

The Blackwells of Chantry Road: The Family

Between 1876 and 1888 Althans Blackwell (c. 1850-1929) and his wife, Agnes (1847-1898), lived at 341 Moseley Road. Between 1888 and 1892 they lived at *Monterey*, 11 Park Hill. In 1892 they moved to 'Brackley Dene', 30 Chantry Road (Figs.1-3). These house moves illustrate the upward mobility typical of many living to Moseley in the nineteenth century. Moving house was a costly business. In 1892, Althans Blackwell paid £3 16s 0d to John Hudson & Son of Balsall Heath for removing furniture from Park Hill to Chantry Road. This involved three men for 14½ hours @ 4s per hour and a small van with three men for 7½ hours @ 2s 6d per hour.¹ There were other costs to owning a house too. In 1879 Balsall Heath Local Board of Health charged Althans Blackwell £4 16s 0d for a District Rate and in 1879 he paid £5 0s 10d for Income Tax deductible from Rent and House Duty.² Other costs included, for example, payment for a water supply, which was expensive – up to 3s per week, often for an intermittent supply.³ In 1893, Althans Blackwell paid £6 8s 0d per annum for water and a 'Bath Supply' at 10s per annum in water rent due on Lady Day at £3 9s 0d for two quarters.⁴ It was costly to establish and maintain an independent middle-class household. He received a document in 1892, signed by John Houghton, Inspector to the Rural Sanitary Authority that certified there was 'within reasonable distance of the house an available supply of wholesome water ... sufficient for consumption/use for domestic purposes'.⁵

Chantry Road was formed by W.Taylor esq., in 1893 and declared a public highway in the same year. The road was built up in the 1890s by the consortium of gentlemen, the Moseley Park and Pool Company, who purchased 14 acres of land around the lake in Moseley Hall Estate to save the land for posterity, to provide a park, and to prevent infilling with inferior housing (Fig.4). The leaseholders of the Moseley Park and Pool Company divided the land around the park into generous plots on which to build themselves large houses. Althans Blackwell was a member of the consortium and was able to build 'Brackley Dene', 30 Chantry Road, in 1892 on a plot that backed onto the park. The house, designed by Alfred Reading, a member of his wife's family, covered almost 4,230 square metres.⁶ In 1896, the gross estimated rental was £150 and the rateable value £127.10.0.⁷ 'Brackley Dene' was the first house built in Chantry Road.

¹ Moseley Society History Group, 'The Collection' (MSHGC), (C3/D2/A/F10/2-4), Reading-Blackwell Archive (RBA), Bills and Receipts, The All Services Club, Church Road, Moseley. John Hudson & Son, 72 Vincent Street, and 67 Mary Street, Balsall Heath. www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currencyconverter: £3 16s 10d in 1890 was c., £300 in 2017, 4s was c., £16 and 2s 6d was c., £10.

² MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/2-4), RBA, Bills & Receipts. £4 16s 0d in 1890 was c. £394 in 2017 and £5 0s 10d was c., £414.

³ 3s in 1890 was c. £12 in 2017.

⁴ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/2-4), RBA, Bills & Receipts. £6 8s 0d and £3 9s 0d in 1890 were c. £525 and £283 in 2017.

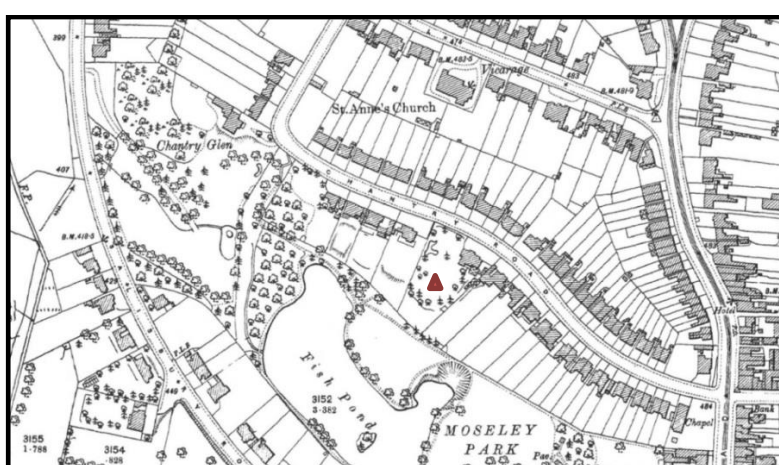
⁵ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/1), RBA, Bills & Receipts.

⁶ The Library of Birmingham (LBA), Kings Norton Building Plan KNBP1414. The plan was entered in 1891.

⁷ LBA, BCK/MB/6/13/23, 1896, Sanitary Assessments.



