

Kineton Green and Olton in Solihull



Michael Pierre de Villiers

Kineton Green and Olton in Solihull

Michael Pierre de Villiers

Copyright © Michael Pierre de Villiers 2025

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means without the permission of the author.

Any errors that may have occurred are inadvertent. Anyone who, for any reason, detects errors are asked to contact the author, or publisher, so that acknowledgement may be made in any subsequent prints, or editions. All photographs taken and diagrams made by the Author.

Kineton Green Road. The village green was in the distance. Gunn & Sons nursery was where the trees are on the left (31st July 2005); Olton reservoir: Two trains passing, Chiltern Railways from the left, Virgin Train from the right (7th December 2005); The canal at Olton (6th April 2008); Saint Margaret's Church 31st July 2005).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Pierre de Villiers was born in Durban, South Africa. He was trained to World Meteorological Organization class one meteorologist and multi-discipline weather forecaster in the South African Weather Service where he reached the rank of Director. He served on a weather ship in the South Atlantic. He served on World Meteorological Organization expert teams and was World Meteorological Organization rapporteur for the Africa region. He was also a commercial pilot and flying instructor. More recently he was a weather forecaster in the United Arab Emirates, then in England. Now retired.

M. P. de Villiers
PhD MSc MDip (FRMetS CMet retired)
2025-11-14

Kinton Green and Olton in Solihull

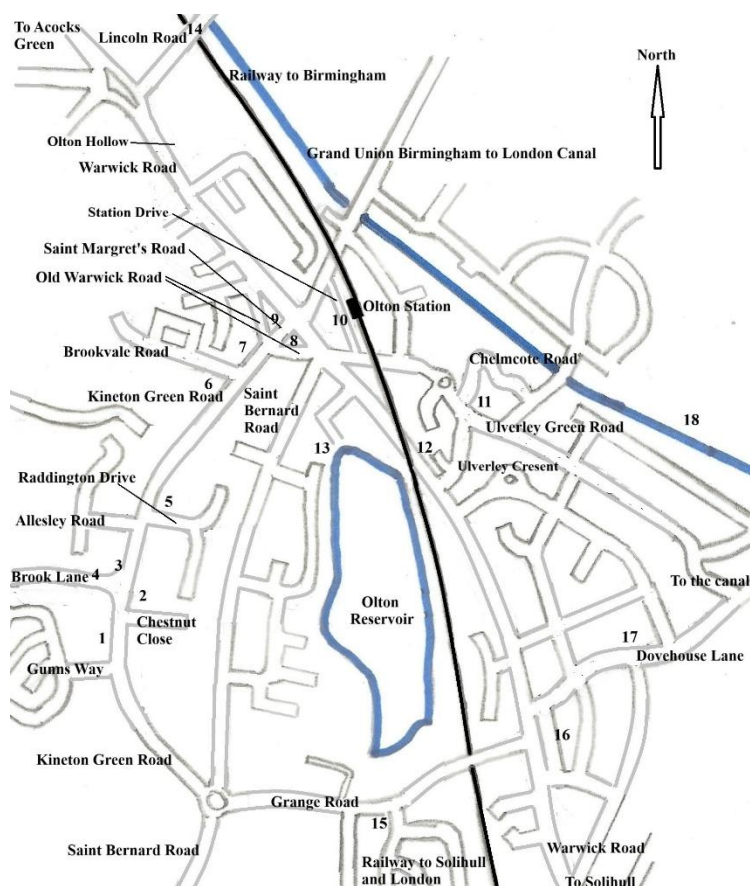
Michael Pierre de Villiers

INTRODUCTION

For a few years my wife and I lived in Kinton Green Road, near to what was known long ago as Kinton Green village, about 1 kilometre from the railway station. Kinton Green village is no longer visible as such having become part of urban spread.

