

Beechwood Road, Alcester Lane's End

“the continued urbanisation of Kings Heath”

By Gail Pittaway 2012



Beechwood Road

By 1895 Kings Heath had become a desirable area to live and a great deal of building took place between 1895 and 1907. This building began and continued further out of the centre of Kings Heath well into 1911 and beyond. In 1911 Birmingham Corporation took over the district of Kings Heath including Alcester Lanes End in 1911 from the parish of Kings Norton in Worcestershire.

By 1907 Alcester Lanes End had become the terminus for the electric tramway when the line was extended from Kings Heath. The terminus was originally situated outside houses situated between the Kings Arms, also known as The Knob, and Woodthorpe Road. The advent of the extension of the tram line encouraged the development of shops and houses, and a number of shops and a garage can be seen to be in existence in 1910. Some of the houses situated between the Knob and Woodthorpe Road were converted into shops at ground floor level. The shops included a garage now All Electric garages, a fruit a veg shop A.J. Carters which is now Vincent's Opticians and a Co-op store built which was in 1915 and opened in 1916.

By the outbreak of World War 1 private housing was developing at Alcester Lanes End. The urbanisation of the district was completed by the development of Woodthorpe Farm and Southern Farm during the 1950's. The Kings Heath Horse Show Committee had also bought land at Alcester Lane's End in 1923, which later became used as a greyhound stadium until 1971.

The 1904 OS map clearly shows Alcester lane's End as relatively undeveloped, apart from the existence of a couple of farms in Woodthorpe Road, Woodthorpe Farm and

Register for Kings Norton and Northfield RDC and UDC, in the Parish of Kings Norton, shows that W. Waring of 257, Hagley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham and (thought to be a firm of builders), had made applications to build a total of 71 houses in a new road to be constructed between Taylor Road and May Lane. The architect Percival Smith designed the properties. Beechwood Road is also the only road to have been designed from the outset as a tree lined street and is shown as such on the OS map of 1916. It still lined with now mature London Plane trees.

The building applications were made in stages as follows, first 3 dwellings, then 7 dwellings and then 61 dwellings and a shop. By 1911 these properties had been built and were occupied. In Oct 1911 an additional 9 dwellings, including WCs, were built. These dwellings were also built for W. Waring Esq 257, Hagley Road and so by 1911 there were 80 properties in the road, and by spring 1920 there were 89 dwellings.

Building Plan Register for Kings Norton Rural District Council and Urban District Council

Aug 1910 Planning application registered by the owner W. Waring to build a new road between Taylor Road and May Lane along with 3 houses. Architect Percival Smith

Oct 1910 Planning application registered to build 7 houses in the new road off Taylor Road at Alcester Lane's End

Nov 1910 61 houses and one shop the latter to be built on the corner of Beechwood Road and May Lane

Oct 1911 9 Dwelling houses to be built in Beechwood Road

For many years there was a fairly large property with extensive grounds situated at the top of May Lane on the corner of May Lane and Taylor Road. This was called May House. It had extensive gardens which contained hot houses where the owners grew vines. 1841 census shows that John Crathorne Farmer aged 65 and his wife Elizabeth lived at May House along with It can still be seen on the OS map of 1916 but by 1934 it had disappeared completely to be replaced with 9 new dwellings facing onto Beechwood Road and several new dwellings facing onto Taylor Road. By the time of the 1937 OS map Beechwood Road, Taylor Road and May Lane were completely developed.

1911 Census

According to the 1911 census the following families living in the odd numbered houses from 1 – 23 include: Parsonage, Tomkinson*, Whitehouse*, Hobday, Grant, Harpen, Oakley*, Tomkins, Arrowsmith*, Baggott*, Noon* and Brown. The occupations of the heads of the households were mostly trades including 2 cabinet makers, 2 carpenters , a wood machinist, a plasterer, a silver smith, a silver polisher, a bedstead maker, a tailor, a law clerk and a piano forte dealer and tuner (who was married with one child aged 3 and who had a servant aged 14.) All the working householders were below 50 years of age.

None of those aged above 50 were working, nor were any of the women including single women, married women and widows.

