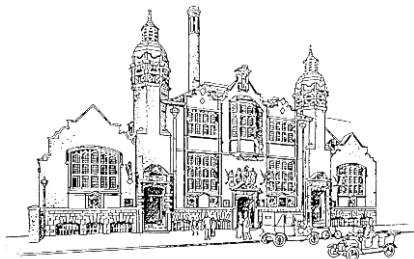


Balsall Heath Local History Society Gazette

JANUARY 2025



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

Monday 24th February.11:15 a,m, Andrew Reekes talking about George Cadbury

Monday 24th March.11:15 a,m, Quiz with Patrick Baird

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.

Application forms can also be downloaded from our website: [www,balsallheathhistory.co.uk](http://www.balsallheathhistory.co.uk).

Existing members should have received a Membership reminder by email and there is no need to fill in forms if we already have your details., Payment can be made either at meetings or online,

NEXT MEETING

11.00 am . Monday, 27th January at St Paul's Venture.

This month we are holding a meeting to recall, memories of Balsall Heath in the 1970s to 90s. This was a time of great change and upheaval. What do you remember from this time? We are aiming to explore this period during 2025 and would love to hear from you.

A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS by BETTY HAGGLUND

As you read this January edition of the Gazette, Christmas probably seems a long time ago. However, this is a report about our last meeting, which took place on December 16th and the talk was aptly named 'A Victorian Christmas'.

Betty started her talk by telling us that Christmas was hardly celebrated in the early 19th century. Workers did not even have a day off at that time. It was not until the 1830s and 1840s that Christmas started to take shape. The decorating of a small tree was introduced by Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George IV. The idea didn't really catch on with the masses until Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's decorated tree appeared in the Illustrated London News. Decorations started to be mass produced and articles began to appear in magazines advising how to decorate the house for Christmas.

Sending Christmas cards was introduced by Sir Henry Cole. In 1843, he had 1,000 cards printed and he sold some for one shilling (five pence) each. Improved printing methods and improved postal services led to an increase in the popularity of sending cards. By 1880 eleven and a half million cards were being sent. Post was delivered even on Christmas morning.

The illustrations on many cards were very similar to those we see today, but not all. The themes of some cards did not appear to relate to Christmas at all e.g. a series of cards depicting dead robins and cards with pictures of lobsters.



THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

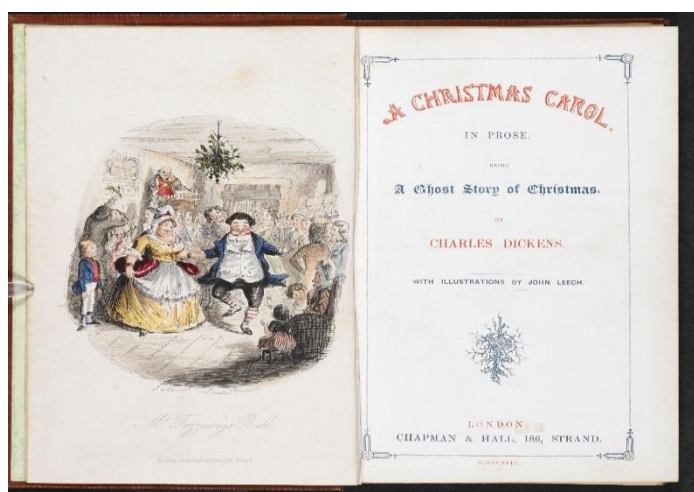
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Christmas Eve became a day for preparations.

There is evidence of carol singing taking place in the 15th and 16th centuries, but by the second half of the nineteenth century carols were sung in church.

On Christmas Day, travelling took place for town dwellers who wanted to return to their families in the country. For those at home, the format for Christmas Day was very similar to the Christmases we know today. Children woke to filled stockings, the family went to church and presents were opened afterwards. It was common to have goose for Christmas dinner, served with seasonal vegetables. The wealthy might have had beef or venison and it is known that Queen Victoria had roast swan. Plum pudding was the usual desert. After dinner games were played, songs were sung and poems recited.



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Christmas was also a time for benevolence to the poor.

Charles Dickens used his book 'A Christmas Carol' to highlight the unfairness of life for the poor. He gave his first reading of this book in Birmingham Town Hall in 1853.

Our meeting ended with members exchanging Christmas cards, enjoying a mince pie and wishing each other a Merry Christmas and best wishes for 2025.

JH



St Paul's Church was a major part of Balsall Heath's life for many years, acting as a hub for a host of activities – sports clubs, Sunday schools, Bible Classes, events, lectures, and fund raising as well as opening and running two church schools. By 1891 the parish magazine was acting as a community newspaper, being delivered to over 1000 homes.

