

Ikon artist gets 3 years in high security prison



■ Birmingham-born artist Dean Kelland is to be artist-in-residence at HMP Grendon.

...But Dean is on a mission to rehabilitate violent offenders

The Ikon Gallery has sent a renowned Birmingham-born artist to a high-security prison – as part of a project to rehabilitate violent criminals.

Dean Kelland, who was born and brought up in Great Barr in the 1970s, will be Ikon's artist-in-residence for the next three years at HMP Grendon, in Buckinghamshire.

HMP Grendon is a unique prison in that it operates as a full-time therapeutic community with in-

By Steve Dyson

mates who volunteer to be there, analysing behaviours to try to understand why they ended up behind bars.

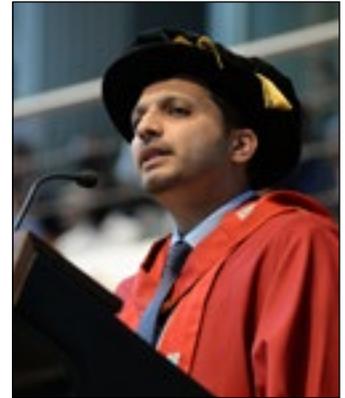
As part of this regime, the artist will work with prisoners to make and submit work to the Koestler Awards – through Koestler Arts, the UK's leading prison arts charity – as well as holding annual exhibitions at the jail.

Jonathan Watkins, director of the

Ikon Gallery, which is housed in a Grade II-listed former school at 1 Oozells Square in Brindleyplace, said: "We are delighted to have Dean on board for Ikon's second artist's residency at HMP Grendon.

"His practice, with its emphasis on the nature of male identity, could not be better suited to the prison's therapeutic programme.

"The next three years will be an exciting creative adventure for all



Saqib Bhatti at the university.

Doctorate honour for Saqib

One of the Westside BID's top leaders has received an honorary doctorate from Aston University to recognise his work promoting business in the West Midlands.

Saqib Bhatti, a chartered accountant by profession, has been a BID director for the last six years, as well as being its company secretary.

The 34-year-old also became the youngest-ever president at the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce last year and has been a director of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership since 2015.

Saqib, whose day job is an associate at Younis Bhatti & Co Ltd, a firm of chartered accountants based at 93 Broad Street, said: "It is such a great privilege to be awarded this honorary doctorate. I receive it humbly.

"I think of the hard work that my parents have put into making me the man I am today and so I dedicate this to them.

"My ambition has always been to serve the people around me so to be recognised by an institution as venerable as Aston University is a real honour."

Speaking to fellow graduates

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Turn to page 2

We want your tales of success

By Mike Olley

Westside BID general manager

Westside is a rich and diverse part of Birmingham that's full of pleasant surprises. And Westside World is hoping to fuse this multi-billion pound district together, capturing both the business acumen and the great characters, venues and events that make it so unique.

This newsletter is for the people who work here, and so we'd like you to come forward with your stories about your businesses and organisations.



We want you to think of Westside BID as your village pump, where people come and tell their great tales of success, and Westside World will be our printed version of that – also available electronically and via social media.

We hope you enjoy our first edition. Email info@westsidebid.co.uk to tell us your stories, to send us your pictures and to order a free supply of future newsletters for your staff.

WEST SIDE World BIRMINGHAM

Published on behalf of Westside BID, the Business Improvement District constantly working towards creating a more attractive, better marketed, brighter, safer and cleaner business environment in Birmingham's Westside entertainment area. Westside BID was voted in by 350 businesses in the area in August 2015, with a 99.75% yes vote (the best in the UK). Westside BID is based at 252-260 Quayside Tower, Broad Street, B1 2HF.

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Art at Grendon 'highly valued'

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involved." The artist-in-residence programme has been funded by the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust and follows Edmund Clark's residency at HMP Grendon.

Dean Kelland, who works across performance, photography and film-making, said: "My ongoing interests in performance, gender representation and veils of masculinities are being rehearsed through therapies at HMP Grendon, and we

can do something really exciting and positive.

"The prison community has been welcoming and the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust supportive from the outset."

Rebecca Hayward, the first woman governor of HMP Grendon, explained that the prison operates a "democratic therapeutic community" to promote positive relationships, personal responsibility and social participation.

She said: "We are delighted to work with Dean to see the trans-

formational effect that art can have on residents and witness the discussion that this will generate amongst our community members and the public beyond.

"The artist's contribution to life at HMP Grendon is highly valued by our communities and really helps to turn the men's lives around.

"Involving residents in the production of visual art which responds to the history and context of therapeutic practice is exciting and offers them the opportunity to find and express their own creativity."

BID's Saqib is a real high-flyer



From page 1

at the degree ceremony about jobs in business, Saqib said: "Work with integrity: it might not make you popular, but you'll know you stood for something and will walk with your head held high."

Saqib's honorary doctorate comes just weeks after he took part in a charity skydive

in a bid to raise £25,000 for the charity Prostate Cancer UK, after two of his colleagues at the Chamber were diagnosed with – and successfully overcame – prostate cancer.

Saqib studied Law at the London School of Economics before qualifying at Deloitte in 2007, one of the 'Big Four' accounting firms, within

their financial services audit practice.

As well as promoting the West Midlands as a national and international leader in trade and business, Saqib has worked with various charities helping to secure free and subsidised education and training to some of Pakistan's poorest areas.

