

Barnet and District Local History Society

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THIS paper is an attempt to reconstruct from a study of old records and maps some of the history of the hamlet of Kitts End, or Kicks End as it was more often called, and the other lands which have gone into the making of Wrotham Park.

The following is an outline of the history I have discovered so far of the lands that John Byng bought in 1750 and their past owners, and the gradual growth of the park until its completion in about 1860. It does not include at this stage details of the land along the northern boundary of Dancers Hill Road, except where mentioned in the early deeds, as I hope to include this area in a paper on Bentley Heath and Dancers Hill.

To-day Wrotham Park occupies all but the most southern tip of a triangle of land bounded on the east by the Great North Road between Barnet and Potters Bar, on the west by Kitts End Road, which until 1826 was the main highway from Barnet to St. Albans, and on the north by Dancers Hill Road, once known as Green Dragon Lane and earlier called Reeve Street or Ryverstretelane.

The name Kitts End refers now only to the road and two farms; but in 1750, when John Byng made his first purchase, there was a considerable community, chiefly it appears in the area now occupied by the Home Farm and its buildings. The present entrance to this farm by the main gate in the Great North Road marks the line of an old road, closed in 1786, which led through the hamlet of Kicks End into the then St. Albans highway. The land to the south of this road was in 1750 mostly open common land with two large ponds, formerly gravel pits. The whole of the north-east corner of the present park was then the common of Bentley Heath.

1750 — ADMIRAL BYNG'S FIRST PURCHASE

Some time in 1748, Admiral John Byng, returning from a successful campaign in the Mediterranean, decided that it was time he had a country estate and started to look around for a suitable property. Although the Byngs originally came from Kent, John Byng's parents' home was at Southill in Bedfordshire, about nine miles north of Hitchin, so that in travelling to and from his parents' home he must have often passed and perhaps admired the lands at Kicks End on the Great North Road that were to become the site of his house and park.

His first purchase in 1750¹ was of an estate which had already been the property of at least two families. The main house was called Pinchbank and stood a little to the west of the Great North Road about halfway between the obelisk at Hadley and Gannick Corner. Its position is shown both on John Rocque's 1754 map of Middlesex and on John Warburton's

1749 map of the City of London and Middlesex, where the house is marked by a number referring to the coat of arms of the family of Reynolds, from whom John Byng bought the estate. The deed of sale not only describes the property in detail as it was in 1750, but also as it had been in 1713² when purchased by the previous owner. It included an inn called The Chequers, which by 1750 had been renamed The Angel; a farm with four fields, one of which was called Margery Mead; and a piece of land called Sheepecotes, whose boundaries are given in detail. There were also several other farms and cottages, in all about 150 acres of land and about ten dwellings.

PREVIOUS OWNERS (1479-1750)

Tracing the owners of this estate backwards we find that the previous owner had been a Thomas Reynolds, of London, who had bought it as a mortgaged estate in 1713. Thomas Reynolds was a director of the ill-fated South Seas Company and in its crash of 1720 his estate was seized and sold along with those of the other directors by Act of Parliament to try to make good some of the loss and damage caused by the company. We find by a deed of 1723³ that Reynolds had managed to redeem his estate for the sum of £6,365. He seems to have lived at Pinchbank, renaming it Strangeways during his ownership, and in 1730 he produced a scheme for the reorganisation of South Mimms Workhouse on more economical lines⁴. His son and heir, Francis Reynolds, sold the redeemed estate to Admiral Byng in 1750.

Up to 1678 this estate had belonged to John Howkins, of South Mimms, who in 1652 had built five almshouses beside South Mimms Church and endowed them with the rent of a piece of Copyhold land called Angells which lay on the south side of Reeve Street and is now part of Wrotham Park. By his will of 1678⁵ John Howkins left all his South Mimms estate to his cousin, William Howkins, of Brownsover in Warwickshire, whose grandson and heir, another William, had heavily mortgaged all the property long before his grandfather's death and completed the sale to Thomas Reynolds in 1713.

