

# the Heathway

Published by.....  
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## CAN WE SAVE

## ST. PAUL'S NURSERY?

### THE CHURCH AND PROFITS

Some people may think it strange, but there is a rule which says that a charity (and the Church is a charity), if it wants to sell property, must do so for the highest price available. This means that the Church, having decided to sell the Nursery, would like to sell it for commercial use. The Church has applied to the Council for planning permission twice-asking that the site shall be declared fit to have offices or warehouses on it. If this planning permission were granted it would make the land very valuable in cash. (You can't, of course, measure the value of the Nursery to the kids or their parents in cash.)

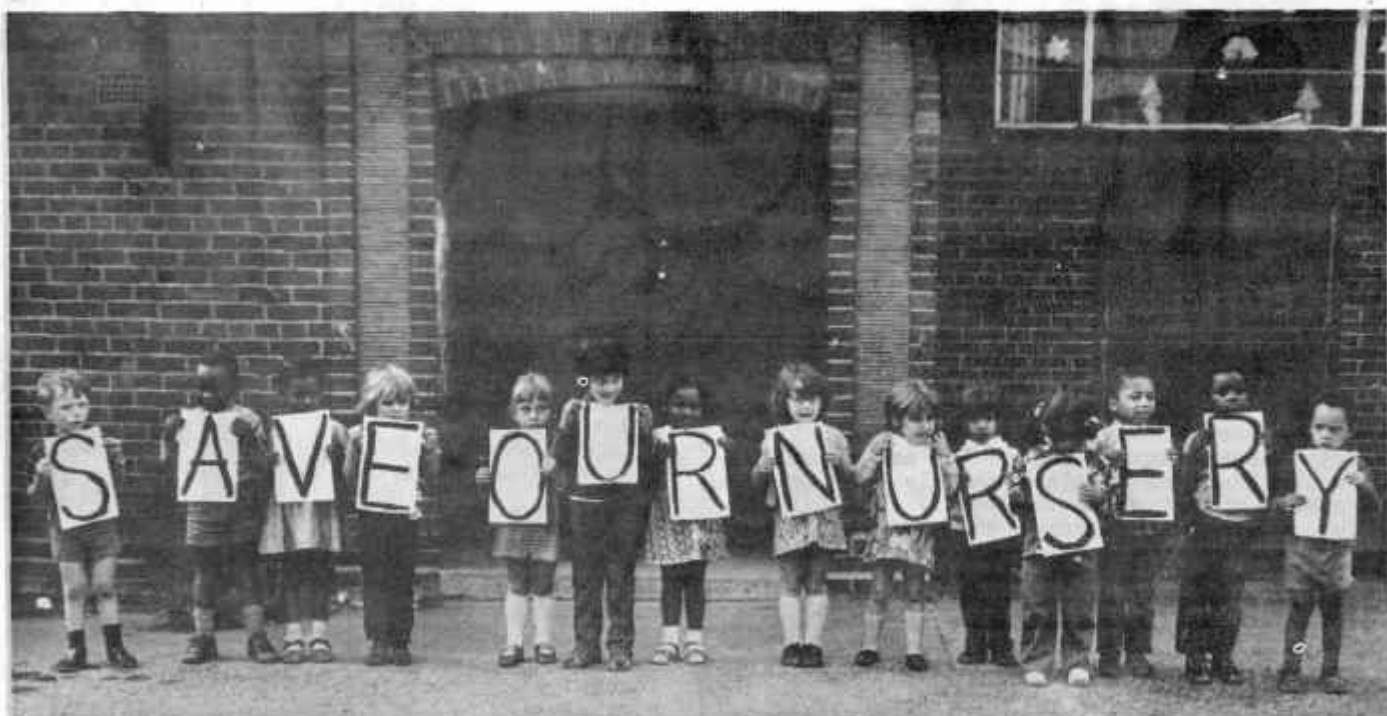
### THE CHURCH EVICTS THE CHILDREN

Many people will know already that there is a danger that the Nursery in St. Paul's Rd. may lose its building, and therefore cease to exist. The Nursery has been running for three years, and looks after 60 children under school age. The building belongs to the Church of England and used to be the church hall for St. Paul's Church. Since the Nursery started it has been re-decorated and improved, with lots of equipment and special facilities for the children. The Church of England has now decided to SELL the hall, and has given the Nursery notice to leave by July 31st. IN FACT THE CHURCH IS SO ANXIOUS TO GET RID OF THE NURSERY that since Friday 20th July, when the children broke up for their summer holiday, its local representatives have been making vigorous efforts to clear Nursery staff, equipment and furniture off the premises, change locks and board the building up. All this despite the fact that the lease was not to expire till the 31st.

### No Sale-So Far

So far, the Church has been refused planning permission by the Council. No doubt this means it is difficult to find a buyer for the site, as most firms would want to be assured that they would be allowed to use the hall commercially before they bought it. The Council refused permission because, they said, "The hall should continue to serve the local community". This seems a clear enough indication that the Nursery which helps to meet one of the greatest local needs, has a strong claim to stay put. Why does the Church, with small chance of a big profit, remain obstinate? WHY SELL THE HALL AT ALL?

*where will they go - if we don't?*



Some of the children who attend St. Paul's Nursery sent us this message before they broke up for their holidays. They are standing outside the front of the nursery building.

