

# **The Journal of the Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation Society**

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*Heir of Antiquity! - fair castle Town,  
Rare spot of beauty, grandeur, and renown,  
Seat of East-Anglian kings! - proud child of fame,  
Hallowed by time, illustrious Framlinghame!*

From: *Framlingham: a Narrative of the Castle*,  
by James Bird (1831)

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L. R. Squirrel's pastel drawing of the *Castle Gateway* in 1924 is held in a private collection. Permission to reproduce free of Artists Rights has been generously granted by the artist's daughter, Mrs Annette Kenny

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At a recent meeting of the East of England Regional Archives Council, Kate Chantry, Head of the Suffolk County Record Office, reported that Doctor John Blatchly MBE, had passed away aged eighty-two. He was a greatly respected and esteemed historian of this area, Honorary Wolsey Professor in the University Campus Suffolk, a mainstay of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Local History, and hugely committed to the heritage of Suffolk's churches. I sometimes chatted to him as we were both travelling on the 'bus to Ipswich; when I visited the Record Office in Gatacre Road I usually saw him in the Search Room there. His death is a sad loss to local history research and its outcomes in Suffolk and beyond.

In December 1997, Doctor Blatchly honoured our Society with a lecture on "The Lost Glories of Letheringham Church". Prefacing his lecture with a few observations about churches elsewhere in this region, he referred to my assertion that my home town of Waltham Abbey had nearly become a cathedral city, describing this as "apocryphal". Spurred to action I went and checked the Calendar of State Papers Henry VIII at Guildhall Library, London, which recorded that at the very end of his reign, Henry decided to make Peterborough, Gloucester and Waltham cathedral cities. Peterborough and Gloucester now have their cathedrals; sadly Henry had passed away before he could enact Waltham's elevation.

"So Caesar winked".

I have been guilty too. Some years ago I was rebuked by a distinguished historian of Framlingham for committing plagiarism by quoting from one of his books in an issue of this journal without acknowledgement.

More recently I have been even more culpable. Jo Rothery's article in our October 2015 issue included excellent endnotes giving full details of sources used, but no numbers for these appeared in the text itself. Jo has now provided me with a copy of her text with the endnote numbers inserted. I can send you a copy of this amended text if you would like to have it on file; my contact details are given on page one of this journal.

Finally, members reading page one of this issue will note that David Ransom has taken over from Anne Baldwin as the Society's Membership Secretary. Anne has been looking after membership records for us since 2011. We give Anne and her husband every good wish as they go over to join their daughter in Canada.

*Bob Roberts*

# The First Petrol Pump in Framlingham

*These notes were written by Bernard Kemp, probably in the 1970s*

Being asked by Mr Bush (*manager of Bridges and Garrards*) to relate the story of the early days of Garrards Motor Engineers, Framlingham and their 'Petrol Story', I can only tell it from the day I started work for them, being the last day of May 1921. Motor work was carried out at the small garage, now an electric store (*now Fine Design*) on the right hand side of Fore Street hill. Motor Spirits or petrol as it is now called was retailed to the customers in painted two gallon cans, and being Red for Shell, Brown for BP and Green for Pratts, also Yellow was for pure Benzol. Cans were charged at 3/- (15 pence) empty each, the two gallons of motor spirit would cost around 2/6 (12.5 pence). It was delivered to us by petrol companies own lorries of about 3 to 4 ton capacity, and being Leyland, AEC or perhaps Thornycroft, and were a credit to drivers and owners for their smartness, but having no self-starter or windscreen. The motor spirit was stored at Garrards in a corrugated shed with metal shelves, and holding about 150 cans.



Stanley Capon, Charles Garrard, Bernard Roe and Bob Moore outside the shop front off the Market Hill. Garrard opened the town's first garage in Fore Street around 1900.

My task in those days was to help with the loading and delivery to farms in the district, the van was driven by an older lad who held a current licence, also the van was lettered both sides 'Charles Garrard, Phone 7' in gold leaf. Needless to say, it didn't take me long to learn the rudiments of driving the motor spirit van, and cannot ever remember having a driving lesson about it should I do anything wrong. However, I was soon promoted to head motor spirits deliverer in 1922.

Change was in the air. Charles Garrard had purchased the malting on the left hand side of Fore Street hill (*Garrards Court*). New entrances were made, the top floor was removed, tie and support bars were fixed and can still be seen today.

Lo and behold, one day a large tank was unloaded on the new site, a few days later a large wooden box with a motor-spirit pump enclosed was also unloaded, this being a new fangled thing called a petrol pump, but being something quite new and the first one in the district. It was a hand operated Bowser and painted black. After erecting, which took quite some time, it was put into use. I can remember the paste which was a mixture of litharge and glycerine being used to seal the petrol joints. Mr Betteridge was the man's name, being in charge of fitting, he was not very popular with the staff because he had the habit of ringing the petrol bell just to see how quickly we would turn out even with no one wanting petrol.

**CHARLES GARRARD,**  
General Furnishing, Builders', and Agricultural IRONMONGER,  
**BAR IRON,**  
**Oil and Colour Merchant,**  
HOT WATER, SANITARY, GAS & ELECTRICAL ENGINEER.  
AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS AND APPLIANCES by all the  
Best Makers, and at Lowest Possible Prices.  
*SPECIAL—MANILA BINDER TWINE of Guaranteed Strength.*  
**CREAM SEPARATORS AND CHURNS.**  
All Kinds of Lubricating Oils of Best Quality only.  
**REX, HUMBER & NAPIER MOTOR CARS AND CYCLES.**  
Petrol and all Accessories.  
**The Ironmongery Stores,**  
**Market Place, Framlingham.**  
Workshops and Warehouses . . . FORE STREET.

