

5. Heritage

In the early 1980s Woodhall Spa absorbed the ancient parish of Kirkstead, which brought with it the ruin of the great Cistercian Kirkstead Abbey and the 13th Century St Leonard's Church. These and the medieval Tower on the Moor, Woodhall Spa's symbol, are the tangible reminder of the history of the area before the Spa was born. There are also records of Iron Age finds and evidence of even earlier settlements.

There is a need to protect the fabric of both the Abbey and the Tower on the Moor. Nottingham University undertook a survey of the sites seven years ago and it would be useful to have access to their report of the findings.

The focus of the Spa heritage is centred on the Spa Baths, which was still operating as a treatment centre when the main shaft collapsed in 1983. The Spa heritage also includes the distinctive style of the many large houses and hotels and the overall design theme of the village.



Iodine Spa circa 1850

Our village also has a rich and strong association with the Armed Forces of our country. This is most evident with the association with the Dambusters Squadron (No 617 Squadron, RAF) but also is reflected in the many people who live in the village and work in the nearby RAF stations. The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, including the last flying Lancaster bomber, is located at nearby RAF Coningsby.

Quote
"Do something with the Spa baths!"

Throughout the consultation on heritage issues, the Spa Baths were foremost in people's minds. People are interested not only in its restoration, but are concerned that it should be turned into a sustainable and a useful site. Strikingly, heritage was seen by an enormous 89% of people as being important to Woodhall Spa as a whole, its identity, its facilities and its economic viability. The Spa Baths proposals ranged from Beauty Health Spa to gymnasiums and

mixed retail/leisure use.

There were a number of suggestions made that are either in existence or started as projects. An Enlarged Museum/Tourist Information Centre is already on the drawing board and is only awaiting planning permission. As a part of this project, photos and memoirs are being collected and processed. After planning permission has been granted a proposed archive is to be built at the rear of the existing museum. The creation of a museum newsletter is also underway and this will be similar to the heritage newsletter asked for by many respondents. There may be an opportunity to combine the two and this should be investigated further. The importance of the Cottage Museum as the centre for local archives and history should not be underestimated.

The underlying action point to be gained from the feedback from the community is that the initiatives needed to develop these ideas need to be co-ordinated. The Parish Council seems to be the logical body to provide that overall co-ordination. However, the Parish Council itself cannot do all the work; it is envisaged that a series of group/committees would be formed to address specific issues, under the umbrella organisation of the Parish Council. This also supports the idea of creating a village development trust, with heritage as one of its sub-groups.

Heritage trails have been highlighted by 57% as something they would like to see around the village. If this were done in partnership with the Woodland walks and other tourist walks in the area, it could prove to be very popular for visitors. It was also suggested that the Kinema could open during the day as part of this trail.



The Mall circa 1900

A wealth of opportunity awaits the group which is tasked with building on the heritage of the parish. Another suggestion, backed by 56% is to have a register of buildings of historical importance. Other well backed ideas, although not supported enough to prioritise, are better signage of heritage sites and 'Information Boards'.

Utilising the website under the heritage heading was proposed in the consultation period. This is a great idea and could be apart of a larger overhaul of the site and its uses and marketing. Currently the heritage pages do not require any action from the viewer. These could be redesigned to not simply educate but entice, showing interesting parts of the history of the parish and always leaving on a note of 'why not book in to one of Woodhall Spa's wonderful hotels or campsites and

find out more about Woodhall Spa yourself'. This type of angle is perhaps filling the role better of a village website by pulling people into the village.

What we want to achieve

What do we need to do

To save the Spa Baths and have them preserved as a heritage site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek the co-operation of the owner to restore the site for the benefit of the community. • Promote its potential as a health / beauty spa with retail outlets (coffee shop etc)
Let's make both ourselves and visitors appreciate our heritage	• Layout heritage trail routes and make leaflets available in the Cottage Museum, pubs and shops
	• A special Woodhall Spa Heritage weekend
	• Put in place information board at currently un-marked important sites: Spa Baths, Kirkstead Abbey etc
	• Encourage local schools to do heritage projects
We want to preserve our local heritage	• Produce a heritage newsletter (perhaps to be combined with the museum newsletter)
	• Have a documented register of artefacts (must be consulted when considering planning applications)
	• Prepare a register of St Andrew's Cemetery
	• Make more use of the heritage of Kirkstead



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