



CHAIR'S MESSAGE March 2024

1 REGIONAL u3a RECRUITMENT WORKSHOP

We are hosting a **Regional u3a Recruitment Workshop on Wednesday 13 March at St Peter's Church Hall at 10.00 a.m.** Recruitment of new members is vital to the long term success of u3a's and we are no exception. I hope that this event is of interest and would encourage you to attend. If you are able to join us, please contact myself or register direct via the u3a West Midlands Regional Website – see link below (note, there is a minor error but the **event is definitely at St Peter's Church Hall!**).

BOOK TO ATTEND: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/u3a-workshop-how-to-recruit-retain-u3a-members-tickets-773179519757?aff=oddtcreator>

Details have also been placed on our own website (see News and Local Events). It runs until **1.30 p.m.** Refreshments will be provided and the event is **free of charge**.

2 QUIZ– Saturday 23 March at St Peter's Church Hall – see reminder from Mick Gill later in this edition. The Quiz has always been a great social event and we look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible.

3 RAMBLERS AND SHORTER WALKS – this Thursday

It has been unfortunate that a number of our walks have recently fallen victim to the wet weather. I am hoping that things will have improved in time for the Shorter Walk that I am leading on **Thursday 29 February at 11.00 a.m. from Chesford Grange Hotel, Kenilworth**. It is a pleasant walk passing the attractive village of **Ashow** and **Blackdown Water Mill**. Please refer to our website and contact me if you are able to join us and also if you can stay for lunch afterwards at Chesford Grange.

Future Events – Save The Dates!:

- On **Thursday 7 March**, the guest speaker will be **Alan Hill** who will be speaking on **A Day by the Seaside – A History of holidays**. It should be a great talk and get us all in the mood for summer and I look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible.
- **Picnic in the Park** – the Village Festivals Committee are holding this occasion on **Saturday 22 June from 3.00 to 8.00 p.m.** For the third consecutive year they are asking us to provide Stewards to help to manage the event. Our members have responded brilliantly to my request for help but, we can always do with a few more volunteers. So, if you can make it, please contact me at chairman@balsallcommonu3a.org with any preferred time slot. It's a great opportunity to engage with the local community and will certainly help us to raise our profile locally.

- **The Fish & Chips Supper and Dance** returns on **Saturday, 6 July at 7.30 p.m.** Once again, live music will be provided by the brilliant band, **Prime Numbers**. Ticket arrangements will be announced in due course.
- As some of you will have read in u3a publications, there is a **u3a Festival at the University of York from 18 to 20 July**. Several u3a Regions run Summer Schools – this is a national Festival where members will be offered all kinds of activities from talks to sport, music and workshops **including some that our own u3a provide (e.g. Walking Cricket and Petanque)**. Join for all or part of the event: **it's £35pp for three days, excluding accommodation** – which you can book now, at **£61.80 B&B on-site at the University of York**. Details are on the **u3a website: u3a – Festival 2024**.

Gardening Group

Until a couple of years ago we ran a successful Gardening Group. Subsequently we were invited to trips out with the equivalent u3a group in Olton – however, we would much prefer to establish our own local group. It doesn't need to be a "trips-out" based group and we would be delighted to hear from anyone prepared to take this on – please contact Juliet Hancox, our Groups Liaison Officer via groups@balsallcommonu3a.org

Out and About

I am delighted to see that the trip to Hampton Court on Wednesday 5 June is a sell-out. If it can match or exceed the success of last May's trip to Kew Gardens, I think we shall all be happy! Thanks go to Peter Calver for arranging this event.

Third Age Matters magazine

Do remember to keep an eye on **u3a** nationally via the on-line newsletters and the quarterly **Third Age Matters** magazine.

In the meantime, enjoy **u3a** and do continue to support our Interest Groups and please check the **website, balsallcommonu3a.org** for details of what's on and group activities.



