Parliament. As London was obviously going to pay for the expensive project then there must be a ways of means that Londoners would be able to pay the tax and an authority who would be able to collect this money. The Government made several failed attempts before the Metropolitan Board of Works was formed and Joseph Bazalgette, was appointed chief engineer of the project.

Today he is another unknown civil engineer, but it was down to him to put theory into practice. Besides the vast lengths of the intercepting sewers and its branches, pumping stations had to be provided to pump sewage up from the lower level to a higher level.

These structures were often given elaborate decoration.

**Figure 5.** Crossness Pumping Station

Parts of the river bank were so congested that Bazalgette had to build three embankments jutting the river, Victoria on the north bank, and Albert and Chelsea on the south. These not only contained the intercepting sewers but some also incorporated underground railways. When this whole venture was finished and fish were again being caught in the river, the parliamentarians were again able to use the whole of their building.

The German bacteriologist Robert Koch identified the cholera bacillus in 1883 and proved that the disease was caused by drinking water continually contaminated by the faeces from people having the disease. Thus all the expensive building work carried out by now Sir Joseph Bazalgette may have cleaned up the Thames but did little to provide the Thames with wholesome water. The controversy carried on despite the work of Koch. Florence Nightingal went to her grave fully believing in the *miasmic* theory.

There were four major epidemics in London, 1831-2, 1848-9, 1853-4 and 1866, and these would have affected many of the major cities and towns throughout the country. The great achievements of the water engineers was there was another serious cholera epidemic in continental Europe in 1892 with many fatalities, btu this did not occur in this country, partly, because a vast number of the inhabitants were drinking wholesome water provided by the forgotten heroes, the engineers.

**Acknowledgements**

First I would like to thank Dr Evelyn Lord for her encouragement and help. The main source for the water engineers comes from the book 'Early Victorian Water Engineers' by G.M. Binne, Thomas Telford Ltd, 1981. The other work I have consulted in the section on London was 'The Great Stink of London, Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the cleansing of the Victorian Capital' by Stephen Halliday, Sutton Publishing 1999, abbreviated to G.S. in the endnotes.

I would also like to thank Tony Turner, archivist of the Haverhill Local History Museum (formerly Haverhill and District Local History Group) for the photo of Haverhill Waterworks

Dr Patrick Crouch

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2. L.T. Rolt, *Isambard Kingdom Brunel, a biography*, 1959
3. South West Suffolk Echo 1894-1896
4. G.M. Binnie, *Early Victorian Water Engineers*, Thomas Telford Ltd., 1981 p. 71
5. Ibid pp. 74, 75
6. Ibid p. 131
7. Ibid p. 131
8. Ibid pp 95,96
9. MGD Million Gallons a day
10. Binnie pp 95,97
11. Ibid pp. 106,107
12. Ibid pp. 107-115
13. Most of the information about choler and Joseph Bazalgette's work on cleaning the Thames comes from G.S. chapter 6 S. Halliday, *The Great Stink of London, Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the Clesnsing of the Victorian Capital*, Sutton, 1999.
14. Ibid p. 143

# THE UNBUILT RAILWAYS OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Out of all of the books describing the building of the railways in Cambridgeshire I'm only aware of one with the word "proposed" in the title. It was written by R.B. Fellows and published in 1948 with the title "Railways to Cambridge, Actual and Proposed". A similar report by the same author is in the 1949 Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, volume 42. Both of these publications, and many others, concentrate on the business dealings associated with the development of the railways. The focus here is only on the use that the survey data made for actual or proposed railways has for the local historian.

In the mid 1800's as railways boomed there were numerous plans for rail lines, some of which were built and a few of those remain in use today. Initially the railways were developed by private companies competing with each other to maximise potential returns.

One example concerning Shepreth will serve to illustrate the extent of this competition. In 1850 a railway line was opened from Hitchin to Royston worked by the Great Northern Railway company (GNR). In April 1851 the Eastern Counties Railway company (ECR) opened a single track line as far as Shepreth branching off its London to Cambridge line (now better known as the


**Figure 1.** ECR station opposite the bus and GN station in the foreground.

Liverpool Street line), with the intention of taking the line to Bedford. In August 1851 a GNR extension from Royston to Shepreth was opened. Therefore you might think that what is now the Kings Cross line was open, but you would be wrong. The ECR wouldn't allow GNR on its line. GNR organised a 4 horse omnibus from Shepreth to it's offices in Trinity Street Cambridge (possibly the first replacement bus service). In July 1852 a 14 year contract was agreed for ECR to use the southern part of the line but GN proposed an alternative route from Shepreth to a terminus in Emmanuel Street in Cambridge. Eventually in

