

IMPORTANT

Changes to our regular meetings and timetable for the next few months.

Over the next few months there will be major changes to the regular meetings of the Society so pay attention.

There is currently no meeting planned for August so our next meeting will be...

September 28th .AGM,

Speaker, Jan Pick "Cached in The Attic" by Janet Pick. The story of the Crofts and Assinder letters. This will be the last evening meeting at the Venture. This is at the usual time and place. .

This is the last meeting to be held in the evenings. In future meetings will be on a **Monday at 11 a.m.** (morning) at the Venture on Malvern St.

Monday 23rd October 11 am for 11.30 am start a talk by either Gill or Ian Binnie from the Moseley Local History Society.

Monday 27th November 11 am for 11.30 am start. Phil Griffiths "Tells the story from the earliest coins in ancient Greece, through the first coins to circulate in Britain, the Roman and Medieval periods, right up to Decimalisation and the present day, with a glimpse into the future."

Monday 14th December 11 am for 11.30 am start. Corinne Brazier | Heritage Manager West Midlands Police Rogues, Villains and Peaky Blinders

Nothing booked as yet for 2023

Moseley Street Fair

The Street fair that formed part of the Moseley Community Festival this month was postponed due to predicted high winds on the day and will now take place on 19th August between 11am and 4pm. As originally intended the Balsall Heath Local History Society will have a stall so please come along and support us.

Balsall Heath Local History Society Gazette

JULY 2023



Telephone: 07565 194822

Email:

info@balsallheathhistory.co.uk

Web:

www.balsallheathhistory.co.uk

www.thelostchildren.uk

**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.

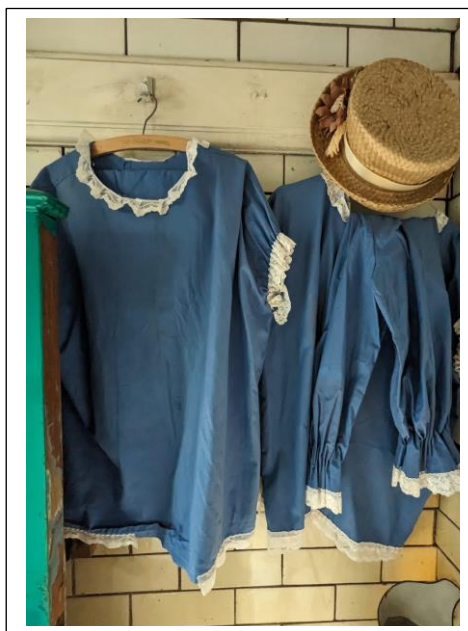
Coming soon

Next meeting will be the AGM on 28th September.

A Historic Cubicle at Moseley Road Baths

The “Living Room” at the Baths is running till the end of September. The Society was offered the opportunity to use one of the original changing cubicles of the Gala Pool so we have set up a small display there. The Baths, together with the Library, were given to the neighbourhood as a reward for agreeing to being incorporated into the City of Birmingham, in 1891. The Cubicle display explains this and there is also a copy of the poster about the voting arrangements for residents about the Annexation.

Val Hart



MOSELEY ROAD BATHS

BALSALL HEATH'S LIVING ROOM
BACK TO OURS



1st July – 30th September
FREE/EVERYONE WELCOME

The Gala Pool Space,
Moseley Road Baths, Balsall Heath
for event programme:
www.moseleyroadbaths.org.uk/whats-on



Thomas Williams, Tram Conductor of Balsall Heath.

A volunteer in the First World War.



Moseley Road Tram Depot staff



When war was declared on 4th August 1914 Thomas was working at the Depot on the Moseley Road/ Trafalgar Rd corner. By the end of August it had become clear that a huge number of volunteer soldiers were needed urgently to form Lord Kitchener's new Army. An appeal was made that men volunteer along with their work colleagues and friends to form the new "PALS" battalions. The principle was that men who enlisted together would have a commitment to their friends and colleagues. There was a huge response and as a result compulsory conscription was not introduced until 1916.

Thomas and his workmates at the Tram Depot were among those who enlisted to form the 1st, 2nd & 3rd City Battalions, later renamed as the 14th, 15th and 16th Battalions of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. They spent some time undergoing basic training, The 1st & 3rd trained at Sutton Park and the 3rd at Spring Hill College, Moseley. Initially there was an insufficient supply of uniforms so many undertook training in their own clothes. It also took until 1915 for accommodation huts to be provided so many volunteers were lodged with local families.



The PALS Battalions went off to the Western Front late in 1915 and in 1916 they played an active part in the Battle of the Somme. Many died.

