Chapter 2

Time to Enjoy

“Too many of us are penned up in close towns and factories for years end to years end and, so that ‘like dumb driven cattle’ our lives merely consist of a dull round of dreary monotony. An ‘out’ at times cannot but add to our health, cheerfulness and knowledge. It is this eternal machine-like labour, without healthful recreation or relaxation, that exercises so debasing an influence upon many of the working population of this country.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Before 1870 it needs to be recognised that, for the vast majority of the population of Aston Manor recreation, as we recognise it today was essentially unknown. This is not to believe however that those of the working class who formed the bulk of the population did not enjoy some form of leisure activity. Nonetheless what was available was, often as not connected to the inn and tavern or local church.

However it was perhaps within the home that recreation can be perceived as being most readily available. For all classes reading, for example was certainly enjoyed,[[2]](#footnote-2) and for many males of the lower orders home brewing. Additionally it could always be supposed that the keeping of poultry and, in some cases swine would also have figured as a hobby, though the truth is more likely to have been that such pastimes were less recreational than acts of self-sufficiency!

Of course many of the population of the Manor could have travelled the short distance to Birmingham and other areas to enjoy what recreational pursuits were on offer there. However these opportunities in regards to the poorer individuals of the area must be considered to have been essentially limited, due to financial restrictions and the lack of available time. Nevertheless one particular recreation that may have been potentially available for those who were willing to travel was swimming. Though Aston Manor did not have public facilities Birmingham had, by 1870 several. Unfortunately, again for the greater percentage of the Manor’s population these public baths was effectively out of reach due to the relatively high entrance fees that were levied. Charging as they did 3d for entrance to the second class baths, first class being 6d they effectively placed their usage beyond the reach of the majority.

Happily this situation had not gone unnoticed, many of the ‘respectable classes’ advocating a change in both attitude and deed to allow the poorer members of society the opportunity to enjoy the recreation. One correspondent, for example writing in a local paper proposed that by the simple measure of reducing the entrance fee by a single penny the enjoyment and benefits gained would be made open to those who otherwise could not be able to partake.[[3]](#footnote-3) It would seem, however that it was several years before the advice was taken.

Given their financial restrictions those of Aston Manor who did wish to enjoy swimming had little option but to resort to the public waters that existed in the area, the canals and pools of the parkland being obvious attractions. This usage of local amenities was however considered, by many to be less than desirable. Writing, in relation to, in this case the Birmingham area the editor of The Birmingham Daily Post, his comments being equally applicable to the Manor stated:

“There is scarcely a roadside pool in which a swarm of naked youths may not be seen dabbling, at any hour between sunrise and sunset, during the hot weather” and “every stream and canal, however frequented the locality is alive with bathers of older growth, whose manners and language have certainly not improved with their years. The police seem powerless to restrain these disgusting exhibitions.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

Of course such recreational pastimes as kicking a ball and going for walks were available and almost certainly enjoyed but the pleasures of even these must have been limited by the time available to enjoy them. For, given the length of the working day and the demands set upon the female via her home obligations it would seem that little time would have been available. The reality, for the vast number of the population of the Manor was that recreational enjoyment was, in general terms extremely limited, and in some case unobtainable.

Yet, from around 1870 recreation began to expand. It would, as our period of interest progressed become a vital element in the existence of the individual, one that it could be said not only defined the individual but also fundamentally influenced the way his or her society developed. Recreational enjoyment became the ‘other’ in the lives of many. In Aston Manor sporting and education along with musically connected amusement became, within the parameters of finance and time, readily available

Nonetheless, before any discussion can take place as to what or how the inhabitants, of whatever class of Aston Manor actually became involved in this expansion it needs to be understood that for them to do so, especially in the case of the working class required time. It matters little whether the activity was performed internally within the home, externally on a playing field or in the bar of a public house there is an essential correlation between the time available and what can be enjoyed by the individual. If indeed we do presume that during our period of interest there was a movement towards greater enjoyment of recreation and this work will indicate that there most certainly was, then we must consider the question of how did the individual obtain the time to participate?

