

MOSELEY BUSINESSES AND GHOST SIGNS WALK - 2 July 2016

*Starting at the Village Green, walk up **St Mary's Row** and stop outside Rice Chamberlain's Estate Agents..*

What are Ghost signs?

Ghost signs are vestiges of advertisements for past businesses that have since disappeared or moved on. They often take the form of painted notices on the side of buildings that have become faded over time and are in some cases barely decipherable.



Ghost sign - Upton's Grocers & Provisions Warehouse

The first ghost sign we see is above Rice Chamberlain's Estate Agents, 27-29 St Mary's Row. In a good light it is just possible to read 'Upton's Grocers & Provisions Warehouse'. The proprietor James Upton is listed in Kelly's Directory 1850.

Ghost sign - Lilian Freeman

Across the road on the side of Indigo Wholefoods 50-52 St Mary's Row there is a well preserved ghost sign, half obscured by the roof of the adjoining building. This advertises the business of Lilian Freeman 'home handicrafts, needleworks and fancy leathers', a haberdashery business which occupied this building in the 1950s and 60s.



Meteor Garage (later Meteor Ford)

At the top of St Mary's Row on the corner with Oxford Road, there is a large building site, destined to become a new M&S store with flats above. This site was previously occupied by the Meteor Garage (later known as Meteor Ford), and before that by a large house 'Elmhurst' which was demolished in 1931. Baron C. S. Underhill was the architect of the garage which claimed to have the 'largest single span roof in the country'. A pre-WW2

advertisement boasts that it offered car storage for 400 cars, battery charging and electric petrol pumps. Frank Guest was the proprietor of the garage and an interesting character.

In the 1950s he received national press coverage for employing girls on roller skates as petrol pump attendants, allegedly to improve efficiency but also no doubt to attract customers. In 1950 Frank Guest with his brother Dick entered the Monte Carlo

Rally - described in the Evening Despatch (20

January 1950) as 'a 2180 mile journey travelling at speeds averaging more than 31 mph (but not exceeding 40 mph)'.



Meteor Garage - an early picture

Walk back towards the Village Green.

18 St Mary's Row (now Piquant) was once a branch of **Drucker's** Vienna patisserie. Andre Drucker started his chain in 1958 with a shop in Aston St, Birmingham and in 1964 chose the 'cosmopolitan' suburb of Moseley as the location for his second shop to sell his 'exotic cakes'. This building collapsed during re-development in around 2005, probably due to instability caused by underground springs, and the developers agreed to rebuild the facade using the original materials.

23a St Mary's Row (now Deolali , next to the Bull's Head)

This building with a grand archway was once a horse-drawn cab depot which incorporated vehicle storage and mews facilities. The mews were later used by Gascoigne's the undertakers who owned the premises opposite (now The Elizabeth of York pub). The cab stand was located on the Green and provided transport for passengers to and from the nearby railway station. The building later accommodated an architectural antiques business before becoming the Deolali restaurant.



12a St Mary's Row (now The Elizabeth of York pub) was formerly the premises of **Gascoigne's** the undertakers, incorporating an archway leading through to stables at the rear. The top of the arch is still visible above the left hand ground floor window of the current pub (see picture).



2 - 4 St Mary's Row (now Carib Grill) was once the Village Coffee House selling tea, coffee, cocoa, tobacco (prop. J. Brown), with a Refreshments saloon next door.

Look behind you across the Green past the former Barclays Bank building to see another **Ghost sign on the side of 17 St Mary's Row (now Flakes)** which is now no longer legible and barely visible. However it is clearly shown on the old postcard of Victoria Parade on a following page and appears to have been an advertisement for Avonvale Bread. Below it at ground floor level is an advertisement for a Picture Framers and Fine Art Dealers promoting the business of **Matthias Watts & Co** which once occupied these premises and dealt in picture framing, print mounting and restorations and a DIY framing service.

*Return to the crossroads, cross St Marys Row at the lights and stop outside **The Bohemian pub**.*

1-6 Salisbury House, Alcester Road (now The Bohemian pub) -

This ornate building on the corner of St Mary's Row was built in 1906 as the offices of the **Tramways Company** with shops on the ground floor. Prior to that in the late 19th Century the site had been a tram depot with stabling for the horses. The tram route from the city centre terminated here and the lines looped back round the Green with a spur into the depot. A regular horse-drawn tram service was introduced between Moseley and Birmingham in 1859, replaced by steam trams from 1867 and by electrically powered trams in 1906.

