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St BOTOLPH'S, SEVENOAKS, 1646-2002**

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A LONDON CITY CHURCH ESTATE IN KENT: ST BOTOLPH'S, SEVENOAKS, 1646-2002

DAVID KILLINGRAY

St Botolph's Road in Sevenoaks is a distinguished looking avenue. It is broad, lined with mature horse chestnut trees, and sweeps in a steady gradient from the railway station at Tub's Hill north-east to the war memorial on The Vine. The original houses, dating from the early decades of the twentieth century, are large and detached. The road takes its name from St Botolph without Bishopsgate, a City of London church that owned and managed the area for a period of over 250 years. This article is concerned with three themes: the management of a rural estate by a City church; the attempts to sell that estate as leasehold or freehold building lots following the arrival of the railway in the 1860s; and the subsequent sale and development of the estate as a new area of housing in Sevenoaks.

In 1600 the area through which now runs St Botolph's Road was part of a wedge-shaped estate owned by Sir Ralph Bosville of Bradbourne. The estate extended from the centre of Sevenoaks northwards down the sandstone slope to Hitchen Hatch Lane. On the eastern side it was bounded by the Vine and the road to Dartford, and on the west by the London road. A rental of that year records that there was a farmhouse on the Vine, probably what was until recently *Bligh's Hotel*, which, along with 50 acres, was leased to Edward Blackman for 21 years. The rent, according to Gordon Ward, was in three parts: the sum of ten pounds, four capons, and, intriguingly, 'Trymning of the head and beard of Raphe Bosvile Knight as often as needs shall require'.¹ The area, of relatively poor sandy soil, contained some woodland; the lower part was for the most part uncultivated. Much of the land was probably rough grazing with hops and hay as the main crops on fields that is now St Botolph's Road, The Drive, and Pembroke Road. Certain old field names give a clue to the nature of the soil – Chalky Field and Sandy Field. Both Kentish rag and sand were quarried at various times on the estate.

An estate to clothe the London poor

In October 1654, during the middle of the Commonwealth period, the churchwardens and vestry of St Botolph without Bishopsgate in the City of London, bought for £1,010 'an Estate at Sevenoaks in Kent' consisting of a farm, barn, stables and 74½ acres of land.² The purchase appears to have been made in two stages; first, money was put 'towards purchasing' the estate by Major John Greenhill in 1646,³ and then, eight years later, using gifts from Sir Paul Pindar, the Duke of Devonshire and others, the final sum was paid. Over the years St Botolph had bought, later acquired, or received as bequests other estates of different sizes in various parts of the country: in Northumberland, Yorkshire, Suffolk, Surrey, Norfolk, Middlesex, Essex and elsewhere in London, including substantial interests in Dulwich. Many of these were intended for charitable purposes.

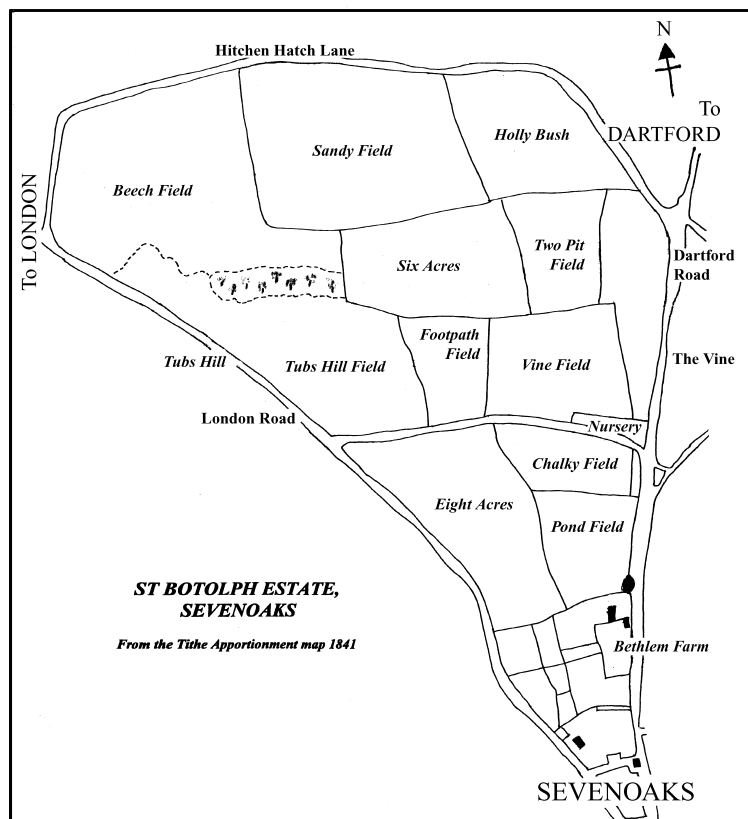
The estate at Sevenoaks was bought from John Turner but he may have been an agent.⁴ By a subsequent deed of October 1654, a charity was created 'for ye Benefit of the poor' with the annual 'rent to cloth people'.⁵ The first lessee, a Mr Chunninge, was soon involved in a dispute with St Botolph so that the vestry set out to 'Sue and Recover ... for the abuse and breach of Contract'.⁶ Clearly the vestry was successful because in the following year the estate was let to Richard Cacket (or Cakott), a cordwainer, for 21 years at an annual rent of £63. He died in June 1672 leaving the estate to his son also called Richard. His will and the accompanying inventory provides some indication of the economy of the estate with 'the stoke of hoppoles & Corne & hay or grase', wagons, 'plowe', 'harrowe and Roale', carts, horses, a flock of nearly 80 sheep and lambs, and also a 'bruhouse'.⁷ The estate remained with the Cacket family until 1718 when, on the death of Robert, perhaps without a son, his widow relinquished the lease that was taken up by John Whiting.⁸ St Botolph vestry gave Whiting an allowance towards repair of buildings on the estate and also agreed to pay charges for ploughing and sowing and for hop poles. He also was compensated to the princely sum of 7*s.* 9*d.* per annum 'for ye 50½ Rods of Land unto ye Road by a Commission of ye Turnpike Anno 1751 during his lease'⁹ – being the newly created turnpike road down Tubs Hill from Sevenoaks northwards to Farnborough.

