

PROGRAMME FOR 'TAKE A SEAT' BENCH LAUNCH

21ST JULY 2021, 1.30pm

GUISELEY WELLS POCKET PARK

Welcome and Introductions - Jennifer Kirkby, Aireborough Neighbourhood Forum

Introduction to the Project and Trail – Becky Palfery, Leeds Civic Trust

Official Unveiling of The Bench – Geoff Brook, Guiseley Wells Society

Bench Blessing – Rev Roger Smith, Guiseley Methodist Church

Story of the Bench – Project Manager, Jennifer Kirkby, Friends of Springfield Park & Guiseley Wells
Close

Photos – Leeds Civic Trust, and Aireborough Historical Society

Bench design and artwork – Lucy Phillips of Codswallop CIC

There will be a stall with a selection of information leaflets plus tea, coffee, and edibles to raise funds for the Friends. (Thanks go to Eleanor Thomson together with Sandra Spink, Lucy Phillips, Jennifer Kirkby).

There will be a range of place-space equipment and an I-Spy leaflet available until 4.30pm (Thanks go to Codswallop CIC)

Street decorations – Thanks go to Abi James, Daisy Croft Crafts, and Eleanor Thomson for the door wreath

ADDRESS BY MR GEOFF BROOK AT THE LAUNCH OF THE LEEDS CIVIC TRUST 'TAKE A SEAT' BENCH SITED ON THE WELLS POCKET PARK ON 21ST JULY 2021

I have been requested to mention the restoration of the Wells during 2000 to 2001.

In effect it turned out to be a near two and half year exercise from March 1999 till the Blessing ceremony in 2001. A planning application notice was posted on the telegraph pole at the junction of Well lane and Butts lane, there was also a notice for anyone who knew who owned the Wells area and if any could claim legal title. Guiseley Wells Society was formed primarily to lay claim to the ownership of the Wells on behalf of the freeholders and residents of Guiseley and to oppose a planning application by Project Guiseley to enclose the Wells with a stone wall, fencing and gates, this to be built on top of the paving from the 1972 intrusion into the Wells which caused the loss of some 60% of its original area. These road intrusions were to accommodate HGV's easier entry reversing into Springhead Mills. Two years later the mill Gates were walled up and a new access road made passing down the side of what is now Springfield Park.

The Project Guiseley meetings in the Parish Rooms in Towngate were attended by members of the Society and other concerned members of the public to inform them it decried the open aspect of the Wells we had enjoyed throughout our formative years where you could simply walk off Well

Lane into the Wells. The Wells was at that time barely visible from this side of the road due to the 1972 road intrusion.

In time after much discussion at the meetings we came up with an alternative and produced a sketch plan of which is basically the present layout we see now with the area close to its previous Victorian boundaries. This in turn seemed to be met with some relief by Mr Hughes –Rowland Chai of Project Guiseley and the attending councillors due to the preceding fractious meetings. It was agreed that we could continue with the original Project Guiseley planning application number purely as a cost saving measure as the Society had only minimal funding from personal donations at this time.

A survey with a theodolite was conducted by my Uncle Mr Denis Chadwick to establish the levels around and also in the Wells. He was employed for many years by Harrisons of Leeds on major building projects across the country and lastly for Patricks of Grassington where he was seconded by a former associate of his to oversee the restoration of the Grade 1 listed Orangery in Wakefield. It was he who made the suggestion we utilise the stone setts to give the site more authenticity, plus pointing out there probably was not enough flags to be reclaimed from the site

It was a fortuitous stroke of fortune that the National Lotteries announced the Millennium Awards for Local Groups scheme around the same time. We made application for a grant after submitting detailed costs analysis, These local group schemes had a limit of £5000 and our budget amounted to just under at £4974 this was applied for on 27 July 1999 for the application form, submitted on 1 March 2000 subsequently granted on 10th April 2000.

Receipt of these funds allowed more expansive work. At this time we also benefited from the free use of plant namely generators, water pumps, hydraulic pick and any hand tools from Parkinsons plant hire of Kirk Lane Yeadon on weekends. This was negotiated by a friend who was previously in their employ and maintained good relations with his former colleagues. We remain grateful for their generosity.

