

Camden Town Chronology – 6: 1850s - Squares

The northern parts of Camden Town in earlier days were farmland, and then used for brick-making. The estate architect, Joseph Kay, on 1 October 1826 wrote to Lord Camden saying he has made agreement with James Rhodes for land 'south of the New Road' [Camden Road] for 14 years with annual revision at £4.10 per acre with fencing. In 1827 James Rhodes paid £323 for a 14 year lease on Camden Town Meadow.

William Rhodes had come to London from Disley in Cheshire c1720, and farmed in the Gray's Inn and Regent's Park areas, as well as Brill Farm at St. Pancras. In common with the four subsequent generations, he is commemorated at St. Pancras Old Church. The family held freehold land in St. Pancras parish and purchased land in Dalston for its brick earth. Three grand-sons were brickmakers locally before moving outwards to the home counties. William Rhodes leased the de Beauvoir estate in Hackney: and his grandson, Cecil, became famous for his activities in South Africa.¹

There is correspondence from agent Joseph Kay to Lord Camden in 1842. 'Rhodes has taken land adjacent on [neighbouring] Agar estate and St Bartholomew's. He is now engaged largely as a brickmaker, and intends to carry on that business on your Lordship's ground as well as cow-keeping.' There is an agreement with Rhodes 'for grass land and as pasture for stock as his general business'. In 1847 James Rhodes has a lease of 18 years at Maiden Lane for one house and Meadow Ground, rent £10.

West side of Camden Road

Kay's correspondence to Lord Camden 27 July 1740 says

I met Mr Parkinson and showed him the general plan of principle lines of roads and openings and particularly of the Rochester Road and the opening at Kentish Town which he thought very desirable.

He also approved his Lordship's opinion to retain the formation of a second Brecknock Crescent on the west side of the road at Kings Road.

Rochester and Wilmot

The first houses along Kings Road were Camden Cottages, set either side of Camden Road. Next was a larger paired villa, Sussex Cottages, and further towards Kentish Town was a row named Sussex Terrace. The whole area was developed by **George Lever** the Younger (**Mm**), continuing his building of Jeffreys Street and the south west side of College Street, starting with the Rotunda Works (the panorama-painting room for Burford) and the first five houses of Sussex Terrace nearby in 1836.

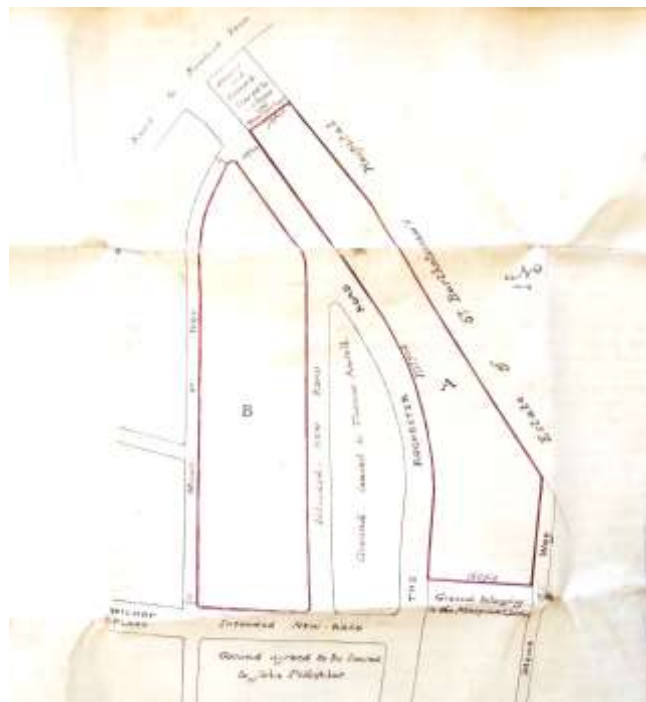
¹ <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/blcas/rhodes-fam.html>



In 1841 he took on Sussex Place 1-3 as a public house and two houses adjacent, all for £20. In 1844 he added the rest of the Sussex Terrace, two buildings in Wilmot Place and the pair of Sussex Cottages. Finally, in 1858, the 'ground and premises near Rochester Terrace' (Reid's Place) were built to more compact scale at peppercorn rents.

