

NORTHGATE UPDATE

The Northgate development is the largest construction and regeneration project in Chester for over 40 years, now moving from the construction to fit-out stage. The summer will be a hive of activity with individual tenants completing their fit-outs and phased openings, culminating in the new Chester Market currently expected to be completed in late autumn, ready for the busy Christmas trading period.

Cheshire West and Chester Council are delighted to announce that the first opening was the Cosy Club restaurant unit within the Coachworks Arcade frontage on Northgate Street, which opened to the public on 12 July. All other elements of Northgate are either already completed and have fit-outs underway, such as the Picturehouse cinema, Florist restaurant and carpark; or will shortly be commencing their fit-outs such as the new market and BrewDog.



The new Exchange Square at the heart of the scheme is also nearing completion and will soon provide a stunning new public realm with outdoor seating, trees, restaurant al fresco areas and event space to create a fantastic new social and leisure hub for the city centre. Three time capsules



were buried in June, with students from Chester Blue Coat CE Primary School, Queen's Park High School and The Queen's School; the capsules contain a wide selection of artefacts that the students selected to provide future generations with an insight into life in Chester in 2022.

Further traders have recently been announced for the new Market and all remaining food

and beverage units in the development and market stalls are currently either contracted or under offer - all demonstrating a huge vote of confidence in the resilience and attractiveness of Chester. For more information and announcements see <http://chesternorthgate.com/news/>

Andrew Arditti

Editors' Note: This is an update of progress provided by Cheshire West and Chester Council. The opinions expressed may not be those of Chester Civic Trust.

VISIT TO RHS BRIDGEWATER

Expectations were high for our trip to Bridgewater Gardens in Salford on June 29th following a talk by Marcus Chilton-Jones at Grosvenor Museum the week before. He was appointed curator in 2017, shortly after the site was acquired by the Royal Horticultural Society. It was previously the site of a grand country house, Worsley New Hall, with an extensive landscaped garden but the house had suffered subsidence and a fire and finally been demolished in 1947 since when the whole area had fallen into neglect.

Marcus gave an interesting and entertaining talk on its recent development, current status and future plans interspersed with the history of previous owners and royal visitors. His enthusiasm for this project was obvious as was his pride in how the whole development had come together for it to be opened to the public last summer despite such set-backs as finding high levels of arsenic in the soil in the area intended as the kitchen garden, the restrictions of Covid-19 and perhaps to be expected, some awful weather.

On arrival we were given a brief introduction and orientation and were then free to wander and enjoy the many and varied areas from the beautiful naturalistic beds and borders and the Chinese stream garden, to the lake, the well-designed play and picnic areas and the very large walled Paradise Garden as well as the greenhouses and kitchen garden.

Some parts of this 150 acre site are still to be developed and it will be interesting to watch this work-in-progress



over the next few years. There are plans to make an arboretum and to develop one of the prize-winning gardens from this year's Chelsea Flower Show, the Blue Peter Garden, which will have underground viewing tunnels to show what goes on in the soil as well as what we normally see above when looking at trees and other plants.

In the many years that this site was unused and neglected there was apparently a proposal to develop it as a luxury hotel and golf course which would have deprived the north-west region of this wonderful new amenity.

Cynthia and Edward Phillips

A PIONEERING PHYSICIAN

The Civic Trust along with the University of Chester, Cheshire West and Chester Council and the residents of the 1761 Building have contributed to the costs of the installation of a Blue Plaque in honour of Dr John Haygarth on the railings outside the 1761 Building in City Walls Road.



Dr Haygarth was a native of Cumbria who was appointed physician at the Chester Royal Infirmary in 1766. The Infirmary was sited in a new building that had

been opened 5 years prior to Dr Haygarth's arrival in 1761. The building remained as a health facility until it was closed and converted into apartments in the 1990s.

During his 30 years as a physician in Chester, Dr Haygarth conducted pioneering research into the treatment of killer diseases like smallpox and typhus. He discovered the importance of establishing 'fever wards' where patients could be quarantined to prevent the spread of highly contagious viruses. Dr Haygarth's published research pre-dated the work of Edward Jenner, who is widely acknowledged as the pioneer of vaccinations for smallpox, by a number of years.