Despite the importance of this point it is not aim of this chapter to provide a detailed, concise history of the national campaign towards a shorter working week. It is, however the intention to indicate, as much as possible that which is relevant to Aston Manor. Nevertheless it has to be recognised that industrially speaking Aston Manor comprised of what might be termed, ‘small scale production units’[[5]](#footnote-5) employing limited number of individuals in specific trades and callings and thus less likely to have any sort of organised union presence.[[6]](#footnote-6) This, it might be recognised would have imposed a strict limitation as to how much direct pressure could be exerted on the employers by the workforce to obtain a reduction of the working week. Given this, it would seem logical to believe that any advances made by the workers of the Manor would have been attained through the actions of the wider movement, including obviously Birmingham. This is, of course not to believe that the individual worker of Aston Manor, in many instances did not become actively involved in the campaign. For, given the Manor’s locality, adjacent to a major centre of industrialisation, it must be believed that many of the Manor who were employed within its myriad of callings, would have, to a greater or lesser extent contributed to the cause. It is therefore perhaps wiser to consider the area within the general framework of the Birmingham campaign and to draw attention to that which was specifically attributable to our region of interest.

It should not, of course be thought that the search for a shorter working week was a campaign that, in regards to those it sought to assist covered all. There were certainly some individuals who did, prior to our period of interest already enjoy the shorter working week, of five and a half days. Birmingham could boast of, for example Cadbury’s who could brag of being the first company to introduce the half-day Saturday whilst members of the Gun trade had enjoyed it since around 1868. There was however, nothing to suggest that any such reduction was enjoyed within the working world of Aston Manor.

However, even for some who had gained the shorter working week and in some instances obtained the half day Saturday, its acquisition was sometimes something of a misnomer. A letter from ‘A Workman’ published in the Birmingham Daily Post outlined some of the reasons for this. For, as it was pointed out though many might finish work at an early hour in the afternoon some time might elapse before wages were delivered and distributed to the workforce. This left, in reality little time, certainly in regards to sporting activity for participation.[[7]](#footnote-7) Indeed it could be argued that this situation was in fact counter-productive, as it possibly both promoted and substantiated the public house as an ‘instant’ recreational facility. Nevertheless, even this situation did not stop those who wished to partake from doing so. For, as Will Thorne noted, in regards to physical recreation:

“no matter how hard they worked [they] were always anxious to take part in sports”[[8]](#footnote-8)

Significantly one of the major and more enlightened employers of the region, Sir Richard Tangye sensed a need for a change and clearly identified:

“We had long noted the fact that the energies of the men were expanded before the close of the day and comparatively little work was done in the last hour.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

It was the realisation that the working week left the individual little energy to do anything else but recover that led many of the agitators to demand a working time system that removed this factor. It was contended:

“that working men wanted more time for recreation and intellectual employment. As it was at present, after the long hours of labour a man was too wearied to make efforts to improve his mind,”[[10]](#footnote-10)

whilst another correspondent, writing to the Birmingham Daily Post expressed the sentiments stated at the beginning of this chapter.

That such recognitions could have been attained were certainly due to the inauguration of a national movement for a shorter working week/half day holiday that commenced in 1869. Owing its origins to the building trades of London it was however, in the north-east town of Sunderland that the first major success was obtained. For it was within the engineering trades of this town that the granting of the Nine Hour Day, one that set the premise for the rest of the country was attained. However this success only came as a result of bitter four week strike. Other employers witnessing this confrontation and capitulation were not so prepared to relent. The result was that when similar demands were made within the engineering trades of Newcastle the employers were far more resilient. Again, as in Sunderland the workers resorted to strike action but instead of a quick victory 1872 witnessed a confrontation between the employers and their workers which lasted for some five months, before a reduction of the working week was obtained.[[11]](#footnote-11) Yet despite these successes the movement towards a more sympathetic working week was perhaps given a more significant boost when, by an Act of Parliament the Bank Holiday Act of 1871 was passed.[[12]](#footnote-12)

There can be little doubt that the passing of this legislation focussed many of the compassionately minded, socially influential individuals who sought further progress. Certainly paramount amongst supporters locally was The Birmingham Daily Mail. This particular newspaper which had constantly campaigned for a more sympathetic working week for the mass of the people stated, in its 4th August issue:

“If a man is kept at his toil, as many are from twelve to sixteen hours nature gets exhausted, the body and mind are alike depressed and he is likely to seek, in the false excitement of the public house, that stimulant which, if the hours are shorter, he would be able to find in his garden or at the library.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

