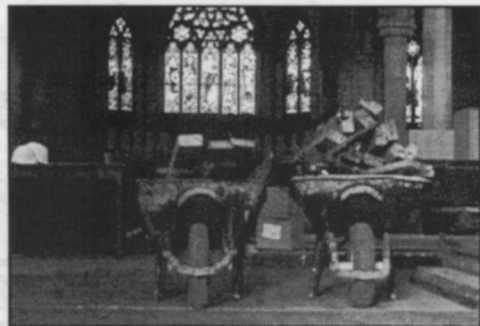


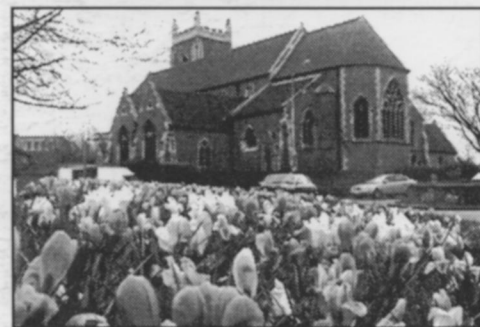


A Vision for the Future

St John's Church which has served the people of Ladywood since it was consecrated in 1854 is under going a dramatic transformation. The interior is being completely revamped



to develop what the vicar Rev Richard Tetlow says will be an improved spiritual and artistic resource for Ladywood and the surrounding area. He says: 'we have created a large open and flexible space for worship and spiritual performance. This means we can continue to develop our thriving arts and education programme for music, drama, dance, visual arts and inter-faith religious services'.



A major fund raising project is in full swing and a number of grants have been received, most notably from the Lottery fund to raise the required funds thought to be around £950,000. The vicar is keen

to emphasise that 'The church has no funds of its own so every penny of our contribution has to be raised through our own fundraising efforts'.

The first part of the work was to repair the roof, which was suffering from dry rot. Since then work has begun on fitting underfloor heating, toilets and new lighting. Work is also underway to erect a stage and improve disabled access.

The redevelopment includes works of art such as a glass cross, a glass water feature and new stained glass windows.

A few eyebrows were raised when the pews were removed but Richard Tetlow says, 'the whole development is essential for the future of the church. Many churches are now redundant but this exciting project will ensure that St John's can continue to serve the area. Although there is already a strong youth provision in the district, we feel we can provide alternative and additional means for people, young and old to express themselves. The internal reconstruction will enable us to be more flexible in our approach to community needs'.

The work is expected to be completed by July 2002.

Welcome

Welcome to Issue Two of The Brew 'Us Bugle, the magazine all about Ladywood in days gone by. Thank you to all of you who attended the launch day of the first edition at the end of November and for your kind comments about that first issue.

So what's in this edition?

- * The Great Circus Disaster of 1930
- * Stories from Up the 'orserowd
- * Tolkien's links with Ladywood
- * Easter memories
- * The Ice Rink
- * Plus much, much more!

We hope Issue Three will be out at the end of July to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the infamous bombing of Dockers' paint factory, which cost the lives of a number of fire-fighters. If you have any memories of that frightful night please get in touch with us.

The address to send your comments and contributions is:

Norman Bartlam
The Ladywood History Group
Ladywood Arts & Leisure Centre
Monument Road
Ladywood
B16 0QT
or phone Norman or Eileen on 0121 455 0663

The Brew 'Us Bugle is put together by the Ladywood History Group. Current members are George Elmer, Darren Cannan, Eadie Ockford, Mac Joseph, Eileen Doyle, John Landon and Norman Bartlam. Let us know if you would like to join us.

The Millennium Awards and The Housing Education Initiative sponsored this issue. We are actively seeking funding for future editions. Stamps and cheques made out to 'The Ladywood History Group' sent to the above address would be appreciated.

Knocking spots off the old days...

'There has been an outbreak of measles so said the newsreader at the start of a recent news bulletin. Big news, eh? Measles! It maybe a rash thing to say, but what happened in the dim and distant past would knock spots off today's minor outbreak! Vaccine has all but eradicated the disease and it only made the news recently because of the row over the triple vaccine MMR. Years ago measles was a hazard of growing up. Mumps, scarlet fever, diphtheria, smallpox, watching the Villa, you name a nasty disease and it was found lurking in Ladywood.

Exactly 110 years ago this month, in April 1892, there was a major outbreak of smallpox in Birmingham, centred on the Ladywood and All Saints areas of the city. The first cases occurred in vagrants who were in the Casual Ward at the Birmingham Workhouse. The official report referred to smallpox spreading 'to a considerable extent by means of association of patients with their fellow work people. Thus six cases occurred in a short period amongst work people at a factory on Ingleby Street'. The previous quarter of the year had seen 27 cases and no deaths from the disease, but in this quarter there had been 979 cases resulting in 70 deaths. Records showed that only 4.5% of the deaths came from those who had been vaccinated. This led the Chief Medical Officer to say that he was surprised, 'there should still be persons who do not believe that vaccination affords protection against death from smallpox'.

Homes throughout the area were, 'purified by fumigation with sulphurous acid, the walls being subsequently stripped of paper and limewashed. All the clothing, bedding, carpets exposed to infection, were sent to Bacchus Road to be disinfected'. This included 927 beds, 1,050

blankets and 733 counterpanes. Also you may like to know that there was a run on diarrhoea, which claimed the lives of 115 people.

Later in the same year St George's School was closed for a while after a child brought diphtheria into the school. It began with what The Daily Mail referred to as a 'prevalence of sewer gas in the neighbourhood of Monument Road and Waterworks Road' resulting in 'a concomitant outbreak of diphtheria whose victims were especially children'. The chief medical officer referred to the 'effluvia arising from the sewers' and to 'various methods of lessening the evil'. By June 28 1892 'forty-five cases were reported in the city with ten or eleven cases among scholars'. The paper suggested that 'a young girl of 12, of rather delicate constitution, was in the habit of bringing her sister, who is a teacher in the school, her dinner. To do so she was wont to pass from her home in Carlyle Road along Waterworks Road to Beaufort Road. She must infallibly have taken diphtheria on her way, for on Friday she was seriously ill with it, and on Saturday she was dead'.

The school was closed on the grounds that 'prevention is better than cure'.

Not wishing to suggest that any disease should be taken lightly but looking back at events like that it makes you wonder what all the recent fuss was about when a dozen or so people caught measles!

