



History - the Future

High on the list of reasons that new members give for joining Harrogate Civic Society is to discover more about the history of our town and its people. So, among the groups which the Civic Society has formed, is a very active History Group.

Nigel McClea, Chair of the History Group, writes:

Since the group came into being some five years ago, our history enthusiasts have worked hard on a wide variety of talks, exhibitions and events that we hope you have enjoyed: Harrogate's railways, The War Memorial Centenary and Harrogate on Film, to name but a few. *Several articles in this newsletter are based on the knowledge and research coming from the group.*

We welcome more active engagement with our members, and an opportunity has arisen with the creation of the West Park Centre (WPC) in the West Park Church . It is our hope that it may become a home for the History Group.

Harrogate History Coffee Club

We are proposing to establish a club at the WPC (dates and times yet to be decided) with the ambition that, over time, it would become the go-to place for discussion of everything history and heritage in Harrogate but importantly in a completely informal and social atmosphere.

We are aiming to launch this autumn, but **we need your encouragement**. So if you like the sound of it - at least in principle - please drop us a line at:

history@harrogatecivicsociety.org

This is *your* Society.



The Crown Hotel has a long history, dating back at least to the mid 18th Century and possibly much earlier

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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

2025 Annual General Meeting

Over 40 members attended the 2025 Annual General Meeting of the Harrogate Civic Society held on 2 April at the West Park Centre.

Angela Fahy reports:

The Chair, Mike Newby, welcomed members to the meeting and began by inviting Stuart Holland to give a short presentation about the West Park Centre, its history as a church and the plans for its future development.

After the formal approval of the 2024 minutes the Chair presented the **Trustees Annual Report**.

He recorded the many successful events and trips that had been held during the past year. The events subgroup had been co-ordinated by Angela Fahy for many years and, as she was now stepping down from the committee there was an urgent need for a new co-ordinator to work with the existing team of volunteers or the Society's programme of events was in jeopardy.

Also recognised was the hard work of Stella and Geoff Brown for their organisation of the Heritage Open Days that are supported by the Society.

Chris Dicken was thanked for his leadership of the Plaques subgroup, which he will continue although he is stepping down from the committee; also Henry Pankhurst and the team for their work on the regular monitoring of planning applications. David Siddans was thanked for the work of the communications group and so were all members who are involved with the work on the Neighbourhood Plan, which the Society has led together with Zero Carbon Harrogate.

Thanks also to those involved with the History subgroup; the town's history being one of the key reasons why many new members join the Society. One future possibility is for there to be new opportunities to share in conversations about different aspects of the town's history.

In relation to the finance section of the report, Paul Fennimore reported a healthy state of affairs and

highlighted the substantial surplus income that had been received as a result of Harrogate on Film, which would be unlikely to reoccur. Also, some gifts that had been received for new plaques were currently being held by the Society until payment was due.

The Trustees Annual Report was approved by the meeting.

Election of Officers and Committee

The Chair thanked both Angela Fahy and Chris Dicken, who were stepping down from the committee. Also, thanks to Andrew Brown for his time as interim chair of the Society and to Paul Fennimore for taking over as treasurer.

He also acknowledged the valuable contribution of Brian Dunsby who, together with his wife Beryl, had been doing excellent work as the Society's membership secretary until Brian's sudden death in January.

The New Committee

Michael Newby (Chair)

Andrew Brown (Vice Chair)

Nick Brennan (Secretary)

Paul Fennimore (Treasurer)

Henry Pankhurst

David Siddans

Michael Laycock

Tony Thorndike

With no new nominations received in time for the AGM, the Chair reminded the meeting that the committee could co-opt new members during the year.



The Chair, Mike Newby, addressing the Annual General Meeting

Committee Retirements - and new roles

At the AGM, two members of the Civic Society committee stood down after many long years of service .



Angela Fahy has held the role of Secretary of the Society, fulfilling the requirements of the Charity Commission, ensuring the constitution is kept up to date, and the formalities of the Annual

General Meeting are carried out. Nick Brennan will take over this role.

Angela has also been the committee's lead member on the events group which has delivered a wide range of attractive events for members with numbers attending increasing significantly as time has gone on. This has been an important part of the offering which the Society makes to members and we are keen to secure a replacement in this role as soon as possible.

Huge thanks to Angela and Chris for their outstanding service over the years. Both are remaining as members and have agreed to continue to support the committee as we move forward.



