RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER
January 2025

A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR!

COUNCIL'S DECISION ON CATHEDRAL'S ANNEXE APPLICATION IS IMMINENT



Above: Kirkgate Park and Ripon Cathedral (picture courtesy of Brian McHugh)
Below: the Veteran beech tree in autumn (picture courtesy of Martin Quinn)



THE DETERMINATION BY North Yorkshire Council of the revised planning application for an annexe to Ripon Cathedral within Kirkgate Park is expected in the next few weeks. The plans have been very contentious within the city. There are divided opinions, too, among our members.

The view of the Society, as determined by its elected committee and advised by the Planning Team, which includes experts in architecture, conservation and policy and which has sought other expert advice, is that the proposed structure is the wrong building in the wrong place.

(continued on page 2)



SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE!

Please remember that we have introduced new rates from 2025:

- Single Membership £20.00
- Joint Membership (two people at one address) £35.00
- Corporate Membership £75.00
- Young Membership remains at £6.00

If you pay by Standing Order please contact your bank to adjust the amount.

Thank you!

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We are agreed that the Cathedral needs extra accommodation for various of its functions. What we disagree with is its location. The Society's statement at the meeting of Ripon City Council on 9 December said, '*The revised plans do not address a fundamental objection - that the proposed large and very high building would occupy an area which for at least 200 years has been a valued open space and is now a public park. It is protected by the*



Artist's impression of the proposed building, from the submitted plans

Local Plan and the Ripon Neighbourhood plan. It's within the Ripon Conservation Area and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There are significant archaeological remains here; Historic England has stated that the loss of archaeological material would cause 'considerable harm' to the site's heritage significance.

'The new structure would severely and irrevocably damage the setting of the listed buildings and walls around the park - Old Deanery, Courthouse and Old Courthouse, and the Cathedral itself. And, despite the few tweaks offered in the new plans, our own arboricultural report has shown that the building would severely compromise the viability of the remaining trees, including those on the boundary of the Old Deanery.

'All these objections could be overcome by building in the stoneyard. Instead, the new plans have widened the frontage on Minster Road and brought it nearer the Cathedral. The planning documentation acknowledges a wish to close Minster Road and build a link across it to join the new building to the Cathedral. We do not believe that such an aspiration is sufficient to overcome all the objections set out here by us and others.'

Citing our objections, the City Council passed a motion agreeing with the Cathedral's needs but asking for a rethink on the building's location. If such a rethink were to produce a solution that protected the Park and its trees, and provided for the Cathedral's requirements, it is very likely that the Society would support it.

OTHER PLANNING MATTERS

FORMER SKELLBANK GARAGE

IT HAS BEEN proposed to build seven apartments on this long-derelict site within the Ripon Conservation Area. We supported the development in principle, considering the massing of the proposed building about right in that it has taken its cue from the listed buildings next door, though we had concerns that the extra flat-roofed top storey seemed incongruous and overpowering in relation to the pitched and gable roofs of neighbouring buildings. We asked that this should be removed from the application or at least substantially scaled back and redesigned. We look forward to seeing this site improved.



CANAL GATES, STUDLEY ROYAL

THE APPLICATION TO provide an extension the tea-room at the Canal Gates, remove later structures and improve the visitor entrance to the gardens of Studley Royal, which we reported in the last newsletter, has not yet been decided. The Society will continue to monitor progress.

PHOTOVOLTAIC CELLS ON ROOFS AT RIPON CATHEDRAL



THE SOCIETY SUPPORTS the Cathedral's ambition to provide renewable energy, following the Government's target for the United Kingdom to reach net zero carbon by 2050. We were also pleased that it had taken account of the comments from heritage bodies before submitting its application and is proposing to install the panels on the lower Library and South Aisle roofs, where parapets provide some screening, and not on the more prominent and higher Quire roof.

We accepted that the panels would not be visible from ground level around the Cathedral; they would have some impact of longer distance views, although not from the Studley Royal World Heritage Site.

