



Garlanding the Guests

The centenary commemoration of the Marquess of Ripon's death brought together distinguished guests, from Ripon and from further afield.

We were pleased to see plenty of local people assembling at the Marquess' statue in the Spa Gardens. Ripon City Band played as they gathered there.

Children from St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic Junior School had made very large and colourful Indian-style garlands which they presented to distinguished guests, among them Michael Abrahams in his role as Deputy Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, Monsignor William Steele representing the Roman Catholic Bishop of Leeds and Councillor David Parnaby, Mayor of Ripon.

Other guests included representatives of the National Trust at Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal and members of the de Grey and Ripon Lodge.

Afterwards, the ballroom of the Spa Hotel was almost full to capacity for everyone to hear Richard Compton of Newby Hall, a descendant of the Marquess, give an excellent presentation of the life and work of this eminent Victorian.

Ripon
City Band
and the
Marquess



St Wilfrid's
School
children
with their
garlands and
some of the
guests they
garlanded
(pictures by
courtesy of
Andrew Curtis
and Keith Sarman)



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Our umbrella - the Civic Society Initiative

We reported in the last edition of this newsletter that the Civic Trust had gone into administration. In June the Civic Society Initiative was launched. Its aim - like that of its predecessor - is to provide a national voice and support for the civic society movement.

More than 650 civic societies are supporting this venture, believing that it is vital for the future of the civic society movement and that

- the civic society movement needs an independent champion
- the movement needs to be supported as a network where the voice of individual societies and local groups can be strengthened
- the future needs to be rooted in what the societies want - and they need to drive the way forward.

Practical offers of help have been received from a large number of professional bodies, local authorities, voluntary and charitable organisations and others, including:

- one year's funding donated by the National Trust for Tony Burton to lead the Initiative as its Director
- office accommodation and in-kind support donated by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) in London and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in Liverpool
- a charitable 'home' to receive funds and provide governance through the North of England Civic Trust
- a civic society convention supported by Blackpool Council and hosted by Blackpool Civic Trust in October 2009

Soundings will be taken from the civic society movement and others and an extensive debate will be undertaken, including surveys and local stakeholder events in the major cities and elsewhere. 2

The new Civic Society Initiative is keen to communicate - and to enable civic societies,

community groups, individuals, local authorities, planners and architects to stay right up to date with moves to strengthen the role of local communities in shaping the future of towns, cities and villages across the country, it is

- announcing a regular blog featuring renowned actor and heritage champion Griff Rhys Jones.

www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk/blog

- launching the twitter account at

www.twitter.com/csinitiative

giving communities and visitors daily descriptions of what's happening with the Civic Society Initiative

- promoting the first national Civic Society News RSS feed at

<http://feeds2.feedburner.com/CivicSocietyNews>

- launching a central video depository dedicated to the civic society movement at

www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk/videos.html

The new social networking tools are available at

www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk.

These new resources will provide current information on the role being played by civic societies as local champions of the places where we live. They also provide opportunities for everyone to engage with the debate being run by the Civic Society Initiative to strengthen the role played by the hundreds of local civic societies and their 250,000 members.



OPEN TO VIEW - a Pump Room, a Masonic Hall and a Gazebo

Look out for the pink and purple balloons!

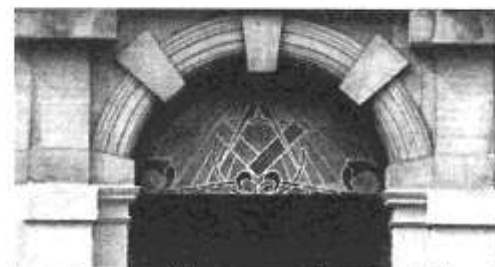
As part of the Heritage Open Days weekend (**Thursday 10 - Sunday 13 September**), organised this year by English Heritage, anyone will be able to take a good look at the foyer - the former Pump Room - of Ripon Spa Baths. You don't necessarily have to go swimming!



First, examine the bizarre terracotta masks built into the *portecochère* and the façade (left). Then go through the doors,

with their carvings of pomegranates, into the former Pump Room; the pump basin and outlet survive behind the pay desk. The whole room is decorated with highly-glazed and moulded faience tiling, and there are stained glass windows showing parts of Ripon's history; smaller windows have art nouveau motifs.

There's a certain amount of clutter hiding these colourful features, but they're still very enjoyable. Thank you to Harrogate Borough Council for agreeing to our request to encourage visitors to the Spa Baths foyer for Heritage Open Days.



