



CHESTER CIVIC TRUST ANNUAL AWARDS 2026

Celebrating the Good, Recognising Improvement and Bringing Attention to the Bad

Although the **The Good, The Bad and The Ugly Awards** have always been well supported by Trust members, this year we have had a refresh. The aim was to reduce the emphasis on the Bad/Ugly and to add a category which recognises improvement.

Through these annual awards 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 groups, individuals and businesses,
- promote the Chester Civic Trust in the wider community.

Two main themes emerged this year. In the Good category it was the tremendous work done by volunteers in and around Chester whilst in the Bad category it was poor first impressions at Gateways to the City.

A summary of the awards is below, but please see the full report on the Chester Civic Trust website.

THE CHAIRS SPECIAL AWARD The Thomas Brassey Statue

The first of our nominations for volunteers is for the work of the Thomas Brassey Society to educate the public about him and his amazing achievements through talks, publicity material, exhibitions, educational publications, sponsorship of a children's book and supporting other societies with links to Thomas Brassey, both in the UK and in Europe. In particular members wanted to recognise their work which culminated in the erection of a bronze statue outside Chester Station. the city of his birth, alongside the interpretation panel already in situ to ensure his legacy is not forgotten.



THE GOOD AWARDS

Watergate Row Stallboards

The stallboards are an important aspect of the Rows system and it is good to see the stallboards being refurbished.

The operation is significantly improving the appearance of the Row walkway and helping to maintain these important features.



History of Chester on the Internet - Peter Elliott and Steven Howe

There cannot be many cities in England, which has so much public information on its history as Chester. This is due to the work of Peter Elliott and Steve Howe. Both have set up sites on the internet that are brimming with historical facts on Chester. Sadly, Peter died in 2025. His death reveals the problem of the existence of important internet domains when the writer is no longer able to sustain them.

Rooftop Social Club

The refurbishment of the top of Pepper Street car park to create Rooftop Social Club has created a space for family groups of all ages, providing a much-needed additional place for teenagers and other young cohorts to gather and socialise - offering games of all sorts and a safe space for them alongside adults. A welcome addition to Chester.

The Queens Garden Hoole

Conceived in memory of Her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, the garden was created by a group of dedicated people from the local community, supported by the local council and MP. They have worked hard to create something very special and beautiful in a forgotten corner of their neighbourhood, for everyone to enjoy.

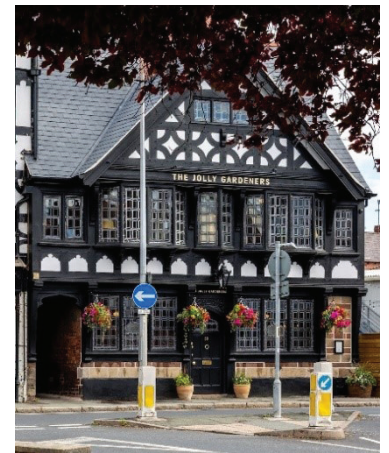
Floral Displays

What a difference it makes to have floral displays around the City. There were three nominations for the Amphitheatre, Moules a Go-Go and Old Harkers Arms. Comments included 'an absolute delight.....it raised my spirits' and 'walking past in summer felt just joyful'.



The Jolly Gardeners

The project began with careful research into the pub's history, original structure, and previous alterations. The approach adopted was not to recreate the past, but to sensitively peel back the years, revealing the character that had been hiding beneath. Working closely with local craftspeople and conservation officers, the team retained and restored original features wherever possible (exposed brickwork, timber beams, sash windows, and even fragments of tiled flooring were lovingly brought back to life). Where new interventions were needed, the design is honest and contemporary, using natural materials that complement the original architecture. Throughout the building, the emphasis is on texture, light, and local provenance from the handcrafted joinery to the reclaimed furnishings and locally sourced fittings. The result is a delightful local pub and restaurant.



THE GOOD COMMENDATIONS

All the awards in this category go to volunteers or volunteer groups.

The Steering Group of the Cheshire West Design Awards 2025 (CWDA)

These awards are nearly 50 years old. They aim to make Cheshire West and Chester a better place to live, work and visit by encouraging outstanding design and projects, and gaining national recognition for this.

Opening of the Shot Tower for Heritage Open Days (HOD)

For the annual national Heritage Open Days in September 2025, the HODs organisers opened the tower with a team of volunteers led by local historian and industrial archaeology enthusiast Stewart Shuttleworth to explain the significance of the site. It is understood that this was Stewart's suggestion; his team included a former employee from the Leadworks. The day that the tower opened was a very wet day, but despite that 426 people visited the building.