[The 'Sussex' appellation is presumably for Bayham House, which Earl Camden had inherited and later rebuilt. The origins of Wilmot and Reid are unknown.]

The triangle of land west of Camden Road, north of Kings Road and south of Kentish Town did not fit a standard street grid. Joseph Kay wrote on 1 Oct 1826 that land has been let to Underwood at £20 per annum. 'This will allow the opening to St Bartholomew's land agreed by Mr Hardwick with less expenditure than expected.' But only the small road entrance at Kentish Town Road, by Joyce's houses, can be seen on a map.



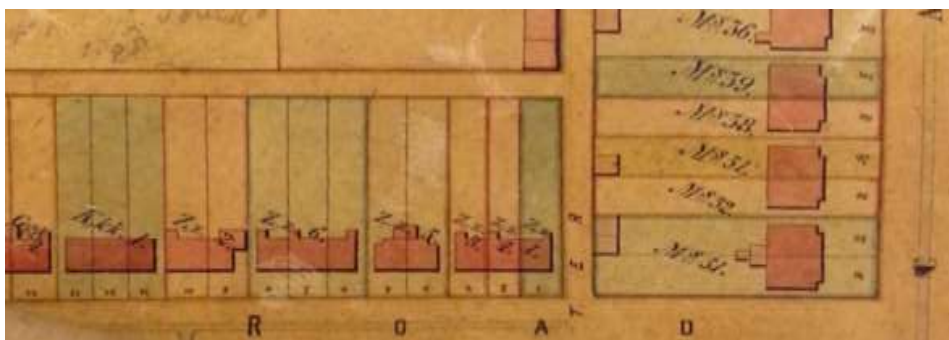
The area adjacent to 'Underwood's land' was set out in a plan, with two main development blocks around an elliptical garden



Ecclesiastical Commissioners Prebendial plan

On 24 November 1846 Kay wrote: 'There has been considerable progress in the buildings on the St Pauls Road and the Rochester Road, indeed quite as much as desirable in the wet weather.'

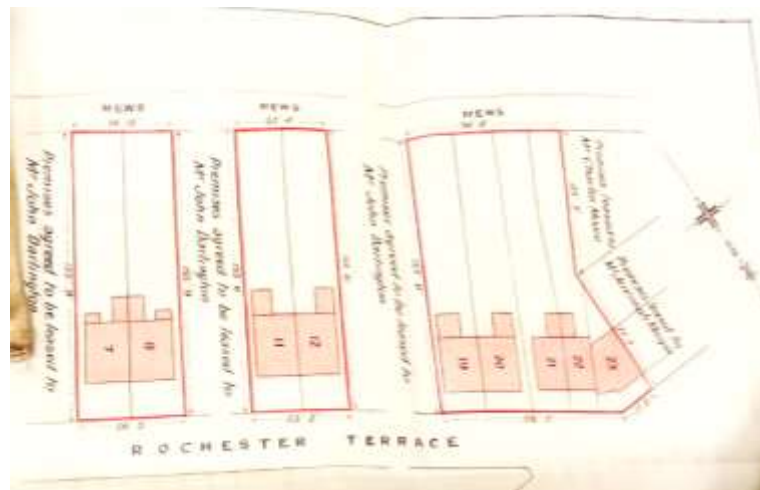
The north side of Rochester Road was taken by **Jeremiah Tibbetts (Zz)** in 1844. (He had worked in 1830s in Kentish Town, while by the 1850s he was a warden at St Paul's Church). But he built slowly, completing only three houses (Zz1-3) by 1851, with eight (Zz4-6) following by 1863. **William Rogers (Kkk)** within a take mainly for Rochester Square for £67, included 11-13 Rochester Road;



John Pettipher (Fff) in 1845 took a block on the south side of Rochester Road for £54. He built two paired terraced houses on Rochester Road, ten houses in Wilmot Place and a grouping of 'stabling' on the remainder, by 1849.



