



Celebrate our past - **Enhance** our present - **Shape** our future

September 2023



Cutting the Tape

Sheila Pantin, who celebrates her own centenary in October, cut the tape to mark the opening on 1 September of the War Memorial Centenary programme which has been supported by Harrogate Civic Society. The first event was held at the West Park United Reformed Church following a brief service at the Cenotaph.

Sheila is pictured together with Civic Society member and Chair of the War Memorial Centenary Project Group, Nigel McClea.

See page 6 for more information including the address given by the Minister of the church reflecting on the meaning of remembrance.

Sheila's talk entitled *The Road to the Concentration Camps* was held to a sell-out audience in the West Park URC on Wednesday 27 September.

Photo courtesy Mike Hudson / Harrogate Photographic Society

Our next Coffee Morning

Monday 9 October 10 - 12

The next informal coffee morning of the Civic Society will be at Cosy Club, Cambridge Street on Monday 9 October from 10 am till 12 noon. Come along if you'd like to meet up with old friends or make new ones! We extend a particular welcome to new members of the Society and friends of current members who might like to join us.

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Please note that whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, no responsibility can be accepted should any losses be incurred. Opinions expressed are those of the contributors and not necessarily of the Harrogate Civic Society.
David Siddans, Editor

Can you help?

We are looking for a minutes secretary. If you are interested, please contact Stuart Holland on 01423 500089

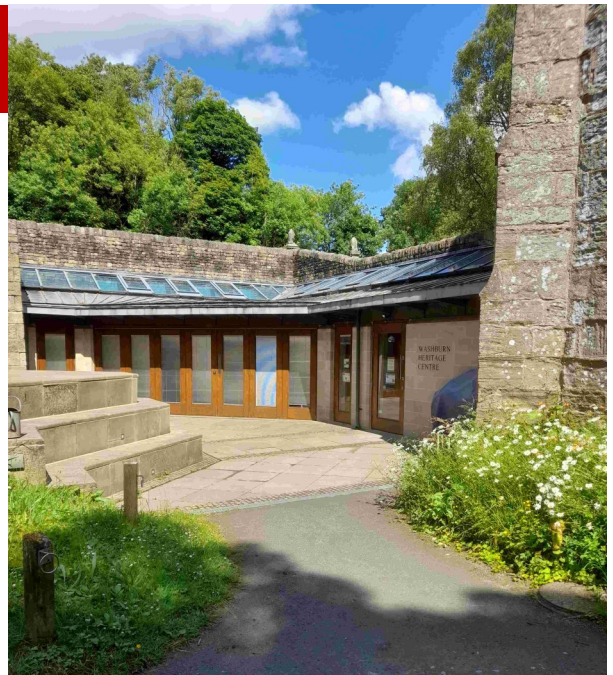
Visit to Washburn Heritage Centre

On the afternoon of 16 August thirty Society members and friends gathered at the Washburn Heritage Centre, set above Swinsty reservoir and adjacent to Fewston church.

We were met by Sally, our guide for the afternoon, who invited us to look around the churchyard before heading into the centre. After a cup of tea we were given a quick resumé of the background to the centre, which came about as the result of a plan to put a small extension onto the church.

Sally then explained how the excavation to build the Heritage Centre had involved the discovery of some fascinating history.

It had been anticipated some human remains would be found, but no-one expected to find 154 sets, now known as the Fewston Assemblage. Teams from Durham and York universities carried out extensive research and have been able to identify around 20 of the people buried there, as well as discover much information about the lives of people in the valley, many of them children, assumed to have been employed in the local mills and farms. Experts have even been able to create facial reconstructions of two local people – both on display in the foyer.



The afternoon was finished off with more tea and an amazing selection of home made cakes and scones all made and served by the volunteers there.

If you have not been to the Heritage Centre it really is worth a visit. The centre is run completely by volunteers and is open Saturdays and Sundays until the end of October, Sundays only from November to March.

There is much more information on the website www.washburnvalley.org

Chris Holland

The Civic Society History Prize



Charlotte is seen here with Paul Jennings of the Society's History Group and John Hunt, the Head of History and Religious Studies at the College.

The first Civic Society Schools History Prize was won by Charlotte Holroyd Smith of Harrogate Ladies' College. A short ceremony was held at the College on 6 July in the presence of the Headteacher and the school. Dr Paul Jennings, representing the Society, said a few words about the prize and presented Charlotte with a certificate, £50 and two books by Malcolm Neesam, after whom the prize is named.

The competition, open to all Year 7 students at Harrogate's secondary schools, was for an essay of 1000 words on a topic about the history of Harrogate. Judging was anonymous and the panel included an independent judge as well as Society members. Charlotte's essay looked at buildings in the centre of the town, using original documents and family memories and showed real enthusiasm for the town and its history.

