

# NEWSLETTER

## WORLD PREMIERE FOR LATHOM PARK TRUST

### 1920's Lathom Theatrical Extravaganza

On 26th and 27th April the Lathom Park Trust will be providing a unique theatrical experience that tells the story of the 3rd Earl "Ned" Lathom during the Twenties.

The atmosphere of the heady days of the Charleston and the Flapper girl will be recreated at The Lathom Club where the story of Ned and his friends, the theatre glitterati of the day, will be recalled through music, drama, pictures and stories of the Earl, his family and friends - and on the actual stage where they performed in the Twenties. You will be welcomed with refreshments and the music of the Twenties with a background of 'never-seen-before' photographs of the young Earl, his family, friends and home; and invited to remember the heady days between the Wars and the life and times of the young playwright Earl.

Featuring professional actresses, soloists and the music of Ivor Novello, Noel Coward and Vivian Ellis, this World Premiere event, specially written by author and playwright John Knowles, must not be missed.



World famous thespians take their applause on the 1920's Lathom stage

**BOOK NOW**

### Ancient 'Siege of Lathom' timbers discovered

Since work commenced on the restoration of The West Wing of Lathom House in 1996, a large number of huge baulks of structural timbers have been removed from the building and WLDC and English Heritage have agreed that they are unsuitable for re-use in the restoration of the building.

It was at first assumed that the timbers were all from trees felled in the early 18th Century for Leoni's Palladian mansion. But a closer inspection of the timbers suggested that some of them have much earlier mouldings and joint constructions and that they are mostly oak and could possibly have been salvaged from the ruins of the fortified medieval house, despite orders from Parliament for it to be "... pulled down and cast into the mote...".

English Heritage therefore decided to commission some tree ring dating on the timbers to try to establish their date. Samples of wood were taken by Ian Tyers of Sheffield University which showed that five of the samples produced dates with the last surviving ring dated to the latter half of the 15th Century and this is consistent with their original use in the construction of the medieval house built for Thomas Stanley around 1490; There is thus very strong evidence that these timbers were over 500 years old and had witnessed, and survived, the great sieges of 1644 and 1645.



Bill Kenyon, technically the owner of the timbers, kindly donated them to the Trust. The problem was that their condition was deteriorating rapidly. Ideally, they should have been retained at their remaining lengths and dried out in laboratory conditions, but there was no funding for such an operation, and it was decided better to salvage something than leave them to rot away. A chain saw was borrowed one cold December day last year and Steve Baldwin, John Hinchliffe and Mike Carrington spent hours cutting some of the best samples into manageable pieces and putting them into the Trust's safe storage.

The best will, hopefully, be used for display and interpretation when the Trust sets up a study centre and some could possibly be sold on as treasured samples of "500 year old Lancashire oak that survived the Siege of Lathom House".

### EXCLUSIVE TO MEMBERS AND THEIR GUESTS ONLY TICKETS STRICTLY LIMITED

Tickets for this unique event include pre-show and interval refreshments. The show is staged for two performances only, Friday 26th April and Saturday 27th April, commencing promptly at 7.30pm.

Dress is informal but like many you may wish to enter the spirit of the Twenties in appropriate fashion.

Tickets cost £12.50 and are available from:

**KATHLEEN WILDE**  
**'Bramwell', Hoscar Moss Road, Lathom,**  
**Nr Ormskirk, Lancashire L40 4BQ**  
(Tel: 01704 893368)

Please send stamped addressed envelope, making cheques payable to Lathom Park Trust and stating which performance you require.



**MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE**



## LATHOM PARK TRUST STAGE WORLD PREMIERE

BOOK NOW

for a unique theatrical experience

T

This exceptional event will feature extracts from the letters and plays of the young Earl performed by two young professional actors, Emma Nanson and Caroline Woodruff and introduced by John Knowles, the secretary of the Noel Coward Society, who is currently researching a biography on Ned

Lathom and his family. Extracts from the six published plays of Ned Lathom will give a flavour of the Earl's struggle to become an accepted playwright and the difficulties he endured at the hands of the Censor.

Our special guest is Adrian Wright, author and singer

who will be performing songs of the Twenties accompanied by Nancy Wells, featuring music composed by Ned Lathom's friends, Ivor Novello, Noel Coward and Vivian Ellis. A chance to hear and join in with some of the most memorable songs of the age. Don't miss this opportunity to return to part of Lathom's past, on the actual stage - in the actual place that witnessed the theatrical rising stars of the Twenties.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lathom Park Trust member, John Knowles has spent most of his life working in education and has always had an interest in writing, the theatre and music. He was a founder member of the Noel Coward Society and is currently its secretary. He is currently researching the three Earls of Lathom in order to produce publications to enhance understanding of this unique family. His interest stems from the connection between Ned Lathom and Noel Coward and through John's wife who is the daughter of a local Lathom family.

