

BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN OF WAR

A learning guide
for researching children's lives
in the First World War



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This learning guide features edited articles by FoBAH members and volunteers. Additional content and a digital download of this guide can be found on the project website: birminghamchildrenofwarblog.wordpress.com

CONTENTS:

1. Introduction
2. Childcare and Nurseries
3. Schools and Education
5. Health and Welfare
7. Children in Care
8. Belgian Refugees
9. Uniformed Organisations
10. Youth Justice
11. Area Study: Hockley
12. Youth Employment
13. In Their Own Words
15. In Pictures
17. Selected Resources
19. About the Project



The 'fatherless' children in this 1920 May Day photograph (MS 4616) projects the active role of children in the 'duty of remembrance'.

The act of loss publically defined these thirty or more children. Their fathers died for the flag and the medals worn by the boys materially declare their acts of sacrifice.

What was the legacy of experiences such as these?

The social and psychological results of the 'war to end all wars' was profound. It not only affected how people thought about the future, but also their view of the child as part of that future.

INTRODUCTION

by Prof. Ian Grosvenor

Eglantyne Jebb, founder of Save the Children, commented that *'Every war, just or unjust, is a war against the child'*. The Great War, the 'war to end all wars,' disrupted the routines and formalities that had previously provided the rhythm of children's lives in Birmingham.

Keeping in touch through letters and parcels connected families with absent fathers. Holding a letter connected the recipient with the writer of the letter, but gaps in correspondence and the uncertainty and anxiety associated with waiting to hear from loved ones inevitably had an emotional impact on family life and relationships. Studio photographs of a father, a husband, or a brother, in uniform alongside close family was something that could be kept on the mantelpiece to be treasured by those who were faced with an impending moment of departure and with no knowledge of the moment of return.



In many households a family photograph often represents the only surviving document of family history during the war. Hickin family, 1916 (MS 4385).

Towards the end of the war the Birmingham Illustrated Weekly Mercury newspaper ran a series of appeals asking for information about family photographs found abandoned on the battlefield. These are images which for those left behind visually represented the possibility of loss, and if not proof of loss, they certainly spoke of uncertainty.

For some women, the loss of a husband and father to her children was too great a burden and the children ended up in care. The father of the Cook children was killed in action in 1915 and the mother turned to alcohol, spending army pay on drink and was drunk for a fortnight. Care for the children was transferred to Middlemore Homes and the family's story was reported in the press under the headline 'Sad Story told at the Police Court'. The case files of Middlemore Homes are full of stories of children being put at risk of neglect due to the war. It is also clear from these files that children were emotionally damaged due to loss.

Materially, we know that in the early years of the war, the War Office introduced a system of remittances which allowed soldiers to have an element of their pay sent directly to their families and wives, and dependents became entitled to a Separation Allowance. But prior to these actions many families suffered financial hardship with income significantly reduced by men leaving for war, unemployment and economic uncertainty.

Men in uniform, some wounded or mutilated, were ever present on the street. The street was a place of flag days and other campaigns to raise funds. Street advertising covered the walls and temporary hoardings of the city but the content and language was different. Patriotic symbolism and legal notices visually testified that the city was at war. Zeppelin warning maroons became a feature of the city soundscape, and children were able to see and touch the new mechanical weapons of destruction. Cinema showed images of war and patriotism, music halls interspersed comic turns with one act plays about the war. If children did not see them, they would know of them through overheard adult conversations. The night, which before the war was turned into day through illumination, returned to semi-darkness because of fear of aerial attacks; attacks which brought the noise of war into public and private spaces. All these sensory experiences became strands in the fabric of children's identity in wartime Birmingham.

CHILDCARE AND NURSERIES

by Sharon Bartlett

The outbreak of the war saw a significant increase in women workers. State funded childcare was introduced for female munition workers and by 1917 there were in excess of 100 state funded nurseries across the country.

Nurseries were funded by two government departments; the Ministry of Munitions and the Board of Education. Women paid a daily contribution towards childcare costs.

Small Heath Nursery, one of five established in Birmingham, opened on 1 November 1916 and accommodated 30 children. Although opened as a day nursery, the intention was to acquire further funding to provide a **night nursery**. We know from a coroner's report of 31 January 1917 that this was achieved. Two six-month-old babies died when the mattress they were sleeping on caught fire. The babies had been residing at the nursery for several days, one child had been taken out for the day by her mother and returned to the nursery on the Sunday evening shortly before the incident occurred.

Efforts were made to **educate parents** and the nursery was set up with simple apparatus to show mothers that it was possible to have healthy, contented children with ordinary things which they could have in their own homes.

Barnt Green Nursery was founded by two local women with the aim to combat **infant mortality**. Under the supervision of a matron, students, who were women in their late teens or early twenties, undertook a three-month course to learn the science of **mothercraft**. They cared for babies from a few weeks old to two years. The nursery was quite selective about who they recruited and described their students as well educated young women. A newspaper article provides evidence that the nursery was also set up to provide day and night childcare, stating that the nursery was split into two with students occupying one side and children the other, and that there was a night rota for students who would tend the children during the night. Great pride was taken in the cleanliness of the nursery, the article makes reference to the spotless whitewashed walls.

Information from another coroner's report supports the notion that **cleanliness** in nurseries was key. A 21-year-old nursemaid died as a result of burns after her dress ignited whilst bathing a baby in front of a fire. Her job was to bath children on entering the nursery. It is likely that this process was implemented to reduce the risk of spreading infection among the babies in their care.

Annual reports of **The Ladies Association for the Care and Protection of Young Girls** describe how they trained young women to become nursery workers. The women earned a wage from running a crèche where people paid to leave their children. This initiative began before 1914, but during the war the need for the crèche was greatly increased.

Newspapers, local and national, can be a rich source of information for research on the First World War.

This photograph of a Birmingham crèche for the children of munitions workers is from an article in

The Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News, 1 January 1916 (© Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans).



Nursery records in Birmingham have not survived, so most information about the day-to-day operation of local nurseries has been found in newspapers and, maybe surprisingly, from coroner's reports on fatal accidents to infants or staff.

SCHOOLS

AND EDUCATION

by Alison Laitner & Cathie Paton

The First World War directly affected children's experience at school. The City of Birmingham Education Committee Minutes (L48.22) record the work and aims of the Education Committee in organising not just children's education, but also their health, hygiene, nourishment, and moral and social welfare, as well as attempts to influence families through the children. A far wider remit than would be expected today.

Elementary Education Acts of 1870 and 1883 had introduced compulsory education for 5-13 year olds. By 1914, there were 111,522 children in Council schools in Birmingham and 36,981 in Voluntary schools. Various types of school existed, but most children attended elementary schools.

The average **class size** was sixty and increased during the war, owing to the shortage of teachers. Heavy rain or snow frequently caused attendance at school to drop, as did regular Sunday School festivals and trips on schooldays.

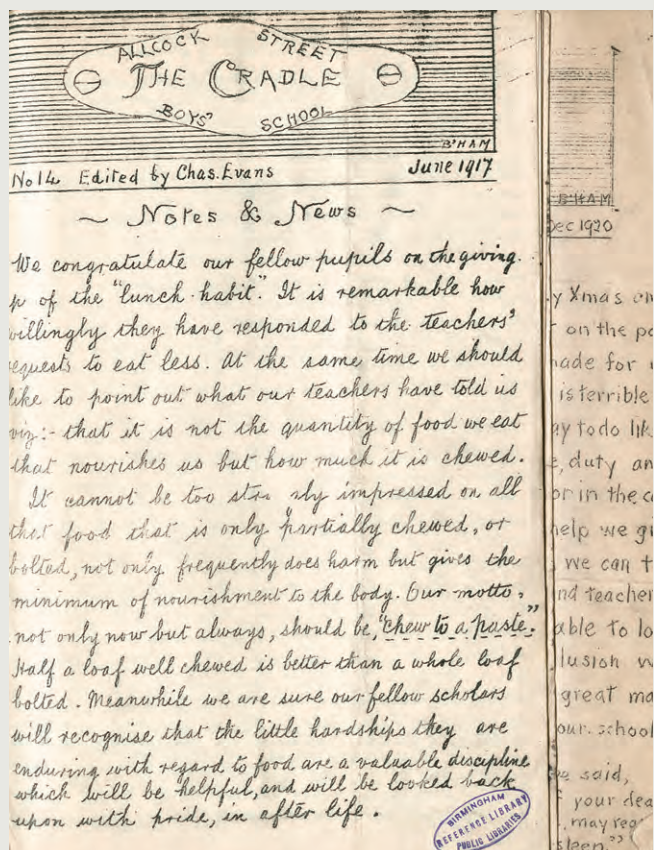
The **curriculum** was based on the 3R's (reading, writing, arithmetic) and additional classes were arranged by gender. Cookery and needlework were taught to girls and practical skills such as drilling to boys. Centres were set up for girls of 13 to learn housewifery and laundry, taking priority over the standard curriculum for older girls (Post, 24 June 1915). Moral lessons were taught and on Empire Day in May, children sang and marched. Some learnt to swim at local baths; boys at Aston Lane Senior School were taught swimming, and were also lectured on hygiene and temperance in June 1914.

