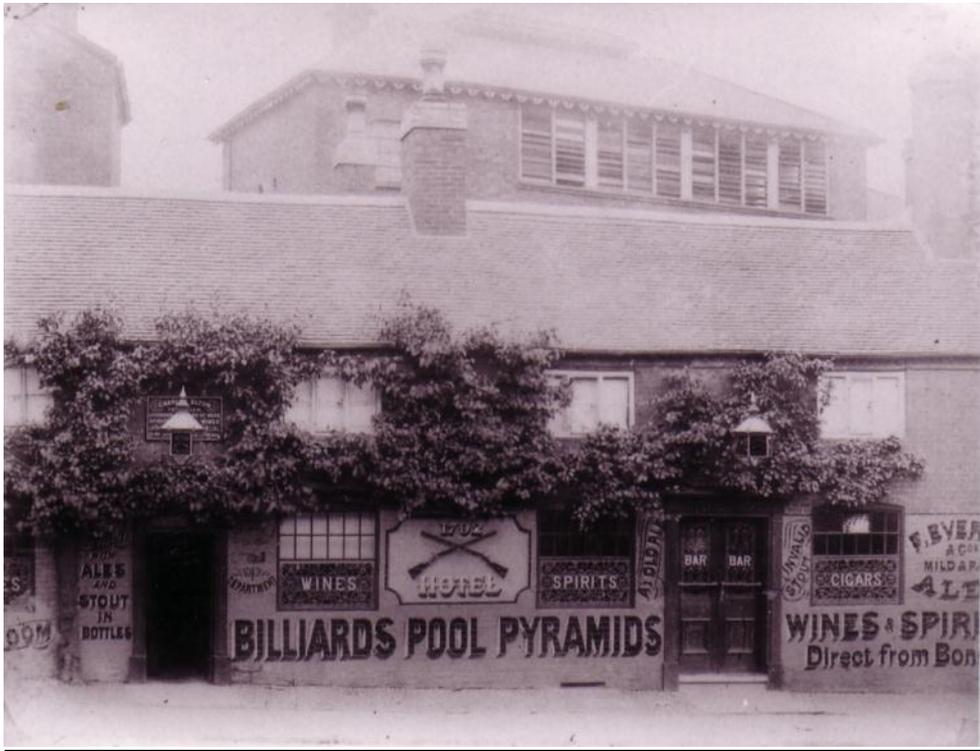


King's Heath Local History Society

The History of the Cross Guns, King's Heath



By Andy Bishop

The Cross Guns.

The Cross Guns stands on the corner of the busy High Street and Bank Street in Kings Heath. A pub has stood on this same site for over 200 years and played a very important part in the history and the community of Kings Heath. It is the busy main road that is the whole reason, not only for the Cross Guns' existence, but also for Kings Heath village's existence today. Originally called the turnpike, then the Alcester Road and now the High Street, it is this thoroughfare that brought about settlement and development in Kings Heath.

People have been recorded living on or near to "the Heath" or "the King's Heath" since the 1600s and 1700s in isolated farmsteads, such as Pineapple Farm, which were situated near to ancient trackways. In 1606 an indenture for the lease of some land by Sir William Whorwood of Sandwell states the following:

"...aforesaid between the King's Highway leading from Birmingham towarde Alcester and the heath or wast gronde called Kinge Heath at or neere all side thereof and nowe or late in the tenure or occupacon of wydowe Holmes."

In 1606 this King's Highway was, possibly, little more than a dirt track that cut through the ancient common and woodland of the Heath which had remained sparsely populated. More wide scale settlement only occurred when more people could pass through the area on better roads. This eventually happened when the ancient trackway from Birmingham to Alcester became a turnpike. This happened by an act of parliament in 1767, and soon after, the sparsely populated area of the Heath and its ancient commons were enclosed in the Enclosures of Commons and Wastes Act of 1772. The few other roads that existed remained as dirt tracks that cut through the area.

The turnpike allowed a safer and quicker passage for fruit and other produce from Worcestershire to Birmingham and, once completed, the traffic across the Heath must have increased as the thoroughfare was much more passable. Small cottages eventually began to line the turnpike and became concentrated in a natural dip in the landscape and this area became the small village of Kings Heath. At the heart of this low lying land a public house was built to serve the inhabitants of Kings Heath. This was the original Cross Guns.

