



Balsall Heath
Local History
Society

THE GAZETTE

NOVEMBER 2018

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Windrush Heritage: Stories to be Told.

2018 saw the 70th anniversary of the docking of the HMS Empire Windrush, this was a prompt to celebrate the journeys and lives of those who helped rebuild a country ravaged by war. But this was also the year when it came to our notice that some of this generation and /or their family members have been treated harshly. "Not all would arrive on the famous passenger liner, yet 'Windrush Generation' has come to refer to those that arrived in the UK between 1948 and 1971. - The government's scandalous treatment of British citizens, being denied healthcare, detained and ordered to leave the country" (1) Became the back drop to these celebrations. The government has since apologised to the victims, and this has led to calls for an immigration amnesty for the Windrush generation.

What then of the journeys beyond 'Windrush', the lives lived in the UK, and in Balsall Heath? What is their heritage? We do have generalised notions of this by way of our own life experiences of living through these times. Tangible evidence comes to us through the work of photographer Ernest Dyche and his son Malcolm. From around 1919 Dyche had a studio at No 354 Moseley Road, from here they continued with the work they had always done that of theatrical, and family portraits. "When the first Black and Asian families began to move into the Balsall Heath, Highgate, and Sparkhill neighbourhoods, like so many before, they too visited the studio to sit in the glare of the lights, facing the huge camera. Their photographs document the development of new communities in the area, from the individual men who came seeking work, through the arrival of their families and friends." (2)

The Birmingham History Theatre Company – (Balsall Heath players) have re-enacted the work of the Dyche studio, during dramatic event trails of Moseley Road history, and with photos and video.

We are all in the debt for the preserving of history and artefacts of the Dyche studio by Peter James of Birmingham Central Library. Photographs from the library were on display at V&A's 'Black British Style show (2004).` This led to an article in The Guardian newspaper about the photos of Caribbean immigrants as taken by Dyche. "At first glance, it seems a straightforward portrait - a woman posing in a photographer's studio sometime in the Fifties. The snapshot would have been sent back home from Birmingham to Jamaica, to her family and friends. Look again, and it is perhaps a little unusual that she has forgotten to take off her coat. But for the first wave of Afro-Caribbean women arriving in Britain in the early Fifties, a warm woollen 'English' coat was as much a fashion and status symbol as a Prada bag or a pair of Gucci shoes might be today. This lady had arrived." (3).

Behind this glamour, was a reality of hard-working lives played in their newly adopted home. Often menial and unskilled work. And Racism to be faced. Against all this a desire for a better life and future. Those stories have been played out in Balsall Heath. But, we don't have those stories. We want to write these stories of family history for our project 'The Journey to Balsall Heath'. Are you from a Caribbean, or Asian family, or do you know of such, whom have a history of a life lived in Balsall Heath? And whom

would be prepared to be interviewed. Then please get in touch.

- (1) Birmingham Mail June 18, 2018.
- (2) Peter James – Photographic Researcher Birmingham Central Library. And Heathen 1991.
- (3) Tamsin Blanchard The Guardian 26/09/2004

Moving to the Heart of Balsall Heath

The Local History Society is on the move. From the end of November we will be based in The Old Print Works, in the eighteenth century house which fronts on to the Moseley Road, and next to the Ort Café. Our base will also be right next to the lovely gallery space at the Works, which is ideal for exhibitions. We are sad to leave St Paul's with whom we worked in partnership for many years, but times change. Going with us to our new base will be our extensive indexed collection of photographs, our Directories from the past, our maps, local books and resources and a selected range of artefacts for use with schools and groups. It will take a few weeks to get everything sorted but we hope to be able to deal with enquiries as usual from the New Year. The monthly newsletter, The Gazette, will continue without pause!

Our new address is:

Balsall Heath Local History Society
The Old Print Works,
498-506 Moseley Road,
Balsall Heath.

Birmingham B12 9AH

Contact us: info@balsallheathhistory.co.uk

New phone number for the office still to follow. Val

Hart: 0121 689 2584 Websites:

balsallheathhistory.co.uk

For our image collection:

<https://www.search.birminghamimages.org.uk/search.aspx>

Facebook: Balsall Heath Local History Society

Twitter: @BalsallHeathLHS

Events

8th December 2018 2p.m.

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.

Taking on the Men (Author Talk)

Join us for an author talk by David J.A. Hallam MA about his timely new book *Taking on the Men - The First Women Parliamentary Candidates 1918*.

Exhibitions

THE LAST ROMAN

Emperor Justinian I (527 – 565 AD), the so-called 'Last Roman Emperor', rose from peasant beginnings in Serbia to become the most powerful man on Earth. An exhibition of Roman artefacts at the Barber Institute, University of Birmingham. For more detail and an audio tour see <http://barber.org.uk/the-last-roman/>
Opening Hours 10 am to 5 pm
Weekdays and 11 am – 5 pm
Weekends. Runs until April 2019.

Next meeting.

Thursday December 13th

Ray Sturdy presents
Vesta Tilley a Victorian Light
The story of the famous music
hall performer.

7 p.m for a 7.30 start.

St Paul's Venture, Hertford St.

Visitors and new members
always welcome.