

**YORKSHIRE & HUMBER  
ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC SOCIETIES**



**Annual Report  
And Accounts 2013**

## **YHACS Member Societies in 2013**

1. Addingham Civic Society
2. Aireborough Civic Society
3. Allertonshire Civic Society
4. Barnsley Civic Trust
5. Beverley & District Civic Society
6. Bingley Civic Trust
7. Bradford Civic Society
8. Bridlington and District Civic Society
9. Brighouse Civic Trust
10. Castleford & District Civic Trust
11. Doncaster Civic Trust
12. Goole Civic Society
13. Grimsby Cleethorpes & District Civic Society
14. Halifax Civic Trust
15. Harrogate Civic Society
16. Honley Civic Society
17. Horbury Civic Society
18. Hornsea and District Civic Society
19. Horsforth Civic Society
20. Howden Civic Society
21. Huddersfield Civic Society
22. Hull Civic Society
23. Ilkley Civic Society
24. Knaresborough Civic Society
25. Leeds Civic Trust
26. Market Weighton Civic Society
27. Ossett Civic Trust
28. Pickering & District Civic Society
29. Pontefract Civic Society
30. Pudsey & District Civic Society
31. Richmond & District Civic Society
32. Ripon Civic Society
33. Saddleworth Civic Trust
34. Scalby Village Trust
35. Scarborough & District Civic Society
36. Selby Civic Society
37. Skipton in Craven Civic Society
38. Spen Valley Civic Society
39. The Oulton Society
40. Wakefield Civic Society
41. Wetherby Civic Society
42. Whitby Civic Society
43. York Civic Trust

*Cover photographs © Kevin Trickett*

*Front cover – Micklegate Bar, York*

*Rear cover – The Rotunda Museum, Scarborough*

# YHACS Annual Report 2013

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## Who we are

The Yorkshire and Humber Association of Civic Societies (YHACS) is a registered charity (no. 1112290) and a membership organisation for civic and amenity societies around the Yorkshire and Humber region.

We aim to be a distinctive voice for the civic society movement in Y&H and seek to strengthen and develop the movement by offering our members advice, support and networking opportunities. We also campaign on their behalf on matters of mutual concern and promote awareness of the work civic societies do through our website, publication of our quarterly newsletter and other publications, and through the issue of press releases.

At the end of 2013, there were 43 paid-up member societies within YHACS with a collective membership in excess of 7,000 individuals and organisations.

Civic societies are independent, grass roots groups of citizens who seek to enhance the quality of life in their communities. Mostly run by volunteers, civic societies have a particular focus on improving the public realm and built environment – through helping to preserve the best of our built heritage while campaigning for the highest standards of architecture, design and town planning. They often act as public watchdogs or mediators between local authority planning officials, developers and the general public on developments that impact on the quality of life for local people.

Civic societies can also be called upon to act as custodians of local history and heritage. As a result, they make an excellent springboard for fostering a sense of civic pride and community cohesion.

Many societies celebrate the heritage of their locality through publishing literature, organising walks, and erecting commemorative plaques.

YHACS encourages member societies to see themselves as part of a wider movement and to share ideas and experiences. We want to see new societies being created in places where currently there is none. In recent years, YHACS has been instrumental in establishing civic societies in Barnsley, Bradford and Sheffield.

While we still regard the protection of our built heritage as a key aim, we recognise that new development can be a necessary step in delivering vibrancy and prosperity in our communities. Where civic societies might once have viewed development sceptically, the civic society movement in our region looks to present development as an opportunity to create the heritage of tomorrow through good design. At YHACS, we are driven by a desire to reconcile the past, present and future of our townscapes with a vision developed by communities in their local civic societies.

YHACS is a member of Civic Voice, the national charity for the civic society movement in England, and collaborates with others, such as English Heritage, on matters concerning the conservation and preservation of our built heritage.

## Our aims

Our aims are to promote and encourage:

- a high standard of architecture, building, and town and country planning;
- the preservation of beauty or amenity in cities, towns and villages or the countryside, and of land, buildings and features of beauty or interest in such cities, towns and villages or countryside;
- a sense of civic pride amongst members of the general public by the provision of support and advice to civic societies in the Yorkshire and Humber area.

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## **Membership**

Membership of YHACS is open to any civic or amenity society that has aims in sympathy with our own. Membership is subject to an annual subscription (£50 in 2013), payable each January; we also welcome and encourage donations from societies that can afford to make an additional payment.

