



## Annual Review



THE  
**BIRMINGHAM**  
CIVIC SOCIETY

*2015-2016*



## Working together to make Birmingham a better place for everyone.

For almost 100 years, we have worked to make Birmingham a better place for everyone. We are a membership body made up from a wide range of volunteers who promote civic pride in our city.

Our work involves many activities some of which include:

- Celebrating the heritage of our city through installing Blue Plaques and History Plates
- Inspiring the minds of young people through our Next Generation Awards
- Delivering the Birmingham Trees for Life scheme
- Promoting and improving our built environment, architecture and public art

I've had a thoroughly enjoyable time since becoming Chairman in November. There is so much enthusiasm within the Society for making Birmingham a better place for everyone. This is all down to the energy, passion and commitment of our Trustees, committees and members.

In Spring, we carried out our +PLUS consultation with members, non-members and key city stakeholders. The purpose of this was to establish where the focus of the Society should be in the lead up to our Centenary Year and beyond. We had a great response and incredibly useful feedback. All of which has been used to inform our +PLUS Strategy, a five-year plan for the Society which is to be launched at our AGM in November 2016. The +PLUS Strategy has our Centenary Year at its heart but importantly sets out how we will continue beyond as a stronger, greater and better Society.

Our Committees continue to go from strength-to-strength. We established a new Membership Committee, chaired by Lorraine Francis. They have delivered a year of outstanding events based around our 'People, Places, Pride' theme. The events have been really well attended by both members and non-members and feedback has always been incredibly positive.

We're looking forward to starting the Centenary Year celebrations in June 2017. It'll be a year filled with many events, activities and a few other 'things' that aim to surprise and delight!

Gavin Orton, Chairman



## Honouring Kate Bunce ...and Moseley Rugby

At the beginning of Birmingham's first Heritage Week in September 2015 we unveiled a Blue Plaque to Kate Bunce at St Alban the Martyr Church in Highgate.

Kate Elizabeth Bunce, 1856-1927, was a prominent Birmingham artist of the Arts and Crafts Movement, who with her sister Myra, created a beautiful reredos screen for a chapel in the Grade II\* listed church. The plaque was unveiled by The Rt Revd Mark Santer, the Bishop of Birmingham from 1987 to 2002, and The Lord Mayor, Cllr Ray Hassall, assisted by youngsters from the Ark St Alban's Academy and Chandos Primary School.

Heritage Committee members joined members of the Moseley Players Association to see Lord Mayor, Cllr Carl Rice and the Lady Mayoress unveil a History Plate at Birmingham Moseley Rugby Club in June.

History Plates are awarded by the Society to celebrate places or events of special historical interest, so Birmingham Moseley Rugby is a worthy recipient. It is one of the world's oldest Rugby Clubs and through the years its teams have achieved numerous sporting accolades and many of its players have competed at national and international level.

## Stirchley Baths wins Renaissance Award

Our Planning Committee visited several buildings that were nominated for our 2015 Renaissance Award which celebrates and recognizes the renovation of buildings, parks or structures that were at risk or vacant, and in April we were delighted to announce that the 2015 Renaissance Award would go to Stirchley Baths.

The judges felt that Stirchley Baths embraces and celebrates its heritage whilst bringing the building back into vibrant use and back into the heart of the local community and that the way that the community had been involved in the restoration as well as on going involvement was exemplary. The Award was unveiled at a summer tea party for all their volunteers and is now on display in the foyer.

## 2015 NGAs embrace multiculturalism

With their inspiring YOUNIFY project, students from King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls' - Aishwarika, Susmita, Samiya, Tanvi and Ishani beat three other Birmingham schools in the finals to become overall winners of our 2015 Next Generation Awards. YOUNIFY aims to educate younger children about the diversity of Birmingham and combating racism.

The awards were presented by the Lord Mayor's Deputy, Cllr Anita Ward. The girls said: "We believe that Birmingham's multiculturalism should be embraced; an attribute, not a burden to what is already a wonderful city."



## Birmingham Trees for Life – promoting the importance of trees throughout the city

BTfL is devoted to promoting awareness and understanding throughout the city of the value and importance of trees. The team raise money to enable more trees to be planted and encourage the involvement of everyone, especially young people, in planting trees.

By the end of the 2015-16 winter planting season, the total planted by BTfL since it began came to over 58,500 and included the planting by the Lord Mayor in December of the 50,000th tree in the City Gardens. As one of the Lord Mayor's chosen charities this year, they held a Woodland Challenge event

in March, to raise money for his charity, which was won by BPN Architects. 2016 also saw BTfL start working in collaboration with the Woodland Trust.

Historically the Trust has concentrated most of its tree planting in rural areas, but they are starting to look at how they can work in urban areas, and BTfL is one of the first urban tree planting organisations that it has formed an alliance with. BTfL hopes that this collaboration will develop over the years enabling them to plant even more trees in Birmingham.



## Birmingham Big Art Project on track

The Society is a supporter of the Birmingham Big Art Project, which was set up in 2012 to commission and install an iconic new piece of public art that will gain international recognition and put the city on the world's cultural map. It will be erected next to the main entrance to Eastside City Park near Millennium Point and the new HS2 station, and will be a major destination and arrival point in the city as a new centre point called Curzon Square is to be created over time around the artwork.

