



KING'S HEATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Woodthorpe Farm King's Heath

Farms in and Around King's Heath

By

Margaret R. Shepherd

Occasional Paper No 13

May 2005

£1.00

In the beginning Kings Heath was, as its name implies, heathland of which there was a great deal in the area eg Druids Heath, Highters Heath, Balsall Heath and Birmingham Heath was where the town eventually built its workhouse, asylum and prison. Heathland is good grazing land and the earliest settlers would have done just that. There was plenty of water as all early maps show numerous streams and springs as the heath overlaid clay. Clay is the very devil to work but once made friable it becomes a good growing medium as it retains moisture so the farms gradually became mixed i.e. arable and grazing. Across the heath ran the highway which was and still is literally a highway running from Birmingham to Alcester and the south. To the right, facing Birmingham, the road drops down Brook Lane to the valley of the river Cole and to the left drops down Fordhouse Lane to the valley of the river Rea. This highway was always busy. In the 12th Century Peter de Birmingham was granted a charter to hold a market so farmers came up from Alcester and Evesham to sell their produce while manufactured goods from the town went southwards. Probably the first settlement would have been a stopping off place for these travellers with similar ones at Balsall Heath and Moseley. Gradually the small Worcestershire hamlet grew as cottages were built along the highway but all around was farmland with small farmhouses and labourers' cottages.

Anyone looking at a map of Kings Heath today would be struck by the names of the roads as they are predominately "lanes" – May Lane, Brook Lane, Haunch Lane, Limekiln Lane etc. and anyone can see that they are not lanes in the accepted sense of the word but suburban streets. They were originally, of course, the tracks running from farm to farm and farm to highway and it is possible to find isolated pockets in built up suburbia to remind us of what the area looked like pre 1920 e.g. by the canal bridge by Yardley Wood church and across the canal bridge in Warstock Lane. Mention of the canal is the clue as it provides a picture of what Kings Heath used to be like.

Around the highway, then, there were a large number of small farms usually about 30-50 acres and providing a living for the farmer and his family and maybe one or two labourers. On the far right of the area close to the river Cole were Brook Farm and Little Sarehole Farm. They were situated at the bottom of old Brook Lane, now Colebourne Road, with Little Sarehole near the ford and Brook farm near the Four Arches bridge and possibly named after the Brook which ran down what is now Dene Hollow into the river. The Cole always flooded easily and still does as foolish people trying to drive across the ford in Green Lane after heavy rain have found to their cost. Sarehole is a corruption of Sareholm which means a flood meadow, Little Sarehole farm was probably Tudor in origin with later outbuildings. Brook farm was Georgian and the Webb family living on the other side of the river owned both of them. Four Arches bridge was built to enable the crossing from Webb farm to Brook farm when the ford was impassable.



Brook Farm and Little Sarehole Farm, looking across the River Cole from Webb Lane ford, the Four Arches Bridge is on the left of the picture, c1900.



Map of the Dingles showing Brook Farm and Little Sarehole Farm (next to Brook Farm).

Between Brook farm and Sarehole Mill lay Sarehole farm and was where the Woodlands garage is situated in Wake Green Road. When the Yardley estate was sold to Birmingham Corporation in July 1913 it was described as a 63 acre farm lying between Swanshurst Lane and the Cole and the farmhouse contained 2 sitting rooms, 5 bedrooms, kitchen, scullery, dairy and cellar.

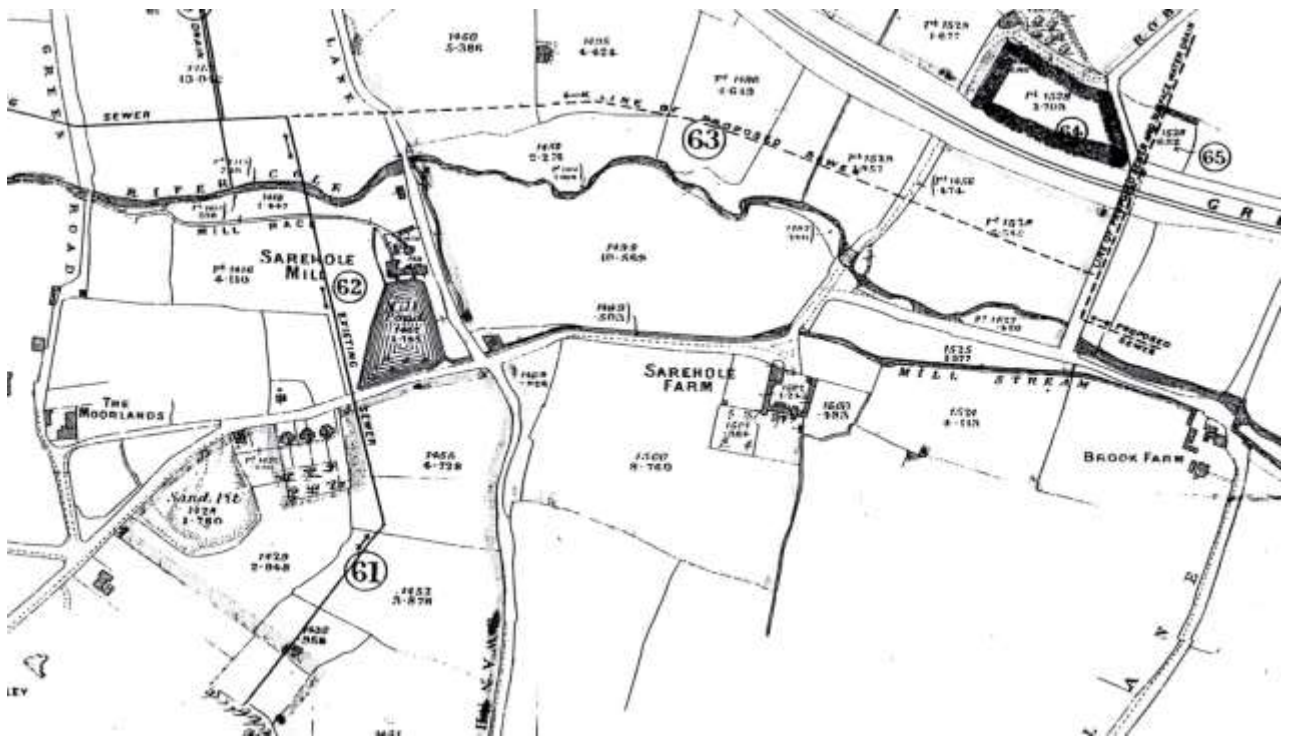
Tittford farm is not misspelt. This is how it was spelt on all the early maps but when Birmingham Council built the housing estate they changed the name to Trittford either by accident or design. The farmhouse stood on the corner of School Road and Glastonbury Road and Yardley Wood library is built on its farmland. The road running between the library and the health centre is Old Farm Grove. The farm was 115 acres and the house comprised 2 sitting rooms, 5 bedrooms, a box room, kitchen, larder, scullery, pantry, cellar and dairy. The water pump was in the kitchen garden.