This 1905 advertisement shows the wide range of services on offer, including the sale of prestigious Napier cars, and petrol (in 2 gallon cans).

Later came the plain white globe with light bulb fitting. Later still came other petrol pumps; one I remember was a Garvie hand operated, to deliver 4 gallons. Eventually the four pumps were painted in the Shell colours and were of different grades of petrol and prices. The motoring public were being treated as customers should be. Garrards were growing every year and became the local Morris agents, and at one March quarter there were 14 new cars to be delivered, and I think the year was 1927. I am sorry if I have used too much of my own efforts to write this true story, but felt I could not obtain a picture without, and therefore gain some knowledge back at 1921 to pass on to you.



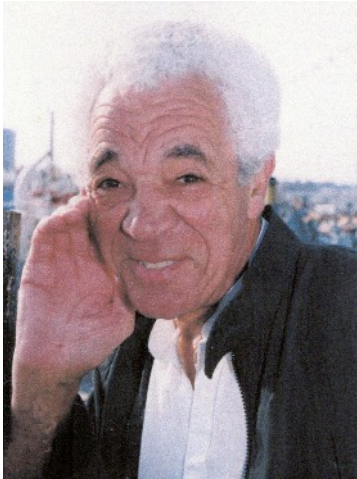


Charles Garrard purchased these premises in Fore Street in the early 1920s. They originally belonged to George Brooke Keer, whose malting and brewing business went spectacularly bankrupt in 1832, causing much disruption in the town. This photo is from around 1979 with Pat Bridges and daughter Susannah. The building was redeveloped in the early 1980s as Garrards Court.



Charles Garrard was Framlingham's first Ford agent, but in 1913 AG Potter obtained a sub-dealership under him, to sell three cars a year within a five mile radius of the station. This photo is of AG with the Model Ts outside his cycle works on the corner of Brook Lane.

SWINFORD JACKSON ROGERS 1919-2015  
EARL SOHAM BUILDER  
by Jo Rothery, Earl Soham



Swin died peacefully in Ipswich Hospital on 10th February 2015 at the age of 95. He dreaded going into a retirement home and was able to live independently right until the end. Swin was an Earl Soham man through and through. However, he was born in Cretingham and at just two hours old was taken by his grandmother to live at The Victoria, in Earl Soham. The family later moved to one of three dwellings in what is now Causeway Cottage. He attended Earl Soham School until he was fourteen, and on leaving was apprenticed to Frank Baldry, builder, undertaker and licensee of The Falcon Hotel. During that time he was involved in the building of the village hall, the commemorative seat that was once found near the village green and the construction of the church pews. He also took on various voluntary jobs around the village particularly the church gutters. His universal nickname was "Darkie" and there are some around who still refer to him by that name. Needless to say, he had to put up with a great deal of ribbing. As a young man he was passionate about his sport, playing darts, quoits and football for the village.

Swin's attempt to join the Suffolk Regiment was initially thwarted, and so he joined the TA, but with the outbreak of the Second World War was called up into the 4th Suffolks. His company commander was the late Geoffrey Clarke.<sup>1</sup> In October 1941 the regiment left Liverpool and sailed via Newfoundland, Cape Town and Bombay arriving in Singapore 29th January 1942. About a fortnight later, on 15th February, Singapore fell to the Japanese, and Swin, with others of his regiment, was captured and sent eventually to work on the Thailand-Burma railway. He was to spend the next three and a half years in a prisoner of war camp.



Geoffrey Clarke considered Swin a man who could be relied on to get things done, often using his fists. Whilst in the camp Swin tried to keep a low profile and took over the job of looking after the elephants, even sleeping with them. He was freed from the POW camp on 15th August 1945 and on demob rejoined Frank Baldry.

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Clarke Grain, Framlingham



A short time later, at a football match, he met Joyce Abraham, a land girl working at Windwhistle. They married in 1950, firstly moving in with Granny Rogers on the Causeway, before taking on The Victoria. Joyce ran the pub whilst Swin started his own building business. In 1964 Swin, Joyce, Daemon, Swinford John and Jayne moved to Little Green, renting Rose Cottage before buying The Cottage and then Swynford Cottage. He worked well beyond the normal retirement age, eventually moving to his last home at The Limes, College Road, Framlingham. Determined to keep active he joined the Framlingham Horticultural Society and the Local History Society and he particularly enjoyed his Sunday mornings at the Lanman Museum, a job he did until he was 90. He never gave up his contact with Earl Soham, frequently attending functions in the village and was still a member of Earl Soham Carpet Bowls Club when he died. The funeral service held at St. Mary's on 3rd March was packed to capacity. A fitting tribute to an Earl Soham Man.



