"Moseley's Got Soul"

NEW COMMUNITIES IN MOSELEY

THE MOSELEY SOCIETY

Formed to protect a unique area of Birmingham Charity No. 512211

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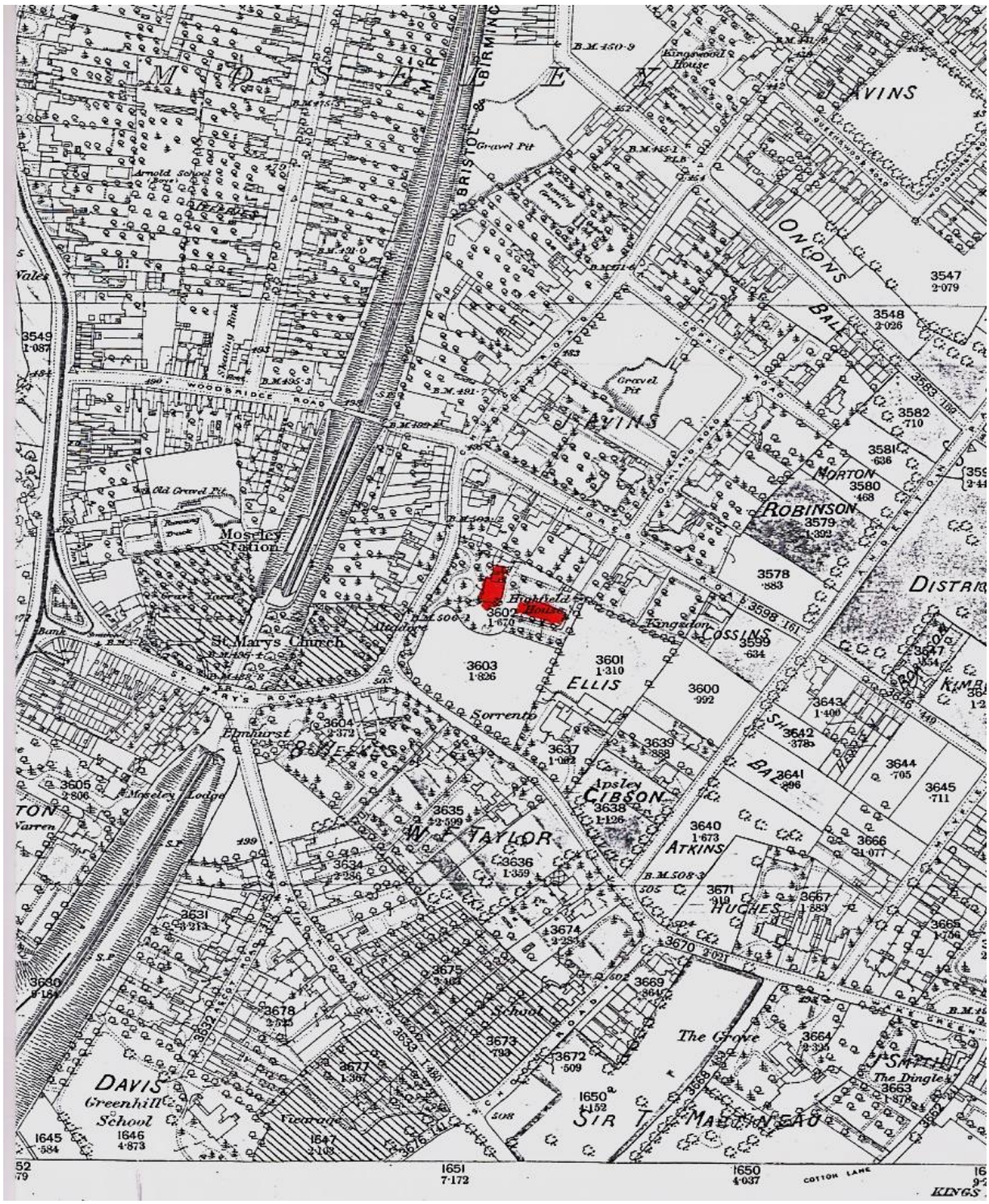


Part of Moseley in 1890

INTRODUCTION

In our booklet 'Victorian Moseley', we described the way Moseley was transformed from a small, rural community to a bustling, genteel suburb of Birmingham. In this booklet, we will consider how that community grew and multiplied, looking at the varied types and groups of people who settled here and at some of their reasons for doing so.

