

**A HISTORY OF THE OLD AND NEW  
'CROSS KEYS' PUBLIC HOUSES AT  
NEWBOLD**

**(From 1819 to the present day)**



**BY SAMUEL T STEWART - SEPTEMBER 2023**

## **PREFACE**

The old and new 'Cross Keys' public houses at Newbold have a chequered history although there is little factual recorded information available on this. However, via old newspaper articles, old maps, the Ashby-de-la-Zouch licensing records together with some local information and photographs, it has been possible to record a basic history on these two public houses. The old Cross Keys was situated in the area of the new Cross Keys car park and in the front cover photograph it can be related to the railings in front of the pond on the corner which still exist today (see the following O/S maps for exact locations).

This publication is an attempt to collate the available information researched by the author into one source which can then be accessed by those with an interest in NW Leics public houses. Newbold only had one pub unlike the villages of Worthington, Griffydam, Pegg's Green, Coleorton, and Osgathorpe which had numerous imbibing establishments.

The author has already researched and published on his website details of the public houses in Griffydam, Pegg's Green, Coleorton, Worthington, Lount and Osgathorpe, most of which do not exist anymore of course.

Further information or photographs from readers would be welcomed which could then be included in a later update.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Permission was given to the author by the Rev. John Dawson to use information and photographs from his book entitled "Hand-me-down-Hearsays" in his own history publications relating to the parish of Worthington, which has been the case here. John confirmed no copyright existed on any of the content.

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We know that the original 'Cross Keys' public house which was located in the front rooms of a residential property as shown on the front cover was in use in 1819 based on the following newspaper article :-

**Transcribed from the Hinckley News - Sat 01 Nov 1879**

### **Deaths**

#### **At the Cross Keys Inn, Newbold**

*Mr. James Bonser, for 60 years the landlord of the above Inn and deservedly respected aged 84.*

This ties in with the Ashby Licensing records on page 7 which only commenced in 1842 but it records him as relinquishing the license in 1878, presumably for health reasons, when it was taken over by Mark Cooper ( a later 1877 newspaper article on page 11 records that he had suffered a stroke).

James Bonser was also a Cordwainer (boot and shoe maker). as recorded in the 1863 'History, Gazetteer & Directory of Leicestershire & Rutland 1863 (2nd Edition)' by William White.

James lost his 18 year old son in a mining accident in the Smoile coal mine :-

**Transcribed from the Leicester Mercury - Sat 29th May 1852**

**COLLIERY ACCIDENT** - *On the 19th Inst., and by adjournment. On Saturday last, an inquest was held at Worthington upon James Bonser deceased. It appears that he was a young man, 18 years of age, and living with his father at the **Cross Keys, Newbold**, and working as a waggoner at the Smoile Colliery. On the morning of the 18th inst., while he was at work, a large stone suddenly fell from the roof upon his head, crushing him to the ground and though it was removed immediately, he was quite dead, his skull having been broken completely in, and the temple bone split right down to the right eyelid. The roof had been tried the same morning and then appeared quite safe.*

### **Verdict - Accidental Death**

When the original property was built is not known, but it is thought to have been the oldest residential property in Newbold, and somewhat surprising that it didn't have a preservation order put on it. The author is of the opinion that this would have been an 18th century building and was probably originally built as a farmhouse. It was often the case that farmers opened up some rooms to serve alcohol and food to weary travellers. It certainly wasn't for local trade as there were no other properties in the locality at that time. The most likely reason was that it took advantage of the early mining of coal that was taking place close by to the north, which was attracting miners.

The old Cross Keys was what was known as a 'Beer House' and was recorded as such in Trade Directories.

## **The Beerhouse Act 1830**

**The Beerhouse Act of 1830** was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, which liberalised the regulations governing the brewing and sale of beer. Sometimes known as the "Duke of Wellington Beer Act" as it was the Duke of Wellington's government in situ at that time. It was modified by subsequent legislation and finally repealed in 1993.

The precursor to the **Beerhouse Act** was the Alehouse Act of 1828, which established a general annual licensing meeting to be held in every city, town, division, county and riding, for the purposes of granting licences to inns, alehouses and victualling (i.e. provision of food) houses to sell excisable liquors to be drunk on the premises.

