RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2022

So much has changed since writing the September newsletter.

The Nation's satisfaction at being able to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee lapsed rapidly in early September upon the passing of the late Queen. The opening of the Carolean era has been marked not only by war in Ukraine, United Nations climate warnings, risks to energy supply and the cost of living but also government turbulence (of which, in this newsletter, perhaps the least said the better).

We know this all too well, so let's just record and remember the announcement of the Accession of King Charles III at Ripon Town Hall.



We reflect on many of the changes in our Elizabethan Age.

2022 has been the anniversary of Wilfrid's settlement of Ripon, this being marked by the installation of his ledger stone in the Cathedral.



Elsewhere, Society members were asked for their thoughts on what matters to them as we go forward.

Enjoy reading.

Christopher Hughes

‘What you told us’

It’s important that organisations are aware of how they are perceived by their members and users. Civic societies are no exception.

Mandy Whitehead and David Hall have worked on compiling a survey for members. This had been available via email though “hard” copies had also been sent out to those members without access to the internet. 27 responses had been received – 26 via email, one by post.

The responses were summarised and presented to the Annual General Meeting:

- there had been a constructive and positive response to the survey
- commenting on planning applications is considered particularly important by the membership, as were promoting the green agenda, offering a talks programme and organising Heritage Open Days. Conversely, organising external trips, working with fellow Civic Societies and the biennial Design Awards are rated lowest in priority.
- half the respondents expressed an interest in becoming more involved and using their skills to help the society
- more time was requested for general discussion at meetings although the provision of refreshments was less clear
- 75% of respondents would be interested in continuation of an online meetings facility
- Nearly 60% of the respondents are aged over 60 and only 25% have been a member for less than five years. This suggests that recruitment should be a focus for the future
- All but one respondent agreed (5) or strongly agreed (21) with the following statement: *For over 50 years we have had the welfare of the City, its buildings, its heritage and its environment as our cause*
- All respondents agreed (1) or strongly agreed (26) with the following statement: *how important is it to you that we continue to have a flourishing Civic Society which continues to promote the welfare of the City, its buildings and its environment?*

Where’s Ripon’s ‘local list’?

Local lists may be compiled of buildings and structures that are not otherwise designated as listed buildings or scheduled monuments - properly called ‘non-designated heritage assets’.

Being on a local list does not confer any protection. Harrogate Borough Council’s Heritage Management guidance and Local Plan policy do require that the significance of a local list item is taken into account in planning decisions - but this would not stop the item being demolished.

That is, unless it is in a Conservation Area. The Character Appraisal for Ripon Conservation Area does identify buildings of local interest on maps (although there is not a list of them). This helps when planning applications are being decided but indifferent ways: for example, the former Kearsley's Warehouse on Trinity Lane is shown as being of local interest on the map and planning permission was refused for its demolition; the former Station Hotel on North Road, also in the conservation area, was mentioned as being of significance when planning permission was granted although it does not appear on the map. The former Girls High School on College Road was not on the local list yet, as we know, is now to be converted to apartments. The Society long advocated for its retention for local interest.

The character appraisal was prepared in 2009 and further potential candidates are likely to have emerged over time. The problem concerns items that are not in a conservation area. Naturally there may be hesitation on the part of Harrogate Borough Council to identify items for a local list when the practicality is that demolition cannot be prevented. Indeed this is the position taken by Ripon Civic Society. Did the neighbourhood plan miss this out? Is this stance still appropriate?

Brought on by research at Ripon Barracks, a list of identified military structures and buildings has been drawn up and submitted to Harrogate Borough Council as part of representations on the planning application. Historic England officers appear to accept the emerging significance of these items but to date have taken no action on listing or scheduling.

Greater Manchester Councils and other places have an agreed process for compiling and adopting local lists. Perhaps the new North Yorkshire Council can bring this about.

HODs … better than this?







The recent HODs programme has been the most extensive to date.

The Ripon BID (Business Improvement District) provided funding for production and distribution of an attractive brochure listing all 14 Ripon sites, several of them new to this annual event.

Although attendance was affected by weather and the period of State mourning:

- the Courthouse cell was highly successful with over 80 visitors
- the Cathedral central tower visits had been sold out with two additional tours provided
- weather had detracted from numbers visiting the workhouse garden
- the guided walk on industrial heritage created and led by David Winpenny attracted 33 visitors in perfect weather
- the possibility of including military heritage in future years

Thanks to all those who opened their properties and to Andrew Curtis and Richard Taylor for co-ordinating the arrangements.

The Elizabethan Age

We should be familiar with the new King's commitment to the environment over several decades. His championing of heritage craft skills is evident and exemplified by the restoration projects carried out in his name. In one guise or another this momentum surely will be continued.

