

Oakington Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies  
reported in Cambridge Newspapers

summarised by

Mike Petty

Many of these stories were featured in my 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014. They are supplemented by some selections 'From our Old Files' published in the Cambridge Independent Press and other notes.

The complete 'Cambridgeshire Scrapbook' of which this is a small section is published online at [bit.ly/CambsCollection](http://bit.ly/CambsCollection)

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.  
I hope to publish these online one day. If you would like them in the meantime then please get in touch.

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.

They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since the 1960s.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – [www.mikepetty.org.uk](http://www.mikepetty.org.uk) for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2016

1897 07 21

Oakington show, p2

1900 07 25

The plan adopted in the villages of amalgamating for the purposes of holding horticultural shows is one to be commended in order to secure friendly rivalry between them. The parishes of Oakington, Westwick & Longstanton followed this course when the society was inaugurated ten years ago and the exhibitions arranged since have met with a measure of success that has continually stimulated its members. The exhibits were a very level lot. The peas, horned carrots & potatoes might be singled out for special mention. A small dish of curious peas of the Ashley Duke variety caused a sensation. Thurston's steam horses were in attendance & in the evening the villagers thronged into the ground in large numbers.

1904 08 06

The current issue of the 'Strand Magazine' possesses a special interest for Cambridge people since the town has furnished Sir Arthur Conan Doyle with material for his latest Sherlock Holmes story, The Missing Three-quarter. It concerns the disappearance of a member of the Cambridge University rugby team on the eve of the annual match against Oxford. Holmes is supposed to visit Cambridge, residing in an inn next to a bicycle shop; he explores Histon, Oakington and Waterbeach before the final scene of the story is set in a lonely cottage in a field near Trumpington.

1905 11 04

Justices awarded compensation under the scheme for reducing the number of public houses. They included the Hoops pubs in Kneesworth, Melbourn and Steeple Morden, the Sir Harry Smith at Swavesey and the Ram's Head at Swaffham Bulbeck. In Oakington The Windmill, King's Head and Plough and Harrow were closed. But the closure of the 'Wait for the Bus' at Bottisham was contested; others Rams Head, Swaffham Bulbeck; Swaffham Prior: White Hart; Swavesey: Railroad, Bird in Hand; Cottenham: Windmill; Dry Drayton: Rose and Crown 05 11 04b-d

1906 03 27

When Cambridgeshire magistrates started the task of extinguishing licences of public houses thought to be superfluous the offers of compensation were accepted in all but three cases. These were the Wait for the Bus at Bottisham, the Sir Harry Smith at Swavesey and the King's Head, Oakington, all owned by Hudson's Brewery of Pampisford. Now the Inland Revenue Commissioners have awarded larger sums for two, but reduced the amount offered for the Wait for the 'Bus from £355 down to £120. Now the brewery may appeal 06 03 27a

1908 07 31

Twenty-six licensed houses are to close, magistrates decided. They include the Robin Hood at Litlington, Chesterton Long Reach, Swaffham Prior's Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Three Jolly Watermen in Waterbeach Fen. But the Fox in the Wood at Soham and the Cock at Isleham were spared after Police Superintendent Winter failed to appear to give evidence. The licence of the Black Horse at Over was renewed after the Star Brewery appealed. also Barrington Boot & Shoe, Bassingbourn Yew Tree, Steeple Morden Lion, Swaffham Prior John Bull, Bottisham Rose & Crown, Cottenham Six Bells, Oakington Lion and Lamb, Stapleford Hammer & Anvil, Swavesey Chequers, Willingham Little Rose, Castle Camps George, Balsham Ram, Linton White Hart, Cambridge Yorkshire Grey, Old Red Lion, Nine Pines, Thatched House, Baker's Arms, Red Lion, Brewery Tap & Carpenters' Arms. CWN 08 07 31

1908 08 13

Oakington new church organ – CWN 08 08 14

1908 10 02

Oakington Rovers Football Club has had a very hard struggle to exist as players could seldom get off work on Saturday afternoons when a match was arranged. It will be discontinued, the goal posts sold

and any money given to Addenbrooke's Hospital. The chairman, Mr H. Orman had been involved in the club from its birth and was sorry to see it come to such an untimely end but there was no other way out of the difficulties they were in. A supper and smoking concert would be held to mark the death of a promising football club. CWN 08 10 02 p8

1909 09 17

All Cambridge will soon be taking a deep personal interest in aviation. In a large barn at Oakington is the slim wooden skeleton of one of the first all-British monoplanes. The plane, which will soon be completed and ready for trial spins, is the joint work of Messrs A.M. Grose and N.A. Feary, two expert London engineers. It will be fitted with a 20 horse-power engine and has already been entered for the 'Daily Mail' £1,000 prize for the first circular flight by an all-British aeroplane. They selected Oakington for the express purpose of dodging inquisitive Press but gave a courteous interview to the News representative. CWN 09 09 17 & CWN 09 09 24

1909 10 08

Oakington aircraft news – 09 10 08

1909 11 26

There had been a serious outbreak of diphtheria at Stapleford resulting in two deaths. The Sanitary Inspector has secured permission to use an old school for an Isolation Hospital and to move the nurses and the children there. Bedding had been secured from the Oakington Isolation Hospital but there were still one or two items of furniture needed. He could not use the Histon Isolation Hospital because there were so many cases of scarlet fever there and it would be impossible to allot separate wards for each disease. Also complaint about the Oakington hospital. CWN 09 11 26

1910 03 11

On Tuesday evening a motor cycle with trailer came to a standstill on the Huntingdon Road near Oakington because of a puncture. It was dark but three cottages were close by, so the cyclist and his passenger took the machine into the room of one of them to repair the damage. While searching for the puncture with the aid of a light, the petrol became ignited and the carpet and other contents of the room were damaged. Some of the occupants who had retired to rest hastily left their beds in alarm. The cyclist and his friend then proceeded to the Five Bells and the landlord drove them, cycle and trailer in a pig float back to St Ives. 10 03 11i

1910 05 20

Sixty-eight cases of scarlet fever (none fatal) were recorded in Chesterton Rural District last year of which 50 were removed to the Isolation Hospital at Oakington together with 44 cases of diphtheria (6 fatal) some of which were removed to a temporary hospital in connection with the outbreak at Stapleford. There were ten cases of typhoid (3 fatal) and three of puerperal fever. During the year 156 new houses were erected and eight cases of overcrowding were dealt with, the Medical Officer reported – 10 05 20

1910 06 24

A weird-looking object passed through Oakington the other day and people hurried into the streets thinking that at last they might see an aeroplane in action. On closer inspection, to their great disappointment, they discovered that the strange object was merely an ordinary farm water cart being towed by another cart, its unusual appearance being due to the stern end being foremost. The punders were fastened to the cart while the shafts stuck out behind. 10 06 24h

1910 07 09

On Saturday an Oakington farmer lost a flock of 83 sheep but, like Little Bo-Peep, he left them alone and hoped they would come home. Then on Sunday he hired a motor car and scoured the country visiting Bottisham, Newmarket, Shelford and other places too numerous to mention. At length discouraged and with the petrol tank running low, he turned towards home and when nearing the Five

Bells on the Huntingdon Road espied them in front of him. Had the farmer only had the faith of Miss Bo Peep he would have saved himself a long motor ride. 10 07 09g

1911 09 22

With the exception of damson and late apples, the fruit gathering at Cottenham is nearly over and the trolley loads so numerous a week or two past, are becoming more rare. The season, especially in the Victoria plum pulling period, has been a heavy one for fruit carriers, over 50 tons a day being a frequent consignment from Oakington Station to London and other markets 11 09 22e

