

Victorian Buildings at Risk

The past couple of months have seen accidents cause damage to two of Leicester's notable Victorian buildings.

On 13th July, one person was injured and a number of buildings evacuated after part of the former Gilbros Business Centre collapsed on Wharf Street South. Firefighters dealt with the initial collapse, and there was a second collapse involving the roof and other brickwork. A possible cause was a major internal water leak; Severn Trent Water confirmed teams assisted in shutting off the water supply after being called to the heavy leak prior to the structural failure.



Figure 1: The damaged building on the corner of Wharf Street South and Wheat Street (photo: Colin Hyde)

This building is on the Local Heritage Asset Register, and it is part of a small group of Victorian industrial buildings that includes 4 Wheat Street and 80 Wharf Street South. The collapsed building is an extension to the earlier building at 4 Wheat Street. The Local Heritage Asset Register states that this is an excellent representative of a late-19th century large-scale

hosiery works complex. The original factory was built for W Raven & Co hosiery manufacturers in the 1870s, to the design of Leicester architect James Bird. Around 1887 it was extended, with a new four-storey addition fronting Wharf Street constructed to the designs of the nationally recognised Leicester-based architectural practice Redfern & Sawday. The complex has a strong visual presence within the street scene and adds to the appreciation of Leicester's hosiery industry.

At the time of writing it is not clear what the future holds for the remains of the building, or how far the damage extends to the original 1870s building. The City Council are seeking a meeting with the owners.

Two weeks later, on the night of Tuesday 28th to Wednesday 29th, a fire broke out at St Andrew's Church on Jarrom Street, Leicester. The cause is not clear but is almost certainly accidental. Thankfully, no one was hurt.

The fire severely damaged the roof and you can see photos of the aftermath on the church's website where it is also possible to make a donation towards the rebuilding. Photos of the damage, latest updates, and a donation page can be found on the [church's website](#)



Figure 2: The original building on Wheat Street with the damaged building in the foreground (photo: Colin Hyde).



Figure 3: Damage to the exterior (photo: Colin Hyde)

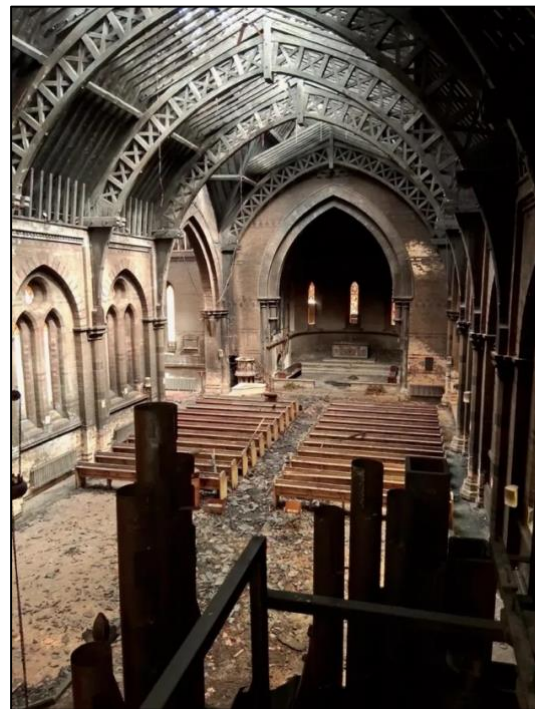


Figure 4: Damage to the interior (photo: St Andrew's Church)



Figure 5: Damage to the roof of St Andrew's Church as seen from Jarrom Street (photo: Colin Hyde)

The church and the attached former schoolroom are listed Grade II*. Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of 'more than special interest' (only around 5.8% of listed buildings are Grade II*). The church was built 1860-62 by Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-78). Scott began practice in the mid-1830s and became the most successful church architect of his day. His churches generally have a harmonious quality which derived its character from the architecture of the late C13 or early C14 and he did not take up the more florid kind of High-Victorian architecture that was popular from the late 1850s to the 1870s. It is therefore surprising to find him making extensive use of brick polychromy at St Andrew, which is one of only four churches where he seems to have done so: the others are at Crewe Green, Cheshire (1857-8), Ottershaw, Surrey (1863), and St Andrew, Uxbridge, Greater London (1865). Use of polychromy is of particular interest because it shows how Scott's work was at that time influenced by the churches of William Butterfield (1829-99). (Quoted directly from the [Heritage England full listing](#)).

