RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

May 2023

RIPON MILITARY HERITAGE TRUST IS LAUNCHED



Some of the Trustees of the Ripon Military Heritage Trust at the launch : (l to r) Jane Furse (Ripon Civic Society Executive Committee member), Stuart Martin MBE, Lt Col (Retd) Bob Lisle, Michael Furse.

A NEW RIPON GROUP was launched in Ripon's Market Square on 21 May, when members of the Ripon Military Heritage Trust (RMHT) took part in Army Day.

RMHT has been established 'to research, conserve, interpret and provide access to the tangible and intangible military heritage of the city of Ripon and its environs'. The Trust was launched as the result of extensive research carried out by members of the Civic Society. This was in response to the planning application for an urban extension to Ripon on the site of the Ministry of Defence's Claro and Deverell Barracks at Clotherholme Army Camp, north-west of the city.

The research revealed that not only was there a very limited understanding of the significance and importance of the military heritage of the site - mostly concentrated on the large camp that embraced Ripon in World War I - but also that the role of Ripon from 1939 and into the Cold War is of considerable national and international importance.

STUDLEY HALL ON TELEVISION



If you came to Mark Newman's talk on Studley Hall last autumn (and you missed a fascinating evening if you didn't!) you may like to know that Mark will be discovering the Hall's archaeology on television's 'The Great British Dig: History in Your Garden'. The programme is on More4 at 9.00pm on Thursday 22 June. Do tune in!

In this issue

Skell Valley stories Page 2
Planning Matters:
Ripon Cathedral Page 3
Beeches Farm Page 4
N Yorkshire Timber Page 4
Keep your eyes open! Page 4
Working with others Page 4
Hurrah for HODs Page 5
Ripon Canal is 250 Page 5
New NR 'Pevsner' Page 5
Programme of Talks Page 5
Membership Reminder Page 5

www.riponcivicsociety.org,uk
info@riponcivicsociety.org.uk
Registered Charity No: 517434

The Royal School of Military Engineering was evacuated to Ripon in 1940. It trained soldiers for most of the major battles and operations of World War II. It was also the place where Bailey bridges were developed and tested, and where troops were trained to construct and use them.

After the war Ripon continued to play a critical role; in the Laver Banks Training Area two important post-war bridges survive. The Heavy Girder Bridge, successor to the Bailey bridge and used mainly in West Germany by the British Army of the Rhine, is thought to be the



The Heavy Girder Bridge

only example left in Britain. The Demolition Training Bridge, built to show different versions of German bridges, was used as part of NATO training. Pioneering bomb disposal techniques were also developed at Laver Banks.

The Trust's first major task is to secure a number of the surviving structures on a site at Laver Banks and develop a military heritage centre alongside countryside trails which will interpret the city's unique military heritage. Talks with the Ministry of Defence, Homes England (which has applied to develop the site) and the local planning authority have been going on for some time. The Trust's long-term aim is to continue researching and preserving Ripon's long and varied military heritage.

Ripon Civic Society Co-Chairman Richard Taylor says, 'We are very pleased that the Ripon Military Heritage Trust has been launched and is already raising a great deal of interest both in the city and beyond. The Society is proud to have helped bring into life another group dedicated to preserving and promoting Ripon's history and heritage, 41 years after we helped found the Ripon Museum Trust. We are confident that the Ripon Military Heritage Trust will grow and flourish like its older sibling!'

To donate to the Trust or to volunteer, contact the Trust for more information:
mail@riponmht.org

UNTOLD STORIES OF THE SKELL VALLEY



THE SKELL VALLEY PROJECT, an innovative, four-year scheme co-led by the National Trust and Nidderdale AONB to conserve, enhance and celebrate the River Skell, is embarking on an exciting new oral history venture. The Project wants to hear experiences of living and working in the Skell Valley. It is looking for people to share their stories of everyday life here, whether it's about farming or working in the valley, growing up and childhood days, memories of past generations, local characters, and some of the wartime history, too.

