

**Balsall Heath Local
History Society Gazette**

APRIL 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.**

**Refreshments will be served at
11:00 a.m. followed by a
speaker**

Coming soon

**Monday 24th April. 11:00 a.m.,
GROWING UP IN BALSALL
HEATH IN THE 1980s a talk by
Osman Yousefzada**

Balsall Heath Local History Society presents

A Talk by Osman Yousefzada
**GROWING UP IN BALSALL
HEATH**

IN THE 1980s

Thursday April 24th at 7.15 pm

at St Paul's Venture, Malvern St,

off Clifton Rd, Balsall Heath B12 8NN

Members £1. Visitors £4. (Plus booking fee)

BOOK ON EVENTBRITE! Limited spaces available

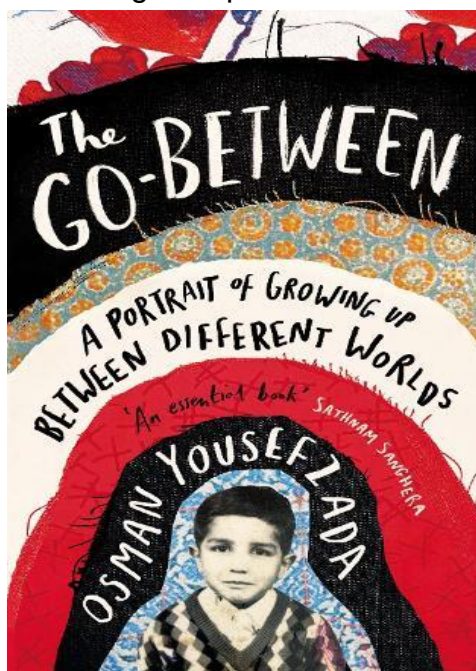
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-talk-with-osman-yousefzada-about-his-book-the-go-between-tickets-1328403423399>

Members do not need to book

Osman is the British interdisciplinary artist, who has won international acclaim.

This talk is based on his book "The Go Between" which was published last year

Osman grew up on the borders of Balsall Heath and Moseley attending Park Hill and Queensbridge Schools.



The adult world is seen through Osman's eyes as a child: his own devout Pakistani patriarchal community, with its divide between the world of men and women, living cheek-by-jowl with parallel migrant communities. The orthodox attend a mosque down the road from the prostitutes and pimps.

VE Day (Victory in Europe) is being celebrated n May 8th. 80 years ago this year!

Memories of the Second World War

I recently interviewed Brian Ingram, who grew up in Upper Cox Street. Below is an extract from what he recalled.

"I was disappointed when the war ended, because we'd got no bombed houses to play in. We liked smashing all the windows in the bombed houses and I used to collect shrapnel and empty incendiary bomb shells; also, the ceiling edging, the dado, which was made of plaster. We used to smash that down and use it as chalk for playing hopscotch in the street

Mary Street School



I remember my dad telling me about Mary Street School on fire when it was bombed. My dad said they couldn't put it out because they were too busy putting out fires at the factories which got priority. We used to climb through the broken windows and there was a piano there, smashed to pieces. So we used to get sticks and bang on the strings. It was only the one side of the building that got burned and the school did reopen after the war. They took away the top part and then re-roofed the bottom to make that into part of the school again.

In the Air Raid Shelter.

Mum used to take me down our air-raid shelter and put me on these iron springs, but funny enough, even now I can remember being put on these springs and feeling them underneath me. There was no mattress. No, just springs. The shelter was horrible, smelly and musty but we were lucky. We had an electric light down there and an electric fire.

My Dad would have done it somehow. He was good at things. Our next door just had candles.

Dad used to come and check on us. He was an ARP warden and he used to have to go to his post when bombs fell and people were trapped. It was his job to go and help them out. That must have been a very difficult job.

Don't forget that Dad worked full time as well. He was working on the spitfires at Castle Bromwich. It must have been 14 hours a day getting to work and back again. And after his tea he had to go out in the dark again all night during the air-raids. I don't know how he did it.

A machine gun.

Well, there was four houses there in Russell Road and nothing else at the time. They built Moorcroft Road after the war. After the last house, there was a patch with a little stream that came through from Moseley. I got over there and got underneath some bushes and I found this machine gun. It must have fallen out of an aeroplane or something! it was all sort of covered in mud.

So me and my brother thought we'd take this home. We got a long piece of wood and somehow tied this machine gun on to it. And we put our coats over it and carried it all the way home. I think Mum nearly had a fit. She said, "I told you not to pick anything up."

I think eventually my Dad gave it to the scrap men or something.



After the War

The areas where the bombs had fallen were left derelict for ages afterwards, well, up to the 60s, because all the building stuff was sent to Germany to help build them up again.

The food went really short after the war, too, worse than during the war, because they were having to send the food over to feed the Germans who were starving. Our rationing went on till summer 1952."

