



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

May 2023



Photo: Jim Counter / Royal Hall Restoration Trust

In this issue

Royal Hall Anniversary celebrations	2
Valley Gardens - A new guide	2
Planning report	3
Harrogate Station Gateway	4/5
A tour of Ripley Castle	7
Harrogate on Film	7
Events	8

The Civic Society is delighted to support the forthcoming event marking the 120th Anniversary of the Royal Hall.

Harrogate's gorgeous Royal Hall, built in 1902-03 as the Kursaal is the nation's last surviving intact Kursaal, erected before the first world war to emulate those at the celebrated continental resorts*. The stunning interior (pictured above) was restored in 2006 - 2008 to Frank Matcham's original colour scheme, following a multi-million pound fund-raising effort led by the then chair of Harrogate Civic Society, the late Lilian Mina MBE.

The then Prince Charles, who was patron of the Royal Hall Restoration Trust, led the Hall's official re-opening on 22 Jan 2008.

The celebration event will be on Saturday 27 May between 10 am and 4 pm. See page 2 for full details

* *Malcolm Neesam: Harrogate in 50 Buildings, 2018*

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

Royal Hall 120th Anniversary Celebrations: 27 May 2023

A diverse range of musical entertainment is planned throughout the day to showcase the versatility of this venue.

The morning entertainment starting at 10am is given over to music and singing ranging through classical music, choral favourites, Gilbert and Sullivan and Harrogate Spa Town Ukes playing rock and pop standards.

From 2pm the Darren Busby Duo will provide music for line dancing and for those of you who prefer to waltz and foxtrot. From 3pm the Harrogate Symphony String Quartet will play until 4pm.

Afternoon tea is provided between 12 noon and 3pm, but by the time this newsletter goes out, available booking places may have already been taken up.

Admission is free and programmes will be available for a donation which will go towards the ongoing work of the Restoration Trust. All donations are very gratefully received.

For further information visit the Royal Hall Restoration Trust website. [Visit us – Royal Hall Restoration Trust](#). Alternatively, telephone 01423 500500 or email enquiries@rhrt.org.uk

*Information supplied
by the Royal Hall
Restoration Trust.*



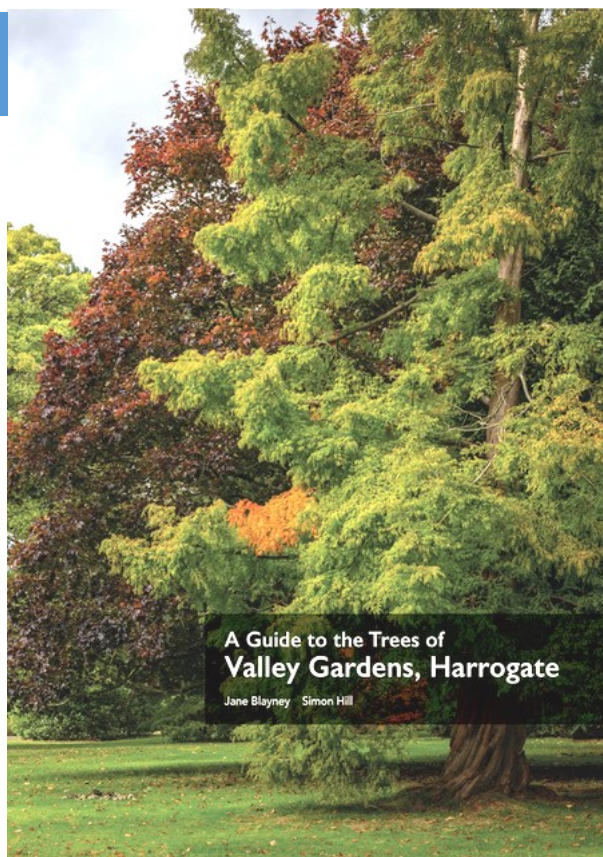
Valley Gardens: A New Guide

Harrogate is rightly renowned for its iconic Valley Gardens, grade II listed and a magnet for visitors. A recently released book focuses on one of its most attractive features: its trees.

