



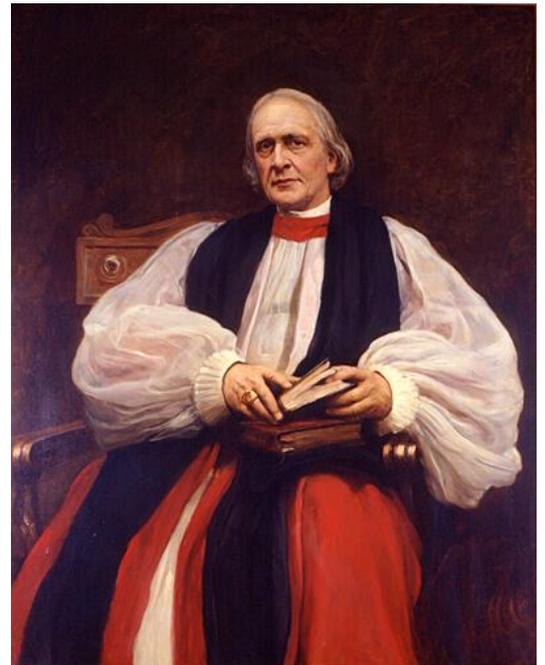
The Balsall Heath Local History Society was founded in 1979 with the aim of promoting interest in our local history. We feel pride in our area and value its strengths – past and present. To meet our aims we work with local schools and community groups organising exhibitions and events. We have also produced several publications. We are a registered charity and rely on grants and donations to achieve our aims. For more information on our work, or to volunteer and help please contact us.

**Balsall Heath Local History Society would like to thank all of you for your support in 2013.
We wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year**

A Canterbury Tale

The forthcoming erection (in September next year) of a Blue Plaque in Balsall Heath to John Bowen – local builder, alderman and luminary of the Victorian/ Edwardian era – is exciting news. While there have been many famous people associated with Balsall Heath, our only other Blue Plaque is in nearby Highgate – an area often included in with Balsall Heath. The plaque commemorates **Edward White Benson** (*right*) who was born on 14th July 1829 at **72 Lombard Street**. Benson is one of the area's greatest achievers as he became Archbishop of Canterbury!

He was the eldest of eight children of Edward White Benson, a chemical engineer and manufacturer, and his wife, Harriet Baker. His father was a strong evangelical with Yorkshire roots and his mother, from a Birmingham Unitarian family, had converted to the Church of England before their marriage in August 1826. When his father became manager of the British Alkali Works at Stoke, near Droitwich, the family moved first to Ivy Cottage in Wychbold, and later to Brook House, near the factory. The failure of the business in 1842 proved a great strain on his father's health and he died the following year. The business partners gave his widow an annuity, as well as a small house within the deserted factory on Birmingham Heath.



Harriet Benson obviously did well for her children because Edward was educated at King Edward's School, Birmingham and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated BA (8th classic) in 1852. From there he began a career as a schoolmaster at Rugby School in 1852, and was ordained deacon in 1852 and priest in 1857. In 1859 he was chosen by Prince Albert as the first Master of Wellington College, Berkshire, which was built as a memorial to the Duke Of Wellington. Benson was responsible for establishing Wellington as a public school in the style of Rugby rather than the military academy originally planned. From 1872 to 1877 he served as Chancellor of Lincoln Cathedral, and the first Bishop of Truro from 1877–82.

In 1883 he was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. While in office Benson tried to amalgamate the two Convocations - the assemblies of the two Provinces of the Church of England, Canterbury and York - and the new houses of laity into a single assembly. In 1896 it was established that they could 'unofficially' meet together. In September that year, the papal letter *Apostolic Curae* was published. This was, issued by Pope Leo XIII, declaring all Anglican ordinations to be "*absolutely null and utterly void*".

Benson had started to work on a reply to the letter before his sudden death of a heart attack while attending Sunday service in St. Deiniol's Church, Hawarden, Wales on October 11th, 1896. He had been in the area on a visit to former Prime Minister William Gladstone. He was buried at Canterbury Cathedral in a suitably magnificent tomb located at the western end of the nave (*left*).

WHERE TO SEE HIS PLAQUE

Edward White Benson's Blue Plaque is seen here in situ (below the Chivers To Let sign) on Benson House at 98-104 Lombard Street – which is where number 72 would be if still standing. The plaque was erected in 1984 by the Birmingham Civic Society.



BENSON'S FAMILY FORTUNES

Edward White Benson married his cousin Mary Sidgwick and they had six children. Their fifth child was the novelist Edward Frederic Benson who will be best known for his "Mapp and Lucia" novels.

Another son, Arthur Christopher Benson was a writer and lyricist who famously wrote the words for Edward Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory". He was also the Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge.

Their sixth and youngest child, Robert Hugh Benson became a minister of the Church of England before converting to Roman Catholicism and writing many popular novels.

Their daughter, Margaret Benson, was an artist, author, and amateur Egyptologist. Interestingly none of the children married.

After Edward White Benson's death, his widow caused some controversy when she "set up household" with Lucy Tait, who was the daughter of Benson's predecessor as Archbishop of Canterbury!



TRUST IN ME!

Tom Williams, the Conservative candidate for Balsall Heath in the Council Elections puts his points forward to the workforce of Alfred Davis Ltd, packing case manufacturers at 418/420 Moseley Road.

(13th May 1954)

Next Meeting:
Thursday 30th January 7:30
The Venture
(*Malvern Street by the farm*)
Erdington Cottage Homes
By Gudrun Limbrick



The children of the Homes

A century of Erdington Cottage Homes

GUDRUN JANE LIMBRICK

A HOME FROM HOME

The cottage homes at Erdington were opened in 1900 by Aston Union, next to the workhouse from where the first children came. Initially, the Homes were made up of 16 large houses (some detached, some semis) on either side of a long avenue. It was single sex accommodation - boys homes were on the right hand side, girls homes were on the left. Each home had two-dormitory style bedrooms and a live in foster mother. Facilities included playing fields, infirmary, swimming pool, school and chapel. Later, a probationary home was added.

In 1949, the homes were each given names rather than being known only by numbers. The foster mothers were replaced by house-parents - a married couple who the children were encouraged to call 'mom' and 'dad'. In 1966, each of the cottages became an independent children's home. The 1970s saw an end to house-parents replaced by a staff team working in shifts.

The homes were used as children's homes right up to the early 1980s. The buildings are now private residences but the exteriors have been preserved. A famous resident was Johnny Prescott, the successful 1960s boxer.

The author, **Gudrun Limbrick**, is our first speaker for the 2014 season. Her book tells, for the first time, the story of the thousands of people who spent their childhoods there through a combination of memoir and factual research.