How Yell.com director let feet do the talking

By Adam Smith

World champion kickboxer Simon Akufo-Teteh has been knocking out adverts for Yell.com for more than 17 years.

Simon, a digital account director, has seen the company transform from the traditional printed Yellow Pages into an all-encompassing digital brand.

Based at Quayside Tower on Broad Street, Yell.com employs more than 500 people and Simon is still grateful the company supported him during his kickboxing career.

He said: "Yell.com let me work from home during my first ten years so I could concentrate on winning two world championships and four European titles, and I will always be grateful for that. I used to do an eight-mile run, make all my sales calls and then hit the gym for training so I learned how to self-manage at a young age."

The 38-year-old added: "The changes I have seen in this sector and in Yell.com have been phenomenal.

"We produced our last ever Yellow Pages directory last year and now provide everything any company needs to have a digital presence, from building websites and increasing SEO traffic to placing adverts."

Yell.com has been live for 20 years and their offices were previously based in Hagley Road before moving to Quayside Tower, and they regularly feature as a Glass Door Top 50 employer.

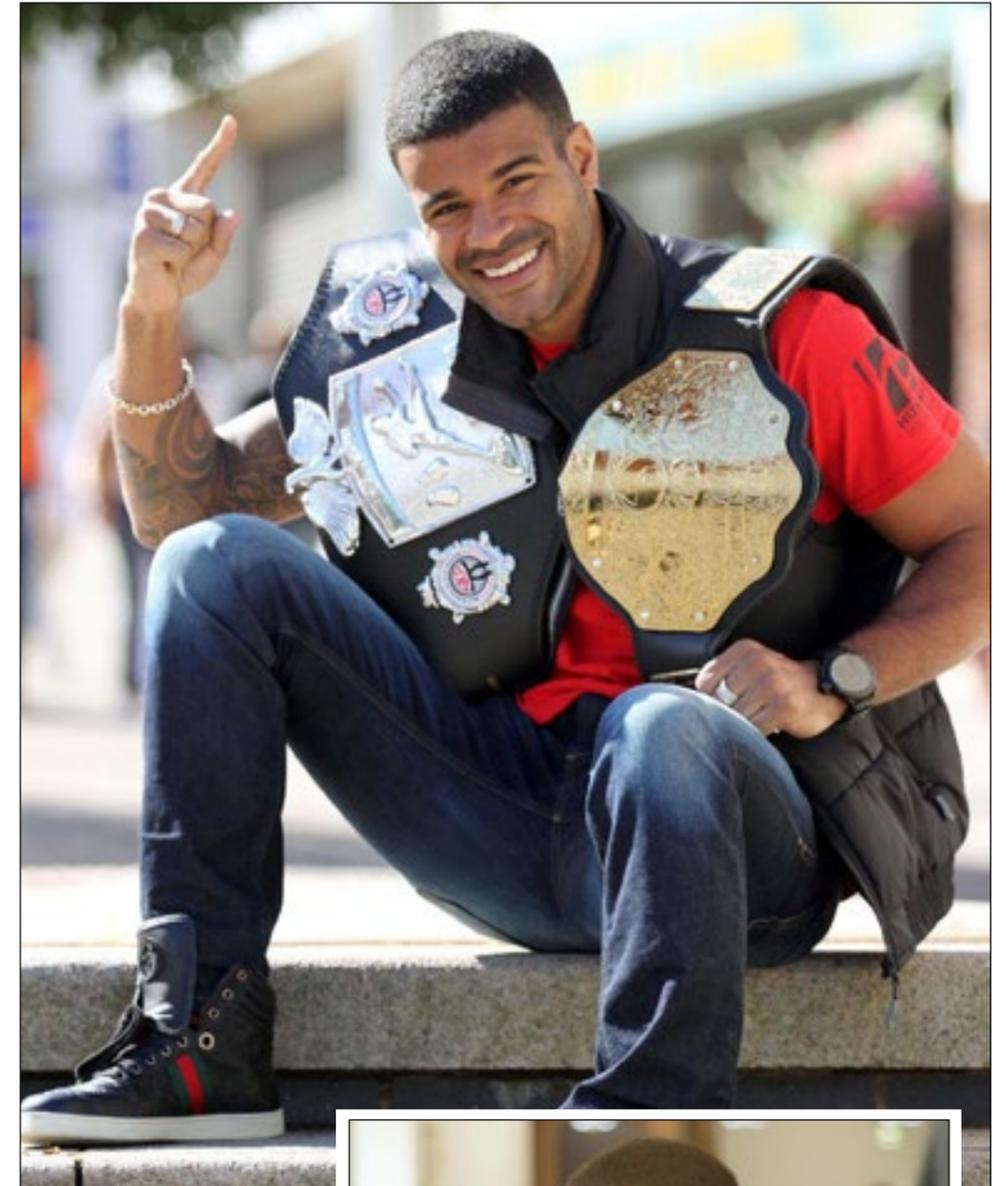
Simon said: "I have now had a couple of promotions and am proud of the work Yell.com is doing.

"We are the biggest digital agency in the UK and will always go that extra mile to ensure a customer is getting what they need and deserve.

"Seeing how Dee Malone, our chief customer officer, engages and manages our top sales team, giving regular talks about giving the best customer service possible, is really inspiring. We want to provide an enjoyable environment where employees can thrive."

And Simon, who has two children and lives in Halesowen with his girlfriend, added: "Being based in Broad Street is great. I can bring clients into our building to meet our digital production team and then afterwards we are in the thick of the business and entertainment district, – it really impresses people.

