

## The Black Country Society AGM 2021 BCS PUBLISHERS REPORT

On reflection, the one thing the pandemic has revealed to us all is the importance of community. I guess we will all be more aware of our neighbours and others living nearby as the virus has swept the nation with much personal devastation. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century was appearing to make us all a little more insular and the technological revolution continued to encourage us all to buy the latest gadgets without a thought to how it has been affecting the planet. COVID, has like both World Wars stopped us all in our tracks and once again given us time to take a look at ourselves and evaluate what is important in life.

The BCS, of course, was started to help preserve a heritage and lifestyle that in itself had created an enormous technical revolution to improve, the living and eventually, the working conditions of people all over the World.

Like all things of merit, the society achieved rapid support and has continued to grow its membership over the past five decades.

There is no doubt the Black Country played a huge part in the first industrial revolution, with many people from all over the World migrating to the area and demonstrating their skills, inventiveness and entrepreneurial approach to business. This has made for an immense archive of documented information as well as stories, tales, sayings and even myths that have extended the reputation of the Black Country over the years.

Generation after generation has recorded and preserved ways of life that we can only just imagine existed in those hard times and continued through two World Wars. The people of the Black Country are not unique but they are unique to their time and now to their ancestry. This is demonstrated even today in the fact that they created their own dialect, which continues to be used.

As Publisher of the Blackcountryman for the past few years, it has been my pleasure to work with the editor, Kerry Hadley-Pryce to prepare and deliver a high quality, full colour, quarterly magazine which contains stories, articles and features about the Past, Present and Future of this unique area. An area, now designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

I have used my previous publishing experience to improve the look, presentation and delivery of the magazine and although COVID has had an effect on our advertising supporters, the generosity of Society members has guaranteed its future in print and online. I am sure that advertisers will return to our publication because it is unique, honest and true to its purpose in bringing history, heritage and entertainment to the Society members and those who purchase it from various outlets around the Midlands.

The Society needs to source many more of the stories preserved in family archives and make sure our page content will also appeal to a younger readership. Grandparents are today relating parts of their lives to their grandchildren and I am sure for those who are listening, those past times will be fascinating and contribute to their education and understanding of the World. The Society needs to be part of that process in relation to the Black Country.

As Churchill said, 'We live in the presence of history'.

Brian Ridout