

The Birmingham Civic Society

Granting of Arms

June 2008



Celebrating ninety years of service
1918 - 2008



The Right Worshipful The Lord Mayor of Birmingham

President of The Birmingham Civic Society

It is with great pleasure that I welcome members and friends of The Birmingham Civic Society to this commemorative booklet issued on the occasion of its 90th birthday.

Over the years the Society has made many positive contributions to the life of the city. From its earliest days as a provider of parks to its present roles in planning, heritage, tree planting and citizenship, the Society has been a remarkable force for good in Birmingham.

The fact that the Society has been recognised through the award of a Grant of Arms is a testament to its work and the leadership it has taken in a variety of civic matters.

I wish the society well as it nears its first century. It is a credit to the great city it serves and I am indeed honoured to be its President for my year in office as Lord Mayor.

Councillor Chauhdry Rashid



Introduction from the Chairman of the Society

An important milestone for the Society



Dr Freddie Gick

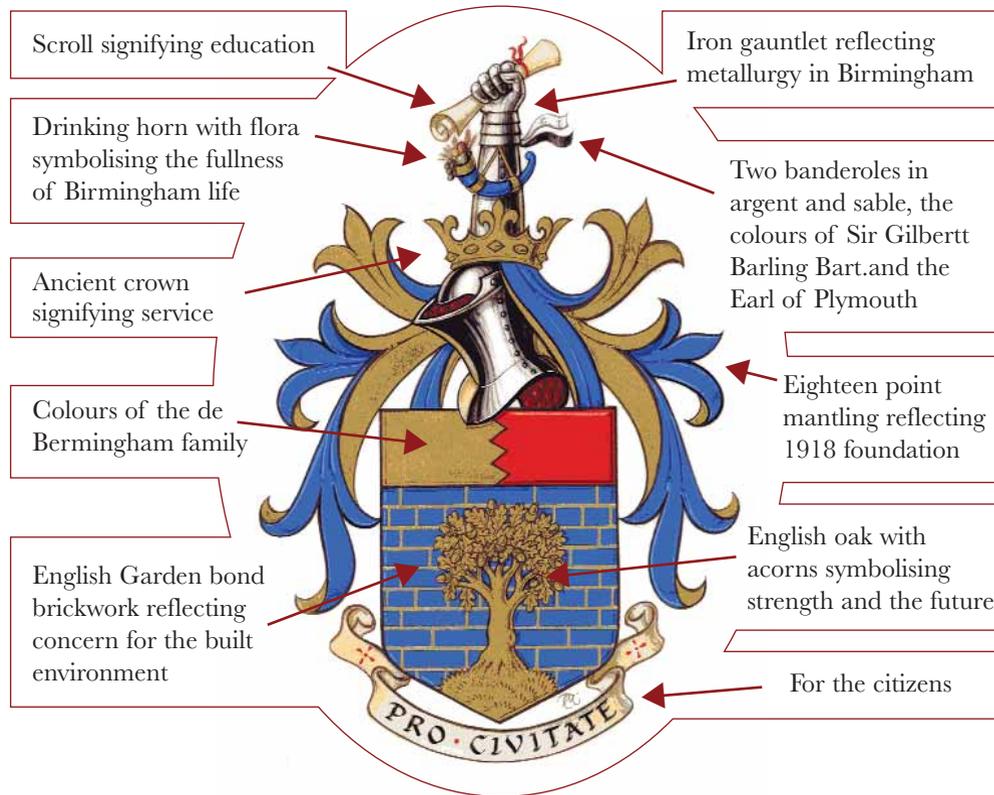
Today, 10 June, 2008, marks a most important milestone for The Birmingham Civic Society as it is the day when we not only reach our four score years and ten, but we also become the first Civic Society in the country to have been awarded a Grant of Arms. The many years of service given by our predecessors, chronicled on the next few pages, are being rewarded in a unique and memorable way - a way that we shall be able to appreciate for many years to come.

As we reflect on the last ninety years we may be struck by the changes in emphasis in our work. While we retain the traditional civic society role of taking a keen and active interest in our built environment, our programmes have extended into wider areas embracing other aspects of the lives of our citizens. I believe it is right for the Society to play a part in building the concept of active citizenship among young people in our various communities and to be proactive in planting trees in the city - and encouraging others to do so.