Fig.1: Brackley Dene, front views, 2014 and 1898 and rear view, 1898.⁸



▲ Brackley Dene

Fig.4: Chantry Road, Moseley, 1900s.⁹

Both Althans and Agnes were born in Birmingham. In 1851 Althans, at the age of three, was living with his mother, Jane Blackwell (formerly Cave). No household head is listed on this census. Jane is identified as 'wife to a Tailor / Draper', which suggests that her husband was away from home on census day. They lived in Wellington Road, Edgbaston, with Althans's sister Sophia, aged one. His mother was born in Brackley, Northamptonshire, which accounts for the name of his final home. Jane Blackwell and her husband, James, were married in 1841, but she died in 1855 in Wandsworth. In 1856 James married Harriet Tingle at Kettering. In 1851 Harriet Tingle, a British School teacher aged twenty-eight years, lived at home with her widowed mother and two sisters in Kettering. By 1861 when Althans was thirteen years old, his father James was a retired draper and the family, including Althans's brother, Frederick, aged nine, and two sisters, Sophia and Elizabeth, aged eleven and three, lived at 359 Bristol Road. A boarder, Richard Righton, aged fifty, a Bank of England employee, lived with them. Agnes lived on Bristol Road in 1851. Aged three years, she and her one year old brother, Nathaniel Cracknell Reading, and her parents, Walter and Sarah Reading, lived with her maternal grandmother, Mary Griffin, a proprietor of houses, at 26 Bristol Road, Birmingham. Walter was a tool maker and coal dealer at the time. In 1861

⁸ MSHGC, RBA, (C3/D2/Artefacts A/1-10), Photograph Album.

⁹ <https://digimap.edina.ac.uk>, 'Digimap', 'Historic', 'Historic Roam'. This map has been constructed using the 1900s historic map by Janet Berry. Accessed 2015.

Agnes, aged fourteen, was living with her parents, Walter and Sarah Reading, both aged forty-four years in the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter at 47 Augusta Street. Walter by then was a watch-guard maker employing four men, one boy, eleven women and five girls. Agnes's brother Nathaniel Cracknel Reading was eleven at the time. In 1871 Agnes, aged twenty-three years, was living with her mother, a widow, and Nathaniel, her brother, at 186 Warstone Lane, the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, the site of the family jewellery business.



Fig.5: Althans Blackwell.¹⁰



Fig.6: Agnes Blackwell.¹¹

Althans Blackwell married Agnes Elizabeth Reading in 1876 (Figs.5-6) when they were twenty-six and twenty-nine. Agnes was slightly older than Althans, unusual in Moseley as younger wives were typical. Their wedding took place on 9 August at Kings Heath Baptist Chapel led by Rev. R. Gray. They honeymooned in Scotland: a copy of *The Birmingham Daily Post* of Saturday 12 August, 1876, which contained a notice of their wedding, was posted to Althans Blackwell at Scotts Lodge Hotel, Keswick.¹² Agnes was a partner with her brother, Nathaniel Cracknell Reading, in the family Jewellery and Chain-making business, a silversmithing and jewellery factory, at 186/7 Warstone Lane in the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham.¹³ On his marriage, Althans took over Agnes' half of the business. Althans had been an accountant clerk there. Many Moseley marriages were forged locally or through religious, family, business or social connections. Althans Blackwell was forty-two years old and Agnes forty-five on moving into 'Brackley Dene' in 1892. Sadly, Agnes died six years later on 26 June 1898 in Bellagio, Italy, and was buried there (Fig.7). The hotel manager in Bellagio corresponded with Althans Blackwell about the gravestone in January 1899 assuring him that the railings and stone were 'ready to be put up' and that the grave would be

¹⁰ MSHGC, (C3/D2/Artefacts A/1-10), RBA, Photograph Album.

¹¹ MSHGC, (C3/D2/Artefacts A/1-10), RBA, Photograph Album.

¹² MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/7/BRB 3), RBA, Newspaper Cutting.

¹³ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/2-4), RBA, Letters.

finished by the end of February (Fig.8). He stated that fresh flowers were always on the grave. Alice left £2,626.13.5 to her husband.

Death was an ever-present part of life in the nineteenth century. Althans Blackwell took out life insurance in 1896 from Railway Passengers Assurance Company, London, through their local agents, James C. Percy & Deakin of Birmingham for £3 12s 0d.¹⁴ Special mourning clothes were essential. Men wore black crêpe arm bands. Women wore black crêpe with no lace or decoration and mourning jewellery, locket containing the hair of the deceased and brooches and other items of Whitby jet, as advertised by James Cargory of Birmingham.¹⁵ On 12 October 1893, Agnes Blackwell bought a 'Black Plush Mantle' and a 'trimmed felt bonnet' costing £5 15s 6d and £1 9s 3d respectively, totalling £7 4s 9d, from Birmingham General Mourning Warehouse.¹⁶ A bill shows that, in 1893, Mr Blackwell paid 2s to The Birmingham General Cemetery for cleaning graves.¹⁷