The Village Hall

As many of you will know, the Village Hall has recently issued a plea for help:

- The current committee has been understaffed – in years gone by they had ten or twelve committee members including trustees. In the last two years most of the work has been carried out **by just two people, both of whom wish to step down in 2024.**
- **They have now reached the point where, if they cannot recruit new trustees and committee members then there will be no alternative but to close the hall – probably at the end of July when most of the hirers finish for their summer holidays.**
- **The Village Hall is in really good shape from a building's maintenance point of view, from the bookings point of view and, from the financial point of view. But this counts for nothing if they cannot recruit people to their committee to take the hall forward beyond 2024.**
- They need **six Trustees and six committee members**. Essentially, they need a **management team which includes practical and professional skills in buildings maintenance as well as in compliance in areas such as safeguarding and risk assessments.**

Why do I mention this? Because 6 of our groups – Photography (who have already reacted to this news), Film Appreciation, Bridge, Social and Political History, Current Affairs (2) and Mahjong all meet at the Village Hall!

Other venues such as the Jubilee Centre, Methodist Church and here at St Peters are already close to full occupancy.

This is a serious threat to the future of the hall and if it closed it could be irretrievably lost. We cannot afford to lose this facility so I am making an appeal to you or if you know of friends who could volunteer to help to save the Village Hall!

- For further information or a general discussion please contact Jackie Tomnie on 01676 533315 or via jtomnie@yahoo.co.uk

And finally.....

.....LEARN, LAUGH AND LIVE!

Matthew Stephens – Chair chairman@balsallcommonu3a.org

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 9th May – *John Bolt Hon. Secretary*

Please note that this year's Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 9th May in St Peter's Hall. It is our intention to keep the AGM as short as possible, hopefully less than 15 minutes. The core meeting will follow after the AGM and our guest speaker, Steve Price, will be talking about advanced motorists.

The preliminary notification seeking nominations for committee members and any resolutions to be considered at the AGM will be distributed at the beginning of March. The formal notification with all the relevant documents will be distributed in April, at least three weeks prior to the AGM.

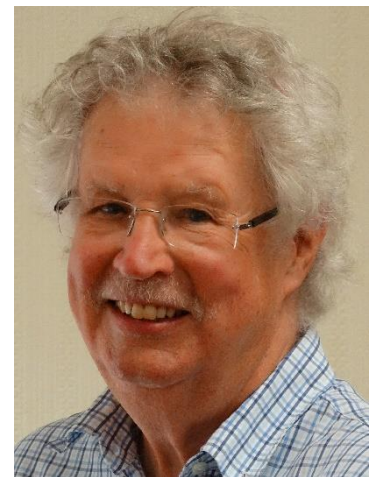
At this year's AGM one committee member will be stepping down and we are pleased that several u3a members have expressed an interest in joining the committee. If you would also like to be involved, please speak to any of the current committee members who will do their best to answer any questions you may have.

John Bolt – Hon. Secretary

DO YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY IN READING THE SENTINEL

There are several ways you can magnify the computer screen, depending on your operating system.

- 1 In windows if you have a wheel on your mouse then hold down the CTRL key and rotate the wheel to increase or decrease magnification (otherwise find the magnification option in "Settings").
- 2 If you are viewing a PDF document through a PDF reader there are "+" and "-" icons at the top of the screen to increase or decrease magnification.
- 3 Sometimes a magnifying glass may suffice.
- 4 With smartphones simply turn the phone to landscape and then increase or decrease the size on the screen by finger touch





u3a Committee Members and their Roles

There follows a list of the current Committee members, officers and their roles within Balsall Common u3a.