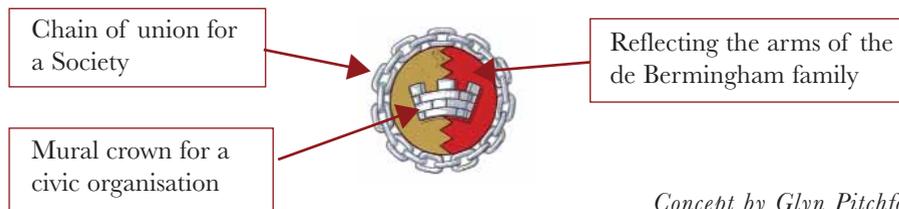
The constitutional changes, the publication of our new thought-provoking journal and the establishment of a city-centre office, are all outward signs of a resurgence of interest in the Society - made possible by the generous support of our personal and corporate members. We are very grateful indeed to all who have sponsored our work, especially those listed at the back of this booklet who have made our birthday celebrations so special. I look forward to continuing the development of our Society and building our contributions to the City of Birmingham.



The Arms of the Birmingham Civic Society



The Badge of The Birmingham Civic Society



Concept by Glyn Pitchford

The Coat of Arms

Arms and crests are granted by letters patent. The Crown delegates its authority to issue such letters patent to the Kings of Arms who are officers of the College of Arms. Before they can act in each case they must first have a warrant from the Earl Marshal agreeing to the granting of the arms.

The first step in applying for a grant of arms is to submit a petition, or memorial as it is called, to the Earl Marshal. This is drawn up for the signature of the petitioner by one of the officers of arms if it is felt probable that such a petition will be accepted.

In the case of The Birmingham Civic Society the petition was submitted in association with the Lancaster Herald, Robert Noel, after careful consideration by the Executive Council and a subcommittee composed of Glyn Pitchford (Chairman), Anthony Collins, Freddie Gick and Stephen Hartland, supported by the Honorary Armorer of the City of Birmingham, Adrian de Redman.

The Committee identified and submitted to the College of Arms a list of the key aspects of the work of the Society, encapsulated in the words Birmingham, Built environment, Heritage, Citizenship, Future and Wisdom. At this time also the Committee agreed to recommend the adoption of the motto *Pro Civitate* (For the citizens).

After visiting the College and reviewing a number of draft designs for the Arms, the Committee finally approved the design to be shown on the Letters Patent, the document conferring the Grant of Arms, and this was subsequently approved by the Kings of Arms. The design of the badge was also completed in the same way.

Once granted, the Arms may be used on the letterhead and other publications and displayed on other materials and goods commissioned by the Society. Members of the Society are entitled to wear the badge.

It is a great honour for the Society to have been granted a Coat of Arms in recognition of the work it has carried out over nine decades. The ceremony in which the Letters Patent are handed over formally by the Lancaster Herald is one of great significance for the Society and will rank among the major events of its history.

It is appropriate, therefore, to acknowledge the work undertaken by the Committee chaired by Glyn Pitchford, together with additional support of Peter Miles, Yvonne Maslen and Elaine Mitchell in organizing the Presentation Ceremony.

The Society is also very grateful to Birmingham City Council and HBJ Gateley Wareing for sponsoring the petition to the College of Arms and to CitiQuilter for their sponsorship of this booklet.



Programme

10 June 2008

Presentation of Letters Patent to The Birmingham Civic Society

Banqueting House, Birmingham Council House

12.30 Reception

Guests assemble for a drinks reception

13.00 Presentation ceremony

Arrival of Platform Party

Welcome by The Lord Mayor, Councillor Chauhdry Rashid

Presentation of the Letters Patent by the Lancaster Herald, Robert Noel

Presentation of the Chairman's Badge of Office by the Lord Mayor

Address by the Chairman, Dr Freddie Gick

13.20 Buffet Lunch

Guests are invited to enjoy a buffet lunch in the adjoining room.

