



RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer 2017

ON THE MOVE



Our regular monthly talks are moving. After many years in the hall of Allhallowgate Methodist Church, where we have been looked after very well, the Society's Executive Committee has decided that from the beginning of 2018 our talks will be held in the Dining Hall of Sharow View – the Workhouse.

As you will know, Ripon Museum Trust has recently completed the transfer to its ownership of the entire workhouse site (except for the hospital block, now Community House) from North Yorkshire County Council – which means that the most complete workhouse in the country is now owned by the Trust. It was formally launched on 18 July with an event that let people see inside the main block of the site for the first time, and outlined the very exciting plans for its future.

As the Trust is, so to speak, a 'daughter' of the Civic Society, it seems appropriate that we should use the new facility that the transfer offers. We are very pleased that the Trust is able to welcome us to the site as it begins its very exciting project.

The Dining Hall is an ideal size for our meetings, and has the added advantage of having projection equipment and a large screen already installed. There is also an adjacent kitchenette, where it may be possible for anyone who wants a cup of tea or coffee before the start of our meetings to have one. Our first meeting in our new venue will be on Thursday 4 January 2018 – details will be sent to you later, but put the date in your diary now; we look forward to seeing you there.

Until we move, our meetings stay put in Allhallowgate Church Hall.

The next talk is at 7.30 on Thursday 7 September, when Jackie Depelle will speak on '19th Century Boom and Bust – Exploring Business and Family Fortunes'. This will be the last of the talks arranged as part of the series by Ripon Historical Society (see 'END OF AN ERA' below).

On Thursday 5 October Richard Hawkes will speak on 'The Conservation of Works of Art'. Richard runs 'Artworks Conservation' and is a conservator of watercolours, prints and drawings, with more than 20 years of experience working for museums, institutions, art dealers and private individuals. He will talk about his work, which can range from the conservation of 600-year-old parchment charters or Old Master drawings to nineteenth-century watercolours of Yorkshire, a library terrestrial globe or contemporary artworks by Banksy.

At the meeting on Thursday 2 November Patrick Wildgust, Curator of Shandy Hall, Coxwold – the home of writer Laurence Sterne – will speak on 'The Beauties of Sterne'. This talk will be followed by the Society's Annual General Meeting.

On Thursday 7 December our meeting will be, as in previous years, a Christmas Social at the Workhouse.

END OF AN ERA

We are sad to report that Ripon Historical Society, with which Ripon Civic Society has had a close association and with which we have recently been running our joint series of talks, will formally close at the end of this year. It has done valuable work over the years, and we hope that, even with their Society gone, its former members will continue to research into and

publish information about the city.

As far as our talks series goes, Ripon Civic Society will resume responsibility for the complete programme from January – in our new venue (see ‘ON THE MOVE!’ above). We shall also revert to our previous pattern of not having a talk in June; recently we extended into June as the Historical Society had traditionally had a talk that month. We hope to welcome former Historical Society members at all the talks.

Our two visits this summer were very different – but both were interesting and successful.

SITWELLS AND CRUMBS

In July almost 30 people enjoyed a visit by coach to Renishaw Hall near Chesterfield, home of the Sitwell family. In lovely warm, sunny weather (we did have a little this summer!) we first had time to look round



the award-winning garden before our conducted tour of the house with an excellent guide who told us about the history of the Sitwell family who lived there. They

included the eccentric Sir George and his three literary children Osbert, Sacheverell and Edith.

After lunch in the stables café, we had a talk from Keiron Atkinson about the Renishaw vineyard – and we sampled some of the wine, too.



Our second visit, again with about 30 people, was in August to Ripon Select Foods on Dalamires Lane. The company makes crumbs and coatings for the food industry, and, having donned white coats and hats and been given earplugs, we were shown how the process works from milling the wheat (nearly all locally grown) to the finished product. We also heard (often with difficulty in the noisy environment!) about the many variations, including gluten-free products. It was an interesting and unusual visit, and we are grateful to Ripon Select Foods for hosting the visit and providing tea, coffee and biscuits afterwards.

