

Trade Directory Descriptions of Moseley

Robson's Birmingham and Sheffield Directory of 1839 said:

'The vicinity of Birmingham abounds with gentlemen's seats; about two miles southward of the town in Worcestershire is Moseley Hall, the seat of James Taylor Esq. The late John Taylor, Esq was one of the principal sufferers during the memorable and disgraceful riots which took place at Birmingham in the year 1791; for both Moseley Hall and Bordesley, a new mansion in which Mr Taylor then resided, were burnt to the ground. The present elegant house is built upon a more extensive scale than the former, no cost having been spared to render it one of the most complete residences in the county. The grounds situated amidst beautiful woods exhibit great taste in the various dispositions in which they are arranged and were laid out by Repton. The Birmingham and Gloucester railway will pass Moseley.'

The History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham (Francis White & Co) of 1849 and 1850 added:

'Moseley Hall, the property of John Taylor Esq, next felt their vengeance {The Rioters}. This was occupied by Lady Carhampton, mother of the Duchess of Cumberland. But neither the years of this lady, being blind with age nor her alliance to the king, could protect it. She was ordered to remove her furniture and 'if she wanted help they would assist her'. She was therefore like Lot hastened away before the flames arose *but not by angels*.'

The 1850 Post Office Directory of Birmingham with Staffs and Worcestershire described Moseley thus:

'Moseley is a village 2 miles south of Birmingham, 3 miles North East of Kings Norton on the high road to Evesham. It is a chapelry of the parish and Union of King's Norton, in Halfshire Hundred with a population of 238. The village is pleasant and romantic and contains some good seats, amongst which is Moseley Hall, a stone mansion with good grounds, the residence of James Taylor, Esq. The former mansion was destroyed by the rioters in 1791. The chapel of ease, dedicated to St Mary, has lately received an addition of 362 sittings, 247 of which are free; the tower of stone is old. The Incorporated Society of the Building of Churches granted £250 towards the expense. The benefice is a perpetual curacy, and the incumbent is the Rev. Wm. Morrol Lawson. It is valued at £150 yearly, and is in the patronage of the vicar of Bromsgrove. The assessment to the income tax, in 1842, was £13,243. The Birmingham and Bristol (Midland) Railway passes through this place. There is a national school for boys and girls.'

M. Billing's 1855 Directory and Gazetteer of the County of Worcester gave a few more details:

'Moseley is a very extensive village about 2 miles from Birmingham, and is a highly respectable neighbourhood. It is distinct for ecclesiastical purposes, but subject to the parish in all parochial affairs (King's Norton). The Church, Moseley, is a large and commodious structure, situate about in the centre of the village. Rev J.R. Davison, Incumbent; Mr Thomas Averill, clerk. Services – 11 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. The National School, Moseley, is about a quarter of a mile from the village. It is supported by contributions and the children's payments. Mr G Sansome, Master. Average number of scholars, 100.'

The 1867 Post Office Directory of Birmingham with its suburbs references change in the village, noting that Moseley Hall is now occupied by William Henry Dawes Esq and that The Birmingham and Bristol (Midland) Railway now has a station there. The church of St Mary is now described as having 'an ancient square tower of stone which was commenced in the fifth year of the reign of Henry VIII' and that 'the incorporated Society for the Building of Churches recently granted £250 towards the expenses of enlarging the church.' The living remained the same at £150 per annum and was 'in the gift of the vicar of Bromsgrove' and was still held by the Rev John Robert Davison M.A of Christ Church Oxford. The population is given in 1861 as 1 491, a significant increase.

In Francis White & Co's 1875 Commercial and Trades Directory of Birmingham, Vol II Moseley is described as 'a well built and pleasantly situated village', containing 'about 1 186 acres of land and in 1871 had 2,374 inhabitants'. Moseley Hall is now the seat of Frederick Elkington Esq J.P. The church is 'a neat edifice of stone and brick with an ancient square tower containing eight bells and a clock' and 'The interior consists of nave, aisles and chancel'. 'The Register dates from 1750'. 'The living is a vicarage, valued at £150' and was, as before, 'in the patronage of the Vicar of Bromsgrove'. The incumbent remained the Rev, Jno R Davison M.A., but his college is given as 'Corpus Christi, Oxford'. A sister church, 'St Anne's Church Park Hill, is added to accommodate the increasing numbers of residents and is 'a neat edifice erected in 1874 by Miss Anderton of Moseley, Wake Green'. The Misses Anderson of *Mansion House* Wake Green were generous supporters of Moseley. 'The Rev Jno Leverett M.A. is the minister' of St Anne's'.

The 1876 *Post Office Directory of Worcestershire* adds to and extends the descriptions of St Mary's: 'The church of St Mary is of stone and brick, partly covered with ivy; it has an ancient square tower, which was commenced in the fifth year of the reign of Henry VIII. It also has a clock and eight bells; a chancel was added in 1873'. The residence was now held by the Rev William Harrison Colmore BA of St John's College, Oxford. 'St Ann's Church was consecrated in September 1874 and a portion of St Mary's parish assigned to it; the church ... and is situated at the junction of Moseley and Park Roads; the Rev John Leverett MA of Emmanuel College Cambridge is the incumbent'.

These Trade Directories highlight a range of features attractive to new and prospective residents in the context of the increasing desire of successful manufacturers wishing to escape the overcrowding, crime and pollution of Birmingham. They describe the location of the village as near to Birmingham and so easily accessible and its environment as 'pleasant', 'romantic', very extensive', 'respectable', 'well-built' and 'with fine scenery'. After 1850 location appears more important, reflecting the enhanced growth of Moseley. They draw attention to the civic status of the village, an aspect gaining in importance after 1867. No national political representation is noted, though, except in 1842, when James Arthur Taylor Esq of Moseley Hall near Birmingham was returned at the general election of 1841 for East division, Worcestershire. Moseley Hall, its grounds and its residents dominated early descriptions of Moseley in the Trade Directories, as the presence of significant gentry was important for the aspirational, but this importance declined over time as indicated by the shorter descriptions. St Mary's Church is described in steadily increasing detail and the new churches springing up reflect the growth of the village. This growth is clear from the population figures; the population rose from 238 in 1850 to 2,374 in 1871. The coming of the railway was significant in this and particularly the new station. The National School, the first in Birmingham, was perceived as a credit to Moseley, though the village was described elsewhere as not having poor children for the school. Its kudos appears to have lessened, since it secure more limited attention in the Directories. Trade Directory descriptions, then, give us insight into the growth of Moseley and the changing importance of its features.

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