1911 11 03

Two unusual events occurred at Oakington. Several women had obtained employment in a neighbouring village gathering potatoes, but on Tuesday decided to strike for more wages. As they could not come to terms, they left the work and returned home. Much excitement was caused on Wednesday afternoon by the sight of an aeroplane flying over Oakington. This is the first one that has passed over this village. Many of the inhabitants had a good view of it 11 11 03f

1912 06 07

Oakington man fell off horse into pond; narrow escape thunderstorm Arthur Ellsdon – 12 06 07m

1912 09 27

The epidemic of diphtheria at Willingham lasted eleven weeks and was complicated by an outbreak of scarlet fever at the same time – out of 22 households, 12 had both. It had been spread by school assemblage and social intercourse, not by milk or other food stuff. The infection had travelled from London by way of Hauxton and the Isolation Hospital at Oakington. A house had been made into a temporary hospital to which 20 cases were admitted and this, together with swabbing of all known contacts and the disinfection of houses and clothing meant the outbreak had now practically ceased. 12 09 27i

1913 02 07

Oakington farmer Thomas Cocker death

1913 04 11

Oakington off to Canada. Some excitement was caused at Cottenham by the descent of a balloon in a field of Mr Lewin's on the Oakington Road. There were two occupants who hailed from Farnborough and were out for military practicing purposes. The balloon was packed up and conveyed to Cambridge station by Mr F. Norman 13 04 18 p12 CIP

1913 06 20

Oakington blacksmith accident

1913 09 12

Oakington child railway accident

1913 10 24

Oakington butcher leaves for Canada

1914 07 03

Oakington houses poor: Inspector of nuisances reported a bad case of overcrowding at Oakington where a small cottage with one lean-to bedroom was occupied by a man and wife and six children. There was also said to be a lodger. There were no other houses in the village at al. They had been trying to build some cottages for six months but had been unable to do so. Under the present circumstances it looked as if no cottage would be built for at least twelve months. The landlord would not spend a penny on the place. The Medical officer applied for a closing order. In another house occupied by an elderly couple the landlord did not care whether it was closed or not. His tenants did not ay much rent and he would probably use it as stables or warehousing. Three houses adjoining one

another were extremely old and very dilapidated and the inspector felt almost afraid to walk across the bedroom floor. Mr Rowley asked if they could not have a good fire there. It would be a good thing provided no one was hurt. But it was a serious thing to close five houses in one parish. The people could not find houses. But these could be repaired and put in order but the landlord objected to do any repairs and unofficially he declined to do any. A closing order did not mean ejection. It gave the landlord warning to repair the houses and make them habitable or close them.

1914 08 14

Red Cross hospitals have been equipped throughout the county. At Cottenham 40 beds are ready at one hour's notice, 25 are ready for wounded at Histon Council School, Oakington has 15. At Waterbeach the Baptist Sunday Schoolroom is equipped as a hospital with nurses in uniform presenting a neat appearance. At Newmarket thirty beds are fitted in the King Edward VII Memorial Hall. Should 100 wounded men be sent further beds will be fitted in the Astley Institute, Town Hall and Technical Institute. 14 08 14 p8

1914 09 18

Recruiting Oakington

1914 10 30

Enlistment Hardwick, Histon, Oakington, Litlington, Guilden Morden,

1914 11 06

Belgians – Littleport, Burwell, Chatteris, Duxford, Comberton, Sawston, Elsworth, Fen Drayton, Swavesey, Fordham, West Wickham, Wicken, Gamlingay, Willingham, Madingley, Isleham, Landbeach, Linton, Lode, Oakington,

1914 12 04

Cat's Long Journey. — Mr. J. Charles, who until recently resided in this village (Oakington), moved a few weeks ago to Chelmsford, where he is employed by the G.E.R. Strange to say, the other day he took with him his cat, and animal suddenly made its appearance in its old home, having found its way back.

1917 03 07

The Mail Cart - On Wednesday evening last the mail cart, which has been running for about 20 years between Cambridge and Willingham, via Milton. Landbeach, Cottenham and Rampton, could be seen making its last journey. Arrangements have now been made for the Cottenham and Rampton mail in future to come from Cambridge to Oakington station by train. Mr. Albert Young, of Rampton, has been appointed to fetch the mail from Oakington in the morning and to carry it to Oakington in the evening. Owing to these alterations, the Cottenham letters will be delivered an hour later than usual. The mail in the evening will go out at 8.45 instead of 8 o'clock, necessitating the posting of letters an hour and a quarter earlier than usual. The mid-day delivery will remain as before. There will in future be no delivery or dispatch on Sundays.

1917 10 10

Fall of Jerusalem. — The bells were rung at the Parish Church (Oakington) when the news was received of the fall of Jerusalem, and a thanksgiving service was held.

1918 03 06

County licensing – Tailor's Arms Comberton, Garden Gate at Histon, Horseshoe Fen Drayton, Swan with Two Necks Swavesey, Harvest Home Oakington referred – 18 03 06b, c

1918 07 24

Licensing meeting; Star Brewery's Racehorse renewed, Earl of Durham on Newmarket Road; Johnny Gilpin, Gold Street; Horseshoe, Fen Drayton; Swan with two necks, Swavesey; Garden Gate, Histon closed; Harvest Home, Oakington renewed – 18 07 24a # c

1920 08 11

Football - The annual meeting of the Histon and District Football League was held in the Histon Institute on Wednesday evening. Mr. L. R. Neaves, of Coton, occupied the chair, and was supported by the hon. secretary of the League (Mr. J. Harold Peck), and there were representatives from the following clubs: Willingham, Cottenham North End, Milton, Comberton, Histon Institute, Girton, Oakington, Cottenham, Horningsea and Coton. Apology for non-attendance was received from Over Hotspurs. Mr. John Chivers was re-elected president of the League, and the following vice-presidents were also elected, subject to their consent: Dr. J. M. King (Willingham), Mr. Arthur Rhodes (Histon), the Rev S. T. Adams (Cambridge). Dr. Balsam (Girton). Mr. F. H. Keats (Milton), Mr. T. F. Essex (Milton), Mr. Thomas Ivatt (Cottenham), the Rev. W C. Cooke, R.D, and the Rev. R. Smith (Histon), Mr. Philip Papworth (Oakington), Mr. John Papworth (Landbeach), the Hon. E. S. Montagu, M.P. Mr. G. Rogers (Comberton), Mr. Gordon Baker (Girton), Dr. Ellis (Cottenham), Mr. B. W. Silk (Coton), and Rev. David Oliver (Over). Mr. A. T. Rogers was re-elected hon. treasurer and Mr. J. Peck auditor. Mr. J. Harold Peck was re-elected hon. secretary, and Mr. L. B. Neaves (Coton) chairman of the council. The secretary's report, which was very satisfactory, was presented by Mr. J. H. Peck. Over Hotspurs were the winners of the cup, with Coton runners-up. The treasurer's report was also presented, and showed a satisfactory balance in hand. Various alterations were made to the rules of the League and it was decided this year to present twelve medals instead of eleven as heretofore. The entrance fee to clubs this season is 10s. Entries close September 1.

