

THE ANTIQUARIAN

The occasional newsletter of the Lytham Heritage Group

ISSUE NO. 6

May 1988

As The Heritage Group continues to go from strength to strength, we are delighted to report about several important matters which developed during the quarter just ending. Perhaps, of these, the one which is closest to the hearts of our members concerns the now-closed Lytham Baths. Our own chairman, Alan Ashton, has, we are pleased to say, accepted an invitation to be chairman of the committee to look into possible future uses for this fine old building. Alan reports that an imaginative plan to retain the front part of the building, and demolish the rest to build flats, has now been put before the Fylde Borough Council. The council will still own the structurally-sound front part, and it is hoped that this will include a community and heritage centre, possibly administered by a Town Development Trust. This is a scheme which we as a group applaud, and which we are sure will commend itself to our members.

Another great coup for our group was the Nature Conservation Day at Lowther Pavilion, Lytham, on March 26th, which we promoted. This was a huge success, and is reported upon more fully elsewhere in this newsletter. Suffice it to say that this was, like last year's Eastwood Art Exhibition, another extremely worthwhile operation which won us a lot more friends, both locally and from much further afield.

We are considering ordering Heritage Group car stickers. Some market research will be done on this at the AGM, to be held at The Ribble Cruising Club on Wednesday May 18th, to see how big the demand would be.

Finally, we have been asked to provide speakers from our membership to speak to our group about any topic of local interest. If any of our members are prepared to give talks in this way, would they please contact Arnold Broxup on Lytham 737241.

Future events

- Wednesday May 11th: Slideshow "Rails through the Sand" (Lytham Trams) 7-30 pm, Ribble Cruising Club.
- Wednesday May 18th: AGM, Ribble Cruising Club, 7-30 pm.
- Thursday May 19th: Friends of Lancashire Archives are giving a free film show of historic film, in conjunction with North West Film Archive, at Lytham Arts Studio, Haven Road, at 7-30 pm.
- Saturday June 4th: President's coffee morning for "Young explorers", Park Street Methodist Schoolroom, 10-30 am - 1 pm.
- Saturday July 9th: Visit to North-West Sound Archive at Clitheroe. Those wishing to go should contact Clifford Smith, 104 Headroomgate Road, St. Annes, for details.
- Wednesday August 10th: Evening visit to the Lancashire Record Office, Preston, 7-30 pm. Those wishing to go should contact W. Hothersall on Lytham 730007. (Evening only please)

"Themes in Fylde History"

Following the splendid success of Dr. Alan Crosby's series of lectures about Lytham last Autumn, and as then requested, there is to be a follow-up series of 10 lectures beginning in October next. It is expected that the arrangements will be the same - 10 am until noon, weekly on Wednesdays from the first Wednesday in October.

Book the dates in your diaries now. Full details in our next issue.

Past events

ON Wednesday March 2nd members were treated to a marvellous talk by Arnold Broxup on "Guides House, Warton". This small rural community, in which he was born, was swept away in 1942 when the present airfield was built.

Arnold's talk covered the history of the hamlet, his own childhood there, the Ribble shipping and vivid descriptions of the characters he had known. The talk was supported by slides of old photographs and postcards of the locality and there was an excellent display of maps and memorabilia for members to examine during the interval. Arnold was thanked by Mr. Syd Hardman.

"The jumble sale"

