

# **THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY BIRMINGHAM & WEST MIDLANDS**

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2018**

The Victorian Society is the charity championing Victorian and Edwardian buildings in England and Wales. Our Conservation Advisers help local planning authorities and churches to make better decisions about adapting Victorian and Edwardian buildings to the way we live now, whilst keeping what is special about them. We also seek to engage the public in our campaigns to help increase the likelihood of conserving buildings.

Our period is defined as 1837 to 1914 and our casework area covers the West Midlands Metropolitan Area: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, Wolverhampton; Warwick District including Leamington; Redditch and Bromsgrove; although our membership base takes in parts of Staffordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Herefordshire; which is more akin to the Government's West Midlands region.

Our casework activities combined with the educational programme, provided by our events, are the tools for championing and protecting buildings at risk.

### **REGIONAL EXECUTIVE**

I would like to thank the Executive Committee for all their hard work in 2018. They are Barbara Shackley (Vice Chairman); Joe Holyoak (Vice Chairman); James Fletcher (Honorary Treasurer & Minutes Secretary); Mary Worsfold (Honorary Secretary); Nina Hatch (Programme Secretary); Andy Foster, Jasna Jaksic, Eva Ling, Gill Sockett, and Angus Kaye, who steps down at this AGM.

### **CASEWORK**

Our Conservation Adviser, Tim Bridges, is paid for by the Mary Heath Trust, a bequest made to the Society for the benefit of the Birmingham & West Midlands Group. The Regional Group Executive made a decision a few years ago to recommend to the Trustees of the Trust that we focus funds from the Trust on this important area.

Tim receives notifications from Local Authorities on listed buildings and those in Conservation Areas. Sometimes he discovers these matters himself, in the absence of any notifications from Local Authorities and he is assisted by an able team of voluntary caseworkers. Tim has done very well in expanding our influence and now has regular meetings with many of the changing Conservation Officers across the West Midlands.

Joe Holyoak chairs the Casework Committee and along with Tim they have been assisted by the voluntary caseworkers, who are Rob Allen (Sandwell); Andy Foster (churches); Jeremy Handy (Redditch); Jennie McGregor-Smith (Bromsgrove); Gillian Roberts (Wolverhampton); Barbara Shackley (Solihull); Jasna Jaksic; Eva Ling; David Low; Mary Worsfold; and Birmingham architect, Matthew Vaughan. Additionally, Angus Kaye represents the Society on Warwick DC Conservation Advisory Forum.

I extend my thanks to them for giving their time and knowledge freely for the good of the Society. Jeremy Handy resigned from the committee in November, due to other commitments, so especial thanks go to him, for his contribution over a number of years and for keeping an eye on matters in Redditch during this time.

Looking at the cases during 2018, some significant cases are as follows, which I have distinguished between positive outcomes and negative ones:

**Positive:**

**St Mary, Handsworth** – The scheme that is finally going ahead, after consultation and input from us, is now much better than was first envisaged.

**117 Hagley Road, Oldswinford** - The potential loss of front boundary wall: following objections from us, the application was refused.

**Tudor Grange, Solihull** – House of 1887 by Mansell & Mansell with alterations (for Sir Alfred Bird) of 1901. Proposed change of use to create 64 bed care home and 44 assisted living units with associated alterations and new development. We were consulted and visited to survey, which resulted in mostly positive comments.

**Dale Cross Grange, Barnt Green** - House of 1899-1900 by Crouch and Butler. Proposed alterations to coach house annex. The proposals were inappropriate, so we objected and applied for Statutory Listing, which was successful. Tim Bridges will talk about this in the Casework Presentation after the AGM.

**The Grand Hotel, Birmingham** – The renaissance is moving to completion. Tattu Restaurant has just opened in the old boiler room, accessed from Barwick Street and Principal Hotels will be opening a 180-bedroom hotel in 2019. Joe, Tim and I will be visiting for an update on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

**St Alban, Highgate** - Rethink of west entrance access project following our representations.

**Christopher Wray building, Bartholomew Row** – This restoration is nearing completion.

### **Negatives:**

#### **22 Ladywood Road.....**

**St Luke, Bristol Street & Highgate Centre** - Church of 1903 by Edward Mansell and Highgate Centre, a former children's emigration home, have all now been lost, to be replaced by 778 residential units.

