



A Secret Kirton

"Emily Kirton?" "Yes miss". Along with the rest of her class little Emily answered her name and started the usual settling in process. She was 8 years old and this was her first year in the Girls at Clifton Road School. She didn't know many of her classmates too well because it was also her first year in Balsall Heath. At the end of the day she probably skipped home, to 127 Clifton Road, where her mother was waiting to hear how she had got on. Nothing unusual about this typical first day at a school. Except she probably wasn't Emily Kirton and the woman waiting was not her mother, and the man who came home later was not her father either. Indeed the family at 127 were the Claxtons. Who then was this little girl? One who wanted some clues was Pat Allcock who wrote, having seen our website, on behalf of her elderly neighbour who had always wanted to know the truth about her mother's origins.

All that Pat "knew" was that Emily Kirton might not be her real name, that she came from Newcastle and her birthday was in 1902. Oh and that she lived in Balsall Heath for a time, where she appears on the 1911 census – not far of course from Clifton Road School. Pat wondered if by any chance little Emily might have gone to Clifton and if there were any records that could shed a little light on the mystery.

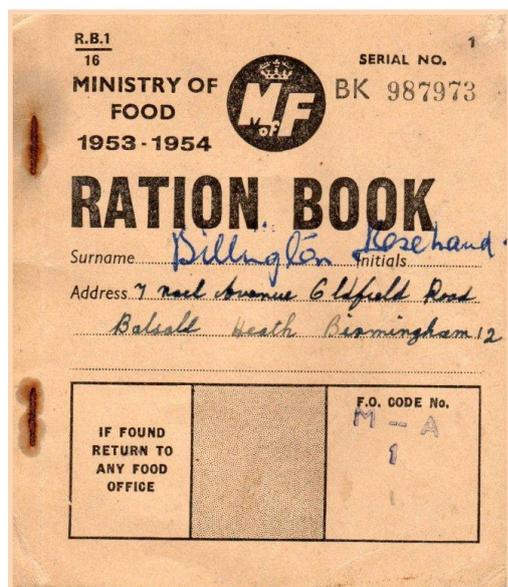
The Admission Register for 23rd August 1910 has Emily Kirton on it and does indeed help provide some information, assuming it is true. Apart from the address anything else could be a fabrication but I suspect – apart from her name – it is correct. We see from the entry that she was born on 9th March 1902 and this agrees with the census. On the census she is living with her aunt, Emily Claxton and her uncle David Claxton, who was a coal merchant. So far there is nothing untoward in this at all. A little girl, somewhat far from home admittedly. living with her relatives.

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Admission Number.	Date of Admission.			Date of Re-admission.			CHILD'S NAME IN FULL. (Surname first).	Date of Birth.			ADDRESS.	Whether exempt from Religious Instruction.
	Day	Mth	Year	Day	Mth	Year		Day	Mth	Year		
5912	15	8	10				Bushby Ethel	5	7	03	41 Sterlford St	ho
5913							West Marie	24	9	02	11 Chesterton Rd	.
5914							Kirton Emily	9	3	02	127 Clifton Rd	.
5915							Edwards Gladys	7	3	03	2 Cornish Pl. Doughton Rd	.
5916							Greaves Edith	19	1	03	8 McDonald Rdgs Slidley St	.
5917							Hetcher Nellie	23	7	03	105 173 Clifton Rd	.
5918							Morris Blanche	4	4	03	2 Ten Stone Row Slippy Lane	.
5919							Yalis Beulah Sula	19	1	03	11 Malvern St.	.
5920							Delington Hilda	7	9	02	3 Florence Pl. Clifton Rd	.
5921							Cherry Annie	2	9	02	1 Oak 106 Dunsunick Rd	.
5922							Marlow Doris	2	3	03	4 Oak Av. Purness Rd	.
5923							Cottonill Rose	14	11	02	20 Clifton Rd	.
5924							Morgan Lois	7	3	03	60 Newport Rd	.
5925							Palmer Theresa	21	7	03	32	.
5926							Bielon Evelyn	1	2	03	44 Dunsunick Rd	.

However the Births records have no Emily Kirton registered at all. Whoever she was born as - it was not Emily Kirton, or she was not registered under that name. So her first official appearance is in the Clifton School register where we get her address, date of birth and, tantalisingly, her father's Christian name – James. James Kirton? James something else? It is hard to say at all. We know a little more about her relatives – David Claxton was from Birmingham and married Emily Woods in 1897 in Medway, Kent. And it is in Kent where the story gets a little more mysterious because little Emily left Clifton School, and subsequently Balsall Heath, with the Claxtons, on 2nd July 1911. Unlike her classmates - who left due to being “over age”, or to another local school – Emily left for Rochester ... in Kent. Why they left is unknown but she eventually reappeared many years later as Emily Kirton back in her native North East.

Adding to the mystery is that in 1959 in Cleveland one Patricia Kirton married an Arnold Claxton. It seems these two families were linked very closely.



January Meeting: Thursday 31st 7:30
The Venture
Diamond Balsall Heath Launch

The January meeting is something of a “show and tell” members evening. The theme is the Diamond Balsall Heath project for which we are looking at personal history inspired by objects. Everyone is welcome to bring some objects along of their own and share some anecdotes.

Jenny Lloyd supplied the above image of a family ration book. There must be many ration book stories out there to be told. Much more from the Lloyd Museum next month.



Tis the season

In 1983 **Alan Maher** edited a small volume of “**Memories of Balsall Heath**” contributed by people at the Day Care Centre for the Elderly. All of the contributors were listed - but not individually attributed. Here are the Christmas memories from the book...

The local bands played on Christmas morning, all the old fashioned tunes like “Mistletoe Bough” and went round collecting coppers. At one time at New Year all the church bells rang, the factory hooters and whistles blew at midnight. Youths and boys used to run round the streets shouting “*Let the New Year in!*”

A lot of families had “first footers”; they would always invite someone with a dark complexion, if possible, to come right through the house from the front to the back shouting such things as:

“I wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year, a pocket full of money and a cellar full of beer, a pig in the sty to last all the year”

I remember the barrel organs with a monkey on the top. Two roads by us put together and bought one between them.

Every year near Christmas time there was an open top deck tramcar, illuminated with hundreds of coloured light bulbs; it travelled slowly from town to the outer terminus and back. A different route was used each night until every route had been covered. Many hundreds of people would wait along the route to see it pass. It was a lovely occasion.