History of the Society

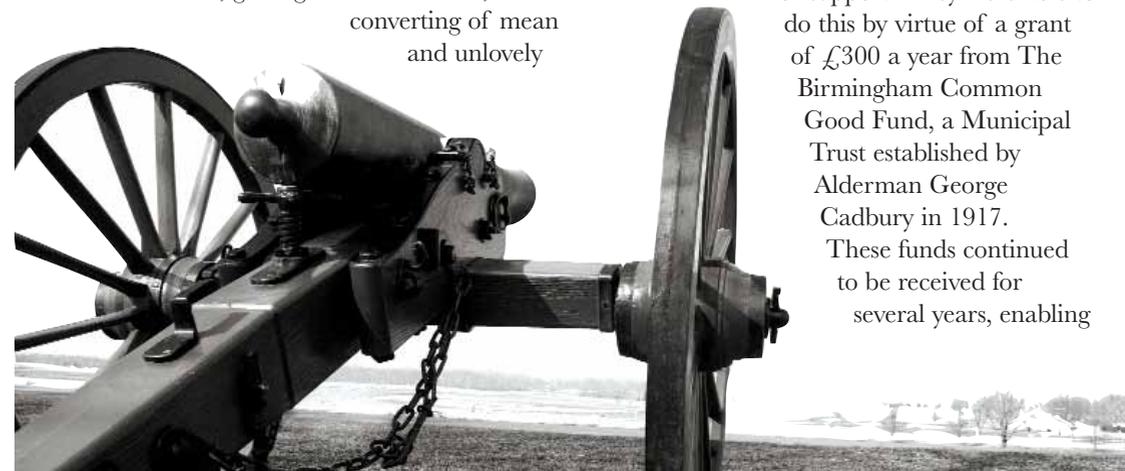
10 June 1918 was a day like many others on the Western Front. The guns blazed as the Germans advanced on Compeigne, the French withdrew from Carlepont Wood on Ribecourt and the Australians advanced south of Morlancourt between Ancre and the Somme.

Far from the carnage of the battlefield in the more serene surroundings of the Birmingham Council House a group of the great and the good of the city gathered to begin a rather different campaign. In the words of the noble Earl presiding over the proceedings the intention was to create an organisation...“to bring public interest to bear upon all proposals put forward by public bodies and private owners for building, upon the laying out of open spaces and parks, and generally upon all matters concerned with the outward amenities of the city and district. “It will insist that taste is a thing that matters, and if any offence against taste is challenged at the outset, great good will be done, and converting of mean and unlovely

parts of the City will gradually follow.” Such an ambitious aspiration proclaimed at the inaugural meeting of the Birmingham Civic Society by its first President, the Earl of Plymouth, on that fateful day was translated into a more formal set of objectives to be achieved by an Executive Council of thirty-one members.

The early years

Initially, the Society did not aim at a large membership and decided consciously to test their opportunities and their ability to meet them before going to the public for support. They were able to do this by virtue of a grant of £300 a year from The Birmingham Common Good Fund, a Municipal Trust established by Alderman George Cadbury in 1917. These funds continued to be received for several years, enabling



the Society to establish a well-run organisation, employing a typist to support the Honorary Secretary, William Haywood. The first major event, in that same month, was the receipt of a donation of £15,000 from the Trident Trust to enable the Society to buy land to create open spaces for the public to enjoy in the south west of the city. Northfield was the first area to benefit from this initiative with the purchase by the Society of ten acres of land at a cost of £1,100, supported by donations of £500 from a Mr Moreland and a Mr Impey. This land was used to create a Daffodil Park which was handed over to the City Corporation on

3 February 1920 on the understanding that the Society would be consulted about any future development of the Park.

This set the pattern for several similar ventures during the following few years. In October 1920 the Society purchased 25½ acres at Kings Norton for £3062 and presented it to the City along with £1000 so that it could be converted into parkland and playing fields. The Society also donated £300 towards the cost of a kiosk and gates for the park.

Muntz Park in Selly Oak followed in ensuing years, as did The Henburys adjacent to Highbury Park and the creation of gardens in several other parks including Aston Hall Park, Handsworth Park and Yardley.

1919 saw three other important initiatives. First, a deputation from the Society met with the Town Planning Committee to argue the case for better and more comprehensive planning of the physical environment, culminating in the Society presenting a plan

for the redevelopment of Northfield village. Similar initiatives followed in relation to Pebble Mill Road and the entrance to Cannon Hill Park in 1921.

