

NEWSLETTER

Letter from American Professor highlights LATHOM'S INFLUENCE ON WORLD HISTORY



Noble Margaret Beaufort played key role

Thanks to the work of Trust volunteers, residents of Lathom are becoming increasingly aware of the area's historic heritage, but how many of us realise that we hold it in our hands when we handle a one pence coin or a twenty pence piece?

The medieval portcullis on the back of a one pence is the emblem of the Beaufort family, and Margaret Beaufort, of course, helped to build Lathom House in the late 15th century as the wife of Thomas Stanley, 1st Earl of Derby.

And the twenty pence piece? Margaret by a previous marriage was the mother of King Henry the 7th. She was also the great-granddaughter of John of Gaunt, son of Edward the 3rd, and it was because of this blood link that son Henry came to the throne.

The Tudor Rose on our twenty pences unified King Henry's Red Rose of Lancaster (from his mother's Lancastrian line) and his wife Elizabeth's White Rose of York. Thus part of Lathom's past is stamped on our coinage but the strange thing is that it has taken an American academic to bring to the forefront the crucial role that Margaret plays in the annals of history.

Dick Gibson is Professor of English and Director of the Graduate English programme at Jacksonville University in Florida.

In 2004 he came to Edge Hill College to take a Shakespeare class as part of a summer school for American students and the play he chose to study was "Richard the 3rd", one of his favourites.

What happened in the weeks that followed he found hard to credit. They were reading the play, which of course mentions Margaret Beaufort as "The Countess of Richmond" and in which Thomas Stanley is actually a major stage character.

The professor had explained their historical importance to his class, but, as he explains in a letter to the Trust, "I had absolutely no idea that either of them had anything to do with Ormskirk. So you can imagine my astonishment when, just for fun, I took the students to see the beautiful local parish church, and lo and behold, there were those stone effigies of two characters in the play we were reading, who were also two of the most important people in the history of England. It was spine-tingling..." Since he had never even heard of Ormskirk till then, the whole thing seemed almost miraculous.

The professor was inspired to return to Edge Hill the following summer to research and teach 'Shakespeare and the Wars of the Roses' and it was then that he built up a detailed picture of Margaret Beaufort and events that took place 200 years before the Civil War.



Margaret Beaufort



Margaret's tomb is in Westminster Abbey yet the professor was amazed to find that no-one in England seemed to appreciate her true place in history.

He looks upon our present Queen as a "direct descendant of a scholarly, kind and pious lady who lived in Lathom and helped to build Lathom House in the 15th century."

The Wars of the Roses exterminated the male members, not only of the Bolingbroke line but also of the Beaufort line, leaving only the young Margaret Beaufort alive - the last Lancastrian.

Queen Elizabeth the Second is, of course, the present Duke of Lancaster and her signature is in the ancient book of previous Dukes (i.e Kings) on display in Lancaster Castle.

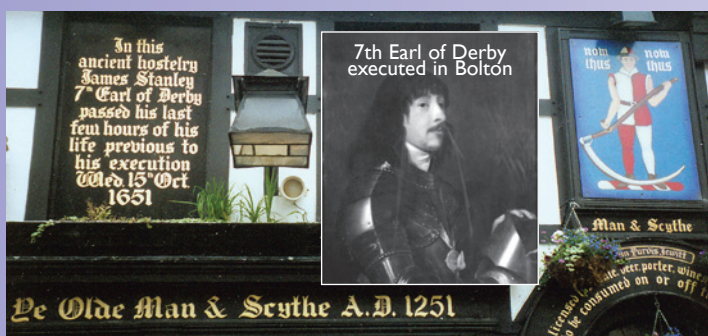
The American professor is of English descent and enthusiastically expresses the view that without Margaret Beaufort and Thomas Stanley everything in English history would be changed.

He writes, "Imagine an England with no Henry the 8th; no Queen Elizabeth the 1st; none of the Georges; no Victoria!"

And that's how important Margaret Beaufort and Thomas Stanley of Lathom are to the history of England, of the British Isles, and indeed of the world".

West Lancashire in particular has come to have a place in Dick Gibson's heart and he plans to return here this year when hopefully he will be able to meet members of the Trust.

A full transcript of Professor Dick Gregory's letter is available on request



SCENE OF 'BOLTON MASSACRE' REVISITED BY TRUST



A day trip to the historic 'Man & Scythe' public house in Bolton proved an enjoyable experience for Trust members with a guided tour of the ancient cellars, a traditional lunch and sampling their excellent world famous mead.

**DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES
2006 HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 8,9,10TH SEPT.
LET'S HAVE YOUR IDEAS**

HAVE YOU SOMETHING OF HISTORICAL INTEREST TO LATHOM & DISTRICT ?

Lathom & District Antiques & Memorabilia Roadshow

Have you something of historical interest to Lathom? An heirloom handed down, an old photographic postcard or newspaper cutting? Perhaps a relic from a big house or a shard, coin, or any artefact unearthed whilst farming, digging, metal detecting or just gardening like John Hayton? (pictured) Perhaps you have stories or letters handed down from previous generations that would be of interest?

