

# LANCASTER JUDGES' LODGINGS

## UPDATE

Newsletter of the Friends of Lancaster Judges' Lodgings

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### October at The Judges' Lodgings

So much has been going on this month, I only hope I can remember it all. We are delighted to announce that the Judges Lodgings has been shortlisted for a Museums Change Lives award by the Museums Association. The Facing The Past Black Lancastrians exhibition by Lela Harris has made Lancaster's oldest town house one of only three museums nationally to be shortlisted for the Decolonising Museums Award.



This award recognises the best example of a museum using decolonising practice to recognise the impact of the legacy of empire and slavery in any area of its activities. Congratulations to all the nominees and watch this space for the announcement on 7 November at the Museums Association Conference. This announcement seems particularly appropriate for October – Black History Month.

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Read more about the exhibition <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/.../facing-the-past-black>

Another well-deserved award goes to Naomi who leads tours of the Judges' Lodgings based on her research into the less well-known facts about the building and what went on there. Naomi is a finalist in The Employee of the Year in the 2023 Lancaster Business Awards – congratulations to Naomi. You can read her article on Thomas Covell below.

Putting (and keeping) the Judges' Lodgings on the map comes another type of award – the Judges' Lodgings now features on the board of the Lancaster Monopoly Game – where Leicester Square is on the original board I understand. Many thanks to all those who voted for the



Judges' Lodgings as a site worthy to be a Monopoly destination. On Sunday 15 October the Judges' Lodgings provided the venue for Lancaster Music Festival events, with two concerts, both full, proving yet again what a superb room the



Dining Room is for musical events. Frederik Holm and Ursula Leveaux played a bassoon spectacular for us, and the second half showcase Laure Chan and William Jack on violin and cello/Guitar. We look



forward to taking part in further musical events.



Also marking Black History Month was the Friday Lunchtime Lecture about Sambo's Grave – *Respect this Lonely Grave* – which was fully booked on its first hearing and to be repeated by popular request on Friday 3 November, 12.00-1.00. Charge is £4.00 which includes entrance to the building and tea/coffee. Book now by calling in to the Judges' Lodgings, phone 01524581241 or

email [judgeslodgings@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:judgeslodgings@lancashire.gov.uk)

The October Friday Lecture – *Life with the Judges* – was also fully booked and had to be repeated.

October winds up of course with Hallowe'en events and lots of spooky crafts for all the family. Did you manage to find some of Barbara's beautifully painted Hallowe'en pebbles?



In addition to all the public facing events and activities, the JL team stay busy (very) with all the admin, fundraising, planning and general care for the building and collection. Congratulations to all of them for creating and maintaining a vibrant and exiting place to visit and enjoy.

### Thomas Covell

Much of what we know about Thomas Covell, original owner of the Judges' Lodgings and linked to the Pendle Witches, comes from snippets handed down over the years. We gain a very mixed picture of him- some sources call him hospitable, kind and courteous, others that he was power-hungry and cruel. Let's dive in and find out what we can about Covell, the builder of the Judges' Lodgings.

Thomas Covell 1561-1639

Keeper of Lancaster Castle (the governor) for 48 years

Mayor of Lancaster 6 times  
 Coroner for the county for 46 years  
 Justice of the Peace

As well as all these accolades, Covell rebuilt this building around 1625, it previously was called the Old Hall (as seen on Speed's 1610 map). It is believed to have been kept the Old Hall name during his life though may have been called Covell House in the later 17th and into the 18th century. Covell also rebuilt the cross outside the house, replacing a much earlier one on the site. This too slowly decayed during the later 18th and early 19th century. Remains were finally held in the Judges' Lodging's attic, then moved up to the castle under Shire Hall then sadly thrown away early 20th century! A new cross was built in 1903 to mark Edward VIII's coronation the previous year but it still retained the name 'Covell Cross'. It has always been a place where announcements (particularly royal proclamations) were marked. When it was announced this cross was going to be opened there was a public and council backlash over naming it the Covell Cross- he had become a more maligned figure for his treatment of the Lancashire Witches and the prisoners more widely, despite this, the cross still features the Covell coat of arms at the base.

Covell is most (in)famous for being the keeper of the castle during the Lancashire Witch Trials though it is not known how much involvement and say he had in their imprisonment and treatment whilst imprisoned. He was, however, present for the interrogation of Anne Whittle (Old Chattox) one of the soon to be condemned 'witches'. In the course of his long life, he had acquired land in Lancaster (here) and at Oxcliffe and Torrisholme. After his death, the house was initially left to his wife Dorothy, then to his granddaughter Elizabeth Brockholes, daughter of his only surviving child, also Elizabeth.

Buried at Lancaster Priory, his tombstone used to be on the floor in the chancel but the brass plaque suffered wear over the years, splitting in half. It is now mounted high up on the tower wall and along with his glowing epitaph to his goodly deeds, shows the only known image of Covell; he appears to be wearing fine robe with padded sleeves and shoulders a ruff and high boots though appears to be bald on top.

We are very pleased to be able to display local stonemason and artist Alan Ward's interpretation of Thomas Covell which has a fascinating secret on the reverse!  
 (This article was reproduced from the Friends' Facebook page).



### **The Garden in October**

After the flowering summer, the JL garden is being put to bed for the winter with cutting back, chopping down, splitting up and all the activities of the cooler months. The plan

for the refurbishment of the garden is still under discussion and we'll keep you updated on developments.

### Events in November

Hallowe'en – because Hallowe'en falls in the middle of the week, there are two bites at the activities provided at the JL for all the family, with Horrid Hallowe'en Crafts (make your own bat or spider) on Thursday 2 November and Friday 3 November, 11.00-12.30 and 1.30-3.30. Drop in, no booking required, with a charge of £2.00 for the craft session and a tasty treat besides.

Light up Lancaster – it's almost that time again. Light up Lancaster runs from Thursday 2 November until Saturday 4 November. This year the JL will be illuminated by projections of Lela Harris's Black Lancastrian portraits moving across the front of the building – *They Were People First*. This will be spectacular – don't miss it.



Lela herself will be running Art Workshops on Saturday 4 November at the Judges' Lodgings, 10.30-12.30 and 1.30-3.30. Drop in during these times, no booking required.

These events at the beginning of November mark the end of the season for the Judges' Lodgings until spring 2024, to give the team time to check through the building and collections, plan events and activities for the coming year, deep clean the rooms and all the housekeeping stuff needed to keep the Judges' Lodgings one of the most popular attractions in Lancaster. There will however be one more opening – **The Victorian Christmas Weekend** – see below.

### Victorian Christmas Weekend

This traditional attraction at the Judges' Lodgings will take place the first weekend in December, Saturday 2 and Sunday 3, usual opening times, 11.00-4.00. Father Christmas and elves will be in attendance, and the beautifully decorated building will showcase live music throughout both days, craft activities and of course the shop with its range of seasonal gifts. The pop-up Victorian Tea Shop will run on the Saturday 2 December. Please see attached flier for more details. Also attached is all the information you



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ever needed to know about how traditions which we regard as essentially Victorian often go back much further in time, some even to pagan times (but bowdlerised by the Victorians).

Be sure to save the dates and come along for what might be your first taste of Christmas this year.

### **And Finally.....**

Advert found on a Liverpool Facebook page – those were the days when you could furnish a six-bedroom house or flat for £600. No Cost-of-Living Crisis around then, at least for those who could shop at Waring & Gillow.



### **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](mailto: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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