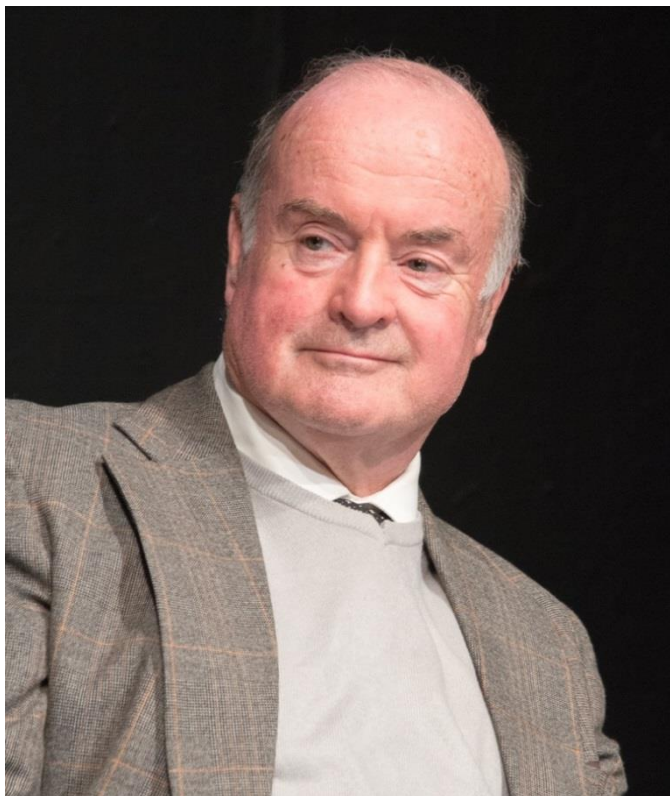


A special reminder

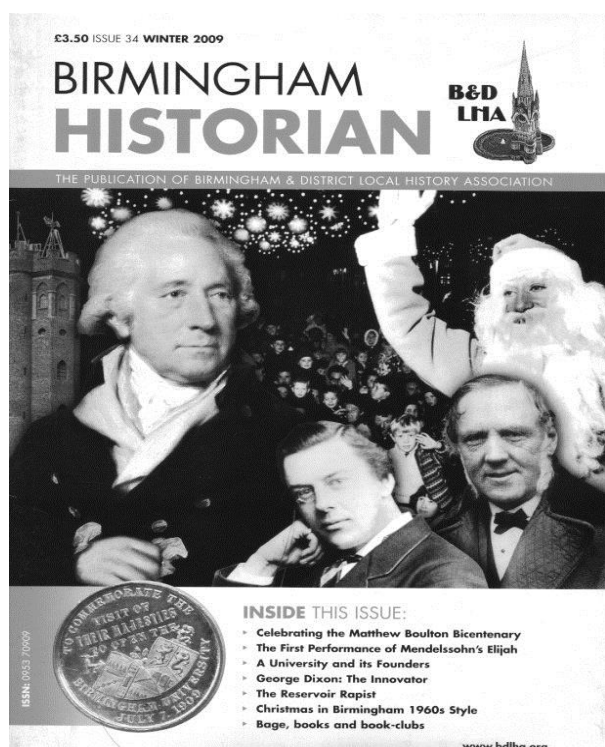
The March meeting has had to be moved forward to avoid clashing with the playscheme at the Venture so the next meeting will come out before the next issue of the gazette. This will happen on the 18th of March at the usual time when Mike Byrne will talk about the Bull Ring

Committee Members of the Society

Patrick Baird Chairman.



My connection with the Balsall Heath Local History Society dates back many years before I became a member of the Society.

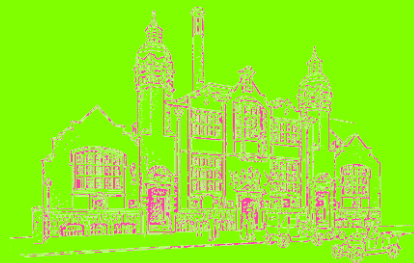


In my professional life I was Head of the Local Studies Department in Birmingham Central Library (the now demolished concrete building in Chamberlain Square) which meant I was involved with the history of Birmingham every day of my working life.

This eventually led to me and members of one or two local history societies - of which there were many then - forming

Balsall Heath Local History Society Gazette

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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 websites. Fees at meetings are: £1 for members and £3 for visitors.

Meetings are held at St Paul's Venture, Malvern Street at 11:15 a.m. Refreshments will be served from 10:45 a.m to 11:00 a.m.