Chris Dicken has been our treasurer for over seven years, keeping meticulous accounts and ensuring our money is well spent and accounted for. Recently he

has led the work in changing and simplifying the membership subscription process. Paul Fennimore has now assumed this role.

Following Chris's earlier interest, he has been our lead member on the Heritage Plaques group which organises the process for researching and delivering the two or three new plaques each year. He developed and maintains the plaques website where currently nearly 100 plaques are catalogued.

Chris is also the Society's webmaster, maintaining and continually updating the website as an essential source of information about the Society.



Taking over

Left: Nick Brennan (Secretary)

Right: Paul Fennimore (Treasurer)



Causing Their Names to Live: A Talk by Dr Ken Griffin

On 11 April at the West Park Centre over 100 members and guests heard a fascinating talk on the Harrogate Egyptian Collection by Dr Ken Griffin who is the curator of the Egypt Centre at Swansea University.

The Collection of more than 800 objects is currently on loan to Swansea for cataloguing and research. Part of the collection was previously displayed at the Royal Pump Room Museum.

The title of the talk, **Causing their Names to Live**, derives from a common Egyptian expression found on monuments dedicated to deceased relatives.

Harrogate's museum is one of many regional museums with a collection of Egyptian antiquities. The objects were primarily donated by two local collectors, Benjamin William John Kent (1885–1968) and James Robert Ogden (1866–1940), who had assembled their collections in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



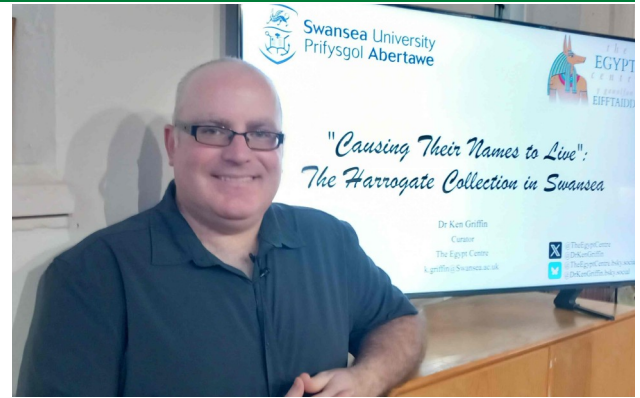
Benjamin Kent (1885 - 1968)
(lived in Beckwithshaw)



James Robert Ogden
(1866 - 1940)

As the Harrogate collection had been largely understudied, the curators thought this might be an opportunity to send it to Swansea on loan. Discussions took place, and May Catt, Visitor & Cultural Services Manager, visited the Egypt Centre in September 2022 to see the museum and our storage. Impressed with the facilities and resources in Swansea, discussions progressed, loan agreements were drawn up, objects were removed from display, carefully packed and transferred.

On Tuesday 28 February 2023, over 800 objects arrived in Swansea from Harrogate Museums, where they are remaining on loan for three years. During this time, the



Dr Ken Griffin

collection is being researched, displayed, and presented online, making the objects more accessible to Egyptologists and the wider public.

How and why Messrs Kent and Ogden formed their collections are two of the main questions this project hopes to answer. In the case of Benjamin Kent, much of his collection was inherited from his father, Bramley Benjamin Kent (1848–1924). Many of the objects were acquired from the local Harrogate dealers, J.E. & E.K. Preston, whose premises were on Montpellier Parade.

Less is known about the formation of J.R. Ogden's collection, although we do know that he received donations from Harold Plenderleith (1898–1997), Sir Henry Sutcliffe Smith (1864–1938) amongst others. He also acquired some of his objects from S. G. Fenton & Co., a London dealer in antiquities and armour. It is also likely that Ogden bought from J. E. & E. K. Preston, who he seems to have known.

The objects are quite diverse and includes stelae, statues, pottery, stone vessels, shabtis, amulets, canopic jars, a coffin, funerary cones, mummy masks, jewellery, papyrus, terracotta figures, and many more object types. There is even a few non-Egyptian items that arrived, including Etruscan mirrors and a large collection of cuneiform tablets, bricks, and cylinder seals. Perhaps the most famous object in the collection is the Anubis mask.

Much more information on this collection can be seen on <https://harrogate.abasetcollections.com/> from which some of this article has been sourced.

Objects from the Harrogate Egyptian Collection



Shabti of Pinedjem II
(Egyptian High Priest)

Large numbers of these small figurines, called Shabti, were placed in tombs where they were intended to become servants and workers for the deceased person in the afterlife.