His first sight on a windy summer's day some eighteen years ago of the views across the West Lancashire plain and the dark unkempt stonewalls of the West Utility Wing of Lathom House started his interest, culminating in the opportunity presented by the Noel Coward Society to explore the story of the three Earls. During these two evenings at The Lathom Club he hopes to provide information and insights into the life of Ned Lathom, a sensitive intelligent man whose childhood, wartime experiences and life-threatening illness, shaped his passion for the company of creative people, writing and supporting the theatre world he loved.

Author John Knowles

## LATHOM PARK TRUST ONLINE



Jamie Quartermaine of Oxford University (North) and Ron Cowell of Liverpool University, joined other members of the LPT Website Project team to establish the design format and structure for the Lathom Park Trust website which will be launched later this year.

Apart from the online links with the Liverpool and Oxford Universities websites it will also combine more fully with the International Noel Coward Society to extend their existing pages which already include reference to the Lathom Park Trust.

The project is another aspect covered by the Local Heritage Initiative Grant which we were awarded last year and will form the basis for the wealth of new information now being discovered by our Archive Research and Buildings Project teams.



## LATHOM'S ARCHIVE RESEARCHERS DELVING DEEP INTO THE UNKNOWN

Comparatively little is known about Lathom, its history and evolution. Many records were lost or intentionally destroyed during the turbulent years of Lathom's past. Field and place names, earth-works and boundaries which often give clues about locations, ownerships and the development of settlements are vague or yet to be discovered.

The LPT Archive Research Group quickly realised the challenging task ahead and had its first meeting at the Lancashire Records Office in Preston on Friday, 16th November 2001. At the meeting Nigel Neil and Dr Alan Crosby, the Trust's archaeological consultants for the project, explained the sources of information held by the LRO and other repositories and how best to access these. There was also a session on how to obtain and use aerial photographs covering the Lathom area.

It was decided that the first jobs to be undertaken by the Group members; are the transcribing of the Tithe Award for Lathom and an assessment of the aerial photographs held by the Trust. Tithes were a payment to the local clergy by the lay population of one tenth of all produce. These had existed since Anglo-Saxon times but by the early 19th century the system was breaking down under the pressures of increasing industrialisation (it is difficult to give one tenth of the produce of a ship-yard!).



Training day at Lancashire Records Office

It was therefore decided to replace tithes with a tax on land values. This required surveys of tithe districts and the production of maps and award documents which are of immense value to local historians as they contain not only details of land holdings but also field names which can often be of ancient origin.

Group members, Fay Alexander Charles and Jenny Coombes; Pauline Davies and Dr Peter Sewell are regular visitors to the Records Office where they input the tithe information into laptop computers for interpretation at a later date.

The assessment of the aerial photographs is a more complex task involving the plotting of our existing coverage on a map of the area so that we can fill in any gaps with additional photos obtainable from English Heritage. This job requires the ability to relate photos to maps and to understand Ordnance Survey National Grid References. Group members: Stephen Baldwin, John Trippier and Mark Sephton are currently fulfilling this essential task with relish.

### WORD KEEPS SPREADING

LPT Secretary Ailsa Bennett and Tustee John Hinchliffe have had fascinating letters from people around the country with Lathom links. Alison Walton (nee Sixsmith) of Gosport, Elizabeth Gowan of London are just two who have come up with exciting information. Some fabulous pen and pastel drawings of 1885 have been generously donated to the Trust, but lack of space cannot do any of these items justice. There will be more details in our next newsletter.

## BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY'S 'MISSING LINK' DISCOVERED IN LATHOM ?

Ron Cowell's project at Duttons Farm, Lathom has now been in progress for three seasons. It has already produced evidence of an Iron age farmstead and associated agricultural landscape, which was in use for at least the period between about 100 BC-100 AD. There are indications that the settlement here was much more long-lived than that and future work is planned to extend our understanding further.

The project has an important educational and public access basis and training courses, site visits, lectures, and press coverage allow a local audience to share in the results. In future it is hoped that this can be extended even further by links to the web site being set up by the Lathom Park Trust and Museum displays. Additionally, a recent grant application to a national body, the British Academy, has shown that the project is regarded as of national academic importance. Comments from highly qualified, external referees advising the British Academy on the value of the project, mention that the North West is 'the Cinderella of British archaeology' and 'largely ignored' by authors of major national publications. This project is judged, however, to have the potential to allow Lancashire finally to play an important role 'in the national debate about the nature of rural archaeology', with this site having the potential 'to be the type-site for the region'. It is also described as having the 'potential to lift the veil on one of the most obscure areas of British archaeology' being 'the breakthrough opportunity for which we have been waiting'.

