



Cheltenham
Civic Society

Annual Report & Accounts 2022

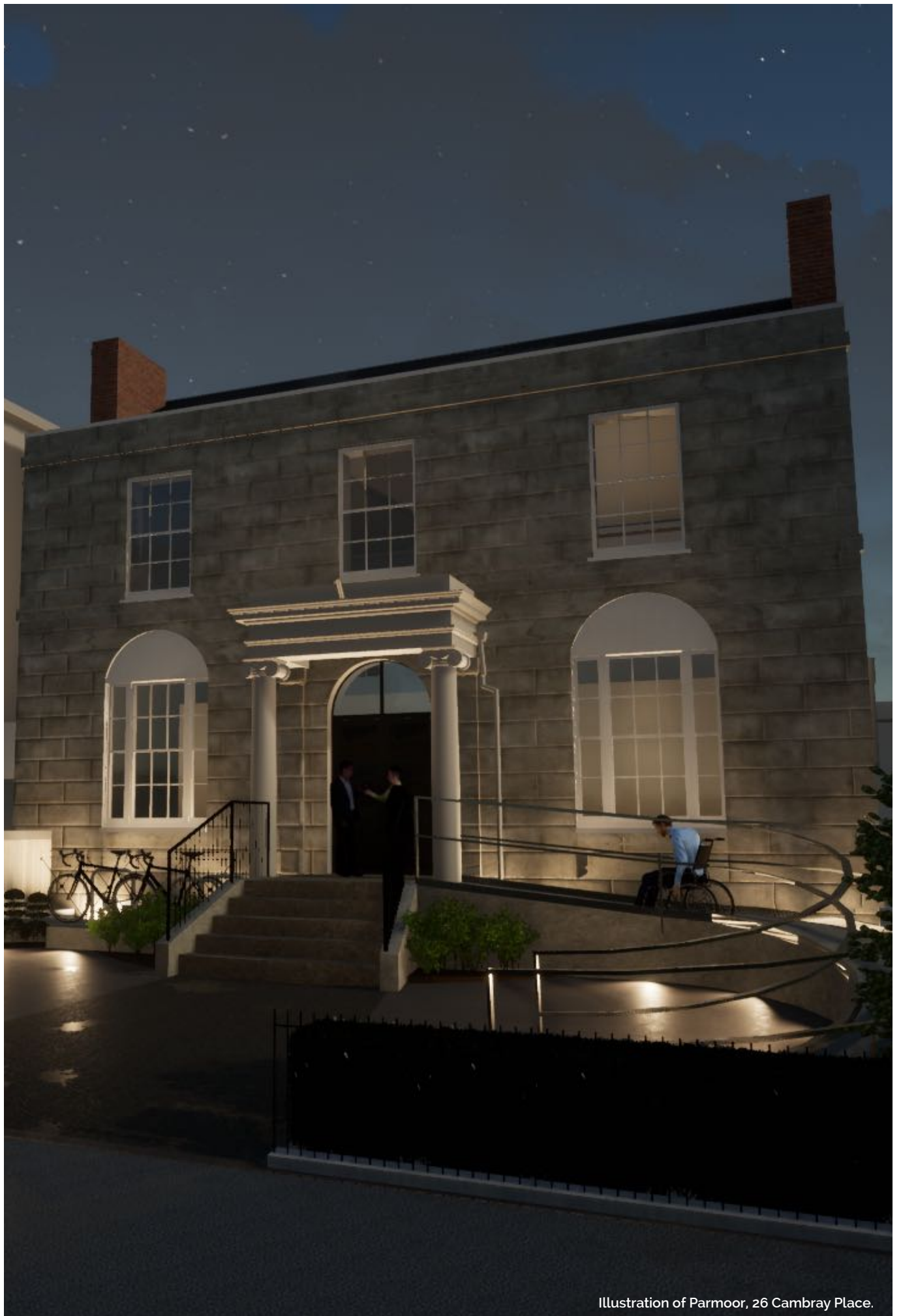


Illustration of Parmoor, 26 Cambray Place.

