

# *Newsletter:*

**December 2025**

<https://www.beverleycivicsociety.com/>

**BEVERLEY  
CIVIC  
SOCIETY**

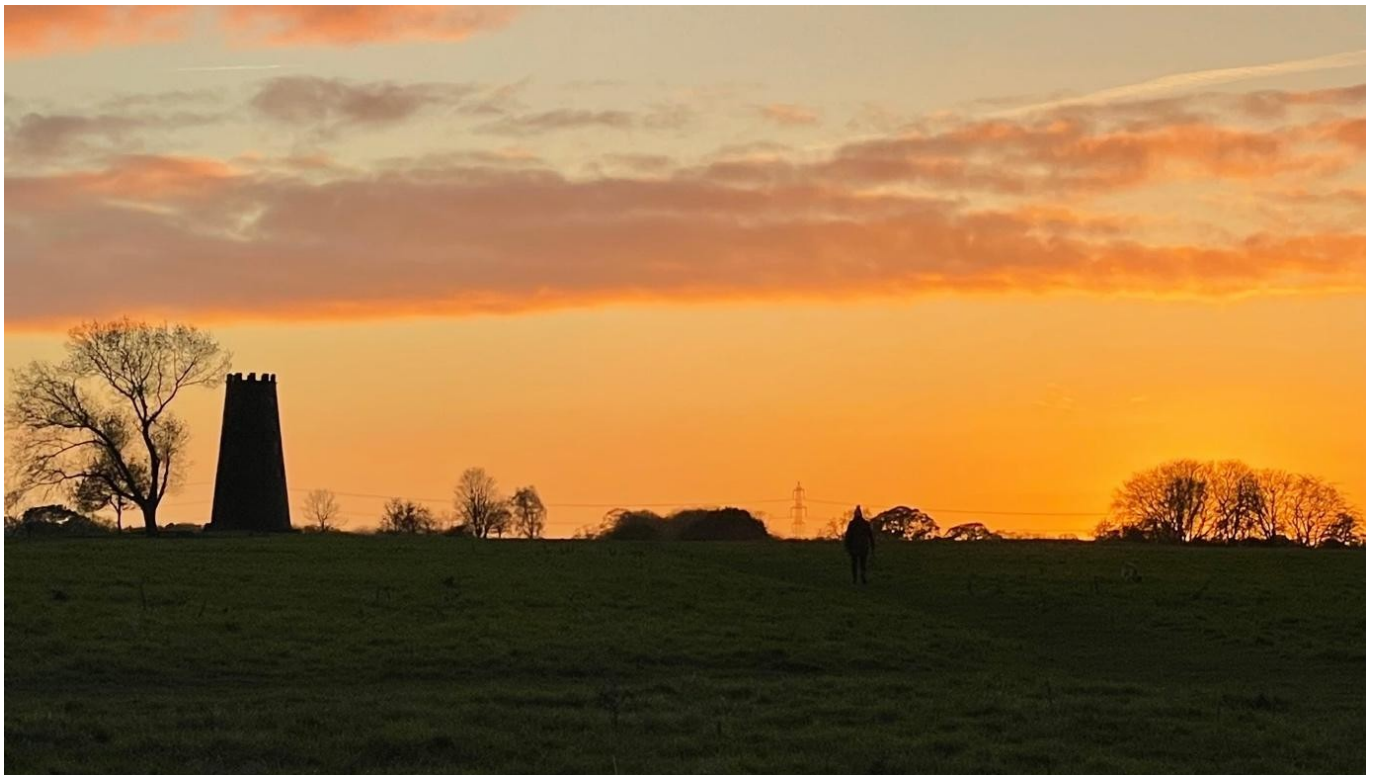
*Founded 1961*



## *Seasons Greetings*



### Chairman's Remarks



*A Walk in the Sunset - Courtesy Dick Lidwell*

As we enter into December, it is time to review the Society's year. Every year seems to pass more quickly than the last, but we hope we have achieved much in 2025. What follows isn't an official Annual Report but a 'snap shot' on some aspects of the year.

For our Summer Garden Party we were lucky with the weather, with the sun returning minutes before the start in Rosie and Charles Ryan's beautiful garden. The event proved to be a wonderful social event, with conversations flowing enabled by the wine and food, plus, thanks to our generous donors, a rewarding raffle. The Executive has resolved not to make this an annual event, but probably biennially. It is discussing, through popular demand, promoting more opportunities for members to meet and socialise. As usual the December talk will be followed by seasonal drinks and nibbles in the South Transept.