The two weeks leading up to our first jumble sale, on February 27th, were very exciting, with people phoning Mrs. Walsh and myself (Mrs. Darley) to promise all sorts of things. We collected so much jumble, it was beyond our wildest dreams, and people were so kind. Our recently acquired room in Lytham Library came in handy for storing all the jumble, and being only just across the road from Lytham United Reform Church Hall, where the sale was held, meant that we had little transportation to do on the Friday evening beforehand. Someone arrived with a wheelbarrow to save carrying the heavier goods across - "What a good idea", was a frequently-heard comment. When I arrived at 7-15 pm on the Friday, what a happy, wonderful crowd had turned up to help! We were amazed to see the bags of things which people had sent, and soon everyone was busy sorting things out. By 9 pm, everything was ready for the big day. Saturday morning came, and all those wonderful people were waiting to open up at 9 am - happy, smiling, and so keen to get started. The doors opened at 10 am, and the rush was on. (Special thanks must be given to Peter Sharman and Keith Darley for kindly making a most welcome cup

of tea for all the helpers, both on the Friday evening, and the Saturday morning). What a day! When we totted up the receipts, they amounted to £245. Such a lot of jumble was left over that we gave it to East End Bowling Club, who were having a sale the next week, and they were grateful for our help. I must thank everyone who helped to make this such a great success - I don't want to single anyone out, because you all worked so hard, and in the most friendly spirit, too.

- Norma Darley and Moira Walsh.

Barn Owls:

Our "Operation Phoenix - Lytham and the Fylde" week-end on March 26th-27th was voted a huge success by all concerned - and when you realise that there were about 1,500 people concerned, that's no bad thing. The week-end began with the nature conservation and wild life focus project in Lowther Pavilion, Lytham, on Saturday afternoon, which attracted 1,000 people. More than 20 organisations and representative groups, from the National Trust downwards, had exhibitions and displays at this marvellous free event. One of the most successful of all was Lytham's own Young Nature Conservationists from St. Peter's RC Primary School, who did marvellously well. In the evening, Lowther Pavilion featured "An evening with the Owl Man" - TV and radio naturalist Tony Warburton, with several species of live owls. This attracted 400 people. On the Sunday, there was an invitation-only, all-day symposium on Operation Phoenix, held in Lytham Hall, by kind invitation of Guardian Royal Exchange, with whom the Heritage Group co-operated in the organisation of this ambitious, and highly successful, week-end. Our chairman, Alan Ashton, said, "It was a remarkable week-end, and we were delighted with the success of it all. It attracted nature conservation people from all over the country, and again we are grateful to Guardian Royal Exchange for their immense help in putting on this great show".

The Group, incidentally, was delighted to be able to send a donation of £125, out of the proceeds, to the "British Owl Breeding and Release Scheme" organisation, to help them with their work in attempting to bring back one of Britain's most beautiful and endangered birds - the barn owl - to its once-favoured haunt on the Fylde Coast.

Lytham's Young Explorers

Three young Lythamers are to join tough and demanding expeditions involving both exploration and community work with disadvantaged people in Africa, America and Canada this year. They are Hazel Cannell aged 20 of Warton Street, Martin Lucy aged 18 of Agnew Street and Luke Smith aged 24 of Clifton Drive. Each of them will have to find £1500 towards the cost of joining their particular expedition.

Hazel has been chosen to go with the Yukon/Alaska Expedition 1988 to the Kluane wilderness in the Yukon territories of Canada with the backing of the Arctic Institute of North America. Glaciological and botanical studies will be carried out and also included will be glacier treks, whitewater rafting and/or canoeing, mountaineering and the production of a video and other records of their findings.

Martin has been chosen to go with a national charity - TOOLS FOR SELF RELIANCE (TFSR) on their KENYA-UMOJA PROJECT. This charity collects and refurbishes old, broken and rusty hand-tools and ships them out to communities in need in the developing world. The local group has a workshop at the Lytham St. Annes & Fylde YMCA, where already 14,000 tools worth about £140,000 have been sent overseas. The UMOJA PROJECT will be joined by a party of six young people with leaders from the Fylde who will visit BUSIA VILLAGE in Western Kenya, where Fylde tools have previously been sent, and they will help in the construction of a new community centre.

Luke has been chosen to go with Operation Raleigh to America for work with handicapped people, and the programme will include a survey of the Mammoth Cave System, the excavation of a 16th century Indian Village, construction work in the Smokey Mountain Region and medical assistance to the Sioux Indians.

