

## Moseley Quoits and Bowling Clubs

From 1867 John Avins of Highfield House, Church Road, Moseley (now the All Services Club) leased land further down Church Road from his home for **Moseley United Quoit and Bowling Club** at a peppercorn rent to Francis Corder Clayton (Fig.1). The Club operated until 1964 when it held its final dinner.

**Fig.1: Moseley Quoits and Bowling Club Grounds, 1890.**



John Avins left the land for the Club to Francis Corder Clayton in his will as well as £250 for the Club and £10 for prizes for competition winners.<sup>1</sup> An 1889 list of officers and members shows ninety-six members of whom eleven were past

<sup>1</sup> BCLA, John Avins' will, MS1672 (Acc 1991/137). Francis Corder Clayton was a Birmingham City Councillor from 1882 until his death and Mayor of Birmingham between 1889 and 1890.

presidents and thirteen committee members, two of whom were trustees (Fig.2). The club was unusual at the time in having a woman on its committee. On 5 July 1887 the then Hon. Sec., William Thomas, informed members by card of a handicap Quoits match. In 1888 the Hon. Sec. Nathaniel Cracknell Reading, a well-known local Moseley resident, reminded members of a Bowls Championship, club colours being available to buy and a meeting to discuss the formation of rinks of players; in 1890 he notified them that a quoits handicap match was to take place (Fig.3). In 1889 he informed members that quoit play began on Saturday 6 April and bowling on 4 May, that there was a Quoits Match for the Annual Club Prize (a Handicap) on Saturday 25 May and a Bowls Champion Match (for the Silver Trophy) on Saturday 22 June.<sup>2</sup> Play commenced for matches at 3.30 pm. A letter alerted recipients of the ballot for membership on Saturday 20 April and on the second Saturday each succeeding month, and noted that candidates' names, occupations and addresses, together with proposer and seconder, were to be forwarded to the Hon. Sec. no later than fourteen days prior to ballot days. Subscriptions were 1 guinea and were due by 1 January.

**Fig.2: Moseley United Quoit and Bowling Club Committee, Season 1889.<sup>3</sup>**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role*</b>	<b>Address</b>
H. Bewlay	PP	Alcester Road
S.C. Cowen	PP	Alcester Road
S. Clarke	<b>President 1889</b>	
P. Gallimore	PP	Church Road
T. Haydon	PP	Coppice Road
H.W. Hyde	PP	Wake Green Road
J. Milligan	<b>Treasurer 1889 / PP</b>	Coppice Road
A. Patterson	PP	Forest Road
N.C. Reading	<b>Hon. Sec. 1889</b>	Inglewood, Wake Green Road
<b>Mrs W Thomas</b>		Oxford Road
G.J. Williams	<b>Trustee / PP</b>	Trafalgar Road
E. Worrall	PP	Elm Villa, Alcester Road
J. Zair	<b>Trustee / PP</b>	Merle Lodge, Wake Green Road.