By 1806 the St Botolph estate was leased to Thomas Wiggins for 21 years at a 'clear annual rent of two-hundred and forty-five pounds'.¹⁰ By then, for some reason, the estate, or at least the southern part around *Bligh's Hotel*, was known locally as Bedlam Farm. This may have been a corruption of 'Bethlehem Farm' (biblical names for farms were not uncommon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries).

It gave rise to the false belief that the Bethlem Royal Hospital had rented the property in the middle of the eighteenth century for use as a country home for patients.¹¹ Until recently a plaque on *Bligh's Hotel* stated this. Some three acres of land near to Bethlem Farm were added to the Estate in the 1820s. By the end of that decade the 81 acre farm was held by Thomas Blackman on a 14 year lease, dated Michaelmas 1828, at an annual rent of £255, which the trustees thought a 'good rent'.¹²

In May 1830 St Botolph vestry paid £23 5s. for a survey of the Sevenoaks estate preparatory to letting it.¹³ Eleven years later the tithe award survey and apportionment provided a more detailed account of the estate, indicating to whom it was leased, field names and acreage, and what the land was currently used for. Thomas Blackman's lease apparently yielded St Botolph vestry a net income for its charity of £132 per annum.¹⁴ In 1841, when the tithe survey was carried out, just under 40 acres of the estate was given over to arable, principally the fields through which St Botolph's Road now runs. A small piece of land of less than an acre, on the north corner of what is now The Drive, was leased as a nursery, and there was a small garden separately leased adjoining Bedlam Farm.¹⁵ A footpath crossed the estate approximately following the course of St Botolph's Road from the Vine and then turning sharply south-west towards Tubs Hill, the line of the present footpath that crosses The Drive.

Samuel Bligh senior secured the lease on the St Botolph estate in 1852. He appears to have been a forceful man who was anxious to capitalize on his investment; within a few years he was listed in a County directory as a hop planter and coal merchant. The front rooms of the farm house, an old structure in need of considerable repair, were turned into lodgings, and a brewery was developed on adjoining land immediately to the south of the house (Brewery Lane marks the entrance). By the end of the century the farmhouse in Sevenoaks High Street was known locally as *Bligh's Hotel* and the fields to the rear as Bligh's Meadow. In 1862 the first railway had come to Sevenoaks, a line laid up the Darent Valley by the London Chatham and Dover Railway Company, to a terminus at the Bat and Ball. This was followed closely by a second and rival line, completed in 1868 by the South Eastern Railway Company, which provided a more direct line to London through the North Downs, with a new station being opened at the foot of Tubs Hill on land adjoining the St Botolph estate. The railway resulted in an increase in Sevenoaks' population although not as rapidly as some landowners and building speculators had hoped. In 1861 there were 4,700 people living in the parish of Sevenoaks; by 1871 the population had increased to nearly 6,000, and by the end of the century it had increased to 9,700.



Map 1 St Botolph Estate Sevenoak. From the Tithe Apportionment map 1841.

Increasing the yield of a charitable asset?

The members of the St Botolph vestry very reasonably thought that the railway was likely to increase the value of their charitable asset. So also did Samuel Bligh. He had secured from the trustees a 99 year lease on a plot of land opposite Tubs Hill railway station where he had built the Sennock Hotel, the present Farmers public house, opened in 1868.¹⁶ The Trustees were prepared to adjust the terms of Bligh's lease on the Sevenoaks estate so that house building could take place but, with an eye to the development potential of the estate, they were not willing to extend a new lease beyond a period of 21

years. In May 1869 they agreed that Bligh could build a road through part of the estate.¹⁷ These new opportunities and proposals required a survey of the possible proposals, and Edward James Smith, a surveyor, duly produced a report in August 1869. His attention was largely focused on the area that is now St Botolph's Road and The Drive. The estate, he reported, offers fine views 'though not equal to those to the West of Sevenoaks Town. Residences are gradually rising in the adjacent properties and there can be no doubt that this Estate is gradually becoming capable of conversion to building purposes'. Smith argued that 'Sevenoaks itself is little more than an ordinary Village' and that there had been 'no sign of vitality' until the opening of the new railway station. Even then he was cautious in his estimation of the potential for building development on the estate:

The only extensive demand for Building land that can arise must come from the Metropolis and that will take some time to develop itself. There are so many other estates in picturesque and more convenient neighbourhoods that however moderate may be the prices asked a long time may elapse before the Farm will require to be cut up. [He concluded that only when] Residences are erected on the Boundary and on the Road between the Station and the Town [will it be] time enough to make new Roads to bring the interior of the farm into Building ground.¹⁸

