DRAFT UNTIL AGM 2025

RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting No 56
held on Thursday 7 November 2024
at the Workhouse, Allhallowgate, Ripon

Chaired by Nigel Rawlinson, President of the Ripon Civic Society.

Registered Charity Number 517434

Those present:
Robert Addyman, Alison Brayshaw, Allison Clark, Neill Clayton, Peter Goldsbrough, Glenn Griffiths, Malcolm Hanson, Paul Kershaw, Nigel Rawlinson, Marcus Ridley, John Roberts, Moira Smith, Mick Stanley, Peter Sutton, Bill Swaney, Stephen Swindells, Chris Tapster, Richard Taylor, David Wells, Mandy Whitehead, Rachel Wigginton, Richard Willis, David Wilson, David Winpenny

The President welcomed members and visitors, reminding them that this was the 56th AGM since the Society's foundation in 1968. Glenn Griffiths asked if anyone present had been there in 1968. David Winpenny said that he had been at the inaugural meeting.

1. **Apologies for absence were received from:**
Lynette Barnes, Andrew Curtis, Rachel Greenwood, David Hall, Irene Hall, Simon Hewitt, Paul Jackson, Ed Jagger, Heather Law, David Rhodes, Katie Sharpe, Gill Stanley, Ros Swaney

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 2 November 2023
These were accepted as a true record and signed by the President.

3. Co-Chairs' Report
David Winpenny reported in the form of an illustrated presentation.

The Society's purpose

At the 2023 AGM members voted some changes to the constitution of the Society, mainly to make the running of the Society easier by amending the number required for meetings to be quorate and, after the pandemic, to make it easier for the Society to communicate electronically with its members. But no change was made to the fundamental objects of the Society – good planning and architecture, education, and preservation, protection, development and improvement. For fifty-six years they had underpinned everything the Society does. This report showed how the Society had lived up to those objects over the past year.

The Society has two aspects - outward looking aspects of its work and service to members, and the more behind-the-scenes work, much of which is carried out by the Committee.

Talks

The year's talks covered nature and railways, the stone from which Ripon is built and, in the year when all three came under the care of English Heritage, the Stonehenge of the North, Thornborough Henges. The talks also had something of a preoccupation with burial customs, encompassing Bronze Age chariots, 20th century War Graves and a survey of everything in between.

Committee member David Hall was thanked for organising the talks; the speakers were also thanked, as were those attending. The numbers present fluctuated from 24 to 75 but remained fairly healthy. Those at the talks were praised for their help at the end of each meeting in clearing up the room, and were encouraged to continue.

Society member Lindy Webb, who died earlier in the year, was the genius behind providing the tea, coffee and biscuits that members enjoyed before meetings. She was much missed, not just for her provisions but for her companionship and her wit. Lindy's role as provider was taken up by Committee member Rachel Greenwood; thanks were expressed to her.

2024 was also a year for the Biennial Awards. Once again there was a good range to choose from.
The winners were:

- Sustainability Award – The Skell Valley Project
- The Hazzard Cup for Best New Building – Maple Nook, Heckler Lane
- Best Restored Building – Westholme Road Barns, Masham
- Younge Rose Bowl for Best Environmental Improvement – The Lower Ure Conservation Trust
- The Craftsmanship Shield - St Wilfrid's Catholic Church
- The Taylor Plate for City Centre Revitalisation – The Ripon Inn
- Helen Whitehead Award for Best Project – The Skell Valley Project
- The John Whitehead Award for worthy local projects – Ripon Community Link for the Ripon Walled Garden
- NEW AWARD : Outstanding Contribution – Neill Clayton

The new Outstanding Contribution Award was initiated this year to honour an individual who has played a significant role in Ripon and the surrounding area. The first recipient, Neill Clayton, was praised for 'his unique knowledge of all things industrial in Ripon and around, always freely given to enquirers, all done with modesty and diffidence'.