The building that stands there today was built in 1897 and replaced the original Cross Guns which was much older. It has been impossible so far to put an exact date on the construction of the first Cross Guns pub from original documents as they no longer survive. However, we can certainly piece together a possible chronology for it from clues left in various later source materials.

The original Cross Guns (see photograph) was built from the conversion of two cottages that faced onto the turnpike. The partitioning walls were knocked through to make one large building. These old cottages or simple buildings like them made up most of the inhabited buildings along the turnpike in the 1700s and 1800s.

From the photograph one can clearly see that the old Cross Guns was built in 1792. One can also see just how small the old pub was and what a striking building it must have appeared to visitors to the area. The whole of the front of the building was dominated by a

large tree growing up it. This tree was in fact a pear tree. According to the Moseley and Kings Heath journal of March 1897 the locals actually called the pub “the Pear Tree”.



This has sparked some debate as to whether this was the original name of the pub and that it was changed to the Cross Guns later. This question is impossible to answer as no document remains from the 1700s that has the name of the pub as the Pear Tree. The possibility remains that the name “the Pear Tree” was only a local nick-name and purely a description of the premises, i.e. the building with the pear tree growing outside it. In fact, the pear tree itself appears to pre-date the time when the Cross Guns was established as a pub. The Moseley and Kings Heath journal of March 1897 has the following text:

“Another interesting fact that is connected to the history of the pear tree.
...this specimen of horticulture is 109 years old this year!”

This means that the tree was planted around 1788. It was planted outside one of two cottages on the turnpike and its owner trained it to grow up the front of the cottage maybe for decoration or maybe to obtain its fruit for the family, or to sell to passers-by. Who the cottage owner was and who converted both cottages into a pub called the Cross Guns we do not know as there are no surviving records from this time. We do know that the piece of land it was built on was awarded to Clement Cottrill, leather cutter/ sadler in 1772 when the commons and wastes were enclosed. He split the piece of land up and sold it to other people. The earliest known inhabitants of the Cross Guns were James and Sophia Bate.

JAMES AND SOPHIA BATE

James Bate was baptised at Saint Nicolas church, Kings Norton, on September 6th 1776. He was the son of Thomas and Mary Bate. At this time Kings Heath was part of the parish

of Kings Norton and baptisms and burials would occur at the parish church of Saint Nicolas, Kings Norton or Saint Mary's, Moseley.

We have no idea where in Kings Norton parish James and his brother Thomas were brought up, but we do know that James, during adult life, became a gun maker.

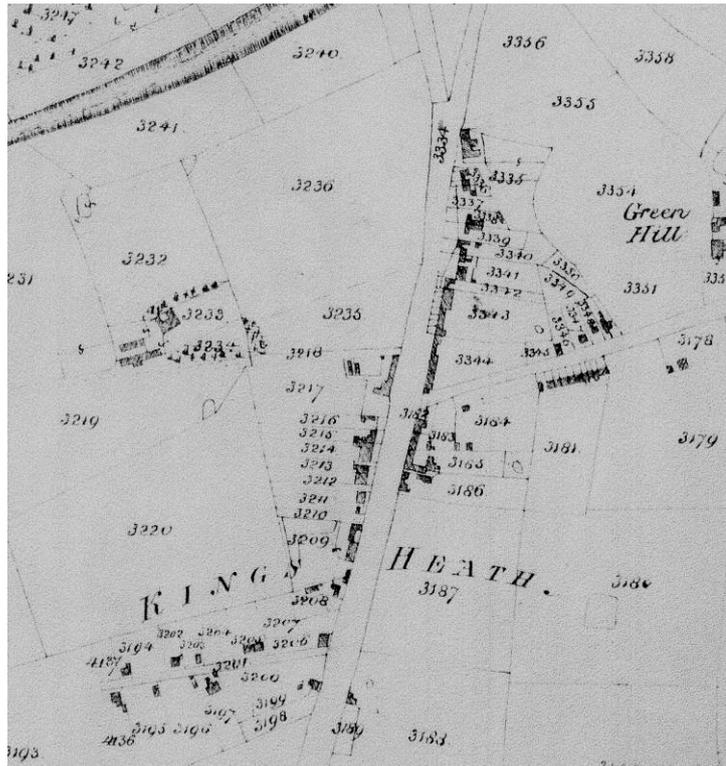
James is next found in Kings Norton parish records upon the baptisms of his children. By this time James had married a woman called Sophia and the first of their children was baptised on July 4th 1813. This child was named James (junior) and in the records James senior is described as a gunsmith. In fact, throughout the registers James is variously described as either a gunsmith or a gunmaker. A document relating to the purchase of land to build the Hare and Hounds describes James as a gunlock maker.

