RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2026

SOCIETY URGES COUNTY COUNCIL TO PROTECT GREEN SPACES AROUND CITY



On Ripon Canal - one of the 'Green Corridors' of concern to the Society

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL has re-opened its 'Call for Sites', which gives the chance for landowners, site promoters, developers or other interested parties to put sites forward for consideration in the new Local Plan to meet the future needs of the area. This is their opportunity for them to suggest that their land is the ideal spot to put some sort of development.

Ripon Civic Society, meanwhile, is continuing to seek protection for green spaces within and around the city in the Local Plan. As noted in previous editions of the newsletter, we have already put forward more than forty sites for consideration as Local Green Spaces including those already designated in the Neighbourhood Plan but also including the City's various allotments, recreation areas such as Paddies Park and Doublegates Park and proposals for new designated green spaces such as Kirkgate Park, College Pocket Park and Princess Road Field.

Green Corridors

We followed this with the submission of further sites which sought to provide protection for larger swathes of land such as green corridors along our rivers and canal as well as the former railway line, and extensions to the existing Special Landscape Areas, again along the rivers. We also proposed an extension to the Nidderdale National Landscape to 'fill the gap' between Studley Park World Heritage Site and the city boundary already covered by the

(continued on page 2)

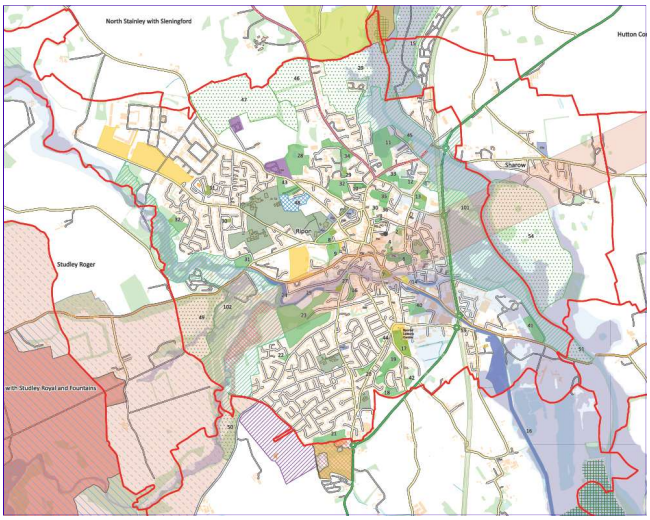
A GENTLE REMINDER

THANK YOU TO everyone who has paid their subscription; it really helps when you pay promptly!

If you've forgotten - it happens to the best of us! - then it would be good if this note prompts you to do so now. Our constitution says that subscriptions 'shall be payable on or before 1st February each year'. If you need a reminder of our current rates of membership, you can find them on our website: ***www.riponcivicsociety.org.uk***

THANK YOU!

World Heritage Site Buffer Zone; this area is already being eroded by new housing development.



A section of the comprehensive Green Spaces map submitted by the Society to North Yorkshire Council.

All our proposals have sought to provide protection for the unique setting of our city, to safeguard our green spaces against inappropriate development and to highlight the specific constraints to development imposed by this setting such as unstable ground and flooding. Whilst the wider landscape areas were not accepted by the North Yorkshire Council as they were considered to fall outside the scope of the Call for Sites process, we continue to explore how we can provide protection for these areas in light of the very high annual target for new homes imposed on the Council by Government.

Ed Jagger

EAVESTONE WALK KICKS OFF SUMMER



ON A WARM and sunny Friday in late May seventeen members and friends enjoyed a fascinating, informative and beautiful walk at Eavestone *(above),* enthusiastically led by Mark Newman who last year had given the Society a talk about the area.

This was the first of several visits we have planned over the summer; at the time of writing we have Ushaw, Skelton-on-Ure and Ilkley to look forward to. There will be a full report in the next Newsletter.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS ARE (ALMOST) HERE AGAIN - IDEAS PLEASE!