Winnie Horton MBE

Miss Winifred Horton who received the MBE in March 1994 for her services to the WRVS in Ladywood passed away in February 2002. Before Christmas she was interviewed on tape for a forthcoming feature in 'The Brew 'Us Bugle', sadly she'll never be able to read it but what follows is a tribute to Winnie.

Winnie was born in Alston Street in 1917 and her father was a well-known coal merchant in the area. Winnie used to help on the coal round especially on Saturdays when she counted the money! She said: 'We never went on any Bank Holiday visits to the Lickey's like other people because we had to stay in a look after the money because, of course, the banks were closed! It seems daft to say this now, but in days gone by my mother used to make gallons of hot soup, which we took out with us on the coal round. She seemed to serve the whole street'.

'My WRVS work began when my mother went into the General Hospital to have her varicose veins done. After the operation the hospital sister went to get her a cup of tea and as Mom tried in to rise in the bed to sit up, a blood clot moved, and she was dead before she came back to her, it was as sudden as that. I was the only one of seven who wasn't married so they said I'd have to give up my job, which I did. I got bored with homework and at the time WRVS were asking for volunteers and I joined them. I later started the first Darby & Joan Club in Ladywood and took people on holidays for over 40 years'.

Winnie's friend Edie Ockford writes: Winnie was a friend of many people and was a full time community worker even before the word was invented! She ran the Darby & Joan Club which had at least 150 members. We had a lot of entertainment, dancing and fancy dress. A great time was had by all. We had plenty of days out by coach, sometimes running three at a time. Every year there was one special trip to Leominster to Lady Alatheia Eliot's, she used to put on tea cakes and sandwiches. We could go and have lunch somewhere then visit Canon Eliot's, Kingsland church in Leominster, for a little service and buy pens to help their church funds. We always looked forward to that and they looked forward to having us too. We told them it was really good to get away



Winnie celebrates receiving her MBE

from the concrete jungle, even for a few hours.

Her friends Edna and Stuart Collins and myself were lucky enough to go Buckingham Palace to see The Queen present Winnie with her MBE. We were waiting for Winnie to ask the Queen her birth sign because anyone she met was always asked that! She always confessed that when she 'met her maker' she would go to the laundry room and she really meant it, so please God that is where we will meet up. Winnie would never laugh at anyone else's sense of humour, but always laughed at her own humour, that was Winnie! A stained glass window is to be erected in St John's Church in her memory.

There'll never be another 'Miss Horton'. All we ask is that she may rest in peace until we meet again.

SCHOOL LOG BOOKS FROM THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

1 April 1968

'Six rabbits were born today at school and seven Mongolian gerbils'.
Barford Primary School

2 April 1873

'Six boys found out in playing truant, the two ringleaders have been expelled from this school. The others have been severely punished and warned'.
St Georges Boys' School

4 April 1937

'School closed for polling in connection with the by-election in West Birmingham consequent upon the death of Sir Austen Chamberlain'.
Nelson Junior Mixed

6 April 1943

'Bars of chocolate sent from the Optimists (Canada & United States) via Lord Mayor for the children'.
Barford Road Infants'

6 April 1995

'Year Three visited Wolverhampton Wanderers as guest of David Kelly their Republic of Ireland International. He gave the school a shirt he wore when he scored against England at the abandoned match in Dublin the previous month'.
Oratory School

9 April 1962

'Classes are performing Easter Plays this week. The use of the tape recorder is proving most valuable to our reading. Children are realising the need to speak more slowly and distinctly. We have also been able to record BBC lessons, which take place at times inconvenient to us'.
St George's Primary School

13 April 1973

'Sixty-four children, mainly of Ugandan Asian origin, visited the school to prepare for admittance next term'. (This followed Idi Amin's rise to power in Uganda).
Ladywood School

16 April 1893

'A Standard VI lad, Henry Bacon, who was present at school on Tuesday, died on Saturday, of pneumonia. He was a particularly nice, good lad'.
St George's Boys School

20 April 1971

'School reopened for the Summer Term- the first time for years that builders etc have not been on the premises. The school now looks lovely and modern compared to the darkness of the former Victorian windows'.
Barford Primary School

24 April 1973

'The television set, on loan since the Boys' left it to us has now been offered to us at a cost of £6. We have decided to buy it, thus saving further rental'.
Barford Primary School

25 April 1972

'The School building is 85 years old today'.
Barford Primary School

26 April 1948

'School closed this afternoon for Royal Silver Wedding Anniversary'.
Barford Road Infants' school

26 April 1960

'It was officially announced that the word 'Road' be dropped from the school name which therefore becomes 'Barford Infants' School'.
Barford Infants' School

30 April 1925

'20 boys are due to leave today or tomorrow, having reached the age of 14 during the term. All seem to have found employment without much trouble'.
Nelson Boys' School

The Way We Were: Thirty years ago

April 1972

* A member of the public writing in the letters column of the Evening Mail complained that 135 trees could be cut down for road widening on Hagley Road near Plough & Harrow Road. She asked: 'Have the powers that be gone mad? To cut living trees down for motor traffic is a disgrace and a sin. I expect it is men who made the plans: women have a kinder outlook'. Protests were organised by the National Association for People before Planning. Ironically, thirty years on people are protesting again about the Hagley Road, this time against plans to put in bus lanes.

* In his Evening Mail column, Canon Norman Power, Ladywood's vicar was asked: 'Is it true that there is a religious revival starting in England?' He replied: 'It is far better for young people to be singing songs from 'Amazing Grace' or tunes from 'Godspell' than getting hooked on heroin or mindlessly shouting slogans of the ungodly'.

* The Evening Mail reported: 'It will be goodbye to the dustbins of Birmingham under a move announced by the City Council. The experiment with the plastic sack system of refuse collection has proved so successful that it is to be adopted for the whole city'. Meanwhile Alderman Wallace Lawler protested against another council plan. He said: 'Plans to but fifty extra traffic wardens on the streets will strangle the city's business life blood'.

* Birmingham Housing Committee revealed it had to pay £78,000 per acre for land on which it is to build 262 flats. This is because the land was zoned for industrial use, which changed hands between council departments and must therefore be transferred at market prices. Consequently £217,000 was paid into the Public Works Committee account and the flats were built on Cambridge Street and became known as Civic Close, and stand today behind the International Convention Centre.

* A study was being undertaken to see if a women's remand centre could be built near Winson Green Prison. Birmingham socialists made it a local election issue claiming Conservatives had put pressure to switch the siting of it from Harborne, asking: 'are we only fit to be the dumping ground of schemes rejected by socially privileged areas'?

