

Birmingham on Sea



This dramatic Canal walk was performed on Sept 12th as part of Birmingham Heritage Week and was a great success. Peter Churchill accompanied us on his piano accordion and the cast performed a variety of roles illustrating canal history, from Matthew Boulton to canal women and the ghost of James Brindley.

We had a good audience for both performances and a lot of great feedback. This was a comment sent to us, "Keep doing all your great work - collaborating, educating and entertaining the people of Birmingham about its rich historical past."



Benjamin Orange Grimmiett, One of the Lost Children



In 1914 the Grimmiett family were in desperate circumstances. Alfred Orange Grimmiett was in very poor health and his wife was said to be a drunkard. Of their 11 children, 4 had died and 5 were still living with them when they were turned out of their house. They moved in with their married daughter, Alice, in Bishop St. Highgate, who herself had 2 children. However, this could only

be temporary because with the Grimmietts it made a total of 11 people, all crammed into 3 rooms. There was also no income and they were on the verge of starvation.

At this point the Grimmietts made a drastic decision and put the two boys, Benjamin, age 11 and George, age 9, into the Middlemore Homes which were nearby. They were described as "very ragged, dirty and poor clothing. They had been caught begging on the streets and their father had been fined for their non attendance at school.

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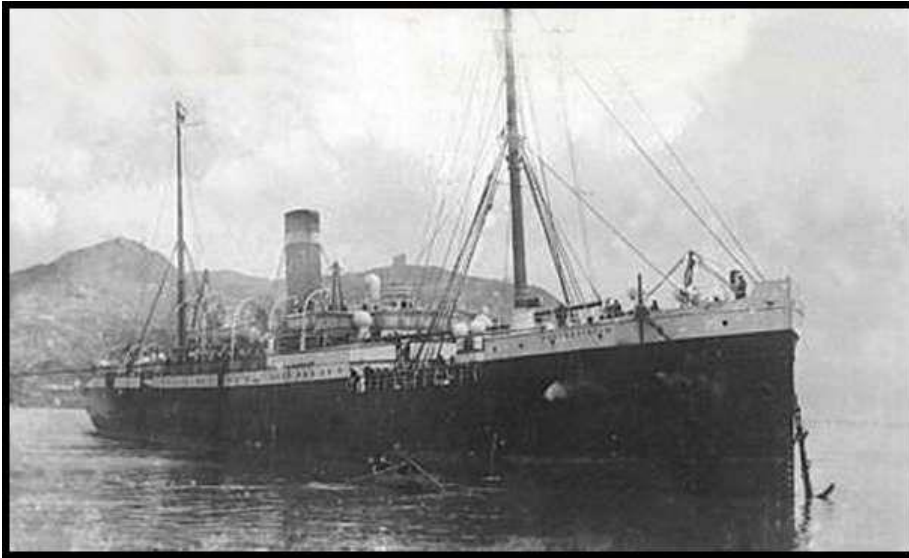
Facebook: Balsall Heath Local
History Society and
lostchildrenproject

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.

Next meeting.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, October 28th at St Paul's Venture, Malvern St. B12 8NN at 7 for 7.30 p.m. The Speakers will be David & Pam Humphries who will be presenting, "A Virtual Tour of the Inner Circle Bus Route". An appropriate follow-on to the visit to the Transport Museum in the summer.

The Journey



The boys spent about 10 months in the Homes and then in 16th May, 1915 set sail for new lives in Canada, on board the ship, Carthaginian, together with 94 other Middlemore child migrants. It is surprising that this journey went ahead. The First World War was raging and just 9 days previously the ship Lusitania had been sunk by a German submarine with a loss of about 1200 civilian lives. The Carthaginian was also sunk, by a mine, off the coast of Ireland in 1917

On arrival the boys went first to the Middlemore Reception Centre, Fairview, in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Then they were placed separately with farming families who had sent in applications for children.

George was sent to Mr Wilcox, in Newtown, Kings County, New Brunswick and stayed for the next 8 years. He had consistently good reports and by the time he was 17 Mr Wilcox described him as, "Easy to get along with, reliable and trustworthy".

Benjamin was sent to Mr Marr who also lived in Newtown and also stayed for in the same place for 7 years but with a very different outcome. A string of Inspection Reports say that Benjamin liked his place and was well treated but Mr Marr became increasingly concerned. In 1917 he commented, "He is a willing sort of boy- has a nice disposition" but said he was very slow to learn anything.. He added that he was informed that Benjamin was "knocked down by an automobile in England and received serious head injuries- boy's head is quite badly scarred". He thought the injury had caused his mental dullness.



The picture did not improve. In July 1921, when Benjamin was 18, the comment was, "Boy while having developed physically has not developed mentally- will never be self supporting." In February 1922 he was returned to England and handed to the care of his sister Mrs Clowes who was still living in Bishop St. His father by then was living in Balsall Heath Rd.

Benjamin was admitted to Monyhull Colony, Kings Heath, where he lived the rest of his life. He died in 1981 at the age of 77 and is buried

in Brandwood End Cemetery. His family in England cared for him enough to put up a gravestone, so he was not forgotten.

Val Hart

Ghost Streets of Balsall Heath (part 1)

This was the title of an event staged at the Old Print Works (OPW Moseley Rd) with the collaboration of the Ort Gallery and Flatback Film Festival in March and April of 2018. Many of you will have made a visit to see the photographs on display which were taken by Janet Mendelsohn in 1967-8 when the part demolition of Balsall Heath was taking place.