Coming soon

Monday 26th February 10.45 for a start at 11.15. Norman Bartlam on Edgbaston Reservoir

Monday 18th March 10.45 for a start at 11.15. Mike Byrne talking about The Bull Ring

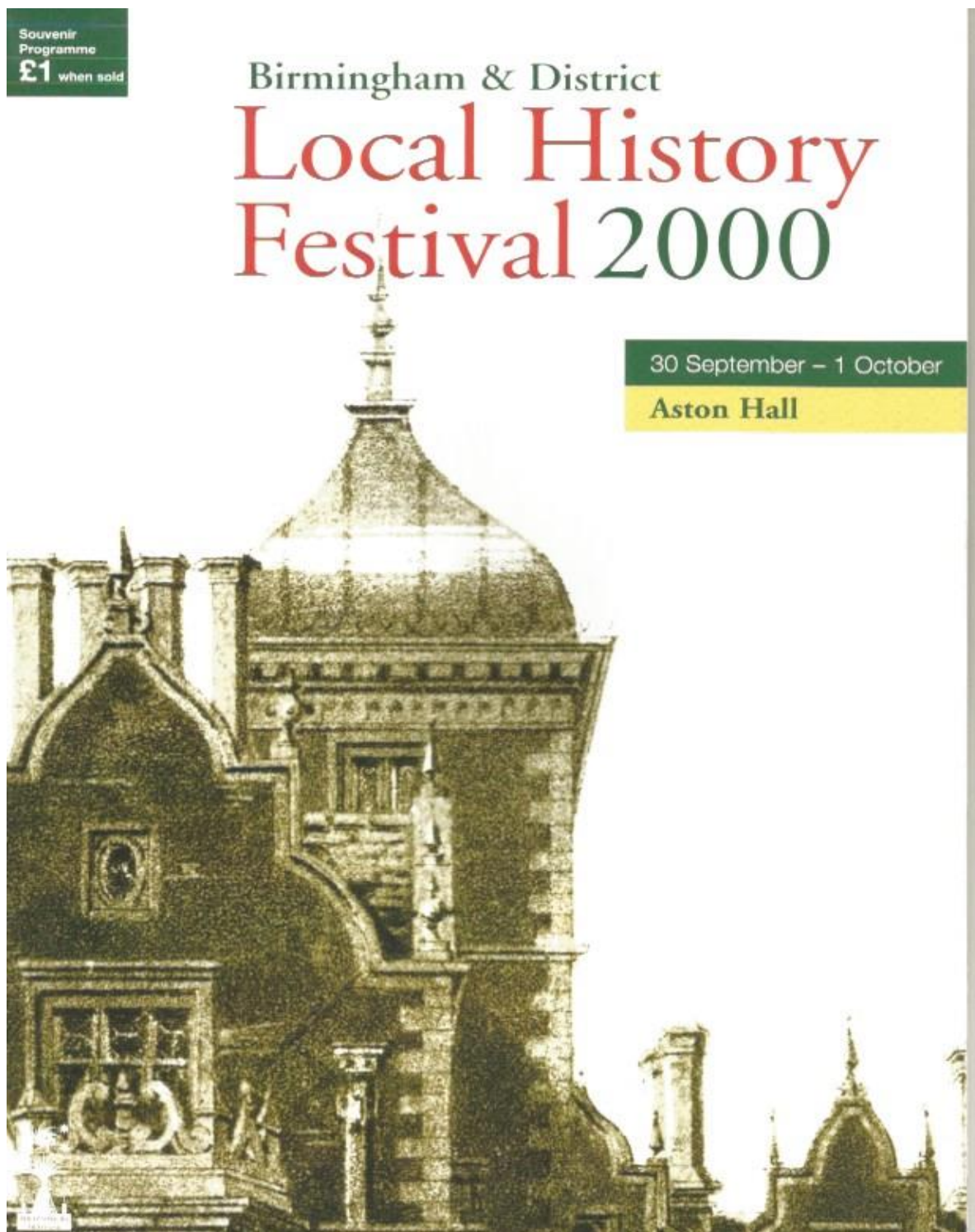
the Birmingham and District Association of Local History Societies (B&DLHA) with the aim to co-ordinate the work of societies throughout the city.

Balsall Heath Local History Society became involved from the beginning. Stalwarts like Val Hart and Pat Johnson were invited to join the Association's Committee.

BADHLA also produced a magazine "The Birmingham Historian" for many years as well as a newsletter. At that time Birmingham was awash with History Societies. In 2009 there were about 60 societies as well as other special interest groups .