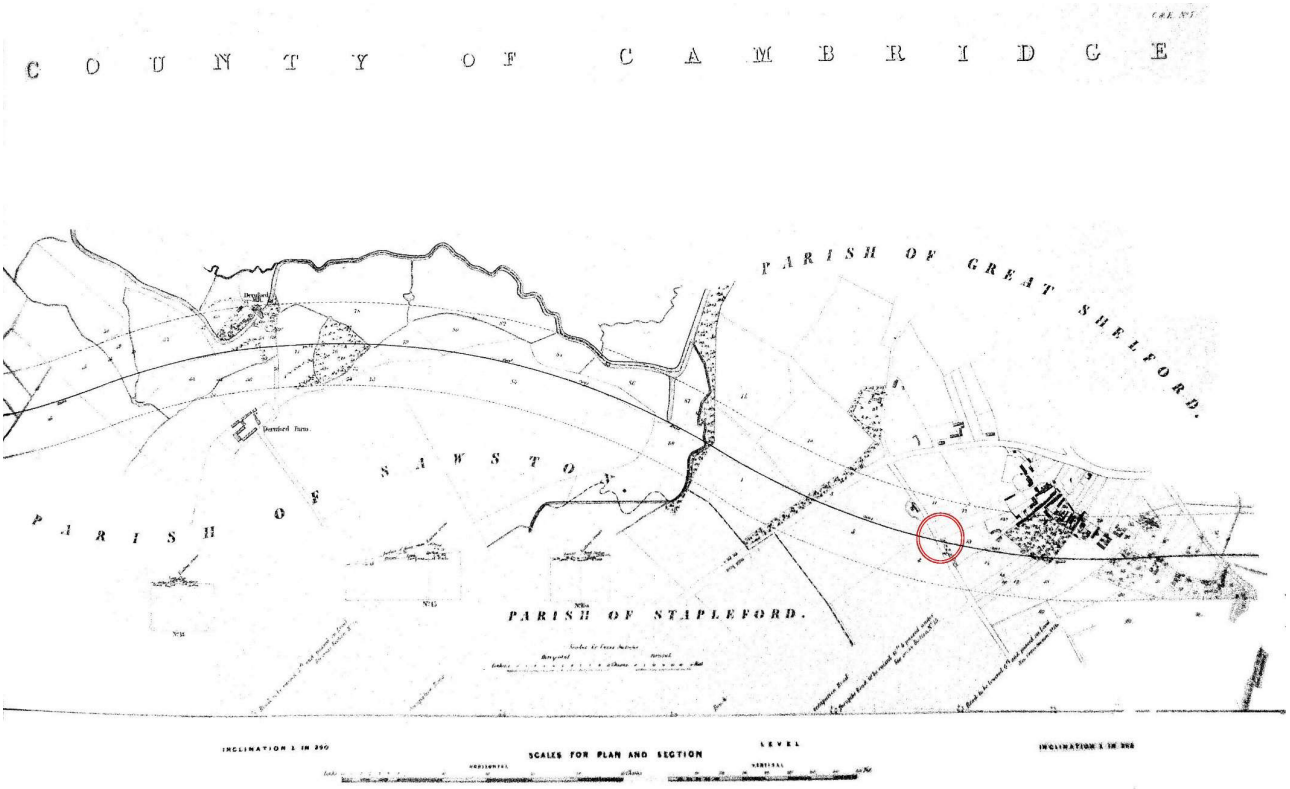



**Figure 2.** An example page from Q/RUm11 1843.

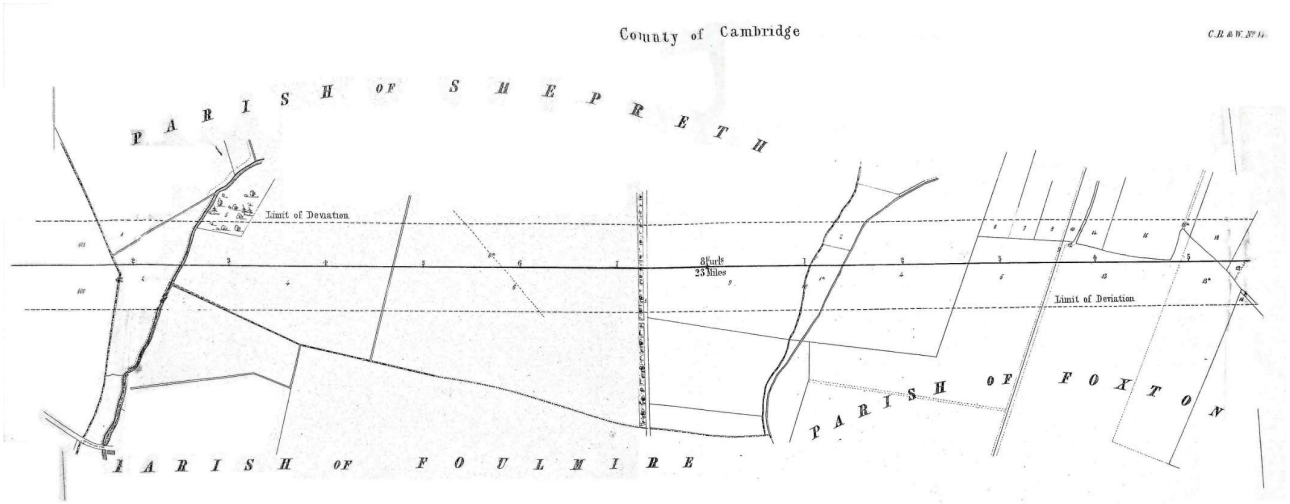



**Figure 3.** An example page from Q/RUm22 1846.

1864 a compromise was agreed but ECR, now Great Eastern, refused to let GN use their station. GN then built a new station next door with its own platform. Figure 1 shows the two stations today. No doubt there were many other similar disputes.

The first step in building a new railway was to raise money by selling shares based on a proposed idea. The next steps included gaining parliamentary approval by means of a private members bill and to survey a route. The surveys in most cases were brought together in large books about 20 by 30 inches at a scale around 5 or 6 chains per inch, each sheet covering about 2 miles. There was a fair amount of variation in the scales used by individual surveys. The survey sheets themselves sought to identify all the properties and many of the buildings affected by the proposed line and within about 100 yards to either side to allow for deviations. Each property is numbered on each sheet to allow a cross reference to a Book of Reference, usually organised by parish and comprising a property description, owner, leaser and occupier. The sheets themselves provide, albeit in a narrow band, very detailed information in the period between or before Inclosure maps and the publication of the Ordnance Survey 25 inch County series maps. In many cases structures are included which are not shown on other maps of the period, though we can never be sure that they were not built between the survey and an earlier map.

Individual pages from the survey books can be very difficult to georeference (fitting a plan into the correct position on a map). The example above is relatively straightforward as it covers three parishes and has a river and some road segments giving some common points on the plan and a modern map. (Although not shown on Figure 2, Shelford station crossing is circled). Many sheets can prove problematic because of the lack of common reference points.

The two examples below both suffer from this problem to a moderate degree, but some plans crossing the Fens can be exceptionally difficult.

