

# the Heathman

Published by.....  
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## SHOPPING AROUND

We all know that prices keep going up... and especially FOOD prices. But do we all know which shops in our area are the cheapest? Probably most people don't, because they haven't got the time to go around comparing the prices in different shops. We decided it might help to do a survey of grocery prices ourselves. We visited seven supermarkets in or near Balsall Heath, but we couldn't go to every shop that sells groceries, so if you think we have missed one that is cheaper, please let us know.

### What We Did

We went to four local supermarkets, two branches of the Co-op, and Tesco's store in Moseley. We chose these shops because they are all quite large - the kind of place people often go to because they can get everything they need in one place. In addition, they are all self-service, and prices are marked on the goods. (We think this is important. You should be able to tell how much things are going to cost before deciding to buy them.) We included Tesco, although it is in Moseley, because we felt that as a large store, part of a big chain, it might be extra cheap. We had a 'shopping list' with 29 items on it. We found out the price of each of these items in each shop. The Table on the next page shows the prices we noted in each of the supermarkets. We chose the items as ones which the average family would be likely to buy in the course of a week. All the shops were visited on the same day at the end of September, to make it all quite fair.

Only two of the stores (one of the Co-op branches, and Tesco's) had all the items on our list in stock. That is something to notice if you really do have to do a lot of shopping in a hurry, and want to go to only one shop.

As well as looking at prices for a lot of nationally-advertised brands, we also looked at prices for many alternative buys. Now we can't, of course, say anything about the QUALITY of goods sold in different shops (we don't know, for example, if a cheaper brand of sausages is 'better' or 'worse' than another. But we do have some information, which you will find later on, from some other studies, which suggests that for most things on our list, cheaper brands are NOT of poorer quality.

### What we Found

#### CHEAPEST STORE & DEAREST STORE.

The cheapest supermarket among those we visited was certainly Maini's. The most expensive were Allen's and the two Co-op branches. Buying the items on our list at Maini's would cost about 7p-8p in the £ LESS than buying them at the Co-op or Allen's. Of course the Co-op gives stamps, but these are worth at the most 2p in the £. A household which spends £5 per week on groceries would save up to £1.60 a month by choosing one supermarket rather than another.

#### THE OTHER STORES

Although the other stores were all cheaper than Allen's or Co-op, they were dearer than Maini. The items on our list cost 3p-5p in the £ less at Tesco, Riteway or Ali

than at Allen's or Co-op. (Tesco give Green Shield stamps worth 2p in the £ if changed for 'gifts' or 1.3p in the £ changed for cash - but even allowing for this, Tesco is a more expensive place to shop than Maini's.)

#### WHICH GOODS ARE BEST VALUE?

Many of the stores like Tesco and Co-op which are part of big chains stock goods under their own 'brand' name. These are usually cheap compared with nationally-advertised brands. Even supermarkets which are not part of a chain, like Maini's, often have a choice of brands, with the ones which are not widely-advertised being cheapest. The Consumer Association, the national organisation which publishes the magazine 'Which?' has done scientific tests comparing 'own brands' and cheap brands with more expensive, well-known products. They tested goods like cornflakes, instant coffee, baked beans, etc., and found that the quality of the cheaper goods is generally as high as those with 'famous' names. Your family may think they only like the flavour of Heinz baked beans or Kellogg's cornflakes, but try out the cheaper Tesco or Armour beans, and the Co-op cornflakes and so on, to make sure you can't make a saving.... By the way - it sometimes happens that the cheaper varieties of different products get put at the bottom of the shelves. Or right at the top where you can't see them. So don't give in. Have a really good look around, and you may find something a good few pence cheaper.





SHOPPING LIST.	ALLEN'S	ALI'S	MAIN'S	Co-op Luton A.O.	Co-op Stamford A.O.	TESCO	RITELWAY
19oz Fairy Liquid	18p	16p	15p	17p	N.A.	18p	16p
1lb P.G.Tips	9p	8p	7p	8p	9p	8p	8p
1lb tea-cheapest	7p	7p	6p	6p	6p	5p	7p
1lb Stork margarine	7p	6p	6p	7p	7p	7p	7p
1lb margarine-cheapest	6p	6p	6p	5p	6p	5p	6p
1lb Anchor butter	N.A.	10p	9p	10p	N.A.	11p	10p
1lb butter-cheapest	10p	10p	9p	10p	10p	9p	10p
1lb Cheddar-cheapest	30p	30p	30p	30p	32p	33p	N.A.
16oz Kellogg's cornflakes	12p	12p	12p	14p	14p	14p	12p
16oz cornflakes-cheapest	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	11p	N.A.	13p	N.A.
15oz Heinz baked beans	8p	7p	7p	8p	8p	6p	7p
15oz baked beans-cheapest	N.A.	6p	6p	6p	6p	6p	6p
17oz Surf	12p	N.A.	11p	12p	N.A.	11p	N.A.
1lb cheapest biscuits (Digestive)	14p	9p	11p	14p	14p	11p	10p
1lb McVittie's plain chocolate digestive	23p	17p	16p	19p	19p	23p	N.A.
Medium sliced loaf	8p	8p	9p	10p	10p	8p	8p
8oz Nescafe	62p	59p	58p	58p	58p	54p	60p
2lb sugar	9p	9p	9p	10p	10p	9p	9p
15oz tin peaches	12p	12p	N.A.	12p	11p	11p	12p
15oz tin peas	9p	9p	8p	8p	7p	8p	9p
1lb pork sausages	28p	N.A.	N.A.	28p	N.A.	26p	N.A.
1 pt. Batchelors soup	6p	5p	5p	6p	5p	5p	5p
1lb cheapest jam	10p	10p	11p	12p	10p	9p	11p
1lb Robertson's jam	14p	13p	13p	15p	N.A.	14p	N.A.
3lb McDougall's Flour	15p	14p	14p	14p	14p	14p	14p
3lb Flour-cheapest	15p	12p	11p	12p	12p	11p	12p
2 Toilet rolls-cheapest	6p	6p	7p	8p	11p	8p	6p
1 dozen standard eggs	40p	38p	35p	39p	39p	39p	N.A.
1lb long grain rice	N.A.	14p	11p	13p	13p	11p	13p

N.A. = Not Available when we visited the shop.

