YHACS
YORKSHIRE & HUMBER
Association of Civic Societies
Member of
CIVIC VOICE
talking civic sense

SOCIETY INSIGHT

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"DESIGN & DESIGN CODES"

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON NATIONAL MODEL DESIGN CODES



We welcome the National Model Design Code (NMDC) in some aspects.

It is not clear however, how the local authorities will use the document and how very different areas within the authority will be treated. A Local Authority (LA) can range from city centre urban to moorland rural with dozens of distinct towns and villages within its boundaries. One size will not fit all and the Local Design Code must reflect this varied geographical nature if it is to have the support of local people. This is particularly true of housing density, infrastructure and design.

The local input into design codes must be genuinely taken into account. This means that those making a local input must be very clear on their intentions. All local communities will need to define the local character that they wish to protect. Some will need support to do this.

The **NMDC is a toolkit** for how to produce a local design code or guide.

• Expected to be used by local authorities to develop their own local design codes and guides. Government ambition for **every area to have a design code in place.**
• Local design codes will be expected to reflect local character and make clear the design standards for new developments.
• Emphasis on **genuinely involving the local community** in developing codes so that local residents have a say in the design of new developments.
• Recommendation to have a **consultation strategy** to support the design code. There will be more emphasis on Statements of Community Involvement.

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However, your LA's Statement of Community Involvement may appear to be concerned only with the local plan. There may be a long list of organisations but little or no evidence that the council *involves* them.
• The NMDC forms a package of Government 'design guidance' and needs to read in conjunction with whatever emerges from the Planning White Paper (on which we have already commented). We also commented on changes to Permitted Development Rights.

At what stage should societies and individuals get involved?

- Pre-application - it's hard to get in here as the developer may want to keep it all confidential and only talk to the planners.
- Responding to applications - as we do now.
- Local plan stage – this might not be very often!
- Neighbourhood plan – the future of these needs defining.
- Conservation Area consultations if applicable - many LAs are not doing enough on conservation areas - many are at risk. Do you have a CA Advisory Committee?
- Appeals - There are fewer public inquiries and more 'written' appeals.

On Permitted Development Rights - Design Codes will not apply, for example, if shops are converted to homes.

...Planning Applications in future will be for Protected Areas only. The only public involvement in Growth and Renewal Areas will be at Local Plan Stage.

The new 'Office for Place' under the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) is being set up but there's not much detail yet. They will oversee the National Model Design Code and support local communities to turn their local design codes into the standard for all new buildings in their area.

'*All new developments should meet local standards for beauty*' But of course, beauty is subjective and we don't all agree!

Will my town get its own Design Code? We don't yet know the format of Local Design Codes and how specific places will be individually treated.

As part of the plans, MHCLG is also proposing changes to the National Planning Policy Framework to place greater emphasis on beauty and place-making.

The National Model Design Code will define areas as:

- Growth
- Renewal
- Protected eg conservation areas and green belt

Planning Applications in future will be for Protected Areas only. The only public involvement in Growth and Renewal Areas will be at Local Plan Stage.

So, there are a lot of questions still to be answered:

- It could be a long wait before we can have another say. Our new local plan will last until 2038 and consultations closed on 24th March 2021. At what points will we be consulted again?
- Will the style of consultation be meaningful?
- Will it be less democratic than at present when we get a say on individual applications?
- How will members of the public have their say about their neighbours' plans in the new system? In the Court of Public Opinion? On social media? How else should they negotiate?
- Can we still lobby councillors? Do the councillors get any say?
- What are the plans to skill-up planning officers to cope with the new system?
- Who has the local knowledge - especially when the planners are miles away and don't know the area?

How is your area vulnerable? Perhaps each civic society should consider what could happen locally and how they will get their messages across effectively.

Helen Kidman
YHACS & Ilkley Civic Society

Editor's Note
You can read the now closed consultation document at ***https://bit.ly/3cEM634***

Civic Voice's Response to the National Model Design Code and NPPF consultation

Civic Voice has responded tn the Government's National Model Design Code and National Planning Policy Framework consultation.

The response is available **here.**

Ian Harvey, Executive Director of Civic Voice, said: *"Whilst we warmly welcome the National Model Design Code and its aims for good community engagement within the local design code/guide process, we are more concerned with the wider reforms to community participation in the planning system. We know that civic societies add value to the planning process. Civic societies still remain the best route into the planning process for serious community involvement and engagement – and that role needs to be recognised somewhere."*

The key issues are:

- We are concerned that the delivery of high quality design will be undermined by the widening of permitted development rights preventing a planned approach to our town and city centres and by limited local authority resource, capacity and skills
- Community engagement doesn't have to be world class, it just needs to be meaningful. We fear the NMDC will be undermined by the PWP proposals for reformed community engagement in planning.

- We welcome earlier engagement, but communities must still be given the right to consider and respond to individual planning applications. Until an LA adopts a local guide/code, the local community must be able to continue to make representation on all individual planning applications.
- Other design tools, in addition to design codes, are available and beneficial, but Government seems fixated on codes.
  Ian finished by saying: *"Our aim must now be to respond to the consultation, but to then prioritize thinking ahead of the Planning Bill in the Autumn. The planning system as we know it is changing, we must make the case and show the role that civic societies and community groups can play in a modern planning system."*

We expect a planning bill to come forward in 2021. Will you now join Civic Voice to help us position the civic movement as the driving force in local democracy and local involvement in planning. Join us today.