FIFTY YEARS ON – HELP!

Next year is the 50th anniversary of Ripon Civic Society; we formally came into existence on 27 June 1968. There are plans being formulated to celebrate our Golden Jubilee – among them we have suggested including a celebratory dinner at our Awards Ceremony in October at the Spa Hotel. Our plans depend, of course, both on your support and on manpower; while the members of the Executive Committee are happy to undertake some of the organisational work, it cannot all be done by them. If you are able, please volunteer to help in this important year; we will certainly find you a suitable role!

HERITAGE ON DISPLAY

This year's national Heritage Open Days weekend is 7 to 10 September. As usual, Ripon Civic Society will open the Gazebo, off Blossomgate, on Sunday 10 Sep-

tember, from 2.00pm to 4.00pm – if you haven't yet seen this remnant of 18th-century Ripon, with its twin towers joined by a gallery, this is your one opportunity of the year!



We have also arranged with our friends at the Masonic Hall on Water Skellgate to open on the same day, again from 2.00pm to 4.00pm, and at Ripon Grammar School, who will open the school's Library from 1.00pm to 4.00pm, also on Sunday 10 September.

In the morning of the same day, David Winpenny, Chairman of the Society, will take a walk around Ripon, looking at some of its important buildings and telling something of the city's history. Some of the society's green plaques will feature in the talk. It starts at 11.00am and will finish by 12.30pm. Meet by the obelisk – on the side facing the Town Hall.

Our Heritage-Lottery-funded photographs project, which we've called 'Ripon Re-Viewed' and which aims preserve and make available up to 8,000 historic photographs of Ripon, is progressing. Unfortunately we experienced a few problems when our Project Officer left us for personal reasons; we are fortunate that we could quickly recruit Maxine Willett in her place.

Maxine is working closely with our enthusiastic

**ANOTHER LOOK AT
RIPON RE-VIEWED**



A TOE INTO FACEBOOK



PROGRESS AT LAST?

volunteers, to whom we are very grateful, to examine and provide information about all the pictures. We are also in the process of commissioning both a database management system and a website designer.

The project is now scheduled to end in spring next year. In the meantime, if you haven't seen the four old pictures we have had printed to a large scale and attached to the white hoardings at the demolished All-hallowgate flats – opposite the Workhouse Museum – do go along and have a look. They have been generating a great deal of interest. And there will also be a regular series of images in the Society's noticeboard in the ground-floor lobby of Ripon Library.

Ripon Civic Society has a Facebook presence: www.facebook.com/RiponCivicSociety/ So far we have only put a toe in the social media water, and we're gradually learning how to do it, so please be patient while we get it up and running. If you have Facebook expertise and can help, let us know!

PLANNING MATTERS

You will no doubt have been following the progress of the disintegration of the former Girls' High School (also called the Old Lecture Block) on Coltsgate Hill. The Society has been working hard for more than three years to protect this important building, which, though not listed, is within the Ripon Conservation Area, and we have a thick file of correspondence with Harrogate Borough Council (HBC), our local councillors and the MP for Skipton and Ripon.

As you will know from previous newsletters, the owners sought permission to demolish the building; this was refused. They then applied for permission to convert it into apartments, with other buildings to

be constructed in the grounds. As we understood the position, this application was granted permission in November last year; this was confirmed by HBC in correspondence with both the Society and with Julian Smith MP; the Chief Planner, Gary Bell, wrote to Mr Smith in April this year that, 'Officers are now liaising with the owner of the site to discuss both the work he is required to undertake to enable him to implement the planning permission granted to convert the building to residential use, and remedial works to protect the building in the intervening period.'



In July, however, we received notification that the application had been 'withdrawn'; Mr Bell wrote to the Society that 'The application was presented to the Planning Committee [of HBC] on 8 November 2016 where approval of the application was deferred for the receipt of a ground stability report . . . Subsequently, in July 217 (sic) the agent for the application wrote to the case officer withdrawing the application stating that

“the client no longer wishes to proceed”. This seemed to be a rewriting of the history of the application.