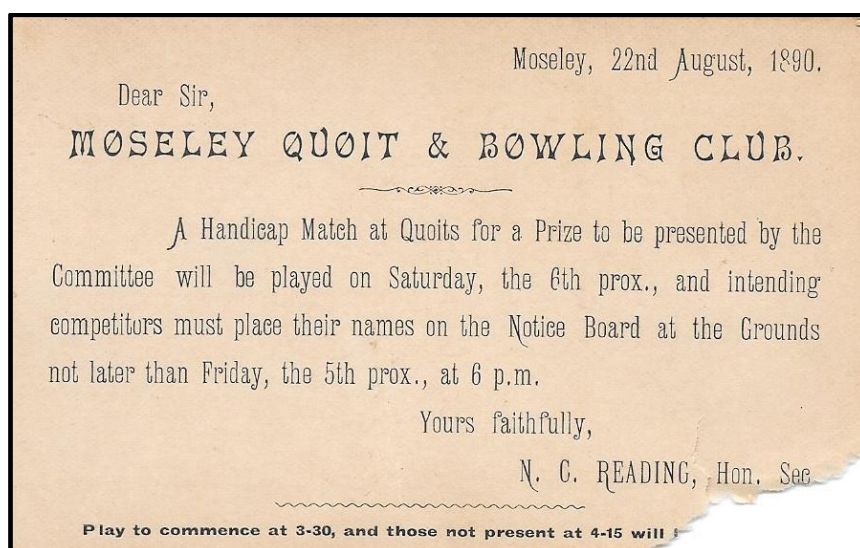
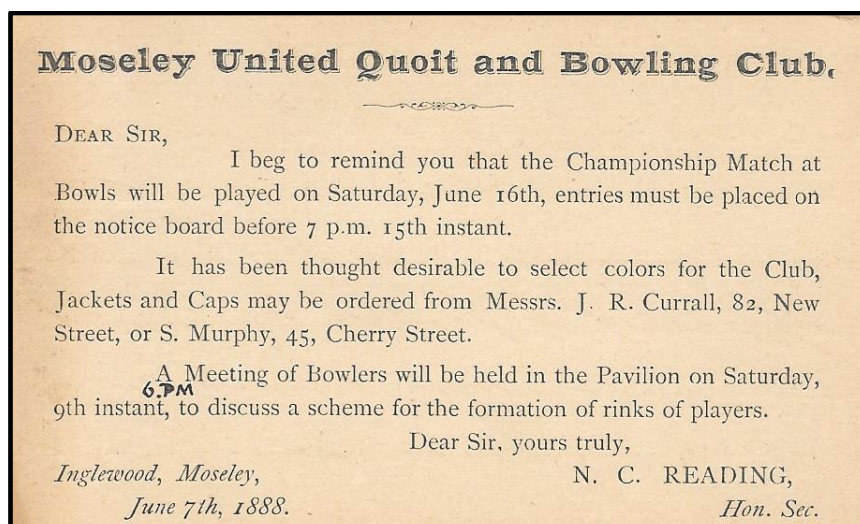
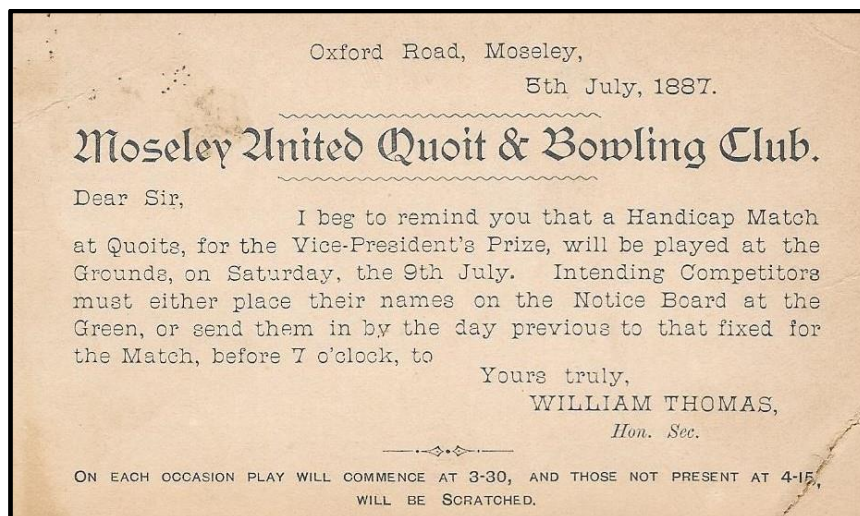
\* PP: Past Presidents

Trustees were permanent members of the committee.

<sup>2</sup> Moseley Society History group Collection (MSHG), Moseley United Quoit and Bowling Club Season 1889.

<sup>3</sup> Information from a range of papers held in the MSHGC, Reading-Blackwell Archive.

**Fig.3: Cards sent to Members of Moseley Quoits and Bowls Club.<sup>4</sup>**



<sup>4</sup> MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/5-6).



Ken Robb sent us a photograph of the cup received by R. McConkey when he won the Quoit Handicap in 1890 (Figure. 4). The cup was in the possession of Ken's grandmother whose maiden name was McConkey. She was born in 1889. At some stage she lived in Nottingham, but spent her subsequent years in Northern Ireland.

**Fig.4: The Cup received by R. McConkey for winning the 1890 Quoit Handicap.<sup>5</sup>**



Figure 5 shows bowling skills in action later in the nineteenth century, and suggests a relaxed atmosphere and more informal dress. The clubhouse is a substantial brick-built building. Ann Crichton-Harris kindly sent us an image of Moseley United Quoits and Bowling Club, which she thinks was taken in the 1930s (Fig.6). Her grandfather, George Tandy, is in the dark suit in the front row. She thinks he was president. There are 33 members in the group photo - all men. George and his wife lived at 12 Forest Road. He was a jeweller (Tandy & Sons, Vyse Street, Birmingham). Their home is still there (Fig.7).

---

<sup>5</sup> Courtesy of Ken Robb.

**Figure 5: Moseley Quoit and Bowling Club at Play, c. 1890.<sup>6</sup>**



**Figure 6: Moseley United Quoits and Bowling Club, c. 1930s.<sup>7</sup>**



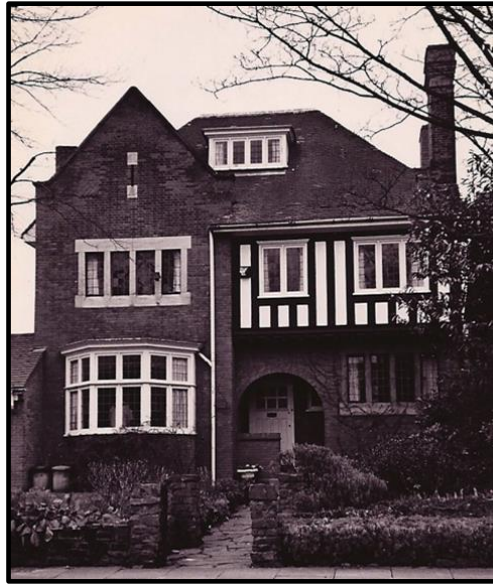
---

<sup>6</sup> Courtesy of Ken Robb.

