

Friends of Lytham Hall

Newsletter

Registered Charity No: 1069442

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Issue 31

John Miller, Director, Heritage Trust for the North West writes to the Friends.

The First of January 2004 was the fourth anniversary of the signing of the lease between Lytham Town Trust and Heritage Trust for the North West (technically it is six years as the lease was back dated to 1998, but it wasn't until 2000 that the Trust was in a position to do anything with confidence, as it was only operating under a temporary management agreement). A lot has happened since 2000, and this summer we shall mark the end of the first phase of improvements which include the restoration of the Gatehouses, the adaptation of the West Wing, and the creation of the Country Park. We propose to have a special ceremony to mark the occasion.

Those of you who came to the very successful Snowdrop Walks in February, will have noticed that the Country Park is already taking shape. A large number of trees (those which are inappropriate for historic Parkland) have been felled to open up original vistas or to enable new pathways to be created. The *Leylandii* around the old car park have gone, and already the area looks more attractive. We look forward to restoring the parterre, but before this can begin an archaeology study will be carried out on the site as it may form part of the medieval settlement.

Friends will recall a bid was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in May 2003 for a Stage I Pass. The Lottery Fund has informed us that their rules have changed and Stage I is now more significant and work that was intended to be done and funded by the Lottery at Stage II has to be brought forward. The Heritage Lottery Fund appreciates that the Trust has already incurred colossal expense and would like the Trust to apply to them for a Project Development Grant (a new grant to help bodies such as Heritage Trust for the North West prepare bids). Up to £50,000 is

available for this work. This will delay the bid, but will, we hope, ensure that it is eventually successful.

Finally, may I thank the Friends for their support and particularly for the generous donation of £2,000 towards re-building the brick chimney above the old Tea-room, which was removed some years ago by Guardian. This will enable fires to be lit and create a friendly and cosy atmosphere in the Tea-room. We have applied for Listed Building Consent, and we hope that the work will be carried out during the summer, in readiness for the winter months.

Forthcoming Events:

Summer Lunch – Sunday 20th June

The *Friends* have been invited to a Summer lunch at Green Close, 1 Laurel Avenue, Lytham, at the lovely home of committee member Marilyn Smith. Laurel Avenue is just off Ballam Rd almost opposite Green Drive Golf Club. The event will take place on Sunday 20th June starting 12:00pm and will cost £12 per person.

The lunch will be a buffet, consisting of Coronation chicken and a selection of cold meats and salad followed by a dessert. The ticket cost includes the first glass of wine.

Tickets, although restricted due to space limitations, are now available for this event and can be purchased by sending in the application form at the back of this newsletter together with a stamped address envelope or by contacting Kath Smith on (01253) 737548).

English Heritage Weekend – Sun. 12th Sept. HTNWW are opening the Lytham Hall as part of English Heritage Weekend. In the spirit of the event there will be no charge for entrance. However the Hall is looking to the friends and volunteers to provide help on the day and especially in the tea room. If you can help, even if its just for a few hours, please phone

Ann Pinder at the Hall on (01253) 736652

Dates for your Diaries

Annual General Meeting – 9th September
The Friends of Lytham Hall AGM will be held at the Assembly rooms Lytham on Thurs. 9th September 2004 at 7:30pm. Our guest speaker will be Peter Shakeshaft, and his subject will be "Heyhouses - 1600-1960"

Xmas Fair – Saturday 20th November.
Assembly rooms Lytham. 10.00-12.00pm

Evening of Christmas Cheer – Fri. 10th Dec.
After the success of last year's event, we are delighted to announce that HTNW have agreed a booking for this year's annual "Evening of Christmas Cheer" on Friday 10th December.

Recent Events

Evening of Christmas Cheer – Fri. 12th Dec.
The Friends held their annual evening of Christmas Cheer in December 2003 and were extremely pleased to be back at the Hall once more.

We held a drinks reception in the main Entrance Hall with the log fire and moved through into the newly refurbished West Wing for a beautiful meal provided for us by Rowleys Catering.

We were entertained at the end of the evening by John Ward and John Laidlaw the evening drew to a close with Don Sheerin and his friends Tara Dempsey, Philip Walsh and Jean Lee who led us in some traditional carol singing to end the evening.

The evening was very successful and raised in excess of £1000.00 for Friends funds which we have agreed to donate to the Hall for the renovation of the old kitchen chimney. I would like to thank all those involved who contributed to making the evening such a success.

We hope to repeat the event in December, so watch this space if you would like to join us, tickets for this event always sells quickly!!

Snowdrop Sundays

The snowdrops were as good as ever this year with over 3,300 people passing through the gates. The first Sunday unfortunately had to be cancelled at the last minute due to the violent storms on 7th Feb which felled a number of trees within the Grounds. The subsequent weekends were very busy though with the exception of the last weekend (March 7th).

