

Putting the SPA back into Harrogate SPA Town

1. Late last year I asked the Society if I might give a talk on this topic, after a colleague showed me a Saturday FT two-page article on 'Yorkshire Housing,' in which, on two occasions it referred to Harrogate as 'the ex-spa town'.
2. This coincided with my bedtime reading of Malcolm's excellent, paperback, '**HARROGATE – History & Guide**' and in particular his Chapter 7 **Death of a Spa**. This prompted me to investigate Spa's and I recalled that!
3. The City of Bath for the millennium built a new dynamic 4 storey 'Thermae Spa' and restored all its historic baths. Whilst Harrogate, closed its Royal Baths and sublet the tenancy apart for the Turkish Baths and TIC shop – but now that is closed.
4. Buxton has dynamically restored its Crescent and advertises that it's the Second SPA in England.
5. Manchester my hometown is soon to open the UK's 1st Spa Park, promoted by international Thermae [from Bath] and Thermae are planning another Spa Park in Glasgow.
6. **2028** will be the 250th Anniversary of the birth of Harrogate, the Great Award of 200 acres of open land in the setting of the springs. It was conceived in 1770 in the Crown Inn at Pannal, by the Duchy Commissioners on behalf of the Duchy Council, representing the Duke of Lancaster, the King. However, Pannal has never had a Crown Inn. The Inn was what today is called the Crown Hotel we all know.
7. Harrogate did not exist, there was just Low Harrogate and High Harrogate, rather like today there is Little Ouseburn and Great Ouseburn near Boroughbridge.
8. Today Harrogate does not even have a Town Council and North Yorkshire is still in the process of merging 7 District Councils, although Harrogate and Scarborough do not admit to being Districts. Harrogate does have quality Spa's at the Majestic, Ridding and Swinton Park and of course Grantley. Malcolm always said Harrogate Town was designed by Medic's and Hoteliers, and it's time to follow the Hoteliers.
9. Today, Harrogate Conference Centre, is working out what to do. Might I suggest that the redundant Halls A, B & C are demolished, and an inspiring Spa Park is built around the Royal Hall reinstating its promenade. I could go on, but my time is short.
10. Its April 2024, so we have 4 years to start to turn things. Civic Societies are the stable organisations that care for the genius loci [spirit of the place]. My fellow speakers care for Harrogate, might we all concentrate on the Towns *natural and built heritage*, and on Saturday 19th August 2028, have 250th Birthday Festival, based on the Crown Hotel, with an exhibition at the Mercer and a week of music at the Royal Hall etc etc. NOW also PLEASE NOTE
2025 Will be Knaresboroughs Royal Forest REBIRTH,
2028 Harrogates 250th Birthday.
2030 will be Knaresborough Castles 900th. Three important dates to work on.

My retirement energies are spent on the Knaresborough Gorge, Castle and Forest. It is because of the Forests closure that Harrogate was born.

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