

the Heathman

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NEVER SAY DIE!

Nesley Rd. Art School, which is Birmingham's - in fact Britain's - ONLY secondary level art school, is still threatened with closure in July. The L.E.A. and Council still intend that in September the school shall merge with Mount Pleasant comprehensive school, and lose its separate and specialised identity. Since the Council's plans first became known the pupils, parents and staff have campaigned for it to remain and develop along its unique lines. In an earlier issue of the Heathman we described the school and showed examples of its work.

NEW CAMPAIGN

Although the time of the merger is fast approaching, those who hope to save the school are far from giving up. They continue their efforts to persuade the Council to change their minds. They are even more determined to do so since they have learned in the last month that Mount

Pleasant's six-storey teaching block is probably condemned and likely to be demolished. The pupils and Friends of M.R.A.S. have been preparing a still more vigorous campaign to convince the Council they are wrong. The argument of the Council and the L.E.A. is that the Art School MUST close because it is selective and specialised, and the City is moving to comprehensive and non-specialised schools. The Art School, in choosing a number of children with an 'aptitude' for art and giving them a special education which develops this ability, is like a grammar school, say its opponents, and like the grammar schools, it must be abolished. Against this, the Friends of M.R.A.S. have always pointed out that when the school was founded it was expressly intended by the City fathers of that time that it should provide a good education for those 'ordinary working class children' who, though not necessarily very successful in academic subjects, were most interested in the visual arts. Unlike a grammar school it does not have to rely on an 11+ exam. to fill its places - such exams tend to favour children from better-off homes - but has always had a majority of pupils accepted because of their demonstrated interest in art. There is still a need for such an education, and the school has shown that it can meet it, say its supporters.



FRIENDS OF NESLEY ROAD ART SCHOOL MARCH TO SAVE THE SCHOOL.

THE FRONT OF MOSELEY RD. ART SCHOOL BUILDING.



The Council and the L.E.A. have then objected that it would be 'unfair' to deprive the children of M.R.A.S. of the wider range of subjects and excellent facilities of Mt. Pleasant. In concentrating on art, it was argued, the school neglected the possibility of the pupils developing in fields such as languages or sciences, where the comprehensive has better staff and equipment. Again the parents, staff and pupils of M.R.A.S. have argued back. In the first place, they say, the school of course teaches all the usual subjects up to age 15 or 16. After that, or even before, should anyone wish, pupils who realise that they are interested in subjects the school can't offer, can move wholly or partly to another school or technical college. No child can study everything at once, whatever school he or she attends, and even in a big comprehensive with excellent resources it is quite possible that children do not gain access to every subject.

EVEN MORE ARTISTIC FIELDS TO DEVELOP

The children of M.R.A.S. go there because they have enthusiasm for, and talent for, art. (A wide range of activities from painting and sculpting through to metalwork, textile design and photography.) Mr. Beckett, a parent and secretary of the Friends' committee, says that it is foolish of the Council to treat the school as if it were a grammar school. After all, he said, there are very few kids at Mount Pleasant who would have chosen to go to M.R.A.S. The reason being, that, sensibly enough, they don't want to go to a school that concentrates on art when they aren't especially interested in art. As far as buildings and equipment go, the school has no special privileges. (The building is the old Victorian one.) It isn't surprising that there's no wild clamour to get in. Unlike the grammar schools M.R.A.S. offers no general 'badge of merit' to its entrants. No-one thinks them superior just because they go there. Mr. Beckett asks why the Council want to abolish the right the kids have at the moment to choose a specialised school and a high-standard art-based education. Wouldn't it be better to EXTEND this right? For example, the M.R.A.S. Friends argue that it would be better to develop in such a way as to encourage kids with an interest in music, drama, dance, and other artistic fields they cannot at present cater for, than to merge all into the uniformity of the state comprehensive school. They quote the Chief Education Officer of Birmingham as replying simply that art, music, drama, etc., are just not as important as subjects like Maths. and English. The Art School pupils answer that while there is no risk that their English and Maths will suffer at M.R.A.S., they do run the risk of having to neglect their other skills at an ordinary school. At Mount Pleasant they expect to have 2 or 3 art periods a week as against between 10 and 20 now. And they are bitterly angry with anyone who says this is not 'real work'. It is clear from their results that it is both hard work and very worthwhile. They point out that without 'artists' we can't build our cities, furnish our homes, read our news papers, watch our T.V. or films, or make our environment and lives more beautiful, interesting and enjoyable in a thousand other ways.

ANTI-LABOUR FEELING

The Heathen asked Mr. Beckett if he didn't think the campaign was as good as lost, since the decision to merge with Mt. Pleasant was apparently taken already. He replied that with the Council elections coming shortly, the campaign would be intensified, hoping to influence a Council, and an Education Committee,

whose composition might well be changed after the election. In any case, he said, 'There are some members of the Labour Group on the Council who believe that the Art School is worth saving, but who have not so far spoken up for us.' Mr. Beckett thinks it is still possible that these people may intervene within or against their party, to save the school. At a meeting of the Friends of M.R.A.S. held on March 14th, which was very well-attended, the renewed campaign was launched. Numerous parents, including many who described themselves as 'former Labour supporters' spoke out fiercely against the Council policy, and urged an anti-Labour vote in the Council elections. A march, to present Cllr. Mrs. Sheila Wright (Chairman of the Education Committee) with a birthday card, depicting a phoenix rising from the coffin of the dead school was planned. This march took place on Saturday March 22nd, Mrs. Wright's 50th birthday, and involved a large number of pupils, parents and staff. Further events were planned by the Friends. On March 27th a petition was sent to the Queen and the Prime Minister, and in April a booklet on the art school will be published. (See Letters page.) The art school has a large number of prominent artists among its supporters - Henry Moore and Margot Fonteyn, for example. It can also boast many eminent people among its former pupils, who are weighing in with their support, too. These range from the Chief Designer at Ford Motors, to the art director to Bolton Education Committee.

FOR, NOT AGAINST.

The pupils and staff point out that they are not AGAINST Mt. Pleasant, they are FOR their own school. "We have no problems of discipline or truancy at our school", says Mr. Beckett. "The campaign was led by the kids who collected 4000 signatures on the petition before the parents or staff joined them. In these days when all we hear about is the problems schools have with kids, isn't it a crime that this school with such loyalty and such a record of unique work should be closed down?" Another parent, Mrs. Dunn, said, "We are not against the comprehensive system as such. It's just the impossibility of joining the two schools that are so different that we object to." So the Friends of Moseley Rd. Art School continue their campaign, hoping for a last minute reprieve.



COFFIN AND PHOENIX ARRIVE AT THE TOWN HALL.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

A special event to look forward to this summer is an International Concert to be held at St. Paul's Hall on June 14th.

The first ideas came from June Hawkins, the playgroup leader at St. Barnabas' Ladypool Road. She thought it would be a good idea to organise a concert to raise money for all the local voluntary groups working in Balsall Heath, and so representatives from the groups got together to talk about it. Other people were very keen and it is planned to have a full evening's entertainment involving different groups in Balsall Heath. We hope to include Indian dancers, a steel band, a folk group, Irish dancing and many others. There will also be a chance to sample food from other countries.

It's local musical talent that we're after and if you know of anyone who'd like to take part or have any ideas, do let us know. A student from Birmingham Polytechnic, Hilary Comfort, is helping out with the organising and she can be contacted at St. Paul's Hall tel: 440 4513.

Take a note of the date and watch out for posters and other details.

MORTGAGE TRAP!

The Heathan believes that as many people as possible should be warned against a MORTGAGE TRAP which is being laid for them by various local estate agents and private agents of finance companies. The trap consists of persuading people to take out loans on the type of old house which abounds in Balsall Heath and the surrounding areas, at EXTREMELY HIGH rates of interest. Some agents are advising desperate, and sometimes not-so-desperate home seekers to take out loans with companies who charge from 16% to 25% interest. Such companies will often advance 100% mortgages, which means that people struggling to find somewhere to live will pay inflated prices for tatty houses. So as well as paying very high interest rates (the City Council's mortgage rate is only 11%, and Building Societies charge between 12% and 13%), people are often being conned into borrowing absurdly large capital sums.

