

NOVEMBER 2024



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**Facebook: Balsall Heath Local
History Society and
lostchildrenproject**

**Membership of the Society
costs £15 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 £4 for visitors.**

**Meetings will be held at St
Paul's Venture. Malvern St. off
Clifton Rd. B12 8NN .**

**Refreshments will be served at
11:15 a.m. followed by a
speaker**

Coming soon

**Monday 25th November 11:15
a.m Phil Griffiths on The story
of Coinage**

**Monday 16th December 11:15
a.m Betty Hagglund on
Victorian Christmas**

NEXT MEETING

**11.15 am . Monday, 25th November at St Paul's
Venture.**

**We will be having a return visit from Phil Griffith
who will be talking to us about the Story of Coin-
age. Phil came last year and we were enthralled by
his excellent talk. He ran out of time that even-
ing so now he is returning.**

A Reminder about Society Membership for 2025

Membership runs annually from January to December. At the AGM in September it was decided that the fee will rise to £15 annually for 2025 . Gift Aid can be added to this if you sign up for it. The visitor's fee at meetings has now also risen to £4. Unfortunately we need to do this to meet rising costs.

Existing members will receive a Membership reminder by e mail but the application forms can also be downloaded from our website:

www.balsallheathhistory.co.uk.



Did you know that whenever you buy anything online – from your weekly shop to your annual holiday – you could be raising free donations for Balsall Heath Local History Society with Easyfundraising?

There are over 4,000 shops and sites ready to make a donation – including eBay, Argos, John Lewis, ASOS, Booking.com and M&S – and it won't cost you a penny extra to help us raise funds. All you need to do is:

1. Go to:

https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/balsallheathlhs/?utm_campaign=raise-more and join for free.

2. Every time you shop online, go to easyfundraising first to find the site you want and start shopping.

3. After you've checked out, the retailer will make a donation to Balsall Heath Local History Society at no extra cost to you whatsoever!

**In the last financial year we received nearly £70 from this
so please support us!**

The old Moseley Rd Methodist Church is now for sale!



Now listed on Rightmove at 1 million but according to Birmingham Live, a mere £650,000. The building dates from 1949 when it was built to replace the original church which was destroyed by bombing in 1940. The Church moved out in 2011 and it has been used since then but has been empty for about 5 years.

The BHLHS Gift Guide

Ideal Christmas presents available at meetings or from our office at the OPW or from the website with postage added.

All priced at £1

Brown Paper and Goose Grease, A Dictionary of traditional remedies. £1

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

The Flicks Memories of the cinemas in Balsall Heath £1

Tales Out Of School Edited by Val Hart. £1

Memories of schooldays spanning more than a century and five continents

Sweet Memories. A confection of confectionery £1

AND ALSO

Balsall Heath, A History by Val Hart **New revised edition**, £10.95

Balsall Heath & Highgate Past & Present Edited by Val Hart and Alan Hemming

Photographs of the area by topic. £7

The Lost Children. The story of over 5000 children emigrated by the Middlemore Homes in Birmingham to Canada between 1873 & 1954. £4

The Flying Dutchman . A correction.

This marvellous Opera was performed in 2024, not 2023 as it said in the last Gazette. Apologies, Byron!

OCTOBER 2024 – LOUISA RYLAND 1814 – 1889

BY IRENE DE BOO

On October 21st 2024 Irene de Boo gave a very interesting and lively talk about Louisa Ryland. This was the first of our morning meetings for this autumn/winter season. There were not many members in attendance, but several visitors came specifically to listen to Irene's talk.



In the first part of the talk, Irene talked about Cannon Hill Park. She felt this was an appropriate place to start, as this park is very well known to residents of Balsall Heath and surrounding areas. Louisa gifted Cannon Hill Park in 1873. She not only donated the land to create the park, but she also paid for drainage of the land, the layout and the facilities. In 1875 she paid for the bridge to be built after the second pool was added. It was suggested that the park should have been named after Louisa Ryland, but Louisa did not want this. She did not crave reward. She believed it was enough to know that one had done good. The estate was called Cannon Hill and this is the name which was given to the park.



Cannon Hill Park

A blue plaque has been placed on the Lodge at the park in recognition of this very generous donation by Louisa. There is some debate as to whether Louisa attended the opening ceremony. Some reports say she did and others say not.



The Lodge House at Cannon Hill Park showing the blue plaque in recognition of Louisa's donation to the City.

(Photo taken in June 2015 when members of BHLHS visited Cannon Hill Park).

Louisa made many donations of land and funds for buildings in Birmingham. This was surprising, as she only actually lived in Birmingham for the first twenty years of her life. After that she lived in Barford and Warwick. In total Louisa donated £180,000, which in today's money would be over £19 million.

Irene went on to explain where the wealth came from. Louisa's grandfather, John Ryland was a Wire Drawer at 27 High St. John invested in land, estates and property and so, his wealth grew. He had one son, Samuel (Louisa's father). Samuel was recorded in censuses as a gentleman. He invested in bonds, including foreign bonds. He also had interests in the canals, which contrary to popular belief, remained profitable until the first decades of the 20th century.

