

THE CHICHESTER SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Celebrating our anniversary 1973-2023



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THE ALLIANCE OF HISTORIC CATHEDRAL CITIES & TOWNS

Members of the Society and guests are invited to a free presentation by the Alliance of Historic Cathedral Cities and Towns about a recent report on their vulnerability to damage by unsustainable development – which can be found on this link:

www.htvf.org

This presentation takes place on

**THURSDAY 29 JUNE
starting 2.30pm**

at the Assembly Room,
North St, Chichester.

For further information contact
christophermead-briggs
@itchenor.plus.com



Despite continual steady rain, several of Chichester's citizens were determined to watch the Coronation on a big screen at the Cathedral Green

Photo: Brian Henham

A WET BUT JOYFUL CORONATION!

With King Charles III we are now in a Carolean era. A recent national survey has shown that the residents of Chichester and the surrounding area have been rated as the sixth most supportive of the Royal Family in the country and long may that continue. After changes at national level, we also have changes locally, with newly elected District and City Councils: see pages 18 and 19 which describe the situation in Chichester. A new beginning with new ideas and priorities, all working for the betterment of the City and the surrounding district.

This year your Society has arranged several social events that will take us well into the autumn; information about these and how to reserve a place will be emailed to you during the coming weeks. But to whet your appetite forthcoming occasions include a Chichester Harbour cruise and lunch on 16 June; an afternoon on the bowling green at Priory Park 5 July; Fishbourne Roman Palace 18 August; a special event at Goodwood Racecourse 5 September; and a visit to Chichester's Planetarium 23 November. Not forgetting the Society's Annual General Meeting in its 50th anniversary year on 18 October: put a note in your diary!

Your Executive Committee will continue to work for the good of this city and for this we welcome your contribution. At the present time we are looking for members' help with Newsletter production and planning policy: if you want more information about these, contact me at peterc.evans@btinternet.com

Peter Evans, Chairman



PLANNING NEWS FOR THE SOCIETY’S MEMBERS

A page of updates on issues that may interest Newsletter readers

ESTATE AGENTS’ BOARDS – NEW REGULATIONS

Over the past few years and particularly since the pandemic, the city’s historic shopping streets have been increasingly defaced by commercial estate agent boards advertising shops, offices or flats or sometimes even advertising a ‘commercial investment opportunity’.

Some V - shaped boards hang precariously over the pavement and could blow down in high winds. At long last the Government has awarded Chichester District Council (CDC) special planning powers, albeit for a limited 10 - year period from February 2023. This requires all such boards to have special conservation area consent. Estate agents may however display advertising boards within a shop window provided they are at least one metre from the window. Full details of the new restrictions may be found on the CDC website.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FORUM

Work on Chichester’s Neighbourhood Plan, sponsored by the City Council continued with a conference held 20 February. 20 community groups attended and presented ideas. Here are a few of their proposals:

- **Chichester Runners** - running track at Chi College
- **Cycle Forum** - traffic-free historic city centre and all nearby roads with 20 mph speed limits
- **Festival Theatre** – create a 3rd theatre
- **Chichester Society** – community projects like:
 - Safer pavements in the city centre
 - Affordable housing near the centre
 - City Walls Walk – new bridge at Priory Road
 - New rail underpass near Chichester Station

RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

The Chichester Society supports the revised Local Plan. We welcome the historic environment policies and those on the green environment, strategic gaps, wildlife corridors, biodiversity and the protection of our designated landscape areas. Some of our proposals are summarised below:

Southbourne development: if 1,000+ new homes are to be developed on farmland around Southbourne, the Plan should propose a new interchange on the A27 at Southbourne to ensure traffic from new housing is directed to the A27, and not the A259.

Public transport: (1) a fast and frequent bus service between Chichester and Barnham station, via a new bus link from Tangmere to the B2233, and (2) extending the 55 service from Tangmere as a circular route back to the city via Shopwyke Lakes and the proposed East of Chichester SDL



Chichester City: encourage a higher density where new residential development takes place close to the city centre such as the Southern Gateway regeneration project.

Southern Gateway:

- Relocate and replace the existing bus depot with a new transport hub immediately to the north of the rail station booking hall.
- Some provision should be made for a nightclub for younger people.
- Chichester needs an hotel suitable for conferences, and this will boost the economy.

HERITAGE REPORT FINDINGS ABOUT CHICHESTER WILL BE DISCUSSED ON 29 JUNE

Members of the Society are invited to the Assembly Room on North Street to learn about research into 12 historic towns. With the Society’s active support the research team has completed this project and this afternoon’s meeting will focus on Chichester. The principal speakers are Jan Pahl and John Walker, both members of the Alliance of Historic Cathedral Cities. We begin at 2.30 pm and there will be refreshments! For further information contact christophermead-briggs@itchenor.plus.com


THEN AND NOW

Richard Childs looks at 87 East Street, once a long-established butchers and now part of the Lush global cosmetics chain.

Walking along East Street, not far from the Market Cross, you may have wondered why the front to the Lush store retains a marble shelf. The reason relates to this shop’s Grade II listed status. 87 East Street was occupied for decades by one of Chichester’s notable butchers, hence the marble frontage. This history can be traced to a business directory of 1866 which records the presence of a ‘pork butcher and provision merchant’. It was run by one Thomas Pain Kimbell whose father had moved to Chichester in 1856 and was a grocer in Somerstown. The son’s business expanded and by 1913 was known as Kimbell and Sons – famous for their Sussex Sausages, as can be seen in this photograph. The Kimbell business continued in East Street until 1968 when the shop became part of Baxter’s chain of butchers. But butchers, whether independent or corporate, seem to have disappeared from Chichester and other communities due to supermarkets. And now 87 East Street – sporting a marble front owing to its past as a butchers - is occupied by Lush, an international cosmetics business with over 900 stores in about 50 countries. It was founded by Mark and Mo Constantine at Poole in 1995.




