

THE INDEPENDENT

MILL ROAD NEWS

N°20 Sep 2018

Mill Road – the truth and the myths

By Madeleine Loewe

What I love about Mill Road

I love its cafés and restaurants, its shops of stylish pre-loved goods, its wine stores and its beauticians. It is a cliché that our High Street has nothing to offer other than coffee and coiffeur and if it were true, which it is not, what would be wrong with that? We have the urban buzz of the road, the pastoral calm of the cemetery and some exquisite 150-year-old buildings. The railings along Ditchburn Place are groaning with event flyers – there's always something going on here, or nearby and we're close to the city centre and the station.

And now the not so good

What I dislike are cars swerving onto pavements, which endangers life; while for short periods during the day long lines of traffic belch out exhaust which also endangers life stealthily over the long durée.

It is unpleasant and dangerous but there is something which infuriates me even more than selfish drivers and their fumes – it is the catalogue of Mill Road Myths.

Myth Number 1. Mill Road is a dangerous place and one should not walk there alone at night. This is nonsense, most evenings there are diners and groups of townfolk on the street, behaving with decorum.

Myth Number 2. Mill Road is primarily a commercial street with a small number of 'flop houses' located above shops. This does not stand up to scrutiny. There are many houses on the street, some are let as shared houses, but a great many are owner-occupied.

Myth Number 3. A primary cause of congestion on Mill Road is the school run. A local County Councillor has identified the figure of 15% of city traffic being attributable to the 'school run' as there is a 15% reduction in traffic during school holidays. 15% is not an overwhelmingly large percentage, but more importantly, Cambridge has two universities whose term times and holidays roughly coincide with local schools. How have these statistics been gathered? And how has the impact of staff and students from both universities been factored out?

Myth Number 4. Mill Road shoppers shop by car and therefore need parking facilities. There is provision for pay and display parking in the side streets to Mill Road. If Mill Road shoppers really did mainly shop by car, these spaces would be constantly occupied. They are not. The pressure on car parking space in most side streets is on resident parking.

Myth Number 5. Most retail units are let to hairdressers and café owners. Certainly, cafés are on the increase, but we are also seeing an increase in the number of crafts people setting up business along the Road. An upholsterer and a tailor have recently arrived while computer repair shops and bicycle mechanics have been with us a long time.

See inside for posts and responses to the issues raised in this article.

A Marmite Mill Road?

Ask people's opinion of Mill Road and the responses are pretty polarised. There can be an extreme love/hate relationship with it. From



my experience, the people who are most negative about it are the people who don't live on or around Mill Road and still view it as 'the rough part of town'. The truth is that all densely-built urban environments can be infuriating, as we jostle against each other in a relatively small space. Some days it can feel irritating – hemmed in by noise, traffic and litter, but on other days, when you stop to chat to a friendly neighbour or shop owner; smell delicious food being cooked in a local restaurant; find exotic ingredients on sale at one of the many international food stores; relax with a coffee at one of our great cafes or hear live music being played in one of the pubs – that's when Mill Road can be an utter joy to be a part of. And, of course, the one thing that keeps people loving Mill Road are the people themselves. Cambridge attracts people from all over the world and that is reflected in the diverse and tolerant community that makes Mill Road a very special place – particularly in today's world.

Anne Beamish
Guest Editor



Visit our webpage, mill-road.com, to discover more about Mill Road and add your own contributions. Scan the QR code.

Letters and opinions can be addressed to the editor at info@mill-road.com

Next Issues Topic
Religions on Mill Road

The Positive, the Pre-loved and the Pre-bridged

Good weather, good neighbours

Here in Britain we have four prevailing winds (Arctic, Continental, Tropical and Maritime), all converging over us, which normally give us the minutely variable weather that we so love to talk about.

The last few months have been a challenge – haven't they? I think, we all start to feel it when the sun sprawls seemingly endlessly across our summertime? I know in this heat my body doesn't work very well. But the high temperatures have also brought me a delicious snapshot of our community.

First, a Polish photographer, Magda helped a neighbour in distress; then a second rescue by 'French Anne' and 'UK Jackie' – helping me out of a hole my overheated body seemed unable to deal with.

