

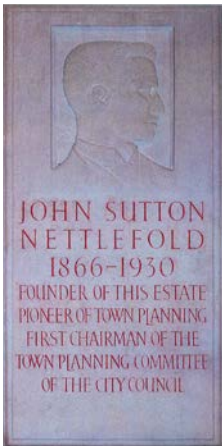
# Moor Pool Estate

## A Self Guided Trail



Registered charity no. 1148252

This trail of the Moor Pool Estate is designed to accompany and provide additional information to the 6 panels positioned around the Estate indicated on the accompanying map.



Trail time approximately 1 hour 15 minutes

## Introduction



The Moor Pool Estate is a Garden Suburb and low-density housing scheme founded by John Sutton Nettlefold (1866-1930) between 1907 and 1912 consisting of around 500 houses built across 54 acres and interspersed with green spaces.

Now a designated Conservation Area it remains a fine example of a Garden Suburb, built to provide affordable housing in a semi-rural environment.

## Further Information

### Books

English Heritage  
*Garden Cities*

Ewart G. Culpin  
*The Garden City  
Movement Up-to-date*  
(The Garden Cities & Town  
Planning Association, 1913)

Steve Beauchamp  
*Played in Birmingham*

Robert A.M. Stern  
*Paradise Planned: the Garden Suburb  
and the Modern City*

Harborne Tenants Prospectus  
*Moor Pool News*

### Websites

Moor Pool Heritage Trust:  
[www.moorpoolheritagetrust.org.uk](http://www.moorpoolheritagetrust.org.uk)

Moor Pool Residents  
Association:  
[www.moorpool.com](http://www.moorpool.com)



Moor Pool Hall, 37 The Circle, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9DY

Telephone: 0121 426 2908

@MoorPoolHT

Registered charity no. 1148252 Photography: [angelayatesphotography.com](http://angelayatesphotography.com)



Moor Pool Hall , 1912



Start at **Panel 1**, located at **The Circle**, across the road from **Park Edge**, along the side of **Moor Pool Hall**.

### Moor Pool Hall

Moor Pool Hall was formally opened on 5th November 1910. Standing at The Circle, along with shops and the Moor Pool Estate office, this group of buildings formed the communal heart of the Estate. Originally social activities at the Hall included dances, weddings, concerts, drama performances and lectures as well as clubs such as a gymnastics club and music society.

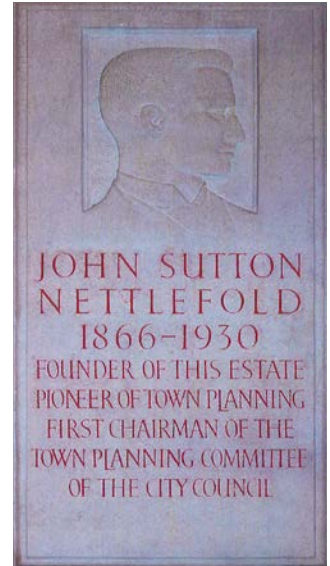
As with all the houses at Moor Pool, high quality materials were used in the building of the Hall, including woodblock pine flooring and maple floors and exterior lime render roughcast (and locally sourced bricks).

Beneath Moor Pool Hall is the original Edwardian Skittle Alley, believed to be the last surviving dual configuration left in the country with a flat and rounded alley placed side-by-side.

The Moor Pool Skittle Club play with their original woods and bowls made of lignum vitae. At one time there were windows in the Skittle Alley which were bricked up at a later date (The photograph above shows these lower windows still intact.) Next to the Skittle Alley is the Lower Hall, once known as the Gymnasium and later used for social functions and home to the Rifle Club since the 1970's.

In the Main Hall there is a commemorative plaque to the founder of the Estate, John Sutton Nettlefold. He was the first Chairman of Birmingham's Town planning Committee and instrumental in the development of the 1909 Town Planning Act. He advocated a policy of building Garden Suburbs on the outskirts of cities to remedy housing problems.

Nettlefold's vision was inspired by the Garden City movement pioneered by Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) who set out a utopian ideal of a 'Garden City' which combined the benefits of both the countryside and the town to create an ideal place for people to live. Examples of Garden Cities include Letchworth Garden City (founded 1903) and Welwyn Garden City (founded 1920). Howard was inspired by the Model Village of Bournville, created by George Cadbury for his workers near his chocolate factory. While Garden Cities had infrastructure including places to work, Garden Suburbs were on the outskirts of towns, with good links to transport for the daily commute to access places of work.