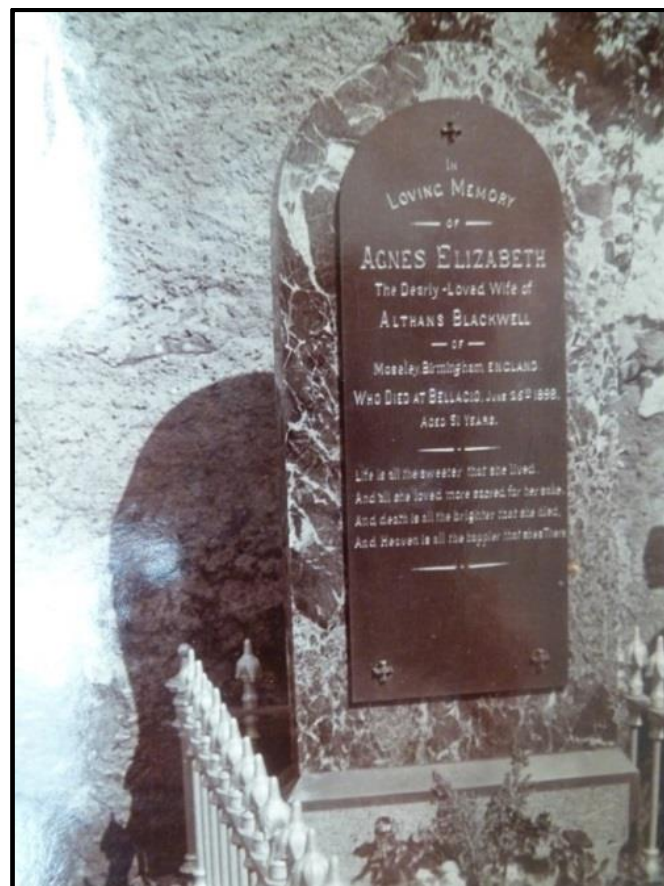


Fig.7: Agnes Blackwell's Grave, Bellagio, Italy.¹⁸

¹⁴ Railway Passengers Assurance Company, 64 Cornhill, London and James C. Percy & Deakin, 32 Paradise Street, Birmingham. Assurance Number 1667.

¹⁵ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/2-4), RBA, Bills & Receipts. James Cargory of 41 Bull Street, Birmingham.

¹⁶ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/2-4), RBA, Bills & Receipts. Birmingham General Mourning Warehouse, 42 New Street, Mourning Drapers and Undertakers. £5.25s.6d and £1 9s 3d in 1890 were c., £474 and £120 in 2017.

¹⁷ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/2-4), RBA, Receipts & Bills.

¹⁸ MSHGC, (C3/D2/Artefacts A/1-10), RBA, Photograph Album.

