



The Newsletter of the Lytham Heritage Group

The Heritage Centre, 2 Henry Street, Lytham. FY8 5LE

Tel: (01253) 730787 Archive: (01253) 730775

email: thecentre@lythamheritage.co.uk email: archivecentre@lythamheritage.co.uk

website: www.lythamheritage.co.uk

Contents

Page 1/2

Notes from the
Chairman

Page 2

Social News

Page 3/4

When Lytham
Sands were Golden

Page 4

Alan Ashton
Plaque

Page 5

Grove Cottage

New Committee
Member

Page 6

Revised Exhibitions

Charitable
Organisations

Page 7

Lockdown Work

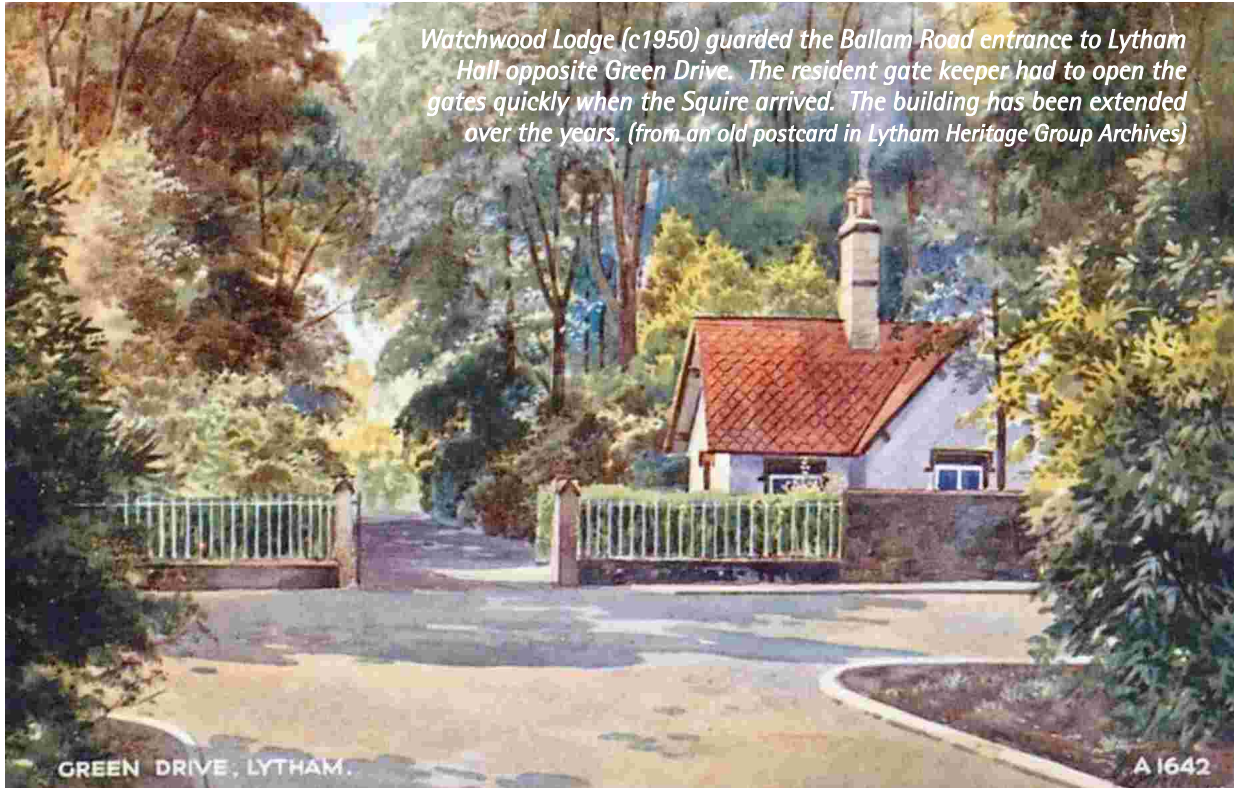
Lytham Club Day

Article
Contributions

Page 8

Members &
Community
Supporters

Contact



Watchwood Lodge (c1950) guarded the Ballam Road entrance to Lytham Hall opposite Green Drive. The resident gate keeper had to open the gates quickly when the Squire arrived. The building has been extended over the years. (from an old postcard in Lytham Heritage Group Archives)

Notes from The Chairman

May I wish you all Happy Easter with the start hopefully of a recovery back to normality.

