

NEWSLETTER

JUST WHAT HAS THE TRUST BEEN DOING ?

It seems that nothing has happened for ages !

For many years the work of the Trust has shown a remarkable regularity of achievement, from historical and archaeological discoveries, to research and publications which demonstrated the importance of Lathom throughout the ages. More recently there may have seemed less to shout about - this does not however truly reflect the intensity of background activity in which the Trustees have been involved.

Just over two years ago Lathom Park Trust was offered the Lathom Park Pleasure Garden and the Walled Garden at no cost, by NSG Pilkingtons. We entered into long, strictly confidential and detailed negotiations through our respective legal representatives. Transfer of the land into ownership of the Trust was well in hand when we were suddenly informed by Pilkingtons that the arrangement had been cancelled - they had received a substantial monetary offer to purchase the land 'which could not be ignored'.

Our total disappointment and complete frustration about the sudden turn of events was enormous, the effort involving the Trustees had stretched our resources to the limit. In addition to this the Trust was also committed to meeting deadlines for two new publications. The first, a twenty four page booklet 'Searching for Lathom House' summarising the latest archaeological excavations, the second, a sixty page publication, 'Horses for the War' recording the importance of the Lathom Park Remount Depot during World War One. Despite everything, we met both target dates.

Our membership has remained loyal throughout in supporting our popular Walks, Talks and Social Events and we are hoping to shortly announce a new exciting archaeological project for members to look forward to.

The Board of Trustees has been strengthened with the addition of Roger Anderton, a local Accountant who has taken over as Company Treasurer - so brilliantly handled over many years by Mark Hill to whom our thanks are extended and last - but certainly not least, David Dunn, founder member of the Trust has decided to retire from his role as Chairman after fourteen years.

David's knowledge, guidance and influence has brought growth and stability to the Trust. It has been immeasurable and something for which we are all immensely grateful.

Thankfully, David will continue his crucial involvement as a Trustee of the Lathom Park Trust.

The true scale of our achievements



As our 'Searching for Lathom House' project progressed it slowly became evident to our archaeologists and helpers the true scale of discoveries they were witnessing.

Sophisticated ground penetrating radar techniques coupled with un-earthed fragmented 'finds' gave major clues to what may be ahead.

They were not to be disappointed. Successful identification of a medieval moat and other important archaeological 'finds' have now been studied.

This indicates the **Lathom House moat was 305 metres** across and was one of the largest castles in the country.

The imposing **Lancaster Castle is only 120 metres** across and even the

Tower of London at 230 metres across is small by comparison to medieval Lathom House



Congratulations

Congratulations to David Dunn BEM who was recognised for more than 40 years of service to conservation in West Lancashire.

As well as his work with the Civic Trust, he is Chair of the West Lancashire Conservation Areas Advisory Panel and recently retired Chairman and founder of the Lathom Park Trust.

He was involved with forming the West Lancashire Civic Trust during government reorganisation in 1974 as well as saving the West Wing of Lathom House in the 1990's

David received his British Empire Medal from the Queen's representative the Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire, Lord Shuttleworth KCVO at a civic ceremony in March



SPREADING THE WORD

'Spreading the Word' about Lathom's history to diverse audiences is always an enjoyable challenge. Such was the case in August when we welcomed visitors from Liverpool. A group of residents from Toxteth are currently delving into the history of their own Parklands and were anxious to see Lathom Park and learn of the Trust's researches. Paul Kenyon introduced the day with an illustrated talk followed by a 'lunch' of tea, scones and cakes (kindly provided by the ladies of the Lathom Park Chapel) - then on to a guided tour of the Pleasure Gardens where the youngsters were in their element.

Social Events



Pam Nanson - Chairman
LPT Social Events Committee

'That was lovely Pam' is a frequent comment made to me following our various Social Events. Having raised over three thousand pounds with our recent events plus small incomes from the catering at the Heritage Days and Wine & Cheese evenings, I am often asked *'but what is the money being used for ?'* As well as helping with general running costs, most crucially, during the long and ultimately disappointing outcome of the Trust's negotiations to take over the Lathom Pleasure Gardens and Walled Garden, it had been important to build up our funding reserves. But social events are not just there to make a profit, in fact some are not designed nor intended for financial gain. We hope they play an important role in bringing the strands of our various member interests together; meeting and chatting in pleasant surroundings and convivial locations. As a Trustee and Chairman of the committee, I really appreciate the fantastic support we have enjoyed from everyone. There's been one or two changes in our set up, Irene O'Donnell has joined and taken over the role of Treasurer from Anne Ferguson, who we thank for keeping things in order. Also Hilary Evans has recently joined and we're always pleased to hear from anyone who would like to help occasionally. The success of the Trust is due in a very large part to the contribution from Social Events and we look forward to seeing you all again very soon.

