

BALSALL HEATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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TAKING BALSALL HEATH ON TOUR

June saw us promoting the Society at two events. The Birmingham History Fair on 12th June was well attended and we had lots of people sharing stories of living in the area and looking at our photographs. We also took along WWII artefacts which attracted interest. The air raid siren was pressed into use to open and close the day!



Irene Rose of Tindall Street School told us of being evacuated to the Duke Of Beaufort's estate at Badminton. The Duke was only too pleased to do his bit to help but was apparently less thrilled by another visitor – his wife's aunt, the dowager Queen Mary. At the outbreak of war George VI wished his mother to be evacuated from London. Although she was reluctant, she decided on Badminton. Her personal belongings were transported from London in seventy pieces of luggage. Her household, which comprised fifty-five servants, occupied most of the house, except for the Duke and Duchess's private suites, until after the war. Queen Mary annoyed her niece by having the ancient ivy torn from the walls as she considered it unattractive and a hazard! From Badminton, in support of the war effort, she visited troops and factories, and directed the gathering of scrap materials. She was known to offer lifts to soldiers she spotted on the roads. She also made herself useful around the estate as she was a keen gardener and she spent countless days tending the flower beds. Accompanying her in this were the evacuees who remember her as a kindly old lady, in contrast to the general perceptions and memories of her as a somewhat austere person. Perhaps this was the period in her life when she felt happiest and so was able to drop her guard.