Pinchbank seems to have been connected earlier with the Manor of Monken Hadley, for in 1574 Robert Stamford sold to William Kympton not only the Manor of Hadley, but also all those parcels of land in South Mimms called Pinchbank containing fourteen acres⁶. His father, William Stamford, had in 1544⁷ obtained the Manor of Hadley and lands at Kicks End from the family of Goodere who, our earliest records show, held land called Pinchbeke at Kicks End in 1479.

This early mention of Pinchbeke is from the Calandar of Close Rolls for the nineteenth year of Edward IV⁸. A marriage was being arranged between Alice, the daughter of Harry Frowyke, of Old Fold, and young John Goodere, of Hadley. Harry Frowyke was to make a grant of certain lands to John Goodere the elder and to pay him £100. John Goodere for his part was to make an estate for the young couple to the value of £10 a year, to array the bridal pair and pay the wedding expenses. The land granted by Frowyke was described in detail and included the abutments and

boundaries of a piece of land called Shepecote. It is by a comparison of the boundaries given for Sheepcotes in 1479, 1713 and 1750 and other land which is mentioned that a plan of John Byng's first estate can be made.

THE LANDS

The accompanying plan is based on John Rocque's map of 1754 with buildings where he has shown them and the names of the pieces of land added in accordance with my interpretation of the various descriptions.

Shepecote, we are told in the 1479 record, lay between the lands of William Rutland held by John Goodere, of Hadley, called Pynchbeke on the east, the King's highway from Barnet to St. Albans and demesne land called Aungeres on the west, Kykesendhethethe on the south, and Ryverstreetlane and land of John Graunte called Margeryfelde on the north. Shepecote appears by this to have stretched diagonally from north to west with Aungeres in the north-west corner where there were several small pieces of copyhold and freehold land, including Angells of the Howkins Charity, all of which were gradually acquired by John Byng and enclosed in his park. Margeryfelde, I think, lay beside the brook which seems to have a connection with that name, for a Margery Bridge is recorded where the brook crosses the road, the valley of the brook is referred to as Margery Bottom, and the fields to the north of the brook across the road are still known as Margery Meads. There are both Margery Mead and Margery Fields listed in the records of the Manor of South Mimms⁹.

By 1750 Sheepcotes, which is earlier quoted as about forty acres, had dwindled to twenty-one acres and the boundary to the south had become William Gamm's field and to the west were other small properties between it and the road. Beyond Pynchbeke to the east in 1479 was another piece of the granted land called Reddynges, with the broke of the hethethe beyond to the east. Mention is made in the records of the Manor of South Mimms of a piece of waste land called Reddings Corner¹⁰ leased to John Howkins and lying in front of his house. John Howkins in his will of 1678 says it is used as a passage to his house of Pinchbank. A cottage and three crofts called Hante, Sayeres and Smythcroft complete the property granted in 1479, they adjoined Reddynges and were perhaps the fields attached to the house of Pinchbank in 1750, one of which was called Smithfield.

The site chosen by Admiral Byng for his new house was a little to the north-west of Pinchbank on the edge of the high ground overlooking the valley of the above-mentioned brook. Across the valley was the house of Knightsland, which the Admiral bought in 1752¹¹ to live in while his new house was being built. Isaac Ware, who had done other work for the Byng family, was chosen to design and build the fine new house, which was to be called Wrotham Park, after the village of Wrotham in Kent from which the Byngs had originally come. Hardly was the new house completed when Admiral Byng was recalled to Portsmouth and soon was on his way to Minorca and the disastrous battle which resulted in his court martial and execution in 1757. He left his estate at Kicks End to his nephew, George Byng, son of his brother, Robert, who had died in Barbados in 1744.