87 East Street today Photo: Brian Henham



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PRIORY PARK: LOVED AND CHERISHED, YET VULNERABLE

Bruce Ruddock reflects on the care and use of a treasured community asset

Affectionately known as Chichester’s ‘Village Green’, Priory Park is a precious open space, given to the City in 1918 by the 7th Duke of Richmond and Gordon. It remains today a wonderful asset for our community. As I look out of my study window and across the road to its wide green acres, bounded by the city wall and mature trees, I never cease to be moved, both by the palpable sense of history here and by the numerous ways in which the park brings pleasure to the people of Chichester and its visitors. There always seems to be something going on - whether it is a Family Fun Day, the Sunday Junior Park Run, a cricket or bowls match, people chatting over coffee in Fenwick’s Café, guests spilling out from a wedding or concert in the Guildhall, folk strolling round the city walls and enjoying play with their children, or simply cherishing moments of reflection.

Not always peaceful

And yet, sadly, it is not always a place of peace. Anti-social behaviour and vandalism frequently raise their ugly heads, turning some quiet spots into uncomfortable, seedy corners, vulnerable to activity such as drug dealing. Cyclists often ignore the ban on two-wheelers and, despite many notices, dogs at times soil the grass where children play. One of the reasons for these abuses is the lack of funds for security. The groundsman does sterling work keeping the space in good shape, but his remit is not enforcement and efforts by members of the public to remonstrate can result in a barrage of verbal abuse. Whilst we long for a return of the ‘Bobby on the beat’, the occasional patrol at key times has the potential to reap benefits out of proportion to the amount of time spent.

The Priory Park Society is committed to being a rallying point for various stakeholders so there is a cohesive vision and credible voice. Our loyal members care about this beautiful open space in the centre of Chichester. Our aims are to act as a forum of its users and stakeholders to represent the views of everyone, see Priory Park’s infrastructure upgraded to better serve the needs of today’s users, and work with Chichester District Council to achieve this. We want to collaborate, but sometimes find it necessary to challenge.



Cricket : played on Priory Park since 1871



Historical events are popular, especially if they are Roman!

Restoration

There is a glaring need to restore or rebuild some of the park’s dilapidated buildings.

- *Red brick pavilion* - Chichester District Council (CDC) has spent tens of thousands of pounds reviewing its future, but rats remain its only visitors.
- *Cricket pavilion* - as long ago as 1977 plans were submitted for a new pavilion: the existing ‘White Pavilion’ is now unsafe and not fit for purpose. Priory Park Cricket Club has made encouraging strides in designing and seeking funding for a new pavilion and CDC has been actively involved in the project. A new pavilion would enable the club to fulfil its vision of making Priory Park a ‘hub’ for the development of women’s cricket in West Sussex, as well as providing a resource for the community. The 1st and 2nd XI sides ‘fled’ to Goodwood some time ago, not least because of the poor facilities and the fact that Priory Park is the only cricket ground in Sussex where players cannot park for free.
- *Bowls pavilion* - the Bowls Club has spent some £12,000 on developing schemes to refurbish the building for their potential use, but these have not been taken up by CDC. A refurbished or extended bowls pavilion would enable club members to entertain their opposition guests in ways that are at present impossible. It might not be widely known, but Priory Park bowling green is one of the finest in the South of England.
- *The Motte* - money spent in recent years has been wasted by failing to provide adequate protection and not allowing the ground repairs time to bed in, so that the ‘open wounds’ in the form of cycle and sliding tracks down its sides are worse than ever.
- *Play area* - there is a clear recognition that the play area needs enhancement, not just by replacing equipment.

Hard work

Credit must go to the hard-working councillors and officers at the District Council for their efforts to bring to the City some of the Government’s 2023 Levelling Up funding, part of which was earmarked for Priory Park. We were all disappointed, if not entirely surprised, that the bid was unsuccessful. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that the toilets are to be refurbished this year and that other aspirations have not been shelved. Having said that, most people were puzzled that an elaborate landscaping project involving



Priory Park’s bowling green is thought to be one of the finest in the south of England

a path to nowhere suddenly came into being this spring in the north-west corner of the park. This had apparently been agreed before the pandemic. But although part of a laudable plan to improve access to the park, given that money is so tight, it seems an odd priority and has potentially increased the vulnerability of this hidden area. CDC has not been idle in giving attention to Priory Park in other ways and an Events Strategy has been formulated which acknowledges the need for the support of local residents. The excessive noise levels and expensive damage to turf caused by mounting two concerts on the last weekend of July 2021 should be avoided in the future.

New management?

It has often been suggested that the management of Priory Park should be transferred from CDC to the City Council. I have not sensed any great appetite for this idea, but maybe our new district councillors will drive it forward. Should Priory Park be managed by a Charitable Trust along the lines of the original Priory Park Society in 1850? (Without of course the exclusivity of the famous subscribers’ keys). Whatever the future, the urgent need is for proper security, joined-up thinking and a cohesive and bigger vision in the corridors of power. Those of us who use the park value its beauty and tranquillity and love seeing people enjoying themselves. The Duke of Richmond gave the park as a memorial to the fallen in the First World War and as a place of recreation for the people of Chichester. As such, it deserves our respect and the Priory Park Society will continue to support this wonderful space in any way we can. I encourage readers to come and join us.

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The Reverend Canon Bruce Ruddock is Chairman of Priory Park Society.

All photographs are by Vivien Ruddock

*Readers with questions about the Park can email
bruceruddock.pps@gmail.com*

RAF TANGMERE AND THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE

David Coxon tells the story of dangerous clandestine flights to France

During the Second World War, RAF Tangmere was used as a Fighter Command station but from 1942 until 1944 it was also used as a ‘forward base’ for a Bomber Command squadron – No 161 Special Duties. This squadron’s dangerous mission was to pick-up Allied intelligence agents and members of the resistance forces who needed to be evacuated and brought to London for de-briefing. While agents could be ‘inserted’ by parachute, they could not be ‘extracted’ or brought back in the same way. Westland *Lysanders*, single-engined aircraft with the ability to take off and land in a short distance and twin-engined Lockheed *Hudsons* were used for this purpose.

