



# HARROGATE CIVIC SOCIETY

# e-NEWSLETTER

14 May 2020

**W**elcome to the second e-newsletter produced during the coronavirus lockdown. Normally in May we would be sending out our regular 16-page newsletter, but printing and distribution is not yet feasible, so again this will reach you by email only. We are, however, aware that a few of our members cannot access email and we are looking at other ways to keep them informed of our activities.

As your committee, we continue to meet on the first Monday of every month. We are rapidly learning the wonders of video conferencing technology and so our last two meetings have been held 'virtually'.

In this way, the Society continues to function in as near normal as possible. Planning for the future is still high on our agenda, as you will see in the following article.



*Crescent Gardens and the Royal Hall, 15 April 2020*

## Planning the Society's future ...

Our Away Day, which had to be cancelled, was intended as an opportunity to put our 'thinking caps' on and explore ways we may be able to improve the effectiveness of our Society.

So to progress this important project, the invited participants have been asked to put

forward their thoughts and ideas via e-mail to see if we can replicate the original concept, a sort of AWAY DAY at HOME. We are collating this input and will hold a video conferencing meeting on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May to fully evaluate the responses and expand on them.

Please note that ideas from members are still welcome and will of course be included in this exercise. We will then report back to members on completion of this work.

## ... and that of the town



*Cambridge Street, Wednesday 6 May 2020*

*"When a day you happen to know is a Wednesday starts off sounding like a Sunday, there is something seriously wrong somewhere."  
(John Wyndham: The Day of the Triffids,)*

We may not be as badly off as they were in *The Day of the Triffids*, but much of what we love about Harrogate is strangely silent too. But that doesn't mean there isn't plenty to be done. Never has there been a better time to plan the town's future. Never has there been more need to support the town's institutions so they can survive to see that future. Please let us know how you can help. More than ever, Harrogate needs the Civic Society. More than ever, the Civic Society needs you.

We learned with great sadness of the death of both Victor Wild and his wife of seventy years, Kay Wild. A tribute from their close friend Peter Brown is appended to this newsletter.

## Kay and Victor Wild

*Kay and Victor on his official retirement as chairman of Betty and Taylors. October 1996*



## Our new treasurer



We are very pleased to welcome **David Pearson** to the committee as our new treasurer, taking over from Peter Brown who served for the last 10 years. David writes:

*I was born, brought up and lived in Australia until I was 27. I met my late wife Helen, a Yorkshire lass, on a trip to the USSR in 1972. My early career was in Banking firstly with the Australia and New Zealand Bank and then the HSBC. We moved to Harrogate in 1983 and in 1985 I began working for Simpson Curtis in finance and remained with them until retirement in 2013. I was chairman of the St George's Bridge Club for 25 years. I am currently helping to organise The Spectrum Group and working to set up a monthly drop in cafe in connection with the Good Grief Trust.*

## Planning

Henry Pankhurst writes:

Even during the Coronavirus lockdown, planning applications continue to be submitted, but maybe fewer in recent weeks. The standard of design has improved over the years but the quality of our town can be affected even by modest applications. Many go unnoticed. People are often only aware of their existence when construction begins – too late!

The planning aspect of the Civic Society work is a fairly lonely business, not only due to 'lockdown', because applications can only be studied on the Council website. With some applications I get assistance from Andrew Brown and Barry Adams, who are both retired architects, and from Peter Hirschmann who was with the Victorian Society for over 40 years. Planning is an activity that can function despite Covid 19, but site visits may be a problem!



## Plaques update



Eighty years ago this summer, the Battle of Britain was fought in the skies of southern England, when as is widely known, the immortal achievements of Spitfire pilots saved our nation. To compensate for planes lost in combat, the British Government started a campaign for communities throughout the land to raise funds to build more Spitfires. The campaign was successful, but a few communities achieved so much that in 1941, the Government decided to recognise their efforts by awarding them a plaque, and Harrogate was one such community to receive one for its astounding success in raising the huge sum of £7,000.

For many years, the plaque was proudly displayed in the old Council Offices in Crescent Gardens, but it was removed in the 1970s and subsequently lost. Today, a group of Harrogate people are working to re-erect Harrogate's Spitfire plaque. Thanks to the kind co-operation of the Crown Hotel and Harrogate's Planning Office, it is hoped to have a replica of the plaque fixed on the external facade of the Crown Hotel in time for the commemoration of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain this summer. During the war, the Crown was occupied by the Ministry of Aircraft Production.

The cost of the replica plaque which, unlike Harrogate's other history plaques will be coloured RAF blue, is around £800 including VAT and fixing charges. Contributions, including ones from Harrogate Civic Society and the Harrogate RAF Club, have reached £600. Anyone wishing to contribute should contact Malcolm Neesam on 01423 541761

## This year's AGM



Our constitution requires us to hold an annual general meeting within five months of the end of February, that is by the end of July. However, in the

Left: 2019 AGM at The Granby

present circumstances and following advice from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, we are postponing the event. We will be notifying the Charity Commission and will let members know of any further arrangements.

## Victor Wild - A tribute

by Peter Brown

Since the turn of the year we have lost two of Harrogate's most distinguished residents, Kay and Victor Wild, both good friends and loyal members of the Civic Society.

Victor, Swiss born, moved to England in 1936 to live with his aunt and uncle who had founded Bettys in 1919. Victor was only thirteen but the long term plan was for him to become part of the business. I think we can safely say that the plan worked. After completing his education at Sedburgh School Victor went through an intense training course at Claridges and then, in 1943, joined the Bettys business. Initially he worked in the York restaurant which narrowly missed being requisitioned by the War Ministry but survived due to its growing popularity, especially with servicemen.

After the war Victor returned to Switzerland for a year to gain the practical experience needed to take a bigger role at Bettys, both in the kitchen and front of house. He arrived back in Harrogate in 1947 which turned out to be a pivotal year for him since, as well as becoming a director of Bettys, he first met Kay who was to become his wife and lifelong companion. In due course he became chairman of the family company, finally retiring in October 1996 while continuing his close involvement in the business. Throughout, he enjoyed his outside interests - his love of art (a talented artist himself), singing with the Choral Society and membership of the Dramatic Society – and of course playing his part as a committee member of the Civic Society where he was Treasurer until 2010.

*Victor at the unveiling of the plaque commemorating the centenary of the opening of the first Bettys premises.*

17 July 2019



This tribute to Victor can only scratch the surface of his extraordinary life and Annie Gray's recently published book *From the Alps to the Dales* brilliantly chronicles the story of the family and the business. As for the person, all who knew Victor will remember him as man of high principles, generous and, certainly in my own experience, with never an unkind word for anyone. He was understated and modest, with a keen sense of humour, especially concerning his own mishaps, and most of all, he was a family man who enjoyed seventy years of blissfully happy married life with Kay and the family that grew up around them – three children, five grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Without Victor we are all diminished and the world is a poorer place. He was truly a remarkable man who enriched the lives of all who were close to him. He and Kay will remain in our memories forever.

*Victor Wild: 30 May 1923 - 11 April 2020*

You can continue to keep in touch with us via the usual email addresses:

General matters .. .. info@harrogatecivicsociety.org

Membership queries .. membership@harrogatecivicsociety.org

*Please let us know us of any changes of postal or email address*

Published by Harrogate Civic Society

Registered Charity no. 501055

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