

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY SOCIETY, NORTH WEST GROUP 2017 AGM

CHAIR'S REPORT FOR 2016

INTRODUCTION

This has been a busy year for the North West Group with a number of high-profile cases that have received national media coverage. We have also made a number of improvements, including a dedicated email account, an e-newsletter and a number of collaborations with other organisations in the pipeline. Sadly, early in 2017 Harry Edwards passed away. He was a stalwart of North West meetings, sitting in his corner and making always astute observations. Meetings will not be the same without him.

CASEWORK

We have had a very busy time in terms of casework, working in conjunction with the caseworkers at Cowcross Street. Perhaps the most high profile case has been the proposed 'St Michael's' development on the edge of Albert Square in Manchester City Centre. What is proposed are over-scaled luxury tower blocks and multi-storey entertainment complex, in aggressive materials they also represent a poor piece of urban planning, with blank facades to the streets and poor permeability for pedestrians. Cowcross Street was due to ask for the application to be called-in by the minister of state but the developers then withdrew the application but this one will come back, so we need to watch out for this. The scheme would mean the demolition of a 1930s police headquarters and an interesting early 1950s synagogue, which unfortunately was turned-down for listing. Another concern has been the proposed redevelopment of the former UMIST campus and Howard Smith represented us in a walk-round with other interested parties. Plans are still very much at the consultation stage, with no firm plans as yet. Regrettably, our application for listing the Stockport BHS mural was also turned-down, it remains vulnerable with the demise of the business and plans for the redevelopment of the Mersey Way shopping centre. Fortunately, however, local councillors appear to support saving the mural. More positive news has been that after a wait of around four years, we have managed to get the RC Church of St Cecelia, Tuebrook, Liverpool listed. This is a lovely Deco/Romanesque church of 1930 by Ernest Bower Norris with impressive mosaics to the interior by Eric Newton. We are still waiting to hear back about our application to list Underhill, a marvellous late 1970s house built into the hillside just over the border in West Yorkshire. Designed by Arthur Quarmby, it is the first modern earth berm house to be built in the UK and was until recently, the architect's family home.

TOURS

We decided to hold only three tours in 2016 because there were only three committee members able to organise these. We had a very successful walking tour of Oldham in the Spring, coinciding the real ale festival. Highlights included seeing the interior of the parish church- redecorated by Stephen Dykes Bower in the 1970s- Puginian Gothic but in 70's colours of browns, greens and purples. Also, a rare chance to see inside the council chamber and the Queen Elizabeth Hall- little altered since built in 1977, including original space-age down lighters and wonderful textured concrete walls to the main hall. Later in the year we ran our first national tour- this was to Lancaster and Morecambe. We visited the University campus to see the lovely post-modern 1990s Ruskin Library by Richard

MacCormac and the fascinating and innovative multi-faith Chaplaincy building of 1968 by Cassidy and Ashton. Most astonishing was a mural at the chapel of the former St Martin's teacher training college- Jesus and his followers dressed like 1960s Beatniks, a very strange place for radical art by John Bratby. A small midweek tour was a visit to the crematorium at St Helens, a lovely modernist building with a symmetrical and classicising character with a main chapel of wonderful dalle de verre glass.

LECTURES

Several members also attended an interesting lecture at Manchester Art Gallery (as an organised outing) on the role of *Vogue* magazine in Second World War propaganda, accompanying an exhibition. We hope to organise more of this sort of event in the future.

DEVELOPMENTS

There have been a number of developments for the North West Group during 2016. Thanks to staff at Cowcross Street, we have now received a full list of members and their contact details and this includes the neighbouring county of Derbyshire (as areas such as Glossop and Buxton have close links to the North West). We now have a dedicated email account and it is intended that in the very near future all communications will come from this account and will be used as a single point of contact. We have also introduced an e-newsletter, to update local members of news and events. We are hoping to have stalls at University Fresher's Fairs and the biannual Manchester Histories Festival and are encouraged that Cowcross street will investigate producing business cards for committee members and some branded merchandise that can be sold or given away at events. In a competitive market for heritage, and a changed digital world of communications, we are aware that we need to promote ourselves more, in a more targeted and efficient way.

Matthew Schofield

Chair, The Twentieth Century Society- North West Group

April 2017

C20 Northwest Group: Secretary's Report 2017

Six meetings were held in 2016, with attendance generally of around six to eight, including officers. The group's first AGM under the revised system set out by Cowcross Street also took place.

Meetings are now managed with a standard agenda, which can be adapted as required. Progress has continued in working with the chair and the rest of the group to develop a more structured approach to planning the programme of events, to encourage forward planning as well as the constructive review of recent events. The nature of the meeting is still evolving, with the hope that more members become actively involved in taking on additional roles for which there is clearly a need. These include researching and organising the programme and enhancing our social media and web profile so it is at least equivalent to other similar groups active in the city/region. We also need to develop a more effective dialogue with members in the region and also those on the mailing list who are interested in the society's activities, but are not yet sufficiently committed to join as full subscribing members.

Early in the year it was decided to begin meetings at 7.00 and have an 'Informal information exchange' as the concluding agenda item, an opportunity for informal discussion about current exhibitions etc.

Howard Smith 28March 2017