

Leeds Civic Trust Annual Review 2020



THE PEOPLE OF LEEDS

From home-schooling to shopping for neighbours, volunteering locally, clapping on a Thursday, keeping apart when out and about, and staying in our homes to protect one another.

We are a city united, a city which is kind and compassionate.
We look out for each other.

#LOCALLEGENDS

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Front cover
A city united – Leeds Civic Trust remembers people and organisations who helped us through a difficult 2020 via the local legends plaques scheme.

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Chair's Introduction



Well what a year it has been! Looking through the Annual Review, the one word that comes to mind by way of a summary of the last twelve months is 'adaptation'.

The Trust has shown itself to be incredibly flexible and able to adapt to what has been an unprecedented situation. From conducting the business of the Trust via Zoom meetings, to being able to work efficiently from home and to putting on a fantastic range of online events up to and including Heritage Open Days, it has been seamless.

I should therefore like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of our fantastic team, Martin, Mel, Doerte and Elaine, all our dedicated Committee Chairs and the highly creative HODs group.

The use of online facilities to produce events has been very well received and supported by our members and non-members alike allowing the Trust to extend its reach further than we could possibly have imagined.

There is no doubt their success has meant that online events are here to stay!

No aspect of the Trust's work has been overlooked, not even plaques. Martin has drawn attention to those that were conducted under covid-secure conditions but I wish to pay my personal tribute to Kevin Grady and Bob Tyrell for all the work they have done to produce 'Blue Plaques of Leeds: The Next Collection'. Please do not forget to purchase your copy!

Lastly but by no means least, I should like to thank you, our members, for continuing to support the Trust during this most unusual year.

Jane Taylor
Chair

Aims and Objectives

LEEDS CIVIC TRUST is a voluntary, non-political body, open to everyone who wants to participate in and influence the planning of our City – not simply at election time or on other formal occasions, but constantly in the everyday decisions that affect our environment and the way of life in work and leisure. The objects of the Trust are to promote and encourage the following, by charitable means but not otherwise:

TO STIMULATE public interest in and care for the beauty, history, and character of the City and locality

TO ENCOURAGE high standards of design, architecture and town planning

TO ENCOURAGE the development and improvement of features of general public amenity

TO PROMOTE and organise co-operation in achievement of these objectives.

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Planning for the future

A year of change in Leeds

Look around you. What do you see? What has changed since last year? These simple questions often form the basis of our review of planning and development across Leeds in this document. But was this year different? We might be forgiven for thinking that the world stopped once lockdown was announced, but development has continued, even if social distancing requirements and gaps in the supply of building materials have created a more challenging environment.

The Student Village

At the start of lockdown, many questioned whether the thousands of bed spaces being created in the city centre might be declared surplus to requirements as our higher education sector moved to online teaching. Would students be prepared to return to our campuses in those circumstances? Developers were confident that these dwellings would have a market. With A Level regrading resulting in a greater number of student offers, coupled with the realisation that taking a gap year overseas was probably not an option, early signs suggest that students are indeed returning in large numbers.

We now see the rapidly developing student cluster in the Arena Quarter reaching maturity. The Rio Architecture designed White Rose View on Merrion Way is complete and the 38 storey Altus House, which will be the tallest building in Yorkshire and the North East is well underway.

Tall Buildings under the skin

Of course, many of these student blocks are tall, and during the course of the year proposals have emerged for further such buildings in different parts of the city centre. Leeds Civic Trust has a long record of championing appropriately-designed tall buildings in the city, but we have always done so with our eyes open.



- 01 Standing tall: Altus House (right) and White Rose View (left) flank the existing Arena Point building
- 02 New and old: The Trust questioned how this 32 storey building on Merrion Street would interact with the Grade I listed St John's Church in the foreground (credit: SimpsonHaugh)

- 03 The layout proposed for the Wood Lane scheme in Rothwell (credit: Sten Architecture)
- 04 Planning Committee member Clifford Stead (left) is briefed on the restoration of The Majestic on City Square, owned by corporate members Rushbond PLC, during a site visit by our Planning Committee and Heritage Watch group

In isolation, a building may be aesthetically pleasing, but how does it fit in with its surroundings? And in a post-Covid world, should we be equally concerned with how a building functions as a place where people live and work? These considerations are of course valid for all buildings, but become even more important as the height of a building increases.

For this reason, whilst we appreciated the visual quality of the proposed SimpsonHaugh designed building on Merrion Way, we ultimately concluded that its impact on St John's Church – arguably the most important ecclesiastical building in the city, was too great. Similarly, we felt that whilst the skyscraper proposed by Nick Brown Architects on the South Bank (Springwell 2) was visually attractive, more attention needed to be paid to the levels of amenity. Oliver Wainwright, architectural correspondent in The Guardian wrote that “Leeds looks like a depot of discarded fridges”. This may be an over-reaction, though we are concerned that the use of white and grey cladding is becoming ubiquitous. In any event, in the years ahead, we must surely pay as much attention to what is on the inside as to how a building looks.

Getting the housing we deserve?

The silent march of the volume housebuilders across our city has a profound impact on our built environment – arguably much more significant than a few “signature” city centre buildings. There is a danger that we pay more attention to these schemes because they are all one-off, bespoke designs and often occupy prominent positions on the skyline. Housing developments, by contrast, are often low key and slip under the radar; many of the houses that are being built in Leeds are identical to those constructed in other towns and cities across the country.