This beautiful book follows a route round the Valley Gardens covering the siting of 30 different selected trees, many over 100 years old and from different regions of the world. There is a full narrative on each tree covering its origins, preferred habitats, horticulture, biodiversity, history, mythology, and usage - be it for building, medicinal purposes, nutrition, weapons, war ships, cricket bats or removing pollution from the atmosphere. Each tree article is accompanied by photographs of that specific tree. As an example, one of the trees included in the book is the Wollemi Pine *Wollemia nobilis*, one of the world's oldest and rarest trees. Only 100 Wollemi Pine trees are known to exist.

The foreword to the book is written by Martin Fish, President of Friends of Valley Gardens, horticulturist, writer, broadcaster and senior RHS judge.

The Guide to the Trees of Valley Gardens can be



purchased through the Valley Gardens website: www.valleygardensharrogate.org

price £7.50 per issue plus postage, or £5 per issue for orders of 10 or more.

Book cover photo: copyright Simon Hill and Jane Blaney

Almsford Bank Stables. An outline application for 17 residential dwellings submitted on 29 March 2023

The Civic Society was recently consulted on an application for housing at the above location. The site is to the east of Leeds Road at Almsford Bank and to the south of Fulwith Road, Fulwith Grange and Fulwith Drive. It is therefore in the Crimble Valley Special Landscape Area with the Grade II* Crimble Valley viaduct close by.

The current housing application is not the first – there is a lengthy planning history. It was in 2018 when a proposal for 65 dwellings came forward. Then in 2019, a reduced proposal for 35 dwellings was lodged. We objected to both of these and they were withdrawn. No doubt the Council was not content with them either.

Trying again last year, the applicant put forward another proposal for 35 dwellings, but with a different mix of housing categories, namely 14 affordable, 7 first homes and 14 self or custom build plots. This no doubt was an attempt to sway the Council in the developer's favour, by concentrating development on housing categories of which there is a shortfall. It is well known that affordable homes in the planning sense are required. It may be less well known that a planning authority must provide a small number of self-build housing plots. What the developer was planning by 'first homes' I don't really know.

This application did not placate the planners and it was refused for so many detailed reasons that, to repeat them here would have taken up about a quarter of this Newsletter! Some of the most important reasons for refusal were that the development would be outside of development limits for Harrogate, that there would be harm to the character and appearance of the Crimble Valley and the listed railway viaduct and that the rural character of the location would be urbanised. Also, trees would be removed, the distinctive rural character of the bridle way would be eroded and there would be potential highway danger at the access point on this steep and bending section of Leeds Road. There is no



The site is outlined in red on this location plan.

need for such a proposal to help fulfil the necessary requirement that there must be a 5 year supply of housing land always available, as the supply currently stands at 7.3 years.

The current proposal is for 17 dwellings, therefore vastly and gradually scaled down from the 2018 proposal for 65 dwellings. The mix of housing is now for 7 affordable homes and 10 self-build / custom build plots. You can't blame them for trying, I suppose! However, we believe that the reasons for refusal of the previous application still apply, that such a development would be an unacceptable incursion into the countryside, especially in the much valued Special Landscape Area of Crimble Valley.

Our response also noted that the applicant put forward two appeal decisions (not related to Harrogate) in order to try and make their case in relation to the provision of self-build housing plots. We briefly pointed out notable differences between the circumstances of those appeals and the Almsford Bank proposal.

Apart from our own, about 360 objections have been made to this development, with much encouragement from our new membership secretariat, Brian and Beryl Dunsby, for local residents to respond.

Hopefully this unwarranted housing development will be refused and bring the saga to an end.

Harrogate Station Gateway: The Civic Society's Views

North Yorkshire Council has been allocated £10.9 million from the Government's Transforming Cities Fund with the stated aim of boosting access to Harrogate's rail and bus stations for people walking and cycling and to support regeneration plans in Harrogate Town Centre.

On Friday 5 May, North Yorkshire Council's Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee (ACC) heard representations from a number of groups, businesses and individuals before going on to consider the scheme as drawn up by the Council.

Harrogate Civic Society's submission is reproduced below.



Andrew Brown spoke on behalf of the Civic Society

Harrogate Civic Society has over 300 members and these comments are the result of an open meeting of the members and detailed consideration of the proposal by the Planning and Development sub-group of the Society.

Whilst the Society recognises that some changes could enhance the town centre, the present proposals focus on a relatively small section and there is no indication of these being part of a longer-term, integrated traffic policy. Without long-term planning these changes may, in the future, be seen as having been unnecessary and/or detrimental. In particular, the Society is concerned that reducing the main south-bound route through the town centre to a single lane will result in significant tailbacks, increased pollution and potentially gridlock.

