

NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS

BROUGHT TO YOU BY BALSALL HEATH AND SPARKBROOK FORUMS, FUNDED BY LIF (BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL)



Balsall Heath & Sparkbrook



EDITORIAL

Sitting eating lunch near the stables under a tree, in the heart of Balsall Heath, my three year old asked me, 'Why might this farm close? I like it here.' It's a good question and not one that I could answer well. How do you explain why there have been so many cuts to all the things that make such a difference to people's lives?

So much is uncertain: the weather is changeable; the political climate unstable and it's hard to see the future of some of the things that we rely on - like education, healthcare and many other services.

At times like this it's more important than ever to increase the connection between us. It's the connections between us that make us stronger. We at Neighbourhood News have been working very hard behind the scenes to build an exciting new project that will use, celebrate and strengthen the connections in our wonderful, vibrant community. We really hope to bring it to you soon.

Along with Balsall Heath Forum, The Active Wellbeing Society and other fantastic local organisations, we've been developing a plan to recruit a brand new news team. We aim to create a self sustaining resource in the newsletter and online site for all of us. It will spread awareness about available provision and reach into your homes with relevant news told by the people you know.

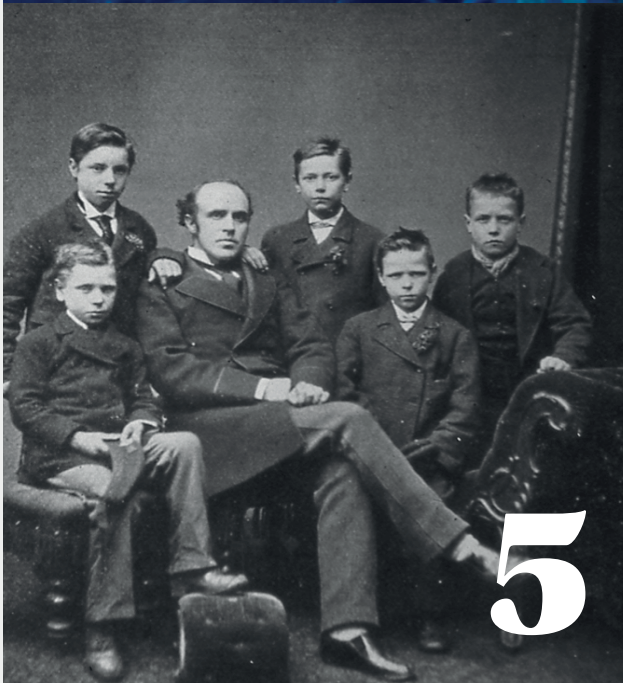
The news platform will act as a bridge between our amazing community groups and organisations and as a source of interest and information. Keep an eye on the site and your local community groups to find out more.

We have already done so much to build on the good work that was started in our local newsletter and at neighbourhoodnewsonline.com. **To help spread the message and share stories, why not put the advert from the back page of this newsletter up in your window?**

Have you enjoyed these two issues of Neighbourhood News delivered to your door? Let us know at editor.nno@gmail.com.

Thank you for reading!

Elisabeth Charis



Newsletter Balsall Heath & Sparkbrook

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**Neighbourhood News for
Balsall Heath and Spark-
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neighbourhoodnewsonline.com**

New Partnership Gives Hope to City Farm



St. Paul's Community Development Trust are happy to announce that following lengthy discussions with a number of organisations agreement has been reached with The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWs) that will secure the long term viability of the Balsall Heath City Farm.

Threatened with closure since December 2018 St. Paul's have been working with a number of organisations to try to secure the long-term viability of the City Farm. Now agreement has been reached with TAWs which means that the farm which has operated in Balsall Heath for over 40 years will remain open.

Working with St Paul's TAWs want to create new opportunities for people to become active and engaged in society and there will be a focus on using the farm as a place to bring people together.

