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# Leeds Civic Trust Annual Review 2024



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## Front cover

Dancers celebrate the unveiling of the Trust's 200th blue plaque for Nadine Senior at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance

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# Chair's Introduction



**February 2025 will mark the completion of my first year as Leeds Civic Trust's youngest ever Chair. Having been involved as a volunteer for over 15 years, I have really enjoyed spending the last 12 months working closely with the staff and trustees, reviewing our long term vision and developing our 5 year strategy.**

Working full time as a chartered building surveyor at Potter Space enables me to bring experience as both a corporate member and a volunteer, giving me a wide understanding of the Trust and enabling me to focus my commitment to strengthening and diversifying the membership and securing our future.

This year has been great for the Trust's blue plaque scheme, with a record number of plaque unveilings. I was particularly proud to unveil a plaque for The Duchess, the wonderful music venue that nurtured some of the biggest bands of the last 30 years.

Another memorable moment was witnessing the unveiling of the stunning Ribbons sculpture, a project we were proud to support financially, showcasing the power of art to enrich our public spaces.

Our walking tours and Heritage Open Days had one of their busiest years to date, proving once again how much our community values connect with the city's rich history and architecture. The completion of our restoration project of the Bear Pit in Headingley is a testament to our commitment to preserving Leeds' unique heritage.

Alongside our events, we continue to focus on key city issues including proposals for mass transit, the changing face of our city centre and how we create places that put people first.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the dedication of our members, supporters, partners, and staff. You are the backbone of the Trust and your contributions ensure we remain a vital force in shaping the city's future.

2025 marks our 60th anniversary, a milestone we are incredibly excited to celebrate with all of you. Together, we have the opportunity to make this landmark year our most impactful yet, building on the foundation of six decades of commitment to Leeds!

**Jenna Strover**  
Chair

## The objects of the Trust are:

**To stimulate** public interest in and care for the beauty, history and unique heritage of the city and metropolitan borough of Leeds including the identification and prioritisation of actions to preserve and enhance the historic built environment of Leeds

**To encourage** high quality sustainable development; promoting high standards of sustainable urban design, architecture and landscape in development across the whole of Leeds

**To encourage** the judicious preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity within Leeds so as to ensure Leeds is a happy, healthy and sustainable place to live and work

**To advance** in the appreciation of a people-friendly environment, considering climate change and the need to reduce environmental impacts; and to promote ways of improving the environment within Leeds including high quality green and public spaces, waterways and sustainable transport

**To promote** and organise participation and cooperation with stakeholders and partners, including other civic organisations, locally regionally and nationally to further these objects

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## Leeds Civic Trust

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# Performers and Artists

This past year Leeds Civic Trust has been engaged in a range of events and projects that celebrate performance, art, public sculpture, and media. With several blue plaque unveilings and artistic projects, the Trust has played a significant role in showcasing and recognising Leeds' diverse arts, heritage and culture.

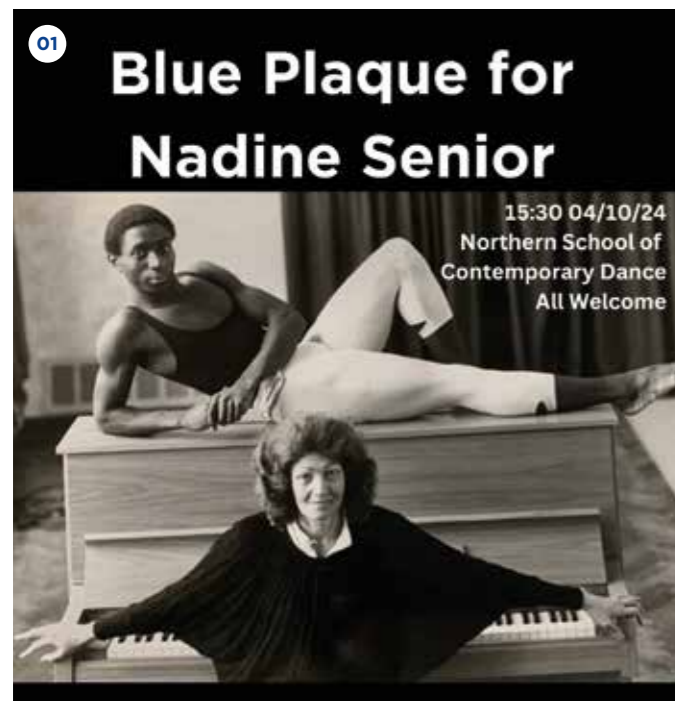
## A landmark: two hundred blue plaques

Leeds Civic Trust's blue plaque scheme was first initiated by Tony Moyes together with enthusiastic support from Professor Neville Rowell, who sadly passed away in 2024. Launched in 1987 as part of a mission to celebrate the heritage of Leeds, the Trust sought to highlight sites, people, and events that have shaped the city's identity. Very early in the scheme, plaques such as the one celebrating the first moving picture filmed by Louis Le Prince recognised the contribution made by the arts to the city. This commitment continues to this day.

## Our 200th blue plaque: Nadine Senior

A particularly memorable event marked the unveiling of our 200th plaque, honouring Nadine Senior MBE, an innovative figure in dance education who founded the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. The ceremony featured moving speeches, dynamic dance performances, and a photography exhibition, bringing her legacy to life.

- 01 Nadine Senior pictured with a dancer
- 02 The blue plaque for Nadine Senior, the first Principal of the Northern School of Contemporary Dance is unveiled



- 03 Flowers left in memory of plaque recipients Duncan Dallas and Liz Brice
- 04 An exhibition of the work of plaque recipient Philip Naviasky at Leeds Left Bank included equipment and an easel as it was left at his house on Scott Hall Road

## Science and cannabis

In Chapel Allerton, we unveiled a plaque for Duncan Dallas and Elizabeth Brice, our first to commemorate two notable individuals on a single blue plaque. Duncan Dallas and Elizabeth Brice met whilst working in broadcasting; they were both trailblazers in their own right. Duncan Dallas established Café Scientifique in Chapel Allerton. It became a worldwide movement offering a place for the lay person to meet and discuss scientific issues with specialists. Liz Brice successfully campaigned to legalise the use of medical cannabis, a substance that relieved the symptoms of her multiple sclerosis. Her campaigning paved the way to providing relief for thousands of people.

## Philip Naviasky's portraits

We also unveiled a plaque for Philip Naviasky, an artist known for his enigmatic portraiture. This unveiling was part of a broader celebration of Naviasky's work, coinciding with an exhibition at Left Bank, which featured artworks sourced from all over England. A special installation recreated his studio, complete with his original studio chairs, proudly showcased on BBC's Antiques Roadshow earlier in the year.

