

## Pattison School expands as neighbouring houses are acquired

THE historic Pattison School on Binley Road, which started life as a dance and theatre academy, has announced new plans to expand.

A multi-million-pound investment is underway to create more space for its senior school and a new Sixth Form, which aims to open in September 2024. The expansion has been made possible by the purchase of adjoining houses at 92 and 94 Binley Road.

Graeme Delaney, head of Pattison School, told *Jabet's Ash* that two houses next to the existing school became vacant recently and the school saw this as an ideal opportunity to buy the houses and expand. The independent school is now under the ownership of Chatsworth Schools which says that pupil numbers have increased by 50 per cent over the course of the last two years.



Houses 92 and 94 Binley Road are now part of Pattison School, adding to the existing houses pictured below. Photos: John Marshall



The story of Pattison's goes back to 1916 when Thomas and Emily Pattison moved to Coventry from Sheffield so that Thomas could take a job at the Ordnance factory in Red Lane. Two years later they moved to a house in Walsgrave Road and Thomas, a good gymnast, began teaching gym classes and later dance, at St Margaret's Church Hall and Institute (now the Churchill Hotel).

It is said that their infant daughter Betty was often wrapped in a rug and would sleep on the stage, behind the piano, while her father took evening classes.

In 1924 the family moved to a house in Binley Road, where Thomas (often known as Mr Pat) turned one of the rooms into a dance studio and set up the Pattison Dancing Academy, which was hugely successful. His daughter Betty later inherited the academy and managed to buy the house next door, which allowed her to create Pattison College, a full-time school with a specialist interest in drama and dance.

During the 1970s the legendary Betty Pattison (widely known as Miss Pat) acquired and renovated the old National School building nearby and also built a large new hall next door on what was once a bomb site.

### Seasonal break – next meeting in February

THE history group now takes its usual break over the Christmas and New Year holiday period, meaning that our next meeting at Stoke Library will take place on Friday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Season's greetings to all.

# Old photographs of Stoke



The photograph above shows the old pool on Stoke Green, pictured during the Edwardian years.



This postcard provides a view looking towards Bull's Head Lane on the left and Coombe Street to the right, dated 1929.

[More picture postcards, page 6](#)

*Photographs courtesy of Rob Orland / Historic Coventry*



# The sinking of the Lusitania



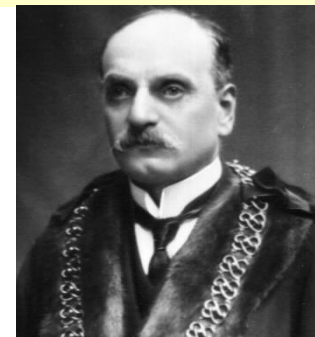
*Jabet's Ash* presents the second part of an article, exploring the impact of a tragic maritime event during the First World War

**Part Two: Public outrage and the intensification of hostility towards Germans living in Britain.**

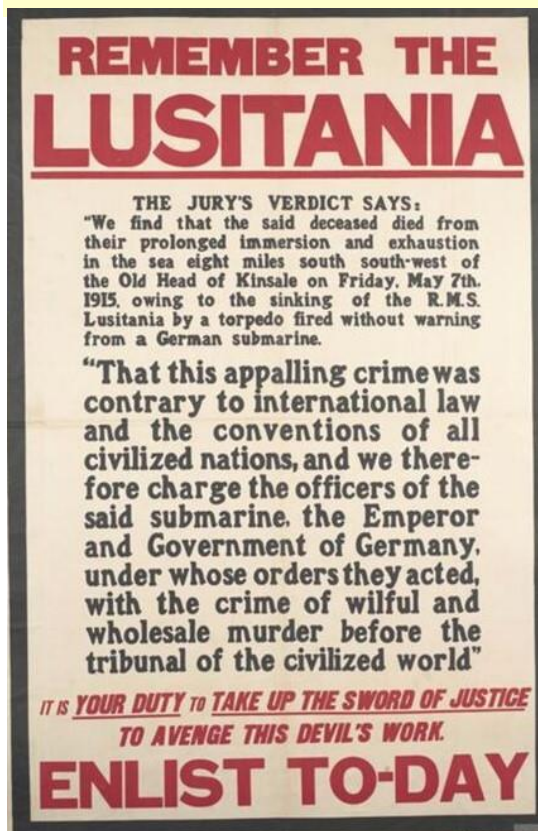
THE sinking of the ocean liner Lusitania in May 1915, with the loss of almost 1,200 lives, sent shock waves around the world. In Britain and elsewhere, it led to a surge of anti-German propaganda, often used by the authorities to encourage military recruitment. And it also led to an increase in the already high level of animosity faced by German-born citizens living in Britain, including Triumph founders Siegfried Bettmann and his business partner Mauritz Schulte.

