



Balsall Heath Local History Society

THE GAZETTE

OCTOBER 2019

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Extra history walks

John Newson, development officer for Balsall Heath Is Our Planet has previously led Tree Walks in Balsall Heath. He has recently branched out into history walks. They are organized by Ashiana Community Project and Ageing Better. Each one is preceded by a pay as you feel lunch at Pacha House at the Friends' Institute. On 6th September the walk focussed on the listed buildings along Moseley Road including the Friends Institute, the library, swimming baths and the School of Art. I joined the one on the 13th which centred around Camp Hill and Highgate. From Camp Hill there is a panoramic view of the city centre to the north and of the Lickey Hills to the south west. The oldest building in this area is Stratford House dated 1601. Originally built as a farmhouse, located close to major routes into Birmingham.

It has been said that Camp Hill is so called because Prince Rupert and his army camped here in 1643 during the Civil War. The distance from water for horses and troops calls this into question. We saw Ravenhurst Cottages, originally built in 1848 by the Lench's Trust for poor widows and single women, now managed by Trident Reach as supported accommodation for homeless young people. Across the road, we noticed that the bricks in the retaining wall around (the now disused) Trinity Church looked much older than the 19th century building. We walked down to the Old Crown Inn with its date displayed as 1368, however the building is thought to be early 16th century and may not have been an inn at that time. From there our route took us along Alcester Street past the Rowton Hotel (previous names, Paragon and Chamberlain). It was originally Rowton House built in the 1903 as a hostel for low-paid working men. The way back took us through Highgate Park, one of the first public parks in Birmingham. There was another walk on the 20th which went into Sparkbrook looking for the 18th century house of Dr Joseph Priestley and that of Sampson Lloyd, founder of the bank. It looked

at buildings old and new and how their use has changed.

The next walk will start at 2pm on Friday 15th November. It will go around Highgate and the River Rea. (Judith Millington)

The Nightingale 50 years on.



At the end of the 60s the Nightingale club opened in a former Indian Restaurant on Camp Hill. 50 years on the club is now in Kent Street and celebrating its 50th anniversary. As an important venue to the local LGBT community there is also a new history project associated with it. They are looking for those with memories of the place to come and record them and volunteers to help with the project. Training will be available for volunteers although they will also have to have a DBS certificate or be willing to go through a DBS check.

If you are interested and can help contact Adam Carver by email at Nightingale50@blgbt.org, by phone at 0121 643 0821 or by post at Adam Carver, Birmingham LGBT, 38-40 Holloway Circus. Birmingham, B1 1EQ.

The Lost Children Project

The Lost Children Exhibition has been a great success. Many more visitors have been to St Martins in the Bullring to look at it, and we have a lot more contacts with Middlemore descendants and relatives. Now it has ended we are working on a publication. Meanwhile work goes on. We are starting to index the photos of children contained in the Annual Reports of the Homes.

Meanwhile I came across another Balsall Heath connection. Children in the Homes who were staying there in preparation for going to Canada attended local schools including Sherbourne Road Board School. I was amazed to discover that one of the teachers went to Halifax in 1926 to visit the reception Home there, Fairview, as well as 9 girls in their placements. On her return she wrote a letter praising the work and sent a £10 donation. Miss Stevenson was also the daughter of the Chief Superintendent of Schools Attendance Officer in Birmingham, which may have had something to do with it all.

(Val Hart)

Other Events

Tuesday November 5th – Sunday November 17th
SHOUT LGBT festival. <https://shoutfestival.co.uk/>
This year includes the launch of the Nightingale50 heritage project and other associated events including
Tuesday November 5th 7:00 pm

The Nightingale

18 Kent St, Birmingham, B5 6RD

Launch night for the Archive Project and the whole festival. Unveiling of two commissioned murals to commemorate the history of the club followed by a movie, then a party at the Village pub.

£5 or free for those on low income – book at <https://shoutfestival.co.uk/>

Wednesday November 6th 7:30 pm

The Loft Lounge

143 Bromsgrove Street, B5 6RG

Reel Herstories Rebel dykes and the archivettes.

A new documentary about the Lesbian Herstory Archives, the world's largest collection of materials by and about lesbians.

£5 or free for those on low income –
book at <https://shoutfestival.co.uk/>

Wednesday November 6th 7 p.m.

ThinkTank, Curzon Street
Birmingham, B4 7XG

The Mystery of the "James Watt Organ" & Other Watt Stories More Musical than Steamy. Dr Nina Baker shares her discoveries about Watt's musical instrument work

Wednesday November 20th 7:15 p.m.

Heathfield Road community centre
Brandwood End Cemetery - 14 years of the Friends Involvement by Julia Griffin.

Thursday November 14th 7.30 p.m.

Moseley Exchange, 153 Alcester Road.

"Joeys, Joshers and James: a BCN Miscellany" - the story of Birmingham's canals with musical accompaniment. by Phil Clayton.

Next meeting.

Thursday November 28th

The speaker will be Gina Maddison on "Christmas at Guildford Street."

7 p.m for a 7.30 start.

St Paul's Venture, Malvern St.

Visitors are welcome. There is a fee of £3 for the evening for non members or £1 for members.

Membership of the Society costs £10 a year.

Tea and coffee are provided at the beginning of the evening at no extra charge.