- 05 Celebrating the launch of the Waddington's exhibition at Leeds City Museum, the countdown for the Leeds BID "Monopoly takeover" and unveiling of a plaque for Monopoly pioneer Victor Watson in Horsforth later in the year (photo courtesy Leeds BID)

## The birth of Monopoly in Leeds

Another plaque was dedicated to Norman Victor Watson, former director of Waddingtons and a key figure in the creation of the UK version of Monopoly. This plaque unveiling was part of the city-wide "Monopoly Takeover" by Leeds BID. This playful trail brought Monopoly pieces to life in the form of giant sculptures. It drew thousands of visitors to Leeds City Centre and brought attention to the role of this important Leeds-based board game manufacturer. Unusually, the Trust allowed the blue plaque to be exhibited in advance at The Leeds City Museum as part of a display showcasing Waddingtons heritage and marking a 100 day countdown to the Monopoly Takeover.





- 01 Legendary promoter John Keenan (holding the blue plaque) and supporters outside the location of The Duchess – the celebrated live music venue
- 02 Pippa Hale's Ribbons sculpture is revealed on Quarry Hill

### The Duchess of York

We were delighted to unveil a blue plaque for this former music venue on Vicar Lane. An incubator for some of the most famous bands in the UK, one of our biggest ever crowds assembled to witness the unveiling by legendary promoter John Keenan. The unveiling took place following the announcement of the Oasis reunion tour. With tickets exchanging hands for hundreds of pounds, it is worth remembering that the band once performed here to a handful of people for an entrance fee of a few pounds!



### Ribbons – celebrating women past and present

Just as we celebrate the heritage of our city through our blue plaques, we also support public art that highlights heritage and the future of the city. At the end of 2023 we saw the unveiling of Hibiscus Rising, a striking sculpture created by Yinka Shonibare CBE; a work that is a symbol of hope and unity. Leeds Civic Trust supported the production of this sculpture with a grant of £5,000 towards the production of the maquette.

This year saw the unveiling of the Ribbons sculpture by artist Pippa Hale, also sponsored by Leeds Civic Trust. This is a celebration of the achievements of women in Leeds from the past and present. The sculpture comprises several metal ribbons that carry the names of 383 women. They include two of our trustees, Lucy Moore and Antonia Stowe, alongside the Trust's Vice President, Lynda Kitching, and former volunteer and centenarian Doreen Wood, and many other volunteers and blue plaque recipients. The sculpture is located in the Playhouse Gardens on Quarry Hill.

- 03 A stellar cast of experts featured in our panel discussion held to mark the unveiling of the Ribbons sculpture

We celebrated the unveiling with a panel discussion on the role of public sculpture. The panel was led by Professor Griselda Pollock from the University of Leeds and included artist Pippa Hale, Jane Bhojroo from Leeds Art Gallery, and Alison Lowe OBE, Deputy Mayor of West Yorkshire. Alison Lowe reflected on the review she led looking at public statues in the city in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. The review highlighted a lack of diversity in the city's public art and statues. The unveiling of two powerful sculptures, Hibiscus Rising and Ribbons, starts to redress the balance.

### A year of championing arts and culture

Through our plaque unveilings, public art projects, exhibitions and events, the Trust remains dedicated to celebrating the city's artistic legacy and encouraging a creative environment.

**Sculpture and Representation in Leeds: A Panel Discussion**

**ALISON LOWE** **GRISELDA POLLOCK**  
**JANE BHOYROO** **PIPPA HALE**

**17 October, 18:30, Leeds Playhouse**  
**Tickets: leedscivictrust.org.uk**



# Protests and Campaigns

Leeds Civic Trust helps preserve and celebrate our city's history while encouraging conversations about the future. One of the main ways we do this is through the blue plaques programme, which highlights important moments that have shaped Leeds and their impact on wider society. In 2024, several of our blue plaques marked the city's involvement in major social and political debates throughout history.

## An academic landmark

The first blue plaque of the year was unveiled in March 2024, marking 50 years since the first trans conference at The Leeds University Student Union. This pioneering event in 1974 is a key staging post in the history of trans rights, and the plaque acknowledges how Leeds was at the forefront of challenging social norms and leading discussions on LGBTQ+ rights.



Leeds Civic Trust

- 01 A joyful unveiling of a plaque to celebrate the 50th anniversary of this pioneering conference that put trans issues on an academic footing for the first time in the UK
- 02 Banners and flags reminded us of the protests that took place on Holbeck Moor to repel Oswald Mosley and his fascists

- 03 Songs by the Commoners Choir in the grand setting of the Leeds Library are a prelude to a talk by Dr Vic Clarke on the Northern Star
- 04 Three MPs joined forces to remember a key moment in the city's history when the advance of fascism was stalled (l-r Hilary Benn MP, Richard Burgon MP and Fabian Hamilton MP)

## Opposing the rise of fascism

Later in the year, the Trust unveiled a plaque commemorating The Battle of Holbeck Moor. This confrontation took place on September 27, 1936 when 30,000 people gathered to prevent the leader of the British Union of Fascists, Sir Oswald Mosley, and his blackshirts from holding a rally. This became a powerful sign of the city's commitment to anti-fascist and anti-racist activism. Nearly 90 years later, over 200 people gathered on the same spot to honour the legacy of those who stood against the rise of fascism by unveiling a blue plaque.

The plaque was unveiled by local MPs Hilary Benn, Richard Burgon, and Fabian Hamilton. We were also joined by descendants of the participants from the original rally, sharing personal stories and accounts of the day.

## The anti-slavery movement

In October, we unveiled a blue plaque for "Abolitionists in Leeds" at the University of Leeds. This plaque, unlike most others, does not commemorate a single individual, building, or event but rather the abolitionist movement in the city as a whole. It highlights key figures such as Mary and Wilson Armistead, leaders in the Leeds Anti-Slavery Association, together with fugitive slaves Ellen and William Craft who stayed in their house on the University campus.

The role of Leeds-based abolitionists deserves wider recognition. The plaque's unveiling took place during Black History Month and was accompanied by a lecture from Professor Richard Blackett on the history of this transatlantic movement.

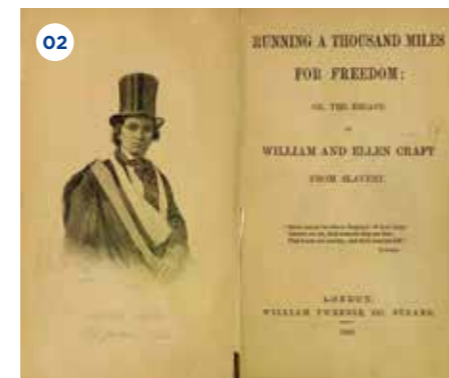




- 01 Lord Mayor Abigail Marshall Katung and writer Khadijah Ibrahiim reflect on the city's 19th century anti-slavery movement
- 02 A booklet from the 19th century depicting fugitive slave Ellen Craft who escaped from her captors by disguising herself as a man

### The Northern Star

Finally, the Trust celebrated its 201st blue plaque with a tribute to the Northern Star newspaper, the journal of the Chartist movement which was created and printed in Leeds. A truly national newspaper, it helped express the demands of working-class people for political and social reform in the 19th century. The blue plaque programme is a chance to keep looking back at our history and connect to the present day. We continue to highlight and celebrate people and events that are making an impact today. We look forward to receiving many more blue plaque nominations in the years to come.