David Hall was thanked for his excellent organisation of the Awards, and the Mayor, Sid Hawke, for his support in presenting the prizes.

Visits and Events
After the talk on High Batts Nature Reserve in January, there was a visit in July to The Lower Ure Trust Reserve at Nosterfield, looking at the important wetland and then visiting the Wetland Plants Nursery. Thanks were given to David Hall for organising that visit. In June, the 300th birthday of engineer John Smeaton was celebrated with a trip along the Ripon Canal, with an appropriately-lighthouse-crowned cake; this trip was organised by Richard Taylor, and with thanks to Ripon Scenic Cruises; Sarita of Realitea in North Street made the cake.

Heritage Open Days
In the past Heritage Open Days – the nationwide celebration of our past – used to be over one weekend but more recently they have extended to more than a whole week at least. Once again the Society had a full programme, with at least one event each day including the annual opening, for two days, of the Gazebo, off Blossomgate. This year Gazebo visitors were able to see footage of the building captured by drone, taken by Jon Garbutt and organised and funded by the Ripon BID. This was played on a screen at the Gazebo and enabled visitors to have literally an overview of the building and also allowed people unable to climb the steps a flavour of this fascinating building.

Also for Heritage Open Days walks were organised, looking at bridges, schools and trees, there was a talk on Ripon-born mountaineer George Hudson and three openings – the Workhouse Garden, the Light Railway and the Grammar School Library. The Ripon BID produced and funded an attractive flyer for Heritage Open Days, They were thanked, along with:

- Andrew Curtis for organising the Gazebo open days and overseeing the HODs programme
- Peter and Greta Hills for the Bridges walk
- Sue Wood for the Trees walks
- Neill Clayton for opening the Railway

- Greta Hills for opening the Grammar School Library
- Catherine Baxter, garden leader for Ripon Museum Trust, for opening the Workhouse Garden
- Other organisations and individuals in the Ripon Area who supported Heritage Open Days

Heritage Open Days are among of the most important of the Society's outward-facing events.

Planning
The less publicly-visible but equally important side of the Society's work is Planning; the first of the objects in the constitution is 'to promote high standards of planning and architecture'. The Planning Team, ably led by Rachel Wigginton and with relevant expertise from its members, meets every two weeks to discuss current planning applications in the city of Ripon and the surrounding area. From North Yorkshire Council the Society receives weekly lists of planning applications in the former Harrogate district. The Planning Team does not comment on everything within the area the Society serves, but does comment on significant applications.

A few of the more notable ones in the last year were:

Clotherholme: This is one of several longstanding cases that have cropped up in annual reports over the last couple of years. Homes England was aiming to build up to 1300 dwellings on the site of the Army Camp. The date of closure of the whole camp was yet to be determined – the current state of the world did not, perhaps lead to a reduction of military sites – though the development plans were well advanced. The Society had not objected to the use of the site for housing, although it had commented on certain details and upon the use of open spaces and playing fields. The Society was supporting the Ripon Military Heritage Trust in its negotiations with North Yorkshire Council and Homes England to safeguard some of the historic huts and the bridges on the site. At the moment it was, perhaps appropriately, something of a battle. Rachel Wigginton was the Society's voice on the Trust.

Spa Baths: This had been another long running case. Since it closed when the new swimming pool was built the building had suffered, not least because of the very slow process of sale to the local Stern Properties. That delay resulted in the deterioration of the building, with vegetation growing on it and the whole thing surrounded by ugly fencing. The new owner had taken steps to clear the foliage and decently surround the building with solid boarding while work was going on.
The building would be brought back into use with some housing behind where the pool hall currently stood. The Society had been regularly in consultation with the architect and the developer and had provided ideas that had helped influence the design. The new layout would enable the Spa Baths to play its part once again in the designed landscape that included the Spa Gardens and what was now the Ripon Inn, and align views from the Baths tower to the war memorial – all of which was set out in the City Plan, so it was good to see it coming to fruition. The Society was optimistic of a very successful outcome.

