

Wetherby Civic Society

Autumn Newsletter

October 2003

VICE-CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - James Lodge

Civic Society received a very sad blow when our Chairman, Mike Welby, was suddenly struck with a very severe illness, which resulted in his recent death. Mike had stepped in at short notice and was good hard working chairman who we had hoped would have been with us for years to come.

In particular he fully realised that we were part of Leeds City and should take advantage of any Leeds projects which might help us. He saw the advantages of becoming an active member of Leeds Voice - the organisation which co-ordinates and represents the work of all kinds of voluntary community groups. He was the Wetherby representative and also served on its managing committee.

Through Leeds Voice Mike hoped to influence the Wetherby Community Involvement Team but sadly his illness prevented him from enjoying the success which seemed within his grasp.

It may be that some of the ideas, which Leeds Voice supports, are not appropriate for Wetherby but Mike had the insight to see that by joining and taking an active part we could achieve things for the benefit of Leeds and Wetherby. Mike supported the Society becoming an affiliated member of Leeds Civic Trust and I believe this will be of considerable benefit in the future.

Mike was an active member of the Society's planning sub-committee and ultimately its Chairman. He was much concerned that new developments in the town should respect the historic core and not overwhelm the modest limestone buildings, which make up most of the town centre.

He was saddened to see litter despoiling the town and pressed hard for the authorities to take action in its eradication. He was keen to make the Society relevant to the life of the town and to seek contacts with other organisations with similar aspirations.

Mike's illness and death was a double blow to the Society.

Annual General Meeting
7.30pm Monday 17th November 2003
Ramada Jarvis Hotel, Wetherby
Followed by an illustrated talk
Barracks and Hussars
A part of Wetherby History
By Clifford Johnson

Shortly after our 2002 AGM, Charles Martin died. Although Charles had retired from the Committee he was still a valuable source of advice and information. In his time Charles had been responsible for the planting and care of over 300 trees and shrubs throughout Wetherby.

Mike and Charles are sadly missed and the Society's sympathy and condolences are

extended to Chris and Janet and their respective families.

I hope many of you took advantage of the Heritage Open Days weekend in September. This is when many places not normally open to the public can be seen free. Sadly Wetherby does not possess buildings or churches of real interest. We had hoped to take people to see the Georgian Bathhouse at Wharfedale Lawn which is now leased to the Town Council. Unfortunately, neither the bathhouse nor the grounds were up to the standard we expect in Wetherby. Something to look forward to next year.

During the Open Days weekend we repeated our guided walks round the town centre. The weekend is not just about historical buildings - one of the most popular venues within Leeds is the preserved open cast walking dragline!

Information about all the Leeds events is available at our library and the Civic Trust maintains a web site with details of every venue and event throughout England and Wales. Next year we hope to advise you in good time of places open near at hand and not just within the Leeds City area.

I thoroughly enjoyed our Society's recent excursion to Broughton Hall, near Skipton. This is a beautiful house which has been in the Tempest family ownership for over 500 years.

The family has had to withstand the post-Reformation penal laws and death duties and inheritance tax. However, the building is now on a secure financial supported by the rents from the conversion of outbuildings and stable blocks to a business park - perhaps their best known tenant

Since our Spring Newsletter the Society has made representations on three applications.

One of these was the second proposal to replace Bridge House, this time with 13 flats in a part three storey, part four-storey apartment block.

This block would dominate the river scene overlooking as it would the bandstand and Wetherby Bridge which has Ancient Monument status. It would be in close proximity to the listed building which was once the Drovers' Inn on Boston Road and also the listed stable block on the Micklethwaite Farm site.

Leeds City refused permission for this application to go ahead. Having taken up the opportunity to obtain details of the reasons for the refusal we were made aware of the planning authority's desire to take notice of the size, design and scale of the proposed development in relation to its prominent position.

We very much doubt that this will be the end of the story since, as is so often the case nowadays, the development value of sites on which large older houses stand is often very much greater than that of the building itself.

in the town and it will take time to adjust to it. If it brings some

is the Dalesman publishing company.

Our guide was excellent- full of pride in the house and the family and the survival of Roman Catholic worship in this corner of Yorkshire. Broughton Hall is not open to the general public and if you know of any other similar places which takes

PLANNING - Elizabeth Johnson

And we have just heard that the Leeds City decision has been appealed to the Secretary of State.

One of the other applications was to build a detached house within the curtilage of one of the three houses which now make up the former Drovers' Inn. The Society expressed concern about the threat this posed to an existing copse of mature beech trees on the site. The application has now been withdrawn.

The third application was the proposed development at Linton Springs Hotel. If this is to go ahead it will inevitably lead to an increase in traffic on a narrow country road which in some places is only single track. So far we do not what is the outcome of this application.