We did agree with concerns raised by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which asked the Cathedral to:

- make further energy saving measures and efficiencies to the building, preferably before photovoltaic panels are installed.
- help to justifying this application by providing an assessment of the Cathedral's wider estate decarbonisation strategy
- clarify whether the Cathedral will be able to use all the energy that will be generated by the proposed panels, to ensure there is no wastage and the number of panels is kept to the minimum necessary; the application did not appear include a battery to store any surplus.
- explore the possibility of reducing the angle of panels' tilt to 20 degrees from the proposed 35 degrees on the South Nave Aisle (which would be visible above the parapet) without affecting efficiency
- paint the frames in a darker colour if possible

If these matters can be satisfactorily addressed, we believe that the potential harm to the significance of the Cathedral's heritage can be justified by the benefits of addressing climate change.

SPA BATHS



(Above) *The east wing of the Spa Baths as later work is removed to allow sensitive restoration and development.*
(Right) Some of the uncovered Art Nouveau tilework

WORK HAS BEGUN to covert the Spa Baths and bring the building into use again, after the approval of plans by the local Planning Committee on 2 September. The wings to each side of the central pump room are having later accretions removed, revealing both the original fabric and more of the attractive Art Nouveau tiles. The 1936 pool at the rear will be demolished and a conservatory, replacing the original one demolished for the pool building, will be constructed. New apartments will be built at the rear, and an open area will link to the Spa Gardens. The Society has firmly supported these plans, and we look forward to a very successful outcome.



SIGN OF HOPE FOR FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING



THE FORMER GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL - later used by the College - has featured several times in this newsletter, because the Society has been concerned first about its proposed demolition and then because it was left unroofed for several winters.

We are very pleased to see that the building has now been rescued, reroofed and converted into apartments, with some new houses constructed in the grounds.

The long planning saga of this building, which although not listed is in the Conservation Area and is important to Ripon, shows that determination to preserve what is good doesn't stand in the way of progress.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS WELCOMED AT AGM

AT THE SOCIETY'S well-attended Annual General Meeting in November the Co-Chair reported on the events of 2024. He thanked Society's Committee for its work, including working with our partner groups, the organisation of talks and visits, the masterminding of our Awards and of Heritage Open Days, of ensuring our members are kept informed (and pay their subscriptions - see page 1!) and have refreshments. He also paid tribute to the Planning Team, which has had a considerable task in dealing with applications, not least the Cathedral's proposed annexe.

Paul Jackson stood down as Treasurer at the AGM (see page 8), and we welcome his successor, David Wilson, from Yorkshire Accountants.

Rachel Wigginton, Planning Lead, was relelected, and we welcome two new committee members - architect Ed Jagger, who was co-opted during the year and is on the Planning Team, and Richard Willis, known to many as the operator of canal cruises. Richard is taking on responsibility for our green plaques and is looking into how we can procure more at reasonable cost.

The draft AGM minutes are now on the Society's website.

RIPON MILITARY HERITAGE TRUST

RIPON MILITARY HERITAGE TRUST (RMHT), which the Civic Society helped to set up, has secured a grant from North Yorkshire Council's Stronger Communities Programme Inspire Fund for recording equipment to capture memories of military activity in the Ripon area during and after World War II. The Trust is now appealing for people with relevant stories who would be happy to be interviewed, and for volunteers to undertake the interviews - all prospective interviewers will be fully trained and equipped.

RMHT has already undertaken trial recordings of two national service soldiers who served in Ripon; one a member of the White Helmets motorbike display team, and the other, Arthur Lampkin *(above right)* a champion motocross rider. Now the Trust is seeking to capture many more unique memories before they are lost.

RMHT Chairman Guy Wilson says, 'We have already learnt so much about military life and activity around Ripon from speaking



to people who were there. We now want to capture that and more on recordings, so that the contributions of the people who served in Ripon can be properly understood and remembered into the future, and the many humorous and illuminating anecdotes about army life are not lost to us all. I know that those who volunteer to help us will find the experience interesting and satisfying.'

