

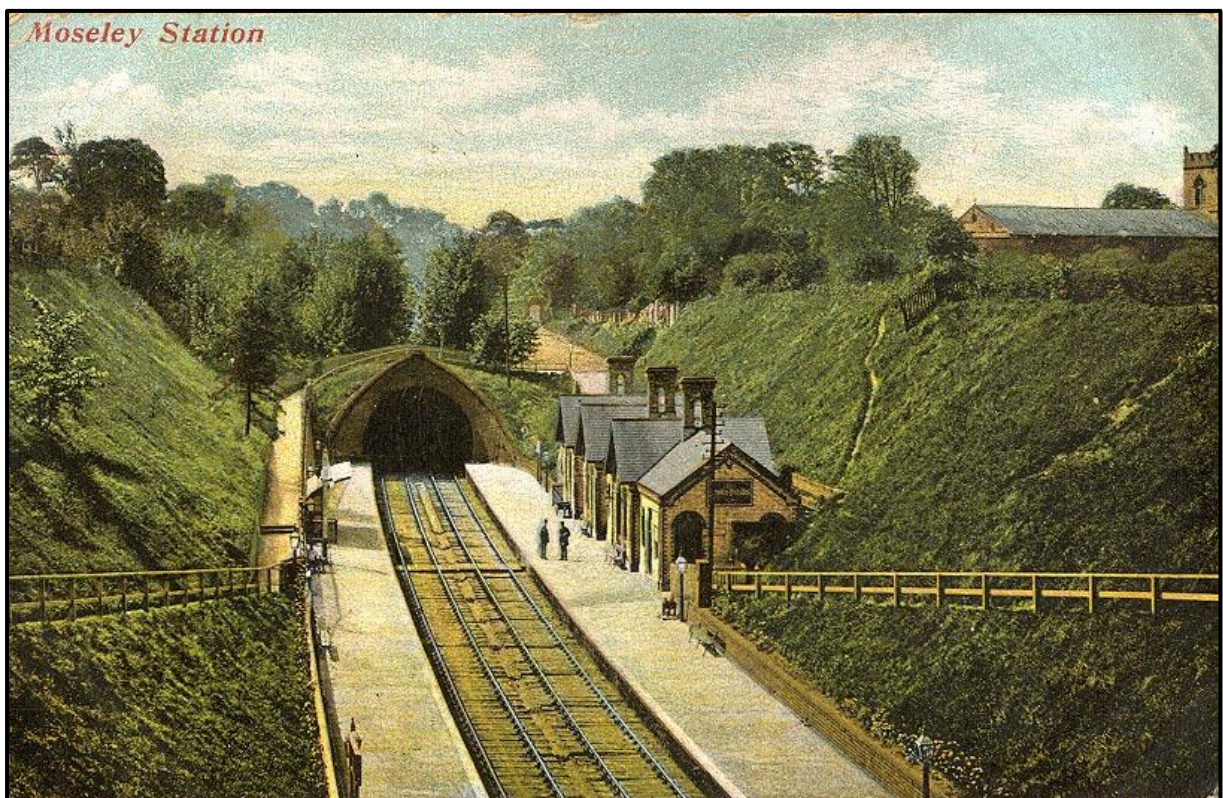
Victorian Moseley in the News: Transport

A range of Birmingham newspapers, local journals and magazines reported on life, developments and events in Moseley in the nineteenth century. Transport drew considerable attention.

What Moseley needed to trigger further development was a station close to the village centre. In 1864, a Moseley correspondent, S. Niak, wrote to the *Birmingham Daily Post* asking the newspaper to use its influence for a station for Moseley, because the journey time to Birmingham by omnibus took forty minutes (*Birmingham Daily Post*, Wednesday 25 May, 1864).

A station was finally built in 1867 in the centre of the village. Thomas Lewis claimed 'There is no prettier station or one more picturesquely situated than that which was opened at Moseley'.

Moseley Station, c. 1890.



Moseley Station, c.1890s.



Moseley Station, c. 1900.



The opening of the new station brought a flurry of comment. An article in the *Birmingham Daily Post* in 1867 described in detail the opening of the new station, its location, the access points from Woodbridge Road and St Mary's Row and the very convenient and frequent train times, including a 'dinner train', which allowed businessmen to make the journey home for lunch and return to their employment afterwards, a service particularly appropriate to the Moseley demographic.

'A New Station for Moseley', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 1867.