"I am still involved in the fight



Simon Akufo-Teteh with his world and European championship belts in 2013 and (right) dressed up for a day in the office.



game as I am in the corner of British boxing champion Brad Foster and I'm so grateful my role gives me the freedom to give back to sport.

"However, I am concentrating more on my career at Yell.com and have been delighted to win several awards including best-in-class and rising star for my sales successes."

New £13m showcase for artists

Birmingham's Symphony Hall is to benefit from a £13.2 million redevelopment programme to create a performance space for talented local artists.

The Making an Entrance project aims to provide even more opportunities to perform in Symphony Hall's public foyer areas in a daily programme of free and affordable performances, learning and participation projects. This will include enhanced food and beverage offers, refurbished toilets, additional disabled toilets and changing facilities.

Nick Reed, chief executive for Town Hall Symphony Hall, said: "We currently reach over 18,000 people with our learning and community programme and over the coming years we will be able to reach thousands more."



Sheepcote Lane's planters are restocked and (left) one of the planters in all its summer glory.

Dentist all smiles with new plants

By Mike Olley

Sheepcote Street's top dentist Colin Pocock got stuck in to brightening up the area with the Westside BID.

Colin, of The Dentist, based on Sheepcote Street, was concerned that Birmingham City Council had abandoned the three planters in Sheepcote Street.

But despite his best efforts to keep them planted out himself, he wasn't happy with the outcome.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID and a happy patient of Colin, was approached and asked if the BID could help.

Colin said: "I'm pleased Mike agreed for the BID to take over the planters. I did put some time, effort and money in myself but it needed professional gardeners."

Mike contracted Arthur Taylor and Steve Caulwell, of the city council's gardener team, to im-

prove matters, and the BID will now be paying them to look after the planters.

This ongoing job throughout the year will see beautiful geraniums, snap dragons, silver dust and verbenas during the spring and summer, with polyanthus, ivy, daffodils or hyacinth in the autumn and winter.

Arthur and Steve will also direct the general upkeep and night-time watering of the trio of planters.

Meanwhile, Sean Wright, the Westside BID street cleaner will also keep a watchful eye on the planters, as will the Westside BID Wardens.

Mike said: "It's an important part of the BID's job to keep the area looking attractive, and so we were pleased that Colin brought this eyesore to our attention. Having a neat, tidy and colourful set of planters will bring a smile to the faces of people who live, work and travel through this part of Westside."

Writing is on the wall for Westside's Warhol

By Steve Dyson

A hotel manager in Birmingham has launched a sideline career as a legal graffiti artist.

Adam Illes, the assistant food and beverage manager at Novotel's Birmingham Centre hotel on Broad Street, initially adorned his workplace's staff canteen and back corridor with his pop art-style illustrations.

Now the hotel has helped him to go public by asking him to decorate the walls of its customer car park.

The first spray painting is Adam's interpretation of famous comedian Rowan Atkinson as Mr Bean, and the second is based on philosopher Alan Watts' thoughts about every person being one of the universe's waves.

Adam, aged 31, was born in Hungary and moved to Ireland to live and work when he was 18, relocating to Birmingham last summer.

He said: "When I was in Ireland I started spray-painting on walls in Limerick to express myself.

"But I've never painted an illegal piece or left my tag anywhere I shouldn't, and I'm very proud that every painting I've sprayed has been entirely legal.

"I got a number of commissions when I was in Ireland and when I moved here started to look for walls where I could paint.

"I spray-painted walls in the ironing room and staff canteen at the Ibis Hotel at Birmingham Airport, and when I started working at Novotel I decorated the staff canteen and the back corridor.

"The manager was so impressed with my work that he's now allowed me to go public by giving me a free hand to paint the car park," he added.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "We've found the start of the hidden treasures of Westside in Adam's work, and it's great that the public will see some of his paintings in the car park."



Adam Illes at Novotel in Broad Street and (below) his artwork on display in the hotel car park.

"Hopefully other businesses with walls that can be painted might consider commissioning Adam to brighten up their properties as well.

"Who knows? We could soon have our own version of Andy Warhol here on Broad Street!"

Adam added: "I love spray paint-

ing and would one day love to make a living out of my work.

"I enjoy spending a whole day being in my own world when I'm spray painting, and the more you do things and put your heart into it, the more your techniques grow and develop.

"I'm grateful for this opportunity and would welcome any other commissions to help make the Westside area brighter."

Anyone interested in Adam's work can see more of his painting on his own pop art graffiti website at www.adamilles.com



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Craefting our culinary senses for 30 years

By Adam Smith

Jai Thompson has brought flavours, tastes and experiences to the bars of Birmingham for the last 30 years.

And now he is creating Heston Blumenthal-style cocktail fusions at the Craeft bar and restaurant in Gas Street.

Bar manager Jai is one of the city's pre-eminent food experts and talks about ingredients like they are the food of love.

He said: "I have been part of the Birmingham food scene for 30 years and I love ingredients which fuel the senses - that keeps me bubbly and happy."

"I want to get the ingredients and tastes that Italian people take for granted but which we are still surprised to get."

A proud European, Jai's parents own a seven-acre olive farm in ru-



■ Jai Thompson (left) and Samantha Sullivan at Craeft.

ral Italy, and at the moment Craeft is using their olive oil exclusively.

He said: "The main focus is pickling, curing and pouring. I am a creative person and I love being on-

when its people's time off - I am the doctor for their medicine."