Scarabs, such as this from the Harrogate collection, were worn as rings or amulets and used as official seals. One side of this scarab is decorated with an image of a sphinx with a winged uraeus (cobra) above it. The throne name of the Pharaoh Hatshepsut (Maatkare) is inscribed next to the sphinx.



Anubis Mask

This mask, in the form of a jackal head, would have been worn by a priest during ritual funeral ceremonies. It was in the collection of Benjamin Kent kept at Tatefield Hall, Beckwithshaw, until Benny's death in 1968, when it and other Egyptian objects were left to The Royal Pump Room Museum in Harrogate.

Anubis was the ancient Egyptian God of funerary rites.



Stela of Hetepnesmin

This gravestone from the Harrogate collection contains hieroglyphs which provides the name of the owner as Hetepnesmin, who held the title 'Singer of Min'. The stela was previously in the collection of George Matthews Arnold, the Mayor of Gravesend, who established the 'Arnold Museum' at Milton Hall. It was sold at auction in 1911 to the dealer J. E. & E. K. Preston. It was later acquired by the Kent family, who bequeathed it to Harrogate Museum in 1968.

The New Town Council and the Town Plan

The Civic Society along with others has been instrumental in establishing the Harrogate Town Plan Forum to guide the future development of the town.

*With the new Harrogate Town Council now in being, **Nick Brennan** explains how this vital work will be carried forward.*

The lead body for the Harrogate Town Plan will now become **Harrogate Town Council (HTC)**. but our Forum hopes to continue working with HTC and to continue its first stage work building the evidence base for the new Harrogate Town Plan.

Ahead of the elections the steering committee of the Harrogate Town Plan Forum delivered a presentation to prospective town councillors highlighting the importance of the Forum's work and the diversity of support within Harrogate for a new town plan. A 94-page handbook documenting the progress of the neighbourhood planning process was handed out.



The steering committee is hopeful that the majority of new councillors will be supportive of continuing the process.

A Forum meeting held on 3 April at West Park United Reform Church was the latest in the recent series and addressed the topics of sustainability, climate change, adaptation and mitigation. The Forum will hold further meetings with designated

theme subgroups carrying out a deeper dive into their subject matter in the months ahead.

Now that the new Town Council has come into being, it can transform the current Harrogate Town Plan Forum into a council-led steering group and build upon the Forum's stage one work. The stage two process will then use Forum information to enhance publicity, strengthen evidence, and draft a town plan.

The goal is to create a neighbourhood plan that complements the North Yorkshire Local Plan and addresses those specific planning issues in Harrogate that are important to residents.

North Yorkshire Local Plan

The existing Harrogate District Local Plan (2014–2035) remains in effect until a North Yorkshire Local Plan is adopted, now expected towards the end of 2029.

There remain significant challenges ahead for North Yorkshire Council in developing its new county-wide plan, not least the allocation of an increased annual housing target of 4077 homes. The Plan will guide future development up to 2045.

North Yorkshire Council is currently reviewing feedback from their [Call for Sites](#) request, now extended until the end of 2025. Prior to that point, a [Public Issues and Options](#) consultation is scheduled by the summer of 2025, with a further public consultation on [Preferred Options](#) towards the end of 2026.

All Council members were given a briefing on the Local Plan on 7 May and the steering committee of the Harrogate Town Plan Forum will attend the first Town Council meeting on 14 May.

We will continue to keep members informed of any significant developments within this process in the months ahead.

Steering groups will remain open to all who have an interest in the future of our town and who would wish to have a voice in the creation of the town plan.

Contact us: info@harrogatecivicsociety.org

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Our February meeting, held on Tuesday 18th welcomed Elizabeth Smith, Public Engagement Coordinator (North East) for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). (pictured right)

Elizabeth delivered a captivating presentation to an audience of nearly 50, exploring the history of the CWGC and its enduring mission to honour the sacrifices of Commonwealth service members.



The evening began with an overview of the CWGC's origins, highlighting the vision of its founder, Sir Fabian Ware. Ware, who had a Yorkshire connection as a former teacher at Bradford Grammar School, recognised the need for a dedicated organisation to ensure the proper commemoration of the war dead. Elizabeth detailed the meticulous process of locating, identifying, and reintering the remains of fallen soldiers, emphasising the Commission's commitment to commemorating each individual by name.