We have been lucky to interview several recent arrivals, and we thank them for their impressions of Moseley.

Summing up the continuing appeal of Moseley, we will end by mentioning those people who work so hard to preserve its character and appearance for the benefit of all the 'communities' who share it.

Moseley in 1858

WHY CHOOSE MOSELEY?

The growth of Birmingham in the nineteenth century led to many of its wealthier occupants moving away in search of space and fresh air. Those with the means wanted to escape the overcrowded, polluted and insanitary conditions in the town and set themselves up as ‘gentlemen’ with a country retreat.

Moseley was an attractive option. It was a small, picturesque, rural village with plentiful supplies of good water and a healthy hill-top location.

It was far enough from Birmingham to escape ‘smogs’, but close enough and on a good turnpike road for easy access to the city. There were regular omnibuses, then trams and later a railway station right at the heart of the village, making commuting easy.

There was also the added attraction of one of the famous Birmingham tea gardens, located at the 'The Fighting Cocks', which was a well-known sporting establishment in its own right.
(Article on 'Old Moseley (Worcestershire)'
from the ‘Birmingham Mail’ of 15th October, 1903)

In the 1860/70s especially, Moseley was developed as a residential area for businessmen and manufacturers. Many of these incomers were middle-class, successful and affluent.

Moseley had space to build, and build they did, from large villas to detached or semi-detached residences of various sizes. These houses were financially accessible only to the better-off. However, such properties needed staff and amenities to maintain them, so the general population increased rapidly, necessitating smaller, more varied housing options.

Moseley's population increased almost fivefold between 1861 and 1891, which resulted in more properties being built at higher densities.
(N. Hewston. 2009. 'The History of Moseley Village'. p. 43)

The rate of growth fell steadily after 1881: Moseley was running out of building land. However, the environment which would continue to attract people over the years had been established.

Such people arrived from a variety of places and for many different reasons. Some were drawn by their sense of belonging to a particular religious or cultural community and the next section will follow the arrival of such groups to Moseley in a (mostly) chronological sequence.

Kingswood Rd Moseley

SALISBURY ROAD, MOSELEY.
"Clarence" Series. No. 15a.

NEW COMMUNITIES

The evidence from the 1841 to 1911 censuses suggests that, prior to the First World War, Moseley was populated by a largely Caucasian population, the vast majority being British and nominally Christian.

The increase of this community is evidenced by the building of sister churches to St. Mary's, Moseley's parish church. St. Anne's Church (consecrated in 1874) and St. Agnes' Church (dedicated in 1883) were needed to serve the growing population.
(G. Hearn. 1974. "A History of the Church of St. Anne, Moseley, Birmingham. 1874-1974. p10)

Other Christian congregations evident at this time were Protestant Non-Conformists. People who didn't conform to the established church were not always viewed positively by traditionalists. However, Moseley seems to have developed an attitude of tolerance and, over the years, more "Non-Conformist" or "Dissenting" groups established meeting places within its environs.

Spring Hill College

In the 1850s, Moseley was witness to the erection of a huge, Gothic-style building. This was Spring Hill College, "*a particularly significant expression of the material and spiritual self-confidence of the Nonconformist community at its zenith.*"
(C.. Gaskin, M. Vlaeminke, K. Gaskin.1998.
'Moseley into the Millennium. The Story of Moseley School')

Later, in 1887/8, Moseley Baptist Church on Oxford Road was built. Many of Kings Heath's expanding Baptist congregation lived in Moseley, where there was no "free" or "dissenting" church at the time, so extending into Moseley was a logical choice when more space was needed.

(K.M. Jones. 1988. 'Moseley Baptist Church. 1888-1988'. pp2/3)

The year after the Wesleyan Methodist Church was built in Cambridge Road in 1896, the foundation stone of St. Columba's Presbyterian Church on the corner of Chantry Road and Alcester Road was laid, the building being completed in 1899. It was built to promote Presbyterianism and supported by expatriate Scottish gentlemen from Moseley.