## People & Products

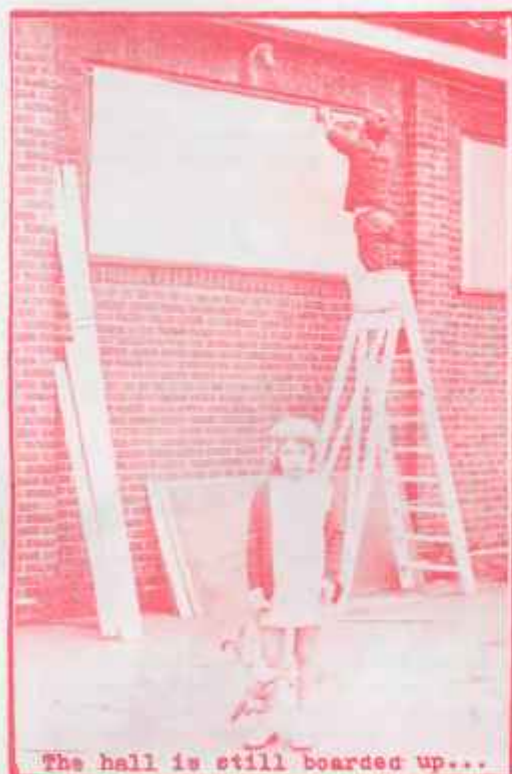
As you can see from the Table on the left prices for individual goods vary quite sharply from shop to shop. If you could spend hours walking from one store to another you could make a much bigger saving by buying each product in the place where it is cheapest. But hardly anyone has that much time, of course. So the best thing is probably to pick your supermarket carefully, then look for the best buys when you get inside. Watch the quantities, though. You think you have bought a cheap 1lb jar of jam, then get it home and find it's an expensive 12oz jar! This especially applies to things like biscuits, which still come in packets which weigh odd amounts like 5oz and cost odd sums like 8p.

By the way, opening hours for the supermarkets in our survey vary quite a bit. Again the Co-op does not seem to be as keen on getting us to go there as some of the other shops. It closes for 1½ hours each lunch hour, and for two half days a week. It is never open after 6 p.m. All the other shops have some late shopping hours—especially on Fridays. Ali's and Riteways also open on Sundays which may be convenient for many people.

### In Future

We intend to keep an eye on how much prices are RISING. So we will be repeating the survey in the future. And perhaps will be checking other grocery shops if anyone tells us of other good ones nearby. Meanwhile if YOU would like us to collect information about the prices of other kinds of products please write and tell the Editor.

## St Paul's Nursery Carries on



The hall is still boarded up...

The last issue appeared in the midst of the controversy over St. Paul's Nursery. At the end of July the nursery broke up for its summer holiday—with no certainty of ever opening again. But there has been massive public support for the nursery, with the result that it HAS been re-housed, happily, but very temporarily, and is still within reach of our neighbourhood. The staff worked during their holidays to find accommodation in a local school and thanks to the co-operation of the Social Services and Education Depts. the nursery is still functioning from 7.30 a.m.—6.00 p.m. in Tindal Street School.

But that's not the end of it. Everyone still feels very anxious and tense. How long can the nursery stay there? Are the facilities really adequate for a long period? Is the Council seriously doing anything to help these youngsters?

### How quickly?

As far as we know, things haven't moved very far since the petition, bearing 600 signatures, went to the Council LAST JUNE. The Council said they would seriously consider purchasing the church hall, thus enabling the nursery to go back there. Since then, no less than 200 letters have been sent to 20 local Councillors individually by parents and supporters of the nursery, urging them to act to save the hall for the nursery. Their replies have been hopeful assurances that everything possible will be done. Heaven knows, there are problems enough in Balsall Heath, without the additional ones that would be caused if the nursery ever had to close down. Those 60 places for under-5's will be needed for the future as badly as they are needed now. (cont..)



...but the kids carry on.



# St Paul's Day Care Centre

Vacancies for 2½ - 5 year olds



good food and care

nursery hours 7.30 am to 6.00 pm

now at TINDAL St. SCHOOL

(entrance in CROMER ROAD only)

## READERS' LETTERS

### A Vital Issue

Dear Heathan, "Why can't I go back to my school?" "Why have all the windows got wood on, and nobody allowed in?" These are questions asked by my four year-old sons. How can I explain it? Why is his school, St. Paul's Nursery, there, and he not allowed in?

How can I, as a mother, or teacher to those young children, explain politics to ones so young? To them, the school is there, empty, and they pass it to come and spend a day (a long day) in one room. The old building offended them so much!

There is a lot to say for a young child's logic - can maybe our councillors and politicians learn something from the logic of a three or four year-old, and perhaps do something for them before the very bad weather comes, confining many of them from 7.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. to the one room without the one hour they get to borrow a playground. I hope so! Do you think maybe they need reminding?

Yours sincerely, Lynda Gale.

### System Improves

Dear Heathan, Earlier this month we discussed in great detail the views on whether the playground improvements would come up to the kids' expectations, or whether they would prefer for the playground to remain as it was. On the plan, the improvements looked impressive. And with great relief I can report that with the sand-pit, track, etc., we can give more scope for the children to play. I think when the work is completed all the kids will have much more fun. Also, we will have one of the best Adventure Playgrounds in Brum. My view as a committee member is that we will now be able to use the playground to its full potential-but only with the assistance of both kids and parents, so please give us as much help as possible.

Yours sincerely, Robert Hill.

