

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43978-7 - A Concise History of the University of Cambridge

Elisabeth Leedham-Green

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

This concise illustrated history of the University of Cambridge, from its thirteenth-century origins to the present day, is the only book of its kind in print and is intended as a standard introduction for anyone interested in one of the world's greatest academic institutions.

Many individuals are celebrated here who have exerted great influence upon developments within the university and beyond; but forces for change have often come from outside the university, from the crown or the church, from central government or from the aspirations and expectations of society at large. One of the prime objectives of this book is therefore to describe how the university has reacted to, or resisted, these external pressures. At the same time it conveys an impression of the day-to-day experiences of students and their teachers and administrators over the university's 800-year history.

Major university institutions, such as the University Press and the University Library, are also described briefly, while for recent years there is information not readily available elsewhere on the official sources and on the dates at which different academic disciplines have offered courses to undergraduates and graduates. In addition, the book contains many attractive and often unusual illustrations of subjects ranging from medieval manuscripts to the striking new building projects of the 1990s.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43978-7 - A Concise History of the University of Cambridge

Elisabeth Leedham-Green

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

**A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43978-7 - A Concise History of the University of Cambridge

Elisabeth Leedham-Green

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

A CONCISE
HISTORY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

ELISABETH LEEDHAM-GREEN



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43978-7 - A Concise History of the University of Cambridge

Elisabeth Leedham-Green

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA

10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, VIC 3166, Australia

Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 1996

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1996

Reprinted 1999, 2001

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Leedham-Green, E. S.

A concise history of the University of Cambridge / Elisabeth
Leedham-Green.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p. 247) and index.

ISBN 0 521 43370 3. — ISBN 0 521 43978 7 (pbk.)

1. University of Cambridge—History. I. Title.

LF109.L44

378.42'65—dc20 96-6469 CIP

ISBN 0 521 43370 3 hardback

ISBN 0 521 43978 7 paperback

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-43978-7 - A Concise History of the University of Cambridge
Elisabeth Leedham-Green
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

For Kay

CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
1 From the beginnings to the late fifteenth century	1
2 Cambridge under the Tudors, 1485–1603	29
3 From the accession of James I to the election of the duke of Newcastle as chancellor, 1603–1748	66
4 From the election of the duke of Newcastle to the beginnings of reform, 1748–1840	108
5 From the Victorian reforms to the First World War 1840–1914	146
6 Cambridge since the First World War	188
APPENDICES	
1 Foundations of colleges	223
2 Matriculations 1544–1989 (graph)	225
3 Triposes – dates of first class-lists	226
4 Diplomas and taught courses for post-graduates, 1875–1995	228
5 Extracts from G. B. Skelsey’s <i>Unofficial guide to the organisation and procedures of the University of Cambridge</i>	234
6 Nobel prize-winners and members of the Order of Merit	239
<i>Glossary</i>	242
<i>Further reading</i>	247
<i>Index</i>	259

ILLUSTRATIONS

Richard Lyne's bird's-eye view of Cambridge in 1574 (courtesy of the
 Syndics of Cambridge University Library) *Endpaper*

Plates

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Charter of Edward I, 1291/2 (University Archives: Luard 7;
courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | <i>page</i> 5 |
| 2. The earliest recorded statutes of the university (Angelica MS 401,
fo. 54r) | 7 |
| 3. A university chest (photograph by Neville Taylor) | 10 |
| 4. Junior Proctor's Book (University Archives: Collect. Admin. 2;
courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 14 |
| 5. Trinity Hall Library (courtesy of the Royal Commission for
Historical Monuments (England)) | 26 |
| 6. Teaching before print (British Library, MS Burney 275, leaf 176v) | 31 |
| 7. Teaching after print (British Library, IA 27203: title woodcut
from Cristoforo Landino, <i>Formulario di lettere</i> . . . (Florence,
Bartolommeo di Libri, 1492)) | 32 |
| 8. Portrait of Erasmus in 1517 by Quentin Matsys (Mansell
Collection) | 35 |
| 9. Portrait of John Fisher by Holbein (by kind permission of the
Royal Collection, © HM the Queen) | 41 |
| 10. The burning of Bucer's and Fagius' remains in 1556 (courtesy of
the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 55 |
| 11. University statutes of 1570 (University Archives: Luard 187;
courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 58 |
| 12. Grant of arms to the university (University Archives: Arms 1;
courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 60 |
| 13. Drawing of Clare Hall (now Clare College) (courtesy of the
Master, Fellows and Scholars of Clare College) | 65 |
| 14. Student theatricals: frontispiece and title-page of George Ruggle's
<i>Ignoramus</i> (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University
Library) | 68 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43978-7 - A Concise History of the University of Cambridge

