
Wetherby Civic Society

Autumn Newsletter

October 2000

Millennial Miscellany *Adrian White*

It is my pleasure to introduce the reports from the various working groups of Wetherby Civic Society covering their work over the last year. This has been an important period in the development of the Society chiefly for its involvement in the production of the millennium video. The production was financed by the Wetherby Historical Trust but I should like to congratulate our members Len Lurcuck, Jim Lodge and David Shaw on their achievement that has rightly gained great praise from all those who have seen it. Sales have been good and I am sure that this video will continue to mean a great deal to all those with any interest in the town for many years to come.

I am sorry to report the retirement of Charles Martin from the Tree Committee of the Society. Under his stewardship nearly 300 trees have been planted. He has coped manfully with the aftermath of vandalism (thankfully limited) and flooding. We all wish Charles well in the future and thank him for his considerable work for the Society which he did in addition to his commitments to very many other organisations.

The Planning, Policy and Programme Working Party have had a very busy year, as you will note from Ron Aitken's excellent report. I am grateful for the work done by members of this group in monitoring planning applications and responding, as necessary, the various planning committees in Wetherby and Leeds. This year has seen several important, and controversial, proposals for

developments within the town's conservation area, not least those on the sites of the Rendezvous Café and La Locanda Restaurant. The outcomes of some of these proposals are still in doubt and you can be confident that the vigilance of the members of this committee will continue to alert the Society to take action as necessary. I should like to thank all the members of this important group for their work and especially Chris Shaw, and her successor Mike Welby, in scrutinising the planning applications as they are published by the City Council.

The social side of our Society has been extremely successful this year and for this we must thank Lis Stretton for her considerable efforts on all our behalf. The talk and the visits have all been well attended and I am sure that you have enjoyed them as much as I did. The plans for next year are already well advanced.

The Society has been delighted to help with several of the many groups active within the town. We were delighted to note the continuing success of Wetherby in Bloom to which, as in previous years, the Society made a small contribution. Its members are to be congratulated for making the town a better place in which to live and work. We were also pleased to make a contribution to the Bandstand that has taken shape on the riverbank thanks to the sterling efforts of the Weir Preservation Trust. The Society continues to be a member of the Civic Trust nationally and receives useful information from

them of the work of other Civic Societies across the country.

Although this has been my first year as chairman, I have, after careful thought, decided not to put my name forward for re-election either as chairman or as a member of the committee. After 15 years as head of Wetherby High School, I find that in my retirement I no longer enjoy the public spotlight and the formal meetings that form part of the work of any society. My membership of the Society will continue however, and I have offered to help with liaison between the Society and the town's schools if required.

It only remains for me to thank you all for your support of Wetherby Civic Society and wish my successor and all members of the committee every success in the future.

A.G.M.

At 7.00pm Monday

November 6th, 2000

Jarvis Hotel, Wetherby

Followed by the first
public screening of video
interviews

The Way We Were

Planning, Policy & Programme Working Party Ron Aitken

Planning Applications

The working party has had the usual busy year reviewing all planning applications for Wetherby. Comments and representations have been made to the Town Council and Leeds City Council planners as well as to developers, for example:

Proposed new restaurant on the former Rendezvous Café site: What is a suitable commercial development on such a sensitive site was always likely to cause controversy within the town. The Society hopes that its detailed discussions with the architect and subsequent strong recommendations regarding the size of the building, site access, type of materials and loss of green space will be reflected in the finished building which was given the go ahead by Leeds City Planners towards the end of September.

Supermarket Proposals: The Society has been part of the consultative process involving all recent proposals. As members will be aware the planners gave the go ahead for the proposal put forward for the Horsefair Centre but detailed plans have not yet been published.

Proposed housing development at La Locanda: Having commented on aspects of a proposed development the Society was given the opportunity to discuss with the architect revised plans which took into account the Society's reservations about encroachment on the present Green Belt. The outcome of the application is not yet settled.

Spofforth Hill: The Society vigorously opposed the application for a further 82 houses in this over-developed area. It was also concerned that the development would result in a loss of green space on the edge of the town as well as putting additional pressure on town centre amenities. The application has been deferred for the time being.

Unitary Development Plan

During the late summer Leeds City Council published its modified Unitary Development Plan. One of the changes from the original plan is the decision to remove Crossley Park from the Green belt. Crossley Park is the woodland area beside Linton Road between La Locanda and the entrance to the Scaur Bank playing fields. Although it remains within the town centre conservation area it will no longer enjoy the protection from new development which Green Belt status confers. The Society is opposed to this decision and will be making representations to Leeds City Council to re-instate Crossley Park as part of the Green Belt.

Conservation Area

Other matters coming within the remit of the Working Party have included worries voiced to the Town Council over the delay in opening up for public use the restored Bathhouse and grounds at Wharfedale Lawn. The Society was also concerned to learn that the interior of the Bathhouse is showing signs of deterioration due to damp.

Implementation of some of the plans agreed with Leeds City Council remains painfully slow and piecemeal. Nevertheless, pavement renovation in the town centre has now been completed. The Highways Authority has been pressed to implement without delay the long awaited heavy lorry ban thus reducing noise, pollution and congestion throughout the town. Car parks have been tidied-up, new bays marked out but overall parking remains limited. Street lighting replacement continues almost unnoticed on an as and when basis but street signing remains unimproved.