Five artists have been shortlisted by a selection panel of professionals from the art world who said that they were struck by the vitality and originality of all the proposals. The models are on public display and the winner will be announced early next year.



## Power List 250

In April, The Birmingham Post identified 250 senior figures that they considered to be the region's most influential people and key to the future of the city.

Our Chairman, Gavin, and Deputy Chairman, Nick Venning, were listed as representatives of the Society in the 'Campaigners and Activists' sector and Trustee and Ambassador, Tony Elvin, and Caroline Coates, Chair of our Ambassadors, are listed in their professional capacities, influencing hospitality and the law.

Nick said: "It just shows that we're engaging the right people and focused on the right issues. It's a great accolade for the Society."



## People, Places, Pride

We have had an exciting year around our theme of 'People, Places, Pride'. Through a series of events we have celebrated the People of our city - past, present and future; promoted the Places - where we live, work and play; and through these, the Pride that we all have in our city has grown.

### *BBC at the Summer Reception*

Our Summer Reception for corporate members took place at St Philips Chambers in July 2015 with Joe Godwin, Director of the BBC Academy and BBC Birmingham as guest speaker. Joe explained his priority building BBC Birmingham as a strong sustainable base in the city and how their new traineeships will help fill the digital skills gap.

### *Annual Leader's Breakfast*

A capacity audience of corporate members and their guests attended our Annual Leader's Breakfast in November, hosted by Hotel du Vin, to hear from Sir Albert Bore. This was one of Sir Albert's last speaking engagements as Leader of the City Council and in recognition of his long support of the Society he was made an Honorary Life Member.

### *2015 AGM*

Previous Chairman, Christine Cushing, officially handed over to our new Chairman, Gavin Orton and we said goodbye to Trustees Paul Farrow, Honorary Alderman Len Gregory and Deputy Chairman, Joe Jordan. In his inaugural speech, Gavin outlined his plans for a +PLUS 2016-2020 consultation and strategy, a new website and a series of events around the theme of: People, Places, Pride.

### *An Audience with John Clancy*

In February we hosted a joint event with Colmore BID and BPS Birmingham to meet the new Leader of the City Council and to learn more about his vision for Birmingham and the part that we might play in realising that vision. It was a direct response to Cllr Clancy's call for Birmingham's Civic Leaders to 'step-up' and work together in making our city better.

### *Behind the scenes at The Electric*

Members were treated to a behind the scenes tour of The Electric Cinema, the UK's oldest working cinema. The tour, which took in the projection room and basement, followed a fascinating talk from Operations Manager, Sam Bishop, on the cinema's history and its many name changes and chequered history since it was established in 1909.

### *A private tour of the Council House*

Trustee Cllr Ray Hassall, made time during his busy year as Lord Mayor, to show us around the Council House and regaled us with many tales of his year in office and how business is conducted in the Council Chamber. Those of us that attended were honoured to sign the guest book and receive a pin badge as a memento.



*Exploring Secret Birmingham*

Hardy members braved the biting cold wind and rain on a March evening walking tour that explored 'Secret Birmingham', with Ian Jelf as their guide. They report that in spite of the weather, they very much enjoyed the walk and learnt many fascinating and unusual facts about the city, including the site of the last public hanging, which is marked by one of our History Plates.

*Spring Reception at Malmaison*

Over 80 corporate members and guests attended our Spring Reception and heard from Craig Rowbottom, BCC's Development Planning Manager, about Birmingham's growth agenda. He gave an excellent overview of the new Birmingham Development Plan with a focus on long term planning, partnerships, consultation and collaboration.

*An excellent evening at Birmingham Cathedral*

Early evening sunshine in June showed the Cathedral at its very best to members, both whilst looking at the monuments in the Cathedral Gardens with Heritage Manager, Jane McArdle, and looking in detail at the beautiful Burne-Jones windows with the Dean, The Very Rev'd Catherine Ogle. The evening began with Catherine and Jane talking about people that were important to the Cathedral's history and ended with listening to organ music with David Hardie, Assistant Director of Music.

*'Our Shakespeare'*

In June, we enjoyed a private tour of the Library of Birmingham's 'Our Shakespeare' exhibition with Curator, Julian Harrison. This spectacular exhibition gave members a rare and exciting opportunity to experience first hand artefacts, footage and audio that hadn't been seen elsewhere and won't be seen again for many years.

*President:*

The Lord Mayor of Birmingham

*Vice Presidents:*

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

*Trustees of the Society as at 30th June 2016:*

Gavin Orton [Chairman]  
Nick Venning [Deputy Chairman]  
Robin Barnes [Treasurer and Company Secretary]  
Michael Butler  
Geoff Cole  
Christine Cushing  
Kirsty Davies-Chinnock  
Sean Elson  
Tony Elvin  
Lorraine Francis  
Stephen Hartland  
Councillor Ray Hassall  
Rita McLean  
Peter Miles  
Andrew Mitchell  
Jagjit Taunque MBE, DL

*Photo Credits:*

We are grateful to the following for the photos in this review:

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Dave Warren



Working together  
to make Birmingham  
a better place for  
everyone.

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