

### Chair's report

It's a strange and difficult time we find ourselves in at the moment with Covid19. I am writing my second Chairperson's report knowing that the AGM will not happen this April. It seems that this year has flown by, it has been especially pleasurable working with the committee and all the members of the Society in my final year in office. Our new chair will be Vincent Hammersly who I am sure you will know as our current vice chair and will be a good replacement. I would like to thank all the committee and the sub committees members for their great help especially John Payne who has helped me greatly as secretary and also keeps the website interesting and up to date, Les Fawcett and his team for ploughing through all the planning applications each week, Peter Walters for heading up the Heritage subgroup and his team of knowledgeable helpers, Terry Kenny who takes down all the minutes, and Colin Walker who said last year he was standing down as Treasurer but has worked on. Thank you, we will try and let you go this year. If I go on naming everyone it will take up all the pages. I would just like to say 'thank you' to you all.

I look forward to our future especially with the City of Culture next year and all the developments around heritage buildings with millions being spent. You will see in the rest of this publication all the good works we have been involved with and what the future will be. I will be Deputy Chair during the next year and still be around to help Vincent and you all.

Yours sincerely Paul Maddocks

### 'Future Of Coventry's Past' Conference

The Coventry Society's first Heritage Conference took place on Saturday 19th October 2019 at the Old Grammar School in Bishop Street. It was attended by representatives of more than fifty Coventry historical, preservation, amenity and local interest groups and organisations. Councillor Jim O'Boyle, City Council Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration gave the Keynote Address, "New City, Old Faces", describing how many of our much-loved City Centre buildings and facades have been saved by creatively re-purposing them to be fit for the requirements of the twenty first century. Next Ian Harrabin, Chairman of Historic Coventry Trust, gave an overview of the future of Coventry Buildings in the care of the Trust. He explained that the trust began with The Charterhouse and had expanded to include a number of other historic buildings in the City. He informed the conference that all of the buildings in the care of the Trust must be self-sustaining with any income that they generated needing to be enough to cover staff salary and maintenance etc. His presentation included an insight into plans and work being carried out to enhance and bring back into use many of our historic buildings and environments. Cheneine Bhatena, Creative Director of the Coventry City of Culture Trust, was the last speaker before lunch and her presentation was entitled "The Role of Heritage in the City of Culture". She introduced the theme, City of Spires, City of Industry, City of Dreams. She pointed out that 40 million people live within a two hour drive of Coventry and the aim was to inform people from all over the country, and the world, about the identity of the City and its people.



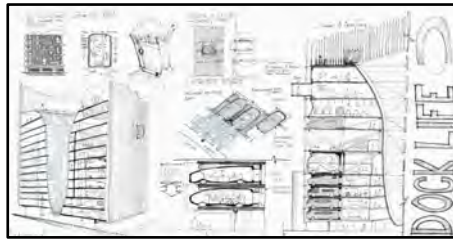
Other speakers were: Victor Riley - Riley Archive; Gabrielle Edmonds Baker - Stoney Road allotments; Iris Weir - Willenhall History Group; Victoria Northridge, - Archives at the Herbert; Mike Polanyk - St John's Church; Tim Claye restoration of historic walled gardens in Allesley Park.

#### Delegates from-

Allesley Walled Garden  
Blue Badge Guides  
Business Improvement District (BID)  
C20 Society  
Civic Voice  
Conservation -George Demidowicz  
Coventry City Of Culture Trust  
Coventry Transport & Highways  
Coventry & District Archeology Society  
Coventry Archives Coventry  
Coventry Canal Basin Trust (Warehouse)  
Coventry Canal Society  
Coventry Cathedral  
Coventry Charterhouse Association  
Coventry Freeman's Guild  
Coventry Music Museum  
Coventry Pub History  
Coventry Synagogue  
Coventry Tree Wardens  
Coventry Irish History  
Coventry Watch Museum  
Culture Coventry Museum Services  
Drapers Hall  
Earlsdon Carnegie Community Library  
Eastern Green Local History Group  
Friends of London Road Cemetery  
Friends of the War Memorial Park  
George Eliot Fellowship  
Great Places  
Godiva Trust  
Historic Coventry Trust  
Historic Coventry Website  
Holy Trinity Church  
Imagineer  
Lanchester Archives  
PhotoMiners  
Police Museum  
Positive Images  
Portals of the Past  
Priority project  
Riley Register  
Septimius Severus Caribbean History  
St. John's Church  
St. Mary's Guildhall  
Stivichall Grange Residents Association  
Stoke Local History Group  
Stoney Gardens Project  
Tudor Coventry Group  
Visit Coventry  
Weavers Cottage  
Willenhall Local History Group

