



THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Chester Civic Trust Awards 2025

These awards are presented annually and with the help of our members the Trust aims to:

- 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.

Members have been busy again this year with a total of 63 nominations submitted. There were 26 Good nominations together with 37 Bad/Ugly nominations. All categories included an interesting mix of nominations. This year there were no nominations from outside Chester; we would like to encourage Trust members to find projects outside the City in the future. There was one project which the Judges declined to consider this year as it is not yet complete; this will automatically be included with other nominations next year.

CHAIRS SPECIAL AWARD

Okells, Walker Street, Hoole

The Co-op in Walker Street opened in 1906 and included a grocer and butcher together with a shoe and clothing store on the upper floor. Latterly it became a convenience store and also accommodated Co-op Funeralcare. The store closed in July 2017 ending 110 years of the Co-op on this site. The empty building started to become dilapidated and run down. It is therefore great to see that Okells have refurbished the building to provide a new shop selling plants, homeware and gifts together with a café. This is a really good addition to the vibrant Hoole local shopping quarter.



Okells

THE GOOD AWARDS



15 - 23 Frodsham Street

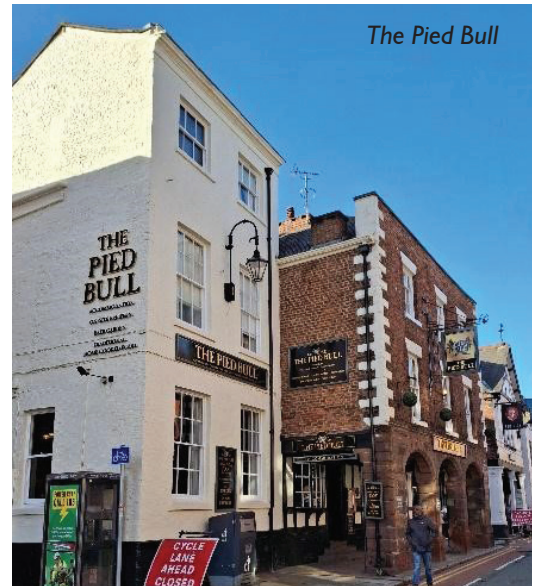
15 - 23 Frodsham Street

This was another empty building (previously Yates Wine Lodge) desperately in need of refurbishment and a new use. The upper floors have now been converted to residential apartments with the whole of the ground floor being occupied by the kitchen retailer Magnet. The work has been carried out to a high standard and the shop unit provides an active frontage to the street. This is a welcome improvement to Frodsham Street.

The Pied Bull, Northgate Street

This is Chester's oldest coaching inn; it dates back to 1155 and since 2009 has been trading as an independent business. It is a pub, restaurant and thirty one bedroom hotel, it also has a microbrewery and a secret beer garden. Two adjacent buildings including the grade II listed Folliot House have been converted to provide twenty of the bedrooms. During 2024 they completed a huge refurbishment covering both the exterior and interior of the pub and restaurant.

It is good to see this sympathetic refurbishment which also includes work to reduce the environmental impact of the business.



The Pied Bull

Hough Green Local History Group

A sub-group of the Hough Green Residents Association comprising just three people have produced three books From Bricks to Villas, The Green by the Hollow Way and Mansions, Semis and Terraces. To coincide with the recent publication of the third volume it is timely to recognise their hard work.

These well researched books provide an excellent history of the areas of Hough Green, Curzon Park and Saltney. Copies are ordered by email from this address local.history@raycar.plus.com.

The Festival of Ideas

This was a programme of free, inclusive and accessible public events on a wide range of themes in and around Chester, co-created by the University of Chester, external stakeholders and city partners. The events covered a range of topics including environmental issues, heritage, the future of cities and wellbeing. It is good to see the University engaging with local people and encouraging civic participation.

We are delighted to see that the Festival is to be repeated this year.

COMMENDATIONS



New Housing, Commonhall Street

New Housing, Commonhall Street

This new residential development fits in well with the street scene. It is good to see the carefully detailed brickwork around doors and windows and the use of other traditional materials matching the houses on the opposite side of the street.



Hoole Hardware

Hoole Hardware, Faulkner Street

This shop always presents a well-designed and beautifully presented display within its fine shopfront, which adds a modern flavour to its traditional form. The shop elevates the retail offer on this busy street.



