



## Balsall Heath Local History Society

### THE GAZETTE

MAY 2020

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## Mary Street – Balfour Street to Balsall Heath Road

Take a walk with Anne Hemming along Mary St as she remembers the place she grew up in. It was post war Balsall Heath before the bulldozers came. Anne writes:-

Turn left into Mary St from Balfour St. At the corner of Pleasant Terrace, you would find Slade's cake Shop, run by the Slade family. Their son was known as 'Sonny'. Further along Mary Street there was a general grocery shop, run by Mr and Mrs Hancox. This was at the top of the entry leading to the backs of the houses in Pleasant Terrace. Slade's being in line with their front gardens.

After this and just before Mary St school, a line of front houses had been bombed this would have been around the same time that the school itself had been hit. This left the normally unseen back houses on view from the street. Mary Street Junior and infant school was closed in the 1960s and was later replaced by Heath Mount Primary School which was built on and across the then Knutsford Street.



After the school came Monks The sausage manufacturers. (1) Then at the corner of Mary Street and Balsall Heath Road was George's Seed (or corn) shop. Opposite Mary Street, on Balsall Heath Road

was Lanes' Newsagent (2). Next to the newsagent was a Laundry. Coming back up Mary Street on the other side, on the corner was a pub, The Wellington, and then a row of missing houses (I presume bombed like the school).



At the corner of Mary St and Knutsford St was an Outdoor shop. Up Knutsford on the left-hand side lived Mrs North, who gave piano lessons to many of us (at a cost of 1/6 per week). At the top on the corner and junction with Wenman Street was a Chapel. -I do not know of which denomination (3)



Back to and continuing along Mary Street – another Grocery Store run by the Evens Family. Next but one to them came the Deakins at No 58, Fred, Phyllis, Mickie, Barry, Alan and Tony (4). Next door (No 60) I lived with my Dad, Stan Davis, Mom, Elsie, and sister Judith. At No 62 Mr and Mrs Burgess, and at No 64 the Capper family. Dad Sid (window cleaner), Mom Vi, and their children Ron, Dennis, Janet, and Paul. My mom, Elsie Davis and Violet Capper were sisters.

There was another building just beyond our row of houses which we could see had once been some kind of Chapel and had been used as a restaurant during and just after the war.

Opposite Balfour street was a Newsagent (A man called Bert I think) (4). Next to it was Harry the Barber (5).

Anne Hemming (Nee Davis) February 2020.

Notes: -

1. Monks occupied several buildings in Mary St and Balsall Heath Road, they made pies and sausages which were a sought-after delicacy. Some said the sausages were 'more bread than pork' I have been assured than this was in fact Rusk. Monks had also had a 'Tripe shop' facing on to Balsall Heath Road.
2. Lane's the family Newsagent was well known in the area. Their son Alan got a job interview with the Birmingham Post and Mail. It was the start of a career lasting over 40 years.
3. The Chapel was used as a Sunday School. Dennis Capper of No 64 mentioned by Anne, who now lives in Australia, actually attended the school. He told us, "Our Mentor was a bloke called Bruce Porter, who later became a Royal Marine Commando".
4. Bert Childs newsagent
5. Harry Watkins Barber

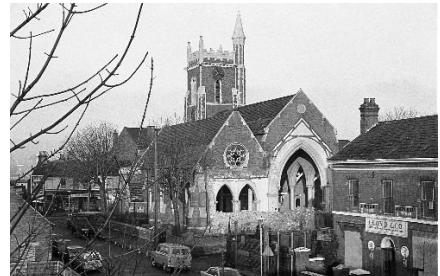
## Forty Years On

Forty years ago a lot was happening in Balsall Heath and, because of the lockdown, some of the anniversary celebrations are probably lost or, at least, delayed. So here is a little celebration of some of them taken from the pages of the Heathan and pictures taken by Mick Turner at the time.

On Saturday 19 April, the Lord Mayor, Councillor George Canning, opened Malvern Street Play centre's Farmyard. The Heathan gave him special thanks "as he had to miss the match at St Andrew's!" Here he is giving out the awards to the children after that day's sports contest known as the Malvern St. Olympics.



St Paul's Church had been demolished in March and



the building of the new church centre had progressed far enough to allow people to take tours of the new building. According to the March Heathan the old war memorial had been rescued by breaking it up into three sections and had been delivered for safe-keeping to St.Paul's Hall. It was now revealed that the bell from the old church would also have a place in its own campanile or

bell tower.



The war memorial seems to have been lost along with the roll of honour that went with it but the bell is still there hanging in a wooden structure outside the church. The bell is rarely used although there was a campaign to restore the bell so it could ring in the millennium.

May of 1980 also saw the first visit by the Prince of Wales to Balsall Heath. The crowds turned out in force lining the streets and every other available vantage point. He visited St Paul's school and the newly opened farmyard. Here is a selection of colour pictures that appeared in an often used slideshow of the event. As they had faded I have tried to revive them a little.

