

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC SOCIETIES

MINUTES OF THE YHACS MEETING HELD AT ST GILES' CHURCH PONTEFRACT ON 10TH OCTOBER 2015

DELEGATES PRESENT AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

See Appendix 1

WELCOME FROM CLLR DENISE JEFFERY, DEPUTY LEADER OF WAKEFIELD COUNCIL

Cllr Jeffery welcomed YHACS members to Pontefract, explaining that Pontefract is a Magna Carta town with much to offer to visitors, including the castle, popular street market and many attractive Georgian buildings as well as a few which are even earlier. Some buildings are in dire need of renovation, including the Counting House. The council regards the civic society as a critical friend and the two organisations work well together. The council has recently set up a business forum to encourage care for the town centre. A Magna Carta monument will be erected later this year.

WELCOME FROM PAUL CARTWRIGHT, CHAIR OF PONTEFRACT CIVIC SOCIETY

Paul thanked Cllr Jeffery and explained the name 'Pontefract' is an enigma as there is no bridge. The Norman castle controlled the area as far as Leeds. He also drew attention to the fantastic heritage of the town including the church of St Giles which is C12-14. Members were urged to make a return visit as there was so much to see.

MINUTES OF THE SKIPTON MEETING 18TH JULY 2015

These were proposed by Margaret Clarke, seconded by Malcolm Sharman and approved by the meeting.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Kevin Trickett updated members on events during the summer.

A public meeting had been held on 1st October 2015 to gather momentum for Horbury Civic Society, which YHACS is supporting at present. A number of potential new members stepped forward at the meeting and subsequently to form a steering committee. It is hoped that YHACS will be able to hand over the society in the New Year 2016.

The same methodology will be applied to Market Weighton Civic Society.

Kevin had spoken in a personal capacity to Harrogate CS on the subject of Art Deco and subsequently been able to visit White Lodge in Harrogate, acclaimed for its distinctive 1930s architecture as a guest of the Society at one of their events – a very enjoyable one indeed.

The closing date for the Spawforth Award for the Regional Civic Society of the Year is 7th November 2015. The awards will be made at the AGM in Harrogate on 30th January 2016.

TREASURER'S REPORT

YHACS now has 41 members. There is £4,927.49 in the bank account.

PRESENTATION 'SECURED BY DESIGN', BY MICHAEL BROOK FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS

Michael Brook made an interesting illustrated presentation on how subtle changes to house design reduced domestic burglaries by up to 15% with the aim of achieving safer living standards for future generations. This includes specifying doors, windows and fittings which were robust and delayed access to burglars. These crime prevention initiatives can apply to housing estates where the layout of streets and the removal of cut-through footpaths can play an important part in the reduction of crime. Similar methods can be used in the design of apartment blocks, schools and commercial developments. Crime reduction is a police priority. The design guides are on www.securedbydesign.com. There are new building regulations standards which apply to all new homes to be found in 'Approved Document Q'.

PRESENTATION BY DAVID WINPENNY (DELIVERED BY KEVIN TRICKETT AS DAVID HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO ATTEND IN PERSON)

In Victorian melodramas, there's often a scene in which the moustachioed villain, having finally secured the blushing heroine into his lair, will snarl 'Now for my evil designs!'

We all know what he meant by the phrase; but in the civic world, the world of building and the environment, it's a much more difficult matter to distinguish the evil design from the good design. How are we to judge between competing designs, or to criticise what is presented to the planners of our villages, towns and cities by developers and architects? What tools do we have, as members of Civic Societies or Civic Trusts, to assess what is presented, and what weapons can we muster to combat what we find unworthy or even offensive?

These are some of the questions that the YHACS Design portfolio was set up to try to answer. Let's say, upfront, that there will be no definitive solution. We cannot hope to offer a silver bullet with which to slay the purveyors of bad designs or the sometimes-supine planning committees that will pass them. Indeed, it will be hard enough to try to find some common ground between our own views; what I consider an architectural masterpiece may well be your worst nightmare.

Nevertheless, we need to try. First, we need to try to come to some basic understanding of what good design might encompass. How do we do this? First, perhaps, by presenting examples of good practice. Many of our member societies and trusts run awards – often called design awards – for the best examples of both new building and restoration in their areas. Although such awards are subjective and, inevitably, will vary both from area to area, from year to year, and with the availability of projects to judge, they provide a good cross section of the sort of design we should be encouraging. We hope to disseminate more widely, through the YHACS members, information about projects that have been recognised by such awards.

From this comes another suggestion put forward at one of our workshops – that YHACS should put together a portfolio of good design examples. This would need willing cooperation from all our members; the diversity of the cities, towns, suburbs and villages we cover between us means that not all example will be relevant to our particular needs, though we should be able to draw from them some general principles.

There is general agreement that we need to encourage good modern design, not timid pastiche which is often pushed by local authorities. As the planners in our council offices and town halls become ever harder pressed and fewer in numbers, it's often the easiest course for them to have an anodyne set of criteria that they know their council won't baulk at. We need to encourage them to champion more adventurous design; civic societies and trusts have a role to play here in trying to work alongside planning and conservation officers (if such semi-mythical beasts still lurk in your planning jungle) and stiffening their resolve. It will not help if your society is always saying 'no' to imaginative applications! And we should also be trying to inspire our councillors to be aware of good design – though for many of us that may be an even more uphill task!

And we need to look closely at local authority design guides – are they too timid, too damning of the adventurous? Could we use them as the starting point for a YHACS design guide that distils basic principles and best practice to encourage them into a better path?

