

# The Birchfield Bugle

Autumn 2013

newsletter for Birchfield Residents

Issue 10

## On the Move

### Popular Parish Priest

Father Simon Hall has been given a new parish in Nuneaton.

He moved in September after nearly 10 years serving the community of St Teresa's in Birchfield, where there is now a large International congregation. He came as the youngest parish priest in the diocese and leaves unexpectedly as the Archbishop had not long made him chaplain to the Migrant Communities.



Read full story on page 3



What are these 2 doing in the Brag Allotment Project shed? See page 9



**Our elderly folk are not so quick to move out of danger from cyclists on the footpath.**

Bugle's publishers, Aston Vision Association, have received funding to run a **BEWARE CYCLISTS** campaign to address the problem of the dangers of Cycling on Pavements in our area. This is especially dangerous to older people and mothers with small children. Many of our local residents think nothing of using the pavements to ride cycles with others

## BEWARE CYCLISTS



This young Italian asks "why don't you have proper lines on path for us like we do?"

## ON YOUR FOOTPATH

Birchfield Neighbourhood Forum  
<http://www.facebook.com/birchfieldneighbourhoodforum>

on the crossbar or with shopping hanging from both handlebars. it is out of place here on our narrow pavements that lead to the Shopping Centre. The condition of the bikes, as far as brakes are concerned, is also worrying, often they do not have any. At night you will never see lights being used. Rarely will they wear a cycling helmet or clothing with reflective surfaces.

So we plan a campaign in the Birchfield area to make both pedestrians and cyclists aware of the dangers to each other. We have put up notices on local lamp posts, but need to engage local school children as well in this exercise. Local schools were invited to hold workshops, but only **Westminster Primary** has responded. They were shown a video of examples filmed on our footpaths and roads of the Good and Bad cyclists, to show the dangers of careless cycling. Some local schools, like **St Clares**, hold Cycle Proficiency Workshops to give our youngsters safer riding skills.

The City Council Transportation Department, who look after our roads and pavements, have promised their support as well as the local Community Police.

Inspector Karen Geddes, based at Walsall Road police station has said in a Neighbourhood Police meeting that **"Cycling on pavements is still illegal and that cyclists who do will be prosecuted if caught by my officers"**.

We know that many cyclists find the local roads difficult to use safely and therefore come onto the pavements and risk hitting pedestrians. Some have been filmed riding at speed from the road onto the pavement at the Crown and Cushion (Wellington Road) weaving in and out of shoppers and mothers with young children. These cyclists can be of any age, usually teenagers and young men.

It is our intention to make our footpaths safer for pedestrians. Certain London Boroughs have clearly marked cycle and pedestrian paths, we hope that Birchfield might become the first inner city area to have these separations on our pavements that lead to the main shopping areas. So if you are willing to help with this campaign we would be glad to hear from you; at one local school a cycling parent has come forward to say he would be glad to help.

**We need to get to grips with this city wide problem before someone gets seriously hurt.**

more pictures on pages 6 & 7



# “The best job in the World!” Who has it?

When we first interviewed **Waseem Zaffar** J.P., MBE in 2011, just after he had been elected as full time Labour Councillor for Lozells and East Handsworth, he stated proudly that indeed it is he who has this privileged job, as we were welcomed warmly at his local office. It is obvious that this young man (31) loves his work and is enthusiastic and totally committed to it.

## Parents

They came to Birmingham from Pakistan in the early 1970s. Waseem was born in Leonard Road, where he still lives. He was educated at Heathfield Road Primary and at Holte and Joseph Chamberlain Secondary schools. He then went on to study Logistics at Aston University. Prior to his election his career has been devoted to community work in particular to youth related projects. He became politically involved at the incredibly young age of 8, joined the Labour Party aged 15 and in 2001 was very active in Khalid Mahmood MP's successful Campaign; he sees the MP as a valued mentor. He considers it an honour to have



been elected to Birmingham City Council in May 2011 to serve this area.

He is passionate about cricket and still manages to find time to play. He cites Imran Khan as a great role model. As a teenager he offered Jesse Gerald the Manager of Holte Leisure Centre; now Constituency Community Partnership Manager, his services as coach for their cricket team! He is, also an ardent fan of our local football club Aston Villa and goes regularly.