THE SEAT OF F. BARRENEAU AT KITS-END, S. MIMS

By courtesy of the Guildhall Library

ENCLOSURE OF ENFIELD CHASE AND SOUTH MIMMS COMMON

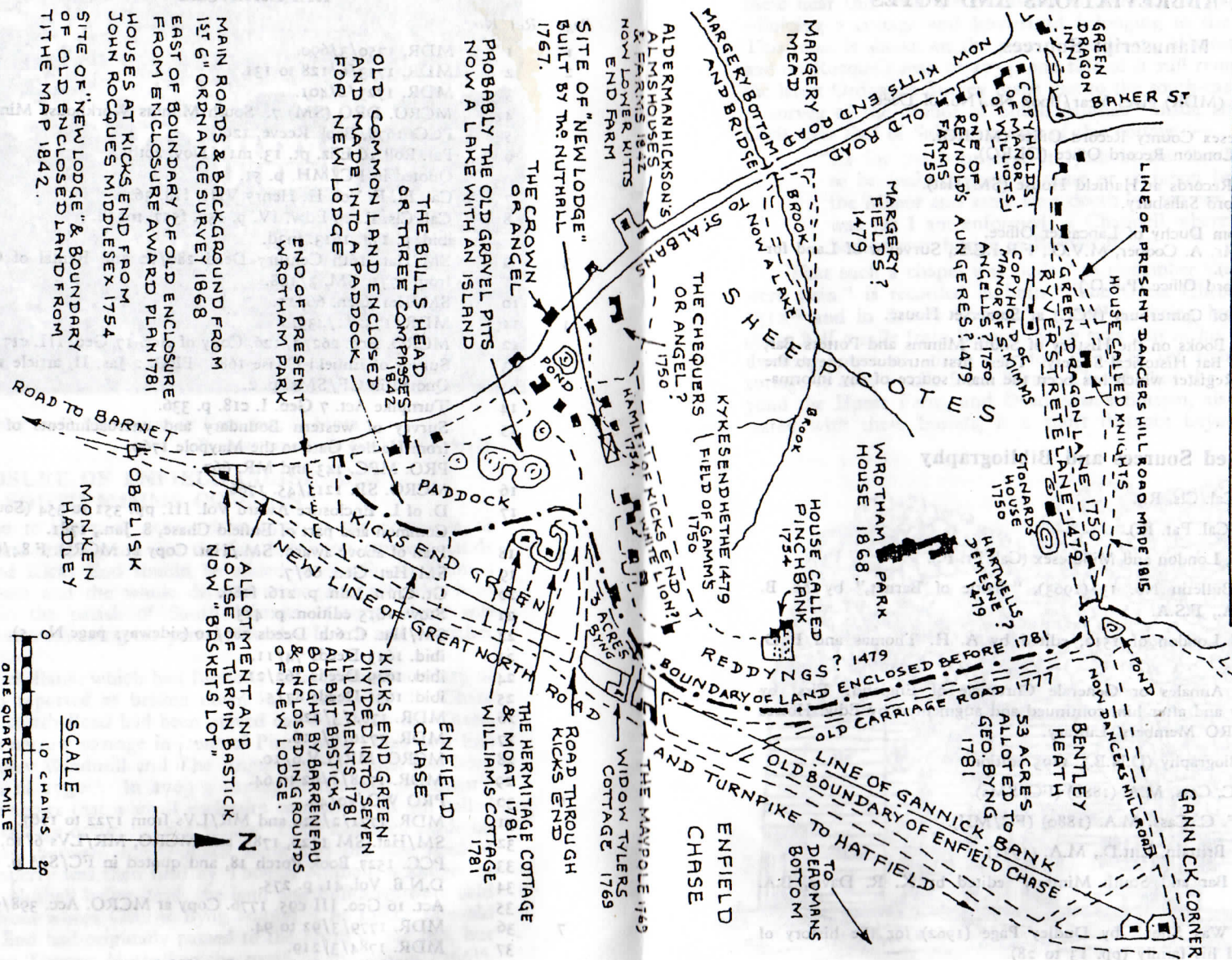
A large addition to the park occurred in 1777 at the enclosure of Enfield Chase¹². It had been agreed that the South Mimms common lands at Bentley Heath and Kicks End should be added to the South Mimms allotment of the Chase and the whole divided amongst those who held rights of common in the parish of South Mimms. George Byng was awarded fifty-three acres adjoining his park at Bentley Heath and a further three acres at Kicks End.

