

CIRCULAR TO MEMBERS

THE HISTORY OF THE SHOPPING "MALL"

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Our Ref: 200/032
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28 November 2018

The annual festive season is synonymous with our spending time in one or more of the many shopping malls which we choose to frequent. Ever wonder where the name "mall" stems from?

There is an interesting and somewhat strange relationship between the earliest forms of the now antiquated game known as *Croquet* and what we commonly refer to as "the Mall", when a visit to the local shopping centre is the topic of discussion. In a time long past (circa 1630), the Italians crafted a game called *Pallamaglio* with the literal meaning of a wooden mallet used to strike a wooden ball, the objective being to follow a circuit of hurdles set up on an open area or in a lane (much like *Croquet*).

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For reasons unexplained, the term *Pallamaglio* morphed into various colloquial descriptions, including *Pall Mall* in England and *Palmaille* or *Jeu de Mail* in France. This was indeed the forerunner to the more well known game of *Croquet*.

In England, King Charles II became somewhat besotted with *Pall Mall*. As the Royal Family would have it, the Monarch decreed that Saint James's Park be used for *Pall Mall*. In modern day England, the *Mall* remains as a ceremonial route in the City of Westminster, between Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square.

Following the demise of *Pall Mall* (the game) the street (commonly known as the *Mall*) and associated playing fields set aside for such purpose were destined for a different use. Food and trading stalls associated with the use of the area for the game of *Pall Mall* remained and the area became a popular place where residents met to socialize, to eat and to purchase items (much like an open area pedestrian mall in modern times).

This concept further evolved to ultimately result in what is commonly accepted to be the first fully enclosed shopping mall named Southdale Centre, erected in the town of Edina, Minnesota in the United States of America (in 1956). The designer, one Viktor Gruen, ironically considered his architectural feat to be the panacea, addressing all the unspeakable ills associated with the urban environment dominated by "car-centric" America. His Southdale Mall was premised on the principle of creating a communal gathering place (to shop, to live and to play), a true mixed use facility. Southdale Mall was initially designed to include not only shops and restaurants, but also a medical centre, schools and a residential component.

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These are terms which resonate eerily with various urban planning and development principles which are commonly found in modern day South Africa's spatial development frameworks and related legislation such as the much bespoke Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act, 2013 (SPLUMA) and the various municipal by-laws dealing with the same topic.

At the risk of concluding that planners in 2018 sunny South Africa have been caught up in a proverbial time warp, it is safe to accept that the old adage of "what goes around comes around" remains very applicable.

Whilst the throw back to 1956 is somewhat disconcerting, and whilst the retrofitting of the mixed use model may yet have to find practical application in a South African context, the history surrounding the naming of the "shopping mall" remains interesting.

SAACPP members and other colleagues from associated disciplines are wished a very pleasant festive season. Here's hoping that 2019 will bring with it new and exciting opportunities. In closing, it is worth noting that *Croquet* as a social game, is enjoying somewhat of a resurgence ... what goes around certainly comes around.

Per: SAACPP