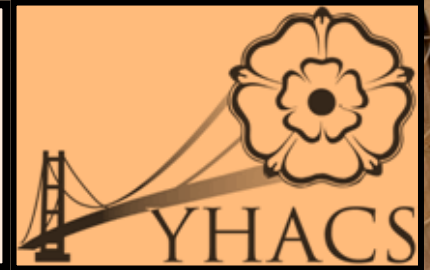


**YORKSHIRE & HUMBER
ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC SOCIETIES**



**Annual Report
And Accounts 2020**

YHACS Member Societies in 2020

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

Cover photograph of The Piece Hall Halifax by Alan Goodrum



Chair's Report

It was all going so well....

We started 2020 in good spirits, confident that, once again, YHACS would be able to offer its regular programme of quarterly events and ongoing support for our members. After all, we were still riding high on the buzz from our 20th Anniversary Lunch held in York in November 2019 and looking forward positively to the year ahead.

Then Covid 'happened'. At the time, it was no more than a little-known virus that was being talked about, if it was mentioned at all, as something happening 'over there'. When the first two UK instances of the Coronavirus were traced to two Chinese nationals who had fallen ill at an aparthotel in York on 29th January – yes, in our region – it was very suddenly something that was being talked about. More than that, it was now very much being talked about as something happening 'over here'. Life began to change; all bets were off, appointments were cancelled, events abandoned, diaries emptied.

But I am getting ahead of myself.

We had started our annual programme in 2020 with a successful Annual General Meeting, held on Saturday, 25th January. We had returned to the Cedar Court Hotel in Harrogate and some of us met up on the Friday evening prior to the meeting to have dinner together as has become our custom at YHACS events.

On the day of the meeting, we had been given a new, and much larger room than the one we had used previously when meeting at this hotel. With nearly 70 people attending, the extra space was very welcome. Our theme was the environment and the threat to our way of life and, indeed, all life, posed by climate change (there is no 'planet B'). Professor Rick Battarbee from Addingham Civic Society's Environmental Group and Jemima Parker from Harrogate Zero Carbon outlined the issues and possible actions from a global and local perspective respectively. In addition, Joan Humble, Chair of Civic Voice, outlined the latest thinking from our national body and their own strategy for the coming year.



Kevin Trickett MBE

A bird sitting in a tree is never afraid of the branch breaking because its trust is not in the branch but in its own wings. Always believe in yourself

Anon

Straight roads do not make skilful drivers.

Paulo Coelho



The meeting closed with me expressing the hope to all present that we would be meeting again in Beverley for the YHACS spring event and, looking further ahead, in Addingham for the summer event and in Halifax in the autumn. Dates had been agreed and themes pencilled in. We were on a roll once again.

Strange to think now that the most topical diversions of the day were the outcome of the December election and the imminent Brexit transition period. What, if anything, we wondered, would these mean for civic societies and the work we do?

At the end of February, I facilitated a workshop for Civic Voice in Birmingham; with Civic Voice staff and trustees, together with representatives of civic societies from around the country, we looked at the strategies that Civic Voice might deploy to develop both the organisation and the movement. I don't think even then that any of us really appreciated the calamity that was to hit – but it was only a matter of days before our world tilted and, by the end of March, we were in national lockdown.

It was at this point that we all of us faced one of our biggest ever challenges as a movement: how to keep things going when we could no longer meet face to face; how, in fact to keep in touch with our members at all?

I was fortunate at Wakefield Civic Society in that nearly all our members are on email – that's not something that had happened over night but something which had taken years to achieve (we now have just a handful of members who haven't provided us with an email address). I was able to keep in touch with members, to tell them what was happening and, first things first, to tell them that our programme of talks and visits was suspended (although, I rather suspect they'd have worked that out for themselves). My committee moved swiftly to video conferencing and we were even able to hold the Wakefield Civic Society AGM by Zoom in April 2020. Meanwhile, the YHACS committee turned to Zoom to allow us to continue operating and I know other civic societies around the country were also experimenting with video technology. As the year progressed and we moved from one lockdown to another, and then to tiers and now to another lockdown, more and more societies have made the switch to video conferencing and on-line events.

I think it is fair to say that it has been a steep learning curve for all of us. We couldn't respond fast enough (perhaps back then we just weren't brave enough?) to hold the YHACS spring 2020 event on-line – but even if we had, I suspect there wouldn't have been much take-up; not enough civic societies had by then adopted the use of Zoom.

