



Knaresborough
Town Council

Press Release

Knaresborough Commemorates the 255th Anniversary of the Enclosure Act and Celebrates Knaresborough Forest Day

Knaresborough is a town rich in history, shaped by its iconic gorge, medieval castle, and once-vast Royal Forest. One of the most significant moments in this heritage was the Enclosure Act of 1770, which marked the formal division and enclosure of the forest lands. On 13th August 1770, commissioners and local people met at the Borough Bailiff (now the Commercial Hotel) in Knaresborough to discuss the implications of this Act. It was a turning point that took away the people's rights to access and use the forest and common land.

Fast forward to Wednesday 13th August 2025, and the town came together to commemorate the 255th anniversary of this historic anniversary, while also celebrating 'Knaresborough Forest Day' – introduced last year to honour and celebrate our natural heritage, green spaces, and the renewed connection between people and land.

Knaresborough Forest Day is more than a look back; it's a hopeful celebration of what's been reclaimed. This year's event recognised the rebirth of the Ancient Royal Forest of Knaresborough, highlighting inspiring local achievements; the development of Long Lands Common, a growing example of community stewardship and access to shared green space, and the successful community purchase of Knaresborough Forest Park, a powerful step toward restoring public access to land and reviving the values of the commons. Together, these milestones reflect a community that is not only remembering its past but actively shaping a greener, more inclusive future where nature, heritage, and people can thrive side by side.

This year, Wednesday 13th August fell in the much-loved Knaresborough feva festival, and it was fantastic to see the town come alive with people, groups, and organisations coming together to remember and celebrate the ancient Royal Forest of Knaresborough.

The week was filled with activities, workshops, and events for all ages, shining a light on the town's rich history and vibrant community spirit.

Highlights included:

- A brilliant community theatre production of *'The Knaresborough Eleven'*, performed on Sunday 10th August in the Castle grounds. The play brought to life JT Glew's *"The Extraordinary Tale of the Castle Yard Riot"* in an unforgettable way.
- Guided walks led by the Mayor of Knaresborough's Tour Guides, offering fresh insights into the forest's past.
- A fantastic Forest Family Fun Day at the Kingfisher Kiosk at Conyngham Hall, packed with nature-inspired activities led by Yorkshire Create, Artventures, and Liz.



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- A civic event hosted by the Mayor of Knaresborough at Knaresborough House, where speakers shared engaging talks on the history of the Royal Forest, the brilliant community led land restoration efforts at Long Lands Common and Knaresborough Forest Park, and exciting future plans to increase woodland cover in the North of England. The event also provided valuable networking opportunities for local groups and organisations. Following the talks, many attendees joined a guided walk to Knaresborough Forest Park.
- An afternoon of celebration at Knaresborough Forest Park with live music, poetry, nature-based crafts, and community activities on the land itself.

Despite the sweltering heat, the energy and enthusiasm were undeniable. It was a truly memorable day – a fitting tribute to our shared heritage and a hopeful step toward a greener future.

Huge thanks to all the individuals and organisations involved, The Mayor Cllr Helen Westmancoat and her Consort John Westmancoat, Knaresborough Town Councillors and staff, our brilliant Town Guides The Mayor of Knaresborough's Town Walking Tours, our fantastic speakers – Anne Richards, Ian Fraser and Shan Oakes, The Kingfisher Kiosk at Conyngnam, Knaresborough Forest Park, Yorkshire Create, Feva, Knaresborough Youth Council and all of the individuals and organisations who joined us and participated, and to the Rotary Club of Knaresborough who supported the events.

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