

New Steelhouse Lane Museum



After a successful Round 2 National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) bid in March 2020, West Midlands Police are currently converting the Steelhouse Lane Lock-up into the new permanent home of the West Midlands Police Museum.

This will be a new attraction for Birmingham and the West Midlands to be proud of. The aim is to be open following renovation works by early 2022.

The WMP Museum team are recruiting for volunteers to support them when they open in April.

This is a big undertaking with lots of detail. Please follow the link(s) for more information.

<https://www.wmpeelers.com/post/volunteers-needed?postId=5e728d20-d5ab-4fd2-b9ff-922f80585da5>

Membership Subscriptions

A reminder that Membership Subscriptions for the calendar year January to December 2022 are now due. The cost is £12 and it is possible to add Gift Aid to this which means it is even more valuable to us.

Existing members have been contacted already with a new Membership Form to complete. If you are not a member but would like to join, let us know or complete the Membership Form which can be found and downloaded from the website

Hugh Taylor 1933 to 2022

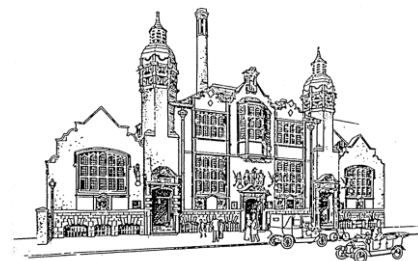
A Lost Child, emigrated to Canada in 1941

We are all sad to hear that Hugh has now died and I have written this in his memory.

Hugh was one of six children born to John Reid Taylor and his wife, Thomasina. In 1935 disaster struck the family when his father died of Pneumonia and his mother developed cancer of the stomach. She signed the consent for the children to be emigrated, provided they were kept together. Five of the children were

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Membership of the Society costs £12 a year. Membership will then run from January to December each year. Fees at meetings will continue unchanged: £1 for members and £3 for visitors. Refreshments will be served from 7 to 7.20 pm at the start of the meeting.

Next meeting.

The next meeting will be on Thursday February 24th. The topic will be "A Picture of Balsall Heath" with film clips and photographs, presented by Val Hart, Jim Fitzpatrick and Jenny Hodson..

admitted to the Middlemore Homes. Walter, the oldest son, was 17 and stayed in England. Hugh remembered:

"Middlemore was a bleak, unwelcoming place, where most of the adults were "grumpy" and the preference seemed to be to hit or verbally abuse the children rather than offer comfort or compassion. Having my siblings with me was an anchor. The Homes had one side for boys and one for girls, and "never the twain shall meet", so even brothers and sisters were separated. I had limited time with my sisters."



In 1936 four of the children were taken to the Fairbridge Farm School in British Columbia.

Hugh was only 3 years old and was left behind because of ill health.

"I was distraught at the news they were leaving without me. In an attempt to soothe my distress Ena assured me we would be reunited in 4 or 5 days. In reality I was left without family for 5 years."

On top of this Hugh had to cope with the distressing news that his 12 year old brother John, one of the siblings sent to the Farm School, had died from a brain tumour.

Hugh was at the Selly Oak Homes during the Second World War. He recalls: *"Two boys found a bomb and brought it up to the MMH building. The boys were very proud of their "find" and ran inside the Home to report it. The boys did not come back out, but some "Nurses" did, and they were loudly instructing us all to back away and not touch the bomb. A few minutes later, the two boys came out, having been thrashed by Mr Plenderlieth for their adventure. The army truck arrived and removed the bomb, thankfully intact"*

In general he had distressing memories of the Homes and of harsh treatment by the staff.

From summer 1940 to spring 1941 Hugh was evacuated to Wilderhope Manor in Shropshire and then in October 1941 was sent to Canada, though the journey was hazardous. One ship in their convoy was torpedoed and no more children were emigrated until after the war ended in 1945.



Children arriving at Fairbridge , Oct 1941.
Hugh is in the seated back row, third from the left.

Hugh also had bad memories of the Fairbridge Farm School. He was there for nine years and in that time was moved between five different cottages, often facing severe punishments for childish misdemeanours.

After Fairbridge Hugh went on to join the Canadian RAF, the main reason being that he saw it as a route back to England and his older brother. His plan worked and he was eventually reunited with Walter in Leamington Spa.

In 2017, at the age of 84, Hugh flew to the UK and visited Birmingham Library in the hope of tracing some of his childhood records but sadly there was little documentation. There were records but they were held in Liverpool as part of the Fairbridge collection. Hugh did not know this at the time and it is only through this project that he has finally been able to piece together his story and that of his siblings.



Our sympathy goes to Ginny, Hugh's wife, who helped Hugh record his memories.

Val Hart

Thomas Bowen and Boys Brigade at the Methodist Church, Moseley Road.

Thomas was the ninth child of John Bowen, the renowned builder whose works were in George St, Balsall Heath. After serving in the First World War Thomas later joined his brothers in managing the family business, but he gave his heart to the Boys Brigade.



He married May Baragnawath, whose family ran a wholesale vegetable business and the photo above shows them at Rochford, the house John Bowen built for himself in Strensham Road. The wedding took

place in 1914 at the Methodist Church, which stood on the corner of Lime Grove and the Moseley Road. As shown in the photo below.



