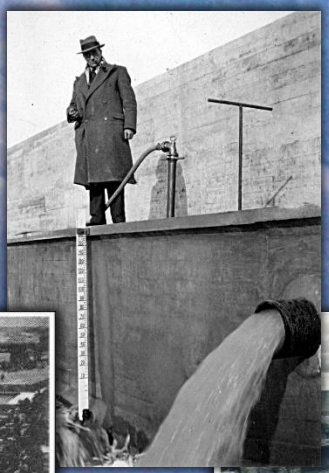
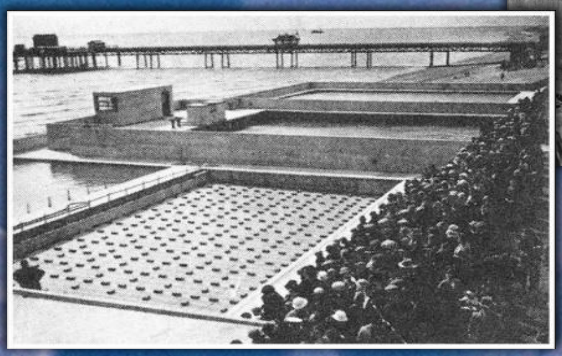
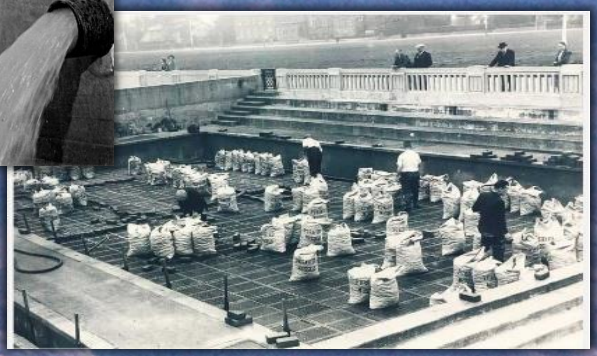
The Mussel Tanks

A History of Lytham's Mussel Purification Station and its Environs







Raymond Pickett

THE MUSSEL TANKS

A History of Lytham's Mussel Purification Station and its Environs

Raymond Pickett

Cover images:

Background - The Ribble Estuary [Marek Ślusarczyk (www.microstock.pl)]

Left – Spectators waiting for the Opening Ceremony of the Mussel Purification Station

Centre – Mr. G. Gomery, Station Superintendent, watching the Storage Tank fill with seawater through the 15" intake pipe

Right – Sacks of purified mussels in one of the two Cleansing Tanks

In Memory of

Mr. George Albert Gomery

(22/05/1893 – 08/08/1961)



Acknowledgements

My thanks go to the following institutions for providing access to the documents shown:

Lancashire County Council Archives

BOT/340 Position of fishing area under the Ribble fishery order 1936
BOT/289 Title: Lytham St. Annes Description: Construction of Mussel Purification Plant Date: 1934
CC/KF/1/11 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17] Part 1
CC/KF/1/12 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17] Part 2
CC/KF/1/13 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17] Part 4
CC/KF/1/14 Papers relating to regulations to be observed by the users of the tanks
CC/KF/1/15 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17] Part 5
CC/KF/1/16 Draft lease of the seabed below the low water mark of the highest ordinary spring tides
CC/KF/1/17 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17] Part 6
CC/KF/1/18 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17] Part 7
CC/KF/1/19 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17] Part 8
CC/KF/1/20 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17] Part 9
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CC/KF/1/23 Found with CC/KF/1/20
CC/KF/1/24 Found with CC/KF/1/20
CC/KF/1/25 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17] Part 10
CC/KF/1/26 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17] Part 11
CC/KF/1/28 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17] Part 12
CC/KF/1/29 Papers relating to the financial state of the Station - 1951
CC/KF/1/30 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17]
CC/KF/1/31 Draft copy of the Ribble Mussel Fishery Order, 1935
CC/KF/1/32 Mussel Fishing Industry: purification tanks [PP17]
CC/KF/1/33 Mussel Purification Station: reports of the tanks superintendent [PP17] Part 1
CC/KF/1/34 Mussel Purification Station: superintendent's reports [PP17] Part 2
CC/KF/1/35 Mussel Purification Station: superintendent's reports [PP17] Part 3
DDPP/5/1/182 Mussel Tanks at Lytham
DDPP/5/1/182 Mussel Tank at Lytham including fishery orders, plans, news cuttings etc Date: 1934 – 1957
DDPP/14/6 Plan of Ribble estuary, annotated Capt. Belcher's survey, 1836
DDPP/18/35 Plan & section of St. Annes .... proposed sewage works..... 1891
MBLS/2/1 General Committee minutes 20 Dec 1847 - 8 Feb 1856
MBLS/2/20 Sanitary Committee Minutes
UDLY/ACC5394 Additional deposit Box 2 (specifically) Improvement Commissioners minutes 1847-69
UDLY/ACC5394 Additional deposit Box 3 Improvement Commissioners minutes 1869-93

Maps Images:

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All Ordnance Survey map segments
1768 Yates' map of Lytham

Lytham Heritage Group Archive

Images and articles extracted from the Lytham St. Annes Express
Images of Lytham landmarks
The 1872 Indenture for land for a new sewage scheme
2025 The Shanty Crew at Lytham Mussel Tank (photo by C. Marquis-Carr)

British Newspaper Archive

All newspaper images
(except for Lytham St. Annes Express)

and various open-access sources online.

I am also truly grateful to my wife, Jennifer, my daughter, Alison, and my son, Ian, for their patience and fortitude over the past three years, during which time I regaled to them the exciting results of my research on many, many, occasions.

And a special thanks to Alison for taking on the monumental task of proofreading my book and for carrying it out with such diligence. Her keen attention to detail truly elevated the quality of my work.

All the remaining errors are mine.

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[Note* Throughout this book I have retained the old spelling of Conwy, i.e. Conway, as all the original reference material I have used pre-dates the 1st August 1972 change.]

Foreword

by Mytilus Edulis

Hi there, my name is Mytilus Edulis although I'm better known as an Atlantic Blue Mussel. As my name suggests I live in the inter-tidal coastal waters of the North Atlantic ocean where I can be found, down to a depth of 15 metres, attached to rocks and other hard substrates by strong thread-like structures called byssal threads. I also attach myself to my neighbouring mussels and, likewise, they attach themselves to their neighbours thereby creating clumps of mussels. When these clumps are small our habitat is usually called a mussel field but if the conditions are favourable large mussel beds can form. If uncovered at low tide these mussel beds become a seabird buffet particularly for the noisy oystercatcher. We are also an important food source for many marine creatures including star-fish, flatfish, crabs and dog whelks. Dog whelks are our main enemy. They drill holes into our shells and suck out our body meat although if a byssal thread can be attached before the dreadful sucking begins, the dog whelk will be trapped and eventually die of hunger.



For such small creatures we produce astonishing numbers of eggs: 5 million for a 7 cm mussel, up to 40 million for a large mussel - per year! Male mussels work even harder - they produce 10,000 spermatozoa per egg. The eggs are released as plankton, measuring a few hundredths of a millimetre, and inevitably 95 per cent or more rapidly die or are consumed by other sea creatures including adult mussels. After a few weeks, surviving mussel larvae, known as 'spat', settle on sea-weed, the sea floor or on man-made objects: sea walls, sunken ships and capture devices such as ropes. Here we start to develop as tiny shellfish and by the time we are a couple of millimetres in length our byssal threads have anchored us to a permanent 'home'. A developing mussel will now grow by up to a centimetre a month in good conditions.

In the shellfish world I'm known as a bivalve mollusc, that is, I have a hinged shell similar to oysters, clams and scallops. I feed by filtering microscopic organisms from about 40 litres of sea water a day. In addition to sifting out plankton and other nutrients, on which I live, I provide a vital role by sifting out bacteria and toxins from the water. I then coat these undesirable substances with a tenacious and practically insoluble mucus and discharge them as faeces in the form of fine threads or small pellets.

It is as a result of this ability to remove the bacteria from my body that the Mussel Purification Tanks were built at Lytham and subsequently why this book has been written.

I hope you find the book interesting, educational and most of all enjoyable.

Mytilus Edulis



Introduction

Mussels had been for many centuries a cheap and reliable source of protein for Lancashire's coastal dwellers. Then, as the railway system developed throughout the latter part of the 19th century, they also became a lucrative source of winter income for the local fishermen as inland markets became more accessible. On the 26th January 1895, the 'Lytham Times' newspaper reported: "*He* (Mr. Fair, Squire Clifton's Land Manager) *had noticed a great quantity of shell fish leaving Lytham station and from particulars he had obtained he found that during the months of September, October, November and December, 365 tons of shell fish–by that he means cockles and mussels–had left Lytham station.*"

facsimile

He had noticed a great quantity of shell fish leaving Lytham station and from particulars he had obtained he found that during the months of September, October, November and December, 365 tons of shell fish-by that he means cockles and mussels-had left Lytham station.

But with every positive there is usually a negative and in the case of the Ribble mussel there were two negatives 1) the growth of the Lancashire cotton industry and 2) the improved accessibility of the Lancashire coastal towns as places to live or visit. The outcome of these two factors was an increase in residential and visitor populations and a corresponding increase in the amount of sewage created. Accordingly, this had to be disposed of somehow and the primary solution was to dump it into local watercourses, into nearby rivers or directly into the sea. An unintended consequence of this method of sewage disposal was the subsequent transmission of the typhoid bacilli to the local mussel beds and from there to unsuspecting diner.

Throughout the 19th century and into the early years of the 20th century, typhoid cases had begun to rise nationally and, whilst most of these cases were not attributed to the consumption of mussels, the number was sufficient for a ban on mussel collecting to be introduced in locations where sewage disposal was carried out in close proximity to mussel beds. This was certainly the case with regards to the location of the sewage outlets and mussel beds of the River Ribble and in 1923 a 12-year moratorium on mussel collecting from its mussel beds was implemented.

With the opening of the Lytham Mussel Purification Station in 1935 it was hoped that this would lead to a reawakening of the local mussel fishing industry and the restoration of a winter livelihood for the fishermen of the Ribble estuary.

For the next twenty years **'Lytham Purified Mussels'** were enjoyed in many English towns and cities but a walk along Lytham promenade today tells us that this is no longer the case. Evidence of the buildings and the water tanks of the purification station are still visible but Lytham's mussel fishing industry is a thing of the past.

My interest in the rise and fall of Lytham's mussel fishing industry was kindled when, whilst researching my family's history, I discovered that the monthly reports my grandfather had written as part of his job as the Superintendent at the Mussel Purification Station were held at Lancashire Archives in Preston. After a visit to the archive and reading these reports and various other letters also held there, I decided that it would be interesting to collate these into a history of 'The Lytham Mussel Purification Station' or as it was known colloquially: 'The Mussel Tanks'.



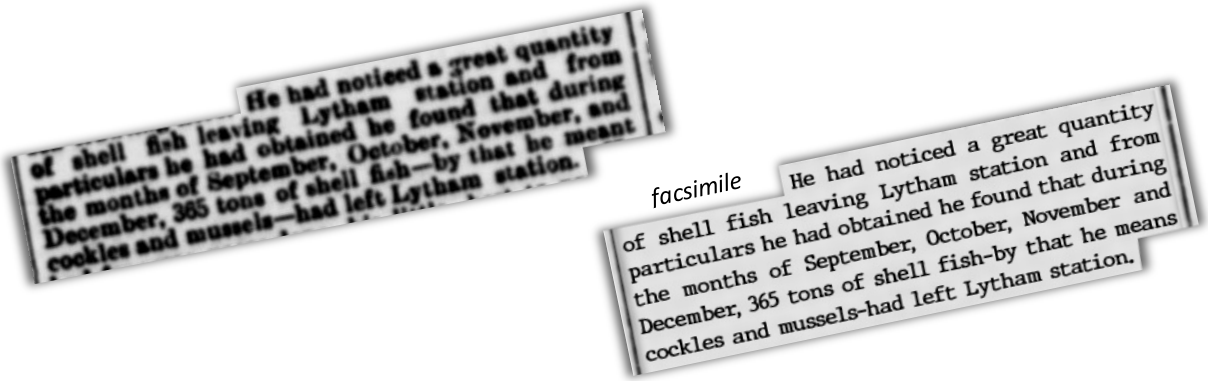
Lytham Mussel Purification Station
The Opening Ceremony – Tuesday, 3rd September 1935

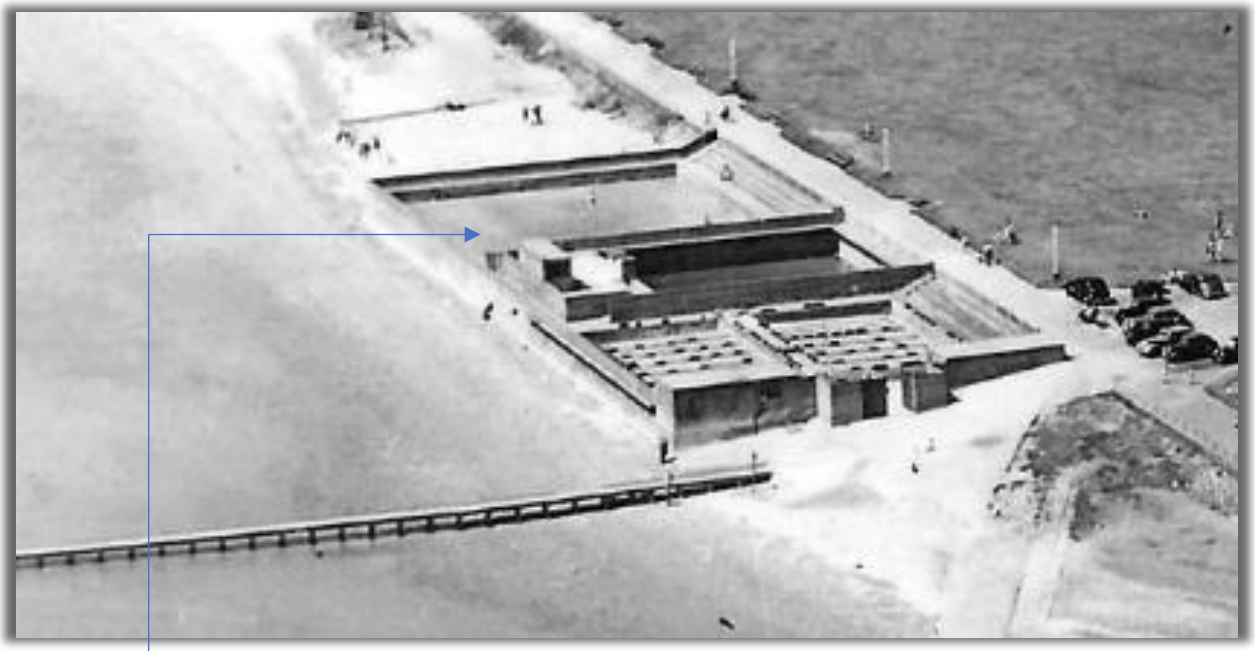
The material held by Lancashire Archives relating to the Mussel Tanks primarily covers the involvement of Lancashire County Council, initially as a source of funding for its construction and then, latterly, as owners of the business. It wasn't long after starting to write this book that I realised that the history of mussel purification at Lytham was a much bigger subject than just the period of the County Council's involvement. To this end I expanded my research sources; using first of all, the 'British Newspaper On-line Archive' and 'Findmypast.co.uk' and then the rich local knowledge held both in hardcopy and personal recollection by the very knowledgeable folk at Lytham Heritage Archive.

The results of this research are contained in the following chapters of this book in which I outline the topography of the River Ribble estuary and the development of its river channel during the 19th and early 20th centuries; the mussel fishing industry local to the estuary prior to the 1923 ban; the cause and effect of mussel poisoning; the development of the sewer systems of Preston, Lytham and St. Annes throughout this period (the primary cause of the mussel collecting ban); the work of Dr. R. W. Dodgson, the scientist who developed the mussel purification process; the building of the Lytham

purification station; its day-to-day operation; and finally the station's demise and subsequent re-birth as the headquarters of the Ribble Cruising Club, the home of the R.N.L.I. Inshore lifeboat and Shop, and a open space for public use.

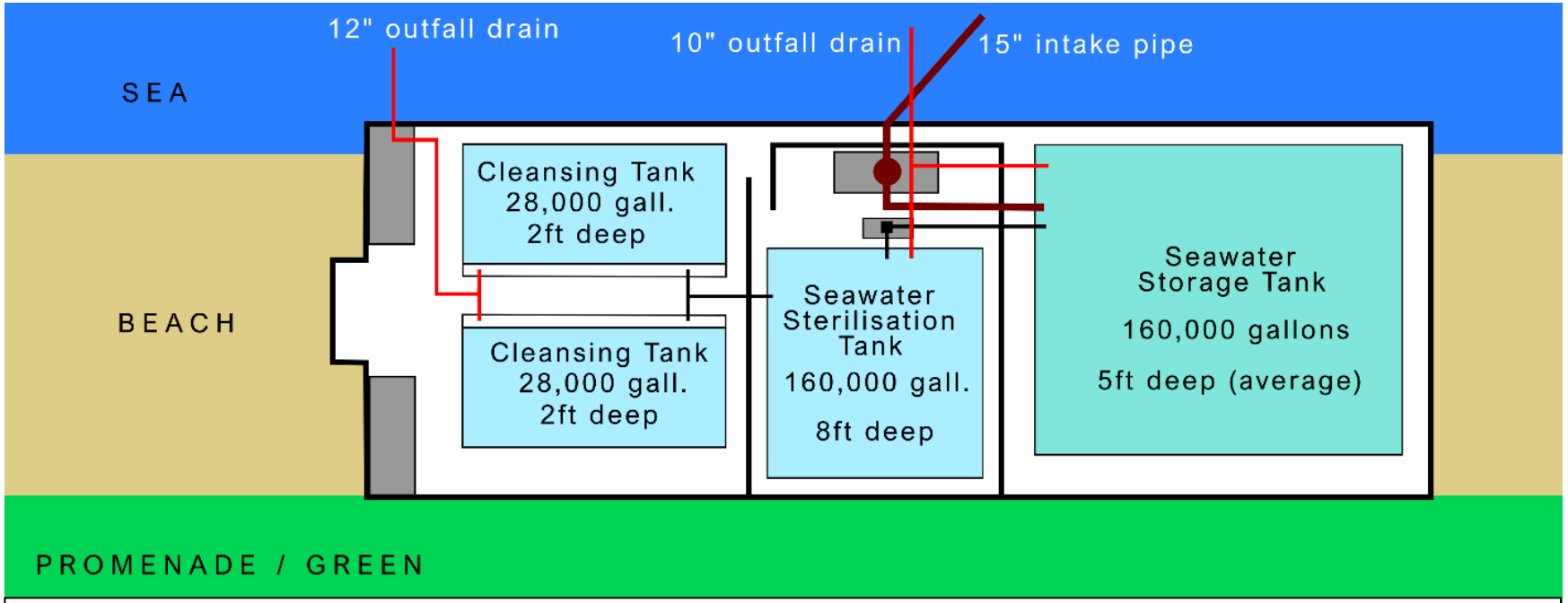
Note: throughout the pages of this book, images of extracts from letters, documents and newspaper articles have been included to provide authentication to the facts and figures used. In a few cases, where I found the quality of the image to be very poor, I have created a facsimile but the reader can be assured that the content of this image remains true to the original item. These images have the word 'facsimile' printed on them. For example, using the newspaper cutting on page iv above:





An aerial photograph of The Mussel Tanks'

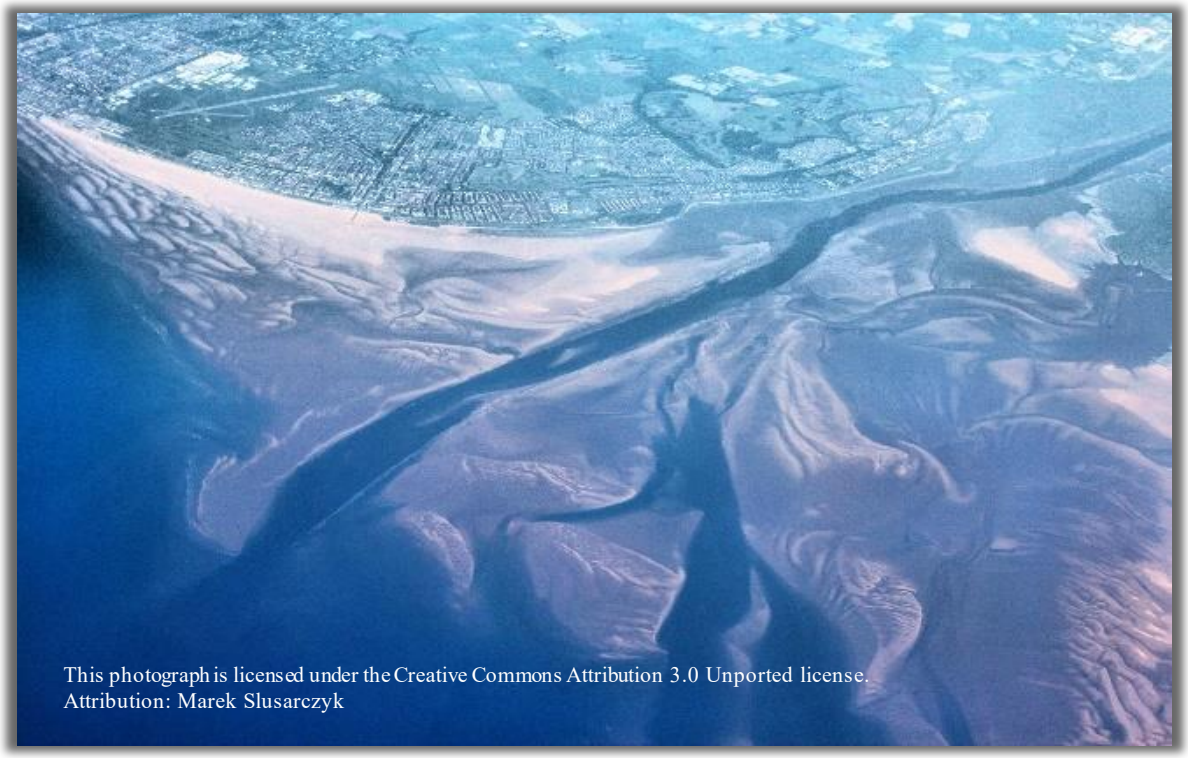
(Taken during the Summer months when the seawater storage (uppermost) tank was used as a public paddling pool)



During the day-time high-tide seawater was pumped along a 300-yard-long, 15” diameter pipe from an intake valve situated under the seaward end of Lytham pier. Prior to the mussels arriving at the Purification Station, the seawater was transferred into the Sterilisation Tank where it was sterilised by the addition of chlorine. The seawater was then de-chlorinated by the addition of sodium thiosulphate. The mussels, brought in by the fishermen, were then spread, without undue violence, up to 3” deep on wooden grids in the Cleansing Tanks. After a high-pressure hosing with sterile seawater to remove mud, seaweed, etc. the mussels were given a 24-hour bath in sterile seawater. The Cleansing Tanks were then drained and the mussels were again hosed to remove dejecta. The whole procedure was then repeated over another 24-hour period. The Cleansing Tanks were then half-filled with chlorinated seawater to sterilise the mussel shells. After an hour (during which time the shells remained closed because of the chlorine) the water was drained off and the shellfish shovelled into sacks, which were then sealed with an official lead seal and made ready for market.

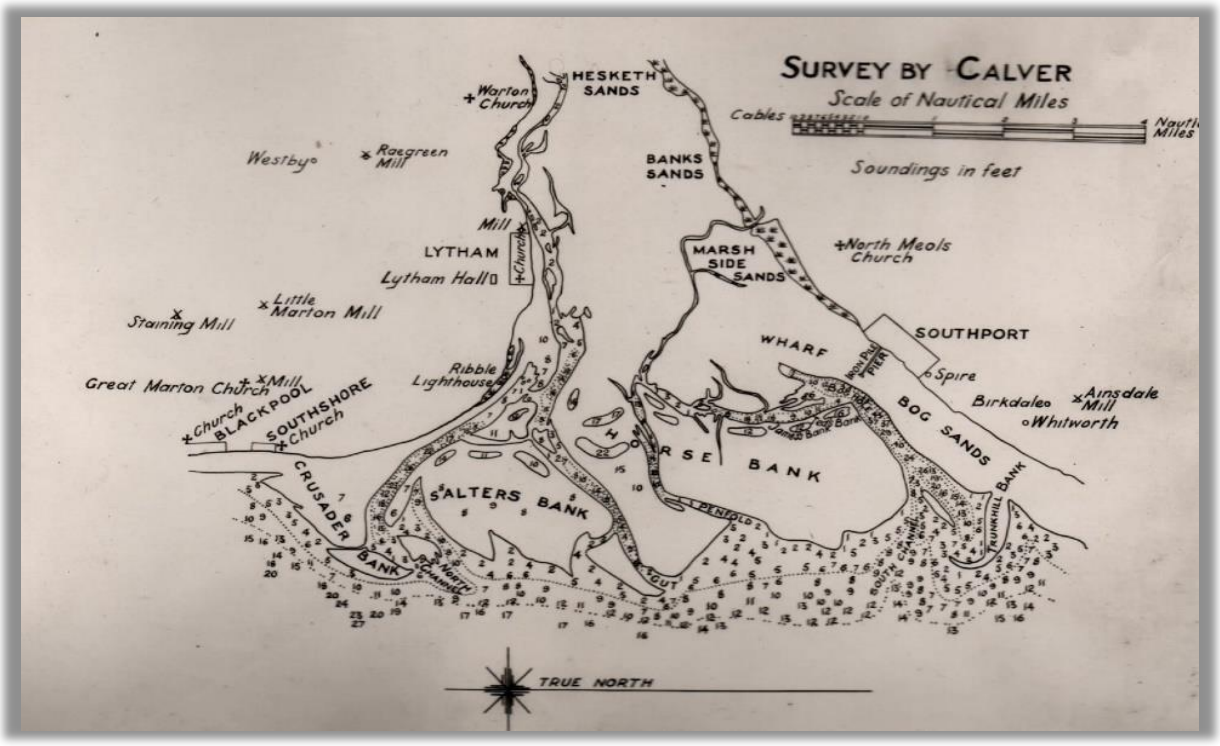
Chapter 1 The Estuary of the River Ribble

The River Ribble, the only major river rising in Yorkshire that flows westward, journeys through Settle, Clitheroe, Ribchester and Preston before emptying into the Irish Sea between Lytham St. Annes and Southport, a journey of 75 miles (121 km). At its seaward end, an estuary mouth has formed in the shape of a funnel 25.7km (16 miles) long, from Preston Docks to the end of the previously maintained channel (the Bar) and 25.7km (16 miles) wide, stretching from Blackpool to Formby Point. As a result of this long, wide, funnel-shape, the estuary has tides that run at 7 km/h (4 knots, 5 mph) and a tidal range (height change) at the Bar during spring tides of 8m (26 feet); the third-largest tidal range in England.


This photograph is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license.
Attribution: Marek Slusarczyk

This present day aerial photograph of the estuary shows that it is formed by significant areas of marine estuarine alluvium, typically a mix of silt, clay and blown sand. An extensive area of tide-deposited sand has formed along the coastal zone from Blackpool through St. Annes to Lytham and this sand sits on top of a thick mantle of glacial till (a mix of clay, silt, and sand together with pebbles, cobbles, and boulders). The glacial till covers a large part of the Fylde and its adjoining areas, having been deposited there towards the end of the last ice age, about 15000 years ago.

The photograph (above) clearly shows the river flowing along a trained and dredged channel through a vast area of sandbanks. Drawn prior to the creation of this 'trained' channel, **Calver's** mid-19th century map of the estuary shows the extent of the sandbanks in the same portion of

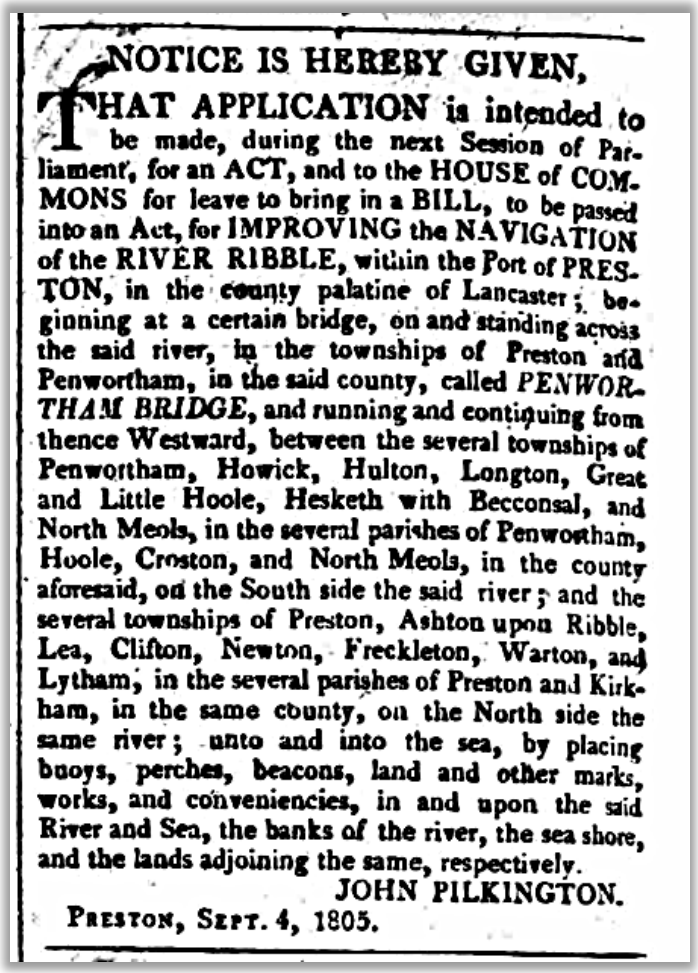


estuary and the intricate path of the river channels created as the water made its way past the hamlet of Warton, on the north bank, through Hesketh Sands to the sea. Similar sandbanks and channels extended a further 10.5 km (6.3 miles) upstream from Hesketh Sands to Preston and beyond. Although these sandbanks were a major hazard for boats sailing to and from Preston they provided an ideal substrate in which shellfish, such as cockles and mussel, flourished and, as the sandbanks became exposed at low tide, these provided rich-pickings for the fishermen from Lytham, Warton, Banks, Meols and Southport and from further up the estuary; Freckleton, Ashton, Penwortham and the port of Preston.

Calver's map also shows the earlier meandering course of the river channel at times of low water as it weaved its way close to the northern shore before bifurcating around Salters Bank. The northerly branch of the river channel, the aptly named North Channel, made its way past Lytham and the future location of St. Annes on the Sea before emptying into the sea between Salters Bank and the Crusader Bank. The North Channel, scoured by the out-flowing ebb tides twice a day, provided a safe, deep-water (5m, 16ft) anchorage for ships entering and leaving the River Ribble even at the time of low water. This feature was utilised by the developers of the new 'watering-hole' of St. Annes on the Sea when they built the pier there in 1883 enabling pleasure steamers to bring visitors from Preston and Blackpool to the town.

Chapter 2
The Development of the River Channel

The remains of a Bronze Age canoe* and other artifacts excavated during the construction of Preston dock in the 1880's are evidence that the River Ribble has long been a means of trade and transport. [*Now on display in Preston's Harris Museum]. By the late 18th century, the 'port' of Preston had developed into a collection of small wharves built along the northern riverbank in the vicinity of the southern end of the road known today as 'Channel Way'. [The steep bank defining the old course of the river is clearly evident on the left as one approaches the modern retail park along Riversway from the west.] With the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the rapid development of Lancashire's manufacturing industries, larger ocean-going vessels began using the river as a trading route and these vessels met with a drawback. As we saw in the previous chapter, the river estuary consisted of a meandering course of channels and sandbanks and their constant changing nature was the cause of significant navigational problems for these larger vessels,



NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN,

THAT APPLICATION is intended to be made, during the next Session of Parliament, for an ACT, and to the HOUSE of COMMONS for leave to bring in a BILL, to be passed into an Act, for IMPROVING the NAVIGATION of the RIVER RIBBLE, within the Port of PRESTON, in the county palatine of Lancaster; beginning at a certain bridge, on and standing across the said river, in the townships of Preston and Penwortham, in the said county, called *PENWORTHAM BRIDGE*, and running and continuing from thence Westward, between the several townships of Penwortham, Howick, Hulton, Longton, Great and Little Hoole, Hesketh with Becconsal, and North Meols, in the several parishes of Penwortham, Hoole, Croston, and North Meols, in the county aforesaid, on the South side the said river; and the several townships of Preston, Ashton upon Ribble, Lea, Clifton, Newton, Freckleton, Warton, and Lytham, in the several parishes of Preston and Kirkham, in the same county, on the North side the same river; unto and into the sea, by placing buoys, perches, beacons, land and other marks, works, and conveniencies, in and upon the said River and Sea, the banks of the river, the sea shore, and the lands adjoining the same, respectively.

JOHN PILKINGTON.

PRESTON, SEPT. 4, 1805.

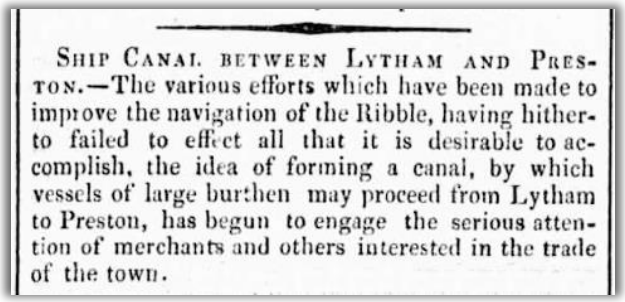
To negate these problems, the 'Preston Consortium' was founded by the Town Council and representatives of the newly developing industries. The purpose of the consortium was to propose ways in which the river could be better used to facilitate trade and on the 7th September 1805 a notice was published in local newspapers announcing: *"THAT APPLICATION IS INTENDED TO BE MADE, DURING THE NEXT Session of Parliament, for an ACT, for IMPROVING the NAVIGATION of the RIVER RIBBLE…'.*

The Act received its Royal Assent on the 12th July 1806 which led to the creation of the first Ribble Navigation Company that same year.

The primary purpose of this Company was to achieve the aims of the Act, i.e. to improve the navigation of the River Ribble, by constraining and straightening the course of the river within 'training' walls together with a programme of land reclamation.

Construction of a new wharf commenced a few years later further upstream along the section of the river where, today, Marsh Lane joins Strand Road. The new wharves, known as the New Quays, were opened in 1825.

On the 4th May 1833, 'The Preston Chronical' reported that *"The various efforts which have been made to improve the navigation of the Ribble having hitherto failed to effect all that is desirable to accomplish, the idea of forming a canal, by which vessels of large burthen may proceed from Lytham to Preston, has begun to engage the serious attention of merchants and others interested in the trade of the town."*



SHIP CANAL BETWEEN LYTHAM AND PRESTON.—The various efforts which have been made to improve the navigation of the Ribble, having hitherto failed to effect all that it is desirable to accomplish, the idea of forming a canal, by which vessels of large burthen may proceed from Lytham to Preston, has begun to engage the serious attention of merchants and others interested in the trade of the town.

The proposed line of the canal was to *"pass Freckleton and Lea marshes, and so terminate at or near Preston marsh where there is ample room for a dock or basin... The distance to be cut is not perhaps above nine miles, and nearly the whole is fine level land, offering every facility to the excavator."*

Thomas Clifton, the Squire of Lytham together with Sir Henry Hoghton (7th Baronet of Hoghton) and Sir Thomas Dalrymple Hesketh (3rd Baronet of Rufford) tried to raise funds to build the canal from Preston to Lodge Pool at Lytham at a cost of £105,000 but the scheme failed to progress past this stage.

At the same time the Ribble Navigation Company was pursuing a different approach to connect Preston merchants to the seagoing vessels. With an increasing number of ships now using Lodge Pool at Lytham for shelter and lightering, the Company persuaded Squire Clifton to build a more substantial dock system there.

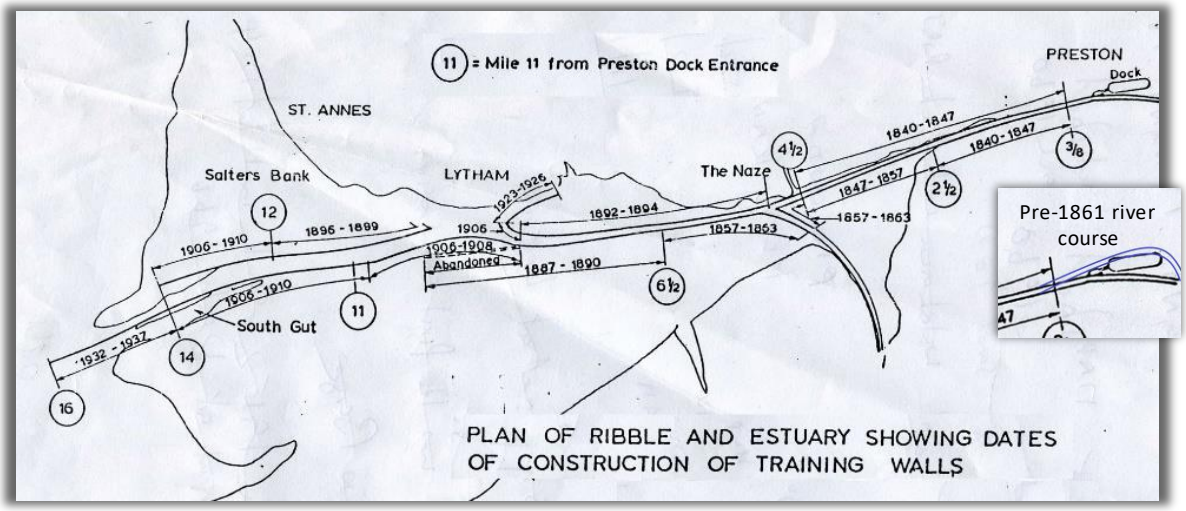
The dock was completed by 1834 covering an area of 5 acres and 3 roods (2.33 hectares) and the Ribble Navigation Company took on a 21-year lease.

Throughout the time that the dock was being built and a ship canal was being considered, the shallowness of the river towards Preston continued to be a major problem for the company as ever-larger cargo ships were being built. In 1837, to try to resolve this problem, the famous Scottish engineer Robert Stevenson was commissioned by Preston Corporation to develop a plan to merge the river's multiple channels together into a single course and to make it deep enough to be safely navigable by larger vessels.

On Saturday, 8th April 1837, the Preston Courier carried a detailed article describing Stevenson's plan to achieve the objects set by the Preston Corporation. In summary, Stevenson's plan provided three 'departments':

1. to deepen the Channel by Dredging between the Naze Point (Freckleton) and the band of Sandstone Rock which appears at the Quarry. (Penwortham)
2. excavation of Sandstone Rock in the bed of the River, and the formation of a Floating Dock near the Town
3. the formation of a Dock, at or near Lytham, as has been proposed, and a Ship Canal or Railway from thence to Preston

To progress Stevenson's plan, a second Ribble Navigation Company was created in 1838 and on the 31st May that year, the Company held its first general meeting of shareholders. At the meeting, the Company's directors were appointed and it was recorded that *'the directors intend to proceed with all possible dispatch'* with Stevenson's proposals. By 1840, the construction of training walls had commenced in order to straighten the main river channel thereby utilising the faster flowing water to maintain a deeper channel. It can be seen on this plan showing the dates of con-



struction of the training walls that by 1847 four and a half miles of training wall had been built on the north side of the channel and two and a half miles on the south side.

The Third Ribble Navigation Company (1853-1883) continued the improvement of the river channel to keep pace with the development in the size of ships. The company realised the requirement for heavy investment as early as 1861 with the proposal for a Dock basin. By 1880 some 1100 acres of land had been reclaimed and also during this period the new quays, later called the Victoria Quays, were established at the bottom of Marsh Lane, and the extent of the Port of Preston was legally defined by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Following further lengthy negotiations, the Ribble Navigation and Preston Dock Act of 1883 transferred the undertaking to Preston Corporation and authorised the construction of the present Dock. The Act also authorised the diversion of the river in a westerly direction towards Penwortham Marsh, in order to create an area for the Dock Basin astride the former river channel in the vicinity of Water Lane. Construction work began in 1884, with the foundation stone of the Dock Basin laid in July 1885.

Also, at the same time that construction work began on the docks, Thomas Snape of Freckleton was employed to extend Stevenson's dredged channel from The Naze to Lytham. The training wall construction continued over the next 25 years to further extend the deep channel to the 14-mile post and an additional 2 miles of wall was added between 1932 and 1937.



Building the Training Walls (c 1900)

Chapter 3
Mussel Collecting from the Ribble Estuary

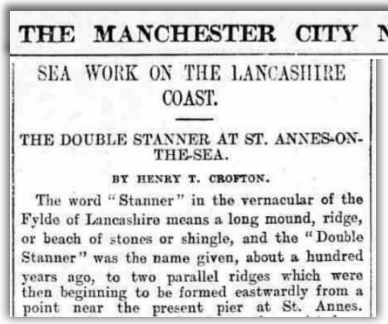
Archaeological evidence suggests mussels have been used as a food source for over 20,000 years and, no doubt, mussel collecting will have been carried out on the Ribble estuary since the earliest of settlers arrived on the Fylde coast and its hinterlands. From Bronze-age canoeists, Roman soldiers at Ribchester and Kirkham, Viking marauders through to the residents of Preston and Lytham at the time of the Doomsday Book, all would have supplemented their land-based diets with these tasty fruits from the local mussel beds.

But where were the Ribble estuary mussel beds to be found? A specific answer can't be given to this question as, by nature, the beds are transitory, dependent upon several conditions: water currents, water salinity, but primarily, the whereabouts of suitable objects to which mussels can anchor themselves. As briefly described in the above *Foreword,* mussels can attach themselves to nearby objects: rocks, driftwood, shipwrecks, or even nearby mussels using byssal threads or, as they are more commonly referred to, their beards. The byssal thread is produced by the mussel ejecting a fine jet of chitinous liquid onto a nearby object. After a few minutes of contact with seawater, the liquid sets creating a fine but tough thread anchoring the mussel to the chosen object. Typically, a mussel will produce between fifty to one hundred of these threads when forming its beard.

Prior to late 19th century, the main sources of anchorage to which the Ribble estuary mussels attached themselves were sunken ships and exposed beds of pebbles. Taking a walk around the streets of Lytham, and especially along the roads that form the boundary of Lytham Hall, one will often see a commodity that has been lying around on the foreshore since the last ice-age, if not longer – the sea-smoothed pebble. Enormous banks of these pebbles, known locally as 'stanners', have formed and have been reformed along the coastline by the ever-present ebb and flow of the tides backed-up by gale-force north-westerly and south-westerly winds over the millennia. It is amongst these banks of pebbles, along and within the Fylde coast's inter-tidal zone, that mussels found a perfect home.



An enlightening article about the creation and movement of the Fylde coast stanners was written by Mr. Henry T. Crofton and printed in 'The Manchester City News', dated 6th April 1901.



THE MANCHESTER CITY NEWS, SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 1901.

SEA WORK ON THE LANCASHIRE COAST.

THE DOUBLE STANNER AT ST. ANNES-ON-THE-SEA.

BY HENRY T. CROFTON.

The word "Stanner" in the vernacular of the Fylde of Lancashire means a long mound, ridge, or beach of stones or shingle, and the "Double Stanner" was the name given, about a hundred years ago, to two parallel ridges which were then beginning to be formed eastwardly from a point near the present pier at St. Annes.

Henry Thomas Crofton (1848-1928) was a Manchester solicitor and historian. He took an interest in natural history and had several articles published in Lancashire newspapers relating to the Lancashire Coast including this one on Stanners and the Double Stanner at Fairhaven.

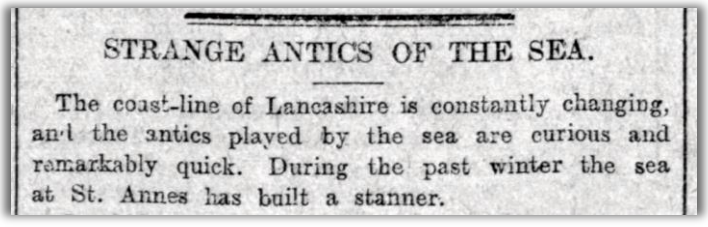
In the opening paragraph of his article, he writes: *"The word 'Stanner' in the vernacular of the Fylde of Lancashire means a long mound, ridge, or beach of stones or shingle, and the 'Double Stanner' was the name given, about a hundred years ago, to two parallel ridges which were then beginning to be formed eastwardly from a point near the present pier at St. Annes."*

Mr. Crofton's interest in the 'double stanner' at Fairhaven was, no doubt, owing to the fact that he had a large bungalow built on the sand dunes at St. Annes, in the vicinity of these two stanners.

He went on to write: *"The relics of the original or inner Stanner where it is not buried beneath the sandhills can still be seen to the west of the Grand Hotel in a large hollow, and could until lately be also seen at intervals to the east of the hotel as far as the house called The Bungalow, which is east of the wooden lighthouse that was pulled down last year."*

Referring to how the stanners were created and their subsequent movement along the coastline he wrote: *"The shingle which formed these Stanners was washed out of the cliffs at the north end of Blackpool. These cliffs are formed of clay and stones, which were deposited there in bygone ages by the glaciers which came down from the English Lake mountains. ... About forty years ago Blackpool had a shingly beach, instead of the present sandy one ... The northerly and north-westerly gales have drifted the shingle southwardly along the coast until it reached the shelter of the estuary, from there the westerly and south-westerly gales have driven the accumulation eastwards towards Lytham."*

A report in the 'Manchester Evening News', 7th June 1902, under the heading "STRANGE ANTICS OF THE SEA" provides us with an indication of the speed of movement of these banks of shingle and pebbles:



STRANGE ANTICS OF THE SEA.

The coast-line of Lancashire is constantly changing, and the antics played by the sea are curious and remarkably quick. During the past winter the sea at St. Annes has built a stanner.

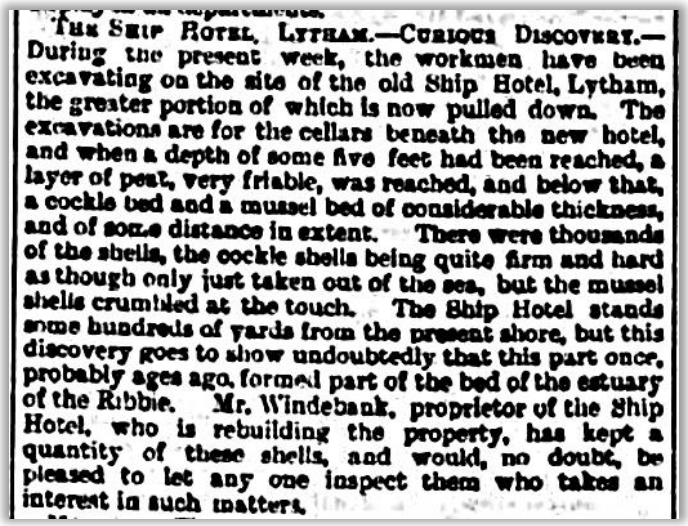
"The coast-line of Lancashire is constantly changing, and the antics played by the sea are curious and quick. During the past winter the sea at St. Annes has built a stanner."

The article continued*: "- a wall of shingle and pebbles – for a distance of nearly a quarter of a mile southward and varying in height from two feet to as high as six feet in places, and extending*

to the borders of the suburb of Fairhaven. As a result of this change the bathing vans have been driven away from the front of the town to a point some distance beyond the Grand Hotel and not far from the site of the old lighthouse. The stanner is added to every tide, and at the present rate of progress it will reach the borders of Lytham in two or three years."

Clearly, this process has been on-going ever since the glaciers of the last ice-age began their retreat from these shores (c20,000 ~ c11,700 years ago) and evidence of other stanners have been found further inland than the present-day shoreline. A further paragraph in Mr. Crofton's article describes how *"when the ground was trenched for laying the sewer along the road which runs from the railway station to the Pier at St. Annes, no fewer than three or four stanners were cut through."*

In Lytham, a mussel bed, and therefore, by inference, a pebble bank was discovered under the Ship Inn on the east side of Clifton Street. On Saturday, 24th December 1892, the 'Preston Herald' recorded: *"During the present week, the workmen have been excavating on the site of the old Ship Hotel, Lytham, the greater portion of which is now pulled down. The excavations are for the cellars beneath the new hotel, and when a depth of some five feet had been reached, a layer of peat, very friable, was reached, and below that a cockle bed and a mussel bed of considerable thickness, and of some distance in extent. There were thousands of shells, the cockle shells being quite firm and hard as though only just taken out of the sea, but the mussel shells crumbled at the touch. The Ship Hotel stands some hundreds of yards from the present shore, but this discovery goes to show undoubtably that this part once, probably ages ago, formed part of the bed of the estuary of the Ribble."*

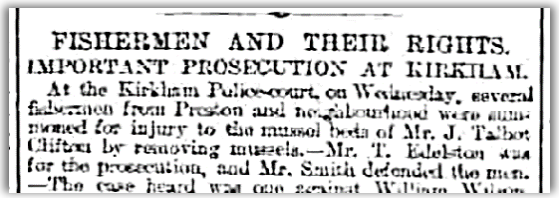


THE SHIP HOTEL, LYTHAM.—CURIOUS DISCOVERY.—During the present week, the workmen have been excavating on the site of the old Ship Hotel, Lytham, the greater portion of which is now pulled down. The excavations are for the cellars beneath the new hotel, and when a depth of some five feet had been reached, a layer of peat, very friable, was reached, and below that, a cockle bed and a mussel bed of considerable thickness, and of some distance in extent. There were thousands of the shells, the cockle shells being quite firm and hard as though only just taken out of the sea, but the mussel shells crumbled at the touch. The Ship Hotel stands some hundreds of yards from the present shore, but this discovery goes to show undoubtedly that this part once, probably ages ago, formed part of the bed of the estuary of the Ribble. Mr. Windebank, proprietor of the Ship Hotel, who is rebuilding the property, has kept a quantity of these shells, and would, no doubt, be pleased to let any one inspect them who takes an interest in such matters.

Although not visible nowadays large areas of pebbles still remain under the oozing mud that covers the current shoreline and, prior to the end of the 19th century, it would have been from these pebble banks that the fishermen collected their mussels. In later years, the recently built training walls, in effect man-made pebble banks, provided an alternative source from which the fishermen could gather Ribble mussels.