James and Sophia soon had other children:

- ◆ June 5th 1814, Thomas son of James and Sophia Bate, gunmaker.
- ◆ April 21st 1816, Ann daughter of James and Sophia Bate, gunmaker.
- ◆ November 28th 1819, Elizabeth daughter of James and Sophia Bate of Kings Heath, gunmaker. Sadly Elizabeth died in August 1825.
- ◆ March 12th 1826, Isaac son of James and Sophia Bate of Kings Heath, gunmaker. (Isaac was born March 18th 1823)
- ◆ March 12th 1826, Elizabeth daughter of James and Sophia Bate of Kings Heath, gunmaker.

The Bates were clearly living in Kings Heath by 1819 and may possibly have lived there even earlier. The parish records before 1819 give no details as to where people resided. However, James may have lived in Kings Heath all his life. James could not have created the original Cross Guns in 1792 as he would have been only 16 years old. So maybe it was James' father, Thomas who created the Cross Guns pub. Clearly the name of the pub denotes some link to the gunmaking profession and maybe Thomas too was a gunmaker. By 1819 James was already 43 years old and still described as a gunmaker and not a publican. Sadly, James Bate died on January 19th 1836 aged 59 years. He was buried at Saint Nicolas church, Kings Norton.

In fact the first member of the Bate family to be directly linked to the Cross Guns is Sophia Bate. The Worcestershire tithe map of 1840 shows Kings Heath as part of the Moseley yield for the parish of Kings Norton (see map). This map is the earliest detailed map of Kings Heath and shows which people owned which buildings and which pieces of land. The only roads shown are the turnpike (Alcester Road), Black (or Bleak) Lane (Vicarage Road), Dads Lane, Poplar Road, and Silver Street. Most of the buildings are located towards the northern end of the turnpike and Silver Street is the southern limit of the village. The surrounding area had large estate houses, such as Kings Heath House (the horticulture training building in Kings Heath Park), the Grange, Hazelwell Hall (where the Hazelwell pub now stands) and isolated farms such as Pineapple farm and Dads Lane farm.



Sophia is listed owning parcel of land 3217. In 1840 the area we now call the High Street was as follows:

<u>Plot Number</u>	<u>Landowner</u>	<u>Occupier</u>	<u>Use</u>	T U R N P I K E R O A D
3217	Sophia Bate	Various	Cross Guns Inn 6 Tenements	
3216	Thomas Knowles	Various	3 houses and gardens	
3215	Charles Horton	William Fletcher/ Joseph Green	2 houses and gardens	
3214	Joseph Davis	Various	6 houses and gardens	
3213	Baptist Chapel		Baptist Chapel, yard and garden	
3212	William Palmer	William Bodnam/ Joseph Hunt	2 houses and gardens	
3211	Daniel Whitehouse	William Bodnam/ Joseph Hunt	2 houses and gardens	
3210	Aaron Payton	Aaron Payton	Garden	
3209	Aaron Payton	Aaron Payton	Hare and Hounds Inn, Stable, shop, yard, Garden and moat	

The two buildings at either end of this stretch of the High Street are still in the same location today and are both still public houses.

1838-40 also saw the laying of the Birmingham to Gloucester railway at the northern end of the village with plans for a railway station to be built in Kings Heath. This had the potential to bring more goods and trade to the village.

