

Friends of Lytham Hall

Newsletter

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Issue 52

Welcome

To the first newsletter of 2011. In what promises to be a pivotal year for Lytham Hall the good news has already started with the award of Country Park status. This is great news and something that we'll return to later in this newsletter.

It is of course the year of the big push for lottery funding. The year that the local community will have to stand up and demonstrate their belief and interest in the Hall by providing the matching funding required to achieve the Heritage Lottery Funding that is so vital for its future.

A massive amount of work needs doing at the Hall to not only preserve it for future generations but also in helping create a viable business model that will ensure its position as a major tourist attraction and educational visitor centre for years to come.

Lytham Hall quite rightly reflects the proud history of the Fylde Coast. It is hoped that with a lot of hard work from a lot of people plus the goodwill from the local community it will also symbolise its future. To ensure that happens requires a big commitment from all of us. The Friends commend the merits of this appeal and asks everyone to do whatever they can to ensure the appeal is a success, whether by contributing directly to the appeal, supporting the many events linked to it or through the many businesses around the town every penny will count.

Paul Hodgkiss from the Lytham Hall team has sent us the following article.

Lytham Hall in 2011

2011 should be an exciting twelve months for everyone associated with Lytham Hall, we are now at a crucial stage with the Heritage Lottery Project which had our focus all of last year. This work is coming together to form a coherent and exciting bid that we will submit to the Heritage Lottery Fund on 23rd March.

We also have the final push with the Appeal to ensure that we have raised our £3 million to match the £2million on offer from HLF. The response to date has been good and we are sure we can succeed, but we must keep up the momentum, donations from individuals are vital in achieving this target. It is by showing this support we can encourage the larger sponsors to contribute to our project.

If we have made a successful bid, we will hear in July, though it will be October when the project funds will be available to start the project. The programme is still being finalised but the grounds will remain open throughout the project so that our outside events can continue and everyone can share in the progress we make.

The Heritage Lottery Project represents so much more than the publicised restoration of the Hall, and the creation of the Tea Room and South Prospect Garden. We will also look at what stories and themes will be told as part of the Heritage Tour and displays. We want to involve the whole of the local community in experiencing our Heritage, whether that is simply a picnic on the front lawn or a project for students studying an MSc on Building Conservation. Lytham Hall should be something for everyone.

Outside the HLF project life at Lytham Hall goes on. The calendar of events for 2011 has grown. The old favourites like the Snowdrop Walks, Easter Sunday, Mothering Sunday, Family Fun Day and the Classic Car Show will feature together with popular new arrivals from last year like Iliria Outdoor Theatre and Flower Power returning. New for 2011 include exciting new events like the Mega Mini Meet, Art in the Park and Cycling Sunday, to mention but a few.

Thank you for your support in 2010 and we hope we can count on you again in 2011.

Fundraising

Clifton Arms Hotel - Sunday 27th March

Activities have sprung up all around the Fylde Coast, typical of which is the Spring Ball and Cabaret hosted by the Clifton Arms hotel. Please support them when you can.



Tickets are £15 and available from the Clifton Arms reception Tel. 01253 739898 or from John Peacock on 01253 734819

Forthcoming events:

Snowdrops Walks – 6th Feb until 6th March

As we go to print the Snowdrop walks have already started at Lytham Hall, the first day being Sunday 6th Jan. and will continue through until to Sunday 6th March

Parking in the grounds will be limited to disabled drivers only. All other vehicles can be parked for free in the Aegon Insurance car park adjacent to the Main Gates on Ballam road. Benches will be dotted along the driveway to allow respite. Stout shoes are recommended and dogs must be kept on a leash.

Entrance to the grounds will start at 10:30am with last entry at 3:30pm. The costs are: £2.50 for Adults, £1 for Children. The Hall is closed for this event but the tea-room will be open for light refreshments.

Further information can be obtained from Lytham Hall Office, Ballam Road, Lytham FY8 4JX Tel. No. 01253 736652 or e-mail lytham.hall@htnw.co.uk

Dates for your Diaries

Evening of Xmas Cheer – Friday 9th Dec.

