

the Heathman

Published by.....
Balsall Heath Community School

N^o5 4p December 1974.

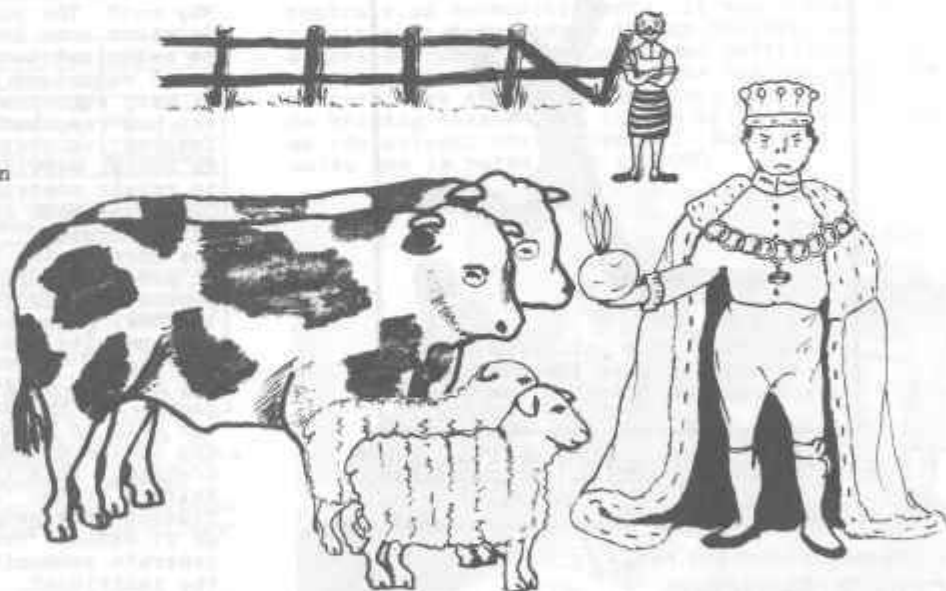
HAPPY CHRISTMAS - NOW AND THEN.

WE SEND ALL OUR READERS THE SEASON'S GREETINGS, AND WISH THEM A HAPPY NEW YEAR. WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO LOOK AT SOME THINGS WHICH WERE HAPPENING IN THE AREA AT CHRISTMAS 150 YEARS AGO AND 50 YEARS AGO.

Food for thought

'William Thomas, Butcher, of Digbeth...Begg leave to inform his Friends and the Public in General that his Christmas show of meat will be ready for inspection this day, and flatters himself he shall be able to convince them of the impossibility of there being any superior to it in the town of Birmingham. William Thomas has slaughtered two Bulls of the real Scotch Breed, fed by the Rt.Hon. the Earl of Aylesford on Grass and Swedish Turnips only; likewise two Sheep bred and fed by the above Nobleman, the whole of which he thinks cannot be equalled by anything of the kind in the Kingdom.'

(From the Birmingham Chronicle & Advertiser, 1824.)



Heal thyself

'A gentleman who styles himself 'Doctor' has advertised a medicine for restoring 'lost appetite' which he kindly promises to distribute 'gratis' to the poor. We imagine he would extend his 'kindness' much further and far more beneficially if he would at the same time present them with something to eat.'

(1824.)

comfort this winter

'At this critical season, when children are teething, they suffer more pain than at any other time of the year, very few escaping convulsions. It is particularly requested that every mother and nurse that has young children not be without the American Soothing Syrup. From 9-11 a.m. every Tuesday and Wed-

nesday till March Mrs. Johnson will give bottles of this to those in need. Out of hours she will supply the medicine if a letter is brought from a respectable housekeeper, showing that the applicants are real objects of charity. Mrs. Johnson hopes at the same time that so great a charity will not be abused, as it is entirely out of her own pocket. She trusts that those who can afford to buy will not injure the poor by obtaining what is intended for their relief. Proprietors of the medicine are Johnson & Co. at 2/2d per bottle!

(1824.)

each to all the 112 occupants of the almshouses, who are principally widows. We cannot too much commend this excellent charity; perhaps, comparing the utility with the means available, it may be considered that the almshouses are unequalled; certainly there is no institution so eagerly sought after by those for whose benefit it is designed. It has been the custom not to admit men under 70 years of age. They receive quarterly 5 shillings each, but at this season of the year the Trustees have thought it right to double the amount.'

(1824.)

Sweet Charity

'On behalf of Lench's Charity the Low Bailiff of the Town distributed a gratuity of 10 shillings

Fifty years ago

The Birmingham Mail's Christmas Tree Fund was started about 85 years ago. The original idea was to raise money for a Christmas tree for the Children's Hos-

(Continued from Page 1.)

pital, and gifts to put round it. By 1924 the sum raised had gone up from the £4 which was collected when the Fund first started to £13,807. This compares pretty well with 1974's £21,000 if we remember (and who can forget?) the difference in the value of money.

In 1924 the 'aged, poor and needy' were provided with a Christmas dinner out of the Fund. 12,500 people each received 4lbs of potatoes, 1lb sugar, 1lb tea, 2 loaves and a joint of meat each. There was also a distribution of gifts of shoes and clothes.

It is only recently that the Fund has stopped giving Christmas dinners. Shoes and clothes will again be given to some children this year, but for the last time. The new policy for the Fund will be to give gifts of money only - mainly to the elderly and the handicapped, though a smaller sum will go to children and needy families still.



The Heathan Needs...

INFORMATION

about local events, news, clubs, organisations, etc.

CONTRIBUTIONS

of any kind from local people. Stories, drawings, letters, crosswords, photos, etc., etc., from anyone of any age. Phone us at 440-4376, or call/write 120, St. Paul's Rd.

The Heathan is published by the Community School and edited by Anita Halliday. It is financed entirely by money from sales and advertisements but does not make a profit. Photos are mostly by Mike Dunkley and the Community School pupils. Copies of the photos can be bought cheaply from the School. The Editor thanks Liz Mackie, Bridget Macrae, Carolyn Parish and all the named contributors, without whom there would be no paper! Many thanks also to Mick Turner.

**Service
to
Advertisers**

RATES: £1.25 per large col. inch (£1 for 3 issues or more.)
Special rates 1 page.
PHONE: 440-4376.
Personal Attention.

EDITORIAL

At last St. Paul's Day Care Centre is back in the old church hall at the Moseley Rd. end of St. Paul's Rd. It's been a hard, long fight since the nursery was evicted from the hall - now one and a half years ago. Then, it seemed, 60 children were to be sacrificed for an office block.

But the Council were eventually persuaded by local pressure to buy the hall, so that the nursery could return. Sixty children and many families are better off because of it. The Nursery staff, the parents and the Management Committee are very grateful to all these local people who helped in the long battle, as well as to the Social Services section of the Council who agreed to the request that the hall be bought.

All our readers will no doubt be very glad to hear that the nursery now looks better than ever - fast work by the staff and others as soon as they were given permission to move back in. The Heathan, and we are sure, its readers, wish the nursery and its staff well for the future. All those who helped with the removals and renovation work - staff, parents, Community School kids, and, of course, the Public Works Dept. - are to be warmly congratulated on their magnificent efforts.

OUTSTANDING QUESTION.

A major question about the Hall remains. Is the Hall to be used as a Community Centre, as those involved in the campaign to get the Council to buy it suggested? Or will it become just a branch of Social Services? The local campaign, spearheaded by nursery staff and the Balsall Heath Association asked that as well as housing the nursery, the hall should be used as a social and educational centre for the community. **THIS SECOND REQUEST HAS NOT YET BEEN GRANTED.**

Why not? The purchase of the hall cost Social Services some £40,000. You can see why they may be reluctant to rent it out, with no strings, to local voluntary organisations. They would need to be very sure that its management was very competent and responsible before they could take that imaginative step.

So Social Services have chosen, for the time being, to retain control of the hall, though a Management Committee with strong local representation is being formed.

The nursery, the Balsall Heath Association and other potential users of the hall hope that over a period of time the Committee will make sure that the hall does become a proper centre for the local community, and not just an offshoot of Social Services.

