

# Balsall Heath Local History Society Gazette



## MARCH 2026

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Facebook: Balsall Heath Local  
History Society and

[https://www.facebook.com/lost  
childrenproject](https://www.facebook.com/lostchildrenproject)

Membership of the Society  
costs £15 a year. Membership  
runs from January to Decem-  
ber each year and application  
forms are available on the  
website. Fees at meetings are:  
£1 for members and £4 for vis-  
itors.

Next Meeting at the Creation  
Climbing Centre Thursday  
March 26th at 2 pm : Andrew  
Reekes on "The General Strike  
of 1926",

Refreshments will be served at  
2:00 p.m.followed by a speaker  
Coming soon;

Meetings move back to St.  
Paul's Venture at 7pm

Thursday April 30th

Lieutenant Lempriere and his  
Parachute Queens. A lecture  
by Richard Albutt,

Thursday, May 28th

Marcus Belben talking about  
100 Years of Woodcraft Folk

## Programme for Society Meetings . March to May 2026

**Thursday March 26<sup>th</sup> 2 pm** at the Creation Climbing  
Centre ( ex Tram Depot) B12 9AA

**Andrew Reekes speaking about The General Strike  
of 1926**

***From April we are moving to evening meetings for  
the summer.***

**Thursday April 30<sup>th</sup> at 7 for 7.30 pm** at St Paul's  
Venture, Malvern St, off Clifton Rd B12 8NN

**Lieutenant Lempriere and his Parachute Queens.** A  
lecture by Richard Albutt, illustrated with film clips and  
music, bout the famous Balloonist .A presentation By the  
Birmingham History Theatre Company

**Thursday, May 28th 7 for 7.30 pm** at St Paul's Venture,  
Malvern St, off Clifton Rd B12 8NN

Marcus Belben talking about 100 Years of Woodcraft  
Folk

## FEBRUARY 26<sup>TH</sup> 2026 TALK BY GILL BINNIE – 'WOMEN OF MOSELEY'

The February talk was given by Gill Binnie. Gill's talk  
entitled 'Women of Moseley' reflected on the lives of  
Moseley women over the centuries.

Moseley was mentioned in the Domesday Book as  
Museleie, but it wasn't until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that the  
population increased rapidly. The population in 1811 was  
400, but by 1911 it had increased to 11,000. During this  
time people were moving out from the bad air to the rural  
idyll, which was Moseley village.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women were frequently not  
recognised for their achievements. They would just be  
recorded as 'wife of .....'. Some evidence of working  
women can be found from early postcards for instance  
women at Moseley Botanical Gardens or servants in  
houses. There were few photographs of women in  
factories until during WWI, when women had to fill the  
roles of the men who had gone to war.

Photography was becoming popular and was a hobby  
which was taken up by middle class women. One  
noteworthy female photographer of Moseley was Lisel  
Haas 1898 – 1999. Lisel was born in Germany, but  
moved to England in 1938. After the war, Lisel set up a

photographic studio at her home in Moseley. Lisel was a photographer at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, lifestyles and expectations grew and Moseley was developing into a middle class suburb with large houses and conspicuous use of wealth. Clubs and societies were being established. Tennis and Cycling clubs were set up. Moseley and Balsall Heath Institute was built in 1876.



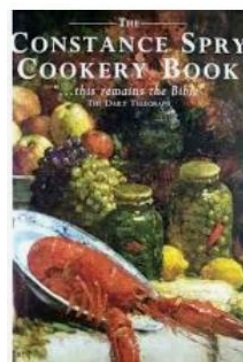
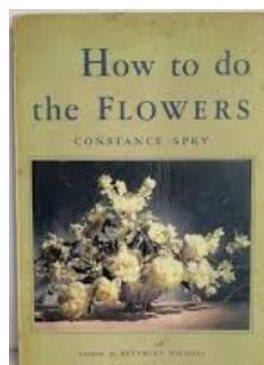
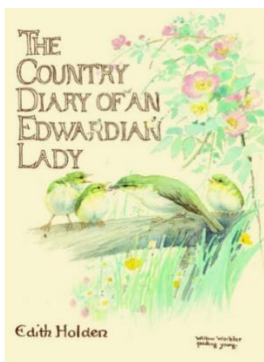
Moseley & Balsall  
Heath Institute

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century women found employment in education, many setting up their own private schools with help from middle class assistants.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century new work opportunities were appearing for women in nursing, in offices and department stores. In 1932 Sparkhill Commercial Secretarial School opened.

These are just some of the noteworthy women of Moseley mentioned in the talk.