IT DOESN'T SEEM LONG since we were last showcasing Ripon's rich heritage but Heritage Open Days 2026 will be upon us soon. This national event runs from 11 - 20 September and this year's theme is Everyday Histories.
Your committee members are contacting local venues and organisations to encourage them to take part. Event organisers make their bookings directly with HODs who then publish an online directory of events in July. We will be publicising those in the Ripon area both on our website and in a leaflet which once again is being funded by the Ripon Business Improvement District. We are very grateful to the continued support of the Ripon BID who share our view that Ripon's outstanding heritage is one of the city's best assets. Already committed is our opening of the Gazebo on Blossomgate and a newcomer to HODS,



St Anne's Hospital, on High St Agnesgate *(above)*. Last year's hard-hat tours of the Spa Baths proved immensely popular and we are looking for further events at other venues this time. If you have any ideas for buildings to visit or events then contact us now at ***hods@riponcivicsociety.org.uk***.

Andrew Curtis and Richard Taylor

PLANNING REPORT - SOME RECENT CASES

The Society has commented on a number of planning applications in and around Ripon, including the following:



St Mary Magdalen's Chapel; the threatened trees are to the left

- The Beeches, Magdalen's Road, Ripon - The Civic Society had previously supported an approved application for two dwellings at The Beeches accessed by the existing road adjacent to the Grade I Listed Chapel of St Mary Magdalen. We have now objected to applications for an alternative access because it would require the unacceptable felling of four trees protected by a TPO. There has been no decision at the time of writing.



- 3 North Street, Ripon *(above)*- We supported the change of use on the upper floors from commercial storage to create two holiday lets but we objected to the more modern design of the new shopfront which would replace a traditional arched panes shopfront which are in keeping with other traditional shopfronts in the conservation area. The Council considered that the new shopfront was a traditional design and has approved the application.

- 16 Fishergate, Ripon - The Civic Society supported the change of use from retail to cinema - see fuller information on page 5

- 21 North Street, Ripon - Unauthorised replacement of window on frontage of Listed Building, reported in the last Newsletter; enforcement action is still being sought.



- Green Royd, Studley Road, Ripon *(above)* - The Society had objected to planning and Listed Building applications for extensive alterations to the house and extension of the former stable block to form garaging because of the unacceptable impact on the listed building and its setting. An appeal against the refusal of the applications has been dismissed. The Inspector considered that 'the proposal would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building'.

- Clotherholme - The Society is supporting the Ripon Military Heritage Trust (RMHT) in seeking to preserve the WWW2 and Cold War military heritage at Clotherholme. Homes England is progressing applications for the discharge of conditions attached to the outline approval for the Clotherholme site. We have objected, along with RMHT, to an application for a phasing plan to discharge condition 6 because there is no provision for preserving some of the Deverell huts on the site. The North Yorkshire Council Environment and Design Manager - Heritage has also objected on these grounds. The application is still undetermined.

Rachel Wigginton

- *All the Society's responses to planning applications can be found on our website.*

RIPON'S INDUSTRIAL PAST ON SHOW AT LOCAL HISTORY MONTH



The Civic Society stall at the Library during Local History and Community Month

THE SOCIETY HAS SUPPORTED Local History and Community Month in collaboration with Ripon Library by exhibiting the Ripon Reviewed historic photograph display throughout May and also with an exhibition on Ripon's industrial past held in the library on 21 May.

This exhibition included a fascinating selection of objects and maps provided by Neill Clayton showcasing the breadth and exceptional industrial output for one of the country's smallest cities. This included maps and photographs highlighting the location of the city's former industrial sites and examples of their output, whether paint, varnish or metal castings, including copies of original plans of the railway station.

The exhibition also included maps of the Local Green Spaces noted elsewhere in this newsletter and sat alongside a wider exhibition of local historic maps, books and publications by Ripon Library.

We should like to extend our thanks to Ripon Library for hosting us both on the day and for providing space for the Ripon Reviewed display which was on for the remainder of the month. If you were unable to attend the event on the day, or have any information that you think might be of interest regarding the city's industrial past, please email the Society at ***info@riponcivicsociety.org.uk***

PLAQUES SHINE OUT IN PROPER COLOURS AFTER REPAINTING



YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED that our green plaques are being refurbished. Some of the older ones, and some in exposed situations, have been looking a little the worse for wear over the years, so their repainting was needed.