- 03 University of Leeds academic Dr Vic Clarke tells the crowds assembled on Briggate about the significance of The Northern Star which was published near this location



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# The Promised Land

**01** A visitor to the 'Promised Land' exhibition views one of the images showing Leeds more than 30 years ago

We held a temporary exhibition in 2024, exploring the legacy of Leeds Development Corporation (LDC), one of several Development Corporations created by national government in the late 1980s. The exhibition, named 'The Promised Land' after the LDC slogan, featured striking now and then contrasts, notably of the waterfront. It showed how areas now teeming with life appeared to be undeveloped wastelands just 30 years ago. The genesis of the project was an approach from the former Director of Planning at LDC (and current Chair of Halifax Civic Society) Alan Goodrum, who gifted us a collection of over 500 35mm slides taken by the LDC that had lain in his attic!

## Our photography group is revived

We realised that this was an excellent opportunity to engage new volunteers and revive our photography group. Following publicity via social media and our Outlook newsletter, we gained 11 committed volunteers. They set about cataloguing and rephotographing the images going to painstaking efforts to recreate the exact angles and vantage points to create a perfect contrast.

The final part of the process was to curate an exhibition, featuring over 100 printed photographs. This ran from 21-25 May and saw 400 visitors pass through the doors, following only two weeks of advertising.

The venue, 2 Brewery Place, was kindly offered to us by our friends and gold corporate members, Rushbond PLC. This was a perfect location as it was one of the buildings (originally the Tetley Brewery Museum) developed by the LDC; we featured images of Brewery Place under construction on our window display.

A special opening event featured Peter Hartley CBE, then chairman of the LDC. Now in his 90s, his reputation as a feisty proponent of development-led regeneration lives on in the remarks he made!

His old adversary Dr Kevin Grady (former LCT Director), and LDC-era developers including Peter Connolly (Yorkshire Design Group) and Jonathan Maud (Rushbond PLC) reminisced about past battles and collaborations, and recognised the profound impact this organisation has had in its few short years of existence.



**02** An artist's impression of a new development at the Royal Armouries. Proposals include the creation of a new building which will incorporate the existing jousting activity together with a large conference venue

**03** The Third White Cloth Hall – captured during the Leeds Development Corporation era  
**04** Manufacturers Leander restore a blue plaque for the Third White Cloth Hall. This was re-unveiled to coincide with the opening of a new food and drink venue in the building

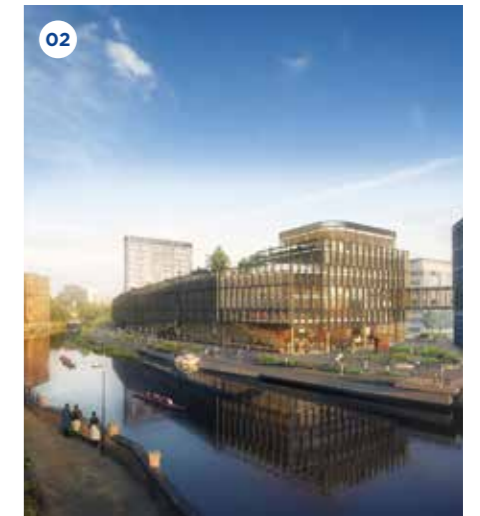
## A new life for the Third White Cloth Hall

The exhibition showed that some of the buildings featured have had several lives since the days of the LDC.

A wonderful image from the time featured the Third White Cloth Hall in a colourful but decrepit state. Its most recent use as a Pizza Express ended during the Covid period. We were delighted to take the opportunity to restore the blue plaque on this important listed building to coincide with its reopening led by a consortium including Corporate Members, Whitelocks as a new food and drink venue.

## What next?

Picking up where our old group left off, our revived photography group has a long list of future projects which will include completing the archiving and digitising the Trust's unique collection of 1960s/1970s photographs and showcasing other slides held at Wharf Street, including glass plate lantern and 35mm slides. In 2025, we hope to showcase our collections, create new archives of Leeds in 2025, and most importantly, curate a second run of The Promised Land exhibition.





# The Bear Pit: A Sixty Year Journey of Restoration

Almost 60 years ago, Leeds Civic Trust purchased a Grade II listed former Victorian bear pit in Headingley for the sum of £125. What was seen at the time as a worthy conservation initiative has become one of our longest-running projects, full of challenges and discoveries.

## A chequered history

The bear pit was originally opened in 1840 as the centrepiece of the Leeds Zoological and Botanical Gardens. Early interest in the gardens dissipated and they closed in 1848. Reopened and rebranded as the “Leeds Royal Gardens” under new management, entrance fees were reduced, opening times increased and the space was hired out for events. The owners even persuaded the Leeds and Thirsk Railway to convey passengers from Thirsk and Ripon to a new southern entrance. It still remained unprofitable and closed in 1858. The land was sold for housing with the bear pit remaining as one of the few original features.

## Progress and discoveries in 2023 and beyond

After years of maintenance by Trust volunteers, we achieved a significant milestone in 2023 with the approval of plans to restore the structure as a “folly” having ruled out various projects, from an open-air theatre to housing over the years. Work commenced in early 2024, and was carried out by contractors R.H. Fullwood & Co. Ltd. During the restoration, we made some exciting discoveries, including a stone trough with an overhead pipe, believed to have been used to provide water for the bear.



- 01 Pictured l-r examining mortar samples, Quantity Surveyor Tony Hale, Builder Ross Fullwood and long standing trust volunteers Graham Castle and Richard Voss who have led the restoration project
- 02 Work in progress: the restored bear pit begins to take shape

- 03 Members of the goth band The Mission, recreate their iconic 1986 photo (Credit: Justin Leeming)
- 04 We held a preview event to allow members and supporters to enter the Bear Pit ahead of our formal launch in 2025

## A ‘sneak peek’ event and growing interest

The restoration also created a surge of interest from local and national media, with Trust Director Martin Hamilton being the face of many interviews. We even had a visit from famous goth band The Mission to recreate their famous photograph from the 1980s. The bear pit also became a stopping off point for the Goth Trail created for this year’s Heritage Open Days by grant recipient Mark Silver.

In June 2024, we hosted a sneak peek event, beginning with a lecture at the Hyde Park Picture House. The late Janet Douglas delivered a fascinating talk on the history of the bear pit and the Leeds Zoological Gardens, followed by a short presentation from former Trust Director Kevin Grady, who shared insights into the Trust’s ownership of the structure. This was followed by a visit to the newly restored bear pit where attendees could appreciate the restoration which includes landscaping, new railings, paths and, of course, a fully restored structure.