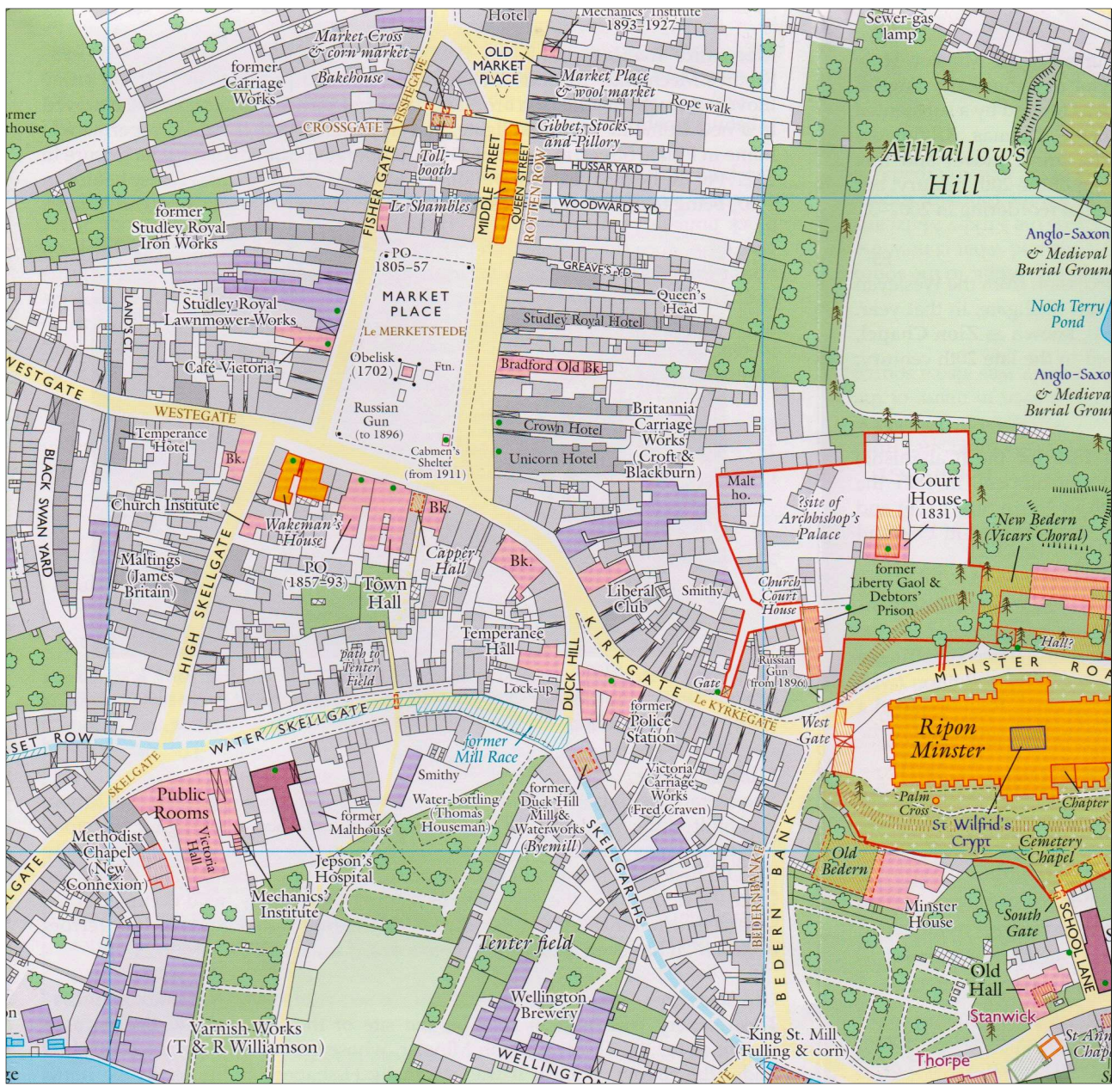
Interested in taking part, in any capacity? email ohp@riponmht.org, phone 01765 777080 or visit the Trust's website https://riponmht.org.

IT'S A WRAP! - HISTORIC PHOTOS ON EMPTY SHOPS



RIPON BID HAS been successful in securing funding for a Vacant Unit Academy project which is enabling them to progress a number of initiatives to try and reduce the number of vacant units in the City centre. The Society has been supporting Lilla, the BID Manager, with one element of this project by providing images from the Ripon Re-Viewed collection to contribute towards bespoke vinyl wraps and heritage display boards. These will be used to furnish empty shop units and hoardings around the City centre. You may have seen the first of these at the former Mountain Warehouse on Fishergate.

