

NEWSLETTER

Another rewarding year for Lathom's very own 'Time Team'

Trust members and volunteers have had another productive year and been rewarded with more exciting discoveries which give important clues to the mysteries of historic Lathom.

Ron Cowell, Curator of Prehistoric Archaeology at National Museums Liverpool, who is co-ordinating the archaeological excavations at Dutton's Farm, Lathom, reports on a surprising and interesting find from this year's excavations.

Metalwork does not generally survive on the site but a metal object, known as a seal matrix, was found in a late medieval ditch (1200-1400 AD).

It was a personal item, used to impress in wax instead of a signature when signing a letter or sealing a letter to ensure it had not been opened before receipt. It is made of copper alloy and is about 2cm long overall. It has a perforation at the base of the stem, which was probably used to attach it to the person with a cord. On the rounded face it has the central impression of an eagle surrounded by lettering forming the words *Jesu Rei* or Jesus the King. Usually such seals have the name of a family on them.

The style dates it to the late medieval period, when the ditch was in use, and it appears as if it may have belonged to someone who was associated with the building that excavations are currently attempting to locate close to the ditch. The eagle was a common design on seals at this time. However, the fact that the medieval lords of Lathom, the de Lathom family in the 12th century and the Stanleys, Earls of Derby, to whom it passed in the late 14th century, both employed the eagle as their family crest, suggests that there is a strong likelihood that it belonged to someone associated with one of these families.

Ron says, once the excavations finish we will be undertaking more research to see if the design on the seal can provide more specific information. We would be pleased to hear from anyone who may know more about this.

Frances McIntosh the English Heritage sponsored Finds Liaison Officer in the Archaeology Department at National Museums Liverpool, who kindly provided the identification for the seal, would also be pleased to hear from anyone who has historic items about which they would like more information. She can be contacted on 0151 478 4259 or e-mail at frances.mcintosh@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk



IMAGES FROM TOP

* An impression of the design as it would appear on documents.

* The face of seal with central eagle and surrounding letters in reverse.

* The seal matrix.

2008 - MORE EXCITING 'FINDS' TO BE MADE ? ? ?

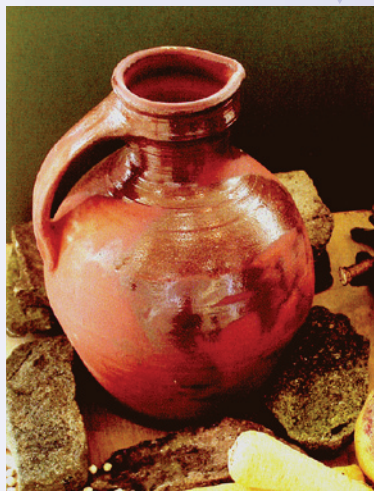
An authentic replica, made for the Trust by John Hudson of the Medieval Pottery Research Group, of an excavated medieval pot found at the Audlem pottery kiln in Cheshire.

Sherds (fragments) of similar pots have been found at Dutton's Farm.

As busy as ever ! Steve Baldwin, Lathom archaeologist and Trustee, has been at the heart of many of the Trust's projects, including the Lathom Medieval Park survey, the Lathom House and Dutton's Farm Iron Age / Medieval excavations.

Delighted Trust member, Pat Boylett, one of the team who discovered the seal matrix.

Ron Cowell being congratulated by West Lancashire District Council Chairman, William Cropper, for his work co-ordinating the Lathom excavations.



On Saturday afternoon, 8th September, we held our customary exhibition (for the eighth successive year) at Pilkington's European Technical Centre in Lathom.

The event was officially opened by the Chairman of West Lancashire District Council, Councillor William Cropper, accompanied by his Lady wife Susan. The number of visitors exceeded all our expectations - more than we have ever had before!

We were also very pleased that Colonel and Mrs Sparrow were able to spend time with us to chat about past times and their interesting Lathom connections.

The cafe organised by Social Event Committee members did a brisk trade, as did the Trust's Membership and Sales shop - a warm welcome to all the new members who joined during the weekend!

As usual, delightful floral displays around the room were provided by John Hayton. The bright colours reflected the sparkling colours of the canal ware painting, being demonstrated by Dave Aspden of the Waterways Craft Guild.

Many other attractive topics were featured including Amy Chandley's Childrens Corner, Kath Wilde and Jean Rimmer demonstrating the intricate art of lace making, local military history with Richard Houghton, artist Dave Shiers with paintings of local scenes, the stone carving skills of Ken Hughes and of course Ron Cowell with his excavations from Dutton's Farm.

Our thanks go to everyone who helped in so many ways to make the afternoon such a success and especially to Pilkington plc for the use of their attractive premises.