Quagmire farm at the far end of Glastonbury Road was well named as it became a quagmire in the winter. It was 30 acres with a brick and tile house with sitting room, 4 bedrooms, kitchen, scullery and 2 larders. It was let to Charles and Thomas Reeves. They left in March 1914 but the area was not built on until after the war. The house attached to Titterford Mill which stood at the end of the Mill Pool (now Trittford Park) was obviously very fine as it had a dining room, a drawing room, breakfast room, 7 bedrooms, parlour, kitchen, scullery and dairy. It had been a corn mill and was advertised as such in 1783 but was converted to a steel rolling mill for the manufacture of pen nibs. It was demolished after a fire in 1926.

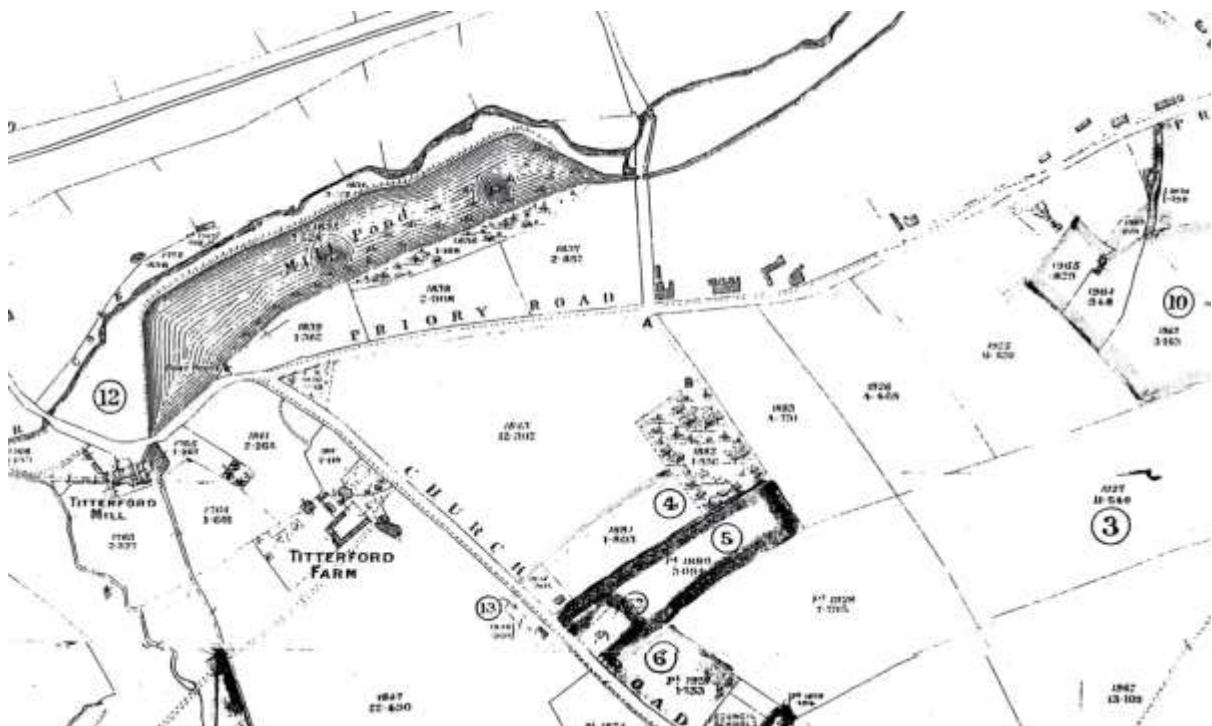
Also included in the sale that day were Ivyhouse and Billesley farms. Ivyhouse had a long frontage to Yardley Wood Road and Brook Lane standing roughly where Bradnock Close is today. It had 2 sitting rooms, 3 bedrooms, kitchen, pantry and cellar. Billesley farm lay a distance from Yardley Wood Road and stood on the corner of the present day Wold Walk and Hullbrook Roads. The house had 2 sitting rooms, 5 bedrooms, kitchen, back kitchen, larder and dairy. On the other side of Yardley Wood Road stood Billesley House farm and the remains of the house can be seen in the police station facing Swanshurst Park. Nearer to Kings Heath was Billesley Hall farm and its house became Moseley golf clubhouse.