## THE STRUGGLE TO SAVE THE NURSERY.

The staff at the Nursery, the parents of the children, and the Balsall Heath Association all want to keep the Nursery open. They have been working to find ways of keeping the building. (There is NO other suitable building anywhere in the area.) It would be ideal, of course, if they could buy the hall themselves. But in the short space of time available, to raise so much money was obviously impossible. So the City Council was approached to see if the Social Services Department (which is responsible for the welfare of pre-school children) would buy the Nursery building and keep it open. Social Services do seem very interested at present in buying the building—but whether they do so depends on at least 3 things: (1) If they can afford it; (2) If they think the building is in good condition; (3) If they think the hall can be used fully enough to justify the expense. (At the moment the Nursery doesn't use the building in the evening or at weekends. There is a suggestion that if Social Services buy it, it could also be used for a much-needed old people's day care centre.



DINNER TIME....



AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.

## What happens when the kids come back?

Unfortunately, it seems as though it is bound to take some time before Social Services have the answer to their three questions and decide whether to buy the hall or not. Meanwhile there is a terrible problem for the Nursery. They are being forced to leave the building. But the children are due back from their holidays on August 20th. If nothing is settled by then, where will they go? If the building is unoccupied it may well be vandalised—as the local Vicar himself said, in an interview with the Birmingham Post. (No amount of door-locking and boarding-up stops vandals from breaking in to unused buildings in the area.) The Nursery staff, uncertain at the moment whether they have a nursery to come back to are sufficiently dedicated to hold on till the last possible moment before looking for new posts—but they can't do it for months on end. So if the Church proves difficult or Social Services fail to act fast, there could be a wasted building, lost staff, and above all, kids with nowhere to go. The absurd waste of all this would be more understandable (though not excusable) if the Church looked like selling the hall. But, as we said earlier, the prospects of this look slight. So another option they have open is to lease the hall to the



I'M GOING TO ROCK, ROCK, ROCK...

