RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER
January 2024

PLANS FOR REVIVING SPA BATHS GOING SWIMMINGLY!



RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY has warmly welcomed and supported new plans for the Spa Baths on Park Street.

For the Society, the Spa Baths have long been of concern. For many years the swimming pool itself was in severe need of care, with some of the floor propped up from below. In 2007 the then Harrogate Borough Council looked at three proposals form the building - short-term refurbishing, total demolition and using the site for a new swimming pool, or partial demolition and conversion 'for residential use' while to build a new pool elsewhere. The Council planners' recommendation to councillors was the third of these options.

There was much local opposition. The Society was part of a consortium that was determined to save the Spa Baths and retain full public access the main interiors of the 1904 building - particularly the entrance, formerly the Pump Room. In the face of this opposition - and more particularly, perhaps, with the severe economic crisis around the world just at this time, the plans were dropped.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Welcome to 2024! This will be our 56th year, and this newsletter will show that we are in good heart and still battling on (sometimes almost literally . . .)

And as it's new year, here's a (gentle) reminder that your membership fee for the year is now due. It would make our Membership Secretary's life very easy if you would pay straight away - and it would save you the embarrassment of being reminded!

THANK YOU!

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Detail of stained glass in the Spa Baths Pump Room

Now of course, we have our shiny new pool at the Jack Laugher Leisure and Wellness centre (with its associated problems of subsidence) and the Spa Baths have been empty for some time. They were put up for sale and, after a considerable delay, were sold to Sterne Properties, a Ripon company that has already invigorated the former NatWest bank, now the Claro Lounge and the premises that were the Curzon Cinema in North Street.

The plans, drawn up with local architect Andrew Burningham of AB Architecture, will see the demolition of the 1930s brick shed that sheltered the pool, and the recreation of a conservatory that originally graced the rear of the Edwardian building. Careful stripping back of the accretions of more than a century in the building have revealed more of the decorative fittings and tiling, and these will be retained and enhanced.

The Pump Room will be preserved as a public entrance, and the wings will become retail units - possibly for spa treatments - or other commercial uses. After the demolition of the pool building, a small block of apartments, in keeping with the style of the Baths building, is planned. The buildings will form a small open square, pacing the Spa Gardens. The Society has discussed the layout of this area with the architect, to arrive at the best possible outcome to enhance the Gardens.

In our response to the planning application for the site we said, 'The Society very much welcomes this scheme which proposes to conserve and provide new uses for an important historic building in the city. Overall, it is a sensitive approach with historic structures cleansed of later inferior additions (including the 1936 pool) and with new-build in an unashamedly modern but complementary style and materials. We accept the need for the residential development as enabling development to make the scheme viable.'

We look forward to seeing the development come to fruition as soon as practicable.



AWARDS - NOMINATIONS WELCOME!



The winner of several of the Society's Awards in 2022, including the Helen Whitehead Salver for the Best Project, was Grantley Hall *(left)*. Now we are on the lookout for candidates for the 2024 Awards on 4 April. We welcome nominations for consideration by our Awards sub- committee, either in Ripon or in the villages and countryside around. Our categories are:

- Best New Building
- Best Restored Building
- Best Environmental Improvement
- Best Craftsmanship
- Best Contribution to City Centre Revitalisation
- Sustainability

Email **info@riponcivisociety.org.uk** if you can help!

‘DOUBLE DEVOLUTION’ QUEST FOR RIPON COUNCIL



THE NEW NORTH Yorkshire Council (NYC), which took over the responsibilities of Harrogate Borough Council in April, has chosen Ripon as one of the places where it is taking forward the idea of 'double devolution' - local councils taking over responsibility for the running and upkeep of local assets.

Ripon City Council (RCC) has put forward a plan to manage Ripon Town Hall, the Market Place and its car park, the city's public toilets and the Wakeman's House. The City Council is now to work with an evaluation board under the guidance of NYC's Assistant Chief Executive Rachel Joyce.

For the Society this raises some questions. The Society wrote to the Chief Executive of NYC that 'Our role is to try to ensure the wellbeing of the city - especially its buildings and environment. We therefore, as would be expected, wish to be confident that every care is taken, especially of the listed buildings that will come into RCC's care - especially the Grade 1 Obelisk and the Grade II* Town Hall and Wakeman's House. Constant surveyal and repair are needed for all these structures, and we would expect a full, published and property funded programme of inspections and of work undertaken.'

We asked that the evaluation board would make sure 'that all necessary processes are in place for the proper running, funding and care of these important feature of the city of Ripon' and that the board’s work is open to public scrutiny. We shall continue to watch progress.



RIPON MARKET SQUARE ROADS RESURFACING

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL has consulted Ripon Civic Society about the proposal to resurface the carriageway of **Ripon Market Place**. We replied that the Society knows that the surface of tegular blocks has regularly suffered. Heavy traffic - not least the regular 36 bus service - has undoubtedly greatly exacerbated these problems. The ultimate solution would be to remove such traffic from the Market Place. The Society is aware, of course of the opposition to any such move.

We therefore concluded that we can accept an asphalt material, as proposed, to replace the blocks. We suggest that, to provide a visual and practical link to the retained blocks on the centre of the Market Place and the pavements, consideration should be given to crossing strips that retain the blocks at strategic crossing points.



CATHEDRAL'S PLANS OPPOSED BY CITY COUNCIL



THE PLANS by Ripon Cathedral to construct a substantial building on part of Minster Gardens are reported to be going to the Area Planning Committee in the New Year. A new CGI image (above), displayed in the cathedral indicates how the building would look in relation to the listed buildings around it - the Grade I cathedral itself, the Grade II* Old Deanery, and the Grade II Courthouse Museum and Old Courthouse - and how it would impact on the gardens.

