Chapter 3

The Tavern and

Anti-Social

Behaviour

Now that a great many of the working population of Aston Manor were able to enjoy a reduced working week/half day Saturday the question to be answered is: What did they do with it? Of course, compared to today their choice was extremely limited, especially for the female. For the vast majority of this gender, of whatever class, especially those who were married, the new ‘time’ in reality changed little. Their subordinate gender relationship allied to their responsibilities as a worker/wife/mother dominated their lives. Indeed even for those who were of an adult age and single, there still remained little during the early years of our period that was available to them. This is not however, to ignore the fact that many females, of differing status, did partake in recreation, particularly within the many public houses available and as spectators at many sporting events, particularly football. Nevertheless it has to be recognised, as will be indicated later, that, in general terms a substantial and meaningful entry into the wider world of recreation would be denied to them until after our time of interest.[[1]](#footnote-1)

For children however they, like generations both prior and since must have formed their own recreational communities, participating in self-organised enjoyments. These ‘games’ and ‘pastimes’ were no doubt, in many instances based upon traditional forms and concepts. For many, especially those from a working class background there can be little doubt that the street was the primary recreational location, though as will be pointed out, as the period progressed they became ever increasingly the focus for those who saw recreation as a means by which social control and cultural improvements could be obtained.

In regards to the adult male however, many would have had to spend this new found time within the home, due either to domestic devotion or, as more likely financial restrictions. Nevertheless, for those for whom these restrictions were either not applicable or important and who did choose to remove themselves from the home to enjoy a modicum of recreation, it was, at the beginning of our period, in many ways of a nature that bore considerable resemblance to that which characterised the recreational landscape of a previous era. The expansion of commercialized sporting endeavour had, in the main not yet become fully established and the excitement of the Music Hall had yet to completely emerge, though a rather diluted version was certainly in existence by the early 1870s in many of the public houses of the Manor. It was however not until the 1890s that what may be considered a location that corresponds to the popular music hall image became established.

Still it would be incorrect to believe that the essential nature of recreational activity had remained constant. Perhaps the most essential alteration had been that, to a very large extent violence has been eradicated. Its connection, particularly in regards to the involvement of animals had been largely discontinued, along with what are often understood to have been time honoured customs, such as ‘traditional’ local football contests.[[2]](#footnote-2) However, there can be little doubt that unauthorised prize fighting still continued to flourish, supported by, there can be little doubt the practice of gambling. One such pugilistic event is recorded as having taken place around the end of 1875 and would have certainly drawn spectators from the surrounding area, including Aston Manor. This event, which was enacted between the hours of 4 and 5 a.m. shortly after the Christmas of 1875 due, it can only be supposed as an attempt to avoid the attentions of the authorities took place at a site near the Parson & Clerk Inn, Sutton Coldfield. This bout between a Jimmy Ireland and a Mr Price (known as The Boxer), lasted some 55 minutes for a £5 a-side purse and resulted in the former being victorious.[[3]](#footnote-3) Though no such contest appears to have been enacted within the boundaries of Aston Manor, some ten years after the aforementioned contest it is recorded that another did take place, only this time considerably nearer to the Manor. For on the 19th of December, 1886 a ‘prize fight’ took place, in a field that adjoined the cemetery at Witton.

This contest, between an Archbald Everall and Edward Barrett, both of Birmingham must have, like the previous event attracted many from the Manor. The fight, which was fought within a ring made up of the spectators ended with Everall being declared the victor, no duration being mentioned in the newspaper reports of the time. However, at the moment of Everall’s triumph the police arrived on the scene. One of the officers, a Pc Hatwell, in attempting to arrest Barrett was:

“deterred by the threatening attitude of the roughs gathered around, who told the officer that if he dared to lay hands on Barrett they would murder him.”

Many of the crowd and obviously the contestants, quite naturally wishing not to be arrested made off in the direction of Perry Barr, but the dedicated Pc Hatwell who had given chase managed to apprehend Barrett’s second. Whilst this, no doubt aggrieved prisoner was being escorted into custody the officer’s colleagues made three further arrests, all four prisoners being then taken to Aston Police Station to be kept in custody. On the following Tuesday, in front of the Magistrate the men were arraigned with the charge of aiding and abetting an illegal prize fight whilst two of the defendants faced an additional charge of assaulting a policeman. All were remanded until the following Friday. Unfortunately no evidence can be found as to what punishment they eventually received.[[4]](#footnote-4) Though these instances might be considered somewhat rare and relatively unusual they do open the possibility that other such events may well have been arranged. That no press reports exist might simply indicate that the organisers had managed to escape the attention of the authorities. This same presumption might also be used in relation to such as cock and dog fighting. Though these activities are certainly recorded as occurring within the areas that surrounded the Manor no evidence can be found to suggest that such activities were enacted within its boundaries.

What can be perceived however with certainly is that much of the recreation that was available, certainly up to the end of our period can be identified as having its bedrock set upon the local inn and tavern. For, as Golby and Purdue point out they were:

“for artisans and labourers meeting places, reading rooms and sports pavilions. They did much more than dispense drink, for drink was an inseparable accompaniment to so much of life, entertainment, like work was closely attached to the inn. Landlords were already entrepreneurs of leisure in the eighteenth century, marketing their commodity with increasing zeal and well placed to exploit an expanding market in the nineteenth.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Whether set in a rural or industrial location the inn and tavern had, and continued to be a central factor in the social life of most communities. The importance of such establishments in regards to Aston Manor had obviously been recognised by the editor of The Birmingham and Aston Chronicle when he commented:

“A public house is not merely a place for the sale of intoxicating liquor but where a tired, cold and hungry man might get rest, warmth, shelter and food.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

That these locations were so attractive to a great many of the local population was certainly due, in part, to the deplorable standard of housing that many in the area endured. This is not surprising given that whilst the area remained constant, the population expanded, as the following indicates:

Year Population

1841 2,847

1851 6,429

1861 16,337

1871 33,952

1881 53,842

1891 68,639

1901 77,316

1911 82,000 [[7]](#footnote-7)

Indeed, as again the Aston and Birmingham Chronicle pointed out in a leading editorial the area of Aston Manor was, in comparison to the twenty largest towns of the United Kingdom more densely populated, forty-four persons per acre as opposed to thirty-six.[[8]](#footnote-8) In considering the standard of the housing stock that existed in the Manor the editor commenting stated:

“Home is surely the proper place where the most perfect feeling of security should be enjoyed. A cozy interior with the shadows caused by the cheerful flickering firelight on the walls whilst the elements are blustering outside on a winter’s night forms a pleasing picture to the imagination which we associate with the ideas of stability and comfort. It is the speculative builder with his insatiable desire to make rich in haste which has set to work to destroy the old associations of home. Suburban housing and honey-suckled cottages that were pleasant to the eye and stable in the foundations are being replaced or supplemented by a class of flimsy brick and milk and water structures which are just as likely to fall any day as they are to stand for ten years at the longest. The ceiling plaster hangs like Damocles Sword over the heads of the occupants. This is no exaggerated description of some of the 8,500 houses which stand along the 30 miles of streets that gird and transverse Aston Manor.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

This view of deprivation was clearly supported when Mr. H. May*,* Medical Officer for Health saw the sanitary conditions of the Manor as being: “rarely equal to any other part in and around Birmingham.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

Of course these conditions, allied to an often harsh working life must have had both a social and psychological effect upon many of the population, driving many to seek an escape which, for many meant the public house and alcohol. Drinking could, and undoubtedly was a means by which many, of both sexes sought a relaxation from the grind of daily toil, though for many it had the capacity to be as equally destructive as the circumstances that drove them to partake. It is also quite reasonable to believe that alcohol was purchased at the expense of essential foodstuffs. The social commentator George Booth, for example, estimated during his extensive social survey of London, and it is not beyond credibility to believe that the same social conditions existed in and around other major urban areas, including Aston Manor that it was not uncommon for at least a quarter of working class income to be spent on alcoholic drink.[[11]](#footnote-11) Indeed, it has been suggested that if the families who practiced temperance were omitted from the equation then the percentage may well have been as high as one third to one half! Given that the proportion of public houses per 10,000 head of population for the United Kingdom for 1871 was 49, an examination of Aston Manor in comparison, can provide for the following:

Public per

Houses head of population

1871 52 617

1881 59 913

1891 66 1,040

1901 64 1,208

1911 62 1,323

The enjoyment of drink was obviously also a means by which the individual might, through its consumption have cause to have felt ‘the long arm of the law.’ Instances abound within the pages of the local newspapers which illustrate many falling foul of authority. Citing liquor as the principal cause of crime in Victorian England was not uncommon, with individuals such as Charles Graham often commenting on the large amount of money that was spent on beer and spirits and about the “great amount of misery and crime caused by over-indulgence.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Another, Joseph Kidd went so far as to suggest that doctors should be allowed to actually physically examine all working class men for signs of excessive alcoholic consumption, as he considered such persons to be a threat to society. He also suggested that they, the ‘working class’ were also significantly physically inferior because of the effects of alcohol and that their bodies were actually poisoned by its use.[[13]](#footnote-13) However, a Charles Walker disagreed with this view insisting that:

"To speak of poverty and crime as the results of the consumption of alcohol is to betray not only an unphilosophical habit of mind, but an ignorance or prejudice which is inexcusable."[[14]](#footnote-14)

For many, the attitude towards drink and its social consequences was perhaps summed up by The Aston News of 1891. In castigating the behaviour of the ‘rogue element,’ particularly during Sundays it stated, albeit in a rather theatrical tone:

“Sunday, when the busy hum and drum of life should be stilled, when the hustle of this world is quietened by the knowledge that it is God’s Day has been converted into a Pandemonium and a carnival of Baccus” and “every suburban resident knows, every magistrate recognises that the groups of intoxicated men and youths who pass along the country lanes on Sundays, destroying the gardens of the more peaceful inhabitants, insult by their obscene language, the respectable pedestrian and degrade nature by their conduct.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Nevertheless, in a perverse way there were some amusing episodes concerning the effects of strong drink. One involving a Sarah Jane Wilkinson, alias ‘Rocky Lane Jenny’ records that she was charged with being drunk on Victoria Road. After arriving at the police station which was situated on the same road during the evening of Sunday, 10th October 1875, obviously the worse for wear she demanded ‘her usual accommodation,’ requesting to be locked up. After being told to: “go away” she lay down in the entrance of the station, finally being locked up and accommodated with the lodgings she desired. She was fined 2/- and costs of 8/- in default seven days.[[16]](#footnote-16) In another, a lady described, again by the same newspaper as ‘being on a spree’ also fell foul of the law. Here, a Jane Smith, wife of a Sgt. Reuben Smith, Recruitment Officer of Duke Street, Birmingham was fined 5/- or seven days default for being drunk and disorderly in Aston Cross. She was said to have approached a Pc Miller and asked him to take her home, an offer which he declined. She then went into a nearby shop and asked the Officer, who had followed her: “where is the Superintendent of Police?” he replied: “I’ll show you” and promptly arrested her.[[17]](#footnote-17) That such incidents were no means uncommon will come as no surprise when it is recognised just how many public houses were actually established within the boundaries of Aston Manor (see appendix ii).