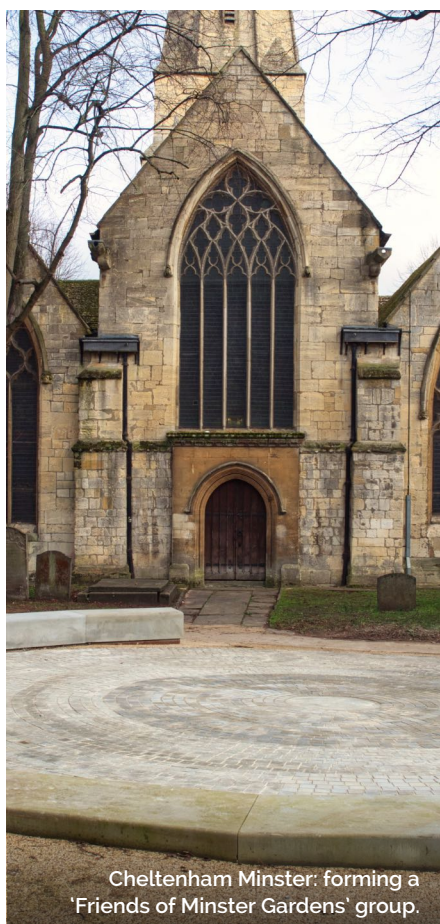


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COVER: Lansdown Industrial Estate. Cheltenham Civic Society is campaigning to conserve much of Cheltenham's remaining industrial heritage, which is embodied in this industrial estate. It is currently threatened by a banal housing scheme proposed by the Cheshire Pension Trust.



Acquisition of 'Parmoor', 26 Cambray Place.



Cheltenham Minster: forming a 'Friends of Minster Gardens' group.



Civic Society members enjoy a first visit to Parmoor.



Town centre manifesto point 3: the County Council must adopt the paving outside John Lewis.

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GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION

Cheltenham Civic Society's Trustees present their report and accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022.

The charity is constituted as a community interest organisation (CIO) – number 1166580 – and is, therefore, governed by a memorandum and articles of association dated 13 April 2016.

OBJECTIVES

Cheltenham Civic Society – a registered charity – is an active network of citizens that promotes civic pride in our town. As a critical friend to both Councils, we aim to encourage:

- ▶ high standards of design and execution for buildings and public spaces;
- ▶ conservation of the town's heritage;
- ▶ discussion and understanding of our urban environment.

We do this by identifying concerns, developing ideas and galvanising the community to help make the town more distinctive, attractive and enjoyable.

TRUSTEES

The Trustees were:

- Andrew Booton – Chair
- Mike Richardson – Honorary Secretary
- Claire Attenborough – Honorary Treasurer
- Tess Beck – Events Officer
- Steve Bryson – Communications Officer
- Hugh Curran – Successful Streets Group Chair
- Peter Sayers – Vice Chair
- Sarah Harvey – Events and Heritage Open Days Officer

ROTATION

Andrew Booton and Claire Attenborough are due to rotate and have agreed to stand again for election as Trustees and in their respective roles.

RETIREMENT

Mike Richardson, Hon Secretary, and Tess Beck are standing down. This will enable the rotation of a third of Trustees, as required by the constitution.

NEW TRUSTEES

A call has been placed for new trustees.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The Trustees have invested carefully in the Society's organisational sustainability to underpin our long-term plans. Their efforts include:

- ▶ reviewing the Society's strategy;
- ▶ balancing financial capacity with ambitions;
- ▶ reinforcing income streams;
- ▶ building capacity through inclusion and involvement, communications and utilisation of skills, knowledge and experience;
- ▶ developing meaningful partnerships.



Cheltenham's
Royal Crescent.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

PARMOOR

The sale of Parmoor House (13 Lypiatt Terrace) enabled us to reposition the Society both physically and inclusively. Parmoor House was unfit for purpose in so many ways, including its inadequate access arrangements and poor meeting spaces.



The acquisition of Parmoor (26 Cambray Place) places the Society right in the heart of the town. It will conserve and revitalise a listed building at risk, raising its value as an asset and giving it new purpose within the community by bringing people together.