In the kitchen is renowned chef Samantha Sullivan, who is passionate about bringing new taste sen-

sations to Birmingham with lamb, venison and black treacle-cured salmon all on the menu. She said: "Our emphasis on seasonal British produce is from 'field to fork', with attention to detail and flavour."

Jai praised her efforts: "Our chef Samantha is an incredible talent and my job is to ensure she can create the incredible food she is capable of producing - it is a joy watching her work."

Craeft is in the historic building which used to be the home of The Pickled Piglet, while there's also a sister pub called The Pig and Tail in the Jewellery Quarter.

Jai, a former artist, added: "We have beautiful products, ingredients, venue and a very homely feel. "We are open for networking events, meetings and people can come here on the way to or from their night out to have a unique experience."

Party time for 20th birthday at Bank

Regular customers will be the main guests when the Bank restaurant holds a huge party to mark its 20th birthday later this year.

Harriet Giles is busy planning the event to celebrate how the Brindleyplace-based venue helped spark Birmingham's culinary renaissance when it opened in 1999.

And Harriet, the sales and events manager at the 500-cover restaurant, believes Bank's loyal customers are one of the secrets behind its success.

She said: "When places say they have regulars, we are on a different level. We have regulars that come in four or five times a week and customers who come in every Saturday and sit at the same table."

"We spend so much time with them that we know their families, what course they're on, we know if they've moved house and if they have changed jobs."

Bank was independent when it opened but is now owned by the Individual Restaurants group, which own more than 40 venues including the Piccolino chain.

Harriet, who previously worked for The Botanist and The Canal House, said: "Bank really changed Birmingham as the first place to do things very big, bold and differently."



■ Warm welcome awaits at Bank.

"People think our customers are mostly in their late 40s but our main demographic is between 24 and 34."

"Our menu is still a big mix of food - obviously traditional dishes like steaks, and we get all our salmon from Scotland."

"Our Asian fusion dishes are still popular especially the sushi element. However, our oysters are a big draw with customers."

There are 85 staff at Bank, several of whom were there on the opening day, and they will all take part in various events to mark the restaurant's 20th birthday, including the party in December.



■ Before the abseil (from left) Dan Kemp, Joshua Dunn, Nichola Currall, Lulu Donna, Samantha Dunion and (crouching next to Harrison) Tanith and Darren Sherwood. (Above) the team takes the plunge.

20 storeys no big deal for magnificent seven

By Steve Dyson

A team of Birmingham hotel workers raised nearly £2,500 for charity by abseiling down 20 storeys of a city centre hotel.

The volunteers were all supporting fundraising efforts by Tanith Sherwood, revenue manager at the Hampton by Hilton hotel on Broad Street, whose son Harrison suffers from the rare Phelan-McDermid Syndrome (PMS).

She was one of seven daredevils who abseiled off the roof of the Holiday Inn Express Snowhill to raise money and awareness for the Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation UK charity (PMSF UK).

Tanith, whose hotel is a keen member of Westside Business Improvement District (BID), said: "PMS is an extremely rare genetic condition affecting only around 2,000 children worldwide."

"It means that although Harrison is aged six he is non-verbal, still wears nappies, is very unstable on his feet and unable to communicate."

"All of this means he always requires intensive care and supervision. He's completely unaware of danger and how the world outside his four walls works."

"Despite all his difficulties he's a very determined, strong-willed and happy little boy who surprises and delights us every day."

"People say 'he lights up a room'."

Tanith was joined in the abseiling event by four colleagues from the Hampton by Hilton on Broad Street.

They were Samantha Dunion, general manager, Nichola Currall, finance controller, Joshua Dunn, reservationist, and Dan Kemp, regional director of finance.

Also taking part were Lulu Donna, sales manager from Holiday Inn Express Snowhill, who led the abseiling event, and Tanith's husband Darren Sherwood.

A total of £2,490 was raised at the event and the team was awarded an 'Outstanding Contribution' award for its support for the PMSF UK charity.

Tanith added: "I was so pleased that my colleagues and others in the local hotel industry supported our efforts. We had a great time and every penny raised will go towards helping families who have someone with PMS."

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "What a heart-warming story that so many hotel workers joined together to help this charity. And what a smashing little kid Harrison is. His smile brings the whole project alive!"

Anyone who wants to know more details about PMS or to donate to the charity can visit www.pmsf.org.



■ Charity champions after the abseil (from left) Joshua Dunn, Nichola Currall, Darren Sherwood, Tanith Sherwood, Samantha Dunion, Lulu Donna and Dan Kemp, with Harrison at the front.



■ A wave to the camera from (from left) Westside BID manager Mike Olley, Tony Iommi, Tony's wife Maria, and Geezer Butler and (right) Geezer (left) and Tony are interviewed by Argentinian sports star and broadcaster Christian Martin.

Brum honours her heavy metal heroes

Thousands of heavy metal fans descended on Westside for an exciting Black Sabbath event earlier this summer.

The canal bridge over Broad Street was renamed the Black Sabbath Bridge at the celebrations organised by Westside BID on Wednesday, June 26.

Meanwhile, the heavy metal bench dedicated to the band, which is now located on the bridge, was unveiled to the general public at the same time.

The event saw Sabbra Cadabra,

By Steve Dyson

the renowned Black Sabbath tribute band, belt out favourite hits from a tiny island on the canal located between The Malt House pub, the Sea Life Centre and the Arena Birmingham.