None of this progress would have been possible without the dedication of our volunteers, especially Richard Voss and Graham Castle. Their commitment has driven the restoration forward by tackling challenges head-on and ensuring that the project remained on course.

## Looking to the future: what’s next for the bear pit?

We are preparing for the official opening of the bear pit in spring 2025, coinciding with the Trust’s 60-year anniversary celebrations. We will install interpretation boards and begin to plan a planting scheme – maybe taking inspiration from the original botanical gardens. We see the bear pit as a community facility and look forward to working with Headingley residents in the years to come.





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## Large Retail: Conversion and Change

In 2015, Leeds Civic Trust celebrated the 50th anniversary of our incorporation in 1965. Amongst the activities that were undertaken to celebrate this important milestone was a walk entitled “Five decades, five arcades: Fifty years of undercover shopping in Leeds.”

Our city is famous for its Victorian arcades, but this walk considered more recent additions to the covered shopping experience in the city. Since then, shopping habits have changed considerably, and our 2024 AGM brought together a panel including Karen Butler (Leeds BID), Ian Harvey - outgoing CEO of Civic Voice and a member of the High Street Task Force, Steve Foster (Centre Director at the Leeds Trinity and White Rose Shopping Centres) to discuss the changing face of the high street.

- 01 Dr Kevin Grady delivering his popular “Leeds in Your Lunch Hour” lectures including one focusing on the history of retail in our city
- 02 An artist’s impression of a re-imagined St John’s Centre showing new elevational treatment (image courtesy of Leonard Design Architects)

The rise of internet shopping and the impact of Covid have changed the way we shop. The debate sought to consider how we make our high streets and shopping centres places that people want to visit, reflecting the important role they play as a source of employment and as a way of animating our town and city centres.

Dr Kevin Grady’s lunchtime lecture “From the Bazaar to John Lewis and beyond” gave an historical context to this fascinating subject. Our city’s retail offer has always been a story of change and renewal.





- 01 The proposed replacement for “The Core” shopping centre (Image courtesy of Corstorphine and Wright)
- 02 A topping-out ceremony for a 369 bed space student development on the site of the former House of Fraser Store on Briggate

**Shopping centres are changing**

Three of the five covered shopping outlets included in our walk ten years ago were also on our agenda this year. The St John’s Centre, which opened in 1984, has often seemed a bit of a backwater, though it continues to perform well as a retail location. Less successful are the upper floors, which house offices. The city’s prime office quarter has gradually migrated from the central retail core to the area around Wellington Street and consequently owners are looking at ways of revitalising spaces that are hard to rent out. The proposals will convert the upper floors of this building into accommodation for around 300 students.

The elevations will be re-faced, and an internal courtyard garden is to be established, earmarking space currently used for car parking. Approval for this scheme was granted in October 2024. These proposals certainly piqued the interest of the general public – our Facebook post on the subject generated over 400 comments – both positive and negative! More student accommodation is proposed on the site of “The Core” – the rather unloved shopping centre built in 1987 on the site of the former Schofields department store. The plans are to demolish the centre and replace it with three blocks which will house around 800 students “above the shop” – retail will be retained on the ground floor. This will enable two new streets connecting Lands Lane and King Charles Street to be created.

After asking whether the building could be repurposed, we supported the proposals which include some interesting architecture which is more in keeping with existing buildings in the vicinity. Finally, we were invited to comment on proposals from Trinity Leeds to add a second floor to their popular Trinity Kitchen operation. This will take advantage of currently unused space and will create a new terrace which will overlook City Square. We supported the proposals which would create a better backdrop to Mill Hill Chapel. We were assured that these new functions would not affect services and events conducted at the church.



- 03 A new rooftop bar will overlook Mill Hill Chapel and City Square in proposals revealed by the owners of Trinity Leeds shopping centre (image courtesy of Chapman Taylor)

**Changes in Briggate**

From the earliest times, Briggate has been the city’s focal point for business and trade but has never stood still. This year, we were given an architectural drawing salvaged from a notice board within the architectural studies department at the former Leeds Polytechnic which was produced in the mid-70s, showing the entire western elevation of Briggate. Only Marks and Spencer survives in the same location.

**A new building on the House of Fraser site**

We attended the topping out ceremony of the former House of Fraser store. This mid-century building has been demolished to be replaced by a ten-storey building that will house 360 students on the upper floors with the ground and basement retained as 3,200 sq m of retail space developed by Manner. The Trust gave its broad support to the proposals which will provide an interesting elevation (we think an improvement on the building that went before), incorporating an interesting arched design. We were less convinced by the powder-coated top two floors which we felt were overbearing. We accepted that retention of the original building was not a practical proposition.

**Debenhams becomes Flannels**

Further up Briggate, a new Flannels store has opened in the building previously occupied by the now defunct Debenhams. This is essentially a restoration and fit-out of this familiar building. Initial proposals would also have seen this converted into student accommodation, before at the eleventh hour this alternative scheme was proposed. We supported this use but opposed the unauthorised insertion of black vinyl on the windows of some of the upper floors of this listed building.





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# Supporting Buildings of the Highest Quality

**01** This new building emerging on the site of Aire Park shows how pre-fabricated panels, when properly designed and attached, can produce a very satisfactory finish

The Trust's charitable objects promote high standards of sustainable design. Our observations are underpinned by the principles of good architecture, and are enriched by the experiences and opinions of our volunteer planning committee which includes a mixture of professionals and well-informed lay people.

### The new government's planning priorities

One of the first acts of the in-coming government was to launch a review of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Trust submitted its views on what was proposed. We agree that the housing crisis is real and support most of the proposed changes. It is perhaps not widely appreciated that Leeds has built more homes in recent years than many of the core cities. In the last year, nearly 4,500 homes were completed. If this level of delivery was achieved across the country on a per capita basis, national housing delivery targets would be met.

The return of mandatory housing targets seems sensible as a general principle, but in supporting development, we also need to ensure that the quality of what we build is as good as it can be. The revised NPPF has removed all references to "beauty", and the Office for Place established under the previous government as a means of promoting good design (through design codes) has been disbanded. This should not be taken as a signal that volume trumps good design.





**01** A poster from the “Humanise” campaign led by Thomas Heatherwick, agitating for “less boring design”

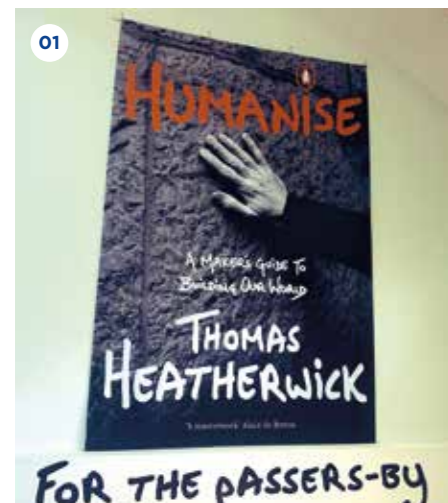
**02** This detail from “The Phoenix” is an example of poor external treatment (not to mention the rather odd wind baffles!)

