

Friends of Lytham Hall

Newsletter

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It has been a Summer of highs and lows at the Hall. The busy season of successful events was marred by acts of mindless vandalism – heart-breaking for all those people who give up so much of their time and energy into saving the Hall and parkland for everyone to enjoy. It is so important to endeavour to engage all age groups of the community in the project, so that people develop an appreciation of this local treasure and want to protect it for future generations.

Outdoor Theatre Season

The outdoor theatre programme, organised by Julian Wilde, goes from strength to strength. This summer saw some of the biggest audiences on the tour for both Illyria and Chapterhouse companies. 'Great Expectations' kicked off the season and was followed by 'The Mikado'. 'The Lost World' brought dinosaurs to Lytham Hall, and 'The Emperor's New Clothes' was great family fun. The Lytham Community Choir supported the productions and, as in previous years, the Friends of Lytham Hall provided a refreshment stall with hot and cold drinks, raising over £710 towards funds. As with all events the support of volunteers is vital so a great big thank you goes to them. Maybe you would consider helping next year?

Lytham Hall open air theatre is one of six finalists in the 'Small Tourism Event' category of the 'Lancashire Tourism' annual awards.



Halloween Spooktacular on Tuesday 31st October.



We will be repeating our popular 'Spooktacular' event from 11.00am to 3.30pm
Admission – Adults free, children £2 each. Crafts 50p per item.

There will be a spooky trail, a tombola, Crafts and Cake decorating.

So dress up and join the fun, see you there!



September Steam Fair

The Friends were happy to help run a Tombola stall at this two-day event which was organised by the Rotary Club. There was a great display of vehicles which attracted many visitors to the Hall and raised a substantial £12,000; of which £10,000 will be donated to the Hall. Thank you to all those who helped with the stall and/or donated prizes.

Memories of working for Violet Clifton.

In August two members of the FOLH Committee, Marion Coupe and Pam Beeden, had the pleasure of talking to Elsie Ayrton, nee Hodgkinson, whose father, Joe used to work for Violet Clifton.

Elsie was born after the Second World War at Church Farm Cottage, Commons side. At the time the cottage was owned by the Clifton Estate. During the war her father was employed by the War Department to cut down trees on the Clifton Estate. He enjoyed working there so much that he stayed on after the war had ended.

Elsie said that her father was very well treated by Mrs Clifton. Although he did many different jobs on the estate he was mainly employed as a gardener. Mrs Clifton used to watch him working from the window of the living room at Lytham Hall and often invited him in for refreshment. Elsie recalls that she also once visited her family home to bring a bottle of Wincarnis for her father and a bouquet for her mother. Elsie said that her father was always treated as an equal by Mrs Clifton and was never looked down upon. Elsie said that was unusual in those days and still is in some circles.

By the time he retired in 1960 Joe was only earning £5 per week. Elsie said that his enjoyment of the work and the kindness with which he was treated more than made up for the poor wages. When Violet's younger son, Michael, used to visit he was like his mother and always treated the staff well. Joe liked Michael very much.

Joe used to comment on Mrs Clifton's love of nature and flowers in particular. One time she invited him in to see a painting she had commissioned of the garden. In fact, there is a photo of her standing next to the painting on display in the Jacobean courtyard at the Hall.

At Christmas Joe used to drill holes in logs and fill them with candles and holly for decorative use in the Hall. Violet wrote thank you letters to Joe on many occasions and one of them that Elsie still owns features these yule decorations.

Another example of a job that Joe did on the estate was when he used his skills to repair the cobbled wall at the gamekeeper's cottage on Heyhouses Lane near Regent Road. The cottage is no longer there but the gates that marked the former entrance to Lytham Hall are still visible.

Elsie is very grateful that her beloved father was so happy working for Violet Clifton because she feels that is one of the reasons she had such a happy and contented childhood.

P. Beeden



Newspaper Cuttings

Two cuttings from the Daily Express, have been discovered by one of our members. One, dated 1938 entitled **'Squire's Bride is Home – An Invalid'**, shows the arrival of 'Blonde, plump, ex-American Socialite Mrs Henry de Vere Clifton, Lady of the Manor of Lytham' being wheeled from the train, wrapped in furs.