The Society has asked many times for action to be taken to protect the building, as there has been systematic stripping of the slates from the roof (allowing water to penetrate the core of the building) and an increasing amount of vandalism, broken windows and fly-tipping. We asked that action be taken under either Section 76 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 or under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (or both). In October last year (and again in December) Mr Bell wrote that having considered the matter, ‘the Council was of the view that the current condition of the building did not warrant action, and that even if it did, that there is a defence to such an action that would result in the action being unsuccessful.’

The Society wrote again in July this year, after the application was ‘withdrawn’, again copying in Mr Smith. In a reply on 10 August Mr Bell now wrote, ‘Officers have recently looked again at the condition of the building and have concluded that a Section 215 Notice should be served on the owner. Relevant documentation is being prepared to draft an appropriate Notice which is likely to require the reinstatement of the roof of the subject building in matching materials.’ So action is promised at long last – though as Mr Bell pointed out, ‘The service of a Section 215 Notice can, of course, result in an appeal to the Magistrates Court.’ The Society is pleased that its pressure has at last resulted in promised action – though we shall not be content until the roof is back in place to protect the building, and, beyond that, until a proper use is found for it. We suspect the saga is not yet at an end.

Another planning case that has been of interest is the former Coltsgate Hill Chapel. In 2013 its owners put in an application for change of use to offices (which was permitted) and for Listed Building Consent (which was refused).



The ground for refusal, which the Society supported, was ‘The proposal is considered an unsympathetic alteration to the Grade II listed building. This proposal would result in unjustified harm to the character, architectural integrity and historical importance of the protected Heritage asset’ – though in fact the work, which had included inserting steel beams into the gallery of the former chapel to support a ceiling filling in the central ‘atrium’ void, had already been carried out. The Society did not object to the infill-

ing of the void, but felt that any insert should be able to support use of the upper floor for other purposes, rather than leaving a useless space. There were also objections from the Victorian Society.

The decision to refuse listed building consent was taken to appeal. The Inspector allowed the appeal, noting that any future use would probably mean filling in the void, and ‘if a permanent re-use of the building included the atrium opening, and the infilling of the opening was to be removed, the harm caused to the significance of the listed building has been minimal and could easily be reversed as part of consented works of conversion. Only small sections of plaster cornice have been removed to facilitate fixing of the four steel beams to a ring beam and full reinstatement of the cornice would be a simple task. Even if the infilling of the opening became a permanent feature, and this is likely in the long term, the harm caused to the significance of the listed building is no greater.’

In September last year, while the Inspector was making his decision, a new application for the building – for conversion to 12 apartments – was submitted to HBC. In its comments on this proposal, the Society wrote that we have ‘no objection in principle to the conversion of the Chapel into residential accommodation. The submitted scheme is, however, too intensive and unacceptable as it entails the loss of so much of the original features of the interior. We cannot agree, as argued in the Design and Heritage Statement, that the scheme “will not material harm the heritage value of the place”.’

At much the same time, the Chapel was put on the market. It currently has a ‘Sold’ sign on it; we shall keep a close eye on its future.

NEXT MOVES FOR HOTEL AND AUCTION MARKET

The fate of the former Station Hotel and of the Auction Market site have also been long-running concerns. Planning permission has now been given for conversion of the Hotel into a House in Multiple Occupation, with seven bedsits and 12 ‘cluster flats’. The Society, while preferring the building to stay in public use, recognised in its response to the application that conversion may be the only answer; we did, though, think that the density of separate apartments was too high for the size of the building, and that the application raises concerns about access to the Auction Market site behind.



We asked that the Station Hotel application be considered with the application to place 31 residential caravans (‘park homes’) on the Auction Market site, which is affected by Ripon’s gypsum problems – you will recall that the plan for 96 houses on the site was withdrawn after a house on the edge of it had to be demolished after a sink hole appeared. The Auction Market application remains to be determined.

All our responses to Planning Applications can be seen on the Society’s website:
www.riponcivicsociety.org.uk

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