According to the 1911 census the demography of the residents living at numbers 1- 23 is as follows:

- 3 couples in their 20's with no children
- 4 couples in their 30's with between 1 – 2 children aged 3 – 8
- 2 couples in their 40's with 1- 3 children aged 8 – 18
- 1 widow in her 50's with children aged 19 and 20
- 1 widow in her 60's with 1 son
- 1 single woman in her 60's with no children

Most householders were born in Birmingham, which in 1911 was cited variously as Birmingham Warwickshire, Birmingham Worcestershire and Birmingham Staffordshire, probably depending upon which district in Birmingham the individual was born in.

However, other householders in the road came from other parts of the country including the plasterer who came from Cardiff, the tailor who came from Weymouth, the carpenter and joiner/cabinet maker came from Durham and the silver polisher from Lilyoak Worcestershire.

Beechwood Road, Kings Heath (unlike Beechwood Road Lightwoods) does not appear in the Kelly's Directory of Streets until 1913 and those entries which do appear are all trades people/professional people who probably paid to advertise their businesses in the directory.

By 1920 the only families left living in the road were the silver polisher, the law clerk and those working in the wood trades. In 1925 the grocer, situated on the corner of Beechwood Road and May Lane was listed in Kelly's Directory along with a jeweller, a dress maker, a nurse, a corsetiere and an art dealer.

Further along the road the houses numbered 40, 42, 46, 48, 50, 58 and 60 continued in the ownership of the Waring family until 1959 and were rented out to tenants for the sum of 22s 5d per week in 1959. However, in 1959 the properties were sold to Patricia Knowles Bolton of Fordingbridge, Hants and continued to be rented out until 1984 when one of them was sold to Anne and Peter Hodgetts and then to myself in 1999. Gradually over time properties have been sold off and now most of the properties in the road are owner occupied with the exception of a small number which continue to remain rented properties.



Beechwood Road forms a crescent running between Taylor Road and May Lane and was developed during 1910 and 1911.

May Lane, originally called May House lane linked May House at the top and May House Farm at the bottom. It began to be developed incrementally from 1905 – 1911 by various builders, who were allocated small building plots of up to two, three and five houses.

Between 1904 and 1916 there were no housing developments on Haunch Lane. There was a smithy between Taylor Road and Wheelers Lane. There was also a large property called The Haunch with fairly extensive grounds which was situated towards the Valley. By 1916 The Haunch became a convent and Taylor Road had become partially developed and there were still Farms in Woodthorpe Road.

By 1937 Taylor Road, May Lane and Haunch Lane had changed from rural idylls and had become fully developed. The smithy had disappeared and The Haunch had become a mental hospital owned by Birmingham Corporation.

Demography of Beechwood Road 1911

1 Jane Parsonage 58 widow and two children boy and girl aged 19 and 20 son was silversmith

3 George and Rosetta Tomkinson late 20's carpenter on building

5 George and Mabel Whitehouse late 20's Silver Polisher

7 Franklin and Fanny Hobday early 30's one child aged three and a servant aged 14 piano forte dealer and tuner

9 William and Clemence Grant two children aged 5 and 8 plasterer from Cardiff

11 Louisa Harpen aged 60 single no occupation

13 Minnie and Donald Oakley late 20's Law Clerk

15 Joseph and Martha Tomkins late 30's one child aged 3 Tailor from Dorset

17 Charles and Jane Arrowsmith three children aged 8 – 13 Carpenter and joiner and Cabinet Maker from Durham

19 Charles and Clara Baggott aged 32 and 40 Cabinet maker

21 Louisa Noone widow aged 65 and son aged 26 Wood machinist

23 Joseph and Caroline Brown early 40's Bedstead maker with 18 year old son Clerk

Beechwood Road in 1920

Beechwood Road in 1937

1 Isaac and Mabel Hickey	No change
3 No change	Thomas & Mary Tomkinson, Ernest & Minnie Smith
5 No change	No change + Maurice Whitehouse & Alice Morris
7 Walter & Bertha Brazier	Steven & Betty Watson
9 Emma Piercy	Elsie & Albert Noon
11 George & Florence Underwood	Walter and Bertha Brazier
13 No change	No change
15 Gilbert & Violet Powell	No change
17 No change	No change

Sources used:

- Buildings Plans Register for Kings Norton and Northfield Rural and Urban District Councils
- 1911 Census courtesy of Find My Past and Jan Pick
- OS Maps 1904, 1916 and 1937 courtesy of House Detectives' Research Guide and Andy Bishop
- Kelly's Directory of Streets
- Property deed
- Internet websites on Alcester Lane's End