

# Social activities

*‘We never heard people talking about their firm in the way that we talked about ours.’*

**N**ot only did Thomas Nelson and Sons look after the welfare of its workforce during their work hours, but also outside them. The firm provided a range of recreational facilities for its workers.

In the Parkside Works there were allotments in the extensive grounds. Some had greenhouses which grew ‘wonderful tomatoes’.

Next to the Parkside Works, on Dalkeith Road, was the playing field (‘the field’) which had a football pitch, tennis court, and ‘pit and putt’ course. At its edge was a bowling club, now Parkside Bowling Club.



*The Institute*



*Bindery workers at flannel dance in the 1950s*

Across the road from the Works was the ‘Institute’, which not only served as a works’ canteen but also hosted concerts, lectures, dances and other events. Some workers recalled that there was a club for male employees ‘in the centre of the city’.

The workers had a number of societies, some of which received grants from Nelsons. These included a football club (‘you had kudos if you

were on the football team’), badminton club, golf club and rifle club. Some of the sporting clubs played in competitive leagues, such as the Printers’ League. The dramatic club staged plays and concerts. Clubs held a succession of dances, especially in the winter months. Departments also had their own clubs and societies: the office, for example, had a book club and a Christmas savings club.



*Dinner meeting of workers and their partners, 1956*

## Stepping out

Nelsons organised a number of annual social events for its workers. These included dances, of which the most important was the Christmas dance, ‘a dressed-up affair in dinner suits and bowties and evening dresses for the ladies’. An informal dance, a flannel dance, was held in the summer months. Until the early 1960s, the highlight of the social year was the annual trip, given free to all the workers in the factory. On a Saturday in July, a train was hired to take the workforce to locations such as Aberdeen and Weymss Bay. These trips were much enjoyed: ‘everybody looked forward to it’; ‘it was such a good day’.



*Nelsons football team in the 1950s*

*Going on the annual trip*