The greatest outreach of the Society must be the ever-growing Heritage Open Days thanks to Mike Farrimond's and Sandra Williams' immense organisational skills. This year's programme involved liaison with more East Yorkshire Civic Societies which led to 100 venues being open attracting some 9,000 visits.

HODs is promoted by the National Trust and its organisers have commended Beverley's programme. A fuller report follows later in this Newsletter.

Our public talks have attracted large audiences thanks to Neil Harris' organisation. Many have had something of a 'Beverley' focus which has appealed, including on the growth of Laurel Vineyard, the ever popular photos of bygone Beverley, and the Margaret Powell Memorial lecture on Philip Larkin's views on Beverley and East Yorkshire, which attracted one of the largest audiences of the year.

Our membership numbers have been maintained, even growing slightly, which is encouraging.

We try to meet our 'Objectives' which include amongst others: '...to stimulate Civic Pride in Beverley and its surroundings', and '...to encourage any development leading to improved conditions in which we live and work'.

To meet just these we are active in many areas:

- the Environment with our tree planting schemes (e.g., the Archery Field and other town spaces);
- Development by responding to planning applications (cases in point being the inappropriate development proposed for Lord Roberts Road, and shop signage out of character for our historic market town);
- Liaising with ERYC and BTC on policies and works within the town (e.g. this year's Gas main replacement works) and responding to consultations (e.g. the Saturday Market pedestrianisation, and local plans).

The Society is an active member of the Yorkshire and Humberside Association of Civic Societies, attending its quarterly meetings, and contributing to its Newsletter on our activities. Civic Voice, the national body for Civic Societies though is going through difficult times, and is likely to fold. We hope that some alternative system will be developed to ensure that the Civic Movement is able to communicate and influence government on planning and related matters; especially important at the present time.

Thank you for your membership and contribution to the Society.

*Dick Lidwell*

## Remembrance Day 2025



In the light of its role in the town, The Society has for the last couple of years joined the Remembrance Day Commemorations with processing and laying a wreath in Memorial Gardens.



Remembrance Day photos courtesy *Dick Lidwell*



**HERITAGE  
OPEN DAYS  
East Riding**

Friday 12 - Sunday 21 September 2025

Pick up a brochure from  
tourist information  
centres, libraries,  
churches & shops

heritageopendays.org.uk

FREE TO EXPLORE

## Beverley and East Riding Heritage Open Days

This article originally appeared in the YHACS Autumn 2025 Newsletter:

Heritage Open Days (HODs) is an annual National celebration of history, heritage and culture. The theme changes each year, this year being “architecture”. For 11 years Beverley Civic Society has led efforts to organise local events, initially in the Beverley area, but extending across East Riding in 2025. This year we have been fortunate to work with our neighbouring Civic Societies in Goole and Hornsea (Hull produces their own brochure) together with Bridlington Heritage Open Days and Cottingham Local History Society.

In total we had 97 open venues, walks and talks spread across the East Riding to which we had 9850 visits between 12 and 21 September. Five people opened their homes to visitors, including the home of the first feminist Mary Wollstonecraft which was oversubscribed several times.

Indeed, visitors were trying to make reservations on the tours within one minute of booking opening.

The success of the festival is down to the owners of the properties and the many volunteers who help to meet and greet the visitors. The attached photograph shows Norwood House, a fine Georgian property, owned by local company Bostonair which has opened their building every year for HODs.

Richard Stott, who opened the Old Savings Bank on Lairgate, said “It was a really great weekend and I loved it! I couldn’t have done it without the volunteers and they were all great and really helpful and supportive. I think we had 88 visitors on Saturday and 100 on Sunday” Newbegin House also proved very attractive with 477 visitors in two days. To see a video of the event search for “Newbegin House on YouTube”. All the walks and talks were fully booked; in fact, some could have been filled many times. The harbour museum in Bridlington welcomed 669 visitors from all over the UK, not just East Yorkshire residents.



Norwood House - courtesy Mike Farrimond

This year we produced 8000 copies of a 44-page brochure at a cost of about £0.75 each. They proved very popular and the Beverley Treasure House had distributed all their brochures before the festival started. Brochures were also distributed in Bridlington, Goole, Hornsea, Howden and other outlying towns and villages. I think we could easily have printed another 2000 brochures and still not satisfied demand. We were fortunate to be granted financial support from Visit East Yorkshire (VEY), Beverley Town Council, Yorkshire Wolds Heritage Trust and the Georgian Society of East Yorkshire, which together with a contribution from Beverley Civic Society covered our direct costs, including a promotional banner hung over Toll Gavel (Beverley’s main pedestrian thoroughfare) for a month.

This event could not happen without the help of many people who give their time freely contributing to the preparation of venues, text in the brochure and acting as stewards to help visitors during the festival.

