
Wetherby Civic Society

Spring Newsletter

www.wetherbycivicsociety.org.uk

April 2007

JAMES LODGE
1928 - 2007

A founding member of Wetherby Civic Society

An appreciation by Elizabeth Johnson

We do not need a stone memorial for James Lodge, although there is one in the Health Centre in Crossley Street. His influence has touched so much in this town with his deep interest in Wetherby's history, as shown in his enthusiasm for blue plaques, and his support for so many voluntary groups whose efforts engender civic pride.

An example of his love for the town's historic buildings was his desire to save the old bath house from destruction. When he was a boy the bath was kept filled by a natural spring and he never tired of telling his friends how cold the water was when he went swimming in it. He persevered and finally achieved Grade II listing for this unusual feature, variously referred to as "Roman" or "Huguenot". Although as he knew, it really dates from the late 18th century.

Years passed before he and various supporters were instrumental in the acquisition of the Jubilee Garden (Wharfedale Lawn) by the Town Council, which at last allowed access to this special building in the Conservation Area. In the early years of the Civic Society he was in the forefront of efforts to spread information about the Conservation Area and listed buildings, which culminated in a leaflet delivered to every home in the town. Perhaps the time is ripe for a similar project.

James had a deep appreciation of the natural world, especially trees, and delighted in the impact the Society has had in increasing the town's stock. The Jubilee Garden is an oasis for contemplation in this busy town offering as well a superb view, which includes the River Wharfe with its many changing moods.

For those who did not know this remarkable man of many talents it would be wrong not to add any mention of his sense of humour and, above all, his zest for life, both of which never left him even in his last days.

WINTER WORK

Although the Society's membership activities during the winter are confined to our annual meeting and the March lecture, this does not mean that our sub-committees take a rest. Planning applications keep coming in. Recently these have been

mostly confined to relatively small developments, some of which have an impact beyond their apparent size. A radical redevelopment of two neighbouring houses on Westgate drew our particular attention. Our representations helped to

ensure that one did not receive approval. However, since this was a speculative development proposal we must expect that it will come back in a revised form. The same will apply to a proposal to redevelop a site on

Linton Road which was also turned down.

There has been publicity in the local press regarding the proposal to build a care home on the site of the redundant farm next to the clubhouse at the golf course. So far full plans have not been available for inspection. We are keeping watch on the Leeds website for details.

Within the town centre we have seen the start of work in the Market Place around the Town Hall. We do hope that, when completed, this will

ensure that the Market Place remains at the core of the town's commercial activities. Within towns, shopping centres are not static and we are beginning to see movement in Wetherby. The development of the old cattle market site now almost completed will add to the attractions of the area east of the High Street as will the new Medical Centre on the old Hallfield Mansion site. The implementation of the Traffic Management Plan now next on the cards ought to help to maintain a link across the High

Street with improved pedestrian crossings.

The Society has been asked for its views on some of the aesthetics of the Market Place development and, along with Wetherby in Bloom and other interested parties, on proposed changes at the Wilderness Car Park. We expressed concern about problems facing pedestrians requiring access to the High Street where, with a very narrow footpath, they sometimes have to share the roadway with motor vehicles.

THE SOCIETY LAUNCHES INTO CYBERSPACE

We have already expressed our public thanks to Martin Rowe who has been instrumental in setting up our own website. This has now progressed far beyond just giving bare details about what we do and how to join. We are now using it to archive our Newsletters and say something about the work we have put in

helping to make the Bathhouse and its garden a community asset. We talk about our tree planting activities and even have our own mini-mail order page!

But is it being used - do people actually look at it and make use of it? Well, yes they do. Martin reports that in the first three months of this

year 217 visits have been made to the site and the total viewings of all pages come to 3690. Emails are coming in from people who could only have obtained the address from the website and we have already recouped the modest expense in setting it up by recruiting new members through it.

THE YORKHIRE HUSSARS - IS THERE A WETHERBY CONNECTION?

Some years ago our interest in the stables at Micklethwaite farm was revived when a planning application for the present development on the site was submitted. We were concerned that the listed building had to be retained especially, as we thought then, it had been used as a barracks by the Yorkshire Hussars

- the local Yeomanry Regiment. This inspired our member Clifford Johnson to look into the history of the building. This took him on a much more extended quest and he ended up investigating the history of the Yorkshire Hussars and recently publishing the results of his labours in a

94 page illustrated booklet.

Sadly he found no evidence that the building at Micklethwaite was ever used by the Yorkshire Hussars or even by units of the regular army. So the question remains as to why the people of Wetherby always referred

to the building as “ the cavalry barracks”. There must be some basis in fact for such a persistent folk memory. What we do know is that in the late 17th century one of the great disputes between the later Stuarts and Parliament was the billeting of troops in private houses. Does this mean that public houses were required to

billet troops? If so, we have to remember that the three-house terrace opposite the stables was once a public house known as the Drovers’ Inn. Did it make use of the stable block to put up soldiers on their travels between postings? We shall probably never get to the bottom of this and we must congratulate Clifford on his attempt to unravel the mystery.

Whatever may be truth, the building itself deserves its Grade II listing and we must be thankful that the developers agreed to restore it and convert it to two houses.

Clifford Johnson The Yorkshire Hussars Wetherby Historical Trust £8.00

SUMMER EVENTS

Our summer events will be starting very shortly with a visit to the Black Sheep Brewery in Masham. As in previous years we shall send booking forms only to those members who have indicated that they wish to attend a particular event. If you haven’t already sent off your intention form to Ruth Wheeler please do so as soon

as possible. Alternatively, send her an email at ruth@wetherbycivicsociety.co.uk listing your preferred events. Details of each event are on the website. Even if you are not sure whether or not you may be able to go that shouldn’t put you off contacting her to register your interest.

EVENTS 2007

Thursday 19th April
The Black Sheep Brewery, Masham
2.00pm £5.00 Seniors £4.00

Thursday 14th June
The Walled Garden, Scampston, nr. Malton
2.00pm £5.00

Tuesday 15th May
Constable Burton Hall & Gardens, nr. Leyburn
2.00pm £11.00.

Tuesday 10th July
Markenfield Hall, nr. Ripon
6.30 pm. £6.00

Tuesday 11th September Sion Hill Hall, nr. Thirsk
2.30pm £9.50 including tea, coffee, cakes.

WETHERBY CIVIC SOCIETY

OFFICERS

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