He has a great desire to motivate and enable the young people in the area to get involved in local politics in order to have their say. He cites local community 'super stars' Ahmed Bostan and Matthew Tye as young people making a big difference. He is grateful that he had and is still having, a good political education and he is keen to pass this on to other young people. As a young Councillor, he considers that he has a serious role in communicating with the youth effectively, through the social media. He invites us all to follow him on Twitter

**@WaseemZAFFAR**

During our interview we asked him about local issues and concerns. These include loss of a Neighbourhood Manager, (Yvonne Wager), lack of Environmental Wardens, rubbish littering our streets, the boarded-up waste land from the demolished flats, library facilities and care of the elderly. He considers Yvonne Wager's leaving as a great loss and hopes that there will be another role for her in the community at a later date. He acknowledges that in the recent Council cuts the hardest hit have been the elderly and the disabled. He promises to represent this group as effectively as he does the youth of the area and he will visit them in their homes, if required, to offer support and advice. He acknowledges the vital role that the local library played in his own young life and is determined that Soho Road library will remain open and maintain its present facilities.

We also asked him about his future political plans. He showed concern and responded positively and realistically to these questions both in general and specific terms. Councillor Zaffar is concerned that there is not enough re-cycling in the area and a lack of appreciation of the value of trees; there are frequent requests from residents to cut them down.

He spoke earnestly about involving local residents in how this money is spent in the future and in how services are to be run. He drew our attention to the first Peoples' conference (July 2010) where all the community groups met including Villa Business Centre, Handsworth Recreation Group and Birmingham Adult Community Education group. He stressed the importance of building a capacity of local people of all ages, from diverse ethnic groups and religions coming together with a common agenda, sharing skills and good practice. He proposed to facilitate this through Neighbourhood Forums and invited every resident to attend and have a say. He also looked forward to a change of leadership in Birmingham City Council in May 2012!

Indeed this proved to be a turning point for his political ambitions as the new leader of the Council appointed him as Chair of Birmingham City Council's Scrutiny Committee for Social Cohesion & Community Safety. This has enabled him to write to the likes of Bob Jones, (West Midlands Police Crime Commissioner) Cllr Sir Albert Bore, (Leader, Birmingham City Council) and Chris Sims (Chief Constable, West Midlands Police). Earlier this year as 'Dear Bob, Albert and Chris,' from his new city centre office in the Council House You will now see him appearing regularly on TV being interviewed on such topics as Terrorism, 'Time for some clear thinking on

Mental Health and Criminal Justice System", in his Birmingham Post column, and more recently a TB awareness campaign in our own ward.



So his new role has taken him to the far reaches of our city as his committee prepares reports for the Cabinet members on such areas as Re-Offending, Homelessness, and most recently, Stop and Search. Earlier this year he presented the findings of 'Birmingham: Where the World Meets' to a full City Council meeting. "The report highlighted the strength of our great city in attracting people from all over the world to come and live here because of our friendly warm nature but most importantly because we allow all cultures and faiths to feel welcome and integrated whilst respecting their beliefs, faiths, morals and cultures."

He has also written to Dame Christine Braddock CBE, Principal of Birmingham Metropolitan College raising his concerns and the concerns of his constituents regarding the college's performance and the policy that has now been adopted by the College. Saidul Haque Saeed, Chairman, Lozells Neighbourhood Forum & Organiser, Citizens UK Birmingham describes Waseem in these terms;

*'His dedication to involvement and empowerment of local people is always a key starting point of any contribution from him. Nevertheless, he is a 'man of action' and does not shy away from leading on tasks himself. A very good motivator and strategic thinker, Waseem is not your ordinary active citizen, but an accomplished young Community Leader having led on various city wide campaigns and drivers for change.'*

He is currently leading an Enquiry into Mental Health Working In Partnership with Criminal Justice Agencies. We were impressed with this committed young man who promises to continue to work hard in this 'best job in the world' to serve us in this community and provide strategic leadership during these tough times. He offers us a clear invitation to get involved and use our people power to make a difference

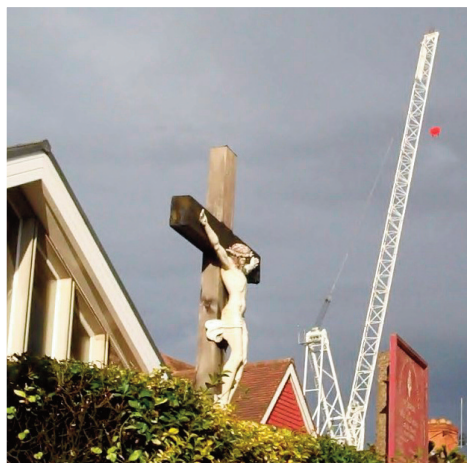
**Let us do it!**

**by Nora Warnaby**



## Dominating

the skyline near to One Stop is Bullocks construction crane that is helping to build a £6



million supported housing scheme for older people. A ceremony launched the start of work on St Teresa's

Court, being built on a site next to St Teresa's Roman Catholic Church in Birchfield, where the church's former social centre had fallen into disrepair. His Grace, Bernard Longley, the RC Archbishop of Birmingham, and John Morris, Chief Executive of Trident Social Investment Group, dug officially, the first spade of soil at the ceremony back in the Spring.