The build up of litter in the town centre particularly on weekend mornings is of great concern to the Society. The local authorities assure us that they have in place a street-cleaning programme at weekends but even so the problem does not seem amenable to improvement. The Society is grateful that so many of the occupiers of commercial premises in the town centre do what they can to tidy up the area near their businesses. The Society will continue to press for more effective action.

As for the future – relations are developing with other Societies in Yorkshire. New places of interest are being revealed for exploration and planners and architects are trying to improve our taste and minds. The Society is reviewing progress to ensure a broader appeal to younger people and the more mature

Social Programme – Derek Gulland.

With thanks to Lis Stretton, our social programme has been as varied and as interesting as usual. Attendances have been excellent with an average turnout of 50 members including a full house at the Jarvis Hotel to start off the new season.

Even if it was a cold rainy evening 50 members were entertained at the Jarvis Hotel by Anne Bachelor's warm-hearted account to trace the early history of her mother and uncle who, when their coal miner father was widowed, were separated and placed in different children's homes many miles apart. To some of us it must have come as a surprise that this was a common practice not so very long ago. Her story of their attempts to be re-united illustrated how attitudes have changed over the intervening years.

There were three visits during the summer to three very different venues.

Allerton Park

Allerton Park just off the Great North Road at the York /Harrogate junction demonstrated what one man's single-minded vision may achieve in renovating and restoring an old building. Allerton Park is a nineteenth century country house which had been allowed to fall into decay.

Bringing it back to its former glory has involved considerable expenditure on reproducing or acquiring furniture and furnishings of the time when the house was built or which could have been in the house during its earlier ownership.

During the 1939- 45 war the house was the HQ of bomber groups of the Royal Canadian Air Force and a small but interesting museum brought back memories to many of our older members visiting the house.

Sutton Park

Sutton Park's austere Georgian proportions are a complete contrast to the gothic grandeur of Allerton Park. But it does have something in common with Allerton Park since what we see today is the result of nearly 40 years of work by new owners restoring and refurnishing the house and gardens.

<p>LEAFLETS AVAILABLE FROM THE SECRETARY</p> <p><i>WETHERBY TRAIL (25P)</i> <i>Discover the secrets of the town centre</i></p> <p><i>CONSERVATION AREA GUIDE (Free)</i> <i>A must if you live or work in the Conservation Area</i></p>
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Our visit there concluded with a buffet upper which complimented the many fine treasures we had seen in the house.

Bradford Industrial Museum

Our final visit was to Bradford Industrial Museum which gave us the opportunity to experience, albeit at second hand, an industrial society which has now all but disappeared. The museum is sited in an old worsted spinning mill and contains textile machinery and mill engines in use from the early nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century. On the site are reconstructions of back to back workers' cottages representative of three different decades within that period as well as the manager's house furnished as it might have been at different times during the mill's working life. We were able to see worsted spinning machinery in operation as well as working mill engines brought together from all over the old West Riding and to experience the unique smell of an old mill – a blend of lanolin and engine oil – part of the very fabric of the building.

The museum also contains a small display of motor vehicles manufactured in the West Riding in the early 20th century as well as an interesting collection of ship models.

Tree Working Party Charles Martin

Tree planting has been limited over the past year because of lack of suitable public spaces. This is especially the case near the town centre, which is sparse in greenery. Should the Market Place be pedestrianised some tree planting may be possible, which

would greatly improve the visual impact of this area.

Memorial trees

Seven memorial trees were planted on Wetherby Ings by the footbridge. These trees were paid for by private donation. One tree, valued at £60, remains

unsold at present. There is a constant demand for memorial trees restricted only by the availability of land.

Wetherby Ings – Scaur Bank

During the year, Leeds City Council planted four of the promised fifteen trees. It is

hoped that the authority will eventually fulfil its promise and plant the outstanding eleven trees.

A replacement tree was planted in the lime avenue but was vandalised. This tree need to be replaced and a further tree planted to complete the avenue once more.

Replacement Trees

A memorial tree planted in Raby Park two years ago and one of the memorial trees planted on the Ings this year have died.

These need to be replaced, as promised out of Civic Society funds. The Society is, therefore, committed to replace four trees in total. As cattle protection already exists for three of these trees, the cost should be around £25 per tree with the fourth costing around £60.

Raby Park

A request for a memorial tree to be planted in Raby Park is under consideration by the Town Council. The delay in approval is due to lack of knowledge of the drainage system under the park which is being researched.

Amenity Planting

Over the past six years 132 trees have been planted in Wetherby schools with the support of the Society. Other sites where trees have been planted are the Wilderness Car Park, the Cemetery, Crossley Park, and the Adult Training Centre. The Society is always willing to consider any area available to the public where its assistance with tree planting would be appreciated.

Patron: Canon W W Powell Corporate member: Collingham Catering Sales

WETHERBY CIVIC SOCIETY

Registered Charity Number: 1039127 A Member of the Civic Trust

www.wetherby-civic-society.freeserve.uk

