

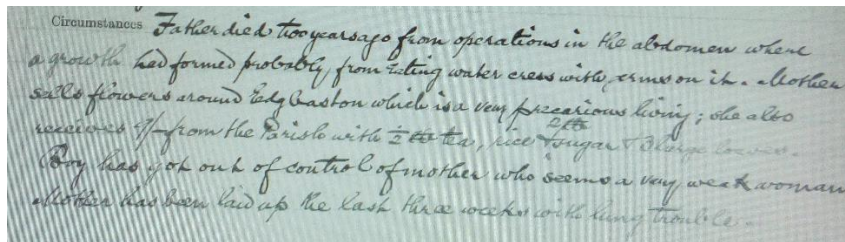
John Dix,

A Lost Child emigrated to Canada in 1914, age 11

A relative recently enquired about John Dix who is interesting for a couple of reasons.

1. Deadly Watercress!

The Application for John to enter the Homes reads:



Father died two years ago from operations on the abdomen where a growth had formed probably from eating water cress with germs on it. Mother sells flowers around Edgbaston which is a very precarious living. She also receives 9/- from the Parish with ½ lb of tea, rice, 2 lb sugar & 3 large loaves. Boy has got out of control of mother who seems a very weak woman. Mother has been laid up the last three weeks with lung trouble.

Report of visitor;

Mrs Chance of Chad Valley is interested in the family and has helped them from time to time & now asks us to receive the boy. Mrs Chance says the boy positively hates his mother.

The family lived in a back to back house in Holiday St , near Broad Street. I wonder where the watercress was from. Surely the river Rea was too polluted? Maybe it was from the market.

2. Middlemore Recycling. The Spires brothers.

John Dix was placed with Ira Allen, a farmer in Upper Cape, New Brunswick and had a string of satisfactory reports. However, in 1921, at age 17 he had moved to the home of Jack Spires, also in Upper Cape.

The entry reads:

John's inclinations were never inclined towards farming- was desirous of learning a trade. Mr Spires got in touch with his brother Samuel Spires (1906) who after serving in the army overseas, upon receiving his discharge married and removed to Boston, USA and arranged for John to get a situation in a garage- youth boards with Mr Spires and judging from letters that have been received it would appear that he is doing quite well- does not take very good care of his earnings but lately has started to save -will quite likely do well.

The Spires brothers , Jack and Samuel, had in fact been emigrated by the Homes in 1906 & 1907 and were placed close to each other, Jack with the same Ira Allen mentioned above, and Samuel with Ira's brother Albert. It seems that there was a close community in the Upper Cape and that Jack Spires became quite a significant figure. He married a Middlemore migrant, Ethel Bird who had been emigrated in 1914

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**Facebook: Balsall Heath Local
History Society and
lostchildrenproject**

**Membership of the Society
costs £12 a year. Membership
runs from January to
December each year and
application forms are
available on the website. Fees
at meetings will continue
unchanged: £1 for members
and £3 for visitors .
Meetings are held at St Paul's
Venture, Malvern Street at 7:30
p.m. Refreshments will be
served from 7 pm to 7:20 p.m.**

Next meeting.

**The next meeting will be on
Thursday March 31st . The
topic will be "The History of
the Birmingham Hippodrome"
presented by David & Pam
Humphries..**

together with John Dix. In 1920 it was reported that Jack and Ethel were living very comfortably on a farm at Upper Cape. At that time they also had another Middlemore child, Herbert Knight, placed with them. Then in 1921 Jack went on to sort out a trade and lodgings for John Dix. He obviously had experience of being emigrated himself and was willing to help other child migrants.

Val Hart

Volunteers needed for a new Balsall Heath Heritage Trail

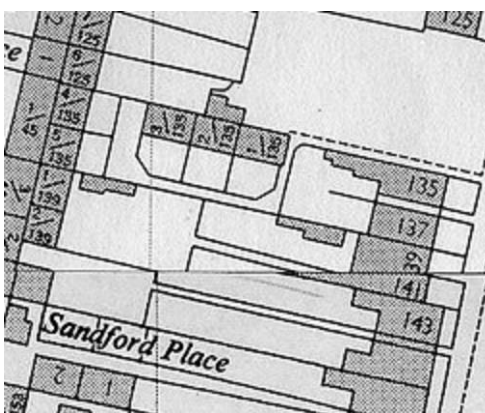
We have been awarded a grant from the **Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund** to devise a new Heritage trail. To deliver this we have to recruit five volunteer Trail Leaders. Do please let us know if you would be willing to consider this.

Val Hart

Can you do this?



Circa 1950's map centred Balfour, Lincoln, and Mary St



Look for Sanford place on the larger map to locate what part of the map is being highlighted in the smaller one above. In the centre we can see the house numbers 1/135 to 5/135. #135 being in Mary St. These back houses were all accessed by way of an entry. The entry, no longer there is represented by the dotted line alongside No 135's house and garden.

