



Bissell Street memories

The Digital Balsall Heath website attracts plenty of worldwide interest and we get regular emails as a consequence. Norman Carter now lives near Bordeaux and has strong memories of his youth in Balsall Heath.



"I lived just facing this shop (above), which was owned by Mr and Mrs Thomas sweet shop and groceries. This was almost facing St David's Church. I was always playing in its ruins and before this I was an Altar boy. Before the church closed down, in 1947 winter, there were six foot drifts across the yard where I lived in St David's place (below near to Hackwood's Jack Tar Soap Works).



I am now nearly eighty and I remember being blown off my feet by the German bombers. Twice this happened and that's the truth as my mother dragged us three boys up to Ephraim Phillip's wire holders and screw manufacturers, to go down to the lower based floor to escape the bombing.

One night we were in the cellars when three land mines fell and completely flattened four streets – Benacre street Ashley street and Pershore Road/ Bristol Street. The all clear went and I roamed up to the disaster area and witnessed bodies being loaded into the ambulances and the strong smell of incendiary bombs. All this happened when I was around 7 years old."

See more at www.digitalbalsallheath.org.uk

Christmas Meeting: Thursday 13th December

Finish one meeting and the next is nearly here. A little earlier than our normal meeting dates comes the annual Christmas "shindig" at the Venture. Usual start time of half seven but feel free to roll up anytime from seven.

Our entertainment for the night comes from Roger Cook who specialises in showing you how to have a "cheap and cheerful Christmas". Now I can do the cheap perfectly well but throw in cheerful and I am yours, so this should be a fun evening. Roger's cunning speciality, which he will be showing us, is how to make Christmas decorations from the garden.

More information on Roger and the kind of work he does can be found on his page at this website:

www.lodgefarmplants.com/theoddchair



How Bazaar

It is probably fair to say there have been some lively nights at the Moseley Dance Centre but it seems that this goes back to Victorian times when its host building, the Institute, was in its heyday. The Moseley Society Journal of November 1894 offered words of caution 'midst the great anticipations of the forthcoming bazaars...

"The Bazaar in aid of the funds of St. Mary's and St. Agnes' Churches is to be held in the Moseley and Balsall Heath Institute on November 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th next. Great preparations are being made, and a big result is anticipated. The Bazaar will be opened by Mrs. Smith-Ryland. An excellent programme of "side shows" has been arranged at which Mr. J.S. Flavell, Miss Louisa Thomas, Mr. Herbert Harvey, and others will perform. The Hall is to be fitted, draped, and decorated by Liberty and Co., who will doubtless perform their duties in their accustomed artistic manner."

"Bearing in mind the presence and active occupation of a party of pickpockets at one of our recent Bazaars, it is to be hoped, the Committee on the present occasion will take due precautionary measures. Hard cash flies quite fast enough at these affairs without having it surreptitiously appropriated. Judging by the articles we have seen at several of the "private shows" which have already been held at many of the workers' houses, we should say that the stallholders on this occasion will have the richest and most valuable collection of goods to offer that has ever been presented at any Bazaar held in the district. Very pleasant gatherings these "shows" have proved. A dainty little card brings the invitation to attend, and when there we find a miniature Bazaar before us. We inspect the articles, speak rapturously of their elegance, take tea, gossip, talk - no, not scandal on this occasion - bid our friends adieu, and return home with mixed feelings of envy, and dread at the amount we shall be expected to part with on the 21st."

Diamond Balsall Heath: The Camera

There have been many makes and designs of camera but one that has endured as a fond memory is the Brownie. The Brownie was the name of a long-running popular series of simple and inexpensive cameras made by the Eastman Kodak company. The Brownie was first introduced in 1900 and went through many style changes, while retaining the basic look and feel. It popularized low-cost photography and introduced the concept of the snapshot photograph.

A camera eventually became a popular gift and photography became something that anyone could have a go at rather than just those with the money to afford the original highly expensive models. There must be countless people out there who have been given a camera as a child or young adult. Now we would like to know your stories of your first camera. What did you take and do you have the pictures - or indeed maybe the camera itself?

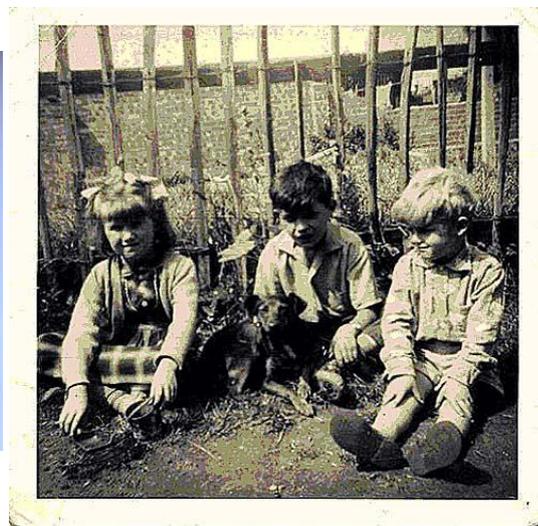


Photo Story: In the back garden of 271 Balsall Heath Road

(Above) Pamela and Keith Whitehouse and their friend Stephen Blakemore, relax in the garden with pet dog 'Trudy'. Keith says:

"The garden was large with a number of trees including apple trees". Beyond the fencing can be seen factory buildings one of these was Smarts, a company that made cheap ornaments. Smarts demise came when it caught fire and burned to the ground."

Rudge's Removals were also next door to the house behind a high wall.

"We would climb on top of the wall and from there we were able to step on to the roof of the furniture removal vans".