As education was regarded as important to the individual and society, education authorities had responsibility for children's **health**. They were inspected frequently at school and teeth, eyes, ears, skin, and hair continually checked. Minutes refer to 'verminous children', and x-rays used to cure ringworm for a speedier return to school. Preventing infection was vital; schools closed on 1 July 1918 because of the Influenza Epidemic.

Many children were **working** as well as attending school and was a frequent concern for authorities.

An enquiry in 1914 showed 9,000 pupils in elementary schools working (City of Education Minutes, 25 January 1918). The Education Act of 1918 raised the **school leaving age** to 14, but children could leave at 13 if they found suitable employment, although Birmingham resisted this. In 1915 'The Question of the Employment of Children' reported that owing to the shortage of labour in agriculture, no objection would be raised to boys between 13 and 14 being employed on farm work (Post, 22 June 1915).

Education authorities could provide **food** to 'necessitous children' and free breakfasts of cocoa and porridge were provided at schools before the war (Bloomsbury Road School log book, S28/2/1). War increased demand quickly, requests for free breakfasts almost doubling; 67,221 were provided in the six weeks before September 1914, compared with 33,251 in 1913 (Post, 27 April 1915). Reasons commonly given were want and delay in government pay for soldiers' families. In 1915, schools continued supplying meals at weekends and half term holidays to prevent hunger. Feeding centres were set up and on Christmas Day 1914 an Experimental Feeding Centre fed 205 children with Scotch Broth, plum pudding, mince pies and oranges (BCC Minutes, 29 January 1915).



School magazines such as 'The Cradle' (above) by Allcock Street Council School, contain original children's work (L48.23).



There are a multitude of resources for research into education in Birmingham in the First World War. An extensive collection of school material includes log books, admission records, and punishment books.

As well as school archives, newspaper articles and published histories, photographs can also be found in family papers, like this one of the Victory Celebrations at Bordesley Green School, 1918 (MS 1645/14).

The City chose schools as the method to distribute donated food; tins of salmon and 2,100 lbs of cheese from Canada were given to children in 1914. Food shortages grew worse and **rationing** was introduced in January 1918. Older children queued for rations affecting attendance at school. Committee and school records show consistent struggles against **poverty** and poor living conditions in Birmingham, in addition to the expected issues relating to children's education.

Education was affected by shortages of teachers who signed up to fight, and persistent **shortages** of fuel meant schools closed early or altogether. In January 1915, coal shortages meant schools closed early as fires could not be kept lit in schoolrooms (*Post*, January 1915). On 28 March 1916, Aston Lane Senior Boys' School log book reported:

'a very heavy snowstorm accompanied by a hurricane' and 'a scarcity of coal unprecedented. Many boys kept away from school waiting at wharf for turn'.

At school, children organised collections for **the war effort**. Log books record knitting cuffs, vests, caps and scarves, and collecting for relief funds such as The Overseas Club, for army horses and POWs, and garments for the Lady Mayoress's Appeal. Schools used children not only in collecting but to pressurise other family members to sign up. **Soldiers** visited schools; Bloomsbury Road School log book from Nechells (S28/2/1) reported on 18 September 1914 that:

'Two gentlemen, Messrs Watson and Jephcott, visited the school. They being newly enlisted in Lord Kitchener's army were introduced to the First Class as examples of what their brothers should do'.

Children were affected by dramatic war events. Moseley Road School log book on 4 February 1916 (S273/2/1/3) records children absent from school because of the **Zeppelin raid** which had passed over Birmingham during the night, later dropping bombs and killing 11 people in Walsall.

The early twentieth century was a period of change for the provision of care for **children with disabilities**. A Special Schools Sub-Committee existed from 1903 to supervise the provision of education for some children with disabilities, often by charities. Several further acts required local authorities to extend this provision: the Mental Deficiency Act 1913 to identify and to assess 'defective' children between 7-16; the Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic) Act 1914 for 'mentally defective' children; and the Education Act 1918 extended this to 'physically defective' children. Day and residential schools were set up in Birmingham in response to this legislation.

RESEARCH TIPS:

The quantity of potential research material is vast for this subject but the quality varies; some log books contain useful information but others hardly refer to the war. School material can be closed or partially closed for 100 years; an application for permission to view can be made. A quick way into the Education Committee Minutes can be found by using the Birmingham Newscuttings (*School and Education*, 1914-21, 249873) which summarise important committee decisions reported in the local press. Secondary sources, such as published school histories (BCOL) often refer to school activities in the war.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

by Alison Smith & Liz Palmer

Children's health mostly improved during the First World War, despite any deprivations due to food shortages and other consequences. The improvement appears to have been as a result of public health interventions aimed at improving maternal and infant welfare. This was mainly through an ever expanding system of Welfare Centres and numbers of health visitors. The 1918 Medical Officer of Health reported that, apart from the influenza epidemic, the year was the healthiest on record.

The **Maternity and Infant Welfare Sub-Committee** was appointed in November 1915 and reported to the Public Health and Housing Committee. Its function was to advise its main parent body on maternity and infant welfare matters, which had become more acute since the outbreak of war. The sub-committee took control of the health visitors and administered the **Notification of Births Act 1915**, which made it compulsory to notify the Medical Officer of Health of all births. The sub-committee also took control of the Infant Consultation Clinics and administered the Midwives Act 1902, which created the Central Midwives Board. Minutes of the sub-committee for 1915-1920 are closed for 100 years as they contain sensitive information.