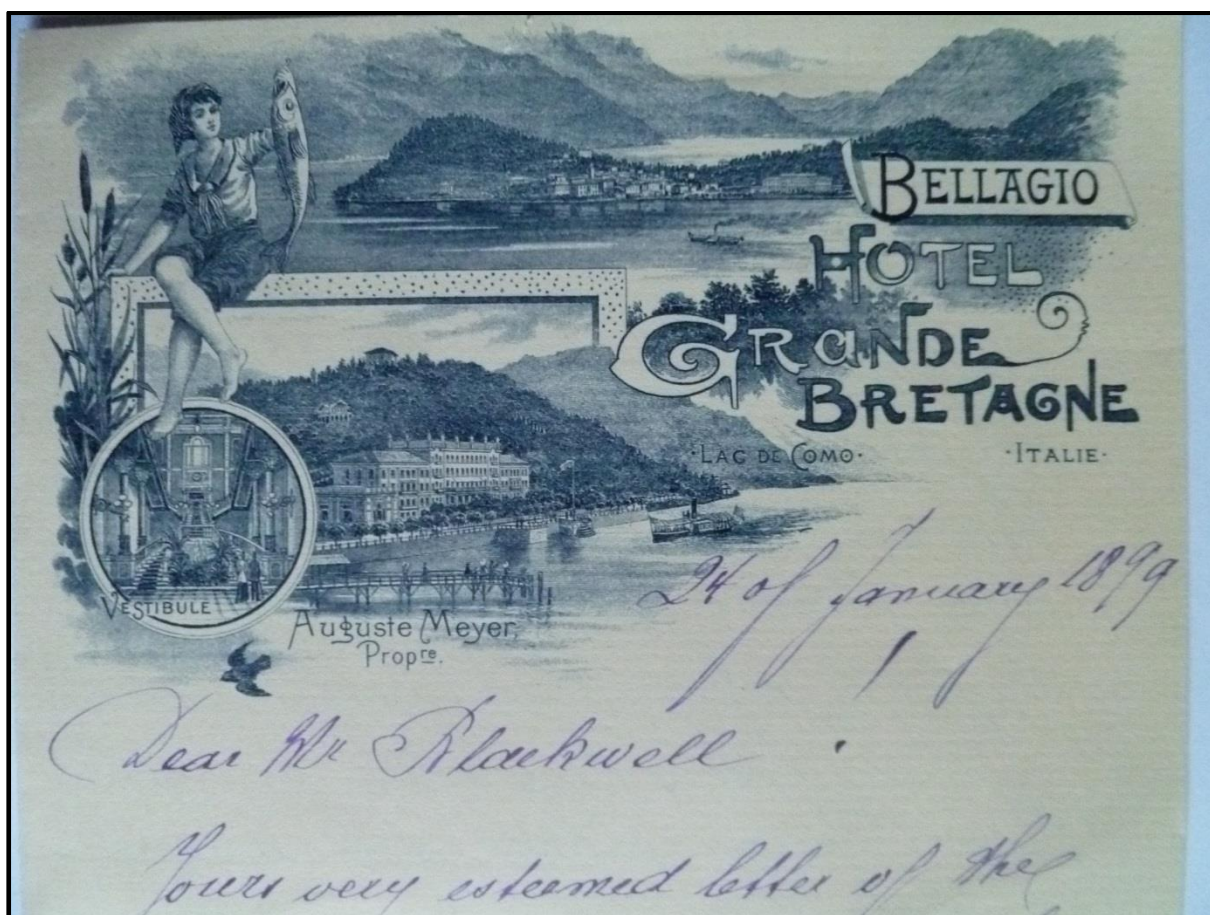


Fig.8: Letter from the Grande Bretagna Hotel, Bellagio, Italy.¹⁹

In 1901 Althans Blackwell was one of the sixty household heads in Chantry Road. Most were men (80 per cent), but this left a surprising proportion of women household heads. Chantry Road was prosperous which meant widows and daughters had sufficient financial means to maintain the household after the death of a husband or parent. Most household heads were married (68 per cent) or had been married (7 per cent were widows and 15 per cent widowers), as was usually the case at the time. Few were single (5 per cent were single males and 5 per cent single females). Althans Blackwell was aged fifty-one in 1901, younger than the average age for household heads in Chantry Road (sixty-four years), but in the most frequent cohort of forty to fifty-nine years of age (65 per cent). In 1901 most household heads, unlike Althans Blackwell, came from outside Birmingham (60 per cent), mostly from Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire, though some came from much further away, including South Africa.

Most Chantry Road household heads were in work in 1901 (94 per cent) and these were all male except for one female, a matron of a private hospital. Althans Blackwell, like many in the road (41 per cent) was an employer. A surprising number were workers (37 per cent)

¹⁹ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/2-4), RBA, Receipts & Bills.

whilst a few (17 per cent) were 'Own Account' earning independently.²⁰ Of the rest of the household heads one was a retired male, and the others (18 per cent) had their 'Own Means'. Most worked in industrial occupations (41 per cent) or commercial activities (39 per cent) with some in professional roles (20 per cent). This work profile ties in with Moseley as a suburb of Birmingham, an industrial city.

Althans and Agnes Blackwell were married for twenty-two years, but had no children. Childlessness was regretted, and came to be a source of shame, but many such couples informally adopted nephews, nieces or friends' sons. In 1901 Althans Blackwell had his nephew, Walter Reading, aged twenty-six years, living with him. Walter was independent, working in the Reading family jewellery business as a worker. Many children's institutions, such as *Barnardo's*, as well as individuals and 'experts', were opposed to the adoption of illegitimate children. Unrelated couples did adopt, but the adoption was mostly kept secret. Many families in Chantry Road supported others in the home - twenty-five across the road in 1901, but they were a small proportion of household members (8 per cent). Most were female (seventeen) and some were financially independent. Most were relatives (thirteen), along with nine visitors and three boarders. Relatives might go to live with family, because of the death or illness of a partner or parent, infirmity, financial difficulties, joblessness, a work opportunity in the family firm or in the locality and to help those with young children and the elderly, lonely, sick, widowers or male singletons. Single women or widows could enjoy some authority in this way, but if financially dependent they were vulnerable. There were four male and nine female relatives in Chantry Road in 1901. Male relatives included one grandson aged ten years, one brother, aged sixty years, who had his 'Own Means' and two single nephews aged twenty-three and twenty-six, who were in work, as a Wholesale Manager and a Manufacturing Jeweller. The nine female relatives included four sisters - two single sisters aged eighty years and sixty-nine years, one married sister aged forty-two years with her 'Own Means' and one widow aged thirty-six years. There were two mothers-in-law, a widow aged seventy-six and one married aged forty-eight years, and also an unmarried granddaughter aged twenty, a niece aged eleven years and a female cousin, single, aged forty years. Married household heads gave most homes to relatives (56 per cent), but widows gave twice as many as widowers and singletons (22, 11 and 11 per cent). Two of the boarders were male and single. One male boarder, aged twenty-six, worked as an Assistant Manager of an Engineering Works, whilst the other was a single fifty-four year old with his 'Own Means'. The female boarder was a widow aged fifty-nine years also with her 'Own Means'. Taking in lodgers in the nineteenth century did not fit with the 'new notions of

