

Newsletter Autumn 2026



Note from the Secretary

It's been a full year since the last Newsletter however as Secretary I do try and get a News Round Up to members every month letting you know what we have been doing and what is coming up. We also produce the Annual Report at the start of each year ready for the AGM in February.

I thought this time we would give Neil, our Vice Chair, the day off and do the introduction myself and give a glimpse of a "day in the life of the Secretary". Over the past few months my paid job has been far busier so it's been a juggle trying to manage to keep on top of the emails coming in and just keeping the Society ticking along in the background. I've been very thankful of offers of help from members that have come in this year and I can only hope they are still there as actually finding the time to follow up on them has in itself been a challenge as there are day to day things that have taken priority. Once September has passed this is something I will follow up on.

David rejoined the Committee this year and has been beaver away in the background organising the Presentation Programme and kick starting a Visits Programme. It's made a huge difference having someone else on board and it is much appreciated. We have also re-established the Planning Subgroup relieving the Executive Committee members of holding planning discussions during the Exec. Committee meetings; although we do have an overlap between members on both so you could argue it's twice the number of meetings ... we didn't think that through did we?

So why after September will I have more free time? Well that's because on Saturday the 19th September we are opening 4 buildings normally closed to the public once again for Heritage Open Days: namely the Victoria Spa Well, the Masonic Hall, Abbeville (The Little Yellow Cottage) and the Port Hole and Ripley's Yard on Baxtergate. Alongside these buildings most of the town's churches will also be open and welcoming visitors. In addition to our events Whitby Youth Hostel will also open their doors but on Wednesday 16th September and The North York Moors Railway are running tours and "Behind the Scenes" events at several stations.

While the ongoing challenge for Whitby Civic Society is doing all the things we would like to and keeping morale up I do hope that this will continue to improve and we can move forward in a positive direction over the next year. We have the ideas and I just need to look at how I can reorganise my time to take up offers to lighten the load.

Best wishes, Kat Norrby, Secretary, Whitby Civic Society.

Heritage Open Day on Saturday 19th September 2026

Heritage Open Days is England's largest festival of history and culture; every year, thousands of volunteers and supporters organise events that allow us to discover hidden places and try out new experiences. Brought to you by the National Trust, supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery and run by thousands of local organisations and volunteers, Heritage Open Days gives everyone free access to experiences and events across England, including access to many sites that usually charge for admission. For details and opening times, visit www.heritageopendays.org.uk

Whitby has many treasures and this year Whitby Civic Society opens the doors to 4 of its most precious hidden treasures not normally open to the public giving you the opportunity to explore behind the doors of unique buildings such as The Victoria Spa Well, 2 of the old cottages that Whitby is famous for, namely Abbeville "The Little Yellow Cottage" and The Port Hole and Ripleys Yard, and the Lion Lodge Masonic Hall with her bespoke stone frontage. All for free. We will also be promoting some of our local church buildings which are open throughout the year but you may not have realised.

This year's Heritage Open Day is on **Saturday 19th September 2026**. All events are free to attend and no pre-booking is required.

- Victoria Spa Well Building, REAR of Broomfield Terrace. 10am to 4pm
- Masonic Hall, John Street. 10am to 2pm
- Abbeville "The Little Yellow Cottage", Church Street. 10am to 4pm
- The Port Hole and Ripleys Yard, Baxtergate, 10am to 4pm

In addition 3 churches are also open. These are also free to visit and will open on the day. These include the churches St Mary's Church, St Hilda's Catholic Church, and St Ninian's Proprietary Chapel.

The Port Hole and Ripleys Yard will also act as an information point for Whitby Civic Society with information and directions for the other open buildings, publications and to let you know what Whitby Civic Society does.

Further information can be found at whitbycivicsociety.org.uk, on Facebook at "Whitby Civic Society" or emailing whitby_civic_society@yahoo.co.uk or from www.heritageopendays.org.uk



Heritage Open Day

Saturday 19th September 2026

Heritage Open Days: England's largest festival of history and culture.

