



Balsall Heath
Local History Society

The GAZETTE

MARCH 2016

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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.

BLIZZARDS IN BALSALL HEATH!



The fabulous picture above was sent in by Mick Blizzard. It shows his great grandfather Charles Blizzard and his family outside their greengrocers shop at 168 Clifton Road. The shop is to the right of the picture and stood on the school side of the road just before the junction with White Street. The family left there around 1912.

Mick added that, "My Grandad's younger brother Harold Blizzard used to run a barbers shop from the front of 56 Runcorn Road before the Second World War".

On the left above, at 166, is a bakery.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 28th April 7:30

The Venture

(Malvern Street by the farm)

Researching the past through maps

Our map collection is coming out for members to have a good look at. Details from them will be blown up on screen for discussion.

The society has quite a large collection of maps of Balsall Heath and they make for fascinating and absorbing viewing. Businesses, schools and public houses are clearly marked and the names of the many avenues are listed, which they often are not in Trade Directories. Come along and see how Balsall Heath developed and grew.

The picture below was sent in by Sue Lloyd (nee Henck) of her brother on his new bike. Taken in the late 40s or early 50s, it shows Strensham Road basking in sunshine.



Left: This "ballerina girl" picture is part of the Janet Mendelsohn collection shown recently at the Ikon Gallery. It was taken in 1968 somewhere in the area and the Birmingham Mail is currently trying to trace her.



BALSALL HEATH IN THE (OLD) NEWS

A HAPPY CELEBRATION



Parties for children in the streets where they live were a feature of Midland celebrations of "VJ" Day. The photograph shows a well-stocked tea-table in Clifton Road, Sparkbrook.

The street parties in August 1945 for the Victory over Japan, which marked the true end of the war, do not seem to have been as widely photographed as the earlier ones for VE Day. Here then is a rare picture story from the Birmingham Despatch showing happy residents of Clifton Road.

In our story below, from the Daily Mirror of 12th November 1943, romance had blossomed for Charles Littlehales over the period of his wartime captivity. Helping to keep his spirits up was Mary Goodyear of Balsall Heath, who he marries at the Register Office.

Charlie courted by prison camp letters

THE Town Hall clock chimed eleven as Private Charles Littlehales, of the Wiltshire Regiment, hobbled out of the Register Office in Edmund-street, Birmingham.

Round the corner on the steps of the Hall of Memories veterans of the last war laid wreaths and bowed their heads in two minutes' silence.

Wed at Last

"Well, Mary dear, we're married at last," said Charles, who had been a prisoner in Germany for over three years. Aged 29, short, blue-eyed, with two front teeth missing, Charlie is a typical smiling carefree British Tommy.

He was so badly wounded in the right leg that he was to have had it amputated. But a French doctor saved it.

His bride, 30-year-old Mary Elizabeth Goodyear, a munition worker, who lives in a little

house in the working-class district of Balsall Heath, told the *Daily Mirror* all about her Charlie.

They had known each other only a few days when he said goodbye. He was wounded and taken prisoner and for over three years they have corresponded," said the bride. "We've done all our courting through the post."

Said Charlie: "I used to be a coalman before I joined up, but I can't heave coal now with this leg."

"But when I saw my old gaffer he said, 'Charlie, your jobs still here for you.' Now that's damn good of him."

"Mary and I are going to settle down and all I ask of the Old Country is to get a job. Come on, Mary."

And Charlie hobbled down the street, joking with his bride of how he had given the registrar his prisoner-of-war number instead of his Army number.

Their first parting in 72 years

NONAGENARIANS, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Hodgetts, are parted for the first time in nearly 72 years of married life.

Probably the longest-married couple in Britain, they have spent all their lives in Birmingham, and have never moved away from the city even for a holiday. Before they were married they lived in the same street.

But Mr. Hodgetts is bed-ridden now, and his wife, after an accident to her leg, has been in Selly Oak Hospital for some time.

Five years ago Mrs. Hodgetts hadn't a grey hair in her head, and still went to the pictures three times a week.

They have brought up 13 children in their house at 126, Sherbourne-road, Balsall Heath.



MR. AND MRS. HODGETTS

Birmingham Despatch
11th February 1942

The Valentine's week story from the Despatch, above, focussed on a couple who must have been well known in Balsall Heath.

William Henry Hodgetts married Mary Jane Bagley in 1871 in Aston. The couple were still going strong at the time of this story, which mentions their 13 children brought up at 126 Sherbourne Road.

In the 1911 Census Hodgetts lists his occupation, intriguingly, as an "Art Metal Worker - Ecclesiastical". Sadly the couple did not spend much more time together - William died aged 92 in the December 1942 quarter and Mary Jane followed in the June 1943 quarter aged 94.

Meanwhile, below, romance was a welcome distraction in the life of Lilian Mackenzie of Clifton Road. Her stolen library of over 700 romantic novels was missed and she ended up at the Magistrates' Court. Story from the Yorkshire Evening Post of 12th January 1954.

700 stolen library books in her house—Police

Over 700 stolen library books, all feminine, light romantic fiction, were found in the house of a woman, it was stated at Birmingham today.

Miss Lilian Mackenzie (46), Clifton Road, Balsall Heath, pleaded guilty to stealing 12 books from Lewis's Library, between December 15 and January 4, and to stealing 709 books since September, 1941. The case was adjourned for 14 days for probation and medical reports.