



Friends of Lytham Hall Newsletter

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When the heatwaves strike, we are so lucky to have the woodlands of Lytham Hall which provide a respite from the high temperatures, for those who prefer not to bake on the seafront. Summer at the Hall is a very busy time, with a wide range of events, from Club Day, outdoor theatre, musical shows, antiques valuation days, vehicle shows, and arts and craft workshops. There is always something happening – check the Hall website for details and tickets.

The Friends' Easter Family Fun Day



This year's event was blessed with sunny weather and all the tickets were sold. Families enjoyed a woodland trail featuring tableaux with familiar story book characters such as Humpty Dumpty, the Mad Hatter and Queen Henny Penny. There was a bouncy castle, children's tombola, Hook a Duck, and a Lucky Dip. The craft tent proved popular with cake-decorating, Easter Bonnet decorating, fir cone pets and mask – making. None of this would be possible without our volunteers who work so cheerfully to make it such a fun and successful day.



The event added almost £3,500 to our funds, all of which goes towards projects at the Hall

Friends of Lytham Hall AGM 2025

The Friends AGM will be held on Wednesday 17th September, 2pm at the Hall.



National Collection of Redwoods Green plaques

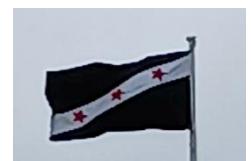
At the end of May, the Hall was presented with not one, but two 'Plant Heritage' green plaques, in recognition of the two National Collections of Redwoods [Giant and Coastal] held at the Hall. A Redwood Trail is being developed so that visitors will be able to identify over 30 different species of redwood trees planted in the parkland.



The Flagpole has been resurrected on the Mount



Have you noticed the flag flying on the Mount? There's a brand new pole with the Clifton family flag with three red stars on a white diagonal band and black background. The flag was made by some of the Hall volunteers – great job! The pole will be used to fly different flags throughout the year. It is the highest point in Lytham. Interestingly, the recently acquired John Boulby 'Warrior' painting shows a Red Ensign on the Mast.



Memories of the last years of the Cliftons at Lytham Hall

We always love to hear from anyone who has memories of the Hall and the Clifton family, and earlier this year, two of our committee members, Pam Beeden and Fiona Sumner, enjoyed a coffee morning in the Tearoom in the company of 98 year old Myra Sutcliffe and three members of her family. Myra used to work for the Blackpool solicitors, Spencer and Holden, who represented Harry Clifton until the estate was sold to Guardian Assurance. She joined the firm in 1953. At this time, according to Peter Watson's book, 'Harry Clifton, Squire of Lytham', he had seven firms of solicitors involved in his affairs, most of whom were unaware of the involvement of the others.

Spencer and Holden also acted for the landlords of the Golden Mile, and Myra remembered collecting the rents from the various fortune tellers. She said they were lovely peoples and she was always very amused when Gypsy Petulengro used to ask her what she thought the weather was going to do! This is an interesting link as Harry spent the last 20 years of his life as a close friend of Margaret Kilner, a palmist from Blackpool who was living in Brighton. In Harry's obituary she was described as a 'soothsayer'.

As part of her duties, Myra worked in the Estate Office, Hastings Place, on a huge file called 'Clifton General'. She spoke of another building behind the Estate Office being jam packed with files. She dealt with John Kennedy, who was the last Estate Manager and the author of 'The Clifton Chronicles'. The others who worked at the Estate Office, that she could remember, were the treasurer, the son of a vicar, who seemed to take a shine to her, and a young female typist.

Myra described John as a real country boy, very pleasant and good with the tenants. He was born in Scotland and moved to Canada when he was eight and she said it was almost impossible to understand his accent! Another person she remembered was theatrical agent Leonard Urry, who was one of Harry's trustees. He was frequently in the office and she said he was like a pop star. [According to the Clifton Chronicles, Urry's claim to fame was his discovery of the film star Merle Oberon]. Another trustee she remembered was Sarah Hurst, sister of the film producer Brian Hurst. Sarah acted as Harry's secretary before the war. Myra said Sarah was extremely reluctant to become a trustee. Harry couldn't have been easy to work for.

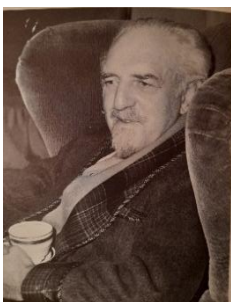
One day, while working in the Estate Office, Myra was aware of an imposing presence. She looked up and saw a figure clothed from head to toe in black. This turned out to be Violet. In fact she remembered Violet as always being dressed in black. Violet asked Myra to introduce herself and said, "You must take tea with me at the Hall". To Myra's relief, Violet did not follow through with this invitation. On the other hand, Myra found Harry distant and stand offish, and she said he looked like a tramp. This impression is backed up by the nurses in the Brighton Hospital where he died. They thought because of his unkempt condition, he must be a tramp. They were amazed when they discovered the truth.



Violet Clifton

From the 'Clifton General' file, Myra discovered the dire state of the Clifton finances.'

She recalled that Harry's younger brother, Michael was determined to marry before the license fee of seven shillings and sixpence was introduced. She was aware of Violet's practice of entering the First Class carriage of a train only to progress down to Third Class when unobserved. Another much more serious example of the lack of money was when the sanitary authority requested a contribution for the maintenance of Violet's grave, there was none available.