Elizabeth then discussed the CWGC's global reach, with war graves and memorials maintained in 153 countries. The distinctive headstone design, the iconic Stone of Remembrance, and the Cross of Sacrifice were all highlighted as symbols of the CWGC's dedication to equality and remembrance, regardless of rank, status, or religious affiliation.

The presentation also touched upon the CWGC's contemporary work, including ongoing efforts to identify

and commemorate previously overlooked casualties, the restoration and conservation of existing sites, and the continued burial of newly discovered remains with full military honours.

The meeting concluded with a lively Q&A session, with attendees raising insightful questions about the challenges of maintaining war graves across the globe, the historical context of commemoration practices, and the personal stories behind individual casualties.

Elizabeth's presentation served as a powerful reminder of the sacrifices made by those who served, and the vital role the CWGC plays in preserving their legacy. Harrogate Civic Society extends its sincere gratitude to Elizabeth and the CWGC for their dedication to honouring the fallen and ensuring their stories are never forgotten.

<https://www.cwgc.org/>



Lilian Mina MBE: The Memorial Tree

Former Chair of the Civic Society, **Lilian Mina MBE** who spearheaded the campaign to restore Harrogate's historic Royal Hall is remembered with a memorial plaque and tree in Valley Gardens.

Here **Lynne Mee**, co-founder of the **Women Winning project**, a year long programme of events, outlines her story and the re-dedication event which took place earlier this year.



The then HRH Prince Charles and Lilian Mina at the official opening of the Royal Hall, January 2008

In March this year a new tree was rededicated in Valley Gardens to remember Lilian Mina MBE who in the early 2000s played a pivotal role in saving the Royal Hall from demolition.

By 2001, the Royal Hall was facing permanent closure because its foundations were deteriorating so much it was in danger of collapse. Despite a £6m Heritage Lottery Grant and £2m from the then Harrogate Borough Council, there was a shortfall of around £2m if it were to reopen to the public.

At this point, the Royal Hall Restoration Trust was formed with Lilian Mina as the founding chair. The Trust raised a staggering £2.1m to cover this part of the restoration. The then HRH The Prince of Wales, Prince Charles, became the patron of the RHRT and played a key role in the restoration campaign, culminating in the official reopening of the Royal Hall on 22 January 2008.

The Trust, a registered charity, carries on to this day, but Mina sadly died in 2008, shortly after the official

opening. She never lived to see the opening concert. Yet you will see her beautiful portrait in the entrance, her likeness in one of the Trust's restored murals in the Grand Hall and, by kind permission of the council, Lilian's ashes were lovingly placed upon high by her daughter Mitzi, reaching from a very useful cherry picker. So, Lilian's presence remains in this beautiful building.

Lilian had a favourite tree, the wedding cake tree (*cornus controversa*), which is why her family planted one in her memory in her beloved Valley Gardens in sight of her apartment on Valley Drive. The tree lasted for more than a decade but eventually became diseased and a new wedding cake tree has been planted.

The event was arranged by the group **Harrogate's Women Winning Project** which the Civic Society is partnering. For more information about Women Winning go to

<https://www.harrogatefilmsociety.org/women-winning>



Left: the tree rededication

left to right : Lynne Mee, Paula Stott (Coordinators, Women Winning), Mike Newby (Chair, Harrogate Civic Society), Sue Wood (NYC Tree Assessor), Mitzi Mina (Lilian's daughter).



March Meeting Report: Leonora Cohen: A Harrogate & Leeds Suffragette



On 11 March Harrogate Civic Society welcomed Nicola Pullan, Assistant Curator of Social History at Leeds Museums, to delve into the remarkable life of Leonora Cohen. The event, timed to coincide with International Women's Day and Women's History Month, drew a large and engaged audience eager to learn more about this influential suffragette.

Nicola's presentation, drawn from extensive research in the Leonora Cohen archive at Leeds Museums, painted a vivid portrait of a woman who defied expectations. From her early life in Leeds, where she witnessed firsthand the

inequalities faced by women, to her pivotal role in the suffrage movement, Leonora Cohen's story is one of unwavering dedication to social justice.

The talk explored Leonora's involvement in key events of the suffrage campaign, including her arrests, her hunger strikes, and her daring actions, such as the Tower of London protest. Nicola also shed light on Leonora's time in Harrogate, where she ran a vegetarian boarding house that provided refuge for fellow suffragettes, including the elusive Lilian Lenton.