Dr Haygarth also wrote research papers, based on his experiences in Chester, on the link between poverty, in particular slum housing, and poor health outcomes. After three decades in Chester Dr Haygarth retired to Bath where he continued to publish medical papers in the journal of the Royal Society as well as advocating support for many social justice issues like free universal education.

Christine Russell

163 BEDROOM HOTEL FOR FRODSHAM STREET?

An application (22/00616/FUL) is currently with the Planning Authority to redevelop the west side of Frodsham Street (nos. 1-13) between the (now closed) RBS building and the Kaleyards carpark exit.

The application is by Frodsham Holdings Ltd but the developers are Cervidae, a privately-financed real estate and asset management firm with interests all over Britain and also in the USA and Israel. The proposal is for a 163-bed Radisson Red hotel and the architects are Donald Insall Associates.

This a very prominent and important site within the City Centre Conservation Area and any development will have substantial impact on the City Wall and the Cathedral surroundings as well as on Frodsham Street itself. The commercial premises currently on the site are of no particular architectural significance but do not detract from the general urban scene.

The architects have endeavoured to design a building that reflects the architecture not only of Chester City Centre but of Frodsham Street in particular. Within the constraints of delivering an economically viable hotel they claim to have reflected the Frodsham Street frontages by providing distinctive gables within a development of comparable height to the existing premises. On the side facing the City Wall and Cathedral they are proposing positive elevations to replace the unpleasant rear of shops and bin storage areas of the present development.

Chester Civic Trust has responded to this proposal in two ways. Firstly, although we do not oppose the proposal in principle, we have objected to various aspects of the design solution. We feel the scheme fails to respect the smaller scale and height of buildings in Frodsham Street that was identified in the Chester Characterisation Study, as opposed to the greater heights in Foregate Street. The design therefore appears dominant and overbearing. We also believe the Frodsham Street elevation should be broken up by incorporating different styles of façade and that the proposed tall two-storey glazed entrance is out of scale and character both with the building itself and its surroundings. The design of the very prominent northern elevation also needs to reflect better the character of Frodsham Street. We have some concern

that the close proximity of the western elevation to the City Walls is overbearing and feel the top floor rooms should be removed because of their alien impact on the Chester skyline.



The Civic Trust lodged its objection on 27 April 2022 and similar points have been made by Historic England and the Chester Archaeological Society. Since then there have been indications that some aspects of the design may be reconsidered in the light of

comments made, and we look forward to some possibly revised proposals.

The Civic Trust also argues that, if granted permission, both the developers and CWAC should take the opportunity to develop improvements to the public realm adjacent to the site. Considerable investment has been put into the pedestrianisation and improvement of Frodsham Street but the area in front of the proposed northern elevation giving access to the public car park, as well as the steps off the City Wall, remains unattractive, poorly functional and neglected. The current steep and dangerous flight of steps from/to the City Wall obscure the Roman remains underneath and should be replaced by a safer access that would reveal the Roman heritage. The cost of the design and implementation of this scheme for the public realm could be met by the Community Infrastructure Levy that would be raised by planning permission for the hotel. Both the success of the hotel and the regeneration of the Frodsham Street area would be aided this targeted investment.

The proposed Frodsham Street hotel development represents a major intervention in this vital part of the City Centre Conservation Area. It is to be hoped that improvements will be made to the proposal and that, if permitted, it will end up making a positive contribution to Chester's future urban character.

John Herson

CHURCH, SYNAGOGUE, MOSQUE - History of Brick Lane in one building

Buildings can define the history of a place and community. One such building is the Brick Lane Mosque, on the corner of Fournier Street and Brick Lane, which has been a place of worship for successive waves of immigrants to the East End of London for near 300 years. The words 'Umbra Sumus' are carved on the stone sundial on the front of the building. Prescient words as the translation from Latin is 'We are but shadows'.



This Grade 11* building was built in 1743 as a church for the Protestant Huguenots who had fled from

religious persecution in France. The Huguenots set up weaving workshops in and around Spitalfields. As the community grew and prospered, families moved out to the West End.