**YOU WRITE TO US!** We are very pleased to get letters from Readers about anything you like. Send to the Heathan at 120, St. Paul's Rd. (440-4376)

Month by month we will be inviting our readers to use this column to have their say about anything connected with the life of their street. It could be a chance to say 'thank you' to helpful neighbours to congratulate friends or relatives on a birth, marriage or engagement, or to raise any issue that particularly concerns you.

This month we start in a small way, with a visit to ST. PAUL'S AVENUE.

Here we find the home of 23 years of Mr. and Mrs. Haig. Mr. Haig settled here after a long career with the Royal Marines. He is a veteran of two world wars and had the chance to see most of the world before he was invalided out in 1945. He has a son now serving in the Marines and a son-in-law due to join the Army in Germany next month.

**PRAISE!** Mr. Haig wanted to pay tribute to his neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Singh. "They are very, very

### LET'S SEE SOME ACTION!

The Council says it is still trying to buy the hall, but the price is too high. (This means that they are still dithering about whether the money should be made available, presumably.) The Church is now saying it is no responsibility of theirs. What is infuriating for all the people who care about the future of the Nursery is that there seems to be NO WAY in which they can find out exactly what is happening. The Council and the Church representatives may be still talking to each other about the fate of the church hall but local people-the staff and the parents-do NOT know what they are saying. As some of our correspondents point out (see Letters, this page) it is a pity that those responsible for the misfortunes of the Nursery, including Priority Area Playgroups as well as the church, could not have communicated with each other and with parents, etc. much earlier, so that plans could have been made for the kids. Let's have no more silence and delay. Let's hear that the Council has bought the hall!

To the Editor, The Heathan.

Dear Sir, I want to protest most strongly about your campaign in the first issue of the Heathan to make St. Paul's Church the scapegoat in the controversy about the Nursery.

You say, "The Church has plainly failed to make itself relevant to the people of Balsall Heath." Nothing could be further from the truth. During the period of social change since the end of the war all the churches in Balsall Heath, with

St. Paul's prominent among them, have played a pioneer role in community action. It was two clergy from St. Paul's who initiated the formation of the Balsall Heath Association. It was a Vicar of St. Paul's who started the Nursery itself, which was eventually taken over by Priority Area Playgroups and continued to have the tenancy of the church hall. The present staff of St. Paul's are equally involved in social work within the community and care just as much about people as any of the rest of us.

But the church has suffered, with the rest of the area, from the ageing of its property, the movement of the population, and the new plans for the neighbourhood. The present congregation may be relatively small, but it is extremely loyal; and it has shown itself determined to make the changes necessary to enable it to be equally relevant in the future.

The decision to sell the hall was taken as a direct result of the Council's designation of the area for industrial use, and Priority Area Playgroups were given twelve months' notice to enable them to make other arrangements for the nursery. It was the plans of the Council, not the greed of the church, which indicated the use to which the hall might be put. There now appears to be some change of mind on the part of the Council, but certainly the present condition of the hall, with cellars constantly being flooded and pumps that don't work, demands the expenditure of a large sum of money which St. Paul's church has not got. If there is need for the continued existence of a Day Care Centre in the area-and there seems to be absolutely no doubt about this, then now is the time for the City Council to accept its responsibilities.

The responsibility for the fiasco which ended the Nursery's tenancy of the hall cannot be put on St. Paul's church alone. It must be shared by Priority Area Playgroups, and the Nursery itself, whose inability to communicate with one another and to work together meant that no action was taken early enough to save the children from being the victims of the situation.

Yours sincerely, Joe Stephens,  
Minister, Moseley Rd. Methodist Church.

## up your street

nice people, they will do anything for you", he said. And the feeling seems to be mutual. Young Dalgit often goes shopping for the Haigs, and Mr. Haig is happy to help them out with small things when he can. Perhaps it is his cosmopolitan training, but Mr. Haig shrugs off difficulties of language and culture which sometimes bedevil relations between people of different extraction. The avenue has always been a peaceful place to live, "There's never been any bother here", said Mr. Haig. One thing does worry him, though, in common with other residents, and that is the untidy state of the central pathway. Mr. Haig thought it should be the



# up your street CONT.

Council's responsibility to keep it swept-after all they are MEANT to sweep the streets. Not that everyone lets the grass grow between their toes.. As I spoke to Mrs. Bishop, another resident, she was sweeping her half of the avenue-as indeed she does every week. "It gives me a chance to burn some of my own rubbish as well", she said. Another short-coming people talked about is the lack of any street lighting on the avenue. Residents remember that in one accident an old lady tripped and injured herself in the dark.

## DIVISION...

While the people I spoke to were on the whole proud of the peace and quiet and relative harmony of their avenue, the Council, it seems, has other ideas. Rumour has it that while the side of the Avenue nearest the Moseley Rd has been given a 'life' of 30 years, the side nearest the Lane is earmarked for the bulldozers when the current clearance plans for the area are implemented. Residents are surprised by the decision: "Is there really that much difference between the two sides of the avenue", they ask. And anyway, after the bulldozers have gone, aren't the new houses to be laid out in the old avenue-style-like the new ones on Brunswick Rd? One householder thought the Council could save money by extending the General Improvement grants to BOTH sides of the avenue.

For some the plan would mean more hardship than for others. Kishore Mandora is a young man with musical talent. He plays with a local band. They haven't got a name yet, but Kishore thinks they might one day make a reputation for themselves. He is now worried that he might be re-housed too far away from the rest of the band. Not that everyone is unhappy about the plan. One young couple told me, "the schools round here are no good. The area is going down. I don't even drink round here any more." They welcomed the chance to get out. Good news, I suppose, for those on the right side of the street-a chance of substantial Council grants to improve their homes.

In the next issue of the paper we hope to publish the results of our own attempts to find out from the Council its exact plans for the fate of St. Paul's Avenue, and also the Council's view of its obligations to residents as regards sweeping and lighting. *mike*



Folk Group at playground Summer Fair.