Post	Post Holder	Email
Chair	Matthew Stephens	Chairman@balsallcommonu3a.org
Vice Chair	Mike Fairbrother	Michael.fairbrother1@btinternet.com
Secretary	John Bolt	secretary@balsallcommonu3a.org
Treasurer	June Slatter (temp)	treasurer@balsallcommonu3a.org
Membership Secretary	Sandra Heard	membership@balsallcommonu3a.org
Room Bookings Secretary	June Slatter	bookings@balsallcommonu3a.org
Speakers Secretary	Vivienne Waterer	speakers@balsallcommonu3a.org
Publicity Officer	Judy Hornigold	publicity@balsallcommonu3a.org
Groups Liaison & Accessibility Officer	Juliet Hancox	groups@balsallcommonu3a.org
Risk Management & Assets Trustee	Mick Gill	mick.gill1951@outlook.com
Core Meetings Refreshment Organiser	Jayne Taylor	Coretearota@balsallcommonu3a.org
Sentinel Editor **	Will Heard	editor@balsallcommonu3a.org
Webmaster **	Robert Zhilmor	webmaster@balsallcommonu3a.org

** Not a Committee Member

u3a QUIZ NIGHT REMINDER

 **BALSALL COMMON U3A** 

QUIZ NIGHT

SATURDAY 23RD MARCH

DOORS OPEN 6.30 FOR 7.00 PM START

St Peter's Church Hall, Holly Lane

£3 PER PERSON

TEAMS OF 4 TO 6 (MAX)

So how do you enter a team?

- Find 4 – 6 players to make up your team and come up with a fitting Team Name
- Elect a Team Captain who will contact Mick (details below) with Team Name and Number of players so he can allocate your place
- Team Captain to collect all the entrance fees for the Team (to make admin easy) and pay on the night. We have a card reader (preferred) but will accept cash.

Tickets are limited, first come, first served, so get your Team organised and booked in quickly to avoid disappointment.

Contact Mick Gill mick.gill1951@outlook.com 07773 635043

NEWS

1 The Core Meeting February 1st

“DON'T TELL HIM, PIKE!” The story behind Dad's Army

Steve Dimmer's web site tells us, in the same sentence, that he is a member of The Magic Circle and has £10 million Public Liability Insurance. Perhaps his magic tricks are more explosive than his presentation of the Dad's Army story notwithstanding its subject matter! St Peter's Hall was packed, almost to the point of standing room only, for Steve's presentation and he certainly entertained us with his talk which was full of anecdote, information and visual interest.

Little known facts:-

- the original working title for what became known as “Dad's Army” was “The Fighting Tigers”
- Arthur Lowe, by then well known playing the character of Leonard Swindley in “Coronation Street” , was third choice for Captain Mainwaring after Jon Pertwee and John Standing who were unavailable for various reasons
- Clive Dunn was third in line to play Jack Jones after David Jason and Jack Haigh
- Arthur Lowe was originally paid £200 per episode and John Le Mesurier (Sergeant Wilson) was paid £250. No wonder Lowe, as Captain Mainwaring, had a chip on his shoulder about Sergeant Wilson.
- Edward Sinclair who played Mr. Yeatman, the Verger, joined the cast of Dad's Army at the age of 65, following a career in banking. His previous acting experience was in amateur productions.
- By the ninth series the viewership for Dad's Army sometimes exceeded 25 million per episode.



Editor's Note: Amongst the many human stories that many of the characters experienced in real life perhaps we should spare a special thought for Arnold Ridley OBE, who played Private Godfrey as a non-combatant first aider with a weak bladder.

In December 1915, he enlisted as a private with the Somerset Light Infantry, British Army. He saw active service in the war, sustaining several wounds in close-quarter battle. His left hand was left virtually useless by wounds sustained on the Somme; his legs were riddled with shrapnel; he received a bayonet wound in the groin; and the legacy of a blow to the head from a German soldier's rifle butt left him prone to blackouts after the war. He was medically discharged from the army with the rank of lance corporal in May 1917. He received the Silver War Badge having been honourably discharged from the army due to wounds received in the war, and was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal for his service.