²⁰ **Employers** included a Boot & Shoe Dealer, Manager Boot & Shoe Company, Manager Food Provisions Company, Director Brass Founder, Brass Founder, Coppersmith, Iron Founder, Silversmith, Manufacturing Jeweller, Soap Manufacturer, Brewery Manager, Bar Fitter, Licensed Victualler, Joinery Manufacturer, Merchant & Shipping Provisions, Provision Merchant, Cattle Salesman, Chartered Accountant, Stock and Share Broker. **Workers** included an Agent for Manchester Goods, Distiller's Agent, Director Umbrella Manufacturing Company, Manager Hardware Merchant, Builder, Civil Engineer, City Birmingham Clerk Accountant, Assistant Local Secretary Clerk Borax Works, Commercial Traveller, Commercial Manufacturer Iron Tube Works, Coppersmith Manager, Manager Brass Works, Manufacturing Jeweller, Meat & Cattle Merchant, a Surveyor and the Matron of a Private Hospital and men working for a Brush Making Company and the Corporation Water Department. Those on '**Own Account**' included an artist, sculptor and Landscape Painter, a Civil Engineer, Coal Merchant, Commercial Agent, Minister (Presbyterian), Solicitor, Undertaker and a Wine and Spirit Merchant. Only one was designated '**Retired**', a builder.

domestic decorum' and was seen as an 'invasion of privacy'.²¹ Lodging was acceptable only for the young, the genteel poor, relations or respectable widows in straightened circumstances. Other lodgers were 'less than full members of middle-class society'. Of the nine visitors seven were female. One male visitor was aged thirteen years and the other, a married man, aged fifty-seven, who worked as a Hardware Agent. The seven female visitors were all single. They were fourteen years of age, a nineteen year old teacher of cookery, a worker, a twenty-eight year old milliner, also a worker, and two governesses, aged thirty-six and thirty-seven. Governesses were often listed as visitors to separate them from lower status servants. Two other female visitors aged thirty-nine and sixty-two years, had their 'Own Means'.

Most households in Chantry Road in 1901 had offspring at home (68 per cent), leaving a surprising proportion without. Most of those with offspring at home had one or two at home (61 per cent). A few had more: 37 per cent had three or four, whilst two households had five (5 per cent) and one had nine (2 per cent). There were more daughters at home than sons (58 per cent as against 42 per cent), more daughters at home over twenty years of age than sons and twice as many daughters at home over twenty-five years, supporting the view that daughters remained at home when older and unmarried. Offspring at home were evenly spread across the age groups, though there were few over thirties (3 per cent).²² They were mostly dependent financially on their family, but some sons worked: In 1901 two sons were cattle salesmen, employers, twelve were workers and one was 'Own Account'.²³ No daughters were in work. Most offspring at home were born in Birmingham or Moseley (63 per cent).

Having a live-in servant was supposedly a sign of membership of the middle class. The Blackwell and Reading families had one servant throughout the period. In 1851 at Wellington Road, Edgbaston, when Althans was a child, the Blackwell family had one servant, Eliza Barrett, aged seventeen years. In 1861 at 359 Bristol Road they had one servant, Ann Jones aged twenty-four. In 1871 the James Blackwell family had a servant, Mary Jane Ryder. The Reading family did not have servants when living with their maternal grandmother in 1851 at 26 Bristol Road, or in 1861 when living in Augusta Street, but in 1871 at 186 Warstone Lane they had a servant, Selina Gates aged nineteen. This suggests they had risen financially and socially. Althans and Agnes Blackwell had a servant when living at 341 Moseley Road in 1881 - Anne Keen aged twenty-eight, and another in 1891 at Park Hill - Marion M Rastall aged twenty-five. In 1901, Althans Blackwell was one of the sixty households in Chantry Road with servants (89 per cent). Most households in Chantry Road (fifty-three) had servants (88 per cent) and the average across the road in 1901 was one servant. The Blackwell household, though, had two servants, as did twenty-four households

²¹ Tosh, J., *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle Class Home in Victorian England*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.19.

²² 31 per cent were ten years and under, 32 per cent eleven to twenty and 25 per cent twenty to thirty.

²³ The workers were a Bank Clerk, Agent, Hardware Merchant Accountant, Commercial Traveller, Commercial Clerk, Assistant, Repair Manager Cycle Works, General Merchant, Bank Clerk, Engineer, Marine Engineer, Tool Maker. The 'Own Account' son was a solicitor.

in Chantry Road in that year (43 per cent). Forty per cent of Chantry Road's other residents (26 households) had one servant, whilst 6 per cent had more than two servants (one household had three servants, one had four and one had five), leaving 11 per cent, (seven households) in Chantry Road without a servant. Althans Blackwell's servants were both female as were all the servants in Chantry Road at this time. Their housemaid, Minnie Eales, was aged thirty-three years of age and the cook, Alice Breakwell, twenty-four years; the average age of servants in Chantry Road was twenty-nine years. 28 per cent of servants in Chantry Road were cooks, 23 per cent housemaids and 34 per cent 'Servant, Domestic or 'General' in 1901.²⁴ The housemaid-cook combination was popular (59 per cent). Minnie was born in London, a goodly distance away, and Alice in Worcestershire, where 23 per cent of Chantry Road's servants were born. Other servants in Chantry Road were born in Staffordshire (16 per cent), Warwickshire (13 per cent) and Birmingham (14 per cent). A servant, Lily A. Adams, aged twenty-four years, working for Thomas Carter a Minister of a Presbyterian Church of England, was born in Peshawar, India.