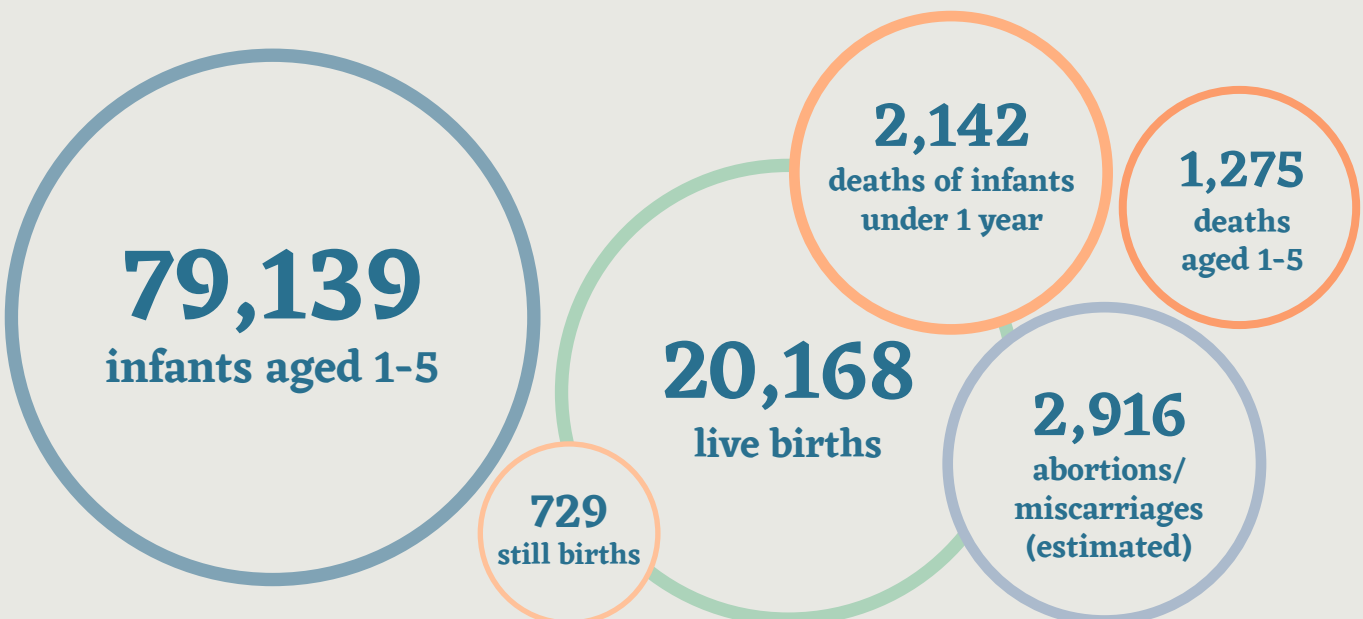
Statistics for Birmingham in 1916

Infant Mortality Rate: 104 per 1,000 births

The **Medical Officer of Health Reports** (MoH) give detailed statistics on a range of health topics affecting both adults and children and together with the Reports of the Schools Officer for Health they provide a good overview of the issues affecting children's health and mortality and the systems in place to improve them. John Robertson MD, in his introduction to the 1916 report, stated that all statistics showed 'a general progressive improvement in health of people'. However, the summary highlighted the difference across areas, with infant mortality in the central wards being twice that of outlying suburbs.

Infant mortality statistics show reductions in most of the major infectious **diseases**, including enteric fever (typhoid), measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria and diarrhoea, with slight increases in TB and whooping cough. The Public Health (Measles and German Measles) Regulations 1915 came into force on 1 January 1916. This made measles a notifiable disease and added force to the local regulations which had been in place a year early, requiring parents to notify the headteacher if a child was suspected of suffering from not only measles, but also chicken pox and whooping cough.

The 1916 report included a special report on maternity and infant welfare including ante-natal care, labour support and post-natal care, infant care to one year and supervision of young children. A rapid increase in appointments of **health visitors** during the early years of the war resulted, by 1916, in 49 health visitors with an additional 10 TB visitors, 2 workshop inspectors and 1 midwife visitor. An additional 10 trained workers in Voluntary Centres made 72 in total.



Details are provided about the number and nature of visits by health visitors and the range of activities in the welfare centres. These focused mainly on the **education of mothers** in the care of infants, in relation to issues such as overlaying, importance of good hygiene and feeding.

In May 1916, a **Motherhood exhibition** was staged for three days in the Town Hall. The Health Department's display consisted of two rooms constructed to represent a living room in a working-class home. One was:

'an insanitary, dirty, stuffy, neglected room in which no infant could be expected to thrive.'

Whereas the other room was:

'a clean, airy, tidy one in which an infant should flourish.'

Health visitors made 474 school visits relating to both infectious diseases and verminous cases where subsequent home visits were also made. One of the main concerns of the medical officer of health throughout the war was the state of **housing and sanitation** in the city. The problem was exacerbated by shortage of manpower to both inspect or repair dwellings under the 1910 Housing Act.

In the section on **Tuberculosis**, the 1916 report highlights the problems of many young doctors being absent due to the war, leaving a reduced number of clinicians to deal with the same caseloads. Cases of TB amongst children under 10 had more than doubled since 1912 and those for 10-15 year olds were also significantly higher. The report on **Yardley Road Sanatorium**, where most children would have been treated, provides details of the schooling provision for children being treated for TB. In 1916, 177 boys and 166 girls had attended the sanatorium school and in addition to keeping up with schoolwork were also taught **basketwork and gardening**.

The advent of the war also interrupted the building of a new hospital for the children of Birmingham. This development was the **Birmingham and Midland Free Hospital for Sick Children** on what is now Ladywood Middleway at Five Ways in Edgbaston. The new building remained incomplete in the mid-war years as labour and materials were not readily available.

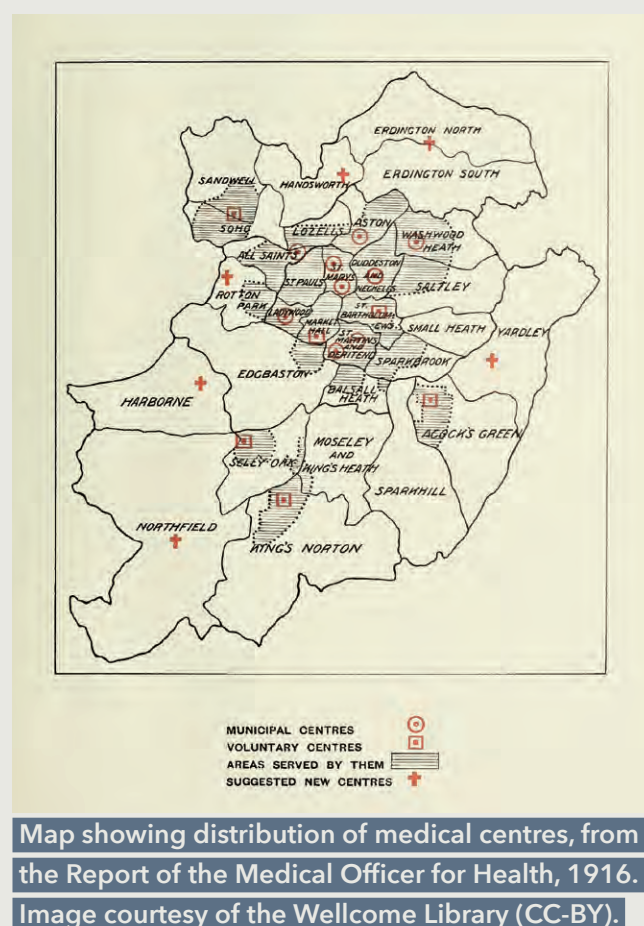
Annual reports from the hospital also tell us that an immediate impact was made by the departure of **medical staff 'summoned to war duties'** and as a result, some clinics were withdrawn and certain dental work reduced.

RESEARCH TIPS:

The archives holds records of several of the city's hospitals including the Children's Hospital and specialist hospitals such as the Dental and Eye Hospitals. Note, however, that patient records are covered by a 100-year closure period. The MoH Reports for this period are accessible though (L45.11-12). Also relevant to children's health research are records or annual reports of institutions such as the Royal School for Deaf Children, Birmingham Cripples Union, and Birmingham Royal Institution for the Blind.

As **food** supplies reduced it became increasingly difficult to secure adequate sources of milk for sick babies and children. Overall, throughout the period of the war, fewer children were treated both as in and out patients.

However, there were perhaps some unexpected consequences on the provision of health services to children, for example the overall **drug bill** for the hospital reduced as English manufacturers began to produce drugs previously only made abroad. Similarly, the demand for 'after-care payments' to the parents of poorly children also reduced as the separation allowances paid to families and the higher wages of munition workers raised average income.



CHILDREN IN CARE

by Maggie Brownlie

There were several agencies, organisations and charities such as Barnados, NSPCC, Birmingham Cottage Homes, Birmingham Bluecoat School and the Citizens Committee who were all active in maintaining the welfare of children during this period, and indeed had been running for several years before war broke out.

Three such child care organisations had all been initiated in Birmingham in the decade 1862-1872 and were still in operation during, and after, the war. **Josiah Mason** built an orphanage housing 300 boys and girls. In 1869, **Thomas Crowley** founded Crowley Orphanage for poor girls. And, in 1872, **John Middlemore** opened the first Children's Emigration Home on St Luke's Road.