WATCH OUT FOR.....

There are many agents, and many finance companies involved in this highly profitable business. Two of the estate agents to treat with caution are Colehill & Co. of Golden Hillock Rd. (also known as First Time Home Buyers Ltd.), and Belhuish & Co. of Terrace Rd., Handsworth. Both of these companies have been investigated by our fellow community newspaper, Saltley Gas. However, there are plenty of other estate agents promoting expensive loans from finance companies in our district, and not by very scrupulous methods. We cannot as yet mention any of the local companies who do this, as we have not as yet come across anyone prepared to make a public complaint about them, and would be reluctant to accuse any company without witnesses.

HIDDEN COSTS.

We are not saying that the companies or individuals involved are breaking the law. But we do say that they put pressure on their clients to take out loans which they often cannot afford, AND OFTEN CONCEAL FROM THEM THE RATE OF INTEREST THEY ARE REALLY PAYING. For example, the agent will say that the rate of interest on a loan is 12%, which sounds altogether alright, compared with building society loans. What he HIDES, is that the 12% is to be paid on the original sum borrowed for the whole length of the loan. This is different, and much more expensive, than a building society or bank loan, where interest is paid ONLY on the amount of money not yet repaid. So, if you borrow from a finance company - for example, if you borrow £3000 for 10 years at a stated rate of 12% - you will finish up paying £3600 in interest alone in the 10 years, and you've still got the £3000 to repay. The interest on a Council loan, on the other hand would probably have been under £2000 for the same loan - less if you paid them back in larger instalments. Heaven help you if the stated rate of interest from the finance company is MORE than 12%, as it may well be. The true rate of interest in these cases is seldom stated anywhere clearly, and of course, estate agents who want to sell their houses have no interest in making it clear.

DEBTS FOR SALE.

It is not only estate agents who peddle mortgages for finance companies. Some 'private individuals' have to be treated with great suspicion, too, unfortunately. Anyone can be a mortgage broker, and all sorts of people 'sell' loans for finance companies, rather like other people sell undies or Tupperware. Of course, the estate agents are probably the most dangerous people, because they are trying to sell houses at a profit and are particularly anxious to get rid of dodgy houses, as well as to get commission by organising loans. In one case which came to our attention, however, the agent was so keen to get his commission that he REFUSED TO SELL a house to a client who had managed to get a Council mortgage. He preferred to hold on to the house (which in this case was not dodgy) until he could get a buyer who would take on a much more expensive finance company loan, and he the agent could get his rake-off.



Of course, it can be argued that the agents and finance companies are providing a necessary 'service'. There is a desperate need for housing and banks, building societies and even the Council won't give loans on the old houses in poor condition which are typical round here. Nor will the organisations which lend money at reasonable rates do so for those with low incomes or in jobs they think are insecure. Such loans are a bad risk for them - the finance companies can afford a few bad risks with their high charges. But it doesn't help that the Council does little to provide information about its own mortgage schemes. We called at both the City's special housing centres and found NO printed material about the mortgage scheme, and little other advice to be had easily. Even those who DO find out about the mortgages offered by the Council have a lot of trouble finding out if they are eligible. There are three separate departments involved, the machinery is complex and very slow. This adds up to potential home-buyers deciding not to bother, as by the time the Council notices them the house they want will be sold.

WHO GETS CAUGHT?

Unfortunately most of the people getting mortgages from the finance companies at heavy interest rates are those who have come to this country from abroad - West Indies, Pakistan or India. Another example of our charming hospitality to strangers who often don't speak English well, don't know much about buying houses in this country, and are given little choice about where they live. They are glad for any chance to get a house of their own to live in, where perhaps English people might be more suspicious. Not, of course, that the locals never get caught - they do, all too often. High loan charges often put people in the position of being desperately short of money, and in debt all over the place, trying to keep up the mortgage payments. Sometimes they are forced to re-sell the house, and find that they owe the company MORE than it will fetch.

GET INDEPENDENT ADVICE.....

You may think that you have been let in for a mortgage or loan which is far higher than you can afford. It is just possible that you might be able to change to a less expensive Council one. You can consult the advisers at the Lane Neighbourhood Centre or the Balsall Heath Association or the Housing Centre, Stratford Rd. if you are in need of help over a mortgage you have already taken on, or are thinking of taking on. The Heathan will be most interested to hear from readers who think they have been treated unfairly by agents, finance companies, etc. Do write or call - we will treat all information confidentially. Addresses of the Advice Centres on our 'Can We Help You?' column.

from
the

COMMUNITY SCHOOL



SOME PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ETCHING OUT ADS FOR ESTATE AGENTS. ANYONE LIKE A DESIRABLE COUNTRY COTTAGE? THE ONE ON THE RIGHT IS OFFERED BY SEENA, THE ONE ON THE LEFT BY TOM. (PICTURESQUE TUDOR BUT THE THATCH LEAKS.) AT BOTTOM A SELECTION OF TOWN HOUSES FROM YONIS.



School Report

Phew!

Since Xmas we've all been working very hard - kids and teachers. The work has been all the more pleasurable (and exhausting) because the kids voted to abolish half-term. They came to school, did extra work and helped us with running repairs and painting: strong evidence that they benefit from the school. We had to insist on a break at Easter, though, to get this issue of the *Heathen* out and have a short rest. So, sorry kids, not this time!

New Teacher

As parents already know, a new teacher has joined the project - Paul Oliver. He's a specialist in Art, Craft, Technical Drawing, and is also starting Woodwork classes. The benefits of his skills are already obvious to the kids, and to visitors, who are struck by the paintings, drawings, kaleidoscopes, candles and other crafts being developed. Such work fits in well with the photography that Mike (CONGRATULATIONS on the baby son!) teaches. This will soon be on display at the Lane Neighbourhood Centre. Our other main craft at present is cookery, which Anita teaches; and the results in this area are much appreciated by families and Bingo enthusiasts.

No Drones

Not to be outdone, Tom and Ada completed their C.S.E. History projects. Then, far from resting on their laurels, they got on with the preparation for the C.S.E. exams in English and Maths. All in all, the terraced houses down St. Paul's Rd. where the School is centred have been a hive of determined and colourful activity.

Going On

Two of the first pupils, Jackie and Goody, who are now 16½ years old have left school this Easter. Two new pupils will start next term with us. Good luck to the leavers, and welcome to the newcomers! The clamour for places is mounting, and we have to warn those who are anxious to join us that there are very few vacancies, and a growing waiting-list. BUT REMEMBER, we're open after school hours from 3.45-5.30, when all (kids and parents) are welcome to visit the 'Happy House'; as the school buildings are known, and join in various activities or just meet us. And anyone can come on our trips, holidays, etc.

Special Event

The School's Management Committee decided to show the school's work and explain its aims and method of working to a range of outsiders to the community on March 29th. Those who came were important representatives of other institutions, such as secondary school Heads, Local Education Authority

and Social Services officials, school inspectors, local social workers and voluntary agency workers. About 35 people (some with chauffeur-driven cars!) came, and created a small traffic-jam in St. Paul's Rd. as they toured the school houses, then trooped off to Clifton Rd. school for a discussion (and also a fine tea prepared and served by some of the children). All were impressed by what they saw and heard. Some of the many favourable comments were: "Such high standards, and hard work!" "Very pleasant and friendly - just like a village school." "Quite an achievement. I wouldn't have thought it possible." The school mums, teachers and local community workers who were there too, of course, were convinced it had been a big success and that much-needed offers of help would start to come in as a result. Let's hope so, for we really do need that help. Money is still very short.

We Need Local Helpers

Much as the outside, official help and approval is needed, we also need help even more from local people. We already get a great deal from the families of School kids. But we need more, from more people. After all, it IS a COMMUNITY school. Many people benefit from it - not just the school families. The project has many activities apart from the school work itself. This newspaper, community Bingo, holidays away from home, theatre shows in the local pub, help to other local projects like the Nursery, and a host of less obvious activities and forms of help are undertaken by us so - how about giving us a hand with something? We really do need your help and support (even if you only buy this newspaper regularly - and get all your friends to!) Even small-seeming things help a lot; for example, help with jumble sales, taking the kids out, fund-raising of any kind. ANY OFFERS!

