



TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
for the year ended 29th February 2024

Harrogate Civic Society (the Society) is a registered charity, no 501055.

The constitution provides for the charity to protect, preserve and enhance the character, amenities and environment of Harrogate and its environs.

The Society is managed by a board of trustees (the committee), appointed in accordance with the constitution at the annual general meeting. The committee are assisted by a number of sub-groups, generally chaired by a committee member but with society members assisting.

The Committee 2023-2024:

The following are members of the Committee and hence Trustees:

Stuart Holland (*Chair*)

Susan Amaku (*Vice Chair*)

Angela Fahy (*Secretary / Chair of Events Sub-group*)

Chris Dicken (*Treasurer/Webmaster/Chair of Plaques group*)

Andrew Brown (*Planning & Development Sub-group*)

Henry Pankhurst (*Planning & Development Sub-group*)

David Siddans (*Chair of Communications & PR Sub-group*)

Nigel McClea (*Chair of History Sub-group / Links Coordinator*) – Resigned Summer 2023

The Committee meet monthly, currently in Woodland Methodist Church Hall.

It is increasingly sharing its responsibilities between the four sub-groups: *Communications & PR, Events, History, and Planning & Development*, who meet separately but report back to the committee.

Minutes Secretary until Summer 2023 - Wendy Cross

Membership Secretariat – Brian and Beryl Dunsby



Chairman's Report:

I am pleased to present, on behalf of the Trustees, the following report which illustrates and records the extent of work undertaken on behalf of our members.

Our overriding aim has been to enhance the standing of the Society within our town by pursuing our strap line, *Celebrate our Past, Enhance our Present and Shape our Future*. All our activities have helped achieve that aim whilst providing interesting and informative events for our members to enjoy.

I wish to acknowledge the long service – over 20 years, by Vice–Chair, Susan Amaku and thank her for her support. She is standing down at the AGM.

After serving on the committee since 2008 (with a short break) I shall not be seeking re-election as Chair at the AGM and so take this opportunity to thank the committee and sub-group members for their hard work and support and to thank all the members who have encouraged me in my role.

The following reports summarise our activities and show how we have met our Charitable Objects.

Stuart Holland

April 2024



SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The committee and sub-groups have worked hard in the last period to deliver a programme of activities to members and to keep them informed of issues affecting the town.

The following is a summary of our activities:

Events:

Our events have been very popular with an average attendance at meetings of about 60 and have included:

Talks

- A talk on the work of Destination Harrogate
- A presentation by local councillors on the Community Governance Review (setting up of a Town Council)
- RHS Harlow Carr - a talk by Paul Cook, Curator
- Use of the Census and other local studies materials by members *Dr Paul Jennings and Kevin Hales* (kindly hosted and introduced by librarian Alison Wheat at Harrogate Library).
- The management of the area's public parks and gardens – a talk by *Sue Wood, North Yorkshire Council*

Visits

- Visit to Ripley Castle, including guided tour and cream tea.
- Visit to Grove Road cemetery, with a tour led *by Dr Paul Jennings*
- A viewing at Ogden's Jewellers of the exhibition highlighting connections with the pyramids
- A visit to Fewston Churchyard and Washburn Heritage centre, with a talk on the Churchyard Assemblage

- Support for the Cenotaph Centenary events, based at West Park United Reformed Church, which included lectures, concerts and an exhibition
- Coffee mornings at The Cosy Club
- Christmas Social held at St Wilfrid's Church

Events were organised by a sub-group comprising Liz Hatherley, Kevin Hales, Chris Holland, Jenny Moore, and led by Angela Fahy.



Heritage Open Days:

Nearly 40 events were held in Harrogate during the Heritage Open Days (HODS) in September and included a programme of walks. The events provide a good opportunity to promote the work of the Society and this year resulted in the recruitment of a number of new members.

We were delighted to welcome Sarah Holloway, national programme director of Heritage Open Days, for a talk at St Wilfrid's Church on "Doorstep Discoveries". This gave members and guests a chance to hear about HODS on a national scale.

HODS events were coordinated by Kevin Hales

Plaques:

The plaques working group is now well established and meets quarterly. This past year has seen one new plaque, which had been in progress before the group's formation, installed at the bottom of Otley Road remembering Michael Rennie, actor and film star.

