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*Anatomy of a neighbourhood
suburban change in Old Trafford
1860 - 1905
Volume 1*

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Chapter 3 Cultural change

Chapter 2 has given us some insight into the social composition of Old Trafford throughout the forty five year period and has shown the extent to which this composition had changed by 1905.

This chapter aims to go beyond this and examine the wider aspect of cultural change in the area. The chapter will be divided into two parts. The first will consider housing style, design and size in an effort to see how far such factors reflected the social status of its inhabitants. The second will assess Old Trafford in the light of its leisure facilities and will elucidate the extent to which the area was a cultural as well as a residential haven for the affluent. It will also show how far the situation had changed by the turn of the century.

Part 1 Housing

Throughout the course of this study, references have been made to the varying residential zones within our sample area of Old Trafford. Let us now again take up this theme and develop it further by examining these zones in relation to housing size, style and design. As already stated, this will show how far the different types of dwellings in the neighbourhood reflected the different socio-economic status of individuals living there.

We are indebted to the work of historians such as Martin Gaskell¹ and Stephan Muthesius² who have examined this theme in detail. Gaskell, for instance, has studied housing built for the middle class, particularly the lower middle class, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He identifies a number of trends in the construction of such accommodation: firstly, the suburbs were primarily created for the wealthy middle classes to enjoy a spacious, salubrious environment, which would provide them with the privacy they required.³ Secondly, by the later part of the nineteenth century, these well-established

suburbs had become built up fairly rapidly and enveloped by smaller properties constructed to a lower standard and inhabited by the lower middle classes.⁴ Thirdly, as time progressed, many of the original wealthy elite moved out, fearing the deterioration of the suburb, and the remaining land was utilised for further residential development of lower middle class and working class housing.⁵ Fourthly, by 1900, the area's status had sunk to the level of the lowest class and consequently building standards were not as high.⁶



Let us now relate Gaskell's claims to the experience of suburban growth in Old Trafford. Indeed, as we have seen, Old Trafford was initially developed during the 1830s and 1840s as the haven for a wealthy middle class elite who could enjoy the extensive sylvan surroundings of the area, but as time progressed, the district had become swallowed up by the development of lower class housing in the Bold Street area in the late 1840s and 1850s, Barratt Street and Duke Street vicinities during the 1870s and the Blackburn Street area in the 1890s. Thus, we can see similar pace and style development to that described by Gaskell.

However, we find ourselves at variance with him regarding the type and quality of housing built in the latter part of the Victorian era, and the reaction of the middle classes to developments occurring within their midst. Old Trafford – even up to the 1900s, remained the dwelling place for a significant number of affluent middle class individuals. For instance, large villas and terraces were still being built along Stretford Road and Chorlton Road up to the 1890s; from the 1870s to the turn of the century similar, though slightly smaller, middle class housing was being developed along thoroughfares such as Clifton Street, Shrewsbury Street, Stamford Street and Henrietta Street; and the new residential quarter built during the late 1890s and early 1900s adjacent to Hullard Park saw the construction of large, ostentatious terraces for the middle class population moving into the area. Contrary to Gaskell's observations, Old Trafford, up to the turn of the century, continued to play host to a significant number of affluent individuals who sought residence in large, well-built, attractive dwellings. This also suggests to us that the middle classes were willing to reside alongside those from the lower classes, a fact that also tends to refute Gaskell's argument.



Chorlton Road

However, as this study has shown, by 1900 this middle class professional and entrepreneurial elite comprised less than 30% of the total population. The remaining 70% were from the lower middle classes and working classes who inhabited smaller houses either on the fringe of the neighbourhood or in residential pockets nestling between the distinctly middle class terraces.