You can read the winning essay on our website under the 'History' tab or [using this link](#).

2023 Allotment Show

The 2023 Harrogate and District Allotment Federation Show took place in and around the Sun Pavilion in Valley Gardens on Sunday 20 August. As in previous years, Harrogate Civic Society were invited to have a stall at the event.

Kevin Hales reports:.



Brian Dunsby and David Siddans at the stall

While visitors may have come primarily to inspect the prize legumes and lettuces, over fifty of them also stopped by to inspect the Harrogate Civic Society's own displays, and to learn about its activities.

This was a late August Sunday at Valley Gardens, sunny but blustery, where the society is a regular attendee at the annual show of the [Harrogate and District Allotment Federation](#). Several committee and other members were on hand to greet passers-by and to promote the Society's activities.

Judging of the floral offerings seemed to take longer than expected, but while this progressed the locked doors of the Sun Pavilion meant that waiting horticulture enthusiasts had extra time in the colonnades to pick up the Society's [heritage plaques guide](#), a membership leaflet, or the latest newsletter. They could even have gently dangled in front of them one of the new keyrings-and-cards which advertise the Society, the plaques,

and [Heritage Open Days](#). Of particular interest to many was the programme for the town's extensive commemorations of the [War Memorial Centenary](#).

It was fascinating, and sometimes quite amusing, to discover what people wished to talk about. Many were keen to know the Society's position on the Station Gateway proposals, and some were not shy in articulating their own views on this interesting topic. I fear our friends from Ripon Civic Society, on the adjacent table, must have wondered what all the noise was about! 'What did we think of the Otley Road cycle path initiative?' more than a few locals asked. It was pleasing to note that many Harrogate folk knew that the Society's focus extends well into the present and future, as well as taking a deep interest in the town's heritage and past.

It was a busy and lively stand. Visitors we spoke with had come from as far away as Nottingham, and even New Zealand, though perhaps not solely to receive a keyring! Perhaps a dozen left names or emails, in order to receive more information.

We didn't win any prizes for our onions or dahlias, but I hope we did score top marks in engaging with potential new members and showing off what the Society is all about.

Kevin Hales talks with visitors.



Heritage Open Days 2023

Kevin Hales reflects on this year's very successful programme.



A waiting list to join a waiting list to join a walk on a humid and baking hot Saturday afternoon in a cemetery! This scenario symbolises the level of interest, enthusiasm, energy, even stoicism, of visitors to just one of the 39 Heritage Open Days (HODs) events in Harrogate in September.

While those 20-or-so adventurers were learning about Grove Road Cemetery, at exactly the same time others were scaling the heights of Harlow Hill Observatory Tower, or admiring the ornate interiors of the Grade II listed Wesley Chapel while listening to a woodwind quartet. Some that morning were exploring the stately Harrogate Club in Victoria Avenue, or being guided around St John's Church in Bilton. Others were being shown the unique and usually hidden baptistry in Harrogate Baptist Church.

That was just one day in ten of England's HODs festival in which Harrogate each year plays an active role. In total, 39 events, at 23 sites, with up to 600 visitors. Quite an achievement! The Civic Society played its part in helping to coordinate the programme locally, and to support events, but it was those who led the walks, opened up their buildings, gave the talks, and served the teas and coffees, who really made HODs such a success. And all the events were, as usual, free to attend.

Other highlights included: the packed-to-capacity talks and exhibition at Ogdens; over-subscribed heritage walks led by local and learned experts around the Duchy estate, amongst the heritage plaques, in New Park, Pannal, Ripley Village, and Valley Gardens; bell-ringing, a talk and tours at St Wilfrid's; a variety of educational events at Stonefall cemetery; and a creative show and talk about all that Harrogate's Library offers.

HODs has ended for 2023. But heritage continues. On 22 November, the Civic Society will welcome the national programme manager of HODs to give a talk and presentation. Details are in the events timetable on page 8.

All this leaves us barely eleven months to prepare for the next HODs festival, which begins on Friday 6 September 2024. If you have ideas on what could be included in Harrogate, or if you might be keen to help develop and support the festival here, do please drop a line to info@harrogatecivicsociety.org



Above:

Ogdens was one of the 23 locations in the Harrogate HODs programme.

Left:

A banner at the Wesley Chapel Open Day event

Our latest plaque - Michael Rennie

On a bright and sunny Saturday 9 September the Civic Society unveiled its 94th brown plaque at 1 Otley Road to commemorate the internationally celebrated star of British and Hollywood films and television, Michael Rennie, who lived there for a while and is interred at Harlow Hill cemetery.

Michael Rennie was born Eric Alexander Rennie in 1909 in Idle near Bradford in the West Riding of Yorkshire. He was the second son of a Scottish wool mill owner whose business operated for over 150 years. He was educated at the Leys School in Cambridge and went on to work at the family mill in Bradford but did not enjoy it. He pursued a number of occupations, before eventually deciding at the age of 26 to pursue a career in acting. He retained his surname but adopted Michael as his professional name.