Thanks to our committee member Richard Willis and his trusty team of practical volunteers, several plaques now glow again, like the one on the wall outside the Old Deanery *(left)*.

Look out for others as you walk around the city. If you want to know where the almost 40 others are to be found - with an interactive map - go to the Society's website at ***https://riponcivicsociety.org.uk/green-plaques***

RIPON CINEMAS - THE SEQUEL IS IN THE MAKING

THE EPIC SAGA of cinemas in Ripon - which seemed to have turned from happy ending to tragedy with the closure of the Curzon on North Street *(below)* soon after its post-Covid reopening - continues with a new hero riding into the shot.

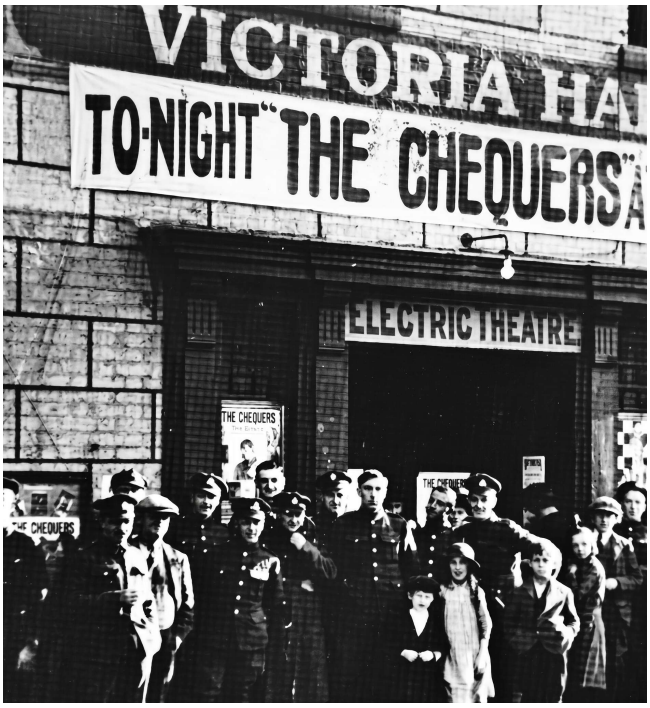
Since the early days of the cinema Ripon has



wanted to watch films. Various buildings have been used for the purpose. Perhaps the best-remembered is the Palladium in Kirkgate *(below)*, which opened in 1916 (though its Art Deco frontage, now missing its two-sided sign, was added later), charged 1 shilling and 6 pence for the expensive seats; it boasted 'an efficient ladies' orchestra. Earlier the Electric Theatre *(top right)* opened at the Victoria Hall (now Sigma Antiques - see page 6). Both cinemas were popular in the two World Wars, as was the Spa Cinema, at Spa Park.



When the Palladium closed in 1982 (the others had long gone) Ripon was cinema-free until the opening of the Curzon in 2013 in the former Abbott's furniture store.



Now we have the prospect of a new, three-screen cinema *(artist's impression below)* with a capacity of 157 seats in what until recently was The Original Factory Shop in Fishergate. It will be run by the owners of the successful cinema developments in Ilkley and Wetherby.



Ripon Civic Society welcomed the plans for this large site, and underlined our support in our comments on the planning application. Our only request was for the shutters behind the existing shop windows to be of an open design to ensure there is not a blank frontage when the cinema is closed. We are pleased to say that the applicant has agreed to install open link shutters.

The planning application has been approved, and we look forward to being able to watch all types of film in the near future; the plans are for the cinema to open in November. We wish it every success.

RIPON BUILDING AT RISK ON NATIONAL LIST

SINCE 2012 THE BUILDING between Sigma Antiques and the former Turk's Head public house, on the corner of Water Skellgate and Low Skellgate, has been on the Buildings at Risk Register run by one of the country's leading conservation organisations, SAVE Britain's Heritage.



How the building at 36 Low Skellgate appeared in 2012 when it was first entered on SAVE's Buildings at Risk Register. Its current state is shown below left.