Nicola's presentation went beyond the well-known narratives of the suffrage movement, highlighting the vital contributions of women like Leonora Cohen, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to drive change.

The evening concluded with a lively Q&A session, where Nicola answered questions about Leonora's life, her activism, and the broader context of the suffrage movement.

Harrogate Civic Society extends its sincere thanks to Nicola Pullan for her insightful presentation and to all who attended for their enthusiastic participation.

Above: Leonora in 1909

Right: Nicola Pullan about to give her talk to an audience of around 50 members of the Society



*In this article, **Henry Pankhurst** looks at an application, submitted in March this year, to redevelop a building which occupies a prominent site in the central shopping area of Harrogate.*

Number 24 Cambridge Street is the location of the Holland & Barrett shop. The proposal is to enlarge and very significantly alter the building. A full second floor, plus a floor in the roof plus a rear extension for a lift shaft would be added. The ground floor would remain in retail use with 2 flats on each of the upper three floors. The existing building would be subsumed by the new work in a pastiche eighteenth century style. From both points of view, scale and style, it was thought inappropriate and we considered that the proposal should be strongly resisted.

The design & access statement supporting the application stated that '*Little historic information is available on the building.....*' and '*The site has no architectural value.....*' It was thought appropriate to challenge these assertions.

The Original Building

After some research, we found that the existing building at 24 Cambridge Street was designed and constructed by Burton the Tailors for its own occupation in 1968-69. Burtons had its own in-house architects. This building was one of a number of distinctive retail outlets erected by Burtons during the 1960s which made use of a blocky modern style, with deeply recessed asymmetrical windows that appeared dark in contrast to the white facade. At least one other former Burton store utilising this design approach survives on Briggate, Leeds.

A photograph dated 1985 held by Harrogate Library shows the Burton building with its original shop front and signage. Although both the shop front and signage have been lost, the remainder of the building's exterior appears to be largely unaltered, including the original windows.

In addition to its two distinctive Burton buildings (in Beulah Street and Cambridge Street), Harrogate has a strong personal connection to the company. Montague Burton, its founder, knighted in 1931, had a home at Kent Road, Harrogate. He died in 1952 and his funeral was held at the Harrogate synagogue. Although originally buried at Gildersome in 1964, the bodies of Montague and his wife were re-interred as the first burials in the Stonefall Jewish Cemetery, Harrogate.

Architectural Significance

It is accepted that the loss of the original shop front and signage has reduced the significance of the building at 24 Cambridge Street. It is nevertheless of some architectural interest as an example of Burton's distinctive 1960s design. This coupled with Harrogate's strong local connection to the founder of the company, suggests that careful thought should be given to any proposal to make significant and detrimental changes to the building.

Also, the building, being in the Conservation Area, requires care regarding design, scale, use, context and history in this street of diverse architecture. We suggest that conversion of the first floor and the addition of a recessive second floor to residential use would be acceptable if a very good contemporary building justified loss of the existing.

It would be of interest to hear of any thoughts about the building that our members have.

Since this article was first written, North Yorkshire Council has confirmed that the applicant has now withdrawn this application (reference ZC25/00717/FUL)

Planning (continued)



Cambridge Street in 1985. Photo courtesy of Harrogate Library Services, North Yorkshire Council



No 24 Cambridge Street today. Photo: J Poulton



Proposed Cambridge Street front elevation

(source: DPP Planning, Design and Access Statement, March 2025. Public Access Planning Portal, North Yorkshire Council)

Heritage Open Days 2025

Stella and Geoff Brown are coordinators of the Harrogate Heritage Open Days programme

September is coming and **Heritage Open Days** are back! From **Friday 12 to Sunday 21 September** Harrogate and the surrounding area will once again be part of England's largest festival of history and culture, and the unmistakable HODs pink bunting will be seen around the Harrogate area.

There are free guided tours, talks, music, walks, and exhibitions and even the chance to explore 'secret' and usually closed-off spaces. HCS supports Heritage Open Days and we need some volunteers to attend events as HCS Ambassadors, to support the event hosts, promote the HCS and hopefully increase membership. If you can spare a couple of hours between 12 to 21 September please drop a line to hods@harrogatecivicsociety.org



Heritage Plaques, Real Lives and a Touch of Murder



*Civic Society member **Gina Crowther**, inspired by the stories in the heritage plaques, has created a series of walking trails that blend storytelling, local heritage, and a dash of mystery. Here she tells her story about how the walks are devised.*

Having lived in Harrogate for many years, I've always felt a strong connection to this town's rich past. That's why, through my meetup group Mini Adventures, I've created a series of walking trails that blend storytelling, local heritage, and just the right dash of mystery.