To the left is a photo of Brian's house decorated for the Coronation in 1953.

Val Hart

A First World War Donation

We had a visitor from Canada recently who brought with her two sets of framed First World War Medals complete with photos and Death Pennies.



The two men were her uncles, both from Balsall Heath; named William John Stone, who died at the Somme in 1916, and Sydney George Stone who died in 1918. Their family lived at that time in Vincent Street. Their older brother, Alfred, also tried to enlist but had a medical condition. Instead he went to the front as an Ambulance Driver, survived the war and is buried in Brandwood End Cemetery.

The loss of William and Sydney must have been terrible for the family. They and their other children emigrated to Canada in 1923 when the donor's father was eight years old. So he started his life in Balsall Heath and attended Tindal School.



Moseley Road Congregational Church

We walked around Balsall Heath and succeeded in finding that two of the family's previous homes were still there- in Edgbaston Road and Brunswick Road. Her parents were attendees at the Moseley Road Congregational Church, which stood on the corner of Runcorn Road.

The church was demolished in the 1950s.



It was particularly pleasing that the old Congregational Church Sunday School building is still there, now part of the Clifton Rd Mosque. The Sunday School was where she believes her parents met each other. Both men's names appear on the Moseley Road Congregational Church War Memorial, which was found in a skip in about 2013 and brought to Banners Gate Community Church in Sutton Coldfield. Thanks to patient research by Rob Rolfe and Andy Vail, the origin of the plaque was identified.

Photo on the right is in front of the old Sunday School building in Runcorn Road

Below: The WW1 Memorial Plaque,

Val Hart



MOSELEY ROAD METHODIST CHURCH

1872 - 2011

MOSELEY ROAD METHODIST CHURCH – Part 1

We recently had a donation of various pieces of memorabilia relating to Moseley Road Methodist Church. This was donated by Andrea Fitter. Her mother, Jean nee Tomlin and her aunt Carol Millbanke nee Tomlin were members of the church. Carol was born in Knutsford St and lived in Edward Rd and then at the flat next to the Church. Carol was a youth club leader and also a member of the Girls' Life Brigade.

1930

Moseley Road Methodist Church



In 1782 Cherry Street Chapel was opened by John Wesley. In Cherry Street Circuit records there are numerous mentions in the 1860s of the rapidly growing area of Balsall Heath needing a chapel there. In June 1864 a definite move was made to this end. A piece of land at Lee Terrace in Balsall Heath Road was identified, but in 1865 plans were deferred for the time being, because of costly improvements being made to other chapels. It wasn't until 1868 that it was agreed to acquire a chapel in Balsall Heath Road. The first mention of this chapel in the Cherry Street records was in April 1869.



