

## Moseley Gentlemen's Club

Moseley and Kings Heath Gentlemen's Club was founded in Alcester Road, Moseley, in what became 'The Village' pub. An ornate plaque reads 1894. It was a licensed male-only establishment with billiard tables in the large room at the rear, cards, bowls, smoking, concerts, a reading room, and restaurant.<sup>1</sup> The entry fee was 2 guineas and there was a further annual subscription of 2 guineas, fees that excluded the working class. This development accords with historian John Tosh's description of 'the flight from domesticity' and men seeking to escape the 'tyranny of the five o'clock tea', but also provided leisure opportunities for middle-class men that for many were not available in smaller homes.<sup>2</sup>

Peter Streets remembers how in the 1950s and 1960s the Club was well used. Cars were parked on the main road. There were no yellow lines in Moseley until 1962 and then they were only in the village. Many of the cars had chauffeurs. They either slept in the driving seat or walked around smoking. The owners would be in The Club from around 12.30 p.m. until after 3.00 p.m. The models parked outside included Rolls Royce, Bentley, Rover, Jaguar, Daimler, Austin (Princess), Riley and Wolseley. A sign of the times, all the above were made in the U.K., and, apart from Rolls Royce and Bentley cars, all the others were produced in Birmingham and Coventry.



MOSELEY GENTLEMEN S CLUB.



**The Village Pub.<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Cockel, R., *Moseley Village Walks from the Dovecote* (Birmingham: The Moseley Society, 2006), p.6.

<sup>2</sup> Tosh, John, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London: Yale University Press, 1999), pp.179 & 182.

<sup>3</sup> Photographs of the Village by Richard O'Neill.



Clubs for the working class were also set up in nineteenth century Moseley. On 20 January 1885 a well-attended meeting was held at the Moseley National School to discuss setting up a club for the young men of Moseley.<sup>4</sup> The president was Mr E.M.S. Kynnersley, the son of T.C. Sneyd Kynnersley (1803-1892) of Moor Green Hall, one of Moseley's 'great and good'. Both father and son supported developments in Moseley including Moseley National School and St Mary's Church financially and in kind. The meeting suggested that rooms be provided where young men might meet on winter evenings and a field be found for outdoor amusements. There was a 'strong feeling' that this should not be just for young men but for all above the age of sixteen years and it was thrown open to anyone over sixteen. It was resolved that the vicar be president of the club, Mr Kynnersley, vice-president, Mr Frank Halward, Hon. Secretary, Mr Frank Bullock, Hon. Treasurer. A sub-committee was set up of Rev. H. J. Coachafer, and Messrs F. Halward and Burden to draw up rules, enquire about a ground and report in a fortnight. Others were appointed to a committee including Messrs Greenhill, Burden, Walker, Breakwell, W. Haward, J. Price, R. Davis, Bishop, and C. Smith. On Wednesday 8 October 1885 a concert was held at Moseley and Balsall Heath Institute to raise funds for the Moseley Social and Recreation Club. In October 1886 the General Meeting of the Moseley Social and Recreation Club decided that a debating class be formed to 'develop local talent'. The subjects debated included free trade, free education, abolishing the House of Lords, 'Instinct versus Reason', and colonialisation. The classes met fortnightly on Monday evenings in the rooms of the club in Moseley village. Gentlemen wishing to join were to contact Mr F. Greenhill, School Road, who was a teacher at the National School there.

The club lapsed somewhat subsequently. Cannon Colmore's Diary records in May 1889 that it is about to be revived and that two 'very suitable and central' rooms belonging to Mr Miles, the car proprietor, had been procured and steps were being taken to form an Ambulance Class. It was noted in July 1889 that an Ambulance class was about to be started conducted by Dr Underhill. These classes were open to men only but not just members of the Club. In August 1889 the Ambulance class had been set up and Dr Underhill's lectures were given in a 'very popular and lucid style'. An examination was to follow. In September 1889 a lending Library was being formed. According to the Hon. Sec., Mr Greenhill, 'donors

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<sup>4</sup> St Mary's Church Archives, *Canon Colmore's Log Book*. *Canon Colmore's Log Book* charts the development of this club for young men, pp.215, 232, 240, 343, 347, 373, and 452.

of books or money for this object will be conferring a great boon upon the working men and youths of Moseley'. He requested the works of Sir Walter Scott, Dickens, Lord Lytton, George Elliot, Kingsley, Edna Lyall, Finemore Cooper and Miss Muloch. In November 1889 Certificates were presented to successful candidates in the Ambulance examinations. A pair of brass candlesticks were presented to Mr F. Underhill for the 'kindness he had shown in acting as lecturer'. In September 1890 lectures were given by Mr Bernard Badger (Oxford University Extension lecturer) on Physiography at the Moseley National Schools to members of the Social and Recreation Club and others, including 'Springs and Rivers' and 'Ice'. Non-members were admitted on payment of a small fee. In June 1893 there was a large attendance at the Moseley Social and Recreation Club Annual Meeting. Mr Cole was elected President, Mr Greenhill, Hon. Sec., and Mr Frank Bullock, Treasurer. The accounts were passed, and a sub-committee appointed to see if better accommodation could be provided.



