

Friends of Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery Newsletter - May 2021

Chair's Report

Peter Miles, Chair of the Friends of Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery

A very warm welcome to all our Members for the first of our regular Friends' Newsletters in 2021, the Friends' ninetieth year.

A great deal has happened since the last edition of *Artefacts* in February – April 2020. The magazine has, unfortunately, been a temporary casualty of the pandemic which has had a great impact on all our lives.

There have been a number of changes over the last few months. David Foster, our Chair for five years, decided that it was time to retire in December. We thank him for his hard work and commitment. He was succeeded by Jane Howell, who many will know for her organisation of local outings, her guided tours, and more recently for her sponsored walk to raise money for Birmingham Museums Trust last year. However, after a short time in post, Jane left to spend more time with her family.

And so you now have myself, Peter Miles, as your new Chair. I have been a member of the Friends for 51 years and this is my second stint on the Friends Committee.

In the early days of Friends we survived a World War and now, many years later, we are facing a worldwide pandemic. Although we have not been able to maintain our usual activities, we have been working away behind the scenes with the support of Lynda Perrin, our Membership Secretary, and Melissa Hughes, who returned from maternity leave in January with a little girl, Tamara.

We hope we may be able to resume one or two activities and reinstate *Artefacts* in the not too distant future. Meanwhile, we will be publishing this Newsletter which we hope to send out to you every two months. It will be primarily an e-newsletter, but those of you who are not online will receive a hard copy. Please do send us your email address if you have not already done so!

We are also looking at hosting online lectures so please do watch this space and keep checking our website, www.fbmt.org.uk.

So we are beginning to stir again and, as Her Majesty said in a broadcast: 'We will meet again'.



Hello from Birmingham Museums!

Rachel Cockett, Birmingham Museums Trust's Director of Development

It is over a year since I last wrote an update for our Friends and it seems even longer! Our workforce and supporters have worked incredibly hard to enable Birmingham Museums to survive through the pandemic. We are grateful for grants from Birmingham City Council and the Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund. We are particularly touched by the generosity of the public who donated to support our charity over the last year. These funds have been invested to make our museums safe, to help us generate vital income, and to support the people of Birmingham through the pandemic and beyond.

Our new Co-CEOs Sara Wajid MBE and Zak Mensah have been with us for six months and I'm sure they would agree that it has been quite a rollercoaster. You will hear from them in a future newsletter. Watch this space!

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery will remain closed throughout 2021 while essential electrical upgrade work takes place. Plans for reopening in time for the 2022 Commonwealth Games are already underway.

I'm delighted to let you know that you will be able to visit Thinktank and explore the impressive exhibits and historical collections from Saturday 29 May, coinciding with the May half-term holiday. Tickets will go on sale on our website on 6 May. Every precaution has been taken to make the experience safe and enjoyable.

Sarehole Mill will continue to sell fresh baked bread, gifts, essentials and treats plus you can now enjoy pizza in the courtyard! You can also enjoy our museums in your own home with Birmingham Museums on Demand, exclusive digital content created by our in-house experts. Please do visit our website to find out more: www.birminghammuseums.org.uk.

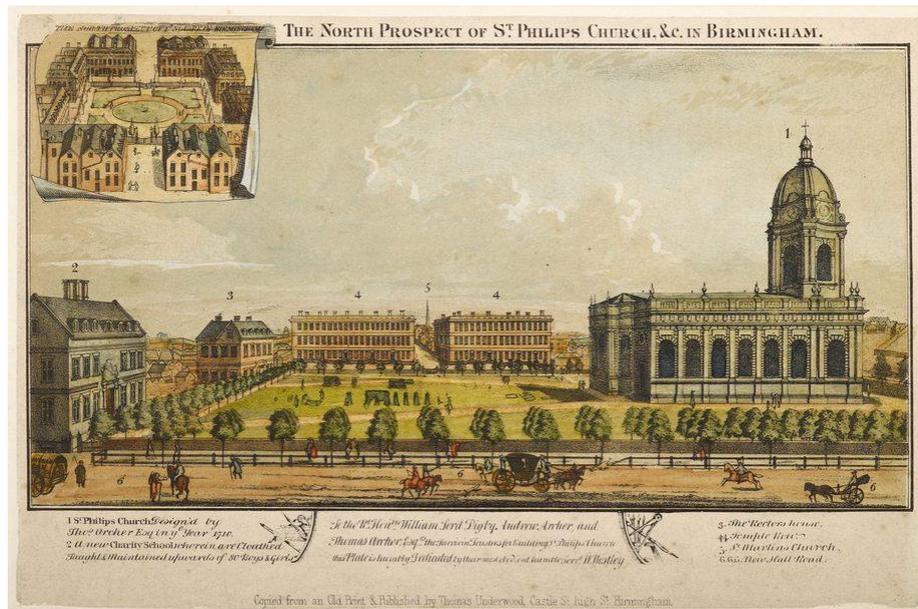


Changing Birmingham - its people and places: St Phillip's Cathedral

By Jim Wells, Friends Trustee

Continuing our series from *Artefacts* exploring 'Changing Birmingham - its people and places', as illustrated by the collection held by Birmingham Museums Trust, which is now available via the marvellous online digital resource which you can access here.

