

# Harrogate Heritage

# Looking back at history of Harrogate Advertiser and local newspapers

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For almost twenty years from 1995, the eminent local historian Malcolm Neesam contributed a series of remarkable articles to the *Advertiser*, initially under the headline 'Bygone Harrogate' and later using the title 'Our Heritage'. In association with Harrogate Civic Society, we are proud to republish a selection from the series. The views expressed were those of the late Mr Neesam at the time of writing and do not necessarily reflect the current view of the *Advertiser* or Harrogate Civic Society.

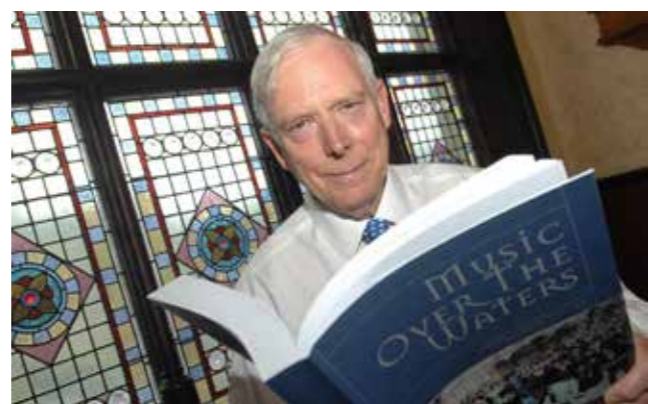
make fascinating reading. The York Courant for May 10 1743 announced that "a person from London designs to keep a shop at Harrogate Spaws, all the Summer Season, and will sell coffee, teas, chocolate, and snuff, of all sorts, by the pounds and ounces, as good and cheap as any in London". This advertisement, which was repeated, was intended for those visitors who preferred to hire a lodging house for their visit rather than accommodate themselves and family in an expensive inn or hotel.

Sometimes, the Harrogate references were to missing individuals, such as the following from the York Courant of July 18, 1758: "William Wray, apprentice to Peter Dolby, Blacksmith, in Harrogate, has been absent from his Master

since the 28th day of June last. He is a strong, broad man, 19 years of age, large ankle bones, pitted with the small pox, squints with his eyes, has very short light brown hair, and had on when he went off, a brown turn'd coat with metal buttons, a black waistcoat and a pair of old buckskin breeches. "Whoever can give notice of the aforesaid William Wray, so that he may be brought to justice for leaving his apprenticeship and conveying away his Master's goods, shall be reasonably rewarded for their trouble; and whoever lets the said William Wray to work, or harbors him, shall be prosecuted as far as the law directs, by me, Peter Dolby."

When the Bill for dividing up the Royal Forest was ready to be put to Parliament, the York Courant advertised a public meeting at the Granby Hotel on January 1, 1770, at which local people could petition Parliament to pass the Bill into law, and thus ensure the equitable enclosure of the Forest.

Some of the most colourful accounts of Harrogate before the *Harrogate Advertiser* come from the period of the Napoleonic Wars, of which the following account from the York Herald of August 20, 1814, is a good example: "Harrogate, 19th August. There is more Company assembled



The late historian Malcolm Neesam.

at this high and far-famed Watering Place than has been remembered for several years past. The spacious Inns and Lodging Houses (at which are displayed every delicacy which nature or Art can produce) are all full, and appear likely long to continue so. "The Wells are crowded every morning to excess, and the Assemblies and Theatre each evening alternately display such a scene of youth, beauty and fashion, as but very few Watering Places can boast of. The following are the principal arrivals since our last: The Bishop of Waterford, Lady, Miss and Mr Miles, Sir Harcourt and Lady Lees, General Mitchell..."

The visitors were all-important. Their regular arrival financed the livings of the great Inns and hotels, paid the salaries of the medical profes-

hotel, who could invite friends from other hotels, who would then reciprocate, and invite their hosts to the ball given by their own hotel. In this way, it was possible to attend a series of entertainments each evening.

This was the origin of the Harrogate newspapers, the earliest editions of which were nothing more than a list of hotels and inns, with the names of all the guests printed beneath. Guests could buy the "List of Visitors" and if they recognized a name at another hotel they could send over an invitation to attend their hotel's ball, an invitation which usually produced a return invitation.

The earliest "List of Visitors" known to me is dated September 18, 1820, and was produced by Mr Langdale, who had succeeded the Hargroves at Library House, Regent Parade.

This early list was arranged alphabetically by the visitors' surnames, followed by the name of the inn or hotel, a practice soon abandoned in favor of arranging by name of inns and hotels.

Of local news there was not a trace, as local news would not have been of any interest to the visitors. Library House was a commercial lending library and novelty shop which opened usually at Easter, when visitors began arriving in Harrogate, and closed in autumn when they left.

It had been established by Eli Hargrove in the 18th century and later acquired by Langdale, whose name can be seen over the windows, in this week's photograph, which was kindly supplied by *Advertiser* reader Michael Crone.

The photograph shows Library House in the middle of the 19th century, by which time both the *Advertiser* and *Herald* newspapers had appeared.



Library House, Regent Parade, published the early "Lists of Visitors". Below: The original article.

The big board to the left of the window probably advertised the latest book additions available for loan on payment of a fee. Both Hargrove's and Langdale's "List of Visitors" were printed in tabloid format, Pickersgill Palliser's *Harrogate Advertiser* of 1836 being little larger. The traditional broad-sheet edition of the *Advertiser* came into being in the 1860s, which began a format that lasted until the May 25, 2012 edition. The *Herald*, which began in 1847, was also tabloid but changed to a larger format before the *Advertiser*.

I forget when the *Herald* – which was once the "heavyweight" publication – changed back to tabloid, but I think it was in the 1980s. Whatever its format, we all must hope the *Advertiser* continues to thrive and to promote the district and keep us informed of all matters affecting residents.

My thanks to Mr. Crone for his interesting photograph. This article was first published on June 21, 2012.

A note from Harrogate Civic Society: It is now more

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than two years since Malcolm's death. He left behind an astonishing body of work that we at the Harrogate Civic Society are determined should be preserved and enhanced for the benefit of future historians and, indeed, for the benefit of anyone who cares about Harrogate. Not long before his passing, we discussed with Malcolm and the Advertiser republishing at least some of his articles. Many of Malcolm's articles dealt with the history of the town, exploring the people,

places and events that helped to form the Harrogate we know today. At other times Malcolm concentrated more on contemporary issues.

While acknowledging that Harrogate could not stand still, he was convinced that change should always be tested.

In September, the first republication of Mr Neesam's articles appeared and this today is the third.

We are grateful to Malcolm's family for their approval, to Simon Kent (closely involved with securing Malcolm's legacy) for his work researching and preparing the articles for reprint, for the advice of historian Paul Jennings and to Graham Chalmers and his team at the Advertiser for their support and encouragement.

We hope you will enjoy reading (or in some cases re-reading) these irreplaceable snapshots of history.

If you are able to add to our knowledge, or wish to know more about our work, contact us at history@harrogatecivicsociety.org.

## Our Heritage

A look back at bygone Harrogate

### The origins of newspaper publishing in Harrogate

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