**Edith Holden** born 1871 – she was an artist and a teacher and attended Birmingham School of Art. Edith is particularly known for her book 'The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady'



**Constance Spry** 1886 – 1970 – a florist and a cook who wrote thirteen books on this and gardening. She had a shop in London and was a high society flower arranger. Her other claim to fame was that she created the dish 'Coronation Chicken' to mark the coronation of Elizabeth II.

Some Moseley women made their name in the medical world.

**Dr Victoria Mary Crosse** 1900 – 1972 was Senior Medical Officer at Sorrento. Dr Crosse was responsible for many innovations which decreased the mortality rate in newborn infants. She made the connection between the administration of oxygen to premature babies and damage to their eyes.



**Dame Hilda Nora Lloyd** was an obstetrician and gynaecologist who was instrumental in setting up the 1930s flying squad for newborn babies. She was the first female president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

**Sheila Davy** was a formidable matron at Sorrento in the 1970s.

**Mary Stopes-Roe** was born 1927. She was the daughter of Barnes Wallis, inventor of the bouncing bomb. Mary moved to Birmingham in the 1950s. After obtaining a History degree and a PhD in Psychology, she did extensive research into family relationships and was widely published.

The world of sport and dance are other areas where Moseley women have made their mark.

**Kemi Chandler** – won the World Junior Disco Dance Championship in 1985.

**Sonia Lannaman** – an athlete who won various awards including the 100m title at the Commonwealth Games in 1978 and a bronze medal at the Olympic Games in 1980 in the 4 x 100m relay.

**Daphne Slater nee Arden** – an athlete who won a bronze medal in the 4 x 100m relay at the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

These are just a few of the names mentioned in Gill's talk. Gill believes there could be many more noteworthy women of Moseley and would be happy to hear from anyone who can add to the list of names.

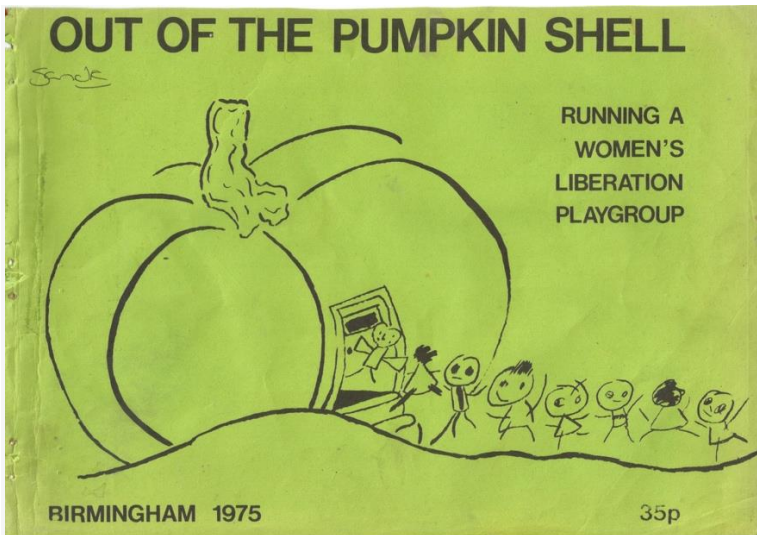
JH

### **The Birmingham Women's Liberation Playgroup In Calthorpe Park 1972 -1976**

The first Womens Liberation group in Birmingham was started in 1970 in Moseley by Catherine Hall and Val Hart who both had young children.

They set up a babies playgroup first in their own homes, and then in 1972, a full pre school playgroup in the play hut in Calthorpe Park offering non sexist childcare, provided by a paid playleader and a rota of parents of both sexes. It was not an easy job to persuade the Council to let us do so.

In 1976 it moved to Balsall Heath Park play hut and in 1977 to All Saints Hall in Kings Heath, where it lasted until 2006. The group also produced a booklet: "Out of the Pumpkin Shell" about the principles involved as well as examples of activities. Many women of note attended the playgroup, including Angela Rayner, a prominent campaigner for women's rights.



The title was based on the nursery rhyme:

*Peter, Peter, Pumpkin eater  
Had a wife but couldn't keep her  
So he put her in a pumpkin shell  
And there he kept her very well*

The Playgroup's archives are now preserved as part of the Women's Library at the London School of Economics in London. See this link. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/library/collection-highlights/the-womens-library>

Val Hart

## Events

**Saturday March 28<sup>th</sup> 3 pm**

**The Oldest Working Steam Engine in the World**

**An illustrated talk about James Watt's 1769 steam engine, by Jim Andrew**  
at All Saints Church, Kings Heath. £5.00 entry includes refreshments.

**Monday 20th April 1 pm.**

**Clash of empires: the Far Eastern War revisited**

An illustrated talk by Ian Binnie at 1 at  
Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret Street, Bham B3 3BS.

**JULY 4<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Balsall Heath Community Festival**

with a programme of events all over Balsall Heath. More details soon.

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