

Westwoods Shops on Ladypool Road. "Nuf Sed"

At the recent Local History Fair, we were approached by a descendant of the Westwoods who used to have shops in Ladypool Road. Carl Chinn recalls them in his book, "Our Brum"

On the other side of Alfred street is Westwoods. "Nuf Sed" is their motto. That says it all: the best fruiterer in in Birmingham- at least for anyone who comes from the Brook".

In 1930 Westwoods had two shops along the road, one on the corner of Alfred St and one on the corner of Brunswick Road.



However, way back in the 1980s when I was working on my first book about Balsall Heath history, with help from Jacqui Ure, we interviewed someone called Mr Hatfield who told us a story about Westwoods. He said that Joseph Westwood started out as a barrow boy, selling his fruit and vegetables from a portable barrow. He did well and eventually had several shops, including two in Ladypool Road. Apparently there was a shopkeeper's petition to the Council to remove the barrow boys because they were holding up the traffic and undercutting prices but Mr Westwood refused to sign, because of his own past on the barrows.

I decided to search the online British Newspaper Archive and found something about the petition, in an article in the Bham Evening Despatch of 1955.

Ladypool Road grew into prominence towards the end of the last century as the district was built up and the population increased Where there had been onlv sprinkling of shops there was suddenly a thriving trading area Business grew with the district.

In the boom days after the first world war there was a big "shoppers' attraction" in Ladypool Road street traders. It was a barrow boys' happy-hunting ground They parked their hand carts either side the road and thrifty housewives came from miles around. The barrow boys did a roaring trade So did the shopkeepers. But there was a snag. The barrows led to congestion and the road became an accident black spot The police reported this the Watch Committee who in turn reported to the City Council. In October 1926 Ladypool Road was prohibited for street trading. In 1930 the shopkeepers petitioned the City Council to lift the ban and let the barrow-boys return but the Council refused.

Does anyone remember the Westwoods shops?

Val Hart

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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 are: £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 pm.

Coming soon

Thursday October 27th Pat Franklin on Eldred Hallas, Birmingham's first Labour MP and his contribution to the founding of the Birmingham Municipal Bank.

Thursday November 24th Corinne Brazier The Police Strike of 1919

Besieged 60s Rockers Come Back for Tea

This is the story of how '60's pop idols Joe Brown, Marty Wilde, and Billy Fury were besieged at a Balsall Heath hotel by adoring fans and had to make an escape out of the hotel's back door. And how it was that one young lady had them at her house for tea. The story is told from three young ladies' personal experiences at the time.



Jean Holbeche (nee Percival) No 142 Sherbourne Rd.

As a child, I frequented the Moseley Road Baths and Library Balsall Heath, with friends, family, and from school. When I was 10 years old during the week beginning Monday 7th March 1960 I had been swimming with friends at the baths in the afternoon. After our usual cup of oxo there, we walked out of the baths past the library, and along Moseley Road toward town, as we passed the next building, which was a guest house for theatrical performers, allegedly owned or used by Ann George who played Amy Turtle in the Crossroads soap opera, we heard shouting.

Joe Brown, born Joseph Roger Brown.

My friends and I looked around and then up and were amazed to see Joe Brown, Billy Fury, and others hanging out of the bedroom windows of the house waving and whooping to us. I can't remember exactly what was said but they chatted and laughed for a while and seemed glad of the excited attention from us. I have a clear memory of Joe Brown with his gorgeous blonde hair smiling down at us.

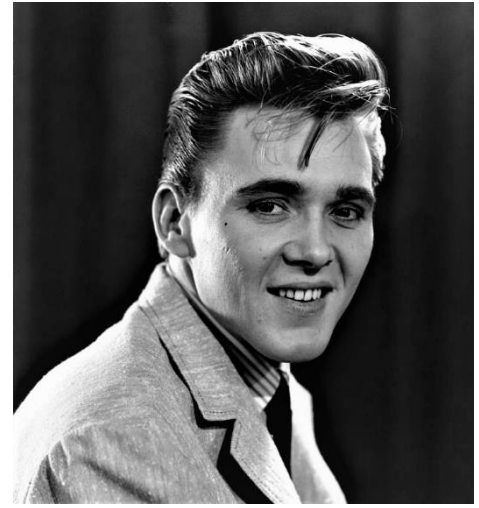


1959-60 Mary St School Rounders team.
Jean Percival is far right middle row.



Photo Right, Jean, centre, paddles in the River Rea with friends Kathy Bainbridge (left) and a girl that Jean remembers as one of the Williams girls.

Word soon got around, and on reaching home I told my 14year old sister Val who attended Highgate Girls School, Moseley Road at the time. Val and her friend went to the guest house that evening or the next as she remembers it was dark, there were other girls crowded around the house by now all excitedly waiting for a glimpse of the stars. To my sister's joy she saw two men walking towards them and realised one was Billy Fury with his trademark collar turned up on his jacket, she ran towards him calling out his name and touched his arm, he was not happy about the contact and shook her off looking annoyed. He quickly reached the door and scooted inside to safety. My sister was not bothered by the rebuff from Billy Fury, she had touched her idol and was in heaven! We couldn't believe such big pop stars of the day were staying so close to where we lived but then Balsall Heath was full of surprises.