The working group has reviewed all the suggestions for new plaques and currently has 8 plaques under consideration and in various stages of progress. Obtaining permissions and arranging funding can take some time but it is hoped that some of these plaques will come to fruition in the next 12 months.

The reorganisation of local government has meant some changes in the liaison with the council. We have produced a set of criteria and protocol for producing new plaques and will continue to work in partnership with NYC to take the number of brown plaques from its current 94 installed to 100 and more.

The group is also considering the feasibility of promoting Interpretation Boards and has examined a number of alternative designs.

Plaques working group: Chris Dicken (Chair), Graham Douglas, Liz Hatherley, Dr Paul Jennings, Erik Thompson.

Development & Planning:

As yet nothing of the **Station Gateway scheme** to promote active travel has come to fruition. The scheme stalled following a legal challenge regarding their consultation process. The way forward seems to be the abandonment of single lane working for vehicles on Station Parade and pedestrianisation of James Street. One way traffic on Lower Station Parade, a cycle lane past the bus station plus 'public realm' works not involving the main highway would be implemented. These are around the One Arch and on Station Square. Further cycle lane provision and other items originally in the scheme are not now proposed.

Phase 2 of the **Otley Road Cycleway** that would have extended Phase 1 down to Beech Grove from Cold Bath Road has been, perhaps unsurprisingly, abandoned. However, Phase



3 westwards from Harlow Moor Road to RHS Harlow Carr is to be implemented but has not yet been designed.

North Yorkshire Council would appear to have many other ambitions for cycleways, including extending Otley Road Phase 3 alongside the Windmill Farm housing site (site H49 in the Local Plan), which is well on the way to Beckwithshaw. Some schemes would be many years hence, if ever.

We see no signs of the **Beech Grove/Lancaster Road Low Traffic Neighbourhood** (LTN) coming back. As LTN's are rather contentious, we hear that the Government may introduce regulations that give the public a right to be consulted where or if they can be implemented.

Development Control never stops of course, and we have as usual involved ourselves in a considerable number of planning applications, although not as many as in previous years. This past year we have examined 133 applications and responded to 67 of these. We have had helpful meetings with developers and architects on several proposals. Consultations by North Yorkshire Council accounted for 25 of the proposals that we looked at, which is a similar number to previous years. However, the majority of them came in the last 4 months of our year. We suspect that fewer Council conservation and design staff could be the reason – the Civic Society is a non-statutory consultee.

Planning Statistics (to year ended 29th February 2024):

APPLICATIONS STUDIED	Last year	RESPONSES	Last Year
133	275	67 (50.4%)	110 (40%)

CONSULTATIONS (Included in the total studied)

Most in the last 4 months this year.

25 (18.8%)	27 (9.8%)
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PLANNING DECISIONS

TOTAL	GOOD	FAIR	BAD	WITHDRAWN
64	32 (50%)	9 (14%)	12 (19%)	11 (17%)

LAST YEAR

110	49 (45%)	16 (15%)	28 (25%)	17 (15%)
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A couple of years ago or so, the Government introduced new **permitted development rights** regarding house extensions, that have been unhelpful to us and perhaps the Council. A particular result has been that many dormer windows and roof extensions are allowed, that we think are ungainly and ugly. A significant number of our responses have been concerned with these. A few have been helpfully amended.

Harrogate Spa Water are now making progress in application terms on the outline permission of 2017 for a large extension to the bottling plant. We have met them several times and are encouraging a result that treats the site sensitively in respect of the new



building and of course the Rotary Woodland. New land is now available for planting. There are still many objectors to the whole idea of any extensions, but the clock cannot be turned back because of the outline approval. We have responded to the two recent applications for the design of the extension including layout and landscaping and the one regarding ecology.

We have not responded to many large housing site applications this year. The site of the **former Police Training College** has been going through the planning system for a number of years but now has full approval after some recent amendments. When the Council first listed it as a potential housing site, it was given an indicative yield of 130 dwellings, but was approved at 200 dwellings! An attempt has been made several times to gain consent for housing at **Almsford Bank Stables**. Twice it was withdrawn and twice permission has been refused. An Appeal has been lodged regarding the most recent and much reduced proposal for 17 dwellings (originally 65 dwellings).