Enacted two years later, the **Beerhouse Act** enabled any rate-payer to brew and sell beer on payment of a license costing two guineas per annum, equivalent to about £150 today. The intention was to increase competition between brewers; lowering prices and encouraging people to drink beer instead of strong spirits. The drinking of Gin had become common place and led to an increase in drunkenness. It resulted in the opening of thousands of new public houses and breweries throughout the country, particularly in the rapidly expanding industrial centres.

A **beerhouse** was a type of public house created in the United Kingdom by the 1830 Beerhouse Act, legally defined as a place "where beer is sold to be consumed *on* the premises". Existing public houses were issued with licenses by local magistrates under the terms of the Retail Brewers Act of 1828, and were subject to police inspections at any time of the day or night. **Proprietors of the new beerhouses**, on the other hand, simply had to buy a license from the government costing two guineas per annum, equivalent to about £150 in current day value. Until the Wine and Beerhouse Act of 1869 gave local magistrates the authority to renew beerhouse licenses, the two classes of establishment were in direct competition.

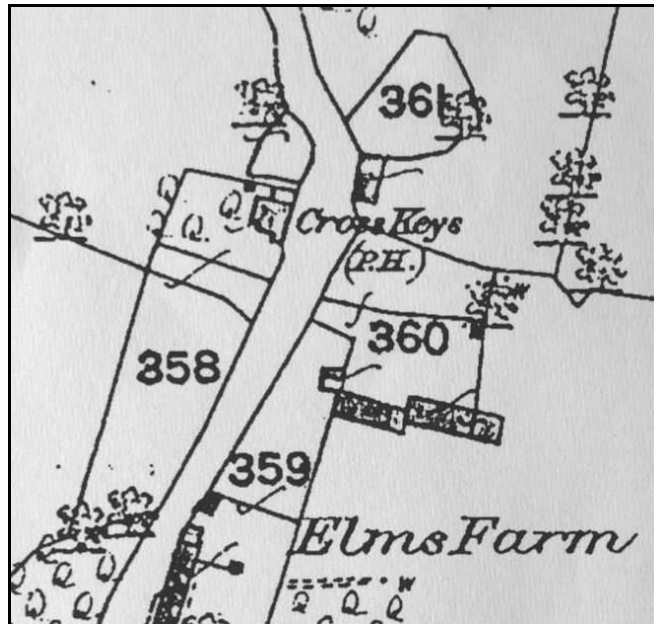
The 1869 Wine and Beerhouses Act brought in magisterial controls with stricter licensing laws, pre 1869 beerhouses were still exempt though and this meant that the small beerhouse could thrive but the large inns that sold spirits were under increasing pressure to run a controlled and respectable house.

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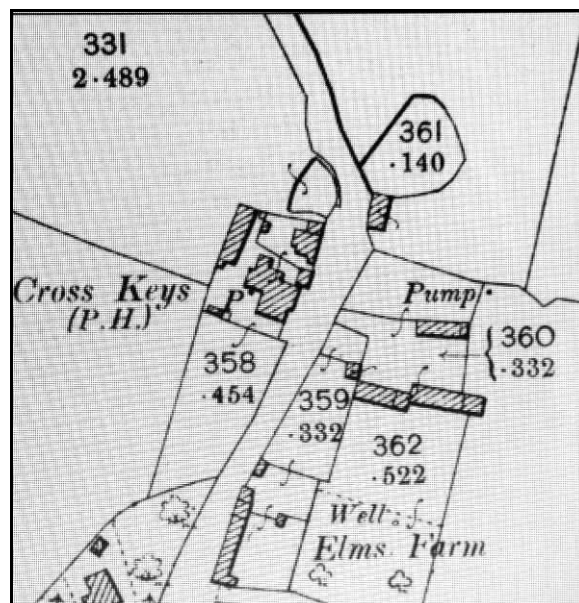
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## MAPS SHOWING LOCATION OF OLD AND NEW CROSS KEYS

