



NEWSLETTER

Summer 2026
Issue no. 108

Worcester Civic Society Blue Plaque Scheme



21st April 2026: Lecture celebrating the printing of the latest 'Worcester 32 Blue Plaque Trail Guide' at Henry Sandon Hall. Left to Right: Stephen Inman (Chairman from 2011-2014 and currently WCS Treasurer); Phil Douce, (Chairman from 2014-2025 and currently President); John Wickson (Hon. Sec. 2005-2026).

The Hannah Snell blue plaque in Friar Street, unveiled in 2018. Following the trail guide launch, Society members enjoyed a one woman show dramatically celebrating the life of Hannah Snell by Dr Georgina Lock.



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Spotlight: Worcester Civic Society Blue Plaque Scheme

Origins of the Scheme

Back in 2012 Worcester contained ten 'earlier' plaques celebrating significant people and places connected with our city's past. Fourteen years on the number of plaques has now risen to thirty-two and it seems appropriate to reflect on what has been achieved as we take a pause in production, before we are 'plaqued' out!



Number 6 on the trail to Sir Charles Hastings, an early plaque pre-dating the WCS Scheme.

The major driving forces behind most of the Society's installations have been our two

recent Chairs: Stephen Inman and Phil Douce, although the fifteen-year push was instigated by Professor Derek Law who was on our Executive Committee back in 2011.

Blue Plaque Celebration Event

On the 21st April 2026 in the Henry Sandon Hall, the Society held an event where I detailed the history of the Scheme and the work undertaken in producing the Society's Blue Plaque Trail Guide.



Presentation on the Blue Plaque Scheme, Henry Sandon Hall.

The presentation was followed by a one woman show dramatically celebrating the life of Hannah Snell by Dr Georgina Lock

who brought the story of one of our plaque recipients to life. Her 45-minute one woman show told the story of "Hannah Snell, Female Soldier 1750" and her time in the Army and the Royal Marines posing as a man named James Gray, in an effort to locate her errant husband.



Dr Georgina Lock presenting the life of Hannah Snell, Henry Sandon Hall.

The Blue Plaque Trail

The linear trail which we have created will take you about two hours to walk around, mostly within the city centre, perhaps commencing with the purchase, for a token sum, of our new paper Trail Guide from The Tourist Information Centre. This may then be used to view a detailed location map,

containing photos by Peter Goggs as well as my brief biographies. In combination, or alternatively, there is a mobile phone guide, with expandable map, to be found on the Society's website:

<https://www.worcestercivicsociety.org.uk/projects/blue-plaque-schemes/> . Credit for this goes to Dee Bruce.



Blue Plaque Trail Map on the WCS Website

Three of the 32 are also further away from the city centre and require determination to find: John Williams at Pitmaston House, William Morris (Viscount Nuffield) at 47 Comer Gardens and Lea and Perrins (Current Factory) in Midland Road.

Spotlight: Worcester Civic Society Blue Plaque Scheme cont/...

There are in reality more than 32 plaques to be found across the city including:

- Red Plaques installed by The Elgar Society.
- Nine rectangular-shaped City Gate memorial Blue Plaques, mostly sponsored by the Eden family.
- 'Outliers' including Lord Faulkner, our Patron's, railway plaque in the Platform Two Waiting Room at Shrub Hill Station.
- Complete 'outliers' at Evesham Town Hall (for Jim Capaldi) and at the Shelsey Walsh Hill Climb (to Stirling Moss and Murray Walker), negotiated by Phil Douce.

Not always a success!

Not all our endeavours have been successful. For various reasons the following have not reached fruition: Ernie Payne (1884-1961), the 'Worcester Wonder', a 1908 Olympic Gold medal cyclist, Mrs Henry Wood (1814-1887), Victorian author, though there is a memorial tablet to her in the North Transept of the Cathedral, Vesta Tilley (1864-1952), Music Hall Performer, Lowesmoor), although there is a memorial statuette in The Cornmarket.

