



Wetherby Civic Society

AUTUMN 2024 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member(s),

VISITS AND TALKS

In June, we visited Third White Cloth Hall in Leeds. We had not realised that this was once a very large building which not only housed the market for selling white cloth, but also the assembly rooms of Georgian Leeds. Some of the Cloth Hall was destroyed to make way for the railway connection to York, but the assembly rooms remain virtually intact. Today it houses the Kadampa Meditation Centre, who have restored the assembly rooms to their former glory.



Third White Cloth Hall

Interestingly, the First Cloth Hall, which lies just behind the Third Hall, in Kirkgate is now fully restored and many of us peeked in to see what an excellent job has been done. Photos of its restoration can be seen on Google.

A tour of Knaresborough was our July visit. The local Civic Society gave us an evening trip around the square and castle of the town. The castle was at its height during reigns of Edward II and Edward III and gradually fell into disuse subsequently. Its destruction occurred after its surrender in the Civil War. It was knocked down, though the Courthouse and dungeons were retained for the use of the town. Much of the stone was used in constructing nearby buildings.

Our Summer Talk in August on the Changing Face of Wetherby featured some of the many photos in Victor Hawkins' collection. This excellent talk was attended by 24 members and guests and kicked off the celebrations of the Great Sale of 1824.

Our final event for 2024 will be a tour of the archive and collection of the former textile mill at Sunnybank Mills in Farsley, the home to "The Great British Sewing Bee", on Tuesday, 24 September at 11a.m.

SALE OF WETHERBY BICENTENARY

We shall not be having an autumn talk nor Festival Walk this year, but shall instead be celebrating the 200th anniversary of the sale of Wetherby by the Duke of Devonshire. The current programme of events is:

- Friday 11 October: 11a.m. St. James Church will ring out a peal of bells to celebrate the start of the Sale at 11a.m. in 1824.
- Saturday 12 October: 10a.m. Guided walk to buildings sold in the Great Sale starting outside the Town Hall
10a.m. – 4p.m. Exhibition of "The Changing Face of Businesses in Wetherby Market Place since The Great Sale" in the School Room of the Town Hall
11a.m. Free talk on The Great Sale in the Town Hall
12 noon Unveiling a celebratory plaque by the Lord Lieutenant in the Assembly Room of the Town Hall open to all, with Wetherby Silver Band playing outside.
2p.m. Free talk on The Great Sale in the Town Hall
3p.m. Guided walk to buildings sold in the Great Sale starting outside the Town Hall
- Sunday, 13 October: Service in St James to commemorate the Great Sale



Full details will be published in the coming weeks.

HERITAGE OPEN DAY WALK

As usual we shall be participating in the Heritage Open Days by conducting our free guided tour of Wetherby on Sunday 8 September at 2p.m. No prebooking is required and participants should meet at the Riverside car park. Please pass this information on to anyone wishing to know more about Wetherby.

BALSAM BASHING

“The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley.” Our Elysian dreams of balsam bashing on a warm summer evening were derailed by heavy rain and the event had to be called off. There are significant quantities of Balsam along the river bank and we would encourage anyone walking along the bank to pull it up. Next year, we shall hope for better weather and have another go at “Balsam Bashing” to try and get on top of the pest.

BLUE PLAQUES

Following a reasonable spell of decent weather, we have at last, been able to install the replacement blue plaque at the weir. As can be seen on the attached photo, member, Victor Hawkins, drilled the holes and fitted the plaque. It was felt necessary to replace the old one as the wording was rather misleading and it had been vandalised with spray paint (although cleaned up as much as possible). The cost of the plaque was met by Wetherby Historical Trust and Wetherby Civic Society.

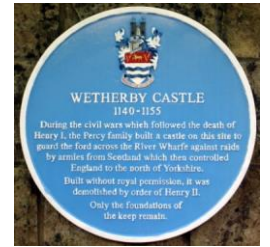


Victor and Replacement plaque



Before

We were contacted by Castle Keep telling us that the plaque for Wetherby Castle was in poor condition and asking if it would be possible to restore it. On examination the white paint on the lettering and around the rim had seriously deteriorated. We went with a tin of paint and a steady hand and have repainted the missing parts. Although not quite as good as new, we hope that you will agree that the appearance is significantly improved.



After

ARCHIVES

We have been investigating how best to ensure that the many photographs and information about Wetherby may be preserved and made available to a wider public. Committee member, Nic Sheppard, has identified that we could have a site similar to that of Tadcaster Civic Society (www.tadhistry.org.uk), but would require an initial £6,000 and annual running costs of about £500, significant effort in preparing material and loading onto the network and the co-operation of those holding material. Further investigation is ongoing, but overall it looks feasible. We shall keep you informed on progress.

BATHHOUSE

We have raised the safety of access to the Bathhouse with Wetherby Town Council and discussions have taken place on how to achieve this. It has been agreed that a simple grab handle will be the easiest, cheapest means of improving this and will not need planning permission.

LIDL

The date of the Lidl Planning enquiry has now been fixed as starting on Tuesday 22 October and is likely to last for up to seven working days. Interested parties are allowed to speak on the first day, and it is likely that we shall take up this opportunity. We reiterate that we are not objecting to having a Lidl store in Wetherby (indeed we would welcome more competition) but that it is in the wrong place and is on land which has been reserved in the Leeds Site Allocation Plan for retirement housing.

RACECOURSE APPROACH

Persimmon have now resubmitted their plans for their 125 houses on Racecourse Approach, details of which can be accessed as application 23/07190/FU on the Planning Portal. Comments are required by 3 September, but as no date has yet been set for the Plans Panel, can still be made after this.

Work seems to have started on developing the Taylor Wimpey site off Racecourse Approach, even though Condition 29 (“No works shall begin on the development until a Statement of Construction Practice has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority”) does not seem to have been approved. We shall be investigating further.

Interestingly, West Yorkshire Archives is recommending that “Research carried out by the Wetherby Civic Society as part of this project should be incorporated into the final text (of the archaeological report on Swinnow Hall). This information enhances the archaeological understanding of Swinnow Hall in the 18th century.” - an accolade for our work.