It is hoped that on their return each of our "explorers" will address one of our meetings on the subject of their experiences.

Our President Stanley Brown, well known throughout Lancashire for his work on behalf of young people, has decided to make these expeditions the subject of a special appeal by holding a coffee morning and exhibition to support them with their costs.

These splendid young citizens of Lytham deserve the wholehearted support of the community and the President is hoping for an overwhelming support for this event. If you cannot attend, buy a ticket anyway!

The event will be held on Saturday 4th June from 10.30 a.m. until 1 p.m. at Park Street Methodist Schoolroom and is to be opened by the Mayor of Fylde, Cllr. John Tavernor.

A fascinating exhibition of collage and embroidery including, it is hoped, a facsimile of a section of the Bayeux Tapestry, exhibited by the Creative Embroidery Group of the Lytham St. Annes Art Society and a display of quilting by the Windmill Quilters will be supplemented by examples of the reconditioned tools carried out by the Lytham St. Annes & Fylde YMCA for the village project in KENYA.

Tickets 50p each available from all members of the Executive Committee, will also be on sale in local shops.

Local History Quiz:

Three local schools each had two pupils amongst the winners of the Heritage Group's local history quiz, held earlier this year. Results in the over 11 section were:

1. Nicola Allen, Queen Mary School, 2. Matthew McLoughlin, Lytham St. Annes High School; 3. Benjamin Butterworth, also Lytham St. Annes High. Under-11 section: 1. Kellie Lord, St. John's School; 2. Sarah Caddy, Queen Mary, and 3. James Lord, St. John's.

Lytham Lifeboat Museum's 1988 season:

As previously announced, the season opens on May 28th, the theme this year being the "Fishing Industry of Lytham". Interestingly, the museum will briefly have the honour of displaying a feature to mark the 150th Anniversary of what has become known as the "Grace Darling Rescue". The RNLI has built a replica of the small boat used in this rescue, and this will not only be shown in the museum, but also will take part in Lytham Club Day procession Saturday June 25th. The following story has been written by one of our members, John Tranter:-

What is probably the most famous lifeboat service of all took place on the 6th September 1838 when the steamer "Forfarshire" ran aground on rocks off the Farne Islands during a severe gale.

Grace Darling, then aged twenty-two, and her father William, who was keeper of the Longstone lighthouse, rowed a coble to the scene of the wreck. They had to make two journeys before Grace and her father had succeeded in saving the lives of nine people.

This rescue would today be classed as a "shore-boat" service and in keeping with the established policy of the Shipwreck Institution (which later became the R.N.L.I.) both Grace and her father were awarded the Silver Medal.

Sadly Grace did not live long after the rescue, dying four years later from tuberculosis. On the hundredth anniversary of the rescue the R.N.L.I. established the Grace Darling Museum at Bamburgh on the Northumberland coast. To celebrate the 150th Anniversary the R.N.L.I. has built a replica of the 21-foot coble used in the rescue which together with a small exhibition will tour the country in 1988. It will come to Lytham on the 19th June and will be on display at the Lifeboat Museum until taking part in the Club Day Procession.

Film Show:

In The last issue of the "Antiquarian", it was inadvertently stated in the report about the film show given by Coun. Alfred Jealous, of St. Annes, that he had also projected a film about Lytham Shipyard in the 1930's, whereas this latter was in fact projected by Frank Kilroy and David Forshaw. The film was kindly loaned to the Heritage Group by Miss Lord, of Skipton, to whom our thanks go. Miss Lord's father was the last chairman of the Shipyard.

The "African Queen"

I was very interested to read Derek Garstang's article on Lytham Shipyard in the last edition of the "Antiquarian". Since the "African Queen" was exhibited at the London Boat Show in 1987 I have been in correspondence with her present owner Mr. James W. Hendricks of Key Largo, Florida, U.S.A. as she does not have, as stated by Mr. Garstang, a brass plate stating where she was built.