Editor - Article abstracted from Civic Voice website www.civicvoice.org.uk

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR



'Adapt or survive' is one of the themes that emerged from Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Although he was at the time writing about the natural environment, the sentiment could equally well be applied to businesses, our town and city centres and, of course, to civic societies.

An example of how YHACS has adapted to the challenge of coronavirus has been our use of video conferencing. In this respect, January 2021 was something of a milestone for us as it was the first time that we held our Annual General Meeting via Zoom.

As regular readers will know, YHACS has been holding its AGM in Harrogate for many years now – I'm not sure when the tradition started, but it's been one with which we have been happy to continue as the location and choice of hotels suits us very well. Not only that, but our members seem to like it too and we usually get a good turnout for the meetings.

Having to move things on-line was forced on us by circumstance and we did wonder if it would have the same appeal for members. In the end, any doubts we had were quickly dispelled as nearly 80 people registered and we had a turnout which was at least as good as some of the best turnouts we have achieved for our meetings in Harrogate. It was also good to see that the audience included some new faces – people who hadn't previously attended our events when held in person.

So, what does this tell us? Well, many of us seem to be adapting very well to doing things on-line. The technology allows participation whatever the weather and certainly makes it easier for people with restricted mobility. It is cheaper, takes up a lot less time as people don't have to travel and from the venue, and it is arguably better for the planet to operate things on-line.

On the other hand, it's less sociable, opportunities for networking are reduced and some of the spontaneity (and fun) is missing when events are held via Zoom, especially when people are on their best behaviour (as our members always are!). There was no Friday evening dinner at the hotel, of course,

something I personally really missed, and no opportunity to explore the area as would have been the case had we been able to meet in person. However, holding the meeting on-line got the job done; it was efficient and convenient. Video conferencing definitely has its place.

But what of the future? Should we hold all our meetings on-line via Zoom, or would you prefer us to revert to 'proper' events at locations around the region once it is safe to do so? Or would you prefer to see a mix, perhaps two events on-line and two events in venues each year? Let me know what you think. For the time being though, we are continuing to work on the basis that our events will have to remain on-line until the situation with the virus becomes clearer.

Changes to the Committee



If you 'attended' the AGM or have read the minutes of the meeting that were circulated, you'll already be aware of the changes to the line up of the committee that took effect as a result of the meeting.

First of all, Phyllis Barnes of Barnsley Civic Trust retired from the YHACS committee; she's a busy woman and the pressure of other commitments meant she couldn't always attend committee meetings or take part in our discussions.

Meanwhile, three new people joined the committee: Alan Nicholson from Grimsby and Cleethorpes Civic Society, Carolyn Curr from Whitby Civic Society and Judith Blackburn, one of our independent members. One other change is that Margaret Hicks Clarke of Goole Civic Society has stepped into the position of YHACS Vice Chair as David Moss (Selby Civic Society) decided to step down from the post, although he remains on the committee and will continue to edit the newsletter for us. My thanks to everyone on the committee, past and present, for their continued support and a big welcome to our new committee members.

My own position as chair was confirmed in that I was re-elected (unopposed!) for another three-year term, which will take me to January 2024. Under the terms of our Constitution, this will have to be my final stint as your chair. While I can stay on the committee when my current period of office comes to an end, I cannot continue as chair after that date.

YHACS will, therefore, need to find someone to take over from me and this is the gauntlet I now throw down – we have just under three years to see who will pick it up.

Kevin Trickett MBE.

THE TOWNS FUND – WHITBY'S EXPERIENCE

On the surface, Whitby seems a busy, prosperous little town. Tourism is thriving, it has a beautiful centre, its history and heritage are renowned, there's a variety of quirky independent shops, and it's surrounded by moors and sea. You might be forgiven for thinking it entered the Towns Fund through underhand political jiggery-pokery. But first impressions can be misleading.

Whitby's economy may be busy, but it rests on minimum wage jobs, many of them seasonal. This work is largely classed as low-skilled, with little training and few openings for advancement. There are no local opportunities for post-16 education and training, so that young people tend to leave (especially if well-qualified). The housing market is distorted by the volume of holiday lets and second homes, so that prices are beyond the means of young families. It's a great town to live in, but it has its problems.

Our involvement came about thanks to our sharp-eyed Secretary, who approached Whitby Town Council after hearing that up to £25 million might be made available under a Town Deal scheme. We were invited to send a representative to the Town Deal Board in January 2020; as well as being represented on the Board, along with local businesses and the four local authorities, we have also tried to contribute by promoting opportunities for public engagement through social media and member communications, and joining project teams where our local knowledge could play a part. And we have agreed to draft information boards for a new sculpture trail aimed at attracting tourists to less visited parts of the town.

Three of the proposed projects particularly interest us:

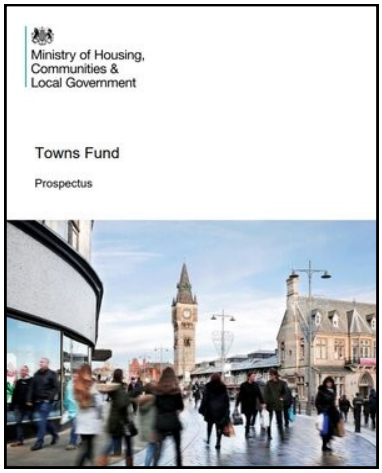
- The seventeenth-century Grade II* Town Hall is potentially a landmark building, but it has suffered badly from neglect and misuse. The Town Council was keen to have it restored and brought back into public use, aims which we very much share.