When Boris announced the Roadmap last week I was optimistic we had turned a corner as the last 12 months have been so difficult in varying degrees for us all. Hopefully those tentative signs of spring with snowdrops and daffodils will lift our spirits even more. I do hope you saw the video produced by Lytham Hall on their best ever display of snowdrops on U tube and a little snippet on Look North West on the 1st March. Such a shame they were unable to let visitors in this year. We look forward to them being able to open up again on April 12th all being well. Peter, Paul and all their staff and volunteers have done a wonderful job during the past 12 months to make the Hall a splendid place to visit. Peter is coming to talk to us in October about Lytham Hall so do put that in your diaries. He has also agreed to be co-opted on the LHG Committee to look at Press and Publicity matters so we look forward to welcoming him at our next meeting in April. We now have 2 co-opted members as we welcomed Phil Stringer last year who is in charge of everything IT. Both will be put forward

for voting on officially to the Committee at the AGM.

The work on the Heritage Centre is still ongoing. The work now being done has no direct connection with the refurbishment but it seems once you start a job more jobs come along! I have asked Dave Hoyle just to add some detail about the work as he has been project managing all our building works this year. I



Lytham Hall Snowdrops (photo David Forshaw)

APRIL 2021

Notes from The Chairman

would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all the Committee, the members of LHG and the artists and exhibitors who use the centre, to thank him for his tremendous dedication to the task!

We did manage to put the plaque up in the garden area at the Centre to acknowledge its dedication to Alan Ashton. We will continue, together with Lytham in Bloom, to keep the display giving us colour throughout the summer.

As the restrictions have been so strict since Christmas and as the highlight of my week is the supermarket shop, you can see this will be a shorter than usual note! We have rearranged the talks, AGM and exhibitions using the Roadmap as a guide and you will find details later in this edition.

Before I sign off this is a little less than subtle hint that it is time to **renew membership**. We have kept the price down even though for 12 months we have had no income from donations but have had to pay out for both our usual and unexpected expenditure. Please pay by direct debit out of preference, and if not pay promptly by the end of April. Please spread the word about the work we do to encourage new member's thank you. The forms to complete are included with this issue

We hope you have stayed well and those of you who have had the jab are looking forward as a result to better times ahead. I feel more confident in looking forward to seeing you sometime in 2021 for a catch up! Until then keep safe.

Sue Forshaw

Social News

Despite the encouraging news from the Government Roadmap it is still difficult to plan the future. We are currently holding monthly Zoom Committee meetings as despite "not being open for business" we have had a variety of issues to discuss and decisions to make over the last 12 months. We have put in place some rescheduled talks and AGM for instance at a time we hope it will be possible to hold them. As our sessions are based at the Assembly rooms I have been in contact with Leanne, who organises the bookings, to reschedule and we are looking at the Covid protocols we put in place in 2020 for a safe return which never happened. When these are finalised I will put details in the July edition of the Antiquarian.

We would like to return to our traditional way of delivery as we as a Committee felt that face to face talks were not only for information and interest but important as a means of social interaction. In many ways Zoom - other platforms are available - serve a useful purpose in times such as these, but hopefully will never be seen as a substitute for actual sociable contact whatever that may mean to you. The AGM for 2021 is changed from June to September to fulfil our obligations. The details for that will therefore be in the July edition of the Antiquarian. If the worst happens and we go back in lockdown then we will have to change tack and organise an alternative AGM but let us not worry about that now and wait and see.

Sue Forshaw

Revised Social Calendar

Information about the postponed talks has been sent to those who have supplied us with e mail addresses. It is the best way of communicating with our members so if you have not been receiving anything please let us know your email address. For those without email a hard copy will be posted outside the Heritage Centre.

All talks will be held at the Lytham Assembly Rooms at 2.30 pm unless stated otherwise.

July 12th **Speaker** Dave Hoyle on "Victorian St Annes 1874 - 1901"

August 9th **Speaker** David Forshaw on "The Mexico Disaster of 1886"

September 13th **Annual General Meeting** at 7.30pm

October 11th **Speaker** Peter Anthony "A sustainable plan for a Heritage Asset"

November 8th **Speaker** Brian Topping "Tales of a Customs Officer"

Please note: - The talk by David Forshaw on the Mexico Disaster, which occurred in the Ribble estuary, is designed to link in with the exhibition planned for the 12th October until the 21st November in the Heritage Centre. This coincides with the 135th anniversary of the worst loss of life for lifeboat volunteers in the history of the RNLI.

