

The Chester Civic Trust NEWSLETTER

November 2019

TOO MANY HOTELS?

Chester Civic Trust is concerned that the current spate of hotel provision in the city will prove unsustainable. We have seen how the office development boom of the 2000s ceased with the 2008 crash with several large schemes never completed. In the 2010s developers switched to purpose-built student accommodation with the result that the city is now overprovided in this sector and operators are struggling to let all their rooms. Since around 2015 the pressure has switched to hotels and there must now be a fear that a similar surplus will arise bringing failed schemes and unsuitable commercial operators.

The 112-bed Premier Inn on the corner of Pepper Street and the 73-bed Hotel Indigo on Grosvenor Park Road have recently opened whilst the 192-bed Moxy Hotel is nearing completion on the canal bank in Boughton. Other schemes in the pipeline include the extension to the Eaton Hotel on City Road (49 beds), the lodges at the Zoo, a 138-bed scheme in the old Wilko premises at 105-111 Foregate Street and 94 beds in the refurbished Pepper House.

Now an application has arrived for an even bigger hotel with 244 beds on the corner of Black Diamond Street and Hoole Way. This site has seen all the development problems of the last ten years. An office scheme given planning permission in

the 2000s failed because of the 2008 crash whilst a massive student accommodation block permitted on appeal in 2017 has never progressed.

The developers clearly realised they were too late and that the scheme would never be viable. The site has remained vacant and earlier this year a two-year extension to its current use as a car park was approved.

This new application (19/03845/OUT) for hotel development on the Black Diamond site has been received from Morbaine Ltd, a 'family-owned property development and investment group' based in Widnes. This is an important gateway site to the city and the Civic Trust objected to the poor design quality of the previous student scheme as well as to the fundamental principle of such a development. The indicative visualisation of the proposed hotel does not give much cause for optimism either, although the Trust's New Works Committee has yet to consider the proposal in detail.

We would welcome members' views both on this specific proposal and on hotel provision in Chester more generally.

John Herson



STIRLING PRIZE raises the bar for social housing design

The annual Stirling Prize, awarded by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) for the best building project of the year, has been won by the Goldsmith Street council housing scheme in Norwich.

This is the first time a local authority housing scheme has won the prestigious award. The other shortlisted designs included the re-development of London Bridge Station and the new Visitor Centre at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. The scheme's architects, Mikhail Riches and Cathy Hawley, have said their design 'took inspiration' from the Victorian terraces in the Golden Triangle Conservation Area in Norwich.

The 105 brick built homes in Goldsmith Street are built to the spacious Parker Morris space standards that were mandatory up to the 1980s. Each home has been built to the German 'Passivhaus' standard where energy costs should be 70 per cent cheaper than average household bills. All the properties face south to maximise solar gain. Communal spaces and open walkways at the rear provide safe playing areas for children.

Parking is on the edge of the site freeing up streets for people rather than cars



York City Council are already planning to commission 3 similar estates in York.

Julia Barfield, the Chair of the RIBA judging panel, described Goldsmith Street as 'A modest masterpiece'. She went on to say 'These desirable, spacious, low energy properties should be the norm for all council housing'.

Councillors and planners in Chester 'Are you listening?'

Christine Russell

DIAMOND JUBILEE IN 2020

The inaugural meeting of Chester Civic Trust was held on the 7th January 1960 in the Blossoms Hotel. A group of concerned local residents had held a series of informal meetings throughout 1959 to discuss the major changes that were proposed for Chester including the construction of the Inner Ring Road, the demolition of the 1862 Market Hall and the development of the Grosvenor Precinct. The dilapidated state of many historic buildings, in particular those in Lower Bridge Street and King Street, were also a cause of widespread concern.

The immediate catalysts for setting up a civic amenity society in Chester were the decision by the City Council to demolish the 15th century Blue Bell Inn in order to widen Northgate Street and the proposal for an eight storey office building on Frodsham Street that would obscure views of the Cathedral and the City Walls.

In 1960 the nascent Civic Trust successfully harnessed public opinion against both proposals that were eventually abandoned by the Council. Over the ensuing 60 years, the Trust has continued to be an influential voice in Chester, campaigning for high standards of design in new

developments, the protection of the built and natural environment and the preservation and sympathetic re-use of historic buildings.