Architects' sketch of one option for the Town Hall and Market Place

- Then there was the old Unitarian Chapel, a hidden delight of a building with connections to Whitby's popular history. The Trustees proposed repurposing it as a managed workspace, so that it remained in public use; we were delighted to support this plan.

- Finally, we have been keen for some time to see a rebalancing of the town's population, with more attractive training and job opportunities locally, so when local businesses proposed a coastal skills academy on the existing harbour site, we agreed to join that project team as well.



It hasn't all been plain sailing. First, the Town Deal prospectus sets out clear limits on how the funding can be used; the focus is firmly on investment in infrastructure, which in turn must support urban regeneration, skills and enterprise, and/or connectivity. This ruled out any ongoing funding for – to take examples which locals proposed during the consultation – youth clubs or public transport.

Second, the public consultation kicked in during the pandemic, so most of it had to be done remotely. We'd managed to hold two open events before lockdown, and met with some youth groups during the summer relaxation. Otherwise, we had to rely on digital consultation through a website and social media, promoted by a stream of articles in the local press. Despite the obstacles, residents fed in plenty of ideas, including pedestrianisation of the town centre, better skills training for youngsters, facilities for business start-ups, and improved community spaces.

Third, some of the proposed projects have been controversial. Some of our own members are unhappy with plans to protect the Town Hall by glazing the undercroft; the car lobby immediately and vigorously attacked the pedestrianisation proposals; a rather clumsy attempt by the Borough Council to place a large concrete sculpture near the Abbey unsurprisingly caused outrage.

Overall, we think our involvement has been worthwhile. At the time of writing we do not know which problems will come to fruition; rather than the £25 million originally on offer, the final allocation was £17 million – admittedly large enough to make a real difference to the town, but inevitably meaning some projects will not survive. Of course, we are only one voice among many, and we are self-evidently less powerful than some of the big players, but we have been and remain constructive partners, who can also be critical where need be, but whose aim is to improve Whitby while keeping it a very special place.

John Field
Chair, Whitby Civic Society

What's Been Happening In Ossett?

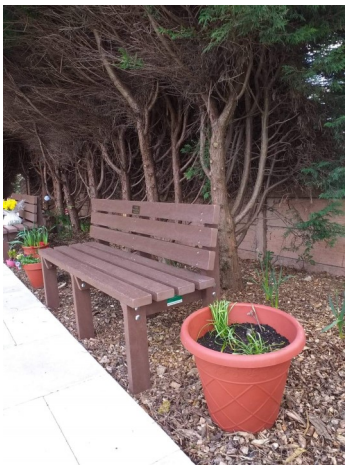
We have a new name, a new team and a new outlook!

Toward the end of 2020 Ossett Civic Trust once again became *Ossett Civic Society,* the name with which it started out at its conception in 1972. Our new Chair Phil Waud introduced a new constitution which has been adopted after a consultation period. We have applied for charitable status and, at the 2021 AGM, a whole new team was elected into office (with the exception of our Treasurer Lynn Ross who has been in the role for 21 years!)

What else have we done?

- We have sponsored a bench in a new 'wellbeing' garden at our Community Centre and a pergola *(left)* has recently been installed. The garden is developing nicely and is a credit to the volunteers who have worked hard to make it happen. It will be a wonderful community space.





- Our local ward councillor Lynn Masterman invited us to team up with the community group *West Wakefield Wombles* to combat the problem of litter in our town and its environs. Together we have organised a '*Get Ossett Tidy*' campaign, actively encouraging civic pride in our town - see photo below.



Some of the new team, along with Councillor Masterman.

- We have been involved in the publication of a *Town Centre Heritage Trail*, developed and financed by Steve Wilson; our new Vice Chair. The publication was placed in our local shops and businesses, encouraging people into our town. They went down rather well and we are now working on an extended version which will be financed by *Ossett Civic Society* and its members.

- Speaking of our members - during the last year membership of *Ossett Civic Society* has more than doubled! We attribute this to our new visible presence, online and in our community.

- We have created a new website, a new *Twitter* account and a new *Facebook* page. We actively engage with our followers and we are developing a strong connection with our community.

As well as a new name and a new team, another momentous civic occasion happened at the beginning of 2021.



Stephen's plaque being unveiled by his daughter Tonya, his widow Margaret and three of his grandsons.

Up until 2018 Ossett had NO Blue Plaques. No historical markers commemorating any historical significance of any building or person. In 2018 the first Blue Plaque was privately commissioned, with a second being commissioned by community group *Ossett Through The Ages*.

On February 16 2021 *Ossett Civic Society*, in partnership with *Ossett Through The Ages,* installed its very first Blue Plaque in recognition of Stephen Hines. For those who do not know him, as well as being a teacher, French polisher and musician, Stephen was an internationally acclaimed sculptor.

Early recognition came in the late 1970s when he was commissioned by the Vatican to carve a statue of the '*Madonna and Child*'. He continued to gain recognition for his talent and began exhibiting in numerous locations including Covent Garden and Scone Palace.



He was named in Who's Who and has been acknowledged by Buckingham Palace and Downing Street. In 1984 he was invited to represent Great Britain in a Symposium of Sculpture in Carrara, Italy. His pieces can be found all over the country and abroad, in private collections, business premises and in public places. Stephen moved to Ossett in 1987 and over the course of the next 30 years he created a vast and widely acknowledged body of work, notably '*Care*' commissioned by Smith Klein Beecham, for their new Research and Development Centre in Harlow, a piece to commemorate the soldiers lost at the Battle of Towton and '*The Tree of Life*' a piece gifted to the Mid Yorkshire Trust to raise awareness of organ donation and to say thank you for the care he had received from them. Stephen Hines passed away in 2017. He is greatly missed by all who knew him.