The Dingle Information Boards

The Curzon Park Residents' Association has installed a series of interpretation boards as part of 'The Dingle Project'. These boards provide interesting historical and environmental information about the woodland area.

Sandy Lane Park

The Friends of Sandy Lane Park have been clearing pathways, painting benches and planting bulbs. They commissioned local artist Nikki Pinder to create a colourful mural to decorate the steps and supported the installation of a new contactless bird feeder at the waterfront and a defibrillator at Sandy Lane Garage. They have recently obtained funding from Severn Trent to kick start more projects. This is a great community initiative.

THE IMPROVEMENT AWARDS

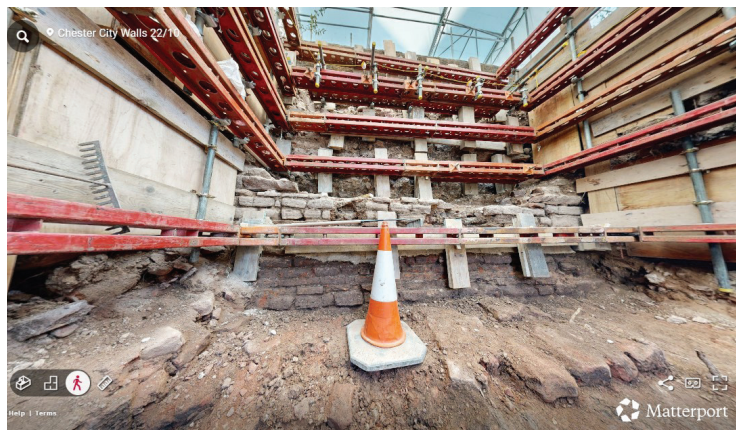
Former Browns Frontage

After years of neglect and a shabby, somewhat derelict, appearance on what is arguably Chester's principal street, this building has finally been given the make-over it deserves. This is part of preparation of the opening of Harrod's Beauty in this former Browns of Chester building.



35 Eastgate Street

It is good to see that this façade has been renovated, it includes carvings of St George slaying the dragon and a liver bird (this building having been a branch of the Bank of Liverpool) on the half-timbering. The view of the corner of the eastern side St Werburgh Street with Eastgate Street has been enhanced with this renovation.



Collapsed Section of City Wall

It is good to see that the repairs to City Walls at the collapsed section has reached a significant milestone, the completion of Stage 1 stabilisation works. It is estimated that Stage 2 will be completed towards the middle of 2026.

THE BAD AWARDS

As previously mentioned, the main theme of the Bad Awards is the poor first impressions at Gateways to the City.



The Entry to the City along Hoole Way

As you drive along Hoole Way into Chester you pass the rear of properties on Brook Street many of which use this area for storage of their waste bins creating an untidy and uncared for atmosphere.



City Forest Garden

Conceived in 2016-17 by Forest City Projects CIC this was a brilliant concept to provide a wildlife-friendly space in Chester in what was a grim, grey, rundown concrete entity created as part of the construction of the Inner Ring Road. Sadly, in the last few years maintenance seems to have lapsed and what should be a delightful space now feels neglected and little used.



St Martin's Gate

The steps on either side of St Martin's Gate have been propped up for many years providing an image of neglect and a sense of lack of maintenance. They are viewed from both the City Walls and the Inner Ring Road. The gate is a prominent feature and part of Chester's 20th century heritage.

The Fountains Roundabout

The Fountains Roundabout is a key transport node and entry point into the city. It is so named because it was designed with fountains, these large jets of water operated for decades. They used to enliven the space here and it seems a pity that they are no longer there. Arguably, they are also part of Chester's 20th century heritage.

Fontessa House, Upper Northgate Street

This building once housed student accommodation but has been empty and boarded up for some time. It occupies a prominent site near to Fountains Roundabout and the Inner Ring and does not present a good image to passers-by in terms of economic activity.

Richmond Garden, Boughton

Walking along the busy dual carriageway into the City is not pleasant so the opportunity to walk around or sit in this garden to enjoy the view across to The Meadows should provide a short respite. Unfortunately, the garden is badly maintained, overgrown and looks very unkempt so that it is virtually unused except by vagrants.