90th Birthday Party at Earl Soham Village Hall



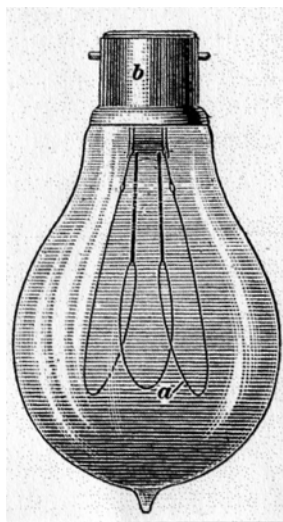
## THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTRICITY IN SUFFOLK

### THE SUFFOLK ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY

by John F Bridges

Part 1 of 2

Are you reading this with the electric light on? If so, have you ever spared a thought to how we came by this amazing flexible source of energy? The routine of daily life since time immemorial had been very much determined by the available daylight, for outside work and also within the home. Rush lights followed by candles and then oil lamps were early forms of lighting, which then gave way to gas light if you were fortunate enough to live in a town. The gas industry was very well established long before any signs of a new, cleaner form of light appeared. This article is primarily concerned with the **Suffolk Electricity Supply Company** and its subsequent development up to Vesting Day in 1948 when all companies and municipal undertakings were nationalised and consolidated in fourteen 'Area Boards', with Suffolk being within the Eastern Electricity Board.



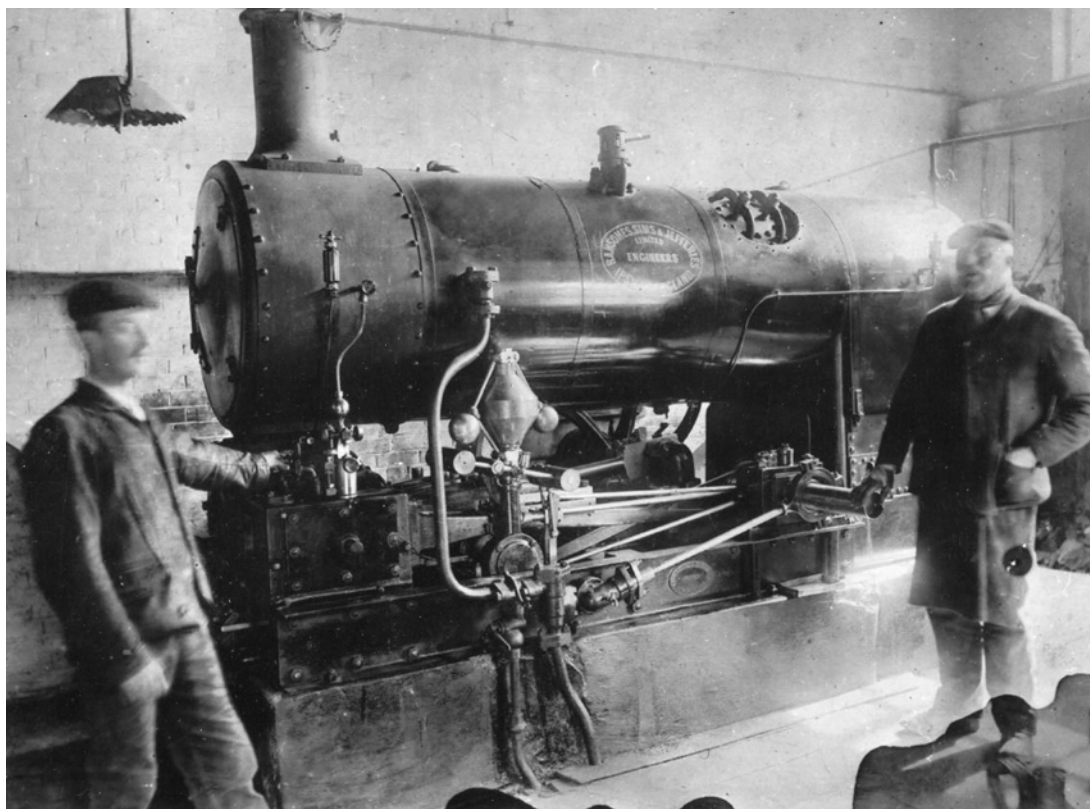
Early carbon filament lamp, c.1890 ICS reference library, c.1907

It was going to be an uphill struggle to introduce the 'new fangled' electricity as the earliest incarnation was very different to our present arrangements. The people of Framlingham were treated to an exhibition of electric light as early as 1879<sup>1</sup>. It was reported as follows:

The light was produced by a powerful battery. The illuminating power of the light was not seen to advantage as it was not sufficiently elevated, and it was all very intermittent in its character. However, the exhibition gave the visitor an opportunity of judging between the relative merits of gas and the electric light. The latter was very brilliant, but it produced a ghastly hue over the countenance and the shadows cast by objects were very dark. Several electrical experiments should have been given but an accident to the apparatus prevented this portion of the exhibition.

<sup>1</sup> Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, (SROI), *Framlingham Weekly News*, (FWN), 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1879

This was hardly a glowing endorsement. These early systems used arc lights, whereby light is generated when two carbon electrodes connected to a battery are placed close to each other, creating an electric discharge. The light was very powerful, but only really suitable for external lighting. The development of the incandescent light bulb by Swan and others would pave the way for indoor lighting, but not until they could be mass produced to a much lower price. In 1881, 'glow lamps' as they were commonly called, had platinum internal connections and carbon filaments, and cost 28/- (£1.40) each, which is in excess of £100 today. It would be another forty two years before the residents of Framlingham bought into the wonders of electric light.