Thanks to everyone for providing a flavour of the best our community can be. Whatever the reason, I'm glad to have found this out. Where would we be without the weather?

Daisy Zoll, Resident

At home in Mill Road

I am waiting for a friend to call round and I'm sitting in a 1930's bent-wood chair* bought second hand sometime in the 1980s. Over the back of the chair is a velour cardigan* and pinned to the collar is a brooch* in the shape of a bee. Next to the chair is an occasional table* and protecting

the top is a sushi mat* and on that is my favourite mug*. This is large and white with a pattern of whiskey blue dragons flying round and under the handle; it has a matching lid to keep the tea* warm while brewing. Also, on the table is a notepad* on which I'm trying to write a piece for this Newsletter. Most of what I have written has ended up in the waste-paper basket*.

I gaze idly at the mantelpiece* and get up and look in the mirror* for inspiration. What I see in the mirror is not at all inspiring. So, I go and water my two plant pots* which used to have little cyclamen* in them. When they finished flowering I planted them in the garden and I'm using the pots to grow on some basil*.

I take down a heavy, scholarly volume* from the bookshelf* (hoping to impress my friend) and hide my trashy novel* behind the coal-scuttle*. I switch on the lamp*, shuffle my feet into some comfy slippers* and reach for my reading specs* but ah! I can hear my friend chaining up her bike next to



mine*. I let her in and while standing on the doormat* she gives me a present: a lovely book* of jaunty linocuts, printed locally* called 'Mill Road Stories Without Words'.

Elizabeth McKellar, Resident

* items bought on Mill Road — no two from the same shop.

Editorial comment: At present there are 9 charity shops, 4 antique shops and one retro clothes shop trading on the street.

Before the bridge

Prior to Mill Road getting its iconic bridge, there was a level crossing, which had been in operation across the railway track since the 1840s and which caused endless delays and frustration as the population and the traffic in Mill Road increased. A wooden pedestrian footbridge was then built in the 1870s.

There's a remarkable document in the County Archives (CA: CB/2/CB/10/29/19) in which several residents and tradesmen list their complaints about the delays caused to them as they waited at the gates whilst trains crossed or were shunted to and fro. Amongst them are two names familiar to us today: Mr Thoday and Mr Sturton, who were developing their land on the Romsey side of the track. Francis Thoday says: "I own 10 horses and they are frequently carting over the line and have been detained a considerable time and our carter often comes home and tells us when the gates are opened there are



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children (who) rush to get across and frequently fall down over the rails and he has to pull up sharp as possible to prevent running over them and he expects that some time or other there will be an accident".

Joseph Sturton described an incident he had witnessed: "caused by Horses, Carts, Perambulators and some aged people waiting for the gate, when some huge Bullocks were driven up amongst them and caused great (blank) to those who were waiting. I have seen the cart with infected linen (from the Isolation Hospital, now Brookfields) kept waiting a long time. I heard him say on one occasion he had been kept waiting there 20 minutes when he had wherewithal in his cart to give anyone Small pox or Scarlet fever".

My favourite comment perhaps is from a Mr Negus who detailed: "the wretched state of the wooden bridge quite spoiling the Ladies Dresses and at night it is quite a scandal through those who hang about the Bridge and it does not in any way meet the requirements of the District as there is now nearly two thousand who have to cross over the Structure or wait until the gate is open".

It was not till 1889 that Mill Road got its first road bridge.

Caro Wilson
Mill Road History Society.
www.millroadhistory.org.uk

The Poets' Perspective



The heartbeat of the city lies here,
Where Muslims, Jews, Christians,
Sikhs,
Buddhists and Atheists alike
Embrace ideas and share our thoughts.
Here, where fairs are held to celebrate
Our corner of the world
And where we march to speak
For freedom and for choice.
We gather here for those without a voice.
This is where the people spread a spirit
Which they say must never die.
This is where the people care
Because Mill Road matters
And that is why
The heartbeat of the city lies here.