## in full swing

We were very pleased at the response to our first issue. So many people have worked hard to produce articles for this one that we have had to expand from six to TEN pages! Thanks to revenue from our advertisers we can still afford to sell the paper at the bargain price of 2 pence. We still very much want MORE LOCAL PEOPLE to write or make suggestions for articles, draw cartoons, send in letters, etc. Would you like to see your street featured in 'Up Your Street'? Tell us, if so.

Sorry about the long delay since the last issue. We hope to be quicker next time, and get the next one out before Christmas.

Thanks to all the people, shops and organisations who helped to sell 1,000 copies of the last issue. We hope they will do it again, and we also hope to increase our circulation.

This issue was produced by members of the Free School with help from Carolyn, Nigel and Keith, to whom many thanks. Thanks also to the authors of the signed articles. Research for the shopping survey was done by Terry, Barbara, Tom and Tea. The interview for the Housing article was carried out by Terry.

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## LETTERS

Dear Heathan,

I would like to write about something I feel is a great public nuisance in our area. I am talking about the fact that a lot of youths and children in the neighbourhood are constantly taking milk bottles from doorsteps and elsewhere and throwing them into roads and gardens which are littered with broken glass. This is very dangerous because often they throw them without even looking to see if anyone might be nearby. It is also bad because the glass lying in the road may ruin car tyres and again cause a nasty accident. Then there is the waste of it all-they say we may have to have our milk in plastic containers soon because of the shortage of milk bottles. I hate the idea of this as the plastic containers squash and break, and anyway once made they can't be destroyed and will just lie about as litter. I wonder if it would help to have a deposit on the bottles like they do in Ireland? This would make the adults take more care of them perhaps.

Yours sincerely,  
Alice McNeice (Mrs.)

(An interesting suggestion, readers-what do you think?)

Dear Sir,

Why does every second person in Balsall Heath have a dog, when it is obviously a really unsuitable place for animals? There is no room to exercise them, and anyway many of them are not properly looked after in other respects. Many of them can be seen roaming the streets in wild packs, and are a hazard to everyone. They also make a terrible noise at night.

Yours, Angry Resident.



The cottage in Shropshire where kids from the Happy House, playground and Free School often 'camp' in the holidays.



Some members of the Free School visit Warwick Castle.



# your HOME and the PLANNERS

During the past weeks many residents of Balsall Heath have received letters from Bush House informing them that their homes were scheduled to be demolished, according to a re-development plan for our neighbourhood, and that they would be rehoused sometime during 1975. This has raised a lot of questions and has been the cause of much chit-chat over garden fences and in local pubs. Therefore the Heathian is printing below an interview it has had with Robert Jenkinson, secretary of the Sparkbrook West Residents' Council, hoping to answer some of the questions people are concerned about.

**HEATHAN:** Planners and Councillors speak of an improvement and redevelopment plan for Sparkbrook West Two. Exactly what area does this include?

**Robert Jenkinson:** It includes the area bounded by Highgate Rd. on the north, Brighton and Taunton Rds. on the south, the railway line on the west and Stoney Lane on the east.

**HEATHAN:** When did the Sparkbrook West Residents' Council come into being, and why?

**R.J.:** Almost three years ago it was first heard that the City Council had plans to demolish and re-build some houses in this area and make money available to improve others. The Residents' Council was formed at this time after a series of meetings called by the Lane Neighbourhood Centre for local residents. Each meeting elected an action committee for the groups of streets who came to the meetings. These action committees came together to form Sparkbrook West Residents' Association, in order to find out what residents thought about all the issues involved and to represent the residents' interests to the City Council and its various Departments. The main thing the Residents' Council has done is try and keep in touch with the residents through surveys, talking to neighbours and publishing five issues of the Sparkbrook West News.

## DEMOLITION & REHOUSING

**HEATHAN:** Many people will be uprooted in our neighbourhood, and large parts of our community will change in the near future. How can this happen with a minimum of disorder, hardship and panic?

**R.J.:** Since the Residents' Council is made up of local people who meet their neighbours all the time the upper thing in their minds is how all this affects individuals. So it is very important that the redevelopment process that affects our community is done in such a way that individuals are treated as human beings, that they understand what is going on, that they have the largest measure of control over what is happening, and that they feel they are part of this important change that's taking place in the area.

**HEATHAN:** How can all that happen in practice?

**R.J.:** It can happen if the community keeps together, in two ways. First, there are those houses located in 'General Improvement Areas' (G.I.A.'s). The Residents' Council hopes that people in G.I.A.'s will take the opportunity to use improvement grants to improve their homes, and in this way make our community a better place to live. Second, there are those houses located in demolition areas. What the Residents' Council wants is for the City Council to do a CAREFULLY PHASED PROGRAMME OF DEMOLITION AND REBUILDING, together with a SPECIAL SCHEME FOR REHOUSING. Ideally, what should happen is that an area of ground is completely cleared, new houses are built there, and people are moved into those new houses from old ones still to be demolished. When they've all moved, their houses will be knocked down, new ones built on the old sites, and so on, in a kind of leap-frogging movement. This special scheme which everyone could understand and trust, because they would know what was going to happen to them, would enable the community in the demolition areas to be kept together.

**HEATHAN:** Has the City Council assured the Residents' Council that they WILL carry through that kind of special scheme?



Robert  
Jenkinson

**R.J.:** Unfortunately, no. All we've got so far from our negotiations is that they'll TRY and do it as far as they can. At our last meeting with the Council representatives a real ding-dong of an argument arose over this very issue. The Chairman of the Housing Dept. said that as far as possible the Housing Dept. would re-house people in new houses in this area. The Chairman of the Public Works Committee said that as far as possible his Dept. would build houses as quickly as they could on the smallest feasible sites. But they both went on to say that it was very difficult to achieve these aims, and they wouldn't give any promises to individuals. The Residents' Council feels this is a crucial issue, and will continue to fight it.

**HEATHAN:** When will people know the date for demolition if they live in houses which are coming down?

**R.J.:** We've been told in a letter from Mr. Borg, the City Engineer, that he hopes to have two documents ready for late summer. The first is a plan showing future development in the area; that is, where they are going to put new houses, shops, roads, parks, etc. The other document Mr. Borg calls a Phasing Programme for Demolition—and this should say which houses are coming down in which year.

## COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDERS.

**HEATHAN:** What exactly is a Compulsory Purchase Order (C.P.O.)? Who do they affect and how?

**R.J.:** The City Council has decided which houses it wants to buy up for redevelopment in our neighbourhood. Anyone can see which ones these are by looking at the plans in the window of the Lane Neighbourhood Centre. The C.P.O. is the means by which the Council compulsorily purchases these houses. People are naturally very concerned about how much money they will be paid for their houses. An owner-occupier gets Open Market Value—which is the price the house would fetch if there was no redevelopment scheme. The City pays the owners fees, and may also pay a tenant a small compensation if the house has been kept in good order. If an owner cannot agree with the City Council at once about the value of his house, then he has to pay rent until he and the City come to an agreement. However, the City doesn't get off free, because it has to pay interest on the owner's money from the week he pays rent, until he gets the whole compensation for his house.

**HEATHAN:** When will the C.P.O.'s be approved?

**R.J.:** We've been told by an official in the City's Estates Dept. that the work to prepare the C.P.O.'s will be begun very soon, and they ought to have it finished and approved by the central government by spring or summer 1975.

**HEATHAN:** What rights does a person have, if he is being rehoused, to reject what he considers poor or inadequate housing?

**R.J.:** What happens if your house is being demolished and you are being rehoused, is that the City Housing Dept. (Bush House) sends a visitor and asks you where you want to be moved to. If it's easily possible they will try and make you an offer in that area. We hope people wanting to be rehoused in Balsall Heath will have this option because of the special scheme explained earlier. If Bush House doesn't find it easy to make you an offer in an area where you are interested, or the kind of house you need, you are in a very strong position. The reason is, that if they want your house, they want you out. So you can, if you want to play it tough, hang on till they make you an offer after offer after offer, till finally they make one which you are prepared to accept. The person whose house is being demolished is in a much stronger position than the people on the ordinary housing list.

Cont. over



Your Home And the Planners-continued.

## GENERAL IMPROVEMENT AREAS

HEATHAN: If a person's house is in a General Improvement Area how can he get an improvement grant?

R.J.: First of all, an improvement grant is money which is given by the City Council to a house owner to do improvements to his house. The City Council will pay up to half, but no more, of the improvement bill, and the maximum they will pay is £1,000. At the moment 'improvements' include putting in a bathroom where none exists, putting in an inside lavatory, a hot water system, a damp-proof course, and possibly putting in larger windows and enlarging your kitchen if it's too small. Improvement money can also be stretched to cover certain repairs. For example, repairs to your roof, floors or brickwork. But money given for repairs must be no more than money given for improvements.

How to set about getting a grant is that once you know what you want improved or repaired, call in a Public Health Inspector and he will tell you what he thinks should be done and what grants are available. Having discussed it with him, call in your own builder, surveyor or architect, and get him to draw up some plans. These plans are then submitted to the Public Health Dept., which sends them through to other relevant Depts. in the city council (Planners and Building Inspectors). When your plans are approved your builder can start work. When the work is completed the city council will pay its half of the bill, so you don't have to raise the entire sum yourself and then be paid back.

HEATHAN: When will the house owner be able to apply for an improvement grant?

R.J.: The G.I.A. proposals are going to the Public Health Committee this month (October), so home improvement grants should be able to start without delay.

HEATHAN: If you are entitled to an improvement grant, but find it hard to raise your half of the money needed, what can you do?

R.J.: You may be able to borrow the money from a Building Society, a bank or another source. If this isn't possible, you may be able to borrow the money from the city council on the same terms as a city council mortgage (that is a mortgage for buying a house.) An extra and important point is that where a person would have great difficulty in paying back the full amount of a mortgage to the city council, in some cases they are prepared to make a Maturity Loan. For example, many pensioners who need the improvement grant can't afford the mortgage. They might get a maturity loan which means the money borrowed is put down as a charge on the house and is repaid to the council by the person who inherits or buys the house after the death of the elderly owner. In addition, Social Security is prepared to pay the whole of the INTEREST on the loan through supplementary benefits, for anyone in this situation.

HEATHAN: Any other thoughts about the future of the neighbourhood as it is about to begin its redevelopment?

R.J.: Yes. Since the Residents' Council began, several years ago, there has mostly been talk, and a few plans on paper, but very little action. This should be changing soon. There will be action in the General Improvement Areas very soon now. Also people will see the beginning of the demolition programme when a visitor comes around and asks them questions about their house and where they would like to be rehoused. So in the next few months people will begin to see developments happening, and it will all be more believable than it has been in the past.

HEATHAN: If any parts of this interview are not clear to our readers, or if they have questions not treated above, how can they get their questions answered?

R.J.: Housing Advice Night at the Lane Neighbourhood Centre is on Mondays between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. I myself am usually there to give FREE advice on all aspects of housing problems.

### Balsall Heath Association.

Advice Centre: 91, Court Rd, Balsall Heath. 440-1310  
Open daily for general (free) advice, Tues.-Friday.  
Monday evenings 7 p.m.-9 p.m. CLAIMANTS' UNION.  
Wednesday afternoons and evenings HOUSING ADVICE.  
Wednesday evenings 7-9 p.m. LEGAL ADVICE.

For free advice on housing problems come to  
LANE NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE, 422, Ladypool Road  
on Monday evenings from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

دھواں والا घर کو اجال مقرر کیا گیا ہے

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مذکورہ

۲۲۲ لیدی پول روڈ

۲۲۲ لیدی پول روڈ پر واقع ہے۔

کیا آپ کا مکان سکیڑا ہوا ہے؟

یہ اور اس طرح کے دوسرے مسائل  
کے بارے میں مفت مشورہ کیلیے

ماہر قانون سے برپیسوارشام کو  
۶ سے ۹ بجے تک مندرجہ ذیل پتہ  
تشریف لائیں:

لین تھان ہاؤسنگ  
۴۲۲ لیدی پول روڈ برمنگھم ۱۲

### \* IMPORTANT! \*

If you have had to move house recently as a result of redevelopment, you may be able to claim compensation. (If you lived at that address for the previous five years.) This will be between £150 and £1,500. CLAIMS MUST BE MADE BY 23rd Nov. If you think you may be eligible contact the City Estates Dept. immediately, or call at one of the Housing Advice Centres - the Lane or Balsall Heath Association. Addresses above.