Lathom's bygone days recorded for posterity

In May 2006 the Trust's Social Events Committee organised an Antiques and Memorabilia Roadshow event. People from Lathom and District brought along many items of interest to be assessed by a team of experts. Some people wanted to know more about a precious memento or family heirloom - others asked for a valuation estimate. A complete written and photographic record was made of all the items; and the photographs here are a small selection from the data.

Pictured left to right:

Three pretty Edwardian opal hand-painted glass vases possibly gifted by the Bootle Wilbraham family to a seamstress employee.

Contemporary photograph of Lady Alice Bootle Wilbraham, wife of the 1st Earl of Lathom.

Watercolour of one of the 1st Earl of Lathom's Shorthorn cattle, painted about 1860 - 1870.

A Regency period table top or travelling stationery cabinet with tambour roll front and gilded brass fittings, from the Lathom House contents dispersal sale of 1924.



Photos: Paul Kenyon



pictured top: Trustee Pam Nanson helping with the 'Childrens Corner' as John Hayton and Colonel and Mrs Sparrow look on.
bottom left: A youngster tries out the ancient craft of stone carving.
bottom right: Dave Aspden of the Waterways Craft Guild with (from l to r) Chairman of Lathom Park Trust, David Dunn, Chairman of WLDC, William Cropper and his wife Susan Cropper, and the Trust's Company Secretary, Susan Dunn.



LATHOM REMOUNT DEPOT - many thanks to everyone who has helped us so far with research work and material!



Following our requests in previous Newsletters and 'updates' for any information that readers may have on the WWI Remount Depot in Lathom, we would like to thank those of you who responded with useful new leads and interesting material.

We are now planning to produce another 'Historic Lathom' Booklet which will be all about the Remount Depot. Lancaster based archaeologist and historian Nigel Neil has already drafted a fascinating article following his visits to the Imperial War Museum and the National Archives.

Nigel kindly brought along a selection from his research material to our Heritage Open Day last September,

which generated lots of interest, and he has since been continuing his investigations. All the facts and details now being made available to us mean that we are confident about being able to publish a unique and valuable reference work of national importance.

Many Trust members are helping with the continuing research, but we would especially like to try to work out the layout of the Depot and also the exact route of the railway track from Skelmersdale Station to Lathom Park, which is still in doubt.

If you have any information on these points (or any other memories about the Depot) please contact the Company Secretary, Susan Dunn, on 01695 422550.

Lathom's Romantic Italian Connections

The story of a wonderful romantic link between Lathom and the Italian region of Lazio

By SUSAN DUNN

The beautiful Gardens of Ninfa are situated in the Lazio region of Italy, about 40 miles south-east of Rome, in the middle of the Pontine Plain not far from the Pontine Marshes.

The gardens are set amongst the ruins of the medieval town of Ninfa. ("Ninfa" means nymph). The Lepini Hills form a backdrop for the gardens and the lake. A single battlemented tower is an iconic reminder of the ancient town.

I first became aware of the possible link between Ninfa and Lathom whilst watching a BBC2 TV programme last year, 'The Curious House Guest', presented by Jeremy Musson who writes for Country Life. He visited Ninfa and recounted the story of the transformation of the gardens that began in the late 1800s.

I was amazed to hear him mention the name "Bootle Wilbraham" and that started me on a search for more information about the connection.

I found that Ada Constance Bootle Wilbraham, granddaughter of Edward, the 1st Lord Skelmersdale, was mainly responsible for beginning the transformation of the ruined gardens at Ninfa.

The Caetani family had been connected with Ninfa since the late 13th century, when the Caetani Pope Boniface VIII bought the town for his nephew, Pietro Caetani. However, Ninfa was destroyed in 1382 by local militia and the few inhabitants left then succumbed to malaria from the nearby Pontine Marshes.

In the 17th century the Caetani family returned and began to plant a formal garden in the ruined and overgrown remains of the town, including spring flowering bulbs, some of which can still be seen today. Later descendants started to uncover many of the ruins at Ninfa, but it was Ada in the 1880s who was mainly responsible for transforming the garden. Her plantings of cuttings of roses amongst the ruined walls during family picnics early last century still flourish now. It is said that some of these cuttings may have come from roses in the garden at Lathom House!

A cool fresh stream of mountain water runs through the garden - essential during the hot Italian summer. A narrow stone bridge cascading with flowers crosses the icy water. There is no formal layout in the garden - it is the ruins of the town and its ancient streets that create broad paths that are bordered with shrubs and tumbling flowering plants - over 10,000 varieties are said to be found in the garden.

Ada's granddaughter, Lelia Caetani, worked tirelessly to continue the restoration of the gardens, until her death in 1977. The gardens are now managed by the Roffredo Caetani Foundation and are open to the public once a month.