Memorial plaque (in Moor Pool Hall) to founder John Sutton Nettlefold

Birmingham was granted City status by Queen Victoria in 1889 and Nettlefold's vision for Moor Pool was to build a Garden Suburb near the city which would include a community of homes, for all classes of society run on a joint-ownership basis.



Moor Pool Gymnastics Club, 1910 (The Circle)



To reach **Panel 2** walk around **The Circle** until you are at the junction with **Wentworth Gate**, overlooking the **Tennis Courts** and the back of **Moor Pool Hall**.



The Circle shops and Moor Pool Hall, 1912

### The Circle Tennis Club and Harborne Tenants Office

The rear elevation of Moor Pool Hall originally included a veranda balcony that overlooked the village green, shown in the first photo on Panel 2. Events held here included children's festivals, performances and maypole dancing.

The green was later turned into grass tennis courts and The Circle Tennis Club formed as one of the two original Tennis Clubs on the Estate, which were one of a variety of sporting facilities provided for residents.

To the left is the original Harborne Tenants Office where the management of the Estate was administered. There was also a Builders' Yard behind the houses on Wentworth Gate, where a team of skilled workers were based and undertook a schedule of routine maintenance and one-off repairs for the Estate.

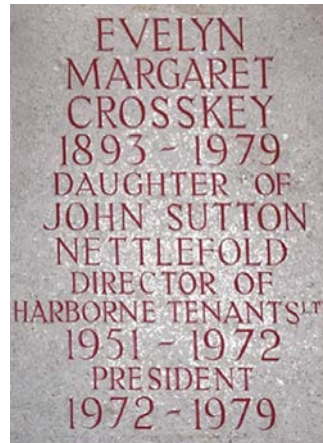
Moor Pool was founded on the principals of egalitarian co-partnership with the intention that residents would gradually buy shares in the company and become co-owners themselves.



Children's Festival, 24th June 1911 on the former Green behind Moor Pool Hall

The Co-partnership management schemes grew alongside the Garden Suburb movement at a time when local authority housing schemes did not yet exist. The pioneer of this movement was Henry Vivian, who founded the national Co-partnership Tenants scheme, which Harborne Tenants was a part of. Vivian founded the Pioneer Co-partnership Suburb,

Ealing Tenants in Brentham (West London) in 1901, which features prominently in the prospectus for Harborne Tenants and was influential in the building of Moor Pool and other Co-partnership Tenant schemes, including local examples such as Leicester Anchor Tenants Ltd., Humberstone Garden Suburb (1907-14) and Bournville Tenants Ltd (1906).



Above the Harborne Tenants office is the Snooker and Billiard Club complete with its original fixtures and fittings, including the fireplace, chalk suspenders, quality slate and mahogany tables. It is another one of the indoor sporting clubs provided to improve social and physical wellbeing of the local community.

Left: Plaque to Evelyn Crosskey (in Moor Pool Hall)

Below: The Circle Tennis Courts and Moor Pool Hall



Continue to walk around The Circle and then turn left onto Carless Avenue. Continue up Carless Avenue until you reach **Panel 3** on the left at The Square.



Moor Pool gardens overlooking the Bowling Green

Moor Pool was built over 54 acres. Almost one fifth of this acreage was reserved as green spaces including gardens, open green spaces, and allotments.

Gardens were designed to be large but not unmanageable, each planted with a fruit tree. Beech hedges, tree lined avenues and grass verges were integral to the design of the Estate. Expert advice was sought from Thomas Humphries, the Curator of the Botanical Gardens as to the choice of trees and their planting, which included thorn, mountain ash, silver birch trees and beech hedges between the gardens. Open planning discouraged the use of gates and walls in order to encourage communal access.