Certain mis-leading newspaper articles over the years have further clouded the issue. One stated that the late Mr. Dick Friedenthal asked for Bogart's film to be re-run at Lytham Picture Palace but in fact the film was "Sanders of the River" which featured a totally different Lytham-built ship. Another stated that the "African Queen" was built at Lytham as the "Ligurd" but again this is not correct as this vessel was 140 feet long, not 40 feet as is the "African Queen". Here, however, may be the connection as the "Ligurd" was built for the East African Railways and in the book "Railways across the Equator", where her arrival and assembly is described, mention is also made of a small steam launch acquired for survey work. Lytham Shipyard built a large number of such launches over the years but on completion they were not usually named but only given Job Nos. It is, therefore, highly probable that the "African Queen" - only given that name by the film company - is this small anonymous vessel.

Mr. Hendricks is so convinced that this is the case that I believe he is now having a brass plate cast "Built at Lytham Shipyard" to fasten to her boiler.

Frank Kilroy

Hon. Curator, Lytham Lifeboat Museum.

Country Archive Research Network:

Did you know that.....

From 3 May 1988 you will need a reader's ticket in order to use the Lancashire Record Office? This is part of a national programme of increased security to protect the country's archival heritage and in Lancashire the use of the ticket will form an important part of the process of consulting documents in the Record Office searchroom.

There will be no charge for the ticket and you will be able to use it in 19 other Record Offices throughout England and Wales. You will need to visit the Record Office in person and to provide acceptable proof of identification in order to obtain your ticket. Further details and registration forms are available from:

The Lancashire Record Office
Bow Lane
Preston PR1 2RE

or telephone Preston (0772) 54868 extension 3027

"Making Salt at Lytham", Snartsalt, Saltcoats

The old road from Lytham to Preston went along what is now Clifton Street, took a sharp left turn at the point where Warton Street begins and where a house used to block the way on to the marshes, and then followed the line of the present B5259 along Mythop Road to the small cluster of houses at Saltcotes. From there it went straight across the flat land towards Warton Hall. Until the 19th century all the area to the south of this road was marsh land liable to flooding by the sea.

From Saltcotes a road led towards the moss land which covered such a huge expanse behind the Fylde coast. This large area, much of it almost impenetrable, was the source of vast quantities of peat used by the small indigenous population for bedding cattle, marking boundary walls, and of course for fuel. Nowadays there is not much peat left but no doubt some could still be found underneath the lanes which still traverse the area often several feet above the surrounding land. The question arises as to how such large quantities came to be used up over the centuries if it was used only for domestic purposes. The name of the little hamlet to the east of Lytham may provide a clue.

Salt has been an essential part of human diet from earliest times. It was used for medicinal purposes as well as in food, but most important for the preservation of meat when fresh supplies were not available. Sometimes the product became a food in its own right, such as bacon. But salt was not easy to come by. The obvious source was the sea so that in certain places round the coast where conditions were suitable, the mineral was extracted from seawater. An essential requirement was a marshy area which would be covered by sea at certain spring tides, and just as important, a convenient source of fuel. The process needed adequate sunshine, drying winds, and especially because there were so many hazards associated with the manufacture, a population which could turn to other activities to make a living. Climate played a big part and Lancashire was at a disadvantage as compared to (say) Hampshire where for centuries the making of salt was carried out and where, near Lymington, traces of the activity can still be seen. These take the form of rectangular enclosures surrounded by low 'bund' walls of earth, together with the ruins of brick buildings which at one time housed the furnaces. No such remains are to be found at Lytham. But this does not mean to say that they once did not exist.