As stated above, you can make a donation towards the repair of the rook via [the church's website](#).

There are other notable Victorian buildings at risk in the city. The master hosier's house and workshops at 3 Darker Street, dating from 1850, have been listed as Grade II thanks to the work of the Leicester Group of the Victorian Society. The buildings have been deteriorating

for many years. They are now in a terrible state and, at the time of writing, the house is surrounded by scaffolding.

There is better news for the former Tudor Pub on Tudor Road. This has been empty and neglected for several years but has recently been purchased.

The Local Heritage Asset Register describes the pub as a good example of a turn of the 20th century former suburban public house on a prominent corner plot, most likely designed by Walter Catlow from the nationally recognised Leicester architectural firm Goddard & Co.



Figure 6: 3 Darker Street, May 2026 (photo: Colin Hyde)

Despite its redundancy as a drinking facility, the building remains a physical remainder of the importance of public houses to their local community, providing a communal space for public gathering and recreation during the 20th century. This public house is a particularly good example of a late Victorian public house, due to its high architectural quality and strong visual presence within the street scene.



Figure 7: The Tudor Pub, May 2025 (photo: Colin Hyde)

We must hope that the new owners take prompt action to remedy the years of neglect. The Leicester Group will keep an eye on developments at all these sites.

Our recent walk following Richard Gill's 1994 trail (see below) demonstrated how much of Leicester's Victorian built environment has successfully survived the past few decades, but we can ill afford to lose buildings of this quality.

Recent Leicester Group Activities

In the footsteps of Richard Gill

A walk led by Peter Ellis and Colin Hyde in partnership with the Civic Society on 25th July 2026. This walk followed the city centre trail in Richard Gill's 1994 booklet 'Walks Through Victorian Leicester'. Two other trails in the booklet cover New Walk and Clarendon Park/Stoneygate. The idea of the walk was to see whether the 62 sites highlighted by Richard were still in place and what state they are in. Starting by the Town Hall we moved toward the Clocktower, then through the Silver Arcade to the market, and from there along Hotel Street and St Martin's. Then, along Greyfriars and Market Street, circling back to the Town Hall along Belvoir Street and Bowling Green Street. The good news that, with only one or two exceptions, the buildings and places Richard noted in 1994 are still in good condition over 30 years later. There is still a rich Victorian heritage to be seen in the city centre that regular users of the centre can perhaps be a little blasé about, but which visitors are often impressed by.

Ernest Gimson's early life and influences

A walk led by Rowan Roenisch on 18th August 2026. The walk started at the New Walk Museum and ended up at The White House in Clarendon Park. Ernest Gimson (1864-1919) was an architect and designer, and a pioneer of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which believed in anti-industrialisation and the joy of labour. Rowan pointed out the Dutch gables on the left-hand side of the New Walk Museum, which housed the Leicester School of Art that Ernest Gimson attended. We then went up to the Belmont Hotel and noted the blue plaque commemorating his childhood home. On London Road, we saw his school, the former Stoneygate School, and noted the black and red diaper brick work (or 'streaky bacon' as Rowan called it). We concluded at The White House in North Avenue, designed by Ernest Gimson for his half-brother, where we noted the 'streaky bacon' chimney, and heart motifs on the black cast-iron rainwater hopper. Ernest Gimson is famous for designing Stoneywell Cottage in Charnwood Forest, which is now owned by the National Trust. Our guide, Rowan Roenisch, is a volunteer guide there. The Cottage is built on several levels on a rocky outcrop which incorporates the rock inside as part of the stairs.

