

Friends of Lytham Hall

Newsletter

Registered Charity No: 1069442
www.lythamhall.org

January 2015

Issue 64

Forthcoming events:

Snowdrops Sundays – 25th Jan. until 1st March

The Hall will once again be hosting the ever popular Sunday Snowdrop walks, the first day being Sunday 25th January continuing through to Sunday 1st March. This is again a week earlier than normal and reflects the ever earlier growing season.

What a treat they are. Beautiful happy looking flowers that never fail to raise spirits on cold and grim Winter days.

Parking in the grounds will be limited to blue badge 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 are dotted along the driveway for respite. Stout shoes are recommended and dogs must be kept on a leash.

Entrance to the grounds will start at 10:00am with last entry at 3:30pm. The costs are: £2.50 for Adults, £1 for Children. Hall tours at 12pm and 2pm, adults £5 and children £2.50. The tea-room will be open for light refreshments.



The Friends will again be running a shop selling pots of snowdrops, fancy goods, gifts and bric-a-brac. and a tombola. We urgently need items to put on these stalls, unwanted Christmas gifts, etc. Items can be left at the Hall, the offices of Coupe Bradbury, Bath

Street, Lytham or with any committee members contacted for collection. If there are volunteers willing to help in the shop then also contact a committee member.

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

Recent events

Friends of Lytham Hall and Lytham Town Trust Masked Ball – Sat. 6th September.

The 2014 Masked Ball at Lytham Hall was another great success. We were delighted once again to have Mercedes Benz as our main sponsors along with the generosity of many others who donated raffle prizes and some amazing Silent Auction prizes. 240 people came along on the night to experience the magic of dining and dancing at Lytham Hall. The weather was excellent and we all enjoyed sparkling wine and canapés in front of the Hall.

We were assisted in our fund raising by Mark Jay, our singer and Auctioneer and George Turner our Toastmaster. Touch the Pearl had everyone up dancing, even though we were all full of food having enjoyed an excellent meal by Rowley Catering.

The evening raised £10,400 which was our most successful ball ever. We are now in the process of planning next years' event, the date being the 4th July, 2015, so make sure you are there at Lytham Hall's most prestigious event of the year. Did you see us in Lancashire Life: will you be there next year? Put in it your diary now.

The Friends AGM – Tues. 23rd Sept.

The idea of holding the AGM at the Hall this year paid off with an increased membership attendance. The minutes of the previous meeting were passed. Kath Smith, Zoe

Rushworth and Meg Hargreaves were re-elected onto the committee. Marianne Blaauboer (Activity Plan Officer) gave an update on activities at the Hall.

Evening of Christmas Cheer at Lytham

Hall. - Friday 5th December.

The Friends Evening of Christmas Cheer was once again a great success. Thanks to all those who supported the events. A very big thank you goes to the organisers, helpers and entertainers and Paul Rowley for another wonderful meal.

Halloween Spooktacular

Over 450 children and their families enjoyed this year's Spooktacular at Lytham Hall.



Some of the fantastic costumes at the Spooktacular

Prizes were given for all the wonderful Halloween costumes worn by the children and even some parents!

Lytham Hall

Report from the Hall by Marianne Blaauboer Activity Plan Officer. Written towards the end of 2014

As we're coming to the end of the year we are focusing on phase I in the South Prospect garden. The steps up the Mount using larch from our own parkland are progressing well by our excellent team of "Mounties"

volunteers. Contractors have erected fencing to keep deer and rabbits out and they are creating the hard landscaping. This area remains closed to the public for the time being and we hope to complete the works in February. There have been a few archaeological discoveries which have been protected in situ until further controlled archaeological work in 2015.

Of course, all this work has meant the Diana car park is no more. This has reduced our car parking by one third and in 2015 we aim to develop the Paddock (the grassland on your left as you come up the driveway before the inner gate) into an all-year, all-weather car park. We are looking at ways to seek sponsorship for this from local and national companies.

The other sponsorship currently needed, is to develop a semi-permanent Tea Hut on the front lawn to replace temporary gazebos to create safer and more efficient outdoor catering during our summer events. If you know of a large shed going spare, please contact us.

