



Balsall Heath
Local History Society

The **GAZETTE**

MARCH 2017

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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.

CYCLING IN BALSALL HEATH by Val Hart

Cycling is getting increased attention from the City Council. In Balsall Heath we now have marked cycle routes... and there are bike stands outside the Library and elsewhere? But did you know that Balsall Heath has been fond of cycling for over 135 years?

The first reference I have found was in 1881 in the Birmingham magazine, The Dart, which reported: "A member of the Balsall Heath Cycling Club tells me he means to treadle down to Torquay this summer, a matter of only 200 miles". Interestingly, this must have been on a Penny Farthing, (named after the two coins) and cannot have ever been an easy ride. Accidents were frequent.

The Safety Bicycle, which closely resembled a modern bike, made its appearance from 1885 onwards and was further improved by the introduction of pneumatic tyres in 1888. This was a much safer and more practical means of transport. The late 1880s and 1890s saw a huge cycling craze everywhere.

In Balsall Heath the Apollo Cycling Club was founded in 1890 with headquarters at The Crown Hotel in St Paul's Rd. Membership cost four shillings and new applicants had to be introduced by two existing members. Respectability was important. Any member misconducting himself "so as to bring discredit to the club or detriment to the reputation of cycling generally" was to be dealt with at a general meeting. The club programme included charity sports events, time trials, and parades as well as touring runs.

It is heartening to find that women were also active cyclists. The Apollo Ladies Cycling Club was founded in 1893 in Kyrwicks Lane "for the encouragement of touring and cycling generally". Initially women were hampered by unsuitable clothing. Some bicycles were manufactured specially to allow for skirts but these machines were heavy and unmanageable. One solution was to wear knickerbockers but these were considered very daring. Another solution was "rationals" a form of divided skirt as shown in this advertisement.

Bicycles were also manufactured locally by Ephraim Phillips of Bissell Street. Ephraim himself was an enterprising business man who purchased the premises in 1880 for the manufacture of screws. However, he also claims the credit for inventing the Duplex Tricycle. This enabled two people to share the same tricycle, riding side by side, since it had two saddles and two sets of pedals but a single set of handlebars. It combined safety with sociability and elegance, allowing the cyclists the benefit of conversation as they pedalled along. However, it was an expensive buy at £35. The firm also made traditional bicycles to individual customers' specifications but it comes as a shock to find that one of the details required was whether they wanted brakes or not!



THE END OF THE SEASON.



**THE "GEM"
SKIRT.**
ADAPTED TO LADY CYCLISTS.
No folds of cloth to sit upon.
Does not ride up in front.
Hangs straight.
Perfectly safe.
Has the appearance of an ordinary skirt when walking.
PATTERNS & PRICES FREE.

**CURTIS & CURTIS,
LIMITED,
LADIES' TAILORS,
83 & 84, BULL STREET, and
116 & 117, Exchange Buildings
NEW STREET,
BIRMINGHAM.**

FRIENDS AT WAR

The involvement of the Friends Institute in the First World War is covered in an official history of the building: – “*Memories & Minutes 1898 – 1983*”. The Institute saw many men join up but it also provided a temporary home for refugees from Belgium.

It was a little over two months after the war began that the first refugees arrived. The use of the whole of the Institute was granted to the War Refugees Committee from 15th to 31st October 1914. Between these dates over 1,000 Belgian refugees were accommodated while homes were being found for them in Birmingham and the district. The Dolobran Club Room was used for sleeping accommodation for the men, while the classrooms round the Large Hall were used as bedrooms for the women and children – as were also the classrooms in the upper corridor and the Lecture Hall. The Large Hall was seated for 400 guests. During this time all the work at the Institute found premises elsewhere, the Mission Hall being largely used. A drinking fountain was installed in the Crush Hall as an additional facility to cope with the numbers.

In February 1921 the unveiling took place of the Memorial Tablet, in the Crush Hall, to members who had lost their lives in the war.

1914

William Henry Fantham.

1915

William Bird. Thomas Broughton. Thomas Harold Evans. Alfred Richard Harnaman. William John Horton. Ralph Allen Paxton. William Turvey. Horace Waite.

1916

George Edwin Ash. Charles Samuel Bates. William Thomas Bayliss. William Miles C Bellamy. Harold Billington. James Donald Cowie. William Henry Crumpton. Ernest Curbishley. Walter Bertram Curry. William Henry Davies. Hedley Gibbs. William Edward Hadley. John Walter Hopkins. Watkin W Henry Hughes. Joseph Steven Jervis. Robert Samuel Jones. Richard Harold Paddock. Arthur Leonard Palmer. Edgar James Palmer. William Henry Parker. John Henry Stanford. William E Stratford. Ernest Stuart. Samuel Walter Taylor. Arthur Henry Turner. Joseph Whitehouse. Edward Nicholas Wilkins. William Young.

1917

William Walter Bagley. Henry Cumming. Sydney Herbert Davies. John Edward Evason. Thomas Gaffey. Edmund Henry E Guy. F Royston Hickman. George Lee. Cecil Owen Mills. Frank Leslie Owen. Alfred Pepperell. William Henry Perks. Harold John Powis. Harry Richmond. Leonard Edwin Robinson. Percy William Robotham. Albert Thomas Smith. Lawrence Clark Sykes. Charles Townsend. John Hawkins Turner. Frank Wright.

1918

John James Cook. Joseph Henry Davis. Sidney Green. Harry James Harper. Wilfred Thomas Lorton. Thomas Joseph Luke. Bert Palmer. Fredrick G Pearson. Horace Penny. Percy Read. W R Harry Robinson. Edward Albert Rogers. Thomas J Saunderson. George Henry Shaw. Harold George Smith. Leonard E Thompson. Frank Tranter. Edward Turner. George Withers. J F William Woodwiss. George Francis Yorke.

1919

Albert Victor Baker.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 27th April 7:30

The Venture

(Malvern Street by the farm)

Quakers In WWI

by Betty Hagglund

Historically Quakers were pacifists. So how did they react to World War I and the immense pressures to serve for King and Country? **Betty Hagglund** will talk about the struggles of conscience for young Quaker men -should they join up or become conscientious objectors?

These dilemmas split families and divided friends. Some joined up, but others undertook service with the Friends Ambulance Unit, set up by Quakers soon after the start of the War. A few, wanting no part in war, were sent to prison.

The Balsall Heath connection here will come from the Friends Institute on Moseley Road, as featured in this, and the previous, issue of this magazine



THE FRIENDS INSTITUTE WAR MEMORIAL

Inscription: PAX In Loving Memory of Our Dear Comrades Members of This Institute Who Fell In Action Or Died In The Course of The Great War 1914 1919.

Location: This oak memorial plaque is on the rear staircase of the building.