Why is this question so important? Because a centre run by Social Services, however good it is, can only do things FOR people. The client has no say in the diagnosis or treatment of his or her problem. This is one of the difficulties of the Welfare State. It takes responsibility and confidence from people by providing for their needs as it defines them. It does not support or regenerate communities, but artificially props up the individual. People learn NOT to rely on themselves, but on officialdom. A Social Services centre would not belong to Balsall Heath. People would not identify with it, or use it adequately. A local centre WOULD be used by people because it would belong to them. It would encourage self-help and be an important focal point for truly community-based activities.

COULD BE GREAT!

Which kind of centre will we get? That depends on which kind the people of Balsall Heath want. For if local people start to use it and show they can manage it responsibly, then the request that it should be handed over to a local committee will make practical sense.

What a centre it could be! The nursery would be there by day, then it could be full of life and bustle again in the evenings and at weekends. It could be a place for kids some evenings - a youth club and a disco. On other occasions it could be a place for adults - for Keep Fit, Bingo, an old people's club. It could have a licensed bar and be a place for festivals and celebrations as well as jumble sales, meetings and the odd play or film. A place too, for anyone in trouble, or with a problem, to turn to for help. A place for the community to benefit from and enjoy. A place to make Balsall Heath that bit better off.

from
the

COMMUNITY SCHOOL

School Reports-

L.

The School is now one and a half years old. There are 12 pupils now, and three more are due in January. All five of the original kids are still there - three will be old enough to leave in the summer, but we hope they will choose to stay on. The amount and quality of the work done has increased steadily. The standards are high. The oldest children are looking forward to taking C.S.E. exams, and the School has now been registered as an exam centre. The School started in one house. Since then, a second one has been added. With help from the children, the two Community School teachers did up a vandalised house, which the Housing Dept. then rented to the project. So there are now separate rooms for History, French and German, Maths., English and Geography, Photography, Art and Craft, Sewing, and Cookery, as well as three rooms for general use with snooker, chess, darts and other games, and a kitchen for tea and coffee. All in all we think the space is used well and there is a pleasant, industrious, family atmosphere. Many people have asked us about our timetable, so here it is:

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9.0.	MEET & GET READY FOR LESSONS.				
9.15	ENGLISH	FRENCH	ENGLISH	CRAFT	FRENCH Private Study
10.15	HISTORY	MATHS.	FRENCH	ENGLISH	CRAFT
11.15	COFFEE BREAK				
11.30	MATHS.	HISTORY	FRENCH	ENGLISH	CRAFT
12.30	LUNCH				
1.30	SEWING, COOKERY	SPORT	HISTORY	MATHS.	GEOG.
2.30	COOKERY, SEWING	SPORT	MATHS.	HISTORY	SCIENCE
3.30	GAMES, EXTRA PRIVATE STUDY, VISITORS, ETC.				

Ada McGee's report, next to this one, shows how well the School is doing now - though there's plenty of scope for development. (Incidentally, we took up his suggestion on lateness and absence.) If you'd like to visit us on a Friday afternoon between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., this is the time when we welcome visitors. We'll be especially glad of any offers of help of any kind.

The Workers

There are still only two full-time workers (Mike and Dick), who are helped by Anita, who has another job elsewhere, and Janet, who has a job as well. After Christmas a third person will be working full-time at the School. We hope Paul will become a permanent member of staff. He's a specialist in Art, Craft, Woodwork and Metalwork. In addition to the work of the school day, a range of community activities are also organised - this paper is one project which takes up quite a lot of time. Community Bingo, Jubilee Sales (one coming up in early February!), Holidays away from home, and informal advice, are others.

Management Committee

The School's Management Committee is made up of some teachers, other adults from the area, and one Head Teacher from another school. It has worked well for nearly a year now, and is a great help to the workers at the school. The children's parents are well satisfied that their children are getting a better education than they did in their old schools. They play their part in this, by sitting on the Committee. The school has proved that it can excite the interest of the kids by teaching them in the setting of their family, and



community, and by giving them confidence in their abilities and widening their horizons.

Future Developments

The Management Committee would like the project to expand. Four full-time workers are needed to concentrate on the teaching, and two more to concentrate on community work. It would then be possible to take nearly thirty children and offer a greater range of subjects, and activities. For example, we could then bring the Heathen out once a month, take even more kids away on holidays, put on evening classes and other activities, and open an educational advice centre. But to do all this we've got to raise over £12,000.



Praise Indeed!

The School has its own Inspector. He's been to look at us three times and is coming again in December. The Chief Inspector for Birmingham has also been. Both men praised the School and suggested appeals to charities for financial aid. Also, the Local Education Authority recently agreed to support the school in principle by providing school meals from its Queensbridge kitchen. This is the start of what we hope will be a mutually beneficial relationship. These are still early days. A lot of hard work and development needs to take place before we can be really satisfied. But there is no doubt that the school has got off to a really good start.

An Illustration

We think that something about the way the school is developing can be seen in the attitudes expressed in a piece of group work done in an English lesson by 5 of the kids. It was stimulated by a Birmingham Young Volunteers poster which carried a photo of one of the children. It was also in-

fluenced by The Wailers' record, 'Burning'. The poster was titled, 'There must be something you can do to help children like this.' The five kids called their answer, 'There must be something we can do to help people like you.' They said:

The other day, we saw a poster. It appealed for volunteers to help kids like us. The picture showed one of us, and a couple of other kids, standing against a vandalised house. One of the kids had been wearing his good jacket that day - but the photographer had told him to take it off. The one he gave him in its place had holes in it and was dirty.

The words on the poster suggested that Balsall Heath was a slum, our homes were poor and that kids like us were deprived and delinquent, and in need of help. This made us feel ashamed and angry. Wouldn't you be, if you'd been in that photo?

We know what they say about kids who live in Balsall Heath, but the poster told only half the story. We come from good homes, and Balsall Heath is not a slum. But our mums do have a hard job feeding and clothing us and our dads have to work long hours at jobs which are often boring and dirty. But we're proud of our families and we want them to be proud of us - and of Balsall Heath. We want things to be better.

Our old schools were too big, and we felt lost there. They said we were failures, and we even thought maybe they were right. We didn't bother, and no-one cared much. Now we go to the Community School. They don't think we are failures there. They like us as we are. We try to work though we don't always manage it. We're learning to better ourselves, and we want to make Balsall Heath a better place to live.

Pass it On!

We're working for our rights now, though we're not sure what they are. So, out of our way poster-maker. Half the story has never been told. Listen to what we have to say - maybe we can help you.

"Be not selfish in you doings

Pass it on.

Help your brothers in their needs

Pass it on.

Live for yourself and you'll live

in vain,

Live for others

You will live again.

In the kingdom of Jah.

Man shall reign -

Pass it on,

Pass it on."

Report by Dick Atkinson.

2.

PUPIL'S VIEW, BY ADRIAN MCGEE.

The school was once called the Free School. There is one word which was a big mistake. The word is FREE. We thought we could do without rules, but it didn't work. The word freedom means freedom from life and freedom from rules. We found we couldn't live without rules.

On one occasion no-one wanted to wash up after dinner. We then had to make a rule saying whose turn it was. You can't do free washing up. It's got to be done.

To sum it up, we decided to call it the Community School. This is a big change, though it may not look one. Community is a group of people who run the school. This community is most of the people in Balsall Heath. I think the school is much better this way.

I think the school has got better partly because we work. Some of this is for C.S.E. This gives me a better chance in life. I'm also certain I'll get a good reference from my teachers. There have been other improvements. The rooms are heated better, and the kitchen and cooking room have been done pretty well. The rules I would make

are most of the ones we already have - but I'd like to make a few hard ones on any lates or absents. If someone comes an hour late, they should stay on an hour after school... or do homework on the lesson missed.

I think we should have a few more kids, because it will liven the school up more. A year ago we used to mess about. But we work now, and when these new kids come they will see us work and follow us. I don't think we should have too many, because we need money and more would slow down the pace of the school.

I'm glad I'm not at my old school because it was too big. You couldn't get to know the teachers. I couldn't settle down to work, because there used always to be someone messing about in the class. There are only two reasons why I miss my old school. They've got equipment for lessons, and I'd like to be playing for the football team.

I think it's quite enjoyable to be a teacher at the community school. It's got to be or else the teachers wouldn't be wasting their lives here. I'd like to see two more teachers at the school. I'd like to see more subjects. We do cooking. I like cooking and when I've finished I feel proud of what I've made. I would like to be able to do metalwork and woodwork - they'll come in handy when I'm older.