Whitby has many treasures and this year Whitby Civic Society open the doors to 4 of its most precious giving you the opportunity to explore the history and architecture of unique buildings. All for free with no prebooking required.

Victoria Spa Well Rear of Broomfield Terrace 10am till 4pm		Masonic Lodge John Street 10am till 2pm	
Abbeville: "Little Yellow Cottage" Church Street 10am till 4pm		Ripleys Yard and The Port Hole Baxtergate 10am till 4pm	

 **WHITBY CIVIC SOCIETY**

www.whitbycivicsociety.org.uk
Whitby Civic Society on Facebook
whitby_civic_society@yahoo.co.uk

Find out more: www.heritageopendays.org.uk

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In partnership with  National Trust  POSTCODE LOTTERY



Churches are Open

Saturday 19th September 2026

Some of our most wonderful architectural buildings in Whitby are our churches and they will be open as associated attractions and free to enter.

St Mary's Church, Abbey Plain: open 11.15am - 3pm

St Hilda's Catholic Church, Brunswick St: open 11am - 4pm

St Ninian's Proprietary Chapel, Baxtergate: open 11am to 2pm

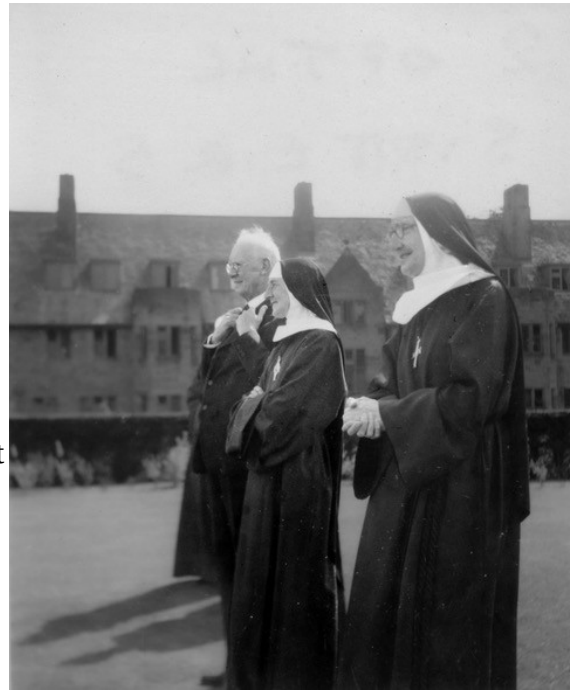


My Mum, Rosemary and my Grandfather, Norman Dunkerley by Andrew Brown

My Mother, Rosemary Dunkerley, at the time this story started in 1940 was a pupil attending St. Hilda's Convent School in Whitby. However, the School decided to evacuate to Canada due to the threat of Nazi Occupation. Her father, Norman Dunkerley a World War One veteran and Whitby Town Treasurer had a horror of war so, as a consequence decided to send my mother then aged 6 to Canada with the School. They travelled across the dangerous North Atlantic in July 1940, returning almost exactly 4 years later.

In that time, she had amazing adventures, met wonderful people and formed close friendships. Canada was a complete change from Whitby with months long snowy winters, wilderness areas and warm hearted, kind people. The Nuns taught and maintained strict discipline in term-time, but in the long school holidays, she was taken in by the Canadians who treated her quite literally as one of their own. She met amongst others Ernest Salter, WWI flying Ace and WWII flying Instructor, Dorothy Richardson, Teacher and Expert Linguist, later to be the first Woman Officer in the RCAF. First and foremost however was formidable 'Aunt' Jean Salter, her surrogate mother and Jean's sister and daughter, Norah White and Joanne Salter respectively.

