



**KING'S HEATH LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY**

Memories of King's Heath

Compiled By ;

By Mary & Walter Reynolds



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MEMORIES OF KINGS HEATH

Compiled by Mary and Walter Reynolds

This booklet contains a small collection of personal anecdotes, mostly pre-1939-45, written by members and friends of Kings Heath Local History Society, who have witnessed the many changes in the village this century.

It is hoped that these reminiscences will serve as an aide-memoire to local residents, past and present, and inspire them to contribute their memories of Kings Heath, for a second publication.

If you have any anecdotes about old Kings Heath please contact the Local History Society at Kings Heath Library, High Street, Birmingham. B14 7SE

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MEMOIRS

"With the peath", said I, waving my little Union Jack aloft at the 1918 Armistice, and that is where I commence these memoirs.

Billesley was the extent of my little world in those days, where I lived in one of eight houses called 'Inglewood' in Brook Lane. These were built in 1888 by an ancestor, each being occupied by an aunt or uncle and family.

My grandfather had been gardener at Nettlefold's house, 'Kingsfield', where St. Dunstan's Church now stands and this was echoed in his own garden which was immaculate, full of colour and produce, and complete with a pig in a sty and poultry in a pen. There was also a magnificent variegated holly tree, conical in shape and roof high. This became the background for family photographs of which there were many.

My mother was a photographer, having worked for George Hynde who had his studio and tobacconists shop in the High Street, approximately opposite the present Boots store.

The family had all "emigrated" from Kings Heath village, mostly from Silver Street, which was quite a venture in those days. I was told many times that after shopping, probably on a Saturday in the winter, they would congregate so that they could return to Billesley in a party, with a lantern to show the way across fields, there being no Institute Road at that time.

The postman, Mr. Beck, milkman Hodgetts and Firkins - newsagent and grocery in Coldbath Road - were like personal friends. Also Vales, the fish and chip shop, where there was much excitement caused by a fire. This was at the side of a cottage just round the corner from the old Billesley Arms.

Then came school at Institute Road, and being taken to meet dear Miss Spencer, the infant headmistress. I also recall Miss Dolan, Miss Hiron and Miss Blundell, who I believe inaugurated the new nursery class when Wheeler's Lane School was opened.

The years I spent in the Junior School created a lasting impression. We had such dedicated teachers, Miss Pittman tragically killed by a 'hit and run' motorist, Miss Stagg, Miss Mason and the indomitable Miss Whitehouse. This record would not be complete without mention of the playground, most memorable being the treacherous slide made down the slope on icy mornings.

By this time we had moved to May Lane to live by my paternal Grandfather, and had the great distinction of being the first house in the lane to have electric light installed. This could be 1923.

Also in 1923 the swimming baths were opened in Institute Road. This was a great innovation then, providing swimming facilities for many who lived so far from the sea. Friday afternoon was the usual time for swimming lessons and it was quite a surprise when first we saw the blue water. Few, I am sure, ever forget the thrill in 'doing the width' for the first time, with both feet off the bottom!

The garden of our new house bordered on the Kings Heath Horse Show Ground. This was a great annual event, always held on a Whit Monday and always hot and sunny. For this we had our own grandstand, although somewhat precarious.

The Show prompted great local interest and besides the usual equine challenges such as jumping, obstacle race etc., the local tradesmen competed with their varied vehicles, all cleaned, polished and sparkling. To mention a few, Lashford, Pearsall, G. R. Bailey, and coal merchants from Kings Heath Station Wharf.

Another event brought to our garden fence - 1926 I think - was the Grand Military Searchlight Tattoo. Again, the grandstand was erected, rather more substantially this time, as we acquired many relations and friends!

This show was in two parts, first the military manoeuvres, accompanied by 'planes skimming the roof-tops - absolutely no exaggeration - and, in the second half, the local children, dressed in period costumes of about the year 1800, sang and danced round a maypole. All this illuminated by searchlights made it quite fascinating.

The military camped in a field in the old Haunch Lane, somewhere around the present Chesterwood Road.

I will conclude my chronicle here as no doubt more recent times will be recorded elsewhere.

Mary Reynolds



King's Heath Horse Show and Recreation Grounds and it became the Dog Track later.

'A CORNWALL READER REMEMBERS KINGS HEATH'

I had the pleasure of receiving a copy of your paper which included an article on the Changing Face of Kings Heath which was of great interest to me.

My memory takes me back only about 75 years but in those days - around 1900 - Kings Heath was little more than a country village. It had its own Urban District Council,⁽¹⁾ the offices being in Valentine Road; also before it became part of Greater Birmingham, a court was held at intervals at the police station.

As boys, we often walked all the way through the fields to the Lickey Hills.

