



CHAIR'S FESTIVE MESSAGE

2025 will mark the 65th anniversary of the founding of Chester Civic Trust. The threat to demolish the historic Blue Bell Inn in Northgate Street for a road-widening scheme and the plans to build an 8-storey office block on Frodsham Street that would have obscured views of the City Walls and the Cathedral were the catalyst for the formation of Chester Civic Trust back in 1960. The original objectives of the Trust remain the same today - to protect Chester's rich heritage and to influence the way our city evolves to meet the present need to create jobs, better housing and a cleaner and greener local environment without destroying the unique historic character of our city. We also retain one of our founding principles that the Trust should work with rather than against the local council. We look forward to engaging with Cheshire West and Chester's elected members and officers over major development proposals like Northgate 2, the Railway Station and surrounding land and the re-development of the Browns store on Eastgate Street.

After the COVID years when our finances were depleted, the Trust is now back on a secure financial footing. This is due in no small part to generous legacies from Dr Allan Pullin, Chairman of the Trust from 1975-1978 and Keith Truman, a stalwart of the Events Committee for many years. We have also received benevolent donations from members.

There were many highlights in 2024 including a 5 day Spring visit to Cardiff and a highly successful Garden Party held at the home of Michael and Inger Trevor Barnston on a glorious sunny day in June where members had the opportunity to meet Lady Alexis Redmond MBE, the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, the Trust's new President.

Members present at a well-attended AGM, held in the Cathedral Refectory in October, made a significant decision to change the status of the Trust from an Unincorporated Charity to an Incorporated one.

Plans are well under way for a full programme of visits, lectures, talks and walks in 2025 beginning with our popular Twelfth Night Quiz that will be held at Bishop Lloyd's Palace on Sunday 5th January. We are always in need of volunteers to serve on Committees and help at events. And, if you have any suggestions for future visits and events, please let us know.

On behalf of the Officers and Members of the Executive Committee I wish you and your family and friends a happy, peaceful and healthy festive season.

Christine Russell



ENGAGEMENT WITH DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The "New Works" Committee are an expert group of Chester Civic Trust members who monitor and assess the quality and impact of all planning applications and development proposals that affect Chester.

On 5th November they attended an impressive exhibition at on the Racecourse strategic development plan and detailed proposals for the first phase of projects. The aim is to regenerate the Racecourse and also the surrounding area: no more tented village and clutter. A planning application should be submitted to the Council by the end of November and members of New Works Committee will discuss the proposals at a future meeting.

We can all view and comment on planning applications online via the Cheshire West and Chester planning portal: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-control/see-or-comment-on-planning-applications/how-to-view-an-application



Peter Hadfield, John Tweed, Christine Russell and John Herson

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY CHESTER CIVIC TRUST AWARDS 2025



The 'Good, Bad and Ugly' Awards recognise progress and change over the past twelve months, encourage high standards in the built environment (urban and rural), recognise achievements that may not feature in a more formal award scheme, recognise the work of local individuals and promote the Chester Civic Trust in the wider community.

Once again, we are inviting Civic Trust members to submit their nominations for our 2025 Awards. We draw attention to the Bad and Ugly in the hope that these can be remedied or avoided in the future. However, it is important that we recognise the "Good" projects and initiatives completed during 2024. The recent "Good" award was given to The Flags and Hamilton House, Church Street, Tarvin.

The Chairs Special Award was given to Picturehouse, an excellent addition to Chester's Northgate development.

Please look around you and help us celebrate some of the positive developments in our local area. You can make a nomination using the forms included with this newsletter or online via the Chester Civic Trust's website. We look forward to receiving your nominations by the closing date which is Friday 24 January 2025.

Peter Hadfield, Chair of Judging Panel

A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Next year is the 50th Anniversary of the European Architectural Heritage Year.