## **Statement of Public Benefit**

Our vision is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens in the region by engaging people not only in the protection of local heritage but also in the promotion of sustainable economic development and urban renaissance. Through our campaigns and networking and through the provision of advice and support to civic and amenity societies, YHACS aims to help make Yorkshire and Humber a better place in which to live, work or relax. This is for the overall benefit of the general public, whether or not they are members of any particular civic society and whether they be residents of or visitors to the area.

## **How to contact us:**

YHACS has no premises of its own but can be contacted by email at the following address: [info@wakefieldcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@wakefieldcivicsociety.org.uk)

Further information is also available on our website: [www.yhacs.org.uk](http://www.yhacs.org.uk)

Written correspondence can be sent to our chairman, Kevin Trickett  
c/o Wakefield Civic Society,  
PO Box 380,  
The Orangery,  
Back Lane,  
Wakefield,  
WF1 3WT.

## **Governance**

As an unincorporated registered charity, YHACS is managed by an Executive Committee of volunteer trustees in accordance with our written constitution, dated 24<sup>th</sup> September 2005 and amended on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2008. The Constitution provides that the charity shall be managed and administered by a committee comprising Officers and other members duly elected at the Annual General Meeting held in January each year. Such persons are also the Trustees of the charity.

In addition to the Executive Committee, YHACS also has an elected President. The role of President is honorary. The President, who is also elected at the Annual General Meeting each January, is consulted for advice and is invited to attend meetings of the Committee to take part in discussion but does not vote.

The officers and committee who held office during 2012 were as follows:

<b>President</b>	Peter Cooper
<b>Chairman</b>	Kevin Trickett
<b>Vice Chairman</b>	David Moss
<b>Secretary</b>	Helen Kidman
<b>Treasurer</b>	Richard Ward

### **Committee members:**

Margaret Clarke (\*)  
Kevin Grady  
Tony Leonard  
Cyril Oliver  
Malcolm Sharman  
David Winpenny

(\*) Margaret was co-opted to office in the Summer of 2013

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## Chairman's Report



Well, here we are again: Annual Report time and I need to pull together and assemble in the right order sufficient *bons mots* and *pensées profondes* to describe and account for the year that just ended. That the year seems to have flown by must be a sign of busyness: 2013 was a year in which, I suspect, we were all kept very busy indeed!

**State of the region:** Overall, 2013 was another very satisfactory year for YHACS. We maintained the number of paid-up member societies at 43, not exactly momentous news but it's not quite the status quo it appears: we lost two members (Forest of Galtres and Rotherham), but recruited two new ones (Aireborough and Knaresborough), although, strictly speaking, these were members returning to the fold).

We did try to recruit more members by sending out targeted invitations to selected civic societies within the region, but there were no takers, at least this time around. However, we're here for the long-term and don't necessarily accept 'no' for an answer.

It is, however, a great pity that more societies have not so far enrolled as members. My arguments on this are well rehearsed and oft repeated – I feel very strongly that there is strength in numbers and we gain a greater appreciation of being part of a much bigger *civic movement* when we take time out to meet up with colleagues from other societies. We have the chance then to share experiences and reflect on the common problems that we encounter as we work towards our shared goals of making the places in which we live and work better for all to enjoy.

That's not to say, of course, that we all want to do this in the *same* way. What works for one society in one place doesn't necessarily hold good for all, but at least by coming together to talk about our concerns, we get to expose our thinking, working practices and, indeed, our behaviours – to challenge and new perspectives.

It is perhaps in this aspect that YHACS excels: if we can be said to be doing anything right, our quarterly meetings at different locations are a great way of bringing members together. In 2013 we held meetings in Harrogate, York, Scarborough and at Fountains Abbey. I think I can say in all honesty that, for those who attended, these meetings were informative and enjoyable experiences. We've had some very interesting speakers – Gary Verity, the Chief Executive of Welcome to Yorkshire, being a particularly stimulating guest at our York meeting – and some delightful venues – from mediaeval to modern (and I'm thinking here of the purpose-built conference centre at Fountains Abbey, which was a very pleasant surprise, with or without the Abbey!).

More and more, we have tried to make our meetings a social occasion rather than just an opportunity for talking heads. We have invited members to get together on the Friday evening before the Saturday meeting for dinner and conversation and these evenings have been a great way to start the weekend. We did this for last year's AGM in Harrogate (just as well really given the snow that fell on the Friday night!), and then again at Scarborough and Fountains Abbey (meeting up in Ripon, of course, for the latter, when we also took a short walk out between main course and dessert to listen to the Hornblower).

