CAMPSEA ASHE
Heritage Group

Auction Centre
and
Cattle Market



Before the coming of the railway to Campsea Ashe, cattle were bought and sold each week in Wickham Market. The railway, which ran from London to Lowestoft, was built in 1859, but did not have a station in the town. The nearest station to Wickham Market is sited in the village of Campsea Ashe, 2 miles to the south. For some reason, which is not clear, it was called Wickham Market Station despite being in Campsea Ashe. The livestock was mainly transported by rail and then taken from the station at Campsea Ashe to Wickham Market. The market was held in the Market Square in the centre of the town. Eventually, in 1921, the market closed and a site near the railway station in Campsea Ashe was acquired. This would be much more convenient and profitable. The livestock was brought to the station and then driven across the road to the auction sheds.

The new site for the market was very close to the station and next to the B1078. When it was purchased in 1921, it was a field of allotments. It is not known how long there were allotments on this site but they were certainly established there by 1904.

In 1819, an Act of Parliament empowered church wardens and overseers with consent of the vestry to let portions of land for the site of the market to the poor and industrious inhabitants of the parish.

According to the Deben Survey, in 1840, the market field was recorded as Punchings Field named after George Punsarch, Rector in 1674. Part of the land acquired for the market was also called Goldsmith's Pightle.

In 1921, the site was bought by Mr. A. Spear. It was levelled and a vast amount of hard core was brought in. Two Dutch barns, one for pigs and one for poultry pens were built. Between these two was a section for housing cattle. The new site was still called Wickham Market Sale Yard.

The Market and livestock auction opened in 1922 by the owner, Mr. Spears and he and then his descendants ran the market until the 1980s.

It took the market 20 years to become firmly established as there was competition from markets at Saxmundham, Halesworth, Framlingham, Woodbridge and Ipswich.

In 1939, the market became a Certifying Centre and during 1940 – 1944. It was also used by the Ministry of Food Livestock Stock Collecting Centre. This ended in 1945 and it reverted back to an auction and market facility.

In 1965, the meadow at the rear was converted into a car park for 300 cars and vehicles.

By 1969, the cattle section had increased with as many as 300 fat cattle on sale on Mondays.. An ex- army hut had been erected for use as a corn exchange. Today it is used for household second hand goods sold by auction. Over time, a tearoom has been added as well as cattle pens covered and another Dutch barn for pigs and new poultry sheds. In 1969, the market could accommodate 300 fat cattle, 1000 pigs and 100 sheep at a time.




Sale during the 1960s

The Market and Livestock auctions continued to prosper in spite of the Campsea Ashe Railway Station being downgraded to a singe line track and reduced service in 1963. As road transport increased more livestock was being transported by road along the A12.

Livestock was sent to a wide area from Lowestoft to as far as the Midlands and further north and also south to Chelmsford and London. In 1968, the numbers of livestock which passed through the market were, 6,000 cattle, 35,000 pigs and 5,000 sheep. The average amount of money passing through the market each year was £1 million.

In 1980s, the market was sold to Abbotts (Estate Agents), who ran the market until 2013 when it was bought by Clarke and Simpson. The live animal market closed in the 1997. The market buildings have been renovated and added to over time.

Today, the site extends some 5 acres and has 6 sale rooms, various building and yard space. There is still a traditional market, which takes place every Monday as well as auctions for antique furniture, modern goods and second hand household goods.

Clarke and Simpson hold several specialised auctions every year. These include the following:
Antiques and Fine Art Sale
Art Deco 20th century design and retro
Agricultural machinery and plant
Domestic and rural bygones and collectables
The Goymore Collection sale of horse drawn vehicles, implements, harness and bygones.



Agricultural machinery and plant sale

Appendix 1
Letter published in EADT December 1985

If you can tell us a
flashback@eadt.co.uk. or
30 Lower Brook Stre
publication and subject of

Re: Christmas cattle sale at Wickham Market, December 1985 (Flashback, April 28).



I AM the lady on the left holding the prize of cattle minerals for the best/ champion beast.
Owner Peter Edwards is right and his son Jason Edwards from Tunstall. Not sure who the judge is though.

ROSEMARY BEECHER,
Sutton.

Appendix 2
Article in EADT 2014

EADT24EADT24



Video/Gallery: Veteran auctioneer Basil Smith celebrates 90th birthday at work

Sarah Chambers [mailto:sarah.chambers@archant.co.uk] Wednesday, October 29, 2014
6.15 AM

A Suffolk auctioneer says he has no plans to hang up his gavel after celebrating his 90th birthday presiding, as usual, over a weekly plants and produce market on Monday.



Suffolk auctioneer, Basil Smith, celebrated his 90th birthday today on 27th October. Basil works in the Garden Produce section of the Clarke & Simpson auction rooms at Campsea Ashe and was given a surprise presentation during his auction.

Around 100 regulars turned up at his regular weekly market at Clarke and Simpson's Auction Centre in Campsea Ashe for a surprise celebration during its regular Monday sales.

Basil. who is thought to be the oldest auctioneer in the country, admitted that he was moved to tears as staff and customers gathered to present him with gifts and birthday cakes to mark the remarkable milestone.

"It was unbelievable," he said. "I was properly gobsmacked. I have never seen so many people in all my life. I was totally bewildered."

He added: "You don't get that every day."

Basil is renowned for his friendly banter as he takes bids for plants and vegetable produce, always coaxing his buyers to up their bids

"You can take the mickey out of people without them knowing," he confided. "I don't need the money, I just do it because I love it. When I retire, I'll do it up the top and all. I can't give up. I have got to keep going."

The buyers are "a good bunch of people", he said, even though he will berate them by saying they "must be on social security", or offer to cook the produce for them as well if they will not bid the price he believes the goods are worth.

"It's all good-natured banter," explained centre manager Geoffrey Barfoot.

Basil was "exceedingly popular" with his clientele, as well as being dedicated to his work, arriving at six in the morning to set up at the height of the season in summer, he added. He often helps with Saturday sales, working as a viewing porter.

"He's 90 years old, but his voice is still strong and clear and he can still shout at them if they make too much noise. He's an amazing character," he said.

"If they won't bid what he thinks is a reasonable amount of money, he'll tell them how mean they are."

Basil, a talented gardener with a greenhouse full of his own home-grown produce, is originally from Snape and now lives at Eyke and remains very active. He started work at the auction centre in the mid-1960s, having previously worked at the fire department at Denhwaters. Until about 10 years ago he also worked as a relief porter.

Geoff believes that Basil must be the oldest working auctioneer in the country.

"It's incredible, amazing. He still drives," he said.

"The livestock's gone. We still sell a little bit of poultry, but Basil's produce, vegetables and plants, it's the last vestiges of a very rural practice."

The produce and plants market regularly attracts 60 to 70 buyers, although Basil says that it used to bring in more allotment holders in the past, as well as the regular smallholders and market stallholders.