There were not all that many shops and on the left hand side, starting from Station road towards the cab stand outside All Saints Church, was Luckmans the Forge, George Inn, Cowans (paper shop), Perrys (ironmongers) Wellings (saddlery), Pearsons (greengrocer), Blucks (butcher), a grocery shop the name of which I forget, Handleys (milliners), the Enterprise (drapers), Bushnells (greengrocer), Barrows (grocers), Baileys (bakers), and then the school.

There were fewer shops still on the right hand side going up. Between Station Road and Grange Road there was a large field, and higher up on what is now Bank Street was a brewery which had a large piece of ground full of beer barrels.

Standing outside All Saints Church, the Knob (King Arms) at Alcester Lanes End could easily be seen.

I wonder if anyone remembers Mr. Hill, the headmaster at the school. His brandishing of the cane and the stentorian voice as he said "woe betide if I catch any boy doing etc. etc. ...", is something that has lived with me all my 81 years.

Yes! Indeed Kings Heath has altered and it would be great if I could see it once again as it was when the bonfire was lit between Station Road and Grange Road to celebrate the end of the Boer War, and an effigy of 'Old Kruger' was thrown into the fire.

Sidney Pearce
(From a letter to the Birmingham Times)

1. The Kings Norton and Northfield Urban District Council.

FROM A LETTER TO THE BIRMINGHAM TIMES FOLLOWING
UPON A LETTER WRITTEN BY MR. PEARCE OF CORNWALL

I was very interested to read the letter in your issue of 13 July from Mr. Pearce, late of Kings Heath, now residing in Cornwall.

I remember the places he mentioned and should like to remind him of a few more. Doctor Harris, who lived at the corner of Valentine Road, still a surgery to this day, would charge one shilling each time you visited him. He would make up your medicine while you waited. He charged five shillings for a visit to your home.

There was the Green Corn Merchants, now Proffitt and Westwoods; they were really Victorian in their manners and their dress. Then there was the Toll House on the parade near the Kingsway. They were the carriers from the districts and would weigh their produce here on the way to market.

I also remember Mr. Hall, the headmaster of the school, who was very strict, but offered a little sympathy to the lad who received a few strokes of the birch for failing, on several occasions, to hand in the money he received for delivering the morning papers.

Bunny Bushell, Swift and Miss Carr were the favourite teachers in the Boys' school. Miss Spencer was the headmistress of the infants' school, and two sisters who taught there, Misses Bayliss, lived in Waterloo Road until a few years ago.

Past the school was the Institute which housed the Working Mens' Club and showed pictures before the Kingsway was built. Back at the railway station was Mr. Brian the Stationmaster when the station was busy.

In the police station was Chief Inspector Chase and two well known Sergeants Bolstridge and Sparry.

The corner of Silver Street was the tram sheds for the old steam trams, and what is now the M.E.B. shop was the old waiting room. Next door was Chapman & Saunders the newsagents, and next to the church was Averys, the ironmongers. I believe the last taxi on the rank belonged to Mr. Hockley who wore the traditional top hat and tails.

Kings Heath Park, given to the City by Major Cartland, only reached up as far as the pool. The other portion, bowling greens and tennis court, was purchased from the Major several years later. Vicarage Road had only a small footpath on the Park side, the other being a hedge and ditch.

At that time Kings Heath boasted two brass bands, The Lamplighters and The Early Morning School Band.

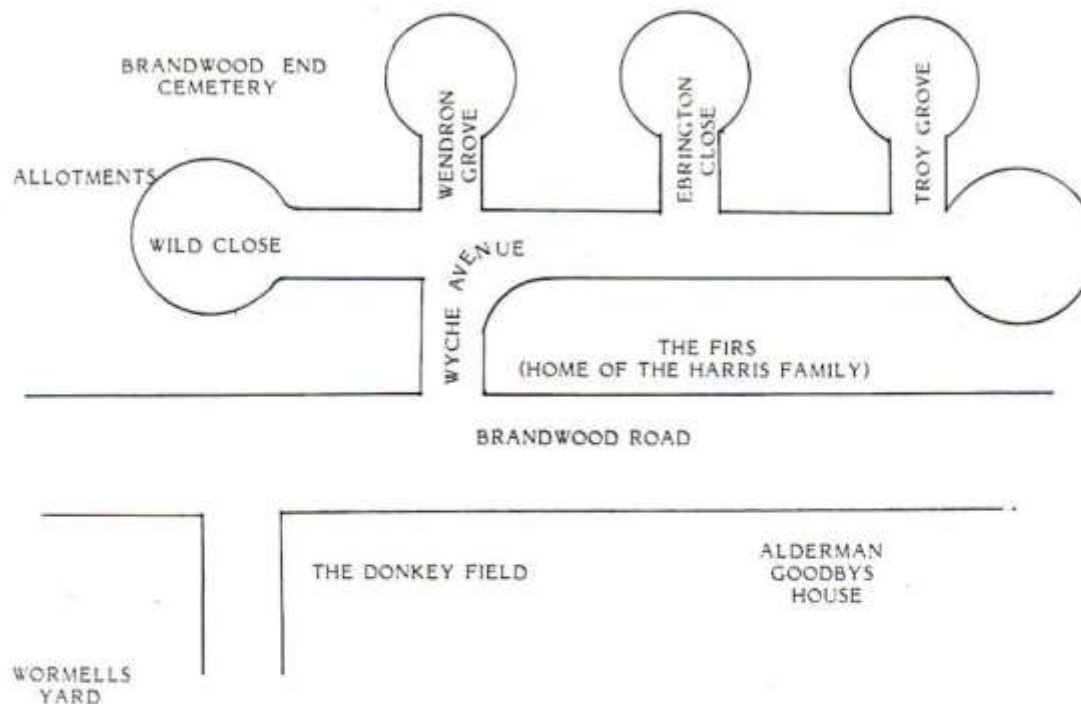
Along Brandwood Road was the golf course from where you could see the Monument on the Lickeys.