This article presents a brief history of the origin of the area as well as colour photographs with descriptions during our residence in the area from the middle of 2005 to middle of 2009. All colour photographs were captured by the author. I have included old black and white photographs in my possession that were passed on to me. I suppose one should now say shades of grey. For most of the them I have no knowledge as to the photographer, etc. They are over 70 years old, most about 100 years. United Kingdom copyright law is complicated. In essence, copyright extends for 70 years starting in the calendar year in which the last remaining author dies or, if the author/s is/are unknown, 70 years from calendar year when the work was created. The assumption is that they are no longer under copyright. An internet search using a variation of keywords such as, photographs of old Olton/Kinton, did not produce copies of some of the old photographs in my possession. I did find others in sources mentioned in the bibliography, that claim copyright. To avoid copyright any copyright infringement the old photographs are solely mentioned in the text.

A simple map was created to show the numbered location of places mentioned.



HISTORY

The place name Kineton, in Olton, apparently goes back to before King Cnut's time. Two Saxon manors existed in the area, namely, Ulversleah (now Ulverley) and Cinctune (now Kineton Green). It is from these two manors that Olton was established. In 866 it is recorded that Ulversleah was given in exchange to King Burgred (852 – 874) of the Mercians. In exchange for what, I have not the faintest idea. While, Cinctunes broc (Kineton Brook) is recorded in 972 as being a boundary of Yardley Parish.

Ulversleah, from Saxon, means a clearing (leah, or lea) in the forest possessed by Ulver (or Wolver). That is, Ulver's clearing (or Wulfhere's clearing) in the forest of Arden (Eardene in Saxon). Cinctune was originally cyningstun, or Royal manor. Cyning, in Saxon, means one born of kings and tune meaning and estate. On such an estate there would be a manor house that was a centre for collecting taxes and justice, the king's representative being resident in the manor. There would be other structures around the manor, such as small buildings, or huts for workers, barns, stables and a prison. A person who had broken his pledge was obliged to reside in the prison at Cyninstun for 40 days according to a law of Alfred.

By the time of the Domesday Book (1086), Ulversleah had become Ulverlei and Cinctune had become Cintone. At this time the entry for Cintone indicated "Land of Willi son of Corbucian. From W Ailmar holds 2 hides in Cintone. Land for two ploughs. There are five villagers who have them. Wood $\frac{1}{2}$ a league long, four furlongs wide. Valued at 50p in modern currency. Turchil held it freely" (Powrie, et al., 1986). According to the Oxford dictionary (1939) a hide was a measure of land big enough to support a family, perhaps 120 acres. A league was about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, or 2.4 kilometres. The Domesday book records the Turchil of Warwick, a Saxon, as holding 70 properties in Warwickshire. I presume "Turchil held it freely" means he was the freeholder, or held the estate. Turchil is probably originally a Scandinavian name meaning one who serves, that is, serves the king.

By 1199 Kineton was known as Kington when Henry le Notte held about 30 acres of land in Kingsford and Kington. Kingsford being adjacent to Kineton, also in Olton, as seen in a map of about 1841. Finally, Kineton appears as a village at the junction of Kineton Green Road and Brook Lane, with Kineton Hall, some cottages and most likely a chapel. Kineton Hall appears on maps until 1860. Kineton Green Road appears on the first Ordinance Survey map of 1834 as Kineton Lane with housing development toward the end of the 1800's.

By the 13th century, Ulverlei was referred to as Oulton, meaning old town to distinguish it from the new town of Solihull. With time Oulton transformed to Olton. There is still an Ulverley Green Road, north-east of the railway, that serves as a reminder of the original name of the area.