TIM, PARENTS AND POLICE

If the police ever got Tim,
His Mum would say, "Have him."
One day they did.
His Dad said, "We're well rid."
Tim would rather see a cell
Than his parents, who mean Hell.
When Tim got home
His parents would moan.
Poor old Tim.
I wouldn't like to tell you
What they did to him.

Adrian McGee.

GEORGE. No.1

It was raining when George finally left the Brewer's Arms. There was a distinct aroma of Guinness on his old breath. He hurried over to a shop doorway for shelter, and as he looked up into the night, he saw that it was a full moon. Directly opposite was the church hall. As he looked at the roof he saw a cat outlined against the night skyline.

"Brrr!" he murmured as he clapped his hands. He looked over at the park. It would be colder still over there, and he'd be disturbed by the park-keeper.

Soon he was sleeping soundly, curled up in a ball in the laundrette in Ladypool Rd. The cockroaches which had come out to feed on the rubbish of the day were crawling over his old tattered coat. George felt a movement on his face and immediately woke. He jumped up and brushed them off.

"Ugh," he said, "I'm not staying here with these." But even if George had wanted to stay, he couldn't have. For at that moment a policeman had come in.

"Excuse me, sir. But would you mind telling me what you're doing here at 3.30 in the morning?" George thought for a moment, then said hesitantly, "I've been locked out." "Locked out? Locked out? What do you mean, locked out?"

"Well, it's like this, see. I was late getting back home from the pub, and when my daughter was in bed when I got home, I didn't want to wake her."

George prayed the policeman would believe this story because he didn't want to go to the police station and go through the tedious rigmarole that he knew so well...

"Would you please get into the car."

Once in the car, the policeman asked all manner of questions. Finally, "Where do you live, then?" George gulped. He had what they call down at the police station, 'N.P.A.' He thought hard.

"45, Princess Rd.," he said. "Hey, that's miles away," said the policeman. "Yes I know. But that's where I live."

The policeman started the car and drove off. Half an hour later they finally reached the place. The policeman got out of the car. He drew his truncheon and gave three sharp raps on the door. After a few moments the hall light came on and the front door opened.

"Dad! Whatever are you doing here? And with the law!" "Well, I didn't like to wake you, love", George said to his daughter. "You what?"

"I think," said the policeman, "You'd better let me explain." "Yes, perhaps you'd better."

So they all went inside, and the policeman said his piece, "and that's where I found him," he finished.

"Dad, you should have knocked," said George's daughter, finally twigging, and covering up for him.

"Well, I'll be off then," said the policeman. "But there's just one thing. How come you got so far away from home?"

George thought. "Maybe I sleepwalk," he said.

GEORGE. No.2

"Clear off."

"Ouch. You ****. What was that for?"

"That's the price you pay for taking things that don't belong to you."

"Oh my God," said George, under his breath, "You're all the same. Just because I want to borrow a couple of bob, you think I'm trying to steal the shop."

"Go on, clear off. Go and get fumigated or something."

"I'm going. I'm going."

George walked off down the street with his head hung low and his back bent. "It's not fair," he muttered. "It's not fair. It's NOT BLOODY FAIR!" he roared at the top of his voice.

He turned round to see everyone just laughing at him. He ran back into the supermarket, pushing everyone out of his way, pulling down displays everywhere. As he went along his path of destruction he shouted, "It's not FAIR."

He was about to knock down a large pile of cans when he felt a vice-like grip on his hand.

"It's...it's...it's..." He turned, and his eyes feasted upon a sight which meant more to him than anything in the world. The Elixir of Life. Pints and pints of whisky.

Forgetting the consequences of what he was about to do he tugged free, ran to the display stand,

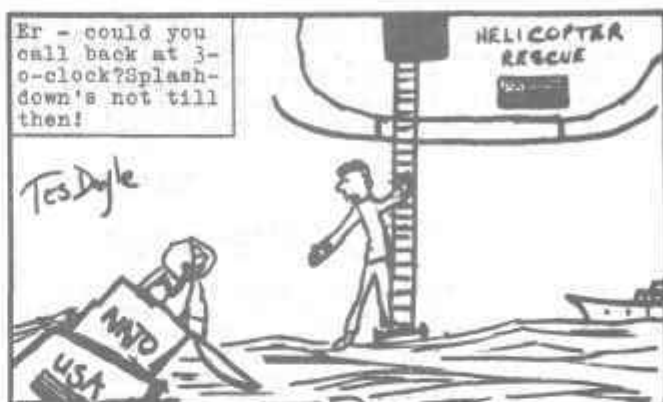
grabbed at least five bottles and rushed into the street— straight into the long arm of the law. (The manager had lost no time in phoning the police.)

"Hello, hello, hello.... What have we got here? A walking pub, is it? Or the story of how they just happened to fall into my arms?"

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

George is an imaginary figure who was first made up in an English lesson. I enjoyed writing about him so much that his name and the theme of the first story were made into a great many stories. Here are the first two of them. I hope that you enjoyed them, as much as I enjoyed writing them. George is an elderly man of about 60. He has an only child of 25; a daughter, who is married. He sees her but once a year, at Christmas. After his wife died George became a gentleman of the road to get away from the same routine way of life of society in general.

Thomas Whiteley.



my mind

My mind is full of tubes that go in and out like a nose.

My mind is my computer and guide.

My mind goes cold when I am thinking too hard.

My mind is split, it's three-quarters good and one quarter bad.

My mind is like New St. Station. The trains are impulses to other parts of my body.

My mind controls the extensive parts of my body.

My mind has a good memory for the bad things that happen but not for the good.

My mind dreams of what sometimes happens

My mind switches from mood to mood

My mind is my master.

Where would I be without it?

(Last time I said I would write some more about Scouts. But I'm quite pleased with this poem, so I'll tell you more about scouting another time.)

Kevin Teece.



Hockley Port-An Excerpt.

The narrow-boat which we went on was painted red and yellow, with black at the bottom. It was driven by an engine. We went under a bridge, and kept going into the bank and getting stuck in the bank. Water kept coming over the side. We had to get the pole out to push against the side. The water became very muddy.

I enjoyed it, but it made me very hungry.

Danna Brown.

An Accident

Me and my mate were walking down the road when, suddenly, a huge car smashed into a little Mini at great speed. My friend ran off, because he was so shocked. I was very, very nervous. But I kept my cool.

There was an awful mess in the road. But, surprisingly, neither of the drivers was hurt. A nice lady made them both a cup of tea. Surprisingly, too, the men weren't arguing or anything like that. They kept THEIR cool - which was the best way to be.

The driver of the Mini was a very nice man, (both of them were, really) and he kept trying to blame himself, when it had been the other man's fault. A policeman came running over, and started asking all sorts of questions. Then a relative of one of the drivers came up.

She said, "Are you alright?"

"Yes, dear. I'm O.K.," the driver replied.

So, the policeman called for some help, and the two drivers got into a police car. They were taken away somewhere. But the Press were around by now. They were asking people what had happened. But the people who had watched and helped just started to walk away. So did I.

Goody Amoo.

One Friday Afternoon

On Friday afternoons Danna, David, Jackie and I usually do cooking in 112 on our own, because Mike and Dick have to be in 121 with the others. On this day we left the front door open, and we suddenly heard someone creeping up the stairs. We thought it was our teacher. Then Danna said, "It can't be Dick or Mike. They have to be with the others."

Then I said, "Let's go and have a look."

David said, "Let's all go up."

David went first, then Danna, me and Jackie. The man was in the English room.

"There's a man in there," said David, "He's picking up all the books."

Danna said, "Let's go in."

As we did, he turned very fast. He was holding some of our books. We asked him who he was, and he said in a deep voice, "I'm an Inspector."

I said to David, "He's looking at the gas fires."

Danna said, "Let's look at your identification."

The man put the books down, put his hand in his pocket, then said, "I've left it in my other coat." David said, "You're an impostor." He turned to me.

"Go and fetch Dick and Mike."

I was as quick as I could be.

Dick said, "I'm going to phone the police."

But the man got on his knees and said, "Please don't phone, please don't, I beg you."

Dick asked, "What did you want the books for?"

"I wanted to make a fire because I was cold."