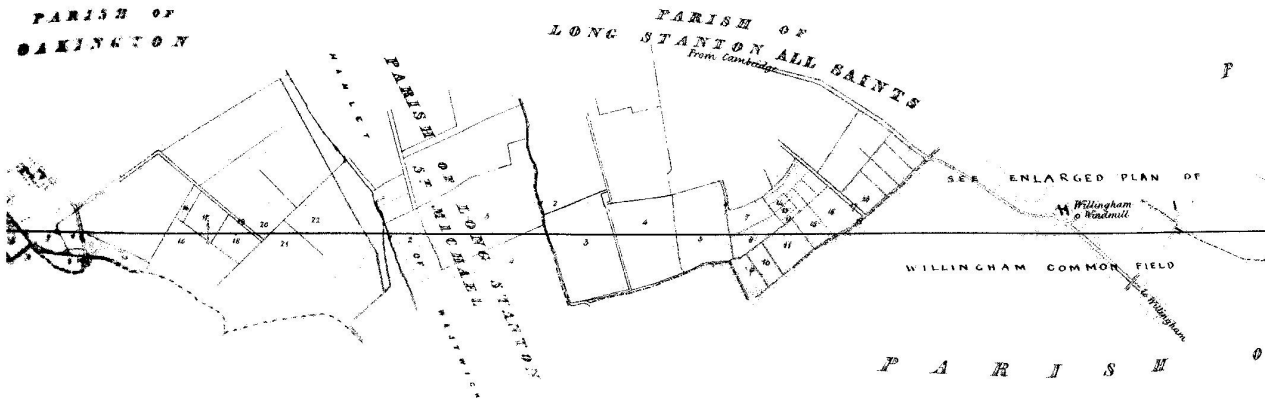



**Figure 4.** An example page from HCP/8/2 1836.

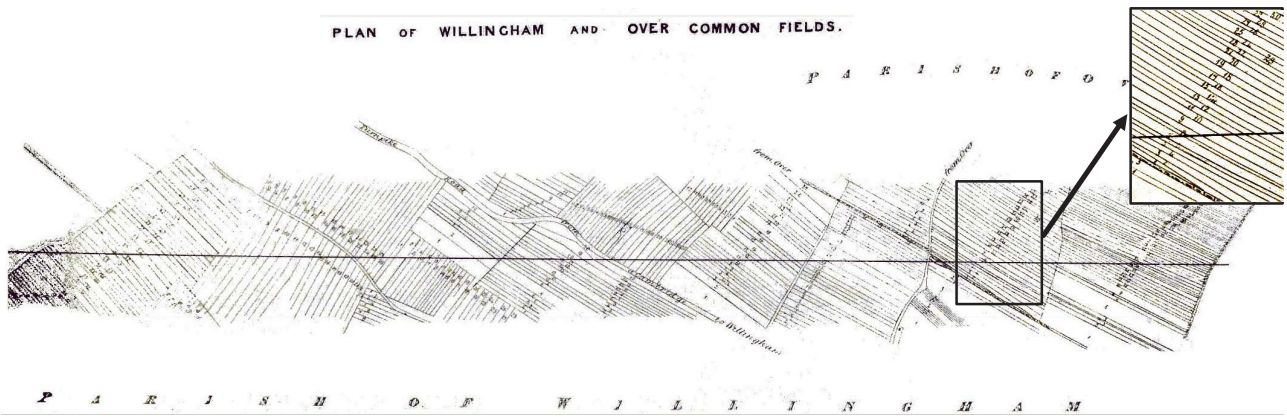



**Figure 5.** An extract from HCP/8/2 1836 with an expanded detail.

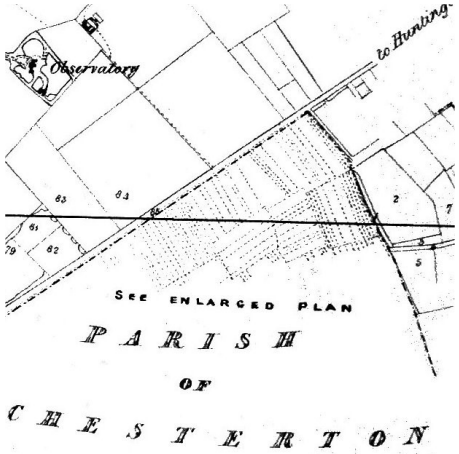



**Figure 5a.** An extract from HCP/8/2 1836.

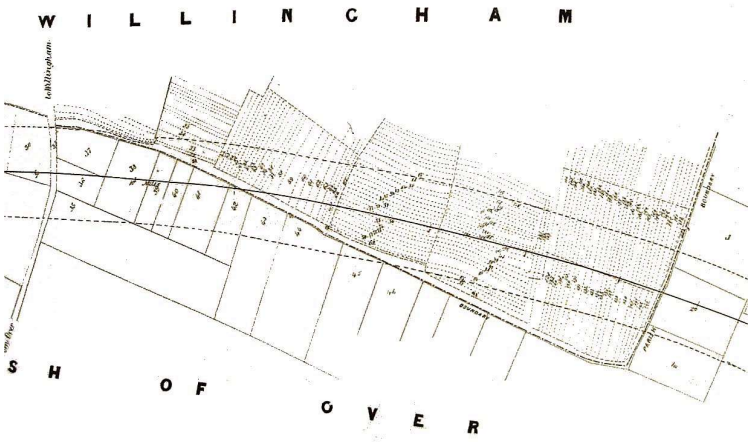
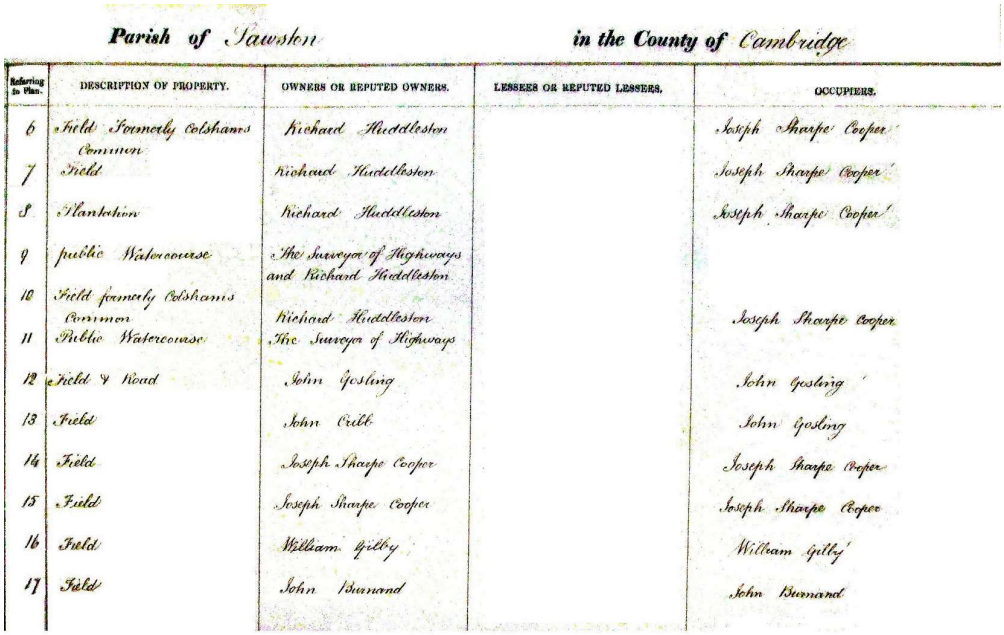



**Figure 6.** Q/RUm17 1845 part HIW.S.6 showing individual pre-enclosure field strips in Willingham.

Figure 4 has the instruction "See enlarged plan of Willingham Common Field". Figure 5 shows that enlarged plan with a section magnified to show that each strip has a reference number. Similar detail occurs in other proposed routes where the survey pre-dates Inclosure.