In their report entitled “Place Alliance: A Design Audit for England”, the Place Alliance considered 142 large scale housing developments built since 2007 and assessed them against 17 criteria. The report concluded that 75% of the resulting estates were “poor or mediocre”, a fifth should have been refused planning permission outright and a majority should have undergone significant improvements before approval was granted! We do not know how the three schemes surveyed in Leeds (South Parkway in Seacroft, Boddington Manor in Adel and Sycamore Park in Whinmoor) fared, but Yorkshire overall was given a mediocre rating.

Taking our cue from the Place Alliance evaluation system, the Trust is now using a criteria-based approach to comment on housing schemes.

Thus, we objected to an outline scheme at Wood Lane Rothwell (which scored poor overall). We considered it to be highways dominated, did not connect well with its surrounding area, and provided little social and play space. We continue to have a dialogue with Leeds City Council about overall design standards, and we hope that reports such as these will be influential in raising the bar of housing design in the city.



Planning for the future

A year of change in Leeds

Planning our transport system

During the year, the Trust has commented on many schemes to improve public transport infrastructure in the city. In the city centre, we are seeing better facilities for our buses but also wider footpaths, more public realm, tree planting and further initiatives to hand over some of our city centre streets to pedestrians (for example Cookridge Street). Through its membership of the Leeds Active Travel Group, the Trust has also been able to comment on the development of emergency transport measures funded by government. This has allowed the Council and the Combined Authority to fast track a number of schemes across the city. These include temporary cycle lanes, low traffic neighbourhoods (including one in Hyde Park) and school streets (where traffic is limited at drop-off and pick up times.)

Perhaps the most significant transport scheme was the approval of a scheme to enhance Leeds City Station at the New Station Street entrance. Providing a new taxi rank, better cycling facilities, public realm access and bus interchange, this scheme forms part of a broader aspiration to redevelop the station in time for the arrival of HS2. The Trust met with officers to discuss the detail and whilst we had concerns about some aspects of the proposal, we were able to give our general support. We look forward to continuing this dialogue as the detailed designs are worked up.



- 01 More than 100 people met in the Town Hall for our event “Leeds Transport in 2030: where is our vision”, which formally launched the Trust’s Transport Vision
- 02 An artist’s impression of the proposed changes to Leeds City Station (credit: Atkins)



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We are committed to investing in Leeds, creating jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities, as well as setting new benchmarks for the highest quality developments of which the community and city can be proud.



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Planning for the future

A year of change in Leeds

A new use for Brotherton House

Not all new student accommodation buildings are skyscrapers. The Trust was delighted to have an early opportunity to comment on corporate member Pullans' proposed student development, involving the restoration and refurbishment of the former police station at Brotherton House together with a new-build element.

Following concerns from the Trust (and others) about the relationship between the new and old buildings, revisions have created a much better visual separation between the two elements. We felt that the restoration proposals for the original building were exemplary.



Cheers to The Templar

Leeds Civic Trust Members raised a glass after successfully supporting an application for the Templar Hotel to be listed. The Trust, often through the work of our Heritage Watch Group, works to protect buildings at risk, and although this building was not in imminent danger of alteration or demolition its location in the middle of a large brownfield location could have meant that it was "swallowed up" by new-build. This new status should ensure that its siting and location are respected. The listing gives a very apt summary of the building's merits. It says:

"The pub has an impressive ceramic-tiled exterior by Burmantofts, a notable Leeds pottery that exported around the world. Despite some later alteration much of its 1920s interior survives, as well as some of the original 19th century features, which show how the pub has evolved over the years."



01 New and old: Brotherton House and its new addition (credit: Cunniff Design)

02 Trust Director Martin Hamilton outside the newly listed Templar Hotel

Health and wellbeing

Past, present and future

Whether by accident or design, health was a thread that ran throughout the year, which seemed appropriate given the national health emergency.

Catherine Buckton - an early advocate of handwashing

Local historian James Rhodes provided one of the first articles for a new blog (<https://aboutleeds.blog/>) which is curated by the Trust but open to anyone to contribute to. His piece was a follow up from his "Women of Leeds" talk - our first online offering post-lockdown, and focused on the remarkable life of Catherine Buckton. The following is a precis of his article:

"The speech ended with a simple but effective message: "wash your hands regularly with soap and water". But this was not the British Prime Minister at a Government coronavirus briefing in 2020; it was public health campaigner Catherine Buckton addressing an audience of one hundred working-class housewives and children in Leeds in 1871.

Catherine Buckton came to Leeds in 1848, having been deeply affected by an outbreak of cholera in her home town of Bridgend.

She was a leading campaigner for free education for all children - ultimately leading to the Education Act in 1870. Catherine Buckton stood for the first Education Board established in Leeds - the first public election in which women were able to stand as candidates.

The Leeds Mercury at the time said that women were "ill-suited" to the "hard work and business habits required"... an all-male board was duly elected! But she successfully contested the election in 1873, becoming the first woman to win a public election in the city.

Catherine's public health advocacy - through lectures to working-class women and children - continued. She advocated good basic personal and food hygiene and dispelled some of the myths that were around at the time. She extolled the benefits of fresh air for those who were living in the city's slum areas - even holding a window box competition to impart the pleasure of growing plants to children - the subject was included in her popular book "Town and Window Gardening."