One of the Association's achievements was the setting up of an annual Local History Fair in which most, if not all, local history societies took part - Including Balsall Heath.

One of its most spectacular fairs was held at Aston Hall in the year 2000. This included lectures, guided tours and Victorian schoolroom sessions run by Balsall Heath Local History Society.



At one point I remember taking part in the Birmingham Film Festival at the Electric Cinema in Station Street (can't remember the year) where Pat and other members of BHLHS described what it was like to attend cinema showings in Balsall Heath during their younger years and I delivered a short speech on the development of cinema in the city.



Sometime after I retired I was kindly invited by Val to join both the Local History Society and the Birmingham History Theatre Company - whose productions I regularly saw.

I can't believe how many roles I have played- from eighteenth century gentlemen to farm labourers and policemen.



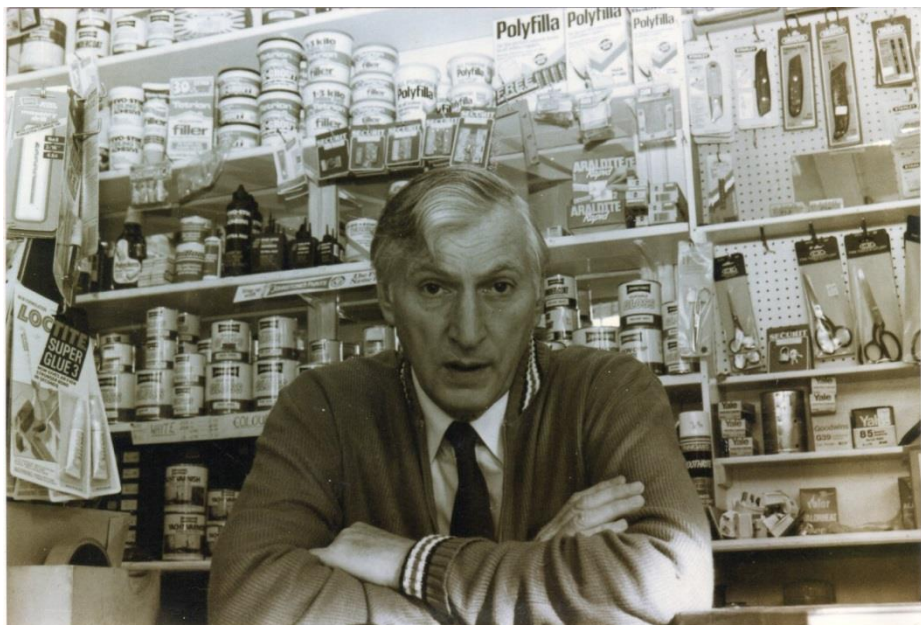
Since 2012 I have had the great pleasure of being your Chairman.

I must point out that I do have a slight connection with Balsall Heath. As a newborn I lived in Kingsley Road.

Patrick Baird

A Tribute to Ron Handley 1929 to 2024

It is sad to report the death of Ron Handley in January this year. Many people will remember him as the shopkeeper of Sandbrooks Hardware shop on the Moseley



Road, at the corner of Homer Street. He bought the shop on 1973 and became a supportive member of the community. He paid for advertisements in the Balsall Heath newspaper for many years.

Key cutting in 1981 cost a mere 28 pence.



Ron was born in 1929 in Aston and was evacuated twice- first to Cinderford and subsequently to Lichfield when King Edwards school, which he was attending, was bombed. To their surprise the boys found themselves living at the Bishop's Palace. He did his National Service in the Navy, serving on three different ships.

Ron was always an enterprising and adventurous man, never one to turn down a new idea .So in 1988 he embarked on a whole new chapter of his life. He had a strong intellect and one day a visitor to his shop noticed he was reading a book in French. She challenged him to take up a course of study and in double quick time Ron achieved A level French. He then gained more qualifications and took up a post teaching French at Golden Hillock School.

Ron stayed in Balsall Heath until 1990 when he sold the shop and it became Saifee Hardware.

Ron always gave his full support to the Local History Society. The story of his shop was featured in The Gazette in July 2022 when he shared a lot of information with Jim Fitzpatrick. We will remember him as man of high principles , strong opinions and unwavering integrity.

TRES BON, MR HANLEY!

Mr Hanley, a local trader, received good news in his post this summer. He passed 'A' level French, at Grade B, after studying for only eight months. Having been encouraged by a customer to take up formal study Mr Hanley set himself the task of passing the exam before his 60th birthday, in July, which he did with flying colours. He was helped with his studies by Martine Prost.