Photograph (Right): Nuns OHP



Photograph (Below): "Aunt" Jean Salter



Fortunately, her father had the foresight to keep the correspondence they received over that period. My Mother also kept it, spending long hours over 3 years transcribing the letters into an account, interspersed with sometimes witty, sometimes poignant anecdotes of her time in Canada. Many photos of that time have survived including of the people involved and even the boat that took them there (The Duchess of Bedford, itself worthy of a book) She then asked me to prepare the text and photos for sending to the Archives in Toronto who are very interested in that story. So I then spent a further 18 months editing, spell-checking and forming it into something that could be read by the general public. Once it was complete, we decided that a general release via Kindle books would be a great way of getting it out there as there still seems to be massive interest in stories about individual people at that time. My Mother is now 90 and still with us, although her sight and hearing are failing her.

My Grandfather and Mum's Father, Norman Dunkerley was Whitby Town Treasurer and Entertainments Manager from the 1930's until the early 1960's. He earned the MBE for services to refugees in WWII in addition to being a WWI veteran, wounded twice in that conflict. He was also wounded when the Offices of Whitby Town Council were bombed by the Nazis and he had to shelter under his desk. Norman was a popular local figure and keen golfer, winning many trophies. Possibly that was helped by the house he had built at 31 Mulgrave Road which was adjacent to the golf course. Later in life however, he suffered depression and PTSD caused by his wartime experiences, which possibly also explained his drive to send my Mum abroad, despite the risks. Norman died in 1972 whilst still resident at 31 Mulgrave Road and his wife Hannah (known as Nancy died in 1977.)

Andrew Brown

Photograph (Right): Mum in Canada (1943/1944)

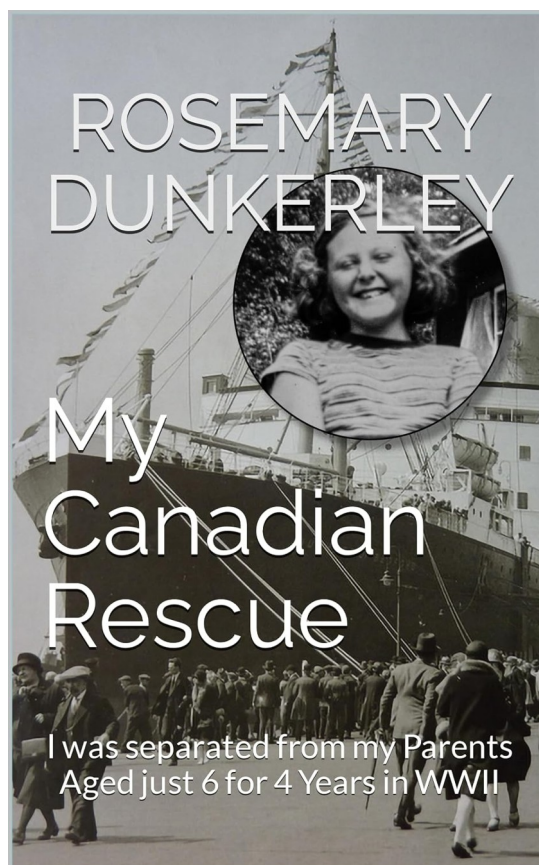


Photograph (Below): Mum 80 years after having emigrated to Canada



The two photos of Mum were taken nearly 80 years apart. The first image is of the Nuns OHP whose Priory still stands in Whitby and the second is of the wonderful Woman who took Mum in and treated her as her own daughter, Mrs Jean Salter.

"My Canadian Rescue" the book of how Rosemary not only survived being sent to Canada but thrived due to the warm embrace of the Canadian People can be bought as a Kindle Book on Amazon.

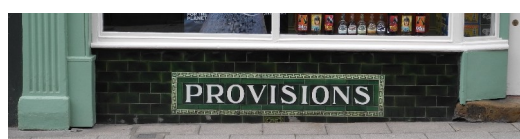


Ghost Signs: Signs of the Past

Whitby Civic Society aims to protect and promote the heritage of the town and Ghost Signs are an important part of the history and heritage of a place and can provide fascinating echoes of the past. Ghost Signs can include adverts painted on gable ends, the names of long ago traders in the form of painted letters, illustrations, tiles or beautifully carved stonework. Many such signs are gradually disappearing and may eventually fade away completely, destroying the link to the past.



