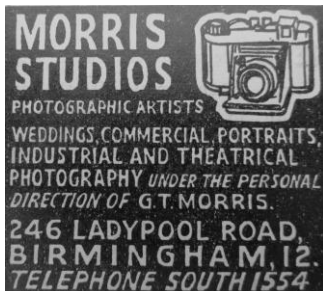




*The Balsall Heath Local History Society was founded in 1979 with the aim of promoting interest in our local history. We feel pride in our area and value its strengths – past and present. To meet our aims we work with local schools and community groups organising exhibitions and events. We have also 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.*

## PICTURE THIS

The late 19th century saw a rise in High Street photographers. Originally only the rich could afford to have their pictures taken, unless you were captured in a street scene! It became traditional to mark important life events such as baptisms, weddings and special birthdays, with a studio portrait. Balsall Heath was no exception and there were several studios in the area, such as Morris Studios (*below*) on Ladypool Road.



Next month we will be looking at some of these studios, their work and listing them. The peak years of business were from the late Victorian era through to just after the Second World War. There then follows a noticeable decline in numbers, linked to the rise of the Box Brownie camera at home. Wedding photography continued as did school photographs.



The lovely photograph (*above*) is of **Iris June Lock** from **Clifton Road**. It was taken for her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday by a photographer on Stratford Road. Her daughter Amanda recalls that it was her first long dress and that the stunning creation was made from a pair of velvet curtains!



**Jenny Lloyd** says of her family photograph (*above left*), "The girl on the left is my grandmother, Rose Maud Bartlett and the girl on the right is her sister, Ada. At the time it was taken they were living at number 8, **White Street**. It was taken by Walter Baker of 159 Moseley Road circa 1910. A nice touch is the picture frames on the table, presumably relatives of the two ladies.

## HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

There is a **Diamond Balsall Heath** exhibition on at St Paul's, Clifton Road on 14th and 15th September. This is part of the **Heritage Open Days Weekend** and the exhibition is open from 11 - 4 both days. There will be plenty of old photographs of Balsall Heath on display as well as chance to see the Victorian Classroom. Entrance is free.

## HAPPY TRAILS

**The Ladypool Road - Trail Through Time** takes place on Sunday 22nd September. Starting from St Paul's, Clifton Road there will be two one hour long trails - 12:00 and 14:30. Both are free to come along to and will be an entertaining guided walk, meeting characters from the road's historic past. This follows on from past successful trails along the Moseley Road and along the canal towpaths.



### Next Meeting:

**Thursday 26th September 7:30**

The Venture (on Malvern Street by the farm)

**Projecting Britain** by Chris Sutton

I am speaking at the September meeting about how Birmingham born **Sir Michael Balcon** (below) transformed the fortunes of **Ealing Studios**. Over the years they produced many great films that, as Balcon hoped, summed up the British character. Many will remember the comedies for which Ealing are well known but I will also be talking about some of their great dramatic films such as **“Dead of Night”**. This was the first horror film made after the war and indeed horror films had been subject to a ban in Britain all through the war years. The film in essence looked at what lay beneath the surface for people – their fears and worries. All of this is explored in the fine old tradition of recounting stories of the supernatural but in a group setting that, in itself, is less than reassuring. The main story is broken up with five short stories; probably the best remembered will be Michael Redgrave’s stunning performance of a ventriloquist (Maxwell Frere) with a dummy named Hugo. Hugo represents Frere’s “darker side”, but it goes much further than that...Hugo is alive and has his own agenda.



### THE WRITING OFF THE WALL

**Alex Layton** (right) popped in to see us with a very generous gift. Here he is below with an indenture dated 25<sup>th</sup> March 1874 between Elijah Goodhead and George Timson. This was for the sale and land and building of domestic residences on **Belgrave Road** between numbers 111 – 123, either side of the junction with **Alexandra Road**. They remained as such for decades, but we do know that by 1935 number 123 had become the Belgravia Private Hotel.

The item will form part of our extensive Balsall Heath collection, which we are always looking for new items for. It will be on display at our forthcoming Diamond Balsall Heath event.

### COURAGE UNDER FIRE (comments)

Mark Houldcroft wrote in about last month’s pieces on the bombing in **St Paul’s Road** and local cinemas.

*“I knew Miss Abel (Edith) in the 80’s when I was one of the Balsall Heath area caretakers. She was still living at 24 St Paul’s Rd. We used to do little jobs for her. She had kept her house very much as it was after it was re-done after the war other than a slightly more modern but still scary electricity supply. Her gas fittings were still intact. – I think it was her that first told me of the stick of bombs that hit diagonally across the area.*

*My mother always said that she was in Taunton Road cinema on the night it was bombed. My eldest brother was ill and grouchy so they left a few minutes before it was hit. At the time her brother would have been on an ack ack gun in Swanshurst Park”.*

The site of the cinema is now a peace garden with a memorial to those who were killed.

### PHOTO GROUP – DEVELOPING NEWS

We are delighted that the Harry Payne Trust has donated £300 to the Photo Group, to purchase acid free wallets and photo boxes to store our collection.

We have also started taking photographs of “old Balsall Heath” that we don’t have pictures of. An example is the industrial buildings (below) on **Brunswick Road**. In 1935 it was a Joiner’s Yard owned by Benjamin Ashby.