Chief Executive of St. Paul's David Cusack said: "We are delighted that we have agreed a partnership with The Active Wellbeing Society that keeps our farm open and will allow both children and adults to use the facilities as a place to learn, volunteer, develop new skills and to just enjoy the facility. I'd like to thank TAWs but also the many people who have rallied around to look at ways to secure the farm's future, we will continue to raise money through the newly established "Friends of the Farm" to improve the facilities at the farm"

TAWs Chief Executive Karen Creavin said: "The City Farm is a vital space for children and families in Birmingham. We are really pleased to be able to work collaboratively with St. Paul's to ensure that this project has a future and can contribute to the increased wellbeing of our citizens. We are working with Sport England and Birmingham City Council on an initiative called Active Communities. The City Farm, and the ongoing partnership with St. Paul's, will both be a key element of how Active Communities comes to life in this part of the city".

The Active Wellbeing Society are working together with The Real Junk Food Project to bring a community kitchen to the Farm, offering meals on a Pay as you Feel able basis. The kitchen will be up and running in time for the summer holidays and will play a vital role tackling food poverty over the summer.

For more information please contact:
Chief Executive David Cusack
David.Cusack@stpaulstrust.org.uk

Open Day
18th May 11-4

To launch our new partnership with
The Active Wellbeing Society



'The Sun Lighters'
Welcome you to join them for
tea & coffee and a chat.
Tuesdays
10am—11.30am

Why not come along and do some crafts as well? We are making cards to take home and sell. We also want to start up a walking group—if you are interested come along and see what else we do for older adults.
For more information telephone 0121 464 1888 ask for Anita

St. Paul's Venture, Malvern Street, Balsall Heath

Nuns and Roses II

Five heavenly voices
sing medieval, classical,
folk, contemporary
a cappella

"Went down a storm...Extraordinary voices"
(Sarah Walker, BBC Radio 3, 2018)

"You will be, as I was, instantly hooked by the bewitching sound of Papagena"
(John Quinn, www.music-webinternational.com, 2018)

Saturday 11th May at 7.30pm

St Mary's Church, 31 St Mary's Row,
Moseley, Birmingham, B13 8HW
Tickets: £12 (£10 students, under 12s free) from:
www.wegotickets.com / call 07510 033 004 / on the door

Papagena

www.papagena.co.uk @papagenasingers facebook.com/Papagenasingers

STAY AND PLAY

Park Hill School

Tuesdays, 9am - 11am

Alcester Road, Moseley, B13 8BB

A friendly stay and play for local families

Join us for play, different activities and snacks with your children.

50p per family
Places are limited.

Call Rani on 464 6349

SPRING IN BALSALL HEATH BOUNCING BACK



John Newson

It is wonderful to see the spring flowers. We may hardly remember, but last year there were 7 weeks of heat and drought, with many plants and even trees browned off or dying. No-one is really responsible for watering public green areas. Those plants that resisted the dry conditions have come back, such as the Mediterranean herbs, or those that went to seed. Established trees with deep roots seem to be unaffected. Dry grass grew back from its roots.

Under the ground are many bulbs and they have stored energy and water from last year to surge up in February and March. Some people will remember the great daffodil planting campaign years ago that saw volunteers planting lorry loads of "daffs" into the grass. They extend and come up better every year. Nature doesn't have financial cuts or setbacks, because it uses endless renewable energy and adjusts its timings around what resources are available.

Sadly, some people have tried to vandalise trees, thinking that they have killed them, but I see that they often regrow from down near the roots and eventually they recreate a correct tree shape. People and communities are also tough, I notice, because we are nature and are strong if we work with nature. It is people who have made Balsall Heath beautiful and if everyone took on a piece of space, however small, to pick litter and pull weeds, then every spring may be better than the last. Thank you from Balsall Heath is Our Planet balsallheathisourplanet.wordpress.com.

A COMMUNITY THAT CARES

Since October I have been speaking with lot of active people who work or live in Balsall Heath and Sparkbrook to find out what events and activities are happening locally and how I can help them to get the word out on our website - www.neighbourhoodnewsonline.com. What is also clear from conversations is that the structures that supported local residents in becoming more active in their community no longer exist in the form they did a decade ago. Funding cuts to local organisations have taken their toll. Most Residents' Associations no longer meet and the street wardens who played such a key role in our neighbourhood are no longer there to assist residents with issues they face.

But we know that there are loads of positive things happening, often informally. It may be a few neighbours doing a bit of gardening together, reporting flytipping through the FixMyStreet app*, a Stay and Play session, a coffee morning or homework club. These activities are all vital in bringing people together and improving our environment.