The formal documentation of the first review of the Leeds Unitary Development Plan has been published. This more or less confirms the information released earlier. The Society has again made representations on the plans announced for the Thorp Arch site and also opposed most strongly the development of edge of town retail uses at Micklethwaite Farm.

life back to a lack-lustre Market Place it may have served its

booked group tours only - or for that matter any other place which may be of interest - please let us know.

I hope to see you at our Annual General Meeting. I am looking forward to the topical and interesting talk which our member Cliff Johnson will be giving.

After what seems a long wait, there is now much building activity at Micklethwaite Farm. All that remains of the old farm is the Grade 2 listed stable block which dates from the late 18th century. For a brief spell we were able to see it standing alone on that high bank as it did when described in 1793.

Conversations with the builders and the West Yorkshire Archaeological Service have highlighted the attention which is being directed to this interesting building and its conversion to two three bed-roomed dwellings.

There have been some modifications to the original plans at Micklethwaite. Although we had no complaints about them, these modifications do raise major problems when we study planning applications. New features are described but without having the original application to hand it is impossible to make comparisons with the plans which were granted planning permission.

The same points apply at the new building on the old Rendezvous site near the bus station where adjustments have been made to the final scheme.

The style here is certainly quite different from any other building purpose and compensate for the

loss of green space and views

from and into the town.

BUILDINGS & ENVIRONMENT Derek Gulland

Although the landscaping groundwork at Wharfedale Lawn has been completed we are still waiting for the opening up of the bathhouse grounds to the public. The Society understands that much of the delay is due to outstanding repairs to one of the site's boundary walls. Once this is completed then we hope that the Town Council will proceed as quickly as possible to adding this site to Wetherby's public attractions.

Still no news of the promised traffic plan for Wetherby even though the repair work on the first bypass bridge has been completed and the temporary traffic diversions and restrictions have been long removed. Was I the only one who thought traffic congestion in the town increased markedly after their removal? Certainly bicycling on North Street became

something of an obstacle course with indiscriminate parking by motorcars, vans and lorries where once there were double yellow lines.

However, there has been one consequential benefit of the bridge work. The mini-roundabout at Bridgefoot is to become permanent although this will mean some alterations to footways and road signage in the area. Maybe not directly following on, motor vehicle access to the east, north and south of the Town Hall on Thursday Market days will be prohibited.

Litter in the town centre remains a perennial problem. Perhaps it's time again for another push to try and reduce this. And is there anything we can do to reduce the plethora of A-boards which are now cluttering up our pavements? Surely the law of

diminishing returns must apply when the numbers reach the levels they are at now in some of our town centre shopping areas.

Something quite new to announce in one of our Newsletters is the that in the short list for this year's People's Award for excellence in architecture sponsored by Leeds City Council and the Leeds Society of Architects are three buildings in our area.

Two are in Wetherby- one is the building on the Rendezvous Café site referred to above and the other is an extension to a house in Westgate best seen from the Ings. The third candidate is the new chapel at Martin House in Boston Spa.

The results will be announced some time after December 1st.

TREES Peter Maun

Summer is a time about thinking for the future and the Society is pleased to report that we have reached agreement with Wetherby Town Council that a lime tree avenue may be created following the line of the footpath which crosses Millennium Field.

The footpath provides a useful link between the Spofforth Hill area and the Barleyfields area. Our preliminary investigations suggest that such an avenue would cost in the region of £7,000.

Of course the Society will not be able to fund such a development on its own. It is our intention to launch an appeal for funds from businesses, other organisations and individuals.

Planting a tree is such a worthwhile activity that we expect that many people in the town will want to contribute particularly if they wish to commemorate an individual person or an event.

We hope to have more details and information at the AGM on November 17th.

We shall be continuing our current planting programme on the riverbank at the Ings this winter. With Janet Martin's agreement one of the trees planted will be dedicated by the Society to the memory of Charles Martin who was such an inspiring convenor of our tree working party in the Society's early days.

Unfortunately the dry summer has taken its toll on a couple of recent plantings on the Ings. These will be replaced during the coming planting season.

EVENTS - Derek Gulland

Once again our March lecture proved a successful start to our annual programme of events.

A packed and expectant room was treated to a witty but at the same time thoughtful talk by Sir Thomas Inglby on the joys and woes of running a stately family home in the early 21st century.

With the lighter summer evenings a guided tour of York Minster attracted a good turn out of members many of whom repaired to the York branch of the Wetherby Whaler for a late

supper of Yorkshire fish and chips.

A more unusual venue was the June visit to the Herriot Museum in Thirsk. Those of us who are old enough will recall with pleasure the TV series based on James Herriot's books. However, to see something at first hand of the conditions under which vets worked in the recent past was an education in itself.

July found us at Lotherton Hall where we enjoyed some of the

beautiful furniture and household goods in Leeds City's late nineteenth and early twentieth century collections.

We also learned something about the history of the family who once owned the property and their generosity in gifting it and much of its furniture to the City.

James Lodge has described his great pleasure in visiting Broughton Hall which rounded off our summer programme in September.

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