

# Friends of Lytham Hall

## Newsletter

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The early part of this year has seen significant further improvements in the grounds thanks to the hard work of the Hall volunteers. Further clearance work has been undertaken, the Mount is now fully accessible with both steps and an easy gradient pathway, and new shingle paths are being laid through the woods.



The Friends ran a shop every Sunday through the Snowdrop Walk season and also opened it on many days during the intervening weeks for coach parties. We managed to raise over £1,000 for the cause. On Easter Sunday, we had our most successful Easter Bunny event with many hundreds of children enjoying a new trail, taking in a climb up the Mount, and an extremely busy Bouncy Castle. The RSPCA brought along some real rabbits and the Blackpool Bee Keepers explained the workings of hives in their new enclosure at the Hall.



We will again be supporting the outdoor theatre events through the summer.

### ***Newsletter Editor Vacancy***

Our newsletter editor, John Martin, is leaving us after 16 years and 53 issues.

We are very sorry to lose such an efficient and enthusiastic editor and must thank him for all the work he has put in over the years.

So now we are looking for someone to take on the task of turning our news and articles into an interesting read for our membership. **Could it be you?**

### **Newsletter distribution**

Many of you receive this Newsletter by email, saving the cost of printing and the use of paper.

If you receive a paper copy but would be happy to convert to email, please let Pam Beeden know (1253 733418).

**We need volunteers to deliver some paper copies four times a year in the St Annes area.**

## Lytham Hall tree planting begins, February 2015

There is something magical about planting a tree in any setting. However, to have the privilege of choosing where in Lytham Hall Estate and which species and then imagine the future importance of that individual tree, is life changing. Fancy being part of an initiative to add to the tree collection dating back hundreds of years!

We have had three very hectic years clearing areas to make way for the grounds and Parkland restoration which is part of a much larger project. We have removed literally hundreds of inappropriate, overcrowded diseased, dangerous or damaged trees in order to improve the long-term sustainability of the parkland and its habitats. I am never surprised when people visiting the grounds ask why we are felling some trees but always try to explain the need for a professional, long-term sustainable approach - I am working to a 45 year plan. Some of the areas cleared are historically important and were never intended to be planted. They are sites of heritage value and we want to share and restore or interpret these features. Other 'wilder' areas although in fact totally artificial, as are all English Landscapes, will be managed but retained if there is a sound ecological benefit. We are very lucky to have an enormous diversity of species at Lytham Hall, some of which have never been recorded in Lancashire before.

So what are we planting? The answer is, lots of trees. Then comes the question 'what kind of trees?' The answer is a wide range, with many different objectives in mind. Are they 'British native' trees? My answer is invariably a question. Do you know what a 'British native' tree is? A British native is generally deemed to be a species resident in Britain after the last ice age after the land bridge, now the English Channel, disappeared. To add complexity, most species existed in tiny pockets of certain counties and should not be considered native outside those areas! How restrictive is that? The excuse for this pure bred, anti-immigrant mentality is that our 'native' birds and mammals need indigenous foodstuffs and habitats in order to thrive and be 'natural'. So why do we encourage thousands of farmers to plant exotic plants like millet and non-native weeds to feed our birds? The honest answer is because it works. Please feel free to carry on planting non-native trees and other plants if you wish. The birds will live in them, shelter and nest in them and feed on them. Try to avoid planting species which are over invasive or have little or no wildlife benefit. That is why we are removing large sections of Rhododendron ponticum thickets and replacing them with more appropriate mixed species.

Despite the above observations we will be planting many 'British natives' in the first thousand or so this year, even if they are not native to Lancashire or the Fylde, as in the case of English Oak and Beech. We will also be restoring huge sections of the ornamental gardens and parkland which will include literally thousands of species, familiar to us through Botanic Gardens and our own suburban homes.

The following examples are mainly the 'native' types being planted now but will later be joined by heritage fruit collections, exotic ornamentals and a huge collection of bulbs and wild flowers in appropriate locations.

Trees for February/March 2015: Objectives; Wildlife Habitats, food source, shelter, screening, ornamental value, educational value, noise abatement, visual enhancement and leisure pursuits.

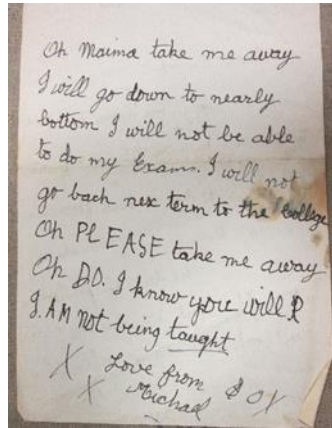
Species will include: Alder, Oak, Hawthorn, Hazel, Blackthorn, Field Maple, Rowan, Birch, Willow, Cherry, Crab apple, Holly, Yew and Scots pine, to be enhanced with a wider range next year and for many years to come. All these trees will need careful management, within the framework of a frail but thankfully restorable historic Park and Garden. If you want to be part of the magical experience of tree planting and the restoration project, please contact the estate office at the hall to explore the many ways in which you could make a real difference

John D Hornyak, Grounds volunteer, February 2015

## Back to School

After a very busy and fun Easter, it is time to go back to school. Not all children enjoy this, and we found an example of this in relation to the Cliftons. John Talbot and wife Violet Clifton had five children. We always talk about Harry, who spent the family fortune. But in the archives in Preston we discovered a little note from Michael, the youngest son, who was born in 1917.