The Elizabethan age itself saw astonishing change. Here are a few markers, both nationally and for Ripon itself:

- slum clearance - council house building
- Green Belts to prevent town expansion and coalescence
- the Clean Air Act 1956 - remember the smog from coal power
- *Traffic in Towns* - the 1964 'Buchanan Report' addressing the rapid growth of road traffic and how to accommodate it
- the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and introduction of Conservation Areas - Ripon Conservation Area dating from 1968
- the decline of heavy industries - mining, ship-building, textiles etc - and resulting extensive dereliction (and social impacts)
- urban regeneration through bespoke development corporations*'Jobs locked up in Planning Department filing cabinets'* (Michael Heseltine) - Planning moving from being creative / positive to regulatory and negative
- out of town shopping centres - exemplified by Meadowhall - and impact on town centres
- Garden Festivals - Liverpool, Gateshead, Stoke-on-Trent, South Wales
- population growth - *'Where Shall We All Live?'* 1992 (John Selwyn Gummer) - the seminal report that started housing target driven Planning
- London's growth as international financial centre - and acceleration of the South East in comparison with other regions
- climate change - recognition of impact of fossil fuel dependence
- renewable energy - coming to terms with wind and solar power and power demands of increasing electrification
- zero-carbon - building design for passive energy and sustainable construction
- search for alternatives to the private car - promotion of active travel
- housing design based on more urban settings and public realm
- decline of the high street attributed to online shopping and revitalisation initiatives - Ripon as *'meeting place of choice'*

Updates

Girls High School / College lecture block
Progress is becoming apparent at the former Girls' High School on College Road as shown in this recent photograph of scaffolding and the developer's sign board.



Let's Talk North Yorkshire
The North Yorkshire councils' public conversation *Let's Talk* started in September. There are three strands: devolution, budget and local. Devolution *(Let's Talk Devolution)* concerns creation of a combined authority for North Yorkshire and the City of York. This would be led by a Mayor and would carry the £540m 'devolution deal' arranged with Government.
The budget consultation *(Let's Talk Money)* is self-explanatory.
What matters most to the Society is engagement on *Let's Talk Local*. There is a survey to respond to and as Society members you are encouraged to do this in person if you wish. The Committee plans to do so as well. https://letstalkny.commonplace.is
You are asked for what you like about your local area, what you think makes a good place to live, how satisfied you are with your area and what improvements you would like to see. There's room to share other thoughts on what you think is important about your area.
The survey invites comments on possible Community Network areas - there's one for Ripon - whether the boundaries are acceptable or not and if so what should be altered.
Finally you are invited to tell the new Council what you think its priorities should be over the next three years.

December talk reminder
Our meeting is on Thursday 1st December when we'll hear Gail Falkingham explain *Researching Garden History at the North Yorkshire County Record Office*. Attendance arrangements as normal, please … and talks in 2023 start on Thursday 5 January when David Winpenny proposes now to talk about *'Nijinsky's Camel' - Gladys, Second Marchioness of Ripon, as Patron of the Arts* (and not Rowels, Mowers and saddle trees).

Full Stop

I stepped down as RCS Chairman at the Annual General Meeting and shall no longer be involved with the Society, other than as a member.

The Society is in the good hands of the committee as it moves forward. I've been pleased to see the responses to the member survey. I'm sure that these will be helpful.

Each Chair brings their own knowledge, interests and skills to their time in office. My own has seen making of the Ripon (City) Neighbourhood Plan and the planning application for redevelopment of the barracks. It has coincided with local government reorganisation and the arrival next April of the single North Yorkshire Council. There was also the pandemic and our adapting to digital operations. It was good to be able to restore the Design Awards.

I've no intention of being a back seat driver but I do need to mention three matters that I really urge the Society to embrace.

Do give your voice to Ripon as it moves forward with the new Council. You understand the city's history, where it's come from, how it relates to other places, how it could be an even better place. This is a time to look beyond the city boundary. Do engage with the current 'Let's Talk Local' initiative and the potential to be a player in a prospective Ripon Community Network.

Next, be confident and engage positively with today's three big development issues - the Cathedral's needs, the Spa Baths and Clotherholme. None of these will be delivered over night.

Last, but definitely not least, I encourage the Society to think back forty years and its setting up of the Ripon Museum Trust. Today there is the pressing need to recognise, conserve and interpret the military heritage of Ripon Barracks as it rapidly emerges. While others work towards a Ripon Military Heritage Trust, the Society is the only clear and present voice to lay the ground for what must be a strong addition to the collective strands of heritage and community that make Ripon the intriguing place that we all know.

Best wishes to you all *Christopher Hughes*