On the other side of the Alcester Highway was Dad's Lane farm and O'Dells farm. Mrs Ruth Foster's mother-in-law lived there as a child when it was known as Fir Cottage as her father Mr. Mullins, was farm bailiff, to either the Holder or the Chamberlain families. On the other side was Eaton farm and Reynolds farm. She could remember hay making which would have been pre World War 1 as she was 18 when the war started in 1914. There was another farm on the Dogpool Lane and Pershore Road corner which might have been called Hall's farm and another at the top of Shutlock Lane. This was Broughall's farm and they specialised in white fowl. This farm was bombed in the Second World War. Dad's Lane originally ran from Bleak Lane (now Vicarage Road) but when the avenue of trees was planted in the grounds of Kings Heath House it was called The Avenue and later Avenue Road.

3



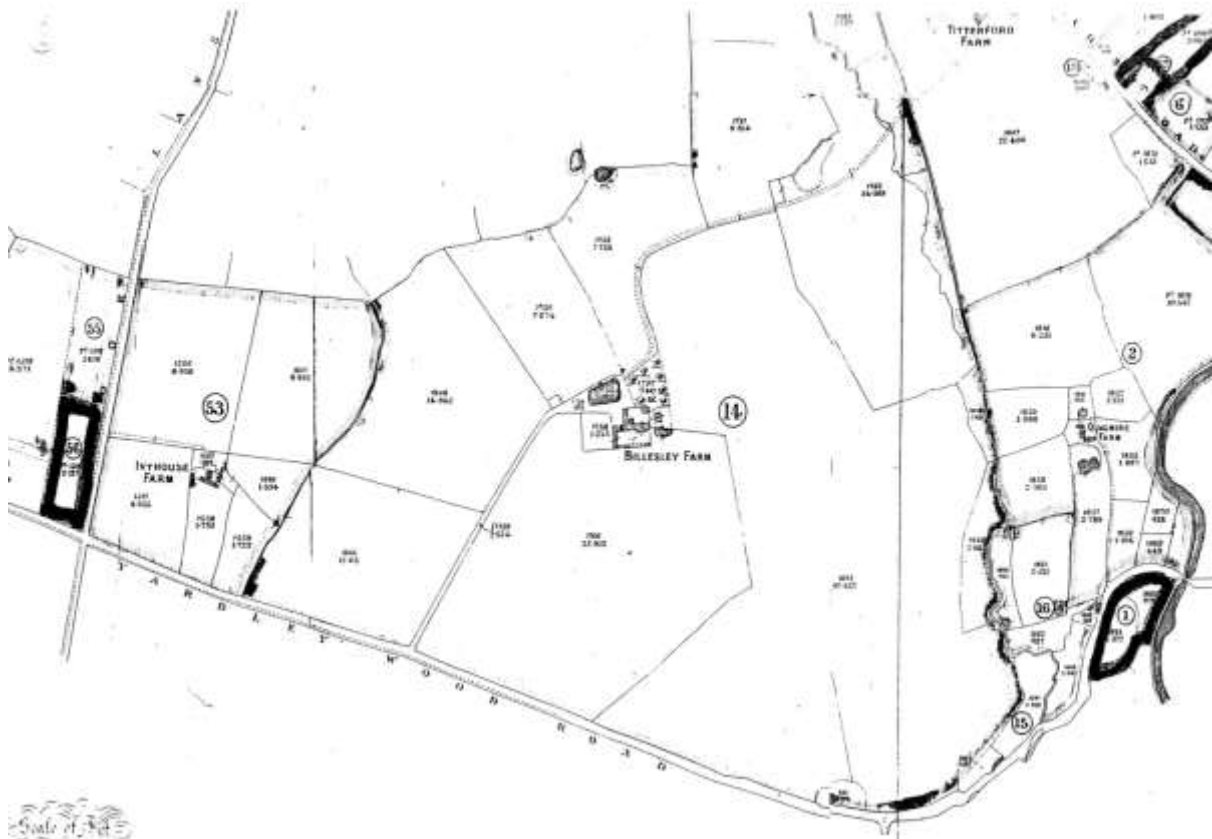
Map showing Sarehole Farm c1900.



Map showing Titterford Farm c1900.



Billesley Farm



Map showing Ivyhouse Farm, Billesley Farm and Quagmire Farm c1900.

Pineapple farm stood at the junction of Bleak Lane and Fordhouse Lane where there is now an island with shops to the left and St Mary Magdalene church to the right. Some old maps refer to it as Pineapple farm but either name is difficult to interpret. Another not obvious name is Dawberry Fields – a corruption of Dogberry perhaps which is an old Warwickshire name. Fred Reynolds born there in 1912 and his brother Arthur born in 1917 both attended Colmore Road school.

Woodthorpe and Southern farms both stood in what is now Woodthorpe Road. Mr Tom Platt's great grandfather was Seymour Greves who lived from 1820-1870. He married Elizabeth Walton and she is the Elizabeth Greves living at Southern farm aged 61 in 1881. The farm was situated where Hannon Road is now. Seymour had a licensed house called the Peartree Inn and it stood on the corner of Featherstone Road and Tenbury Road. Tom's grandfather was John Ingram Greves and he remained with his mother at Southern farm until 1900 when he moved to Woodthorpe farm. John had three sons and a daughter – Tom's mother. The eldest Seymour farmed at Malthouse farm which had a brewery at the back and left there in 1968. Horace born in 1887 farmed at Alcester Lanes End until his death in 1975. The youngest, Edwin, stayed at Woodthorpe and then went to Monkspath when Sunderton Road was built in 1951. He died in 1973, Daisy born in 1892 married in 1921 and moved to live on the Alcester Road in 1923. While Edwin was away in W.W.1 she took over the milk round. Grandfather's brother Fred and his wife Mary Ann had a shop in Albert Road. Another cousin was Arthur Greves and he farmed in Druids Lane. Woodthorpe farm had dairy cattle so had a milk round with horse and float. There were also stables and some arable. Water came from a pump in the yard and the lavatory was at the bottom of the garden. All the family went there for Christmas.