This original building was later demolished due to structural problems and the current building was completed in 1940.
(F. Price. 1991. 'Moseley Presbyterian Church. A Candid History')

In 1896, the Roman Catholic Church of St. John the Evangelist was built on George Street, Balsall Heath. According to the Roman Catholic Diocesan Almanac Records, this was considered to be *'a new church in Moseley*.'
(W.I. Ozanne. 1986. 'Parish of S. John & S. Martin De Porres: A Brief History. 1896–1986.' p2)

Although today's maps place St. John's beyond Moseley's boundary, the church's 'parish' extends south to Wake Green Road, east to Yardley Wood Road and west to Pershore Road.

A church school was established in Park Road, which later moved to Chantry Road as St. John and St. Monica Roman Catholic Primary School – this continues to serve the community today.

1909 saw the building of a Swedenborgian New Church on the corner of Reddings Lane and Alcester Road.
(A. Fairn. 1973. 'A History of Moseley'. p68)

Highfield House, Church Road, was originally the home of one of the early, affluent incomers, but by 1930 was home to the St. Francis' Orphanage, staffed by Franciscan nuns. During the 1950s it became the Birmingham Jewish Social Club.

This club is no longer in Moseley but Jews have been present here since the late 1800s. According to the census returns from 1841-1911, some were German immigrants who came to the area to work as teachers and servants.

In the years leading up to the Second World War, many Jewish people left their homes in Europe to seek refuge overseas. In 1939, the Singers Hill Synagogue reported 500 such refugees in Birmingham. We know something about two of those who came to Moseley.
(Z. Josephs. 1988. "Survivors. Jewish Refugees in Birmingham. 1933-1945". p172)

Andre Drucker, from Vienna, came to Birmingham to join his family in 1938. Twenty years later, he *"started a small bakery … in Moseley, and then a patisserie in town."* Drucker's Patisseries still tempt us today.
(Z. Josephs. 1988. "Survivors. Jewish Refugees in Birmingham. 1933-1945". p159)

Lisel Haas also arrived in Birmingham in 1938. Already an established photographer in Germany, she set up a studio in Grove Avenue, producing a highly-regarded and important collection of portraits. She remained in Moseley until she left Birmingham in 1962.

The Jewish community in the area were able to worship in their own building when the New Synagogue, originally established in Holloway Head in 1894, re-located to a new site in Park Road in 1963. This building was sold to the Buddhist community in 1997, which still occupies it. The Jewish congregation subsequently met in the hall at King David School until 2001, when a purpose-built synagogue was erected on the school site.

After World War II, with the influx of immigrants from the Commonwealth, the demographic of Moseley started to change, when large numbers of people *"mainly from the Indian sub-continent and the West Indies, settled in suburbs around Birmingham, like … Moseley."*
(N. Hewston. 2009. 'The History of Moseley Village'. p. 69)

In the 1950s, Fairn suggests that "*many of the remaining wealthier families moved out of Moseley towards Solihull and the open country. Victorian houses were converted into flats and then many of the smaller ones deteriorated into multi-occupation."*
(A. Fairn. 1973. 'A History of Moseley'. p.80)

These multi-occupancy properties attracted economic migrants and students as well as, in the 1960s, *"many of the youths of the counter-culture and dispossessed of society."* With them came new ideas and attitudes. New Age and Alternative life style venues started to appear.
(N. Hewston. 2009. 'The History of Moseley Village'. p. 70)

Also in the 1960s, St. John's, in Balsall Heath, needed to expand when its congregation swelled to almost 8,000. The Roman Catholic St. Martin de Porres Chapel was built in Church Road. Acknowledging the growing social issues in Moseley, the Chapel actively addressed these by establishing a 'Social and Welfare Centre' to *"serve the needs of the, by then, very mixed and socially needy inner city area. The Centre … provided … clinics, clubs for the aged and handicapped and … a social venue for vulnerable single men living away from home in the flats in the older houses in the area; and …mainly of 'Irish origin'"*
(W.I. Ozanne. 1986. 'Parish of S. John & S. Martin De Porres: A Brief History. 1896–1986. p.4)

As congregation numbers fell the chapel and centre were closed and by 1977 the congregation was re-absorbed into St John's, which changed its name to St. John and St. Martin de Porres.

The Masjid e Hamza Mosque has now been built on what was the site of the chapel.