Jumble Sale

A Grand (Super*Grand*) Jumble Sale is coming up at the end of April in St. Paul's Nursery. This is a joint fund-raising and fun-raising event by the School and the Nursery. Please help us by giving jumble, coming to sell it, or coming to buy. You can always get in touch with us at 120, St. Paul's Rd. (Tel: 440-4376.)

Report by Dick Atkinson.



PUPIL'S EYE

The Attic Before by PAUL MUSGROVE.

There was a lot of mess in the attic. There were two chairs and one desk. There were cracks in the walls and the paper was hanging off. It was littered all over the floor. There was a lot of dust and dirt on the floor. There was only one nice thing - that was a new light frame. There was also an old, broken one. But in two weeks' it will be sparkling. We're doing it up to use for Art and Craft.

& AFTER! by SYLVIA MUSGROVE.

The attic is now very nice and neat. There is linoleum on the floor and carpets. There are paintings on the walls and the ceiling has been painted orange. The beam across the roof is black, and the walls are white.

Now there are chairs and tables, and a big tea-chest. By the window is another table. You can sit at it, and look out and paint the view.

The rooms are not like ordinary ones. They are all different shapes. We can do candle-making and painting and all sorts. There is only one teacher up there. His name is Paul. There can be a lot of pupils up there, so we can do lots of paintings to put up on the walls.

My Teacher. by PAUL MUSGROVE.

My school is nice. I do lots of things in it, and I make lots of candles. I have made over twenty of them, and I do them every Tuesday and Friday. I have three teachers and two who come part of the time. Their names are Paul, Dick, Mike, Anita and Janet. I like Paul the best, then Dick, Janet, Anita and Mike.

I love it in this school. I'd like to stay as long as I can.

What nice things to say about us. No prizes for guessing who helps with the candles! Ed.)

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT by Danna Brown.

One day I came to school - late, as usual. I went up the stairs and found one of the teachers on the floor. "It's Mike", I said to myself.

So I ran downstairs and out of the door to the other house. I said to Dick, "What's Mike doing on the floor? He isn't moving a muscle."

Dick replied, "He must be trying something new." Well, I went back and felt his forehead. It was cold, and his pulse had stopped. Eventually all the kids and Dick came running up the road, into the house and up to the room where Mike was.

When we noticed Sylvia. She had a cup in her hand. Dick took the cup from her and said, "What are you doing?"

Sylvia replied, "I envied him. So I poisoned him!" We sent for the doctor. After a minute he came and we took him to Mike. The doctor said, "He's been poisoned. Call the police and an ambulance." The police came and questioned us. Then Anita came and asked, "What happened?"

"Poor Mike's been poisoned by Sylvia," we replied. But before Anita could say another word, Ada said "Do you want another cup of coffee everyone?"

"All said, "Yes".

So I brought the cups and we all drank our coffee.

But I noticed that he didn't have a cup himself.

So I said to him, "Where's your cup?"

He replied, "All of you are going to die."

And that was the last word I heard.

But the story ends happily folks 'cos we're all talking about as usual, and Mike's entirely given up lying down. We should have KNOWN when Ada offered to make a cup of coffee.... Ed.)



SECLUDED COUNTRY RESIDENCE by SYLVIA MUSGROVE.

In the Mine by TES DOYLE.

It is five-o'clock on a Monday morning and a red alarm clock rings and drones all over Fred Smith's bedroom. He wakes and rubs his weary eyes. He jumps out of bed and takes off his pyjamas. Then he puts on his shirt, overalls, and big, heavy boots. He goes downstairs to have his egg and bacon. Then he picks up his sandwiches (his wife made them last night.) Off he goes.

At the colliery he puts on his helmet - the one with the torch attached. Then he and his mates all crowd into the cage, and the lift is lowered into the murky depths of the mine.

"Did you read in the papers about that mine disaster?" asks one of the others.

"Oh shut up!" says Fred, "you sound as if you want one."

Fred watches the rocky surface flash past the lift. Down, down, down. Finally, the cage reaches the bottom and the miners turn on their headlamps. Then they all get into a small trolley and are taken along to the place where they are digging. They take up their picks and drills and begin work.

They work for a few hours. At about noon they stop and eat their sandwiches. Then they work again until about 5.30 p.m. Finally they go back up in the lift, remove their dirty clothes and have a shower. Then they dress and go home.

Back home, Fred changes into his street wear. He has his tea and goes straight off to the pub. At closing time he returns home, has a last cup of tea and goes to bed ready for next day.

What a life! Is there nothing else?

LENIN An Extract from a History Project. By KEVIN TEBBE.

'Lenin' is a pen-name which has stuck. His real name was Vladimir Illyich Ilyanov. He was born in the town of Simbrisk on the Volga River. His father was a school inspector, and fairly well-off. They lived in a large wooden house.

When Lenin was a small boy he was bad-tempered and liked smashing toys - especially his friends'. Lenin was stocky and had a big head. His friends called him 'little barrel'.

His brother Sasha was hanged for taking part in a plot to kill the Tsar. Lenin was shocked by his brother's death, and saddened, but he only said, "We must find another way."

Lenin was a very intelligent pupil. His best subjects were German, Greek and Maths.

Fearful company by Desmond Gray.

It was a cold and damp day when I got up. There was dew on the flowers, and there were little red flowers coming up. As I walked down the road I saw a house like a mansion. It was all black and white, and deserted. So I went inside. There were cobwebs on the chairs and on the walls.

I thought to myself that it must have been years old. There was a room on my left so I went in. Suddenly there was a cry. It seemed to come from a white cloth with a shape underneath it. I pulled it off. There was a young lady underneath it.

She said, "He's dead."

The shape started to move and I ran to the door. But it was closed fast now, and I couldn't find the knob, and the shape got closer and closer to me.

Then a man's voice said, "My name is Mr. Smith."

"Pleased to meet you," I said.

What a relief I felt as I went out of the house and down the road to my own house!

THE UNEXPECTED

by Zereena Jan.

One day I was coming home from school. It was my birthday.

I decided to take the short cut and I went through the woods. Suddenly I heard someone saying, "Come over here." I walked in the direction of the voice and I heard it again. "Over here."

I walked on and I kept hearing the noise. I tried to follow it, but it got quieter and quieter. In the end I couldn't hear it at all. I just kept on walking.

Then I saw a little house. I thought that if I went to it, they could show me the way home. I knocked on the door and I heard the same voice again. This time it said, "Come in."

I became frightened, but I opened the door. All of a sudden the lights went on. All my friends were there. They were waiting for me because they had arranged a party all for me.



YOURS FOR
ONLY
£10,000.
By
DANNA
BROWN.

THE NUMBERS GAME

BY DAVID MUSGROVE

When the mood takes me (or not) I go to Sissy's Cafe. Can you guess why? That's it, you've got it. The pin-ball machine. That's why. All I need to start, is 2p. The coins gone, five little balls appear, only to disappear one by one each time. You see 26 holes and 25 numbers and 28 spring mushrooms decorate the machine. Bounce, bounce, the metal balls collide, barging off the mushrooms. If the lights weren't broken they'd flash on when the ball falls into one of the holes. All the balls must vanish like this. If the numbers show in a line - say, one, two and nine - Bingo! I've won. That means I've four more games to play. And that's the way it goes - the pin-ball game.

Takeover bid

BY YUNIS JAN

My temper's colour is yellow, a big yellow square.
My temper comes quick, like an eruption,
My temper makes me stamp and shout.
My temper sometimes takes me over, and I can't catch it up.

My temper makes others get mad,
My temper makes me angry and they get angry back.
My temper makes the whole world cross.
My temper gets me into trouble and I wish it did not.

My temper has one good point, because it lasts for only a minute.
My temper. One of these days I'll get hold of you.

Winter

BY ANNE DOYLE

It's cold outside,
The wind is blowing, and I think it's snowing.

On goes my coat, and hat,
And mittens too. I don't want to catch cold or flu.

It's bitter out here,
Enough to make your hands turn rough.