'The new Moseley station opened on November 1st 1867. The station is on the town side of Moseley at the back of 'the old church' and is accessed from the upper and 'old part of Moseley' and also from the newly built district in the vicinity the wooden bridge which spans the line some 200 yards below. The station is built on the Moseley side of the railway. Six trains leaving New Street will stop at Moseley according to present arrangements and seven leaving Moseley for town each weekday. A dinner train leaving New Street at the convenient hour of 1 p.m. arrives at Moseley at 1.11.p.m. and an equally convenient train picks up the after-dinner passengers at 2.48 p.m. and deposits them on New Street Station platform at 3.05 p.m. After business hours Moseley may be reached by trains leaving town at 5.20 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. or later still at 7.00 p.m. Journey time averages twelve minutes'.

Horse-drawn trams were popular. The *Birmingham Daily Post* in 1873 praised the motion, ventilation, speed and cheapness of horse omnibuses and described the carriages as 'light, commodious, comfortable, and convenient. . . . The seats inside are covered and backed with Utrecht velvet . . . canvas rendered waterproof, windows of ornamental stained glass' (*Birmingham Daily Post*, 'Opening of the Birmingham Tramway', Monday 8 September, 1873).

There was much concern about damage to the environment. In 1884, a Moseley resident, 'An Old Inhabitant', wrote to the *Birmingham Daily Post* complaining about the 'wholesale' cutting down of trees in Moseley Park required to widen the road for the accommodation of the Tramway Company (*Birmingham Daily Post*, Saturday 15 November, 1884). He claimed he would rather do without trams than lose the beautiful trees and rookery and requested that someone should step in and, at least, arrange to leave a line of trees and the 'busy rookery at the edge of the new footpath'.

The Dart reported the widening of the main road and the Tramway Company 'taking up the rails again' in Moseley, which must have been very disruptive (*The Dart: The Midland Figaro*, Friday 6 December, 1884, p.12).

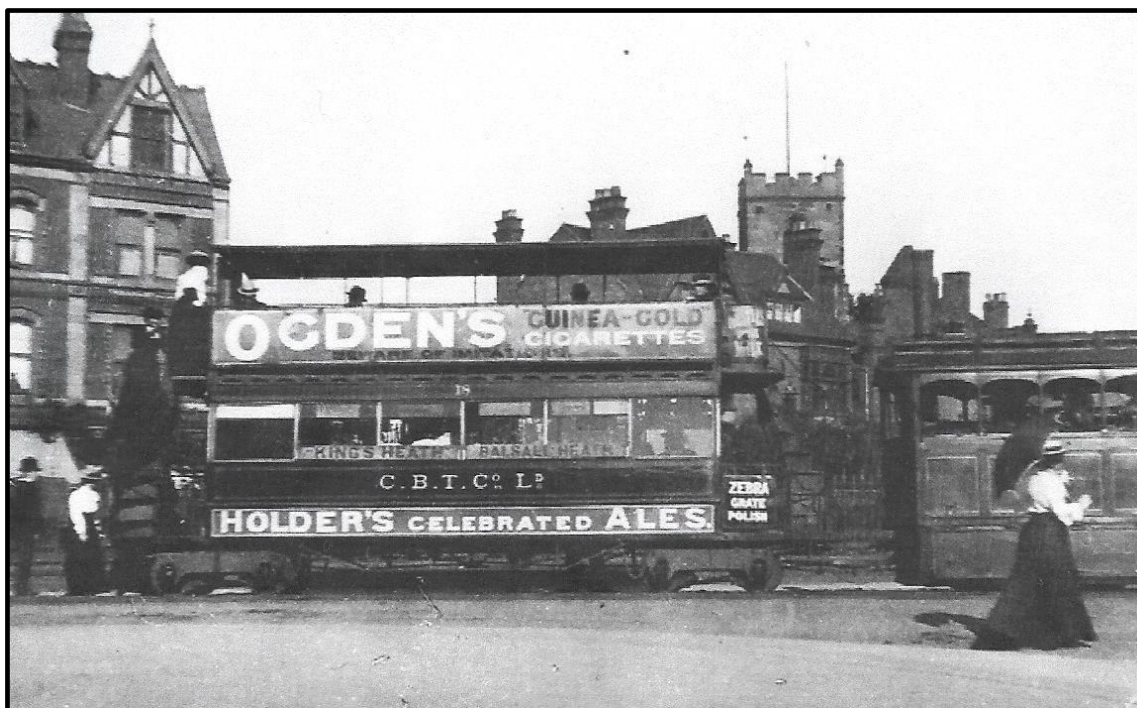
Trams caused serious accidents. In 1886 *Birmingham Daily Post* included a report of a child under two years of age who ran out into the road and was killed by a tram (*Birmingham Daily Post*, Wednesday 22 September, 1886; *The Dart*, 'Hoots of the Week', Friday 24 September, 1886, p.10). The child had been in the charge of a young girl who had left her to take another baby she was looking after back home. There were several eyewitnesses. The driver was exonerated, but the parents, who lived at the Coffee House, Moseley Green, were admonished and considered negligent for allowing a young girl to look after their child.