By the 19th century the church was falling into disuse and the building was taken over by the latest wave of immigrants, Ashkenazi Jews, who had escaped from the pogroms in the Russian Empire. The Jews continued the traditional trades of the Huguenots and Whitechapel became the centre for the rag trade. The Huguenots' church was converted into the 'Great Synagogue'. At one time there were 150 synagogues in the East End. Today only 4 remain as the main centre of Jewish population is now in North London.

After the ending of British colonial rule in India in 1947, the next wave of immigration to the East End were Bengalis fleeing from the ethnic violence in their homeland. The Grand Synagogue was repurposed as the Brick Lane Mosque and many of the local garment factories left by Jewish businesses are now owned and staffed by local Bengali workers. Today over 30% of the population of Tower Hamlets Borough has Bengali heritage.

A 5 day visit to London's East End has been organised for October (a booking form is enclosed with this newsletter). You will stay in Spitalfields, perhaps the most diverse, vibrant, multicultural neighbourhood in London, sandwiched between the City and Canary Wharf. You will visit places like the Museum of the Docklands, the Museum of the Home and the Bank of England Museum plus you will have the opportunity to enjoy cuisine from across the world (even jellied eels if you wish!). And of course the local textile heritage continues - from high-end designer clothes to cut-price bargains in Petticoat Lane market.

Christine Russell

WITHIN THESE WALLS

My early childhood in the 1960s was spent in a terraced house in Water Tower Street, beside the City Walls. Within a few paces of our home lay a cornucopia of hazards, including the newly opened St Martin's Way, the canal, the railway line, and many derelict buildings in nearby King Street, all presenting unspeakable risks to inquisitive kids. It was lucky that some degree of common sense, coupled with the threat of parental retribution if we strayed off the beaten track, rose above the urge to explore these places - most of the time, anyway. The railway line was far too terrifying to go anywhere near, but my brothers pushed the limit occasionally along the canalside, and I do remember us all venturing into dilapidated King Street houses to search for hidden treasure! Against all odds, the four of us made it to adulthood intact and unscathed.

Water Tower Street, despite the local perils, was an enchanting place to grow up in. We had a back yard that was a building site for many a den, as well as a handful of local streets to play in. Canning Street was especially thrilling as it faced the back end of Northgate Brewery. Many an hour was spent watching the drays collecting their cargoes of bottles and barrels and clanking across the cobbles into the world beyond. Our teenage years being some way off, we didn't really know what beer was, and wouldn't have considered it worth investigating due to the funny smell coming from the colourful bottle caps we collected from the brewery's back gate!

Another bonus was living around the corner from that wonderful edifice, the fire station. On hearing the siren calling the firemen to muster, my siblings and I would leg it up to the top of the Northgate, which gave the best view of the engines manoeuvring their way out of the building that's now Chez Jules. All other traffic was halted while this happened, since Northgate Street was only just wide enough for these mammoth vehicles to conduct a 3-point turn in before roaring off. Exciting times! On the many days when Chester wasn't ablaze, the engines - 3 of them, as I recall - would be sedately lined up, awaiting the next emergency. The only thing I could never work out was why all these engines were called Dennis!?

Much as we adored living in the town centre, the lack of parking was an issue. On procuring our first family car in the mid-60s, my dad negotiated a parking space in the driveway of the workwear factory along the canalside opposite our house. All went well until some bright spark decided to jemmy a paving slab from the Walls one night and toss it over the parapet onto our old Morris parked below. Strange what some folk find amusing as a pastime.

Spending my first decade of life in the centre of Chester instilled in me a deep affection for this beautiful city. My passion for the old place has never left me, though it did take a couple of gap years when nightclubs, glam rock

music, and boys in flared pants and platform shoes were a stronger enticement than the more cultural stuff of life. Temporarily consigned to a cupboard, the old Chester guide books my dad had given me were retrieved from hibernation once I became more sophisticated in my late teens. I still have a couple of those old booklets now, nestled alongside other well-thumbed Chester history books. Some of these were amassed over the years from Bookland, itself now

a thing of the past. This much-loved emporium occupied Cowper House in Bridge Street, one of the city's many ancient buildings that still fascinate me to this day.