I'm freezing now,
My feet are cold. I can't pick up anything to hold.

It's too cold for me
Oh, I would like a nice cup of tea.

The hot breath comes from my mouth
Like ice, and I think I'm going to freeze.



CHESS AT BREAK FOR KEVIN, DAVID & YUNIS.

OPPORTUNITIES

Recently we talked to Megan Booth who is Deputy Warden of Osmond House, a young people's day centre. In her spare time Megan is the leader of a new youth club just opened at Moseley Road, Methodist Church. The club meets on Wednesdays from 7.30 - 10p.m. and is for all teenagers over 14. The club provides facilities such as table-tennis, badminton, chess, cards and draughts, but Megan is very keen that the local youngsters decide what activities they want to do. Ideas so far have been for occasional discos, summer outings by coach and possible voluntary service in the community. One exciting opportunity is that each Wednesday evening for 1½ hours the club has been offered the use of the gym of Moseley Rd. Art School. There are also plans to have an electric cooker and sewing machine available. Most of the helpers for the club come from the Methodist church and from the Church of Christ. Joe Stephens, the minister, tells us he is very glad another club is appearing because he knows there is a great need for youth clubs in the area. Other local people are also interested and Megan hopes to include them on the Club's Management Committee. Membership costs just 20p for 6 months and non-members can pay 5p per evening. Good value for money, and we wish the new club luck!

Report by Hilary Comfort.



CHECKING THE RULES?

Happy Birth

Dear Heathan,
I just want to take this opportunity of thanking the staff at the Sorrento Maternity Hospital for their kind and thoughtful service. Especially for letting me participate in the birth of my son. I wouldn't have missed being there for the world!

I would be interested to hear how other people feel about other maternity hospitals and wards. I think some doctors are a bit free with their scalpels and needles and drugs - what with induced births and epidurals and things. Perhaps you could compile a Heathan 'Best-Place-To-Have-A-Baby-Guide'.

Yours,
A happy father.

(We'll send the hospital a free copy! And we'd certainly like readers to give us their views on this or anything else. Write to 120, St. Paul's Rd or call, or phone 440-4376. Ed.)

Just for Fun.

Dear Heathan,
I thought the Road Show was something really good and really different. All my mates enjoyed themselves and I certainly did too. There seemed to be even more people at the second show than the first!

The bits I liked most were when Bondi Bill swallowed the razor blades, and the sketch where the vicar told us all about the evils of the demon drink. I don't know whether it would be possible, but I'd certainly like the actors to come back again. If they can't, it would be really good to have something like it. I don't suppose you could do it yourselves? There's plenty of us ready to join in! Anyway, thanks to the Crown management, the actors and Community School for organising it.

Yours,
Terry Byrne, & the gang from the Crown pub.

Letters

Keeping an eye on art

Dear Sir,
I enclose a copy of a review of a booklet about Moseley Rd. Art School which may interest many of our readers and can be obtained from the Friends of Moseley Rd. Art School c/o the school. The booklet is called 'The Truth about No. 492' and costs 50p to cover production costs. The Friends of M.R.A.S. have published this booklet to explain what the school is doing and why they feel there is a very strong case for its continued existence. The review says:

'This booklet contains a brief history of the school, which was built in 1899 and which has been a Junior School of Arts and Crafts since 1921. Messages of support from prominent people in the world of art are included - Henry Moore, Graham Sutherland, Margot Fonteyn, and Bernard Leach (the potter) among them. There are also contributions from former pupils of the school who are now working in the fields of art and design in Birmingham. The booklet contains details of plans, (requested but afterwards rejected by Birmingham Education Committee), which would enable the school to retain its identity and at the same time directly serve the interests of the immediate area through the consortium system. The particular atmosphere of a small, unique, school is described, and the booklet states, 'It stands today as a tribute to those men of Birmingham who created it', as another example of something which 'Birmingham has pioneered and in which it has led the world.' Photographs illustrate the work of the school, and the contribution of the artist and designer in modern society.'

We hope you will find room to print this review, and hope for the continued interest of yourselves and your readers in the fate of our school.

Yours sincerely,
Friends of Moseley Rd. Art School.

Response

Dear Heathan,
I read with interest Dick Atkinson's School report in the December issue of the Heathan. I would just like to add my agreement to the opinions expressed about the Birmingham Young Volunteers poster studied by the pupils. The poster was designed in London by professional advertising designers. It was being done free, so they were given a lot of leeway in the poster design. None of the staff here saw it before it was printed.

When we saw this one (there were 3 posters in all) we were immediately disappointed because it was patronising. In the end we did send some out because of the considerable money spent on the printing. Later one of the Community School pupils called at B.Y.V. to complain about it. I immediately agreed that no more posters would be sent off without the wording cut off. I wrote letters of apology to the parents of the three boys in the poster. I also agreed that any copies displayed with the original wording on could be pulled down.

We in B.Y.V. agree with both the sentiments and reasoning expressed by the students. I hope that the value of direct action was demonstrated by the results of their visit to our office. No final ironies. The series of posters won an international design award (the judges were other advertising designers). They have been rather successful in attracting volunteers on to our projects.

Yours sincerely,
Paul Chaplin. (Organiser, B.Y.V.)

We thank Paul Chaplin for his letter, and also for his helpful response to the kid who plucked up courage to go to town to the B.Y.V. office to complain. We know that B.Y.V. appreciate that the kids were trying to make a wider point, and weren't simply criticising them for sending out a 'patronising' and misleading poster. Ed.)

Helping

Dear Heathan,
I'm writing to say that if there are any EX-SERVICE men or women in the area who are in need of help of any kind, they can write to me at the address below:

7, Lilac Avenue,
Runcorn Road,
BIRMINGHAM 12 BH.

If they give their name and address, and tell me what kind of help they need, I will contact the British Legion on their behalf. I am on the Committee of the local and County branches, and would like to see the Legion doing more with its funds for the service people in this district who are in need of help. But before we can do this we must find out who and where they are. Of course I will treat any letters I have from your readers in the strictest confidence. One last thing. Could anyone who writes to me please let me know their Service particulars.

Sincerely,
(Mrs.) Sadie Evans.

worried

Dear Sir,
I am writing because I'm worried about the playground in Malvern St. The kids round here really need a place to go to for something to do and there isn't anywhere else. But I think its been getting bad for some while now. There is a lot of dirt, and a lot of things have been broken, and the kids dont enjoy it any more. There's a lot of swearing and bullying and stone-throwing, too, which no-one likes. I'm wondering what the people who run it are doing about this. I know its got a committee with local people, and I think its very good of them to give up their time and try to help the kids. But it has been getting very bad from what it was, and I know a lot of people who say the same as me. I dont know what to suggest, because I know it isnt easy to cope with some of the youngsters and I know the playleaders work hard and I'm not criticising them. I just know all the parents would like it to get better, and the kids want to go and have a good time. I am sorry not to sign the letter, but I dont want anyone to think I'm stirring up bad feeling.

Yours,
'An anxious mother'.

most elegant

Dear Heathan,
I really did agree with the reader who complained about the men's lavatories like the ones in Clifton Rd and Edward Rd. in your last issue. Every time I go past them I feel really angry with the Council for not doing anything about them. I did go to one of the development meetings and mentioned the lavatories and asked what was going to happen to them. I dont know who it was, but one of them men from the Council who was there said he thought they were 'In keeping with the character of the area.' This reminds me of your readers suggestion that if anyone thought they were of historic interest they should take them away for a Museum. I'm not sure what it was about the area that they were thought to be in keeping with, but personally I thought that was really insulting. Not to mention highly inconsiderate, as I also agree with the point that there ought to be some proper provision for everyone. Incidentally, well done with your paper in general - its just what we need to cheer us up and get us all going.

Yours faithfully,
P. Kennedy, (Mrs.)

(So far no letters from interested Museum-keepers all over the country. But we'll keep this spot open for more examples of lavatory humour from developers, or anyone else with views on the subject. Or if someone thinks the subject should be tactfully changed, you've only got to drop us a line. Ed.)

