

Wetherby Civic Society

Autumn Newsletter

October 2002

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - Michael Welby

I'm pleased to have this opportunity as Chairman to report on the Society's activities over the year. This was our first full year of our new structure, which has proved beneficial being more fitted to our current activities than the previous one, which had outlived its usefulness.

Reports are included in this newsletter from working groups. You will see that it has been a busy year for the Planning Applications group. As the convenor of the working party, I can confirm that we have been kept very active.

Activities on trees have also been busy. We were fortunate at the start of the year when Peter Maun volunteered to take over as Tree Warden and be co-opted to the Executive. He has tackled this job with enthusiasm and is rapidly expanding his knowledge of this area.

AGM
7.30pm Monday
November 18th 2002
Ramada Jarvis Hotel, Wetherby
Followed by an illustrated talk
Micklethwaite
Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow
By Dr James Lodge.

While the Buildings and Environment working group

has not been as busy as last year, you will see from the report that they have considered some important issues. There is also a report on our events programme and you will see that there have again been some very interesting visits. I was fortunate this year with diary dates and was able to attend every event and found all of them very worthwhile.

We are very grateful to Lis Stretton for the brilliant job she has done in organising the events. Unfortunately, Lis is no longer able to do this job and in recognition of her work for the Society, initially as Secretary and then Events Organiser, the Executive voted to make Lis an Honorary Life Member of the Society.

One of the highlights of the year was the Heritage Open Days, which are held throughout the country. Wetherby has never been involved in this before but this year the Society contributed by putting on guided historical town centre walks. Despite the Heritage Open Days providing alternative attractions in the surrounding area, we had 42 people turn up for the four walks and they made many

favourable comments. A few were people who know Wetherby very well but were astounded to have interesting features pointed out to them which they had never noticed. Many thanks to my fellow guides James Lodge, Elizabeth Johnson, Derek Gulland, Nic Sheppard and David Shaw and those members who were involved in preparing the route and assisting on the walks.

An area where we have had only limited success this year is recruitment of new members. The big idea was to offer the guided walks to local groups and they will be so impressed that they will want to join the Society. We had a pilot run at this with one group, which went well, but there was not enough time to roll this out for this summer. We will now be offering this free service to local groups shortly so that they can plan their next summer events.

It just remains for me to say a big thank-you to all the members of the Executive for their support and hard work including our Press Officer Hilary Maun and other members who have assisted in the running of the Society over the last year.

PLANNING - Derek Gulland

The Society Planning Working Party has four members. It monitors all planning applications on a weekly basis taking further if necessary applications which affect the town as a whole. It will, of course, consider any application where environmental or aesthetic questions may be raised particularly within the Conservation Area but it does not normally deal with applications affecting individual dwellings. Representations are made as appropriate to the Planning Authority - Leeds City Council - and reported to the Executive Committee of the Society. Where larger questions of principle may be involved, the Society's views will also be made known to Wetherby Town Council, which has a statutory right to be consulted on all applications.

Many applications have an impact on traffic and it is a requirement of the planning process that traffic impact study has to be made by the developer. This is a highly technical procedure and the Society believes that it does not have either the expertise or knowledge to comment on the traffic consequences of individual schemes. Any new development of any size is

bound to lead to an increase in traffic. What the Society cannot say with any certainty of knowledge is whether or not such an increase is likely to overwhelm the local road network, or will it be absorbed within the general increase year on year of road usage.

What the Society has to do is look at each application and consider:

Is this something which is suitable for the site?

Are the materials to be used in sympathy with those of the surrounding buildings?

Does it have an impact on nearby listed buildings and/or the Conservation Area?

Is the overall design appropriate? And here we are into the area of what is very much a subjective judgement. Building design is as much a victim of fashion as any other visual art form and it is pity that so many developers of speculative housing are so reluctant to offer anything other than the current tried and tested form.

Even on commercial developments - where the life span of the buildings is not likely to exceed 20 to 30

years and where a more adventurous approach might be expected - we see the same reluctance to step out of the currently fashionable look.

Since our late Spring Newsletter we have had the detailed application for the new superstore on the Horsefair site. Overall this is as much as may be expected but we regret the opportunity has not been taken to upgrade the entrance from North Street.

At Micklethwaite a revised application reduced the numbers of units on the site and moved back the building line on its northern boundary from the cliff edge - a move which is welcomed by the Society.