The origins of Masjid e Hamza Mosque can be traced back to the 1960s, when Muslims from the Indian sub-continent settled in the UK. One of the first mosques in Birmingham, originally at 15 Woodstock Road, it helped establish the Muslim identity in Birmingham. In the late 1970s it expanded, becoming known as the 'Woodstock Road Masjid'. 90 Church Road was bought in 1991 and this is the current site of Masjid e Hamza and Islamic Centre. Woodstock Road is now a private Muslim Girls' School.

Ozanne reported in 2004 that this community organised inter-faith meetings to facilitate dialogue. Further, prayer rooms were being constructed *to "cater for Muslims of differing sectarian or national identities",* suggesting that Moseley's tradition of tolerance lives on.
(W.I. Ozanne. 'Religious Diversity' in A. Fairn. 2004. 'A History of Moseley' p. 60)

The proximity of the Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Muslim Community's main centre in Balsall Heath has attracted many members to the area over the last 25 years. The worldwide umbrella organisation, the World Federation of Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Muslim Communities, which provides religious, welfare and educational services to members of the community, established one of its offices in Moseley.

As mentioned previously, some buildings have housed several different communities. Thus, the Swedenborgian Church became Hope Chapel in 1972 when the Christian Brethren Community of Kings Heath needed new premises; the Baptist Church in Oxford Road is now the place of worship of the Calvary Church of God in Christ; the Roman Catholic School in Park Road became a Jewish Synagogue and later still a Buddhist Centre.

In 2004, Ozanne reported that *"The Buddhist community has a particularly strong presence in Moseley,..."*, with a monastic headquarters in Chantry Road, as well as the Associate Centre in Park Road, although the former has now gone.

(W.I. Ozanne. 'Religious Diversity' in A. Fairn. 2004. 'A History of Moseley' p. 60)

In 2004, Peter Lee wrote of a decline in student numbers. He felt that *"This is a concern as it reduces the pool of talent and mindsets that contributes to the diversity of Moseley as a symbol of alternative lifestyles."*
(P. Lee. 'The Socio-Demographic Trajectory of Moseley' in A. Fairn. 2004. 'A History of Moseley' p. 49)

Alternative lifestyles continue to be represented however. In 1998 Sylvia Chandler opened the Zen Shop in the village to share awareness of natural and complementary therapies, many of which are evident in alternative beliefs and religions.

Why should so many spiritual groups seem to be drawn here? Perhaps the ethos of acceptance of others and tolerance of differing ideas, or perhaps, as one of our interviewees mentioned, because Moseley is believed by some to be situated near a junction of ley lines, which are considered to be spiritual hubs.

ETHNICITY IN MOSELEY

Lee reported that, between 1981 and 2001, *"Moseley's ethnic minority population (non-white) increased by almost 70% ..."* This contributed to a population increase in Moseley of 19% (although Birmingham's total population decreased by almost 2% over the same period).

Ethnic minority identity in Moseley, 1991- 2001:

	1991(000s)	2001(000s)	%change
White	74.9	62.8	-4.7
Black Caribbean	4.1	4.2	16.5
Black African	0.5	1.1	150.1
Black Other	1.0	0.5	-43.1
Indian	5.3	6.1	30.9
Pakistani	10.1	17.7	99.3
Bangladeshi	0.3	1.2	354.8
Chinese	0.2	1.8	923.3

Naturally, this is reflected in religious affiliation, making Moseley *"more pluralist in its religious outlook".*

Religious affiliation in Moseley, 2001:

	Numbers of people	%
Christian	7,531	45.8
Buddhist	129	0.8
Hindu	458	2.8
Jewish	268	1.6
Muslim	3,871	23.6
Sikh	492	3.0
Other	122	0.7
No religion	3,566	21.7

(Adapted from P. Lee. 'The Socio-Demographic Trajectory of Moseley' in A. Fairn. 2004. 'A History of Moseley'. pp.46-49)

This table suggests that there are sizeable communities affiliated to the Hindu and Sikh religions. There are no established places of worship for them in Moseley, although a Gurdwara was established in neighbouring Balsall Heath in 1957.

WHY CHOOSE MOSELEY NOW?

In considering Moseley, it is apparent that the general community comprises smaller communities which freely interact with each other. To gain an insight into why these communities are in Moseley, a series of interviews were conducted with a cross-section of local people.

The gentleman with the oldest memories of Moseley, a member of the Brethren, was born in 1938 and grew up in the back-to-back houses in Balsall Heath. From this crowded, bomb-damaged area he and his friends would come to Moseley to 'scrump' apples and play in the fields.