However, during the pandemic the City's Historic Environment Record Officer (now Conservation Officer), Sheena Payne-Lunn, set about creating biographical information boards as part of the Riverside Park and gaps in our Plaque Trail were filled, including the one for Mrs Henry Wood located at Hylton Road and also for William Forsyth (1834-1915, Sculptor and Carver) at the site of his entrance gates near the South end of Pitchcroft.



The Mrs Henry Wood information board, Hylton Road.

Many supporters of the scheme.

Credit goes to other organisations which have played their part in paying for and installing some of our Trail Plaques: John James Cam – The Worcester Tourist Association; Dr John Wall – Royal Worcester; John Adams and Thomas Jefferson – Battle of Worcester Society with Barry and Hilary Hansell; Worcester Cross – The Milestone Society with Worcester City Council; Edward Hurdman – Charter 400 (Worcester 1621-2021).

Credit also to: the individuals who have so generously paid for manufacture of plaques; the owners of the properties where the plaques are located for their permissions; our regular Iron Founders (Leander Architectural) at Buxton in the Peak District; the assistance of city planners (particularly Dr Paul Collins) and 'Ringway' for permissions and installations; Society members who have found forebears, family, friends and sponsors to attend, speak and unveil on the day; and the willing attendance of, among others our local MPs and City Mayors at the unveilings.

At the Society's recent plaque event I had the opportunity to thank the following for



Sir Thomas Brock plaque unveiling, Crown Courts, Foregate St. August 2022

their assistance in completing our new Trail Guide and all 77 guests received a copy of our newly printed Worcester Blue Plaque Trail Guide:

- Peter Goggs for plaque photographs and assistance with biographies.
- Dee Bruce for her interactive Google map.
- Stephen Inman for his work with the printer 'Pace Print and Design' towards our updated paper guide as accepted by the Tourist Information Centre at The Guildhall.
- Phil Douce for his insights into the processes which have led to installation.

Article by: John Wickson, Honorary Secretary (based on his presentation at the trail launch in April)

Planning Watch: Battenhall Farm – Mind the Gap, and 4 & 6 The Moors



Battenhall Farm

The latest instalment from Battenhall Farm arrives in the form of a screening request, which is planner-speak for: "Do we really need to do the big environmental homework?" Our answer: yes, and please show your workings.

The site may not be wearing a landscape designation badge, but it is no anonymous field. It is Green Space in the adopted SWDPR, and it touches against the Whittington Significant Gap - the piece of countryside whose job description is, awkwardly, to stop Worcester and Whittington politely becoming one another.

The view from here

The land is highly visible from roads, homes, businesses, the railway and public rights of way. Its upper slopes also offer long views across the valley towards the Malverns. Those views are not decorative extras: they are part of the green approach to Worcester.

Cumulative: the planning word for "altogether"

The Panel also flags cumulative pressure from nearby sites, including the withdrawn Middle Battenhall Farm scheme and land north of Crookbarrow Way. One bite at the gap is one thing; several bites and the sandwich disappears.

At present there is no concept masterplan to show how the landscape and visual constraints have shaped the ideas. No careful choreography of access routes; no convincing demonstration that built form can sit quietly; no real sense of how the bulk of development would be hidden while the important views are kept open.

In the absence of that, the request reads less like "nothing to see here" and more like "please avert your eyes". The potential effects on openness, the green corridor from Battenhall Park and St Peters, and the wider setting are plainly not minor paperwork.

The school-shaped elephant

Worcestershire County Council has sought a new secondary school in Worcester, and existing schools are already under pressure. A large urban extension could have significant education impacts. That, too, should be scoped in..



No significant landscape impact?

4 & 6 The Moors

A neat little bundle has arrived at 4 and 6 The Moors: two Certificates of Lawfulness, a full planning application and a listed building consent application. The properties are Grade II listed and sit in the Riverside Conservation Area, so naturally the paperwork begins....

