

Trees in the Town

1961 - The first exhibition the Society organised was 'Trees in Towns,' sponsored by the Civic Trust and held at the College of Further Education St. Annes and at Lytham Baths Hall.

The Society also mounted a campaign to protest against the proposed felling of street trees, trying to limit it to diseased ones only and began a policy of planting in areas wherever it could in order to keep Lytham

In 1970, three thousand whips (very small trees) were bought and distributed to all the primary schools in the borough for planting. Throughout the 60s and 70s working parties planted trees in the town on Saturdays and Sundays.

1977 - To celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee it was decided that a row of trees would be planted along the main A584, running from outside Warton to the beginning of the Lytham boundary. Witch Wood volunteers continue with periodic maintenance

Many thousands of trees have been planted in the town by the volunteer team, mainly led by the late Bill Thompson (d. 2006). The trees can be seen in our streets, school playing fields, church grounds, Lytham Hall grounds and in other public areas which were short on greenery.

1970 - Lord Mountbatten planted an evergreen oak in the small gardens created by the Society by the gates at the corner of West Park.

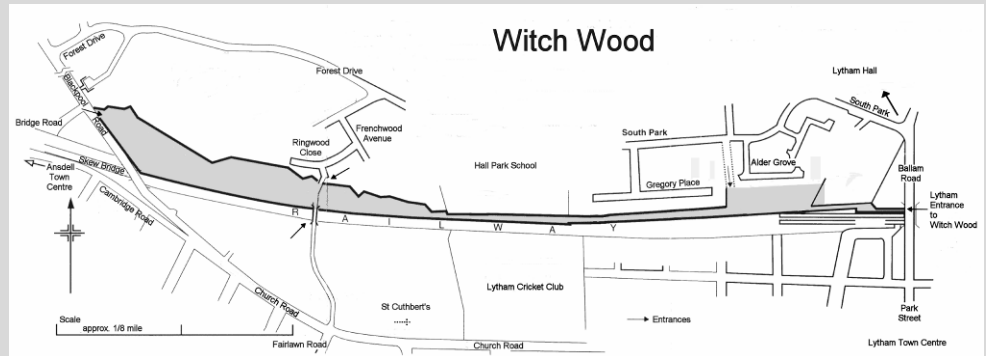


A black mulberry was chosen to commemorate Bill Thompson because he tried hard to save the last of 30 planted in the town by Thomas 'Tree Planter' Clifton in the mid 19th century. Its owner, on East Beach, cut it down to build a garage. Our mulberry is at Lytham Hall.



Black Mulberry
IN MEMORY OF
BILL THOMPSON
1928 - 2006
Lytham St Annes Civic Society

The Creation of Witch Wood in 1974



In the 1970s, fears that the whole of Lytham Hall estate might be sold and developed were ended when the Guardian Assurance Co. assured the Society that the Hall and inner park would remain in their ownership for the time being and that they were amenable to paths being made amongst areas where there were tree preservation orders preventing development.

British Rail no longer required the strip of land running to the north of the railway line between Ansdell and Lytham Station, and the local council were not prepared to take responsibility for it, nor the land offered to them by the Guardian where there were preservation orders.

The Society stepped in and took over the remaining woodland alongside the railway and leased from (the then) British Rail a strip of land approximately 40 ft wide, to provide a continuous walk from Ansdell to Lytham.

The Society set up a limited company to own and manage the wood. Members cleared the undergrowth, removed rubbish that had been dumped in the wood over the years and introduced paths.

The wood was officially opened by the Duke of Edinburgh on 4th May 1974 for use by the general public.

In the afternoon a reception was held at Lytham Hall, attended by the committee, patrons and representatives from the Guardian Assurance Co., British Rail and the Council.



In the process of acquiring the land John Kennedy, the long serving Agent to the Clifton family and subsequently to Guardian, told how a daughter of the Clifton family was riding her horse, called the Witch, in the wooded area when it fell and was so seriously injured that it had to be put down. There are a number of animals' graves in the Lytham Hall Park, but only one of a horse. Witch Wood was the obvious name for the wood.



The stone columns at various entries to the wood, including that on Ballam Road bridge, were part of the portico entrance to the original Lytham station in Station Road. After demolition these columns inexplicably were found in Blackpool Zoo. They were retrieved and placed in the wood.

Maintenance of Witch Wood

The Civic Society has continued to maintain the wood, taking advice from the Forestry Commission and the Fylde tree officer, and receiving grants from the Lancashire Environmental Fund and Lancashire Green Partnership. Some 200 diseased elms had to be removed in the early days and, more recently, much sycamore, which grew in the open spaces, was removed and replaced by native species such as oak, ash, beech, alder, rowan.

There is a weekly rota of members for clearance of litter and a group of volunteers works in the wood each week throughout the year.



Excessive growth of sycamore and elm continues to be removed, and ground is cleared of bramble for planting young trees

Bramble was cleared near Skew Bridge in 2008 for planting of 1,000 bluebells, with the help of local scouts. A further 2,000 bluebells were planted in 2009 elsewhere in the wood.



Splitting and selling logs provides useful income

15 bird boxes have been mounted in the wood. All are regularly used and are steam cleaned each



Clearing invasive ivy from the wall near Lytham station



In 2011 the main path through the wood was repaired by the Witch Wood volunteers, broken paving slabs being replaced by Toptrec – a 20-ton load for the purpose cost, with delivery, over £700.



Wild flowers have been sown in parts of the wood, but clearing the ground has revealed flowers already there.

Witch Wood Today

The walk through the wood became steadily more popular and, with regular use, the pathways became very muddy in winter. With some reluctance, it was decided in the early 1990s to lay broken paving slabs on the main path to give firmer footing, but, with time, the surface became very uneven, and it was felt necessary in April, 2003 to close the wood to the public for safety reasons.

The main path between Skew Bridge and Middle Bridge was then resurfaced with a recycled material, TopTrek, by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust Environmental Task Force (LWTEFT), and the cost, over £5,000, was borne by the Society as it was wished to re-open the wood as soon as possible, rather than wait for a grant to be obtained.



It was decided that further improvements should be made and grants were obtained from the Lancashire Environmental Fund.

Two phases of work saw the remainder of the main path resurfaced, new fences installed, seats repaired and information boards introduced.

Through 2003 to 2005 the total cost was around £21,000, with nearly £12,000 in grants.



Good use was made of an old beech which had to be felled for safety reasons

In 2010 the ramp giving access to the wood from Lytham railway bridge was completely refurbished. The cost was over £6,000 but with grants and donations the Society's contribution was limited to £2,900.

Since the improvements the Society has twice been awarded Green Pennants by the Civic Trust and also received a special 10th anniversary award from Lancashire CC Green Partnership for the work in renewing the woodland.



The beech wood now with seats



Summer or winter, we have an attractive and popular woodland walk