However, though these instances provide a rather light-hearted view of the consequences of drink, in many cases its popularity had another side, one that could, and often did err on the side of tragedy. There are numerous reports of drink inspired domestic violence as well as assaults and their like within the many drinking establishments of the Manor. Again, it would be impracticable to list all the incidents that occurred though the following may perhaps be taken as typical. In front of the local magistrates a Florence Daffern of Priory Road was accused of assaulting an Annie Farnworth with a basin. It would seem that the two met at the Red Lion public house and argued. After meeting again, sometime later in Alfred Street the defendant hit the victim with the item, an act that resulted in a fine of 10/- and costs. Again, in another incident involving a culinary item an Edward Burton of Lichfield Road was summonsed for an assault on his wife Sarah. It would seem that the cause of this domestic disagreement was that, after being requested by his wife to return home from a local public house the husband refused. Upon this the wife took their five children to the inn and deposited them there. Upon returning home an argument ensued during which the wife’s mother was verbally abused which then resulted in a fight between the married couple, during which the husband hit the wife with a dish, resulting in her suffering a bad cut to the head which required hospital treatment. Upon hearing all the evidence the court chose to impose a jail sentence of one month with hard labour.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Of a more unusual nature The Times of London*,* in its 9th April, 1896 edition, under a heading of ‘Collision Between Tramcars in Aston’ reported on how a William Davis, being drunk, left his tramcar with the engine running whilst it was near Aston Church (St. Peter & St. Paul). Unfortunately, he had left it on an incline with the brake not fully engaged which resulted in the convenience moving, at an ever increasing speed, with some nine, quite likely concerned passengers on board until, after colliding with another tramcar and several lamp posts it eventually halted. Thankfully, those unfortunate persons on board suffered no injuries.[[19]](#footnote-19) Whether the situation has reached such a position that it was felt that an innovative approach was required to reduce the effects of excessive consumption is questionable but certainly in 1895 one enterprising individual certainly thought so. It was, during this year that a Mr. Deacon, Medical Herbalist of Tottenham, London began to advertise in a local newspaper a remedy for the effect of what might be politely termed as over indulgence. It was, he stated:

“a most certain and inexpensive cure. It is perfectly harmless and tasteless if given in a cup of tea, coffee or any food. It never fails. It has cured and restored happiness in thousands of families. It cures cases however long standing in men or women. Remedy sent for 1/3d, post free.”[[20]](#footnote-20)

Nevertheless, there were those who believed that, as our period of interest progressed, drunkenness within Aston Manor actually decreased. The report of the Annual Licensing Session presented by a Superintendent Walker of Aston Police referred to it as being:

“a sign that men and women are beginning to recognise the value of moderation” and “that the people of the district are becoming more temperate in their habits and less fond of spending their hard earned wages with a class of society who care only for a customer as long as he is prepared to help swell their profits. We do not ask for the abolition of public houses; but we certainly think that persons who patronise the trade would show their good sense if they would leave licensed premises when they had had sufficient refreshment and not stand lolling about the bars listening to the egotistical utterances of landlords who are friends to none but themselves. Be that as it may, the decrease in the cases of drunkenness is highly satisfactory to everyone interested in the cause of temperance and should act as a stimulus to those organisations which have their object the reduction of the misery which is hourly and daily caused by an uncontrollable love of drink.”[[21]](#footnote-21)

Whether this situation was true of course might stand to be queried, but, if the local advertisements that were placed in the press are taken as an indication the honourable gentleman might well have had a valid point. For, in the years previous to Mr. Walker’s bold statement it was not uncommon to read of bargain offers for the local drinker. Indeed one local brewing company advertised their product as being ‘Brewed specially for Families.’ The offer of an 18 gallon cask of a pale ale that was ‘clear, bright, sparkling and of a pleasant aromatic flavour, containing neither added sugar, colouring matter, hop substitute’ for 18/- cash discount 2/- might suggest that there were those whose drinking habits were more confined to the home.[[22]](#footnote-22) That another company in the area could also advertise ‘Genuine ale and stout in 9, 18, 36 gallons at casks at 1/- and 1/4d per gallon net for the home’ further reinforces this view.[[23]](#footnote-23) Indeed the popularity of such offers can be perceived when it is noted that some thirteen years later the Aston Manor Brewery were offering 9 and 18 gallon casks, for home consumption at 1/- a gallon.[[24]](#footnote-24) It could be, of course that the individuals who took advantage of these opportunities were expressing both a taste for a ‘pint’ as well as an expression of distaste for the public house. However, it cannot be discounted that there were those of the Manor who simply wanted to expand their alcoholic intake at a much reduced price!!

The question of drink and the individual however remained a subject that was always to the forefront of the respectable classes. It was clearly recognized by many, rightly or wrongly that alcohol was a contributory factor in the increase in crime, pauperism, insanity and disease. However, The Aston News chose on occasions not to decry but to suggest that the attitude towards drinking should not be simply to prevent it’s existence but more to prevent drunkenness and its effects, the “poverty stricken houses, the half-starved, nearly naked children and their dejected parents”.[[25]](#footnote-25) The clear implication being that there were inns and taverns of the area that were indeed places of habitual drunkenness.

Yet, it would be incorrect to suppose that all the licensed establishments of the Manor were places of perpetual drunkenness, though it has to be believed that some may well have been. Others however may be perceived as aspiring to a modicum of respectability. For some their very image pronounced a desire for decency. The Station Inn, The Aston Hotel and The Britannia were particularly resplendent, being decorated in terra cotta and attractively glazed brick. In the case of the first it advertised itself for a number of years in the mid-1870s as providing, every Saturday and Monday a ‘convivial evening’ with a display of fireworks[[26]](#footnote-26) whilst the latter gloried in a classical edifice which was spectacularly surmounted by a resplendent sculpture of Britannia herself.[[27]](#footnote-27) Others such as The White Swan, Upper Sutton Street, for example, from the mid-1870s advertised itself as offering convivial evenings,[[28]](#footnote-28) whilst The General Havelock*,* Aston Road could, in the same year boast of being recently renovated and now affording a ‘most comfortable and pleasing place of social resort.’[[29]](#footnote-29) For one particular hostelry, The Prince of Wales, the concept of respectability had a particular edge in that its ‘harmonious evenings’ every Saturday night were for ‘gentleman only.’ Whether this attraction can be construed as offering, what in modern parlance might be termed a ‘stag-esque’ night out’ cannot be discounted.[[30]](#footnote-30) Additionally, throughout the period 1870-1880 this venue was also the scene for what were advertised as ‘convivial evenings of concert entertainment.[[31]](#footnote-31) Rather unusually though, another location, The Waterworks Tavern*,* chose to offer during the later months of 1875 ‘dancing in its assembly room’, the entertainment commencing at 3.30 p.m., free admission, perhaps indicating a recreational opportunity for the female!

Nevertheless, many of the ‘respectable class’ within Aston Manor still retained a believe that the public house was a location which undermined the moral and physical fabric of society, a stance personified by the words uttered by a Rev. W. Wallers: “be not drunk with wine wherein in excess,”[[32]](#footnote-32) and the rather apocalyptic message that was passed some thirty six years later at a Wheeler Street Band of Hope Meeting:

“Alcohol upon entering the mouth so affects the saliva that all starchy matter instead of being dissolved hardens and so passes to the stomach in this condition.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

It has to be noted though that one of the leading abstinence organisations in the area, The Total Abstinence Society ceased to exist in 1880, due to a lack of members![[34]](#footnote-34)

Here though is a clear paradox, for notwithstanding those of the temperance movement, many of those same ‘respectable’ persons, throughout our period of interest themselves frequently utilised these very same establishments. They were not however, forging a new idiom but, were in truth continuing a long held tradition. The notion of the public house as being a venue of administration, a place where societies and organisations could meet was, as Golby and Purdue point out already well established.[[35]](#footnote-35) Certainly in the 1880s, this notion of the inn or tavern as a community venue can clearly be identified as being maintained. The Aston Manor Coroner, for example often held inquests in a number of public houses, such as theQueens Arms, The Holte Hotel, The White Swan and The Vine Inn.[[36]](#footnote-36)It would certainly seem that this particular usage of such establishments continued for some time after these examples. It is recorded that in 1885 an inquest into the unfortunate passing of a well known local cricketer, a Mr. Herbert Johnson, a player with the Aston Mutual CC who died whilst playing in a match was held in the Avenue Inn, Park Road.[[37]](#footnote-37) Though no further examples of such has been found it can perhaps be assumed that around this time the practice of using the local hostelries for such purposes ceased.