Death of Mr J.I. Greves (1918)

The funeral took place on Thursday of Mr John Ingram Greves of Woodthorpe farm or as it used to be known, Alcester Lanes End farm. Mr Greves had been ill for some time. He was the eldest surviving son of the late Mr Seymour Greves of Alcester Lanes End. The family have been associated with the district for very many years; in fact they can be regarded as one of the oldest. It is an interesting fact that Mr John Greves and his father were said to be descendants of the noted family of Greves or Grevis of Moseley Hall. Mr Seymour Greves was a well known villager in the old days when Kings Heath was a mere hamlet astride the Alcester Road and he kept a licensed house where is now Featherstone Road. He died in 1870. Mr John Greves had been a farmer all his life and had lived at the old farm in Woodthorpe Road since 1883. Mr Greves was 66 years of age and leaves a widow, three sons and a daughter. The coffin was interred in the family grave in the old part of Kings Norton churchyard. The service was read by Canon Hugh Price and the mourners were Mrs Greves (widow), Mr Seymour W Greves, Mr Horace G Greves and Private Edwin Greves (sons), Miss Greves (daughter), Mr Fred Greves (brother), Mrs Court and Mrs Sumnor (sisters), Mrs Seymour Greves and Mrs H Greves (daughters in law), Mr. A.J. Gupwell (brother in law), Mrs Bruce and Miss S Greves (nieces) and Mr Arthur Greves (cousin). The funeral arrangements were carried out by Ambler Bros.

4

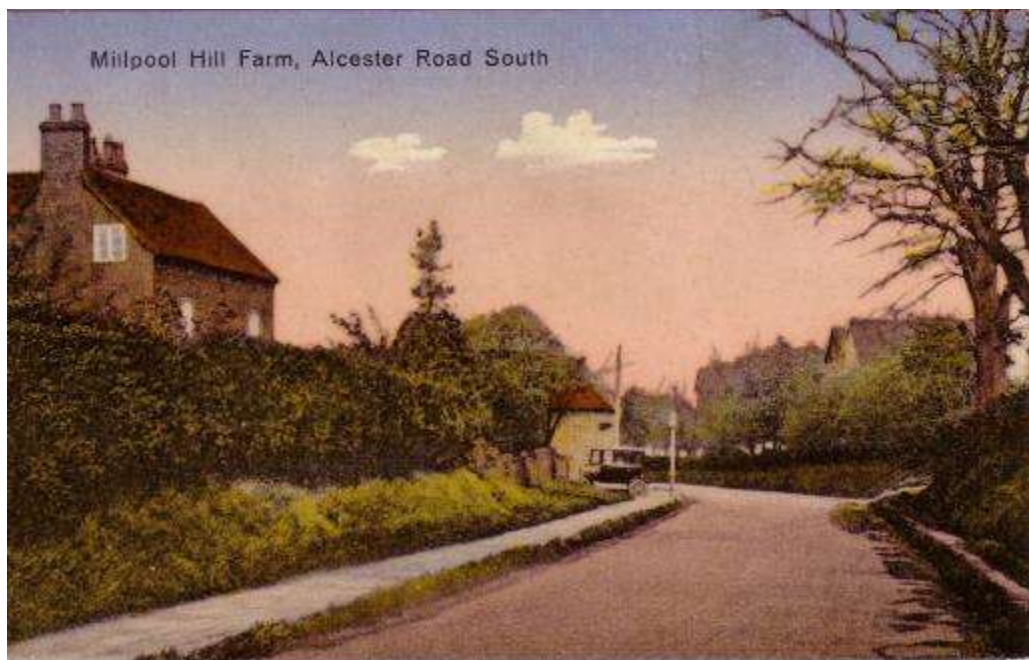
Many older residents can remember cows being brought from Broad Lane farm across the Alcester Road to what is now Cocks Moor Wood leisure centre. The traffic was not quite so heavy then. It is now difficult to cross with a dog let alone a herd of cows. John and Alec Cutler born in Broad Lane in 1904 and 1905 also attended Colmore Road school.

Bells farm and Kingswood farm both served Monyhull Colony with Bell's farm providing the pork, ham and bacon and Kingswood the dairy products for the residents some of whom were able to work on the farms. The colony had been founded in 1908 to provide care for epileptics and feeble minded persons from the Birmingham, Kings Norton and Aston Unions. Barbara Osborne worked there in 1945 as a clerical officer. She remembers that the offices were in Monyhull Hall which was a very fine house. The views from the Hall were pastoral and looked out over Druids farm with the farmland stretching from the valley below the hall uphill to the distant Alcester Road. It was very pleasant to cycle to work from Moseley. Lunches were a Sunday dinner affair served in the dining room and usually consisted of a roast joint – this at a time of strict rationing. In summer the rest of the lunch hour was spent in deck chairs by the stream which ran along the valley. It was an idyllic work situation and only the fact that she was the office junior with no friends of her own age persuaded her to leave and transfer to a job in the city. By 1962 the farms were no longer deemed suitable for occupation so the land was sold. The farms were gradually run down and the stock and equipment sold by auction in 1965 – 76 cattle, 2 bulls, 232 pigs and farm implements and dairy equipment. Kingswood was demolished but Bell's farmhouse left standing. Despite a devastating fire it has been restored and is now used as a community centre.

