



Friends of
Birmingham
Museums

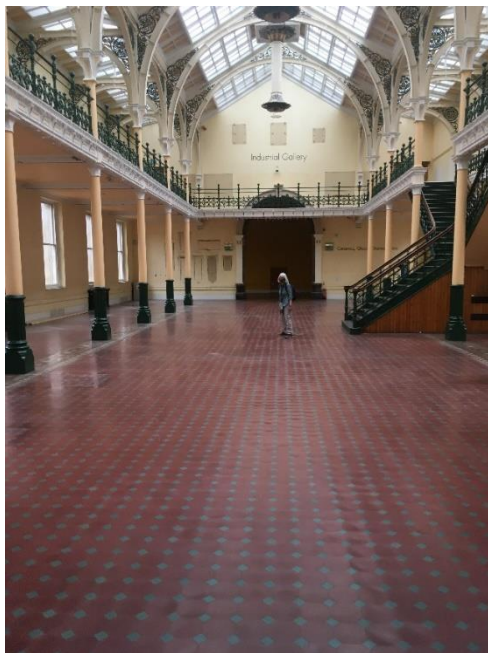
Friends of Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery Newsletter - July 2021

Chair's Report

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

Most of you will know that Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG) is currently closed until 2022, while essential electrical upgrade work of Birmingham's Council House complex takes place. The plan is for BMAG to reopen in part, in time for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, which are to be hosted by Birmingham. BMAG will be fully reopened by early 2024.

As a result, the Gallery displays are being packed up and decanted to safe storage and the offices are also having to be emptied. In preparation for the removal Lynda Perrin, Jane Howell, John Pownall and myself have been doing some essential 'spring cleaning' work in the Friends' office rationalising files, cupboards and desks so that there will be less to pack and move.



The picture above shows our Membership Secretary, Lynda Perrin, in the now deserted Industrial Gallery - I'm sure many of you will recognise her!

This is a challenging time for the Friends for a number of reasons. We will need to vacate our office by the end of September and so we are in the process of searching for a new home – premises which will still be central and available for Friends to visit. We will, of course, keep you up to date on our progress.

A number of our Trustees have stood down and so, whilst we are delighted to have recruited a couple of new Trustees, we are still looking for more! We are also looking for support with organising local Members' events. If you would be interested in volunteering please get in touch to arrange a chat. Unfortunately, the limit on numbers for coaches means that coach trips are currently not financially viable, but let us see how things change as the weeks progress. We hope to organise a weekend away but, once again, this will be dependent on the easing of government restrictions.

We are also looking at talks and lectures and how to hold these with appropriate social distancing in place. This has implications for our AGM, which we are anxious to hold as we have topics to discuss which will affect our Members. Again, we will keep you up to date but don't forget to visit our website: www.fbmt.org.uk!

Your Trustees are grateful for your loyalty and for your continued support. And remember - we will meet again.



Hello to the Friends of Birmingham Museums

Sara Wajid, Co-CEO, Birmingham Museums Trust

It has been a little over 8 months since Zak Mensah and I took on our roles as Co-CEOs of Birmingham Museums Trust. We were recruited to the role to lead a transformation of Birmingham Museums as we emerge from the turbulent months of the global pandemic (you can read more about our appointment [here](#) [link 1 below]).

To start this transformational work we have spent our first few months getting to know more about the people and city, which is no small task and will continue over the coming months. We are talking to the people who care deeply about their museums such as our Friends, as well as seeking out and listening to new voices to find out what they want for their city.

The [closure of BMAG](#) [link 2 below] has created an opportunity to reimagine who the building and collection are for. We will use this period to collaborate with the people and communities who are critical to the future of Birmingham Museums for the next 50 years and beyond.

The Friends are instrumental in helping us develop our collections and I thank you for your support in helping us buy *Souvenir 9 (Queen Victoria)* for Birmingham's collection. An important artwork by Hew Locke, a Guyanese-British sculptor, whose work across a range of media often explores colonial histories and legacies. The Friends have supported Birmingham Museums for 90 years and we are very grateful.

Finally, I wanted to share something our team have been working on during the pandemic. The Life on Lockdown project collected images and recordings to reflect the lives of Brummies over the last year. We want to ensure that future generations could learn about this extraordinary time. This moving film tells [Birmingham's Lockdown story](#) [link 3 below].

Zak and I hope to meet some of you in person before the year is out.