But it is her simple advice on handwashing - just as important today as it was 150 years ago, that remains with us. Read more of James Rhodes' writing at <https://rhodestothepast.com/>



01 Public health pioneer Catherine Buckton, whose advice remains all too relevant today

Health and wellbeing

Past, present and future



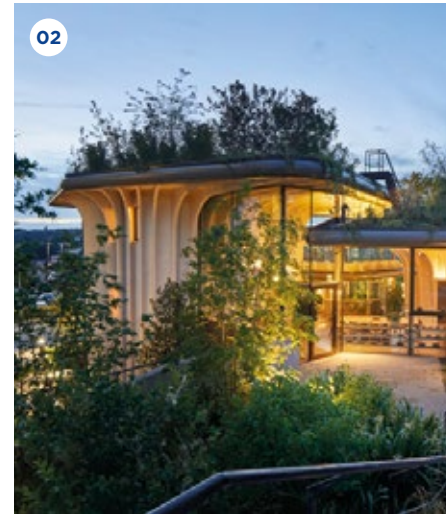
Maggie's Centre - providing cancer support in Leeds

Before our Events Committee "went virtual", it was able to organise a visit to the newly opened Maggie's Centre in the grounds of St James's Hospital. This facility, run by an independent cancer support charity (www.maggies.org), provides support to people suffering from cancer but also their friends and relatives. The support may be practical, emotional or social - anything from counselling support, advice on nutrition and exercise, benefits and finance and even practical issues such as wig purchase. Inside the building you are confronted by an informal light and airy space which makes use of natural materials to provide an aura of calm. It has become a badge of honour for architects to be commissioned to design these centres.

This scheme - by the renowned Heatherwick Studios - must be one of their most architecturally successful. Our Chair Jane Taylor presented the Centre with a cheque from our grants scheme to support the cost of the planters situated around the centre. A wonderful visit to a wonderful facility.

Two new hospitals for Leeds

This year saw the go ahead - in outline - for two new hospital buildings at Leeds General Infirmary. The Trust was able to give its general support. A new Children's Hospital and adult facility will be built on the site. This will enable the LGI to rationalise its estate. The Gilbert Scott Building (Grade 1 listed) will be declared surplus to requirements, and other buildings with no architectural merit will be demolished. The announcement in the autumn of 2019 that these buildings were to be allocated a share of the government's £2.7 billion health infrastructure plan, was quickly followed by planning approval for the scheme.



- 01 In her Zoom talk on children's health in 19th Century Leeds, Dr Emma Storr paid tribute to many people who championed better working conditions for children. Dr Robert Baker's cholera map, which tracked the spread of cholera in Leeds, ultimately led to a better understanding of how diseases are spread. An early example of "track and trace"
- 02 An image of the exterior of the wonderful Maggie's Centre at St James' Hospital (credit: Heatherwick Studio)
- 03 An artist's impression of the proposed new Children's hospital at the LGI, approved in outline in 2019 (credit: Gilling Dod Architects)

Going virtual

How we responded to the Covid Crisis

- 01 Trust Director Martin Hamilton and Leeds West MP Rachel Reeves discuss the impact of Covid in one of the lockdown lockdown interviews
- 02 A return to Leeds for Kully Thiarai - Creative Director of Leeds 2023

Leeds Civic Trust's bread and butter is its events.

Our constitution even refers to "discussion" as one way in which we seek to change our city for the better. The advent of Covid-19 followed by lockdown and restrictions on public gatherings, put paid to our usual physical meetings, but also created an opportunity. How could we use the internet and social media to pursue the Trust's objectives?

"Lockdown Lowdown"

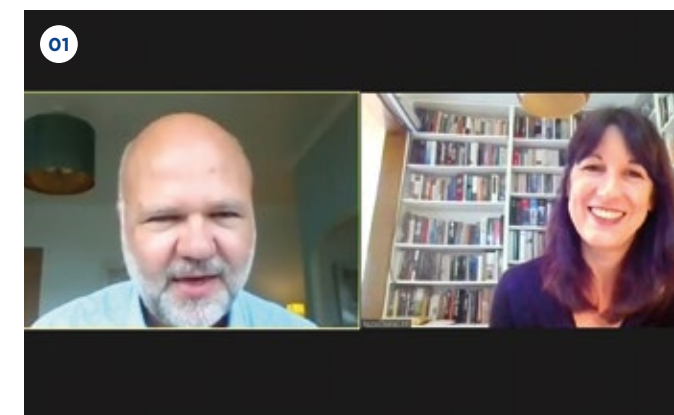
One way we achieved this was through a series of live discussions and interviews which we called "Lockdown Lowdown." Over the summer, we engaged with politicians (Stuart Andrew MP, Cllr Judith Blake CBE and Rachel Reeves MP), the development community (Mark Finch, Development Director at Rushbond PLC), the business community (Leeds BID CEO Andrew Cooper) and culture (Creative Director of Leeds Culture 2023 Kully Thiarai).

We also held a special discussion on #buildbackbetter with Professor Paul Chatterton (Professor of Urban Futures, University of Leeds), Youth Strike (Robbie Strathdee, Shannon Jackson), The Clean Air Alliance (Ruth Gelletlie) and Sai Murray (Racial Justice Network). In all, the seven events attracted 600 live viewers, led to some interesting discussion, and gave some clues as to how the city may emerge post-Covid. All of the events were recorded, so we will be able to look back on them in years to come as a record of this strange period in our lifetimes.

What were the major themes to emerge? It was clear that the city has been resilient during the crisis. At a Council level, financial pressures have been significant, but services have stood up. Collaboration has been key - different services "mucking in" to support the overall effort.

