



Balsall Heath  
Local History Society

# The GAZETTE

APRIL 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.*

**BH Birmingham History Theatre Company Presents**

## WHEN THE LAMPS WENT OUT

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AS EXPERIENCED BY A FAMILY FROM BALSALL HEATH

**A DRAMA WITH MUSIC AND FILM**

Friday May 8th 2015 at 7.30pm  
and Saturday May 9th at 2.30pm & 7.30pm

On stage at:  
St Paul's School, Hertford St  
Balsall Heath B12 8NJ

To book call: 0121 464 4376  
Tickets: £5 Concessions: £3

[birminghamhistorytheatre.com](http://birminghamhistorytheatre.com)

## IN THE LAMPLIGHT

The new play "When The Lamps Went Out" is on shortly – May 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and the final rehearsals are taking place. It is all shaping up very nicely indeed and we have had a lot of enquiries about it. The play follows the fortunes of the Francis family and their friends during the war. The family are genuine and did live in Runcorn Road. Most of the events that are mentioned actually took place in real life.

One of those featured in the play is the story of the Suffragette's disruption of the Patronal Feast of St. Alban, at St. Alban's Church in Highgate. This event took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1914 and was reported in the Birmingham Despatch. It followed on from the burning down of Northfield Library that year.

### STOPPED ADDRESS. BISHOP INTERRUPTED AT ST. ALBAN'S, BALSALL HEATH.

The Suffragettes created a disturbance and had to be forcibly removed from St. Alban's Church, Balsall Heath, last evening.

Being the first celebration of the Patronal Feast, a large congregation had assembled, and were about to hear an address by the Bishop of Birmingham (Dr. Wakefield), who had just advanced to the chancel gates for that purpose.

His lordship had pronounced the Invocation, and was commencing to speak, when three women, who were seated in the south aisle, jumped to their feet and shouted: "We protest against forcible feeding."

#### RUSHED AT THE WOMEN.

Men on the opposite side of the church rushed across the aisle towards the women, while all around them members of their own sex rose to their feet in indignation.

For a moment it almost seemed as though the disturbers were about to be crushed by the startled worshippers, but the figure of the Bishop at the chancel gate waiting calmly to resume his discourse had a reassuring effect, and the congregation seated themselves while the three Suffragettes were ushered out by a number of men. On the way one woman was heard to remark: "Leave me alone, and I will go out."

#### SCREECHING OUTSIDE.

At last calm was restored and the Bishop continued, while from the outside came the noise of screeching, and the vicar, Father Underhill, left his place in the choir and went outside in order to persuade the women to be quiet.

Following the service a procession took place, Dr. Wakefield with cope and mitre, and carrying his pastoral staff, taking part. As the procession moved round the church all those not kneeling to receive the Bishop's blessing were kept under strict observation, but no further disturbance took place.

### A FAMILY AT WAR

Here are some of the Francis family (right) outside their home in Runcorn Road in 1914. Left to right are Albert, Jane, Elizabeth (the mother) and a friend of Albert's. Albert joined up soon afterwards.



# STRATFORD ROAD EXHIBITION TRAIL

*Sampad presents the My Route Exhibition Trail along Stratford*

*Road from Saturday 13th June - Friday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2015.*

My Route is Sampad's community heritage project researching and documenting the history around Stratford Road in Birmingham, from the 1940's to the present day. The project has been supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The free Exhibition Trail will feature striking images of the Stratford Road and its residents by internationally-respected photographer Vanley Burke, combined with sound installations by pioneering artist Brian Duffy, best known for his work with the Modified Toy Orchestra.

The large-scale photographs will be located on buildings along a three mile length of the road, accompanied by sound installations at street-level. Together they will paint a picture of what it is to live and work on Stratford Road, giving an insight into the rich history of the area.

Find out more details at [www.mvroute.org.uk](http://www.mvroute.org.uk)

## FIRST PASSENGERS TO BALSALL HEATH

Camp Hill temporary station opened on 17th December 1840 despite Sir Frederick Smith, who inspected the line between Cofton Farm and Camp Hill on behalf of the Board of Trade, recommending that the opening of the line be delayed because of serious concerns concerning the instability of the cuttings at Longbridge and Groveley. He recommended that should the opening proceed then a speed reduction of 10 mph be imposed. The directors, knowing that they were not legally bound to adhere to the inspector's report, proceeded with the opening of the line albeit having initiated some remedial work. At the time of opening the temporary station still lacked some rails and no signals. The line opened on 17th August 1841 which resulted in the temporary terminus at Camp Hill being relegated to goods use (see march 2015 newsletter) from this date. Camp Hill partially reopened to passengers on 15th November 1841 as the 3:30pm departure and the 1:40pm and 7:10pm arrivals were goods trains that also carried passengers.

The opening of the Lifford Curve on 1st July 1892 saw the start of the circle passenger service from New Street to New Street via Camp Hill and the West Suburban lines. The southbound Manchester to Bournemouth service, which ran via LNWR metals on the Stour Valley line ran through Camp Hill in order not to be reversed to take the West Suburban route, commenced on 1st October 1910 but it wasn't until 1927 that it received the name '*The Pines Express*'.

The second and permanent Camp Hill station opened in 1867 by the Midland Railway and was renamed as 'Camp Hill & Balsall Heath' in December 1887. The station reverted to Camp Hill on 1st April 1904 and was closed temporarily as a wartime economy measure, as were several other city centre stations, on 27th July 1941 being closed officially on 27th November 1946 having never reopened. The goods yard and shed, which opened on 17th December 1840, was finally closed on 7th February 1966.

## NEXT MEETING

Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 7:30

The Venture

(Malvern Street by the farm)

Members' Evening: AGM

The annual review of the year is here again. A year that saw Balsall Heath's first blue plaque installed, for local builder and worthy, John Bowen.

