

Leeds Award – nomination for Dr Kevin Grady

On behalf of Leeds Civic Trust, I should like to nominate Dr Kevin Grady for his unique contribution to the **heritage of Leeds**, including the regeneration of buildings and areas in the city.

From 1987 to date, he has been the salaried Director of Leeds Civic Trust. Dr Grady oversees the daily running of the Trust, which is part of the Voluntary sector, is independent and self-funded. He is the face and the voice of Leeds Civic Trust.
www.leedscivictrust.org.uk

Executive Summary:

During his time as Director, especially in the 'boom years', Kevin Grady worked hard to ensure that **'heritage' has been embodied**, rather than replaced, in developments. (Although this nomination concentrates on heritage, Dr Grady also in his role, comments and raises issues concerning town planning, amenities and transport for the future.)

He is the **leading historian** of Leeds who, not only writes books and articles, but also delivers lectures and evening classes on the history of Leeds, both drawing people from a variety of backgrounds.

He is **notably collaborative** in his work, never seeking personal credit but focused on the goal of preserving Leeds' rich heritage and increasing awareness of it.

Since his appointment in 1987, in order to exert influence on decisions which shape the city, Dr Grady has **reached out to decision-makers** in the Local Authority and many spheres of business throughout the City.

He goes **well beyond the call of duty**, volunteering his time at evenings and weekends to support and inspire the volunteers.

There are many examples, - some follow:

1987 to date. From the beginning of his tenure, one of Dr Grady's objectives has been to recruit **Corporate Members**, thereby ensuring regular income, and that the corporate voice is represented when stating the Trust's views to the City Council, or the media, about whichever issue is being debated. Corporate Members currently total 85.

1987 Dr Grady initiated the Leeds Civic Trust **Blue Plaques scheme** – with 157 to date across Leeds, all sponsored and unveiled by a notable person connected with the theme of the Plaque. He speaks at each unveiling from the historic perspective.

1988 to date Dr Grady has been a Trustee or Committee member of the **Thoresby Society** (Leeds' historical society) and delivered occasional lectures.

He has, with Trust volunteers, **organised and spoken at conferences** on a variety of topics, (for example, **1991** 'Leeds District Historical Societies' Conference'; **1993** 'Heritage Leeds: An Asset for the Future'; **1995** 'Leeds: The Next 30 Years'; **1996** 'Being Young in Leeds'; **1997** 'Historic Buildings & Conservation Areas'; **2003** 'Conserving Historic Cemeteries'; **2013** 'Heritage at Risk', to all of which were invited delegates from across Leeds.

1994 and from time-to-time. Devised and **run evening classes** with the theme, 'The History of Leeds' (series of 20 evenings), from which several active volunteers have been recruited.

1998 to date Dr Grady has been an enthusiastic **supporter of Heritage Open Days**. Leeds Civic Trust co-ordinates the event for the Metropolitan Area, having 80+ participants. Dr Grady issues press releases and leads 2 walks every year.

2007 - 2016 'Leeds in your Lunch-hour' **talks** at Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane (5 each year) raising money via donations, divided between the Civic Trust and the Church.

1998 - 2008 Instigated and made a major contribution to the '**Spirit of Leeds**' award biennial lunches at the Queen's Hotel, recognising the special contribution made by a person, or organisation to the enlivening and advancement of Leeds in the spheres of architecture, planning, heritage and amenity. Speakers have been the Earl of Harewood, Rt. Hon. David Mellor, Sir Simon Jenkins, Janet Street Porter, Rt. Hon Lord Smith (when Chris Smith, Minister for Culture, Media, Sport), Ian McMillan.

2004 – Dr Grady, working with City Centre Management, **provided the text** for heritage information-boards along the riverside.

Over the years, Dr Grady has **trained approx. 25 volunteers** to lead historically-themed walks around the city centre. These are popular and are an important source of income.

2013 Dr Grady attended an '**Introduction to Twitter**' course and now tweets regularly. His rationale was that 'it will be good PR for the Trust'

Influence

Owing to his knowledge, pragmatism, enthusiasm, determination and as a 'critical friend', he has **gained the respect** of politicians from the 3 main parties in power in Leeds, as well as senior Council officers and Leeds' City Centre Member of Parliament. He **represents the Trust**, by invitation, at separate regular meetings with the Leader of Leeds City Council, the Chief Planning Officer and the Lead-Councillor for Development.

He **sits on the Board** of the City Council's Sustainable Economy and Cultural Partnership, (also Leeds & Partners during its lifetime), and the 'Leaders for Leeds' forum run by the University of Leeds.

Since the 1980's, there have been Civic Societies and Amenity groups affiliated to Leeds Civic Trust. Now totalling 25, they come together twice a year on a Saturday, when Dr Grady **speaks and chairs discussion** on matters current to the city.

Regeneration issues.