Tower Wharf

Tower Wharf was intended to comprise a mixed-use regeneration scheme, with retail/restaurant/office accommodation at ground floor with apartments on the upper levels. The ground floor units were designed to have active south-west facing frontages enlivening the area with a mix of different uses, all surrounding a picturesque canal basin. Clearly there is no demand for them, and they should now be converted to a different use.

The judges this year were Peter Hadfield assisted by Chloe Sheward, Paul Fielding, Steve Wright, Geoff Clifton and Philip Harrison.

MEMORIES FROM PRESTON

Friday, 13th of February turned out to be an auspicious day for the group of members, who visited Lytham Hall and the newly refurbished Harris Museum and Art Gallery. The latter was so popular that many members felt they would return later in the year.

As well as having a large collection of paintings, perfume bottles and a Foucault Pendulum, the gallery has a local history section. The model of the huge Horrockses' factory and an exhibition of its products was quite a talking point. The factory began in 1791, mainly producing cotton products. It gradually expanded, chiefly continuing with this cotton tradition.

In 1946 it brought out its first collection of ready-to-wear fashions. These became instantly popular. They made everything in women's cotton clothing from shirtwaisters to evening dresses. This huge popularity was sustained from 1946 to 1964. Interest began to decline then, even though fashion products were produced until the 80s. The firm also diversified into bedding and many of us remembered the sheets, which they produced.

It was the fashion, which members particularly remembered. Here we have a photograph of one of our members on a family picnic. They are all wearing Horrockses' dresses. Mary Allinson is the youngest in the centre. She remembers her dress was blue. Also included is a pink Horrockses' cotton dress. This is on display at the museum.

The location of the mill is now being developed for housing.

Karen McKay



CYRIL MORRIS

...a founder member and Vice-President of Chester Civic Trust has gifted a beautiful set of architectural drawings to the Chester Bluecoat Charity. The drawings of the Bluecoat, one of Chester's most iconic buildings, were executed by Cyril when he was a student of architecture at Liverpool University in the 1940s.

The drawings are a historic record of the Bluecoat as they show the building without the decorative railings that had been removed earlier in the 1940s for 'the war effort'. The Civic Trust campaigned for the reinstatement of the railings that were finally restored and unveiled by the former Duke of Westminster in 1987.

Cyril Morris has been a lifelong champion for heritage and conservation. He is one of Chester's unsung heroes.

Christine Russell



CHESTER CASTLE

Many thanks to Tony Barton for providing the January lecture on Chester Castle. The castle will be open every weekend from 1st April - 31st October, 11am-3pm subject to the availability of volunteers. Free entry. Further details on the English Heritage website. The Military museum is open Thursday – Sunday 11am – 4pm. More details on their own website.

AMBITIOUS NEW HOME PLANS FOR CHESTER CITY CENTRE

In November last year, the Council announced that they had signed a Pre-Development Agreement with VINCI UK Developments Limited for Northgate Development - Phase 2. This agreement sets out the collaboration that will go ahead with VINCI in a joint venture with ION Property Developments Ltd. The goal is to transform the former Market, Forum, Car Park and surrounding buildings into a "new city garden neighbourhood." BDP Architects have been appointed.

Last month, Chester Civic Trust officers met with Richard Fagg (Vinci Development Director) and Lee Nickson (Council's Economic Growth Project Manager) to discuss opportunities for the Civic Trust to engage as a key stakeholder in the planning process. Richard and Lee explained that the next 9-12 months will be spent developing a proof of concept and master plan. We agree that engagement with the Civic Trust would be welcomed across the principle topics of Design, Landscape and Place Setting.

It is envisioned the Trust's involvement will include:

- Forming a small panel of people with relevant knowledge and expertise to engage in workshops to discuss specific design topics in advance of major planning stages,
- Providing member updates via this newsletter,

- Arranging for Northgate phase 2 updates as part of the member lecture series,
- Creating opportunities for Civic Trust Corporate Members to meet with the Council and Developers to discuss plans.

Vinci will also be developing a public web to keep people informed of progress.



Picture from Google Earth

PLANNED VISIT: CASTLES AND COAST OF THE KINGDOM OF NORTHUMBRIA

There will be a 5 days / 4 nights visit to explore the history of Northumberland from 5th - 9th October 2026.

The visit will begin at Hadrian's Wall, part of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site. Followed by Lindisfarne, a centre of Celtic Christianity, the Saxon Museum at Wooler, Norman castles at Alnwick and Bamburgh, a flamboyant Georgian home at Seaton Delaval and a pioneering Victorian mansion at Craggside. In addition we will see spectacular scenery, stunning coastlines and historic towns.