One of the shops in this building in the 1940s and 50s was **Walwyns**, which sold Clarke's

Postcard Below -Moseley crossroads looking south showing Salisbury House with Walwyn's shop



shoes and had a very popular X-ray machine to check shoe fittings. Another, Miss Gore's, a Milliner, had an unusual spiral staircase, which was later relocated to the dovecote but subsequently stolen. The shops were progressively taken over by a car showroom of which

the proprietor was David S Dunnett, the son of a blacksmith born at Dunnett Head on the northern tip of Scotland. The premises later became a branch of the TSB before being converted to a pub, operating under various names - The Drift, then Hogshead, then The Junction and now The Bohemian.

*Walk past The Bohemian along Alcester Road in the direction of Kings Heath and stop at the bus stop by the **Select & Save** convenience store.*

174-176 Alcester Road, formerly Birmingham Municipal Bank, (now Select & Save)

This building was originally the Moseley branch of the Birmingham Municipal Bank. The photographs below show the original bank at



its opening, when it occupied a single shop, and later after it expanded into a second shop next door



The bank's key-shaped logo can be seen clearly displayed in the windows. Following war damage the bank was rebuilt in its present style, at which point the key-shaped logo was incorporated into the stonework over the first floor windows. These logos remain today as a **ghost sign**, giving evidence



of the building's original owners, the Birmingham Municipal Bank. The building is now a Select & Save convenience store



*Return to the crossroads and cross diagonally to the opposite corner by **Boots the Chemist**.*

Victoria Parade (west side of Alcester Road, looking north from Boots)

In the early 19th century there were only two shops in Moseley village, a butcher and a grocer, with additionally a tailor and two boot & shoe repairers operating from home. By 1867 there were 14 and by 1896 there were 20. The number expanded significantly with the building of **Victoria Parade** in 1901 along the boundary of the Moseley Hall estate. Originally the Parade contained a variety of retail businesses - a corn dealer, a bookseller, an umbrella maker, a photographer, a wine & spirits merchant, three drapers, a tailor, a fruiterer and two bakers & confectioners. Gown specialists/ ladies outfitters started to be



introduced from the 1930s, along with hosiers /men's outfitters. The butcher's (Dave Cox) survived until the 60s. Comparing the past with the present day we can see the wide variety of small retail outfits has been gradually replaced by eating and drinking establishments and supermarkets.

Postcard Above - Victoria Parade showing the original design of the Boots corner before 'modernisation', and a ghost sign for Avonvale Bread (?) on the building on the right

*Continue along **Victoria Parade** stopping to look at the following premises.*

127 - 129 Alcester Road - Boots, Cash Chemists - Before Boots moved to the site, no. 129 was the premises of **Frederick Elias Hallam**, a corn dealer, and no. 127 used to be the dye works for **Sketchley** the dry cleaners. **Boots** once had its own 'private' lending library on the first floor where members who had paid their subscription could borrow books and purchase stationery items (pencils, rubber, notebooks).

125 Alcester Road (now Imlees)- formerly **Pattison & Co, confectioners** until 1967. Pattison's was started in Birmingham city centre in 1791 by two maiden aunts, who sold buns and cakes to coach passengers in New Street. By the time of its closure in 1967, the firm owned 18 cake shops and restaurants employing 400 staff.

119 Alcester Road - (now Coral's right hand shop) - once **W H Simpson & Son, - Seed Merchants and Corn Factors**, with nurseries at Chad Valley

115 Alcester Road - (now Java Coffee) - once a branch of **G. Houghton & Son, Gents' outfitters and hosiers**. The business was founded in Birmingham city centre in the mid 19th Century. This branch was opened in 1901 and was the last to close, in 1986.

111 Alcester Road - (now Subway) - Before Victoria Parade was built in 1900-1901, this was the location of the entrance gates to Moseley Hall leading to a drive which curved across the line of Salisbury Road up to the Hall itself (now a hospital). This side of the road was lined by tall trees containing rookeries. Note the decorative stone carving on the wall above commemorating the building of Victoria Parade.

107 Alcester Road - (now Indioz) -. once a branch of **Simpson's the fishmonger**, a Birmingham-wide business which survived until the 1960s.

101 Alcester Road - (now Oxfam) - - once **T. Cooper**, selling pastries & confectionery and the 'finest bread'. They also hired out urns & cutlery, plates & table linen.

*Stop at the end of Victoria Parade by the entrance to **Moseley Park and Pool***



93 Alcester Road - (soon to be Pizza Express) - once **W.H.Smith & Son**.

Before 1913 WHS had a shop at **152 Alcester Road** (opposite, now part of Sainsbury's), offering 'new & second hand books, book binding, notepapers, die cutting, relief stamping & up-to-date printing' (quite different from the modern WHS business!). In 1913 WHS moved to these premises, designed in the company's then

corporate arts & crafts style. Since WHS's closure the ground floor has been re-modelled but the firm's initials and date **WHS - 1913 remain as a ghost sign** carved into the woodwork above (see picture). The typeface was designed by Eric Gill specially for WHS.

