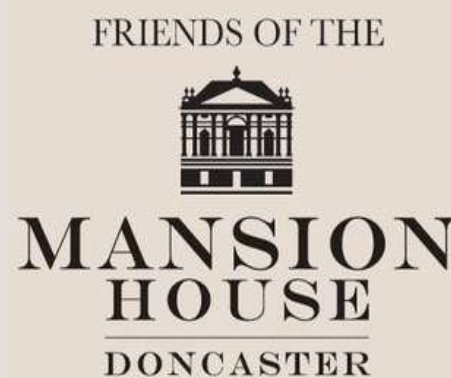


Friends of the Doncaster Mansion House

Newsletter No. 1 Spring 2023



Welcome to our first newsletter. We hope to publish two in each year to inform you about our activities, working alongside the Heritage Services department of Doncaster Council, and to provide new information about the Mansion House and its important role in Doncaster's history. We start our newsletter as a newly created city, opening up the Mansion House to the public after several challenging years for everyone. We have already had two well attended Open Days this year, and we hope to recruit new members and volunteers to enable us to complete our workplan. This includes raising money for transport costs so that every school in Doncaster is able to send its pupils to visit our Mansion House. Our previous chair Colin Jaynes has stepped down, as he

is travelling extensively, and our founding Secretary Owen Evans has also stepped down. We owe them both a great deal for many years loyal and dedicated service, and we are very pleased that they both remain Friends and volunteers.

Bobbie Roberts MBE Chair, Friends of Doncaster Mansion House, Freeman of Doncaster

Contents

- 1 Introduction from our Chair
- 1 Forthcoming Open Days
- 2 A Royal Visit
- 3 The Mayors of Doncaster
- 4 Behind the Scenes at the Mansion House
- 7 The Portraits in the Mansion House – Lord Lonsdale
- 8 Joining us, become a volunteer

Forthcoming Mansion House Open Days – all 10.30 – 2.00

Friday 21st April
Saturday 13th May
Friday 23 June
Friday 21 July
Friday 18 August
Friday 15 September
Friday 27 October
Friday 17 November
Friday 15 December

A Royal Visit

On 9th November the Mansion House hosted their Majesties King Charles and Queen Consort Camilla when they visited Doncaster to present the Letters Patent conferring City Status, which had been awarded as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations earlier in the year.



Four of our trustees were present; Marion Johns was in the great Kitchen, ensuring that the Councillors and Freemen were given refreshments, in the Chamber Bobbie Roberts our chair was presented to Queen Camilla in her capacity as a trustee of the Firefly charity, John Holmes was introduced to the King in his capacity as chair of Doncaster Civic Trust and Yvonne Woodcock heard the King's speech in the Ballroom with the Councillors and Freemen of Doncaster. A delicious buffet was prepared and served by students at Doncaster College.

The Mansion House has a history of entertaining royalty, having been visited by the late Queen Elizabeth II in 1952, 1975 and 1994, Princess Margaret in 1951, 1964 and 1976, and King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1948.

To commemorate the occasion, the Friends of the Mansion House, together with the Civic Trust, funded a tree and an associated plaque. On 8th March, at an event hosted by Doncaster Council, Lord Kirkham, ably assisted by the Junior Mayor, and four children from different schools in Doncaster, planted the tree in the garden of the Museum and Art Gallery. The Deputy Civic Mayor welcomed everyone, our chair Bobbie Roberts thanked everyone who had contributed, and Lord Kirkham gave a speech expressing his confidence in Doncaster's future success.



Thanks to an anonymous donation, the Friends have also funded the framing of a photograph of the King and Queen Consort signing the Mansion House Visitors' book on the internal balcony, as shown above. This will join the many portraits of the King's ancestors currently hanging in the Mansion House.

This is the first in our series about the mayors of Doncaster.

Sir Isaac Morley – Mayor 1840

Visitors to the Mansion House may see the three boards in the Front Committee Room displaying the names of past mayors of Doncaster.

One of the proud holders of this title was Sir Isaac Morley.

He was born in Doncaster in October 1801 and his father, William Morley, was a successful timber merchant who owned a fleet of thirty vessels which used the River Don to transport timber from the North Sea ports to his premises near Fisher Gate.

Sir Isaac became a councillor first in 1826 and in due course became mayor.

