

Our Future Meetings

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

In Memoriam . Jim Fitzpatrick



The sudden death of Jim on October 8th has come as a great shock to us all. He has been a member of the Society for nearly 20 years and has made a huge contribution to our understanding of Balsall Heath's history. He was committed to collecting stories from Balsall Heath people and spent a lot of time interviewing people, writing up the results and presenting them in an illustrated form for the Gazette newsletter.

Over the years he has taken an active role in all our exhibitions, events and stalls, ever keen to promote the Society, and has also worked on some of our publications, especially Tales Out of School, and Stars of Balsall Heath. I am personally indebted to him for his massive support for the Lost Children Project in all its aspects- research, publicity, exhibitions and the play. He has been a key member of the Society and will be badly missed.

Balsall Heath Local History Society Gazette

OCTOBER 2023



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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 11:30 a.m. Refreshments will be served from 11 a.m. to 11:20 a.m.

Coming soon

Monday 23rd October 11 am for 11.30 am start a talk by Ian Binnie from the Moseley Local History Society entitled "Moor St Station to the Dardenelles. Birmingham soldiers in the Gallipoli campaign"



Jim was also a member of the Birmingham History Theatre Company. He used often to tell people that he originally got involved as a scenery shifter but somehow got roped in to play significant parts in a host of productions. He was willing to try his hand at anything and dress up appropriately too.

He played a wide range of characters, from an eighteenth century canal entrepreneur to Police Chiefs, a Tollhouse Keeper, a farm labourer, the Stationmaster of Camp Hill Station, a Canadian farmer and Headmaster of Fairbridge Farm School

His most recent roles were as Harry Withers, the Bournville Carillonneur and Mr Butcher, founder of the works on the Moseley Road, now the OPW, Old Print Works. He approached all his roles with great commitment and humour.

I will remember Jim for his unfailing support, his creativity, his kindness and generosity. When I had a bereavement in 2018 he stepped up to take a lead part in producing The Gazette newsletter and has continued this for the last five years, expanding and enriching the content.

After his wife, Rose, died in 2020, Jim accelerated his work for the Society. Most recently he has spent vast amounts of time on preparation work for the re publication of my book, Balsall Heath a History. I am not sure this would have been possible without Jim as a driving force.

He gave us all so much, we should honour him.

Jim's Funeral will be held on Tuesday, November 7th at Redditch Crematorium at 11 a.m. All Welcome.

Val Hart

A Message sent by Dick Atkinson in March, 2012.

This is a follow on piece from the Tribute to Dick which appeared in last month's Gazette. I found this old e mail last week and decided to share it with readers.

As part of the Open Day we offered people a session at the WW2 Classroom so I am sharing that photo too.

Val Hart



Dear Colleagues,

I had a little weep last Saturday. I'd like to tell you why.

I remember over 30 years ago when Malvern Street was a rubble-strewn mess. Residents had cleared just a bit of it and a few very rough kids played there with the help of Rob, a play leader. Nothing grew. Certainly there were no animals. Well, there were a few rats. It was a pretty desolate place with just a dim ray of hope in the shape of Rob. But, even with Rob, it was no place to bring up kids, or expect them to be responsible.

Yet, last Saturday in Malvern Street, St Pauls held an open day to celebrate Spring and the 'outstanding' Ofsted result which its Nursery, Children's Centre and School had just gained. Each time I looked in, there were 200+ parents and children there, maybe 1,500 in the day. There was an array of activities in the Children's Centre, Play Centre and on the Forum and all kinds of outdoor events. In place of Rob were a dozen staff. In place of the rubble were fine buildings and play areas.

Everyone was so happy, polite, friendly and clearly enjoying themselves. Somehow, one scene summed it up for me. The farm animals were enjoying themselves as much as the people - sheep, goats, turkeys, rabbits, geese, ducks. And, the black cat! It was lying down just a few feet from 2 small white crested ducks. A child threw the cat a bit of the cake she was eating, The cat caught it, slowly walked over to the 2 ducks and dropped it in front of them, lay down and watched them eat it.

Talk about the lion lying down with the lamb! For me, it summed up a pretty well perfect day. That's St Paul's. That's Balsall Heath. Perhaps not enough people remember just what it was like just 3 decades ago or, therefore, just how far the area and its residents have come. Then, it was bleak, atomised and struggled to care for its children. On Saturday I saw the whole village on display which is needed to care for the child and see it graduate into responsible, adult, maturity.

And, yes, I did have a little weep. And, yes, I would like you to know that if this can be done here in Malvern Street and Balsall Heath, then it can be done anywhere - with the help of Rob, a black cat and a crested duck.