Elisabeth Leedham-Green

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*List of illustrations* xi

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 15. Plague Bill (University Archives: T.X.21 (52); courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 74 |
| 16. Dr Butts' account book (University Archives: T.X.20, fos. 7v–8r; courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 75 |
| 17. Grave digging at Great St Mary's: detail from Loggan (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 76 |
| 18. Domestic arrangements: detail from Loggan's engraving of Christ's College (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 85 |
| 19. Examples of academical dress from Loggan (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 86–8 |
| 20. Sir Isaac Newton's laboratory and garden (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 96–7 |
| 21. Provisions: detail from one of Loggan's engravings of St John's College (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 103 |
| 22. 'A View of the Public Library . . .', by P. S. Lamborn (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 104–5 |
| 23. 'Gown! Gown! Town! Town! or The Battle of Peas Hill' (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 112 |
| 24. John ('Maps') Nicholson, by Philip Reinagle, RA, 1788 (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 115 |
| 25. Academic dissipation and its imminent come-uppance as depicted by Hogarth (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 121 |
| 26. Pembroke College: drawing by A. C. Pugin (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 124 |
| 27. Sir Busick Harwood (1750–1814) (courtesy of the Wellcome Trustees) | 128 |
| 28. Notice of a course of lectures in 1805 by Busick Harwood (University Archives: UP1 (184); courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 129 |
| 29. University business (courtesy of the Registry) | 133 |
| 30. Charles Simeon preaching (courtesy of the Church Pastoral Aid Society) | 134 |
| 31. 'Cambridge in 1797': 'the day before Ordination' and 'the day after Ordination' (University Archives: CAS F.147; courtesy of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society) | 138 |
| 32. Map of Cambridge in 1810 (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 144 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43978-7 - A Concise History of the University of Cambridge

Elisabeth Leedham-Green

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

List of illustrations

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 33. Prince William Frederick, 2nd Duke of Gloucester (courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College) | 147 |
| 34. 'Degree time' from John Lewis Roget's <i>A Cambridge scrap-book</i> (1859) (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 153 |
| 35. J. J. Thomson delivering a lecture (courtesy of the Cavendish Laboratory) | 163 |
| 36. Sedgwick Museum of Geology: letter from the architect, T. G. Jackson (University Archives: GEOL 9/40 (1); courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 164 |
| 37. Girton College Fire Brigade, 1887 (by kind permission of the Mistress and Fellows, Girton College) | 177 |
| 38. 'Honour to Agnata Frances Ramsay' (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 179 |
| 39. Imminent extinction of the greater part of the Downing student body (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library) | 180 |
| 40. The passing of the old order: Ward and Butler | 186 |
| 41. The Cockcroft/Walton particle accelerator, being operated by Ernest Walton in 1932 (courtesy of the Cavendish Laboratory) | 196 |
| 42. James Watson and Francis Crick with their DNA model in the 1950s (A.C. Barrington Brown/Camera Press, London) | 210 |
| 43. The new Judge Institute of Management Studies, formerly Addenbrooke's Hospital (photograph by Paul Langham) | 212 |
| 44. The new Cambridge Law Faculty (a) under construction and (b) completed (Dennis Gilbert/Sir Norman Foster and Partners) | 218–19 |
| 45. Work at the MRC Cambridge Centre for Brain Repair | 220 |