93a Alcester Road (now The One Trick Pony pub)

This and the adjacent building were previously a carriage hire business (**Moseley Park Mews Cab and Car Co.**) with multi-storey stabling for horses at the rear, incorporating an unusual horse lift to transport horses to and from the upper storey. Traces of the individual stalls and the wheel survived until the stables were demolished in 1997 (see picture right). The buildings later became **Park Garage**, a car showroom with offices over the top. Evidence of this business can still be seen in a **ghost sign on the far gable end bearing the words Park Garage** which is still just discernable (see picture below).



More recently the premises became a pub, initially known as O'Neill's and more recently renamed the One Trick Pony.

91a Alcester Road - (now Prezzo) -

until recently a branch of **Halford's** and before that a garage. A rare surviving **ghost sign advertising Lucas batteries**, (dating back to 1950), a remnant of the building's days as a garage, has been preserved on the right hand wall inside the restaurant.



Turn to face the buildings on the opposite side of Alcester Road

154 -158 Alcester Road (now the Cooperative supermarket) -

The original shops across the road were replaced in the early 1970s by a **Tesco** supermarket (now the Co-operative supermarket) built in a brutalist architectural style. It was officially opened amidst great excitement by the Wombles, a huge TV hit with children at that time. Outrage at the 'inappropriate design of the Tesco supermarket' was one of the factors leading to the formation of the Moseley Society in 1979.

Also on that side of the road there was in 1895 an ironmongery shop owned by **James Williams** (at 64 The Village - now maybe part of the Sainsbury's site). The business offered the services of 'gasfitter, tinman, bellhanger and locksmith; ash pans made to order; baths, cutlery and electro-plate for hire'.

Next to the former Lloyds Bank (at no. 142) **Chas. Ayres & Co** ran a 'high class boot and shoe' shop, bespoke work a speciality', claiming "our school boots for boys and girls are noted for their durability".

Cross at the crossing to the corner of Woodbridge Road

140 Alcester Road (corner of Woodbridge Road) - This used to be a branch of **Lloyd's Bank** and the word 'Bank' carved into the stonework above the door is a **ghost sign** bearing witness to the building's former use. There used to be three banks in Moseley, the Midland, Barclays and Lloyds, all of which closed in 2015 or 2016, Lloyd's being the last. Barclays on the Green is being converted to a Costa coffee shop and there are plans to re-develop the Midland in Victoria Parade (97-99 Alcester Road) as a hotel.

138 Alcester Rd., corner of Woodbridge Rd. (now Cafephilia)



This impressive building, originally with an ornate dome (as seen in the picture) was built in 1893 as Moseley House and occupied by **T.Hadley & Son**, general grocers selling tea, coffee, wines & spirits, fruits and vegetables and brushes. However it is most fondly remembered, from 1907 onwards, as the premises

of **Shufflebotham's**, a high-class and well-respected establishment selling stores, grocery & provisions. Verity Montague-Smith recalls riding her pony to Shufflebotham's as a child, and tethering it outside while she visited the store (1940s). Shufflebothams closed in 1972.

Looking to the right down Woodbridge Road there is a garage immediately before Moseley Police Station, and above the vehicle entrance to the garage can be seen a **ghost sign bearing the name Shufflebotham's Stores**, uncovered as recently as October 2016



when the garage's fascia board was replaced (see picture). This indicates that the garage premises were once owned by Shufflebotham's, possibly for use as a depot.

*Continue along Woodbridge Road to the terrace of shops before the **Patrick Kavanagh pub**.*

Woodbridge Road

A post-WW2 advertisement proclaims "**Woodbridge Road** on the map - get all you want from Woodbridge Road". The road then contained a butcher, a decorator, a newsagent, a gentlemen's hairdresser, a hardware shop, a shoe repairer, an electrical engineer, two drapers, three grocers / confectioners and Montmartre bistro francais.

21 Woodbridge Road - vacant shop to the left of Drinksville -



These were once the premises of **Luker's** (also known as the Moseley Steam Bakery), proprietor T. W. Luker. The business started as a bakery and later expanded to sell hot soup and sandwiches and became a takeaway. The picture (left) shows the premises with staff and transport on display outside.



The business was dissolved in 2009 after 71 years but a reminder of this well-loved institution has survived in the form of a **Ghost sign - Bakers sign with baguettes** hanging above the shopfront (see picture left) - the last ghost sign on our walk.

Retrace your steps via Woodbridge Road and Alcester Road to reach the starting point of the walk.

If you are interested in finding out more on these subjects, see the Local History section of The [Moseley Society website](#) and this website on [Birmingham Ghost Signs](#).