Plans were approved for the building of a railway line from Birmingham to Oxford in 1846 to connect to the Oxford to London line already in existence. The line was completed by 1864 when Olton station was opened, or 1869 depending on the source of information. Olton was largely agricultural until the arrival of the railway and the Olton station. This gave a big boost to the development of Olton. It made the area attractive, initially to the wealthy, particularly after the development of nearby St Bernard's Road by 1872. It was now an easy daily commute from a pleasant and peaceful rural home to the Birmingham city centre. Hence the number of large houses along St Bernard's Road and the ensuing development of the area. For around four years my wife and I lived in Kinton Green Road about 1 kilometre from the railway station.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The photographs begin where we lived in Kinton Green Road then move north toward Warwick Road and the railway station. Then branch slightly to the east under the railway bridge to the only photograph in the Ulverley area. Back at the station there is a short excursion south to the Bridal Shop next to the railway bridge that then passes Olton Reservoir. Back at the railway station it is a somewhat long hop along Warwick Road north to the Lincoln Road bridge and the canal. Finally, back at where we lived it is south and east to Grange Road, the Dovehouse shops then along Dovehouse Lane to the Grand Union Canal.

Kinton Green Road



Number 1 on the map. On the left, is a photograph of our row of houses in Kinton Green Road after snowfall (6th April 2008). These were labourer's cottages for Gunn's nursery in 1894. From what I can gather the row where we lived (numbers 136 – 146) was built late in the 1800's (apparently 1894) for workers at Gunns Nursery. The nursery was to the left off the photograph. A photograph dated 1913, taken further away to the left has a wooden sign indicating Gunn & Sons.

The houses still have the little outside room at the back that was the lavatory. These have either been converted into small sheds, or have been incorporated into the main building so as to enlarge the kitchen with the bathroom and lavatory above. Our home was the one with the blue door, number 146.

Gunns Nursery was originally known as Brookfield Nursery and probably Kinton Brook ran through the property. The nursery prospered until late in the 1900's. The nursery extended from Gunns Way (the road on our right) south-west along Kinton Green Road to St Bernard Road.

By the beginning of the 1900's Mrs Gunn was a widow and her four sons were in charge of the nursery. A family home, called Kildonan, was built at number 152 Kinton Green Road and when the one son, John, married he built a house at number 75, which was called Brookdale.



Diagonally opposite our home is a photograph, taken from our front garden, of the row of houses at 121-131 Kinton Green Road (10th June 2006). Originally Kinton Lane, a narrow winding country lane indicated on the first Ordnance Survey map of 1834. The row of houses, or cottages, at 121 – 131 across the road from where we lived, were said to be built as homes for farm workers at Olton Court. However, they were built before Olton Court came into being. Rather they were built circa 1860 for local farm labourers.

Seen below left (number 2 on the map), photographed 5th April 2008, is the large brick house listed as 115 Kinton Green Road that has been subdivided. Probably now numbered 113 and 115. It is close to the intersection of Kinton Green Road and Brook Lane. This intersection was once the location of Kinton Green Village.



Above right, number 3, is a photograph (dated 7th December 2005), looking to the south. It shows the intersection of Kinton Green Road and Brook Lane off to the right, the site of the original Kinton Green village. The grass patch that is all that is left of the village green. This and some 250 to 300 years old oaks that line Kinton Green Road on the eastern side of the intersection. In the background is Postie collecting mail. Our home was in the far distance on the right of Kinton Green Road. Gunn & Sons nursery was where the trees can be seen beyond the row. This side of the row, the white building houses BU Salons Ltd at number 130. The large brick house (seen above left) is off the left of the photograph above right.

The photograph below left dated 7th December 2005 (number 4 on the map), shows Brook Lane leading downhill away from the intersection at Kinton Green Road. A photograph circa 1910, in a similar position showed that it was then a sandy cart track with a brook crossing it beyond the last curve in the road in this photograph. There was also a small wooden footbridge over the brook at the ford next to the cart track. The brook now flows through an underground pipe.



Number 5. Further along the road northward toward Olton Station, at number 77 Kinton Green Road, on the corner with Raddington Drive, is the snow-covered Tudor Court Hotel

photographed 23rd March 2008. Rather it was the Tudor Court Hotel. The building is now home to the Bright Horizons Solihull Day Nursery and Preschool.



