

Friends of Lytham Hall Newsletter

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July 2015

The summer season is well under way at the Hall with lots of opportunities for the Friends to support a variety of events. There is so much activity with armies of volunteers transforming the grounds – see Edward Thorp’s article, and Beekeepers taking good care of the busy bees.

The Volunteer-co-ordinator at the Hall, Amy Hannan has moved on to a new job with the ‘Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust’ and we wish her happiness and success for the future.

The AGM is on 29th September – at the Hall at 2pm. This may seem a long way off, but please make a note in your diaries because we would love to see you there.

Outdoor Theatre at the Hall



We are again supporting the outdoor theatre performances organized by Julian Wilde. The weather and size of audiences vary but all are glad of a hot tea or coffee, wine or beer provided by the Friends. It is lovely to be at the Hall on a summer evening and last year we made approx. £1,000 on the refreshments.

Jane Eyre, The Taming of the Shrew and Iolanthe were all thoroughly enjoyable, and there’s The Sorcerer’s Apprentice matinee to come on 23rd August.



Secret Woodland Doors

When asked to paint some ‘Fairy Doors’ for the woodland at the Hall, I didn’t realise there would be 15 of them! But once I had found suitable paint and doorknobs [from my old button tin], I had a lovely time designing a variety of doors and found it quite an enjoyable new hobby.

Several layers of paint and varnish later, they were finished and handed over to the Hall – I didn’t really want to let them go but it’s all for a good cause.

Now they are in place around the grounds waiting to be discovered by children [of all ages] on a new woodland trail during the school holidays.

See if you can spot all of them, but please don’t disturb the little folk!

Kath Smith



All Change for Treasurers

Yes, it's all change, in more ways than one, as Zoe Rushworth, who has done a great job for the last 10 years as our Treasurer, has taken on a new role as Mum to the lovely Evie. We wish her a very happy baby and lots of fun!

Welcome to Terry Jones who has taken over as Treasurer – many thanks for joining us and making it such a smooth transition.

Celebrating Progress at the Hall



In May, the Mayor of Fylde, Councillor Kevin Eastham attended a gathering to celebrate progress with restoration planning at the Hall. He is seen here congratulating John Miller [Chief Executive Heritage Trust for the North West]. He has a keen interest in the Hall as a, 'Wonderful heritage asset' to the Fylde Coast.



The Friends' Bookshop

The bookshop in the old scullery is doing well but we are always in need of new books. If you have any, please leave them in there and we will put them on the shelves.

The shop operates on an honesty box basis, but does need regular tidying and organising. If anyone would like to help look after the shop, please let us know.

We may have to re-locate the shop when renovation work starts on the Hall.



Lytham Hall Fudge

We have new supplies of locally made Lytham Hall Fudge which is good value at £2.50 a box. This is available at the theatre events, or phone a committee member.

Local Historian's latest research

Peter Shakeshaft presented a copy of his recent research into 'Lytham manorial court' to the present Lord of the Manor, James Hilton and Marianne Blaauboer of the Heritage Trust for the North West.

A manorial court was the lowest court in England. Records go back to 1504 and span the period to 1946 when the last court was held at the County and Commercial Hotel.

The portrait in the background is of Cuthbert Clifton who purchased the Manor from the Rogerley family in 1606.



The Rogerley Family of Lytham, 1539 to 1606

All Friends are invited to a talk by Peter Shakeshaft, arranged by Lytham St Annes Civic Society.

Peter will tell us about his research and the Rogerleys' connections with the Cliftons of Lytham Hall.

This will be on Monday 28th September, 7.30 at Lytham Assembly Rooms.
Please come along, there is no need to book.



Progress at Lytham Hall, by Edward Thorp

Over the last year there has been a lot of cutting and grinding, digging and shaping, fencing and ditching, path improvement and creation, sowing and planting, and perhaps only now is it obvious what was going on in the park, apart from a bunch of people indulging their passion for messing about with what previously seemed a perfectly satisfactory place.

At last it is beginning to look less like a war zone and more like a landscape restoration project in progress. As the landscape architect guiding the works I tend to concentrate on the immediate problems and things to do next, since I know we've got a plan and have faith in it so don't need to worry about it. However over the last weeks I've been delighted to look up from the problems and take in the views that have appeared, and now I know that the plan is right.

