



## Balsall Heath Local History Society

## THE GAZETTE

JANUARY 2020

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### It's not a bicycle it's an ASP!



Dec 1950. Back row Anne, Margaret, James, Patrick, Mary, Michael. At the front Eilleen

In 1943 I was the second born to an Irish immigrant family, there were to be seven children altogether and like many others at the time, we were not well off. As a boy I had

learned to ride on a bike owned by a friend, and I wanted one of my own. Buying a new or even a second-hand one was out of the question. This is where my uncle Joe came to be useful. He was mom's lodger and worked in Birmingham's salvage department or as we knew it, the tip!

Knowing of my desire my uncle started bringing home bicycle parts that had been thrown out by the good citizens of Birmingham. The first item was a frame with no wheels or handlebars. He then came home with a pair of wheels which were not really a match for the frame. Then handlebars were found, followed by a link chain and so on. But uncle couldn't find all I needed so I had to beg steal or borrow the rest. My friend Jimmy Black was a good source. His family had a business in Mary St which from memory was a motor car breakers and repairs yard. Jimmy got me some spare bits, whether his dad knew about them is something else! I remember too being introduced to 'Cow-horn handlebars', this had you riding in a sit-up-and-beg position. I felt rather cold and exposed riding my ASP (all spare parts) in winter!

A nearby neighbour in Mary St, a teenage girl from a comparatively well-off family, had a Dawes bike (quality product) which had Dralia gears of variable ratio transmission and multiple sprockets. I was told

the gears would cost £1 15s 0d, a small fortune at the time. How I envied. The thing is I had to learn to put all these parts together by myself. One day I 'fixed' a bike for my dad to ride and when he first turned the handlebars to negotiate a corner the bike went straight on! He came back to the house walking and pushing his bike all bruised and battered and shaking his fist at me. Michael H Fitzpatrick.

### 50 years ago.



(L to R. Roy, Billy, and Terry Seeney – Freddy ran off before the picture was taken)

On 19<sup>th</sup> January 1970, the Birmingham Post carried the headline "We want to keep our family together, runaway brothers say". This was just the latest episode in the long running story of the Seeney family – a family of 14 children with an absent father and a mother that died giving birth to the last of them. For a while the eldest members of the family had acted as parents but social services could not allow that. The family was broken up and sent to various homes. The four

in the article had escaped from St. Gilbert's School in Kidderminster and were hiding out in various demolished houses and other places in Balsall Heath where they had lived before. The family never come back together completely but 7 of them were given a home for some time on a farm in the west country.

In 1973 a film was made of the story although it was transferred to London that went by the titles of "The 14", "The Wild Little Bunch" and "Existance". This film does occasionally show on Talking Pictures (channel 81) late at night.

## **This Year's Calendar.**

We now have a full list of speakers for the 2020.

March 26th – Gina Maddison – Every Picture Tells a Story

April 30th - Richard Churchley – Plague, Pestilence and Pox, deadly diseases in days gone by.

May 28th – Corinne Brazier and Steve Rice – Out of the Blue - Police Strike of 1919.

June 25th – David and Pam Humphries – A Virtual Tour of the Outer Circle.

July 30th – AGM followed by - Val Hart – Stories of the Lost Children.

Stories of children taken from their homes in England and their lives in Canada.

September 24th – Janet Berry – Women, Wives and Daughters in a Middle-Class Victorian Suburb: Moseley 1850-1900.

October 29th - Christopher Rawlins – Enemy Aliens: the forgotten story of a German family in Victorian and Edwardian Balsall Heath and Sparkbrook.

November 26th – Andy Vail – Marching for the King? The rise of the Brigade and Scout Movement in Birmingham.

December 17th – Celebrating 40 Years of Balsall Heath. 1980 – 2020.

## **Other Events**

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020, 7 p m**

The First 100 Years of Wireless Communication at Sea. THE LONG SILENCE FALLS: Dr John Moyle examines aspects of this transformative technology.

The Newcomen Society, ThinkTank, Curzon Street, B4 7XG

**Thursday 6th February 2.00pm.**

"The Gallipoli Campaign and WW1." Moseley History Group team talk.

Moseley Local History Society, Moseley Exchange, 153 Alcester Road

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020,**  
7:15 p m

Horse power to motor power. A history of local transport told through the medium of pub signs by David Cole

£3 for Non-Members

King's Heath Local History Society, Heathfield Road, Community Centre.

**Thursday 20th February. 7.30pm**

"Those Damn Tin Cans" - the story of Birmingham prefabs. David and Pam Humphries.

Moseley Local History Society, Moseley Exchange, 153 Alcester Road

## **Next meeting.**

**Thursday February 27<sup>th</sup>**

The speaker will be Simon Gulliver talking about Ernest Wilson, Birmingham's Plant Hunter

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.