Armed with this not very encouraging information the Trustees decided to mark the boundary of the estate with iron markers inscribed 'St Botolphs Bishopgate'. Several people with property adjoining the St Botolph farm applied to lease small portions of the estate; the Trustees agreed to this for a number of peripheral fields close to the Vine and Hitchen Hatch Lane. The increased commercial potential of the estate attracted the interest of the Charity Commissioners.¹⁹ Their view was that the value of the estate had increased since Smith's survey of 1869. In response the Trustees instructed their surveyor, Henry Heath, 'to prepare a Plan of the Estate showing the new Roads as proposed by him and their cost, the manner of laying out the estate for building purposes and the estimated rental of each Plot'. The plan was submitted to the Trustees for their meeting in mid August 1873, and they resolved that it should be passed to the Charity Commissioners for their assent.²⁰

Heath's plan, entitled 'Bishopsgate Parish. Plan of the Sevenoaks Estate proposed to be laid out for building purposes', showed a main road cutting through the estate from a 'Crescent Road' on the Vine to the foot of Tubs Hill, the course of the present St Botolph's Road.²¹ The road was designed as 60ft wide with an impressive graded incline; the estimated cost was £3,795 without curbing. Material for the road came from one of the quarries on the estate.²² This allowed

for fifty building plots, the largest being those numbered 18 to 28 facing onto the new road; there were four plots on the south side and seven on the north side but none were at the higher Vine end of the road. Heath calculated that leasing the 50 building plots for house building would produce an income in excess of £1,100 per annum. To avoid additional costs the Trustees hoped that the local Highways Board would assume responsibility for the maintenance of the new road, but in this they were to be disappointed. The Trustees agreed to proceed with the road, which was sanctioned by the Charity Commissioners in late 1876, and the necessary £5,000 was raised by sale of part of the estate to other trustees. An added cost was the need to put in a 15in. main drain down the road. In November 1876 the Trustees accepted Messrs Botterill's tender of £5,405, and in July 1877 they 'Resolved that the new Road upon the Estate be called "St Botolph's Road"'.²³ The Trustees now sought to promote the sale of leases on the estate by placing advertisements in *The Times* and in *The Builder* and by exhibiting the plans at Sevenoaks railway station.²⁴ During the next two years negotiations took place with the Sevenoaks Local Board, created in 1871, with a view to the local authority assuming responsibility for the road. The discussions were inconclusive; in 1879 St Botolph's Road was closed to the public for the following eight years.

Some unwelcome publicity came in March 1881 when an itinerant labourer named John Constant, from Deptford, was murdered in a drunken brawl at the top of St Botolph's Road. Constant was brutally kicked about the head until unconscious and then pitched over a fence into a hop garden where he died. John Williams, employed building the Westerham Valley railway, was arrested and charged with the murder.²⁵ In the same decade another murder enquiry resulted in the arrest of a servant girl who had abandoned her newly-born illegitimate child in one of the gardens adjoining the alley running out of St Botolph's Road.

An Abortive Scheme

The expected sale of building leases on St Botolph's Road failed to materialise. Building plots were leased in Hitchen Hatch Lane and on the London Road, including one for a row of shops opposite the railway station. Although one offer had been accepted for building leases on two plots on the upper northern side of St Botolph's Road, no building had actually taken place. John Plumbridge, a 'foreign fruit merchant', living in Forest Hill, applied in September 1878 to lease two plots at the top of St Botolph's Road. On a plot overlooking the Vine he built a house named *Belmont* in which he and his family

were living by the Spring of 1881.²⁶ Several of those who had taken out building leases were behind schedule with building work and thus in breach of contract. Samuel Bligh had died and his son was struggling to meet the conditions of the lease, blaming the agricultural depression for the poor state of the market. In addition there was a dispute with the cantankerous Lord Sackville over the enclosure of a strip of land 'lying on the High Road' to which he claimed rights as Lord of the Manor.²⁷

Faced with real difficulties in leasing building plots the Trustees asked the Charity Commissioners in November 1884 if they might sell some land, but this was refused. During these early years the newly built St Botolph's Road had been inadequately gated and was not open as a public right of way. However, it had been illegally used with the result that it was 'seriously cut up and damaged by carts ... full of weeds and in bad condition'. By 1886 the Trustees were burdened with a two-fold problem: an unused road which due to neglect and misuse now needed expensive repairs, and the failure to sell building leases on all but a handful of the plots. A new barrier was erected across the entrance where the road met Tubs Hill to keep out unwanted traffic.

The Trustees decided that they needed local knowledge and expertise to better promote their building schemes, and they turned to Edwyn Cronk, a prominent Sevenoaks auctioneer and valuer. Cronk produced a report in November 1886 on the 'best means of facilitating the letting of the said land on Building Leases'. In this he suggested that the road be opened to traffic in order to get it well known to the public, giving the highest part of the land to building, and blocking up the footpath which ran down the line of the road and then west towards Tubs Hill. There is, he wrote, 'great depression in the building trades' caused by over-building; the specific problem was that the estate was leasehold and not freehold and few speculative builders in the countryside would touch the former. By May 1888 St Botolph's Road was opened to the public (road repairs were £240 and Cronk estimated that annual maintenance would cost c.£130) and negotiations had begun with the Sevenoaks water company to put in a main supply.²⁸