Harry Clifton

Myra was fascinated by the incidents involving Harry and Violet. She helped set up the conveyance of a plot of land to George Criticos, the doorman at the Ritz, where Harry lived periodically. He wanted George to have building land for his retirement gift, but was completely unaware of the wishes of the recipient. George quickly gave instructions to the solicitors that the land should be sold. [Apparently, he already had a home in the South, where he planned to spend his retirement growing roses]. Myra also had the job of obtaining licences to export a bull that Harry wished to send to an Arabian king. This was proving to be extremely difficult and she was most relieved when the king was overthrown by his brother. Then, to her dismay, the brother was assassinated, the king was reinstated, and the bull business started all over again. In the end, the licences were never obtained.

Myra recalled a complaint from Violet that the painter refused to paint the flagpole on the Mount. It did not collapse flat, so the job would have required the very unsafe use of ladders. She also heard the instruction from Violet that the cook must be dismissed for using custard powder instead of making custard from scratch. It sounds as if the only straightforward work that Myra did was issue fishing licences for local lads to fish in Curtains Pond.

One strange recollection Myra has is of a Scottish artist who was always around. He wore a kilt and rode in Violet's fancy chauffeur driven car, while Violet used a much less fancy estate car. She thinks his name was John Laurie, but has no idea what he was doing at the Hall. According to the internet, John Laurie was born in Shrewsbury, went to school in Glasgow and attended the school of art there. He painted portraits and occasional landscapes and lectured at the Glasgow School of Art. It is thought that he painted the depiction of the garden which is over the fireplace in Violet's Boudoir. Interestingly, Myra said she felt that Violet's heart was in Scotland. [The Clifton's Kildalton Estate was on the Isle of Islay and is where John Talbot was buried].

Myra still seems to be genuinely concerned and sad that everything that was left of the Clifton Estate, after 350 years in the family, had to go to Guardian Assurance, and she witnessed volumes of paperwork being handed over. At least we now know that Guardian did essential repairs and redecoration which saved the Hall from the dilapidated state that Harry had allowed it to fall into.

Myra and her family are now regular visitors to the Lytham Hall, so she must continually be reminded of her interesting and often intriguing career. The only memento she has of the Clifton family is a copy of the family tree.

Many thanks to Myra for agreeing to pass on her experiences, and to her family for arranging the get together.
Pam Beeden

Friends of Lytham Hall Membership

£20 for a single member and £30 for joint members.

Also, there is now an opportunity to get a free annual car park pass for Lytham Hall by becoming a **Patron of the Friends at £60 per year.**

Thank you for your continued support.

If you know anyone who may like to join us, or would like to give a membership as a gift, you will find membership forms on the Friends' website or in the Bookshop at the Hall.

Is Your Membership information up to date?

We are currently updating our Membership list and find that a number of membership fees have not been renewed, or updated. We don't want to lose any members, so please can we ask you to check your records and make sure standing order details are correct.

Contact the Membership Secretary if you find a payment has been missed.

The Friends Bookshop



No trip to the Hall is complete without a visit to the Friends' Bookshop.

Our second-hand bookshop, opposite the Tearoom in the West Wing is a major source of income for the Friends. It is organised by a dedicated team of volunteers who keep it looking attractive.



The shop depends on donations of books in good saleable condition, especially paperback fiction, which is always popular. There is a container for donated books by the window, just inside the door. The shop runs on an honesty box system. All money raised by the Friends goes directly towards projects at the Hall.

The Friends are supporting the Outdoor Theatre season at the Hall, by providing a refreshment stall at each production. There are three plays still to come:



Lytham Hall Open Air Theatre Season 2025

*This year's program of six productions includes something for everyone.
Gates open for picnics 4pm For tickets, see the Lytham Hall website.*



The Merry Wives of Windsor, Shakespeare – Friday 8th August 6pm, Illyria

HMS Pinafore, Gilbert & Sullivan – Sunday 10th August 6pm, Illyria

The Wind in the Willows, Kenneth Graham – Sunday 17th August. 6pm, Illyria

Admission: Adults £19 Seniors/ students £16 School age children, 5 to 18 £10

HISTORY IN THE STREET NAMES OF LYTHAM

Holcroft Place

Sir Thomas Holcroft was a notable figure associated with Lancashire and the Lytham area. He was a courtier, soldier, landowner and politician. His wealth came largely from speculation in former monastic lands, following the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII.

Peter Shakeshaft's book 'Lytham Priory a history' tells us that, in 1549, the manor of Lytham was granted by Queen Mary to Sir Thomas Holcroft, 'the great buyer of monastic property' noted for his 'ambition . . . coloured by ruthlessness'.

He died in 1558 and the manor passed to his son, Thomas. In 1597 the manor was sold to Sir Richard Molyneux.



Fylde Gallery at Lytham Hall

Funded and managed by Fylde Council, the Gallery is free to visit, although donations will be very welcome and re-invested in the art collection.

Fylde Gallery at Lytham Hall is open Thursday, Friday and Saturday 10am to 4pm

Exhibitions:

15th May – 15th Aug **Savage Beauty** – Richard Ansdell

28th Aug – 7th Nov **Painting Inspired by Nature and the Elements**, Margaret King

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