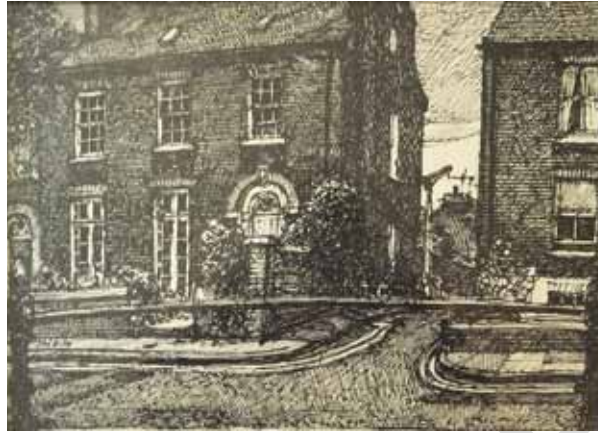


3: Midsummer Common

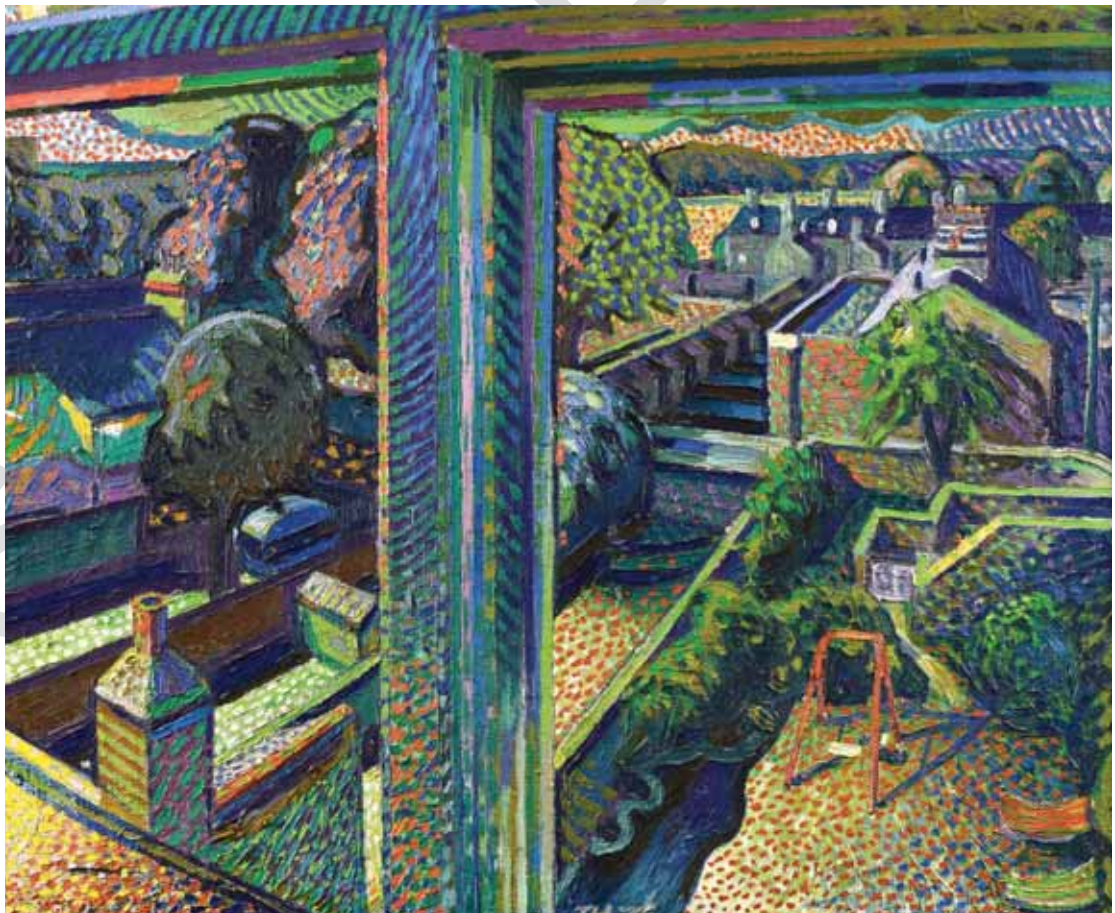
53 Maids Causeway, grander than its Maids Causeway neighbours, is one gatepier to the narrow opening of Brunswick Terrace. I drew the reverse view uphill when living there from 1962-4. Number 53 was bought by Kit Martin and his first wife Julia in 1973. In the big oil-painting, the cottage beyond the swing was brand new when Reynolds Rowe was born there in 1824. Downhill and opposite was number 10, the end of terrace 1890s cottage where I lodged with Mrs P., a Peterhouse landlady. She was a baker's widow, well into her 80s, living downstairs with an oil stove, her parrot Joey and the one functioning bulb (of two) when the great freeze of 1962-3 sent our wiring up in smoke. Upstairs, in my greatcoat and a deep armchair, I kept warm with sticks foraged from Midsummer Common (glimpsed in the background of the painting)