The Bank Holiday legislation, initiated by Sir John Lubbock, a banker and MP, introduced four additional days on which banks would close, thus giving those staff employed within these establishments, mainly clerks an additional period of time away from labour. This concept fundamentally created the notion of holidays with pay and created holidays on Boxing Day, Easter Monday, Whit Monday and on the first Monday in August.[[14]](#footnote-14) Though this legislation was particularly aimed at the improvement of the Banking fraternity’s lot, its influence was wide. Its passing gave the opportunity for other employers who felt inclined to support the reduction of the working week a chance to respond without seemingly breaking ranks with other fellow employers. Again the firm of Cadbury’s was to the fore, actually closing their doors on the first Monday of August, 1871.

The impetus for change had clearly been established, so much so that the influential United Kingdom Trades Association were able to demand that:

“Parliament should be asked as soon as possible to extend the principles of the Bank Holidays Act to all sections of the community,”[[15]](#footnote-15)

a response that was enthusiastically supported by the local press of the Birmingham area:

No artisan can, with justice to his own health work in a manufactory for more than nine hours a day. It is unfair to expect more of him. If men want ‘the sound mind’ they must look after the ‘sound body’ Vigorous health is not obtained by excessive hours of labour and confinement in factories .. We are not, therefore, advocating shorter hours for the mere sake of reducing labour; but simply because long hours are inimical to physical health, and where there is not physical health there can be no moral or social excellence.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

whilst another publication retorted that:

“men were not seeking more money, but shorter hours and a due and righteous regard to the health and strength Heaven has given them.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

Additionally there can be little doubt that the campaign received a substantial fillip in that the crusade was run during a time of national economic buoyancy. Indeed it could be argued that the notion of reducing the working week was, in fact inspired by the economic circumstances of the day. For, at the very time that the campaign set out to fulfil its ambitions and prepared to face the expected resistance the years, economically speaking, 1869 to 1873 was a time when the nation was in excellent financial health. Certainly for the Birmingham area the economic atmosphere was such that Asa Briggs could write:

“[the period 1869-1873 was] the Golden age of business prosperity which warmed the hearts and lined the pockets of business men.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

It can certainly be identified that as far as the local campaign is concerned it was the announcement that the Newcastle campaign had ended successfully that provided a major impetus. The news, indicating that their cause could succeed was enough to provide the campaigners with a renewed vigour. All the local newspapers carried correspondence from workers demanding a reduction of the working week to, if possible include the half day Saturday. Within a very short time the engineering firm of Richard Tangye, who, as already stated was sympathetic to the cause broke what might be considered the ‘employers lines’ by granting, unconditionally the nine hour working, breaching what had previously been an unanimous rejection of the workers demands.[[19]](#footnote-19)

This company’s firm action however was not received well by his fellow employers. Nonetheless, it would seem that this gentleman, who had been in the vanguard of the campaign felt so strongly about the issue that he was prepared to state his argument personally to those who were opposed. In so doing he was met by a wall of defiance, which:

“indignantly protested against our proposed action, declaring it would ruin the trade; but I replied that when whirlwinds were about, it was better to ride and direct them, than to be overwhelmed by them and that we should certainly take the course I had indicated. Up to this time no action had been taken by the men in Birmingham, although the question had been discussed with great interest, and they had expressed their willingness to meet the masters in council upon it. It was clear to me therefore, that an attitude of blank resistance would be most impolitic and unfortunate one to take under the circumstances, and I said so to the masters, but my arguments made no impression on them at all.”[[20]](#footnote-20)

There can be little doubt that the granting of a nine hour day by Sir Richard Tangye was obviously well received by his workforce. Indeed, in what seems to have been a sign of appreciation they chose not to pursue an increase in regards to piece-rates, this removing a further, potentially heavy economic cost to the employer.