Indeed, from the beginning of our period there are numerous indicators to illustrate the employing of the public house for recreational uses by the very sort of persons who often decried their usage by the working classes. Of course the availability of alcohol must have been for many an attraction, but perhaps their greatest attribute was that a society or club, of whatever nature could use the inn or tavern as a headquarters, and as such provide for itself both a social venue and a centre of organisation, given that many were able to accommodate a reasonably large number of persons in comfort. It was this function, as will be indicated later that many of the working class adopted to great effect. For there was, outside of the public house and venues connected with the church and school halls, until the introduction of The Victoria Hall in 1887 little public meeting space available within the Aston Manor.

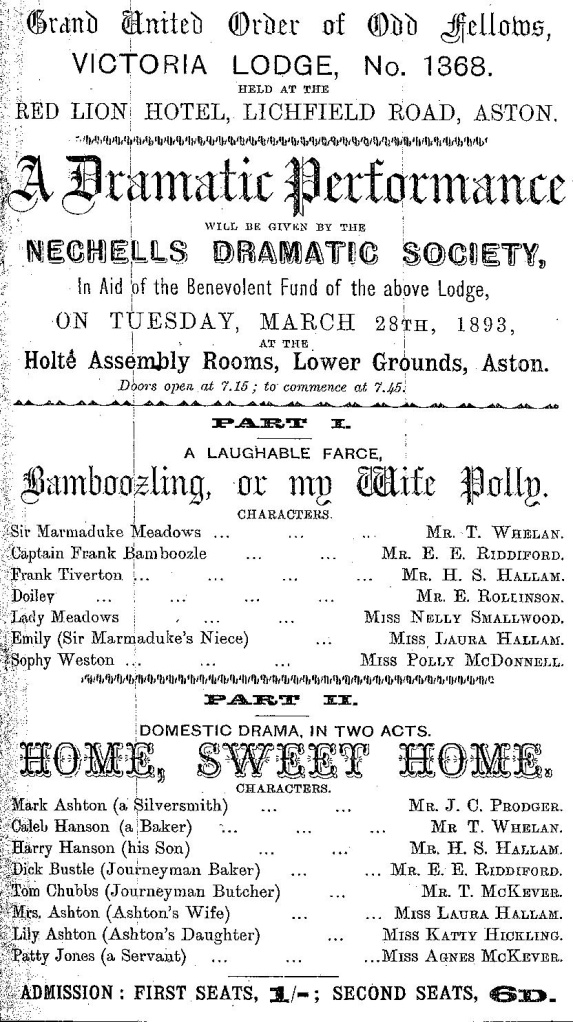
Many societies and organisations can be found to have been represented within the Manor, many of these linked to specific public houses. The Vine Inn*,* for example was the meeting place for several including the Aston Manor Debating Society and the Postman’s Federation*.* This latter society appears however to have utilised many of the hostelries of the Manor, beginning a tradition of an annual dinner from as early as 1877. However it was from 1895 until the end of our period that they seem to have become particularly fond of The Vine in Lichfield Road.[[38]](#footnote-38) In the case of the former it is recorded that they only used the venue for a short duration, between 1877 and 1879.[[39]](#footnote-39) There was also a Vine Debating Society which appears to have existed between 1885 and the mid 1890s.[[40]](#footnote-40) Whether this society is connected to the one previously mentioned cannot be established but it is a possibility. Perhaps typical of the sort of discussion that this particular society engaged in was, when in 1886 they debated Gladstone’s Irish proposals.[[41]](#footnote-41) The Vine however was not the only public house to attract a serious minded debating clientele. The Red Lion was also the venue within the same time span for programmes of a very similar nature.[[42]](#footnote-42)

Another work based society, The Birmingham and Aston Tramway Company also seem to have favoured a local inn enjoying, on many occasions dinners and functions at the Avenue in Albert Road.[[43]](#footnote-43) There were, in addition to these many others of varied types whose activities might preclude them for being considered recreational who also chose to meet in similar places. Though it is impractical to relate all, a few of the more notable ones were: The Aston Political Society who met at The Gunmakers Arms;[[44]](#footnote-44) The Victoria Mutual Money Society, The Brittannia;[[45]](#footnote-45) The Hungry Club, The Swan, Victoria Road;[[46]](#footnote-46) The Permanent Money Club (mentioned on page 80**)** for The White Horse[[47]](#footnote-47) and The Scotch House Sick Dividend Society, which met at the Holte Hotel whose landlord was the ex-Aston Villa player Mr. Jas Cowan.[[48]](#footnote-48)

However one particular type of organisation, The Masonically inclined Friendly Society appear to have had a most vibrant relationship with the Manor and its licensed establishments. One of the earliest instances of such a society having an connection with the area occurred in 1864 when the Manchester Order of Oddfellows*,*[[49]](#footnote-49)utilised the Lower Grounds for a ‘Great Gathering’ (see chapter 5). It is unknown if this particular branch of the tradition continued to sustain a relationship with the Manor but what is known is that The Imperial Independent Order of Oddfellows London - Aston Manor Lodge, from 1867 until the turn of the century used as its headquarters and celebrated its various anniversaries in the Grand Turk Inn, New Street. In 1876, for example it is recorded that under the host PGM Mr. T. Rathbone it celebrated in time honoured custom with the ‘Roast Beef of Old England.’[[50]](#footnote-50) That this Lodge chose to utilise a public house was explained by the columnist as being due to the absence of a public hall.[[51]](#footnote-51) It might well have been this particular Lodge which was the subject of ‘Local Gossip’ in The Birmingham and Aston Chronicle. Here, a writer drew attention to the ‘Odd’ factor in their title. For, they had a ‘Brother’ who was a professor, who bore the name of Trevori who was a ventriloquist; a Shakespearian rector; and ‘Negro delineator!!’

The following year yet another lodge took up residence there. In opening a new lodge, The Odd Fellows (Manchester Unity), seemingly another branch of the organisation mentioned previously, with nearly 5,000 members in Birmingham alone must have proved of some considerable financial benefit to the licensee.[[52]](#footnote-52)Indeed such was the popularity of this venue that it also attracted, in the same year The Aston Manor & Handsworth District Licensed Victuallers Association Annual meeting,[[53]](#footnote-53) though it appears that this particular society adopted a policy which meant that a different venue for their celebrations was utilised every year.

It would certainly seem that ‘The Oddfellows’ society found Aston Manor a particularly seductive environment, for The Red Lion, on Lichfield Road from the mid-1880s also became the home for yet another Lodge, The Grand United Order of Oddfellows. It was this particular Lodge who offered, on one occasion a locally based dramatic society the chance to provide the entertainment at one of their meetings. In 1893, in aid of its benevolent fund it hired the Holte Assembly Rooms for its function, giving the Nechells Dramatic Society the opportunity to show their worth. That the Lodge should choose to hire another establishment must suggest that their regular home, The Red Lion was perhaps not of sufficient size to accommodate the numbers when guests were included. Perhaps as a reflection of what must have been the success of this venture this particular society, during the years up to 1890 utilised this location for many other performances. However, after this date nothing is recorded as to their activities.

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The Grand Order of Odd Fellows, Victoria Lodge, No. 1368, Red Lion, Lichfield Road. [[54]](#footnote-54)

Indeed the attractiveness of the Manor for this particular Order can be verified when it is noted that other Lodges met at various other locations, these being The Loyal William Grims Lodge, (The Golden Cross);[[55]](#footnote-55) The John Baker Lodge, No. 948, (The Duke of York[[56]](#footnote-56) and The Aston Tavern)[[57]](#footnote-57); The No. 12 Welbed Lodge, (The King Edward)[[58]](#footnote-58) and The No. 37 Sir Richard Holte Lodge, (The Upper Grounds Hotel).[[59]](#footnote-59) It would appear however that, in terms of attendance these organisations were small in size, though the Baker Lodge when encamped at The Aston Tavern could boast of a slightly higher membership, of some fifty persons. That the fellowship might be considered a permanent feature of the Manor can be perhaps verified when it is noted that as late as 1908 The William Gowice Lodge of the Independent Order of Oddfellows held a Ladies Night in the Golden Cross which featured, during the interval musical entertainment, coffee and sandwiches.[[60]](#footnote-60)

Other Orders can also be found to have utilised the hostelries of the Manor. Various lodges of The Royal Antedulivian Order of Buffaloes, for example met throughout the period up to the turn of the century in several of Aston Manor’s inns and taverns, including both the King Edward[[61]](#footnote-61) and The White Horse Inn, first using the locations in 1876 and retaining a connection to at least 1880 when no further reports of activity are recorded. The advertisement reproduced below not only verifies this fact but also gives an indication as to the versatility of the establishment as a venue for recreational enjoyment.[[62]](#footnote-62)



This particular location was also the venue for other elements of the Order. One such was The No. 27 King Bruce Lodge which met during the late 1880s. It would appear that this entity was not hugely supported, as it is recorded that it only had some seventeen members, attracting only some forty eight members and friends for a Christmas function in the same year.[[63]](#footnote-63) The No. 11, 17, 19 Lodges of the same organisation also seem to have, during the same period favoured The Vine,[[64]](#footnote-64) this same venue also accommodating, at times the Sir Charles Napier Ancient Order of Foresters and the RAOB Lodge No. 32. Though there is no indication as to the extent to which the former took advantage of the inn, it is recorded that in 1902 they held their 48th annual dinner within its walls, though how many of these functions were held at this location is unknown.[[65]](#footnote-65) In regards to the latter organisation however their behavior sometimes left a lot to be desired and, in many cases negates the notion of respectability. For as the Birmingham & Aston Chronicle reported of a meeting at The White Horse Inn, under the heading ‘The Buffaloes Again’ they:

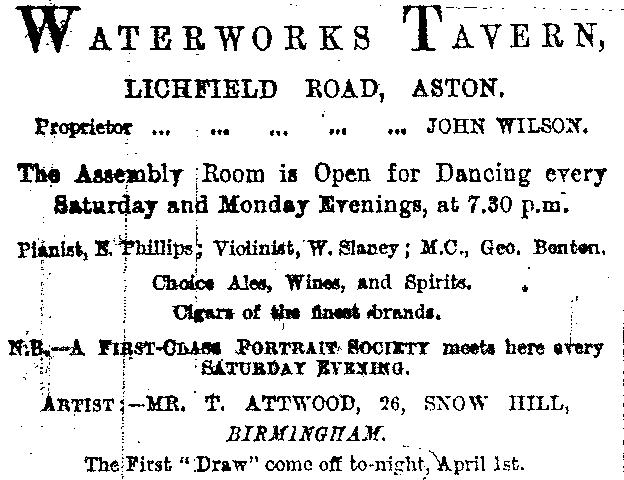
“kicked up a ‘deuce’ of a romp in Aston Lane last Sunday night. At closing time a number of them emerged from a well known Tavern and came into collision with some stray civilians who happened to be passing at the time. The Buffaloes swaggered, roared, swore, buffeted and pulled the gentiles about until the sweat bedevilled their tails. All the parties were drunk however and neither side was able to hurt the other much, but the shame is that such a noisy lot were allowed to make such a disturbance and block up the lane on a Sunday night.”[[66]](#footnote-66)

That this association appears to have had a rather rumbustious nature is certainly confirmed when it is understood that the landlord of the New Inn, Lozells, a Mr. Wilkins, a ‘Buffalo’ himself was refused by Aston Magistrates an extension to his hours of opening so as to accommodate his Lodge. They, in their wisdom were afraid: “too much dancing might not be good for the Buffaloes.”[[67]](#footnote-67) Yet, despite their reputation various lodges of the Order continued to hold meetings and celebrations in various locations apart from The White Horse Inn[[68]](#footnote-68) principally The Gunmakers Arms[[69]](#footnote-69) and The Rose and Crown where, on every Monday and Tuesday for a large part of 1886 they enjoyed ‘Grand Musical Entertainment.’ As no further note is made of this particular employment of this venue it can only be presumed that it ceased after this time,[[70]](#footnote-70) They also, on several occasions utilised the Victoria Hall and it was at this location that there is evidence that they seemed to have retained their regard for high jinks when it was stated that they danced the night away to Shelleys Quadrille Band.[[71]](#footnote-71) That this love of ‘fun and frolics’ continued can be pereceived when eleven years later, in 1907 at a function held again in the Victoria Hall they organised a fancy dress competition. Seemingly not content with the usual run-of-the-mill depictions the members took to the task with gusto. Amongst the many costumes that were presented were an ‘Admiral of The Fleet’, ‘Japanese Lady’, ‘Welsh Mountaineer’, ‘Mesophoflese’, ‘The Stars and Stripes’ and, most intriguingly a ‘Patent Safety Match’![[72]](#footnote-72)

There was however one Masonic institution that seemed to have, on instances rejected the public house in favour of a more ‘respectable venue’ It is recorded that The Holte Lodge, No. 1246 of Freemasons held meetings in the Albert Hall, Witton Road. On several occasions between 1905 and the end of our period these took the form of ‘Ladies Nights.’ These, as in 1910 often attracted as many as one hundred persons and were dining and dancing affairs, where the entertaining artists, in the case of the this event, from London provided a concert of light operatic and drawing room music.[[73]](#footnote-73)

Of a slightly less rowdy nature was The Portrait Society of the Waterworks Tavern. Here, it would appear a group of artists had conspired with the landlord to seemingly provide a recreation which might have appealed to the more discerning [and wealthy]. For, in promoting the society he not only advertised the skill of the membership but also himself. For, as it was stated:

“a capital imperial size portrait of the landlord may now be seen at the inn, [and] every one desiring of securing a good likeness, either of himself or of a friend will do well to avail himself of the of the present opportunity.”[[74]](#footnote-74)



Advertisement placed in the Birmingham and Aston Chronicle[[75]](#footnote-75)

However, from one particular public house, TheAston Cross Tavern an alternative to these essentially middle class orientated activities was provided, Pedestrianism. This was, in essence, a 19th century form of competitive walking, more often as not [professional](file:///C:\wiki\Professional_sport) and funded by [wagering](file:///C:\wiki\Wagering), from which the modern sport of race walking developed. This establishment which opened in 1775 as a public house and tea garden by a Mr. Barron, his widow retaining the property until her passing in 1817 became after this time an attractive recreational location for both the competitor and spectator alike.[[76]](#footnote-76) It was, in the words of Showell:

“a favourite resort of all classes of athletes, though from being so closely built to it has lost much of the attraction which drew our grandfathers to its shady arbours when on country pleasure bent.”[[77]](#footnote-77)

This site was, in the absence of another outdoor, mass popular sporting recreational location one that actively fulfilled a central role in providing sporting enjoyment for many of the area up to the later years of the 1870’s when pedestrianism declined in popularity in the face of alternative attractions. This establishmentwas able to uniquely provide this particular attraction as it had upon its grounds what was described as an ‘athletics track’,[[78]](#footnote-78) a facility that was not available to any other public house in the area.[[79]](#footnote-79) An early meeting in 1871 for example comprised of a mixture of sprint races competed for by many local competitors, whilst at a later date an event offered a prize of £10 for the winner of a 50 miles walk, being won by a local man named Parry,[[80]](#footnote-80) as well as the chance for those interested to compete in sprinting events. Again, in 1875 it was reported that, at this location a ‘pedestrian handicap,’ over an undisclosed distance was promoted by Messrs Wager & Cooper. After completing the Saturday it was recommenced on the Monday, the event being won by a Mr. A. Wilkins who had a 183 yards start, the event being officiated by Mr. Clowery.[[81]](#footnote-81) The following year also witnessed another prominent event within which a Mr. J. Thew triumphed in front of a ‘large concourse of people’ in a half-mile handicap to win, a not inconsiderable first prize of £8, whilst the second and third were awarded £1 10s and 10/- respectively.[[82]](#footnote-82) Perhaps the popularity of such events can be best illustrated when it is noted, that, in 1876 a local newspaper chose to report, in some considerable detail on a 24 hour international walking race which had taken place in London.[[83]](#footnote-83)

That the recreation did eventually lose its appeal can perhaps be established via the fact that, as far as can be judged after 1880 none of the local newspapers carried any more reports of activity. This decline might be substantiated, not only in regards to Aston Manor in general and The Aston Cross in particular by the report in 1900 of the passing of a Henry Ellis, a noted aficionado of the recreation. This gentleman, described as a ‘watch holder’ was recorded as one who: “used to take a prominent part in local pedestrian events when the Aston Cross *was* a noted resort for fast races”.[[84]](#footnote-84) After this time the recreation certainly seems to have faded in popularity, both at this particular establishment and in the Manor generally. In what seems to have been the last major event of pedestrianism in the Manor a George Guest, a notable walker successfully wagered to walk, on The Lower Grounds 1,000 miles in twenty eight days. From this time onwards the local press provided no further reports on the activity, it falling in popularity as will be indicated in the face of other attractions.[[85]](#footnote-85)

It could well be that one of the attractions of this particular sport was the opportunity to ‘have a flutter.’ Yet, whilst this might be true there can be little doubt that a more critical attitude developed in the period towards its existence. Nevertheless a more virulent approach by the authorities did not seemingly either eradicate it nor in any way contribute to any lack of popularity. In regards to one incident which the press wrote of as ‘Sunday Racing’ which involved a number of persons engaging in what was described ‘Fast Racing’ on the Witton Road led to one of the competitors, an Arthur Parkes of Tower Road being, on 20th April, 1877 apprehended by the police. This event, which was said to have attracted a large crowd of spectators, who presumably would have had the opportunity to place bets on the results resulted in the individual named being fined 1/- with 7/- costs or seven days in default. His appearance also brought comments from both the Magistrate and Police Superintendent that this nuisance must be stopped and that the next offence would result in a heavy fine being imposed.[[86]](#footnote-86) Rather surprisingly there is no mention made of any other individual connected to this incident feeling the force of the law, either competitor or spectator. Perhaps they were either too nimble for the attending officers or that blind eyes had been turned!! However, some three years later the editor of The Aston and Handsworth Observer*,* in regards to similar betting activity at the Lower Grounds felt compelled to provide a rather terse opinion of it when he commented:

“It is bad enough that the noblest of the brute creation should form the subject of the nefarious transactions of the blacklegs whose hoarse bawling of the ‘odds’ make earth hideous; but that these gentry should thrive and fatten out of the achievements of the lithe-limbed youth of our country - that the domain of health and innocent recreation should invaded by those whose only interest in the sport is in calculating how much can be made out of the flesh and blood the competing athletes - is monstrous. But this is not the worst feature of the case. If not infrequently happens that some athlete who has been selected for the unenviable distinction of ‘favourite’ by the bookmakers is honourably defeated from no fault of his own; but the bookmakers have no respect for honourable failure, inasmuch as it affects their unlawful gains and the defeated athlete is assailed with a such a volley of foul abuse and opprobrious epithets as would scarcely be used by them towards the ‘welsher’ of their own fraternity.”[[87]](#footnote-87)

Unfortunately all the procrastinations of the press and the condemnations of the authorities seemingly were, to a great extent in vain. Indeed, only some fourteen days after the previous statement had been made a clear example of failure can be appreciated. For, in front of the Aston Magistrates, in a case that was brought against individuals for the offence of betting at a local sports meet, one of the defendants Probert chose not to attend. In a statement to the court a senior police officer, Superintendent Gallaway stated that the defendant had:

“called upon him to say that he should be away from home - in order to attend to the Goodwood Races - but was willing to abide by the decision of the magistrates.”