In a meeting before Christmas Ripon City Council, having previously supported 'the general principle' of the new building, voted to oppose the development.

The meeting heard from a number of opponents to the scheme, with concerns about the loss of trees and the effect the proposed new refectory would have on the city's cafes and other traders. Concern was also expressed about the stability of the ground and the disruption that would be caused by construction works.

We have made the Society's concerns about the scheme know in several letters North Yorkshire Council, and we shall report back to our members if there is further news - and especially when a decision on the application is made.

(Thanks to Andrew Curtis photographing the above

PLANNING MATTERS

RIPON RUGBY CLUB

RIPON RUGBY CLUB has submitted plans to build a 100-seater stand and associated structures and fencing, and to rearrange the parking. We supported the application in principle; we did not object to the black-coloured mesh fencing or to the relatively unobtrusive structures themselves.

We were, though, concerned about the plans to paint the buildings in the club colours. We said it was reasonable for seating and signage to be in blue and yellow, but that the large areas of coloured sheeting proposed for the buildings - particularly the main stand - should be in muted colours, such as mid grey to reduce their impact.

EAVESTONE, NIDDERDALE



A CAMPING SITE, described as a sustainable eco-development for yurts in woodland at Eavestone, in the Nidderdale National Landscape (the new name for Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) was given planning permission in 2020. The Society objected, saying it was inappropriate development in a particularly sensitive and tranquil area. We also objected to a second application, also permitted, to extend the site's operational season and to allow the structures to remain on-site all year.

The site is operational, although the development does not conform with the planning consents, with most of the yurts in different locations to those shown on the approved plans. A new application seeks to legitimise the changes.

Whilst we accept that the yurts are well screened and do not at present impact on public views from across the lake or significantly in longer views; but on the part of the site closest to the lake it is proposed to accommodate timber A-frame units, considerably larger and higher than the yurts. We are concerned that they would be clearly visible from the public footpath on the other side of the lake and above the currently uninterrupted natural tree cover.

We believe the changes proposed will fundamentally change what was originally promoted as a low key eco campsite and reduce the tranquillity of this sensitive area.

Additional ancillary 'wellness' structures are now proposed, for the site's guests. A 'pop-up' wedding venue with very large 22-foot yurts is also proposed - this is not part of this planning application. We do not consider that such intensification, with many more people using the site and its facilities the associated increased traffic, noise and lighting nuisance, is acceptable.

CLARO BARRACKS AND MILITARY HERITAGE

THE FORMATION of the Ripon Military Heritage Trust (RMHT) has underlined the importance that the Civic Society attaches to the future of the Claro Barracks site and its nationally important structures and buildings, including bridges and huts.

Both the Society and RMHT were assured at a meeting of Harrogate Borough Council Planning Committee in February that the draft 106 Agreement (by which the Council enters into a legally-binding agreement or planning obligation with the landowner, Homes England, as part of the granting of planning permission) would include a strategy to secure the military heritage.



It now appears that Homes England regard the 106 Agreement as unnecessary, and that conditions within the grant of planning would be enough. The Society and RMHT are alarmed by this suggestion, which goes against the assurances given at the planning meeting.

The Section 106 Agreement would have much more weight in the development of a strategy for protecting, preserving and interpreting the site that a condition in the outline planning consent, which could be superseded by a future full consent.

We have urged North Yorkshire Council, now the planning authority, to include the terms previously agreed. We are pleased that the two Ripon-based County Councillors, Cllr Williams and Cllr Brodigan, have agreed that the protection of the military heritage must be part of the section 106 Agreement.

OUR PROGRAMME

Here's the programme of talks and events until May 2024.

PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATE FOR OUR JANUARY MEETING



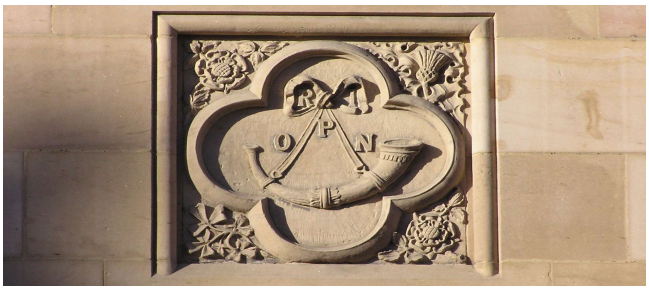
■ **11 January 2024**: "50 Years of the High Batts Nature Reserve" – Colin Slator, Chair of Trustees. High Batts was Winner of the Environmental Award in our 2022 Awards

■ **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.

HAVE YOU MET THE FOLLY FLANEUSE?



THIS PICTURE of a little-known folly, the Grotto Temple at Masham, recently appeared on 'The Folly Flaneuse' website, dedicated to extraordinary buildings.

The Flaneuse's well-researched and wonderfully illustrated descriptions of follies around the country include many not too far from Ripon; as well as the Masham Temple, she has written about, for example, Greygarth Tower at Dallowgill and Fisher's Hall at Hackfall.

If you subscribe to the site, you'll find a small, jewel of an essay appearing in your inbox each Saturday; they often open a window on some startling and amusing facts!

https://thefollyflaneuse.com/

RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

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THIS YEAR'S COMMITTEE
President - Nigel Rawlinson
Co-Chairmen - Richard Taylor and David Winpenny
Treasurer - Paul Jackson
Membership - Alison Brayshaw
Planning Lead - Rachel Wigginton
Website, Talks & Visits, Design Awards - David Hall
Heritage Open Days - Andrew Curtis
Skell Valley Project, Ripon ReViewed, Ripon Together - Mandy Whitehead
Member - Rachel Greenwood
Communications - David Winpenny
Newsletters and External Relations - Richard Taylor and David Winpenny