This warmed up fans while Black Sabbath founding members Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler were transported on a canal barge to reveal the bridge's new name – cheered on by thousands of fans gathered at canalside bars and

footpaths. In a surprise move, the legendary rock stars then got off the barge and climbed up the steps to unveil and sit on the heavy metal bench, before signing memorabilia for scores of eager fans.

Tony Iommi said: "We're thrilled that everyone can now enjoy what has become a special location for Black Sabbath history."

Geezer Butler added: "I was stunned at what was such a memorable event."

As well as those attending, the eyes of millions of people from

across the UK and around the world were on Westside as the event was captured on local, national and international TV, press and social media.

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "We were thrilled to lay on this extraordinary event to honour Birmingham's legendary heavy metal rockers."

"And the coverage we got across all media made the time, money and efforts the BID invested more than worthwhile."

Westside BID's event was assisted by the Canal & River Trust and Big Bear Music, and coincided with a major Home of Metal exhibition celebrating Black Sabbath and the band's legacy, which runs until 29 September at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

Black Sabbath super-fan Mohammed Osama came up with the original 'heavy metal bench' idea and this was turned into a project by Westside BID.

Egyptian artist Tarek Abdelkawi created the images of Black Sabbath legends Ozzy Osbourne, Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler and Bill Ward.

This was applied in steel by Etc Components from Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, with the final manufacture by Gateway Steel Fabricators, based in Tyseley, Birmingham.

Councillor Waseem Zaffar, Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment on Birmingham City Council, helped Westside BID to gain permission to rename the canal bridge on Broad Street as Black Sabbath Bridge.

Ian signs up Sabbath stars

By Mike Olley

Ian Lomas had the shock of his life when two of his heroes appeared outside his office.

Ian, the building manager at Quay House, Edward Street, was in his office as normal on Wednesday 26 June – but what was about to unravel was no ordinary day.

Because Birmingham-born heavy metal band Black Sabbath was to be honoured with a bridge named after them on Broad Street, topped with a specially made 'heavy metal' bench.

Founder Black Sabbath band members Geezer Butler and Tony Iommi secretly visited the offices of the Canal and River Trust to start the day's celebrations, and their route



■ Ian Lomas with autographs.

in was directly past Ian office. But Ian was swift to spot two international rock stars passing his office.

He said: "I was astonished, I'm a life-long metal fan and to see Geezer and Tony together was amazing."

"I jumped up and spoke to them and was so delighted to find they are such normal, lovely blokes. They each

agreed to pose for a photo and I even got them to give me an autograph.

"I have a great job, and almost everyone I meet is lovely, but Geezer and Tony... what a day! Perhaps the best day I've had in 12 years in a great job."

Ian has now had the autographed pictures of him with Geezer and Tony framed, and he proudly keeps them in his office.

The Quay House complex is the home of some of Birmingham's best-known businesses.

The Legal Ombudsman, Acivico, Bouygues, Ecorys, GCL Direct and the National Deaf Children's Society are among the many tenants Ian regularly looks after.



■ Geezer Butler (left) and Tony Iommi and their wives Gloria and Maria try out the new Heavy Metal bench on Black Sabbath Bridge.

'Memories to last a lifetime'

By Gary Young

A Black Sabbath fan's mission to meet his idols succeeded beyond his wildest dreams after he was given VIP access at a Birmingham tribute event.

Prison officer Alex Woodford found himself rubbing shoulders with guitarist Tony Iommi and bassist Geezer Butler as the band's 'heavy metal bench' and Black Sabbath Bridge were unveiled in the city.

His good fortune on 26 June followed a mini disaster in February when the lifelong Sabbath fan's car caught fire as he travelled to Birmingham for an earlier exclusive viewing of the bench, where Tony Iommi was the special guest.

Alex, who lives in Littlehampton, Sussex, said: "I was absolutely distraught when my car broke down halfway through my four-hour journey to Birmingham back in February."

"I was stranded by the side of the



■ Alex Woodford with (left) Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler.

road holding my ticket and had to go home knowing this great event was going on without me.

"But now I'm still pinching myself that I finally made it to Birmingham for the latest event and ended up meeting and chatting to Tony and Geezer face-to-face."

"I keep looking at the pictures because I can't believe it's happened, and it's made memories that will



stay with me for a lifetime." Alex, aged 40, travelled to Birmingham the night before the June event to make sure he didn't miss it, visiting Ozzy Osbourne's former home in Aston and the Crown pub in the city centre where the band played their first gig.

He arrived early for the event to get a front row space and began chatting to Mike Olley, general

manager of Westside BID, which was organising the event.

Before he knew it, he had been co-opted to help out and was invited behind the scenes as Tony and Geezer set sail on a narrowboat to the canal bridge renamed in honour of the band.

Alex explained: "I was there when they arrived and chatted with Geezer after the unveiling. I helped to guide the VIPs into position and was then invited along to the private drinks afterwards and got to speak to Tony."

"He was great, a real gentleman, and chatted to me even though there was a room full of people waiting to talk to him. He and Geezer signed my vinyl – it was incredible, I just couldn't believe it was happening."

Mike Olley, of Westside BID, said: "We could tell that Alex was a true Black Sabbath fan and when we heard about his heart-breaking journey in February we just had to help."



■ Delighted Black Sabbath fans meet their heroes at the unveiling of the new Black Sabbath Bridge in Birmingham.



From Caracas to Five Ways to serve Chinese

By Adam Smith

When Venezuelan graphic designer Gustavo Todar convinced his wife to leave Caracas, he had no idea they would help create a new concept in Chinese food in Five Ways.