It also became clear that changes already afoot - the high street changing as more is bought online, more flexible working and a move away from 9-5 commuting - had been accelerated during lockdown. A number of our speakers also spoke of the importance of neighbourhoods and neighbours - using local services and the increased importance of informal and voluntary services to support our well-being. There was general confidence that the city's economy would bounce back, though what form this would (or should) take was a point for debate. The cultural celebrations in 2023 are something to look forward to. Fundamentally, there was a sense that some of the societal changes seen in 2020 would endure.

All of these points were underlined in a special breakfast briefing with Council leader Judith Blake and Leeds City Council CEO Tom Riordan, which we held exclusively for our corporate members.



Going virtual

How we responded to the Covid Crisis

Local Legends - celebrating the city's unsung heroes

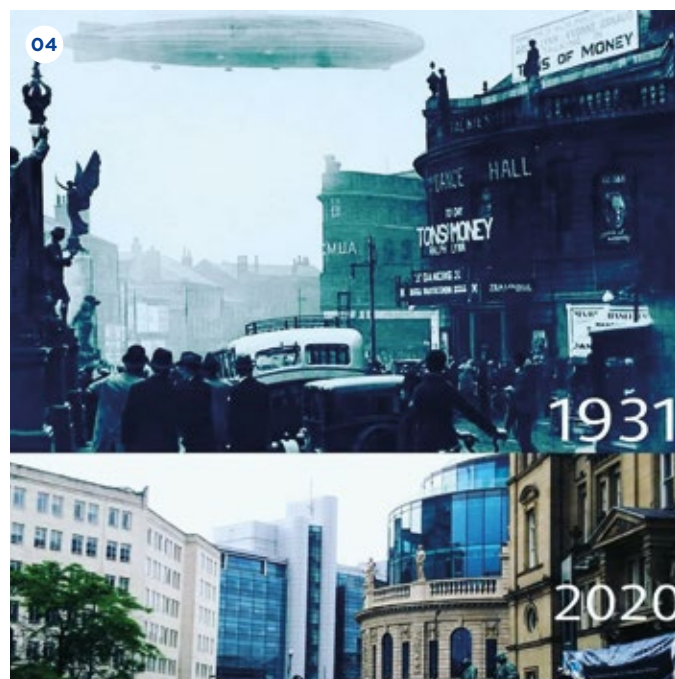
We were keen to make more use of social media to celebrate our city. This led to our "Local Legends" campaign on twitter during the course of June (adapted from an initiative by York Civic Trust), through which we awarded "virtual" blue plaques to people and organisations who had "gone the extra mile" to support people during the Covid pandemic. From health workers to food banks, so many played their part in keeping people safe and happy during lockdown. Each nominee was also sent a specially commissioned card which provided them with a permanent memento.

Postcards and Photos

On a lighter note, we also took the opportunity to raid our archive of historic photos and photos from the 60s and 70s for a bit of twitter-fuelled nostalgia. Our postcard collection provides a visual reminder of how our city has changed over the decades. Shops, restaurants and cafes that no longer trade, now famous Leeds landmarks then under construction, and changes in fashion are all depicted on these small pieces of card. The messages they contain - greetings from holidays with relatives in Leeds, messages of longing to loved-ones - one even written to a secret lover in code - are strangely relevant to today, where Zoom and Facetime have acted as a substitute for physical meetings with friends and family who could not be visited during lockdown.



- 01 One of several virtual local legends plaques awarded during May to celebrate the unsung heroes of our city during this difficult period
- 02 Not a Yorkshire terrier? This postcard's strange combination of poodle and city landmarks always raises a smile!
- 04 Civic Trust member Clifford Stead curates our Facebook page. This fascinating image of the Graf Zeppelin viewed in 1931 from City Square and how it compares with the square today.



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Eastside

The promise of a more liveable Leeds

This year, the Trust launched what it hopes will become an annual competition to reimagine our city through the eyes of those who live and work in it.

A couple of years ago, our Transport Group (newly renamed as the Transport and Liveable Leeds Group), produced a vision for transport in our city. Several months in the making, this document served two purposes. One was to act as our own internal agenda - to provide an overarching philosophy to guide our approach to transport. The second aim was to inspire others to develop their own proposals for transport interventions that put people first. Too often, strategies and visions end up filed away without ever being used. We were determined that this would not be the case with our vision.

With this in mind, we decided to launch a competition - open to all (professionals, lay people, residents) to identify how a part of our city could be improved, using the principles contained in our Transport Vision as a guide. The competition was called "Liveable City" (in future to be known as Liveable Leeds) and the area we chose is known as "Eastside."

Where is Eastside and why was it chosen?

Eastside is an area which connects with the communities of Mabgate, Burmantofts and Richmond Hill and takes in Quarry Hill, the markets area and the waterfront. Major highways include Marsh Lane and East Street. It includes some of the city's most important institutions: Leeds Minster, The Leeds Playhouse and the Royal Armouries, it includes major employers (most notably the occupants of Quarry House) and hundreds of students walk through the area every day to the education hub on the South Bank.

Yet it lacks human scale. A tangle of roads makes it unpleasant to navigate on foot. A ten-minute walk from Saxton Gardens flats to the Palace public house (next to the Minster) involves crossing 20 separate lanes of traffic! The area includes significant brownfield sites - and half a dozen proposed apartment schemes that could lead to an influx of 4,500 people into the area in the next few years. So, the area is crying out for rethinking. This is where our competition came in.