HISTORIC MAP PUBLISHED - AND ATLAS IS PLANNED



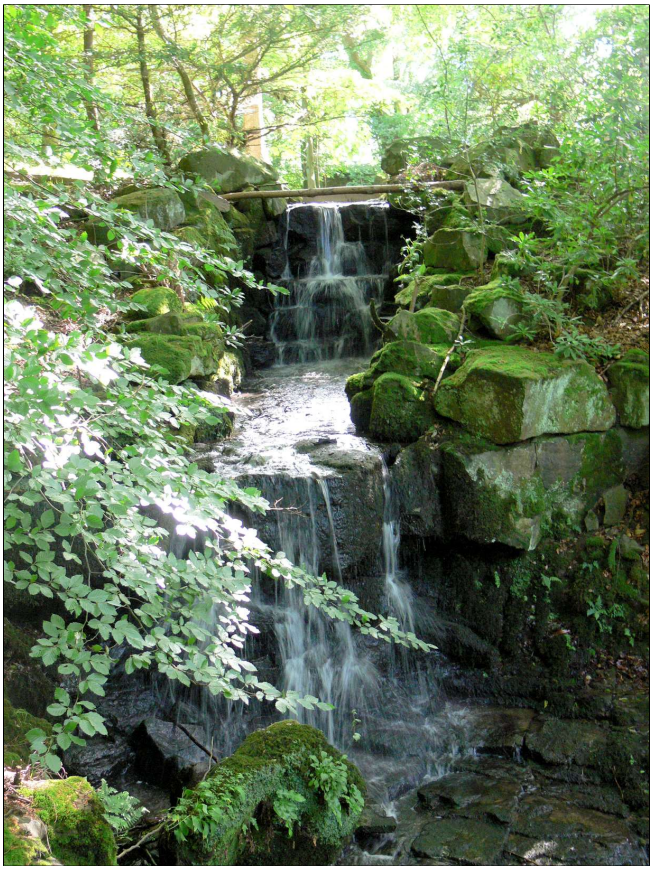
IN THE LAST newsletter we heralded the imminent arrival of 'An Historical Map of Ripon', compiled by local experts and published by the Historic Towns Trust.

The map was published in October, and has proved a hit with local people and many others. If you haven't yet purchased your copy, the map is available from all good bookshops - especially in Ripon!

After completing the map, the team is not resting on its laurels; there are now plans being made for an historic atlas, amplifying the map's information and covering aspects that could not be included there.

Look out over the coming year for information about this exciting new step!

SUMMER VISITS - DATES FOR YOUR NEW DIARY





SWINTON 22 May

Dame Susan Cunliffe-Lister has kindly offered to lead a walk in the grounds of the Swinton Estate in the early evening of **Thursday 22 May**. The visit will take in the four-acre walled garden and the heritage parkland. Dame Susan developed the gardens at Burton Agnes Hall in East Yorkshire from 1989 until 2008, and continues to still manage and tend to the gardens at Swinton.

Ripon War Graves 20 June

Geoff Dickson, who spoke to the Society in September 2024 about the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, will give a conducted tour of the War Graves in Ripon Cemetery **on Friday 20 June**. Geoff is undertaking additional research and will relate some of the history of the people the graves commemorate as part of the visit.

Further details of both visits will be available soon on the website and in the next newsletter

SOME RIPON ANNIVERSARIES

TWO CENTURIES AGO Ripon, as reported in the *Millenary Record*, was both forward-looking and reactionary.

The City Council agreed to petition parliament objecting to 'further concessions' to Roman Catholics. It also set up a meeting to take forward the enclosure of the open commons around the city.

For the first time the mail coach to Glasgow came through Ripon.

And St John's Church in Sharow *(top)* was consecrated on 2 October 1825, so it will celebrate its bicenenary this year.





The church was designed by George Knowles, and largely funded by Elizabeth Sophia Lawrence of Studley Royal, who donated around £2,000 towards the cost.

A century on, 1925 seems to have been a less exciting year, according to *A Ripon Record*. The offices of WIlliamson's varnish works *(bottom)* were opened, the Market Square was relaid and the council agreed to the use of dustbins instead of ashpits.

