

@CWCHAMPIONS

Coventry and Warwickshire

Champions



Adam Dent, Advent Communications

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#ChampsNovember

www.coventry-warwickshire.co.uk



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Coventry and Warwickshire

Champions

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Andre Klein
The Jockey Club

THE BEST SMALL RACECOURSE IN ENGLAND



WARWICK

A Jockey Club Racecourse



Introduction

- Warwick Racecourse is one of 14 tracks managed by The Jockey Club
- Founded in 1750
- Formulated the Rules of Racing
- The largest commercial group in British racing
- Governed by Royal Charter returning all profits back into the sport
- Manages some of the country's best attended sporting events
Cheltenham Festival, The Epsom Derby, The Grand National, Newmarket
- National Stud, Racing Welfare and Jockey Club Estates

A Few Statistics

- 500 Employees - 10,000 Temporary Casual Staff
- 30% have worked for 10 years or longer
- 1.95 million annual attendees
- £43.9 million in prize money
- 336 fixtures - 23% of all race days in the UK
- 85% of Britain's Grade 1 Jumps Races / 40% of Group 1 Flat Races
- Business Turnover Performance - £174.2m
- Operating Profit - £20.8m



Core Values



**BEST
FOR RACING**



**BEST
PEOPLE**



**BEST
EXPERIENCE**



**BEST
HERITAGE**



**BEST
FOR THE FUTURE**



Warwick Racecourse A Brief History

◆◆◆◆
THE JOCKEY CLUB
Since 1750

- 1707 - Sixth oldest racecourse in the world
- 1825 - 50,000 people attend the races
- 1831 - First racecourse to introduce jump racing
- 1846 - Richest steeplechase in England, the Leamington Grand Annual
- 1847 - Chandlers Record Leap
- 1949 - Racing commences after the war. Italian POW camp
- 1966 - Lester Piggott rode five winners from six races
- 1967 - Town Council hands racecourse to Racecourse Holdings Trust
- 2002 - Tony McCoy surpasses Gordon Richards all time record of 269 wins in a season
- 2014 - Warwick becomes a jumping only race track



Warwick Racecourse Now

THE JOCKEY CLUB
Since 1750

Attendance
UP
21%
in 2016

Hospitality
SOLD OUT
First 4
Fixtures
2016/17

- Part of the South-West Region of JCR
- 17 Fixtures September to May
- Team of 5 in the office 5 on the track Support from Cheltenham
- Highest attended day is New Years Eve - 6000 people - Regionally iconic
- Most important race day is Classic Chase Day - Saturday, January 14
- Innovation - May Carnival - RCA Showcase Finalist
35% Increase in attendance. 46% advance ticket sales, 40% hospitality and 55% sponsorship growth
- Thriving Conference Centre
- Community events - Thai Festival, UK Cycling, Town Bonfire, Beer & Cider Festival



Warwick Racecourse The Future

THE JOCKEY CLUB
Since 1750

- Jockey Club Objective: **The Best Small Racecourse in England**
- Key Project: New Entrance Way
- St Marys Land: Community - Car parking, racecourse access, cycle path
- Facilities: Tote re-development, Chandlers Bar, softening the facility
- Improving the Owners Experience
- Track Improvements: £500,000
- Re-introduction of summer racing
- Bespoke Hotel

THANK YOU



THE JOCKEY CLUB

Since 1750



@CWCHAMPIONS

Rob Back
World Rugby Hall of Fame, Rugby Borough Council



WORLD RUGBY™
HALL *of* FAME

A journey from 1823 to 2016



- William Webb Ellis (1823), first written rules (1845), formation of RFU (1871)
- Hall of Fame inductees since 2006
- Rugby World Cup 2015
- New partnership with World Rugby in 2016



Hall of Fame – key facts

- Opened 18 November
- Free admission initially
- Interactive, immersive and inspirational
- Complementing existing attractions in the t
- Remodelled Foyer – café and gift shop











passion



Rugby people have a passion for the game. Rugby is a game of passion, commitment and a sense of belonging to the global rugby family.

solidarity



Rugby is a game of solidarity. It is a game where players support each other, both on and off the field. It is a game where players work together to achieve their goals.

respect



Respect is the foundation of rugby. It is a game where players respect each other, both on and off the field. It is a game where players work together to achieve their goals.

integrity



Integrity is the cornerstone of rugby. It is a game where players play the game as it is, without resorting to cheating or foul play. It is a game where players work together to achieve their goals.





rugby caters
on game day,
Barbarians game?



forever,
what the result?

