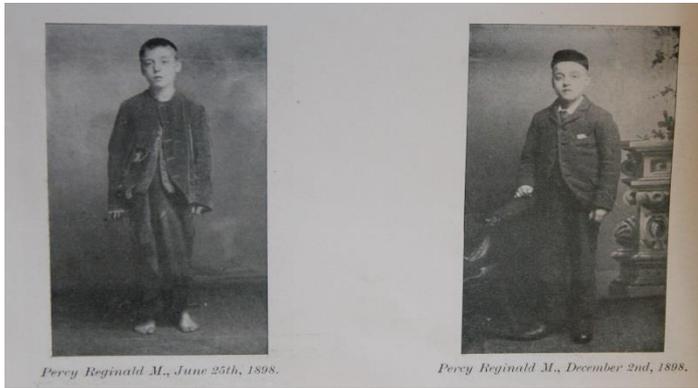


Percy Reginald Mitchell and his lost mother

Percy was taken in to the Middlemore Emigration Homes in 1898 at the age of 14. He was living with a Mrs Keeley, who was said to be “of questionable character” and co-habiting with “a man they call the Major”. Percy thought Mrs Keeley was his actual mother and did not find out the truth until after he was taken to Canada in 1899.. He was puzzled to be named as Mitchell when he thought his name was Keeley.



In 1907 he wrote to Mr Jackson at the Middlemore Homes:

“It has been 8 years since I left the Homes and I haven’ t heard from there or anyone since. I now want to find my mother & sisters as you know a man would like to hear from his people.”

By 1909 he had discovered more. He sent a postcard from Boston.



On this he wrote;

*“I received your most welcome letter and was awful glad to hear from you and get word from my old country you know I always stick up for my old country. I see you sent me Mrs Kealey’s address but I got in ahead of you but I didn’t think she was in poor circumstances. I wrote to her, you know I always thought she was **my mother** and I don’t no any other yet, will you please try and find my mother for me. Mrs Keely knows but she won’t tell me. I wont to find out about my life, it is only right that I should you know cause I always looked to Mrs Kealy as my mother, allways liked her and will try to help her out a little, I can’t much you know but every little helps.*

Balsall Heath Local History Society Gazette

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History Society and

lostchildrenproject

Next meeting.

The committee has decided to suspend meetings. We hope to start meetings again in January 2021.

Membership of the Society costs £10 a year.

I am driving a team here now at \$15 a week that is about 3 pound that is pretty good wages but things is pretty high. Well Mr Jackson you have been in Boston haven’t you. I will send you some souvenir postcards and that will tell you better than I could, tell you it is about the same size a city as Birmingham, it has some fine public buildings”

We do not know whether he ever found his mother.

Val Hart

Pete Evans, Balsall Heath Basher

During the open day at the Old Print Works back in September we had a visit from Peter John Evans, ex-professional wrestler, and proud Balsall Heathen.



Born March 1944 and raised in Balsall Heath, Pete lived at No 81 Ombersley Road with parents Howard and Francis Evans, brother David and sister Rita. Peter, the second of the three children relates "I was born in the front room of that house"

Wrestler Pete Evans, the 'Balsall Heath Basher'

The Evans's neighbours at No 83 were relatives, uncle, and auntie Les and Dolly Barry.

His first school was Clifton Road Infants, Miss Ward was the Head Teacher, others he remembers were, Miss Davis, Miss Lawry, & Miss Buckingham.



Then moving on to the Junior section of the same school where Miss Seal was the head.

His seniors' education at Dennis Rd meant he was there at the same time as Alan Deakin who became the Aston Villa football star. Mr Griffiths being the Headmaster, and a favourite teacher, Pete recalls, was Mr Broughton who ran the chess club.

*No's 81 & 83 Ombersley Rd
(Sept 2020)*

Pete began his working life as an apprentice bricklayer. Though he continued work in the building business for some years, he increasingly found the work boring and monotonous. Looking around for other opportunities, he had a leisure pastime of going along to the Embassy Sports Drome in Walford Road, Sparkbrook, to watch wrestling and began to think of the possibility of becoming a professional in the sport.