Why not bring them along to the Trust's Antiques & Memorabilia Roadshow, Saturday 20th May 2006 at The Scout HQ, Hall Lane, Lathom, between 10-30 am and 4.30 pm, when a team of experts will be delighted to talk to you, record your item and perhaps tell you something more. If your item is too large to bring along, a photo will do, or arrangements could be made for an expert to visit to view it on site. This is NOT an auction or valuation and items will only be recorded with your permission. Nominal entrance fee, including light refreshments

For more information contact ;
Jenny Coombes 01695 577764
or Pam Nanson 01695 574364



'Portrait of Jessy'- more evidence of the creative Bootle-Wilbraham influences

Painting of Jessy,
the Honourable Mrs. Bootle-Wilbraham.

The photograph of the small painting was sent to us by Sarah, Mrs. Randle Sparrow, of Shropshire. It was painted in 1833 by Jessy, the Hon. Mrs. Bootle-Wilbraham when she was aged 20 (a self-portrait). Jessy was married to Richard, the eldest son of the first Skelmersdale and was the mother of Edward, 2nd Baron.

Mrs. Sparrow's husband was given the small picture by his grandmother Rose Sparrow, the great granddaughter of Jessy. The Bootle-Wilbraham family has played a significant artistic role in Lathom's history, from the design of stained glass windows in Lathom Chapel to illustrating and participating in the many theatrical performances staged at Lathom House, local schools and other Stately homes around the country.

RESPECTFUL MEMORIES

The Social Events Committee recently planted a flowering Cherry Blossom tree in memory of Isobel Carrington, a past Secretary of the committee who died last year.

Sadly this committee suffered another great loss when Janet Pope died in September. Janet was Treasurer of the Social Events Committee and played a major creative role in the Trust's Theatre Group. Our thoughts are with Eddie and Janet's family



Heritage Open Day walks break new ground

New walks were introduced at the Heritage weekend involving joint efforts from the Trust and Lathom Parish Council.

The walks included a visit to the grounds of Burscough Priory (by kind permission of Mrs Musker) and followed a route which explored the sites of the ancient Lathom crosses.

Parish Councillors and Trust members Liz Ord and Jenny Rushton are working in conjunction with LCC Green Partnership Awards to establish an historical tour. The walks proved highly successful with numerous unanticipated points of interest emerging - which unfortunately played havoc with our schedules.

Many of the visitors asked for details of other Lathom guided walks - a subject which we are currently working on.



Remains of one of Lathom's ancient crosses uncovered by a group of the walkers

LATHOM DISCOVERS LARGEST EVER 'ASSEMBLAGES' OF 12-14 CENTURY POTTERY IN NORTH WEST ENGLAND



Youngsters get 'hands on' experience with the excavation



Yet another TV crew filming Lathom's discoveries



Ironage Quorn Stone in play



Open day displays



Cataloguing & recording Data

Dutton's Farm Project Update (Jan 2006)

The project started on Monday 25th July 2005 and ran every weekday for 5 weeks until 31st August. Prior to excavation Ron Gurney and Julie Cartwright undertook a geophysical survey of two late-medieval pottery scatters close to the present Burscough - Newburgh road which runs through Lathom. This provided evidence of circular and rectangular features (possible structures) below the modern day ploughsoil.

One of the aims of the project was to try and identify if archaeological features survived below two areas of late medieval pottery scatters (collected by local volunteers prior to excavation) and to try and determine what the features might represent. This has been achieved and early results indicate that potential medieval land boundaries, in the form of banks and ditches, survive along with an impressive cobbled yard possibly associated with a medieval building yet to be located.

Another project aim was to recover significant amounts of medieval pottery that might allow the identification of patterns of ceramic production and organisation in the region. This has also been achieved, the project volunteers have located and collected one of the largest assemblages of twelfth to fourteenth century pottery ever found in the north west of England.

Perhaps the real success of this project is evident from the wide range of members and their families, including children, who have played such an active role in all stages of the excavation, from initial fieldwalking and collection of surface shards to excavating, sorting, cataloguing and data base production.

Ron Cowell, Curator of Prehistoric Archaeology, National Museums, Liverpool, in conjunction with Lathom archaeologist Steve Baldwin, have directed and managed the project and a full assessment is in the process of now being completed. Over one hundred members of the public took part in the guided tours of the site during Heritage weekend in September; enjoying scorching weather and generous hospitality provided by the Beesley family.

At the recent AGM, Ron Cowell gave an illustrated presentation of the 'finds' and outlined the possible fascinating links of this site with discoveries emerging from the Lathom Parklands survey carried out by the Trust in 2004. Like many research projects more clues create more questions for further investigation and Lathom in particular continues to provide a seemingly endless potential treasure trove.

