

The ST Annes Heritage Mural



The Parish Church of Saint Anne
St. Annes-on-Sea in the Diocese of Blackburn
Lancashire, England.

The ST Annes Heritage Mural

*Had I the heavens' embroider'd cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly, because you tread on my dreams.*

William Butler Yeats
1865 - 1939

WRITTEN by
Gary and Julie Liggett

*This book is dedicated to the memory of the late Helen Thornber
who, with her friend Betty Mansfield, designed
the St Annes Heritage Mural*

The Mural was embroidered by the St. Annes Broderers:

*Jean Anthony, Freda Aspinall, Joan Belbeck, Edith Cartmell, Anne Cooley, Edith Degnan,
Muriel Driscoll, Margaret Hallatt, Hilda Hamilton, Mary Hargreaves, Helen Hodgson,
Cissie Hooper, Margaret Johnson, Joyce Knowles, Edna Moss, Winifred Oakley,
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Doris Snape-Butterworth, Joan Watson, Bessie Watts, Christine Welch,
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The St Annes Heritage Mural

The St. Annes Heritage Mural is a celebration of the history of a community, which has grown into the town of St. Annes we know today.

Around 1840 this area, known as Heyhouses, was mainly sandhills and fields, with scattered farms and tiny fishermens cottages. Life here was hard. The farming and fishing folk waged a constant battle for survival against land and sea.

The Mural, which is eighteen feet long and six feet five inches high, contains two million, one hundred and sixty six thousand, five hundred and twenty eight stitches. It comprises seven individual panels, each depicting various aspects of the life and times of this community.



The St Annes Broderers

Preparation for the work began with ordering specially made 'slate frames' in traditional beechwood. At the same time, wooden stretchers, polished antique mono canvas and a mountain of crewel wool, all had to be obtained. The first stage was the numbering of the wools, weaving a grid on the canvas and practising the stitches to be used.

Embroidering began on 17th April, 1989 and, almost seven years later, the final stitch was put in place on 29th January, 1996. Over forty six different types of



Attention to detail and careful checking were the key to success

embroidery stitches have been used, to great effect, in this magnificent work.

None of the St. Annes Broderers fully anticipated the enormity of the task. However, now the work is complete and they are justifiably proud of their accomplishment. This was recognised in 1995 when the Mural won a national award from the Age Resource Council. Such is the detail of this work that each time you look at it, you are bound to see something new. Indeed, the comments made by one of the judges surely speaks volumes. "You must see for yourself the immense beauty of the colours and textures of this Heritage Mural. The St. Anne's Broderers have every right to feel proud of their achievement. There is so much of themselves in this work, which will give pleasure and inspiration for hundreds of years".

Lady Eleanor Cecily Clifton

On 14th February 1606, the manor of Lytham was sold to Cuthbert Clifton, owner of the adjoining manor of Westby, for £4,300. Clifton set about enlarging the manor house, which became the family seat. The Cliftons had been substantial landowners in the Fylde since the twelfth century.

The present Lytham Hall was started in 1757. Thomas Clifton commissioned the subsequently eminent architect, John Carr of York, to design a new hall. Although parts of the old building remained Carr built anew, what is perhaps, the most elegant Georgian house to be found in the country.

The existence of St. Annes Parish Church is directly attributable to Lady Eleanor Clifton. The bricks were provided by the Estate, on condition that every able-bodied man in the hamlet put in a days work. They were taken from the Kiln, beside the Shovels Inn, to the site. A prize of one pound was offered for the first to tip a load of bricks. The so-called 'brick race' is legendary, and stories of racing farm carts and milk floats are part and parcel of local history.

At a meeting of the Lytham St Annes Golf Club in 1889, it was announced that Lady Eleanor wished to give a gold medal. Valued at £25, it was awarded to the winner of the annual competition. In her letter she said "I am very glad to be of use at St. Anne's and tho I have never seen a golf match, anything that promotes health, exercise and sociability is to my mind a great advantage to the individuals and the locality..."

Today, many examples of the rich legacy and generosity of the Clifton family are still much in evidence, throughout this area. They were typical of the old families of England - brave, honourable, perhaps occasionally tyrannical, but having in their hearts a deep involvement with the people who relied upon them for their livelihood.



Farming Folk



Shire horses have been used for agricultural purposes since the early eighteenth century. As farming practices became more efficient, increased varieties of cereals and roots were grown. In Springtime, the horse and plough would have been a common sight in the fields surrounding Heyhouses.

