**The Twentieth Century Society, Northwest Regional Group**

**Acting Chair’s report, 2019 AGM**

When I attended last year’s Group AGM I didn’t expect to be writing a report now as your Acting Chair. Last year the Group’s then Chair, Matthew Schofield, stood down for reasons of health. I was asked to be Acting Chair until the 2019 Annual General Meeting on March 18, 2019. Matthew has agreed to be Casework Reporter because he has a valuable awareness and knowledge of local C20 cases. The Group is most grateful for Matthew’s work and we wish him well.

Our principal activity in the last year has been our involvement, with our colleagues, the Modernist Society, in celebrating the centenary of the birth of Mitzi Cunliffe, the sculptor, architectural designer, and the designer of the BAFTA award mask trophy. Using crowd sourced funding, we were able to fund the installation of an impressive Manchester City Council bronze plaque on the former home and studio of Mitzi Cunliffe in Cranmer Road, Didsbury. The unveiling ceremony (featured on Granada TV news) attracted a good and cheerful crowd who were able afterwards to attend a reception kindly provided by the Head Mistress of Manchester High School for Girls where there is a charming wall plaque sculpture by Cunliffe. This was followed by a lecture and discussion at the Whitworth Art Gallery given by Professor Ann Sumner, the leading scholar and researcher on Cunliffe. We were fortunate to be joined by Antonia and Shay, the daughters of Mitzi Cunliffe, and other members of their families, in a memorable and successful event. We were pleased, if somewhat surprised, to discover that our plaque is the first to be dedicated to a woman artist in Manchester, a fitting coincidence in a year when Manchester also celebrated, with a statue unveiling and other events, the work of Emmeline Pankhurst and her Suffragette colleagues in the city a hundred years ago. We are looking forward to a city coach tour this April of sites connected with Mitzi Cunliffe, linked to the publication of a trail leaflet called ‘An American in Manchester’.

In April our Treasurer Barry Clark led a well-attended morning walk around central Manchester looking at buildings from the period between the two world wars. During this time Manchester erected some of its most notable, and expensive, buildings, often reflecting  Art Deco and the Jazz Age in detailing, as well as neo-classical motifs revealing a fascinating eclecticism.

The following month saw a small group visit the Whitworth Art Gallery for a special tour led by a senior curator, giving a professional insight into the planning and delivery of the award-winning scheme to refurbish and renovate the gallery by MUMA architects.

In October we organised a national Society event to Crewe and what we learned to call the Lovell Telescope at Jodrell Bank, Cheshire. Drafting the notes for this visit I was struck by the essential role of Charles Husband, the civil engineer who designed the radio telescope before 1957. Husband’s part in the daring and now world-famous design deserves to be more widely appreciated. If our visit helped to draw attention to Husband’s powerful engineering design skills then this is good work by us.

On the same day our party also visited Maguire and Murray’s 1962-7 All Saints church in Crewe. I drafted a Building of the Month article for the Society’s website; this was posted in December 2018. We were puzzled to discover that this important modern church by Maguire and Murray is unlisted. Prompted by our visit the Society has applied to Historic England for All Saints to be considered for listing.

Another pioneering success for our Group was the production of a smartly designed colour bookmark with our contact details and information about our Group. We had long felt the need for such a modern take on a traditional *carte de visite*. Even in a world of social media and smartphones, we suspect that many people still quite enjoy a nice bookmark as a reminder and souvenir. We are grateful for all the effort that our Secretary, Howard Smith, made producing the bookmark.

The secretary and communications officer, Lois Smith, managed the introduction of regulations relating to data protection (GDPR) in May, drafting a communication to members which Julia Lane wanted to share with other regional groups as an effective model.

As to new Society books, I drafted four articles about north-west churches for the *100 churches, 100 years* volume which is to be published by Batsford for the Society on March 7, 2019. You will have to buy a copy to find out which churches have been covered.

A long-standing case – that of Preston Bus Station – came to a satisfying almost-conclusion last summer when the newly restored and reconstructed building was officially re-opened. And very smart and handsome it looks too. The proposed Youth Zone block, intended for the western former bus aprons, is not to be built so we may end up with a good quality urban landscaped space complementing the station. Some people may decry the installation of security screening in the upper floors of the car park but these screens are necessary to prevent the sadly frequent use of the building by suicides. I was gently amused to read that some local councillors, having campaigned strenuously and doggedly for the building’s demolition, now appear to be claiming credit for the station’s restoration. I think that the Society had something to do with this successful outcome too.

Aidan Turner-Bishop

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