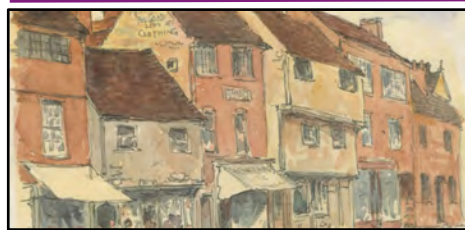
**The Coventry Society has had many interesting talks and tours over the last year, here are some of them -**  
**Talks -**

**September - Ben Flippance** - Design Director of IDP Architects, challenged the Coventry Society to think about the impact of autonomous vehicles on the future environment.



**October - Brian Stote** - showed a series of images, mainly photographs, showing how Broadgate and the roads which have radiated from it have changed over time.

**November - George Demidowitz** renowned archaeologist and historian 'What Lies Beneath' a talk on the discoveries about the development of the old cathedral as a result of the 2015 excavations.



**December - Peter James** talked about Sydney Bunney famous Coventry artist and his watercolour drawing of old Coventry and Warwickshire views.

**January - Nigel Page** talked about archaeological finds from Baginton, amazing Prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon cremation cemetery remains, before the new Jaguar Land Rover facility moves on the site.



**January - Roger Bailey** - 'Aten' the Egyptian Sun God. Pharaoh Akhenatena built the ancient city of Amarna. Was this the inspiration for Donald Gibson's design for Coventry Precinct?

**February - Aidan Ridyard** Coventry's postwar suburban Churches, focused our attention on St. Nicholas Church in Radford. Plus other example of post-war Church building in the city.



**March - Lesley Durbin** talked on the subject of restoration of the Cullen Tile Mural, plus architectural tiles their conservation and restoration.

**Visits and Tours -**

**May - 'Phoenix Walking Tour'** with Dr Eleanor Nesbit discovering part of the city centre



**June - Visit to Amazon Warehouse** tour exploring this vast site on what used to be Jaguar Browns Lane, factory.



**June - Civic Day** tour of Post War Architecture by Paul Maddocks.



**July - Tour of Earlsdon** with historian Peter Walters.



**August - Visit to Tamworth** hosted by the Tamworth Society



**September Heritage Open Days** - plans for the area of Burges and a tour by Paul Maddocks



## **The Coventry Society has been involved with many other interesting projects -**

### **Coventry's Heritage Action Zone -**

Peter Walters and Paul Maddocks represent the Coventry Society and attend the HAZ meetings. The initiative is to unleash the power in Coventry's historic buildings to breathe new life into old places that are rich in heritage, working with Historic Coventry and the City Council. Historic England through, the Heritage Lottery Fund, is helping to making them attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors. They are doing this through joint-working, grant funding and sharing their skills. The building and places that are involved are -

**Charterhouse Priory** and the grounds, Historic Coventry Trust has been awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £4.3 million to restore Charterhouse Priory and the adjoining land. Restoration work has started on the main building and wall murals.

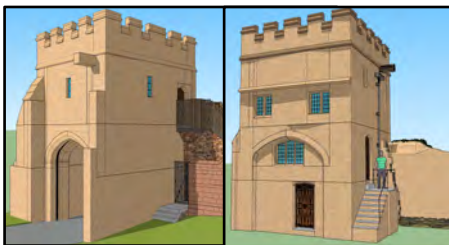


### **London Road Cemetery**

The restoration of the Grade II\* listed cemetery, its Anglican chapel and the Non-conformist chapel that the Historic Coventry Trust will be restoring. The cemetery is run by the Council's Bereavement Services. The cemetery has many interesting buildings including the Entrance Lodge, Prospect Tower and the memorial for Sir Joseph Paxton.



**Much Park St. Gate, Cook St. Gate and Swanswell Gate** are the three remaining gatehouses of Coventry's medieval times. They will provide studio units, including kitchen, bedroom and bathroom facilities accessed by new stairs etc.