Sue Forshaw

When Lytham Sand was Golden

The sea-water-for-health craze was being hailed as the universal cure-all. Royalty had tried it, the medical profession, with some reservations, advocated it, die-hards derided it but most people believed that sea-water was the infallible remedy for all ailments.

The first bathers trickled into Lytham during the 1770s and we may wonder who were the more startled, they or our natives. Lytham in those days was a poor and 'obscure place', a ramshackle collection of straw-thatched mud and clay cottages which, we are told, more resembled 'an Indian town than an English village.' There were neither refinements nor accommodations to offer apart from barn floors and shared beds already crammed and overcrowded. Ever resourceful, the Sandgrown'uns in 20 years wrought a remarkable transformation.

In 1795 William Crookall respectfully announced in the Blackburn Mail that he 'intends fitting up good accommodation for about 20 persons (with suitable stabling) during the above season, at Lytham. A bathing machine will be provided for the safety and convenience of those who please him with their company, who may depend upon the strictest attention and the most moderate terms.' His house was the Wheat Sheaf, now the Deacons premises, at the corner of Dicconson Terrace and Clifton Street and it offered 'a style of elegance, civility and propriety' to a discerning clientele. Another hotel, the first Clifton's Arms, which stood across the entrance to Park Street, was presently conducted 'with equal excellence' by Mr Hampson. In addition, two public houses 'of an inferior description' sheltered working-class bathers who 'literally come in shoals during the spring tides' ... and little wonder! 'No watering place can excel Lytham in convenience of bathing, few can equal it, the shore being level and overspread by a sheet of the finest sand', wrote Militia Captain William Latham in 1799.

There were bathing machines, three all told. Mr Parkinson had two and the other belonged to Mr George Gillet (sic). The proprietors were 'particularly adroit in delicately handing the fair females out of the machine and into the water.' It was quite safe to drink Lytham's sea-water, it being 'free from seaweeds or dirt and perfectly clear and pure.' Sophisticated diversions were in short supply but none could offer better than Lytham of 'salubrious sea breezes' (to which was attributed the vigorous longevity of the natives) and of such 'innocent recreational delights' as walking, riding, sailing and conchology. Besides a couple of bowling greens there was always the spectacle of tall masted sailing ships ploughing up Ribble to Lytham since all cargoes for Preston discharged at Lytham Pool. It was fascinating, too, to watch local fishermen at work and in 1805 Richard Cookson took a plot of ground and built his 'windy milne'. It was a charming sight, this bit of the country come up to the edge of great water and many would pause there,



Lytham's golden sands - West Beach with Charley's Mast Centre and the Clifton Arms right (from an old post card)

within earshot of the heavy rumbling sails and the carts wending thither, groaning and grain-laden. The 'Marsh', now part of the Green, inaptly named since it was always dry and springy underfoot, supported plant life in abundance. It extended south-wards from the village to the Pool and afforded a pleasant hour's rambling. Another pleasant walk from the pinfold (near the Guardian Estate Office) led, in the pre-railway age, immediately past Lytham Hall. 'Aquatic excursions' were also greatly enjoyed. When wind and tide allowed, small boats cruised over to Southport or up to Freckleton Naze and, during the season, two packet boats conveyed passengers to and from Preston. A few shops had appeared, 'the windows of which display much taste', brightening the village of which the worst eyesores were being demolished. Virtue held sway. 'Vice has not erected her standard here', it was claimed, but Vulgarity had, it must be admitted. 'Males and females' (in the nude, in those days) 'are seen lining a considerable extent of shore in promiscuous groups and not embarrassing themselves about appearances, but enjoying the salt water as well internally as externally, to the no trivial amusement of numerous spectators. The generality of these people usually come for the purpose of washing away (as they suppose) all the collected stains and impurities of the year'. That was 1799!

A correspondent to the Preston Chronicle in 1826 was horrified to witness 'men bathing on the beach opposite the houses at Lytham and most shamefully exposing their persons, to the great annoyance of females who are thereby prevented from enjoying refreshing sea breezes during such disgraceful scenes.' This sort of thing continued until new bathing regulations were enforced some twenty years later. Meantime, 'for the preservation of good order,' a lock-up 'of considerable strength with distinct accommodation for both sexes' had been established in now vanished Douglas Street. Such provision had never been called for, before the bathers!