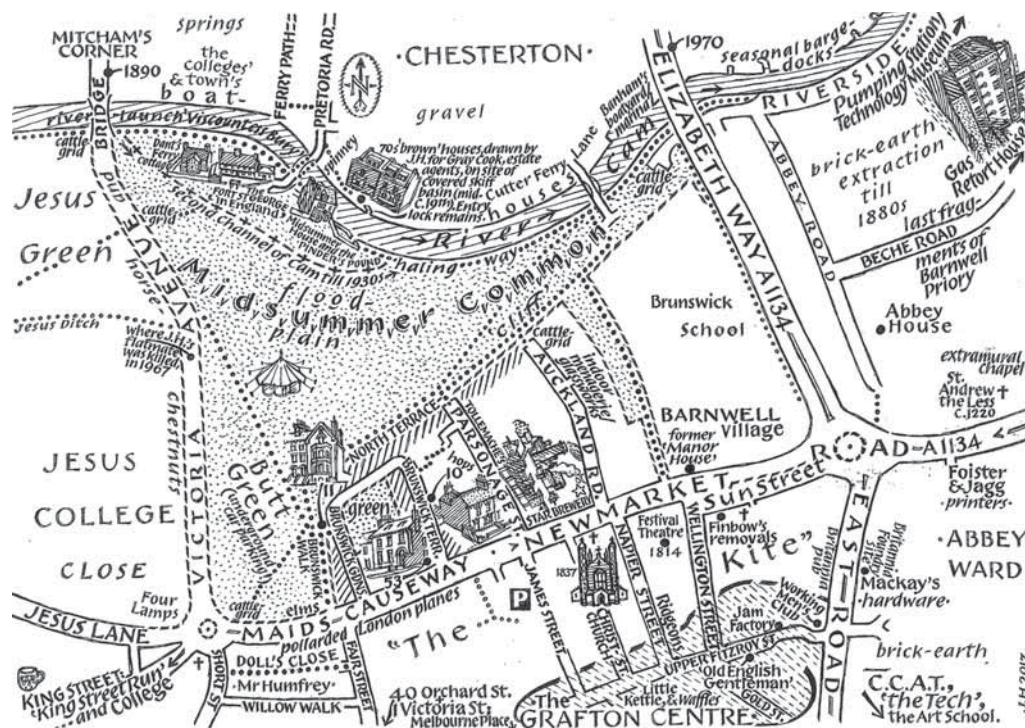
Maids Causeway and Brunswick Terrace, ink, 1975

The garden of 53 Maids Causeway looking north, oil, 1974



and the two 1940s Stravinsky symphonies on my Dansette. Behind the window-mullion is the 'unofficial' green, a neatly-mown slope down to a low wall, which Peterhouse created by knocking down ramshackle timber stabling. It remained a safe play-space for children, until redeveloped as a horseshoe of three-storey townhouses.