This Ransomes Sims and Jefferies steam engine drove the dynamo at Easton Park, c.1910 Peter Farley

The use of gas for lighting was well established, but not much favoured by the aristocracy for their mansions. The 12<sup>th</sup> Duke of Hamilton (1845-1895), did have his own gas works on the Easton estate near Wickham Market, but also invested in a steam engine and generator to provide lighting for his Mansion<sup>1</sup>. He was a man not to be deterred by the cost of light bulbs. This was a long time before the advent of the National Grid and alternating current (AC). The near future saw the establishment of generating stations in some of the smaller towns, which provided direct current (DC) from dynamos, which might be driven by steam engines, and gas or petrol powered internal combustion engines. In much larger towns such as Ipswich, the Borough Council appointed its own Electric Lighting Committee in 1894<sup>2</sup>, and received Parliamentary Approval to proceed in 1897. Bury St Edmunds received a new Order in 1897 as the original one had lapsed, and a street lighting scheme was not commissioned until 1901<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Farley, *The Hamiltons of Easton*

<sup>2</sup> SROI, IK400, Electricity Undertakings

<sup>3</sup> Bury St Edmunds Power Station and the story of electricity.

[www.stedmundsburychronicle.co.uk](http://www.stedmundsburychronicle.co.uk)

It is in Stowmarket that we come across a young man, Herbert Napier Prentice, but always called Napier, who had a passion for electrical exploration, and would pioneer these developments through the towns of Suffolk. The Prentice family were prominent in the life of Stowmarket from the late 1700s. Thomas formed Prentice and Co. who were coal and corn merchants, ran the gas works, and dealt in chemical manures. A separate firm of Prentice Brothers developed the manure side, and would eventually be taken over by Fisons, a family they were related to by marriage. Thomas Lungley Prentice (son of above Thomas) was involved in setting up The Patent Gun-Cotton Factory in 1863<sup>1</sup>, and following the development of a new process, the name was changed to the Patent Safety Gun Cotton Co. Ltd. This was an important but ultimately disastrous business for the town, following the massive explosion on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1871, when 24 people were killed<sup>2</sup>, including members of the family following a secondary explosion. Napier Prentice (1866 to 1931), was five years old at the time, and living at Violet Hill in Stowmarket. He recalled this period in later life<sup>3</sup>.

Suddenly it seemed to me that the curtains guarding the bay window drew together and parted with a blinding suddenness and explosion.....my second oldest brother (William).....ran and jumped up by the coachman and went galloping down the front drive. He and my uncle Edward were killed by (a further) explosion.

The company was rebuilt, but wisely dropped the 'Safety' element in the title. Napier Prentice would become best known for his exploits in the development of electricity in Suffolk, with the formation of the Suffolk Electricity Supply Company (SESC), and a separate company that would manufacture electrical equipment such as dynamos and motors. We are fortunate that he recorded his working life in 'Dawn of the Electrical Age'<sup>4</sup>, from which we can establish the path of his development. At an early age, with his brother, they were using jam jars filled with acid and water, along with coils of wire and pieces of zinc and copper to produce sparks. This was later followed by making an armature, telegraphs and telephone receivers. When he reached the age of sixteen, in 1882, he wanted to leave school and work in the field of electricity. This was also the same year that the 'Electricity Lighting Bill' was introduced, which turned out to have some untoward implications for any fledgling electricity supply company.

There was an obvious need to dig up roads, particularly in urban areas, in order to bury cables, and also to erect poles in the street, for which petitions to Parliament had to be made. There was much work in their preparation, which led to long backlogs. The new Bill was meant to overcome these problems, but had the opposite effect. It allowed local authorities to set up electricity companies, which could in turn dissuade private companies, as they might find it difficult to obtain funding. If the authority did not wish to do so, they could license local companies, but had the option to buy all their equipment at scrap value after twenty one years. Such matters were potentially detrimental to private companies seeking investment, and not good news for the young Napier. He took advice which suggested that the importance of the matter would lead to a repeal or alteration. There were various amendments made to the Act in 1888, including an extension of the period to forty two years.

<sup>1</sup> Steve Williams, *Do You Wonder, Where you Wander, in Stowmarket*, 2015

<sup>2</sup> Robert Malster, *Stowmarket*, The History Press, 1995, p.17

<sup>3</sup> SROI, HD1848/4, Napier Prentice, *Dawn of The Electrical Age*. This document consists of 129 un-numbered pages, with pencil notes written in 1931, the year he died. The first 18 pages have been typed out separately

<sup>4</sup> Ibid



Herbert Napier Prentice, 1866 to 1931  
Suffolk Record Office, *East Anglia in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*,  
W.T.Pike (editor), 1912

Prentice served his indentures with the Broad Weir Engine Works in Bristol, which included experiments on two stroke engines, telephones and making dynamos. He then worked for the company Pantin in Paris making patterns for electric light engines for the new Paris Opera House, but there was not sufficient electrical work for him, and he left after nine months, eventually returning to England in late 1886.

He then worked with his eldest brother Manning to gain general experience at the Chemical works in Stowmarket, before joining the firm of Paris and Scott in Norwich. This company was very much involved with electrical equipment, particularly in the development of dynamos. They also established the first electricity supply for Norwich in 1888, and Prentice gained important experience here. However, he was not happy with his progress in the company, and returned again to Stowmarket to help his brother provide electricity to the Chemical Works. By 1889, he had started making electrical equipment<sup>1</sup>. The breakdown of a steam engine at the Gun-Cotton Works was soon overcome by installing two of his dynamos, which were floated down the river on a barge to the works. This in turn led to the electrification of the 'Explosives Works'.

There was a farmers' ball at the Stowmarket Institute Hall (tastefully decorated by Mr J Bridges!), which was illuminated by electricity, set up by Prentice who borrowed the dynamo from the chemical works, and persuaded local firm Woods and Co to lend a portable steam engine to drive it<sup>2</sup>. Footman Pretty and Nicholson in Ipswich were making extensive alterations to their premises in 1890, and employed Prentice to provide new electrical plant for illuminating the store with incandescent lamps<sup>3</sup>. He was referred to as '**Napier Prentice and Co**', his first real business venture.