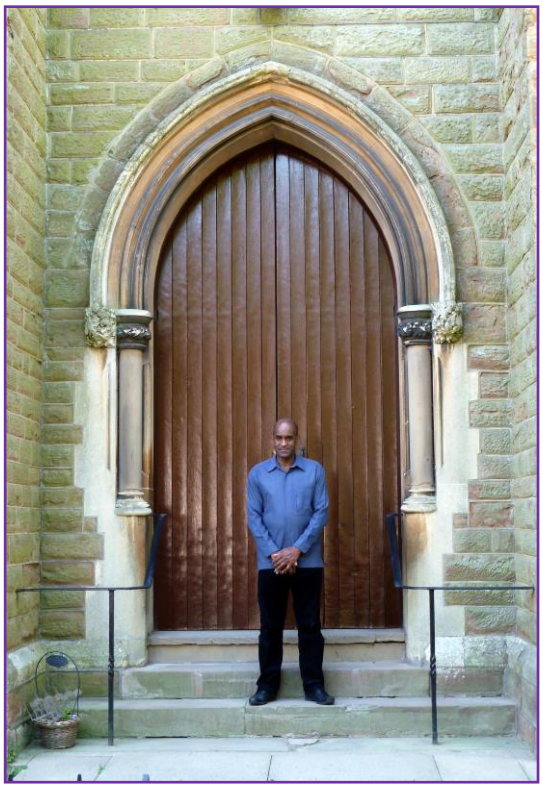
When asked about his first impressions of Moseley he responded: *"It was a posh place with big houses … It was green … There was a feeling of space."*

Asked how it had changed, he said: *"There are a lot more houses and there's been a loss of green spaces."*

The Brethren moved here due to a chance encounter and the need for larger premises.

When asked why he thought so many different people and groups seem to migrate here he answered: *"It's a well-to-do, well-educated area with free-thinking people."*

Another Balsall Heath boy is Winston Spencer, the pastor of The Calvary Church of God in Christ at the old Baptist church on Oxford Road. Born in Jamaica in 1957 he moved into the area in 1983. Like the previous interviewee, Winston remembers Moseley's large, well-spaced houses and the general sense of space. He described it as *"refined compared to Balsall Heath."*



One of the changes he was aware of was families moving out of the large houses in Oxford Road, and new occupiers not being so community-aware.

Yet Moseley had, and still has, a welcoming ethos.

The Baptist Church had been empty for three years when Winston's church bought it in 1995. He told us that the local people came and helped with the renovation. They were pleased for the building to be used and cared for and welcomed the new Pentecostal community.

Asked 'Why Moseley?' Winston put it into one word: *"Diversity."*

Cultural diversity was also cited by another interviewee. A member of the Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheries Muslim Community, he suggests that people feel comfortable in Moseley and able to fit in. During his time here, he has seen his Community grow and develop, strengthening their strong social ethos.

Arriving in England from Uganda, our interviewee has lived in Moseley for 30 years, drawn to the "*better quality housing"* and "*big gardens",* which give him the chance to enjoy his hobby of gardening. He considers Moseley's greenery to be a big attraction, as is its "*community spirit".*

Our interviewee feels that Moseley has "*improved", "modernised"* and become "*more cosmopolitan"* over the years, and that it is a "*nice, decent area to live in*." It is also close to the Community's main centre in Balsall Heath and convenient for transport, shops and other amenities.

Janet Berry is a retired teacher and has lived in Moseley since 1966. She is a member of the Moseley Society and the Local History Group. She moved to Moseley from London when her husband took a job at Birmingham University.

With no car at that time, a location with good, easy transport links was essential, so Moseley was perfectly situated.

She doesn't remember anything standing out about Moseley when she first arrived but *"something must have attracted us because we looked here specifically when we were looking to buy, although the house prices were high. We liked the 'village green' aspect, the feeling there was a centre."*

An obvious change since she first came here is to the retail environment. Where there was once a range of small shops, including several butchers, there are now restaurants and coffee houses, with many traditional shops disappearing.

She was aware of increasing numbers of buildings being converted to multi-occupancy, but feels this is better than losing the buildings altogether to new developments.