It was the Reverend William Thornber, Rector of Blackpool who first wrote the story of the 'salterns' at Lytham in his book *The History of Blackpool and Neighbourhood*. It seems that King John as Earl of Morton in the second year of his reign (1201) gave lands at Lytham to Richard Fitzroger whose estate passed in 1336 with the church to the monks at Durham to build a 'house'. This was the foundation of Lytham Priory. The transaction recorded one of the boundaries to be - 'from the other side of Snartsalte as it falls upon the sands of the sea'. This particular document is also mentioned by Edward Baines ('History of Lancashire' - 1886) who adds a footnote suggesting that it might be 'Suartessalte'. If so, it makes sense. The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology gives 'Swart' an archaic term as a meaning 'of dark colour' and deriving from Old English - Swear or Old High German - Swarz. If they made salt from the water which came in from the Ribble estuary, it would very well have earned the epithet. Baines records the fact that when he wrote, Lytham was destitute of commerce and manufacture, but that a small building for the refining of salt was said to have existed a century before 'at a place called Saltcotes near the Lytham Pool'.

In 1975 the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society published an article by Robert Taylor dealing with the salt industry of West Lancashire. Here he gives an account of the way in which salt was produced from sea water in Amounderness. To produce the salt, the 'wellers' as they were known, took about three inches of sea sand off the top of sandbanks during low tide to be taken away in carts known as 'coupes' for the next process. The sand was dropped into wooden troughs perforated with holes and lined with peat and straw to act as a filter. Sea water which had already been evaporating in shallow sumps by the shore was then poured over the sand in the troughs and allowed to drip into vessels. At this stage the liquor was already concentrated and they reckoned that if an egg would float in it, it was ready for the next stage of further evaporation.

The used sand was then cast aside to be tipped on to a mound or mounds known as 'Saltcoat hills'. These mounds were often used for building on, perhaps a cottage or a structure used to contain the furnaces. Each salthouse usually possessed from 3 to 6 pans used for boiling the brine and they reckoned that each pan would produce up to two gallons of wet salt in a boiling lasting four hours. The fuel used was peat.

The scum was taken off and the remaining solids were put into wicker baskets to dry out. The drips from these baskets were bitter magnesium salts which were thrown away in the Fylde but in Hampshire were used as Epsom Salts.

Each saltcoat had its own 'turbary' from which it could cut peat while other turbaries were used exclusively for domestic purposes. The iron pans suffered considerably from corrosion and so were lined with lead. Taylor points out the frequency of surnames such as Salthouse and Leadbetter (leadbeater) which could indeed derive from these activities.

The storms of 1701 and 1720 caused much suffering in the areas which produced sea salt. Many salterns were destroyed. At the same time the much purer salt deposits which by then were being worked in Cheshire (discovered in 1670) brought about the permanent closure of the industry in Lancashire, although the manufacture of sea salt on the south coast especially near the naval base at Portsmouth continued for another hundred years. (The better roads were needed to take Cheshire salt to the south coast).

The expansion of building to the east of Lytham in the 19th century, not to mention the construction of the railway and the digging of the Main Drain with its outlet at the site of the former Lytham Pool, has led to the elimination of any surface trace of the location of the former Lytham salterns. But some clues still remain. Lytham has been fortunate in having shared the long history of one of England's oldest families - the Cliftons. They, or at least their stewards, kept detailed records of transactions of many kinds going back at least to the time of the first Queen Elizabeth. For instance, after Thomas Clifton died in 1551, his executors prepared a long account of the way in which they had dealt with his estate by detailing the sums paid out in fulfilment of his wishes. (The executors actions were confirmed by vicars of 'Garstange', Kirkham and 'Sanct Michaels upon Wyre, all appointed by the 'bishoppe of Chester)'). Scores of debts were listed including two small entries:-

'to John Crokan of Lethm for salt vs'
and
'to John Fyssher at Lethom for salt xix s iiij d'

John Kennedy, who until his retirement was the agent for the Clifton Estates, confirms that in 1589 the rent for Saltcotes was made up by

John Salthus	9s 6p
John Crookall	13s 10p
William Waltche	8s 2p

and that the Saltcotes cottages were in existence until they were demolished in the 1960's.

