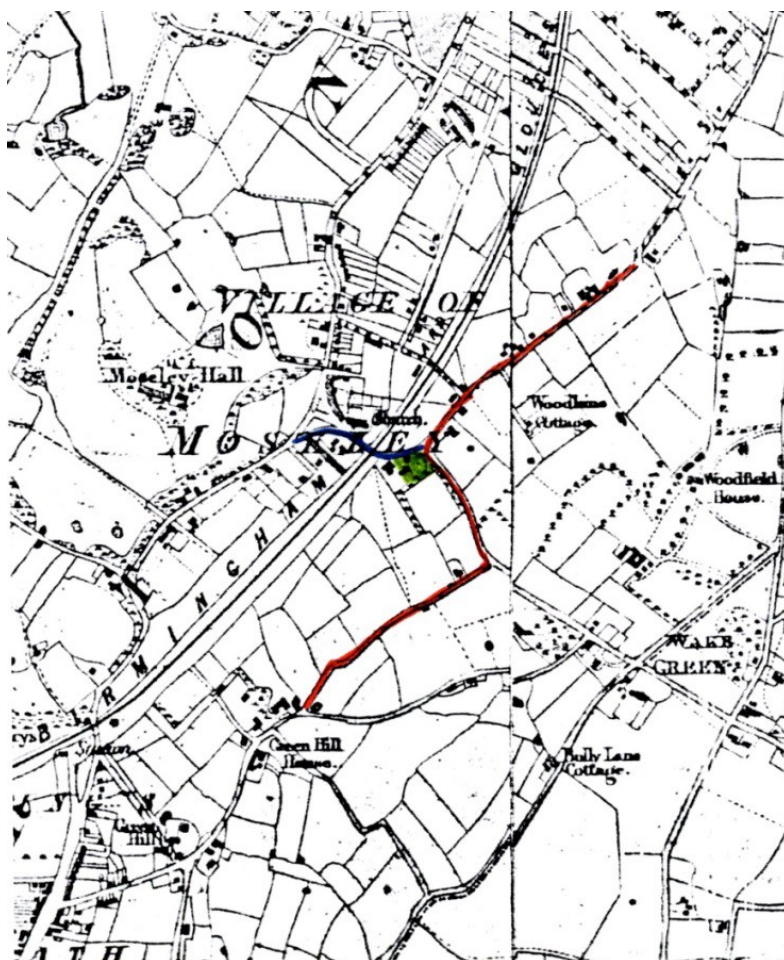


# ***Moseley Village Green Then and Now***

## **Moseley Village Green in the Past**

The Moseley Village Green we know today at the crossroads of Salisbury Road, St Mary's Row and Alcester Road, was not always the centre of Moseley. The junction of St Mary's Row with Ladypool Lane (now Church Road) and Wake Green Road was more likely the original settlement and 'Village Green', a dry piece of land close to a good spring.<sup>1</sup> An ancient route followed a track linking the River Rea at Cannon Hill with the River Cole at Yardley Wood by way of Moseley and Wake Green (Map 1)<sup>2</sup>. Ladypool Lane led into Birmingham and School Road led to Kings Heath (Map 2)<sup>3</sup>.