In just a few months of conversations, together, we've begun to build an online directory and calendar of things happening in the area. Take a look. It's inspiring. There are so many things going on; coffee mornings, gardening sessions, youth groups, craft workshops, litterpicking, exercise classes, swimming sessions and art exhibitions - to name but a few things happening each week on our doorstep - often at low cost or for free.

The calendar looks impressive because of the staff and volunteers who care so passionately about improving the lives of people who live here.

So here is the ask - go to www.neighbourhoodnewsonline.com and share what you have been doing. Publicise your next event or activity, invite others to get involved, put a call out for help or send us some images or a report on anything you have already done. Items can be sent to comknow.nno@gmail.com. Or if you want to speak to someone about sharing your news, contact Rachel on 07967 093 256.

Rachel Gillies



* FixMyStreet is both a website and a downloadable mobile app to make it easy to report issues such as flytipping, graffiti, potholes and broken streetlighting. Locate the spot where you have seen the problem, describe what you see, add a photo if possible and then a report is sent to the local Council.

Gardening Club

Wednesdays 12.30 - 2.30

For adults 50+ who want to enjoy the company of others in a lovely relaxed environment

- Create containers gardens
- Hanging baskets
- Natural craft activities
- Refreshments
- Join us on walks
- Visit gardens
- Cooking projects
- Propagation



Balsall Heath City Farm & Gardens

Malvern Street, Balsall Heath B12 8NN - 0121 464 1888
Ask for Hywel or Anita

STOP THE LOAN SHARK



Smartlyte, a local training company recently put on an event at Balsall Heath Library to help local families raise awareness of the dangers of illegal money lending and loan sharks. The event was timed to coincide with the half term break and the choice of venue made it an easily accessible place for families.

The range of craft, songs and reading activities, including animation workshops on offer helped families to have fun, whilst at the same time understand the dangers of Loan Sharks. Families were also able to participate and show their creativity in designing and entering an 'Stop The Shark' poster competition.

Hafsha from Smartlyte said. "It was great to see over 90 families enjoying the activities and learning about an important issue. We hope that this work has highlighted the dangers to families" As Kerry, from Balsall Heath Library said. "It was a great day and so lovely to see families using the library space; engaged in learning and having fun". The England Illegal Money Lending Team estimates that more than 300,000 people are in debt to illegal money lenders in the UK. The harm and worry that can be caused to vulnerable families at risk is immense. For more details see www.stoploansharks.co.uk or call 0300 555 2222.

Hafsha Shaikh

THE LOST CHILDREN

A Balsall Heath Local History Society project, financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund

Between 1873 and 1948 around 6,000 destitute children were sent from the Birmingham Children's Emigration Homes in Highgate, to live with farmers in the backwoods of Canada. Described at the time as "gutter children", they lived in desperate conditions in the slum streets of the city and were the children of the poorest families.

Some were orphans, some were illegitimate, some were given away by parents who could not afford or care for them. All must have felt very lost and alone when they arrived at the Emigration Homes to prepare for a new life, in a very different world, some 4,000 miles from their Birmingham roots.

The Children's Emigration Homes were set up by 28-year-old John Middlemore. The scheme was financially supported by various wealthy companies and prominent individuals. The children spent up to a year here before being taken overseas in large groups and distributed to families. For the colonies it was a source of cheap labour and an opportunity to populate the Commonwealth with 'good British stock'.

Their future lives varied enormously - there are tales of happiness and success as well as tales of great sadness. All the children were parted from their siblings, some never to be reunited again..

The Homes were part of a much wider picture of child emigration which saw over 130,000 children sent from the UK to Australia, Canada and Rhodesia. It is estimated that around 12% of Canada's population is descended from Britain's "Home Children". However, this project is focussing solely on the Birmingham Children's Emigration Homes.

Sadly, the last of the Middlemore Homes - in St Luke's Road, Highgate - was demolished in May 2018 to make way for housing.

THE PROJECT

Balsall Heath Local History Society has received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for an exciting project based specifically around the Birmingham Children's Emigration Homes. We aim to

- raise awareness of this important aspect of Birmingham's heritage.
- make contact with living relatives of migrant children
- research and tell the stories of our Home Children and bring their memories home to Birmingham.