Next



St Werburgh Street



Brook Taverner



HSBC Building

Refurbishments in St Werburgh Street and Eastgate Street

We are pleased to recognise several façade refurbishment projects which have been carried out to a high standard. These are the **HSBC building (47 Eastgate Street)** and the building occupied by **Next (37 Eastgate Street)** together with the **Eastern Section of St Werburgh Street**. At the street level **Brook Taverner** have fitted out numbers 14 and 16 with a simple dark blue and white shopfront with nicely dressed window display. If only other parts of Chester could look this good.



Repairs to Northgate

Repairs to Northgate

These Awards also aim to recognise small projects which have been carried out to a high standard. The stonework repairs to the Northgate have been extremely well done and we hope this sets the standard for work to the walls in the future.

THE BAD AND THE UGLY AWARDS

This section is included in the hope that it will prompt action. Given the current stagnant economy and inadequate funding for local services, we are not anticipating that 2025 will bring many improvements. As usual we had many nominations for our 'Hardy Perennials' (those buildings which get mentioned year after year) including Dee House, the former Quicks Garage/St Olaves, Diocesan House, the collapsed wall in Liverpool Road, Delamere Street, the Southeast Angle Tower and the dilapidated buildings in Boughton. We remain concerned about all these areas but this year we decided to concentrate on new nominations and those which we have not mentioned or some time.



The City Walls

We have included the City Walls because there is both bad and good news. The bad news is that there is no progress with repairs to the Recorders Steps or the steps on either side of St Martins Gate. The Walls should be a key priority for maintenance and presentation especially given their value as a tourist, leisure and educational asset.

The good news is that preliminary works associated with the reconstruction of the collapsed section of wall behind the Wesleyan Chapel I St John Street are underway. Sadly, there is no agreed date for work beyond the anticipated completion of site investigation works and scheduled monument consent in mid-2026. It is also good to see that the upper part of Off The Wall (a regular in the Bad/Ugly section of these awards) has been repaired.

Kirton House and Former GP Surgery, Hunter Street

Both buildings are in a shockingly bad state. The Victorian red brick Kirton House is amazingly high quality whilst the 1950s doctors' surgery is a good example of mid-century Modernism and post-war optimism in the early years of the NHS.

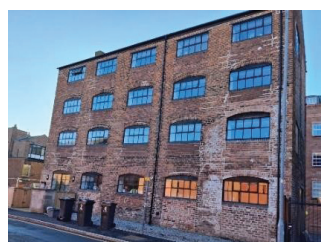
The dilapidation of these buildings detracts from the new development of the Northgate Quarter and should be a priority for improvement. Too many empty buildings in Chester are left to deteriorate and become vandalised resulting in demolition and redevelopment when an earlier intervention could bring them back into beneficial use.

Public Toilets

It is shocking that there are virtually no public toilets in the city centre. The toilets in the market are badly signposted and already showing signs of wear whilst the badly maintained toilets in Frodsham Street are unappealing. The toilets in the Grosvenor Precinct and below the old market are no longer available. These are an important amenity for visitors and residents alike and appropriate provision should be made.

Finally, in addition to myself the Judges this year were Chloe Sheward, Paul Fielding, Steve Wright, and Philip Harrison. They all have my thanks for their time and commitment visiting and providing insightful comments on the nominations.

Peter Hadfield



Commonhall Street

There is a proliferation of wheelie bins and other items (including beer barrels and pallets) around Chester, we have chosen Commonhall Street as an example, but they are everywhere! These are detrimental to the street scene and block roads and pavements. Properly designed storage areas where these are shielded and contained would help to reduce the problem.

HERITAGE COMMITTEE NEWS

This year marks Chester Civic Trust's 65th Anniversary, and also the half century since Chester's leading role in European Architectural History Year. You can read more about European Architectural History Year in the last newsletter.

There will be a conference in Chester Town Hall looking back to 1975, but really exploring the challenges of the next 50 years for historic buildings. It is being organised, with Chester Civic Trust (CCT) Heritage Committee support, by the Institute of Historic Buildings Conservation (IHBC) but tickets will be available to Civic Trust members.

Watch this space for other events, coinciding with the Chester Heritage Festival and Heritage Open Days.

The CCT Heritage Committee looks forward to trying to tackle the 'Bad' and 'Ugly' 2025 awards and supporting those individuals and organisations working towards making our city even better.

