

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE 'CIVIC AWARDS'



This is the 9th round of 'Civic Awards'. They were first presented in 1979 as part of a programme of events to celebrate Chester's 1900th Anniversary. The objective then, as now, is to recognise the best examples of architectural design and conservation.



The winners on the first occasion included Awards for the restoration of Stretton Cornmill, the Anchorite Cell (on the Groves) and 90-92 Lower Bridge Street (The Three Kings' Studio). Conservation remained the dominant theme when the Award Scheme was repeated by Chester City Council in 1984 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).

Although the original intention was to hold the Award Scheme every five years, the 3rd round was in 1987 to coincide with the European Year of the Environment. On this occasion it was decided to introduce a separate category for new buildings in conservation areas: the winners included a new bookshop in Watergate Street and an estate agents' office in Grosvenor Street.



The 4th round, in 1991, was the first occasion involving the Cheshire Society of Architects as partners in the Scheme – and then, in 1995, the Chester Civic Trust (long-time supporters of the Awards) was also invited to join in. This tripartite sponsorship has worked well for the past two decades and is now being generously sustained by Cheshire West and Chester Council. It is a happy coincidence that 2015 is the 40th anniversary of European Architectural Heritage Year – an event which gave Chester international recognition for its pioneering conservation work.



Text abridged from a longer report by Cyril Morris, founder of the Civic Awards.

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