Oral history, the organisers say, is exactly that – talking about the past! Anyone who takes part will have an informal chat with a couple of volunteers who will record the stories at home or home or another convenient place.

There is currently not a great deal of archive information about twentieth century life in the the 12-mile length of the Skell Valley, which runs along Skell River, from Dallowgill, through busy rural villages and into the city of Ripon. The Project hopes that by speaking to members of the community about their lives in the valley the rich local history of the last century is documented and brought to life for future generations.

Volunteers are also needed to help carry out oral history interviews to collect the stories; full training will be provided.

To share a story or to volunteer get in touch with Karen Collins, Skell Valley Heritage Officer, on 07816 204585, ren.collins@nationaltrust.org.uk.

For more information about the Skell Valley Project visit: nationaltrust.org.uk/skellvalleyproject

PLANNING MATTERS

RIPON CATHEDRAL



THE CONTROVERSIAL PLANNING APPLICATION by the Chapter of Ripon Cathedral for a new building on Minster Gardens continues to occupy much of the Executive Committee's deliberations.

As members of the Society will be aware, the Committee has objected to the plans. Our initial letter of objection, sent on 3 March, was based on the unacceptability of constructing a large building on Minster Gardens which are protected in both the Harrogate Local Plan and the Ripon Neighbourhood Plan as public open space, the effect the new structure would have on the setting of the adjacent listed buildings and the felling of at least ten trees - eight of them graded A1, with the central beech also a 'veteran'.

Since that letter, many more significant documents - many of them very technical - have been added to the North Yorkshire Council (NYC) Planning website in support of the application. In response, the Society has submitted a number of further comments. We point out that NYC will need to have assessed these complex documents before the application goes to committee and may need to get expert advice, which may take some time. Without such scrutiny, the Society cannot have confidence in any decision.

This is probably the most significant planning application in Ripon for many years and is of national importance because of its historic setting. This is reflected in the level of public interest both in support and opposition. The Society therefore believes that the decision on the application should be taken by the Strategic Planning Committee and not by the Area Constituency Planning Committee.

In our first letter of objection we urged that any new building should be on the cathedral-owned Stonemasons' Yard. One of the latest documents purports to address this, but simply superimposes the proposed building in the Stonemasons' Yard with no serious attempt at redesign or breaking down the different elements to fit. The Society does not consider that the applicant has demonstrated satisfactorily that a quality building of a different design cannot be set back into the stone yard.

Transport matters are not yet adequately dealt with; further comments from North Yorkshire Highways are awaited. The Society is not satisfied that parking surveys are adequate, that the potential impact of construction traffic on listed buildings and walls and on trees has been sufficiently addressed, and that problems with servicing any new structure are properly considered.

The Society reiterates its objections to the loss of trees and highlights its belief that the proposed mitigation planting is insufficient to offset such a loss.

Historic England has noted that the loss of archaeological material on the site would represent 'considerable harm' to its heritage significance. The Society is, however, concerned that they then conclude, subjectively, that this serious loss is only moderate because it is balanced by the delivery of 'notable public benefits for both Cathedral and City'. The Society considers that the views of the NYC archaeologists should be sought.

In a related concern, the Society believes that the response by Building Control to reports on the stability of the land because of Ripon's gypsum deposits and the means of mitigating the risks is inadequate. NYC needs to ensure there is an expert opinion on the adequacy of these reports before a decision is made. (*see also 'North Yorkshire Timber, page 4*)

The Society reiterates its support for the need of the cathedral to have new facilities; but urges a rethink as to the location.

The latest letter can be read in full at **https://riponcivicsociety.org.uk/planning-correspondence/**

BEECHES FARM, MAGDALENS ROAD

PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING applications to convert existing agricultural buildings at The Beeches, Magdalen's Road, to become two houses, as well as the demolition of agricultural buildings, the realignment of the boundary wall, improving the access track and landscaping works, were brought to the attention of the Society. The plans affect the Grade I Chapel of St Mary Magdalene and adjacent Grade II listed buildings.