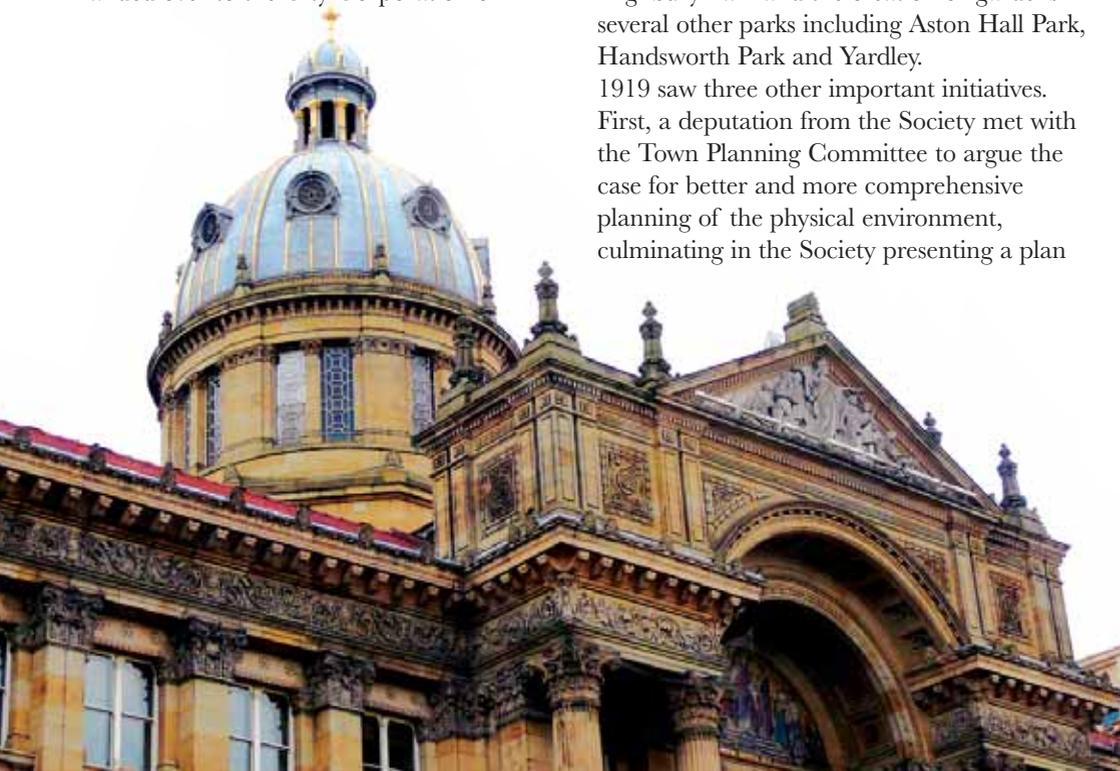
The second initiative in 1919 was the publication of a pamphlet outlining a scheme for the public use of the Lickey Hills. This publication contained maps and photographs, was funded mainly by members of the Cadbury family and proved so popular that it was reprinted in 1920 and ran to a third edition. Subsequently the Society published a guide to Sutton Park containing articles on local history, geology, flora and fauna and a map of the park.

On a different front, the Society became involved in submitting designs for street furniture and telephone boxes. While its designs for lamp standards were not adopted at that time, subsequent designs produced in 1937 were used. Its designs for telephone boxes were not adopted but led indirectly to a national design competition in which the Civic Society played a part.

There followed a period of about 15 years in which the range of activities broadened significantly, due in considerable measure to the enthusiasm and energy of its Secretary, William Haywood. Haywood was the Birmingham-born son of a silversmith, trained as an architect at the Birmingham School of Art and practised in the firm of Buckland-Farmer in Congreve Street. After

publishing his own ideas for the future of the City in 'The development of Birmingham' in 1918, he became the first Secretary of the Society in the same year.

