

LANCASTER JUDGES' LODGINGS

UPDATE

Newsletter of the Friends of Lancaster Judges' Lodgings

Issue no 50

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The Judges' Lodgings in February

No-one has been twiddling their thumbs at Lancaster Judges' Lodgings during a somewhat bleak (but short) February. Conservation and cleaning have been carrying on with Jenny (site manager) and volunteers, so that by the time of opening everywhere should be spick and span as well as Covid-secure. Various training courses have been on offer for both staff and volunteers to try and make the JL as accessible as possible to everyone – there was a deafness and disability course in January. If anyone missed it who would have liked to attend, there are some notes available which I can pass on if you contact me. Alzheimers' training is also currently on offer – Jenny writes –

“As you know we are keen to make the museum as accessible and inclusive to all staff, volunteers and visitors as possible, including those living with dementia. *Jenny cleaning curtains*
The Alzheimer's Society run sessions to create 'Dementia Friends' and we would like as many of you as possible to undertake this training. It is currently online with multiple options and takes less than 45 minutes. Please be aware that if dementia affects your life personally you may find parts of the training upsetting and so choose not to do it. The goal of the training is to change perceptions, removing fear and stigma surrounding the condition and empowering those with dementia and their supporters to live well.

If you are interested please go to

<https://www.dementiafriends.org.uk/WEBSession#.YDjA4t9xfIU> and book on one of the sessions. I would be grateful if you could please let me know if you undertake the training or have done it already in another way. Many thanks”



Work is being done on designs for a new JL leaflet for visitors, and Jack (who designed the Friends logo above for us – thank you Jack) has been creating some interesting

images of items and scenes in and around the JL. We shall look forward to seeing the final version when the JL reopens.

AGM

A successful Friends AGM was held via Zoom in the middle of February, with 17 virtual attendees and 3 apologies. The business part of the meeting was short, as AGMs often are and we held a quiz in the second part of the meeting with questions coming from Susan Batternay, Howard Feather and the JL itself.

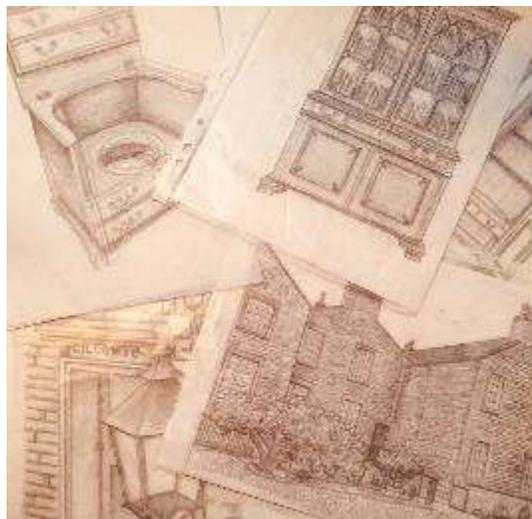
The answers were sent round separately after the meeting and participants were asked to send in their scores just for interest as there were no prizes I'm sorry to say. Only four people sent in their scores and of those Jack (see above) was top scorer with 14 correct answers. Congratulations, Jack.

Howard, Chair of the Friends of JL, said in his report to the meeting –

“This time last year we were looking forward to The Judges' Lodgings opening in March, and building on the success of the previous year. However on 20th March 2020 we learned that the decision had been made to postpone the re-opening of the Judges' Lodgings indefinitely, and that the situation would be reviewed in the coming weeks in light of advice from central government. Obviously the health and wellbeing of volunteers, visitors and staff had utmost priority. Little did we realise, at this stage, the impact that Coronavirus would have.

Lynda and members of the JL team continued working behind the scenes to ensure that the Museum would be Covid-secure when allowed to re-open (this work taking place alongside other roles they have taken on during this time) – and the Museum did manage to re-open for a few months from the end-August 2020 Bank Holiday. We are most grateful to all the staff and volunteers who made this possible. Although it wasn't open to the public, Jenny and the garden volunteers had also worked hard, when they were allowed under the restrictions, to try and keep the garden looking as tidy as possible.