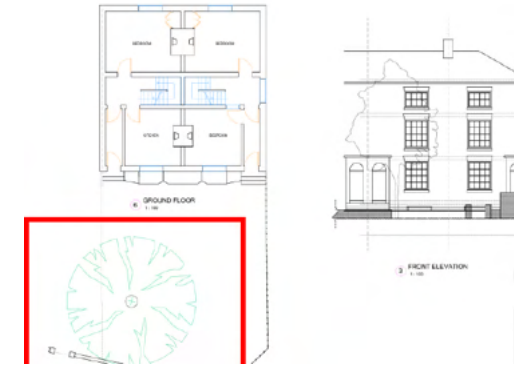
If a boundary wall has long formed part of the listed property - and appears to include original brickwork - then the applicant needs evidence, not optimism with a drawing number.

Boundary behaviour

The front boundary is not merely a line on a plan. It helps define the relationship between terrace and street. Punching new vehicular opening and gaps through it risks fragmenting the very townscape rhythm the conservation area is meant to preserve.

The missing files file

The Planning Portal reportedly offered "Further Files To Be Submitted" and then little enough to judge the matter properly. The Panel therefore asks for clarification and reconsultation once the evidence is actually available. We will consider further once the evidence is properly made available.



The tree appears inconsistently on plans.

Lawfulness, but make it lawful

Certificates of Lawfulness turn on evidence and balance of probability. We say the evidence is ambiguous and not precise enough. That is a problem for an application whose whole premise is that the answer is already settled.

Worcester Civic Society's Planning Panel, led by Chris Evans MRTPI (Chair), examines and comments on key strategic documents affecting Worcester's and its historic assets. It also examines and monitors individual major developments and minor developments affecting listed buildings and conservation areas in the city.

Local 'Heritage Heroes' – Discover History

In this article contributed by Discover History's Paul Harding, we look to highlight the work of a fellow organisation in championing Worcester's heritage.

Discover History – origins.

Discover History was founded in 2003 by Paul and Helen Harding, after almost 15 years working in the Heritage and Tourism Industry.

Paul started his career working for Worcester City Museums and even managed the Tourist Information Centre for a short period too. Outside of this he was, and still is, a long serving Sergeant at Mace (Macebearer) for Worcester. Helen, has worked for numerous organisations, including Warwick Castle and several National Trust properties in the County.

Originally, we planned to be purely an Education Company, working with schools. When schools book us to look at the Roman Invasion for example, we visit with hundreds of replica items and wear authentic Roman clothing. They are therefore fully immersed in the period they are studying, and carry out fun, and practical activities.



Paul and Helen Harding of Discover History

We have now won several education awards and offer every period in history from the Stone Age to the 1950s. We also cover the whole of Britain, visiting schools as far away as Northumberland, London, and Wiltshire.

A growing portfolio of activities

We have also become multi-faceted, offering lots of different services. These include site specific living history, whereby we portray characters associated with an historical site. Clients include English Heritage, The National Trust, and

independent museums and tourist attractions across Britain. The furthest North we have worked is Edinburgh Castle, the furthest South, being Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight. We have also worked in Wales and sites in both Lincolnshire and Norfolk to the East.

We also offer talks to organisations such as Rotary Clubs and The Women's Institute. We specialise in local history and see ourselves as Ambassadors for Worcester. In more recent times we also offer training and consultancy for heritage sites.

Being Worcester people, we have both researched the history of our great City, taken part in archaeological excavations, written articles for several newspapers and magazines, and regularly feature on BBC Hereford and Worcester radio.

Heritage walks – informing about and watching out for Worcester's heritage

In 2007, we added guided walks to our ever-growing services. This started as one tour known as 'The Worcester Story'. This is still a popular walk, looking at how the City started as a hunting ground for Mesolithic people, and developed as a Bronze Age settlement around 700-750BCE.



Paul in action on one of Discover History's heritage walks

It concludes with the Cathedral and University City of 2026. We now offer 35 different walks of Worcester, plus tours of the Guildhall on behalf of the City Council.

Our walking tours are available all year round, and at different times in the day. We are therefore an important tool in reporting damage or changes to the historic fabric of the City.