Ripon Cathedral: More problematical had been the proposed new building for Ripon Cathedral. It was reiterated that the Society fully agreed that the Cathedral needed extra space. Where the Society differed was in the proposed location. The arguments the Society had put forward – on the loss of public open space, on the severe damage to the setting of the surrounding listed buildings and the loss of trees – were well known. The Society had set out in three carefully-argued documents the value of the proposed site, and believed that there were alternative sites that could be used. Those views had been detailed in several letters, first to Harrogate Borough Council and then to its successor North Yorkshire Council as the Planning Authority – the letters were publicly available on the Planning Portal, as were the Society's documents.

The Society was, of course, not alone in its views. There had been opposition from many national and local amenity groups, and from high-profile individuals. It was noted that the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, first objected to the loss of the veteran tree; his 'clarification', in which he said, like the Society, that better facilities were 'evidently necessary', he continued: 'I support a solution that balances development with respect for the environment and local community.' And also 'I am in no way opposed to a development that will resolve urgent issues and provide vital opportunities for the community'. The Society

agreed with both those statements, and considered that they did not endorse the current plans. The planning application was into the tenth month of an original three-month 'pause'. The Society was awaiting the revised plans promised for the end of September. The application would not, therefore, be determined, as planned, in December. When the revision arrived, the Society would look again at the proposals, and make its views known. There were additional question marks over the ownership of the Kirkgate Park site and about if and how North Yorkshire Council would transfer ownership to the Cathedral – the Society noted that the Council had recently shown its support for the Park's continued use as public open space by designating it as an Asset of Community Value. The Society very much regretted the division that the proposals had engendered in the city and hoped that a solution acceptable to everyone would be found as soon as possible.

Studley Royal: Another planning application that was currently in the process of being determined was that for a new café and entrance at the canal gates of Studley Royal. The Planning Team had several times discussed the plans with the National Trust and offered its views. The Society was pleased that the Trust had revised its plans to decrease the footprint of the proposed building, but was still concerned about the ugly scar of the car park. The Planning Team had urged better screening, and also hoped to see better management of traffic, particularly that coming through Studley Roger.

Former Girls High School: As reported at the last AGM, the long saga of the former Girls High School was ending. The building had been deroofed and was in a poor state; two applications were made to demolish it but, as the Society urged, were refused. Its conversion into housing, with additional houses built alongside, saved an important, though unlisted, Ripon structure.

Other planning matters of concern to the Society included:
Town Hall and other Listed Buildings : On related planning matters, the Society noted Ripon City Council's proposed ownership of several of Ripon's important buildings, notably the Town Hall. The Society would keep an eye on how the council dealt with them. The council had also recently become the owner of three of the four telephone kiosks in the Square – it already owned the adjacent Cabmen's Shelter: all are Listed Buildings, which the Council has a duty to maintain. Before their transfer the Society had encouraged BT's successful repainting of the kiosks and the repair of broken glass. As far as the Society was aware, the Council had not yet proposed uses for the kiosks – in the past the Society had suggested how they might be utilised and hoped to engage in the discussions about their future.

Members were reminded that all planning correspondence from the Society was publicly available on the website. Members were encouraged to look at it to see what other cases the Planning Team had dealt with over the past year, and to keep an eye on what it said in the future.

Campaigning and Supporting
The Society had been pleased to support improvements to Temple Garden. North Yorkshire Council's Community Safety Officer had received grant funding and made improvements to Temple Garden in response to the high level of anti-social behaviour and vandalism there. The site was managed by Ripon in Bloom with support from the ranger team from the Skell Valley Project and support from the Ripon BID. The Society was pleased that action was being taken to protect this tucked-away but important open space.