Since the Gannick Bank, which had formerly marked the boundary of the Chase, had been reported as broken down in a survey of the Chase in 1686¹³, the Great North Road had been moved eastward into the Chase, perhaps to avoid the narrow passage in front of Pinchbank. This new line of road between Hadley Windmill and The Angel near Gannick had been turnpiked by an Act of 1720¹⁴. In 1769 a survey of the encroachment¹⁵ made into the Chase shows that a small enclosure containing an inn called The Maypole and a cottage occupied by a Widow Tyler had been made on the edge of the Chase between the Gannick Bank and the new road at Kicks End. This property was then held by Thomas Nuthall, a Ranger of the Chase. In 1777, Nuthall being dead, the land and buildings were sold to Francis Russell, from whom George Byng bought it in 1782. The old road through Kicks End had originally passed to the north of the inn, but it was moved, first by Thomas Nuthall to the south of the inn in 1766¹⁶, and again in 1777 at the enclosure it was moved to the present drive in to the Home Farm.

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PLAN OF WROTHAM PARK AND KICKS END.



H.M. BAKER 1970.

My thanks are due for the help given by the staff of the above-mentioned record office and to Joan Weston of Cockfield for the loan of his notes from the South Mumps Manor Record at Hatfield House.

SOURCES, ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTES

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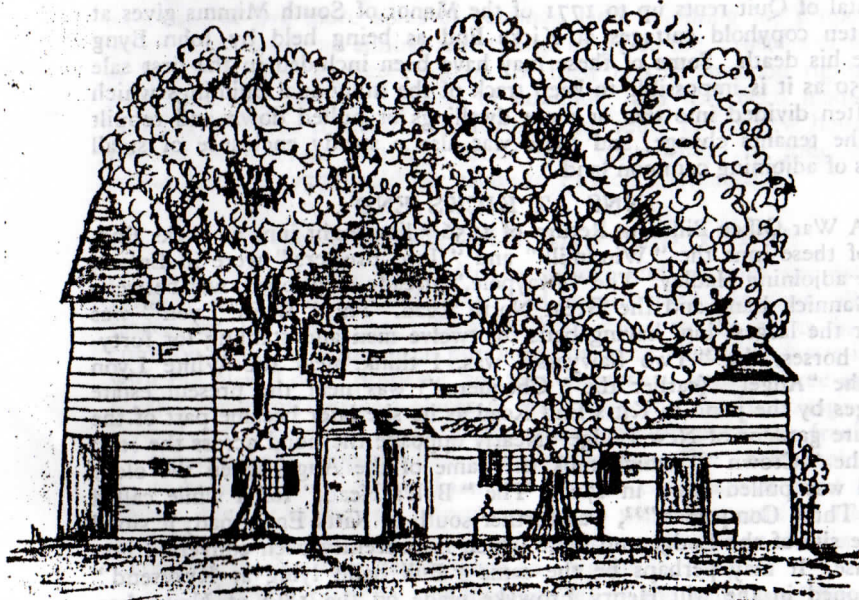
My thanks are due for the help given by the staff of the above-mentioned record offices and to Brian Warren, of Cockfosters, for the loan of his notes from the South Mimms Manor Record at Hatfield House.

THE BATTLE OF BARNET, 1471

The common land to the south of the road through Kicks End was known as Kicks End Green and was divided into seven allotments. Two of these near this road are described as bounded in part by a lake or moat adjoining a cottage and homestead belonging to the Earl of Salisbury¹⁷. This moat is shown on the plan of the South Mimms enclosure of 1781¹⁸ and on Rocque's map of 1754, one side of it still remains and is shown on the latest Ordnance Survey maps just to the south-east of the Home Farm. A survey of the Manor of South Mimms¹⁹ made about 1606 for Robert Cecil, first Earl of Salisbury, says of this cottage:—

“As for the hermytage it lyeth in the heath; supposed to be builded upon a waste or common belonginge to the Manor and some wast dooth lye rownde about yt. It was (as I am enformed) a Chappell wherein the dead bodies were buried in Barnett fielde . . .”