We are aiming at an exhibition In September 2019 at the Birmingham & Midland Institute in Margaret St. There will also be a dramatic lecture, some talks by two visitors from Canada and a book.

So Far:

We have had a huge response from both English and Canadian families

The majority of Middlemore child migrants have sadly died now. Many gave up searching for their long lost families but the pain lives on for their relatives, many of which are still searching for answers. There are thousands of children born to child migrants that are affected by what happened to their parents, grandparents and great grandparents and want to trace their wider families.



Help!

We now have a great team of volunteers but there is a lot to do so if you are able to give any time, please contact us:
info@balsallheathhistory.co.uk

We are also posting updates on our website: balsallheathhistory.co.uk and our Facebook page.

VAL HART



CHILDREN'S EMIGRATION HOMES, BIRMINGHAM.



James and John D., as they appeared when received into the Homes in July, 1907.



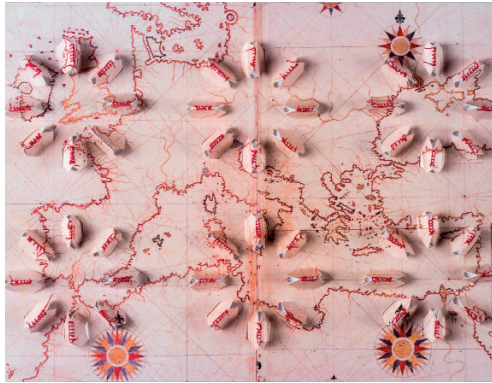
James and John D., as they appeared six months later in January, 1908.

For further explanation regarding these portraits see page 8.

Why Does Publ

Six local artists talk about their work and share their views

SHAHEEN AHMED ARTIST RESEARCHER MAKER



Art in public spaces plays an important role in our community. It reflects and reveals us and adds meaning and uniqueness to our neighbourhood.

FOKA WOLF POSTER ARTIST



I put art up on the street at ground level. Everyone sees it. The point of art is exploring reality through physical objects and people. Makes the world run more smoothly and it's nice to look at.

I try to encourage people to go the art route. Tell people that there is another way. If you can create ideas you can make it work.

It is important to give the general public, especially poor people and people that don't usually access art, inspiration. Otherwise the only people that will be creating art will be rich people and that is very dangerous. Art can be used to change history. Poor people need to be at the forefront of this as we represent the majority of the planet.

In the future, I would like to see Balsall Heath and Sparkbrook covered in Art painted by the people that live around there.



ic Art Matter?

JOSEPHINE REICHERT
ORT DIRECTOR
GALLERY



I see myself more of a curator of art than maker of art these days as that takes up all my time and makes me the happiest.

Anyone can make art!

It is important to make art public because art that is shown in hidden away spaces like art fairs or London based galleries means it is exclusive to the elite. The more people see a piece of work and experience it, the more the piece of art can touch people, change them, inspire them or get them talking. Especially art with a social impact needs to be seen by many people in order to educate people or to challenge their ideals. The arts can really change the way we communicate with others, the way we think about ourselves, the way we live, and that's why I believe it needs to be experienced by everyone from a young age. We

normally encounter public art unintentionally so there is also an element of discovery and surprise that can change our day or the feeling we have towards our city. Successful public art commissions allow viewers to play, to reimagine spaces or to discover new areas.

Balsall Heath and Sparkbrook is an amazing area! We love being based here as our immediate community are so diverse and connected. All our events are well attended and this is a lot to do with word of mouth. People speak to their neighbours and friends and this way the message spreads very quickly.

This area also has a great history of community spirit and this prevails to today. When things are wrong people get together and tackle the issues from illegal dumping to social unrest. It's amazing to see that what's considered a 'deprived neighbourhood' being full of community spirit. Finally, this area has some amazing community organisations, too many to mention, that do incredible work.



MOHAMMED
AEROSOL ALI



I started off as a mural painter. I still do it but I do a lot of other things now, a bit of everything, really, performances, curating -. I do a lot with food heritage now.

Art shouldn't really be confined to specific place. It should be embedded within our daily lives. We all, as human beings, are born as artists. Children by nature, have the instinct to play, create and experiment. As Pablo Picasso said, 'it is society that pulls us away. Art shouldn't be confined to a posh, white-walled gallery. It should be embedded in our daily life in the place where we work, live and play.