Dick let him go, but told him he'd get into trouble if he came here again. The man thanked us and left. I felt sorry for him, but he went and we never saw him again.

Then Dick told us all, "Don't leave the door open when no-one is here with you."

We went downstairs and finished our cooking.

Sylvia Musgrove.

(Editor's Note. It is true that Mike and Dick are always trying to be in two houses at once on Friday afternoons, and six rooms at once in each. But this is an IMAGINARY event, and readers will be glad to know that the kids aren't left on their own, and strange men don't prowl about.)

bonfire night

I was not looking forward to Bonfire Night. But I went to the Playground because I had nothing to do.

The fire was half out when I got there. But it was still hot, and people were running about and some were standing looking at the fireworks.

I like bangers myself, and 'calling-all-cars.'

Girls like sparklers and Roman Candles.

There were hot dogs and potatoes, and soup and pop to eat and drink.

I think all the people enjoyed it. I'm glad I went, because all my friends were there.

Yunis Jan.

Getting wet

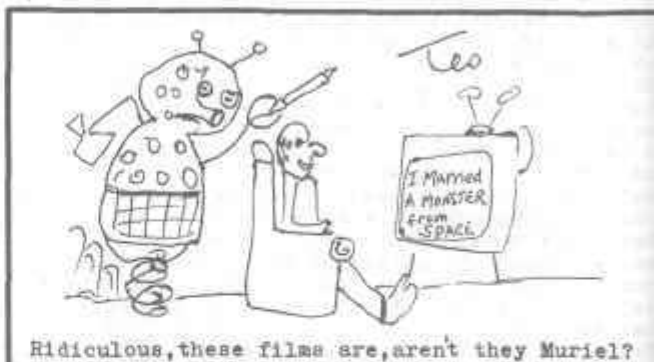
One day recently I went out to my friend's house for tea. It was a nice day. But, when I went home it started to rain. Yet I could not stop long, because I had told my mum that I'd be back soon to help in the house.

So, I went, and got wet. When I got home, my mum said, "Take those wet clothes off and dry your hair. I had a cup of tea and some biscuits. I soon felt nice and warm again."

Comment

It's all very well, but when you get married you soon have children, and the same thing day after day. A woman's work is never done. A man's work is finished when he gets home.

Jacqueline Johnson.



Ridiculous, these films are, aren't they Muriel?

STRAY CAT

The door opens slowly, silently. In comes a stray cat. It walks cautiously but stealthily over to the fire. (It is very cold outside.) It looks round the room, stares at me, then lies down. Not making a sound the cat twitches its whiskers. Seeing that he is not going to be bothered, he rests his head at last.

Jimoh Polarin.



Marooned

I moved swiftly across the hot rock with the boiling sweat trickling down my aching forehead. I gazed out to sea, where the lashing waves beat like giant fists against the sandy, dust-filled beaches. My eyes focussed on a small pool on the beach where the tide had gone out. A small piece of driftwood floated in the pool, bumping off the side of an almost non-existent breeze. Its solitary state reminded me of how lonely I felt. I had not found a single person since regaining consciousness after the crash.

The rocks on which I stood weren't very high, so I jumped off, landing on the beach, spraying sand in all directions. I stood up and looked around. I cupped my hands over my mouth:

"Hello. Hellooooo..."

There was no reply, save the gushing of the sea. Often, when I had read books like 'Robinson Crusoe' and 'Treasure Island', the thought of being stranded on an island had seemed exciting. But now the thought of being alone made me almost cry with rage.

I kicked the sand in frustration, and stubbed my toe.

"God damn it!"

I soothed my toe in the pool and looked thoughtfully at my reflection. I was a mess. My hair was straggled, my clothes torn, and my face beet-root-red.

I thought of building a boat, but the sun was so hot. Anyway, it could wait till I was in the mood. I wiped the sweat from my eyes and paddled in the pool. The soft warm water enclosed my feet. It had a soothing effect.

Suddenly I yelled, and fell hard into the sand. Suspended from my big toe was an ugly-looking crab. I yanked it off and threw it violently into the pool. Then I began to massage my toe, which had gone a purply red colour.

"Hi! Hello."

I turned. There was another boy! He stood at the far end of the beach.

"Well! I thought, 'Perhaps there is hope after all.'"

Tes Doyle.

Pushed into Peril

During the summer holidays I went in a barge to Worcester. The first night, we moored up. Across the other side of the bank was an apple tree. So, me and my mate got a plank and rested it from the side of the barge to the bank.

We walked across the plank. I climbed the apple tree and stuffed my jumper with apples. I walked back across the plank quite easily. But then my mate tried to pull the plank back. It got caught. The only way was to lift it. So my mate got on the roof of the barge while I lifted the plank up to him. This was hard. While my weight was on the plank and, without my knowing, my mate had a sudden urge to twist the plank. Well, you can imagine what happened.

Yes, I fell into the water. Head first. When I realised what had happened I swam to the barge, but I lost all my apples except one. So I dried myself, got changed, and made the dinner. The rest of the day wasn't very exciting. But it had been a laugh!

Vincent Doyle.

NORFOLK



David strikes out - Pat nods off!

We went to Norfolk in two vans. We started out from the Happy House (Community School) at three o'clock.

The camp was like a youth hostel. There were bunk beds. They were soft, and we brought one blanket, and they provided the rest.

Every night the girls played it up. They banged on the walls and we could not get to sleep.

(Danna confirmed this in her story. She wrote, "When it was time to go to bed we made a lot of noise. Then Gill came in and said, 'Quiet down, you lot.' She put the light out and left. So, I got up and put it on again." Ed.)

Every morning we had breakfast of toast and corn-flakes. We then went swimming in the sea, and it tasted like salt, and the waves were coming in and going out each time. We had games of football and cricket before dinner. Then we'd play darts in the bedrooms and table-tennis in the hallway.

One day it was cold, and Dick and Mike made a fire on the beach. Then we went into town. There was an arcade, and I bought some rock. At night we played a guitar with Anita and we all sang. That

was how it was. It was very exciting in Norfolk. When we got back to Birmingham it was raining and we all felt a bit sad. I hope I can go again next year Dick.

David Musgrove.

Scene on the sea-shore

"Where's the deep end?" "Where's the END?"

"Where's the steps to get in?"

The Community School teachers, and Gill Southwell from the Nursery, who acted as leaders, couldn't keep up with the questions. Of course, a lot of the 51 kids who went on the three camps had been to the sea-side before. But a lot hadn't.

Despite their lack of familiarity with the sea, no-one was worried by it. In fact we were kept very busy stopping adventurous spirits from challenging the biggest waves, climbing the highest cliffs, and swimming impossible distances.

The kids couldn't be got away from the sea. Not that we really wanted to try, except when it got dark. The camp which we borrowed was a marvellous place, only a mile from that fascinating sea and endless sandy beaches. It had large rooms, splendid equipment, and stood in its own fields. You can see from Mike's photographs, and read in what David (who's at the School now) and Alistair (who was one of the kids from the area who are friends we meet 'outside' the School) have written, how much we all enjoyed ourselves.

Each party spent five days on holiday, though unfortunately we had to use a lot of time travelling. They were five days of intensive activity. We

walked miles, we visited Cromer and Yarmouth, we went strawberry-picking (and destroyed the belief that strawberries grow on trees), and some people stayed up a good deal of the night into the bargain. The leaders thought of exhausting people before bed with strenuous games of football and tag, but only exhausted themselves. But we must record that a lot of effort went into such things as washing up and cleaning, as well, and a high level of efficiency was attained by everyone.

The School owes thanks to a lot of people who helped the holidays to happen: especially to the parents who came with us (5 in all), who helped to cope with the needs of the kids; the Norfolk Youth Service who loaned us the camp; the schools who lent us their minibuses to get there; and the City Amenities and Recreation Dept., who gave us a grant to help with the cost.

As we can't, sadly, bring the beach and the sea to Balsall Heath, let's hope David gets his wish.

Anita Halliday.



Ann helps Frances, the youngest holiday-maker, to lay the foundations of a castle.

The Cheapest Holiday.