1923 01 05

Mr Francis told Chesterton Board of Guardians that Oakington was supplied with water from a well on Queens' College Farm. There was an agreement between the trustees of Marsh's Charity and the Council for the pipe to pass through the land. The agreement terminated in 1922 and the Council had been given notice to terminate the agreement which would mean that the whole water supply of the village would be cut off. This would lead to the installation of a new well at the expense of the parish. The Clerk said he thought it was only a matter of rent

1925 04 11

About 120 members of the 1st Cambridgeshire Regiment are spending the Easter weekend under canvas at Madingley. The Cambridge-St Neots road acted as part of the front line of a British force which was endeavouring to repel an invader marching on London. The Norfolk Brigade was ordered to take up position from Oakington to Comberton. The work was carried out under service conditions & proved exceptionally difficult on account of the wooded nature of the country in front

1930 08 20

There are only seven patients at Oakington Isolation Hospital, the cases were chiefly scarlet fever and the virulence of this disease was decreasing. The matron and porter have retired due to ill-health. It would be best to close it and arrange for Cambridge sanatorium to take the patients. But the cost of maintenance there was three shillings and sixpence more a week, councillors were told. 30 08 20d-e

1931 11 13

The reopening of the Oakington Women's Institute was celebrated by a social and dance. Music was provided by Mrs E.C. Papworth at the piano and Mr Boutellier's jazz band was very much appreciated. The competition cake was won by Miss Francis and the mysterious competition for gentlemen by Mr W. Elmore. Oakington ladies should be proud that their menfolk took a great interest in the movement. 31 11 13l

1936 02 01

Chesterton RDC's scheme to enlarge their isolation hospital at Oakington spoiled the County plans for accommodating small-pox patients, the Medical Officer complained. In the event of an outbreak it was the usual practice that one of the existing isolation hospitals should be immediately vacated and used for small-pox cases. Oakington was ideal for this. Within 24 hours all the ordinary patients could



be transferred and in another 48 hours it could be ready for use. The Ministry of Health should hold an inquiry. 36 02 01a

1937 01 15

The head offices and showroom of the Cambridge University and Town Gas Light Company in Sidney Street, where all the most modern and efficient appliances for heating, cooking, refrigeration and lighting can be seen, were built in 1909. Today the total number of consumers is in the region of 25,000. Recently the villages of Willingham, Longstanton and Oakington were supplied with gas and mains are being laid to Sawston. 37 01 15b

1938 01 26

Oakington Isolation Hospital to be closed with cases transferred to Cambridge – 38 01 26

1939 11 30

Over possessed an obsolete Merryweather manual fire engine dated 1789 which with three lengths of unserviceable hose and eleven buckets was valued at £7 10s. Willingham's 1827 manual engine with trailer tank, ladders and hose was valued at rather more - £14. Other parish engines at Caxton, Cottenham, Horningsea, Oakington and Swavesey would be acquired by Chesterton District Council at the valuation price 39 11 30

1940 03 12

Waterbeach and Oakington manual fire engines in yard to be broken up – photo – 40 03 12

1940 02 23

Former Vicar's New Living.— The many friends in the village (Oakington) of the Rev. W. W. Lillie, formerly vicar of the parish, will be interested to learn that he has been appointed to the living of Cheddar, Somerset, where he was instituted on Saturday by the Bishop of Bath and Wells.

1941 06 13

Longevity,—Paragraphs in the London newspapers often tell of longevity in Cambridgeshire villages, particularly those in or bordering upon the Fens (says Watchman). In January, 1910, for instance, most of the daily newspapers told of Over being notable for its old people, saying that of a population of 860 there were 76 persons between 70 and 90 years of age. A remarkable instance of contemporary longevity occurs in the history of Oakington, a village figuring in the old records as Hokington. In the year 1315, during the reign of Edward the Second, there were living in the village at the same time one person 120 years of age, two who were upwards of 100, and two who were 95 years of age. These facts were recorded in the proceedings in a tithe cause, recorded in the register of Crowland Abbey.

1941 06 20

Old-time names of villages.— The recent paragraph giving the old-time names of several Cambridge streets has led a correspondent to compile from old books and documents a list of some old-time village names (says Watchman). Most of these old names, it may be said, are taken from the "Cambridgeshire" section of "Magna Britannia," a valuable work compiled by the Rev. David Lysons and Mr. Samuel Lysons and published in the year 1808. The present-day name is given first, the old name following it in parentheses; Abington Pigotts (Abington in the Clay). Babraham (Baburham, Badburgham, and Badburham), Burrough Green (Burgh), Coton (Cotes), Croydon (Crawden), Fowlmere (Foulmire and Fulmere), Harston (Harlstpn), East Hatley (Castell Hatley), Hatley St. George (Hungry Halley), Hauxton (Hawkstpn), Cherry Hinton (Hinton), Oakington (Hokington), Isleham (Iselham), Horningsea (Hornsey), Kirtling (Chartelinge. Catlige and Catlage). Pampisford (Pamps-worth), Quy or Stow-cum-Quy (Stow-Qui), Thriplow (Triplow). There are, of course, very much older and more peculiar names to some villages, notably those in the Domesday Book, compiled in the time of William the Conqueror and finished in the summer of 1086. The above old names, however, are some which appear to have been in use in comparatively modern times, or, say, 133 years ago.

1941 10 03

Presentation to Stationmaster. — On the occasion of his leaving Oakington after five years as Stationmaster to take up an appointment as sack auditor at Crewe, Mr. Jenkinson has been presented with a hall set, subscribed for by the staff at Oakington station. Mr. Rutledge, the chief clerk, who made the presentation in the presence of the staff, expressed their regrets at losing such a good Stationmaster and friend, and wished Mr. Jenkinson and his family every success and happiness in their new surroundings.

1942 03 28

Fred Pearson of Westwick Hall Farm, Oakington awarded medal for saving airmen when plane crashed and caught fire nearby – 42 03 28

1943 01 21

Oakington Baptist chapel dispute – pastor locked out and set up elsewhere – 43 01 21, 21a

1943 07 23

Day School Festival—Last Sunday was observed in the parish church (Oakington) as the day school festival. At the evening service the visiting preacher was the Lord Bishop of Ely. During the service the children sang some of their favourite hymns. There was a good congregation. The collection throughout the day were given to the Day School Managers' Fund,

1943 09 03

New Stationmaster—The L.N.E.R. announces that Mr. A. E. Stalley, stationmaster, Saltfleetby, has been appointed Stationmaster at Oakington.

1946 09 11

Oakington RAF Pathfinder station opens public – 46 09 11

1947 06 11

As an emergency measure the Public Health Committee of Cambridgeshire County Council has agreed that the Infectious Diseases Hospital be made available for any initial cases for which observation in hospital might be necessary, until the smallpox hospital at Oakington could be opened. Following further negotiations the National Fire Service is now prepared to allow the Council to retain the static water tank on the Romsey Recreation Ground (it has been proposed that it shall be used as a children's paddling pool), and to pay the Council £107.8s.10d, the revised estimate of the cost of demolition and reinstatement of the site

1948 01 02

The question of providing week end leave transport for personnel at the RAF Station, Oakington, evoked a good deal of discussion at the sitting of the Eastern Area Traffic Commissioners. Mr Lainson (for Premier Travel) mentioned that his company sought to provide a new express service from Oakington RAF to King's Cross, London. The proposed fare was 12s.6d return. He also said they were willing to provide a "feeder" service between Oakington and Cambridge Railway Station as his company could not hope to carry 600 odd personnel direct to London. There were approximately 1,100 personnel on the camp and something like 600 were on weekends each week. In view of the limited station transport it was impossible to cater for all the troops by running into Cambridge Railway Station

1948 12 08

Cambridgeshire is the home base of some 50% of the RAF aircraft and crews at present bringing help on the airlift to Berlin. Oakington, one of the war-time Pathfinder airfields, and Waterbeach, are the two stations on which Dakota squadrons taking part in the lift have their home base. Another Cambridge link is that the commander of the squadron equipped with Hastings transport aircraft is a Cambridge man, Squadron-Leader P. J. Finlayson of Milton Road. He was the first man to pilot a Hastings carrying coal into Gatow, one of the Berlin termini of the lift.



1949 01 08

A chase through streets “more reminiscent of what one sees on the American films than in an academic town”, was described when a corporal in the RAF police was charged with using a revolver to prevent lawful apprehension and stealing £500. At the time of the offence he was acting as armed escort to F/Lt Goldie of RAF station, Oakington, who collected the money from a Cambridge bank.