Its sustainable re-use will be enhanced by improvements to its environmental efficiency, accessibility and will serve as a model for the upgrading of similar heritage buildings.

As a longer-term project, it will help to transform a neglected part of town and demonstrate how

'Parmoor' – carrying forward the name of Lord Parmoor, who donated 13 Lypiatt Terrace to the Civic Society in 1964.

heritage can rebuild civic pride. It will also improve the Society's financial sustainability, building our resilience and enabling us to achieve more ambitious objectives in the longer term.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

TOWN CENTRE CAMPAIGN

Our hard-hitting town centre campaign and manifesto repositioned Cheltenham Civic Society as one of the most influential and proactive campaigning organisations in the town. It brought Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council to the table and encouraged them to act on six of the ten manifesto pledges, including:

- ▶ improved constructive cooperation between Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council so that the public can have increased confidence in both Councils and the pursuit of their respective public realm responsibilities;
- ▶ Cheltenham Borough Council to hand over the paving outside John Lewis to Gloucestershire County Council who will adopt it;
- ▶ GCC agreement to repave Cambray Place by making good the slabs at the side and repaving the centre with buff-coloured tarmac, which will finally improve this neglected area;
- ▶ the Promenade to be repaired and made good by replacing all broken stone paving on a sound resilient bed and with sound pointing;
- ▶ CBC initiation of the conversation to develop policies for coherent design and for all street furniture for the Borough of Cheltenham;
- ▶ CBC taking firm action to ensure that premises do not compromise the amenity of an area, in accordance with Section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act and best practice guidance.

The remaining points are still in progress and we will update members on developments.

The manifesto in full

1. I will ensure full and constructive cooperation between Councillors and Officers of Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council so that the public can have absolute confidence in both Councils and their respective public realm responsibilities.

2. I will work with Cheltenham Civic Society and Cheltenham BID to devise a plan for Cheltenham town centre, to include creation of new public spaces, distinct zones, design guides, greening, maintenance and repair, and redevelopment opportunities. Cycling, walking and reduction of vehicles to be at the core of the plan. This plan to be adopted by 31 March 2024 and implemented within 5 years.

3. I will ensure that by 31 March 2023, Cheltenham Borough Council will hand over the paving outside John Lewis to Gloucestershire County Council who will adopt it.

4. I will ensure that by 31 March 2023, The Strand and Cambray Place will be repaved to a satisfactory standard. This will include making

good slabs, removing superfluous bollards, furniture, and street clutter, and the installation of street trees, appropriate bins and benches.

5. I will ensure that by 31 March 2023, The Promenade will be repaired and made good. This will include replacing all broken stone paving on a sound bed and with sound pointing. Bollards will be replaced to protect the stone as originally envisaged.

6. I will work with Cheltenham Civic Society to devise and adopt a coherent design and performance policy for all street furniture for the Borough of Cheltenham. Until the policy is adopted we will not spend any funds on street furniture. This policy to be adopted by 31 March 2023.

7. I will work with Cheltenham Civic Society and Cheltenham BID to revise and adopt the Shopfront Policy and apply it consistently to all retail premises in the Borough of Cheltenham. The revised policy to be adopted by 31 March 2023.

8. I will work with Ubico, Cheltenham Civic Society and Cheltenham BID to devise and adopt

a residential and commercial Bin Storage Policy and apply it consistently to all premises in the Borough of Cheltenham. This policy to be adopted by 31 March 2023.

9. I will take timely, firm and consistent action to ensure that premises do not compromise the amenity of an area, in accordance with Section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act and best practice guidance.

10. I will immediately seek the suspension of the use of tarmac infills on pavements and pedestrianised areas for any reason and will instead seek to have marked dangerous or hazardous areas with temporary barriers or cones until they can be repaired and reinstated to the correct standard in accordance with the New Roads & Street Works Act 1991 and other extant legislation, including standards, timings for repair and recovery of costs and penalties.