Impala Estates put forward a proposal for conversion of the old Council Offices at **Crescent Gardens**, which eventually gained consent in May 2022. We were very pleased with the scheme but are not so happy about the recent application (as yet undetermined) to close the road in front to the public, at least to motor vehicles.

Planning and Development Sub-group: Barry Adams, Susan Amaku, Andrew Brown, George Eglese, Peter Hirschmann, Stuart Holland, Henry Pankhurst

Neighbourhood Planning:

Working in partnership with Zero Carbon Harrogate, the Society has held meetings with approx. 18 organisations across the town to determine whether there is support to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. Full details were outlined in our November 2023 Newsletter and discussions are ongoing. A decision is likely to be made in the summer of 2024.

The group, led by Paul Hatherley, has been assisted by Andrew Goss, Stuart Holland, Jemima Parker (ZCH) and Val Rogers.

History Sub-group:

Our activities in the past year have been dominated by the War Memorial Centenary which has involved the various, but very complementary, skills of each member of the Group. Although this was very much a team effort, one name must stand out for special mention – Terry Williams, the designer and creator of the exhibition that was at the very centre of the project.

This has also been a busy year seeking to fulfil our stated role within the Society: *to research, record and communicate the history of Harrogate*. Highlights include:

- Responding to a growing number of enquiries from the public on matters of local history



- Awarding the first History Essay Prize to Charlotte Holroyd-Smith, a pupil at Harrogate Ladies College
- Contributing to the Society's events programme and newsletters and supporting Heritage Open Days 2023 with a series of talks and walks around the town
- Continuing to grow the history pages on the Society website
- Encouraging the curating of the Walker Neesam archive at the Mercer Gallery.
- Finalising a "Time Line" for possible inclusion in the Station Gateway Scheme.

We still miss the guiding hand of Malcolm Neesam, to whose memory the War Memorial Centenary Project was dedicated but are fortunate to enjoy the guidance of Dr. Paul Jennings, the town's pre-eminent social historian. Paul's hard work and enthusiasm underpins many of the highlights mentioned above.

History Sub-Group: Chris Dicken, Stuart Holland, Dr Paul Jennings, Simon Kent, Terry Williams, and led by Nigel McClea

Links:

Fostering connections between our Society and a multitude of other organisations in Harrogate has been a material part of our strategy, designed to strengthen our linkage with the life of the town. We see an important part of our role being to support, encourage and add value wherever we can, and where our objectives align.

In the past year we have been involved in two major projects:

- "Harrogate on Film" – many of you will already have enjoyed this experience, commissioned by us and Harrogate Film Society from the Yorkshire Film Archive and screened at the Odeon. Initial showings in autumn 2022 were followed by two further performances - both sell-outs – March 2023. More screenings are planned for this coming September. If you have yet to see it (or wish to see it again) please look out for further details.
- The War Memorial Centenary – This major exhibition, with full supporting events programme, ran throughout last autumn at the United Reformed Church. It was probably the largest community project ever to be staged in the town. Although led by its own independent organising committee, it was supported by the Society with many members being involved in a wide variety of roles. The Society handled the finances for the event, with over £4000 raised (after costs) and distributed to a range of military and other charities.

Links are largely maintained by Nigel McClea and Stuart Holland



Communications:

We regard communicating with our wide membership and keeping everyone aware of what the Civic Society is doing as extremely important.

We do this in several ways:

- via our website
- regular newsletters
- by email

We also have a Facebook page.

Our website www.harrogatecivicsociety.org was compiled and launched in 2021. It is maintained and constantly updated by Chris Dicken and is rapidly becoming the source of up to date information of our events and activities. It also contains a number of articles written by the History sub-group.

The Plaques website www.harrogateplaques.org receives an increasing number of visitors, providing an instant source of historical information about the town.

We regularly monitor website statistics and recorded 5092 unique visits to the main website and 1787 unique visits to the plaques website.

Newsletters are issued minimum of four times a year to all members, largely by email downloads but also by delivering printed copies where requested - most hard copies are delivered by hand which reduces postage costs. Recently we have set up an email messaging system which means we can communicate much more regularly to members with information about activities and reminders of forthcoming events.

We coordinate our messaging system with the membership database maintained by the membership secretariat so that it is constantly up to date with new members and retirees.