Tony Barton

HERITAGE FESTIVAL 24th MAY - 8th JUNE

Chester Heritage Festival continues to be supported by the Civic Trust and is going from strength to strength. Over the last ten years members have been involved with the organisation, presenting talks, leading walks and of course participating in the events.



Roman Zumba - Chester Heritage Festival 2024

The 10th festival will be bigger and better, with something for everybody: free family activities during half term; cocktails in a crypt for adults; long and short walks to keep fit; opportunities to learn new skills from calligraphy to Morris dancing; talks, and films, in Picturehouse and Storyhouse; events in the Cathedral, in Bishop Lloyds Palace and some less likely venues; online events; the unexpected around the city; new events and some favourites from the last ten years.



Chester Summer Celebration - photo credit Stuart Robinson

The festival launches on Saturday 24 May with activities in Exchange Square and displays and talks in Picturehouse. There is then a packed programme until Sunday 8 June. However, that is not the end. Since the 2024 festival, pop-up events have been organised by the festival team. There will now be occasional events year-round, in addition to the festival, Heritage Open Days in September and Rowvember, the celebration of Chester's unique Rows in November launched in 2023. All are promoted through the festival website where you will also find links to videos and articles about **Our Heritage** and details of regular heritage events to **Discover Chester**. Visit the website to learn more, book events or sign up for newsletters to ensure you stay in touch with how Chester's heritage is being celebrated. www.chesterheritagefestival.co.uk

Liz Preedy

CHESTER WITCHES

Those of you who attended the “Chester Witches” talk in February will know that one of the speakers, Peter Elliot, was unable to attend at short notice. Sending through his apologies he has provided some text explaining his reason for writing the Chesterwiki article. There appears to have been much inaccurate information concerning witch trials. The numbers of

executions were greatly inflated and the whole issue was sensationalised. The event information on our website will be updated to include the additional information. Many thanks to Karen Mckay for taking the stage and delivering his presentation at very short notice.

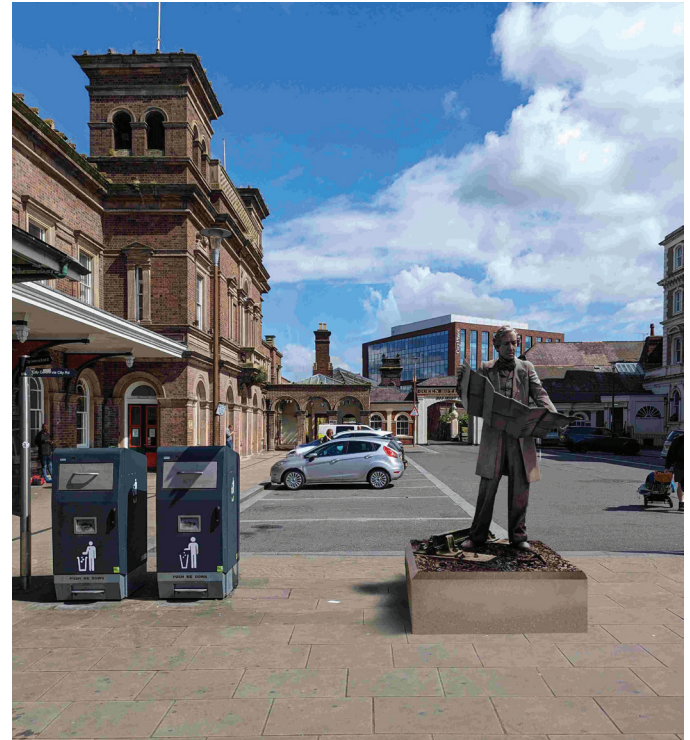


2025 is the 200 th anniversary of the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the world's first railway to use steam locomotives. The UK will be holding numerous celebrations, including a dedicated Railway200 train 'Inspiration' touring the country including, hopefully, Chester.

As part of these celebrations, Peter Cocker is giving the Chester Civic Trust's April lecture (Wednesday 16th April) on the subject of “Thomas Brassey - the world's foremost railway builder of the 19th century”.

Thomas Brassey was Chester born and bred and, as a railway contractor, built one third of all UK railway lines during his lifetime and one in twenty miles of all railway lines in the world. He is relatively little known, certainly compared to his contemporaries like George and Robert Stephenson and Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

In addition to his work for the Civic Trust, Peter is a charity trustee of the Thomas Brassey Society, whose mission statement is to make Thomas Brassey better known to the general public.