Prior to moving to Warwick, where they had a long term lease on The Priory, a very large property, the family had lived in Edgbaston, off Hagley Rd.

Samuel died in 1843 and left all his money to his wife, Anne and £1000 per annum to Louisa. Louisa bought a property called Barford Hill in Warwickshire and lived there with her governess. Anne Ryland died in 1862 and the governess died in 1882. Louisa carried out many improvements to the house. It was demolished in the 1950s.

By 1864, 40% of Louisa's income was given to charity. She had a particular interest in three areas, Education, Health and Churches.

Education – Louisa gave £5000 to the Birmingham and Midland Institute. She was a great believer in self improvement. She also gave money to the School of Art. The Colmore family gave the land, the Tangye Brothers gave £10,000 and Louisa donated money, too. She had a particular interest in women and children.

Health – Louisa gave half a million pounds to the Birmingham Eye Hospital. As well as Cannon Hill Park, Louisa donated Victoria Park in Small Heath. It was originally called Small Heath Park and has now reverted to that name.

Churches – Louisa gave £3,000 to the rebuilding of St Martin's Church and a further £1,000 in 1875. In 1880 she gave money to red brick churches. In 1862, she funded the building of All Saints Church in Sherbourne. This was built as a memorial to her parents. It was designed by Sir Gilbert Scott.

It was strange that Louisa donated her money to Church of England Churches, as her family were active Unitarians (non-conformists). This can be explained by the fact that when Louisa's parents attended The New Meeting House, Louisa was left at Christ Church with her governess. Christ Church was in Victoria Square.

All the family wealth came to Louisa, as she was an only child and she was unmarried, so she was able to have access to all the money.

Louisa had wanted to marry a metal manufacturer called, Henry Smith. Henry was 15 years older than Louisa and her father totally forbade the marriage. He wanted Louisa to marry someone of higher standing. Henry married someone else in 1852. Louisa could have married him after her father died, but she chose not to. She continued to live with her governess and companion, Charlotte Randall. Charlotte was born in 1794 and died in 1882.

Louisa Ryland died in 1889. At the time of her death, she was worth £80 million in today's money. She left some money to schools, hospitals and churches and left everything else to her friends and family. The largest part of her estate was inherited by William Charles Henry Allston Smith. William was the son of Henry Smith (Louisa's lost love). He was left the money on one condition that he took the surname, Ryland. He agreed to this and became William Charles Henry Allston Smith-Ryland.

Louisa made a codicil to her will, stating that any money left to women must be for their sole use and free from marital control.

Louisa's funeral took place in Barford and the route was thronged with people. She was buried beside her governess, Charlotte Randall at All Saints Church, Sherbourne. Her grave was made from granite from Aberdeen.



**All Saints Church,
Sherbourne,
Warwickshire.**

Pat Johnson, Member of the Committee



Pat moved to Balsall Heath in 1960 and has lived here since then.

At that time it is astonishing to hear that some local houses did not have electricity. Pat and Albert, her husband, had electricity installed. Their house was one of the last in their road to have it.

Pat joined the Society about 40 years ago and became a member of the Making History Reminiscence Theatre company with Bernard Jackson, Nell Wilkins and Val Hart. This continued until 2004, taking live performances to schools and older people's groups.



Then when the Victorian Schoolroom opened in 2005 in the old Clifton Junior school, Pat became the Teacher's Assistant to Bron Salway who took the lead as Teacher. This expanded to also become the World War 2 schoolroom and was visited by literally thousands of school pupils not just from Balsall Heath but also from the whole of the West Midlands. Unfortunately we had to close it in 2016.

Throughout the years Pat has been a key member of the History Society Committee, taking on the role of Treasurer when Mary Bramwell retired from the post. Her service as Treasurer lasted for about 30 years before she resigned in 2023, while still remaining an active Committee Member. Pat has been a truly valiant contributor to all the endless exhibitions, stalls, and events which we have organised, of which the most recent was the Exhibition this September.



Finally there is the Birmingham History Theatre Company of which Pat was a founder member in 2008.

It has always worked closely with the History Society and has mounted shared events, especially dramatic trails and dramatic lectures.

Pat has played many roles, including several in in "The Lost Children" play in 2022

VH

Events

- We will be putting up a display and book stall at the Print Works 2nd Saturday on 14th December . 12 noon until 4 pm
- And running a stall at Anawim's Christmas Fayre in Mary St . 10 a.m to 1 pm on Saturday, December 7th
- Wednesday 27 November 5:00-6:30pm

"Orchid Jo": Empire, Satire, and Political Self-Fashioning

A talk by Dr Victoria Mills , organised by Friends of the Centre for Midlands History and Culture.
In person in Bham University Arts Building, Room 104 and online via Zoom .

Book by Eventbrite, link below

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/orchid-jo-empire-satire-and-political-self-fashioning-tickets-1069066790549?aff=oddtcreator>

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