Asked what attracts people to Moseley she replied: *"The diversity. It has a bohemian quality. A very open society where whoever you are you're welcomed and respected. I have no knowledge of any antagonism, at any time, between different groups ... it has a centre and a sense of community which helps a sense of well-being. There are good schools, clubs, something for everybody regardless of age or ethnicity. You could find something for you whoever you are, and fit in."*

Clyde Pile, born in Barbados in 1953, first discovered Moseley in the 1960's through friends. At that time, his impressions were that it was very similar to many other city suburbs.

It had easy access to amenities and a *"culture of acceptance, a live-and-let-live attitude based on relationships"* which has developed into its own bohemian ethos.

When he was looking to open his business four years ago, Clyde considered four different Birmingham suburbs but wanted somewhere which was *"welcoming and adventurous, somewhere which was open to something different."*

He describes Moseley as: *"different to anywhere else in Birmingham and near areas. It's unique. It lets you be you, but recognises you as you. The other places I looked at didn't have any soul. Moseley's got soul."*

Hamid at the Nima Delicatessen has been in Moseley for 23 years. Originally from Iran, his impressions when he arrived were of a cosmopolitan place with many different cultures and lots of families. Like other people, he has found it a kind, accepting place.

He has seen a change in the types of business found in the village, commenting *"There are big stores now."* However, he also felt Moseley has variety, having retained many small, individual shops.

Kate moved to Moseley in about 2000, when she was around 12 years old, her Mom having established Zen some years before. Like other people, her first impression was of diversity, but she was also aware of the music scene.

She feels that Moseley's physical environment has much improved since she arrived.

"There are more pubs and the Prince of Wales is a community hub. There's a variety of cultures and something for everybody. You can be who you are. You can fit in and be left alone."

Her response to "Why Moseley?" She said: *"I like travelling but always come back to Moseley. It's where the heart is."*

Keith Marsden is originally from rural Lancashire, and has lived in London and New York. He moved to Moseley in 2006, when he became the landlord of the 'Prince of Wales' public house.

His first impressions of Moseley were of *"a run-down, multicultural inner city area with a bohemian feel."*

As he spent more time in Moseley he discovered *"new bits: artists, the alternative lifestyles, musicians, "a melting pot which (to some extent) has been eroded over the last ten years. There are few venues for local musicians to play now, only known artists playing at the festivals."*

This perception is supported by F. Townsend who catalogues the decline of live music venues over recent years, although some venues, such as the 'Bull's Head', are now welcoming live music again.

(F. Townsend from A. Fairn, 2004 'A History of Moseley' pp 75/76)

It is only fair at this point that historian Chris Upton should remind us that the line between protection and progress can be a fine one, with results that can deter as much as attract. It is a line that has to be walked with care to avoid a perception of stifling those very aspects of Moseley which have contributed to its ethos and sense of community.

(C. Upton. 'A Changing Moseley' in A. Fairn. 2004 'A History of Moseley'. p.45)

So what does Keith think attracts him and others to Moseley?

"It's tolerant, liberal and alternative. There's a lot going on. Its diversity, ethnicity and artistic interests. It has history facts, such as Tolkien, and contemporary facts, like (the band) *Ocean Colour Scene. It's in a city but has a village feel, allowing you to be part of a small community, but have the city facilities on hand. It's unique."*

Someone who appreciates Moseley's social scene is an Italian lady who moved here five years ago. Asked about her first impressions, Anne reported finding Moseley *"inspiring".*

She feels an affinity with the cultural and artistic communities in the area, with the nearby Midlands Arts Centre and Cannon Hill Park adding to its attractions. *"It's an artistic place comparing to other places."*

Asked what she thought drew people here, Anne cited *"a multicultural environment, different restaurants with different international food … and … a lot of music and art."*

Why Moseley? *"Because it's multicultural, has beautiful parks."* It offers a *"better quality of life comparing to other parts of Birmingham"* and has *"community values".*

Originally from Sardinia, our next interviewee is a recent arrival initially attracted to Moseley's cultural and social activities, attending festivals and musical events.

Moving here just six months ago, she confirms Moseley as *"very central … close to town … transport is good".* She feels *"there is everything here for everybody",* with *"so much happening."*

Since she's moved to Moseley, this lady has discovered *"the secret park, friendly people, green places, quiet suburbs."*

She appreciates meeting people with common interests, as well as the *"sense of community – people really like the area."* But she also has *"a sense of history"* of being able *"to belong to somewhere."*

These interviews confirm that people are still attracted by Moseley's convenience; by its housing choices and attractive green environment; by its welcoming manner and sense of community.