We are lucky in Whitby to have many examples of Ghost Signs. They include the old Whitby/Ruswarp Parish boundary stone clearly visible on Flowergate, stone steps that once led to the original Wesleyan Chapel off Church Street and which now remain in glorious isolation, and splendid examples of beautiful, original glazed tiles which despite many changes over many years remain to betray the names of long ago trades.



A wonderful Ghost Sign is seen high up on the Wellington Road side of the

building currently occupied by Brown & Kidson solicitors. Fading letters show the business named ARTHUR SAWDON once occupied these premises and a glance up at the New Quay Road side of the

building shows Mr Sawdon dealt with CARPETS and BEDDING. On either side of the entrance to the same building, you can see beautiful, colourful tiles speaking of the WELLINGTON ROOMS and an even earlier business, a Mr George Thompson who appears particularly versatile dealing in tuning and repairing organs and pianos and who was also an auctioneer and valuer.

Whitby Civic Society member Peter Craggs has so far identified and documented over 36 Ghost Signs and the Civic Society audit and monitor the condition and retention as well as having a Ghost Sign Quiz to see if you can locate some of the 36. If you are aware of any signs that you feel the Civic Society are not aware of please contact them directly so they can investigate further and add them to their Ghost Signs collection. Does your town or village have Ghost Signs to the past?

Kat Norrby



Dinosaur Footprints in Bay?

I was on duty in Bay museum when a visiting couple, Peter and Michelle Jones, brought in photographs they had taken on the foreshore at grid reference NZ 95700 05732, just north of the village, which they thought may be dinosaur footprints.



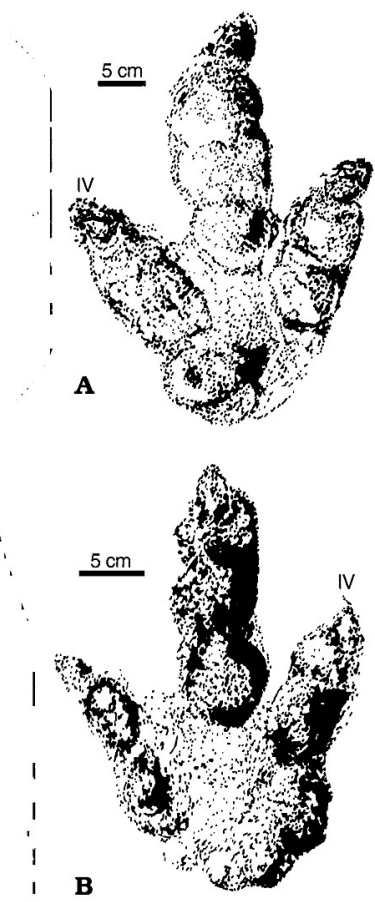
I've never come across such a thing locally, so I was quite interested. I have seen those at Saltwick and Cloughton, but they appear reptilian, whilst these look distinctly avian. I consulted two local geologists and received various possibilities, notably that the prints could be those of a Theropod, but both agreed that they seem to be in the Redcar Mudstone Formation, which was deposited in a marine environment about 193 million years ago in the early part of the Jurassic Period, and hence would not support such things.

One possibility suggested is that they could be weathered-out burrows, now partly filled by modern encrusting bivalves and algae, which were originally formed by a marine animal at the time of deposition of the sediment.

So it's rather a shame that Bay may not become world-famous for such an amazing find after all. Wouldn't that have been splendid!

Jane Ellis (2025)

Theropod Footprint



Flashback from Whitby Civic Society Newsletter in May 2006

Whitby Civic Society - Ten Years On.