North Yorkshire Council had called for nominations of green space for the forthcoming Local Plan.
The Society had submitted a list, together with a map, put together by Committee member Ed Jagger, of more than 50 sites which the Society believed should be protected. The Planning Team had also looked at larger green swathes of land particularly along the river corridors. The council was expected to call for consultation on these larger sites later in the year, and the Society would respond accordingly.

Local Groups: The Society is associated with many local groups, including:

- Skell Valley Project, now towards the end of its remit: 16 organisations came together, 15 projects delivered. Mandy Whitehead is the RCS representative on the Project.

- Consultee on World Heritage Management Plan for Fountains Abbey Studley Royal World Heritage Site
- Ripon Together: Mandy Whitehead is RCS representative, actively promoting our interests.
- Historical Map of Ripon, published by the Historic Towns Trust and managed by Mick Stanley and edited by David Winpenny. RCS made financial contribution.
- Ripon ReViewed – using the collection to support heritage projects eg canal celebration. Rachel Greenwood and Mandy Whitehead have continued to oversee the Ripon ReViewed project; the images are now in the care of North Yorkshire County Record Office.
- Role in fielding enquiries about Ripon's heritage – signposting to information sources.
- RCS is also member of the Yorkshire and Humber Association of Civic Societies (YHACS) and of the national organisation Civic Voice.

The Ripon Military Heritage Trust: The Society could claim RMHT was, like the Ripon Museum Trust, one of the Society's 'children'. It would continue to support both. Rachel Wigginton provides advice to the Trust on behalf of the Society.

The Ripon BID – Business Improvement District – was a relatively new but important player on the Ripon scene. Led by the dynamic Lilla Bathurst, it used the money collected by levy on local businesses to promote the city and to undertake projects. The BID was important to the Society's work and there was close co-operation. Among the projects underway was one to refresh tired shop fronts using photographs from the Ripon ReViewed project, sourced by Mandy Whitehead. The Society very much valued its links with the BID.

Members

The most important part of any society is its members. New members in the year were given another welcome, and condolences sent to the families of those who had died. All members had an important role not only in supporting the Society but also in spreading the word of its work. The membership leaflet sets out the Society's values and what it does; speaking to people about the Society and then giving them a leaflet was the best way to engage them. More members made the Society's work easier and provided greater credibility, as well as a greater pool of expertise on which the Society could draw. More members also meant greater income, and while the Society tried to keep expenses to the minimum it could not work without funds. So subscriptions were increased for the first time for more than 20 years – the Committee hoped that members agreed that membership still gives value for money. Those who paid by Standing Order were asked to contact their bank to adjust the payment to make life easier for the Membership Secretary and the

Treasurer. Thanks were offered to Membership Secretary Alison Brayshaw, the main channel of communication with members, and to Treasurer Paul Jackson for his work. Paul, who retired at the AGM, was thanked for his work over the years.

Website and Newsletters

The website was another aspect of the outward facing aspects of the Society, and something that could be seen by anyone throughout the world who had Internet access. The Society hoped it was a regular port of call for members. The Committee expressed grateful thanks to David and Irene Hall for caring for the site so diligently and Irene for also providing technical expertise when the rest of the Committee was struggling.

The Society has brought out a newsletter, edited by David Winpenny, three times a year; as well as going to members it had a wider distribution amongst interested parties and to places like doctors' surgeries, thanks to Alison Brayshaw. It was available on the website and as a large print copy on the Society's notice board at the entrance to Ripon library.

Talks 2024 - 2025

The Society had a very varied programme in prospect:

- *5 December 2024* – 'Spital' – the medieval hospital of St. Mary Magdalen in Ripon and the development of early English hospitals – *Peter Sutton*

- *9 January 2025* – Science and Sand – the remarkable life and career of Charles Piazzi Smyth – *David Winpenny*
- *6 February* – Forged in War: making soldiers at Ripon Camp – *Antony Prince*
- *6 March – James Farrar*, the recently appointed first Chief Executive of the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, on his vision for the future of the Authority and Ripon's place in it
- *3 April* – The Middleham Jewel: biography of a found object – *Dr. Kate Giles*
- *8 May* – Domestic servants in Edwardian Harrogate – *Dr. Paul Jennings*

The Society was particularly fortunate to have booked James Farrar, the Chief Executive of the new York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority – it would be interesting to see how he envisaged Ripon fitting into the new structures of local authority.