1950 04 06

A six-month search to find a girl worthy of the title of Cambridgeshire Village Beauty Queen ended at the Embassy Ballroom with a win for Oakington. The competition was organised by Mr Leo Neaves to raise money for the Cancer campaign. The winner was 17-years-old Mrs Vima Stearn who received a CDN Challenge Cup, an inscribed bannerette, a scarlet and white swimsuit and a tray. The second prize went to Miss Balsham, June Morley, who received a silver-plated dish. Miss Duxford, Pauline Warner, came third. Her prize was a handbag. A special prize for the best figure when to Sheila Leftley of Elsworth who secured the much-coveted prize of nylons.

1950 09 18

For many of the 7,500 spectators the ‘At Home’ held at RAF station Oakington, (some of whom wore handlebar moustaches and ex-service ties), probably brought back memories of wartime experiences. Spectators poured in by bus, car and bicycle and some even walked or hitch-hiked. Small boys sat in the pilot’s seat of the Prime Minister’s personal aircraft and imagined themselves airmen. The ‘beating-up’ of the aerodrome by a Meteor jet fighter from Waterbeach was probably the biggest thrill of the afternoon.

1952 07 31

Part of the land allocated for recreational purposes at Oakington is now to be used for houses. And it will be a “great improvement”, a District Councillor said. “At present if you stand on our cemetery and recreation ground you get a fine view of the back gardens of Council houses with their washing and hen houses and so forth. The proposal is to build a row of Council houses on the other side of Queen’s Way so that the recreation ground will face the front of these new cottages instead of looking into the back-doors. It will also relieve the Parish Council of a bit of land which had been assigned for recreation purposes but which had been found to be rather a handful”. The Parish Councillors were very favourably impressed with the proposal.

1952 08 16

The public concern about jet fighter crashes is not shared by the men most affected – the pilots who fly the R.A.F.’s 600 m.p.h. Meteors and Vampires. On a special visit to the Advanced Flying School, Oakington, I found not the slightest trace of alarm or despondency. The atmosphere fairly crackles with energy and enthusiasm. Dozens of flights took place with smooth precision and at frequent intervals the gleaming silver Meteors howled down the runway and shot up into the sky, many flown by young National Servicemen who by the time they have finished their course are not only skilled jet flyers but are beginning to know how to use their aircraft as weapons. The Chief Instructor, Wing Commander Tomalin, persuaded me to accompany him on a half-hour trip in a Meteor two-seater

1952 09 08

A fete was held at Westwick Hall in aid of the Oakington Recreation Fund. Captain Taylor said that big towns and cities were attracting the younger folk away from the countryside, tempting them to leave the village for a life in the town. “We ought to provide the pleasures and recreation for our younger folk by providing playing fields near their homes so they are encouraged to settle down to country life”, he said

1952 09 10

Two Meteor jet aircraft collided in mid-air over Over. One of the pilots landed near the church & the other near the Pike and Eel public house. The landlady observed: “We often have pilots calling here – but not by parachute”. The electricity supply was cut when one of the planes struck an electric cable in Mow Fen, Swavesey. The other fell in a meadow behind Station Road, Over. Firemen put out

magnesium flames which broke out in one of the engines after its impact on hitting the ground. The two aircraft were on a training flight from R.A.F. Station, Oakington

1952 09 22

Speeds of up to 660 mph were reached by more than 30 British and American jet aircraft which took place in an "At Home" display at RAF Station, Duxford. Thousands of people watched the display and similar ones at RAF Oakington, Debden and Upwood. It opened with a fly-past of three Washington bombers which, together with the renowned Lincolns are now the only four-engined piston bombers in service with the RAF. There was an exhibition of teamwork by one of Duxford's two squadrons of Meteor jets who took part in a mock dog-fight with U.S. F84 Thunder jets and a display from the long-nosed Super Marine Attacker

1952 09 23

The lone Hurricane which always has the place of honour at the head of the air parade over London was the opening item in the flying programme at Oakington RAF station's Battle of Britain "At Home". Gusts of laughter swept the aerodrome during the comedy antics of a "pupil" in a Tiger Moth who tried without a great deal of success to emulate his "instructor" and took part in a remarkable exhibition of marksmanship. The pilot was shooting at balloons on the ground and his firing was so accurate as to be almost incredible – until the secret was revealed by the sudden bolt from cover of the man who had been bursting the targets for him. He was not allowed to escape scot-free but was bombarded with bags of flour and soot.

1952 10 02

Oakington Parish Council has withdrawn their objection to the building of a new road to replace the one crossing the airfield which has been closed. They had claimed the scheme would be a waste of public money, the road would be of no use to Oakington and the route would be a public danger. The Air Ministry said the road would be lowered about two feet to ensure "flying clearance"

1952 11 24

The County Council have designs on a quarter of an acre of smallholdings let to Redgate Nurseries on the corner of Hick's Lane and Cambridge Road Girton. It is proposed to establish a police station and house on the site which would give adequate supervision of the Huntingdon Road – a black spot for accidents in the past. The County Police force has been undermanned since the war and better accommodation would attract more recruits. The constable at Girton was responsible for policing the parishes of Girton, Oakington and Westwick. A council house was not suitable; if a constable had to detain a prisoner there was only the living room of the house available.

1953 01 28

The chairman of Histon parish council protested against a proposal that boundaries of the adjacent parishes should be altered and 415 acres added to Girton. This was the third time that Girton had asked for an extension; on the last occasion in 1934 Histon had agreed. Oakington also wanted additional land, previously the site of the isolation hospital; the Cambridge road was their only source of development since the aerodrome had taken 500 acres, the water supply was provided by the village and residents would be able to avail themselves of the new recreation ground.

1953 04 14

An impressive ceremony was enacted at Swavesey parish church in the laying-up of the village's British Legion men's and women's section standards. Rain poured in torrents as a large procession of British legion members from various branches headed by a combined band from the R.A.F. stations Oakington and Upwood marched to the church where the congregation included children and First World War veterans

1953 06 19

An open verdict was recorded at an inquest into the Venezuelan pilot of a Meteor jet plane which crashed near Pasture Farm, Caxton. Wreckage was scattered over a wide area. PC Leonard from

Caxton described how he was awakened at 1.20 am by the roar of a low-flying aircraft. From his window he saw a red flash and heard an explosion. The pilot had taken off from Oakington just before midnight. He was in Britain as head of a Venezuela training mission.

1953 07 27

Chesterton RDC opened their new £15,000 store and depot, part of a 15-acre Oakington Estate scheme. There is a site for housing, a recreation ground, a site for a village hall and one for a burial ground for the parish. Three tiers of local government had contributed to it but there had been a lot of objections from Whitehall. It was an extraordinary attitude and one that was quite deplorable. The new building was of considerable architectural merit; it was by no means a horror

1954 03 19

At Oakington RAF station one of the runways is being re-surfaced with a one-inch topping of asphalt – good for 10 or 15 years even with the harsh treatment it will get with the jet engines of the Vampire T-11s which are due when the flying school re-opens at Easter. Taxpayers will be glad to hear that little is being wasted on the job – even the old runway surfacing is being used for the working course on new landing strips at other airfields

1954 04 23 c

County Councillors say that as the Girton-Earith Road across Oakington airfield is now permanently closed, and the need for a by-pass has gone then the land at Girton purchased for a by-pass should be sold. Owing to the expansion of Bassingbourn aerodrome and building developments between Bassingbourn and Kneesworth, the route for a future by-pass has now been transferred to the eastern side of Kneesworth

1954 05 10

Longstanton's new school for five to 11-year-olds was opened - its gay colours and ultra-modern interior flooded by sunlight. It has been built on the latest lines at the lowest cost with wide windows providing natural lighting, three classrooms, an assembly hall, staff room and kitchen. Children of airmen stationed at the neighbouring Oakington will go there and it will also take in pupils from the overcrowded village Church of England school. Lord Tedder, Marshall of the R.A.F., said: "I envy the children. It really is a beautiful place".