By Mike Dawson – President in 2006

The present Civic Society has now been active for ten years. It is the third such society, and was formed after a public meeting called by Alan Whitworth. During that first year we initiated the erection of Blue Plaques and the opening of historic buildings for Heritage Open Days, and we took over the care of the Spa Well House, Edna Whelan writing an account of its history. An exhibition was staged first at the Spa Pavilion and later at the Library. Frank Doyle arranged coffee mornings, bric-a-brac and book sales to raise funds and a newsletter was started. At the first AGM Peter Thornton was elected Chairman. Peter proved an excellent chairman who wore his authority lightly but got the work done with everyone feeling that his or her point of view was taken seriously.

A large number of Blue Plaques were put up during the first year. Kevin Devaney organised the unveiling of the Lewis Carroll plaque, which was carried out by an enthusiast for the author, Malcolm Barker, helped by appropriately dressed children from West Cliff Primary School! Subsequently, Elizabeth Cheyne aided by Ann Dennier and Mike and Jean Dawson, brought out the 'White Rabbit Trail' booklet that is still on sale at the Tourist Information Centre today. In the early days Peter Thornton served with the Whitby Traffic Committee and Jean Dawson with the Whitby Regeneration Committee. Today we have representatives in groups such as the Primary Health Trust, the Community and Police Liaison Committee, the Marina Improvement Group, the Yorkshire and Humberside of Civic Society and the Whitby Voluntary Action Group. Ten years ago we set a target of gaining sixty members, which would make us comparable with the Scarborough Civic Society in numbers per thousand of the population.

We have always believed that the protection of Whitby's heritage was of prime importance and here our past secretary's expertise in planning matters has been much appreciated; Ann Dennier had previously worked in local government. She brought in the help of the Victorian Society to give a report on the value of the Brunswick Methodist Church, and an application for it to be destroyed to build flats was rejected: a small part of the building became a dwelling, the Brunswick Room became an antiques showroom and there were plans for the rest to be made into a concert hall. Now however the major part of the building is unused and we are aware that new planning applications are being considered.

We had the Spa Well House listed (Grade II), which should keep it safe for the future, and now Parry and Jean Thornton open it to the public regularly during the summer. We joined others in the town in a successful protest at the proposal to build bright yellow storage tanks on the East Side of the harbour, and we were partly instrumental in the subsequent concealment by burying of the water treatment works beside the Tourist Office. We protested vigorously over the original Scarborough plans for the Marina but now mainly support the new improved scheme. Some contests have not been so successful: we tried to stop the destruction of Fairmead, a large house on the east side built

by a shipping family. This was lost, the building was knocked down and the site used for houses (Fairmead Court). Our opposition to the destruction of West Cliff Villa on Argyle Road was also unsuccessful: it was demolished in 2003 and a block of flats built in its place.

In 2001 Walter Jones, then secretary of the Society, organised a general meeting to examine the Cook's World planning application and to set up small groups to discuss the plans. Since then the Society has kept a close eye on the revised plans and has submitted detailed constructive criticisms. Also in 2001 a varied programme including monthly lectures and occasional visits was initiated and proved very popular with an increasing membership. Things now seemed to be going very well for the Society. Peter was a very popular chairman who had led us from our first AGM and his association with other town societies meant that he was always able to give the broad view in discussions. His annual lecture during Heritage Weekend had become a Whitby tradition. His sudden death in March 2003 came as a shock, especially to his colleagues on the committee. The first meeting after Peter's death was a sombre affair to which Frank Doyle, the Vice Chairman, gave dignity and consolation to the shocked committee. Dr. John Shorter was elected as our new Chairman. Peter's absence was felt as a personal loss by all of us, and in his memory the Society started two annual events. The Heritage Open Weekend lecture, which he had given so well from his wealth of varied knowledge, was to become an annual lecture given by experts in various fields on subjects that related to Whitby and district. Another of Peter's great loves was photography and it was decided to institute an annual photographic competition for members of the Civic Society in conjunction with the Whitby Photographic Society.

In 2004 Geoff Wilson set up a recycling scheme for Whitby which ran for several months before circumstances outside his control led to its collapse, despite his considerable efforts. We still regard recycling as an important issue. A new initiative recently adopted by the Society, is the award of Certificates of Excellence for new buildings or renovations which preserve or enhance Whitby's architectural heritage. Also, in 2004 the Society sponsored step number 66 (our membership number at the time) of the newly renovated Church stairs for £1000.

