



## Balsall Heath Local History Society

## THE GAZETTE

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### Moving House



The society has been moving house this month. St. Paul's has decided that it needs our former offices above the venture for its

own offices so we're now in the cottage at the Old Print Works. Our room is at the top left in this picture. The cottage is said to date from 1790 which could make it the oldest building in Balsall Heath. The society's regular monthly meetings will continue to be held at the Venture despite the move. For those that want to write to us now, the new address is :- c/o The Old Print Works, 498-506 Moseley Road, Balsall Heath. Birmingham B12 9AH

### The Lost Children Project Update

We have been inundated with enquires from families in the UK and Canada wanting to trace their ancestors' experiences of being a migrant child sent to Canada from the Birmingham Children's Emigration Homes between 1873-1948. Amazingly we are even in touch with a gentleman who spent six years living at the Homes from the age of 2 before he was forcibly emigrated. Sadly his experience was not a good one but he is keen to tell his story. As we go to press we are looking forward to six of us spending a day at the Wolfson Centre on December 11th at Birmingham Library to research the files of around 40 children. Canadian Author Patricia Roberts-Pichette has offered us invaluable help in sourcing specific references in the Archives for each particular child. Patricia and volunteers at the British Isles History Society of Greater Ottawa have spent years indexing this information and have very kindly allowed us to access it before it is even available on their website.

We are in talks with Birmingham City University regarding a potential film-making project. Many thanks to Michael Bickerton and Xavier Mendik at the Centre for Digital Technology for their help and enthusiasm in supporting our project.

2020 will be a very exciting year as the project culminates in an exhibition and a dramatic lecture, both of which will take place in September as part of Birmingham Heritage Week. We are looking at potential locations and hope to finalise these shortly.

Christmas must have been a particularly hard time for these migrant children, thousands of miles from their families and familiar surroundings and many of them separated from their siblings when they reached Canada. We have heard some heart-breaking stories but equally some children were raised as members of the family and treated well. We look forward to telling their tales.

### In Memoriam. Harry Debey

It is sad to record Harry's death in November this year.

I first met Harry when I was researching the history of Balsall Heath in the 1980s with Jacqui Ure. Harry's building and decorating firm was based at 105 Clifton Rd, opposite Hertford St.

At that time he told us that the big double fronted house had been in the family since 1910; the business was started in 1920 and was then

passed down from father to son. The house itself was still a family home until the 1950s, with business premises at the rear.

He had vivid recollections of the Second World War. An incendiary bomb fell on the roof of the house in Clifton Road and his father managed to put it out. He said that Balsall Heath was known as Bomb Alley because of the intensity of the bombing.

Harry also became a member of the Local History Society where I was pleased to meet him again. He had a wealth of memories about Balsall Heath and was a notable figure in the area. We shall miss him.  
Val Hart

## Next year's Timetable

February 28th – Mary Bodfish – The King's Loose Box - so contemporary wits named the seats at King Edward VII's coronation specially reserved for his lady friends.

March 28th – Richard Churchley – Off to the Workhouse: the poor are always with us.

April 25th – To be confirmed

May 30th – Corrine Brazier/Steve Rice – Women in Policing

June 27th – Ned Williams – The Birmingham Onion Fair

July 25th – AGM followed by Gina Maddison – bring along your own piece of memorabilia to share with others.

September 26th Ruth Lowe – Mary Quant Part 2. Her later life, career and designs.

October 31st- Marie Fogg – The Smalbroke Family of Birmingham

November 28th – Gina Maddison – Christmas at Guildford Street.

December 19th – Mike Watkins – Remembering the Swinging Sixties

## Events

### Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2019 7 p.m.

The Cobb Land Speed Record Car  
Free (but donations are appreciated)

Birmingham ThinkTank, B4 7XG

A lecture by Dr Jim Andrew.

The story of a car that broke the world speed record 3 times.

This is the monthly meeting of the Newcomen Society dedicated to the history of engineering.

### Friday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019 7p.m.

Diabolical Murder. Or, Why The Nation Was Gripped By The Horrible Fate Of Poor Mary Ashford in Erdington on 27 May 1817.

£3 per ticket

Gunmaker's Arms, 93 Bath Street, B4 6HG

The story of a young servant girl from Erdington raped and murdered in 1817 and the trial of Abraham Thornton for it in which the dead girl's brother invoked the right of trial by combat.

Come and find out more from Naomi Clifford.

### Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 7 p.m.

Opportunities for Women in Wireless Telegraphy during World War One

A lecture by Dr Elizabeth Bruton  
Free (but donations are appreciated)

Birmingham ThinkTank, B4 7XG

## Next meeting.

### Thursday January 31st

Gina Maddison – author of "The Girl from Guildford Street".

Talk about growing up in the Birmingham back to back houses 1957-68.

7 p.m for a 7.30 start.

St Paul's Venture, Hertford St.

Visitors and new members always welcome.