Last autumn someone kindly sent us photographs of two papier mache plates featuring St Paul's Church

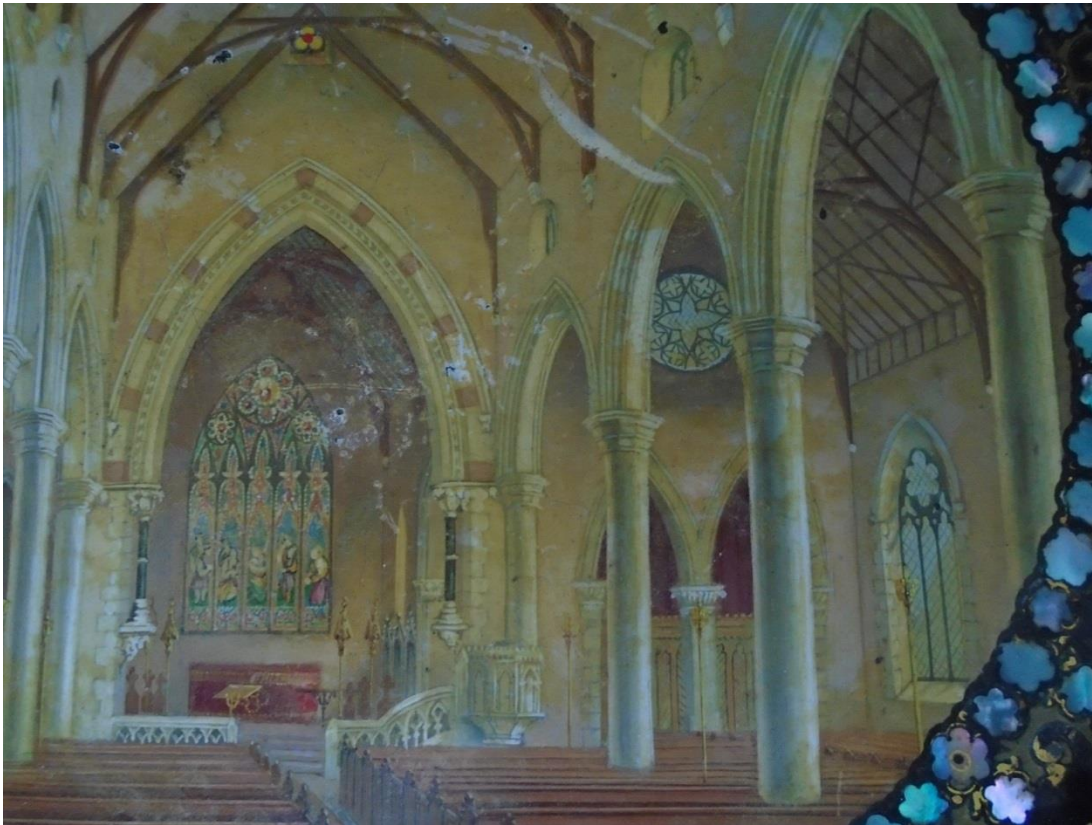


Exterior view



Interior view

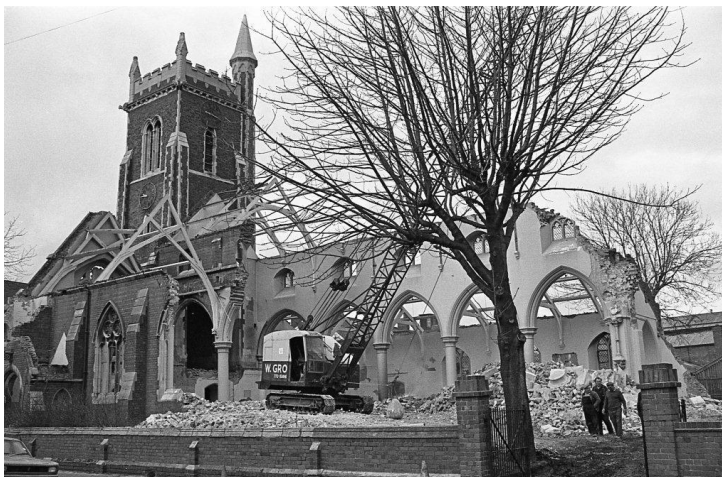
The detail contained within the images is extraordinary.





The plates seem to show the church some time after it was built in 1853. It had seats for 1,111 people but this was the very time when new streets and housing were rapidly being built in the area. In 1865, only ten years after opening, the south aisle was enlarged and the chancel lengthened in order to hold the choir and an organ chamber was built. The plates possibly show the interior after this enlargement.

Goodbye to the Church By 1977 Balsall Heath 's demographic profile had changed radically. A decision was taken to demolish the original church and instead a new Church Centre was constructed in Edward Road to house the congregations both of St Paul's and the Church of Christ in a building which could also provide for flexible community use. This opened in 1980 and has been a success but many of us regret that the old St Paul's Church was not kept and adapted.
Val Hart



Events

Midland Bank Unlocking the vaults –

This University of Birmingham heritage project (funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund) looks at the history of the Birmingham Municipal Bank on Broad Street. The building was recently refurbished by the University of Birmingham and is now known as The Exchange. There are taster days at The Exchange on 16 January (daytime) and on 27 February (evening). More about the Unlocking the Vaults project and how to get involved is here - <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/the-exchange/unlocking-the-vaults>

Kings Heath Local History Society

present an illustrated talk on

Wednesday 19th February, 7.15 to 8.45

The First World War V.C.'s of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment

by Ian Binnie

At the Community Centre, Heathfield Road, B147DB



45,570 men served in the 31 battalions of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment during the Great War. 11,610 were killed. Many received awards for bravery. Ian will tell the story of the five men who received the highest award, the Victoria Cross. Two of these men came from Birmingham, two from other parts of the West Midlands.

Ian is a retired secondary headteacher with a lifelong interest in military history. He has done many talks both live and on Zoom, on topics ranging from the Battle of Waterloo to the leadership of Field Marshal Montgomery. He has a particular interest in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

Members are free. Visitors pay £3.00. Light refreshments are available for a small charge

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