

Moseley National School

Moseley National School was the first National School built in Birmingham. It was located in School Road, where Lorne Court now stands. It was built in 1828 and had two rooms, one above the other, one room for boys and one for girls, and a small teachers' house. In 1827 Reverend Walter Farquhar Hook - curate of St. Mary's Chapel formed a committee of important local men which set up a general subscription and within a month there were about fifty subscribers. Land for the school came from James Taylor of Moseley Hall at an annual rent of 1 guinea (about £70 today). The school cost £465 to build (about £32,000 today). When it opened ninety-seven boys and eighty-two girls marched from the school to St Mary's Chapel for a service followed by a lunch of roast beef and plum pudding. The building was extended and facilities improved in the nineteenth century including gas lighting (1872) and a new infants classroom (1883).



Moseley National School.¹

The school was intended for children of local estate servants and labourers. Pupils paid 2d and later 3d (now 60p) per week - too much for the poor. The money went to buy the pupils new clothes at Christmas. The children went home for lunch but when the weather was bad Moseley ladies organised 'half-penny lunches' (about 30p today). The children started school at about six years of age and at first many left at aged

eight. In 1880 primary education became compulsory from five to ten years. In 1891 it became effectively free, in 1893 the leaving age was increased to eleven years and in 1899 to twelve. Classes were large and pupils were taught by the monitorial system in which the teacher taught lessons to bright pupils who then repeated them to about ten younger ones. The subjects taught initially were the 3Rs, but the curriculum gradually expanded. The local middle class came in to help with subjects such as drawing, singing, scripture and needlework. The children used slates and copy books, but had few textbooks. They sat at long tables with benches or desks with fixed seats. Classrooms were lit by coal fires. Rules were strict – no talking allowed. The school was inspected annually.

The school was run and supported by the Moseley middle class. Thomas Clement Sneyd-Kynnersley of Moor Green House, for example, was a manager and treasurer for many years and a great benefactor of the school. His son, Edward M. Sneyd-Kynnersley paid for rebuilding the 'outhouses', putting the drains in order and draining and filling in of a stagnant pond. In 1878 he restarted the school library and contributed many volumes. He

gave a glass-fronted cabinet containing specimens to form the nucleus of a School Museum. Miss Harriet Kynnersley, Edward's sister, brought in specimens for the Museum. Cadburys gave objects illustrating cocoa manufacture and items illustrating pin and needle-making were also donated. In 1880 a certified cookery mistress was appointed to the Girls' School. Mr Wilmot gave a gas stove. 'Ladies' were admitted by 5s tickets to cookery lectures on Friday afternoons to witness 'Miss Boot's cooking skills'. St Mary's and its members continued to support the school financially, giving nearly £800 to the National School (about £53,000 today) between 1879 and 1893.



The Infant and Junior Classes, Moseley National School, c.1870.



Local people gave their field or grounds and provided food and entertainment for annual School Treats: in the 1880s the chief attraction was the ascent of balloons, one of immense size representing an elephant 'jumbo' accompanied by the strains of Kings Heath Band. They celebrated Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 and her Diamond Jubilee in 1897 in the grounds of Moseley Hall, when prizes and presents were distributed, paper balloons soared in the sky, including an elephant and a colossal policeman and fireworks.

The twentieth century brought significant change. In 1948 the school reopened as Moseley Church of England Primary School and in 1969 moved to a new school building in Oxford Road. The old school became a community centre, B13, and was later demolished.

Janet Berry