

Chance Brothers Bicentenary

1822
2022

HIGHLIGHTS

NEW Grant Investment

Meet: Mark Holden
& Keith Bracey

1822 and all that

the CHaT magazine

January 2022



CHANCE
HERITAGE
TRUST



Chance Heritage Trust

www.chanceht.org

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the CHaT magazine

... is a free and occasional publication aimed primarily at subscribers of the Chance Heritage Trust (CHT). Your contributions are welcome: please send articles, letters, thoughts, anecdotes to editor@chanceht.org

Photos are especially helpful! Please ensure these are photoed or scanned at high resolution for optimum result.

Photos are best sent as JPG or PNG, and without cropping if possible.

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Front Cover:

An 1816 painting of Nailsea, where the Chance family had its original interest from 1793.

Editorial CHaT

The best news of the year (and there are still some 340 days to go) is the announcement of a fantastic grant totalling **£586,000** that has been awarded to the Trust, courtesy of the UK Community Renewal Fund.

Now the work really begins ... more on the following pages.

If proof was ever needed that assuming you are told something is true, then one case disproves this: the year that the Chance family (or, more accurately, Robert Lucas Chance, see right) started the glass-making business is *not* 1824, but 1822. But don't worry, you would be in good company as even the eminent historian, James Frederick Chance got it wrong.

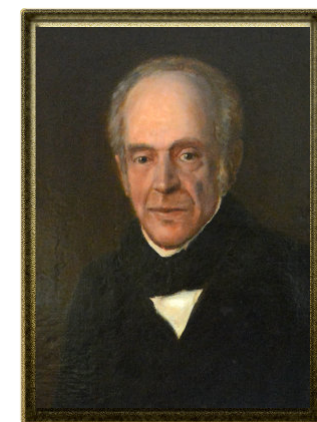
From the many, many sources on the interweb the date has always been 1824, being acknowledged by historians and academics alike. But a single ambiguous footnote (fn.145) on british-history.ac.uk states:

¹⁴⁵ Birm. Univ. Libr., acct. book of R. L. Chance 1821-31, ff. 15-17, 19, 60-1, and accompanying notes by Sir Hugh Chance; archives at Chance Brothers Ltd., R. L. Chance's MS. of his speech of thanks for a testimonial, Sept. 1860. The hitherto accepted date of the sale has been 1824. The writer's attention was drawn to the new date and the sources for it by Sir Hugh Chance.

Until Sir Hugh's summary of this account book was found, this remained buried by the numerous inaccurate mentions. The only other mention of 1822 has been the blue plaque on the old Chance school building.

So there you have it – do not believe everything you read. All this means, of course, is that the bicentenary of the company's founding is November 2022 – so be prepared for more announcements: **#Chance200**

David Encill



NEW GRANT!

Thanks to a UK Community Renewal Fund grant funded by the UK Government and with the support of the West Midlands Combined Authority, the Trust is appointing a number of contractors to take on the work needed to progress the regeneration project. Part of this will be fulfilling our remit to educate and inform, especially in regards to heritage – it's in our name, after all.

There will be strands to this, not least in regards to social media because, after all, the history of firms in Smethwick touches not only the current and former residents in the borough, but interested folk worldwide. In particular the reach of Chances due to the profusion of lighthouse lenses across the seaways and great lakes of the world and means that ours is a global family.

If you are local, however, look out: we're coming to you! Two strands of the Community Engagement project will be undertaken in Sandwell, targeted at young families and concentrating on science and industry, and their local history and relevance today. The other will be seeking out the stories and memories of residents and past residents, which is a rich vein to mine and will no doubt uncover some gems.

Henry Chance, Vice Chairman

See: [West Midlands Combined Authority website](https://www.westmidlandscombinedauthority.gov.uk/)



JOB VACANCIES

With the announcement of the new investment came the need for more personnel to push the ideals of the Trust forward. Unfortunately, the deadline had passed before this issue of CHaT went to press.

These are the two main jobs, and details of the new appointments will be made in the next issue.

Project Administrator

This post is to work on a really exciting project funded through the Community Renewal Programme. A home-based, part time role of approximately 20 hours a week and can either be an employed role or would suit someone already in a self-employed role.

Social Media & Communications Coordinator

Chance Heritage Trust is undertaking a six-month feasibility project to help define the future of two heritage assets in the Galton Valley Conservation Area: the former Chance Brothers glassworks and former Soho Foundry & Mint.

The Board is appointing a Social Media & Communications Coordinator to develop and oversee all aspects of our social media campaigns and external communications.

Also see the following pages for more information on Mark Holden and Keith Bracey, who are working with the Trust.

Mark Holden, Project Manager



Mark has been working with the Trust since 2019 to progress the redevelopment plans for Chance Glassworks. He is a Chartered Surveyor and Managing Director of Invigour, a company he co-founded in 2001 having spent his early career as a Partner in a major international consultancy practice.