Thomas Ansell leased the 'garden ground' in the centre for 21 years in 1842. Plots A and B in the map were taken together by **John Darlington (Ggg)** in 1846 for £175. He started 1847 with two houses in Wilmot Place and nos. 1-2 Rochester Terrace; then paired villas along the central row of Rochester Road; and then running terraces in fours. Rochester Terrace was leased in 1851-52, again mainly as paired villas. Darlington himself lived at No. 15 and his daughter and son-in-law at no. 21 Rochester Terrace.



Site plans for 7-23 Rochester Terrace in John Darlington's lease

There were also some coach-houses and workshops on the west end Rochester Place, for Springall Thompson, Thomas Purkiss and Samuel Hewitt, built 1851-1863 after the main housing plots in the area had been taken.



1890s



1910s



1890s



1900s

The corner of King's Road, Camden Terrace and Kentish Town Road was a piece of 'waste' land called that formed the southern end of Kentish Town until 1880s demolition.



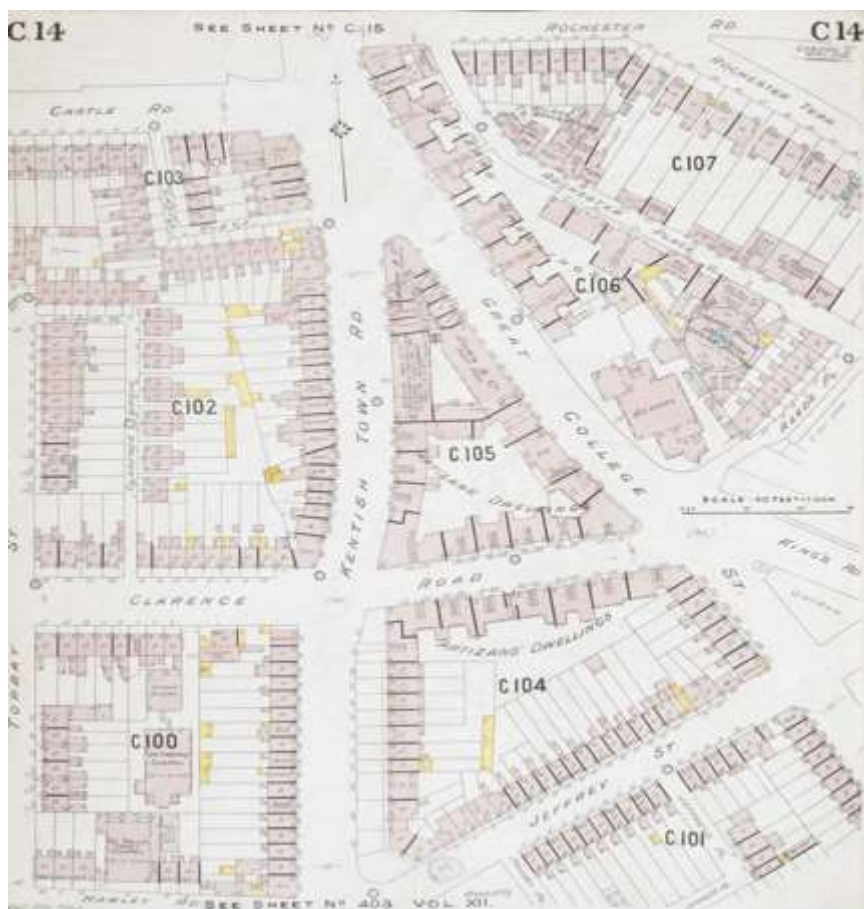
Cain Place, with view to Camden Gardens, c. 1853²

² <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol19/pt2/plate-6>

It was one of the only two parts on the edges of Camden Town that were rebuilt for social housing – the other was Goldington Buildings which replaced the timber yard opposite the St Pancras Vestry. The Cain's Place renewal by the London Metropolitan Board of Works was linked to repositioning of the junctions of the main roads; a significant reason for widening was to enable double tram lines.