But who owns the mussels, or more specifically the mussel beds, found on the foreshores of the Ribble estuary? Can anybody go down to the seashore and rake up a bucketful of shells from the

mussel beds? These questions were raised during a prosecution of fishermen at the Kirkham Petty Session held on Wednesday, 2nd October 1895.


FISHERMEN AND THEIR RIGHTS.
IMPORTANT PROSECUTION AT KIRKHAM.
At the Kirkham Police-court, on Wednesday, several fishermen from Preston and neighbourhood were summoned for injury to the mussel beds of Mr. J. Talbot Clifton by removing mussels.—Mr. T. Edelston was for the prosecution, and Mr. Smith defended the men.—The case heard was one against William Wilson

An extract from 'The Manchester Courier', Saturday, 5th October 1895, proclaimed:

"**FISHERMEN AND THEIR RIGHTS.**
IMPORTANT PROSECUTION AT KIRKHAM."

At the court session thirteen men *"were summoned for doing damage to mussel beds, the property of Mr. J. Talbot Clifton, at Lytham, by removing mussels therefrom."* reported 'The Preston Herald' (on the same day as the 'Courier' article, above, had appeared). Mr. Smith, for the defence: *"raised the question of title to the place the mussels were taken from."* He was further reported as saying: *"Mr. Clifton had no title to that part of the shore. According to the ordinary rule that part belonged to the Crown, and those men or any of the public had a perfect right to go over it."*

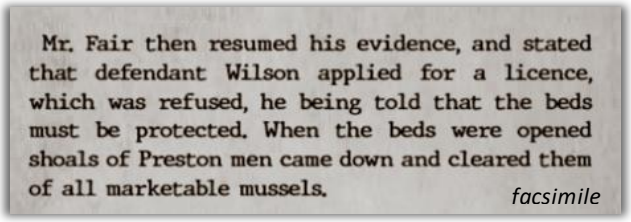
Mr. Edelston, for the prosecution, then referred back to a case tried in 1824 *"between the Clifton family and other persons as to whom belonged what was called the foreshore at Lytham – whether it was the property of the Crown ... or whether it belonged to the Cliftons as Lords of the Manor of Lytham."*

After a very long legal debate it was agreed *"that Mr. Clifton has rights over a close* [a plot of land] *situated between high and low water mark on the River Ribble"*.

The prosecution of the thirteen men then continued with Mr. J. A. S. Fair, assistant at the Lytham estate office, stating that Mr. Clifton *"had been in the habit of issuing licences every year to fishermen to obtain mussels at the various beds in the manor of Lytham. The charge of the licences was 1s, and the cost of printing and issuing them was more than was received for them. Mr. Clifton desired to protect these beds, so that the bona-fide fishermen might have a means of livelihood through the winter months, when other fishing could not be pursued."*

Another prosecution witness *"then gave evidence to seeing mussels taken on the 15th September, from St, Cuthbert's Church Scar, Lytham. The mussels were worth from 2s 6d to 4s a bag."*

"Mr. Fair then resumed his evidence, and stated that defendant Wilson applied for a licence, which was refused, he being told that the beds must be protected. When the beds were opened shoals of Preston men came down and cleared them of all marketable mussels."


Mr. Fair then resumed his evidence, and stated that defendant Wilson applied for a licence, which was refused, he being told that the beds must be protected. When the beds were opened shoals of Preston men came down and cleared them of all marketable mussels.
facsimile

"*Mr. Smith then made an appeal to the Bench on behalf of the men, they had been fishermen all their lives, and to a great extent their living depended upon what they took."*

The Bench found the men guilty and fines of 1s and costs were imposed.

Mr. Clifton's effort to protect the beds was seen to be paying off as the Superintendent of the Lancashire Sea Fisheries wrote in his report for the quarter ending 30th September 1897: *"The mussels on the bed of the channel near Church Scar, Lytham, have grown fast, and the men are getting about three bags per boat, per tide of very good fish."*

An article in 20th February 1892 edition of the 'Preston Herald' gives us an insight into the relationship between the Clifton Estate and the mussel fishermen. Under the heading 'Mussel Cultivation at Lytham' the newspaper reported: *"The possibility of the successful formation and cultivation of mussel beds along the west coast of Lancashire."*

It further reported: *"At an earlier meeting of the Lancashire Council Sea Fisheries Committee the Superintendent referred to the great destruction which takes place on existing mussel beds owing to the continued use of the hand rake, and the difficulty of carrying out the present bye-laws."*

During this meeting, the Superintendent stated: "*that in many places, fishermen were desirous to try mussel farming, but at the present time there was no encouragement to do so, as no law existed in Lancashire to prevent anyone gathering the mussels that another person may have laid down. Before the meeting separated Mr. Thos. Fair stated that he should like to say that the whole of the foreshore of the parish of Lytham belonged to Mr. Clifton, who would be glad to let it for a mere acknowledgment to enterprising fishermen if they would go in for the formation of mussel beds."*

On the French Atlantic coast, Bouchot mussels are grown on wooden poles in the sea, out of reach of predators. Bouchot mussels are easily identifiable: the shell is small; the fish inside is fleshy and yellow or orange and as the mussels are not grown within a layer of silt there is neither sand nor parasite inside. It is said that their taste is unlike that of any other mussel.

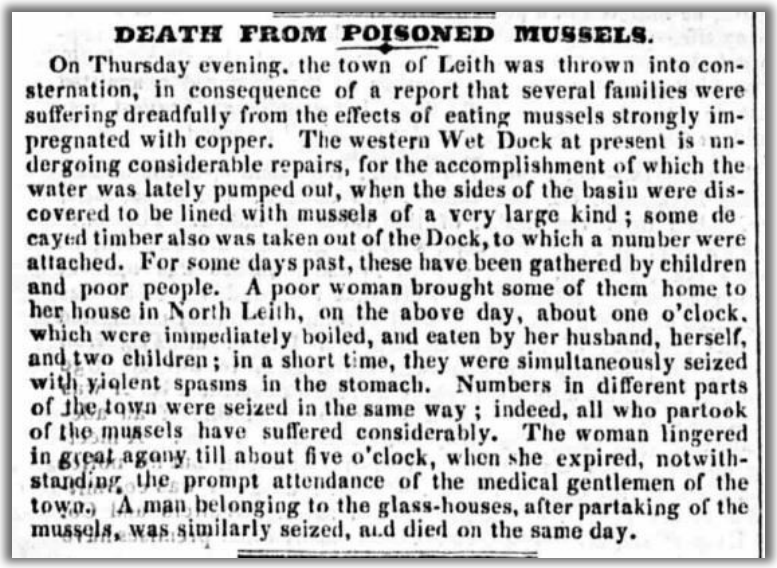


There is no evidence that mussel farming, that is the cultivation of mussels using artificial beds, as carried out in France and other European countries for over 800 years, was ever undertaken on Mr. Clifton's foreshore but as we will see in Chapter 13, sixty-three years later the idea was re-considered.

Chapter 4
The Cause and Effect of Mussel Poisoning

Mussel collecting was such a common day-to-day activity carried out by coastal dwellers throughout history that very little information was recorded about this pursuit and any related issues. [Perhaps with the exception of 'Molly Malone'.] Then from the beginning of the 19th Century, newspapers around the country started to contain articles about severe illness and deaths linked to the consumption of shellfish, particularly oysters and mussels.

During July 1827, one particular harrowing story was reported in newspapers throughout the nation.



DEATH FROM POISONED MUSSELS.

On Thursday evening, the town of Leith was thrown into consternation, in consequence of a report that several families were suffering dreadfully from the effects of eating mussels strongly impregnated with copper. The western Wet Dock at present is undergoing considerable repairs, for the accomplishment of which the water was lately pumped out, when the sides of the basin were discovered to be lined with mussels of a very large kind; some decayed timber also was taken out of the Dock, to which a number were attached. For some days past, these have been gathered by children and poor people. A poor woman brought some of them home to her house in North Leith, on the above day, about one o'clock, which were immediately boiled, and eaten by her husband, herself, and two children; in a short time, they were simultaneously seized with violent spasms in the stomach. Numbers in different parts of the town were seized in the same way; indeed, all who partook of the mussels have suffered considerably. The woman lingered in great agony till about five o'clock, when she expired, notwithstanding the prompt attendance of the medical gentlemen of the town. A man belonging to the glass-houses, after partaking of the mussels, was similarly seized, and died on the same day.

This story linked the deaths and illnesses suffered by several families in Leith (Edinburgh) to *"mussels strongly impregnated with copper"*. In this case, the mussels had been collected from the decayed timber taken from the sides of Leith Dock which was undergoing considerable repairs at the time. In subsequent years other cases of copper poisoning were blamed on mussels taken from the hulls of ships which were in dry dock for cleaning. [Since the 1750's ships had been 'copper bottomed' in order to protect the wooden hulls from continuous attack by shipworm, barnacles and other marine growth.]

But was copper the real cause of the illnesses and deaths? An article published in 'The True Sun', a London newspaper, on the 29th September 1837, provides an insight into the medical knowledge of the day on the subject of shellfish poisoning and its treatment:



The True Sun.

No. 369—New Series.] LONDON, FRIDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 29, 1837. Price 5d.

POISONING WITH FISH.

"Gentlemen :— Among the animals which prove poisonous to the human species are found many fishes and some reptiles, but too little is known respecting some of them to permit any satisfactory comments to be made upon them in a course of this kind : I shall, therefore, confine my account of them to those which either belong 'to our

own climate, or the poisonous nature of which has been well ascertained. Both oysters and mussels have frequently proved poisonous. … The symptoms which usually result, when mussels or oysters prove poisonous, commence with a general uneasy feeling, such as characterises gastric and enteric irritation, followed by a sensation of weight in the stomach, nausea, vomiting, severe pain at the epigastrium, sometimes convulsive and stertorous, breathing, great precordial anxiety, and itching of the skin, followed by an eruption of wheals resembling urticaria, occasionally of pustules. The face is frequently the chief seat of this eruption; it previously swells, and the eyelids in particular are affected with the most tormenting itching; the swelling is occasionally confined to the eyelids. Sometimes there is a sensation of heat and constriction of the throat, accompanied with coldness of the extremities, twitchings of the tendons, the pulse becomes nearly imperceptible, and, when this occurs, syncope supervenes, and the case terminates fatally. The symptoms occur usually two or three hours after eating the poisonous shellfish, and very soon acquire their maximum of intensity; nevertheless, the duration of the attack varies greatly, whether it proves fatal or recovers. When death is the result, it has occurred, in some instances, in a few hours; in other cases it has not taken place until the third or fourth day. … The report continues … *Many physicians, as well as naturalists, have sought to explain the causes of this occasional poisonous property in mussels. Some of the naturalists have referred the poisonous properties of oysters to copper, and others to particular minute molluscous animals and minute sea starfish, gaining admittance to the interior of the mussels and oysters at certain seasons of the year. M. Brevmic has affirmed that, in some cases of poisoning by mussels, he has seen all the symptoms suddenly cease on the patient vomiting matters containing minute starfish, which, when examined by a good lens, could be perfectly made out."*



Salmonella enterica serological variant Typhi (shown under a microscope); the cause of Typhoid Fever.

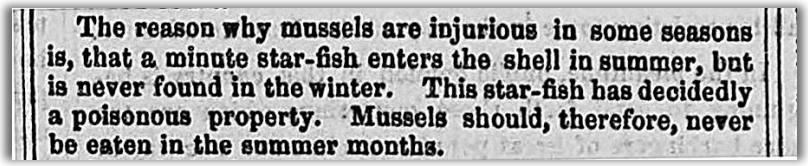
Was this what M.Brevmic described as 'minute sea starfish'?

The newspaper article continued:

"He gave some of these starfish to a dog; in a short time the animal displayed symptoms of a description similar to those which characterise the influence of the poison on man, and it soon died. M. Davenpeau repeated the experiments of M. Brevmic and obtained similar results. This opinion, also, was taken up by M. Lamovroux, and by others, but it still wants confirmation. Upon the whole, the causes of poisoning by mussels and oysters seem to depend upon some change in the fish, approximating to disease ; but there is no obvious change, either in their appearance or in their taste ; and whether this depends on the introduction of other animals into them, or upon disease, still remains, in my opinion, undecided. In treating cases of this kind of poisoning, the stomach should be first cleared by emetics, leeches should then be applied to the epigastrium, to combat the pains there, and mucilaginous and demulcent fluids should be freely administered, and vinegar and water with ether, which should be frequently repeated, to allay the nervous symptoms. In the case which I saw, opium seemed to produce much relief to the patients when cramps of the stomach and the legs supervened; it was, however, chiefly combated by saline purgatives and demulcents."

The full article, initially published in Vol II, Issue 734 of 'The Lancet' dated 23rd September 1837, clearly shows that medical science relating to bacterial infection and its treatment was, at this time, very much in its infancy.

Seventeen years later, the 'starfish' theory was still being promulgated as shown in this article from the 'Preston Times' newspaper, dated 22nd April 1854:


The reason why mussels are injurious in some seasons is, that a minute star-fish enters the shell in summer, but is never found in the winter. This star-fish has decidedly a poisonous property. Mussels should, therefore, never be eaten in the summer months.

[The typhoid fever bacterium wasn't discovered until 1880 by Karl Joseph Eberth.]

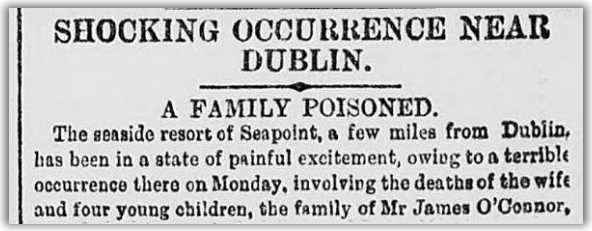
A search of the on-line British Newspaper Archive for the occurrence of the words 'mussel poisoning' during the period 1850 – 1899 provides some evidence of the escalation of the problem:

1850 – 1859	**1 article**	1860 – 1869	**10 articles**	1870 – 1879	**34 articles**
1880 – 1889	**113 articles**	1890 – 1899	**251 articles**		

Whilst the rise in reporting mussel-poisoning shows an obvious trend, the significant increase during the 1890 decade is skewed by one single incident: the deaths of Mrs. O'Connor and four of her five children. This one incident was responsible for over sixty newspaper articles during the month of July 1890 alone and it became known as 'The Seapoint Calamity'. On the 5th July 1890, the 'Newcastle Courant' reported it thus:

"**SHOCKING OCCURRENCE NEAR DUBLIN**

A FAMILY POISONED



SHOCKING OCCURRENCE NEAR DUBLIN.

A FAMILY POISONED.

The seaside resort of Seapoint, a few miles from Dublin, has been in a state of painful excitement, owing to a terrible occurrence there on Monday, involving the deaths of the wife and four young children, the family of Mr James O'Connor,

"The seaside resort of Seapoint, a few miles from Dublin, has been in a state of painful excitement, owing to a terrible occurrence there on Monday, involving the deaths of the wife and four young children, the family of Mr. James O'Connor, …"

During the inquest it was stated by the Medical Officer for Dublin that during his tests for poisons *"copper was looked for but with a negative result"*.

Sixty years after 'The Lancet Vol II, Issue 734' article (above) was published, an article in Issue 3841 of 'The Lancet', dated 10th April 1897, suggested another cause: *"For many years it has been matter of common knowledge and experience that certain persons and families possess a peculiar susceptibility with regard to mussels, and numerous instances are on record in which the consumption of this mollusc in an uncooked condition has been followed by serious and often fatal manifestations of ptomaine poisoning. … Ptomaine poisoning as the result of eating mussels dates back, however, considerably earlier than 1883, and it is recorded that in 1827 some thirty persons were attacked with serious symptoms, which in two cases ended fatally, after eating mussels collected from the dock gates at Leith."*

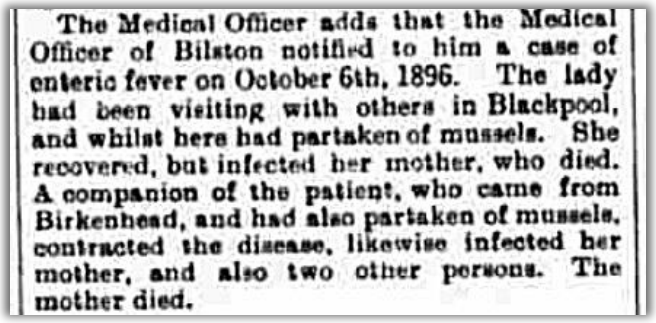
The same article also included a view that was becoming more prevalent in the medical world: *"Within recent years, however, evidence has been accumulating which tends to incriminate mussels as being at times responsible for conveying enteric fever*. and the mussel is at times gathered from localities dangerously near to sewer outfalls."*

* Enteric Fever, also known as Typhoid fever or typhoid, is a disease caused by Salmonella serotype Typhi bacteria.

The article continued: *"We note that Dr. Ripley Bailey, medical officer of health of Bilston, records an interesting instance in which four persons, visitors to Blackpool, were seized with symptoms of ptomaine poisoning shortly after consuming raw mussels procured from the vicinity of a sewer outfall, and two of these four persons subsequently developed enteric fever at such a date after the ingestion of the mussels as to render it highly probable that the shell-fish were the means of conveying the disease."*

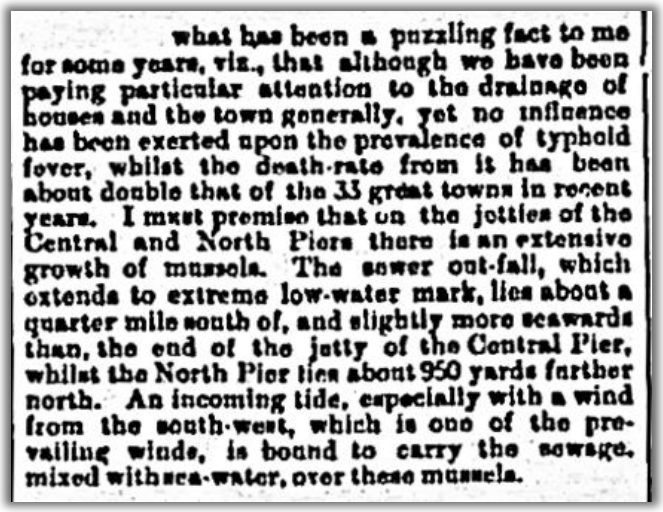
In his Annual Report for 1896, the Medical Officer for Blackpool, Dr. Alfred Jasper Anderson, included a paragraph regarding the Blackpool poisoning mentioned in the above Lancet article and

the 'Blackpool Herald and Fylde Advertiser', published on Friday, 9th July 1897, carried an article about the Medical Officer's report which provided additional details about the poisoning: *"The Medical Officer adds that the Medical Officer of Bilston notified to him a case of enteric fever on October 6th, 1896. The lady had been visiting with others in Blackpool, and whilst here had partaken of mussels. She recovered, but infected her mother, who died. A companion of the patient, who came from Birkenhead, and had also partaken of mussels, contracted the disease, likewise infected her mother, and also two other persons. The mother died."*


The Medical Officer adds that the Medical Officer of Bilston notified to him a case of enteric fever on October 6th, 1896. The lady had been visiting with others in Blackpool, and whilst here had partaken of mussels. She recovered, but infected her mother, who died. A companion of the patient, who came from Birkenhead, and had also partaken of mussels, contracted the disease, likewise infected her mother, and also two other persons. The mother died.

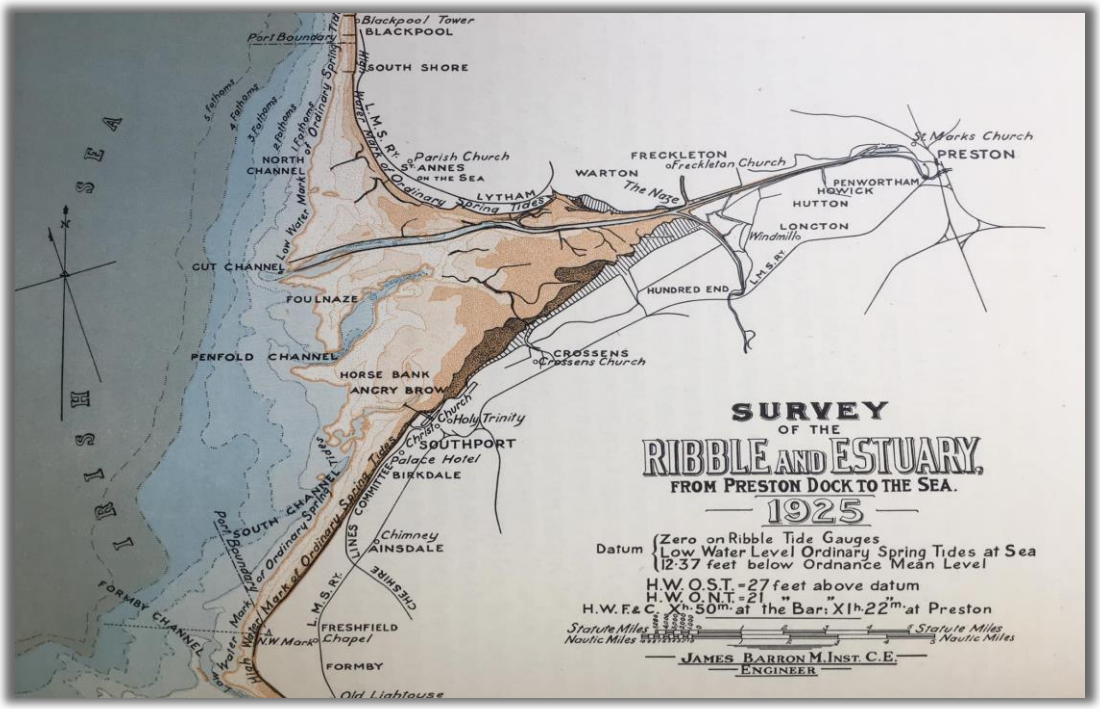
This report varies from the one in the Lancet as here we see that the two mothers who died were, in fact, infected not by the mussels but by their own offspring.

In his report the Medical Officer for Blackpool also wrote: *"... what has been a puzzling fact to me for some years, viz, that although we have been paying attention to the drainage of houses and the town generally, yet no influence has been exerted upon the prevalence of typhoid fever, whilst the death-rate from it has been about double that of the 33 great towns in recent years. I must premise that on the jetties of Central and North Piers there is an extensive growth of mussels. The sewer out-fall, which extends to extreme low-water mark, lies about a quarter mile south of, and slightly more seawards than the end of Central Pier, whilst the North Pier lies about 950 yards further north. An incoming tide, especially with a wind from the south-west, which is one of the prevailing winds, is bound to carry the sewage mixed with sea-water, over these mussels."*


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Thus, by 1897, a link between mussels, typhoid fever and sewage had been identified within the medical profession with the Fylde coast, and Blackpool in particular, at the forefront of this scientific breakthrough. In the next chapter we shall see what brought about the contamination of this part of the coastline during the 19th and early 20th century

Chapter 5
The Pollution of the River Ribble Estuary



The estuary of the River Ribble, an area of approximately 30,000 acres, is defined as extending from Blackpool to Formby Point and up the River Ribble and its tributaries to the farthest point to which the tide flows. Situated on its shores are the towns of **Preston** (designated a city in 2002), **Lytham**, **St. Annes**, **Blackpool**, Southport, Penwortham and a cluster of villages e.g. Warton, Freckleton, Crossens and Longton. In the hinterland, beyond the river's tidal reaches, there were further towns and villages which also utilised their local ditches, streams and rivers as a primary sewage system, contributing to the overall pollution of the Ribble estuary.

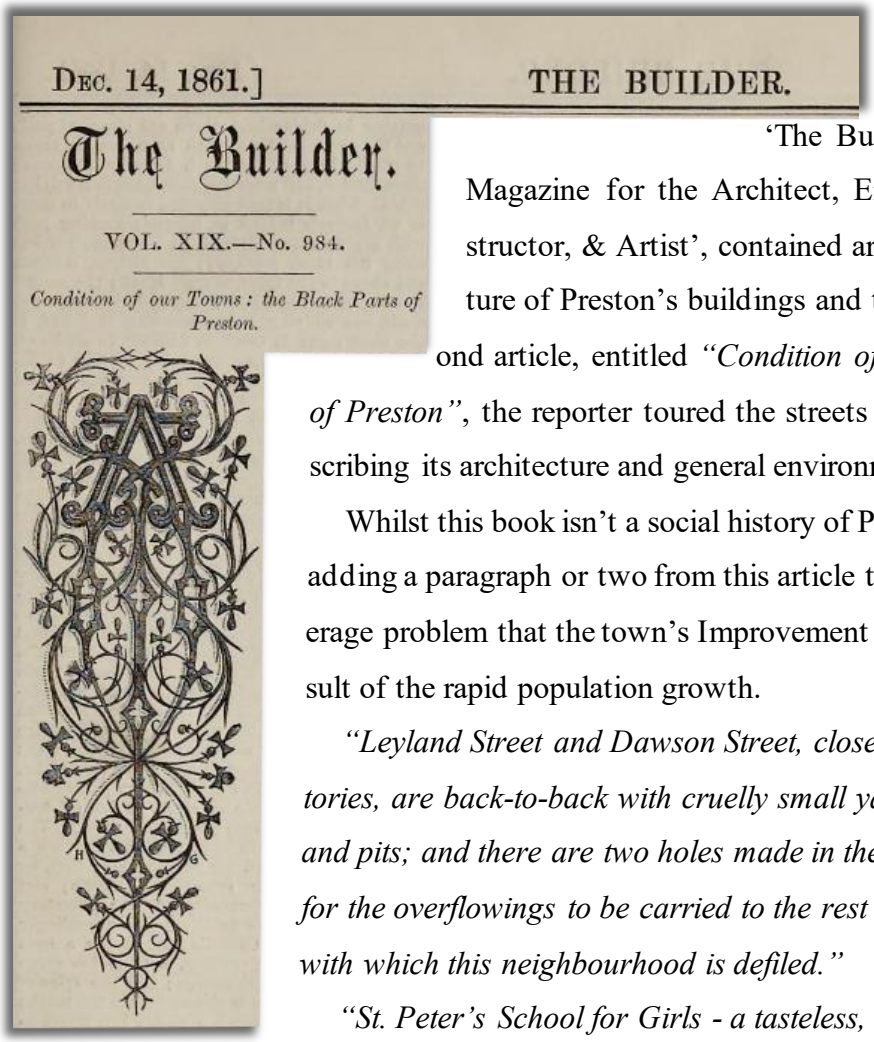
Preston, the largest town situated on the estuary was, throughout the 19th century, the river's major pollution contributor.

Prior to the Public Health Act of 1848 there had been no planned sewerage system for the town of Preston as can be deduced from a discussion that took place at a monthly meeting of the 'Preston Improvement Commissioners' and reported on Monday, 5th April 1847 in the 'Preston Chronicle and Lancashire Advertiser': *"By passing the motion of Mr. Ascroft they would obtain a sum of from £1,000 to £1,500, to lay out in the improvement of the sewerage; and he thought that they ought to have a similar sum to lay out every year for the same purpose, on the main streets of the town. In some of the other streets it might be*

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Even though the population of Preston had been expanding rapidly as the town's industries and commerce flourished over the previous fifty years, up until this time only a rudimentary sewerage system utilising streams and culverts had carried commercial and human waste down to the river. At the start of the 19th century, the population was recorded at 12,174 rising to 50,073 by the time of the first national census in 1841, then to 68,356 (1851) and 82,941 (1861).


DEC. 14, 1861.] THE BUILDER.

The Builder.

VOL. XIX.—No. 984.

Condition of our Towns: the Black Parts of Preston.

In December 1861, two consecutive editions of 'The Builder', an 'Illustrated Weekly Magazine for the Architect, Engineer, Archaeologist, Constructor, & Artist', contained articles relating to the architecture of Preston's buildings and their surroundings. In the second article, entitled *"Condition of our Towns : the Black Parts of Preston"*, the reporter toured the streets and alleyways of Preston describing its architecture and general environment.

Whilst this book isn't a social history of Preston, I think it is worthwhile adding a paragraph or two from this article to outline the scale of the sewerage problem that the town's Improvement Commissioners faced as a result of the rapid population growth.

"Leyland Street and Dawson Street, close to Mr. Hugh Dawson's factories, are back-to-back with cruelly small yards, all of which have privies and pits; and there are two holes made in the wall at the end of the row, for the overflowings to be carried to the rest of the sewage streamlets, with which this neighbourhood is defiled."

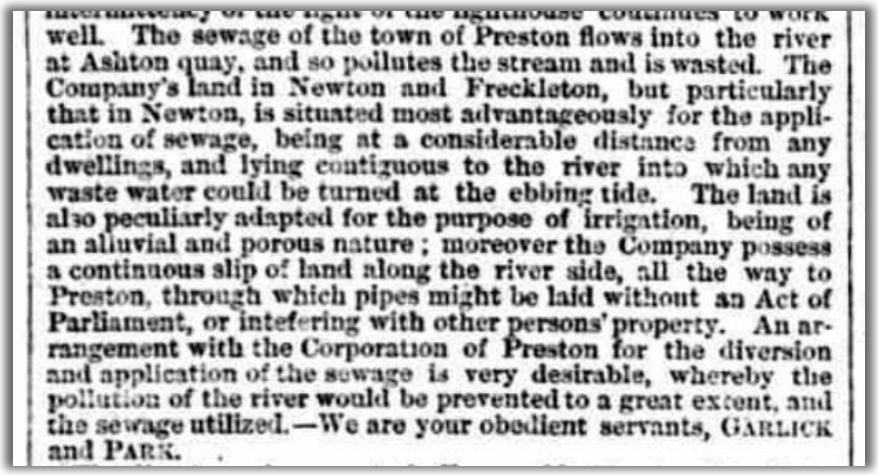
"St. Peter's School for Girls - a tasteless, neglected brick building ... where the girls' privies are so disgusting that the children are reduced to the necessity of using the paved yard, which is accordingly defiled with pools of urine; further, a channel has been actually made to convey these away past the entrance-door. The state of the windows and of the whole of the establishment, too, would be a disgrace to a community of savages."

"The next row of houses is called Maudland Bank: their contracted yards and crowded ash- pits overhang the steep bank of a canal. The view from the canal bridge is ghastly. There are a few wretched, decayed trees on the banks, and the overhanging privies and dung middens have

discharged their surplus filth over their boundary walls on to these banks below where sewers empty themselves into the canal; and the water has the appearance of a stagnant sheet of fluid with a thick oleaginous brown crust on it."

Twelve years before these articles appeared in 'The Builder', a government inspector had visited the town and found very similar sanitary conditions. In summarising the town's sewer system, he reported that "one fourth of the town was drained and had main sewers in the streets" but his main recommendation was to convert Moor Brook into a sewer and connect this to the 30 or 40 acres of reclaimed land at Lea Marsh where the land "would derive considerable benefit from sewage manure".

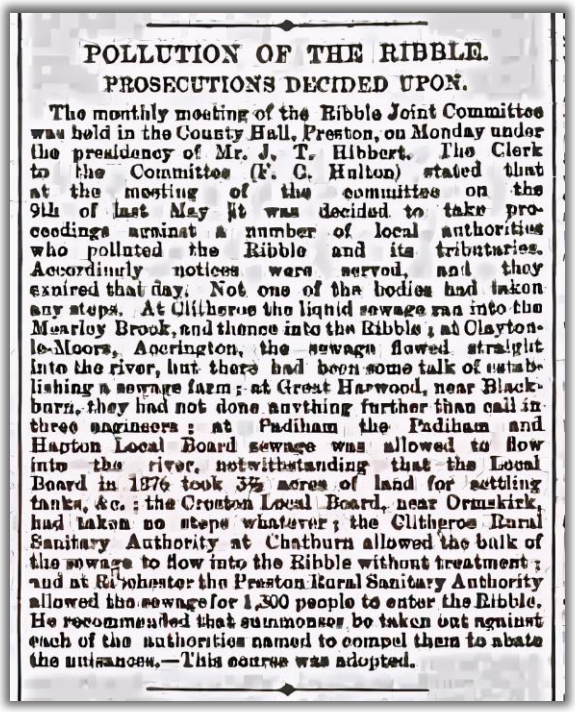
It would appear that this recommendation wasn't acted upon at the time as the same subject was raised at the half-yearly general meeting of "The Ribble Navigation Company" on the 23rd February 1865. In their report to the Company, the engineering company responsible for the maintenance of the river channel (Garlick and Park) put forward a similar proposal, but this time as a solution to the river's pollution problem. The 'Preston Herald' printed the following:


well. The sewage of the town of Preston flows into the river at Ashton quay, and so pollutes the stream and is wasted. The Company's land in Newton and Freckleton, but particularly that in Newton, is situated most advantageously for the application of sewage, being at a considerable distance from any dwellings, and lying contiguous to the river into which any waste water could be turned at the ebbing tide. The land is also peculiarly adapted for the purpose of irrigation, being of an alluvial and porous nature; moreover the Company possess a continuous slip of land along the river side, all the way to Preston, through which pipes might be laid without an Act of Parliament, or intefering with other persons' property. An arrangement with the Corporation of Preston for the diversion and application of the sewage is very desirable, whereby the pollution of the river would be prevented to a great extent, and the sewage utilized.—We are your obedient servants, GARLICK and PARK.

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A further indication of the scale of the sewage problem that the River Ribble was experiencing as the population of towns in its catchment area expanded can be seen in the following newspaper article published in 'The Manchester Courier' on Saturday, 16th July 1892. Here we read that the

'Ribble Joint Committee' were going *"to take proceedings against a number of local authorities who polluted the Ribble and its tributaries."*:



POLLUTION OF THE RIBBLE.

PROSECUTIONS DECIDED UPON.

The monthly meeting of the Ribble Joint Committee was held in the County Hall, Preston, on Monday under the presidency of Mr. J. T. Hibbert. The Clerk to the Committee (F. C. Hulton) stated that at the meeting of the committee on the 9th of last May it was decided to take proceedings against a number of local authorities who polluted the Ribble and its tributaries. Accordingly notices were served, and they expired that day. Not one of the bodies had taken any steps. At Clitheroe the liquid sewage ran into the Mearley Brook, and thence into the Ribble; at Clayton-le-Moors, Accrington, the sewage flowed straight into the river, but there had been some talk of establishing a sewage farm; at Great Harwood, near Blackburn, they had not done anything further than call in three engineers; at Padiham the Padiham and Hapton Local Board sewage was allowed to flow into the river, notwithstanding that the Local Board in 1876 took 3½ acres of land for settling tanks, &c.; the Croston Local Board, near Ormskirk, had taken no steps whatever; the Clitheroe Rural Sanitary Authority at Chatburn allowed the bulk of the sewage to flow into the Ribble without treatment; and at Ribchester the Preston Rural Sanitary Authority allowed the sewage for 1,300 people to enter the Ribble. He recommended that summonses be taken out against each of the authorities named to compel them to abate the nuisances.—This course was adopted.

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The seaside towns of Lytham and St. Annes, situated on the northern shore of the estuary, also contributed to the river's pollution and, probably, more directly to the contamination of the local mussel population than the aforementioned towns and villages.

Lytham, an area estimated to be two carucates* of arable land in the Domesday book had, by 1801, developed into a hamlet with a population amounting to 920 persons. By this time, in addition to traditional mud and thatched cottages and farmsteads scattered around the area, brick buildings with slated roofs had been erected, roads developed and a seaside resort was burgeoning; two inns (the Wheat Sheaf and the Clifton Arms) had been built, in addition to several shops and a gaol. Visitors arriving from the nearby Lancashire towns by steamboat or horse-drawn carriage were able to walk along the low sandhills that marked the landward margin of the beach or to use bathing machines to take an invigorating bath in the sea.

* A carucate is a medieval unit of land area that approximates the amount of land a plough team of eight oxen could till in a single annual season.

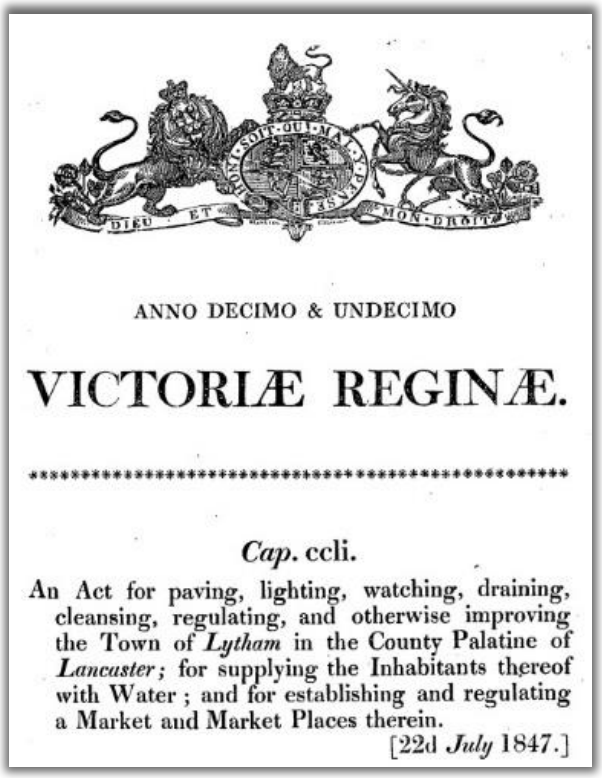
As a place not only to visit but for the wealthy local entrepreneurs to reside, Lytham was rapidly developing. The most pretentious dwellings were built upon the northern portion of the tract known as the Marsh, and one near the tract's western extremity was a substantial house with gardens and plantation, inhabited by the clergyman of the parish, the Rev. Robert Lister. In close proximity was a marine villa with a Chinese porch, belonging to William Hornby Esq., of

Kirkham; and a row of white cottages, called Lizmahago after a racehorse owned by the Lord of the Manor, John Clifton Esq., which were erected for the accommodation of visitors. All this new development needed a supporting infrastructure of artisans, shopkeepers, household staff and tradespersons of all descriptions.

In his book 'The History of the Fylde of Lancashire', written in 1876, John Porter wrote that by 1828 *"Of trades and professions in the village* [Lytham] *there were three milliners, six drapers, three boot and shoe makers, five joiners and cabinet makers, one druggist, two blacksmiths, one ship carpenter, one custom-house officer, one tide-waiter, one corn miller, three butchers, five grocers, two coal dealers, one confectioner, one surgeon, one attorney, and one clergyman."*

The 1821 Census recorded Lytham's population as 1292 and rising by a further 755 during the next 20 years to 2047 in 1841.The opening of the railway from Preston in 1846 and the almost simultaneous extension of ground leases from forty to sixty years (and later to ninety-nine and nine hundred and ninety-nine years) provided a further incentive for wealthy residents and visitors to invest in the future of the town. Mr. Corry, in his book 'The History of Lancashire', published around this time, says, *"A considerable part of the visitors and settlers within the last twenty years have been opulent individuals, who were induced by the beauty of the spot and the benefit derived from bathing in the sea water, to resort to this pleasing village."*

The outcome of this rapidly expanding population meant that the old feudal system of government, as employed by the Lord of the Manor was becoming unsustainable. The responsibility for providing the essential services for the expanding town needed to be provided and managed by a local authority and to achieve this required an Act of Parliament.



ANNO DECIMO & UNDECIMO

VICTORIÆ REGINÆ.

****

Cap. ccli.

An Act for paving, lighting, watching, draining, cleansing, regulating, and otherwise improving the Town of *Lytham* in the County Palatine of *Lancaster;* for supplying the Inhabitants thereof with Water; and for establishing and regulating a Market and Market Places therein.

[22d *July* 1847.]

The 'Lytham Improvement Act' received its Royal Ascent on the 22nd July 1847 enabling the Lytham Improvement Commissioners to borrow, on mortgage, up to £10,000 for *"paving, lighting, watching, draining, cleansing, regulating, and otherwise improving the Town of Lytham in the County Palatine of Lancaster; for supplying the Inhabitants therefore with Water; and for establishing and regulating a Market and Market Places therein. ... And in order to raise Money for the Purpose of this Act"* it was

enacted *"That it shall be lawful for the Commissioners, once in every Year, or oftener if they shall think it necessary, to make One or more Rate or Rates, Assessment or Assessments, upon the Occupiers of all Messuages, Buildings, Lands, Tenements, and Hereditaments whatsoever within the Limits of this Act"*.

With the Act in place, the Commissioners began fulfilling their obligations. Building a Market Hall (opened on 24th June 1848). Lighting came to the Lytham streets in October 1850 using gas from its own newly-built gas works (only eight months earlier, 2nd March 1850, 'The Preston Chronicle' had carried an advertisement for a contractor to build a gas works). By 1864, water flowed through pipes to Lytham residences, provided by the recently incorporated 'Fylde Waterworks Company Limited',

TO IRONFOUNDERS AND CONTRACTORS.

LYTHAM GAS WORKS.

THE Commissioners acting under and by virtue of "The Lytham Improvement Act, 1847," are willing to receive TENDERS for the Supply and Erection of the Buildings, Pipes, and Apparatus, and for laying the Pipes requisite for lighting the town of Lytham with Gas.

The Commissioners will not bind themselves necessarily to accept the lowest Tender, and the parties contracting will be required to execute a contract under seal, and to provide good and sufficient security for the due execution of the work to the satisfaction of the Commissioners or their Engineer for the time being.

Plans and Specifications may be seen on and after Thursday, the 7th March instant, on application to Mr. ROFE, at the office of the Preston Gas Company.

Tenders must be sent in sealed, and marked "Tender for Lytham Gas Works," addressed to "The Improvement Commissioners, Lytham, Lancashire," on or before MONDAY, the 18th March instant.

J. W. R. WILSON,
Clerk to the said Commissioners.

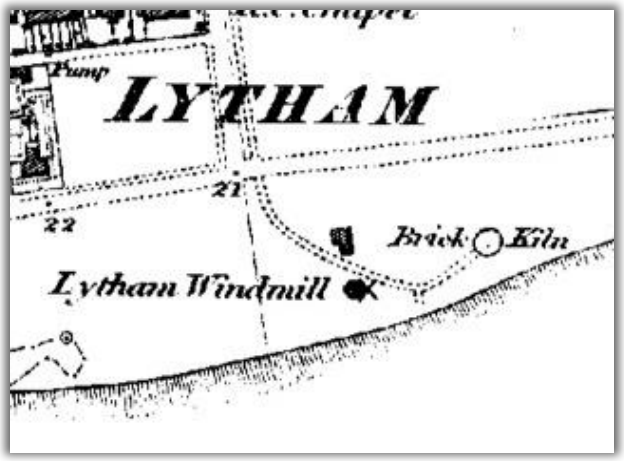
Lytham, 1st March, 1850.

Another aspect of the town that required the attention of the Improvement Commissioners was the draining and cleansing of the streets and associated properties. Less than a year after the Improvement Act had been passed, a notice was placed in the Saturday, 20th May 1848, edition of 'The Preston Chronical' by the Commissioners asking for tenders for the construction of a sewer extending 1300 yards from *"Bannister's Pool, near the Railway Station, to the southern end of Station Road, and thence running by the side of Beach Road to a point opposite to the house now in the course of erection by Mr. John Stevenson* [now 11 West Beach] *(the total length thereof being about 1,300 yards)"*.

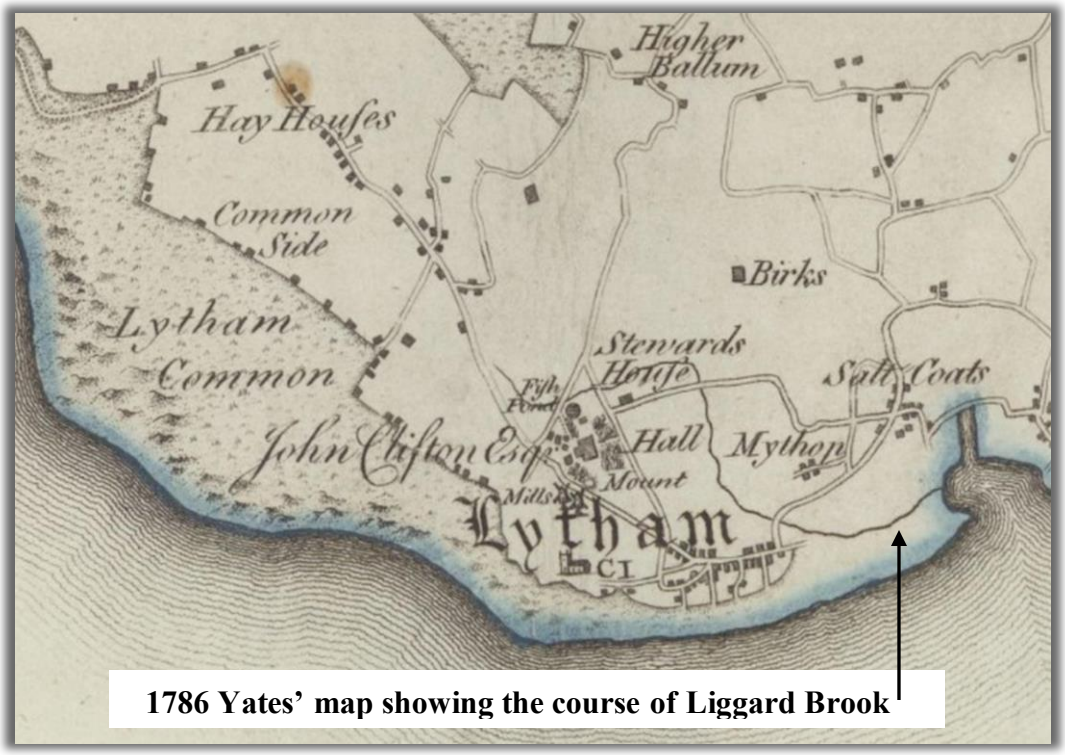
LYTHAM IMPROVEMENT ACT.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN,

THAT Persons desirous of undertaking the construction of the SEWER about to be formed at Lytham, from "Bannister's Pool," near the Railway Station, to the southern end of Station Road, and thence running by the side of Beach Road to a point opposite to the house now in the course of erection by Mr. John Stevenson (the total length thereof being about 1,300 yards),



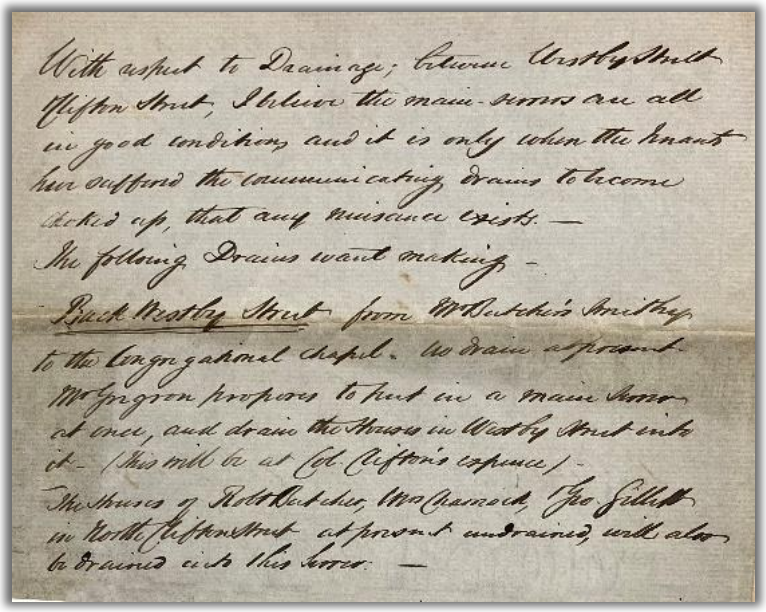
The sewer was constructed using bricks supplied by the town's kiln at the rate of 21s. per thousand. To achieve a gradient down which sewage could flow, it took the rather counter-intuitive route of flowing along Beach Road and then north along Station Road before being deposited into Liggard Brook and thence into the Ribble estuary.



1786 Yates' map showing the course of Liggard Brook

The 1848 sewer enabled the 'new' properties being built along Beach Road [the present-day West Beach, Central Beach and East Beach] to have proper drains and water-closets unlike the older, traditional cottages of Clifton Street, Westby Street, Henry Street, etc., which used back-yard privies and cesspits for both human and animal waste.

During the 20 years following the passing of the Act, the population of Lytham expanded rapidly, (increasing to 7902 by 1871) and as a consequence additional sewers were installed throughout this period, each one terminating at its own outfall pipe along Liggard Brook. In the town, property owners were required to connect their houses to nearby sewers at their own cost.



With respect to Drainage; between Westby Street Clifton Street, I believe the main sewers are all in good condition and it is only when the tenant has suffered the communicating drains to become choked up, that any nuisance exists. —
The following Drains want making —
Back Westby Street from Mr Butcher's Smithy to the Congregational Chapel. No drain at present. Mr Ingram proposes to put in a main sewer at once, and drain the houses in Westby Street into it. (This will be at Col Clifton's expence) —
The houses of Robt Butcher, Mrs Charnock, Geo Gillett in North Clifton Street at present undrained, will also be drained into this sewer. —

The Commissioners Office sent a letter, dated 26th October 1864 to James Fair Esq., the Clifton Estates Land Agent, describing a particular problem: *"With respect to Drainage; between Westby Street Clifton Street; I believe the main sewers are all in good condition and it is only when the tenant has suffered the communicating drains to become choked up, that any nuisance exists –*

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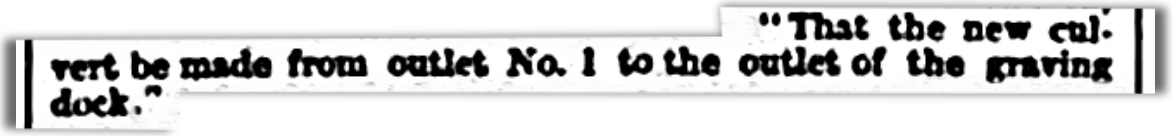
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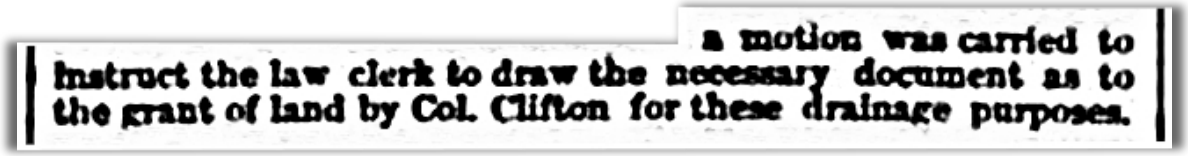
As described in the Commissioners' letter above, a major problem with the town's drainage system was the chocking up of the sewers due to an ever-increasing volume of sewage entering the system. This was exacerbated by the shallow gradient down which it had to flow towards Liggard Brook. The sewage flow was further compromised at times of high tide when the level of water in the brook was raised above the height of the drainage outlets. This not only stopped the flow of the contents in the pipes but forced them back into the houses.