Well, it's certainly a case of 'exciting times' for the Chance Heritage Trust and the former Chance Glassworks.

The recent UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) grant award is a significant boost after several years of commitment, perseverance and sheer hard work by all involved with the Trust.

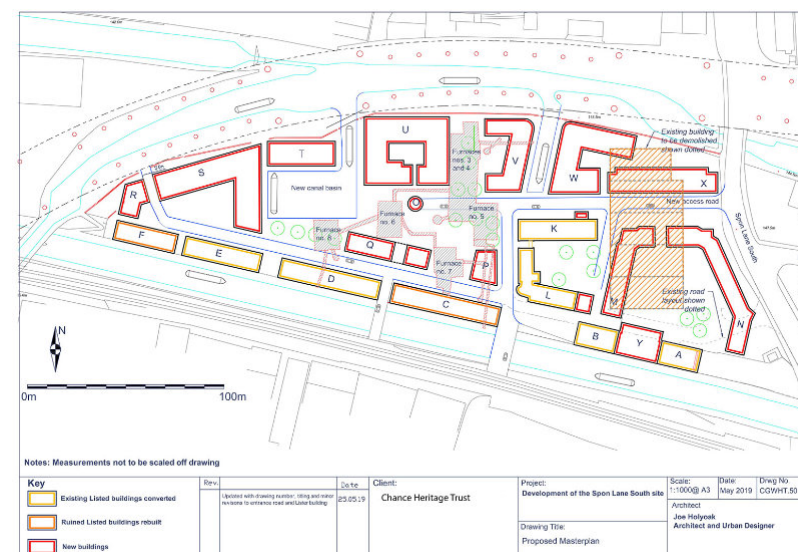
To borrow from Mother Teresa "To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it". Mark Davies, the Board of Directors, supporters and volunteers have kept the lamp that is their vision for the Chance Glassworks alight and it's great to see it now starting to glow.

The CRF funding will enable the Trust to progress feasibility work and a clear proposal for how the site can be redeveloped, the type of uses and how it can be funded and made sustainable for the future. This will involve looking at options with our appointed design team led by BPN Architects and the type of uses that can come together to create a vibrant urban village in line with the Trust's vision.

In any redevelopment proposals we must ensure that the heritage and legacy of Chance Brothers incredible work after 200 years on the site is celebrated. This can be achieved in a number of ways through design, branding, use of artefacts and encouraging businesses with the same entrepreneurial spirit shown by Chance Brothers to make the site their home. We anticipate a mix of uses including workspaces and new homes taking full advantage of the site nestling between the James Brindley and Thomas Telford canals. These have enormous

amenity and leisure potential and exciting ideas have already emerged through feasibility works on a potential first phase of development centred on the seven storey building.

As well as the design team we will be appointing planning consultants, economic and business case advisers and undertaking further survey work to understand more about the buried structures and tunnels that resulted in the site being classified as a scheduled monument under the protection of Historic England. My job is to manage these various activities to deliver the outputs required by the CFR funding and it all has to be completed by the end of June 2022!



My brief called for me to say something about me and my life beyond Invigour and working to restore Chance Glassworks. Running a business makes for a busy life but over the past several years I have found coaching junior rowers on the River Avon very rewarding. I am a Trustee of a Building Preservation Trust myself so recognise the amount of work involved in being a volunteer Trustee.

I enjoy the arts in all their forms and sport, although as I pen this article it's looking like another challenge in the final Ashes Test down under!

To conclude, having been put in the 'too hard' box, by many, for too long it feels as though we have prised open the lid and transferred Chance Glassworks to the 'can-do' box. I am relishing the challenge.

Keith Bracey, Volunteer



I was born and brought up in Bearwood, Edgbaston, so I'm a Brummie through and through, using the pseudonym @brummiebard for my Birmingham and Black Country heritage-inspired poetry.

From 1969–1976, I attended George Dixon Grammar School and then went up to read Commerce and Economic History at the University of Birmingham, 1976–1978, representing the University 1st XV in rugby as an 18-year-old Fresher. At this point I had a breakdown and was diagnosed as being Bipolar.

After working for the Civil Service from 1979–1984, I returned to academia as a mature student studying Modern History and Politics at the University of Nottingham, graduating in 1987 having also represented the university 1st XV. I then embarked on a Postgraduate teaching degree at my Alma Mater, the University of Birmingham, teaching History and Physical Education at both Handsworth Grammar School and Solihull School.

Feeling teaching was not for me, I worked for International Property Consultants, Lambert Smith Hampton, for five years from 1989–1994, before joining Locate in Birmingham, the city's former inward investment and investment promotion agency.

From 2000–2004, I project-managed the relocation of the Elmhurst School for Dance from Camberley in Surrey to Edgbaston to become the feeder ballet school for the Birmingham Royal Ballet. That is my legacy to my home city of Birmingham.