Make a date in your diary for this popular event which always sells out. Alternatively,

let Meg Hargreaves (01253) 733098 know if you would like to be put on a list for tickets.

Recent Events

The Friends Evening of Christmas Cheer and the Autumn Fair were once again great successes with over £1500 going into the fighting fund. Thanks to all those who supported the events. A very big thank you goes to the organizers, helpers and entertainers plus Paul Rowley for another wonderful meal.

The Cliftons

Lytham Hall archaeology: the story continues by Nigel R J Neil

In the January 2010 edition of the Newsletter, I told you about the archaeological trial excavations in Autumn 2009 in the South Prospect Garden (south of the Hall, east of the Monks' Walk wall). I'm very happy to say that 2010 has proved to be a bumper year for archaeology at the hall, and – since the 'digging' season was completed in June - there has been much going on behind the scenes. All the hard work that volunteers put in allowed me to submit a substantial report to Heritage Trust for the North West, with recommendations for work to undertake with the main Heritage Lottery Fund grant. As you will already know, the proposals are now to be submitted to HLF in March 2011, so there are plenty more hoops to jump through, before archaeology work can recommence.

The evaluation trial trenches – especially those on The Mount and icehouse - have answered most of the questions they were designed to address and, as intended, have posed new questions to answer, for which a strategy for 2011-12 has been developed. Furthermore, the work has provide a framework for landscape conservation initiatives which might include some form of display of the ice-house remains, restoration of access to the top of The Mount, and of some of the vistas from that commanding viewpoint, and works to improve the visitor experience in the adjacent South Prospect

Garden. I am now in touch with all the leading experts on icehouses in Britain and Ireland, and they are very interested in our work at Lytham.

Perhaps more importantly, the volunteers in 2009-10 have grown in confidence and ability in the field over the 12 days of excavation, and work very well together as an archaeological team. Many volunteers helped visiting members of the public to appreciate the purpose and value of the work by giving impromptu site tours. We hope that the fundraising appeal will bring in new members to enlarge the team, and - with HLF funding - we hope to enhance the skills of these keen volunteers, while undertaking work which will generate long-term public interest in the site.

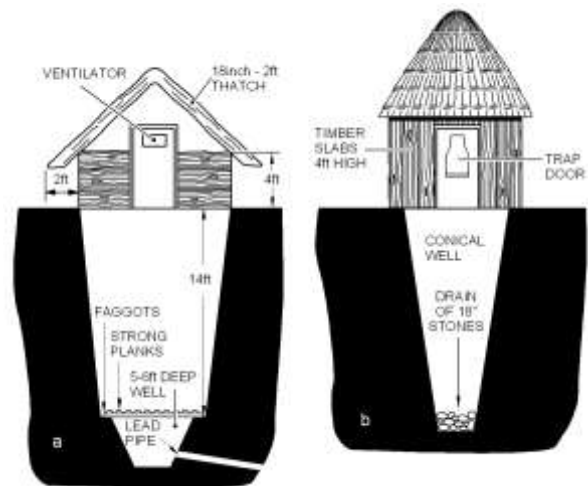


Archaeology volunteers during the early stages of the 2010 Mount excavation, looking north towards Monks' Walk wall

In mid-March, a team of British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) cleared part of The Mount of brambles and nettles, and felled selected sapling trees. Without this work, the archaeological excavations in March to May could not have taken place. The wood and shrub materials were put to good use, in 'habitat piles' for wildlife, and as path edging, and firewood for sale.

The Lytham 'Prospect Mound', to use English Heritage's preferred terminology, is thought to be the only one in post-1974 Lancashire, and may date from shortly after

the Clifton acquisition of 1606. Although it is not the largest or best preserved in Britain, what makes it very unusual indeed is that it is one of only two confirmed examples (the other is in Lincolnshire) of a prospect mound cut by a later icehouse. The absence of the Lytham icehouse from the 1812 estate map suggests that it probably dates from after John Clifton's inheritance in 1832. Whilst icehouses are much more common than prospect mounds (there are around 2500 in England and another 300 in Scotland), the 2010 work has produced evidence to support a 1980s report which says that ours was timber and turf roofed - a type of which there are few if any surviving examples. This was the 'Virginian' pattern, popular in the United States, which was promoted by William Cobbett in *Cottage economy* (1822), and was much cheaper to build than a stone or brick-roofed chamber.



