

LANCASTER JUDGES' LODGINGS

UPDATE

Newsletter of the Friends of Lancaster Judges' Lodgings

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The Judges' Lodgings in March

March has been such a busy month for the Judges' Lodgings team, culminating in the display and launch of the powerful and moving exhibition of portraits of **Black Lancastrians** by Kendal artist Lela Harris – more about this below. Lela's work on the Black Lancastrians was also featured as part of Lancaster's LitFest, when she and Professor Imogen Tyler discussed the paintings and how they came to life. 59 people attended the event and 117 people came to the launch of the exhibition – so plenty of exposure already, with some great feedback. The exhibition is on throughout the season, so lots of time to visit and re-visit.

Work has been continuing on the Gillows Gallery, now a shell with all stands and dividers removed, and revealed as a light and spacious room. The display will set the work of the Gillows in an expanded historical context and is planned to be reopened in June – watch this space for more details.

The Young Producers' project to beautify the picnic room is coming to fruition with a launch on 1 April, and during the month the whole museum has been cleaned and painted. The museum opened for the season on 30 March.

As a final check on the paranormal in the JL, Lancaster Ghostbusters paid an investigatory visit – what did they find? Was that the ghost of judges' past? A long time gone housekeeper? Or the victim of a miscarriage of justice? The spirit was not moved to speak, so we'll never know.



The Judges' Lodgings Garden in March

The large planters in the Tea Room courtyard have been replanted after the ravages of the cold weather and spring flowers are providing splashes of colour. As previously there will be children's games in the garden and lots of space to run around, weather permitting. After looking solemnly at

beautiful furniture children need a bit of relief. More planting will take place in the coming weeks. Anyone wanting to volunteer to help make the garden the lovely place it is each year would be very welcome – see below for details on how to volunteer.

Black Lancastrians

This exhibition of six portraits of black women and men by Lela Harris of Kendal seeks to give personalities to Black people who were recorded as living in Lancaster in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, either as enslaved people, or possibly as free servants. Because there is no visual record of these people, Lela has relied on written descriptions and other written evidence – the written descriptions come mostly from newspaper advertisements for runaway slaves, such as that for “The Ibo Boy”, a Black enslaved African who ran away from his master – a parson living in Heysham. The Ibo Boy is described as having scarification marks on his face, suggesting that he came from modern-day Nigeria. He is also described as having a Lancashire accent.

Lela has created imaginative portraits which give these Black Lancastrians of 300 years ago personalities and humanity – they are all ordinary people just like us.

Lela says “Howdy! I’m really happy to let you all know that my first solo exhibition opens on 30th March - 5th November 2023 at the Judges’ Lodgings Museum in Lancaster! It would be awesome if anyone would like to pop in for a visit.



Lubaina Himid and Lela Harris with one of the portraits

It’s been an absolute privilege to work on such a fascinating project over the last 12 months so I’m super happy to be able to share the portraits that I’ve created. You can find out more about the project here:

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/.../facing-the-past-black.../> “

The exhibition was opened by Lubaina Himid, who herself had an exhibition at the JL some years ago – “Swallow Hard”, again giving life to enslaved Africans, and depicting those who made profits from the Transatlantic trade in human beings.



An integral part of the Black Lancastrians project was to work with schools.

Jack working on the presentation of the children’s portraits

Lela inspired primary school children from Bowerham, Christchurch and Dallas Road Primary Schools to produce their own portraits, using three templates taken from Lela's design for The Ibo Boy. The 180+ portraits which they now have created all hang throughout the Judges' Lodgings – beautiful, colourful and mature, and very varied in approach – some of them you would hardly know that the same template had been used.

See the attached accompanying poster for full details and please share this around all your social media contacts.

Events in April

The Judges' Lodgings opens its season's programme of events with an Easter Egg Hunt, which runs every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday 11.00-4.00, 30 March-30 April. The Easter Egg Hunt takes you around the oldest town house in Lancaster and into its beautiful springtime garden. £1.00 per child, no booking required.

There are also Easter Craft sessions on Friday 7 April, so get stuck in with some crafty fun decorating egg-cellent Easter eggs.



On Friday 14 April you can bring your little chicks for some egg-cellent Easter family fun. Create your own Easter masterpiece with a colourful cardboard Easter bunny.

First session 11:30am to 12:30pm

Second session 1:30pm to 3:30pm

Standard admission charges apply: £3 for adults, £2 for concessions, children free. Crafts cost £2

per child

The JL popular lunchtime lectures begin again in April, 12.00-1.00 on Friday 28 April. Colin Penny will be giving us an insight into the gruesome work of William Calcraft, England's longest serving hangman, who was believed to have executed 450 people during his career.

Wild Escape is a national project promoting natural history in our museums, funded by the Art Fund. The JL has been funded to appoint an artist and a writer to work with families over three workshops starting from 1 April and ending on 22 April, Earth Day, when all the art/work will be displayed in the JL.

The JL is really buzzing throughout April – be there.



The Victorian Pop-up Tea Room



The Friends bring you the monthly Pop-up Tea Room this season, starting on Saturday 1 April (no joke). The Tea Room is open from 12.00noon until 3.00pm for a large range of beverages and delicious cakes and bakes, all home made. The Tea Room is staffed by volunteers and there is no set price for your afternoon tea – we ask for donations, as generous as possible, since all the money we make goes towards

Raspberry Buns – popular favourites

supporting and enhancing the Judges' Lodgings Museum. Compare afternoon tea prices elsewhere and you will see that you get a magnificent deal for your money. If the weather is clement afternoon tea will be served in the JL courtyard – if not, there will be tables inside. The forecast for the afternoon looks promising.



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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