It is the product of a unique partnership between Midlands-based Trident Group, which provides housing, care and support services to vulnerable people across the region, and Cornerstone Regeneration, a Charity which spearheads regeneration and development projects on behalf of the Catholic Church.

St Teresa's Court will offer quality homes to people aged over 55, with a range of communal facilities and support services on site. There will be 42 self-contained one and two-bedroom flats, with four specially designed so they are accessible to people with disabilities.

Anthony McCool, Charity Lead at Trident Reach the People Charity, said: "Trident Group and the Church will work in partnership to deliver a unique service to cater for the practical, emotional and spiritual needs of residents.

"St Teresa's Court will offer quality accommodation, together with flexible support, for older people.

"It will enable residents to maintain their independence and be part of the local community, while having the peace of mind that support is



**Father Simon Hall, looks down, when he was the Parish Priest, on this ceremony which took place to open the site in the Spring. Perhaps he has in mind to try out the big digger**



## Re-Building Birchfield, St Teresa's Court Sheltered Housing Scheme



there when they need it.

"There will also be a range of communal facilities to promote a real sense of community among residents at the scheme, reducing the sense of isolation many people feel as they grow older."

Monsignor Daniel McHugh, Executive Director of **Cornerstone Regeneration**, said: "This is an important day for all of us. "After years of planning, we are about to embark on what promises to be a fruitful and rewarding relationship which will create a quality scheme offering our older people the lifestyle they want in a safe and secure environment."

He added: "When completed, this development will also make a significant impact on the local area, promoting a sense of community safety and complementing Birmingham City Council's regeneration plans for Perry Barr."

**Cornerstone Regeneration** works to place the Catholic Church at the service of the wider community through ethical investment in sustainable and socially worthwhile projects.

The **Trident Group**, through its **Trident Reach** arm, has an office based locally at Grosvenor Studios, providing life skills to disadvantaged young people plus housing advice and tenancy support to those needing accommodation. The overall aims of Trident are to support these groups of people to live independently and make a positive contribution to their communities by gaining the most possible control over their lives, enabling them to participate actively and equally within their community. Trident has a 'People First' ethos and assists also in providing housing, care and support services to vulnerable people across the Midlands, including homeless people, the elderly, people with learning disabilities or mental health issues and women fleeing domestic violence. We hope to feature their activity in a future Bugle.



**Aiden Roberts, Site Supervisor, with an apprentice worker**

We asked the Construction company, Bullocks, who worked on the London Olympic site, if they employ local workers and would be offering apprenticeships. It seems that they will employ local people in the later fitting-out stages of the project, which is due to finish, in November 2014, according to Project manager, John Lines.



**We asked  
Andrew Simons,  
who is OutReach  
Worker for this  
Project, to explain  
what is happening....**

# BIRCHFIELD BIG LOCAL

**Members of the Community come together at  
the First Conference at St Clare's school**



Birchfield is one of three neighbourhoods in Birmingham to be chosen for the Big Local initiative. Together with Firs and Bromford estate in East Birmingham and Welsh House Farm in Quinton, Birchfield is to receive £1 million over the next ten years to enable local residents to make the neighbourhood an even better place in which to live. Birchfield was included in the second wave of 50 Big Local areas announced in February 2012 by the Local Trust who are managing the programme, and is now coming to the end of the "Getting started" phase.

All Big Local areas are following a similar pathway, but as each neighbourhood is unique this pathway is not set in stone and is flexible depending on local circumstances. During the "Getting started" phase four important steps have been taken:

**Spreading the word about Big Local and  
getting people involved  
Exploring people's priorities for the area  
and visions for the future  
Setting up a Local Partnership  
Creating a Big Local Plan**

Spreading the word and getting people involved is an ongoing process that will continue throughout Big Local. Priorities have been identified through in-depth interviews with people who live and work in the area; pop up events at locations around the neighbourhood; conversations with groups including young people, the elderly and parents; an online survey; and through two community conferences, the first held in April at St Clare's Catholic Primary School, and the second in September at Grosvenor Road Studios. This information has been used together with neighbourhood statistics to create a profile of the Birchfield Big Local area.

