

Friends of Lytham Hall

Newsletter

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The following report is an extract of the most recent Lytham Hall executive report to the Lytham Town Trust concerning the Hall.

The Heritage Lottery Fund application was submitted on the 30th May 2003 following considerable work by John Miller and the Heritage Trust for the North West (HTNW). Part of the bid includes "The Collection" of artefacts relating to the Clifton Family. No decision on this part of the bid will be made until possible December 2005.

There is a strict timetable for the bid as it is in a number of stages that will progress through 2003 and 2004. The Final decision will not be made until June 2005. This will then allow the major work to commence on the Hall. Initial consideration will be taken to assist with income generating activities, as the Hall needs to work to becoming self-financing. It is hoped that if the bid is successful that all work will be completed by 2007. John Miller is to be congratulated for all the hard work he has done to get the bid to the stage when a hopefully successful bid can be submitted. Lytham Town Trust (LTT) executive committee have worked closely with John in preparing the bid. The bid is supported by Fylde Borough Council who have donated £75,000 towards the acquisition of the pictures.

The total cost of the project is estimated at £4.7 million, LTT and HTNW are asking the Heritage Lottery Fund for 75% of the cost ie. £3.8 million. The two trusts have made substantial progress through establishing partnerships with many regional bodies. Lancashire Tourism Partnership has offered two grants, one to support the conversion of the West Wing and help with the Country Park and another to contribute to the costs of Dr. Sam Johnson the new Project Officer at the Hall who is helping John Miller with the bid. Support has also come from Lancashire

Environmental Fund and Lancashire County Council for the Park.

From time to time the two Trusts intend to issue statements about progress and explain how the projects are developing.

The Country Park is still under discussion with HTNW and Lancashire County Council. No decision has yet been made on how this will be managed if the proposal goes ahead.

The Hall is taking bookings for weddings which is proving very popular and guided tours are available along with party visits, and conferences in the West Wing. A Grand Opening of the West Wing will take place in Spring 2004. HTNW is developing short-term strategies to open the Hall and ground to the public whenever feasible but is aware that the facilities are currently far from ideal. The Trust also has to be very careful not to do work which might prejudice the Heritage Lottery Fund Bid.

The Friends of Lytham Hall are supporting the bid and their continued fund raising is regarded as an important part of showing community commitment to the Hall to support the purchase of the Collection and future projects.

Forthcoming Events:

Annual General Meeting – 24th September
The *Friends of Lytham Hall* AGM will be held at the Assembly rooms Lytham on Wed 24th September 2003 at 7:30pm. Coffee will be served prior to the meeting at 7:00pm.

Directly following the meeting we are delighted to announce that Ann Pinder, the Events organiser at the Hall, has agreed to give a talk to the "Friends". We have asked that the subject be the Cliftons, followed by an update on the present work at the Hall and any questions. However, Ann has hinted that she has something new to tell us but will not elaborate on it until the AGM. Only fully paid

up members are eligible to attend and vote at the meeting, but anyone is welcome to attend Ann's talk, which will start at approx. 8 pm.

Autumn Fair – Saturday 4th October.

Assembly Rooms, Lytham. 10:00 am – 12 pm
This year's Autumn Fair will again follow the same successful format as previous years, Tea/Coffee, Stalls, Bottle Tombola, Raffle, Poinsettias, Cakes, Bric-a-Brac etc. Tom Eccles will be on hand to sign Christmas cards.

Please contact any member of the committee with donations for the Raffle, Tombola, Bric-a-brac, Home Baking, or Christmas decoration stalls. Alternatively they can be dropped off at the offices of Coupe Bradbury, Bath Street, Lytham. If you can help on the day please let us know. Bring your friends for a cup of coffee. Entrance is just 50p which includes a cup of tea or coffee and biscuits.

Evening of Christmas Cheer – Fri. 12th Dec.
The *Friends* "Evening of Christmas Cheer" should be a splendid event this year. It is returning to the Hall and using the West wing, which has been refurbished to accommodate more people, and with better facilities.

The evening will begin with reception in the Main hall before moving into the West wing for the remainder of the evening.

Don Sheerin accompanied by a number of friends will supply entertainment. There will be carol singing to wind up the evening.

Rowleys will be providing the menu as follows:

- Squire Clifton's Lancashire Tasty Soup. Creamy Root Vegetables, Cauliflower & Leek soup enriched with Lancashire Tasty Cheese.
- Gamekeepers Roast Fylde Turkey served with Pigs in Blankets, Rosette Potatoes, Savoury Stuffing, Cranberry Sauce & Roast Gravy, Steamed broccoli, Batons of Carrots, Roast Potatoes
- Cooks Christmas Pudding with Topsy

Rum Sauce. Or A Selection of Local Cheeses with Grapes & Celery Curls & Cheese Biscuits

- Coffee with Chocolate Wafer Thin Mints

Tickets are £25 and reflect the quality of the evening, venue and facilities. Advanced bookings can already be obtained by contacting Kath Smith on 737548 or by using the cut off strip at the end of the newsletter.

Recent Events

Summer Lunch - 22nd June.

Those who turned out for the Summer lunch at Church Farmhouse were rewarded with a lovely day out. The weather was glorious, the gardens lovely, and the food excellent and plentiful.

Our thanks go once again to David and Marion Coupe for allowing the event to be held in their lovely house, and to all those who helped with the organising and on the day. Just over £400 was raised which reflected an excellent effort all round.

Pride & Prejudice – Sunday 3rd August.