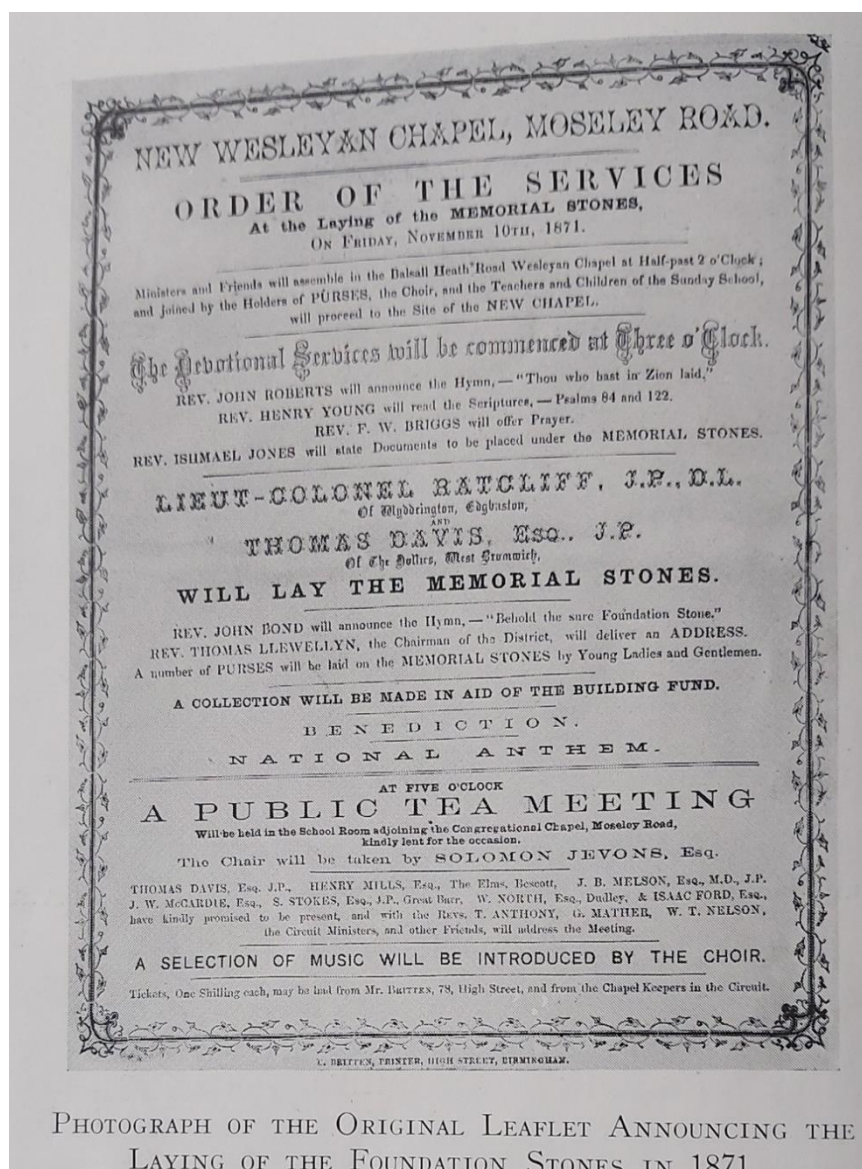
The Old School in Balsall Heath Road



Cherry Street Chapel

The Society there grew rapidly until in March 1871 it was felt that extra accommodation was needed. A decision had to be made whether to expand the existing chapel or to build a new one. It was in June 1869 that the decision was made to build a new chapel on the corner of Moseley Road and Lime Grove. Plans went ahead to build this chapel, which would seat 1,000 people. Cherry Street Chapel specified that the expenditure should not exceed £4,400, although this amount was increased at the next meeting to £5,500. Messrs Loxton Bros. of Wednesbury were the architects and a tender of £4,425 by the builder, Mr Chappell of Willenhall was accepted. The

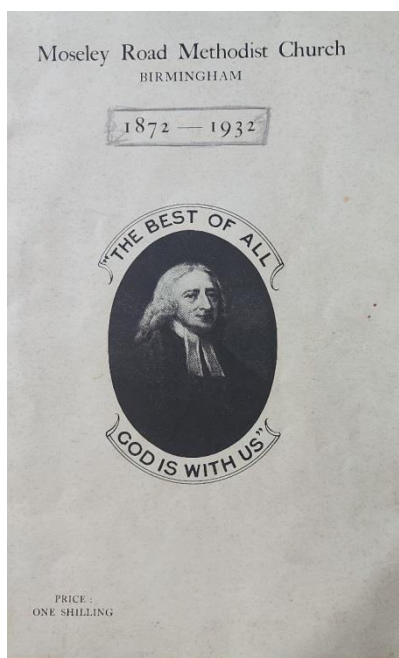
stone laying ceremony took place on November 10th 1871. After some delay, the dedicatory service took place on November 27th 1872.



Cherry Street Chapel became a victim of Joseph Chamberlain's Corporation Improvement Scheme and was demolished in 1885 -1886. In its place Central Hall was erected in Corporation Street. This eventually was replaced by the present Central Hall lower down Corporation Street, which is now derelict.

Amongst the memorabilia donated to us was a booklet produced to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Moseley Road Methodist Church in 1932. The above information and pictures have been obtained from this booklet. Further details and photographs will be included in future issues of the Gazette.

The booklet produced to celebrate the Diamond Anniversary of Moseley Road Methodist Church



JH

Events

1. Kings Heath Local History Society .15 pm Weds May 21st

at the Community Centre, Heathfield Rd, B14 7DBt

An illustrated talk by Liz Palmer:

“An Accident Waiting to Happen” The Whittall Street Explosion. Of 1859

2. Railway History: A Journey Through Politics, Performance and Song

Wednesday 14 May - 5.30pm-7pm

Aston University's history and literature teams explore different aspects of railway history, showcasing their research and activities through a series of short talks. On will be some of the treasures from the recently established Aston University Archives.

How to attend - tickets are free, reserve a place on Eventbrite -

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/railway-history-a-journey-through-politics-performance-and-song-tickets-1206857085029?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

Venue - Susan Cadbury Theatre, Conference Aston, Aston Street.

VE Day. 80th Commemoration Events

- **6.30 pm May 8th. National Church bell ringing.**
- **At the Great Western Arcade Birmingham. 11 am to 3 pm Saturday May 10th** Displays & entertainment
- **In Kings Heath Exhibition in All Saints Church :** 8th May 5 to 9 pm; 10th May 10 to 4 pm; 11th May 2 to 4 pm.
- **and An Illustrated talk by Ian Binnie on Kings Heath at the end of WW2 on 10th May at 2 pm**

The Balsall Heath Local History Society is Registered Charity No. 1101945
The Old Print Works, 498-506 Moseley Road, Balsall Heath. Birmingham B12 9AH