Some of the stories about the farming folk of the Moss have attained legendary status. These people had a dry sense of humour, spiced with malice but softened by a grin. Practical jokes were much favoured. Tarring windows, throwing a hen down a chimney to smoke the residents out, and removing a haystack from one field to another, were all pranks which provided some rather one-sided amusement.

Despite their jovial ways, this was a difficult life. Their days were long, full of physical toil, with no modern implements to help ease their load. Large families were commonplace. In 1860, it was estimated that an average of twelve people were living in every house in Heyhouses. One large family lived in two adjoining cottages, with thirty five children between them. In 1960, these same dwellings were scheduled for demolition on account of their size and general inadequacy.

In the Summer months, the men and boys took carts into the fields and cut turf. It was stacked and dried and, during the Winter, provided much-needed fuel. The womenfolk also toiled in the field, as well as the homestead. Somehow, they cared for large families, with only a tiny range for cooking, and a small boiler to provide hot water.

The old farming methods slowly began to die out. Along with this came the gradual decline of that marvellous beast the Shire horse - a gentle giant that had served man so well. These people of the Moss, along with their way of life, died hard and slowly; for they were a breed resistant to change.

Shrimping

Anyone who has stood watching the sunset over St. Annes pier on a warm summers evening will instantly recognise the sky in this panel. The myriad of colours can range from pale yellows, through oranges and blues, to deep crimson. Add to this a few windswept clouds and you have the effect created here.

The large expanses of flat, gently sloping sand made ideal conditions for shrimping. Following high tide, the shrimpers could be seen silhouetted against the evening sky, with horse and cart pulling the huge nets through the shallow waters. It was an arduous task. The men worked in all weathers, and the womenfolk helped with the time-consuming job of boiling and shelling by hand. Then they walked to Preston to sell their catch at the market, and local inns on the way.

St. Annes was still in its infancy when the decision to build a pier was taken by the St. Annes-on-the-Sea Land and Building Company in 1879. Apart from the church and the newly built St. Annes Hotel, there were no other public buildings. The pier was formally opened by Lord Stanley on 15th June, 1885 amidst a blaze of glory. At this time piers were at the height of their popularity. It is difficult to imagine that during the early 1900s, management employed ushers to keep the crowds moving and so avoid queues. The pier was very basic in its early days. In fact, the jetty for passenger steamers and the seats were its only attractions. The entrance was not built until 1899, and the Pavilion and Floral Hall were added in 1903 and 1910 respectively.

In 1903, gale force winds drove two barges against the pier, slicing it in half. In 1974, a fire gutted the beautiful Moorish Pavilion and in 1983, a similar fate destroyed the Floral Hall. Sadly, money was not available to return the Pier to its former glory.



The Parish Church of Saint Anne



In 1872 the foundation stone for the church was laid by Lady Eleanor Cecily Clifton. The hamlet of Heyhouses (the Western outpost of the Parish of Lytham) had no place to attend divine service. It seems she was concerned that those who set out on the three mile walk to St. Cuthberts, found the attraction of the Trawl Boat Inn too great to refuse.

Whatever the reasons for her concern, St. Annes owes a great deal to the Lady of the Manor. She provided the money for the building, while her husband donated the two and a half acre site.

The church was designed by Paley and Austin, and built in the style of the Queen Anne period for just over £4,000. It faced the sea, nestling in the dunes, and the local inhabitants had helped in the building. Some older residents were less than happy with the site of the cemetery, gloomily forecasting that their resting bodies would be scraped up by the ever present, burrowing rabbits. On 6th August 1873, the church was dedicated under the patronage of Saint Anne, in memory of Lady Anne Bentinck, an aunt of the Clifton family. The town later took its name from the church.

In 1887, the monumental West Tower was added by R.K. Freeman at a cost of £1,261. Around 1890 the lych gate was moved from the corner near the school, to its present location, and an avenue of trees were planted which now lead to the porch. The North aisle, Vestry, Lady Chapel and Choir Vestry have all been additions to the original building. The Baptistry, annexed to the west end in 1920, has been described as an "architectural gem".

Since those early days many notable gifts have enhanced the church. More recent additions include the panelling in the sanctuary, the lectern (in the form of a bronze eagle), the bishops throne, and the pulpit. The organ was rebuilt in 1934 at considerable cost. The last of the beautiful stained glass memorial windows was given in 1919.