'The Fatal Tram Accident at Moseley'

Birmingham Daily Post, Wednesday 22 September, 1886.

'Mr R. Docker (Coroner of East Worcestershire) held an inquest at the Prince of Wales Inn in Moseley into the death of Nellie Edmunds, aged 1 year and 9 months, whose parents lived at The Coffee House, Moseley Green. Birmingham Central Tramway Company were in the court. When found dead she had only just been found missing from her parents' house. She was believed to be in the charge of a young girl. A witness, James Roland Averill from Moseley was standing near the tramway terminus in Moseley on Sunday at about 5.30 p.m. and saw the deceased. She had a toy perambulator and ran from footpath. He heard a scream. The child was under the engine of the car which had just left the terminus. The engine stopped very quickly and others helped extricate the child, who was dead when found. She was carried to Dr Shaw's surgery. Her head was crushed into pieces. The car was going slowly – it had just started off. George Powell, a carpenter of Woodbridge Road, saw her run from the footpath in front of the tram. Samuel Pritchett, the driver, saw her when a yard from the engine'. He applied the brakes straightaway and stopped the car within two yards of the child, who seemed to run from behind people. A little girl about ten years was minding the child on Sunday evening. She left her on the footpath while she took another child home. The Coroner said in summing up that the parents were negligent entrusting her to a young girl also minding another baby and that the parents were not wholly free from blame. The verdict was 'Accidental death' and the driver was exonerated from any blame.

A Steam Tram, Moseley Village Green, 1902



Horse trams lost out to steam trams, but *The Dart* claimed entrepreneurs had 'been too speculative' and 'could not make **horse trams** pay' in an 1887 article (*The Dart*, 'The Central Tramway Company', p.1604).

There were a range of problems related to steam trams and considerable opposition:

Steam trams created smoke, sparks and noise and chaos as the locomotives turned round the limited space of the Village Green to the Terminus at The Fighting Cocks Inn and hooked up at the other end of the trailer.

Steam Trams turned round the Village Green, c 1895.



Steam trams brought unwelcome visitors from Birmingham to the village. In 1886, the *Birmingham Daily Post* reported disturbances caused by young men and women, who came to Moseley on omnibuses and trams to pick up cabs and traps to go on to Alcester Lanes End Inn and the Billesley Arms, returning late at night and then drinking in Moseley inns (*Birmingham Daily Post*, Tuesday 5 October, 1886). Cabs and traps competed for passengers, causing road safety issues, and engine drivers used the tram alarm bell very liberally, creating noise pollution. Passengers milled around in the village, jostling pedestrians and singing loudly and some damage was done to fences by blackberry gatherers and apples and turnips were stolen. Trams rumbled over the wooden pavement and bells jangled uninterruptedly from 7.30 a.m. every weekday until nearly 12.00 p.m. each night.

An Anti-Steam Tram Association was formed and worked to improve the situation. On Wednesday 20 June, 1888, a conference was held at Moseley National School for Kings Heath and Moseley by members of the Anti-Steam Tram Association to consider the renewal of the licence to use steam on tramways due to expire on 9th June (*Birmingham Daily Post*, Wednesday 20 June, 1888). The purpose was to induce the authorities to assure a freedom from nuisances and dangers characteristic of steam to date. Mr G. Lyndon presided over the meeting and about a half dozen gentleman, including Messrs Lister Lea, Frank Smith, S. B. Allport, H. Satchell, A.G. Hudson, T.W.F. Newton, W.H. Pass and G.T. Smith (Hon. Sec.) attended. The Association had communicated with the Board of Trade suggesting an enquiry, but had not received much encouragement for this idea. The Association suggested that the licence be renewed only for six months so as to hold an enquiry as to the working of the system, the effect on rates and the welfare of the district, the impact on property values (a total of £40,000 and a depreciation of 35/40%), the reduction in rents of 30-40% and how almost impossible it was to rent out houses nearby as people did not want to live near steam tram routes because their sleep was disturbed until 12.00 midnight

Conditions suggested for a licence:

1. No noxious fumes and steam to be emitted
2. No impure or Birmingham coke be burned
3. The Maximum speed not be exceeded with the speed restricted to 4mph down Alcester Road and on Sundays to be walking pace when passing places of worship during divine services
4. No excessive noise be made
5. Bell ringing to warn not startle and annoy

It was further resolved that:

1. Present car be superseded by one carrying at least a third less passengers and constructed as to avoid the small wheels of the present one which caused so much noise
2. Present engine be superseded by one of less weight ...