**Burges** - One of the most prominent routes into the City centre which is now sadly neglected but still has a large number of historical buildings mainly used as shops. The River Sherborne, that flows behind the shops in the Burges, has been covered over and unseen by the public for many years. The Historic Coventry Trust is bring back the charm of the area and upgrading the shopping experience. There are plans to re-open the River as much as possible and bring in new buildings in line with those already present.



**Drapers' Hall** Historic Coventry Trust is working in partnership with The Princes Foundation and Coventry Music Service to restore this beautiful building which will be open in time for UK City of Culture 2021. Prince Charles visited the building before work started.



### **St. Mary's Guildhall.**

The committee was able to see the progress of the major plans to make St. Mary's Guildhall fit for the 21st Century. A total of £5.5 million is to be spent on the building. restoration of the medieval kitchen (see photo) plus conservation and showcasing of the tapestry, a City Council lead project.



**Lychgate Cottages.** 3-5 Priory Row are three remarkable close-studded timber frame properties dating from around 1415 and the only upstanding buildings surviving from the 12th century St Mary's Priory complex. Historic Coventry Trust will revive and provide much needed visitor accommodation in the lead up to City of Culture 2021.



**The concept** for reusing and saving old building was a Coventry Society idea many years ago when Keith Draper and David Tittle from the Society organised a conference in the Coventry University Architect's Department. Many different people from the City Council and other organisations attended to discuss the five major empty buildings at the time - Old Grammar School, County Court, Drapers' Hall, Charterhouse and Whitefriars Monastery. From this the Coventry Society launched a 'Save the Big Five' Campaign.

**The Coventry Society is always interested in plans and projects for the future -**

**Abbotts Lane.** The Coventry Society committee were consulted on the plans and walked the site. We welcome the proposed provision of high quality residential flats and welcome the return of a residential population into the city centre rather than just more student accommodation. There will be new access from Naul's Mill Park into Belgrade Square with a park area under the ring road, plus the opening up the Radford Brook.



**Cov. & Warwick Hospital old site development.** Again the Coventry Society was consulted on the plans and pleased with the re-use of the old Nurses Home and the hexagonal out patients building, the committee had a visit there.



**Old Civic Centre Two site.** The Coventry Society was consulted on the Coventry University proposals and felt too much of the original old Architects and Planning Offices would be lost. We put our objection to the loss of the listed building. The city Council will make the decision based on the advice of Historic England. We now await the decision on this.



**The Telegraph Hotel.**

The old Coventry Telegraph building is being converted to become a new boutique hotel. The Coventry Society was consulted on the plans and welcomes the proposed new hotel and attached Digital Art Gallery.



**Favourite Conservation Area**

By a public vote and confirmation from our members 'Hill Top' conservation area, which includes the two Cathedrals, Holy Trinity Church, St. Mary's Guildhall, Drapers Hall, old County Court and the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum. 'Hill Top', was voted the favourite. It was entered into the Civic Voice Conservation Area competition.



**Coventry Society publication of brochures -**

'Postwar Architecture', 'Public Art', and 'Heritage' tours are the first of many new publications for the Coventry Society which should be helpful for people who are visiting the city in 2021 UK City of Culture.



**The Coventry Society** is very interested to know what is going to happen to the now closed Sports Centre, Swimming Baths, Priory Visitor Centre and the Whitefriars' Monastery. We would also like to know what is happening to the old Paris Cinema (now the Empire) which is moving to Hertford Street. Also what is happening to the Coventry Canal Basin & Spon St. (which seems to be failing)? Where will the Police Museum be located and where will the Naiad be placed? What will happen to the City Centre South Scheme re development? Where and when is the Coventry Cross to be re-erected? The Society will be following all these issues keenly and scrutinising any developments.

The committee of the Coventry Society has had various one to one meetings with different people including Cllr. McNicholas, Cllr. Jim O'Boyle, Cllr. Ed Ruane. Colin Knight, Director of Transportation & Highways, plus Carol Pyrah, Executive Director and Ian Harrabin Chair of Historic Coventry Trust and discussing many different topics which all help to keep in touch with what the future of the city could be. We also hope to have talks with people from UK City of Culture 2021 soon.

This year is the Coventry Society's 50th anniversary 1970 - 2020. Because of the developing Covid-19 crisis, we will have some difficult decisions to make on our future programme of meetings and activities, so please look on our website for ongoing details.



Campaigning for a quality Coventry