1954 08 16

The pilot of an RAF Vampire jet trainer from Oakington airfield was killed when his plane crashed into a cornfield at Dry Drayton. He succeeded in missing 18 Council houses and women picking fruit in a nearby orchard before the plane – smoke pouring from its tail – crashed into a field off the Oakington Road. It is thought the pilot might have been attempting to make a forced landing and crashed through a hedge before skidding along the ground for some distance. The engine and tail-plane were 40 yards apart but still intact after the crash

1954 09 22

Oakington and Westwick Recreation Ground was opened in the shadow of the airfield as a memorial to the fallen of the last war. Hubert Doggett, chairman of the parish council said: "We have been up against terrible expense and the Council have been almost afraid to look at the figures." Many of our social evils arise because of the lack of playing fields and the appalling amount of deaths which occur to young children on the roads today could be avoided if there were somewhere they could let off steam. The children of the future would say 'thank you' to those who had carried out the work. It is also planned to erect a Memorial Hall facing Queen's Way

1954 09 27

A 78-year-old gardener was cycling across the perimeter track at Oakington RAF Station when he was struck by a Vampire jet plane that was taxi-ing before take-off. The pilot saw the cyclist crossing the dispersal area when travelling at 25 mph. He assumed the man would look to see if anything was coming and would certainly hear the plane. It was a rule that aircraft always had the right of way. He

added: "the cyclist took a 90 degrees turn towards me suddenly. I turned slightly to the right and my left wing caught his neck". All employees were required to sign a document that under no circumstances could claims be made against the Air Ministry in the event of accidents to and from work.

1954 12 03 c

A Vampire jet aircraft from RAF Oakington attempting to land on a disused runway at Bourn aerodrome overshot and crashed across the main Cambridge to St Neots Road. It landed in a field and burst into flames. The pilot managed to pull himself clear of the wreckage suffering from severe burns and was given first aid by Sister Joan Webb of the Medical Research Department of Bourn Pest Control. All that was recognisable of the wreckage was the tail assembly and jet engine propulsion unit. The pavement on the other side of the road was smashed and crumpled by the impact when the plane crashed.

1955 02 16

A Vampire jet aircraft on a training flight from Oakington crashed and exploded at Comberton, killing the pilot. Flaming twisted mangled parts of the plane carpeted a 500 yards radius, a bullock was badly injured and chickens were killed. A car was badly damaged. Pieces of the plane wreckage went through the roof of the kitchen of Fox's bridge Farmhouse where the farmer's wife was working. She described the noise as a 'terrific tornado' and flung herself down for safety. She tried to dial 999 but the telephone wires had been cut by the crashing aircraft. 55 02 16a

1955 04 29

A mixed throng of 1,400 people revelled to non-stop music by the U.S. Air Force 'Glenn Miller' Band in the N.A.A.F.I. canteen at Oakington R.A.F. station. It was this band that starred in the film hit 'The Glenn Miller Story' and many of the players were recognised. From the moment the band struck up it made an enthralling impact on the audience with the old favourites including 'String of Pearls', 'In the Mood' and 'Night and Day'. The audience was one of the warmest and most receptive the band has met in their travels. 55 04 29 c & d

1955 05 18

A judge was asked to decide who was liable for the cost of repairs to the chancel of Oakington church. It was damaged in the winter of 1948 and the repairs cost £80. Messrs Chivers had paid but claimed the Air Ministry should contribute £14 towards the cost. But they said it was the responsibility of Queens' College who had sold them the land in October 1940. It was a very small matter but of great importance. 55 05 18

1955 05 28

Judgement has been given on who is liable for repairs to the chancel of Oakington church which was damaged in the winter of 1948. Messrs Chivers have paid but claimed that the Air Ministry should also contribute. But they said it was the responsibility of Queens' College. However the judge said the college had sold the land in 1940 and had no further liability for repair. The Ministry should paid £14 towards the costs. 55 05 28

1955 11 15

A Vampire jet from RAF Oakington skimmed over Rampton before crash-landing in a field. The pilot managed to miss council houses and touched down, bouncing over and ditch and hedge before coming to rest in an orchard. Several villagers did not hear any explosion and only realised a plane had crashed when they saw the flames. 55 11 15

1956 02 21

The names of Cambridgeshire civilian casualties from the last war are included in a roll of honour which was handed over for safe-keeping in Westminster Abbey. It has been placed in a memorial case within a few paces of the Unknown Warrior's Grave and a page will be turned daily. It includes the names of T.R. Samsen who was killed near Oakington, Pamela Turner, an evacuee of Old Bank

Prickwillow, Fred Stanley of the Hone Guard who was killed at Pampisford and Albert Stones of March. 56 02 21a & b

1956 05 24

Princess Alexandra was fascinated by a close-up view of a Vampire training aircraft when she visited RAF Oakington Flying Training Command Station and asked if she could have a ride. She burst into laughter at the sight of the pilot wearing the latest type of space-man crash helmet. It was her first visit to the Royal Air Force and she was Reviewing Officer at a passing-out parade for 15 newly-qualified pilots. 56 05 24a b c

1956 06 06

The pilot of a Mark 5 Vampire training jet based at R.A.F. Oakington was forced to bale out of his machine while flying over Littleport. He landed safely in Camel Road and the plane crashed at the side of a cornfield at Black Bank, Lt Downham causing a crater 15 feet deep. Norah Garner and Neville Constable ran to the wreckage and could see there was no one in it. The nose was sticking up in the air. 56 06 06a

1956 08 18

Rev R.L. Hale became vicar of Longstanton in 1950 where in addition to his spiritual duties he took a great interest in young people's activities and two years ago conducted a service which was broadcast from All Saint's church. He has been officiating Church of England chaplain to RAF Oakington where in an unobtrusive way he made his presence felt at ceremonial services, passing-out parades and prayers. Now he is leaving for a large housing estate at Sheffield. 56 08 18

1956 08 31

At Oakington airfield there is a station cinema, the NAAFI provides television and haircuts and shoe repairs are free. A civilian tailor comes every week to fit the men for their uniforms and pyjamas are part of the Service issue. There is one full armed parade a month but most time is devoted to teaching young pilots to fly. It has enough ground staff for a large village since it takes from 50 to 80 people to keep one plane in the air, most are fitters and mechanics who tend the Vampires. 56 08 31d & e

1956 10 20

A most thoughtful exhibition called 'Wonders of the Bible' is housed in a giant pantechicon whose sides hinge down to provide a room as big as an averaged-sized village hall. It was built by two pastors who have spent two years working on it in a disused hangar at Graveley. It is standing at the moment in Oakington RAF station and the first visitors were the officers and men. After three weeks there it will move to ... where? 56 10 20a & b

1957 12 04

An Oakington farm has been judged the best of its kind in the country. It stands within the boundaries of the Royal Air Force base and is looked after by its civilian manager, 'Mac' McAvoy, assisted by the wives of service personnel and by children who are fascinated by the 250 pigs when the food bucket is clanged. Enough potatoes, greens, carrots and turnips are grown to supply the winter needs of the entire airfield. 57 12 04

1957 12 18

Oakington was not a village which was going to increase, because of limited access and the proximity of the airfield, planners told an inquiry. But a petition backed proposals for new housing and a little light industry: it would improve amenities and move the centre of gravity of the village away from the airfield. The noise of aircraft taking off across the village made telephone conversations difficult, residents complained. 57 12 18b

1958 07 18

Two residents appealed to develop land they owned at Water Lane, Oakington; it was near the shops and schools and was one of the finest sites for building. But the County Council say that since 1948



there have been 24 private houses built and there were 17 acres for which development had already been agreed. "One has to be realistic and face the fact that Oakington is not going to expand" If anybody wished to build a house in the Cambridge area they would not go to Oakington to do it. 58 07 18.

