

The Lost Children Project.

The Gibbons children , admitted to the Middlemore Homes 1897



Willie



Nellie

The Admission Book records:

“Both parents alive. Father a hawker and has gone off with another woman. Mother gone hop picking with another man. Both father & mother deserted the children 6 or 7 weeks ago since which time they have been looked after by an aunt and other friends”

The newspaper report says:

“About 11 o'clock on the night of September 8th Police Constable Henry Wilkins found Thomas (actually Willie) and Nellie sitting on the Sea Horse steps in Buck St. They were wet and cold and he took them to Duke St Police Station. The boy presented a ragged, neglected appearance and was barefooted. The girl was very poorly clad. The children were removed to the workhouse and afterwards to the Middlemore Homes. The child John was picked up in the street the following day and removed to the workhouse. Mrs Pember, the proprietress of a lodging house said the room she let John Gibbons for a workshop, he turned into a bed room, his wife, children and himself having nothing to lie on but the shavings from the wood which he converted into broom handles. The prisoner and his wife both drank and the neighbours found the children food.”

Prosecuted by the NSPCC with neglecting their 3 children, John (9), Nellie (6) and Willie (3). All three children were taken to Canada in 1898 and the parents were sentenced to 2 months hard labour

The Lost Children book is available through the Society website.

A 10 min talk about the Middlemore Homes is also available at:

www.balh.org.uk or at <https://youtu.be/JPdZ5kWqYSQ>

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Next meeting.

The Committee has decided that we should aim to restart monthly meetings from June this year, following the guidelines for easing restrictions. However, there may well be some change to the government's timetable so we are proposing to make the meeting at the end of June an outdoor one, visiting a place of interest. More news to follow.

Membership of the Society costs £10 annually and can be bought via the Donate button on the Society website. Thank you to all who have chosen to subscribe this year in spite of the lack of meetings. We hope to hold our AGM in July as usual.

Photo of a Jewish Challenge Trophy.

This was bought in a charity shop in Kings Heath some time ago and has now been donated to the Society. Written on the back-"Found at 100 Cannon Hill Rd, c1980"



The words "Challenge Trophy" appear in the image above the Star of David on the shield. The heading on the framed certificate is 'Grand Order of Israel'. Can anyone shed light on this? We would like to find its rightful home and have already been in touch with Jewish friends who are posting an enquiry in The Jewish Recorder.

A Disturbance

JOB JAKEMAN, whose name is still with us today in Jakeman St and Jakeman Nursery, first appears in Balsall Heath in 1841, listed as a milkman and living at Longmore Farm. The previous year he had married Jane Kempster and at that time was a farmer in Halesowen. However, Jane's family were in Balsall Heath. Her father was a grinder at Speedwell Mill just the other side of the Rea and in the 1840 Tithe award Longmore Farm was owned by Dr Cox but rented to Charles Kempster, probably Jane's brother. Job stayed at Longmore Farm for over 30 years and was involved in an incident recorded in the newspapers in 1863.

"DISTURBANCE AT BALSALL HEATH. FIVE MEN SHOT, On Monday evening, the usually quiet neighbourhood of Balsall Heath was the scene of a disturbance which threw the whole place into an unwonted state of excitement.

From Balsall Heath Road to Moseley runs a field path, at the side of which is the farm of Mr. Jakeman, called Longmore Farm, and a little beyond this, his fine meadow of mowing grass. At the end of the path is a road-side inn, the Traveller's Rest.

To this hostelry resorted on Monday some half-dozen Birmingham people of the class usually called "rowdy". After regaling themselves plentifully with the beer of the Traveller's Rest, they left about seven o'clock in the evening, and turned towards town. They met a serving-man and with that playfulness which usually follows extensive libations of beer, they commenced to play a series of practical jokes. He turned upon his assailants, who immediately fell upon him, giving him a sound thrashing and depriving him of a bottle and some of his wearing apparel.

These playful Brums then proceeded on their way, which brought them to Mr. Jakeman's meadow, in which were a number of mowers at work." One of them also received a beating. Then at Mr. Jakeman's house, "the row became fast and furious, stones being used to supplement fists.