A recent project of the Society was the 'Tribute to Seafarers', an idea which Doreen Wort suggested. After inviting tenders from artists all over the country, a design was proposed for a new safety gate on the West Pier, which combined practicality, beauty and a monument in one. The project was backed with enthusiasm. The Tribute to Seafarers Storm Gate and bronze plaque were erected in October 2005, financed by individual donations and grants from various local organisations. It is universally admired and now performs its role both as a monument and as a safety measure. Recently we have seen non-committee members doing vital work for the Society. Ben Dean helped set up the Tribute to Seafarers and Parry Thornton works constantly behind the scenes with historical research. June Atkinson has started a fund raising raffle at the lecture events. Several members also help with the beach cleaning and surveys four times a year.

The committee has changed many times during the past ten years and every year brings new challenges and problems. The pattern introduced ten years ago continues: a concern with planning issues, Blue Plaques, talks, visits, Heritage Open Days, the Spa Well House, beach-cleaning, fund-raising, publicity and the newsletter. The number of members is now over 70 and its activities more varied than ever.

I am aware that this short review of ten years has not done justice to all those involved, or to all the hard work which has been undertaken in these years. For any omissions I ask pardon and hope that my summary has given an insight into the ongoing work of the Society....

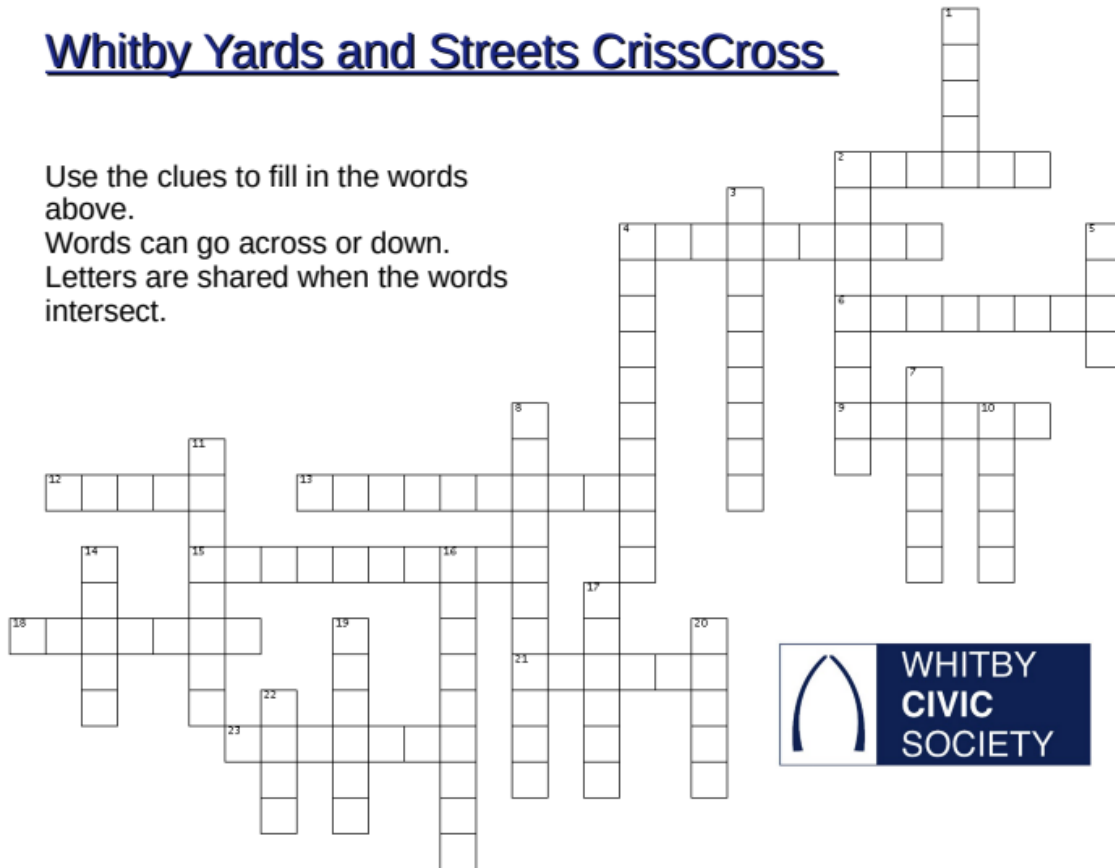
Mike Dawson (2006)

