



ANNUAL REPORT

for the period 1st March 2019 to 31st December 2020

The AGM that should have been held in June 2020 to cover the Civic Society financial year that runs from March to February had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions. We had hoped to defer the AGM until such time as we were able to meet in person, but with the end of our next financial year almost upon us, and Covid restrictions still in place we decided to proceed with a 'virtual' AGM. It will now take place on 23rd February 2021 using Zoom technology and so this report is for a longer period than normal.

Looking back on the period from March 2019 to December 2020 shows just how busy we have been.

The Committee:

For your Committee, the big change was the retirement of Henry Pankhurst as Chairman, a position he held for about 9 years after the best part of 20 years on the committee. He is one of a handful of members who joined the Harrogate Society before it became the Harrogate Civic Society. Following Henry's retirement at the last AGM, Susan Amaku and Stuart Holland were appointed as Co Vice-Chairs. During the course of the year, for simplicity, the Committee changed their designation to Co-Chairs.

Angela Fahy is Secretary, and Henry Pankhurst, David Siddans and Granville Simpson continued to be committee members. Two committee members stood down during the year; Jacky Little who had been minutes secretary for many years and Peter Brown who, for much of his 11 years on the Committee, acted as Treasurer and Membership Secretary. We are grateful to both of them for all their hard work on behalf of the Society.

We co-opted three society members on to the committee; Nigel McClea (who leads our new History sub-group), Chris Dicken (who also agreed to be Treasurer) and Chris Holland (membership secretary, and who sends all of our Newsletters).

All of the current committee members have agreed to stand for re-election, and (as provided for by our Constitution) the co-opted members are also proposed for formal election to the committee.

Since the first lockdown in March 2020, the committee has carried on the business of the Society, by holding virtual meetings on Zoom.



Events:

We had a full programme of events planned for 2020, but our February 2020 visit was the last in-person event, with all other events cancelled due to the Covid -19 pandemic and the lockdown imposed on the country.

17 th March 2019	<i>Domestic Servants in Edwardian Harrogate by member Dr Paul Jennings</i>
28 th April 2019	<i>A visit to Waldernheath, now Manor House Nursing Home</i>
12 th June 2019	<i>Visit to Halifax including the Square Chapel Arts Centre, Piece Hall and Town Hall</i>
5 th September 2019	<i>A talk at 20 Park Parade, once the studio of artist Bernard Evans RA.</i>
30 th October 2019	<i>Talk by Keith Wilkinson on Harrogate at the outbreak of World War 1</i>
8 th December 2019	<i>Festive Gathering at The Club with a talk by member Harry Satloka</i>
27 th February 2020	<i>Visit to Allerton Incinerator</i>

We experimented with a talk via Zoom on 4th November 2020 when Dr Paul Jennings gave an interesting talk on the *European Presence in Edwardian Harrogate*. Over 30 members joined in that event.

Plaques:

Our new website dedicated to plaques www.harrogateplaques.org, was officially launched on 15th July, 2019 by the Mayor at a gathering of over 60 friends and members in the Crystal Ballroom at The Granby Care Home. At the same time, a Town Centre Trails leaflet was launched and over 2,000 copies distributed to residents and visitors through a network of hotels and tourist attractions.

The Society also supported several new plaques:

1. Bettys, on the occasion of their centenary - 17th July 2019
2. A second plaque was affixed on the wall of the original Bettys on Cambridge Crescent
3. Yorkshire Hotel and White Hart Hotel – both unveiled by the Mayor, Cllr Stuart Martin OBE and the Mayoress, April Martin on 27th August 2019
4. A plaque has been manufactured remembering the work of artist Jean-Georges Simon but due to the pandemic, the unveiling of this has been delayed.
5. We were able to support, during a brief respite from lockdowns, the unveiling of a replica plaque close, to Battle of Britain day, that marked the raising of funds by the people of Harrogate to buy a Spitfire aircraft in 1941. The plaque was unveiled by Lord Houghton of Richmond with Andrew Jones MP assisting.



Planning Issues:

Although retired as Chairman, Henry Pankhurst continued to take the lead on reviewing planning applications, with support from other members of the Development and Planning sub-group. A summary of their work features in a separate report.

The Society has given a number of interviews with the media including on Crescent Gardens, the old Post Office on Cambridge Street, Harrogate Spring Water proposals and the future of the closed Debenham's building.