His appointment as mayor came around the time that Queen Victoria and Prince Albert married, and Sir Isaac visited London to offer congratulations to the royal couple on their marriage. Before long he was back there again in July 1840 to congratulate Her Majesty on escaping an assassination attempt.



It wasn't to be long before he was on his way down to London for a third time.

The opportunity arose when Victoria had her first child, Victoria, later the Princess Royal. Doncaster Council decided to send the Queen their congratulations and wished Sir Isaac, as mayor, to present them in person. This he did at a levee at St James's Palace in the spring of 1841.

Her Majesty was so pleased she decided to knight him and did so at a levee at St James's on Wednesday 28th April 1841 and thus Isaac Morley became Sir Isaac Morley

A special banquet in his honour was given to Sir Isaac in the Mansion House, although Sir Isaac appreciated that the knighthood was really an honour for the Council and the town, rather than for him personally.

Photograph of Sir Isaac by kind permission of City of Doncaster Archives

As his mayoralty came to an end, Sir Isaac gave a ball and supper in the Mansion House, where the ballroom was lit by many candles in the chandeliers.

Outside his work for the Council, Isaac, a married man but with no children, was involved with several charities in the Doncaster area and had a number of business interests, in particular a directorship he held with the North Midlands Railway Company, a role which involved him in much travelling to meetings.

He lived in Beechfield House (later to become Doncaster Museum and now the site of the Doncaster Council offices), supported in a comfortable style by three servants. In later years his health was in something of a decline. On the 17th of November 1879, Sir Isaac travelled to Derby by train for a meeting of the Board of the North Midlands Railway Company. On his arrival back at the



railway station in Doncaster he was so weak that he was unable to leave the railway carriage and had to be carried by a porter and the station master to a cab to take him home.

He spent two days in bed, but then was able to sit in a chair in another room to look out onto the gardens of Beechfield. He died, aged seventy-eight, Monday 1st December 1879 and was buried on the 5th of December 1879 in the consecrated section of the Hyde Park Cemetery.

In his will he left money to provide grants (pensions) to "poor, reduced or decayed persons of good moral

character residing in the borough of Doncaster," but the charity ceased to operate in 2011 and the funds were incorporated into those of the Hospital of St Thomas in Doncaster charity.

Richard Cuell

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE MANSION HOUSE

There are fascinating glimpses of life 'behind the scenes' at Doncaster Mansion House. Here we find the housekeepers, servants, cooks and artisans busy getting ready for the big occasion, cooking, cleaning, ordering supplies, fetching and carrying and setting out the ballroom and dining room. We can discover the equipment they used, the dishes they had to produce and something about their lives and personalities.

The Mansion House was managed by a small female staff - a housekeeper, a cook and a servant. Help was brought in for mayoral feasts, balls and coronations, when 300 or so of the towns leading citizens and their guests would be provided with huge quantities of food and drink.

Feasts and Entertainment

Cooking for a feast could start two or three days before the guests arrived and involved baking cakes, making deserts, preparing jellies and roasting beef, mutton and pork over the fire in the range. With so many people at a feast the ranges were vital pieces of equipment. The principal range had a smoke jack to cook the meat evenly by an ingenious system of cogs and wheels driven by the up draught from the fire.

There were 3 kitchens at the Mansion House with a pastry for preparing pies and cakes, a scullery for washing pots and a larder for storing meat. Large presses or cupboards housed the hundreds of items needed for cooking and serving the food.

Housekeepers and Cooks

The earliest housekeeper was Mrs Ann Smith, she was responsible for: cooking; overseeing cleaning the rooms; washing the huge collection of knives and forks, plates and pots and pans;



mending tablecloths and ordering supplies from local shopkeepers. She, like many of the other housekeepers, was the widow of one of the town's wealthy tradesmen used to running a large household and managing servants. Housekeepers were expected to pay for their own food and servant.

Sarah Winterbottom (also known as the 'Fat Cook') was appointed in 1804. She came from the New Angel Inn on French Gate. She had a reputation as a wonderful cook but had a difficult personality; she was said to carry a large knife tucked into a leather belt round her waist. She was paid 7s a week until her wages

were raised to 10/ad. She died 'in office' in 1817.

Servants

The first named servants were Charles Blyth, the Sergeant at Mace, and his wife Mary followed by Dolly Steel in about 1760. Dolly Steel 'lived in' and had a bedroom in the attic. Unfortunately, her work was not always to the satisfaction of the Corporation, and she was criticised for leaving rooms dirty and for drinking tea with her daughters rather than getting down to the cleaning.