SUNSHINE & STRAWBERRIES

In July, more than a hundred people enjoyed the Trust's strawberry tea in the beautiful setting of Burscough Priory. Our thanks go to Mrs Musker, who owns the Scheduled Ancient Monument (which was destroyed during the Dissolution of Monasteries) for her generosity and splendid guided tours of the historic site.



Years of spectacular progress

.....but let's not get too complacent

It is a privilege to serve the Lathom Park Trust in my new position of Chairman. I am anxious to see the Trust as an outgoing, dynamic organisation, developing close working relationships with our local schools and members of the public to emphasise the significance of Lathom and our history.

The article on page one highlights the stretched resources of our hard working Board of Trustees and it is essential that we encourage more direct involvement with all members in our many projects and activities.

The responsibility of the Trust is to: *'Advance the education of the public in the history of Lathom through historical and archaeological research, promoting the historical significance of Lathom, offering and supporting training for the general public in historical research.'*

This is an almost open ended brief and as I was reminded by a founder member, the original topics of local history that people felt we should pursue ranged from Farming evolution over the centuries, Vernacular building surveys and Archive research to Theatrical influences, Educational modules and Archaeological projects.

Following years of success in some areas - we have hardly 'scratched the surface' in many of the others. There is a huge amount of Lathom's heritage in English (and world) history yet to discover. This can only be done with your help.

If I can encourage more contact with members, who have so much to offer; but perhaps are a little apprehensive in coming forward, it would make my new role as Chairman even more rewarding. We are here to help and support everyone and if you are interested in any of the above topics, or one of your own choosing and would like to know more, please give me a ring or e-mail.

Some examples of the Trust's links with diverse age groups and events over the years are illustrated on the right but perhaps one of the most enjoyable aspects in my many recent travels, giving over thirty talks and guided walks on behalf of the Trust, is meeting and chatting with people, when a passing comment can trigger off fascinating stories.

One such arose when meeting Mr Roy Richardson, which I have tried briefly to summarise below.

Just a passing comment

Roy's Grandfather, Francis Richardson 1869-1955 and Great-grandfather William Richardson 1823-1904, were both stonemasons for the Lathom Estates. It lead to further information including the maintenance of farm structures in Elmers Green, the installation of a water tank in Ashurst Beacon - to give water pressure to Dalton, but perhaps of particular significance to Lathom was an old postcard (pictured below) from a relative with the message

'I thought you may like to have this, the Lathom War Memorial, Father's last piece of work on the Estate' along with a photograph of the completed memorial. Roy wondered if, through the Trust, anyone may be able to throw more light on his family, he'd be delighted to hear from them..

His Grandfather had two brothers William and Hugh and cousins named Wadsworth. There are various slaters, flaggers and masons in the family from the Dalton area who could have worked at the Lathom owned quarries. Please get in touch if you think you can help Roy further.



Post Card from Ellen A ??



Student on 'dig' led to instant job offers



Childrens Group drawing on Lathom's history



Successfully finding long- lost WWI relative



Repton's famous 'Red Book' arrives at Lathom



One of our many walks for all ages



Lathom's World Premiere theatre productions

Lathom's Thespian 'Snippits'



Early days at Blythe

Pete Postlethwaite

The late Pete Postlethwaite, Oscar nominated stage, screen and TV actor was described by Steven Spielberg as "the best actor in the world". His early foray into drama came in 1959 when Peter trod the boards at Blythe Hall where he attended the seminary run by the Passionist Fathers. In his autobiography 'A Spectacle of Dust' Peter said it was here "where it ignited a passion deep within me for acting and drama".

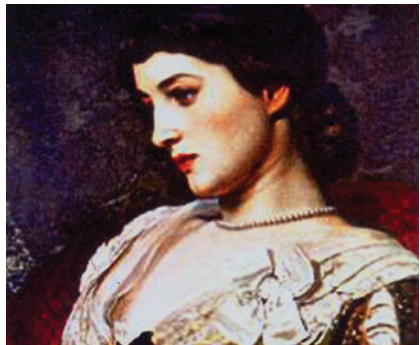


Blythe Hall



Mrs Patrick Campbell

Many years ago a well known actress; Mrs. Patrick Campbell, lived at Ashfield House in Hall Lane but when appearing in the West End stayed at the Savoy Hotel. Those were the days when ladies were not expected to receive gentlemen in their rooms, but on one occasion the Hotel Manager became suspicious and knocked on her door - "Mrs. Pat, are you entertaining a gentleman in there?" back came the reply "I don't know, you'd better ask him!" George Bernard Shaw wrote the play "Pygmalion" for Mrs Patrick Campbell and at the time was not on very good terms with Winston Churchill. He sent a note to Churchill saying "Herewith two tickets for the first night of my new play, so that you can take a friend - if you have one!" Winston Churchill wrote back - "I cannot come on the first night, but would love to come on the second night, if there is one!"