Links:

- 1) <https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/blog/posts/zak-mensah-and-sara-wajid-appointed-joint-ceos-of-birmingham-museums-trust>
 - 2) <https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/blog/posts/birmingham-museum-and-art-gallery-to-remain-closed-throughout-2021-to-allow-for-essential-work>
 - 3) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqsHRZ-d7Wk>
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Friends support the acquisition of Hew Locke's sculpture *Souvenir 9 (Queen Victoria)*

As Sara has mentioned above, the Friends are delighted to have played a vital role in the acquisition of Hew Locke's sculpture '*Souvenir 9 (Queen Victoria)*' for Birmingham's collection. Following the Friends commitment to supporting the purchase, BMT was able to secure the remaining funds required to acquire the sculpture from the Art Fund and the V&A Purchase Grant Fund.

'*Souvenir 9*' will be on loan to the Tate from 1st December 2021 to 3rd April 2022 for their major exhibition '*Art from Britain and the Caribbean*'. This will enable the sculpture to be shown whilst BMAG is closed for electrical work. '*Souvenir 9*' will return to Birmingham next spring and be on display when BMAG reopens for the Commonwealth Games.

On 25th June 2021 there was an in-conversation event with Hew Locke and ceramicist Matt Smith, chaired by Dr Sadiya Qureshi. A recording is available through the Race, Empire & the Pre-Raphaelites research group of the British Art Network blog:

<https://raceempireprb.wordpress.com/events/>.



Hew Locke, *Souvenir 9 (Queen Victoria)*, 2019
Mixed media on antique Parian Ware
Hales Gallery, photo by Anna Arca

Changing Birmingham - its people and places: Bournville Village

By Jim Wells, Friends Trustee

Using Birmingham Museums Trust's excellent online Digital Image Resource, we continue our exploration of 'Changing Birmingham - its people and places'. You can access the online resource via the following link:

<https://dams.birminghammuseums.org.uk/asset-bank/action/viewDefaultHome?browseType=folders>.

With summer here it seemed like a good opportunity to explore an outdoor feature of Birmingham's history, and that is Bournville Village. Situated in what is now suburban Birmingham, it was initiated by George and Elizabeth Cadbury to be a model for housing reform. George Cadbury was determined to prove that there was a viable alternative to the squalor of the back-to-back housing* he had seen as a Sunday school teacher at the Severn Street School.



1980P92; 'A Bournville Workroom (decorating department)', 1910;

Attributed to: H N Bradbear; Photo by Birmingham Museums Trust, licensed under CC0.

Cadbury bought 124 acres next to the Bournville Factory in 1894 and commissioned a young architect, William Harvey, to plan a model village. The aim was to have a socially mixed development with plenty of open space and well-designed housing. George was a vegetarian, not common at the time, and consequently allotments and large gardens for vegetable cultivation were central to the plan. By 1913 there were 1,100 gardens and 1,104 allotments, with classes to help people get the most out of their cultivation.

To avoid property speculation and paternalism, George gifted the estate to a specially set up Trust which then organised future developments and continues to thrive today. There was always a difficult balance to be struck between art and economy. However, this small part of Birmingham went on to have a positive national and international impact on housing design, in particular interwar municipal housing and the garden city movement, attracting visitors from all over the world. It has had its critics over the years but has stood the test of time and it is well worth a summer stroll to admire the range of housing design and impressive public buildings such as the Friends Meeting House and Ruskin Hall. Having built up an appetite why not finish off with a visit to Birmingham Museums Trust's Sarehole Mill for a freshly made pizza?

<https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/sarehole>

Further Reading and Sources:

- 1) Michael Harrison, '*Bournville Model Village to Garden Suburb*', Phillimore, 1999
- 2) Andy Foster, '*Birmingham Pevsner Architectural Guides*', Yale University Press, 2016
- 3) Selly Manor Museum, <https://sellymanormuseum.org.uk/>

*<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/birmingham-back-to-backs> – the last example left of the type of housing Cadbury was looking to replace.

Following Aston Hall's reopening on 7th July 2021, our next topic will be the Holte family.



1995V632.1146; 'Bournville, Maryvale Road'; Photo by Birmingham Museums Trust, licensed under CC0; Purchased from Roger Kesterton.

Recruiting a Membership Secretary

We are still on the hunt a Membership Secretary to take on Lynda's role when she steps down. 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.

New Trustees

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