Thomas fought in the battle of Beaumont Hamel on the Somme and was gassed. He was Acting Company Sergeant Major and was awarded the Military Medal. Surviving the war he eventually died in 1951 and is buried in Brandwood End Cemetery.

The City's Tramways Department put up a wonderful Cenotaph for those who lost their lives. It stands in its own small memorial garden near the entrance to the Stadium Club in Wheelers Lane, Kings Heath.



Every man who lost his life is listed under his workplace so there is a list both for the Moseley Rd and the Highgate Rd Depots.

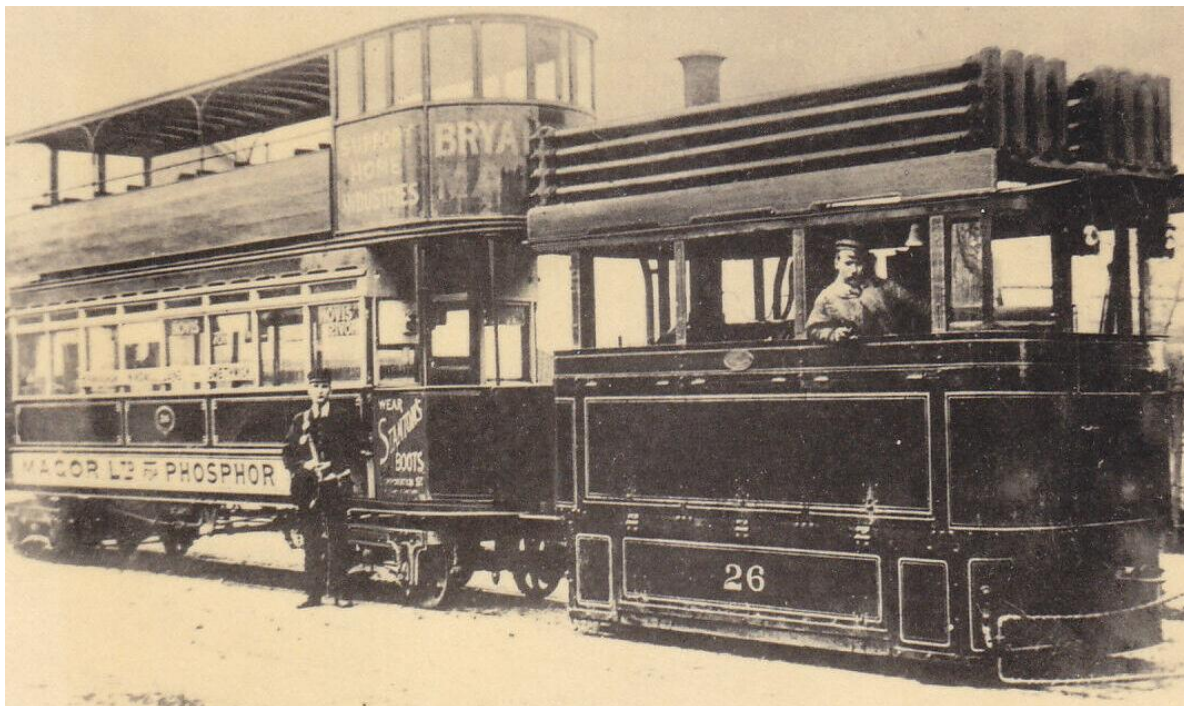


Doug Smith's book, "From Trams to Trenches" was published in 2016 by National Express to mark the centenary of the Battle of the Somme where 49 tramway men died. Doug says that by 1916 1755 employees of the Tramways Dept were serving in the armed forces and of these 236 never came back.

Val Hart

Trams & Tram Depots in Balsall Heath

The first trams to take to the road in Balsall Heath were steam trams. These had a steam engine at the front which pulled a passenger vehicle. They offered an alternative to the horse drawn buses which had been the earliest form of public transport. The steam trams were not popular. The Dart, a local satirical magazine, described them as "a cross between a bathing van and a threshing machine".