Art should be something that we must see. It's necessary for us to plant within the urban landscape things that resonate with people and community. When we place art it should speak of the very people within that space. Artists may not always consider that. Telling stories that resonate and connect with the people that might see that art every day is important. The artist doesn't see that every day. It's necessary to uplift them. When they see themselves reflected in their spaces that is something that empowers the people. It's important for people to see a reflection of themselves.



BUILDING



HEALTHY LIVES

George Perkins Day Nursery's launch of their 'Building Healthy Families' campaign has been a great success with a large number of families attending the launch event and signing up to be involved. We have been really impressed with the creative ways that families have engaged with our weekly Family Physical Challenge and the children have loved telling us all about their family bike rides and walks and even their home made obstacle courses. The launch was followed by an evening with Dr Anita Soni, Educational Psychologist who talked to parents about supporting their children's emotional wellbeing through emotion coaching*: a really positive way to help children to learn to name and express their emotions. Staff at the nursery have been using this approach for about a year and have seen the benefits for the children as they become increasingly able to emotionally regulate themselves; not having to resort to the usual 'toddler tantrums'!

The children are also beginning to focus on planting seeds and plants in their growing beds now that Spring is here. They have thought about the foods that they would like to grow and have planned some meals with the staff that they hope to prepare later in the year when they have harvested all their produce. This is a project that they will be collaborating on with some of the residents of the Lenches Residential Home in Moseley. Drawing on their many years of gardening expertise to make sure all their crops flourish.

The nursery is thrilled that so many people both within, and beyond the nursery community have got so involved with their initiative and they can't wait to see all the fruits of their labours in the coming months and years.

If you'd like to find out more about emotion coaching, visit www.emotioncoachinguk.com

"Not My Rubbish. Not my Problem"

Birmingham has a problem with rubbish. Balsall Heath has a special problem. As a Birmingham resident of 22 years, my pride was hurt when an MP said dismissively: "We have our party conference in Birmingham and it is filthy". I've also heard it described as a 'shanty town' by environmental workers battling with the constant rubbish being thrown into our rivers and canals. I was ashamed because I could not deny the truth of these statements, but hurt because I know there is more to Birmingham, and to Balsall Heath than bulging bins and large piles of black bags. Sadly this problem shows no signs of going away soon. If anything it is growing.

What is the problem?



At least 15 years ago I remember being in local meetings where residents claimed people came from outside the area to dump rubbish in Balsall Heath. (Maybe there was a time when this happened but now the problem is definitely a local one). People also claimed wheelie bins would solve the rat and rubbish issues. The rubbish issue however, towers well above the bulging lids of our now obligated wheelie bins, and there is still just as much rubbish dumped in any open space as ever, with plastic bags decorating the trees, Heathen style.

While trying to clear some long-term rubbish outside a neighbour's house recently, I asked the young man opposite if he would help move some of it too. After all, it did affect his living area. He said, "Sorry, that's not my rubbish, not my problem, I'm not going to do that..."

Well... it was not my rubbish either but until people see it as a problem and they can be part of the solution, things are not going to change.

Can things change?

The one thing to give me hope in 20 years of 'doing my bit' and rubbish vigilanteism has been the introduction of the single use plastic bag tax. Almost overnight, I stopped seeing big

More to Balsall Heath than Bulging Bins.

brand supermarket bags flying around. What a difference 5 pence made on peoples' behaviour and attitude.

I have several proposals for the council that would make significant change but individuals can make a difference too. For example,

1. Take your own carrier bag to the shops,
2. Look out for volunteer led litterpicks with 'Moseley Litterpickers' around the area.
3. Write to the council requesting they introduce a food waste system and to enforce the current recycling system meaningfully so that the recycling bins are not just second bins.
4. Use the website 'fix my street' app (see page 4) to report problem rubbish dumping and make suggestions.
5. Organise regular street cleans so others can get involved.
6. Sign the Green peace petition asking environment secretary, Michael Gove, to take action. Go to greenpeace.org where you will find a variety of ways you can take action.

Genevieve Jordan

BALSALL HEATH YOUTH THEATRE



IAN EDWARDS

A chance for young people to let their imagination run wild!

