

NEWSLETTER

EUREKA!
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'WE ARE TALKING HERE OF A SERIOUSLY LARGE & IMPORTANT DEFENSIVE STRUCTURE'

LATHOM'S NATIONALLY IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES

Supported by
The National Lottery®
 through the Heritage Lottery Fund



The Trust's successful application for substantial Heritage Lottery funding enabled us to start the third phase of our Historic Lathom Project in May 2009.

One of the key aims of the archaeological investigations into the site of Lathom House and its medieval landscape was to find the extent of the 'long lost' castle. In the early days of the project the team soon found that the conventional geophysical equipment in use was not penetrating deep enough into the ground to detect any building remains associated with the medieval house.

Our salvation came in the guise of Martin Roseveare of ArchaeoPhysica (specialist providers of surveys for archaeology) who, after discussions with Oxford Archaeology North (project managers for the Trust) and project directors Steve Baldwin and Jamie Quartermaine, came up with the latest state-of-the-art geophysical equipment, which involved using Ground Penetrating Radar: This could penetrate down to remarkable depths, in excess of ten metres, enabling the team to discover a late-medieval building surviving deep below a thick layer of 18th century landscaping.

Trenching began with eager anticipation, revealing civil war demolition, containing numerous musket balls, medieval walls, cobbled floors, a courtyard and what appeared to be a path leading to the threshold of a large medieval building. With a bit of detective work, we are now able to reconstruct part of the line of the moat, and we anticipate its diameter could be in the region of 305m.

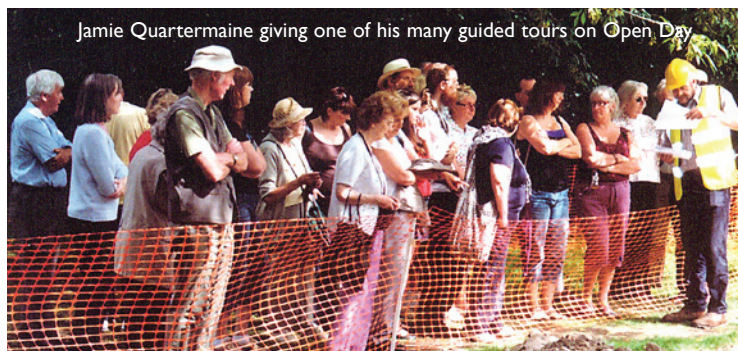
Just to put that into perspective, Lancaster Castle is only 120m across; Warwick Castle is 160m across; the Tower of London is 230m across; Alnwick Castle at its longest is 225m; Bamburgh Castle is 206m long and the large Pickering Castle is 185m along its longest axis.

OWe are talking here of a seriously large and important defensive structureO

It is very important to stress that our project would have achieved nothing without the commitment of our volunteer team, whose hard work and efforts, often in awful weather conditions, produced these momentous historical results. However, the project could not have even got off the ground without the full co-operation of NSG Pilkington Group and other landowners. Our special thanks go out to everyone concerned.

This very brief report cannot do justice to the fantastic success of the project and there is still much to be done to detail the many findings. A technical report is being written and the Trust will be publishing a popular booklet highlighting the exciting results, as well as expanding our website.

Contributed by Steve Baldwin and Jamie Quartermaine



Jamie Quartermaine giving one of his many guided tours on Open Day



Exciting discoveries start to emerge in deep trenching



Conventional & state-of-art geophysics fully employed in project



More excavations and inevitable puzzling surprises



Happy volunteers - it couldn't have happened without them



Lord Derby becomes Patron of Lathom Park Trust

Friends and Trustees welcomed Lord Derby and his young family when they visited the excavation site to see the remains of their long lost ancestral seat.
 Pictured L to R: Louise Ward, David Dunn, Elizabeth Hayton, Steve Baldwin, Lady Henrietta Stanley, Hon. Oliver Stanley, Lord Derby, Lord Edward Stanley, John Hayton, Susan Dunn, Peter Ferguson, Pam Nanson, Paul Kenyon



SOCIAL EVENTS

Make a note in your diaries !
2 GREAT FUTURE EVENTS

Saturday 24th JULY

In the unique setting of Lathom's recently discovered Ironage Roundhouse Settlement

Summer BBQ
£10



Scratch the surface in Lathom and . . .