(continued)

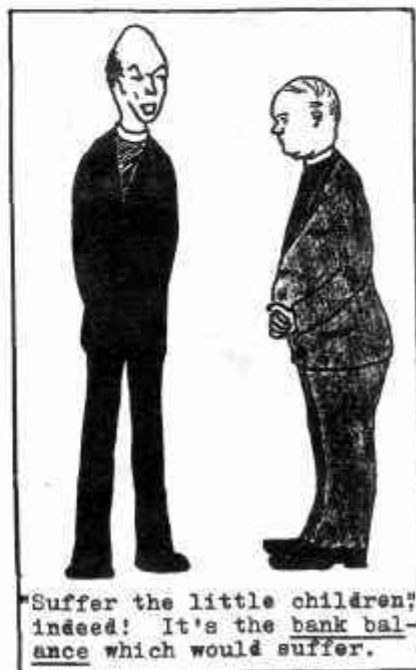
Nursery again. For obvious reasons this solution is not as good, from the Nursery's point of view, as Social Services buying the hall outright. But it seems a reasonable way out of the immediate crisis.

## Another Problem!

It is not only the Nursery which has nasty problems in this situation. On the Nursery site are three houses. Two of these have been empty for quite some time (the Church doesn't seem to be doing much from the point of view of housing needs either!), but the third still has tenants in it. Although they are due to see their house sold with the rest of the site, so far the people in the house have heard nothing official from the Church at all, about what is happening to their home.

## Talking to Parents...

We went to talk to some of the parents who have children at the Nursery, to see what their feelings about the position were. We met about a dozen or so altogether and they were united in their disbelief that the Church (of all things) could mean to do this, as well as in their strong desire to see the Nursery keep going. Not one of them had any idea why the Church should be determined to sell the hall. (Though this is not so surprising when one learns that the congregation of St. Paul's Church is virtually non-existent. The Church has plainly failed to make itself relevant to the people of Balsall Heath, and now intends to worsen the situation by ceasing to do something which really does make sense to them.) Mr. Paul Frisby, one of the parents—he has one child at the nursery—said, "Round here there's not much scope for the little ones to play. It's really good here, or I wouldn't bring her. There's nowhere else—only a registered child-minder, and that's no good. I went to see one once and she was far too strict. The children couldn't speak, they just used to sit in a row." A mother who works full-time is Mrs. Pamela Grant. "I've got no-one to mind the kids. I've tried to find another nursery, but they are full up for two years. The kids love it here. Sometimes they start screaming when I come to take them home." Mrs. Paris had one daughter at the nursery, and was worried when we saw her because she had hoped to start her youngest at the nursery soon, and take a job. We also talked to some of the people who work at the nursery. Mrs. Gayther helps to get the children's meals. She was upset at the thought of the nursery closing, for, if it does "The children may be sent to minders—people who haven't got the foggiest what to do."



"Suffer the little children? indeed! It's the bank balance which would suffer."

# Pensioners Dont Get Enough Money

This was the unstartling conclusion reached by a young student social-worker who recently did a series of interviews of old people in the neighbourhood. She recommends at the end of her report that pensioners should be paid a minimum of £10 for a single person and £16 for a couple. Even this may not be enough. It is certainly criminal that people should work all their lives for a mere pittance in their old age.

Old people are more likely to be ill than young people, and take longer to recover from illnesses. They are often faced with the diseases of old age itself - short-sightedness or blindness, deafness, arthritis, rheumatism. In addition to this old people suffer worse from the cold than young people: every winter in this country

many old people die of what the doctors call hypothermia - that is they freeze to death. The problems of old people are frequently made worse by the fact that their families and friends have drifted away or died - from this can come the problems of loneliness, isolation, boredom and depression.

An adequate pension would mean that old people could face the hardships and joys of old age with dignity and hope, instead of living with the uncertainty of where the next meal or bag of coal is coming from.

We can't do anything about the basic pension rates that the government pays out, but we can make sure that those in need know about Supplementary Pensions, and how to claim them.

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

### DO YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT THE ALLOWANCES AND SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR O.A.P.s?

Whether you are a pensioner yourself, or a friend, neighbour or relative, we hope the information below will be useful to you. There is a need for such information because many O.A.P.s who have a legal (and we think moral) right to extra money on top of their pensions, and also reductions in rates do not claim them. There may be a variety of reasons for this: leaflets and forms are often hard to understand; different offices and departments are involved and this complicates things. The attitude of the officials can also be intimidating and unhelpful, especially to those who are unsure of their rights.

