



# The History of The Peel Institute



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The Peel Institute was founded in **1898** by Sir George Masterman Gillett and a group of friends and prior to World War II its headquarters were in St. John Street close to Smithfield Market in central London. It was a branch of the Bedford Institute Association and until the **1970's** had strong Quaker links. It broke away from the Bedford Institute Association in **1929** and became independent although still retaining some ties with the BIA.

Peel Trust Deed states

'To advance the mental, physical, religious, moral and social education of persons and the promotion of facilities for the recreation or other leisure time occupation of those who by reason of age, youth, infirmity, disablement, poverty or social and economic circumstances are in need of such facilities, with the object of improving their conditions of life'

Although small, it is well known in the City, Camden and Islington areas of London. Over the years its activities have ranged from breakfast kitchens in the early **1900's**, Women and Men's Fellowship Groups, Boy's and Children's Clubs, Guides and Scouts, to a choir, orchestra, and cycling club. Youth work has always been a major part of its activities and in **1933** the boys club moved to the premises in Lloyd Baker Street in Clerkenwell. The early youth work was solely for boys until **1940** when a mixed club was firmly established, with one night a week allocated exclusively to girls.

In **1940** the Peel headquarters transferred to Lloyd Baker Street when a bomb destroyed the building in St. John Street.

In **1975-76** we re-assessed the direction of our work as a whole, at that time the Men's Club was faltering, the Youth Club was jogging along and a well supported Women's Fellowship Group was very active.



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It was decided that the Men's Club should close and a Day Centre for the Elderly started. We had very little money then but obtained an Urban Aid Grant to alter the premises to accommodate the Day Centre and to partially finance the running costs.

From **1977–82** the Day Centre and Youth Clubs were two main areas of our work, run on an extremely tight budget with little opportunity for expansion.

Since **1929** we had owned a sports ground at Woodford. Very well used until the middle **1970's**, by **1981** it had become an expensive millstone round our necks. It was seldom used by our members in Clerkenwell due to the fact that more open space for football, etc. had been provided in the area. In **1983** the sports ground was sold with planning permission for housing. Thus in one move we were transformed from a financially struggling organisation to one with resources to support our activities. In doing so we were able to invest in building a purpose built centre to house all our activities and to develop further our work.

## Present Premises

In **1996** we moved to the new Peel Centre on the present Percy Circus site, at a cost of over £2 million. The Centre provides 14,000 sq.ft. of fully accessible space, including offices, classroom and meeting space, indoor sports and catering facilities. In the years since we have moved to the new site we have been able to expand our provision dramatically and work in partnership with many other organisations to provide a diverse range of services to all sections of the local community.

From its humble beginnings in the late **1880's** the Peel is now an established and trusted community organisation, providing effective, real and lasting change to both the local area and the people who live there, making a positive difference to peoples lives on a daily basis.