

# Welcome to **W**etherby



## *Visitor Guide*

Town Website - <http://www.wetherby.co.uk>



- Welcome to Wetherby



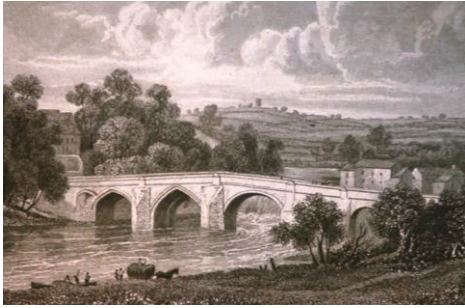
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**WETHERBY  
TOWN COUNCIL**

## Wetherby - a Brief History

Archaeological evidence shows habitation in the area we now know as Wetherby Town since the Bronze Age, with extensive Roman finds in the form of coins, pots, building foundations and at least two burial grounds. There was also an extensive villa complex, Dalton Parlours, just south of the town at Wattle Syke.



Wetherby bridge was built in 1233 AD with money collected by the Archbishop of York, Walter de Grey, who granted 'indulgences', a qualified remission of sins, to those who contributed to the construction of the bridge. The bridge was widened on the upstream side in 1773 and again in 1826 on the downstream side, raising and widening to the bridge we have today. However the original 11 foot wide (3.3m) bridge of 1233 still exists as

Wetherby's only historical monument and can be best seen from the Riverside Walk under the present bridge. Following the first world war, with its loss of many local men, the very striking War Memorial was erected on an existing strengthening buttress of the bridge, paid for by donations from town residents.

In the reign of Henry II there was a Castle on the promontory overlooking the area of the bridge where it is thought there was an early ford crossing. The castle had been built without the permission of the King and was ordered to be demolished. Now only the foundations remain in the gardens of a private house. This castle was associated with the large fortified Manor House owned by the Percy's at Spofforth, indeed Wetherby was historically in the parish of Spofforth until St James Church was built with the donations of a number of local landowners and businessmen and Wetherby became a parish in its own rite in 1869.



In the days of Coach travel, Wetherby was renowned as an important halt, exactly half way between London and Edinburgh on the Great North Road, which ran through the centre of the town. The Town also serviced the coach routes between London and Glasgow and also Hull and Liverpool. The number of coaching inns that had extensive stabling bears testament to this fact. The 'Angel' and the 'Swan and Talbot' were the principal hotels, both with stabling for over 100 horses. The centre of

Wetherby is happily now bypassed by the A1(M), but until 1961 all traffic came through the Town.

Until the great sale of 1824 the Town was owned by the Dukes of Devonshire who had plans to develop the centre of the town but only managed to build one terrace of houses on New Street, later renamed Victoria Street, and the Shambles before having to sell all their properties, it is thought to pay for the refurbishment of the seat of the Cavendish's at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, or to pay gambling debts, but no records exist to verify these facts.



Wetherby's role as a market town dates from 1240 when King Henry III granted a charter to the Knights Templar to hold a weekly market. The general market is, and was, held on a Thursday in the area around the Town Hall. There was also a cattle market, first held in the High Street but later transferred to a purpose built premises off the Horsefair. Unfortunately this ended as a result of the 2000 nationwide outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease. Wetherby continued to be the administrative centre for the area until 1974 when local government reorganisation combined Wetherby and the surrounding villages into the Leeds Metropolitan Council Area



During the railway era Wetherby was at the junction of the Church Fenton to Harrogate line with the Leeds to Wetherby line and at its height had three stations, a Goods Station, a Passenger Station, and a purpose built Station on the Racecourse to handle the large numbers of visitors to the races from all over Yorkshire. All the lines and infrastructure were removed under the 'Beeching Axe', now only the track beds remain and have

been adopted by Sustrans, a National Cycle network, for leisure purposes with the section from Wetherby to Spofforth known as 'The Harland Way'

In all Wetherby has had three road bypasses, the first, in 1961, was a new dual carriageway road to the east of the Town, with roads crossing and the potential for accidents. The first of which happened at the York Road crossing on the evening of the road being opened by the then Minister of Transport, Mr Marples. Bridges were eventually built and the road redesigned and updated. The latest rebuild saw the A1 upgraded and a third carriageway installed to bring it up to motorway standard. A new bridge had to be installed to take the York Road.