Whitby Yards and Streets CrissCross

Use the clues to fill in the words above.

Words can go across or down.

Letters are shared when the words intersect.



ACROSS

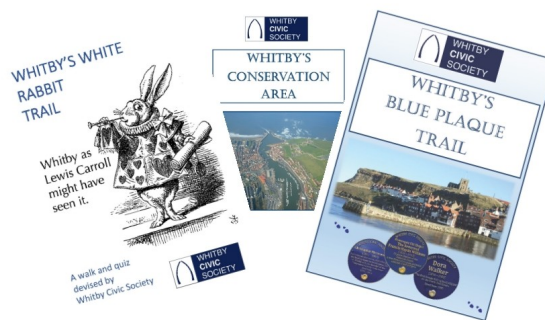
2. The name of the Bank between Church Street and The Ropery where houses were demolished in 1958.
4. A yard named after a building or area in which bread is made. There were once 3 yards of this name.
6. Named as it bordered the East Sands it links Bridge Street to The Market Place.
9. This street was a vital route for connecting St Mary's and the 199 steps to the port and Market Square.
12. The lane where Captain James Cook lived while he was an apprentice in Whitby.
13. The home of the old Post Office, St Ninian's, Church and The Old Ship Launch Inn and once a key banking and legal centre to the town.
15. Heading down to the swing bridge over the River Esk you will pass by the chapel where Reverend Francis Haydn Williams was Unitarian minister.
18. This street was the hub of the smuggling trade so they say but also home of Frank Meadow Sutcliffe's gallery and still the home of one of Elizabeth Botham's store.
21. The name of the bank behind the Custom House which houses one of Whitby's oldest existing pubs.
23. Named after of the beck that flows into the Esk along the side of Pannett Park

DOWN

1. Dating back to the 1850's this Crescent on West Cliff was only partially completed.
2. Formally Skate lane this street has a history rooted in religious institutions still housing Saint Hilda's Catholic Church and St John Evangelist Anglican Church.
3. This street was previously called Haggerlythe and renamed in honour of Lord Chomley's wife.
4. The terrace where the Victorian Spa Well located.
5. This road leads to the beach and has a real holiday atmosphere with amusement arcades and fish and chips shops.
7. This street is named after George "The Railway King" who was an important figure in developing the West Cliff area.
8. Home to a grand Georgian house of the same name now Whitby Mission and Seafarers' Centre.
10. Home of Dora Walker, Whitby's first female Skipper, this row of fisherman's cottages and yards are steeped in fishing history.
11. An abbess of Whitby Abbey whose terrace is located on the ridge of East Cliff
14. Originally a dead end this lane became a street when it joined the newly opened Khyber Pass. Once a home to an infant school and confectioners it is one of Whitby's oldest streets.
16. Yards on The Cragg and Church Street where couples squabble?
17. Street where the West Cliff Congregational Church and West Cliff Saleroom could be found.
19. Historic terrace of Georgian town houses named after the abbess that founded a monastery in Whitby.
20. Name of the yard that runs alongside the "The Big A" a coaching house from 1795
22. What type of entry is the name of a Yard that connects New Quay Yard to Baxtergate?

Publications

Whitby Civic Society has produced a range of publications that help to raise awareness of the conservation area and that promote good practice in design and development. A number of town trails have been devised to help locals and visitors to discover local history and heritage, for example the Blue Plaques trail and White Rabbit trail. They are priced from just 50p to £3 and are available at all Whitby Civic Society events, the monthly lectures and at the Tourist Information Centre in the town. Thank you for your support in purchasing one of our booklets.



