

BALSALL HEATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT 2016/ 17



Bringing history to life

BALSALL HEATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The Society was founded in 1979 with the aim of promoting interest in our local history. Over the years the Society has achieved considerable success, working with schools and community groups, organising exhibitions and events, collecting resources and producing its own publications. It is important we all feel pride in our area and to value its strengths, both past and present. Local history has a key role to play in underpinning community cohesion.

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

(Patrick Baird)

PROJECTS

Comic Relief provided funding for our tea tent and displays at the Carnival.

Two books are in process of compilation and publication: “Sweet Memories” focuses on people’s memories of the sweets we remember so well from our youth, while “Legends of Balsall Heath” is a biographical work on those who have

EVENTS

The year got off to a lively start with “**A Night At The Music Hall**”, produced and performed by the Theatre Group. Three shows were performed over **Friday 24th June** and **Saturday 25th June**. The audiences were most enthusiastic for the review style format, showcasing the range of talent that Balsall Heath had to offer—a veritable feast of comedy, song and speciality performances!. One audience member, caught in the moment, called it a “terpsichorean extravaganza”. Indeed it was, and plans remain bubbling for a repeat performance at some future date.

Next came the **Balsall Heath Carnival (9th July)** where our tea tent made a welcome return, alongside displays on the Tornado and Balsall Heath in WW1. The theme was Community Safety, and to tie in with this the Society came up with the idea of the “early days of motoring” for the procession, as seen on the front cover of this report.

We were unaware at the time but this turned out to be the final Balsall Heath Carnival. It had been a highlight of the social calendar in Balsall Heath and the Society had been an ever-present contributor and mainstay. In terms of engaging with the local community this was always an important day for us. 2016 was the 39th anniversary of the Carnival and it is hoped that somehow it can be brought back in the future.

Heritage Open Days Weekend, on **10th September**, had also become a regular annual event. It was set up to celebrate local history, giving access to places usually closed to the public. We provided the public a chance to visit the Old Clifton School, and the First World War schoolroom, with activities including: writing with pen and ink; chanting tables and air raid practice in case of Zeppelin attack. Taster classes were held with a teacher and class discipline was strictly adhered to. There were displays relating to Clifton School in particular and the First World War in Balsall Heath.

Sadly this proved to be the last Heritage Open Day we are able to hold as the building had to be closed in July 2017.

A little later, on **17th September**, an exhibition opened for a month at the Park View Gallery in Kings Heath. This showcased the best of Mick Turner’s photographs of Balsall Heath in the 1970’s. Mick’s images have been used and displayed by us on many occasions, so it is nice to report that they have now been transferred from St Paul’s Trust to us for safe-keeping and cataloguing. No doubt they will be appearing on displays again in the future.

In **January** we had the sad news of the death of **Polly Hackett**. She was a big part of the Theatre Group activities in particular and will be remembered fondly and much missed. It is fair to say we won’t see her like again; Polly truly was a one-off and always there whenever her support was needed, and to stand up for social injustice.

It was a busy end to the year. First up was the now annual canal walk. There is quite a public demand for this walk and the 2017 proved no exception with a large and eager crowd along for a “walk through time”. It all took place on Sunday **25th June** on a stretch of the Kings Norton canal and the Theatre Group had a variety of historical characters at key points on the walk to entertain and delight the audience. No walk would be complete of course without Peter Churchill and his always popular musical accompaniments. A chance to sing the canal songs of bye-gone days.

Much of the end of this year, since Christmas, has been given over to re-organising the History Bay. This has been essential due to changes at our host St Paul's Trust. The School Room and Costume Room have gone and we have had to integrate items from there into the History Bay, along with the St Paul's photo collection. It has been a monumental task and could not have been completed without the indefatigable Val Hart who saw it through.

SCHOOLROOM

The Schoolroom in the old Clifton Junior School had some very successful visits from primary schools. The classroom has been a major attraction and income source for the Society, so it was a sad day in July 2017 when it had to close due to St Paul's closing down the building it is located in.

The collection of desks and schoolroom objects has been stored in Northfield, pending finding a new location for the schoolroom to re-open.

PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP

The group has continued to index and archive our ever growing photograph collection. We have recently taken collection of much of the old photo archives of St. Paul's Trust and these will be the next task to sort out. This includes the work of Mick Turner, which will be well known from many exhibitions over the years.