#### 'Supplementary Pensions' and Allowances.

If your pension is not enough to meet your needs you are entitled to extra cash (Supplementary Pensions). These Supplementary Pensions are paid to men over 65, and to single women and widows over 60. They are for married couples when the man is over 65. They do not depend on contributions.

#### How much are you entitled to?

If your expenses are greater than your pension, the 'supplementary' benefit should cover the difference. Expenses means day-to-day costs of living like food, fuel, clothes etc. In addition you may get an extra allowance to help meet the cost of rent. If you need extra HEATING because of age or illness or whatever, they are meant to give you money for heating costs. Sometimes a lump sum is provided to install heating equipment. Other special needs arising out of illness or infirmity like special clothing or help with laundry bills are also catered for.

#### How to claim for Supplementary Benefits

Get FORM SBI from your local Post Office. Send it in to the Dept. of Health and Social Security

(the address is on it) and they will send someone round to find out about your needs.

#### Rate Rebates.

These can be claimed by both tenants and owner-occupiers. (Including where rent and rates are paid together. You qualify for a rent rebate (reduction) if your income is less than £12 per week (single person or widow) or £14.75 per week if you are married. Write to: City Treasurer's Dept. Birmingham City Council, P.O. Box 5, 98 Edmund St. B'ham B3 3DP for a form.

#### Services and agencies to help the elderly

The Social Services Dept of Birmingham City Council keeps a register of old people needing help. They also provide Home Helps for those unable to cope with all the house-work, and among other things a range of services for the disabled or handicapped. Phone them at 021-235-2697.

The Birmingham Council for Old People runs a Meals-on-Wheels for the house-bound. Phone them at 021-454-2208 for information or advice on O.A.P.s clubs, day centres, cheap holidays, etc.

FINALLY if you experience difficulty in obtaining Benefits or services please let the HEALTH-AN know by writing c/o 120 St. Pauls Rd.

## COMMUNITY BINGO

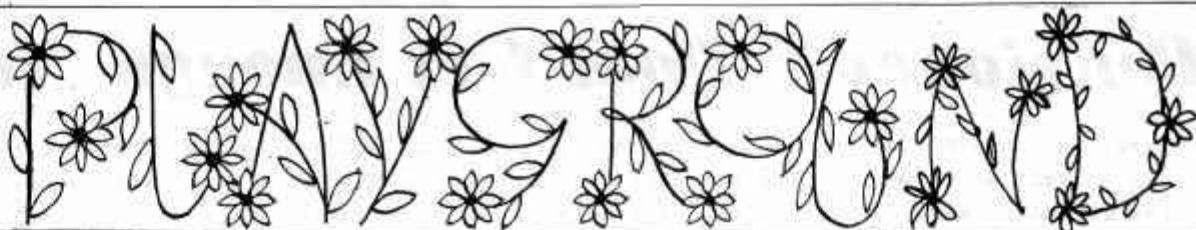
- ★ BY THE MUMS - FOR THE MUMS (+DADS)
- ★ GREAT PRIZES - FLYER, RAFFLE, SNOWBALL etc.
- ★ 5p IN and 1p A GAME - PENSIONERS FREE.
- ★ DOORS OPEN 7.30 - EYES DOWN 8.00.
- ★ AT MALVERN ST. PLAYGROUND EVERY TUESDAY.

In aid of the Happy House  
and Malvern St. Playground

Bring this ad. for one FREE game.



news from  
Malvern St.



CARNIVAL QUEEN.



ALL THE LITTLE PRINCESSES.