Running for the last two years, Balsall Heath Youth Theatre provides an opportunity for children and young people to meet on a regular basis to take part in drama workshops and put on theatrical performances.

Each term, the members of the group decide for themselves what themes they want to explore, leading to a very wide programme of activities. They have explored topics such as the environment, feminism, folk tales and Halloween. Since September, BHYT has taken part in theatre skills workshops run by Leaders Mais and

Ayiesha. In addition, several visiting students from Birmingham City University taught the group new skills. In the last six months, they have taken part in public performances at mac Birmingham, St Martin's Church and New Street Station!

Mais Vahora, Group Leader said 'Balsall Heath Youth Theatre is an inclusive and diverse group. All young people aged 8 to seventeen are welcome. Whether you have any drama experience or not, this is a great group to join. There is no audition process, all that is required is that you bring your enthusiasm!'

Assistant Leader Ayiesha Sinara added

'It is a fantastic opportunity to try something different, learn new skills and make new friends.'

The group meets on Saturday mornings during term-time at the Balsall Heath Children's Centre, Malvern Street off Clifton Road. Children aged 8 to eleven meet between 10am and 11am. Young people aged twelve to seventeen meet from 11.30am to 12.30pm. Sessions cost just 50p.

For further details, you can drop in to the Children's Centre on Saturday mornings during term-time or email Ian Edwards at BHYT@balsallheathforum.co.uk

THE MIX CAFE
BALSALL HEATH COMMUNITY

Based at The Old Prints Works in Balsall Heath, The Mix is a community cafe with the mission of bringing people together through the sharing of cultures and cuisines. We offer affordable and nourishing food from a regularly changing menu, with recipes inspired by and collected from members of the local community. We run a varied cultural programme opening up opportunities to participate in meaningful exchanges and create lasting relationships.

Profits go towards sustaining The GAP, a charity that creates time and space for young people to make sense of the world through creative and cultural action.

Opening May 11th – For more details see www.thegapartsproject.co.uk/the-mix

Situated on the former site of Ort Cafe.

YOUR VOICE. YOUR BALSALL HEATH

HAVE YOU EVER DREAMED OF BEING A JOURNALIST?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A VOICE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?

The team here at Neighbourhood News have been working with *Balsall Heath Forum*, *The Active Wellbeing Society** and other partners to develop an exciting opportunity. Very soon, we hope to be looking for **people like you** to be part of our **brand new news team**.

No experience necessary.

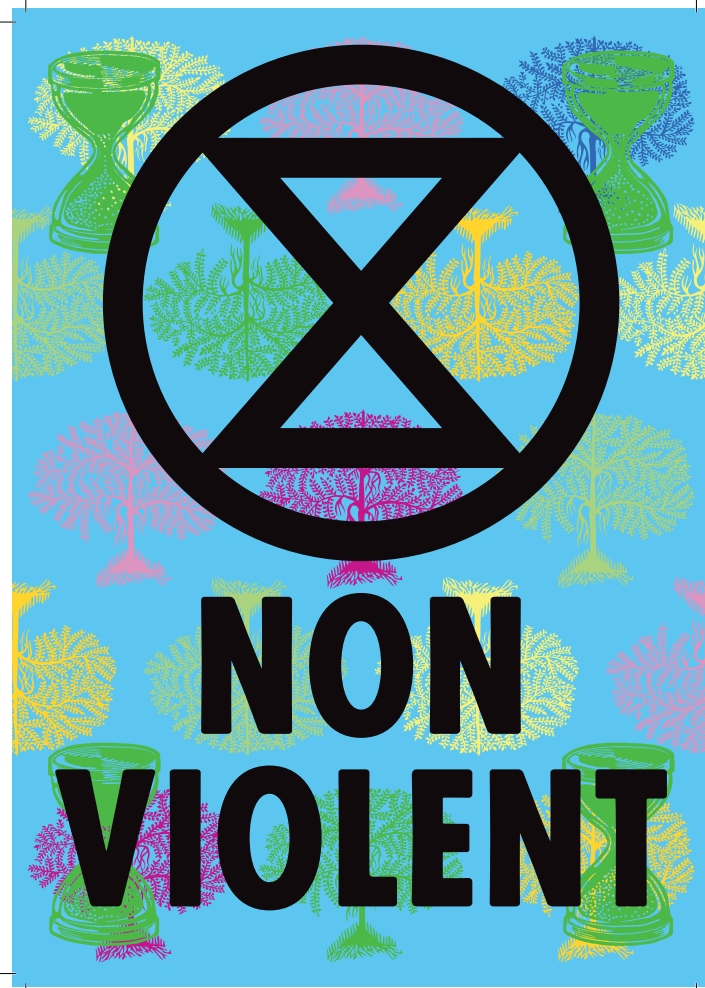
If you'd like to get involved, support or find out more please email editor.nno@gmail.com.

