

MOVING TIMES

An Occasional Newsletter from

Dakin  Estates

Autumn/Winter 2007

DAKIN ESTATES NEWS

Developing Tradition



Some changes since our last Newsletter.

ND has sold Tilbrook Farm, Dullingham via Bidwells and has moved to the centre of Cambridge.

Big Al recently celebrated his 65th birthday but, fortunately, his only concession to reaching retirement age is to take Mondays off to play golf.

Good wishes, though, to carpenter Gary, who has left us for pastures new. A fond farewell also to farmer Michael Funston, late of De Freville Farm Shelford, with whom we have enjoyed an excellent working relationship over several years in developing his two large barns in Great Shelford, Cambridge, the last of which was sold in June by Cheffins and Carter Jonas.

All crew have now moved to Boundary Farm, Wramplingham just south of Norwich and are developing farm buildings on a site which has the advantage of being both in the middle of beautiful countryside but only five minutes from a Waitrose and the A11.

Location, Location, Location, as they say.....

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CONNOTATIONS.....

One definition of an Editor is of a man able to print as many of his personal prejudices as he thinks the advertisers will let him get away with. If this is so then we at MT are doubly blessed in that we have no advertisers to constrain our views!

MT readers will be aware that we have taken a critical interest in the Bury St Edmunds Cattle Market Redevelopment, (in local newspapers this title usually has the word "controversial" in front of it!).

Our problem is that we have yet to meet any ordinary citizens of Bury St Edmunds who are in favour of this "controversial" scheme. Most, like, us believe it could be detrimental to the town's unique charm. Only time will tell.

However, one aspect throughout of the "controversial!" scheme has been the brushing aside of wishes and concerns of local citizens. Nothing is more symptomatic of this than the recently announced new name for the finished development - "ARC". That's right "ARC".

The choice of this bland and meaningless name has, naturally, been criticised by Bury's citizens who, unsurprisingly, can see nothing wrong with a name along the lines of "The Old Cattle Market" which would reflect the site's history and its role in Bury's social and economic heritage.

In answer to these protests the developer, Centros Miller, has said that a name incorporating the words "Cattle Market" would have "negative connotations" as it usually denotes "a place where men go to pick up women".

If applied to a night club in Harlow, perhaps, but, to most people in Bury, the only connotation of the words "Cattle Market" is that of the place where, for centuries, they traded livestock and, as such, an important part of the town's rich history.

(An) "ARC" on the other hand might be defined as something that, parabola-like, rises from the ground to a great height before plunging back to the ground.

.....now there's a connotation!



The Ducks Footand other stories

In 1963 “The Duck’s Foot”, described as “A Former Country Inn”, in Pulham St Mary, Norfolk, was sold at auction “by Direction of Messrs Bullard and Sons”.

On 5th July 2007 the sale particulars from the 1963 auction of The Duck’s Foot were themselves auctioned off as Lot 172 in a highly unusual sale conducted by Thos. Gaze of Diss.

It was one of 252 lots of historic property particulars and posters from Suffolk and Norfolk dating from the 1870s to the 1960s which Gaze’s, to their credit, had taken from their archives to auction for charity in a large marquee on their Diss sale ground.

The sale was extremely well attended, not least due to the generous provision of free beer by Gaze’s with the crowd of antique dealers, house and landowners and interested parties being swelled by local characters there for the viewing of Gaze’s normal weekly auction the following day.

The sales details, most of which were photoless, used a wealth of rich language in describing “Cottage Tenements”, “Mercantile Properties”, “Capital Smallholding”, “Marshholding”, “Enclosures” and “Ample Farm Premises” in auctions spanning nearly a century. All properties described, of course, having their land area expressed in the traditional measurements of Acres, Roods and Perches.

One noticeable thing about the farm auction particulars was not only how small the farms were by today’s standard but how labour intensive. Most farms were auctioned complete with their tied workers’ cottages and Doggett’s Farm, Stradbroke (“..A Small Farm..”) may have only had 23 acres, (plus 3 roods and 16 perches!), but it was sold in 1952, with no less than 7 farmworkers’ cottages!

The auction particulars for larger estates, (some even with photos!), included Riddlesworth Hall, (in 1893), and, at 2,400 acres, the massive Fornham Park Estate, (“...by direction of Captain Duncan Macrae..”), in 1950 which included “..houses and The Woolpack Pub..”

Lot 20 consisted of three sets of particulars for three different auctions of the same country house, Botesdale Lodge, in 1910, 1912 and, again, in 1939. Following this chequered ownership Botesdale Lodge evidently fell upon hard times. When TC and ND viewed the property in 2001, they reported it to be as derelict as a house could be without having actually having collapsed completely. Botesdale Lodge, (or the ruins thereof), was, once again, sold at auction by Cheffins in October 2001.

Many properties described in the particulars had a noticeable lack of basic sanitation and services with smaller properties described as having an “EC” or “Earth Closet”. This lack of facilities was by no means limited to the earlier auction particulars. In 1952, 8 Vince’s Lane, Diss is described as having a “Newly erected brick built Pail Closet” and, even as late as 1963, The Duck’s Foot is described as having only “Two Earth Closets” for sanitation.