Our vision for the future is to work collaboratively with *Ossett Through The Ages* to install more Blue Plaques in and around our town. With that in mind a sub-committee has created a list of criteria which will be included in our Blue Plaque protocol for future plaques.

We have several projects lined up for the rest of 2021 and well into 2022. These include the installation of a WW2 memorial, adoption of a Grade 2 telephone kiosk, more Blue Plaques and a project working with our schools and young peoples groups to mark *Remembrance 2021*.

Ossett Civic Society welcomes new members!

Anne-Marie Fawcett
Media Officer
Ossett Civic Society
https://www.ossettcivicsociety.org/

Castle Hill Development Concerns Huddersfield Civic Society



Castle Hill by Vinny Tyrell

Huddersfield Civic Society (HCS) believes the decision to allow a restaurant and bedrooms on top of Castle Hill, a hilltop overlooking Huddersfield, may set a dangerous precedent for other ancient monument sites to be spoiled by inappropriate developments.

The history of Castle Hill stretches back 4,000 years. It began as an Iron Age hill fort before becoming a Norman castle and then a medieval hunting lodge. Grade-II listed Victoria Tower – built to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee of 1897 and finished in 1899 - is in green belt and can be seen for miles. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI) in recognition of the range and variety of its flora and fauna.

Huddersfield Civic Society has battled for a considerable time against a planning application for the development – which will also include a visitors' centre with toilets – and asked for the plan to be decided on by the Government after it was passed by Kirklees councillors last October … but the Government has now refused to get involved. This means the application will now go ahead unless it is vetoed at the 11th hour by Historic England - the commission which oversees historic buildings and scheduled monuments in England - by refusing to give consent for the development. Huddersfield Civic Society (HCS) will continue to lobby Historic England to refuse that consent and it's thought that Historic England may not come to a decision for three months or so.

HCS's call-in hopes were dashed in a letter to Kirklees Council on behalf of Housing, Communities and Local Government minister Robert Jenrick which

states: *"The Secretary of State has decided not to call in this application. He is content that it should be determined by the local planning authority."* But HCS believes this is setting a dangerous precedent as one of the reasons the minister would call-in an application and make a decision on it was if it *"could have significant effects beyond their immediate locality."*

HCS believes this is the case and fears that if the Castle Hill development is allowed, other ancient monuments could be at risk with the Government refusing to look at these often highly controversial applications and leaving the decision to local councils instead.

HCS Secretary Martin Kilburn says: *"There remains significant concern that approval of the Castle Hill development establishes a precedent which will mean any local authority can approve a major development within the green belt and curtilage of both listed and scheduled monuments anywhere in the country.*

"When this is coupled with a size of development which is accepted as being far greater than that needed simply in order to provide private funding of required public facilities, we struggle to understand why this does not fall within the identified remit of the Secretary of State.

"This is why HCS is both deeply disappointed and troubled by the decision of Robert Jenrick's department not to call-in the planning decision on Castle Hill.

"Our call-in was based on a desire by the society and many residents of Kirklees to avoid wholly inappropriate development on one of the most important green belt locations in Kirklees and to protect one of the north of England's most important heritage sites.

...other ancient monuments could be at risk with the Government refusing to look at these often highly controversial applications and leaving the decision to local councils instead.

"Current national policy has specific provisions to protect such sites which last October's planning decision failed to apply appropriately.

"Declining our call-in request flies in the face of current and proposed planning policy stated to provide protection for the green belt and protection for environmental and heritage assets – to include continuing to protect our treasured countryside and historic places.

"The grounds given for the decision are based on the contention that the Government is committed to giving more power to councils and communities to make their own decisions on planning issues and believes planning decisions should be made at the local level wherever possible.

"This decision appears to us to give tacit approval for wholesale breaches of national green belt policy.

"Despite the lack of call-in request, the development still cannot go ahead without Scheduled Monument Consent from Historic England. The level of our concerns regarding the proposed development are such that we will continue to lobby Historic England."

David Wyles

A Positive Spin On The Pandemic



Knaresborough Civic Society is small and, in common with many small societies, we have difficulties in not having enough people to take forward initiatives and we struggle to find new members and new committee members.

We have a website and a Facebook page. We have previously held regular meetings during the winter for members in a local hotel, limited by the size of the room to around 20-25 attendees but, to be honest, the size of the room has not been a problem! We make a modest charge for these events and we have an annual subscription charge.

Or at least that was the position for years before Covid came along. Face-to-face meetings were no longer an option and we decided that, as we were giving a poorer service to members, we would not charge subscription fees for 2020. We have made more of a feature of the 'free membership' for 2021 when we are again not charging subscriptions. So far two rounds of advertising by way of Facebook posts has brought us 7 new members, many of them much younger than the rest of us. This is more new members in one year than I can recall, indeed it may be more than we have had in my 8 years of being a member. We realise that we now have an obligation to satisfy these new members in the hope that they continue to support us and pay their 2022 subscriptions.

We have taken the first steps in offering online meetings. We started holding committee meetings on Zoom in July 2020 and I have come to think that these are often more efficient than holding face to face meetings. I'm not sure why that should be: perhaps people interrupt less and there is less informal chat? Two of our committee members have had difficulties with the technology, so effectively we have fewer committee members, though we have recruited one new committee member.