That was the real Kings Heath as it was in the good old days.

E. H. Woodwiss

CHILDHOOD RECOLLECTIONS

The Firs Estate lies off Brandwood Road at the Kings Norton border with Kings Heath. It is made up of the main artery road which is L shaped and called Wyche Avenue. Off this there are smaller cul-de-sacs, namely Wild Close, Wendron Grove, Ebrington Close, and Troy Grove.



The semi-detached houses were built by 'Harris' the builder. The Estate was named after the name of the builder's house which stood in its own grounds, entered into from a drive lined with fir trees, off the Brandwood Road.

The houses were built in the mid 1930s, and my family was one of the first to move in, and I was in fact the first baby born on the estate. I have very happy memories of my childhood, for as the estate was a cul-de-sac, and there was very little traffic in those days, it was an ideal playground for the many children who eventually lived there.

Street games after listening to Children's Hour were only interrupted for quarter of an hour at 6.45 when we all listened to the latest adventures of Dick Barton Special Agent. What did we play? Shots In (a version of street football), Can We Cross the Golden River, Queenie, What's the Time Mr. Wolf, Hop Scotch and Lardy (a game of marbles in the gutter, including fishing them out of the drain). When we were really brave (or was it naughty!) we played Dare Truth or Promise, knocking doors and running away, or putting thunder-flashes under dustbin lids. There was of course the inevitable cricket up the entries between the houses, and Cowboys and Indians.

Our milk was brought by a Mr. Maiden in his horse and trap. His customers took out their large milk jugs to him and he would fill them, using a metal jug from his churn on the cart. I remember it was really thick and creamy. The bread was delivered by Hardings the Bakers. A selection of loaves was brought from the van by the delivery man to your door in a large wicker basket. The coalman was W. H. Lane from Kings Heath yard. The one hundredweight (cwt.) sacks were carried on his back through to the coal shed in the back garden. The laundryman from Acocks Green and Olton Laundry also came once a week.

Often in the winter the weather was so bad that the deliveryman couldn't get their vehicles into the estate, and they used sledges to bring their deliveries to our door. I can remember, in the winter of 1947, the snow being so deep that all the men got together and with their shovels cleared a path down through the Avenue so that vital services could get through. It was so deep that we could not go to school.

School was Colmore Road, travelling on the special bus for a halfpenny fare. The headmistress of the infants was Miss Bott, and of the Juniors, Mr. Downes.

The teachers who stand out in my memory are the ones that I didn't see eye to eye with - Mr. Coppack (who lived in Peacock Road), Miss Brazier and Miss Mills. I can, however, remember one who I liked, a Miss Marshall. I am sure there weren't any young teachers when I was at school, they all seemed terribly old. It was of course the war years; brick built shelters were in the playground, and regular trips were made to these, complete with gas mask on your back. Apart from the usual Religious Festivals, the highlights of the year were May Day and Empire Day when festivities and pageants were held.

During the war years many of the men left on the estate were in the A.R.P. (Air Raid Precautions). My father was in charge of the unit. He used to have to go out in his white tin helmet (with which we all loved to play soldiers), and patrol the estate, stirrup pump, buckets of water and sand at the ready. We had an Anderson shelter down the garden, over which a rockery had been built. I spent many a night down there wrapped in blankets in the flicker of candlelight. During one air raid we had a piece of shrapnel through the roof of the house, and this was a prize exhibit for many years. We children loved to watch the barrage balloon and the searchlight that were based in the grounds of Monyhull Hospital.