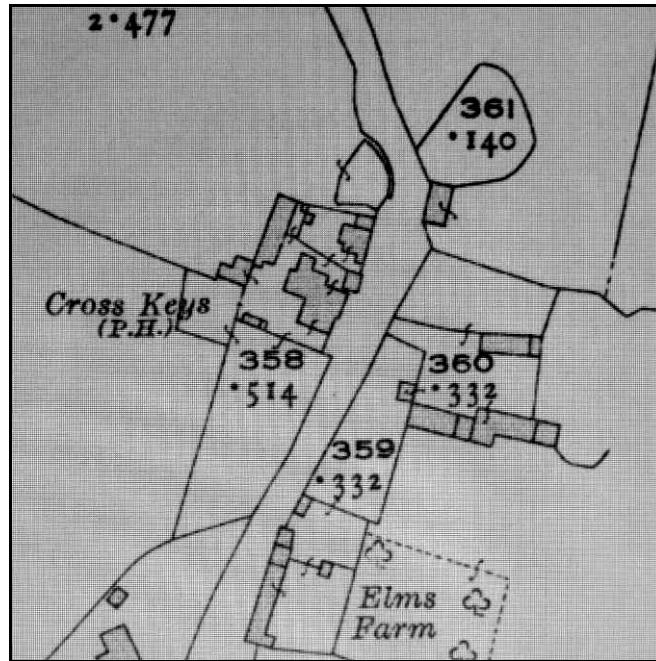
We know from the following extract of the 1881/2 surveyed 25 inch O/S map that the *new* 'Cross Keys' had not been built at that time because it clearly shows the *old* Cross Keys building which was located approximately where the *new* Cross Keys car park is now. Without access to the deeds it is not possible to say exactly when the *new* 'Cross Keys' was built, but if we take the maps and licensing records as being correct then it would have been built between 1897 and 1901.



1881 / 2 surveyed 25 inch O/S map



1901 surveyed / 1903 published 25 inch O/S map  
This shows the new Cross Keys  
and also the old Cross Keys building still there



1920 revised 1923 published 25 inch O/S map  
which shows the old Cross Keys building still there

It is not known when the old Cross Keys building was demolished but  
presumably this was done for the purpose of creating a car park  
for the new Cross Keys

## INFORMATION ON LICENSEES AND LEASEHOLDERS / OWNERS

(The following information is taken from the Ashby de la Zouch  
Licensing Records **1842 - 1936**  
which overlap the old and new Cross Keys)

NAME OF LICENSEE	DATE
JAMES BONSER (OLD CROSS KEYS) ALSO A CORDWAINER <b>Actually held license from 1819</b>	AUG 24th 1842 TO AUG 24th 1878
MARK COOPER (OLD CROSS KEYS)	AUG 23rd 1879 TO AUG 28th 1897
FRANCIS SMITH (NEW CROSS KEYS)	FEB 4th 1905 TO FEB 3rd 1906
WILLIAM CRABTREE (NEW CROSS KEYS)	FEB 3rd 1906 TO FEB 7th 1925
CLARA CRABTREE (NEW CROSS KEYS)	FEB 26th 1926 TO FEB 8th 1936

### OWNER / LEASEHOLDER

PETER HEWARD 1872 TO 1897
OFFILERS BREWERY COMPANY FROM FEB 4th 1905 TO FEB 8th 1936

Peter Heward had a close relationship with Sir George Beaumont and acted as  
his land agent at one time

### TYPE OF LICENSE RECORDED

1842 TO 1869 - NONE GIVEN
1872 TO 1876 - ALEHOUSE
1877 TO 1880 - OLD LICENSE
1881 TO 1914 - VICTUALLERS
1915 TO 1936 - PUBLICANS

## INFORMATION ABOUT PAST LICENSEES OF THE NEW CROSS KEYS

### CLARA CRABTREE

Apparently, Clara Crabtree was a much respected licensee in Newbold but unfortunately certain facts in a local publication and some newspaper articles have proved to be incorrect.

1. Clara Crabtree could not have been the licensee at the Railway Tavern, Gelsmoor, from 1880 to 1889, as George Crabtree was the licensee there from 1843 to 1899, and Clara wasn't born till 1851 ! Clara was not George Crabtree's husband as has been stated.