At the corner of Kinton Green Road and Brookvale Road was the Olton United Reformed Church (number 6). Originally the Olton Congregational Church built on land acquired toward the end of the 19th century and ready for the first service 1st January 1901. This was the successor to the original church next to the railway bridge over Warwick Road that is discussed later (number 12). It became the Olton United Reformed Church in 1972. It is now believed to be an Islamic community centre. Comparing it with a photograph in 1912, both from a similar

position, shows little change except the church was in open ground with ivy growing on parts of the walls.



At number 6 on the map, getting close to the northern end of Kinton Green Road at approximately house number 6 looking southward toward number 16 and Brookvale Road in the distant right of the road.

A scene of Kinton Green Road (31st July 2005). A 1928 photograph shows that it has hardly changed. The buildings are still there. This part of Kinton Green Road is near to Olton station and St Margaret's church as well as near to the NHS doctor's rooms.

The last two mentioned places are at the four way intersection of the Old Warwick Road with Kinton Green, St Margaret's roads. Numbers 8 and 9 on the map.



Number 8. Grade II listed St Margaret's Parish Church (31st July 2005) is in the southern triangle bounded by Saint Margaret's, Old Warwick and Warwick roads. Gothic designed with stained glass windows; it was built with sandstone blocks beginning on the 30th October 1879 when the foundation stone laying ceremony was held. Under the stone a bottle was placed containing four newspapers of the same date and silver coins dated 1879. Construction was completed by the 14th December 1880 when the consecration ceremony was held. The building was

extended in 1896 with the hall to the right believed added in 1971. It has not changed much compared with a photograph dated 1879 when it was built. Pity about the bright blue door.



Rapid growth of the Olton area with the coming of the railroad created a need for a church in the area rather than have to travel north to St Mary's church in Acocks Green.

Number 9 on the left. The house across the road, built in the 1870's was donated to St Margaret's church in 1887 as a parsonage. It is now the St Margaret's Medical Centre (7th December 2005). At the intersection to the left of the building Kington Green Road becomes St. Margaret Road for about 100 metres where it then ends at Warwick Road.

Olton Station

Number 10 on the map. Below left, Olton station platform during the summer with leaf laden trees on the 12th July 2006. The tracks and the platform looking northward to Acocks Green and onward to Birmingham. Originally there were two platforms and three tracks as seen in a 1935 photograph. The remains of the westernmost platform, nearest the station building can be seen on the left and the where there was a third track. The platform building is not the original. Long ago there were shelters on both platforms. Part of the station building can be seen on the left among the trees. The platform is accessed via a tunnel from the station building (seen below right) then stairs or a lift.

The train on the left is a suburban West Midlands Central two car Diesel Multiple Unit Class 150/1 Sprinter number 150101 that is on its way to Kidderminster via Birmingham. While on the right, coming toward the photographer, is a Chiltern Railways three car Bombardier Class 168 Clubman Diesel Multiple Unit fast train Birmingham Snow Hill to Marylebone that does not stop at Olton and goes through at about 130 kph. It does the trip in about 2 hours. You can't do it in anywhere near that time by road. It stops at Solihull where we used to board when going to London.



The raised track and part of the platform building can be seen behind the station building on the 7th December 2005 (above right). It is early winter. The trees are beginning to shed their leaves, although the one on the right behind the pole is already bare. The stainless-steel statue is of a Saxon King on a horse by John Mckenna. Why it is there is unknown to me.

Ulverley Pond



After leaving, turning to the left southward along Station Drive, one quickly arrives at the lengthy Ulverley Green Road to Dovehouse Lane, one of few references to the Ulverley area that remain. Others are Ulverley Crescent that joins Ulverley Green Road with Warwick Road and Ulverley School in Rhodney Road close to Lode Lane and the Jaguar/Land Rover factory. Travelling a short distance along Ulverley Green Road one arrives the intersection with Chelmscote Road and the Ulverley Pond (number 11 on the map) in a small green belt area at. The pond, photographed on the 4th November 2008, is populated by numerous Mallard ducks.