Gustavo and the rest of the team have just celebrated I-Krave's first year celebration at their Broadway Plaza restaurant.

The 29-year-old manager met owner George Zhao, who wanted to change the way Chinese food was sold in Birmingham, and with both their wives they launched the restaurant.

Gustavo said: "I-Krave has been open for a year, we celebrated our first anniversary in July.

"We serve Chinese food, with our own concept delivering a clean, fast service with our own spin on Chinese food.

"I came to Birmingham from Ca-

racas, Venezuela, when my mother came over here and I brought my wife too.

"We both work here – I am a graphic designer by profession so I designed all the menus and my wife did the interior decorating for the place" he added.

"George and his wife also work here too so it is a really family affair and we make a great team."

Customers at I-Krave are given the option of rice and noodle boxes and the choice of beef, pork and chicken with a variety of sauces.

Owner George said: "The customers like the quality of the food and the quality of the service.

"We also get lots of compliments about the size of our portions."

There are three main chefs at the restaurant, which is open from 11am until 11pm Monday to Saturday and 4.30pm until 10.30pm on Sundays.



■ Gustavo Todar at I-Krave, in Five Ways.

How sandwiches fuel business on Westside



■ Broadway Plaza Philpotts manager Andy Bradley outside his shop.

Philpotts helps to fuel Birmingham's army of workers – and the manager of the Broadway Plaza outlet Andy Bradley is happy to reveal the secrets behind the company's success.

Andy has been in charge of the Broadway Plaza Philpotts, which also has a kiosk in Tricorn House, for seven years and has been at the company for 12 years, seeing four different takeovers.

He said: "We have nine people in our team and a lot of them have been here for several years.

"We do not have a large turnover

of staff and that is great. Because it is less hectic than the city centre people like to work here as it is more relaxed, and as they are all so long-serving the customers get to know everyone. We keep our customers because we are very competitive and we know their names.

"You have to go back to basics when it comes to customer service, providing what people want quickly and with a smile."

Philpotts was established in Chester in 1985 and now has outlets in Birmingham, Liverpool and Nottingham.

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■ Paul Reece, head of marketing and communications at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

Marketing chief highlights Rep success at nurturing talent

By Adam Smith

The Birmingham Repertory Theatre's ability to make new plays is what excites Paul Reece, its head of marketing and communications.

Paul, who's been at what's known as The Rep for 13 years, said: "We are the only producing theatre in the city and have a pedigree of producing new plays.

"We nurture new creative talent for the future and send work 'made in Birmingham' off to tour nationally and internationally.

"We're a creative and artistic representation of what Birmingham has always been about – visionary ideas, compelling stories, and skilled craftsmen."

The next new play running from 19 September to 5 October is called Rebel Music and is set in Birmingham in the 1970s, focusing on the diverse musical legacy the Midlands has created, from punk to reggae and 2-tone.

"I'm excited by Rebel Music," said Paul. "It's been written by local talent, Robin French, and will tour across the Midlands to community venues."

Paul loves the ethos of the internationally-renowned theatre, which has a total of 80 staff across all departments.

He said: "The REP is in a unique position to work directly with communities in order to celebrate Birmingham's rich and diverse tapestry. We are the city's theatre.

"It's a bold and dynamic organi-



■ The Rep's new production, Rebel Music.

sation that isn't afraid to take risks or diversify its approach – so I've always felt challenged and excited. "My highlight from the spring/summer season was Blue/Orange, an intense and compelling play by Joe Penhall about mental health and institutional racism in modern Britain. It was produced by three

amazing actors and was skillfully directed by our very own associate director, Daniel Bailey, who now divides his time between The Rep and The Bush Theatre in London."

One of the most memorable performances for Paul during his 13 years at The Rep was One Love: The Bob Marley Musical.

He explained: "The show was well-loved by audiences who danced in the aisles. We even attracted celebrity chef, Levi Roots, to run a masterclass on Caribbean cookery so we could offer a special menu to complement the show.

"It was so successful we had to extend the run to accommodate demand. It doesn't get much better than that!"

Paul heads a team of six in the marketing department, which covers campaign delivery, PR, online and social media and audience development to attract new customers, membership schemes and all communications in the building.

Looking to the future, Paul added: "I'm delighted that we're now able to make the most of the newly-opened Centenary Square. Our guests have commented on just how open, fresh and welcoming it now feels."



■ The Birmingham Repertory Theatre in Centenary Square.

Buses are rerouted for Metro

Bus stops on Broad Street are set for big changes from September as construction of the Metro tram extension continues.

Buses 9, 10, 10H, 12, 12A, 13, 13A, 126, X8 and X10 will not stop along Broad Street between Monday 2 September and spring 2020 while the Metro extension to Edgbaston takes place. Services 23 and 24 travelling out of the city will also be diverted, although cars, taxis and delivery vehicles will be able to access Broad Street between Sheepcote Street and Gas Street.

Five Ways underpass will remain closed until the Metro extension to Edgbaston is completed in 2021.

The many hotels, bars, shops, restaurants and visitor attractions in the area and Five Ways roundabout remain open for business as usual.

A health hot spot – 24 hours a day



■ Manager of The Gym Group, Paul Grice, outside the gym at Five Ways, on Broad Street.

By Adam Smith

The Gym Group on Broad Street, Five Ways, is fast becoming a 24-hour hot spot for people who want to train at any time of the day.