‘so avoiding the ponderosity and noise of the former’

3. Engine and car be made sightly
4. No gratuitous rides be given to policemen or other officers

Also suggested local authorities

1. make necessary provision for the enforcement of regulations by providing special inspectors and giving instructions for prosecution when regulations broken
2. should consider matter of tramway motors with a view to substituting one for steam

The Vice president was Mr J.C. Holder candidate for a seat on the County Council of Worcestershire for one of Balsall Heath districts and Mr Lyndon for Moseley District.

The horse omnibus struggled and horse trams were attracting fewer than expected passengers. The Dart blamed the railway and the steam tram for this in July 1891 (*The Dart*, 'Tittle Tattle by Mollie', Friday 31 July, 1891 & Friday 17 July, 1891, p.5):

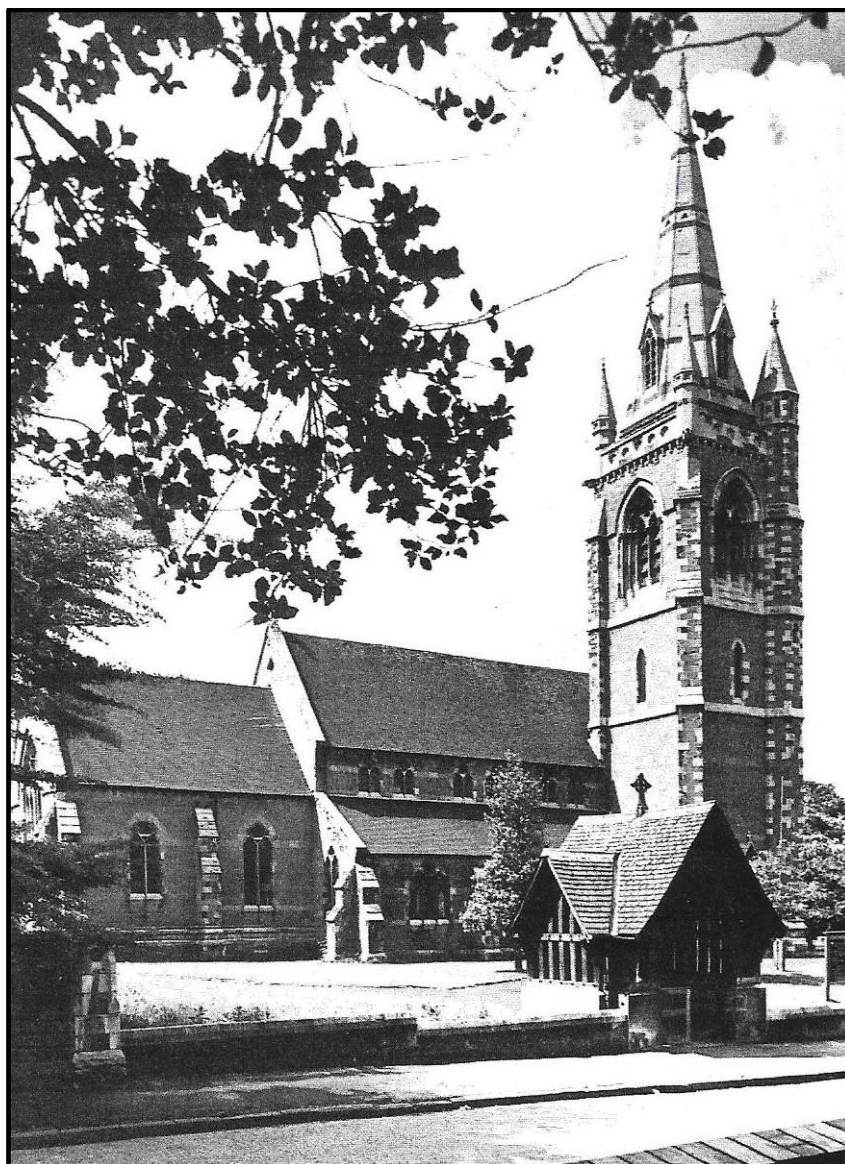
'The Moseley people do not seem to take kindly to buses. One has been seen struggling desperately for the last month from Church Road to town and back again, but it has received so many rebuffs that it has at last given up the struggle. No doubt the excellent train services and the proximity of the steam tram have a great deal to do with this failure. Businessmen have to consider speed and convenience before pleasure'.