1958 07 31

Oakington sewage scheme – 58 07 31b

1958 12 05

Two airmen from Oakington airfield had miraculous escapes when their Vampire jet trainer crashed on the main railway line bordering the airfield and skidded 200 yards across a ploughed field. The plane had taken off from the main runway when its engine failed. It rapidly lost height and at 100 mph hit the main 'down' Cambridge-Huntingdon railway line, shedding its undercarriage before knocking down fences and coming to rest. Both lines were blocked for half an hour but workmen soon had the damage repaired. 58 12 05

1958 12 29

Coun Burkitt, Chairman of the County Council, made a Christmas Day visit to Midfield Children's Home, Oakington where children were playing happily with their presents and one presented him with an ash tray he had made. At the Grange Children's Home, Swavesey the children were given an additional treat when he played carols on the piano while at Willingham House Old People's Home he admired the turkey which the residents were going to have for their dinner. 58 12 29

1959 05 27

British Railways announce that passenger train services between St Ives and Kettering and the freight train services from Buckden and Grafham stations will be withdrawn on June 15th. In addition trains running between Cambridge and St Ives on weekdays which at present serve Kettering will also be withdrawn. Arrangements will be made to augment the service to St Ives by the 10.17 am Cambridge to Peterborough train calling at Histon, Oakington, Longstanton and Swavesey stations and an additional train leaving for St Ives at 5.15pm calling at all stations. 59 05 27a

1959 10 15

A Vampire jet trainer aircraft which was formation flying with three others ploughed through electricity cables before crashing on its back in a field at Meadow Farm near Elsworth. Thousands of gallons of foam were poured on the wreckage by members of the Oakington RAF Station Fire Brigade and spectators were told to keep well clear as one of the ejector seats in the aircraft had not gone off and bare electricity cables were smouldering and sparking in the stubble. 59 10 15b

1959 10 03

RAF Oakington Meteor crash near Willingham – pics 59 10 03

1959 10 16

Oakington aeroplane remembered – 59 10 16

1959 10 30

Oakington aeroplane – 59 10 30a & b, f & g

1959 11 03

Oakington plane crash – 59 11 03

1959 11 13

Grose monoplane Oakington – picture – 59 11 13b

1960 01 18



Oakington railway station is one of the busiest in the area: 80 trains pass daily, 14 of them stopping passenger trains. However many RAF passengers from Oakington airfield find it easier to reach their living quarters from Long Stanton station and services can be disrupted by plane crashes. Large quantities of fruit are still sent 'up North' but there is increasing competition from road haulage firms. One farmer says he prefers the rail as the fresh air blowing through the trucks helps to keep the fruit fresh. But the station suffered when a large local farming concern changed hands and nearly 700 tons of sugar beet was not grown. 60 01 18a & b

1960 07 18

A four day manhunt for 'Gipsy Jack' ended when he was found in a secret hideout inside his mother's hut in the gipsy encampment near Oakington where he had been since he shot and battered a woman in the corner of a cornfield. Superintendent John du Rose of Scotland Yard realised the old railway carriage was shorter inside than out and pulled away a chest of drawers from an old wooden partition. But 'Gipsy Jack' shot himself in the head with a shotgun before police could break in. 60 07 18a 60 07 14 60 07 18 60 07 18a

1960 12 16

Amongst those working on Christmas Day will be 30 men at RAF Oakington. Being a training school and operational station there must be a handful of men to tend the sick and guard the vital installations on the base. They will have a six-course Christmas dinner served by officers and senior NCOs plus free beer and cigarettes. They can then relax with a book or in front of the television, hoping that no crises will arise to disturb their peace. But if it does there are an additional 150 men in the near vicinity who can be called in for reinforcements. 60 12 16a

1961 04 26

An Old Persean, 23-year-old Flying Officer Peter Neville Perry from Doddington, became the youngest RAF pilot ever to assume command of a V-bomber when he took off in a Valiant from RAF Honington. Perry trained at RAF Oakington before taking a captain's course for the most promising and ambitious student pilots. Previously only pilots with 15 years flying experience have been considered for the job. Mr Stubbs, Headmaster of the Perse, said he had a good academic record and was never hasty: he would think things out carefully before making a decision. 61 04 26c

1961 08 24

Histon station has completed a hat-trick of wins in the garden section of the annual competition for best-kept station. They are one of four in the region to gain the top award of £10 which will go towards the cost of seeds and plants for next year. The new stationmaster, A.S.G. Harris, has taken a keen interest in the competition with strong support from his three porters who have done the bulk of the work. Longstanton, Oakington and St Ives stations also won recognition. 61 08 24b

1961 09 08

Oakington was unsuitable for major residential development, the County Development Control Officer told an inquiry. It had mains electricity, gas and water but a sewage system was not expected for three or four years and the school was already overcrowded. There is a distinct danger of development outstripping the services available. Cottenham, Girton, Histon and Milton were more suitable. But there were swarms of builders after any land for which planning permission had been granted. The developer said there was a heavy demand for houses in the £2,000 range and he would install an estate sewage disposal system. 61 09 08a

1962 12 07

Two railway lines in Cambridgeshire are under threat following Dr Beeching's proposals. All lines transporting less than 10,000 people and 10,000 tons of freight a week may close. This includes the line from Cambridge through Histon and Oakington and the one to Mildenhall through Burwell. Fruit growers would be seriously affected and have to switch to road transport, putting up prices. Rural bus services are another failure of Government policy and had been cut because they were unprofitable, a Labour meeting was told. 62 12 07c # c.26.2

1963 09 04

With eleven airfields within a 25-mile radius of Cambridge no-one is immune from the noise. But few experience such consistent interference with their sleep as the villagers of Cottenham, Girton, Histon and Dry Drayton which lie on a circuit used by planes of the flying school at Oakington where the night flying programme goes on until three o'clock in the morning. Residents have complained to MP Francis Pym but the Air Minister says the noisy Varsity aircraft cannot be moved to another station. 63 09 04

1964 06 09

Large twin-engined Vickers Varsity aircraft warm up their engines as Oakington Flying Training School start another period of night flying. The planes lumber round to the end of the runway, pause to allow safety checks and then haul themselves into the sky. Villagers attempting to sleep complain that all they do at Oakington is night flying and urge the RAF to relocate to quieter areas. But it is an essential part of the flying curriculum. 64 06 09

1964 07 05

Snowy the roadman is the first person newcomers to Oakington notice, for he always wears a 'bowler' to work. Walter Reginald Farr was born in Longstanton and has been a roadman eight years. He has three bowlers including a Sunday best which he only wears at weekends with his dress suit when he goes for a walk. 'Snowy' sports a colourful, grizzled beard, yellow at its thickest but now greying at the sides. His face is a lobster red and he has bright, friendly blue eyes. He takes a pride in the village and there is no doubt the village take a pride in him. 64 07 05

1964 08 03

Midfield House at Oakington is a reception centre for children in need of care. Some are short-term visitors, others are admitted under the Children's Act. Every child brings a problem. They are assessed and transferred to a home at Shelford, to foster-parents or sent for training. There is plenty to keep them mentally fit and interested. Up to five share a daintily decorated bedroom and parents are encouraged to visit whenever possible. Some, after rehabilitation, return to their families. 64 08 03a

1964 09 26

Dry Drayton has more than its fair share of problems, villagers claim. It is lacking essential amenities and facilities. It has no recreation ground with swings and mothers of young children live in daily fear of the heavy lorries that speed through. The sewerage system is inadequate, buses infrequent and the aircraft from RAF Oakington fly low at night. Money has been raised for a new hall but nothing has been done, leaving just the old hut. "We have to play bingo with gloves on in winter, it's so cold in there" one pensioner complains. 64 08 26a