One of the three wells discovered

'Scratch the surface' has become a familiar remark since the Lathom Park Trust was formed over ten years ago and the results have uncovered an unimaginable wealth of information.

As is often the case, initial leads come from a casual comment made by friends and members.

Such was the moment when we were asked to visit an area high on the banks of the River Tawd. Years of dense undergrowth and brushwood was being cleared in woodland when a 'hole' was found among tree roots.

On further inspection we found what we thought to be a medieval well, then we found another, then another, almost equally spaced, in straight line. It was then we realised they were set in a sophisticated labyrinth of earthworks on the hill-side - leaving even more questions to be answered.

Needless to say, we hope with the landowner's permission, to investigate this more professionally in due course.

For example, to clear, excavate and date the wells, trace the water source, establish whether there were dwellings on site to service what could have been an important historical function.

Another Lathom mystery waiting to be solved !!!



LADY ALICE
COUNTESS OF
LATHOM

Lady Alice's Fateful Drive

The pony would have been well schooled, familiar with its role and in the capable hands of an experienced horsewoman - but we'll probably never know what really caused the poor creature to bolt on that fateful 27th day of November, 1897.

Lady Alice, Countess of Lathom who was accompanied by Lady Leitrim and Lady Masoni was returning home to Lathom House from a shooting party at Dalton. She was driving the phaeton drawn by two ponies and as they entered the Lathom Estate via Green Lane the pony suddenly bolted as it was crossing the ford at the River Tawd.

The exact point of the crossing can still be seen today from the remains of the ford, although infill banking now hides the original approach level of Green Lane. (see picture above) The carriage overturned into the water and Lady Alice was pinned underneath. On her eventual release she was taken back to Lathom House but was dead on arrival. Her two companions somehow survived the tragic accident.

Society was devastated by the news and a photograph taken at Lathom Chapel, shows floral tributes engulfing the vaults area where she now lies, a hint perhaps of the popularity of such a vibrant and lovable personality. Lady Alice Drive, Blythe Lane in Lathom, although not the actual location of the accident, is a gentle reminder today of the sad demise of the Countess of Lathom, Lady Alice.

Contributed by Pam Nanson

A FRIEND IN DEEDS - 5000 more historical Lathom items from John



John Hunter Knowles



Some of John's stage productions for the Lathom Park Trust

John has been a friend of Lathom Park Trust for many years. Apart from being our Website designer (which is currently being updated and re-vamped) he produced world premier shows in The Lathom Club in the early 2000s based on the life and plays of the 3rd Earl of Lathom.

John has been researching and writing a book on the 3rd Earl of Lathom for the past eight years and is in the process of placing up to 5,000 photographs, drawings, paintings; texts and other historical items, drawn from his research, on a website entitled,

'The Lathom Angel' (www.lathomangel.com) to provide a resource on the Earls of Lathom for future study and to thank the people of

Lathom for their help in his research. John works as a designer in the world of digital media, developing websites, video and audio products. He is currently a consultant to the literary estates of the composer, actor and playwright Sir Noel Coward; the playwright Sir Terence Rattigan and the composer and writer of musicals, Julian Slade.

He produces a bi-monthly magazine for the International Noel Coward Society entitled 'Home Chat' that is distributed worldwide. In the last two years John has worked for Alan Brodie Representation, an agency for theatre, television and radio writers based in the West End. They represent writers, performers and estates as diverse as Bertolt Brecht, Simon Callow, Tim Firth (Calendar Girls), John Godber and Alistair McGowan. His recent work has appeared at the Museum of Performance and Design in San Francisco followed by exhibitions in Los Angeles and New York.