The Commissioners had to deal with many complaints by Lytham residents with regards to obnoxious smelling gasses filtering back along the pipes into residential properties and instituted a number of remedies. Additional manholes were added to allow for regular flushing of the main pipes; additional street air vents (charcoal filled grids) were added to stop the build of gasses; and to combat the 'flow back' into homes they specified that new properties had to be built two foot six inches above the sewer.

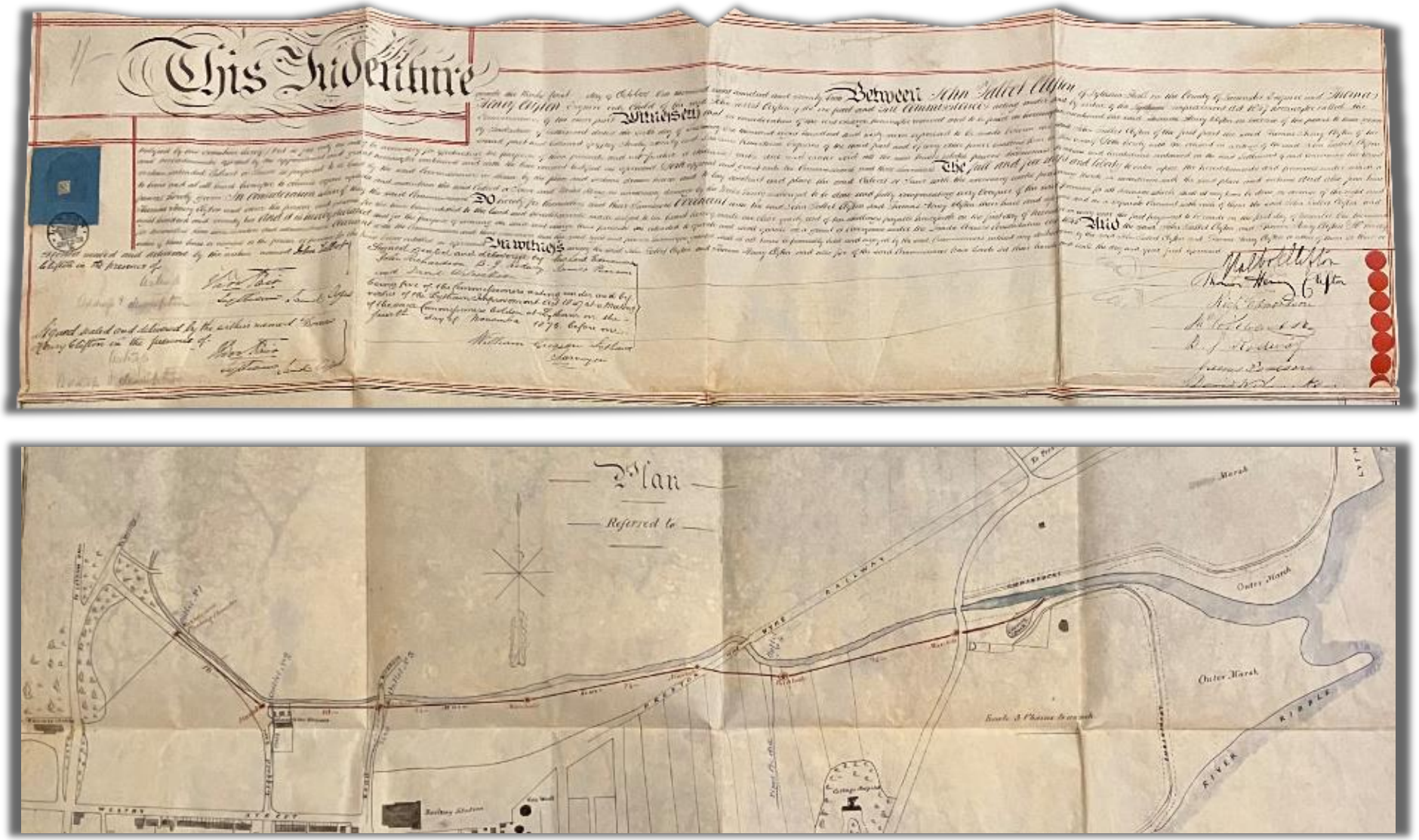
At the Lytham Improvement Commissioners' meeting held on the 18th July 1871, it was agreed *"That the new culvert be made from outlet No. 1 to the outlet of the graving dock."*


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and "*a motion was carried to instruct the law clerk to draw the necessary document as to the grant of land by Col. Clifton for these drainage purposes."*


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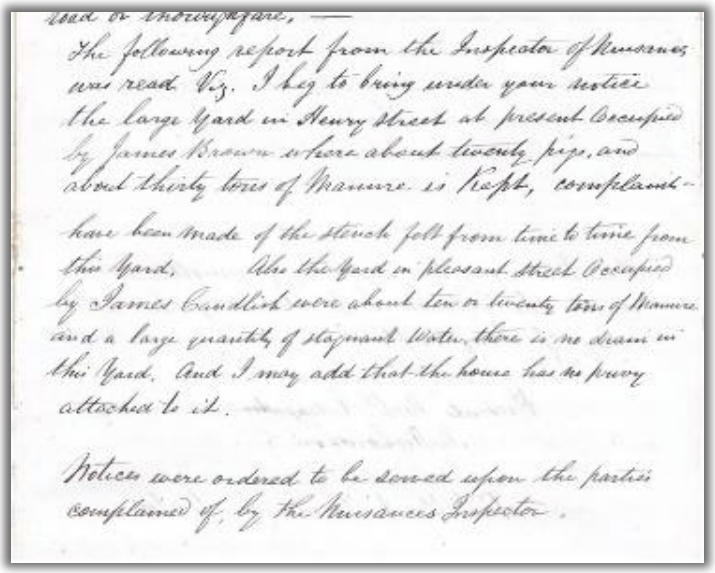
On the 31st October 1872, an indenture was signed between John Talbot Clifton together with his son, Thomas Henry Clifton and the Lytham Commissioners, acting under and by virtue of the Lytham Improvement Act 1847, giving the Commissioners *"The full and free right and liberty to enter upon the hereditaments and premises under which a certain intended Culvert or Sewer is prepared to be laid by the said Commissioners as shown by the plan".*



Parts of the 1872 Indenture for the installation of the new sewage pipe alongside Liggard Brook from 'Outlet No. 1 to the Graving Dock'

Principally, the problem concerning the sewerage of Lytham via Liggard Brook was only associated with the 'new-build' properties erected since the passing of the 'Lytham Improvement Act' and the introduction of piped water in 1864 and the subsequent disposal of 'running' water from these properties. A completely different problem concerned the Improvement Commissioners in relation to the traditional thatched cottages that still occupied the streets of Lytham.

Many of these cottage dwellers reared a pig or two in their back-yard for their own meat supply and also to supplement their meagre income by selling pigs to the butchers and manure to the farmers. The tradition of 'back-yard' pig keeping and the storing of manure was a major concern for the Improvement Commissioners in their quest to develop Lytham into a salubrious 'watering hole'. This unsavoury tradition was frequently brought to the attention of the Commissioners by the Inspector of Nuisances and many 'nuisances' were recorded in the Commissioners' meeting minute books throughout the 1860's and into the 1870's. The minutes of a meeting held on 20th November 1873 recorded the following:


road or thoroughfare, —
The following report from the Inspector of Nuisances was read Viz. I beg to bring under your notice the large Yard in Henry Street at present Occupied by James Brown where about twenty pigs, and about thirty tons of Manure is Kept, complaints have been made of the stench felt from time to time from this Yard, Also the Yard in Pleasant Street Occupied by James Candlish were about ten or twenty tons of Manure and a large quantity of stagnant Water, there is no drain in this Yard. And I may add that the house has no privy attached to it.

Notices were ordered to be served upon the parties complained of, by the Nuisances Inspector.

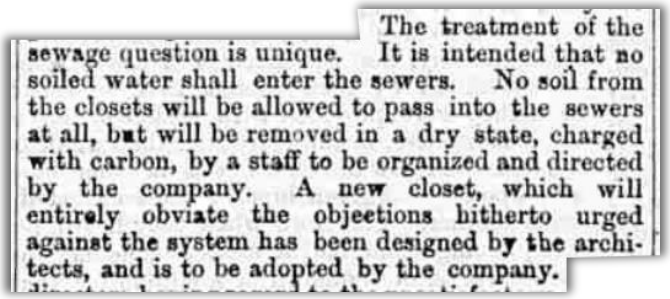
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St. Anne's-on-the-Sea's was relatively late on the scene as a contributor to the pollution of the Ribble estuary. Prior to the creation of the town, c 1875, the area shown on the 1786 Yates' map (page 23) as 'Lytham Common' was sparsely populated and consisted solely of individual farm cottages and associated buildings. The need for a sewerage system was neither practical or necessary as the use of cesspits and field ditches provided a cheap and time-honoured method of wastewater disposal. Whilst the contents of these ditches did eventually find their way into the Ribble via Liggard Brook, the impact of it on the overall pollution of the river, at that time, would have been negligible.

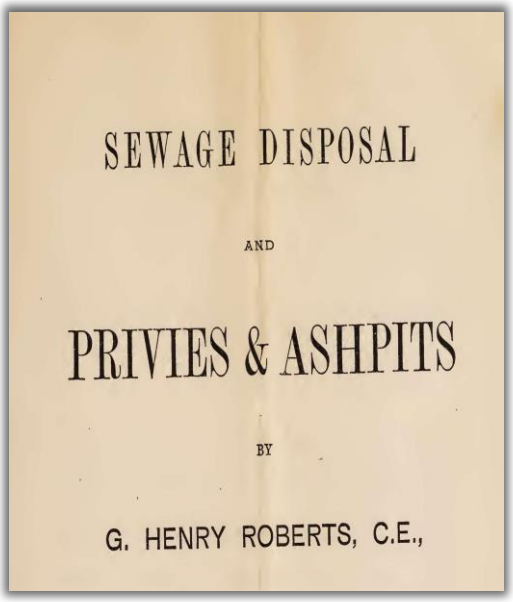
This situation changed considerably after Squire Clifton leased a portion of 'Lytham Common' to the *St. Anne on the Sea Land and Building Company*. Reporting on the occasion of the "Laying

the Foundation Stone" for the new town of St. Annes on the Sea, the "Blackpool Herald", dated 2nd April 1875, noted that the building estate had been laid out with great judgement by Messrs. Maxwell and Tuke, of Bury, who have spared no pains to bring it up to the highest known standard of modern sanitation. The newspaper article continued: *"The treatment of the sewage question is unique. It is intended that no soiled water shall enter the sewers. No soil from the closets will be allowed to pass into the sewers at all, but will be removed in a dry state, charged with carbon, by staff to be organised and directed by the company. A new closet, which will entirely obviate the objections hitherto urged against the system has been designed by the architects, and is to be adopted by the company."*


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Well into the 19th century in cities and towns throughout the country the primary method of sewage disposal was the 'dry system'. This system took the form of either a privy or an ashpit usually situated away from the living quarters and positioned with access from a rear lane or alleyway to enable the local night-soil man, or 'scavenger', to remove the contents every few weeks or so.

Even when water-closets were becoming the fashion, there was still a belief by some people that the 'Dry System', i.e. the privy or ashpit, was superior to the 'Water Closet System'. In a pamphlet titled "SEWAGE DISPOSAL – PRIVIES & ASHPITS", written in 1873 by Mr. G. Henry Roberts, CE., an Associate of the Institution of Civil Engineers, he presented his ideas for the proper construction of privies and ashpits as, in his words *"The advocates of the Dry System have, beyond all question, achieved the victory over the advocates of the Water Closet System"*.

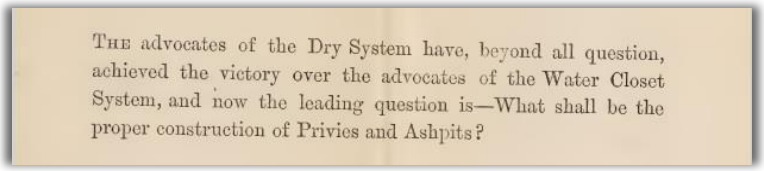

SEWAGE DISPOSAL

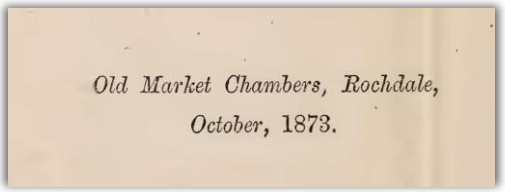
AND

PRIVIES & ASHPITS

BY

G. HENRY ROBERTS, C.E.,


The advocates of the Dry System have, beyond all question, achieved the victory over the advocates of the Water Closet System, and now the leading question is—What shall be the proper construction of Privies and Ashpits?


Old Market Chambers, Rochdale,
October, 1873.

In the pamphlet Mr. Roberts' address was shown as: 'Old Market Chambers, Rochdale"

Perhaps it was no coincidence that 'the architects' and Land Agents to the *St. Anne on the Sea Land and building Company*, Messrs. Maxwell and Tuke of Bury, were responsible for designing a new 'dry system' closet as their office in Bury was situated only 10km (6 miles) from Mr. Roberts' office in Rochdale*.

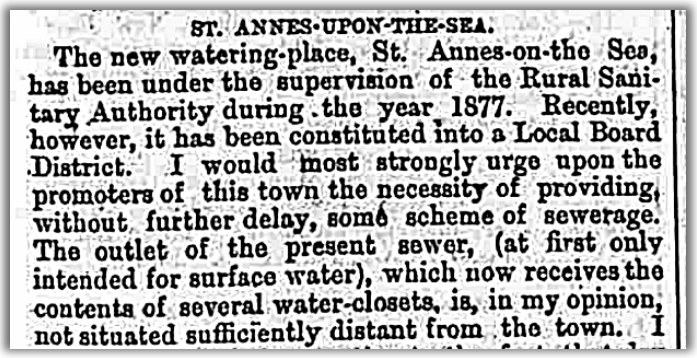
[*In 1869 Rochdale's town council had, itself, pioneered Mr. Roberts' 'dry system'. Instead of people using the traditional cesspits, the council provided small outhouses or *'pail privies*. The pail privy housed a portable bucket placed under a seat and the local authority collected and re-placed the bucket (pail) with clean ones on a regular basis.]

Thus, by 1875, the situation at Lytham and St. Annes with respect to the disposal of sewage was two-fold:

i) in Lytham the old cottages used cesspits or privies whilst newer properties were linked to the recently installed pipe running alongside Liggard Brook before emptying into the seaward end of the brook at the Graving Dock.

ii) the new premises of St. Annes were to use the dry system with the contents of the privies being passed to farmers for use on their fields.

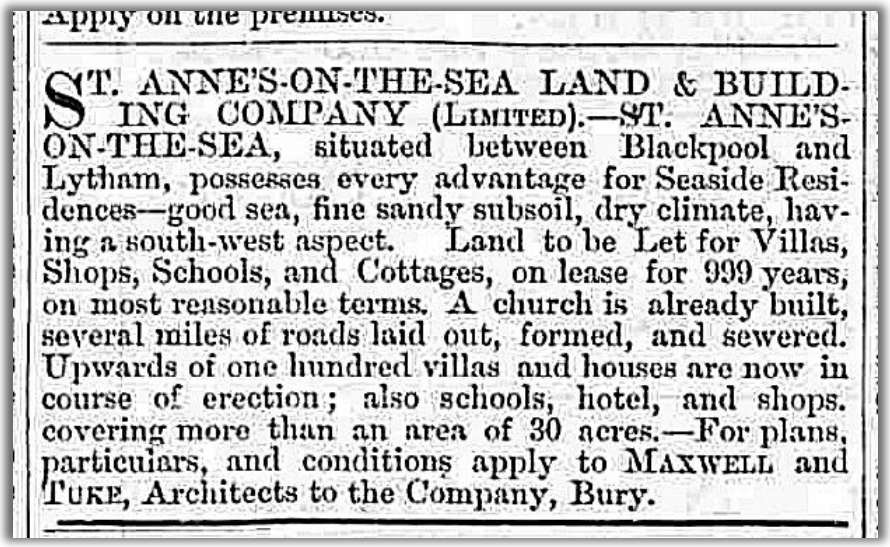
By 1877 the vision of Messrs. Maxwell and Tuke that "*no soiled water shall enter the sewers"* had started to fade. In his annual report for that year on the sanitary condition of the Fylde Rural District, the Medical Officer of Health to the Fylde Rural and Kirkham Urban Sanitary Authorities made the following observation:


ST. ANNES-UPON-THE-SEA.

The new watering-place, St. Annes-on-the Sea, has been under the supervision of the Rural Sanitary Authority during the year 1877. Recently, however, it has been constituted into a Local Board District. I would most strongly urge upon the promoters of this town the necessity of providing, without further delay, some scheme of sewerage. The outlet of the present sewer, (at first only intended for surface water), which now receives the contents of several water-closets, is, in my opinion, not situated sufficiently distant from the town. I

"The new watering place, St. Annes-on-the Sea [sic], has been under the supervision of the Rural Sanitary Authority during the year 1877. Recently, however, it has been constituted into a Local Board District. I would most strongly urge upon the promoters of this town the necessity of providing, without further delay, some scheme of sewerage. The outlet of the present sewer, (at first only intended for surface water), which now receives the contents of several water-closets, is, in my opinion not situated sufficiently distant from the town."

It would appear from this report that not all of the new properties were being built with the 'dry system' but with water-closets plumbed into a surface-water drain. Surface-water drains had been installed during the laying down of some of the new main roads by the Clifton estate prior to leasing any land for the development of St. Annes. This is evident by the fact that only 6 months after the first lease was issued 'The Blackpool Herald', dated 18th June 1875, carried an advertisement offering *"Land to be Let…"* declaring amongst other aspects that *"A church is already built, several miles of road laid out, formed and sewered."*


Apply on the premises.

ST. ANNE'S-ON-THE-SEA LAND & BUILDING COMPANY (LIMITED).—ST. ANNE'S-ON-THE-SEA, situated between Blackpool and Lytham, possesses every advantage for Seaside Residences—good sea, fine sandy subsoil, dry climate, having a south-west aspect. Land to be Let for Villas, Shops, Schools, and Cottages, on lease for 999 years, on most reasonable terms. A church is already built, several miles of roads laid out, formed, and sewered. Upwards of one hundred villas and houses are now in course of erection; also schools, hotel, and shops. covering more than an area of 30 acres.—For plans, particulars, and conditions apply to MAXWELL and TUKE, Architects to the Company, Bury.

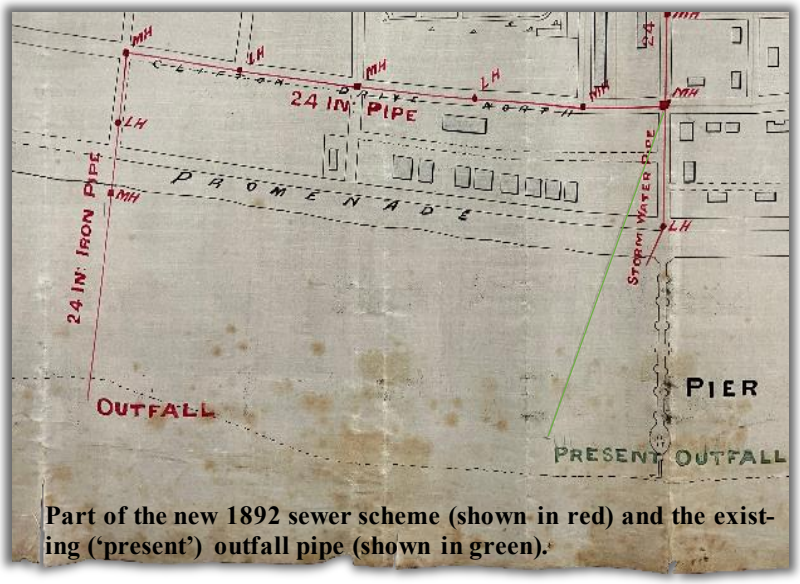
The church was built in 1872-73 and the 'sewers' would have been surface-water drains as prior to 1875 there was no requirement for a waste-water sewer as there was, at this time, no fresh water piped into the area.

The surface-water sewer mentioned in the medical officer's report followed St. Annes Road from the railway station to an outfall pipe situated along the north side of the site designated for the future pier. [The St Annes-on-the-Sea Pier and Improvements Company was formed in 1877.]

A significant problem associated with satisfying the medical officer's *"urge"* for *"the promoters of this town the necessity of providing, without further delay, some scheme of sewerage"* was one of cost. Who should pay for the emerging new town's common infrastructure: main roads, shared sewers, etc. The medical officer's report also referred to the *"Rural Sanitary Authority"* as having been recently *"constituted into a Local Board District"* and it was the Local Board who were responsible for the district's sewerage matters as a result of the recently passed Public Health Acts of 1871 and 1875. This meant that there were three players in the arena: the Clifton estate, the Land and Building Company and the Local Board.

Suffice to say the resolution to the town's sewer requirements was a lengthy affair and work didn't begin for a further FOURTEEN years. So significant was this occasion that the 18th August 1892 was declared a General Holiday in St. Annes. *"At two o'clock a procession left the St. Annes Hotel in the following order to the site where Mr. Porritt cut the first sod of the new drainage scheme – on waste land nearest the sea on the North Drive about midway between the Convalescent Home and Mr. Sidney Herman's house - Mounted police, St. Annes Brass Band, contractors with lorries containing plant, workmen, etc., school children, golf caddies, St. Annes lifeboat and*

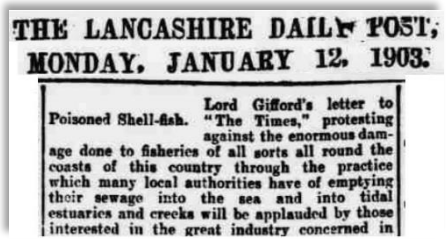
crew, reserve crew, invited guests, residents, fire brigade, directors of the Land Company, members of the Local Board, band and workmen from Helmshore", reported the 'Blackpool Herald' the following day.



Part of the new 1892 sewer scheme (shown in red) and the existing ('present') outfall pipe (shown in green).

By 1906, only fourteen years after this joyous occasion, we shall see below the unintended consequence of the new 24-inch outfall pipe.

Situated at the northern end of the estuary, **Blackpool,** by the end of the 19th century, had already played a major role in the 'mussel v typhoid' story, as we saw in Chapter 4, but its story continued into the 20th century. In 1903, 'The Lancashire Daily Post' carried an article referring to a letter sent to 'The Times' by Lord Gifford: *"protesting against the enormous damage done to fisheries of all sorts all round the coasts of this country through the practice which many local authorities have of emptying their sewage into the sea and into tidal estuaries and creeks"*.


THE LANCASHIRE DAILY POST; MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 1903.

Poisoned Shell-fish. Lord Gifford's letter to "The Times," protesting against the enormous damage done to fisheries of all sorts all round the coasts of this country through the practice which many local authorities have of emptying their sewage into the sea and into tidal estuaries and creeks will be applauded by those interested in the great industry concerned in

Two weeks later a report in 'The Blackpool Herald and Fylde Advertiser", dated January 27th 1903, announced that the Joint Sewage Board for the townships of Thornton, Bispham and Carleton had held an *'interesting ceremony at Cleveleys'*, where *"the chairman of the Board drove the first pile for the new £36,000 sewage scheme, on the beach at Anchorsholme some little distance from the low water mark, where the sewage would be discharged into the Sea"*.


FYLDE SEABOARD AND SANITATION

Inauguration of a Joint Sewage Scheme - Proposed Expenditure of £36,000.

INTERESTING CEREMONY AT CLEVELEYS

The newspaper article listed 38 dignitaries in attendance who, after several 'back-patting' speeches, left the sod-cutting ceremony, journeyed by special car to Blackpool, and re-assembled at the Station Hotel for dinner where *"complimentary speeches were given in the submitting and accepting of toasts"*. One of the dignitaries attending the ceremony was the Rev. G Leighton who *"having invoked the divine blessing on this work proceeded to say that there was undoubtably a strong desire to make this district attractive to those who wished to vary the monotony and toilsome part of their daily life, by a pleasant visit to the seaside"*.

I wonder if the irony of Rev. Leighton's words went unnoticed by those present. It certainly wouldn't have gone unnoticed by the superintendent of 'Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries'. His quarterly report for the period ending 31st December 1902, which was reviewed on the same newspaper page as the above ceremony, recommended the Sea Fisheries Committee *"to report to the sanitary authorities the risks incurred by the discharge of sewage in proximity to shellfish beds, and the necessity for medical officers of health giving this subject their prompt attention".*

By 1906 reports of typhoid outbreaks had become such a common feature in newspaper articles around the country that the newspaper proprietors of the 'Manchester Courier' saw an opportunity to 'cash-in' on the population's fear by offering their readership *"a Free Insurance Policy of £20 against Disablement from Typhoid ... and £100 against Death".*


FREE INSURANCE POLICY.
Persons who regularly read the "Manchester Courier" are entitled to a Free Insurance Policy of £20 against Disablement from Typhoid, Typhus, Scarlet Fever, Small Pox, Diphtheria, and £100 against Death.
For particulars see page 8

In that same year, the contamination of mussels with sewage was finally becoming a major issue locally. On the 15th September 1906, a well-known St. Annes resident, Mr. John Bagot, of 94, St. Annes Road East, wrote a letter to the Editor of 'The Blackpool Herald and Fylde Advertiser' on the subject of 'Fylde Sewage'. Whilst the letter is too long to include within these pages, I have reproduced some sentences below that show his measure of disapproval of the St. Annes District Council and their handling of the situation:

> **Sir, The proceedings of the St. Annes District Council are chiefly remarkable for the absence of anything important that the ratepayers should know.**

Referring to recent newspaper articles about typhoid in St. Annes he wrote:

> **For instance, the other day an alarming statement appeared in the Manchester dailies that there was typhoid at St. Annes and that a policeman was stationed on the north shore to prevent anyone gathering shellfish ... but not a word was said on the subject at the *[Council]* meeting in question.**

On the state of the sewer system of St. Annes he wrote …..

> **St. Annes has all summer been in danger of a serious epidemic through the fatuous method of treating sewage, disinfectants are applied plentifully to the street grids, but most ineffectually so far as the road in which I reside is concerned, at any rate, for the stink is sometimes awful. After gathering all the offensive matter into sewers that have practically no gradient this horrible stuff is forced on to the shore to contaminate the food of man and destroy the industry of many poor folk.**

With regard to the deaths from typhoid of four soldiers at Fleetwood, the letter continues …….

> **Mungling** [sic] **and selfishness reign supreme elsewhere as well as here, at Blackpool, for instance I see the quidnuncs are trying to account for the deaths of those soldiers at Fleetwood in the usual wooden-headed fashion. Why, if they got a mouthful of the sea, whilst bathing, impregnated with Blackpool and St. Annes sewage, that would set up enough typhoid to clear the whole barracks. People come here for "a sniff of the briny" – what they smell really is sewage in the salt water.**

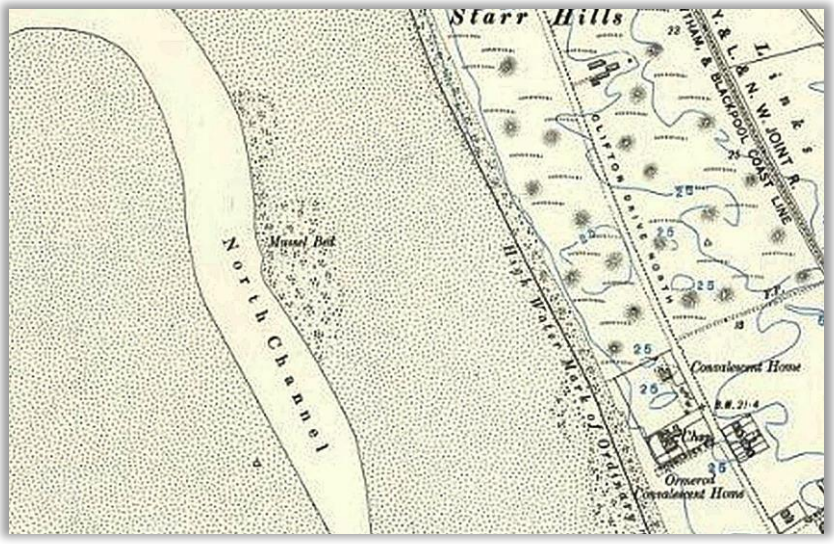
On the subject of manure ……..

> **It all arises from miserable money grubbing, penny wise and pound foolish policy. We pay the Manchester Corporation 5s a bag for sewage manure for our gardens and have it sent on rail, whilst our local authorities poison us and the fishes with the same kind of stuff.**

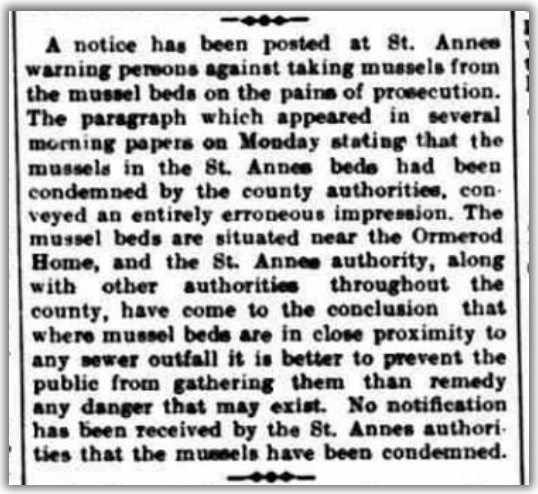
And finally ……..

> **This will go on until the people of this district waken up, turn all those self-seekers out of office, and inaugurate a natural system, wherein there will be no such blundering work as I have alluded to above.**

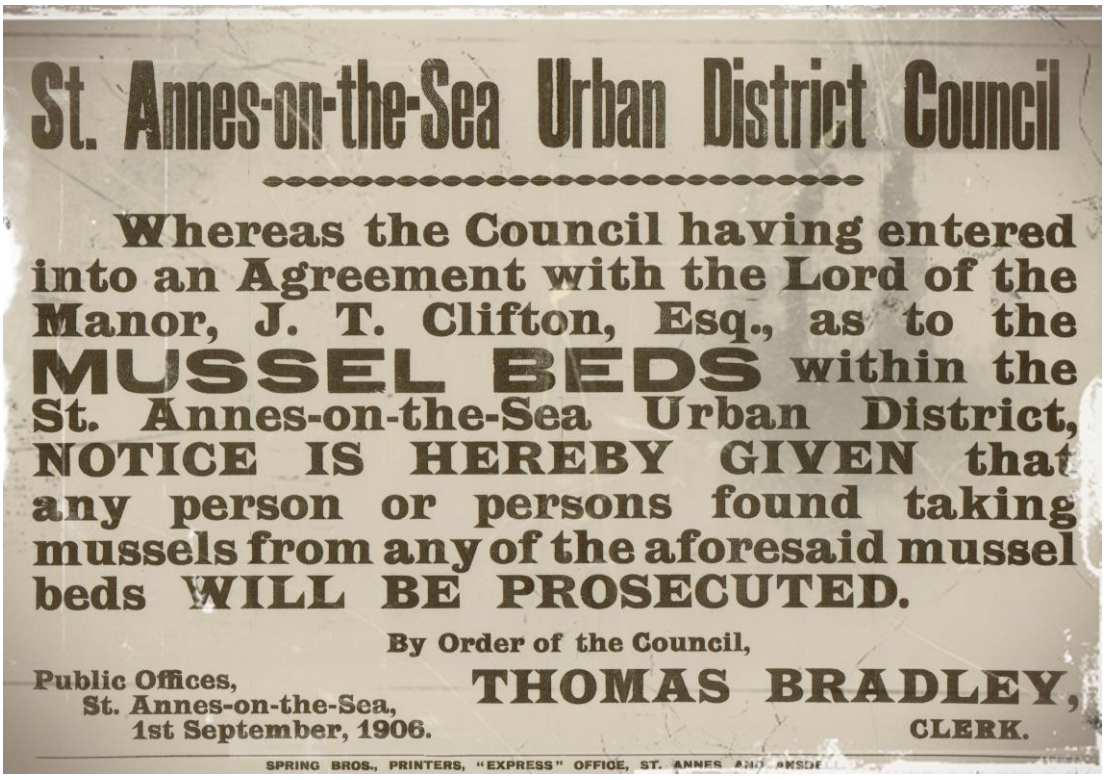
Mr. Bagot's comments regarding the presence of typhoid in St. Annes; a policeman preventing anyone from collecting shellfish; and the horrible stuff destroying the industry of the poor folk, were all references to the closing of a mussel bed along side North Channel and near to the Ormerod Convalescent Home on Clifton Drive North, St. Annes.



Whilst his letter referred to *"Manchester dailies"* the local 'Blackpool Herald and Fylde Advertiser' reported that the mussel bed closure was more an act of prevention rather than as a direct result of *"typhoid at St. Annes"*. The newspaper report continued: *"A notice has been posted at St. Annes warning persons against taking mussels from the mussel beds on the pains of prosecution. The paragraph which appeared in several morning papers on Monday stating that the mussels in the St. Annes beds had been condemned by the county authorities, conveyed an entirely erroneous impression ... the St. Annes authority, along with other authorities throughout the county, have come to the conclusion that where mussel beds are in close proximity to any sewer outfall it is better to prevent the public from gathering them than remedy any danger that exists. No notification has been received by the St. Annes authorities that the mussels have been condemned."*



A notice has been posted at St. Annes warning persons against taking mussels from the mussel beds on the pains of prosecution. The paragraph which appeared in several morning papers on Monday stating that the mussels in the St. Annes beds had been condemned by the county authorities, conveyed an entirely erroneous impression. The mussel beds are situated near the Ormerod Home, and the St. Annes authority, along with other authorities throughout the county, have come to the conclusion that where mussel beds are in close proximity to any sewer outfall it is better to prevent the public from gathering them than remedy any danger that may exist. No notification has been received by the St. Annes authorities that the mussels have been condemned.



St. Annes-on-the-Sea Urban District Council

Whereas the Council having entered into an Agreement with the Lord of the Manor, J. T. Clifton, Esq., as to the MUSSEL BEDS within the St. Annes-on-the-Sea Urban District, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that any person or persons found taking mussels from any of the aforesaid mussel beds WILL BE PROSECUTED.

By Order of the Council,

Public Offices,
St. Annes-on-the-Sea,
1st September, 1906.

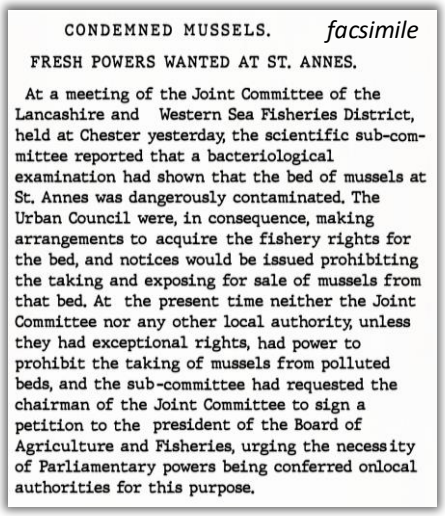
THOMAS BRADLEY,
CLERK.

SPRING BROS., PRINTERS, "EXPRESS" OFFICE, ST. ANNES AND ANSDE

Obviously, to remedy the danger would require the authorities to stop releasing the contents of water closets into the sea and to fund an alternative method of treating human waste.

Chapter 6
The Decline of Mussel Collecting in the Ribble Estuary

1906, the year that Mr. Bagot wrote his letter, was the beginning of the end of a way of life that had provided the fishermen of the Ribble estuary food and a source of income for centuries past. Two days before he wrote his letter to the 'The Blackpool Herald and Fylde Advertiser' the 'Manchester Courier', dated 12th August 1906, had carried a report about *"a meeting of the Joint Committee of the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries District held at Chester yesterday"*.



CONDEMNED MUSSELS. *facsimile*

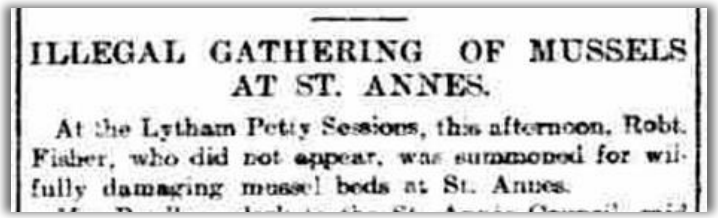
FRESH POWERS WANTED AT ST. ANNES.

At a meeting of the Joint Committee of the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries District, held at Chester yesterday, the scientific sub-committee reported that a bacteriological examination had shown that the bed of mussels at St. Annes was dangerously contaminated. The Urban Council were, in consequence, making arrangements to acquire the fishery rights for the bed, and notices would be issued prohibiting the taking and exposing for sale of mussels from that bed. At the present time neither the Joint Committee nor any other local authority, unless they had exceptional rights, had power to prohibit the taking of mussels from polluted beds, and the sub-committee had requested the chairman of the Joint Committee to sign a petition to the president of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, urging the necessity of Parliamentary powers being conferred onlocal authorities for this purpose.

At this meeting *"the scientific sub-committee reported that a bacteriological examination had shown the bed of mussels at St. Annes was dangerously contaminated"*. The newspaper article continues: "*The Urban Council were, in consequence, making arrangements to acquire the fishery rights for the bed, and notices would be issued prohibiting the taking and exposing for sale of mussels from that bed."*

The final paragraph of the newspaper article shows how serious the problem of sewage-polluted mussels had become: *"At the present time neither the Joint Committee nor any other local authority, unless they had exceptional rights, had power to prohibit the taking of mussels from polluted beds, and the sub-committee had requested the chairman of the Joint Committee to sign a petition to the president of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, urging the necessity of Parliamentary powers being conferred on local authorities for this purpose."*

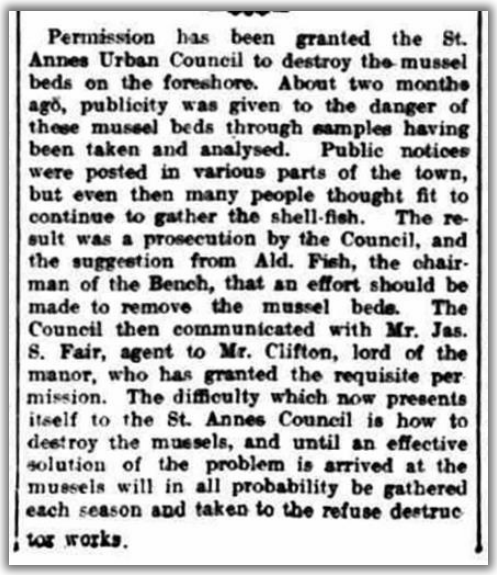
So, eighty years after the Leith deaths and illnesses were widely reported, a mussel bed at St. Annes became the forerunner in the quest for Parliamentary action. Whilst waiting for these Parliamentary powers to be conferred on them, the local authority could only apply the Lord of the Manor's licence, which was to protect the bed from damage. It was, therefore, on this basis that *"At Lytham Petty Sessions, this afternoon, Robt. Fisher, who did not appear, was summoned for wilfully damaging mussel beds at St. Annes"*, rather than a matter of affecting the public health of Blackpool and the surrounding district. The damage was assessed to be 10 shillings and a fine to this value was inflicted upon Mr. Fisher, as reported by the 'Lancashire Daily Post on the 9th February 1907.



ILLEGAL GATHERING OF MUSSELS AT ST. ANNES.

At the Lytham Petty Sessions, this afternoon, Robt. Fisher, who did not appear, was summoned for wilfully damaging mussel beds at St. Annes.

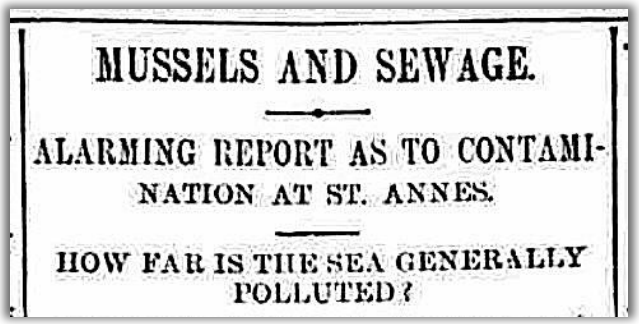
Two months after this court case, and perhaps because of potential repercussions if a death was to occur as a result of eating contaminated mussels from the St. Annes beds, Mr. Clifton granted St. Annes Urban Council permission to destroy the mussel beds on the foreshore.



Permission has been granted the St. Annes Urban Council to destroy the mussel beds on the foreshore. About two months ago, publicity was given to the danger of these mussel beds through samples having been taken and analysed. Public notices were posted in various parts of the town, but even then many people thought fit to continue to gather the shell-fish. The result was a prosecution by the Council, and the suggestion from Ald. Fish, the chairman of the Bench, that an effort should be made to remove the mussel beds. The Council then communicated with Mr. Jas. S. Fair, agent to Mr. Clifton, lord of the manor, who has granted the requisite permission. The difficulty which now presents itself to the St. Annes Council is how to destroy the mussels, and until an effective solution of the problem is arrived at the mussels will in all probability be gathered each season and taken to the refuse destructor works.

'The Blackpool Herald and Fylde Advertiser' announced this decision in the Tuesday, 2nd April 1907, edition of its newspaper and it went on to report that *"the difficulty which now presents itself to the St. Annes Council is how to destroy the mussels, and until an effective solution of the problem is arrived at the mussels will in all probability be gathered each season and taken to the refuse destructor works"*.

One week later, on 9th April 1907, 'The Lancashire Daily Post carried an article titled *"MUSSELS AND SEWAGE"* in relation to a Lancashire Sea Fisheries Board report written by one of its officials, Mr. Johnstone B.Sc., on his bacteriological analysis of mussels from Lancashire and Wales. The newspaper reporter wrote: *"He states that the mussel bed at St. Annes is situated near and, and* [sic] *indeed around, the sewage outfall, and some little distance to the south of the latter. It is a small bed, but the mussels on it are fairly abundant. The shell-fish are of good quality, with fine, clean, and thin shells, apparently rapidly growing fish. Those examined were apparently well nourished and healthy molluscs.*



MUSSELS AND SEWAGE.

ALARMING REPORT AS TO CONTAMINATION AT ST. ANNES.

HOW FAR IS THE SEA GENERALLY POLLUTED?

The bed has long had an evil reputation, and he was informed by the medical officer of St. Annes that though he had no direct evidence of illness in St. Annes resulting from the consumption of these mussels the medical officer of Blackpool had attributed several cases of enteric fever directly to the consumption of mussels from this bed.

Mr. Johnstone thinks the direction of the tidal streams favours the contamination of these mussels. Not only is there direct and continual pollution by the St. Annes sewer, but a considerable quantity of greatly diluted sewage from Lytham and even from the Ribble estuary generally, must find its way over these grounds at the earlier period of the ebb tide. The topography of the coast, indeed, renders it impossible that these shellfish can escape direct contamination.

A bacteriological analysis of mussels from the bed near the St. Annes sewage outfall left no room for doubt that they "are most gravely polluted by micro-organisms of intestinal (or faecal) origin." ... "Most people" he observes, "will say that neither crude sewage nor a purified effluent should find its way anywhere near a shellfish bed. One must agree with this opinion but when practical methods of sanitary engineering and sewage disposal are being considered, and when one thinks of such a densely-populated littoral as that of Lancashire, it must be apparent that the idea of removing sewage so that it cannot approach mussel beds is quite unattainable."

In answering his own question *"To what extent does the sea contain sewage bacteria?"* Mr. Johnstone referred to his analysis of mussels collected from Roosebeck Inner Scar, near Piel, Barrow-in-Furness. *"Now, it is here"*, he wrote, *"that one might expect freedom from contamination"* however, his analysis had *"indicated a certain degree of sewage pollution, so slight as to be certainly insufficient to justify any degree of interference with the local industry ... I can only suggest that the sea all along the coast of Lancashire is generally slightly polluted with sewage matters. A thorough examination of the distribution of colon bacilli in the coastal waters of Lancashire would undoubtedly be of practical value."*

A further eighteen months on and the topic of the pollution of the Lancashire coast was again in the news. During an inquiry into an application for sanction to borrow £3,400 for the purpose of extending and improving Lytham sewerage works, it was reported in newspapers throughout Lancashire that the medical officer of health for the county, Dr. Sergeant, *"expressed regret that the whole coast of Lancashire should be polluted through the discharge of sewage into the sea."*

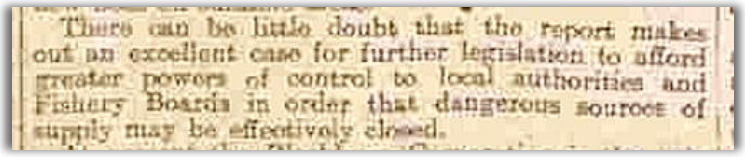
Another year went by and the need for Parliamentary action was still being sought by Lancashire County Council for some authority to prohibit the taking of mussels for human consumption from beds known to be contaminated with sewage. The headline for a report on this topic in 'The Lancashire Daily Post' for Thursday, 3rd February 1910 provided an explanation for the lack of action by the Council; mussels were considered to be 'wild animals' and as such there was, in legal terms, "no property in them until they were captured". That meant the mussel beds couldn't be destroyed or even made out-of-bounds to the general public. But the slow wheels of government research had been turning during the five years since the Joint Committee of the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries District called for Parliamentary action to prohibit the taking of mussels from polluted beds.


"MUSSELS AS WILD ANIMALS."

DIFFICULTY OF DEALING WITH CONTAMINATED BEDS.

POWERS SOUGHT BY LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL.

On Tuesday, 18th April 1911, 'The Lancashire Daily Post' carried an extensive article on the outcome of a lengthy and exhaustive inquiry on the conditions under which mussels and cockles are grown, collected, cleaned, and stored, and the relation of such treatment to the prevalence of enteric fever (typhoid) and other illness. The inquiry was carried out by the Medical Officer of the Local Government Board [the predecessor of the Ministry of Health], Dr. H. Timbrell Bulstrode and covered every source of supply of the shellfish on the English and Welsh coastline. Commenting on the work of Dr. Bulstrode, the newspaper article stated: *"There can be little doubt that the report makes out an excellent case for further legislation to afford greater powers of control to local authorities and Fishery Boards in order that dangerous sources of supply may be effectively closed."* [Dr. Bulstrode died twelve weeks after the newspaper article was printed.]


There can be little doubt that the report makes out an excellent case for further legislation to afford greater powers of control to local authorities and Fishery Boards in order that dangerous sources of supply may be effectively closed.

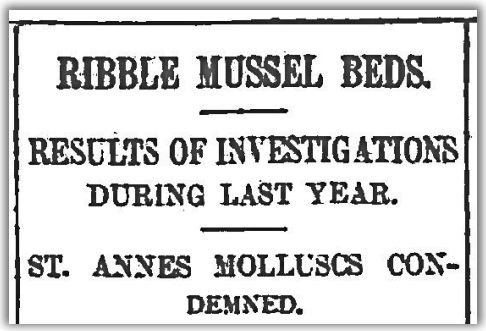
In addition to Dr. Bulstrode's lengthy investigation, careful analysis of the cases of typhoid occurring in Manchester over the period 1906 to 1912 had been carried out by the Medical Officer of Health for the city, Dr. Niven, which provided a crushing condemnation of the mussel beds at Conway (Wales). In June 1912, Professor Hardman, the Honorary Director of scientific work at the Lancashire Sea Fisheries Laboratory at the University of Liverpool, and the Sea Fish Hatchery at Piel issued his annual report in which he pointed out a situation likely to arise with many shellfish beds following the case where the Health Committee at Birmingham*, no doubt using Dr. Niven's results, refused to admit mussels from Conway without a certificate of purity.

[* the 1875 Public Health Act required all local authorities to appoint medical officers who, being responsible for the health and wellbeing of their inhabitants, were authorised to examine foodstuffs and deny entry into their district any contaminated produce.]

This resulted in the passing of the Conway Mussel Order (1912) with one of its provisions being that no mussels should be taken from the fishery except for relaying in a suitable place within the fishery for such time as should be necessary to achieve purification. This, Professor Hardman went on to say, had resulted in the Conway fishermen applying to the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Committee for a certificate of purity for their mussels but before his Committee could issue a certificate of purity some standard of bacteriological impurity must be adopted.

Obviously, a 'standard of impurity' wasn't available at that time, neither was there any scientific evidence that could be used by the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Committee to form such a standard. This resulted in the Conway mussel industry having to be closed down. But as detailed in Chapter 7 this wasn't the end for the Conway mussel fishermen.

Where did this leave the mussel fishermen of the Ribble estuary? In response to complaints about contaminated shellfish in the Ribble estuary, members of the Lancashire Sea Fisheries Laboratory carried out investigations during 1913 and a report of their findings was the subject of an article in the 12th June 1914 copy of 'The Lancashire Daily Post'.



RIBBLE MUSSEL BEDS.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATIONS DURING LAST YEAR.

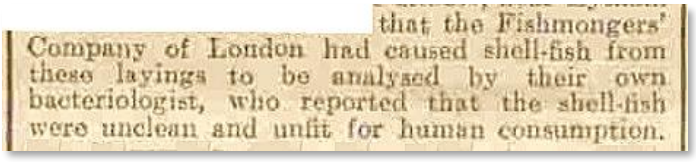
ST. ANNES MOLLUSCS CONDEMNED.