When I attended the event, I admit I did not really get the Ghosts meaning of the title. Until that is, I listened to a talk given there by Kieran Connell, when talking about the changes made by the demolition, he used the phrase, 'the non-place'. He was referring to the road junction of Balsall Heath Road with Longmore St, Cox St West, and Clevedon Road. Looking at it today, you will have to admit Mr Connell did have a point.



1947 Photo Credit BHLHS

The No 37 Tram drops its passengers at the Luxor Cinema, Balsall Heath Road, before turning into Clevedon Rd. Its 1947, we can date this photograph by the Film boards advertising 'It always Rains on Sunday' starring Googie Withers, Jack Warner, and Alfie Bass. The woman on the left here would be looking at the junction with Longmore St, with Pinnicks Furniture shop on one corner and the Wallace Inn on the other.



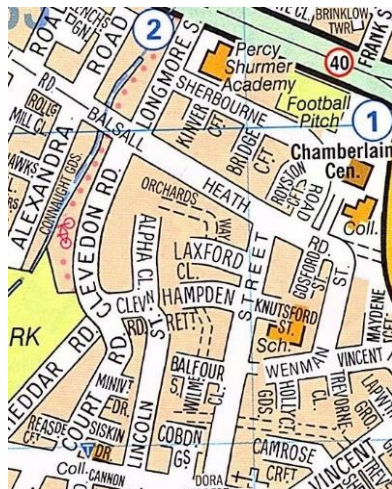
Photo Credit BHLHS

A man walks past the large advertising for Pinnicks on the wall. The 'Ansells' sign high up denotes the existence of The Wallace Inn on the corner. The passing tram leads the traffic out of Cox St West into Longmore and hides our view up the Balsall Heath Road. A woman crosses toward the shops separating Clevedon Rd and Cox St West. Alongside the shop's advertising is the name plate for Jackman's Walk

YESTERDAY



TODAY



When the demolition had been completed all the buildings in these photos were gone, so too had Cox St West and Jackman's Walk in their entirety. Clevedon Rd had been stripped of its buildings and re-aligned with Longmore St.

There is now an open-air feel about the junction. It could be anywhere and nowhere. The River Rea can be seen easiest on the coloured 'Today' map running

between Alexandra Road and Clevedon Road (blue line). The Luxor Cinema had been located on the banks of the Rea.



Sept 2020. Photo Credit BHLHS

From the road island on Balsall Heath Rd, we look down Longmore St. The Wallace pub had been on the near right hand corner. Pinnicks Furniture shop facing it on the left. Comparing this 'non-place' junction as it is today with that of its yesteryear, it's difficult to conjure the busy metropolis it once was. The streets that were are an alternative reality or parallel universe.



Sept 2020. Photo Credit BHLHS

The site of the former Luxor Cinema. The dip in the ground under the trees on the left has the River Rea passing through. In the distance we can see Gooch St and Belgrave Middleway buildings. In the middle distance is the grassed area that had housed homes and shops on Longmore St. You would be forgiven if you doubted that this location could ever have been a 'hubhub' of life.



Here then a photo of such, along one of the other 'arms' of the junction, the eastern section of Balsall Heath Rd.

Photo Credit BHLHS

So many people gathering together to watch the Balsall Heath Panthers Speedway Club racing against rival teams. Among the buildings opposite are George Mason's grocery shop and the Lyttleton Arms. There are many more ghosts that we can raise from the past of the streets emanating from the hub that was, once upon a time, such a busy crossroads. J.F.

Future Meetings

November 25th Marching for the King? The rise of the Brigade and Scout Movement in Birmingham - Andy Vail

December 16th Flappers, Fashion and Fun - Lynda Sharpe and Pamela Manning

Other events

Moseley Society History Group

The History Group have now resumed their weekly meetings at the All Services Club – but on a different day of the week, due to post-pandemic changes in the opening hours of the All Services Club. We are now meeting on Friday mornings from 11.00 to 1.00. Visitors are always welcome but it is helpful if you can let us know that you are intending to come and what your areas of interest are, so that we can agree a time when you can meet up with people who are best able to help.

The Society has organised a further online talk for members on Tuesday 5th October at 2.30 pm when Gill Binnie will talk on the subject of Photography in Moseley. This will be a well-informed presentation based on Gill's research, looking at the history of the development of photography and making reference to historical photographs of Moseley. If you would like to attend all you need to do is to email rkt103@btinternet.com and we will send you the Zoom link; then on the day itself you merely need to click on the Zoom link to join the meeting.

The Exchange Community day

The Exchange, formerly the Municipal Bank on Broad Street, will be holding a Public and Community day on Saturday 2nd October from noon. There will be tours of the building guided by local historian Justine Pick among other things. Admission is free and no bookings are necessary.

Black History Month

Black History month has lots of events this year but only two of them seem to relate to history. These are :-

Freedom – The Black History Experience

Sat, 23 October 2021 17:00 – 21:00

Cost: £25 – £45

The H Suite, 100 Icknield Port Road, B16 0AA

And

Black Women and Resistance (Live Stream)

Wednesday 20 October 2021

Cost : free

Professor Robert Beckford will speak about Black Women in history and then take questions from the audience

Note: the actual event is in Winchester and open to students only but it is possible for others to watch/listen on the internet.

For more events and details of how to connect to the above see

<https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/listings/region/west-midlands/birmingham/>