Plans are already being put in place to repeat this formula in 2014, beginning with the January AGM, for which we are returning to Harrogate.

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**The YHACS Committee:** It is essential that we ring the changes from time to time by bringing in new people to join the committee. In 2013, we made an effort to do just this.

Having put out the usual call for volunteers to come forward at the AGM, a call that was singularly unanswered by the way, we then tried the personal approach and made direct contact with a (very) limited number of individuals whose jibs were cut to our liking.

It's early days yet but we have already had some success and were delighted when Margaret Clarke of Goole Civic Society agreed to join us as a co-opted member back in the summer. Not only that, she appears to have enjoyed the experience so much that she has agreed to allow her name to go forward for election at the AGM this coming January.

Being on the committee is not intended to be a job for life – you enlist, serve for a period of time, and then step down, handing the baton on to someone else as you go. Or at least that's the theory. The AGM presents an opportunity for others to come forward, of course, and I'd like to think some of our members will. I hope not to be disappointed!

Having said that, we do know that we are going to lose one of our valued committee members at the coming AGM. Cyril Oliver of Bridlington Civic Society, who joined the YHACS committee in July 2006, has announced that he is stepping down. In recent times, Cyril has been our transport correspondent (with a particular interest in all things railway).

I would like to put on record my personal gratitude to Cyril for his work and support as a committee member and, on behalf of the whole of the YHACS membership, to express our thanks and to wish him well for all he does in the future.

**YHACS / Peter Spawforth Award:** Having instigated Civic Societies Week in 2008, and aligned our annual prize giving to recognise and reward the best project or activity associated with the week, the YHACS committee then decided to move with the times and agreed to support Civic Day when it was introduced by Civic Voice in 2011. We allowed some flexibility for projects or activities that took place in the week or so either side of Civic Day as we wanted to encourage participation.

The YHACS/Peter Spawforth Award has been a very important part of our calendar with members of the YHACS committee scrutinising the evidence submitted by competing societies each year and marking that evidence according to published criteria. Unfortunately, the number of entries started to fall off and we asked why. Some of the smaller societies in our midst said that, for them, trying to put anything extra on in the summer months was not realistic as it was the time of year when their committee members took their holidays. We were asked for even more flexibility.

Then it was suggested that we should allow societies to put forward projects that they had undertaken at *any* time of the year. This would be fairer to everyone, irrespective of the size of the society. Showing that we listen to our members, for 2013 we changed the rules and said that we would indeed award prizes for the best effort during a twelve month period – from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013. We also proposed a change to the prize structure, which the membership endorsed at our meeting in Scarborough in July. This time, there will be cash prizes for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places!

Societies were asked to submit their entries and the YHACS committee met at the end of November to adjudicate. We will be revealing the results at the AGM in January 2014 and I'll be giving some very interesting feedback on what happened!

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**The Art of Communication:** While face-to-face meetings are, of course, important, much of our routine committee work is done by email, as you would expect. Email is now also the method of choice for our interaction with member societies between meetings. Our newsletters and reports are now *only* issued by email. It's taken us a while to get to this stage but the change that we have implemented has led to important savings in time and, just as importantly, in effort, as well as the associated costs of printing and postage, thereby enabling us to reduce running cost overheads significantly.

Used well, email has the potential to be an efficient means of transmitting salient information between people who need to see it or who might have an interest in the facts under discussion. I've found it works best when people actually read and then respond to what is in their inbox. This requires a certain amount of discipline, of course, but there is an established etiquette associated with most forms of communications and email is no different in this respect. If someone sends out an invitation or a request for information, it is exceptionally useful if the recipient of that invitation or request fires up the old pc/laptop/smartphone/tablet/etc. and taps out a reply occasionally!

As someone who thrives on the interaction with others and understands the benefits of email as a communication tool, I am often surprised by people who tell me they don't check their emails every day; people who tell me that they have busy lives to lead (assuming I don't!) so reading and answering emails is way down their list of priorities, but do spare a thought for those like me who crave the pleasure of your replies – or at least want to know who's coming to the meeting so that we can book the necessary and sufficient refreshments.

The serious message here is that sometimes we need to gather information very quickly from our member societies. This might be to do with an event or it could be in response to a request from Civic Voice or some other body. Email is the most efficient method of doing this – or it should be. The system breaks down and means that we cannot rely on having comprehensive information if societies don't reply.