Just for one afternoon - **Sunday 13 September**, from 2 pm to 4 pm - the Masonic Hall on Water Skellgate (above) will be open, courtesy of the de Grey and Ripon Lodge, who will guide the public around. We're very grateful to the Lodge for allowing this special opening.

As in previous years, the Gazebo to the rear of the Blossomgate Court, Blossomgate (below) will be open on the same Sunday afternoon. If you haven't seen this delightful and unique garden building before, do go along and explore it. But this year, we really do need more **volunteers to help** in stewarding the opening of the **Gazebo** - so if you can spare an hour (or two!) to do this, please telephone 608320 or e-mail info@riponcivicsociety.org.uk

St Mary Magdalen's Chapel in Magdalen's Road will also be open on the same afternoon.



OUT AND ABOUT WITH THE CIVIC SOCIETY

There were visits to Hackfall and to Lancaster this summer. Both were very successful - here and on the next two pages we report what you may have missed . . .

Hackfall - romantic even in the rain



It was exactly the weather we didn't want - a leaden sky and steady fall of rain that seemed set in for the day. A few charity runners were sharing the little car park - but we didn't see them later in the woods. (Perhaps they got lost!) As we booted up and donned our waterproofs on that soggy June morning, our guide - conservation architect Linda Lockett - was unperturbed.

She introduced us to Hackfall and the remedial work on its buildings that she has overseen in recent years, leading us into the woods and down to the Round Pond, with the Rustic Temple nearby. A short distance away the Grotto gave a fine view of the Forty Foot Fall (actually it's rather greater than that), perhaps not as spectacular as it might have been - this was the first rainy day for a while -

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- but still an impressive sight.

This deep gorge is a magical place that captivated the great landscape painter Turner and enthralled Wordsworth; their contemporaries were inspired to visit on their way to the Lake District. William Aislabie, (son of John, of South Sea Bubble notoriety) trans-

formed his father's woodland into a "beautiful wilderness", creating grottos and surprise views, glades, rustic temples embedded in groves of trees, waterfalls and follies. Later in the nineteenth century the Marquis of Ripon created more paths, steps and cascades. We imagined ladies being transported in carriages and taking tea with the Aislabies at Mowbray Point . . .

The latter (above) was our constant reference point: it can be seen frequently from



deep within the gorge, perched high and (until recent vital work was done) precariously above it. Now leased to the Landmark Trust, it is a holiday let ('The Ruin'), and the public is allowed on to its terrace only between 11 am and 3 pm.

We walked along the gorge to Fisher's Hall (left), named after William's gardener, and saw the River Ure in fairly powerful spate; afterwards we crossed the stepping stones by the Alum Spring to walk up to Mowbray Castle (top). In line with current practice, any new structural work on the Hackfall buildings is visible - a concrete beam and steel rod can be

seen tying two walls of the little mock castle together.

Our tour took us on past the Grewelthorpe entrance and finally to the delightful Banqueting House at Mowbray Point, of which we had had so many tantalising glimpses. The sky was brightening and from the terrace we could appreciate a fine vista - the deep gorge,

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Mowbray Castle, the spire of Masham church and even Roseberry Topping, 35 miles away.

On our way back to the car park we had a serendipitous meeting with James Ramsden, who has worked tirelessly, through his Hackfall Trust, to restore this

very special landscape.

It was almost fine as we left, a few of us going into Masham for lunch and afterwards to the lovely Himalayan Garden in Hutts Lane, where the rhododendrons and azaleas were still in bloom and the sun was attempting to shine.



Looking at Lancaster, then treading the boards in Morecambe

The August sun shone as we arrived at the Ashton Memorial in Williamson Park on Lancaster's eastern edge, where we could appreciate a fine view of Morecambe Bay and the Lake District beyond. Roger Frankland (*below left with members of RCS at the Memorial*) and two ladies from Lancaster Civic Society were there to greet us and tell us how James Williamson II, later Lord Ashton, one of two linoleum magnates in late-19th-century Lancaster (the other was Sir Thomas Storey) erected a grand memorial to himself and his family on Golgotha Hill (the site, of course, of gruesome hangings) and created the park.

From a balcony on this eye-catching folly Roger pointed out features in the city of Lancaster below, including the

millennium bridge, the aqueduct over the River Lune and the striking new apartments on the Kingsway site: eight storeys are built on huge legs above the former bus depot. The depot's structure had to remain intact because Roger's wife was responsible for its being given a last-minute Grade II listing! An even larger and more controversial development is proposed half a mile south, near the canal.