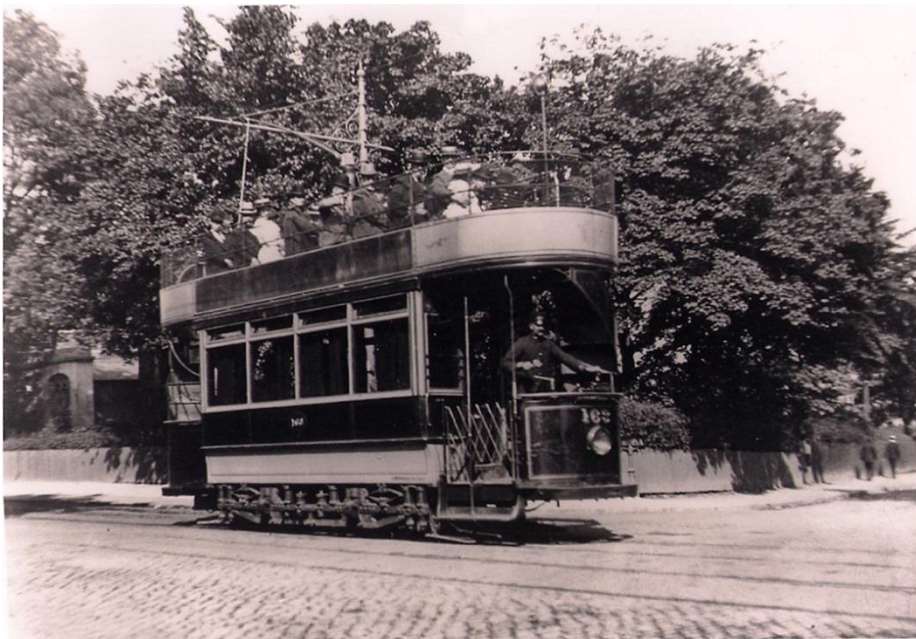


The first trams appeared in central Birmingham from 1882. As the lines began to extend to the suburbs the Local Board of Health appointed a special Tramways Committee to ensure that they were safe and in November 1884 the whole committee as well as the Board Surveyor and Clerk travelled the entire line to check it out. The Moseley Road line opened in January 1885 and it was

reported," *The steam engines are working satisfactorily there being much less steam and smoke than at the commencement.*"

There were difficulties, however. As early as November 1885 the Board Clerk wrote to the Tramway Company requesting that trams passing a place of worship on Sundays restrict their speed to a maximum of 3 mph. Residents made frequent complaints to the Board about drivers steaming along "at reckless speed" as well as obnoxious steam, smoke and fumes. In response, the Board even fined several drivers for this offence. By 1887 opposition to the trams had increased and there was vociferous complaint as well as active campaigning against them.

The steam trams were ousted by the new Electric Trams which were already being trialled by 1888. They did not arrive in Balsall Heath until Jan 1st 1907.



First electric tram to run on the Moseley Road.

The Moseley Road Tram Depot was built in 1906, designed specially with elaborate architecture to suit the "select residential area" and opened on Jan 1st 1907, just in time for the new electric trams. It had capacity for 77 trams and had access to the Moseley Road by a track running behind the splendid office block at the front.