To this end, the Society is planning to erect a bronze statue of Thomas Brassey in front of Chester Railway Station in 2025, to coincide with Railway200. This is a particularly appropriate location because Thomas built the station in his home town, together with most of the railway lines serving it.

Peter Cocker

STOP PRESS

Planning is underway for a celebration of the 65th anniversary of Chester Civic Trust during the week of June 23. Watch out for more details by email and on the web site.

NEW MEMBERSHIP LEAFLETS

We have enclosed one new leaflet in your newsletter pack for you to hand to anyone you think could be a new Trust member. Please do attend events with new guests in mind.

MARCH LECTURE: "Chester - The Must-see European City 20 years on"

Colin Potts, Head of Destination Chester, highlighted the diverse array of activities and quality developments in the city in our March lecture, emphasising the absence of such offerings a decade or fifteen years ago.

He listed key milestones since 1945 for Chester planning (1964, 1968, 1981, 1996 and 2000) and followed on with covering in depth how plans after them have developed and influenced other solutions so he and we could reevaluate and look forward.

Colin demonstrated using 'visitor to the city' theory how the walls were key to the visitor offer as "The pedestrian link route" and then followed with "the waterfront scenic route". He pointed out that there are 23% lower visitors in 2023 than 2017 and areas in the city of 'Conspicuous Deprivation' but said "this is not uncommon in most other English cities.

Chester BID footfall data now shows improvements on the last year measured and in 10 of the last 11 months." He highlighted that 3-5 companies were bidding to deliver the Northgate 2 plans which

are now much more 'mixed use' than retail. But big opportunities still needing development were discussed; an enhanced 'south bank' for a Groves circular walk for example, and development of the River and Castle area. A target for 2015 was wifi "fully wired" which we still await in the city.

He finished with a Quote from 1964 "Chester's face is its fortune" and one from 1856 below, and challenged current thinking to develop a vision for the city which is more memorable and simpler.

"If Chester is to maintain its far-flung celebrity as one of the 'wonder cities' of England, if the great European and Transatlantic continents are still to fill our hotels, and the not too plenteous coffers of our tradesmen, one course only is open to us. We must preserve inviolate our city's rare attractions."

There is a link to the slides shown at the presentation from the news page of Chester Civic Trust's website.

Jane Harrad-Roberts

WORK UNDER WAY ON NEW CENTRE FOR CHESHIRE'S ARCHIVES

The new state-of-the-art history centre will be delivered on the site of the former Enterprise Centre, on Lightfoot Street, Hoole, and is included in the wider Chester City Gateway Masterplan and Chester One City Plan. Construction company Kier began onsite in January alongside the project's sister site in Crewe with both new centres opening in 2026.

Cheshire Archives and Local Studies is a shared service of Cheshire East Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council. It looks after the county's unique and irreplaceable written and pictorial history, which dates back more than 900 years.

The two new history centres will feature exhibition and event spaces, new research rooms, workspace for staff and volunteers, as well as environmentally stable storage for the archives.

The project has been made possible thanks to National Lottery players through The National

Lottery Heritage Fund and The Wolfson Foundation, an independent charity with a focus on research and education. More information on the project can be found at: <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/regeneration-of-west-cheshire/chester-regeneration/cheshires-archives-a-story-shared>

Andrew Arditti



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 generally 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.

APRIL 16th

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

First lecture of the new season will be 8th Oct.

Additional Events in 2025

The following are additional member only events. 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. * details enclosed.

APRIL 10th (Thursday)

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

MAY 16th (Friday), 2pm

Barry Clark, Arts and Crafts in Manchester*

MAY 21st (Wednesday)

Green visit to Wrexham*

MAY 24th to June 8th

Chester Heritage Festival

JUNE 10th (Tuesday), 7.30pm

Talk: Mike Emery, Recent Archaeology in St John's*

JUNE 12th (Thursday)

Day visit to World of Glass, St Helen's and Astley Hall, Chorley*

WEEK BEGINNING JUNE 23rd

Celebration of the 65th anniversary of Chester Civic Trust. Details to follow by email.

AUGUST 27th (Wednesday) 2pm

Talk: Karen McKay, Treasures in the Attic*

SEPTEMBER 12th to 21st

Heritage Open Days

SEPTEMBER 25th (Thursday)

Visit to Bradford, City of Culture 2025-details to follow in August.

OCTOBER 2nd

AGM. Details to be mailed to members nearer the time

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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