The Book of Reference for each parish crossed by a route gives a description of each property linked to a number on the survey plan with the owner and occupier. The descriptions tend to be minimal such as 'Field' or 'Plantation' but can be useful even today in, for example, distinguishing a public right



Parish of Sawston in the County of Cambridge

| Referring to Plan. | DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY. | OWNERS OR REPUTED OWNERS. | LESSEES OR REPUTED LESSEES. | OCCUPIERS. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | Field formerly Colshams Common | Richard Huddleston | | Joseph Sharpe Cooper |
| 7 | Field | Richard Huddleston | | Joseph Sharpe Cooper |
| 8 | Plantation | Richard Huddleston | | Joseph Sharpe Cooper |
| 9 | public Watercourse | The Surveyor of Highways and Richard Huddleston | | |
| 10 | Field formerly Colshams Common | Richard Huddleston | | Joseph Sharpe Cooper |
| 11 | Public Watercourse | The Surveyor of Highways | | |
| 12 | Field & Road | John Gosling | | John Gosling |
| 13 | Field | John Crib | | John Gosling |
| 14 | Field | Joseph Sharpe Cooper | | Joseph Sharpe Cooper |
| 15 | Field | Joseph Sharpe Cooper | | Joseph Sharpe Cooper |
| 16 | Field | William Gilby | | William Gilby |
| 17 | Field | John Burnand | | John Burnand |

**Figure 7.** Example Book of Reference page from Q/RUm11 1843.

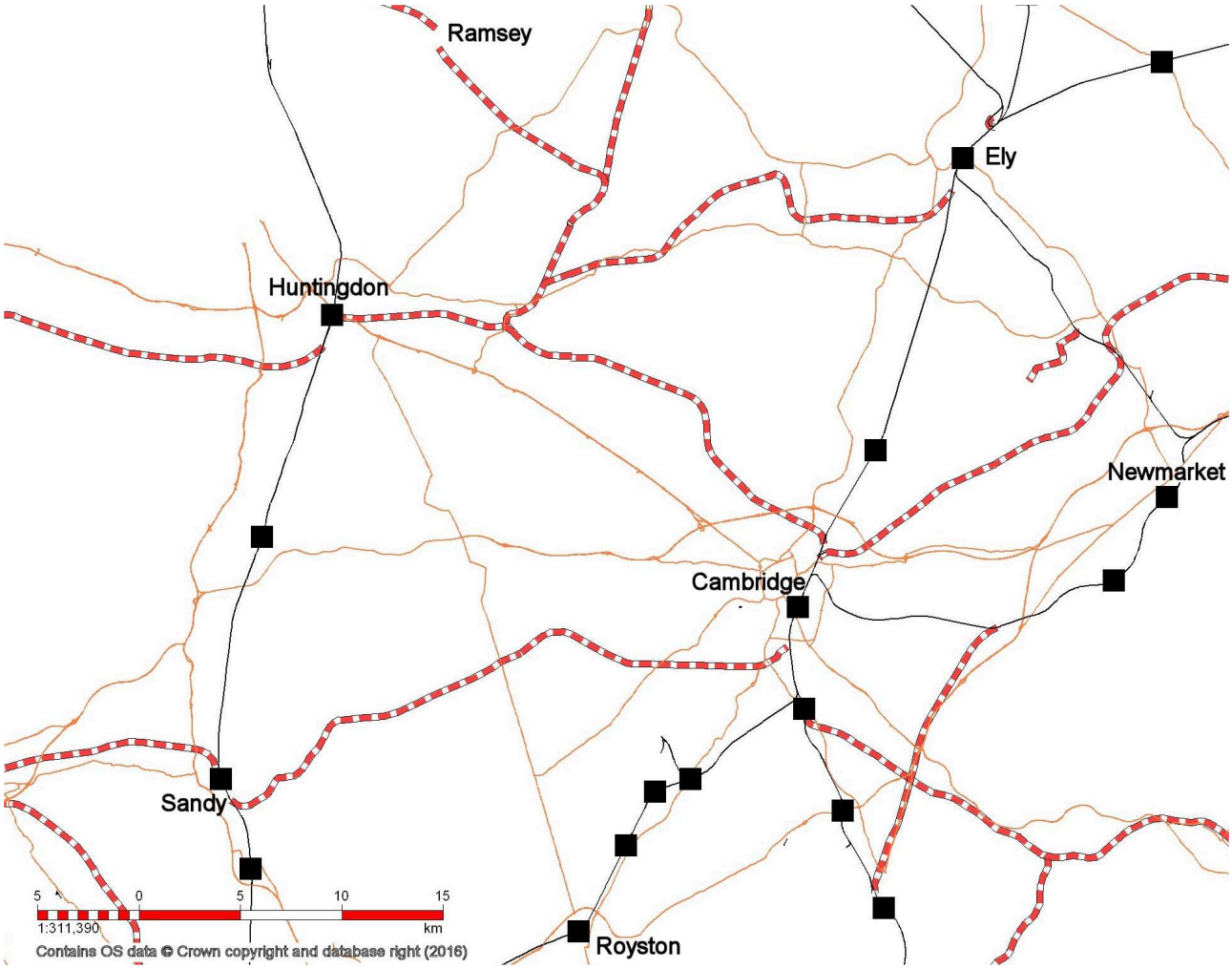



**Figure 8.** Present and disused (or re-used for buses) railways.
(Present routes, disused , 'A' roads )

of way from a private footpath. The names may be of interest to family historians.

Most of the surveys include detailed sections of crossing points, either of roads or water courses Many of the sections give dimensions as shown in Figure 9 of the Old Bedford River.

The sectional surveys served two purposes. The main one was to confirm the gradients that the trains would have to contend with. As the early engines were much less efficient than modern ones, a steeper gradient meant fewer profit generating carriages. The other purpose was to allay the fears, principally of the influential