In that year they wrote, 'This 18th-century townhouse, later converted to a subscription library, has a sorry story of delays and false starts behind its current state. Renovation works began in about 2007 but stalled, leaving this once elegant building to decay. We added it to our register in 2012. In the right hands, it could be revived to make a positive contribution to the conservation area.

'As with the neighbouring Turks Head Pub, the council has threatened the owner with a Section 215 notice requiring the street-facing part of the building to be made to look more attractive and presentable.

'Viable options for reuse of the building could be a shop at ground-floor level with a flat above or offices.'

This proved optimistic; although an update in 2020 noted that ' While this handsome townhouse is looking a great deal better than it did, it does not appear that restoration works have ever been completed.' Since then little has changed. The latest update, in September last year, reads 'No action has been taken in relation to this handsome building as far as we are aware this year'.

The Civic Society has been aware of the problems of not only this structure but of the ones either side of it, which are also not in a good state. Sigma Antiques, once the Victoria Hall, is almost-derelict at the back, after a fire 50 years ago. At the Turk's Head some work has been done, but more needs to be done; it has also lost some of its original detailing.



A decorative cast-iron grille that was once on the front of the Turk's Head, Low Skellgate

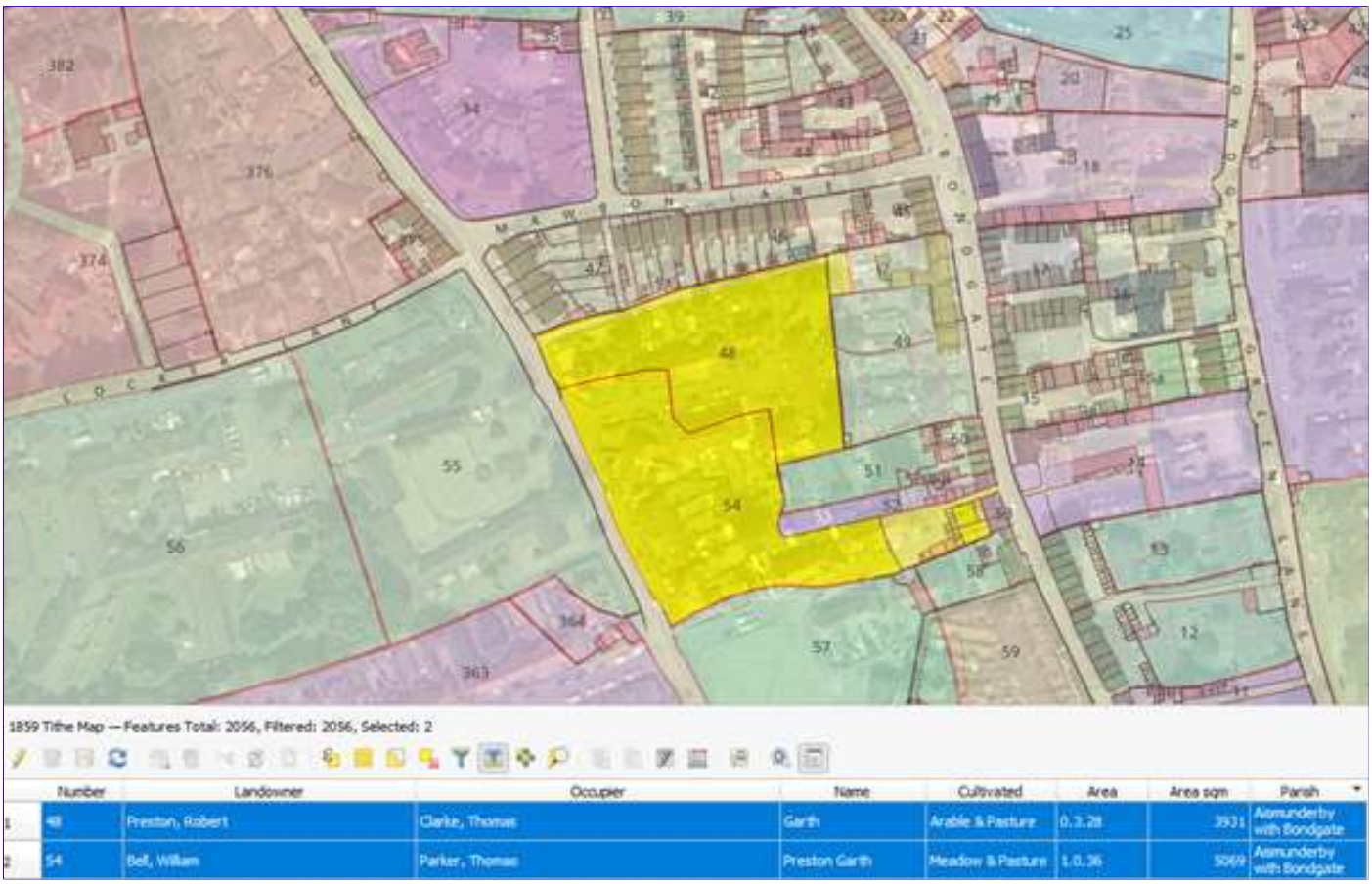
Now we can add another building, adjoining Sigma Antique on the east - the former Conservative Club is deteriorating. The Society will continue to press for action on these buildings.