In 2026 the HODs festival will fall between 11 and 20 September with a theme centred around “working lives”.

*Mike Farrimond and Sandra Williams*

## The shocking story of the body of Catherine Parr

Enjoying the Margaret Powell lecture given last month by Philip Pullen reminded me that last year we were fortunate to have David Neave giving a fascinating insight into the work of the Scott family of architects and the many contributions they made to architecture both in Beverley, Hull and nationwide.

In April of this year, I was surprised to come across a design by George Gilbert Scott which I knew nothing about and which revealed the fascinating history of the body of Catherine Parr.

Catherine was the sixth wife of Henry VIII and famously outlived the old tyrant. Following his death in 1547 she scandalously remarried within 5 months without the permission of the Regency Council. She had been left a wealthy widow and married her sweetheart Thomas Seymour, brother of Henry's 3<sup>rd</sup> wife, Jane Seymour. They set up home at Sudeley Castle in Gloucestershire and Catherine quickly became pregnant.

This was to be her first child and she was 36 so understandably there was anxiety about her pregnancy. On 30<sup>th</sup> August 1548, following a long, hot summer she went into labour and gave birth to a baby girl, Mary. Unfortunately, Catherine became ill, probably with fever and died on September 5<sup>th</sup>. Her body was shrouded in wax paper and then wrapped tightly in lead sheets to embalm the body and prevent it from decaying. She was then placed in a wooden coffin.

The funeral, although simple, was fitting for a queen, with a small procession leading from the castle to Sudeley Chapel. The chief mourner was Lady Jane Grey, the future 'Nine Day Queen'. The burial tomb, said to be beautiful, was marked with an alabaster figure of the late queen and the chapel hung with heraldic flags. It is thought to be the first royal Protestant funeral in England.

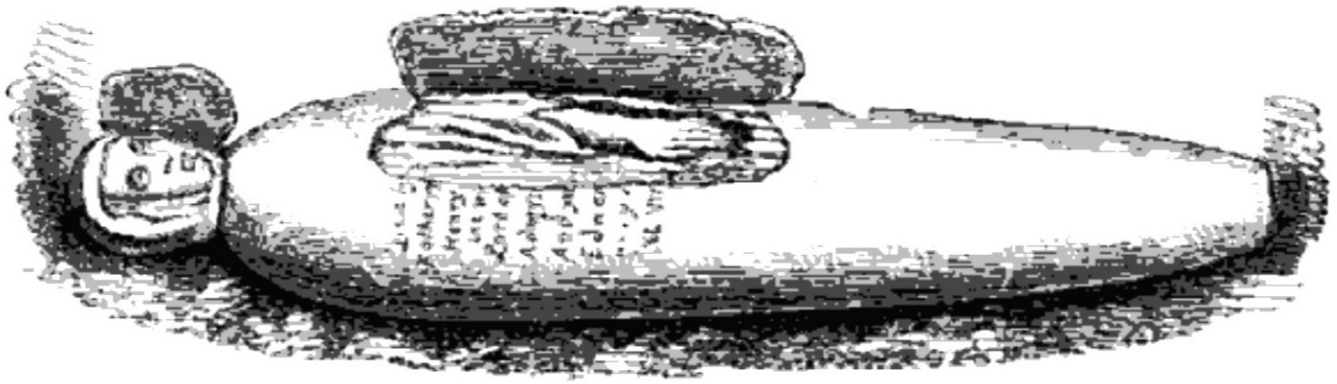
Thomas Seymour did not attend.

Less than 100 years later the chapel had fallen into disrepair. In 1642 the Roundheads besieged Sudeley castle and desecrated the chapel, digging up graves and smashing the tombs, including Catherine's. At the end of the war, the Roundheads being victorious, the castle was 'slighted' or ordered to be made uninhabitable. At this time the roof came off the chapel and what was left of Catherine's burial place was left open to the elements. There she remained, virtually forgotten, for over 100 years.

There is some debate about how the tomb was rediscovered. Some historians say a local landowner became interested in the site, others that in 1782 some ladies went to visit the 'romantic' castle ruins aware that Catherine had been buried there. Finding some alabaster remnants against the north wall, they hired some men to excavate in the chapel and after only digging a few feet they came across Catherine's lead coffin (see illustration on next page), an inscription on the lead identifying its owner. They opened it in 2 places, at the face and on the body. Her face was said to be remarkably well preserved, white and moist, but shortly after opening the body to the elements the exposure to air and moisture began to change its colour and they ordered it to be resealed.