We have enjoyed opening the Hall during the week this past year, and are very happy with the amount of people who took the opportunity to visit. The visitor book is showing they came from near and far afield and were pleasantly surprised by what they found. At the time of writing, the Hall will be open Sundays until mid-December and will reopen for Snowdrop Sundays. After that, the Hall restoration project is expected to commence, and we are currently looking how we can offer access when contractors take over. There is nothing set in stone yet, so we'll keep you posted.

What is certain, is that we will be offering outdoor tours from 2015, which will focus on the architecture of the Hall, history of the Cliftons and landscape elements in the parkland. We are also keen to do more volunteer outreach talks in the community, both local and further afield. If you know of any groups who'd be keen, do let us know.

The list of events is looking promising again for 2015, more of this in the next newsletter.

We are very excited to have a full complement of staff on site again, with Amy Hannan taking over as volunteer and training coordinator and Cath Plant joining us as part-time receptionist and administrator. If you've not met them yet, do say hello next visit.

Thank you to all of you who have helped throughout this year, in whatever shape or form. We couldn't have done it without you.

The Cliftons

So what did John Talbot Clifton do in the war?

At the outbreak of war on 4th August 1914 John Talbot and Violet Clifton were in residence at Lytham Hall. On the 15th they drove to London (in four hours) and JT offered his services at the War Office. His speech impediment barred him from becoming an officer but his offer of a fast car for dispatches was accepted.

An adventurer at heart, fearless and eccentric, John Talbot Clifton had become very fond of fast cars and thought nothing of racing along local roads at considerable speed, so it was this propensity which he put to use at the outbreak of war. They took the car to France and arrived at Le Havre where they made themselves useful and took letters to the King and Queen of the Belgians from their children who were safe in England. Violet was arrested by the police at Abbeville, apparently on suspicion of being a spy. As they drove they met soldiers coming from the trenches who cursed them on the road.

Soon JT's car came to be used to transport men on stretchers from the front to some sort of safety. There was a dire shortage of transport and field hospitals and many men died of their wounds. In her account of this expedition Violet claims she was again mistaken for a spy. Horrified by the carnage, she then spent time in Dunkirk assisting in the distribution of clothing to the French soldiers

and in a kitchen established at the railway station. They had left their four children at home in Lytham and Violet became pregnant with the fifth.

They crossed the channel several times but then in 1917 John Talbot was called up to Stornoway with his yacht to help watch the coast. Not happy with this he then managed to be sent to the west coast of Ireland in the Naval Reserve and bought a new yacht. They soon bought a house too, in Connemara, and Violet joined him with three of their children and the baby Michael. Many of the servants from Lytham Hall had gone to war but the family found a refuge in Ireland, training and employing Irish servant girls. The car was later stolen by armed men. It seems the dashing Englishman who so enjoyed hunting and fishing was not popular among the locals. The Cliftons' life of melodrama continued as usual - away from the main theatre of war

Aurea Clifton

The last edition of the newsletter contained an article about the 1927 'Season' of Yseult Hermione Aurea Alatheia Clifton, the eldest daughter of Squire John Talbot Clifton and his wife Violet.



Following her 'Season' not an awful lot is known of Aurea, but a couple of letters found at the Lancashire Records Office give us a good idea of her life thereafter.

She spent a lot of her childhood living on the family's Scottish Kildalton estate on Islay.

This remoteness probably accounts for the lack of information we have on her. Apart from the occasional mention of her from memoirs of staff members there is not a lot else.

It appears that she followed a career in maternity nursing. Training and working mainly in and around London. Her CV mentions her working at Queen Charlotte's Hospital and Great Ormond St. Children's Hospital before taking up the post of Matron of St Michael's Hospital, Kutana, South Rhodesia (1937-39).

She then threw all her energies into the war effort, working as an ambulance driver during the 1940 air raids and A.T.S. up to 1944 before a final stint driving supplies around Italy and Austria during 1945. For her efforts she was awarded both a Civil Defence Medal and the 1939 Italian Star Medal.

In a letter to her Brother (Squire) Harry on 10th August 1946 from the Port Charlotte Hotel on Islay she wrote:

Dear Harry

Very many thanks for your letter; there is nothing that I should like better than an international job at a salary. And as you know I have and always will have your interests at heart.

I enclose on a separate piece of paper my qualifications; I leave here on Thursday so please will you write to me at the Ladies Carlton Club, 5 Grosvenor Place, London SW1.