These trails are built around real local history and draw on true murder cases from Harrogate's past. What helps bring these forgotten stories to life are the heritage plaques that quietly mark our town's history. Installed by the Harrogate Civic Society, they're an essential part of how I develop each trail. These plaques honour the people who lived, worked, and shaped Harrogate and are often directly connected to the tales we tell.

Each trail is carefully plotted with directions that lead participants through the town, stopping at key points to uncover clues. Along the way, they learn about the lives — and sometimes the tragic ends — of real individuals. Participants cross off suspects and evidence as they go, gradually building a picture of what really happened. By the end, one name remains — the historical murderer.

To keep things fresh, I slightly change the Harrogate trail every time it runs. As new plaques are installed, they often inspire a new route or introduce a new character into the story. This evolving trail wouldn't be possible without the Civic Society's ongoing work, and I'm incredibly grateful for it.

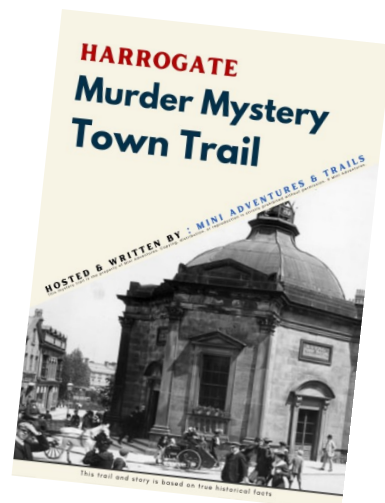
A few of our Mini Adventure team help bring the stories to life on the day. You'll find them at certain stops along the route, sharing insights into the people involved and the wider historical context.

Although the trail is primarily aimed at the over-50s, it attracts a broad mix of ages. My children, who are both in their 20s, regularly join us, and we welcome anyone who enjoys history, puzzles, and exploring the town in a different way. The trail is free to join, but we do collect donations for the mental health charity Mind.

I'm a teacher by day, but writing murder mysteries in my spare time has become a real passion of mine. In addition to the walking trails, I write dinner party-style murder mysteries, all inspired by real events and historical figures. I've created a couple of these, set in Edwardian Harrogate, designed for groups of 20 to 60 people. They're perfect for team settings, where one person takes on a character role and reads the script, while the rest of the group become detectives, working together to solve the case.

Whether it's a walking trail through town or an indoor mystery around a dinner table, the starting point for my inspiration is the heritage plaques. Without them, many of these tales would stay hidden. So thank you, Harrogate Civic Society, for keeping those names visible and for helping us all to step into the past, one clue at a time.

For more details, visit the website [Mini Adventures & Trails for the Young at Heart](#) to explore what's on and make bookings.



Progress on the West Park Centre

We have regularly reported on the progress of the project to restore, renovate and repurpose the historic West Park United Reformed Church into a major asset for the town and an important visitor attraction.

Harrogate Civic Society has been supporting this project by publicising fundraising events (below, right) organised by the project team and including holding our Annual General Meeting at this venue. As time goes on, we will be making use of the refurbished meeting rooms and holding more events here as progress allows.

*Here, **Stuart Holland**, Project Leader and former Chair of Harrogate Civic Society, reports on progress to date.*

We were delighted to host the Annual General Meeting of the Civic Society at the West Park Centre in April, followed by the successful talk on the Harrogate Egyptian Collection.

