



Balsall Heath  
Local History Society

The **GAZETTE**

JUNE 2016

**CHRIS SUTTON:** St. Paul's Trust, Hertford St, Balsall Heath, B12 8NJ.  
**Tel:** 0121 464 1890 **Email:** [chris.sutton@stpaulstrust.org.uk](mailto:chris.sutton@stpaulstrust.org.uk)  
**Web:** [balsallheathhistory.co.uk](http://balsallheathhistory.co.uk) & [www.digitalbalsallheath.org.uk](http://www.digitalbalsallheath.org.uk)  
**Facebook:** Balsall Heath Local History Society

*The Balsall Heath Local History Society was founded in 1979 with the aim of promoting interest in our local history. 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.*

## THREE STEPS TO BALSALL HEATH

Fifty six years ago, in 1960, the rock'n'roll package tour headlined by Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent arrived in Birmingham. Two shows were scheduled each night at the Birmingham Hippodrome from Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March to Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March. Also on the bill as, per the playbill shown here, were Billy Fury and Joe Brown. Things got off to a bad start in Birmingham when the hotel manager at a central (un-named hotel) asked Eddie and Gene to leave, shortly after arrival for "behaviour issues". This left the road-manager with some fast thinking to do and so he booked them into Lovesey's Guesthouse at 111- 113 Showell Green Lane, where the rest of the tour party were settling in.

Things settled down here and both men apparently enjoyed the homely welcome and cooking of Mrs Lovesey. We know of their stay here, thanks to a book about the tour by Spencer Leigh, entitled "Things Do Go Wrong". In his appeal for those who saw the tour dates to come forward, he was lucky enough to also get someone who saw them in their digs! Rita, who was the daughter of a friend of the Lovesey's, was walking to her home around the corner in Phipson Road when she saw Joe Brown in the garden. She approached him and he offered to introduce her to Eddie and Gene.



Lovesey's Guesthouse today



She met them both later that day in the lounge where she found both men to be friendly and approachable. Eddie, in particular, seemed glad to meet his fans in a low key environment. At the Hippodrome shows both men ran through their hits to a great reception. Eddie's star was firmly in the ascendant and it looked as though he was heading for an even brighter future. Sadly things went very badly wrong after the final show of the tour in Bristol. On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April at about 11:50 p.m. while heading back to London, the car that Eddie and Gene were travelling in lost control on a corner in Chippenham, Wiltshire. Everyone in the car was injured severely but Eddie was unconscious with severe brain injuries. He died the following day in Bath Hospital. I went to Lovesey's recently – it is still a guesthouse and still pretty much as it was in 1960. For a homesick Eddie it was the last place he knew any home comforts, just a bit more than three steps away from Balsall Heath.

## WHAT A PERFORMANCE! Music Hall shows a success...



The audiences were most enthusiastic for the review style format, showcasing the best that Balsall Heath had to offer. One even called it a “terpsichorean extravaganza”, but this has yet to be confirmed by our man with a dictionary. What they definitely got was a feast of acts spanning comedy, song and speciality performances!

### BALSALL HEATH CARNIVAL

The carnival this year takes place on **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July**. This is one week later than usual. The theme is Community Safety. To tie in with this the Society is thinking of an “early days of motoring” for the procession.

### NEXT MEETING

**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> July 7:30**

The Venture

*(Malvern Street by the farm)*

**The History Society Annual General Meeting**

Updates from the Society, and the past year in review.



### NEW COMMUNITY GARDEN IN BALSALL HEATH

A new community green space, Gaia's Garden, has launched at the Old Print Works. Gaia's Garden, which was unveiled to the public at a Launch Day on Saturday 14th May, will provide local residents with a green space to use and enjoy throughout the summer months, promoting sustainability, creativity, and community spirit. Scores of the area's diverse community turned out on the day to see the sites transformation, lend a helping hand and donate much-needed materials to help the garden flourish, as well as enjoy freshly prepared, homemade food from Ort Cafe, live music from local artists DJ Silence and Onira, and artwork from talented local artist, Hoakser. Following the launch, Gaia's Garden is now open to the public every Saturday from 10am-3pm, where local residents can drop in to check out the space and get their fingers green. The sessions will offer locals the chance to learn new skills regardless of gardening experience, as well as make a positive difference within their community.

**SERIOUS TRAMCAR COLLISION.**—A steam tramcar collision of an alarming nature, although fortunately attended by no very serious results, occurred on Saturday morning, on the Central Tramway Company's Balsall Heath route. This route is for the most part, owing to the narrowness of the streets, worked on a single line, with loops at intervals for the cars to cross one another. The collision occurred on the stretch of single line in Cox Street West, between the junction with Longmore Street and King Street, along which the line turns at right angles towards Mary Street. In consequence of the fog the engine drivers had received instructions to use the greatest caution, and to restrict the pace to four or five miles an hour. About half-past nine o'clock, however, two trams proceeding in opposite directions came together in Longmore Street. The car from Moseley to town had only three passengers inside. The tram from town was, according to those who saw the accident, travelling at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour, but before the collision the speed had been reduced, or the results would have been more serious. The water-tank of one of the engines was broken, and the steps at one end of the Moseley car were smashed; the other engine was not so much injured, but both the engines and the cars had to be taken to the depot. The passengers escaped with nothing more than a shaking. An old lady in the car from town was thrown with sufficient violence against another passenger to make her nose bleed. The traffic was not much interfered with by the accident. The driver of a third car from town was warned of the obstruction only just in time to prevent him rushing into the damaged cars.

The roads may have been emptier but road safety was still sometimes an issue. The *Birmingham Post of 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1887* reports above on a tram collision in Balsall Heath.