The bridge was installed overnight on the 8th of May 2004 with the A1 diverted and a large proportion of the Wetherby residents viewing from the old York Road bridge.

## Some Interesting Features of the Town



**The 'Tardis'** is not something that Doctor Who has landed in Wetherby but is a genuine Police Box from the era of the 1950s. It was rescued from destruction and sited outside the Wetherby Police Station for historical interest. But just maybe the Doctor may materialise one day.....

**The War Memorial** to the 71 men of Wetherby killed in the First World War is situated on the bridge and represents Victory, with two bronze lions mounted on a plinth of Portland stone. Standing at 22 feet in height the structure weighs in excess of 33 tons. The memorial



was designed by Louis Frederick Roslyn who himself served in the Royal Flying Corps in the Great War. Wetherby started to raise a fund for construction by public subscription which at the close amounted to over £3000, the memorial itself costing £1000. The balance of £2000 was devoted to the remodelling of the interior of the Town Hall which in addition would provide a social centre or meeting place for the local branch of the British Legion. In heavy and continuous rain, the memorial was unveiled on Saturday 22nd April 1922 by the Right Honourable Earl of Harewood (Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding) and dedicated by the Bishop of Knaresborough.

**Wetherby Bridge** is an amalgamation of three bridges, all of which can be seen from the Riverside Walkway which passes underneath. The first bridge of 1235, only 11 foot wide can be clearly identified in the centre, with the first widening on the upstream side in 1773 and the second from 1826 on the downstream side when the whole roadway was raised and flattened removing the 'hump back' of the first two bridges. The Bridge is a listed structure, and is Wetherby's only ancient monument



**The Bandstand** was constructed in 2000 on a pleasant site below the bridge and is a focal point of the Town especially on summer Sunday afternoons when the Wetherby Silver Band, and other visiting bands, perform for the passers by. A full programme of concerts can be obtained from the Tourist Information Office in the Library



**The Weir** powered a **Corn Mill, Wooyard, and Sawmill** until 1935. The large cog wheel was found during excavations for the Old Mill Apartments, restored and mounted as a reminder of past activities on the site. The delightful salmon sculpture was created by local artist Michael Liesener in 2000, it was the winner of a local competition to celebrate the new millennium. A **Fish Ladder** was installed on the south side of the river in 1871 - as yet no Salmon have been seen above the Weir



**The Bridgefoot Gardens & Pergola** were created by the Town Council in conjunction with the international award winning 'Wetherby in Bloom' group who are responsible for the majority of the fine floral displays throughout the Town. The gardens were established on the site of the Bishopsgate slum tenements which were condemned and demolished in 1937 to widen the entrance into the Market Place.

**The Shambles**, a collection of slaughter houses and butchers shops, were built by the Duke of Devonshire when the Cavendish's owned Wetherby before the great sale of 1824. They were later made into an indoor market area, and later still into the shops of today. The Town's Public Toilets are situated at the Cross Street end of the row.



The Foundation Stone for the **Town Hall** was laid on the 11th of June 1845. It was completed at a total cost of £1300, raised by public subscription.

The **Town Market** is held every Thursday in the pedestrianised area around the Town Hall. The charter to hold the market was granted to the Knights Templar by King Henry III on the 15th November 1240.

**Church Street** runs from the **Market Place** to **Bank Street** and then on to the Church entrance. It contains a number of small shops and is particularly attractive just before Christmas with the lights and Christmas Trees. It is the area where rope making, carpentry, and other artisans had their workshops.



The '**Garden of Rest**' was constructed on the site of a Hotel, 'The Bowling Green', and a number of other buildings demolished in 1929 to open a bottle neck in the Great North Road where at its narrowest it was only 11 foot wide. There is a small building in one corner of the gardens built as a meeting place and shelter for the old folk of the Town, with money bequeathed by a local schoolmaster, Mr

Whitaker, and opened in 1952. This shelter is used by a number of gentlemen of the town as a meeting place twice a week and known to all as 'The Old Men's Parliament'. It is also used in September and October as the Box Office for the very popular Wetherby Arts Festival.