Time of Trial

Dear Heathan,
Can I ask your readers please to keep their dogs in their own houses and gardens. I'm sure those who let them roam dont realise, but I got the garden really nice last year, and over and over again dogs broke my fence and hedge and came in and dug up the plants. I work hard on the garden and get depressed about the way its spoiled. J. Ball.

Cement report

As we reported in our last issue, Mount Pleasant school's six-storey teaching block has been closed all this year because high alumina cement was used extensively in the construction, and is now known to be dangerous. Unlike some other City schools, Mount Pleasant's problem with the cement cannot be cured simply by strengthening parts of the building with new materials. High alumina cement is all over the walls and floors of the whole six-storey block, and not, as in some other buildings, just in the roof beams.

THE LONG WAIT.

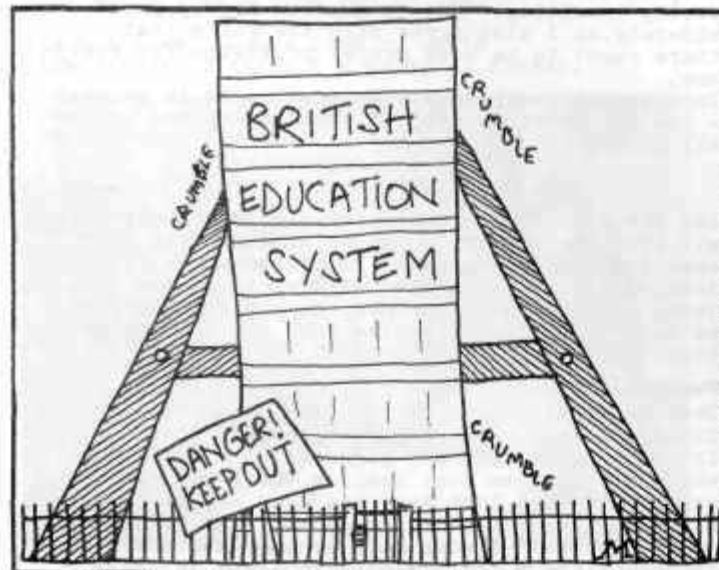
City Engineers have solved the problem in some other affected buildings, mostly single-storey, by 'strengthening' and supporting beams. They hope they have, anyway, but they are not SURE since they are awaiting instructions from the Dept. of the Environment on new safety standards which they must meet. They do not yet know (How long, O Lord?) how to tackle Mount Pleasant's problem. It looks as though nothing they could do to strengthen the 6-storey block would be satisfactory. But before they decide whether to try, or on the other hand, to knock it down and start again, they are waiting for the Ministry report. Some hopeful engineers say the school could move back into the building quite soon if the Dept. of the Environment advises them that it can be made safe.

WHAT GOES UP....

But there are plenty of pessimists, too. (Which is not surprising, when we recall again that high alumina cement has been BANNED in the country of its invention, France, since the 1940's, as well as in other countries like Germany more recently. These countries seem to have learned faster than we did from the collapse of buildings with the cement in them.) The pessimists envisage Mount Pleasant's structure as failing to pass safety tests. If it does fail them, re-building them will be a very costly and lengthy business.

HOW LONG IS 'NOT FOR LONG'?

All this year, staff, pupils and parents have coped with a situation in which the members of the school were dispersed to several 'temporary' centres. Although arrangements were efficient and thorough, the strain is beginning to tell as the temporary arrangements seem more and more permanent. For the senior pupils there is the problem of having to shift about all the time between their temporary centres and the special workshops and sports hall still open on the Mt. Pleasant site. Although the distances are not huge, the journeys are distracting, and in the winter weather unpleasant. Juniors are better off. They have further to go to their temporary centres in the morning, but once there they can stay put. In fact, many of them seem happier than they did in the large complex of the 'proper' teaching building. Their centres are much smaller and cozier. The strain is worst, perhaps, for the staff. Many of them have to move about between the centres and the main site. They have more commuting to do than the senior pupils even. The temporary arrangements have dragged on for a long time and many wish they could see some end to them.



Nothing definite HAS so far emerged, as far as the fate of the 6-storey block is concerned. But there IS a new plan to make the temporary arrangements more comfortable. Calthorpe School has just acquired a new building, and its old one will now be vacant in September. So it has been decided that (failing a miracle which makes the block safe), Mt. Pleasant will take over Calthorpe's old building in September. The senior forms will move in there, which will put them all under one roof and save a good deal of the present marching about. Of course, no-one sees this arrangement as ideal. The old Calthorpe building had itself been scheduled for demolition, and no doubt will have been allowed to deteriorate. It had, in any case, none of the modern comprehensive school's space or special facilities. If the new 'temporary' solution persists for a long time, new strains are bound to be felt.



Charity begins in the pub

At the beginning of November a group of regulars at the Crown pub decided that they wanted to do something to raise money for a charity organisation, to help those less fortunate than themselves. So the 'Crown Fund-Raising for Charity Group' was formed. It includes the licensee, his wife and some of the customers. They decided to raise money for the Muscular Dystrophy Group, and their first venture was a sponsored walk which took place on a Sunday afternoon. It covered 10 miles and had 22 participants. This venture raised £165, which was a good start. They then held a darts K.O. competition and a 'carol-singing' session. When all the proceeds were added together it all came to £178 which was duly posted off to the Muscular Dystrophy Group in London.

Report by Maureen McSkane.



Members of the Crown Charity Group—with Cheque!

St.
Paul's

TO MIND THE KIDS....

Suppose you had a child under 5 and had to go to work. Would you start to look for a Nursery, or a nice friendly person who had other people's children in her own home? How much would you expect to pay? What kind of pre-school activities are there in this area?

Basically, if you want to work full-time, there are day nurseries and child-minders, and you have to decide which is available, convenient and best for your child. Both will take children of any age up to 5, and are usually open from 7.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. The best way to find a nursery place is to look in the Telephone Directory under Birmingham City Council (Social Services Dept.) There you will find a list of 20-odd day nurseries in the city. Having selected the nearest, and there are 5 within a 2-mile radius of Balsall Heath, it is up to you to go and see the matron and put your case. They are usually full up, with long waiting lists, and only the most persistent search will get results.

Finding a good child-minder is even more difficult. Vacancies are often passed on by word of mouth, and it's almost impossible, if you don't know one to start with. The best thing to do is to ring up the Social Services Dept., Child Minders Section (235-2332) and they may find one for you or tell you where they are.

There are, of course, a few 'private' day nurseries in the city. Our own, St. Paul's, is one of these.

What it's all about.

Some of the mothers who bring their children to our Nursery in St. Paul's Rd have suggested that we should have another open evening soon. They want us to set out the nursery with all the activities, so that people can come and ask questions. They have suggested this because they feel that they don't understand well enough why we encourage the children to play with sand and water, paint, play mums and dads in the house-corner, do jig-saws, read books, etc. Some mums feel that the kids are just messing about, and can't quite see that all this playing is the very basis of learning and is very important.

The nursery may look very noisy and busy during the day when the children are all moving about from one activity to another. But it's not as free and easy as it looks. For example, they love playing with sand - but they mustn't throw it over the floor or over each other. They love playing with the pastry too, but they must sit at the table with their sleeves rolled up, and they mustn't plaster it in their hair or run off and stuff it into the electric plugs. They learn to look after things - that it's silly to chew jig-saw pieces or books, or scribble on the walls and the tables.



Drawing the cat.

If you leave children to their own devices they soon get fed up because they need to be shown how to play with things and with each other properly. Take drawing, for example. It's important,

because you are training clumsy little fingers to hold a pencil, make all sorts of shapes and draw lines on paper which mean something. At home, if you give your child 4 or 5 pieces of paper and a pen and then leave him to it he'll probably do a quick scribble on all the bits of paper, then get fed up. So you have to sit down with him and show him a few things. He'll probably say, "Draw me a cat". If you do, he'll think it's marvelous, but he'll also say, "That's good. I can't do it." Beware! All you've taught him is that he CAN'T draw. Here's what we do at the Nursery in the same situation:-

Child: Draw me a cat.
Teacher: (very gently) No - you draw a cat.
Child: I can't.
Teacher: Let me show you. (1. 'Draw a face', and you make a circle in the air with a finger.
2. 'Put in 2 eyes and whiskers', and you show where they would be on your own face. 3. 'Put in 2 pointed ears', and you show where, in the air again. 4. 'Give him a body and a tail'.)