Mr Tony May can name all who lived in these 5 houses. #1 Mrs Penny, #2 Mrs Shaw, #3 Mr & Mrs May (and Tony), #4 Mr & Mrs Tisdale, #5 Anne & Dennis May,

Tony's grandparents. Tony adds "Mrs Porter and her dog lived at 1/139, while Mrs Ashby was next door at number 2, when she left a Danish family came to live there."

Remember the Pink

This month would have been the 125th anniversary of the Sports Argus' first edition and, at least, one internet news site is rushing to commemorate this. <https://youtu.be/dONHQCNxbII> has a video programme dedicated to the paper. For those of you that have a problem with internet video, the Birmingham Mail who now use the title for their Saturday supplement, produced this tribute last year for the 15th anniversary of its last full edition. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/sport/football/football-news/sports-argus-the-pink-gone-11325757>.

Thanks to the Ladywood History Group for sending in the Youtube link.

Moseley Road Hardware Shop

Life behind the counter

Noun: life the condition that distinguishes animals and plants from organic matter, including the capacity for growth, reproduction, functional activity, and continual change preceding death.

The July 2021 edition of the Gazette carried the story 'Sandbrooks Hardware Shop'. It told something of the shop's history, and we had interviewed the two owners it has had since 1973. That shop being at No 545 Moseley Rd on the corner with Homer St. Research brought the surprise that Sandbrook's had an earlier life across the Moseley Rd on the corner with Runcorn Rd, and with a history of an Ironmongery store being around as early as 1879. We can *now* tell the stories of the people who have served behind the counter(s) since the early 1960's and importantly, the why and how of the move across the Moseley Road happened.

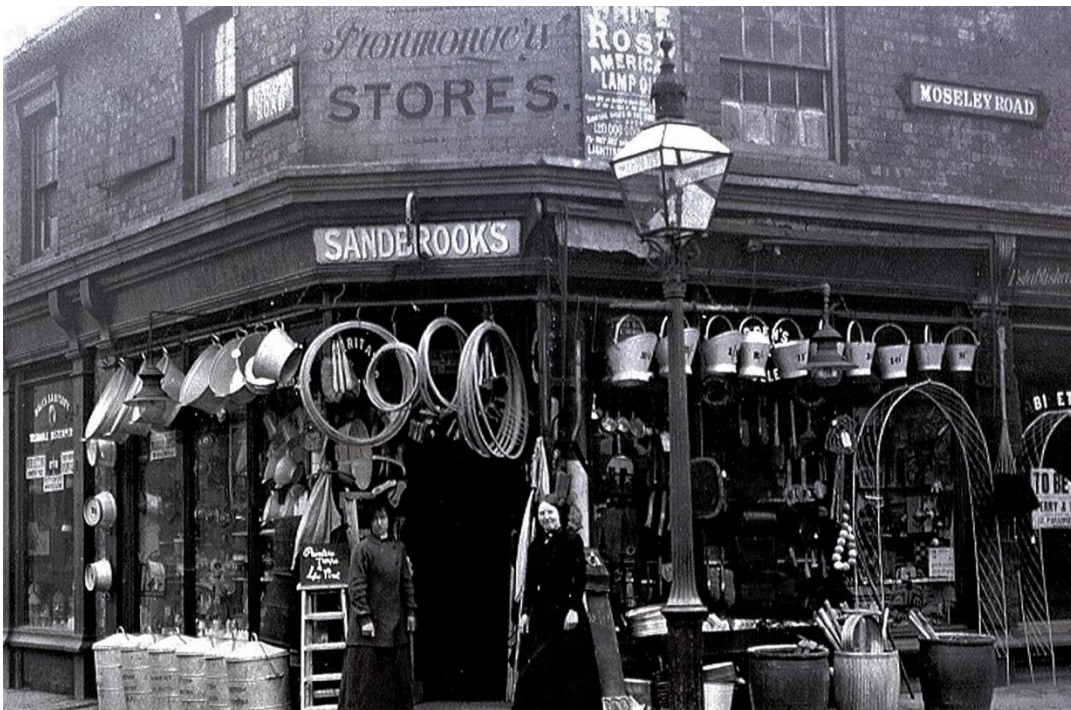
Back in 1898 the shop at No 548 Moseley Road was owned or managed by George Hirons Jones,