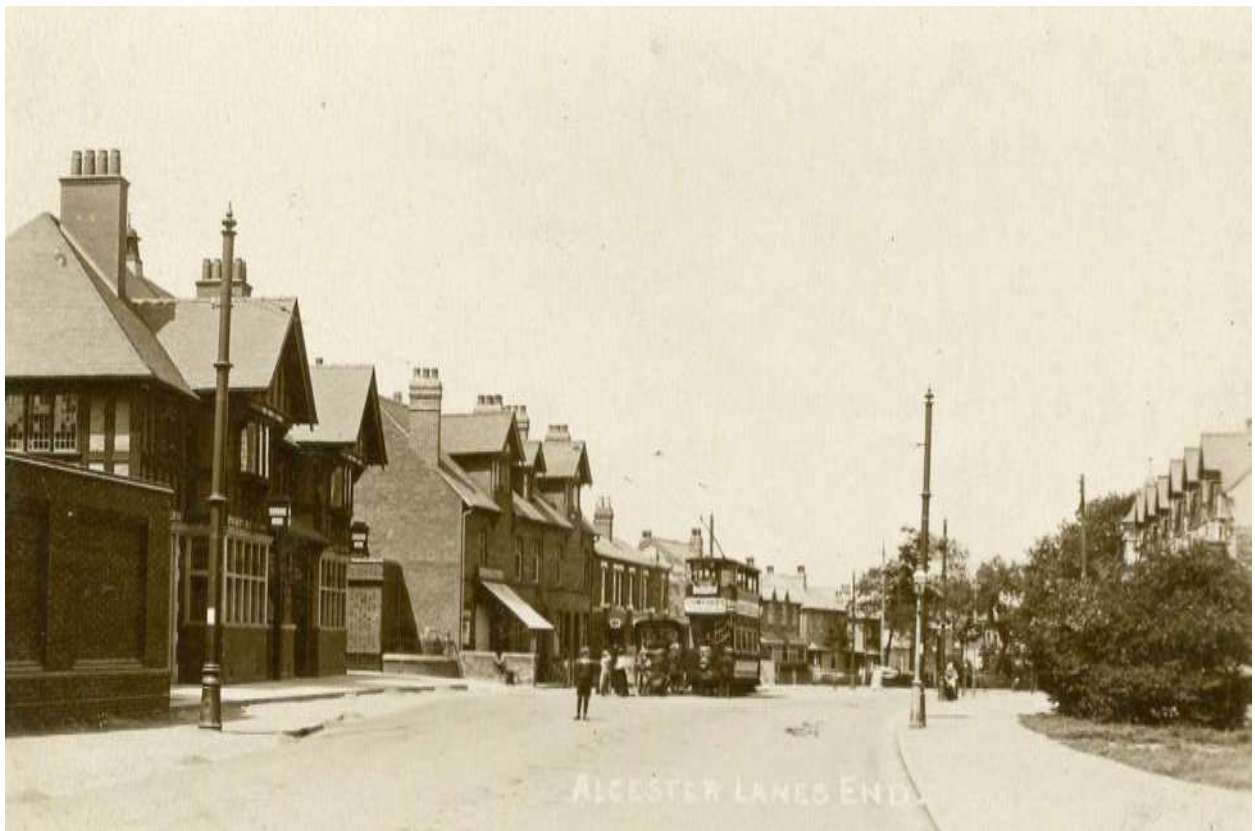
On V.E. Day and V.J. Day and also on the Queen's Coronation Day, street parties were held. I still have the card presented to every child on V.E. Day, saying "The Firs Estate. To Commemorate Peace. 1945". Sports were held on 'The Donkey Field' which was a field on Brandwood Road opposite the Estate, so called because it had one donkey in it. The Field was owned by Wormells the builders who had a yard adjacent. On the other side of the field was a large house owned by Alderman Goodby. All of these are now gone and replaced by modern houses.

One of the highlights of the week was the journey to Sunday School every Sunday afternoon. Sunday School was at Cambridge Road Methodist. The Minister in those days was the Rev. John Talbot. We used to walk to the 'Nob' at Alcester Lanes End via Brandwood End Cemetery which was 'out of bounds' but very tempting in the conker season. We then walked on down Woodthorpe Road, past The Southern, the large house owned by the Perry family, Olive Perry being a well-known and well loved Music Teacher, and many happy hours did I spend there. Further down Woodthorpe Road, about where Sunderton Road is now, was Greaves' Farm.

The 'Nob', or The Kings Arms to give it its correct title, was the tram terminus; there we would take the one penny ride on the open ended top of the number 42 or 39 to Poplar Road, arriving at Sunday School looking very windswept. When we returned, on arrival at the terminus, we loved to go up the tram slamming the noisy wooden seats to face the other way for the return journey.

They were happy days, despite the war years, for to us this was just another part of the big adventure of childhood.

Brian White



Alcester Lanes End, the King's Arms (Nob) and Tram Terminus.

SOME PERSONALITIES OF MY YOUTH

I was born in Waterloo Road in 1915, so my early memories are located in that area.