To help us achieve such things our societies need to have people with some professional expertise on their committees. This is not always possible, of course, but we should always be on the lookout for people who can be gently persuaded to join us. We should cultivate links with our local branches of the RIBA, the RTPI and other professional bodies. And our own society planning committees should take the time (this is a scenario of idealism, of course) to discuss exactly what they would like to see in the area; it is too easy to just be reactive as planning applications come in.

We may never entirely agree about the minutiae of design, but we would be failing in our role as Civic Societies or Civic Trusts if we throw up our hands in surrender when

faced with the latest 'build it cheap, don't bother with an architect' application. Good modern design and imaginative restoration that shows both respect for the past and an awareness of the needs of today are, surely, what we are all aiming for. We will get closer to those targets by cooperation, both among our societies and with our local authorities. Together, we could make those 'evil designs' as old fashioned as the melodramas!

PONTEFRACT UPDATE BY PAUL CARTWRIGHT

Paul delivered an illustrated presentation on the riches of Pontefract, including several blue plaques, the Magna Carta town, the conservation area and THI, Heritage Open Days activity, design awards and partnership working.

PRESENTATION BY JOHN ORRELL OF DLA DESIGN ON CENTRAL SQUARE LEEDS

John presented an illustrated presentation on this new development in central Leeds which is the biggest office space in the city. It fits on a tight site on Whitehall road and had to be sympathetic with the architecture both of Wellington Street, which is Georgian, and Whitehall Road, which is more modern. The height of the development was a sensitive issue after the problems caused by the nearby Bridgewater Place where there had been accidents in strong wind. An innovative Skygarden is being created. The building is clad in thin layers of Corian. There are visuals of this at www.centralsquareleeds.com

CIVIC SOCIETY NEWS

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AOB

This item was not discussed at the meeting due to time constraints:

War Memorials Project – Civic Voice have asked YHACS to nominate a person to act as the liaison point for this project for the YHACS region. Anyone interested should contact Helen Kidman on 01943 609154 for more details.

Dates of Next Meetings

AGM At Harrogate on 30th January 2016

Doncaster on 9th April 2016

Helen Kidman
29th July 2015

Appendix 1 - Attendees & Apologies

	Society/Organisation	Surname	First Name
1	Aireborough Civic Society	Woods	Clive
2	Barnsley Civic Trust	Barnes	Geoff
3	Barnsley Civic Trust	Barnes	Phyllis
4	Bridlington Civic Society	Oliver	Cyril
5	Brighouse Civic Trust	Culpan	John
6	Doncaster Civic Trust	Anderson	Tina
7	Doncaster Civic Trust	Coote	Peter
8	Goole Civic Society	Clarke	John
9	Goole Civic Society/YHACS Committee/Horbury Civic Society	Clarke	Margaret
10	Goole Civic Society	Holmes	Gerald
11	Goole Civic Society	Laidler	Chris
12	Goole Civic Society	Walker	Stephen
13	Halifax Civic Trust	Connolly	Eileen
14	Halifax Civic Trust	Paxton-White	June
15	Huddersfield Civic Society	Earnshaw	Lesley
16	Huddersfield/Scalby and Scarborough Civic Societies/YHACS Committee/Horbury Civic Society	Ward	Richard
17	Hull Civic Society/YHACS Committee/Horbury Civic Society	Sharman	Malcolm
18	Ilkley Civic Society/YHACS Committee/Horbury Civic Society	Kidman	Helen
19	Leeds Civic Trust	Brettell	Jim
20	Pontefract Civic Society	Cartwright	Christine
21	Pontefract Civic Society	Cartwright	Paul
22	Ripon Civic Society/YHACS committee/Horbury Civic Society	Winpenny	David
23	Scarborough Civic Society	Perry	Adrian
24	Scarborough Civic Society	Perry	Chris
25	Scarborough Civic Society/YHACS President//Horbury Civic Society	Cooper	Peter
26	Selby Civic Society	Moss	David
27	Selby Civic Society	Wildash	Jim
28	Skipton Civic Society	Clark	Sheila
29	Spennings Valley Civic Society	Amende	Erica

30	Spen Valley Civic Society	Berry	Colin
31	Spen Valley Civic Society	Rowley	Eric
32	Spen Valley Civic Society	Rowley	Lelsley
33	Wakefield Civic Society	Smith	Anne-Marie
34	Wakefield Civic Society	Spawforth	Peter
35	Wakefield Civic Society	Taylor	Peter
36	Wakefield Civic Society/YHACS Committee/Horbury Civic Society	Trickett	Kevin
37	Wakefield Civic Society	Ward	Brian
38	Speaker - ACPO	Brooke	Michael
39	Speaker - DLA	Orrell	John
40	Deputy Leader, Wakefield Council	Jeffery	Denise
	Apologies Received		
1	Bradford Civic Society	Hall	Alan
2	Bridlington Civic Society	Payne	Jane
3	Historic England	Wall	Deborah
4	Hornsea Civic Society	Miller	John
5	Horsforth Civic Society	Wright	Janis
6	Leeds Civic Trust	Grady	Kevin
7	Leeds Civic Trust	Kitchin	Lynda
8	Market Weighton Civic Society/YHACS Committee/Horbury Civic Society	Leonard	Tony
9	Skitpon Civic Society	Clarke	Sheila
10	Whitby Civic Society	Harty	Nik
11	Whitby Civic Society	Harty	Susan
12	Wakefield Civic Society	Baker	Col