In 1891 there were only two family members living at 'Brackley Dene' and two servants. 22 per cent of households in Chantry Road had two family members, making this not unusual. 20 per cent had three family members and 23 per cent had four. The average family unit size in Chantry Road in 1891 was four people, which shows families were not large in this road. The average size of household including servants and others was five.

In 1901, three years after Agnes's death, Althans married his second wife, Alice M. Barnes (1866-1947), seventeen years his junior at thirty-five years of age. Widowers frequently remarried. Alice was the sister of Emma Hannah Barnes who married Agnes' brother, Nathaniel, in 1873 at St Bartholomew the Great, London. In 1901, the year of her marriage to Althans Blackwell, Alice was living with Nathaniel and Emma Reading at their home, 'Inglewood', 1 Wake Green Road, Moseley. She had also lived with them there in 1881, aged eighteen, but it appears that in 1891 she lived at 166/168 Oxford Street, London, working there as an assistant and mantle saleswoman for the household head, commercial traveller John B Taylor, along with five other assistants, five apprentices and ten servants. Both sisters were born in Stoke Newington, London. In 1871, before her marriage to Nathaniel Reading Emma Barnes, seems to have been a servant at 7 Douglas Road, Islington.

Althans and Alice had two children, Sybil (1902-1991) and Eric (1906-1970). By the end of the nineteenth century, new attitudes meant that mothers were seen as important in satisfying the particular needs of children as individuals and ensuring their happiness. This was a more intimate relationship and one considered natural for women. The change is suggested in the image of Alice, Sybil and Eric (Fig.9). It is informal, taken in the home, not in a studio, and they are standing rather than sitting and are on the stairs, giving a sense of movement and animation to the image. Alice has her arms around the children holding them towards her, indicating affection and attentiveness. They are casually dressed with

²⁴ Cooks were 25%, housemaids 22% and 'Servant', 'Domestic' or 'General' 45% in all roads in 1901.

Eric, the young son, not yet 'breached'. There is softness about Alice shown in her hair style and her dress that is far from the corseted rigidity of earlier decades. She reflects the fashionable urban bourgeois mother in fashion plates.²⁵ Mothers with large numbers of children born close together could not give their children the individual attention and watchfulness felt particularly necessary for spiritual and moral development. Thus, nurses and servants were often mother-substitutes. However, fathers in 'the respectable classes' helped rear their children and were considered important in creating happiness through the care, nurture and affection they gave their children when they were home from work. The father was the ultimate legal and social authority, though.



Fig.9: Alice, Sybil and Eric Blackwell, 1908.

In the nineteenth century St Mary's, St Anne's and St Agnes' Churches, were the only religious establishments in Moseley apart from Moseley Baptist Church, built in 1888 in Oxford Road, and the modest Moseley Presbyterian Church on the corner of Alcester and Chantry Roads begun in 1898. Althans Blackwell was a Baptist. His family worshipped at Kings Heath Baptist Chapel until Moseley Baptist Church was built. They paid 6s per quarter in 1876 for the rent of two sittings there.²⁶ An 1892 bill from the Offering Steward for the quarter ending Christmas 1892 shows that the amount of offering promised by Althans Blackwell (9/- per week) was £5 17 0.

²⁵ Belnap Jensen, Heather, 'Marketing the maternal body in the public spaces of post-Revolutionary Paris' in Balducci, & Belnap-Jensen (eds.), *Women, Femininity and Public Space in European Visual Culture, 1789-1914*, pp.17-35.

²⁶ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/2-3), Reading-Blackwell Archive (RBA), Bills and Receipts.