However, by July, we were ready and, working with the committee of Addingham Civic Society, we were able to hold our first on-line members' event. Supplemented by short videos hosted on Vimeo, the event ran smoothly enough and we became more confident in the approach, enabling us to hold our second on-line event with Halifax Civic Trust in late September. Once again, the event was in two parts – a selection of videos uploaded to the YHACS Vimeo account for people to watch in their own time and then a short (90-minute video) conference on the Saturday afternoon that had been scheduled for the meeting more or less since the beginning of the year.



Now, I know that video conferencing is not the same as meeting face to face. For the hosts, it takes far more preparation than holding a 'proper' meeting at a venue and there are fewer opportunities to network with each other and asking questions requires a certain discipline – you can't just stick your arm in the air and expect to be asked to speak. There's also the problem that some people don't have either the broadband capacity or the home set-up (camera and microphone for starters) to be able to take part in an on-line event while others, lacking the know-how and perhaps not having anyone to ask, might just feel excluded. And besides all that, there's no 'grand day out' to enjoy with colleagues (nor the Friday evening dinner for those who are able to travel the day before one of our events).

It's not all bad news, however. Holding Zoom video conferencing is remarkably cheap – there are no travel costs to incur – and they take far less time for people who are attending. You just crank up the technology and you're there. Another advantage is the fact that, not being limited by geography, people can take part in our events who might not be able to make the journey to one of our face-to-face events for whatever reason and we have seen a number of people taking part in our on-line events whom we have never seen at one of our 'physical' events. Certainly, there has been a big saving in terms of time and expense for the committee meetings we have held throughout the year.

Now, back in March, when lockdown first started, we might reasonably have expected the situation to have improved by the end of the year ("It will all be over by Christmas", I believe someone said). Experience has shown us that a mix of human behaviour, a tendency by government to relax lockdown a bit too soon, and the highly contagious nature of the virus has conspired to extend the period of lockdowns and the restrictions on movement. Although we now have a vaccine that seems to be effective at reducing infection, it is still going to be some months before we can all start to mingle again and there's no way of knowing just how soon we will be able to return to our usual ways of working. For now, therefore, YHACS, like many of our member societies will continue to operate exclusively on-line and we hope that you will be able to join us.

Managing Market Weighton Civic Society



After the unveiling of the blue plaque to Hilda Lyon in 2019, the YHACS committee continued to keep the clock ticking at Market Weighton Civic Society. We gave the clock an occasional wind, but it never actually chimed, and we ended the year exactly where we started it with no new members and no new sources of income.



If you haven't yet taken the plunge into video conferencing, now really is the time to face up to the challenge if you can. Like me, you will make mistakes, you will learn through trial and error, but learn you will and, in so doing, you will acquire new skills. The way ahead may seem twisty and tortuous but, as the saying goes, straight roads do not make skilful drivers.

What we did in 2020

We held our AGM in Harrogate on Saturday, 25th January. As well as the guest speakers already mentioned, we presented our YHACS/Peter Spawforth Awards (see page 6).

We held our summer event on-line on 25th July with the assistance of Addingham Civic Society. Our themes were the future of the high street and how societies could survive Covid while Paul Cartwright explained how Pontefract Civic Society had engaged in a master planning exercise.

And we held our autumn event on-line on 26th September in association with Halifax Civic Trust. Our guest speaker was Ian Harvey, Director of Civic Voice, talking about the government's proposals for overhauling the planning system. Martin Hamilton of Leeds Civic Trust also provided an on-line presentation about the white paper, *Planning for the Future*.

What we talked about in 2020

While it was difficult not to talk about Brexit, somehow, we managed to eschew all such discussion at our YHACS events. Instead, we focused on matters such as the Yorkshire devolution deals, in particular the West Yorkshire proposal which was opened to public consultation and to which we responded. Our concerns centred on how the newly elected Mayor would engage with community organisations such as civic societies.

We also spent time considering the impact on our towns and cities of the Covid pandemic. Our high streets, already starting to struggle because of a switch to on-line shopping saw the trend accelerate because of lockdown. Even when restrictions start to be lifted, it is clear that it will take a long time for footfall on the high street to return to anything like pre-Covid levels and some businesses with a high street presence have already closed their doors for good. With the recent collapse of a number of major retailers, the future of our high streets is uncertain and it looks increasingly likely that retail alone will not be sufficient to bring high streets back to life.