Katherine Parr National Portrait Gallery  
NPG4451 attributed to Master John



## LEAD COFFIN OF QUEEN KATHERINE PARR.

Illustration of the opening of Catherine Parr's coffin in 1782 - Wikimedia Commons

Later that year a local farmer came and dug up the body once again and commented on the state of the body, now beginning to decay. He removed some of Catherine's hair as a souvenir. A few years later the body was dug up for a third time. It was now in a poor state. The fourth time the body was dug up, the miscreants pulled the arms off the body, knocked out the teeth and chopped the head off with a spade. An iron bar was stabbed through her body several times. The body was thrown into a rubbish heap. It was noted that she had been buried in an expensive gown and that her feet were shod.

Her body was reinterred, only to be exhumed in 1786 for an autopsy. By then her body was severely decayed. But each time the body was simply reinterred under the floor of the ruined chapel.

Eventually Catherine was entombed in the Chandos family vault. But when the chapel was restored in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Dent family commissioned a marble tomb for Catherine. In 1861 her leaden coffin was moved for the final time. Her new tomb was redesigned by George Gilbert Scott and carved by the firm of J. Bernie Phillip, also responsible for the Albert Memorial in London's Hyde Park. By this time her body was said to be little more than brown dust, but her beautiful final resting place was, at last, a fitting place for the former English queen.



Catherine Parr's Tomb - courtesy *Lesley Blucke*

She is the only English queen buried in a private family home.

*Lesley Blucke*

## **Places, Loved Ones- Philip Larkin's Beverley**

The Margaret Powell Memorial Lecture- November 2025

Philip Pullen, The Philip Larkin Society

It was wonderful to see such a busy church to enjoy the 2025 Margaret Powell Memorial Lecture 2025.

After a short introduction by the Chairman of the Civic Society, Dick Lidwell, reminding us of the role Margaret Powell played in the preservation of Beverley in opposition to planners, the audience sat back to enjoy an illuminating and amusing lecture from Philip Pullen from the Philip Larkin Society.

Larkin was a frequent visitor to Beverley during his time as chief librarian at Hull University. But Larkin clearly was not often complimentary about the places where he lived or which he visited. He called Hull 'a dump'; and 'a ghastly place'. He did come to appreciate the city in later years, referring to its 'sudden elegances'. He apparently liked Belfast where he had worked previously but referred to it as 'an unattractive city smelling of horse dung'.

His habitual criticism of places he visited is perhaps reflected in some of his poetry when he wrote:

**No, I have never found  
The place where I could say  
This is my proper ground,  
Here I shall stay;**

But perhaps it was in the East Riding that Larkin came closest to finding a permanent place, living here for nearly 30 years. The lecture explored how Beverley and its surrounding countryside played a role in the poet's landscape, his sense of humour and adventure and his exploration of what might be discerned from the everyday. How did this area affect his poetry and prose?

Larkin arrived in Hull in the March of 1955 aged 32. He was then the youngest University Librarian in the UK and deeply regretted his move from Belfast. He was unimpressed by Hull saying it was 'A bit chilly and smelling of fish'. Later he came to appreciate the city. Initially staying in Holtby House (the former home of Winifred Holtby) he cycled around the local countryside. He was unable to drive until his 40s.

On 16<sup>th</sup> April 1955 he made his first visit to Beverley on his bicycle. The trip took an impressive 35 minutes. He wrote to his long-term companion and lover Monica Jones of his visit and was, unsurprisingly, none too complimentary. Whilst he praised the beautiful painted roof of St Mary's, he concluded that the town was too busy and there was no bookshop. He made a similar complaint to his mother when he wrote.

His gut reaction was, perhaps, to always denigrate, but he certainly visited Beverley on numerous occasions. St Mary's was a regular port of call as was the Beverley Arms hotel where he dined with colleagues, distinguished guests and lovers. A keen photographer, we can still see photographs he took in 1956 of Monica Jones outside St Mary's, and on North Bar Without.

In the 1970s he referred to Beverley as 'A country town' where 'People are very rural and the men have clownish expressions'. Nevertheless, he came to Beverley to purchase exotic items perhaps not available in Hull, Twining's tea, soda bread and Lisle thread socks.

Occasionally, it seems, he found something to enjoy which he recorded for posterity. He was entranced by the little roundabout, so long a feature of Saturday Market. He enjoyed the Victorian cemetery. He

often took visitors, including Cecil Day Lewis, the one time Poet Laureate and Poet in residence at Hull University, to visit the two churches. He regularly dined at the Beverley Arms.

The audience were much amused to find that the often-repeated comment that Larkin regularly cycled to Beverley and had afternoon tea at the Beverley Arms was only half his message. He went on to say that the tea wasn't particularly good but there was nowhere else to go.