* 'The Comedian of the Year', Ken Goodwin opened Birmingham Motor Show at Bingley Hall. 91,000 people attended the nine-day show looking at 700 cars.

* Plans for a walkway from Summerfield Park to Harborne along the line of the railway were unveiled. This became the Harborne Walkway.

* A stainless steel sculpture was unveiled for the centre of the traffic island at Five Ways. The tubular structure is still there today. A correspondent to the 'Evening Mail' complained: 'I was disgusted and ashamed of our City Fathers when I read £10,000 is to spent on the sculpture'.

* 'The Evening Mail' produced a special pullout to show drivers how to use the 'new seven lane commuter highway', which was known as Aston Expressway leading to Spaghetti Junction.

Mind the horse rowd!

Share the memories of a form of transport from days gone by. Some tales are funny others are tragic, but whatever your memory horses will never be forgotten.

A horse drawn delivery taking place on Ruston Street.
Photo: Mac Joseph collection

'Coming down Osler Street sitting on a board on a roller skate, we turned on to Icknield Port Road and a railway cart was backing into the Winfield's yard. We were careering ahead and couldn't stop. I went under the cart and Freddie Crisp and Brian Kenny went under the horse as it was moving!'
Derek Fowler

'My granddad delivered coal by horse & cart and his horse was stabled in Browning Street. I have fond memories of visiting the stables and feeding the horses and exercising them. Sadly one day I was walking down Monument Road and saw a crowd had gathered. My granddad's horse had collapsed and died outside Chamberlain Gardens. He was so distraught.'
P W Plummer

'On Osler Street at Tree Place a bloke was a well-known drunk and he ran a secondhand business. He kept the horse in Freeth Street but occasionally he used to bring the horse to his house. Occasionally people would say they'd seen the horse in his living room. We used to tease him about it. It is said that in a drunken stupor he once tried to take the horse up the stairs with him! The story goes that the neighbours were out and the horse was a neighing and kicking. He was trying to push it up the stairs and they were trying to pull him off and pull the horse back. He eventually collapsed on the stairs and they got the horse out'.
Derek Fowler

'There were a few houses that were three up. One old lady always fed the horses and a horse was said to have got out the shafts and got into the house and had somehow got upstairs. People used to pass and say 'I can see the horse upstairs'. Clearly we thought we had. It can't possibly be true can it, but we were only six or seven years of age at the time'.
Gordon Cull

'My dad was in the fishing club at the Stour Valley Pub but it was always called the Horsefalls. One day I asked my dad why and he says that there was a lot of commotion one day when a horse collapsed and died. The name Horsefalls stuck. There was even a fishing contest called the Horsefalls'.
Harold Brown
(Research has since uncovered the fact that the pub was run by a man called Mr Horsefalls!)

'A Co-op horse once bolted and shot down Osler Street and an old fella who was bad on his feet waved his stick at it but he had to get out of the way. It was a gallant attempt to stop it but it didn't succeed. The horse continued down the slope and bolted across Icknield Port Road and crashed into the wall of the billiard hall, which was later the Kodak place. The shafts were all smashed as the cart ran into it. All the milk bottles were everywhere, all the trams were held up'.
Derek Fowler & Ray Perks

'Dad had a coal yard on Beach Street and I always remember the horse and carts on special occasions like May Day when all the horses were done up with ribbons and flowers and their tails were knotted and platted'.
Winnie Horton

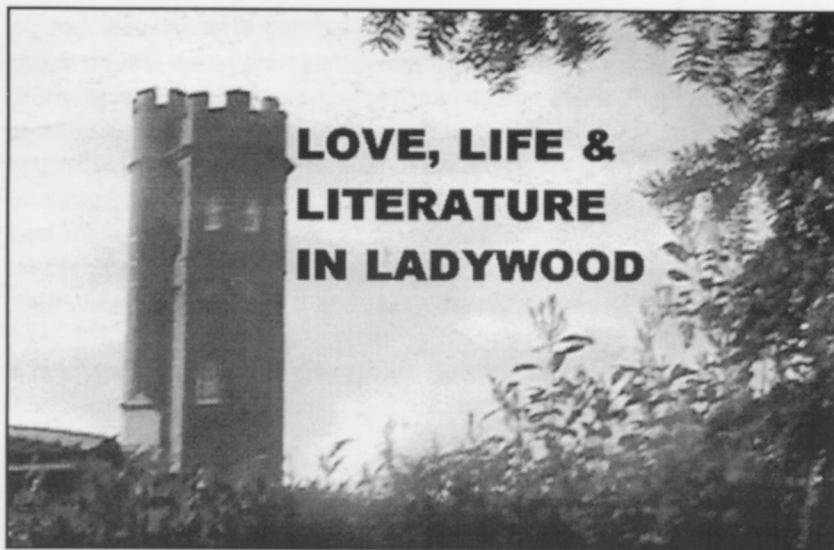
'Sometimes according to the season a donkey pulling a small flat dray type of thing loaded with plums, apples etc would come up the street. They were sold by the peck or half peck, there was no weighing machine, just a scoop. The fruit was always cheap and everyone took advantage of it'.
Len Thornton

'People had a sense of humour. One Saturday night in Friston Street a group got together and while their friend was in the pub they unhitched his horse from his cart and took the horse up a narrow entry. They then turned the cart on its side and just about got it up the entry as well. Then they hitched the horse back to the cart in the yard. When the bloke came out he couldn't work out how the horse had got up such a narrow entry!'
Clara Taylor

'As a little girl I lived in Bristol and when I came to Birmingham I felt the winters were much colder. I used to dread the winters when the horse and carts used to come down St. Vincent Street with the coal. In those days we'd got cobbles on the road, and in the winter months, with the snow and ice, it was absolutely dreadful. One winter a horse slipped and broke a leg. They put a cover around the horse and cart and someone had to shoot the horse. It was heartbreaking'.
Audrey Spettigue

Extract from the log book of Nelson Street School in 1880 in which the headteacher refers to the horses kept at the stables at the bottom of Sheepcote Street.

endeavouring strenuously to obtain improved personal appliances among scholars especially cleaning boots. Gave a lesson to the assembled school this morning after reading scriptures upon this subject; referred to beautifully clean & shining condition of Railway Co's wagon horses as I met them every morning when led to their daily work.



LOVE, LIFE & LITERATURE IN LADYWOOD

LIFE, LOVE AND LITERATURE IN LADYWOOD: THE TOLKIEN CONNECTION

Researched and written by Darren Cannan

Imagine the amazement of the drinkers in a well known Ladywood boozier when they learnt their beloved 'Twin Towers' on King Edward's Road isn't the most famous twin towers in the area!