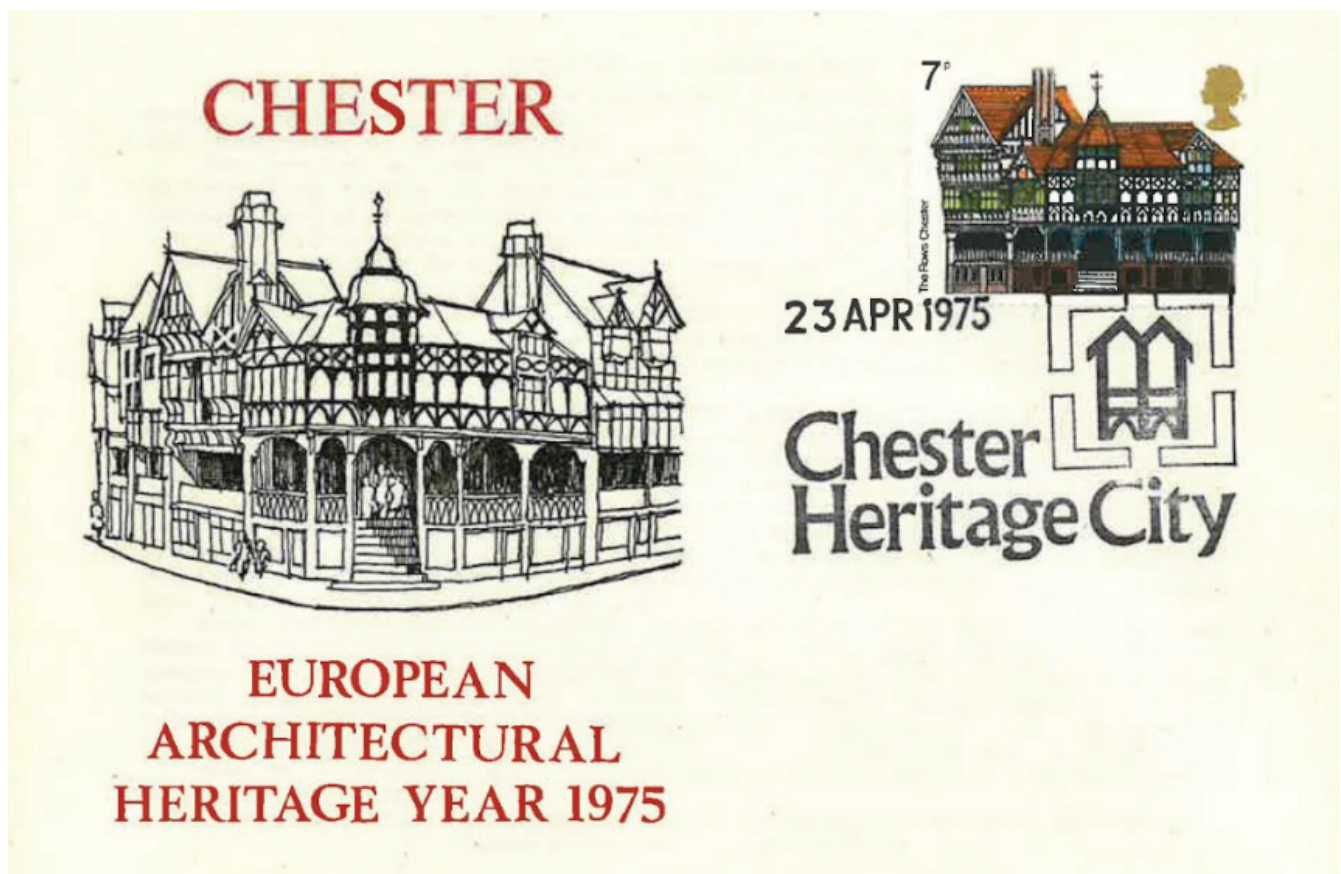
Chester played a central, internationally recognised, role in celebrating the importance of our shared built heritage back in 1975, so what can we do to build on that legacy in 2025 and beyond?

Listening to our Cestrian hero, Cyril Morris and my day job colleague, Sir Donald Insall, talking about European Architectural Heritage Year (EAHY), the role of Chester Civic Trust, and how highly regarded Chester remains in Europa Nostra, has inspired me to chair our Heritage Committee and to expand on Steve Langtree's excellent work.

Challenges both large and small remain and new problems arise year on year, but it is not all doom and gloom. The One City Plan and the Chester Great And Small (GAS) organisations, with Chester Civic Trust representation, are helping with progress on the Castle, the Amphitheatre, Chester Hydro, Northgate 2 the Rows and our Cathedral. These are exciting times but one fact to face is the lack of resources within the Council compared with 1975 and their folk on the front line need our support.

However, we see a growing list of 'Bad' and 'Ugly' in our annual round and Peter tells me that there are always many more of these nominations than the 'Good'. Our nascent Heritage Committee has started to tackle this long list head on, including volunteering on working to clean and improve the Roman 'Strong Room'. We want to play a positive collaborative role in improving our City, but we will also hold the people paid to manage its environment to account when necessary. If you want to make a real difference in Chester, please join us, we need you, we need more volunteers especially as we look forward to EAHY50 next year. You can email me directly if you would like to know more about how you could make a difference.

Tony Barton
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SURREY RESIDENTIAL VISIT

March 31st - April 4th

There was a scurrying to rural Surrey towards the end of the nineteenth century. The railway had brought its delights nearer to London.