When Lytham Sand was Golden

Lytham had not grown as quickly as many other villages but by 1830 new settlers had set up homes here and houses and cottages, familiar today, made their appearance. 'Ennis's warm and cold baths' (sea-water, of course) were available at the first Clifton's Arms, and there was a public bathing house described as 'very complete and unique.' A few streets had been named but there were neither street lamps nor house numbers, neither public clock nor news-room to while away the hours. Livery stables and horses and gigs to hire by the hour would have been welcomed, and bath carriages for invalids on Sundays now that a decent road had been put through to the church. The old fish stones in the market place were decrepit and in 1837 would have to be replaced at the cost of £8.

By that time, Lytham had been pulled up by the bootstraps and all sorts of improvements were in progress. First, and most important, the railway linked Lytham with Preston in 1846. Then in 1847 the Lytham Improvement Act was passed and practically the first job of the Commissioners

was to build a handsome market house. It went up in 1848 to the design of Mr Reed of Liverpool and it cost every penny of £1,000. It was a splendid investment. The Market House with its 20 or more stalls drew huge weekly crowds from outlying villages, now linked by rail. Everything could be bought there, food, clothing, farm produce, fancy goods and toys. For 30 or 40 years it flourished and did a roaring trade. There was a public clock now, donated by Lady Eleanor Cecily Clifton. It was assembled by Cooke and Sons at York in 1869 and in 1872 it was placed above the Market House in a specially designed, quasi-Italian style tower. Unfortunately, as shops opened up, the market lost glamour. Vacated stalls cast

a blight and the decline could not be halted. The building was eventually converted into separate shops, to the regret of old Lythamers who remember-ed it, nostalgically, in its heyday. Another interesting structure appeared about 1850. The old Custom House, as it was called, a brick and shingle encrusted tower perched on a stanner at the end of the Green, was not connected with H M Customs and Excise. Its function was to look out for shipping, to collect harbour dues and, possibly to discourage smuggling. The captain in charge received £25 per annum for rowing out to collect Squire Clifton's fees. Until 1879, all arrivals and sailings

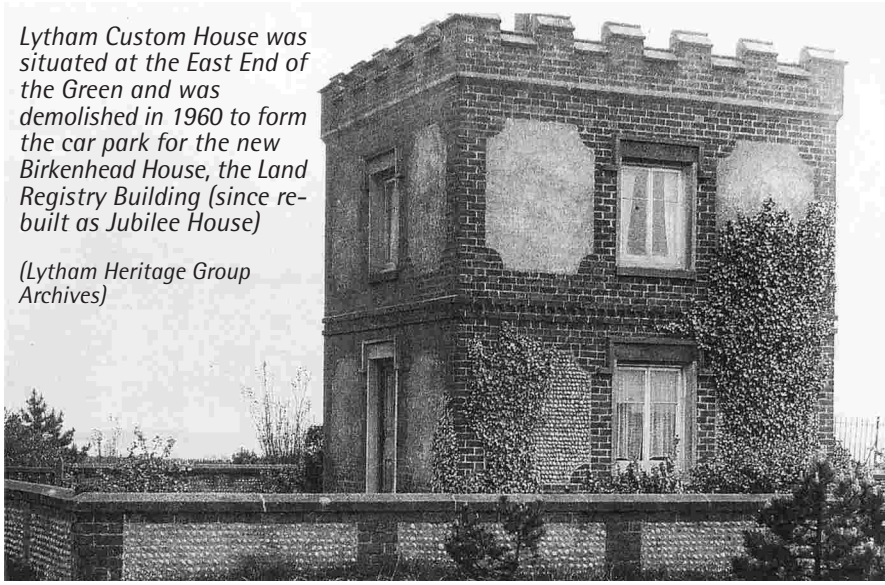
were reported to HM Customs at Preston but, by then, Lytham's importance as a port had declined and in 1885 Lytham Dock ceased to function. The old Custom House might have died a natural death at this point but, instead, it entered into another interesting phase of existence. Attracted by its ample lighting, solitude and views over the estuary, Hugh B. Scott, a talented artist, established his studio there early this century

and produced the fine river scenes which made him famous. During 30 years he hauled up soil buried beneath four or five feet of shingle and made a bonny nook of his half acre plot. There he planted Austrian pines, privet and poplars. His roses were a riot of colour, his vegetable plot a gardener's delight. After his death the little tower served as headquarters for naval cadets. Now it is no more, alas! Like so many things which gave delight to the town's real creators, the visitors who put Lytham on the map.