In the report it described the shellfish beds as being *"situated on the Horse Bank, which is south of the channel, and Salter's Bank, which is mainly in the north."* *"Mussels,"* the report went on to say, *"are not that important, and the only beds at present are those at St. Annes, on the foreshore sloping down to what used to be the North Channel; one or two small banks on the foreshore and in the channel near Lytham, and a bed in the channel near Lytham, and a bed in the Ribble channel close to the training wall and nearly opposite Ansdell."* [Here we can see the effect that the building of the training walls had on the main Ribble outlet to the sea. It was only twenty-five years between the time when ships laden with visitors were able to disembark on to St. Annes pier using the deep-water channel, to what was described in 1913 report as "what used to be the North Channel".] The Lancashire Sea Fisheries Laboratory report continued with a detailed account of the flow of diluted sewage within the estuary and its association with the bacterial impurity of the various cockle and mussel beds and the investigation found that: *"Lytham beds were not free from risk of pollution by sewage but epidemiological evidence of their role in transmitting disease is lacking. The case of the St. Annes bed is entirely different. Here we have mussels which are, some of them, entirely bathed in sewage ... Needless to say, the St. Annes mussels should not be eaten at any period of the year, and numerous cases of enteric fever have been ascribed to these molluscs at Blackpool and elsewhere."*

Whilst the report did state that the Lytham beds were 'at risk' of pollution there wasn't any published medical evidence of the type used by the Birmingham Medical Officer therefore the Lytham mussel industry was allowed to continue.

Eighteen months later another attempt was made to get these beds condemned but this time using medical evidence.

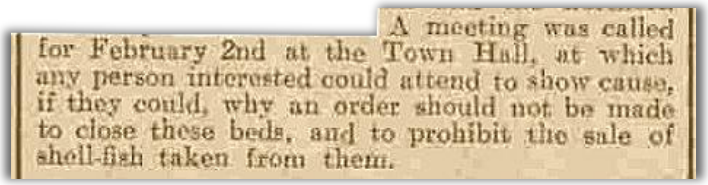
It was stated at the monthly meeting of the Preston Town Council held on the 30th December 1915 and reported in 'The Lancashire Evening Post' the same day, *"that the Fishmongers' Company of London had caused shell-fish from* [the mussel beds in the Ribble, near Lytham and St. Annes] *to be analysed by their own bacteriologist, who recorded that the shell-*



that the Fishmongers' Company of London had caused shell-fish from these layings to be analysed by their own bacteriologist, who reported that the shell-fish were unclean and unfit for human consumption.

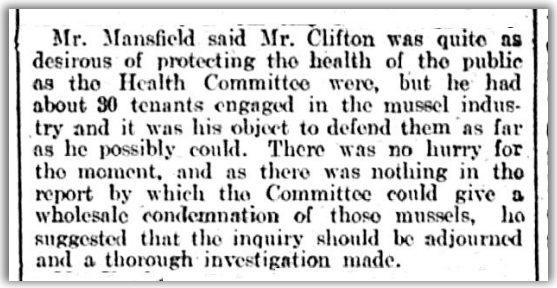
fish were unclean and unfit for human consumption".

The meeting was further informed that additional tests had been carried out by their own medical officer and the result was identical with the analysis received from London. As a consequence of these findings: *"A meeting was called for February 2nd at the Town Hall, at which any person interested could attend to show cause if they could, why an order should not be made to close these beds, and to prohibit the sale of shell-fish taken from them."*

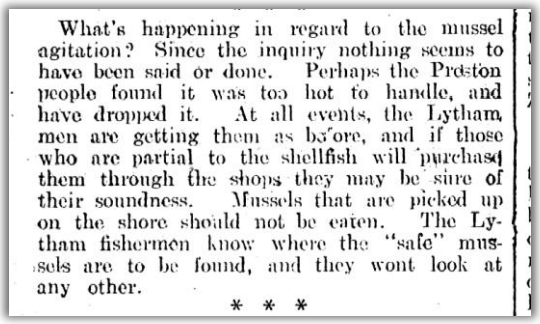

A meeting was called for February 2nd at the Town Hall, at which any person interested could attend to show cause, if they could, why an order should not be made to close these beds, and to prohibit the sale of shell-fish taken from them.

The meeting was duly called at which there was a large attendance including Mr. John Forshaw, representing Lytham Urban Council, Mr. Mansfield, representing Mr. J. Talbot Clifton and Mr. Bradley, Clerk to St. Annes Council.

During the meeting it was disclosed that the two contaminated mussel samples examined by the Fishmongers' Company were in fact from St. Annes and Glasson Dock (near Lancaster) and there was no evidence of disease being traced to mussels from Lytham. Mr. Bradley said they were convinced that the mussels taken from St. Annes were polluted, and they hoped an order would be made for St. Annes. Mr. Forshaw had pointed out to the meeting that St. Annes had quite a different situation to Lytham and, as reported in 'The Lytham Times', 4th February 1916: *"Mr. Mansfield said Mr. Clifton was quite as desirous of protecting the health of the public as the Health Committee were, but he had about 30 tenants engaged in the mussel industry and it was his object to defend them as far as he possibly could. There was no hurry for the moment, and as there was nothing in the report by which the Committee could give as wholesale condemnation of those mussels, he suggested that the inquiry should be adjourned and a thorough investigation made."*


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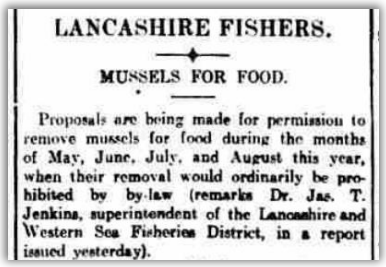
Three weeks later an article in the 'Gossip' column of the 'Lytham Times' asked the question: *"What's happening in regard to the mussel agitation?"*


What's happening in regard to the mussel agitation? Since the inquiry nothing seems to have been said or done. Perhaps the Preston people found it was too hot to handle, and have dropped it. At all events, the Lytham men are getting them as before, and if those who are partial to the shellfish will purchase them through the shops they may be sure of their soundness. Mussels that are picked up on the shore should not be eaten. The Lytham fishermen know where the "safe" mussels are to be found, and they wont look at any other.

* * *

The article continued: *"Since the inquiry nothing seems to have been said or done ... At all events, the Lytham men are getting them as before, and if those who are partial to the shellfish will purchase them through the shops they may be sure of their soundness. Mussels that are picked up from the shore should not be eaten. The Lytham fishermen know where the "safe" mussels are to be found, and they wont* [sic] *look at any other."*

Unbeknown to the writer of the newspaper article it would be many years before a resolution to the problem of Ribble estuary contaminated mussels would come to fruition but it must be remembered that, by this time, the Great War had been raging for over eighteen months and, no doubt, other priorities got in the way.



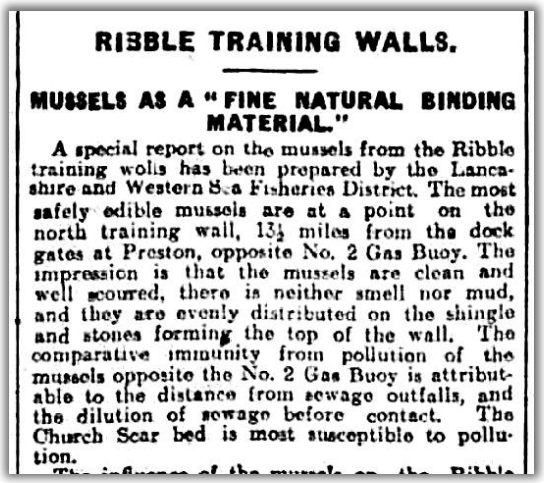
LANCASHIRE FISHERS.

MUSSELS FOR FOOD.

Proposals are being made for permission to remove mussels for food during the months of May, June, July, and August this year, when their removal would ordinarily be prohibited by by-law (remarks Dr. Jas. T. Jenkins, superintendent of the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries District, in a report issued yesterday).

An article in "The Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury", dated Monday, 14th May 1917, highlights the fact that eating mussels was being encouraged as *"Proposals are being made for permission to remove mussels for food during the months of May, June, July, and August this year, when their removal would ordinarily be prohibited by by-law"*. For the next five years mussels continued to be collected from the Ribble beds by the local fishermen and sold to the traditional markets across the country.

Was it the continued post-war hardship, both in terms of food shortage and unemployment, which kept the 'notorious' Ribble mussel out of the mind of the medical committee? A special report prepared by the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries District *"on the mussels from the Ribble training walls"* contained the statement: *"The most safely edible mussels are at a point on the north training wall, 13 1/2 miles from the dock gates at Preston, opposite No. 2 Gas Buoy. The impression is that the mussels are clean and well scoured, there is neither smell nor mud, and they are evenly distributed on the shingle and stones forming the top of the wall. The comparative immunity from pollution of the mussels opposite No. 2 Gas Buoy is attributable to the distance from sewer outfalls, and the dilution of sewage before contact. The Church Scar bed is most susceptible to pollution."* This article was printed in 'The Lancashire Daily Post' on Thursday, 2nd March 1922.



RIBBLE TRAINING WALLS.

MUSSELS AS A "FINE NATURAL BINDING MATERIAL."

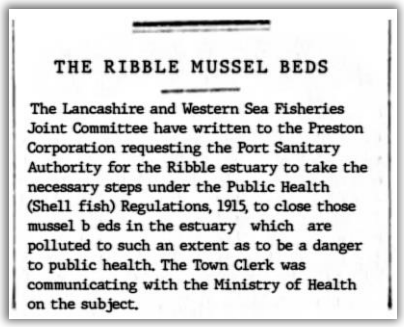
A special report on the mussels from the Ribble training walls has been prepared by the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries District. The most safely edible mussels are at a point on the north training wall, 13½ miles from the dock gates at Preston, opposite No. 2 Gas Buoy. The impression is that the mussels are clean and well scoured, there is neither smell nor mud, and they are evenly distributed on the shingle and stones forming the top of the wall. The comparative immunity from pollution of the mussels opposite the No. 2 Gas Buoy is attributable to the distance from sewage outfalls, and the dilution of sewage before contact. The Church Scar bed is most susceptible to pollution.

The following week the 'Blackpool Times, Fleetwood Express and St. Annes Visitor' carried a damning article, based upon the observations by Professor J. Johnstone of Liverpool University, regarding the Church Scar bed pollution:

"There is evidence of recent and immediate sewage pollution; there are privies actually discharging on the Scar itself, and there are two large outfalls of crude sewage about a mile and a quarter away from the centre of the mussel bed. The latter may smell offensively, and in addition to all that, there is general pollution of the Ribble. Whatever value the fishery on Church Scar may have cannot be much, but much or little, it seems reasonable to urge that mussels taken from this

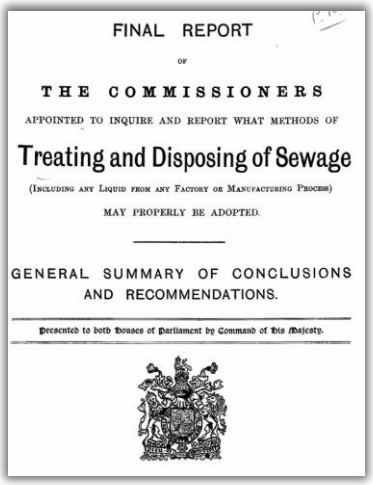
bed should certainly not be marketed for human consumption without it being re-laid or otherwise pumped. If that is impossible, then the fishery had better be prohibited."

Perhaps based on the observations of Professor Johnstone and only two months after reporting that the training wall mussel bed was *"clean and well scoured"* the same newspaper reported: *"The Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee have written to the Preston Corporation requesting the Port Sanitary Authority for the Ribble estuary to take the necessary steps under the Public Health (Shellfish) Regulations, 1915*, to close those mussel beds in the estuary which are polluted to such an extent as to be a danger to public health. The Town Clerk was communicating with the Ministry of Health on the subject."*



THE RIBBLE MUSSEL BEDS

The Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee have written to the Preston Corporation requesting the Port Sanitary Authority for the Ribble estuary to take the necessary steps under the Public Health (Shell fish) Regulations, 1915, to close those mussel b eds in the estuary which are polluted to such an extent as to be a danger to public health. The Town Clerk was communicating with the Ministry of Health on the subject.



FINAL REPORT

OF

THE COMMISSIONERS

APPOINTED TO INQUIRE AND REPORT WHAT METHODS OF

Treating and Disposing of Sewage

(INCLUDING ANY LIQUID FROM ANY FACTORY OR MANUFACTURING PROCESS)

MAY PROPERLY BE ADOPTED.

GENERAL SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

[*The final report of a Royal Commission on the subject of 'Treating and Disposing of Sewage published on the 11th February 1915, stated: "The subject matter of our Fourth Report - the discharge of sewage into tidal waters was brought specially to our notice by the Local Government Board, who had been moved to take action in consequence of a number of serious outbreaks of enteric fever, ascribed to the eating of shell-fish obtained from sewage-polluted water." The report then recommended: "That the necessary power of control over the pollution of tidal waters, and over waters, foreshores, pits, ponds, beds, and layings where shell-fish are grown, fattened or stored, should be vested in the Rivers Boards, subject to appeal to a central authority."

This recommendation then brought about the 'Public Health (Shellfish) Regulations, 1915', which allowed the Preston Port Sanitary Authority the legal right to close polluted shellfish beds.]

Fifteen months later and another report appeared in the 'The Lancashire Daily Post': "*A meeting of Lytham fishermen was held last night* [Friday, 20th July 1923] *to discuss the threatened closing of the Ribble mussel beds. Several members spoke of the great hardship the closing of the beds would mean to between 40 and 50 men, and it was pointed out that letters had been received from all parts of the country testifying to the purity of Lytham mussels."*



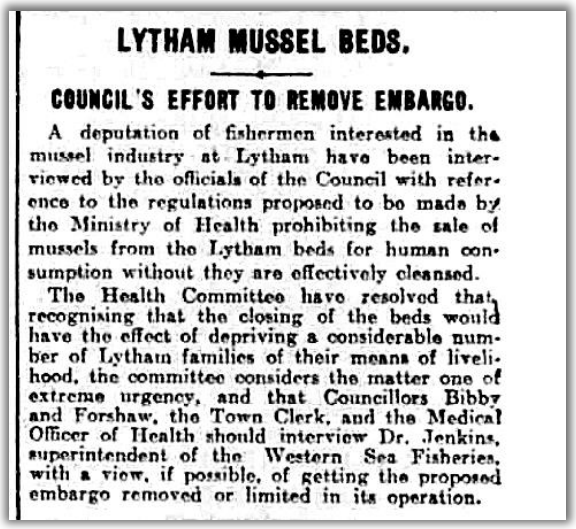
RIBBLE MUSSEL BEDS.

LYTHAM FISHERMEN PROTEST AGAINST THREATENED CLOSING.

A meeting of Lytham fishermen was held last night to discuss the threatened closing of the Ribble mussel beds. Several members spoke of the great hardship the closing of the beds would mean to between 40 and 50 men, and it was pointed out that letters had been received from all parts of the country testifying to the purity of Lytham mussels.

Then, on Tuesday, 7th August 1923, 'The Lancashire Daily Post' informed its readers: *"A deputation of fishermen interested in the mussel industry at Lytham have been interviewed by officials of the Council with reference to the regulations proposed to be made by the Ministry of Health prohibiting the sale of mussels from the Lytham beds for human consumption without they are effectively cleansed.*

The Health Committee have resolved that, recognising that the closing of the beds would have the effect of depriving a considerable number of Lytham families of their means of livelihood, the committee considers the matter one of extreme urgency, and that Councillors Bibby and Forshaw, the Town Clerk, and the Medical Officer of Health should interview Dr. Jenkins, superintendent of the Western Sea Fisheries, with a view, if possible, of getting the proposed embargo removed or limited in its operation."



LYTHAM MUSSEL BEDS.

COUNCIL'S EFFORT TO REMOVE EMBARGO.

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The Council mentioned here is the Lytham St. Annes Borough Council, which had only come into existence the previous year. Perhaps the might of the combined urban districts of Lytham and St. Annes on Sea could get *"the proposed embargo removed or limited in its operation"*.

Two months later, Wednesday, 10th October 1923, the fate of the mussel fishermen on the Ribble estuary was announced in an 'Extra Special' edition of the 'Lancashire Daily Post':



Extra Special.

The Lancashire Daily Post.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1923.

PRESTON PORT SANITARY AUTHORITY

THE PRESTON (SHELL FISH) REGULATIONS, 1923.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Minister of Health, in exercise of the powers conferred on him by the Public Health Act, 1875, the Public Health Act, 1896, and the Public Health (Regulations as to Food) Act, 1907, has made REGULATIONS which provide that a person shall not SELL, DISTRIBUTE, or OFFER FOR SALE for HUMAN CONSUMPTION any MUSSELS taken from within the DISTRICT of the PRESTON PORT SANITARY AUTHORITY unless and until they have been subjected to a process of cleansing which the Minister, on the representation of the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, or of the Port Sanitary Authority, has approved.

The DISTRICT of the PRESTON PORT SANITARY AUTHORITY embraces the whole ESTUARY of the RIVER RIBBLE from BLACKPOOL to FORMBY POINT, and up the River Ribble and its Tributaries to the farthest point to which the tide flows.

Any person wilfully neglecting or refusing to obey or carry out, or obstructing the execution of, the Regulations is liable to a penalty not exceeding £100, and in the case of a continuing offence to a further penalty not exceeding £50 for every day during which the offence continues.

ALFRED HOWARTH,
Town Clerk and Clerk to the Preston Port Sanitary Authority.

Town Hall, Preston, 10th October, 1923.

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ALFRED HOWARTH
Town Clerk and Clerk to the Preston
Port Sanitary Authority

Town Hall, Preston, 10th October, 1923

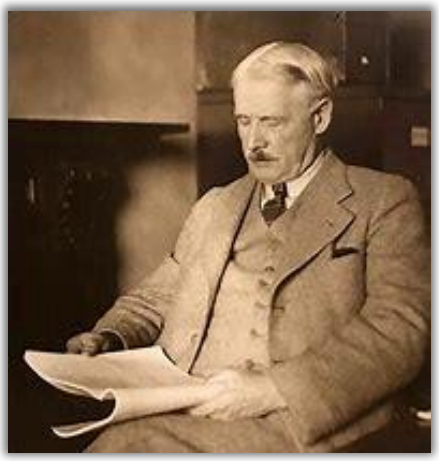
Chapter 7
The Conway (Wales) Experiment

We have seen that, during the concluding five or six years of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century, much had been written about mussel-borne typhoid and, as we saw in Chapter 5, the Conway mussel was the 'star turn' owing to its *"well-merited evil repute"*. Constant attention had been directed towards Conway mussels as a result of complaints by many health authorities and a careful analysis of the cases of typhoid occurring in Manchester over the period 1906-1912, by the Medical Officer of Health for that city, provided the crushing indictment which resulted in the Conway Mussel Order of 1912 being passed by Parliament.

One of the provisions of the 1912 Conway Mussel Order was that no mussels should be taken from the fishery except for relaying in a suitable place within the fishery for such time as should be found necessary to achieve purification. This stipulation was made on advice based upon the observation that shellfish became purified if re-laid in clean water.

In practice, no suitable, clean place could be found for re-laying Conway mussels; a difficulty which would have presented itself at most, if not all, polluted fisheries around the coast of Britain.

But, unlike that for the Ribble estuary mussels, a practical solution to the contamination of the Conway mussel was swift and it came in the form of Dr. R. W. Dodgson.



Robert William Dodgson, the brother of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (better known by his pen name Lewis Carroll), was born in 1870 in Wigton, Cumberland, of Quaker parentage. He attended Owens College, Manchester, and thence in 1890 entered St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, as a senior scholar in natural science. There he became assistant pathologist and showed outstanding ability as a teacher as well as in his other duties, his time at St. Mary's being rounded-off by a gold medal award in 1898.

Dodgson's subsequent career fell into two periods, the first of which was mostly spent abroad. In 1900 he went to South Africa to inquire into the results of anti-typhoid inoculation of British troops serving there. This War Office appointment was followed by the directorship of the Government Research Laboratory at Cape Town under the Plague Administration, and in 1902 he became director of the Pasteur Institute of Rhodesia at Bulawayo.

Two years later he returned to Britain and remained in private work until 1911. He then joined Sir Almroth Wright in an investigation of epidemic pneumonia among employees in the gold

mines of the Witwatersrand, but in 1913 he left South Africa after a somewhat severe illness. Dodgson visited laboratories in France and Germany on his way home and reached England just before the outbreak of the First World War.

The second period of his career began in 1915 with an appointment under the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to devise a method of freeing mussels from dangerous pollution. Dodgson's approach to this problem was through a comprehensive study of the physiology of the mussel, coupled with bacteriological investigation. His research enabled him to provide the scientific evidence and a repeatable mussel cleansing process that satisfied the Conway Mussel Order and within the space of four years the Conway mussel industry returned again to being a commercial success.

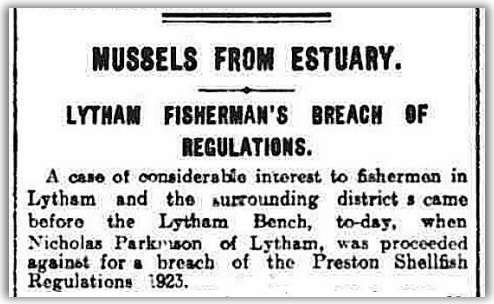


Unloading mussels at Conway – 1950

Chapter 8
The Lytham Mussel Purification Station Scheme

Although we saw in Chapter 6 that '**The Preston (Shellfish) Regulations, 1923**' removed the main livelihood of the Ribble estuary mussel fishermen, i.e. the selling of mussels for human consumption, there wasn't a complete ban on mussel collecting. The regulations did allow for the collection of mussels to be used for bait by 'rod and line' fishermen and, as such, mussel collectors could still be seen legally toiling away on the Ribble estuary mussel beds after the 10th October 1923. The regulations also allowed for the sale or distribution of mussels for human consumption after they had been subjected to an approved process of cleansing such as that used at Conway but as we can see in the following court case, such a process wasn't available to the Ribble fishermen.

Less than six months after the introduction of the regulations a *"case of considerable interest to fishermen in Lytham and the surrounding districts came before the Lytham Bench, today"* reported the 'Lancashire Daily Post' on the 24th March 1924.



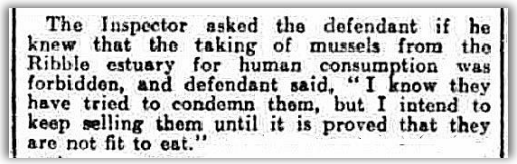
MUSSELS FROM ESTUARY.

LYTHAM FISHERMAN'S BREACH OF REGULATIONS.

A case of considerable interest to fishermen in Lytham and the surrounding district s came before the Lytham Bench, to-day, when Nicholas Parkinson of Lytham, was proceeded against for a breach of the Preston Shellfish Regulations 1923.

The case in question was a breach of the Preston Shellfish Regulations by Nicholas Parkinson of Lytham.

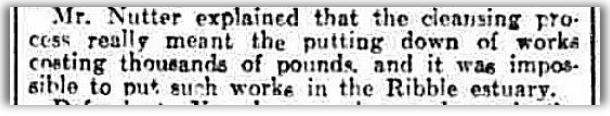
The case against Mr. Parkinson was that on the 9th February 1924, he was seen on the front at Lytham with a handcart containing three bags of mussels. When questioned about them he said he had obtained them from a spot about 200 yards below Lytham Pier. He also stated that the mussels were for human consumption and not for fish bait.



The Inspector asked the defendant if he knew that the taking of mussels from the Ribble estuary for human consumption was forbidden, and defendant said, "I know they have tried to condemn them, but I intend to keep selling them until it is proved that they are not fit to eat."

Mr. Parkinson went on to say: *"I know they have tried to condemn them, but I intend to keep selling them until it is proved that they are not fit to eat."*

The defiant defendant continued with a very salient point: *"The regulations provided for a cleansing process and we want it, but you won't give it to us."*



Mr. Nutter explained that the cleansing process really meant the putting down of works costing thousands of pounds, and it was impossible to put such works in the Ribble estuary.

In reply, the Deputy Town Clerk of Preston: "*Mr. Nutter explained that the cleansing process meant putting down of works costing thousands of pounds, and it was impossible to put such works in the Ribble estuary."*

Here we see what the mussel fishermen were up against; a Deputy Town Clerk who didn't want to spend money and who considered himself capable of assessing the practicalities of building a

mussel purification station in the Ribble estuary. Didn't he know about the financial success of the Conway mussel purification station?

It is perhaps necessary to point out that the Ribble mussel fishermen were not alone in their fight to get the Lancashire mussel industry back to its former high regard throughout the industrial towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire. At the same time that the Ribble regulations came into being similar restrictions were imposed on the vast mussel beds at Morecambe and following the success of the Conway experiment the fishermen there were also asking for a mussel purification facility.



MUSSELS FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION.

Council Seek Powers for Cleansing Plant.

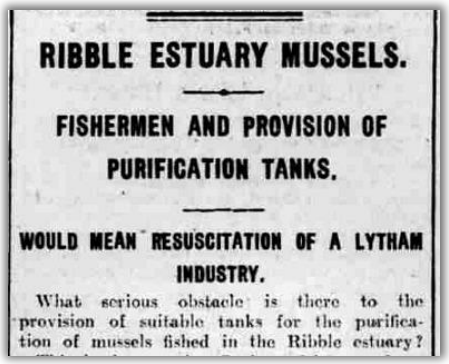
FISHERMEN UNEMPLOYED.

Wish to Get Back to Their Former Trade.

Statements that Morecambe mussel fishermen had taken jobs as labourers because they could not follow their own trade through the restriction of the sale of mussels for human consumption were made at the Ministry of Health's inquiry at the Town Hall yesterday (Thursday).

The Morecambe Guardian, 30th May 1930, carried a report of an inquiry at the Town Hall at which the Council were seeking powers to provide a mussel purification plant for their unemployed fishermen.

Later that same year the Lancashire Daily Post, 19th October 1930, carried an article asking the question: "*What serious obstacle is there to the provision of suitable tanks for the purification of mussels fished in the Ribble Estuary?*"



RIBBLE ESTUARY MUSSELS.

FISHERMEN AND PROVISION OF PURIFICATION TANKS.

WOULD MEAN RESUSCITATION OF A LYTHAM INDUSTRY.

What serious obstacle is there to the provision of suitable tanks for the purification of mussels fished in the Ribble estuary?

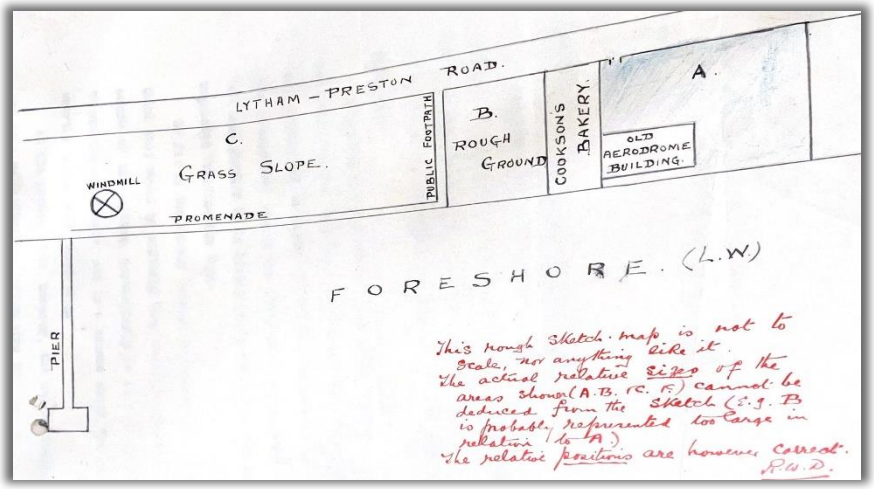
The report went on to say that local fishermen had approached Mr. Rosbotham, M.P. for the Ormskirk Division and the Mayor of Lytham St. Annes (Councillor A.J. Price) to interview the County Council on the subject. The cost of the tanks was quoted as being in the vicinity of £4000 of which a grant* of £2000 would be available leaving £1000 to be raised on each side of the river.

*Under the Road and Development Act 1909 the Development Commissioners had the power to make grants for the improvement of fisheries.

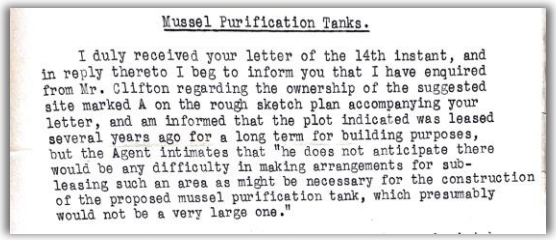
The 'serious obstacle' in question was quickly revealed in a letter from the Clerk to the County Council to the County Architect, dated 16th December 1930. In the letter it was disclosed that following his meeting with the fishermen, Mr. Rosbotham had approached the Ministry of Health in order to progress the issue of the County Council obtaining funding for the provision of mussel purification station at Lytham, only to be told that they had no power to borrow money for that purpose.

Undaunted, Mr. Rosbotham took his case to the Lord Privy Seal to see if he would sanction a grant (for £2000) as an Unemployment Scheme. [The 1930s was a period of national economic downturn in the Britain, which had its origins in the global Great Depression. Unemployment reached 70% in some areas at the start of the 1930s (with more than 3 million out of work nationally) and many families depended entirely on payments from local government known as the dole.]

In the meantime, a site for the purification tanks on the Lancashire coast was being sought and, owing to the need for the sea water used in the purification process to be of a suitable salinity, Lytham was identified as being the most favourable. A rough sketch plan, prepared by Dr. R. W. Dodgson (the 'father' of the mussel purification process), identified the site of the old aircraft factory at the east end of the promenade as a possible location for the construction of the proposed mussel purification tank.



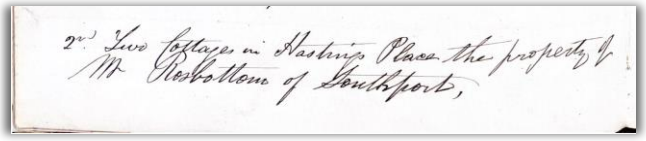
On the 21st January 1931, the Lytham St. Annes Town Clerk, Mr W. Heap, wrote to the Clerk of the County Council stating that he had *"enquired from Mr. Clifton regarding the ownership of the suggested site marked A on the rough sketch plan …"* and that his Agent *"does not anticipate there would be any difficulty in making arrangements for sub-leasing such an area"*.


Mussel Purification Tanks.

I duly received your letter of the 14th instant, and in reply thereto I beg to inform you that I have enquired from Mr. Clifton regarding the ownership of the suggested site marked A on the rough sketch plan accompanying your letter, and am informed that the plot indicated was leased several years ago for a long term for building purposes, but the Agent intimates that "he does not anticipate there would be any difficulty in making arrangements for sub-leasing such an area as might be necessary for the construction of the proposed mussel purification tank, which presumably would not be a very large one."

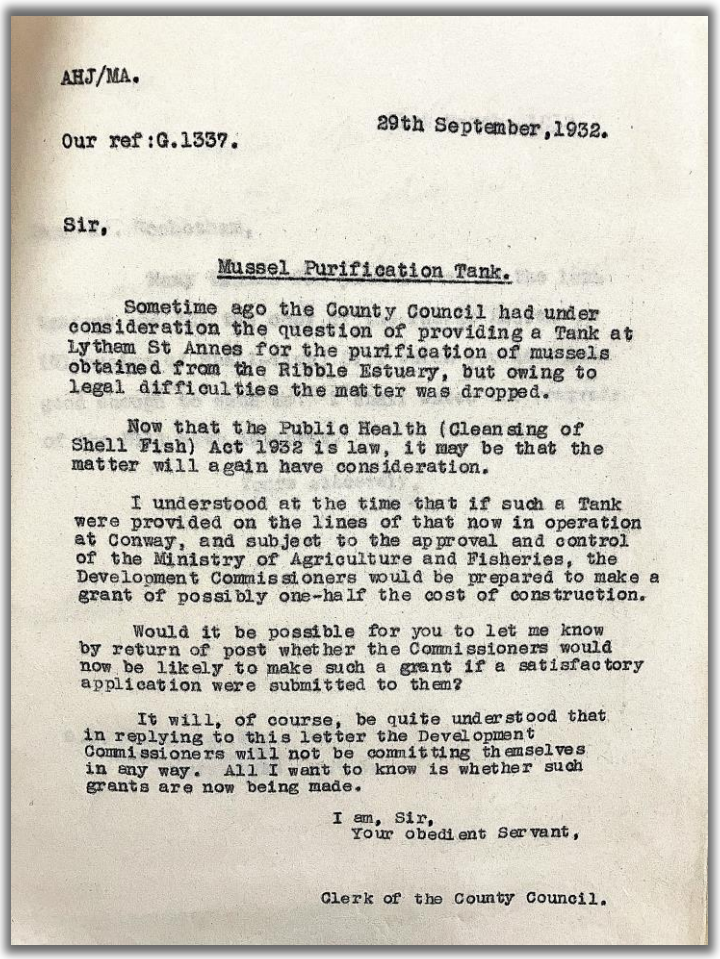
Unfortunately, Mr. Rosbotham's attempt to secure a grant from the Lord Privy Seal's Unemployment Scheme didn't achieve its hoped-for outcome and the plan to build the 'mussel purification tank' stalled. But not for long. Behind the scenes, Mr. Rosbotham was preparing a parliamentary bill that would enable local authorities, including County Councils, to provide funds in support of shellfish purification facilities.

Did Mr. Rosbotham have fond memories of Lytham that spurred him into action on behalf of the Lytham fishermen? Although he was the Member of Parliament for the Ormskirk Division, he may have visited Lytham as his father had owned properties in the town during the 1870's. An entry in the Minutes of the


2nd Two Cottages in Hastings Place the property of Mr Rosbottom of Southport,

Lytham Commissioners Sanitary Committee Meeting dated 12th June 1873, made reference to *"Two cottages in Hastings Place, the property of Mr. Rosbottom* [sic] *of Southport",*

Whether or not this was the case, Mr. (later Sir) Samuel Thomas Rosbotham was instrumental in driving through Parliament the 'Public Health (Cleansing of Shell Fish) Act' which *"enabled local authorities to provide or contribute towards the provision of means for cleansing shell-fish"*. The Bill was presented in Parliament by Mr. Rosbotham supported by: Major Lloyd George, Mr. Cape, Mr. Charles Williams, Mr. Wilson Ramsay, Mr. Cook, Viscount Elmley, Mrs. Ward, Mr. David Grenfell, and Dr. Worthington, and it received its Royal Ascent on the 16th June 1932.



AHJ/MA.

Our ref:G.1337. 29th September,1932.

Sir,

Mussel Purification Tank.

Sometime ago the County Council had under consideration the question of providing a Tank at Lytham St Annes for the purification of mussels obtained from the Ribble Estuary, but owing to legal difficulties the matter was dropped.

Now that the Public Health (Cleansing of Shell Fish) Act 1932 is law, it may be that the matter will again have consideration.

I understood at the time that if such a Tank were provided on the lines of that now in operation at Conway, and subject to the approval and control of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Development Commissioners would be prepared to make a grant of possibly one-half the cost of construction.

Would it be possible for you to let me know by return of post whether the Commissioners would now be likely to make such a grant if a satisfactory application were submitted to them?

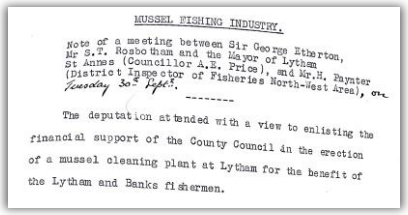
It will, of course, be quite understood that in replying to this letter the Development Commissioners will not be committing themselves in any way. All I want to know is whether such grants are now being made.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

Clerk of the County Council.

The County Council, now with an Act of Parliament on their side, went in search the necessary funds again. A letter was sent to the Development Commissioners on the 29th September 1932, asking whether *"the Development Commissioners would be prepared to make a grant of possibly one-half of the cost of construction"*.

The following day a meeting between Sir George Etherton, Mr S.T. Rosbotham, the Mayor of Lytham St. Annes and Mr. H Paynter (District Inspector of Fisheries North-West Area) was held *"with a view to enlisting the financial support of the County Council in the erection of a mussel cleaning plant at Lytham for the benefit of the Lytham and Banks fishermen"*.



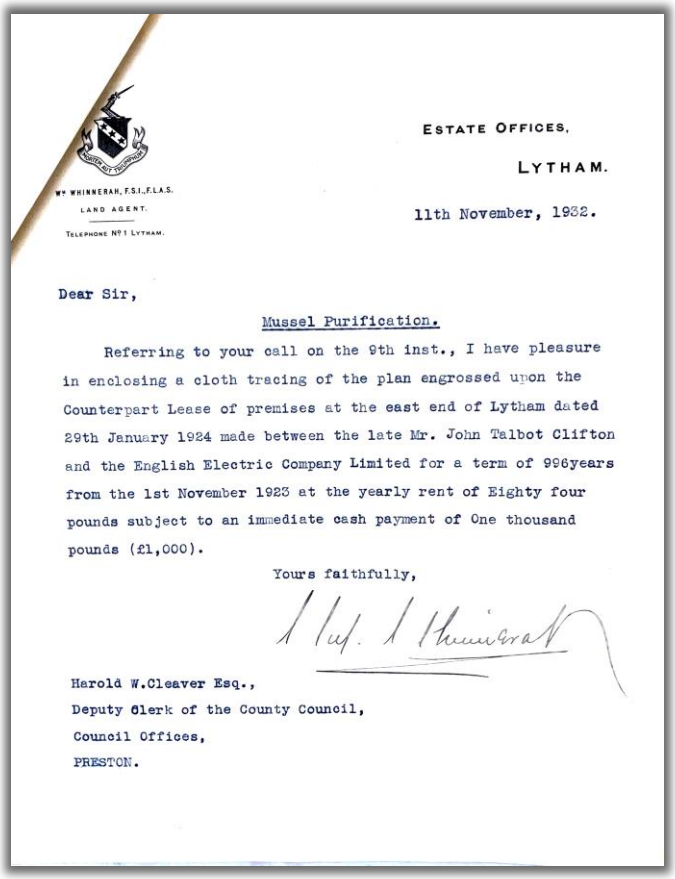
MUSSEL FISHING INDUSTRY.

Note of a meeting between Sir George Etherton, Mr S.T. Rosbotham and the Mayor of Lytham St Annes (Councillor A.E. Price), and Mr.H. Paynter (District Inspector of Fisheries North-West Area), on Tuesday 30th Sept.

The deputation attended with a view to enlisting the financial support of the County Council in the erection of a mussel cleaning plant at Lytham for the benefit of the Lytham and Banks fishermen.

It was now full steam ahead to secure the plot of land previously identified as suitable for the 'mussel cleaning plant' i.e. the site of the old aircraft factory at the east end of Lytham promenade.

On the 9th November 1932, the County Council contacted the Clifton Estate office, by telephone, requesting a copy of a plan of the site. The Estate Offices promptly sent *"a cloth tracing*



Wᵐ WHINNERAH, F.S.I., F.L.A.S.
LAND AGENT.
TELEPHONE Nº 1 LYTHAM.

ESTATE OFFICES,
LYTHAM.

11th November, 1932.

Dear Sir,

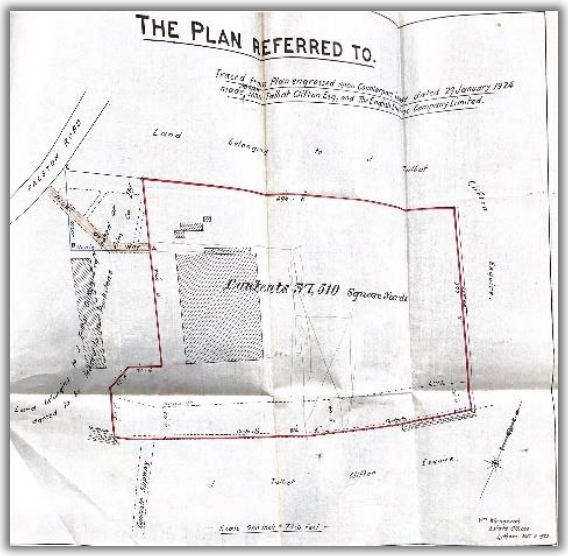
Mussel Purification.

Referring to your call on the 9th inst., I have pleasure in enclosing a cloth tracing of the plan engrossed upon the Counterpart Lease of premises at the east end of Lytham dated 29th January 1924 made between the late Mr. John Talbot Clifton and the English Electric Company Limited for a term of 996years from the 1st November 1923 at the yearly rent of Eighty four pounds subject to an immediate cash payment of One thousand pounds (£1,000).

Yours faithfully,

Wᵐ Whinnerah

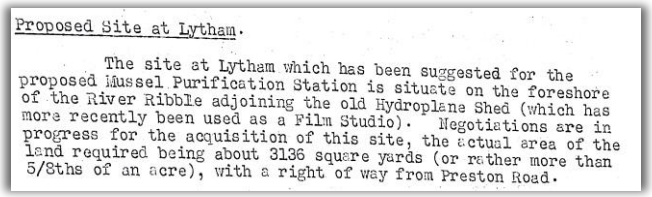
Harold W.Cleaver Esq.,
Deputy Clerk of the County Council,
Council Offices,
PRESTON.



of the plan engrossed upon the Counter-part Lease of premises at the east end of Lytham dated 29th January 1924 made between the late Mr. John Talbot Clifton and the English Electric Company Limited for a term of 996years from the 1st November 1923 at a yearly rent of Eighty four pounds subject to an immediate cash payment of One thousand pounds (£1,000)".

The plan also showed a plot of land *"belonging to J.Talbot Clifton Esq leased or agreed to be leased to the Parkstone Film Co Ltd."* with 'Right of Way' access on to the land on offer to the County Council.

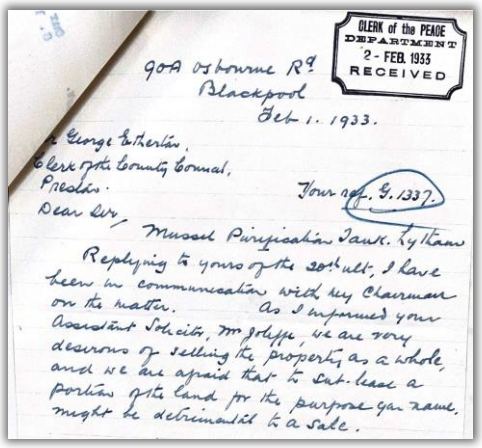
In a letter written by the County Architect, dated 18th January 1933, it contained the estimated cost for building the proposed scheme: £4,524 with the caveat that *"the cost of the site will be additional to the above estimate"*. In the same letter he refers to the location of the site as "*on the foreshore of the River Ribble adjoining the old Hydroplane * Shed (which has more recently been used as a Film Studio). Negotiations are in progress for the acquisition of this site".*



Proposed Site at Lytham.

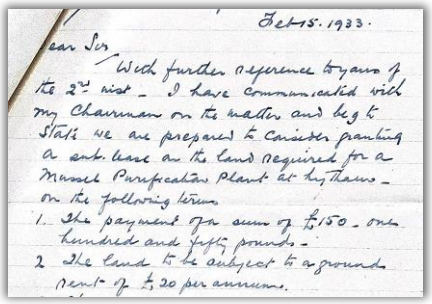
The site at Lytham which has been suggested for the proposed Mussel Purification Station is situate on the foreshore of the River Ribble adjoining the old Hydroplane Shed (which has more recently been used as a Film Studio). Negotiations are in progress for the acquisition of this site, the actual area of the land required being about 3136 square yards (or rather more than 5/8ths of an acre), with a right of way from Preston Road.

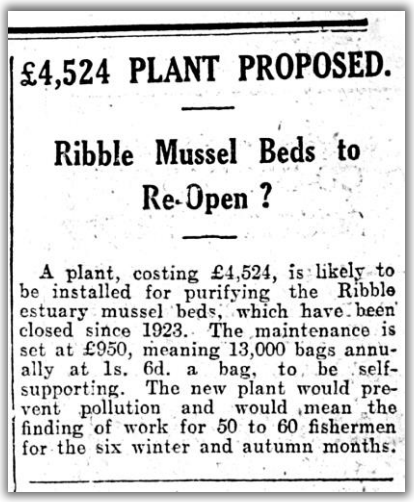
* Seaplane



The 'Film Studio' referred to belonged to Parkstone Film Company and it was this company that the Clerk of the County Council had written to on the 20th January 1933, regarding the lease of part of their property on which to build the mussel purification tanks. On the 1st February 1933, in his reply to the Clerk, Mr. D.P. Stone wrote that his company were "*very desirous of selling the property as a whole, and we are afraid that to sub-lease a portion of the land for the purpose you name might be detrimental to a sale*".

Two weeks later Mr. Stone wrote to the Clerk again, but this time offering a sub-lease on the land for a payment of £150 and a ground rent of £20 per annum.





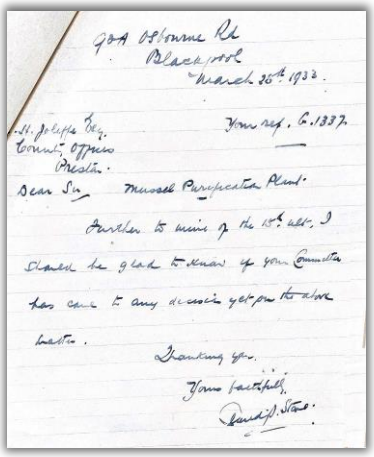
£4,524 PLANT PROPOSED.

Ribble Mussel Beds to Re-Open ?

A plant, costing £4,524, is likely to be installed for purifying the Ribble estuary mussel beds, which have been closed since 1923. The maintenance is set at £950, meaning 13,000 bags annually at 1s. 6d. a bag, to be self-supporting. The new plant would prevent pollution and would mean the finding of work for 50 to 60 fishermen for the six winter and autumn months.

In the meantime, the 'Blackpool Times' provided some more detail. On the 3rd February 1933, it reported: "*A plant, costing £4,524, is likely to be installed for purifying the Ribble estuary mussel beds, which have been closed since 1923. The maintenance is set at £950, meaning 13,000 bags annually at 1s. 6d. a bag, to be self-supporting. The new plant would prevent pollution and would mean the finding of work for 50 to 60 fishermen for the six winter and autumn months.*"

On 25th March 1933, David P. Stone wrote to the Chief Assistant Solicitor of the County Council asking, *"if your Committee has come to any decision yet on the above matter"*.



What Mr. Stone wasn't aware of was that the County Architect had contacted Dr. Dodgson at Conway on the 14th March 1933 and the news was less encouraging. In a letter to the Clerk of the County Council, dated 10th April 1933, the County Architect wrote: *"Since the results of the tests of the samples taken in February at points in the Estuary opposite the Lytham Ship Building*

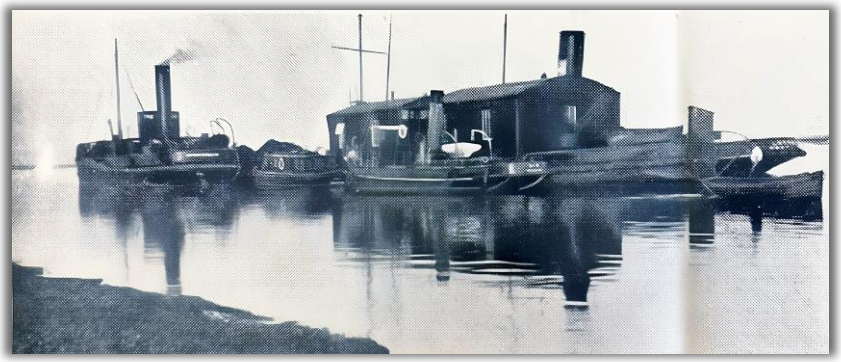
Since the results of the tests of the samples taken in February at points in the Estuary opposite the Lytham Ship Building Co's. Yard and Messrs. Cookson's Bakery respectively, and in March off Lytham Pier, I have felt doubtful as to whether any of these positions would give water of sufficient salinity except on high tides.

Co's Yard and Messrs. Cooksons Bakery respectively, and in March off Lytham Pier, I have felt doubtful as to whether any of these positions would give water of sufficient salinity except on high tides."

The Architect's letter continued:

I have therefore had a series of samples taken at a point about 1500 yards West of Lytham Pier, near the Preston Corporation Barge anchorage and approximately opposite to Fairlawn Road.

"I have therefore had a series of samples taken at a point about 1500 yards West of Lytham Pier, near the Preston Corporation Barge anchorage and approximately opposite to Fairlawn Road."



Preston Corporation's Barge (the river-pilots' houseboat) anchored off Fairlawn R[d] with other craft in attendance.

Church Scar mussel bed can be seen in the foreground.

The salinity at this point was found to be favourable and he suggested: "*…for your consideration that the Lytham-St. Annes* [sic] *Corporation should be approached as to whether they will be prepared to approve the erection of the proposed Station on a site near the South end of Fairlawn Road, but not on the foreshore, as I fear that the additional cost of the scheme at any point on the foreshore would be prohibitive."*

for your consideration that the Lytham-St.Annes Corporation should be approached with a view to a definite decision being given as to whether they will be prepared to approve the erection of the proposed Station on a site near the South end of Fairlawn Road, but not on the foreshore, as I fear that the additional cost of the scheme at any point on the foreshore would be prohibitive.

It would appear that this location quickly fell out of favour and another possible site had been identified near to the sewage pumping station at Fairhaven but this new location was, again, quickly dismissed. In a letter to the County Council dated 10th May 1933, the Town Clerk of Lytham St. Annes (Mr. W. Heap) stated that he was of the opinion the Fairhaven Estate Company will very strongly oppose it on the basis that: *"This site was leased to the Corporation for 999 years subject to certain covenants, two of which at least will in my opinion enable*

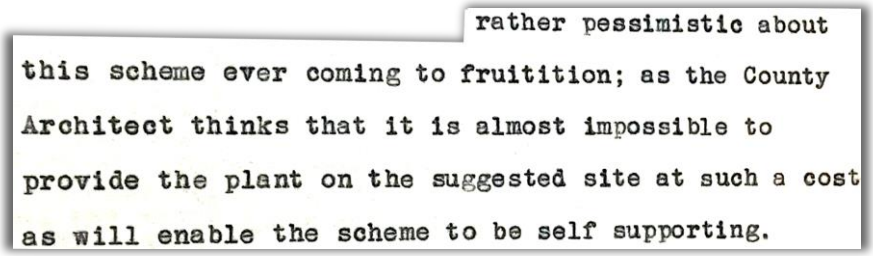
This site was leased to the Corporation for 999 years subject to certain covenants, two of which at least will in my opinion enable the Fairhaven Estate Company to prevent the Corporation from using this part of the foreshore for the purpose named.

the Fairhaven Estate Company to prevent the Corporation from using this part of the foreshore for the purpose named."