John Hunter Knowles - a very busy man - and we thank him for his continuing involvement in the ever increasing achievements of Lathom Park Trust.

Making a start in the Walled Garden

Members may wonder whether the Trust has 'just lost interest' in the Lathom Walled Garden - which in fact, couldn't be further from the truth. The reality is that until we can make the area and walls safe, it remains a potentially hazardous project.

Trustees Paul Kenyon and Andrew Beeston along with Chairman David Dunn, have spent a great deal of time assessing how best to progress this important task and we are grateful to Roy Stancombe of RS Landscapes for bringing his voluntary expertise to the work.

Roy has already felled many of the trees which were endangering the wall foundations and great efforts are continuing to achieve our aims.



Roy starts work in the Garden.

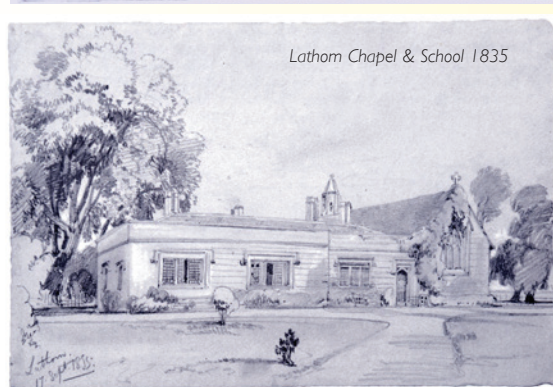
EDWARD LEAR AND LATHOM



Edward Lear



Lathom House 1835



Lathom Chapel & School 1835

Compiled by Susan Dunn

Acknowledgements: The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Derby DL; Clem Fisher, Curator of Zoology, National Museums Liverpool; The Kings School, Canterbury; Frederick Wame Archives.

More Lathom theatrical links with Ivor Novello



Rita Bullock

Trust members Kath and Dennis Wilde brought yet another surprising link to our theatrical heritage.

Dennis's sister Rita, a well known local soprano, was selected from hundreds, by Ivor Novello to appear in his show "Perchance to Dream".

Unfortunately she could not be released from her essential WW2 work at the time but subsequently enjoyed success in BBC broadcasts with the Richard Valerie Orchestra and in the radio feature "Curtain Up". Like many entertainers of her day, Rita also devoted time to entertain the war wounded at several Manchester hospitals.

Rita Bullock (nee Wyld) 21.6.1924 - 25.11.2007

Last year we were contacted by Charles Nugent, an independent art historian, formerly the Drawings and Watercolours Curator of the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, who was in the process of sourcing material for an exhibition of the landscape art of Edward Lear, to be held at the Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage, Grasmere. The exhibition was to focus on Lear's visit to Ireland in 1835 and his tour of North Lancashire, Westmorland and Cumberland in 1836. Many of the works for the exhibition had never been seen or reproduced before and we were surprised and delighted to be informed that two of the pictures were of Lathom (one of Lathom Chapel and School, drawn on 17th September, 1835, and one of Lathom House, drawn the following day). These are in the private Hugh Walpole collection at The King's School, Canterbury, and the Lathom Park Trust now has special permission to reproduce these drawings.

Edward Lear was a prolific and talented artist, cartoonist and poet, but he is probably most well-known for his nonsense poem "The Owl and the Pussy Cat". He was born in 1812 in Highgate, London, and died in 1888 in San Remo, Italy, where he is buried. He never married.

He spent his young adulthood working primarily as an animal artist and it is thought that whilst he was painting parrots at the Zoological Society of London in 1831 for his *Illustrations of the Psittacidae or Parrot*, (published in 1832) he met Edward Stanley, 13th Earl of Derby. Lord Derby had a large private menagerie of birds and animals at Knowsley and he invited Lear to draw some of them. Lear stayed for long periods over several years at Knowsley and became popular with the family. His cartoons and poems written especially for the Derby children included "The Book of Nonsense". Lear was introduced by the Earl to many of the grand households and families in Lancashire and Cheshire, and it was natural that he should be regularly invited to Lathom House by Baron Skelmersdale, a close relative by marriage of the Derby family.