On the way down into the town we passed Lancaster Royal Grammar School and the fine St Peter's Roman Catholic Cathedral.

In Dalton Square we admired the neo-Georgian Town Hall (which celebrates its centenary this year), the statue of Queen

Victoria with Victorian worthies depicted around it, Georgian terraces (including a house that was the scene of a grisly murder in 1935) and successful modern infill.

In smaller groups we were shown some hidden gems, among them a tiny mediaeval street now cleverly incorporated into a wine bar, and the Georgian Music Room (*above*) - built as a garden house - with its superb Baroque interior



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(another Landmark Trust restoration). In contrast, it's difficult to miss the awful 'Vue' cinema, with its illuminated signs. The impressive Judges' Lodgings stands proudly beneath the castle and contains a toy museum, a wonderful collection of Gillow furniture and fine art.

After lunch some of the group made time for a quick visit to the Priory Church and then we all had an excellent tour of the castle (*below*), which included the Shire Hall (the Civil Court) and the Crown Court. We learned about the



Duchy of Lancaster, crime and punishment, the Pendle Witches and much more. Part of the building is still a prison. Lancaster Castle is resisting pressure to make it into a museum and is maintaining its historic role as a working part of the judicial system.

Lancaster flows seamlessly into Morecambe, where we donned hard hats (*top right*) to have a special tour of the defunct Winter Gardens. Originally known as the Victoria Pavilion, this huge theatre nurtured the young Thora Hird and many famous stars. The structure has been made watertight: in September 2009 it will know if it will receive the



regeneration funding and lottery grant it so desperately needs.

On the terrace overlooking the bay and the hills beyond we imagined relaxing with our interval drinks; then we sampled the boxes and went on stage. This building thoroughly deserves the total restoration its Grade 2* colleague the Midland Hotel has already achieved.

Nearby, Eric Morecambe does his dance routine and gives everyone a laugh (including the Queen when she unveiled his statue in 1999). The bird sculptures of the 'Tern' project on the promenade are another sign of Morecambe's efforts to resurrect its image as a resort - but it still has a long way to go. Its hope must be in the 'silver surfers' who can travel there by coach or by rail and who will appreciate its brilliant geographic position. We crammed a lot into our day out - but it was just a little sample of what this lovely corner of the north-west has to offer.

We are grateful to Linda Lockett at Hackfall, to Lancaster Civic Society and to the Friends of the Winter Gardens for their welcome, and to our own Committee Member Daphne Allan for making all the arrangements for both these visits.

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DIARY

Forthcoming Meetings and Events

Richard Tinker, case worker for the West Yorkshire branch of the **Victorian Society**, is

our speaker on **THURSDAY 3 SEPTEMBER**. Do come along to learn about the important work the society does in a region renowned for its splendid Victorian and Edwardian architecture.

Our annual **Awards Ceremony** is on **THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER**, at a new venue - the Ballroom of the Spa Hotel - this is our flagship public event, and we need the support of as many of our members as possible!

The **Annual General Meeting** on **THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER** will follow a talk by Malcolm Tempest, archi-

tect of that quirky and very successful landscape design 'The **Forbidden Corner**' (right).



The last talk of 2009 will be on **THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER** when John Hobson will give a presentation on **Yorkshire Wildlife**.

Please do your best to support these events.

Fixing the flow for traffic

The Civic Society Committee is putting together its response to the Local Traffic Plan Survey sent by North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) which will inform the Council's decisions about traffic throughout the county.

The Chairman has also attended a meeting, chaired by County Councillor John Fort, specifically about Ripon's traffic; it was a positive meeting, at which the Society's own Traffic Policy was discussed. Everyone at the meeting, which included representatives from retailers, emergency services and Harrogate Borough Council (HBC), agreed that it was a useful forum that will be repeated.

There has also been a meeting with NYCC and HBC officers about street cleanliness and the plethora of traffic signs and information signs. We are hopeful that there will be action on both these matters before too long.

Have your say!

Enclosed with this newsletter is a brief questionnaire. Please spare a few minutes to complete it. It's also available on the RCS website www.riponcivicsociety.org.uk

It will help us enormously if you could first complete your contact details, giving your e-mail address if you have one, so that more of you can receive our regular news bulletin.

We'll consider the replies at a meeting of the Executive Committee on 28 October and will report to the membership at the Annual General Meeting on 5 November.



RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY

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