This year the walks were put back one week due to the late flowering of snowdrops in 2003. It was therefore entirely predictable that the Snowdrops should show early this year making the final weekend not so much a show of snowdrops but of Daffodils. Ah well!

Thanks go to the volunteers who helped out in the tea-room, managing without a proper gas supply until the final weekend! Oh! and also to the brave souls on gate duty.

Memories of the Hall

In February 1908 the Clifton family returned to Lytham Hall after an absence of fourteen years. The Squire, John Talbot Clifton had married Violet Mary Beauclerk twelve months earlier, and in December 1907 the heir to the estate, Henry Talbot de Vere Clifton, was born.

The "Lytham Times", which had been increasingly critical of the Squire's long absence, entered into the spirit of regeneration with positively gushing enthusiasm:

Lytham Times 6th March 1908

Until the recent return of the Lord of the Manor, Lytham Hall was to most of the children of Lytham a hall of mystery. Its isolated position and severe appearance conjured up in youthful minds ghostly pictures, and even adults who had been in its rooms carried away with them some of the awe which antiquity always imparts.

But how different the Hall is today. The gloom is dispelled, the eerie feeling fled before a marvellous transformation. The Clifton portraits, which have hung so listlessly on the walls for so many years seem vivified. What has happened?

His Majesty, the Baby!

To the ears of those ancestral walls has come a welcome sound - the tiny voice of another lineal descendant, and it has brought with it infectious gaiety, which had its counterpart in December 1868, when the present squire made his first appearance.

In the spirit of thanksgiving, as it appears to us, the Lady of the Manor recently invited the pupils of the principal private schools of Lytham to afternoon tea at the Hall, and the lucky guests derived unbounded delight from their visit. It will live in their memory for ever, no doubt.

To ensure this, we have arranged a competition, open to all the boys and girls who went to the Hall, and we offer two prizes, value 10s. each, for the best written impressions of their visit. The idea has the full support and interest of Mrs. Clifton, and in agreeing to adjudicate, she writes: "I am always interested in literary competitions - in fact in literature in any branch, so shall enjoy reading the papers."

We make one stipulation. The essayists must confine themselves to their impressions of the Hall and grounds, avoiding anything of a personal nature. Foolscap paper should be used, written on one side, and the limit is 500 words. Essays marked "Hall Impressions" must be sent to this office on or before Friday next, March 13th.

Lytham Times 20th March 1908

There are evidently no embryo journalists among the boys of the private schools who were entertained to afternoon tea at Lytham Hall recently. In response to our offer of two

ten shilling prizes for the best description of the visit, not one of the boys has bestirred himself. "Too much fag," perhaps, to "swot" for half-a-sovereign's worth of books, when "Pater" only needs to be written to for anything one fancies. How some boys would have striven for even a prize of this value. It makes one's month water to see the opportunities possessed by the school children of to-day and the longing is turned to indignation when one sees such a want of appreciation as is often evinced.

Perhaps the task we set was not congenial to the boys. They would probably have written with better zest if we had asked for an article on "The world wide adventures of the Squire," or one entitled "If I were Squire." But that could not be. As Mr. Clifton pointed out to us, he has had the light of publicity poured on his journeys, by papers of almost every country, until he yearns for the quietude which life at Lytham Hall offered him. It may be that the subject didn't suit the boys. It may also be due to laziness or indifference. Whatever the reason, the girls have put them to shame.

The essays were sent to Mrs. Clifton on Saturday, and on Tuesday morning we received them with the Lady of the Manor's adjudication. She wrote as follows:

I think Mary Houfe's essay the best, as showing a great deal of observation. If you give her the first prize will you send Elsie Ball 5s., and N. Willoughby 2s. 6d. as consolation prizes, and I will send you P.O. for these."

We appreciate very highly both Mrs. Clifton's interest and generosity in this matter. We give below the essay of the winner:

IMPRESSIONS OF LYTHAM HALL.

A general feeling of delight went round the school when our Principal announced to us that the Lady of the Manor, Mrs. Clifton, had very kindly invited us to Lytham Hall. The day was very eagerly looked forward to and

though the weather was not good, we did not mind in the least that being a secondary matter, our thoughts being wholly centred upon the Hall.

Arrived and walking along the drive, everywhere I noticed among the shrubs, snow-drops peeping forth, reminding us that spring was fast approaching. Being winter time we could not see the grounds at their best, but after exploring them for some time I entered the Conservatories where there were many lovely plants and flowers. The wax-like Camellias were in full blossom with many other lovely flowers, Maidenhair fern seemed to be growing everywhere. Among the most beautiful were some lovely Almond trees in full blossom. Entering a hot house I noticed a tall Banana tree with huge clusters of green fruit, not very large, perhaps on account of being grown in England, and also not yet ripe. Between the gardens and the Hall we came upon a Persian garden among the shrubs, where the roses were beautifully and gracefully trained to hang in bowers as we read of them in Persia and the East.

