

## Brilliant News on Moseley Road Baths

The transformation of Moseley Road Baths and Balsall Heath library has received a major boost with the allocation of £15.5m of Levelling-Up funding.

This latest funding success will enable the first phase of an ambitious £32.7m masterplan to transform the Grade II\* Listed Baths and Library, building on the successes of a ground-breaking collaboration between local, national and international organisations to safeguard the future of Moseley Road Baths.

"This news changes everything for us," added Karen Leach Chair of Moseley Road Baths CIO. "It has been such a challenge operating swimming within this amazing but crumbling building with its leaky roofs and antiquated boilers and filters. Suddenly the restoration we've collectively been working towards is becoming a reality. Not only does this mean a future for swimming but also for the baths' and the library's crucial role in creating livelihoods in the heart of Balsall Heath."

## The Middlemore Homes in 1921

The end of the First World War saw the return of many ex-soldiers to Birmingham and a huge rise in the unemployment figures. City wide schemes were set up to alleviate distress and the City Council had many delegations appealing to them including some from Balsall Heath.

It is interesting to note that the Middlemore Homes in Highgate did their best to help. This is an extract from the Annual Report for 1921.

**UNEMPLOYMENT.**—Owing to the abnormal conditions now prevailing, the Committee at their Meeting in November last had under consideration the temporary admission, until March 31st, of a number of children. An arrangement was arrived at with the "Mail" Xmas Tree Fund whereby it was agreed to admit 45 children (30 boys and 15 girls) of unemployed ex-soldiers, the cases to be nominated by any Agency appointed by the "Mail." The Committee decided that the expenses of the first 15 children should be defrayed out of the funds of the Homes, and the "Birmingham Mail" (through the Xmas Tree Fund) readily promised to defray the expenses of the remaining 30 children. The expressions of gratitude from the parents on Visiting Days have amply repaid our Matrons and their Assistants for the extra efforts put forth on behalf of these temporary children.

Val Hart

Remember our Lost Children book is still available as are several of our other publications including Stars of Balsall Heath, Brown Paper & Goose Grease, Sweet memories, The Flicks, Tales out of school, and Then and there : Here and now. For details of how to order, see our website.

## Balsall Heath Local History Society Gazette

### DECEMBER 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

Membership of the Society will cost £12 a year from Jan 2022. No subscription will be renewed to taken until then. Membership will then run from January to December each year. Fees at meetings will continue unchanged: £1 for members and £3 for visitors. Refreshments will be served from 7 to 7.20 pm at the start of the meeting.

### Next meeting.

We have decided to cancel the January meeting in the light of the new Omicron variant. We hope to resume in February.

## Ephraim Phillips. Screw Manufacturers of Bissell St.

This family business in Highgate was founded by Ephraim Phillips who was a remarkable inventor and entrepreneur. According to a booklet published by the company in 1974, Ephraim started work at age 8 and in his teens rented an attic from which to start his business. In 1880, at the age of 30, he managed to buy a shop in Bissell St on the site of the later factory and it all grew from there to become a major company employing over 300 people.



Ephraim Phillips  
Managers 1905

The firm prided itself on good relationships with its employees. There were annual Family Days, social club activities and outings as well as Annual Dinners for employees with over 25 years service.



Works Outing  
for staff in  
1927

Ephraim was a great inventor. His works originally made bicycles but later diversified, developing as producer of screws and machine components. Two of Ephraim's machines were donated to the Birmingham Museum of Science & Industry- a wire eye forming machine and the Phillips thread rolling machine. One of his most striking inventions was the Duplex Bicycle which we featured in the Gazette in March 2017.



Thread Rolling machine 1895



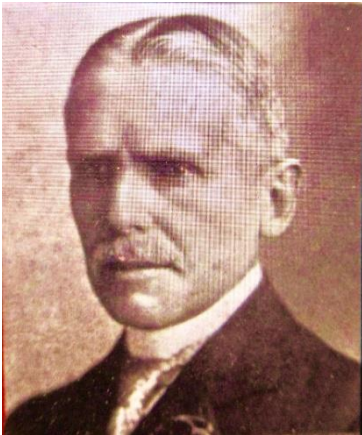
Ephraim died in 1910 and by then there was also a second factory in Sherbourne Road which closed in 1930 when the Bissell St Site was extended.