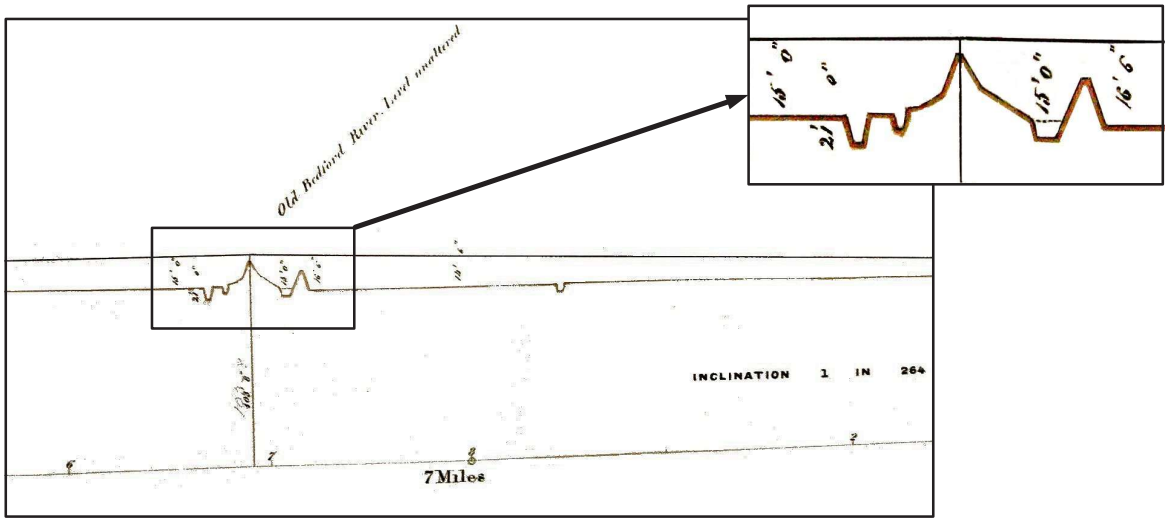



**Figure 9.** Detailed cross section from Q/RUm10 1844.

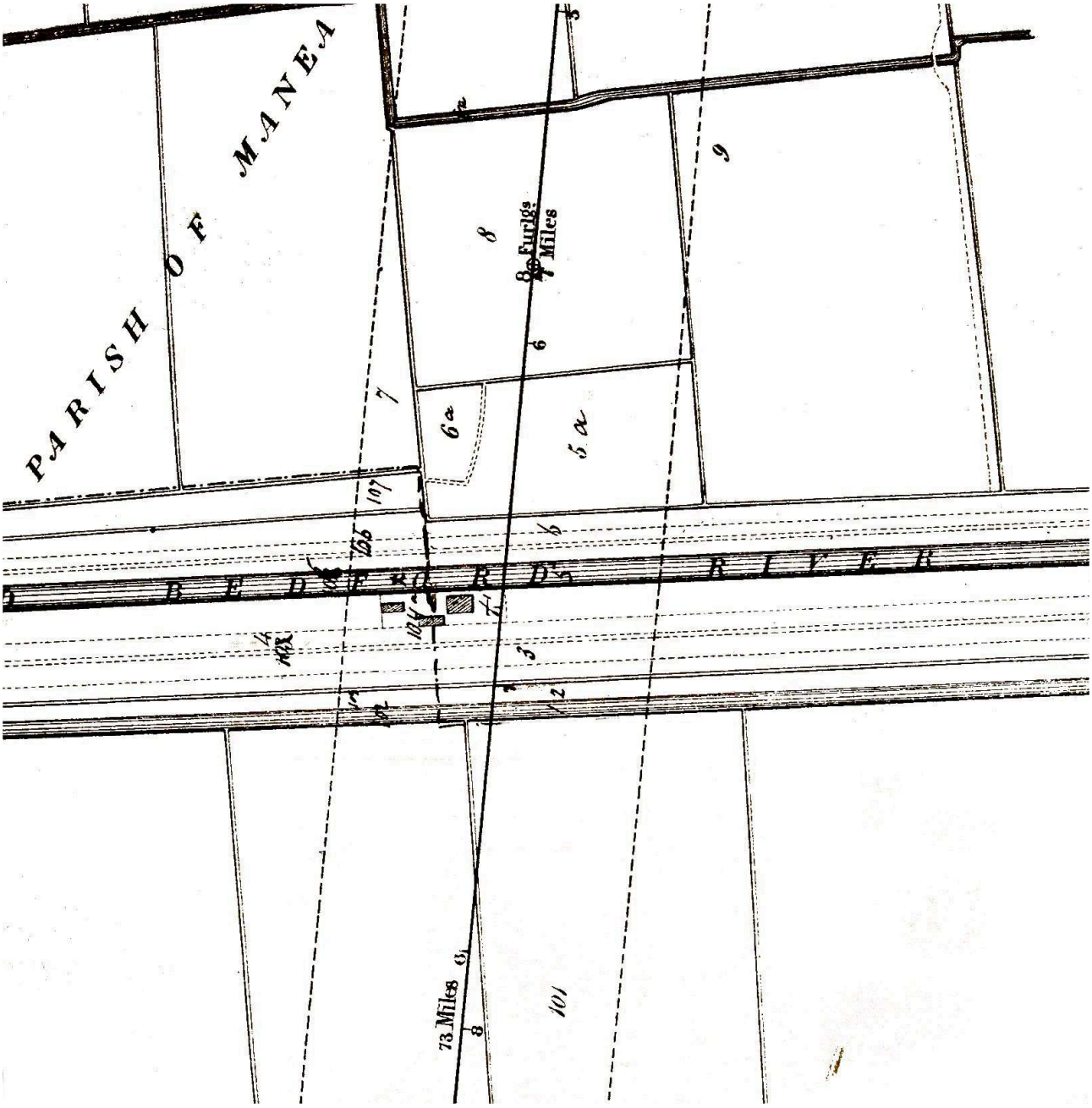



**Figure 10.** Plan view of the cross section above.

business concerns that might be affected, that bridges would be high enough for their commercial vessels and that road crossings would not limit the size of wagons if they needed to be raised.

One of the proposed routes passing through Cambridge is included (Figure 11) to illustrate the diversity of the proposed routes in a setting which might be familiar to a Cambridgeshire reader. Parts of the proposed route in this case are marked by letters to identify small areas which were surveyed in greater detail (Figure 12).

The general route maps were usually red lines on the Ordnance Survey 1inch to a mile maps of the time. In the examples below the red line has additionally been indicated with an arrow.

Figure 15 shows most of the railway lines, both built and proposed, that have an Ordnance Survey route map within the records held by Cambridgeshire Archives. All of the lines are dotted but some appear solid where two or more surveys proposed the same or very similar routes or where plans were made to upgrade or modify an earlier proposal. Only about a third of the records contain a general route map, without which each individual plan needs to be georeferenced to define the route. Although this can be time consuming, for research on an individual parish it may only involve one or two survey pages.