At this time, only 4 years after James' death, Sophia owned a large piece of land, a pub and a set of tenements let out to various inhabitants. Sophia would have been able to count on the help of her sons James junior, Thomas and Isaac to help to run the pub. In fact Sophia is the first member of the Bate family to be described as a publican. The first Worcestershire census of 1841 lists her as such. James senior, in his lifetime, was always described as gunmaker. However, in the parish register of Saint Mary, Moseley is recorded the marriage of Elizabeth Bate on June 17th 1858. Although recorded well after James senior's death it describes his profession as a publican too.

After James' death Sophia continued to run the pub. Sadly, Sophia passed away soon after her husband. She died on June 18th 1844, aged 60 years. She was buried with her husband at Saint Nicolas on June 24th 1844. The running of the Cross Guns now passed into the hands of her sons.

JAMES, THOMAS AND ISAAC BATE

James, the eldest son, is next listed as the head of the family in the 1851 census and he is described as a brewer. Thomas and Isaac are both described as maltsters.

In Everson's history of Moseley, Kings Heath and Balsall Heath there is the following advert showing what a focal point for the local community the Cross Guns was:

“January 13th 1852. The seventh anniversary of the “Feast of the ancients”, founded by George Knowles was held at the Cross Guns, Kings Heath.”

A Birmingham trade directory of 1854 lists all the traders present in Kings Heath at that time. It gives a fascinating description of the area in detail as follows:

Charles Adams – beer retailer and shopkeeper
George Attwood – cattle dealer
Richard Badham – stone mason
Thomas Bate – horse dealer
James, Thomas and Isaac Bate – Cross Guns public house
Thomas Berwick – blacksmith
Elizabeth Carr – Hare and Hounds public house
Henry Chinn – farmer
Samuel Cox – farmer
Phoebe Davies (Mrs.) – shopkeeper
George Graham – Superintendent of Police
Seymour Greves – farmer
George Kemp – brick and tile maker
George Knowles – farmer and butcher

Charles Payton – beer retailer
Edward Todd – cutter
John Wharton – boot and shoemaker
George Henry Wilkinson – gardener and seedsman.

The nature of the trades listed shows how small and rural Kings Heath still was at this time with only 18 traders.

The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal of March 1897 sheds some more light upon the Cross Guns of the 1850s. It states the following:

“It is an interesting fact that the present commodious smoke-room and the room over it were built as part of the inn forty five years ago (1852), for the express purpose of a Police Court! The magistrates thus had the privilege and the opportunity of partaking of a drop of “Scotch” and other refreshments.”

In fact, the Cross Guns was used as a Police Court up to the 1890s. The petty sessions were held in the room above the Cross Guns and shows what an important building the pub had become. Not only was it a focus for the local community, in terms of drinking and entertainment, but it was also at the heart of law and order in Kings Heath.

The Birmingham Weekly Post of Saturday December 24th 1904 had the following article describing the Cross Guns in some detail:

“Reminiscences. The Cross Guns, Kings Heath.... The Cross Guns is an old inn modernised. There are hundreds of our readers who remember the fine old jargonelle pear tree which used to spread its branches over the front of the house; there may be some who were the lucky recipients of a specimen of its luscious fruit, for it used to bear a goodly crop regularly, and the Messrs. Bate were in the habit of giving (as an especial mark of favour) the fruit to friends. The house was originally founded by a Mr. Bate about a century ago. Originally a tailor, Mr. Bate senior found the licensed business more profitable than cutting up nankeen and doeskin. He had three sons and two daughters – Thomas (a maltster), James (a locksmith), Isaac, Ann, and Eliza. All are dead excepting the last named, and this lady still resides in Kings Heath.”

The family details given are incorrect as it appears to confuse James junior and senior. James senior being a gunsmith and James junior a brewer and maltster. There is also no evidence of James senior being a tailor. He is described as a gunsmith as early as 1813 and always so until his death.

The article continues and describes the gardens at the back of the pub:

“Under the three sons’ management the Cross Guns became a famous house, and many parties used to go there from Birmingham, and in its extensive gardens at the back used to enjoy their refreshment surrounded by flowers – chiefly roses. It was the custom to present a moss rose (this flower was especially cultivated) to any respectable visitor, but evidently the hooligan is of greater age than one could credit, for owing to the wholesale robberies and depredations the garden was eventually closed to the public.”

