



***BHLHS** 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.*

A WISE MAN IN BALSALL HEATH

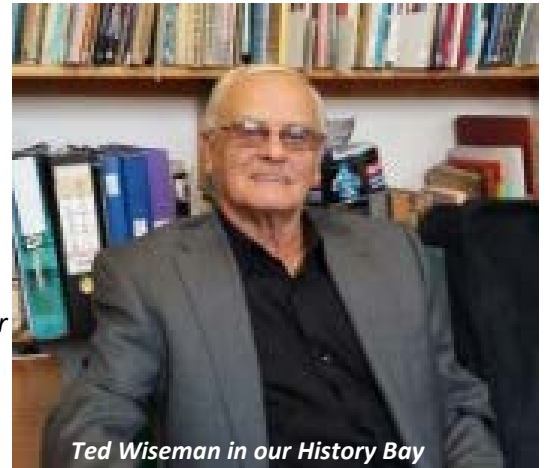
TED WISEMAN POPPED IN LAST MONTH TO MEET HIS FRIEND HARRY AND TALK ABOUT LIFE IN BALSALL HEATH. HERE HE TALKS ABOUT THE WAR YEARS, HIS FIRST JOB AND NATIONAL SERVICE

Ted's father, John, owned a newsagents business at 64 Vincent Parade. John also put in time as a part time fireman in the Auxiliary Fire Service. His local fire station was on Belgrave Road corner. Apart from attending the many local fires he was also among those called out for the raid on Coventry which flattened a large part of the city centre on the night of 14th November 1940.

Ted can recall vividly the air raids on Balsall Heath. *"When there was a raid we went down the road to Bycroft's sweet factory and went in a shelter under there. Six a clock of a night you would see people going in with blankets and so on, ready to stop all night. I would hear them saying it was a "bombers' moon" for sure". My school, Vincent Street, was just up the road. My father came back (after ARP duty) and he said the school had gone, bombed, completely. We also heard there were a family who were drowned in Vincent Street as the bomb busts the water main and flooded the cellar they were taking refuge in".* This is likely to be the Wilford family who lived at number 32 Vincent Street and who died there on 19th November 1940, many burst water mains were reported that night in the area. Ted and his friends would often see planes, British and German, in the sky during day and night. *"One day we were sitting on the step of my father's shop and I saw a plane in the distance and the lad next to me said, I bet that's a jerry. It was a Spitfire in fact but it came over that low he was at roof top level. He was obviously in trouble".*

Rebuilding after the war was slow and it took many years for all the ruins and bomb sites to go. For Ted though it wasn't all bad, "We played on the bomb sites, picking up shrapnel. We went to Cannon Hill Park during holidays. We paid a shilling to go on the canoes or rowing boats. Next day we went to Calthorpe Park, which was nicknamed the black patch.

When it became time for Ted to start work he found things did not go as well as was hoped at first. *"I started as an apprentice at Charles Brecknell, scale-maker, of 23 Ombersley Road (next to Woodfield Road junction). I had to go to college, but I failed the first year. My boss, Leslie Brecknell, said I will give you another 12 months to pass – getting over 40% in all subjects. Second year I failed again, he called me in and said sorry Ted I am going to have to let you go. I thought ok fair enough, and he said when you leave here you will be conscripted, they will call you up".*



Ted Wiseman in our History Bay



The Brecknell Works building is still there in Ombersley Road. This view shows the side in Woodfield Road.

(TED WISEMAN CONTINUED) Ted didn't fancy waiting around for his National Service call-up papers so he decided he would go and sort it out himself! "I went to the recruiting office opposite the Law Courts, and went for an interview for the RAF, Afterwards they sent me for a physical and they offered me four years as an airframe maker. I didn't want to do that though, so I went down the corridor to the army and he told me I would do two years. So I accepted that and got a job as a clerk in the quartermaster's store".

"The unit I was in was sent to Germany and I did two years at Dettmold. We weren't liked at all in Germany. The younger generation there just didn't like us. You would come up against a gang of kids and they would start their antics but you couldn't retaliate. I got a job working for the German service organisation who had drivers working for the English in the camp. I went around with the German drivers delivering groceries to the married persons' families. I got to know a German family, the Lehmann's, well. They had me round for dinner and I asked Eddie Lehmann what he did in the war. It turned out he had been in the SS!"

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 24th November 7:30

The Venture

(Malvern Street by the farm)

Victorian Gardens

by Dr. John Page

Dr. Page is a retired lecturer and a Convenor for the Rock and Alpine Gardening Study Group. He has a large number of talks he does on aspects of gardening history. This is sure to be an interesting talk for anyone interested in gardening. Some of you will be aware of the walled Victorian gardens in Edgbaston near the tennis club.

The novelist Marie Corelli found life was imitating art, in this story (below) from the Gloucestershire Echo, 14th December 1908.

To Aid The Danish Seamen

Evening Despatch

11th April 1940



Members of the Birmingham Players' Amateur Operatic Society photographed at the entertainment they gave at the Moseley and Balsall Heath Institute in aid of the Danish Seamen's Fund. In the centre is Mr. A. L. Brett, divisional manager of the Danish Bacon Co., who are the sponsors of the fund.

MARIE CORELLI'S VISITOR. SHOTS FIRED IN HER GARDEN. REMARKABLE OCCURRENCE AT STRATFORD.

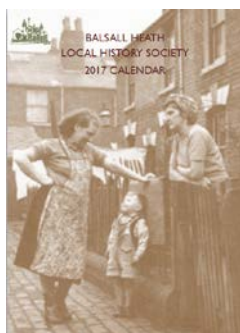
A singular story was narrated to the Mayor of Stratford-on-Avon at the Borough Police-court on Saturday, when a young man who gave his name as Reginald Rupert Jarvis (21), of 38 George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, was charged with being a rogue and vagabond, and with being found in an enclosed garden in the occupation of Miss Marie Corelli for certain unlawful purposes. The prisoner, who presented a woe-begone appearance, pleaded not guilty.

Police-constable Workman informed his Worship that at 10.45 p.m. on Friday he was on duty in Rother-street, when he heard five revolver shots in rapid succession in the direction of Miss Marie Corelli's house. He went round immediately, got into the garden from the paddock, and, accompanied by the butler, instituted a search. Prisoner was discovered on the top of some steps leading to a miniature tower. He was grasping a six-chambered revolver, and, on being asked for an explanation, said it was "all through reading novels and books." Witness took him into custody, and found in his pocket six undischarged cartridges, also four spent cartridges and one ball cartridge. A piece of paper bore the words, scrawled in pencil: "Never give the poor or needy help," and was signed "R. J."

Jarvis said he gave himself up; otherwise the officer would never have found him.

On this evidence the prisoner was remanded in custody till Thursday, Superintendent Lambourne observing that he would have an opportunity of communicating with his friends.

It is stated that Jarvis tramped from Birmingham on Friday, and when at Liveridge Hill was given a lift by a motorist. He has been recognised by a man from whom he made enquiries as to the residence of Miss Corelli.



THE 2017 CALENDAR

The annual calendar is available now for just £4! It features a lovely selection of images from our past.

It is printed on heavy deluxe card and will make a great gift for family, friends...or even yourself!