David Hoyle The Archivist of Lytham

Lytham Custom House was situated at the East End of the Green and was demolished in 1960 to form the car park for the new Birkenhead House, the Land Registry Building (since re-built as Jubilee House)

(Lytham Heritage Group Archives)



Memorial Plaque for Alan Ashton MBE

A plaque has been installed in the Heritage Centre Garden to commemorate our late Chairman and one of the founders of the Lytham Heritage Group. Due to the Covid restrictions it has not been possible to hold an unveiling ceremony yet but hopefully this can be arranged with the family before too long.

(photo David Forshaw)



Grove Cottage

There is an old cobble and brick cottage in Gregson Street, Lytham, not far from the sea, that most old folk in the town will tell you is well over 200 years old. They may say it was once used to be a tavern, but none of their tales will take you as deep into its history as I discovered recently looking through the archives.

When the property was bought in the 1930's by Mr Tomlinson he stripped the wallpaper, and found in one corner a scribbled record that in 1853 someone had caught a shark off Lytham. Then he discovered another set of writing, fainter this time and telling how a tarpaulin full of fish was caught and taken up to "the hall," presumably Lytham Hall.

The Window

On the top floor on the landing Mr. Tomlinson was puzzled by an unusually small and odd-shaped window. Then he remembered that during his research he had read about "coffin windows" - windows built on the top storey of cottages with stairs and corners too awkward to negotiate with a coffin. The practice was to lower the coffin and contents into the waiting hearse - a pony and cart in those days - on the ground below.

But Mr. Tomlinson prefers to forget that kind of thing. He has bricked up the window and turned it into a ventilator. The walls of the cottage, he found, are made mainly of cobbles, probably gathered laboriously on the beach that at one time is said to have been only a few feet from its tiny garden.

Bricked-up

During the decorations two bricked-up doorways were revealed, suggesting that



Grove Cottage, Gregson Street (Lytham Heritage Group Archives)

the whole row of cottages was originally one building.

Mr. Tomlinson measured the thickness of the walls-21 inches. "I don't suppose they would fall down in another 200 years," he smiled.

Mr. Tomlinson asked a lot of questions and read a lot to find more about the history of the cottage. He has discovered that it was called Grove Cottage and used to be the home of the Clifton Estate surveyor. It must, he reckons, have been the site of one of the first homes in Lytham, built on long before the sea was pushed back and the broad Green laid along the front.

The Past

One record tells him that in a bottle buried under the ornamental bridge of the gardens on St. Annes promenade is

the tale that a one-time schoolmaster and later Surveyor to the Lytham St. Annes Commissioners, William Gregson, lived at the cottage. Hence the name of the road today

The bottle is supposed to have been buried under the bridge by his son, so that generations later, when the cottage has gone, the people of Lytham St. Annes will learn something of the past. The last tenant of the cottage was 95-year-old Miss Jean Jeffrey, who died eight months ago. She used to have a grape vine growing over her doorway. Even that was said to be over a century old, and its fruit, though sour, still made good pies. This is one of the oldest properties in Lytham and was in the grounds of Hungry Moor which later became Lowther Gardens

David Hoyle The Archivist of Lytham

New Committee Member for Lytham Heritage Group

The Committee welcomes Peter Anthony who has joined the Committee as a co-opted member and is taking over the brief for Press and Publicity.

Most of you will know of Peter and his love of the historical aspects of Lytham Hall and Lytham St Annes in general. Peter is General Manager of Lytham Hall and with his Deputy Paul Lomax, and along with the assistance of staff and volunteers, he has transformed the Hall from a somewhat run down and underused building to the magnificent attraction it is now. The changes they have made to return the building to its Georgian glory have been incredible and once lockdown is lifted it is well worth a visit, or any number of visits, to take it and the Hall grounds all in. You will not be disappointed. The transformation and accuracy for detail to it are superb. The top floor and Long Gallery now contain two fascinating displays on the Lytham Priory and Squire John Talbot Clifton. The basics are the Lytham Heritage Group's displays but with material and artifacts added from the Hall's archive. The LHG's Windmill and Lifeboat Museum co-ordinator Steve Williams has been instrumental in the exhibitions move and re-display in the Hall. Even if you remember these exhibitions at the Centre, please see them again for these additions.