We left Birmingham at approximately 4.0 p.m. on Saturday July 27th. After a journey of nearly 200 miles, we reached Trimmingham which was the name of the small village our camp was near. It was very different to what I thought it would be. We were in the middle of nowhere, about a mile from the coast and about half a mile from the nearest shop, which was a small village shop and Post Office where you couldn't buy anything very much. The place we were staying at was a sort of log cabin. To get to the sea we had to walk through quite a large cornfield and walk down a slope in the cliff which was about 150 feet high. We also visited some of the other holiday resorts, but we had to go in the van to get there. One of the days, the older ones walked to a town which was about 5½ miles away, but the younger ones went in the van. On the last day we had a choice of going to either Great Yarmouth or Cromer. The food and drink were very good and I was only sorry that it couldn't have lasted for at least a week. We left Trimmingham at 11 a.m. and arrived in Birmingham at about 4 p.m. All this for just over £1!

Alistair Evans.

(Alistair is not at the School but we were very glad to have his article, as we thought it added another view of the summer trips. Of course, the majority of the kids who went on the trips were friends rather than members of the School. Ed.)



THREE
REACTIONS
TO THE
SEA.



NEW BINGO NOW!

The Community Bingo sessions were started over a year ago by two Community School mums whom many of our readers will know - Mary Amoo and Mary Doyle. Mrs. Doyle has since been re-housed in Winson Green and Mary Amoo is now helped by several of the regular attenders, including Mrs. Joan Bassett and Mrs. Mary Inglis, as well as by the staff of the Community School.

The Playground Committee very kindly allowed us to use the playground hut for the first year or so of the Bingo's existence. However, in recent weeks it became possible to move to St. Paul's hall at the top of St. Paul's Rd. Many of us were reluctant to say goodbye to the cosiness of the playground hut, but it was generally thought that the hall was more convenient, offering as it did, more seating room, storage space, and full kitchen facilities. Unfortunately, the central heating in the hall has been damaged by vandals, but we hope that the plumbers will soon be warming us up again! Meanwhile, we are just using the overhead electric fires - which did not stop us having a record week last week!

We realise we can't compete with the really big commercial bingo halls as far as big money prizes go, but for a friendly, relaxed evening out, and some really useful and nice prizes (which our regulars help us to buy), we don't think we can be beaten. And don't forget that there's no big businessman busily pocketing the profits. Anything we make goes either to improving the quality of the prizes or to help the local organisations that are providing activities for all our children. Why not come along next Tuesday, and don't forget bring your friends!

Mike Dunkley and Rob McCann.

NEWS FROM CLIFTON RD. SCHOOL.

Mr. M. Dard, an Asian teacher with teaching experience in city schools, took up in September a new appointment at Clifton Junior and Infant Schools. Mr. Dard's post is for responsibility for liaison between home and school, and for developing the possibilities of increased links between parents and teachers for the benefit of Clifton children. Mr. Dard had already met most parents and many other agencies in the community. Mr. Abbey and Mr. Nicholas hope that this new appointment will extend the existing cordial relationship between school and home in the neighbourhood.

GREAT EXHIBITION.

A lot of people visited the marvellous exhibition of work by pupils, which Clifton Rd. School put on at the end of last term. We were shown round by some very enthusiastic kids who were most helpful. We took a lot of photos and wish we had room to show you more of the work - it was all great, and we know that everyone who saw it would congratulate all involved.



NEWS FROM TINDAL ST. SCHOOL.

The role of a Home/School Liaison Teacher should be a simple one, but in practice it is a complex task. We began by getting to know our own children, and through them, their parents, building up relaxed and friendly relationships with no authoritarian undertones. Whether it is a friendly social chat, or a particular difficulty, we hope that children and parents, or indeed others in the community, will use us. Next, we had to get to know the 'experts' in the neighbourhood so that 'professional' assistance could be available at all times. We have been impressed by the sincerity and warmth of everyone, be they voluntary or statutory workers. Balsall Heath is a 'village' within a large city, and our task is to encourage, as others are doing, the feeling of community and belonging. If the school can become a focal point, a resource centre, for community activities and discussion, then our job is done.

We have two special rooms in process of construction at the school. Soon, it is hoped, there will be coffee mornings for old, young, lonely and sociable, discos, discussions, etc., etc. Our Committee of parents and advisors is already taking shape. This Committee of local people will decide what should be done. They will help us to do our job of making the school a communal meeting point.

Rod Parry & Laura Mead

CHRISTMAS FAIR.

Our photographer went along to Tindal St. School's highly successful Christmas Fair on 22nd November and took the picture you can see of parents, staff friends and kids having a good time.



LETTERS

THANKS

Dear Heathan,

I just want to say thank you to Grace Allanson and the Balsall Heath Association for helping me and my family to find another house in the area.

In your last issue you printed a story about Woodfield Crescent and the disgusting state it was in - due to uncollected rubbish and the fact that it was used as a general dumping ground. I think we'd have gone mad if we'd lived there much longer. We tried to improve things - a petition to the Council, phone calls, letters, meeting Councillors. But nothing much happened. So, moving seemed our only hope.

We've got a nice house now, and we're feeling better because of it. More people ought to know of the good work the Balsall Heath Association are doing. They've certainly helped to make my life a bit easier.

Yours sincerely,
Eveline Saar.

HELP PLEASE!

As well as the above letter giving good news about someone whose housing problem is solved, we've also had a good deal of news about people whose problems are still with them.

In particular if anyone can help a young married couple with a baby who are looking for a flat or house at £8 a week or less, would they be kind enough to contact us at the Heathan office 120, St. Paul's Rd, or phone 440-4376.

.. AND MORE THANKS

Dear Heathan,

Many thanks to the Community School mums for starting the Tuesday evening Bingo sessions. It makes a good night out once a week. The prizes are really useful for the home and the kids, and the company is nice and friendly.

Since moving to the old church hall its got better still. I hope it can stay there permanently. Its so clean and warm, and big enough to attract really good crowds.

Yours sincerely, J.Stone.
18, Sunny Avenue.

VERY SAD

Dear Heathan,

I go to Moseley Art School.

I've heard that we are going to join Mount Pleasant, and we have made a Committee to save our school. If we join Mount Pleasant we might have to change our uniform, our school might be demolished, and our lessons might be cut down.

Nobody really knows what will happen, now, but we hope that the public will support us and help us to save our school. I'm only a first year who started in September, but it almost brings tears to my eyes to think of the happy community of friends to be broken up and separated.

Personally I like my English lessons and art lessons, but sadly I fear that if we join Mount Pleasant these lessons will be shortened by about two-thirds.

So again I plead with you to give us all the help you can in fighting for our school's life.

Yours sincerely, K.

(Some of the fears of the author of the above letter may be unfounded. But he is obviously very upset, and we sympathise with his general point that the Art School is well worth saving, though it begins to look as though it WONT be saved.)

Priorities

Dear Heathan,

I suppose, like me, many of your readers have read about what the Council is supposed to be doing to our part of Balsall Heath. Oh how I wish that they WOULD do something to the footpaths and avenues. Ours is so bad that you really have to pick your way to the top of the avenue. If we have any visitors we have to meet them and guide them to the house. If not, the visitors are splashed with mud and dirty water, and hey presto, no more visitors.

We in our avenue have asked, but were told that only when all the houses are done, then and only then, will there be avenues. So it sounds like 'Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?' Where do we stand? Do we get our houses done up, and then get them messed up again? We can't win.

Does anyone feel like me, and say, 'For Heaven's sake DO SOMETHING SOON. We are fed up with promises.'

Yours, A Very Frustrated
Balsall Heathan, Mrs. Sadie G. Evans.

Urgent demands

Dear Heathan,

May I add something to your growing and very fine collection of local eyesores? Top of my list of things-about-which-something-should-be done are the men's urinals which are the most outstanding architectural features of some of our streets. No doubt these things have a kind of interest as antiques. In which case, I for one will be delighted if collectors will come and take them away for Museums.

What I do doubt is that anyone is so careless of their health or public hygiene as to make much use of them for the purpose for which they were intended. If I were very brave I might, I suppose, investigate to see if my theory is correct.

I don't, you will understand, have any objection to public conveniences as such. On the contrary I think they are quite essential, especially for mothers with young children when they are out shopping. They should be conveniently sited, hygienically designed and properly looked after. Needless to say, they should cater for both sexes.

I do not think for a moment that the residents of shall we say Solihull would be expected to put up with the standard of provision we have at the moment. Why are we expected to?