All good things come to an end, and we left Water Tower Street in 1969, abandoning the city centre for the suburbs. It was a sad time too for lovers of Northgate Ale, as Greenall Whitley closed the brewery in the same year!

Maria Owen

INVESTING IN HERITAGE

The first thing to say is that this plea for greater investment in our heritage is not intended to be a criticism of those, in various sectors, who are doing their very best with limited resources. Nor is this request targeted solely at our local authority. If, as various independent reports suggest, Chester's 'unique selling point' (USP) is its heritage, then this is an issue that needs to be taken seriously by all sectors, public, private and voluntary.

It is evident to all to all who visit the city that the hotel and hospitality sector is 'bouncing back' well - but is the heritage sector being left behind? People come here because it is a special place which offers more than coffee and prosecco. They come for our architecture, ambience, history and heritage. We must not be complacent. Here are ten suggestions, which all require a fresh impetus and appropriate financial resources:

- 1. Millennium Festival Trail** - a £25,000 investment organised by Chester Civic Trust and Chester City Council in 2000. It deserves better promotion, new publicity and a mobile phone app.
- 2. Blue Plaque Trail** - unlike comparable places, we do not have a trail leaflet or phone app to help people find our many blue plaques.
- 3. River Dee South Bank Trail** - a relatively new ambition to install a series of information panels in between the Meadows and the Dingle. This could tell the fascinating history of Handbridge, as well as celebrating the centenary of the Queen's Park suspension bridge next year.
- 4. Chester Heritage Festival** - a success since we helped to start it in 2015, there is so much more we could deliver. The original ambition was to make this a festival of national significance but it will need more than its current level of funding to achieve this.
- 5. The Rows** - already the subject of a Heritage Action Zone project, Chester's most unique feature has so much to offer. The star attraction could be the grade 1 listed Leche House. This is the most unaltered historic building in the Rows and would make a fascinating visitor interpretation centre.

6. Dee House - investment has been found to stabilise the structure, but what will it be used for? Ideally, most if not all of this Council-owned building should be used for public benefit and, at the very least, it should include a state of the art visitor centre and reception facilities.

7. Civic Heritage - by which I mean our Civic regalia, Royal charters etc. Rarely mentioned, but surely worthy of being displayed in an appropriate setting.

8. Chester Castle - a complicated shared ownership between English Heritage and the Crown Estate. The former is making preparations to open the Inner Bailey more regularly, but the latter seems content to leave important listed buildings empty for over 30 years. The potential of this site as a cultural quarter is huge.

9. St Olave's Church - a Council-owned building that is standing empty. It has strong associations with Chester's Viking story so perhaps this could inspire a (peaceful!) new use?

10. St Paul's Church, Boughton - the most difficult building to re-use for another purpose as it has such a magnificent John Douglas interior. The church authorities need encouragement and inspiration to save this very important landmark building.

All of the above could and should involve Chester Civic Trust. Some already do but, in a few cases, we might consider putting some of our own money where our mouth is! Whatever you may think of that idea, the underlying challenge remains the same. We need to make the most of Chester's assets and opportunities. And we need a concerted effort backed by adequate and sustained investment.

Steve Langtree



VISIT TO THE COTSWOLDS

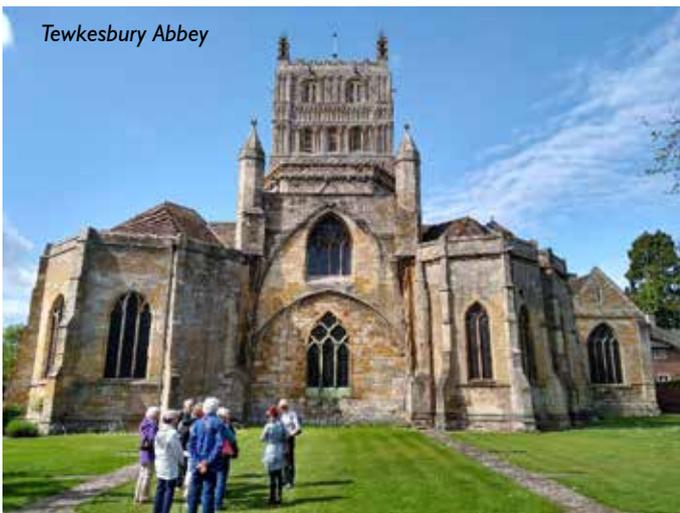
As brand-new members of the trust it was with a little trepidation that we boarded the coach in Chester to head for the beautiful Cotswolds.