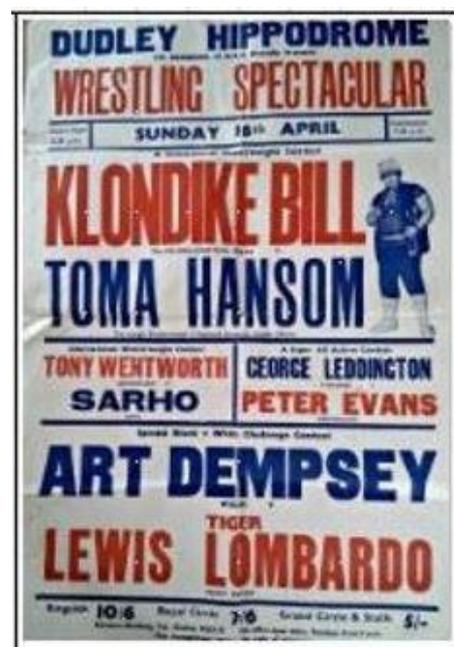
Schoolboy Peter John Evans

He joined the Birmingham Amateur Wrestling Club in 1963/64 when he was 19 years old. He went on to be taught professional techniques by Coventry's Prince Barnu (Freddie Barnes) and John

Clarke of Birmingham. Pete's first paid bout was in one of the wrestling booths run by Ronnie Taylors in Coventry, in 1967.

A short time afterwards he made his indoor professional debut for promoter Cyril Knowles at the Dudley Hippodrome, on 16th April 1967, against George Leddington of Stafford. Against the odds for a newcomer Pete won that pro debut by 2 falls to 1 in 5 rounds. For which he got the princely sum of £2.50.

Evans recalls that on that night he had used the same dressing room as Laurel and Hardy had in 1947.



Martin Conroy, who was then the matchmaker of Wryton Promotions, signed Pete up, and it was Martin that gave him his nickname of 'The Balsall Heath Basher'.

Peter and the famous film and tv star Pat Roach grew up not far from each other in Balsall Heath, although, at the time they did not know it. They met working in the ring and later became business associates in the scrap metal business.

In this photo Pat Roach has his hand on Peter's shoulder, apart from business they became real friends. Pete's connection to Balsall Heath is a strong one. His maternal grandmother lived in Vincent Parade, while on the paternal side, his gran had lived in the upper part of Mary St. We have only been able to tell a small part of Peter's story here. I believe he will make a suitable subject for our 'The Journey to Balsall Heath' project. Jim.Fitzpatrick



L to R - Eddie Richards (Promoter), Pat Roach, Ronnie Taylor (Promoter), Peter Evans.

Please remember us at Christmas

When you're buying your Christmas presents this year, remember you can raise money for the Society at the same time. Easy fundraising will donate money when you spend online at Ebay, Boots, Curry's, and many others including Amazon UK.

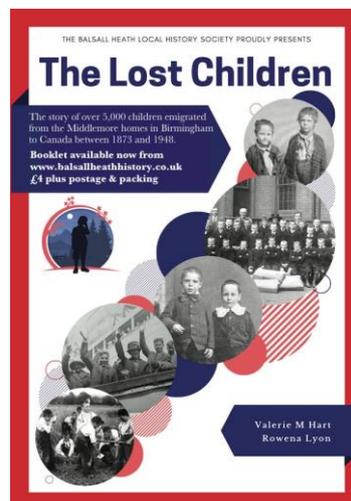
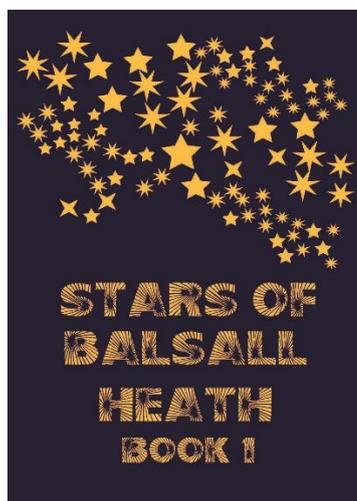
<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/balsallheathlhs/>

If you're buying through Amazon also look at

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1101945-0>

You can also buy many of our books including our latest Lost Children book, this year's Stars of Balsall Heath volume 1 and many others online from us at

<http://balsallheathhistory.co.uk/index.php/publications/>



Heath Mount School 50th birthday

Heath Mount opened in 1970, replacing the old Mary St School which stood on the opposite side of the road. This dated from 1878 and was the first Board School opened in Balsall Heath. It was damaged by air raids in December, 1940. We have been contacted by the Head Teacher of Heath Mount who is looking at plans for celebrating the birthday. Does anyone have memories of Heath Mount that they would like to share?

Events

If the Restrictions permit, there will be a Christmas Event at the Old Print Works between 11 am and 4 pm on the weekend of 12th and 13th of December. The Society will have a stall and a small exhibition. See you there.



**Season's
Greetings to all
our readers**