According to the 1911 census, there were over 53,000 German immigrants living in Britain before the start of the First World War. They occupied a variety of roles in the job market – from waiters to merchant bankers - and a number had become naturalised Britons, successfully integrating into their local communities. But the outbreak of the First World War suddenly brought any hidden tensions to the surface, and Germans in Britain were increasingly viewed with suspicion, with fears that they might be spies.

An article by Professor Panikos Panayi, of De Montfort University, graphically describes the change in mood at the onset of war and the response of the British government:



*Mayor Siegfried Bettmann - excluded from public life*



*Poster calling on Britons to enlist to avenge the sinking of the Lusitania. Imperial War Museums*

“Nothing,” he writes, “could have prepared the Germans for the level of hostility that they would face in Britain during the First World War. A combination of government measures and public opinion destroyed the communities that had emerged by 1914.

“Immediately after the outbreak of war, the Aliens Restriction Act meant that Germans could not move more than five miles and had to register with the police. The Act also eliminated all German newspapers and clubs. A series of measures also closed down all of the German-owned businesses in Britain and confiscated property and assets without compensation for the owners.

“Most dramatically, the government introduced a policy of wholesale internment of males of military age. Camps emerged throughout the country with the largest, Knockaloe, situated on the Isle of Man and holding over 23,000 men at its peak. The government deported German women, children and the elderly throughout the war and also sent away males upon release from internment, meaning just 22,254 Germans remained in Britain by 1919. Such actions received wholesale support from public opinion. Newspapers became littered with stories about German spies and constantly demanded an intensification of internment.”

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This hostility had consequences throughout society and even included the Royal Family, which felt compelled to change its name from the Germanic Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to Windsor in 1917.

Locally, Siegfried Bettmann, a resident of Stoke Park, had taken British citizenship in 1895 and by 1913 had proudly risen to become Mayor of Coventry. But his German origins were obvious and he immediately felt the wrath of anti-German sentiment when Britain declared war on Germany. Faced with pressure from a vociferous minority, Bettmann felt compelled to resign as Mayor, barely a month into the war.

Other German-born residents in Coventry were regarded as enemy aliens and were arrested and interned, including a number of waiters from the King's Head Hotel.

Only six months after Bettmann's resignation, which took effect in November 1914, opposition to German-born citizens in Britain became even more extreme, when the sinking of the Lusitania in May 1915 sparked nationwide violence and riots. In the words of Professor Panayi again:

"The most serious manifestation of Germanophobia consisted of anti-German riots which broke out on several occasions, above all following the sinking of the Lusitania by a German submarine, resulting in 1,198 deaths.

Most national and local newspapers made a direct connection between those Germans living in Britain, many of whom had resided in the country for decades and had become an integral part of society, and the actions of the German army. This construction of a universal enemy by the Press played a central role in the violence which followed. The riots began in the home port of the Lusitania, Liverpool, but spread like wildfire to the rest of the country, meaning that virtually every German-owned shop in the country had its windows smashed.



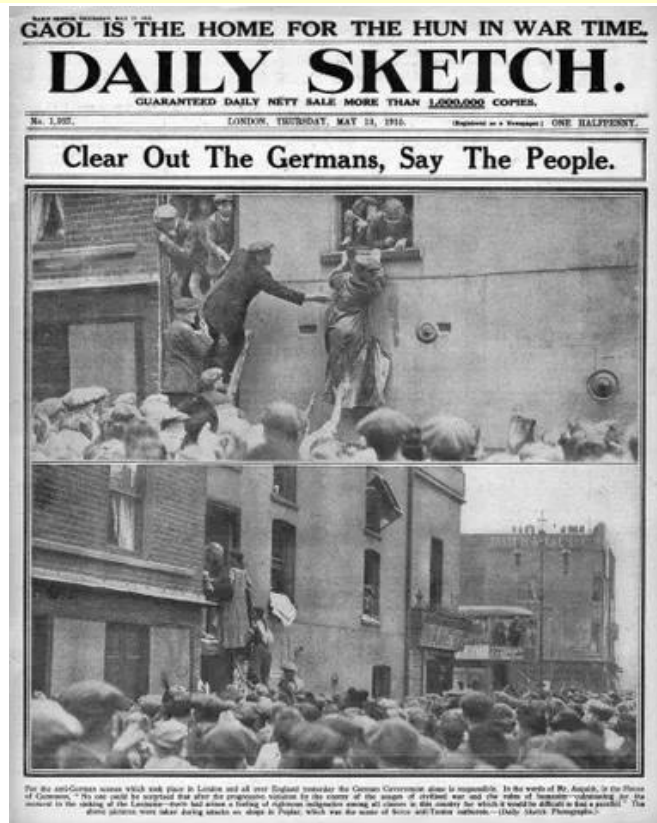
Mauritz Schulte of Triumph

London became especially affected so that 1,950 properties came under attack."