The painter George Watts decamped here from Holland Park during the winter months. Watts, who modestly called himself Signor, had an Arts and Crafts House built here. Limnerslease is part of the attractions in Compton. At Little Holland House he had built a gallery to display his works to the general public on 'Show Sundays'. This was the foundation of the Watts Gallery at Compton.

It has a collection of the varying styles and media of his career. It includes his iconic symbolist painting, Hope, as well as phrenological portraits of his contemporary notables.

His younger and adulatory wife, Mary Seton Watts, was active in the local community. She had worked teaching pottery in Whitechapel.

We will spend a day at Compton Village where we will have an explanatory group talk about the Watts Chapel and its symbolist content.

We are staying in Woking and time will be given here to explore the town. We will also spend time in Guildford, including a visit to Polesden Lacey where we will have a private, Behind The Scenes talk. The cathedral here was built almost simultaneously with the Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool. It had been devised prior to the Second World War, but the finance to build beyond the crypt came in the 1950s. Designed by Sir Edward Maufe, it was a contemporary interpretation of Gothic cathedral features. It has an Art Deco bulk and simplicity.



As always, we will make the most of our journeys. Hughenden House was Disraeli's Gothic home. The house was a top-secret establishment during the Second World War. The Trust are developing part of the house to show the map making work on German war targets at the time.

On the way home we visit Stanley Spencer's beloved Cookham. Spencer spent his childhood and his adult life here. He only left for his traumatic service in the First World War. The whole village is reflected in his paintings. We will begin the visit with a talk at the Spencer Gallery and we will be able to see some of these paintings reflecting the local church, river and streets. There will then be time to do a walk to actually see them.

Karen McKay, Chair of Events Committee

Chester Civic Trust Needs Your Support

The operation of Chester Civic Trust is wholly undertaken by volunteers. Could you spare a little time to support our activities? Some duties are office based where there are opportunities to meet the public and socialise with other members. Alternatively, if you have computer skills (using email etc.) you can also get involved from the comfort of your own home.

Currently, we are hoping to add to our list of people who can undertake admin duties, provide support for running events and participate in the work of the Heritage Committee. If you would like to find out more, please email src.web@gmail.com

BISHOP LLOYD'S PALACE



A small group of members of the Trust has researched the history of Bishop Lloyd's Palace through late Tudor times to contemporary restorations. A virtual tour of BLP and links to the monographs that they have produced are available on the Civic Trust website: chestercivictrust.org.uk/aboutus/the-history-of-bishop-lloyds-palace/

This important town house has been associated with Chester Merchant Adventurers, a king's ex-mistress, a coaching firm, a girls' school, a pub and a cheese makers. Were there slum properties in the burgage plots behind the buildings? What is the connection between Bishop Lloyd's Palace and the Royal Crescent in Bath? Did Charles Brown really save the building from American buyers?

These questions are answered in a new monograph which traces owners and occupiers of the two buildings from the 1700s to 1900.

Karen McKay

In November, the public were invited to #Rowvember: a celebration of the history, heritage and businesses which makes Chester rows unique.

We know very little about the long history of the individual town houses on Chester Rows.

FOUNDLING HOSPITAL

Did you know that there was a foundling hospital in Chester? In May we moved one of our regular social meetings from Bishop Lloyd's Palace to the Bluecoat Building. Our guest speaker Anthony Annakin-Smith provided evidence that the Bluecoat Building had been used as a branch of the London foundling hospital in the 1760's. See more details of the event on our website. This year's Civic Voice AGM is being held (7th December) in the Foundling Museum in London, the site of the former Hospital.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION

In July the government published a consultation on a new national planning policy framework that will govern the scope and content of planning decisions and policies made at the local level. This will directly influence the next local plan to be drawn up by Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Civic Voice is a national charity representing civic societies across the country. The government recently wrote to them saying:

"We recognise the important role that civic societies play in promoting the interests of local communities and I would like to assure you that community involvement in place-making is at the heart of the planning system."

The Chester Civic Trust's Committees will monitor the development of the new national planning framework and the way it will influence decisions in our local area.

For a more in-depth analysis, please see our website: chestercivictrust.org.uk/planning/

Andrew Pannell
Chair of New Works Committee

RECOGNISING PROGRESS AND CHANGE

One of the commendations in the 2024 Good, Bad, Ugly awards was for the extensive refurbishment of the Lock Vaults on Hoole Lane overseen by the licensee Carl Burleigh. The £400,000 redevelopment has been a long process. Previously The Lock Vaults had a mock Tudor exterior and was boarded-up with peeling paint, graffiti and weeds but has been remodelled with a charcoal grey and wood effect

exterior, new roof, bi-fold café style windows and brighter lighting.

The cottages opposite were refurbished recently also adding to the regeneration of this area of Hoole. Carl is hoping to take responsibility for a patch of land by the front of the pub for a pavement café opposite.