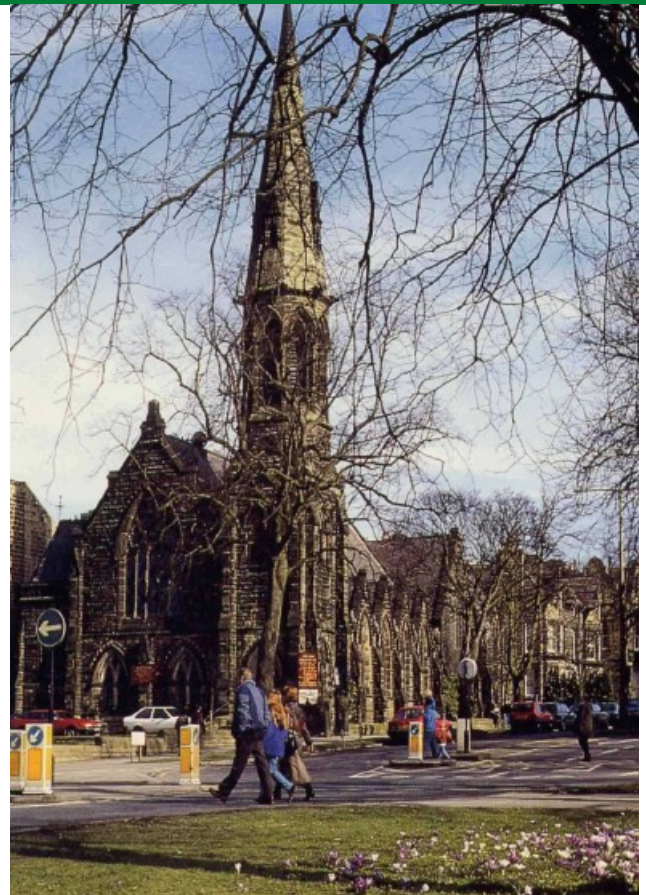
Since then, refurbishment of the new worship area has been completed and any day now, we will see scaffolding erected to facilitate more repairs in the main church area.

The Harrogate Story is largely compiled, displays drafted and proofed ready to open in very early July once scaffolding is down and our displays erected.

Our focus this month is on recruiting volunteers to help steward the exhibition. If you like welcoming and talking to visitors to the town, this may just suit you. There are also opportunities to volunteer in the new coffee shop and to help with adapting furniture to suit events.

Alongside the Harrogate Story, we are seeing more and more bookings for the centre and some of these will also need volunteers.

We are holding a volunteer information meeting at 3pm on Wednesday 14 May at the West Park Centre. Please come along if you would like more information. Please indicate your interest to: enquiries@westparkcentre.org.uk)



West Park Centre

at West Park United Reformed Church

present

Music for A Summer Evening

by

Harrogate Male Voice Choir

Musical director Richard Kay



On Saturday 14th June 2025

at 7.30pm

Tickets £12.50—including interval refreshments on

	www.trybooking.com/uk/EUOK
	07460 470003
	enquiries@westparkcentre.org.uk



SCAN ME for
tickets

Coming soon: Claude Verity - a World First for Harrogate?

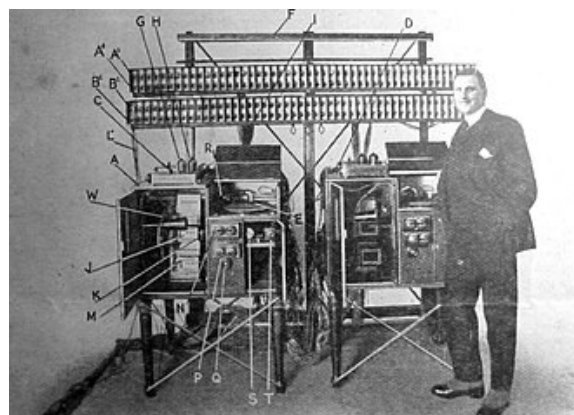
Nigel McClea, Chair of our History Group, writes about an unsung Harrogate inventor and entrepreneur whose story will be the subject of a new plaque and a talk in our forthcoming programme of events.

On 28 April 1921 a large audience in the Royal Hall saw the first demonstration anywhere in the world of a successful, sustainable and affordable system for the synchronisation of sound with film – arguably the first talkie. This was some six years before *The Jazz Singer* opened in the States; being the film that we feel stole that accolade. The Veritiphone, as the invention came to be called, was the work of Claude Verity who lived and had his workshop in East Park Road.

The History Group has been working closely with the Plaques Group, the Harrogate Film Society and the Verity family (of Verity Frearson fame), aiming at a significant celebration of the life and work of Claude Verity this September. This will include the unveiling of a brown plaque at Claude's home and an exhibition in the Royal Hall and the West Park Centre.

Claude is now a largely forgotten man. Sadly, it is an all too familiar story in the UK. His invention proved to be the Betamax of his day. It clearly worked but was rapidly overtaken by an

American system - Vitaphone - which developed in parallel. Vitaphone was much more powerfully funded. Poor Claude lost the race and is largely airbrushed from the history of film – but he has not been forgotten by us. More details of our celebration will be announced when finalised but, in the meantime, please scour your attics and old family albums. We have researched Claude extensively but he remains an elusive figure and we need any help you can give.