A Horse Omnibus outside The Fighting Cocks, Moseley, 1870s.



The Dart claimed that St Anne's Church was 'situated so that the sound of trams and vehicles cannot mar the beauty of the service' (*The Dart: The Birmingham Pictorial*, 'Tittle-Tattle from Moseley', Friday 28 August, 1891, p.5).

St Anne's Church, Park Hill



Trams brought other troubling visitors later. In 1891, *The Dart* described the nuisance of 'match boys', 'lavender-seller boys, and those other little torments so frequently met with in town but who seem out of place in quiet suburban districts' and is amazed that 'even aristocratic, sedate Moseley is not free from those little pests' (*The Dart: The Birmingham Pictorial*, Friday 17 July, 1891).

Steam trams were still unpopular with some at the end of the century. ‘The Trolley System’, an article in *The Owl*, on 10 March, 1899, refers to ‘grumblers against the trolley’. The *Birmingham Mail* of 13 October, 1903, referenced the ‘long prejudice against the steam tram’ and remarked: ‘This gentleman [Rev. Colmore] on the appearance of the first tram registered a vow never to ride in one, a resolution which, we are told, he has unfalteringly maintained till the present day’.

Newspapers were important to commuters. The writer of ‘Tittle-Tattle from Moseley’ in the *Dart* was amused when returning on the 6.40 p.m. train to witness ‘the scramble by the gentlemen passengers for *Mails* ... the gentleman in charge of Smith’s bookstall, No.5 platform, rushed down the steps with an armful of *Mails* ... what amused me was to see gentlemen of every description, old, middle-aged, and young jump nimbly out of the carriage [The train was about to go], dash to the bookstall, throw down their halfpenny, and return with the speed of greased lightning, bearing triumphantly their precious *Mail*’ (*The Dart: The Birmingham Pictorial*, Friday 31 July, 1891, p.13).

The slowness of trains to Birmingham resulted in humorous stories. A man supposedly taught his dog to see him off on the early train from Moseley, then ‘trot off down the road to Mr Higgins’ newspaper shop, purchase a *Post* and deliver it to his master at Camp Hill when the train reached the station’ (*The Dart: The Birmingham Pictorial*, ‘Thursday’s Gossip’, Friday 14 August, 1891, p.3). The dog ‘caught a severe cold through having so frequently to wait the arrival of his master’s train at Camp Hill – and he died!’ The story was told to the writer ‘on the Moseley train (as it was taking a rest on the curve)’.

There were complaints about train ticket costs. A Moseley newsagent, signing himself ‘A Daily Reader’, wrote to the *Birmingham Daily Post* in 1891 suggesting that GWR reduce the cost of its season tickets like the Midlands had (*Birmingham Daily Post*, Monday 12 October, 1891). He added, ‘if it were not for that curve and tunnel there would be no murmur from Moseley against the Midland Service’, which hints at local discomfort with the tunnel and the track.

‘Private transport’ was still thriving in 1891. *The Dart* commented on ‘one of our young Moseley medicals’ who was seen ‘in company with a well-known city man driving in the country behind the prettiest pair of horses in Birmingham’ (*The Dart: The Birmingham Pictorial*, Friday 7 August, 1891).

‘Mr Joseph Horton went to Dublin the same day he was thrown from his **trap**, lighting on his head. He has been in many similar accidents and is never any the worse. A good many people would like to have the secret of invulnerability which Mr Horton seems to possess’ (*The Dart: The Birmingham Pictorial*, Tittle-Tattle from Moseley (by Mollie), Friday 4 September, 1891).

The frequency of the steam trams to and from Moseley was a key factor in Moseley's growth in the final decade of the century. They were reported as being very frequent, at every ten minutes, during the period from 1890 to 1897 and every nine minutes from 1898 and journeys were short at only ten minutes (CRL, C1/10/11, *Moseley and Kings Heath Journal*, No. 10, March, 1893, p.9).

Attempted suicide on the railway: On Saturday 15 September, 1900, Charles Burge, a hairdresser of St Mary's Row attempted suicide by placing himself on the railway in Moseley tunnel. A porter saved him. Burge was brought before Kings Heath Bench where he said 'Life's not worth living'. His manner in court was strange and he was remanded to see how he went on. He claimed a spotless reputation and asked to be allowed to go. 'Whiskey I have had, I know' he called as he went downstairs, 'loudly expostulating with the officers' (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, Saturday 15 September, 1900).

Janet Berry