John Middlemore, born in 1844 in Birmingham, spent four years in North America where he saw large farming communities and the opportunities families were enjoying. On his return, he saw the poor conditions of Birmingham where families lived in overcrowded slums and subsequently suffered poor health. Alcoholism, spousal and child assault, rape and incest was rife and **infant death rate** was high. Children were often abandoned and driven into a life of crime or prostitution. John Middlemore wanted to take these children off the streets and send them to Canada where they could have a chance of a better life and so the Emigration Homes were founded.

The Emigration Homes continued to care for many children during the war and to migrate children to **Canada** up until 1917. They amended their admissions policy in 1917 to cater for children whose fathers were serving in the army, so they would remain in the UK and potentially be returned to their parents at the end of the war (*Minute book, MS 517/4*).

Children could be brought to the home by their parents or relatives, some were recommended by magistrates or local organisations. Minutes of the committee meeting of 2 September 1915 highlight the case of three male children aged 6, 10 and 11 of the Benbow family referred by the Citizens Committee. Their father enlisted in 1915 and their mother was a drunkard and neglected the children. Application and **admission registers** note that the eldest boy was not attending school and had been seen pilfering coal. Their father had been admitted to a convalescent home and their mother had been prosecuted by the **NSPCC** and convicted of cruelty and sentenced to six months hard labour. The children were committed to care under a custody order (*MS 517/97*).

The Children's Emigration Homes entrance book case number 3547 of 10 September 1915 noted there were five children, a paternal aunt and a stepfather in the family (*MS 517/473*). The children's father had died of cardiac failure in the 1st Southern General Military Hospital located at the University of Birmingham. The eldest child was sent to a reformatory and the other two children were 'placed in a situation' on 22 September 1919. At least one was transferred to Barnados and later migrated to **Australia**. Two younger brothers were taken in by their aunt.

Photographs of children can sometimes be found in annual reports;

Children's Emigration Homes, 44th Annual Report for the year 1916 (*MS 517/23*).

A CONTRAST.



RICHARD; JOHN AND WILLIAM N—, as they appeared when received into the Homes in June, 1916.



RICHARD; JOHN AND WILLIAM N—, as they appeared after seven months' training.

Unlike many other records of institutions, the Emigration Homes only have a 75-year closure period and so they were chosen as the example to examine the impact of war on children in care.

BELGIAN REFUGEES

by Anna Muggeridge & Liz Palmer

Britain welcomed thousands of Belgians who had fled the advancing German army. After arriving in ports along the South Coast, the Belgians were sent to stay in towns and cities across the country. Approximately 5,000 were settled in Birmingham, including many children who mostly arrived in family groups.

On 1 September 1914, the Birmingham Daily Post reported, a committee was set up to organise the resettlement of the first 200 refugees, including 50 children. The **War Refugee Committee** was chaired by Elizabeth Cadbury, the philanthropist and activist for women's rights. By 4 September, the **Birmingham War Refugees Fund** had raised over £65,000 donated by people in Birmingham and the surrounding areas. That's an astonishing £5 million today. It wasn't just money that was donated, Birmingham Bedstead Manufacturers' Federation presented fifty beds to the home being set up for the new arrivals on Islington Row. In Aston, local tradesmen fitted out the Liberal Club, so that it too could house the refugees.

The Belgians arrived by **train from London**. The Evening Dispatch of 5 September 1914 reported:

'the express arrived into New Street Station at 6:45 bringing about forty Belgian refugees, who, driven from their homes by the German soldiery, have come to seek sanctuary with warm-hearted local friends'

The group was mainly made up of women and children, clutching their toys, and in the case of one young girl 'proudly wearing a miniature helmet'. They were met by various dignitaries, including the **Cadburys** and the Archbishop. However, the Birmingham Post reported that it was the reaction of ordinary citizens that did most to reassure them that they would be accepted. Having read of the horrors the Belgians had escaped from, men and women 'rushed up to the refugees and shook them enthusiastically by the hand' welcoming them to the city.

There were occasional unaccompanied minors. Picture World reported that among the 347 Belgian refugees arriving in Birmingham on 14 October 1914 was Jean Baptiste Despiegelaere, a boy scout from Louvain. At just 16 years old, he had fled his hometown before it's destruction by the German army, served in the Belgian army, been captured and interrogated, and escaped, shot three German soldiers while on spying missions and been wounded himself. Listed as number 998 in the **Refugee Register** (MS 652/6) he was immediately taken to Dudley Road Infirmary and a later note recorded his return to London.

In addition to the War Refugee Committee's **Receiving Home**, at 44 Islington Row, other large homes were made available, including Kings Heath House and Moor Green House. Belgian children initially attended the local schools, until an '**Ecole Belge**' opened in Birmingham on 14 February 1916 to educate the children in their national languages by Belgian teachers, so that they would not be behind with their schooling when they returned home. By 1918, the school had over 200 refugee pupils in attendance.

Photographs and anecdotes can be found in newspapers and publications such as Edgbastonia, Bournville Works Magazines, and (below) the Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, December 1914 (L92.1).



Photo]

[A. E. Dawson, Station Rd., Kings Heath.

GROUP OF BELGIAN REFUGEE GUESTS AT KINGS HEATH HOUSE.

Several records of the Birmingham War Refugees Fund survive, including minute books, a refugee register, registration forms and newscuttings.

UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS

by Alison Smith

Alongside women, children in Birmingham made an important contribution to war work on the home front. Much of this activity was channelled through schools but older children, in particular, participated as members of uniformed organisations providing practical assistance to the British war effort.

Following the publication of 'Scouting for Boys' in 1907, the **Birmingham Association of Scouts** was formed in 1908 with a membership of 1,000 and by the end of 1916 there were more than 7,000 Scouts in the Birmingham District.

The Boy Scouts carried messages for local government offices and guarded important places, such as railway bridges, and telephone and telegraph lines. They learnt to send **semaphore** messages using small flags and, by 1917, Scouts were also watching the skies for Zeppelin attacks and sounding their bugles to signal when an air raid was over.

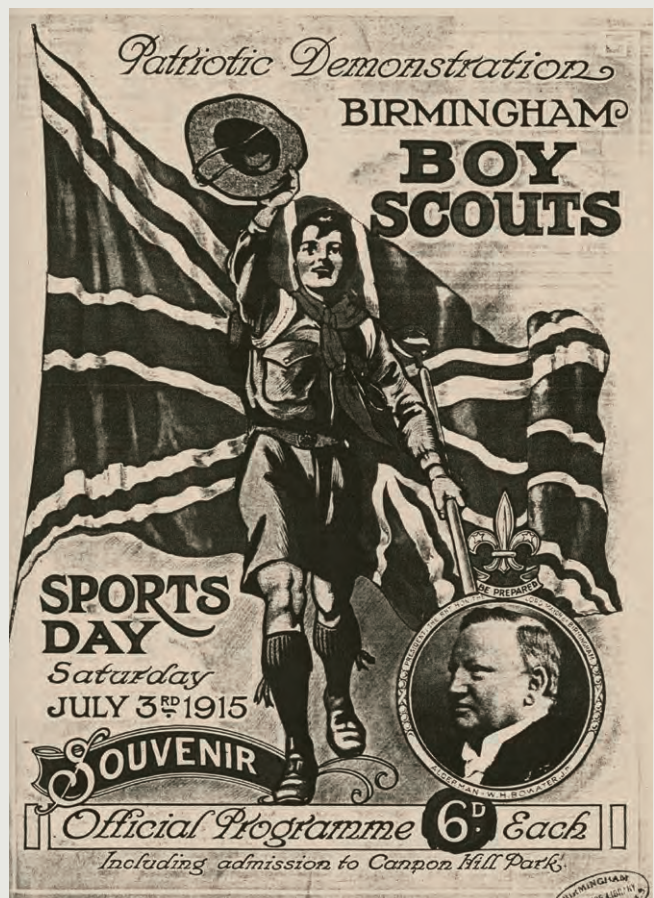
Birmingham Boy Scouts also undertook 'valuable work as **Sea Scouts** on coast-watching duties'. They were sent to vulnerable coastal locations on the East and South Coasts with Whitby being the largest station manned by a Birmingham contingent. Sea Scout Arthur Walters writes to his old scout master and this is printed in the monthly newsletter of St Paul's, Birmingham, describing his experiences:

'serving my country by guarding telegraph wires... also stop anyone sketching or taking photographs around the coast. We haven't seen any Zeppelins yet, but we heard them a few nights back. We are in a house (20 are Birmingham chaps) it is our own and we do our own cooking, and we scrub it from top to bottom twice a week: we also named it ourselves.'