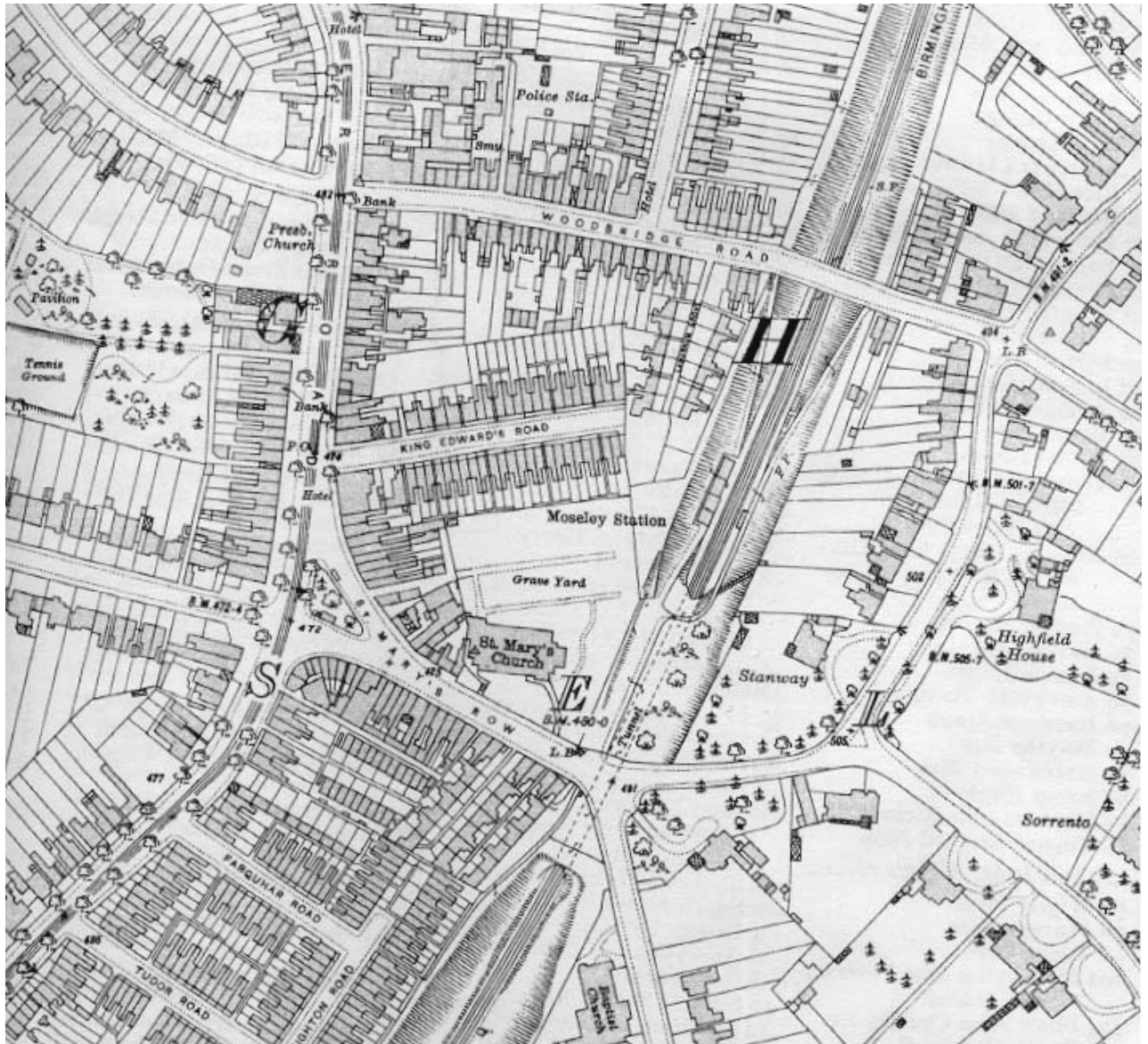


**Map 1:** *Birmingham and Environs within a Circle of Five Miles*, Charles Henry Blood, 1857.<sup>4</sup>

1 Cockel, R., *Moseley Village Walks from the Dovecote*, p. 9; *The Listed Buildings of Moseley*, p. 19; Gilbert, C., *The Moseley Trail*, p. 18.

2 Gilbert, C., *The Moseley Trail*, p. 18.

3 Gilbert, C., *The Moseley Trail*, p. 18.



**Map 2:** The site of the original Moseley Village Green and the new Village Green and Crossroads.<sup>5</sup>

An Elizabethan timber-framed farmstead, called *Village Green House* once probably stood near this Old Village Green (Map 2 and Illustrations 1 and 2).<sup>6</sup> Elmhurst, a substantial mansion, was built there later (Map 2 and Illustration 1) and in the twentieth century, Meteor Ford Garage (Illustration 2).