Before © Bernard Platt



Impression © Star Pubs & Bars

PRESERVE AND REUSE - OR DESTROY AND REBUILD?

At the recent COP29 climate change summit in Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister announced that the UK will now aim for an 81% cut in its emissions by 2035. This target updates the 78% pledge given under the previous government. Currently, this is higher than any other major economy.

Nearly 40% of global carbon emissions come from the built environment, with new construction responsible for about a quarter of that. The president of the Royal Institute of British Architects says: "Experts predict that 80% of our current building stock will still be in use in 2050, the year we want to be net zero. We need to make a concerted effort to realise the full potential of these buildings and take retrofit seriously ... Reducing the built environment's impact is one of the most effective ways of helping the UK reach its legal commitment to be a net zero community by 2050..."

"The tragic fact is that 20% VAT applies on building refurbishment (since 2012) whilst new build is VAT free, so many construction companies and property developers are keener than they should be to demolish and build fresh, rather than refurb and repurpose which halves the carbon emissions." (Jane Harrad-Roberts, Chester Civic Trust Trustee and project director for Green Expo.)

Recently, Civic Voice Expert Panel Member, Celia Clark, issued a call to action. She urges civil societies across the UK to share their experiences and examples of successful adaptive reuse and retrofitting projects by making contact via Civic Voice: info@civicvoice.org.uk Do we have examples in our community? These stories will be used to help build a case for legislative reform that reflects the importance of sustainability and heritage conservation.

GARDEN PARTY, CREWE HILL, FARNDON

In June Chester Civic Trust members were excited and honoured to have a rare and exclusive opportunity to visit one of the most historic and wonderful private estates in our locality, Crewe Hill near Farndon. This was by kind invitation of Michael and Inger Trevor-Barnston. The weather was glorious. We enjoyed cakes, strawberries and fizz accompanied by the Farndon and District brass band. The head gardener Tristan Salmon provided several informative tours of the extensive grounds.

Due partly to the generous purchases of raffle tickets, this enjoyable event raised £1,500 towards running costs and for the Trust's work in preserving and protecting buildings in Chester.

The Garden Party also presented the first opportunity for members to meet Chester Civic Trust's new President, Lady Alexis Redmond, the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire who, together with her husband, Sir Phil Redmond spoke to the 120 guests and drew the raffle.



*Lady Alexis Redmond President of Chester Civic Trust),
David Evans, Tristan Salmon, Christine Russell,
Inger and Michael Trevor-Barnston*



Important Information

Have we got your email address? Sometimes we need to communicate last minute changes to events. We can message you directly if we have your details. Please email admin@chestercivictrust.org.uk if you want to be added to the mailing list.

We operate separate bank accounts for membership fees and events. It helps our office volunteers greatly if bank payments are made to the account details provide on each form. Also, separate cheques for membership fees and event bookings are appreciated.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Member Lectures

Free entry to members. Guests are welcome to attend: £5 on the door.

These events start at 7.30pm and are held on a Wednesday at The Grosvenor Museum lecture theatre, 27 Grosvenor Street, Chester CH1 2DD. There is free parking nearby in the car park on Castle Drive after 6pm.

JANUARY 15th

James Wright 'Historic Building Mythbusting'.

FEBRUARY 12th

Create Streets

"Speaker from "Create Streets", a think tank who research links between urban form and wellbeing, health, sustainability, prosperity, value and popularity.."

MARCH 19th

Colin Potts, Programme Leader International Tourism Management, Chester University.

APRIL 16th

Peter Cocker will give a talk on Thomas Brassey - the world's greatest railway builder.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Additional Events in 2025

If you would like to attend, you will need to book using the forms provided in this or future mailings. These talks are usually held at our wonderful meeting space in Bishop Lloyds Palace. Please see details and booking forms included.

Sunday JANUARY 5th, 7.00pm

Twelfth Night Quiz.

Thursday JANUARY 30th, 2pm

Michael Trevor Barnston talk on his family history that dates back to the Norman Conquest. Followed by afternoon tea.

Friday FEBRUARY 28th, 7.30pm

"Chester Witches" Peter Elliott and Clare Dudman.

MARCH 31st - April 4th

Surrey Residential. Highlights will include a visit to the Watts Gallery and Village, Guildford, Polesden Lacey, Hughenden and the Stanley Spencer Gallery.

Thursday APRIL 10th

Day visit to Llangollen including tour of Plas Newydd, lunch and talk on the Pontcysyllte World Heritage Site

Wednesday MAY 21st

Planned event: Wrexham, guided walk-to be announced in April.

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. For more information on the benefits or to join, contact **Nick Clarke** at nickclarke77@btinternet.com

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