In the meantime, Artificial Intelligence (AI) allows us to see how much could be achieved by even a modest improvement to these structures *(below).*





HELPING WITH EMAIL QUERIES ABOUT ASPECTS OF RIPON



A screen shot of the Southgate area, used to answer a correspondent's question about what was there before housing

THE SOCIETY REGULARLY receives emails from local residents as well as people living further afield - occasionally in other countries - with specific questions relating to Ripon's past.

One such recent question related to the land now occupied by Southgate Avenue off Southgate and what, if anything, was there before the houses were built. Through research of historic maps and newspaper articles we were able to confirm that Southgate Avenue, along with the south end of Aismunderby Road, were two of the first streets to be constructed by the council in that area with the building programme continuing into the 1950s, incorporating slum clearances along Bondgate.

Tenants were being allocated houses on Southgate Avenue as early as 1926 although they may not have been completed at that time.

Prior to Southgate Avenue *(below)* being built, the land was agricultural and appears not to have changed much at all since the 1857 tithe map when the two fields were owned by a Robert Preston (who also owned the land on the opposite side of Southgate where Judson Close and Lister House are) and a William Bell respectively (see map) and were arable/meadow and pasture.

We do our best to answer any questions relating to Ripon or to direct enquiries to those better placed to provide a more detailed response.

Ed Jagger



KELVIN H. GOTT : A TRIBUTE TO A GREAT FRIEND

Malcolm S Beer and his wife Joan have been members of the Civic Society for many years - introduced by Ripon-born Kelvin Gott. As Malcolm and Joan retire from membership, Malcolm remembers Kelvin - musician, artist and friend; Malcolm and Joan have made a generous donation to the Society.

WHEN I WAS an 18-year-old in the choir of Saint Edmund's Church in Roundhay, Leeds, and also a pupil of the organist Raymond G. Sunderland, I used to play the piano for the Sunday School. I later became a teacher and was chosen to attend a 'Sunday School Teachers Training Course' for an extended weekend at Wray Head College in Scarborough. The Chaplain at this event was a young newly-ordained priest named the Reverend Duncan Thomson and I became very friendly with him.

When my wife and I were married in 1964, we left our hitherto mutual home town of Leeds and moved to a little house in Harrogate. By that time Duncan Thomson was the Precentor at Ripon Cathedral and had recently been appointed as Headmaster of the newly established Ripon Cathedral Choir School.

Knowing of my keen interest in English church music and that I had been for many years in the St Edmund's Church choir, Duncan Thomson invited me to come and sing as a 'Supernumerary' (an impressive sounding word used by the Church of England which actually means 'unpaid') Lay Clerk at weekends in the Ripon Cathedral choir. This was because, whilst four of the masters at the new Ripon Cathedral Choir School were Lay Clerks in the cathedral choir, they did not have the full complement of six singers (two altos, two tenors and two basses) to properly fulfil this role.