Heyhouses School

Records for the year 1780 show that an attempt was made, in the area of Heyhouses, to educate a handful of poor girls who were precluded, by distance, from attending the first school at Lytham. To start with, a mistress would teach a small group in some humble cottage for a salary in the region of three pounds a year. In 1832, a new school building was provided at the cost of £150 with provision for "as well boys as girls". No child was admitted "who hath not a perfect knowledge of its letters". In those days, school holidays were three days at Easter, two at Whitsuntide, and two whole weeks at Midsummer and Christmas.

The old whitewashed schoolroom was built in 1869. It was used for meetings during the week and for services on Sundays. In 1870, before the church was built, the first Education Act was passed, making attendance compulsory up to the age of ten. Due to the mounting numbers of pupils, this building was replaced in 1880 by the present Heyhouses Infants School. Sadly, the old school was demolished in 1959, to make way for modern buildings.

This panel reflects the story of a bygone era. The two schoolchildren are wearing the simple uniform of the time. Children took pleasure from simple pursuits, such as skipping and hoop and stick. It is nice to know that the present Heyhouses pupils still dance around the Maypole. It is doubtful whether their childhood is as carefree as those of past times.

One of the success stories of Heyhouses is Sir John Alcock. He was a pupil here from 1900 to 1905. On 15th June, 1919 he became the first to make a direct non-stop flight across the Atlantic. He flew from St. Johns, Newfoundland to County Galway in seventeen hours, in a Vickers-Vimy aircraft. For this achievement, he and his companion were knighted by King George V.



Harvest Time



They say that if "Kent is the Garden of England, then the Fylde is its Salad Bowl". The rich fertile earth of the Moss, has provided excellent conditions for growing tomatoes, salad greens and flowers in abundance.

History shows that the needs of man have frequently changed the environment in which we live. Today, it is difficult to imagine the St. Annes of the past. A time when housing was scarce and farms, though scattered, were plentiful. The whitewashed cottages have all but disappeared, and the thatched roof is a rare sight.

During the middle nineteenth century, the needs of the locals were quite basic. The population, although relatively small, was heavily dependant upon the land; food and shelter were priorities. Where there was good earth, farmsteads began to appear. The fishing community developed from the large areas of sand, dominating the landscape, close to the sea.

It was in these largely unspoilt areas, that many wild flowers grew. Hedgerows, woodland, ditches and farmers fields all served as habitats for a plethora of flora and fauna. Sadly, the rapid growth of urbanisation today, means that such flowers and wildlife are fast disappearing.

Without today's modern machinery, farmers were at the mercy of the elements, pest and diseases. To compensate for potential losses, large areas of land were often set to seed. In bad years, they might harvest enough to survive. If it was a good year, they might have sufficient to sell at market.

Given these conditions, it is easy to see why the farming folk of this hamlet, would come to church each October to give thanks and, at the same time, pray to God for a good crop next year.

The Mexico Disaster

The headlines in the *Fleetwood Chronicle* on Friday 17th December, 1886, tell of a "Sad Catastrophe off Southport".

On the night of Thursday 9th December, a savage gale was blowing. "The wind howled with terrible force, and the sea ran mountains high, the hissing breakers sending their clouds high into the air".

A German barque the *Mexico* of 500 tons was seen riding at anchor to the left of Southport. It was outward bound from Liverpool. At about nine o'clock several rockets were seen to rise from the vessel. The signals of distress were seen almost simultaneously at Southport, Lytham and St. Annes-on-the-Sea. The St. Annes lifeboat, the *Laura Janet*, was launched at ten-thirty, having taken on four volunteers to make up a full crew. They put to sea amidst deafening cheers from the crowds that bid them "God Speed". She proceeded for about five hundred yards under oars, and then made sail, crossing the Salthouse Bank. What happened after this is difficult to determine.

Evidence shows that distress signals from the lifeboat were seen about west by north from Southport, at a distance of two miles. It is thought that she struck on a part of the Horsebank, known as Spencer's Brow, and capsized.

A telegram received from Southport the next day, confirmed the worst. The *Laura Janet* was found bottom-up, near to the wreck. All hands had perished. In the pocket of one of the men was found a silver watch. It's hands had stopped at twenty past two, showing that the brave crew must have battled the surf for hours.





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