The other companies, particularly those of the engineering sector of the district, however, in ‘standing firm’ gave notice that they were prepared to confront the movement. Again, as in many other cases the result was industrial action by their workforces. However, it would seem that in the Birmingham area concerted strike action lasting little more 24 hours was enough to convince the employers that to resist was futile. In the main most of the employers quickly capitulated and accepted the principle of a reduction of hours. Though many of the engineering employers side had uttered words of doom and gloom as to the cost of the reduction the fact that the men made no further demands proved their worries groundless. Indeed Sir Richard Tangye was to write, some twenty years later:

“And now, after nearly twenty years experience nothing would induce us to return to the old system of longer hours. Seeing that we employed more than half of the operative engineers in Birmingham and the district it is certain that our prompt action was the means of preventing a long and bitter struggle between the persons concerned.”[[21]](#footnote-21)

Within a relatively short time most of the other larger commercial establishments followed suite, including the prestigious works of James Watt & Co. whose family had such a strong connection with Aston Manor. Almost immediately the smaller commercial concerns found themselves under pressure to adopt the new shorter working schedules. Though there were instances of strikes, in the main such was the strength of the campaign that The Birmingham Trades Council, which included members from Aston Manor could state:

“The necessity for reducing the hours of labour appears to be almost beyond dispute. And it is pleasing to note that in numberless instances this concession has been granted in the most willing manner, while in many others masters and men have met in friendly spirit to reason with each other, referring, if necessary to an arbitrator.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

The effective result of the campaign had, in general terms benefited the worker by, on average a reduction in the working week by some ten per cent, roughly around, six hours.

Nevertheless, in granting such a reduction both sides now faced another, not intangible problem, one that required a modicum of compromise if a solution was to be found. Given that, if the incorporation of the reduction into the working week was dependent upon those conditions already existing it is likely, where the half-day holiday was already in operation it was incorporated into the weekday, Monday to Friday working pattern. However where the half day Saturday was not utilised, its introduction was normally limited to being incorporated into this day, the Sunday, naturally being a day within the Victorian social pattern when physical exertions were actively discouraged. This last point however might have been, for a good number of the working population somewhat mute, as many had to labour on the Sabbath, not least being the vast number of individuals who were employed as servants of the affluent. For, as the illustrious Mrs. Beetonsuggested:

“that while in the country it [was] customary for servants to have a week allowed them once a year, they should expect no other holidays.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

Indeed, even in the most generous households, at the end of the [19th] century, time off was normally restricted to a fortnight’s holiday each year, plus a half day every Sunday, one day off per month and an evening out weekly.[[24]](#footnote-24) Notwithstanding the anomaly of the servant it would seem that the incorporation of the reduction did not provide any great dispute and was seemingly assimilated, to both sides satisfaction very quickly.

Yet despite these successes and the advances enjoyed the fact was that for the majority of the employed persons within the Birmingham district, including Aston Manor the working week remained long. The situation certainly remained that a great many individuals initially did not prosper from the campaign. However, on the positive side many did and it was these individuals who perhaps can be identified as providing the impetus for the advance of recreation. The half day Saturday and the shorter working week was by 1875 seemingly so well established to be, if not the norm, then at least common.

One of the most important employment sectors who did not benefit initially from the advances made were the clerking fraternity. Employed in positions of trust and responsibility they might be identified as, if not the elite then certainly one of the more educated elements of the proletariat and ones whose skills were vital for the transaction of commerce. Writing, one correspondent, ‘Quilldriver’ obviously connected to the profession stated;

“I think the clerks have an equal claim to the concessions now so generally made.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

The clerks, in making it clear that they wished to benefit from the reduced working week movement had, to their immense benefit the backing of The United Kingdom Trade Association. This organization, in supporting their aims was unequivocal in their attitude:

“that considering the evils resulting from unremitting attention devoted to the transaction of business, it is the opinion of this meeting in order that those who are engaged in the retail trades may be allowed to cultivate their mental and physical processes, it is absolutely essential that some additional time should be secured for such purposes.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

No doubt buoyed by this support, very shortly afterwards, in the October of 1871 The Birmingham Clerks Association was formed to represent those engaged in the occupation. Nevertheless it quickly became apparent that their fortunes were very dependent upon their clerking brethren from within the banking sector. It must have seemed logical to them that if they could have the benefit of a half day Saturday why not them? However, given that the shortening of the working week was a concession that was extremely unpopular with both the banking community and the local Chamber of Commerce any removal by them of the concession might have had severe repercussions on their ambitions. In such an attempt The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, whose members certainly included some from the Manor proposed that the banks be kept open on Saturdays until 3 p.m. in the afternoon.[[27]](#footnote-27) This plea also found active support from within the general business community, as both clearly saw that if the benefit for the banking clerks was rescinded then their own clerks might not have any basis for their demand. The response was prompt, concise and emphatic. In reply the chairman of The Birmingham Clerks Association, formed to represent all the clerking fraternity in the district, including the Manor stated:

“In the present state of things all monetary matters must of necessity be transacted early on the Saturday morning; the cashier can close his books by 1 p.m., get his cash balanced and off by two; but if the banks hours are altered and the money can be had up to three o’clock there will be no hurry to expedite matters and two o’clock will come and find the work not half done.”[[28]](#footnote-28)

After a short period of time for consideration, the demands of the Chamber of Commerce were rejected and the campaign continued. The way was now set for the commercial clerks to obtain, like their banking counterparts, a reduction in the working week.

