

## Diamonds Are Forever In Balsall Heath

Sixty objects from the last sixty years will help to tell the diamond jubilee story of Balsall Heath, thanks to a £10,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The Balsall Heath Local History Society will be getting local people to come up with ideas about which objects will best tell the story of this inner city area. An early suggestion is a simple light bulb drawing attention to the fact that it was not until the late 1960s that some local residents actually had electricity in their houses!

The chosen objects will be backed up by recordings of residents' memories of living, going to school and working in the area over the past six decades. Local volunteers will be trained up to research the area history and to conduct interviews.

There will also be a photographic survey of the district with current day images compared with historic pictures of the local environment. The exhibition of objects, images and recorded memories will run from March to July next year touring a number of local venues, including Balsall Heath Library, The Church Centre and schools. An exhibition catalogue will also be available online for schools and community groups to use as an ongoing resource.

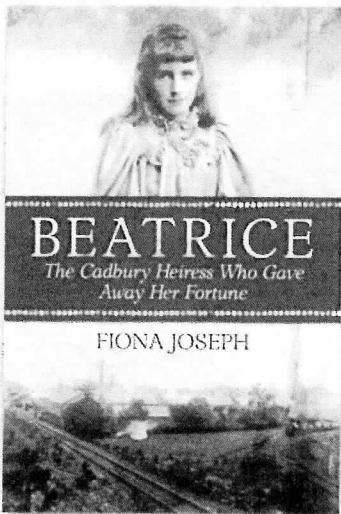
Balsall Heath is a very diverse area and a particular aim of the project is to describe local heritage and history to more recently arrived residents. The area was the site of the city's first mosque and now has one of the largest Muslim populations in Birmingham. A local event that may find its way into the exhibition was the tornado which hit Balsall Heath and neighbouring districts in July 2005 leaving a trail of damage estimated at £40 million.

Reyahn King, Head of Heritage Lottery West Midlands, said: *"Local residents will play a fundamental role to play in creating a people's history of their district by selecting objects that stir memories, by curating an exhibition and recording their stories for future generations."*

Patrick Baird, Chair of Balsall Heath Local History Society said: *"This will provide a wonderful opportunity for all residents of Balsall Heath to learn about the area's colourful and diverse changes and development over the past sixty years. The Local History Society cannot thank the Heritage Lottery Fund enough for its support and faith in us."*



*Could this be one of the 60? Mary Dorrell in her Pawnbroker's shop on Leopold Street in 1966.*



---

### NEXT MEETING: 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER BEATRICE CADBURY – THE RADICAL QUAKER

---

Fiona Joseph is a Birmingham-based writer of fiction and non-fiction. She is a graduate of the National Academy of Writing diploma course at Birmingham City University, where she won the '2009 Prize for Fiction'. Her biography of Beatrice Cadbury, *'Celebrating Beatrice: the Cadbury heiress who gave away her fortune'*, is on sale now.

The book details Beatrice's determination to give up her inheritance and use it to benefit the workers at the Bournville factory. She and her husband became anti-capitalist protestors and peace activists, and she made considerable effort to leave behind her earlier existence as a privileged member of a wealthy family.