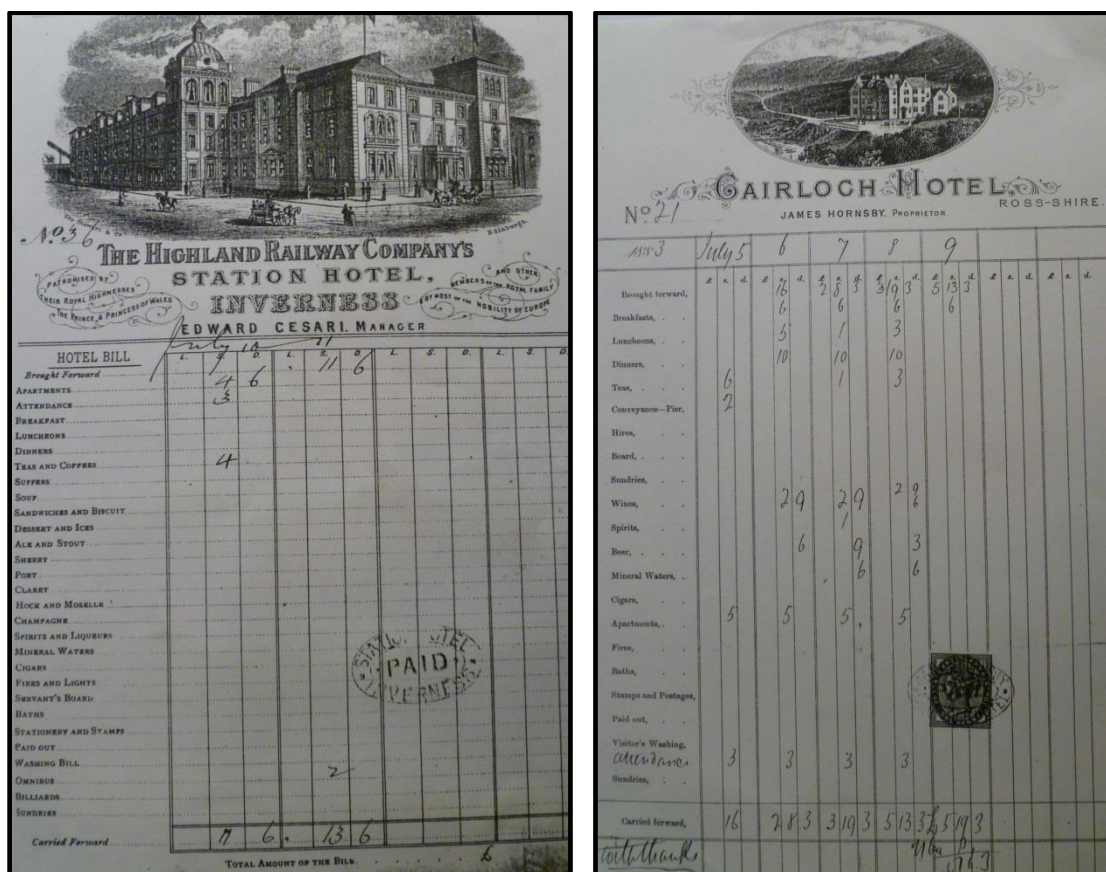
Fig. 10: Agnes Blackwell dressed for the Lord Mayor's Ball, 1881.

Like others of the Moseley middle-class the Blackwells were socially active in the local and wider community and were part of a middle-class public culture based on fine art, classical music and cash payment which was key to middle-class identity. Althans and Agnes Blackwell attended The Lord Mayor's Fancy Dress Ball on 22 April, 1881, at which Joseph Chamberlain was dressed in a Cabinet Minister's Court dress and Miss Chamberlain as a fifteenth century Burgundian Duchess.²⁷ They attended a range of concerts: a subscription to the Wesleyan Philharmonic Society cost Mrs Blackwell 5s in 1878, season tickets for Mr Stockley's Orchestral Concerts in 1878 cost 12s and in 1893 two tickets for the Birmingham Choral Society cost £1 8s 0d and four cost £2 16s 0d.²⁸ Attending such events allowed better-off middle-class suburbanites to assert their presence and display their wealth and authority. The social status of important public occasions, such as these was judged by the presence of women and 'their capacity to perform the rites of feminine gentility'. Women transmitted cultural competence by 'embodying it in their own person, their dress, deportment and behaviour' on such occasions. The Blackwells also raised their status and took part in public culture by subscribing to the Birmingham Central Literary Association, which cost 5s in 1879-1880, by buying their magazines at 2s 6d, and by subscribing to the 'Ladies Room' at the Birmingham Library at a cost of 2s in 1897.²⁹ Like other Victorians, the Blackwells subscribed to charity. An 1894 receipt, No.994, shows that Agnes Blackwell subscribed a guinea annually to the Moseley Hall Convalescent Home for Children at Moseley Hall. In 1897 Althans Blackwell donated 5 guineas to the Lord Mayor's Portrait Fund honouring Councillor James Smith, who lived at The Dingle, Wake Green Road, Moseley. Althans Blackwell was the chairman of the committee for the Birmingham Midland Hospital for the Skin and Urinary Diseases in 1915. Involvement in activities and events in Birmingham shows that living in a suburb was not just about proximity to the country, but also about participation in the opportunities of the city

²⁷ Cadbury Research Library, (CRL), MS804/1/8/3, Newspaper articles.

²⁸ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/2-3), RBA, Bills & Receipts. 5s in 1880 was c., £17 in 2017 and 12s was c., £40. £1 8s 0d in 1890 was c., £115 in 2017 and £2 16s 0d was £230.

²⁹ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/2-3), RBA, Bills & Receipts. 5s in 1880 was c., £17 in 2017, 2s 6d was c., £51 and 2s in 1900 was c., £8.