Charitable Reform and the Bishopsgate Foundation

The City of London Parochial Charities Act 1883, although not applying to St Botolph Bishopsgate, nevertheless spurred the parish to draw up a scheme of management for its varied charities. The new scheme, approved in 1891, created the Bishopsgate Foundation subject to an elected board of governors who administered 'the income to

purposes beneficial to the inhabitants of the parish and the public generally'.²⁹ The result was the founding of the Bishopsgate Institute, a free library with other facilities for public meetings, opened in 1894.³⁰ Part of the income from the Sevenoaks Estate, and its subsequent sale, thus went towards the provision of books and cultural amenities for Londoners.³¹

The Foundation continued to lease plots for house building but with some difficulty. As their Sevenoaks agent, Cronk, pointed out in 1893, there were difficulties in letting leasehold land. However, he argued, 'if your land could be sold as freehold instead of let we feel sure it would readily sell in consequence of its proximity to the Railway Station'.³² The road was a 'constant expense' and the Local Board was averse to taking it over because without houses it did not generate any rates. Faced with this dilemma the Governors of the Foundation wrote to the Charity Commissioners in June 1893 asking if they could sell land rather than lease it for building. This was agreed but the Charity Commissioners first required an independent survey to be carried out, which was promptly done by Seymour & Waring of Maidstone. In September of that year the Charity Commissioners authorized the sale of freehold plots on the Sevenoaks Estate, but advised that care should be taken not to put too many on the market at any one time.³³

Cronk was instructed by the Governors of the Foundation to advertise land for sale. One or two plots were leased and various bids made for others but the market was slow. In July 1894 seven Governors visited the Sevenoaks Estate and recommended to their fellows 'that energetic steps be taken to develop (sic) the Estate either by Sale or Building Lease'.³⁴ Illustrated advertisements of the Estate were produced and displayed at 17 railway stations, while notices were publicly posted in Sevenoaks and also published in local newspapers.³⁵ A committee of seven Governors was appointed to consider 'the whole question of the Sevenoaks Estate'. They were confronted with the difficulty of selling building plots, made worse because the new Urban District Council (UDC) refused to link the 12in. main drainage pipe down St Botolph's Road, which was poorly jointed, to their own 9in. system. Proper drainage was vital, especially as lower lying areas of the Estate had been severely flooded during fierce storms in 1892. St Botolph's Road was now open to the public with access controlled by a swing gate erected by the Local Board in 1889. However, the Governors faced with continued costs and limited revenue, decided in December 1894 to close the road. This was done completely two years later when a fence was erected across the road.

This latter decision, along with other problems, now exercised

much of the Governors' time: the extraordinary tithes on the Estate needed to be redeemed; a small piece of land between Dartford Road and St Botolph's Road 'obstructing the exit from the Road' had to be purchased. Much more worrying was the filing of a law suit by some indignant local people who claimed that a 'public highway' had been blocked.³⁶ This unwelcome development came at a time when offers were being made for the Estate and the Governors were negotiating with the UDC for them to take over St Botolph's Road. One offer of £12,000 was from Walter Wright, 'Kent County Builder' of Beckenham, for the 'undeveloped portion of the Sevenoaks Estate', that being the land to the south of St Botolph's Road stretching up to the town. Cronk recommended acceptance, arguing that the Bishopsgate Foundation would thus 'be relieved of all liability in respect of the St Botolph Road and it is to be hoped much of the expense, trouble and delay of the present litigation'.³⁷ Income from sale of the Estate had to be balanced against the costs conditional on the UDC assuming responsibility for St Botolph's Road, estimated to be nearly £2,000 plus an annual maintenance charge of £140. The annual net income from the Estate in 1896 totalled just under £300.

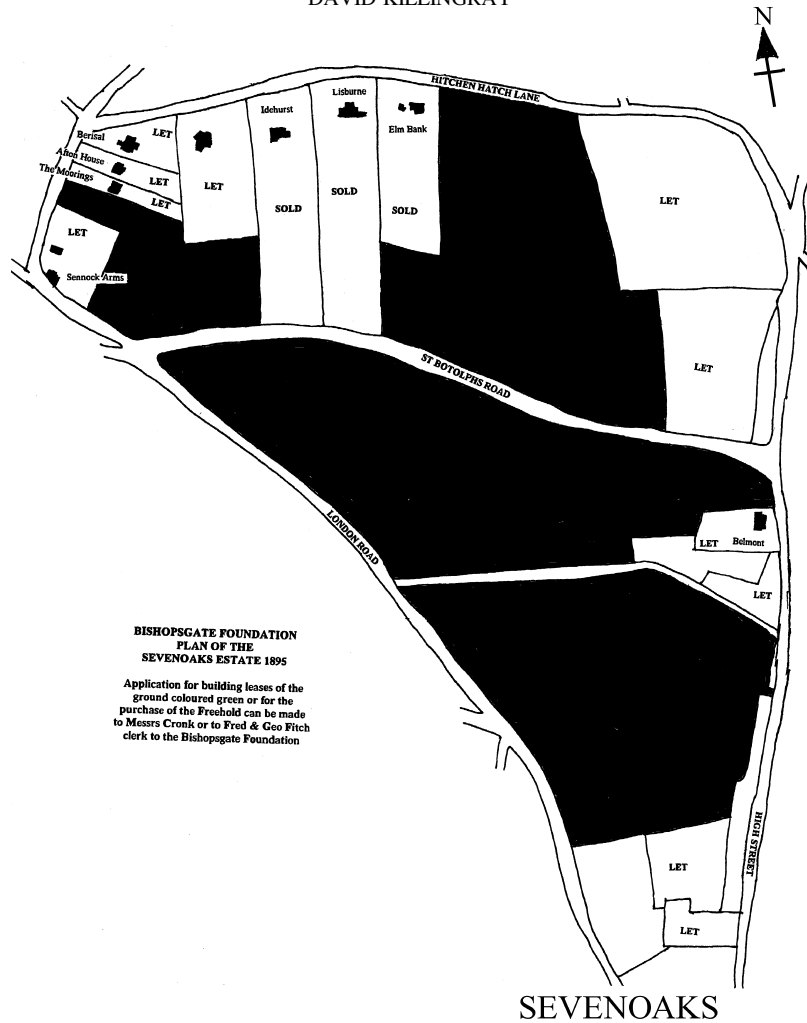
Sell the Estate!