'She was taken by car to Lytham Hall, ancestral home of the Cliftons, on her first visit since she married the 29-year-old world-wandering squire last autumn.

For three months, Lytham has been waiting to welcome the Squire's wife. Tonight, nobody apart from the station and estate staffs recognised her as she left the train after travelling from London.

She should have come to the Hall with her husband for Christmas, but travelled alone in the Europa. While on her way to see a London specialist she was taken ill suddenly, and has been in bed since December suffering from a breakdown.

This visit to Lytham, centre of the West Lancashire coast, where her husband's family have lived for seven centuries, was the first journey she has been able to make since leaving America. She went to bed immediately on reaching the Hall. A member of her staff said that there was no truth in the report in an American newspaper that Mrs Clifton had come to England following differences with the squire. "It is just nonsense," she said. Lytham's six-foot-four squire has been in America since his marriage. He is writing plays.'

The second cutting, is headed, **'Wife Waits for Squire in £30,000 Poker Suit'**:

'In a mansion guarded at every entrance, cut off from all communication with the outside world, a young wife waits for her husband, Harry Talbot de Vere Clifton, poet-squire of Lytham, Lancs, who returns home next week after a £30,000 poker lawsuit in America.

Since the news of her husband's sensational lawsuit reached England, Mrs Clifton has been pestered by the inquiries of every curious person in the district, till at last she could stand it no longer. So yesterday, a civilian guard was posted round the fourteen-mile boundary of Lytham Hall.

Now nobody is allowed to enter the grounds without a special permit.

Mrs Clifton has not seen her husband since he sailed for America six months ago. It was while he was in Los Angeles that he got into a game of stud-poker and lost £30,000 to Lew Brice, brother of the stage and radio comedienne Fanny Brice.

He wrote out a cheque but stopped payment afterwards claiming that he was tricked into the game by Brice who did not have the money to cover a similar loss. The lawsuit which followed in which the Judge had a dramatic reconstruction of the poker game staged before him, was eventually settled out of court.

Mrs Clifton, formerly society leader Mrs Lilian Griswold, was married to her husband, who is thirty-one, in Boston, U.S. Recently, she came to England to see medical specialists, and after being some time in a London nursing-home with a baffling illness, went to Lytham Hall to recuperate quietly. Yesterday, she indignantly denied reports that she was returning to America. She communicated with her husband by transatlantic telephone; confirmed his decision to come home, and immediately started to prepare a welcome.

[Harry Clifton and Lilian were divorced in 1943]



Christmas Coffee Morning – Tues. 12th December



Come along to the LSA Civic Society and Friends of Lytham Hall joint coffee morning in the West Wing at the Hall at 10.30am.

Changes at the Hall

Peter Anthony and Paul Lomax have taken on the roles of *General Manager* and *Deputy General Manager* at the Hall.

We would like to thank Marianne Blaauboer, who has taken sabbatical leave, for all the help and support she has given the Friends and wish her all the best.



The Friends Bookshop



The Bookshop opposite the tearooms in the West Wing continues to be very popular with visitors and we are always in need of more stock. Donations of the following in good, saleable condition are welcome:

- **Paperback general fiction**
- **History/Arts and Local interest hardbacks**
- **Children's books**
- **CDs and DVDs** (in plastic cases)

Please place any items in the box by the bookshelves. If you have items other than those listed above, please first contact: Eddie / Jo James via friendslythambooks@btopenworld.com

Table needed

The bookshop would benefit from a permanent replacement for the present display table, which is on loan. The size would need to be: H 65-80cm (28"-32") W 70-90cm (28"-36") D 50-60cm (20-24").

If you have such a table that you can spare,

please contact Lytham Hall office or email Ed/Jo James at ed.xword@btopenworld.com.

An Evening of Christmas Cheer – Friday 8th December

The Friends are again holding their annual 'Evening of Christmas Cheer' at Lytham Hall. This is a very popular black-tie occasion in the elegant atmosphere of the Hall. Drinks and canapes are served at 7.00pm in the main hall, followed by a festive candlelit dinner in the west wing. Light entertainment and carol singing after the meal, herald the start of the festive season. Carriages at 11.30pm. Tickets cost £30 per person.



To book please contact Meg Hargreaves using the contact form on the Friends' website.

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