The Old Chapel



Return to the beginning of Ulverley Green Road and Warwick. Travel downhill south under the railway bridge. Next to the railway bridge over Warwick Road, at number 225, photographed on the 21st December 2005, in weak winter sun surrounded by mostly bare trees, is the Ava May Bridal shop in The Old Chapel (number 12 on the map). An alternative route is to follow Ulverley Crescent to Warwick Road.

The building originally housed a butcher's shop and a smithy. In 1879, Congregationalists (a form of Protestant Christianity) purchased the building. The building was converted into a chapel, the Primitive Methodist Chapel, with new arched windows installed. A small enclosed porch was added onto the front with a door on either side. Yes, the up market bridal shop is still there. As of 2025 in existence for 35 years.

Olton Reservoir



Retracing one's steps back toward Olton Station along Warwick, one arrives at a narrow road off to the left that leads to the Olton Mare Sailing Club (number 13 on the map).

Referring to the photograph left, dated the 7th July 2005, while comparing it with a black and white photograph from around 1912 (not shown) reveals that Olton Reservoir still looks very much the same now. The boat

house on the left has been rebuilt while Olton Mere Sailing Club clubhouse in the background is still there albeit with new roof and a conservatory (7th July 2005). The canal from Birmingham to Warwick was opened in December 1799. The later built railway line passes close to the reservoir.

The Olton reservoir, or mere, was built at the same time as the canal to supply water to the canal that was opened in 1799. In the early 1800s it was linked to the Stratford-Upon-Avon canal, hence to London. The mere was formed from marshland fed by Folly Brook (now Hatchford Brook) and was designed to hold 150 locks full of water, but this was not achieved until the Mere was extended in 1834. It was built by a method known as puddling. This was a process of kneading together clay, sand and water to form a semi-fluid puddle. Two or three layers were made; each being trodden down by labourers. Rumour has it that this work was done by prisoners from the Napoleonic war, but there is no proof. More likely it was done by the navvies who built the canal.

From 1899, the Olton Mere Club leased the reservoir area for sailing, boating and fishing by members. Between 1900 to around 1945 a ticket kiosk was established that charged members of the public allowing them to skate on the frozen surface for the short periods during February and March. It was considered safe when the ice was at least 20 centimetres (8 inches) thick. Areas to avoid were with lights when dark. The practise was discontinued due to Public Reliability Risk that held the club responsible in the event of an accident.

It is the largest of the few areas of open water in Solihull and supports a large number of waterfowl. The woodland surrounding the mere has remained undisturbed for many years, providing an important habitat for plants and animals.

There is no public access to the mere but there is a good view of it from the trains travelling between Solihull and Olton. The Olton Mere Sailing Club also has a membership category for those who wish to have walking access to the mere. While we lived in the area, we paid a small annual fee that provided us with a key so that we could walk around the mere and relax for a while.

Lincoln Road bridge

Heading northward from the Olton Reservoir along the Warwick Road toward Lincoln Road (number 14 on the map), one descends into a dip known as the Olton Hollow.

The shops in Olton Hollow, on the east side of Warwick Road, have been there since 1883 when they were built for James Kent which he called Kentish New Town. By 1918 there were seventeen shops there. One of the shops housed the chemist, Frank H. Biddle. He set up shop in 1906. He was also a prolific photographer and most likely responsible for most of the photographic historical record of Olton. Many of his photographs were made into postcards and sold in his shop.

Unfortunately, I never photographed the shops in the hollow. However, judging from old photographs most of the buildings have not changed. A Tesco shop and petrol station at the northern end being a significant addition.

The canal (next page on the left), photographed from Lincoln Road bridge on the 14th December 2005), shows a natural fuels supplier's storage facility at 62 Lincoln Road. This is

the Birmingham to London and Stratford-Upon-Avon canal, later named the Grand Union Canal, that is almost next to the railway line at this point. Notice the train passing on the raised railway in the background. It was very rural looking in a 1904 photograph with a footpath on the right of the canal and a double story house on the left. Below right another view. This time from the towpath looking toward the bridge. Towpaths were necessary so that horses could pull the canal barges, before the invention of steam engines and later diesel engines.