I hope to leave a more international legacy for Birmingham and my adopted Black Country home with the whole Galton Valley World Heritage site project. This begins with the Soho Foundry in Smethwick, moving along the valley to

the Galton Bridge – one of the oldest iron bridges in the world – to the Brasshouse Pumping Station and its Smethwick Engine. Then onto the crowning glory: the Chance Glassworks in Spon Lane, Smethwick.

On the community engagement aspect of the Chance Heritage Trust project, I will be working with Narinder Singh Rai [*more on Narinder in the next issue*], but also adding my expertise in property, planning and regeneration having worked for Birmingham City Council for nearly twenty years in that field.

I have a special interest in local history and heritage, and with 'Save Dudley Hippodrome' where 'buildings at risk' are involved.

Additionally, I am an active member of Birmingham Civic Society and the West Midlands Victorian Society in trying to save Icknield St School, in Winson Green where my mom's family lived in back-to-back housing.

Keith Bracey, Greensward Enterprise Heritage Consultancy

<http://keithbracey.wordpress.com>

North Lincs. Aviation Heritage Centre

The Trust was contacted recently by Christine Bojen of the NLAHC about certain fittings that can be seen dotted around various abandoned aerodromes in the UK.

These rings were intended to house Chance Airfield Beacons, although how they were actually implemented is not known. Certainly, the large cast-iron ring to the outside has an unusual configuration, but what are all those notches for? The casting also has a mark BRITISH PATENT, but the number is not clear. Knowing this number would certainly answer these questions.



Of particular interest is the inner cast-brass ring with the CHANCE BROTHERS markings. They are believed to date back to the late-1930s.

Hopefully we will be able to follow up these findings to give a definitive answer.

1822 AND ALL THAT

It has finally been confirmed that the founding date of the company is actually **1822** and not 1824 as originally thought.

The confusion was not helped by the eminent historian, James Frederick Chance, using this date in this seminal work of the company, *A History of Chance Brothers & Co.* Subsequent publications and articles have used this date ever since, which led to the date being propagated across the web.

The original company was started by Thomas Shutt in 1814, following his purchase of land along Spon Lane. On his death in 1822, the sale was agreed between the remaining partners and Robert Lucas Chance in November 1822 for the sum of £24,000 (£3.12 million today). Although this was not completed until nearly a decade later (with Lucas repaying the partners over a series of years), the new ownership was definitely agreed with Lucas Chance in 1822.

The reason for the confusion is due to the freehold being purchased by Lucas on 18th May 1824 and this was assumed to also be the date of purchase for the glassworks.

However, when Toby Chance viewed some boxes of family papers, one that stood out was a handwritten summary of Lucas Chance's private account book dated 1821–1831. The author was Sir Hugh, who acknowledges the 1822 date.

This means, of course, that we have a bicentenary to celebrate in November!

Although J.F. Chance's "History of Chance Brothers & Co." states that R.L.C. bought the business in 1824 - this was in fact the date of the acquisition of the freehold for which he paid £8,000. This account book (pp 167-17) shows that he agreed to pay a total of £24,000 in November 1822 - the Palmers taking £9,000 + Stock £15,000.

Part of the handwritten summary by Sir Hugh Chance, where it clearly states, "... shows that he agreed to pay a total of £24,000 in November 1822, the Palmers taking £9,000 and Stock £15,000."

NEWS & EVENTS

Talks at Bournville and Dudley

On the 3rd November, Henry Chance and David Encill presented a talk on the history of the company to The Bournville Society. Hot on the heels of this, a presentation was then given to the Friends of Dudley Archives on the 4th.



Above: Henry Chance in full flow with the excellent facilities (and tea & biscuits) offered at Dudley Archives.

Kidderminster Trefoil

Covid permitting, a talk along similar lines will be given to the Kidderminster Trefoil Guild on the 18th May. It is expected that Henry Chance and David Encill will once again be in attendance.

Another talk is planned with the Wordsley History Society (date to be announced) – the word is getting around!




Do you have any news you would like to include? Please contact us: info@chanceht.org

UPDATES

Social Media

Plenty of new activity on our new Facebook pages!

There are now three pages: Chance glass collectors, Chance Brothers history and Chance Heritage Trust.

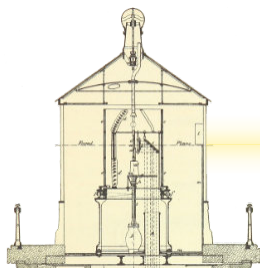
If you like the pages, then please **'LIKE'** them:  your support is appreciated!

Management of these pages is now carried out by a team of people: Henry Chance, Narinder Singh Rai, David Encill and Stuart Summers.



Any ideas on how to commemorate the Company's Bicentenary?
Drop us a line at info@chanceht.org

Please adopt the hashtag **#Chance200** and spread the word!



Do you have an interesting story to tell? Mail me at editor@chanceht.org.

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a free and occasional publication



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