MR/U/P/1151 Parliament deposited plan: Kentish Town Road Improvement, 1877
 After, new 'Artizans' housing was built on Clarence Road



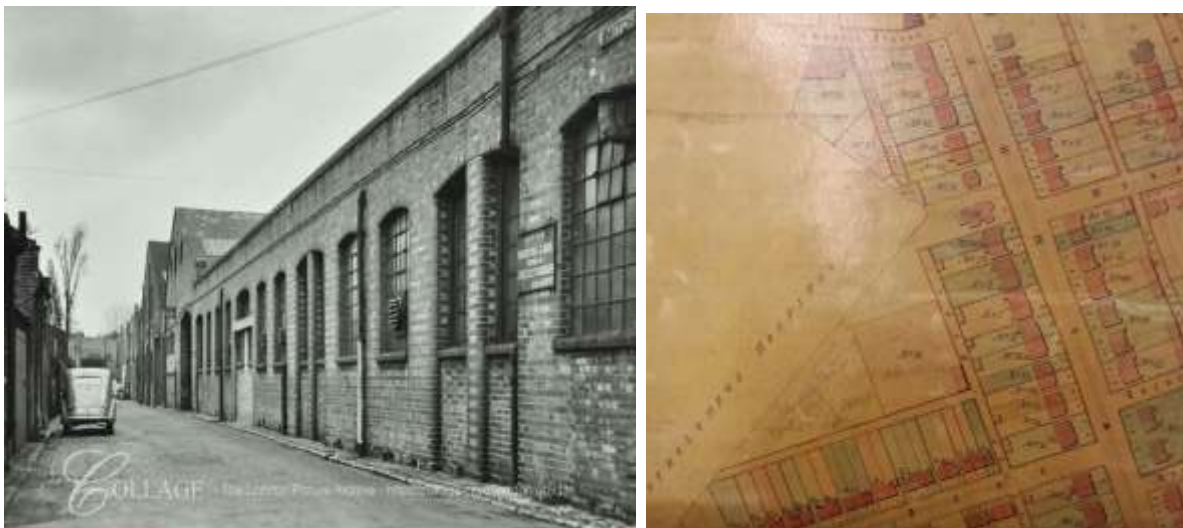
Whitcher Place

Another awkward parcel of the estate was at the northern tip of the field beside St Bartholomew's land. Camden Road had been built as villas with service mews behind. But at one point the St Bartholomew's land prevented the mews joining, leaving two side-roads. Rochester Mews ran up the west side of Camden Road, with the Camden School for Girls at the head (just visible in picture on left).



The mews from the north – from Sandall Road – also started as nursery but was sold in 1870 for the North London College for Ladies (Misc 93), and adjacent in Camden Road Mews was the Housekeeper's Association Emporium (Misc 92).

The part from Rochester Road was taken from 1864 for market garden by John Whitcher (Misc 91) – and later divided for workshops. Idris mineral water company had a works in Whitcher Place, and a deep well was bored – which however gave no supply.