Just down Waterloo Road on the right hand side lived a young man whom I assumed had T.B. He would be in the 'entry' in a cane chair, and like a number of other locals, I would stop and have a chat to him most days. A little further on, the same side and opposite York Road, was the village blacksmith, another stopping place of mine, and I well remember the heat, smoke and smell. This led to the blacksmith asking me where I lived, and I was then urged to go and ask my mother for a jug of tea for them. My mother fell for it and I was duly sent back with a jug of tea and a mug for the workers.

Another day the Rag and Bone man pushed his handcart down South Road with his usual shout "Rag Bone", offering to ~~change~~ a balloon for a cup. My mother indulged me as usual, but I had been gone a long time and was still waiting for my balloon, having kept my part of the bargain, when my mother came tearing down Balaclava Road shouting to the man to hand over the balloon - which he then did - or else!

Lower down Waterloo Road was Precious the green grocer and the second blacksmith, by the side of which was an alley way to Silver Street. This skirted a yard behind the 'outdoor' Cotterills, where horses used for drawing the bread and milk carts were stabled.

On the corner of York Road and High Street was the Hare & Hounds with 'Fishy' and his cart outside. It was here on Saturday morning I sought to augment my pocket money by offering to 'mind your bike, mister' to anyone patronising the hostelry. A penny was the usual rate for the job.

The emerging exit for the Ideal Picture House which you entered from the High Street, came next to the Hare & Hounds in York Road. You could see Tom Mix and Tony, Lilian Gish, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton plus the serial, Pearl White tied to the railway line while the Express thundered towards her - all for 2d., and an agonising wait until the following Saturday to see the next instalment.

Walter Reynolds

GROWING-UP IN KINGS HEATH

In the summer of 1925 the Cossacks came to Alcester Lane's End for a whole week and gave a very exciting performance of horsemanship, singing and dancing.

My sister remembers an amazingly tall man and very fast horses. This took place on the Kings Heath Horse Show and Recreation Ground, which was converted to the Greyhound Stadium in May 1926.

As a child in the 1930s, I remember Major Cartland riding his horse around the roads. We were all frightened of him and used to hide - I can't think why! He owned a cottage in Grove Road and Jean Evans told how he rode straight in one day to speak to her mother.

I had a penny a week pocket money, which would buy all sorts of sweets from Miss Floyd's shop which was next to Colmore Road School. The Wall's ice cream man came round on a tricycle and sold penny 'sno-fruits' and penny 'sno-creams', the forerunners of ice-lollies I suppose.

Milk then came in a churn and had to be ladled out with a pint dipper into customers' own jugs or containers; 3d being the winter price - cheaper in summer. Later, when bottles were used, these had cardboard tops, and if you pushed the middle out you could thread them with wool and make fluffy balls.

On Good Friday the baker brought hot cross buns in time for breakfast.

I don't recall going to town as a child and all our clothes were bought in the village. The area of Kings Heath seemed very large and going to Highbury Park quite an expedition.

Peacock's Store and Bebbingtons were not considered by my mother to be "nice" shops, so to wander round them on my own was quite an adventure and I felt very brave.

After school we sometimes went swimming, which cost a penny if we belonged to the club. We all jumped off the top board, even if we could only swim a few strokes.

Mollie Budd

ANECDOTES

Having read of your plan for a third Local History exhibition I trust that I may be able to say something of interest to you.

I was brought up in Fairfield Road, and one of my vivid memories of those days before the last war (in the twenties) is of the late Major Cartland. He lived in a very large house standing way back on the Vicarage Road which is now, I believe, a grammar school. I understand that it was the Major who presented the ground to the City Council to develop what is now Kings Heath Park. His son, Ronald, became an MP and was killed whilst serving with the R.A. early in the 1939-45 war. I cannot be sure but I think Barbara Cartland, the novelist, is related to the Major.⁽²⁾

When the Major went out on horseback he looked very much the part with his long pointed moustache and straight back. I occasionally saw him come up Silver Street on his horse to call in at the newsagents shop which was next to the Corporation Yard and owned by a Mr. Poole. He would take himself up on the footpath and leave his horse right in front of the shop, and a very imposing sight he was to us kids.

Adjoining the Corporation Yard was the now defunct Fire Station where, as a teenager, I went with all the other local lads and lassies to what we called the Fire Station dance. All the engines and other equipment was moved out so that we could enjoy ourselves, and it was certainly a lovely night for us in those days. This was held usually on the Saturday preceding Christmas Day.

There was a man who was called Titty Owen. He owned a newsagents shop on the main Alcester Road South next to what eventually became the Kingsway Cinema - we called them 'picture houses' then. Titty was a churchwarden at Kings Heath Church (corner of Alcester Road and Vicarage Road), and it was said that he developed a hatred for the threepenny bit - called a 'joey' in those days - through taking the plate round at Church. When he was given a joey by a customer in his shop, he would literally throw his arms up and tears would fall from his eyes. I was one who delivered papers for him and we had to collect the money due at the weekend, and woe betide us if we paid any joeys to him. He would lose his cool and go off at us, crying at the same time.