Keep an eye on neighbourhoodnews.com for updates about this exciting project.

In the meantime, we will be visiting a group near you to hear your story and help you get it online.

* The Active Wellbeing Society has been established to work collaboratively with citizens to bring wellbeing activities into our communities. The Active Wellbeing Society

- For fun, for free, for everyone!



DISRUPTION

We are protesting to prevent the breakdown of humanity's life support system, the Earth

If we continue to ignore the current crisis we face an unprecedented level of disruption within our lifetimes:

- loss of pollinators destabilising our food systems
- more violent storms, more deadly heat waves
- an increase in deaths from air pollution
- mass migration as sea level rise displaces whole communities
- And that is just within our borders.

Our Government is refusing to act - and we demand to be heard.

We call for the creation of a National Assembly capable of implementing informed solutions to these ecological crises. We have it within our collective power to change our cataclysmic course.

We refuse to bequeath a dying planet to future generations by failing to act now.

We act in peace, with ferocious love of these lands in our hearts. We act on behalf of life.

Thank you for understanding.



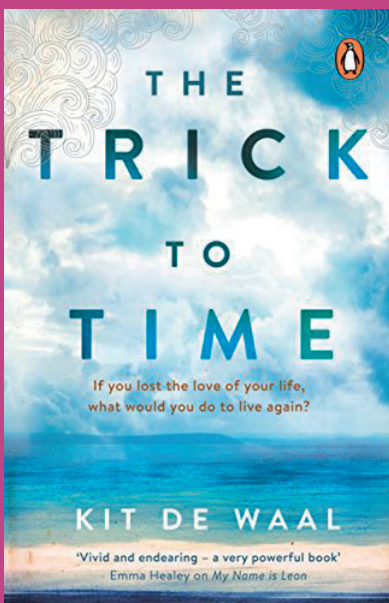
www.rebellion.earth

Extinction Rebellion is an international group of concerned citizens who engage in nonviolent direct action- driving radical reforms in governmental policy in order to address the urgency of the ecological crisis we are facing.

You can now join your local branch!

Like the facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/extinctionrebellionbirmingham/> for events and updates, or email extinctionrebellionbham@gmail.com to join the mailing list!

A GOOD READ



This review features work by local writer, Kit de Waal.

Could be a love story, could be a self help tale on dealing with grief, could be something else entirely. The main character in this story is Mona, with the narrative toggling between her growing up years in a small Irish seaside town, through her young adult years in Birmingham to her present day life in a small English seaside town. Here she owns a shop which sells dolls, with all the clothes beautifully and intricately made by Mona herself and from where she also helps others struggling with grief of a fairly specific kind. The dolls are internationally acclaimed, with each one being very special to Mona, great care is taken over the choice of materials for their clothes and the 'look' they will have. The dolls are very much not just an object, they have a role to fulfil.

The writing gives a nod to part of Birmingham's history, using the Birmingham pub bombings as a pivotal point in the story and touching on aspects of the kind of racism which existed in Birmingham during the 50s, 60s and 70s. There were a couple of moments which made me wince. Once when I felt the character was not sufficiently developed to get away with the remark they made, once when an observation was made in the narrative. That said, there is much of charm in this story, especially if you enjoy local geographical references.

Although Mona's story is not always a happy one, indeed she is touched by tragedy more than once in her life, the sadness and how she deals with it is a strong strand throughout the book. If you are a fan of stories in the Maeve Binchy style, you will probably love The Trick to Time. It would make a good read for book groups as the story throws up many likely discussion points.