Left of centre and next to the library is the guest house where Billy Fury (above), born Ronald Wycherley and his fellow pop stars resided while appearing at the Birmingham Hippodrome.

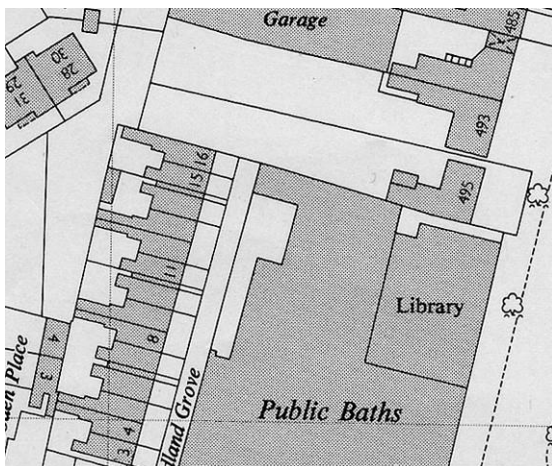
Mary Elizabeth Brown (nee Harkin) No 30 Balfour St



Around 1960 Billy Fury was very popular, especially with teenage girls, as he was quite a heartthrob'. One afternoon, whilst at Bishop Challoner School, word got around that Billy & backing group were staying in a Guest House on Moseley Rd, as he was in Birmingham for a concert.

Several of us caught the No.50 bus down to Moseley Rd Swimming Baths. The Guest House was next to the Library, and the building is still there (now a Gurdwara Sikh temple) It was then a double-fronted house, lying back from the road with a small wall in front. When we arrived, the same rumour had obviously gone around Queensbridge School, as several of the pupils were there already.

The expectation was Billy's entourage would leave by 6.30 pm to be in time for the concert. Time ticked by, and there was lots of screaming and whaling in anticipation. However, It was difficult to work out what was going on, once the deadline had gone, until a young man came & told us, Billy and his team had gone out the back way, had climbed the wall, and from there were able to get into Edward Rd, where their transport awaited! It was disappointing, but who could blame them, they probably thought they would be mobbed. I think they would have been right!



Here we come to the essence of our story, how the final part of it happened. The building numbered 495, on this map, is the guest house where our pop stars were residing. You can see that it backs directly onto (through garden space) the houses numbered 28 & 30 (top left). Those

houses were and are still in Tanworth Grove off Vincent Street. In this photo of the Grove, the chimney of the Baths can be plainly seen behind the houses at the bottom of the cul-de-sac.

Linda Evans, (nee Kemp) No 28 Tanworth Grove



I was 13 at the time, and one evening I was helping to clear up after the family meal. I looked out of the kitchen window, and saw 3 people, male, climbing over the wall into our garden. I called my dad who opened the window and asked them what they were doing, it was obvious who they were, Marty Wilde, Billy Fury, and Jo Brown. I could not believe it I was so excited. My dad told me to carry on with the clearing up while he went to see why they were coming through our garden.

Marty Wilde, born Reginald Leonard Smith.



Circa '55 In the back garden at number 28 Tanworth Grove, the Kemp children pose on the garden hill with Linda's friend Joan.

Martin Kemp
Adrian Kemp
Linda Kemp
Joan Porch

Behind them, the wall that our pop stars clambered over to escape being mobbed by fans.

Linda Kemp with brother Adrian (1960/1)



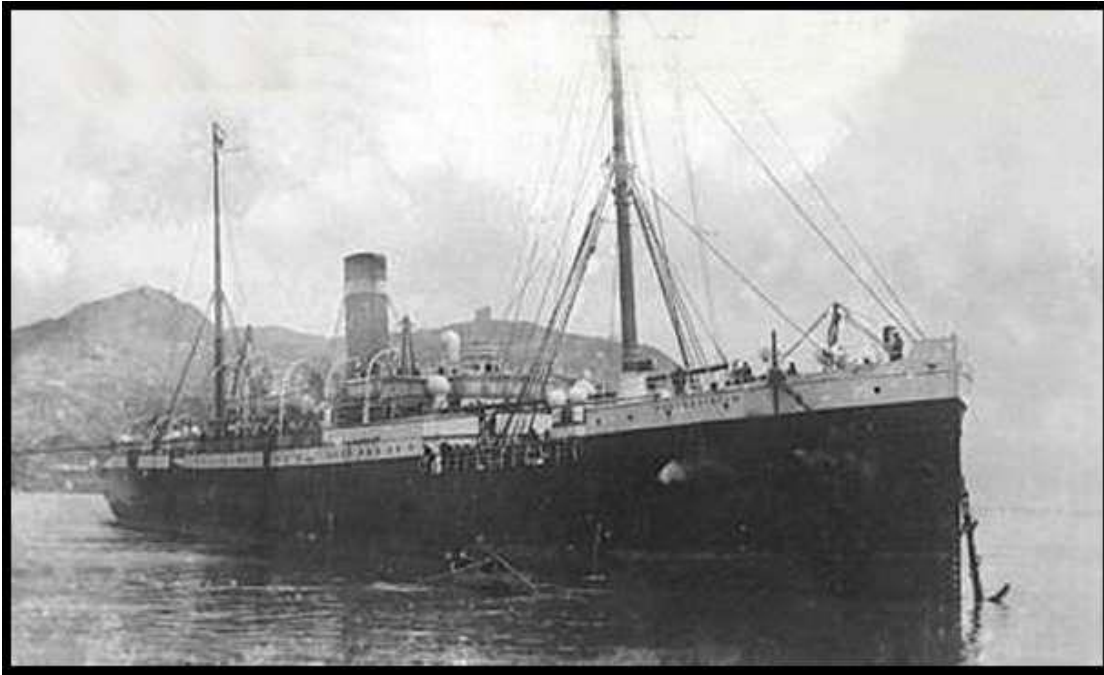
On the other side of our garden wall was the garden of a hotel on Moseley Road and they needed to escape the back way to get away from fans who were at the front of the hotel. A car was driving around to pick them up to take them to the venue they were performing at.