Leicester's Cultural Quarter – The Renaissance of St George's

On 3rd September Leigh Picciano Moss led a walk around Leicester's Cultural Quarter. The theme of the walk was 'The Renaissance of St George's' and Leigh demonstrated how many 19th century buildings have found new uses as Leicester City Council's vision for a cultural quarter is gradually coming to fruition. The area is full of interesting buildings, and the walk took in the Secular Hall, Makers' Yard, Alexandra House, several former factories and warehouses, St George's Church, the Exchange Buildings and the former Guild Hall on Colton Street. Add in more modern buildings such as Curve, the Athena (formally the Odeon cinema) and the Pfister & Vogel building, and it is clear how richly endowed with notable architecture the area is. Leigh illustrated the walk with many useful facts and anecdotes.

Autumn/Winter talks

All talks take place at the Friends Meeting House, 16 Queens Rd, Leicester LE2 1WP at 7.30pm. Our talks are open to all, but we will ask all attendees to register in order to comply with fire regulations. There will be a charge of £3 towards the cost of room hire and other expenses (if you would bring the exact change, we would be grateful). There is car parking at the Meeting House and on the adjoining roads. Details of talks in 2027 will be in the next newsletter.

Tuesday 6th October 2026

The Day 'The Builder' Visited Leicester

A talk by Colin Hyde

In July of 1897 *The Builder* magazine published an article detailing a visit to Leicester to assess the town's architecture and built environment. This was one of a number of visits to the UK's cities and towns in 1896/97. As well as an appreciation of Leicester's buildings, the article featured illustrations and photographs of notable buildings. What did *The Builder* have to say? Were they impressed with Leicester, or not? This talk shows all the photos and illustrations and takes you on the same walk as *The Builder* over 120 years ago.

Tuesday 3rd November 2026

Ernest Gimson and the Arts & Crafts Movement

A talk by Rowan Roenisch

Stoneywell Cottage is in Ulverscroft and is run by the National Trust. The cottage and its collection provide a rare surviving example of an Arts and Crafts home in its entirety and demonstrates part of an international movement of British origin. This talk will complement the walk Rowan led earlier in the summer (see above). It will examine the commission for Stoneywell and in what ways the cottage and its furniture (largely by Gimson and the Barnsley brothers) are a very 'pure' example of the movement.

Tuesday 1st December 2026

David Vaughan

A talk by Rebecca Hale

David Vaughan is a significant figure in the history of Leicester, as a pioneer of workers education for the illiterate working poor. His impact was such that a main thoroughfare in Leicester bears his name. In this talk, Rebecca Hale looks back at the life of Vaughan and the personalities and experiences that shaped him. Weaving in aspects of Leicester's social history and the radicalism of the early Victorian era, it provides a compelling account of Vaughan's achievements and the impact he had on the town in which he was born.

Other News and Events

Keep up with out latest news on [our Facebook page](#).

Leicester Civic Society are running a series of walks through the autumn, some of which have a Victorian theme. Details are on [their website](#).

The Stoneygate Conservation Area Society's latest newsletter is available to read [on their website](#).

If you are interested in knowing more about, or joining, the Victorian Society there are details about the Society and membership on [the Society's website](#), where you can also find the latest news.

Published by the Leicester Group of the Victorian Society

Chair: Colin Hyde. Treasurer: Peter Ellis.

Contact: Peter on 01455 291694 and ellisdesign@talktalk.net; Colin on 0116 2517659 and colinhyde9@yahoo.co.uk

Website: <https://www.victoriansociety.org.uk/regional-groups/leicester/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066541184338>

X: @LeicVicSoc

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or the Victorian Society.

The Victorian Society, 1 Priory Gardens, London W41TT

Contact: 020 8994 1019 and admin@victoriansociety.org.uk

Charity No. 1081435 Company No. 3940996 Registered in England