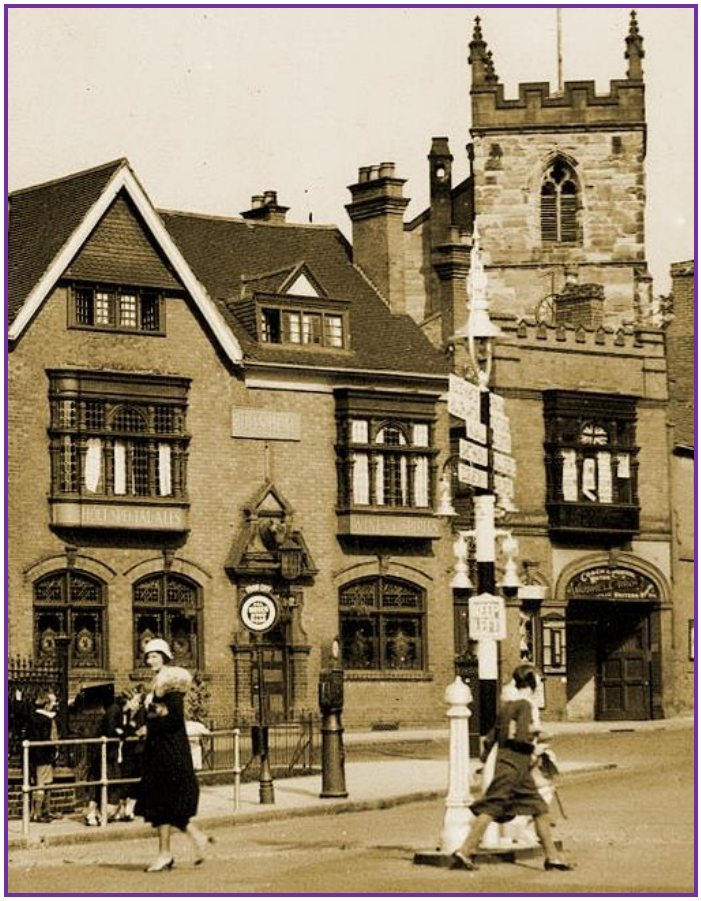
Moseley's social scene continues to draw people too, with its musical heritage, its many and diverse festivals and markets, and events in its 'secret park'.

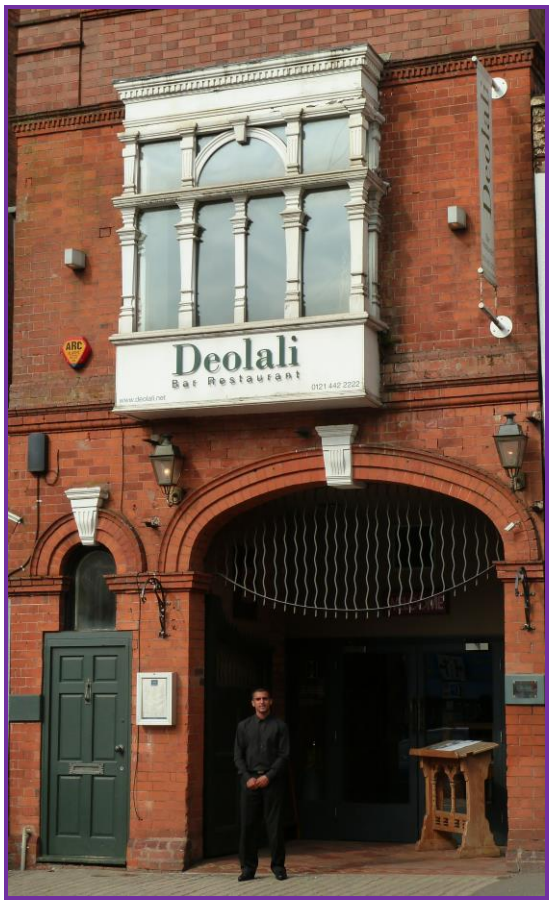
It seems that the *'cultural boom'* of the 1970s, when *"many gifted individuals were pursuing their own various artistic fields … and gelling together to form writers, poets and theatrical groups, artists' co-operatives"* has largely been sustained and continues to draw people in.
(N. Hewston. 2009. 'A History of Moseley Village', Volume One. p.72)

Our interviews suggest that there is a real perception of a 'village green' and a centre.

