

LEEK TOWN COUNCIL - WAR MEMORIALS COMMITTEE

Report of the meeting on Wednesday 6 September 2023 (with subsequent development)

Present were Cllrs Hilyer (Chair), Nicholls (Vice-Chair), Webster;

In attendance was Victoria Johnson (Administrative Assistant);

Apologies were received from Cllrs Swindlehurst L, Swindlehurst M, Powner.

HISTORIC ENGLAND LISTING OF BALL HAYE MEMORIAL

Having considered Historic England's recommendation, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport has decided to add Ball Haye Green War Memorial to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. The building is now listed at Grade II. EH has advised that "listing helps (them) to mark a building's significance and celebrate its special architectural and historic interest. It brings specific protection so that its special interest can be properly considered in managing its future. Listing does not mean, however, that no alterations can be made - in fact in the vast majority of cases applications to make changes to a listed building are approved". The List can be accessed at

<http://services.historicengland.org.uk/webfiles/GetFiles.aspx?av=9963D060-A51B-4FA8-9799-BCC2D28F193A&cn=ED92D498-C60C-45D6-9EB2-F55B7E36465A>

Grade II is defined as a "site of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve [it]", Grade II* buildings are "particularly important...of more than special interest", and Grade I are of "exceptional interest". Leek currently has one grade I (All Saints church), and four grade II* (Abbey Inn, Greystones, Nicholson Institute, St Edwards church). Among the grade II listed buildings are the Nicholson Memorial, and the memorial in St Edwards churchyard – plus that to C company, 5th Staffordshire Leek Battalion Home Guard, Merryton Low above Thorncliffe.

MEMORIAL CLEANING

An estimate is expected imminently a Staffordshire stonemason and sculptor (a limited company) for cleaning the stonework on the three memorials, to be judged against that previously received from a company recommended by CDT architects: in light of this the possibility of the lengthsmen cleaning the Leekbrook and Ball Haye Green memorials will be assessed (taking into account the report by CDT architects).

LEEKBROOK

Mr Lovatt has started to improve the area around the Leekbrook memorial and the shrubbery immediately behind it: a local resident has kindly been weeding the paved area for some time and the Mayor has sent her a bouquet and certificate in appreciation of her work. The appearance of the memorial is now much improved and will be further enhanced over time. Talks are taking place with Staffordshire County Council to permit the Town Council to pave the (often muddy) verge in front of the memorial and possibly to provide a safety barrier: the expense of this work will be examined in due course. The wooden harness used to retain the wreaths is of low quality and the possibility of a good quality replacement is being considered – support from Leekbrook firms will be sought for help in this. Cheddleton RBL organises memorial events at Leekbrook and the Chair of the committee will ask how our involvement in Remembrance Day may be coordinated.

BALL HAYE GREEN MEMORIAL

Mr Lovatt has painted the railings at the memorial and the implications of EH listing will be examined with a view to further improvement (including cleaning).

NICHOLSON WAR MEMORIAL

The Town Clerk has conducted a **risk assessment** of the memorial and the following work has resulted

- vacuum cleaner has been acquired for the memorial and a considerable amount of dust has been removed
- a removable barrier has been activated to deter visitors from ascending to the clock/bells area
- fire extinguishers have been installed
- the Fire Service has been contacted with a view to assessing fire precautions (including signage and the possible need for detectors) – it may be necessary to invite professional advisors to undertake this work
- the electrical provision is being checked, with the possibility that additional points may be needed and that some re-wiring could be required (a quotation for this work was available in 2018 but no work was undertaken)
- safety-critical work on repairing steps and paving around the memorial are urgent
- the lights in the trees behind the memorial are broken and a quotation for the renewal is being sought
- the benches around the memorial have been painted and revarnished, bringing them into line with the greatly improved floral displays now taken in hand by Mr Lovatt.

There have been frequent requests for **tours of the Monument** to be restarted (suspended during COVID, 2024 previously scheduled for restart) but this will not be possible until safety critical work has been completed. The OUTSIDE Arts advent project could include visits to the door of the Monument but we have not been told yet whether or not the project (with the Monument) will go ahead – safety improvements would be essential for this to happen.

The **cleaning** of the Monument (up to pediment level) will be possible once a second estimate of costs has been received.

The **Centenary of the Monument** (August 2025) is being considered by the Events Committee, taking into account the wish of the War Memorials Committee that this “major event should ...mark the centenary of the dedication of the Nicholson War Memorial on 20 August 1925, linking it to a celebration of Leek and its assets and achievements”.

FUNDING

Funding sources are to be sought for work on the Monument, and local support is to be solicited for improvement (harness, possible planting) at Leekbrook.