The duties of a servants were wide ranging; from assisting with the cooking and cleaning, to looking after the chickens, geese and turkeys in the back yard. The days before and after the, often rowdy, entertainments were the busiest. Duties included fetching and carrying, sweeping the floors. Tablecloths and napkins were washed with soft soap or Fullers Earth in wooden wash tubs and dried on 'winter hedges' (drying racks). There were the fireplaces to keep clean and the ranges to be black-leaded. Pewter plates had to be scoured with Calais sand. Servants were not allowed to be seen in the public rooms just the cellars, attics and kitchen areas connected by a hidden back stair.

Other Servants

In 1800 seven professional waiters from the New Angel Inn and the Red Lion were hired for a feast. A man was paid for three days work cleaning knives and four women were each paid for four days for cleaning the rooms and scouring the pewter plates after a feast. A Mr Washington was paid for an afternoon cutting spice cake and making Negus (wine with hot water, lemon juice and nutmeg). The Duke of Norfolk's cook came to make turtle soup.

Carpenters brought up the tables from the cellars for the feasts and took them down and repaired them afterwards. They repaired the card tables and put-up beds when needed. The plumbers with their ladders cleaned the windows and chandeliers and the whitesmith was paid to repair the system of bells (used to summon the servants), locks, candlesticks and pots and pans.

Inside, the Mansion was lit with beeswax or tallow candles before gas and later electric lighting were introduced. Oil lamps used oil



made from whale blubber. The Council had to send back seal oil as the smell badly affected the gentlemen -the only time it was tried!

The 19th and 20th Centuries

An extra kitchen and storage rooms were added when the new dining room was created in 1806. Furnished rooms for the housekeeper and servants were added in the 1830s. There are named housekeepers throughout the rest of the 19th century. Hannah Denison was ordering goods and services and paying suppliers and tradesmen as well as overseeing all other aspects of the Mansion House operation on a salary of £250 a year. Mrs Wightman, who followed her, had to pay for a servant from her salary of £80 a year. Mrs Belton, 1864-1877, worked with her husband who was also at the Mansion House. They were congratulated on the 'elegant, sumptuous and altogether well-appointed entertainment' at the mayor's feasts of 1866. The menu shows there were over 60 different dishes for 120 guests.

As time progressed Council business started to replace entertaining. The Dining Room became the Council Chamber in 1914 and the established 'behind the scenes' operation changed.

Frank Carpenter

The People in the Portraits - Lord Lonsdale

Hanging in the Ballroom is a painting of Lord Lonsdale, 1930, by St John Lavery RA. It was commissioned by Doncaster Council in recognition of his generosity in promoting Doncaster Racecourse. He is one of the most colourful characters whose portrait hangs in the Mansion House, in all senses of the word. He acquired the nickname the 'Yellow Earl' because of his fondness for the colour yellow, and this is illustrated in the portrait in the colour of his coach and the livery of the coachmen. He was always very dapper in a pale grey suit of Lowther tweed and a gardenia in his buttonhole. He was born in 1857, the second son of the 3rd Earl, and educated mainly at home by a tutor who had been his father's batman in the Lifeguards and the regiment's boxing champion.



When he was 10, his mother came home to find him in a fierce boxing match with the butcher's boy and insisted on sending him to Eton, though after little more than a year he returned home to another tutor. He was later sent to a finishing school for gentlemen in Switzerland but absconded after a month to join a travelling circus.

He returned to England, taking a small flat in Jermyn Street, and although he was shy in 'Society' he made friends with other young men with similar passions for hunting, sport and gambling. On one occasion he lost £18,000 in one evening – a huge amount today, and the debt was paid by a family friend on condition he never gambled again – which he didn't.

He married Lady Grace Gordon, a childhood friend, from a high ranking but not wealthy family, despite her parents' strong disapproval. Whilst pregnant she sustained a bad hunting accident which made her lose the baby and be unable to have any more children.

His father died in 1876, and his elder brother took the fortune, and the title. He continued an extravagant lifestyle, but on the same day that he came home to find the bailiffs in his rented home, he was summoned to his brother's death bed, and on his death inherited a huge fortune and property including Lowther Castle, Whitehaven Castle, a 20 bedroomed shooting box on Rutland called Barleywood and a double terrace house in Carlton House Terrace in London, as well as an income of £80,000 a year. When he moved from one house to another, a special train was reserved, and if overnight he had first class sleeper for himself, and another for his dogs. He enjoyed his fortune, ordering specially made 6-inch cigars which his tobacconist christened Lonsdales and acquiring a reputation as an admirer of actresses, engaging in a fight with another man over Lillie Langtry.