A crunch point had been reached. The Governor's Committee now recommended more decisive action:

The Committee feel that the only mode of substantially increasing the annual income arising from the Estate would be its development as a Building Estate which will involve a large expenditure in making Roads and necessitate constant application to the Charity Commissioners in addition to much care and anxiety.³⁸

In 1896 most of the land on the north side of St Botolph's Road was sold and the trustees had also agreed to the sale of much of the area to the south of the Road for a sum of £14,000. Walter Wright agreed to pay this increased price, but the Charity Commissioners refused to sanction a sale at less than £15,500.³⁹ Wright accepted, although there were objections to the sale from a number of lessees on the Estate. Nevertheless, the sale was concluded by early 1897.⁴⁰ There then followed a series of further sales of part of the land by Wright in May 1897. He sold to Edward Boyle the actual St Botolph's Road, a condition being that he 'should forthwith dedicate the ... Road to the public', the lands to the south of the Road stretching into central Sevenoaks, and one or two other lots for a sum of £10,175. Wright also disposed of various lots of land fronting Hitchin Hatch Lane and on the northern side of St Botolph's Road nearest to the railway

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Map 2 Bishopsgate Foundation plan of the Sevenoaks Estate 1895.

station to Douglas Neame for £6,325. Boyle's purchase appears to have been potentially profitable, although untangling all the twists and turns of his speculative transactions would be time consuming and probably inconclusive. What is known is that in September 1897, Boyle agreed to sell thirty-three acres of land south of St Botolph's Road to the British Land Company (BLC) for £14,000.⁴¹

Over the next three to four years the Company gained plans for a new road named prosaically The Drive, sold some seventy freehold lots, and in an effort to sell the remaining 34 put them to auction in October 1901.⁴² All the lots for sale were available on a deposit of ten per cent, the balance to be paid by easy instalments over nine years by equal half-yearly instalments at five per cent interest. The lots involved no additional charges; and the Urban District Council was now responsible for maintaining the road. This auction failed to sell all the lots, further ones being sold at subsequent auctions in 1902 and in October 1903 by which time both The Drive and Pembroke Road were paved and curbed and served with main sewers. At this last auction, in Sevenoaks, it appears only a single lot was sold despite advertisements for 'tastefully designed private residences' near the railway station. A fourth auction, in June 1904, seems to have been more successful.⁴³

The first houses in St Botolph's Road, The Drive, and Pembroke Road were erected in 1904. At the northern end of The Drive two adjoining lots were bought by Henry Swaffield, a local nonconformist benefactor, which he offered to town and church for a 'New Wesleyan Church' and assembly hall, built 1903-4, and the Carnegie-endowed 'free' public library that was opened in 1905. The BLC plan of June 1904, showed two houses completed in St Botolph's Road, and several others in process of construction including two in The Drive next to the newly built Wesleyan Church. By 1910 there were eight houses in St Botolph's Road, 26 in The Drive, and a dozen or so on the north side of Pembroke Road.⁴⁴ The OS 1:2500 map of 1909, surveyed the year before, showed over thirty houses in the three roads and along the adjoining London Road. Many plans for buildings had been made in the preceding twenty-five years and these can be seen from the local authority surveyor's department records, first produced in the 1870s, which often contain plans and profiles of proposed buildings and alterations to structures. For example, four detached villas were planned for St Botolph's Road in 1878, two houses in 1879, a further house in 1884, a proposed 'St Michael's Orphanage' in 1892, and then an increase in the number of plans for new houses from 1899 onwards.⁴⁵

A few years later an area of land, right-angled in shape and behind the *Sennock Arms Hotel*, was sold to a co-operative building venture. Two rows of houses were built, designed by Raymond Unwin, the Garden City pioneer, to form St Botolph's Avenue, all occupied by 1906. In the years 1900-16 the remaining land and property of the Sevenoaks Estate yielded to the Bishopsgate Foundation an annual rental net income of c.£100.⁴⁶

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[S. 5. P. 2598. Lots various.]

ST. BOTOLPH'S ESTATE,
SEVENOAKS.

In a charming and elevated position, commanding uninterrupted
and extensive views over the surrounding country, and embracing
some of the most beautiful Kentish Scenery.