We managed to incorporate a home-grown speaker with our AGM which was also conducted via Zoom and then discussed holding member meetings with a speaker in the same way. We have advertised such events more widely than just to members and as a result the number of attendees has increased and this has been another route to recruiting new members. With committee meetings on the free Zoom package we ran two 40 minute meetings back to back with a brief break in between. However, with a professional speaker, we felt that was not acceptable, so we took the plunge to pay a Zoom subscription (£14.39 per month) to remove the 40 minute restriction. And

astonishingly we find ourselves going international with the next meeting including people from the Isle of Man, France, Holland, Italy, Spain and Pennsylvania! I have 40+ people who have said they will be attending this one, far more than we could accommodate normally.

I would not go so far as to say that we are now a thriving Civic Society, but the pandemic has unexpectedly brought new interest from a wider audience and I hope this will continue in future years. The additional cost of Zoom and the lack of incoming subscriptions is not viable long term, but we are lucky enough to have funds to carry on like this for the moment.

Ian Wright

DIALECT STREET SIGNS.. ..A NORTHERN THING?

It all started when we were up in Bishops Auckland pre Covid. I can recommend a visit there to enjoy the fruits of Jonathan Ruffer's Auckland Project. The restoration of Auckland Castle, the historical palace of the Bishop of Durham, is particularly of note….



Chare. There it was on a street sign. Castle Chare. What's a Chare? Wiki tells me that in the dialect of the North East, it is a narrow mediaeval street or alley. Well, that made perfect sense!

But what of Wynd? I've also seen that on my travels. In Scotland or Northern England, it is typically a narrow lane or alley leading off a main thoroughfare.

Ginnel? The Yorkshire Historical Dictionary offers the meaning as a narrow entrance between houses and that many dialect words have been lost in recent times but 'ginnel' survives in good health, acceptable in polite conversation and even in newspaper articles. In that respect it can be compared with SNICKET.

In addition, in Wright's Dialect Dictionary it is contrasted with ENTRY which is specifically said to have a roof – unlike a ginnel.

If you've noticed any similar signs, please let us know!

Judith Blackburn



Editor's note

Finkle Street in Selby (left) is said to be derived from a Norse word "vincle" - a corner, bend or angle, particularly one in a narrow, winding street. It can also mean crooked, as in bent, or a short winding street - either way it's a good description of the street in Selby.

HALIFAX COAL DROPS

Most people in Halifax know about them. Most have an opinion on them. Most agree that *something should be done about them*, but no one has much of an idea what that could be. The Coal Drops in Berry Lane are a bit of a conundrum.



Photo: Dee Weaver, taken in 2009

Constructed in 1874 for the Ovenden & Halifax Junction Railway Company, the coal drops occupy the site of the former Vicarage for Halifax Parish Church (now Halifax Minster) which is just across the road. The top of the Minster tower can be just seen beyond the trees in the photo above, with the drops amongst the trees and fronted by a large grassed area. These are Grade II listed, and described by Historic England as "a rare and large scale example of railway coal drops."

The coal drops played an important part in the transporting of coal from the mine to its final destinations. Built into the sloping hillside with the coal sidings on a higher level above them, they comprise 15 wooden bunkers, each supported between stone piers; each with two iron doors raised by an iron ratchet geared pulley system. Trains pulling wagons full of coal would arrive in the sidings on the line above the drops and discharge their coal into the bunkers for storage. Coal merchants would then back their horse-drawn carts into the space underneath the bunkers, a load would be dropped into the cart, and then they would head off to the nearby weighbridge before continuing on their journey.

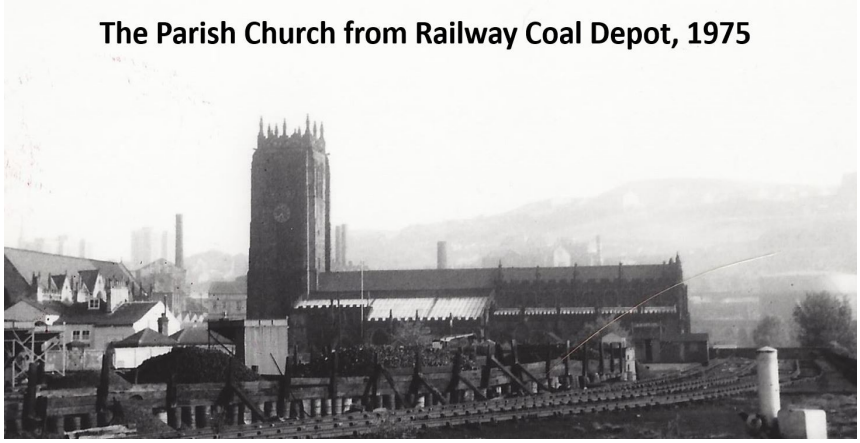


Photo courtesy of David Glover

The Halifax coal drops fell out of use some time in the 1960s, although this photo shows coal still being stored on the sidings in 1975. Over the years there have been several suggestions for their re-use, my favourite being a tea room with a chair-lift connecting them to the top of Beacon Hill which stands majestically over the town, but none of them were very practical, and no one offered funds for any work.

Until around 15 years ago the local Parks department used to keep them clear of weeds, but then a piece of masonry fell off one of them, so they were deemed a danger to the public. A fence was erected to keep people away from them, but this blocked access for the weed clearing, so since then the coal drops have been quietly deteriorating, completely hidden by a belt of young trees growing in front of and through them. Halifax Civic Trust (HCT) have been keeping a watching brief on them for many years now, while accepting that the austerity of the past decade means that Calderdale Council (CMBC) have no spare funds for their upkeep.