Yours, (Miss) L. Lewis.

COMING APART AT THE BEAMS!

As most of our readers will know, Mount Pleasant School has had a very difficult term. The main school building, a six-storey teaching block, was found in August to have 'high alumina' cement in its beams, and was therefore closed on August 16th. Although other parts of the school are unaffected by the cement, and can be used still, the closure of the main block has meant that the majority of the school's 1200 pupils have had to be rehoused elsewhere. To ease the difficulties of this formidable operation the senior pupils have been accommodated in the emergency space which is within walking distance of the school site (on which the Community Centre, the technical studies facilities, workshops, and sports hall, are still open). The school is lucky in having, in the near neighbourhood, St. Martin's Youth Centre and a Baptist church - both of which have modern buildings with provision suitable for classes. With the seniors using this emergency accommodation, they are able to reach the site to use the facilities still available there as well.

TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS GOOD.

The junior pupils have been distributed to 4 temporary centres. The children have been given bus passes to reach them, or can come to school as usual and catch a bus from there. The school has been most thoughtful in its arrangements at the centres for the juniors. The children are divided between the centres according to the 'houses' which they belong to at school. As children in the same family are always put in the same house, this means that brothers and sisters among the juniors all go to the same emergency centres. The difficulty of providing the necessary equipment for the children in the emergency centres has been largely overcome by such devices as using special science kits provided by the Education Authority.

Everyone who has studied the arrangements made for Mount Pleasant's children must be deeply impressed by the energy and initiative of Miss Hanks and her staff. Several parents and children we have spoken to said that they were very happy and well-satisfied with the measures that have been taken. One teacher whom we spoke to told us that at first it was feared that with all the difficulties of the new situation there could be a rise in truancy from the school, or even breakdowns among staff suffering from extra work caused by the new organisation. But happily the fears were groundless. The children and staff rather like their temporary accommodation, which is pleasant and cosy - perhaps more so, ironically, than the block they have had to vacate.



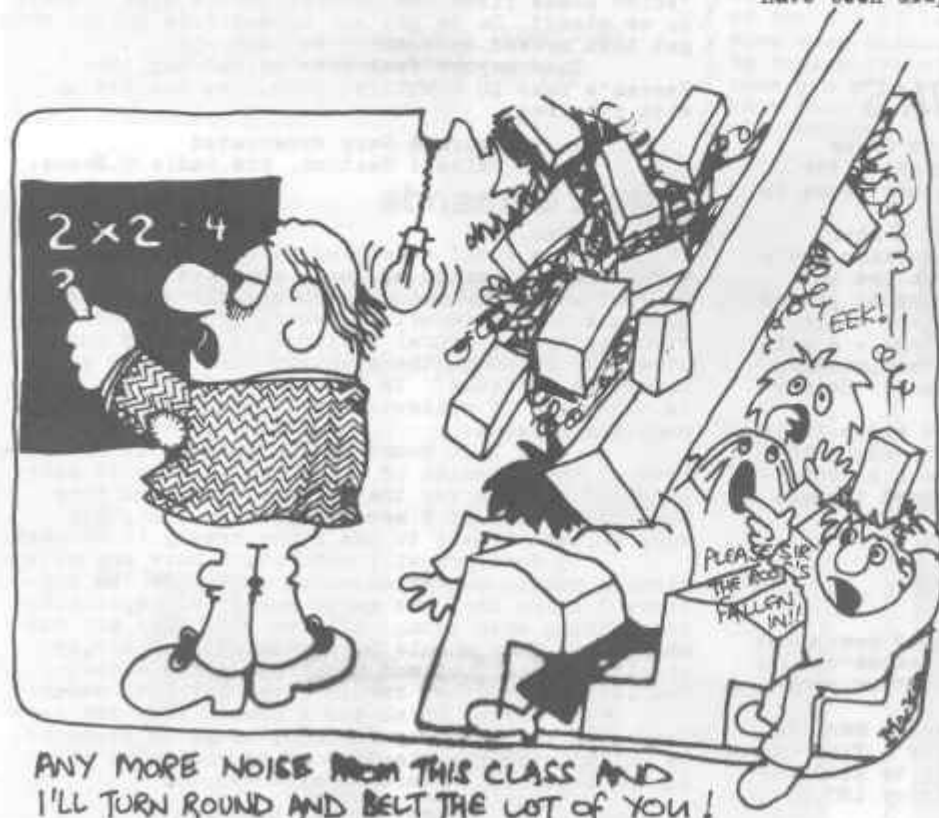
ABOVE: THE DANGEROUS TEACHING BLOCK.
BELOW: ONE OF THE TEMPORARY CENTRES.



WHY WAS HIGH ALUMINA CEMENT USED?

Many of us, of course, are not at all clear, despite the publicity in other newspapers, about the danger caused by the high alumina cement. Mount Pleasant is one of about 17 Birmingham schools which are affected by the problem - some being closed completely, others more or less dramatically upset. 4,200 children altogether in the city have been displaced from their schools.

Of course we have been lucky so far in Birmingham, in that there have been no actual instances of the collapse of roofs or buildings, as there have been in London. It must be said that it is difficult to understand why the high alumina cement was ever used in so many of our buildings. This cement has been banned in France since the 1940s. As it was known to be suspect, why on earth did City Architects of all people, permit its use? The possible answer is that, since the cement is quick-drying it makes it possible to put up buildings faster and cheaper than other materials. The speed and economy have been gained at what is now going to be, obviously, an enormous cost. The City, which is to blame for the use of the cement will have to pay - that is, all of us who pay rates and taxes will be paying. The cost is not yet known, since it is not yet known, for example, whether buildings like Mount Pleasant's 6-storey block will have to be pulled down and re-built, can be repaired, or will have to be partially taken down and re-built. Tests and experiments have already been going on for months and no answers



ANY MORE NOISE FROM THIS CLASS AND
I'LL TURN ROUND AND BELT THE LOT OF YOU!

to the question 'What can be done?' are publicly available yet. Presumably because there are no answers yet. Guesses on the cost of ANY solution are already in the millions of pounds - even on optimistic estimates of 'repair jobs' rather than pulling down and rebuilding. Of course, the cost of accommodating children in emergency centres, etc. is also high. Not to mention the costs to hard-pressed staff and others, in time and energy.

A HA'PENNY-WORTH OF TAR.

One last point. Mount Pleasant, which is of particular interest to us, is a very well-equipped school, with all sorts of special facilities. Nevertheless, ever since the school was built in 1967, critics have suggested that the buildings were a cheap, shoddy job. They point to details like structures giving way under normal use, to emphasize this point. They argue that by comparison with some of Birmingham's other comprehensive schools, these buildings were never up to scratch - even without the cement problem. We shall watch with interest to see what the authorities come up with by way of a solution to the present problems, and we do hope that it won't just be a quick, cheap answer, because we think the kids round here deserve buildings which are just as good and just as safe as those anywhere else. Especially when they are being paid for twice over.

up your street



For this issue's Up Your Street feature Rob McGann and I went to talk to some of the residents of that little group of new red brick houses on Brunswick Rd. near the surgery. They're lovely houses, and everyone we talked to seemed very happy with them. Unfortunately, the problems begin more or less at the doorstep, because the Council's bit-by-bit policy of renewal has made this group of houses into an island of new housing surrounded by a sea of dereliction.

There was a disturbing incident last summer which makes the point clear. Michael Helen of Chelmsley Wood came over to spend the day with the Deards of 112 Brunswick Rd. He went out to play at the back of the house and narrowly escaped being killed when part of an old derelict house fell on him. Mrs. Dolores Deard took him to hospital with cuts on his leg and foot. The police said the derelict houses could not be pulled down because one was still occupied. The Council sent men who took down one of the buildings, but left another which looks absolutely deadly (see picture). I don't know what Michael Helen said, but the residents all say that it's about time something was done - before there's a worse disaster.



WELL, I DIDN'T GET MUCH SCHOOLING - FIRST THERE WAS A TEACHER SHORTAGE & THEN THE SCHOOL FELL DOWN. SO I LEFT & TRIED TO GET A JOB BUT THERE AREN'T ANY JOBS...

However, one good mark for the Council on the getting things done side - the residents I talked to would like to pass on their congratulations to them for at last doing something about the pile of masonry that used to stand on the corner of Hertford St. Give us some more please!