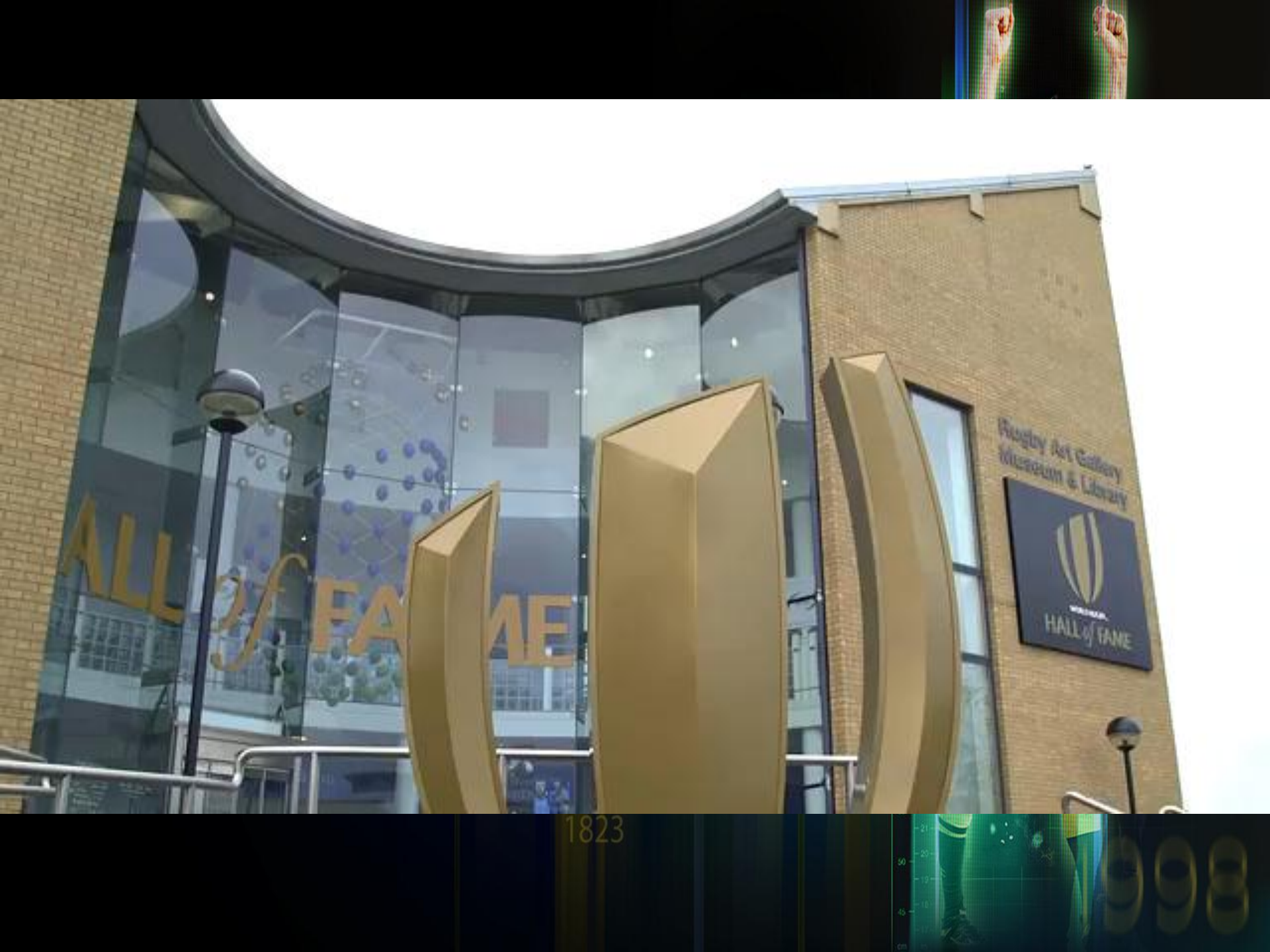


Looking back,
so surreal.
whole lot of things
to get done

Bill Beaumont







Rugby Art Gallery
Museum & Library



1823

1998

BY™
AME

rugbyH

CELEBRATING RUGBY'S GREAT

HALL of
201



Expected annual visitor numbers

- Richard III Visitor Centre, 90,000
- Wimbledon, 80,000
- National Football Museum, 200,000
- MCC Museum, Lords Cricket Ground, 80,000
- British Motor Museum, 300,000



SINCE 1823 THE
RUGBY
TOWN



WARREN CLOSE CHARLOTTE STREET ALBERT SQUARE ALBERT STREET ARNOLD STREET BANK STREET BARBY ROAD BENNFIELD ROAD
ELBOROW STREET ELSEE ROAD CHESTNUT FIELD CHURCH STREET CHURCH WALK CLIFTON ROAD CORPORATION STREET
CHURCH STREET LITTLE ELBOROW VIREUX WAY GAS STREET HENRY STREET HIGH STREET HILLHORTON ROAD HORTON CRES
NINGTON STREET RAILWAY TERRACE STREET MANNING WALK MARKET HALL MARKET PLACE MOULTRIE ROAD NEWBOLD ROAD
WHITEHALL ROAD WILLIAM STREET REGENT PLACE REGENT STREET RUSSELHEIM WAY SHEEP STREET ST. MATTHEWS STREET UNK

LOXAM PLACE CASTLE MEWS CASTLE STREET CHARLES WARREN CLOSE CHARLOTTE STREET ALBERT SQUARE ALBERT STREET ARNOL
DALE STREET DRURY LANE DUKES JETTY EASTFIELD PLACE ELBOROW STREET ELSEE ROAD CHESTNUT FIELD CHURCH STREET CHUR
ESCENT JAMES STREET LAWRENCE SHERIFF STREET LITTLE CHURCH STREET LITTLE ELBOROW VIREUX WAY GAS STREET HENRY STREE
ROAD NORTH STREET OLIVER STREET PARK ROAD PENNINGTON STREET RAILWAY TERRACE STREET MANNING WALK MARKET HALL
UNION STREET WARWICK STREET WEST LEYES WESTWAY WHITEHALL ROAD WILLIAM STREET REGENT PLACE REGENT STREET RUSSEL



FIND YOURSELF HERE

BUT IT SHOULD BE

FIND YOURSELF HERE

VISIT THE RUGBY HALL OF FAME

FIND YOURSELF HERE

Town centre and visitor economy

- Joint packages and Town Guides
- Destination Management Partnership
- Coach parking and tour groups
- Signage
- Retailer involvementInvestme



Education programme

- 2,500 school pupils during Rugby World 2015
- Key stage 1, 2, & 3 linked to National Curriculum
- Workshops and tours
- Sports Development Team



Activation and brand placement



An international platform



All Blacks
@AllBlacks



Following

Congratulations to all inductees of the World Rugby Hall of Fame! 🙌🏈

#RugbyHOF



World Rugby @WorldRugby

The World Rugby Hall of Fame is officially open after a star-studded launch in Rugby. For more head to: worldrugby.org/halloffame

RETWEETS

44

LIKES

121



10:02 am - 17 Nov 2016



44



121



World Rugby

17 hrs ·

12 new inductees were welcomed into the World Rugby Hall of Fame at its official opening in rugby, including the likes of Jonny Wilkinson, Brian O'Driscoll and Maggie Alphonsi. Go visit for yourself! #RugbyHOF



[Shane Williams, Jonny Wilkinson, Brian O'Driscoll, Maggie Alphonsi ...](#)
BBC News - 14 Nov 2016

... Shane Williams and former England fly-half Jonny Wilkinson are among 12 players who have been inducted into World Rugby's Hall of Fame ...

[Williams one of 12 new inductees to World Rugby Hall of Fame](#)

RBS 6 Nations - 14 Nov 2016

[View all](#)

Thank you

#RugbyHOF

@CWCHAMPIONS

Rob Robson
Tata Technologies



TATA TECHNOLOGIES

Make it real. Make it better.

Introduction to Tata Technologies



TATA TECHNOLOGIES

Make it real. Make it better.

Introduction to Tata Technologies

Rob Robson, VP HR Europe & GM UK Operations

23 November 2106

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Purpose, Vision, Mission

Pedigree of Product Development that Extends over 25 years.

Our Purpose

To make product development dreams become reality.

Our Mission

To transform product development through deep industry knowledge combined with intelligently different approaches to technology, process, innovation, and execution.

Our Vision

To bring better products to market for our customers and for the millions of people around the world who benefit from them.