One of the features of Big Local that marks it out from many previous regeneration programmes is the requirement that it is resident led. Decision-making in each Big Local area is the responsibility of a partnership that has to have a minimum of 50% resident representation. In the case of Birchfield this is seventy per cent. After a number of initial meetings the Birchfield Big Local Partnership was established in July this year and elections held for chair and vice chair. Michael Tye was elected chair and Dorrette Hanson as vice-chair; the partnership is now looking to appoint a

secretary and treasurer. The partnership remains open to new members and membership is likely to change over time as the programme evolves.

To access the £1million each Big Local area also has to create a plan. For Birchfield this began life at the April community conference where the participants looked at the priorities for the area and started to formulate ideas for action around four key themes:

**Well Run, Active and Inclusive Birchfield  
Well Built and Environmentally Sensitive  
Birchfield  
Well-Served Birchfield  
Thriving Birchfield**

Four theme or working groups were formed



**A Big Local Partnership Board  
member makes a point with  
Councillor Zaffar**

to take these ideas further and create action plans which together form the core of the Birchfield Big Local Plan. To deliver the plan, Birchfield Big Local will also need some basic infrastructure to be in place, for example, an office base, the means to communicate and engage with people, and the capacity to help support and nurture the skills, aspirations and talents of local people. This too is part of the plan. A draft of the action plan was discussed at a second community conference in September at the Grosvenor Road Studios and at the same event a shared long-term vision was created.

**"We have a dream that Birchfield**



**Here participants in one of  
the groups at the second  
conference share their ideas**

**will become ...**

**A beacon neighbourhood where  
the diverse community feels em-  
powered, engaged and enabled to  
address issues such as health,  
inequality, unemployment and en-  
vironment, so creating a happy,  
safe, clean, prosperous and re-  
generated area in which to live  
and work.**

**A place where every citizen has a  
collective sense of ownership,  
belonging, pride, respect, creativ-  
ity and an equal voice. A place  
where individual talent and skills  
are nurtured and people want to  
come and stay.**

**And so providing a lasting legacy  
to all people by giving them a  
new direction that helps break the  
cycle of poverty through creating  
a well-served and connected  
community."**

The plan is about to be submitted to the Local Trust for their approval. Once accepted, the next step will be implementing it with the support and involvement of local people. To help with this, Birchfield Big Local needs a "local trusted organisation" to assist the partnership in administering the funds. The search for a suitable "local trusted organisation" and for an office base has already begun.

Big Local isn't just about the money. The key is having a shared vision and people working together to make the most of the existing community assets; above all the skills, talents and aspirations of the people who live and work in Birchfield, and also the physical assets that exist within the area.



# BLACK VOICES CELEBRATE

**25 years of performing their unique brand of a cappella including traditional African, Caribbean and English folk songs, jazz, Gospel, pop and reggae, in a truly harmonic blend that celebrates their rich African, Caribbean and British heritage yet transcends gender, race, age or religious persuasion.**



**Dorrette Hanson spends time with founder member Carol Pemberton of Birchfield based a cappella quintet BLACK VOICES and asks.....**

## ***How was your tour in Vietnam?***

Really good thanks. Black Voices made two visits, first in October 2012 as part of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations. We performed both in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, at the Opera houses and workshops with hundreds of school children.

The second visit was in February 2013, to celebrate 40 years of diplomatic relations with the UK there. We have also performed extensively across the east in China, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

We had a feeling that audiences in Vietnam might be polite but not have heard of or be interested in Black Voices' music, but we quickly realised as we sang, people were visibly moved by the songs and this was an indication that in spite of the language barrier, BV's music was able to transcend this and deliver a pleasurable and memorable music experience to its new Vietnamese audience. We presented a mixed repertoire of folk, reggae, jazz, pop as well as traditional strands. There was silence throughout the performance, an atmosphere not too dissimilar to a classical concert, but at the end, they gave BV a hearty 10-minute rapturous standing ovation.

We later learned that such visible appreciation is rare. It was a fantastic feeling to be so well received in a new country and we were blown away with all the great comments from audience members. All the performances in the tours were sold out so BV proved to be a good success as a female a cappella group from the UK and also for The British Council.

The successful performances were followed by extensive coverage on local and national TV channels across Vietnam and the group spent a lot of time being interviewed, even between workshops. Looking back, it was an extremely hectic schedule, especially on the first visit. The second visit they (The British Council) were more merciful, more sympathetic and organized a more relaxed schedule. Vietnam is a fantastic place to

visit.

The south is a frequent destination of choice because of the musical Miss Saigon. It was a more intimate experience in Hanoi for BV, there is a lot more to learn about in the slower paced historic North. In Hanoi we also met more local people, who cooked their local dishes for BV and the group got more of a feel of Vietnamese culture. Five Black Women from Birmingham UK, people never know what to think when they see us, nor what to expect when we open our mouths - it's a surprise to hear the range and diversity of songs we produce and this is one of the greatest rewards working in a group such as BV and seeing the delight on people's faces as we sing.