After an audition by the then Cathedral organist, Dr Philip Marshall, I was accepted as a Supernumerary Lay Clark and sang Choral Evensongs on Saturdays and on every Sundays I attended an early morning rehearsal at the Cathedral followed by singing at Matins and Choral Evensong. Four years later, a new Dean, Edwin Le Grice, arrived on the scene, and he added the extra service of 'Choral Communion', resulting in three sung services each Sunday.

It was whilst singing at these services in the Ripon Cathedral Choir that I met one of the other acting Lay Clerks who was a charming gentleman called Kelvin Gott. He was born in 1939 of Ripon parents and his father, Jim Gott, was a well-known character, being not only a lifetime Ripon postman, but also an entertainer and a brilliant artist, several of whose fine drawings of Ripon Cathedral still hang in the Chapter House.



Ripon Cathedral Choir in the early 1990s; Kelvin Gott is in the back row, second from the left.

Kelvin himself was educated at Ripon Grammar School and became a very capable musician, having been a boy Chorister at Ripon Cathedral in the days of the renowned Dr Charles Moody. Like his father, Kelvin was also a very capable artist and he won a Scholarship to the Slade School of Fine Art in London. Whilst there he became a deputy Vicar Choral, at St Paul's Cathedral.

On returning home to Ripon, his main job was as an Art Teacher at the Breckenbrough Special School for gifted pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties. Kelvin also became a regular Lay Clerk in the Ripon Cathedral Choir. He was particularly admired and valued by Organists and Masters of the Choristers at Ripon because he was a capable choral music sight reader who could equally sing a bass, or tenor or an alto part as required. Moreover, Kelvin was a very capable double bass player and in this context he helped Xenophon Kelsey in founding the St Cecilia Orchestra, with whom he played for many decades.

Sadly, soon after the arrival of the new Millennium, Kelvin was diagnosed with leukaemia and, after a brave and stubborn fight, he died on 2 July 2004 , at the comparatively young age of 65 years.

Having formed a long-standing friendship with Kelvin, it was he who, long ago, encouraged my wife and I to join the Ripon Civic Society. Over many years we have derived huge pleasure from our membership of this excellent organisation but due to our now considerable ages and decreasing mobility we have reluctantly had to resign.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Kelvin for the pleasure and privilege of his friendship over many years and it is a great delight and privilege to be invited to write this memorial tribute.

Malcolm S. Beer

PROGRAMME - SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2026

HERE'S THE PROGRAMME of talks and events until December. We hope to see you there! All meetings are in Allhallowgate Methodist Church, at 7.30pm; tea, coffee and biscuits from 7.00pm

- **3 September: Rails across the North Riding** - Richard Barber



Ripon's former railway station on Ure Bank

- **1 October: Garden projects at Raby Castle & Kinross House** - Alistair Baldwin



Ripon-based Landscape Architect Alistair Baldwin

- **5 November (after the AGM): Humphrey Repton** - Michael Smart



Humphrey Repton's business card

- **3 December Levelling up in the 12th Century** *How the Cistercian monks rebuilt the Yorkshire economy after William the Conqueror's Harrying of the North* - Peter Lewis



The Cistercian Fountains Abbey emerges from the mist

RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

Registered Charity No: 517434

www.riponcivicsociety.org.uk
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THIS YEAR'S COMMITTEE

- **President** - Nigel Rawlinson
- **Vice-President** - David WInpenny
- **Chair** - Richard Taylor
- **Vice-Chair** - Ed Jagger
- **Treasurer** - David Wilson
- **Membership** - Alison Brayshaw
- **Planning Lead** - Rachel Wigginton
- **Talks** - David Hall and Richard Willis
- **Heritage Open Days** - Andrew Curtis
- **Uredale Community Partnership, Ripon ReViewed, Ripon Together** - Mandy Whitehead
- **Plaques** - Richard Willis
- **Members** - Rachel Greenwood, Peter Goldsbrough, Michael Exley
- **Website** - David Hall
- **Communications, Newsletters and External Relations** - Richard Taylor and David Winpenny