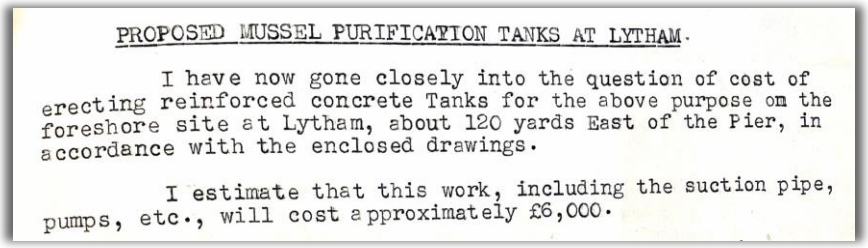
But good news was not long in coming. Ten days later the District Inspector of Fisheries (North Western Area) wrote to the County Council *"to bring to your notice a rather important discovery in connection with the Lytham Pier site"*.

This discovery was that the main intake supplying water to Lytham Baths runs alongside the Lytham Pier site on the foreshore and as this intake was only used occasionally it was thought that there would to be no difficulty over obtaining permission from Lytham St. Annes Corporation to obtain sufficient water to run the Mussel Purification Tanks. It was further noted that the Lytham Baths intake ran out to the end of Lytham Pier, a distance of 300 yards and at this point it ought to be possible to obtain the necessary salinity, even during very low neap tides. The District Inspector went on to say, *"this scheme is worthy of careful consideration as it may be possible to erect the tanks on the foreshore at a price considerably below the estimate of £4,500"*.

Then on the 17th July 1933, the Chief Assistant Solicitor to Lancashire County Council, Mr. Joliffe, wrote to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries stating that he was *"rather pessimistic about this scheme ever coming to fruition; as the County Architect thinks that it is almost impossible to provide the plant on the suggested site at such a cost as will enable the scheme to be self supporting"*.


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this scheme ever coming to fruitition; as the County
Architect thinks that it is almost impossible to
provide the plant on the suggested site at such a cost
as will enable the scheme to be self supporting.

Eleven days later, Mr. Joliffe's pessimism proved justified when the County Architect wrote to the Clerk of the County Council informing him of the revised cost estimate for the proposed mussel purification tanks at Lytham: *"I estimate that this work, including the suction pipe, pumps, etc., will cost approximately £6,000."*

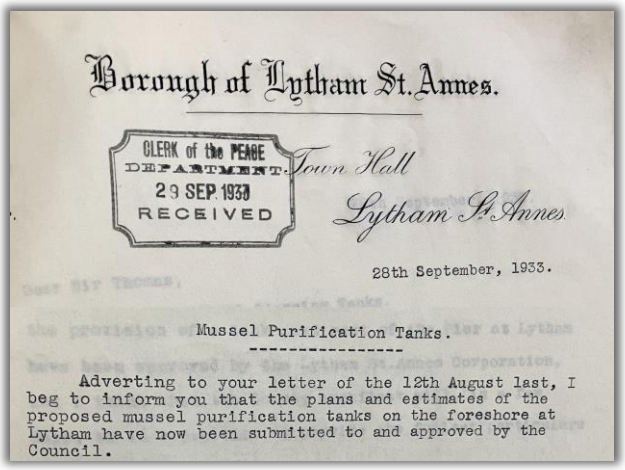

PROPOSED MUSSEL PURIFICATION TANKS AT LYTHAM.

I have now gone closely into the question of cost of erecting reinforced concrete Tanks for the above purpose on the foreshore site at Lytham, about 120 yards East of the Pier, in accordance with the enclosed drawings.

I estimate that this work, including the suction pipe, pumps, etc., will cost approximately £6,000.

At a meeting held on the 25th September 1933, the Lytham St. Annes Town Council had before them a recommendation from the Parks and Pleasure Grounds Committee to approve a scheme for foreshore improvement round the open-air baths at St. Annes, embodying a boating pool with necessary sea defence works, on the north side, and a miniature golf course, on the south side, at a cost of £15,000. At the same meeting the Council were recommended to approve plans for the proposed mussel purification tanks on the foreshore east of Lytham pier at a cost of £6,000.

Four days later Sir George Etherton, the Clerk of the County Council, received at letter from the Town Hall, Lytham St. Annes, notifying him that the plans and estimates for the tanks had been approved by them.



Borough of Lytham St. Annes.

CLERK of the PEACE DEPARTMENT 29 SEP 1933 RECEIVED

Town Hall
Lytham St Annes

28th September, 1933.

Mussel Purification Tanks.

Adverting to your letter of the 12th August last, I beg to inform you that the plans and estimates of the proposed mussel purification tanks on the foreshore at Lytham have now been submitted to and approved by the Council.

Final approval of the plans and estimates for the mussel purification tanks was needed from the owners and paymasters of the scheme, Lancashire County Council, and as we have seen the cost of the scheme had risen from its original estimate of £4,524 to the recently announced (28th July 1933) figure of £6,000.



LYTHAM MUSSEL TANK SCHEME

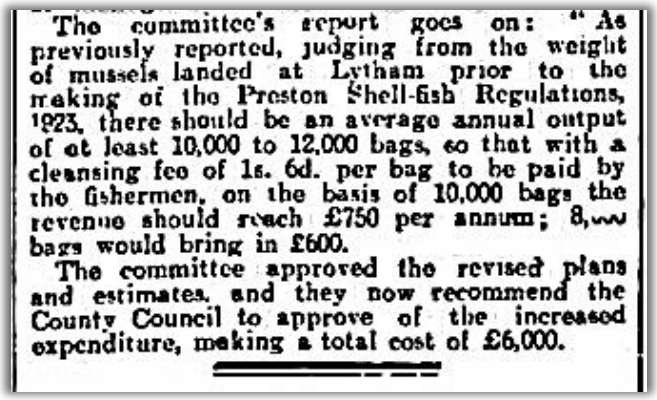
Further Grant Proposed

A FURTHER grant of £1,476 will be made by the Lancashire County Council towards the cost of establishing a mussel purification plant at Lytham, if a recommendation of the County Agricultural Committee approved at the County Council meeting next Thursday.

On the 26th October 1933, the Lancashire Daily Post reported: *"A further grant of £1,476 will be made by the Lancashire County Council towards the cost of establishing a mussel purification plant at Lytham, if a recommendation of the County Agricultural Committee is approved at the County Council meeting next Thursday.*"

The newspaper then provided the reason for the increased cost: *"The original scheme included a storage tank of 90,000 gallons and two cleansing tanks each of 40,000 gallons capacity: but having regard to the suggestion of the Corporation that the tanks might be enlarged so as to provide boating and paddling pools for the use of children during the summer months, when they will not be used for mussel purification purposes, a revised scheme has been prepared [which] provides for a storage tank of 147,000 gallons and two cleansing tanks of 41,000 gallons."*

The County Agricultural committee report continued: *"As previously reported, judging from the weight of mussels landed at Lytham prior to the making of the Preston Shell-fish Regulations, 1923, there should be an average annual output of at least 10,000 to 12,000 bags, so that with a cleansing fee of 1s 6d per bag to be paid by the fishermen, on the basis of 10,000 bags the revenue should reach £750 per annum; 8000 bags would bring in £600.*



The committee's report goes on: "As previously reported, judging from the weight of mussels landed at Lytham prior to the making of the Preston Shell-fish Regulations, 1923, there should be an average annual output of at least 10,000 to 12,000 bags, so that with a cleansing fee of 1s. 6d. per bag to be paid by the fishermen, on the basis of 10,000 bags the revenue should reach £750 per annum; 8,000 bags would bring in £600.

The committee approved the revised plans and estimates, and they now recommend the County Council to approve of the increased expenditure, making a total cost of £6,000.

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Chapter 9
Mussel Purification Station Construction

Thus, by the end of 1933, the go-ahead to build the purification tanks was nearing fruition and advertisements for tenders *"for the construction of reinforced CONCRETE TANKS on a site situate on the foreshore about 200 yards east of Lytham Pier, including the laying of cast-iron suction pipes and drains below the foreshore for a distance of 300 yards into tidal waters"* were displayed in the newspapers throughout Lancashire. This particular advertisement was placed in the 'Liverpool Post and Mercury', dated Friday, 12th January 1934.

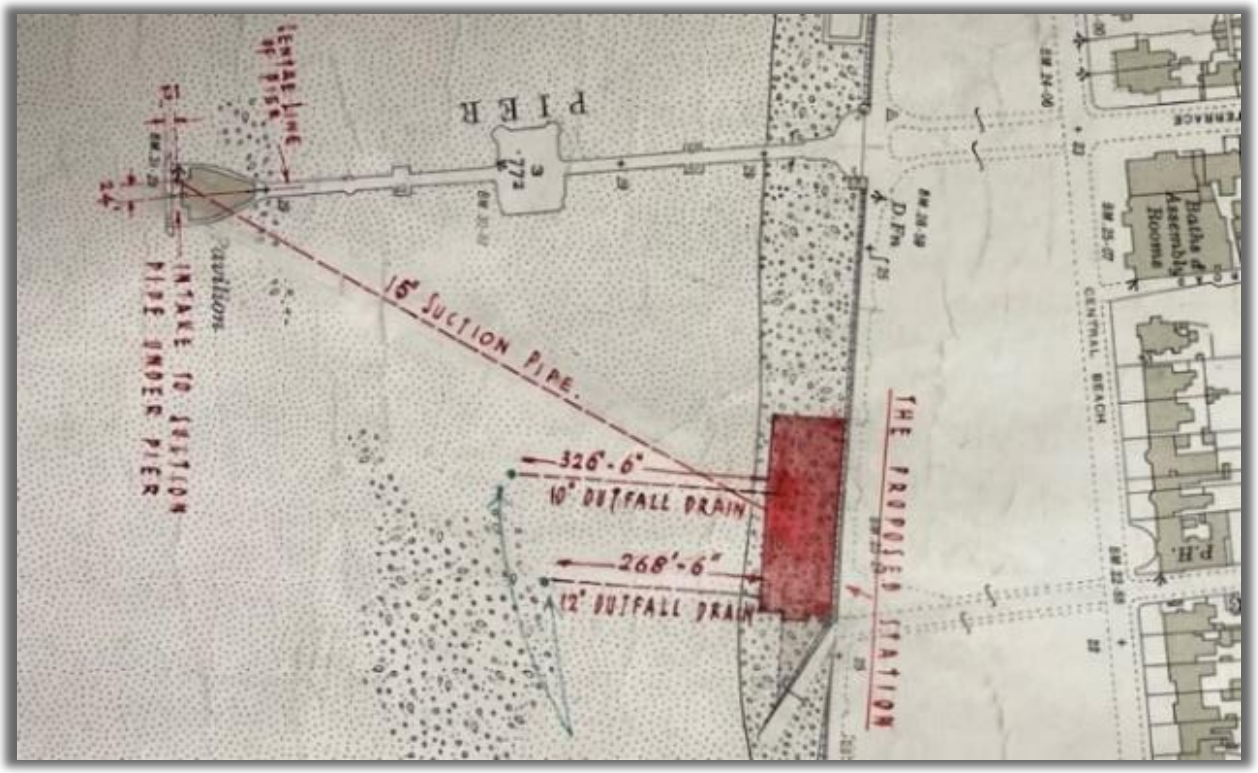
LANCASHIRE AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE.

TO CONTRACTORS.

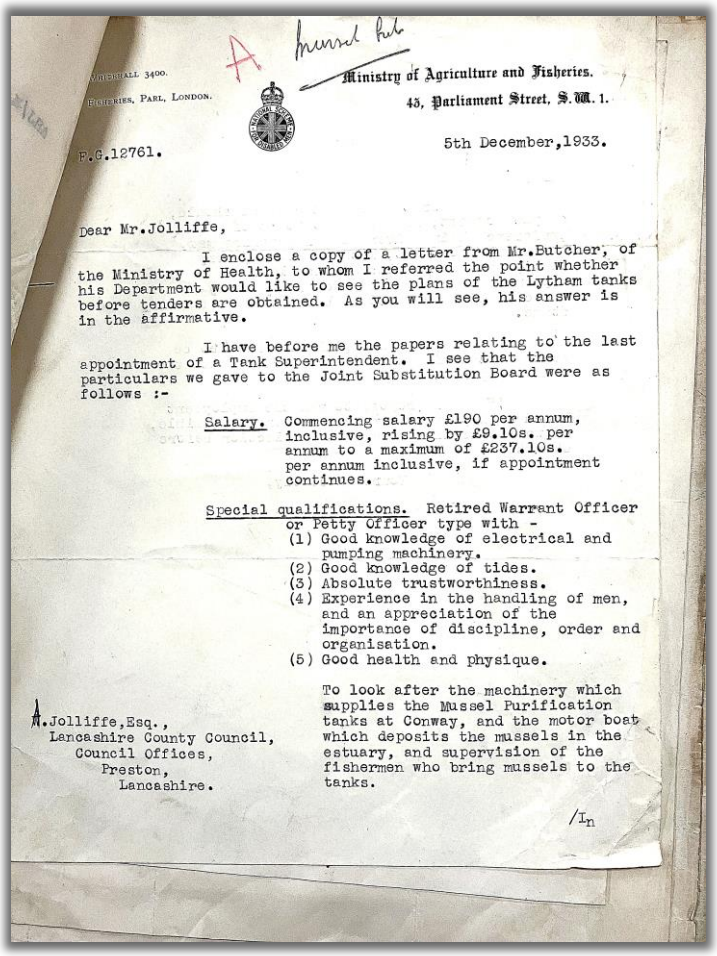
PROPOSED MUSSEL PURIFICATION STATION AT LYTHAM.

TENDERS are required for the construction of reinforced CONCRETE TANKS on a site situate on the foreshore about 200 yards east of Lytham Pier, including the laying of cast-iron suction pipes and drains below the foreshore for a distance of 300 yards into tidal waters.

A plan of the proposed site showing the relative positions, lengths and diameters of the intake and drainage pipes formed part of *"the plans and bill of quantities"* that were available to Contractors on payment of a £2 deposit *"which will be returned upon receipt of a bona fide tender"*.



In addition to advertisements for construction tenders being posted, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries sent a letter to the Lancashire County Council detailing the *"particulars"* that were used for the position of the Tank Superintendent at the Conway tanks.



Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.
45, Parliament Street, S.W. 1.

5th December, 1933.

F.C.12761.

Dear Mr. Jolliffe,

I enclose a copy of a letter from Mr. Butcher, of the Ministry of Health, to whom I referred the point whether his Department would like to see the plans of the Lytham tanks before tenders are obtained. As you will see, his answer is in the affirmative.

I have before me the papers relating to the last appointment of a Tank Superintendent. I see that the particulars we gave to the Joint Substitution Board were as follows :-

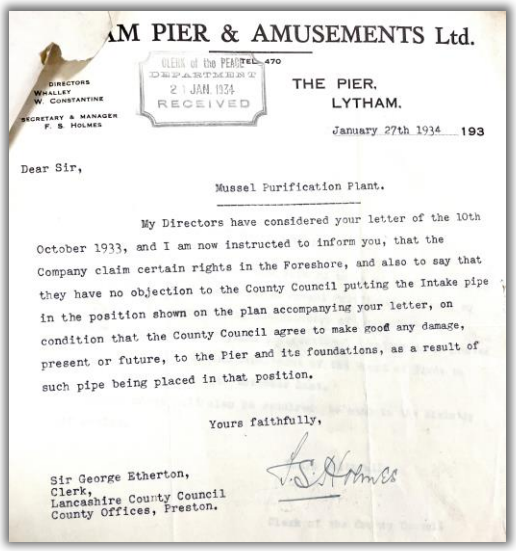
Salary. Commencing salary £190 per annum, inclusive, rising by £9.10s. per annum to a maximum of £237.10s. per annum inclusive, if appointment continues.

Special qualifications. Retired Warrant Officer or Petty Officer type with -
(1) Good knowledge of electrical and pumping machinery.
(2) Good knowledge of tides.
(3) Absolute trustworthiness.
(4) Experience in the handling of men, and an appreciation of the importance of discipline, order and organisation.
(5) Good health and physique.

To look after the machinery which supplies the Mussel Purification tanks at Conway, and the motor boat which deposits the mussels in the estuary, and supervision of the fishermen who bring mussels to the tanks.

A. Jolliffe, Esq.,
Lancashire County Council,
Council Offices,
Preston,
Lancashire.

Meanwhile, on the 27th January 1934 permission was finally granted by



AM PIER & AMUSEMENTS Ltd.

DIRECTORS
WHALLEY
W. CONSTANTINE
SECRETARY & MANAGER
F. S. HOLMES

CLERK of the PEACE
LANCASHIRE
21 JAN 1934
RECEIVED

THE PIER,
LYTHAM.

January 27th 1934 193

Dear Sir,

Mussel Purification Plant.

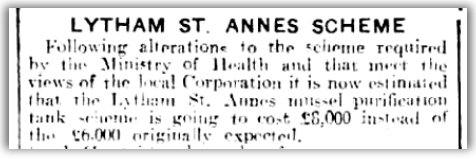
My Directors have considered your letter of the 10th October 1933, and I am now instructed to inform you, that the Company claim certain rights in the Foreshore, and also to say that they have no objection to the County Council putting the Intake pipe in the position shown on the plan accompanying your letter, on condition that the County Council agree to make good any damage, present or future, to the Pier and its foundations, as a result of such pipe being placed in that position.

Yours faithfully,

Sir George Etherton,
Clerk,
Lancashire County Council
County Offices, Preston.

'Lytham Pier & Amusements Ltd.' to a request by the County Council, dated 10th October 1933 for an intake pipe [suction pipe] to be put in the position shown on the plan *"on condition that the County Council agree to make good any damage, present or future, to the Pier and its foundations, as a result of such a pipe being placed in that position"*.

Although it would appear from the above that all was now well with the scheme and construction was about to begin, if not already started, the final signing off by all the necessary government departments hadn't yet taken place.



LYTHAM ST. ANNES SCHEME

Following alterations to the scheme required by the Ministry of Health and that meet the views of the local Corporation it is now estimated that the Lytham St. Annes mussel purification tank scheme is going to cost £8,000 instead of the £6,000 originally expected.

On the 26th April 1934, the Lancashire Daily Post reported: "*Following alterations to the scheme required by the Ministry of Health ... it is now estimated that the Lytham St. Annes mussel purification tank scheme is going to cost £8000 instead of the £6000 originally expected.*"

The £2000 increase in cost was brought about following concerns raised by the Ministry of Health (Mr. Butcher) with regard to the strength of the sea defence wall and the need to install a 15" suction pipe extending from the site of the tanks to the seaward end of the pier after the earlier

proposal to use the Lytham Baths intake pipe to provide the water wasn't accepted by the Lytham St. Annes Corporation.

Finally, at the Lancashire County Council meeting held on the 3rd May 1934 the £8000 cost was approved and an application was to be made to the Ministry of Health for sanction to the raising of a loan for that amount. The money would be borrowed at 3½ per cent. for a period of 30 years and it was hoped that the scheme would prove to be self-supporting.

Less than four weeks later, the 29th May 1934 edition of 'The Lancashire Daily Post' announced *"that the Lancashire County Council had let the contract for the construction of mussel purification tanks at Lytham, and that it is expected the work will commence very shortly*".

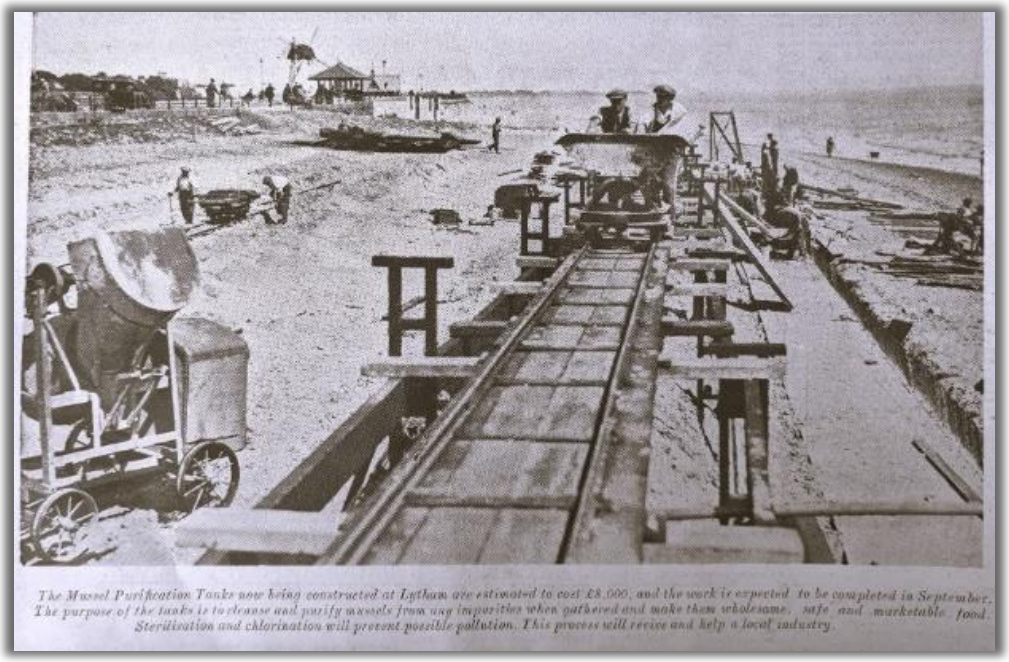


MUSSEL TANKS

County Council Let Contract for Lytham Scheme

The Lytham St. Annes Corporation have been informed that the Lancashire County Council have let the contract for the construction of the mussel purification tanks at Lytham, and that it is expected the work will commence very shortly.

The task of building the tanks was given to Messrs. Ormerod and Shields, of Preston and work was commenced on the 18th June 1934. It was hoped that the plant would be functioning by the end of that year.



The Mussel Purification Tanks now being constructed at Lytham are estimated to cost £8,000, and the work is expected to be completed in September. The purpose of the tanks is to cleanse and purify mussels from any impurities when gathered and make them wholesome, safe and marketable food. Sterilisation and chlorination will prevent possible pollution. This process will revive and help a local industry.

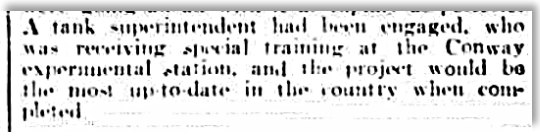
A photograph taken at an early stage of the mussel tanks construction had a very optimistic caption: *"the work is expected to be completed in September."*

The structure of the mussel tanks was formed in steel reinforced concrete for which 90% of the ballast and screened sand was obtained, free of charge, from the excavations covering the site.

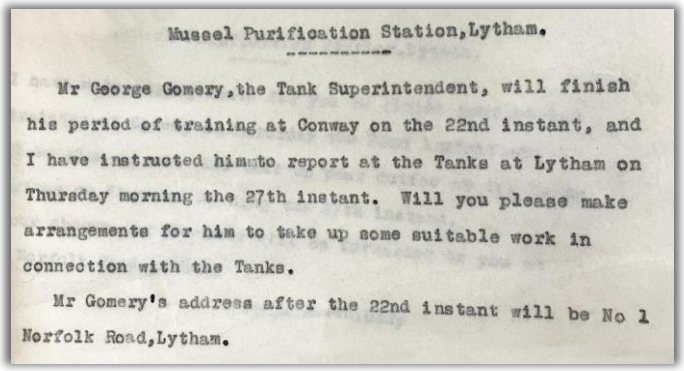
On 5th November 1934, the 'Lancashire Daily Post' reported that the concrete work was nearly completed, but the machinery had yet to be installed and great difficulty was being encountered in laying the feed-pipe that conveys sea-water to the tanks, out to deep water. Only one short length of pipe a day could be laid owing to the work being confined to very low tides, and the problem of excavating soft, running sand. The report concluded by saying that the work would be finished,

and the mussel-gathering, which is a winter occupation, would be in full swing early in the new year.

In the meantime *"A tank superintendent had been engaged, who was receiving special training at the Conway experimental station , and the project would be the most up-to-date in the country when complete"* reported the Lancashire Daily Post, dated


A tank superintendent had been engaged, who was receiving special training at the Conway experimental station, and the project would be the most up-to-date in the country when completed

18th October 1934, and on the 12th December 1934, a letter was sent from the Clerk of the County Council to the County Architect notifying him that: *"Mr. George Gomery, the Tank Superintendent, will finish his period of training at Conway on the 22nd instant* [December]*, and I have instructed him to report at the Tanks at Lytham on Thursday the 27th instant. Will you please make arrangements for him to take up some suitable work in connection with the tank.*

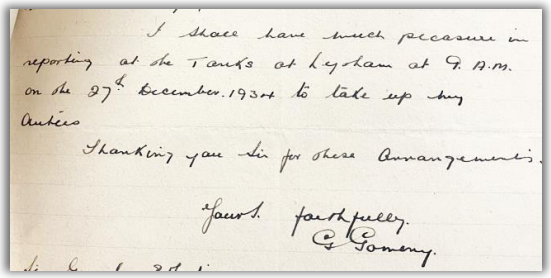

Mussel Purification Station,Lytham.

Mr George Gomery,the Tank Superintendent, will finish his period of training at Conway on the 22nd instant, and I have instructed him to report at the Tanks at Lytham on Thursday morning the 27th instant. Will you please make arrangements for him to take up some suitable work in connection with the Tanks.

Mr Gomery's address after the 22nd instant will be No 1 Norfolk Road,Lytham.

Mr. Gomery's address after the 22nd instant will be No 1 Norfolk Road, Lytham."

The following day, 13th December 1934, Mr. G. Gomery sent a letter to the Clerk of the County Council replying to a letter he had received: *"I shall have much pleasure in reporting at the Tanks at Lytham at 9 A.M. on the 27th December 1934 to take up my Duties."*


I shall have much pleasure in reporting at the Tanks at Lytham at 9 A.M. on the 27th December 1934 to take up my duties

Thanking you Sir for these Arrangements.

Yours faithfully.

G Gomery.

No doubt very pleased to have a job at a time of high unemployment, finished the letter *"Thanking you Sir for these Arrangements, Yours faithfully, G. Gomery".*

A letter sent on the 1st January 1935 to the County Council's Assistant Chief Solicitor, Dr. Dodgson expressed his concern about starting mussel purification early in the New Year: *"If they started in February and encountered poor prices and slack demand, as they undoubtedly will, they will attribute the failure to the process itself. It would be a pity if, as a result of their disappointment, the whole thing got a bad name. In any case, the tanks could only be used for a few weeks before the close of the mussel season, and the impression which the general public might receive would be that the project had been a failure."*

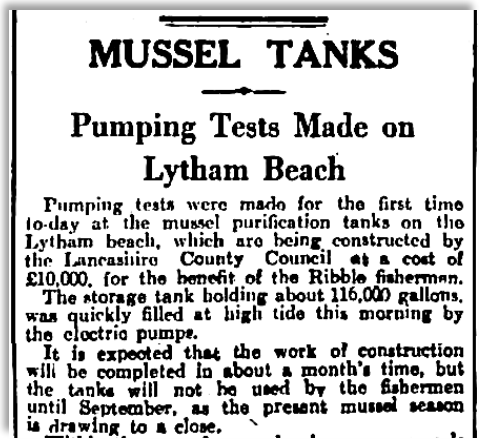
A more optimistic view was reported in the Ormskirk Observer on the 14th February 1935, where it was stated that the Lancashire County Council's Agricultural Committee: *"... has decided, subject to the members of the Lytham St. Annes and the Banks Fisherman's Societies wishing to use the tanks this season, to have a formal opening about the end of February and to give the tanks a trial run until the end of the present season, in order that there may be no hitch when work commences at the beginning of the golf* [sic] *season."*



LYTHAM MUSSEL PLANT.

A statement that the new mussel purification plant at Lytham is almost completed appears in the Lancashire County Council's Agricultural Committee's report. The committee has decided, subject to the members of the Lytham St. Annes and the Banks Fishermen's Societies wishing to use the tanks this season, to have a formal opening about the end of February and to give the tanks a trial run until the end of the present season, in order that there may be no hitch when work commences at the beginning of the golf season.

The envisaged *"formal opening about the end of February"* didn't happen as can be perceived by the report printed in the Lancashire Daily Post on the 4th March 1935, which announced: *"Pumping Tests Made on Lytham Beach"*.



MUSSEL TANKS

Pumping Tests Made on Lytham Beach

Pumping tests were made for the first time to-day at the mussel purification tanks on the Lytham beach, which are being constructed by the Lancashire County Council at a cost of £10,000, for the benefit of the Ribble fishermen.

The storage tank holding about 116,000 gallons, was quickly filled at high tide this morning by the electric pumps.

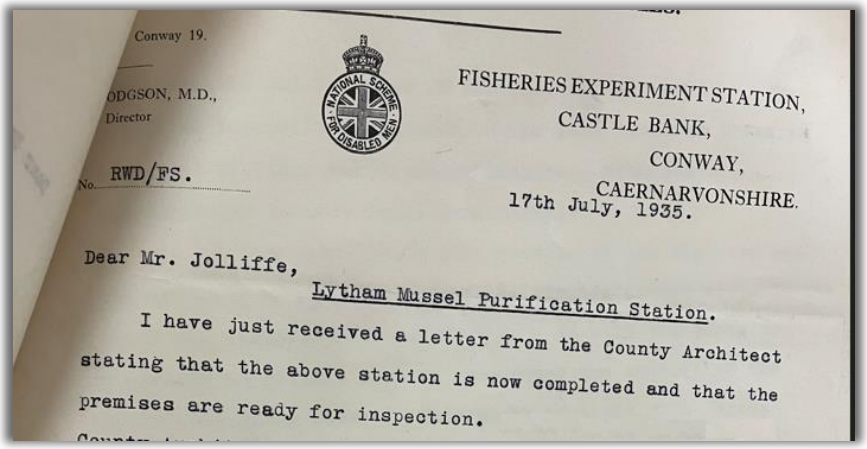
It is expected that the work of construction will be completed in about a month's time, but the tanks will not be used by the fishermen until September, as the present mussel season is drawing to a close.

"Pumping tests were made for the first time to-day at the mussel purification tanks on the Lytham beach, which are being constructed by Lancashire County Council at a cost of £10,000 [sic] *for the benefit of the Ribble fishermen.*

The storage tank holding about 116,000 gallons, was quickly filled at high tide this morning by the electric pumps.

It is expected that the work of construction will be completed in about a month's time, but the tanks will not be used by the fishermen until September, as the present mussel season is drawing to a close."

On the 17th July 1935, Dr. Dodgson, at the Fisheries Experimental Station in Conway, sent a letter, to Mr. Jolliffe, the Lancashire County Council's Assistant Chief Solicitor, announcing the completion of the Lytham Mussel Purification Station.



Conway 19.

ODGSON, M.D.,
Director

No. RWD/FS.

FISHERIES EXPERIMENT STATION,
CASTLE BANK,
CONWAY,
CAERNARVONSHIRE.
17th July, 1935.

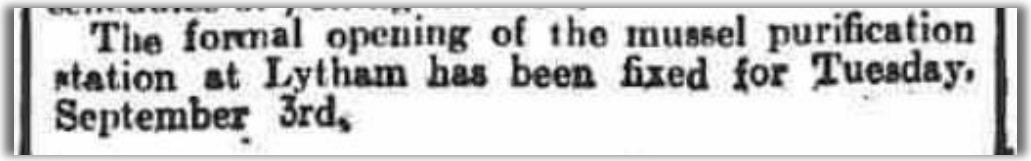
Dear Mr. Jolliffe,

Lytham Mussel Purification Station.

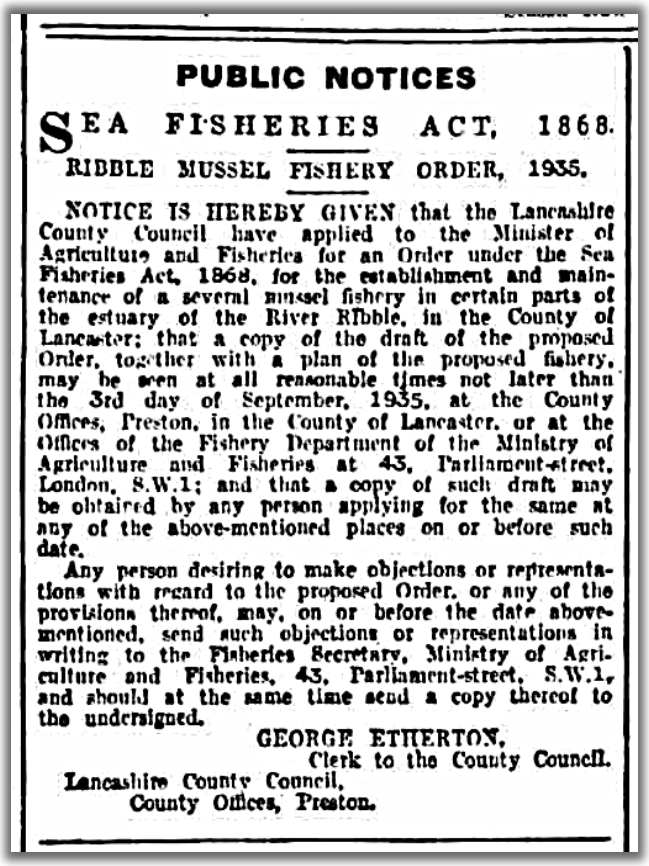
I have just received a letter from the County Architect stating that the above station is now completed and that the premises are ready for inspection.

Chapter 10
Open for Business (1935)

The building work having been completed and the inspection passed, the official opening date of the mussel purification station at Lytham was finally announced. The 25th July 1935 edition of the Lancashire Daily Post simply reported:


The formal opening of the mussel purification station at Lytham has been fixed for Tuesday, September 3rd.

Two further pieces of official business were now required to be completed. Firstly, the ban on mussel collecting from the Ribble estuary had to be removed. To achieve this, the Clerk to the County Council *"applied to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for an Order under the Sea Fisheries Act, 1868, for the establishment and maintenance of a several mussel fishery in certain parts of the estuary of the River Ribble, in the County of Lancaster".* A draft of the proposed Order together with a plan of the proposed fishery was made available to view via a PUBLIC NOTICE placed in local newspapers stating that "*objections or representations with regard to the proposed Order"* could be made "*not later than the 3rd day of September, 1935".*


PUBLIC NOTICES

SEA FISHERIES ACT, 1868.

RIBBLE MUSSEL FISHERY ORDER, 1935.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Lancashire County Council have applied to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for an Order under the Sea Fisheries Act, 1868, for the establishment and maintenance of a several mussel fishery in certain parts of the estuary of the River Ribble, in the County of Lancaster; that a copy of the draft of the proposed Order, together with a plan of the proposed fishery, may be seen at all reasonable times not later than the 3rd day of September, 1935, at the County Offices, Preston, in the County of Lancaster, or at the Offices of the Fishery Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries at 43, Parliament-street, London, S.W.1; and that a copy of such draft may be obtained by any person applying for the same at any of the above-mentioned places on or before such date.

Any person desiring to make objections or representations with regard to the proposed Order, or any of the provisions thereof, may, on or before the date above-mentioned, send such objections or representations in writing to the Fisheries Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 43, Parliament-street, S.W.1, and should at the same time send a copy thereof to the undersigned.

GEORGE ETHERTON,
Clerk to the County Council.

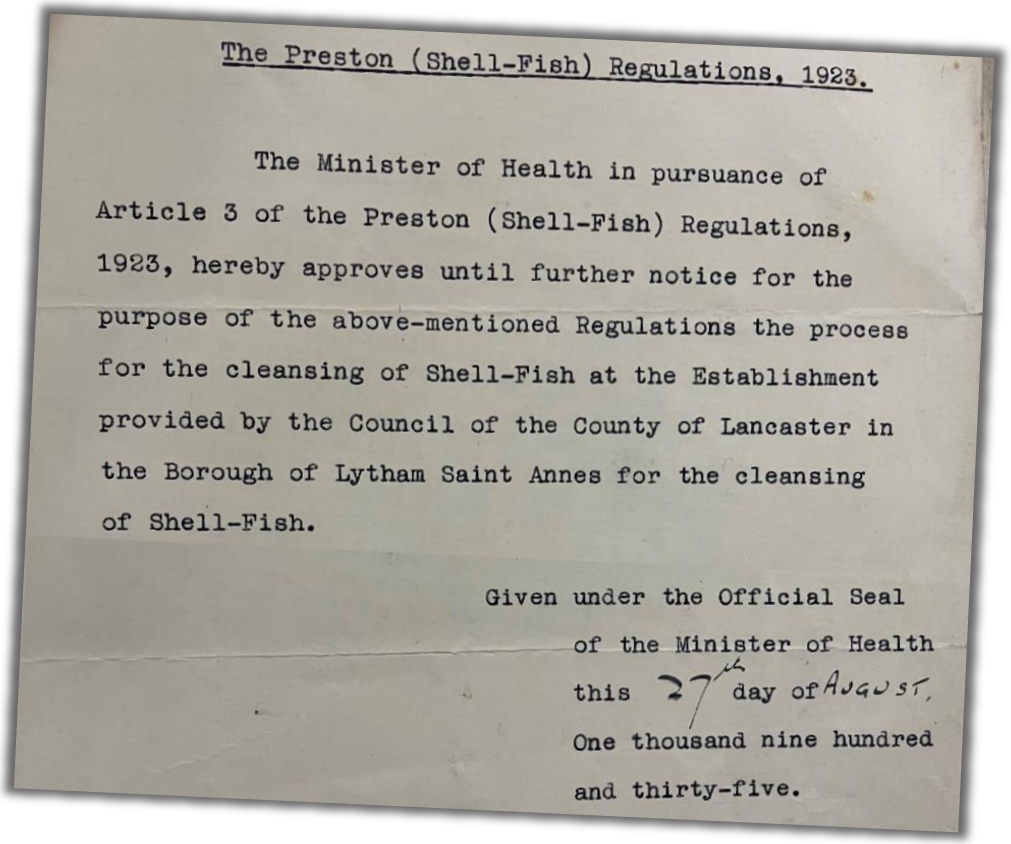
Lancashire County Council,
County Offices, Preston.

[The Order to remove the ban on mussel collecting from the Ribble estuary required the County Council to make the mussel beds a *"several* mussel fishery"* thereby enabling them to control who could gather the shellfish from them.]

* a several: an area of private land

Secondly, in order to fulfil the requirement of 'The Preston (Shell-Fish) Regulations, 1923', which only allowed mussels to be sold, distributed or offered for sale for human consumption if they had been subjected to a process of cleansing which the Minister of Health, on

the representation of the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, or its Port Sanitary Authority, had approved, the Ministry of Health issued the necessary approval notice:-.



The Preston (Shell-Fish) Regulations, 1923.

The Minister of Health in pursuance of Article 3 of the Preston (Shell-Fish) Regulations, 1923, hereby approves until further notice for the purpose of the above-mentioned Regulations the process for the cleansing of Shell-Fish at the Establishment provided by the Council of the County of Lancaster in the Borough of Lytham Saint Annes for the cleansing of Shell-Fish.

Given under the Official Seal of the Minister of Health this 27th day of AUGUST, One thousand nine hundred and thirty-five.

The outcome of the requested Ribble Mussel Fisheries Order and the signed Approval Notice meant that mussels in the Ribble estuary could only be collected by approved fishermen and had to be cleansed at the County Council's mussel purification station at Lytham.

Everything was now in place for the official opening of the mussel purification station and the grand occasion took place on Tuesday, 3rd September 1935, a day of celebration for the fishermen of the River Ribble estuary. As reported in The Lancashire Daily Post, Wednesday, 4th September 1935: *"RIBBLE INDUSTRY MAY BE REGAINED Lytham Mussel Cleansing Tanks Opened 12 YEARS BAN ENDS Lancashire County Council's £8,000 scheme for mussel purification in the Ribble Channel was completed yesterday, when Sir Thomas Rosbotham, M.P. for Ormskirk, officially opened the new mussel tanks on the Lytham foreshore."*



RIBBLE INDUSTRY MAY BE REGAINED

Lytham Mussel Cleansing Tanks Opened

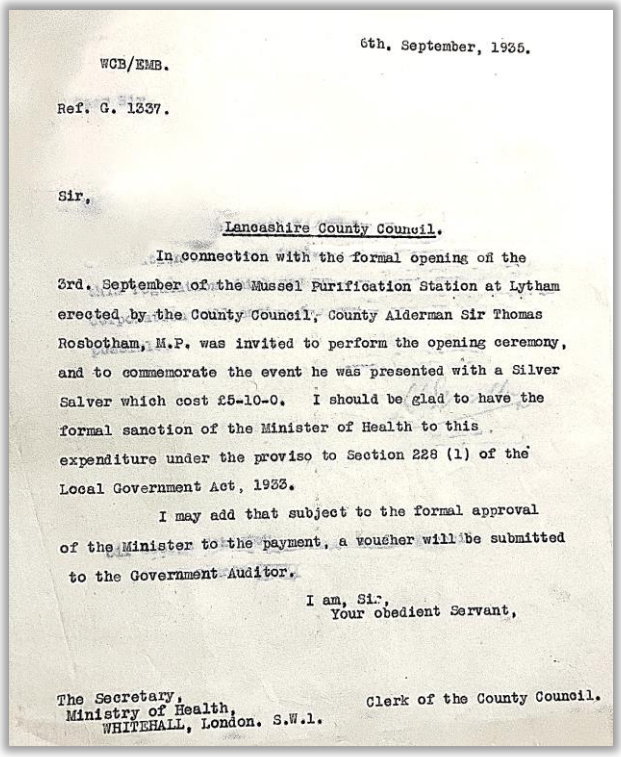
12 YEARS' BAN ENDS

LANCASHIRE County Council's £8,000 scheme for mussel purification in the Ribble Channel was completed yesterday, when Sir Thomas Rosbotham, M.P. for Ormskirk, officially opened the new mussel tanks on the Lytham foreshore.

The newspaper report continued: *"Large crowds witnessed yesterday's opening ceremony, which was attended by members and officials of Lancashire County Council, including Sir James Travis-Clegg (chairman), Sir George Etherton (clerk), and Mr. J. Smith (Chairman of the Finance Committee. Also present were Dr. R. W. Johnstone (director of the Conway Fisheries experimental station), Mr. H. P. Paynter, of the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Squire of Lytham (Mr. H. T. de Vere Clifton), the Mayor of Lytham St. Annes (Alderman W. Hope), and the Town Clerk of Lytham St. Annes (Mr. W. Heap)."*


LYTHAM'S NEW PLANT FOR MUSSEL INDUSTRY

On the 6th September 1935, the Clerk of the County Council wrote a letter to 'The Secretary, Ministry of Health, Whitehall, London, S.W.1' on a very important topic relating to the opening ceremony that had taken place only three days earlier. As can be seen in his letter, the Clerk had to have "formal sanction" from the Minister of Health under the proviso to Section 228 (1) of the Local Government Act, 1933 having spent £5-10-0 on the purchase of the Silver Salver presented to Sir Thomas Rosbotham to commemorate the opening of the Mussel Purification Station at Lytham.



6th. September, 1935.

WCB/EMB.

Ref. G. 1237.

Sir,

Lancashire County Council.

In connection with the formal opening on the 3rd. September of the Mussel Purification Station at Lytham erected by the County Council, County Alderman Sir Thomas Rosbotham, M.P. was invited to perform the opening ceremony, and to commemorate the event he was presented with a Silver Salver which cost £5-10-0. I should be glad to have the formal sanction of the Minister of Health to this expenditure under the proviso to Section 228 (1) of the Local Government Act, 1933.

I may add that subject to the formal approval of the Minister to the payment, a voucher will be submitted to the Government Auditor.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

Clerk of the County Council.

The Secretary,
Ministry of Health,
WHITEHALL, London. S.W.1.

But all was not well. As we saw above, 'The Public Notice' applying for an Order "*for the establishment and maintenance of a several mussel fishery in certain parts of the estuary of*

the River Ribble", had also called for objections to the Order to be sent to the Fisheries Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

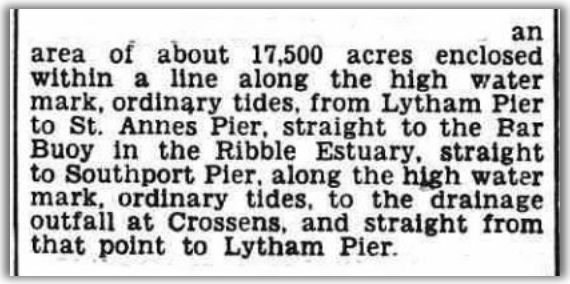
Objections to the Order were submitted from: Preston Corporation, Lytham St. Annes Corporation, Southport Corporation, Preston Fishermen's and Boatmen's Association, and other Preston fishermen.

In response, a public inquiry was held at the County Offices in Preston by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries on the 9th October 1935, and reported in the 'Lancashire Daily Post' that same day. In the main, these objections fell into four categories:

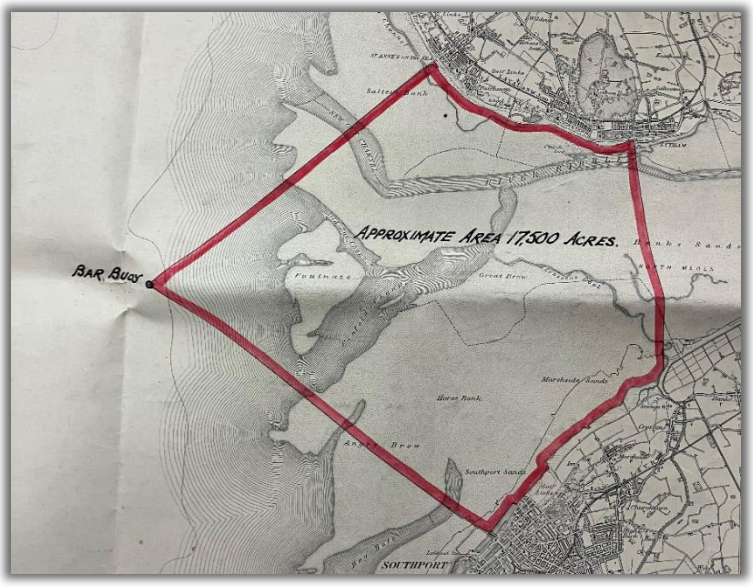
1. The boundary of the mussel fishery.
2. The marking of the boundary by buoys.
3. Possible damage to the training walls.
4. The public fishery would become a 'several' (i.e. private) fishery.

The inquiry discussed each category in turn:

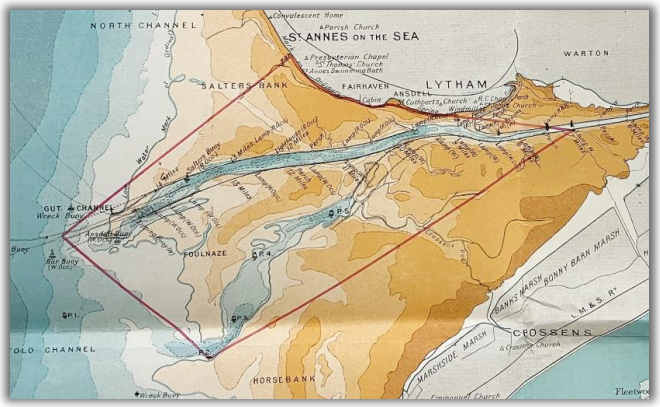
1. Several local Corporations objected to the general position of the proposed fishery which contained: "… *an area of about 17,500 acres enclosed within a line along the high water mark, ordinary tides, from Lytham Pier to St. Annes Pier, straight to the Bar Buoy in the Ribble Estuary, straight to Southport Pier, along the high water mark, ordinary tides, to the drainage outfall at Crossens, and straight from that point to Lytham Pier."*


an area of about 17,500 acres enclosed within a line along the high water mark, ordinary tides, from Lytham Pier to St. Annes Pier, straight to the Bar Buoy in the Ribble Estuary, straight to Southport Pier, along the high water mark, ordinary tides, to the drainage outfall at Crossens, and straight from that point to Lytham Pier.

At the inquiry the case for the County Council was put by Mr. A. H. Jolliffe, assistant solicitor to the Council, who stated that as certain alterations of the boundaries had been made the objections from Southport Corporation, Hesketh Bank and Scarisbrick had been withdrawn.



Objection 1: nullified.



The modified mussel fishery boundaries map shows the southern tip no longer extending to Southport Pier and eastern tip was moved to the 7-mile Buoy rather than the Crossens drainage outfall.

2. Preston Corporation, as the harbour authority, objected to the use of buoys to mark the mussel fishery as they could be confused with their navigation buoys used by vessels carrying 1,000,000

Mr. Jolliffe explained an agreement had been arrived at regarding the markings and the buoys. There would also be a general clause to the effect that nothing would prejudice the rights of the harbour authority.

tons of cargo to Preston annually. *"Mr. Jolliffe explained an agreement had been arrived at regarding the markings and the buoys. There would also be a general clause to the effect that nothing would prejudice the rights of the harbour authority."*

Objection 2: nullified.

3. Mr. Nutter, Town Clerk for Preston Corporation, objected on the basis that extracting mussels

Mussels, went on Mr. Nutter, collected on the training walls, and these mussels bound the walls together. In that way they provided a great saving in the cost of maintenance, and were a very valuable asset to the Preston Corporation. If the order was granted great damage would be done to the walls by mussels being taken from them and the Corporation would have to pay a fairly large sum each year to keep the walls in proper repair.

off the river channel training walls would weaken the structure and add significantly to the cost of their upkeep. On the grounds that there was no evidence supporting it:

Objection 3: nullified.

4. Preston fishermen objected to the Order on the basis that it would restrict the collecting of

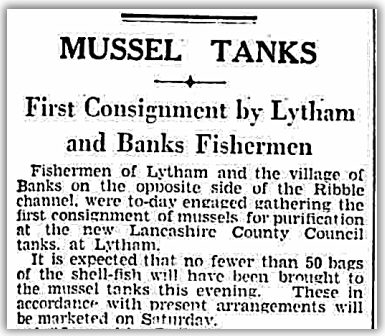
FISHERMEN OBJECT

The Chairman of the Preston Fishermen's and Boatmen's Association (Mr. W. Preston) said the Preston fishermen did not want to lose the rights they had always enjoyed. They had been gathering mussels before the training walls were built, and they strongly objected to any order which would restrict their rights.