TATA TECHNOLOGIES

Operational Snapshot

India
Korea
Japan
UK
China
Romania
Singapore
France
USA
Mexico
Thailand
Bahamas



\$420+ Million USD
CONSOLIDATED REVENUE

4 Active Regions
AROUND THE WORLD

8,000+ Professionals

15 Legal Entities
INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

SERVICES



Engineering,
Research &
Development



Product
Lifecycle
Management



Connected
Enterprise
IT



Digital
Engineering
Applications



Technical
Workforce
Solutions

Works With

**12****AEROSPACE OEMS****11****AUTOMOTIVE OEMS****15****TIER 1 AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLIERS****15****INDUSTRIAL MACHINERY OEMS**

Industry Standards



Internal Quality Operations

Annually assessed under the Tata Business Excellence Model (TBEM©) (equivalent to the Malcolm Baldrige quality award)

Internally developed Global Engagement Model (GEM©) for outsourcing engagement and delivery

All employees trained in and governed by Tata values and Code of Conduct ("Leadership with Trust")



TATA GROUP

One of India's oldest, largest and most respected business organizations

Founded in 1868

More than 145 years of commitment to business ethics and corporate social responsibility

Revenue \$103 B+

67% of this from outside India

Employment 580,000+

More than 100 operating companies, in 100 countries, on six continents

BUSINESS SECTORS



IT and
communication



Steel,
materials



Energy



Engineering
services



Services,
hospitality



Consumer
products



Chemicals

SISTER COMPANIES

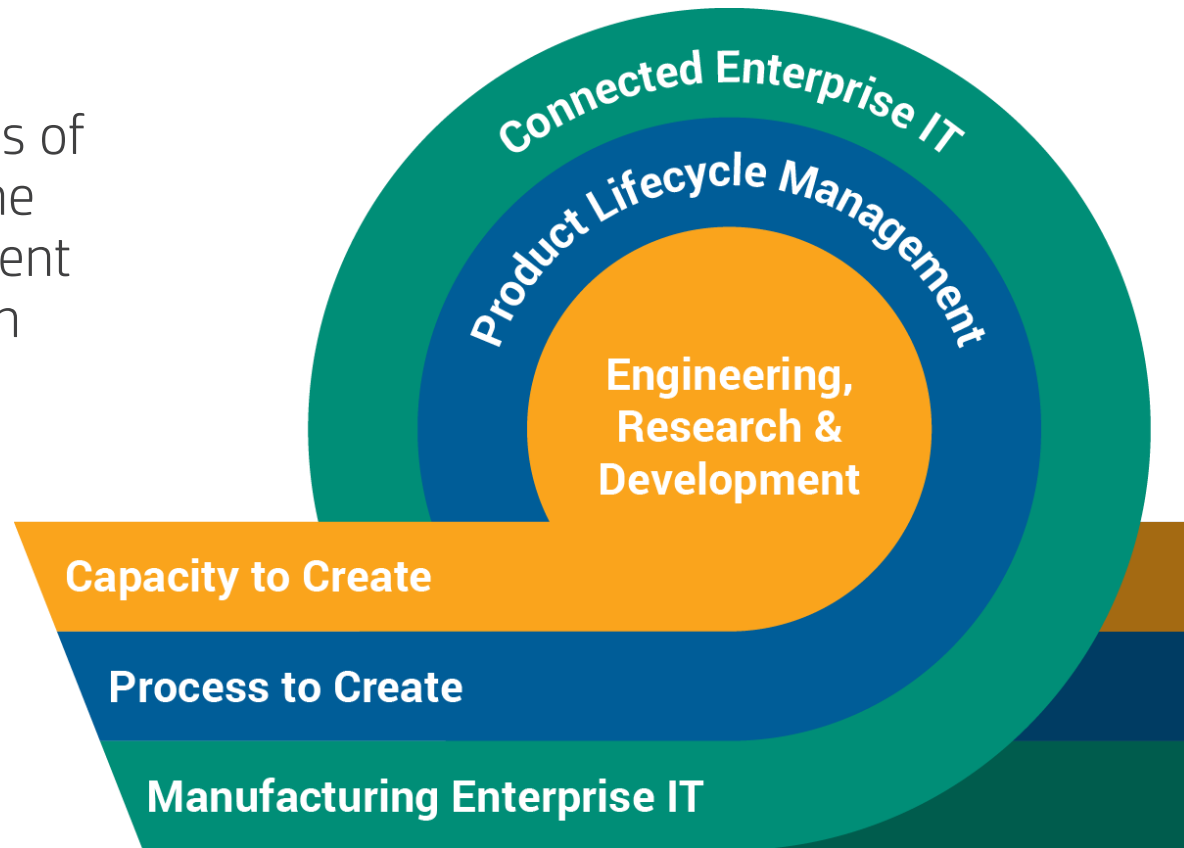


TATA MOTORS



The Golden Circle

- Shows the progression of what makes up the product realization lifecycle
- Represents the capabilities of Tata Technologies from the core of product development out to business integration



Engineering, Research & Development

Providing talent globally – where it's needed locally

Our engineers and designers have unique domain experience, which gives them deep **knowledge of manufacturing** in multiple verticals. Experienced in all leading engineering and design software, our **highly-skilled experts** have comprehensive capabilities. With delivery centers across the globe, Tata Technologies experts can provide **innovative engineering, research and development** services any time—day or night.



- Can work onsite alongside the client or remotely.
- Deep applications engineering knowledge adds further expertise to any project.
- Integrates complete product lifecycle solutions with engineering and design processes, industry-leading technology, and resources to create better products.

Product Lifecycle Management

Harmonizing speed and accuracy for intelligent product development



Structured, three-stage PLM maturity assessment reduces time-to-market, **improves product quality** and reduces cost