This is the first description of the Cross Guns in any real detail. There is no other mention anywhere about the pub's rose garden and so one has to be careful as to its accuracy. It is certain that other pubs in Kings Heath and Moseley (the King's Arms and the Fighting Cocks) did have well known pleasure gardens and advertised them in local publications. The gardens at the Cross Guns are not mentioned in the tithe apportionments of 1840, but the same inventory described the Hare and Hounds having a "garden and moat".

The article continues and describes Isaac Bate and his brothers' interests:

"Mr. John Andrews, one of Kings Heath's oldest inhabitants – he has lived there for sixty years – well remembers Isaac Bate's breathless audiences in the tap room during the Crimean War. Here it was that Isaac read the latest edition of the newspaper – it cost fourpence then. After reading all the news contained in the "extra special" Isaac would then explain to his eager audience his views on the latest movement, filled in with frequent references to a map which hung on the wall. When Mr. Andrews knew Kings Heath first there were but two shops – a butcher's and a grocer's. Now it is almost a township. An event which stirred Kings Heath to animated excitement was the race for the Derby about forty years ago. The Messrs. Bate were very fond of horses, and not only bred, but bought, racers. They had a three year old named Cockney Boy, which was thought very highly of, and it was considered to have a great chance in the Epsom Derby. Cockney Boy was trained at Kings Heath, and amidst the good wishes of all the inhabitants started on its 120 mile journey in a van by road. To the chagrin of all concerned, Cockney Boy figured prominently in the rear in the race for the blue ribbon."

The Bates interest in horses would not have been unique in Kings Heath. The dealing in cattle and horses was well known in the area. For example, Edward Walker is described as a horse dealer in Kings Heath in the parish records of Saint Mary, Moseley, as early as 1830. However, the Bates clearly had an extra competitive side to their characters and wanted to breed and trade in race horses. I would also assume that they were not averse to a little gambling on the outcome of the races in which their horses participated.

The Bates had a business drive and ran their pub, their horses and also a brewery that was situated behind the pub. The Birmingham Weekly Post continues its article as follows:

"Mr John Andrews acted as a brewer to Messrs. Bate when they established a brewery in 1849."

Other sources give the brewery being established by James Bate senior in 1831 and so exactly which of these dates is correct is uncertain at present.

During the late 1850s and early 1860s the Bate family became more involved in running their own expanding brewery business and so they allowed the Cross Guns to be run by its first tenant landlord.

WILLIAM JACKSON

William Jackson was born in Bilston, Staffordshire in 1808 and he is recorded at the Cross Guns in the 1861 census. Exactly how long he ran the Cross Guns for we are unsure. What we are sure of, however, is that he must have been a valued and trusted employee of

the Bates as he is associated with them, in one way or another, from the 1860s to the 1880s.

Sadly, in the 1850s, the Bate family had lost another member. Thomas died on June 14th 1855 aged 41. He too was buried at Saint Nicolas. The business of the Bate family was now in the hands of James and Isaac and by 1861 William Jackson had moved into the Cross Guns.

James and Isaac Bate moved into larger premises called the Grange located nearby (see photo below). The Bates first rented the Grange in 1858. The rate book for this time shows them occupying the buildings and 32 acres, 2 rods, and 18 perches of land which were owned by Miss Hamper. The Grange was a large house with grounds situated behind the Cross Guns and the brewery, in what is now, Grange Road (the road named after it). The house was built soon after the turnpike in 1767 and was for many years the home of William Hamper, antiquary. The house no longer remains as it was demolished in the 1890s and the Grange Estate built over it and its grounds.



The Bates were fast becoming a very influential family in Kings Heath. They owned and ran their own brewery, lived in one of the largest houses in the area, and in 1859 James and Isaac were listed leasing Malthouse Farm (beside Cocks Moor Leisure Centre). Soon they also had a monopoly on brewing in the centre of Kings Heath when in 1866 they purchased the Hare and Hounds and its associated land outright.

