



Balsall Heath
Local History Society

The GAZETTE

FEBRUARY 2015

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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.

A DRAMATIC NEW WEBSITE

New to the Internet is the official page for the Birmingham History Theatre Company (*right*). The company was formed by members of the Balsall Heath Local History Society following on from many years of performances made under the auspices of the Society.

Over the last few years there has been a succession of well acclaimed stage productions, historical canal walks and road trails - as well as taking part in the annual Carnival procession. The website will feature all the latest news as well as photographs, audio clips and even video links from performances.

The major production this year is a WW1 themed play in May – “When The Lamps Went Out. It is also hoped to fit in a historical canal walk to Kings Norton and another road trail in Balsall Heath, this time around the Mary Street area. The website for the company can be found at www.birminghamhistorytheatre.com

TORNADO PICTURES AND STORIES

We are looking at putting together a small publication commemorating the tornado. If anyone has any photographs of the event or would like to share their stories, please get in touch via our email or phone number above.



TORNADO TENTH ANNIVERSARY

It is hard to believe but this year marks ten years since the tornado left a trail of devastation across Balsall Heath. It was one of the strongest tornadoes recorded in the United Kingdom in nearly 30 years, occurring on 28th July 2005. The tornado struck at approximately 2.30pm with wind speeds varying between 93 and 130 mph. Its main effects were felt in Ladypool Road which bore the brunt of the damage. Ladypool Primary School was extensively damaged and lost its distinctive tower. The adjacent St Agatha's Church also suffered some damage. Christ Church on the corner of Dolobran Road and Grantham Road in Sparkbrook was also damaged and had to be demolished.

Thankfully there were no fatalities, although there were 19 injuries, three of which were said to be serious. The tornado uprooted an estimated 1000 trees, removed the roofs of buildings, picked up and deposited cars and caused other damage during its short existence. The total cost of the damage was put at £40 million, making it the most costly tornado ever in British history.



ALDER ROAD



LADYPOOL PRIMARY



CLIFTON ROAD



PLENTY IN STORE

Runcorn Stores was on the junction of Ladypool and Runcorn Road. The photograph is from around the early twentieth century and provided the inspiration for the main setting of "When The Lamps Went Out". In the play this has become a newsagents but the look and feel of the shop in this image is exactly what was wanted for the location.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 26th March 7:30

The Venture

(Malvern Street by the farm)

A Few Birmingham Quakers

by Russell Steed

This should be an interesting talk indeed. Expect the Cadbury family and Sampson Lloyd to be featured along with some less familiar names. Birmingham has the only Quaker Study Centre in Europe which is of course Woodbrooke on the Bristol Road outside Selly Oak. Famously it was visited by Mahatma Gandhi in October 1931.

BEHIND YOU!

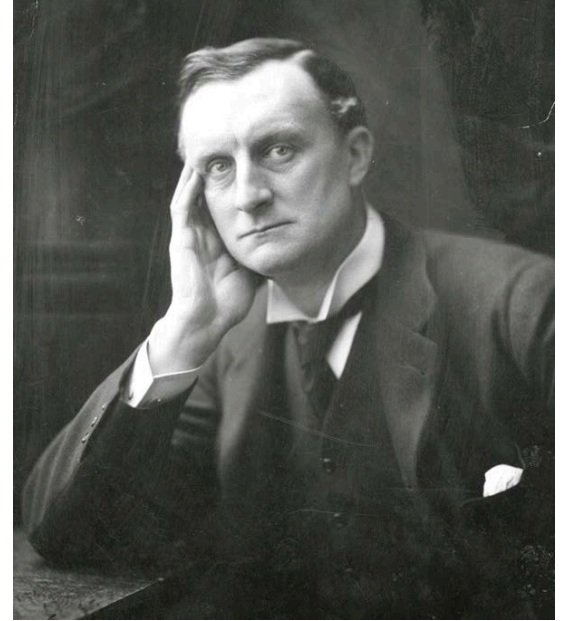
The wonderful group photograph below was taken on Coronation Day 1953 in Upper Highgate Street. It was uploaded to our Facebook page on the internet by Jayne Stone on behalf of her mother Betty Walker (nee Stait).

It is a fabulous image, and quite an unusual one for Coronation Day pictures which mostly seem to be people sat at tables. It has certainly appealed to one of our members, Jenny Lloyd, who was pleased to see at long last her great-grandfather's shop!



WHEN THE LAMPS WENT OUT

The WW1 themed play by the Theatre Group has now got a title – "When The Lamps Went Out". The title comes from a famous quote by Edward Grey which over the years has achieved great resonance. Grey (*below*) was Foreign Secretary in 1914 and was right at the heart of the hard decisions facing Britain.



On 3rd August 1914 John Alfred Spender (editor of the Westminster Gazette) visited Grey at the Foreign Office. The two men stood at the window watching the sun set on St James's park. As the first lights slowly appeared on the Mall Grey turned to Spender and remarked: "The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our life-time". Grey's quotation has been used as in numerous works but interestingly it had no public airing until 1925 when it was mentioned by him in his memoirs.

When the centenary of the outbreak of the war was commemorated last year Grey's words were the inspiration for the memorial. Between 10 and 11pm on 4 August 2014 lights were dimmed at many public locations and in private homes, including, progressively, at a national service in Westminster Abbey.

The Luxor Cinema, Balsall Heath. Taken in the 1970's.

