AN ELDERLY man died yesterday in hospital after a fire swept through a shop below his flat.

The fire brigade was called to the shop in King's Road, Harrogate, at 2.20am, where firefighters took some time to extinguish the fire. Firefighters recovered the man from a second-floor bedroom in the flat and he was taken to Harrogate District Hospital. He died later, believed to be due to the effects of smoke inhalation. Police and fire experts have yet to establish the cause of the blaze.

RAPE CLAIM DROPPED: A teenager who told police she was raped in the early hours of Christmas Day has dropped the allegation. The 18-year-old claimed she was attacked in an alley at about 1.30am, after a night out in Darlington. But police confirmed yesterday that the allegation had been dropped. A spokesman said: "We are no longer looking for anyone in relation to this incident."