This is about the men of the Lysander ‘A’ Flight, No 161 Squadron who flew these extraordinarily dangerous pick-up sorties, landing and taking off from secluded farmers’ fields in the dead of night, collecting their precious human cargoes and bringing them back to England under the noses of the enemy. The story focuses on 1943, eighty years ago this year, because it proved be the busiest year for clandestine operations. When preparing for missions, Lysanders were stripped of all armament and carried a 150-gallon auxiliary fuel tank beneath the fuselage in order to increase their endurance to eight hours. As these aircraft were only used at night, the underside of the aircraft was painted black and a ladder was fitted on the port side to provide easy access to the rear cockpit, which usually accommodated two people. The Lysander’s short take-off and landing capability (310 yards take-off, 250 yards landing), an extraordinarily low minimum speed of 54 mph, and strong fixed undercarriage made it ideally suited to landing in farmers’ fields, transferring of agents, and immediately taking off again.



September 1943 ‘Operation Battering Ram’- the first treble Lysander operation flown by Verity, Vaughan-Fowler and McCairns
Image: detail from a painting by artist Douglas Littlejohn

a pick-up was scheduled for them that night. Landing fields - many situated near the River Loire - had to have an approach unobstructed by tall trees or other obstacles, and were expected to provide a firm and level surface of at least 600 yards in length. The reception committee was responsible for laying out a rudimentary flare path, consisting of three lamps showing an inverted ‘L’ to mark a landing run into the direction of the wind. Once the Lysander pilot had found the field, an identifying code letter was flashed to him in Morse to signal that all was well. The Lysander would then commence its approach to land and after landing would turn back into wind to be ready for take-off before disembarking its passengers and picking up those to be carried out. All agents were known as ‘Joes’, no matter whether they were male or female for the aircrew never knew their real names. Time on the ground was naturally kept to a minimum, and a smooth pick-up could be accomplished within five minutes.

Despite operational dangers, No 161 Squadron’s casualties were not especially heavy, a fact attributable largely to the high standards of navigation and airmanship of its pilots. Enemy action was an ever-present threat, with the Lysanders vulnerable to enemy flak and night-fighters when in the air, and to small-arms fire when landing in France. Bad weather, especially when it involved fog or ice, was another serious hazard. On one disastrous night in December 1943, two Lysanders were lost while trying to land at Tangmere in fog on their return from a Special Intelligence Service operation to collect four French agents. Flight Lieutenant J M (‘McB’) McBride’s aircraft crashed short of Tangmere’s runway; the aircraft bursting into flames and McBride killed, although his two passengers were rescued. Sussex born Stephen Hankey, the pilot of the second Lysander, was instructed to divert to Ford aerodrome but crashed into a hillside in the thick fog; there were no survivors among the three aboard.

Soft ground

Another problem the pilots faced was an unsuitable landing field. In November 1943 Flight Lieutenant Robin Hooper managed to land but soon realised that the ground was very soft indeed - turning was all but impossible since the wheels dug themselves into deep grooves with the Lysander bogged down. The reception committee was soon organised to push the aircraft out, but this proved impossible. At this point two bullocks were brought over from the nearest farm. Despite the efforts of this team, later augmented by a further two bullocks, the Lysander remained firmly stuck. Hooper decided to burn the aircraft and go into hiding with the resistance. He was picked up by No 161’s commanding officer, Wing Commander Lewis ‘Bob’ Hodges, a month later.



No 161 (SD) Squadron 1943 Lysander Pick-up Pilots, from left: Hooper, McCairns, Vaughan-Fowler, Verity, Rymills and Hankey
Source: TMAM/McCairns collection



The Museum’s full size replica Lysander
Photo: Pete Pitman

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No 161 Squadron’s pick-up operations commenced in February 1942 and ended in September 1944. In 30 months, 247 Lysander missions were attempted – about 300 persons were flown out to France and over 400 flown back. The pick-up pilots of 1943 included ‘A’ Flight’s boss, Hugh Verity, Jimmy ‘Mac’ McCairns, Peter Vaughan-Fowler and ‘Bunny’ Rymills. Tangmere’s Military Aviation Museum has two permanent exhibitions on the Special Operations Executive (SOE) including a full-size replica of a Lysander aircraft in the markings flown by ‘Mac’ McCairns, a pick-up pilot with 25 successful missions. He was awarded three Distinguished Flying Crosses during his 1943 tour of duty.

David Coxon is Tangmere Military Aviation Museum’s historian.

‘Lysander Pilot: secret operations with 161 Squadron’ by James Atterby McCairns can be purchased from the Museum shop for £9.50

TAKE THE 54 BUS FOR A WALK!

John Templeton recommends a Downland bus service that’s approaching its centenary

The Stagecoach 54 bus service from Chichester to Petersfield runs five times a day (Mondays-Saturdays) at roughly 2-hour intervals, from Chichester bus station and cathedral to Petersfield town centre and rail station. It is run by helpful drivers on stylish buses with sunshine roofs. The journey end to end takes exactly an hour and passes through some of the most beautiful landscape of the South Downs and Western Weald. It enters the South Downs National Park at East Ashling and after Funtington it runs up the valley of the chalk River Ems passing iconic villages of Walderton, West Marden and Compton. From the top of the Downs near Uppark House (National Trust) it crosses the South Downs Way, a long-distance trail from Winchester to Eastbourne, and descends the steep hill to South Harting. After Rogate it turns west along the A272 into Hampshire before arriving at the market town of Petersfield.

Over 90 years!

The 54 has been running for over 90 years! It was introduced by Southdown Motor Services in 1930 initially only as far as Compton but extended to Petersfield in 1946. In the 1970’s Southdown was nationalised as part of the National Bus Company and the service was renumbered 254 and again only as far as Compton. Following later deregulation, common sense prevailed and it once again runs to Petersfield. After being operated by a variety of small bus companies of varying quality, it is now run by Stagecoach with financial support from West Sussex and Hampshire county councils.