I have seen very little of Mother and the family; but I look forward very much to seeing you again. I will then tell you all that I did in the past to keep the diamond necklace safe for you and that which I have done in the present.

*With Sisterly love
Aurea*

The letter doesn't say much about the relationship between the two, but does show them on talking terms. The mention of safekeeping of a diamond necklace sounds very intriguing. For it to be mentioned belies a probability of considerable value. Unfortunately we hear nothing more about it.

We know nothing of her life beyond this point apart from the fact that she died in Bath on the 22nd March 1952 aged just 43.

BEES RETURN TO LYTHAM HALL

Give a present of a ½ day with a Bee Keeper at Lytham Hall.

Blackpool and Fylde Bee Keepers have formed a partnership with the Heritage Trust for the North West and have built an Apiary at Lytham Hall where they will be keeping bees.



The purpose of the Apiary is to give members of the public an opportunity to look inside a bee hive and learn about the wonderful world of bees. They will be offering training sessions to the public.

To learn more about it please contact www.bbka.org.uk/local/blackpool-fylde/, or phone Pamela Greenhill on 01253 735045 or p.m.greenhill@btinternet.com.

GIVE A PRESENT OF A ½ DAY SESSION AT LYTHAM HALL WITH AN EXPERIENCED BEE KEEPER.

Come and learn about the wonderful world of bees by attending a half day hands on learning session with an experienced bee keeper. This would make an ideal present for someone at a cost of only £25. The sessions will take place in the spring and summer of 2015.

Posties

The Friends need a couple of new Posties to help with the distribution the Newsletter around St Annes

If you can spare a little time once every few months please phone Pauline Hamilton on (01253) 736857

Witchmarks

Halloween may be fun these days but in the days when pestilence and other evils were not understood, superstition was rife.

Apotropaic or ritual marks are not unusual in late medieval houses, and there are many from the 16th and 17th century when trials for witchcraft were prevalent. People went to considerable lengths to protect their houses from evil spirits, and there are instances of witch bottles, shoes, and dried cats being concealed in walls. There are visible symbols too and these tend to be at the entrances to houses, seen as vulnerable to evil spirits. They are particularly to be found on beams across fireplaces and on cast iron firebacks (as the chimney could not be closed off), doorways, and windows.

Were the attractive pointy finials on gables in Lytham put there to stop witches landing? Apparently so. Why do I have a prickly holly bush near my front door?



Witchmarks at Lytham Hall

The most common marks to be found on timber are round “daisy” wheels, and letters such as an M or rather upturned W, a double V, sometimes incorporating a P or R. These symbols were there to invoke the protection of the Virgin Mary (holy Virgin of Virgins) from evil spirits. The marks at Lytham Hall could even read MARIA, although this may be fanciful.....

The cult of the Virgin Mary was particularly strong preceding the Reformation, yet these marks were largely ignored by the image destroying Protestants, even where they occur in churches.

Request

We have been asked by Jenny at Lytham Hall for a good steam iron and ironing board and clothes drying rack for use of the kitchen staff. If anyone wants to donate good second hand ones please can they contact Jenny at Lytham Hall office.

Events at the Hall

Open Days 2015

There is free entry to the Grounds every weekday (excluding Bank Holidays). 10am to 4.30pm

From April to October the Hall is open for visitors every Thursday and Friday between 1pm until 4pm. Admission: £5.00 per adult / £2.50 per child, under 5's free

On Sundays and Bank Holidays the Grounds are open from 10am until 4.30pm. Admission: £1.00 per adult, £0.50 per child. The Hall is open for a Guided Tours at 12pm and 2pm. Admission: £5.00 per adult / £2.50 per child, under 5's free.

The Tea Room is open Tuesday to Friday & Sundays serving light lunches between 10am and 4.30pm.

Contacts:

Lambert Dopping, Chairman (01253) 736408

Kath Smith, Secretary: (01253) 737548

Zoe Rushworth, Treasurer: (01253) 731538

John Martin, Newsletter: (01253) 728186

Pauline Hamilton, Membership:

(01253) 736857

Marion Coupe, Committee (01253) 733563

Liz Guffogg, Committee (01253) 727696

Meg Hargreaves, Committee (01253)

733098

Hall: Bookings: (01253) 736652

Internet: lythamhall.co.uk