<sup>7</sup> Courtesy of Ann Crichton-Harris.



**Fig.7: 12 Forest Road.<sup>8</sup>**



The same all-male formality is displayed in Figure 8 which features Prize Day at the Club in 1958. The John Avins Cup is on the table, perpetuating his name into the twentieth century.

**Figure 8: Moseley United Quoits and Bowling Club, 1958.<sup>9</sup>**



---

<sup>8</sup> Courtesy of Roy Cockel.

<sup>9</sup> MSHGC, (C3/D1/F8/3/3).

Bowling was a very popular pastime in Moseley. There were other bowling grounds, for example, in Moseley Park (Fig.9), which attracted considerable crowds of men and women.

**Figure 9: Moseley Bowling Green, c. 1920s.<sup>10</sup>**



---

<sup>10</sup> MSHGC, (MC/D3/F8/1-3 and A1-A8).

**Fig.10: The Trafalgar Hotel, now the Patrick Cavanagh.**



**The Trafalgar Hotel** was a Commercial and Posting Hotel on Woodbridge Road which had a Bowling Green and Pleasure Gardens (Fig.10). The Birmingham Daily Gazette advertised the 'Bowling Green and Pleasure Gardens' at the Trafalgar Hotel on Tuesday 13 May 1862 and Thursday 22 May 1862 and the proprietor, J Chadwick. On Friday 9 May 1868 it advertised a match on the bowling green for a cup beginning at 3.00 pm with an entrance fee of 1/6, when George Gorton was the proprietor (Fig.11). On 4 May 1869 it advertised the opening of the 'Bowling Green and Quoit Ground'. On Monday 11 July 1870 it stated that the 'Pleasure Grounds and Bowling Green' were open at the Trafalgar Hotel 'opposite Moseley Station', which suggests people were coming out of Birmingham to enjoy the entertainment facilities of the middle-class suburb. Mr William Dyke Wilkinson bought the hotel and had a rink built on the site of the Hotel's Bowling Green in 1875.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> *Some Moseley Personalities*, Vol. I., (Birmingham: Moseley Local History Society, 1991), pp.33-36.



**Fig.11: A Bowling Trophy from the Trafalgar Hotel, inscribed 'Prize Cup presented to the Best Bowler on Trafalgar Hotel Green, Moseley, October 1868'.<sup>12</sup>**



The Fighting Cocks alongside the village green was partially rebuilt as a commercial hotel with formal gardens and a bowling green around 1860 (Fig.12).<sup>13</sup> The present building was constructed in 1899. The bowling green was superseded by a bandstand & running track in the 1880s, but these in turn were lost to King Edward Road, built in 1901. Figure 13 shows that the clubhouse was small and rustic and the men serious, but grouped in relaxed stances. They mostly sported beards and moustaches. Beards were physical markers of 'rugged, daring manliness' from the 1860s on, which made them popular.<sup>14</sup> The men are dressed formally with many wearing bowler hats - quality gentry country clothing that looks something like a 'uniform' - respectable representatives of a male world and men of action, but at ease.

---

<sup>12</sup> MSHGC, (C2/D3/A/2).

<sup>13</sup> Gilbert, C., *The Moseley Trail* (Birmingham: John Goodman & Son, 1986), p.10.

<sup>14</sup> Begiato, Joanne, *Manliness in Britain, 1760-1900: Bodies, Emotion and Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp.42 & 46-47.

Such team photographs were intended to record sporting events and achievements and advertise skills and here the one ball marks out the skill involved.

**Fig. 12: The Fighting Cocks about 1875.<sup>15</sup>**



**Fig.13: The Moseley Quoit and Bowling Club, the Leisure Gardens, the Fighting Cocks, 1875.<sup>16</sup>**



<sup>15</sup> Gilbert, *The Moseley Trail*, p.9.

<sup>16</sup> MSHGC, (MC/D1/F12/18), From Left to Right: J. Zair, Merle Lodge; H. Bewley, a Constructional Engineer and Director, 76 Alcester Road; J. Haydon, Coppice Road and The Woodroughs, Church Road; G. Moxton; A. Bradburn, Woodville, Park Hill, The Palms, Trafalgar Road, and Beech Cottage, Forest Road; N.C. McEntee, Atthdow, Church Road, and J. Williams, Trafalgar Road and Carlton Lodge and Aston Villa, Church Road.



When we can access our room at the All Services Club and also the City of Birmingham Library Archives, we will be adding to this article. Do let us have any information on Quoits and Bowling in Moseley that you have. Perhaps you can identify individuals in the photos here?

**Janet Berry**