Lily Langtry

Hidden away in Bleak Lane stands Moss Grove Cottage, formerly a Lathom hunting lodge. Lily Langtry was an actress famous for her stunning beauty - a friend of Oscar Wilde and other prominent social celebrities of her time. Her fame and status escalated when Lily became the mistress of the Prince of Wales (Bertie) the future Edward VII, during which time, according to local gossip, she and 'Bertie' frequently used the lodge for their discreet liaisons.



The Hunting Lodge

Surviving the Reformation in Lathom and Burscough

Researches by local author Gillian Goddard brought to light interesting features about Parish life and architecture in bygone years.

Lathom and Burscough have a long Catholic history. From the 12th century parishioners worshipped at the Augustinian Burscough Priory for 350 years when the Priory, including the church, was destroyed as part of the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Catholic forms of worship became illegal, but many of the local gentry and their tenants refused to give up their faith and the Burscoughs of Burscough Hall were one such family.

During the 17th Century their home became a centre to which priests came secretly to meet with local Catholics and say Mass for them.

After the Burscoughs, Peter Lathom took possession of the Hall in about 1670, and the Hall remained a focus for Catholic worship.

Peter Lathom in turn leased it to a John Heyes of Ormskirk in 1700 on condition that a priest be supported from the farm income and in addition ten pounds to be shared among the poor each year.

Priests continued to serve the Mission in Burscough and around 1791 there was an easing of the Penal Laws. They took advantage of the relaxed laws to provide a proper church and presbytery for the Catholic community in Lathom and Burscough. **It was built in 1815, and by law was simple, plain, located out of the way and with no bells. Complying with the law it resembled a farm with an attached barn. In this 'disguise' it also prevented it becoming a focus for anti-Catholic sectarianism.**



St. John the Evangelist Church as it is today
The bell tower and porch were added in 1915



Complying with the law it was 'disguised' as a farm building - as seen now in this shot from Blythe Lane



WWI LATHOM REMOUNT DEPOT MEMORIAL PLAN

Military Historian Richard Houghton is seen here with Trustee and Lathom Parish Cllr. Peter Ferguson discussing a possible location for a memorial to commemorate the importance of Lathom Remount Depot in the first World War. Richard and Lawrence Critchley of the Lathom and Burscough Military Heritage Society are currently preparing an Application for appropriate funding.



LATHOM'S ANCIENT CROSS SITES SAVED BY LOCALS

Jointly funded by Lathom Parish Council and VLBC, it was fitting that the VLBC Mayor Cllr. Robert Bailey formally recognised the parishioners efforts to erect stones to mark the sites of Lathom's ancient crosses.

Wayside Crosses were a feature of Lathom, many being destroyed or just lost in time.

The origin of such crosses is still uncertain.

Perhaps they were erected to mark early land boundaries or resting places for funeral processions to Burscough Priory. Maybe they were purely devotional.

Other views of their origin refer to 'Dob' and 'Hob' being terms which frequently crop up in describing ancient crosses. 'Dob' and 'Hob' are supposed to be the male and female goblins or fairies, who in ancient times were believed to be capable of leaping from one 'Hob' stone to another.

Whatever the explanation, these were landmarks of some significance.

The Hob Cross site is located on Hobcross Lane and the Priory Cross site, which still has the remains of the original pedestal, is at the corner of Blythe Lane and Dark Lane.



OUR OWN LOCAL HEROES

The Army needed large numbers of horses and mules to move equipment and stores over rough ground that could not be accessed by mechanical vehicles. L/Cpl W Heyes and Pte J Ramsbotham of the 18th Battalion's Transport Section, were two of the many brave local men working with the horses on WWI battlefronts.

LATHOM'S WarHorses

'HORSES FOR THE WAR' is a 60 page booklet devoted to the history of the First World War Army Remount Depot situated in Lathom Park. Over 250,000 horses and mules were transported to Lathom from around the world to be trained and conditioned for action in the Great War. Little was known of how important the Lathom Remount Depot was - the largest in the country - in training horses for the battlefronts of WWI. Lathom Park Trust has devoted more than ten years detailed research into Lathom's Remount history.

'HORSES FOR THE WAR' gives a unique insight into the significance of Lathom during these times. Available from the Lathom Park Trust, price £11+£1pp - full details- www.lathom-park-trust.org.uk