2. Clara was not the licensee at the 'Cross Keys' from 1899 as has also been stated. Her husband William held the license from 1906 to 1925 and Clara became the licensee in 1926, possibly following his death, and held it till 1944 when she sadly died aged 93. William and Clara had three children who all pre-deceased her.

Reputed to be a wonderful old lady by her customers, Mrs. Crabtree retained all her faculties to the last and only a few days before her death was chatting happily with her customers. She was known as the grand old lady of Newbold and was for many years thought to be the oldest licensee in England.

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE CRABTREES' TAKEN FROM THE 1921 CENSUS

NAME	AGE	EMPLOYMENT	BORN
WILLIAM CRABTREE (HEAD)	72 YRS / 7 MTHS	INN KEEPER	WORTHINGTON, LEICS
CLARA CRABTREE (WIFE)	70 YRS / 9 MTHS	HOME DUTIES	HILTON, DERBYS
ANNIE M CRABTREE (DAU)	43 YRS / 1 MTH SINGLE	ASS'T HOME DUTIES	B-O-T, STAFFS
GEORGE W CRABTREE (SON)	38 YRS SINGLE	CARPENTER AT LEICS COLLIERY & PIPE CO	ALREWAS, STAFFS

### JOHN COXON

**Transcribed from the Coalville Times - 14th June 1946**

*In June 1946, festivities were held at the Cross Keys to celebrate the coming of peace after the 2nd W.W. At the children's party, 104 sat down for a Victory tea at loaded tables, "the strain of which they quickly eased!". Owing to the rain, the sports programme had to be postponed. At the old people's party on Whit - Monday, the Victory committee entertained 45 pensioners and their friends at the Cross Keys. Mr. Albert Hodges, on behalf of the committee, presented the landlord and landlady **Mr. & Mrs. Coxon** with an electric clock as a token of esteem and affection. A smoking concert followed during which several of the guests sang some of the old songs. The ladies were each presented with a china cup and saucer and the gentlemen with an ounce of tobacco. Towards the close of proceedings, Mrs. Pargeter, aged 83, said*



*she was not accustomed to visiting such places as the hotel, but she had nevertheless found the evening very enjoyable. She then sang "Abide with Me", the capable rendering of which stirred the emotions of all present. (Mr. John Coxon died in 1955 when he was still the licensee)*

## **GERALD AND JOAN SHAW**

Other popular licensees were Gerald and Joan Shaw who ran the public house from 1960 until 1967. Gerald was apparently a real character who sported a full handlebar moustache. He loved to host the Quorn Hunt Meet on the car park and many local people would attend



**Licensee Gerald Shaw, complete with handlebar moustache, behind the bar of the Cross Keys in 1966. His wife Joan is talking to Mrs. Linny Shaw, Gerald's mother (and Candy the poodle)**



**Gerald Shaw, the landlord, offering local farmer, Frank Hewitt, a stirrup cup at the meet in 1962**



**A further photograph of the meet in 1962**

## TRANSCRIBED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES RELATING TO THE NEW & OLD CROSS KEYS

### THE OLD CROSS KEYS

Transcribed from the Leicester Mercury - Sat 29th May 1852

**COLLIERY ACCIDENT** - *On the 19th Inst., and by adjournment. On Saturday last, an inquest was held at Worthington upon James Bonser deceased. It appears that he was a young man, 18 years of age, and living with his father at the Cross Keys, Newbold, and working as a waggoner at the Smoile Colliery. On the morning of the 18th inst., while he was at work, a large stone suddenly fell from the roof upon his head, crushing him to the ground and though it was removed immediately, he was quite dead, his skull having been broken completely in, and the temple bone split right down to the right eyelid. The roof had been tried the same morning and then appeared quite safe.*