The 54 provides a wide variety of enjoyable day trips. A South Downs Discovery day ticket can be purchased from the driver for hop-on, hop-off opportunities. There are historic churches at Funtington, Racton, Compton, South Harting



A 54 bus today outside the Cathedral on a journey that begins at Chichester Bus Station and ends at Petersfield

THE 54 BUS ROUTE A SAMPLE TIMETABLE

OUTWARD

11.29	Chi Cathedral
11.40	Funtington
11.54	Compton
12.02	South Harting
12.12	Rogate
12.25	Petersfield Station

INWARD

16.45	Petersfield Station
16.54	Rogate
17.09	South Harting
17.17	Compton
17.31	Funtington
17.43	Cathedral



A Southdown 54 bus outside Chichester rail station in the early 1950s before the bus station was built

and Rogate; village pubs serving meals at East Ashling, Funtington, Walderton, Compton, South Harting and (when reopened following refurbishment) at Rogate. There is a farm shop at Funtington and village shops at Compton, South Harting and Rogate. The shop at Compton has a tearoom while on the A272 between Rogate and Petersfield are Durloughmarsh and Sky Park Deer Farms, both with farm shops and cafés. Petersfield is well worth visiting, with a traditional market in the market square on Wednesday and Saturday mornings and plenty of attractions including churches, an outstanding museum and a physic garden.

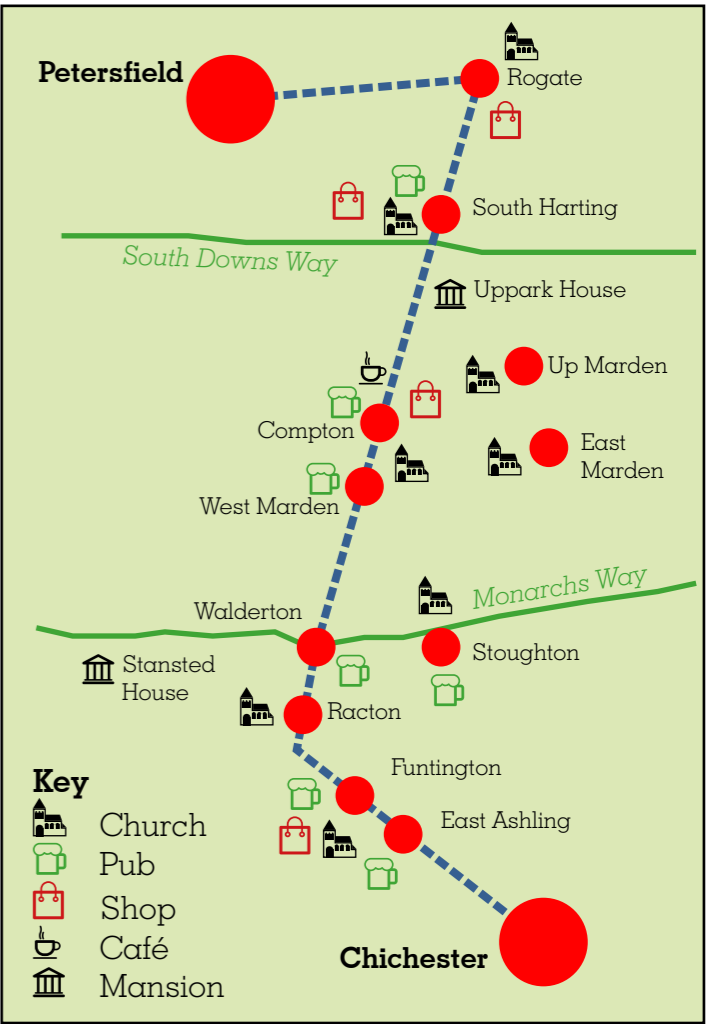
Good walks

And all this without mentioning walks! Armed with a Chichester & South Downs OS Landranger or Explorer map, the opportunities are endless. Walks can be either circular from and back to a particular village, or point-to-point catching the bus at the end of the walk. A particularly helpful walks guide is *Octagon Walks*, a free leaflet published by the Octagon parish of 8 Downland churches to mark the late Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in 2012. Copies are available from the Novium Museum or from the 8 churches including Racton and Compton. Short circular walks are described from Walderton, West Marden and Compton, each of about 3 miles, and there is an 18 mile Octagon Walk linking all 8 churches!

The 54 bus deserves our support! It has served the rural community for nearly 100 years and provides for enjoyable car-free days out for Cicestrians and those who live elsewhere particularly on the overcrowded coastal plain. With greater use, hopefully a Sunday service may become viable before long.

John Templeton is a member of the Society’s Executive Committee and took all the photographs for this article. Readers wanting a timetable for the 54 route can download and print a single-sheet pdf file from the Stagecoach website: stagecoachbus.com However, readers may prefer to download the Stagecoach app to their smartphone and access timetable and route information in this manner. This journey is free to those with a bus pass.

THE No 54 BUS ROUTE Chichester to Petersfield



Some villages have a shop. This one at Compton includes a café



Above and Below (centre): The extensive scaffolding which currently encapsulates the Nave.

Below: Part of the original 13th century oak roof structure, which is undergoing conservation and repair.

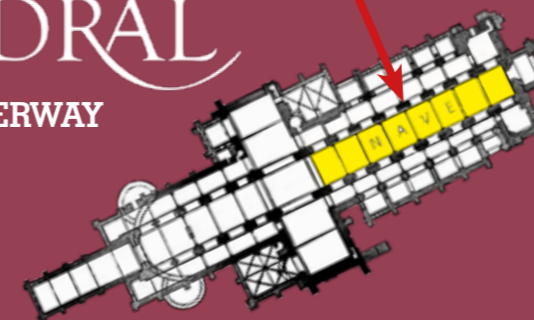


CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL

THE FINAL PHASE OF THE ROOF RESTORATION IS UNDERWAY

The final and largest phase of the Cathedral roof restoration began in October 2022. When complete, it is estimated that the new roof covering and structural conservation should last for the next 200 years.

Aerial photograph courtesy of the Chapter of Chichester Cathedral. The remaining photos by Anthony Quail and Brian Henham



Above: The timber roof covering, stripped of the old copper cladding and awaiting the lead replacement. Each lead panel weighs about 75kg (almost 12 stone).