In 1864 another Birmingham trade directory again listed the trades present in Kings Heath which had grown from 18 to 30 and the population had grown to 1,460. A greater variety of trades were also listed along with the many farmers, showing that Kings Heath remained

essentially rural, but was beginning to expand. Among the new traders were listed fender and fire iron makers, wheelwrights, grocers, road surveyors and a ladies' boarding school teacher. These trades showed how Kings Heath was attracting more people to come and live and work in its pleasant rural surroundings.

The railway had a limited impact on the area as there were only a few stations along its length until the 1860s, when more began to be added. This maintained Kings Heath's rural aspect.

On June 25th 1869 James Bate died, aged 56 years, and ownership of the Cross Guns passed to his brother Isaac. James was buried at Saint Nicolas and in his will his effects were listed as "under £14,000."

This now meant that Isaac, the youngest, was now the sole owner of the brewery and two pubs. Yet Isaac was a bachelor and had no heirs to inherit his businesses if anything should happen to him. All of the Bates were self-made men. They had worked hard all their lives and concentrated all their efforts into their business exploits which had made Isaac very wealthy. In 1871 Isaac married a woman called Eleanor and they moved into the Grange. Details of where Isaac and (Ellen) Eleanor were married are unknown at present, but they were married in the December quarter of 1871. Eleanor was born in Kings Heath and her father was William Curnock, cattle dealer. Eleanor was some 25 years Isaac's junior.

Isaac was also a very generous benefactor to Kings Heath. He, along with other wealthy men in Kings Heath, such as Joseph Nettlefold at Kingsfield House (where Saint Dunstan's now stands), gave their money to build Kings Heath Institute in 1878. This building stood on the corner of the turnpike and the road that was named after it, Institute Road. This establishment was built to give something back to the inhabitants of Kings Heath and for many years was a focal point for the local community, hosting concerts, dances, lectures, drama and many other social occasions.

By 1869 William Jackson had moved from the Cross Guns and was now working at the brewery as a brewers agent. With William Jackson no longer working at the pub, the Bate family turned to another of their acquaintances to run their pub. Everson's history of Moseley and Kings Heath records the following:

"August 6th 1869. The Cross Guns Inn. At Kings Heath Police court the license of the Cross Guns Inn was transferred from Mr. Isaac Bate to Mr. Charles Reynolds."

WILLIAM CHARLES REYNOLDS

William Reynolds was known by Isaac Bate in a very direct way. He was a tenant of his and lived at Isaac's house, the Grange, in Kings Heath from 1869-1871. William Reynolds was born in Birmingham in 1828, he married a woman called Rosina and they had three children, Abraham, Annie and Rosina. From 1854 to 1868 William is listed as working as a publican at the Fighting Cocks in Digbeth, just near to the Old Crown pub.

During the 1870s there were concerns expressed by the Police about drinking in Kings Heath. Everson's history includes the following:

“June 20th 1873. Sunday drinking nuisance at Kings Heath. Yesterday, Superintendent Humphries called the attention of the Magistrates to the nuisance caused by the Sunday traffic at public houses in the neighbourhood.”

The concerns about drinking were county-wide and led to a change in the licensing hours in the county and these too were recorded by Everson as follows:

“August 29th 1874. Kings Heath Licensing Act. From the 10th October 1874 all premises within the county, in which intoxicating liquors are sold by retail, must be closed by 10 o'clock at night.”

During William's time at the Cross Guns the last member of the Bate family died. Isaac died on June 21st 1885 aged 62 years. He left his effects worth £21,294 10s 9d to his widow Eleanor and ownership of the Cross Guns passed into the hands of the man that had taken over the brewery a few years earlier. His name was Frederick Everitt. William remained at the Cross Guns until 1890. In 1891 he moved to a house on Blenheim Road, Moseley, called Waverley. He died there on December 23rd 1892, aged 65 years. In his will he is described as a gentleman and left his widow, Rosina, his effects totalling £5,763 3s 7d.

In 1891 the Cross Guns was taken over by a man that had lived and worked opposite the pub since the 1870s. His name was Charles Elton.

CHARLES AND ELIZABETH ELTON

Charles Elton took over running the Cross Guns in 1891. Charles Elton was born in Stourbridge and married Elizabeth who was from Birmingham. They came to Kings Heath in 1875 and Charles began to work as a grocer, butcher and sub-postmaster.