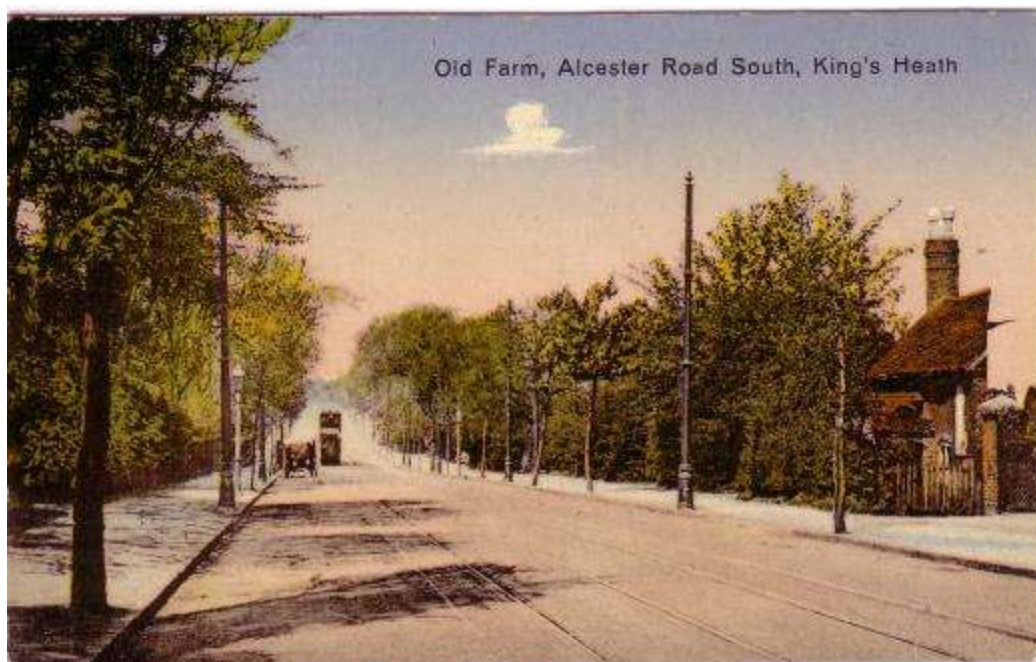
On the other side of the highway stood Millpool Hill farm with Sladepool and Daisy farms beyond it. Mrs Woodin lived at Millpool Hill farm and these are her memories.

People called Bird lived in Lime Kiln Lane and they made boats and hired them out for use on the canal. There were also occasional steamers and plenty of narrow boats carrying coal and manure. During the winter the canal froze and sledges were brought down to break the ice.

Chris Hodgetts rented the farm opposite Glenavon Road. He delivered milk and cream and sold it right up to the 70s. He had four daughters and one son. The Burmans were at Sladepool farm now Hawkehurst Road and they had four sons and a daughter. Henry Fletcher kept Maypole farm and he had pigs. Alf Greves was in Druids Lane opposite Crabmill Lane and his cousin Seymour farmed at Cocksmoor. Seymour's wife delivered the milk. Another member of the family farmed in Woodthorpe Road. Warstock farm was down Lime Kiln Lane and one of our fields was next to it and my brother and I used to take the cows down there before going to school. Opposite was Warstock House and the Plums farmed there until the 30s.



Millpool Hill Farm, Alcester Road South, early 20th century.



Old Farm, Alcester Road South, King's Heath, early 20th century.

Great grandfather bought Millpool Hill farm when it was called Ivy Cottage and I still have to auction papers. It was Lot 6 and said: 'A pleasantly situated small freehold country house known as Ivy Cottage - 3 bedrooms, parlour, sitting room, kitchen, dairy, wash house etc with garden and useful outbuildings - stable, 2 four tier cow houses, chaff house, pig sty etc. and a field of turf land occupied by Mr Jones at rent £24 p.a.' Hollywood farm near the Maypole was sold at the same auction: 'Five pigsties 2 stall stable, four tier cowhouse, gig house, loft, granary, fowl house etc. Garden and cottage fronting road from Alcester Road to Yardley Wood and Solihull Lodge called Hollywood cottage containing two bedrooms, sitting room, kitchen, pantry, brew house, pig sty etc.'

Great grandfather had four sons and when he died in 1896 he left the farm between them. One tenanted it but when he died in 1920 it had to be auctioned and grandfather Charles Jun bought it. My two brothers and myself were born there.

I went to Yardley Wood school and then to Highters Heath. There was no running water and the pump in the yard had to be used for water not only for the house but also for the animals. If the pump went wrong we sent for the old pump man who would go down on a swing to put it right. Neither was there gas or electricity so we had oil lamps and candles. All cooking was done on the range which had to be black leaded. My mother was an excellent housewife and when a pig was killed was able to make lard and faggots and chitterlings. She, of course, had learnt from her Devonshire mother.

I remember round about the time of the General Strike in the late 20s we couldn't sell the milk or the cows. My mother used to heat the milk on the hob and skim off the cream for us and the rest we fed to the pigs. Soon after the Milk Marketing Boards was set up and milk was sold to the Board for retail so you were sure of a milk cheque each month. There were many children in school, though, who had Evening Mail boots and free dinners.

By 1936 life was getting easier as gas and water had been laid on and a bus to Kings Heath or town passed the door but Birmingham Council put a compulsory order as they wanted the land for housing for the slum clearance from town. We were given six months to get out. We looked round for somewhere else as both boys wanted to stay in farming and then we saw Wythwood Grange for sale. The main who owned it had started the football pools. My mother was rather frightened when she saw the size of the house but there was a modern pig unit and brick cow sheds and a stable for horses so, with my grandmother's help, we bought it. We called it Wythwood farm but another family called Lewis had a Wythwood farm and at Stratford market it became difficult so we decided to change the name. My mother had been born in Chagford, Devon so we called it Langabeer meaning a long pasture and I am still here today.



Hollywood Farm was close to the Maypole.



Horse drawn loaded hay cart.