Other Suffolk companies benefited from his expertise including, E. R. & F. Turner in Ipswich, and Whitmore and Binyon of Wickham Market. These firms were manufacturing the latest roller mill equipment, which would make the traditional stone milling process for flour uncompetitive. Napier was a man to promote his products, which were put on show at various exhibitions. The firm of Easton and Anderson were impressed, and visited his Stowmarket premises where they were less impressed by the fairly basic facilities. The outcome was that they offered to buy his stock, patterns, and drawings etc., and start up an electrical department at their Erith works in early 1891. At the Crystal Palace exhibition

<sup>1</sup> SROI, *E. Anglia in the Twentieth Century, Contemporary Biographies*, W.T. Pike (editor) 1912

<sup>2</sup> *Bury & Norwich Post*, (B&NP), 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1890, 19<sup>th</sup> century British Newspapers: Gale Databases

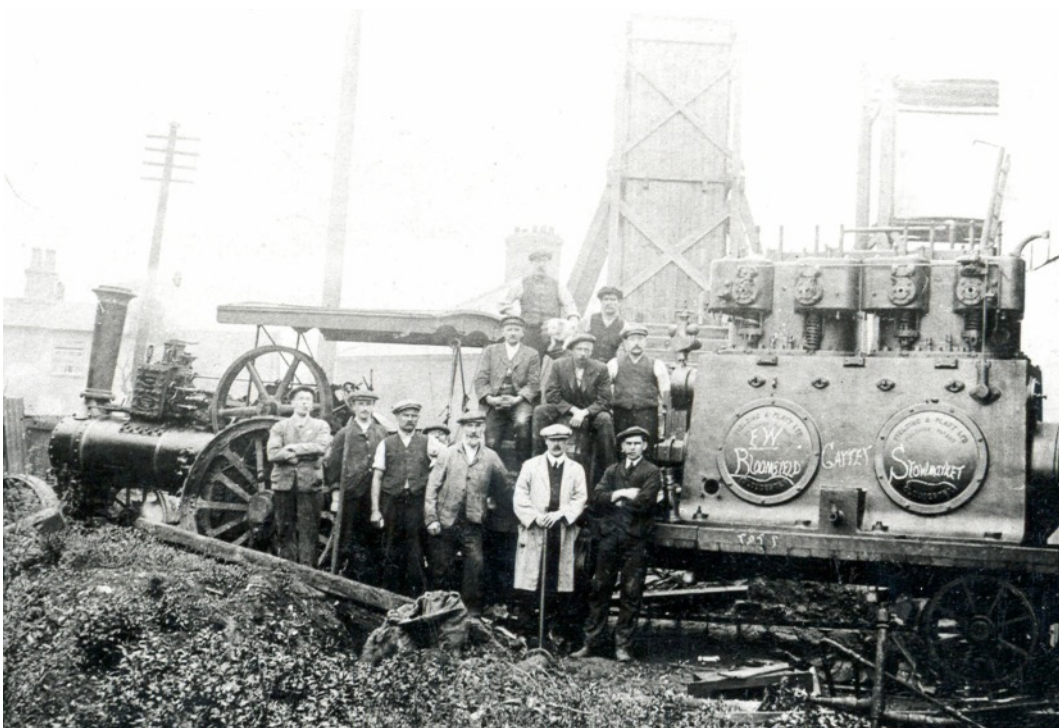
<sup>3</sup> *Ipswich Journal* (IJ), 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1890, 19<sup>th</sup> century British Newspapers: Gale Databases



later that year, they had a stand with one of their engines driving one of his dynamos. By his good fortune, the electricity supply to the Palace was not ready in time, and they were able to supply and sell electricity to other exhibitors, gaining a Gold Medal in the process. Further contracts followed from their exposure at the exhibition.

For reasons which were not explained and Prentice never understood, he was dismissed from the company in 1893. They now owned his patterns and drawings etc. and he was lucky to receive £1500 by way of compensation. He seemed to be more put out by the amount of time he had effectively wasted, as he would now have to start again. A visit to the United States provided him with knowledge on the broader aspects of electricity generation, particularly water powered. Returning to Stowmarket, he resumed production of dynamos.

Some small private electricity supply installations were carried out in Colchester, which were followed by an enquiry for a much larger installation. The equipment was manufactured, but the scheme foundered due to issues associated with the 1882 Act. Colchester Council had decided to undertake the supply under their Provisional Order, and his clients not wanting to be in competition with the Council, withdrew from the contract, leaving him with the equipment, but not for long.



Fielding and Platt generator engine, Milton Road, Stowmarket, 1914 Steve Williams

At a meeting in 1894<sup>1</sup>, he outlined to a number of interested Stowmarket people, the options available for providing a lighting scheme for the town. This was later followed by a demonstration of four arc lights which had been set up by Prentice in the Market Place. In 1896, he again provided illumination to the Institute Hall, under the name **Peddar and Prentice**<sup>2</sup>. In the same year a request was received to set up a supply for the town which found a ready home for the dynamo and switch gear from the Colchester scheme. A local auctioneer was prepared to fund the project, and a partnership was formed.