The business was carried on by Ephraim's sons and grandson, who continued to invent and patent innovations much as Ephraim had done. In 1924 for their 50th anniversary the company paid for all their employees to visit the Wembley Exhibition in London. The company closed in 2011 but the premises still carry the name. They are currently managed by the Saturn Business Centre.

In 2017 part of the buildings were taken over by Scru:Club as a music venue, now also closed. There is a

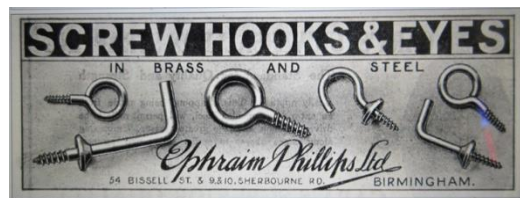
remarkable photo online of the ground floor with a view to the River Rea.



Ephraim Phillips

I knew about Ephraim Phillips but recently came across his younger brother, Manessah who had a shop and brewery for about 30 years in Middleton Rd, Kings Heath.

Their father, George Philips at one time ran The Breedon Cross pub on the Pershore Road while also occupied as a Bayonet Finisher. He seems to have favoured biblical names. Siblings included Esther, Enoch and Nephi.



Manessah

Val Hart

## Service to Queen and Country

Those of you that were at our November meeting this year will have heard Andy Vail who presenting his talk 'Marching for the King'. An outline of the rise of the Boys Brigade and Scout movements nationwide, and of the volunteers who made such an outstanding success possible over the years.

This reminded us of our own Scouts and Boys Brigade movements within Balsall Heath. There was the much admired Brigade which was sponsored by and located in the Methodist Church on the corner of Lime Grove opposite Moseley Road Baths. Lime Grove was also the location of 48<sup>th</sup> Birmingham Scout group, one of several in a strong movement serving the district. That strength came from the numbers and quality of the volunteers prepared to give their time and commitment to the boys in their charge. Outstanding amongst them is the service given to Scouting by Mr & Mrs Albert and Pat Johnson. This year, 2021 has seen each of them complete 60 years with local troops. This letter, written in 1961 by the then County Commissioner Dawson Collins thanks Albert for "undertaking this most important service" (Pat was to join him in the service a few months later).

## BIRMINGHAM COUNTY BOY SCOUTS ASSOCIATION

HEADQUARTERS: DALE END, BIRMINGHAM. 4.  
CENTRAL 7865

27/03/

27/3/61

Dear Scouter,

On presentation of your Warrant as a Scouter, I am writing to thank you for undertaking this most important service, and to wish you success and satisfaction in your new work.

You are joining a great body of men and women; we have over 12,000 warrant-holders, including 1372 in Birmingham County, who are devoting themselves to helping boys to grow up into better citizens than they would otherwise be.

This service has been going on, as you know, for over fifty years, so all of us who undertake it have a great responsibility in upholding the great tradition of the past and making Scouting even greater in the future.

Already you can see in this cropped version, the letter tells of the great body of men and women devoted to helping boys to become better citizens, and of making scouting even greater in the future. Enough of a responsibility you might think. Yet the letter asks for more, it encourages getting the best out of the boys by influence and example and having them first in your mind. Then there is the wider responsibility of the district and elsewhere fostering growth and care for the standards of the movement, and of yourself having a full well balanced life. Not to do so would set a poor example.



Albert and Pat maintained all of the above and have had that 'well balanced life' a successful marriage, raising two children, a living to be earned, and being member/volunteers of clubs and societies of their interest and choice.

As part of the 1st Moseley Athletic 59<sup>th</sup> Birmingham Scout Group, Albert went through the ranks all the way up to Group Scout Leader overlooking local groups of scouts. In 1993 both Pat and Albert were awarded 'The Silver Acorn' one of the highest awards given for service in scouting. They went to a special service at St George's Chapel Windsor on St George's day to receive this honour.

On the same day their son Patrick and his friend Desmond Parris were at Windsor for the annual Parade of the Queen's Scouts.

Photo: Pat and Albert at Windsor to receive their award. A Bearskin wearing guard in the background.

Scouting awards received by the Johnson family.

Bottom; Woggles & Beads for Wood Badge Training.

It should never be forgotten that Scout Leaders have to do the training and pass a test on the subject before they can teach the boys.

Centre; left, Medal of Merit. Right, Medal of Merit with Bar.

