



Balsall Heath
Local History Society

The GAZETTE

JULY 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.

TURNER'S PRIZED COLLECTION TO GO ON SHOW



St Paul's Trust is putting a selection of the Mick Turner Collection of photographs on show at a gallery in Kings Heath later this year.

Mick worked in Balsall Heath from the 1970s to 1990s and he photographed the area extensively. An era which saw the worst of the social conditions, and the start of the urban renewal schemes which turned things around. A constant theme throughout the pictures is of local people making the best of what are sometimes visibly awful conditions. There are many pictures which are not so awful – the annual carnivals for example are well represented and a joyous celebration of community spirit. It's that community spirit that shines through on so many of the photographs. There is plenty here to enjoy, as well as those that make you pause to wonder how it was possible for conditions like this to exist so late into the twentieth century.

There are some 12,000 pictures in the collection and the vast majority have never been seen by a wide audience. This is now set to change thanks to St Paul's Trust.

Ian Edwards from St Paul's sees the Kings Heath exhibition as the first stage of a programme of events featuring the Turner Collection. He is seeking funding to assist with the costs of exhibitions, a book and even a calendar! William McCabe, also from St Paul's, was the man who took on the exhausting task of cataloguing the collection so that there became a clearer idea of what there is featured in it. Even so there are still photographs where the names of the streets seen are tantalisingly elusive, and of course most of the people in the images are unknown. Ian is locating Mick Turner, who now lives in Ireland, to get him over for the launch of the photographs, and hopefully add his memories of what was happening in them at the time.

The exhibition will be held at Park View Gallery, 70 Vicarage Road, Kings Heath from 17th September to 15th October. Further information on the collection, and further plans for how and where it will be developed, from Ian Edwards at ian.edwards@stpaulstrust.org.uk

A PUBLIC CLOCK FOR MOSELEY ROAD.

Through the generosity of a resident in the parish, the inhabitants of Balsall Heath and the neighbourhood are about to become possessed of a great public convenience, in the shape of a clock, which is now being fixed in the tower of St. Paul's Church, Moseley Road. The want of a reliable public timepiece has been felt for some time past in that populous locality, and a few months ago a subscription was started, for the purpose of placing a clock in the tower of St. Paul's, the parish church of Balsall Heath. The project commended itself to others besides churchmen, and a considerable sum was promised. Before, however, the movement had gone very far, Mr. T. Barnes, of Balsall Heath Road, whose family have long been connected with the parish, intimated his desire to present the clock as a memorial of his late uncle, a gentleman who for many years resided in the neighbourhood, and as a sign of his own interest in the parish. The offer was gladly accepted by the vicar and churchwardens, and after correspondence with various eminent firms Mr. Barnes accepted the tender of Messrs. J. B. Joyce and Co., of Whitechurch, who have supplied clocks to Worcester, Chester, Chichester, Bangor, and other cathedrals, and to large public buildings in various parts of the country. The clock, which it is hoped will be set going in about a week, will cost altogether about £160. The dials, four in number, have been fixed this week. They are of copper, painted jet black, with the Roman numerals and borders in gold. The hands will also be of copper, gilded. The dials, which face towards and up and down the Moseley Road are 5ft. 6in. in diameter, or with the border 5ft. 10in., and are fixed at a height of about 50ft. from the ground. The fourth dial is 6ft. in diameter, or with the border 6ft. 4in., and is placed about 10ft. higher. The fixing of the dials is effected by means of bolts driven through the 3ft. wall of the tower. This plan was adopted at the request of Mr. Barnes as giving a more neat external appearance than that which is obtained where the dials are secured by means of cobles and other projecting fastenings. The trials can be seen from considerable distances along the Moseley Road and from many parts of Balsall Heath, the Stratford Road, Sparkbrook, Spark Hill, &c. The clock, which will have Denison's gravity escapement, will go eight days without winding and will strike the hours on the bell now in the tower, and which is 43in. in diameter and weighs about 14cwt. The iron frame of the clock will be a horizontal casting in one piece, with pivot holes screwed on so that each wheel may be separately removed. All the wheels will be of gun metal with teeth cut and finished by engine, so as to ensure perfect accuracy of movement. The main wheel of the striking part will be twelve inches in diameter. The maintaining power of the clock is self-acting, and sufficient to keep the clock going during the time of winding. The pinions will be of steel, hardened and tempered. For the purpose of more accurately regulating the rate the pendulum will be fitted with small weights and variations that might be caused by changes of temperature will be prevented by providing the pendulum with compensating tubes of zinc and iron. The weights, which will have a fall of 50 feet, will be suspended by cords of patent iron wire passing over pulleys of iron, with turned grooves and steel pivots running in gun-metal holes. The clock is guaranteed not to vary more than 15 seconds in a month, and is expected to keep time well within that limit.

The story above is from the *Birmingham Daily Post* 6th October 1884. The clock was a welcome addition indeed and graced the church until it was eventually demolished. It can be seen clearly in the postcard view of it to the right.

WAR SHRINE AT BALSALL HEATH.

The Archdeacon of Birmingham last night unveiled and dedicated a war shrine at St. Mark's Mission Church, Balsall Heath, which is to be placed outside the church in honour of the 240 men who have joined the forces from Vincent Street, Wenman Street, Knutsford Street, and Pearson Street, in the immediate district of the mission, and the nearly 40 men of that number who have laid down their lives. The shrine has on one side a panel inscribed with the Roll of Duty—those who have answered the call—and on the other the Roll of Honour—those who have fallen, while in the centre is a picture of the "white comrade." Above is a small crucifix, and below is a shelf on which will be placed flowers. The shrine is intended to serve as an object of reverence and a call to prayer. The service was largely attended. It is proposed to erect a smaller shrine on the east side of St. Paul's parish.

The story above appeared in the *Birmingham Mail* 5th October 1916. What happened to the memorial is unknown as are the names which were inscribed upon it.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday 29th September 7:30

The Venture

(Malvern Street by the farm)

The History of Egg Cups

by Javad Hashemi

This looks to be a cracking talk. Egg cups have been used since prehistoric times, with some of the earliest occurrences on Minoan Crete. Archaeological recovery at the Bronze Age palace of Cretan Knossos reveals the presence of egg cup use as early as the 18th century BC.

IN TENT ON GOOD SERVICE

What would Balsall Heath Carnival be without a cup of tea, cake and a sit down in the shade? Margaret and Jenny, from our happy band of volunteers, are seen here on duty for the 2016 Carnival in July.