Many scouts went on to join the armed forces and a list of scouts compiled in 1910 by the **1st Edwardian (Aston) troop** is annotated in a final column headed 'killed or decorated'; a poignant record indeed.

1910 saw the establishment of the **Girl Guide Association** in the UK under the leadership of Agnes Baden-Powell, sister of Robert, the Scouting founder. The Girl Guides took on many roles: they packaged up clothing and foodstuffs to send to British soldiers at the front and provided assistance at hospitals, canteens and in munitions factories. 'An ounce of help is worth a pound of pity'; a philosophy expressed in a newspaper when describing the practical help provided by Girl Guides at a local hospital.

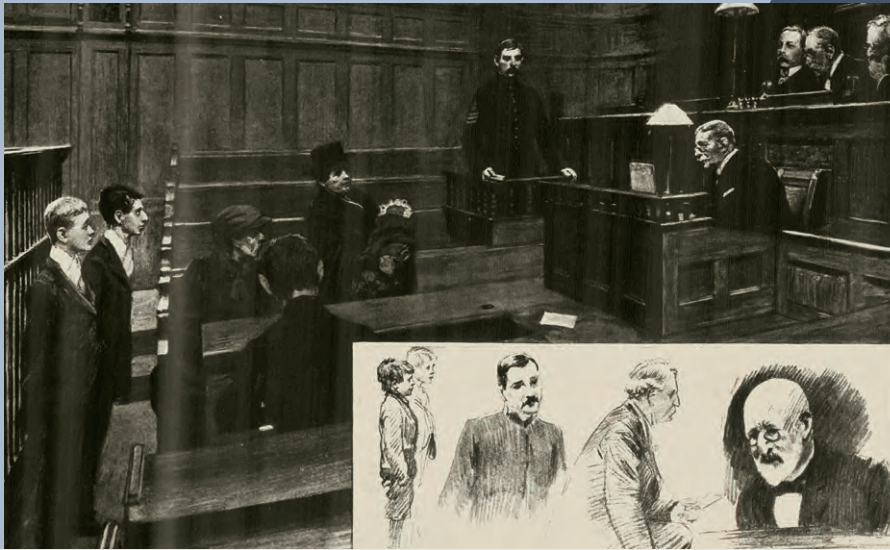
The **Boys Brigade** was founded in 1883 in Glasgow by William Alexander Smith as an inter-denominational youth organisation conceived to combine drill and physical activities with Christian values. Just six years later, in 1889, the brigade had its first company in Birmingham at Camp Hill Presbyterian Church. The Birmingham Daily Post of January 1915 records a Boys Brigade bazaar displaying a patriotic exhibition of the work of the league with 50% of the profits going to the **Prince of Wales Relief Fund**. In September 1918, the annual conference reported that several members had qualified for the National Service Badge, awarded for not less than 100 hours service to the community.



Copy of a souvenir programme for the Birmingham

Boy Scouts Sports Day at Cannon Hill Park,

3 July 1915 (Birmingham Institutions, F/2).



The 1917 report using Birmingham Children's Court records 'The Child and The War' by Cecil Leeson is essential reading for putting the spotlight on the delinquency problem during the war years.

Birmingham newspapers can be viewed on microfilm, as well as online: www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

This pre-war image of Birmingham Children's Court is from The Graphic, 24 June 1905.

YOUTH JUSTICE

by Robert Gould

From the start of the First World War, on 4 August 1914, the military recruitment to the front line of fathers, brothers and uncles decimated family life and fractured the social structures that bound communities together. One of the consequences was a rapid rise in juvenile delinquency as the war progressed.

This increase was especially seen in the more serious and indictable **crimes** of larceny, burglary, stealing, arson and wounding. This had been demonstrated nationally and particularly in the more urban areas. Birmingham was no exception to this phenomenon with a 30% plus increase in these crimes since the beginning of the war.

Although not specifically detailed in any archive documents, there was a concern from politicians, judiciary and interested public figures that as the actual and predicted death toll rose dramatically on the front line, the importance of children and their upbringing would become acute. The future of the country postwar would be looking to these children as the fathers and mothers of the next generation, and the labour supply for economic and social recovery. The welfare of children by way of the **Factory Acts** of the 1830s to the 1908 Children's Act demonstrate this was being addressed, albeit slowly. However, the consequences of war and a decimated (mainly male) population focused the attention on looking after the children and addressing juvenile delinquency.

Due to Birmingham having the **first Juvenile Court** in the country, established in April 1905, a comprehensive collection of statistical and written information was recorded in the form of court registers (*Juvenile Court Registers, PS/B/1/1/8/3-6*) of crime and child offenders, and annual reports (*Reports of the Birmingham Prison Visiting Committee of the Juvenile Court, 1906-1957, L43.46*) summarising the year's activity with comments and observations on child crime.

The Birmingham Juvenile Court System was a beacon of excellence for Britain and for other countries around the world at the time. As a consequence, it was no surprise that the **Howard Association** (known today as The Howard League) chose to undertake an in-depth study on behalf of the nation on Juvenile Delinquency in Birmingham during 1916 compared to peacetime:

'The Howard Association has been privileged to analyse the records of the Birmingham Children's Court for the past three years... the most disquieting features of all these juvenile-court returns are not merely that the increase exists, but that it is so much larger in the second year of war than the first and that a far greater proportion of increase consists of larcenies and felonies'

The subsequent report, published in 1917, was 'The Child and The War' by Cecil Leeson, the secretary at the time of the Howard Association. A number of **causes** were described including:

'inadequacy and late arrival of army separation pay to families, the loss of the male controlling influence of children, the growing scarcity of vital food stuffs and a reduced police force of trained officers'

AREA STUDY: HOCKLEY

by Anne Hornsby

Maps of 1914 illustrate the Hockley area, to the north of the City Centre, as a district of long terraces and courts of back-to-backs; housing that became renowned for squalor, poverty and disease due to its cramped design and poor sanitation. It was needed to accommodate the population boom in the early 1900s, as the area reached its height of activity with tens of thousands of people employed within the jewellery trade.

School log books provide an insight into daily life and routines. There are reports that children were receiving free breakfasts because fathers were away fighting and the War Office payment had not yet arrived. Many were suffering from **malnutrition** and St Paul's School log book notes numerous applications for Daily Mail Relief. In addition, the shortage of coal had a significant impact; All Saint's National School records several periods of no coal between January-March 1915, and children sent home from unheated classrooms.

The war also brought about an increase in **child labour** in Hockley. Boys and girls woke to find that their fathers had enlisted and had left for distant battlefields while they slept, resulting in a massive gap in the area's workforce. Although families in Hockley were generally not directly employed in making jewellery, many earned an income from the jewellery trade, perhaps by producing boxes. Factories went against the child labour laws and hired children younger than the

school leaving age. St Paul's log book shows that more than 150 girls worked before, between and after school, and were too tired to be taught. Often employed under the **'Half Time' system** children spent the morning in the factory and the afternoon at school. Reportedly, many were asleep at their desks. Was the employment of juveniles considered exploitative at the time? Articles in St Paul's Parish Monthly Newsletter (1914-1918) debate the 'undesirable' accounts of children working. But they also report, for consideration, that the term 'child labour' could be misleading and that 'useful occupation of leisure time by children still of school age' is a better reflection. The Vicar of St Paul's suggests that with no playing fields, an active child has nowhere to let off steam. Better that they are busy at the end of a school day rather than hanging around idling on street corners:

'by doing the lightest of light work, they may yet save the more important worker for more important work and earn easy coins.'