Great grandfather originally farmed at Greenhill in Poplar Road. My grandfather was at Billesley farm – the entrance was off Brook Lane opposite Swanshurst Park. They had a small lake where they boated and skated in the winter. When he died the land was taken for building and my grandmother moved to Dickens Heath. She was 92 when she died. They went to Yardley Wood church and my parents met at the church. Mother had come from Devon to stay with an aunt and uncle living in Valentine Road and she used to teach at Yardley Wood Sunday School. When she married in 1914 she was given a tray with a plaque which I still have. The second son was at Tritlifford farm which was about where the health centre and library are now. Another son was at Quagmire farm where Glastonbury Road is.

Miss Maisie Holt lived at Daisy Farm and these are her memories.

Mr Packwood who lived at The Homestead, Highters Heath owned the farm and my father was the bailiff. Before going to the farm he had moved from Wythall to Balsall Heath and worked for the city council. In 1914 he went into the army and the wives of the council workers took over the men's jobs to keep them for when they returned. His nine month old son died in 1917. He came home in 1919 and he, my mother and older brother moved to Daisy farm. I was born at the farm in 1921. We left in 1929 when the council bought the land to build the Daisy Farm estate. People wondered why it was called that as there seemed to be more buttercups than daisies.

The farm was situated on the corner of Prince of Wales Lane and Warstock Road and the address was 95 Prince of Wales Lane. It extended from Prince of Wales Lane to School Road, along Highters Heath Lane to Maypole Lane. All the fields were named and the Daisy Farm recreation ground is in the field known as Rainbow field. The shops now in Prince of Wales Lane were private houses. There were about 16 horses on the farm used for carting and the men who worked on the farm looked after them and mucked out the stables etc. The blacksmith was in Druids Heath Lane and if only a couple of horses needed shoeing my brother and I would ride them down there – bare backed with no saddle or bridle. Once my brother got off and couldn't get back on again so had to back the horse to a convenient fence.

There were a lot of farms round there: Andrews farm, mainly horses; Plums farm in Lime Kiln Lane – mainly dairy. They delivered milk in churns with a ladle to transfer the milk into the customers' jugs; Taylors farm in Warstock Lane; Lewis farm on Millpool Hill.

The grandparents of a school friend lived at Brook Lane farm which was in Brook Lane opposite Swanshurst Park (i.e. where Bradnock Close is now).

There was no gas, electricity or water at Daisy farm. The pump was in the yard and father's job every morning was to pump up the water and thaw it out in winter. There was a three hole lavatory and at frequent intervals the night soil men came and emptied it – made a bit of a stink! All the cooking was done on the black leaded stove which had a hook over on which the kettle was

7


suspended. Mother baked bread and cakes and tested the heat of the oven by putting her hand inside and knowing from experience whether it was hot enough. The garden provided all the fruit and veg and she also made jam and chutney. In the autumn blackberries were picked from the surrounding lanes. Later when we had moved from the farm Dad, my brother and me would catch a train from Yardley Wood station to Earlswood and walk to Henley picking blackberries where my mother met us with sandwiches and lemonade.

The kitchen was the only room used with the rest kept for high days and holidays. In front of the fire was a settle – high backed to keep out the draughts but it had to be shared with Henrietta a hen who liked her comfort. On bath night the tin bath which normally hung on the outside wall was brought in and the water heated in the corner boiler by the fire. Lighting was an oil lamp which hung on chains from the centre of the ceiling. It had to be carefully cleaned every morning otherwise it smoked. Candles had to be taken to bed and often blew out before getting there. During the winter a brick was heated in the oven, wrapped in flannel and put in bed as a necessary bed warmer.

In 1927 when I was 6 I contracted scarlet fever and went by ambulance to Little Bromwich isolation hospital. While there it was arranged to take out my tonsils but I had a relapse so the operation was never done. Then I and the rest of the patients were taken by ambulance to a diphtheria hospital where I promptly caught diphtheria. I only found out afterwards that there was a small pox epidemic in Birmingham so Little Bromwich was cleared to take these patients. Part of the cure for diphtheria was to lie flat and still and you knew you were getting better when you were given one pillow then two and finally three. On getting home I was desperate to get back to school, did so and went down with measles. I went to Yardley Wood school and then Highters Heath.

When the farm was sold we moved to Pendeen Road and my father became vergar at Yardley Wood church where he stayed for over thirty years. When both my parents died I moved to a flat and when my brother came to see me he said 'Fancy you living in Pigsty Field'.

There were other dwellings on Millpool Hill, William Walker whose address was 1 Millpool Hill attended Colmore Road school in 1915 but left in 1916 to go to Yardley Wood school. At number 4 lived John, Fred and Thomas Wilcomb who were at Colmore Road in 1917. Other pupils were William Wright at 4 Bell Cottage and Harold Beech at 1 Belgravia. Charles Portman's address was 2 Canalside and Percy Bettington was 1 The Caravan Millpool Hill. Francis Burman of Sladepool Farm left school in 1916 aged 13 to go to "farming work". The tenants of Malthouse farm were in 1780 Joseph and Ann Craythorne. The landowner was James Taylor but there was a family close by called Cocks as Joseph's will in 1822 was witnessed by three members of the Cocks family. The farm had a series of tenants and in the 1920s Seymour Greves was there.



May House farm and May farm both in May Lane were farmed in 1841 by John Craithorne and Mark Taylor respectively and a farm at Alcester Lanes End was farmed by Ann Craithorne. Thirty years later May House was occupied by William Cooke, farm bailiff.

The Haunch was a large house standing in Haunch Lane near to Haunch farm. In 1841 the farm was occupied by Thomas Avery and in 1878 by Henry Cooper. In September 1897 a report appeared in the local newspaper of a harvest supper held at the Haunch: "The beautiful residence of Mr F.J. Gibbs in Kings Heath was, on Thursday evening, the scene of festivities with the favourable ingathering of the harvest celebrated under auspicious circumstances reminiscent of the good old days. A supper of substantial and toothsome nature was served up in the large dining room with the host presiding supported by Councillor Thomas Hadley and Rev. Kenneth Buchanan-Allen, Vicar of All Saints Kings Heath, the sons of the host and the farm hands. A toast was drunk to these farm hands as the best to be had and despite advances in science essential to the running of the farm. There were other speeches interspersed with songs".