Manager Paul Grice, aged 38, who has two decades experience in the fitness industry, is determined to make everyone who walks into his venue comfortable.

He said: "I've been in the industry for 20 years and have done every job, starting off cleaning changing rooms and riding up the ranks of gym instructing, marketing and management roles as I worked up to become overall manager.

"We have got a great spot here, in a very competitive market in Birmingham's Westside.

"We attract both the business crowd and as we are near to residential areas we get people who come from home too. Because we have both business and residential customers we are not manic at any time but have a nice flow of people day and night."

The Gym Group has outlets across the Midlands and Paul believes the 24-hour option is a key to their success.

He said: "We are rapidly becoming a 24-hour society and we give the option for people to pop in at any time of day or night.

"There are 50 classes a week, the popular ones now are the high-intensity sessions because they have been popularised in social media and magazines, and it is a very time-efficient way of training. People can come in for 30 minutes and achieve everything they want."

The Gym Group attracts a lot of university athletes and recently a Paralympic athlete joined to do her fitness work, which Paul believes has inspired other gym users.

He added: "Our gender split is pretty close now when five years ago it would have been about 65 per cent men.

"Our team is great, we have lots of different specialities from people who offer boxing training to people who have learned how to get women involved in classes too.

"What we are trying to cultivate here is a very accommodating atmosphere because gyms can be intimidating.

"My philosophy is that my mother is not a natural gym person so I want to know if she came in here she would feel comfortable."

11 Brindleyplace sold for £37.7m

Real estate investor Blue Noble has bought 11 Brindleyplace for £37.7m in the latest multimillion-pound office deal in Birmingham.

Number 11 has been owned by

Benson Elliot since 2014, when it bought it from developers Argent for an undisclosed sum. The building is an 108,000 sq ft of office development that is currently around three-quarters full.

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■ The landmark Roundhouse canalside building and (inset) Louise Brennan, Historic England's regional director for the Midlands.

Making sure our past is fit for the future...

By Adam Smith

Historic England is based in the Axis Building from where the team help protect the buildings and places that define Birmingham and the Midlands.

Louise Brennan, Historic England's Regional Director for the Midlands, leads the team and has masterminded the revival of several buildings across the Westside BID area.

She said: "We protect, champion

and help to save the places that define who we are and where we've come from as a nation by offering advice, facilitating grants and working in partnership with organisations, businesses, local authorities and community groups to give new life to heritage.

"Although we are a national organisation, we have regional teams

across England, including one in the Midlands.

"Our regional office is in Birmingham's Axis Building, just behind Broad Street, and so we see every day the changing scenes of the Westside area."

Savings buildings from decay and destruction is what Louise and her team specialise in.

"We've been involved with numerous buildings in the area; one of

our joys has been witnessing the revival of the Victorian Oozells Street Board School from potential demolition to becoming the home for the world-class Ikon gallery.

"We're also helping to fund the restoration of the Roundhouse canalside building, putting in £200,000 to bring this amazing Victorian landmark back into use, working alongside partners such as the Canal and River Trust and the National Trust."

She added: "We care about the stories heritage tells, the ideas it represents and are committed to working with communities and specialists to share our passion, knowledge and skills to inspire interest, care and conservation, so that everyone can enjoy and look after the history that surrounds us all.

"For more than 20 years we have managed the Heritage at Risk Register, our tool for shining a light on the listed buildings, scheduled monuments and places in England that need most help."

Louise is hoping the next few years will be memorable as English Heritage helps to create the international spectacle of the Commonwealth Games.

She said: "Birmingham has a great deal to look forward to, not least with the Commonwealth Games – an opportunity for the city to celebrate its heritage, which can help to inform and enrich its future ambitions."



■ The Victorian former Oozells Street Board School which was transformed into the Ikon Art Gallery.

Councillor on beat with our wardens

A leading Birmingham councillor witnessed the bright lights of Broad Street and the hidden, darker side of the city centre while on patrol with street wardens.

Coun Waseem Zaffar, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment at Birmingham City Council, joined Westside BID's street warden team as they kept a watchful eye over the city's Golden Mile on a busy Saturday night.

The Westside BID wardens work closely in partnership with West Midlands Police, venue door supervisors, taxi companies and other agencies to prevent injury and criminal activity, and to reduce the fear of crime.

During his tour of the area this spring Coun Zaffar met many Broad Street revellers and spoke to the people who work throughout the night to keep them safe, includ-

By Gary Young

ing police officers, club door staff, ambulance crews and the area's street pastors.

At one point, the team was put on the lookout for a missing 14-year-old child and responded to reports of a mobile phone being snatched from a partygoer walking down Broad Street.

Coun Zaffar also met one of the area's homeless people who was spending his Saturday night begging in Centenary Square, and discussed the problems that had forced him to live on the street and the difficulties he had in finding permanent accommodation.

Senior warden Peter Willis and warden Casey Hocknall showed Coun Zaffar how the city's agencies worked together to fight crime on the streets, keep partygoers safe and help the Westside area's home-

less and distressed people find the support they needed.

He also visited one of the city's car parks, which had become a hangout for drug addicts, leaving piles of rubbish, drugs paraphernalia and human excrement littering the parking bays between the cars of Broad Street visitors.

Coun Zaffar said: "It's been a real eye-opener for me. You never understand what the wardens do beyond the basics of making sure that those out having a great night on Broad Street are in a safe environment."