18 million man hours helping more than



250 clients optimize value from PLM investments

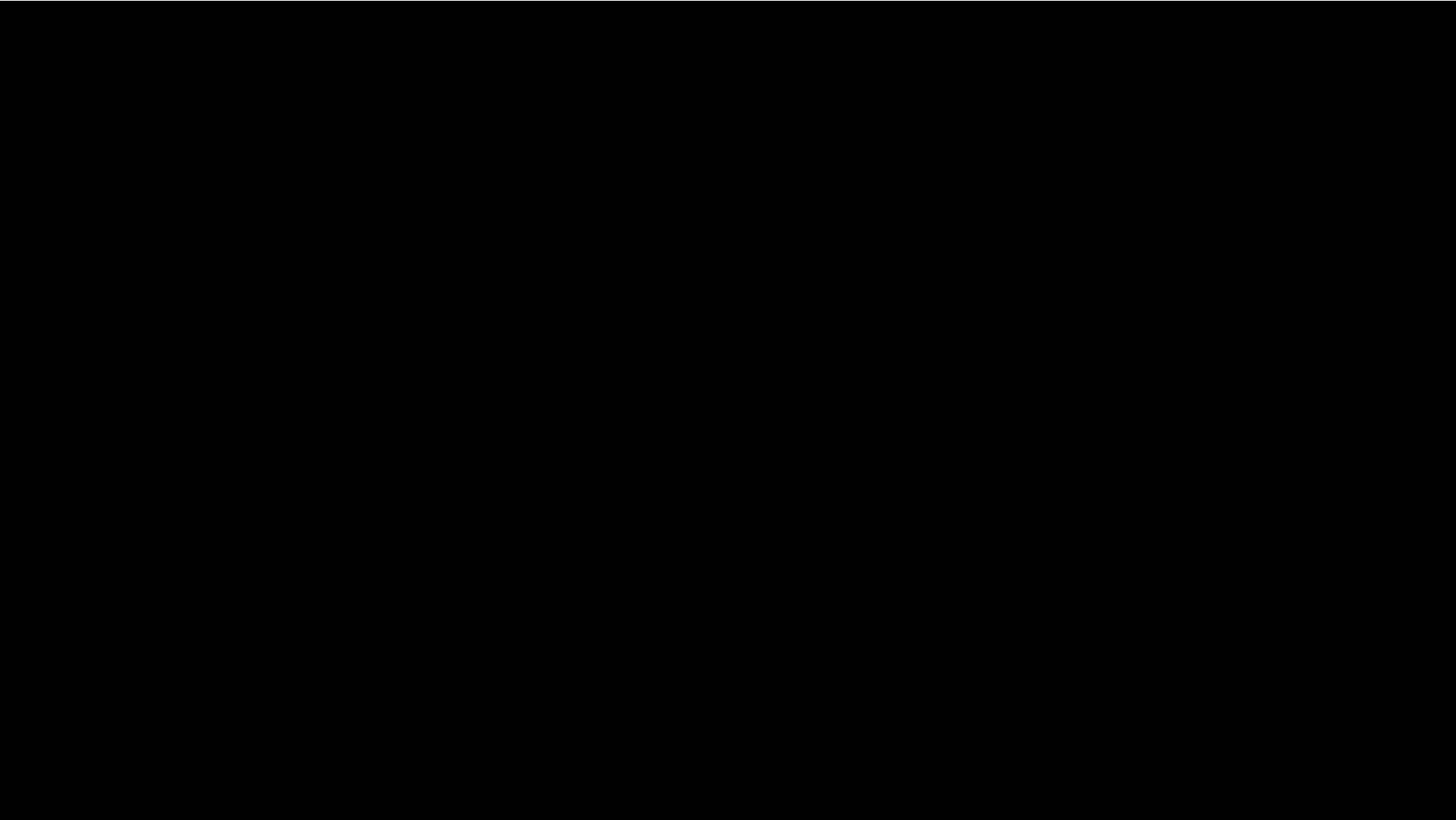
Our PLM practice helps manufacturers **build better products**, define better processes, and **reduce costs**. As an engineering services organization, **we use the processes and software we recommend** to our clients. And we leverage two decades of PLM domain expertise, industry-leading software partnerships, innovative training services, and a laser-like focus on understanding the product development challenges specific to each of our clients.

Connected Enterprise IT

Leveraging manufacturing know-how for enlightened enterprise systems


Technical mastery and deep industry experience allow us to drastically reduce process time and effectively streamline business flows for any organization. Our world-class consultants enable organizations to realize the power of the integrated enterprise by providing superior consulting and implementation services for Enterprise Resource Planning, Customer Relationship Management, Supply Chain Management, and Supplier Relationship Management, Dealer Management, and Business Intelligence.





EIDC Vision Statement

Tata Technologies' new European Headquarters will provide an environment that enables us to meet our business growth and sustainability ambitions.



It will provide a pleasant, attractive, effective and inspiring **working environment** that enables collaboration and innovation, and foster a sense of pride that we can share with our partners.

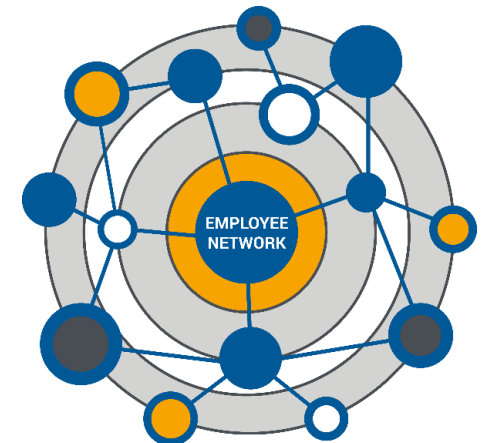
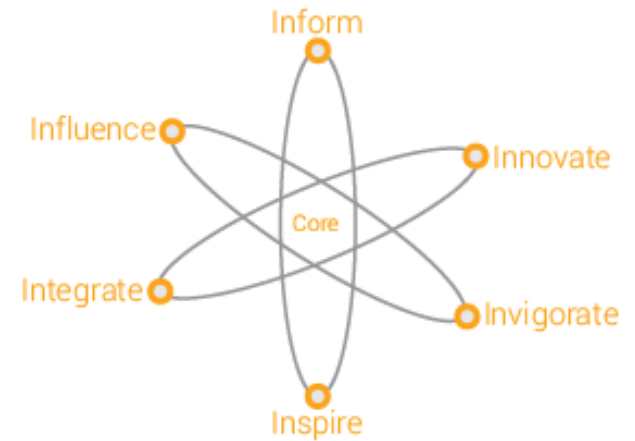
Our **customers** will feel welcome and be impressed by the confident statement of our strengths that our HQ communicates.

It will demonstrate our commitment to **sustainability** by meeting high environmental standards, and enabling us to contribute more to our local community.

Work Environment



CREATIVE SPACES



Sustainability

LEADERSHIP THAT INSPIRES

For over 100 years, the Tata group has been led by visionaries who have stayed true to the vision of the founder, Jamsetji Tata.

A vision that placed the greater good of society at par with business growth.

A vision that put into practice pioneering social initiatives that changed the way responsible business was run.

And a vision that brought into the group a strong social conscience.



TATA
BUSINESS EXCELLENCE GROUP



BREEAM®



Making product development dreams
reality since 1989.

For further information about Tata Technologies and what we can do to help you
create better products for your customers, simply check out our website
www.tatatechnologies.com.