We are planning a number of special events throughout the year to celebrate our Diamond Jubilee. The launch will be on the 15th January at the Grosvenor Museum at 7.30pm when TONY BARTON, the Chairman of Insalls, the leading Conservation Architects and STEPHEN LANGTREE, Vice-President of the Civic Trust and the Chair of the Heritage Committee will give an illustrated talk entitled, 'ROUND the WALLS in 60 YEARS'

Another date for your diary will be TEA at TATTON - a guided tour of the Mansion at Tatton Park followed by High Tea in the Gardeners Cottage on 9th of June. Further details and a booking form will be included in the February Newsletter.

Notices of other events, including an Anniversary Dinner in the Autumn, will be notified when confirmed.

Christine Russell

BREATHING NEW LIFE into an OLD PLACE

Through its Heritage Action Zone initiative, Historic England is helping to breathe new life into old places that are rich in heritage, by making them more attractive to residents, visitors, businesses and investors.

One of the pilot towns for the initiative was medieval Kings Lynn that will be the base for our visit to the Fens in April 2020 (details enclosed with this Newsletter). The town has a long and illustrious maritime history dating back to the 12th Century. It developed close ties with the Hanseatic League cities of Northern Europe. The Grade I listed Hansa House is the only surviving Hanseatic warehouse in England. Fine old houses, many built for German merchants, stretch down the cobbled lanes to the Great Ouse River.

The overall aim of the Kings Lynn Heritage Action Zone is to show how well designed new development, which works with historic Kings Lynn, can reinforce the economic, social and environmental vitality of a 'modern' medieval town. The Kings Lynn Heritage Action Zone contains 462 listed buildings including 17 Grade I listed properties. A number of these are in a poor state of repair. Another of the aims of the

Kings Lynn scheme is to find economic uses for underused historic buildings.

Chester Civic Trust, along with other partners, supported a bid by Cheshire West and Chester Council for a Heritage Action Zone for the Rows. The bid has been successful and work should commence early in 2020. Chester's Rows are unique with buildings dating from the 13th century through the Tudor, Georgian and Victorian periods of our city's 2000 year history. Essential repair work will be carried out to the walls, steps and floor surfaces of the Rows. New signage and interpretation will be provided.

In the past the Rows have been a thriving centre of trade in the city. The establishment of a Heritage Action Zone can be a catalyst for a 21st Century revival that breathes new life into the Rows to encourage opportunities for new businesses, specialist shops and residential use on the upper floors.

Christine Russell



Hanseatic Warehouse, Kings Lynn



Chester Rows

"WANTED: VOLUNTEER PHOTOGRAPHERS"

If you have an interest in photography and our local heritage please consider joining The Chester Photographic Survey. We are a small group of photographers who are undertaking a new programme to record important buildings within Chester and the local environs. This will add to our large

collection of slides from the 1960s onwards which we hope to digitise with lottery funding. Come along to our next informal meeting at 2pm on Monday 9th December at Bishop Lloyd's Palace or ring Sue Denly on 07833927342 to find out more.

CHESHIRE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

The Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER) contains information on a wide range of historic sites from archaeological sites and stray finds to listed buildings, historic parks and gardens and the wider historic landscape of Cheshire, Warrington and Halton.

Details such as the type of site, its date, location, description and sources are held on a database and linked geographical information system. Additional information may include reports on surveys or excavations, correspondence, plans, published and unpublished material and photographs (including aerial photographs).

The level of information and accuracy varies between records, depending on the available sources. Some sites are known only from 19th century or earlier chance discoveries and their exact location may be vague. Others are based on modern excavations or surveys which can produce much more detailed information.

The Cheshire HER is continually updated. Information on new sites and finds and additional details about existing sites are provided by professional archaeologists, museums, local researchers and members of the public. The significance of an archaeological site or historic building can therefore change as new information leads to its re-interpretation.

HERs are a primary source of information for planning, development control work, and land management.

HERs are also an important starting point for anyone interested in the archaeology, built heritage, and history of an area.