Our first stop was Croome Court, giving a chance to stride out into a fine Capability Brown landscape centred on a Palladian house looking across to the Malvern Hills. Of great interest was the RAF visitor centre recalling the secret wartime airbase there.



Our accommodation at The Royal Hop Pole Hotel in Tewkesbury had begun life as a pilgrim hostelry for Tewkesbury Abbey in the 15th century. A coaching house added later featured in Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*. Information boards described the superb wall paintings in the medieval hall and various bedrooms. We ate at the lively Zitto E Mangia Italian restaurant in the town. By the end of the day the friendliness of the group had dispelled any worries about travelling amongst 'strangers'.

Tewkesbury Abbey



Tewkesbury Abbey is one of the finest examples of Norman architecture in Britain. It was the magnificent first stop on the next day's guided tour around the waterfronts, museums and alleys of the town. In the afternoon some chose to visit the John Moore Museum's Natural History collection. The Merchant's House, a 15th century former shop is reminiscent of a Chester Row dwelling.

Also open was a medieval hall house later used as a Nonconformist chapel. Tewkesbury gave us a taste of medieval and Tudor structures, seeing untreated oak beams of pale brown or grey, with original wattle and daub, and jettied overhanging first floors.

Many of the places we visited on the tour had similarities to the half-timbered buildings that give such distinction to Chester and its surrounding villages. Tracing the historical path from genuine medieval and Tudor structures to their afterlife in Victorian incarnations was a particular pleasure on our journey.

A wonderful time was had at the Fleece Inn in Bretforton. Owned by the National Trust it is a medieval half-timbered longhouse of great charm. We sampled the recent asparagus crop and enjoyed a delicious meal and cider in the inn's ancient barn.

A high point of the visit was a tour of William Morris's home at Kelmscott Manor. A leader of the Arts and Crafts movement, Morris responded to the great technological and social upheavals of his day with a style that conjures a pre-industrial golden age. As well as many Pre-Raphaelite drawings and paintings we admired the Morris's Tudor-style beds, fine tapestries and their daughter May's embroideries. Many themes were inspired by chivalric legends of the 'Pre-Raphaelite' age. It was a pleasure to see the 'Strawberry Thief' hanging, a popular print inspired by Morris witnessing a thrush taking a strawberry in the garden. Expanding on the recent civic trust lecture by Mallory Horrill, Curator at the William Morris Society, our viewing was brought to life with tales of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's love affair with Jane Morris and William's unhappy exile until the romance burned itself out. Suffused by the personalities who created an artistic movement, the staff at Kelmscott did a wonderful job of communicating the enduring legacy founded in the idyllic mansion.

At the Cotswold town of Broadway we wandered the museums, coffee houses and antique shops, while a brave few walked down the hill from Broadway Tower.



Broadway



Next morning brought a fascinating tour of Weston's Cider Mill with enthusiastic guides. We indulged in the company's ciders and a ploughman's lunch. At Hereford, we had free time to explore the Cathedral, Mappa Mundi and historic buildings including The Black and White Museum. Throughout, Christine and Karen arranged for us to eat in a variety of top restaurants which all fulfilled their star-rating. On our last evening we had a final feast at the wonderful Abbot's Table in Tewkesbury.