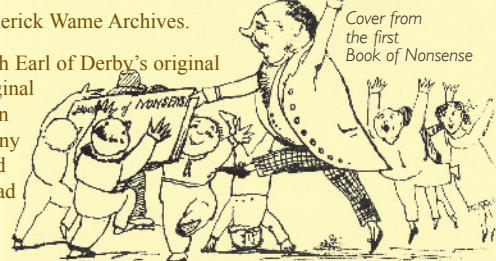
Lear was also a prolific letter-writer and in one of his letters, dated 19th May 1837, from Knowsley Hall, to Fanny Coombe nee Drewitt (a childhood family friend) he writes,

"Although I wrote to you yesterday, there is a possibility you may not have got my note, as I forgot to send it myself to Lord Skelmersdales, & the porter at Grosvenor Sqre may have been oblivious anent its being put in the post. I lunched with & took leave of the Lathom people, but they were all in a bustle going to the drawing room, so I could not ask them to frank it just then."

This letter is one from a collection held in the Frederick Wame Archives.

The present (19th) Earl of Derby still owns the 13th Earl of Derby's original paintings and books, including many of Lear's original paintings of animals, but when the 13th Earl died in 1851, his museum, which included the skins of many of the aviary and menagerie animals and which had been earmarked for the British Museum, was instead bequeathed to the people of Liverpool.

The collection was the foundation of the Liverpool Museum (now National Museums Liverpool).



Paul's Lathom Walks and Talks in great demand

Since launching his first illustrated talk on the 'POTTED HISTORY OF LATHOM' earlier this year for the Ormskirk Clock Tower Rotary Club, demand for Trustee Paul Kenyon's talks seem to have increased by the day. It was quickly followed by presentations to the National Trust at Rufford Old Hall, Ormskirk Historical Society, Central University of Lancashire's LCC Archaeology Dept., Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society, West Lancashire Heritage Association and a talk with the Ormskirk Family History Society in April - and if this wasn't enough - Paul has also carried out guided Lathom Park walks for the National Trust, Rufford Old Hall staff, two for Lancashire LCC Archaeology and of course Lathom Park Trust member's Heritage Weekend. Our thanks go to Paul for all the time and research that has gone into making these presentations so successful. The Trust also acknowledges his generous donations of all resulting fees.



Paul Kenyon in full swing



Grand-daughter Mary-Anne



Blythe Hall... Memories & Mystery

Brian Smith writes: - In September 2009 one of my friends enjoyed a Country House Hotel holiday near Launceston, Cornwall, and over dinner the lady of the house asked him if he was familiar with the Lathom area, because her family had connections there in the past.

The lady was Mrs. Mary-Anne Otway-Ruthven, whose maiden name was Debenham.

I made initial contact with her by e-mail and after several more e-mails that also had photographic attachments from her, I sent her back copies of some Lathom Park Trust newsletters, including programmes from the various shows that had been staged at 'The Scout Hut' by the Trust.

Mrs. Otway-Ruthven's connection soon became clear. Her grandfather, Mr. A.E. Debenham, a London banker and lawyer had purchased Blythe Hall and estate in 1923 from the 3rd. Earl of Lathom. The Debenham family moved to Blythe Hall in the early 1920's and set up a model farm and bred racehorses.

I arranged to meet Mrs. Otway-Ruthven and her husband on a visit to Lathom in November and we lunched at Briars Hall Hotel. Later we viewed the developments now in progress at Blythe Hall from various points round the boundaries.

Finally, we visited the Lathom House West Wing, where Mrs. Otway-Ruthven found the views over the Lathom parkland made her reflect with some emotion as to the passage of time and her childhood links with Lathom.

I am very grateful for the many family photographs Mary-Anne has given us access to for future reference and possible publication.