Near the shelter is a **Huguenot Archway**, transferred from a site in Westgate, near the present Library, built originally by Huguenots, Protestant refugees from France.

Also in the Garden is a striking sculpture consisting of three blades of stainless steel. This was erected as 'A tribute to the Young People of Wetherby who will never grow old'. The sculpture was prompted by the death of three teenager boys, pupils of Wetherby High School, who were killed in a road accident in December 2006.



A **Georgian Bath House**, situated in the **Jubilee Gardens** public park, accessed from Westgate, was recovered from dereliction by local volunteers and is now a Grade II listed building on the banks of the River Wharfe with the gardens being tended by the Wetherby in Bloom Volunteers.

**The Cinema**, on Crossley Street, was built in 1914 to entertain the troops billeted in the Town. It was first named the 'Raby', shortly after changing to the 'Rodney'. This name endured including a spell in the 70s when the Cinema changed its use to a Bingo Hall before closing for a few years. It is now back in use as a cinema attracting many 'full houses', and has been renamed 'Wetherby's Cinema'



**The 'Engine Shed'**, more correctly the Railway Goods Transfer Shed, on the York Road, is the only railway building to be retained in the Town. It is now a popular dance venue that also hosts visiting music groups and private functions.

The Town has a number of religious groups. **The three main Church buildings** are St James (C of E) Church, built in 1842 before Wetherby became a parish in its own rite in 1869. St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church on Westgate, built in 1882 and extensively rebuilt in 1986, and The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Bank Street, opened in 1829 and internally modernised in 2011 at a cost of £483,000.



**The Town Cemetery** is situated in Hallfield Lane and contains two small Chapels. When they were built in 1874 they were designated as one for Church of England use and the other for all other denominations and religions. In these more enlightened times one is still a Chapel, now for use by all, and the other a store room.

### Parking in Wetherby

Car parking in Wetherby is free for a two hour period in the main car parks, with the 'Wilderness' car park free long stay. Some restrictions are in force for 'on street' parking. Please note local parking restriction notices. There is a pay Long Stay car park on Hallfield Lane to the rear of the Horsefair Centre.

### Wetherby in Bloom

Wetherby's aspirations to become one of the best floral towns in Britain began with small beginnings in 1989 when an entry was made in the regional Yorkshire in Bloom competition. Since that tentative entry Wetherby has become an acknowledged champion of floral display in Yorkshire, the United Kingdom and Internationally having won the best town category of Britain in Bloom in 1998, been awarded a silver gilt award in the same competition in 2002 and 2010, a coveted European Entente Florale Gold award in 1999 and a Gold award in the 2005 International Communities in Bloom competition.



The driving force behind this achievement has been the volunteer group known as Wetherby in Bloom in conjunction with the Town Council, the Business community, and the people of Wetherby.

During the Summer months a floral trail guide is available from the Wetherby Tourist Office

and [www.Wetherbyinbloom.co.uk](http://www.Wetherbyinbloom.co.uk), to enable visitors to enjoy the full effect of the floral displays.

### Wetherby Twinning Association

Wetherby was twinned with the French town of Privas in 1992. Since that date, regular visits have taken place every 2 years. In 2012, a delegation from Privas, which included the Mayor, came to celebrate both the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the twinning link. Crossley Street School has a partner school in Privas and annual exchanges take place between Wetherby High School and the College Bernard de Ventadour. The Wetherby Twinning Association organises visits and regular fund-raising events and can be contacted through their website [www.wetherbytwinning.org.uk](http://www.wetherbytwinning.org.uk)

### Guides to the Town

There are three walking guides to Wetherby which can be obtained from the Town Tourist Information Office situated in the Library in Westgate.

**The Historical Town Trail** gives the reader a fascinating short walk around the centre of the Town pointing out some interesting historical details.

**The Blue Plaque Trail** takes the visitor around 18 interesting features in the town. This trail can be combined with the Historical Town Trail.

During the Summer months there is a **Floral Town Trail** indicating the work of the Wetherby in Bloom Group