But then, email is now so passé! Anyone who is anyone is now on Twitter. While email has its uses for the more formal communication, for those who live in the moment, Twitter is the place to be. There's a lot of misinformation out there about the perils of using social media. Don't let that put you off! Twitter didn't invent stupidity, it just exposes it (and that's a quote I found on Twitter). Used wisely as a marketing and communication tool, it's a great device for attracting visitors to your events, gaining support and volunteers for your project and keeping your stakeholders and the general public aware of what your organisation is up to. From these acorns come new members – and I speak from experience! Wakefield Civic Society recruited 45 new members in 2013, the first full year of using Twitter and Facebook.

While it took us quite a long time to get to the point where all our member societies were on email, I suspect getting them all on to Twitter will be a harder task, especially when some of our members still don't have websites. The YHACS committee are very keen to see a modern, dynamic civic society movement in our region and we put together a special, low-cost, offer to allow all our members to acquire a new website, whether they were starting from scratch or just revamping an existing site. That offer is still available and I am aware some societies have taken it up. If your society doesn't have a website, please do give it serious consideration. If you need to be reminded of the offer details, let me know.

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**Out and About:** During 2013, I visited a number of civic societies in the region. These visits are as ever a good way for me to meet people and discuss their issues while also sharing some of my experience and knowledge of the civic movement. I'm always willing to come and talk to your officers, your committee or your membership – subject to my other diary commitments, of course – and I hope my visits are considered useful after the event (but should I be worried that no society has yet asked me back to speak a second time?).

In January, I was the guest speaker at a meeting of Goole Civic Society (the first and so far the only time I've ever given a talk on a barge). In March, I gave a talk to Beverley Civic Society and then in November I spoke at the AGM of Ripon Civic Society. I also accepted an invitation from Castleford Civic Trust to attend their annual Shop Window Awards, and another invitation to spend a few hours with Addingham Civic Society to learn something about the village, the society and their Marsh Award-winning project to create a multi-use sports court for the village.

In November, I attended an "Association Showcase" at the Park Inn Hotel in York. This was an event targeted at charities across the country with a view to introducing them to the Radisson Blu/Park Inn group of hotels. The idea was that the hotel company would get to know something about the operation of the charities and associations they had invited and representatives from the organisations attending would find out how the hotel group could assist in organising conferences and providing facilities tailored to our needs. This was an interesting idea which, if nothing else, helped the hotel group realise that charities operate on very low budgets that mean we are unlikely to spend lavishly on hotel-based conferences and events.

In May, I attended a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies in London. Chaired by Laura Sandys, MP for Ramsgate and a former trustee of the Civic Trust so someone well-versed in the issues facing civic societies, guest speakers included the planning minister Nick Boles and Civic Voice president Griff Rhys Jones. It's not every day that I get to put points directly to a minister but YHACS was there and our voice was heard.

In October, it was off to Liverpool for the Civic Voice convention and AGM. Now, I attended that meeting wearing two hats, president of Wakefield Civic Society but also as chair of YHACS. It was a very good occasion all round with opportunities to explore Liverpool during the day on Friday, a civic reception at Liverpool Town Hall on Friday evening and then the AGM itself in the Council Chamber on the Saturday. With a welcome address from the Lord Mayor of Liverpool – whose delight at being able to host the convention was tangible – and a spirited key-note speech by Griff Rhys Jones, perhaps the only disappointment was that so few YHACS members attended. We understand that this year's Civic Voice AGM and convention will be in Canterbury; further to travel perhaps, but what a place to visit! I hope more of our societies will make the effort to go.

The Civic Voice AGM in Liverpool was the swansong for Paula Ridley in her role as trustee and chair. She had seen Civic Voice through its important, difficult and crucial first years and hands over the reins at a time when the organisation needs to focus on growth. Freddie Gick is the new chair of Civic Voice and has agreed to attend the YHACS AGM in January 2014 to share his thoughts for the future with us and to solicit our views on what the focus of Civic Voice should be going forward. It will also provide an opportunity to discuss how YHACS and Civic Voice can develop our relationship and work together successfully as partners.

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**The Political Context:** As well as all the usual day-to-day organisational activity associated with running YHACS in 2013, we have been paying pay close attention to what our political masters have been talking about and doing!

There seems to have been a constant stream of legislative and policy proposals emerging from central government, some quite frankly bizarre and quickly dropped for the red herrings they were (at least for now), and others that are likely to have a long-lasting impact on our green and rather pleasant land. Trying to keep up with all the consultations and points of view has left me feeling quite dizzy at times, and I'm sure I'm not alone in this respect.