## The Spectacular Dazzling Sparkbrook Carnival

Saturday July 7th was the day of the Sparkbrook Carnival. The Playground went along in force - about 100 kids, mums, dads and helpers. All the photos on this page show them disporting on the three floats built for the occasion. Lots of people had great fun beforehand making witches' hats, creating spacesuits, engineering a giant rocket, painting scenery on wallpaper, etc. All this talent was rewarded by a rosette, which we won for producing one of the best three floats in the procession. After the procession there was a knock-out competition in Farm Park. A good time was had by all.

### Money's worth

The Jumble Sale which was held at the Playground hut on Saturday 21st July was a big success from several points of view. About £30 was raised for the Happy House and the playground. Many kind people had sorted out really nice and useful things for us, so everyone who came to the Sale got some good bargains. A BIG THANK YOU from the organisers to all who gave jumble, bought jumble or helped to sell jumble. (And special congratulations to those who managed to do all three!)

### music!

REMEMBER\*\*\*Saturday night is DISCO NIGHT at the Playground.  
6-7.30 p.m. for small kids, &  
7.30-10.30 p.m. for older ones. Refreshments sold.

## HOLIDAY PROGRAMME!

DO NOT MISS any of the great events at Malvern St. Playground this summer holiday. There is a diary of activities and happenings below. We have 'nt got room to tell you about everything, so GET ALONG TO THE PLAYGROUND to find out more from the two Robs, and to book for the events you want to take part in. Mums and Dads are needed to help with many of the things, so Rob and Rob will be very pleased to see them too.

\*\*\*\*\* DONT DELAY-COME DOWN TODAY \*\*\*\*\*

Some special events will be happening every week on the same day....  
EVERY TUESDAY there will be trips to the baths for free swimming....  
EVERY TUESDAY there will be BINGO at 7.30 p.m. Playground hut....  
EVERY WEDNESDAY there will be story-reading in the local library....  
EVERY SATURDAY there will be trips to the ice-rink for skating....  
EVERY SATURDAY there will be COMPETITIONS in Farm Park-we will go...  
EVERY SATURDAY there will be DISCOS in the Playground hut....

### DIARY

Sat.21st July. Swimming Gala.  
Tues.24th July. Swimming.  
Weds.25th July. Story-reading, 2.30.  
Y.H.A. film in hut.  
Fri.27th July. Trip to Sutton Park.  
Sat.28th July. Skating, Competitions  
at Farm Park and Discos.

Mon.30th July. (For 3 days.) The  
'Build-a-Den' Competition.  
Weds.1st Aug. Quiz at Leamington,  
and Darts Match-Dads v. Lads.  
Fri.3rd Aug. West Indian Festival  
Sat.4th Aug. All usual Sat. events  
Tues.7th Aug. Film-Arts Lab cinema  
Weds.8th Aug. Darts Match-Mums v. Girls.  
Fri.10th Aug. Night Ramble for older people.  
Sun.12th Aug. Day trip. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Weds.15th Aug. Punch and Judy Show, 11 a.m.  
Thurs.16th Aug. (For three days.) Playground  
CARNIVAL.

Thurs.23rd Aug. Asian Festival.

CAMPING TRIPS. Between Aug.5th and 14th, there will be 3 trips to Wales. 45 kids in all can go.  
Between Aug.20th and 24th there will be a canal boat-camping trip for 10 kids.

From Aug.24th a camp in Hereford.  
There will be a chance for both boys and girls to go on these trips. The cost is low. You must have your parents' permission. See Rob or Rob about it.



WATCH THIS SPACE!



WHO'S WHICH WITCH?



# OUR COMMUNITY SCHOOL

## FROM HAPPY HOUSE ....

It was almost a year ago, in August 1972, that the Balsall Heath Community House opened its doors at 120 and 121 St. Paul's Rd. Some of the people at St. Paul's Day Care Centre and at Malvern St. Adventure Playground had noticed some community needs which lay beyond their own work. They saw 'latch-key' children, unemployed school-leavers, truants, and people looking for legal and other kinds of advice. They thought the best way of helping some of these people was by getting a full-time group living and working in the community. When it came together, the group called itself the 'Community House'.

