



Roger's Almshouses

Walk 2: The Heart of Harrogate Town walk



When the wealthy philanthropist George Rogers, of Park Parade's Claro Villas, decided to build a suit of Almshouses in Harrogate, he paid £1,422 in 1866 for two contiguous plots that faced each other astride the new Avenue Place, later to be called Belford Road.

On the western plot he built the elegant series of homes known to this day as 'Rogers Almshouses', the site to the west eventually being occupied by the Infirmary, later St. Peter's Schools. Work on the Almshouses, which were designed by the distinguished Bradford firm of architects Andrews and Pepper, began in 1868, the design being for twelve Almshouses built on three sides of a square open to the east.

The domestic gothic design contains several pleasing features, such as the strong corbal table, gothic windows and a splendid pyramid-roofed clock tower rising from the centre of the eastern facing block. This last is embellished by a sculpted beehive, emblematic of industry, and above this, the bust of George Rogers was placed in 1909 after being moved from its original position on a marble plinth in the front garden.

George Rogers spent £4,000 on his charitable venture, which was funded by several wise investments which paid the charity enough to administer the

Almshouses and provide the carefully selected residents with a pension.

The selection criteria was typical of Victorian England: *"nine of these almshouses are intended for women, either widows or spinsters, who have moved in a respectable position in life, but who have been reduced to poverty by circumstances over which they had no control, and who have lived within three miles of Bradford Parish Church for three years immediately preceding their application, and have attained the age of sixty years. The other three houses are for similar persons, who have resided for three years within three miles of Christ's Church, Harrogate."*

In building his twelve houses in this form, George Rogers provided Harrogate with one of its most useful and attractive architectural creations, which although diminished in 1940 by the removal of its splendid iron railings, is still a delight to the eye. Today, Rogers' Almshouses are still homes, whose privacy should be respected.