



THE ANTIQUARIAN

The occasional newsletter of the Lytham Heritage Group

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It was with mixed feelings that your Executive Committee read some of the comments in the Lytham St. Annes Civic Society newsletter No. 250, dated June this year.

As we have no connection with the Civic Society, we were surprised to read, under the heading "LYTHAM HERITAGE GROUP", "It is gratifying to see our efforts to start this group bearing fruit". Along with our feeling of surprise was added that of partly feeling flattered, and then of some irritation at this completely imaginary link. But there was more to come....in the next paragraph of the Civic Society newsletter, we also learned to our astonishment that they had plans to keep Lytham Baths in use "in co-operation with the Lytham Heritage Group and the Art Society". Well, we cannot - and would not - presume to speak for the Art Society, but we can assure you that both these statements as far as we are concerned are a complete figment of somebody's very vivid imagination. The Heritage Group has no connection with the Civic Society nor is there any intention of a link with them. Nor did they "start this Group". Turning to other matters, your committee members have been very active in recent weeks, with several meetings having been held. Of course, the major item recently has been the organisation of the Walter Eastwood Art Exhibition at Lytham Baths from August 15th to 31st. More details of this exhibition, which promises to be a super event, appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

We are also in the process of formulating a winter programme. It is not too late to let us have your views and suggestions for this, but please do hurry - winter, we are sorry to remind you, is not all that far away!

Finally, you will find elsewhere in this newsletter two excellent features which have been written by members of our group. One is by John Dickinson, about "Old Tom", the great elm tree which for centuries dominated the Church Road entrance to Hastings Place by the Market Hall and the County Hotel. The other, about the town's flora and fauna, is written by Executive Committee member, and designated Keeper of the Group's Artefacts, Barry Dawson. Both features are commended to you, along with the assurance that all literary efforts by members, as well as ideas for future issues of the Antiquarian, will be welcomed by the Editor. The next issue will reach you in December - we told you earlier that Winter wasn't far away! - and ideas should be submitted to the Editor as soon as possible, please, but at any rate by October 31st.

Walter Eastwood Exhibition

This great exhibition, which promises to be the jewel in the crown of the Group's first year, will be held at Lytham Baths, from August 15th - 31st inclusive. There will be a Press View on the evening of Friday August 14th, beginning at 7.30pm, during which Miss Vicky Slowe, A.M.A., Director of the Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, will declare the exhibition open. The Exhibition will be open to Heritage Group members from 11am to 1pm on Saturday August 15th, and members of the public from 1pm to 5pm. It will thereafter be open daily from 11am to 5pm. More than 150 of the paintings of this prolific Lytham Artist (1868-1944) will be on show, along with a splendid back-up of paintings from local school children. King Edward VII, Queen Mary, Lytham St. Annes High, and St. Bede's R.C. High have loaned some work of outstanding quality. The exhibition is being organised by us, in close collaboration with the Lytham St. Annes Art Society, which this year celebrates its 75th anniversary. Eastwood was a founder-member and inaugural president of the society in 1912. His work as an artist and photographer has been accepted and hung in most of the provincial Art Galleries and in the Royal Cambrian Academy. Preston and Blackpool Galleries have purchased Eastwood pictures for their permanent collections and a number of his paintings are in the Town Hall.

The Exhibition includes a wide range of Eastwood landscapes, many of local scenes in the Fylde area, and due to the kindness of private owners the exhibition includes a substantial number of paintings which will be on view to the general public for the first time. This is believed to be the first-ever exhibition of this talented local artist.

I have enclosed a sample roster, and would ask you to indicate on it the periods in which you would be willing to give some help. Please return the form to either Alan Ashton, at 1 Warton Street, Lytham, or Peter Sharman, at Lytham Library.

Other forthcoming events:-

Wednesday August 19th Afternoon tea at the Darleys, 2.30 to 4pm. Mrs Norma Darley invites members to her home 18 Preston Road, Lytham, to meet fellow members. There will be a bring and buy stall, cake stall and other interesting items. Admission 50p

Wednesday Sept. 9th An evening with topographical post-cards. Miss Diana Winterbotham, the Local Studies Librarian at the Lancashire Library Headquarters, will give a talk on post-cards and their relationship with Local History at the Lytham St Annes Art Society's Studio, Haven Road, Lytham (near Lytham Fire Station on Station Road) commencing at 7.45pm. Tea & Biscuits will be available. Enthusiasts are invited to bring their own postcard collections with them to show to fellow collectors.

