



# The History of Moseley Hall and its Dovecote

## THE GREVIS FAMILY

The Grevis family were lords of the sub-manor of Moseley in the middle ages. Their manor house was situated behind the present position of the O'Neill's pub, and their land extended along the west side of Alcester Road from Edgbaston Road at least as far south as Moor Green Lane. There were two main entrances to the park; one was near the manor house, and the other (later known as the South Lodge) was at approximately the position of the present hospital entrance gates.

Benjamin Grevis was squire of Moseley from 1688 until his death in 1733, and the dovecote was probably built in his time. It and the ice-house (near to the present tennis courts in Moseley Park), are all that now survive of the building activities of the Grevis family. After Benjamin's death, the family fortunes declined and the estate was sold to John Taylor, a successful manufacturer of gilt buttons. The last of the Grevis family of Moseley ended his days distributing newspapers in Leicestershire.

## THE TAYLOR FAMILY

John Taylor, who bought the Hall in 1761, never lived there, preferring to remain at Bordesley Hall, and in his country house at Bishop's Itchington near Southam.

He died in 1775, and the estate was inherited by his son, the second John Taylor, who built a new Hall on the present site. He was a dissenter (non-conformist), and may well have been friendly with the group who held a banquet on July 14th 1791 to celebrate the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. A mob assembled and went on the rampage for days shouting "Huzza for Church and King", pillaging and setting fire to houses of dissenters in and around Birmingham. Although Taylor was not in the town at the time, the mob set fire to the Hall on July 16<sup>th</sup> and feasted upon its cellar and livestock. The elderly tenant and her servants were allowed to leave peacefully with their baggage in carts. Taylor claimed £3,839 in damages; he was awarded £2,700. The new enlarged Moseley Hall was built between 1792-6 and John Taylor took up residence in it. He added banking to his other business interests, going into partnership with Lloyd and Hanbury to establish what is now Lloyds Bank.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Taylors began to sell off land for building around the edges of their estate: Park Hill was the first new road to be cut in 1865, and Chantry Road in 1890, Salisbury Road was cut about 1897, and was followed by Amesbury Road - Reddings Road was opened a little earlier, mainly following the line of a footpath. The Hall was sold to Richard Cadbury who presented it to the Town Council for use as a convalescent hospital for children. It remains as a hospital today. The residue of the estate was leased to a group of local residents who formed the Moseley Park and Pool Company, Limited.

## **DOVECOTES**

Dovecotes were constructed of timber, stone or brick and were of various shapes, round, square, hexagonal or octagonal. Thousands were built from the middle ages onwards, and many survive today. As they provided what was regarded as a luxurious food they became status symbols and so were often sited in a prominent position near the entrance driveway of large houses. Few, however, were built after the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as they became unfashionable with pigeons being regarded as vermin damaging profitable corn crops. The interior of the dovecote was provided with nesting boxes in the upper part, from which young birds could easily be collected when expelled by their parents.

It was long believed that dovecotes provided pigeon meat for the table in winter but recent research has suggested that this view is wrong. In fact tender young birds (squabs) were taken as a delicacy mainly in the breeding seasons of spring and late summer. They would often be roasted on a spit or baked. Older birds are tough and needed prolonged stewing before use in pigeon pie, a dish mainly eaten by servants.

Moseley dovecote had, by 1840, been adapted for general farm use and its ground floor had been converted to two pig sties, and the upper parts became storage rooms. The whole complex of South Lodge buildings was scheduled for demolition in 1933, but public petitions for the dovecote were successful, and this building, with a part of the adjoining "cow-house", were spared. Plans for restoration of the building were in hand in 1939, but work was suspended on the outbreak of war, and it was not until the 1980s that, with the help of the Manpower Services Commission, it was possible to complete the work.

The Dovecote has been placed in the care of the Moseley Society, whose members volunteer to supervise opening to the public. The Society is gradually creating an 18<sup>th</sup> century style garden around these buildings. We would greatly appreciate your support, by means of a donation, or (if you are not already a member) through a new subscription.

[www.moseley-society.org.uk](http://www.moseley-society.org.uk)