In summing up the magistrate made the point that, under the law £10 was the maximum fine that he was allowed to administer and, that if such offences continued to be enacted then the fines imposed would be increased towards this maximum. In punishing the defendants to the tune of 40/- plus costs he also made a significant observation. For, as a result of recent cases he had observed that the manner in which the bookie plied his trade had altered. Now instead of the traditional habit of “shouting of the odds” many employed in that trade preferred another, more subtle method of working the book:

“Instead of calling out the odds [they] went quietly amongst the spectators, and when a bet was made they said: ‘If blue or red comes in first you will have to pay me so much’ or vice-versa, as the nature of the betting might be.”[[88]](#footnote-88)

Despite the threat made by the magistrate and the efforts of the police seemingly they did little to dissuade. Many individuals continued to be brought before the Bench on charges relating to bookmaking and gambling in general. Perhaps typical were those cases brought in relation to Messrs William Hesprey, James Allan and William Darby, described as ‘Commission Agents’. They were each fined £5 plus 9s 6d costs for the act of Street Betting[[89]](#footnote-89) and Andrew Barnes of Avenue Road who suffered the not inconsiderable penalty of £5 plus costs for running a book.[[90]](#footnote-90) That such fines were administered and, it must be presumed promptly paid must suggest that within the Manor there was enough money to be made so as to be able to take such punishment.

Of course not all gambling involved the bookmaker. For even a cursory glance though the reports of the Aston Manor Magistrates Court published weekly in the local press indicates that gambling was participated and presumably enjoyed by many, wagers which were often enacted on the public highway. Though these instances are certainly far too numerous to completely relate, typical were those, for example that concerned a Henry Cooper, aged sixteen of 16, Upper Thomas Street who, after being apprehended by a Pc Miller was charged with playing pitch and toss in Tower Road and received a Caution,[[91]](#footnote-91) and that of a John Surman. Again, this individual was caught enjoying the game and was fined 1/- and 11/- costs for playing it in Burbury Street.[[92]](#footnote-92) Indeed such was the perceived situation, that, by 1899, a local magistrate, Mr. Mottram was driven to state that the:

“number of prosecutions for gambling held in Aston is proof of the hold this pernicious habit of gambling has upon a large proportion of our population.”[[93]](#footnote-93)

Indeed such was the situation that a local newspaper chose to publish a letter from a former resident, a Mr. Charles Roberts, now of New York. In it this individual described the situation, in this case in regards to horse racing, as he remembered it, as being a ‘vice’ which held the local population in its grip. In describing the social consequences of gambling he drew attention to: “an unwashed urchin handing over a bet for his father to a local publican” and of: “two matronly looking women over a gin solemnly discussing the turf.” For him, the conclusion was:

“the bookmaker smiles a big smile as he glances over the debit and credit side of his account. It is a ‘clean book.’ As an outsider has won, upon which, as, he himself puts it, ’not one person in a thousand has invested a bloomin’sou’.”[[94]](#footnote-94)

The sport of horse racing, as can be imagined was not the only sporting activity which attracted the thrill of the wager. Football, for example even before the introduction of the ‘Pools’*[[95]](#footnote-95)* had been recognised by many who were connected to it as being an event which drew in those who were interested in a bet. In a feature entitled ‘By The Way’ a columnist wrote of a fixture, which seems to have been an Football Association Cup tie between Aston Villa and Nottingham in 1883 when betting was made on the result:

“I wish however and I know that many football players agree with me that there was less of the cup-tie business as I feel it tends to encourage betting and make men play simply to win and not for the sake of enjoyment of a splendidly healthy and scientific sport.”[[96]](#footnote-96)

The identification of gambling within many areas of activity prompted one recreational body, the AAAC to make a particularly strong denunciation of it. In a clear attempt to prevent it becoming a feature of the athletic arena it chose to insert within its rule book a demand, via Rule 14, for member clubs to:

“to use their best endeavours to suppress betting at their respective meetings.”[[97]](#footnote-97)

Whether this aim was totally successful can be doubted but it clearly indicates that, at least within the area of Aston Manor the habit of gambling was increasingly being confronted.

Of course the condemnation of gambling and its supposed effects upon the working class, contains no reference to the ‘respectable’ who were, as it is well acknowledged just as devoted to its pleasures. It also did not prevent the local press printing ever increasingly detailed information about not only the major races of the racing calendar but also the more mundane local meetings. Indeed by the 1890s some of the newspapers servicing the area, particularly the Sports Argus were devoting whole swathes of its pages to the ‘Pastime of the Kings.’ It must have been extremely frustrating for those individuals, including those of the courts who had campaigned so hard against what they perceived as the evil of the wager to witness, what in reality was a social acceptance, by the masses of gambling. Despite the fact that betting shops were banned by the Betting Act of 1853 and that local police and magistrates were attempting to curtail gambling, in reality the ‘anti-gambling campaign’ certainly within Aston Manor had fundamentally failed.[[98]](#footnote-98) That such a position had been reached can perhaps be verified when it is noted that the Deputy Chief Constable of Birmingham was driven to say, of Aston Manor and the prevalence of ‘Pitch and Toss’, just prior to the areas annexation into the City that:

“That (in this case in reference to Sundays) gambling has become so common in Aston that ten to twelve Constables had to be held off to cope with the nuisance.”[[99]](#footnote-99)

However, gambling was not the only problem that the local police had to deal with. For, apart from the usual everyday occurrences of drunkenness and general misbehaviour which unfortunately were all to common in urban areas they also had to deal with the sort of behaviour that, in reality one can always associate with youth, as is still the case today, of playing with fireworks. Though the bye-laws of Aston Manor prohibited the sale of these to minors there were cases, as there are today of shopkeepers, in the pursuit of profit ignoring this ruling. Such a disobedience led a Annie Callow of 329 Lichfield Road being fined 2/6d for selling them to a thirteen year old boy.[[100]](#footnote-100) However for those lucky children who did obtain the articles, there was always the risk, if they were unfortunate enough to be ‘collared’ by the local constabulary to find themselves in front of the Magistrate, On one occasion when a boy, Charles Thompson was presented and fined 2/6d for letting them off in the street, the officiating official stated, for the benefit of the offender and society in general:

“that the dangerous practice of letting off fireworks in the street must stop, and that, as a general warning future offenders would be severely punished.”[[101]](#footnote-101)

Additionally, then as now the exuberance of youth sometimes spilled over into behaviour that caused annoyance to others. The editor of one paper, in complaining about such anti-social activity perhaps epitomises an attitude that is still prevalent today:

“Much annoyance was caused at the Holte on Saturday night by the thoughtless conduct of several young gentlemen who would amuse themselves by jumping from the temporary platforms in the gallery. This charming pastime is of frequent occurrence especially on crowded nights, by the reckless, swaggering, smoking would be swells of the ‘genus cad’ who frequent the gallery. Cannot the directors do something to prevent this nightly nuisance? I know the ever courteous manager does his best in this direction. I have often heard him give some to the disturbers a bit of his mind but I’m afraid it will require a stronger antidote to cure the evil.”[[102]](#footnote-102)

There were of course incidents of anti-social behaviour which though against the law perhaps now might be considered by many to be of a less serious nature. However in Aston Manor of the 1870s onwards this was not always the case. One such unfortunate ‘criminal’ was a John Horsfall, aged 19 years who was apprehended for throwing stones at a Horse Chestnut Tree in the park. Though it would seem he was simply trying to get some ‘Conkers’ he was charged with criminal damage and heftily fined the same amount as was a previously mentioned bookmaker, of 5/- or 14 days in prison.[[103]](#footnote-103) Within a similar vein a George Harrison and William Barley, 13 and 14 years of age respectfully were dealt with, these two children being caught ‘scrumping’ from fruit trees. After an Inspector Hinde had stated that “a great deal of damage to fruit trees in the area had been caused” and their mothers had pleaded for them they were discharged under the threat of Reformatory should they ever do it again.[[104]](#footnote-104) However, for one youth, William Hackett even the onset of an icy winter proved disastrous. For, having been apprehended for the crime of ‘sliding on the road’ he found himself being made an example of as a warning to others and fined 1/- for his ‘fun’.[[105]](#footnote-105)

Perhaps though, the strangest incidents of people being hauled before the ‘Beak’ concerned the publicans themselves. There are numerous incidents throughout our period of interest which indicates that the local power of the law was often turned towards them. One instance which indicates this, and which can be perceived as being slightly unusual was one that concerned a George Willetts, the proprietor of The New Inn, Vine Street. He was hauled before the Bench on charges that he permitted his premises to be the scene of gambling and drunkenness!! After the police had been called on the 5th to the establishment they found not only one man unconscious and another asleep but also other men engaged in playing cards! Despite the fact that the landlord stated that he did not care if he was summonsed and that could pay the fine he received one of only £2 plus costs. That such a lenient sum was imposed was probably due to the fact that not all charges were proved.[[106]](#footnote-106) Other landlords however fared better when confronted by the law. Some eighteen years previous a George Henry Brown of the Albion Inn was charged with, that he on the 28th July at half-past midnight did serve customers alcohol after permitted hours and obstructed the police by refusing to let them enter the Inn in pursuance of their duties. Happily for him he was found not guilty as he argued successfully that the persons in the Inn were friends simply in for a meal.[[107]](#footnote-107)

However, one recreational enjoyment that seems to have attracted a constantly popular following and approval from all sectors of the community was music, often accompanied by dancing. It appears that it was enjoyed both proactively and passively and was utilised by many licensees to promote their establishments. The nature of what was provided ranged from that of the Brass Band concert to what may be generically termed the ’Concert Hall,’ though the nature of these presentations should not be thought of as comparing with the large ‘palaces of entertainment’ that personified the Music Hall that would emerge later. It might be justified to suppose that, for many inns and taverns the format might well have been the ‘free-and-easy’ though there is no little to support this. But, thanks to ‘Quiz’[[108]](#footnote-108) of the Aston News there is a description of such an event that was certainly enacted within the Manor.