## What's Coming on Television

On 14th November at 10.15 p.m. the Balsall Heath Community School, St. Paul's Nursery and the Malvern St. Adventure Playground will all be featured in a T.V. film 'The Changelings'. This will be shown on B.B.C.2. We hope that any readers who see the programme will write in and tell us if they have any comments, criticisms, etc.

### PLAYGROUND KIDS AT CAMP IN SHROPSHIRE



## photos

Prints of any of the photographs published in the Heathan can be purchased from us at low cost. Please write or call Mike at 120, St. Paul's Rd. to give your order! They can be printed to larger sizes than the published photos.



news from  
Malvern St.

# PLAYGROUND

## great holiday

We hope you all enjoyed your summer holidays on the playground. About 800 of you, children and adults, visited us in Malvern Street or came on trips with us, making it the best year so far. The biggest events were the film show in the hut, the outings to Sutton Park and Coombe Abbey Park, and the Asian Festival evening when an Indian group entertained us. There was also the trip to the circus, the swimming, the ice-skating, and of course, the continuous play-time in the playground. The Summer Fair was a great success, thanks to all the people who came and all the people who helped. We must say a BIG THANK YOU to everyone who gave time to help with any of the summer programme. See you all at the Bonfire! Rob & Rob.



Taking to the trees at camp in Shropshire.

## skating

Mike is still taking people skating on Saturday mornings—see him at the playground if you want to go.

**CROSSWORD SOLUTION** ACROSS. 1. Balsall Heath. 11. B.E.A. 12. Glaucoma. 13. Sep. 14. Ned. 15. Own. 16. Body. 17. Heathen. 21. Man. 23. Duo. 24. Crown. 26. Neck. 29. Limes. 31. He. 32. The Lane. 33. Yes. 34. Barnabas. 35. Sex. DOWN. 2. All. 3. Learn. 4. Scum. 5. Lion. 6. Lament. 7. Head. 8. Abscond. 9. Tea. 10. Happy House. 12. Grosvenor. 18. E.E.C. 19. Air. 20. Hawleys. 25. Mile. 27. Char. 28. Keen. 30. Mass. 32. Tab.

**COMPETITION!** Make up a crossword with local interest. We will pay £1 for each one printed.

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at Malvern St. Playground

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In aid of the HAPPY HOUSE & Malvern St PLAYGROUND

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We had a Build-a-Den competition!



## BONFIRE NIGHT



The Playground's Bonfire Night Party will be held on Saturday 3rd November in the evening. The site will be the one by the railway line in MALVERN STREET. There will be a GRAND FIREWORK DISPLAY, a raffle, and REFRESHMENTS. We hope to see hundreds of you-kids, parents, and friends there. Everyone is welcome.

### UNCLAIMED RAFFLE PRIZES

There are three raffle prizes still unclaimed from the Summer Fair in August. These are as follows: 202 GV9357 Green (Initials F.H.) 28 ES6652 Pink (Initials V.C.) 30 KT1849 Green (Initials M.L.)

If anyone has these tickets, or had them and still has the right initials (!) please claim at once from 22, Brunswick Road.

Darts competition at the Summer Fair.



## Making the "Adventure" STARTING OUT

An article by Ted Wright.

A plot of land...A derelict site...A 'bombed' patch. That's where it all began. Well, that's

not quite the truth of it: Once upon a time, the Balsall Heath Association (that's our parent body) had its office in 66, Varne Rd, right in the thick of an 'area of ill-repute'. Gathered there from time to time were a number of folk of all kinds, creeds and professions. The common bond between them was CARE. They cared about all sorts of things which afflicted us as only people living in a 'twilight zone' can be afflicted.

(Cont. over)



Oh yes, I know that people everywhere have problems. The difference, I would plead, is that the 'twilight zones' have more of 'em, more intensive-ly.

One of the areas of need that we cared about was children and play-provision. From the talk in the B.H.A. committee, and from the inspired actions of a smaller number led by our paid worker at the time, Diane Burke, an adventure-type playground grew in the extra-large back garden attached to 66, Varna Rd! The actual construction was carried out by a work-party from ToCH.

## BIGGER & BETTER

The urge for GREATER things didn't die. We wanted a 'proper' adventure playground. At the centre of the continuing struggle for this objective were George Humphreys (then Head of Clifton Rd school), Trevor Rowe (minister of Moseley Rd Methodist church), and the late Rev. Alan Wright (minister of the Moravian Church). There were other interested helpers, and perhaps they will understand if we do not mention them all.

During 1967 the argument became a public one. Cllr. Eric Collins, who was a member of the B.H.A. at the time, presented a petition on behalf of local people to "convert part of the open site in Malvern St. to a children's playground". In March 1967 a public meeting was held (sponsored by the B.H.A.), to "Discuss the possible use of a site in Malvern St. as: Open Space? A Quiet Corner? A Car Park? A Playground? Or Perhaps a Bit of Each!"

A good discussion took place, during which we learned that the land was not scheduled either for re-building houses or for light industry. The one remaining fear was that a private developer might get it. Our advisers couldn't clear up that doubt.

To cut a long story short; the meeting concluded by resolving that: "A children's playground, an open green, or quiet place and a school gardening area be provided within this site."

## STAKING THE CLAIM

And so the effort continued, moving now into the 'corridors of power' at the Council House. At last a piece of land was given into our care during 1969. The lease, giving the B.H.A. Trustees 'the plot' is dated May 1st 1970 to run for seven years therefrom. There will be those who argue that THAT is where it really all began-but I would refute that, and now you know why!