Mr. Jakeman, who was in his house, hearing the disturbance, came out, and after securing his windows, which he feared would be broken by stones, ordered the fellows off his premises. They, utterly disregarding both threats and entreaties still continued to throw, when Mr. Jakeman retired to his house and armed himself with a fowling-piece, loaded with shot No. 7. He threatened to shoot them, and seeing that threats were of no avail, waited until they were some seventy yards distant, and then shot at them. They were considerably peppered, but not at all seriously.

The men made off, but speedily returned with a large mob, who surrounded Mr. Jakeman's house, and clamoured for his arrest. By this time Sergeant Lane, who is stationed at Balsall Heath, arrived, and Mr. Jakeman went to the police station at King's Heath, and gave himself up. "The case went to court but Job was acquitted.

Fundraising



Raise donations from Easy Fundraising for the Society whenever you buy anything online. It is easy to sign up and recommended by many others. They give donations on over 4000 retailers as well as insurance companies.,

So far this year we have raised £87 which is useful.

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/balsallheathlhs/>

There's also Amazon who will donate. – have a look at <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1101945-0>



Happy Birthday

Dennis John Jukes congratulations on your 90th birthday
In April. 'Happy Birthday' from us all at Balsall Heath Local History Society.

Bird's Flight to Brunswick

In our January issue Jackie Davies told of her family's connection to Balsall Heath. Her mother and father came to live in Brunswick Road in 1943 after being bombed out of two homes in Solihull. The target for the Luftwaffe being Elmdon airport. Her main theme was about her brother Ronnie Bird and his life with learning disabilities. Reaction to that story has shown us that Ronnie was well known and liked around the Balsall Heath area.

For the article Jackie let us have a lovely photo of a 'Special Needs Class' dated 1945. And has gone on to provide us with further great photos which illustrate family life during the 1950's. It was a time of change, when we fell head long into consumerism, buying Twin Tub Washing Machines, Record Players and TV's.



This fun picture from 1953 of a dad's knobbly knee's contest has to be at the time of the Queen's Coronation. We can name a few here, at the back 4th head from the left is Ted Wright. In the centre with his knees bent and wearing glasses, is Mr Page. The man in the tall hat is

Mr Smith, a street gas lighter, and far right, crouched is Jackie's dad Harold Bird.

Harold, originally from Aston met his wife to be Elsie May Cook from Winston Green on a blind date.



These two photos were taken from the Bird family home at No 30 Brunswick. From the bedroom window auntie Silvia (Cook) can be seen approaching the house. The housing across the road will have been the odd numbered dwellings No 1 to 15. Also approaching is dad Harold. He had walked



all the way home after a 12-hour shift at the Rover car works located in Greet. In the background and on the other side of

Brunswick is a large factory. Research suggests this was the wire works of Thomas P Hawkins & Sons, Cotter pin makers at No's 19-31.

This became a paint works later. It's listed as Walpamur Distributors in 1971/2.

Inside the house Elsie is in the kitchen wrestling with a large bag of salt and has a handful ready for the pan. Commenting on this, Jackie says "Doctors would have a heart attack today" but admits "I still measure salt this way". And added, "This was before we had a bathroom attached to the back of the kitchen, where the coalhouse and outside toilet had been". Harold and Elsie had 4 children over a 15 year period. They already had Barry and Ronnie when they moved in '43. Michael and Jackie came along in the mid 50s.



Two photos of a rare aspect from these times. The back garden.



Well, they didn't have barbecues in them days did they? Mrs Sanders leaning on the gate is chatting with Mrs Bird, the path ran the length of 6 or 8 houses. It was accessed by way of an Entry between No's 30 & 32. These ladies modern equivalent would be meeting in a coffee shop. In the 2nd picture Elsie is putting out the washing and upstairs a curtain is drawn back. Jackie tells us, "This is my dad Harold, checking on what my mom is up to". Jackie left home in 1978 at the age of 22, to marry Graham Davies at St Nicolas's Church in Kings Norton and to live in Druids Heath. They now live in Tamworth where Jackie works in special needs transport for the local council. It would seem this family has come full circle from the days Ronnie pictured in that special needs class at St Paul's way back in 1945. J.F.

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