Stating, that whilst in Birmingham it was necessary for a publican to obtain a license to be able to provide musical entertainment within the Manor this rule did not apply. The writer goes on to describe the tobacco smoke filled room where the concert was to be held. It is not, he states: “for the better class of people that the entertainment is provided for, but rather for those artisans who find little pleasure in their own home.” As far as the evenings entertainment is concerned, despite the heat of the room those who are attending crowd in to hear: “any casual artist who cares to put in an appearance and, in return for a pot of ale give the company the benefit of his vocal or instrumental abilities”. ‘Quiz’, in adopting a moralist stance, stated, that, for the sake of his readers, he actually attended, on the Saturday an Aston Manor inn finding:

“the whole of the windows thrown open and the chairman, who sat at the head of the table, hammer in hand, in a state of perspiration, which no doubt was as beneficial to him as a Turkish Bath. The chairman was a man of no small importance, either in stature of estimation of himself. His portly chest was hidden behind a dress white shirt, the centre of which was adorned with an alleged jewel, the glitter of which ‘jewel’ justified the suspicion that it was well backed up with quicksilver.”

In regards to the actual entertainers he stated that he was not surprised that the artists, both male and female took freely of the beer that was readily available. After order had been called for the chairman he announced to the audience that Mr. - would render the well known tune ‘Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay’. The audience, being urged to join in on the choruses do so, roaring it whenever it was due. The evening continues in this fashion, with anyone who wished to entertain being allowed to participate, and upon the chairman’s permission, doing so. Popular music hall songs, like ‘The Old Kent Road’ and jingoistic tunes such as ‘Three Cheers For The Old Red White and Blue’ were heartily sung by all, but not, according to the writer in a manner which would have allowed for the:

“approval of any Sunday School teacher or member of the Purity Society. The louder the chorus, the more vulgar the patter, and the more suggestive the words the more enthusiastic was the reception of them.”

In conclusion and clearly dismissive both of this form of entertainment and of the nature of the people who attended the writer concluded that:

“I will not say anymore than those who desire to obtain a splitting headache and an utter contempt for the tastes of some of the lower and middle classes ought do better than spend an evening at one of the many free-and-easies which held in our neighbourhood.”[[109]](#footnote-109)

Though, as stated it is not possible to identify which inn or tavern this description relates to it is highly likely that this sort of night was enacted in more than one establishment. The Gunmakers Arms, for example certainly presented concerts, providing for, at times, reportedly large audiences.[[110]](#footnote-110) Whether these were of the ‘free and easy’ nature however is not known but it would seem that by the end of our period the tavern was considered sufficiently respectable enough to have, in 1911 attracted the London and Provincial Dividing Society to hold a social function at the venue, providing for members a concert night.[[111]](#footnote-111) Another hostelry, The White Swan Inn also held, up to the late 1880’s a variety of musical evenings.[[112]](#footnote-112) One public house however, whilst serving up entertainment chose to stand apart somewhat from the usual, this being the Bell Inn of Lozells. This particular venue, somewhat unusually chose to provide, what were termed ‘Sacred Concerts’, which presented what, in effect were choir works sung by local singers.[[113]](#footnote-113)Though it is clearly impossible to identify all those premises that did present these informal sing-songs it has to be supposed that many must have, if only simply for the additional finance that they generated.

Of particular interest in regards to the provision of music was The Church Inn, Lichfield Road. This venue, it would seem provided, possibly for the first time in the area, under the auspices of a Mr. Neal, a programme of music and singing, more it seems in tune with a music hall presentation. In one of his earliest presentations he included the rendering of ‘Negro Songs’, whilst a local band, the Royal Albert Brass Band provided the accompanying music for this and the dancing that followed, all for an entrance fee of 6d.[[114]](#footnote-114) Perhaps as a means of both promoting itself and the venue prior to the event the band are recorded as having smartly marched from Aston Cross to the venue. Indeed, it appears that a rendition of ‘Negro songs’ was well-liked, for in September of the same year an artist named Waller was engaged to present the same kind of music at the venue.[[115]](#footnote-115)

This sort of entertainment appears to have retained its popularity for some years for in 1884 the establishment was still presenting very similar type of attractions. On this occasion it was the celebrated ‘Negro’ comedians Parks and Mace who were contracted to entertain the clientele.[[116]](#footnote-116) Additionally, perhaps indicating that the establishment has attained a reputation for respectability it actually organised and presented, some months earlier an event entitled ‘The Modern Masons Concert,’[[117]](#footnote-117) providing another indication of the popularity of Aston Manor with these sort of organisations.

Mr. Neal also, and here is an example which clearly indicates the versatility of the public house within the recreational life of the Manor, provided a venue within which local charity could be administered. This gentleman allowed his establishment to be the site for many charitable occasions, once when upwards of 200 children were encamped in the concert hall and had supplied to them currant cakes and tea, undoubtedly a rare treat.[[118]](#footnote-118) Indeed such was the standing of this establishment that it drew the comment:

“It is a concert hall worthy of the name. Mr. James Neal, proprietor of the establishment has often a collection of ‘all sorts’ visiting his establishment which is capable of holding some hundreds of people. The magistrates have complemented him on assisting the constabulary to bring fools to their senses.”[[119]](#footnote-119)

This establishment, throughout the period up to at least 1890 continued to sustain a constant stream of variety presentations, which appear to have increasingly moved closer to what we might imagine the music hall to be. One such presentation, in 1882 presented the following, not insubstantial Bill of fare:

Brothers Jakeman, charismatic vocalist

Mr. T. Beck, motto tenor

Mr. J. Williams, silver toned tenor

Mrs. Jackson, the people’s favourite

Bosco Evans, the pattering comique

Violin Mr. W. Jackson

Piano and Harmonium, Mr. P. Hopkin

Chairman Mr. J. Linforth

All accompanied with a grand display of ‘dissolving views.’[[120]](#footnote-120)

The Church Inn was however certainly not alone within the area in providing such a type of entertainment for its customers.

The Holte Hotel for example throughout the period of 1870-1911 presented: ‘miscellaneous concerts of vocal and instrumental music.’ These were of various natures but perhaps can be typified by those that took place between 1890 and 1900. It appears, according to the local newspapers Saturdays and Mondays were often illuminated by the presence of a ‘leading act’. One of these, which appeared on a regular basis seem to have employed the name ‘The Lion Minstrels.’ That these performers should choose to employ the name ‘Lion’ perhaps could well relate to a jingoistic approach to being English. However, it might also suggest that they were local in origin. For the Lion was, and indeed still is the proud emblem of Aston Villa FC, suggesting that the adoption of this name may have signified a pride in their having a connection with Aston Manor.[[121]](#footnote-121) This particular establishment was also, perhaps reflecting the standing of the Hotel within the Manor the location from around 1878 until the mid 1880s of an ‘Annual Ball’. This event, which it must be presumed was primarily attended by the local luminaries was held just after the Christmas period and often featured the music of the establishments very own band, The Holte Quadrille Band.[[122]](#footnote-122)



The Holte Hotel[[123]](#footnote-123)

Another nearby location, The Holte Arms, under the ownership of a Mr. Richards was also able, on many occasions to offer the local population what it described as ‘select harmonic meetings’ where ‘the company of gentlemen is especially invited’.[[124]](#footnote-124) It is also recorded that The Garrick Amateur Dramatic Society performed the comedy ‘Married Life’ at the site. Though seemingly from outside of Aston Manor they are recorded as have being in existence for some three years and that the members were all ‘local amateurs.’[[125]](#footnote-125) Indeed so popular was music in this location that towards the end of our period of interest an ‘Harmonic Society’ was formed, meeting regularly on Saturday, Sunday and Mondays.[[126]](#footnote-126) It is not recorded as to how long this society existed though it would seem that it enjoyed at least two years.

It would certainly appear dancing was also extremely popular, an attraction that without doubt seems to have inspired several landlords to provide it as an inducement to would-be customers. Certainly from the early 1870’s The Waterworks Tavern offered, under the proprietorship of Mr. John Wilson the opportunity for its enjoyment every Saturday and Monday evening, with no admission charge whilst George Wagner’s Wine and Spirit Vaults[[127]](#footnote-127)at Aston Cross offered similar, with the stated advantage of being able to obtain ‘cigars of the finest brands’.[[128]](#footnote-128) There is, sadly no indication as how long these establishments presented such opportunities as they did not, perhaps as a reflection of a diminishing trade, after around 1880 choose to advertise within the pages of the local press. There is however no reason not to believe that they did continue to provide some form of recreational opportunity within the same vein for some years after this date.