## ***Where next?***

Wherever the roads open - Next year we hope to do an extensive tour in Australia as well as represent Birmingham/the UK in Berma, Jordan and Malaysia with the British Council. We hope to keep going, developing ourselves as people, as women, as singers and to be there for young people who don't have a lot of positive things in their lives to support and encourage them.

***Do you think there will be opportunity to develop an ongoing event for young people who want to sing in Birchfield, with Black Voices?***

We have been running the World Music Youth Choir from our centre during term time every Saturday for over 2 years. It offers young people plenty of opportunity to develop their voice, singing as part of the choir, recording, working with local singer songwriters and also working with a range of professional world musicians. CMAT, now known as Grosvenor Road Studios has a range of facilities offering a range of services, including instrumental tuition serving the Birchfield area. A new partnership with Reach The Charity, Jazba Ltd and Black Voices (UK) has been formed to run the centre and we will continue to offer a range of music and media opportunities to the communities in Birchfield,

Handsworth, Aston and Lozells.

The World Music Youth Choir (WMYC) meets on Saturday mornings from 10-11.30am. The opportunity is free and open to all young people aged 8 – 14 years. There are great opportunities for WMYC to perform at venues across Birmingham and with a range of professional musicians. New members are welcome.

The partnership at Grosvenor Road Studios works with local organizations/agencies including the Big Local in directing people to the centre, with the aim of involving the community in a variety of activities.

It's really surprising that we still come across people who are not aware of what's happening on their own door-step but hopefully things like this article will help in this regard.

## ***What would be your biggest words of encouragement?***

Be bold if you have a dream or a desire to do something in life. Be confident and go for it. People who have great ideas talent often hide. Sometimes they think it isn't very much and won't be appreciated. Often what's needed is a little bit of support and encouragement. Surely we can at least give them a platform/opening to showcase their talents and skills, and a start maybe having an open evening/weekend at the centre where people can come and share. Hopefully where appropriate, we can help them to develop. We aren't going to get it right for everyone, but we can work to get it right for a few and that could be really powerful for Birchfield.

## ***Have you been back to the schools you attended and performed?***

I attended Swanshurst Girls School and have delivered workshops there, giving a little back and giving support and encouragement to students there. North side we work with lots of schools in partnership with Handsworth Association of Schools who are well experienced and a priceless resource for local schools.

## ***How would you say the CMAT centre has helped the music to progress?***

There's still a lot of work to be done and we have lots of ideas for how we can work more closely with all the communities around the centre to develop music and media ideas/projects. The centre should be a focal point, a hub where people can have access to/gather information about what is going on in Birchfield and the surrounding area and contribute positively to new developments.

## ***What's happening for your Jubilee?***

October 2013 will be exactly 25 years in our BV journey and we are planning a reunion for all those who have contributed to where we are now and holding a big party. We are looking at ways to celebrate it and open it up to share it with the public. There is so much film, video footage, and lots of interesting highlights of our work over the years. It will be an emotional look back for both me, and all the women involved, but it will be an incredible milestone celebration. Once the plans and date is finalized, it will be on BV's website, so watch this space!

<http://blackvoices.co.uk>

***Congratulations to you on the 25 years. It's been enjoyable interviewing you. It's been good to reflect and talk about it in a most positive way. It's a message for the youth to take on board when they start something you never know where it will lead to but good things can and do happen!***



# GOOD,Careful,Kind Cyclists

Saad Nasir Ali and Jubair Ahmed (year 5) from Westminster Primary School reporting on a special visitor from the Birchfield Neighbourhood Forum, that came in to talk about ‘safety awareness for cyclists’. He showed us a video of how people drove and cycled on the road. He taught us a lot about safety when cars and cyclists are not concentrating when on the move.

We then went on a small trip around the Perry Barr area and we parked next to the ‘The Crown and Cushion’. We explored how different people driving and cycling could be involved in a very serious accident. We also looked at the gear that cyclists wear and that they could wear in the future.

Furthermore, The Forum had printed out big, yellow and alerting posters around Birchfield. On our trip, we spotted many signs that cycles should be beware of. At the end of our excellent journey, we drove back to school, walked off the official Westminster Primary’s mini buses and returned to our seats in the class room, and listened to Jenny Coombs a Sustainable Promotions Officer from the Smarter Choices Team of - Birmingham City Council, who will come back and help us ride our bikes safely.

. For our co-operation, she handed us a thank-you gift for our participation in the safety awareness project.