Verity standing by his 'Veritiphone'

Reaching out to other organisations

Over several years, the Civic Society has actively sought to establish links with the many organisations in Harrogate with whom we can find ways of cooperating to further our aims and objectives.

HCS committee member Tony Thorndike has developed a Power Point presentation explaining the objectives, work and successes of Harrogate Civic Society. First delivered to Harrogate Rotary on 7 April, he has been approached by other groups in our area to do the same.

The presentation focusses on three main activities.

- Publicising our town through plaques, events and, in the near future, information boards for visitors.



Tony speaking to Harrogate Rotary Club in April

- Careful scrutiny of planning applications, looking to achieve high standards and making comments where required.
- Developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Harrogate.

The talk was greeted with acclaim by those present.

Our Next Visit: Undercliffe Cemetery, Bradford

Dr Paul Jennings will lead a tour of this historic 19th century cemetery located off the Otley Road in Undercliffe, Bradford. Postcode reference: BD3 0QD

Sunday 22 June

10.30 - 12.30



The photograph shows the Smith Monument which has a Harrogate connection

Undercliffe Cemetery in Bradford is one of the finest Victorian cemeteries in the country. It occupies a hilltop with a dramatic view over Bradford and up Airedale. It was opened in 1854 and is the last resting place of the great and good of the city but also of some of its poorest inhabitants. This guided tour will begin with a talk on the work of the charity which manages the cemetery, followed by a guided walk around the site, taking in several of the outstanding monuments (some of which are listed) and including Harrogate connections.

We will assemble at the car park of the Undercliffe Lane entrance (top) by the Cemetery Lodge. The walk is a little over an hour on level ground with one slight incline (or steps). Please note the cemetery is in an exposed site so please dress for the weather. The visit will last from 10.30 until 12.30.

If you wish to stay longer in Bradford the Industrial Museum is off the Harrogate Road on Moorside Road about ten minutes drive away. There are several places for lunch also on the route.

How to book - see page 16

Our Talk on 10 September: Harrogate's 'Saviour' Edward Wilson Dixon

Our talk on Wednesday 10 September will describe how, over 100 years ago, the critical problem of water shortage in the town was solved by the construction of a new reservoir.

At the turn of the 20th century Harrogate faced the prospect of what the local press described as a 'water famine'. Ironically, there was a real danger that the taps would run dry in this increasingly popular spa town. However, Harrogate's newly appointed Chief Water Engineer, Edward Wilson Dixon, initiated and oversaw a scheme to build a new water supply for the town: Roundhill Reservoir, near Masham.



Our speaker, Graham E Seel, taught History for 34 years. He has published widely on English history, and he is currently Head of History at St Paul's School, London.

Summary of Forthcoming Events

Talks are held at St Paul's Church Hall, Belford Road, unless indicated otherwise

Teas and coffees will be available from 7 pm

Tuesday 20 May 7 for 7.30 pm	Malcolm Neesam: Discovering the Historic Archive Danielle Little (Harrogate Museums) will talk about discoveries made during her work with the huge Walker-Neesam Archive, bequeathed to the town by the late Malcolm Neesam in 2022.
Thursday 29 May 7.00 pm	From Prison to Palace (NOTE: Book via the Harrogate Film Society) A talk by Veronica Bird OBE To be held at the Police Treatment Centre, Harlow Moor Road.
Sunday 22 June 10.30 am	Undercliffe Cemetery, Bradford A guided tour, led by Dr Paul Jennings, of this historic 100 acre graveyard, now managed by Undercliffe Cemetery Charity. A donation to the charity would be welcome (£5 suggested to include tea/coffee and biscuits). See page 15
Wednesday 10 September 7.00 for 7.30 pm	Harrogate's 'Saviour': Edward Wilson Dixon How Harrogate's water shortage was solved. A talk by Graham Seel See page 15
12 Sept to 21 Sept	Heritage Open days Further details will be issued in due course.

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

Guests are welcome - suggested donation £5 on the door

Paying for events and membership (as 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 P Fennimore, HCS Treasurer, 9 Merryfield, Harrogate, HG2 9DH (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: Michael Newby ..	chair@harrogatecivicsociety.org
General matters	info@harrogatecivicsociety.org
Membership queries.. ..	info@harrogatecivicsociety.org
Event bookings	events@harrogatecivicsociety.org

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