After being stranded for an evening at Mangotsfield railway station, near Bristol, Ridley was inspired to write the play *The Ghost Train* (1923), a tale of passengers stranded at a haunted railway station in Cornwall, with one of the characters being an incognito British Government agent trying to catch Bolshevik revolutionaries active in Great Britain. The play was produced on stage, and became a hit, with 665 performances being staged consecutively in London's West End, and two revivals. The first credited filmed version was a German-British silent film co-production *The Ghost Train* in 1927. *The Ghost Train* was also filmed in 1931 and again in 1941 when it starred Arthur Askey.

All quotes from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnold_Ridley

2 Out and About Group

Birmingham Museums Collection Centre 27th March and 3rd April 2024

We now have 15 members booked for March 27th (tours are arranged and priced in blocks of 15 participants) but such was the interest in the initial visit to the Birmingham Museums Collection Centre scheduled for March 27th that **we have arranged a second visit.**

We will start a reserve list if the number of reserves reaches 15 then we can arrange a second group on the 3rd April. The cost per person is £10.00. If you want to go on a reserve list for this second visit please email petercalver@outlook.com. Details of this visit can be found on our website: www.balsallcommonu3a.org/Out%20and%20About.htm.

The Museum Collection Centre, not normally open to the public, is the main store for Birmingham Museum Trust, holding over 80% of a collection of around a million items, many offering a real insight into life in Birmingham and the West Midlands over the centuries.

With only a small percentage of collections on display at Birmingham Museums, or on loan to other organisations, it is the only place to see collection items not normally on display.

First Announcement of visit to The Exchange Tuesday 30th April 2024 11:00 am or 2 pm

The Birmingham Municipal Bank has been repurposed by Birmingham University into a multifaceted space that serves as a hub for curiosity, celebration, collaboration, and change. (Their words)

It is now known as The Exchange. The building itself has a rich history and was once a prominent Victorian commercial structure.

The venue has been recommended by two of our members who visited it recently.

We have arranged two guided tours one starting at 11:00 am and the second starting at 2:00 pm on Tuesday 30th April.

There will be a maximum of 15 members on each tour. Each tour will last about an hour. The venue is easily reached by public transport being a few yards from the metro tram stop opposite the Library in Centenary Square.

There is no charge for this visit. If you are interested in participating please email petercalver@outlook.com



Wednesday 5th June 2024 Coach Excursion to Hampton Court Palace

We have arranged a coach excursion to Hampton Court Palace. The cost is £38.50 per person. The cost includes coach fare and entrance to the Hampton Court Palace and grounds.

The coach will leave from outside the Library at 08:15 am on 5th June. We will join the coach at 4:15pm for the return journey.

All 49 seats have been taken on the coach. If you wish to be added to a reserve list please email petercalver@outlook.com or telephone/text 07836 230464 to be added to the reserve list.

Please contact Peter Calver if you need more information.

3 Country Dancing – Call for expressions of interest!

Sue Green and Richard Hancox have been discussing whether it would be feasible to relaunch the Balsall Common U3a Country Dancing group.

They are currently planning a potential relaunch commencing Wednesday 10th April 2024, then meeting every successive three weeks, depending on room availability.

If you would like to put your name down for future news about the Balsall Common u3A Country Dancing group, please contact Sue Green: Sue-Green@hotmail.co.uk.

ACTIVITY GROUPS

Craft Group – *Jane Cooper*

We will be meeting again at Haigs Hotel on Wednesday 13th March 10am – Noon (£2.50 for coffee or tea). Our next craft project will be Dorset Buttons.

A Dorset Button is a hand-made button originating from the County of Dorset, where the trade of buttony thrived between 1622 – 1850. A Dorset Button is made by repeatedly binding yarn over a ring former. There are several distinctive styles including the cartwheel, bullseye and knob.

Aside is a photograph of our successfully completed “Ojos Dos Rios”.

The trade of buttony was undertaken by outworkers working from their own homes on piece work. Some farm workers worked on the land during the day and on button making in the evenings or in the winter months but many were full time button makers. It was an important source of income for families, a good buttoner could make six dozen buttons per day earning 3 shillings compared to a farm workers wage of only 9d per day.