It was written to his mother, probably in the mid-1920s, when he was taught at Ampleforth College.



Michael with his 'Maima' and sister Easter

Dear Maima,

Take me away, one master has refused to teach me, he is the WICKED one he hit a boy so hard four times yesterday that there were marks this morning he hit him for looking at a fly that was bussing near his books the master will not teach me. So I cannot learn  
**TAKE ME AWAY**

Oh Maima take me away I will go down to nearly bottom I will not be able to do my Exams. I will not go back nex term to the College Oh PLEASE take me away Oh DO. I know you will  
**I AM NOT being taught.**

x x Love from Michael o x

It is fascinating to see how Michael complained about not being taught – he clearly felt that was a reason his mother would take seriously. And he was right. At the top of the letter is written in pencil “*I did take him away. He went to Switzerland.*”

Ampleforth College still exists today and is a Catholic, Benedictine boarding and day school for boys and girls in North Yorkshire, with many happy success stories.

Marianne Blaauboer

## AN INTRODUCTION TO BEE KEEPING, AT LYTHAM HALL

Blackpool and Fylde Beekeepers are offering a 1 day course at the Apiary at Lytham Hall on either the 24<sup>th</sup> May or the 28<sup>th</sup> June from 10.30am to 3.30pm at a cost of £45 per person.

The one day course is designed to give you an introduction to keeping bees. Our experienced bee keepers will take you through the honeybee life- cycle, equipment needed and other important information.

In small groups, you will be able to look inside a bee hive (weather permitting) and have the opportunity to ask questions about all aspects of bee keeping.

You will be provided with bee suits to wear on the day, but must bring suitable footwear i.e. wellingtons or boots.

To book your place please email Janet Preece at [jpreece@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jpreece@yahoo.co.uk) or go to the club's website at

[www.bbka.org.uk/local/blackpool-fylde/index.shtml](http://www.bbka.org.uk/local/blackpool-fylde/index.shtml) **Numbers are limited and booking essential.**

## Sir Thomas Holcroft

We all understand the story 'cornerstones' of Lytham Hall's progression from monastically owned to a manorial estate owned by gentry. Little however has been explained about the bits in-between these two great periods of ownership, events that facilitated the transfer of this vast estate from clergy to private ownership.

There is an interesting newspaper cutting in Violet Clifton's box of documents stored at the Lancashire Records office. It is an article written by a W Ward, giving a detailed account of the character most involved in that transfer and how he used and manipulated the new Tudor laws to acquire Lytham Priory and other Monastic properties and estates.

His name was Sir Thomas Holcroft of Vale who acquired the Estate in 1554. He was born in 1503 into a privileged family, but being the second son was without inheritance and he had to make his own way in life. He did this by soldiering, politics and civil administration. However, his fortunes were made through marriage and property speculation. His early years saw him serving Edward Stanley, the 3rd Earl of Derby and by association he gained the attention and favour of Thomas Cromwell and the court of Henry VIII and was soon on the Royal payroll. He was entrusted with a number of important matters of state the most delicate of which was to travel to Scotland to arrange a meeting between Henry and the Scottish King James V, primarily to allow Henry the opportunity to explain his breaking with Rome and the dissolution of the monasteries. Unfortunately these efforts proved fruitless and the two countries were soon at war. It was during this war that Holcroft earned his Knighthood through his involvement with the burning of Edinburgh in 1544.

He married the daughter of a wealthy London merchant where the daughter was the sole heiress. The merchant was Nicholas Jennings and the combination of his monies and Thomas's connections allowed them to set about acquiring lands and estates annexed by the crown upon the dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII.

The threshold of £200 annual incomes, declared in the Valor Ecclesiasticus, was used to ascertain which monasteries could be compulsorily dissolved. However, it was the King's Commissioners that set the sell-on value many of which were well under the real value. Holcroft had previously been appointed by Thomas Cromwell to assist the commissioners for the Dissolution of the monasteries in Lancashire. Using the knowledge gained from this together with his contacts at court, he and his Father-in-Law found ways to buy up to nine former monastic houses and attached lands of which Lytham Priory was one. It was said that he even forged the Abbott of Vale Royal Abbey's 'signature of surrender' (a place where he had been appointed Royal commissioner).