He began his career with British Gaumont working as an extra but gained considerable experience of acting in repertory theatre. He gained prominence with the York Repertory Company where he played leading roles. After that he began to be offered larger film roles, including at Ealing and Paramount Studios.

Rennie was one of a number of English actors cast in the *The Black Rose* for 20th Century Fox in 1950. As a result, he was offered a 7-year contract by Darryl Zanuck.



In 1951 he was given the leading role in *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. This is the film for which he is perhaps best remembered.

Thereafter he continued to star as a top supporting actor at Fox making films such as *Les Misérables*, *Sailor of the King*, *The Robe* and *The Rains of Ranchipur*.

Rennie became a familiar face on television, taking the role of Harry Lime in *The Third Man*, an Anglo-American production which ran between 1959-65, based very loosely on the original film.

Less than three years after leaving Hollywood he journeyed to his mother's home in Harrogate, following the death of his brother. It was there that he died suddenly of an aortic aneurysm on 10 June 1971 at the age of 61. After his cremation, his ashes were interred in Harlow Hill Cemetery, Harrogate.

Stuart Holland

See all the plaques of Harrogate on our dedicated website harrogateplaques.org

The plaque (picture right) was unveiled by David Rennie, the son of Michael Rennie, (third from left, below) in the presence of Cllr Michael Harrison, Charter Mayor of Harrogate (left), Andrew Jones MP and Stuart Holland, Chair of Harrogate Civic Society (right)



The Cenotaph Centenary

Our previous newsletter gave details of the events being held to commemorate the centenary of the Harrogate War Memorial. The opening event was a service held at the West Park United Reformed Church on 1 September with a congregation of invited guests.

The following is an abridged version of the address given by the **Reverend Alison Micklem**, Minister at the Church, for which we thank her.

'People have commemorated victories in battle with public monuments for millennia, celebrating leaders from Alexander the Great to local village chieftains. In this country we have Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, and numerous Waterloo monuments.

The memorials erected in the years following 'The Great War' were different. They marked the victory, yes, but first and foremost they mourned and commemorated those from that locality who had died, with the promise "*We will remember them*". One reason for such personal memorials was the sheer number of dead, touching virtually every family in the land. Linked to that was conscription: in previous wars it had been those with a taste for adventure, or in need of a profession, or at a loose end who had headed off to fight, not people who had good jobs, promising careers, studies to complete....

Before conscription there was the drive to join up, which groups of friends did together; and those who joined together often died together. Improved record-keeping and communication also meant that more people knew when and where their family members had been killed.

In 1923 the promise "*We will remember them*" must have felt superfluous. The grief was still raw, those who would never return impossible to forget. Yet it was an important

promise to make: it helped bind wounded communities together; and it charged future generations not to forget the price that had been paid for their – for our - freedom.

Our memories are not personal, the stories of those who died often hard to trace. Even the Second World War seems a long time ago, and there are few now who have a first hand account to give. The wonderful work that has been done for this exhibition tells some of those lost stories and reminds us poignantly that those whose names we pass each time we walk along this street all helped to shape this community.

How can we best honour that promise to remember? It is important that our remembering is not sentimental or rose-tinted: those who gave their lives deserve more. Wars are fought for territory, for assets, for political gain – and they are also fought over ideas, values, fundamental beliefs.

Those who died fought for the safety and future of their families and their country, and they were also defending hard-won freedoms developed over many generations.

One way of honouring them is to be aware that our democracy, the rule of law, the checks and balances which defend our freedoms need constant protecting, supporting and renewing, if we are to retain the the quality and nature of life for which they fought.

The new heaven and the new earth seen by John are reserved for those whose race is run. For us who remain, I believe the best way we can honour their memory is to work to shape a future based on

the values and ideals they fought to defend. "*We will remember them*".
Amen.'

Photo:

Mike Hudson / Harrogate Photographic Society



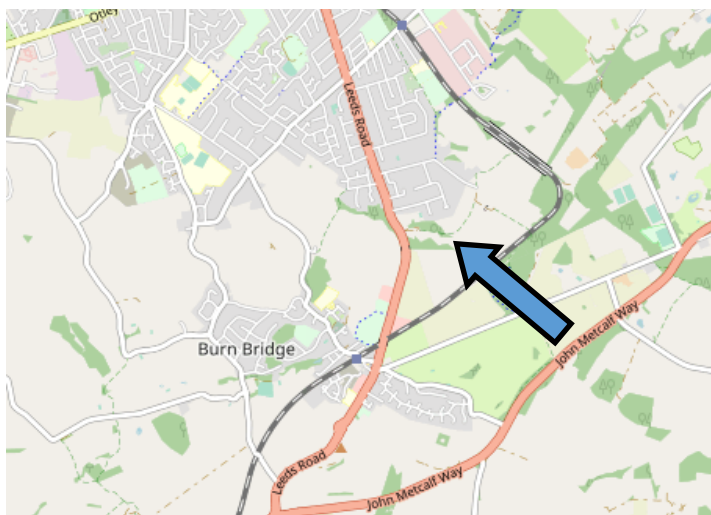
Almsford Bank Stables

The application for 17 dwellings as noted in our May newsletter, has unsurprisingly been refused. Let us hope we have seen the last housing application for this site! Successive proposals have been scaled down, or efforts made to make them more 'palatable' in planning terms, having begun in 2018 at 65 dwellings.

The decision notice to refuse permission is scathing. Seven reasons are listed but last year's proposal was refused for ten reasons! This is my summary.

The land is outside of Local Plan development limits and considered an inappropriate location for development, resulting in harm to the character and appearance of the Crimple Valley Special Landscape Area and the listed railway viaduct. The high value landscape separating Harrogate and Pannal would be incongruously urbanised. Removal of trees, some with a TPO, would result in fragmentation of mature woodland. Further harm would potentially be caused by disruptions to the soil, including to ancient or veteran trees. Re-routing the public bridleway is unacceptable. There would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety at the access point. Lastly, no mechanism or agreement is provided for financial contributions for off-site public open space, village hall provision or on-site affordable housing.

Local Plan policies, National Planning Policy Framework and Supplementary Planning Documents are noted throughout the decision notice.



53 Grove Road



The proposal to demolish a coach house and replace it with a building with five apartments has been refused. The coach house has been used for retail and a café. The refusal was for significant reasons but not as lengthy as for Almsford Bank Stables. The building to be demolished is set back from Grove Road with a large open area in front. The new building was intended to be in line with the dwellings on this part of Grove Road. A few years ago, the whole 53 Grove Road site was in the conservation area, but an area to the north was taken out, including the Fire Station, most of Chatsworth Road and Waterloo Street. The unbuilt area fronting Grove Road remains within the conservation area. Even if it were not, effects on the conservation area within 100m have to be considered.

The apartments were refused due to scale, mass and incongruous design features (detailed in the decision notice). A harmful impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area would result.

The development would be overbearing to neighbours and have an unacceptable level of amenity for future occupiers, due to lack of outlook for two apartments. Refusal was also for parking, manoeuvring and highway reasons.

Forthcoming Events

Unless otherwise stated, please book by email to events@harrogatecivicsociety.org

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| Friday 1 September to Sunday 12 November | War Memorial Centenary Exhibition (continued) A number of events are continuing in connection with the Centenary commemorations. A full programme can be seen on https://thecenotaphcentenary.info/ |
| Monday 9 October 10am to 12 noon | Informal coffee morning To be held, as previously, in the Cosy Club, Cambridge Street. All welcome and no need to book |
| Tuesday 24 October 7.30 pm | Harrogate Carnegie Library A talk by Alison Wheat (Librarian) and Civic Society members Dr Paul Jennings and Kevin Hales about the library's local and family history resources, with examples on display and plenty of time to ask questions. Also the chance to hear from artist Matthew Wyatt about his work on display at the Library. Tea and coffee available |
| Wednesday 22 November From 6.30 pm | Heritage Open Days and the National Trust A talk by Sarah Holloway, the National Programme Manager for HODs . The focus will be heritage at the national level and, as Sarah puts it, 'Doorstep Discoveries - some of the wonderful heritage stories we've come across over the years, highlighting how heritage is all around us and so important'. To be held at the West Park United Reformed Church. The church will be open from 6.30 pm for viewing of the exhibition More than a Name on a Memorial , commemorating the centenary of Harrogate's war memorial. Talk begins at 7.30 pm. Pre-talk refreshments from 7.00 pm. |
| Saturday 9 December | Civic Society Christmas Social At St Wilfrid's Church Hall, Duchy Road Further details to be announced in the next newsletter. |

Paying for

events - (Where applicable)

By bank transfer: Name: Harrogate Civic Society. Sort Code: 05-04-54. Account: 167 465 95

Reference: please use your name, followed by the date DDMM (day/month) of the event.

By cheque: post to Mr C R Dicken, HCS Treasurer, 74 Otley Road, Harrogate, HG2 0DP (include event)

All details are on our website and are continuously updated. Full information and reminders will be issued via the newsletter, by email and via facebook.

Occasionally, talks will be advertised to our link groups and the general public. **Events are free for members** unless otherwise stated. Early booking is recommended.

Contact us:

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Chairman: Stuart Holland | .. | stuart@harrogatecivicsociety.org | Tel: 01423 500089 |
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