

# MOVING TIMES

An Occasional Newsletter from  
Dakin Estates Ltd

*Very Best Wishes  
for 2014 to all*

2013/2014



**A**t the time of writing it looks as if 2013 could end on something of a high note for Dakin Estates with a sale on Parlour Barn, Barnham Broom due to go through just before Christmas (fingers crossed and well done Strutt and Parker if all goes well).

2013 also saw a sad farewell to Marco, known to many MT readers who has gone to set up on his own account. However, we look forward to continuing to work with him on occasion.

Whilst still interested in barns, farms and old buildings, 2014 will see a

change of emphasis as Dakin Estates gets more involved in new build as we pursue planning consents on properties in South Cambs, Suffolk, Cambridge and Derbyshire.

Meanwhile best wishes for the festive season and prosperous New Year.

## DAKIN ESTATES



We are always interested in looking at possible refurbishment and newbuild projects and will always consider options, joint venture, profit sharing ventures and, indeed, any other arrangement ventures that landowners and their agents would care to suggest.



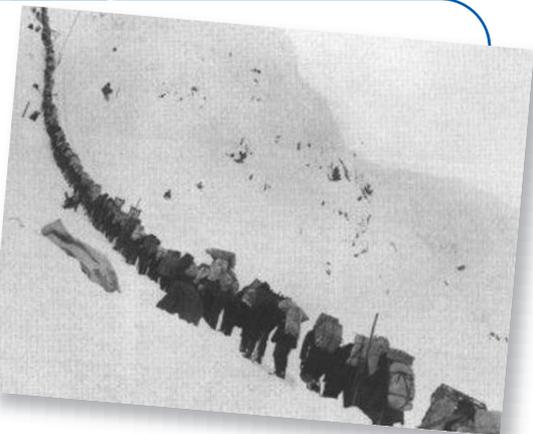
See our Website for details of present and past projects as well as previous copies of Moving Times Newsletters.

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# BOOMTOWN



**A Terrible Crossing. The Chilkoot Pass – one of only two land routes to Dawson City.**

**I**t is currently fashionable to refer to Cambridge as a “Boom Town”, – indeed, the city has been said to be currently one of the largest construction sites in Europe...

... but, what happens to a boomtown when the boom is over?

A dramatic insight into this can be found in a short but fascinating film called “City of Gold” seen by ND years ago and rediscovered by him recently on Youtube. Made in 1957, in it the well-known Canadian broadcaster and writer Pierre Berten recalls his childhood in Dawson City in the Yukon, Canada in the 1920s and 1930s when then, as now, Dawson City was a remote cut-off outpost with a population of only a couple of thousand people.

Dawson City, however, had a tale to tell for, during a brief window in history, the city had become a boomtown and the richest city in the world almost overnight even being referred to as “The Paris of the North”.

In 1897-98 the Klondyke gold rush

centred on Dawson City in the Yukon whose population soared to 40,000 as people from all over the world flocked to the Yukon hoping to make their fortunes from gold. Then, after only a couple of years, the boom was over and the population shrank back, just as quickly, to its former level.

Dawson City was very hard to get to and virtually cut off in winter yet, during those boom years, you could buy anything there from oysters to opera glasses and the latest Parisian gowns but all at a price.

A single egg cost 3 dollars, a glass of milk cost 5 dollars and a pint of Champagne 30 dollars in a demented city on speed, fuelled by gold, close to the Arctic Circle.

Substantial buildings were built, a railway started and huge fortunes made and lost overnight. However, Pierre Berten, the narrator of City of Gold, never saw any of this, only its aftermath twenty five years later when the fabulous but shortlived boom had become just a distant memory.

Its artefacts, however, remained and,

as a young boy, Berten’s childhood playgrounds were abandoned mansions built by millionaires, long uninhabited, but still fully furnished with pictures on the walls and books on the shelves. His trainset, too, was impressive – real locomotives abandoned at the disused railhead and, if he wished to play with boats, dozens of river boats and paddle steamers, with still sumptuous interiors, were tied at their moorings where they had been abandoned a quarter of a century before. With the gold, which had financed the insane import of all this materiel to such a remote location, gone, it simply wasn’t worth shipping anything back.

One thing Berton vividly remembers is there being thousands of picks and shovels absolutely everywhere, propped against walls, in doorways and on street corners, a silent testimony to the gold fever that had drawn tens of thousands of people to Dawson City all those years before.

Will there ever come a time when children in Cambridge, its boom but a memory, will play in derelict blocks of flats in CB1? And what will be propped up against walls and in doorways? Thousands of computers?

Never happen of course – Cambridge will always be a boomtown.

Did they ever say that in Dawson City we wonder?

# THE REIVERS TALE



**“One of us then”, murmured the Rector’s Granddaughter, (who readers may recall has appeared in MT before in “The Rectors Tale”), as she pointed to the inscription on a Suffolk war memorial.**

“A relative?” asked ND puzzled, reading the name ‘ARMSTONG”.