The Society objected most strongly to demolish Bridge House at the southern end of Wetherby Bridge and replace it with a three-storey block of flats. This would have destroyed the present aspect looking south from Bridgefoot and we are pleased that Leeds Planning agreed. A new application to develop the site retaining Bridge House has now been made.

Decisions on all these applications are awaited.

BUILDINGS & ENVIRONMENT James Lodge

After the excitement of last summer's traffic exhibition which promised changes in traffic management

throughout the town, everything has been put on hold until after the completion of remedial work on the first

bypass bridge. The remedial work itself has now been put off until the new year. Then we may expect to see major

traffic difficulties within the town since the closure of the old bypass bridge will mean traffic diversions and closures.

During the year the Society has expressed concern about the state of the Harland Way. In many places its surface cannot cope with the consequences of even moderate rainfall. The Way also suffers from litter and

dumping of unwanted objects. A major cleanup did take place in the summer but unfortunately it is again becoming something of an eyesore. The Society has been invited to appoint a representative to serve on the management group and we are confident that Ruth Wheeler will do everything she can to ensure that this amenity will remain an

attraction for both visitors and residents alike.

Work has begun and is well advanced on the landscaping of the public area at Wharfedale Lawn. Rosemary Rogers will be advising the responsible group on a planting programme. She has also taken over from Tony Gaffney the Society's position on the Town Centre Partnership.

TREES Peter Maun

The Working Party spent much of the first part of the year attempting to identify sites for new planting. The development of The Ings by Wetherby Sports Association has opened up new opportunities on the riverbank downstream of the footbridge and we shall be planting four new memorial trees here over this winter. Many thanks to the families who have given the Society the funds to meet the costs.

Places where planting would enhance the environment are the gateways to the town. However, spaces are limited but we intend to discuss this further with the Town Council. The southern approach from the

northbound A1 has always looked a likely candidate but recent discussions have now ruled this out.

If members know of any public or semi-public land where tree planting would be a benefit will they please contact the Society or myself direct?

Expenditure this year has been restricted to replacing trees planted by the Society, which have died.

Unfortunately, one of the replacement trees in Raby Park has again succumbed and we shall be investigating this further. Some protection measures have also been replaced. Fortunately,

vandalism is not generally a problem.

What is a worry, however, is the accumulation of litter and debris in areas adjacent to public roads. Where possible we bring this to the attention of the appropriate authority. One area which is particularly prone to this problem is the woodland to the west of the old La Locanda Restaurant. However, with the redevelopment of the site, which now seems to be underway this may diminish. Further west the woodland comes under the care of the Woodland Trust and here a lack of volunteers makes it difficult to keep it clear of rubbish.

EVENTS - Derek Gulland

Lis Stretton once again devised an interesting programme of events and visits beginning with an interesting and amusing story told by Maria Glott of how she promoted Bradford as a tourist centre. Perhaps attendance at this lecture fell

prey to the Bradford negative perception effect, which Maria discovered when she began work, since the number of Society members attending fell well short of our expectations.

However, numbers soon picked up for the summer programme beginning with a tour of the Leeds Waterfront hosted by Leeds Civic Trust.

The Saturday morning visit to Brodsworth Hall was something of a departure for

the Society. Even though it was in competition with the England/Argentina World Cup match, a substantial number of Society members experienced this fascinating Victorian Country House and garden which through the unique family history of its former owners exhibits the preserved fashions and styles of their period of ownership.

Our Skipton Experience tour was a light-hearted look at some of the more unusual aspects of English History as experienced by the town. We also saw something of the

changes and renewal of the town centre following the decline of its traditional textile industry. An interesting evening completed by a traditional Yorkshire meal at an award winning fish and chip restaurant.

Again a departure from our usual timing was the weekday morning visit to the National Photographic Museum in Bradford. Most of us had been to the Museum before but this was an opportunity to see behind the scenes and to hear something of the

SITUATION VACANT!

Wetherby Civic Society requires enthusiastic event organiser to succeed Lis Stretton.

Hours unlimited - no pay - but job satisfaction guaranteed!

Please contact the Secretary for further details

Museum's work from its enthusiastic staff. The visit concluded with the chance to see a dramatised documentary on the 1914 Shackleton Antarctic Expedition at the Museum's IMAX cinema.

Patron: Canon W W Powell

Corporate member: Collingham Catering Sales

WETHERBY CIVIC SOCIETY

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