The "Ideal" was the local bughouse, situated just past the Hare & Hounds pub on the main road. This cinema eventually became an amusement arcade housing the machines of those days and other games, and I well remember when 'time' was called for the night they had a nice way of letting you know. A couple of yards or so from the Exit door stood a booth; attached to the front was a circle of names of a gramophone record each with a different number. We put a penny in to have our record played by a person seated inside. When it was time to go, this person would put on the record called "Goodnight Sweetheart", a song I will never forget. This building was then turned into a billiard hall and is now, I believe, a bingo hall with the entrance in York Road.

I remember the horse trough which stood just about where the public lavatories now are.

Last, but not in my opinion least, there was my older half-brother, a familiar sight in Kings Heath and Moseley. You see he was probably the only one-armed full-time window cleaner in the British Isles. His name was Fred Taylor. His cart was professionally painted in green and red with the words

'Fred Taylor & Son Est. 1897'. On this cart with its large wooden wheels was a ladder for every height of house. He had lost his arm by accident working in a factory and when Dad was also accidentally killed, he took over the window-cleaning round. Fred was in his sixties when he called it a day. This man had the courage of a lion. I am sorry that I have no photographs of him or his cart, but should you like to find out more about him, I can tell you that his eldest son, Fred, is a bus driver stationed at Selly Oak Department.

J. H. Taylor

2. Ronald's father was Bertram, who was the son of James Frank Howard Cartland, a brother of Major John Howard Cartland. Major Cartland himself never married. Ronald was Barbara Cartland's brother. So Major Cartland was a great uncle to both of them. All Major Cartland's brothers and sisters had Howard as one of their names. It was their mother's maiden name. She was Ann Howard.



Barbara Cartland in her early 30s, she published 722 novels in a period of 80 years.

FARMING

The main farming families locally were the Taylors and the Greaves. There was also another small farmer named Buggins, who subsequently changed his name to Burgoyne, in Woodthorpe Road, opposite where Hannon Road is now. According to an old map, this was Southern Farm. There was also another farm in Woodthorpe Road, about where Sunderton Road starts, and this was called Woodthorpe Farm. Mr. Taylor was probably one of the descendents of Squire Taylor who formerly owned much of the land around the Kings Heath area. In the deeds of my house, the land on which it stands was purchased from Squire Taylor's Estate. The Taylor's farmhouse was just past the canal bridge, on the left hand side of Warstock Lane.

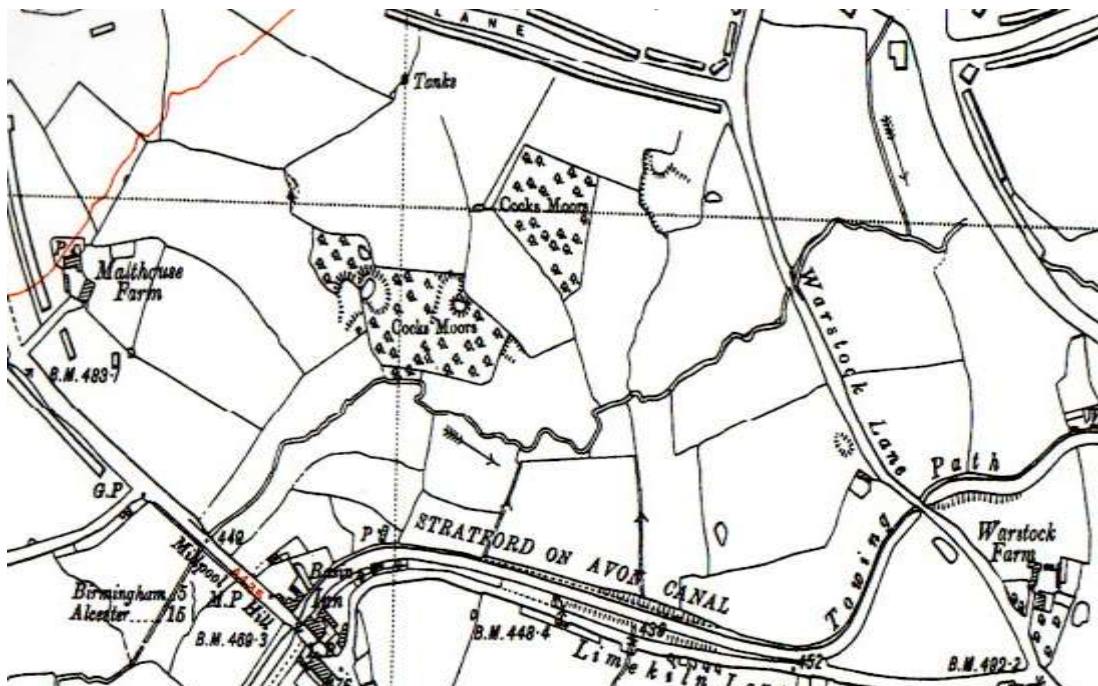
I used to go there with my friend Jack Ludditt, a grandson of Mr. Taylor. One thing which has always remained in my memory was the well in the yard outside the house. This had a bucket which, when reaching the surface, automatically released the water which remained in the bottom of a shaped container surrounding the wheel. The water was then drawn off by means of a tap.