**Miles Cab Firm and its site today.<sup>5</sup>**

*Presumably the Social Club was held in an upstairs room over Miles' business premises in what is now Wetherspoon's.*

In 1891 some ladies of St Mary's Church 'have expressed wish to start a Working Girls' Club'.<sup>6</sup> This opened weekly at first on Wednesdays from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Those wishing to be members applied to Miss Charlton, The Limes, Alcester Road, opposite the Reddings for a

<sup>5</sup> Courtesy Roy Cockerl.

<sup>6</sup> St Mary's Church Archives, *Canon Colmore's Log Book*, pp.398, 400, 415, 428, and 452.

ticket to the opening tea at the Moseley National Schools on Wednesday 14 September at 7 p.m. when the object of the club 'will be explained'. Miss Allport consented to take on the role of Hon. Treasurer and asked for subscriptions from any parishioners 'who are willing to help forward this good work'. The Moseley Girls' Club started on 14 October 1891 when Miss H. Kynnersley gave a tea at Moseley National Schools. Nearly forty girls accepted. The subscription was 1d per week, but this was not enough to cover the expenses so subscriptions and donations were needed. These were sent to Miss Allport at Pymore Cottage and Miss Charlton at The Limes. Thirty-eight girls were present on the second Wednesday showing 'a real desire to enjoy the advantages of the club'. Ladies who have promised their services included the Misses Allport, Treasurer, Charlton, Hon. Sec, J. Broughton, Bladon, Cole, Goode, F. Goode, Keep, H. Kynnersley, Lunt, N. May, E. Padmore, Suffield, C. Suffield, and Wilson. In February 1892 Moseley Girls' Club was thriving with 476 attendances. £11 7s 5d was spent on a piano, room hire, printing and advertising, music, books, stationery etc, games and room cleaning, leaving 3s in hand. In the summer of 1893 Moseley Girls Club was only open one evening a month, but the August report stated that it was to reopen on Wednesday 5 October for the winter quarter with a tea at 7 p.m. Tickets for the tea could be obtained from Miss Charlton, price 3d. The committee reminds the 'kind friends who helped them last year with subscriptions, that although there is a small balance in hand they cannot continue their work without assistance'. Subscriptions were required along with books for the library which was shortly to start. This initiative reflected growing female independence.

Moseley Social Club was established by Richard Cadbury for working men and youths in 1898.<sup>7</sup> The foundation stone for the new buildings to be erected on the site on Alcester Road near the Convalescent Home was laid by Mrs Richard Cadbury on Saturday 22 January 1898. The new club was the outcome of a scheme formulated to develop the resources and attractions of the club 'which has for some time had existed in a small way in the village'.<sup>8</sup> Mr F.H. Bell presided and amongst those present were the Revds. W.H. Colmore and J. Hatton Jones, Mr R. Cadbury, Councillor Skinner, County Councillor J. J. R. Mogg, Messrs T. H. Daniel (Chairman of the Building Committee), J. W. B. Brown, W. J. May, J. Heaven, H. Heaven, C. J. L. Hickling, T. Hadley, F. Hadley, F. Bullock (Hon Treasurer), F. Greenhill (Hon Sec.), and others. Also in attendance was J. Brewin Holmes, the architect of the building, who designed the chapels in Brandwood End Cemetery.

The Chairman thanked those present for the generous support they had given the club and said that the commencement of the new buildings was made possible by the promise of Mr Cadbury to give £1,900 conditionally upon £500 being raised. He mentioned that the club would be conducted on unsectarian and temperance lines. Mr Daniel said that when the club was completed it would prove a great boon to Moseley, because its object was to supply healthy recreation and instruction. The architect presented Mrs Cadbury with a silver trowel and 'the laying ceremony was well and truly performed'. Mrs Cadbury expressed the

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<sup>7</sup> MS 579/6 Acc 71aE; *Birmingham News*, Saturday 29 January 1898; *The Birmingham Daily Post*, Monday 24 January 1898.

<sup>8</sup> *The Birmingham Daily Post*, Monday 24 January 1898.

pleasure she had in accepting the invitation to lay the foundation-stone and especially so as she understood the club was to be carried on temperance lines. She was no advocate of anything which induced working men and especially married men, to always spend their evenings away from their homes; but that the club was intended to provide wholesome and healthy recreation for men and youths under conditions they could all approve. She wished the club every prosperity. Following various votes of thanks Mr Bell appealed for further support to the subscription list. The new building will contain reading, chess, billiard, and bagatelle rooms in addition to the usual offices and when completed will cost about £700.

In about 1924 Moseley Social Club became the Asman Carnegie Boys' Club. In 2013 Lauren Guthrie [Great British Sewing Bee finalist] and her husband Ayaz Ghani set up Guthrie and Ghani transforming the building, 169 Alcester Road, into the bricks and mortar version of their online haberdashery, fabric, and yarn store.



**169 Alcester Road.<sup>9</sup>**

Why did the Moseley middle-class establish and support these clubs? The large number of young people in the population that presaged youth crime, and the cultural, moral, and physical impoverishment of the working classes were both visible and alarming to middle-class Victorians.<sup>10</sup>

***Do please let us know of any memories you have of the Gentlemen's Club or indeed any Moseley places.***

**Jan Berry**

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<sup>9</sup> Courtesy of Roy Cockel.

<sup>10</sup> Owen, D., *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.145; Harvey, E.A., *Philanthropy in Birmingham and Sydney, 1860-1914: class, gender and race* (PhD Thesis, University College London, 2011), p.191.

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