That such a chapel was built “to remember the sowles of them that were slain” is recorded in both “The Great Chronicle of London” of 1512²⁰ and in Stow's Chronicle 1580²¹ as being builded upon the plain about half a mile from Barnet. Stow says that in his time it had become a dwelling-house of which the top quarters yet remain. The Hermitage cottage is over a mile from Barnet Church, but the plain extends well beyond the Home Farm, and Dead Man's Bottom, also thought to be associated with these burials, is a short distance beyond to the north-east,



from an old drawing

THE BULLS HEAD - KITS. END.

in old Enfield Chase. Is there a possible connection between the William Rutland recorded as tenant of Pinchbeke in the earlier mentioned Goodere marriage settlement of 1479 and the nearby house called Ruthland to which, Stow says, the wounded Earl of Exeter was carried after the Battle of Barnet in 1471?

Records of the Manor of South Mimms show that the Hermitage cottage was leased sometime in the sixteenth century to Richard Lowche²², in 1613 to Thomas Ravenscroft²³, and in 1649 to John Howkins²⁴, who was given permission to rebuild it in 1651²⁵. Finally it was sold freehold by the Earl of Salisbury to Francis Barrenew in 1784²⁶ and became part of his estate of New Lodge.

KICKS END HAMLET

Near the above moat was an inn called The White Lion, described in a deed of 1726²⁷ as freehold and having:—

“a garden platt lying east at the back of the stables near the mote, with a parcel of garden ground and a vault lying behind the new built house north on the said messuage.”

The house behind was copyhold as were two adjoining cottages later used as a washhouse to the inn. Beyond the cottages to the east was an orchard and a house, copyholds of Widow Sullens, perhaps the alehouse licenced by her as The Bunch of Grapes in 1732²⁸.

There were a great many other small properties described as at or near Kicks End, a deed of sale from a local farmer, William Pratt, to Thomas Reynolds in 1728²⁹ lists eight cottages and eleven acres of land. A rental of Quit rents up to 1771 of the Manor of South Mimms gives at least ten copyhold cottages at Kicks End as being held by John Byng before his death. Some of these may have been included in the first sale of 1750 as it is impossible to keep track of the individual buildings which are often divided into two or more dwellings or pulled down and rebuilt and the tenants change, and there was also a steady enclosure of small pieces of adjoining common land.

INNS AT KICKS END

A War Office Billeting Return of 1756³⁰ lists eight inns at Kicks End, and of these inns the “Windmill” and “Two Brewers” were in Enfield Chase adjoining Hadley. The “Maypole,” already mentioned, was between the Gannick Bank and the Great North Road. The “White Lyon” was by far the largest inn, having beds for twelve men and stabling for forty-three horses, the “Two Sawyers” was, I think, near the White Lyon and the “Angel” (earlier the “Chequers”) was near the present estate cottages by the pond in Kitts End Road as its site later became part of the pleasure gardens of New Lodge. Nearly opposite the pond across the road was the “Crown”³¹ which took the name of the Angel when the older Angel was pulled down in 1767. The “Bull’s Head,” for a while called the “Three Compasses”³², was further south in Kitts End Road; it stood on the site of the Lodge and Gate which has recently been converted into a house. It may perhaps be the same “Bull hedd lying at Kykesend” mentioned in the will Henry Frowyke made on the 18th of November, 1523³³.