Adam Dent, Advent Communications

5 years of Coventry & Warwickshire Champions



Jo Cox and White Helmets awarded joint peace prize

'Jo was inspired by the White Helmets because they personified some of the best about humankind in some of the worst circumstances'

Lucy Pashe-Robinson | Saturday 12 November 2016 | 183 comments



Click to follow
The Independent Online



The late Labour MP Jo Cox and the Syrian volunteer rescue workers known as the [White Helmets](#) are to be honoured with a joint peace prize.

The ceremony will be held next week in Coventry at the [Rising Global Peace Forum](#), which was launched last year by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, on the anniversary of the Coventry blitz, a night of devastating Luftwaffe bombing during the Second World War.

An outpouring of national mourning followed the MP's killing last June. She was known as a vocal advocate for various humanitarian causes, including the White Helmets' work in Syria.

Ms Cox's husband Brendan said she would have been delighted to see the group honoured.



Jo Cox to share peace prize with the Syrian group she championed

MP is honoured with the White Helmets on the eve of Thomas Mair's trial for her murder



A photograph of Jo Cox is held aloft at a gathering in London following her death. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

The MP Jo Cox is to receive a posthumous peace prize jointly with the Syrian civil volunteer group known as the [White Helmets](#), which she supported in the last years of her life.

The MP will be remembered next week at the [Rising Global Peace Forum](#), launched in Coventry last year by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The recognition comes as the trial of Thomas Mair, the man accused of shooting Cox on 16 June near her constituency office in Birstall, West Yorkshire, begins tomorrow.

Cox's husband, Brendan, said that she would have been delighted to see the White Helmets honoured. She had written a letter this year to the Nobel peace prize committee, nominating the civilian group. They lost out to [Juan Manuel Santos](#), the president of Colombia, who was awarded the prize for his work in brokering peace in the country's long-running civil war.

"Jo was inspired by the White Helmets because they personified some of the best about humankind in some of the worst circumstances," Brendan Cox said. "These are the people who run towards danger when others run away. They've saved over 70,000 lives and helped many more and, for Jo, they were a symbol of how, even in the depth of inhumanity, humanity can still respond and individuals can still find that compassion, that commitment and that service in their hearts."

NEWS

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Blitzed Coventry Cathedral revived by new app

3 November 2016 Last updated at 15:52 GMT

New technology is helping to bring back a cathedral bombed nearly 80 years ago in the Blitz.

An "augmented reality" app, developed by Coventry University, has recreated the city's St Michael's Cathedral which was targeted by the Luftwaffe in November 1940.

The software allows people to stand in the ruins and recreate the past before their eyes.

It will be available for the public to try out at the Rising Global Peace Forum in Coventry on 15 November.


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Before the bombs came: Coventry Cathedral is restored to its former beauty with a virtual reality app that shows you how it looked before it was destroyed in the Blitz

- New technology provides digital recreation of how cathedral used to look
- It was bombed in 1940 as parts of Coventry was destroyed during WWII
- App using Google Tango will detect visitors' position relative to building
- Recreated features include stained glass windows, pillars and pews

By MARK DUELL FOR MAILONLINE

PUBLISHED: 15:01, 25 October 2016 | UPDATED: 15:35, 25 October 2016

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14
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It was famously destroyed by the Luftwaffe in November 1940, with heavy bombing leaving only its tower, spire, outer wall and the tomb of its first bishop.

But Coventry Cathedral has been virtually rebuilt thanks to new technology which will provide a digital recreation of what it looked like before the Blitz.

An app using Google Tango will detect the position of visitors relative to their surroundings and provide a reconstruction of the 14th-century building.



© Rising Global Peace Forum

Virtually rebuilt: Coventry Cathedral has been brought back to life thanks to new technology

THE TIMES

News



Coventry cathedral is virtually rebuilt

Coventry's old cathedral was described as a masterpiece by Christopher Wren. Almost 80 years after the building was destroyed by the Luftwaffe, researchers are using virtual reality to transport visitors back to the gothic structure in which Henry VI attended Mass and James II touched 300 people to cure the king's evil, scrofula (Mark Bridge writes). The original church of St Michael was built in the 14th and 15th centuries when Coventry was a centre of

the cloth trade. It was one of the grandest churches in England before it was elevated to cathedral status in 1918. The building was destroyed by incendiary bombs on the evening of November 14, 1940, in a raid that claimed 568 lives and damaged two thirds of the city's buildings. After the war the authorities chose to leave the ruins as a monument to sacrifice and to build a modern cathedral by the architect Sir Basil Spence alongside them. Visitors to the ruins get some sense of the original building but the



The technology allows users to see the building as it was, including the stained glass, left, before it was destroyed by German bombs in 1940

overwhelming impression is of the devastation of war. The computer-generated 3D reconstruction from Rising Global Peace

Forum, a partnership between the cathedral, university and council, aims to show visitors the beauty and importance of what was lost. This includes stained-glass

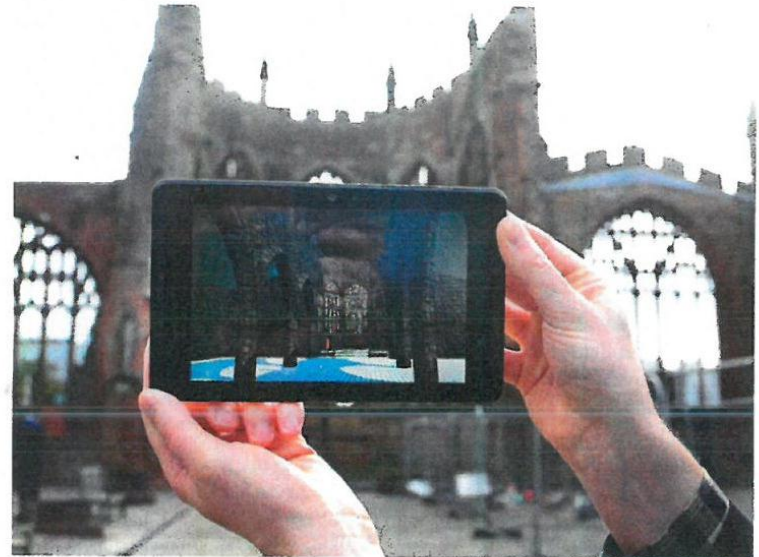
windows by John Thornton, decorative stonework and vaulted ceilings. The team used thousands of documents from the cathedral archives.