Photo: Dee Weaver, taken March 2021

There is currently a major road upgrading scheme ongoing to improve access to the town via the A629 south of Halifax, and part of this plan will reduce the grassed area in front of the coal drops by about 50%. We approached Calderdale Council to express our concerns about this but the plans are now fixed and cannot be altered. However, a zoom meeting was held between a representative from HCT, a conservation officer, and representatives from the A629 project, and it was agreed that the coal drops needed some attention. The first task was, sadly, to remove the young trees before they could mature to the point where their roots would damage the structure of the drops. This was done in early March this year (2021), carefully and in consultation with the Tree Preservation Officer who selected a few trees which were safe to keep. The deterioration of the newly exposed coal drops is alarming, to say the least.

The next step will be a full structural survey to establish the minimum work necessary to ensure the future stability of the coal drops. The ball is now in the court of CMBC's Conservation Officers, to raise funding and organise the survey. Following that, there will need to be discussion and debate on what, if anything, to do with them to give them a renewed focus and purpose. The new A629 scheme will create an improved footpath/cycleway between the town centre and the nearby Hebble Trail and onward to the canal towpath network which is such a beautiful asset in this area. The route will go right past the coal drops, so they will be seen and hopefully admired by locals and visitors alike. At the very least we'd like to see some information boards and perhaps picnic tables so that people can take a break while they admire the view of Beacon Hill and our 12th century Minster next door.

Dee Weaver

NOT YOUR AVERAGE GRADE II LISTING!





Is it a house? No. Is it a building? No. It's a structure. To be more specific, it's the ROCKERY ADJACENT TO REETH COTTAGE, MAIN STREET, AYSGARTH, in Wensleydale.

I have been many times to the area walking and of course visiting the magnificent and spectacular falls especially after a lot of rain. But I had never come across this until I was researching something on the Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP) website. My attention was grabbed immediately by the title of the article written by Hannah Kingsbury, (Cultural Heritage Officer) "*The most unusual listed building in the Yorkshire Dales?*"

There are over 1,800 listed buildings in the Park and anything of heritage significance are included, such as structures like lime kilns, bridges and milestones.

The article informs that Aysgarth Rockery is a picturesque alpine rockery that was built at the beginning of the 20th Century using blocks of limestone to create a rockscape and water feature. it was commissioned in the years before the First World War by Frank Sayer-Graham who owned the cottage opposite. The 1843 tithe records reveal that the land was previously classed as an "arable garden", so was likely used as a vegetable patch. Sayer-Graham was a keen horticulturalist – he had planted fields of tulips around Aysgarth and set up his own nursery next door to his home.

It was spot listed as Grade II in 1988 in order to prevent its destruction, and since then it has been restored to its former glory.

The rockery stones are reported to have been brought to this site from a field just to the west of the village. The builders, James Backhouse and Son of York, were well known rockery builders and alpine nurserymen from the late 1850s. (The rockery houses a large and varied collection of alpine plants which is not covered by the listing.)

The cultivation of alpine plants had become popular from the mid-century onwards. Interest was fuelled by plant hunting expeditions to faraway parts of the world and by books written by men such as William Robinson and Reginald Farrer. Enthusiasts created rock gardens to show off their plants to great effect, and some nursery firms became specialists in building these so that anyone could have their own little alpine paradise at home, albeit on a very small

scale.

Construction began in 1906. The rockery in Aysgarth is a rare surviving example of a “walk through grotto” type. Sayer-Graham may also have had advice from the famous alpine specialist and plant hunter, Reginald Farrer. (Farrer published many books but is best known for *My Rock Garden*.)

The rock garden itself is constructed from massive blocks of waterworn limestone that were transported there from a nearby location – a hugely difficult task. Today, this is a nationally important garden; however, the movement of this limestone would now be considered environmental vandalism. Limestone Pavement Orders afford statutory protection for limestone pavements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which prohibits the removal or damage of limestone within the designated area. Many limestone pavements have also been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest for their geology as well as their natural habitat.



The limestone blocks create the rockscape, rising to about 8 metres in places with narrow winding paths through giving that “grotto” feel. This rockscape results in countless planting pockets providing a variety of micro-climates for the garden to be planted with a variety of choice specimens of alpines and ferns (likely supplied from the Backhouse nurseries originally). There is also a mountain stream and cascade which add to the alpine atmosphere, and there is an open south facing area of lawn to the rear of the garden. After the creation of the rockery this lawned area continued to be cultivated as a vegetable garden for the house in an echo of the mid-19th Century usage of the plot. The rockery garden is contained within a walled enclosure with cast-iron railings.



By 1998, despite its protected status, the rock garden had become very neglected and overgrown. Unfortunately, there are no records of the original Rock Garden plantings and the large and varied collection of alpine plants are not covered by the listing. However, during the 2002 restoration many plants

were identified as likely to have been original. During the restoration expert advice was sought on design and planting from a garden historian and a professional alpine specialist.

Frank Sayer-Graham's garden was private – the original sign on the wrought iron entrance gate stated "private rock garden" – with visitors only being allowed to view by personal invitation. However, today the garden welcomes all visitors.

In September 2020 ownership of the garden transferred to the Aysgarth and District Parish Council and the garden is open every day.

Sadly, when I went to visit it, the gate was padlocked and I had to be satisfied with taking some photos over the wall. A phone call to one of the most helpful Councillors informed me that it is closed as they have to do a Risk Assessment for Insurance purposes…….. I'm to ring again after the next PC meeting on 8th April.