Below: Looking down from the roof on a sunny West Street



CHICHESTER’S SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Greg Slay on the orchestra’s contribution to this city’s classical music scene

With some justification the Chichester Symphony Orchestra (CSO) can claim to be the oldest secular musical ensemble in the area still in existence. A *Chichester Instrumental Society* is known to have existed in 1881 and is listed in the Chichester Directory Handbook and Almanac for that year. The Society’s name made its first formal appearance in print in the Bognor Observer and West Sussex Recorder newspaper of 25 December 1889 in which it was announced that the Society was ‘prepared to receive engagements for banquets, balls, evening parties’. This is the date the orchestra now documents for its foundation. A review in the same newspaper of a concert on 14 April 1896 reported that ‘the various items on the programme were admirably rendered and reflected the greatest credit on every member of the orchestra.’

A new name

Chichester *Instrumental* Society was renamed the Chichester *Orchestral* Society in 1906 and on 10 May performed what was billed as its ‘First Grand Concert’. Works by Mendelssohn, Grieg, Schubert, Auber and Smetana were performed, conducted by Frederick Crowe the newly appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at Chichester Cathedral. The soloist at concerts given in 1907, 1908 and 1912 was the Countess of March (Hilda Gordon-Lennox), a talented amateur pianist and grand-daughter of Victorian railway pioneer Thomas Brassey; she later became the Orchestral Society’s Chairman. During the 1920s the orchestra gave concerts at Chichester’s Picturedrome on South Street (occupied today by Iceland supermarket). Composer Norman Demuth took over as conductor between 1929-1935. His orchestral piece *Selsey Rhapsody* was inspired ‘by a view of Selsey Bill in the sunlight on a bright autumn morning’. The orchestra lost many members during World War 2 when they signed up for military service. Members had already formed a slimmed-down Chichester Light Orchestra and this became the mainstay for concerts entertaining wartime audiences. The Light Orchestra continued to perform through to 1966 with local music teacher Olive Lewis as its conductor.

Coronation & anniversaries

The Orchestra’s 35th anniversary concert was on 31 May 1934 at the Assembly Room for a programme that included a performance of Mozart’s *Maurerische*



Chichester Symphony Orchestra rehearsing in 2023 at Christ Church on Market Avenue with Simon Wilkins conducting Photo: Shaun Nightingale



Chichester Light Orchestra gave a celebratory concert on 8 June 1953 in honour of our late Queen’s coronation Image: West Sussex Record Office Add Mss 51334

Trauermusik and the world premiere of Norman Demuth’s *Merciles Beaute*, set to words by Chaucer. Several concerts were given at Graylingwell Hospital including one to celebrate the Queen’s coronation on 8 June 1953 with a programme that included Montague Phillips’ *The Fishermen of England*, Edward German’s *Who were the Yeomen of England* and William Purcell’s *Fairest Isle, all isles excelling*. The orchestra’s 200th concert was held on 18 January 1972 at Chichester High School for Boys, a programme with Rossini, Haydn, Gounod and Schubert. In December a joint performance with Chichester Amateur Operatic Society was held in memory of Olive Lewis who had died earlier in the year.

An opportunity arose to use a larger space for rehearsals and concerts and in November 1981 the orchestra moved to Bishop Otter College, which readers will recognise is now Chichester University’s campus on College Lane. Students from the College joined the newly named Chichester Symphony Orchestra which was then able to tackle a more ambitious programme. This arrangement lasted five years but in late 1986 the orchestra moved again, this time to County Hall in Chichester for weekly rehearsals. The orchestra’s centenary events began with a Victorian themed party held at County Hall on 26 June 1990, and continued the following year on 13 April at Christ Church on Old Market Avenue. Soloists were Alan Thurlow, the Cathedral’s Organist and Master of the Choristers, Jeremy Smith, a sixth-former from Bishop Luffa School, and Patrick Moore, astronomer and broadcaster – who readers may recall was known for his excellence on a xylophone!

The CSO today

Over the past 25 years Chichester Symphony Orchestra has had four conductors, most recently Simon Wilkins since 2018. Simon lives in Southampton and works professionally as a music teacher, conductor, and composer; he is also an accomplished cellist. Natalia Corolscaia has been the orchestra’s leader since 2022. She was raised in Moldova and has been playing the violin from the age of seven. Natalia came to Chichester University in 2016 where she then completed her advanced musical studies and is now a member of the teaching staff.

The orchestra is solvent (generally!) owing to the generosity of its members, who pay an annual subscription. This is topped up by the sale of concert tickets, grants from the City Council and by private donations. Expenditure mainly relates to concerts such as paying freelance players for some pieces. The result of this endeavour is illustrated by a comment from a reviewer in July 2017: *That the Chichester Symphony Orchestra can attract soloists of the international standard calibre of Ben Goldscheider is a clear reflection of the orchestra’s current status*. An audience of 170 in 2023 enjoyed the family concert in February and feedback confirms the calibre of the orchestra today.



Norman Demuth conducted the Chichester Orchestral Society, as it was then called, from 1929 to 1935 Photo: West Sussex Record Office Add Mss 51334

CHICHESTER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA 2023 CONCERT PROGRAMME

- February 5 - Bishop Luffa School** - a ‘magic’ theme:
- Magic Flute overture – Mozart
 - Harry Potter Symphonic Suite – John Williams
 - Danse Macabre – Saint-Saens
 - The Wand of Youth - Elgar

- April 1 - St Paul’s Church**
- Marriage of Figaro overture - Mozart
 - Cello Concerto – CPE Bach
 - Symphony no. 96 – Haydn
 - Symphony no.2 - Beethoven

- July 8 - St Paul’s Church**
- Academic Festival Overture – Brahms
 - Violin Concerto - Bruch
 - Symphony no.2 - Brahms

- October 24 - Chichester Cathedral** lunchtime
- Serenade for 13 Wind Instruments – R. Strauss
 - The Banks of Green Willow - Butterworth
 - By The Sleepy Lagoon – Coates
 - To be confirmed

Orchestra plans

Chichester Symphony Orchestra numbers around 40 but recruits extra players when needed. They mostly live within 20 miles of Chichester. New audiences and new players ensure the orchestra’s continued success in Chichester’s cultural life. We are expanding the repertoire because local composers should feature in our programmes, as well as music set locally like Eric Coates’ *By the Sleepy Lagoon*: readers may know this was inspired by the view from Selsey to Bognor on a summer evening.