In the 1980's, after personal research and much opposition from developers, Dr Grady **successfully advocated**, for alternative uses rather than demolition, for the historic south side of Boar Lane, now beautifully restored.

1988 - 1994 **Director**, (part-time) '**EYE on the Aire**' (EYE was European Year of the Environment) – This was an umbrella organisation for a series of groups all seeking to improve the water quality of the river Aire. Dr Grady's diplomatic skills led to Yorkshire Water embracing this.

1995 **Board member** of Aire Action Leeds, set up with 4 key partners: Yorkshire Water, Leeds City Council, British Waterways and the Environment Agency. Over those years, there has been a transformation in water quality and diversity of wildlife it supports. Without his

tireless efforts and firm leadership, this would not have been achieved within the timescales set.

The river and its frontage through the city centre is a passion of Dr Grady's and he still attends board meetings of Aire Action Leeds as well as leading Waterfront walks during evenings and weekends several times a year.

2002 - 2005 Encouraged and liaised with developers and City Council officers to **promote the regeneration of Holbeck**, now Holbeck Urban Village, a media hub. He still leads walks around the area at least twice a year, including for Highways Agency staff.

2009 Dr Grady's **research started the debate** about the importance of the dilapidated White Cloth Hall, Kirkgate, (opened 1710). Through his drive and energy, it is now the **subject of a successful** Townscape Heritage Initiative and Heritage Lottery grant. He is currently (2016) **working to produce a publication** about the history of Kirkgate.

2010 **Facilitated** the coming together of professionals interested in regenerating the huge (210 acres) area, much of it brownfield, south of the city centre. As a result, Leeds Sustainable Development Group was set up. Leeds Civic Trust is a member and Dr Grady has spoken in favour of the ambitious plans in progress.

2012-to date Discussing **flood alleviation**, the Chief Executive of Leeds City Council learned of an **alternative from Dr Grady** to the high barriers proposed along the waterfront, namely inflatable weirs. The idea was pursued and the project is being implemented at a fraction of the cost of the original scheme. The Civic Trust is working with agencies and individuals concerned with flood alleviation.

2013-to date As a result of **Dr Grady's representation to the City Council**, up to 49 volunteers are working alongside its Conservation Officers to appraise the state of the 3300 Grade 2- listed buildings, initially as part of English Heritage's (Historic England's) pilot project, now accepted and 'rolled out' to other areas. To date 1700 have been surveyed.

County-wide:

1999 **Founder member, Trustee and active committee member** of the Yorkshire & Humber Association of Civic Societies, set up to support civic societies in the region and which encourages new societies in areas not represented. He is a regular guest speaker.

UK-wide:

2009 Instrumental in **setting up and supporting Civic Voice** (the umbrella organisation representing civic societies at national level)

2010 - **Invited by English Heritage** to its national conference to speak about the success of Leeds Civic Trust's Blue Plaques scheme

Publications:

Researched and wrote:

1989 'The Georgian Public Buildings of Leeds and the West Riding'

Researched and co-authored:

1985 'War Plague & Trade – Leeds in the 17th century'

1992 'Kirkgate Market, An Illustrated History',

1994 'The Illustrated History of Leeds',

1987 'The Merchants' Golden Age',

2001 'The Blue Plaques of Leeds'

2004 'Edwardian Postcards of Leeds'

2007 'Briggate Yards and Arcades'

2016 'The Blue Plaques of Leeds, Volume 2' due to be published

2016 'History of Kirkgate' due to be published

Edited:
2011 'Leeds Waterfront'

Other ways in which Dr Grady's contribution is recognised

Awarded an **Honorary Degree by Leeds Beckett University** in 2014 for services to the Built Environment.

- **Corporate membership** (currently 85, as high as 105 in 2008 before economic downturn)
- Regularly to be heard on **BBC Radio Leeds'** Andrew Edwards' show, speaking about current issues and/or the historical perspective to an issue.
- **BBC On-line** often features quotes from Dr Grady
- Occasional televised interviews for **BBC Look North or ITV Yorkshire**
- **Yorkshire Evening Post** reporters consult and regularly seek opinions/updates
- Quoted in **Guardian North** and its blog occasionally
- **The Times'** Giles Smith's Saturday column –mentions the Trust's Blue Plaques scheme, and although 'Leeds Civic Trust' is mentioned, Giles Smith's contact has been Kevin Grady throughout.
- A main contributor to Leeds Civic Trust's **monthly newsletter** and co-ordinates production of the **Annual Report** which is distributed widely to businesses and other Civic Societies.
- **'Made in Leeds'**, - regular contributor, commenting on historic aspects of Leeds. (Before winning the region's TV franchise in 2013, consulted with Dr Grady before submitting their bid.)

LETTER OF SUPPORT from:

Jonathan Maud – Managing Director, Rushbond plc (enclosed)
Lynda Kitching – Chair, Leeds Civic Trust (enclosed)

Submitted by Lynda Kitching
7 June 2016