Since it opened, the Community House has been filled with kids from the area. They have been doing a lot of craft activities, reading, writing, and going on expeditions to various places. This had only been going on for two months when a six-year-old who was asked by his Mum where he had been all afternoon, said, "Over at the Happy House!" The name stuck—most people call it that now.

The Happy House has an old van which is used for our trips, and will, we hope, take a lot of people to camp at the Welsh cottage we sometimes borrow, this month.

Quite a few people turn up with legal or other problems which we try to help with. People from the Happy House have also spent time repairing or boarding-up many of the abandoned houses in the area.

## TO COMMUNITY SCHOOL.

After seven months of the community house work, some of the kids and their parents thought it would be a good idea if we could turn into a full-time school. Some of the kids were not enjoying being at their state schools, and their parents worried about them. As well as the parents, some local teachers and social workers encouraged us. In March 1973 the Balsall Heath Community School was provisionally registered with the Dept. of Education and Science.

At present there are five full-time pupils, aged 13 and 14. The school runs formally from 9.0 a.m. to 4.0 p.m. on weekdays, but spills over into evenings, weekends and holidays. During the next 12 months the school expects to expand to between

(continued)  
20 and 30 children.

People are always asking us what a community school is, and whether it's the same as a 'free' school. How is it like, or unlike, a state school? (Other people have written things for the paper which help to answer these questions, and will write more in future issues. Only short answers here, then.)

We are like state schools in wanting to foster useful skills and knowledge—reading and writing, for example. But we go about it differently from most state schools. We want pupils and parents to feel part of the school—but not that it's a place anyone has to come to. You don't have to force people to come to school if they are learning things they regard as useful and interesting. A free school never closes its doors, and there is always someone around to try and help. Adults in a free school are helpers and friends, not 'teachers' and disciplinarians.

A community/free school differs from a state school, too, in being smaller. Smaller numbers means more personal attention, more chance to do really interesting things.

Its own community and local area are the most useful assets of a free school. Lessons are more often out and about than behind a desk. For example, in our school two of the pupils are interested in car mechanics—and are learning from a qualified mechanic who works in a local garage. Another likes to write, and is working with actors from the Midlands Arts Centre.

If our community school is a 'free' school, it is because all of us try to pursue our own interests and goals in a responsible way. How many kids would go to school if given the choice? Ours can come and go when they want—and they come every day.



## We free—

The difference between us and a normal state school is simple: ours is a community school. We have no strict rules. Nothing is kept from us—of secrets and things; the teacher is not superior—the child is on the same level as the teacher, and no-one is the boss. We do not have to come to lessons if we don't want to and we can create lessons of our own. A community school is a free school.

The community we live in is a bad community—that is why we found it hard

in other schools. The community we live in is a slum area and children often get depressed. This leads to violence and vandalism. A community school can help to stop depression, and we are given only the things we like to do, not things other people like us to do. Hence, no depression, and something to look forward to. I personally found it boring and depressing in my old school. I am much more happy now than I could ever have been in my old school.

Terry Doyle.

## harmony

To start a free school you need to have a lot of patience, with the children that are in the free school. They can be some of the toughest kids that you ever have seen. The kids will try you out to start with, and if you don't show them that you are just the same as them, they have got the power over you. Goodwin Amoo.



You're doing it wrong, old chap!



My pole's stuck in the mud again.



## adrift

We set out at 3.30 on Friday afternoon in the Sparkbrook van, which we had borrowed, and we all took turns sitting in the front seat. Ada sat in the front for half an hour, Goody sat in for an hour, and I sat for two and a half hours.