At present there are four performances a year: a family concert in February at Bishop Luffa School, two at St Paul’s Church in early April and July and one at the Cathedral in the autumn, part of the lunchtime concert series. Each family concert has a theme which this year was ‘magic’ and the programme included Mozart’s *Magic Flute* overture, John Williams’ *Harry Potter Symphonic Suite* and Saint-Saens’ *Danse Macabre*. Next year’s theme will be ‘rhythm’. Concert programmes are publicised on the orchestra’s website. Tickets are available through TicketSource, the Novium Museum’s Box Office, or on the door. It’s our hope to establish a Friends or supporters’ group in the coming year. We very much hope to see you at one of our forthcoming concerts.

Greg Slay is Chairman of Chichester Symphony Orchestra. He has lived in the city since 1991.

The orchestra’s website is chichesterso.co.uk

WHY CAN'T CHICHESTER CREATE A BUZZY TRANSPORT HUB?

Bill Sharp says some places have well designed rail/bus hubs which show what's possible here

Readers will know that the Society is concerned about plans to do away with Chichester Bus Station and replace it with stops scattered to some forlorn location or other. (See Newsletter 212, June 2022, pp 2-3). The Society is keen to see this idea unceremoniously dumped in favour of one of two possibilities. As one option, we suggest the existing bus station could simply be refreshed. In most people's eyes this building is, to say the least, down at heel. But it does have its admirers. The insightful blog Beauty of Transport states '*Chichester bus station. The brickwork! The windows! The serified lettering! The cantilevered balcony! I love it all.*' However, the Society is even keener on the idea of creating a new, fully-integrated bus/rail hub as part of the Southern Gateway re-development plans.

One problem in any campaign of this kind is finding inspiring pictures to illustrate what's possible. Many such buildings are bland or outright ugly – which is an indictment of past designers, bus companies and local authorities (mixed in with a bit of post-war austerity). One can press the case for beauty too far. Even the most beautiful of buildings would be an abject failure if it didn't get other aspects right: like proper weather protection, good signage and quality wheelchair access. But aesthetics are important and, in Chichester, so too is a sense of place and a sense of arrival.

In the hope of stimulating creative juices somewhere, we present illustrations of what can be achieved, to set the bar for what could (and should) be aspired to in Chichester. This writer's personal favourite is the West Croydon Bus Station which has the scale that would fit the space available in Chichester and combines a warmth of materials with the kind of detailing interest which is too often absent from modern buildings. The main difference in Chichester would be that we are suggesting better use of space by building higher in order to accommodate, for example, shops or a multi-use 'flexi-space' above. Or, even better, residential flats to take some of the pressure off our fast-disappearing green fields.



A traditional design at Harrogate has charm and would look good in Chichester Photo: Michael Dibb



Chichester's bus station as we know it – down at heel but it has its fans Photo: Bill Sharp

THERE'S A TRANSPORT HUB AT PORTSMOUTH - THE HARD INTERCHANGE

Portsmouth Hard has an interchange par excellence, where the traveller is spoilt for choice for local and long-distance destinations. The bus station pictured is right next to not only the rail station but also the ferry terminals to Gosport and the Isle of Wight. Facilities include toilets, a café and an information centre!

Photo: Brian Henham



West Croydon Bus station

Introducing a bit of humanity among the faceless towers. In a rarity for this day and age, the project was led by Transport for London's own in-house team of architects. In 2017, it won the prestigious "London Award" from the Royal Institute of British Architects. The judges commented that it 'makes a brilliant case for the value of beautiful design and aesthetics ... and for projects that are fully achievable under budget with the right leadership and vision.'

Photo: Kate Pugh, via Flickr, cropped and licensed under Creative Commons 'Share Alike' 2.0



WHAT MIGHT A COMBINED BUS & RAIL HUB LOOK LIKE?

Here is one interpretation for a new transport hub at Chichester.

Image by Andrew Bain





CHICHESTER AREA TALKING NEWS - A LIFE-ENHANCING SERVICE

Delivering local news to sight-impaired people has been possible for decades but technical changes are introducing amazing improvements as Bob Money explains

Breaking news on TV and radio, endless Tweets, Podcasts, 24-hour social media – sometimes it seems that we’re already bombarded with way too much information. With so many media outlets competing for our attention, why on earth should a Chichester charity provide regular audio recordings from our local newspapers? The key here is local. If you’re blind or partially-sighted you can access the global and national news as well as anyone else, but what about really local news: the village fetes, readers’ letters, planning applications, farmers’ markets, school sports days, forthcoming events and the like? If you’re unable to read your local paper you’re cut off from these day-to-day happenings in your local community and could feel isolated and out of touch.

A solution to this form of social isolation is CATN or Chichester Area Talking News, that has become a lifeline to help people take an active interest in local affairs. One-hour audio recordings are provided to listeners, with news and information mostly from the Chichester, Bognor and Midhurst & Petworth editions of the Observer newspapers. There’s also an Information Desk highlighting material of particular interest to blind people, Sussex Village News, readers’ letters, audio book recommendations and much more. In addition, there’s *Insight*, a quarterly magazine with articles and information of local and general interest, again available online. The service is completely free to blind or partially sighted people as well as any other disabled people who, for whatever reason, can’t read for themselves.

Beginnings

Eileen Brown started CATN in 1975. She had already spent many years organising sport for disabled people and promoting golf for the blind, when one of her blind golfers told her about the newly-launched Talking News in Portsmouth. Eileen was attracted by the idea of providing



Volunteers Helen Pinn and Sophie James in studio 1

local news recordings to help blind and visually impaired people and set about organising a similar organisation for West Sussex. The first one-hour edition was produced in December 1975 – recorded on borrowed equipment in the Hospital Radio Studio at St Richard’s, Chichester, followed by a dash to Portsmouth Talking News to borrow its equipment to copy cassette tapes (then the latest technology!) for the first 42 listeners.

