

# Down Your Way

YORKSHIRE'S NOSTALGIC MAGAZINE

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## THOSE ROARING FORTIES

Des and  
the Butlin's  
beauty

Lighthouse  
landmark

Guardian of  
Hovingham

**WIN**

**Great Yorkshire Show tickets**



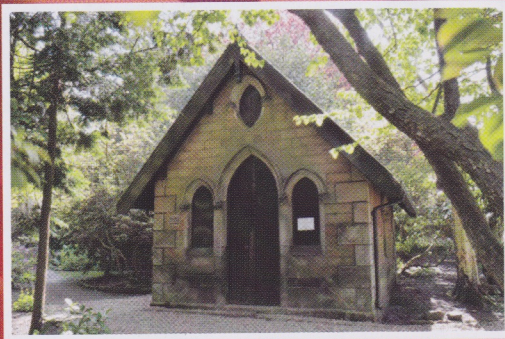
Once this neglected gothic-style structure in the heart of Harrogate's Valley Gardens was a popular destination for rich and fashionable Victorians, who would spend hours each day patiently queuing outside to sample its not-very-appealing, health-giving spring water. Known as the 'cure' and claimed to cure everything from lumbago to gout, it smelt vile of rotten eggs, but nevertheless left its patrons clamouring for more.

Built in 1858, the Old Magnesium Well pump room is a small, pointed roof building and should rank in importance with the town's other famous landmarks such as the Royal Hall or Spa Baths. It is the very reason the stunning Valley Gardens exist today. Along with its woodland walks, and magnificent floral displays, all were originally created to surround the pump room which started life on boggy open ground. The gardens gave Victorians a beautiful place to promenade among the flowers and trees, which was all part of their health regime in between sampling the spa waters. Photographs from the early twentieth century testify to the enormous popularity of the old pump room and gardens, and show crowds of people gathered around the tea room, boating lake and band stand.

The established routine in those days was to take one or more glasses of water between

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7-9am, giving an excuse for a spot of socialising, followed by a gentle stroll around the gardens. The chronically sick would go to the nearby Spa Baths for further treatment, while others would



go shopping, sightseeing or perhaps attend parties. A greater number of mineral springs came to surface within the Valley Gardens, in fact thirty-six out of a total of Harrogate's eighty-eight are to be found within the gardens and surprisingly no two are alike!

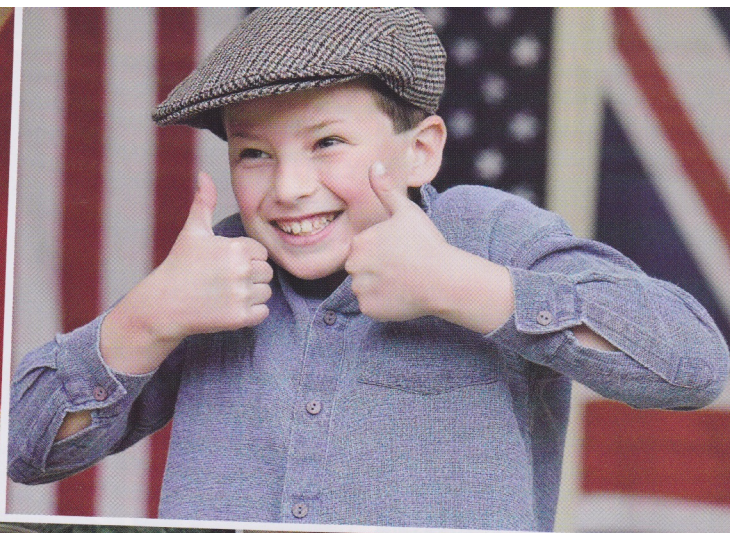
Until recently the Old Magnesium Well pump room

was barely visible to visitors to the gardens, unnoticed in thick undergrowth. It could quite easily have been mistaken for a public toilet or even a garden shed. Thanks to a fundraising drive by a volunteer group called Friends of the Valley Gardens, the historic Grade 2 listed building is gradually being brought back to its former glory.

As part of their fundraising efforts, the Friends hold an annual 1940s themed open day, which has proven over the last three years to be a very memorable and enjoyable occasion. Attendance has grown each year, reaching more than 20,000 visitors last year. The volunteer group aim to raise sufficient funds for full restoration of the pump room, and also to landscape the surrounding area as well as funding other projects within the Valley Gardens. They plan







to transform the building into an education and information centre, which will describe the history of the gardens and the town's spa heritage. This year's event is scheduled for Sunday 29 June.

The committee involved had previously researched and visited other similar 1940s style events staged around Yorkshire, concluding that Harrogate's version should be less specialised and be a truly family fun day occasion. Locals and visitors alike will make a special effort to capture the wartime spirit by dressing up in 1940s garb. The entertainment itself will be performed on the park's large bandstand, and in the surrounding area, where singers, dancers, a swing band, plus local schoolchildren, will entertain, evoking the music entertainment and songs of war-weary Britain. Army vehicles, old cars, wartime re-enactors, retro clothing and craft stalls, and visitors in military and civilian dress from the era will add to the atmosphere.

It's free entry too.

More info [www.friendsofvalleygardens.co.uk](http://www.friendsofvalleygardens.co.uk)  
[www.harrogate1940s.com](http://www.harrogate1940s.com)

**ROY HAMPSON**