1965 10 15

Oakington grave of Francis Holcroft – feature – 65 10 15g

1967 11 03

Snowy Farr, Oakington village roadman going about his duties on a colourful tricycle dustcart he built for himself – photo – 67 11 03a

1968 01 18

Oakington White Horse pub closed since Christmas, to reopen – 68 01 18a

1969 05 21

Snowy Farr, Oakington roadman with trike and top hat – 69 05 21

1971 07 15

RAF Oakington trains pilots – feature – 71 07 15 # c.26.1

1972 05 12

Robinson and Gimbert, the Cambridge builders with reputation for high class work have been taken over by one of the "big boys" of British home building. From next week they will be trading under the direction of T & E Homes Ltd of Reigate. The Cambridge firm who started in Guildhall Street 25 years ago and moved to Victoria Road six years ago have 60 full time employees. Robinson and Gimbert currently have schemes on the go at Oakington and Stapleford, and recently completed one at Waterbeach. They build about 50 houses a year

1972 08 12

Castles in the air are all very well but when it came to haystacks in the sky villagers at Histon began to think they were really dreaming. Airborne straw rained down on the village yesterday and clumps of it were scattered over roads and in the gardens of puzzled residents. Seven year old Carmen Moore, who watched the whole event said; "I thought it was very funny seeing haystacks in the sky". The mystery of the falling straw was solved by the R.A.F. Oakington meteorological office. A spokesman said "This comes from burning fields of stubble. The heat from the ground can lift loose straw up to 10,000 feet and it can travel as much as 30 miles before it falls down again"

1972 09 08

Just in case The Bomb should ever drop, eight powerful new air raid warning sirens are to be installed in Cambridgeshire. Although few people ever see or hear them, the Home Office has about 22,000 warning points in the United Kingdom equipped with electric or hand sirens for air attack warnings and maroons for fall-out warnings. Now they are to be replaced by powerful compressed-air sirens which are much more efficient and much louder. The eight which are to be installed in Cambridgeshire will be at Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge, Waterbeach Barracks, Oakington airfield, Great Wilbraham, the old Duxford airfield, Bassingbourn Barracks Lt Eversden & Linton

1972 12 19

Snowy Farr, the self-styled King of the Road, who has raised more than £1,400 for the blind in two years, has been priced off the road with the tractor that tows his mobile menagerie. Since Snowy bought the tractor two years ago to replace the tricycle he had used previously he has driven it on a £5 a year concessionary licence. But now he has been told that he must have a general haulage tractor licence which costs £60 and he says he hasn't got the money. Snowy first became famous when the cart he used for his work as a roadman around Oakington began to take on a very individual appearance as he added to its basic shape. He then started to take his pet animals with him. Someone suggested he should raise money for charity because so many people gathered to see his mobile show wherever he went.

1973 07 05

Oakington, the last operational RAF airfield in Cambridgeshire is to close down and will be sold off within two years, the Defence Lands Committee have recommended. The committee also says that other mid-Anglian airfields and military sites should be returned to civilian use and over 600 acres of land at Molesworth should be sold. It was a bomber base during the war and is now used as a United States Air Force stores and housing complex in association with their use of RAF Alconbury

1974 07 11

The bells of Oakington church are ringing again after 50 years silence thanks to the efforts of four boys from the village. For almost a year, Graham Brasnett, aged 13, Tony Moore, 12, his brother David, 11, and their friend Michael Cleaver, 11, who all live in Water Lane, have been helping the vicar to repair the 300-year-old bells which experts said would never ring again. The vicar, Rev. James Alexander, said he was very pleased the bells were ringing again. His only disappointment: "They don't have a very beautiful ring"

1974 08 10

The decision to close down the RAF base at Oakington, first announced in 1972, was confirmed yesterday. There were tears in the eyes of many workers when Wing Commander G.J. Daly made the

announcement. Mr Ivan Cockbill of Willingham, a chef at the station since 1970 said: "We hoped the closure would be shelved". Another worker, Mr Martin Rainesford, of Cambridge, who has worked at the base for 17 years said: "We are all sorry to see it close down". The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers will take over the base in April next year

1974 09 24

Fears were expressed at a special meeting of Longstanton parish council that the village would become a "garrison town" when the army take over the RAF Oakington in April. The chairman said plans for 200 extra married quarters made a complete nonsense of the village plan. They are recommending that the quarters, if built, should be on the other side of Oakington's airfield, adjacent to that village. Although one member suggested the council were "passing the buck" others felt there was "nothing wrong" with building the quarters in the next village. Oakington had been pressing for expansion

1974 11 06

The departure of the last pilot training aircraft from RAF Oakington – a Varsity T Mark 1 – saw the end of an era at the base, which is due to be taken over by the army in March next year. The Varsity is the last of 31 used at the base since 1951. From 1962, about 1400 trainee pilots have recorded 60,000 landings at the airfield. The Varsity completed a sweep above the village and two fly-pasts at low-level before heading to its new home at Cottesmore in Lincolnshire.

1975 01 03

The meteorological office at RAF Oakington, which has kept weather records and made forecasts in Cambridgeshire since the second war is to close down. The closure of the office brings a step nearer the handover of the base in April to the army. Flying has ceased now. The weather area was a 50-mile radius around Oakington for flying purposes but forecasting for the public extended throughout Cambridgeshire

1975 01 10

The road across Oakington airfield linking it with Longstanton may be reopened to buses, cyclists and pedestrians. It was closed 18 years ago when the airfield was established. County Surveyor Mr Robert Lacey said he doubted if there was a case for the reopening of the road to all traffic because the building of the Bar Hill flyovers nearby would give a better access to Longstanton than through neighbouring villages

1975 01 18

The question of whether to re-open the road across Oakington airfield is developing into an inter-village row. Villagers at Oakington and Girton say they do not want the road opened to traffic, but a number of people at Longstanton are in favour of the idea. The chairman of their parish council pointed out the new flyover on the A604 would cut out most of the inconvenience and danger to motorists and this may well be completed before any decision on the airfield road is taken.

1975 02 03

Cambridgeshire chief constable, F. Drayton Porter, suggested that the defunct RAF station at Oakington could be used to house the county's problem children. This would prevent them being held in police stations and prisons when there was nowhere else for them to go. "This kind of accommodation could well be ideal. After all the housing of the Ugandan Asians in RAF stations was done in a matter of days", he said. A plan to build a prison for young offenders on part of the disused Duxford airfield was dropped in 1973.

1975 03 21

Cambridge has become a garrison town, with more soldiers living within a 10-mile radius of the city than University dons. With the arrival of a new infantry regiment at Oakington there are now 2,500 soldiers in the area with 2,000 dependants. Most of the troops are stationed at Bassingbourn with the

army engineers at the former battle of Britain RAF station at Waterbeach. There is no larger concentration of troops than this in East Anglia, other than at Colchester.

1976 01 31

The old signal box on the Cambridge to St Ives railway line at Oakington was loaded on to a lorry and taken to the Bressingham Steam Museum near Diss. The box, one of the few remaining Great Eastern types dating back to the early 1900s, was bought several years ago by railway enthusiast Mr Mike Sharman, who lives at Foxton. However he ran into snags when he wanted to move the box to his home so he presented it to the museum.

1976 10 18

A new sport was devised by an Oakington farmer, Mr D.W. Chapman: spud picking. Not the orderly picking carried out each year by part-time fenland workers but a less-refined version invented by ordinary people intent on surviving in inflation-hit Britain. The offer was 7p a pound for Red Desiree. "We dig, you pick" said the advertisement in the News. With forecasts of spuds costing at least 20p a pound by Christmas it was an offer not to be scorned; like diving seagulls people swooped, grabbing, scraping and grovelling. Others wandered off to a quiet spot, kicked away the top soil and clawed out the potatoes with their bare hands. One man lifted 12 plants and then noticed his wife was selecting the whoppers and leaving the rest for the vultures. "To hell with that", he said, throwing down his fork, "I'm off to the pub"

1977 07 25

Parishioners at Oakington have raised nearly £5,000 to repair the church bells. On Saturday four bells were taken down from the tower by a group of villagers; by doing a lot of the manual work they have kept the costs down. The bells need a new frame to replace the present one which is 300 years old. They also need retuning and a fifth bell is being recast at Loughborough.