The availability of musical entertainment however, within one particular public house had a somewhat humorous downside. For, to be able to gain the expertise that was required to provide an acceptably high standard of performance naturally required practice and, for some residents of Aston Manor this must have been somewhat wearing:

“The Aston Waits. It is no news to our readers to say that during the last three weeks the air of Aston has been filled with excellent music during the long hours of the night and sometimes into the small hours of the morning by the Rose and Crown Band. The Company has been practising for the best part of four months at Mr. G. Browns AlbionInn*,* Aston Road. Those disturbed during their sleeping hours will give thanks for the arrival of Christmas.”[[129]](#footnote-129)

In recognising the attraction of music as a means by which he could increase his clientele the licensee of The Station Innchose to advertise for alto, tenors and basses so as to promote a ‘Glee Club Union.’[[130]](#footnote-130) This traditional English concept, involving a choir, historically comprised of men but sometimes included women specialised in singing short songs. Whether or not this initiative included female participation is not however recorded, this club meeting every Thursday, perhaps providing a guarantee of custom during a day when trade was probably slack.[[131]](#footnote-131) Additionally there does appear to have been another venue in the area which also formed a similar club, this one being the Old Boys Glee Club, in The Britannia Inn on Lichfield Road. Here, in 1902 it is recorded that 70 members with wives and friends enjoyed a selection from Mozart followed by a gentleman who glorified under the name of ‘Master Fred,’ magician.[[132]](#footnote-132) However there are no other reports of such activity in regards to these two public houses, perhaps because, on these occasions decorum did not make as much profit as expected!!

This same aim was perhaps behind the proprietor of The Victoria Cross, who, not only provided concerts at his establishment but also the opportunity for aspiring songsters to perform, in what might be considered a talent contest, for the prize of a silver medal for the winner.[[133]](#footnote-133) Perhaps in an effort to lift his establishment’s social standing on occasions the landlord presented what may be considered rather up-market evenings, one such occasion being in 1886 when, under the banner of a ‘Grand Musical Evening’ he provided Mr. J. H. Stallard, late of the Carla Rosa Opera Company as his star attraction![[134]](#footnote-134)

However, if the local press is to be believed this sort of recreational opportunity that was being offered by the public houses of the Manor was, by 1884 certainly declining, though as already indicated some establishments did continue to provide such entertainment right up to 1911. Indeed such as The Church Inn certainly continued to present concerts whilst The Vine*,* up to 1911 frequently held, what were advertised as ‘Smoking Concerts’.[[135]](#footnote-135)



The Vine Inn[[136]](#footnote-136)

In regards to this particular establishment there are references to indicate that it had a considerable history in providing the opportunity to ‘trip the light fantastic’. It is recorded that, as early as 1876 a platform was erected, allowing the landlords customers the opportunity to dance, for which the proprietor charged 3d. During the latter years of our period these particular events were, often as not, as exampled by one held in March 1911 for the ‘benefit of particular individuals’, as, in this case for a Mr. W. H. Sutton of The Electric and Ordinance Accessories Co. Ltd.[[137]](#footnote-137) Additionally this venue held Sunday Concerts which were presented up to the turn of the century and were also seemingly well attended.[[138]](#footnote-138)

There were, of course, as indicated in appendix ii many other public houses within the area of Aston Manor. Two of these, The Crown Inn and The Castle Inn both held musical evenings but it appears not on a particularly regular basis. Both appear to have made presentations up as late as 1894 but after this year they do not seem to have offered any similar entertainment.*[[139]](#footnote-139)* It would appear that many of the others that have not been indicated either a) simply did not provide such entertainment; b) did, but chose not to advertise within the local press or c) the local press did not report on their activities. Certainly if the advertisements that were placed within the pages of the local press are taken as an indicator, by the early 1890s it would seem that the vast majority of them had effectively ceased to offer s organised entertainment. Indeed by the later years of the decade what was on offer was limited to the core function, of providing ales and beers. Indeed, in the case of The Red Lion its ‘attraction’ was listed simply as being the availability of ‘Home Brewed Beers,’[[140]](#footnote-140) whilst one of the local newspapers, The Aston Times, from 1880 onwards in fact only provided advertisements on a regular basis in regards to The Church Inn*.* Such, it seems had been the change in the nature of entertainment provided by many of the inn and taverns of the area that one, The Avenue Hotel was proud to advertise the attractions of the house as being ‘Dinners, Teas and Suppers.’[[141]](#footnote-141)

Happily, as is often the case there is always the ‘odd-man out’, in this case The White Horse Tavern, Victoria Road. Already well known as a site for recreational opportunity the 1880‘s witnessed the landlord pursuing a policy of unusual attractions to tempt customers into his establishment. Indeed the local press, describing the venue as a ‘thriving business’ advised its readers that a visit to Mr. Edward’s enterprise as a ‘must for anyone visiting Aston,’ especially to see:

“the large number of curiosities at this house, including the celebrated hermit.”[[142]](#footnote-142)

This advice was again repeated some months later which certainly indicates that Mr. G. H. Edwards the proprietor had adopted a long term policy in regards to entertainment:

“Everyone should pay a visit to the ‘retreat’ at The White Horse, Victoria Road where they can be regaled with refreshments of the best quality and can be entertained in a manner worthy of any establishment of superior pretensions.”[[143]](#footnote-143)

On another occasion he provided what was termed a ‘plethora’ of flowers whilst in the August of 1885, perhaps as a response to the advice stated he surpassed himself. Advertising in the Birmingham and Aston Chronicle he offered his customers the opportunity to view ‘Curiosities from Zululand’, ‘Sea Views’ and an ‘English Village’! Sadly no explanation is available to explain exactly what was offered in regards to two of the items. However one possible clarification as to the Zulu presentation might be that it was in celebration of the action of the men of the 2nd Warwickshire Regiment in the Zulu Wars which included the famous defence of Rorkes Drift which had been fought only some six years earlier, for which, mistakenly the South Wales Borderers Regiment are now credited.[[144]](#footnote-144) Perhaps believing that this was the correct policy to ensure financial success this imaginative proprietor continued to present unusual offerings, certainly up to end of the decade. If the establishment sustained such attractions after this time it is not possible to verify, for as stated previously this, as with many other licensed establishments at this time provided little or no advertising within the local press.

Indeed even the most superior of local hostelries, The Holte Hotel whilst still presenting, as already indicated musical entertainment would, in the words of the press fail to ‘draw an attendance as good as the excellence of the programme,’ to one presentation, perhaps providing a clear indication that this particular function of the licensed houses of Aston Manor was in clear decline.[[145]](#footnote-145) Those which were presented, from 1890 onwards were essentially light operatic in nature and featured renditions of favourite songs such as ‘Tit Willow.’[[146]](#footnote-146)

The discussion has so far attempted, however simplistically to draw attention to the recreational value of the many Inns and Taverns of the Manor. However, it should be mentioned that one particular establishment, which has, over the years come to perhaps personify the public house of Aston has not been referred to, The Barton Arms which is situated on the junction of High Street and Potters Lane. Though active in a previous form as a licensed establishment since 1840 it does not appear to have contributed to the topics that have been considered. However, as a contributor to the recreational landscape of the area it is of particular relevance to the time that followed our period of interest.

This decline that has been highlighted should not, however be considered as a sign that the type of entertainment indicated ceased. Music and dancing, albeit in a somewhat more refined form throughout our period of interest was still presented via the school and church hall. As the public house declined as a musical venue these locations continued to prosper, providing, as they did, a very often more dignified and respectable alternative. It would seem that, to a certain extent the many inns and taverns of Aston Manor had fallen prey to the Music Hall, with its more boisterous but better organized atmosphere, though it has to be remembered that such a facility did not appear in Aston Manor until the early 1890s. The presence of many well built and sophisticated Halls within neighbouring Birmingham must surely have had an effect on the local inns and taverns of the Manor. Those individuals who performed and prospered within these small scale venues, be they amateur or at best semi-professional artistes had simply relocated or had been driven off stage by the ever increasingly professional entertainers that emerged to appear at the many Halls that sprang up during this period. The simple reality was that many public houses had altered in accordance with changing tastes that, as will be shown later in this work indicates a fundamental shift in the type of recreational opportunity that was desired by the mass of the people. Yet as important as the public house was it should not be forgotten that the church also maintained a presence that was always a factor within the development of recreation. It was a resilient force which attempted to, and indeed succeeded in providing for an alternative. Additionally, alongside the religious community was the school. Though initially intimately linked to the place of worship it became, as the years passed an ever more confident and separate provider of alternatives to the inns, taverns, and indeed churches of Aston Manor. It is to these that the discussion now turns.

1. N. Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain, 1750-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, chp 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. J. M. Golby & A. W. Purdue, *The Civilisation of The Crowd: Popular Culture in England 1750-1900,* England: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1999, chp 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 1st January, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 25th December, 1886. Unfortunately the microfilm that

   this edition of the newspaper was recorded on has suffered damage and the months of

   January and February have been eradicated. It was certainly during this period that the report

   of sentencing was published. None of the other local newspapers appear to have recorded the

   verdicts. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. J. M. Golby & A. W. Purdue, *The Civilisation of The Crowd: Popular Culture in England 1750-1900,* England: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1999, pp36. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 23rd November, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Kelly’s Directories of Birmingham*, London: Kelly & Co., Printers, 1841-1911. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle* 23rd October, 1875. The figure quoted is for 1873.