The Society was generally supportive of the applications and endorsed the comments made by Historic England and other conservation bodies that the scheme offers the potential to enhance the setting of the Chapel and bring redundant buildings back into use. Historic England asked that a rural, open, character is maintained in any development, and that conditions could be attached to any planning consent to controls the erection of garden structures that might follow a fundamental change of character of the agricultural building to residential use.

There were some concerns, though, about the potential highway and traffic implications arising from the proposals. Whilst the Society would support a barrier to restrict vehicles to the site using the access road which serves the Chapel and the adjacent almshouses, we said that, if this road is closed, an adequate turning facility for users of the Chapel and adjacent residents should be provided as part of this development so that vehicles would not have to reverse into Magdalen's Road. The application has not yet been determined.

NORTH YORKSHIRE TIMBER, TRINITY LANE

IN THE LAST NEWSLETTER we reported on the plans to convert part of the former North Yorkshire Timber (and before that the warehouse for Kearsley's Ironworks) and build houses next to it. The planning application was refused permission by the then Harrogate Borough Council, and the applicant went to appeal.

The Inspector carefully considered the council's reason for refusal. She decided that partial demolition on the site, the location of the houses in relation to other nearby structures and the effect on the Conservation Area would be less than significant.

She agreed with the Council, however, on the matter of ground stability. She notes: 'Policy NE9 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that where development is proposed on potentially unstable land the developer demonstrates that appropriate measures can be put in place to ensure that the development can be safely undertaken and that there are no significant risks of instability over the lifetime of the development.'

This is especially relevant given Ripon's gypsum problems. She concludes that 'the specific requirements of Policy NE9 have not been met in that there is no physical intrusive ground investigation which demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt that the site can be developed as proposed and the specific foundations required to do so.' The appeal was therefore dismissed. The applicants have submitted a revised planning application.

- The need to have clear demonstration that the development can be safely undertaken and remain stable is pertinent to most developments in Ripon - including the proposals at Ripon Cathedral (see Page 2).



KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN!

OUR BIENNIAL AWARDS are due to be held in May next year, so let us know of any new buildings, restorations, craftsmanship or environmental works that we might consider. E-mail your suggestions to *info@riponcivicsociety.org.uk*

HURRAH FOR HODs



HERITAGE OPEN DAYS (HODs) will be with us again in September. Running from 8 to 17 September, this is your chance perhaps to visit some of Ripon's not-so-public spaces or to learn something new about the city and the surrounding area.

Plans are currently being finalised, but properties open include The Gazebo (*above*), behind the sheltered housing on Blossomgate. This is the annual chance to visit this fascinating garden building with its two turrets and walkway, built as a garden ornament for a large house in Park Street.

Ripon and District Light Railway will again open its engine shed, displaying a wide range of industrial artifacts. It will also link in with the celebrations of Ripon Canal's 250th anniversary (*see opposite*).

There will be a chance to explore Ripon's industrial past on the guided walk, first held last year, called 'Rowels, Mowers and Saddle Trees'. This takes visitors to the sites of many of Ripon's former industries, with some surprising insights - like this terracotta panel on the former offices of the Yorkshire Varnish Company, Low St Agnesgate. A walk looking at the city's trees is also planned.



- Look out for this year's **HODs leaflet**, with full details of all properties open and events. It is again being generously sponsored by the Ripon BID.

RIPON CANAL IS 250 YEARS OLD THIS YEAR



IT'S 250 YEARS since Ripon Canal, constructed to plans supplied by engineer John Smeaton, was opened to navigation.

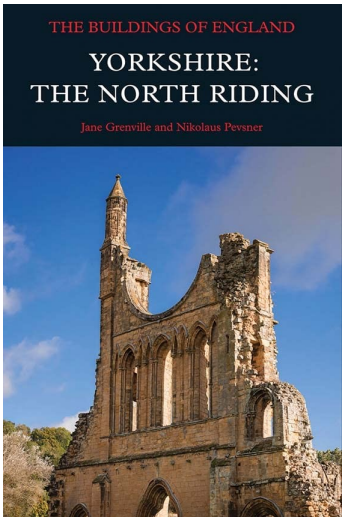
On 9 September this important anniversary will be celebrated at the canal basin by Bondgate Green. The event is being organised by Richard Willis, who owns and operates Ripon Scenic Cruises and provides trips from the canal basin.