THOMAS NUTHALL AND NEW LODGE

Sometime in the 1750's Thomas Nuthall, who held the Maypole inn on the edge of the Chase, had leased from George Byng a house with gardens, stables and a coachhouse and other buildings, also three acres of meadow land and the Angel or old Chequers inn. About the same time Thomas Nuthall was admitted as copyholder of three cottages with some pieces of land and some strips of manorial waste, one of which bordered upon two large ponds, formerly gravel pits. Besides being Ranger of Enfield Chase in the Duchy of Lancaster, Thomas Nuthall had held several offices under the Crown, and in 1766 was appointed Solicitor to the Treasury. In 1775 he died very suddenly after an encounter with a highway man on Hounslow Heath³⁴; and on an examination being made of his business affairs it was found that there were large sums of money due from him to the Crown in respect of his several offices besides some private debts. In 1776 an Act³⁵ was passed to enable trustees to take over and administer his estate. This Act sets out in detail two leases from George Byng, the first of 1764 was for a term of sixty years, because of Thomas Nuthall's expenditure in improving the property. The second of 1768 granted him an extension of his lease for another twenty-four years as he had spent £10,000 on the construction of an elegant mansion house called New Lodge and in the cultivation and improvement of its pleasure grounds. The Act also details a grant by the Manor Court of South Mimms for the enclosure of five more acres of common land adjoining his property, for which he is to pay an annual rent charge of £4 to the Trustees of the poor of South Mimms as compensation for their loss of common rights. This five acres and the other pieces of common land had been made into a paddock of about thirteen acres lying to the south of his new house. The trustees of Thomas Nuthall's estate sold New Lodge to John Niccolls, whose heirs in 1779³⁶ sold the estate to Francis Barreneau.

THE BARRENEAUS AND NEW LODGE

Francis Barreneau proceeded to enlarge and improve the estate still further. In 1781 Kicks End Green had been divided into seven allotments under the Enclosure Act. Two of these came to the estate in lieu of common rights, one had been purchased by John Niccoll and was included with the New Lodge property, and Mr. Barreneau bought three more and several small cottages and pieces of land including the Hermitage Cottage from Lord Salisbury. In 1784 Mr. Barreneau obtained the freeholds of all the copyhold property belonging to the estate³⁷. These included the house behind the White Lion and the two cottages now used as wash-houses, but I can find no information as to what happened to the White Lion itself: its owner was stated to have been unknown at the time of the enclosure, the last heir having gone to Virginia in 1764.

All this new property was incorporated in the grounds of New Lodge and in 1786 Francis Barreneau was granted permission to enclose the old lane through the Hamlet³⁸ which passed between his paddock and the south front of his house, from the corner of his kitchen garden to where it turned down northward to George Byng's farmyard. The alternative route was given as Green Dragon Lane and Bentley Heath, a very long

detour for those on foot; but it was agreed to as quite suitable by the "honest and lawful men" who made up the jury at the Quarter Sessions.

Francis Barreneau died in 1812 and his wife, Elizabeth, in 1846, the Tithe Award of 1842³⁹ shows that all the former estate of the Barreneaus was leased to Mr. A. L. Pfiels except the Bull's Head, whose landlord was James Cox. In 1826 the present St. Albans Road was made by Thomas Telford through the fields nearer to Barnet and took the main traffic away from Kicks End.

A deed of 1859⁴⁰ on the transfer of the estate to the executors and trustees named in the will of Elizabeth Barreneau sets out in detail the whole of the Barreneau property at Kicks End. Soon the New Lodge estate had been taken over by the Byngs, the house pulled down and the grounds and paddock added to Wrotham Park. The Bull's Head must have been pulled down about the same time and the lodge and entrance gate erected on its site.

THE FINAL STAGE

Only a small piece at the southern end of the triangle of land remained outside Wrotham Park and this, at the time of the enclosure, had been a house and garden owned by a Mr. Turpin Bastick and behind his house to the north was his allotment of the Chase and Common. The house on this site to-day is called Baskets Lot, a possible corruption of Bastick's allotment.

With the making of the new St. Albans Road inns were no longer needed on the old Kitts End Road, and the Angel (formerly the Crown) disappeared sometime about 1873. The Byngs also bought up most of the lands and farms on the west side of the old Kitts End road and pulled down the buildings and replaced them with estate cottages. Some almshouses which had been built by Alderman Hickson of Williotts Manor at Potters Bar before he died in 1686 and left by him in trust to the Brewers Company, lay in front of what is now Lower Kitts End Farm. In 1856 these were also moved to South Mimms village, so the last of the buildings of the old hamlet of Kicks End gradually disappeared and all that is left to remind us of its former existence is the name of the road and the two farms.

H. M. BAKER, 1970.