Situated in the normally busy hubbub of the city centre is one of Birmingham's most elegant buildings, St Phillip's Anglican Cathedral, designed by the architect Thomas Archer, who travelled widely and was much influenced by his visit to Italy. Archer produced one of the rare examples of English Baroque in a provincial setting, a style most evident in the concave features of the tower. Finally completed in 1725 it was originally intended to be a parish church to serve the rapidly growing Birmingham population which the medieval St Martin's Church was unable to accommodate. It was extended in 1884-85 by J.A.Chatwin to produce a delightfully light and airy chancel which contains one of its most well-known features, the stained glass windows designed by Edward Burne-Jones and manufactured by William Morris. Burne-Jones, born on Bennetts Hill and baptised at St Phillip's, was a natural choice for the commission although he was disgruntled at the fee his old friend Morris paid him!



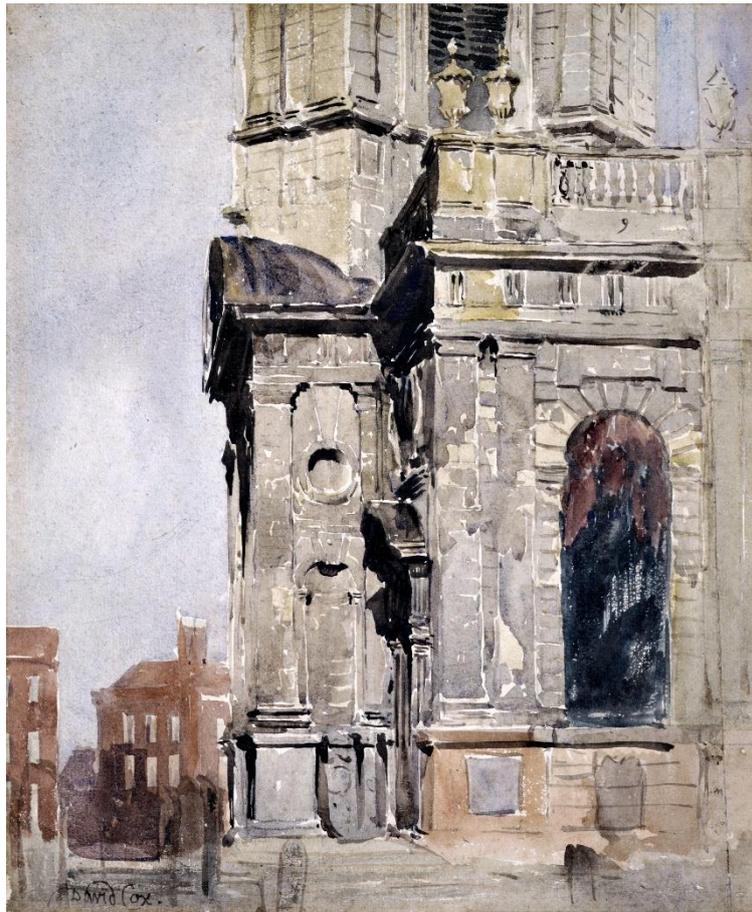
1937V841; The North Prospect of St Philip's Church.&c. in Birmingham,
1825-1875, Thomas Underwood after William Westley,
Presented by Dr Edmund Wilkinson;
Photo by Birmingham Museums Trust, licensed under CC0

The combination of the original design and later extensions produces an interior that is an oasis of calm and spirituality in the heart of the city. In the grounds of the Cathedral, on the approach to the main entrance, is a statue of Bishop Gore, Birmingham's first Bishop in 1905. Gore was a strong social reformer who felt that expenditure on a new cathedral was not a good use of funds. Consequently, St Phillip's parish church was adopted as the Anglican Cathedral for the new Diocese of Birmingham. One of the smallest Cathedrals but perfectly formed.

Further reading:

Andy Foster, 'Birmingham: Pevsner Architectural Guides', Yale UP, 2005

Conrad Gill, 'History of Birmingham Volume One', Oxford UP, 1952



1904P557, Porch of St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham, 1836 by
David Cox, Presented by John Feeney, 1904; Photo by
Birmingham Museums Trust, licensed under CC0

Many of David Cox's paintings are available as framed prints via Birmingham Museum's online shop: <https://shop.birminghammuseums.org.uk/>

If you are interested in similar topics, under the publications section on our Friends website you will find other themes and illustrations: <https://fbmt.org.uk/publications/>

Recruiting a Membership Secretary

Having dedicated many years to the Friends, Lynda Perrin has decided to 'hang up' her Membership Lists. She has been a stalwart over the years, especially during this pandemic. It has been a privilege to work alongside her and we will miss her greatly.

If you or anyone you know would like to find out more about or apply for this paid part-time post please contact Peter Miles: email chair.fbmag@gmail.com or ring 07443 825459.

Friends need friends

Are you looking for a new and rewarding challenge? Are you passionate about Birmingham Museums and what they have to offer? Would you like to work with like-minded people on a shared interest and commitment? Would you be interested in finding out more about joining the Friends' Committee? Or do you have a solid accounting background and might welcome the chance to support us with financial oversight, specialist information and advice?

The Friends are urgently looking to recruit new Trustees and an Honorary Treasurer to join this well-established charity.

If you, or one of your friends or acquaintances, might be interested in filling these roles then please let us know. For more information please contact Peter Miles: email chair.fbmag@gmail.com or ring 07443 825459.

Please do share this Newsletter with your friends and family to let them know what we are up to and to encourage them to join!

If you have received this newsletter in the post then we have not got an email address for you. If you have an email address please email Lynda at fbmagmembership@gmail.com so that we can save paper and postage.

Please visit the Friends' website - www.fbmt.org.uk