Wednesday October 7th
The Story of Lytham

A weekly series of ten day-time lectures in collaboration with Liverpool University Department of Continuing Education begins. These lectures, to be led by Dr. Alan Crosby, who spoke to us on the fascinating History of Lytham at the Audio-Visual Evening in May, will be held weekly in the Art Society's Studio, Haven Road from 10.00am until noon.

Further details in due course from our new President Stanley Brown.

As stated earlier, the winter programme, is now being formulated. It is planned to have about five or six meetings, from October to March amongst these are planned a car boot sale, and a cheese and wine evening - more details later, of course.

Past Events:

The coffee morning at the home of Mrs Moira Walsh, Clifton Street, Lytham, in June, was a splendid success. This raised nearly £97 for group funds, as well as being a pleasant social occasion. Some new members had also joined "on the spot".

The audio-visual evening at Park Street Methodist School room was also a great success. About 80 people attended, including the newly-installed Mayor of Fylde, Coun. Richard Spencer MBE, of Freckleton. In his remarks, the Mayor pointed out that he had founded Freckleton Historical Society, so our event that evening was close to his heart. Dr. Alan Crosby, who is to lead the "Story of Lytham" series of lectures beginning in October, gave an attractive account of life in our town of yesteryear. By the 1970's, the tourists were beginning to come, there were fine golden sands, the sea-water was clear and pure, and Lytham was one of the most popular sea-bathing places in the county. The Clifton family controlled the town's development - "they acted as mid-wives for the birth of Lytham". Dr. Crosby also referred to the part played by two of their great estate agents, father and son James and Thomas Fair. He ended, "Lytham today is a special and delightful place, with dignified, wide streets".

He was introduced and thanked by the Deputy Chairman, Mr Stanley Brown, who conducted the event because of the indisposition of the Chairman, Mr Alan Ashton. (Mr Ashton had earlier been involved in a motoring accident, but was able to attend the meeting, and we are happy to report that he is now fully recovered from his injuries). The event included an interesting exhibition of items, arranged by Mrs Janet Kitchen, and a captivating slide-show of Lytham down the years by Mr Tom Stringer. Those present also enjoyed the hot-pot supper.

Another great success to report, in which our group took part by invitation, was the Heritage Week held in May at St Annes R.C. Primary School. This had ranged from old agricultural implements and dairy utensils to songs and poems in Lancashire dialect, exhibitions of walking sticks and corn dollies, a working model of a windmill, and talk about the lifeboat. (Note: It was reported at a recent committee meeting that because of the success of this enterprise, it was evident that other schools would be seeking similar involvement in the future - St John's School, for example, had already been in touch, and would be doing their own similar event in September.)

Unfortunately the proposed outing to Scarisbrick Hall on July 8th had to be cancelled because of insufficient numbers.

Happily this will not prejudice any possible future visit.

An enjoyable "Getting to know you" meeting was held at Lytham United Reform Church Schoolroom, Lytham, on July 28th, when more than 60 members attended. The purpose was to enable members to get to know each other, and also become acquainted with committee members. The event began with a welcome from the chairman, Alan Ashton and a reminder of the Group's aims and objectives. A progress report, and a

discussion about the future programme followed. After a tea break for light refreshments, there was a discussion about involvement in the forthcoming Walter Eastwood Art Exhibition, and the announcement that the Group's inaugural President was to be Mr Stanley Brown.

Arts and crafts
Exhibition

Our Group also took part in a mammoth arts, crafts and hobbies exhibition at Park Street Methodist Church Hall, Lytham, early in June. The day-long event attracted many visitors, who saw more than 200 exhibits on display. These included the work of local crafts people, and items loaned by various organisations, including Mrs Norma Darley's collection of old post-cards of Lytham. Demonstrations included traditional spinning and wood turning.

Lifeboat Museum.

Our close links with Lytham Lifeboat were strengthened recently in two ways. Many of our members enjoyed an open evening at the museum, at the Old Lifeboat House on July 1st. Several of our members responded to a call from the Lifeboat Museum for volunteers to help with the manning thereof during the day-time this summer. As a result, we now have a poster promotional display at the museum. Incidentally, during the open evening we proceeded a little further westwards along the promenade to visit the main lifeboat-house itself, which was also extremely interesting.