How, we wonder, will the historians of 2125 report on our actions?



SPARE SILVERWARE?

WE DON'T EXPECT you to have something as grand as this silver palm-tree table centre-piece *(left)* spare in your house, but the Society is looking to replace its long-serving **Craftsmanship Shield**, which has come to the end of its life. It came to us from a previous owner, and the small shields on its wooden surface are now full of winners' names.

As we are all urged to recycle as much as possible, we wondered if any member had a suitable replacement that they could offer us. We are thinking of something like a salver, a tray or a trophy - which could be silver or plate - but we are open to other suggestions.

If necessary we shall search elsewhere for something suitable, or possibly commission a new piece, but if you can help the Society save money - your subscriptions! - we should be very grateful.

The next Awards are in 2026, so there's time to find a replacement for the Shield.

Do speak to us at our monthly meeting on 9 January or send us an email to *info@riponcivicsociety.org.uk*, so we can discuss your ideas.

KING FOLLOWS SOCIETY IN HONOURING WINNERS!

WE ARE DELIGHTED to say that His Majesty the King has recognised two local groups that Ripon Civic Society had already praised in our Biennial Awards.

Both the Ripon Community Poppy Project and the Lower Ure Conservation Trust have received the King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS).



Equivalent to an MBE, the KAVS was established in 2002 as The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service to celebrate Her Late Majesty's Golden Jubilee. It's the highest award given to local voluntary groups in the UK, and it is awarded for life. The KAVS website notes that 'this year's awardees serve as the hearts of their communities, dedicating themselves to benefitting the lives of those around them'.

The Society fully endorses the Award's accolade, and we are delighted to congratulate both the Lower Ure Conservation Trust and the Ripon Community Poppy Project on this very prestigious Award.

In our Awards of 2022 The Poppy Project was the winner of the John Whitehead Award, while in 2024 the Lower Ure Improvement Trust won the Younge Rosebowl for Best Environmental Improvement. In the last newsletter we reported on a Society visit to see the Trust's work.

We offer our congratulations, too, to another local voluntary organisation, Ripon Swimming Club, which also received the KAVS in 2024.

OUR PROGRAMME

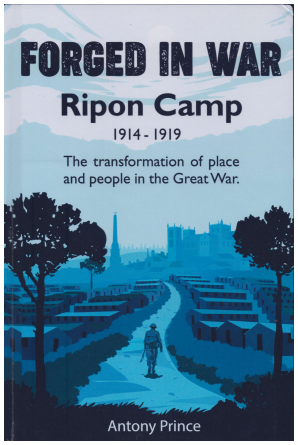
Here's the programme of talks and events until May 2025.



Pyramid monument to Piazzi Smyth, Sharow

■ **9 January 2025** ***(note the date)***: '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, will address us 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*

■ **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 £5.00.**

SOCIETY SAYS 'THANK YOU' TO PAUL



Paul Jackson (centre)with the Society's Co-Chairs David Winpenny (left) and Richard Taylor

AT THE AGM in November our Treasurer, Paul Jackson, stepped down from his role after more than eight years in the role. Paul kept on the right financial lines, and was always helpful if we had queries on our income and expenditure. Paul has now moved his business to Knaresborough, and the Co-Chairs called on him there to make a small presentation on behalf of the Society. We wish him well in the future.

We welcome as new Treasurer David Wilson - see page 4

RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

Registered Charity No: 517434

www.riponcivicsociety.org,uk
info@riponcivicsociety.org.uk

THIS YEAR'S COMMITTEE

President - Nigel Rawlinson
Co-Chairs - Richard Taylor and David Winpenny
Treasurer - David Wilson
Membership - Alison Brayshaw
Planning Lead - Rachel Wigginton
Website, Talks & Visits, Awards - David Hall
Heritage Open Days - Andrew Curtis
Skell Valley Project, Ripon ReViewed, Ripon Together - Mandy Whitehead
Plaques: Richard Willis
Members - Rachel Greenwood and Ed Jagger
Communications - David Winpenny
Newsletters and External Relations - Richard Taylor and David Winpenny