Beverley was the pivotal point of wider journeys throughout the area including Bishop Burton and Holderness which he referred to as 'A graceless hole'. Only its flat landscape was to be recommended.

Later, having learned to drive he went further afield to Pocklington, Bielby and Huggate.

Just as Larkin suggested he never found 'his proper ground', he also declaimed that he had:

**Never met that special one  
Who has an instant claim  
On everything I own  
Down to my name;**

Larkin never married. Whilst he met Jones in 1946, she did not move to Hull until 1981 and Larkin died in 1985.

There were other ladies in his life, including his mother, Eva, who was widowed in 1948 and lived to be 91. He wrote to her twice a week.

Another relationship was with Maeve Brennan, a native of Beverley. He began an affair with her in 1961 having tutored her for library exams. She describes a dinner at the Beverley Arms where the nature of their relationship was, perhaps, clarified. They enjoyed walking around the local area, including Seven Corners Lane. After his death, his liaison with Betty Mackereth, his secretary, came to light. This had begun in the spring of 1975 at the *Pipe and Glass*. Betty destroyed all her letters from Larkin after his death and now, aged 101, is resident in a Care Home in Hessle.

Larkin rarely named places in his poetry but in 'Bridge for the Living', written to commemorate the opening of the Humber Bridge, Beverley is mentioned by name. The piece was set to music by the Beverley composer, Anthony Hedges.

Whilst he was regularly asked to give readings and interviews, Larkin usually refused, but in 1975 he agreed to an interview with 'The Beverlonian' the school newspaper of Beverley Grammar School. In the interview, which consisted of a series of Q &A, Larkin reflected on why he wrote poetry. It was not to make money, but to attempt to recreate emotions and sensations he had experienced. He commented that being interviewed for the school article was a great deal less threatening than talking to the *Observer* or the *New York Times*.

Larkin was a prolific church visitor, although he professed no faith, describing himself as 'An Anglican agnostic'. Sometimes he was a solitary visitor and on other occasions he visited with companions, including Monica Jones. A very notable visit was made to Lockington Church with fellow poets Douglas Dunn and Richard Murphy, along with Ted Hughes whom he described as 'A great thug of a man'. All four signed the visitor's book.

In his poem, 'Church Going', from the Anthology 'The Less Deceived', Larkin describes his complex relationship with church buildings, with faith and with order and tradition. The poem highlights the contrast between Larkin's non belief and the Church's enduring significance.

In December 2016 Larkin was memorialized in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. Although he was a non-believer, it was argued that he did God's work through the beauty of his poetry and prose.

**POSTSCRIPT- Since Philip's talk unfortunately we have to report that Betty Mackereth passed away on November 19<sup>th</sup>. An irreplaceable link with Larkin has now been broken.**



## *For your Diary*



### Wednesday 3 December 2025

Cottingham Local History Society  
**'The Seeds of Change Project'**  
**Celebrating the history of Hull's oil seed crushing industry**  
Peter Connelly  
Cottingham Civic Hall 7.45-9.15pm  
Members £2.00 Non-Members £4.00

### Saturday 6 December 2025

Hull Male Voice Choir and Hull's Ladies Choir  
with the St Nicholas Church Community Choir  
**Sounds of Christmas**  
Guildhall, Alfred Gelder Street, Hull  
7.00 for 7.30pm  
Tickets £10.00  
HMVC 07813 430429  
HLC 07842 592567

### Monday 8 December 2025

Hull Civic Society  
**Chapels, Charity and Choirs**  
John Scotney  
Holiday Inn Express, Ferensway  
7.30pm  
Non-members donation £2.00

In the light of Philip Pullen's fascinating talk not all members may be aware that there is a small interesting exhibition of Philip Larkin's spectacles and a series of Photographs of him in the entrance foyer of the Hull Eye Clinic adjacent to the HRI.

# Beverley Civic Society Event

**Archaeology finds in East Yorkshire**

*A talk by David Marchant,  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council*

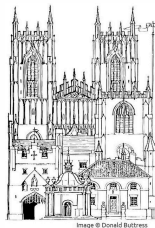
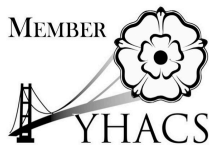


**7.30pm, Thursday 11 December 2025**

**St Mary's Church, Beverley**

Non-members are welcome £5

**As this is the final event of 2025, you are very  
welcome to join us for a festive drink afterwards**



## DISCLAIMER

**The Beverley and District Civic Society assumes no responsibility or liability for any errors  
or omissions in the content of this Newsletter.**