Those civic societies that are also members of Civic Voice will, I am sure, be very grateful to that organisation for keeping us in the loop on all the proposed changes, for collating our views and feeding them back on our behalf to the relevant ministers and government departments. Civic Voice continues to provide a vital service to civic societies and is an essential channel for communications between the movement and government. As I have said before, YHACS cannot do this – our strengths lie elsewhere – and we are, in any case, too far removed geographically to beat a regular path to the doorways of ministers.

The National Planning Policy Framework continues to cause uncertainty with its presumption in favour of sustainable development. Has it become a developers' charter or does it allow local communities a real voice in how their cities, towns and villages are developed? It's too early to be entirely certain but it does seem clear that local authorities that have no agreed local plan in place are disadvantaged when they try to prevent unwanted development.

Meanwhile, the effects of housing targets and the consequences of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments continue to reverberate. As the economy starts to pick up, planning applications for housing developments are beginning to materialise thick and fast.

Alas very little of what I have seen so far can be said to be truly inspiring. In the main, they merely replicate the housing offer already available while contributing further to urban sprawl and putting additional pressure on existing infrastructure systems and services.

Not content with troubling us with what goes on above the surface, the government is flagging its strong support for shale gas extraction (or fracking), sparking considerable coverage in the media about the risks and benefits. It is difficult to know what to believe – some 'experts' say it is safe if done correctly (what happens if it's not done correctly, I wonder?), while other 'experts' highlight the risks however it is done. Perhaps wind farms, solar panels, wave energy and even nuclear options will start to look more attractive when communities are presented with stark choices. No doubt we shall return to this subject in 2014.

**The Future:** Lacking the ability to see into the future, I will close by saying that YHACS will continue doing more of what it did in 2013. We will try to remain topical and informative as we bring you what we hope you will find to be an interesting programme of meetings, articles, guest speakers and breaking news (you'll read it on Twitter first, of course). We will do this through teamwork, by which I mean the efforts of my hardworking, unstinting and supportive committee and also our member societies who will turn out to wave us on. We'll do it via email and also at locations across the region over a cup of tea and a nice digestive.

I hope to see you there!

**Kevin Trickett**

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## Income and Expenditure Account for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013

	2012	2013
	£	£
<b>Income</b>		
Subscriptions		
- 2012	1,750.00	0.00
- 2013	800.00	1350.00
- 2014	0.00	400.00
Donations		
- sundry (see note 1)	450.90	642.25
- refreshments (see note 2)	1,225.00	116.00
Reserve deployed (for Griff Rhys Jones event)		764.50
Bank interest	3.41	4.47
Sale of equipment	0.00	298.10
	<b>£4,229.31</b>	<b>£3,575.32</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Subscriptions	15.00	0.00
Meeting expenses – Griff Rhys Jones event 2012	0.00	764.50
– Other	635.40	881.50
Stationery and Newsletter printing	369.95	10.50
Postage and Telephone	128.93	60.70
Travel	261.50	510.25
Insurance	245.00	245.00
Civic Societies Day/Week		
- Prize	250.00	0.00
- Certificates	60.00	0.00
Website	0.00	444.00
Banner purchase	0.00	98.00
Misc.	0.00	42.00
	1,966.18	3,056.45
<b>Reserve</b>	764.50	0.00
	<b>1,498.63</b>	<b>518.87</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>£4,229.31</b>	<b>£3,575.32</b>

**Notes:** (1) Donations include payments made by member societies over and above their membership subscription and as contributions towards the cost of our quarterly meetings. They also include speaker fees paid for Kevin Trickett's attendance as guest speaker at certain civic society member meetings.

(2) Donations for refreshments are the monies collected for food served at specific events (such as the Griff Rhys Jones event in Leeds in 2012) or dropped into our collection boxes at meetings.

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## Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013

	31.12.12	31.12.13
Balance of Accumulated Fund brought forward	2,345.18	4,608.31
Reserve	764.50	-764.50
Surplus/deficit for the year	1,498.63	518.87
	<u>£4,608.31</u>	<u>£4,362.68</u>
<b>Represented by:</b>		
Un-presented cheques	200.00	400.00
Cash with CAF Bank	4,441.43	4242.88
Less un-presented cheques	(-33.12)	(-280.20)
	<u>£4,608.31</u>	<u>£4,362.68</u>

Accounts prepared by Richard Ward, Treasurer, and agreed by Kevin Trickett, Chair

Member of

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VOICE**  
talking civic sense