To these attractions are added words like ‘bohemian’, ‘cosmopolitan’, ‘diversity’. Moseley obviously continues to present as welcoming, tolerant and free-thinking. Moseley people feel a sense of community, encompassing their multiple ‘communities’.

Much of ‘Old’ Moseley’s physical ‘skeleton’ is still visible, with many buildings remaining, and continuing to play major roles in modern living, whether they’re religious buildings, providing spiritual sustenance, hosting events or playschools; or restaurants, offering a huge variety of cuisine; or public houses, still providing a range of leisure opportunities for the community.





This gives an impression of stability and continuity, whilst embracing change and variety.

STILL GROWING, STILL PROTECTED

Over the years Moseley has seen many changes and no doubt will continue to do so. Its ethos was protected in the past by land owners, entrepreneurs and building restrictions. Today it continues to be protected and preserved, with its unique character continuing to attract newcomers.

The efforts of the Moseley Society were rewarded in 1983 when Moseley was designated a Conservation Area. The Society continues to work tirelessly to maintain that character, alongside many other groups, such as the Moseley Community Development Trust, the Moseley Forum, Moseley Interfaith Group, the Moseley Regeneration Group and Moseley in Bloom.

Several of these groups are currently collaborating on 'The Moseley Big Plan', to ensure that Moseley can develop and flourish without losing its neighbourhood character: something it has managed to do in the past and hopefully will continue to do well into the future.

Moseley
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT TRUST
An independent organisation
ensuring Moseley continues
to be a vibrant place to live
Moseley Community Development Trust
The Post Office Building,
149 - 153 Alcester Road,
Moseley, Birmingham B13 8JP
www.MoseleyCDT.com
THE MOSELEY SOCIETY
Protecting a unique area of Birmingham
MOSELEY'S
BIG PLAN
Get involved!
Birmingham City Council

It has been said that *"Moseley's 'success' is a reflection of the structure of housing and urban environment provision laid down in the nineteenth century, which has proved to be enduringly popular and flexible."*
(P. Lee, 'The Socio-Demographic Trajectory of Moseley' in A. Fairn 2004 'A History of Moseley' p49)

Yet generally it seems to be the ethos and atmosphere which did, and still does, attract people to Moseley.

"Living here is like stepping into a painting by Breughel, in modern dress. Here are the scholars, drunkards, religious people, musicians, prostitutes, writers, happy people and sad … actors, painters, professionals and derelicts, every class and type … I wonder whether the feeling that is Moseley has always been here, bringing the village to itself; or whether it is the village's presence which creates and sustains the feeling… the feeling is strong enough to hold together all the diverse facets into an eccentric family and community; like you, and me, and him and her."

(Quote by H. Nicholas, from 'The Moseley Paper', quoted by N. Hewston 2009 'A History of Moseley Village', Volume One. p72)

Or, to put it more simply in Clyde's words –

"Moseley's got Soul".

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Website: www.birminghamchurches.org.uk/churches/calvary-church-of-god-in-christ-moseley

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Moseley Community Development Trust

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Moseley Forum
Moseley Round Table
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Moseley in Bloom
Moseley Festival
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Tel: 0121 440 3025
E-mail: innamorati@btinternet.com
Website: www.ssjohnandmartin.org.uk

This project was made possible by a grant from
the Heritage Lottery Fund and by the efforts
of many volunteers, past and present.

The Moseley Society Local History Group:

. collects and manages archival materials,
. designs displays for local events,
. researches and produces local history booklets,
. holds monthly meetings with varied speakers.

If you would like to participate in any of these
or to volunteer, please contact us on

moseleyhistory@moseleyexchange.com

You can find us on
Facebook:www.facebook.com/
MoseleySocietyLocalHistoryGroup
Twitter: www.twitter.com/moseleyhistory
Our website: www.moseleyhistory.co.uk

'The Collection' is available for consultation by appointment.
With thanks to all those who participated in this project.
Unless stated otherwise, all quotations are taken from
the Local History Group oral history project.

THE MOSELEY SOCIETY
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