



## THE MOSELEY SOCIETY

Caring for an historic area of Birmingham

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### Winter Newsletter 2022

Greetings for the New Year – we hope that you are enjoying the lighter evenings and the signs of life that are appearing in our gardens including rhubarb and snowdrops in the Dovecote garden.

We've been busy with monitoring planning applications and looking ahead to returning to face-to-face meetings, especially our AGM on Wednesday 11 May.

### Dovecote



Meanwhile the Dovecote gardeners have kept the grounds looking neat and cared for week by week through the relatively mild winter. The long-awaited signs of spring are here: buds, bulbs and birdsong. As dormant plants – and weeds – wake up, we would welcome more help in the garden to keep it looking at its best and to relieve the poor old knees and backs of the regular team!

At the few informal openings over the last year, we attracted a lot of visitors. We hope to open regularly this year. So we would welcome help with stewarding on our monthly openings. The icehouse will be reopening for the first time since the pandemic began, and we hope to find new people able to help us show this very special part of Moseley's history to the

public. The dates and time of opening at both sites are 1-4 pm on Saturday 26 March, 30 April, 28 May, 25 June, 30 July, 27 August, 24 September.

### Moseley Society History Group

If you look at the group's pages on the website, you will be able to see pictures of the stunning stained-glass windows in some of Moseley's private houses. The Group have begun a new project on stained glass windows in Moseley Churches looking at who they commemorate and why, and who donated them. Why not join them? Contact: [moseleyhistory@gmail.com](mailto:moseleyhistory@gmail.com)

To learn more about the work of the group or if you have some stories or photos of the past to share, why not visit them at The Hive (old Pizza Express building in Alcester Road). They will be there between 3.30-5 pm on Thursday 24 February and between 10-12 on 24 March and 21 April.

### The Hive

This space is still open for community activities as the future of the building has yet to be decided.



On the pavement on 22 January, the day of the Climate Café at The Hive, you may have noticed this historic vehicle which formed part of the bike bloc at the Cop 15 in 2009 in Copenhagen.

Inside the building, it was possible to meet people who were 'retrofitting' their houses. Help was at hand from Jo Hindley and John Christopher, designer/owners of the zero-carbon house in Balsall Heath.

<https://zerocarbonhousebirmingham.org.uk>

Visitors to the café were also asked to try out a new game Climania, devised by students at Birmingham City University. The better your knowledge of climate change and the environment the nearer you got to being able to virtually retrofit your house! We'll let you know when the game is in production.

### **The Village Shopping Centre**

Sainsbury's will be missed when it closes soon. We are also very sad to say goodbye to Nima's Delicatessen. Hamid and Ziba, who have been running it for over 30 years, have decided to retire. Unfortunately it hasn't been possible to find someone to run it as a deli. A planning application for a new shop front indicates the arrival of an Iranian restaurant.

It's always a pleasure to welcome shops with a different flavour into Moseley, so the arrival of the **Jungle Club, Plant Shop** was a nice surprise. It is in the Alcester Road just beyond Woodbridge Road heading into town.



The owner, Ash, and his brother have a shop in Worcester selling indoor tropical plants that can usually be found on a jungle floor. They were delighted when a vacant property became available in Moseley that suited their needs. The plants

he sells are recommended for beginners and go from small cacti to Swiss Cheese plants that might benefit from a moss pole to keep it in control!

### **Clean Kilo**



A peak inside the zero-waste supermarket that has moved from Digbeth to St Mary's Row in Moseley. Over 700 package free products from rice to spice. Jeanette and Tom Pell, the owners of The Clean Kilo, say the point is to reduce the use of single use packaging, especially plastics. Customers are encouraged to bring their own containers which are weighed and then filled with whatever they want to buy. Paper bags and bottles are also available. If you've never experienced this pick 'n' mix style shopping, there's someone to help you.

### **Shop Fronts in the Village**

The Moseley Society was instrumental in producing the Moseley Shop Front Guide in 1992. Soon after the Moseley Guide had been adopted, it was expanded and became a city-wide policy. It still is – it's on the website.

[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory/10/planning\\_guidance\\_and\\_strategies/category/54](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/directory/10/planning_guidance_and_strategies/category/54) If you have a chance to look at it, it is a very detailed guide of the principles of good shop design along the lines of respecting architecture of the original building and the surrounding area. There is an acknowledgment that shops don't need to become museums and that over time modern materials will be available and could be used.



Pabari was one of the first shops in Moseley to refer to the Shop Front Guide. It is a good example that complies with the guidelines, without sacrificing an attractive shopfront with a clear individual character.

Visitors to the Village shopping area will be well aware that it has now become a bit of carnival with shop fronts trying to outdo each other to be noticed, without taking any account of the principles contained in the Guide. Maybe the community and some businesses are not aware that one exists or even think it's necessary.

