



Wetherby Civic Society

SPRING 25 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member(s),

With the start of another year, it is a time to look back to see what we have achieved and forward to see what we hope to achieve.

One obvious success was the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the Great Sale of Wetherby; the talks were well attended, the guided tours were full (despite the rain in the afternoon), the Silver Band played, the excellent exhibition was lauded and the Lord Lieutenant unveiled the plaque. Copies of the original Auction Listings sold well and we did not have a financial deficit! Many people in Wetherby now have a greater knowledge of our history thus fulfilling one of our aims – **“TO PROMOTE CIVIC PRIDE”**.

We have been less successful in opposing planning applications – with Lidl succeeding in winning the appeal to build their supermarket where retirement homes should have been built. It only goes to show the vagaries of the planning system; the Inspector used figures that show that Leeds has 7.7 years' supply of housing approvals (against a minimum requirement of 5 years) but is short of beds for dementia patients. Thus retirement housing is unimportant but the dementia care home is – and it is OK to use the spare bit of land for a supermarket; an example of Leeds being a victim of its own success.

One outstanding item, which it would be great to resolve in 2025, is the future of the Municipal Offices in Westgate. This building is an outstanding example of civic Art Deco architecture with a Council Chamber preserved from its opening in 1938. The obvious risk is that, with money tight, Leeds Council could sell this off for a developer to knock down and build yet more housing. We have avoided applying for an architectural listing of the building as this can inhibit what can be done to make it really viable, but we would apply if necessary.

AGM

We do hope that you come to our AGM on Monday 10 March, which will be held at St James Church Centre at 7-30p.m. We shall present our annual report, approve the 2023/4 accounts and answer any queries from the floor. Hopefully, this should not take too long. The talk immediately after the AGM is entitled “Spofforth Park: Community Power and the Estates Evolution”. Malcolm Gardner will explain how the “discussions” of householders on the Bellway estate have progressed with thebuilders and Leeds City Council – an interesting primer for the future battles on other large developments in Wetherby. Visitors would also be welcome to attend this meeting, but of course cannot vote in the AGM. As previously, the entrance fee is members - £5, non members - £7. Pay at the door.

VISITS AND TALKS

We have another interesting and mixed programme of events for 2025.

In April, we shall visit Thirsk Hall, a Grade II* listed building which is newly opened for guided tours. The house, built in the 1720s, had an extra floor and new wings, designed by the famous John Carr of York, added in the 1770s. The visit includes the opportunity to walk in the sculpture gardens of the house



Thirsk Hall



Newburgh Priory

This is followed in May with a visit to Newburgh Priory, a Grade I listed Tudor building near Coxwold. Again, this includes visiting the well kept large grounds of the Priory.

Following our recent tradition of town guided walking tours, in June we shall visit Ripon for an afternoon guided walking tour. In July we go to find out what happens to all that green bin recyclable material at the Leeds Material Recycling Facility, which is run by H W Martin.

Our Summer Talk in August is again at the Council Chamber in the Municipal Offices when Malcolm Barnes, from Boston Spa Archaeology & Heritage Group, will talk about geology and archaeology in Boston Spa. As usual, the talk will be followed by cake and fizzy wine.

Our final visit will be a guided tour of Lotherton Hall in September followed by our final talk in October by Jeremy Burton, entitled, "Montague Burton – The Tailor of Taste".

You will be receiving your programme of events soon along with information on the AGM in March. ***We shall email application forms and details of each event to ALL MEMBERS about 3 weeks before the event for you to register and pay for your visit.*** The obvious exception is the pay at the door events in March and October.

TOWN HALL

We have recently written to Wetherby Town Council requesting that they rename the three main rooms in the Town Hall to reflect their original usage, i.e. Assembly Room, Court Room and School Room.

The reasons for such a change are:

1. The current names appear to have been chosen at random and are totally unmemorable,
2. The proposed names are reasonably memorable as they describe what the room's function was, e.g. the Assembly Room was obviously (and still is) an assembly room,
3. The use of the proposed names preserves and reinforces the history of the building and helps to educate visitors as to its original purpose.

HALLFIELD MANSIONS

We are researching the history of Hallfield Mansions (originally named Hallfield House) with a view to publishing our findings as part of a series of booklets about vanished houses of Wetherby; the previous ones being "Swinnow Hall" and "Hall Orchards". Surprisingly, whilst we have found a lot of detail from 1808 onwards, we have so far failed to unearth what the house was used for during the last World War and little about its use as apartments. We would welcome information and pictures from its later years. If you have any reminiscences or pictures from then, please email them to us at p.g.catton@gmail.com.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership organisations, such as ours, face a continuing task of replacing the departing membership with new members. As usual with our new year, numbers have fallen with members moving or no longer able to be active. We would be delighted to hear from anyone who wishes to join our Society in order to maintain Wetherby as a pleasant place to visit and live. You can contact our secretary by email at jean.chapman930@gmail.com and can find out more at our website at www.wetherbycivicsociety.org.uk.

Please note that the AGM will be an opportunity for those who have not yet paid their subscription for 2024/5 to do so.

Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to others.