The real legend is in fact a mile up the Middleway, thanks to an illustrious former Ladywood resident, author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. Just after the turn of the twentieth century Tolkien lived in the shadows of two of Birmingham's most striking buildings, the 96ft high tower known as Perott's Folly and the Waterworks Tower, both on Waterworks Road. The bizarre constructions are said to have inspired 'Minas Morgul' and 'Minas Tirith', the towers that formed the fantastic gateway to the ancient Kingdom of Gondor, after which the second volume of the *Lord of the Rings* is named.

In January 1902, due to financial difficulties and a conversion to Catholicism, Mabel, Tolkiens' mother, moved the family to 26 Oliver Road. The great bonus of moving into the city from Sarehole Mill was the nearby St Philips Grammar School and a small house with affordable rent. The house has long been demolished but history and circumstance have a strange way of meeting.

Across from Oliver Road in Ladywood today stands Gamgee House on Damley Road. It's the offices of the charity, the Saturday Hospital Fund, an organization set up by a Birmingham surgeon called Joseph Sampson Gamgee who made his name by inventing a surgical cotton wool known as the 'Gamgee Tissue'. Like Perott's Folly and Waterworks Tower, the name 'Gamgee' was part of Tolkien's early memories that surfaced in the *Lord of the Rings*. The old Brummie slang term Gamgee appears in the *Lord of the Rings* as the name of Frodo Bagins' trustworthy companion and fellow ring bearer, Sam Gamgee.

Whilst living at Oliver Road and attending St Philips, young Tolkien (also known as Ronald) met an inspirational figure in the community of the Oratory Fathers, Father Francis Xavier Morgan. He befriended the family, offering spiritual guidance and support for Ronald and his brother Hilary. Father Francis, of Anglo-Spanish descent, contributed to young Ronald's developing interest in foreign languages, an area of study that would help Tolkien the writer invent his own language for the *Lord of the Rings*.

Ronald's enthusiasm for languages blossomed when he switched from St Philips to the prestigious King Edward's School in New Street on a scholarship in 1903. Though as life seemed to settle for Ronald at school, tragedy struck in 1904 when his mother Mabel was taken ill with diabetes. Oliver Road was the Tolkiens' fifth address in Birmingham and Mabel was exhausted securing a stable environment for her boys. Only eight years before in 1896, she had lost her husband Arthur in South Africa due to a severe hemorrhage. Widowed and distanced from her family, Father Morgan arranged for the family to rent rooms in the Oratory House at Rednal. On 20th November 1904, Mabel died at the cottage aged 34. She was buried at St Peter's RC Church in Bromsgrove.

Now under the guardianship of Father Morgan, orphans Ronald and Hilary returned to Ladywood and were taken in by their Aunt Beatrice Suffield at 25 Stirling Road. It was a gloomy time for the boys at Stirling Road as their aunt showed them no affection. So in 1908, realizing the boys were unhappy, Father

Morgan found lodgings with the Faulkner family in Duchess Road. The house was filled with music and chatter, as Mr Faulkner was a wine merchant Mrs Faulkner was a keen musician, organizing music nights for the Oratory Fathers. Only a day into his stay at Duchess Road did Ronald discover another lodger living beneath him in the house.

Living on the first floor was a pretty, 19 year old girl named Edith Bratt. Friendship grew quickly between Edith and Ronald as they shared the misfortune of losing their fathers at a young age. They overcame the constraints of an Edwardian household by devising a secret call to get each others attention, leaning out of windows to talk when the rest of the house was asleep. Often they would disappear on cycling trips or meet in teashops around Birmingham, and during the hot summer of 1909, they started to fall in love. Local gossip prevented the relationship remaining secret when Mrs Church, an owner of a tea shop the couple used, told the Oratory caretaker about their meetings. Father Morgan soon found out and forbid Ronald contact with his childhood sweetheart. Ronald's time was taken up with preparing for his Oxford exams and Father Morgan felt Edith would jeopardize his chances of reaching university. In 1910 Ronald and Hilary were moved to 4 Highfield Road and arrangements were made for Edith to live at the family home in Cheltenham. Despite their forced separation, Ronald and Edith made a pact to resume their bond when he was 21, after Oxford.

Ronald wrote of his woes in his diary; apparently he would walk the streets around Duchess Road hoping for a glimpse of his beloved Edith. Without distraction,



Tolkien threw himself into his studies and in October 1911 he went to study classics at Exeter College, Oxford. In the summer of 1915, Tolkien was awarded a first class degree from Oxford and on 22nd March 1916, in keeping with the promise he made to his first love, he married Edith in Warwick.

In their years apart the world had changed, Europe was a maze of war trenches and blood, a continent torn apart by the First World War. Transformation turned Tolkien from scholar to soldier; he gained a commission with the Lancashire Fusiliers and moved with Edith to lodgings outside the army training camp at Great Heywood, Staffordshire. An uneasy waiting time ended on 2 June 1916 when Tolkien received the fateful telegram summoning him to Folkestone to embark for northern France on 5 June. Tolkien spent his last night in England with his newly wed at the Plough & Harrow Hotel on the Hagley Road, only a street away from the Duchess Road guest house where they met years before as teenagers.

The grime and bustle of the inner city lacked the rural beauty and adventure Tolkien found in Moseley, but his time in Ladywood gave him inspiration for his life, love and literature.

TOGARE IN LADYWOOD LION RESCUE DRAMA!

THE STORY OF THE GREAT BIG TOP DISASTER OF 1930

by Norman Bartlam

In March 1930 Ladywood was the location of the biggest Big Top Circus Tent ever seen in this country. Sadly, the circus was to become victim of two events that are still recalled by people in Ladywood today, over 70 years since they happened.

This line from 'The Sunday Mercury' gives you a clue to what happened. It was first smothered in snow and after a wonderful revival promptly cremated'.

The Great Carmo Circus erected on the Sandpits at Spring Hill, was advertised as 'The Biggest, Finest Show Birmingham has ever seen'. It was described as 'The Latest Craze of Society' and 'a big, healthy, he-man entertainment'. Featured artists included Togare the lion tamer with Paris the wrestling lion, Captain Anker on his world famous high school horse, The Nonsens 'in their astounding act on a rope ladder trapeze, the first time in Great Britain', The Four Benthos musical clowns and 'the only cycling elephant on the world'!