4 MSLHA.

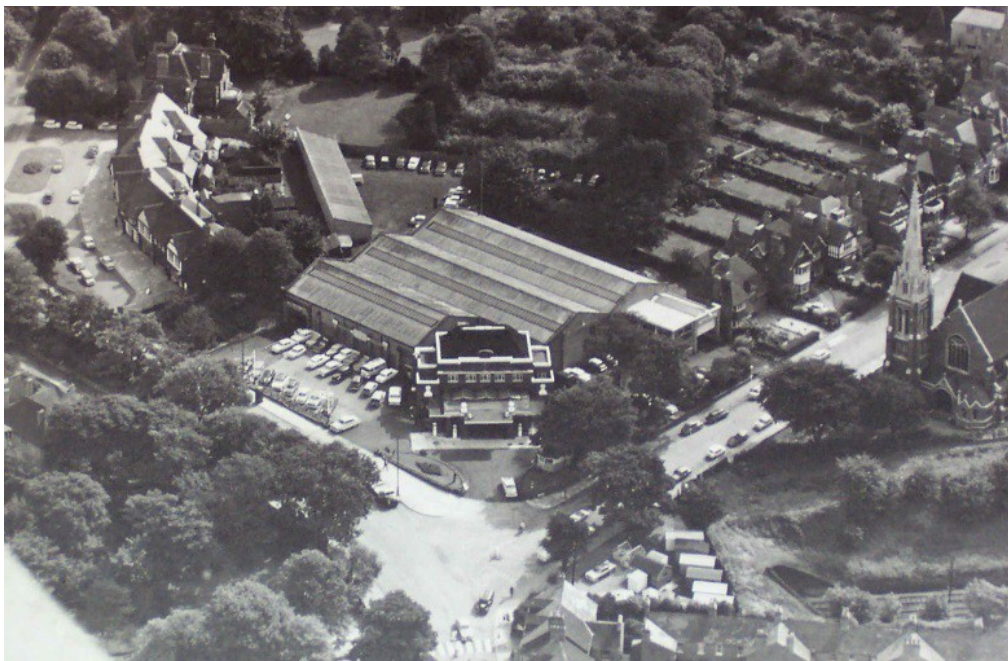
5 Birmingham central Library Local History, (BCLLH).

6 Hewston, N., *The History of Moseley Village*, (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2009).pp. 13-14.





**Illustration 1:** The original Village Green, centre back, with *Elmhurst* on the site of *Village Green House*. The 'new' village green is on the left.<sup>7</sup>



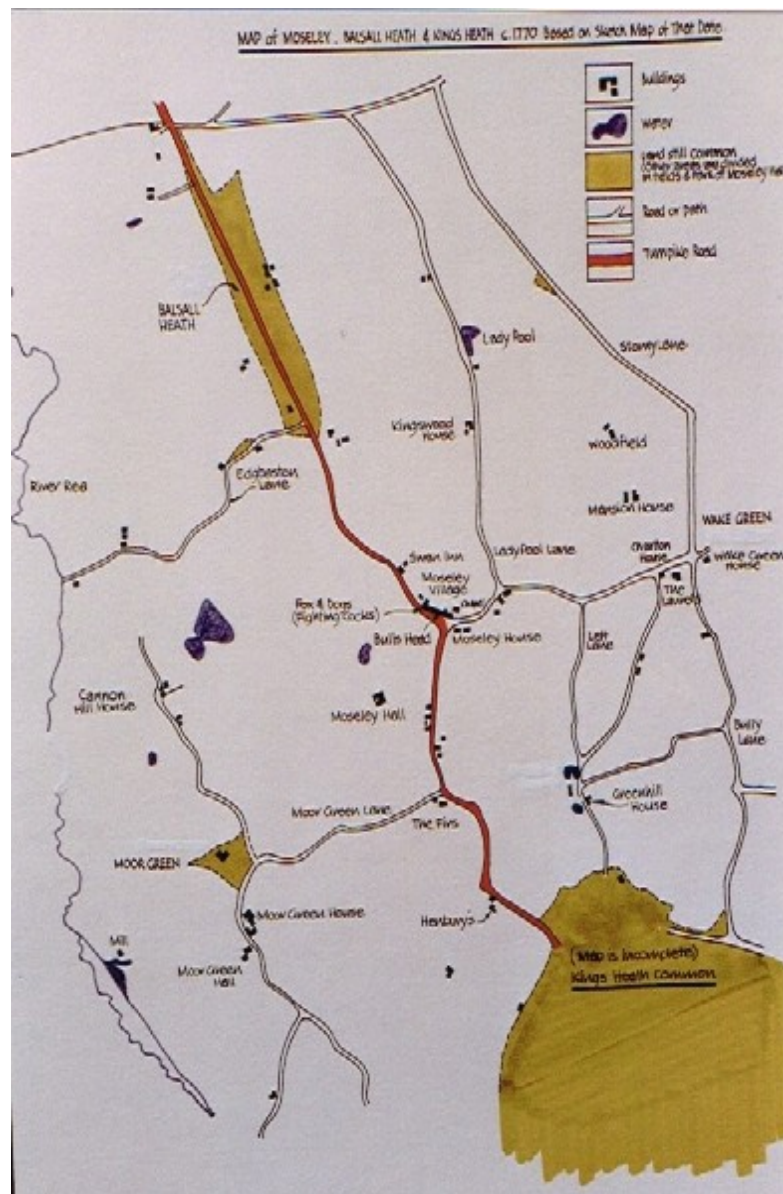
**Illustration 2:** An Aerial View of the Meteor Garage, near the location of the Original Village Green and on the site of Village Green House and Elmhurst.<sup>8</sup>