From there, the story moves from one struggle to another. As one problem is solved, there is yet one more to confront. Having got our little plot of 'God's earth', what to do with it? There were many plans-but plans stay just plans without MONEY. Then-what about staffing the place? More discussions, more designs, but still no money!

## DOING THE MONEY

...A. through its full-time worker got to grips with the problem. After Diane there was Margaret Parker, soon to be followed by Dick Empson. The latter has carried the largest burden of this problem through to our latest success in the Urban Aid Stakes. (That we survived in the early days was due to various private trusts and donors who gave us money.) In Phase 8 of the Urban Aid programme we were granted £4000 for capital works inside and outside at the playground. We were not immediately successful in our application-that we eventually did get all that money was due to the efforts of Dick Empson who tried again after we had been turned down once. We were allocated this £4000 back in Oct-Nov 1972.

Still another problem, though! The money was urgently needed for development of both the hut and the site-but although some of the work has been done, it is painfully slow reaching completion. Let me give a prime example of the kind of thing that is enough to drive me up the wall:- we have a very substantial hut on the playground, supplied by a very well-known firm. It had the usual cladding for this type of building-namely asbestos moulded sheets. Fine-provided the vandals and the playground children don't find out that asbestos cracks and splits delightfully under the impact of various missiles. But they DO, of course. So we went into a huddle. Eureka! We had it-steel proofed with plastic. We put the job in hand with the same well-known firm. But they didn't come themselves-they sent a couple of sub-contractors who had never fitted the stuff before. The rain keeps coming in....

I could give you more examples, but there isn't the

space. Fortunately there is another side to the coin of our tales of woe with sub-sub-contractors. Some of our extension work has been done by direct labour via the City Parks Dept. Now THAT work is a joy to behold.

I'll just conclude this part of our story by telling our readers that we have recently learned that we have been successful in Phase 9 of Urban Aid. We don't know yet how much we'll get.

## STAFFING THE PLAYGROUND

Our first year was carried through by the first paid playleader, Ray Wills. A very difficult year it was, too! All he had was a piece of land-mostly mud-and a brief to get on with it! The hut soon followed, of course. The next period of development was seen through by Rob Wheway, one of our present leaders, who came in 1971. He was joined by an assistant in the person of Rob McCann in 1972.

## FOR THE FUTURE .....

In these last paragraphs I want to talk a bit about the politics of our playground. By 'politics' I mean the form of control and the use of facilities.

From the outset the playground has been 'managed' by a sub-committee of the B.H.A.'s Management Committee. The leaders are employed by the B.H.A. but 'managed' by the sub-committee.

Two main problems arose from time to time, from these arrangements. First, communications between B.H.A., sub-committee and leaders sometimes became snagged up. Second, the centre of B.H.A. interest began to shift to other fields-and as a result the work load on their office has grown. These problems were put to the B.H.A. Annual General Meeting in 1972, and it resolved "To set up an Association with specific responsibility for the playground in association with the B.H.A." In May 1973 the Malvern St. Adventure Playground Association was born.

While these developments were taking place in B.H.A. affairs, a new venture was starting in our immediate vicinity. One which struck me, in the early references at any rate, as another 66, Varna Rd. in embryo. This new venture is based in St. Paul's Rd, and in its early form offered 'open house' to any who cared to look in. From this, the Free School has grown.

In addition to this venture there was already a Day Nursery in St. Paul's Church Hall-which had close links with the Community House/Free School. To me, this whole picture had a happy logic to it. The three 'bits' could very easily come closer together under one umbrella, if the various controlling interests were so minded. Thus pooling whatever resources and skills they had for the service of the area in which we all work. (This lies roughly though not exclusively between them.) It seems to me, therefore, that given the movement within the B.H.A. (i.e. both the apparent change in its aims, and the change in its geographical base) and the links between the three community projects I have mentioned, it is logical for the three of us to come together in a closer association. This would lead eventually to one entity which would seek its own legal and charitable status.

If we now consider the latest move made by decision at our management committee meeting on Sept 20th it will be appreciated how rapidly and how far we have moved in the direction indicated. We decided to merge activities formerly centred in the 'Happy House' with playground activities. A practical effect will be that facilities in the hut will be used more fully during the daytime. Another practical effect will be that Community House staff will join the two playleaders actually on the site-which means more adult guidance and care more often than we could manage with just Rob Wheway and Rob McCann.

It is not just the playground which will benefit-the Free School will also gain in being able to use ready-made facilities. We are all on the same road. But perhaps there could be snags... The three bodies have different management structures, and although this might not mean acute problems, in the short run it can certainly bring differences of approach to decisions, and different attitudes to difficulties.

To conclude: I believe that these changes may lead to an exciting new era of community service and community participation-such as we have not seen in Balsall Heath since the days of Percy Shurmer, M.P. and that was a very long time ago!



# from the COMMUNITY SCHOOL

## FIRE

The flames jumped high and low  
Dancing to and fro  
Leaping about from chair to chair  
While the flames bellowed into the air.

Our matches having done the trick  
Made us stand back a bit.  
When the wood began to catch fire  
The flames rose higher and higher.

When the flames began to die  
Goody, Noel and I began to sigh.  
When gone were the flames,  
All that was left was the furniture frames.

A. McGee.

## A MATTER OF RACK AND RUIN

Before:  
Care arriving, doors opening, and out step little children. Happy, carefree, smiling little children. Rosy red cheeks and beams of happiness as they scrunched up the path to St. Paul's Nursery. Inside, the shouts and laughter of happy children at play; building with bricks, playing with model cars, jigsaws. The little girls with dolls and aprons, playing mother. An atmosphere one can't help loving. Who would want to spoil all this?

After:  
Now the building old, looking faceless. No laughter, no happiness, just gloom. Desolate, deserted, not worth bothering about. No more.

