

**Balsall Heath Local
History Society Gazette**

DECEMBER 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 16th December 11:15

**a.m Betty Hagglund on
Victorian Christmas**

**Monday 27th January 11:15
a.m,- No speaker – a chance to
share your memories of
Balsall Heath with the society.**

NEXT MEETING

**11.15 am . Monday, 16th December at St Paul's
Venture.**

**This month's speaker is Betty Hagglund on the
Victorian Christmas.**

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.](http://www.balsallheathhistory.co.uk)

THE STORY OF COINAGE by PHILIP GRIFFITHS

On November 25th 2024, Philip Griffiths paid us a return visit to continue his most interesting talk about coinage. We were keen to hear more about his story of coinage and we were not disappointed.

The talk this time started from the early 1800s, when there was a shortage of small change. Almost all transactions then were cash transactions and so the government had to act to increase the amount of coins in circulation. This action was called The Great Recoinage. Money to fund this was raised by the introduction of the window tax. A new Royal Mint had been built at Tower Hill, London. This was designed by Matthew Boulton's architect. Boulton and Watt's Soho factory had produced some coins for the government, as well as coins for the East India Company.

It was at this time that the composition of coins changed and the weight and value of the metal no longer matched the value of the coin. A George III silver half crown from 1817 did not contain all silver.

Philip continued his talk with some slides of coins and explanations about the various designs.

A Victoria two shilling coin known as a florin was the first decimal coin, as it was one tenth of one pound. There was also an Edward VII silver florin. All inscriptions on this were the same, but with the addition of IND IMP (Emperor of India).



A Victoria gold sovereign from 1893 and a George V silver jubilee Crown from 1935 both showed an image of St George and the Dragon. This same image is still shown on gold coins today.

Until 1920, silver coins in the UK were made of sterling silver (0.925 silver). In 1920 the silver content was reduced to 50%. This reduction was to help to pay for WWI. From 1948 until 2011 'silver' coins were made from cupro-nickel. This reduction was to pay for WWII. From 2012 to the present day, 50p and 20p coins are made from cupro-nickel, but 10p and 5p coins are made from nickel plated steel.

Copper coins were made from copper until 1860 and from 1860 until 1991 they were made from bronze. Since 1992 until the present day they have been made from copper plated steel.

Gold coins were in everyday circulation and were legal tender until 1914. They were withdrawn to pay for WWI.

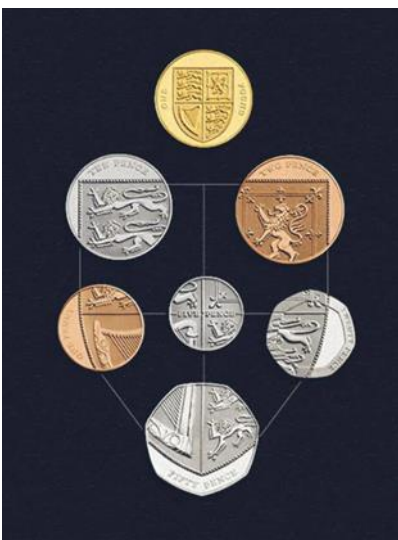
Decimal Coinage

In the late 1950s, business machines were being introduced, but they were finding it difficult to cope with the sterling monetary system. It became necessary for the decimal system to be introduced. The decimal coinage was to be produced at the new Royal Mint at Llantrisant, near Cardiff.



The new decimal system began in the UK on February 15th 1971, although 50p pieces had been issued in 1969 as ten shillings. The new coinage used 'p' instead of 'd' ('d' stood for denarius) and coins bore the inscription NEW PENCE until 1982 when NEW was dropped.

The 20p coin was introduced in 1982 and the pound coin in 1983. The half penny coin was discontinued in 1984. 5p, 10p and 20p coins were reduced in size in the 1990s and a £2 coin was introduced in 1997.



In 2008 a competition took place to find a new design for the reverse of coins. Matthew Dent was the winner of the competition. His clever design split the Royal Arms over all the coins below the value of £1 and to bring it all together the complete image of the Royal Arms was used for the reverse of the £1 coin.

In 2017 the £1 coin was changed to a twelve sided, bi-metallic coin. This was because it had become too easy to replicate the previous coin. Again, the new design was chosen after a competition had been held. The winning design for the reverse image was created by David Pearce. David was a pupil at Queen Mary's School in Walsall.



In 2023 a new set of coins was released to mark the new reign of King Charles III. The design on the reverse of these coins reflects the King's interest in the natural world.

The Future

What does the future hold?

Less than 20% of transactions are now cash transactions.

Will we become a cashless society?