The 10th Birmingham Company, based at the Methodist Church, was founded in Jan 1908 and Thomas Bowen joined a few months later. He wrote in 1929, when the Company was celebrating its 21st birthday,

" Looking back I remember...our first band practice, the joy of the boys, the dismay of our neighbours; our first inspection; our first camp at Malvern, August 1909, eighteen boys and two Officers."



He stayed as Captain for 33 years until his early death in 1941.

This extract from his Obituary shows how highly respected he was.:

" Whatever job he took in hand he saw it done, and well done too; steadfast and unflinching he would not turn aside to find an easier way; the right way was the only way for him."

1940 was a very difficult time as the church was severely damaged by bombing and then demolished. However, huge effort was made to rebuild it.

For the Boys Brigade the reins were taken up by Harold Burnett who can be seen in the photo below, leading the Brigade to the 1949 ceremony for the laying of the Foundation Stone of the new church building.



Harold Burnett remained Captain for over 40 years until 1985. He too was an outstanding leader, becoming President of the Birmingham Battalion, and afterwards its Honorary President.

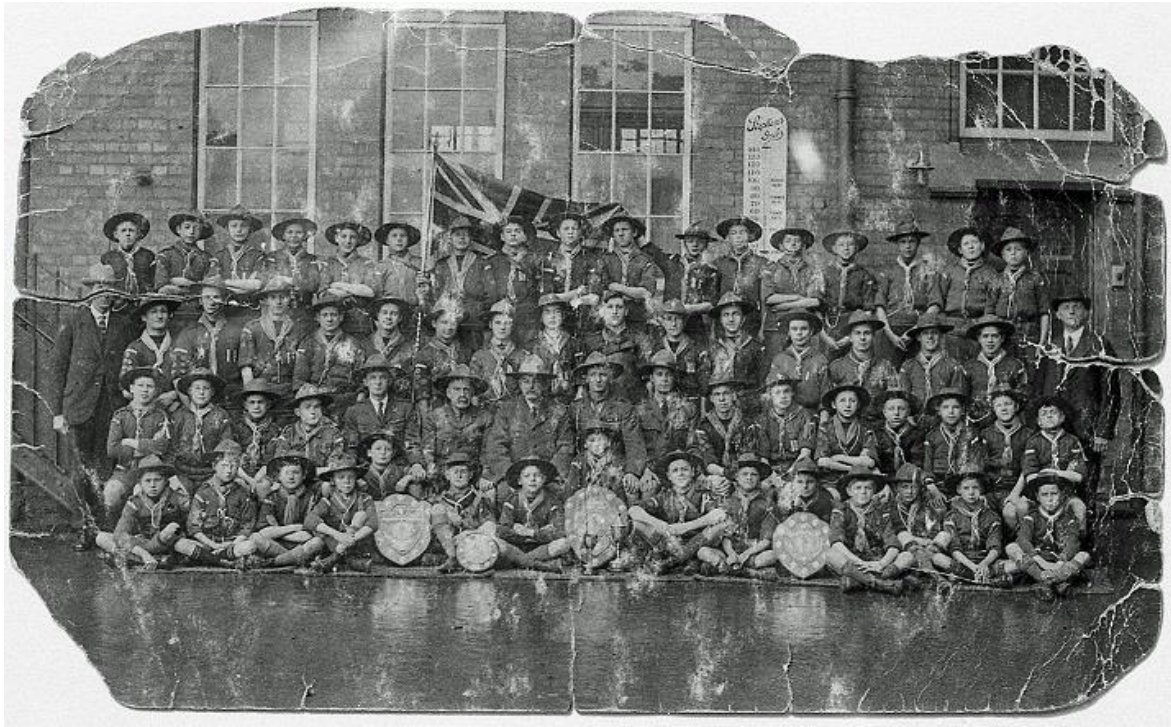
Sadly the Methodist Church closed its doors in 2011.

Thanks to Anthony Collins who supplied information and photos for this article.

Val Hart



Boys Brigade
June/July 1978
Harold Burnett
is at the centre
of the front
row. Photo
Mick Turner.



This photo of a, so far, unidentified scout group was copied from a previous print in 1986. The building looks like a large school and has a 20s-style Stephens Inks thermometer on the wall at the back of the group. We don't know even whether the group is or was based locally. Can you throw any light on this? Does anybody recognise the building? Could this be the school at Dennis Road (Anderton Park), Tindal St, St Patrick's or Sherbourne Rd.

Other Events

Tuesday 1 February 2022 7 pm
Edgbaston Park Hotel, 53 Edgbaston Park Road, B15 2RS
£5.80

The first London-Birmingham railway

Learn about the construction and early years of the London and Birmingham Railway. Professor Felix Schmid will trace the history of this huge undertaking through the watercolours and lithographs of John Cooke Bourne (1 September 1814 to February 1896). Cooke Bourne's pictures illustrate the amount of earth movements necessary to build the railway.

Felix will discuss some of the technologies used in the construction of this first railway to reach London. Felix is neither a historian nor an archaeologist but a railway systems engineer who enjoys talking about the history of railways and its pioneers.

This event is presented by the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society and is free to their members. Anyone else pays £5.80 and needs to book at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-first-london-birmingham-railway-tickets-238272749207>