Ribble estuary mussels to members of the Lytham and Banks Fisherman's Association. The fishermen were informed that they could join the Association.

Objection 4: nullified.

In the meantime, the important business of mussel collecting and purifying had begun only two days after the opening ceremony. The Daily Lancashire Post, 5th September 1935, reported: *"Fishermen of Lytham and the village of Banks on the opposite side of the Ribble channel, were to-day engaged gathering the first consignment of mussels for purification at the new Lancashire County Council tanks at Lytham.*



MUSSEL TANKS

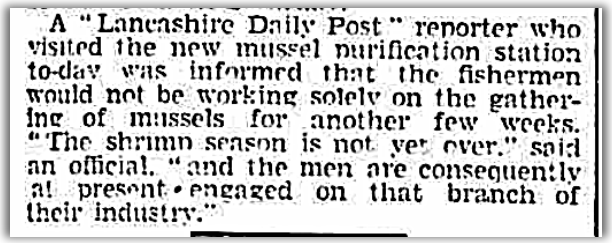
First Consignment by Lytham and Banks Fishermen

Fishermen of Lytham and the village of Banks on the opposite side of the Ribble channel, were to-day engaged gathering the first consignment of mussels for purification at the new Lancashire County Council tanks, at Lytham.

It is expected that no fewer than 50 bags of the shell-fish will have been brought to the mussel tanks this evening. These in accordance with present arrangements will be marketed on Saturday.

It is expected that no fewer than 50 bags of the shellfish will have been brought to the mussel tanks this evening [Thursday]. *These in accordance with present arrangements will be marketed on Saturday."*

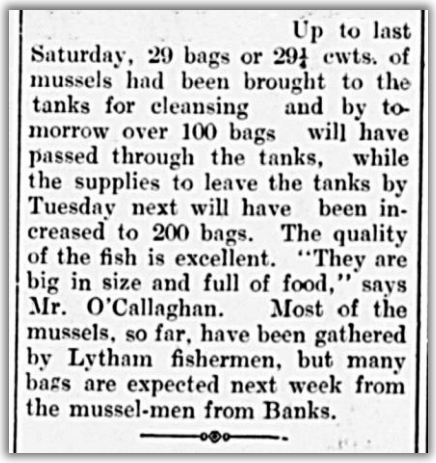
The newspaper article concluded with what appears to be an innocuous comment: *"A 'Lancashire Daily Post' reporter who visited the new mussel purification station to-day was informed that the fishermen would not be working solely on the gathering of mussels for another few weeks. "The shrimp season is not yet over," said an official, "and the men are consequently at present engaged on that branch of their industry."*



A "Lancashire Daily Post" reporter who visited the new mussel purification station to-day was informed that the fishermen would not be working solely on the gathering of mussels for another few weeks. "The shrimp season is not yet over," said an official, "and the men are consequently at present engaged on that branch of their industry."

[As we shall see in later chapters, the fishermen's conflict of interest between shrimps and mussels would reverberate throughout the whole of the period that the mussel tanks were in operation.]

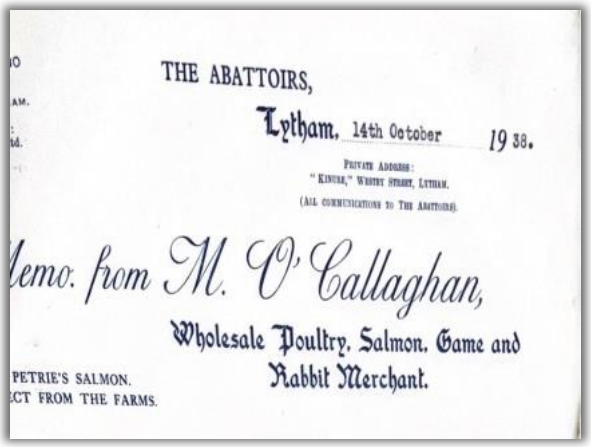
The expected *"50 bags of shellfish"* didn't appear on that first day but, as reported in the 'Lytham Times and St. Annes on the Sea Gazette' a week later: *"Up to last Saturday, 29* bags or 29 1/4 cwts. of mussels had been brought to the tanks for cleansing and by tomorrow over 100 bags will have passed through the tanks, while the supplies to leave the tanks by Tuesday will have been increased to 200 bags."*



Up to last Saturday, 29 bags or 29¼ cwts. of mussels had been brought to the tanks for cleansing and by to-morrow over 100 bags will have passed through the tanks, while the supplies to leave the tanks by Tuesday next will have been increased to 200 bags. The quality of the fish is excellent. "They are big in size and full of food," says Mr. O'Callaghan. Most of the mussels, so far, have been gathered by Lytham fishermen, but many bags are expected next week from the mussel-men from Banks.

* This article was part of a column called 'My Weekly Survey' and written by 'Scrutator' who didn't quite live up to his name as the number of bags shown was incorrect. The correct quantity was 23. 'Scrutator' had been interviewing Mr. Michael O'Callaghan, the secretary of the Lytham & Banks Fishermen's Societies (an amalgamation of the Lytham St. Annes Fishermen's Society Ltd. and the Banks Fishermen's Society Ltd). who went on to tell him: *"They* [the mussels] *are a good size and full of food … Most of the mussels, so far, have been gathered by Lytham Fishermen, but many bags are expected next week from the mussel-men from Banks."*

Mr. O'Callaghan was the proprietor of 'The Abattoirs' in Lytham from where he administered his wholesale poultry, salmon, game and rabbit business, and from where he managed the wholesale of all the Lytham Purified Mussels on behalf of the Lytham & Banks Fishermen's Societies.


THE ABATTOIRS,

Lytham, 14th October 1938.

PRIVATE ADDRESS:
"KINDER," WESTBY STREET, LYTHAM.
(ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE ABATTOIRS).

Memo. from M. O'Callaghan,

Wholesale Poultry, Salmon, Game and Rabbit Merchant.

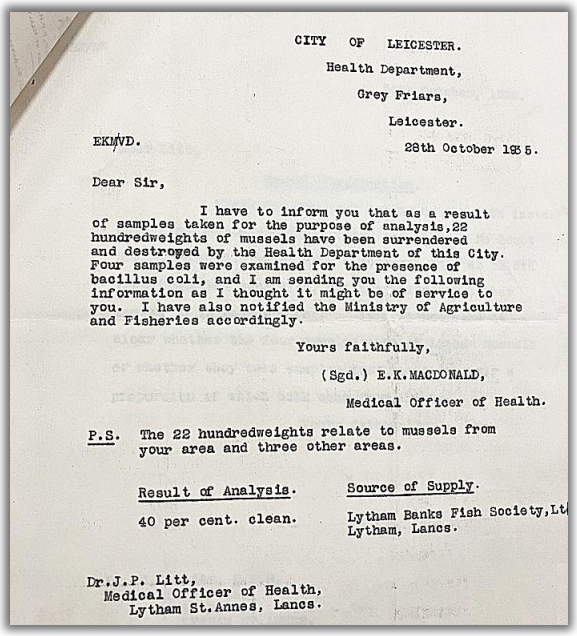
PETRIE'S SALMON.
ECT FROM THE FARMS.

On a positive note, the newspaper article described how the retailers, with whom Mr. O'Callaghan was dealing, *"are very pleased with the high-class quality of the mussels"* but also reported: *"There is strong competition with cheaper imported shellfish* [from Holland and Ireland] *but the consumers realise that the specially prepared and guaranteed Lytham product is worth a better price."*


The retailers, we learn from Mr. M. O'Callaghan, the secretary of the Fishermen's Co-operative Society, and sales manager, are very pleased with the high-class quality of the mussels.

There is strong competition with cheaper imported shellfish, but the consumers realise that the specially prepared and guaranteed Lytham product is worth a better price.

Less than two months later, 28th October 1935, a letter was sent from the City of Leicester Health Department to the Medical officer of Health at Lytham St. Annes: *"Dear Sir, I have to inform you that as a result of samples taken for the purpose of analysis, 22 hundredweights of mussels have been surrendered and destroyed by the health department of this city. Four samples were examined for the presence of bacillus coli, and I am sending you the following information as I thought it might be of service to you. I have notified the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries accordingly."*


CITY OF LEICESTER.
Health Department,
Grey Friars,
Leicester.

EKM/VD. 28th October 1935.

Dear Sir,

I have to inform you that as a result of samples taken for the purpose of analysis,22 hundredweights of mussels have been surrendered and destroyed by the Health Department of this City. Four samples were examined for the presence of bacillus coli, and I am sending you the following information as I thought it might be of service to you. I have also notified the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) E.K.MACDONALD,

Medical Officer of Health.

P.S. The 22 hundredweights relate to mussels from your area and three other areas.

Result of Analysis.	Source of Supply.
40 per cent. clean.	Lytham Banks Fish Society,Lt Lytham, Lancs.

Dr.J.P. Litt,
Medical Officer of Health,
Lytham St.Annes, Lancs.

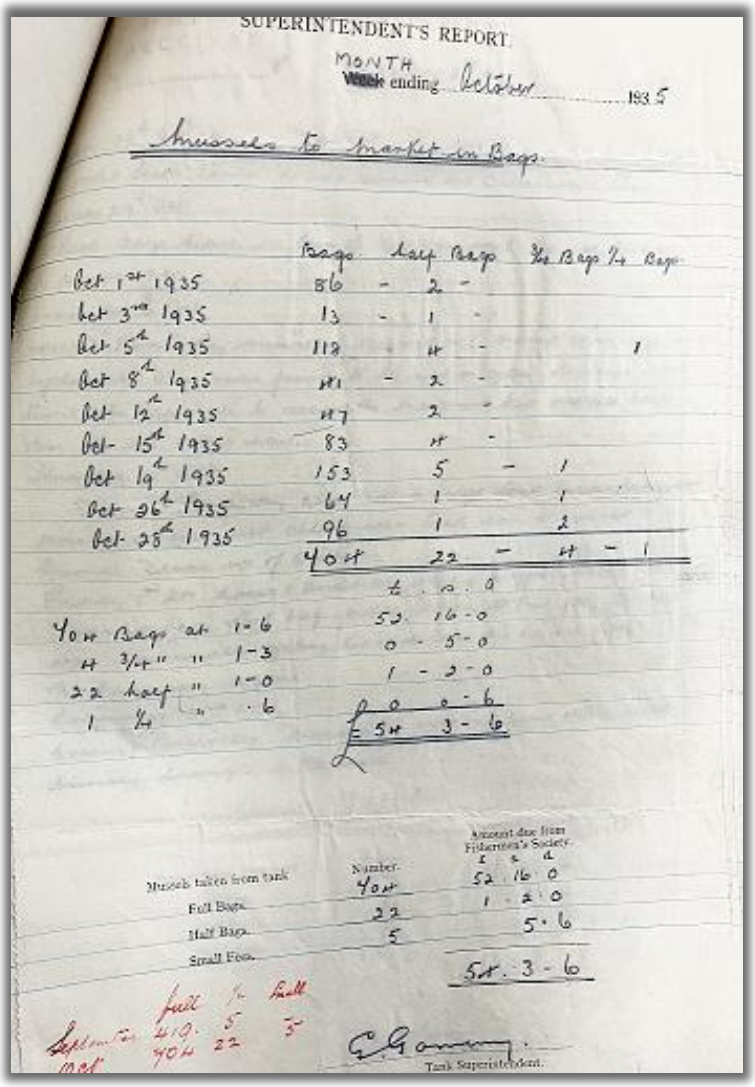
In a postscript to the letter he added *"The 22 hundredweights relate to mussels from your area and three other areas."*

The letter identified one of the four sources of supply as 'Lytham Banks Fish Society, Ltd'.

Whilst there didn't seem to be any definitive evidence that the contaminated mussels came from the Lytham Mussel Purification Tanks, this would not have been the publicity that Mr. O'Callaghan and all those involved in the new venture would have welcomed at this early stage. As it was

usual for mussels to be delivered in bags weighing 1¼ hundredweight, approximately eighteen bags of mussels would have been destroyed at Leicester.

In his first monthly report, October 1935, the Tank Superintendent itemised the output of "Mussels to Market in Bags" which shows that 704 bags, 22 half bags, 4 three-quarter bags and 1 quarter bag were delivered that month. The income generated for the owners, Lancashire County Council, was £54-3s-6d.



SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

MONTH

Week ending October 193 5

Mussels to market in Bags.

	Bags	Half Bags	¾ Bags	¼ Bags
Oct 1st 1935	86	2		
Oct 3rd 1935	13	1		
Oct 5th 1935	118	4		1
Oct 8th 1935	41	2		
Oct 12th 1935	47	2		
Oct 15th 1935	83	4		
Oct 19th 1935	153	5	1	
Oct 26th 1935	64	1	1	
Oct 28th 1935	96	1	2	
	704	22	4	1

704 Bags at 1-6 — £52-16-0
4 ¾" " 1-3 — 0-5-0
22 half " 1-0 — 1-2-0
1 ¼ " 6 — 0-0-6
£54 3-6

Mussels taken from tank — Number — Amount due from Fishermen's Society £ s d

Full Bags — 704 — 52 16 0
Half Bags — 22 — 1 2 0
Small Fees — 5 — 5 6
54 3 6

Sept 419 5 5
Oct 704 22 4 1

G. Gomery.
Tank Superintendent.

The income generated for the owners, Lancashire County Council, was £54-3s-6d.

The report also reveals that the cost to the mussel gatherers was:

1/6d per bag

1/3d per ¾ bag

1/0d per ½ bag

6d per ¼ bag.

Scribbled in red ink at the foot of the report it can be seen that in the previous month, September, there had been 419 full bags and 5 half bags delivered to market.

The report was signed by the Tank Superintendent: G. Gomery.

The Tanks Superintendent's Report highlights a significant problem for Mr. O'Callaghan, the Wholesaler, viz., the large variation in the availability of mussels for market on a day-to-day basis – 86 bags October 1st, 13 bags October 3rd, 118 bags October 5th, 41 bags October 8th, etc.

On the 25th October, the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' printed an article written by one of its reporters, T.H.T., in conversation with Mr. O'Callaghan, which I have reproduced here in full as it provides an excellent 'on-the-spot' account of the nascent Lytham mussel industry and this problem in particular:

THE mussel industry is a ticklish affair. So much depends on the weather. The storm of last Friday and Saturday hit the fishermen a severe blow. They could not go out to the gathering grounds and consequently the greater part of this week has been lost to them.

At the moment 22 men are engaged in the industry. Divided, a little more than half of these belong to Lytham, the others to the village of Banks, which lies across the channel on the Southport side.

The Banks men find the work too hard altogether if they have to come and go daily from one side of the river to the other, and now they dwell in Lytham during the greater part of the week, making homewards on Saturdays.

CONTINUITY OF SUPPLIES.

When the tanks were brought into operation it was stated that work would be found for quite 45 men, so therefore it may be taken for granted that there is probable employment for twice the number according to that estimate. It has, of course, been a matter of feeling the way. The markets have to be found. As these materialise, the absorption of men into the industry goes on gradually.

The questions arise at this stage: "Is there the market which would justify
a larger body of mussel gatherers?" "Are the mussels in sufficient quantity to keep the markets in continuous supply?"

I have this week had a chat with Mr. Michael O'Callaghan, who has undertaken the onerous task of sales manager and secretary to the Lytham and Banks Fishermen's Society.

He is the "live wire" in the new adventure. He sits in his office with a telephone at his elbow – of course he has other large commercial interests – and as I discussed matters with him the phone rang and I could not deafen my ears to the fact that merchants were "talking mussels."

Mr. O'Callaghan informed me that one of the greatest difficulties he had to contend with is the continuity of supplies. "For instance," he said "one week we had orders for 150 bags of mussels, and there were only 40 in the tank. The weather makes things very awkward, as last week-end, when the storm interfered with the operations for this week. The highest number of bags dispatched in one week was 215; the lowest has been 32."

DEMAND FOR PURIFIED ARTICLE

This energetic sales-manager is en-

thusiastic about the future of the Lytham mussel industry. When I asked him about markets, Mr. O'Callaghan said the best were perhaps Huddersfield, Halifax and Leeds, but he was sending the mussels to many places in Lancashire – Preston, Wigan, Blackburn, Nelson; besides other towns in Yorkshire. They were even going to Birmingham, Chesterfield, Walsall and Leicester, to pick out but a few of the places where "Lytham purified mussels" are now on sale.

"The fact that they are purified is making the sale." said Mr. O'Callaghan. "The reason Yorkshire markets are among the best is because there is a growing demand for the purified article."

But if one wants to plumb the depths of the worries of a sales-manager they need only go through the files of correspondence and note the disappointment, aye the temper, caused by the breakdown of supplies. Since the industry was restarted the markets have been regained with surprising celerity. Lytham mussels, it has to be remembered, have not been a commercial commodity since 1923.

Naturally, the merchants must be assured of a regular consignment, and this is the great point emphasised and doubly underlined in their communication.

"We must be able to depend on our orders coming to hand," is what they say in effect.

ENCOURAGING

Nothing could be more encouraging to those engaged in the industry than such a persistent demand. It is amazing what wonderful effect has come from the act of cleansing the mussels. It demonstrates that this particular shellfish is a popular food with a big class of people, who are going strongly for what has become a delicacy of the table.

Mr. O'Callaghan mentioned that the fishermen are trying to overcome the breakdown in operations through bad weather by creating stocks nearer to home. It is intended to create a sort of larder within easily-reached deep water by relaying the mussels during spare time, so that these storings can be made use of when it is impossible to go to the usual hunting grounds.

Speaking of the competition in the market, Mr. O'Callaghan was very enlightening. "There is a very fierce competition. We are up against the unpurified British, Irish and Dutch supplies, which can be put on the market at about 4/- per bag, which is considerably less than our charges. We have to ask about 3/- more so as to cover overhead charges. But the pleasing thing is that the demand for Lytham mussels is steadily increasing every week. The local requirements and those at Preston and Fleetwood are exceedingly good. People are eating more simply because they are guaranteed. The demand at times is larger than we can meet, but we hope to get over that difficulty.

FROM THE DEEP WATERS

Those who have stood on the promenade and watched the process of cleansing will have observed that many of the mussels are liberally bespattered with barnacles.

"The secret of that," said Mr. O'Callaghan – and the fishermen themselves also supplied first-hand evidence – "is that they are recovered from the deep water. Therefore, they are the very best

type of mussels."

In the getting away of the goods to the markets one of the most important essential is a good transport system. No doubt many people have seen the fantastic story of "mussel Specials" – and it is a pure fantasy.

True, the L.M.S. are giving all the assistance they can in this respect. When the mussels are bagged, ordinarily on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings, the railway people send one of their four-ton lorries with trailer. It loads up and takes the mussels direct from Lytham to Preston, whence they are distributed to all parts as early as possible.

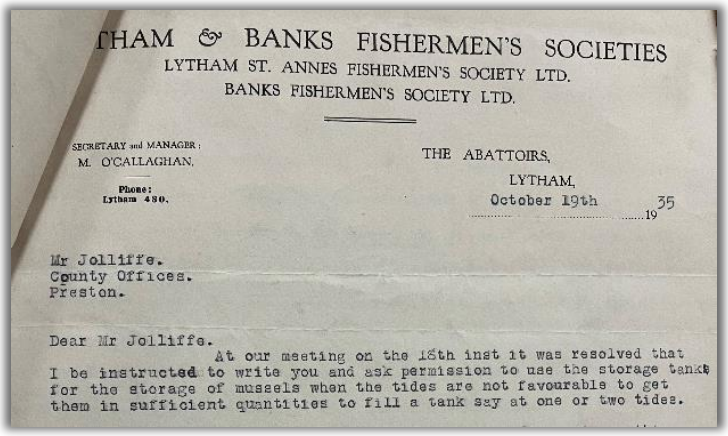
ENORMOUS STOCKS

On the question of quantities of mussels in the estuary there is abundant evidence that supplies are enormous. When the ban was put on the removal 12 years ago, attempts were made to destroy the beds, but it was as futile as trying to stop the incoming sea. Undisturbed for so many years the mussels have increased and multiplied.

Summing everything up it is clear that the Lytham mussel industry has a bright future before it. The tanks are delivering the goods. As will be seen they are not working to anything like full capacity.

The demand from the merchants and the consumers is insistent and all that is wanted are favourable weather conditions so that they who go down to the beds shall not be interrupted in their labours – labours which are very arduous and from which many people less hardy than our fishermen would shrink.

T.H.T.



ΓHAM & BANKS FISHERMEN'S SOCIETIES
LYTHAM ST. ANNES FISHERMEN'S SOCIETY LTD.
BANKS FISHERMEN'S SOCIETY LTD.

SECRETARY and MANAGER:
M. O'CALLAGHAN.

Phone:
Lytham 480.

THE ABATTOIRS,
LYTHAM,
October 19th 35
19

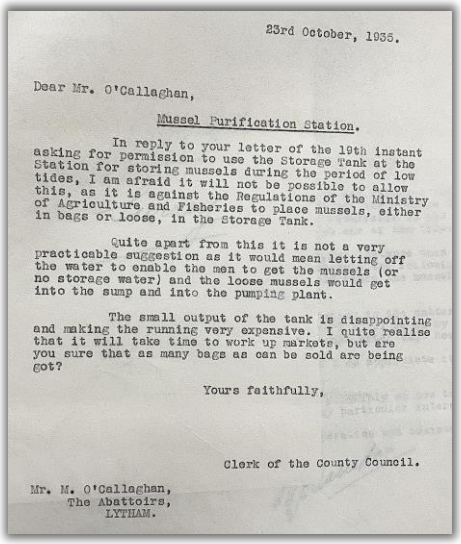
Mr Jolliffe.
County Offices.
Preston.

Dear Mr Jolliffe.

At our meeting on the 18th inst it was resolved that I be instructed to write you and ask permission to use the storage tanks for the storage of mussels when the tides are not favourable to get them in sufficient quantities to fill a tank say at one or two tides.

The reference in the above article to the fishermen creating stocks nearer to home was perhaps related to a letter Mr. O'Callaghan had written to the Chief Assistant Solicitor at the County Offices in Preston only six days earlier, 19th October 1935. In his letter he refers to asking for *"permission to use the storage tanks* [at the purification station] *for the storage of mussels when the tides are not favourable to get them in sufficient quantities to fill a tank say at one or two tides"*.

In reply to Mr. O'Callaghan's letter, the Clerk of the County Council, in a letter dated only three days later, 23rd October, declined the request on the basis that *"it is against the Regulations of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to place mussels either in bags or loose, in the Storage Tank"*. As if it wasn't enough to quote 'Regulations' as the reason for the refusal, the Clerk continued: *"Quite apart from this it is not a very practicable suggestion as it would mean letting off the water to enable the men to get the mussels (or no storage water) and the loose mussels would get into the sump and into the pumping plant."*



23rd October, 1935.

Dear Mr. O'Callaghan,

Mussel Purification Station.

In reply to your letter of the 19th instant asking for permission to use the Storage Tank at the Station for storing mussels during the period of low tides, I am afraid it will not be possible to allow this, as it is against the Regulations of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to place mussels, either in bags or loose, in the Storage Tank.

Quite apart from this it is not a very practicable suggestion as it would mean letting off the water to enable the men to get the mussels (or no storage water) and the loose mussels would get into the sump and into the pumping plant.

The small output of the tank is disappointing and making the running very expensive. I quite realise that it will take time to work up markets, but are you sure that as many bags as can be sold are being got?

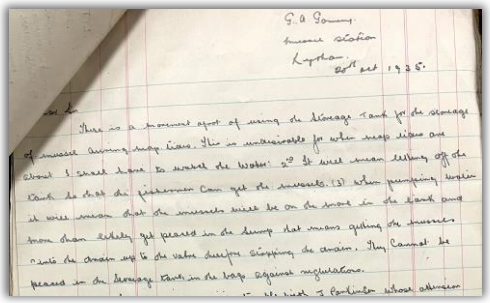
Yours faithfully,

Clerk of the County Council.

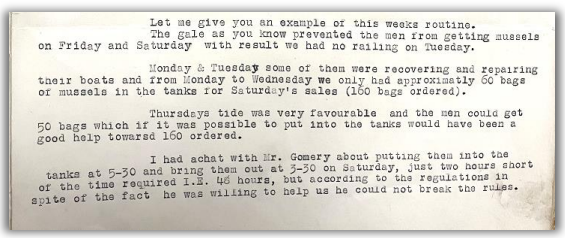
Mr. M. O'Callaghan,
The Abattoirs,
LYTHAM.

Finishing with a rather passive-aggressive paragraph: *"The small output of the tank is disappointing and making the running very expensive, I quite realise that it will take time to work up markets, but are you sure that as many bags as can be sold are being got?"*

The prompt reply from the Clerk was possible as he had been briefed about the forthcoming request in a hand-written letter from the Tank Superintendent dated 20th October. In his letter Mr. Gomery wrote: *"There is a movement afoot of using the Storage Tank for the storage of mussels during neap tides. This is undesirable for when neap tides are about I shall have to watch the worker. 2nd It will mean letting off the tank so that the fishermen can get the mussels. (3) When pumping water it will mean that the mussels will be on the move in the tank and more than likely get placed in the sump that means getting the mussels into the drain up to the valve therefore stopping the drain. They cannot be placed in the storage tanks in the bags against regulations."*



A reply was swift in coming. On the same day that the newspaper article was published, Mr. O'Callaghan wrote back to the County Offices further explaining his problem: *"Let me give you an example of this weeks* [sic] *routine. The gale as you know prevented the men from getting mussels on Friday and Saturday with the result we had no railing on Tuesday.*



Let me give you an example of this weeks routine.
The gale as you know prevented the men from getting mussels on Friday and Saturday with result we had no railing on Tuesday.

Monday & Tuesday some of them were recovering and repairing their boats and from Monday to Wednesday we only had approximatly 60 bags or mussels in the tanks for Saturday's sales (160 bags ordered).

Thursdays tide was very favourable and the men could get 50 bags which if it was possible to put into the tanks would have been a good help towarsd 160 ordered.

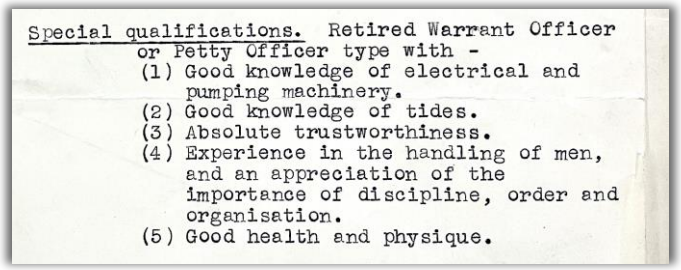
I had achat with Mr. Gomery about putting them into the tanks at 5-30 and bring them out at 5-30 on Saturday, just two hours short of the time required I.E. 48 hours, but according to the regulations in spite of the fact he was willing to help us he could not break the rules.

Monday and Tuesday some of them were recovering and repairing their boats and from Monday to Wednesday we only had approximately 60 bags of mussels in the tanks for Saturday (160 bags ordered)

Thursdays [sic] *tide was very favourable and the men could get 50 bags which if it was possible to put into the tanks would have been a good help towards 160 ordered.*

I had a chat with Mr. Gomery about putting them into the tanks at 5-30 and bring [sic] *them out at 3-30 on Saturday, just two hours short of the time required I.E. 46 hours, but according to the regulations in spite of the fact he was willing to help us he could not break the rules."*

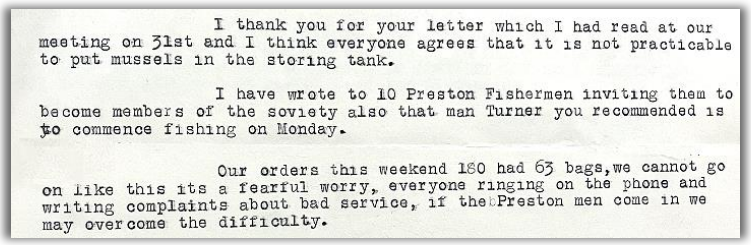
Again, the 'regulations' were getting in the way of 'business' but it must be remembered that the position of Tank Superintendent required Special qualifications:


Special qualifications. Retired Warrant Officer
or Petty Officer type with -
(1) Good knowledge of electrical and pumping machinery.
(2) Good knowledge of tides.
(3) Absolute trustworthiness.
(4) Experience in the handling of men, and an appreciation of the importance of discipline, order and organisation.
(5) Good health and physique.

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(2) Good knowledge of tides.
(3) Absolute trustworthiness
(4) Experience in the handling of men, and an appreciation of the importance of discipline, order and organisation.
(5) Good health and physique.

Mr. Gomery was a retired Chief Petty Officer with 23½ years service in the Royal Navy having signed-up in 1909, aged 15½ and he fitted the role perfectly.

In his letter to Mr. O'Callaghan, the County Council Clerk had asked the question: "*The small output of the tank is disappointing and making the running very expensive, I quite realise that it will take time to work up markets, but are you sure that as many bags as can be sold are being got?"* Following a meeting of the Lytham and Banks Fishermen's Societies, Mr. O'Callaghan sent a reply the County Council: *"I thank you for your letter which I had read at our meeting on 31st and I think everyone agrees that it is not practicable to put mussels in the storing tank.*


I thank you for your letter which I had read at our meeting on 31st and I think everyone agrees that it is not practicable to put mussels in the storing tank.

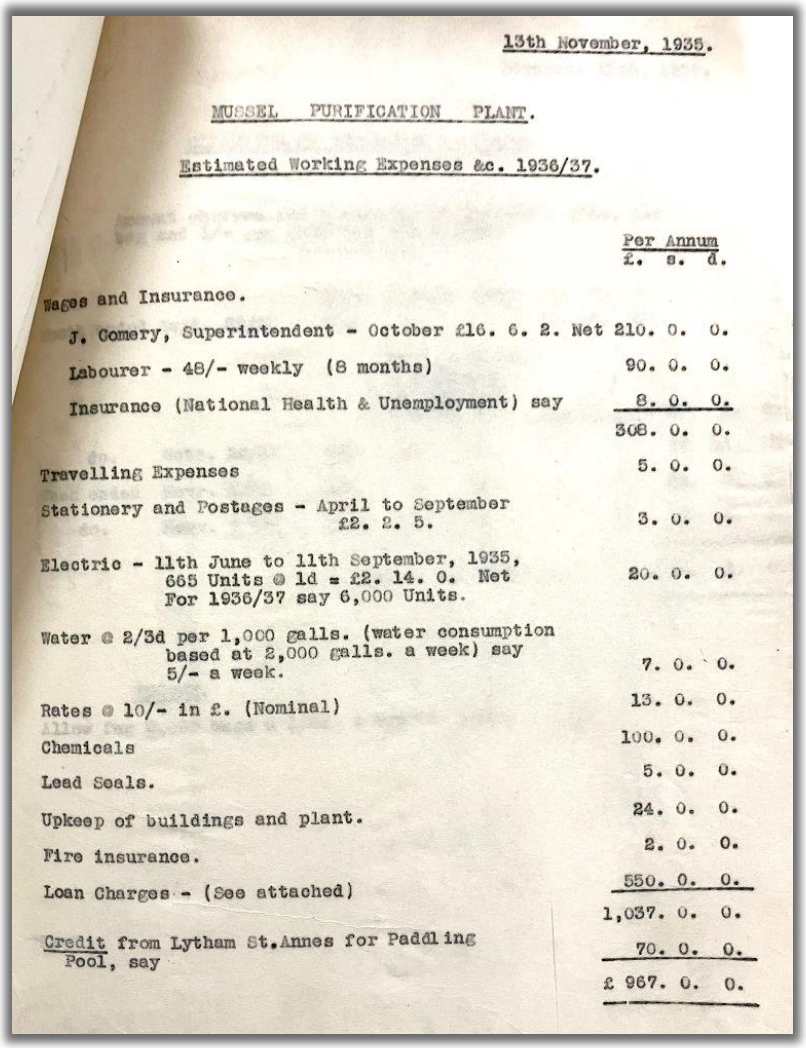
I have wrote to 10 Preston Fishermen inviting them to become members of the soviety also that man Turner you recommended is to commence fishing on Monday.

Our orders this weekend 160 had 63 bags, we cannot go on like this its a fearful worry, everyone ringing on the phone and writing complaints about bad service, if the Preston men come in we may overcome the difficulty.

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As the first three months of eventful, if not satisfactory, business for the Lytham Mussel Purification Station neared its end, the Lancashire County Council turned its attention to planning the financial needs of the next mussel gathering season. A letter, dated 13th November 1935, showed the total for the 'Estimated Working Expenses &c. 1936/37' to be £967. 0. 0.; at £550.0s.0d the



13th November, 1935.

MUSSEL PURIFICATION PLANT.

Estimated Working Expenses &c. 1936/37.

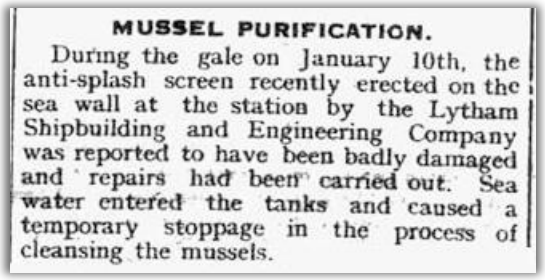
	Per Annum £. s. d.
Wages and Insurance.	
J. Comery, Superintendent - October £16. 6. 2. Net	210. 0. 0.
Labourer - 48/- weekly (8 months)	90. 0. 0.
Insurance (National Health & Unemployment) say	8. 0. 0.
	308. 0. 0.
Travelling Expenses	5. 0. 0.
Stationery and Postages - April to September £2. 2. 5.	3. 0. 0.
Electric - 11th June to 11th September, 1935, 665 Units @ 1d = £2. 14. 0. Net For 1936/37 say 6,000 Units.	20. 0. 0.
Water @ 2/3d per 1,000 galls. (water consumption based at 2,000 galls. a week) say 5/- a week.	7. 0. 0.
Rates @ 10/- in £. (Nominal)	13. 0. 0.
Chemicals	100. 0. 0.
Lead Seals.	5. 0. 0.
Upkeep of buildings and plant.	24. 0. 0.
Fire insurance.	2. 0. 0.
Loan Charges - (See attached)	550. 0. 0.
	1,037. 0. 0.
Credit from Lytham St.Annes for Paddling Pool, say	70. 0. 0.
	£ 967. 0. 0.

largest expense was to be the loan repayment, followed by J (sic). Gomery's wages of £210.0s.0d. Chemicals at £100.0s.0d, the wages of a labourer at 48/- per week for 8 months and £87.0s.0d for sundry items made up an estimated total expenditure of £1,037.0s.0d.

Offset from this was a credit of £70.0s.0d for use of the facility as a Paddling Pool during the following summer months.

Chapter 11
Lytham Mussel Purification Station: 1936 -1938

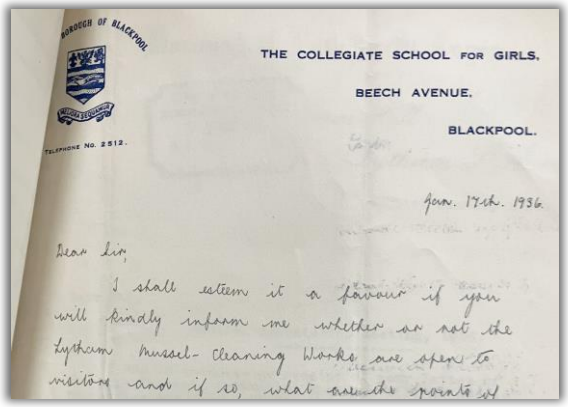
Gales battered the north-west of England again at the start of the new year and the Purification Station sustained significant damage, reported the Ormskirk Advertiser on the 13th February 1936:*"During the gale on January 10th the anti-splash screen recently erected on the sea wall at the station by the Lytham Shipbuilding and Engineering Company was reported to have been badly damaged and repairs have been carried out. Sea water entered the tanks and caused a temporary stoppage in the process of cleansing the mussels."*



MUSSEL PURIFICATION.

During the gale on January 10th, the anti-splash screen recently erected on the sea wall at the station by the Lytham Shipbuilding and Engineering Company was reported to have been badly damaged and repairs had been carried out. Sea water entered the tanks and caused a temporary stoppage in the process of cleansing the mussels.

Public interest in the purification of mussels must have been awakened during the months following its opening as requests to visit the plant started to appear as early as the 17th January 1936, when the Secretary of The Collegiate School for Girls Scientific Society, Nora Lumb, wrote to Mr. O'Callaghan:



BOROUGH OF BLACKPOOL

THE COLLEGIATE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS,

BEECH AVENUE,

BLACKPOOL.

TELEPHONE NO. 2512.

Jan. 17th. 1936.

Dear Sir,

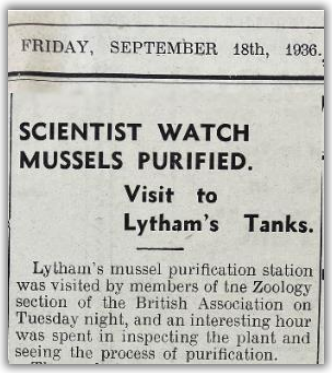
I shall esteem it a favour if you will kindly inform me whether or not the Lytham Mussel-Cleaning Works are open to visitors and if so, what are the points of

"Dear Sir,

I shall esteem it a favour if you will kindly inform me whether or not the Lytham Mussel Cleaning Works are open to visitors, and if so, what are the points of [interest?]".

This letter was shortly followed (28th January 1936) by a similar request from the Zoology Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The Association was holding its annual meeting in Blackpool during September of that year and hoped that about fifty members *"could make a visit of inspection to the Mussel Purification Station".*

The subsequent visit was reported by the 'Lytham St. Annes Standard' in their newspaper published on Friday, 18th September 1936 under the heading:



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18th, 1936.

SCIENTIST WATCH MUSSELS PURIFIED.

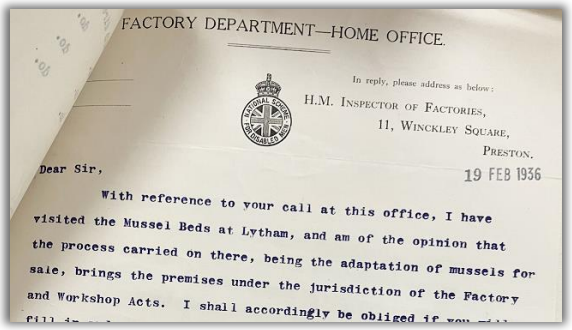
Visit to Lytham's Tanks.

Lytham's mussel purification station was visited by members of the Zoology section of the British Association on Tuesday night, and an interesting hour was spent in inspecting the plant and seeing the process of purification.

"SCIENTIST WATCH MUSSELS PURIFIED":

"Lytham's mussel purification station was visited by members of the Zoology section of the British Association on Tuesday night, and an interesting hour was spent in inspecting the plant and seeing the process of purification."

On a more serious note, the Clerk to the County Council received a letter sent by H.M. Inspector of Factories on the 19th February 1936 informing him he had *"visited at the Mussel Beds at Lytham, and am of the opinion that the process carried on there, being the adaptation of mussels for sale, brings the premises under the jurisdiction of the Factory and Workshops Acts."*



FACTORY DEPARTMENT—HOME OFFICE.

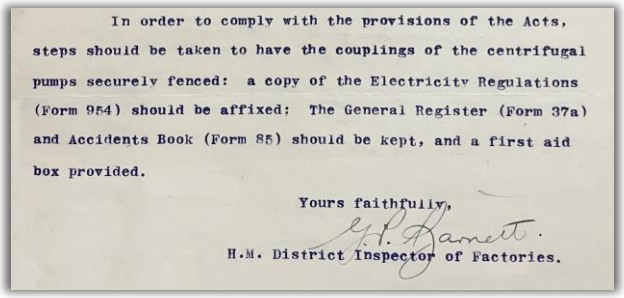
In reply, please address as below:
H.M. Inspector of Factories,
11, Winckley Square,
Preston.

19 FEB 1936

Dear Sir,

With reference to your call at this office, I have visited the Mussel Beds at Lytham, and am of the opinion that the process carried on there, being the adaptation of mussels for sale, brings the premises under the jurisdiction of the Factory and Workshop Acts. I shall accordingly be obliged if you

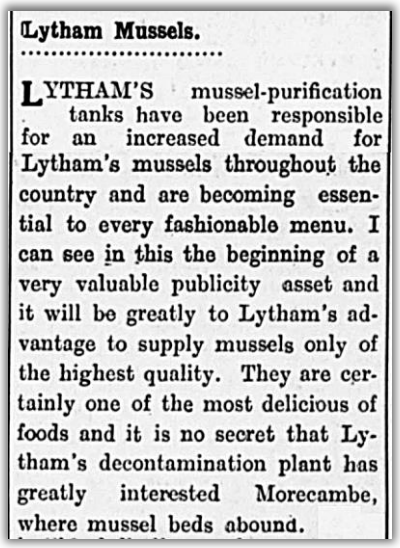
The letter goes on to explain that a 'Health and Safety' notice was required to be affixed on the premises and: *"In order to comply with the provisions of the Acts, steps should be taken to have the couplings of the centrifugal pumps securely fenced: a copy of the Electricity Regulations (Form 954) should be affixed: The General Register (Form 37a) and Accidents Book (Form 85) should be kept, and a first aid box provided."*



In order to comply with the provisions of the Acts, steps should be taken to have the couplings of the centrifugal pumps securely fenced: a copy of the Electricity Regulations (Form 954) should be affixed: The General Register (Form 37a) and Accidents Book (Form 85) should be kept, and a first aid box provided.

Yours faithfully,

H.M. District Inspector of Factories.



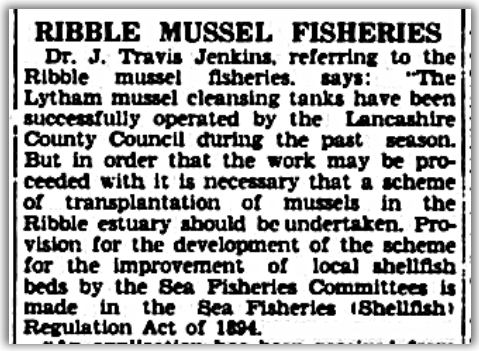
Lytham Mussels.

LYTHAM'S mussel-purification tanks have been responsible for an increased demand for Lytham's mussels throughout the country and are becoming essential to every fashionable menu. I can see in this the beginning of a very valuable publicity asset and it will be greatly to Lytham's advantage to supply mussels only of the highest quality. They are certainly one of the most delicious of foods and it is no secret that Lytham's decontamination plant has greatly interested Morecambe, where mussel beds abound.

At the end of the season, the 'Lytham Times' published a very upbeat article in praise of the Lytham mussel and its potential to advertise the name of Lytham countrywide: *"Lytham's mussel purification tanks have been responsible for an increased demand for Lytham's mussels throughout the country and are becoming essential to every fashionable menu. I can see in this the beginning of a very valuable publicity asset and it will be greatly to Lytham's advantage to supply mussels only of the highest quality. They are certainly one of the most delicious of foods and it is no secret that Lytham's decontamination plant has greatly interested Morecambe, where mussel beds abound."*

[The reference to Morecambe's interest in the last sentence was significantly more farsighted than the newspaper reporter could have imagined. The attempt to finance and build a mussel purification station at Morecambe failed to come to fruition (see Chapter 8) and as a result the Lytham station, over its working lifetime, purified more Morecambe mussels than were collected from the Ribble estuary.]

In the month following the H.M. Inspector of Factories letter, the Superintendent of the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries District, Dr. J. Travis Jenkins, published his quarterly report in



RIBBLE MUSSEL FISHERIES

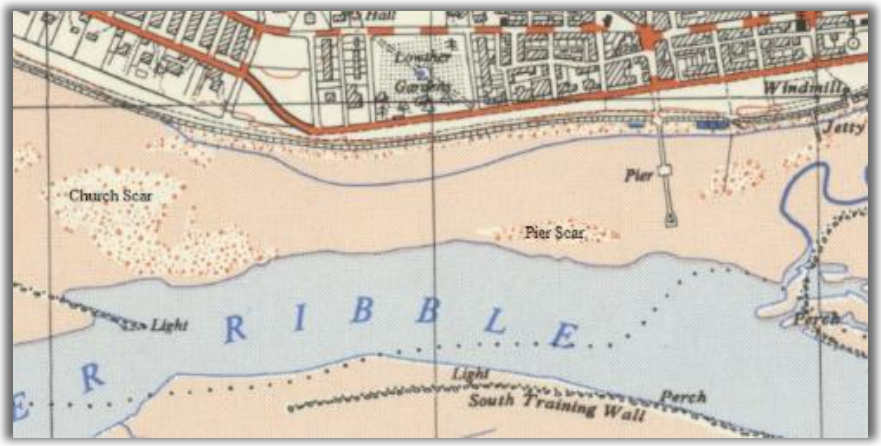
Dr. J. Travis Jenkins, referring to the Ribble mussel fisheries, says: "The Lytham mussel cleansing tanks have been successfully operated by the Lancashire County Council during the past season. But in order that the work may be proceeded with it is necessary that a scheme of transplantation of mussels in the Ribble estuary should be undertaken. Provision for the development of the scheme for the improvement of local shellfish beds by the Sea Fisheries Committees is made in the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Regulation Act of 1894.

which, when referring to the Ribble mussel fisheries says: *'The Lytham mussel cleansing tanks have been successfully operated by the Lancashire County Council during the past season. But in order that the work may be proceeded with it is necessary that a scheme of transplantation of mussels in the Ribble estuary should be undertaken. Provision for the development of the scheme for the improvement of local shellfish beds by the Sea Fisheries Committee is made in the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Regulations Act of 1894.'*

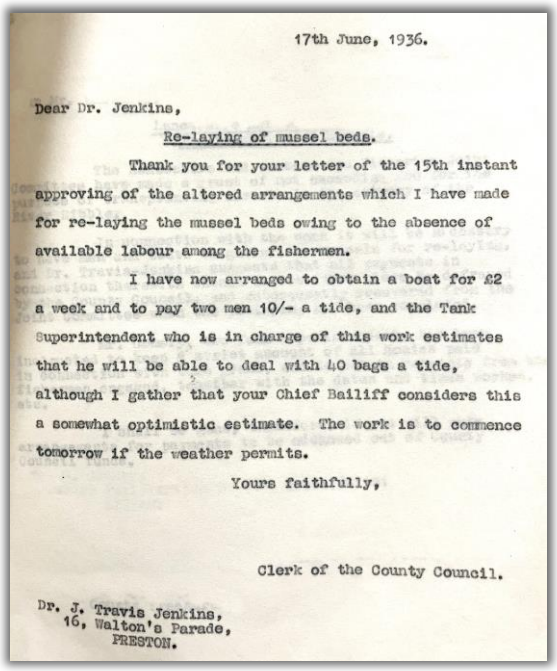
Dr. Travis Jenkins' report went on to say that the Lancashire County Council had already approached the Sea Fisheries Committee for financial assistance for the development of their mussel fisheries and the sum requested was well within the amount authorised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. As such, he therefore advised the committee that this scheme should commence immediately.

What Dr. Travis Jenkins was proposing was the setting up of mussel nursery beds where transplanted mussels would be re-laid in the most favourable positions for spawning and the resultant fall of 'spat' would in due course replenish the beds in the estuary.

The County Council lost no time in putting in place a plan for a mussel transplantation scheme as the mussel spawning season, June to early July, was fast approaching. The plan was for the Tanks Superintendent to get in touch with two fishermen from Lytham and two from Banks, who would, for an agreed fee, collect 10 bags of mussels per tide from the lower reaches of the river for transplanting on the Church Scar and Pier Scar mussel beds until the transplanting operations were completed. These two mussel beds would then be closed for the whole of the forthcoming mussel gathering season.



The plan failed to materialise in this form, presumably owing to the fishermen not wanting to give up their more lucrative summer fishing jobs just to relay mussels. Instead, as explained by the County Council clerk to Dr. Jenkins, in his letter dated 17th June 1936, an alternative solution was implemented.



17th June, 1936.

Dear Dr. Jenkins,

Re-laying of mussel beds.

Thank you for your letter of the 15th instant approving of the altered arrangements which I have made for re-laying the mussel beds owing to the absence of available labour among the fishermen.

I have now arranged to obtain a boat for £2 a week and to pay two men 10/- a tide, and the Tank Superintendent who is in charge of this work estimates that he will be able to deal with 40 bags a tide, although I gather that your Chief Bailiff considers this a somewhat optimistic estimate. The work is to commence tomorrow if the weather permits.

Yours faithfully,

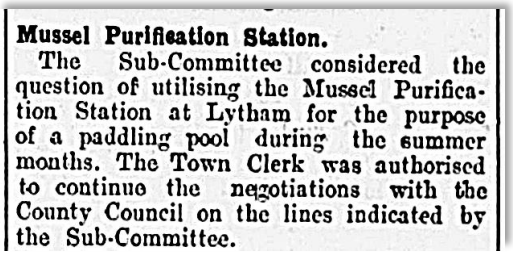
Clerk of the County Council.

Dr. J. Travis Jenkins,
16, Walton's Parade,
PRESTON.

"Thank you for your letter of the 15th instant approving of the altered arrangements which I have made for re-laying the mussel beds owing to the absence of available labour among the fishermen.

I have now arranged to obtain a boat for £2 a week and to pay two men 10/- a tide, and the Tank Superintendent who is in charge of this work estimates that he will be able to deal with 40 bags a tide, although I gather that your Chief Bailiff considers this a somewhat optimistic estimate. The work is to commence tomorrow if the weather permits."

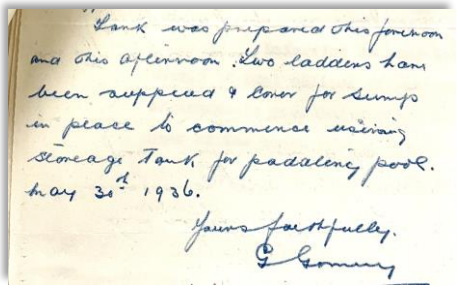
Prior to arranging the re-laying of the mussel beds the Tank Superintendent had been engaged on another task. Following a Lytham St. Annes Corporation Sub-Committee meeting held at the beginning of May, preparations were made to utilise *"the Mussel Purification Station at Lytham for the purpose of a paddling pool during the summer months. The Town Clerk was authorised to continue the negotiations with the County Council on the lines indicated by the Sub-Committee."*



Mussel Purification Station.