Only twelve years later the scene was very different. The house was now empty although Haunch farm was still being worked. In 1909 the Haunch became a convent. Millicent Taylor came to St Jude's parish Birmingham in 1900 and in 1905 founded the Society of the Precious Blood for work amongst the poor. At first Mother Millicent and two novices lived in John Bright Street. The street was in a noisy crowded part of the town with hundreds of rat infested back to back houses built in courts. The poverty and destitution were unbelievable. It was difficult ministering to the sick as the bed was a heap of filthy rags on the floor with little else in the room.

By 1908 the community had expanded and it was suggested that the House for Novices be further away from the parish of St Jude where they could be trained in the Religious Life away from the distractions of parish life. The nearest suitable house that they could find was at Kings Heath. It was an old house known as the Haunch with plenty of rooms and a large and very quiet garden. Nothing could be seen all round but fields and trees. So Mother Millicent, two sisters and three novices came to Kings Heath. They had a very small income and were dependent on alms or gifts in kind. The new convent was blessed and opened on St Luke's Day October 18th 1909 and Rev Roxburgh, Vicar of All Saints Kings Heath was present. The Haunch was a typical solid square Georgian or early Victorian manor house ten minutes walk away from the terminus of the Kings Heath to Birmingham tram at Alcester Lanes End. All Saints was two miles away and although the tram passed it they walked there and back every day to save the fare. As Howard Road had not been cut through they had the longer journey to the tram terminus and then down the main road. They were very isolated and in the first winter lived on mangold wurzles. The farm had a barn full and said that they could help themselves. The winter was hard with frost and snow from November to April. Occasionally there was a thaw and that meant burst pipes.

A novice described the house: it had a large flag paved hall with long stone passages leading off it. Of the five rooms on the ground floor the largest was made into the chapel and a long room near the kitchen became the refectory. At the back of the house was a butler's pantry, the kitchen another pantry, scullery and pump. Twice a day water had to be pumped up into the cistern. Cooking was done on a large old fashioned range. The only other fire was in the refectory. The stone passages were usually dripping with water. When they had flour bread could be made in the bake house. The community left in April 1914 to go down south.

Rushton's farm was on the corner of Wheelers Lane and Haunch Lane and was very damp because of the stream splashing over the area. Dr Dorothy Graham said that her father Ray Lowe farmed there in the 1930s. After the house was demolished Wheelers Lane school was built on the site and opened in March 1939.

Holliebank farm stood further along Wheelers Lane and opposite to Barn Lane. In the late 1890s it was owned by Councillor Hadley and in September 1896 an account was in the local paper of his harvest supper; "Those interesting harvest suppers have now unhappily on account perhaps of agricultural depression and the pressure of changing circumstances in the elements of life have almost fallen into destitute. Therefore the continuance of the old institution so near Kings Heath is a matter of congratulation. The host was supported by M Gibbs of the Haunch and Councillor Edward Holmes while the Misses Hadley were indefatigable in looking after the guests who could not fail to enjoy the good old English fare provided. In the speeches Councillor Holmes said that he had been acquainted with Mr Hadley for 25 years but his acquaintance with Billesley dated back 50 years and he could remember when Squire Taylor's Yeomanry troop had exercised at Moseley Hall on Waterloo Day. Following other speeches entertainment was provided by recitations from Miss Nellie Hadley and songs from Miss Florence Hadley and other members of the company".

A year later and a week before the harvest supper at the Haunch the paper reported on Councillor Hadley's supper which followed the proceedings of the year before. Mr Hadley was mentioned again in the paper at the end of October when under the heading "Apple-plexed" the following was reported: "A freak of nature of interest to those who grow and eat fruit is reported from Kings Heath. Among the crop of apples in the orchard of Councillor Thomas Hadley of Billesley was found a bunch of apples literally grown together in such a way that separation was impossible; a sort of happy family which defied the housewife's dissecting knife".

Hollie Bank farm was later owned by Mr. Fleetwood and at one time an elephant stayed there for a short time when a visiting circus needed accommodation. Mrs Jones remembered going over to the farm with her grandfather to collect some of the manure for his allotment.

10

By 1930, however, the whole area of Kings Heath had changed dramatically and for the reason one has to look at the city of Birmingham. During the 19th Century the city itself had changed with an expansion of industry. Unfortunately, the influx of labour and the demand for housing far outstripped the city's ability to provide it. As a consequence houses were built as cheaply as possible, as close to work as possible and in the smallest space possible. This resulted in hundreds of back to back houses with a tainted water supply, communal lavatories and a standard of living which was reflected in the high mortality rate especially among children. Prior to 1900 the Council refused to consider council housing preferring it leave it all to private enterprise. In 1890 some council flats had been built in Milk Street and Ryder Street but to rid the city of its slums a massive rebuilding was needed and for that space was required. The city had expanded in 1891 taking in Harborne, Balsall Heath, Saltley and Ward End but in 1911 there was greater expansion when the parishes of Aston, Kings Norton, Northfield, Yardley and Handsworth were incorporated. This included, of course, Kings Heath. Any planned new building was put on hold during 1914 to 1918 but in 1920 the city began a building programme which in fifteen years provided 100,000 new houses, half by the city and half by private enterprise.