Heritage Centre Exhibitions Programme 2021 Revised

Well no-one will be surprised to hear that our Programme must be revised to fit in with the government's Roadmap for the easing of Covid 19 restrictions. Legally, the first Tuesday that we can reopen would be 18 May, though of course that could all change again. The first two exhibitors have both opted to defer till next year.

So we are discussing with the relevant artists to reopen from 18 May, with the dates following on as per below. We realise that our stewards may not all be ready to come back, and Covid restrictions will put some strain on exhibitions. If gaps appear we will slot in one of our own heritage exhibitions - if we can cover it. Ever hopeful, we must try to reopen this year with whatever precautions are necessary.

Here are the revised dates, let's hope the vaccines work well against the variants that keep appearing, and the Roadmap holds true.

Hilary Fletcher

18 May - 06 June	Abstraction and Portraiture by Will Pickering.
08 -27 June	"COASTAL CONTRASTS" Paintings by Carla Raads
29 June -18 July	"CAPTURED ON CANVAS" From the botanical to mechanical, a unique collection of art inspired in Lancashire by Glynn Ward
20 July - 08 Aug	The Art and Craft Guild of Lancashire Summer Exhibition
10-29 Aug	"NATURAL INSPIRATIONS" Contemporary Art by Joan Aitchison
30 Aug -19 Sep	"HUMAN LAND" Photographic Studies and Landscapes of Northern Britain by Peter Laurence
21 Sept -10 Oct	"AUTUMN EXHIBITION" by LSA Art Society
12 Oct -21 Nov	"THE Mexico DISASTER" Lytham Heritage Group exhibition to commemorate the 135th Anniversary of the worst ever Lifeboat disaster that occurred locally on 9th December 1886.
30 Nov - 05 Dec	"CHRISTMAS FAYRE WEEK" buy original gifts by local artists and crafts people

News of the Charitable Organisations we are Members of

As with everything at the moment we are working with others to put our Heritage message across to all as well as finding out what and how others are doing what they are doing. Networking is a very important tool and so is financial survival in difficult times and thank goodness for the positive side of social media. We have strong local links with the Lytham St Annes Civic Society, Lytham Town Trust and Lytham Hall but we all have to see the bigger picture. I thought you would like to know of just two of the organisations we are members of and give you the links if you wish to explore them further.

Lancashire Local History Federation

This was set up in 1973 as an official coordinating body for Local History in the County Palatine of Lancashire. Their website is very interesting and extensive covering many different groups throughout Lancashire. Each group has a link, as have we, outlining what they do and any current news. On the LLHI

website there are newsletters, details of talks both virtual and in the future actual, and links to various social media platforms.

It is certainly worth a visit on - www.lancashirehistory.com

Association of Independent Museums

This is a bit younger than the LLHI having been formed in 1978. It is a national charity which supports independent museums and heritage organisations. They also issue grants for specific projects and will be involved in the distribution of Richie Sunak's recovery package, the Culture Recovery Fund, which at the time of writing is anticipated to include an extra £300 million. Their website is more formal in approach and business like although there are items which may be of interest.

Their website is - www.aim-museums.co.uk

Sue Forshaw

Lockdown Work

All has been quiet in the lockdown, people staying in, people adhering to the government guidelines, no exhibitions. Meanwhile things have been active in the Heritage Centre.



David Hoyle. LHG Archivist and Centre refurbishing Team Leader (photo David Forshaw)

We have had new girders in the cellar. These were rusted and could have been there for over 100 years. Builder Steve Grundy replaced them and they will be there for at least another 100 years.

For ease of storing display boards and the cards and leaflets, we have made a cupboard in the corner out of one of the display areas. With a door and a hidden handle it is still able to hang art and does not take up much room within the gallery.

The roof has also had a slight leak and we are "Work in Progress" as we go to print and hope to get to the bottom of the problem once and for all.

The clock over the entrance is also having a repair and refurbishment by one of the best clock repairers in Lancashire and also this is work to be completed very soon.

The cellar has been cleared and is ready for a coat of paint when we can get some volunteers together in March.

The large cupboard in the toilet area has had a jig around and is able to store more items than before and has a new latch fitted.