**03** The artist’s impression of this building to replace Zurich House was generally supported by our Planning Committee (image courtesy of Russ Drage Architects)

### Good brick versus bad brick

One way in which design quality can be addressed is in the quality of the finish. The internal treatment of a private building is only appreciated by those who live and work there, but the external elevations are seen by all of us and has to be endured for many years! The Trust produced a report this year which looked at examples of good and bad brick work. We looked at the extent to which original designs had been realised in the finished article and the quality of work undertaken to achieve this. A good example is the very well executed brick panelling used in the Vastint office scheme on the former Tetley Brewery site. Joins are carefully hidden, and the finish is consistent.

This contrasts with The Phoenix residential building in Eastside which appears clunky and unfinished. We also lament the fact that the original design intentions on the Kirkstall Hill development (known as Abbey Court), have gradually been eroded with the brickwork lacking the subtlety and finish that the original CGIs had promised.



### “Humanising” architecture

This year, we hosted the 25th anniversary lunch of the Yorkshire and Humber Association of Civic Societies at the Met Hotel. Abigail Scott Paul, Global Head of the Humanise campaign, an initiative conceived by acclaimed designer Thomas Heatherwick, talked about their central mission to ensure that buildings were less boring. Heatherwick, who designed the award-winning Maggie’s Centre at St James Hospital, cites the John Lewis store in Leeds as an example of a building that is less boring. The Humanise campaign defines boring buildings as being “too flat, plain, straight, shiny, monotonous, anonymous or serious” and promotes buildings that “lift the soul.” Maybe this is a useful shorthand for evaluating schemes considered by our planning committee?

### Delivering good design

A residential scheme called “Evolution House” at 34-36 Springwell Road for 391 residential units was considered by us to be lacking in architectural interest in its massing and materiality in a location that will be very visible to people arriving in Leeds by train.

A proposal for a replacement of Zurich House with a building of up to 10 storeys for residential use was, in our view, better resolved in terms of architectural interest but would benefit from more variety in materials, which would reduce the risk of the building appearing monolithic and replicating the Leeds Look. We also felt that the frontages were relatively inactive and entrances too understated.

MAP charity objected to the reserved matters application for 71-73 Mabgate. They had a number of concerns including overlooking and the height of the adjoining building. We agreed at outline stage that the massing was excessive in this location but given that this principle had been established through outline approval, our comments at the reserved matters stage related to the finish and articulation of the building. We supported the inclusion of murals in the internal courtyard as a way of adding variety and noted the subtle changes in brick tone and texture incorporated into the building. We pointed out that these variations would need to be sufficiently obvious to break up the large expanses of brick. The introduction of glazed brick to the arches was a very positive element of the scheme.





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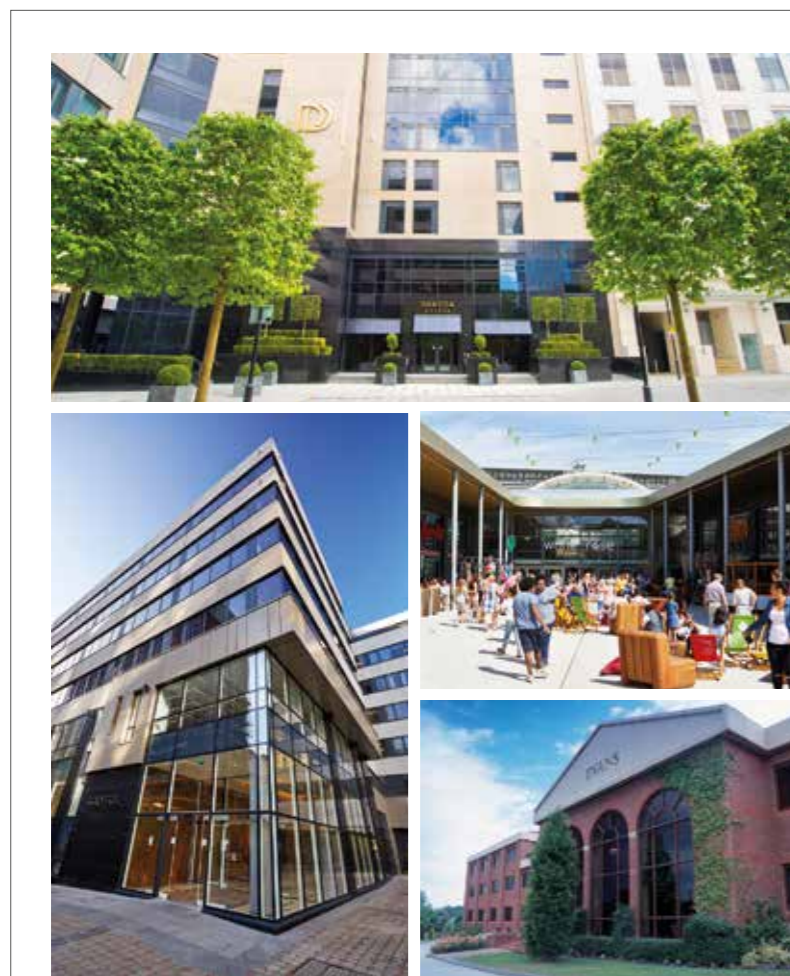
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The Wagon Lifting Hoist Mini Museum, located at Wellington Place, celebrates Leeds's rich industrial heritage. The Grade II listed building closed in 1967 and was awarded a Leeds Civic Trust blue plaque in July 2011.

Reopened in 2024, it is one of the last remaining parts of Leeds Central Station. The museum contains immersive exhibitions and original artefacts spanning the station's more than a century long history including sounds, photos and memories of the working station.

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[info@wellingtonplace.co.uk](mailto:info@wellingtonplace.co.uk)



# Saving the fabric



As Jenna Strover moved on to become chair of the Trust, we were delighted to welcome Clare Chapman as the new chair of our Heritage Watch Group.

Clare Chapman is a graduate in Art History and Museums Studies. Her work with the Church Commissioners for England focuses on finding suitable new uses for former church buildings no longer needed for regular public worship.

Clare is ideally suited for her new role. The “art of the possible” and being selective about which of the hundreds of listed and precious heritage buildings we focus our attention on, is providing a new impetus to our group. These insights have been particularly useful this year as a number of challenging projects have been presented to us.

## The Tetley Building

This much-loved building is the centrepiece of Aire Park, a vast brownfield site which is being developed for a variety of uses at the location of the former Tetley Brewery. The Trust supports the overall vision for the site and there is already much to admire – particularly the high-quality public park which is now taking shape.

However, we were concerned about proposals for the former Tetley HQ, which we felt did not respect the history and heritage of this building.