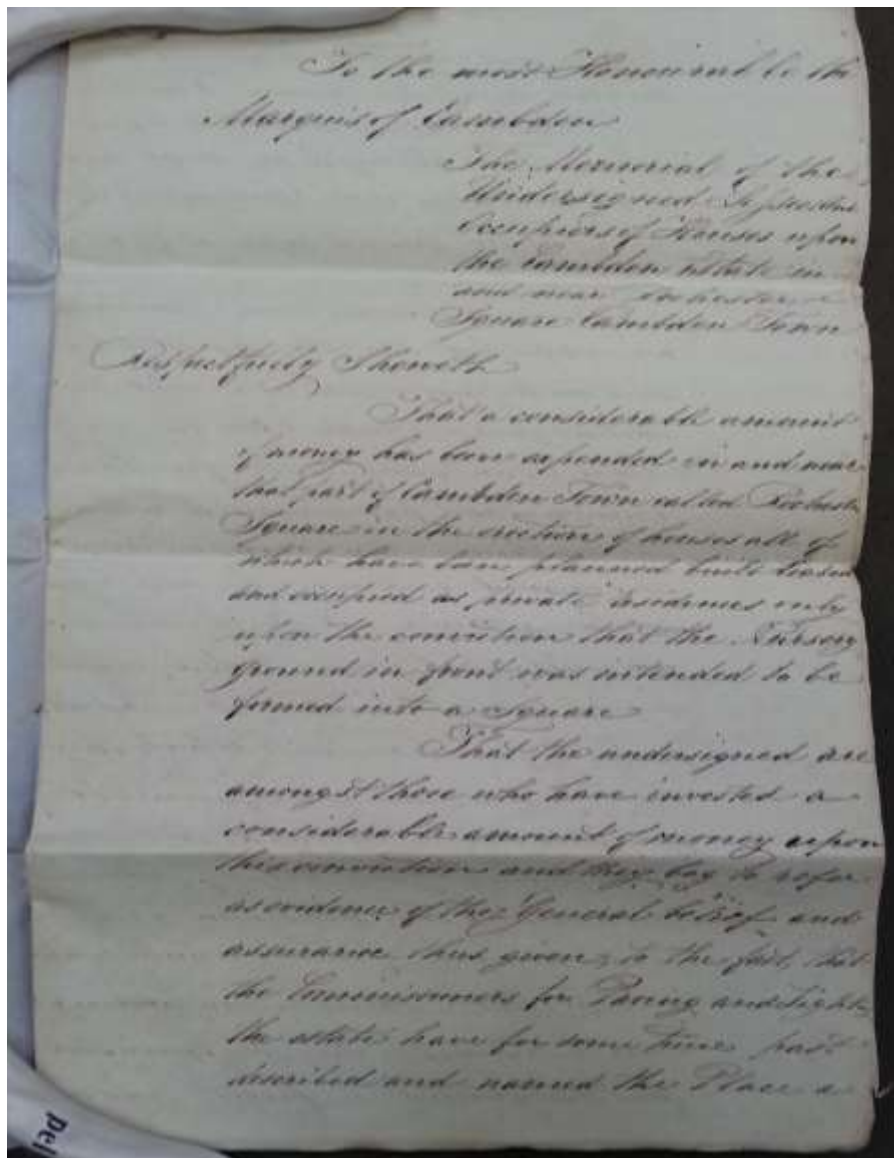
East side of Camden Road

Rochester Square

In 1843 **Johnathan Triggs (Xx)** took a lease for £40 to build villas on 'a new road south of Camden Road'. These later became nos. 1-14 Rochester Square, the south west side, but were demolished in the 1940s and the land is now part of the St Pancras Way Estate).

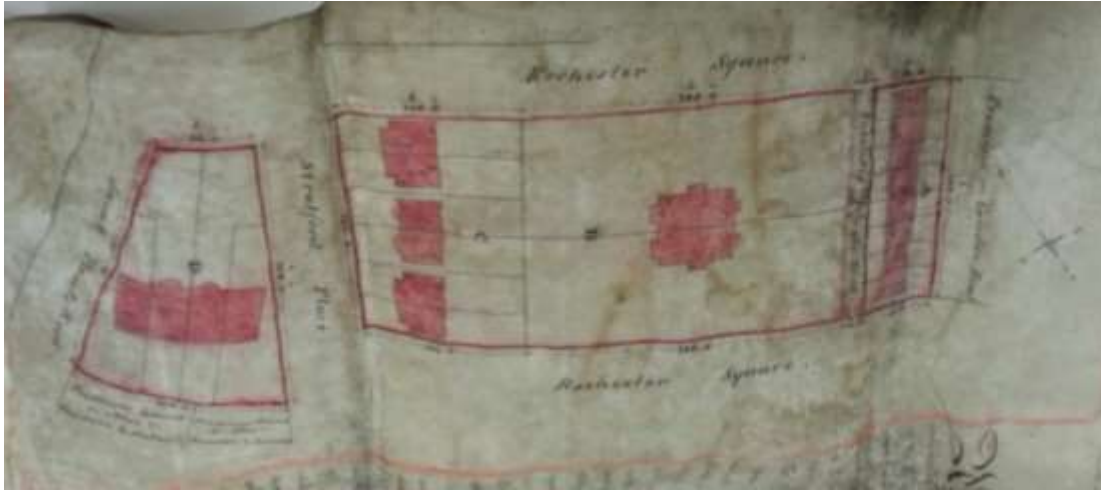
Joseph Kay recorded that Mr Triggs had 'successfully started disposing' of houses in Rochester Square – Kay noting it was renamed from previously Rochester Gardens – and that Mr Abbey had bought Montgomery's house and the nursery land behind. But Mr Triggs 'unfortunately' became ill and died, so the next steps for the square were unclear (29 Feb 1844).