01

LEEDS EASTSIDE

A
COMMON
GROUND

A site-wide concept masterplan, transforming Leeds Eastside into a shared common ground, for people and nature.

This is a dream vision and an ideal scenario which would involve holistic planning at a large scale.

01 Illustrations from Hannah Beard's winning entry

Eastside

The promise of a more liveable Leeds

The Competition

Prior to the Covid-19 Lockdown, we were able to hold a workshop at Leeds Playhouse with interested parties to draw out the key issues and challenges before we launched the competition. Although Covid-19 meant that some organisations were unable to participate, we were pleased with the level of interest shown in the competition; a dozen credible competition entries were shortlisted and can be seen in full on the Liveable Leeds website: www.liveable-leeds.org.uk. Two entries were singled out for commendation (a joint entry from Planit-IE and Buro Happold and another from Gillespies LLP). An excellent entry from Page/Park was awarded second prize, but the overall winner of our inaugural competition was Hannah Beard's "A Common Ground."

Hannah's entry combines the practical and easy to achieve with some truly visionary thinking. The submission, which includes a visual presentation together with a sound piece by Alex de Little, has as its centrepiece a new linear green spine running through the area incorporating 1000 new trees and revealing Lady Beck (currently culverted). It proposes the creation of "New York Urban Farm" – a sister to Meanwood Valley Urban Farm and brings the railway arches back into use by creating a new market street. Cycling and pedestrian space are freed up via interconnected car-free streets and pathways – some of which could be elevated. Further features include an events space, a continuous "play route" and the knitting together of the heritage quarter using sympathetic materials, installations and new build.

The judges said of the entry: **"Hannah sets out a clear concept and vision for the area with a series of focused interventions to achieve this. She has considered people at the heart of her proposals, putting forward ideas that will make Eastside an attractive place to live and visit. Hannah brought her plan to life with a delightful audio piece."**



AN ALTERNATE REALITY



Emerging through the urban orchard, an expanse of open space unfolds before me, a square, before it encompasses Leeds Playhouse. I shield the sun from my eyes with my hand and squint. I can't see what kind of performance is happening, but long shadows dance to distract chatter. Groups of people are starting to take an outdoor seat.

THERE IS NEW LIFE ON THE STREETS AND NEW LIFE IN THE CANOPY

Look up. GREEN, a great green leafy canopy, that stretches up towards the beginning of the Meanwood Valley Trail at Sheepscar. A sliver of the Yorkshire Dales, meandering through Bramhope, Adel, Meanwood and the city centre, towards the River Aire. This is where office workers, city dwellers and nearby residents seek sanctuary. So do the birds. For now, you can hear their songs without the noise of the traffic...

- 01 Hannah Beard, winner of our inaugural Liveable City Competition
- 02 Illustrations from Hannah Beard's winning entry
- 03 Participants discuss potential improvements to Leeds Eastside at our workshop held at Leeds Playhouse
- 04 Doreen Wood – the Trust's oldest member, celebrates her 100th birthday
- 05 Finn Cawley – at the age of 9, our youngest participant in the Liveable City Competition

Eastside

The promise of a more liveable Leeds



Next Steps

A report produced by Leah Stuart from Civic Engineers draws together key themes from all of the entries, and presents an agenda for change. We will now be engaging with the Council – who have been supportive of our initiative – to see if some of these ideas can be brought to life. We hope to repeat the exercise next year – possibly with a focus on Holbeck.

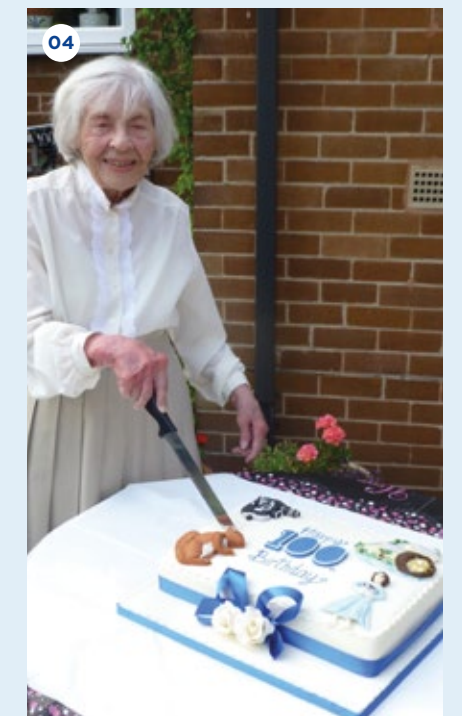
Leeds Civic Trust – an organisation for young and old!

The Trust is grateful to its members and supporters who help make our organisation vibrant and relevant and we are open to all ages.

We were delighted to recognise the work of Doreen Wood, who celebrated her 100th birthday this year. Remarkably, her involvement with the Trust dates from 1990 – at an age when many would be thinking of putting their feet up! She was a member of our House Committee at a time when our Wharf Street premises were purchased. She then contributed to the work of our Photograph Collection Group – meticulously cataloguing our wonderful collection of black and white photographs from 60s and 70s Leeds – her interest in images is reflective of another post-retirement passion of hers – film making.

She has lived in Meanwood for the last 50 years where she has been an active member of the Meanwood Village Association. No doubt her longevity must be put down to staying active. Thank you Doreen!