With a little practice he will be able to draw all sorts of things this way. He will be so pleased with himself, because it really is his own work. Also, you, his teacher, have encouraged him to listen to your words and follow your careful instructions - very good practice in learning the language. He knows, now, what ears, eyes, bodies, tails, etc., are. Children need lots of practice at both listening and talking, and they only get better at these things when a sympathetic adult is there. A lot of mothers notice how much better their children are at talking after only a short time at the Nursery. This is because the child doesn't have to bother too much to explain things to his mother. She understands his funny little mumbles and hand signs too well. At the Nursery, the teacher doesn't know what he means unless she can understand his WORDS, so he has to make the effort to communicate more clearly. (OUR CAT WAS DRAWN BY BLOSSINA.)

Stories and Rhymes.

At Nursery we read lots of story books and sing a lot of nursery rhymes. We do this mainly because the children really enjoy it, and are as proud as Punch to go home and recite things to Mum. But it also encourages lots of new words, which the children hear in stories and rhymes, almost by accident. Nursery rhymes don't make much sense to grown-ups but children really enjoy the nonsense of them. You can find a wide selection of stories and rhymes in a series of books called 'Ladybird Books.' A great many shops round here sell them and they're only 18p each. And of course, there's the library on Moseley Rd. with a marvellous selection of books for children under 5.

PLAYDO-'Something to do.'

This is a good activity to make at home. All you need to buy is a bottle of liquid paraffin from the chemist.

Recipe. 1 Mug of plain flour.
1 or 2 teaspoons of liquid paraffin.
Water.
Food colouring (if you like).

Mix it all together for 10 minutes or so, until it is a lovely smooth elastic dough. Don't put in too much liquid paraffin or else it will be too greasy, and not too much water or it will just be a sticky mess! If you keep it in a plastic container it'll keep for at least a week, especially in a fridge.

USE. 1. Teach the child to use it always in the same place. (At table on a newspaper.)
2. Use a real rolling pin, tart cutters, tins. (They can easily be washed afterwards.)
3. Even a child of 3 can understand that it mustn't be stuck on walls, clothes, hair, etc. If he doesn't stick to the rules, put it away as a punishment.

****By the way, liquid paraffin is a powerful laxative, and the bottle should be kept well out of the kids' reach.*****

By Gill Southwell.

EDITORIAL

Some 70 years ago Balsall Heath was little more than a village joined to Brummagem by a track. The people who lived here were mostly poor. But they were born, raised, worked, brought up their families, and died here. It was a community. Local people worked together to help each other and to build a better future.

Today the village has been eaten up. The community has disappeared, and individuals are lost. Balsall Heath is now just part of an enormous urban sprawl. To the politicians and the planners it is only another 'inner-ring re-development area' with a bad reputation. It is not even, these days, a bit of Brum, so much as a bit of the 'West Midlands'. (And where, as the telly ad says, is THAT?)

FOR RICHER & FOR POORER.

We may be better off financially than those who once lived here. But we no longer have much control over what HAPPENS to us. Our lives are controlled by other people. Though not so poorly off for money, we are poorly off for the satisfaction, excitement, interest and pleasure that comes from making our own decisions, building our own organisations, shaping our own future. So, since the last century, while some things have improved, the quality of life has suffered.

TWO REACTIONS.

Some of us become frustrated, apathetic or resigned, and come to accept that nothing can be done, the experts know best, and things had better be left to professional outsiders. Others work, against the odds, to prove that local people CAN create their own institutions and improve the place that so many know as just another 'slum'.

BETTER - BUT -

One of the issues on which debates are bound to take place between local people and 'experts' concerns the schools. Comprehensive schools, like other parts of the modern Welfare State, once seemed a just and fair solution to the problem of a divisive, class-based, education. The old system meant secondary modern schools for the working class, grammar schools for the middle class and public schools for the rich and privileged. One school for all seemed to be an advance.

But the comprehensive schools are NOT schools for the local community. They have been made by the government and the Local Authority. They are made to fit into the needs of the kind of urban, industrial society which politicians and officials plan and control. Local needs; those of the individual, the family and the community, are neglected in favour of the needs of remote economic, technological and industrial institutions.

NOT A COMPREHENSIVE ANSWER.

Which kind of education is best? The one the State provides is, of course, a lot better than no education at all - and also better than some of the messy 'alternatives' offered by trendy 'progressives' who believe in licence with no responsibility. But Balsall Heath shows that local needs are not fulfilled, except by local initiatives. The children at St. Paul's Nursery, for example, had no education at all until it started. The children who now attend the Community School did not GO to their former state secondary schools because they were not relevant to their needs. Now the Nursery is a great success, and the Community School kids voted to cancel their last holiday to continue school work, including preparing for public exams, which no-one thought them able to take in their old schools. So, the comprehensive school is not the ultimate solution, perhaps, to educational inequality. Perhaps there are other alternatives, no one solution.

KILLED BY KINDNESS.

The parents and children of Moseley Rd. Art School think there IS a need for other solutions. They have set themselves high standards. The quality of their work is excellent. They have built a good school with a city-wide reputation. Founded 70 years ago, so that ordinary local children with an interest in, and aptitude for, the arts, could have a good education, the school now faces closure. Kids we know who go there are literally in tears at the prospect.

The L.R.A. and the Labour Council are doing no more than authorities in other towns, as they see it, in

decreasing that M.R.A.S. should merge with Mount Pleasant Comprehensive school. One more relic of the past will go and one more piece in the jig-saw of centralised planning will be put in its place.

DIS-INTEGRATION?

But the staff, children and parents of M.R.A.S. do not see it this way. They want their school to live and develop... They have protested, pleaded, marched and presented petitions. Just recently they heard that Mount Pleasant's main building may be knocked down, in which case all its pupils (1500 already) must continue to be distributed among half a dozen temporary centres, for a long time to come. SURELY no-one will destroy the Art School now, to 'integrate' it with a school whose buildings may become a heap of rubble, they ask.

OTHER WAYS?

The Heathan supports the Friends of Moseley Rd. Art School in their aim to ensure that one of Balsall Heath's schools is not eliminated. We are proud of the school. It contributes to the quality of life in our community as little else does. Its standards are of the highest in art and life. Against the standard of uniformity imposed by the state, and local government it stands for beauty and creativity. We urge those responsible to think again. Please leave the Art School alone. Too few of the City's schools command loyalty and enthusiasm from their pupils, staff and parents. Don't destroy one which does. Don't assume comprehensive schools are the answer to all educational ills. Be bold. Perhaps there are other ways.

LOSING A BATTLE, NOT THE WAR

If, as seems possible, the Friends of the Art School are defeated, the school will disappear in September. Not only will its defenders have lost, but Balsall Heath will have lost. We who live here are used to that - it's part of our experience. But the lesson some of us will draw is that if you want something done you must do it yourself... If you want something badly enough, like the Nursery, or the Community School it can be created.



Your Up Your Street reporter called this week on pensioners Jack and Daphne Bury of St. Paul's Rd. 'I don't think I can tell you much', said Mrs. Bury. As it turned out, Mrs. Bury's life has been far from uneventful. She wasn't born in England at all but in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Her mother and father had both emigrated from England and had met and married in Africa. Her mother worked at making handbags from snake-skin and crocodile skin and Daphne learned the same skill. It's a trade which has stood her in good stead all her life. By 1930 Daphne Bury and her mother had saved enough to make the long sea-voyage back to England. They soon found that no-one would let a house to women (let alone give them a mortgage) so for 20 years they lived in rooms in and around Balsall Heath. First, in Gladstone Rd., then Priestley, Belgrave, and Balsall Heath Rds. At first Mrs. Bury worked in 'Samuels', making shoes and slippers, then, when it was bombed in the war, at a place in Hockley making raincoats. (For the great sum of £4-10s a week.) Later, when her mother became ill she started to work at home, making up garments and doing alterations - a job she is still doing.

BETTER DAYS.