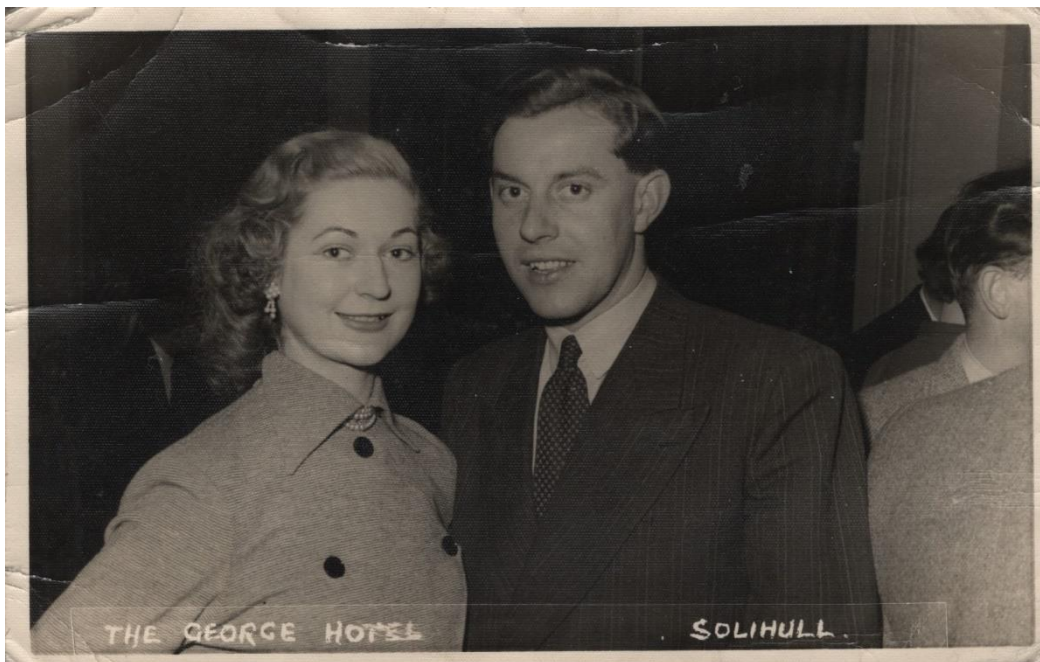
hardware dealer. By 1912 a Mr John P Davison was in charge, and in 1921 it was 'Attenborough & Oakey', Ironmongers. We don't know for sure how long this remained the case, but we do know that by 1931 it had become Sandbrook's Ironmongery.

These photos show clearly the shop is on the corner junction of Runcorn and Moseley Roads. When the store first opened in the 19th century Runcorn Rd was then St John's Rd.

This second photo taken at a different time, has an advert for vacuum cleaners (white plaque bottom of right-hand window) which suggests it is the later one of the two photos.

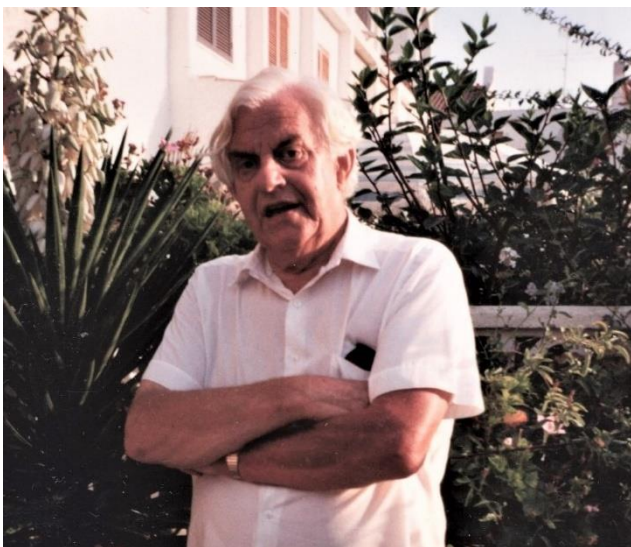
One John Pardoe, formerly of Homer St remembers buying a penknife from this store as a very young man during the late 1950s.





This is Joy Bates and John Boden they met at the George Hotel in Solihull and married in 1958. John joined the RAF and trained as a pilot with transport command. He spent two years 1943-5 flying supplies to soldiers in the Burmese jungle. After leaving the RAF he became a civilian pilot working for Dunlop the tyre manufacturer, flying executives around the world from a base in Coventry.

When Dunlop moved that base to Castle Bromwich airfield, they did not require John's services any further. From there John joined his father George in his wood business for a time. George was already considering taking over Sandbrook's Ironmongery from a man that was looking to retire. The father and son signed a 10-year lease and took over the store. Meanwhile Joy continued with her secretarial work where possible while raising two children, Martin (1959) and Carolyn (1960).



Hawley's Bakery Van – Photo credit Birmingham Forum Nov 2011.

John Boden 1995

A few years into their lease of the store George and John received a letter from solicitors representing Hawley's Bakery – the lease holders, telling them they must vacate premises at No 548 as the whole block between Runcorn and Brighton Roads was to be redeveloped.