In particular, we felt that the proposed extension to the building would dominate the existing building and were concerned that too much of the interior, including wooden panelling and individual rooms, was to be stripped out as part of a refit for office and conference use above a bar/restaurant use on the ground floor.

- 01 Leeds Civic Trust was concerned about proposals for an extension to this key heritage building and the extent to which original features might be removed
- 02 This picture of the collapsed building on Kirkgate shows what happens when buildings are neglected

## Kirkgate

The Trust’s interest in Kirkgate stems from the fact that it is the city’s oldest street. Whilst some very positive work has been undertaken (not least the renovation of the First White Cloth Hall and five other shop fronts), other properties have continued to be neglected. We were alarmed but not surprised when the frontage of 85 Kirkgate collapsed in April with adjacent buildings now also under threat (not helped by fire damage in 2023). Their dilapidated appearance was already a source of frustration for nearby businesses and protective hoardings create an unwelcoming environment. Leeds City Council obtained an urgent works notice (bizarrely as an unlisted building, permission has to be sought from central government) which effectively underwrites the cost of repair works and may end up as the developer of last resort.

## Reuse of mills

The Trust held a members visit to Sunny Bank Mills in Farsley. The Mills have been in the ownership of the Gaunt family for over 100 years. Following the closure of the mills as worsted cloth manufacturers in 2008, the owners have created a thriving and vibrant complex of 100 small businesses (employing over 500 people) together with cafes, a gallery and entertainment uses.

It is heartening that perhaps the most obvious solution to create apartments was ruled out in favour of retaining its primary employment function.

More problematic is the future of other mill buildings in the city. Leeds City Council took the decision to relinquish its lease of the listed Thwaite Mills, closing the museum in April 2024. The Council reported that low visitor numbers and costs of around £0.75 million over the next five years were factors in making this decision. If the building does not have a future as a museum, we hope that an imaginative and sustainable alternative use can be found.

As we balance the need for preservation with pragmatism, we have expressed concerns about the future of Aire Place Mills on Kirkstall Road. The site, which formally housed several businesses including Seagulls Reuse, the paint recycling social enterprise, is in family ownership but with an option assigned to a developer for housing. Whilst we welcome initial proposals for low rise traditional housing on this site which is a transition point from urban Leeds to suburban Kirkstall, we share Leeds City Council’s concerns that at least some of the existing mill buildings should be retained as part of any redevelopment.





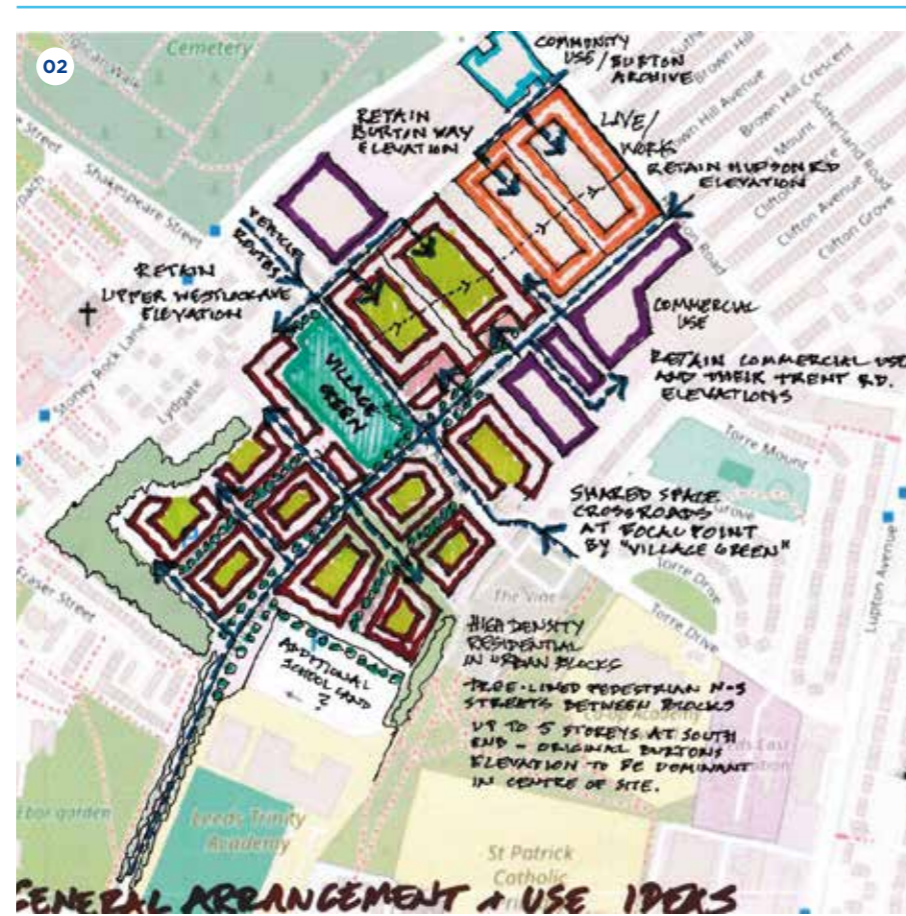
01 Ellie Thompson joined us over the summer on a placement funded by Historic England and supported by Leeds City Council

### Burton's site

This vast site on Hudson Road, once the epicentre of the Burton's clothing empire where more than 10,000 people were employed, has been in the ownership of Avant Homes since the collapse of Arcadia. In our conversations with the new owners, we are keen to ensure that the key northern and southern facades with the famous tiled frontages are retained. The site needs to have decent greenspace and we are keen that the housing properly reflects the industrial heritage rather than being "off the peg" housing that we often see from volume house builders. Early signs are encouraging – in addition to 500 homes on the site, it is proposed that the southern façade will be retained in an apartment scheme. Around 8 acres of the land will continue to be used for employment and there may even be a location found for an archive.

### Historic England work placement

We were delighted to work with Leeds City Council and Historic England to host Ellie Thompson, a second year University of Leeds history student over the course of the summer. Ellie worked with our Heritage Watch group documenting key buildings, worked with the Council's conservation team on the city's local listing scheme. She used the knowledge she had gained to lead a walk around Little Woodhouse pointing out the everyday heritage features that make this part of the city so fascinating and a good starting point for local listing.



02 We developed our own masterplan sketches for the Burton's site. When the developers revealed their plans we were pleasantly surprised that they agreed with many of our ideas







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# Influencing and Advocating

Leeds Civic Trust has not shied away from exerting influence through our planning and transport work across 2024, in tune with our wider objectives to promote and organise participation and cooperation with stakeholders and partners locally, regionally, and nationally. Our cooperative efforts to shape our city's future have taken many forms.

## Re-imagining Leeds Eastside

For several years, Leeds Civic Trust has championed the transformation of Leeds Eastside, a part of the city centre historically dominated by traffic, fragmented greenspace, and limited community facilities. Since 2019, we've collaborated with the public, stakeholders, and organisations to reimagine Eastside as a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable urban space. These efforts ranged from hosting a public competition of ideas to creating the Vision document in 2023, led by landscape architects Urban Wilderness.