Success stories include the removal of graffiti and arranging the City Youth Team to deal with gangs of youths riding bikes dangerously on the High Street.

continued on next page...

Local 'Heritage Heros' – Discover History cont/...

Heritage campaigning continued...

We also campaigned to remove banners on the Guildhall railings, reduced the use of A Boards, and suggested the closure of Copenhagen Street to traffic to protect the Guildhall from damage caused by Lorry strikes

More recently we have also had a large banner removed on Laslett's Almshouses, and a plastic 'To Let' sign unscrewed from the timbers of a shop in Friar Street!



Section of the City Wall, City Walls Road (image credit: Geoff Hicks (2023), Historic England List Entry).

The most successful to date has been getting the Medieval City walls looked after. A street cleaner now visits City Walls Road daily, unused traffic cones, and plastic barriers have been removed, and the 1960s railing are currently being painted.

I am also a Battlefield Guide for Powick Bridge 1642, and Worcester 1651. Since Powick Bridge has become impassable, we are actively working behind the scene to highlight how important it is. We take 'selfies' at the bridge on our Battlefield walks.

This highlights how often we bring people to the bridge. These walks are popular with international visitors, hundreds of school children, and local people with an interest in the English Civil Wars. www.discover-history.co.uk

Facebook and YouTube – Discover History

X (Twitter) and Instagram - DiscoverHistPH

Article by: Paul Harding, Discover History

Campaigns update – Powick Old Bridge

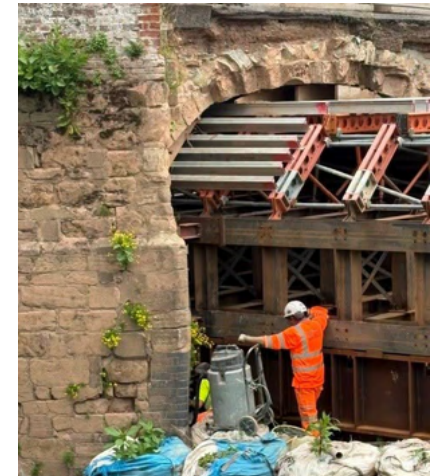
The Society continues to support the campaign to save Powick Old Bridge. Since our spring update, there has been some activity, but progress remains slow, and the bridge continues to be at risk. Works have been confined to dealing with the on-going risks the bridge faces rather than addressing these problems. The massive accumulation of winter flood debris was removed in late-spring (with further tree strikes having done some damage to the bridge) and a new beam was put in place to support the bridge structure.

However, it remains the fact that work on actually repairing the bridge will not begin until 2027! Currently further investigation work is being undertaken on the bridge foundations to inform detailed design work which is supposedly taking place this year. Updates on this are available on the [County Council webpages](#). We do hope that the bridge can survive another winter, before this long-awaited work starts.

Yet, in the plans what we consider to be a vital part of protecting the bridge longer-term is missing. Debris will continue threaten the bridge, hence why we are calling on Worcestershire County Council to work with Historic England, the

Environment Agency, and other partners to design and install a suitable debris or tree catcher, or an equivalent protective measure as part of the restoration project. A petition has been created that only needs a few more signatures to get to 500 to provide the basis to press for further action here: <https://c.org/NjRcWmmnHq>

Campaigning work continues and regular updates are posted on the 'Friends of Old Powick Bridge' Facebook page. Thanks go to Society members Dee Bruce and Liz Demaison for their continued work on this campaign and for providing updates.



Investigation work at Powick Old Bridge (image credit: Worcestershire CC).

