

The Twentieth Century Society, Northwest: AGM 2022 Chair's report for the year ending 31 December 2021

Introduction

Last year the Chair, Treasurer and other members of the committee retained their positions until the next AGM to be held 28 February 2022. This was agreed with Julia Lane, the society's secretary, as a response to the lockdown in place at that time and the difficulty in holding an AGM meeting, either in person or virtually. The committee comprises the elected positions of chair and treasurer with four members regularly attending, one of whom representing Liverpool.

At the moment we have no vice-chair or secretary, although I fulfil part of the latter role by taking minutes. There is a need to enlarge the pool of active members and as we begin to contemplate life resuming some form of normality we will endeavour to pursue this again to secure our long term viability. We are particularly keen to welcome new committee members who are interested in developing our social media presence and also assist with organising events.

During 2021 as the various lockdowns and other restrictions were in place we decided not to hold any events in person but to concentrate our efforts on casework, which could be done largely by desktop and telephone. We were not able to use Zoom, either for group committee meetings or talks as not all committee members are equipped with the necessary technology although we did initiate a Zoom event using Cowcross Street facilities.

We held one committee meeting in person on 29 November. At this meeting we agreed to hold future meetings during the day and also in the café of the Manchester Central Library, a more informal setting than previously. We began to talk about restarting our events programme in 2022 although the prevailing mood remains one of caution.

The treasurer reported some problems with our bank account in late autumn, arising from the bank changing the sort code. However, this has been rectified and a new cheque book issued.

It was agreed with Andrew Jackson (Trustee and National Groups coordinator) that we would only invite North West members to the AGM but email those in Derbyshire with information on the events programme or casework. This includes those members with Greater Manchester postcodes but within Derbyshire.

Programme

'Brutal North' 15 April

A conversation presented by Simon Phipps with Matthew Steele, Dr Christina Malathouni and Catherine Croft held on Zoom.

This was prompted by the publication of *Brutal North: Post-War Modernist Architecture in the North of England*, a photographic exploration of the North of England by Simon Phipps in late 2020. It was initiated and organised by C20 Society, Northwest and went out as part of the national events programme on Zoom, raising an amazing £998 in ticket sales for casework activities. The event led to the launch of a survey of Brutalist architecture in the North by Letitia Mckie, a London-based volunteer attached to the Society. Some useful groundwork was achieved before her term ended and it is hoped that at some point the project will be restarted.

A C20 Weekend: Chester, Wirral and Flintshire 2 – 4 July

This tour was organised and led by Andrew Jackson. Highlights included churches by F. X. Velarde and H. S. Goodhart-Rendel, Mold Civic Centre and Theatr Clwyd. The final day was a tour of diverse buildings by Herbert Rowse and a visit to Port Sunlight.

F. X. Velarde 28 October

Velarde is one of the northwest's most remarkable architects of the middle years of the century. A talk took place under the auspices of the first Liverpool Architecture Festival by Dominic Wilkinson and Andrew Crompton, authors of the volume in the C20 Society Architects Monograph Series. We hope to organise an event in 2023 with the authors, coinciding with an exhibition on Velarde.

'Mitzi Cunliffe: An American in Manchester'

This book by Ann Sumner was finally published by Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University in December, coinciding with a display about the sculptor at their Holden Gallery. It was funded by the university with a contribution from C20 Society, Northwest and the Modernists, funds remaining from an earlier crowdfunded Cunliffe project in 2018. Our intention is to promote it through the society's website, with copies available from the modernist bookshop.

Casework

As previously stated, casework has been the major focus of our work in the past year, with Aidan Turner-Bishop and myself responding to requests for advice and assistance from Coco Whittaker (national casework officer), as well as initiating our own listing submissions. We also responded to a few enquiries for help from individuals in the region. Aidan Turner-Bishop meticulously compiled a register of department stores in the northwest, as part of a national campaign.

Here is a summary of buildings in the northwest which were involved in:

Listing Achieved at Grade II

- Former Abbey cinema, Liverpool (Alfred Ernest Shennan, 1939).
- All Saints and Martyrs, Middleton, with the awesome Langley Cross by Geoffrey Clarke (Leach, Rhodes and Walker, 1964). We made a significant contribution, with help from local member Judith LeGrove and Matthew Steele

Pending

- Church of the Holy Rosary, Oldham containing the fresco and mosaic mural by Hungarian émigré artist George Mayer-Marton (1955). This is the subject of a national campaign by SAVE and the society which we have supported. I am in touch with the artist's great nephew and related events are being considered.
- Beech Hill House (or 'Ward House'), Parbold, West Lancashire (Anthony Grimshaw, 1960s). Initiated by the group, supported by the Casework committee.
- Pavilion, Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester (Tadao Ando, 2001). With the Casework committee.

Rejected

- Albert Bridge House, Manchester (H. E. Banks for the Ministry of Works, 1959). Prompted by C20 NWest. Although we were disappointed that this restrained high quality office building now faces demolition, the nearby set of three buildings designed by Leach, Rhodes, Walker (1959 -1965), have been transformed into modern mixed-use commercial spaces, trading on their fashionable Sixties heritage

as the ABC Buildings. This shows what can be done with this widely threatened building type and is an excellent example of long-term sustainable redevelopment.

- *Cosmos 1*, University of Manchester (Mitzi Cunliffe, 1963); initiated by C20 NWest. This architectural sculpture does not face an immediate threat but its future will be monitored.

We were also asked to give an opinion on these for Coco Whittaker:

- Royal Windermere Yacht Club (John Gill of Gill & Rhodes, 1964-5) and a Modernist house, both in Bowness.
- Former magistrates' court in a PoMO style, Whitehaven.
- Two separate applications in Sheffield: roof extension on a 1950s bungalow and redundant industrial building.
- Synagogue in Lytham St Anne's (Alfred Ernest Shennan, 1930s).

In July 2021, Liverpool lost its international UNESCO World Heritage Site status, 17 years after it was first awarded. The decision is widely felt to be due to inadequate management of large-scale development and weak planning laws permitting inappropriate new build. It follows years of warnings from UNESCO about the impact of new development on the docks and surrounding areas. Although the majority of buildings affected are from the 18th and 19th centuries, some are from the period which falls within the society's remit and are thus affected by the diminished quality of their architectural context. It is greatly regretted that this fine city has lost such an outstanding honour.

We were thrilled that Preston bus station was awarded the 2021 World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize, for 'its thoughtful and detailed conservation' in November. Threatened with demolition not so long ago, local members of the Society worked energetically with others and the national society to campaign for its retention. This now famous monument to Brutalism was designed in 1968 by Keith Ingham and Charles Wilson of the Building Design Partnership (BDP) and the engineering firm Ove Arup; refurbishment was by John Puttick Associates 2015-18. It is particularly impressive that so much of the original detailed fittings were retained or carefully updated. When it opened in October 1969, it was Europe's largest bus station, offering an innovative approach by integrating car parking, bus and taxi services within an awe-inspiring exposed concrete structure.

Articles in the magazine

Members of the committee had two articles in the Society's magazine this year. I wrote on Tadeo Ando's pavilion and wall in Piccadilly Gardens (Issue 2021/1) and Aidan Turner-Bishop reviewed *Dark Beauty: Hidden Detail in Harry Clarke's Stained Glass* by Lucy Costigan and Michael Cullen (Issue 2021/2).

Howard Smith

Chair
The Twentieth Century Society, Northwest

February 2022