The proposal appears to have been driven by an imperative to introduce cycle lanes wherever possible (even when they will be of little use) with limited, if any, consideration being given to the way that pedestrians, the users of mobility scooters, and disabled drivers move around the area. The Society considers that the proposed cycle lanes, accelerating traffic after the single carriageway section, and the additional street furniture, will hamper their movement.

The proposals relating to the northern section of Station Parade are welcomed but the suggested cycle lanes along the remainder of Station Parade are fragmented and confusing; so they will not result in safe, attractive routes for cyclists. The Society considers that the

previous proposals for extensive cycle lanes along East Parade represent a much better option.

The widening of the pavements along James Street and the introduction of trees is welcomed but the Society would strongly prefer James Street to remain open to vehicular traffic and to provide on-street parking at all times. In relation to the detailed design for James Street, there is concern about the introduction of low-level planting, which will be vulnerable to damage.

The Society is concerned that the detailed design of the proposal will result in a clutter of signs, barriers, and other street furniture, plus a variety of surface treatments, that will be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Also, the need for major change to Station Square is questioned. The principal problems with this space relate to inadequate maintenance and poor collection of litter (problems that we suspect will remain however much money is spent on redesign). The proposed introduction of water jets suggests that the designers have failed to understand that for much of the day, the relevant section of the Square is in shadow.

As a result of all the above, the Society considers that the proposals will be detrimental for many users of the town centre and will result in serious damage to the character and appearance of the Harrogate Conservation Area.

The Council Committee decision

The Area Constituency Committee (ACC) met on 5 May and, after a lengthy debate, resolved the following:

This committee believes that Harrogate needs a vibrant, prosperous, safe, attractive, accessible, healthier and sustainable town centre and would welcome further investment in it to achieve that goal through a Gateway scheme, subject to the following conditions:

- 1. That the genuine concerns of individuals and groups continue to be listened to, debated and responded to where possible within the constraints of the scheme funding.*
- 2. That the ACC has a meaningful role in the implementation of the scheme, including the above mentioned conversations, and that a full report on progress is received at its meeting in the Autumn.*
- 3. That a rigorous monitoring system for expected and actual impact on traffic flows, the environmental, active travel take-up and businesses in the area of the scheme is put in place pre-shovel and made open and transparent from day one.*

The Harrogate Station Gateway project will now go forward to the North Yorkshire Council Executive when it meets on 30 May.

Visualisation at James Street / Station Square (updated proposals, June 2022)



What does the Civic Society do next?

If the North Yorkshire Executive confirms the resolution of the ACC with its conditions, there will be a further opportunity for further meaningful dialogue with the Council's officers.

As one of the groups who have made representations already, we will then be preparing to restate our concerns to the council officers and members.

Within the established definitions of 'a Gateway scheme' and the constraints of the funding package, we will be looking to secure:

- better facilities for pedestrians, disabled drivers and users of mobility scooters,
- vehicular access through the length of James Street, whilst allowing for widened pavements and additional planting,
- a reassessment of the treatment of the variety of surfaces to respect the character of the Conservation Area,
- a reassessment of the Station Square space, retaining much of the existing attractive features.

In the process of restating our concerns, we will be consulting with other groups to establish points of common ground so that, where feasible, a coordinated response can be made.

A Town Council for Harrogate: Our response to the latest consultation

Over 60 members attended a meeting on 18 April to listen to short presentations by local councillors on the Community Governance Review (CGR) set up by North Yorkshire Council, which has recommended that a town council be established for Harrogate following the abolition of Harrogate Brough Council on 1 April 2023.

This was an important occasion to sound out members' views before submitting the formal Civic Society response, which is set out below.

Following a wide-ranging discussion and debate, an overwhelming majority of those present supported the principle of creating a Harrogate Town Council.