The Cheshire HER provides a range of options for accessing information

Revealing Cheshire's Past

www.cheshirearchaeology.org.uk or
www.heritagegateway.org.uk

This is an online version of the HER database, designed to be user friendly and launched in 2005. It allows you to search a subset of HER data by site type, period and parish. The information shown on the Revealing Cheshire's Past database is a selection of the records held by the Cheshire Historic Environment Record and should not be considered definitive. There are no digital maps attached to the public access database. For access to the full HER records you can consult the HER directly.

Direct HER consultation

For commercial searches and more detailed research queries, you can make an HER enquiry or search request by email, telephone or letter. Search results are supplied from the HER database and its linked GIS. Details about requesting a HER search can be found on our website.

Visit the HER

You can make an appointment to follow up HER information supplied, to look at source material and aerial photographs at our office in Chester where we have a dedicated room for visitors.

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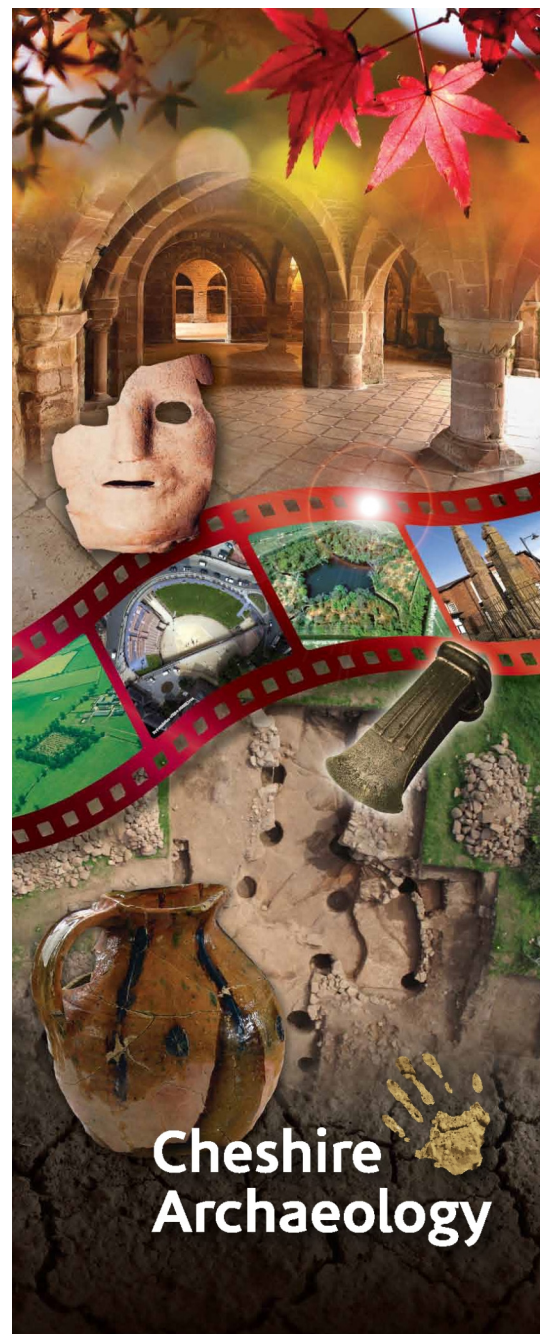
Address: Cheshire Historic Environment Record,
The Forum, Chester, CH1 2HS

Tel: 01244 973667 or 01244 973997

Email: hbsmadmin@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Website: www.cheshirearchaeology.org.uk

Moya Watson



FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OLD FIREPLACE THROWS LIGHT ON BISHOP LLOYD'S PALACE



Carving of Lucretia on the fireplace in Tabley House

Let us celebrate four hundred years of a fireplace. In 1619 Peter Leycester had a huge carved wooden fireplace put in the Great Hall at his moated mansion in Nether Tabley. The date is conveniently included in the design. In 1927 this house began to collapse. The fire surround was moved to Tabley House. A room was created to store what had been retrieved from Tabley Old Hall. This is now a tea room, and the ancient surround can be seen here.

What is of great interest in relationship to Bishop Lloyd's Palace is how in 1619 in the Cheshire area we have a series of very similar carvings to those outside of Bishop Lloyd's Palace. Particularly interesting is the use of the Roman matron, Lucretia, on the fire surround. She is also the only Classical allusion on the front of Bishop Lloyd's Palace.