The Big Top opened on Wednesday 12 March 1930 and accommodated 4,000 people sitting and 1,000 standing. Later in the week seven inches of snow fell across the city, which was 'as heavy as it was unexpected'. Falling trees damaged tram wires and two trams collided on Soho Hill. In the early hours of Saturday morning the alarm was raised at the circus site when a security guard reported that a number of the supporting poles were breaking. The main poles supporting the canvas big top were 18 inches in diameter and took 24 men to carry one into position. Between 50 and 60 men were engaged in an attempt to remove vital equipment from the tent, but as the poles around them creaked and snapped the tent was evacuated and a 45 minute search found no one was trapped.

The animals were kept in a number of smaller tents and they too buckled under the weight of the snow. One containing 40 horses and zebra was cleared of snow. The eight lions were relatively safe as they were in lorries with bars, which acted as cages. These were cleared of snow and saved, but the large tent gave way. It was reported thus: 'Under the weight of more than 100 tons of snow the great marquee collapsed, and the lives of 50 or 60 men were imperiled'. The main tent, which weighed 20 tons, was 'cut into shreds by the collapse'.

The elephant trainer had a remarkable escape from death. He was clearing snow from the top of the elephant tent, to save it from destruction, when the canvas and poles collapsed with a crash beneath him. He was hurled between the two trumpeting elephants, and was in danger of being trampled to death'. The Birmingham Mail reporter added: 'two elephants are now placidly having breakfast on top of the fallen tent'.

The Lord Mayor attended the reopening of the circus five days after the disaster. The Birmingham Mail reported 'the entertainers re-entered upon their work with renewed energy and zest. The audience testified its approval of the entertainment by frequent and hearty applause. Togare put his eight handsome lions through a remarkable performance. He carried one of the largest out of the ring by placing him across his broad shoulders, and in another instance wrestled with a beast until he showed himself indubitably the master'. Mother Nature was soon to become THE master causing another more serious disaster.

On the evening of 21 March 1930 'the Great Circus at Summer Hill was practically destroyed by fire in one of the most disastrous outbreaks that has ever befallen a travelling circus in this country'.

'There were thrilling scenes when the outbreak was discovered at 11.30am. By the time that the first of eight fire engines arrived the canvas had practically gone. The strong wind fanned the flames fiercely'.

While dashing to the scene there was an incident involving one of the fire engines from Central fire station. A fireman fell off the engine as it turned in to Victoria Square, 'but realizing the urgency of the call the engine did not stop'. A passing motorist took the fireman, who was uninjured, to the fire.

'It was the cage of lions which caused the greatest anxiety. A rumour got abroad that they had escaped from their cages and Goodman Street was cleared. Happily the rumour was unfounded'.



**THE GREAT
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CIRCUS**
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'THROUGHOUT TO A
TEMPERATURE OF 60 DEG**

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has ever seen!*

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entirely new all Star acts ever
offered to the British Public.

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'Togare, went into the wooden cages where the lions were housed, and naturally they were somewhat alarmed, but he moved them into a cage with iron bars. Togare, whose lions are to him like so many children, went into their cages and kissed them, so elated was he that his charges escaped injury beyond injuries to the faces of one or two, caused by butting against the bars'.

'When the firemen got near the cages they found great pieces of horse flesh which would have been fed to the lions had roasted to the ground'.

Togare was reported as saying: 'the fireman's throw water on me and my lions. I get wet, yes, my lions get wet, yes, but I get them all-safe'. At one stage Togare was blown off his feet when hit by the full force of water jet. It was later stated that three lions Paris, Kate and Amia had been 'scorched'.

'Armed with a number of raw eggs and a bottle of olive oil Togare fearlessly re-entered the cages of the frightened animals and a small audience of fireman, policemen and a few circus assistants saw a performance as thrilling as any Togare has given in public. Talking to them the whole time just as a mother would to her child in similar circumstances and showing as much distress as a mother would show, he commenced the job of getting raw eggs and oil on to the burns. Amia seemed to know that her trainer was trying to heal her sores, Paris looked sulky and Kate struck one as not liking the business at all'. The Birmingham Gazette commented 'Togare's pluck is admirable: so to is the sense of the lions who allowed themselves to be soothed and controlled for their own good'.

One of the zebras was burned and was sent for treatment and the two elephants after a little difficulty were also got out and taken to the rear of Birmingham District Nursing Society's institution in Summer Hill. One of the nurses said: 'The blaze didn't last more than five minutes and for a time the screaming of the animals was terrible'.

The press reported: 'one of the bigger elephants turned on one his rescuers, Gilbert Lewis. He was 'pinned in a corner and to save himself from facial injury he lifted his arms, which were badly gored'. Later when the elephants left their temporary home nearby a pony suddenly screamed and the elephants went onto the pavement scattering onlookers. 'Two children were knocked down in the scramble but not hurt'.

One eyewitness to the fire was ten-year-old Ernie Bennett. He recalls: 'I only lived just around the corner and so went to see the circus. The tent was enormous, a huge monstrous thing, the size of a three storey house. The lions were the ones that everyone wanted to see. All the seats were packed full, the place used to be solid with people. Togare came in to the ring to the blast of horns, resplendent in a high gown with six girls following him. We thought he was the bravest man on earth and the lions would go for him. We were all petrified that he would get eaten.'

'The fire was a great shock to the whole neighbourhood. Everyone was running around with buckets of water and batting the flames with mops and their feet! The hot air was sending huge pieces of burning canvas up and it looked like pieces were floating in the air. Pieces of flaming canvas drifted across and landed in the backyards of nearby houses and we had stamp out the flames with our feet. The flames were leaping above the height of our houses and when we realised how dangerous it was our parents wouldn't let us go and watch, although there were police and firemen all over the place. We could hear the distressed animals roaring. It

definitely caused quite a commotion and was a major talking point not just in our area, but also right across the City'.

The circus arrived in Birmingham by road from Catford in London, but many circuses transported their animals by rail. Following my appeal for information on Carl Chinn's BBC



Radio WM show Geoff Canning phoned to say that he lived in Kings Edward Road at the time and although only very young he vaguely remembers the great commotion and visiting the remnants of the tent. He adds: 'It wasn't unusual to see circus animals walking the streets because whenever a circus was held at Bingley Hall the trainers would exercise the animals by walking them around the area. On one occasion an elephant butted the door of the Prince of Wales pub on Cambridge Street. It seems it had spotted his reflection in one of the huge mirrors which it saw through the window!'