Growing Numbers

Our present membership stands at 159. We are delighted to report that this includes our first junior member. It has been decided, incidentally, to have a junior membership to the under 16's for an annual subscription of only £1.00. Our first junior member is Sarah Draper, of South Clifton Street. Welcome, Sarah, to the Group. We hope that you will enjoy being a member for many years, and also bring lots of your friends to join, too.

"Old Tom"

One of our members, Mr John Dickinson, has written the following delightful feature:-

"OLD TOM" was the affectionate name given to the huge elm tree which for many generations looked down on the revelries outside the County Hotel in Lytham. Long before the trains puffed in and out of Lytham Station "Tom" stood at the entrance to Lytham Hall. When the railway station was moved from the original site and the new one built in its present position in 1874, the entrance to the Squire's domain was moved to its present place on the far side of the Ballam Road railway bridge.

When Tom started out in life, his view to the River Ribble was almost uninterrupted. The Market Hall building and the Cenotaph were things of the future, and it is ironical to reflect that all the railings which surrounded the Cenotaph gardens were used for scrap to further the cause of the second world war.

Along with hundreds of trees in the area and millions more countrywide, Tom fell prey to Dutch Elm disease. He was finally cut down in 1984 and the enormous roots, spreading to the pavements on both sides of the road, were removed. A young sapling of different breed was installed in his place, trying hard to assume the dignity of its mighty forbear.

It is interesting to note that a tree of Tom's stature takes up about one hundred and fifty gallons of water per day, well over half a ton!

It was indeed a sad day when the old boy finally disappeared. Many Lytham folk watched the proceedings as they mourned for an old friend. When I first started school I had to pass the Market Place on the way to St. Cuthbert's School opposite Ashton Street, so old Tom had been part of my life for more than 60 years.

In my younger days Lytham was often referred to as "Leafy Lytham" and at the present time many beautiful trees still adorn the streets and avenues. Great care is taken to preserve this heritage. It was a tragedy, in view of the susceptibility of elm trees to the dread disease, that they were so popular during the early stages of Lytham's development. For example, the road to the Cemetery adjoining Fairhaven Golf Course was originally planted all down one side with elm, leading to the subsequent loss of every one of them.

We lost several elm trees from our own garden and a great many had to be removed from the beautiful woods which enclose the picturesque Fairhaven Golf Course.

It is sad to reflect that such a distinctive feature of our countryside is almost a thing of the past.

Flora and Fauna:

And last, but far from least, we have a contribution which will be of great interest to many members, about the area's wild life, written specially by Barry Dawson:-

In our efforts to conserve and preserve those things which we cherish in the town - most of which are Man's handiwork - it is easy to overlook our most ancient but largely unsung edowment, namely our wild-life. This year, near King Edward VII School, a colony of Early Marsh and Common Spotted Orchids, together with the much taller hybrids (see accompanying photograph of the *Dactylorhiza* and *Praetermissa*) and the Dune and Marsh Helleborines, has flourished as never before. In St. Annes, the Nature Reserve reports some 230 different species of botanical interest, many quaintly-named like the Isle-of-Man Cabbage, Hound's Tongue, Danish Scurvy-grass, Twayblade, Fox-and-cubs, Fingered Saxifrage, Grass of Parnassus, Rough Hawksbeard, Toad Rush, Blue Fleabane and, at Fairhaven, Pellitory-of-the-wall. When to these one adds the superb Bee Orchids, the Heath Spotted and Pyramidal Orchids and the Pendulous Helleborine, there remain unmentioned more than 200 plants and we have dealt only with those recorded at the Reserve. For more than fifteen years, University botanists have made an annual study of the land which the new hospital on Clifton Drive is obliterating. This site of especial scientific interest supported a wealth of wild-life, the loss of which is comparable only to that sustained when the land surrounding KES and Queen Mary School on the seaward side was levelled, filled-in and rendered featureless two decades or so past. How many, I wonder, remember the "Bun Run" and tree-girt shooting range at KES, and the enormous, pond topped sand-dunes which rose from what now are the newest of the QMS sports fields? Where balsam poplar and willow looked down on an unbroken swath of meadowsweet in a dell running half the school's length there now sprawls a flat tundra where cars park when Royal Lytham Golf Club hosts "The Open". Yet despite these and thousands of acres elsewhere in the borough where whole miniature eco-systems have been wiped out, we are literally surrounded by a botanist's treasure-house.