Timber and Thatched Houses of 1853 from *The Book of the Garden* by Charles MacIntosh

After the experience of the somewhat over-ambitious trench in November 2009, the relatively small team in 2010 proved to be well-suited to working in the four trenches on The Mount, in close proximity to one another for company, ease of supervision, and the ease of creating teaching and learning opportunities. The first trench investigated the brickwork revealed and left exposed by the 1980s work, about which I now need to 'eat my words' from January! This was quickly shown NOT to be part of the icehouse, but the original terminal buttress of the Monks' Walk

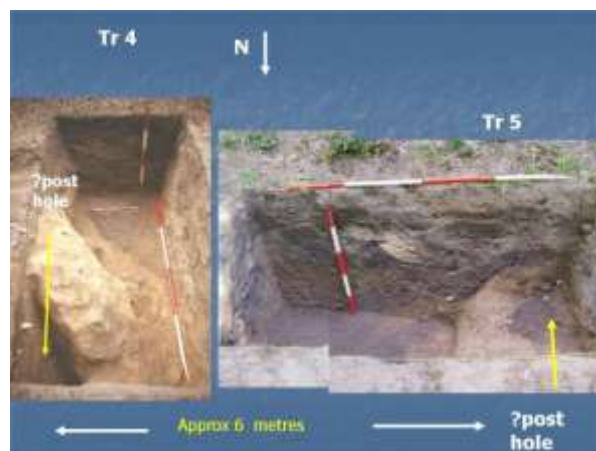
wall, some 8 metres of which was dismantled (on map evidence) sometime between the 1840s and 1890s. The team revealed the buried lower courses of the demolished wall, and the deep trench afforded a glimpse of the 'old ground surface' under the Mount, samples of which will be kept for scientific analysis.



The demolished stretch of Monks' Walk wall and the buttress, looking South towards the Mount

Two trenches then successfully located the north-east and north-west corners of the icehouse, cut through the compacted sand of the Mount. Loose bricks and quantities of mortar suggested that brick walling had been present, and would probably be extant at greater depth, but that the internal walling had been comprehensively demolished within the 1 metre that we could safely excavate. A small team of post-excavation personnel – finds washers – was created to process the huge quantities of brick, pottery, iron objects, window and bottle glass, and other artefacts recovered. With hindsight, we should have

commenced this work sooner, in order to keep up, but a lesson has been learned!



The icehouse trenches, fully excavated. The sand edge marks the cut for the icehouse pit

The final trench considered the construction of the spiral path, higher up The Mount, about 6 metres above the top of the brick buttress in the 1980s trench. Here, large lumps of 'clinker' (a furnace waste product), were deeply-set into a trench cut into the Mount sand. In some cases the clinker had bricks attached, in one case three courses, including a 'header' course, implying that they were removed from a furnace during its demolition. Abutting some of the lumps were rotted branches of wood, apparently deliberately laid and interwoven, which may represent a remnant of path surface.

Geophysics

At the end of June, a team from GSB Prospection Ltd., of Bradford conducted two types of geophysical survey - resistivity and fluxgate gradiometry - in the west courtyard, and west of the woodshed. A large (c. 20 x 10 metres) oval anomaly was revealed in the courtyard, and smaller features elsewhere, the cause and date of which cannot be ascertained without excavation. The sandy soil, and extremely dry weather, combined to remind us that locating the subtle traces of timber monastic buildings will need better survey conditions, and a helping of luck!