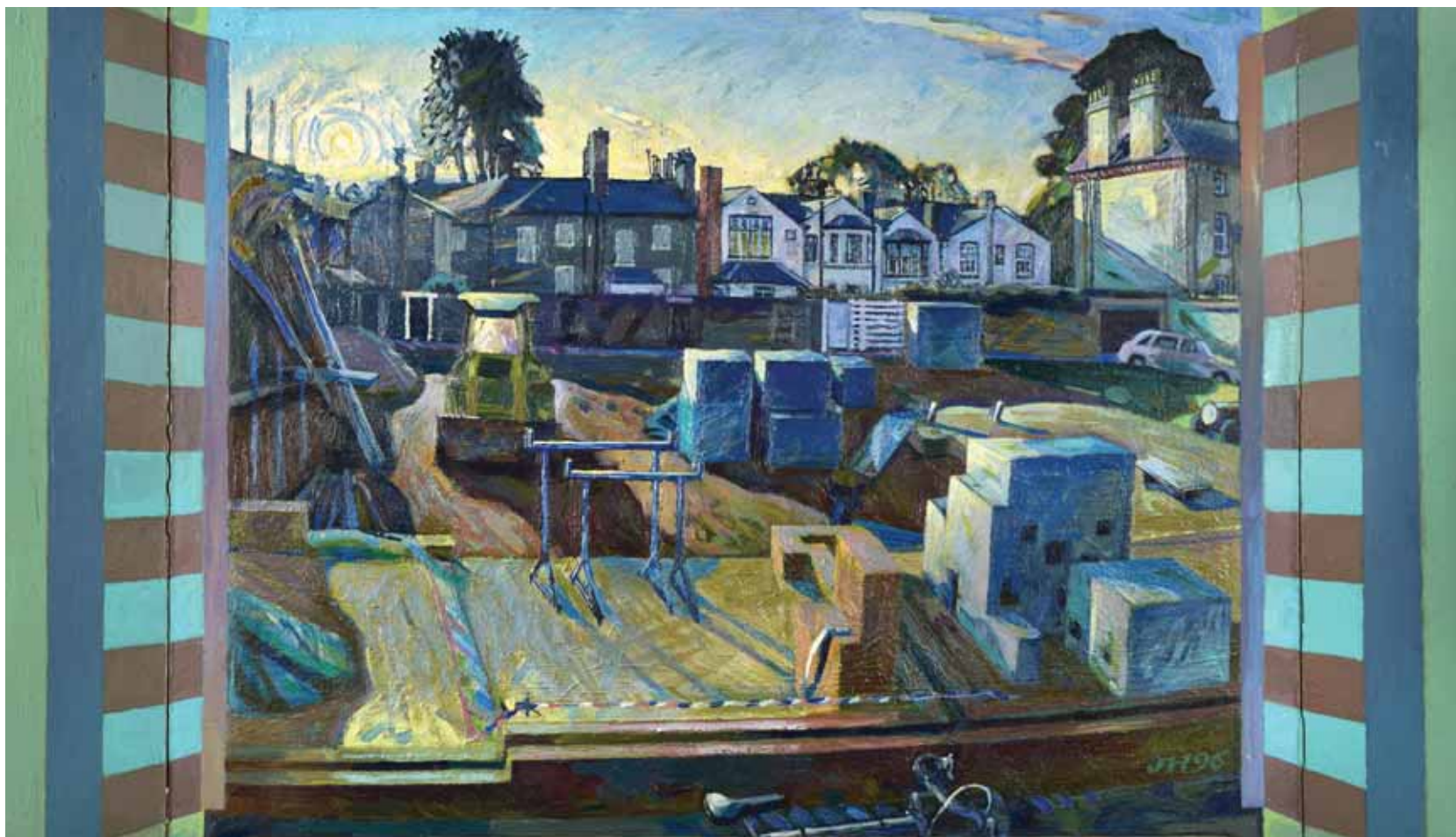


At the far corner of Midsummer Common, towards Victoria Bridge, is a mystery, well, vanished island which (perhaps) paid no heed to Cambridge's licensing laws – or else jolly well wasn't in Malta, or wherever. The pub on this silt islet in the Cam, a very East Anglian jettied cottage, styled itself the Fort St George in England (that qualification now suppressed by the brewery, silly them). A ferryman's house joined it, Dant's Ferry, opposite Ferry Path on the Chesterton bank, and a brick-walled enclosure at the northern end, the Borough pinder's pound, in which stray and unauthorised beasts from the Cambridge commons were corralled for ransom or sale. The pound was joined by an 1890s house, a slice of a terrace that has leapt across from the mainland. Midsummer House, the name adopted by King's College when they took it on for their graduates, was kept on when a Cambridge Phenomenon star, Jack Lang, renowned for pyrotechnics and gastronomy, turned it into one of East Anglia's choicest eateries. The map shows Midsummer Common and Butt Green, all flood-plain, in their context.