Finn Cawley, on the other hand has (at least) 60 years to go before he retires! His entry to the Liveable City competition for smart crossings captured our imagination. Finn said in his entry "I like smart gadgets. I think smart crossings would be really cool. The crossing will light up red on the floor of the crossing from one side of the road to the other if you cannot cross and green if you can and orange if its moving between the colours, like a traffic light." We thought his entry was cool – and awarded him a special prize. No doubt Eastside will have changed beyond all recognition by the time he retires!



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Telling the story of our city

More than 30 years ago, Leeds Civic Trust decided that it should launch a blue plaques scheme to celebrate important events, people and places with a Leeds connection. It is fascinating to think that the Trust originally intended to declare the initiative complete after the unveiling of a mere 30 blue plaques. We have awarded 180 plaques across the district!

Celebrating our Blue Plaques in print

To mark this important achievement, former director Dr Kevin Grady together with Plaques Group member Bob Tyrrell have written a companion volume to the popular "Blue Plaques of Leeds." Entitled "Blue Plaques of Leeds: The Next Collection", this volume covers plaques unveiled up to the end of 2017 (the 30th anniversary year). This wonderful volume is now available for purchase – please let us know if you would like a copy by emailing office@leedscivictrust.org.uk

This year's blue plaque unveilings were necessarily curtailed by Covid but we were able to unveil two plaques which might come under the category of "local lads made good."

- 01 The front cover of our new publication which tells the stories behind just under a hundred Leeds Civic Trust blue plaques
- 02 Left to Right, Hilary Benn MP, journalist and writer Anthony Clavane, Trust Director Martin Hamilton, Trust Chair Jane Taylor and Yorkshire Evening Post Editor Laura Collins at the unveiling of a blue plaque for Keith Waterhouse

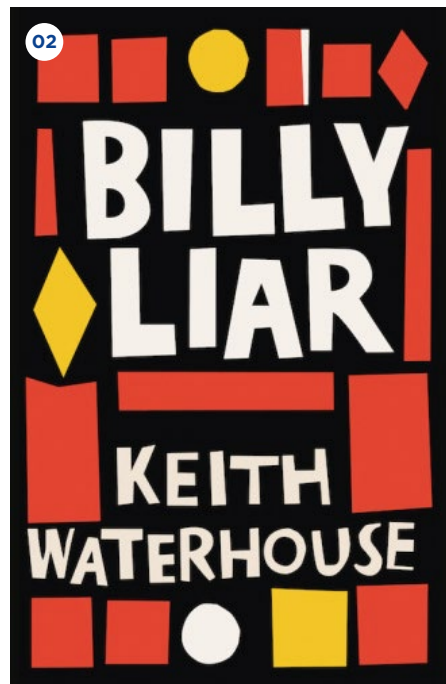
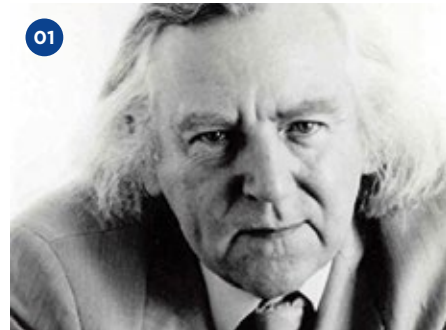
Keith Waterhouse

We were delighted to unveil a blue plaque for the Leeds-born writer Keith Waterhouse. He was a journalist (foreign correspondent and features writer for the Mirror and later a twice-weekly columnist for the Daily Mail), screenwriter (collaborating with childhood friend Willis Hall to produce the script for Whistle Down The Wind), children's television writer (Worzel Gummidge), sitcom creator (Queenie's Castle with Diana Dors set in the Quarry Hill Flats) and playwright: his play Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell starred another former Yorkshire Evening Post cub reporter, Peter O'Toole.



Telling the story of our city

- 01 Keith Waterhouse – the subject of our unveiling
- 02 The front cover of Waterhouse’s most famous novel, which was also made into a play and a film
- 03 This Windrush Plaque for Cllr Eileen Taylor takes pride of place in the ante-chamber at Leeds Civic Hall



But it is his childhood memoir “City Lights” describing his pre-war upbringing in the poverty of Hunslet, and evoking the sights and sounds of Leeds (the Majestic, Leeds Town Hall, Kirkgate Market) that underlined his affection for his home city – even though his adult life was spent basking in the bright lights of London and even Hollywood.

It was appropriate that we unveiled this blue plaque outside Hunslet Library – he was a voracious library-goer as a child. Waterhouse started his journalistic career at the Yorkshire Evening Post and so it was also appropriate that the current Editor Laura Collins co-unveiled the plaque with journalist Anthony Clavane, who gave a talk after the unveiling as part of the Leeds Lit Fest programme.

Jim Bullock

The story of Jim Bullock really is one of rags to riches. Born in 1903 the youngest of 12 children, he started working at the age of 13 as a pony driver. He became a pit deputy at the age of 25 and ten years later was a pit manager at Fryston Colliery. Having seen life quite literally “on the coalface”, he was particularly keen on miners’ welfare. His colliery was one of the first to have a pithead bath installed, and later he constructed the Fryston Welfare Hall for his workers. His life on both sides of the tracks was recorded in his book “Them and Us.” The plaque was unveiled by his son (also Jim Bullock) during the Covid-19 lockdown and so was a small, socially-distanced affair.