The courts were trying to tackle the problem and The Birmingham Daily Post in 1915 has reports on **prosecutions** of a number of manufacturers illegally employing children in Hockley. However, while the Senior Lady Inspector of Factories professed horror at the employment of Ethel and Nellie Parkes, children under the age of 12, she commented that interference in the marketplace could cost Britain her manufacturing supremacy:

'it is imperative that this young labour should be carefully husbanded for the future needs of the century. These little girls may be needed in a few years time in munitions works, and consequently their health and strength must be carefully preserved.'

Maps of the Hockley area offer a fascinating starting point for research. This one is from the Ordnance Survey, Warwickshire XIII.4, revised 1913-14, published 1918. National Library of Scotland (CC-BY-NC-SA).



The archives contain an extensive collection of tens of thousands of maps, including Ordnance Survey maps for the Birmingham area. Many historic maps have also been made available online by the National Library of Scotland.

YOUTH

EMPLOYMENT

by Maggie Brownlie

In 1914, Birmingham education authority imposed a school leaving age of 14 years. By the end of 1915, the Chamber of Commerce urged the authority to reduce boys leaving age to 13 during the war to increase the amount of labour available.

A massive gap in the workforce was left as men and older boys enlisted in the army. Women and children were recruited to take their place by working in **factories**, especially in manufacturing and arms and ammunition production. Many companies and factories went against the child labour laws and hired young children to work up to 15 hours a day.

There was growing family pressure on **teenagers** to earn money to support the family and parents would press for immediate earning after leaving school in unskilled work rather than encouraging training opportunities. Munitions Labour Supply Committee reports indicate wages in 1915 were based on ages: 16 shillings per week for over 21 years, 13 shillings for 19-20, 11 shillings for 18, and 7-9 shillings for 14-17 year olds.

The **coroner's newspaper cuttings** for 1914-1918 indicate the types of youth employment that were undertaken in Birmingham and some of the tragic consequences of lack of training and safety procedures.

Coroner's Report, 8 July 1915:

Elsie Cash aged 14 years of 7 Sheepcote Street died after an accident at James Booth and Co. She was employed as an assistant at a draw bench and became entangled in the machine. Verdict accidental death.

Coroner's Report, 16 March 1915:

Leah Harrison aged 16 years of 1 back 228 Hospital Street was employed by Mr Charles Carey, a metal button manufacturer, as a press worker. Her clothes ignited as she passed a gas stove in the workshop. Verdict accidental death.

Coroner's Report, 16 May 1916:

Doris Hilda Cole aged 15 years of 41 Westfield Road was employed in the capstan shop at Messrs Bulpits Works in Summer Hill. She slipped on the stairs and her plait of hair caught in the shafting where she was whirled around and died almost immediately. Verdict accidental death.

Coroner's Report, 28 November 1916:

William Henry Stevenson aged 15 years of 45 Court 1 House Irving Street was employed as a warehouse boy. He was dropping 7lb cylinders down a hoist into a padded basket two floors beneath. He fell down the shaft head first and sustained a fractured skull and broken neck. Verdict accidental death.

Coroner's Report, 29 February 1916:

Elsie Lilian Freckleton aged 16 years of 68 Alfred Street died as result of burns sustained whilst working as a wire machine attendant at Messrs Davidson, Balsall Heath. She was bending with her back to a stove and her clothing caught fire. Verdict accidental death.

Photographs provide an insight into the working conditions children endured alongside adults in the dangerous manufacture of hand grenades. Mills Munitions Works, 1915 (MS 4616/9).



Many photographs were taken for propaganda and promotional purposes during the war years, by Birmingham firms, such as Mills Munitions Works and Kynoch.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

by Liz Palmer & Rebecca Ball

Throughout this project we have been seeking to discover as much as possible about children's lived experiences during the war. But most primary and secondary sources about children's lives that we have uncovered are written by adults and either provide narrative of events that happened to children or discussed changes in policy about provision of services for children. There are only fleeting glimpses in Birmingham archives, library resources and newspapers of children themselves voicing their own thoughts.

A series of prize essay competitions ran in the **Birmingham Weekly Mercury**. Irene Harrison, a 13 year old of Sparkbrook, won in November 1915 with an essay about how children could help the **war effort**. She extolled the virtues of denial and unselfishness and encouraged other children to buy cigarettes for soldiers with their pocket money instead of it being '*squandered at the sweet shop*'. And with the approach of Christmas she thought children could request their parents didn't buy them expensive toys, but practical gifts such as new boots and money saved could be spent on sending parcels to 'Tommies'.

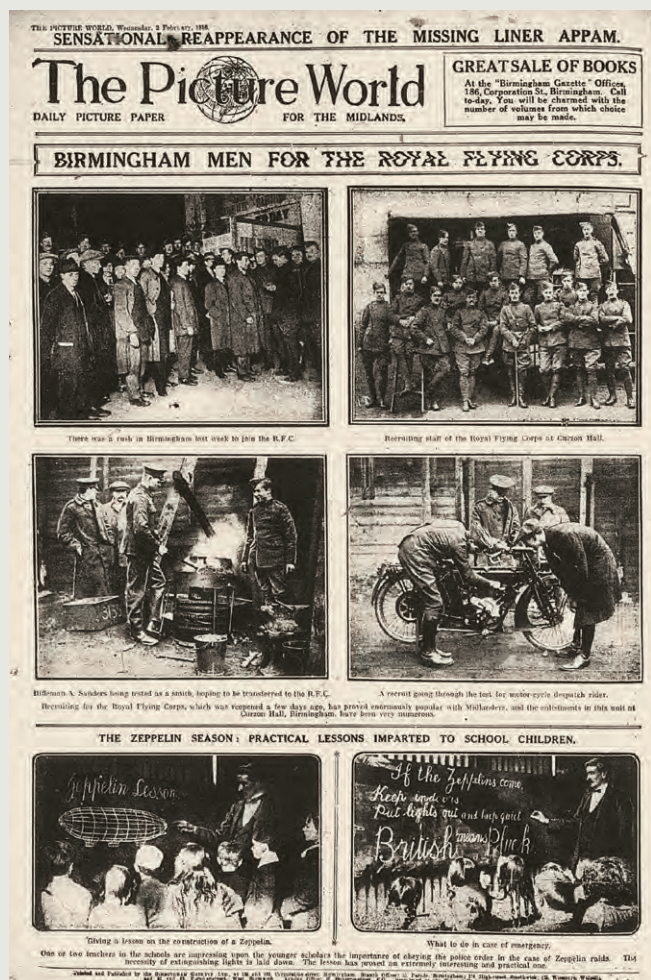
In May 1916, Harry Hill of Sparkhill won the half crown weekly prize for his essay on the theme of 'Brave Deeds' in which he wrote about [Alfred] Victor Smith who was posthumously awarded the **Victoria Cross** for his actions in Gallipoli when after dropping his '*missile of death, a great feeling of resolve came into his noble breast [and he] lay at full length upon the nearly bursting grenade*'. Other essays in the series feature more benign topics such as Christmas or interesting places to visit.

In the **unpublished memoir of Norman Hickin** (MS 4383) written in the 1980s, he remembers the declaration of war whilst on holiday with his parents in Lower Bentley, Worcestershire. The vacation was cut short by the arrival of the news, but the event which stuck most in his mind was the teenage daughter of the family they were staying with being kicked by a horse and breaking her leg! Making a stronger impression was the 'extraordinary sight' of a Zeppelin. Living in Handsworth, this must have been the raid on 31 January 1917 which rained terror down on

Tipton and the Black Country. Norman describes it being lit up by searchlights and the crowds in the street watching it pass overhead. '*The fact that it carried a load of bombs and was ready to drop them did not appear to worry anyone*'.

There are several series of school magazines, mainly from independent or grammar schools. But some working-class voices can be found in a bound volume of school newsletters entitled **The Cradle** from the Boys Department of Allcock Street Board School. It includes a letter from the headmaster expressing surprise that the library would be interested in saving them for posterity, being as they were written by '*the poorest of slum boys to put on record their school life*'.