The beautiful lake and gardens of Ninfa, dominated by the ancient battlemented tower in the background



Ned Lathom's American trip with garden designer Norah Lindsay

'THE LIFE AND ART OF A GARDEN DESIGNER' by Allyson Hayward

Trust members may be interested to know that a biography of the garden designer Norah Lindsay has recently been published. John Knowles has liaised with the author, Allyson Hayward, on Norah's relationship with Ned Lathom, the 3rd Earl.

She mentions him in this book and a trip Norah and Ned took together to America in 1919.

This beautiful large illustrated book contains countless illustrations of Norah's work in the many famous gardens of her patrons. Her designs in the late 1920s and early 1930s for the parterre at Anne Boleyn's ancestral home, Blickling Hall in Norfolk, are particularly well known. The parterre has recently been re-planted using Norah's original planting list. The original and unique yew hedging remains as she planted it.

Norah was also a friend of Lawrence Johnston, who created Hidcote Manor Garden in Gloucestershire. Norah stayed in touch with Ned Lathom right up to his death in 1930.

The book is published by Frances Lincoln. RRP £35.00. ISBN 978-0-7112-2524-4

THE WOMAN MOST ADMIRER BY THE ROMANS

Ada Constance Bootle Wilbraham

Ada was born on 18th July 1846 in London. She was the granddaughter of the 1st Lord Skelmersdale.

Ada married Don Onorato Caetani, 15th Duca di Sermoneta on 11th July 1867, in London and subsequently went to live at Ninfa, in the region of Lazio in Italy.

She died on 16th August 1934 in Rome. Part of a contemporary description of Ada's life written in 1866 makes fascinating reading.

"Miss Wilbraham, the future Princess Teano, now Duchess of Sermoneta, was very beautiful in the Roman contadino style, with a clear brown skin and large liquid eyes."

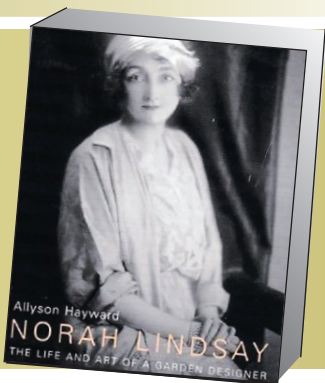
The woman most admired by the Romans was Princess Teano. Though an Englishwoman (Miss Wilbraham) she was quite Italian in type. With a large felt hat, goatskin leggings and a reed pipe, she would have been the most lovely shepherd boy, such as old Riedel Penrhyn Williams painted fifty years ago, in the pretty, conventional campagna sketches. As long as she was replenishing the house of Caetani with little Leones, Roffredos and Livios, she was sufficiently quiet, but from the moment that she thought she had done her duty in that respect, nothing could hold her. She rode and hunted; she went to live for weeks in wretched shanties in the Pontine Marshes, whilst her husband was sitting in a tub shooting wildfowl; she climbed impossible mountains in Switzerland, passing the ridges in a califourchon. She went up in balloons, telling her husband that he must stay below because it would not do if something happened to both of them, on account of the children (there were in the end six or seven of them).

One night she invited us to the Palazzo Caetani. We found the bedroom full of bedding, towel-horses, etc., etc. There was a steeplechase of ladies. I declined to be anything but a spectator. Princess Teano led off, showing a very pink pair of silk stockings; then followed Teresa Caracciolo, married by that time to Marc-Antonio Colonna, gathering her yellow satin skirt up to her waist, and then potelee Princess Brancaccio, supported on each side by a man, was, together with her ponderous Worth dress, dragged over the obstacles. Princess Teano half-killed herself with this regime and one whole winter she hovered between life and death from fever caught in the Pontine Marshes, but the moment she recovered she began again.

Onorato, her husband, was in appearance a grave and quiet man. Excessively tall, with a long beard and spectacles, he had upon his forehead a snow-white lock which gave him something peculiar and mysterious. Kind and good-hearted, I yet question whether he was capable of any sacrifice. He was an atheist but his standard of honour and morals was high for an Italian. It was fortunate that he told his stories in an undertone, for though they were funny, they were entirely unfit for publication."

Written & compiled by Susan Dunn.

We are also grateful to Sir Richard Baker Wilbraham for the information from the Rode Archives and also to John Knowles for his research material.



Tawd Vale Festival of Lanterns

John Foscett, warden of the Merseyside County Scout Councils, Tawd Vale Scout Camp in Lathom, invited some local residents and Trust members to their annual Festival of Lanterns in October.

The festival was attended by scout groups from all over the North West of England, each producing magnificent themed, illuminated structures and displays celebrating 100 years of Scouting. It was a truly awe inspiring event, with over fifty displays spread around the five acre site.

The historic Tawd Vale is located in beautiful surroundings - but very few people have had the opportunity to meander through the tree lined valley.