After the tent disasters The Birmingham Post suggested that, 'Mr. Carmo will need a long run of good fortune to wipe out the unhappy memory of his circus's visit to this city'. The circus reopened a week later in West Bromwich and Togare continued his work. Geoffrey Inshaw, who was six at the time, told me that he remembers seeing Togare in Blackpool during the summer of 1930 and 'seeing a number of lions which still bore the scars of the great fire of Ladywood'. Togare was obviously a roaring success!

Easter Memories

Hot Cross Buns, One A Penny, Two A Penny . . .

Easter and hot cross buns have long since been associated with the name of Watty Green. Many people recall visiting the Cross Keys pub in Steward Street for his annual ceremony of handing out the buns.

Albert West who was born in Nelson Street in May 1923 remembers hot cross buns for a different reason! He writes: I suppose really one of my earliest recollections could be called the Hot Cross Bun incident. I was about 12 years old and like most 12 year olds I went around knocking doors to get orders for delivery on Good Friday, we would buy the hot cross buns for three a penny and sell them at two a penny, which made us a good profit. Anyway this particular year I went to get my buns and the baker asked me if I would like to earn a few extra coppers and gave me the job of painting the tops of the buns with a brush and some liquid which made the tops of the buns look shiny. Unfortunately I lost



track of time, I arrived at the shop at 8.30am and it was now 12.30pm, a fellow called at the shop to enquire if I had been and collected my hot cross buns and was told I was working there, when he saw me he said my mom was frantic not knowing what had happened to me and told me to get home quick, needless to say I got a clout around the ear hole, but I cleaned up with the money from the job plus the profit from selling the buns.

Another recollection comes to mind from around the same time. This fella called Bill Cunnington was the local bookie I remember he wore beautiful suits but the odd thing was it was said he wore a corset and had a figure any 18 or 20 year-old-girls would have been proud of! He had an archenemy a copper called Ginger, people would warn Bill if Ginger was about. Bill would get one of the locals to stand in as a runner with a bet in his pocket. Ginger would arrest the runner, he would be fined and Bill would pay the fine and treat the runner. The runner being a first time offender would have a cheaper fine than if Bill was caught himself. The runner would most likely be out of work anyway so really Bill was doing him a favour by putting a few bob his way!

EASTER SCHOOL TRIPS

OSLER STREET SCHOOL Mystery Photos



These photos came from an album of photos showing Easter trips to the continent by pupils from Osler Street Boys' School in either 1959 or 1964. The only problem is there are no names on the back of the pics. So your task is simply to identify the pupils on them! Let us know via the address on page 1 if you were on the trips or can identify the people. Look at the state of the art camera that one of the boys is holding. What did his photos turn out like and more importantly do they still exist?

ORATORY SCHOOL

Abridged extracts from the Oratory School magazine 'The Oracle' referring to the Easter trips in the late 1950s.

* In 1957 a party of girls led by Miss Gilfoyle, Mr Heaton and Mr Wells travelled by train to Hope Station for a holiday in the Peak District. The party stayed at Youth hostels, and a great deal of strenuous but enjoyable walking took place. Following the success of the tour it was decided to set up the Oratory School Mountaineering Club. The first activity of the club was a Sunday expedition to learn the basic principles of rock climbing. The school linked up with a Wolverhampton school and later in the year 17 pupils went to The Lake District.

* On Easter Sunday 1958 a party went to Lourdes on a coach via Paris. Pupils took part in the Blessed Sacrament procession which was described as 'surely the most touching sight, for all the sick people are on stretchers under the trees and the officiating Bishop walks slowly round with his attendants, blessing the sick as he carries the Monstrance.' Hot Cross Buns



Enny rowd up, do yow wot's gooin on ?

The photograph above shows a crowd, which has gathered outside the White Swan to find out the latest gossip. Read on for news of what is happening in Ladywood today which will interest those of you who lived in Ladywood in days gone by.

* The last remaining factories on Browning Street finally bit the dust just before Christmas. The picture shows the last few hours in the life of the former French's Mysto Works before it was demolished to make way for trendy new housing, which will extend along the street and back on to the canal. W. T. French & Son made electrical apparatus on Browning Street and also once had premises in St Mary Street. The business was established as long ago as 1865. Local people remember stirrup pumps being made there during the Second World War. Companion sets for fireplaces and sprayers were also made there.



The Mysto Maid featured in the company's advertising literature.



The former W T French & Sons' premises in November 2001

demolishing meant and next time we went down there the buildings were gone and so had my cup! I wonder where it went?' Can anyone help?

* A bit more of the old new Ladywood has been demolished. When the back-to-back houses off the Sherborne Street end of Ledsam Street were demolished they were replaced by these state of the art homes, which were not traditional flats but a mix of flats and maisonettes on top of each other. They became known as Kenchester House and Blakemere House. They became unpopular with residents and now demolition men have moved in to raise them to the ground.

* A search is underway for a treasured memento of days gone by and The Brew 'Us Bugle's readers have been asked to help. There is not much chance of finding the object in question, but let's give it a try. John Green is searching for his 1937 silver plated Royal Cup, which was presented to him on 12 May 1937 to commemorate the Coronation of George VI. He says, 'the cup was engraved with my name because I was the only boy born in the district on that day. I last saw it when I was about twelve. It was in the pawnshop next to the liquorice shop on the Sandpits. We were told they were demolishing the buildings, but we didn't know what

• If you knew the area around Shepcote Street, Oozells Street and Cumberland Street, then you'll be interested in a new web site devoted to the history and current development of the area in which is now known as Brindleyplace. If you can get on the internet it's well worth a look. You can find it at: www.brindleyplace.com

Thank you to all who attended the launch of the Brew 'Us Bugle which has hell, er, held at Ladywood Health & Community Centre on St. Vincent Street West in November 2001. Around 200 people attended and although it got a bit crowded, it was an enjoyable occasion. Carl Chinn presented his BBC Radio WM show live from the venue and interviewed many people from Ladywood's past and present. Carl's producer Sue said it was one of the best outside broadcasts that they'd ever done! The photo shows Carl interviewing Edie who helped to put The Brew 'Us Bugle together.



*Many people complemented us on the choice of title for this magazine. Carl Chinn reminds us that a 'brew us' was originally the room in the backyard where beer was brewed and the word appears in Shakespeare. I don't mean the street near Spring Hill but in his literary works. Yes, the Brew 'Us is referred to in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor'. So if you want to look it up it is in Scene III Act III.