Mrs. Bury met her husband Jack in 1956, which is when they bought their house in St. Paul's Rd. Jack came from Ireland about 30 years ago, and worked at Lucas' till his health broke down. The Burys remember a smarter St. Paul's Rd. in the 1950's, with all the houses occupied and well-kept. Jack Bury remembers dances held in St. Paul's church hall every Saturday.

U.Y.S. THANK YOU MESSAGES.

The special Up Your Street 'Thank you' this time goes, first, to the Rev. Mr. Cooper for being (I quote) a 'lovely man' and doing a fine job at St. Paul's Church. Second 'thank you' is to Mrs. Bury's neighbour Mrs. Miller for all the help while Mr. Bury was ill recently.

up your street cont.

The Up Your Street 'thumbs down' goes to the people who keep tipping rubbish in Mr. Bury's entry. He doesn't happen to enjoy clambering over piles of broken bottles, etc., and who can blame him?

SKIPPING IT!

Finally, a special Good Try award to the Urban Renewal people, who have put out a circular, claiming that they've solved Balsall Heath's rubbish problem. Unfortunately, six skips are NOT going to be enough for the whole of the area and anyway **WHAT ABOUT ALL THE RUBBISH THAT'S ALREADY BEEN DUMPED?** It would surely have been better to have contacted local schools, play-ground and voluntary bodies to get them to help out, and advise. Alternatively, they could pay someone to fill skips. Two blokes I know were paid £25 per week for 3 months to fill-a-skip-a-day, as part of a thorough clean-up of Saltley. See you Up Your Street next time!

mike dunkley

FANTASTIC!

'Fantastic' 'Great' 'Never enjoyed myself so much before'. **AGREED**, the people who made these comments about 'The Road Show' (performed by the actors of Second City Theatre First Company) were a bit merry at the time, as it was just after the show at the Crown pub! **BUT** there was no doubt that everyone who made up the packed audience in the pub's lounge had a very good time. The actors had done their homework. They had dug up several old Brummie songs, and their Music Hall sketches were peppered with local gossip and information.

down the hatch!

The Show started at 8.30 and went on till 10.30. By half-time the pub was alive and the audience, once over their initial reserve were joining in with gusto. (Except when it came to swallowing razor blades and fire, and pushing gigantic nails up noses!) By the end, you couldn't tell actors from audience as the beer-drinking competition raised the roof.

no return performance.

Those who missed the first show or heard about it from friends demanded a return performance. Some said it went even better the second time. But unfortunately there won't be any chance of a third time round. The acting group has to disband for the second time. They started out as the Midlands Theatre Company, housed at Cannon Hill. But the management there told them to leave, because they refused to cut out their work in community theatre. They had been going out of Cannon Hill to places like Balsall Heath, and refused to confine themselves to straight theatre. They raised enough money to stay together for a while, doing many shows all over Birmingham, not just in the Crown, in the past three months. But now the money has run out and they've had to get jobs elsewhere. If any of our readers is a millionaire who'd like to get them started again, there are plenty of people at the Crown who'll give them a jolly good reference!



Knocking it back - in record time!



TOPLESS DANCERS AT THE CROWN!



AUDIENCE REACTION.



ANY OLD IRON?

St Paul's Day Care Centre

VACANCIES FOR 24 - 3 YEAR OLDS



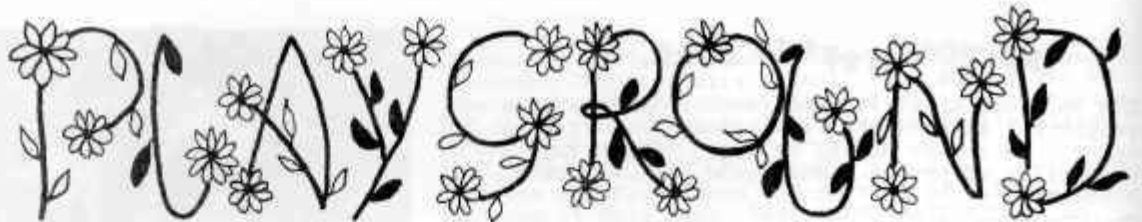
good food and care

AT ST. PAUL'S HALL

TOP OF ST. PAUL'S RD.

Nursery hours 7.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.

Mrs. Bury has a very unusual trade. And we know another Heathan who used to put the letters in the middle of sea-side rock. (Not any more, 'cos no demand for rock from Brum.) Any more readers with unusual trades? Write and tell us about it if so, or phone, 440-4376. Heathan, 120, St. Paul's Rd. 4



IF AT FIRST WE DON'T SUCCEED, WE TRY, TRY, TRY AGAIN.

On Thursday March 29th the Annual General Meeting of the Malvern St. Adventure Playground Association took place at St. Paul's Nursery. This meeting is the yearly opportunity for all parents and interested local people to talk about the way the playground is run, and to suggest people to serve on the Committee.

The meeting received reports from last year's officers of the Committee and from the playleaders (Though unfortunately, poor Rob McCann fell into a window before the meeting, spent most of it in the accident hospital, and only arrived at 9.30 p.m. complete - again - with 7 stitches in his hand.) There were quite a few people at the meeting despite thick snow on the ground outside. We heard depressing official reports from the Secretary, Treasurer and playleaders.

Bad Luck

Everyone agreed with Ted Wright, the Secretary, when he said that the playground had had a lot of bad luck, lately. Last summer, Rob Wheway, one of its two playleaders, had left. Then Rob McCann took 6 months' leave to do a college course. He's back now but, meantime, there has been a lot of chopping and changing of replacements.

Worse Still

Worse still, we heard from Frank Smyth (Treasurer) and Ted, that there was no money left in the kitty. Things were so serious that the two playleaders would have to be given notice in the near future unless money could be borrowed or raised. Despite trying hard, the outgoing Committee had had little success in this field. Things looked desperate.

Crisis

Combine these factors - the rapid turnover of leaders, and lack of cash - and it became easier to understand why the day to day work of the playground had suffered, some children were no longer using the facility and some parents had become worried. Ann, in her playleader's report, said that despite some successful activities, the hut had taken a lot of heavy blows from vandals, and both it and the playground were in a poor state. It was difficult to create a situation in which enjoyable and interesting play could take place. After a good discussion, the playleaders favoured closing the playground for a short period, to carry out 'spring-cleaning', draw up new plans and get new activities ready.

Taking Steps

The A.G.M. spent a long time discussing the whole situation, and considered ways of helping the new Committee, which was duly elected, to start its difficult task. It was agreed that the first step was to accept the seriousness of the present situation. The second was to do something about it. The necessary action was put into motion when the newly-elected committee was given the task of investigating the viability of the playground, its running and financing - in fact everything to do with its work. It was instructed to report its findings to a Special General Meeting in two months' time - a 'make or break' point.

Hopefully

In accepting the Chairmanship of the new Committee, Dick Atkinson said that he and the other committee members had been given an almost impossible task. But he felt sure that 'where there's a will, there's a way'. He was convinced that enough people would chip in and help, when they realised how sorely their help was needed. The A.G.M. concluded on an optimistic note, and all present agreed that they would do all they could to ensure that the playground survived the difficult period it was facing.

Excursions - & Alarms

Hello again! Just a few lines to tell you what we have been doing since the last issue of the Heathen. Since the Christmas holidays we have had a few big events. Perhaps the most unusual of these was the midnight hike for teenagers. We set off at midnight for the Lickey Hills in a van. After avoiding ghosts, witches and tree-stumps we reached the top of the hills. The mist was all around us and owls screeched in the night - we began to wonder whose idea it was to do such a stupid thing. Why hadn't we stayed in bed? Then George took us on the BIG TREK. We must have walked about 16 miles! At each rest point our Scots friend opened his magic bag. First stop, we all munched a sandwich. Then coffee emerged from it. A rumour went round that he had a stash of chocolate - or was it something stronger? Just as we all thought we were completely lost, we rounded a corner to see our trusty friend the Transit van.

More recently we have had three Sunday trips to Sutton Park (where we played hide and seek in the woods, fished in the stream and caught two crayfish, paddled, etc.); the Clent Hills, on a very windy day, on which we were blown down or rolled down; and to Stratford-on-Avon where we fed the ducks, walked along the river (yes, it was a bit muddy!) and spent a lot of time reading the inscriptions on grave-stones. We never did find Shakespeare's - I think he must have been put somewhere special.

