

## Early Special Needs Nursery in Balsall Heath.

We have been contacted by Jackie, for many years a former resident of Balsall Heath. She has a story to tell us and a rare photo to share that illustrates the very heart of her story. The use of the word 'nursery' here is not meant to indicate its present day meaning as part of a formal education.

Hi my Name Jackie Davies (Bird). I lived at 30 Brunswick Road from my birth in 1956 until 1978 in my possession is a photo of St Pauls Nursery for special needs Children that I would like to share with you...

My Brother Ronnie Bird was born 1942. He had a difficult delivery. Mom always thought it was the Forceps that caused his learning disabilities. But in fact, not till late 80s did we discover Ronnie had Mosaic 13 chromosomes. This gave him the look of Downs syndrome.



In a nursery and junior setting this is a 1945 photo of a celebration of the end of WW2. Ronnie is at front right of the photo in a Sailors suit.

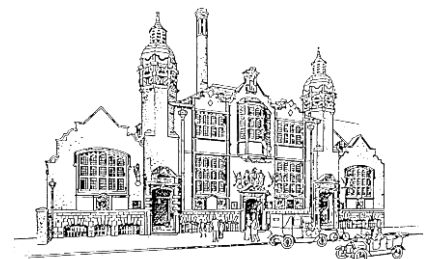
Back in 1942 and 43 my parents were bombed out of 2 houses in Solihull. Moving to 30 Brunswick Road Balsall Heath in 1943. There was little or no Education Provided for Children like Ronnie. So, the Church on St Paul's Road started to look after Children with learning disabilities in a Nursery and Junior setting for 'Children with Special Needs'. This for Balsall Heath and Surrounding areas, and for those that were lucky enough to have family that wanted to look after them. As the main policy back then was to have Social Services put them in to an Institution like Psychiatric Monyhull Hospital.

This picture was taken in the main hall of St Paul's Church Hall, St Paul's Road, where the nursery was held. It was situated opposite the church and set back just before the railway bridge. I believe it now a Primary school. The old building was small with the main door at the front leading to a big hall to the right. On the left an office and cloakroom, and a small kitchen area just off the bottom of the hall.

Ronnie continued to attend until he was 10 years old. He could write his name but reading and writing was not really taught there. Household jobs for girls and woodwork for the boys. The wood would often be supplied by the wood yard opposite the hall. Ronnie went on to have a full and active even independent life with help.

## Balsall Heath Local History Society Gazette

### JANUARY 2021



Telephone: 07565 194822

Email:

[info@balsallheathhistory.co.uk](mailto:info@balsallheathhistory.co.uk)

Web:

[www.balsallheathhistory.co.uk](http://www.balsallheathhistory.co.uk)

&

[www.thelostchildren.uk](http://www.thelostchildren.uk)

Facebook: Balsall Heath Local  
History Society and  
lostchildrenproject

Next meeting.

**The committee has decided to suspend meetings. We hope to start meetings again in 2021.**

**Membership of the Society costs £10 a year.**

He died on the 14th February 2018. A few days short of his 77th Birthday.

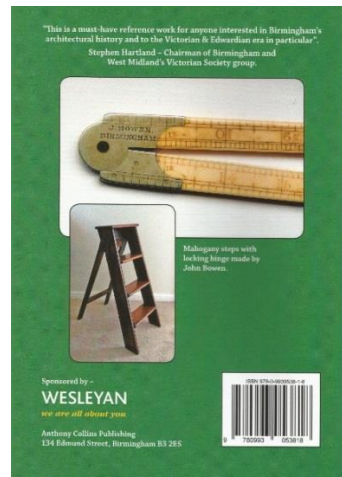
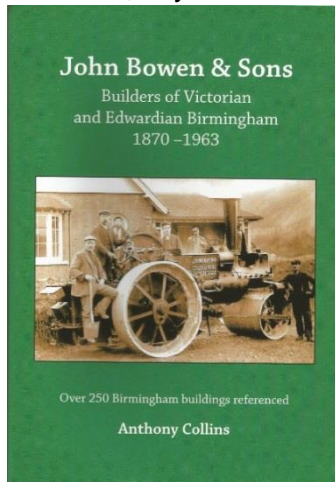
**Jackie Davies**

## A New Bowen Book!

Hot off the press is Anthony Collin's latest Bowen book which is an invaluable resource for all those interested in Birmingham's architectural treasures. A colossal amount of research over many years has gone into this book which lists in

chronological order the building work undertaken by John Bowen and Sons.

John Bowen, from humble beginnings, established himself as a substantial builder, with works in George Street, Balsall Heath. From here came some of Brum's finest buildings including the Victoria Law Courts (1887); the Wesleyan Central Hall (1887 and 1903); the Police Courts (1892); the Birmingham Meat market (1894/6) and much of the city centre especially Corporation St. The range of his work is remarkable- from swimming baths to churches, asylums to schools, shops and housing.



Balsall Heath benefitted from his work with gems such as The Friend's Institute, St Agatha's Church, Tindal School, Sames Piano factory and the Moseley & Balsall Heath Institute. John was also a prominent member of the Balsall Heath Local Board of Health which had governance of the area from 1862 to 1891.

After John's retirement in 1909 his sons took up the reins and the company continued to thrive for many years until it eventually wound up in 1963.

This book covers the whole story of John Bowen & Sons with listings of over 250 buildings. Anthony Collins is himself the great grandson of John Bowen.

**Anthony Collins**

The book is available by contacting Antony by e mail: [anthonyrcollins@btinternet.com](mailto:anthonyrcollins@btinternet.com)

## A Ten Minute Talk on the Middlemore Homes

The British Association for Local History offers spots on their website for a 10 minute talk with powerpoint illustration. I have done one about the Middlemore Homes and it will be on their website from 19th January onwards. Do have a look!

The website can be found at [www.balh.org.uk](http://www.balh.org.uk). Our book, The Lost Children continues to sell well. It is available via our website.

**Val Hart**

A version of this talk can be found at <https://youtu.be/JPdZ5kWqYSQ>

## Events

### 'Spitfires and Universals'

Thursday 28th January 2021,  
2.30 pm

Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of Operation Overlord in WW2

The personal stories of two local men, a Spitfire Ace, and a Universal Carrier Driver who took part in this historic event

To register for the talk email [rkt103@btinternet.com](mailto:rkt103@btinternet.com)

The talk will conclude with David Vaux, a well known local historian, showing artefacts relating to the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in World War II

MOSELEY SOCIETY HISTORY ZOOM  
TALK

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021, 2.30 pm

'Spitfires and Universals'

Commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of Operation Overlord in WW2

The personal stories of two local men, a Spitfire Ace,  
and a Universal Carrier Driver who took part in this  
historic event

To register for the talk email [rkt103@btinternet.com](mailto:rkt103@btinternet.com)



Wing Commander Barrie Heath, DFC



Private Alfred Taylor  
2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal Warwickshire  
Regiment

The talk will conclude with David Vaux, a well known local historian, showing artefacts relating to the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in World War II

This talk will be given live using zoom. You will need to get a link from the organiser via the email address and install some kind of client software before the meeting. See <https://zoom.us/download> for details. If you want to participate and not just watch you'll need a microphone on your device but you can watch without.

Since the talk will take place very soon, it's best that you get this set up and contact the organiser as soon as possible.