A Swedish link

The idea of providing audio recordings of local news for the blind originally came from Sweden in the early 1970s. Many local groups were formed in the UK at around that time and, thanks to recognition of the need by the then Postmaster General, the convention was agreed that articles labelled ‘For the Blind’ would be treated as first-class mail but wouldn’t need a stamp. That convention still exists and saves Talking Newspapers a small fortune every year. Today there are around 400 local Talking Newspaper groups in the UK, mostly charities, serving 25,000 listeners. Most rely on fundraising and donations for their survival and owe a great deal of their success to the goodwill and generosity of an army of volunteers, some of whom have been with ‘their’ charity for 30 years or more. From those early years CATN has developed and grown. Since that first recording, there have been some 1,250 regular news programmes. Local coverage has expanded to include not only around Chichester, but also Midhurst, Petworth and Bognor Regis. CATN’s area is bordered by similar organisations: *Sussex Coast Talking News* eastwards from Littlehampton, *Havant Talking News* to the west and *Roundabout Talking News* north from Horsham.

The service evolves

CATN now has a purpose-built recording studio in the grounds of St Richard’s Hospital, with hi-tech audio recording and fast-speed copying equipment. Around 300 copies of each edition are produced on USB sticks to be sent post-free for listeners to play on their specially designed audio players, which are loaned free of charge. USB or ‘memory’ sticks are still the most popular way to hear the programmes, although increasingly listeners are using other channels to access the recordings including the charity’s website www.catn.org.uk, the British Wireless for the Blind app on a smart phone or tablet, on

Chichester Hospital Radio, or smart speakers such as Amazon’s Alexa.

All this has been achieved through regular fund-raising ventures, legacies and generous donations from listeners, friends, other organisations and companies. Above all, the success of CATN has been made possible by the talented, dedicated and enthusiastic band of around 70 volunteers who run the charity. There are three production teams, including producers, readers, contributors, presenters and technical engineers who are responsible for recording up to 50 news items and general information. A copying team produces multiple copies on USB sticks from the master recording, and volunteers pack and despatch them. As it’s very much a local service the catchment area is necessarily quite small, but programmes are also sent to listeners who have moved to other parts of the country – perhaps to be with family - but who wish to retain their links with West Sussex.

There is a social side as well. CATN hosts an annual ‘Listeners’ Lunch’ for up to 100 people, where listeners and carers can make friends and compare notes in a relaxed atmosphere over a leisurely lunch; and a distinctively different annual general meeting where light-hearted musical entertainment enlivens the routine business of an AGM. Volunteers get together as well, with regular lunchtime meetings and occasional informal gatherings in interesting venues such as the South Downs Planetarium.



Chichester area
Talking News

YOU can read your
local newspaper but
not everyone can ...
WE CAN HELP.



The CaTN team provides a fortnightly recording of
local news for visually impaired people.
The FREE SERVICE designed to keep people
informed and in touch with their local community.

Chichester area Talking News
The Studio
St Richard's Hospital
Chichester, West Sussex PO19 6SE

Tel 01243 775050
Email studio@catn.org.uk
Website www.catn.org.uk

Registered charity no. 273279

Jan Penn and her guide dog Bobbi. Jan is both a listener and a CATN trustee

Our plans

As people become accustomed to hearing their news on speakers and smart phones, CATN will devote resources to make its programmes more easily accessible. At the moment, a trial is underway to gauge the popularity of smart speakers by loaning a number of Alexas rather than USB players. We’re also encouraging the use of CATN’s website and smart phones to hear the recordings. As sight problems increase with age, and women are more susceptible than men, the majority of CATN’s listeners reflect these trends. However, we are recruiting some younger people as readers to provide a youthful voice and also to encourage younger listeners to try the service. It’s important to make sure our programmes reflect what listeners wish to hear, and CATN regularly asks for feedback and suggestions for future topics to cover in the ‘Information Desk’ part of the programme. We are always looking for new volunteers for a whole range of jobs and all contribute to the worthwhile cause of helping people with sight problems.

Bob Money is Vice Chairman of Chichester Area Talking News. All illustrations are courtesy of CATN. Readers wanting to find out about CATN have several choices: the website at www.catn.org.uk, or email studio@catn.org.uk, or call 01243 775050.