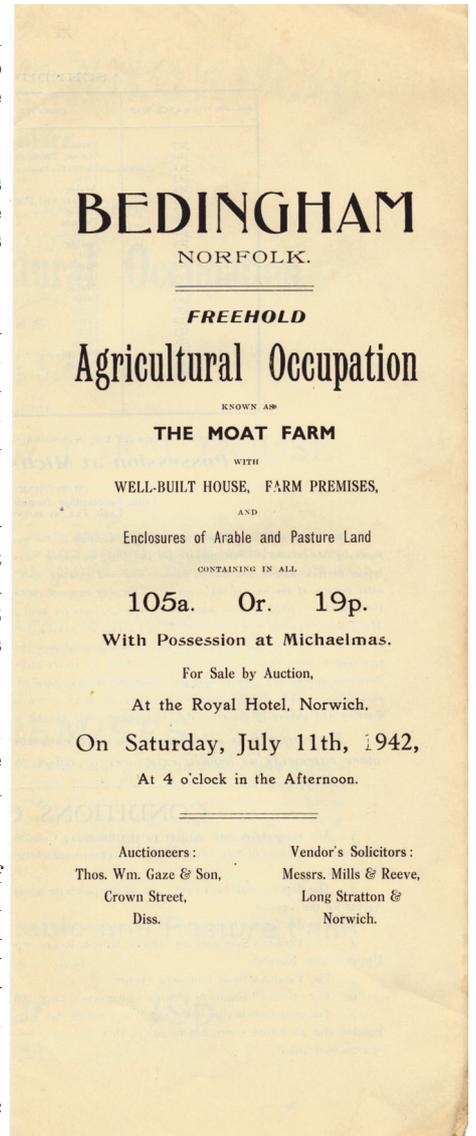
Interestingly, the later auction particulars, including those of The Duck’s Foot in 1963, had an almost identical layout and style to that of the Victorian auction particulars from 90 years earlier.

Time moved more slowly in those days.

Prices achieved for the historic auction particulars varied from a few pounds for an antique poster to hundreds of pounds for particulars of well known properties and estates. The Botesdale Lodge particulars fetched £208, (we hope to the current owner), whilst The Duck’s Foot particulars sold for a more modest £20.

In total, the Gaze’s sale of these fascinating fragments of Suffolk and Norfolk history raised over £9,000 for East Anglian Children’s Hospice.

Well done Gaze’s... and thanks for the beer!



Cambridge, June 1861...

..a Public Meeting is held in Cambridge's Guildhall which is to have a far reaching effect on Cambridge both in architectural terms and on the City's nightlife today.

The meeting is held on behalf of The Roman Bath Company and its splendidly named chairman, Septimus Beardmore. The meeting is chaired by The Mayor of Cambridge and attendees include members of a prominent local banking family, The Fosters, (whose name can still be seen above Lloyds TSB on Hobson Street).



The company's modest aim is to start a chain of Turkish Baths, (popular due to The Crimean War). The first of these is to be in Cambridge...

Starting a business in 1861 was a simpler undertaking than today – no tiresome cash flow forecasts, business plans or feasibility studies were involved. You simply called a public meeting, inviting as many dignitaries as possible, explained the nature of the enterprise in vague terms and hoped the attendees would invest.

According to one expert, Henry Kiallmark, ("late surgeon Ottoman Medical Corps"), Turkish Baths had to be custom built with "...airy domed chambers.." "...well lighted from above.." "faced with marble or tiles..." and "No adaptation or alteration of a private dwelling house will permit of these necessary arrangements".

The company is duly launched with a capital of £2000 and acquires the redundant Coaching Yard of The Hoop Inn in Bridge Street and the baths are duly constructed with an entrance onto Jesus Lane.....

..... and they are still there today! The elegant temple like building in Jesus Lane now houses Pizza Express with The University Pitt Club above it and, below it, with appropriately exotic décor, a nightclub, one of the Po Na Na chain, patronised on occasion by both TC and ND.

Inside Pizza Express it's still possible to see "The Cooling Room" with its domed ceiling – it's now The Oak Room to the rear whilst, on the right, The Brasserie housed a rectangular pool, long since floored over but still with large pillars marking out its footprint.

Entering Po Na Na down a cavernous staircase one can see a similar large pool with brick steps down and large pillars. This now forms the bar area whilst, off the dance floor, a huge industrial scale fireplace can be seen which must have provided the steam.

The baths opened formally in 1863 but, sadly, ceased trading early in 1864 with the contents being auctioned off. The premises were sold for £2,600 and, eventually, found a new life as The Pitt Club with later sub-lettings to other businesses. The building is said to be haunted with staff, today, reporting many unexplained incidents and sounds.

However, as you will now see clearly on your next visit, the building started life as a custom built Victorian Turkish Bath following a public meeting in Victorian Cambridge.

(Acknowledgements to and further information available from www.victorianturkishbath.org)

Thanks to staff at Pizza Express and Katie, (late barmaid, Po Na Na.).

(P.S. Sadly, since the compilation of this article, Po Na Na has closed down).