When we got there we went to a College called Sidney Sussex, and then on to the flat where we were staying the night. Afterwards we went back to the College for dinner, and we were served by waiters. After dinner we watched T.V. while as usual the adults went off to the P.U.B. for a quiet drink to quench their thirst. So they said, anyway. Off we went to find them...and after embarrassing them enough to make them leave, we all went for a walk. They said they would take us down to see the river. But when we got there, there was, as usual, a P.U.B. And they hurried off to get a drink to quench their thirst.... They sat all night drinking beside the river and only bought us one drink the whole time.

Afterwards we went back to the flat.

When we got up in the morning we had a quick breakfast and then set out for the most boring place in Cambridge-the Botanical Gardens. Later we went to the river to go in a punt. I was with Anita, Mike and Terry. Mike was punting first and then I had a go, but I seemed to go into the bank all the time. Afterwards Terry had a go, and he was nearly as bad as me, but just in the nick of time our HEROINE came to the rescue. Yes folks it was the one and only Anita-she was super?? After going about 4 miles up the river we swooped into Rob's canoe and went back down river.

Later we went to pick up Barbara and Terry. In the van on the way home we all sang songs and were generally HAPPY. And we all lived happily ever after.....  
Typed by Thomas Whiteley  
Created by Thomas Whiteley  
Gags by Thomas Whiteley  
Abbreviations by Thomas Whiteley.

## London

We were off to London to see our T.V. programme, at the B.B.C. The programme was called 'The Changelings! It was all about the free school and the playground. After the film the adults went to the pub and we told the B.B.C. what the free school was like and how we started it. After that we went round the B.B.C. studios to have a look at how they make films. They make the films in a big hall. They planned the scenery out and had all lights hanging from the ceiling. The cameras could be filming them from a balcony.

We later went into the B.B.C. canteen and had a choice of any meal we wanted. After that we had a look round London. We also took a tube to Piccadilly Circus-there were lots of clubs and cinemas there, and big advertising signs on most of the buildings in bright lights.

We then went to see the London free school in Islington. They had a much bigger building than us. There were more kids, as well, though none of them were there when we went in.

Adrian McGhee.



Drawings by  
Adrian McGhee



One of our regular activities is visiting Hockley Port, where, up to now, we have done odd jobs then relaxed in canoes, boats or simply water. But we have now been given an old boat of our own to repair.



The three photographs on the free school pages were all taken in Cambridge, where, believe it or not, we were all attending a conference. Some conferred more than others. The Botanical Gardens are NOT boring. The picture above shows final defeat of would-be punter.

## about this paper

The members of the Community School decided it was about time the area had a proper newspaper to report on local happenings, publish articles of special interest to people round here, and give us all a chance to display our journalistic or artistic talents. (We mean YOU as well as us at the school. We want other people in great quantities to write-letters, if nothing longer-draw, even compose music, if you want.) We shall be doing a regular 'Up Your Street' column, so we shall eventually be coming to press you, if you don't volunteer! We also want to have a page by and for the older folk-including photos and stories about Balsall Heath years ago. (Don't tell us nothing's changed.)

This issue was produced by members of the school-with help from Clive, Keith, Carolyn and Cas, to whom very many thanks.

We are beginning modestly with only 6 pages, but before long we will be aiming to produce 10 or 12 page-issues. We are printing 1,000 copies this time, and if we manage to sell them all at 2p each we should just be able to pay the bills. (Definitely no profit-but it isn't intended to be a commercial venture.) In order to increase the number of pages next time we hope to sell some ADVERTISING SPACE-at £1 per column inch. If you are interested please contact us at the address below.

The paper will appear monthly, so the next one is due out in the middle of September. Anyone wishing to contribute should let us know as soon as possible.

You will notice its 'Heathan' with an 'a', and that shows we're only slightly irreverent, and mainly showing local patriotism.

Our Address: 'The HEATHAN', 120, St. Paul's Rd.  
Telephone: 021-440-4376.

### PHOTOS.

All photographs published in this paper can be bought at low cost from the above address!