Grange Road

One now has to jump to the south to the intersection of Kineton Green, Saint Bernard and Grange roads and number 15 on the map.

The photograph shows a portion of Grange Road as it was on the 14th December 2005. A photograph from 1865 reveals that it was then a sandy cart track in a very rural setting. This is the road that connects Kineton Green Road with Warwick Road and the Dovehouse shops. Nearing Warwick Road is a bridge over the railway line where one has a clear view of trains passing in either direction. A Chiltern Railways three car Bombardier Class 168 Clubman Diesel Multiple Unit is seen emerging from under the bridge passing at high speed toward Birmingham Moor Street from Marylebone during the morning of the 26th April 2009.



Dovehouse shops

Dovehouse shops (photographed 4th October 2008) in Warwick Road (number 16 on the map). A convenient row of shops within reasonable walking distance from our home. Extending from street numbers 345 to 385 along the eastern side of Warwick Road. Shops such as, at the time,

a convenience store, bakery, liquor store, laundrette, gift shop, Hospice shop, take-aways, restaurants and clothes wear, seen below left. A good early morning walk to get the Sunday newspapers.



To the left of the shops in the picture is Dovehouse Lane where the old Dovehouse farmhouse (number 17) is situated. Shown above right, photographed on the 21st December 2005. The Dovehouse building is a Grade II listed building. Built circa 1500.

The original timber frame is still visible on the western gable structure with an oversailing 1st floor side and lead casement windows. Notice the ornamental chimney shafts and chimneybreast. The eastern part was surfaced with brick in the 1700s. Following the road further eastward one arrives at the canal.

The canal

Number 18 on the map. A number of photographs have been included. The canal usually looked its best/prettiest in winter in frost and snow. Walking along the canal it was often not easy to establish one's exact location until one surfaced near a road bridge, such as Dovehouse Lane. Here there are two bridges, an older brick road bridge and a newer, wider concrete road bridge.



Above left, a section of the canal late autumn/early winter with a carpet of leaves on the towpath and mostly bare trees. Above right, frost and frozen snow on the trees and ground on the 6th April 2008.

Two canal scenes on the 6th April 2008 at the Dovehouse Lane bridge over the canal. On the left looking northward toward the two bridges at Dovehouse Lane. The newer slender concrete bridge in the foreground with the more prominent older and bulkier brick bridge behind. Notice the towpath on the left. On the right, under the older bridge still facing toward the north with the towpath on the left.



Finally, photographed on the 13th April 2008, a canal scene off the bottom right of the map and no longer in Olton next to the south-western corner of the Jaguar Land Rover factory in the Billsmore Green Road area. There were locations where properties bordered directly with the canal and had a private wharf. 13th April 2008.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- British Listed Buildings. Dovehouse Farmhouse. <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101031375-dovehouse-farmhouse-olton-ward> . Accessed 2025-11-03.
- Dodds, N.S. 2005. Butler of Olton. The birth of a parish.
- Kilby, T. 2000. The centenary of Olton Mere Club: a history 1899-1999. Brewin Books Ltd., Redditch.
- Olton on old picture postcards by John Marks, 1993
- Historic England. Church of St Margaret, Warwick Road, Olton. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1489519?section=official-list-entry> . Accessed 2025-11-03.
- Marks, J. 1993. Olton on old picture postcards. Reflections of a bygone age, Keyworth, Nottingham.
- Olton history. The history of Olton in Solihull. Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council. <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/about-solihull/olton-history> . Accessed 2025-10-26.

Oxford Dictionary, the pocket. 1939. Edited: Fowler, F. G. and Fowler, H. W. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

Powrie, J. Jordan, M. Andrews, C. 1986. Olton Heritage. Studley, Warwickshire: K. A. F Brewin Books.

UK Copyright Service. UK copyright law. Factsheet No. P-01. April 2000, last amended 17th April 2015.