We hope that cyclists will take notice of the posters in our area, in order to make our footpaths a safer place to walk Why not get trained-up like we will.

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/bikeability/>



Local resident Mr Saffat gets his bike checked over by Dan from Bikeability Project at One Stop Shopping Centre



A proper cyclist uses the road, wears bright clothes, has lights at night and carries luggage safely.



This mother & toddler are safe on the footpath, the cyclist is using the road.



This can't be a motorbike taking the Crown & Cushion bend at speed ?



Pictured right is the Obaheed Family sensibly **WALKING THEIR WHEELS** up the narrow footpath outside St Teresa’s Church on Wellington Road. We even have a photo of a not very sensible group going down the footpath with a passenger on the front handlebars.



Above these very considerate cyclists **WALK THEIR WHEELS** past the narrow bus shelter opposite St Teresa’s Church on Wellington Road, where it would be dangerous to cycle past waiting passengers or others trying to pass. Far right shows another kind cyclist walking her wheels into the Shopping Centre.



# BAD & DANGEROUS Cyclists



The really DANGEROUS corner at The Crown & Cushion



Cycling using a phone can be very dangerous

Our photo evidence shows clear examples where cyclists should have been given £30 fixed penalty tickets for dangerous cycling. We often see riding on the wrong side of the road or on the pavement, such habits are not appreciated on our narrow footpaths.

We suggest clear lane markings as in London or parts of our City Centre that would help to keep walkers clear of cyclists, especially since the City has been awarded £17million to improve Cycling. Councillors please take note.



Keep the Elderly and our Mums with Children safe from anti-social cyclists



Above we have evidence of regular anti-social cyclists speeding down the hill and even speeding up the hill towards the bus-stop without dismounting. We even saw two cyclist head towards each other at the crowded bus stop, fortunately they managed to stop in time. Far right shows 3 cyclists together who ignored volunteer workers clearing the side-walk.



# The Opening of The Back Yard

report by  
Cherrelle Dowdie

The Back Yard is a newly established artistic space constructed in the back garden of Nu Century Arts Offices at Henderson House on Hamstead Road in Handsworth. The unveiling of the new venue took place on the 7th September 2013 and demonstrated the versatility of this exciting space open to artists, local businesses and residents from the local community and further afield.

As with other successful Nu Century Arts ventures such as the Livebox event and the Flyover show, the Back Yard is a space for showcasing newly emerging talent as well as internationally acclaimed artists. The venture is supported by Black Mental Health Organisation COPE who are keen to highlight the outdoor area as ideal not only for artistic ventures but which could be used at other times as a therapeutic local retreat.

Local MP for Perry Barr, Khalid Mahmood opened the launch and congratulated the organisers on a successful venue which would serve as a form of 'support for those people that need it' as well as a place 'to bring people closer together'.

Shared enriching experiences through music, theatre and education have long been core strands of the company which has been going strong since the year 2000. Attendees at the launch were treated to all of these strands through some dynamic performances and lively discussions.

Local musicians such as artist Louise from So Sick Entertainment UK with a rendition of Etta James' 'At last' and a duo with two boys took advantage of the open mic slot available on the day. Birmingham local Ruvimbo who pens her own lyrics and who emerged as part of the Livebox is an artist who returned to

the launch to perform alongside the David Grey Quartet. The quartet also performed a set featuring music composed by Birmingham Conservatoire graduate David Grey. During his highly anticipated set, multi-award winning artist Soweto Kinch treated the audience to music from his latest album 'The Legend of Mike Smith.' which has been turned into a stage play and is playing at the Birmingham REP until the 28th September 2013. Jonzi D, Artistic Director of Breakin' Convention and Jonzi D Project is the Director and choreographer of the show and both artists engaged the audience in a lively interactive freestyle performance.

Esteemed Actress Doreen Blackstock, featured as Miss Mercle, emerging in role from the seating area and engaged the audience with a humorous yet heartfelt solo performance. Also taking on a different persona was Man Booker Prize nominee Yvette Edwards in the voice of her character Jinx with a reading from her debut novel 'A cupboard full of coats'. Nu Century Arts Youth group Aesop's Kids courageously performed to a full audience and were later asked by Anna Edwards a retired health practitioner to plant seedlings of the moringa 'tree of life'. Her mini-presentation of the plant was followed by a lively question and answer session with the audience who were intrigued to learn more about this versatile tree, native to parts of Africa and Asia. Continuing along the education strand, local photographer Anthony McFarlane's work was exhibited on the day as well as a display of artistic work from the local Summerfield and 610 youth Group.