CALL TO ACTION

If you would like to help campaign to improve the town centre, contact Hugh Curran: ssg@cheltcivicsoc.org ●

Our Town Centre Manifesto was launched in spring 2022.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

CAMBRAY RIVERSIDE

We secured planning consent for our scheme that offered a far better alternative for Cambray Riverside than carbon-heavy demolition and rebuilding.

The Civic Society's Cambray Riverside scheme represents a much more attractive alternative to the Cambray Court landlord's like-for-like replacement of the existing garages. In all probability it will be much cheaper too.



It will open up the River Chelt and help people connect to our natural heritage in a heavily hard-surfaced area, creating large porous areas and tree-lined banks that will help mitigate the impacts of adverse environmental impacts such as flooding and climate change. It will help stop and reverse the loss and decline of species and habitats and improve biodiversity.

Finally, it demonstrated our active commitment to Cheltenham and our willingness and ability to lead by example and take decisive action to do the right thing where others fear to do so.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

PLANNING FORUM

Our Planning Forum is a formal consultee to Cheltenham Borough Council on planning matters including listed building consents.



Some of the building projects that have been considered by the Planning Forum.



The Forum meets every month except for August and usually considers around 5-6 schemes each time. Our views are then sent to Cheltenham Borough Council and are published on its planning portal.

By commenting constructively and authoritatively, we have helped improve planning outcomes for the town, protected its architectural heritage and enhanced civic pride.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

The Civic Society organises the annual Heritage Open Days (HODs) festival in September each year on behalf of the town and with financial support from Cheltenham Borough Council.



2022's HODs festival offered some 50 free events and guided walks – giving access to places that are not normally open. One of the guided walks included a fascinating tour of the original General Hospital buildings constructed long before the formation of the NHS.

Free access to the venues, including new ones, enabled organisations to remove barriers to access and participation. HODs helped improve inclusion and participation in heritage and provided opportunities to learn, develop new skills and explore our shared heritage, regardless of background or personal circumstances.

Participants were able to volunteer,

co-curate projects, and develop knowledge, experience and skills.

Our experience from running virtual HODs during the pandemic allowed us to build on our digital heritage resources to make heritage more accessible, relevant and enjoyable. It promotes better access to heritage information, enabling projects to improve interpretation, education, reach and impact.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

LANDSDOWN INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

Our campaign to conserve Lansdown Industrial Estate continues. The Cheshire Pension Fund, which owns the estate, has put forward a 215-home scheme that will demolish half of the site and along with it most of Cheltenham's remaining industrial heritage.



The Civic Society's view is that such a proposal would never be permitted to desecrate Chester's rich heritage, so why should it be acceptable to destroy Cheltenham's?

We are fighting hard to prevent this needless and environmentally-destructive demolition and instead to conserve and re-use buildings that tell the story of Cheltenham's industrial heritage.

We have put forward an alternative mixed-use scheme that would still provide much-needed

The Civic Society's alternative plan for Lansdown Industrial Estate would conserve the industrial heritage through the re-use of buildings in a much more environmentally-friendly and truly mixed-use redevelopment.

housing but in a sustainable way while complying with the planning policy for the site. It would deliver place-based investment that will boost pride in place and connect communities and visitors with much of our heritage.

The fight continues to conserve and redevelop this site responsibly and sympathetically.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

PARTICIPATION

It is not good enough just to 'belong' to groups: we must be active participants and give in order to receive.

The Civic Society is an active member of Civic Voice, the overarching body for civic societies, contributing experience, knowledge and good practice to real life and virtual meetings and events.



2022's AGM.

Similarly we are active contributors to the West Midlands Amenity Societies' Association (WMASA) and the Gloucestershire Civic Societies Group (GCSG), where we help shape the agenda, share good practice and promote cooperation.

This all contributes to sustaining the civic movement by helping to develop the skills and capacity to ensure a robust and resilient long-term future that underpins communities and local economies.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

COMMUNICATIONS

Our highly influential quarterly magazine, **OurTown**, continues to challenge, propose ideas, explore options and improve public involvement and education in planning and reshaping Cheltenham.