As this is a research project, funding is always very hard to come by. The project therefore, has to rely on combining a number of small grants each year to allow work to progress. In the light of the comments about the importance of the results achieved from such modest amounts, those who have supported the project so far deserve recognition. These include bodies such as West Lancashire District Council, Lancashire County Council, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside and Liverpool University, and the help in kind from WCF and the Beesley family, which is equivalent to a significant sum over several years, is also gratefully acknowledged.

RC



**BBC** features Lathom Park Trust  
Steve Baldwin and Pam Nanson, backed up by Ken Vincent did a great job for the Trust on Radio Lancashire's Friday 8th March programme. They had very short notice of the broadcast and to eloquently convey so much information about the Trust in such little time deserves our congratulations. Thanks also to Trust member and glass expert, Ruth Hurst Vose's plug for Lathom's medieval Palace Fortress

## Lathom's influence on World Heritage sites



John Hinchliffe, the former Conservation Officer for West Lancs District Council (and still Professional Advisor and Trustee to Lathom Park Trust) took up the post of World Heritage Officer for Liverpool City Council in August last year with responsibility for achieving the inscription of Liverpool as a World Heritage Site - Liverpool is being nominated as the supreme example of a commercial port at the time of Britain's greatest global influence - from the end of the 18th Century to the beginning of the 20th Century.

John said 'I have been spending much of my time so far researching the history of Liverpool and really it is no surprise to find there is a strong link to Lathom in the proposed World Heritage Site.

Not only is there Stanley Dock but there is pictorial evidence of the Tower of Liverpool, built in 1402 by Sir John Stanley of Lathom House on the site of the existing Tower Building in the Strand to provide a military presence in the town to rival the Molyneux who held Liverpool Castle'

Only sites of outstanding universal value to the international community will be accepted by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. Such as the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall of China. There are only 24 World Heritage Sites in the United Kingdom at present including Stonehenge and Hadrian's Wall, and none yet in the North West. It will be a great accolade to the historic importance of the area if the nomination is successful.

## LATHOM WIN LANCASHIRE'S BEST KEPT VILLAGE PRIZE



Vice Chairman of Lathom Parish Council, Peter Ferguson seen here receiving the Hambleton Trophy with from left to right : Anthony Skinner, Editor of Lancashire Life, Dorothy Westell, Chairman Lancashire County Council, Kevin Holden, Chairman of sponsors Chorley & District Building Society, Robert Hodge, Chairman West Lancashire District Council and Chairman's Lady Margaret Edwards

## Walled Garden secrets uncovered



Golf umbrellas shot up as the LPT Walled Garden Project Group set off in pouring rain with our guide, Mr John Hayton, who had kindly arranged for us to explore the walled garden. It was an immediate link with the past to see that the tall brick walls were still standing, although obviously in need of repair. Mr Hayton, who once lived in the East Wing and had a market garden on the site, pointed out that the foundations of the pineapple house are still visible. We could see where four rows of cast iron pipes had provided bottom heat for the pits.

On top would have been slates and on top again the light compost in which the pineapples flourished. Real excitement when we found some of the blue tiles which had formed the edging round the peach house. Of the splendid vinery which produced grapes early, midseason and late, only the foundations remain. Strawberries in pots were forced alongside the early vines. With good management they would be served with cream for Easter!

Mr Hayton remembers how plums and greengages lent colour to the orchard as they ripened, and the earliest of the apples on the scene were Beauty of Bath. The twisted trunk of a Morello cherry tree is still lodged against the old wall, and we imagined how the fruit might have been used in the Bootle-Wilbraham's own fine blend of cherry brandy, stored away with the home-made wines, syrups, cordials, jams and preserves.

In Victorian establishments nothing was wasted. Offal and bones from the estate cattle were ground into fertiliser. Even small twigs were put to use. They supported the strawberry plants to keep the fruit sound and clean.

Co-ordinator of the project group, archaeologist and Trustee, Mark Fletcher believes there is a wealth of information still waiting to be garnished from this once exotic site and is extremely encouraged by the Group's enthusiasm and John Hayton's invaluable knowledge and co-operation.

MW





## SKITTLING SUCCESS

Beryl Whittington, Chairman of the hardworking and enthusiastic Social Events Committee reported yet another great success with the traditional Lathom Skittles event held in November which raised over £300 and thanked the valuable contributions made by Brian Smith and the Douglas Valley Lions in setting up the alley and illuminations.

Beryl explained the essential need to create funds for the continuing success of the Trust - especially with so many interesting projects ahead and the current Local Heritage Initiative Grant fully committed to funding the Vernacular Building Survey, the Archive Research Programme and establishing the Lathom Park Trust Website. It was however important to pace a balanced diary of events throughout the year to ensure there is something of interest for everyone in the community.