As work progressed interest grew and we were approached by Mr Brian Chappelow from the Aireborough Rotary Club to offer their assistance on weekends. This proved invaluable as the work progressed; I recognise some of those in attendance today. Sadly some have passed on in the 20 years since the works were finalised in June 2001 namely Mr Chappelow shortly after completion of the Wells and Mr Gerald Long so tragically having his life cut short in a road traffic accident who along with Mr Bill Hudson assisted on many occasions.

We made some significant discoveries during the restoration namely, the ancient paving to the right of the drainage channel below the carving. These have possibly not seen the light of day for some 400 years or more, this paving at the wall side is over eight inches thick but taper down to just over two and half inches at the outside. One has to ask how many pairs of feet have worn them to that extent over the Years to obtain water when the Wells were the primary source of water in the town. When the paving was lifted we discovered there was no hard core underneath and was fluid and deep enough to nearly swallow a six foot crowbar till hard surface was felt, this was hastily reconstituted with reclaimed hardcore to negate any possible danger to the unwary.

After all the accumulated stone and debris was painstakingly removed from the Wells chambers by hand a socket was discovered carved into the rear of the front wall of the troughs. This caused much debate till it was suggested that a dividing stone had been there originally and not where it was further to the left at the end of the long stone running lengthwise in the Wells towards Butts Lane. It was decided to remove the long stone and utilise it to manufacture the divider stone now in situ (first one to the left of the carving), the left over portion formed the kerb to positively retain the ancient paving in place. The main reason was to ease cleaning of the Wells in the future rather than have two long narrow channels. It remains a puzzle as to why this crudely cut stone was placed like that in the first place plus the iron railings that were fitted to it which were still there in my infancy, these are visible on older pictures at the turn of the 20th century available in local history books and other sources. Perhaps it was some long forgotten dispute over water rights.

More unstable substrata was discovered in front of the Wells when we excavated so the decision was taken to stabilise this by concreting the full frontage to prevent any future movement, this involved sealing the troughs with puddle clay and concreting to below the bottom of the troughs, this was a lengthy process and required the water pump to be running constantly till the concrete had cured, a neighbour of mine from Springfield Terrace stayed into the late evening supervising the pump. He also allowed us to store a large amount of reclaimed material from the Wells in his large garden at the bottom of Springfield Terrace for the duration of the project.

When Mr Ken Moore chairman of the society, he no longer lives in the area having relocated to Alnwick in Northumbria, exposed the old kerbs on Butts Lane we noticed that they had had a six inch socket cut into them obviously to hold posts and hand rail hence we then decided to put something more durable and use stone pillars manufactured from surplus kerbs. These sadly have been hit on three occasions, twice by the council refuse collection wagon who replaced with like, but on the last occasion there were no witnesses or confessors. This broken pillar was subsequently deposited by vandals in the Wells and broken in two pieces, I have since repaired it by dowelling and fixing it with resin it remains in my daughter's garage till such time that the double yellow lines are in situ around the Wells. It is the illegal indiscriminate parking at the junction of Well Lane Butts Lane that forces the wagons over to the narrow Butts Lane that causes this collision damage.

Underneath these sockets some 670mm down we discovered some flags, these were square to the front edge of the troughs so you could assume at some time flags extended all the way to the troughs more puzzles to solve there.

The stone on which the carving is seated is not the same as the rest of the stone composition throughout the Wells, which is clearly local Guiseley Sandstone, we suspect this could date back when another alteration took place at the Wells. This stone was cut down to establish a datum level for the projected level for water to issue from the intended carving. The main subject content of the carving is as some are aware taken from a section of the ancient Saxon cross which was discovered in the North wall of the Parish Church when that was extended in C.1908.

The stone from which the carving was created was sourced from the quarry up Moor Lane this was cut to dimensions which we supplied and is consistent with the rest of the stone throughout the Wells.

We had the support of a civil engineer who was in the employ of Duffy's who complete a great deal of engineering work for Yorkshire Water to oversee works in the road. He was a resident of Butts Terrace at this time. It was required by law regarding the kerbs placement – he explained that regarding the law it is a bit of a grey area in that anyone can dig up a road but you need to be an accredited person to put services in or reconstitute it! Over 9 tons of setts were sourced from Mones in Bramhope and 50 square yards of stone setts from South Leeds

We did ask Leeds City Council in December 1999 before work commenced and received an estimate for them to provide and fix the kerb outline, this amounted to some £2,575 which clearly, given we would only have £5000 working capital a non starter, plus they probably would not have made the discovery of the flags.

