



Wetherby Civic Society

WINTER 2025-26 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member(s),

VISITS AND TALKS

In August, we had a very interesting and detailed talk given by Malcolm Barnes about archaeological finds in Boston Spa, including widespread flint implements and flint knapping sites next to the river. A linen washing site had also been excavated.

Even though many of us had visited Lotherton Hall before, the tour in September, led by two guides, provided interesting new insights into the life of the Gascoigne family and the artefacts which they owned. The only criticism was that Leeds Museum seems to have put surplus artefacts into the house, e.g. the study had two desks; one used by Mr. Gascoigne and one that the Museum had put there, thereby destroying the feel of the room.

Our final event of the year was a talk titled "Montague Burton - The Tailor of Taste" given by Jeremy Burton in October. This was well attended by 50 members and visitors (and a dog). Jeremy, a lifetime member of the Society explained the commercial history of his grandfather Montague Burton, who arrived as a Jewish refugee aged 15 in 1900 and rapidly built up a retail and manufacturing empire before his death in 1952; an interesting and inspiring tale.



Jeremy Burton at his talk

We are currently putting together our programme for 2026. We do know that the first event will be a talk entitled "Hallfield Hall – 200 Years of History" to be given at our AGM in March (date to be confirmed).

LEEDS SITE ALLOCATION PLAN

The closing date for submitting objections to the "Call for Sites" for Leeds Local Plan has now passed. Congratulations to everyone who submitted a comment on the Leeds Local Plan. There were 619 comments on the Crossley Street site, three times higher than any other site in Outer North East Leeds. We presume that the vast majority of comments were opposition.

The next step is for the Council Officers to reduce the proposed sites down to a quarter of the original list and then go out for consultation again. We shall keep you informed of progress as this is the vital stage of ensuring that Wetherby is not overwhelmed by new house building. The Council's own data shows that with sites from the previous local plan, Wetherby will have an excess of houses up until the Plan's end date and so should not have further house building. But one never knows what happens in the smoke filled rooms of power and we need to be ever vigilant.

NORTH YORKSHIRE PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Stockeld Estate is planning to apply to build 100 houses off Sicklinghall Road, in North Yorkshire just over the Leeds' boundary and adjacent to Wetherby. This is in addition to their application to build 240 houses off Spofforth Hill in North Yorkshire. They are hoping to take advantage of the three-fold increase in housing targets set by the Government for North Yorkshire. Again they are advertising it as an extension to Wetherby, even though Leeds say we do not need further housing here. We believe that their application will be submitted in early 2026 and will probably be the first of many more applications on the Wetherby border. We will inform you on how to submit your objections once Stockeld has applied. There are many grounds for opposition including: the houses are not needed in Wetherby, the strain on

Wetherby resources, poor access on a busy road and, especially, this is Green Belt land. Even if you are not directly affected, it is important that you do object to this and similar opportunistic applications to prevent Wetherby sinking under a morass of unwanted and unnecessary housing development.

WETHERBY IMPROVING

Despite these threats, we are delighted to see that the devastation of Wetherby by the banking corporations is at last being overcome; the HSBC is being converted into flats, Barclays at last looks less like a building site, Lloyds is now a "Banking Hub" and even though Natwest is now a betting shop, it is better than being empty. Only Halifax remains unoccupied. In addition, the Angel is being restored and will open before Christmas.

Sharp eyed members noted that the stone being used to renovate the Crown public house was smooth faced rather than rough and so did not match the rest of the frontage. Being in the Wetherby conservation area this is not in keeping and so we were able to have the error rectified and the facing now matches that of the building. And no, we do not know what will happen to the building next, but it does look in tip top shape.

VISIT OF ADDINGHAM CIVIC SOCIETY



Addingham visitors with WCS officers

On 10 September we hosted a visit from officers of the Addingham Civic Society to exchange ideas on "rewilding". Malcolm Gardner showed us the green parts of the Bellway Estate and the various areas of rewilding which are taking place. After lunch we took them along the Ings, where we were rather embarrassed to find that Himalayan Balsam was blooming well along the banks! They have three bashing sessions per year so we cannot blame them for the seed appearing via the River Wharfe. Interestingly, their membership is about 400, four times ours from a smaller population.

WALKS

Despite overcast days, we had a reasonable attendance at our Heritage Open Day Walk in September. All the attendees were visitors to the town and they found our "hidden gems" of the bathhouse and municipal offices interesting. Our Wetherby Festival walk was very successful with over 30, mainly local, attendees, who were a very receptive audience, with many "Well, I didn't know that" comments. We also led our annual guided tour for Year 6 from Crossley Street School. As usual they were well behaved and attentive. We were particularly impressed that in our final quiz on what they had learnt, one child remembered the date of the "Great Fire" exactly. Do you?

WETHERBY HISTORICAL TRUST

Wetherby Historical Trust has run its days and decided to dissolve. Its assets are being transferred to a charity with similar aims; Wetherby Civic Society. On 18 November, Chairman Mike Bale formally handed over the assets at a small signing ceremony in the Municipal Buildings. The assets include the magnificent painting of Quintin Rhodes in the Town Hall.



WHT Chairman Mike Bale handing on to WCS Chairman Peter Catton

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

On Remembrance Sunday, our Chairman, Peter Catton, was in the Parade and laid a wreath on behalf of the Society.

MEMBERSHIP

A reminder that, if you have not already done so, membership fees for 2025/6 are now due. Anyone who wishes to join the Society should contact our secretary by email at jean.chapman930@gmail.com and can find out more at our website at www.wetherbycivicsociety.org.uk.

AND FINALLY

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