

Gloucester Heritage Open Days Report 2022

We had hoped this year we would have been back up to strength after Covid but sadly our Queen died the day before the weekend was due to start and the nation went into mourning. Decisions had to be made as to whether we should continue or not. The National HOD office sent an email to say that the Festival would go ahead but it was up to local organisers to decide how to proceed in their area. After some late night phone calls around the City the decision was made to go ahead here in Gloucester but in a respectful way. This meant not going ahead with most of the planned musical events but the guided walks and talks would run as normal and some of the venues would open.

Those who did not take part or in a limited way included the Cathedral and Blackfriars. Of course we could not know how many people would actually turn up thinking we would cancel. I received many last minute phone calls asking that question so I could explain what we intended to do. In the event the turnout for those events that did run was encouraging.

We opted for a 3 day event this year – Friday 9th to Sunday 11th September. From experience the usual fourth day on the Monday had been less well attended in recent years. This proved to be a sound decision as the statistics will reveal so we will probably adopt this again next year. Sadly the Gloucester History Festival to which we are part had to cancel most of their events which this year had been planned for the following weekend.

Another decision we made was to produce our own brochure and arrange our own booking. The brochure was available on the Civic Trust website with booking instructions but also 700 paper copies were generously printed by Ecclesiastical Insurance Company for those without internet access or who just wanted a printed copy. This number was just about right as there were very few left over. The Museum of Gloucester kindly did the booking for us. Unfortunately the booking software they had ordered did not materialise in time but Amy Washington and her staff did a sterling job in devising a system that despite a few hitches worked for which we are extremely grateful.



It was not possible to make a fair comparison with previous years and the numbers are a bit mixed. As you will see from the appendix to this report there were 29 different guided walks on offer. Three new ones, Gloucester's Rainbow Streets, Westgate Street and Cathedral Quarter Walk and Revd Witts Diary. New venues this year were Gloucester Prison, Sherborne Theatre and St Margaret's Church at Whaddon. Now the Folk is under Civic Trust management we used the excellent facilities of the Ed Shed for 10 talks on Gloucester's Heritage and there were guided walks around the historic main building. Some places we usually open were not available this year including The Fleece Undercroft, Meek's, the Bastion and The Whittington.



This year's HOD team consisted of Maggie Goodchild – Venues; Debbie Vass – Guided Walks; Jennifer Walker – Music; Emily Gibbon – Social Media; Rose McDowall – Events; and myself - Talks and Co-ordinator. Again Pauline Roberts forwarded our events to the National HOD Website and Helena Taylor kept the Gloucester Civic Trust Website up-to-date..

On behalf of the team I wish to acknowledge and thank the many people who gave their time and talents in making another difficult year a success. These include the team at the Tower, The Folk volunteers, the aforementioned Museum staff, all those who opened up their premises to the public and the guides and members of the Civic Trust who led walks, gave talks and acted as stewards. All volunteers without whom the HOD festival would not run each year.

After 7 years of co-ordinating Gloucester HODs and becoming an octogenarian I am handing the role over to Debbie Vass who I am confident will do a great job for us all. I will remain as a member of the team arranging the Talks programme. Next year's HOD weekend will be Friday 8th to Sunday 11th September.



***Paul Drinkwater
HOD Co-ordinator
Gloucester Civic Trust***

October 2022

Just a few samples of the feedback received ...

Guided tours -

Absolutely fascinating and well presented tour given the lack of remains

Wonderful tour, great guide, memorably presented with visual references and great anecdotes

Learned lots of facts not previously known. All our tours have been brilliant

St Nicholas - *lovely to see the church open. How beautiful. How nice to see*

A big thank you to all those involved in the Heritage Open Days which once again gave my wife and I much pleasure. Brockworth Court was fully booked but I was subsequently able to organise a visit and this fabulous house and garden should be on everyone's visit list.

I so enjoyed the guided tours, listening to many enthusiastic and knowledgeable people, as well as having access to so many historical buildings and areas.

It's been a treat for me in the last two years of living in this lovely city, as I never before experienced heritage open days to be so well organised and presented and I realise how much time and effort it must have taken.