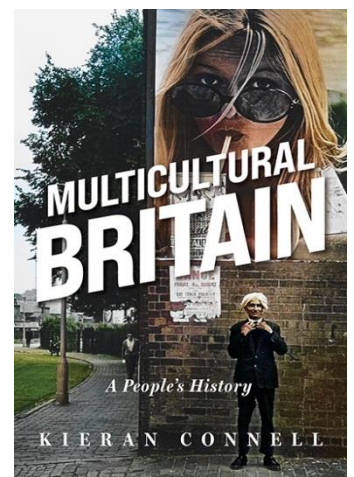
JH

NEW BOOK!

A new history of personal and community relationships across post-imperial Britain, from 1940s

Kieran grew up in locally and went to Clifton Junior School. Two chapters of this book are about Balsall Heath.

Review to follow in next month's Gazette.



Alfred Dilworth, Shopkeeper of Wenman st. 1868 -1954

Alfred's granddaughter, Maureen Field, contacted us recently to tell us about his life and to share her wonderful family photographs.



Alfred was born in Birmingham, one of the six children of John Dilworth, a Clerk, and Mary Ann.

John died in 1889 and in 1891 Alfred was still living with his widowed mother in Aston together with his sister, Annie. At that time he was listed as an employed gas fitter.

In this photo he exudes confidence and well being..

As a young man, Alfred signed up for what later became the Territorial Army, attached to the Warwickshire Regiment

This photo shows him wearing his uniform with pride.





His life changed after he married Beatrice Maud Brewer in 1894.

By 1901 he was living as head of his own household in Upper Highgate Street with a new baby son and his mother.

He was by now a self-employed Gas Fitter so he must have done well.

Left Alfred and Beatrice.



Alfred Charles and Jack Edward, very well dressed for a special photo at a studio.



This photo c.1903, is of Beatrice with her two sons

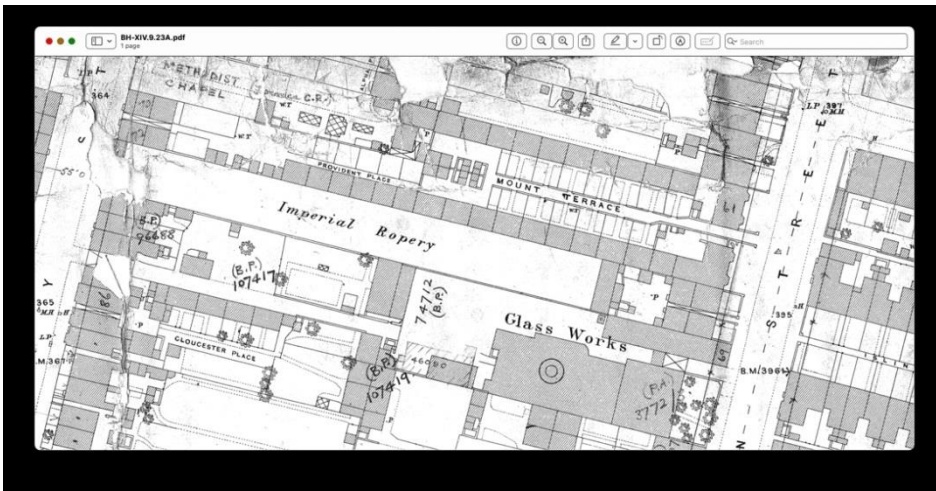
By 1905 Alfred had his own shop at 61 Wenman Street which ran from Edward Rd to Balsall Heath Road. It was listed as a Greengrocers and the family tell us that he was selling his own home grown veg from an allotment in Queensbridge Road. This photograph from 1908 shows an expanded range of everyday items. There are certainly vegetables and groceries as well as assorted hardware. Surely he must have sold gas lamps?



The family give a good account of themselves in this photograph. Alfred is clearly in charge with his sleeves rolled up, ready for work. The children, again, are finely dressed; the boys with shiny boots, long socks and sparkling white collars while Ida, their little sister, has puff sleeves and a wide brimmed hat.

The Glory Hole

The shop was part of a double fronted house, on the corner of "The Glory Hole". This was in fact Mount Terrace, later renamed as Mount Pleasant Terrace, a row of terraced houses with front gardens which lined the steep alleyway as it dropped down halfway to Mary St. A pub stood on the other corner.



1888 OS map

Alfred and Beatrice had four children but the youngest, Beatrice Maud, died as an infant in 1910 and the following month Alfred's wife, Beatrice, also died, leaving him with 3 children aged 10, 8 and 4. This cannot have been easy particularly as war was approaching. In 1912 he married again to Magdalen (Maggie) Grew. They had two more children.

The shop continued in Wenman Street until at least 1935. By 1939 he had retired and was living in St Paul's Road. He died in 1954 at the good age of 86 and is buried in Brandwood End Cemetery. Magdalen outlived him, dying in 1963.

Maureen herself has a Balsall Heath story too, as she worked for Bowen & Sons, builders, of George St. This was the famous firm which moved to the George Street site in 1880 and from which extensive work was undertaken city wide. Most illustrious of their buildings were the Victoria Law Courts in Corporation St.

Val Hart



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