Given the organisational ability of this element of the workforce it might come as no surprise to find that they were amongst the very first to incorporate recreational activity within this new found time. Some of the very earliest sporting fixtures in the area in fact can be traced to their administrative ability. The clerks of Van Wart’s, of Summer Row, a road adjoining the Manor for example are recorded as playing organised football as early as 1872,[[29]](#footnote-29) whilst the actual Birmingham Clerks Association had, by 1873 formed both a football and cricket club.[[30]](#footnote-30) Though no evidence exists to substantiate any connection with Aston Manor, it could be thought of as highly possible that some of these early events might well have been enacted on Aston Park. It would seem that the movement had been so successful that in 1876 a local factory inspector, a Mr. Baker could be drawn to comment, perhaps with a little over enthusiasm that: “the shorter working week is now becoming universal.”[[31]](#footnote-31)

Yet despite this seemingly ‘total victory’ there was one vital sector of the working population, the shop worker that the advance appears to have passed-by. Perhaps because of the fact that this form of work was, and indeed still is traditionally a barren area for union representation and that it is one where the employing of the female dominates the workforce the benefits of a shorter working week were substantially delayed. Though a demand for Early Shop Closing had commenced in 1840, in Liverpool[[32]](#footnote-32) it was not until the formation of The Early Closing Association in 1842 whose aims were to specifically both shorten the hours of shop and to abolish Sunday trading that any sort of real progress to improve the shop workers lot was made. Surprisingly however, it was not until as late as 1888 that a Bill was proposed by again the parliamentarian who had done so much to inspire the shorter hour movement, Sir John Lubbock which called upon commercial shops to close at 8 pm and 10 pm on Saturdays. Yet, despite his motion attracting a great deal of general support it was unfortunately rejected by the House of Commons. Nevertheless, despite this defeat the impetus that it initiated was taken up in many locations including the Birmingham district. A campaign was instigated which provided for clear demands to be made in relation to the plight of the commercial shop workers. In regards to the retail sector of Aston Manor it was from within the columns of The Aston and Birmingham Chronicle that these demands were substantially and most effectively made. The editor, in his ‘Chit Chat Column’*,* perhapspersonified the thinking of many of the campaigning middle classes when he described the situation as being:

“a fearful blot upon the character of our modern town life that immense numbers of the rising population are deprived of their rational opportunity of rest by the present system of keeping open shops until the latest possible hour of the night.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

Such ideals however were not entirely confined to editors of provincial newspapers. Influential periodicals such as The Leisure Hour, in its July 1872 issue sought to define the notion of ‘rest’ rather poetically as follows:

“Rest is not idleness; in a very true sense it is a part, an integral part of work . . . If we really work when we work, we should not be ashamed of periods of sheer inaction . . For nature is not idle with us at such times; she coils the uncoiled springs of action, screws up the wires which have been out of tune, tightens the rigging of our ship, sets the grass growing over the worn and bare places in the pastures of our minds, overhauls the lumber room of our memory, and puts the sap of life through a moral change.”[[34]](#footnote-34)

Unfortunately, in regards to the Manor there is no indication that the shorter working week had become a reality for its retail workforce. However, by 1904 the movement appears to have gained sufficient momentum which allowed a proposal to be introduced to the The House of Commons that the Shop Hours Acts that had been enacted by Parliament in 1892, 1893 and 1896 be enforced.[[35]](#footnote-35) Upon the passing of this legislation local authorities were granted optional powers to be able to make a ‘closing order’ which fixed the hour, though not earlier than 7 p.m. or, on one day in the week 1 p.m. at which shops shall cease to serve customers. This demand expressed an earnest and unqualified desire that the Act should be adopted and for the Aston Manor Council to make a closing order for all establishments where retail trade was carried out within the borough, including Sundays. This demand was, in reality extremely radical, for it was certainly believed that many shopkeepers of Aston were able to take more money on a Sunday than any other day of the week.