Green spaces were integral to Garden Suburbs and Garden Cities and feature prominently. At Moor Pool every house overlooked green space whether this was allotments, gardens,

open green spaces or the bowling green. The Harborne Tenants' brochure advertised the benefits to the tenant:

*'He gets this house with a small garden attached in a neighbourhood where there is plenty of fresh air; and the house itself is one with some individuality, in which the tenant can take pride, instead of being, as is far too often the case now-a-days, an insignificant unit in a interminable row of jerry-built ugliness.'*



Margaret Grove, 1912  
(looking towards Ravenhurst Road)

### Allotments

The provision of allotments is another feature of Garden Suburbs and was an important part of the design of the Moor Pool Estate. At Moor Pool, instead of being located in a centralised area, the allotments were interspersed between the houses, accessed by interconnecting passages, which adds to the semi-rural character of the Estate and gives every resident the opportunity to have their own allotment. This allowed tenants to grow their own produce and was another means of encouraging outdoor activity in healthy surroundings.

A Horticultural Society was established to encourage residents to work on their allotments and this has continued in today's Allotment Association, Nettlefold Garden Group and Moor Pool in Bloom. In later years some allotments were replaced by garages, and more recently, by housing, but the allotments that continue to be worked today yield a great variety of produce.

There are also a number of Anderson shelters that remain from World War II in the allotment areas across the Estate.



Moor Pool allotments



The next **Panel 4** is located on **Park Edge**. Walk back down to **The Circle** (en route on your left as you head back towards **The Circle** you will see some of the hidden pathways that go to some of the allotments).

When you reach **The Circle** turn left and continue around until you turn left onto **Park Edge**.

Leisure facilities were integral to Moor Pool, to encourage physical and social wellbeing. The Harborne Tenants prospectus advocates:

*'The children of to-day are the citizens of tomorrow, and nothing is of greater national importance than that our future citizens who should grow up in healthier environments with every opportunity for sensible recreation.'*

Provision for recreation is a feature of other Garden Suburbs and Co-partnership Tenants housing schemes. Most Garden Suburbs had tennis courts, bowling green and outdoor communal areas; other examples with such amenities include Bournville, Brentham and Wavertree. The mixture of outdoor and indoor recreational facilities encouraged tenants to stay active throughout the year regardless of the weather, and villages celebrations were encouraged including traditional red-letter days such as May Day.

Originally located on the site of the current Moor Pool Tennis Club, the Bowling Green moved to its current location located between Park Edge and Moor Pool Avenue in 1913, complete with its wooden pavilion which was allegedly carried across the Estate by members of the club. The flagpole was added later. The new Bowling Green has an uneven shape, and has a crown bias making it particularly challenging to bowl on. The location of the Bowling Green was such that even the back of The Circle flats look out onto green space.

There were no public houses on Moor Pool, but leisure provision was well catered for in other ways and the placement of the Estate close to Harborne Village meant that residents were able to easily access the High Street if they felt the need. There was also once a Cycling Club (recently revived), Athletics Club, Gymnastics Club and Social Club among many other societies and clubs for socialising and recreation.



Harborne Tenants' May Day Festivities, 14th May 1910  
at the current location of the Nettlefold Garden



Painting of the Moor Pool Bowling Green

Updates from various clubs and activities were given in the Moor Pool News, a newsletter for tenants on the Estate. In the first volume of the newsletter in 1910 John Sutton Nettlefold stated

*'Harborne Tenants was founded on the principles of Self-help and Co-operation, and the new magazine will, I hope, play a useful part in keeping these ideals before its readers. Harborne Tenants is a Birmingham experiment in co-operative building. It was started with high hopes and good wishes, which its successful career has so far justified, but its continued prosperity must depend on the united efforts of its tenants associating together for their mutual pleasure and advantage.'*



Moor Pool Skittle Alley

Today the Moor Pool Duck newsletter is produced by the Moor Pool Residents' Association.



**Panel 5** is located at the Pool. Cross the road on to the pavement and continue down the road away from The Circle towards Ravenhurst Road.

Turn right onto Ravenhurst Road and follow the boundary of the Pool which is a short way down on the right.

Moor Pool Estate before building work commenced in 1907



Just over 54 acres of land were purchased in 1907 for £15,860. The building to the Moor Pool Estate took place between 1907 and 1912. The site chosen was located around the Moor Pool, a natural pool, albeit initially much larger. In addition to fishing, the pool had historically been used by local people from Harborne Village for washing clothes and bathing.