By the end of the 17th century buttony was a thriving industry in Dorset employing up to 4,000 people under the control of the Case family. However in 1825, a cloth and thread button machine was invented. In 1841, John Ashton’s button making press manufacturing buttons from thin metal sheets was patented. Machine made buttons manufactured in industrial cities like Birmingham decimated the trade of buttony. The collapse of the industry led to much personal hardship, destitution and admission to the workhouse. Many families emigrated to Australia, Canada and America.

In 2017, the Heritage Craft Association included button making on a list of endangered heritage crafts. So why not come and join us and help keep an endangered heritage craft alive. If you’d like to make a set of Dorset Buttons to adorn a special item of clothing, please contact Jane Cooper.



Mahjong – *Sue Simms*

Taster session – Tuesday 5th March

The group is now almost full. There will be a free taster session on Tuesday 5th March, 2–4:30pm in the Westlake Room of the village hall for anyone who would like to see if this is for them.

Places are limited so, if you would like to try the game out, please book your place with the group coordinator (see the website for further details).

Birdwatching group – *Juliet Hancox*

The Birdwatching group had an outing to Brueton Park in Solihull this month.

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust manages a wildlife reserve within the park,

incorporating a wetland area and meadowland, which we visited. We

managed to pick a dry morning and the sun shone, although the ground

underfoot was still very boggy from the recent downpours. A walk through

woodland and along the river Blythe

brought us to a boardwalk within the reserve which gave good views of the

reedbeds and meadow area. We saw and heard a wide variety of woodland

birds and viewed a distant ring-

necked parakeet, which are becoming increasingly common in the local parks in the Birmingham

area. We had good views of a goldcrest and a nuthatch although the elusive tree creeper evaded us!

We finished our visit with a hot drink in the Parkridge visitor centre and had a quick look at the adjacent nature reserve, which looked an excellent place to visit with grandchildren!

Our visit next month will be to Upton Warren on Thursday 21st March. We hope to see

avocets which regularly breed there. If you are interested in joining us please contact me

on birdwatching@balsallcommonu3a.org

Photography group – *Jim Melville*

u3a Eye: Congratulations to Karen whose image “Space To Sit and Think” was selected for last month’s topic “Space”.

Karen says “My favourite spot to sit a while and reflect on life. This is at the top of Rosedale Bank, North Yorkshire. You can see for miles. Space across the moors and huge skies.”

The Bugle: It is with a sad heart to read that the 61st edition of The Bugle is its last one. It will be sadly missed by its thousands of readers. At the end of

2017, Roger Monkman, the editor, approached me to ask if this group could provide some photographs for inclusion in future editions of the magazine. 26 editions later we have appeared in 22 of them contributing 217 photographs.



Film Appreciation Group – *Kim Hathrell*

The Banshees of Inisherin (15)

Starring Colin Farrell as Padraig, and Brendan Gleeson as Colm, this film by writer-director Martin McDonagh (Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri; In Bruges) portrays lifelong friends at an impasse when one abruptly ends their relationship, bringing alarming consequences for both of them.

Set on a fictional island in Ireland in the 1920s, this black tragi-comedy “explores male loneliness and swallowed anger in a weirdly compelling and often very funny” way (according to Peter Bradshaw of The Guardian).

The film will be shown in the Westlake Room behind the Village Hall, starting at 2pm, on Wednesday 13th March (members of the u3a only). The small fee of £2.50 per person covers the hire of the room. If possible, please let Kim Hathrell know if you are planning to attend, by email on films@balsallcommonu3a.org or phone/text on 07510725607.



Editor’s note: This film received excellent reviews. Here are a sample from “Rotten Tomatoes”:-

The film toggles masterfully between comedy and tragedy; realism and fable. It manages to be both of the moment and completely timeless.

November 18, 2022 | Rating: 3.5/4 | Full Review...