Midsummer Common map, ink, 2017

Midsummer House postcard, ink, 1986



The transformation of the unofficial 'Brunswick Green' happened suddenly and brutally in 1982-83. In the painting, Brunswick Walk lies ahead; at top right, facing Midsummer Common, is number 11 with the sunlit gable. The velux window between twin chimneys provided a high viewpoint for the pictures on pages 38, 40 and 41. Numbers 9 and 10 with the multiple white gables had been a private maternity and nursing home. Charles Humfrey's stockbrick cottages, 1820s, stretch up towards Fair Street, and my bike is in the foreground to set the scale.

Brunswick Green under blocks, bricks and mortar, oil, 1996

Groundworks, preliminary sketch, ink, 1982-3



Ed Hoskins's new family was bursting out of Melbourne Place and moved to 11 Brunswick Walk, a tall 1880s house by Rowe, one of four facing onto Midsummer Common, a place of new enchantment for Barrington the beagle. My own delights were the views east across the unofficial Peterhouse Green to the Star Brewery and, from the new velux rooflight in the south slope of the attic

roof at number 11, along the spine of the cottage roofs of Brunswick Walk. The end house, its bulbous chimney clasped by dormers, is 23 Maids Causeway.

11 Brunswick Walk rooflight, oil, 1991

Rooflight sketch, ink, 1979

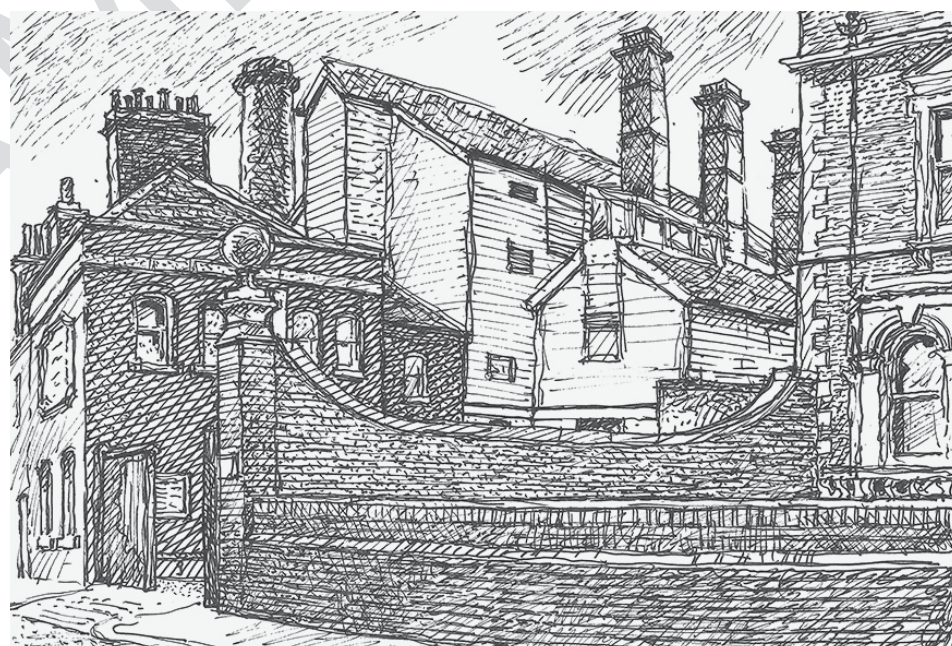
I would look over my lace curtain at Mrs P's and, a block beyond the end of the garden, the bulk of Tollemache's Star Brewery seemed to pin down Christ Church on the summit of Maids Causeway. Its plump round chimney was more than a match for the imitation King's pinnacles of the church. Smaller chimneys, like baby asparagus sprouted from thoroughly East Anglian cream clapboard; and even though the brewery was only a bottling plant, a hop-vine clung to the garden telegraph pole. Unlisted, the brewery made way for middle-class housing; I was too involved in Grafton Centre battles to record its demise in 1975.