If you would like to express an interest in the visit please email christinerussell4@icloud.com or mckaykaren68@gmail.com. We will email you the itinerary and prices as soon as finalised.



HERITAGE FESTIVAL 23 MAY - 7 JUNE



Chester Heritage Festival is launching on Saturday 23 May, bringing creativity, discovery and community spirit, to unlock heritage for everybody! There will be an array of free activities in Exchange Square, giving

families the opportunity to enjoy displays by a bubbleologist, workshops with BBC Gladiator winner Amanda Wah, choir performances, puppetry, craft activities, and more. The event will extend indoors at Chester Picturehouse, where novelist Ben Kane will transport you back in time with tales of Spartacus. Plus, there will be exciting stories about Vikings, the Watch Parades, and Brown's of Chester.

Over two weeks there will be plenty to discover around the city, with themed Roman and Viking activities in the amphitheatre, guided walks exploring Chester's past and present, and an opportunity to see up close the incredible camera obscura in Bonewaldesthorpe's Tower. A quiz will test your knowledge of Chester. Civic Trust members will be making contributions including Paul Hyde who will present two talks on 27 May "Chester's 3Rs" at Lache library and "A Trek Through Triassic Chester" at Bishop Lloyd's Palace; and Chris Fozzard who will present "Old News: Tragedy and Comedy in the Early Chester Press" on 2 June at Picturehouse.

Whilst some events will be familiar favourites from previous festivals, there will also be exciting new events

for 2026, celebrating Chester's origins and less distant past to spark your own memories.

Street performers are an intrinsic part of Chester's identity. Whether you've been wandering Chester's streets for 40 years or just 40 days, you will have encountered a street performer. Have you ever wondered how the busking scene works or considered how important street performance is to our ever-evolving city centre? For the first time, the festival will welcome veteran street performer, Dave Southern, with his "Chester Pavementology Storywalk", taking participants around the city, recounting some of the fantastic performances seen in the streets of Chester over the years and uncovering the secrets of street performance.



So, whether you're looking for ways to entertain the kids for half term, or simply wish to explore Chester's rich heritage, the festival programme includes events to suit everyone. The full programme of drop-in and bookable events will be published on the festival website in late April www.chesterheritagefestival.co.uk.

Liz Preedy

EVENTS AND DIGITALISATION

In the last newsletter I wrote to explain that from April 2026 we would be advertising events digitally. I made it clear that we would put a system in place for members without access to a computer. I did ask for anyone who had a problem with this to contact me. No member has contacted.

The new system will be that at the beginning of April, August and January we will send out digital flyers and access to application forms on-line. We will stagger them over a few days. The newsletter will still have a list of events on the back cover. This will be our programme for the season.

You can pay by BACS or send a cheque to the Office.

If you send a cheque please write a short note with all the necessary information on it.

It only remains for me to thank David Evans. He has created all the flyers, which you have received over the last fifteen years. He has tirelessly improved, corrected and printed the work, which event organisers have sent to him. I only hope we can sustain his standard. There will occasionally be an event organised outside of this system. It will still be advertised digitally. Please continue to support our events. If you have any initial problems or queries, contact mckaykaren68@gmail.com

Karen McKay

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.

The first lecture of the new season will be in the Autumn.

Additional Events in 2026

The following are additional member only events. If you would like to attend, you will need to book using the forms provided. These talks are usually held at our wonderful meeting space in Bishop Lloyds Palace.

April 17th 2pm

Elizabeth Davey-Working Class Housing.
Details in December mail out.

MAY 21st 2pm

David Mottram-Hooton Hall and Park.
Email early April.

JUNE 1st

Evening meal at Chez Jules with guest speaker.

JUNE 9th

Day visit to Hooton Belfast Hangars, Allerton Hall, Sudley House and St Michael's-in-the-Hamlet cast iron church. Email early April.

JULY 8th

Day visit to RHS Bridgwater. Email early April.

OCTOBER 1st

AGM at Bishops Lloyd Palace.
Details to be mailed to members nearer the time.

OCTOBER 5th-9th

Residential in Northumbria.
Details to follow later in the year.

SAVE THE DATE Monday June 1st Members Meal at Chez Jules

Details and an online booking form can
be found on our website:
<https://chestercivictrust.org.uk/summer-social/>

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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