Balsall Heath: AN EDUCATION

Elliot Moody



For years I took the number fifty from King's Heath, through Moseley to the historic and beautiful Moseley Road Baths to get to work. I stood outside those baths one morning and found the contrast between the Edwardian architecture and the fried chicken shops bizarre. This led me to think about the area.

After getting off the bus outside the baths, I would cross the main road to work. On my way, I would pass disused pubs with boarded up windows and terraced houses, reminding me of pictures of wartime Britain. Yes, the surroundings reminded me of the blitz, but the families walking to school in the morning, I found, was a bigger indicator for this feeling. Nineteen forties Britain is traditionally thought of as a time when communities came together and supported each other. Neighbours chatting outside their front doors and children playing with their families as they walked to school was a common sight as I made my way to work every morning.

As a learning mentor and teaching assistant at school, I was witness to children learning as they matured and grew. But, I have to admit, the most rewarding education was my own. Listening to children as young as six explain the intricacies of their culture in a way an outsider like me could understand was truly moving. Chatting with parents about things to do in the area (the creation climbing centre and Skate Park I already frequented as a teenager) and what local restaurants I should try out solidified my love for the open-hear-

.....
I stood outside those baths one morning and found the contrast between the Edwardian architecture and the fried chicken shops bizarre.

ted residents of Balsall Heath. Working at Clifton Primary also taught me that Balsall Heath isn't solely a Muslim area as I had previously thought but that the population is truly diverse. Pupils at the school came from all over the world. The area is full of individuals from all backgrounds, and organisations, such as St Paul's Trust and Sultan Bahu Trust, dedicated to improving the lives of residents, and is all the better for it.

Since leaving my job in Basall Heath, the time I spend within the community has significantly reduced but I am still in contact with many of the people that I worked with. I am always eager to learn of any exciting news regarding the area whenever I meet them. I do still travel through Balsall Heath from time to time, catching the same bus that once took me to work, now past my old stop as I journey into town. The fast food shops are still there. The old swimming baths are still there. The resilient, hard working and generous people are still there.

'The Sunlighters' group welcomes you to join them for some healthy cooking sessions



St. Paul's Venture,
Clifton Road,
Balsall Heath.
Wednesdays
10am—12.00.
Costs £4 (£2 concessions)
Starts 3rd April 2019

You'll be learning how to cook healthy vegetarian meals with fresh ingredients and spices bought locally. The food that is prepared will be shared with others at lunchtime. Spaces are limited. If you would like to book at place telephone Anita on 0121 464 1888.

Activities for adults 50+



Safe and Well

Your Local Fire Service



When you ask someone to think about the fire service, most people picture a fire engine on blue lights travelling to an emergency. However, a lot of people aren't aware of our prevention work within the local community.

We offer free Safe and Well visits to our more vulnerable residents, which involve us visiting you at home and discussing how you can keep safe.

We'll ask you some questions and talk to you about common fire safety issues. We'll go through creating a safe night-time routine, discuss how to make the best escape plan for you and your family, check your electrical plug sockets and extension leads and even fit some smoke alarms free of charge if you don't already have any.

For those that struggle with their hearing, we can supply and fit a hearing-impaired alarm that goes next to your bed and under your pillow. It flashes and vibrates so you can feel and see the alarm instead.

We also have our own dedicated team of Complex Needs Officers who specialise in working with vulnerable people and with other agencies. This enables us to refer people in need of more help to relevant organisations.

Here at Highgate Community Fire Station and throughout West Midlands Fire Service, we aim to get to you in an emergency in 5 minutes or less. We know from our own research that your survivability rates go up the sooner we can get to you.

Having a Safe and Well visit can help to prevent a fire happening in the first place. To find out more, give us a call for free on 0800 389 5525 or visit our website: www.wmfs.net.

Chris Kirby

**Find events.
Enjoy activities.
Read the news.
Contribute ideas.**

Know your area.

**WHAT'S ON IN BALSALL HEATH
AND SPARKBROOK.**

Working with local residents, volunteers, charities, venues, organisations, councils and businesses to list all types of events for the community. Our aim is to bring everything together on one easy to use website so you can find what's happening in your local area and be *in the know*.

VISIT

www.neighbourhoodnewsonline.com