Lytham Hall has been lurking in a wood for far too long. There were glimpses of the Hall down the North and East Prospects and from the last bit of the drive, and very nice it looked as it peeped at you, but that was not what was intended when it was planned. If you stand at the south end of the South Prospect now I think the Hall looks majestic. As you come up the main drive you now get glimpses of the Hall through the wood as you approach the inner gates. From the Hall, or the top of the Prospect Mount (not many places have Mounts as big) you can enjoy the setting of this special building, in a way that was not possible until recently.

To get this far has been extremely hard work. Despite some very welcome HLF grant and Landfill Tax money, HTNW have had to dig into their own reserves to fund the tree felling and landscape contracts, and above all a dedicated band of volunteers have laboured, whatever the weather, long and hard, to do remarkable amounts of work. I know, I watched them do it (I'm the man with the clipboard – mustn't get my plans dirty). They've cleared ditches and long lost culverts. They've cleared overgrown Rhododendrons. They've built about a mile of footpath. They've built a foot bridge with help from HTNW's craftsmen. They've relocated the urns to south of the Hall, started replanting and clearing beds, and have got the ornamental planting and cobbles round the Hall in good order, and they're about to seed the South Prospect, and plant the topiary in the Italian Garden. And there is plenty more to do.

In my view the volunteers are a bunch of local heroes who deserve everyone's praise, and equally important, support. It takes cash to carry on with what needs doing, and HTNW have to concentrate their resources on the Hall. We're reduced to relying on the topiary fairy to buy the Ilex crenata for the Italian garden, and like the rest of the volunteers even our fairy friends get tired of digging into their pockets, in addition to manual digging. If you don't know what Ilex crenata looks like, you'll soon be able to see it in the garden. If you look at the plans, which we'll put up in the courtyard, you'll be able to see what we're doing, and what else we need to buy to create that special place we think Lytham Hall deserves. If you can persuade anyone to contribute, it would be most welcome and acknowledged for posterity.

Cleaning up the Dairy



Before



The cleaners



After

Armed with mops and buckets, brooms and shovels, a small group of Friends tackled the job of clearing junk and scrubbing tiles in the dairy, which had been used as a dumping ground for years. A broken ventilator on the roof has recently been restored so dead birds, feathers and debris needed clearing to make this a usable space. The spiders weren't too pleased at being disturbed and it was hard work, but the end results were well worth it. The tiles and slate bench tops [for keeping the milk cool] are actually in very good condition.



Blackpool and Fylde Out Apiary at Lytham Hall

The bee year goes from October to October, so we are nearly through our first year of keeping bees at Lytham Hall. We started with one hive and named our queen bee Violet. Since then we have expanded and now have queens in six hives called, Primrose, Snowdrop, Daffodil, Elder and Poppy along with other hives cared for by a Master Bee Keeper who has recently joined the club and has been invaluable in giving us good advice.

In May and June we offered our first training days – 'An Introduction to Bees'. These were well-attended with 14 people enjoying the training and the opportunity to look inside a bee hive. The money raised has allowed us to buy much-needed equipment. At the Lytham Hall Masked Ball we offered a training day for four as an auction prize. This was successfully bid for, raising funds for the Hall.

Club members meet every Sunday Morning to care for the bees and receive training and advice. We are available to meet members of the public and give advice and information on bee keeping.

We are hoping to extract our first Lytham Hall Honey shortly, which will be available to buy. There will only be a very limited amount as not all of the hives have produced honey. As we are in fact 'stealing' the honey which the bees have collected to feed them through the winter, we have to replace this by feeding them with sugar syrup.

At this time of the year the bees will be treated with chemicals to destroy the varroa mite which is allowing diseases to seriously affect our bee colonies. We will then leave them alone for the winter and hope that we have done enough to ensure minimum winter losses. The overall colony survival rate for 2014/15 was 85.5% with losses of 14.5% compared to the very bad winter of 2012/13 when the survival rate was only 66.2%.

Charles Greenhill
Chairman of Blackpool & Fylde Bee Keepers.