Agnes and Althans Blackwell enjoyed the new freedoms brought by train travel: they toured Scotland by train in June and July 1883. They stayed for two days at the St. Enoch Station Hotel, Glasgow, at a cost of £1 4s 9d and two days at the Highland Railway Company's Station Hotel, Inverness, at a cost of 13s 6d (Fig.11). They visited Edinburgh where meals, apartments, attendance, tea, coffee and drinks cost £2 10 8 and spent two days in the Foyer Hotel, Loch-Ness, where apartments, attendances, beer, wines, claret, breakfasts, dinner and teas cost £4 2 0. Also in 1883 they stayed at the Ardchewan Hotel, Trossachs, for two days and paid £1 12 4 for apartments, attendances, luncheon, dinner, claret, beer and breakfast, the Argyll Arms Hotel, Inveraray, for a day when luncheon, spirits etc., attendance cost 7s and the Inversnaid Hotel for three days where whiskey, apartments, attendance, breakfasts, biscuits, dinner and claret cost £1 19 3. In 1894 they stayed with Ilkley Wells Hydropathic Company Ltd., Ilkley, Yorkshire for seven, 20-27 September, when board, lodging and attendance, drinks and amusements cost £8 17 9. They holidayed in Oban twice at the Craig-Ard Hotel, Oban, for three days each time. The charge for the first visit for bus and baggage, tea, apartment, attendances, breakfasts, biscuits, dinner, wine and beer was £3 6 3 and on the second visit for bus and baggage, tea, apartment, attendances, washing, wine, beer and breakfast, £2 16 0. At other times they holidayed at the Port-Sonachan Hotel, Loch Awe (£1 5 3), St Enoch Station Hotel, Glasgow and South Western Railway, (£1 4

³⁰ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/4), Reading-Blackwell Archive (RBA), Bills & Receipts.

9), Portree Hotel, Skye (£2 16 0), Loc Marce Hotel, Talladale, Ross-shire (£1 9 0) and Invermoriston Hotel, Glenmoriston, (14/10). They travelled abroad, touring Italy in 1893.³¹

Althans Blackwell died in 1929 leaving £149,725 1s 4d to Hugh Morton J.P., Ebenezer Anthony Lees, gentleman, and Robert Leslie Biggs, chartered accountant. Alice died in 1947. Eric died in 1970 whilst on holiday in Italy.

Their grave at Brandwood End Cemetery reads:³²

Sacred to the Memory of
Althans Blackwell
Who passed away
October 12 1929
Aged 81 years

Also of his beloved wife
Alice Maud Blackwell
Who passed away
February 22 1947
Aged 81 years

And also of their son
Eric Blackwell
Who died in Italy
19 March 1970
Aged 64 years

Neither Eric nor Sybil had children. Sybil Blackwell lived at Brackley Dene until her death in 1991, making a continuous family occupancy of almost 100 years. On her death she was described a 'jewellery heiress'. After leaving personal legacies she left half her wealth to the West Midland Baptist Association and the rest to various charities. The sale of the house after Sybil's death attracted national attention because the building and its contents were original and reflected the lifestyle of a lost era. The house was bought by the Western Order of Buddhists but was subsequently bought by private individuals.

³¹ MSHGC, (C3/D2/A/F10/4), Reading-Blackwell Archive (RBA), Bills & Receipts.

³² Brandwood End Cemetery, Section A2.

Blackwell Family Photos



Sybil aged five years, 1907.



Alice, Sybil and Eric Blackwell, 1909.



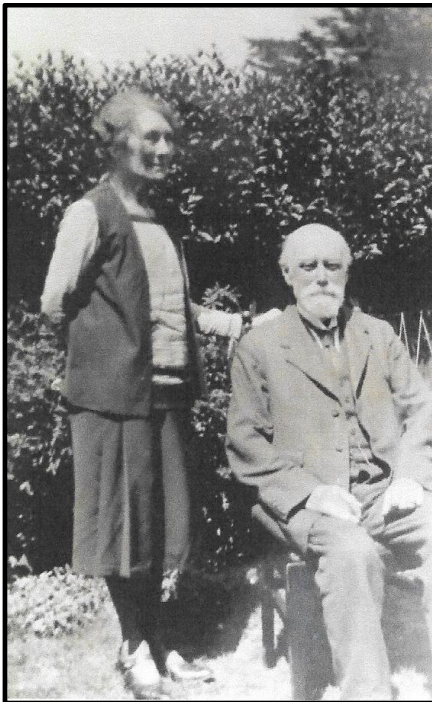
Sybil, Alice and Eric.



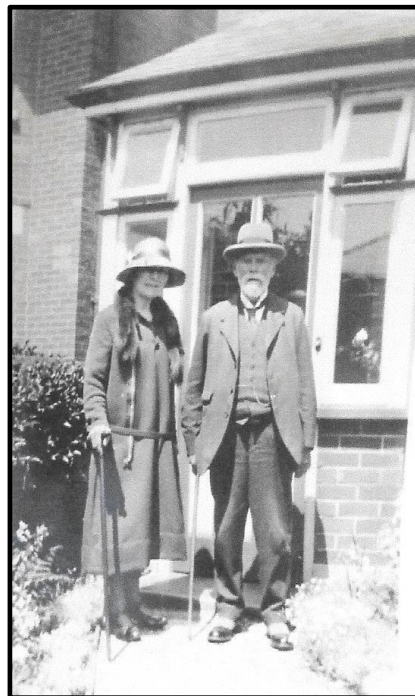
Sybil, Eric and Alice.



Eric and Sybil



Althans and Alice Blackwell, 1926.



Tyrenhellig, Llanfarian, near Aberystwyth.

Janet Berry