William Haywood's hand can be seen in most of the major initiatives taken by the Society in this period. These included calling a meeting to promote better gardening cultivation, resulting in the formation of the Gardens Guild, and campaigns in 1926 to save Stratford House and the Aston Almshouses from demolition. A more significant campaign was the successful attempt to keep the Repertory Theatre open in 1923. When Sir Barry Jackson announced in November of that year that the theatre was to close in the following February the Society immediately contacted him and offered to help him to make it commercially viable. The Society arranged a programme of productions and set up an organising committee which mounted a campaign to boost audiences. This was highly successful for several years, but difficulties arose again in 1934. This time William Haywood met with Sir Barry and convinced him to agree to give the theatre to the people of Birmingham, provided that sufficient funds could be raised to guarantee its continuing maintenance. Despite a disappointing response to a public appeal for funds, Jackson handed over the theatre to a new Sir Barry Jackson Trust which succeeded in gaining exemption from the Entertainment



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Tax and in increasing seating capacity to improve financial viability. The Sir Barry Jackson Trust continues today and includes a representative of the Society as a trustee. In the 1930s the Society continued its work on city parks and in advising the City on a range of planning matters, adding to its work in Aston Hall Park and producing designs for improving the area around the Town Hall. The latter involved preparing a detailed plan, including replacing the Chamberlain memorial and widening Edmund Street. This was submitted to the City Council in 1937, but was eventually superseded by larger scale plans for the development of the whole area.

The Second World War and beyond

Following the outbreak of war in 1939 the Society recognised that Birmingham would become a target for bombing and that many of its buildings were likely to suffer damage. Specifically, the Burne-Jones designed windows in the cathedral were considered to be vulnerable. The Society decided to use £375 from its Charitable Trust to remove and store the windows and to board up the empty spaces. In the ensuing years the building was bombed and all the remaining windows were destroyed. When the Cathedral was being restored in 1944 the Society provided £640 for the replacement of the windows. The retirement of William Haywood in 1947 and his award of the Society's Gold Medal marked the end of an era and the beginning of massive redevelopment of the city following the

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devastation of the war years. There were urgent needs to provide new housing for large parts of the population and to regenerate the city centre, including the provision of a new library and other facilities.

Under the leadership of City Engineer, Herbert Manzoni, the Council embarked on ambitious projects to build new housing estates of high-rise apartment buildings, encircle the city centre with a ring road and burrow under it with road tunnels. The result was the creation of much enhanced housing for thousands of residents who were delighted to have accommodation that included fitted kitchens and inside lavatories. Motorists were also able to travel in a matter of minutes from one side of the city to the other - an asset that still largely holds true and which differentiates it from many cities of a comparable size. Notwithstanding these remarkable achievements, there were a number of less positive consequences. Several important and beautiful Victorian buildings were demolished to make way for city centre redevelopment, including the Central Library, The Grand Theatre, the Colonnades and the Stork Hotel. These fine old buildings were a significant loss to the city and in more modern times would certainly have been preserved. The city's statues also suffered - Josiah Mason and George Dawson were reduced to busts and

only the head remains of John Skirrow Wright.

The Society noted in its annual report of 1956 that

'The swift pace of post-war development in Birmingham coupled with the acute shortage of undeveloped land is leading to the clearance and rebuilding of old sites. In this process a number of interesting buildings are being removed.'

This modest reaction was perhaps symptomatic of public opinion at the time, as may have been the Society's decision to reward Sir Herbert Manzoni, the architect of the whole programme, with its Gold Medal in 1963.

On a more positive note the Society erected in 1953 the first of what was to become around 90 blue plaques honouring famous citizens and it promoted exhibitions on Silver and urban trees in 1956 and 1959 respectively.

There followed a period of less intense activity during the next few decades. Works of public note were few in number, though the Society continued to lobby for better planning and facilities for residents, sponsored postgraduate work and ran events for its members. The drive of the early years had diminished as people

concentrated more on their careers and the pressures of modern society and a generation of the 'great and the good' had virtually disappeared.

One significant achievement was the reinstatement of the pools around the Chamberlain Fountain in Victoria Square in 1978 under the leadership of the then

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Chairman, Sir Joseph Pope. Successive leadership teams strove to rebuild the Society during the 1980s and 1990s, culminating in the recruitment by Bruce Tanner of a few individuals who accepted the challenges and the freedom he offered to build new programmes and activities. The first of these was the publication of the Heritage Buildings Guide, inspired by Bruce Tanner and marking a significant enhancement of the visibility of the Society. To date 750,000 copies of this guide have been printed.