This, in its turn, supports a very substantial number of moths and butterflies. Foliage, lashed by wind and rain, is unlikely this year to act host to the usual quota of larvae and the same phenomena may upset butterfly migration but, as I write, the Small Tortoiseshell is much in evidence. One hopes that shortly the Painted Lady, the Peacock and the Red Admiral will join them in force to add their beauty to the garden. Always there are more moths than butterflies and this year the sulphur coloured Swallow tailed moth is abundant, as is the imago of the Poplar Hawk moth. Usually only encountered in the caterpillar form, in the last few days I have seen four "adults", one of which "attacked" me and having so done, could not extricate its feet from the lapel of my jacket. These insects are nearly as big as a small bat and in the dark with wings doing many thousands of r.p.m. literally under one's nose, vivid thoughts of Peter Cushing assial the mind. Few moths fly by day but the club-antennaed Six-spot Burnet moth breeds near the sand-dunes, its harva pupating in a bright yellow cocoon spun and attached lengthwise to a suitably long grass stem. In the early evening, the Ghost moth flaps awkwardly in contrast to the darting flight of most moths. The Fylde has more than a fair share of rarities but three in my lifetime are worthy of note, the Oleander Hawk, Convolvulus Hawk and the Clifden Nonpareil a.k.a. Blue Underwing. The last mentioned is in my collection bought in 1944 from the late Arthur Murray, a noted entomologist which experimented with the Sandhill Rustic and Six-spot Burnet, actually producing a completely black variety of the latter. The Clifden Nonpareil he took from a tree near his house in Curzon Road and my father paid 30 shillings for it.

(I leave it to mathematicians to convert shillings to decimal currency and to calculate today's equivalent of thirty bob forty-three years ago!)

Lytham's birdlife is so rich that one can only dip into it. Until recently, yards from an estuarine shore and mudflats was the vast wooded Clifton Estate. Beyond that lies The Moss, a shadow of its former self but still the haunt of Hen-harriers and Short-eared Owls. Then we have Fairhaven Lake, a storm haven for Grey and Red-necked Phalaropes and winter home to swans and ducks of many types, Wigeon, Pochard, Scoter, Tufted, Pintail, Teal, Velvet-scoter, Scaup, Goldeneye - the list is most comprehensive. So in addition to the great variety of waders and seabirds, befitting a coastal town, we have the added benefits of a wooded sanctuary for those species which live only in such a habitat plus the marshy ditches of the mossland for birds which prefer that type of environment. Lytham Hall Park still gives shelter to a host of creatures, despite the fact that much of what was scrub and woodland is now brick-and-mortar. Thirty years ago, one could walk into, say, the Fairlawn Road entrance to the Estate and within minutes, the only sounds were those made by the woodpecker, willow-warbler, chaffinch and pheasant, to select a few at random, Moorhens squawked from St. Cuthbert's pond; mallard thronged Curtains Pit and as the track drew closer to the Hall, a hideous screech would make the nape-hairs rise. Further along the origin of this noise would strut across with a great flapping, alight stop the high Orchard wall and repeat the noise. One of the Cliftons' peacocks!. It was hard to equate such beauty with so ghastly and stentorian a call. In those days, kingfishers were common along Liggard Brook - not only in the Estate but often, with the Dipper, to be seen where the Brook passes under Ballam Road where now stands the Lions Clubhouse. At the same time, Kingfishers nested on the Boathouse Island at Fairhaven Lake and Mute Swans, not Canada Geese, were the largest nesting resident. Now the moorhen nests there and were I to report seeking a kingfisher anywhere at all I doubt that I would believed. But not all is loss; a pine tree in my own garden is home to a pair of Tawny Owls and also the nesting site for the Collared doves. The sparrow apart, our commonest finch is now the Goldfinch when once it was the Greenfinch. The linnets and the Redpoll are more scarce while the Mistle-thrush has increased. In the summer countless Redwings and Fieldfares feed on the Sea-buckthorn's clustered orange berries where the ornamental lake used to be, with its stepping-stones and little wooden bridge, quite often joined by the brambling and snow bunting.

The reader will appreciate that a contribution of this length can only touch the surface of a subject so vast as the flora and fauna of an area and tolerance is asked for the sin of omission.