During the harvest season, Jack and I used to fill crock type bottles with cider to take to the men working in the fields.

One of Mr. Taylor's brothers lived in a cottage on the corner of Warstock Lane and Haunch Lane.

The Greaves family lived at the farmhouse which still stands alongside the club house of the Cocks Moors Golf Club.

Mr. Chillingsworth



Cocks Moor Wood area of King's Heath, on the left is Malthouse Farm in the middle Cocks Moor Wood and on the right Warstock Farm c1930s.

MAY LANE, KINGS HEATH

May Lane, at one time called May House Lane, was just a narrow track joining May House at the top to May House Farm at the bottom. The farm disappeared about half way through the last century, but the large house at the top remained until 1934.

Mr. George Seymour, late of Taylor Road, told me that some people named Connery owned it early this century, and while they occupied the house, the gardens were well cared for, and his father helped with the pipe-work for their hot houses where they grew vines.

The house was later owned by a Mr. Crow and his family. He was noted for his carrier pigeons which were used during the Great War. When the war ended, some of these pigeons were carried in procession round town.

Mr. Seymour was one of the first to live in the houses developed down the left side of the lane, and recalled a great snow in 1911 when it came up to the bedroom windows, and some of the youngsters built snow houses which they lit with candles further down the lane. The weather continued so cold that they lasted for three weeks!

The lane narrowed from about half way and became only wide enough for a governess cart, but gradually it was all widened and houses built on both sides.

My family first came to May Lane in 1932 to a house overlooking Cocks Moors golf course. I remember a great flock of rooks roosted each night in trees beyond our garden, and it was a fantastic sight when hundreds of these birds arrived at dusk, circling round and round, making a great clamour, and then settling in the trees, repeating this twice more before they seemed satisfied and settled for the night. Unfortunately, we think these wonderful birds became war casualties for they were not seen afterwards.

The woods of Cocks Moors were full of bluebells in the spring and must have been well known for this as lots of people would arrive and pick great bunches, which they often threw down after a while. These bluebells became casualties too, because sheep grazed the golf course during the war, and it was presumed they destroyed the bulbs by eating the leaves. After the war it was hard to find a single one, and only now are they starting to re-establish themselves, but they are finding it hard because of the amount of rubbish, lots of it in plastic bags, which are dumped in the woods.

It is hard to understand why people ruin their own environment in this way. They are despoiling Warstock Lane, an attractive by-way and relic of Saxon Birmingham bordering the golf course, in just the same way. It could still be a pretty lane just as it was in 1936 when I started at Highters Heath School, and walked down it every day. In summer it was full of wild flowers, but now only the coarsest survive because of the litter.

It is such a pity because this lane is a very ancient trackway indeed, and was once part of the boundary between Yardley and Kings Norton. It drops down to the Chinnbrook, where someone I met heard of people being able to catch trout there. The lane then climbs and crosses the Stratford-on-Avon Canal, and just past the bridge on the right there was a deep pool, and I remember looking down and seeing moorhens. I did not realise it at the time, but this was probably an old clay pit as there were lots in this area.

After the war, it was filled in and built on, as was the land on the opposite side of the lane. The bus garage was also put on part of their land. A neighbour remembers it in his youth as being a nice farm owned by people called Taylor, and he was allowed to take cider kegs to men working in the fields.

I still live in May Lane, about half way up now, where the snow houses were built, and our garden still contains part of the original lane hedge under which blue bells grew. We also have the Oak to which the farmer used to drive his pigs to eat the acorns.

Brenda Unwin



May Lane looking very new!

KINGS HEATH RAILWAY STATION

The Moseley & Gloucester Railway Co. authorised the opening of Camp Hill, Moseley and Lifford Stations in 1840, Kings Norton in 1849, Kings Heath and Moseley in 1867. It was used extensively, particularly from the beginning of this century until the late 1930s.

At one time, a regular service existed with as many as eight trains in one direction before 9.30 a.m. Trains from New Street called at Camp Hill, Brighton Road, Moseley, Kings Heath, Hazelwell, Lifford, Kings Norton and beyond. Business men from the city were able to get home for lunch. In the 1930s you could travel from New Street, or intermediate stations, to Barnt Green for 6d return, in off peak hours, and it was the same to Sutton Park. Old photographs show a footpath from the Station to the High street opposite Valentine Road for the convenience of passengers living in that area.