We believe planning should be done with us, not to us, and this inclusive, democratic approach underpins our philosophy and effectiveness. We have run a series of articles on masterplanning the town centre, which we will develop and publish as a pamphlet

to help shape the town's redevelopment and longer term planning.

Importantly, the location, configuration and accessibility of our new headquarters will enable us to expand this work to include events such as seminars, debates and consultations to ensure that everyone's voice can be heard in Cheltenham's future.

In addition, between editions, we have also started publishing **Making A Difference**, which seeks to highlight our achievements and progress on various campaign and information issues, and serves as a further educational resource for readers.



OurTown quarterly newsletters.

The distribution goes well beyond just our members and includes all Borough and County councillors, business organisations, council officers and other amenity groups.

We have also sent copies to other civic societies including Ludlow, Stourport and Bewdley, as those groups have sought our advice and wish to learn from our good practice. This reinforces our strong belief in wider involvement and 'net contributions', i.e. giving more than we receive.



Making A Difference interim news sheets.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Our Town Centre Manifesto sought to help shape the town's improvement. As part of that, we have started developing policy documents that can be refined and used by our local authorities to help save their resources while delivering tangible efficiencies and improvements. We have drafted:

- ▶ a policy to address the problems of front garden conversion for parking;
- ▶ an aide-memoire to help assess planning applications' compliance with policies – for use by councillors, officers, the Planning Forum and others.



The Poets' Conservation Area.

As part of our Town Centre Manifesto, and pursuing our remit as a critical friend, we have offered to assist CBC with:

- ▶ updating the Shopfront Design Guide (issued 2008);
- ▶ devising a residential and commercial waste storage design guide.

It's the Civic Society's belief that many of the town centre's planning problems stem from the lack of a coherent masterplan (see point 2 in our Manifesto on page 9). So we have been publishing a series of articles in **OurTown** (see page 15) outlining potential masterplans for key areas. We will consolidate and re-publish these later this year to help inform the debate about the content of a town centre masterplan.

These efforts demonstrate our cooperative, informed and professional approach to making Cheltenham more distinctive, attractive and enjoyable.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

BATTLEFIELD CROSSES

In the Great War, roughly hewn wooden crosses were often made to mark the temporary graves of the fallen by their fellow soldiers. After the war, the soldiers'

The proposed signage for the gravediggers' hut in which 23 battlefield crosses from the Great War will be put on permanent display.



bodies were reinterred in cemeteries by the War Graves Commission and the wooden crosses were returned to their families. Cheltenham Cemetery homed many of these but, out in the open, their condition deteriorated over the years.

With Heritage Lottery funding, the Civic Society has led the conservation of these crosses but the recent pandemic temporarily halted the project.

But we are now back on track and we are turning a former gravediggers' hut into a permanent home for the crosses, complete with sensitive displays and interpretation boards to remember the fallen.

The research of students from Pittville School will serve as an example of community cooperation and involvement and show how younger people from diverse backgrounds can appreciate and contribute to the retention of Cheltenham's heritage.

This is something we intend to build on in the coming years.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