Tree-ring dating

Mention should also be made of the dendrochronological (tree-ring dating) survey undertaken by Dr Ian Tyers, of Dendrochronological Consultancy Ltd., Sheffield, which was commissioned by English Heritage. A report will hopefully be available before the end of the year; a large number of potentially late medieval and early post-medieval oak timbers in the rear wings, and eighteenth-century oak and soft-wood timbers in the Carr house were core sampled, together with growing oak trees in the Park. We can all be proud that Lytham Hall is contributing to very recent innovation, still experimental in Britain, of tree-ring dating of softwood in buildings. A number of shipping marks were found on timbers in the roof of the Carr building, a very rare survival, confirming the suspected Baltic origin, at a time when good British softwoods were unobtainable.

Heritage Trust for the North West instigated all the archaeology work including the geophysics and tree ring dating as part of its proposals for improving the area between the Hall and the Mound, and alterations at the Hall. This has been paid for by grants obtained by the Trust from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other agencies and groups.

Lytham Hall Country Park

It has been almost ten years since the idea was first mooted, but the sensational news is that Country Park status for Lytham Hall has finally been secured. This will bring many benefits to the Hall in the form of help with the estate, car parking and advertising. For the public it means that the grounds will be accessible for over 200 days every year – what a great boost to the area.

Under the agreement Lancashire County Council are obliged to provide a Countryside Ranger to help manage the facility and they have been swift in appointing the highly qualified Sarah Dornan to the post. Sarah's position will not only be a benefit to everyone

who turns up to enjoy the grounds but also in providing a valuable educational role to local primary schools. Visit the Lytham Hall web site for details on the outdoor events Sarah is arranging for this year.

Volunteers needed

The Friends need a couple of new Posties to help with the distribution the Newsletter. If you live in St Annes or the Clifton Drive/Fairhaven area and you can spare a little time once every few months please phone any of the committee at the end of the newsletter.

Events at the Hall

Open Days: Easter to 31st October 2011

There is free entry to the Grounds every Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday until the end of October.

Sundays and Bank Holidays there will be a small charge of £1 Adults/50p Children.

Times: 12.30pm - 4.30pm, (last entry 3.30pm)

The House is open every Sunday for a Conducted Tour starting at 2pm. Adults £4, Children £2, except on the last Sunday of every month and Bank Holidays when the House will be open to the public from 1.30 pm - 4.30pm. Adults £2.50, Children £1

Tea Room open every Sunday and Bank Holiday.

Easter Sunday - 24th April

Easter Bunny Hunt (£1) & Family Fun Day
12.30pm to 4.30pm, gates close at 3.30pm.
Entry to Grounds - Adults £1 & Children free

The House is open for conducted tours starting at 2.00pm. Adults £4 & Children £2

The Friends Easter Bunny will be at the Hall again to give out the prizes for the Egg Hunt and for wearing your Easter Bonnet. Hop along and enjoy the fun and the bouncy castle, the children's tombola, a tour of the Hall followed by delicious refreshments in the cafe.

Other Events

Herbal Courses with Mel Hornby –
Tuesday 1st March

Jamie Oliver Party – Saturday 19th March

Yoga Day with Deborah Hopkinson –
Monday 28th March

Mothering Sunday Lunches – Sunday 3rd
April

Student Photography Competition –
Sunday 10th April

Craft Fair - Saturday 15th May

Mega Mini Meet – Sunday 22nd May

Spring 5K Run – Sunday 5th June

Art in the Park – Sunday 12th June

Cycling Sunday – Sunday 19th June

Family Fun Day – Sunday 3rd July

Specialist Plant Fair – Sunday 17th July

Classic Car Show – Sunday 14th August

Heritage Open Day – Sunday 11th Sep

Autumn 5K Run – Sunday 9th October

Halloween at the Hall – 29th & 30th October

Plays in the Park

The Illyria Theatre Company will perform the following outdoor plays:

Much Ado about Nothing - 14th June

Twelfth Night - 6th July

The Pirates of Penzance - 14th July

The Fantastic Mr Fox - 28th August

For more details on any of the events listed visit the Lytham Hall web site

Help needed

The Friends have been asked to help on Snowdrop Sundays, the Easter Fun Day, the Outdoor Theatre Productions and the Blackpool Male Voice Choir Concert. If you can spare an hour or two to help out please get in touch with Liz Guffogg on (01253) 727696.

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