



Balsall Heath  
Local History Society

# The GAZETTE

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Facebook: Balsall Heath Local History Society

*BHLHS 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.*

## THE FRIENDS INSTITUTE

***A belated story for you which covers the re-grading of the Institute – a building we haven't covered in The Gazette as yet. STACEY BARNFIELD reported for the Birmingham Post on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014***

The Friends' Institute Building on Moseley Road, Birmingham, has been handed Grade II\* listed status.

The historic Quaker building, the site of the first international athletics match between England, Ireland and Scotland, has been listed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on the advice of English Heritage. Only 5.5 per cent of listed buildings in England are Grade II\*, making them particularly important and of more than special interest.

One of the largest Quaker buildings in England, The Friends' Institute was commissioned by Richard Cadbury, son of the chocolate company's founder, and designed by the noted local architecture practice of Ewan and James Harper, who also designed the Methodist Central Hall on Corporation Street in the city centre.

The Friends' Institute's 37 classrooms, lecture theatre and assembly hall were used for adult education and social work in the area and reflect the Quakers' values of education and philanthropy.

The building, which opened in 1897, was also the home of the Dolobran Athletic Club and was the venue for the first international athletics match between England, Ireland and Scotland in 1900.

The Dolobran Athletic club started in Sparkhill in 1884, but by the end of the century it had grown to have almost 700 members. Its president was Barrow Cadbury, Richard Cadbury's son, and he moved the club to the Friends' Institute. It is also thought that the gymnasium was used as a training venue by the British Olympic Teams in 1936.

From 1962 to 1979 the Large Hall functioned as a bakery and from 1979 it has been used by the New Testament Church.

The plan of the building has been little altered since its opening and many of the fittings and details of the original decoration are still in place.

Birmingham City Council Heritage Champion, Coun Philip Davis, said: *"Official recognition of the Friends' Institute as a building of historic value could help the city win external funding to better look after it. I hope listing by English*



*Heritage will support continued community use of this fine building."*

Michael Bellamy, Designation Adviser for English Heritage in the West, said: *"This is an expressive building, and it shows the altruism and desire to educate which are features of the Quaker faith. Its grandeur and intact survival, as well as its important sporting associations justify the listing at Grade II\*."*

Other Grade II\* listed buildings in the area include the College of Art and Moseley Road Swimming Baths and Library.

## REMEMBERING GUNNER LAWFORD OF BALSALL HEATH



Gordon Grubb got in touch with us on the off chance that we might know if there was any sort of record kept of the names on the St. Paul's Church war memorial. In fact one image exists still of the memorial as it was, with the wooden name boards montaged next to it. The boards themselves are long gone but we have a transcribed list of all of the names on them, including the name that Mr. Grubb was interested in. He was delighted to find that Frederick Lawford's name was on there as he had been told it was by his mother.

Gordon subsequently emailed us again, "A follow up to my recent enquiry to you regarding the cross and memorial boards that were sadly destroyed during the 1980s demolition of St Pauls church Balsall Heath I enclose photographs of my late Mother's first husband Gunner Frederick Lawford (mounted on his horse) Service No 836473 Royal Field Artillery who fell in the Great War on May 5th 1918 aged 21 - one of those named on the St Paul's boards. The other pictures are of my late Mother and her two children (Frederick and Eileen Lawford my half brother and sister). My Mother was widowed aged 19 and was left with the children, on her husband Frederick's death, when she resided in Tindal Street Balsall Heath. The grave of Gunner Lawford, (also shown here) is in the VIEILLE-CHAPELLE CEMETARY LACOUTURE and was kindly taken recently by a neighbour who had made a visit to France. Again I thank you for your recent help and photographs etc in my enquiry regarding the St Pauls war memorials."



## NEXT MEETING

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> March 7:30

The Venture

(Malvern Street by the farm)

**Nowt So Queer As Folk**

by Alan Tumber

Alan was a former headmaster at Ladypool Primary School. His talk is all about Folk music. His talk is, he says, "A brief history with examples of the genre, song and dance with live music, pictures, film clips and recordings. Choruses to join in or just sit back listen and watch."

He further adds, "I develop themes which include, the folk revival around the end of the 19th Century, The development of one particular song, songs which feature soldier/sailor relationships with wives and girlfriends, rustic songs, mining songs, sea shanties and songs, drinking songs and poems later set to music. There's a fascinating song about how a particular group set about performing 'John Barleycorn' and a story of how a staunch folk traditionalist is fooled into thinking a song written in the 80's was traditional. The presentation is rounded off with a look at traditional folk dance".