We are grateful we have had the opportunity to welcome back visitors, even for a short time this year, as this was not the case for many museums. However, because of the coronavirus, it did mean that the Friends were not able to offer the successful series of talks and events that had been planned, nor was it possible to offer the very successful Victorian Tea Room – all of which had previously raised much needed funds for the Friends and the Judges' Lodgings. We are therefore very grateful to the Friends for their continued support, financial and otherwise, during this difficult time – and we ask that you please continue to support us by renewing your JL membership, which is now due. Your Friends of the Judges' Lodgings Committee has been meeting via Zoom, and we very much look forward to re-launching face-to-face events again, when this becomes possible. In the meantime we are starting to trial holding a few short events via this



medium, and would be grateful if you would let us know what 30 minute sessions might be of interest to you.

I would like to conclude by thanking all the Friends' Committee for their work and support during this last year, and I'm sure we are all particularly grateful to Catherine and her team for the launch of the wonderful website in May, and to Sue for her informative monthly newsletter – both are so important in keeping the Museum's profile raised, both locally and further afield."

There is still plenty of time to renew your membership of the Friends – it's great to get that support, and in view of the proposed reopening of the JL we shall hope to put on some face-to-face events for the second part of the year. The subscriptions are the same as last year.

You can pay the relevant amount by sending a cheque made payable to Friends of Lancaster Judges Lodgings C/o Sue Widden, 12 Castle Park, Lancaster LA1 1YQ; or by making a bank transfer to TT's of Friends of Lancaster Judges Lodgings bank, The Cumberland. Sort Code: 16 52 21; Account: 54106246. The amount payable is £10 for over 25 year olds and £5 for under 25's, the unemployed and those on benefit. Many thanks again for your continuing support.

Reopening

After the publication of the government's "roadmap" for the relaxation of the lockdown restrictions the potential date for the reopening of JL is 21 May. Lynda will be looking for volunteers to help with the new season. Lynda writes –

"You may be raring to get back to Judges Lodgings or you may be feeling a bit more unsure or you may be somewhere in between! I know we have all been through the mill this last year and it will be so nice to see everyone back but we will of course make sure that whatever H&S measures needed are in place and that you feel comfortable about returning to site. We are planning to maintain the booking system and one way system and will keep in line with any gov restrictions in place by then. If you have any concerns or feedback, please get in touch. We will also organise a catch up via zoom or teams to talk through re-opening again. It's good to finally have a date to work to and we are all really looking forward to you returning to the house."

We will all look forward to the reopening of the house and getting back in touch with this particular section of Lancaster's History.

2021 marks the 50th anniversary of....

What do you remember about the early 1970s? Bowie's 'Life on Mars'? The three-day week? Whatever your memories the chances are that they don't include the passing of the Courts Act of 1971, although this piece of legislation made seismic changes to the

administration of justice in England and Wales. These changes led directly to the Judges' Lodgings in Lancaster ceasing to provide accommodation to touring judges. Prior to this major reorganisation, the more serious crimes which could not be tried in the magistrates' courts – murder, manslaughter, robbery etc – were referred up to the Assize Courts which sat in the designated towns and cities three times a year. ('Assize' derives from the French assis meaning sitting or in session). The judges who sat in the Assizes were of High Court rank and their arrival in Lancaster was a spectacle which once drew the crowds (and an assortment of street life and entertainment!). Once settled in JL, they would proceed in some pomp and ceremony up to the castle to begin work.

This system was unable to meet the demand of ever rising caseloads and so the Courts Act replaced the Assizes with permanent Crown Courts in all the shires. Lancaster was increasingly being seen as too remote an outpost and it surprised few when Preston was nominated as the home for the new Crown Court serving Lancashire. After 800 years Lancaster ceased to be an Assize town and JL ceased to host visiting judges. Nowadays (or in more normal times at least) a crown court does occasionally sit in Lancaster but operates as a satellite of Preston's and with less senior judges. A few years after the final Lancaster Assizes in October 1971, the JL found a new purpose and became the museum it is today.

Garth Lindrup

Volunteering at JL

You can volunteer at JL through the LCC Volunteering Programme either to act as a Room Steward or to join the Gardening Team – follow the link <https://lancsvp.org.uk/opportunities>

Join Us

If you have not yet joined the Friends, or you have friends and neighbours who would be interested in supporting our work to ensure that Lancaster Judges' Lodgings remains open and accessible to the public, please contact me, and encourage them to do the same – sue.widden@outlook.com – and I'll send joining details. Please feel free to forward these newsletters to your friends and relatives and encourage them to join us in our work.

Comments and ideas from everyone are always welcome and we are happy to share them widely. If you have a view or a comment to contribute to UPDATE, please email me at the address below.

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