The Sub-Committee considered the question of utilising the Mussel Purification Station at Lytham for the purpose of a paddling pool during the summer months. The Town Clerk was authorised to continue the negotiations with the County Council on the lines indicated by the Sub-Committee.

The negotiations were swiftly completed and G. Gomery informed the Clerk of the County Council on a hand-written letter that the *"Tank was prepared this forenoon and this afternoon. Two ladders have been supplied & cover for sump in place to commence using Storage Tank for paddling pool May 30th 1936."*



Tank was prepared this forenoon and this afternoon. Two ladders have been supplied & cover for sump in place to commence using Storage Tank for paddling pool. May 31st 1936.

Yours faithfully,
G. Gomery



The Paddling Pool at Lytham Mussel Purification Station

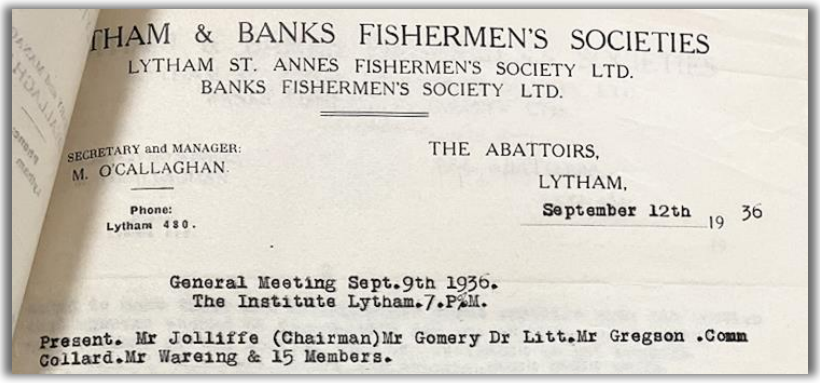
The 'Sea Fisheries (Ribble) Order Confirmation Act, 1936', the final piece for the establishment and maintenance of a several mussel fishery in the estuary of the river Ribble was confirmed by an Act of Parliament on the 31st July 1936:

[26 GEO. 5. & 1 EDW. 8.] *Sea Fisheries (Ribble) Order Confirmation Act*, 1936. [Ch. lxxxvi.]

CHAPTER lxxxvi.

An Act to confirm a Provisional Order made by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries under the Sea Fisheries Act 1868 for the establishment and maintenance of a several mussel fishery in the estuary of the river Ribble in the county of Lancaster. [31st July 1936.] A.D. 1936.

With the start of the 1936/1937 mussel gathering season on the horizon, there was unrest amongst the fishermen of the Lytham and Banks Fishermen's Societies. At a General Meeting of the Societies held on the 9th September 1936, attended by Mr. Jolliffe (Chair-man), Mr Gomery, Dr. Litt, Mr. Gregson, Commander Collard, Mr. Wareing and 15 members, the Secretary of the Societies, Mr. O'Callaghan, read a letter from the Lancashire County Council expressing their concern that the tanks weren't being worked efficiently and asked for assurance from the meeting that the members were prepared to give the business their full support.



THAM & BANKS FISHERMEN'S SOCIETIES
LYTHAM ST. ANNES FISHERMEN'S SOCIETY LTD.
BANKS FISHERMEN'S SOCIETY LTD.

SECRETARY and MANAGER:
M. O'CALLAGHAN.

Phone:
Lytham 480.

THE ABATTOIRS,
LYTHAM,
September 12th 19 36

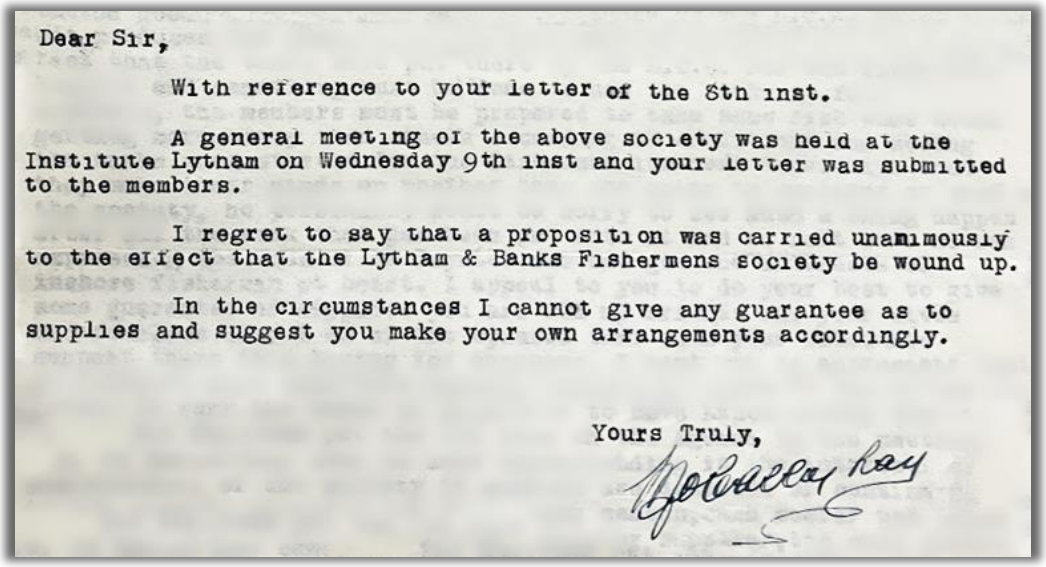
General Meeting Sept.9th 1936.
The Institute Lytham.7.P.M.

Present. Mr Jolliffe (Chairman)Mr Gomery Dr Litt.Mr Gregson .Comm Collard.Mr Wareing & 15 Members.

Commander Collard, the North Western inspector for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, told the fishermen that in his view they had not produced the goods and must take into serious consideration the fact that the tanks were put there for their benefit and something must be done to use the tanks to full capacity.

Mr. Jolliffe put to the meeting Agenda Item 1: "*To definitely come to some understanding in the interests of the shareholders of the society if members are desirous of continuing to get mussels regularly for the coming season.*"

Each member present was asked individually, "*was he prepared to get regular supplies?*" Mr. O'Callaghan recorded that *"the only members present who would give his assurance was J. J. Parkinson and his son"*. Dr. Litt then proposed and Mr. James Parkinson seconded a proposition *"that the society be wound up"*. This was then put to the meeting for a vote.



Dear Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 8th inst.

A general meeting of the above society was held at the Institute Lytham on Wednesday 9th inst and your letter was submitted to the members.

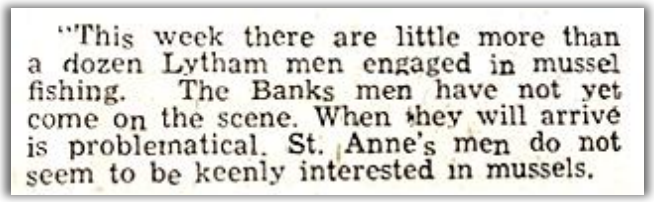
I regret to say that a proposition was carried unanimously to the effect that the Lytham & Banks Fishermens society be wound up.

In the circumstances I cannot give any guarantee as to supplies and suggest you make your own arrangements accordingly.

Yours Truly,

A unanimous vote in favour of winding up the 'Lytham & Banks Fishermens society' (sic) saw its demise and Mr. O'Callaghan withdrew his support as the sole supplier of 'Lytham Purified Mussels'.

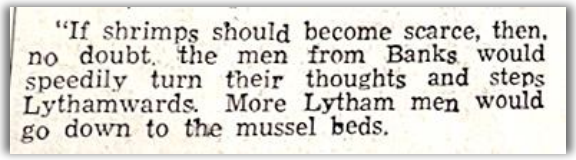
An article in the North Wales Weekly News, published on Thursday, 24th September 1936, which discussed the possibility of a number of Conway mussel fishermen coming to Lytham also mentioned the general malaise of the local fishermen: *"This week there are little more than a dozen Lytham men engaged in mussel fishing. The Banks men have not yet come on the scene. When they will arrive is problematical. St. Annes men do not seem to be keenly interested in mussels."*



"This week there are little more than a dozen Lytham men engaged in mussel fishing. The Banks men have not yet come on the scene. When they will arrive is problematical. St. Anne's men do not seem to be keenly interested in mussels.

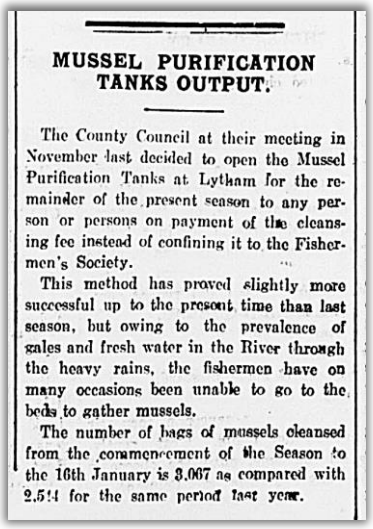
The reason given for the lack of interest in mussels was reported as: *"Mussels are not everything with the fishermen. The industry might perhaps with some degree of truth be classed as a 'side line'. Shrimps are the backbone of their all-the-year-round living."*

"If shrimps should become scarce, then the men from Banks would speedily turn their thoughts and steps Lythamwards. More Lytham men would go down to the mussel beds."



"If shrimps should become scarce, then, no doubt, the men from Banks would speedily turn their thoughts and steps Lythamwards. More Lytham men would go down to the mussel beds.

Perhaps the shrimps did become scarce as in the 29th January 1937 edition of the 'Lytham Times' it was reported that: *"The County Council at their meeting November last decided to open the Mussel Purification Tanks at Lytham for the remainder of the present season to any person or persons on payment of the cleansing fee instead of confining it to the Fishermen's Society.*



MUSSEL PURIFICATION TANKS OUTPUT.

The County Council at their meeting in November last decided to open the Mussel Purification Tanks at Lytham for the remainder of the present season to any person or persons on payment of the cleansing fee instead of confining it to the Fishermen's Society.

This method has proved slightly more successful up to the present time than last season, but owing to the prevalence of gales and fresh water in the River through the heavy rains, the fishermen have on many occasions been unable to go to the beds to gather mussels.

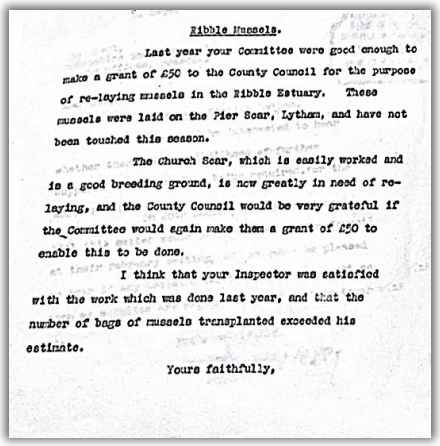
The number of bags of mussels cleansed from the commencement of the Season to the 16th January is 3,067 as compared with 2,514 for the same period last year.

This method has proved slightly more successful up to present time than last season, but owing to the prevalence of gales and fresh water in the River through heavy rains, the fishermen have on many occasions been unable to go to the beds to gather mussels.

The number of bags of mussels cleansed from the commencement of the Season to the 16th January is 3,067 as compared with 2,514 for the same period last year."

No mention was made as to how these mussels had found their way to market following the demise of Mr. O'Callaghan's Society.

As the end of the mussel gathering season approached, thoughts turned to the job of re-laying, as had happened during the close season the previous year. On the 24th March 1937, The Clerk of the County Council wrote to the Secretary of the Lancashire & Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee to request a grant for this purpose: *"Last year your Committee were good enough to make a grant of £50 to the County Council for the purpose of re-laying mussels in the Ribble Estuary. These mussels were laid on the Pier Scar, Lytham, and have not been touched this season.*



Ribble Mussels.

Last year your Committee were good enough to make a grant of £50 to the County Council for the purpose of re-laying mussels in the Ribble Estuary. These mussels were laid on the Pier Scar, Lytham, and have not been touched this season.

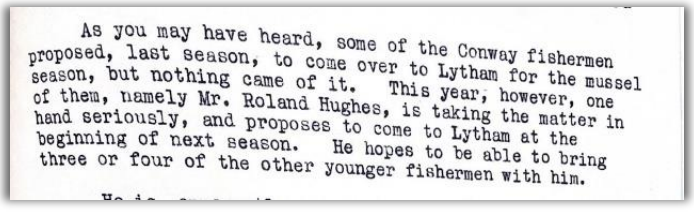
The Church Scar, which is easily worked and is a good breeding ground, is now greatly in need of re-laying, and the County Council would be very grateful if the Committee would again make them a grant of £50 to enable this to be done.

I think that your Inspector was satisfied with the work which was done last year, and that the number of bags of mussels transplanted exceeded his estimate.

Yours faithfully,

The Church Scar, which is easily worked and is a good breeding ground, is now greatly in need of re-laying, and the County Council would be very grateful if the Committee would again make them a grant of £50 to enable this to be done. I think your Inspector was satisfied with the work which was done last year, and that the number of bags of mussels transplanted exceeded his estimate."

Referring back to the 'Lytham Times' article about the Conway mussel fishermen coming to ply their trade at Lytham: whilst this didn't come to fruition during the past season, the idea was again raised in a letter sent by Dr. Dodgson, at the Ministry of



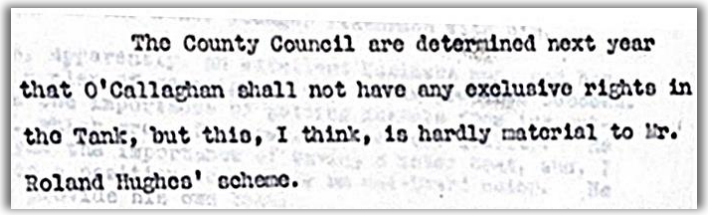
As you may have heard, some of the Conway fishermen proposed, last season, to come over to Lytham for the mussel season, but nothing came of it. This year, however, one of them, namely Mr. Roland Hughes, is taking the matter in hand seriously, and proposes to come to Lytham at the beginning of next season. He hopes to be able to bring three or four of the other younger fishermen with him.

Agriculture and Fisheries Experimental Station at Conway, to Mr. Jolliffe on the 20th April 1937: *"As you may have heard, some of the Conway fishermen proposed, last season, to come over to Lytham for the mussel season, but nothing came of it. This year, however, one of them, namely Mr. Roland Hughes, is taking the matter in hand seriously, and proposes to come to Lytham at the beginning of next season. He hopes to be able to bring three or four of the younger fishermen with him."*

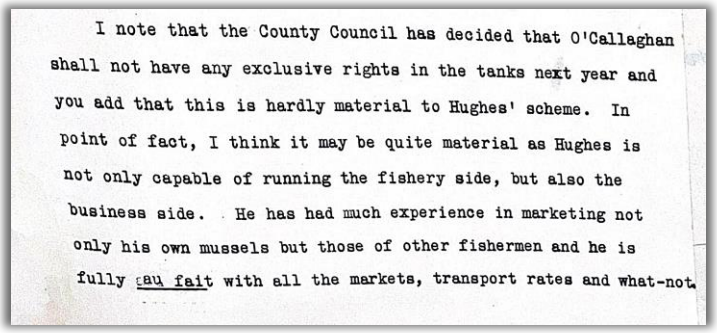
The letter went on to enthusiastically describe Mr. Hughes as an excellent businessman who had mapped out a plan of campaign which Dr. Dodgson thought *"promised success"*. He went on to say, *"A man like Hughes had made enough money to buy and run a car ... the chief reason for Hughes wishing to seek new pastures is that the demand for mussels at Conway is so great that the men have to be strictly rationed as to tank space."*

Dr. Dodgson also wrote that *"Hughes has already been over to see O'Callaghan, and I think they have had satisfactory discussions"*.

In replying to this letter, Mr. Jolliffe wrote that he would be glad to see Mr. Roland Hughes when he next visits Lytham but then in a more serious vain wrote: *"The County Council are determined next year that O'Callaghan shall not have any exclusive rights in the Tank, but this, I think, is hardly material to Mr. Roland Hughes' scheme."*


The County Council are determined next year that O'Callaghan shall not have any exclusive rights in the Tank, but this, I think, is hardly material to Mr. Roland Hughes' scheme.

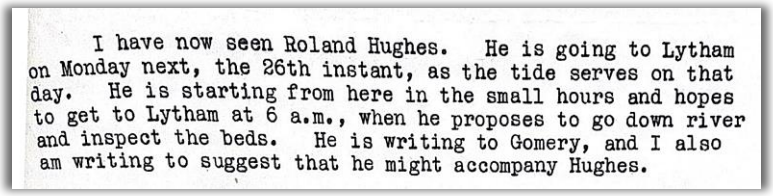
The following day, 22nd April 1937, Dr. Dodgson wrote back to Mr. Jolliffe thanking him for his letter and set out preliminary details of a visit to Lytham by Mr. Hughes, before adding: *"I note that the County Council has decided that O'Callaghan shall not have any exclusive rights in the tanks next year and you add this is hardly material to Hughes' scheme. In point of fact, I think it may be quite material as Hughes is not only capable of running the fishery side, but also the business side. He has had much experience in marketing not only his own mussels but those of other fishermen and he his fully au fait with all the markets, transport rates and what-not."*


I note that the County Council has decided that O'Callaghan shall not have any exclusive rights in the tanks next year and you add that this is hardly material to Hughes' scheme. In point of fact, I think it may be quite material as Hughes is not only capable of running the fishery side, but also the business side. He has had much experience in marketing not only his own mussels but those of other fishermen and he is fully au fait with all the markets, transport rates and what-not.

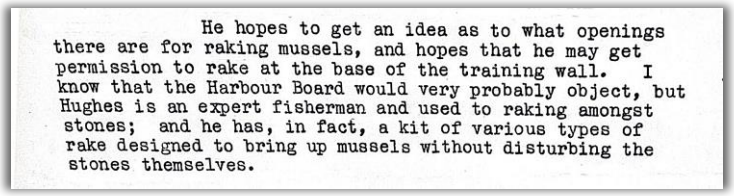
The letter continued: *"Of course, Hughes has been plied with stories by the Lytham longshore men to the effect that O'Callaghan has swindled them and these stories have naturally reached*

Conway via relatives of certain Lytham men. However, Hughes has his head screwed on the right way and says he has, of course paid no attention to such yarns."

Dr. Dodgson, with great keenness to make the forthcoming Lytham mussel season a success, wrote to Mr. Jolliffe again the following day, 23rd April 1937, with more precise details of the proposed visit by Mr. Hughes: *"I have now seen Roland Hughes. He is going to Lytham on Monday next, the 26th instant, as the tide serves on that day. He is starting from here in the small hours and hopes to get to Lytham at 6 a.m., when he proposes to go down river and inspect the beds. He is writing to Gomery, and I also am writing to suggest that he might accompany Hughes."*

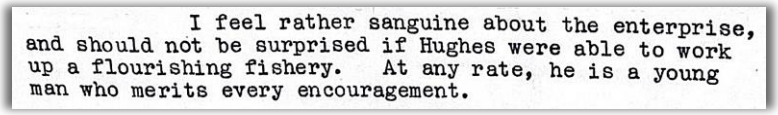

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His letter then went on to provide further information as to how the mussels might be collected: *"He hopes to get an idea as to what openings there are for raking mussels, and hopes that he may get permission to rake at the base of the training wall. I know that the Harbour Board would very probably object, but Hughes is an expert fisherman and used to raking amongst stones; and he has, in fact, a kit of various types of rake designed to bring up mussels without disturbing the stones themselves."*


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[It should be remembered that Mr, Nutter, Town Clerk for Preston Corporation, had objected to "*the establishment and maintenance of a several mussel fishery in certain parts of the estuary of the River Ribble"*, on the basis that extracting mussels off the river channel training walls would weaken the structure and add significantly to the cost of their upkeep.]

But Dr. Dodgson was still hopeful of a successful outcome and finished his letter with optimism: *"I feel rather sanguine about the enterprise, and should not be surprised if Hughes were able to work up a flourishing fishery. At any rate, he is a young man who merits every encouragement."*


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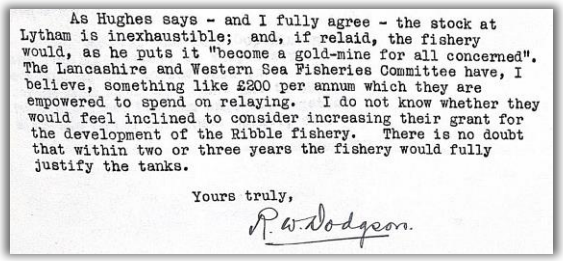
This optimism was short lived. Ten days later, Dr. Dodgson wrote again to Mr. Jolliffe but this time the tone was one of pessimism. He had spoken to Mr. Hughes, who reported: *"... he had very thoroughly inspected the fishery and come to the conclusion that as practically the only marketable size available were those on the training walls and would therefore require handpicking, this would mean that he would only get about three bags a tide, which would leave him in no better*

position than he is at Conway, where he is now limited to three or four bags owing to the demand for space in the tanks."

Dr. Dodgson went on to write: *"I have also had a letter from Gomery, in which he describes the expedition. His view is that Hughes did not make a really searching investigation, and appeared not to be very enthusiastic."*

The fact that Mr. Hughes didn't make a really searching investigation was probably down to the simple fact that on reaching the mussel beds he saw that he wouldn't be able to collect the mussels other than by raking. But, on a positive note, he did point out that: *"... there are huge beds of undersize mussels behind the training walls below Peat's Light. Here, he says, 12 or 13 bags could be raked on a tide – and he thinks the supply almost inexhaustible – but the mussels are far too crowded and unlikely to come to marketable size in any quantity without relaying."*

In the final paragraph of his letter, Dr. Dodgson again wrote with a degree of optimism for the future of a Lytham mussel industry: *"As Hughes says – and I fully agree – the stock at Lytham is inexhaustible; and, if relaid, the fishery would, as he puts it 'become a gold-mine for all concerned'. The Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Committee have, I believe, something like £200 per annum which they are empowered to spend on relaying. I do not know whether they would feel inclined to consider increasing their grant for the development of the Ribble fishery. There is no doubt that within two or three years the fishery would fully justify the tanks."*

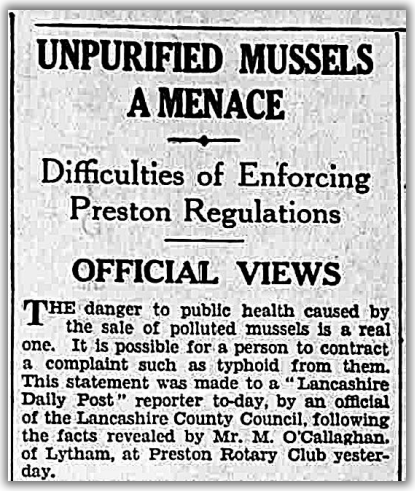


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Yours truly,

R. W. Dodgson.

Shortly after the 'saga' of Mr. Hughes and, no doubt, to further promote "Lytham Purified Mussels", Mr. O'Callaghan, accompanied by the Tanks Superintendent, Mr. Gomery, gave a presentation to Preston Rotary Club on "Mussel Purification". Together, with practical demonstrations on a small scale, Mr O'Callaghan outlined in detail the process of mussel purification. An article about the presentation was published in 'The Lancashire Daily Post' the following day, Thursday, 20th May 1937, but rather than describe the process of mussel purification, it focused on the 'menace': *"The danger to public health caused by the sale of polluted mussels is a real one. It is possible for a person to contract a complaint such as typhoid from them."* The article then described the background to the 1923 regulations before providing an insight into the ongoing difficulties of enforcing the extant regulations:



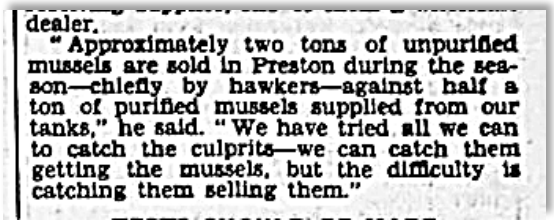
UNPURIFIED MUSSELS A MENACE

Difficulties of Enforcing Preston Regulations

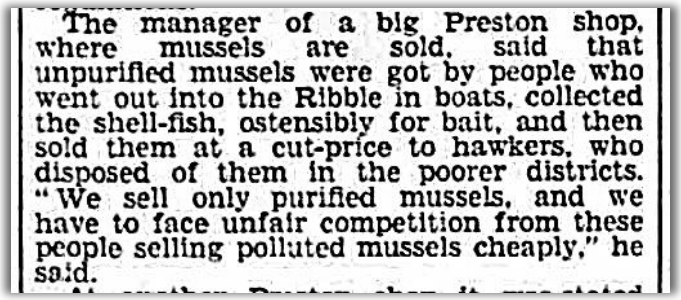
OFFICIAL VIEWS

THE danger to public health caused by the sale of polluted mussels is a real one. It is possible for a person to contract a complaint such as typhoid from them. This statement was made to a "Lancashire Daily Post" reporter to-day, by an official of the Lancashire County Council, following the facts revealed by Mr. M. O'Callaghan, of Lytham, at Preston Rotary Club yesterday.

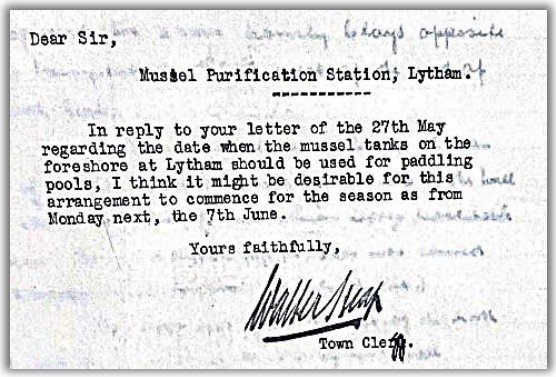
"Approximately two tons of unpurified mussels are sold in Preston during the season – chiefly by hawkers – against half a ton of purified mussels supplied from our tanks," he said. "We have tried all we can to catch the culprits – we can catch them getting the mussels, but the difficulty is catching them selling them."


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"Approximately two tons of unpurified mussels are sold in Preston during the season—chiefly by hawkers—against half a ton of purified mussels supplied from our tanks," he said. "We have tried all we can to catch the culprits—we can catch them getting the mussels, but the difficulty is catching them selling them."

"The manager of a big Preston shop where mussels are sold, said that unpurified mussels were got by people who went out into the Ribble in boats, collected the shell-fish, ostensibly for bait, and then sold them at a cut-price to hawkers, who disposed of them in the poorer districts. 'We sell only purified mussels, and we have to face unfair competition from there people selling polluted mussels cheaply.' he said."


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As the close season for mussel gathering made the purification tanks redundant for their primary purpose, their use as a paddling pool was, again, being considered. In a letter dated 2nd June 1937, the Borough of Lytham St. Annes Town Clerk, Walter Heap, replied to a letter from the Clerk of the County Council regarding the use of the mussel purification tanks as paddling pools: *"In reply to your letter of the 27th May regarding the date the mussel tanks on the foreshore at Lytham should be used for paddling pools, I think it might be desirable for this arrangement to commence for the season as from Monday next, the 7th June."*


Dear Sir,

Mussel Purification Station, Lytham.

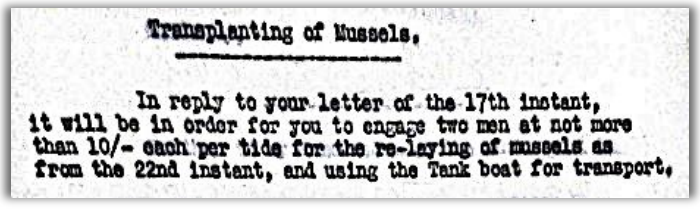
In reply to your letter of the 27th May regarding the date when the mussel tanks on the foreshore at Lytham should be used for paddling pools, I think it might be desirable for this arrangement to commence for the season as from Monday next, the 7th June.

Yours faithfully,

Walter Heap

Town Clerk.

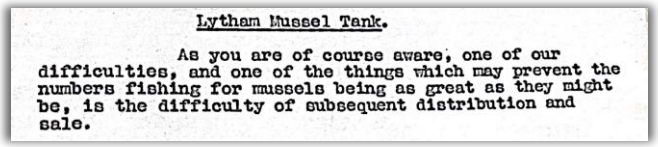
It was also during this close season that the advice from Mr. Hughes, the Conway mussel fisherman, was acted upon and the re-laying of mussels began. A letter to the Tank Superintendent informed him: *"In reply to your letter of the 17th instant [June], it will be in order for you to engage two men at not more than 10/- each per tide for the re-laying of mussels as from the 22nd instant, and using the Tank boat for transport."*


Transplanting of Mussels.

In reply to your letter of the 17th instant, it will be in order for you to engage two men at not more than 10/- each per tide for the re-laying of mussels as from the 22nd instant, and using the Tank boat for transport.

By the end of the following September 64 tons of mussels had been re-laid on Church Scar at a cost of £49 12s 3d and in a letter to the Clerk of the County Council, written on Sunday, 25th August 1937, the Tank Superintendent described the quality of the mussels on part of Church Scar as very good and an area between Barge House and the V-wall should be made available to the gatherers. In addition, he also requested that access to the Pier Scar should be controlled by permit and as such these beds could be fished during bad weather when other beds were inaccessible.

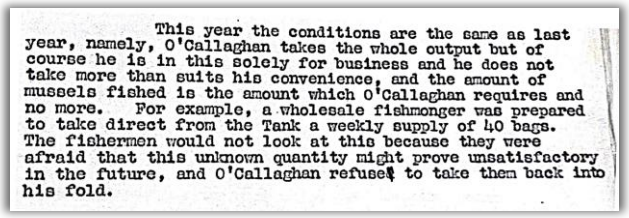
So, the 1937/38 season of mussel gathering and purification began but, with the season barely started, a letter sent to Dr. Dodgson from the Clerk of the County Council on the 23rd September 1937, showed that little had changed from the previous season:


Lytham Mussel Tank.

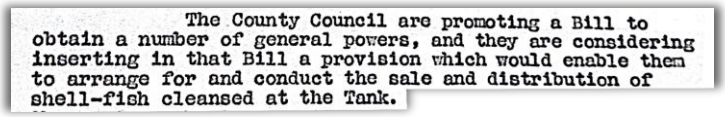
As you are of course aware, one of our difficulties, and one of the things which may prevent the numbers fishing for mussels being as great as they might be, is the difficulty of subsequent distribution and sale.

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The letter continued: *"This year the conditions are the same as last year, namely, O'Callaghan takes the whole output but of course he is in this solely for business and he does not take more than suits his convenience, and the amount of mussels fished is the amount which O'Callaghan requires and no more. For example, a wholesale fishmonger was prepared to take direct from the Tank a weekly supply of 40 bags. The fishermen would not look at this because they were afraid that this unknown quantity might prove unsatisfactory in the future, and O'Callaghan refuse to take those back into his fold."*


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The seriousness of this problem and its possible detrimental effect on the success of the mussel purification project was such the County Council considered including in a Parliamentary Bill:


The County Council are promoting a Bill to obtain a number of general powers, and they are considering inserting in that Bill a provision which would enable them to arrange for and conduct the sale and distribution of shell-fish cleansed at the Tank.

"... a provision which would enable them to arrange for and conduct the sale and distribution of shell-fish cleansed at the Tank."

At least the following month brought some good news for one person at the mussel tanks. In a letter dated 4th October 1937, it was announced that the labourer at the station, Mr. W. Pratt, could be awarded a pay rise of up to 2/- per week if the nature of his employment justified an increase. The letter also revealed that Mr. Pratt's wages were 48/- per week for seasonal employment, which includes weekend over-time without pay and this had been his wage for the past two seasons!

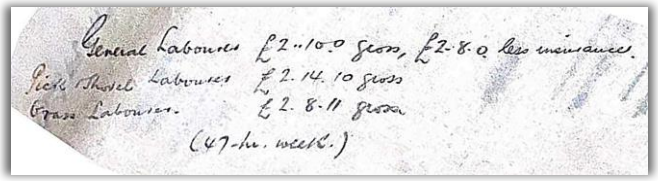
A handwritten note at the bottom of the letter detailed the wages of different types of labourers employed by Lytham St. Annes Borough Council:

General Labourer £2.10.0 gross, £2.8.0 less insurance

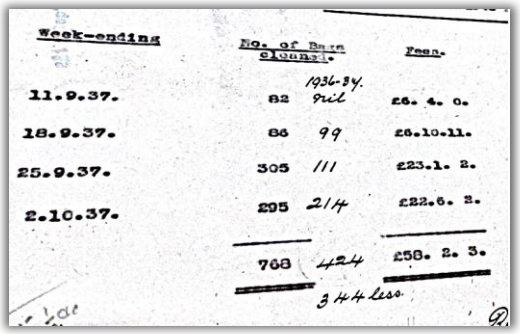
Pick & Shovel Labourer £2.14.0 gross

Grass Labourer £2.8.11 gross

(47 hr week)

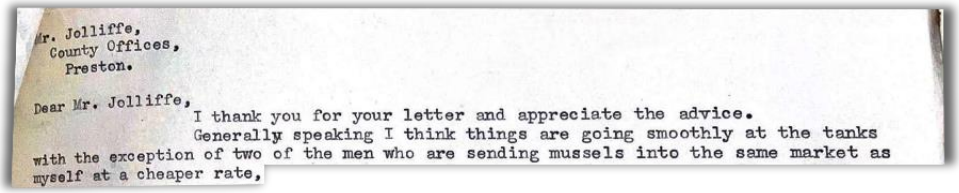


In the meantime, mussel gathering continued and the returns for the first four weeks of the season looked favourable, with the total number of bags cleaned standing at 768 compared with the previous years total for the same period of 424. (It should be remembered that the start of the previous year's season was fraught with problems and the fishermen were slow to begin collecting.)



Week-ending	No. of Bags Cleaned.	1936-37.	Fees.
11.9.37.	82	9cwt	£6. 4. 0.
18.9.37.	86	99	£6.10.11.
25.9.37.	305	111	£23.1. 2.
2.10.37.	295	214	£22.6. 2.
	768	424	£58. 2. 3.
		344 less.	

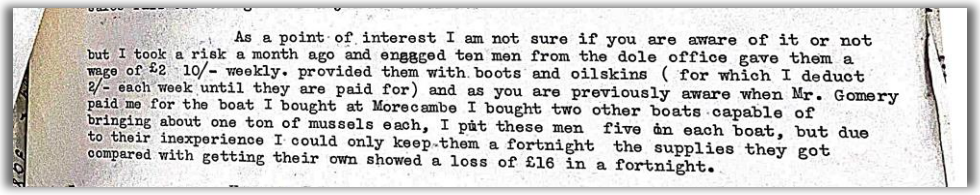
A letter sent by Mr. O'Callaghan, on the 23rd October, to Mr. Jolliffe, provides us with a possible reason for the increased quantity. The letter starts with a minor complaint: "*Generally speaking I think things are going smoothly at the tanks with the exception of two of the men who are sending mussels into the same market as myself at a cheaper rate …*".



Mr. Jolliffe,
County Offices,
Preston.

Dear Mr. Jolliffe,

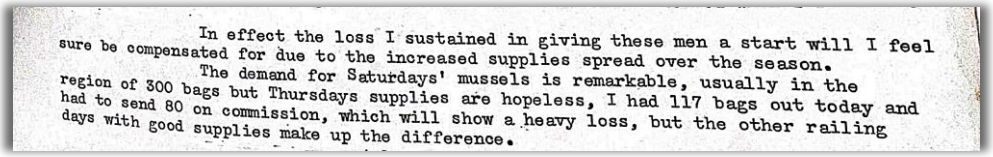
I thank you for your letter and appreciate the advice.
Generally speaking I think things are going smoothly at the tanks with the exception of two of the men who are sending mussels into the same market as myself at a cheaper rate,



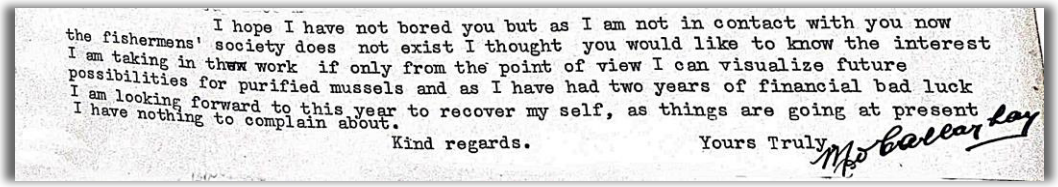
As a point of interest I am not sure if you are aware of it or not but I took a risk a month ago and engaged ten men from the dole office gave them a wage of £2 10/- weekly. provided them with boots and oilskins (for which I deduct 2/- each week until they are paid for) and as you are previously aware when Mr. Gomery paid me for the boat I bought at Morecambe I bought two other boats capable of bringing about one ton of mussels each, I put these men five on each boat, but due to their inexperience I could only keep them a fortnight the supplies they got compared with getting their own showed a loss of £16 in a fortnight.

But the second paragraph reveals all: "*As a point of interest I am not sure if you are aware of it or not but I took a risk a month ago and engaged ten men from the dole office gave them a wage of £2 10/- weekly, provided them with boots and oilskins (for which I deduct 2/- each week until they are paid for) and as you are previously aware when Mr. Gomery paid me for the boat I bought at Morecambe I bought two other boats capable of bringing about one ton of mussels each, I put these men five on each boat, but due to their inexperience I could only keep them a fortnight the supplies they got compared with getting their own showed a loss of £16 in a fortnight.*" But, as a shrewd businessman, Mr. O'Callaghan was investing in the future as the letter continued:

"*In effect the loss I sustained in giving these men a start will I feel sure be compensated for due to the increased supplies spread over the season. The demand for Saturdays' mussels is remarkable, usually in the region of 300 bags but Thursdays supplies are hopeless. I had 117 bags out today and had to send 80 on commission, which will show a heavy loss, but the other railing days with good supplies make up the difference.*"


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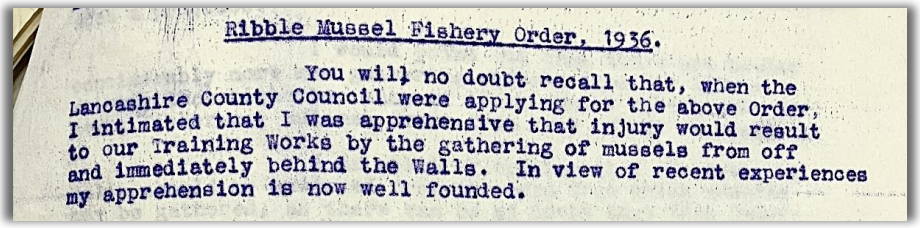
And perhaps as a final plea to counter the County Council's determination to remove his sole dealership of Lytham Purified Mussels from him, Mr. O'Callaghan closes his letter by saying: "*I hope I have not bored you but as I am not in contact with you now the fishermen's society does not exist I thought you would like to know the interest I am taking in the work if only from the point of view I can visualize future possibilities for purified mussels and as I have had two years of financial bad luck I am looking forward to this year to recover my self, as things are going at present I have nothing to complain about.*"


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Kind regards. Yours Truly, M. O'Callaghan

Whilst the increase in the quantity of mussels being purified and the number of bags of mussels sent to market was welcomed by all in the industry, there was one discontented voice and once again it came from Mr. Nutter, Town Clerk for Preston Corporation. In Chapter 10 we saw that Mr. Nutter had raised an objection to the 'Ribble Mussel Fishery Order, 1936' on the basis that extracting mussels from off and around the training walls would weaken the structure. In a lengthy letter of complaint, written on the 8th November 1937, he wrote:

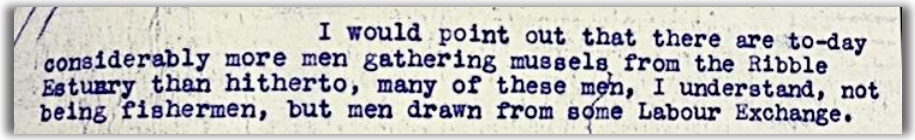
"*You will no doubt recall, when the Lancashire County Council were applying for the above Order, I intimated that I was apprehensive that injury would result to our Training Works by the gathering of mussels from off and immediately behind the Walls. In view of recent experiences my apprehension is now well founded.*"


Ribble Mussel Fishery Order, 1936.

You will no doubt recall that, when the Lancashire County Council were applying for the above Order, I intimated that I was apprehensive that injury would result to our Training Works by the gathering of mussels from off and immediately behind the Walls. In view of recent experiences my apprehension is now well founded.

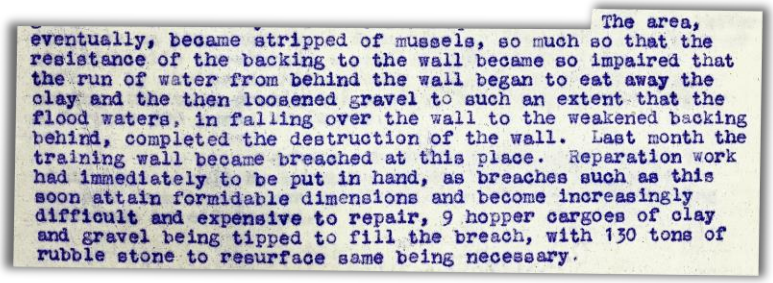
The Town Clerk's finger of blame was pointed towards Mr. O'Callaghan's previously mentioned "*ten men from the dole office*".

"I would point out that there are to-day considerably more men gathering mussels from the Ribble Estuary than hitherto, many of these men, I understand, not being fishermen, but men drawn from some Labour Exchange."

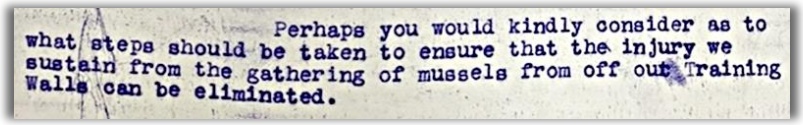

I would point out that there are to-day considerably more men gathering mussels from the Ribble Estuary than hitherto, many of these men, I understand, not being fishermen, but men drawn from some Labour Exchange.

He then went on to describe the damage caused by the mussel gatherers to the South Training Wall, at a point 11¼ miles below Preston, which was naturally covered with mussels:

"*This area, being close to Lytham, was a very popular spot for the mussel gatherers to readily obtain their requirements. The area, eventually, became stripped of mussels, so much so that the resistance of the backing to the wall became so impaired that the run of water from behind the wall began to eat away the clay and then the loosened gravel to such an extent that the flood waters, in falling over the wall to the weakened backing behind, completed the destruction of the wall. Last month the training wall became breached at this place. Reparation work had immediately to be put in hand, as breaches such as this soon attain formidable dimensions and become increasingly difficult and expensive to repair, 9 hopper cargoes of clay and gravel being tipped to fill the breach with 130 tons of rubble stone to resurface same being necessary.*"

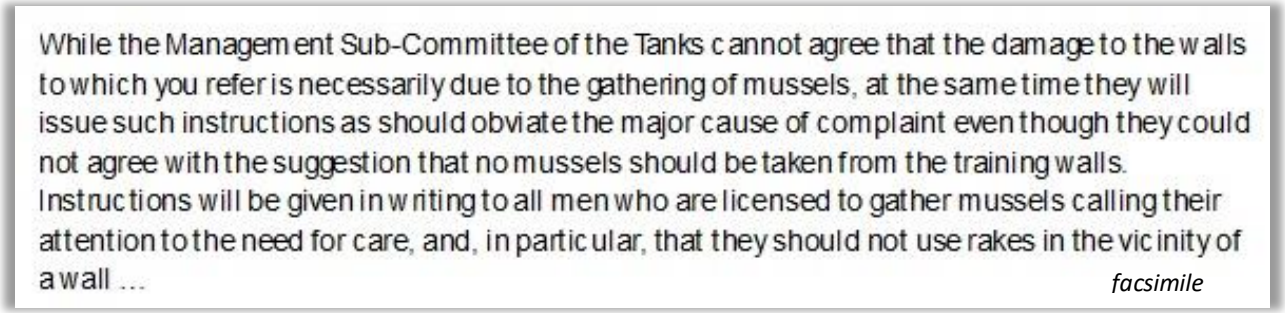

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Mr. Nutter concluded his letter with a request to the County Council:


Perhaps you would kindly consider as to what steps should be taken to ensure that the injury we sustain from the gathering of mussels from off our Training Walls can be eliminated.

"*Perhaps you would kindly consider as to what steps should be taken to ensure that the injury we sustain from te gathering of mussels from off our Training Walls can be eliminated.*"

The Clerk of the County Council was quick to reply to Mr. Nutter as two days later he sent a letter to him in which he stated:


While the Management Sub-Committee of the Tanks cannot agree that the damage to the walls to which you refer is necessarily due to the gathering of mussels, at the same time they will issue such instructions as should obviate the major cause of complaint even though they could not agree with the suggestion that no mussels should be taken from the training walls. Instructions will be given in writing to all men who are licensed to gather mussels calling their attention to the need for care, and, in particular, that they should not use rakes in the vicinity of a wall ...

facsimile

As if to show that his Committee was willing to punish the mussel fishermen if they transgressed the rules, he wrote to the Tank Superintendent the same day regarding an issue that had happened on the Pier Scar mussel bed:

10th December, 1937.

Dear Sir,

Breach of Regulations.

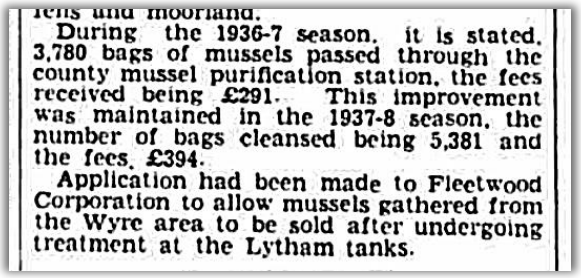
The Committee at their meeting yesterday considered the explanation made to the Chairman by Mr. F. Kenworthy and other with regard to the picking of mussels from the Pier Scar. The Committee were not satisfied with the explanation and require that the permits of F. Kenworthy, J. Holden, J. Holden Jnr., and J. Cookson be suspended for 14 days.

Yours faithfully,

Clerk of the County Council.

facsimile

An article in the 'Lancashire Evening Post', Thursday, 28th April 1938, included a report from the Lancashire County Council's Agricultural Committee in which it stated during the 1936-7 season: *"3,780 bags of mussels passed through the county mussel purification station, the fees received being £291. This improvement was maintained in the 1937-8 season, the number of bags cleansed being 5,381 and the fees £394."*



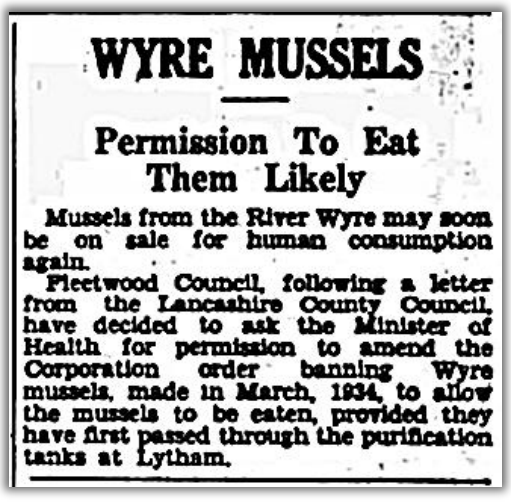
fens and moorland.

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Application had been made to Fleetwood Corporation to allow mussels gathered from the Wyre area to be sold after undergoing treatment at the Lytham tanks.

The article also mentioned that an *"Application had been made to Fleetwood Corporation to allow mussels gathered from the Wyre area to be sold after undergoing treatment at the Lytham tanks".*

The driving force for the application was the Lancashire County Council. The following day, 'The Fleetwood Chronical, Fylde News and Advertiser' reported:



WYRE MUSSELS

Permission To Eat Them Likely

Mussels from the River Wyre may soon be on sale for human consumption again.

Fleetwood Council, following a letter from the Lancashire County Council, have decided to ask the Minister of Health for permission to amend the Corporation order banning Wyre mussels, made in March, 1934, to allow the mussels to be eaten, provided they have first passed through the purification tanks at Lytham.

*"**WYRE MUSSELS***

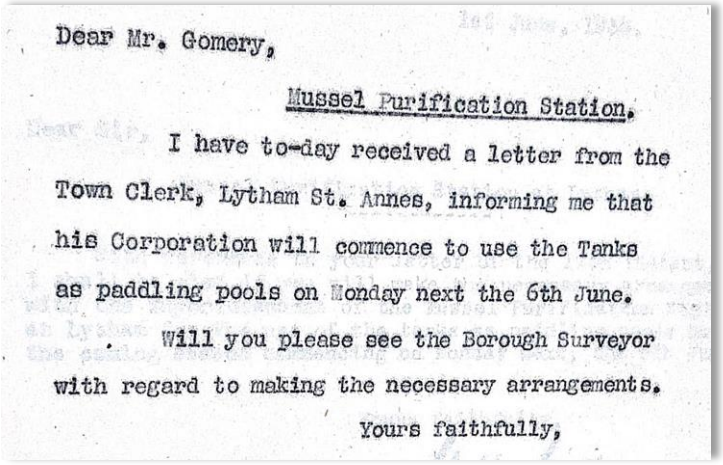
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Once again the end of the mussel season released the tanks for use as a paddling pool and on the 2nd June 1938, the County Council informed the Tank Superintendent that they had *"today received a letter from the Town Clerk, Lytham St. Annes, informing me that his corporation will commence to use the Tanks as paddling pools on Monday next the 6th June.*

Will you please see the Borough Surveyor with regard to making the necessary arrangements.

Yours faithfully,"



Dear Mr. Gomery,

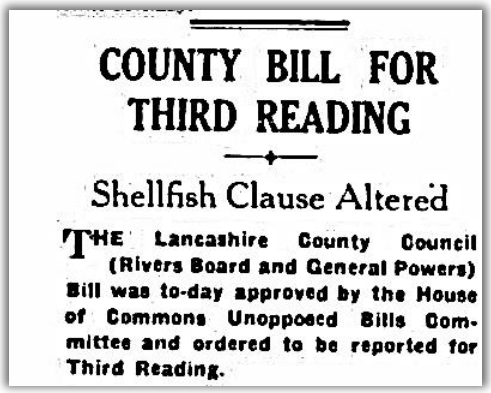
Mussel Purification Station.

I have to-day received a letter from the Town Clerk, Lytham St. Annes, informing me that his Corporation will commence to use the Tanks as paddling pools on Monday next the 6th June.

Will you please see the Borough Surveyor with regard to making the necessary arrangements.