Representatives from a number of interested groups, including the Inland Waterways Association, the Canal and River Trust, RSPB and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, as well as Ripon Civic Society, will be present.

There are plans to unveil a commemorative plaque, and there will be entertainment canal-based duo Rose & Castle.

Do go along and enjoy this special event.

NEW NORTH RIDING 'PEVSNER' PUBLISHED



THE LATEST EDITION of the 'Buildings of England' architectural guides - usually known by the name of their originator as 'Pevsners' - is '***Yorkshire: The North Riding***'.

This is the first revision to the volume originally published in 1966. It's full of fascinating detail - though not, of course, about Ripon itself, which appears in the '***Yorkshire West Riding: Leeds, Bradford and the North***' volume.

PROGRAMME OF TALKS AND OTHER EVENTS

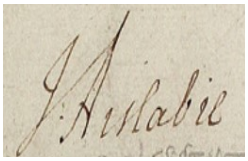
As promised, here's the programme of talks until May next year; put the dates in your diary!



■ **7 September:** Tony Hunt, YAA Mapping - A lost manor house at Hutton Conyers and other discoveries

■ **8-17 September**: Heritage Open Days (*see page 5*)

■ **5 October**: Vicky Grindrod, Skell Valley Project Archivist - 'Digging deep in the archives'. The Vyner archive of correspondence and ephemera pertaining to John Aislabie and the Studley Estate



■ **2 November**: AGM and brief talk by David Winpenny: Ripon Historic Town map

■ **7 December**: Paula Ware, MAP Archaeology Ltd. - 'A Tale of Three Chariots' - the Pocklington Bronze Age Burial Site excavation



■ **4 January 2024**: Colin Slator - 50 Years of High Batts Nature Reserve

■ **1 February**: Terry Williams - The History and Development of the Leeds to Ripon Railway Line

■ **7 March**: Neil Redfern, Executive Director of the Council for British Archaeology - 'Thornborough Henges - a recent gift to the Nation'



■ **4 April**: Design Awards Evening

■ **2 May**: Mick Stanley - 'Ripon in Stone'

All our talks take place at the Workhouse Museum, Allhallowgate, Ripon HG4 1LE, starting at 7.30pm; tea, coffee and biscuits from 7.00pm. Everyone is welcome; non-members pay £3.00.

MARCHIONESS GLADYS GETS ABOUT



David Winpenny's talk 'Nijinsky's Camel' on Gladys, 2nd Marchioness of Ripon, on January, has renewed interest in her racy and artistic life. David has spoken about her on a cruise ship, and is booked to tell her story in Bolton-by Bowland, Hexham and Ruislip! If you missed hearing about her racy life, complete with tales of opera and ballet, try to catch up!

MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

A gentle reminder from our Membership Secretary that by now you should have paid your subscription for this year: if you have overlooked doing so, she will be glad to receive it!

Thank you to all those who have paid already; your promptness helps us to ensure our work in caring for the city of Ripon and the surrounding area can continue - and you can also continue to enjoy some top-class talks and receive this newsletter!

And if you've enjoyed the talks and want to support the Society, why not bring a friend (or two!) along to the next one - and encourage them to join? We'd welcome them very warmly.

RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

THIS YEAR'S COMMITTEE

President - Nigel Rawlinson
Co-Chairmen - Richard Taylor and David Winpenny
Treasurer - Paul Jackson
Membership - Alison Brayshaw (co-opted)
Planning Lead - Rachel Wigginton
Website, Talks & Visits, Design Awards - David Hall
Military Heritage - Jane Furse
Heritage Open Days - Andrew Curtis
Skell Valley Project, Ripon ReViewed, Ripon Together - Mandy Whitehead
Communications - David Winpenny
Newsletters and External Relations - Richard Taylor and David Winpenny