All the best, Dick

Allen's Grocery Shop, 428 Ladypool Road, at Alder Road junction.



This photo was sent recently by a Gazette reader who, like me, remembers this shop which was until recently OAK superstore. It has now closed and this previous signage can be seen. So, what is the history of this shop?

This section of Ladypool Road on the East side runs between Taunton Road and Alder Road, after which it becomes Church Road. The whole road from Moseley to Highgate Road was originally called Ladypool Lane but the parish boundary runs across the road at Alder Road and in 1855 Moseley decided on a change of name for their part of the road.

Most of Ladypool Road remained undeveloped until the 1880s & 1890s. The east side especially was still mostly farmland at the time of the 1889 Ordnance Survey maps. The extract from this map below shows a building on the corner of Alder Road, on land which was originally part of the Old Farm but it is not the current shop building as it is set back from the road.



The earliest entry I have found for the shop at 428 Ladypool Road in Directories is 1892, when it is listed as a Confectioners, run by Robert Powell. By 1900 it was still a confectioners, now run by the Misses Elizabeth and Ellen Pratt and it stayed in their hands for 26 years. Next to take it on was Mrs Ellen Griffiths who continued until 1954, a run of 28 years.

Then in 1957 a recognisable name pops up.. Mrs Florence Allen is listed as running the shop as a Confectioners but not for long. Between 1959 and 1960 it became a grocery shop, still run by Florence. Later it was taken over by her son Frederick so the Allen family also had a long run as shopkeepers. They lived nearby in Willows Crescent.

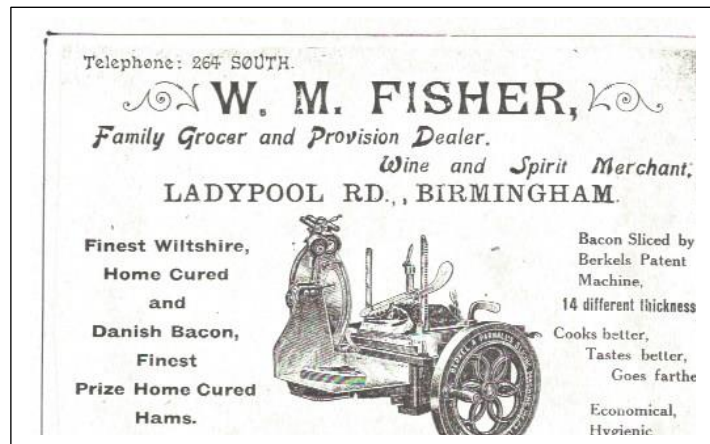


The more recent shop covered both 426 and 428 Ladypool Road and I did find an advertisement for number 426 in St Paul's Parish Magazine in 1905.

A few doors down from this was Fishers Grocery shop at 420 Ladypool Road



Advert 1905



Advert 1920

I am afraid I have not yet managed to track down when Allens finished, but certainly remember being served in the shop by Mrs Allen in the 1980s.

Can anyone help with this?

Val Hart

A Welcome Middlemore Donation

A generous well wisher has donated to the Society a set of photocopied Annual Reports produced by the Middlemore Homes, for the years 1873 (1st Report) to 1914 (42nd Report). This is a valuable resource as the Reports contain a lot of detailed information.

Many thanks to the donor!

Other Events

Tue, 7 Nov 2023 19:00 - 21:00 GMT

Birmingham's Buildings at Risk

Birmingham & Warwickshire Archaeological Society

The Wellington 37 Bennetts Hill, B2 5SN

A talk given by Chris Patrick, Birmingham City Council's Principal Conservation Officer

Birmingham has nearly 1800 listed buildings, while most historic buildings in the city are used and cared for, some do become 'at risk' of decay and dereliction due to a variety of factors. The talk will look at the reasons why buildings become at risk and what is being done to save them

This event is free to members of BWAS, others will need to pay at

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/birminghams-buildings-at-risk-tickets-682306185167?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

**Birmingham
People's History Archive**

2nd Floor, Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret St, Birmingham B3 3BS

Sat 11 Nov : Albert Knight: a British railwayman in Bolshevik Russia

12.30pm – 3.30pm – BPHA Rooms, Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret Street

Sat 25 Nov : How the Liberal party shaped the Labour party

12.30pm – 3.30pm – BPHA Rooms, Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret Street

The Balsall Heath Local History Society is Registered Charity No. 1101945

The Old Print Works, 498-506 Moseley Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham B12 9AH