There are also implications for the take-up and use of office space. With more people than ever finding that working from home can have its advantages, many employees, and even some employers, may want the exercise to continue. Will everyone want to return to their long and possibly expensive commutes to work in an office or will they opt instead for continued working from home and maybe only part-time or occasional visits to their office? Who can say at this stage – but there are implications in those decisions, not just for the office landlords but also for public transport, if there are fewer people travelling, and all the ancillary businesses that support the office worker and the commuter.



The Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission published its report *Living with Beauty* calling for new developments to be beautiful. The report carries some interesting recommendations – some laudable - but, when push comes to shove, we wondered whether the recommendations would have any practical application.

If they are to have legal backing, then we might expect to see legislation coming through go give the proposals some bite. During the summer, the government did indeed publish new proposals for the planning system in their white paper *Planning for the Future*. The idea underpinning the Commission’s work was that the public might be more willing to accept new development if the schemes were beautiful. Sure enough, the white paper did promise a focus on beauty and there were proposals to introduce design codes to ensure better overalls standards of design. Alas, the white paper was full of vague and sometimes conflicting ideas (allowing more permitted development while reducing opportunities for community consultation hardly seems consistent with achieving publicly acceptable ideals of beauty). The result was that we all spent far more time than we wanted to in discussing and then drafting our responses to the proposals. Even allowing for the fact that there were some good bits in there, the whole exercise seemed to have been rushed out – almost as if someone wanted to distract our attention from other problems while keeping us busy in lockdown.....

The government also published proposals to amend housing allocations and then, right at the end of the year, proposals to give greater permitted change of use development rights for commercial properties. You might regard these proposals as well-intentioned but they do seem rather one-sided – making it easier for developers and harder for the community to influence outcomes.

Co-ordinating responses to government consultations is an exercise in itself and, with the *Planning for the Future* consultation in particular, it was evident that, the more we shared information and ideas with each other, the better our overall response as a movement would be. In this respect, Civic Voice deserves our thanks; they did sterling work during the year organising on-line networking events both to help societies to understand what was being proposed and to elicit our thoughts. I know that many civic societies submitted their own responses but the Civic Voice response to *Planning for the Future* was very impressive.

The YHACS/Peter Spawforth Award
At the AGM in January, we announced the results of our annual awards.



First prize (£200) went to Addingham Civic Society (above) for their ‘Young People are our Future’ initiative.

The second prize (£100) went to Pontefract Civic Society (below) for their 50th Anniversary Programme.



Third prize (£50) went to Wakefield Civic Society (below) for their ‘Forgotten Women of Wakefield’ partnership with Dream Time Creative.





We attended events

YHACS wasn't the only organisation organising on-line events. Civic Voice really stepped up with a programme of 'In Conversation with' events (which I hosted). These events enabled civic society members and others from across the country (and even further afield) to hear professional speakers talking about ideas that were extremely relevant to the movement. Civic Voice also ran other workshop events including training events for societies wanting to boost their on-line presence. Meanwhile, Paul Cartwright represented us at the Civic Voice Regional Forum (chaired of course by our own Helen Kidman, one of three YHACS members on the Civic Voice board alongside Paul Bedwell and Martin Hamilton).

Many other organisations offered on-line content, some live, some recorded. I signed up for talks, workshops and even on-line theatre performances and my diary quickly filled up once again (so much so that I wondered how I ever found the time to actually go to 'proper' meetings!).

We've saved some money

Our income has held up reasonably well during 2020. Nearly all societies paid their membership subscriptions as they fell due. We have been able to cover our costs and, because YHACS has been able to make use of the Wakefield Civic Society Zoom account, those costs have been remarkably low this year. We ended the year with a surplus. The bank balance looks healthier still because it is boosted by the Richard Ward legacy of £2,000 presented to us at the end 2019 by Richard's wife Pam. The YHACS committee has discussed how to put the legacy to good use and we think we should use it on some scheme to promote the involvement of younger people or even children in the civic movement. We shall finalise our proposals in due course and share them with members.

Looking ahead

From where we are now at the beginning of 2021, things don't look that much different from how they were at the end of 2020. Yes, we have the vaccine and there are grounds to be optimistic, but we need to see a high percentage of the population vaccinated and the virus at least contained if it cannot be obliterated. The YHACS committee has, therefore, determined that all future events will be on-line for the time-being, starting with our AGM in January. Our spring event in April will be hosted in association with Beverley Civic Society (making up to some extent for the one we had to cancel back in April 2020) but will be via Zoom.