The outside drain in Henry Street was blocked and has now been cleared with my jet washer and should give us no more trouble.

The flagpole has been cleaned and a new rope has been inserted for easy raising and lowering

the flag.

We have jet washed the Patio around the flagpole and painted the railings and the roses and it is all looking smashing.

A new plaque for Alan Ashton has been put on the wall and soon we will commemorate the occasion when we are able to do so.

I would like to thank the volunteers who have helped when the Covid rules have let us. Joyce, Janet, Steve and Dave have been a great team and have helped in every way they could and without them none of this would be possible. Thank you.

So it has not been as quiet as you may have thought.

Hope we are open soon.

David Hoyle



Lytham Heritage Garden Centre (photo David Forshaw)

Lytham Club Day

On the mention of Lytham Club Day, unfortunately this has had to be cancelled again this year due to the Covid virus problems, the decision having to be made when the possibility of further lockdown restrictions were still unclear. Let us look forward to 2022 and hope things will return to as near normal as possible to allow Club Day to take place.

Antiquarian Contributions

Any contribution for inclusion in The Antiquarian will be gratefully received. Photos, articles, reminiscences, etc are all welcome.

Please email to: davidzforshaw@gmail.com

or write to the Lytham Heritage Centre, Henry Street

or ring Lytham (01253) 794196

Thank you

David Forshaw

Members and Community Supporters

We are sad to have to report the passing away of the following who gave a great deal of their time to Lytham and the community. Our condolences go to their families and friends.

Thelma Braes who died aged 97 in December 2020 was a long time member of the LHG as well as a founder member of the Lytham St Annes Lifeboat Ladies' Luncheon Club.

A regular volunteer at the Heritage Centre and also a Tour Guide at Lytham Hall, **Graham Mason** passed away suddenly on 14th February 2021.

A former Editor of this Newsletter, the Lytham Heritage Group's Antiquarian, **Michael Boddy** died in hospital on 11th February 2021. Michael was well known for his journalistic skills which also included a time as Deputy Editor of the Lytham St Annes Express. He was author of a book on the history of King Edward VII School, Lytham in 2004 and Editor of the Lytham Club Day magazine for many years. He served on the Club Day Committee for over forty years and in 1995 was made an Honorary Vice President for his unwavering commitment to Lytham's celebration day.

Snowdrops of Lytham Hall (photo David Forshaw)



Many of you will know **Joyce Bamber**, a well known Lythamer who was another who gave vast amounts of time and effort to Club Day and other local charities so we feel she must be mentioned. She sadly passed on in January 2021. Widow of well known and long serving Lifeboatman Harry Bamber junior, Joyce received a glowing eulogy from the Club Day Committee which is reproduced below.

"It is with great sadness that we announce the death of one of our longest serving committee members and Hon. Life Vice President Mrs. Joyce Bamber.

Joyce was a well known character, having lived in the same house in Lytham all her life and attending Queen Mary School. Without doubt Club Day was her favourite day of the year, her son David said "Once Christmas was over the countdown to Club Day would begin, she loved being involved and would help out wherever she could".

Joyce was part of our fundraising team, over the years she has held coffee mornings, raffles, tombolas etc to raise vital funds for Club Day. In the week before Club Day Joyce would sell raffle tickets at the Club Day stall, nearly everyone who walked passed knew Joyce and would stop for a chat! For the past 25 Club Days Joyce could be found in the Hewitt Lecture rooms organising the refreshments, after which she would watch the parade before dashing to Lowther or Lytham Hall to organise the tombola. Over the years Joyce was involved with several Lytham organisations, she was instrumental in installing the Floral Clock, Rose Garden and Shrimper in Lowther Gardens.

We send our love to David, and the family.

RIP Joyce, we will miss your dry wit and sense of fun. Thank you for your service to Club Day and the Lytham community"

Contact Details

We welcome all queries and suggestions. Please send emails to

thecentre@lythamheritage.co.uk

or leave a note addressed to The Editor, at the Heritage Centre.

Archive - Dave Hoyle dave@davidhoyle.co.uk

Exhibitions - Hilary Fletcher [via The Centre](#)

Social Events - Sue Forshaw [via The Centre](#)

Press & Publicity - Peter Anthony [via The Centre](#)

Windmill and Old Lifeboat House - Steve Williams

steve.williams@lythamwindmill.co.uk