Top; Badge of Merit to wear with uniform.

Medals with Yellow Ribbon are the Silver Acorn among the highest awards for service to Scouting.





Albert and Pat alongside these awards, proudly display framed certificates of recognition of 50 years' service, signed by the Chief Scout Bear Grylls. These having been presented in 2010 & 2011.

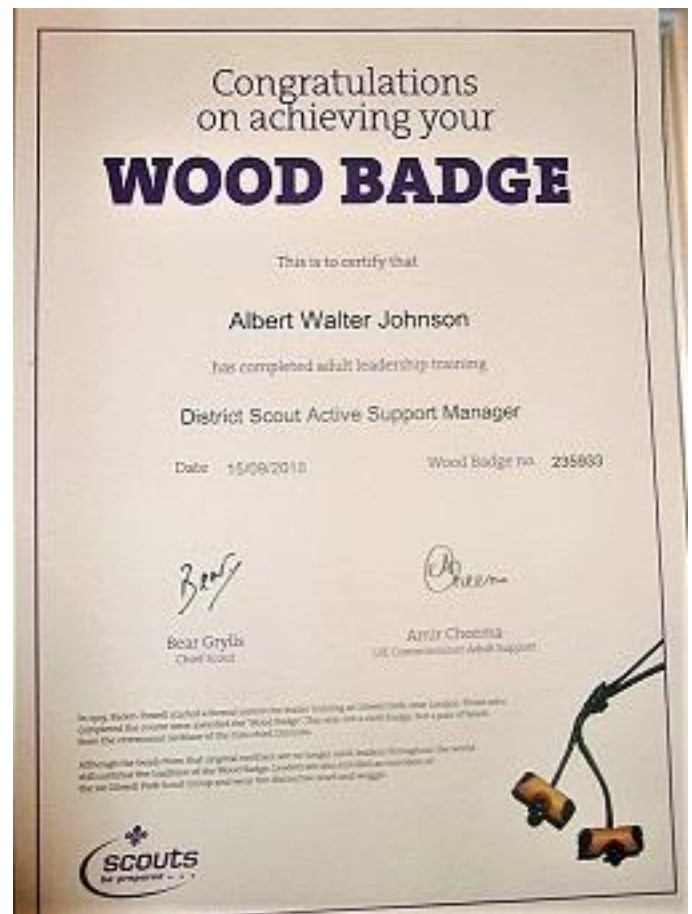
Separately from those, this Wood Badge Certificate dated 2018, says a lot about the fortitude of the person who has completed the adult leadership training, one Albert Walter Johnson was well past normal retirement age at the time.

Training is a constant, and a leader will have to undertake being retrained every three years or so.

The requirement to take this badge again in 2021, for Albert and Pat meant a decision had to be made that now was the time to retire. They can take heart that they have very much helped hundreds if not thousands of boys to grow up towards being that 'better citizens than they would otherwise be'. As that thank you letter of 60 years ago suggested they might.

Our thanks to Albert and Pat for their help and advice in compiling this article.

JF



The Eagle Pub on the corner of Longmore Street and Belgrave Road.

## Events

20 Jan 2022 7.00pm - 8.00pm

Thinktank

£10 admission

The Smethwick Engine

The Smethwick Engine, at Thinktank, is the oldest working steam engine in the world. Jim Andrew recounts its history and significance in the context of the industrial history of the West Midlands.

The engine was the first of its kind to use both the expansive force of steam and vacuum at the same time, built by Boulton & Watt and installed over 240 years ago in the Birmingham-Wolverhampton canal in 1779. Its role was to pump water up a series of canal locks at Smethwick.

<https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/thinktank/whats-on/planetarium-lates-the-smethwick-engine>

Lady Charlotte Guest at Dowlais 1833 – 1855

5th January 2022 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Thinktank

Free Admission

The Newcomen Society

Dr Victoria Owens examines how a pioneering businesswoman came to head the world's largest ironworks.

The story of Lady Charlotte Bertie who married wealthy Welsh ironmaster John Guest of Dowlais in 1833, learned the business and, after he died took over.

Booking required.

<https://www.newcomen.com/activity/lady-charlotte-guest-at-dowlais-1833-1855/>

---

The Balsall Heath Local History Society is Registered Charity No. 1101945  
The Old Print Works, 498-506 Moseley Road, Balsall Heath. Birmingham B12 9AH