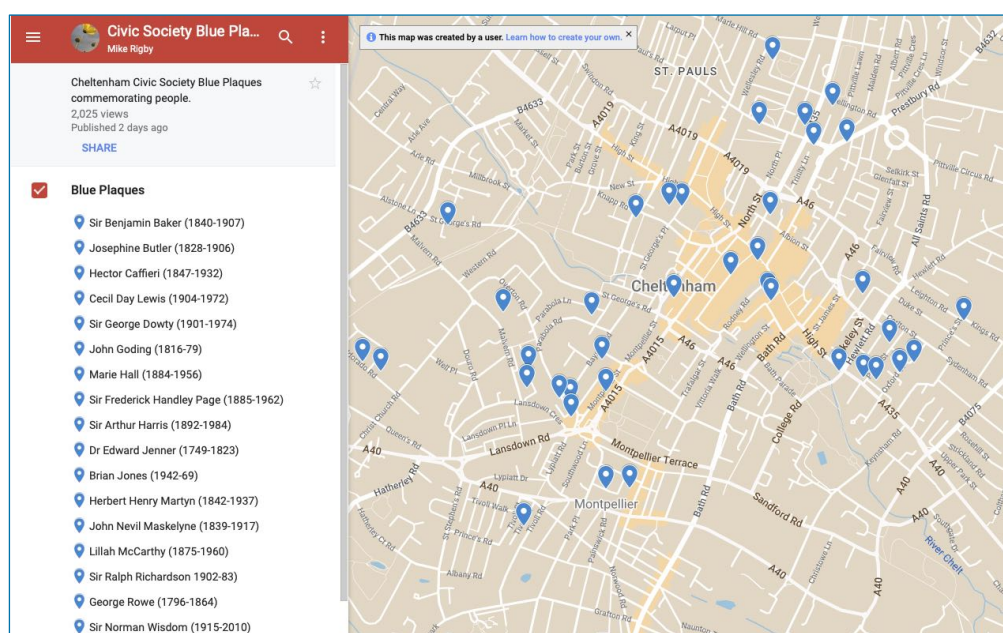
BLUE AND GREEN PLAQUES

Since 1980, the Civic Society has been responsible for Cheltenham's blue and green plaques scheme.

Mike Rigby, our Plaques Officer, has recently made two phone-friendly Google maps of all the blue and green plaque locations – see the links to these on the home page of our website <https://cheltcivicsoc.org> We have publicised these widely as they provide

a great resource for anyone wishing to plan interesting and educational walks to discover and learn about more of the history of our town. Clicking on any of the markers brings up the exact address plus an explanation of who or what each plaque commemorates.

We have been working with partners at CBC, Cheltenham Festivals and Visit Cheltenham to



The Blue Plaques Google map.

explore more digital and interactive mapping options to enable people to explore Cheltenham's heritage.

It is an excellent example of creative use of digital technology in heritage to promote access and reach. This broadens opportunities to learn and explore our town's heritage, regardless of background or personal circumstances while co-curation and collaboration helps us and our partners to remove barriers to access and participation.



The plaque commemorating the childhood home of the Rolling Stones' founder, Brian Jones.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership has increased over the past year – with a noticeable leap of 13% following the publication of our Town Centre Manifesto.

This illustrates that our effective campaigning speaks to a wide range of voices and is successful in championing causes which have popular support. The Civic Society gives citizens a democratic voice in the planning process, removing barriers to access and participation.



Members' meeting at
Parmoor.

The number of corporate supporters has also increased by 63% from eight to thirteen, demonstrating local businesses' commitment to our shared values and acknowledging that a vibrant, well-cared-for town is good for business and demonstrates commitment to

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policies.

We have also introduced an Affiliate Membership category for Cheltenham's diverse range of amenity groups. This will strengthen our collective voice, improve communication, coherence and cooperation, and enable us to reach a broader, more diverse audience. It is through this channel that the town's Heritage Strategy will be delivered.

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OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

HERITAGE STRATEGY

Through our partnership with an initial nine heritage groups from across the town, we have successfully persuaded Cheltenham Borough Council that Cheltenham needs a Heritage Strategy.

Cheltenham has a rich heritage, built upon a culture of beauty, diversity, tourism and fine craftsmanship. Yet despite this wealth, Cheltenham remains one of the few towns of its size and significance to lack a strategy for the management, sustainability, maintenance and development of its heritage.



The town's rich heritage deserves to benefit from a clear strategy setting out how it should be managed, maintained, made sustainable and be developed.

Without Cheltenham's heritage, particularly its built form and settings including parks and gardens, much of the town's cultural offer could not exist.

The proposed strategy will set out the town's approach to heritage and heritage assets, whether in public, private or third sector custodianship.

It will position heritage as a strategic consideration, not as an afterthought, and will properly represent the wider interests of the town. It will also form a coherent vision for Cheltenham's heritage and be developed by and with the numerous stakeholders. In addition, it will build on the experience of others, such as Gloucester, Bath and Oxford to ensure good practice, timely delivery and cost effectiveness.