ENQUIRIES AND PUBLICITY

Research queries are steady and are usually connected to family history. Shirley Thompson, a local author, used our archives to good effect and her book about her family's life in Brunswick Road is due out shortly.

The Gazette. This newsletter of the Society continues to be widely circulated. It is available via our website and email.

Our Websites include news of events, activities, features and publications.

MEETINGS AND TRIPS

The Society enjoyed a full programme of interesting speaker meetings. **June 25th 2015** saw the Society visiting **Cannon Hill Park** to be shown around by Alan Watkins, the Park Ranger, ably assisted by Tony Fox.

Meetings are held on the last Thursday of every month at 7.00 for 7.30 at St. Paul's Venture, Malvern St, off Clifton Road, Balsall Heath. All are welcome to come along. For details please phone 464 1890 or 1888.

PARTNERSHIPS

Thanks to those who work in partnership with us: **St. Paul's Community Development Trust**. **OPNOCS** (Older People's New Opportunities Consortium), **Balsall Heath Library**. **BHOPS** (Balsall Heath Older People's Services), **Heart of England Comic Relief**, **Heritage Lottery Fund**.



- Publications by Balsall Heath Local History Society -



Balsall Heath Through Time

by Val Hart

Then and Now images of Balsall Heath from Victorian times to the present day. Old and current images are contrasted to depict the ebb and flow of life in a richly diverse community.

Balsall Heath, A History

by Val Hart

Balsall Heath's development from the farmland and heath of the 18th century to the suburbs of the 1930s and 1940s.

The Flicks

Memories of the old days at the cinemas in Balsall Heath, through contemporary accounts and people's memories.

The Moseley Road Trail

The Development of the Moseley Road from the 1740s. Locations map with historical notes and photographs.

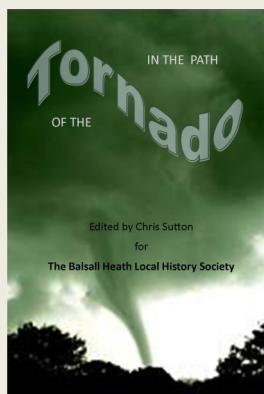
Brown Paper and Goose Grease

A Dictionary of Traditional Remedies, chiefly collected from memories.

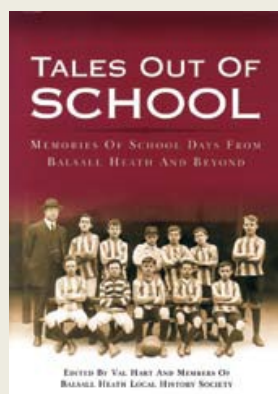
In The Path Of The Tornado

Edited by Chris Sutton

The story of the 2005 tornado with many images. It also includes details of the 1931 tornado which affected the area.



Price: £10.00



Balsall Heath & Highgate Past & Present

Edited by Val Hart and Alan Hemming

Fascinating photographs of the area arranged under topics, from long ago as well as some of our more recent pictures.

Tales Out Of School

Edited by Val Hart

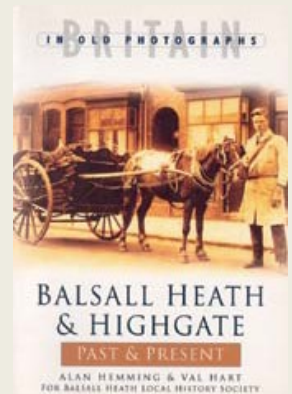
Memories of schooldays by adults from Balsall Heath and beyond, spanning more than a century and five continents. A story of what school really felt like for 120 different people. The happiest days of their lives, or days to forget?

The Gazette Price: FREE

Edited by Chris Sutton

Keep up to date with the History Society via our monthly newsletter. Stories and photographs from the past and present.

Available as a hard copy at our monthly meetings or as an email attachment. Contact us to receive it to your email account every month.



Price: £7.00

Price: £5.00



COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2016-2017

President: Richard Albutt (elected November 2005)

Chair: Patrick Baird

Vice-Chair: Pete Salway

Treasurer: Pat Johnson

Programme Secretary: Bron Salway

Committee Secretary: Val Hart

Committee Members: Jenny Lloyd, Margaret Pendry, Diane Stead

Charity Registration Number: 1101945

CONTACT INFORMATION

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WEBSITES

www.balsallheathhistory.co.uk
www.birminghamhistorytheatre.com
Balsall Heath Local History Society (Facebook)