



Wetherby Civic Society

AUTUMN 2023 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member(s),

VISITS AND TALKS

Our visit to Calverley Old Hall, in June, allowed us to see (wearing hi-vis jackets and hard hats – see photo) the work being undertaken in converting this semi ruined Grade 1 listed mediaeval manor house into a holiday let; not as brutal as it sounds. The Landmark Trust is putting enormous care (and money!) in restoring an “at risk building” for future generations. In doing so, they have uncovered rare 16th century wall paintings which will be preserved. An excellent visit. Incidentally, once finished in February 2024, they will have an open day to allow visitors to see the finished building.



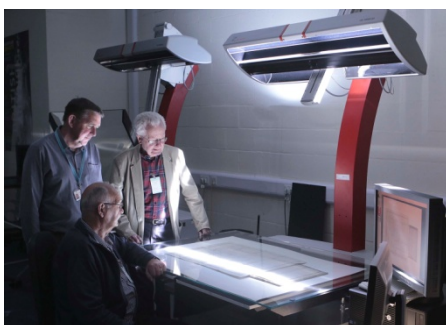
Society members at the Calverley Old Hall

In July, we visited Lawnswood Cemetery and with an amusing guide saw the graves of innovators and trailblazers, including the founders of Hepworth Tailoring (now Next plc) and Waddingtons. Of particular interest was the Grade II listed Columbarium, where the ashes are stored in niches in the outside wall and also on shelves inside the building.

Our Summer Talk in August in the Council Chamber of Municipal Offices was very well attended. This was another excellent talk by Professor Joyce Hill, whom we shall be inviting to speak in 2024.

The guided tour of the Wetherby Waste Water Treatment Works planned for Tuesday 19 September **has been postponed** and we shall be contacting you again once a new date this year has been agreed. Our Autumn talk “True Life Tales of Tudor York” being given by Tony Morgan will be, as planned, on Monday 9 October at the St James’ Church Centre at 7-30p.m. The talk is a “pay at the door” event.

SALE OF WETHERBY BICENTENARY



Roger Taylor and Ian Leadley at the scanning

A grant of £500 has been obtained from Leeds Council and a grant of £250 is being pursued with Wetherby Town Council towards the celebration of the bicentenary of the Sale of Wetherby.

The reproduction of the 1824 catalogue has been undertaken by the British Library at Thorp Arch. The work being undertaken is shown in the picture in a manner reminiscent of Wright of Derby’s paintings.

BALSAM BASHING

Unfortunately, not many turned up for this year’s July annual balsam bashing. The benefits of previous year’s work were evident with only minor regrowth in the areas where we have previously “bashed”. However, as can be seen, we found plenty of Himalayan Balsam to remove and have left plenty for next year’s efforts.



Balsam bashing in progress

PLANNING

The work of our Planning sub-committee, headed by Nic Sheppard, in reviewing planning applications and ensuring the architectural beauty of our town, continues. Their latest success has been in objecting to the First Floor signage above 23 Market Place, which they raised with Leeds City Planning. A retrospective planning application has been refused by the Planning Committee and this signage should be taken down.

Leeds City Council has decided to cease publishing public representations on the Leeds Planning Portal for a six month “trial” period. No criteria for judging whether the “trial” has been successful have been given. We have only heard of this from Councillor Alan Lamb as it does not seem to have been publicly announced nor does it appear on the Planning Portal. We have objected to this decision as it is the exact opposite of Open Government, which the public expects from a democratically elected body, and will allow officers to summarise objections without the public being able to check the accuracy. We would welcome individuals objecting to this decision by emailing the Chief Planning Officer (david.feaney@leeds.gov.uk), Leeds CEO (tom.riordan@leeds.gov.uk) and the Executive Councillor for Planning (helen.hayden@leeds.gov.uk).

We have been invited to a meeting in September, when Persimmon’s plans to build 125 houses on the Racecourse Approach site will be unveiled. With the Taylor Woodrow’s 762 houses already approved, this will mean a total of 887 with perhaps 50 more to come, out of the initial 1,100 houses included in the original SAP designation.

MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

In July, we held a site meeting with officers of Leeds City Council to discuss the former Wetherby Rural District Council Offices in Westgate. We explained to them that we believed that the 1938 Art Deco part of the building is a significant heritage and must be preserved and that the whole building should provide a significant asset to Wetherby.

We wanted the building to be refurbished and be fully utilised. The officers were sympathetic and assured us that the site was not on their list of property to be disposed of. Among the potential uses we suggested were moving the library and “One Stop” into the building and making it a “Community Hub”. This would allow the existing library building to be sold. Now would be a suitable moment to plan for refurbishment as the government are taking over the funding of the new High School and this money would become available along with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which would become available from the developers of Racecourse Approach.

We asked to be involved in further discussions and this was agreed.

KIND GIFT

Shirley Hunter has gifted to the town, through Wetherby Civic Society, an oil painting by Jo Dixon of the High Street in the 1970s. Nic Sheppard was delighted to receive the painting which is now on show at Windsor Court Care Home.

MEMBERSHIP

We are striving to maintain Wetherby as a pleasant place to visit and live. We would be delighted to hear from anyone who wishes to play a more active part in our work and anyone who wishes to join the Society. You can contact us by email at secretary@wetherbycivicsociety.co.uk and can find out more at our website at www.wetherbycivicsociety.org.uk. As an introductory offer, new members joining now will receive their 2024 membership included in this year’s fee.



Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to others.