**Nurses Home, Wolverhampton Royal Hospital** - We objected to demolition, but it was nonetheless approved.

**Shadwell Street, Birmingham** – This is a development behind St Chad, with tall buildings. Unfortunately, it is currently under construction.

**St Philip, Dorridge** – This redevelopment is likely to go ahead with replacement by Worship Centre, even though they don't have the funds in place to fit it out.

**Fox & Grapes, Freeman Street, Birmingham** - demolished after fire for HS2

The Society's Top Ten Threatened Buildings List, published in September, saw two buildings from our area featured, that of Langley Maltings, Oldbury & Brandwood End, King's Heath.

## **PROGRAMME**

Our Programme Committee, led by Programme Secretary Nina Hatch, comprises: Mary Collins, Eva Ling, David Low, Celia Potts, Helene Pursey, Gill Sockett and Barbara Shackley. Over the year it has provided a varied, enjoyable and interesting schedule of events, as follows:

- **21st January**  
Annual Lunch at St Paul's Club (founded 1861), with quiz and raffle (Prize was a drawing of the Chamberlain Clock in the Jewellery Quarter by "Made on the Canal")
- **10th February**  
AGM and Casework Presentation, including announcement of the winner of the 2017 Conservation Award, Green Lane Masjid & Community Centre
- **21st April**  
Day School - Religion and Philanthropy in Victorian Birmingham
- **11th June**  
Coach trip to Abberley Hall and Witley Court

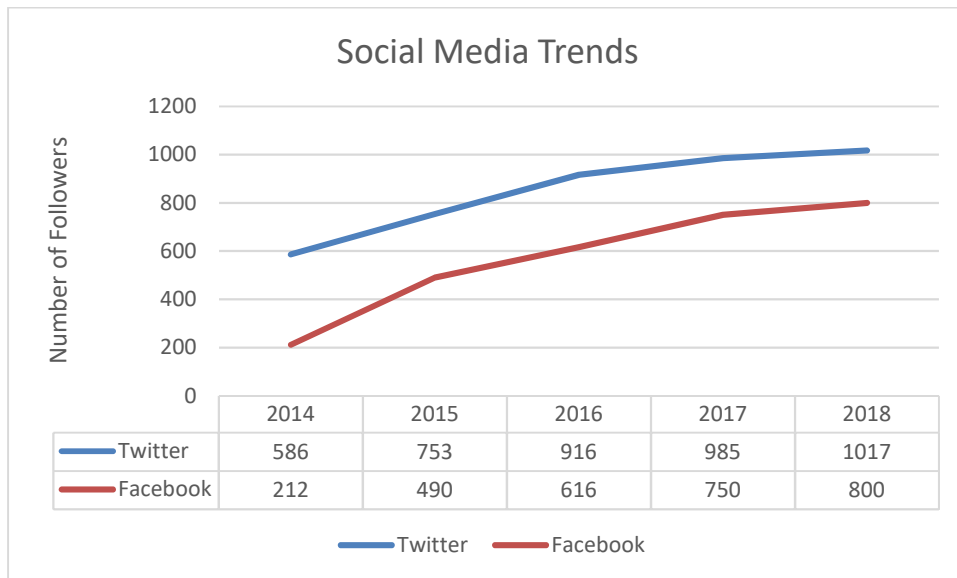
- **15th July**  
Book sale and tea party at Yew Tree House, Clent  
This included a presentation of a certificate and nice big cake to Nina Hatch for her 30 years' service as Programme Secretary.
- **21st-23rd September**  
Weekend to Mid-Wales (Newtown and Welshpool); staying at Gregynog Hall
- **November**  
2 events at BMI, NOT organised by us, but supported:  
17th - Ruskin Day School, with Joe Holyoak and Stephen Wildman speaking  
24th - Pre-Raphaelite Women Day School



## **MEMBERSHIP**

Our membership remains constant and it is important that our members support our events and that we keep them informed of the work we are doing. This is now achieved by regular mailings from Helene Pursey, who updates members with the latest events. This is done, where possible by e-mail, as it saves a large amount of money by not having to print, post and pay for postage. Members are encouraged to supply their e-mail address to Helene to assist in this process.