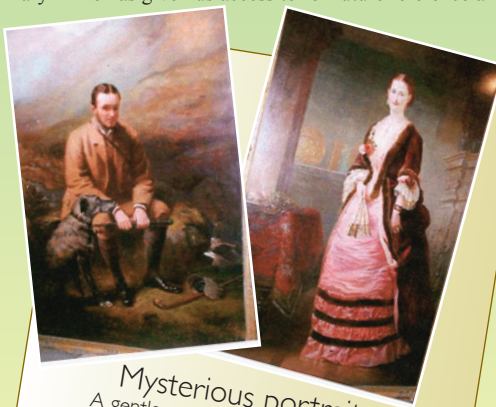
Blythe Hall
1927

More childhood memories

Another recent visitor to Blythe Hall was actress Susan Shaw, to see the Lathom she remembered from childhood.

'Ned' Lathom, the 3rd Earl was her Godfather and her mother acted on the stage with him at the Lathom Club. Her father was Commanding Officer of the Remount Depot at the time.

Behind many of these brief snippets which are constantly emerging from Trust members and friends, there will be a fascinating story to justify volumes!



Mysterious portraits

A gentleman from Denver, Colorado contacted us recently. He had just purchased two 8"x5" portraits at auction in New York and was anxious to establish their provenance.

His only information was that 'at sometime they came from Blythe Hall in Lathom'.

Try as we may, we have been unable to trace anything for him - perhaps you can help us.

Who are the two people portrayed?
Do they have a history in the Lathom family?
Who was the artist?

What's in a name?

Peter Latham and his son Richard got in touch with us last summer, in connection with their "family history" project.

Peter's great-grandfather had commissioned a 'family tree' tracing back as far as the 11th century, linking their name Latham to the family of Lathom, notably the "Eagle Child" Oskatel (Thomas) de Lathom who moved to Astbury, in Cheshire.

(A stained glass window there includes a version of the Lathom arms).

We were delighted to welcome Peter during his 'history trip' around the northwest.

Whilst he had seen the Lathom House remains previously; we were able to show him Lathom Park Chapel and its historical connections. Peter very kindly gave us a copy of his fascinating 'family tree' for our records.



Susan Dunn and LPT Chairman, David Dunn, welcome Peter Latham in the grounds of Lathom Chapel

'Shakespeare and Lathom' - more interesting connections

William Shakespeare and John Salusbury: what was their relationship?

More fascinating Lathom connections are emerging from John Idris-Jones's continuing research into Shakespeare's 'lost years' from his detailed study of Shakespeare's association with Welsh poet John Salusbury.

John Salusbury married Ursula, daughter of Henry Stanley, 4th Earl of Derby who was said to be the second richest person in Britain after the monarch, his main house being at Lathom and described as a huge castle like fortress near Ormskirk.

John Idris-Jones believes that his interpretation of the works of both Shakespeare and Salusbury may suggest an important underlying relationship between the two writers. John's proposition should be studied in its full context, which embodies many other details supporting his 'Lancashire Theory' of Shakespeare's presence in Lathom during the 1580's, teaching the Stanley's children, acting as singing-master and musician and working on theatricals.

Trust members wishing to learn more of John's detailed analysis of the numerous poems, social, political and personal (possibly romantic) influences which brought both Salusbury and Shakespeare together - please contact Lathom Park Trust.

LATHOM PLANS FOR FUTURE

Probably the most comprehensive survey of Lathom and its people ever undertaken has just been completed.

The process began in October 2008 when the Parish Council successfully applied for a grant from the National Lottery Awards with the aim of showing how the people of Lathom would like Lathom to develop in future years.

Lathom Park Trust and other local organisations, supported by West Lancashire Borough Council, played an important role in determining the conclusions. It was particularly reassuring that the conservation of historical and environmental issues emerged as top priorities, including the replacement of the old Lathom Club with a similar structure, incorporating the historic stage and proscenium arch, famous for its connections with the 3rd Earl and his theatrical friends.