

2 JAMES WALKER- Earlsdon gentleman

Local historian Mary Montes has been delving into the archives to produce this account of one of Earlsdon's pioneers.....

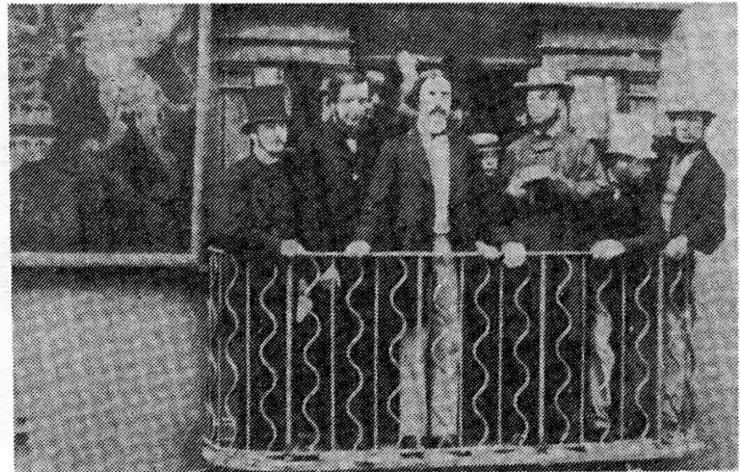
If there is any man who deserves to be called 'Mr Earlsdon' then that man is James Walker. Of the first settlers in the 1850's, he more than any other was responsible for getting that sense of community started on which Earlsdon folk have always prided themselves.

He came to Coventry in 1846 from his native Birmingham where he had just finished serving his time as an apprentice watch case maker. He married a Coventry girl, Hannah, and started up his own business as a gold and silver case maker in the Butts. With his energy and skill he obviously prospered, well enough by 1852 to be able to buy a plot of land on the newly laid out Earlsdon estate and build a substantial house for himself and his growing family. Some of our readers will remember it as 'Woodlands' - Dr Kenderdine's home for many years on Earlsdon Avenue, South. Mr Walker lived there until his death at the age of 82 in 1907, a total of 55 years.

Among his many interests politics ranked high. As a Gladstonian Liberal he founded and organised the Earlsdon Liberal Association as well as taking an active part in the City affairs, as his appearance on the balcony of the Craven Arms after the result of the 1865 election had been declared shows - the Liberals had lost as is evident from the glum look on the faces of their candidate and his backers! He also led the Earlsdon contingent at the great Spencer Park Rally in 1884.

The estate was at that time virtually autonomous, not being incorporated until 1890 and, paying no City rates, its residents could expect no material help from the City Fathers. So, when it became nauseatingly obvious that some sort of proper sewage disposal was needed, Mr Walker was a prime mover in the provision of Earlsdon's own little sewage farm. (Perhaps more on this subject at a later date.)

Again, when the desperate need for a school for the growing number of children was realised, it was he again who worked tirelessly to get one established. He served as Chairman and Committee member on the School Board for many years until it was taken over by the Local Authority and he continued to take an interest in it until his death, regularly visiting the school and presenting prizes to deserving children. With his great



James Walker is pictured extreme right.

interest in education, it would have pleased him no end to know that many of his descendants, daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren would take up teaching as their profession.

His business, although never large, was steady and when each of his two sons were married, he handed it over to them - the gold case side of the business to Edwin James and the silver case side to Arthur James. They had both been apprenticed to the trade under their father and so were quite competent to carry it on.

Among all the references I have relating to him, James Walker comes across as a very human, clear sighted GENTLEMAN in every sense of the word, always busy, always interested in his fellow human beings, generous and patient.

I wish I had known him.

GRUMBLE BOX

Are you annoyed about something in the area? Would you like an opportunity to let off steam?

If so, we would like to hear from you. People have written to us about a variety of subjects concerning Earlsdon, Chapelfields or Hearsall over the last few months but now our Grumble Box is empty!

If you let us know what concerns YOU we will look into it and try to come up with some helpful advice, information or even action.

Please send your grumbles to the Grumble Box, E.C.H.O., c/o Earlsdon Library, Earlsdon Avenue North.

Correction

We apologise for misleading our readers about the dates for the Easter display at Earlsdon School - the school was of course closed 12th -15th April but these were the dates quoted by the school for the display.

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