LEFT: BEFORE.

RIGHT: AFTER.



Unfortunately, the danger of bomb-sites next door doesn't end with falling bricks. It also means broken bottles, rubbish, rats and mice - which animals are already invading the new houses. It also means vandals, broken fences and greenhouses, frightened children, and gardens where it's unsafe to leave anything. So far this year, Mrs. Deard has lost 1 Chopper bike (£8), 1 toy car (£15), 1 swing (badly damaged), and one toy motor bike (£8). Has anyone seen one blue motor bike with sidecar, for a five-year old? If so, please return to 112, Brunswick Rd.

MYSTERY.

Mrs. Waring, of number 92, is puzzled by the mysterious patch of grass between the houses and St. Paul's Rd. The Council are trying to keep it fenced in - without much success, because it's a shortcut from St. Paul's to Brunswick Rd. Mrs. Waring thought it might be just right for 'something for the little kids', a couple of slides and a swing, or so. She wrote to the Estates Dept. and suggested it. Mr. Atkinson of the Dept. wrote back and told her (as if she didn't know!) that there was already a voluntary playground in Malvern St. Meanwhile the little patch of grass is in dire need of its third lot of fencing. Mrs. Waring also wants us to say how much she appreciates her good neighbour Mr. Ford, who is always very generous and helpful to her family, especially in taking her son to hospital when he had an accident. It's very nice to know there are still good neighbours around.

LOST!

Finally, from Up Your Street, - has ANYONE SEEN A BLACK KITTEN, four months old, with a white spot on its chest and three white paws one black? It went missing from 92, Brunswick Rd on 15th November and has some young friends there who would be overjoyed to see it back.

Mike Dunkley.

news from
Malvern St.



HAPPENINGS!

Hello - I'm Anne. I joined the playleaders at the Venture in September, so many of you may not have met me yet. I suppose you have all seen George beneath a mop of hair. The latest addition is Joe, who is taking over from Rob while he has six months' leave to study. This may sound a bit confusing, but really the simplest way to meet us is to come down to the Venture!

WILD ANIMALS, GHOSTS, & WITCHES!

Over the half-term holiday, we had a trip to the Dudley Zoo, and a Halloween Party. The Zoo trip attracted over eighty kids - all packed on to a fifty-seater coach, plus a few Mums. We arrived O.K., and spent a cold but enjoyable day looking at the animals. It's difficult to say whether we interested the animals more than they interested us! The trip home was even more fun, with singing etc. Thanks go to a very tolerant bus driver. Halloween night began, again with hundreds of children - and the music we intended to play with spooky noises and things, never happened as the amplifier was not working - but we soon provided our own 'spooks' when someone saw a ghost in the Venture. A chase followed and we caught our victim - Joe Glenholmes! Someone saw a real witch going down Clifton Rd., so we went after her chanting 'Burn the witch'. She vanished on a broomstick - the real ones always get away, don't they! Having exorcised the area, the kids came back to the Hut for soup, and then we had a disco for the older ones.

FIRE!

Bonfire night went off very well this year. Bernard gave us a magnificent display of fireworks, and Joan, Mary and Ted made smashing hot dogs and roast potatoes. We raffled a Christmas Hamper, which was won by Mrs. Condon of Sunny Avenue. This will be presented nearer the date.

GREAT FUN & EXCITEMENT TO COME!

At the moment the playground is a bit waterlogged and activities are confined mainly to the Hut. We have been doing a fair amount of painting, ball games, table tennis, etc. If any children want to do something else, then ask Joe, George or myself, and we will try to get it arranged. We're waiting for a lorry-load of bricks, and then we'll be building some cooking stoves and perhaps a Cafe. (Ask William about the cafe!) By the way - the Playground always needs odd bits of junk to play with - an old chair makes a great gangster car, and an old pram makes a super trolley - so bring it along and we'll try and make use of it. Lastly, we'll be having two CHRISTMAS PARTIES this year. From 3 to 5 p.m. in the afternoon, for under 12's, and from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. for over 12's. See the next edition of 'Playnews' for further details - or ask one of the Playleaders. HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON AT THE VENTURE!

Anne.

I AM...

I AM A BLACK BOY
SO SAY I
HANDSOME AND ATTRACTIVE
SLEEK AND SLY
COOL AND CALM
WITH LOTS OF CHARM
THEY CALL I COUNT SAVAGE
BUT IT DOES NOT
WORRY I.
BY TWEED THE SAVAGE.

coming back

Returning to visit Balsall Heath 38 years after leaving the area where I had been employed as Adventure Playground leader for the Balsall Heath Association (from 1969-71), I saw lots of changes. Because of my role in setting up the playground, then in Mint St., a great deal of time was spent in the community, getting to know the young people who didn't belong to clubs, working in the youth clubs in Ladypool Rd. and Moseley Rd., helping Miss Selby at the Lane Centre, and Mr. Loundes at St. Barnabas Sunday School.

The most horrible housing conditions I have ever seen (and I've seen some bad ones, as I've worked in Notting Hill in London) then existed in the Vincent St. area. Yet the families there somehow managed. There was neighbourliness and everyone was always so hospitable.

Vandalism, then, as now, was a problem. I recall that the Evening Mail did a series called 'the Outsiders' and I wrote a short article for this called 'Becoming a Vandal at Five Years of Age.' At that time I was using an old dentists' surgery in Ladypool Rd. as a centre for young people who didn't belong to any clubs, at the suggestion of the late Rev. A. Wright. It is good to hear now that most of the lads I knew then have good jobs, and have largely avoided the kind of trouble I once used to know.

Not that it was always the boys I had to sort out - once I had to intervene to stop some teenage girls who were intending to commit assault on each other with very large knives.

The boys on the playground built a super camp 3 storeys high, with a brick fireplace and chimney, ramps and trap doors - the best I've seen. (None to compare with it in London, South Wales, Stevenage or Bristol.) Unfortunately it was burnt down. We also once had a tower SEVEN storeys high, which the Bishop christened the Tower of Babel. I remember too, the great search for the Seeneys, and it was Mint St. playground where they were hidden in the evenings by Michael Warren! (He was the boy who caught a baby rat and put it in a cage, convinced it was a mouse.) There was another search, too, for the children from Runcorn Rd. who were eventually found in Moseley Park, and the families were so relieved.

Very few of the families I knew so well are left now. Then I could walk into practically everyone's home and be made welcome - Balsall Heath people were so grateful for someone to take the kids out. I am pleased to see that the Adventure Playground has continued to develop into a good community amenity, and expand its role in the community. The old bomb sites in Balsall Heath are now grassed over and are a safe place to play, and the Lane Centre has really developed as a community service. Miss Margaret Selby and the Rev. Loundes are still doing a magnificent job in the area - they seem to be the only community workers still around who were here in 1969.

I would like to thank all the families who were so hospitable to me on my visit - especially the Donnelly's of Clifton Rd.

Ray Willis.

ICE SKATING

Every Saturday. PRICE 10p. and 6p BUS FARE.
Leave the Venture 10 a.m. return 1 p.m. ROLL UP!

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE VENTURE'S FOOTBALL TEAM? GAMES PLAYED SUNDAY AFTERNOON - DROP BY AND SEE TWEED AND GEORGE.

CAN WE HELP? ADVICE COLUMN

Q. My roof leaks badly. I have asked my landlord to mend it and he says no because the Council plans to pull the house down. What can I do?

A. If the landlord won't do anything, ask the Public Health Inspectors (local office of Environmental Department 249 Warwick Road, Greet, Birmingham 11, Phone 772 7420). They can order a landlord to do repairs and if he does not do them they can do the repairs themselves and charge him. Urgent repairs, particularly to leaking roofs, blocked drains and so on can be ordered even if a home is due to be demolished. Ring the inspectors before 10 o'clock (when they go out inspecting) or write to them. When the health inspector comes, take his name and telephone extension number. If nothing happens within six weeks, contact your local residents association or advice centre.

Q. My boss says I'm going to have to change to another factory the other side in Birmingham. Can he sack me if I refuse to go? I get FIS already and the travelling would be very expensive.