The reconstruction can be viewed on a tablet, smartphone or virtual reality headset. The technology will be available to the public during Rising 16, a

peace forum to be held in the city on November 15 and 16. The creators intend eventually to make it available to all visitors to Coventry cathedral.

COUNTRY LIFE

Risen from the ashes



VISITORS to the ruins of old Coventry Cathedral will be able to see it in all its former glory, just as it would have looked had it not been bombed by the German Luftwaffe in 1940, using a new and ingenious app.

Available from November 15, RISING Ruins has been created by the RISING Global Peace Forum (<https://rising.org>), funded by Coventry University in collaboration with Coventry Cathedral. It uses special technology that detects the user's location and surroundings, creating an immersive, 3D virtual-reality re-creation of the 14th- to 15th-century church as you stand within it.

The ruins of St Michael's Coventry remain hallowed ground and are Grade I listed; its spire is still the tallest structure in the city at 295ft.

BBC



theguardian



Masterji organized his studio with hand-painted backdrops for his subjects. In this portrait, the boy is posed in a landscape that Masterji painted in his own studio. The boy is holding binoculars to his eyes, looking at a landscape that Masterji painted in his own studio. The boy is holding binoculars to his eyes, looking at a landscape that Masterji painted in his own studio.



Masterji's studio often set up his photos, such as his daughter holding him, and his son holding her. The boy is holding her, and the girl is holding him. The boy is holding her, and the girl is holding him. The boy is holding her, and the girl is holding him.



A portrait of a young boy, who would have been playing in the garden when he was a child. The boy is lying on a patterned sofa, looking at the camera. The boy is lying on a patterned sofa, looking at the camera. The boy is lying on a patterned sofa, looking at the camera.



Masterji's studio often set up his photos, such as his daughter holding him, and his son holding her. The boy is holding her, and the girl is holding him. The boy is holding her, and the girl is holding him. The boy is holding her, and the girl is holding him.



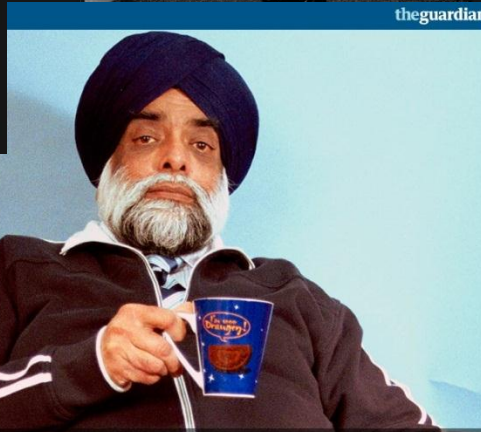
A portrait of three children, who would have been playing in the garden when they were a child. The children are sitting on a patterned sofa, looking at the camera. The children are sitting on a patterned sofa, looking at the camera. The children are sitting on a patterned sofa, looking at the camera.



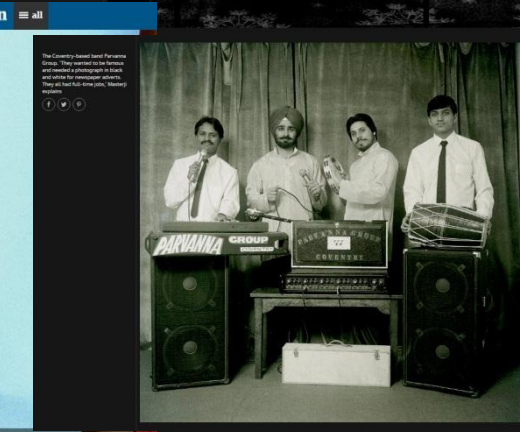
A portrait of a man, who would have been playing in the garden when he was a child. The man is standing in a room with a large window. The man is standing in a room with a large window. The man is standing in a room with a large window.



A portrait of a man, who would have been playing in the garden when he was a child. The man is lying on a table, looking at the camera. The man is lying on a table, looking at the camera. The man is lying on a table, looking at the camera.



Masterji: Coventry's secret 94-year-old photographer - in pictures



A portrait of a man and a woman, who would have been playing in the garden when they were a child. The man and woman are standing together, looking at the camera. The man and woman are standing together, looking at the camera. The man and woman are standing together, looking at the camera.

Coventry photographer Masterji, 94, has first exhibition

17 October 2016 | Coventry & Warwickshire

Share

Maganbhai Patel exhibition: Snapshot of Asian life in Coventry

Published on: 11 November, 2016
By Gouri Sharma

Share Share Share Share Share Share



Maganbhai Patel was affectionately known as Masterji

photography business.

His studio is still open and is being run by his son Ravindra.

Masterji said: "There was no other Indian photographer in the city. I was the first. I made people happy – they liked me. I am very proud. I always enjoyed photography but didn't expect this to happen."

As well as portraits of his family, Masterji documented ordinary families – like the bus conductor Mr Khan – who were living in the area. One of the exhibition's curators, Jason Tilley, told *Eastern Eye*: "On the first day of the exhibition, a lady came in. The first picture that she saw was of her father and she immediately burst into tears. It was amazing to see how quickly these pictures triggered a reaction."

Despite being a photographer in the city for so many years, Masterji's work is on display only now as part of a wider campaign by Coventry, which is bidding to be the UK's city of culture in 2021.

Tilley added: "An exhibition isn't always the end goal for photographers – what Masterji has built up is a successful photography business that's still going today."

"His work is of huge significance not just for Coventry but the UK also because it's a window into the lives of people as they arrived here and the image they wanted to send home. In some photos, you see a more laid-back style and also some of the difficulties they faced, so it documents a very important part of the city's history and its cultural diversity."

The exhibition of Masterji's photographs is on at The Box, Fargo Village, Coventry, until November 20

For most people, reaching the age of 90 heralds a time when life really starts to slow down.

But Maganbhai Patel – also known as Masterji – is not most people. A renowned photographer from Coventry who has been documenting the lives of south Asian families for more than 50 years, he is now holding his first-ever exhibition – at the age of 94.

The exhibition is a collection of 70 photographs Masterji took between the 1960s and 1990s, which reveal what life was like for people who had recently emigrated to the UK.