The Illyria Theatre Company in association with Fylde Borough Council staged a version of *Pride and Prejudice* at the Hall on Sunday 3rd August. A stage was erected on the lawn in front of the Hall and the audience brought their own chairs, tables. Picnics etc. assembled on the lawn around the stage.

The Friends provided support on the night for catering, car-parking and manning of the main gate. Thanks to all the volunteers who turned up on what was a perfectly glorious warm evening. This wonderful summer just seems endless!

Memories of the Hall

Jim Fletcher

Jim, of Harwood Ave. St Annes, was a fireman at the beginning of the 2nd World War. In the winter of 1941/42, shortly before he joined the RAF, he and his tender conducted a practice visit to the Hall. It was late when the practice got underway but

nevertheless Violet Clifton came out to say hello to Jim and the other 9 firemen on the tender. Before they left she showed her legendary kindness by giving each of the fireman a bottle of beer. When we asked Jim about the Hall at that time he was unable to comment as the entire practice was carried out during the dark of the evening. In fact Jim never got a better view of it until he returned to the Hall as a visitor over 50 years later!

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.

Lytham Hall **The Dovecote**

The dovecote at the Hall was built around the time it was rebuilt in the 1760's. It is an attractive feature of the park, quite close to the stables, and had a practical as well as decorative function. It is, like most dovecotes, round and made of brick

Dovecotes were part of the accepted management of large estates and country houses. Young doves or pigeons (squabs) supplied fresh meat throughout the year, while older birds were mainly used to lay eggs, with some culling occurring before winter. The birds were also bred for their manure, and in the 16th and 17th centuries for saltpetre - a component of dung - which was used to make gunpowder.

Dovecotes have a long history. It is known that the Romans kept doves but dovecotes as we know them were introduced by the Normans in the 12th century. During the medieval period large dovecotes were built on manors, at castles and monasteries. The right to build a dovecote was traditionally reserved to the lord of the manor, and was much resented by poor farmers as the lord's doves could eat their weight in corn every day. During the French Revolution of the 1790's rural agitators burnt down the dovecotes as

symbols of oppression.

The need for doves as winter meat began to die out with the introduction of new farming methods. From the late 18th century in England dovecotes were often built as central decorative buildings in architect-designed farm courtyards or orchards. Those built in landscaped gardens were there for decorative purposes to catch the eye and could even be disguised as Greek temples.

Dovecotes had to be protected from human, airborne and animal predators. They also had to be sealed in order that the birds could be trapped by their legitimate owners. There are usually small flight holes, which enabled the doves to enter but not their larger predators, and reinforced doors to keep out intruders. One danger recognised in the 19th century was that of whole flocks being stolen for pigeon shoots.

When a new dovecote was established, a flock of doves was introduced and encouraged to remain not only by the presence of nesting boxes but also, often, by white-plastered walls, as doves are attracted by white surfaces. Traces of white plaster can often still be seen today and there are signs of lime wash at Lytham. Continuous ledges were constructed on the outsides of the buildings, to provide areas for perching and a choice of spots to avoid the prevailing winds. This feature can be seen at the Hall. The ledges are often angled to provide suitable footing for doves, but to be impossible for predators to perch on. Glazed windows were sometimes inserted in the 18th and 19th centuries, often into the wall nearest the house so the birds' 'flirtations' could be watched and admired. At Lytham the windows are high up to give light to the egg collectors.

The 850 nesting boxes are well preserved and roomy with a raised edge to stop the eggs rolling out. There is a continuous alighting ledge to make access easier.

The most impressive structure surviving

within a dovecote is the potence. This was a central revolving wooden pole, mounted on a plinth, with arms onto which ladders could be attached and suspended a few feet off the ground, to enable the eggs and squabs to be collected from the upper tiers of nest boxes. Potences avoided the inconvenience and disturbance of continually having to move a conventional ladder around the wall. The potence at Lytham is in excellent condition and turns full circle at the touch of a finger. There is one ladder attached to it.

The birds flew in through the louvered hole in the centre of the roof. There are four crossbeams from which the potence is suspended. The floor of the dovecote is of compacted pebbles.

This building has been given a Grade 11* listing by English Heritage, one of very few such grades in the area. (Lytham Hall is Grade 1, most buildings are listed Grade 11.) It is in good condition structurally, and has a new door, donated by the Civic Society. The windows are however broken and vandalised.

The Georgian Group

As previously stated, we have affiliated to the Georgian Group. Based in London it was founded in 1937 to protect and preserve Georgian buildings, monuments, parks and gardens. We continue to receive quarterly newsletters and other correspondence from them on their work and activities. If any member wishes to read any of them they can by phoning John Martin. The only drawback is that anything borrowed must be collected and returned by the borrower. Alternatively you can access their very interesting web-site at www.heritage.co.uk/georgian.

Membership

Thanks to all those who have renewed their membership. Remember that only fully paid up members are eligible to attend and vote at the AGM. However, anyone wishing to can renew on the evening.

Anyone unsure of eligibility can phone the

membership Secretary Pauline Hamilton on (01253) 736857.

Who said that!

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

In days gone by, Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children-last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it - hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water."

Volunteer Required

We have a requirement for a Postie for one of our rounds – Area E. This is a compact but sizeable round, which we have divided into two. It is based around Lytham Town centre.

If you can spare a little time once every three months please phone any of the committee at the end of the newsletter.

Thanks go to Kath Crabtree who has given us great service but is now, sadly leaving Lytham St Annes.

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