In Coventry, German-born citizens like Bettmann and Schulte condemned the sinking of the Lusitania and German methods of warfare, with the latter stating that he "would be perfectly happy to be interned if it would do any good". And in the days following the sinking, both Bettmann and Schulte made financial contributions to a Relief Fund to help those who had suffered in the disaster. But anti-German feeling intensified, and campaigners began to question the position of those German-born citizens, like Bettmann, who had become naturalised British subjects and were now viewed in some quarters as 'the enemy within'.

Although Bettmann had resigned as Mayor, he was still a city councillor and this prompted Councillor Jepson to ask a meeting of the council in June 1915 if Mr Bettmann should vacate his seat. In a letter to the *Midland Daily Telegraph* on the following day, Councillor Jepson declared that in his opinion "every German, naturalised Englishman or otherwise, in this country at a crisis such as we are going through now, should be under strict supervision, and unable to hold any public office or position."

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Newspapers seemed to glorify attacks on German-owned shops, like these in Poplar, London, only days after the Lusitania was sunk.



These sentiments were roundly condemned by those sympathetic to Bettmann, but it was clear to him that his role in civic life was now over, and he was destined never to return to the council chamber. “Bettmann was zealously excluded from all forms of public life: social, political and economic,” wrote Gordon Maycock in *The Triumph of Siegfried Bettmann* (2000). “Nothing was left for him except the management of Triumph where the demand from the Allied governments for motor cycles provided business and remained the only way for him to serve his [adopted] country.”

Bettmann was never arrested and his activities or movements were not restricted. Charles Charsley, the Chief of Police in Coventry, was well-disposed towards Bettmann and saw no reason to intervene. But other German-born citizens in Coventry were less fortunate. Although the city was never a hotspot for anti-German activity, attention inevitably turned to the King’s Head Hotel in the centre of Coventry which employed a number of German waiters and was run by German-born Otto Meinhardt, who had been a British subject since 1904.



*The King’s Head Hotel, on the corner of Smithford Street and Hertford Street, employed a number of German-born citizens.*

Meinhardt was never interned but was obliged to leave Coventry for the duration of the war and was once punished by the courts for returning to the city without a permit. His former head waiter, Rudolf Henninger, had a more chilling experience. John Yates, in *Pioneers to Power* (1950), tells us that Rudolf had set up a small tobacconist shop on the corner of Charterhouse Road and Northfield Road, serving the nearby Humber Works. He had an English wife and two children, and was out when a small mob arrived at his shop. The mob ransacked the shop, smashed the windows and stole his stock. “They refrained from setting the place on fire,” wrote Yates, “not out of deference to the English wife and her two babies cowering in mortal terror inside, but because they didn’t want to burn the street down.”

Yates adds that Rudolf was interned to the Isle of Man, for his own safety, by the friendly Chief Constable.

*Jabet’s Ash* has also discovered that the King’s Head Hotel was later keen to banish its reputation as a place of employment for Germans. On May 1<sup>st</sup> 1917 the *Midland Daily Telegraph* carried an announcement from the King’s Head, telling readers that the hotel was not only fully English owned but also “entirely English controlled, with no enemy nationality employed”. □

● For further reading, see *The Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain During the First World War* (1991) by Panikos Panayi. Quotes used

here from Professor Panayi are taken from the excellent website ‘Our Migration Story’. Useful local sources include the works and newspapers cited above and also ‘Enemy Aliens and Naturalised British Subjects: the case of Siegfried Bettmann’, by Chris Holland in *Coventry and Warwickshire 1914-1919: Local Aspects of the Great War, Vol 2* (2014), and David McGrory’s *Coventry and the Great War* (2016). JM

## COLD-BLOODED MURDER!

REMEMBER

### GERMANY’S CROWNING INFAMY

THE SINKING OF THE LUSITANIA,  
WITH HUNDREDS OF WOMEN & CHILDREN

- Germans have wantonly sacked Cities and Holy Places.
- Germans have murdered thousands of innocent Civilians.
- Germans have flung vitriol and blazing petrol on the Allied Troops.
- Germans have killed our Fisherfolk and deserted the drowning.
- Germans have inflicted unspeakable torture by poison gases on our brave Troops at Ypres.
- Germans have poisoned wells in South Africa.
- Germans have ill-treated British Prisoners.
- Germans have assassinated our Wounded.

THESE CRIMES AGAINST GOD AND MAN  
ARE COMMITTED TO TRY AND MAKE YOU  
AFRAID OF THESE GERMAN BARBARIANS

The place to give your answer is  
THE NEAREST RECRUITING OFFICE

ENLIST TO-DAY

*Another military recruitment poster inspired by the sinking of the Lusitania. Imperial War Museums*

# More Stoke picture postcards



Walsgrave Road, with St Michael's Road on the right, and the Clay Lane junction in the distance on the left. Dated about 1911. The old butcher's shop on the right is now the Smile Centre.



Walsgrave Road looking towards the old railway bridge and Ball Hill beyond, with Gosford Green on the right, 1924.

*Photographs courtesy of Rob Orland / Historic Coventry*