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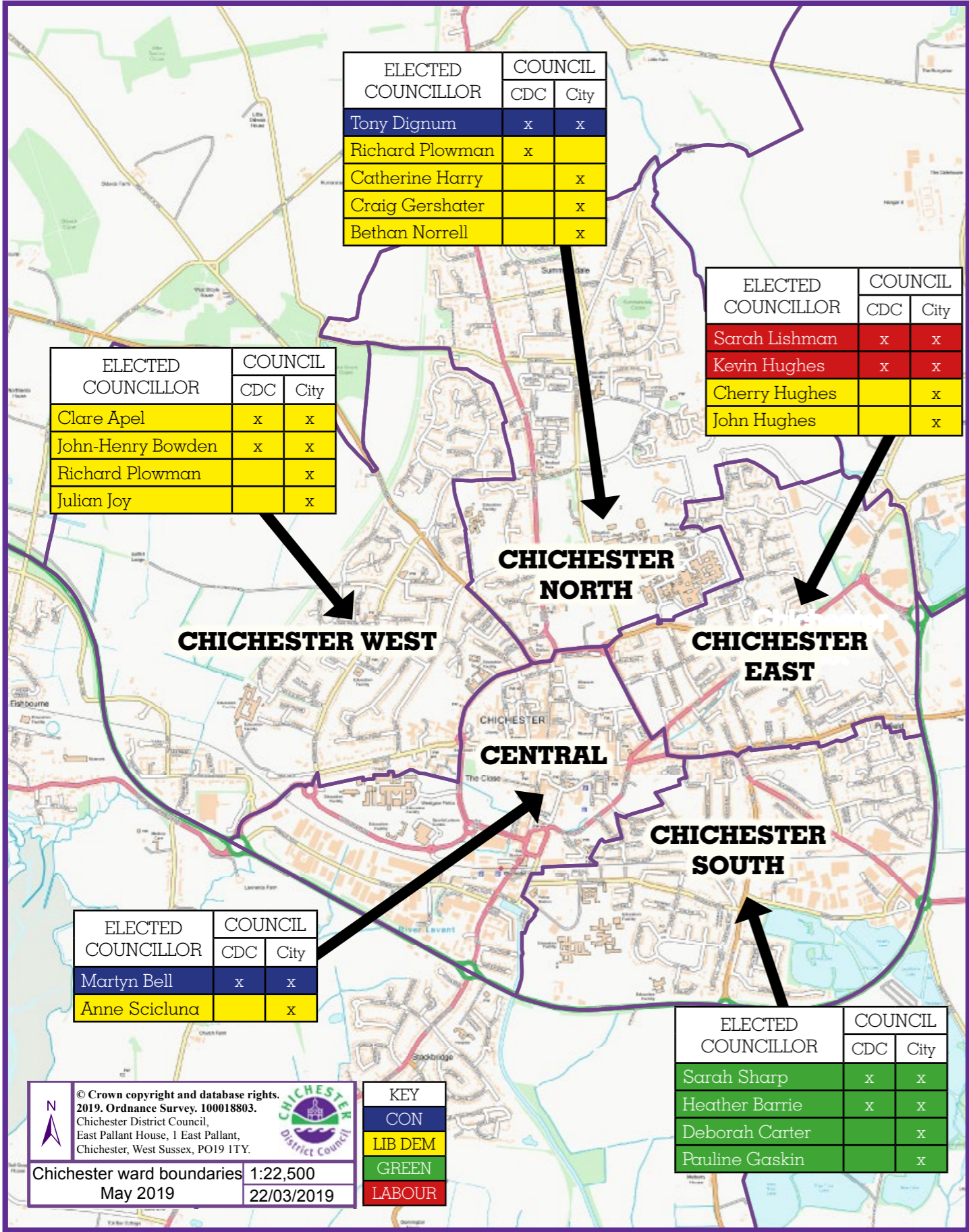
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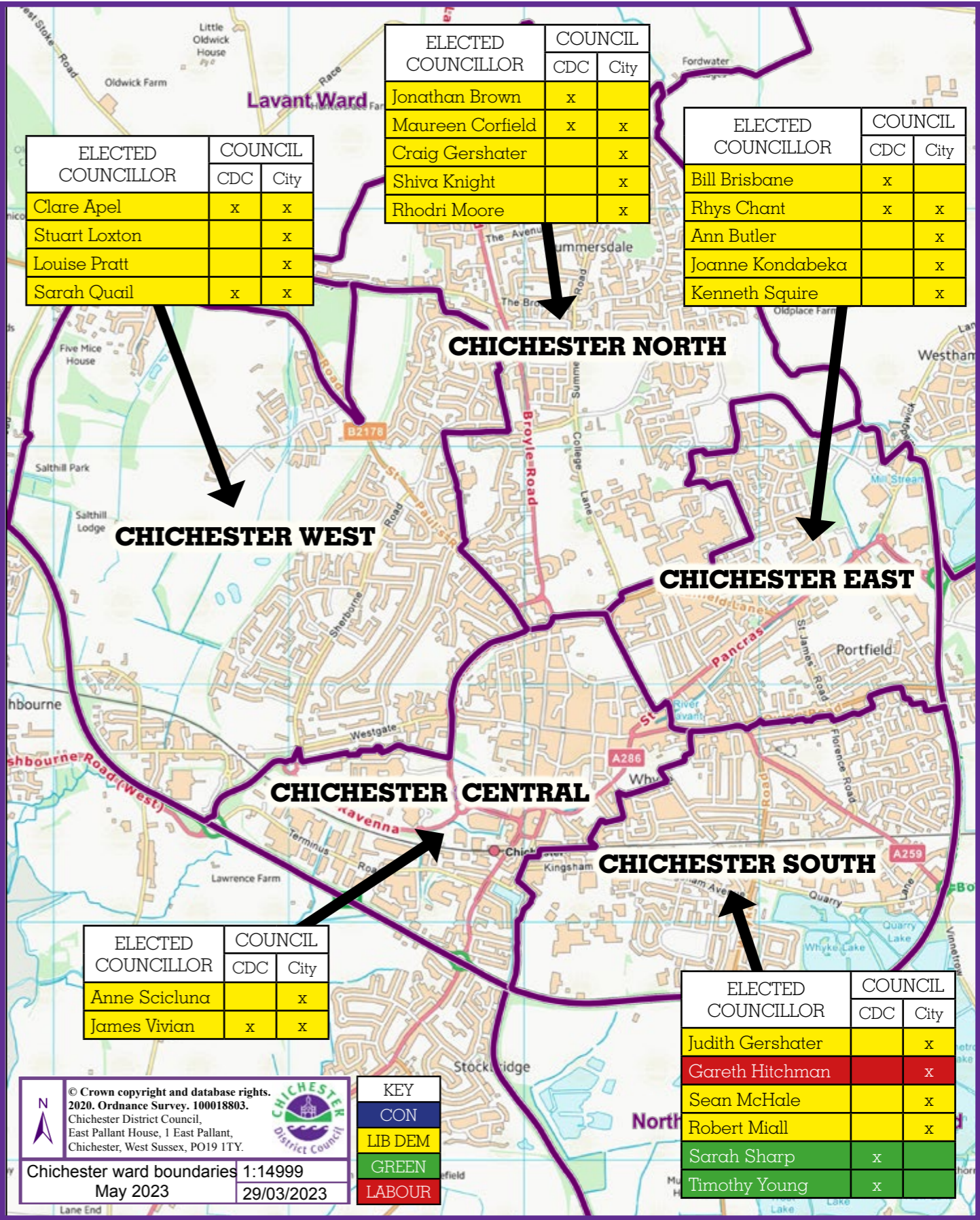
THE MAY 2019 LOCAL ELECTIONS

We thank those City and District Councillors who served us during the past four difficult years



THE MAY 2023 LOCAL ELECTIONS

We welcome City and District Councillors who have been elected to serve our city for the next four years and look forward to working with them





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