In Kings Heath one of the first estates was at Billesley. The estate built on Billesley farm lay between Tritford Road, Yardley Wood Road and Chinbrook Road. The houses were non parlour type with a bathroom and one's own lavatory. In each garden was a fruit tree provided by Cadburys. Many who went there from the centre of Birmingham felt that it was the end of the world. One big drawback was the lack of amenities as no shops or schools had been built.

Further along Yardley Wood Road Ivy House farm was demolished and the estate around Oakcroft Road built. Fortunately the area opposite was not built on and Swanshurst park is still appreciated. Opposite to Swanshurst was Billesley House farm and its land was used for the "war roads" – Menin, Jutland and Vimy. Part of the farmhouse can still be seen as it is incorporated into Billesley police station.

Nearer to Kings Heath Billesley Hall became the club house for Moseley golf club. Billesley common was left but it has been reduced considerably in size with the building of Hollybank Road, the Earl Haig almshouses and Swanshurst school.

On the other side of the highway Dad's Lane farm made way for the Dad's Lane estate with Pineapple Road linking it to the Pineapple estate built at the junction of Vicarage Road and Fordhouse Lane with Allenscroft Road running parallel to the latter. Mr Williams remembered the building of the Dad's Lane estate in 1923/24. Some houses were offered for sale rather than for rent and the non parlour type were £425 and £475 for parlour type.

11

The bother big state was at Warstock which covered the farmland of Daisy farm, Warstock farm, Millpool Hill farm and Sladepool farm. The school in Wheelers Lane was opened in 1939 and the children from Kings Heath school on the High Street moved there and the old school building was closed. It had to be reopened and used again in 1946 when Wheelers Lane became overcrowded. The farmland of May farm and Haunch farm was built on mainly by private enterprise but the council houses built at the end of Haunch Lane near to Yardley Wood Road were so expensive to build as the land was expensive that they were offered for immediate sale.

Another war in 1939 prevented any further building and it wasn't until 1945 that the Dawberry Fields estate was built with Italian prisoners of war helping to cut Brandwood Park Road.

One of the last working farms to disappear was that of Malthouse on the Alcester Road when a report in the Birmingham Mail of 1958 spoke of the end of fifty years of farming for Mr Seymour Greves. He and his wife had been given 12 months to leave and their livestock and equipment were auctioned – 400 laying fowl; 98 pigs; 11 milking cows and a calf. The land was not for housing but to construct three new holes for the adjoining Cocks Moor Woods municipal golf club. The 400 year old farmhouse was scheduled for preservation and it was suggested it might become the club house. Unfortunately it never happened and it was left to fall into ruin. Through the efforts of some local people and in particular Mr Ken Unwin the house has been preserved and is now, in 2004, being restored by a private builder.

Census 1841

Alcester Lanes End	Ann Craythorne	Farmer
Kings Heath	Abraham Holyoak	Farmer
Kings Heath	John Simmons	Farmer
Haunch Lane	Thomas Avery	Farmer
May House	John Craithorne	Farmer
May Farm	Mark Taylor	Farmer

Census 1871

Bell's Farm	Alfred Greves	Farmer 263 acres
Maypole Lane	Thomas Berwick	Farmer 75 acres
Dad's Lane Farm	George Grainger	Farmer 100 acres
May House Farm	William Cooke	Farm bailiff
Hiters Heath	Alfred Greves	Farm bailiff

Census 1881

Drakes Cross	Henry Greves	Labourer
Drakes Cross	Benjamin Greves	Labourer
Hiters Heath	Alfred Greves	Farmer
Bell's Farm	Alfred Greves	Farmer 107 acres
Alcester Lanes End	John Powers	Farmer 70 acres
Southern Farm	Elizabeth Greves	Farmer
Alcester Road	Robert Jones	Farmer 16 acres
Alcester Road	John Burgogne	Farmer 70 acres
Alcester Road	Frank Breedon	Farmer 57 acres
Birchpool Cottage	William Johnson	Gamekeeper
Maypole Lane	John Hemus	Farmer 100 acres
Drews Farmq	John Wakeman	Farmer 30 acres
Money Hill	James Millward	Gentleman
Brandwood House	Harvey Gem	Gentleman
Dawberry Fields	John Ledbrooke	Farm bailiff
Brandwood End	William Bushell	Cattle dealer
The Grange Alcester Road	Isaac Bate	Farmer and brewer
Pineapple Farm	John Watkins	Farmer

Census 1891

Warstock Farm	Joseph Hill	Farm bailiff
Trittiford Farm	George Fleetwood	Farmer
Billesley Farm	Charles Rowe	Farmer
Ingrams Farm	Thomas Reeves	Farmer
Coldbath Farm	John Quinney	Farmer
Dad's Lane Farm	George Key	Farmer
Haunch Farm	Herbert King	Farmer
Pineapple Farm	John Watkins	Farmer
Vicarage Farm	William Roberts	Farmer

P.O. Directory 1845

Haunch Farm	Thomas Avery	Farmer and Malster
Bell's Farm	Joseph Brown	Farmer
Malthouse Farm	Thomas Pountney Jnr	Farmer
Millpool Hill	Thomas Pountney Sr	Coal dealer and Malster
Millpool Hill	Thomas Wheeldon	Farmer and Malster
Warstock Farm	John Bickley	Farmer
Monney Hull Farm	Humphrey Pountney	Farmer

Electoral Roll 1920

Dad's Lane	Edward Ede	Farmer
Alcester Road Paddock Farm	Horace Greves	Farmer
Malthouse Farm	Seymour Greves	Farmer
Sladepool Farm	Amos Burman	Farmer
Hollybank Farm	Thomas Hadley	Farmer
Maypole Farm	Arthur Greves	Farmer
Billesley Farm	Charles Reeves	Farmer
Bell's Farm	Harry Bromwich	Farmer

Railway Line



Tithe map of King's Heath Area after the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway was built in 1840, sorry no farms shown on map.