It would be interesting to hear about your most unusual listed building.

Judith Blackburn

"WHATS THE BIG IDEA"

A roof over the High Street and a riverside eco-park are just two of the radical new ideas being generated by Horbury Civic Society's WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA' consultation.



Following from its work on a response to the Wakefield Council Local Plan the Civic Society decided to ask residents to consider the big challenges facing Horbury over the next fifteen years and to come up with radical solutions.

The challenges were identified as: built environment and heritage; public health; the digital revolution; climate change; and nature conservation; and a questionnaire was devised so that people could supply their own suggestions.

The consultation runs from 1st March to 31st May and the questionnaire can be found at **https://horburycivicsociety.org.uk/projects-events/vision-for-horbury-a-place-plan/**

Graham Roberts, Chair of the Horbury Civic Society said "*Horbury is such a great place, but like everywhere else it faces the challenges that stem from changing habits in retail, climate change, bad development and loss of heritage protections; so want some big bold ideas for Horbury, ideas that we can run with and try to make some great things happen.*"

So far we have received some interesting ideas for new traffic flows, more

provision for cyclists, a new railway station, a roof over the High Street and part of Queen Street, more public art and a festivals, a riverside eco-park and a wildlife sanctuary between the River Calder and the canal.

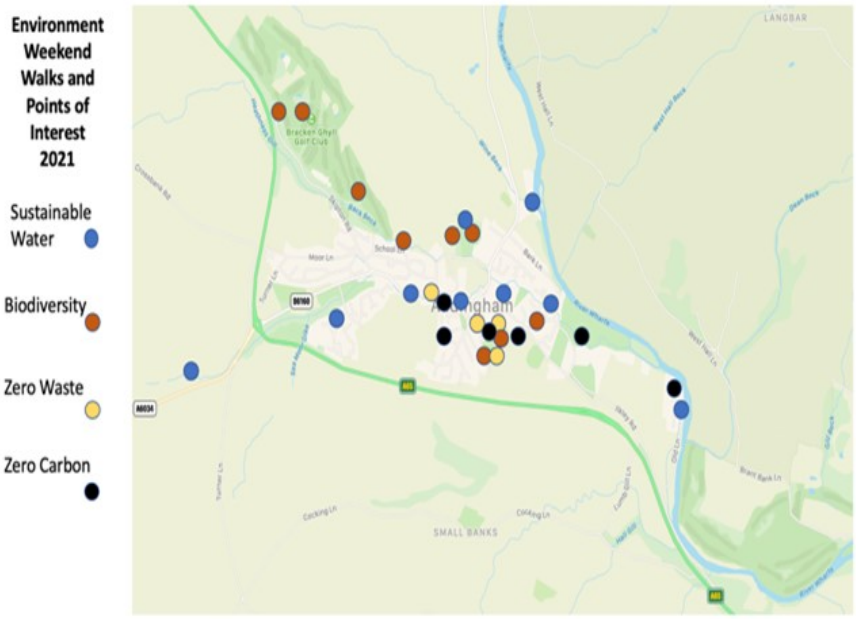
At the end of the consultation we will discuss these ideas with Wakefield Council and then do what we can to ensure that Horbury not only addresses the pressing challenges we face but also continues to raise its profile as a place where really interesting things happen.

For more information contact **info@horburycivicsociety.org.uk**

Graham Roberts

ADDINGHAM'S ENVIRONMENT WEEKEND WALKS

As you all know by now we, here in Addingham, have a very active Environment Group and vigorously pursue a 'Green Agenda'. Well, even with the huge disappointment of our cancelled **Environment Weekend** last year our Environment Group were not going to be deterred and this year they have planned an alternative to their 'physical' series of presentations/displays. In order to stay safe they are organising some self-guided walks in the village. The walks will pick up a range of points of interest that link to our environmental themes of *Biodiversity, Zero Carbon, Zero Waste and Sustainable Water.*



Residents and Visitors will be able to design their own route to cover all the points of interest. Here is a first draft of one of the maps to illustrate what we have planned.

There will be three outdoor "hubs" at which a Society member will be available with information and a display. At some of the points of interest there will also be a range of 'activities' on offer. We are delighted that St Peters Church has agreed that we can use the Church Field as one of the Hubs and we will be inviting families to end their walk in the field and, weather permitting, bring their own picnic!



There will be a map leaflet available nearer the time and for those who own a smart phone or tablet all the information will available on our website and the points of interest will each have their own QR code linking to further information. And finally, but most importantly everything is being planned to take account of Covid safety.

It's all going to take place over the weekend of the **15th and 16th of May** and like many in the Village we are all very excited about it!

Jim Robinson

CAPT. SIR TOM MOORE (1920-2021) RIP

Pontefract Civic Society worked quickly to bring back a Captain Tom VE Day NHS artwork created by Rachel List, who on hearing the sad news worked overnight to add an additional tribute for display on the balcony of the Red Lion in Market Place, Pontefract.



Photography courtesy of Phil Cook and Scott Wilson

Phil Cook, civic society Vice Chair, who coordinated the partners to deliver this tribute said, "*We are very honoured to be able to pay a special tribute to Captain Tom. Our Decoration Squad managed to bring this together in less than 24 hours with support from Rachel List, Chris Taylor (Tracked Spider Solutions), and Scott Wilson, the new landlord at the Red Lion*". Phil went on to say "*It seems appropriate to reuse the display we have to mark this sad time, and to honour Captain Sir Tom. RIP from a grateful community. Our thoughts are with you and your family.*"

Scott Wilson at the Red Lion said, "*We will get through this and come out the other side. Your legacy, Capt. Sir Tom, will live on, we will keep fighting, and we will keep smiling. Stand easy soldier, your work here is done. It's an honour to display the tribute to a truly amazing man.*"

As many will remember, Rachel List created a whole host of street art to celebrate the work of the NHS, frontline workers, and Capt. Tom, all at the request of property owners which captured the mood of the times. Following the sad news, a number of floral tributes were also left under one of the images at the Malt Shovel.