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7 MSLHA.

8 MSLHA.

This change to the focus of the village was caused by improvements to the turnpike road, established in 1766/7, that ran through Moseley to Birmingham (Alcester Road). In 1801 the turnpike was extended across the ill-drained Kings Heath (Map 3) and levelled, drained and straightened where necessary. This opened up areas further afield and provided a better road, bringing more traffic and residents to and through Moseley.



**Map 3:** The Route and Extent of the Turnpike Road in Moseley in 1770.<sup>9</sup>

The improvements also brought a new village centre. The old road linking Alcester with Birmingham had skirted 'the Slough' and run up in front of the

<sup>9</sup> MSLHGA; Fairn, A, *A History of Moseley*, (Halesowen: Sunderland Print Ltd., 1973).



Bulls Head before regaining its direct course.<sup>10</sup> When the ground was drained in 1801 a tiny piece of land was left between the old and new roads (Illustration 3).<sup>11</sup> This developed into the current Village Green, because of the increased traffic using the improved toll road, the new omnibuses, horse trams and steam trams that came to and through Moseley, and later because of the new Salisbury Road cut at the end of the 1890s and named after the then Prime Minister.<sup>12</sup> This all facilitated the development of the village Green shopping area (illustration 4).



**Illustration 3: Moseley Village, 1868.**<sup>13</sup>

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10 Gilbert, C., *The Moseley Trail*, (Birmingham: Birmingham Urban Studies Centres Committee, 1986), p. 2.

11 Gilbert, C., *The Moseley Trail*, p. 2.

12 Cockel, R., *Moseley Village Walks from the Dovecote*, (Birmingham: The Moseley Society, 2006), p. 9  
 9 The Listed Buildings of Moseley, p. 19.

13 Postcard, The Moseley Society Local History Archives, The Moseley Exchange, Moseley, Birmingham, B13. (MSLHA); Postcard courtesy of Cockel, R., and Elliot, J.



**Illustration 4:** Victoria Parade – The development of shops at the new crossroads in Moseley Village, Early Twentieth Century.<sup>14</sup>

Moseley developed significantly over the nineteenth century. Its population expanded from in 1811 to in 1901, because of people's desire to move out of overcrowded, polluted Birmingham, a move that transport developments, particularly in the second half of the century, supported. The new Village Green changed too, from the rough, barely grassed area shown in Illustration 1 to a railed, manicured well-lit enclosure in Illustrations 5 and 6.

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<sup>14</sup> MSLH.