<sup>1</sup> B&NP, op. cit., 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1894

<sup>2</sup> IJ, op. cit., 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1896

Prentice's two business interests, i.e. as a manufacturer of equipment, and a supplier of electricity had begun to impact on each other, so he founded the **East Anglian Engineering Company** (EAEC) in 1898<sup>1</sup>. Land was purchased in Stowmarket and a combined 'electric machine and cycle works' built. The reputation of the electric motors grew, and they were called Bull motors. They found a ready market for small country house installations and also for powering the blowers on church organs where their 'silent running' qualities were paramount.

The increase in his electricity supply work also saw the formation of **The Suffolk Electricity Supply Company** (SESC) in 1898<sup>2</sup>. The company records list the shareholders from that date, with a Mr Turner being the major one. The generating station in Milton Road was next to the Old Vicarage where he lived, and he was therefore able to keep a close eye on everything. Relations between the two companies started to deteriorate before long, as the directors of the manufacturing company strongly felt that Prentice spent far too much time on his electricity supply company (SESC). This ultimately led to him selling his shares in the manufacturing company so that he could be released from it. In his memoir of 1931 he wrote:

I therefore agreed to surrender £2000, nearly all of my shares for cancellation of the agreement with the company. I of course lost all control and the company was liquidated, one man taking the cycle business, one the installation department, and the electrical man took over all the electrical machinery. Afterwards he sold out and it is now part of Agricultural and General Engineers (AGE).

It was in 1919 that several East Anglian companies including Bull Motors and E. R. & F. Turner were formed into the ill-fated Agricultural & General Engineers Ltd. (AGE)<sup>3</sup>. The name of Bull Motors seems to have been adopted from the early days, being defined by the product. That company name however, does not appear in local trade directories until 1925<sup>4</sup>, by which time they had moved to Ipswich and were part of E. R. & F. Turner Ltd. The AGE group of 14 companies went into liquidation in 1932.

The exact course of these events, and the personnel involved is not clear. Prentice did not refer to the name Bull Motors or the names of specific people associated with it in his memoir. The registration of Bull Motors Ltd. in 1902<sup>5</sup> could be seen as a new start for that business. Napier Prentice was no longer involved, and free to concentrate his efforts on the work that most interested him, the electricity supply business and SESC.

The motive power to drive the dynamo for the Stowmarket installation was a Stockport gas engine. He had tried to promote this method of powering dynamos back in 1894, and had contacted gas companies in many towns to see if they were interested. They were not, presumably as the electricity generated by the gas system would be in direct competition with gas, the main form of lighting. He was not daunted by that and was soon in discussion with the Stowmarket gas works manager who was quick to point out that he and his partner would inevitably lose their money. However, he persevered, and eventually was able to gain a contract for the supply of gas to the generating station. His

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<sup>1</sup> Ipswich Engineering Society, *The History of Engineering in Ipswich*, 1949, p72

<sup>2</sup> SROI, IK 400/1/1/1. SESC ledger, 1899-1908

<sup>3</sup> Mike J. Burrows, *Agricultural & General Engineers Ltd.*, 2003. [www.angelfire.com](http://www.angelfire.com)

<sup>4</sup> SROI, *Kellys Ipswich Directory*, 1925

<sup>5</sup> Mike Burrows, op. cit.

bank was not happy and tried to dissuade them. The bank manager was also chairman of the gas company.

The matter of gas supply would still be a problem in later years, when he was mainly using suction gas engines. This type of engine had its own small gas generating plant next to the engine. Air and water vapour were drawn through the incandescent fuel in the burner by the suction stroke of the engine. There was no need for an external gas supply or storage, as the engine only produced the amount of gas needed to make it operate, hence the name 'producer gas'. This meant he only needed to maintain a minimum supply of gas from the town works for limited operation or emergencies. They were not happy with that and told him he needed to double his supply requirement otherwise the gas would be cut off. Prentice reacted by fitting large carburettors to the engines at Stowmarket and Diss, so that in the case of emergency, he could run the engines on petrol. The gas company did cut his supply off.

The Stowmarket venture was well received. He encouraged shop keepers to keep their lights on into the evening to promote their trade, even sending a man round (free of charge) to turn them off. The generating station in Milton Road had three suction gas engines by 1907<sup>1</sup>, two rated at 25hp, and one at 85hp. There was a change in the supply voltage in 1911, when it was increased from 110 to 220 volts.

The next contract was in Norfolk, where a supply was to be provided for Diss. He rationalised this location as being suitable as it was 'near the border of Suffolk'. Electricity was available for Christmas in 1898, and people coming into the town from country areas thought there was a fire, as the arc-lamps outside the shops produced such a bright light

In 1899, Prentice was approached by Mr Wright, the architect for the new Pavilion for the Ranelagh Gardens in Felixstowe. A syndicate of leading Felixstowe men agreed that the building should be provided with electric light, along with the gardens. The latest metal filament bulbs were used<sup>2</sup>. They also asked for extensions to provide light to their private houses, which in turn led to a request for a public supply to the town. Negotiations were made with the gas company to provide a supply to the engine that drove the dynamo, and the system was completed in July 1899, just in time for the opening of the Gardens. The installation was a success and before long the equipment was duplicated, and a larger power house built, the original corrugated iron one being transferred to Stowmarket. In 1903, the assets of the company were transferred to Walton and Felixstowe U.D.C., but they continued to operate the undertaking under a management agreement. The SESC installations were confined to Stowmarket, Diss and Felixstowe until after the First World War. Employees, who had served, whether at home or in the Forces, during the war, would receive workman shares for each year of service. In 1919 the company was reorganised with the new trading name **East Anglian Electricity Ltd.** (EAEL).