The site of his shop is where Asda now stands on Kings Heath High Street. Along with the Cross Guns it was one of the oldest buildings in Kings Heath at that time. The shop was a conversion of two old cottages with the left hand side being the butchers and grocers and the right hand side being Kings Heath Post Office. The butchers purported to have been established in 1770 and was originally run by Thomas Knowles. The butchers was eventually taken over by William Bluck who ran it into the twentieth century.

Being a sub-postmaster, Charles would have known virtually everyone in Kings Heath including Isaac Bate and Frederick Everitt. Charles was a member of the Freemasons in Kings Heath and regularly attended meetings at the Masonic Hall in Kings Heath. He was also a founder member of Kings Heath Volunteer Fire Brigade formed in 1886.

Charles took over the Cross Guns at a time when the population of Kings Heath was beginning to expand rapidly. This had been brought about by the trams that could transport large numbers of people cheaply to the area.

In fact, the Police Court too was also regarded as no longer adequate for the needs of the area and a new one was built by the railway. Everson notes:

“October 19th 1891. Kings Heath Police Court. Worcestershire County Council have agreed to a report of the Standing Joint Committee recommending the extension of the building of Kings Heath Police Court at a cost of £4,000.”

By March 3rd 1893, the improvements had been carried out and the new Court premises were formally opened by Mr. Charles Pelham Lane M.A., J.P. acting on behalf of the Northfield Petty Sessional Division.

However, soon after the improvements to the Police court were completed an incident occurred which called into question the methods used by the workmen responsible for the improvements. The Birmingham Weekly Post of January 6th 1894 contained the following article:

“Exciting incident at Kings Heath Police Court. The Kings Heath Police Court had just disposed business yesterday when a sudden excitement was caused by the falling of a portion of the roof. There was a crash, and Mr. L.C. Colmore, the magistrates clerk, shot back in his chair and looked up for something else to happen. A large piece of wood, about 4 feet long, weighing between 5 and 10 pounds, and constituting the part of the frame of one of the panels of the ceiling, had given way and fallen about 25 feet to the floor, within a yard of the clerk’s chair. Rebounding it hit Mr. Colmore in the side, and chipped his desk. Happily Mr. Colmore was not seriously hurt. The piece of wood was examined and was seen to have been neither nailed or glued to the ceiling. The magistrates, apprehensive of further catastrophes, gave orders that the roof should be thoroughly tested, to see whether it had been constructed throughout upon the same principle.”

Repairs must have been carried out to some degree, as the court continued to run until 1896. It was at this time that the old brewery and the Cross Guns were taken over by Birmingham Breweries Limited. They decided that the old pub was no longer big enough or modern enough to effectively serve the rapidly expanding population of Kings Heath. They decided to replace the old pub with a much grander building in 1896. This event was recorded in the Birmingham News of September 1896:

“But a few short days, and the Cross Guns Hotel, Kings Heath, as it has long so appeared, will be no more. The demolition, which I predicted some time ago, is to be commenced next week, to make way for the modernised version of a licensed victualling establishment, under the sign of “The Cross Guns.” I regret to hear that very little mercy – in fact none – is to be shown towards the picturesque pear tree, such a thing of beauty, but alas, not to be a joy forever, for the workman’s axe is to be laid irreverently at the roots, with no voice to say, “spare that tree.”

Work soon got under way to construct the new Cross Guns. This process was to take quite a while and interrupted a traditional event for Kings Heath’s victuallers and their customers. In January of each year local victuallers gave away Christmas gifts of meat to their customers. However in January 1897 Charles Elton was prevented from this action as recorded in the Birmingham News.

“Host Elton, of the Cross Guns, on account of the building of new premises, which is going on, postponed his treating of the customers until the day of the opening of the modernised version of “The Cross Guns”, which is timed to take place in March.”

In the meantime, temporary premises for the Cross Guns were acquired along the High Street. The position of the premises were given in an account of the death of a lady called Mrs. Robinson (nee Molesworth) in the Birmingham News of February 1897:

“Mrs. Robinson was born in one of the cottages which stood where is now the temporary premises of the Cross Guns.”