Looking even further ahead, and dreaming of the day when we can once again venture out in safety and start to meet up again, one of the discussions we shall need to have is whether or not to continue holding at least some of our events on Zoom (or an equivalent). Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages? Or are we all so fed up with our screens and so keen to get together once again that none of us plans to ever take part in another video conference when this is over?

This might not be the life any of us envisaged twelve months ago but, now that we are accustomed to Zoom, do we want to go back *entirely* to how things were? I'll leave that one with you for now.

Kevin Trickett MBE, Chair.



**Income and Expenditure Account
Balance Sheet
as at 31st December 2020**



Income and Expenditure Account

		2019	2020
		£	£
Income			
Subscriptions	- 2019	710.00	0.00
	- 2020	0.00	1,860.00
	- 2021	0.00	60.00
Sundry donations		60.00	160.00
Richard Ward Legacy Donation		2,000.00	0.00
AGM refreshments		63.00	65.84
Design Workshop		1,100.00	0.00
YHACS 20th Anniversary Lunch		2,327.00	0.00
		<u>£6,260.00</u>	<u>£2,145.84</u>
Expenditure			
Meeting expenses		399.75	362.80
Travel (*)		433.95	328.80
Insurance		285.36	285.36
YHACS/Spawforth Awards	- prizes	350.00	350.00
	- certificates	33.95	18.00
Marketing (replacement banners)		0.00	64.99
Website		137.96	234.12
Design Workshop		1,710.00	0.00
YHACS 20th Anniversary Lunch		2,757.00	0.00
		<u>£6,107.97</u>	<u>£1,644.07</u>
Surplus/Deficit		<u>£152.03</u>	<u>£501.77</u>



Balance Sheet

	31.12.19	31.12.20
	£	£
Balance of Accumulated Fund brought forward	6,723.71	6,875.74
Surplus/Deficit for year	152.03	501.77
	£6,875.74	£7,317.51
Monies held for Market Weighton Civic Society	£535.40	£485.40
	<u>£7,411.14</u>	<u>£7,862.91</u>
Represented by:		
Cash with Co-operative Bank	7,411.14	7,862.91
	<u>£7,411.14</u>	<u>£7,862.91</u>

Accounts prepared by Alan Goodrum, Treasurer, and agreed by Kevin Trickett, Chair

Reserves Policy:

In 2016, the YHACS committee agreed to hold reserves of £2,000. This money is a notional sum and represents the minimum level of unrestricted funds that the committee will endeavour to maintain in our accounts at all times. We have chosen this figure because it is equivalent to one year's funding and, should there ever be a sudden and unforeseen drop off in our income, it would allow us to continue to operate and cover all potential liabilities for one year until such time as we had restored our income or made the decision to wind up the charity's affairs. Having a reserves policy does not mean that we will never allow our funds to drop below £2,000 but, in the event of that happening, the committee would make it a priority to raise sufficient income to bring the level of reserves back to the target amount.

This policy will be kept under annual review by the committee.

(*) Travel costs shown for 2020 include a delayed claim of £183 from 2019



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, in our quarterly newsletter and other publications, and through the issue of occasional press releases.

At the end of 2020, there were 40 member societies within YHACS.

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. YHACS has been instrumental in establishing civic societies in Barnsley, Bradford and Sheffield and has stepped in to prevent the closure of Horbury and Market Weighton Civic Societies.

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 Historic England, 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.



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 (held again at £50 in 2020), payable each January. In 2018, the YHACS Committee agreed to open membership to individuals sympathetic to our aims for which the annual fee is £10. We also welcome and encourage donations from societies and individuals who can afford to make an additional payment.

Statement of Public Benefit

The Charity Commission require charities to provide a statement of public benefit. Having taken account of the guidance produced by the Charity Commission, the YHACS trustees (ie the Executive Committee) have prepared the following statement:

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 or visitors to the area.

Governance

As an unincorporated registered charity, YHACS is managed by an Executive Committee of volunteer trustees in accordance with our written constitution, dated 24th September 2005 and amended in January 2008 and again in January 2017. 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 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.

YHACS welcomes, and indeed encourages, applications from anyone wishing to join the Committee and who can help us to run the association.

The officers and committee who held office during 2020 were as follows:

President:

Peter Cooper

Chair:

Kevin Trickett

Vice Chair

David Moss

Secretary:

Helen Kidman

Treasurer:

Alan Goodrum

Committee members:

Phyllis Barnes

Paul Cartwright

Martin Hamilton

Margaret Hicks-Clarke

Tony Leonard

Jim Robinson

Malcolm Sharman

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