Prentice was a great promoter of electricity, and never missed an opportunity to sell more of it. In Felixstowe, the shops closed around 7pm each night, and he came up with a scheme to extend their lighting times in order to gain sales. If the shop owner was prepared to pay for additional current until 8 pm, then, free of charge, he would provide it to 11 pm, thereby giving them three hours of free electricity. Many took up this offer, but Cowells, whose shop was in a prominent position was not convinced. He knew members of the family in Ipswich and made them an alternative favourable offer, which was accepted.

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<sup>1</sup> SROI, 621.3, The Finborough Review, (TFR), Vol. 1X, No 3, 1946

<sup>2</sup> The Engineer, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1948, p. 423

It is worth outlining how one small town gained a supply of electricity. Framlingham as we recall was not over impressed by the early demonstration, but by 1921 was minded to move forward. Napier Prentice was asked to start a supply, in particular for the College, as well as the town. He was not keen to proceed, pointing out that he had already been approached by Leiston U.D.C., and Saxmundham was also likely to benefit, and he could extend the mains to Framlingham. He referred to a potential cost of 1/6 (7.5 pence) per unit of electricity supplied, which would probably reduce to 1/- (5 pence) if they waited. The deputation from the town said they would rather pay 1/4 (nearly 7 pence) per unit and start now.



The Framlingham generating plant was in the old tan-yard buildings, and subject to flooding, 1938 *Author's collection*

EAEL as we shall see later was short of capital and stated that they would require the sum of £4,000 guaranteed before they would consider a supply for the town<sup>1</sup>. Following a further meeting, a telegram was received from A. T. Wicks stating 'Amount guaranteed. Proceed forthwith, letter following'. Napier Prentice proposed that it should go ahead, which was seconded, and the directors were instructed to proceed. An account was to be opened with Lloyds Bank on the Market Hill. Soon after, he bought premises known as 'Fellmongers Yard', which were deemed suitable for the power house as there was a ready supply of water from the adjacent river for cooling the engines. A mortgage was arranged with the 'Framlingham Castle Court of the Ancient Order of Foresters' for £450. The building was on the site of the present Tanyard Court in Bridge Street. The smell that used to come from the old tannery would soon be replaced by the noise of the engines.

The initial uptake of the £1 shares was good, with many prominent local people signing up for them. The maximum amount was £400 by Miss D Jeaffreson, with others contributing between £5 and £250. By October 1921, Napier Prentice reported that the Electricity Commissioners had given consent under the Electricity Supply Act 1919, but he was having problems getting hold of an engine. He was after a Dorman engine from a company in

<sup>1</sup> SROI, IK400/2/1/1, EAESCL Directors' Minute Book 1921 -1925, 20<sup>th</sup> July, 1921



London, which had since gone into receivership. This delayed everything, and he had to hire a tractor to provide a temporary source of power for the dynamo before that engine could be delivered. The supply was a 400/200 volt DC 3 wire system, with Framlingham College the first customer. When the Dorman engine broke down, a tractor would again be used to provide temporary power. The original engine was not reliable, as by 1923 there is reference to 'the matter regarding the supply of a new engine'. This was a Campbell 60 HP marine engine driving a 30 kilowatt generator with balancer gear and battery, all purchased for £400. When further funds became available following the company restructuring, new plant was installed, and by 1929 automatic control handled the night load, thereby dispensing with the battery. A second set was later installed, followed by a third in 1932.

Mr A. Sharratt became district manager for Framlingham and Beccles at a salary of £225 p.a. The cost for providing electricity for lighting was 1/3 (approx. 6 pence) per unit. The price for power would be decided on the individual merits. In 1926 Cyril Hopes became Resident Engineer<sup>1</sup> at Framlingham, when 21,600 units of electricity were sold that year, producing an income of £1,067. He recalled some incidents that were amusing in hindsight, but not at the time. The lights had dimmed and gone out, and he feared the big end on an engine had failed. It was Gala weekend, with fairground rides on the adjacent Sale Yard site. The over enthusiastic occupants of one of the swing-boats had managed to get it tangled up in the overhead cables causing much flashing and short circuiting! For a DC system, un-insulated copper cables were used. The site was also prone to flooding, when the rising waters would eventually cause the sets to fail.



Framlingham personnel, with Cyril Hopes (centre front), and Stephen Sullivan (far right, second row), 1949 Author's collection

<sup>1</sup> Eastern Electricity Magazine, (EEM) June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1955, p.10. Via Steve Williams

Stephen Sullivan joined the Framlingham branch in 1931<sup>1</sup>, and was initially involved with maintaining the engines. He recalled that the semi-diesel engines had to be started by heating the cylinder head with a blow torch. Later engines were started by a compressed air supply, but the air bottles had to be charged before the engine was closed down. This was a big improvement provided you had remembered to do that.

*I would like to thank Steve and Sue Williams for their generous assistance based on their extensive knowledge of Stowmarket history and the Prentice family.*

*In Part 2 we shall see how EAEL developed from the 1920s through to nationalisation in 1948.*



Framlingham was the last town in Suffolk to be connected to the National Grid, in 1938. The generator buildings then became the Service Centre, and the pole supporting this sign is still there. Moore Garrard and Son ran the Sale Yard which was on the present Elms site, but that closed in 1937. Their advertising board was still in place on the end of the barn, which was demolished around 1949 to make way for Potters new Ford premises.