Wightwick Manor was a perfect ending to the tour, a Victorian paint merchants' house inspired by Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites. Here was the high Victorian interpretation of 'Old England' with sharp black and white timbering, steeply pitched roofs, jettied first floors and high twisted chimneys. Inside was a vast array of artefacts, including a Burne-Jones painting of Love Among the Ruins. As Simon Jenkins says in England's Thousand Best Houses (which also lists Croome Court, Kelmscott Manor, Tewkesbury Merchant's House and Broadway Tower) 'Wightwick is a Pre-Raphaelite Banquet'.

Many thanks to Christine and Karen for organising this wonderful tour, and to our excellent coach driver.

Martine and Martin Bailey

CHESTER HERITAGE EVENTS 2022

Normality has been restored: heritage events have returned to Chester streets and venues; and Chester Civic Trust continues to work in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council to deliver Chester Heritage Festival and Heritage Open Days.

This year's festival included a full programme of events at the end of June with financial support from the Trust. Sincere thanks to Trust members who led walks and especially to Paul Hyde who presented three lectures and led four walks.

Events were also presented through the festival website along with other online media, which will continue to be available until September.

The festival has been judged a great success, and planning of Chester Heritage Festival for June 2023 is already underway.

Now we are looking forward to Heritage Open Days from 9 to 18 September with some events focusing on the national theme for 2022, Astounding Inventions, including a walk looking at Chester's industrial heritage; a talk about Chester physician, John Haygarth and his contribution to the invention of vaccines; and a presentation by Stewart Shuttleworth, 'Forgotten Chester: Engineering World Leaders'.

Other events will allow an inside look into normally hidden places and a closer look at familiar places.

There will be no brochure for Heritage Open Days this year. Details of all events across England can be found on www.heritageopendays.org.uk. Full details of events in Chester and beyond in West Cheshire, organised by the team the Trust is a part of are available on the heritage festival website www.chesterheritagefestival.co.uk.

Liz Preedy



Paul Hyde leading a walk in Chester



Chester Civic Trust

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

9th - 18th SEPTEMBER

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

See www.chesterheritagefestival.co.uk

13th SEPTEMBER

Talk by John Walker 'John Haygarth preventing smallpox' 7.30pm at BLP

17th SEPTEMBER

HERITAGE OPEN DAY at BISHOP LLOYD'S PALACE - 10.00am-5.00pm

21st SEPTEMBER

CORPORATE MEMBERS RECEPTION
BISHOP LLOYD'S PALACE - 5.30-7.00pm

23rd SEPTEMBER

KNUTSFORD WALK (flyer enclosed with details and booking form)

6th OCTOBER

TRUST AGM at ST MARY'S CREATIVE SPACE 7.30pm

Guest speaker (invited) Professor Eunice Simmons, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Chester (details to follow)

7th OCTOBER

DAY VISIT TO MACCLESFIELD SILK MILLS and TABLEY HOUSE (flyer enclosed with details and booking form)

12th OCTOBER

GROSVENOR MUSEUM LECTURE THEATRE 7.30pm - LECTURE (details to follow)

22nd - 26th OCTOBER

VISIT to the EAST END of LONDON (flyer enclosed with details and booking form)

16th NOVEMBER

GROSVENOR MUSEUM LECTURE THEATRE 7.30pm - LECTURE (details to follow)

5th JANUARY 2023

TWELFTH NIGHT QUIZ (details to follow in December newsletter)

24th - 28th APRIL 2023

VISIT to NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE (details to follow in December newsletter)

PLEASE NOTE

There are some changes to how events are organised. Some are being advertised by email. Please do check your emails for these. All events are now on the society's web site with an application form. You can pay and fill in the form online. We will continue to put flyers into the mailouts whenever possible.

Payment now can be done by BACS.

The Bank Transfer Account for trips is not the same as for subscriptions. We will always remind you on the

flyers, about which to use. You can continue to send cheques to Bishop Lloyd's Palace.

Remember that no news is good news. You can assume you have a place on an event, if you do not hear from us.

We are sorry, but events are becoming more expensive. They continue to be advertised at what they cost to organise. A very small donation is given to Chester Civic Trust. The organisers receive no payment. Costs of the visits have risen as prices rise.

CORPORATE MEMBERS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER
KENNEY MOORE
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