For the most part the launch was blessed with sunshine and during the brief but heavy showers, attendees took shelter in the ground floor of the building. After some high

spirited acapella singing, the skies cleared and the busy team of volunteers had got the venue ready once again for the audience and performers to continue to enjoy their day.

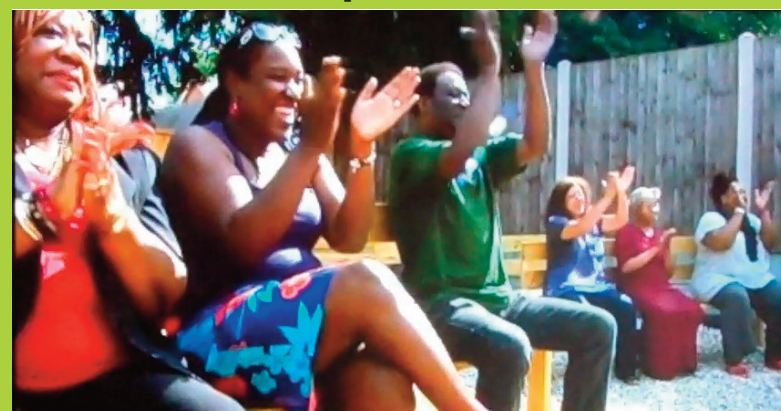
As with other events such as Nu Century Arts Supper Club in collaboration with Perry Barr Local Arts Forum, the event allowed for casual networking with attendees working in the arts, media and local businesses as well as students and retired locals. Among the crowd, Ben, a representative from Changemakers, an organisation which supported the Back yard project with funding and a series of skills workshops for the young people involved, commented on how impressed he was with the high quality result. Some of these young people included local footballer Mensah Kinch and aspiring Costume Designer Rose Magia who were heavily involved in managing the project. A local catering business attracted many to their food stall featuring items such as barbecued corn on the cob, curried mutton, chicken, and rice and peas on the menu.

If passers-by had not been affronted by the sounds and smells ascending from the event, there was also a very bold visual sign above the side entrance to the garden space. The sign remains as an invitation along with the Back Yard idea 'Ask for the Key' where community members are invited to take part in scheduled activities ranging from performances to varied workshops as well as initiating new projects and taking the lead in delivering sessions.

Back yard promotional t-shirts displayed a message which sums up how the community can continue to support its continued success, 'Help us turn the back yard into an orchard. Give what you can. Time, money, good vibes'



**BBC's Midlands Today Arts reporter Satnam Rana (left) came to interview the events organiser, Don Kinch (below centre) who directs Nu Century Arts, together with other artists as they rehearsed the day before the launch in the Back Yard of Henderson House, before an appreciative audience of supporters and helpers. View news clip at**



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-23986355>

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# Brag's Livingstone Road Allotment Project

On a sunny Saturday afternoon in September, **Birchfield Residents Action Group** ran another successful community event at **Livingstone Road Allotments**.



On the day there were vegetable competitions with prizes for heaviest pumpkin, longest marrow, straightest runner bean, funniest vegetable and most unusual vegetable. There were photography displays, a special food tasting menu, a vegetable auction, crafts for children and a poster art display by pupils from **Holy Trinity Primary School**. We were also doing tours of our community allotment plot where we host weekly gardening sessions throughout the year.

A surprise appearance by musician **Milton Godfrey**, playing traditional Creole songs and a few Bob Marley numbers people joined in



with, took place thanks to **Grosvenor Road Studios**. And when the fire engine turned up from **Rookery Road Community Fire Station**, we got some free advice on fire safety!

We also launched our new **cultural food project** that involves connecting people through cooking and eating local produce. On the day we provided a tasting menu featuring



a range of allotment grown dishes such as

Courgette and Pea Soup, Potato Patties, Yellow Plum Chutney, Green Tomato chutney,



Blackcurrant Cordial and a few other home cooked treats!

As part of the food project, called '**Allotment Cooking**', we're asking local people for their recipes to help create a Community Cook Book. Find out more by contacting us and come along to our lunch club or one of our special food events, try something new and



share your cooking tips!

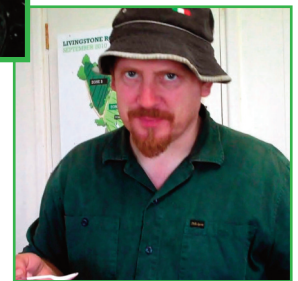
Thanks to **Near Neighbours** – a national scheme that fosters social interaction to help people transform their neighbourhoods – and also to **Birmingham City Council's Community Chest** scheme – for their financial support.