*Gordon Cull of The Old Ladywood Association has arranged the next get together for Tuesday 23 April 2002. It will take the form of a Music Night at Ladywood Social Club on Ladywood Middleway featuring music of bands from the swing era. The event starts at 6.30 pm. The next big reunion is planned for Sunday 6 October 2002 at The Clarendon Suite Hagley Road at 1.00pm. Contact Gordon on 02476 746886.

BOOK CORNER

'Birmingham The Way We Were' is a new book by Ladywood author Mac Joseph. It contains 120 pages of old photos from across the city including many from Ladywood.

'Broad Street Birmingham' is a new book about, er, Broad Street by Norman Bartlam. It shows how the street has changed over the years. There are around 250 photographs most of which have never been published before.

Advance news is that Mac Joseph is producing a calendar for 2003 featuring scenes from Old Ladywood and Norman Bartlam's publishers Sutton Publishing have commissioned a third volume of his old Ladywood books which, hopefully, will be out for Christmas. Ladywood born actor and former wrestling star Pat Roach has written his autobiography called "If" and is out in the shops now.

Monument Road: A Shopping Experience!



Ayers' bakery near The Nags Head at the junction of Icknield Port Road Ayers' bakery advert

Monument Road was one of the great shopping streets of Birmingham lined with numerous shops. In this article Audrey Spettigue, G Curley and Malcolm Davis recall some the shops on the street between St John's Church and the Ivy Bush.

Audrey Spettigue says: 'Monument Road was a great shopping street. You could buy anything and people used to come a fair distance to buy things there. The street and those off it were very popular. One of the most popular and upmarket was Arnold's. The gentlemen used to help the ladies out of their cars. I used to stop and watch and wait for them to come out again. I thought it was wonderful seeing all these ladies all poshed up to their shopping. Inside it was lovely, it smelt smashing especially the coffee, and the beautiful food that we couldn't afford was a sight for sore eyes!

Nearby was Caves, a furniture shop that was a three-window shop on the corner of Parker Street. It was a beautiful shop with good quality goods. Almost next-door was a big Georgian House that had been turned into a dance school. As you went down the road there were shops like Ayre's, which sold beautiful cakes not like they are today, they were delicious. Nearby was the Nags Head. My father in law was popular in there because he played the piano'.

Everyone remembers Hickman's the greengrocers; they were nice people to deal with. During my early marriage years they sold good quality vegetables and fruit and fish as well. The Co-op and George Mason were near each other. The Co-op sold lovely bacon and as we weren't very well off we could get small pieces of bacon in there. When you paid for your goods they put your money in a little container and pulled a lever or something and the money used to go up and off and round the shop to the cash office. The lady's office was in the corner of the shop. She'd send

your change back in the container. Wrenson's was a very nice shop. I rather liked it".

"Jaffa's was also very popular it was a very cheery shop selling his washing powders and brushes and all sort of things to do with the house. Other shops I remember were Cash's, it was a beautiful cut meat shop and it was very, very popular; and Pearce's had a real big window. You paid so much a week for your goods.

Mr G Curley writes:

'My parents lived in Ladywood in early 1939 at the News and Tobacco shop sited almost at the corner of 160 Monument Road and Alston Street, opposite Oliver Road. My parents used to get up early in the morning at 5.00am to open the shop,

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in the mean time bundles of newspapers had arrived at the shop delivered By Taylor's Wholesale newsagents who were sited in Edgbaston Street, off Smallbrook Street by the BullRing. My father's first job was to clean out the ashes from last nights fire, using newspapers; bundles of firewood and coal relight the fire and make the tea.

He sorted out the papers on to the counter and started to make up the paper rounds for boys, seven in all. Already men were calling for their morning papers, fags and snuff. I used to weigh the snuff in triangular bags on the scales the night before and put change ready on the back counter, for if, they had example 10 shilling note, and were invariably running for the 33 tram or number 8 bus.

After the rush mother would make breakfast for 8.00am. My brother and I would rise and get ready for school and so the day went on with customers, school children, many of them from the Oratory for their penny sweets, until again the evening rush hour, when we sold the Mail and Evening Despatch, Id each. We close the shop between 7-8pm after serving the regulars on their way home.

My father then had to do the books and restock the shelves. On Saturday night we sold dozens of Argus's and Blue Mails and had an inquisition into the results of the local football teams. Sunday we sold and delivered 1,000 papers closing at 2.00pm.

During the War years my parents both looked after the shop, because in the afternoon my father had to go to work at Docker's brothers, which was; legally compulsory, and at night he was an air raid warden, which kept him up until the early hours of the morning. I don't know how he did it!

Father Charles from the Oratory Church used to walk down Monument Road to the Oratory School and was greeted by many Catholics on his journey. In later years he was brought down by nuns in a wheelchair and received similar adulations.

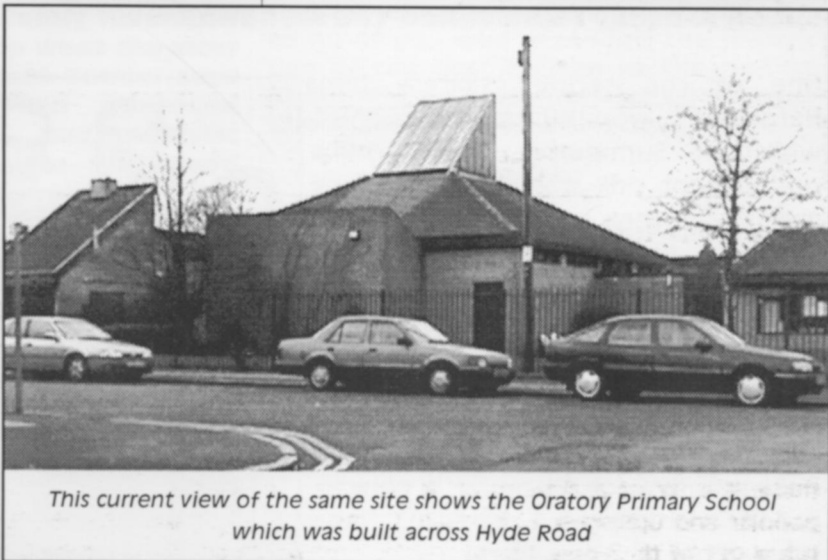
Adjacent to us was Bannister & Thatcher's chemist; it shared our yard in which hung the galvanized bath, outside toilets and dustbins: further down on the same side was Jackson's newsagents, G Talbot & Son shoe repairer and opticians: Cohen a tailor: Hr Hughes a hairdresser; Mr. & Mrs. Flowers of the Criterion laundry: Preston's ironmongers and Bullock's greengrocery. On the opposite side of the road starting at Hyde Road there was Kerr's credit clothing: Whites foodstore; a carpet shop; cycle shop; Frank Talbot's butchers; Dean's moneylenders; Frankes hairdresser; a toy shop; Cyril's cooked meats; Mr. Wine's newsagents; Ayre's the bakers; a music shop then the Nags Head which was on the corner of Icknield Port Road'.

