

## Highbury Park: The History Within.

### **Dad's Lane Farm**

Dad's Lane Farm is featured on the King's Norton Tithe Map of 1838 and is listed in the Tithe Map Index as being owned by Henry Homer and occupied by John Wardell. The Farm comprised a house and buildings, a yard, an orchard, garden and 3 fields used for pasture and meadowland. It was situated on Dad's Lane opposite the junction with Shutlock Lane. In 1841 John Wardell was still farming the land according to the 1841 census. (By the time of the 1851 census James Bryant was the farmer occupying the land and buildings, followed by George Grainger in 1871 and George Key in 1891/1901.) The farm consisted of approximately 94.5 acres and was eventually owned by Austen Chamberlain and acquired 16.3.1919 possibly for housing development.



**Dad's Lane Farm**

### **The Grange Estate**

The Grange was a large mansion built towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It included 350 acres of land in its heyday. It was originally owned by William Hamper, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and later passed into the ownership of the Misses Hamper, daughters of

William. In 1838 it was occupied by Thomas Sharpe and his wife, who was one of the Hamper sisters, and included a farm, farm buildings, a garden and a large number of fields including arable, pasture and meadow land. It was located in a triangle of land between Alcester Road (formerly the turnpike road from Digbeth to Spernal Ash, (which was created by 3 Acts of Parliament dating from 1766 – 1828,) Dad's Lane, which had part of its name changed to Avenue Road in 1871 after Mr Cartland created an avenue of trees and Vicarage Road, formerly called Bleak Lane.

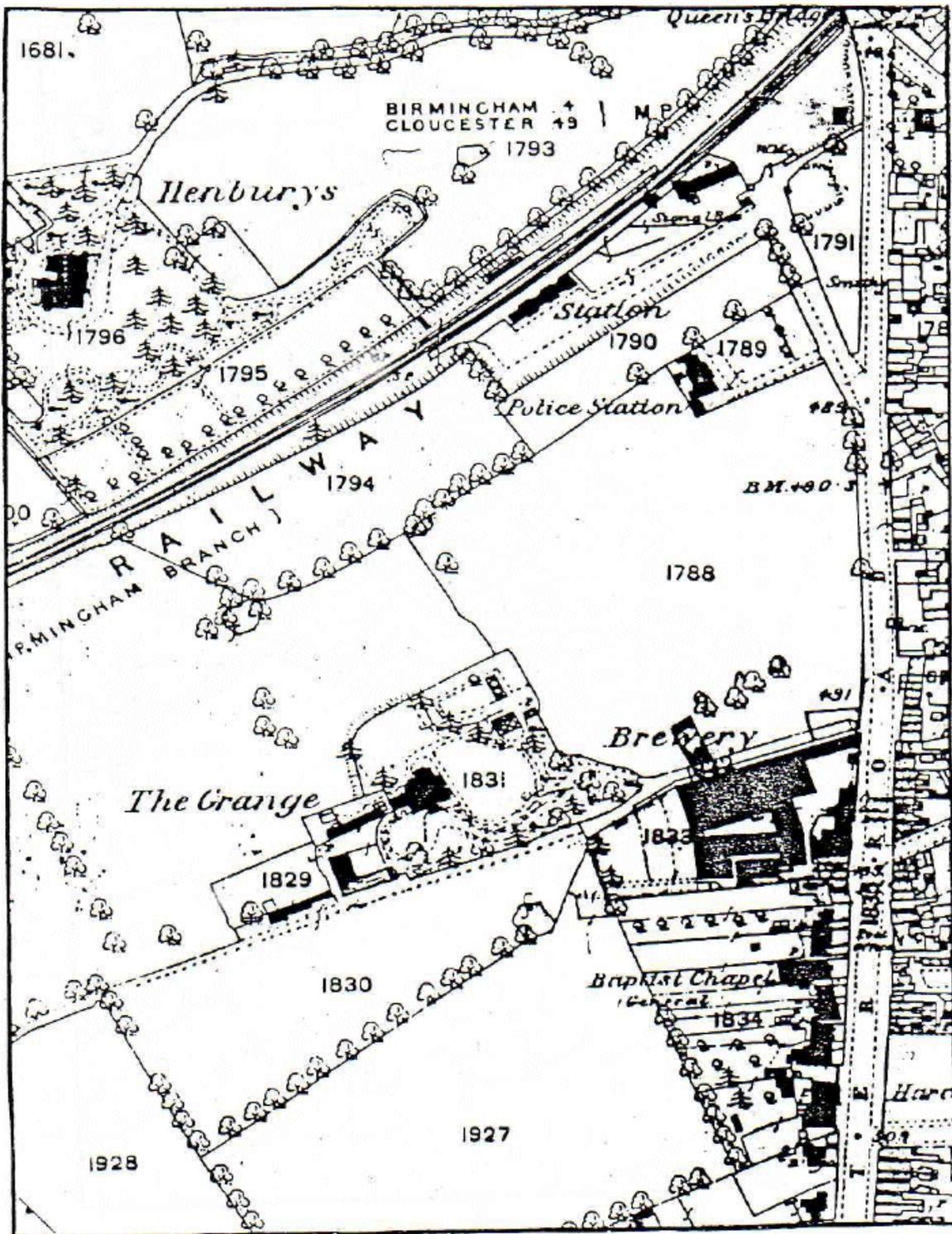
The estate was split into two sections between 1837 – 1840 after the acquisition of part of the land by the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway. Land belonging to The Grange Estate now lay either side of the railway line thereby placing some of the land into what became Highbury Park. The split also separated The Grange and the Henbury's placing them either side of the railway line. The Grange mansion now lay to the south of the line. In 1843 the land usage at the Grange is shown as a combination of pasture, meadow, arable and domestic use. The house was inhabited variously by William Hamper, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries followed by his Daughter and son in-law after his death and later by Isaac Bate who kept the Cross Guns Public House (now the Court House) on Kings Heath High Street.