Paul Cartwright, civic society Chair said of Captain Sir Tom, "*A legend in his own lifetime, an officer and a gentleman, an inspirational optimist, and an immense NHS fundraiser. We clapped for you at 6pm on Wednesday, and we'll look for your bright star in the sky. Pontefract salutes you, Sir! Tomorrow Will Be A Good Day*".

SUCCESS IN SHOWCASING COMMUNITY GROUPS

Whilst restrictions on public events remained, Pontefract Civic Society turned a planned physical event into an incredibly successful online event run over five days on Facebook.

Paul Cartwright, civic society chair said "*Pontefract Community Showcase hosted by us was supported by 25 other local community groups and charities which each created either a short video or a slideshow to explain what they do, and in the hope of gaining more support and new members. Our Citizenship Group Coordinator, Phil Cook led the project spending over 90 hours on it, which is a feat in itself.*"

Each group was showcased on different days which gave a could spread of types of groups including volunteering, gardening, sports, dance, health and much more, which should be of interest for people looking for help or an activity to get involved in, whether Pomfretians, or new people coming to live in the area.

Phil Cook went on to say "*We also produced four videos for the civic society*

which demonstrated the breadth of different interests, activities and campaigns that we are involved in to make Pontefract a better place. We shared 29 videos from all participants, on a geographical basis, to between 7 to 15 Facebook groups across the east of the district, with an estimated reach per group of between 40k and 80k that reach equates to videos being seen 1.5 million times."

Pontefract Civic Society has received positive feedback from most spotlighted groups. We're now moving onto street decorations for loads of events throughout 2021 starting with the Royal British Legion Centenary in May, followed by highlighting major sporting events, liquorice and all things Yorkshire, which will brighten up the town as residents, businesses and visitors move into the 'new normal'.

Paul Cartwright chair of Pontefract Civic Society has reflected on the year since the first Lockdown and what this meant for Pontefract Civic Society? Paul said, *"Following a pause in April to allow to re-plan, all internal meetings were moved online, which to some members was a challenge, that was soon followed by our monthly talks programme, then engagement with Wakefield Council, rail stakeholders, and the civic movement, nationally and regionally."*

Phil Cook, Vice Chair at Pontefract Civic Society said *"We had to adapt by shifting physical events onto social media using slideshows for our Community Showcase, then video skills being learnt on the job for VE Day, A Taste of Liquorice, Yorkshire Day and Heritage Open Days."* For VE Day, the civic society had scheduled street decorations, a period newspaper, and a town hall concert, all of which had to be put on ice.



As local artist, Rachel List, captured the public mood, the civic society commissioned one piece of work for VE Day and Captain Tom Moore, an art trail leaflet as a resource for families and schools, then the preparation for our 2021 Calendar where the Prince of Wales Hospice became the main beneficiary, receiving £4,149.25.

"Optimism, collective thinking and responsibility" is what Paul said in one business campaign articles last year gathering quotes and setting up photoshoots throughout the year to support the business community. The civic society also partnered with a business coach to run sessions for businesses, which strangely received little support, so that activity ceased. Paul went on to say, *"A more positive opportunity was the 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme, when the Council's economic growth team sought our support in recruiting Pontefract's businesses to register; a tremendous success saw the numbers of hospitality businesses registered rise in two days from 17 to over 30."*

We partnered with the Royal British Legion staging closed ceremonies for VJ Day, and Remembrance Day, and 1,500 bottle bottoms were painted by the community to create the fantastic poppy display on the Town Hall and Valley Road. At Christmas, shop windows were judged by eight pupils from six schools across Pontefract Academies Trust schools and St Giles Academy with the winners being presented with certificates namely Jolly's Café, Hark Interiors, and Jackie's Florist. We've encouraged the community to submit their recollections for the 'Pontefract Stories' project, and finally, with the support of Rachel List, and landlord Scott Wilson at The Red Lion, we remembered Captain Tom Moore.

Paul Cartwright

YHACS
YORKSHIRE & HUMBER
Association of Civic Societies

Reg. Charity No. 1112290

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Please send any articles, comments, letters or questions to the editor:

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The Yorkshire and Humber Association of Civic Societies (YHACS) is the distinct voice of the civic society movement in the Yorkshire and Humber region, and our vision is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens in the region by engaging citizens not only in the protection of local heritage but also in the promotion of sustainable economic development and urban renaissance.

Future Events/Dates In 2021

Mon 26th April	**A Civic Voice event "New planning rules: What do they mean for you and your community?" See https://bit.ly/32r6q1U for details. Tickets £10 for Civic Voice members**
Sat17th July	**YHACS Summer Meeting - by Zoom, co-hosted by Leeds Civic Trust**

NEXT YHACS MEETING

SATURDAY 24TH APRIL 2.30 – 4:00 PM
MEMBERS MEETING BY ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING
IN ASSOCIATION WITH BEVERLEY CIVIC SOCIETY

GUEST SPEAKER
HENRY WOOTTON, ARCHITECT FROM MIKHAIL RICHES

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