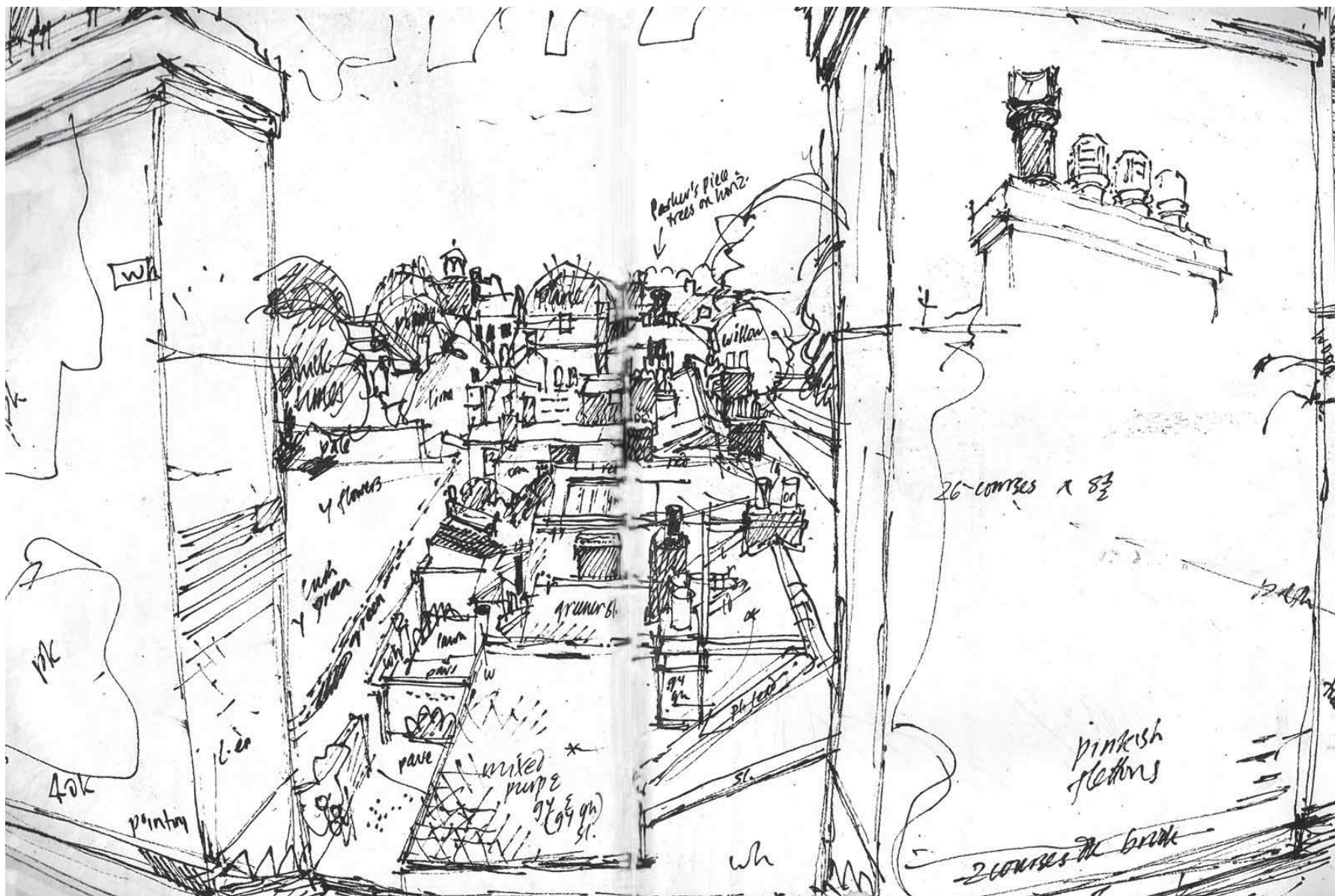


Above: Double view of Brunswick Walk, oil, 1974

Right: Star Brewery and Burleigh Arms, ink, redrawn 2017

Left: View from 11 Brunswick Walk, ink, 1974

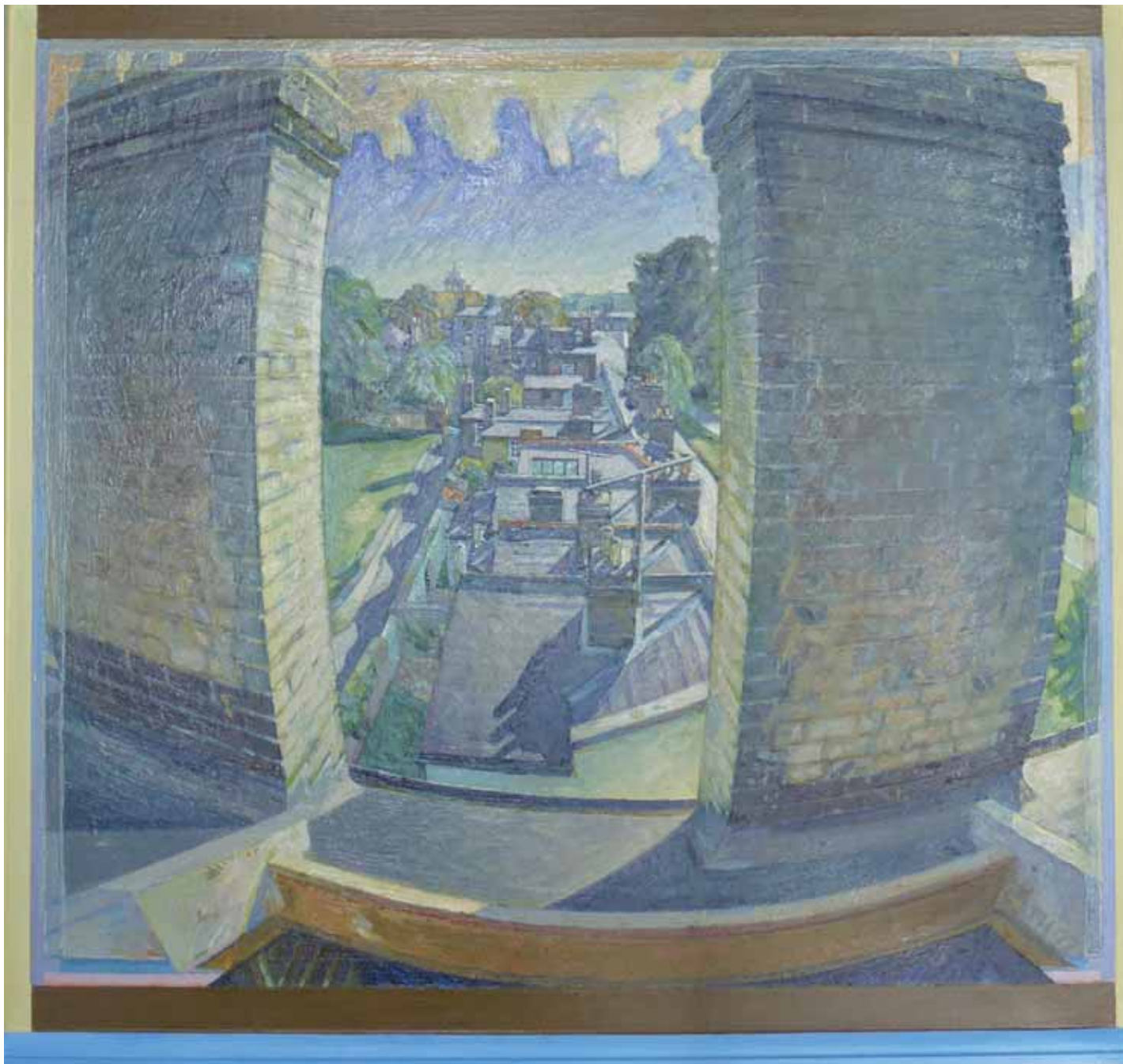




A dozen years elapsed between the highly annotated drawing and its painted realisation in the studio. The drawing adopts a proportion closer to 'A' sizes for paper than the painting: yet, for all the time I was teaching observational drawing in the Art School (somewhere behind the left-hand chimney)

Sketch for '11 Brunswick Walk: between chimneys', ink, 1979

we had access to beautiful foolscap sketchbooks supplied by Roberson's: an A4 page side to side, with a couple of extra inches to the page depth. It's no longer available, but was superb in encouraging us all to subdivide each double-spread into four images, or paired panoramas. Using its full depth and height allowed you, as here, to deal more fully with vertical, potentially vertiginous, space. In the painting, I've extended the format to nearer square.



11 Brunswick Walk: between chimneys, oil, 1991

I first tackled the order and tonality of Cambridge Gault bricks in a Victorian garden wall near the Architecture School, flat on the floor, using brass strip to paint and

plaster mixed in. Here, thirty years on, I evoke these bricks again, and the lost Brunswick Green, with brush and easel, relying on my sketchbook drawing.