Particulars, Plan and Conditions of Sale

OF EXCEEDINGLY VALUABLE

Freehold Building Land

FREE FROM TITHE AND LAND TAX,

Being a portion of the

ST. BOTOLPH'S ESTATE,

Situate close to Sevenoaks Railway Station,

COMPRISING

TWENTY-TWO SITES,

Eighteen having important frontages to

THE DRIVE,

Two to

PEMBROKE ROAD,

Leading from the High Street to Tubb's Hill, and Two Plots to

ST. BOTOLPH'S ROAD,

Affording choice sites for the erection of

Tastefully Designed Private Residences,

Which are greatly in demand in this delightful residential district,
fully ripe, and immediately available for

BUILDING OPERATIONS.

For Sale by Auction, on behalf of

THE BRITISH LAND COMPANY,
LIMITED,

At the "Royal Crown" Hotel, Sevenoaks,

On **THURSDAY, 8th OCT., 1903**

At Four o'clock in the Afternoon precisely,

(Unless previously disposed of by Private Treaty.)

FREE CONVEYANCES.

Purchase-money payable by a deposit of 10 per cent. and
balance by Easy Instalments if desired.

Messrs. RUSSELL & RUSSELL,

Solicitors,

59, COLEMAN STREET, LONDON, E.C.

Telephone No.—1613 Central.

ASH & Co. Ltd., Printers, 42, Southwark Street, S.E.

Fig. 1 St Botolph's Estate: auction particulars by British Land Company, October 1903. (Source: in private hands.)

Twentieth-Century Development

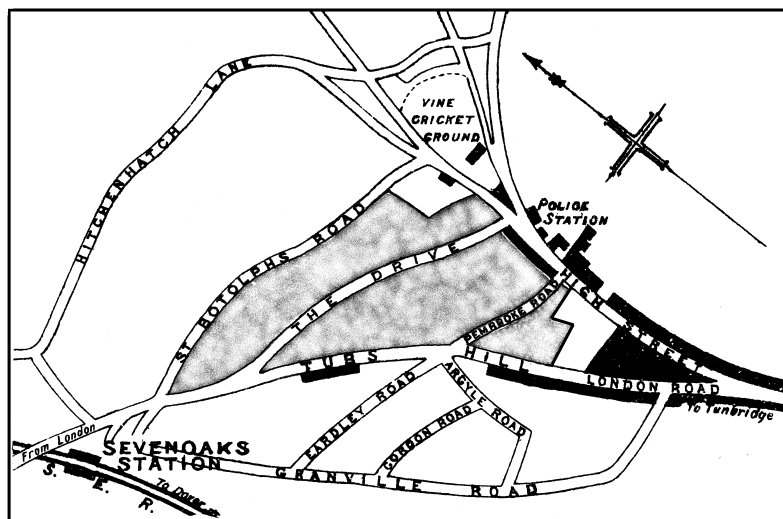
After 1904 there is a new and as yet unknown history of this area – the accounts of the lives of the people who moved into the newly built houses in these several roads. Local directories and elector's lists provide bare information about certain owners and tenants. The Valuation Office Field Books for the survey undertaken following Lloyd George's Finance Act, 1910, provides information on each unit of property.⁴⁷ However, the census returns for 1911 that would provide a 'snapshot' of the occupants of each house in the area on a single day are unfortunately closed by the one-hundred year rule.⁴⁸ Access to those records would make it possible to look in a little more detail at the people who lived in this area, at family structures, age profiles, occupations, places of origin, and the number, age and origin of the servants employed in each household. Even with that material a fuller and more rounded picture of the steadily growing population living in the area would only emerge if letters, photographs, diaries, accounts, and other personal records had survived. These might be supplemented by oral evidence gathered from elderly residents. No doubt some of this material does exist, but it is probably scattered and its present owners may have no idea that it relates to houses in roads laid out in Sevenoaks in the early twentieth century.


House building continued in the roads laid out on the St Botolph estate during the 1920s-1930s. The first houses were built in Vine Avenue in 1923. A decade later the electrification of the Southern Railway line to London, completed in 1935, encouraged further house building in the town.⁴⁹ By 1934 several houses had been built on the north side of St Botolph's Road. By then the Bishopsgate Foundation estate in Sevenoaks consisted of four properties: the *Sennock Arms* opposite the railway station, the imposing house called *Belmont* facing the Vine, and two houses in the London Road.⁵⁰

A substantial change on the northern side of St Botolph's Road came in 1970 when a developer put in Ashley Close. In the process of building the road the old gravel pit had to be filled-in. This development came at the time when property prices began a steady rise in the South-East, and particularly in Sevenoaks; during the 1980s and 1990s they accelerated. Sevenoaks, with its fast rail link to London, was increasingly attractive to more prosperous commuters. At the same time building land in the town was limited. There was growing pressure for the division of larger houses in to flats; for 'infilling' by selling off larger gardens as building plots, or the demolition of older and larger houses, and the erection in their place of either several houses or low level apartment blocks. All of this has happened over the last twenty years in St Botolph's Road, while some houses in

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KEY PLAN



 Building land for auction by BLC, 1904

Map 3 The St Botolph Estate, 1904. From British Land Company plan 6 June 1904. (Source: Sevenoaks Public Library. D 64.)

Pembroke Road closest to the town centre have been converted into commercial offices and adjacent areas turned into public car parks.