Extract from
The Heartbeat of the City
by Carol Ann Wood



Changing times and rolling
stones,
Thee sixties clichés all gone
home.
And what are we left with
after the boomer's have
burst?
A hunger for knowledge? A
beautiful thirst?
Expanding our beings to
infinite heights
Taking our fantasies out for a
flight.
Enjoy this spring morning and
this poem with Love.
May your hearts drain ov
their sorrow and all soar like
doves.
Poem by the Late
Jonny Warnes



Dome to steeple
Steeple to dome
Lots of people
But is it home?
Magic has colour
Black or white
But with one another
Surely the spectrums
right
Is life here tranquil
Or is there strife?
Do we have serendipity
Or a humdrum life?
Extract from poem
by Ed Jenkins



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Posts and Responses

What a lively debate about Mill Road and its character! As a long-term Mill Road resident and Petersfield county councillor, I share all the positive feelings about the road's diversity, vibrancy and its fascinating history. The Mill Road area has been a welcoming and inclusive place to live and this hot summer has encouraged even more leisurely strolls, neighbourly chats and café life.

But I do share some concerns about traffic congestion, parking and pollution. At peak times traffic queues mean buses run late, walking and cycling is unpleasant and we all breathe in noxious fumes. Children are especially vulnerable.

County budgets for road and pavement repair have shrunk massively in recent years. Pavement parking (though it does keep traffic moving) destroys pavements and brings dangers, especially for vulnerable pedestrians. Unsafe pavements deter local walking and community engagement.

Ways forward?

1. Tighten restrictions especially at peak times. Narrow pavements and high footfall make parking bays and bollards difficult to install. Extending 'no loading' hours in morning and evening peaks can cut congestion. 'No parking on footway' signs might help. Enforcement would be the challenge here.
2. Use evidence and traffic monitoring to understand patterns of use, identifying through and local traffic and 'rat-runs'. Use the evidence to shape the response.
3. Continue local debate about priorities. Some local businesses depend on daily deliveries, taxis generate traffic to/from the station and local restaurants, people drive to work and local residents want to use their cars. As a community we need to decide whether and how to manage or limit these journeys.

Whose needs should count?

Linda Jones, Cambridge County Councillor

There is evidence that traffic drops by between 5% and 15% during school holidays. The university terms are shorter than school terms, so it should be possible to discern the impact associated with schools rather than university.

Since students at both universities are not allowed to have cars, they do not contribute to motor traffic. Most university teaching staff work all year, though may not work the same hours as in term time. I think their contribution to traffic is likely to be small. Support staff do contribute to traffic, but they also work all year (conference trade and other events take over from students during the holidays). Cambridge University has an unmet target of having fewer than 25% of their staff driving to work.

During school holidays, teaching and some support staff will also have time off, as will some working parents, who take holidays to coincide with their children's. This will contribute to the traffic reduction.

So, in conclusion, the school run probably does contribute in the region of 5-15% on some roads, but in most cases somewhat less.

Edward Leigh, Smarter Transport UK

Can we stop cars, vans, lorries and taxis driving onto Mill Road's pavements near our shops? It's dangerous – especially for toddlers, old people, the partially-sighted and it's breaking up pavements.



In February 2011, the government granted Cambridgeshire County Council powers to make a 'Traffic Regulation Order' and put up 'No parking on footway' signs banning vehicles pulling onto the pavement city-wide or anywhere it's a particular problem, such as Mill Road, but has anything been done? The issue can't be about policing costs as council traffic wardens would ticket offenders which would pay for enforcement – so no extra council tax. What about Romsey's narrow streets then? Pavement parking would still be allowed on streets where bays are lined out. So, where would a ban apply? Well, that's up to us to push for what we want. How about a trial along Mill Road from Coleridge Road to East Road? After all, pedestrians are traffic too – our shops' vital customers!

Richard Wood, Resident

I have lived just off Mill Road since 1967 and I have lived in a number of other towns and cities, so I can compare what they offer with Mill Road.

What I love about Mill Road is the variety of individual shops where you get to know the shopkeepers, they are friendly and helpful, and there is room for different types of business, but there are things that are happening now which I would like to change.