HODs 2025

Heritage Open Days in 2025 run from 12 to 21 September, with the National Theme of 'Heritage for All'. The Gazebo would have its annual opening, and there was hope that St Wilfrid's Church would be able to take part in 2025, having been unable to do so in 2024 because of construction work. The Society was always looking for new places to open or walks to offer, and members were asked for suggestions.

FURTHER AHEAD

In the very early stages of planning was a celebration of the bicentenary of the birth of the First Marquess of Ripon in 2027. He was very important in Ripon – but also on the world stage – so the Society hoped to be able to come up with a programme that does justice to this remarkable man, from his birth in 10 Downing Street to his death at Studley in 1909.

Finally

Thanks were given to the whole Committee, but especially the President, Nigel Rawlinson, a wonderful support of everything the Society does and a fountain of knowledge of all things Ripon.

4. Presentation of Accounts

The accounts had been independently examined by John Darnbrough of Darnbrough & Co Ltd. and were circulated at the meeting. David Winpenny thanked Paul Jackson for his tireless work as Treasurer, including navigating us through the process of funding of our various projects. Paul was unable to be present but he would be suitably thanked in person. David Winpenny introduced David Wilson, from Yorkshire Accountants Ripon and thanked him for taking over the role and recorded our gratitude to YAR for their continued pro bono support of the Society. Moira Smith asked about the assets of £17,000 and about the purpose of the balance. It was explained that much came from a legacy, and that the Committee had agreed that it should be used to forward the Society's purposes. Mandy Whitehead commented that we needed to have reserve funds to allow us to work in partnership as opportunities arose – for example, the Society had helped fund the Historic Map of Ripon, just published. The accounts were approved unanimously by the meeting.

5. Election of Officers

The Officers are elected annually. The President advised that nominations had been received as follows:

- Chairman: Richard Taylor: Proposed by Moira Smith; Seconded by Alison Brayshaw
- Vice Chairman: David Winpenny: Proposed by Rachel Wigginton; Seconded by Alison Brayshaw
- Treasurer: David Wilson: Proposed by David Winpenny; Seconded by Richard Taylor

No other nominations having been received, the above nominations were put to the meeting and accepted unanimously.

The elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman intended to continue to operate in the style of Co-Chairs during the forthcoming year.

6. Election of Executive Committee
David Winpenny explained that the Committee members are elected on a three-yearly cycle. This year Rachel Wigginton was standing for re-election, having completed her three years. Ed Jagger had been co-opted to the Committee during the year and now stood for election. Richard Willis had volunteered to join the Committee. The nominations were therefore:

- Rachael Wigginton: Proposed by Alison Brayshaw; Seconded by Richard Taylor
- Ed Jagger: Proposed by Nigel Rawlinson; Seconded by Moira Smith
- Richard Willis: Proposed by Richard Taylor; Seconded by David Winpenny

No other nominations having been received, the above nominations were put to the meeting *en bloc* and accepted unanimously.

7. Appointment of Independent Examiners
The existing financial examiners, Darnbrough and Co Ltd, were proposed for re-appointment and approved by the meeting. They were thanked for their work, offered gratis, over the years.

8**. Any other business**
No other business had been notified to the President. The meeting closed at 8.05.

Post-meeting
Mick Stanley then spoke about the **Historic Towns Trust's** new Historic Map of Ripon, just published and on sale locally.
Richard Taylor thanked Mick Stanley and David Winpenny for their work on this very successful project.

Signed by the President:

Date: xx xx 2025