A century after the first freehold houses were built on the estate, many of the original properties, particularly at the lower end of St Botolph's Road had been demolished, mainly in the 1980s and 1990s. By 2002 only six houses remained of those built in the early twentieth century including *Bishop's Lodge*, the official residence of the Bishop of Tonbridge. Some of the magnificent trees that lined the road had also been lost, particularly in the great storm of October 1987. By the end of the century the Bishopsgate Foundation had disposed of three of its four remaining properties and was left with what had been the *Sennock Arms*, now a popular public house called *The Farmers*. With the lease expiring at the end of 2001, the Foundation sought planning permission to demolish the pub and develop the site for commercial offices.⁵¹ A vocal local campaign opposed this and planning permission was withheld. The last surviving property of a City church estate stretching back over 350 years remains in the hands of its successors, the Bishopsgate Foundation.

A CITY OF LONDON CHURCH ESTATE IN KENT: ST. BOTOLPH'S, SEVENOAKS

ENDNOTES

¹ Gordon Ward, *Sevenoaks Essays* (Sevenoaks, 1931), p. 110. Ward says the rental was in the Chapter House Library, Canterbury, but he fails to provide a full and accurate source.

² *Parliamentary Papers. Accounts and Papers* (1903) XLIX. Endowed Charities (County of London), Vol. V, pp. 669-71, which lists the names of the fields on the Sevenoaks Estate.

³ T.L. Smartt, *A Brief History of the Parish of St Botolph Bishopsgate* (London, 1824), p. 62.

⁴ Guildhall Library, London. [Hereafter GLL]. MS.4526/1, entry for 'Decimo quarto Decembri 1646'. See also The National Archives, Kew (TNA). CHAR 2/163, St Botolphs. Also William Barnfield, *An Abstract of the Several Gifts to the Parish of Saint Botolph, Bishopsgate* (London, 1814), pp. 39-40.

⁵ GLL. St Botolph Bishopsgate, Vestry Minute Book. MS.4526/1, 1646; and MS.5377, no. 22, entries for 1646 and 1658. Another entry in MS.4531, nos. 54-62, 'Title of Estate' 1737, says that Major John Greenhill gave £100 towards purchasing the estate at Sevenoaks 'And is to Cloth Four poor men on Michaelmas Day for Ever'. See also J. Dunlop, *The Pleasant Town of Sevenoaks* (Sevenoaks, 1964), p. 110, although irritatingly Dunlop does not provide any notes indicating the sources that he used.

⁶ GLL. MS.4526/1, entry for 2 October 1650.

⁷ A transcript of Richard Cakott's Will and Inventory is in H.C.F. Lansberry, ed., *Sevenoaks Wills and Inventories in the Reign of Charles II* (KAS, Maidstone, 1988), pp. 100-1.

⁸ GLL. MS.4531, no. 57, entry for 1718; and No. 58 entry for 1744, and letter dd. 11 January 1744.

⁹ GLL. MS.5377, no. 22. The relevant Act, for a turnpike from Riverhill to Farnborough was in 1749.

¹⁰ Barnfield, *Abstract*, p. 40. The estate then totalled 81 acres, 20 roods and 23 poles. According to the Land Tax Assessments in 1822, Wiggins was paying an annual rent of £112; see Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone (CKS). Q/RPI/333 (microfilm 132).

¹¹ This erroneous idea seems to have been taken from Jane Edwards' 'Diary' of 1863, published as *Jane Edwards 1792-1868: Her recollections of old Sevenoaks* (Sevenoaks, 1985), p. 103, picked up by Dunlop, *Pleasant Town*, p. 144, and repeated by Christopher Rayner, *Sevenoaks Past with the Villages of Holmesdale* (Chichester, 1997), p. 85. See letter correcting this from Patricia Allderidge, the Archivist of the Bethlem Royal Hospital Estates, to *Sevenoaks Chronicle*, 27 February 1982, and to The Curator, Sevenoaks Museum, 21 January 1987, in Sevenoaks Library, D571.

¹² *Accounts and Papers*, p. 670. Smartt, *Brief History of St Botolph Bishopsgate*, p. 63; the figures are amended by hand in the copy in TNA. CHAR2/163.

¹³ GLL. MS.5600. St Botolph, Church Warden's Account book 1829, entry for 1 May 1830. The surveyor's report and plan appear not to have survived, a common fate of some other later nineteenth-century reports and maps submitted to the Trustees.

¹⁴ Sevenoaks School Archive, Sevenoaks. 'Valuation for 1831', but no other source known. See annotation in T. L. Smartt, *An Abstract of the Several Gifts to the Parish of St Botolph, Bishopsgate* (London, 1824), p. 63, copy in TNA. CHAR 2/163.

¹⁵ A copy of the Tithe Award map for Sevenoaks, 1841, is in the CKS, Sevenoaks branch, Sevenoaks Local Library (CKS-S). However, James Edward Smith, surveyor to the St Botolph trustees in 1869, commented that 'The tithe commutations map ... is in no way to be depended upon'. GLL. MS.432/3, Report of 4 August 1869.

¹⁶ GLL. MS.4532/2, St Botolph Vestry, minutes of meeting of 25 October 1866. See also MS.4532/3, meeting of 10 July 1890, for a description of the hotel and stable block which was then currently let at an annual rent of £150.

¹⁷ GLL. MS.4532/3, St Botolph Vestry minutes, meetings of 23 February 1869, and 12 May 1869.

¹⁸ GLL. MS.4532/3, St Botolph Vestry minutes, report by Edward James Smith, 4 August 1869.