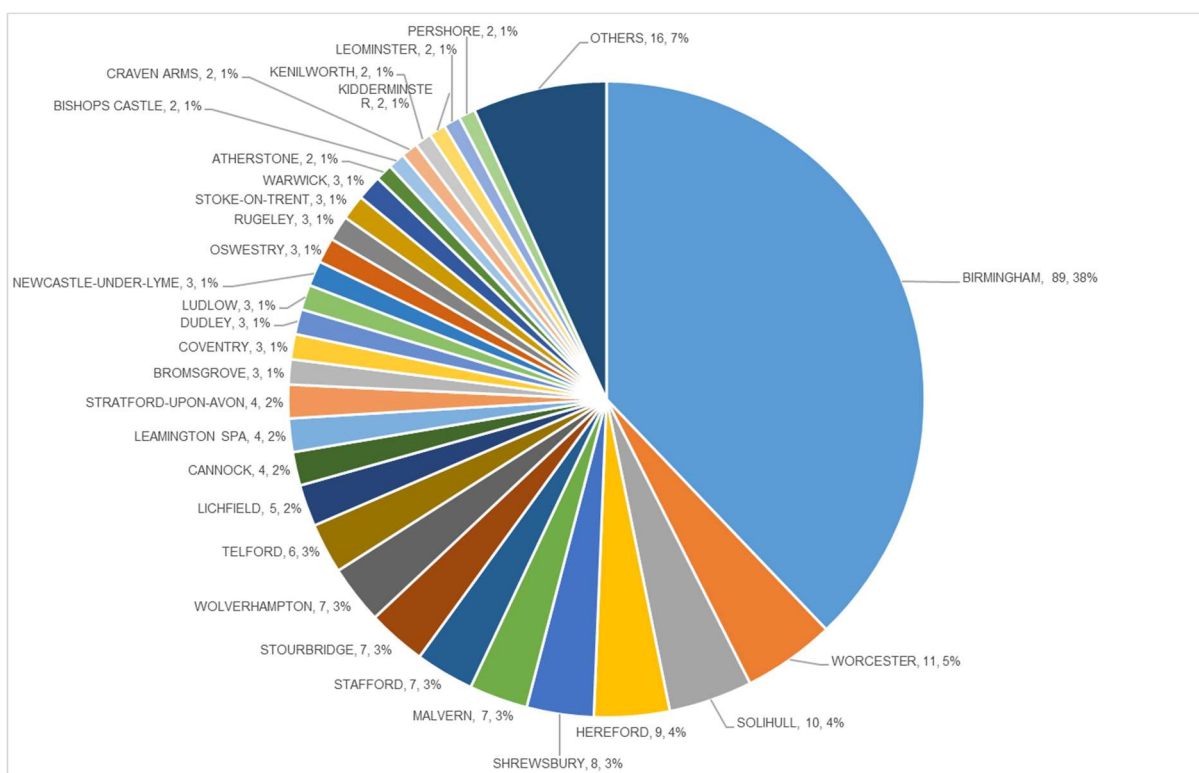
As I have referred to in previous years, fewer people are paying subscriptions to join Societies and that will be a challenge in the years ahead, as paying members diminish. However, this does not indicate a diminution of interest in our cause, but rather they subscribe to feeds in Facebook, Twitter and other social media. In response to this appetite we regularly post updates on Facebook and Twitter and currently we have 1,017 followers on Twitter (985 in 2017, 916 in 2016, 753 in 2015, 586 in 2014) and 800 followers on our Facebook page (750 in 2017, 616 in 2016, 490 in 2015, 212 in 2014), so that is clearly an increasing media through which we can share our activities and encourage people to join in with us. I think I am right in recalling that our Casework Committee member, Matthew Vaughan, came to us through Twitter!