He was introduced to the actress and singer Violet Cameron, who was married to a Moroccan tea taster, David de Bensaude. She started the Violet Cameron Operatic Company, which was managed and funded by Hugh, who accompanied them on tour. De Bensaude was not happy, and on being thrown out by Hugh, sued him for assault. Hugh was fined forty shillings and the affair was publicised widely in the national newspapers. Hugh took the company to New York, where the public brawling continued, and back in England Hugh and Violet moved into a house in Hampstead where they lived as Mr and Mrs Thompson. Queen Victoria intervened and let it be known that she expected Lord Lonsdale to leave the country. It was suggested to him that he should go on behalf



of the Scottish Naturalist Society to the arctic wastelands of Canada to collect specimens of fauna, a dangerous expedition which took him 14 months and he returned a heroic adventurer. This was the start of his slow rehabilitation into one of the most popular figures in the country. His marriage with Grace developed into an effective working partnership, which lasted until her death in 1942.

The Earl had a long association with the sport of boxing, which in the 1870s was still illegal, and mainly a vehicle for gambling. He determined to fight for fair play and properly constituted rules and became the first president of the National Sporting Club, an office he held for 38 years.

He had a passion for hunting, was master of the Quorn and then the Cottesmore hunt and had a reputation for great skill and horsemanship, with a keen discipline over the members. His other sporting interests included yachting, in which he won 17 prizes in 22 races. He was the first President of the International Horse Show at Olympia.

He was a founder and first president of the Automobile Association, which adopted his colours.

From 1897 he was Lieutenant Colonel of the Westmorland and Cumberland Yeomanry and during WW1 he was a recruiting officer for men and horses, and formed his own Pals battalion, the Lonsdales. He helped to found a charity Our Dumb Friends League for animals injured in war, establishing three animal hospitals, and this is now the Blue Cross.

Racing was a great passion, and in 1926 he became Senior Steward of the Jockey Club. According to his biographer, Doncaster was his favourite racecourse, and in 1922 his horse Royal Lancer



(painting in the Back Committee Room) won the St Leger at odds of 33-1. He would take a house for the races (according to some sources Edenfield House on Thorne Road) at which he would entertain Lord Harewood and the Princess Royal. His other associations with Doncaster include officially opening the former Airport on Bawtry Road in 1934, and the Doncaster Royal Infirmary in 1935.

He loved to entertain, and among his guests at Lowther for grouse shooting were the Kaiser Wilhelm II, and the kings of Portugal and Italy. Sadly, his extravagance, together with the exhaustion of the mines on his estates meant that he gradually had to sell off his inheritance. He sold Whitehaven Castle in 1921, and then in 1926 Barleythorpe in Rutland. The closure of coalmines on his estates in Cumberland reduced his income further and in 1935 he moved out of Lowther Castle.

A measure of his popularity can be seen when a public subscription list was set up on the occasion of his golden wedding in 1928. It raised over a quarter of a million pounds to be put to charity. In the same year he was appointed to the order of the garter. He died in 1944, and his heir, his brother Lancelot had to auction off the contents of Lowther Castle, the largest English country house sale of the 20th century.

Among the many wreaths at his funeral was one from his friend Prince Monolulu which included the lines "Great Britain's Greatest Ambassador of Clean Sport, Boxing, Wrestling, Swimming, Yachting, All Ball Games, Man's Friend, the Dog his delight A Horse A Horse The Pillar of the Turf....."

Most of the information came from *The Yellow Earl* by Douglas Sutherland, pub Cassell 1965

Jackie Gladden

Would you like to help us in our aims of conserving the Mansion House and its contents, increasing opportunities for the public, and particularly schoolchildren, to visit, and providing educational resources about the Mansion House and its architect James Paine?

Membership of the Friends costs Adults £10, Joint £15, Volunteers £5 Over 60s £7.50, Corporate £20 For this you receive our twice-yearly newsletter, updates about events at the Mansion House, and an invitation to our AGM and social afternoon

For more information about membership, or volunteering with us, please contact the Secretary at secretaryfodmh@gmail.com

Registered Charity Number 1171398

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