This increased visibility contributed to membership recruitment and stimulated the adoption of wider perspectives on the potential role of the Society. It was recognised that in addition to the traditional role of civic societies in being concerned about their physical environment, the state of the social environment is at least as important. In a city where a high proportion of residents have only short histories in this country there is a special need to promote awareness of our heritage and a broadening of participation in city affairs.





The Society today

Today the Society has 500 personal members and 100 corporate members and has a robust committee structure which manages its different programmes.

Following a strategic workshop in November 2004, the Society under the leadership of the author, decided to operate programmes in Planning, Heritage and Citizenship, supported by a strong programme of events for members. This list was later supplemented by the addition of a tree-planting programme, Birmingham Trees for Life, funded largely by the City Council.

The core role of the Society continues to be in the area of Planning and the general development of the City. A very active Planning Committee led by Paul Lister, a Vice Chairman of the Society, which includes three architects, two Chartered Surveyors and a property lawyer among its members, considers and advises on all significant planned developments in the city. The Society's representative on the City Conservation and Heritage Panel makes regular reports to the Committee. Increasingly city planning officers and developers meet with the committee to discuss outline plans and canvas opinion before detailed proposals are prepared for public disclosure.

Enhancing the accessibility of the cultural heritage of the city is the focus for the Heritage Committee which is led by Peter

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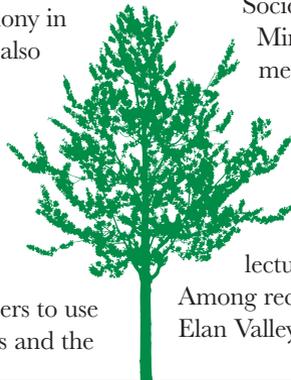
Leather, a senior historian from Birmingham University. The committee fulfils the traditional role of erecting Blue Plaques honouring some of Birmingham's most illustrious citizens, coordinated by Blue Plaques Secretary Yvonne Maslen, but has also begun a programme of erecting History Plates to mark important events in the city's history. It also manages the production of the Heritage Buildings Guide of which 750,000 copies have so far been printed.

Promoting active citizenship among members of all the different ethnic groups that now make up the population of the city is the main activity of the Citizenship Committee. Led by Michael Sheehan, this committee has pioneered the introduction of a highly successful programme, the Next Generation Awards Programme for school pupils aged 11 to 14. Just over 2000 pupils a year participate in this six week project based programme, culminating in a major award ceremony in the Council House. This committee also manages the long running Schools awards programme in which up to six schools each year are selected to be rewarded for the work they have undertaken to improve their local environment. Other initiatives currently being pursued include the preparation of a workbook for teachers to use with final year Primary School pupils and the

possibility of introducing a new award scheme for Young Citizens of the year.

The Trees Committee manages our tree planting programme, Birmingham Trees for Life, funded largely by Birmingham City Council. Led by Society Vice Chairman, Rob Blyth, the committee has organised the planting of several hundred trees over the last two years, usually in association with local schools. Public and corporate sponsorship of tree planting has also been achieved through a Plant a Tree for Life programme in which special tree planting days are organised in local parks and sponsors are invited to join in group planting sessions. Project Manager Sue Griffith coordinates the activities of Birmingham Trees for Life which this year have also included planting an orchard in a restored garden at the Edgbaston Guinea Gardens, preparing for a second Apple/Tree day at the Botanical Gardens and Glasshouses and several tree planting ceremonies in city parks. A Red China Birch Tree has been planted in the City Centre Gardens to mark the Society's 90th birthday.

Mindful of the need to ensure that members of the Society are kept up to date with the development of the city and have opportunities to contribute their ideas and opinions, the Events Committee, led by Peter Miles, organises a series of lectures and visits throughout the year. Among recent events have been talks on the Elan Valley Dam from which Birmingham gets



Civitas has now been replaced by a new magazine, Birmingham Perspectives, appealing to a wider audience around the city.

its water supply, the restoration of the Town Hall and Birmingham's canals. For the brave, a four day trip to sister-city Chicago has been arranged for May this year.

The Society has made significant changes to its membership communications. A website was launched in 2005 and a new magazine, Civitas, with a circulation of 3000, was introduced at the same time.

Civitas has now been replaced by a new magazine, Birmingham Perspectives, appealing to a wider audience around the city, an office has been opened in the Birmingham and Midland Institute building in March and for the first time in several decades the Society has its own paid administrator.