We would urge any member who has difficulty in accessing any of our communications to get in touch so that we can do something about it. It is important that every member feels a part of the society, can see what is being done in their name and can be involved whenever they want.

Statistics: (April 2023 to April 2024)

- Newsletters issued **6**
 - To members 232 *by email addresses plus approx. 30 by hand.*
 - To NYC councillors 11
 - To external contacts 36

Total **309 *per edition***
- Mailer communications 24 *(including newsletters)*
- Websites
 - Civic Society *continually updated*
 - Plaques *continually updated*



- Roll-up banner
 - New plaques banner purchased
- Displays
 - Royal Hall Anniversary (27 May 2023)
 - Allotment Show (20 August 2023)

Communications sub-group: David Siddans (Chair), Susan Amaku, Chris Dicken, Angela Fahy, Margaret Siddans.

MEMBERSHIP:

Beryl and Brian Dunsby took on the role of Membership Secretariat in April 2023 shortly after the AGM had agreed to increase the subscriptions for the first time in 14 years. Their responsibilities are to maintain a database of members and to administer membership renewals.

This necessitated emailing each known member in order to achieve a uniform renewal on 1st May each year.

Part-year subscriptions were duly collected although the number of resignations and deceased members during the year was disappointing at 38.

Fortunately, the number of new members joining has gone up steadily to a total of 36 as at 29th February 2024.

All new member subscriptions and renewals will now be valid from 1st May 2024 until 30th April 2025

As a result the total number of current paid-up members is now 307, made up as follows:

- Individuals = 128
- Joint Members = 135
- Family Members = 5
- Hon. Members = 8
- Patrons = 31

TOTAL = 307 as at 29th February 2024

**FINANCE:**

The accounts and balance sheet are appended to the report.

The Harrogate Civic Society's finances are in a very strong position with cash reserves of over £36,000.

Last year saw an "Excess of income over expenditure" of £4731.68. This was mainly due to the excellent "Harrogate on Film" showings arranged in association with the Harrogate Film Society, which contributed almost £3000. In addition, the new membership fees are working their way into the accounts.

The general increase in interest rates and the moving of reserve funds to a better account gave a healthy income from these funds.

The Society is therefore well placed to organise and financially support events in line with its charitable aims.

HCS Treasurer - Chris Dicken

Accounts checked by member Paul Fennimore

PUBLIC BENEFIT:

The Society aims to represent the views of its members on key matters affecting the town and its environs and via its links, communication channels and external meetings, is able to meet the Society's objectives as set out above.

In conclusion, the Trustees believe that the year ended 29th February 2024 has been a successful one. This is a direct result of the enormous amount of hard work by committee members and sub-group members, all serving in a voluntary capacity.

We are grateful to them and to all our members who continue to support the work of the Society.



Appendix A: Balance Sheet

Harrogate Civic Society		Income & Expenditure Account 2023/2024		Balance Sheet as at 28th February 2024	
	12 Months to 28th February 2024	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23
Income					
Memberships		£4,388.31	£3,142.00	£0.00	£0.00
Gift Aid		£0.00	£464.65		
Bank Interest		£799.50	£178.03	£11,702.08	£7,810.90
Donations in		£390.41	£342.36	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
Events in		£3,901.54	£700.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00
Cash Back		£1.88	£0.39		
Donation for Wells & Sw		£0.00	£2,000.00		
Total Income		£9,481.64	£6,827.43	£14,702.08	£10,810.90
Expenditure					
Admin		£1,149.92	£727.40		
Insurance		£286.24	£286.24		
IT		£265.38	£475.39	£41.00	£32.00
News/letter		£488.13	£485.09		£50.00
Events Out		£1,569.30	£1,023.09		
Plaques		£200.00	£14.49	£41.00	£82.00
Subscriptions		£70.00	£70.00		
Publicity		£424.69	£527.24		
Donations		£0.00	£0.00		
HODS		£148.59	£0.00		
Bank Charges		£147.71	£88.22		
W&S		£0.00	£1,468.82		
Total Expenditure		£4,749.96	£5,165.98	£36,014.09	£31,282.41
Excess (deficit) of income over expenditure		£4,731.68	£1,661.45	£4,731.68	£1,661.45
		Accounts checked & approved by: <i>Paul Fenimore</i>			
		Date: <i>19 March 2024</i>			