Dad asked if they would like to come back this way and if perhaps they could call in for a cup of tea. At around 9.30 they came back, to my delight and mom made tea, they signed my autograph book and left once again climbing back over the garden wall. If it had not been for the autographs. no one at school would have believed it so I was a superstar for a week. (Linda got signed photos of all three).

You see, dear reader, we were there, and we *do* remember the 60s! B.H. history society is grateful to our three ladies for their time and benevolence in contributing to this article. Jean, Mary, and Linda (originally Lynne) are alive and well and living in the Midlands.

Footnote: Billy Fury was beset with heart problems and sadly died in 1983. Marty Wilde and Joe Brown are still with us, and both have been awarded an MBE. So too has Linda Evans, who in that room drinking tea so many years ago could have predicted that? J.F.

Middlemore Canal children. 1902 and 1903



Mr Hayes was a boatman on the canals but in 1902 disaster struck when he had a “paralytic seizure” and was admitted to Selly Oak Workhouse Infirmary with very little hope of recovery. His wife, Sarina, was left with 4 children between the ages of 13 and 5. The whole family had always lived on canal boats. In desperation she went to stay with her half sister and her husband in Longmore St, Balsall Heath but they were all struggling as the husband was out of work. They had to sell all their furniture to buy food and were behind with the rent. In May 1902. Harry age 8 and Enoch, age 6 were admitted to the Middlemore Homes in Highgate.

By the next February, 1904, Mrs Hayes had gone into service with a Mrs Hutchinson, a fruiterer, in New town Row, but the remaining two children William, age 14, and Caroline, age 6, were “quite destitute” and the comment was added, “William will certainly go to the bad if not taken in hand.” They joined their siblings in the Homes.

In May 1903 William, Caroline and Harry all emigrated to Canada, Enoch followed them the following year. All were settled in New Brunswick.

Val Hart

Two songs from the Lost Children Play performed in July, 2022

by The Birmingham History Theatre Company.



Two of the songs from the play are now available on Youtube. These are the links:

<https://youtu.be/34I9C26fCOA>

https://youtu.be/n9zKVZJ_BPk

A filmed version of the play is being produced.

Val Hart



Please help us by raising 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.

<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>

Last financial year we raised £57 from these sources.

Christmas is Coming!

Our books would make presents to bring a smile to the lips and a warmth to the heart! On sale at the next meeting & on website.

The Lost Children. The story of the Middlemore Homes. £4

The Flicks. Memories of the old days at the cinema in Balsall Heath, £2

Brown Paper and Goose Grease. A Dictionary of Traditional Remedies £1

Balsall Heath and Highgate, Past and Present. Photographic images .£7

Tales Out Of School . Memories of Schooldays. £2

Stars of Balsall Heath Eleven famous Balsall Heathans. £2

Sweet Memories. A dictionary of confectionery. £1

Other Events

'Brickyard Engines that drove Clay Mills in the Early 19th Century' by Elizabeth Thomson

November 2 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

A talk from the Newcomen Society at the ThinkTank. (free event)

<https://www.newcomen.com/activity/brickyard-engines-that-drove-clay-mills-in-the-early-c19-by-elizabeth-thomson/>

'Invention & Design; Elkington of Birmingham' by Dr. Jonathan Berg

December 7 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Dr. Jonathan Berg discusses the invention of electroplating and its commercialisation in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter

A talk from the Newcomen Society at the ThinkTank. (free event)

<https://www.newcomen.com/activity/invention-elkington-of-birmingham-by-dr-jonathan-berg/>

Square Eyes TV Festival

As part of its 60th anniversary celebrations the Midland Arts Centre is running a series of events showing programmes and holding talks on the last 50 or more years of TV. Some run for a full day (70 years of Sooty and a Blue Peter retrospective) some are just the show with a talk by those involved (Licking Hitler a 1978 play about a wartime propaganda unit). The whole thing runs from the 4th to the 13th of November.

<https://macbirmingham.co.uk/>

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