Lytham Hall Masked Ball – 4th July 2015

This year's Ball was the biggest yet, being held in the marquee that was used for Club Day ceremonies the weekend before. It was a complete sell-out with almost 300 guests, some from as far afield as Australia and South Africa as well as all around the UK. Everyone entered into the spirit of the Masked Ball theme with some amazing masks. Some people even came in wonderful Baroque costumes to suit the period of the Georgian Hall.



The weather was perfect for pre-dinner drinks outside the Hall, giving Lancashire Life and local photographer Philip Wilson [who gave his time free of charge] plenty of photo opportunities. The Hall, although in urgent need of restoration provides a very impressive background.

There were £500,000 worth of Mercedes-Benz cars on display, which set the tone of the night as a high-class event. Mercedes-Benz and Smart of Blackpool continues to be our biggest supporter, donating over £4,000 and Live Auction prizes of the use of one of their top-model cars for a weekend and another one for a week.

Rowley's Catering provided an excellent dinner as always, and generously donated a Day at Cartmell Races with corporate entertainment as a Live Auction lot.

Other Live Auction lots included: VIP tickets for eight, including hospitality at Manchester United FC, and an opportunity for eight people to visit the Houses of Parliament and enjoy champagne on the Terrace, from Mark Menzies MP.

Touch the Pearl, our live band, announced on the night that they would give a performance for anyone anywhere as their donation to the Hall.

We also had generously donated Silent Auction lots including: paintings by Margaret Rodwell and Ken Roberts, an 'Introduction to Bee Keeping' for 4 people, a pearl necklace, a signed Manchester United football, an England shirt signed by Frank Lampard, a Chelsom light, an overnight stay at the Glendower Hotel, and many others.

The generosity of the people who supported the evening, and that of the revellers, helped us to raise a record £20,000, doubling last year's total. The Lytham Hall Masked Ball is becoming one of the social events of the Lytham calendar and people have already asked us to let them know when next year's is taking place.

A huge amount of work goes into the planning and preparations for this event and continues for weeks afterwards, and a massive vote of thanks must go to the Ball committee and the Friends of Lytham Hall for making it such a success - well done everyone who helped in any way.

Pamela Greenhill

News from the Hall

We are in the middle of the busy events season and visitor numbers are looking very good indeed. The picnic benches on the Tea room green are in daily use and the parkland feels busy. There was even drumming when Lytham College used the grounds for their 'flexible learning day' with 115 students.

Club Day saw a popular return to the Hall, with many commenting that it has been the best move ever. The outdoor theatre is a resounding success in the capable hands of Julian Wilde and as I write this, we are preparing for the Flower Power Fair, Classic Cars and outdoor cinema events. August will end with the family favourite 'Sorcerer's Apprentice' performed by Illyria on Sunday 23rd August, and the Ribble Vehicle Preservation Trust running a display day of vintage buses on 31st August [Bank Holiday].

The South Prospect garden [or Paradise Garden as it was historically known] is starting to look great with urns put in place, a new bridge created and borders being slowly filled. This has been fantastic work by our Tuesday and Thursday ground volunteers. The bridge was built by Conservation Services North West, the building team from Heritage Trust for the North West, who have done great work. The same team has repaired the fire-damaged stable roof, allowing more storage space and safe access.

The portico at the North entrance has been stripped of paint and repainted in a soft ochre, which is the original colour found under 20 layers of paint. Now that the scaffolding is down, it starts to give an impression of what the Hall could look like in ochre, rather than the harsh, twentieth century white. During the work the entrance point has been moved to the East entrance, where it will stay for the foreseeable future. It makes for a better welcome, and a more pleasant environment for our Hall Volunteers.

This summer the parkland has a 'Secret Door Trail', thanks to Barrie Turner and Kath Smith, who created the doors. Our work-experience student Phoebe Thompson put them up with help from Sue Lowe and they have created quite a buzz around the place. LSA Express have been very supportive of all our efforts.

This autumn, the archaeology project around the Jacobean part of the Hall will start. Tenders are just coming in at the moment.

Two of our Tea room staff, Dianne and Jenny have left to pursue new opportunities. We are currently recruiting and, with help from staff at our sister site, Pendle Heritage Centre, we will be staying open with only minor disruption to services.

Marianne Blaauboer
Heritage Trust for the North West.

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.

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