Many thanks to all the plot holders who contributed and to everyone who helped make the day such good fun

To find out more about the **Allotment Cooking** project or our work in general please speak to Rob (BRAG Community Allotment Project Worker) on 07528

575344 or email;  
[bragallotment@gmail.com](mailto:bragallotment@gmail.com)

**Rob and his helpers boil up Blackcurrants to make Cordial to fight those winter chills**



"Job well done"





Keeping you up to date



# The Birchfield Gateway Development Proposals

The plans for the 111 mixed units Housing Development on the Birchfield Estate were shown at our Birchfield Neighbourhood Forum's AGM earlier this year, where we were told that the Developers would have started on site in September. They will then build the three floored rented properties on either side of Livingstone Road junction with Birchfield Road. These Gateway Apartments and other rented terraced housing will be available through the Council's Choice Based Letting site. But the Sale properties will not be happening until much later, and the developer will be able to offer assistance through the use of equity products, however, 5% deposit will be needed.



New occupiers will have to sign a Good Neighbour Agreement that expects respect for neighbours, property and the estate as a whole. We are wondering how these brand new properties will look alongside the existing terraced properties.

***(These are shown in the off-white colour on the picture left above and bottom row)***

We asked about Play Provision, but were told that there is none for children as "it would have to be sited well away from roadways, especially the fast 6-lane Birchfield Road". Again as the Council's own Municipal Housing Trust is building this



estate they do not have to allocate any special funding for such a provision as would a private developer or Housing Association. The council has called for a consultancy to produce a 145 page plan on reducing our reliance



on cars and using more public transport, which should mean more space around houses for play and less for cars. They are even proposing marked cycle routes, which our BEWARE CYCLISTS campaign is supporting

***In the Planner's picture on the left, and below you can just work out how much greenery has been allocated to our Brighter Birchfield Patch***





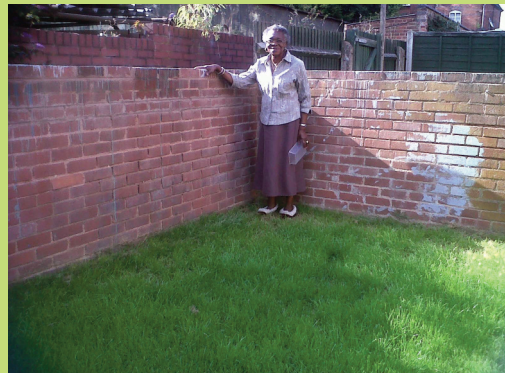
# Improving our Environment



Neighbourhood Forum volunteers plant up bulbs for our enjoyment last Spring as one of their Environmental projects



Birchfield Residents Action group have planted up and maintained this area beside the recycling bins at Leslie Road.



This elderly lady was well pleased when she knew HHH was coming to help her clear the overgrown garden, remove a shed, and lay a lawn.



HHH have provided skips from their funding for certain streets where the residents bring out a whole range of unwanted items, such as this motorcyclists helmet, which soon filled 3 skips



Handsworth Helping Hands encourages local residents to keep their frontages tidy so that their children learn good habits for the future. Below far right Simon Baddeley takes a moment for a well deserved cuppa.



Hard at work, all the year around, in our Birchfield Community are Volunteers from the **Neighbourhood Forum** and **HANDSWORTH HELPING HANDS**. They attempt to improve our environment with their efforts and are well appreciated by those individual folk they help. Gardens are often cleared for the Elderly and Housebound, especially where Housing Associations or other landlords fail to help. The Street Skip days organised by HHH are very popular and help to reduce the burden on our overstretched Council resources, now that Bulk collections are being cut back.







*Edell Wilmot with helper Christine Innis prepare the display at the Flower festival in St Chads Cathedral earlier this year.*



## BIRCHFIELD'S HIDDEN GEMS

Tucked away behind Birchfield School is the Roman Catholic West Indian Chaplaincy. Set up in 1974 it provides for the Social and Spiritual needs of Caribbean folk.

Edell Wilmot, pictured right, with helper Sister Bernadette, far right, prepared a vibrant and



unique arrangement around the Font of the 4 main symbols of Baptism. On the top the font the flowers symbolised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

For further information about their activities, including a Credit Union contact Sister Marie on 0121-551 2084

**Westminster's** uniform reflects the aspirations the school has for its pupils. With blazers and ties they are by far the smartest primary around. The school motto 'Nurturing minds... Inspiring excellence' is reflected in all they do. There are many former pupils of the school who are very proud to be associated with Westminster. These include the Headteacher of a Birmingham Secondary school, a senior educational advisor, an overseas director of a multinational company and a highly regarded surgeon. The Headteacher reminds the children to excel in all they do in order to become tomorrow's professionals. The pupils enjoy coming to school.