It was erected on the only remaining building in Bowers Row – the non-denominational Chapel. Civic Trust member Michael Meadowcroft later referred to him in his Heritage Open Days talk about the history of mining in Leeds (one of many lectures now available to view via our Youtube channel and website)

Celebrating the Windrush Generation

The Trust was delighted to lend its support the Windrush Plaques Trail. The initiative, which took place during Black History Month in October 2019, highlighted the positive impact of members of the Windrush Generation on our city. A series of plaques (decorated with Caribbean flags) and a map were produced. Director Martin Hamilton was delighted to speak at the launch of the initiative in Leeds Civic Hall which was presided over by Jamaican born Councillor Eileen Taylor – the first black Lord Mayor of Leeds.

Blue Plaques Review

What and who have we represented over the last 30 years through the blue plaques scheme? Do they properly tell the story of Leeds? How is a subject considered worthy of a blue plaque and how should the scheme evolve in the future?

These are some of the questions we will be asking in a Blue Plaques Review. Headed up by Susan Pitter and supported by a review group, the Trust has decided to take stock of our blue plaques scheme. Do the subjects represented by our plaques present a rounded history of our city?

Telling the story of our city

- 04 Miner Jim Bullock – recipient of a Blue Plaque to recognise his rise from the coalface to the boardroom
- 05 Susan Pitter who is leading our review into the Trust’s Blue Plaques scheme (credit: Yorkshire Post Newspapers).

Plaques featuring women and the BAME communities are few in number for example. The Black Lives Matter movement and the review of sculpture in Leeds (in which Leeds Civic Trust was a participant) have also highlighted how those we celebrate may not always be beyond reproach. This is not about rewriting history but about ensuring that we are open and honest about our past. The Trust’s vision document asks us to look at “untold stories” in describing the history of our city so now is a good time to consider how we tell the story of our city.

Banging the “drum” for Leeds

‘Ever energetic’ – those were the words that our friends, Leeds Inspired, used to describe us this year, and after such a tumultuous time it was a rather pleasing compliment.

You may have noticed some of this ‘energy’ as you walk through the city’s streets during the last few months? We were delighted to work in partnership with Munro House based Colours May Vary to bring Peter Mitchell’s stunning and intimate photographs, capturing a not too distant but almost lost Leeds to a city-wide audience.

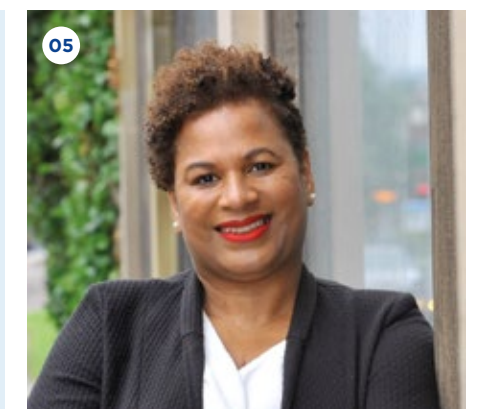
Enlarging Mitchell’s images and producing them on posters that were visible from Middleton to Meanwood was a format which suited Mitchell’s work perfectly, and as he said when filmed for BBC Look North, they offered a democratic way for people to engage with his work.

This project was funded via the Trust’s grants programme, a fund set aside each year by our trustees which aims to develop projects which benefit the people of Leeds and which further the work of the Trust.

We again turned to drum posters for another visually stunning project. ‘You Are Here’ is a collaboration between us, The Leeds Library, and The Thoresby Society. Curated and completed by workerslunchtime.com, ‘You Are Here’ is a collection of ten historic city maps, spanning from 1932 to 1726, which together create a walking trail throughout the city. Coinciding with the students’ September term, the posters offer an insight into our city streets, how they have grown, developed, and sometimes even disappeared.

Heritage Open Days goes virtual

This campaign also coincided with Heritage Open Days which made a welcome return this September. We have been amazed at the adaptability, innovation and ingenuity that the team of event volunteers showed this year, as the usual talks, tours and walks inevitably made their way online. From live Zoom events, to virtual walks, as well as a host of pre-recorded local history talks, our volunteers rose to the occasion and helped keep the show on the road. With nearly 3000 views on our Youtube channel, our events this year proved to have a nationwide appeal, with attendees able to tune into events from their own home wherever that may be.



Congratulations Leeds United!

This fantastic mural of triumphant Leeds United Manager Marcelo Bielsa, sponsored by Parklane Group on a gable end at Hyde Park Corner, is unveiled. The artist is Irek Jasutowicz known as “Tank Petrol”



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Telling the story of our city

- 01 One of Peter Mitchell's wonderfully evocative images displayed in the poster drum exhibition sponsored by Leeds Civic Trust.
- 02 The poster drum shows the famous Cossins map of Leeds dating from 1726. In the background the First White Cloth Hall, which is now nearing the end of its rebuild and restoration. It was opened in 1711 and features on the map.
- 03 Trio Literati, the Leeds-based arts group explore the arts in lock down. One of many on-line offerings in this year's Heritage Open Days festival.