Membership

Whitby Civic Society is always delighted to welcome new members. The Society is its members, it is only through a strong membership that we can hope to protect and promote everything that is wonderful about Whitby.

Please join us to help make Whitby an even better place to live, work and visit.

Membership costs just £10 per year. If you would like more information please contact:

whitby_civic_society@yahoo.co.uk

You can download the application form from the website and complete it online, no printer required.

Presentation Programme

We hold monthly talks at Whitby Coliseum on the 2nd Monday of the month. These meetings also allow us to meet our members in person as well as being a point of contact for people wanting to know more about what we do and how they can get involved. We currently aim to have 10 presentations a year with the focus of the talks being on the history of our wonderful town. Details can be found on our website.

Future talks include ““Parkol Marine Engineering: Anchored in Whitby: Aiming for the future” following the history of Parkol including information on some of the fishing vessels they have built and some current projects, “The railway that refused to die” which follows the North York Moors Railway from horse-drawn beginnings to a modern heritage railway, and a Pictorial tour of “Pubs, Inns and Taverns” with regular speaker Neil Williamson.





NEXT PRESENTATION
Monday 14th September 2026 7pm to 9pm



Parkol
MARINE ENGINEERING LTD 1971

Anchored in Whitby: Aiming for the Future
The story of one of Britain's leading boatbuilders
by Sally Atkinson, Commercial Director



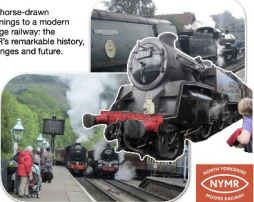
The Coliseum
ALL WELCOME MEMBERS £1 GUESTS £3
REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE DURING THE BREAK
CORRECT CHANGE WILL BE GREATLY APPRECIATED
RAFFLE

FOR FURTHER DETAILS
TELEPHONE: 01947 826100 VISIT: WWW.WHITBYCIVICSOCIETY.CO.UK
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@WHITBYCIVICSOCIETY



Next Presentation New Time
12th October 2026 2pm-4pm
Dave Boddy
The Railway That Refused To Die

From horse-drawn beginnings to a modern heritage railway: the NYMR's remarkable history, challenges and future.



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There is also an active Visits Programme for our members and we are looking to attend more community events.

Whitby Civic Society Executive Committee 2026

Whitby Civic Society does not employ any staff and is run by an Executive Committee of volunteer trustees. The Executive Committee is elected at the society's Annual General Meeting. Any member of the society may volunteer for election and we are always looking for new members, Executive Committee members and for members to get involved in subgroups especially our planning group. At the AGM February 2026 the committee was elected as follows:

President: Mrs Betty Bayliss
Chair: Vacant position
Vice Chair: Neil Swannick
Secretary: Kat Norrby
Membership Secretary: Chris Whitlam
Treasure: Janet Kukk
Events Secretary: David James
Minutes Secretary: Vacant position

Committee Members: Laura Meszaros, Kerry Boardman
Newsletter Co-ordinators: Chris Whitlam/Kat Norrby



We are always looking for members, new and old, to get involved

Could you spare some time regularly or on one off occasion?

Do you want to help keep Whitby special and promote our wonderful town?

The charity supporters include residents, those with Whitby connections and visitors alike, all of which love our town.

Could you help with ...

- publishing a regular newsletter
- providing content, articles and inspiration for our website, social media and news roundup
- completing surveys within the town
- progressing targeted projects
- helping restart our popular heritage open days and tours
- sourcing or suggesting speakers for our lecture programme
- distributing publications and generating new guides and trails
- joining our sub groups such as the planning group
- becoming a member of our committee

GET INVOLVED !
- JOIN WHITBY CIVIC SOCIETY

Email: whitby_civic_society@yahoo.co.uk

www.whitbycivicsociety.org.uk