FIGURES

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1 Matriculations 1544–1699 | 90 |
| 2 Matriculations 1800–1900 | 181 |
| 3 Matriculands (i.e. new staff) with no college, 1951–89 | 203 |
| 4 Numbers of post-graduate taught courses, 1938–95 | 213 |
| 5 Matriculations 1900–89 | 214 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-43978-7 - A Concise History of the University of Cambridge

Elisabeth Leedham-Green

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

It is a remarkable testimony to the absence from Cambridge of one variety at least of self-regard that, to the best of my knowledge, there has been no attempt to provide a portable history of the university since James Bass Mullinger's *A history of the University of Cambridge* written as a contribution to Mandell Creighton's series, *Epochs of Church History*, in 1888. Recent years have, indeed, seen a striking increase in the application of serious scholarship in this area, notably in the four-volume *History of the University of Cambridge* even now issuing, volume by volume, from the press. The list of suggested further reading at the end of this volume includes a good many books of recent date devoted to particular periods or particular aspects of the university's history, and to its constituent colleges and other institutions. For a continuous and comprehensive survey, however, there has been nothing to challenge comparison with John Roach's admirable account in a hundred and fifty or so pages of the third Cambridgeshire volume of the *Victoria history of the counties of England* published in 1959, or with Christopher Brooke's contribution to the lavishly illustrated *Oxford and Cambridge* of 1988. This is a lighter book, though doubtless not without its indigestible passages, and challenges comparison with neither of these except in respect of size and weight, both of which challenges it loses easily.

In endeavouring to bring this account up to the present day I have been painfully conscious of the difficulty of discerning the wood for the trees and of having, in an attempt so to do, ignored a great many of the nearer trees, especially in the groves dedicated to advancing the frontiers of scientific knowledge and to the arts. A list of *all* the distinguished scientists and scholars who have sojourned in Cambridge in the course of this century would make an appendix almost as long as the rest of the

book, and too short a list would be as invidious as it would be misleading.

In navigating so small a bark over so wide an ocean I have drawn on many aids, too many to be individually acknowledged in the notes. The list of further reading will provide chapter and verse for the great majority of the *facts*. I am, however, under a particular obligation to Mr D. P. F. McCallum, Secretary of the Board of Graduate Studies, and Mr John Easterling, the University Draftsman, who miraculously, and with the greatest goodwill, found time to furnish me with, respectively, a list of post-graduate courses and of triposes initiated, modified and discontinued in recent decades, and to Mr Geoffrey Skelsey for permission to include a large extract from his *Unofficial Guide*. For advice on the selection and interpretation of the remaining facts I have been a constant debtor to many friends of whom I cannot omit especial mention of Professor C. N. L. Brooke, Dr D. J. McKitterick, Mr Peter Searby and Mr Malcolm Underwood. If I have ignored their advice it has, I hope, been seldom, and certainly inadvertently and at my peril. Errors, nonetheless, will persist, and for them I claim full responsibility.

My debts, however, are not so easily paid: of my colleagues in the University Archives, Dr Patrick Zutshi and Mr Mark Nichols have not only provided practical assistance, but have shown almost as much tolerance as my family at the sounds of tearing hair and gnashing teeth, while the staff of the Photography Department have, against all probability, exceeded even their habitual helpfulness. My thanks are also gladly extended to all those whose permission to publish photographs is acknowledged, to Janet Keystone of the University Publications Department for giving me access to her collection of images, and to Dr Lotte Hellinga for her willing consent to my imitation of her use of plates 6 and 7. Dr Roger Morgan would be astonished to know how much he has helped. Margaret Deith has wrestled with my irregularities with unflinching patience and inexplicable good humour. Others too, who will know who they are, have assisted me in countless ways and will, I hope, accept my expressions of thanks, but most of all, perhaps, I owe to those who, for the last twenty years and more, have had recourse to the University Archives and, in the course of their researches, have posed innumerable questions to which I did not know the answer. May their shade never grow less!