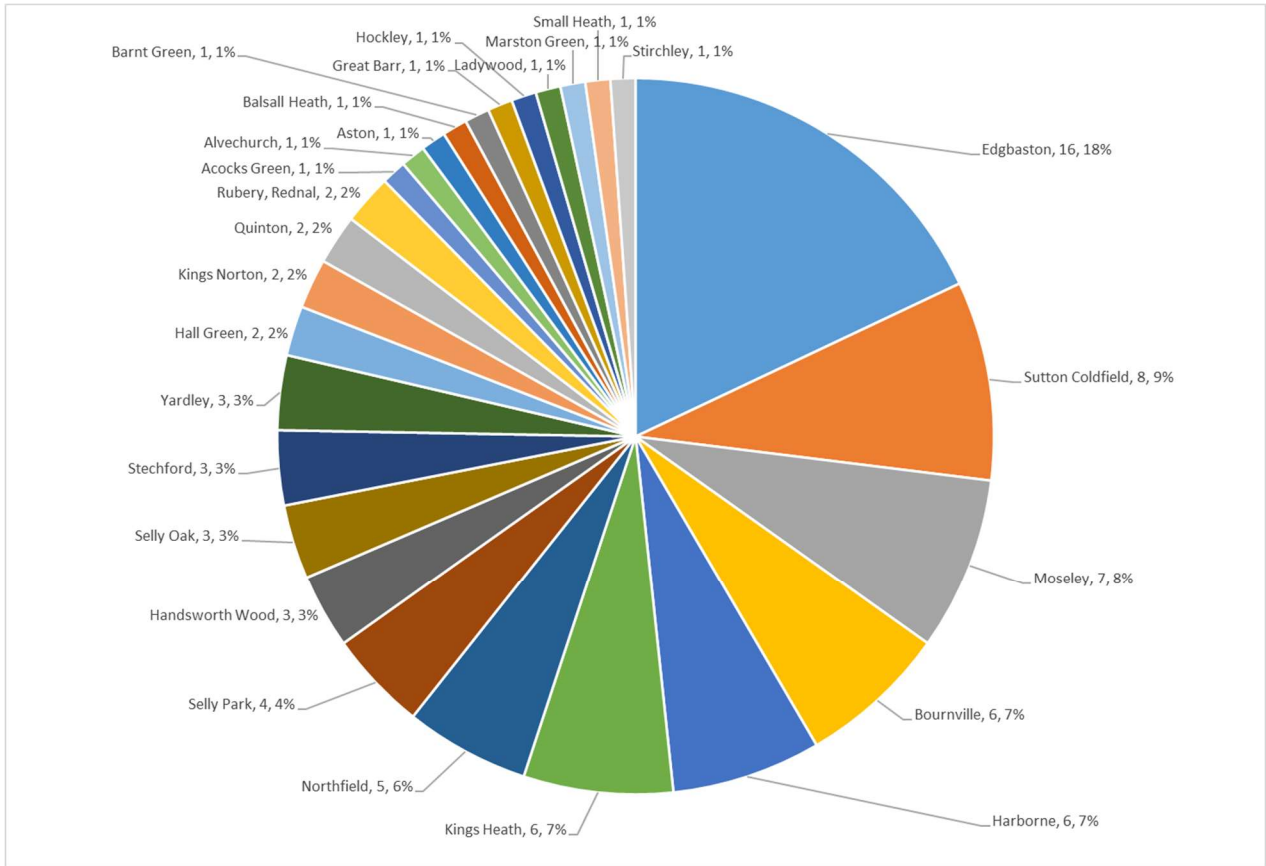
There is a lot of interest and interaction in both these mediums and often you can see posts that have been shared and re-shared to this online media community which goes into the thousands. So, it is very important in maintaining this presence, where there are many users in their twenties and thirties and as such may be the emerging members of the future.