In commenting on the situation a leading churchman of the area, Canon Sutton, one of the principal campaigners proposed:

“A resolution expressing an earnest and unqualified desire that the Act should be adopted, and requesting the Town Council to make the closing order for all shops and other places where a retail trade was carried on within the borough, and the latest hours be Mondays, Tuesday and Thursdays 8.30 p.m.; Wednesdays 2 p.m.; Fridays 9 p.m. and Saturdays 11 p.m.” and “that it would have given him great pleasure to have moved a resolution of a more drastic character than the one which he submitted. Some alteration of the hours of trading was important for physical, mental and moral reasons. Why should tradesmen and their assistants be kept for such late hours? If the public would only remember what it wanted and purchase it at a reasonable time those who were kept at work so long would be set free at an earlier period than at present.”[[36]](#footnote-36)

In passing the resolution the campaign within Aston Manor was effectively suggesting the following hours: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 9 a.m.-8.30 p.m.; Wednesday 9 a.m.-2 p.m.; Friday 9 a.m.-9 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m.-11 p.m. This would, said another campaigner The Rev. F. Moore mean that the working week would be around 64 hours, a total he noted that would not persuade many working men to agitate to obtain, an observation which brought forth laughter! The important point however was that a principle has been attained in regards to the working conditions of shop workers and the process by which they would attain social equality with fellow members of the working class had begun.

Despite reluctantly accepting the seemingly high figure of sixty four hours as an ambition it certainly appears that the pressure the campaign caused finally allowed the shop workers of Aston Manor to take advantage of something that many others, both locally and nationally were already enjoying. Though it might appear for us today that the notion of such a level of working hours was unacceptable the reduction of hours though the Shop Act did finally allow a modicum of freedom for the retail worker and provide for, potentially a greater recreational life. This incorporation, often however provided for a deviance within its application. For purely commercial reasons, the shorter working week/half-day holiday became assimilated within the weekday, often on the Wednesday, a pattern that was replicated throughout England, whilst for most non-retail trades the half-day was set to the Saturday.[[37]](#footnote-37) Happily, this did not seem to have been a handicap to progress and given that by 1905 perhaps the last major firm in the Aston Manor area, The Birmingham & Aston Tramway Company had introduced the shorter working week/half day holiday the campaign was able to enjoy a successful conclusion.[[38]](#footnote-38) Though it had taken a considerable time for the working class of Aston Manor to enjoy the benefit of a shorter working week, its influence, as will be indicated in this work was phenomenal. Though recreational opportunities did exist prior to the shorter working week/half day campaign its incorporation into the working life of the people of Aston Manor allowed for a dramatic increase in both range and opportunity. Indeed such was the impact that this advance made that its effect was sufficient to sustain a commercially produced publication entirely devoted to its enjoyment, The Birmingham Saturday Half Day Guide.[[39]](#footnote-39)

Whether its incorporation into the fabric of society can be put down to an emergence of a middle class conscience, is of course debatable. It could be, if one takes Marx‘s view that it was in fact inevitable, inspired, as he perceived it by the employers’ ability to intensify the pace of work thus, in effect compensating for the reduction of worked hours[[40]](#footnote-40) or perhaps most simplistically as a result of a proletariat demand. Whichever might be considered apt it is clear that all, in some way must have played a part in determining the outcome and that, by 1911 the great majority of Aston Manor’s population, had certainly benefited from both a local and national campaign. It should also be borne in mind that alongside the drive towards a more sympathetic working week there was also the movement to improve conditions within the working environment. For those working in industry, including the female and child the ever progressive Factory Acts of the 19th and early 20th centuries provided a far better environment within which work was conducted.[[41]](#footnote-41) The shorter working week agenda allied to that of the Factory Acts can be perceived to have improved the lives of many to such an extent that they were by the turn of the century in a position, physically and mentally able to enjoy an ‘other life’.

This is not to say however that the working lives of those of Aston Manor were anywhere near what the individual might expect to enjoy today. The working hours were still comparatively long and arduous and the power of Health and Safety were essentially non-existent, though reforms were making a significant difference. Nevertheless the time to enjoy a wider aspect of life, through recreation had been, for many obtained. The question now to be considered is - to what use was this new found freedom put to and to what direction was it aimed?

