



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.

TAKING UP ALMS IN BALSALL HEATH

The James Lloyd Almshouses

The section on Charities for the Poor in Volume 7 (Birmingham) of the Victoria County History of Warwickshire lists all the Alms Houses established in the city. Of interest to Balsall Heath are those built in Belgrave Road, and sadly long since demolished...

"By deed of 1869 Mrs. Elmira Lloyd gave £1,000 and certain property for the endowment of the almshouses which she was proposing to build. The almshouses, for 25 almswomen, were shortly after erected in Belgrave Road, Balsall Heath, and were named in memory of the benefactress's husband. They were to be for needy women of Birmingham and district, not of the pauper class. By deed of 1889 Mrs. Lloyd added a further £750 to the endowment. In 1928 the income from rents was about £160 and from stock £70. Part of the property was sold in 1938 for £610 and a sum of £400 of accumulated surplus income invested at the same time. The income was being fully expended on the maintenance of the almshouses in 1957."

The James Lloyd Trust still exists today. Their website adds further details on the Belgrave Road properties...

"In Belgrave Road, Balsall Heath, the original almshouse development consisted of 12 four-roomed properties – each designed to accommodate two women – plus one four-roomed house, to be occupied by the Superintendent. There were also some outbuildings; presumably toilets, and a wash house.

Elmira charged no rent; on the contrary, she gave each occupant two shillings (20 pence) per week, and the Superintendent received four shillings per week – though the title 'Superintendent' was quickly changed to 'Matron'.

The total number of residents was 25, and their selection is stipulated in the original Deed, which stated "residents must be a spinster or widow, over 60 years of age." 'Respectable' is probably the term, but this is not used. Nor was it intended to take the very lowest in society.

Fairly standard Victorian values applied; "Preference shall be given to women who shall not be of the pauper class, nor wholly destitute but who, through misfortune or infirmity, are unable to earn a livelihood, or to subsist without charitable aid."

The Deed also stated the almswomen can have any religious creed, but most certainly not the Roman Catholic faith."

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 31st March 7:30

The Venture

(Malvern Street by the farm)

Birmingham then and now by Mac Joseph

Another welcome visit from Mr Joseph, who will be looking at the ever changing face of Birmingham. Those of us who try to pass through the city centre lately wish it might not change quite so much and so often!

WHERE WERE THE LLOYD'S ALMSHOUSES?

They would have been on Belgrave Street/Road, down from where the Middle Way island is now – on the South side which is nearest to Balsall Heath. The nearest road junction was with Orchard Road when it used to connect to Belgrave Road.

Not far away on Conybere Street were the Lench's Trust Almshouses, still there today but no longer almshouses.

JACK BILLINGTON

Sad to note that our oldest member has passed away. Jack was born in Oldfield Road and attended Clifton Road School. He served with St John Ambulance during the war at many incidents in Balsall Heath.

He was a lovely gentleman and will be fondly remembered by us all.

BALSALL HEATH IN THE (OLD) NEWS

COINING IT IN MALVERN STREET

Long ago, before the farm and St. Paul's Trust existed, a local funding source operated in Malvern Street...

Birmingham Daily Post 25th December 1980

CAPTURE OF COINERS AT BALSALL HEATH.