The Vision was never intended to be static but to spark conversation and inspire change. This year we took significant steps to engage a wider audience. In January, we ran a scoping workshop with key stakeholders to explore collective ways forward.

Following this, Urban Wilderness designed and facilitated creative workshops over the summer to capture the public's emotional responses and perspectives about the area.

These workshops culminated in some really powerful creative outputs, including film, photographs and screen-printed collages, displayed in September at the 'Re-imagining Leeds Eastside Exhibition' at Leeds City College.

A closing event in September gathered community members, stakeholders, and speakers to celebrate more than five years of dedicated work and to reflect on the past, present, and future of the project.

A huge thanks to Hannah and Ishita at Urban Wilderness and Lydia, Jaime and Tom at Leeds City College - without their creative input this project would not have been possible!



## Leeds Transformational Regeneration Partnership

The momentum behind Eastside's transformation this year has started to properly align with Leeds City Council's broader regeneration goals. Notably, Leeds Civic Council announced that it had secured funding from central government to establish the Leeds Transformational Regeneration Partnership. The Trust has been in dialogue with Council colleagues with a view to embedding the Eastside principles into this broader programme of regeneration.

The project aims for a 'gentle density' approach to regeneration across five neighbourhoods on the edge of the city centre including Hunslet and Riverside, West End Riverside, South Bank Central, the Innovation Arc, Holbeck & South Leeds, and, of course, Leeds Eastside.

The Eastside project exemplifies how collaboration, creativity (and persistence!) can support the re-imagining of our urban spaces for the better. We have been able to exert influence by bringing together people and ideas to shape the future of Leeds, none of which would be possible without our city partners.

Further discussions have now been held to discuss improvements to Penny Pocket Park, the land that straddles the railway viaduct. By supporting a study to be undertaken by Groundwork in collaboration with the Wades Trust, Leeds Minster and Leeds City Council, we look forward to supporting changes that go with the grain of our broader vision.

- 01 Participants were invited to use a disposable camera to take pictures during a walk through Eastside
- 02 The logo for the 4x4 events
- 03 Our proposals for the initial phases of the Mass Transit route

## The revival of the 4x4s

2024 also marked the return of the iconic 4x4 discussion series in collaboration with the Leeds Society of Architects, Leeds Beckett University and RIBA after a gap of many years. The "2024x4" series featured four evenings of thought-provoking discussions centred on architecture, design and the future of Leeds.

Each week tackled a unique theme, with renowned speakers sharing their insights. Week One: A City Alive explored how culture serves as a catalyst for creating dynamic urban spaces. Week Two: A Developing City, examined regeneration and development. Week Three: The Look, celebrated thoughtful design and Week Four: A Sustainable Future? tackled sustainability. We were delighted that so many of the Trust's friends and associates contributed to these vital debates.





### A tram for West Yorkshire?

As a long-term supporter of Mass Transit, we've also played an active role in advocating for a new tram system across West Yorkshire. This year, we developed our own route proposals which are available on our website. Our proposals are underpinned by core principles, focusing on connecting areas currently under-served by public transport, encouraging sustainable travel and wider opportunities for placemaking. Building partnerships with the decision makers and building public support for the tram has been at the heart of our approach.

We had regular meetings with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) to share our proposals, offering constructive input informed by local knowledge and our expertise. We submitted our formal response to WYCA's 'phase one' consultation on proposed route options in August 2024.

We also engaged with national social enterprise Create Streets on their report which made a strong case for trams in the UK, using our very own Leeds as a case study. The report explored the tram's potential to enhance connectivity and placemaking across the region.

- 01 Clifford Stead with a group of participants under Monkbridge Viaduct during his walk entitled "Trains, trams and the underground: lost and unrealised public transport in Leeds"
- 02 A group of supporters await a decision on bus franchising outside Wellington House

### Supporting the move to bus franchising

In our quest for a more liveable Leeds, we know that a reliable, affordable, and integrated transport system is crucial. The Trust is pleased to support the move towards bus franchising in West Yorkshire, a major step forward following the success of last year's campaign led by Better Buses for West Yorkshire. Looking ahead, the Trust is committed to holding decision-makers accountable, working with partners and local authorities to ensure these improvements are fully realised and support the wider transport vision for West Yorkshire.

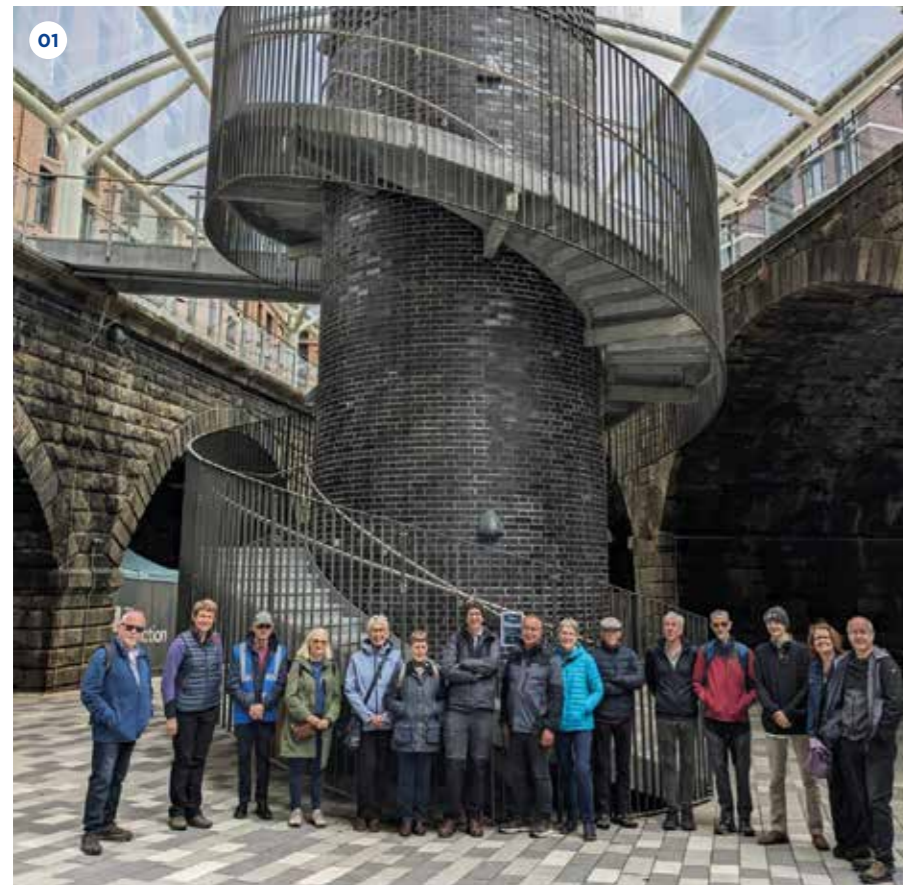
### Working with the city

Our long-term role as a 'critical friend' of the Council has continued to evolve, particularly when harnessing our shared goals in development and transport issues. This year, we engaged with Leeds City Council on key consultations such as the Woodhouse Lane Gateway scheme, influencing proposals at an early stage to ensure sustainable and inclusive outcomes.