## 15c Lathom Chapel - Open again for business

After the long closure brought about by the serious Foot and Mouth restrictions the historic Lathom Park Chapel is back to normal and will once again feature in the Trust's National Heritage Weekend later this year. At a recent tree planting event in the beautiful Chapel grounds, Lathom Park Trust took the opportunity to meet the Reverend Chris Jones where he told us of his deep fascination for Lathom and it's community.

'I came to Ormskirk in December 1999 as Vicar of the Parish of Ormskirk & Lathom, so I had overall responsibility for the Chapel from then. However since the retirement of Rev. David Benge as Minister at Lathom in September last year services have been covered by myself, other Clergy and lay people from the Parish and elsewhere. This has meant I have had more 'hands on ministry' at the Chapel and in the area and I count that a privilege.'

'I see Lathom Park Chapel as a place of worship and a wonderful historic building. We celebrated it's 500th Anniversary in 2000 and are keen to foster links with other organisations in the area. such as the Scouts, Tawd Vale, Pilkingtons and the Lathom Park Trust - as well as our school of course.

But above all we live and work in the context of a farming community, as we were reminded of so pointedly by the Foot and Mouth problem last year. At the height of the problem we felt it right to close the Chapel and worship in the Scout Hut to show consideration to local farmers. God has given us some good farming land in this area as well as a rich historical heritage.

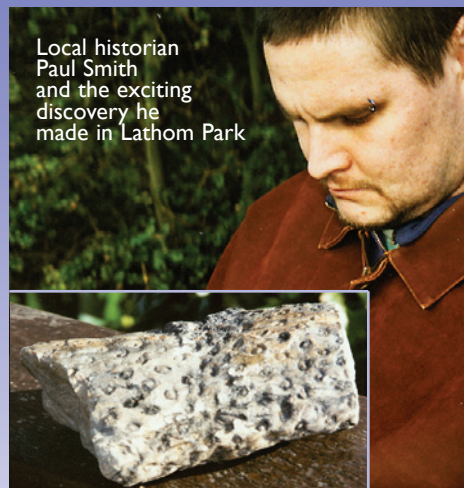
I am a 'Towny' who is learning fast about rural life and I hope that all who want to see Lathom prosper will work for a future which also values it's history'.



The Reverend Chris Jones seen here with Lathom Park Trust members Sam Holland and Jean Rimmer outside the famous Lathom Park Chapel

## NOW ! 280 MILLION YEARS OF LATHOM HISTORY DISCOVERED

Local historian Paul Smith and the exciting discovery he made in Lathom Park



Local historian, and Member of the Trust, Paul Smith stumbled across an interesting stone-like object while meandering through Lathom Park one hot day in summer.

Closer inspection showed it to be part of a fossilised fern-like (Lepidodendron) tree that once stood over 130 feet tall in the carboniferous swamp forests that were 'Lathom Park' over 280 million years ago.

The fossil probably reached the surface by way of coal mining activity - Lathom Park has many disused mineshafts and coal seams beneath its surface. Paul was absolutely thrilled to have found the fossil and it is by far the oldest tree ever to be found in the Park.

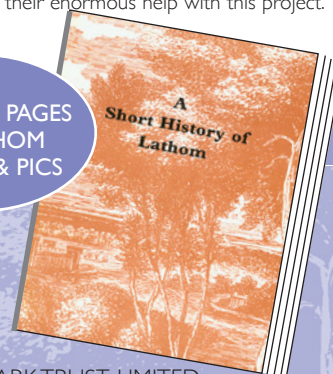
## LIKE A DUCK TO WATER

Lathom's Vici Hodge, has taken to the Vernacular Building Survey 'like a duck to water'. She has been amazed at the wealth



of history virtually on her doorstep. The Lathom survey is making excellent progress with many more discoveries than could ever have been anticipated. We are extremely grateful to local residents, Hoscar Mission and Eric Joinson for their enormous help with this project.

72  
CRAMMED PAGES  
OF LATHOM  
HISTORY & PICS



JUST OUT - REPRINT OF POPULAR LATHOM HISTORY - £5 inc p&p .....

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL / APPLICATION FORM

Membership fees for the current year are £5 per individual member or £7 for partner / family membership.

These commenced on a common starting date for all members of November 1st 2001.

Membership of Lathom Park Trust brings you information updates, colourful Newsletters twice a year, opportunities to get personally involved with archaeological excavations and research under expert guidance, friendly meetings, social events and a diverse range of projects relating to the unfolding tapestry of Lathom.

Please complete the following details, enclosing the appropriate fee - Cheques should be made payable to LATHOM PARK TRUST LIMITED

Name / s		
Address	Tel	E-mail

Type of membership £5 Individual ☐ £7 Partner / Family ☐

Please return your completed Application Form with appropriate remittance to:

AILSA BENNETT, SECRETARY, LATHOM PARK TRUST, NELSON'S COTTAGES, HALL LANE, LATHOM, Nr ORMSKIRK, LANCASHIRE, L40 5UG