The Trust wishes to express our thanks to Ron, Steve, the Beesley family, Paul Kenyon for use of his office and computer facilities and of course all members who have so enthusiastically contributed in all sorts of weather and taxing conditions.



More than a hundred visitors enjoyed scorching weather and generous hospitality during their guided tours of the Duttons Farm excavations on Heritage Sunday

News-clips



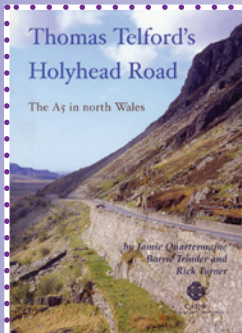
Howard M. Whitaker, FRICS

Howard M. Whitaker, FRICS, nephew of the 3rd Earl of Lathom brings his wealth of local knowledge and professional expertise to the Lathom & District Memorabilia & Antiques Roadshow on Saturday 20th May. Howard's vast experience and participation augers well for what is expected to be a busy and informative event. The above picture was taken on Howard's retirement as auctioneer in Ulverston



Pam Nanson & Steeleye Span

Ken Nicol of well known folk group Steeleye Span, seen here with Trustee, Pam Nanson, recently visited the actual site of the 'Siege of Lathom'. Ken wrote and composed the featured track on their latest CD - 'They called her Babylon' - the story of Lady Charlotte's defence of Lathom House. Members will be interested to know that Steeleye Span are appearing in concert at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on Sunday 7th of May - more info in next 'UPDATE'



Thomas Telford's Holyhead Road

The A5 in north Wales

Prestigious Award from the Council for British Archaeology has gone to Lathom Park Trustee Jamie Quarmermaine for his book 'Thomas Telford's Holyhead Road', a comprehensive survey of the spectacular Welsh section of the road and associated buildings

which was winner of 'Transport Book of the Year 2005'. Jamie said "I have to admit, I was pretty chuffed, particularly as no other book brought out by Oxford Archaeology (North), for whom I work, has ever won an award". A fuller description of the book, which can be purchased for £17.50, is available on request.

NEW TRUSTEES APPOINTED

We welcome Andrew Beeston, Bruce Fulton and Paul Kenyon to the board of Lathom Park Trust Limited. Their appointments were confirmed at the recent Annual General Meeting. All are residents of Lathom and bring a wealth of local expertise to the Trust and our ever expanding workloads.

The AGM was well attended, other Trustees who were re-elected were, David Dunn and Kenneth Vincent.

Lancashire Record Office acquire more new & exciting Lathom House theatrical treasures

Trust member Nigel Neil brought us exciting news of another brilliant Lathom acquisition by the Lancashire Record Office. Nigel is also a member of the Friends of Lancashire Archives who funded the purchase of this new 'find' - the Lathom House Scrapbook, which covers the theatricals and social amusements of the guests at Lathom House in the second half of the 19th century and includes watercolour illustrations by the Bootle-Wilbraham's and records of their thespian performances. Having now had an opportunity to briefly mull through the hundred or so pages, we urge members to go and see for themselves this marvellous record of Lathom's theatrical history.

The following article is an edited extract from Bruce Jackson's newsletter. Bruce is the County Archivist and his writing succinctly captures the flavour and significance of this acquisition.

"I am sure someone, somewhere must already have said that "archives are like buses - you wait ages to find one, and then two come along together".

Certainly this observation seems fitting for the records of the Bootle-Wilbraham family who became earls of Lathom in the late 19th century. You will remember that in June 2004, the Record Office managed, with the financial help of the Friends of Lancashire Archives and several other national funders, to purchase Humphrey Repton's "Red Book" for the Lathom Estate (ref. DP 504)

Previously there had been no evidence to contradict the report - noted in the Record Office files and backed up by a newscutting - that all the records of the family and estate had been destroyed in the furnaces of Blaguegate Colliery, after the death of the last Earl in 1929. The fact that virtually nothing from Lathom was known to survive makes this album of interest, particularly as the few other surviving items are relatively impersonal. The scrapbook provides a glimpse of the last earl, with his dazzling links with the world of entertainment - Noel Coward and Ivor Novello were house guests for example.

While this background makes the item of great interest, the content of the scrapbook itself does not disappoint, throwing light on an interesting coincidence of amateur and professional theatricals. The album includes sketches, poems, letters, newscuttings and programmes for theatrical productions at Lathom House, which was licensed as a theatre with County Quarter Sessions.

Performances were also held at Maghull National School, the Primrose League at Skelmersdale and local schools at Burscough, Bickerstaffe, Westhead and Lathom Park, SS Garonne (Orient Line), Worth Park, Rufford Abbey and Luton Hoo.

I am sure the Scrapbook will be of great interest to a wide range of people and we will be looking to see how we can best engage children and others through the strong visual appeal of much of the material - may be in the form of brief dramatic re-enactments".

The Scrapbook can now be viewed at the Lancashire Record Office in Preston (ref. DP509)

- an opportunity not to be missed !