1978 10 13

Pleas from villagers at Oakington for South Cambs District Council to get rid of 'slum' homes for problem council tenants have been turned down. The Housing Committee decided it needed the 30-year-old prefabricated bungalows at The Broadway as temporary accommodation for problem families or the homeless. But Coun Tom Flanagan said "It is very unfair to put so many problem cases into a small village like Oakington. There is often violence in the area and the problem could erupt at any time". Other residents complained that the area was a 'slum' with an 'unpleasant and dangerous environment'

1979 01 23

The railway line between Swavesey and Cambridge will be used for a passenger service on March 31st for the first time since its closure in 1971. Trains will call at Longstanton, Oakington and Histon – at least for one day. A special train is being organised by the Railway Development Society in conjunction with British Rail. It will leave Swavesey at 1pm and arrive at Cambridge an hour later, returning at 5.30 pm. The fare for adults will be about £1, children 75p and cycles free.

1980 03 24

Rail transport enthusiasts who want the Cambridge to St Ives branch line re-opened have hired a 10-coach Inter-City train. It will set off from Swavesey station and call at Longstanton, Oakington and Histon before running non-stop to Liverpool Street. The branch line closed to passengers in October 1970 but the track has been kept open by block freight trains carrying Spanish oranges and pulp to Cadburys at Histon and bringing out sand from Amey Roadstone. But the track has recently been lifted beyond Fen Drayton and the station site at St Ives has been obliterated by the new by-pass. 80 03 24

1980 12 18

The headmaster at Longstanton School is finding that the academic needs of his pupils are outstripping their financial resources. He gets £10 per year for every child, which has to cover



everything. Two-thirds of the children come from service families at the Oakington Barracks and because the Army moves a whole battalion at a time, the school's population changes literally overnight every two and a half years. This raises problems for the village children who are there all the time. 80 12 18

1984 01 12

An unemployed teenager pocked thousands of pounds from church offertory boxes after 400 raids on churches. On one occasion he sat in St Edward's church, Cambridge and watched an old woman put an envelope containing £70 into a church box then fished it out for himself. Amongst his targets were the Round Church – 52 thefts, Little St Mary's (46). Burwell church (42) and Swaffham Prior (26). He was finally caught after the Vicar of Oakington heard him inside the church opening drawers. He was sent to a detention centre for four months. 84 01 12 p16

1984 04 27

Council prefabs in The Broadway, Oakington were in a 'diabolical' state; they would need substantial repairs and had been a target for vandals. They should be demolished with the site redeveloped and the road renamed, some councillors felt. They decided include temporary housing – provided for the homeless and bad tenants – in their normal repairs policy though some were concerned that the homes would be improved to the point when they were no longer a deterrent 84 04 27 p9

1984 05 21

A mysterious killer beast has struck again, slaughtering half a dozen chickens at Oakington. Big paw prints found in the chicken run give a fresh boost to claims that a puma is at large in the area. It is the latest in a series of terror attacks on animals: in March a cat was mauled in Histon and rabbits killed when their hutch was ripped open, while at Landbeach a pet duck was carried off by a large animal. 84 05 21 p3

1985 02 20

This year for the first time in living memory Cottenham people can stand in their gardens off the High Street and see across to the Oakington Road. It was once a mass of orchards. Today there are only one or two left scattered amidst seas of arable land. The acreage of fruit in Cottenham has slumped from 900 at the end of the war to well under 300 in recent years. One of the last orchards to disappear was worked by Frank Peacock and comprised 65 acres of mainly Cox apples, Conference pears and pollinators. But it became uneconomic and the Government gives grants towards grubbing them up 85 02 20 & a

1986 05 22

A new town for up to 18,000 people may be created as a cure for Cambridge's spiralling housing needs. It would include shops, pubs, leisure facilities and 150 acres of supporting industry. Two possible sites are the A10 Waterbeach-Landbeach area and the Caxton, Bourn and Swavesey area between the A45 and A604. One solution would be if the Ministry of Defence could be persuaded to leave either Waterbeach or Oakington bases. But County planners have rejected any new settlement south of Cambridge, fearing housing would be snapped up by M11 and railway commuters 86 05 22

1986 06 04

Wilfreda Leakey was the original secretary of the Girton and Oakington Child Welfare Centre established in 1936. The warm, friendly atmosphere was a focus for village life where mothers could get expert help on child care from the visiting doctors and nurses. During the war it ensured children received supplies of food and vitamins and when toothbrushes were impossible to find they obtained a consignment that they sold for threepence each. A library lending books on child care to mothers and reading material for the youngsters started in the 1940s and continues to this day. Now she has written its history. 86 06 04a



1986 06 23

British Rail is considering reopening part of the disused Cambridge-Huntingdon railway to provide extra transport for the suggested new village in the Swavesey area. They would use the existing platforms at Swavesey, Longstanton and Oakington but would have to build a new one at Histon. Most of the line closed to passenger traffic some years ago but some is used for occasional freight trains to the Chivers factory and fruit orchard complexes 86 06 23

1987 04 14

Frederick Moore is retiring from the company he started over 50 years ago. After some initial work at Oakington he moved to the present Histon Road site in 1937 where most of the work involved re-boring car engines. Extensions were built in the early '50s and late '60s when the workforce climbed to 36-strong. Now one of Cambridge's oldest engineering firms, it carries out general motor engineering and machine tool-grinding. The business has been bought by Griffin Machine Tools of Keighley, Yorkshire who may build a new workshop on the site 87 04 14

1988 01 07

Oakington and Longstanton villagers are fighting the Army's proposals to build a mock battlefield near their homes. Two lakes would be dug out to create a series of mounds for general infantry training and another for practice helicopter landings. As the Army is not subject to normal planning rules it could use bulldozers noisier than four combine harvesters, which would be unbearable, residents complain. But SCDC say the airfield has been there 47 years and troops must be trained somewhere 88 01 07b

1988 02 22

The Territorial Army staged a massive exercise as 300 soldiers firing blank ammunition brought war to the Cambridge area. Enemy forces were advancing from Haverhill, blowing up bridges on the A45 and imaginary infantrymen were sent to engage them. Countless 'casualties' were ferried by helicopter to the main dressing station at Oakington Barracks where they were treated by volunteers and doctors from Mid Anglia health services. One specialist unit was kept busy appeasing local residents' complaints about disturbances. 88 02 22

1988 10 10

The road between Longstanton and Oakington, across the airfield, may be opened for general use – 88 10 10

1989 08 31

The 1830 Beer Act encouraged people to set up beer houses to combat the problem of gin drinking. By 1840 Oakington had eight pubs and another, the New Inn, opened when the railway came. The flourishing fruit trade brought a lot of business but the closure of the line in 1970 saw a big drop in sales and in it was suddenly closed by the brewery. This leaves just the White Horse which was first shown in records of 1765 89 08 31a

1989 09 26

Military bases on terror alert following IRA bombing, Oakington tested – 89 09 26

1990 03 13

Royal Highland Fusiliers at Oakington – feature – 90 03 13a & b

1990 03 24

Hundreds of people swamped the first passenger train between Swavesey and Cambridge for 20 years and at least 200 were left standing. The special service, chartered by the Railway Development Society was overwhelmed. There were 500 waiting at Swavesey, 100 at Longstanton, 200 at Oakington and another 100 at Histon. The train arrived at Cambridge station more than 20 minutes late. 90 03 24b 90 03 26a # c.26.2