There is then an unusual instance of public action. There is a Memorial (undated) from the residents of Rochester Square to Lord Camden: 'Memorialist regret to hear that attempts are being made to prevail upon your Lordship to let the Nursery grounds referred to as building ground ...'.



Letter from Memorialists about Rochester Square: U840/EL17

The memorialists prevailed. In 1846 E. Buckingham took an 89 year lease at £6 for 'Rochester Gardens'. (This may be the same E. Buckingham who managed the gardens and farm at Leavesden Asylum 1869-1884.³



(LMA) E/CAM/0634. Building article: Ground forming Rochester Road and Rochester Terrace and plantation, 1848.

The building on the central area shown in this lease was not built; by 1875, in the Second Estate map, the open land continued commercial use as 'T Searle's Nursery'.

In 1848 **Richard Richardson (Ccc)** similarly took a lease of £56 to build villas numbered 15-28 opposite on the north east side, and further houses around the square for £50 (**Nnn**). When Montgomery's nursery lease expired, from 1849 Richard Richardson added a new lease (**Ooo**) at £49 for a terrace of 8 houses on a 'Road through Rochester Square called Victoria Terrace' and for an 8-house terrace with fronts onto Stratford Place (as Stratford Villas was then called).



³ www.workhouses.org.uk/MAB-Leavesden/

St Paul's Road

St Paul's Road was a boundary for the Camden Town estate. Agar's land to the south was undeveloped until it was bought by the Midland Railway for goods yards in the 1850s.

Richard Richardson (Ccc and LII) was the major builder of this area (Sun insurance records him as a builder in 1830 at Queen Street, Edgware Road). From 1844 to 1850, paying a combined annual rent of £160, he built St Paul's Road 30 twinned four-storey houses, with good back gardens, from Camden Cottage Mews to Lomond Street.

The Camden Town estate bordered William Agar's land (originally the Pancras estate) south of St Paul's Road. The Midland Railway took over the Agar's land, Wrotham Road was made to give access from St Paul's Road, but otherwise enclosed by railways on two sides. There was a church – re-provision for the church half-built in Agar Town further south – and 30 narrower terraced houses (built very close to the railway line) fifteen broader terraced houses and ten double villa houses. None of this, however, was the Camden Town estate.





Camden Estate map 1875



Ordnance Survey 1875

St Thomas' Church was an interesting design, able to hold 800 worshippers, and an organ by Willis. But its position was very poor: it was entirely cut off from Somers Town and its previous ministry to the poor. Its new parish was drawn laterally, across Camden Road to Rochester Road, to include mostly the Camden Town estate, but this was not a natural 'catchment' when a new church, St Andrews, was built at the western end of Rochester Road – on the site of Joyces' 'four houses'.

Camden Square

George Duncan had been an early arrival as builder of one of the Camden Cottages from 1825. The partners **George Duncan** and **George Newman (Hhh)** were the main builders for Camden Square from 1846. They took a £260 p.a. lease and achieved 26 large double villa buildings, with ground rents of £10 per house, and went on to build a further 24 houses at peppercorn rent by 1850. The mews behind were intended for access or stables, not for residential building.



The southern side of Camden Square, which was in Murray Street, was built by **William Rogers Kkk**), who had previously built some villas in Camden Road and three houses in Rochester Road. He took out an option for £67 in 1846, but didn't do the building until 1852-1853. Nevertheless, these 12 houses are stylish double villas, with long south-facing back gardens.

Stratford Villas

Duncan and Newman (Iii) took on the whole block between Stratford Place and St Paul's Road for a ground rent of £70. They built five substantial double villas on the west side St Pauls Road, and quickly achieved their ground rent of £70. They then proceeded to complete the plot with narrower terraced houses: sixteen in Stratford Place and sixteen in Murray Street. There was also a pub at the corner of Murray Street and St Paul's Road.

Gardens in miscellaneous

1851/1858 Ground and premises fronting the Camden Road were leased for 21 years at £8 by Springall Thompson and Thomas Purkiss, who had also taken land for workshops in Rochester Place.

1862 Ground and premises taken in Wrotham Road at £2

1871 George Noakes rents 'garden ground' at £10