



Balsall Heath Local History Society

Annual Report 2022-2023

The Society was founded over 40 years ago with the aim of promoting interest in our local history. Over the years the Society has achieved considerable success, working with schools and community groups, organising exhibitions and events, collecting resources and producing our own publications. It is important we all feel pride in our area and to value its strengths, both past and present. Local history has a key role to play in underpinning community cohesion.



The Middlemore Blue Plaque Launch was a glittering occasion, attended by The Lord Mayor, Birmingham Civic Society representatives, relatives of children who were emigrated and Patricia Roberts-Pichette, the leading authority on the Homes, who flew in specially from Canada for the event

Chairman's Report

Another year has gone by so fast and the Society has continued to provide a wide and varied programme. A range of excellent speakers has given us subjects ranging from the life of our own Joseph Chamberlain; women of the English Civil War who involved themselves in fighting and spying; and a "singalong" of popular songs from the 1860's to 1960.

However, the year has been tinged with sadness. We lost two of our long-standing members, our Programme Secretary, Bron Salway and Peter Charlton. Bron was a key member of the Society. She served on the



Society's Committee for many years, ran the Classroom until it closed and organised the programme of speakers for our monthly meetings. Our sincere sympathies go to Jackie Charlton and Pete Salway, both long-time members.

My continuing thanks go to all our volunteers, particularly Diane Stead and Margaret Pendry for refreshments at our monthly meetings; William McCabe for his layout of The Gazette; Haqi Ali, for help with events; and Jenny Hodson, who as Vice Chair replaces me when I cannot attend, as well as leading on our photographic collection.

The Society of course would not exist without you, its members, so I wish to give you my grateful thanks and hope that you will continue to support and attend the Society's monthly meetings and other events.

The Lost Children Project

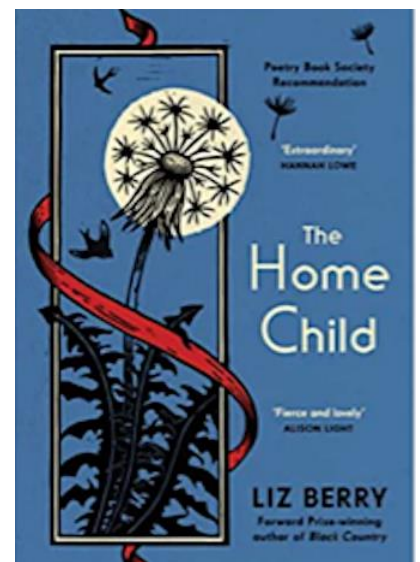


The Lost Children Project aims to raise awareness of the work of the Middlemore Homes which emigrated over 5000 children from Birmingham to Canada but also Australia, between 1873 & 1954. The children were placed with farmers in the backwoods until 1932 and after that sent to Fairbridge Farm Schools.

The Home Child

In April this year there was the Launch of "The Home Child", a novel in verse by Liz Berry, the story of Eliza Showell, a Middlemore Child and Great Aunt to Liz herself.

The Launch attracted an audience of over 100 people. After an introductory discussion, Liz Berry read a selection of poems from her book and then there were questions from the audience which were responded to by Liz herself and Val Hart from our Society. The Lost Children touring Exhibition was also on display and received a lot of attention.



The original Homes were in St Luke's Road, Highgate, and moved to Selly Oak in 1929. In July, 2022 the Blue Plaque in St Luke's Road, Highgate was launched. This was achieved in partnership with The Civic Trust and Barratt Homes, who developed the site. It is surrounded by maple trees as a homage to Canada.



The Society gained grants from the Commonwealth Games Celebrating Communities Fund for a touring exhibition on pop-up banners also partly funded by a grant from the Midland Ancestors Kemp Legacy Fund. This toured Balsall Heath and Highgate before moving to The Back to Backs in Hurst Street where it stayed from July to October for Birmingham Heritage Week 2022 and Val Hart gave a talk at St Martins in the Bullring.

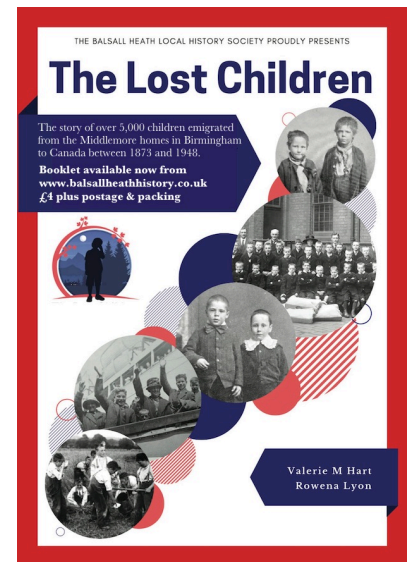
The Birmingham History Theatre Company also performed a play, "The Lost Children" at the Midlands Arts Centre and the Blue Orange Theatre, in July. The performances won excellent reviews.