The location of the Moor Pool Estate was ideally situated so that tenants could easily commute to urban areas by bicycle, bus or train for their employment. Those living on the Estate in the early years were artisans, labourers and middle-class professionals. Although described as 'an Edgbaston for the less wealthy' at the opening ceremony, the rent for houses on Moor Pool ranged from four to eleven shillings per week (equivalent of 20-55 pence) and therefore could not have been afforded by the poorest sections of society.

### Martin and Martin

The chosen architect for the Estate was Martin and Martin, which included William Martin and his son Frederick Martin. William Martin was formerly of leading architects Martin and Chamberlain, but upon J.H. Chamberlain's death in 1883 Frederick Martin became a partner in the practise that would become Martin and Martin. Their works included numerous public buildings, baths, police stations and 41 board schools (including Station Road Board School in Harborne). Some other examples of their work still in existence include Spring Hill Library, St John the Evangelist, and the Telephone Exchange Building in Edmund Street. Frederick Martin meticulously researched ideals in the Arts-and-Crafts movement when designing the Estate and would himself also become a forerunner in Town Planning.

### Moor Pool Houses

Moor Pool Estate was designed with a range of six different houses to choose from, to cater for the social mix who came to live on the Estate. They were made of quality materials, with roughcast render contrasting with the red brick. Traditionally, houses were passed down through direct family associations and it wasn't until the mid-twentieth century that those who did not have family associations could apply to move on to the Estate.

The houses on Moor Pool were built within the natural contours of the land, utilising existing features and gradients. Variation in design was

maximised in stark contrast to the rigid uniformity of typical terraced housing of the period. Similarities in design can be seen at other Garden Suburbs and Garden Cities, such as Letchworth, and Hampstead with characteristic roughcast or pebbledash, contrasting with the brick, tiled roofs and gables. The Arts-and-Crafts Movement was a reaction to the industrial age and encouraged the return of traditional craftsmanship and quality. Many supporters of the movement worked within the same circles. Prominent Arts-and-Crafts Jeweller, Bernard Cuzner was also a resident of the Moor Pool Estate and lived on Carless Avenue.



Carless Avenue



There is a large existing Panel from 2011 labelled on the map as **Panel 6**, located on **Winterbourne Lane**. Walk down to the panel which is located on the right past the allotments.



### Winterbourne Lane – new houses

The new houses are located on an area which was originally allotments. Many of these were replaced with garages which were, in turn cleared to make way for these new houses built in 2011.

The panel shows an early Martin and Martin plan of the Estate and photograph of the cutting of the first sod by John Sutton Nettlefold's wife, Margaret Nettlefold on 26th October 1907. After cutting the sod Margaret said she hoped to 'inaugurate today a community of healthy happy homes on this spot.' Work started on the building of the Estate three days later. The spade and ceremonial box containing the sod are now on display at Winterbourne House, the former home of the Nettlefold family.



To reach Margaret Grove walk back on to Ravenhurst Road turn right then first right.

### Margaret Grove

Margaret Grove was named after the wife of Moor Pool's founder, John Sutton Nettlefold. The houses along Margaret Grove are built in to the natural hillside reflecting the variation in house design and deliberate attempts to ensure that Moor Pool was built into the existing natural landscape. Stone retaining walls rather than hedges feature as a boundary to front the gardens on Margaret Grove adding further variety and character, as did the varying building levels.



To reach the Nettlefold Garden walk all the way down Margaret Grove – the entrance is located on the right. Continue past Nettlefold Garden to reach the corner the corner of Margaret Grove and Moor Pool Avenue.

### Opening of the first house on Moor Pool Avenue

Work on the Estate started in 1907 and the first house to be completed and opened was on Moor Pool Avenue, next to Park Hill Road. The house was officially opened on 24th May 1908 by MP Henry Vivian. After giving a speech John Sutton Nettlefold called upon the architect Mr Martin to present Mr Vivian with a silver key and inspect the house.

### Moor Pool Tennis Club

The Moor Pool Tennis Club is the older of the two tennis clubs that serve the Moor Pool Estate, and is on the original site of the Moor Pool Bowls Club before it moved to its current location near the Pool. The now disused Harborne Railway also ran through this area (the railway bridge is seen on Park Hill Road from the corner of Margaret Grove and Moor Pool Avenue), and is now the Harborne Walkway. While the railway was still in operation, this provided easy transport for residents of the Estate to commute to work in urban areas or industrial works.



To return to the Circle follow Moor Pool Avenue.