**Illustration 5:** Moseley Village Green, c. 1895.<sup>15</sup>



**Illustration 6:** 'Moseley in the 1900s'.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> MSLHA; Postcard, courtesy of Cockel, R., and Elliot, J.

<sup>16</sup> Postcard courtesy of Cockel, R.

One regular visitor to Moseley, Thomas Anderton, described the Village Green in 1900 thus:<sup>17</sup>

*The prevailing colour of the old village green is now red brick, and the modern colour does not agree so well with my vision as the more rustic tones of a bygone day; whilst the noise and bustle of tram cars, the swarms of suburban residents that emerge from the railway station (especially at certain times in the day), are fast wiping out the peaceful, pretty Moseley of my youthful days.*

He was mourning the village green of his boyhood in the 1840s, which he described thus in the same article:

*As for Moseley . . . it was a pretty little village in those days. The old village green, the rustic country inns (of which the "Fighting Cocks" was the chief), and some low-roofed, old-fashioned houses, backed by the parish church tower, made up a picture which still remains in my mind's eye.*

*Beyond Moseley Church was a pretty road to Moseley Wake Green, in which were, if I remember rightly, one or two timbered houses and some old-fashioned residences, surrounded by high trees. Many of these have now disappeared. In another direction from the church was a country road running to Sparkbrook, and near which were an important house and lands belonging to the wealthy Misses Anderton, whose possessions have been heard of in more recent days.*

Ownership of and responsibility for the Village Green was a contentious issue in the later nineteenth century. The Blayney family had inherited the land there in the late eighteenth century and began selling land in the 1840s. By about 1882 the Green belonged to W.D. Wilkinson. Residents were afraid it would be built on and so they engaged solicitors to investigate the title deeds, with a view to buying the Green themselves. Finally ‘... a satisfactory price was arranged at which Mr Wilkinson is, we understand, inclined to give up his claim to the land’.

Management problems with the Village Green persisted. The Moseley Village Green Committee then found they had on-going maintenance issues.’ In September 1885, *The Birmingham Gazette* stated:

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Anderton writing in 1900 of his youth in *A Tale of One City: the New Birmingham*, [billdargue.jimdo.com/placenames-gazetteer-a-to-y/places-m/moseley/](http://billdargue.jimdo.com/placenames-gazetteer-a-to-y/places-m/moseley/) ; Gutenberg - <https://archive.org/details/ataleofonecityh11356gut>.



*Again of Moseley Green, it is still a wilderness and inhabitants are hinting that the committee have lost heart and despair of beautifying a spot which is so hopelessly disfigured by those hideous tall Scotch railings.*

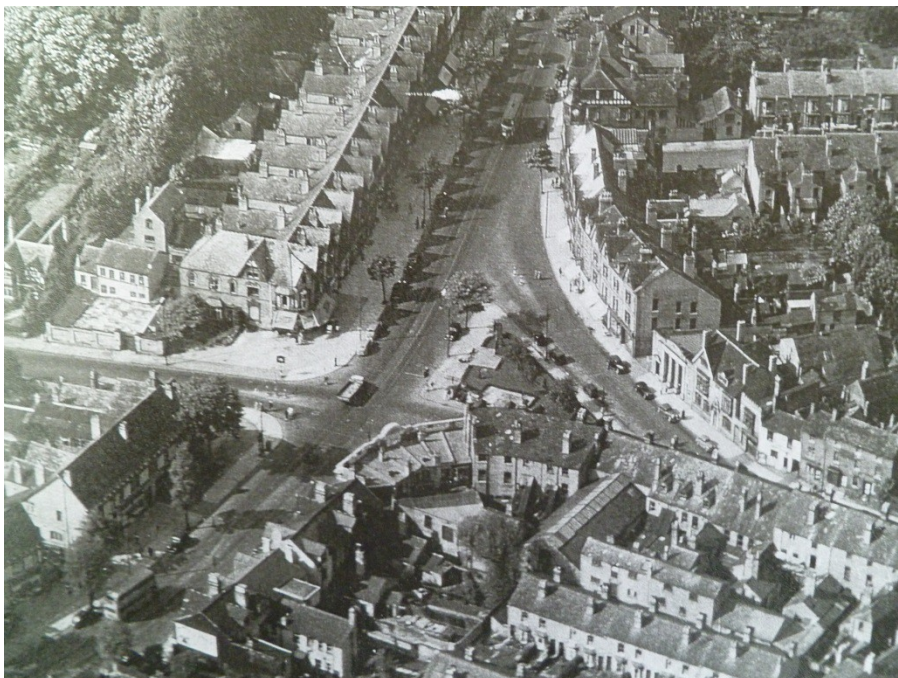
The problems continued: St Mary's Church Magazine in January 1893 noted:

*The Chairman stated that no funds exist for maintenance of the Green'.*

The Committee decided to hand over responsibility for the Green. A letter from Birmingham City Council confirms that:

*Moseley Village Green was a gift to Kings Norton Parish Council on the 23 June 1897, to be dedicated for the use and benefit of the inhabitants of Moseley as open space.*

## **Moseley Village Green in the Twentieth Century**



*This photograph shows the Village Green before WWII. The white rectangle on the Green is the roof of the underground toilets, now gone. They were tarmacked over during WWII as part of the blackout.*

Elmhurst was demolished in the 1920s and in 1831 Meteor Ford Garage was built, with 'the largest single span roof in the country'.<sup>18</sup> The architect was Baron C. S. Underhill. Visit the Moseley Society Local History website and the section 'Shops and Businesses' for more information on Meteor Ford Garage and its architect. The following artefacts are held in the Moseley Society Local History Archives.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Birmingham* 13, April 1982, 'Letters to the Editor', p.2.

## THE CHAIRMAN'S REPOST

MY FIFTIETH BIRTHDAY HAS COME AND GONE  
WITH DOZENS OF LETTERS AND CARDS  
THE BEST ONE OF ALL, AS I RECALL  
CAME FROM THE METEOR BARDS

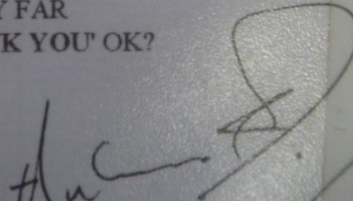
SUCH AN ODE SO CHEEKY AND DRY  
FROM THE METEOR TEAM I CAN ALWAYS RELY  
TALKS ABOUT THEM AND US, NEVER MIND THE PRICE OF A BUS  
BUT ITS CERTAINLY WORTH A CAREFUL REPLY

IT TALKS ABOUT MONEY IN THE NICEST WAY  
AND THAT PERHAPS I SHOULD GO OFF AND PLAY  
I TELL YOU GUYS, THIS APPEALS TO ME  
BUT ONLY INFREQUENTLY

WHAT'S NEEDED IS VOLUME AND PROFIT  
THEN YOU ALL WILL SHARE IN SOME OF IT  
SELL AS HARD AS YOU CAN, I DON'T GIVE A DAMN  
THAT WILL PUT DOSH IN YOUR POCKET

THE GIRLS IN THE TEAM THEY DID THEIR BIT  
PUTTING KISSES IN THE CORNER OF IT  
IT CERTAINLY IS A SIGN OF MY AGE  
WHEN ALL THEY CAN DO IS PUT LIPS TO THE PAGE!

'TO BE TOTALLY HONEST' AS TONY WOULD SAY  
YOUR HILARIOUS POEM JUST MADE MY DAY  
WHAT A TEAM YOU ARE, THE BEST BY FAR  
THERE'S NO MORE TO SAY BUT 'THANK YOU' OK?



14/6/92







## Moseley Village Green Today





# The Original Village Green Today

## The Meteor Ford Garage in 2014

The future of the Meteor Ford site near the Old Village Green is somewhat uncertain today. Demolition of the garage, recorded in photographs below, is complete and we await building works.

















The removal of the Meteor brings a stunning view of the Baptist Church in Oxford Road.



**Janet Berry**