Ayre's Bakers is fondly remembered by Malcolm Davis who worked there for five years from the age of twelve in 1958. He says: 'I got the job working there after school and at weekends after my pal who worked there Tommy Henderson became ill and I took over. I really enjoyed my time there.

It was run by a man in his fifties Bertie Ayres, he was a well-known figure. I think his dad owned it before he did as it had been around for years. Strangely enough Sunday was always the busiest day for me. I made custard tarts and apple pies ready to be sold when the shop opened on Monday morning. I sang in the choir at St John's Church then nipped over the road to the shop to feed the oven with wood and coke to maintain the temperature so that it would be ready for when Bertie came in a five o'clock in the morning. I then sang in later services at the church. We got the wood from Hickman's greengrocers. Fred or Barry would sell us about twenty boxes for ten shillings, which kept us going for weeks. There was only one oven but it was a really big thing about fourteen feet square. All the cakes were put on with the help of a wooden peel, which was like a rowing oar. I got £1 2s 6d for my endeavours which was a good wage in those days.

In the back yard there was a stores where there was a bread dough trough. All the yeast and chocolate was kept in there because it was a cold room. The flour was delivered by a truck, which came up an entry beside the Nags Head. It was taken onto the second floor and stored until it was tipped down a chute into the bake house below.

The shop was always popular with local people and we made bread for the nuns and



This current view of the same site shows the Oratory Primary School which was built across Hyde Road

fathers of the Oratory. We also supplied the brown bread for Lovatt's Botanical Remedies shop on Broad Street and for their branch in Kidderminster.

A view of Monument Road from Darnley Road during demolition c1968. Hyde Road on the extreme left separates the Oratory School from the shops. The shop on the left is George Smith's grocery shop. At the opposite end is Talbot's butchers, Jackie's drapers is the white shop and next to it is the former Rogers' grocers with the canopy. Today Hyde Road has disappeared and the new Oratory School was built across it. The car is on cleared land, which is now home to the Birmingham Saturday Hospital Fund. St John's Church is just off the photo on the right.

Photo: Victor Price collection.

"Goo 'n play up yer own end"

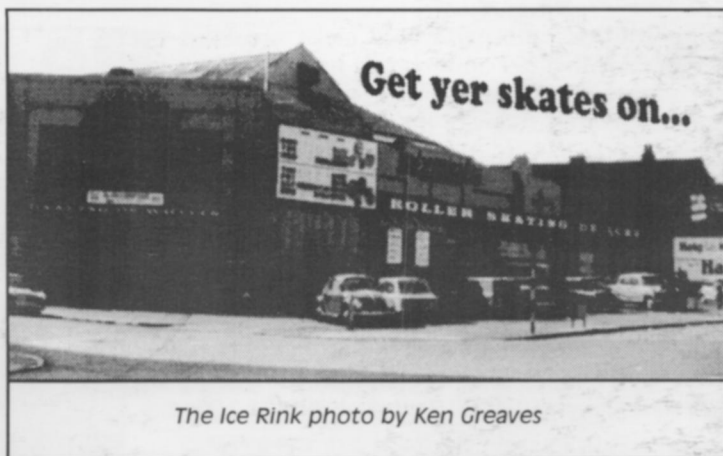
The Brew 'Us Bugle Sports Page

Ladywood's Summerhill Ice Rink closed in this month in 1964 and although it reopened later as a roller rink it never regained the popularity of the famous ice rink. On the final day, 18 April 1964, the 'Sunday Mercury' reported that 800 people were in the queue waiting for it to open and many teenagers were seen singing and blowing bugles. The rink will always be remembered as a great venue for a social night out, but it also attracted a number of serious skaters. At the time of closure the rink was home to two Olympic skaters and seven international skaters were in a Speed Skating Team called The Mohawks.

One of the serious skaters Dena Hargreaves, won numerous trophies whilst at Summerhill. Summerhill's replacement rink was at Silver Blades and it was when based there that she and her partner Bernard Fletcher became the British Professional Pairs Skating Champions in 1965, thanks in no small part to the work they put in on the ice at Summerhill. She was the fourth or fifth best skater in the world at the time and all her training was done at Ladywood. Recently, in conversation with Norman Bartlam, Dena recalled her days as a skater.

I was about 11 when I took up skating after a friend from Camden Street School asked me to go with her and I took to it really well and ended up becoming a professional and teaching at the rink. We trained late at night for various championships, which was often difficult because by then the ice had really been cut up! One of the pictures shows my partner in about 1957, Arthur Jeffries with my Dad Ronald. I was the youngest person to represent the ice dance team and always fondly remember winning my first trophy. Dad was a great organiser and he became the chairman of the speed skating club, president of the ice dance club and was involved with The Mapleleaves, which was the ice hockey team.

I worked as a badge and medal designer and did skating in my own time but this changed in 1961 when I turned professional. I did part time to start with but we ended up with so many pupils that



The Ice Rink photo by Ken Greaves

I became a full time skating teacher after a couple of years. The ice rink was so popular in those days and I was one of about ten trainers. We had fantastic standards and John Curry was there as a little lad and he became so successful as did other like Janet Sawbridge, Ken Vickers and Harry Francis.

We took our skating really seriously but we did let our hair down as well! New Year's Eve fancy dress ice dances were always popular.

This picture shows one of those occasions when we dressed as witchdoctors. The necklaces were made from real teeth, which we got after boiling a sheep's head on a stove; you can imagine what the smell was like! I'll always have fond memories of my time there, it had a unique atmosphere and smell, and I don't mean from the teeth! The ice used to be packed out with hundreds of



Dena and trophies 1957



New Year's Eve Witchdoctor

skaters. That atmosphere and comradeship was never repeated at Silver Blades. We knew the new place was going to be built and that it would have better facilities but we enjoyed Summerhill immensely and didn't want to move. On hot days the sun melted the ice and we got

soaked if we fell over, kids loved it they could slide for miles'.

Owners of the rink, Mecca, blamed 'the dying area of Ladywood for the closure'.