“Possibly not a blood relative...” conceded the Rector’s Granddaughter but added firmly...” but definitely one of us”.

The Rector’s Granddaughter name is Ann Armstrong.

Apparently, every Armstrong in the world can trace their ancestry back to the ancient lawless no man’s land between Scotland and England, an area controlled by The Border Rievers, (Reive means rob), who were so feared that it was said no man dared travel across their lands after dark.

There was no definitive border between England and Scotland and The Border Reivers could claim to be Scottish when it suited them and English when it didn’t whilst not paying much heed to the jurisdiction of either country.

The Border Reivers control of this area lasted from the

13th century right up until the 1600s and the most feared and powerful of The Reiver clans was The Clan Armstrong who allegedly acquired their surname when one of their number helped a Scottish King remount his horse in the middle of a battle.

Most Armstrongs throughout the world are aware of their ancestry and many, including astronaut Neil Armstrong, visit their ancient Border Reiver homeland when coming to the UK. There is an Armstrong museum and an annual horse ride around their ancient boundaries for The Armstrongs and other descendants of The Border Reivers.

The Rector’s Granddaughter still has family silver, (“I know I’ve got it somewhere”), dating back to James 1st days and when she got married she did so wearing the ancient Armstrong Clan tartan.

The Reivers, and the Armstrongs, have long gone, scattered across the world over the centuries, but, at one time, it was not for nothing that the words “blackmail”, “ransom” and “kidnap” all came from The Border Reivers.

Nowadays however, The Rector’s Granddaughter assures ND that it is quite safe to travel across her ancestral homeland – even after dark!

# THE LAST DETAIL

**On arriving in Nigeria, TC was proudly shown around the modern airport by his hosts.**

The Nigerians had searched the world for an airport design that would suit their purpose and had finally settled on Schipol Airport in Holland as their prototype.



Obtaining the blue prints and specifications from the Dutch, (whether they were ever paid for is not recorded!), a Nigerian construction company set out to build a new airport that would exactly like Schipol Airport down to the very last detail...

... and they succeeded!!... as was proven to TC when he saw an underground garage at the Nigerian airport with a sign saying "FOR SNOW CLEARANCE VEHICLES ONLY"!

## SURVEYORISMS

**The Buyer stared at his House Buyer Survey Report his jaw dropping in horror at the lengthy list of defects that had been found in the survey of his dream home.**

Fortunately The Estate Agent was on hand and gently removed the report from the buyer's trembling hand saying as he did so: "You must always remember that a Surveyor is a man paid to find fault"

Then, The Agent coaxed the Buyer through the list of defects that The Surveyor had noted.

"well that's nothing..." "that will cost about fifty quid to put right...", "that damp patch is covered by guarantee...", "you insist the Vendor rectifies that before exchange..." "you could touch that up yourself"...

Before they knew it they had reached the end of the list with The Buyer realising that remedying everything on the lengthy list would actually only cost him about £200 and the sale went ahead.

In thirty years, Dakin Estates have never seen a survey report that didn't find some fault or darkly hint at some future problem – even on brand new homes – and we have, over

those years, gleefully collected a number of "surveyorisms" gleaned from survey reports.

On one occasion, unable to find fault with the actual house, the surveyor turned his attention to the garden noting "there is a pond in the grounds which may be a danger to small children", (as if he had spotted something the house buyer might be unaware of!).

In another instance, similarly thwarted by the pristine nature of the house, a surveyor dutifully noted that, "alongside the property runs a busy road which may be hazardous for animals and children."

(A BUSY ROAD? Thank god The Surveyor had spotted it! How could the buyer have missed that?).

However, our favourite "surveyorism" was when a surveyor, evidently at a loss for something to say, dutifully noted that, "The gable end may need some redecorating in due course". Only "may"? Surely, the whole house will need redecorating "in due course"!

All proving that, if you pay a man to find fault, that is exactly what he will do!

## TO BE JOLLY

**Driving through the Suffolk village of Peasenhall, Suffolk in March 2013, ND noted a cottage in the high street that still had decorative Christmas lights attached to its gable wall.**

The cottage looked slightly run down and sported a slightly ethnic, over-colourful exterior décor. This, combined with the Christmas lights in March, gave it the air of possibly being the home of someone slightly eccentric, bohemian and something of a non-conformist.

On close inspection ND noticed that the lights, (which were

switched off – this was in broad daylight), seemed to spell a pattern of words – a Christmas greeting perhaps ... or not.

Studying them more closely ND tried to make out the festive message formed by the lights and saw that the Christmas lights actually spelt out the words,

"BAH HUMBUG!".

Chuckling to himself ND drove on leaving with the vague impression that the cottage's owner might not be the Festive Season's greatest fan!!