Vans unloading using part of the narrow pavement space. Almost every time I walk down Mill Road there is at least one van parked well on to the pavement, blocking the pavement and causing traffic to

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backup, engines running, increasing pollution. I have NEVER seen a parking warden caution a van parked on the pavement. Loading hours should be severely restricted to times when pedestrian footfall is lowest and traffic congestion lowest.

Cyclists on the pavement. Almost every walk down Mill Road at least one cyclist uses the pavement. I have NEVER seen a cyclist being cautioned.

A-boards on the pavement. Boards outside shops reduce the already narrow pavement area.

We have lost the post office in Petersfield. This is a densely populated area, many older people and mothers with pushchairs needing to use the post office – the nearest post office is now over the bridge in Romsey Town or the central Cambridge office.

Liz Haggard, Resident

I used to shop a lot in Mill Road, but I find that I became reluctant to do so as increasingly delivery vans and cars are mounting and parking on pavements without due care and attention for pedestrians. It is not a relaxing place to stroll, it detracts from the shopping experience and I suspect that before too long a serious accident or a death will be caused by this laissez faire attitude. It is not in keeping with current thinking about environmental issues and our need to walk more drive less. Why don't residents, shoppers and traders work together to request the council to provide delivery bays surrounded by bollards niched out of pavements on the Southern side of the street?

Nicola Terweil, Resident



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We welcome your submissions on any topic about the Mill Road community. Send images and short articles to info@mill-road.com.

Please note that articles cannot favour a political party, they should not be of a purely commercial nature, and we reserve the right to edit, refuse, or postpone use of submissions. Any views expressed in the Newsletter are those of the authors and not

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Good to know about

Cambridge Street & Mental Health Outreach Team (CSMHOT)

CGL Cambridge Street & Mental Health Outreach Team is a street and community-based service dedicated to identifying and working with people who are over 18 and are rough sleepers, engaged in a street-based lifestyle whose anti-social behaviour may be causing a nuisance, putting themselves and others at risk and making people feel unsafe. The service also works with homeless or vulnerable housed individuals presenting with mental health support needs, that are not engaged with mainstream mental health services.

If, as a resident, you have concerns for the welfare of any of the street people in Mill Road that you feel may be in particular difficulties, you can call the outreach team on 01223 366292.

Cambridge re-use

Carrying forward the good work of Cambridge Sofa, this volunteer-based service helps people on low incomes to furnish their homes. They provide low-cost household furniture and electrical appliances to people – prices for most goods are about half that in other charity shops. Volunteer van crews are out collecting all year round.

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Note: If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Cara (Manager) on 01223 414554 or email cara@cambridgereuse.org.uk

Dates for your Diary

Sunday 9 September 9.30 – 2.00pm

Bridge the Gap Charity Walk, Parker's Piece, Cambridge. In aid of Arthur Rank Hospice Charity and Romsey Mill. Take part in a walk around the Cambridge colleges and their gardens. £20 on the day. Up to four children go free with each paying adult. <http://www.arhc.org.uk/bridge-the-gap.asp>

Saturday 15 September 2018 2 – 5pm

Picturing Mill Road, St Barnabas Centre (behind church) Open Cambridge. www.opencambridge.cam.ac.uk

- Images of Mill Road old and new
- Talks from Local Artists
- Have a go yourself
- Meet Urban Sketchers
- Refreshments

18 September – 18 October

Eco Homes for All – a festival of green ideas for home makers from Open Eco Homes. 5 FREE Eco Homes for All workshops to give you the practical knowledge you need to create the home you want. Visit www.openecohomes.org for details.

Saturday 22 September

Go plastic free day – more information to be found at www.museum.zoo.cam.ac.uk/events/cambridge-eco-living-festival-goplasticfree-day

Tuesday 9 October 2018 7.30 – 9pm

Radical Mill Road, Ross Street Community Centre. How did late 19th/early 20th century radical demands for social justice impact on Cambridge and Mill Road? www.festivalofideas.cam.ac.uk



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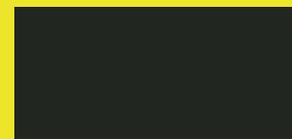
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