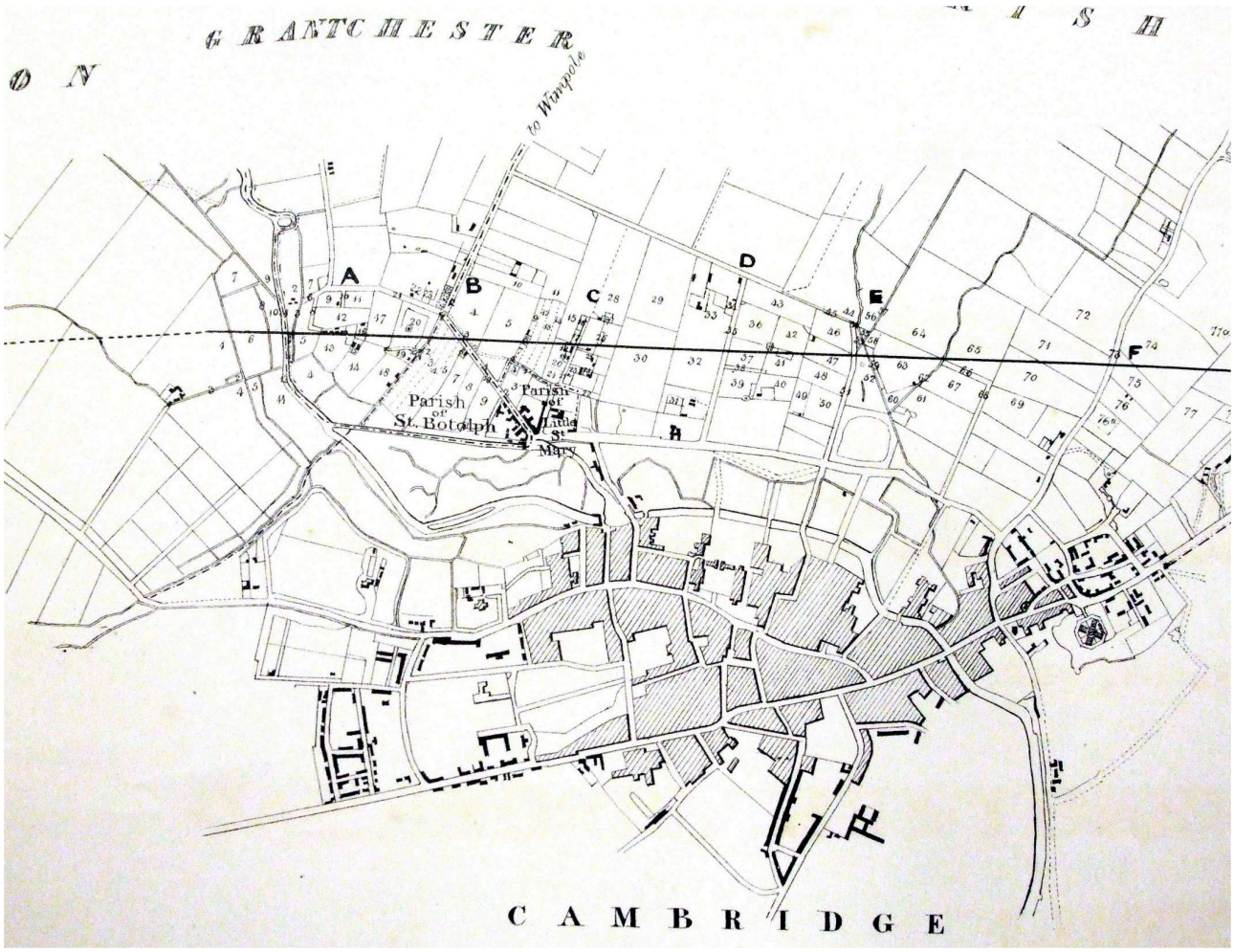



**Figure 11.** An example of a proposed railway of 1836 passing through Cambridge. HCP/8/2.

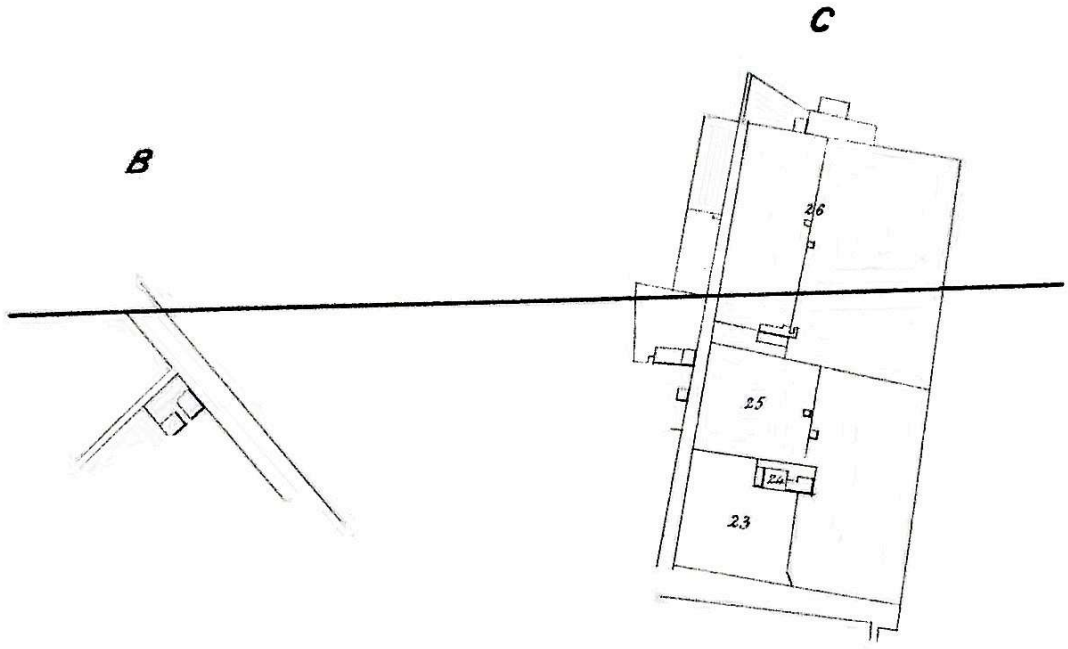



**Figure 12.** A detailed plan in the same survey book as the above, "C" is on the present site of Ridley Hall.

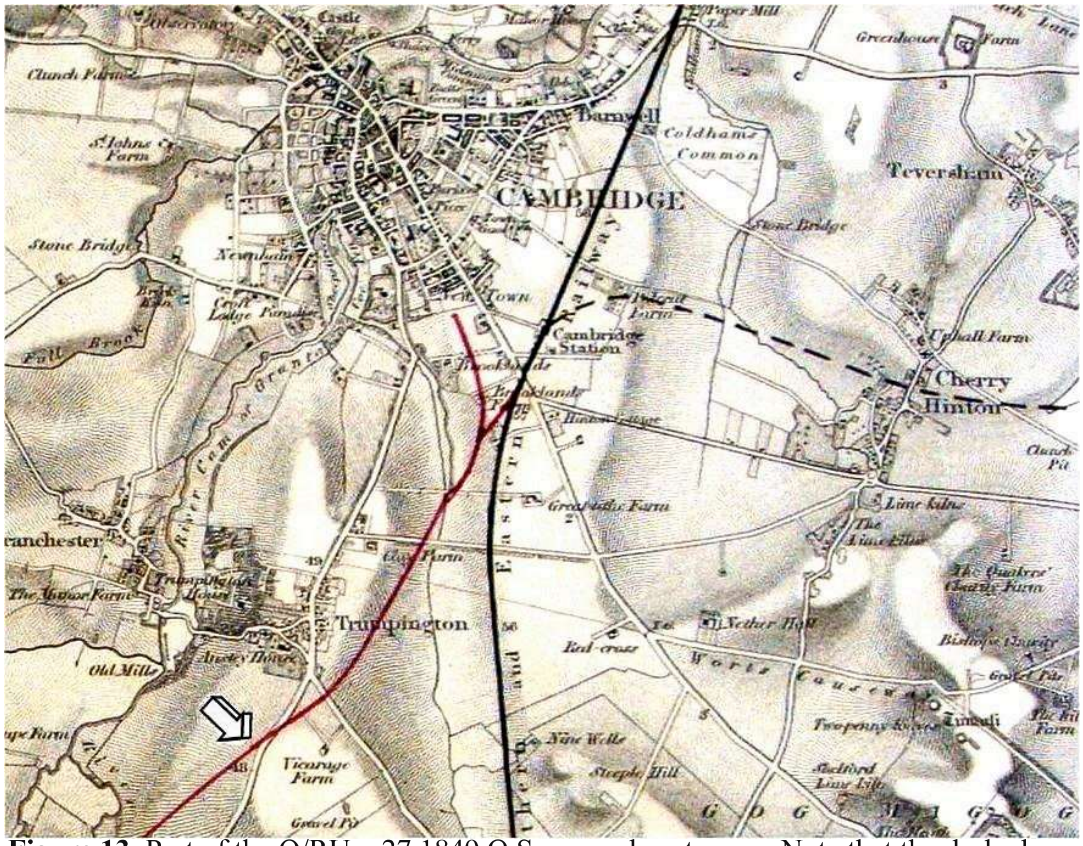



**Figure 13.** Part of the Q/RUm 27 1849 O.S. general route map. Note that the dashed line was not in red on this map.

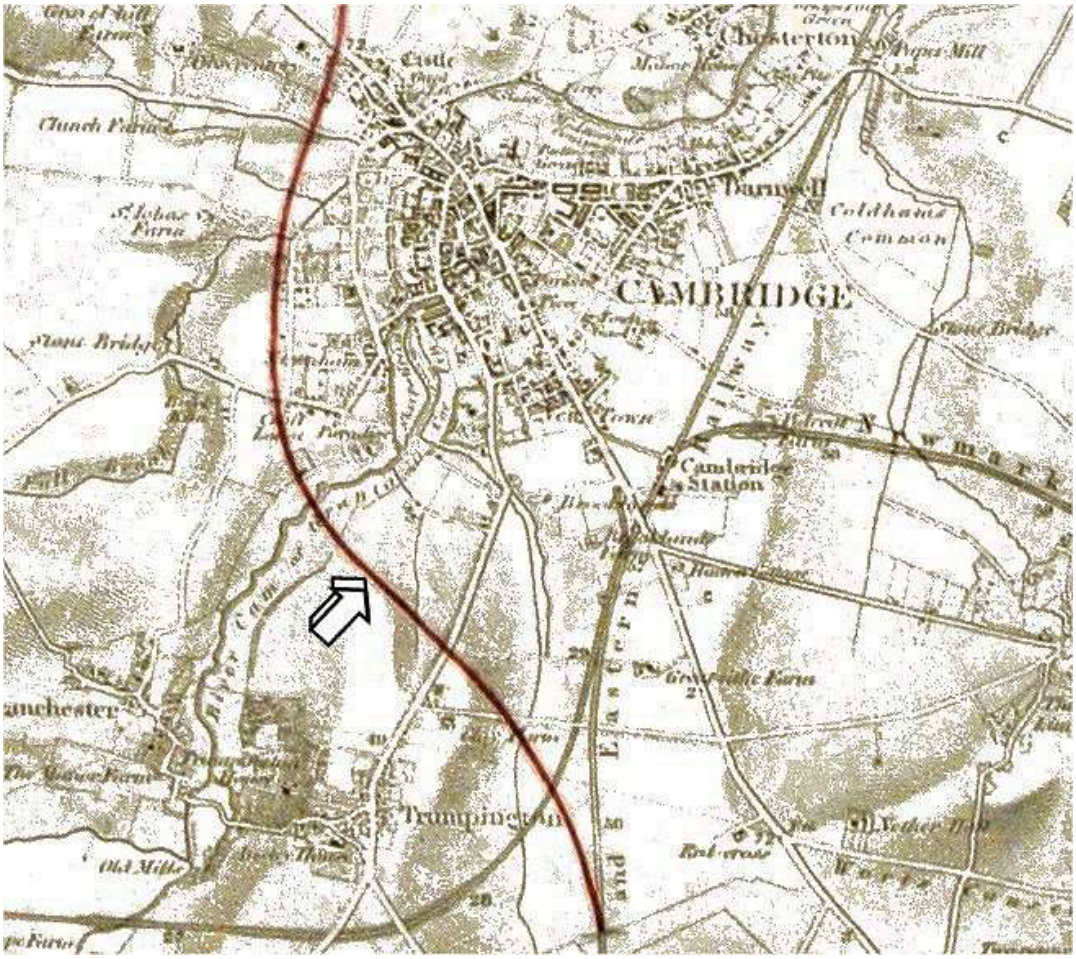



**Figure 14.** Part of the HCP/8/50 1870 O.S. general route map.

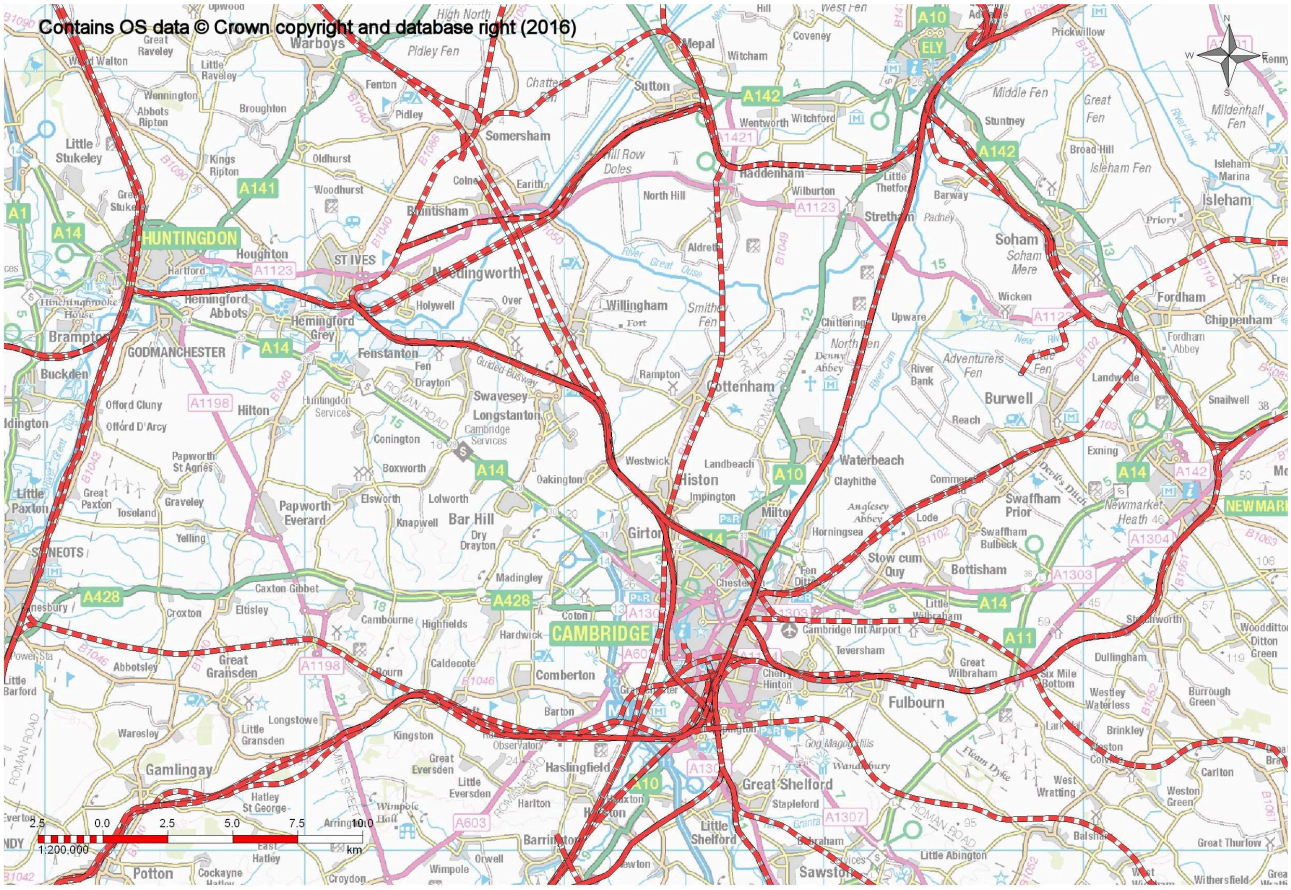



**Figure 15.** Map of some of the proposed railways near Cambridge.

Anyone interested in georeferencing would do well to look up "QGIS", a free programme for computers with tutorials, and the free maps available from the Ordnance Survey.

Acknowledgement.
Fig. 1 Thanks to Tony Kirby for supplying the photograph.

Ian Sanderson

## References

All of the original images and references above come from Cambridgeshire Archives in either Ely (CRO) or in Huntingdon (HRO).

**Figure 2.** CRO Q/RUm11 1843. Eastern Counties Railway. Newport (co. Essex) to Thetford (co. Norfolk) and Ely (co. Cambridgeshire) to Peterborough, with a branch to March (co. Cambridgeshire).

**Figure 3.** CRO Q/RUm22 1846. Cambridge, Royston and Ware Railway.

**Figure 4.** HRO HCP/8/2 1836. Northern and Eastern Railway. Extended Line.

**Figure 5.** HRO HCP/8/2 1836. Northern and Eastern Railway. Extended Line.

**Figure 6.** CRO Q/RUm17 1845 Railway from Huntingdon to Wisbech.

**Figure 7.** CRO Q/RUm11 1843. Eastern Counties Railway. Newport (co. Essex) to Thetford (co. Norfolk) and Ely (co. Cambridgeshire) to Peterborough, with a branch to March (co. Cambridgeshire).

**Figure 9.** CRO Q/RUm10 1844 Eastern Counties Railway. Extension from Ely to Peterborough (Whittlesey).

**Figure 10.** CRO Q/RUm10 1844 Eastern Counties Railway. Extension from Ely to Peterborough.

**Figure 11.** HRO HCP/8/2. 1836 Northern and Eastern Railway. Extended Line.

**Figure 12.** HRO HCP/8/2. 1836 Northern and Eastern Railway. Extended Line.

**Figure 13.** CRO Q/RUm27 1849 Cambridge and Shepreth Junction Railway.

**Figure 14.** HRO HCP/8/50 1870 Coal Owners Associated London Railway.

# THE GREAT STORM OF 1868

The other day I watched an extremely interesting talk by Wayne Shepheard of the Society of One Place Studies. It was entitled *Using Parish and Other Records ... to determine how natural phenomena affected people and places.* He made the point that historians should take into account the effect of the weather on the people and places they are studying.