¹⁹ The Charity Commissioners were established in 1853 to oversee the accounts and activities of registered charities.

²⁰ GLL. MS.4532/3, St Botolph Vestry minutes, meeting of 19 August 1873.

²¹ CKS. C1051.

²² The OS 1:2500 map, 1898, shows two quarries at the mid point of St Botolph's Road, 'Old Gravel Pits' on the north side, and 'Old Quarry' on the south side. There were also sand pits on the estate facing on to Hitchen Hatch Lane.

²³ GLL. MS.4532/3, St Botolph Vestry minutes, meetings of 17 November 1876 and 9 July 1877. The road was completed in November 1878 at the cost of £5,540 19s. 6d.

²⁴ GLL. MS.4532/2, St Botolph Vestry minutes, meeting of 13 February 1878.

²⁵ See *Sevenoaks Chronicle*, 11 March 1881, p. 4, for the coroner's inquest, and *Illustrated Police News*, 12 March 1881.

²⁶ Census enumerator's report, Sevenoaks 1881.

²⁷ See D. Killingray, 'Rights, "riot" and ritual: the Knole Park access dispute, Sevenoaks, Kent 1883-5', *Rural History*, 5, 1 (1994), 63-79.

²⁸ GLL. MS.4532/3, St Botolph Vestry minutes, meetings for 8 November 1882, 2 February 1884, 24 February 1886, and Cronk's reports to the Trustees, 10 November 1886 and 5 May 1888.

²⁹ Bishopsgate Foundation. *Centenary History* (London, 1991), p. 3.

³⁰ Raphael Samuel, 'The Bishopsgate Institute', *History Workshop* 5 (1978), 162-71.

³¹ Victor Belcher, *The City Parochial Foundation 1891-1991. A trust for the poor of London charities* (Aldershot, 1991), p. 134. An annual grant of £1,000 from the Foundation was derived mainly from St Botolph parochial charities. This continued to 1899 when the Charity Commissioners refused to prolong the arrangement.

³² Bishopsgate Institute, London. Bishopsgate Foundation (hereafter BF). Minute Book 1, p. 132. Report to Governors by Cronk, 26 May 1893.

³³ BF. Minute Book 1, pp. 152, 158, 187, June-September 1893.

³⁴ BF. Minute Book 1, p. 285, report of 4 July 1894.

³⁵ Bishopsgate Institute, London, 'Bishopsgate Foundation. Plan of the Sevenoaks Estate 1895', drawn-up by Cronk. This plan showed *Berisal*, in Hitchen Hatch Lane, leased in 1877 for 99 years – the freehold was subsequently sold to Mr Hickman in 1900 for £585 (BF. Minute Book 2, p. 219); houses in Hitchen Hatch Lane called *Idehurst*, *Lisburne* and *Elm Bank*, had been sold by 1894.

³⁶ BF. Minute Book 1, pp. 456-7.

³⁷ BF. Minute Book 1, pp. 459, 461, July 1896. By 1896 Sevenoaks UDC intended to 'make up' St Botolph's Road: BF. Minute Book 2, p. 233.

³⁸ BF. Minute Book 1, p. 461, 30 July 1896.

³⁹ *Accounts and Papers*, pp. 701-2. The Board of Charity Commissioners Order, 11 December 1896, authorized the Governors of the Bishopsgate Foundation to sell 'land and hereditaments' for not less than £15,500 these details come from a privately held Indenture for a house built in The Drive in 1904.

⁴⁰ BF. Minute Book 2, p. 4, 6 May 1897.

A CITY OF LONDON CHURCH ESTATE IN KENT: ST. BOTOLPH'S, SEVENOAKS

⁴¹ The British Land Company was formed in 1856 'by three Liberal Members of Parliament to enable citizens to achieve property ownership franchise qualifications required to exercise a Parliamentary vote. During the nineteenth century the company inaugurated the policy of acquiring income-producing property investments'. <http://www.britishland.com/Company-history.asp>. Another founder director was the manufacturer and benefactor Samuel Morley, later a Liberal MP, who lived at Leigh, south of Sevenoaks. Many BLC papers were lost when the Company's offices were destroyed by enemy action during the Second World War.

⁴² The details of these transactions come from British Land Company Indentures, privately owned, for a plot of land in The Drive, sold at auction 1 May 1902. The indentures are dated 13 May, 29 September 1897 and 1 May 1902.

⁴³ The BLC plans for the auctions in 1901, 1903, and 1904 are in Sevenoaks Local Studies Library. D904.

⁴⁴ *Salmon's Directory 1903-4 and 1906-7* (Sevenoaks, 1904, 1907).

⁴⁵ CKS-S. Sevenoaks Surveyor's Department Records 1873-. S1 and subsequent. Some information on owners and tenants of these new houses is to be found in local directories, telephone directories, and the electors' list although this only applied to certain men before 1918.

⁴⁶ BF. Minute Books 2 & 3.

⁴⁷ See TNA. IR 58/85832 and 85843.

⁴⁸ The census enumerators' returns for 1911 will not be available until January 2012.

⁴⁹ See G. Crompton, 'Transport', in Nigel Yates, ed., *Kent in the 20th Century* (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 128.

⁵⁰ BF. Scheme. Rent Roll and Plans, 1931, p. 18 and plan.

⁵¹ Sevenoaks library. B1253. *Sevenoaks Chronicle* 1 January 2001, and 28 March 2002.

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