Once an atmosphere of happiness, now prison-like walls and boarded-up windows.  
I could pass it by without a second look.  
As I walk round to the backyard where children used to play in the sun, I see scattered papers blowing in a cold, hard wind.

No echo of children's voices. Just the gloom and worthlessness of an old has-been building.

T. Doyle.

## Holiday break

The Community School and the Adventure playground have organised many holidays and day trips for our neighbourhood children. But the coach trip to Blackpool was the adults' turn!

We had a tremendous response to the idea. Three weeks before we went, we had two raffles and a Bingo flyer which went towards buying a drink, crisps and cigs. We brought some old age pensioners with us. We boarded the coach at the Community School at 5 p.m. on Saturday October 6th. We played Bingo on the coach journey, and stopped about half-way before we got to Blackpool at a pub for a drink.

When we arrived at Blackpool friends left in groups to enjoy themselves in their own way, as everyone has different ways of enjoying themselves. Some went to amusement arcades, others to pubs, and another group went to the fun fair. We had arranged to meet in the coach park at 11.45 p.m. When we arrived back everyone was tired but happy. We had all enjoyed ourselves very much, and I'm sure I speak for everyone pensioners included, when I say we had a lovely time. On the way back we had a sing-song and a lovely end to a lovely day.  
Mrs. Johanna O'Brien.

## PEACEFUL

It was quite a cold day when we got to the place where we set off on our boat trip, which was called Wooten Waven.

We saw our boats moored up against the bank, and out of all, the boys' boat looked the best. It was called Samantha and was orange and white in colour. The girls' boat looked the worst—it was just like a tent on top of a boat. It was called Gina. The kitchen boat was called Twill Dhu. In this boat there were two cooks and a sink. The skipper's boat was the best of all and it also had a sink and a cooker. The skipper had the boat all to himself. It was called Tally Ho, and it was the easiest boat to steer I think, because the steering was as sharp as a car's. The most difficult boats to steer were Gina and Samantha because it took at



least 15 seconds for them to react after you had turned the wheel. And in Gina you had to turn the wheel the opposite way to the way you wanted to go — as well as not being able to see, for the tent blocking your way.  
The skipper's name was Alan. We didn't like him very much. He seemed to keep himself to himself and would not even eat with us. And he was always telling us to do work which he said was important but he never seemed to do it himself.  
The first canal we went up was the Stratford on Avon stretch. We had to open and close 19 locks before we finished for that night. Just imagine—we had to open 19 twelve foot high oak and metal gates all through the day. I can assure you it's pretty hard work.

But at the end of a fantastically hard working day as usual there was a PUB. In fact, everywhere we stopped there was a PUB. And the adults hurried off...  
The best laugh was at night, when everyone was so-called 'settled down'. Well, the adults settled down but we weren't—not for a few hours yet, anyway! We were merely telling ghost stories and jokes. Well, back to the plot, as a professional writer would say. (All authors are mad, so they say, and I'm not surprised. Here's me, slaving away on this typewriter and all you have to do is sit back and read this great piece of work by me.) Oh well, back to the plot for the second time. In the end we slept on the towpath, which we did for the rest of the trip except for the last night, when they got so fed up with us shouting at 4.0 a.m. that they gave us a tent each and stuck us out about a mile from where they were moored up and sleeping.

Typed, gage and brainwork by Thomas Whiteley. Punctuation by, wait for it, yes folks, our heroine, Anita. The characters appearing in this story were Gizzie O'Gunter, Brian Johnson, Terry Tebo, Marie Glenholmes, Mary Donnelly, Janet Doyle, Barbara Chamberlayne and of course, the ever-faithful Thomas Whiteley.



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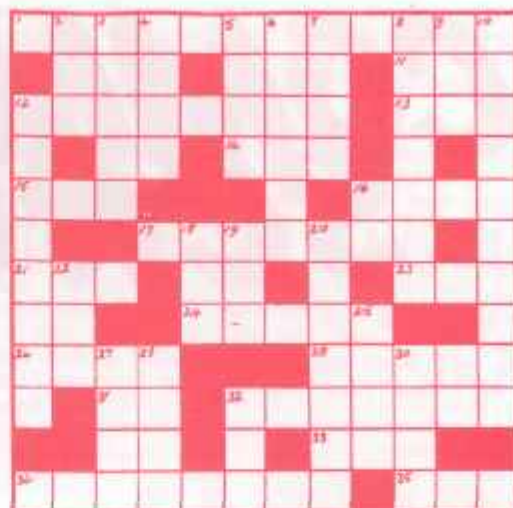
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### DOWN

- 2 Total (3)
- 3 Understand (5)
- 4 Dirt (4)
- 5 King of the beasts (4)
- 6 Regret (6)
- 7 Pats (4)
- 8 Run away (7)
- 9 Afternoon meal (3)
- 10 Community house on St Paul's Rd. (5-5)
- 12 Avenue off of Oldfield Rd. (8)
- 18 European Economic Community (3)

### ACROSS

- 1 Part of B'Ham. (7-5)
- 11 British European Airlines (3)
- 12 Eye Disease (8)
- 13 Weaken (3)
- 14 Boy's name (3)
- 15 Possess (3)
- 16 Corpse (4)
- 17 Local newspaper (7)
- 21 Male (3)
- 23 Latin number two (3)
- 24 Pub on St. Paul's Rd. (5)
- 26 Head holder (4)
- 29 Citrus fruits (5)
- 31 Personal pronoun (2)
- 32 Original name for Ladypool Road (3-4)
- 33 Affirmative reply (3)
- 34 Church on Ladypool Rd (8)
- 35 Gender (3)
- 19 Gas (3)
- 20 Bakery Company (7)
- 22 Beer (3)
- 25 River in Egypt (4)
- 27 Does she clean? (4)
- 28 Enthusiastic (4)
- 30 Quantity (4)
- 32 Label (3)

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DETAILS OF OUR  
CROSSWORD  
COMPETITION  
ON  
**Page 4**

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