A. This is a legal problem. Most firms of solicitors will advise in redundancies and changes of employment which are very complicated and may affect unemployment benefits or involve unfair dismissal. Go to a solicitor (you can get a list of them from advice centres) and ask for advice. Ask for "Green Form Legal Aid". Remember, if you are on FIS or Social Security solicitors can help you **FREE OF CHARGE**.

Q. One of my friends came to England from Pakistan and stayed longer than he should. Can he be declared legal or will he be deported.

A. Your friend may be in a very awkward position. He could go to the Community Relations Office (37 Bennetts Hill, phone 235 4097). Their staff will advise him confidentially - if the government amnesty covers him your friend can legalise his position. Otherwise he can return home, give himself up or risk keeping it secret.

So, if you have a problem, why not write to THE HEATHAN, we will certainly try to help you, and in so doing we may help others.

If you have a problem you want to talk over with someone, then why not go to one of the advice centres in the area.

There's the Balsall Heath Association on the corner of Court Road and Edward Road. The Social Services Area Office by the Brighton Road Traffic Lights and also the Lane Neighbourhood Centre at 422 Ladypool Road.



Wormseye

There are many pretty gardens in Balsall Heath and it's clear that there are a lot of keen gardeners. One photographer found that the garden in the picture was still full of flowers even at the end of November!

Now we don't pretend to offer advice to the people who've been at it for years and already have beautiful gardens, though we shall be nipping about from time to time trying to get photos of them, to get hints, and to encourage ourselves. What we thought we'd do was try to give a boost to those who, like us, have got a wilderness at the back and a small patch of mud with a privet hedge at the front. Perhaps if we all start together we can make a thousand flowers bloom next year!

You might think that December is a funny time to get interested in the garden, but our expert friends assure us it's ideal for coping with the wilderness problem. Because that problem is mainly one of digging out the weeds, rubble, etc. This is the ideal time for getting the job done - in January and February it will probably snow, and after that you ought to be putting your new flowers in! We've got a LOT of rubble in our garden and we're shifting it to one corner to make the basis for an interesting (we hope) rockery, in the spring. We'll tell you about this next time. The rest of the garden, yes all of it, fellow wilderness pioneers, has got to be **DUG** and **DUG** well. This includes the lawn if like ours it's four blades of grass and 1000 weeds.

While you're at it, give yourself a Sunday off after you've done quite a bit, if you've got a car or a friendly neighbour with one. Take a trip to the Lickys or somewhere like that,

and some large plastic sacks and collect a lot of leaf mould. Dig that in when you get back. You could always try the bus if you can't find a car.....

Try and keep the dug surface level, but you can leave it rough. **GET ALL THE WEEDS OUT**, especially horrible white roots of the deadly bindweed which will consume the house as well as the garden if not violently attacked first.

When we've all done our digging we'll be ready for more exciting gardening. See you with the spade!

RAISED SHOULDER OF LAMB

WITH APRICOT STUFFING

OUR SUGGESTION FOR A CHEAP BUT FESTIVE XMAS DISH. Do YOU have any favourite cheap-but-interesting recipes? We offer a 50p prize for any we print!

The recipe comes from New Zealand with the lamb!

Ingredients (for 6 people) Stuffing.

4lb Shoulder of Lamb - BONED	3 oz. Dried Apricots.
1 pint Stock.	1 oz. Butter.
6 Carrots.	1 tablespoon chopped onion.
6 Celery Sticks.	4 tablespoons fine white breadcrumbs.
6 Turnips.	1 teaspoon parsley (or parsley flakes).
2 large onions.	1 - 2 tablespoons milk.
Salt and Pepper.	

Method. Soak the apricots in water until soft. Drain and chop them small. To make the stuffing; melt butter in a frying pan and cook the onions till soft but not brown. Take the pan off the heat and add the breadcrumbs, parsley, pepper and salt to taste. Stir in enough milk to give a soft mixture, then add the apricots.

Sprinkle the cut surface of the lamb with salt and pepper. Spread the stuffing over the meat, then roll it up and tie it with string. Put the joint in a casserole or meat dish.

Put the casserole in pre-heated oven (450° F. or Mark 8). Cook it for 15 minutes uncovered. Pour in half the stock and turn heat down to 350° (Mark 4). Cover the dish and cook for 45 minutes.

Meanwhile prepare and chop the rest of the vegetables. Put them round the joint and add the rest of the stock. Cover and cook for another 1½ hours. Serve meat and vegetables, thicken juices for gravy.

Sandbrook & Co.

545, Moseley Rd.

(CORNER OF HOMER ST.)

Tel: 440-4188



Glass Cut To Size
HARDBOARD
ROOF FELT
PLASTER
SAND/CEMENT
ELECTRIC FIRES



Sandbrook & Co.

For a Safer Paraffin Heater :-

EVERY TUESDAY

St PAULS HALL

COMMUNITY

BINGO

DOORS OPEN 7.30. EYES DOWN 8.00

GREAT PRIZES. FLYER, SNOWBALL, RAFFLE, ETC.

5p IN and
1p a game

PENSIONERS FREE

In aid of the Happy House and PLAYGROUND.

Bring this ad. for a FREE game. Refreshments.

SEWING MACHINES

151 LADYPOOL ROAD

REPAIRS

SALES

SERVICE

ALL MAKES



PFAFF



THE COMPLETE SEWING SERVICE

Christmas Diary

Dec Buy your copy of the Heathen now to avoid disappointment. Fill in your own important Christmas Diary Dates below.

14 10.30 a.m. Church of Christ (CoC): A Gift Service. 11 a.m. Moseley Road Methodist

15 Church (MRMC): Family worship. 2-6.30 p.m.

16 10-12 a.m. English Classes for Asian ladies, playgroup for kids. All FREE. 2 p.m. Over 60's Club. All at M.R.M.C. every week.

17 *** Care for the Elderly, visits to Carols. Birmingham Mail Xmas Tree fund distribution: 8 p.m. Community Bingo St. Paul's Centre, and every Tuesday. CHILDREN'S PLAY 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Cannon Hill Arts (CH) - 'The Owl and the Pussycat' - nearly every Tues to mid-Feb.

18 7.30 p.m. Carol singing round the streets - meet at MRMC.

19 Make sure your Xmas cards have been posted.

20 12 a.m. W.R.V.S. Lunch Club MRMC each Tuesday and Friday. 2 p.m. Friday Club for OAP's at CoC. 8 p.m. Xmas Party and Disco at MP.

21 Why not visit Cannon Hill Puppet Theatre? At 2.30 p.m. 'Thrice Upon a Time'. On nearly every day except Sunday.

22 ***** 2 p.m. and 4.30 p.m. Cannon Hill special, 'Young Christmas'. 6 p.m. Carol Service CoC and MRMC.

23 10 a.m. English Classes for Asian ladies and 2 p.m. Over 60's club at MRMC. 10 a.m. Xmas Decorations for children at CH.

24 10 a.m. More Xmas Decorations at CH. 'Care for the Elderly' Christmas Party. 4.30 p.m. Blessing the Crib S.P.C.

Dec 8 a.m. Holy Communion: 9.30 a.m. Parish Eucharist S.P.C.

10.15 a.m. Morning Service M.R.M.C.

Cannon Hill closed all day.

25 St. Paul's Day Care Centre closed till Jan 2.

THE HEATHEN WISHES ITS READERS A HAPPY XMAS.

26 Xmas is a sad time for the elderly. Go and visit someone you had forgotten who's old and alone.

27 12 a.m. W.R.V.S. Lunch club at M.R.M.C.

28 2 p.m. Friday Club for OAP's at CoC.

If you've any money left, the shops should be open.

29 6 p.m. United Carol Service CoC.

***** Children's playscheme and young people's activities at MP Centre. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day till 4th Jan. - sports, arts and crafts, outdoor visits, skating, bowling, all-day party. Also Nursery Group, puppet theatre, Panto, films. FUN FOR ALL.

30 12 a.m. W.R.V.S. Lunch club MRMC.

31 8 p.m. till 1 a.m. New Year's Eve dance, party or disco. But WHERE?

Jan 9.30 a.m. Visit to Birmingham Science Museum for CH.

1 10 a.m. Gujarati dancing for children CH.

2 2.30 p.m. Visit to BRMB studios from CH.

12 a.m. W.R.V.S. Lunch club MRMC.

2 p.m. Friday Club at CoC.

3 8 p.m. Concert and Disco MP.