Max Weiss
Baltimore Magazine
★ TOP CRITIC

A dark comedy, at times with a great dramatic component, that explores human relationships and interpersonal communication with a lot of charisma and in a highly entertaining way. [Full review in Spanish]

December 19, 2023 | Rating: 8/10 | Full Review...



Nicolás Medina
Montevideo Portal / Latido Beat

Sentinel Editor – *Will Heard*



Thanks to all those who have contributed to The Sentinel this month. Members’ contributions on almost any subject are welcome so why not send yours to editor@balsallcommonu3a.org

MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Kim Hathrell – oldest photograph

John Henry Hatherell

This picture is of my great uncle, whose identical twin brother (Isaac Albert) was my grandfather. In the picture, John Henry (or was it Henry John?) is about 17 years old. He enlisted at the start of the First World War with my grandfather – to avoid questions about their age, they changed the surname to Hathrell, hence my name.

John Henry was killed aged 19, in 1916, the details of which are included in the attached word document (named Henry John, hence the confusion, but he was always known as John).

Further poignancy is added to this photo. When I was researching my family history, we made an unexpected discovery. Rather than twins, there was a third brother with exactly the same birth date in 1897, Ernest. Unfortunately, he died very young – around 4 years old. So my twin grandfather was actually a triplet!



Surname	Christian Names	Service Number	Rank	Regiment
Hatherell	Henry John	19452	Pte	6 Wilts
Born	Age	Enlisted at	Address	
Chippenham	19	Trowbridge	Lowden Hill, No 9	
Date of Death	Where killed		Cause of Death	
04/07/1917	Boulogne		Wounds	
Cemetery	Plot		Country	
Boulogne Eastern Cemetery	IV,A,23		France	
Next of Kin	Next of kin address		Town	
John William and Emily Eliza Hatherall	9 Lowden Hill		Chippenham	

Notes

Wounded 4 June 1917

John Henry?

Something like 100 men belonging to Chippenham and the immediate neighbourhood have laid down their lives in the service of their King and Country during the three years of the war. Below we give the photo of Bugler J Hatherell, son of Mr JW and Mrs Hatherell of Lowden Hill.

Bugler Hatherell was formerly employed at the Chippenham Signal Works but when war broke out - he was only 16 years of age at the time he was working at Melksham. He joined the Wilts and went to France, where on June 4th, he was severely wounded. He was taken to the base hospital at Boulogne and hopes were entertained at first that he would recover and it would be possible to eventually remove him to England but unfortunately he got worse and on July 4th just a month after he received his wounds he succumbed. The news was conveyed to the bereaved parents in the following letter: -
No 13 Base Hospital Boulogne

Dear Mr and Mrs Hatherell: I am indeed most sorry to have to convey to you the sad news that your dear boy died this afternoon. Yesterday he seemed a little better, if anything, but he collapsed today. I saw him early this morning and we said a prayer together, but he quite suddenly, after dinner got worse and expired in a few minutes. I know how much he longed to get back home and how much you longed to have him, so I can feel most sincere sympathy and I pray that our Heavenly Father may pour into your bleeding hearts His holy comfort and give you strength to bear bravely such a grievous blow.

Yours faithfully JFA Blandford. Chaplain. July 4th 1917

Maureen Watson— oldest photograph

My mother used to collect old photos of pubs. A lot were sent to Dr Carl Chinn the Birmingham historian. I moved here with my parents after being bombed out in Coventry and my dad lost his job. He applied to M & B who owned the Bell in Marston Green and he became licensee in about 1943. I was 8 at the time.



I came out of that door in my wedding dress in 1955.

I have a photo of how it is now The Ginger Tree Curry house**. Breaks your heart but at least it's still there. The lovely cottages and blacksmiths which were over the road were all pulled down by Birmingham Council when Chelmsley Wood was built.

Before that you just walked past some old cottages at the back, over a stile and into a field and there was Chelmsley Wood as I remember it, miles and miles of beautiful trees. They were all felled in the 50's** (see below) to build Chelmsley Wood as we all know it.

