

What did people in the Nineteenth Century think of Moseley?

Richard Cadbury and his family at Moseley Hall

When the Cadbury factory moved to Bournville, Richard Cadbury decided to move from the Calthorpe Estate where the Cadbury family had lived for many years and which was becoming very built-up, to somewhere nearer the new works. Like many other successful, well-to-do businessmen and manufacturers, he also wanted a more rural environment and chose Moseley. He rented Moseley Hall in 1884, initially for one year. He then bought the Hall in 1890 and gave it to Birmingham Town Council in 1891 as a Children's Convalescent Hospital along with a generous endowment.

Richard Cadbury's children, Barrow, William and Richard, Jessie, Edith, Helen and Margaret,¹ were delighted about living in the country, particularly attracted by Richard's stories of the 'spreading lawns, the trees and woods, the open fields and the beautiful pool with its tree-shaded island'.² He told them stories of the rabbits 'scuttling across the grass, waving their little white 'flags of truce', or 'venturing onto the lawns in the evening to nibble the softer grass'.³ The result was that the children nick-named their new home, 'The Bunny House'. They arrived in Moseley to find that around the Village Green were:

'... low houses and old-fashioned shops, with a blacksmiths at the corner and up the street to the left could be see the square tower of the village church. Close by the Green, and sloping steeply away from the road at right angles, was the entrance to Moseley Hall. Tall wooden gates, flanked by a little lodge on each side, were thrown open under the shade of spreading trees, and showed a vista of the long drive winding between woods and fields, down-hill and up again with glimpses of the pool at the bottom of the valley. The old house, with its portico of stone

¹ Beatrice was born in 1884 after the move to Moseley Hall (by Richard's second wife) – Richard's last child.

² Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*, (Hodder & Stoughton, 1906), Chapter XIV, p. 213.

³ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*, pp. 213-214.

pillars, its spacious rooms, and long stone-paved passages, was full of mystery and delight to the young folks.’⁴

The children were fascinated by the cellars, the oldest part of the Hall burnt down in the Priestley Riots, because they had been built as prisons and used for this purpose and stretched the whole length of the house. The secret rooms in the house were also a joy to the children; a cupboard door with mirror panels led to another mysterious room filled with cupboards with doors, one of which when opened by a spring, led into another secret room and another door with metal lattice work which slid aside when and revealed ‘a large roomy safe’.⁵ The double doors were ideal for hide-and-seek and one bookcase covered in brass lattice work in the library was a ‘sham door’.

Views from the windows were ‘very beautiful’ with no houses in sight and from the dining-room, drawing-room and library there was a vista to the pool and then up ‘a green hillside to the thick belt of trees fringing the top of the hill’.⁶ St Ann’s Church spire ‘soared’ above it all.

The Richard Cadburys welcomed many guests to Moseley Hall, ‘Sunday Schools, men’s and women’s classes, mothers’ meetings, bands of hope, Christian workers of every variety and every denomination’.⁷ Larger parties ‘were entertained in the fields with tents and booths erected in case of rain’ and smaller ones in the gardens’.⁸ The children shared in the work of entertaining, ‘carrying round heavy cans of tea ... or distributing buns and cakes’.⁹ They played games with the children from ragged schools, or bands of hope and were delighted to look after the babies at a mothers’-meeting party’.¹⁰

The children visited poor children in Balsall Heath known to them as the ‘Poor Class’ bearing gifts. The boys swam in the pool, whilst the girls punted across and in winter enjoyed skating there. The public was invited in at a small fee for the Gospel Temperance Mission to skate there. The woods were glorious in the

⁴ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*, p. 214.

⁵ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*, p. 215.

⁶ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*, p. 216.

⁷ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*, p. 221.

⁸ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*, pp. 221-222.

⁹ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*, p. 222.

¹⁰ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*, p. 222.

summer and Richard Cadbury would often send Beatrice and her nurse carrying baskets of bluebells to give away into the village, 'which with the advent of steam-trams was fast losing its country appearance'.¹¹ When the bluebells were over, parties of ragged children from the slums came to run amongst the trees and flowers.



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¹¹ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*, p. 225.
¹² Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*.



RICHARD CADBURY'S DAUGHTERS, 1880.

Jessie.
Helen.

Edith.
Daisy.

¹³ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*.



RICHARD CADBURY'S SONS.

Barrow, 1882.

Richard, 1876.

William, 1880.

¹⁴ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*.