Also not to be forgotten were the happy occasions when the station became the starting point for many adventures in the form of family outings, day trips and Church and Sunday School outings, Barnt Green or Sutton Park being favourite venues. The train was the chief means of communal transport in the pre-1920s.

Although the passenger station closed in February 1941, the goods yard, where the Texas building now stands, continued in use for many years. There were three sets of lines, two used for coal wagons to be shunted and unloaded by coal merchants, all of whom had their individual offices on the site. Each wagon would hold ten tons of coal and one train would haul about 50 wagons. The third line was used for merchandise for local delivery. A crane for dealing with heavy goods stood on the line quite close to the Police Station stables. Coal for local delivery was carried in a horse drawn cart of the tip-up type, and a ton, (maximum load), would be tipped into the road in front of a customer's house. Small deliveries were made in one hundredweight bags at a cost of one shilling and six pence per bag.

Parcels of other merchandise were delivered to local traders by horse-drawn covered wagons. One delivery man was Mr. W. Fleet (who, in an old photograph, is shown with the Stationmaster Mr. Brain).

The staff of Kings Heath Station were besides Mr. Brain, Mr. Bramwell, Mr. Allington and Arthur Candlin - the writer's father-in-law.

The coal and coke merchants were Dixon & Baker. In the early 1920s, Dixon & Baker sold out to Mr. F. Sharp, and about 1924 Mr. Sharp sold out to Mrs. S. J. Strong.

The house on the corner of Valentine road, now used as a 'drop in' centre, was then the home and surgery of Dr. Young who was succeeded in the mid 1930s by Dr. Hodgson, both much revered doctors.

H. Williams

HIGH STREET

I remember Kings Heath when the trams ran down the High Street - No. 42 which went to Albert Street by the old Beehive Store, and No. 48 to the Town Hall part of town. These trams were designed with wrought iron open ends on the top deck so that one could travel in the fresh air - lovely in summer. The conductor rang the bell on the platform, then ran upstairs with his ticket rack to punch the penny, twopenny and threepenny fares.

Opposite the Library and Police station on the site of the present Social Services Office was Taylors, a high class family grocer, and nearby Mr. Strong's sweet shop selling Cadbury's waste and a good selection of boiled sweets.

There was Collettes the tailors, a barber's shop complete with pole, Taylors wine shop, and Profitt & Westwood seed and corn merchant, all in this area. Opposite, on the corners of Station Road, was Betty Staite's flower shop and Hobdays, music and pianos etc.

A little further up was a wool and haberdashery, Sadlers; a marvellously crowded shop with packets of wool - no pre-packed neatness - and a 'sock machine' which made socks to order. Then Dixons, a quite extensive ladies fashion shop.

Further still up the High Street next door to the old Post Office and preceding the Co-op, also no more, was Bebbingtons, called by some the 'in and out shop'. This was a marvellous old bazaar opened about mid 1930. It extended a long way back and had a smell all of its own, compounded of sugary sweets, treacle crops, biscuits, soap, disinfectants, candles, firelighters and shoe polish. Further back were clothes, jumpers skirts and socks, all laid out on counters with assistants behind, as was customary in those days. It was a great place to spend Saturday morning, especially in bad winter weather, but a penny had to go a long way. Sweets were 4d. a quarter. I still remember the smell, and the spring of the wooden floor.

Woolworths was another haven on a Saturday, then back to Auntie's for hot buttered toast for tea and maybe fancy cakes, it being Saturday.

Opposite the church was Coopers, a large greengrocers where quite half the stalls were spread across the footpath. Next door came Nicholls, a high class hairdressers with a large pink mirror outside.

It could have been a hundred years ago, the whole atmosphere and tempo was so leisurely (with never a pair of Levi's in sight). These old happy times are doubtless retained in many peoples' memories.

Miss A. Cotton

WOOLWORTHS

In 1934, I was in Mr. Andrews' class at Kings Heath Junior School in Institute Road, which was on the opposite side of the road to the Kings Heath Institute. During the three years prior to this date, I had taken part in the school's annual concerts which were always held on the stage of "The Institute".

Wednesday 14 June 1933 had been a sad day for this Institute when a resolution had been passed by its members who agreed that it could not continue and that the building should be offered for sale.

The site was duly purchased, and contractors moved in to alter the building to suit the requirements of its new owners Messrs. F. W. Woolworth.

The opening day was announced to be 1 June 1934, and I recall that all the children at the Kings Heath School, were specifically instructed that they were not to go into the new shop unless they were taken there by their parents.

I recall the disappointment on racing home from school, only to learn that my mother wasn't prepared to take me there on that wonderful opening day. I had to wait a few days before being taken into that new treasure house where everything on sale was within the 3d. and 6d. price range. (1½ and 2½p in today's prices). Timpsons the shoe-shop occupied the southern end of the Old Institute, and Pearsall the butchers were next door at that time.

Stan Budd.



Woolworth shop front in the old Institute building on King's Heath High Street