Stuart Holland (left) introducing the panel of (left to right) Cllr David Goode (Knaresborough Town Council), Cllr Philip Broadbank (NY Council), Cllr Pat Marsh (NY Council) and Victoria Oldham (the last Mayor of Harrogate Borough Council)

The Civic Society Response

Harrogate Civic Society agrees with the recommendation to create a town council named Harrogate Town Council for the unparished parts of Harrogate. We have the following comments to make:

Harrogate was one of the original English spa towns, with the first medicinal waters discovered in 1571. It became one of England's most popular spa towns. Today its fine Victorian and Edwardian public buildings, hotels and private homes, elegant town centre streets, and 200 acres of parkland (known locally as *The Stray*) ensure Harrogate's popularity as a place to live, work and visit. Harrogate Civic Society was established in 1971 and is committed to celebrating the town's architectural and social history, contributing to discussions about how the

town is developed, and to ensuring that Harrogate both retains the best of its historic character and embraces the future.

The Society aims to celebrate our past, enhance our present and shape our future. We believe that this can best be done with a Harrogate Town Council, so key decisions will be made by local councillors who live in the town. We note the possible remit of the new council set out in the consultation document, but would like to see it have more of a role over time. This would enable opportunities to raise income, protect and enhance the key assets of the town, have a greater say in planning and development (through a Neighbourhood Plan), and promote a vision for the town which makes it a premier spa and floral town.

Harrogate Civic Society would wish to work constructively with a new town council to keep the town the jewel in the crown of North Yorkshire and we look forward to a positive outcome to this consultation.

A Private Tour of Ripley Castle (with cream tea)

A report by Angela Fahy

On 26 April, twenty six members enjoyed a very interesting and entertaining tour of Ripley Castle, home of the Ingilby family.

We started in the Georgian House and ended in the Drawing room for cream tea, via the Tudor tower.

A combination of saving King Edward III from a wild boar in Knaresborough Forest (and being rewarded with a title) and later marrying into money (and building the Georgian house) means that we can now enjoy these historic buildings.

The family's history included service to Henry VI,

Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I. James VI of Scotland stayed overnight on his way to London to become James I of England- the plaster ceiling in the Tower House having been installed in 4 days in honour of his visit. Within a few years the Ingilby family were involved in the gunpowder plot to kill him- and the plotters met in the Tower rooms we visited.

The Georgian house is still the family home, and contains lovely examples of the furniture and furnishing fashionable at the time of its construction, including chairs made by Chippendale (who was born in Otley).



A visit to the Long Lands Common Community Project in July

On 12 July at 4.30 pm we will visit the community owned Long Lands Common near Bilton. Here we will

learn about this exciting community owned woodland project and will hear also from Knaresborough Forest Park about their plans and fundraising efforts to acquire 60 acres of greenbelt land linking Long Lands Common and the Nidderdale Greenway. We will also have a tour of key features and members can explore the site as much as they wish to. Further details to follow

For more details of the project visit

www.longlandscommon.org/



Forthcoming Events

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

Saturday 27 May 10am - 4pm	Royal Hall Anniversary The 120 th anniversary of the formal opening of The Royal Hall is being celebrated by the Royal Hall Restoration Trust with a free public open day. There will be performances in the auditorium and other attractions. Call in at any time and stay as long as you like. See also page 2.
Sunday 11 June 2 pm	A tour of Grove Road cemetery Led by Dr Paul Jennings. Meet at the cemetery entrance. Maximum of 25 people, so early booking advised.
12 July 4.30 pm	Tour and a talk about Long Lands Common See page 7 for details. Please let us know if you are interested in attending. For those without transport lifts can be arranged.
Late August (date to be confirmed)	A guided tour of a local 'hidden gem' site of interest. Further details to follow
8 - 17 Sept	Heritage Open Days A full programme is being developed and will be advertised nearer the time. See page 5
Tuesday 19 September 7.30 pm	RHS Harlow Carr Gardens A talk from Harlow Carr Curator Paul Cook on the history of the gardens and their exciting future developments. Venue: St Paul's Church Hall
September to November	Harrogate War Memorial Centenary A number of events are planned in connection with the centenary commemorations. These are being arranged jointly with organisations across the town. Details in our next newsletter
Saturday 9 December	Civic Society Christmas Social At St Wilfrid's Church Hall, Duchy Road. Further details to be announced later in the year.

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
General matters	info@harrogatecivicsociety.org	
Membership queries..	..	membership@harrogatecivicsociety.org	
Event bookings	events@harrogatecivicsociety.org	

Published by Harrogate Civic Society

Website: www.harrogatecivicsociety.org

Registered Charity no. 501055

Plaques website: www.harrogateplaques.org