The passing of the old Cross Guns was remarked upon in the Moseley and Kings Heath Journal of March 1897:

“The relics of the past are gradually disappearing from the ancient village of Kings Heath. There is now a new order of things arising from the rapidly-approaching advance of the twentieth century!”

“...and owing to the general increase of the population of the salubrious suburb of Kings Heath, the host – Mr. Elton – of that time-honoured wayside inn, known as the Cross Guns, has resolved not to be behind the times. In place of the quiet little hostelry there will shortly stand an imposing – hotel we suppose we must designate it.”

The journal also commented on the fate of the old pear tree which appears to contradict the Birmingham News view of events:

“The pear tree is not to be used as fire-wood. Mr. Elton is fortunately possessed, as anyone can observe, with the bump of veneration. He has had the tree properly “doctored” top and bottom, and replanted by the side of the new building, where it will probably remain until another Kings Heath arises.”

Clearly, the pear tree was not planted by the side of the new Cross Guns and it was never seen again. Keeping it in situ was not an option as its roots would have interfered with the construction of the foundations and the cellar. The old tree and the old pub it stood outside for so many years had now disappeared from the Kings Heath skyline. In its place was built the new Cross Guns (see photo), and this is the building that still stands today.



Sadly, Charles did not enjoy the new premises for long. He died at the Cross Guns on October 18th 1898. He had been taken ill a fortnight before with a “heart affection” and was making good progress towards recovery. However, he soon took a turn for the worse and died at about 6 o’clock in the evening. He was 53 years old. He was buried at All Saints church, Kings Heath on October 23rd. In his will he left his effects totalling £4,335 12s to his widow, Elizabeth. She continued to run the Cross Guns for the next few years with help from 2 of her 4 sons, namely Charles Hall Elton and Percy Alfred Elton. However, tragically, Elizabeth soon lost 2 of her sons. Charles Hall died in January 1902 of pneumonia, aged 27 years. Another son, Herbert Palmer died in October 1902 aged just 21 years.

These tragic events happened within a few years of her husband’s death and must have been a terrible shock to Elizabeth and maybe caused her to reconsider her position at the pub due to emotional stress. The Birmingham News of November 1st 1902 stated that Elizabeth was to retire from the Cross Guns.

The Cross Guns was purchased from Birmingham Breweries Limited by Mitchells and Butlers for £16,715 and became a managed house and remained so until the 1990s when it was taken over by the Goose chain.

THE NEW CROSS GUNS

The new Cross Guns was built between 1896 and 1897. The architects of the new pub were Wood and Kendrick and the contractor employed to carry out the building work was Edward John Charles of the Thelsford Works in Moseley. The new pub was much larger and grander than the old one. The interior was well laid out into separate small rooms with living accommodation for the staff at the ground-floor rear. The upstairs had several rooms for paying guests in the “Hotel”.

Upon its completion, the exterior and interior of the pub were altered in 1898 and 1904.



In 1898 a new billiard room was added on the first floor. This was built over the old stable area which was on the left hand, or southern, side of the building when viewed from the front. When the billiard room was added, the stables beneath were turned into a large smoke room. The alteration in 1904 was to the northern, or right hand, part of the pub.

Previously, a building associated to the brewery (see picture) had adjoined the pub here. However, by 1904 the brewery building had been demolished. The northern wall of the pub was now an exterior rather than an adjoining wall and so windows were added to this exterior wall in the 1904 alterations.

The Cross Guns name was changed to the Goose and Granite in the 1990s and soon after shortened to the Goose. It still trades under this new name today.

KNOWN LANDLORDS/LANDLADIES OF THE CROSS GUNS

? - 1836 James Bate
? - 1844 Sophia Bate
1845 – 1861 James, Thomas and Isaac Bate
1862 – 1868 William Jackson
1869 – 1890 William Charles Reynolds
1891 – 1898 Charles Elton
1898 – 1902 Elizabeth Elton
1902 – 1909 Harry Peters
1910 – 1916 Charles William Jones
1917 – 1926 Mrs. Annie Jones
1927 Charles Whittle
1928 – 1960 James Barnett Pearsall