Events and Trips

This year we ran stalls at Balsall Heath Carnival, the Moseley Fair and the Birmingham Lives Local History Fair, all of which went well. In July we enjoyed a trip out to The Police Museum at the Lock Up in Steelhouse Lane and there was also a Brandwood Cemetery Trail in August and September, "Every Grave Has a Story," revealing the lives of seven of Balsall Heath's residents.

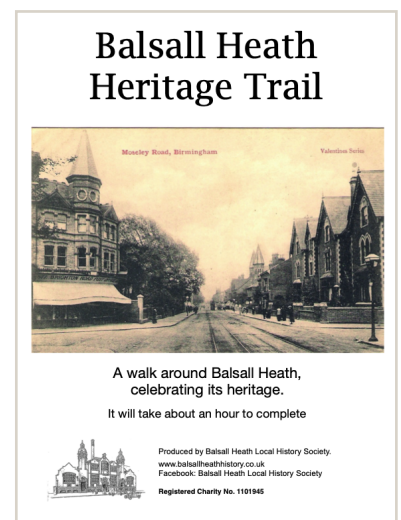
Meanwhile The book, "The Lost Children" continued to sell well and enquiries from relatives flowed in. We have been able to undertake some research for families, which has been very pleasing.

One of the people who contacted us was a relative of Benjamin Grimmett, one of the Lost Children who was returned to England to live at Monyhull Colony. His grave has now been restored, thanks to donations from his relative and readers of the Gazette.



Balsall Heath Heritage Trail, September 2022

We were awarded a grant from The Commonwealth Legacy Fund to develop this new trail which took place in September as part of Birmingham Heritage Week 2022, with visits to the old Tram Depot and the Eco House as well as various pop up characters from the past. A printed booklet was produced.



The Gazette Newsletter

The Gazette has flourished this year. It has a wide circulation and we get a lot of positive feedback.

Thank you to all readers who help by responding to enquiries and thanks also to all those who have shared their Balsall Heath memories with us.

Meetings

Meetings are held on the last Thursday of every month at 7.00 for 7.30 at St. Paul's Venture, Malvern St, off Clifton Road, Balsall Heath, B12 8NN. All are welcome to come along. The programme is on our website. We are planning to change to daytime meetings for the winter months for October, 2023

Funders

Thank you to funders this year:

Celebrating Communities Fund
The Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund;
The Harry Payne Fund

Partnerships

Thanks to those who work in partnership with us:

Birmingham History Theatre Company
The Old Print Works
St. Paul's Community Development Trust.

Research Enquiries

Research queries remained steady, usually connected with family history. We have good resources at our History Base; maps; some Birmingham Directories; a complete run of The Balsall Heath newspaper from 1973 to 2015; and an indexed photographic collection. These are all useful in answering enquiries.

This year we have also been able to buy a new computer thanks to a grant from The Harry Payne Fund.

Committee Members 2022-2023

President: Richard Albutt
Chair: Patrick Baird
Vice-Chair: Jenny Hodson
Treasurer: Pat Johnson
Programme Secretary: Bron Salway (until December)
Committee Secretary: Val Hart
Committee Members:
Jim Fitzpatrick
Judith Millington
Pauline Pedersen
Jackie Charlton (Co-opted).

Contact Information

Balsall Heath Local History Society.

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Birmingham B12 9AH

www.balsallheathhistory.co.uk

www.thelostchildren.uk

email: info@balsallheathhistory.co.uk

We can also be found on Facebook

Publications by Balsall Heath Local History Society

All our publications are available to order on our website, www.balsallheathhistory.co.uk

The Lost Children. The story of over 5000 children emigrated by the Middlemore Homes in Birmingham to Canada between 1873 & 1954.

Stars of Balsall Heath. Vol 1. A few of our most famous Balsall Heathans.

Sweet Memories A dictionary of confectionery from times gone by.

Balsall Heath Through Time by Val Hart. This book illustrates some of the major changes to the area since 1939.

The Flicks Memories of the cinemas in Balsall Heath.

Balsall Heath & Highgate Past & Present Edited by Val Hart and Alan Hemming. Photographs of the area by topic.

Tales Out Of School Edited by Val Hart. Memories of schooldays by adults from Balsall Heath and beyond, spanning more than a century and five continents.

Balsall Heath Heritage Trail

A Street Trail of the Edward Rd area.

Brown Paper and Goose Grease A Dictionary of Traditional Remedies.

Balsall Heath, A History by Val Hart. Our development from the heath of the 18th century to the suburbs of the 1940s.

The Gazette Our monthly newsletter. Stories and photographs from the past and present.