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Heritage: History restored at popular park



Civic dignitaries at the opening of the King Edward VII Memorial Gate in Harrogate's Valley Gardens. (1811262AM4)

Perfect send-off for stalwart of Valley Gardens

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The chairman of the Friends of Valley Gardens bowed out in style this week with the unveiling of the historic King Edward VII Memorial Gate with its impressive stone pillars.

Located at the south west entrance to the Valley Gardens, the completion of the magnificent Edwardian restoration by the hard-working charity group will be the last project undertaken under the chairmanship of Jane Blayney.

Speaking after the ceremony at a reception at Harrogate's Mercer Gallery, Jane said the Valley Gardens was the most used public park in Britain outside of London and deserved to be protected and improved at all times.

She said: "I'm absolutely thrilled. A great deal of effort has gone into this project from tracing the original gates and railings to fundraising to pay for their restoration and erection.

The original King Edward VII gate and pillars were constructed in 1910 and the new restoration took three years.

The project was only made possible after the original gates and some of the railings were discovered in a remote field above Pateley Bridge after being sold to a scrap metal dealer in Ripon around 25 years ago.

Funding came from a combination of community do-



Chairman of The Friends of the Valley Gardens Jane Blayney with her husband Peter Blayney. (1811262AM6)

nations, presentations and Valley Gardens tours organised by Friends of Valley Gardens with additional financial support from Harrogate Borough Council and North Yorkshire County Council.

The civic ceremony held on Monday also marked successful restoration in the park of the Memorial Rose Garden which commemorates the centenary of the First World War.

Among those attending the event were the Rev Brian Hunt, Deputy Lieutenant of North Yorkshire; the Mayor of Harrogate, Coun Bernard Bateman MBE and Coun

Robert Windass, chairman of North Yorkshire County Council, Martin Fish, president of Friends of Valley Gardens, and the Rev Donald Cumming, Army Foundation College chaplain who performed the dedication at the rose garden.

Jane Blayney said FVOG was hugely grateful to many people and groups for their support.

The new Memorial Rose Garden was designed by Sue Wood, horticultural officer at Harrogate Borough Council, with rose beds filled with Tommy's roses and Peace roses.