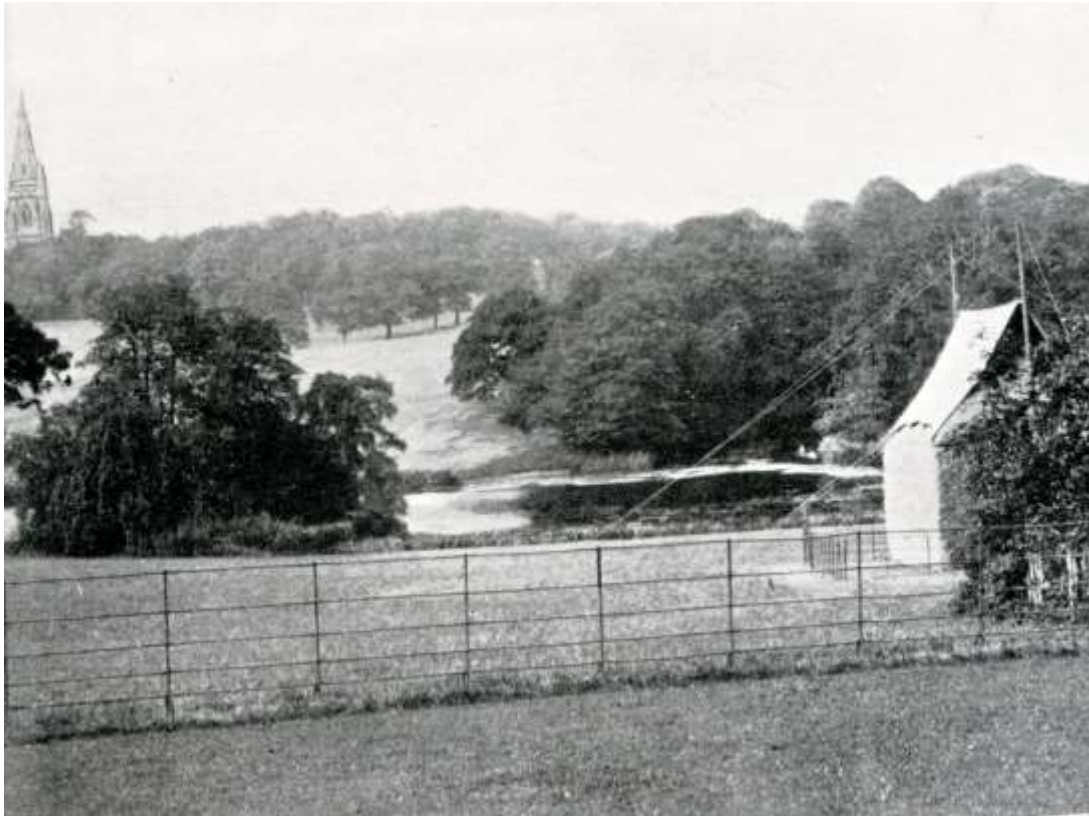
Moseley Hall before being burned down in the Priestley Riots of 1791.¹⁵



Moseley Hall Front View 1883.¹⁶

¹⁵ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*.

¹⁶ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*.



View from the Windows of Moseley Hall to St Ann's Church.¹⁷



¹⁷ Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*.

Visiting Moseley Hall

George Waring Ormerod, later an eminent geologist, describes in his diary a walk to Moseley on October 19th, when he drew Moseley Hall (Illustration 1), the key house and estate in the village.¹⁸ This was the Moseley Hall rebuilt by 1796 after the earlier Hall was destroyed in the Priestley Riots (Illustrations 2 and 3). At the time of George Waring Ormerod's visit, the Hall was occupied by James Taylor, and his widowed Mother. James' grandfather, John Taylor I, a very wealthy and successful manufacturer of buttons and other small gilded and japanned objects, was an early 'immigrant' to Moseley; he bought the original Hall in 1764. His son, John Taylor II, inherited in 1775 and added banking to his interests, going into partnership with Mr Sampson Lloyd in founding Lloyds Bank. John II lived there until his death in 1814, when his son, James, inherited.¹⁹

George Waring Ormerod's sketch appears to be drawn from the North-West, with the front of the house facing South West. The Moseley Parish Magazine of 1893²⁰ (Map 1) shows a footpath coming down from Green Lane merging with one from Russell Road and Park Hill which might be this location. The view is oblique and the Hall is not given its sweeping drive or any luxurious foliage. Images of Moseley Hall usually show the house from the front, as in Illustration 1, where a coach is seen in the wide inviting drive and the house is surrounded by trees and shrubs. Other views make much of the rear view and the spacious area of parkland and the lakes, as in Illustration 2.



Illustration 1: A sketch of Moseley Hall done by George Waring Ormerod on a country walk on October 19th 1829.²¹

¹⁸ MS10/1, Special Collections, University of Birmingham.

¹⁹ MS10/1, Special Collections, University of Birmingham, pp. 13 & 17.

²⁰ Hewston, N., *The History of Moseley Village*, p. 41.

²¹ MS10/1, Special Collections, University of Birmingham, pp. 13 & 17.



Map 1: Map of Moseley 1873, Moseley Parish Magazine.²²



Illustration 2: Moseley Hall, 1796.²³

²² Fairn, A., *A History of Moseley*, 1973, pp. 57-58.

²³ *The Listed Buildings of Moseley*, (Moseley Local History Society, 1989), p.7.



Illustration 3: Moseley Hall, 1796.²⁴

Sources:

Cadbury Helen, *Richard Cadbury of Birmingham*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1906), Chapter XIV, pp. 213 –

Innes John & Behrens Derick, *The History of Moseley Hall*, a Local History Booklet published by the Moseley Local History Society in 1991 in cooperation with Moseley Hall Hospital.

²⁴ *The Listed Buildings of Moseley*, (Moseley Local History Society, 1989), p.7.