John Foscett said it would be a pleasure to see Trust members if they would like a pleasant stroll, or just to take their dogs for a walk through Tawd Vale.

IT IS HOWEVER IMPORTANT to call at the Wardens bungalow at the entrance to Tawd Vale, or at the shop further into the site, to first check-in, for obvious security reasons.



Lathom Park Trust Annual General Meeting Tuesday 26th February 7.30pm

The fifth Annual General Meeting of the Trust will be held on Tuesday 26th February 2008 at 7-30 p-m in the 'Orangery', Briars Hall Hotel, Briars Lane, Lathom. (off the A5209) Your copy of the Agenda for the meeting is enclosed with this Newsletter:

The formal business meeting will be followed by a talk by Dr. Jennifer Lewis, Honorary Research Fellow, School of Archaeology, Classics & Egyptology, University of Liverpool. Dr. Lewis is also a Fellow of the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Liverpool and she has helped and sponsored Lathom Park Trust's previous projects.

As we embark on what we hope will be yet another successful Historic Lathom project, Dr. Lewis will speak about the potential of our project plans for uncovering even more of the hidden mysteries of Lathom.

Members will also have a good opportunity to discuss their own particular project interests with the various group co-ordinators, for updates and progress reports.

Please make every effort to attend. Your continuing support is crucial to the well-being of the Trust.

RE M I N D E R !

Membership fees are now due for 2008 (ie Nov '07 - Nov '08)
Individual UK £8 - Overseas £10
Partner / Family UK £11 - Overseas £13
Cheques / money orders should be made payable to
LATHOM PARK TRUST LIMITED
and sent to Barbara Fulton, Membership Secretary,
Silcock House, Hall Lane, Lathom, Nr Ormskirk, Lancs. L40 5UG



Mike Clarke's acclaimed book on the history of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal

Canal talk launches Lathom Heritage Festival

We began our heritage festival weekend on Friday 7th September in the beautiful setting of Lathom Park Chapel with a presentation by Mike Clarke all about the history of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, particularly in our locality. Many old photographs of working boats, boat men and their families and canalside buildings in West Lancashire gave us a memory of how it all was not so long ago.

Mike has written several books and is an acknowledged expert on the Canal - he even lived at one time on a canal boat at Burscough!

The presentation was followed by an enjoyable Wine and Cheese buffet in the Trust's marquee, organised by our hardworking Social Events Committee.



LATHOM FEATURED IN NEW BOOK

JOURNAL OF THE LANCASHIRE LOCAL HISTORY FEDERATION
Aspects of Lancashire History:
Essays in Memory of Mary Higham edited by Zoe Lawson.

The 2007-8 journal has recently been published, as a tribute to the late Mary Higham. Nine contributors have written articles, including Nigel Neil - "Parks within parks like Russian dolls: the work of the Lathom Park Trust Archives Research Group".

Nigel discusses our work in unravelling the history of the medieval park and embraces the fields of archaeology, landscape and medieval history and the study of place-names. These were all areas within Mary Higham's field of interest and she approved of and participated in the project, helping us particularly with place-name evidence.

Other contributors to this journal who are well known to Trust members are Audrey Coney and Alan Crosby.

The journal is A5 size, 117 pages, black and white text, photographs and maps, and the cover is in colour. Price £4.75 including p&p. Please phone Susan Dunn on 01695 422550 if you would like to order a copy.

Aspects of Lancashire History: Essays in Memory of Mary Higham



Edited by Zoe Lawson

KNOWSLEY HALL VISIT & LUNCHEON

A visit, organised by the Social Events Committee, to Knowsley Hall proved to be both informative and enjoyable. The Hall has been in the ownership of the Stanley family since 1385 and has many historic links with Lathom House.

We were fortunate to have Emma Tate, Curator of Collections at Knowsley, take us on tour of the Hall and its art treasures, many specifically relating to Lathom.

Shakespeare's connections with the murdered Fifth Earl, Ferdinando (Lord Strange), was also touched upon which gave members, author John Idris-Jones and drama lecturer, Jill Pimblett, a valuable opportunity to discuss their own theories further.

The tour was followed by an excellent lunch in the impressive surroundings and a wander round the 'Capability Brown' landscaped parkland and lake, rounded off a brilliant day out.

Pictured right:
Trust members on the steps of Knowsley Hall before leaving for home.



LATHOM PARK TRUST SOCIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE STOP PRESS

Saturday March 15th 8pm
Scout Hall, Hall Lane, Lathom

LANCASHIRE NIGHT

Delicious Lancashire Hotpot and Apple pie
with entertainment from the popular Lancashire Folk Group

T'OTHERS

Tickets £8
Tel. Anne Ferguson
01704 893083