This reminded me of the great gale that affected Thriplow and its surrounding villages on Sunday 27 September 1868. Several press reports described the storms effects and the damage done:

> "At *Thriplow, a whirlwind passed through the centre of the village from south to north, completely devastating everything in its path; its ravages were most apparent at the National School, and on the property of Henry Perkins, Esq. In the schoolroom, which is quite new, upwards of sixty children were assembled, when both ends of the room were blown outwards, and the materials scattered in all directions. At the same instant, the trees surrounding the building were torn up by the roots. At Mr. Perkins's, (the Bury) four magnificent elms were rooted up, and a large spruce fir was twisted like a corkscrew. In all, upwards of 400 trees were blown over."*
>
> *The whirlwind also swept over an off-farm of Mr. Ellis's, tearing the buildings to pieces. In passing from Little to Great Shelford it crossed the river, on the banks of which was a plantation of about sixty trees, belonging to Mr. P. Grain, which were entirely swept away. A little further on is another small plantation, divided by the Great Eastern Railway. Through the opening, the storm seems to have passed, just touching one side of the passage, and breaking off a fir, which it carried about 100 yards, and dropped on the road on the bridge over the railway. The whirlwind had the appearance of an immense column of dense smoke, mixed with leaves, dirt, and branches of trees. It was about 100 yards across, appeared to reach from the earth to the clouds, and made as much noise as a heavily laden train at full speed."*

Another report from The Times read:

> *"A circular storm or whirlwind visited the village of Thriplow in Cambridgeshire on Sunday the 27th September. In the course of three minutes, it destroyed 400 trees, blew out both ends of a handsome new school and shook the building so violently that it is thought to be permanently injured. [The building of the school was completed late in 1863] On Sunday for the first time this year, we had a thunderstorm with vivid and incessant lightning and terrific thunder which seemed to come from all quarters. There was no wind to speak of and the storm was getting over, we thought. We were waiting with the assembled morning school for the arrival of the superintendent when suddenly there was a sharp rattle of hail against the windows. I looked up and saw a cloud of dust and leaves whirling in the air and, with an indescribable roar and crash which filled the whole air around us, the tall poplars on the opposite side of the road were dashed to the ground and we all huddled in the passage as the large and costly window with its stone mullions was dashed out and every brick blown out up to the apex of the high-pitched roof. We had a most providential escape.*

Another report gave further details:

> " *…We were waiting with the assembled morning school for the arrival of the superintendent, when suddenly there was a sharp rattle of hail against the windows, I looked up and saw a cloud of dust and leaves whirling in the air, and with an indescribable roar and crash which filled the whole air around us, the tall poplars on the opposite side of the road were dashed to the ground, and we all huddled together in the passage as the large and costly window with its stone mullions was dashed out, and every brick blown out up to the apex of the high pitched roof. We had a most providential escape ...The storm swept through the lower part of the*

*village, breaking off some trees and tearing up others by the roots, but not a twig was injured on either side of its path."*
*Together with donations from a long list of individuals in 1859 and a grant of £499 from the National Society in 1862 the school had been built, only for it to be destroyed six years later. the new school reopened in 1875 with Mary Haslop in charge.*

How fortunate the children had been waiting in a corridor, which sheltered them from the blast. How dreadful it would have been had they been sitting in their seats.

Shirley Wittering

## References


1. The Bury Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald, Tuesday, October 16, 1868, p.6
2. The Leeds Mercury, Saturday, October 10, 1868