We expect to play a leading role in the development of this strategy as it evolves over the next few years.

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LOOKING AHEAD

COMMITMENT

Cheltenham Civic Society is well-led, effectively administered and punches well above its weight in the town and beyond. The Trustees, however, are determined that we should not rest on our laurels and are committed to:

- ▶ a continuous improvement approach to management, including Trustees' training, more efficient management systems especially those relating to membership administration and financial accounting;
- ▶ starting work on the complete refurbishment of Parmoor with an emphasis on accessibility and community use;
- ▶ progressing our town centre campaign, paying particular attention to pedestrianised areas and the state of pavements;
- ▶ continuing to develop our educational remit by working with other groups and stakeholders across Cheltenham;
- ▶ taking forward a fundraising campaign to ensure that our new premises serves as an exemplary, vibrant and accessible centre for the community;
- ▶ playing an active, supportive and authoritative part in the development of Cheltenham's Heritage Strategy.



Andrew Booton
Chair of Trustees
March 2023

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YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2022

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

	2022			2021		
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Civic Society Income						
Membership	£2,292	–	£2,292	£3,013	–	£3,013
Corporate Members	£1,250	–	£1,250	£250	–	£250
Room Hire	£497	–	£497	£857	–	£857
Bank Interest	£243	–	£243	£3	–	£3
Flat Rental	£0	–	£0	£6,123	–	£6,123
Sundry	£97	–	£97	£10	–	£10
Total Income	£4,379	–	£4,379	£10,256	–	£10,256
Civic Society Expenditure						
Property expenses						
Utilities, inc. water	£3,889	–	£3,889	£6,053	–	£6,053
Business Rates	£13	–	£13	£78	–	£78
Council Tax	£382	–	£382	£1,784	–	£1,784
Maintenance	£1,968	–	£1,968	£1,365	–	£1,365
Caretaker	–	–	£0	£171	–	£171
Insurance	£2,717	–	£2,717	£3,007	–	£3,007
Garden	£138	–	£138	£252	–	£252
Storage	£1,471	–	£1,471	–	–	–
Notice to quit	£2,400	–	£2,400	–	–	–
Cambray project	£841	–	£841	£110	–	£110
Newsletter	£2,607	–	£2,607	£2,367	–	£2,367
Website	£742	–	£742	£3,997	–	£3,997
Events	£20	–	£20	£167	–	£167
HODs	£37	–	£37	£1,083	–	£1,083
Printing/Stationery	£372	–	£372	£2,764	–	£2,764
Subscriptions	£677	–	£677	£927	–	£927
Sundry	£1,022	–	£1,022	£663	–	£663
Legal Fees	£3,470	–	£3,470	£1,813	–	£1,813
Grants Paid	£0	–	£0	£1,480	–	£1,480
Civic Awards	£0	–	£0	£539	–	£539
Plaques	£249	–	£249	–	–	–
Total Expenditure	£23,015	–	£23,015	£28,621	–	£28,621
Surplus/(Deficit) before other movements	(£18,636)	–	(£18,636)	(£18,365)	–	(£18,365)

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YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2022

Other Receipts and Payments	2022			2021		
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Sales proceeds from Parmoor House	£1,427,924	–	£1,427,924	–	–	–
Purchase of 26 Cambray Place	(£873,720)	–	(£873,720)	–	–	–
Total Other Movements	£554,204	–	£554,204	–	–	–
Surplus/(Deficit) before other movements	£535,568	–	£535,568	(£18,365)	–	(£18,365)

Please note that the accounts have been prepared on a receipt and payment basis.

Reconciliation of closing reserves

As at 31st December 2022

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Opening Reserves	£57,452	–	£57,452
Surplus per above	£535,568	–	£535,568
Closing Reserves	£593,020	–	£593,020

Reserves made up of:

Cash at bank	£567,610
Deposit	£25,000
Cash	£200
PayPal	£210
	£593,020

The financial statements on pages 22 and 23 of this document were approved at the Annual General Meeting of Cheltenham Civic Society CIO (registered charity no. 1166580) on 26 April 2023.