In April 1915, the **Woodrough School Chronicle** featured two prize-winning essays. In the first, 13 year old 'Watts' acknowledges the war was the '*most terrible one the World has ever seen*' because the '*latest engines of War are truly terrible machines*'. He was supremely confident that at '*no distant date the German Empire will be crushed and beaten*'.



This 'daily picture paper for the Midlands' features lessons to children on what to do in a Zeppelin raid. The Picture World, 2 February 1916 (on microfilm).

10 year old 'Allen' shows that he too was well aware of some of the causes of the war and the progress of the various protagonists. He also specifically mentions that the Germans were calling up boys *'from thirteen and a half to seventeen years, who, undrilled and undisciplined, were going straight into the fighting line'*. Does this suggest some empathy with youngsters like himself or hint at fears that boys little older than himself may find themselves enlisted here too?

Within the Carl Chinn archive (MS 1902) and transcribed in **Brummagem Issue 29**, there is a letter from Emma Bygrave (nee Hanley) who lived on Witton Road during the War. She recalled *'knitting socks for soldiers and sailors, khaki and grey'* and sometimes seeing *'a gun carriage come down Witton Road with a soldier's coffin covered with a Union Jack'*. Also prominent were her memories of the **flu epidemic** of 1918. *'People were dying so fast, it was hard coping with the funerals. I was one of the fortunate ones, I did not get it, but my young brother was desperately ill, but he did come through and lived to his 88th year.'* And on 11 November 1918 *'everything went haywire as Armistice was signed. Work was forgotten and the workers from Kynoch's and all works around came marching up making for town to celebrate - what a day'*.

Additional memoirs and letters can be found in other local repositories including family letters in the **King Edward School** archive, and an oral history recording of Elizabeth Cross, from Small Heath at **Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery**.

The **Moseley Society** in their Moseley at War booklet includes a quote from an unnamed contributor: *'I can remember the Zeppelins coming over at the beginning of the First World War. They came right over Moseley. They went towards Birchwood Road and I'm sure I could hear the men receiving orders on the platform underneath the Zeppelin. People won't believe me but I'm sure I could hear it'*.

Further afield, the John Burnett Working Class Autobiographies Archive at **Brunel University** includes a life story by Ellsye Finnie. Born in Sutton Coldfield, Ellsye began her recollection with the dark clouds of war, which *'drifted over, dark and threatening'*. The streets soon became full of *'khaki-clad soldiers'* and the windows were covered with *'gloomy blackout curtains'*. Ellsye also recalled how *'rationing became part of life'* and the appearance of *'queues at the butcher's shop'*. She wrote how *'sadness hung in the air'* however school life continued but with an added lecture on refusing extra helpings at dinner. And on the subject of Zeppelin attacks, Ellsye recalled the *'ominous noises coming from the sky'* as a Zeppelin passed over. Listening close in fear they heard another noise *'the slow solid tread of the night policeman on his beat'*. Ellsye also recalled how she enjoyed the arrival of billettees in their home *'sometimes soldiers in training or girls working in munitions factories'*. Her personal favourite were two young Royal Engineer Corps. She remembered how *'they bought me my very first box of chocolates'* when she passed the entrance exam into Grammar school. *'No chocolates have ever tasted sweeter!'*

Gordon Innes includes reminiscences of his school days in seven typed pages (MS 2646/2/1) which describe his time at Rookery Road School in Handsworth. The arrow in the below photograph indicates Gordon. The memoirs include comments on teachers including one of German origin who was interned.



We searched in vain amongst the archives for diaries or letters written by children. Correspondence from a couple of serving soldiers to their families make reference to the pleasure their children's letters gave them, but the letters themselves have not survived.

IN PICTURES

POSTCARDS



Poor old Spud we often
"CHIPPED" him
When we always had him near
But how the Girls would love
to "MASH" him.
Nowadays if he were here.

As the war progressed into the winter of 1915, school log book accounts relate to the scarcity of food supplies, with distributions of tinned salmon from British Colombia and tickets for 2lb loaves made from Canadian wheat. This postcard tries to make light of this serious shortage (WW1 Postcards/Box 1/10b).

ANNUAL REPORTS



Administrative records of organisations active in the First World War have not always survived, but printed records like Annual Reports often do. The Cinderella Club struggled to continue their summer holiday camps for children of poor families. This image appeared in several annual reports but appears to date from 1909-10 (L41.23).

PHOTOGRAPHS



Food shortages led to long queues, with women and children often waiting up to six hours for basics such as tea, sugar or butter. This had a significant impact on school attendance. School dinners were introduced during particular times of hardship, and rationing was introduced in 1918 and remained in place until 1920 (LSH Photos/WW1/Home Front).

NOTICES

BIRMINGHAM CIVIC RECREATION LEAGUE.

STIRCHLEY CLUB

WILL BE HELD DURING THE COMING SESSION AT THE
STIRCHLEY INSTITUTE.

FOR ALL YOUTHS and GIRLS.

DANCING

MONDAYS, 7.30—10 p.m. Admission, Members 6d., Visitors 1/-.
THURSDAYS, 8.30—10 p.m. Admission, Members 3d., Visitors 6d.

For GIRLS only.

TUESDAYS, 8 p.m. Singing and Embroidery,
Admission 2d.

THURSDAYS, 7-30 p.m. Dramatic Class,
Country and International Dancing,
Dressmaking. Admission 2d.
(Members who come for classes at 7.30 may stay for Dancing without extra payment).

FRIDAYS, 8 p.m. Musical Drill, Embroidery,
Millinery. Admission 2d.

REFRESHMENTS at Popular Prices.

FIRST NIGHT, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1919

JUNIOR CLUB.

A Club for Girls from 8 to 14 years of age
will be held at the Institute every Tuesday at
6-30 p.m., beginning Tuesday, October 7th, 1919.

Post-war notice of dances and classes at the Stirchley Institute, September 1919.

From material relating to the Birmingham Civic Recreation League (LF 36.99).

REGISTERS

49

NAME.	AGE	Regd. N.	B.N.	Belgian Town.
Oct: 15 th 1-50				
Koonet- Louis.	62	8534	1152	(Single man.) Malines.
Obislagers- Cornelle.	74	8536	1153	Amers.
" Petronelle.	81	8534	1154	
" Catharina.	75	8536	1155	
Baissé, Maria.	(26-7)	8240	1156	Amers.
" François.	25	8242	1157	
" Marguerite.	7.	8241	1158	
Bourne, Rachelle.	14	8243	1159	(Sister of Maria Baissé)
Geets, Pierre.	7-37	8153	1160	Malines.
" Dorothee.	11-3	8154	1161	
" François.	12	8155	1162	
" Laurent.	9.	8156	1163	
" Caroline.	7.	8157	1164	
" Antoine.	3.	8158	1165	
" Pierre.	3	8159	1166	
Koch- Peter.	24		1167	Amers.
" Josephine.	57		1168	
" Louisa.	18		1169	
End of Vol. 1 (Lancaster House)				
Oct: 17 th (Met by Mrs. Radcliffe.)				
Vol. 2 (Lancaster House)				
Monsieur Joris (Fem.)	54		1170	Utrecht.
Madame Joris (Victoire)	56		1171	
Mademoiselle Joris (Julienne)	28		1172	

Around 5,000 Belgian refugees in total were allocated to Birmingham. They were found places in homes across the city from ordinary people, who were keen to help, and many stayed for the duration of the war. Their details are documented in this register, which records the names of the refugees in the groups in which they arrived, with their ages and town of origin. Birmingham War Refugee Committee (MS 652/6).

COMMUNITY MAGAZINES



Local journals such as Edgbastonia, or company magazines such as Bournville Works, are also a rich resource. This image of schoolchildren visiting Colmore Road Military Hospital is taken from the Birmingham, Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, April 1917 (L92.1).

PHOTOGRAPH ALBUMS



A number of scrapbooks and photograph albums can be found in the archives. This one features photographs of the Tank Bank Week in January 1918, which raised £6.5m via the purchase of War Certificates. This photograph, entitled 'The Youngest Investor' illustrates that children were also targeted to support the war financially. Birmingham Tank Week album, January 1918 (LF 75.7).