A shopping area where every shop is trying to shout out each other is less appealing than a row of attractive shop fronts where each one makes a positive and individual contribution to the overall look. To increase shopping footfall the shops and business leaders will need to work together. The Moseley Society does comment to the Planning Department on applications for an alteration to a shopfront, reminding them of the guide, but enforcement is patchy.

The Regen Group and the Moseley Society are looking into the feasibility of an update; bringing the Guide into line with the current legislation that would reflect more precisely the sorts of changes to material and aesthetics that are already envisaged in the guide.

The issue of parking in the Alcester Road on double yellow lines near the bus stop has been raised by some of our members. We are told it is Highway Enforcement Officers and not the police who have the authority to enforce double yellow line

restrictions. The police can only take action where there is an obstruction.

### Planning

Some other planning applications on which the Planning Group have commented include the retrospective application by Turk Nazz to continue using the first floor as a restaurant. Plans have also been submitted for the addition of two floors of flats above the old WH Smith/Pizza Express building. Although 'Melt', a new business at 126 Billesley Lane has been granted a licence to sell alcohol until 8pm, the planning application to extend the hours has been refused.



Mohammed Sjjad is waiting to hear if he has been successful in applying for a semi temporary construction to house his veg stall, so that he doesn't have to remove everything at the end of each day.

### St Agnes Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

There are definite signs of movement as the Plan is being prepared for approval by the Cabinet. Hopefully, we will soon know the date when this will happen.

### Elizabeth Dowell's Almshouse Trust

In the Alcester Road, almost opposite the Dovecote, you might have noticed 'Dowell's Close'. Up the drive are 30 one-bedroom flats owned by the Trust. Elizabeth Dowell was the wife of James Dowell who in 1820 set up the 'Retreat' in her name in Bordesley. Pictures of these charitable almshouses show a row of terraced cottages round a garden with plaster plaques above the doors with images of Faith and Hope. You can still see the images on the buildings in Dowell's

Close. In the communal lounge of the present building, there are panels of some of the original Flemish glass that came from the Retreat.

Following development of Bordesley, the Trustees decided to move the residents into Moseley. It is still an Almshouse Trust and provides social housing for the elderly. The current buildings are on part of the ground once occupied by 6 large houses. There remain several wonderful old trees that house woodpeckers and a family of buzzards. The gardens are maintained mainly by volunteers and are a delight for the residents – both men and women.



Sheila Perks is the longest serving residents and has lived there for 32 years. Some of you might remember her as the person who cleaned St Mary's Church for over 30 years. She was the Deputy Warden for a while and loved visiting the older residents. Nowadays she is less active but can often be seen pushing her walking aid on the paths round the building to get her daily exercise. She says, 'It's a lovely place and I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.'

There is more to tell, and the Trustees would be delighted if anyone would like to put together the story of the almshouses and the Trust. [chair@dowellstrust.org.uk](mailto:chair@dowellstrust.org.uk)

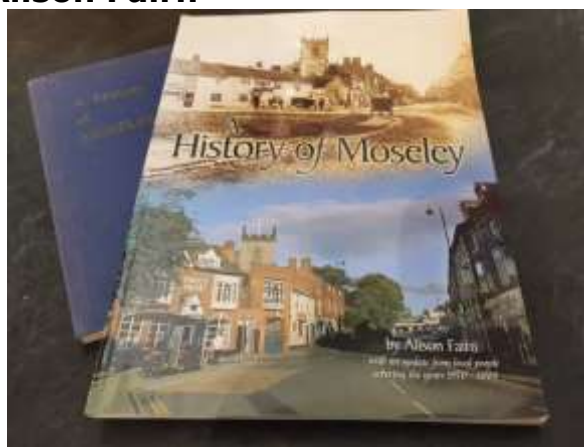
### **Izzy Knowles**

We were delighted when Izzy, the tireless community activist was awarded the BEM (British Empire Medal) for services to the community, especially during Covid-19.



Izzy with the Little Busters from Moseley Cof E school fund-raising and cleaning-up the neighbourhood.

### **Alison Fairn**



Some of you may have a copy of the History of Moseley which was written by Alison Fairn who died in January in Scotland. The book originally came out in 1973 and was updated by local contributors in 2004. It is still available to order on the internet.

Alison came with her parents as a child to Moseley from Scotland and lived in Chantry Road. She attended Edgbaston High and Oxford University. Her passion was history and she taught at Sutton Girls Grammar apparently with brilliant results. She continued to live in Moseley until she returned to Scotland in the mid 90's. She was very active in all walks of life and was the first organiser of the Moseley Society Art Competition. She is remembered by a friend with affection as being kind and socially minded, but with a strong will with whom it was difficult to argue!

### **New Members**

We are pleased to welcome Claire Wainwright, Catherine Howard, SS John & Monica School, Liz & Nigel Blakey and Alison Coates as members of The Society.