Apart from all this the playground is in the middle of a massive clear-up. I suppose you could call it a spring-clean. The inside of the hut has had a bit of a decoration - a mixture of paint and wallpaper. The den-building season is just starting, and we've got some smashing wood and nails. Swimming is coming on well too - two of the kids have learned to swim. If you want a splash join us on Tuesdays at 4.15 - cost is 5p. Skating is Saturdays at 10 a.m., cost 10p. Look out for Easter - we've got a great programme lined up. See you soon!

Anne.

REPORT

from

TINDAL ST. SCHOOL.

Since our article in the December issue of The Heathen our work at Tindal has been progressing slowly but surely.

The nursery which is being built is near completion and already 25 children are waiting to join us. The two resource rooms, especially for our Community project, are also progressing well and we hope soon to have a grand opening.

We have now started a Wednesday Club for our older children which runs from 6 - 8 pm each Wednesday and proving very successful. We have a regular 45 - 50 children attending. During the Easter holiday we are having a holiday playscheme which will involve both parents and children.

In January the Moseley Branch of the Round Table very kindly invited 70 of our children to a party and a good time was had by all. On February 14th we had a Valentine's Dance and were very pleased to receive help from parents and other friends of Tindal. A further social is to be held at Tindal on 26th April when we are joining with two residents associations to make an evening of enjoyment and entertainment for everyone. Remember everyone is welcome and we hope to see you there. Posters advertising the dance will be shown in the Balsall Heath area shortly.

Other projects are in hand and with the help of our parents, children, and friends, should prove as successful as those already accomplished.

Red Parry and Laura Need.
Home/School Liaison Teachers.

CAN WE HELP? ADVICE COLUMN

Q. You said in the last issue that people should give public health 6 weeks to do things before complaining that they haven't done anything. Surely urgent repairs can't be left that long?

A. You're right: some things like drains or defective toilets should be done in a couple of days. Otherwise homeowners obviously have to be given a few days to get a builder and organise other work. For bad defects like a leaking roof the Council can give a 9 day order but otherwise the order will be for a 'reasonable time' which may be a couple of months or more. Ask the inspector what he's going to do and when work has got to be done - if the work isn't done by then tell him and ask him to get the work done by the Council. Keep reminding them once a reasonable time has gone by and ask your advice centre to help if nothing happens.

Q. What can I do, I think my rent is too high?

A. If you live in furnished accommodation and the landlord lives in the house, contact the rent tribunal and they will fix a fair rent, 6, Livery Street, Birmingham 2, telephone 236 3060. If you live in unfurnished accommodation or a furnished accommodation where the landlord lives away from the house, contact the rent officer and he will fix a fair rent. Rent Officer, 5th floor, Grosvenor House, 14 Bennetts Hill, telephone 643 8861.

Q. What can I do if I think I'm entitled to a rent rebate?

A. Write, call or telephone:-
Rebate Office, Bush House, Broad Street, Birmingham 2. Telephone 235 3411 or Housing Centre, 271, Stratford Road, Birmingham. Telephone 773 4211.

Q. What can I do, my landlord has given me notice to quit?

A. If you live in a furnished flat and the landlord lives in the house, contact the rent tribunal right away, 6 Livery Street, Birmingham 2. Telephone 236 3060. The rent tribunal will hear your case and usually they will give you security of tenure for at least six months.

If you live in an unfurnished or furnished flat where the landlord lives away from the house, just sit tight until you receive a court order. After receiving the court order it will take at least 2½ months before your case is heard in court. During this time the landlord will refuse to receive rent, but keep the rent on one side because when you win the court case you will have to pay all the back rent. The best thing to do is to open a Post Office Account and pay your rent into that.

Q. I have bought goods on HP and something called Credit Sale. What's the difference?

A. Basically, goods on HP belong to the person you're buying them from till you've finished paying - they are not yours till then. With a credit sale the goods are yours to

do what you like with; you owe the money but the company which sold them has no more claim on those goods than any others. If you want to know more, ask your advice centre or a lawyer.

Q. What can I do, I've got rats in my house?

A. Phone the health department 235 3434.

Stop up all holes in the house.

Keep food in containers.

Buy some traps - good bait is bread dipped in milk with a bit of sugar on it.

Q. You said that landlords could be forced to do repairs to houses that are going to be demolished. I'm a landlord and I can't afford it. It's very unfair when rents are frozen as well.

A. Life can be very hard for a landlord where rent does not cover the cost of mortgage, rates, repairs and so on, so he will want to charge high rent, which the law can put down. The law seems to be on the tenant's side. This is because a tenant has the house because he desperately needs accommodation - we all do; the landlord (except when he lives in the same house) is really doing it as a business venture to make a living so the law favours people who have basic human needs rather than people trying to make a profit.

If a landlord can't keep a house repaired and break even or make a small profit without charging too much rent, he is like an inefficient business that goes bust - he should be sold to someone else, or a Housing Association or the Council. The lesson to be learnt is that no one should buy a house with tenants or to let to tenants without investigating the finances and being aware of his legal duties. The people who suffer are tenants with inefficient landlords and landlords who have not thought about it before buying or have not been properly advised.

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.

RECIPE

TASTY BACON & POTATO CASSEROLE.

This recipe is very cheap, makes use of ingredients generally to hand, and tastes particularly delicious.

Ingredients (for 4 people)

- 4 large onions.
- 4 large potatoes.
- ½ lb bacon bits.
- 2oz grated cheese.
- 1 pint milk.
- 2oz flour.
- 2oz margarine.
- salt & pepper.

Method. Peel potatoes and onions and slice them thinly. Remove the rind and cut the bacon into smallish bits. Grease a casserole and fill it with alternate layers of sliced onions, sliced potatoes and bacon bits, ending with a layer of potatoes.

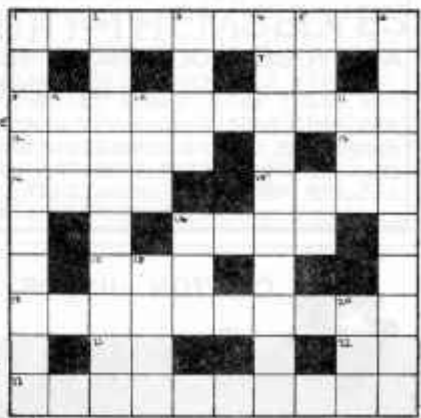
For the white sauce - melt the margarine, stir in the flour and add the cold milk. Stir until the mixture boils and thickens, and season well.

Pour the sauce over the casserole. Give the dish a good shake to distribute the sauce throughout. Sprinkle grated cheese over the top - cover and bake in a fairly hot oven (gas 6, 400F) for 1 hour. Uncover and bake for a further hour at reduced heat (gas 4, 325F). Serve with any green vegetables.

CROSS-WORD

- ACROSS
1. Local St. Tall entrance
 7. Male.
 8. Going up?
 12. Short extra school year.
 13. Backward ha.
 14. Old-fashioned you.
 15. Hartebeeste.
 16. Stupid short sheep.
 17. American initials.
 19. Dynamite.
 21. Where in French is a University.
 22. Concerning.
 23. Street of water babies!

- DOWN
1. Sorrowful snap of the ticker!
 2. Was attacked.
 3. It's in a gin and tonic.
 4. Consider more than once.
 5. Found in jelly.
 6. Turned into play.



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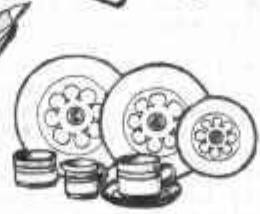
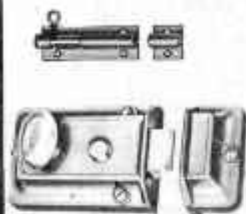
9. Fifth note. **MAY 31st.**
10. Spanish cry.
 11. Sounds wild, hits hard.
 16. Chinese chairman.
 18. Bullet for a quiet ear!
 20. To be human.

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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.

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