

**The Twentieth Century Society  
West Midlands Committee**

**AGM 23 May 2022**

**Chair's Report (from AGM 2021 to current AGM) – Katriona Byrne**

**1. Personnel**

We have a regular core of about 5-7 people who regularly attend committee meetings.

Our Secretary Sian Bradley has continued in position aided by the meetings still being online.

We gained some extra help from new member Becky Bubb who has started assisting on events.

We have had wider support from the committee and other members who may not attend meetings but keep us in touch on various subjects and sponsor various items. Again we welcome anyone who has a good idea or who wants to get more involved.

**2. Meetings**

A West Midlands committee continues to meet formally, more or less on the last Monday of the month. We tend not to meet in December or August, so we average 10 meetings a year. All meetings were held online. The Committee has a very good diversity of skills, including planning, conservation and architectural knowledge, with time-served professional expertise. This year we continued our practice of inviting people to committee meetings as guests to see if they are interested in getting more involved so we have had a number of guests this year.

However as always we are a group of busy professionals, so not everyone can make every meeting and we also have to negotiate our ambitions against our actual capacity for activity.

The plan is to continue to meet online until the end of this year 2022 and to review then. Some of us personally get a lot from meeting people face-to-face but others are reluctant to meet in person yet.

**3. Finances**

Matt Vaughan remained as Treasurer. Our finances are in a healthy state although we had hardly any traffic with the bank account this year. Our usual main fundraiser for the year, the Slam, held this year in April in Coventry, made a small loss but hopefully the event will return to profit next year. Our balance for 2021 is £2336.03 (statement 10/5/21).

**4. Events**

While we managed to run a good series of online lectures in 2020-21 we stalled on this since May 2021. We ran two in-person tours during Heritage Week, September 2021, in Birmingham and Coventry; we gained some interesting insights as we had a blind person on one of our September tours and we gained a new committee member from our Coventry September tour. However Covid affected our ability to plan and run events in Autumn to Winter 2021-22. Nevertheless we ran two days of fieldwork on the Black Country Local List. We also ran the annual Slam in Coventry on 2 April 2022

which had been postponed twice from 2021, to tie in with the end of City of Culture. This was not as well advertised as it could have been and clashed with a national event, however was most enjoyable.

Our aim is to plan for face-to-face tours for Heritage Week 2022 and from there to kick-off our new programme. We have a backlog of sites we want to see.

## **5. Casework**

The Committee has one case-work liaison lead, Joe Holyoak. Joe will report later on. We have been liaising with Coco Whitaker on a regular basis to highlight casework in the region. This year Joe Holyoak joined the national casework committee. We had some lows of the renewal of the Certificates of Immunity on Charles Street Queensway and on the House of Fraser. We had success in the form of the listing of the Mitchell murals at Hockley Circus, submitted by myself in a personal capacity in March 2021. Awareness of the hidden Mitchell mural in Hertford Street, Coventry, has been raised, but the fate of the one in the former Lucas Research Centre in Solihull is unknown.

### **Applications to list were submitted:**

Mitchell Murals, Hockley Circus, Birmingham. By William Mitchell, opened 1968. Submitted on an individual basis by a member 6/3/21. Listed at Grade II.

Triplex Glass Offices, Eckersall Road, King's Norton, Birmingham, by James Roberts 1966. Coco Whittaker submitted an application 12/5/21. No news?

### **Certificates of Immunity granted:**

Charles Street/Queensway, Roberts building – CoI renewed, using the same arguments of repetitive elevations and internal alterations.

## **6. Other activities/news**

We continue to work with other groups and initiatives including:

- a. Consortium of groups including the Civic Society, Brutiful, the Birmingham Modernists on the Survey of C20 Architecture. The plan to start with a second consultant in May 2021 resulted in a trial of two days but only three sites were written up. We decided to review this after our experience with the Black Country Local Listing survey.
- b. Brutiful. This group will fold after its forthcoming publication and are willing to consider joining us.
- c. Black Country Local Listing. We were consulted on this as a local amenity group and underwent the training. We held two fieldwork days with members Rob Bishop and Gary Davies which resulted in nominations from Wolverhampton of #56 sites and from Walsall of #35 sites, amounting to #92 with an additional one made after the Feb 14 2022 deadline direct to the HER in Wolverhampton. This represented an

overall contribution of about 10% of nominations. Both days used different methodologies.

- d. In Coventry we continue to sit on the HAZ committee with committee member Geraldine Hammersley attending and Katriona Byrne as backup. A legacy body is being put in place to continue this work. Member Alan van Wijgerden and Aaron Law continue to input on Coventry.

## **7. Membership**

We now have approx. 187 members of The Twentieth Century Society who live in the West Midlands Region, which includes Staffordshire, Shropshire, West Midlands, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, and Oxfordshire.

Because we did a postal drop to those 25 people on the membership list in this region in 2021 who had no email addresses we got many email addresses for them.

The Committee awarded its annual prize to a Conservation student at BCU for the best essay on C20 architecture, planning or design, which includes a year's membership. This went to Peter Jenkins, an architect in private practice, who delivered a talk at this year's Slam. If anyone here would like to sponsor that for 2022 please get in touch with me or any member of the committee.

## **8. The Future**

We have plenty of potential for growth and influence, however, the key issue continues to be the issuing of Certificate of Immunities for post-war buildings in Birmingham and the scale of loss in Coventry. Our capacity as a Committee to act strategically as well as reactively is limited.

Finally thanks to the Committee members for all their hard work this last year and to you the members who make it most enjoyable.