It's a story that Masterji is able to relate to – he arrived in Coventry from Surat, Gujarat, in 1951. Armed with just a box brownie – one of the first Kodak cameras ever made – Masterji gave up his role as a schoolteacher in India to focus on building a



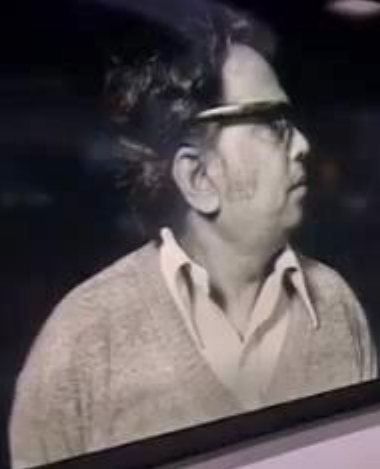
The Khans, photographed at home



A photographer who has captured South Asian immigrants settling in the UK since the 1950s is having his first exhibition - at the age of 94.

Maganbhai Patel arrived in Coventry from India in 1951 and spent many years taking photographs of his community.

BBC



27:41 / 33:29



From 19th-century black pioneer to cultural ambassador of Coventry

Ira Aldridge was the first non-white actor to portray Othello in England. Now his legacy will play a key role in the city's bid to be the capital of culture



Adrian Lester plays Ira Aldridge - playing Othello - in Lolita Chakrabarti's *Red Velvet* at the Garrick Theatre. Photograph: Tristram Kenton for the Guardian

When Ira Aldridge stepped on stage as the first black actor to play Othello, the Moor of Venice, he had an insight into the role shared by no other performer of the day. Arriving in England from America in the early 1820s, he had been met with prejudice and suspicion, like Shakespeare's hero, especially when he went on to marry an Englishwoman. But the towering theatrical reputation that Aldridge built up across Europe during the mid-1800s rested just as much on his portrayal of a full range of leading roles as on his unusual racial status.

Now the people of Coventry are finally to claim the actor as a key part of their cultural heritage and plan to celebrate his achievements with a series of readings, performances and guided walks. The city was already proud of its connection with Aldridge, recognised now as Britain's first black theatre manager because of his 1828 stint running the former Coventry Theatre. But the full impact of Aldridge's career has come to light. New research reveals the extent of his role in the political campaign against slavery in the colonies.

"Aldridge chose to play a lot of anti-slavery roles, including Othello, as well as the standard lead parts in the repertoire," said Tony Howard, professor of English at Warwick University. "And at the height of his influence in Coventry, there was actually a public petition held at County Hall for all those against slavery to sign."

The Observer

From 19th-century black pioneer to cultural ambassador of Coventry

Ira Aldridge was the first non-white actor to portray Othello in England. Now his legacy will play a key role in the bid to be City of Culture. By Vanessa Thorpe



When Ira Aldridge stepped on stage as the first black actor to play Othello, the Moor of Venice, he had an insight into the role shared by no other performer of the day. Arriving in England from America in the early 1820s, he had been met with prejudice and suspicion, like Shakespeare's hero, especially when he went on to marry an Englishwoman. But the towering theatrical reputation that Aldridge built up across Europe during the mid-1800s rested just as much on his portrayal of a full range of leading roles as on his unusual racial status.

Now the people of Coventry are finally to claim the actor as a key part of their cultural heritage and plan to celebrate his achievements with a series of readings, performances and guided walks. The city was already proud of its connection with Aldridge, recognised now as Britain's first black theatre manager because of his 1828 stint running the former Coventry Theatre. But this month the full impact of Aldridge's career has come to light. New research reveals the extent of his role in the political campaign against slavery in the colonies.

"Aldridge chose to play a lot of anti-slavery roles, including Othello, as well as the standard lead parts in the repertoire," said Tony Howard, professor of English at Warwick University. "And at the height of his influence in Coventry, there was actually a public petition held at County Hall for all those against slavery to sign."

The activities planned for this week are designed as part of Coventry's bid for the title of City of Culture in 2021

and include the staging of a new drama about the life of Aldridge at the Belgrade Theatre, as well as a guided walk to the site of the former Coventry Theatre, later called the Theatre Royal and Empire. Extracts from several plays Aldridge programmed in his 1828 Coventry season, including *Othello*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, the anti-slavery melodrama *The Revenge* and a musical called *The Slave*, will also be staged as part of *Against Prejudice - Ira Aldridge in Coventry 1828*.

Aldridge's story clearly provides a welcome alternative to other well-rehearsed stories about the city, from Lady Godiva's mythical horse ride through its streets to the destruction wrought by the Blitz more than 70 years ago.

CULTURAL CAMPAIGN

Coventry's celebration of its links with Ira Aldridge are part of its bid for City of Culture status in 2021. Coventry, now home to 250 Syrian immigrants, hopes to underline its diversity.

The bid trust is also showcasing the work of Indian photographer Manganlal Patel, 94. His exhibition at Fargo Village, to 20 November, chronicles south Asian immigrants since the 1950s.

Coventry also hopes to establish itself as the home of peace studies and research, with an annual Peace Festival. The Lord Mayor's Annual Peace Lecture was given by Wertheimer author Michael Morpurgo, and a Remembrance Sunday service and parade are to be staged at the city's War Memorial Park.

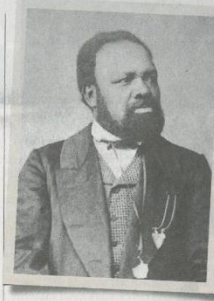
Aldridge, who was also known as FW Keene, appears to have felt equally positive about the city that had given him a chance to run his own theatre. David Burbidge, chair of the Coventry City of Culture trust, cites a letter of thanks the actor wrote to the local newspaper almost 180 years ago. It first details his plans to "improve the fittings" at the theatre and make sure that curtain up always commenced "precisely at seven". Then it continues: "FWK [FW Keene] might have feared that, unknown and unfriended, he had little claim to public notice, did he not feel that being a foreigner and a stranger are universal passports to British Sympathy. He desires only to be judged by his actions and relies on that discrimination and generosity which appreciates endeavour and rewards effort."

Burbidge believes this makes Aldridge the perfect embodiment of culture in a diverse city. "In other words, he felt he might not be welcome but rather than being held back, the city judged him not on his colour or creed but on what he wanted to achieve and his clear talent... In adopting Ira Aldridge's story we hope to inspire young people in particular to learn from this ambition and talent of nearly 200 years ago," he writes in an introduction to this week's events.

Many black performers, inspired by Aldridge's legacy, have gone on to become well-known names, from Paul Robeson to Adrian Lester. But the story of the man himself has been slow to re-emerge.

"Aldridge has always interested black stars, but the wider influence he had is not well known," said Howard. "Robeson was a great fan of his, and when he came to London to play Othello in 1930 at the Savoy, he put on an exhibition about Aldridge in respect of his memory."

