

Ladybarn Social Club by Phil Cowtan with the Committee of Ladybarn Social Club

Ladybarn Social Club was, until 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009, known as the Ladybarn & District Royal British Legion Club. It was one of the first legions in the UK. However it has now left the RBL organisation and become a Social Club in its own right.

The history of the Club starts just after the Great War in 1919. At this time many service men were being discharged from the Armed Services and returning to the Ladybarn area and were wanting somewhere to meet, read and socialise. A group of ex-servicemen formed a club and looked for a place to meet. Lord Egerton (the fourth Baron Egerton of Tatton in Knutsford, Cheshire) of the Tatton Hall, Knutsford, Cheshire, who at that time was the major land owner in what is now South Manchester was approached as he had previously given land around the area for good causes including the land for St Chad's Church, Ladybarn. He consented to their request and donated a piece of land on Edward Street, now known as Beverly Road, and a simple wooden hut was constructed by the new Club's members.

In May 1921, the British Legion organisation was formed from the amalgamation of four existing ex-servicemen organisations. These were The National Association of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers (1916), The British National Federation of Discharged and Demobilized Sailors and Soldiers (1917), The Comrades of The Great War (1917) and the Officers' Association (1920). It is unknown which if any of the organizations the Ladybarn Club was part of, however it is known that the Club joined the British Legion shortly after it started and became The British Legion, Ladybarn and District Branch. In 1925, the British Legion received its Royal Charter and Club's adopted the term 'Royal'.

On 13th January 1958, Lord Egerton died childless, and the Egerton Family line ended. His land and property was broken up and sold off by the executors of his will (Norman Hudson (Solicitor), Kenneth Selwood (School Master), Eric Ellis & James Ross of Ellis & Ross Solicitors, London)). On 21<sup>st</sup> May 1959 the Club purchased the 1802 sq yds of land it stood upon for £350 from the Executors. Shortly after this the wooden hut that had been the Club's home since 1919 was demolished and a new larger brick single storey building was built (see illustration). This incorporated a Concert Room, a Lounge and bars.



*Relatives and family of the men pictured are still members of the club*

Next to the Club on Edward Street stood Derby Hall, which was owned by Lord Egerton until 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1906 when a Thomas Turnball, of 'The Beeches', Burnage Lane, Burnage, lease-purchased the building for the sum of £10, 10s. 0d a year. Later in 1906, Thomas let the building to his three children, Isabella, Albert and Thomas A. Turnball, who between them set up the Turnball Institute and Ladybarn Lads' Club. The Institute was set up to provide a religious, educational and social centre for the boys of Ladybarn. In 1934 following the death of her two brothers, Isabella Briggs (nee Turnball) who was now living in Bournemouth, purchased her brothers shares of the Club from their estates for a total £266, 13s 4d.

In 1936 she made John Lyth of Stockport, Charles Cooper of Levenshulme, William Jackson of Fallowfield, William Simons of Withington and Albert Hamnett of Burnage, trustees of the Institute at a rent of £30 per year. They continued to run the Institute and Boys Club for a number of years, but eventually the Institute closed, the building fell into disuse, later demolished and the site cleared.

After the completion of the new Club In 1962 the Club purchased the 1170 sq yds of land formally occupied by Derby Hall, and this allowed the building of an extension to the Club and a second car park. The extension was built to house four snooker tables, a TV room, additional toilets and a Committee Room. The completed building, which is still in use today, saw the Club and its members through the following four decades, with around 2000 members.

However, as the Club entered the new millennium, the demographic make-up of the local population changed and the numbers of ex-servicemen and women declined. Local interest and membership of the Royal British Legion decreased and the Club had to explore ways of changing their image.

In 2006, the Club adopted the name Ladybarn Social Club, but as the Club was in the almost unique position of owning outright all their land and buildings, talk of disaffiliating and leaving the Legion organisation grew.

In October 2008, the decision was finally taken by the members to hold a ballot, with the result being almost unanimous in the support of leave the Royal British Legion, and become an independent Private Members Club.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009, membership for the new Club opened, and it attracted many new members who hadn't previously been interested in joining. Disaffiliation finally came through in early February and the Club finally became independent and membership started to grow once again.

At the time of writing, the club's building is uneconomical and in need of repair. It is clear that if it continues at this venue, it will be forced to shut its doors permanently. The club has agreed to sell its present buildings in exchange for the building of the White Swan public house (until recently a Robinson's pub) in nearby Green Street, Ladybarn. It intends to fully refurbish that venue, maintaining the club's strengths as a venue for competitive and social snooker and other games, as well as creating a pleasant and relaxing venue for the whole community of South Manchester to enjoy.

The club is currently located on Beverley Road, Ladybarn, and intends to move to the Swan in early 2013. It welcomes customers old and new. Drop by one evening, ring the bell, and join us for a drink. You will be welcomed and your custom will be appreciated.

Contact details: [info@ladybarnsocialclub.co.uk](mailto:info@ladybarnsocialclub.co.uk); tel. 0161 225 8105

Note: the information on the origins of the club were gained from documents in the possession of Ladybarn Social Club and Brian Smith; information regarding the associations that joined together to become the Legion was taken from internet sources.