



## Balsall Heath Local History Society

## THE GAZETTE

FEBRUARY 2019

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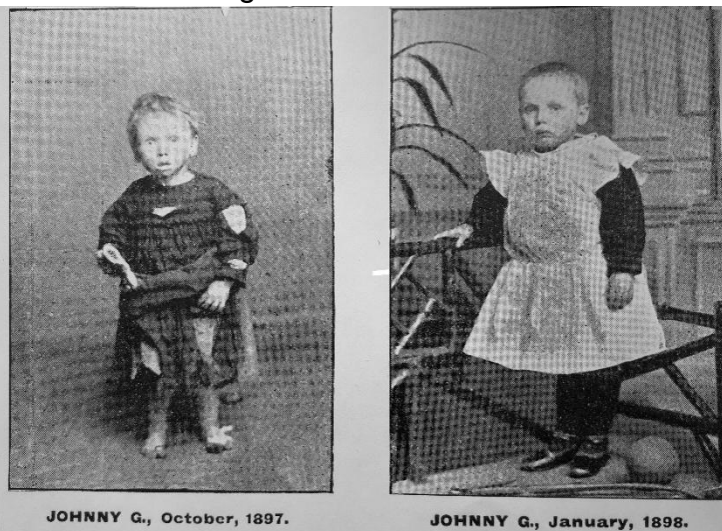
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### The Lost Children

We are delighted to announce that our main exhibition will be held from September 13th to 22nd at The Birmingham & Midland Institute in Margaret street, a stone's throw from The Council House.

This FREE family event will take you on a trip back in time to 1872 and the opening of the Middlemore Homes. You'll be able to 'choose your child' and follow their remarkable family journey from the slum streets of Birmingham to the backwoods of Canada. If you have a smartphone, unique QR codes will provide additional access to documents, pictures and amazing stories.

We'll also be holding a lively 'Dramatic Lecture' performance. Expect pop-up theatre, singing, film and lots more. There will be at least two FREE performances held in the main Theatre at the BMI - times and booking details in the next issue.



JOHNNY G., October, 1897.

JOHNNY G., January, 1898.

We are hoping that Canadian Author, Patricia Roberts-Pichette, will be coming to the UK to be involved with the exhibition. Patricia has worked tirelessly for many years to compile an index of Middlemore children, which has just been launched at: <https://bifhsgo.ca/cpage.php?pt=470>

Fingers crossed, Patricia Skidmore, daughter of child migrant Marjorie Skidmore, will also be flying in to give a talk about her family's personal experiences of being Middlemore Home Children.

There's lots more in the pipeline and plenty to do so if you could spare a couple of hours to help with anything from admin to set designing we would love to hear from you!

### A Wonderful Donation

Some of you may remember Nick Bigg who was a photographer in Balsall Heath in the 1980s. Many of his photos appeared in the Balsall Heath newspaper.

I am sad to report that he died in June, 2018 but his sister, Clare Nicholls, has been in touch as she found an amazing album of Nick's photos of Balsall Heath. She has donated the album to the Local History Society.

The photos are a treasure trove. There is the Opening of the Gurdawara on the Moseley Road, housing construction in St Paul's Road, various school photos, Roshven residents' Christmas raffle, the opening of Pickwick Park, and a wealth of community events of all kinds. Best of all, there is a detailed list of what the photos are about.

Clare said in her letter; "I hope that Balsall Heath Community take great interest in this small piece of social

history". We certainly will do so and are intending to collect more information on the photos by asking people to identify people they remember.

## Save Balsall Heath City Farm.

The much loved City Farm in Clifton Road is under threat of closure. It opened in May 1980 when a lot of the area was in turmoil with Urban Renewal. The site on the corner of Malvern St was derelict.

Dick Atkinson managed to raise the funds and get approval for this innovative project, as part of St Paul's Trust commitment to the local community. The Lord Mayor came to declare it open and said, "The farmyard will not only be of value to today's youngsters but also to future generations."



This has certainly proved to be the case for the past 39 years. Thousands of children and families have come in through the gates to meet a variety of animals. Who could forget Buster the goat, one of the first residents, or Charlie the horse?

The farm has survived recession, rebuilding of the neighbourhood, foot and mouth disease and many political changes.. Now the time has come when funding is no longer available to keep it going. Income earned just does not cover the costs. There are plans for sustainability longer term but right now it needs support to prevent closure.

A new group, Friends of Balsall Heath City Farm, is being set up. You could join that Or just donate: <https://www.gofundme.com/balsall-heath-city-farm-need-30k-to-stay-open>

## Events

These are meetings held by other groups in other parts of Birmingham that may be of interest.

### Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 7:00 pm

The Newcomen Society  
ThinkTank, Curzon Street.

The History of Gas Manufacture in the U.K. A lecture by Russell Thomas.

Admission Free

### Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 7:15 p.m

Kings Heath Local History Society  
Heathfield Road Community Centre,

A talk by Pete Haylor, co-author of "Billesley and surrounds".

£3 admission

### Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2:00 pm

Guided Tour: Heritage and History of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens - a new monthly tour.

The tour is free but admission to the gardens is not. Prices from £4 - £7.50

### Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 7:00 pm

The Stadium club, 205 Wheelers Lane B13 0ST

**Birmingham History Theatre company** presents Cluedunnit the dining experience. Tickets £18.50. for further details contact [cluedunnit@gmail.com](mailto:cluedunnit@gmail.com)

## Next meeting.

### Thursday March 28th

The speaker will be Richard Churchley on "Off to the Workhouse: the poor are always with us."

7 p.m for a 7.30 start.

St Paul's Venture, Hertford St.

Visitors and new members always welcome.