Once he had acquired a property he moved quickly to increase its profitability either by selling on or raising rents. In 1540 he bought three friaries for £126 but one of them alone fetched the same sum when he sold it three years later, minus the building stone, which he kept for himself. In Cartmel, he tripled the rents and made £250 from rents alone. He was a clever politician and managed to stay in favour at court through the tenures of at least four sovereigns, probably due to his religious ambivalence. However he was aware of the perceived unfairness of the distribution of the former monastic properties and made provision to foil any inquiry into his dealings. When a Royal Commission was set up to look into his affairs he managed to ensure that the inquiry charged him under a part of the accompanying Act that stated "*for being a suspected person holding lands to superstitious purposes*". He also ensured that the Commission used as first example, Warrington Priory, the least valuable of his purchases and one that he had already sold on. At the first day of the inquest he simply declared that he was no longer the owner and stated therefore that the Commission had to declare the enquiry '**Non est**'. The person to whom he had sold the priory, a John Cawdwell, was less sure of the outcome and had already demolished the Priory, probably selling on the stone and other building materials, thus ensuring that there could be no priory to repossess.

Although Thomas survived the purchase of Lytham Priory by just four years, it is written that it was he that started its transformation into the Elizabethan Hall later completed by Cuthbert Clifton.

Thomas died in 1558 and the estate stayed in the Holcroft family until 1597 before selling out to Sir Richard Molyneux. The sale price is not known, but what we do know is that most of the monastic properties were picked up for just a few hundred pounds and that in 1606 Cuthbert Clifton was reported to have picked up a bargain by paying his Brother-in-Law £4300 for roughly the same estate. I think we know who got the real bargain!

John Martin

## Getting down and dirty at Lytham Hall



*Little did I know when I volunteered to help with an archaeological dig for 6 weeks in the summer of 2013, how much Lytham Hall would become part of my life. When the dig ended I was introduced to John Hornyak who said they were forming a group of volunteers to help restore the grounds, at that time there were only about 10 of us.*

*Since then I have become involved with the groundwork, which could be anything from bonfires, moving wood, bramble clearing, the new extreme sport...rhodi-bashing and moving yet more wood. The "Garden Girls" do proper gardening too. My love of photography has also led to my being asked to keep a record of the restoration, like a long time lapse, with repeated photos from the same fixed points. Before Christmas a group of us, led by Linda Salter, created decorations made from wood from the grounds, which we sold to raise money for the restoration -no end to our talents!*

*I tend to steer clear of the really heavy work-but there is something for everyone –we all have different skills, including pyromania and bodging/fettling (and no end of jobs to do either!) It doesn't do to be too fashion conscious as we look like a motley collection of tramps when at work-the new "Lytham Hall" Hi-viz jackets help. At least nobody now thinks we are doing community payback. There are some fantastic people working here and we are a great team. I have made many new friends. It's great to receive so much praise from visitors on the outside progress so far.*

*All round personal benefits have been better fitness, camaraderie, the pleasure of seeing the results of your labours and being part of a unique restoration project and knowing you helped to do it. (Oh-did I mention the free tea and biscuits?)*

Sue Lowe



### Outdoor Theatre Tickets go on sale on 1<sup>st</sup> May – from the Hall.

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June, 6pm Jane Eyre

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July, 6pm The Taming of the Shrew

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July, 6pm Iolanthe

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 4pm The Sorcerer's Apprentice

## **LYTHAM HALL MASKED BALL, 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.**

This will be the 5<sup>th</sup> year that we have held our fantastic masked ball to raise funds for the Lytham Hall Appeal. 250 people are expected to attend this prestigious evening.

Last year some amazing masks were seen from Venetian's with long noses to black cats, and glamorous masks for the ladies, to complement their beautiful gowns.

The evening commences with sparkling wine and canapés either inside the hall or on the front lawn, depending on the weather. We will then be called into dinner by our Toast Master – George Turner. Rowley's catering will provide us with a delicious 3 course meal, followed by coffee and mints.

You will be entertained, during dinner by singer Mark Jay, and after dinner, music by 'Touch the Pearl' will accompany the dancing.

During the evening you will get the opportunity to win some impressive raffle prizes donated by local businesses, and the opportunity to bid for some amazing lots in our live and 'Silent' auctions.

The evening is sponsored by Mercedes Benz and Smart of Blackpool who give people the opportunity to bid for the use of a Mercedes Car for the week or weekend. Other prizes and auction lots include a week in Lanzarote, a weekend in a hotel in the Lake District, tickets for Manchester Football Club and many others donated by members of the local community who understand how important it is to preserve the Hall and it's contents for future generations.

The evening commences at 6.30 pm, with carriages at 1am.  
Dress code is formal.

Ticket price is £65 each, with tables of 8, 10 and 12 available. They are already selling fast and we expect to be fully sold out. So if you are interested then please reserve your tickets by phoning:

Pamela Greenhill 01253 735045 or Susan Havenhand 01253 735513  
or email [p.m.greenhill@btinternet.com](mailto:p.m.greenhill@btinternet.com)

### ***Events at the Hall***

#### **Open Days 2015**

Entry to the grounds is free every weekday (excluding Bank Holidays) from 10am to 4.30pm.

From April to October, the Hall is open for visitors every Thursday and Friday from 1pm to 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 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 email: [lldopping@gmail.com](mailto:lldopping@gmail.com)

*Kath Smith*, Secretary (01253) 737548

*Terry Jones*, Treasurer: (01253) 794524

*Pam Beeden*, Membership (01253) 733418 email: [pam.beeden@btinternet.com](mailto:pam.beeden@btinternet.com)

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