   Given that the population of the Manor continued to expand it would be reasonable to believe that the density remained high as the area retained the same acreage. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 23rd November 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 6th November, 1875. See Chp 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The complete survey was published as C. J. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People,*

    17 volumes London: Macmillan,1902-1903. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. C. Graham, ‘Beer and the Temperance Problem’, in *Contemporary Review*,

    Oxford: The Contemporary Review Company, 30th, June, 1877, p72. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. J. Kidd, ‘Temperance and Its Boundaries’, *The Contemporary Review*,

    Oxford: The Contemporary Review Company, 34, January, 1879, p357. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. C. Walker, ‘The Veto Bill’, in *The Fortnightly Review,* England:

    Oxford: The Fortnightly Review, 1883, 59, May, 1883, p737. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Aston News,* 1st August, 1891. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 16th October, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* March 25th, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Aston News*, 10th June 1905. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *The Times of London,* 9th April, 1896. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Birmingham & Aston Chronicle*, 26th January, 1895. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Birmingham & Aston Chronicle,* 10th December, 1892. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Aston Observer and Handsworth Times* 3rd April, 1880. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Aston Observer and Handsworth Times* 10th April, 1880. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Aston Times,* 30th December, 1893. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Aston News*, 29th September, 1896. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 6th November, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The modern image of Britannia is accepted as being that of Frances Teresa Stuart,

    Duchess of Richmond and Lennox. It is she who appeared on British coins up to the time of decimalisation. For a brief account the circumstances that led to her to pose for Philippe Roettier on the request of Charles II see F. Linnane, *The Lives of The English Rakes,* London: Portrait, 2006, pp78-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. For an example of an advertisement for this particular public house see *The Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 27th November, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 15th February, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Aston Observer and Handsworth Times* 13th September 1879 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 30th September, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 13th November, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. *Aston News*, 4th January, 1911. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *Aston Observer and Handsworth Times*, 13th March 1880. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. J. M. Golby & A. W. Purdue, *The Civilisation of The Crowd: Popular Culture in England 1750-1900,* England: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1999, chp.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *Aston Observer and Handsworth Times* 24th January 1880 *Aston Observer and Handsworth Times* 31st January, 1880 *Aston Observer and Handsworth Times* 14th February, 1880. *Aston Observer and Handsworth Times* 27th March, 1880. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 4th July, 1885. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 26th January, 1895 and *Aston News*, 14th January, 1911. Within this latter issue it is stated that the Federation had held 32 annual dinners. Though

    there is no indication that this organisation only used one particular venue it seems that the

    Vine Inn was particularly utilised. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. It appears that this society meet monthly during the period stated, see *Aston Observer and Handsworth Times* for reports of the meetings. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Aston Times* 30th December, 1893. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 26th June, 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 26th June, 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 9th February, 1895. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. *Aston News,* 8th April, 1911. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *Aston News*, 6th May, 1911. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. *Aston News*, 6th May, 1911. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 11th December, 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. *Aston News*, 3rd November, 1900. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. In 1810, the Oddfellows in Manchester area became dissatisfied with the way the Grand United Order was being run and formed an independent Order with the title 'Manchester Unity'. This organisation is now referred to as "The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (Manchester Unity)", or more simply, "The Manchester Unity Order of Odd Fellows. (MUOOF). According to Manchester Unity literature: "With their improved organisation and rules, they encouraged many other lodges across the country to leave the old Grand United Order and join the Independent Order under the 'Manchester Compliance'. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. *Aston & Birmingham Chronicle,* 26th February, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 13th May, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle* 23rd June, 1977. In this paper’s report the Order is stated

    to have over 500,00 members nationwide with assets of some £50,000. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 13th January, 1877. It would appear that this association

    had a policy of changing its meeting place to accommodate as many of its members venues

    as possible. On 13th September, 1879 for example it met at The Holte Hotel, see *Aston*

    *Observer and Handsworth Times* issue for this day [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. *Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, Victoria Lodge No. 1368, 1893,* Programmes and

    posters of entertainments 1884-1895, Aston Lower Grounds, Accession No. 634492. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. *Aston Times*, 31st August, 1895 and *Aston News*, 30th January, 1909. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. *Aston News*, 2nd February, 1907. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. *Aston News*, 18th January, 1902. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. *Aston News*, 13th February, 1909. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 6th October, 1888. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. *Aston News*, 21st Niovember, 1908. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 6th January, 1877. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 11th December, 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 4th December, 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 4th February, 1888, 16th October and

    27th November, 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *Aston News*, 11th October, 1902. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 24th March 1977. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 23rd June 1877 [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. *Aston Times*, 14th September, 1895. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. According to a report from the *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 23rd February, 1889 this

    Inn was the headquarters for the No. 33 Jubilee Lodge, Grand Surrey Banner. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 2nd October, 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 23rd February, 1889. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. *Aston News*, 2nd March, 1907. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. *Aston News*, 17th December, 1910. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 18th March, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 1st April, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreation in English Society 1700-1850,* Cambridge: Cambridge Univerity Press, 1973, p143. During the late [eighteenth](file:///C:\wiki\18th_century) and [nineteenth](file:///C:\wiki\19th_century) centuries, the sport became a fixture at fairs - developing from wagers on foot races By the end of the 18th century, and especially with the growth of the popular press, feats of foot travel over great distances gained attention, and were labelled "Pedestrianism". [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. W. Showell, *Showell’s Dictionary of Birmingham,* England: Walter Showell & Sons, 1885. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. *Birmingham Faces and Places*, p3. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. This tavern, had, until the opening of an athletics track on the ALG the only such facility in the area of Aston Manor, see W. Showell, *The Directory of Birmingham,* England: Walter

    Showell & Sons, 1885. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. *Birmingham Daily Post,* 11th September, 1871. For details of other events see *Birmingham*

    *and Aston Chronicle*, 9th March, and 30th March, 1878. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 23rd October, 1975. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 8th July, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 19th February, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. *Aston News and East Birmingham News*, 28th July, 1900. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. W. Showell, *Showells Dictionary of Birmingham,* England: Walter Showell & Sons, 1885. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 19th May, 1877. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. *Aston and Handsworth Observer*, 17th July, 1880. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. *Aston and Handsworth Observer,* 31st July, 1880. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Aston News, 8th December, 1900. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Aston News, 22nd December, 1906. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 23rd October,1875. Rules of the Game. Any number of

    players line up a fixed distance away from a wall or if in street the gutter. The players each

    take a coin of common denomination and take turns tossing them towards the wall. The

    objective is to toss the coins such that they land as close to the wall as possible. If a coin hits

    another coin this is known as 'Jingle', making all shots must be re-taken. The winner

    collecting all the losing players' coins from the ground. If a coin hits another coin this is

    known as 'Jingle', making all shots must be re-taken. Rolling the coin is forbidden. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. *Aston & Birmingham Chronicle*, 14th March, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. *Birmingham Daily Mail,* 1899 editorial. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. *Birmingham and Aston Chroni*cle, 30th January, 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. The first Pools Coupon was introduced by Littlewoods in 1923, though there was, prior to

    this a simplified guess the score competition included in many papers nationally, including

    the *Sports Argus* though not in any of the other papers that covered the Aston Manor area*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 5th January, 1884. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Midland Athlete, 17th April, 1880. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. It was not until May 1961 the Betting Shops became legal under the Betting and Gaming

    Act. For a social history of gambling see C. Chinn, *Better Betting With A Decent Feller –*

    *A Social History of Bookmaking,* London: Aurum Press, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. *Aston News*, 25th February, 1911. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. *Aston News*, 13th October, 1900. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. *Aston News*, 13th October, 1900. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. *Aston Observer and Handsworth Times*,17th July, 1880. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 16th October, 1875. This is worth as 2008, in regards to Retail Price Index £351 see *www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/result* [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 23rd October, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 19th January, 1895. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 19th May, 1894. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 12th August, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. See Chapter 4, p146 for another mention of this author. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. *Aston News*, 30th July, 1892. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. *Birmingham and Aston Chron*icle, 4th December, 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. *Aston News*, 4th January, 1911. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 5th December, 1875. The White Swan often ran Glee Party’s whilst the Waterworks Tavern sometimes, but not regularly dancing. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 25th February, 1888. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 8th April, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 16th September, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 19th January, 1984. It is quite likely that these

     ‘Negro’ acts were in fact ‘blacked up’ artists. The practice of white performers mascarading as Negro entertainers was a well established practice during the Victorian period. This practice retained a place even up to the 1960’s with the BBC show ‘The Black and White Minstrels’. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 13th January, 1877. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 27th November, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 30th September, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 7th January, 1882. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. *Aston Times*, 25th May, 1895.

     Given the Scottish connection in regards to Aston Villa the Lion might be thought of as

     relating to that nation rather than to England. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 25th January, 1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. V. J. Price, *Yesterday and Today: Aston Remembered,* Warwickshire: Brewin Books, 1989, p69. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. For an example of an advertisement for the establishment see *Birmingham and Aston*

     *Chronicle*, 6th May, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 30th October, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. *Aston Times*, 27th January, 1894. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. This establishment would appear not to have been a public house in the accepted tradition.

     It seems, rather to have been a location where tobacco, beer and spirits could be purchased

     with additional recreational facilities. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 6th November, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 25th December, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 6th May, 1876. Glee in this context does not refer to the mood of the music or its singers, but to a specific form of English seventeenth and eighteenth century part song, the Glee. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 1st April, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. *Aston News*, 15th February, 1902. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. *Aston Times,* 7th September, 1895 [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 27th June, 1886.The original Royal Carl Rosa Company was established in 1873 and closed in 1960. In 1998 it was relaunched as The Carl Rosa Company, a touring light opera company. It has become Britain's only professional touring company dedicated to keeping the heritage of Gilbert & Sullivan alive. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. *Aston Times,* 16th December, 1893. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. J. Price, *Aston Remembered: Yesterday and Today,* Warwickshire: Brewin Books, 1989, p71. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. *Aston News,*18th March, 1911.These ‘Benefit Nights’ were held to raise money for the individual when they were either retiring or in need of financial assistance. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. *Aston Times,* 10th December, 1893. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. *Aston Times,* 1st and 6th January, 1894. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. *Aston Times* , 24th May, 1884. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. *Aston Times* , 24th May, 1884. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 21st March, 1885. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 1st August, 1885. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*. 1st August, 1885.Though the noted film of the Battle of Rorkes Drift ‘Zulu’ stated that the men involved were from the South Wales Borderers Regiment, at the time of the battle the regiment that took part was the 24th of Foot, 2nd Warwickshire Regiment. The 24th did not change its name to the South Wales Borderers

     until 1881. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. *Aston News*, 19th November, 1892. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. *Aston News*, 12th September, 1891. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)