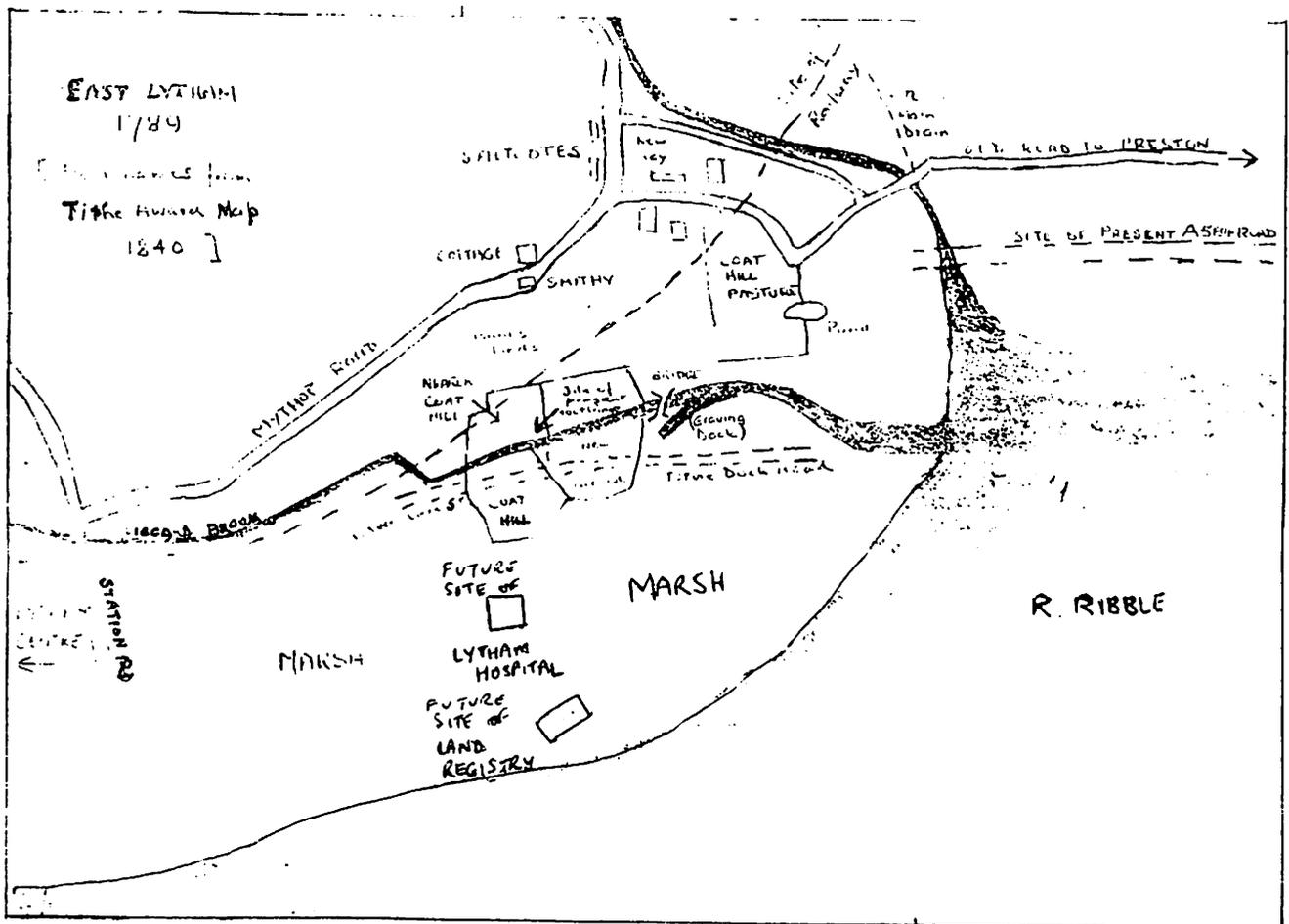
Cunliffe Shaw writing in 1935 shows in extracts from the 'Clifton Papers' that in 1632 the Pentecost Rent at Saltcoats was collected from:-