The house and accompanying 55 acres of land South of the Railway line was purchased in 1895 by Birmingham Freehold Land Society. They surveyed the land and produced a layout plan showing 7 proposed roads including Station Road, Grange Road and 5 others together with 400+ building plots each containing 2 houses to be offered for sale in 1895 in the Moseley and Kings Heath Journal. This led to the creation of the Grange Estate. The Alcester Road frontages, from the railway to the brewery, in what is now Bank St beside the Courthouse Pub, were to include shops. The final group of houses fronted onto the railway and overlooked the residences of Messrs Cadbury and Chamberlain. 2400 applications were made for 449 building lots, which had to be sold by ballot due to the large number of applications. It is thought that building continued beyond 1911 when Birmingham Corporation took over the area from Kings Norton District Councils.



**The Grange with the Isaac Bates' Family seated.**

### The Grange (house) and Surrounding Area 1883



(Information and map are taken from *The Grange King's Heath* by S.A. Budd)

## **The Henbury's**

The Henbury's dated 1801 – 1895 was a substantially sized house on a 45 acre estate. It was owned and occupied by Charles Ratheram and comprised a house, carriage drive, orchard, pools and several fields of arable, pasture and meadow land. It was also lived in for a time by Joseph Purden a Birmingham Metal Manufacturer and later by the Lyndon family, who built an obelisk to mark the burial of their favourite racehorse. The house was demolished in most part in 1895 and the grounds of The Henbury's became a public park in 1922. The remaining part of the house was used as a refreshment room and was known locally as the Bonkoms. The obelisk remained within the park until as late as 1957.

## **Uffculme Open Air School**

Uffculme Open Air School, situated on the edge of the park adjacent to Queensbridge Road became Birmingham's first open air school. It was built on a 5 acre piece of land donated by Barrow and Geraldine Cadbury from their Uffculme Estate in 1910. The school was initially built for 70 "debilitated and backward children", aged between 8 – 12 years, from the poor areas of Birmingham, in the hope of arresting many causes of chronic illness by offering fresh air, good food suitable exercise and instruction. This regime led to a 20% – 25% cure rate and a 45% improvement rate in health. The number of places at the school was eventually increased from 70 to 120.



**Photograph of an open air classroom at Uffculme School.**

## Uffculme

Uffculme, the house, was built in the 1890s, for Richard Cadbury, by William Jenkins on the hill above the original house on the former Henbury Estate. It was named after the Cadbury's home village in Devon and was built as a two storey house and attic divided by a large, full height central hall with an oriel and a conservatory at the southern end. It is built in red brick with Portland Stone dressings.

Richard Cadbury and his wife lived in the house until 1906. It was then gifted to Birmingham Corporation in 1916 for use in the furthering of psychiatric health. It was used for this purpose until 1999 and is now an NHS conference, function, meeting and training centre.



**Photograph of part of the interior of Uffculme.**

## **Highbury**

Highbury (now a Grade 11\* listed building) was commissioned by Joseph Chamberlain as his Birmingham residence in 1878. This was two years after he became Member of Parliament for Birmingham. The house was named after the London suburb where he lived as a child. The architect was John Henry Chamberlain (no relation to Joseph), who built the house in Venetian Gothic style in 1879 incorporating much terracotta decoration. The grounds of the house contained a conservatory, 13 orchid houses, (for which Joseph Chamberlain won prizes), Italian, Dutch and Elizabethan Gardens, a kitchen garden, rockery, model farm and a dairy. In its heyday Chamberlain employed 18 gardeners and a large household staff. He lived in the house from 1880 until his death in 1914. During World War 1 it passed into use as a hospital annex and home for disabled soldiers (part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Hospital.)

In 1919 Austin Chamberlain, eldest son of Joseph Chamberlain, gave the house to the Highbury Trustees, who presented it to the Corporation of Birmingham in 1932 from whence it became a home for elderly women until 1984. In 2016 the Chamberlain Highbury Trust took over the site from Birmingham City Council on a long leasehold.



**Photograph of Highbury showing part of the conservatory and south facing garden, which was designed by Edward Milner.**



**Photograph of part of the interior of Highbury**

*G.Pittaway Highbury Park Friends Feb 2019 with thanks also to DP and AB for some of the images.*