**Verdict - Accidental Death**

Transcribed from Leicester Daily Mercury - Mon 10 Sept 1877

#### ASHBY PETTY SESSIONS NEWBOLD - BRUTAL ATTACK ON A WOMAN

At Ashby-de-la-Zouch Petty Sessions on Saturday, Edwin Hewitt and William Wileman were charged with assaulting Sarah Cooper, widow, Newbold, on the 3rd instant.—Mr. Mears appeared for the defendants.—Complainant said the defendants came to the Cross Keys beer house, which was kept by her father, and after she had supplied them with beer one of the defendants took hold of her fingers and held them for few minutes. They used bad language, and she requested them to quit the house, when Hewitt struck her a blow on the mouth. He then took hold of the poker and beat her on the arms and back with it, which left marks. Wileman next struck her on the face with his fist, pulled her into the street, and beat her, making bruises on her face. Hewitt took the poker away with him. While Wileman was beating her, the defendant Hewitt set upon her father and mother and beat them. They were nearly 70 years of age.—By Mr. Mears; Had not been keeping company wrtn Wileman, nor had she owed him grudge since. Did not strike Hewitt or Wileman with the poker, did not use knife and cut Hewitt's finger. She threw a stone at Hewitt as he was going away.—Elizabeth Bonser, the mother of the complainant, corroborated, and said that Hewitt threatened to murder the complainant, and also struck her husband several times. Her husband was unable to come as a witness because he had had a stroke. — Sarah Cooper was then charged on a cross-summons with assaulting the two men. They denied assaulting Cooper, but, on contrary, said she struck them.— The magistrates dismissed the case against Cooper, and sentenced the male defendants to one month's imprisonment with hard labour, stating that they were determined to stop such brutal conduct.—Hewitt had been previously convicted.

Transcribed from the Hinckley News - Sat 01 Nov 1879

#### **Deaths**

##### **At the Cross Keys Inn, Newbold**

*Mr. James Bonser, for 60 years the landlord of the above Inn and deservedly respected aged 84.*

## THE NEW CROSS KEYS

Transcribed from the Melton Mowbray Mercury & Oakham & Uppingham News  
- Thurs 13 March 1913

### ASHBY PETTY SESSIONS

*William Marshall, colliery, Worthington, was charged with stealing £4, the property of George (William) Crabtree, at Worthington.—Mr. Jesson appeared for defendant who pleaded guilty.—P.C. Collis said he received a complaint from Crabtree of the loss and visited the premises, the Cross Key's Inn, Newbold. He was shown a cupboard, which had been prized open with a screwdriver. Witness traced Marshall's movements.. and ascertained that he had changed a sovereign at the Railway Tavern, Gelsmoor, spending 3d. on a glass of whisky. Afterwards he went to the Bull's Head, Swannington, and to another public-house, spending 1s. 7d at each house. He returned to the Bull's Head, where witness charged him with the theft. He produced 14s. 8d. and said it was all he had. Witness found £2 in a purse in defendant's pocket, and took him to Coalville Police station, where he made various statements to the superintendent as to how he obtained the money. Later on witness; received a sovereign from defendant's wife. On the Sunday following, witness saw defendant at his house and he volunteered a statement to the effect that he took £4, but did not know how he did it—he seemed to have awakened out of dream.—Mr. Jesson made a long appeal to the Bench to deal with defendant under the First Offenders Act on account of his previous good character, and the fact that his lapse was due to drink. He had been receiving compensation on account of an accident at the Ellistown Colliery, and had been spending his time drinking. He asked the Bench to give the defendant an opportunity of retrieving his character.—Mr. H. Southerd, of Worthington Colliery, spoke as to defendant's good character and testimonials were also put in.—Crabtree, in reply to the Bench, said that there was £47 in gold in the cupboard in a purse.—Defendant was sentenced to 21 days imprisonment.—The Chairman said that the Bench thought Crabtree was an extremely foolish person to keep money in a place like that. It was a stupid thing to do and he was putting a great temptation in people's way.*

Transcribed from the Leicester Evening Mail - Monday 12th March 1956

### FATAL COLLAPSE AT NEWBOLD INN

*A 25 year old Bakers Roundsman, Mr. Dennis Alwyn Roy Clements had just entered the Inn and ordered a drink when he fell to the floor. He was taken to Ashby Cottage Hospital but was dead on arrival.*