Photo via Ian McLeish

<sup>1</sup> Notes prepared by Stephen Sullivan, 1994, author's collection



# The Origins of New Road in Framlingham

By John F Bridges

Most roads that have been in existence for some time can be traced back to the rough tracks and pathways which had been in use for centuries. At a time when most people needed to walk to their destination, they were going to use the most direct route. So why would you suddenly get a 'new road'? This got me thinking, and the obvious place to start looking was at the Ordnance Survey maps.

The first such maps for our area date from 1883, and the location of the present New Road is shown on it. Going further back to the Tithe Map of 1842, the road did not exist then. The next thought was who would need to use this new road? The obvious property was Little Lodge Farm, which begged the question as to how the occupants, James Abbott and his family, had previously reached the town.

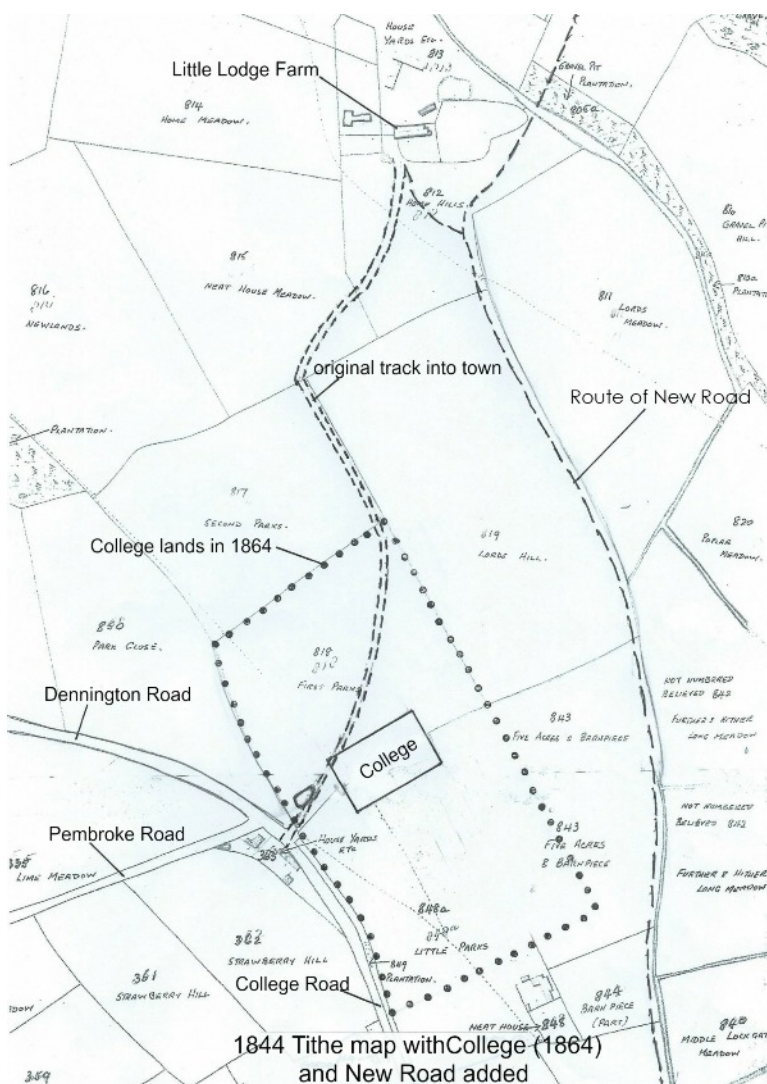
Back to the Tithe map, it soon became apparent that the original Little Lodge access to town was along a track that came out onto the Dennington Road, almost opposite Pembroke Road. It all then fell into place. The building of the Albert Memorial College in 1864, along with the cricket ground would cover the path of the long established track into town.

James Abbott did not own his property, but was a tenant of the Sir Robert Hitcham Trustees, who were Pembroke College, Cambridge. They also granted the land to the Founders of the Albert Memorial College, so he was hardly in a position to complain about his loss of access.

A 'New Road' would therefore be needed for the occupants of Little Lodge Farm to get into the town. Countess Wells and Great Lodge Farms were not affected in the same way, as they had more direct access onto Dennington Road and Badingham Road respectively.

This drawing is based on the 1842 Tithe map, with the later approximate outline of the main College building added, along with the extent of the land granted by Pembroke College in 1864.

Before you ask, I have no idea how 'New Street' got its name. I suspect those origins go much further back in time, and I will leave someone else to investigate that one.



## The Mansion House

How I wish that I  
could find a house with history.  
New places did I try  
when looming high, a mystery,  
Framlingham, and on  
the hill I spied my dream.  
'For Sale' stuck upon  
the wall, flashing like a beam.  
Up Church Lane I strode  
along a dingy alley,  
nothing it foretold  
of views across the valley  
Upstairs in gloom,  
the 'Old Bank' door stood solid  
push, the sitting room  
revealed ,no, nothing horrid.  
Sunshine burst throughout,  
Sash windows and high ceiling,  
without a single doubt  
this was a house with feeling  
enveloping the soul.  
The sprites of long years past  
play a goodly role.  
A heavenly peace at last!

(Anon)



## The Guildhall

The Guildhall is one of the oldest houses in Framlingham. Although the front is 18th century Queen Anne style inside there is 16th and 17th century timberwork. It was built on the site of a building known to exist in 1363. The raised pavement area in front of the building marks the boundary of the Mansion House that formerly stood on the site.