Andrew Lewty	1 - 4d
John Crookall	16 - 6d
John Walsh	9 - 1d
John Salthouse	11 - 6d
Eliz. Walsh	2 - 1d

The Crookall, Walsh and Salthouse families were still paying rent in 1662, and the records further reveal that the Clifton steward paid duty on salt from John Crookall on November 6th 1698 consisting of 24 bushels (ie 84 lbs) and that the sum of £4.15s was paid to the same man in respect of the purchase of 28½ bushels of salt on October 1st 1704. At these dates it can be assumed that the salt would be needed for preserving meat.

There remains one further clue to the location of the saltworks at Lytham.

The Tythe Award Map of 1840 for Lytham gives details of the names of the fields at the east end of the town at a date before the most recent development. By superimposing the detail on the Estate map of 1789 it is possible to conclude that the areas bordering the old road to Preston, (now gone) and on either side of the Liggard Brook now occupied by Lorne Street and the adjacent Bowling Green were at one time involved in salt production. The 'Coat Hill' and 'Nearer Coat Hill' fields, together with the 'Coat Hill pasture', were on the edge of the marsh leading to the sandbanks. It is surely significant that the largest bank is called Salter's bank to this day.



The sketch map of the area gives some idea of the situation. The bridge leading from the shore to the saltens over the brook was at or near the site of the present bridge which takes the main A584 past the entrance to the old docks.

The Clifton records make several mentions of payments to 'John Salthouse, 'smith'. It seems likely that this mighty man lived in the smithy marked on the old maps as being in Mythop Road where the Ashton's Mythop Nursery Garden is now. And members of the Crookall family still live in Lytham.

At the beginning of the 17th century, Camden describes the area, Amounderness - "A great part is called File, or Field, but being in many places fenny, it is reckoned less wholesome. In many places along the coast there are heaps of sand, upon which the natives now and then pour water till it grows saltish, and then with turf (peat) boyl it into white salt". Several of these salt manufacturaries were located near Lytham, and it is very likely that the two brass pans and an ancient measure, discovered about 1830 embedded in the peat moss not far from Fox Hall (Blackpool) were used in the production of salt. On many places on the coast, the inhabitants gather heaps of sand together, which, having lain some time, they put into troughs full of holes at the bottom, pour water upon them, and boil the lees into white salt". The last people to occupy the Saltcoat site as a farmstead was the Hardman family, having farmed this ancient site for generations, and who were turned off in 1963, when the land was required for building. This was despite valliant efforts by Mr. William Moon Hardman, the last tenant, who made valliant efforts to hold on to what he saw as his rights.

Annual subscriptions:

The £3 subscription for 1988/89 became due for renewal on April 1st, and should be paid to the Treasurer, Walter Brayshaw, 3 Crystal Grove, St. Annes, the Membership Secretary, Peter Sharman, 14 Upper Westby Street, Lytham, the Chairman, Alan Ashton, 1 Warton Street, Lytham, or the President, Stanley Brown, 29 East Beach, Lytham. An attractive new membership card incorporates the receipt.

Knots & Splices - by Mr. Tony Bloomer

Tony Bloomer's most interesting talk on Knots and Splices was heard by an undeservedly sparse audience on Wednesday 20th April. Splicing tools lent by The Lifboat Museum (Mr Brin Eccles collection from his lifetimes work as Rigger at Lytham Shipyard) together with examples of knots, splices, fancy ropework, cording and netting from Tony's collection added to his discourse on the history of ropes from 1800 BC down to the present day.

A series of slides from Frank Kilroy's collection, encompassing pictures of Lytham-built tugs and river-steamers, as well as those of local fishing craft and other well known vessels which regularly plied our river before the closure of Preston Docks, all added a nautical touch to another pleasant social occasion.