The redevelopment was complete by 1971 and the former Ironmongery store had become Red Robin Supermarket. Today (2021) the space is occupied by Zaffs Restaurant and take-away.

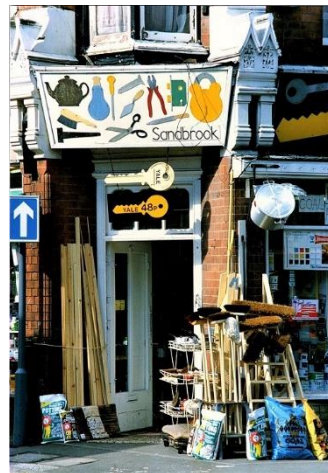
2021, Zaffs Restaurant on the corner of Runcorn and Moseley Road.



George and John, despite having that ten-year lease were being forced to move out and were keen to find new premises for their hardware business. A timely opportunity to take over a shop close by came their way. The shop, on the corner of Homer St, had been a boot repairers known locally as Dan's Boot Repairs. Its official listing in Kelly's was 'Wells & Sons Boot

Repairs. According to local memories of the shop, many things could be bought there. The expected shoe polish and laces, but also prepacked coal and airgun pellets.

By 1965 Sandbrook's was listed by Kelly's Directories as being at No 545 Moseley Rd, and so the move was complete. The Boden's worked hard at the business and ran it successfully for 10-12 years. With the children growing up, Joy was able to help in the shop on Saturdays. Those years of service took their toll and John found the days long with deliveries to be made of items such as Paraffin and bottled gas, after the shop had closed for the day. The family decided to look for a buyer and Mr Ron Handley was to take over Sandbrook's in 1973.



Far left: A hand bill advertisement for the hardware store. Ads on the reverse side were for Valor Gas, Paraffin, cutlery, and Glass cut-to-size.

Left: Sandbrook's as it looked in the 1970s

When the Boden's first took over the shop, they found a cellar full of Leather. This was the legacy left by Charles Selwood, Leather Goods Manufacturer, a company that predated the tenancy of the boot repairer. Prior to these two companies, #545 had housed Thomas Baker, Grocer (1912) and White's Glass and China shop from the 19th century.

John Boden spent the rest of his working life with the NHS ambulance service, he passed away in Nov 2003. Joy went back to her work as a private secretary, with various employers by way of an agency. Having retired and living in Wythall, she is still active playing her part in the running of a Ladies social club.

Balsall Heath Local History Society extend our thanks to Mrs Boden for her help in making the telling of this slice of *local* history possible.

Photo: Joy Boden at home October 2021.

There are two more *life changing* stories of the people associated with ownership of this Ironmongery Store, the already mentioned Ron Handley (1973-1990), and the present incumbent Mr Hirani Sabbir. These individual personal memories bring us closer to our own history and shows how each of us have a bearing on others life and times.

Carl Chinn MBE, Birmingham's own Historian, writer, and broadcaster has a belief on this subject.

"My writings are deeply affected by my family's working-class background and life in the back-to-backs of Birmingham, and I believe passionately that history must be democratised because each and every person has made their mark upon history and has a story to tell."



In the preparing and writing of this piece my thanks go to BHLHS volunteer William McCabe, and fellow society members Jenny Hodson, and Val Hart for their help in the research and confirmation of the facts related here. J.F.



Photo Pick



Photos of St John's Church (now SS John & Martin) George St B12

Supplied by Catherine, parish secretary. They were sent in by Mrs Lawrence (March 2021).

Photos by H.O. Lumby in 1909.



Other Events

The final curtain call



It's February 1914 and it looks like murder
A play showing at the Red Lion, Vicarage Road, Kings Heath at 7:30 pm on Friday 1st April and Saturday 2nd April. Tickets £6.50 or £5 to those in period costume.


Highbury house and gardens open days



The Chamberlain Highbury Trust now has regular open days at Highbury house and gardens. On each open day there are separate guided tours of the house and gardens. Most of them are on Mondays although the next one is on Sunday 6th March. Others currently listed are on 7th March, 4th April, 2nd May, 6th June and 4th July. The open day is from 11am to 4pm. More details are available at <https://chamberlainhighburytrust.co.uk/> and they do ask that you book free tickets through Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-chamberlain-highbury-trust-15364196765>

The Final Curtain Call

It's February 1914 and it looks like murder!
Can you help Inspector Rafter solve the crime?
email : cluedunnit@gmail.com for further information

Friday and Saturday April 1st and 2nd
7.30 pm at the Red Lion, Vicarage Rd, B14 7LY
Tickets £6.50 on the door
(£5 if in period costume)
Not suitable for under 12yrs

Birmingham History Theatre Company