The whole fireplace is complex in its iconography. The eyes are drawn to the two half naked women, who are surprisingly about to kill themselves. On the sinister (our right hand) side is Cleopatra with her asp; on the dexter (our left) side is Lucretia stabbing herself in the heart. These images seem particularly shocking in domestic rooms. Christianity and the law at this time forbade self killing. Within

Greek and Roman tradition there were no such sanctions either religious or legal. If your death precluded your own or your family's dishonour, then it was seen as justified.

Cleopatra, rather than dishonour herself or Egypt by being ignominiously exposed in Octavius' Triumph in Rome, chose to kill herself.

Lucretia was the epitome of Roman matronly virtues. The son of the Etruscan king became enamoured with her. Whilst her husband was away he ravished her. Lucretia called together her husband and father with their close associates, and told them what had happened. She demanded revenge, but still took her own life, because of her view that there was a stain on herself and her family.

She finally stabs herself in the heart.

Her death eventually led to the establishment of a Republic in Rome.

Many meanings have been attributed to the story. Some are political. Many concentrate on her matronly virtues: her sexual fidelity, her sense of duty and her sacrifice of herself for the honour of the family. All centre on her innocence.

From the evidence of this fireplace we can confidently say that she would be recognised in Jacobean Cheshire

Happy Birthday to the Leycester fireplace.

Karen Mckay



Lucretia on the front of Bishop Lloyd's Palace

WALKING IN SHOTWICK PARK

Civic Trust members had a very successful walk in Shotwick Park led by Geoff Holland of the Wirral Footpaths and Open Spaces Preservation Society (WFOSPS).

He seems to have enjoyed the morning, as much as we did. We were introduced to functional ditches dating back to the 1300s. We saw a little known large house by John Douglas and the remains of the once important Shotwick Castle. We realised the amount of reclaimed land resulting from the 1737 canalisation of the Dee. He also told us about how we nearly lost many footpaths when the area was sold to private buyers.

For those who missed the walk he will lead two walks in the CWaC Walking Festival and the Wirral Walking Festival in May 2020. One will be the Shotwick Park walk. The other will be The History of Little Neston and Ness.

He did mention CWaC's excellent interactive map facility, which includes rights of way and all sorts of other information. This will probably be of interest to other

members, if they do not already use it. He promised to give us this link:

<https://maps.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/cwac/webmapping>

For example, type "Saughall" in the search box and click the search icon.

Then click on the "+" symbol ("add data").

Then click "Leisure and Culture" and select what you want from the drop down menu (EG "Footpaths" and "Bridleways")

Then click "Add selected layer" and they will all magically appear on the map and you can zoom in and out and drag it around etc.

Finally, he thanks us for our donation to WFOSPS.

Karen Mckay

HADDON HALL



PICTURE 1

Does this look familiar?

This is a motif from the sumptuous frieze in an upstairs chamber of Haddon Hall. The work is from 1564, and by a plasterer called William Bell.

Spot the dolphins. In Tudor times the dolphin symbolized safe journeys. Gods and heroes were said to have been saved from the sea by riding on a dolphin's back. The most famous was the musician Arion.

The dolphin was thought to be a fish, and in early Christian symbolism was a sign of salvation and the Eucharist.

Of course this should look familiar. It is on the frieze in Bishop Lloyd's Palace. A symbol of safe journeys was appropriate for a building associated with the Merchant Adventurers.



PICTURE 2

A slightly later and more sophisticated piece of overmantle plasterwork from Haddon Hall. It is reminiscent of the plasterwork still to be seen in the remains of Hardwick Old Hall. Surrounded by two caryatids Orpheus sings to a charming array of animals.

Karen Mckay

NORTHGATE DEVELOPMENT CAR PARK, CINEMA AND MARKET APPROVED



In the last newsletter, the Council's proposals for Phase I of the Northgate Development, including a new 782 space multistory car park, cinema and market, were described. Planning applications had not yet been submitted, but since then they have been submitted and approved.

In its representations, the Civic Trust welcomed the applications, and particularly the new market square. The Trust did however express many reservations about aspects of the proposals. There is concern about the appropriateness of green living walls and their long term maintenance.

