



Wetherby Civic Society

WINTER 2024/25 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member(s),

Another year at Wetherby Civic Society over! By and large it has been successful; the biggest failure – our Balsam Bashing in July – having been cancelled due to inclement weather. Probably the greatest success was helping to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Great Sale of Wetherby. What both these different activities have in common is that they further our aims of promoting Civic Pride and improving the culture of our town.

Members who do not pay by standing order will have received their reminder that fees for 2024/5 are now due. These remain unchanged at £12 for one person and £20 for two people at the same address. We do hope that you will remain members, but if you make the decision not to renew, it would be helpful if you would email Angela at angela.winterbottom@hotmail.co.uk to tell her of your decision.

We look forward to seeing you all at our AGM in March, with date and time yet to be announced.

VISITS AND TALKS

We made our final visit of the year Sunnybank Mills in Farsley. After struggling to find the archives (and appropriate car park) on this very large site, we heard and saw a very interesting presentation on the manufacturing of fine woollen cloth that took place on the site. Examples of some materials were more like fine cotton than wool. The local Farsley/ Pudsey area was full of fine wool manufacturers. The Woodhouse family took over the site in 1881 and specialised in spinning and weaving merino wool. The archives now hold many examples of the cloths produced on the site until its closure in 2008.

Last season's Events Programme was successful with good attendances throughout. The visit to Hovingham Hall was particularly memorable, perhaps aided by it being a beautiful day. We are currently in the process of putting together our Programme for next year. As usual you shall be receiving your programme of events in the New Year along with information on the AGM in March. As this year, we shall email application forms and details of each event to all members about 3 weeks before the event.

SALE OF WETHERBY BICENTENARY

Celebrations for the 200th anniversary of the Duke of Devonshire's auction sale of Wetherby were judged to be a great success. The peal of bells from St James on the anniversary of the start of the sale set the tone. Victor Hawkins' talks were extremely well attended with the Town Hall's Assembly Room full with standing room only. The two walks, especially the first, were more than full though the numbers in the afternoon fell away as the heavens opened. The exhibition on the changing face of the centre of Wetherby had a steady stream of visitors. Sales of the reproduction of the Sale Catalogue from 1824 were high, though copies can still be obtained from the Whitaker Shelter, where The Old Men's Parliament meets, on Tuesdays or Thursdays between 10.00 am and 12 noon.



Plaque unveiling



Plaque installed

We were delighted to have the Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, in full dress uniform, representing King Charles, to unveil the commemorative plaque and to say a few words. The plaque has now been installed on the wall of the Town Hall. The celebrations concluded with an inter-denominational church service on Sunday.

Our thanks to all those involved in celebrating this milestone event in Wetherby's history and we were delighted that so many came to see and hear about the Great Sale.

WALKS

In September we led our annual Heritage Open Day walk around Wetherby. This was poorly attended due to poor weather (again), but those attending appreciated the effort and two attendees have joined the Society.

In October, we again led Year 6 children from Crossley Street School on a tour of Wetherby as part of their local history project. We think they enjoyed the walk and the results of their project can be seen at

<https://sites.google.com/crossleystreet.co.uk/year6-historyofwetherby/home>

VARIOUS BUILDINGS IN WETHERBY

We are delighted that Wetherby Town Council has greatly improved access to the Bathhouse by fitting a grab handle at the top of the steps into the Bathhouse. This simple, cheap, but very effective aid demonstrates that progress can be made in improving Wetherby without huge cost or bureaucracy.

In order to reduce the sunlight during talks, we have installed, with Leeds Council permission, one blind in the former Council Chamber of Wetherby Rural District Council Offices. This is not really enough, but until agreement is reached for restoration of this building, it did at least show willing.

RACECOURSE APPROACH

The conditions for Taylor Wimpey's application to build 762 houses off Racecourse Approach are gradually being approved and they anticipate that first occupations will be in Autumn/ Winter of 2025. The Centre Heating Hub providing heating to all the houses needs to be completed before then. The recent activity on site has been the construction of attenuation ponds which are designed to hold excessive surface run-off water during heavy rain.

The archive report on the archaeological investigation of the site has now been issued. It can be found via the planning portal as one of the documents under condition 44. We are pleased that mention is made of our desktop investigation of Swinnow Hall and that our booklet on the subject is attached as Appendix 7.

LIDL

We had planned to have a representative make a contribution at start of the planning enquiry into Lidl's application to build a supermarket and nursing home on the site of the Mercure hotel on 22 October. Unfortunately our representative was unable to attend due to illness, but the Civic Society statement was read out on our behalf by Councillor Lamb.

We have now learnt that the Inspector has **APPROVED** the Lidl application for a supermarket, 84 dementia care home units and 8 independent senior living homes. Details of the judgement can be accessed via the Leeds Planning Portal using the planning reference 23/01507/FU. Importantly one of the conditions is that the care home has to be built before the supermarket.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

On Remembrance Sunday, our Treasurer, Angela Winterbottom, was in the Parade and laid a wreath on behalf of the Society.

PARKING CHARGES

We understand that despite the public consultation on parking fees in Wetherby showing a heavy majority against their introduction, Leeds City Council intend to ignore this and go ahead anyway. However, the Leeds Council Scrutiny Board subsequently voted 6-5 in favour of the Council **reconsidering** their decision. What next in the saga?

DID YOU KNOW.....

That the stone container at the Wilderness Car Park is thought to be a Roman container excavated in 1938 on the site of the Wetherby and Rural District Council Offices. It came into the possession of Walter Mellor, member of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, who lived in St James's Street. It was presented to the town by Mr and Mrs J.L. Mark of Cleveland House in 1990 to celebrate the anniversary of the market charter.



Roman container

AND FINALLY

Our best wishes for an enjoyable Christmas break and a happy New Year.