Events – Autumn 2026

Date & Time	Event (please see our website for more detail & updates with more events to follow – www.worcestercivicsociety.org.uk)	Location
Monday 14 th September 10.15am and 11.15am.	Heritage Open Days: Worcester Civic Society Archives. The Worcester Civic Society saved from landfill, the archives of the 'Worcester News' containing over a million press cuttings, negatives & photographs, these are being catalogued by volunteers in a secure room below the History & Heritage pod. The Worcester News archives consists of 100 boxes of cuttings & photographs, 250 bound volumes of Berrow's Journals dated from 1801 to the 1990s, 1,500 Glass plate negatives from 1936 to the mid 1960s, over a million black & white and colour negatives 1968 to 1993 and 500 discs of approx. 500 images per disc – come along to find out more! Conducted tours will start at 10.15 am, and 11.15am – free admission, no need to book, just assemble in the History and Heritage Pod area by the escalators above the bus station at Friary Walk Shopping Centre, 54 Friary walk, Worcester WR1 3LE for these times.	Archives (Meet outside History and Heritage Pod, 54 Friary Walk, Friary Walk Shopping Centre WR1 3LE. Nearest car park is Crowngate Car Park WR1 3LZ
Tuesday 3rd November 7:00pm to 9:00pm Doors open at 6:30pm	Worcester Civic Society AGM. AGM followed by a talk by Tim Bridges: 'Victorian and Edwardian Architecture in Worcester and the West Midlands'. Tim will give an illustrated autobiographical account of his work for the Victorian Society.	Swan Theatre, The Moors Worcester WR1 3ED Nearest car park is: Pitchcroft, Castle St, Worcester WR1 6EJ
Events & Talks Programme - 2027 We are beginning working on our programme of events and talks for 2027 which we will confirm in our winter newsletter and following Newsletters. If you have any ideas for future events, please email us on worcestercivicsociety@gmail.com with email subject matter of 'Events'.		

Your Society Needs You - volunteering

We are pleased that our membership numbers remain buoyant, but a Civic Society's strength is very much driven by the active participation of that membership, in both supporting the events we put on, and more importantly in offering time to be part of the Society's campaigns and management.

In our last newsletter, we put out a request for a volunteer to fill the role of Treasurer. We are still looking for a volunteer for this role, so if you are interested then please do get in contact. Our current Treasurer is happy to talk to interested people about what the role involves.

By the time of our AGM in November we will be looking for people to take on a number of key roles for the Society, including another important Society officer role, that of Hon. Secretary, as our long-standing Secretary John Wickson has expressed his wish to step down. The Secretary provides key support for Executive meetings and the AGM, working with the Chair to set agendas, distributing officer meeting reports and producing minutes. If you feel this is something you could volunteer for then please do get in touch.

Other areas where we are or will be looking to fill roles are; vice-chair, membership secretary, events officer, newsletter editor and publicity officer. For these roles we have developed a range of role descriptors to help new volunteers understand what is required within the role.

We need more active volunteers to join the Society's Executive to help us develop and grow stronger as a Society providing that collective voice to champion civic pride in our city. Currently, we all lead busy lives and giving time to volunteer can seem hard, but if you can spare some time then this would be much appreciated to help keep the Society's proud legacy continuing.

If you would like to volunteer to join the Executive Committee or help us with our events programme, please let us know. Our email address is worcestercivicsociety@gmail.com

Heather Barrett
(Worcester Civic Society Chair)



WCS Executive

Chair: Dr Heather Barrett

Hon. Treasurer: Stephen Inman

Hon. Secretary: John Wickson

Vice-Chair: Vacant

President: Phil Douce

Vice-President: Nicola Gibbons

Membership Secretary: Vacant

Events Officer: Lorraine Preece

Chair of Planning Panel: Chris Evans, MRTPI

Conservation Consultant: Carl Jukes

General Consultant: David Birtwhistle

Archivist: Chris Wilkinson

Email: worcestercivicsociety@gmail.com **Website:** www.worcestercivicsociety.org.uk

Please contact the Chair for comments, articles or ideas at worcestercivicsociety@gmail.com

2026 content deadlines:

Autumn – 7th September

Winter – 1st December

Worcester Civic Society is a registered charity (No. 505346) and is independent of political parties. Our members regularly meet with the City's Planning and Regeneration Officers. The Society is a member of the national body Civic Voice.