The Trust's main concerns were about access and transport. The car park is regarded as too tall and dominant, and unsympathetic in design. The removal of the top floor would allow for a roof garden taking advantage of views towards Wales, and the design should not just mimic similar car parks across the world. The Trust would like to see a car parking strategy for the city within which the number of spaces needed at Northgate could be assessed.

Access by public transport is a matter of real concern. Instead of two hopelessly located bus stops on St. Martin's Way, the very least the Trust would like to see is proper bus lay-bys in St. Martin's Way and guaranteed provision of a circular shuttle bus with a stop in Hunter Street.

The pedestrian routes from bus stops on St. Martin's Way are regarded as unattractive, with a long and daunting flight of steps up Princess Street. There should be a more gradual change of levels.

None of the Trust's concerns was taken on board before the Council gave itself the planning permissions asked for.

JOIN EVENTS COMMITTEE

Have some spare time?
Prepared to help organise outings?
Have ideas for outings and talks?
Happy to regularly serve teas and coffees to members?

If you have answered positively to any of these questions please consider joining the Events Committee.

We are a lively, even a lovely, group of highly vociferous members with lots of ideas. You would enjoy it even if you are quiet and aren't sure whether you have any ideas. We meet once every two months on Monday afternoons at Bishop Lloyd's Palace. We then meet as and when we are helping with an event.

If you are interested please send your details to –
admin@chestercivictrust.org.uk>

CIVIC TRUST WEBSITE

A new website for Chester Civic Trust was made live in late October. The new site can be located at the usual address: <https://chestercivictrust.org.uk>, it is an attempt to simplify the old version with a new layout that makes more use of photographs. Developing a new site is the relatively easy thing, now the challenge is to keep it as up to date and relevant as possible. If you become aware of events or news pertinent to the activities of the trust please let me know using the email address cchesterctwebgmail.com and I will try to include them on the website.

Graham Catlin.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 20th 2019

Grosvenor Museum Lecture Theatre 7.30pm
John Benson, illustrated talk on the Archives of the National Waterways and Canal and River Trust

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 29th 2019

BLP 7.30pm
Talk on Flamenco

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 15th 2020

Grosvenor Museum Lecture Theatre 7.30pm
Tony Barton and Stephen Langtree
'Round the Walls in 60 Years'

FRIDAY JANUARY 17th 2020

BLP Social 7.30pm
'Brush up your Shakespeare'

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 28th 2020

Grosvenor Museum Lecture Theatre 7.30pm
Louise Palomba, Associate Partner with Rogers Stirk Harbour

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 28th 2020

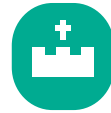
BLP 7.30pm
'Turner and Harrison at Chirk Castle'

TUESDAY 21st - SATURDAY 25th APRIL 2020

Visit to THE FENS

WEDNESDAY 23rd - WEDNESDAY 30th SEPTEMBER 2020

Visit to MALAGA



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Our office in Bishop Lloyd's Palace is open between 12pm and 2pm, Monday to Thursday.

If you would like to join The Chester Civic Trust, please call in at our office, write to the Membership Secretary or email us at admin@chestercivictrust.org.uk

BISHOP LLOYD'S PALACE

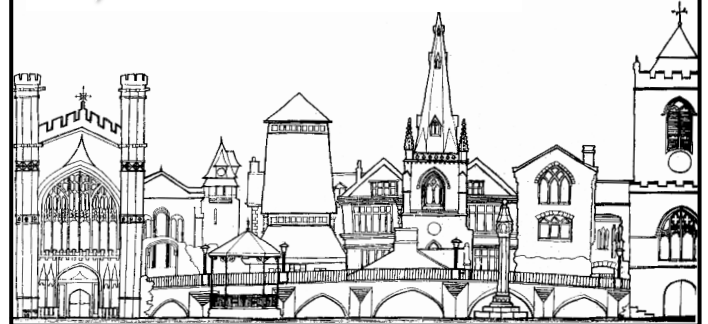
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For more information, visit our website at www.chestercivictrust.org.uk

Founder member of



North West Association of Civic Trusts and Societies



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The Civic Trust is grateful for the support of its Corporate Members.

Corporate Membership is available to professional practices, institutions, colleges, schools and businesses of all types in the Chester area. Visit our website or contact Nick Clarke, nickclarke77@btinternet.com

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Any comments can be addressed to the authors, or the Civic Trust, or the editors.