Our ongoing quarterly meetings with the City Development Department have continued to foster an open dialogue and enabled us to ask important questions. We wish outgoing Director of City Development Martin Farrington well, as he stands down after nearly 30 years at Leeds City Council. We gave him our own send off at a special "in conversation" event hosted by Arup.

Our dialogue with the Council remains a cornerstone of our efforts to influence change and we look forward to building on this with Angela Barnicle who has stepped into Martin's role.

## Committees and Groups



#### Events Committee

Jane Taylor (Chair), Meryll Wilford, Joan Hick, Mark Parry, Roderic Parker, Garance Rawinsky

#### Finance and General Purposes Committee

John Pike (Chair), Catherine Black, Jeremy Burton, Robert Solyom, Jenna Strover, Jane Taylor

#### House Committee

Richard Voss (Chair), Graham Castle

#### Planning Committee

Mike Piet (Chair), Peter Baker, David Barraclough, Jim Brettell, Robert Collins, Alannah Coulson, Howard Dews, Paul Exley, Ruth Gelletlie, Jeff Gleisner, Adrian Jones, Karmjit Lyal, Caroline Newton, Tony Ray, Claude Saint-Arroman, Lesley Slaney, Clifford Stead, Jeremy Thompson, Luke Tyler, Clive Woods, Colin Woodward, Samuel Yates

#### Heritage Watch Group

Clare Chapman (Chair), Rick Amos, Peter Baker, Carol Page, Clare Chapman, Christine Osborne, Garance Rawinsky, Tony Ray, Helen Sanders, Jenna Strover, Meryll Wilford, Clive Woods

#### Blue Plaques Group

Jane Collins, Kate Davis, Lizzie Mussett, Liz Yeoman

#### Heritage Open Days Group

Meryll Wilford (Chair), Jan Farrar, John Harris, Joan Hick, Roderic Parker, Garance Rawinsky

#### Photography Group

Lisa Brown, Stephen Cole, Jane Collins, Andrew Fahy, Anthony Hicks, Liz Samways, Igor Sivolob

#### Transport and Liveable Leeds Group

Ruth Gelletlie (Chair), Howard Dews, Jeff Gleisner, Adrian Jones, Mark Parry, Mike Piet, James Riley, David Smith, Jeff Turner, Clive Woods

#### Heritage and Culture Panel

Lucy Moore (Chair), Jay Anderson, Katy Frankland, Alex Fitzpatrick, Jordan Keighley, Sophia Lambert, Simon Morgan, Lisa McIntyre

#### Community Groups affiliated to Leeds Civic Trust

Aireborough Civic Society  
Alwoodley Community Association  
Far Headingley Village Society  
Friends of Lawnswood Cemetary  
Friends of Middleton Park  
Friends of Roundhay Park  
Friends of Temple Newsam  
Gledhow Valley Conservation Group  
Horsforth Civic Society  
Little Woodhouse Community Association  
Newlay Conservation Society  
Pudsey & District Civic Society  
Thackray Museum  
The Oulton Society  
The Thoresby Society  
Weetwood Residents' Association  
Wetherby Civic Society



# Heritage Open Days – A Festival of Connections

2024 marked the 30th anniversary of The National Trust’s Heritage Open Days festival, and Leeds Civic Trust has been instrumental in coordinating the festival in Leeds for an impressive 26 years, making Leeds one of the earliest cities in the country to participate.

What began as a weekend event has now grown into a 10-day celebration. The 2024 festival theme, Routes, Networks, and Connections, was particularly fitting given the event’s long-standing legacy of building connections within our city. Over 100 events were part of this year’s festival in Leeds, and Leeds Civic Trust saw the return of our successful grants scheme, which funded 16 new initiatives providing a platform for new voices and communities that may not previously have had the funds or the support to participate in the festival. We supported the Ahlulbayt Cultural Centre, which ran an interactive masterclass and mini exhibition exploring storytelling within the diaspora community specifically catered towards the Leeds Iraqi community. The event explored the collective memory and shared identity of Iraqi migrants, and the challenges faced in capturing their stories.

We also supported the We Are Hyde Park exhibition, an art showcase curated by the Left Bank. This was a celebration of the rich heritage and stories of Hyde Park which invited local creatives to submit works inspired by the area. The exhibition was accompanied by workshops, talks, and performances that further connected people through shared experiences of the area’s history and cultural stories. Another notable grant receiver was The Leeds Goth QR Code Challenge by Mark Silver, aka Leeds Nomad. This interactive scavenger hunt invited participants to discover QR codes placed at significant sites around the city, each telling the story of Leeds’ pivotal role in the birth of Goth culture. One of the hidden QR codes even led participants to our own bear pit!

- 01 A flyer by Leeds Nomad for his goth trail – one of many events that took place during Heritage Open Days
- 02 The Lifting Tower opened as a museum celebrating the rail heritage of Wellington Place. It was also on the Leeds BID’s “monopoly board” and the location for our Heritage Open Days launch



- 03 Celebrating the city’s rhubarb history and its pioneer Joseph Whitwell at Holly Bush Farm in Kirkstall
- 04 Leeds Civic Trust was one of a number of sponsors of “the Waste Shark” – a remote-controlled waste disposal system that patrolled our waterways collecting rubbish during 2024

## A plaque for rhubarb!

The festival also saw the return of the popular open day at Hollybush Conservation Centre, which celebrated its recent blue plaque in honour of Joseph Whitwell, a Victorian gentleman farmer who pioneered the cultivation of forced rhubarb. Visitors enjoyed a self-guided tour to learn about Whitwell’s story and the opportunity to see the newly unveiled Leeds Civic Trust blue plaque.

## A new museum for Leeds

In May, The Wagon Hoist at Wellington Place, restored by Corporate Members MEPC, opened a mini museum. The museum explores 170 years of railway history and showcases signage from the Middleton Railway, as well as filmed interviews with former workers, hosted by our Trustee Clifford Stead. What better place to hold our festival launch? We brought together festival participants for an evening of networking, music from Foxwood Panyard, a steel band, and talks from some of the year’s Heritage Open Days participants, including the Middleton Railway, Mark Silver of The Goth Trail, and Swarthmore Education Centre.

The year’s festival not only highlighted the city’s valuable heritage but also supported community engagement and creativity. The event’s ability to evolve and grow each year reflects the ongoing relevance of heritage as a source of connection, inspiration, and pride in our city. Thank you, as always, to our wonderful Heritage Open Days team for their continued work and coordination.







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