POSTERS



Propaganda posters often drew on sentimental subjects, such as protecting the children and their future, to encourage men to enlist (LS/Ephemera/WW1).

SELECTED RESOURCES

The following are selected references primarily from the resources held at the Library of Birmingham and identified during the Birmingham Children of War project. They include archive material, some of which is affected by 100-year closure periods.

Researchers are advised to consult the online catalogue at:

calmview.birmingham.gov.uk

Archive material that is open to view can be seen by appointment only. Some published material held within library stocks must also be ordered in advance.

The Library catalogue can be searched here:

library-opac.birmingham.gov.uk

However, it does not contain all material within the Birmingham Collection and use should be made of earlier paper catalogues and card indexes in the Library.

Report of Visitor *Not for immigration. We are to receive this Mrs. Cook's allowance of 5/- per week for each child.*
Accepted.

DATE *23* No. *3578* Name and Age of Child *Ellen Cook 12 yrs 12/15* John Thomas Cook 9 yrs 11/15 Thomas Cook 11/15
Name and Address of Parent *Edith Cook 218 1/2 Camden St. S.W. 11/15*
School Standard *Ellen John W. Thomas infants*
Description of Child *rather ragged but clean as they have been in the Birmingham Home for a week*
Members of Family *mother & 3 children*
Legitimate? *yes*
Circumstances *Father, a soldier, was killed in action in France last March. Mother has been receiving Army pay & finding much of it in drink. Children before Children's Court charged with living with mother under legal custody. When asked with them. had been with a woman*
DAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1917
REPORT FOR A PORTUGAL
AND FIRST TRIP IN THE POLICE COURT.

Records of institutions, such as this Application Book from the Child Migration Homes, can provide details on individual children and families. But care is needed, to check access conditions and closure periods; ask archives staff for guidance.

Middlemore Homes Application Book (MS 517/248).

Childcare and Nurseries:

Association for the Rescue and Training of Young Women - Annual Report, 1918-19 (MS 603/3/1/6)

Ladies Association for the Care & Protection of Young Girls (L41.2)

Small Heath Nursery (*Coroner's Inquest*, 31 Jan 1917, Lily Irene Boucker & Norah Kathleen Delaney)

Education and Schools:

Records of Birmingham Education Committee and related sub-committees (BCC/BH/1)

Records of Blue Coat School (MS 1622)

Allcock Street Council School - log books (S4)

Aston Hall Primary School - log book (S9)

Hebrew School (JA/1/C/9/2)

Allcock Street Council School Magazine - The Cradle (L48.23)

Woodrough School Chronicle (L48.23)

School & Education Newscuttings Collection (*Birmingham Newscuttings*)

Health and Welfare:

Annual Reports of Birmingham Lying In Charity & Maternity Hospital, 1914-17 (HC/MH/1/6)

Medical Officer of Health Reports (L45.11)

School's Medical Officer of Health Reports (L45.12)

MoH reports can also be found online at: archive.org/details/medicalofficerofhealthreports

Reports of Medical Superintendent (L45.12)

Annual Reports of the Birmingham Cripples Union (L46.03)

'A Breath of Fresh Air - Birmingham's Open Air Schools' (48.6)

Children in Care:

Records of Middlemore Child Migration Homes (MS 517/A)

Records of Crowley Orphanage for Girls (MS 517/B)

Records of Birmingham Children's Homes (BCC/10/BCH)

Minutes of Birmingham Poor Law Union (GP/B)

NSPCC - Birmingham & District Annual Reports (L41.3106)

Belgian Refugees:

Birmingham Citizens Committee: Moseley Auxiliary Branch (*EP 77/16/2*)
Records of the War Refugees Fund, Birmingham and District (*MS 652*)
War Refugees Fund – miscellaneous leaflets (*LF21.86/531707*)
Report of Birmingham War Refugee Committee (*Birmingham Institutions F/3*)

Uniformed Organisations:

Records of 1st Edwardian (Aston) Scout Troop (*MS 4036/2*)
1st Crescent Scout troop - photograph album (*MS 2174*)
Birmingham & District Association of Boy Scouts - year books (*L21.5*)
Boys Brigade - annual reports (*L21.5*)
Boy Scouts Patriotic Demonstration Souvenir (*Birmingham Institutions F/2*)

Youth Justice:

Norton Reformatory - annual reports (*MS 244/5/1*)
Tennal School (Formerly Gem Street Industrial School) - annual reports (*MS 994/7/1/55-57*)
Minutes and Reports of Birmingham Working Boys Home (*MS 3375/1/9 & L41.31*)
Birmingham Children's Remand School - register of children (*BCC/10/BCH/12/2/3*)
Shustoke Industrial School - log book (*CC/10/BCH/11/1/1/1*)
Juvenile Court - registers (*PS/B/1b1/8/3-6*)
Birmingham Prison Visiting Committee of the Juvenile Court (*L43.46*)
Leeson, Cecil 'The Child and The War', 1917 (*Political - A320.8 D44/301163*)

Hockley Area Study:

Records of St Paul's Primary School, Spencer Street (*S 171*)
St Paul's Church - parish magazines (*EP 35/7/1/7- 9*)
'Illegal Employment of Children' (*Birmingham Daily Post, 11 Dec 1915*)
Historic Ordnance Survey maps (*Map Collection*) and online: maps.nls.uk

Youth Employment:

Report of the Special Schools After-care Sub-committee (*L41.3*)
Freeman, Arnold 'Boy, Life and Labour', 1914 (*L61.47*)
'Women's Work and Wages' (*L22.7*)
Birmingham Education Committee – Report on Birmingham Trades for Women and Girls, 1914 (*BCOL*)

In Their Own Words:

Material relating to Gordon Innes' school days (*MS 2646/2*)
Papers of Norman Hickin – include WW1 memories (*MS 4383*)
Children's Competition 'What can little ones do in the War?' (*Birmingham Weekly Mercury, 1915-16*)
Elizabeth Cross' reminiscences (*BMAG First World War Sound Archive*): bmagblog.org/tag/audio

Newspapers:

Picture World, Birmingham Weekly Mercury, and various suburban newspapers (*microfilm only*)
Birmingham Daily Gazette, Birmingham Daily Post, Birmingham Mail, Evening Despatch (*on microfilm*)
and online: www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

Some Useful Websites:

Birmingham Archives & Collections blog: theironroom.wordpress.com
BBC Schools: www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1
Imperial War Museum: www.iwm.org.uk/history/10-ways-children-took-part-in-the-first-world-war
A rural perspective of the Home Front: ww1inthevale.wordpress.com
Children's History Society: www.facebook.com/histchild

A longer resource list can be downloaded from: birminghamchildrenofwarblog.wordpress.com

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Friends of Birmingham Archives and Heritage

(FoBAH) is a volunteer group formed in 2009 to promote and support the work of Birmingham Archives & Heritage in making their collections as available to as wide an audience as possible. FoBAH has nearly 100 individual members and 3 valued patrons: Professor Sir David Cannadine, Sir Nicholas Goodison, and Professor Catherine Hall.

Wishing to undertake a project marking the Centenary of the First World War, FoBAH was successful in seeking funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to focus on uncovering the, largely untold, story of children's experience of war from a Birmingham perspective.

The project enlisted the help of volunteers to research archival and library resources to find examples of what life was like for a child living in Birmingham and the impact war had on their everyday lives. Meeting on a weekly basis the volunteers have learnt how to use library and archive catalogues to identify sources to research their chosen themes. This was augmented by a workshop on using historic newspapers both online and on microfilm.

Volunteers have regularly shared their findings via the project's blog:

birminghamchildrenofwarblog.wordpress.com

And small snippets via: **twitter.com/BmChildrenOfWar**.

Material can also be found on the Historypin website:

www.historypin.org/en/birmingham-children-of-war-ww1

To find out more about Friends of Birmingham Archives and Heritage: **www.fobah.org**

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Mary Evans Picture Library

National Library of Scotland

Wellcome Library



Historic references can also be found in the

landscape, like this Hall of Memory plaque

by William Bloyes (Photo: Birmingham City Council).

F R I E N D S
O F
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