In 2012, Lester starred at the Tricycle Theatre in north London in *Red Velvet*, a new play about Aldridge, written by Lester's wife, Lolita Chakrabarti. The acclaimed production was revived early this year at the West End's Garrick, with Lester earning renewed



Actor Ira Aldridge has been reclaimed by Coventry as a favourite son. Alamy

plaudits for his rendering of soliloquies in the authentic 19th-century declamatory manner.

The phrase "political theatre" is more usually associated with the modern era, and yet Howard believes there is no clearer example of it than in the close relationship between Aldridge's work and shifting social attitudes.

"He really was able to make the most of good timing. He came into Coventry at the age of 20 and wanted to meet the important people of the town. He then went through the most extraordinary change of circumstance in the course of just two months. By the end of it, he was running a theatre," said Howard.

The Coventry Theatre had been built by the theatre manager Sir Skears Rew but, by the time Aldridge arrived in the city, Rew was very ill and the venue had fallen into disrepair. The actor must have impressed Rew, an alderman, fervent anti-Tory campaigner and abolitionist. Before he died on 23 April he had handed over the theatre to Aldridge in what Howard believes was both a political move and a leap of faith.

"It seems such an extremely young age to have the responsibility," Howard

said. "It is the one time the community took a bet on Aldridge and he made a success of it in only a few short months. Both the shows and the standards of rehearsals were much improved."

Aldridge was born in New York and, as a teenager, had been involved in an attempt to create a black theatre company. These plans were effectively destroyed by a rival New York manager who, according to Howard's research, "hired thugs to beat up the actors". The theatre subsequently burned down and the actors were victimised by the New York police. Aldridge managed to board a ship to England but initially encountered the same sort of racist treatment. He was regarded as something of "a circus freak," said Howard. He toured Britain in serious productions but was first billed to West Midlands audiences as a "Most Extraordinary Novelty, a Man of Colour".

"But audiences were then utterly astonished by the skill of his acting. Critics said he was one of the two or three best they had ever seen," said Howard.

Aldridge's first wife was the daughter of a member of parliament, something anti-abolitionists regarded as a real provocation. "From one political perspective he was your worst nightmare come true, for others he was a symbol of all that might be possible," said Howard.

Aldridge toured Europe and was hailed by fans as the "African Roscius", after the actor popular in ancient Rome, Quintus Roscius Gallus. Aldridge was fêted in Russia, too. But once work in England had dried up, he was forced to consider returning to America.

He died in 1867 in Poland, after both the end of slavery and the American civil war. He had been about to go back to America, where several prominent white actors had declared that they were ready and willing to act with him in New York. Next summer, 150 years after his death, the City of Culture trust in Coventry hopes to put up a plaque to his memory on the site of his lost theatre.

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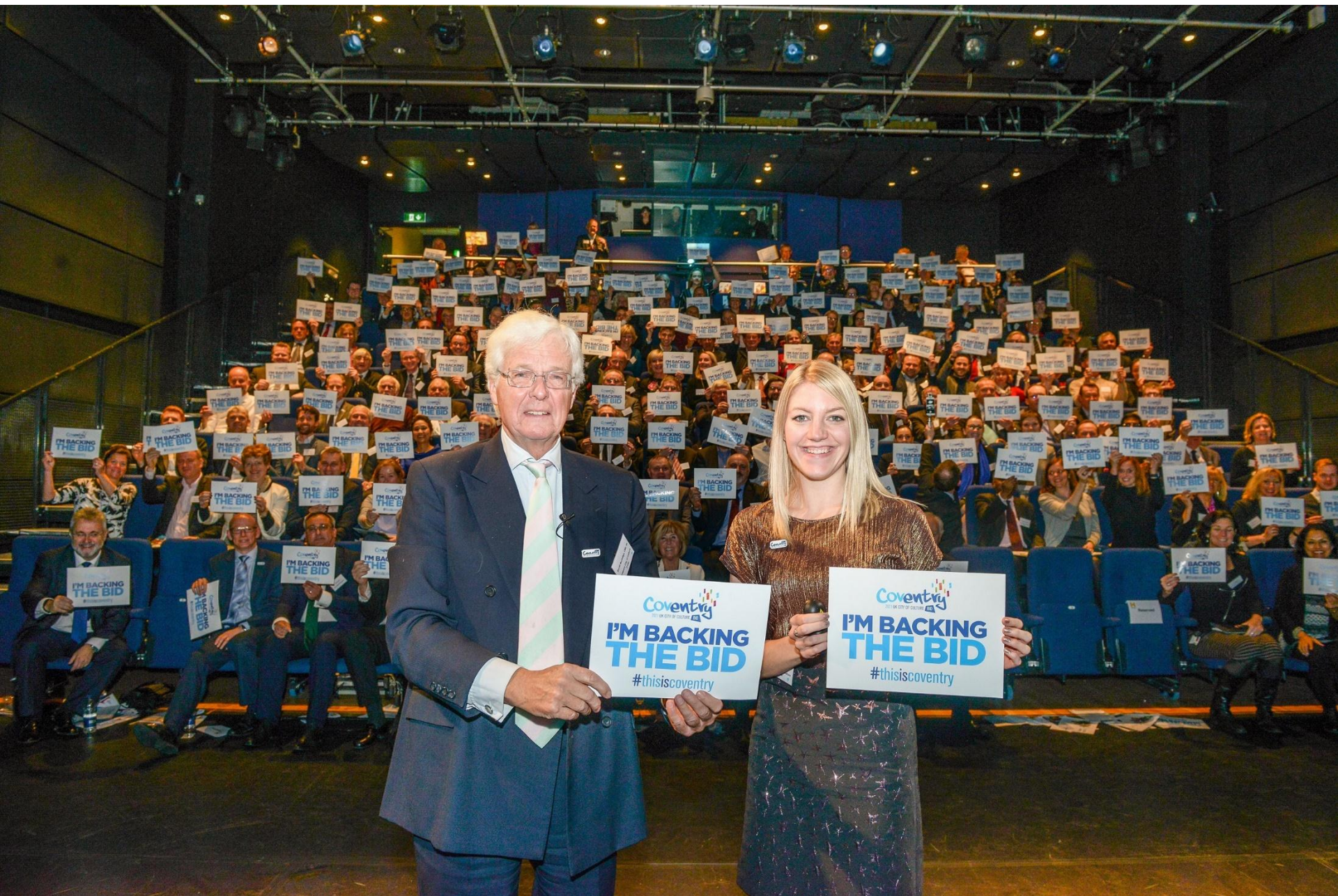
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WARWICK
A Jockey Club Racecourse







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9.30am - 12.30pm

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