Membership demographics this year, I have split into three pie-charts. A total one for our area; one covering the Birmingham suburbs and one showing the constituent locations of the “Others” in our area:

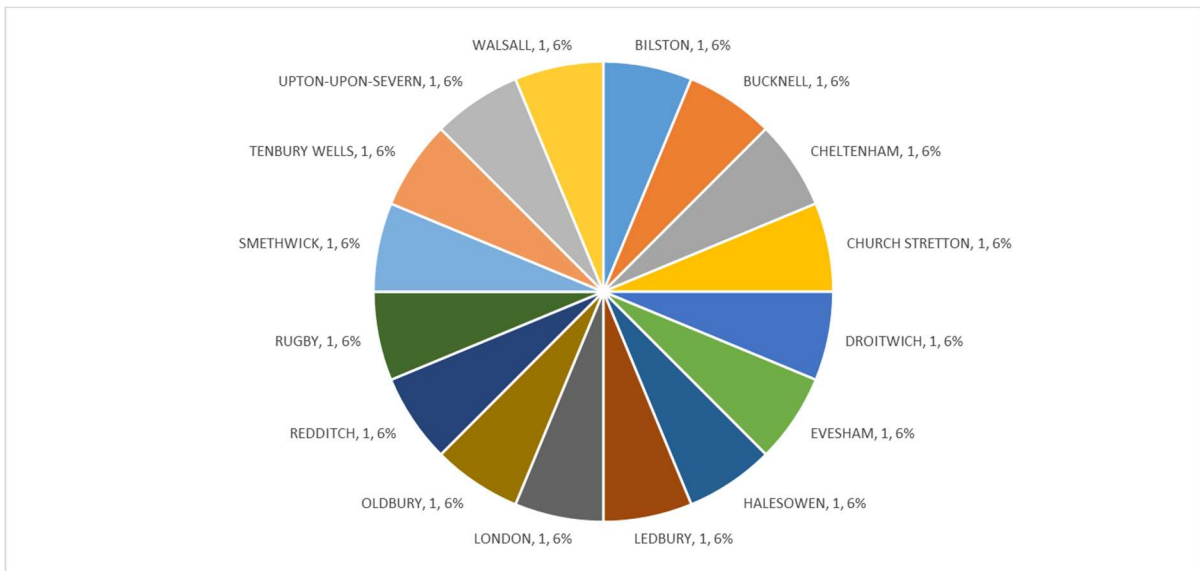
**Fig.1 - West Midlands Area**



**Fig 2 – Birmingham**



**Fig 3 – Single Membership in Other Areas in the West Midlands**





## TREASURY

Our Treasurer, James Fletcher, will discuss the accounts further, and you will see that all of the events organized by the Programme Committee have contributed a sizeable sum to our bank balance, increasingly through the highly successful Day Schools. This is important, as it is the only way we generate income for the Regional Group and would have helped pay for the Conservation Award, had Hortons' Estate Ltd not agreed to fund the 2016, 2017 and 2018 Awards; so attendance at events is critical to the success of the regional group. I am also delighted to report that as the original period of sponsorship has expired, Hortons' Estate has kindly agreed to sponsor the award for a further three years, for 2019, 2020 and 2021.

## CONSERVATION AWARD

The Group's Conservation Award was inaugurated at our 2015 AGM. The winner of the 2015 award was Hortons' Estate Limited for its restoration of the façade of the Grand Hotel. In 2016 the winner was Dudley Council, for its restoration of the Dudley Fountain, and in 2017 the winners were the Trustees of the Green Lane Masjid & Community Centre in Small Heath, Birmingham.



**Presentation of the 2017 Conservation Award at the Green Lane Masjid & Community Centre**

Hortons' Estate Limited is sponsoring the Award for another three years and I am delighted to record my thanks once again for their commitment to the idea of rewarding good quality conservation and for their generosity.

The winner of the 2018 Award will be announced at the 2019 AGM.

## **SUMMARY**

Thanks to all of the usual contributors. The ongoing success of our region is due to our small number of committed volunteers, our supportive members, and also to the knowledge, dedication, diligence and enthusiasm of our paid Conservation Adviser. We always welcome any members taking on work through our Programme, Casework and Executive committees, so if you would like to join in, please mention it to any of those mentioned in this Report.

**Stephen Hartland**  
**Chairman**  
**The Victorian Society**  
**Birmingham & West Midlands**

[chairman@victorian-society-bham.org.uk](mailto:chairman@victorian-society-bham.org.uk)

**9<sup>th</sup> February 2019**