In the Autumn of 2000 we were beset with inclement weather with frustrating heavy showers everyday, which was enough to undo any concreting works. This resulted in us having to seek an extension from the lotteries award, this had strict conditions attached but did give us the breathing space to finally complete and remove the safety fencing surrounding the site in May 2001, when the final pointing of the stone sets were completed. We did finish with some £333 balance on completion, mainly due to the generosity of Parkinson Tool Hire.

It is 20 years on since that time and apart from the damage to the stone pillars the site is mainly intact because of the thorough measures we took in construction. The carving has mellowed to blend in with the surrounding stone work and looks like it has been there hundreds of years. With minimal cleaning on a regular basis is all that is required. I have to confess I have since December last had to refrain from doing this, I have been shielding ever since the start of this infernal Covid experience on immune deficiency and was in close contact in the Wells with a lady clearly with a bad cough who informed she came here every day to wash her dog in the Wells after being on the Chevin. I had with great reluctance to take the decision to be not exposed to such danger and therefore keep clear of such persons till the epidemic is consigned to history. Mr Peter Wood has taken up the duties on cleaning and recently completed some sterling work removing the invasive brambles, privet and sycamore tree sapling which were a frequent cause of blockages to the stainless steel grid. In a small way I did assist in removal of the debris it is unfortunate he cannot attend today due to prior arrangements. On the subject of vegetation the recurrent proliferation of the algae has always been a problem and becomes more endemic after the Vernal equinox and dies down after the Autumn Equinox. samples were taken from the Wells and analysed by Mr John Hobson in 2001 he identified there is one alien microscopic organism out of seven others that should not be there as its normal habitat is only above the Arctic circle, perhaps it is a survivor from when the Guiseley Gap was formed by glacial action.

The volume of water flowing through the Wells is likely to remain constant unless groundwater is again abstracted as Yorkshire Water have shut most of the boreholes down, plus the cessation of the woollen industry, with the exception Moons mill, has caused the water table to rise since the mills stopped abstracting from boreholes. This information was relayed to me by a former employee who was contacted by the mill engineer to ask if he could remember how deep the water table was when they sank a new larger borehole just after the Second World War. Mr Street could remember and informed them to measure from the wellhead to the outside wall that was why they built the wall there, this turned out to be 17 feet. When Mr Street asked why they needed to know they

answered 'we have to discharge overflow down the drain!'. I knew Mr Street having lived on Springfield for 60 years I helped him and his family move house in 1963 from a House at the side of Springfield Fish shop up to Wells road.

Busfields Mill off Towngate had a direct effect on the Wells in the early 70's when they started double shift working, the Wells used to dry up entirely on Mondays come Saturday afternoon a trickle flowed then Sunday regular flow was restored, come Monday morning when the pump was switched on flow again ceased. I Witnessed this on many occasions to and from my way to work. A further example of the rise in the water table was last year's flow from Springhead Mill borehole, over to my right, it took two attempts to stem this flow which cascaded down the road for weeks and actually lifted the tarmac on its first showing. It was only on a second attempt that after cutting an eight foot slot in the well head to lower the level did it cease.

All who assisted in the restoration in any manner can take pride in what collectively is the finished product, there is increasing interest from afar via social media etc in the Wells, I have personally been asked by strangers for directions to Guiseley Wells when walking down Springfield Road. Guiseley in Bloom deserve credit for their displays at the Wells which have been on constant refurbishment since 2001. On behalf of the Society I cannot stress the importance of all the assistance and advice from volunteers and notably the Rotary Club we received over the near two year project, without such assistance the sheer scale of the task would have been more exacting.

We have to give thanks also to the generosity of local business, the aforementioned Parkinson's tool Hire, Sandhams skips who donated two skips f.o.c. and transported puddle clay and the stone setts from south Leeds, they also donated the stainless steel grid which is in place in the Wells. Mr Sandham sadly passed away after a long illness earlier this year. He was one of the 20 persons who signed the original document laying claim to ownership of the Wells. I have with me a ring binder with a selection of photos of the Wells before we started and as work progressed showing the scale of the project if any further interest is forthcoming from anyone.

I take great pride having been given the honour to unveil this seat being such a humble lifelong resident of this town, it is an embellishment to the Pocket Park which is continuing to grow with the input from voluntary efforts and long may it continue.

Geoff Brook
President Guiseley Wells Society
21st July 2021