I even have the original letter sent to my dad when he heard he had the job as licensee telling him that he had to continue with his current job as well as being licensee as the war was on and there was a shortage of manpower.

****Editor's Note (Thanks to our Chair)** The restaurant that Maureen refers to (that replaced the Bell pub) – the "Ginger Tree Curry House" has for at least 5 years been replaced by the Kutum Bari – a significant upgrade and independently reviewed as one of the best Asian restaurants in the Birmingham area.



Chelmsley Wood 1892 – Wikimedia Commons

Editor's Note: extract from

<https://www.solihull.gov.uk/About-Solihull/Chelmsley-Wood-history>

During the Second World War some 12,391 houses in Birmingham were destroyed and no more were built for 6 years.

In order to meet demand, new houses had to be built in large numbers and the slum clearance programme had to be resumed to enable redevelopment of Birmingham city centre. Large new estates were built within the city boundaries e.g. Druids Heath, but by the 1960s there was insufficient land left to accommodate further large-scale developments. In November 1963, Birmingham City Council took the decision that would lead to the building of the Chelmsley Wood estate. A public enquiry was held in May 1964, with strong objections being raised by Meriden Rural District Council and Bickenhill, Castle Bromwich and Coleshill Parish Councils. Despite this, permission for the development was granted and it was named Chelmsley Wood in February 1965, taking its name from the existing 'bluebell wood' that is fondly remembered by locals.

People would come in droves to picnic at Chelmsley Woods, particularly on Bank Holidays. They would arrive from Birmingham by train at Marston Green station and, as a result, tea rooms in Marston Green would do a roaring trade. Pots of tea were also sold by people at Alcott Hall Farm. Land was compulsorily purchased and construction of the 15,590 dwellings (including 39 multi-storey blocks of flats) was begun in 1966 and completed in 1970.

Sue Green— oldest photograph



This is my Great, Great Grandfather (1849 – 1927) Alfred Green from Kidderminster. He was married to Sarah with whom he had four children Edwin, Mary, Sarah and Henry. For most of his life he worked as a Worsted Carpet Weaver but for a short time he was a Grocer & Beer Retailer.

According to family folklore he spent a fortune on a return ticket to America, which almost left his family destitute, but further research is required to verify with factual evidence.

This latest Sentinel challenge has coincided with my reading of Alexander McCall Smith's book "Chance Developments", which is a compilation of five short stories. Each story is based on a made up tale imagined from an old black and white photo of unknown persons. It is an enjoyable and easy read, which I recommend.

In my family photo archive, there are photo's for which similar stories could be invented, for example, this is my Grandfather's cousin, Phyllis Humphries, dressed as Cleopatra but no one knows why? Perhaps she is going to an extravagant fancy dress party or performing in a theatrical performance or just dressing up for the fun of it. I'll never know the real answer.



Will Heard— oldest photograph

My father's note on the back of this photograph says it is his grandmother Eliza Anne Knowles so she would be my great grandmother.

She looks quite stern but that doesn't surprise me because all the old photos of relatives I have on the Heard side look stern. This may be due to their strict Methodist upbringing. My grandfather was just the same. Happily my Dad was much more laid back (apart from the odd belt for coming home late).

My grandfather on my mother's side was a career soldier, having served in India before the First World War and then in France from 1914. Retirement from the army saw him taking up clerical duties at the Chilwell Royal Ordnance Depot so he wasn't far away from guns and bullets all his life. Must have been something in the blood! This p.c. below was sent by him to my grandmother in November 1918.



France
Wednesday
30/11/18

Dearest Kid

We had quite an exciting time
this morning, killing rats, we killed as
fewer than seen in our Tent alone, only
one escaped out of our whole net. The
weather has changed, and it is quite
misty to night, Best Love to you + Babo

Your own Boy x x x
x x x Fred x x x

L. BRANGER, Editeur - Nanterre

u3a learn,
laugh,
live