Cultural Quarter:

A small groups including representatives from the Society, The Mercer Gallery and Royal Hall met over the Summer of 2019 to explore the potential of creating a Cultural Quarter to take in the Royal Hall, Royal Baths, Crescent Gardens, Royal Pump Room, Mercer Gallery and Valley Gardens through to the Sun Pavilion. A brochure explaining the concept was produced and discussions with various parties continues.

Crescent Gardens:

5th April 2019 saw a turning point for the future of the old Council Offices, Crescent Gardens. That date was set as a deadline for the potential owner to submit a planning application. That didn't happen and the building went back on the market.

The Co Vice-Chairs entered into dialogue with potential purchasers as well as with Harrogate Borough Council to encourage respect for the historic value of the building and the potential of using the old Council Chamber, Mayor's Parlour and staircase for heritage events, exhibitions and as a "hub" for a proposed Cultural Quarter for Harrogate.

We are pleased that the successful purchaser, Impala Estates Ltd, has continued a dialogue with the Committee since purchasing the building in January 2020.

On 9th October 2020, several members visited the building as guests of Impala Estates to see progress and plans.

Devolution:

This was a hot topic over the summer and an evening was set aside to discuss the implications of devolution and how we might help "Shape" the future of the town. We corresponded with the leaders of North Yorkshire County Council and Harrogate District Council and received some constructive replies. We emphasised the opportunity for a Town Council and now await the next stage.

**Mike Hine:**

Sadly, we lost a great friend and supporter of the Society when Mike Hine passed away in December 2019 after a very short illness.

A bequest to the Society from Mike's estate will ensure his name is not forgotten. A tribute to Mike was published in the February 2020 newsletter.

Victor Wild:

Sadly, on 11th April 2020, Victor Wild, a long standing member, former Treasurer and Patron of The Society passed away, not long after his wife Kay died. A tribute to Victor was published in the May 2020 newsletter.

UCI:

This report would not be complete without reference to the World Cycling Event held in September 2019 and the effect it had on the town. The Committee corresponded with Harrogate Borough Council over problems arising from the event.

Newsletter:

The newsletter continues to be edited by David Siddans who each issue brings our members a detailed and interesting account of our work.

Since the first lockdown David has issued e-Newsletters every couple of months. Those members who have registered an email address receive them electronically but for the handful of members who do not use email, we have copies printed and distribute them by hand. David works very hard to bring colourful, appealing newsletters to us all and this is hugely appreciated.

Committee Meetings:

The Committee generally meet on the first Monday of the month at the Ascot House Hotel – who kindly provide accommodation and refreshments free of charge. As noted above, since March 2020 the committee have continued to meet monthly but via Zoom.



Vision and Strategy:

In March 2020 we had planned an Away Day for the committee and some members, to discuss a future Vision and Strategy for the Society but unfortunately this event was cancelled due to the Covid pandemic.

However, we did not allow this to deter us and after extensive consultation with members, the committee and a few members had a 'virtual' Away day (via Zoom), facilitated by Kevin Trickett (chair of Wakefield Civic Society and YHACS).

A key outcome of the consultation and discussions was a new mission statement

“Celebrate our past, Enhance our present, Shape our future”

...and the establishment of four sub-groups, to promote the work of the Society, and encourage greater involvement of members in the activities that are of particular interest to them:

1. *Development and Planning*
2. *Communications*
3. *Events*
4. *History*

We are pleased to report these groups have started to make a difference to the effectiveness of the Society – despite lockdown restrictions.

Communications:

Over the autumn of 2020 we spent time on designing a new logo and website. The criteria were for a simpler logo that would be visually effective when used on social media and a website that was modern and more extensive than the existing. The logo has been finalised and there are plans for the new website to go live this spring.

External Links:

We have supported the work of YHACS – The Yorkshire and Humberside Association of Civic Societies - including giving a talk on the plaques website ahead of their AGM in January 2020

We have also debated joining Civic Voice and propose to do so early in 2021

We have established strong links with Harrogate Borough Council, recently meeting with the Curator of the Mercer Gallery and the Head of Culture, Tourism and Sport. We will also be working with them in bringing a programme of Heritage Open Days together.



Thank you:

To those many members who assist with the work of the sub-groups and indeed to **all** our members, whose support is invaluable.

2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the Society and we are making plans to mark this occasion and hope that it might be possible to arrange an event later in the year.