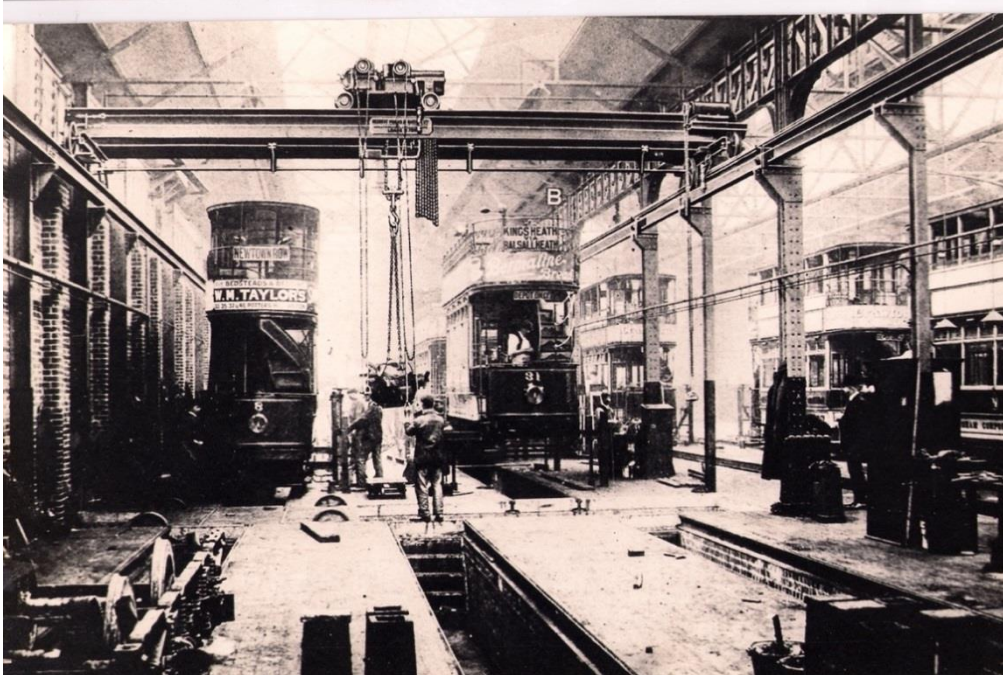


Interior of Moseley Road Depot .c 1940

The Depot was converted to provision for motor buses in 1949 and finally closed in 1975. It has now been brilliantly repurposed as the Creation Climbing Centre and Skate Park. The office building at the front, however, is in a very sad state and urgently in need of attention.

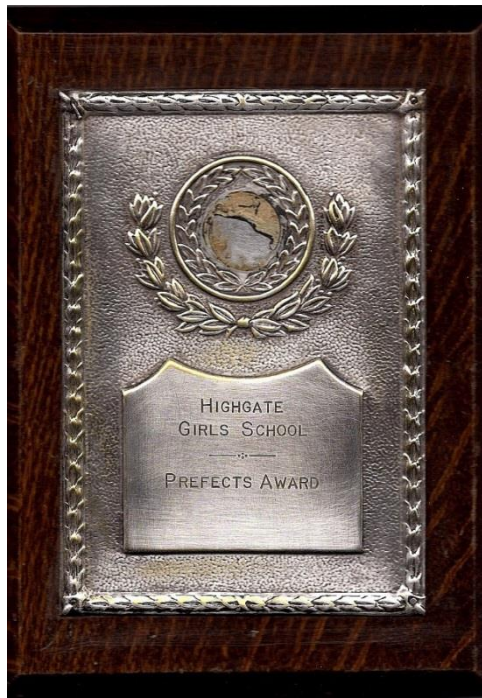


In 1913 a second depot opened in Balsall Heath in Highgate Road. This was a smaller place and less ornate but still a huge building. It converted to being a motor bus depot in 1937. Then in 1968 it was taken over by the Ambulance and Fire Service for repair and maintenance services. When the Fire service moved out in 1974 the ambulance service stayed for many years. Currently the building is in poor repair, being used as car parking space for the nearby Royal Signature banqueting Suite.



Interior of the Highgate Road Depot.

Val Hart

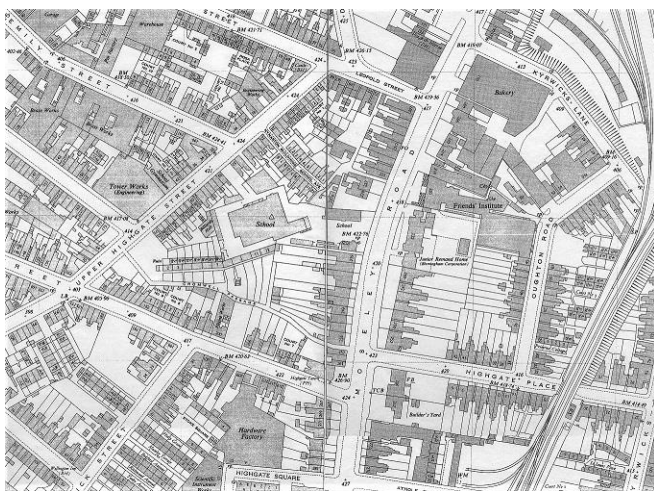


We are looking for a new home for this Highgate Girls School Artefact.

A Prefects Award

We at Balsall Heath Local History Society (BHLHS) have been having a tidy-up in the office and clearing some of the artifacts we have due to space restrictions. This plaque is a good example of those. It is mounted on a beautifully polished wooded board with a hinged flap for standing on a desk or side table. Originally given to the society by my former committee member Nell Watkins, we would like to find a new home for it.

Discovering this item again has prompted us to do some fresh research into Highgate School's history. What became quickly apparent is that photos of Highgate Girls School Birmingham are not plentiful.



In fact, apart from the former pupil's memory of the school, it does not seem to be that well known.

From the research we have done, we plan to bring you lots of information about the school in a future article. We'll have the official stuff, the opening and closing dates. Pupil's memories and some photos!

This map shows the school's location prior to demolition.

The building can be seen left of centre, with Upper Highgate Street and the school entrance to the left. The main thoroughfare of Moseley Rd to the right of the school provided a further entrance. Do you have memories of the school? Then let us know. Referring again to this lovely Prefect Award, do bear in mind we are looking for a new home for it. If you have an interest or know of someone that does do let us know. JF