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Roundhay Conservation

Society

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The Leeds Library

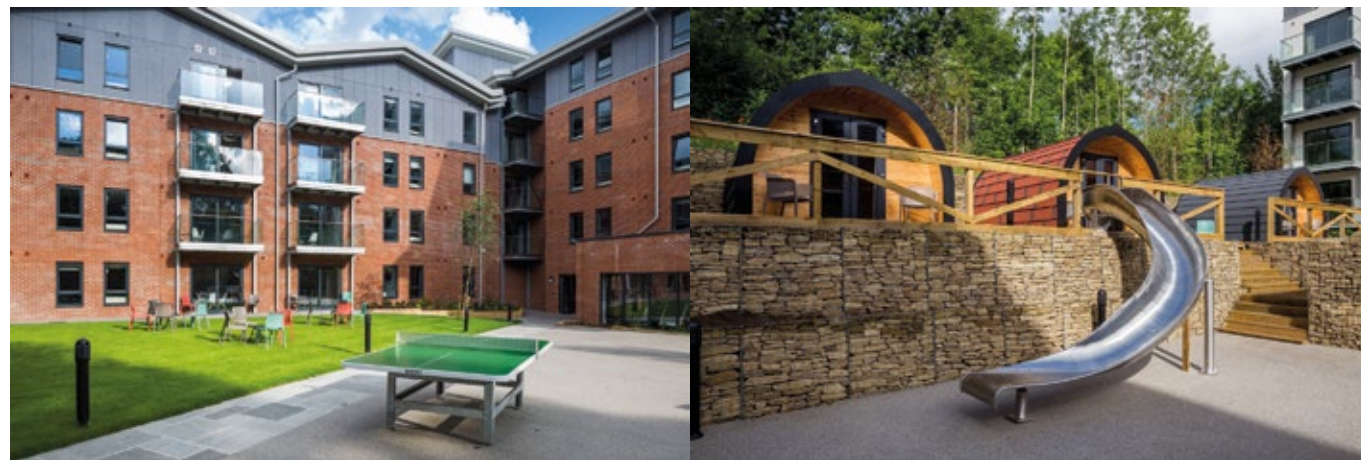
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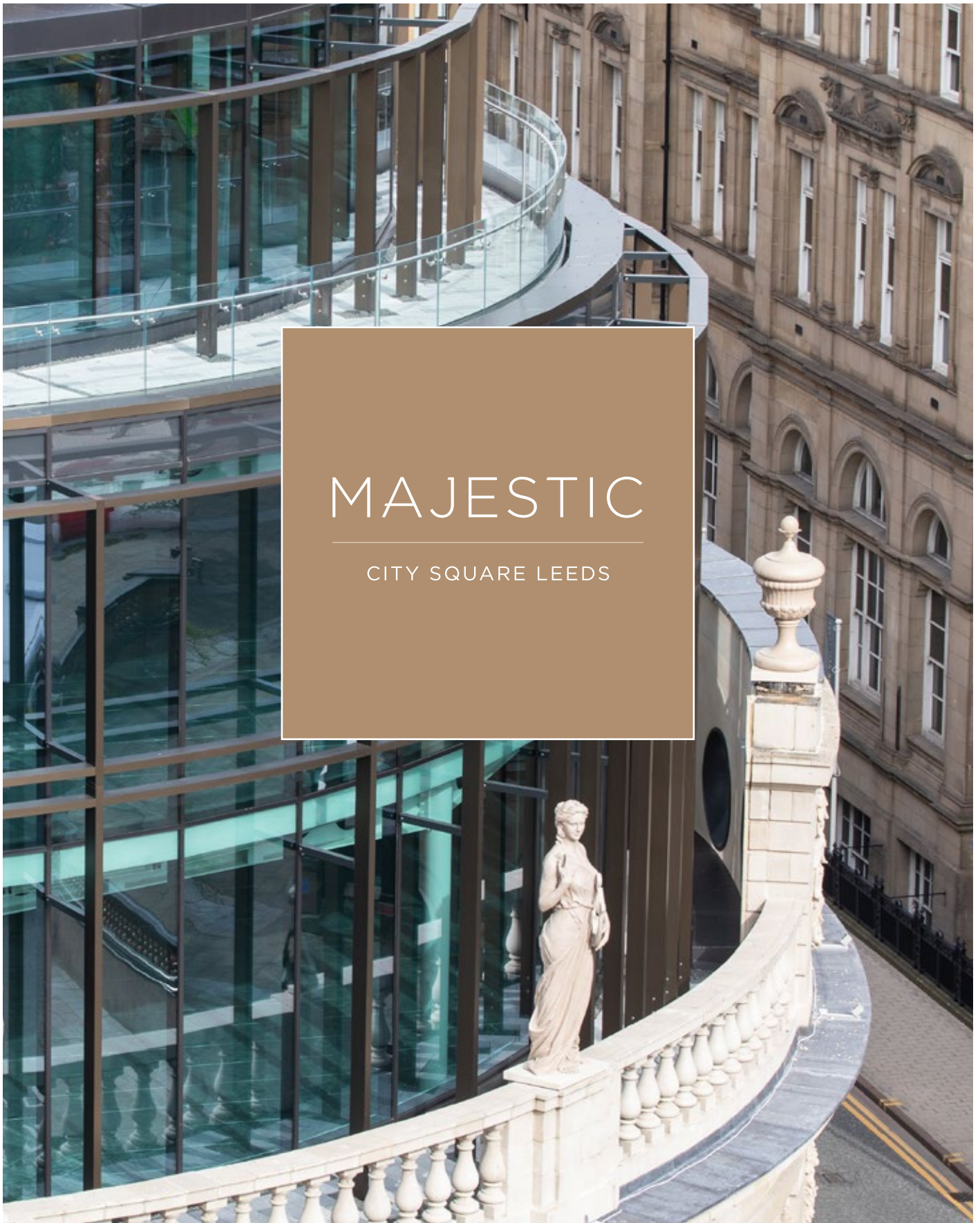
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