"But walking with Peter and Casey into some of the locations and talking to some of the vulnerable folk gets you to understand that the job is a lot, lot more than that."

"I think they are a really important asset to our city - it's a very challenging role as they never know what's around the next cor-

ner, but they are very personable, patient and knowledgeable about the local area."

Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said he hoped that the visit would be the first of many from politicians across the Midlands.

He said: "We would like to invite them along to see for themselves how our wardens work throughout the night to protect the people of Westside."

"We're delighted that Coun Zaffar asked to join our street wardens to witness firsthand the amazing job that they do in helping visitors to Broad Street and supporting the services that watch over them."

"He left with a real appreciation of the dedication and professionalism of our warden team and the challenges we face in keeping everyone safe, whatever their circumstances."

Andy helps police arrest aggressive beggar

A quick-thinking street warden helped police arrest a wanted sex offender who was allegedly carrying a knife in Birmingham city centre.

Andy Stratford, who works for Westside BID, found a man he knew as a regular and aggressive

By Steve Dyson

beggar sleeping by the bins at The Bull's Head on Bishopsgate Street.

Mr Stratford called PCSO Zoe Bishop of West Midlands Police who told him that a man of the same name was also wanted by

them for failure to sign the sex offenders' register.

Mr Stratford waited with the suspect to make sure he didn't leave until police arrived to arrest him. When arrested, the suspect was also allegedly found to be in possession of a knife.

Mr Stratford said: "I know this man as persistent beggar throughout the Westside BID area who regularly harasses visitors, and so I wanted to take action. I'm very pleased that I contributed towards getting him off the streets, especially given that he was wanted for inquiries into other matters."

Mike Olley, manager of Westside BID, said: "Andy Stratford's actions were typical of our street wardens who are constantly on the look-out for those persistent beggars who cause problems in the area. We have a very warm relationship with some of the homeless people in our city, and even employ a vulnerability officer to try to help them."

"But where there are what I would call 'problem' beggars we are determined to remove them from the Westside BID area."

"The fact that this man was wanted by police anyway and was allegedly carrying a knife made Andy's actions even more important and brave. We're very proud of him."

A spokesperson for West Midlands Police confirmed the incident on Thursday 21 February and said: "A man of no fixed abode has been charged for breach of the Sex Offender Register and possession of a knife after being arrested in Birmingham city centre."



■ Birmingham city councillor Waseem Zaffar (centre) on Broad Street with senior warden Peter Willis (right) and warden Casey Hocknall.



■ The wanted sex offender is arrested on Bishopsgate Street (above and below).



Sean is *really* serious about cleaning up those streets....

Eagle-eyed street cleaner Sean Wright helped police to catch a suspected shoplifter after a mini-crime drama in Birmingham.

Sean, employed by Westside BID, had noticed a man parking a car and acting suspiciously on the corner of Granville Street and Broad Street on New Year's Eve.

Minutes later, Sean saw the same man running out of the Sainsburys Local supermarket at 10 Brindley Place, chased by staff who suspected him of shoplifting.

The suspect disappeared, but Sean was able to tell shop staff and police where the man's car was parked, and when the same man returned to his car shortly afterwards he was arrested on suspicion of shoplifting.

Sean, a dad-of-five from West Bromwich, said: "The man had changed his clothes, but I recognised him straight away and was able to alert the police who arrested him."



■ Street cleaner Sean Wright.

Asked what prompted his public-spirited action, 41-year-old Sean said: "Most people only see you as a cleaner, but while I might be sweeping streets I also keep my eyes open and know what's going on. I keep observant because I think it's important that anyone who works for Westside BID is prepared to protect the public and its members."

Cherie Whyte, customer and trading manager at the Sainsburys Local branch,

confirmed that there had been a series of shoplifting incidents that morning, mainly involving the theft of confectionery.

She said: "This was a fantastic reaction by Sean and we're really grateful to him for helping police to catch the suspected shoplifter."

"Hopefully people will realise that the wardens and street cleaners in and around Broad Street are always keeping their eyes open and this might help dissuade them from shoplifting."

Mike Olley, Westside BID manager, said: "We're really proud of Sean for being prepared to go above and beyond his job role in helping the police and members of the BID. It's typical of the team spirit we have here at Westside BID."

A spokesperson for West Midlands Police said a 37-year-old man had been arrested and charged with theft from a shop.



Festival unleashes the spirit of Jazz



By Steve Dyson

Westside BID was one of the main sponsors for the Birmingham, Sandwell and Westside Jazz Festival this summer.

The festival – now in its 35th year – saw more than 230 jazz and blues performances, talks, workshops and film showings, with nearly all offering free admission.

The events were held at 116 venues across the West Midlands, including everywhere from bars to shopping centres, parks to libraries, with many in and around the Westside area.

The festival was organised by Big Bear Music, one of the UK's longest-running independent record labels and booking agencies, which is run by Jim Simpson.

Jim, himself a bit of a jazz legend, said: "It was marvellous to have Birmingham's main entertainment quarter backing what is England's



longest-established jazz and blues festival and one of Europe's biggest free jazz parties.

"The jazz festival brought Westside alive during the daytime as well as the evening, and we're very grateful to the Westside BID for

playing such an important part." Mike Olley, general manager of Westside BID, said: "We were proud to sponsor the jazz festival which gave our business members, their staff and visitors to the area something to remember."



Do you have a story for Westside World? If you have something to tell us about, or if you would like us to highlight the work of your business in our autumn edition, please contact info@westsidebid.co.uk