The Hall itself is a fine large square building, perhaps rather severe-looking, but beautifully surrounded by a very expansive park and noble trees and shrubs.

In one part of the park there was a lake which had an archway over one end, and in winter it affords fine skating, My impression of the park and grounds is that they are very fine, extensive and picturesque.. The numerous pathways among the shrubs are, in places, over-grown with soft green moss and in summer the grounds would be beautifully cool and one could spend hours saunter along down the shady paths and under the lovely old oaks and beeches.

Entering the Hall the Lady of the Manor received us most graciously. The very fine paintings and carved oak struck me forcibly. An immense oil painting of a dead lion with ravenous vultures hovering over - the king of beasts, overcome by the king of birds-portrayed truly a dethroned Monarch Those of

Ansdell particularly interested me. Briton Riviere's Dog-stealer, enticing a lovely King Charles' spaniel from a mansion, Drummond's "God of the Ancients" in vivid colouring, and a portrait of a Russian Bride, the Artist's wife were amongst the finest and most beautiful. Life-sized portraits, dating back to many generations of the family adorned the walls; particularly fine were those in the dining hall where afternoon tea was served us during which a gramophone played many of the newest airs. It is impossible to enumerate all the beauties of the Hall, but I shall always remember those that I saw. As we left, it was with great feeling of thanks to Mrs. Clifton for our most enjoyable afternoon.

MARY E. HOUFFE, (age 13)
Fairhaven High School.

Fairhaven High School was on Clifton Drive. It was described by the "Lytham Times" as "well known and sought after by parents in England, India and the Colonies both for its highest educational advantages and for the excellent care and training which their daughters receive." It opened around 1898 and closed in 1911.

Please keep sending in your own **Memories of the Hall**, whether they are personal stories about Lytham Hall or about one of its inhabitants; it all helps to piece together what life was like when the Hall was a lived in property.

ART COLLECTION - CAN YOU HELP?

Brian Turner is writing a history of art collections in Lytham St. Annes, including the pictures at Lytham Hall. Between 1910 and 1913 the Hall was open to the public and each visitor received a catalogue of the pictures. If any reader has a copy - or any other information about the collection - would they please contact Brian Turner on 01253-730909 or brian.r.turner@btopenworld.com.

Membership

As the end of the current membership year

approaches (31st May) we would like to thank our members for their continued support. Without the committed support shown by the local community over the past 8 years it would have been very difficult to have kept the Hall out of the hands of private developers.

Renewals forms will be sent out closer to the subscription date to allow existing members to rejoin. Those that pay by standing order need do nothing to renew. We are aware however, that the circulation of the newsletter reaches a wider readership than the current membership, we do therefore urge anyone who does manage to read the newsletter on a regular basis to join the Friends in their worthy cause. It only takes a phone call to the membership secretary and an application form will be posted direct to your home.

All enquiries concerning membership should be directed to the membership secretary, Mrs Pauline Hamilton, Tel. (01253) 736857

Who said that!

Continuing with our series of articles that attempt to explain where unusual sayings originated:

Clean Pair of Heels

A criminal sometimes had a brand shaped in the letter “M” for malefactor fired into his heel. If a man was accused of being an ex-prisoner, he would show his heels to prove they weren’t branded. Hence; Show a Clean Pair of Heels!

Kick the Bucket

In the past, hangings were very crude affairs and prior to the gallows being law, a criminal was hung by the rope around his neck being thrown over a beam in the roof, an object (Usually a bucket) was placed for him to stand on, then kicked away to leave him dangling. Hence; Kick the Bucket!

Money for Old Rope

An enterprising hangman would make a few shillings by cutting the rope that had been

used to hang a man in to short lengths and sell them as Lucky Charms! Hence; Money for Old Rope!

A Screw

The treadmill was an instrument of torture, a huge horizontal drum with wooden slats would be tread by the prisoners, it was of no practical use, just a means of exercising the prisoners severely. To make the drum harder to turn, a screw was tightened by the warder who was referred to by the prisoners as A Screw!

Contacts:

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I should like to attend the Summer Lunch on June 9th at Church Farmhouse.

Name.

Address.

.

Post Code. Telephone

Please send me __ _ tickets at £10.00 each

I enclose my remittance of £

Cheques should be made payable to: The Friends of Lytham Hall.

Please return with remittance to:

*Mrs Kath Smith
28 Park View Road
Lytham
Lytham St Annes. FY8 4JE*

If any further information is required Kath can also be contacted on (01253) 737548