1. Letter from ‘One of the Masses’ in *Birmingham Daily Post* 15th August, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. R. Strong, *The Spirit of Britain*, Great Britain: Hutchinson, 1999, chp 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18th April, 1872. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Birmingham Daily Post,* 14th September, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Kelly’s Directories*, London: Kelly & Co., Printers, 1871 1876 and J. M. Jones,, *Manors of Aston Manor,* Birmingham: Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1968, pp17-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Kelly’s Directories*, London: Kelly’s, 1870-1912 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Birmingham Daily Post,* 11th July, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. W. Thorne, *My Life’s Battles*, England: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989, p25. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. R. Tangye, *One and All,* London: Partridge, 1889. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5th and 18th August, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. S. & B. Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism,* 1920, p315-316. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Parliamentary Statutes, Third Revised Edition, The Bank Holiday Act 1871, 34 and 35 Victoria, chapter xvii, London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1950, pp693-695. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 4th August, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *Parliamentary Statutes, Third Revised Edition*, The Bank Holiday Act 1871, 34 and 35 Victoria C17, chapter xvii, pp. 693-695. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Birmingham Daily Mail,* 15th December, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *Birmingham Daily Mail,* 4th August, 1871 *and Birmingham Daily Post,*

    12th September, 1871*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12th September, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. A. Briggs and C. Gill, *History of Birmingham, vol II,* England: Oxford University Press, 1952, p71. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5th August, 1871. See also J. Reid, *Sir Richard Tangye*, London: Duckworth & Co., 1908, pp103-104. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. R. Tangye, *One and All,* London: Partridge, 1889, pp117-118. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. R. Tangye, *One and All,* London: Partridge, 1889, pp117-118. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *The Birmingham Trades Council, The Sixth Annual Report*, year ending

    30th June, 1872. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Mrs. Beeton’s Domestic Service Guide* in P. Horn, ‘The Rise and Fall of The Victorian Servant‘ London: Gill & Macmillan Limited, 1996, p112. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. P. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of The Victorian Servant,* London: Gill & Macmillan Limited,

    p112. C. E. Collett, ‘Report on The Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants, pp1894 LXXI, pt II, in P. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of The Victorian Servant,*

    London: Gill & Macmillan Limited [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 21st October, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 15th December, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Birmingham Daily Mail,* 30th November, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *Birmingham Daily Post,* 4th December, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *Birmingham Daily Mail,* 10th December, 1872 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 21st January, 1873 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. M. Hodgson, *The Working Day and The Working Week in Victorian England,* unpublished M.Phil, University of London, pp.244-245. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. W. B. Whitaker, *Victorian and Edwardian Shop Workers: The Struggle to Obtain Better Conditions and a Half-Holiday*, England: David and Charles, 1963, chp 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 20th June 1885. For a national perspective see Wilfred B. Whitaker, *Victorian and Edwardian Shop Workers: The Struggle to Obtain Better Conditions and a Half Day*, England: Faber & Faber, 1971, chp 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *The Leisure Hour,* 6th July 1872, London: Richard Jones, 1872. This publication was published by the Religious Tract Society. It was in circulation from 1852 until

    1900, being published weekly from 1852 until 1880 and then monthly until its

    demise. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *Shop Hours Act 1904,* 5 Edward VII C 31, London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1950. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *Aston and East Birmingham Times*, 15th April, 1905. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. For a national view of the legislation versus voluntary argument see W. B. Whitaker,

    *Victorian and Edwardian Shop Workers: The Struggle to Obtain Better Conditions and a*

    *Half-Holiday*, England: David and Charles, 1963, chp 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 19th September, 1905. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. J. Sturge, *The Birmingham Saturday Half Day Guide,* Birmingham: William Walker, 1871-1907. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. For considerations on this view see K. Marx, *Kapital* vol 1, London: Allan Unwin, 1946 and E. Hobsbawn, *Labouring Man: Studies in The History of Labour*, London: Weindenfeld and Nicolson, 1964, pp344-370. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. For a brief review of the various import Factory Act legislations see J. Belchem and R. Price,  *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century History*, London: Penguin Books Limited, 1996,

    pp217-219. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)