Yesterday, at the Balsall Heath Police Court, before Messrs. Swinburn, Nettlefold, and Stock, Charles Jones (35), alias "Highly-Tighty," 49, Malvern Street, Clifton Road, Balsall Heath, and who was stated to be the son of a solicitor living in Northampton; and Mary Jones, his wife, who appeared in the dock with an infant in her arms, were charged with making base coin. —Detective-sergeant Black said at two o'clock on Monday afternoon, accompanied by Detective-sergeant Mountford, he went to the house occupied by the prisoners. The door was locked, but a boy opened it. The boy was about 10 years of age, and was the prisoners' son. Witness rushed upstairs into the back bed room. The prisoners were in the room, and the male prisoner jumped off his seat with a file in one hand and a pound's worth of bad half-crowns in the other. Witness thought the file was a knife, and he told him to drop it. Prisoner replied, "All right; I won't fight; I'm done." The half-crowns had just come from the moulds with the get out of. Sergeant Mountford came upstairs, and they commenced taking possession of the things. Witness took a ladle containing metal in a molten state off the fire. He caught hold of four moulds, but had to drop them owing to their being heated. Coins were lying about, but they were too heated to be handled. Witness went to the side of the room and discovered a battery—a Bunson battery. It was in full working order, with the silver, acids, &c. There was a pail in the room containing water and acid, and in it he found a number of coins in process of picking, preparatory to being plated. He also found paste and blacking, which were used for greasing and dulling the coins. When the moulds cooled they opened them. There were two double moulds for florins with the gets in them: one treble mould for a florin and two shillings, with the get of the florin in it; and one double mould for half-crowns. They also found the metal used for the manufacture of the money. Altogether they discovered 217 coins, consisting of half-crowns, florins, and shillings. Witness produced the coins, moulds, battery, acids, &c., found in the prisoners' house. He found a quantity of sand on the premises, and also a milling machine. Witness charged the prisoners with coining, and told the wife he should be obliged to lock her up. The wife said she had often spoken to her husband about it and asked him not to do it. The husband said "What could I do? I could not support a wife and two children on 18s. a week." Witness was present when the male prisoner was sentenced at the Birmingham Quarter Sessions to nine months' imprisonment for passing a base half-sovereign. —Detective-sergeant Mountford gave corroborative evidence, adding that he asked the female prisoner for her purse. She handed it to him, and in it he found two half-crowns, two florins, and two shillings which were base. He discovered in the house forty coins with the get taken off preparatory to being milled, and fifty-three coins which had just come out of the mould. The male prisoner admitted that he was tenant of the house and that the female was his wife. The female said to her husband, "I begged of you this morning to discontinue this; I knew that sometime or other it would come to something bad." —Police constable Holmes said on Tuesday he searched the house, and between the bed and the mattress found a child's sock which contained thirteen base sixpences and eight base shillings. In the parlour, behind the shutter, he discovered ten shillings and three florins, all counterfeit. The coins bore different dates. —Mr. Masters, silversmith, said he had examined the coins found in the prisoner's house. They were all counterfeit, and had not been plated. —The male prisoner said he was guilty, but his wife was innocent. —The Bench remanded them for a week, pending communication with the Mint authorities but consented to allow the female bail.

ATTACKED ON A BOMB SITE

One of our members remembers those happy days of playing on the bombsites; ready-made adventure playgrounds for the youngsters. But on several occasions in Birmingham the bombsites also offered up grim stories like the one below. Marguerita survived her ordeal.

Attacked Girl Very Ill

TREMBLING MAN SOUGHT

SIX-YEAR-OLD Marguerita Orme, of Wenman Street, Birmingham, who was found unconscious after she had been attacked on a bomb site in Balsall Heath, Birmingham, on her way home from school yesterday, was stated to-day to be "very ill."

Police have been keeping watch at her bedside in Birmingham accident hospital. She is suffering from head and internal injuries. Last night she was given blood transfusions and an operation was performed.

Police want to interview a man who walked past after the girl had been found, and asked three women what had happened. They noticed that he seemed agitated and that his hands were trembling.

A description of the man issued by the police states that he is about fifty, 5ft. 8in., medium build, with sharp features and a fairly prominent nose.



MARGUERITA ORME

Aberdeen Evening Express 23rd October 1953

HOME BUILT TELEVISION IS FINE

A home-built television?! Surely the big question is how on earth did he manage to build his own set.

Home-Built Television Set Leads To Fine

The first case of its kind to come before the Magistrates at Birmingham was heard to-day when George Bannister, of Highgate Road, Balsall Heath, was summoned for not having a licence for his home-built television set.

A Post Office official, Mr W. Birch, said Bannister had been receiving signals from London since January.

Bannister wrote to the court saying he did not think a licence was necessary as the Sutton Coldfield television station was not yet in operation.

Mr Birch said a licence was necessary as soon as a set was installed. The case had been brought as a warning to other users of television in the district.

A number of licences had been taken out for television sets.

Bannister was fined 10s.

Dundee Evening Telegraph 18th August 1949