The transformation of the Society during the past five years has been remarkable, made possible by the energetic enthusiasm of a growing number of active members and enabling more significant beneficial contributions to be made to the quality of life in the city.

The celebration of the Society's 90th birthday on 10 June 2008 is being marked by the award of a Grant of Arms, a first for Birmingham among the country's civic societies!



Gold medal recipients

1921 Appleby Matthews
1922 Sir Barry Jackson
1923 W H Bidlake MA FRIBA
1925 Alderman George Cadbury Jr
1926 James Richardson Holliday MA
1928 Councillor G E Macdonald
1929 The Rt Hon Neville Chamberlain MP
1930 The Hon Lady Anstruther-Gough-Calthorpe
1931 Mr And Mrs Barrow Cadbury
1934 Sir Granville Bantock MA DMus FRCM
1935 Sir Gilbert Barling Bt CB CBE
1936 Sir Harry Vincent
1947 William Haywood FRIBA MTP
1948 Alderman W Byng Kendrick
1949 George Drysdale FRIBA
1951 Alderman Sir Albert Bradbeer JP
1953 J Leslie Wright
1957 Sir Wilfred Martineau MC TD MA
1958 Florence Barrow

1961 Derek Salzberg CBE
1963 Herbert Manzoni CBE MICE
1965 Paul Cadbury CBE
1968 Alderman Stephen Lloyd
1970 Sir Robert Aitken
1972 Beryl Foyle
1974 Harold Gray
1976 Dr Norman Wright Bertenshaw
1979 Sir Joseph Albert Pope
1981 John English OBE
1984 Michael Cadbury
1986 George Jonas LLB
1988 Professor Edward Marsland
1990 Sir Simon Rattle
1992 Anne Kenrick
1996 Reverend David Collyer
1998 Dr Llewellyn Lloyd
2000 Les Milner

Forward prize recipients

1968 City Police Panda Car Scheme
1969 City of Birmingham Tree Lovers League
1970 Birmingham Society for mentally Handicapped Children
1971 J A Skipper, Street Cleaner
1972 Birmingham Shopping Centre
1973 Parks Department (Emphasis on islands)
1989 St Basil's centre for the Homeless
1990 Winson Green Visitors centre
1991 The River Cole & Chinn Brook Conservation Group
1992 The Arcadian Car park
1994 The Chamberlain Hotel
1995 Birmingham Citywatch

1996 Centro
1997 City Planning Department - New Street
1998 Argent plc - Brindley Place
1999 The Old Crown, Digbeth (Patrick Brennan)
2000 The Royal Birmingham Society of Artists
2001 The Mailbox
2002 Castle Vale Housing Action Trust
2003 St Martin's in the Bullring
2004 Birmingham Conservation Trust/
The National Trust for Back to Backs
2005 Elmhurst School for Dance
2006 Rev Tom Pike/St Paul's Church

Officers of the Society

President

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Chauhdry Rashid

Vice Presidents

The Bishop of Birmingham
 Sir Frederick Crawford DL
 Lord Jones of Birmingham
 The Rt Hon the Lord Rooker
 Bruce Tanner DL

Chairman

Dr Freddie Gick

Deputy Chairman

Guppy Dhariwal

Vice Chairmen

Rob Blyth
 David Clarke
 Anthony Collins
 Paul Lister
 Glyn Pitchford
 Bob Warman

Honorary Treasurer

Tony Collinson

Honorary Secretary

Nick Madeley

Members of the Trust Board

The Chairman

The Deputy Chairman

The Vice Chairmen

The Honorary Treasurer

The Honorary Secretary

Councillor John Alden

Ross Bellamy (Conservation and Heritage Panel representative)

Councillor Ray Hassall

Peter Leather (Chairman of the Heritage Committee)

Yvonne Maslen (Blue Plaques Secretary)

Peter Miles (Chairman of the Events Committee)

Councillor Mike Sharpe

Jagjit Taunque MBE DL

Peter Wall

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acknowledges the support of Birmingham
City Council in obtaining its grant of arms*

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*Congratulations to
Birmingham Civic Society
on 90 years of service
from
HBJ Gateley Wareing*

HBJ Gateley Wareing

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