Mr Hanley is now studying German for beginners and conversational French. We wish him continued success with his future endeavours.

If you are interested in Adult Education classes contact Sparkhill Centre on 772 1893.

So it is now time to say Goodbye, Ron, and Rest in Peace.

Val Hart



The New Belgrave Village

Many of you will have noticed that a new housing development being constructed on the former site of Joseph Chamberlain College, the Sports Centre and the Astroturf pitch. The site has been derelict for years so it is a relief to see new housing there.

So what is the history of this land?

The earliest reference I can find is 1791, when Thomas Haden bought it. He dies soon after and left the estate to his brother, Henry. Both men were Pearl Button makers and it was obviously a lucrative trade. A large mansion house was built on the site with handsome reception room, 8 bedrooms, stable, coach house and extensive planted grounds. The whole estate comprised 22 acres and stretched from the Moseley Road to the river Rea. When Henry died in 1837 the purchaser of the house was Cornelius Robins, who renamed it as Belgrave House, but most of the land was sold in lots for houses.



Henry Haden and his wife are remembered in a plaque in St Mary's church, Moseley and also in street names. Haden St runs through what was Henry's land and so does the more recent Haden Way.



The house was occupied until 1875 when it was bought by William Charley, who used the "mine of clay" beneath the ground to take to his brickworks.

On the site he built 9 workshops, 55 cottages and the grand Belgrave Hotel.

He died a wealthy man.

Meanwhile the rest of the estate was being developed. Sherbourne Rd School opened in 1889 and a mix of housing was built as can be seen on the 1916 OS map below.



Sherbourne Rd 1968



The first Joseph Chamberlain College

Much of this land was cleared in the 1960s as part of the extensive redevelopment of this side of the Moseley Road and new buildings appeared. Mount Pleasant School, later renamed as Highgate School, was built in 1967 and this became the old Joseph Chamberlain College in 1983.

At that time, the Birmingham Athletic Institute also opened, later to become Birmingham Sports Centre. The Astro Turf pitch was laid at great expense next to the Sports Centre and was used successfully for several years. This picture shows the Carnival Fun Run there in 1991.



By 1999, however, the Astro turf was no longer useable. The Heathan reported in February that year:

“Once it was the pride of the City as it was the first site of its kind in Birmingham, but over the last two years, it has deteriorated into little more than a useless and dangerous eyesore. We inquired as to why the pitch has been left in this neglected condition for so long and discovered that the City Council were attempting to gain funding for repairs estimated to total £250,000. No decision looks likely in the short term, denying us a premier facility that has done so much to encourage local sporting talent.”

By 2001 a new Joseph Chamberlain College was being planned and in 2005 the City Council decided to concentrate sports facilities at Perry Barr so the Sports Centre closed. The new College opened in 2008 and the old one was demolished. The whole of the old Haden site remained derelict for years. The first idea was to put a retail park there but this did not happen..



The derelict Astro Turf site . (Image: Graham Young / BirminghamLive)

So now we have Belgrave Village covering the site of the college, the sports centre and the astroturf, currently still under construction but selling fast off plan. There will be a total of 438 homes which include various size houses and a lot of apartments.



On-Site Luxuries: Residents of Belgrave Village enjoy a green oasis within close proximity to Birmingham city centre. The development boasts a range of amenities, including a concierge service for round-the-clock support, an indoor gym for fitness enthusiasts, a film screening room for entertainment, and a modern co-working space to accommodate the new hybrid way of working.

Val Hart

Enquiries

1. Combe Bros, Brushmakers, George St.

We had an enquiry in recently about this company, which employed about 30 people in the 1960s. Does anyone have any information or memories?

2. **St John and St Martins Church** in George street is asking if anyone has a photo of the stained glass window showing St George and the dragon. Unfortunately a break-in left the window in pieces and they are keen to restore it. Has anyone got a photo?

Other Events

Friday 8 March 2024 (11:00-12:00)

Women in the archive at Winterbourne House and Garden.

A chance to see original archival material up close!

Hear directly from our Curator Henrietta Lockhart about these very special pieces and the stories behind them. The session will include photos, letters, diaries, artworks and botanical specimens which shed light on women's lives from the late 19th century to the 1940s.

Book places at <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/events/international-womens-day/2024/women-in-the-archive>

Thu Mar 07 2024 at 06:30 pm to 08:30 pm

Bournville Quaker Meeting House,

Women's History Month: Symposium

Celebrate Women's History Month with a special evening of enlightening talks shining a light on some of the City's most interesting women.

<https://allevents.in/birmingham/womens-history-month-symposium/10000816733350437>

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