Yours faithfully,

The end of the 1937-8 season also saw a resolution to the County Council's on-going problem with Mr. O'Callaghan and the marketing of the shellfish. On the 7th July 1938, the 'Lancashire Daily Post' announced: *"The Lancashire County Council (Rivers Board and General Powers) Bill was today approved by the House of Commons Unopposed Bills Committee and ordered to be reported for a Third Reading."*



COUNTY BILL FOR THIRD READING

Shellfish Clause Altered

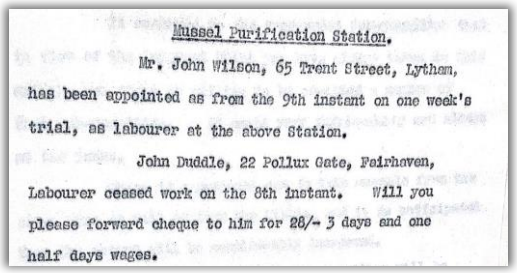
THE Lancashire County Council (Rivers Board and General Powers) Bill was to-day approved by the House of Commons Unopposed Bills Committee and ordered to be reported for Third Reading.

The outcome of the bill meant that the County Council now had the power, at the request of the owners of the shell-fish, to act as the agents in the sale and distribution of shell-fish.

During the Bill's passage through the Committee stage, a question was raised as to why there was a need for the clause relating to shell-fish and it was explained that *"at present there was no organisation for selling the mussels to the market, which was largely in Yorkshire and the Midland towns. ... The fishermen were poor and it was not possible for them to deal with the distribution of mussels. They could not get in touch with the wholesalers. At present they were sold to a local wholesaler, who was primarily engaged in other work and only bought what he could dispose of. Very much more could be disposed of if the market could be found. The purpose of the clause was to enable the Council to assist the fishermen in finding a market and carrying on their fishing in the estuary."*

September saw the start of the 1938/39 season with the prospect of River Wyre mussels being brought to Lytham for cleansing; new markets opening up under the control of the County Council; and a slight change of workforce. A letter from the Clerk of the County Council to his Cashier

announced the appointment of Mr. John Wilson, 65 Trent Street, Lytham, on a one week's trial, as labourer at the Mussel Purification Station. In addition, it also stated that John Duddle, 22 Pollux Gate, Fairhaven, Labourer, ceased work on the 9th instant and a cheque was to be forwarded to him for 28/- 3 days and one-half days wages.

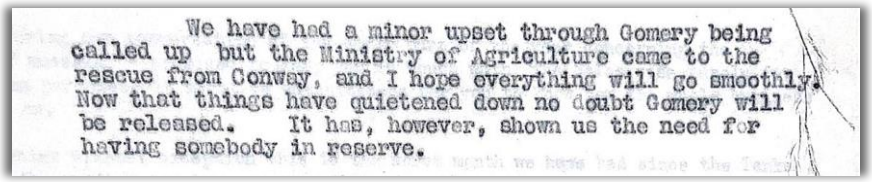


Mussel Purification Station.

Mr. John Wilson, 65 Trent Street, Lytham, has been appointed as from the 9th instant on one week's trial, as labourer at the above Station.

John Duddle, 22 Pollux Gate, Fairhaven, Labourer ceased work on the 8th instant. Will you please forward cheque to him for 28/- 3 days and one half days wages.

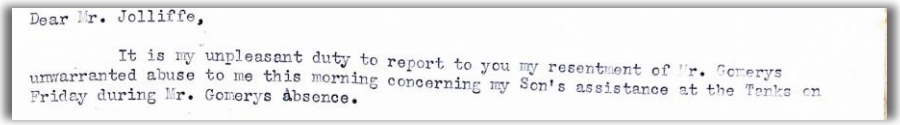
A letter dated 10th September 1938, from the County Council, disclosed a further workforce change. Mr. Gomery, the Station's Superintendent, had been *"called up"* [back into the Royal Navy] and a stand-in had been arranged from Conway to cover as his replacement. The letter continued: *"Now that things have quietened down no doubt Gomery will be released."*



We have had a minor upset through Gomery being called up but the Ministry of Agriculture came to the rescue from Conway, and I hope everything will go smoothly. Now that things have quietened down no doubt Gomery will be released. It has, however, shown us the need for having somebody in reserve.

Mr. Gomery's call-up was scheduled for Friday, 30th September 1938. [The day that Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich and declared 'Peace in Our Time'.] The date of his 'call-up' is confirmed in a letter sent by Mr. O'Callaghan to Mr. Jolliffe at the County Council on Monday, 3rd October 1938, which began with a strong accusation: *"Dear Mr. Jolliffe,*

It is my unpleasant duty to report to you my resentment of Mr. Gomerys [sic] *unwarranted abuse to me this morning concerning my Son's assistance at the Tanks on Friday during Mr. Gomerys* [sic] *Absence."*

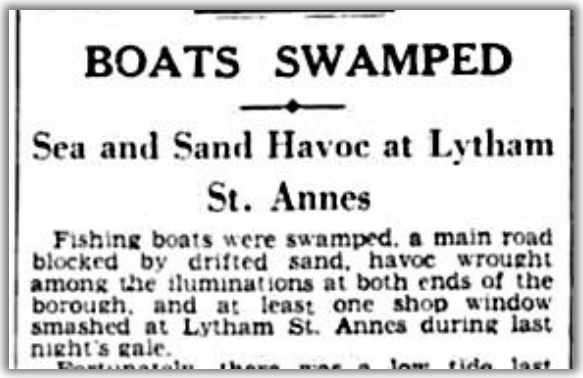


Dear Mr. Jolliffe,

It is my unpleasant duty to report to you my resentment of Mr. Gomerys unwarranted abuse to me this morning concerning my Son's assistance at the Tanks on Friday during Mr. Gomerys Absence.

The letter continued: *"Gomery came to my house on Thursday evening on two occasions (unfortunately I was out) he told my wife he had to leave on Mobilisation orders on Friday morning."*

Presumably, as nothing was mentioned in his letter, Mr. O'Callaghan was unaware of the great misfortune that had befallen the Lytham fishermen the previous night. On the same day that he wrote his letter, the 'Lancashire Daily Post' reported: *"Fishing boats were swamped, a main road blocked by drifted sand, havoc wrought among the iluminations* [sic] *at both ends of the borough, and at least one shop window smashed at Lytham St. Annes during last night's gale."*

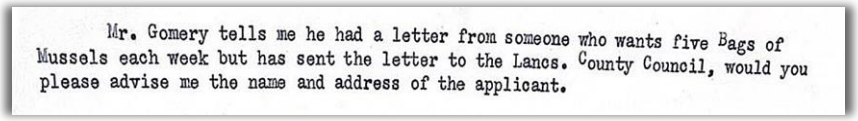


BOATS SWAMPED

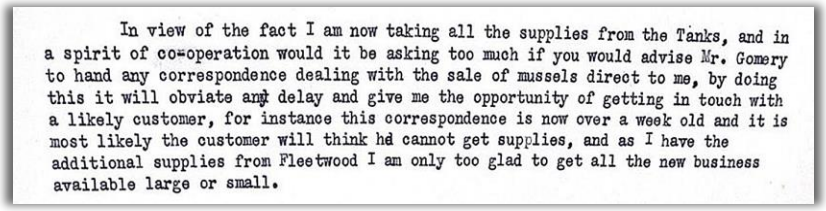
Sea and Sand Havoc at Lytham St. Annes

Fishing boats were swamped, a main road blocked by drifted sand, havoc wrought among the illuminations at both ends of the borough, and at least one shop window smashed at Lytham St. Annes during last night's gale.

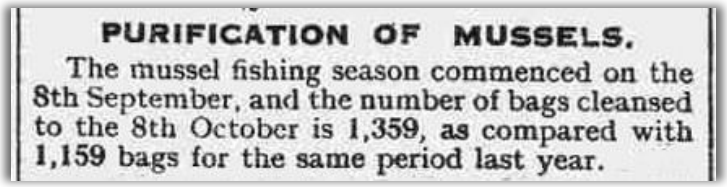
Mr. Gomery's 'call-up' must have been on a very short basis as he was referred to in another letter from Mr. O'Callaghan, dated 14th October, *"Mr. Gomery tells me he had a letter from someone who wants five bags of mussels each week but has sent the letter to the Lancs. County Council, would you please advise me the name and address of the applicant."*


Mr. Gomery tells me he had a letter from someone who wants five Bags of Mussels each week but has sent the letter to the Lancs. County Council, would you please advise me the name and address of the applicant.

The following paragraph of the letter then returned to the topic of the now extant 'Rivers Board and General Powers' Bill and Mr. O'Callaghan's loss of overall control of the marketing of Lytham Purified Mussels: *"In view of the fact I am now taking all the supplies from the Tanks, and in a spirit of co-operation would it be asking too much if you would advise Mr. Gomery to hand any correspondence dealing with the sale of mussels directly to me, by doing this it will obviate any delay and give me the opportunity of getting in touch with a likely customer, for instance this correspondence is now over a week old and it is most likely the customer will think he cannot get supplies, and as I have the additional supplies from Fleetwood I am only too glad to get all the new business available large or small."*

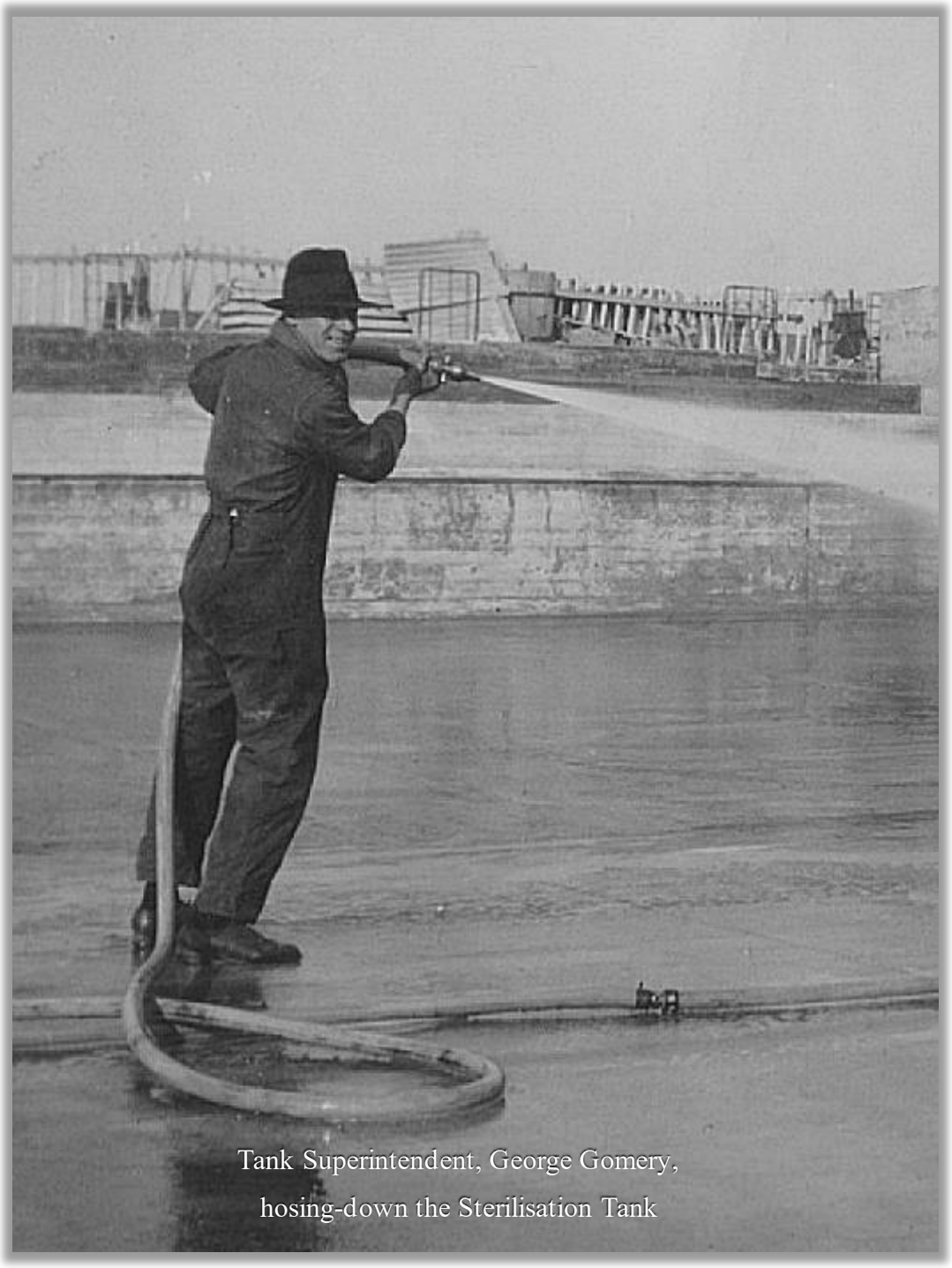

In view of the fact I am now taking all the supplies from the Tanks, and in a spirit of co-operation would it be asking too much if you would advise Mr. Gomery to hand any correspondence dealing with the sale of mussels direct to me, by doing this it will obviate any delay and give me the opportunity of getting in touch with a likely customer, for instance this correspondence is now over a week old and it is most likely the customer will think he cannot get supplies, and as I have the additional supplies from Fleetwood I am only too glad to get all the new business available large or small.

Although the loss of boats at the beginning of October may have affected the overall quantity of mussels cleansed in the tanks, the total for the first four weeks of the new season saw an increase of 200 bags over the same period for the previous year. The 'Ormskirk Advertiser' reported: *"The mussel fishing season commenced on the 8th September, and the number of bags cleansed to the 8th October is 1,359, as compared with 1,159 bags for the same period last year."*


PURIFICATION OF MUSSELS.

The mussel fishing season commenced on the 8th September, and the number of bags cleansed to the 8th October is 1,359, as compared with 1,159 bags for the same period last year.

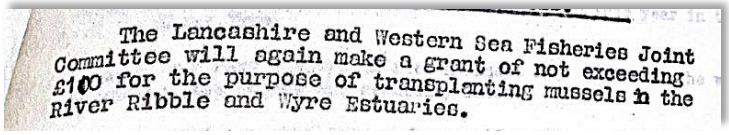
Unfortunately, the following two months didn't see a similar increase. In a report by the Lancashire Agricultural Committee, it was stated that: *"During November and December, when demand for mussels appeared to be increasing, heavy gales and frost prevented the fishermen from going to tides to gather mussels, or a further considerable improvement would have taken place."*

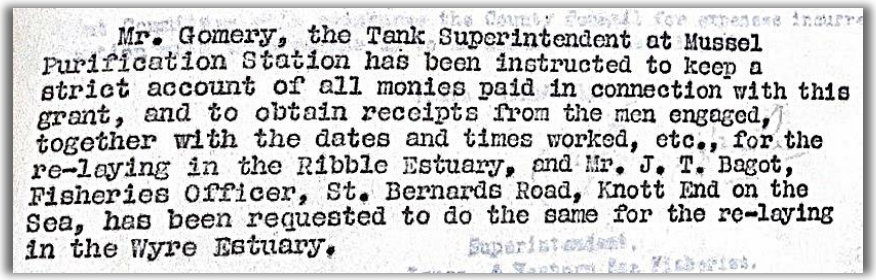


Tank Superintendent, George Gomery,
hosing-down the Sterilisation Tank

Chapter 12
The War Years: 1939 - 1946

Towards the end of the 1938/9 season, a letter from the County Council once more announced that the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Committee *"will again make a grant of not exceeding £100 for the purpose of transplanting mussels in the River Ribble and Wyre Estuaries "* and to ensure that the money was spent correctly the letter continued: *"Mr. Gomery, the Tank Superintendent at the Mussel Purification Station has been instructed to keep a strict account of all monies paid in connection with this grant, and to obtain receipts from the men engaged, together with the dates and times worked, etc., for the re-laying in the Ribble Estuary, and Mr. J. T. Bagot, Fisheries Officer, St. Bernards Road, Knott End on the Sea, has been requested to do the same for the re-laying in the Wyre Estuary."*

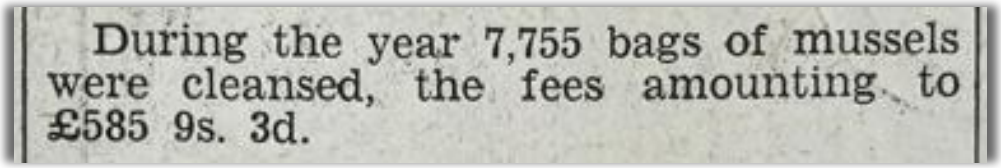

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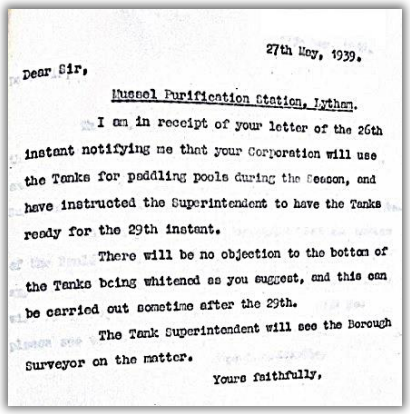
No time was lost in starting the work of re-laying and in his quarterly report the superintendent of the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries District, Dr Jenkins, stated: *"£100 has been devoted to the work. Over 60 tons were transplanted in the Wyre before March 31st, and several more tons would be moved before the grant was exhausted. All the arrangements have been made for the work of transplanting in the Ribble estuary to commence."* (As reported the 'Lancashire Daily Post on Tuesday, 30th May 1939.)


Dr. Jenkins says £100 has been devoted to the work. Over 60 tons were transplanted in the Wyre before March 31st, and several more tons would be moved before the grant was exhausted. All the arrangements have been made for the work of transplanting in the Ribble estuary to commence.

The 1938/39 season ended on the 15th April and a record number of bags cleansed was announced: 7,755 bags with fees amounting to £394 6s 5d.


During the year 7,755 bags of mussels were cleansed, the fees amounting to £585 9s. 3d.

As the summer months approached, preparations were made to open the Tanks as a paddling pools and in reply to a letter written by the Town Clerk at the Town Hall, Lytham St. Annes, to the Lancashire County Council on this subject, the County Clerk noted that he had *"instructed the Superintendent to have the Tanks ready for the 29th."* and *"There will be no objection to the bottom of the Tanks being whitened as you suggest"*.



27th May, 1939.

Dear Sir,

Mussel Purification Station, Lytham.

I am in receipt of your letter of the 26th instant notifying me that your Corporation will use the Tanks for paddling pools during the Season, and have instructed the Superintendent to have the Tanks ready for the 29th instant.

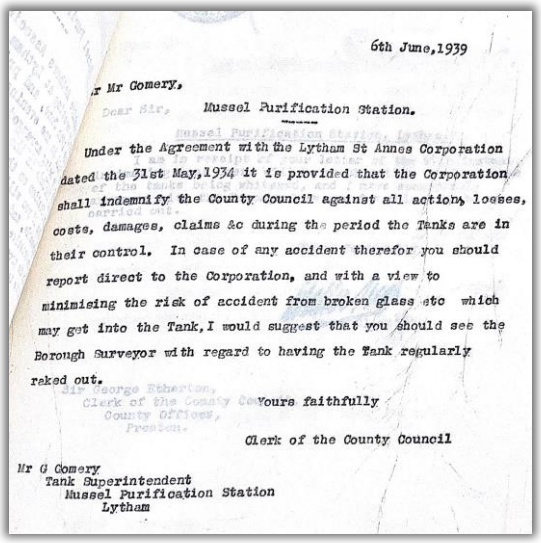
There will be no objection to the bottom of the Tanks being whitened as you suggest, and this can be carried out sometime after the 29th.

The Tank Superintendent will see the Borough Surveyor on the matter.

Yours faithfully,

Perhaps whilst preparing the Tanks for use as paddling pools, the Tank Superintendent became aware of a potential hazard to future users. In a letter to him, dated 6th June 1939, the County Clerk outlined their position in the event of there being an accident at the Mussel Purification Station:

"Under the Agreement with the Lytham St. Annes Corporation dated the 31st May 1934 it is provided that the Corporation shall indemnify the County Council against all action, losses, costs, damages, claims &c during the period the Tanks are in their control. In case of any accident therefore you should report direct to the Corporation, and with view to minimising the risk of accident from broken glass etc which may get into the Tank, I would suggest that you should see the Borough Surveyor with regard to having the Tank regularly racked out."



6th June, 1939

r Mr Gomery,

Dear Sir, Mussel Purification Station.

Under the Agreement with the Lytham St Annes Corporation dated the 31st May, 1934 it is provided that the Corporation shall indemnify the County Council against all action, losses, costs, damages, claims &c during the period the Tanks are in their control. In case of any accident therefor you should report direct to the Corporation, and with a view to minimising the risk of accident from broken glass etc which may get into the Tank, I would suggest that you should see the Borough Surveyor with regard to having the Tank regularly raked out.

Yours faithfully

Clerk of the County Council

Mr G Gomery
Tank Superintendent
Mussel Purification Station
Lytham

Eleven days after this letter was sent an accident did happen – but it didn't involve broken glass. Saturday, 17th June 1939 was a busy day on the Promenade at Lytham; a party of approximately 70 children and 30 parents from Penwortham Methodist Sunday School were on their annual outing: a group from the Lancashire Authors Association were visiting the Mussel Purification Station: and overhead aeroplanes were flying. What also happened was described in a report in the 'Lancashire Daily Post' on the following Monday under the heading "PRESTON BOY FALLS GAZING AT 'PLANES".



PRESTON BOY FALLS GAZING AT 'PLANES

SKULL FRACTURED?

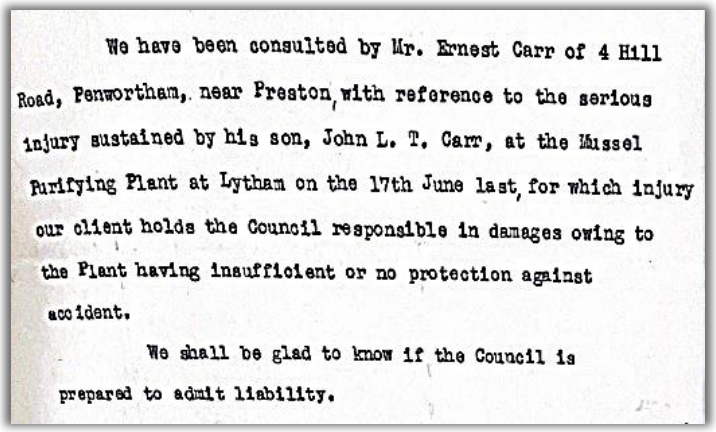
Drama of Sunday School Lytham Outing

The newspaper report continued: *"While looking up at some aeroplanes passing overhead, it is believed, a nine-year-old Penwortham boy, John Thomas Carr, of Hill-road, fell into a seven feet*

deep empty tank on Lytham seafront on Saturday. He is lying in a serious condition in Lytham Hospital with a suspected fractured skull."

Mr. F. Addison, superintendent of Penwortham Methodist Sunday School, told the 'Lancashire Daily Post' reporter, *"I understand a lecture was being given to adults near the tanks, and some boys stopped there on their way from a game of rounders on the grass near the windmill on Lytham promenade to Park-street Methodist School for tea. No one seems to have seen Jackie fall into the tank, but the accident occurred as some aeroplanes were passing overhead, and apparently he fell while looking at them."*

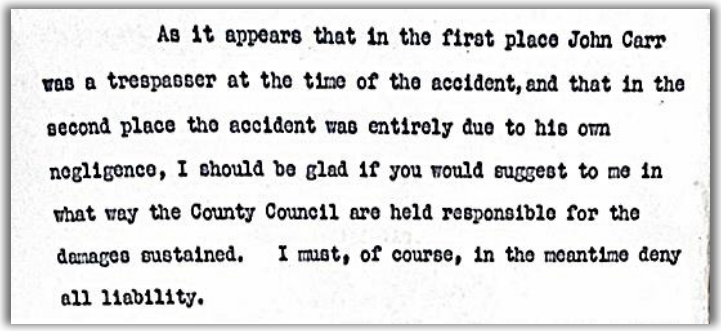
Almost two months later, 10th August 1939, the Clerk to the Lancashire County Council received a Solicitor's letter: *"We have been consulted by Mr. Ernest Carr of 4 Hill Road, Penwortham, near Preston, with reference to the serious injury sustained by his son, John L.T. Carr, at the Mussel Purifying Plant at Lytham on the 17th June last, for which injury our client holds the Council responsible in damage owing to the Plant having insufficient or no protection against accident. We shall be glad to know if the Council is prepared to admit liability."*



We have been consulted by Mr. Ernest Carr of 4 Hill Road, Penwortham, near Preston, with reference to the serious injury sustained by his son, John L. T. Carr, at the Mussel Purifying Plant at Lytham on the 17th June last, for which injury our client holds the Council responsible in damages owing to the Plant having insufficient or no protection against accident.

We shall be glad to know if the Council is prepared to admit liability.

The Lancashire County Council replied the next day and their answer was brief and to the point: *"As it appears that in the first place John Carr was a trespasser at the time of the accident and that in the second place the accident was entirely due to his own negligence, I should be glad if you would suggest to me in what way the County Council are held responsible for the damage sustained. I must, of course, in the meantime deny all liability."*

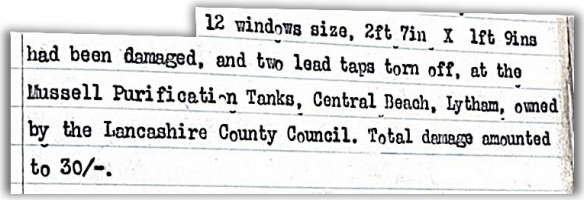


As it appears that in the first place John Carr was a trespasser at the time of the accident, and that in the second place the accident was entirely due to his own negligence, I should be glad if you would suggest to me in what way the County Council are held responsible for the damages sustained. I must, of course, in the meantime deny all liability.

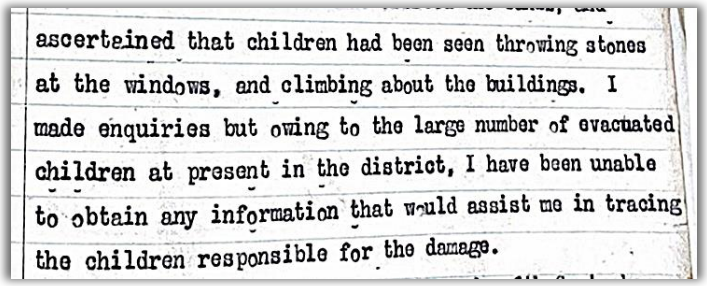
Twenty-three days later, Sunday, 3rd September 1939, His Majesty King George VI addressing his people at home and overseas announced over the airwaves …

"We are at War"

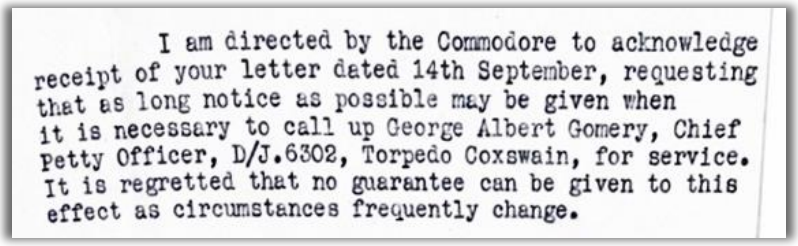
Sometime between 5:00pm the following evening (4th) and 9:00 am the next morning (5th), further trouble was to afflict Mussel Purification Station. An Occurrence Report written by P.C. 942 John Noble stated that: *"12 windows size, 2ft 7in X 1ft 9ins had been damaged, and two lead taps torn off, at the Mussel Purification Tanks, Central Beach, Lytham, owned by the Lancashire County Council. Total damage amounted to 30/-."*


12 windows size, 2ft 7in X 1ft 9ins had been damaged, and two lead taps torn off, at the Mussell Purification Tanks, Central Beach, Lytham, owned by the Lancashire County Council. Total damage amounted to 30/-.

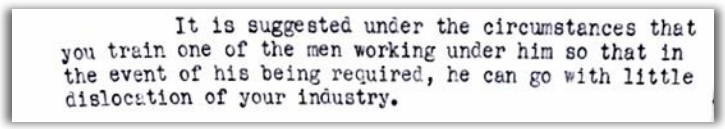
His report went on to say that he had *"... ascertained that children had been seen throwing stones at the windows, and climbing about the building. I made enquires but owing to the large number of evacuated children at present in the district, I have been unable to obtain any information that would assist me in tracing the children responsible for the damage."*


ascertained that children had been seen throwing stones at the windows, and climbing about the buildings. I made enquiries but owing to the large number of evacuated children at present in the district, I have been unable to obtain any information that would assist me in tracing the children responsible for the damage.

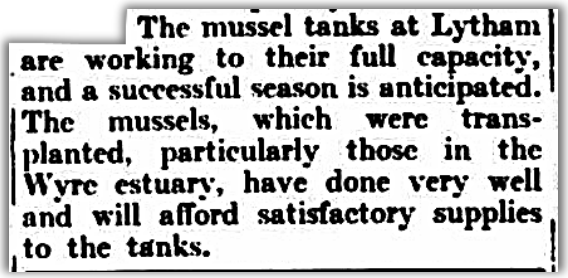
As an immediate consequence of the King's announcement, the Superintendent of the Lytham Mussel Purification reverted back to being Chief Petty Officer George Albert Gomery and, as such, he was required to be on standby to be called-up into the Royal Navy. It must have been obvious to his employers at County Hall that a replacement from Conway wouldn't be available owing to the severity of the crisis, so the Clerk wrote to the Commodore at the Royal Naval Barracks in Devonport to request delay in Mr. Gomery's call-up. A week later he received a reply: *"I am directed by the Commodore to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 14th September, requesting that as long notice as possible may be given when it is necessary to call up George Albert Gomery, Chief Petty Officer, D/J.6302, Torpedo Coxswain, for service. It is regretted that no guarantee can be given to this effect as circumstances frequently change."*


I am directed by the Commodore to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 14th September, requesting that as long notice as possible may be given when it is necessary to call up George Albert Gomery, Chief Petty Officer, D/J.6302, Torpedo Coxswain, for service. It is regretted that no guarantee can be given to this effect as circumstances frequently change.

Concluding the letter a little advice was offered: *"It is suggested under the circumstances that you train one of the men working under him so that in the event of his being required, he can go with little dislocation to your industry."*


It is suggested under the circumstances that you train one of the men working under him so that in the event of his being required, he can go with little dislocation of your industry.

As the year came to a close, a small article, published in the 'Formby Times' on the 30th December 1939, provided a small ray of sunshine at a time of foreboding skies: *"The mussel tanks at Lytham are working to full capacity, and a successful season is anticipated. The mussels, which were transplanted, particularly those in the Wyre estuary, have done very well and will afford satisfactory supplies to the tanks."*


The mussel tanks at Lytham are working to their full capacity, and a successful season is anticipated. The mussels, which were transplanted, particularly those in the Wyre estuary, have done very well and will afford satisfactory supplies to the tanks.

The 'satisfactory supplies' certainly kept the tanks busy throughout the 1939/40 season, as can be seen in the following extract from a report, published in 1946, titled 'Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Report on the Sea Fisheries of England and Wales for the Years 1939-1944 inclusive',.

Lytham. The mussel purification station at Lytham operated by the Lancashire County Council, continued to function during the war. As at Conway, the season 1939–1940 established a record, but subsequently shortage of musselmen and blackout restrictions caused a decline in the quantity of mussels taken from the Ribble Estuary. Arrangements were made in 1938 for mussels from the Wyre Estuary to be sent by road to the Lytham tanks for purification but the results were disappointing. A few bags of mussels sent from Morecambe by road transport were accepted for purification in 1941 with satisfactory results. The number from this source increased each succeeding year until in the season which ended in March, 1945, over half of the output of the Lytham tanks were Morecambe mussels, and a new record was set up.

	Ribble. (Lytham).	Wyre.	Morecambe.	Total Output. Full Bags.
1938–1939	7,207	548	—	7,755
1939–1940	10,524	1,200	—	11,724
1940–1941	7,837	345	—	8,182
1941–1942	7,436	—	57	7,493
1942–1943	7,583	—	117	7,700
1943–1944	5,401	—	2,633	8,034
1944–1945	5,318	433	6,707	12,458

That season 10,524 bags of mussels were gathered from the Ribble estuary beds and, together with 1,200 bags from the River Wyre beds, resulted in a total output of 11,724 bags from the tanks, an increase of over 50% from the previous season's record yield.

The above-mentioned Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Report also stated that 'blackout restrictions' were one cause of a *"decline in the quantity of mussels taken from the Ribble Estuary"* during the following years. The effect of these restrictions on the Ribble mussel fishermen is explained in detail in a letter sent by the County Council to the Regional Commissioner on the 13th July 1941:

Urgent representations have been made to me by Lytham fishermen against the operation of the Order recently made by the Regional Commissioner which prevents persons being on the foreshore at Lytham after dark.

The fishermen say that the Naval Authorities have, to meet the difficulties of fishing, relaxed their Order which originally prevented boats setting out during the black-out, and that it is now possible for fishermen to go seaward before dawn provided they do not come back until after daylight. The effect of this concession has been now nullified by the Order which prevents the men from going to the beach until daylight. Lytham, as you know, is very tidal, and it is essential that they should be able to "lay-off" their boats in deeper water before the tide has completely gone out if they ate to make use of the ebb to get out to sea.

The mussels in the Ribble estuary are owned by the Lancashire County Council. They are only fished by fishermen who have a permit to do so issued by the County Council, and no mussels can be sold for human consumption except those which have been passed through the Purification Tank at Lytham. The industry not only provides a considerable amount of employment but also food, and will average 8,000 cwt.bags a season, probably worth 10/- a bag to the fishermen at the present time, so you will appreciate that any restriction on fishing (which can only be done for an hour or two round low water) will bear very heavily on them and the supply of fish.

facsimile

It appears that this letter had no effect on easing on easing the fishermen's plight as a letter, sent 18 months later, shows that blackout restrictions were still in place:

To: Captain Hughes, Resident Naval Officer, Preston

From: P.O. Peterson

Date:- 24th January 1943.

On Saturday 23rd January I warned Edward Butcher and W Proctor that they were not allowed to go afloat until 0714 A.M. Sunday the 24th January.

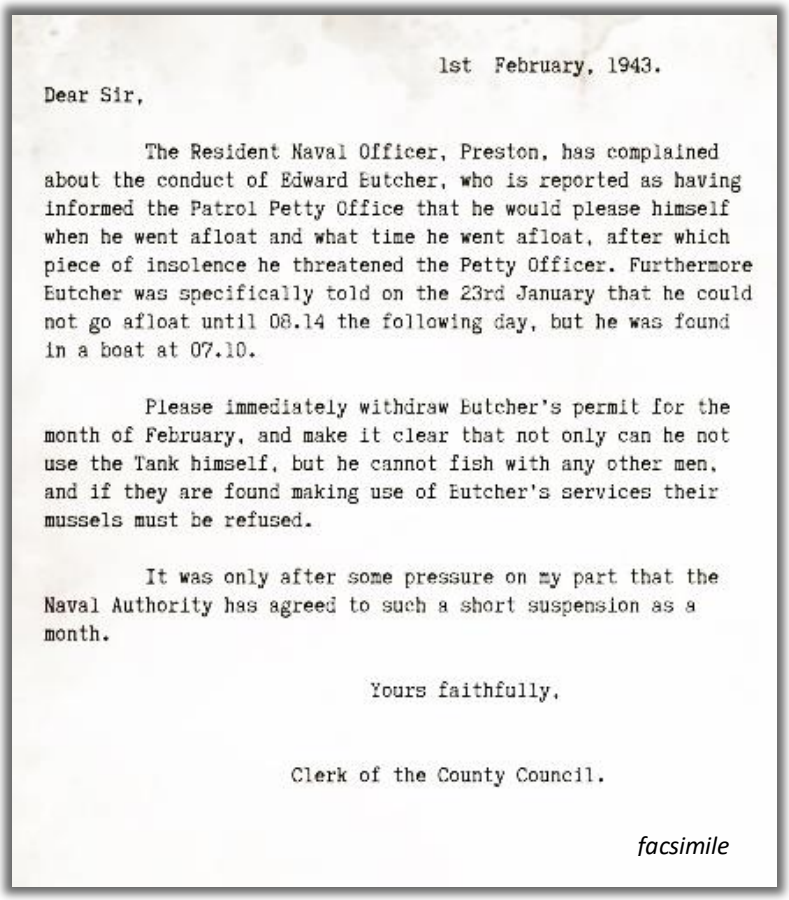
Edward Butcher told me that he would take no notice of what I said and that he would please himself when he went afloat and what time he went afloat. At the same time he threatened me if I ever tried to stop him.

On Sunday at 0710hrs I saw Butcher going down the river in Rowing Boat 610G with three other men. I have discovered that one of the other three was F Rayton, but Rayton in my opinion is innocent and I have warned him and am sure he will give us no more trouble.

I am sure that if Butcher is not punished severely we will always be having trouble with these men.

facsimile

The consequence of Mr. Butcher's belligerence was conveyed to the Tank superintendent in a formal letter from the Clerk of the County Council on the 1st February 1943:



1st February, 1943.

Dear Sir,

The Resident Naval Officer, Preston, has complained about the conduct of Edward Butcher, who is reported as having informed the Patrol Petty Office that he would please himself when he went afloat and what time he went afloat, after which piece of insolence he threatened the Petty Officer. Furthermore Butcher was specifically told on the 23rd January that he could not go afloat until 08.14 the following day, but he was found in a boat at 07.10.

Please immediately withdraw Butcher's permit for the month of February, and make it clear that not only can he not use the Tank himself, but he cannot fish with any other men, and if they are found making use of Butcher's services their mussels must be refused.

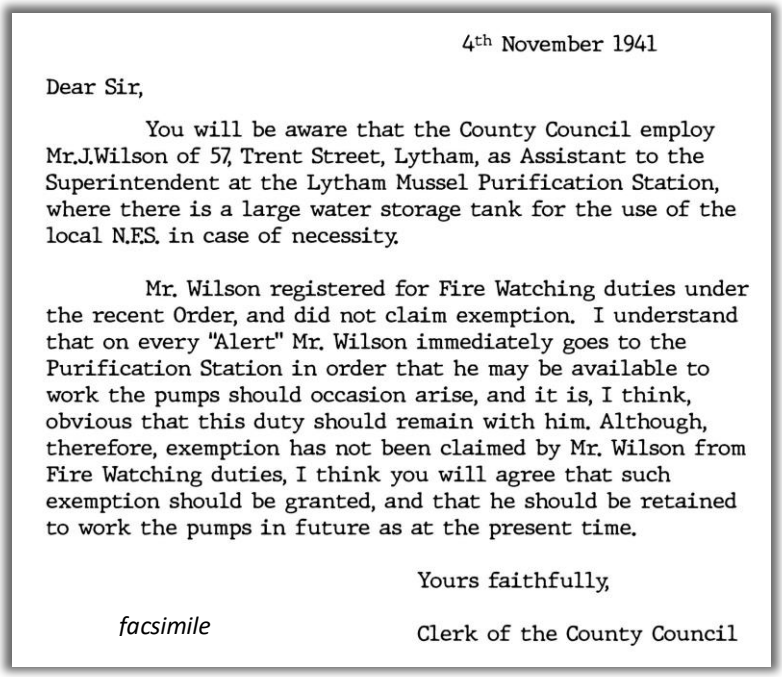
It was only after some pressure on my part that the Naval Authority has agreed to such a short suspension as a month.

Yours faithfully,

Clerk of the County Council.

facsimile

During the wartime period, the Purification Station and its staff supported the war effort. A letter from the County Council outlines the nature of Mr. Wilson's role:



4th November 1941

Dear Sir,

You will be aware that the County Council employ Mr.J.Wilson of 57, Trent Street, Lytham, as Assistant to the Superintendent at the Lytham Mussel Purification Station, where there is a large water storage tank for the use of the local N.F.S. in case of necessity.

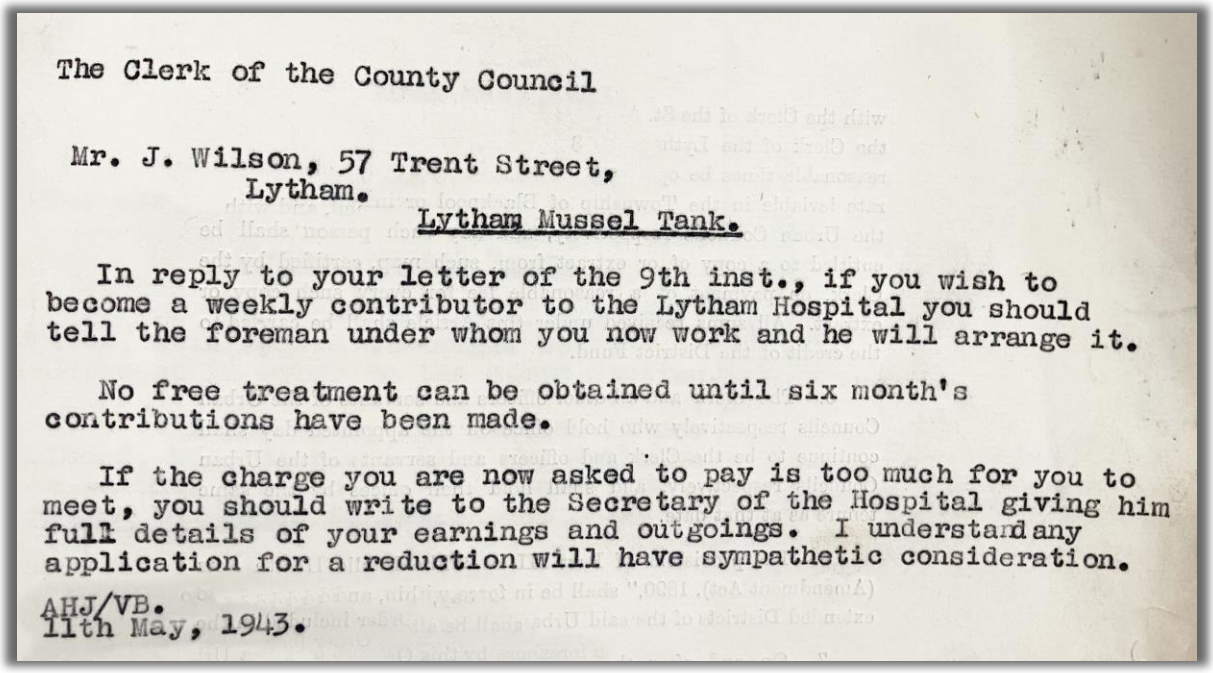
Mr. Wilson registered for Fire Watching duties under the recent Order, and did not claim exemption. I understand that on every "Alert" Mr. Wilson immediately goes to the Purification Station in order that he may be available to work the pumps should occasion arise, and it is, I think, obvious that this duty should remain with him. Although, therefore, exemption has not been claimed by Mr. Wilson from Fire Watching duties, I think you will agree that such exemption should be granted, and that he should be retained to work the pumps in future as at the present time.

Yours faithfully,

facsimile

Clerk of the County Council

In a letter, dated 11th May 1943, to the above-mentioned Mr. J. Wilson, we can see a slice of what life was like five years before the N.H.S. was founded. Perhaps he had he been injured at work, as it appears that he had written to the Clerk of the County Council regarding "free treatment" at Lytham Hospital. The Clerk of the County Council wrote a reply on the 11th May 1943:



The Clerk of the County Council

Mr. J. Wilson, 57 Trent Street,
Lytham.

Lytham Mussel Tank.

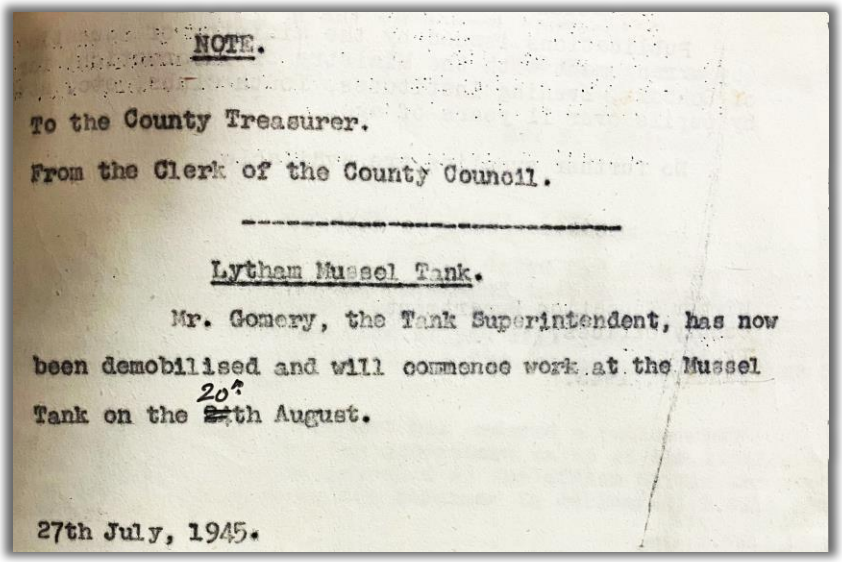
In reply to your letter of the 9th inst., if you wish to become a weekly contributor to the Lytham Hospital you should tell the foreman under whom you now work and he will arrange it.

No free treatment can be obtained until six month's contributions have been made.

If the charge you are now asked to pay is too much for you to meet, you should write to the Secretary of the Hospital giving him full details of your earnings and outgoings. I understand any application for a reduction will have sympathetic consideration.

AHJ/VB.
11th May, 1943.

With the end of the war in Europe having been declared on the 8th May 1945, demobilisation of military personnel began six weeks later, on the 18th June. In a letter from the Clerk of the County Council titled *"Lytham Mussel Tank"*, dated 27th July, he informed the County Treasurer that *"Mr. Gomery, the Tank Superintendent, has now been demobilised and will commence work at the Mussel Tank on the ~~24th~~ 20th August"*.



NOTE.

To the County Treasurer.

From the Clerk of the County Council.

Lytham Mussel Tank.

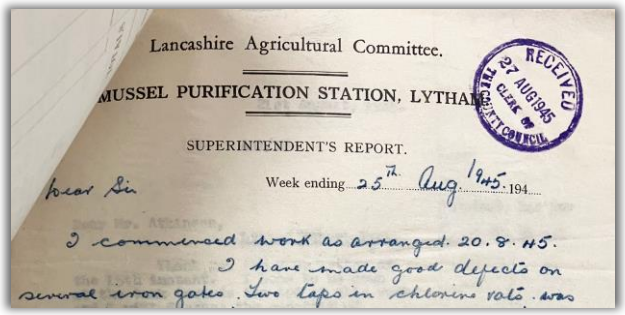
Mr. Gomery, the Tank Superintendent, has now been demobilised and will commence work at the Mussel Tank on the ~~24~~th 20th August.

27th July, 1945.

Thus began a new chapter in the history of the World, the lives of its people and that of the Lytham Mussel Purification Station.

Chapter 13
The Decline and Closure of the Mussel Tanks

Tank Superintendent, Mr. George Gomery, promptly returned to the mussel tanks as he noted in his first weekly report, dated 25th August 1945: *"Dear Sir I commenced work as arranged 20.8.45."*


Lancashire Agricultural Committee.

MUSSEL PURIFICATION STATION, LYTHAM

RECEIVED 27 AUG 1945 CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.

Week ending 25th Aug. 1945. 194

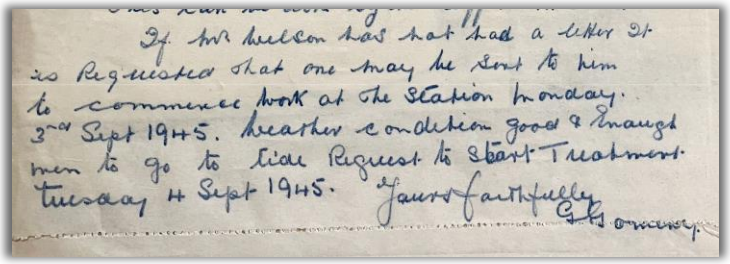
Dear Sir

I commenced work as arranged. 20.8.45.
I have made good defects on several iron gates. Two taps in chlorine vats. was

He then went on to detail the work he had done during his first week back; mending gates, taps on chlorine vats, repaired doors in offices, cleaned out offices after painting oiling & greasing nuts and bolts of Pump which is away [for repair].

It would appear from the next part of the weekly report that there had been a lack of general maintenance and upkeep of the Station during the Superintendent's absence as he then went on to list work that still needed to be done: *"70 grids are in need of repair, 14 broken windows want repairing. I see a requisition has been made. No action taken"*. He also requested that the County Surveyor call at the Station as the South Cleansing Tank side should be made good.

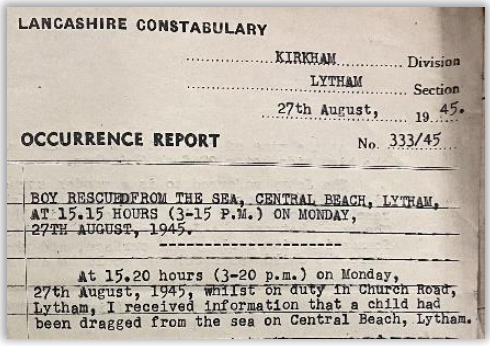
The letter concluded by announcing the start of the 1945-46 mussel gathering season: *"If Mr. Wilson has not had a letter It is Requested that one may be sent to him to commence work at the Station Monday 3rd Sept 1945. Weather condition good & enough men to go to tide Request start Treatment Tuesday 4 Sept 1945.*


If Mr Wilson has not had a letter It is Requested that one may be sent to him to commence work at the Station Monday. 3rd Sept 1945. Weather condition good & enough men to go to tide Request to start Treatment. Tuesday 4 Sept 1945. Yours faithfully G Gomery.

Yours faithfully,

G Gomery."

Only two days after writing the letter and only seven days after returning to work following a six-year absence, Mr. Gomery was called upon to perform an act of great courage. An Occurrence Report, dated 27th August 1945, written by PC 1376 Wiggins describes the incident under the heading "BOY RESCUED FROM THE SEA, CENTRAL BEACH, LYTHAM, AT 15.15 HOURS (3-15 P.M.) ON MONDAY, 27TH AUGUST, 1945".


LANCASHIRE CONSTABULARY

KIRKHAM Division

LYTHAM Section

27th August, 19 45.

OCCURRENCE REPORT No. 333/45

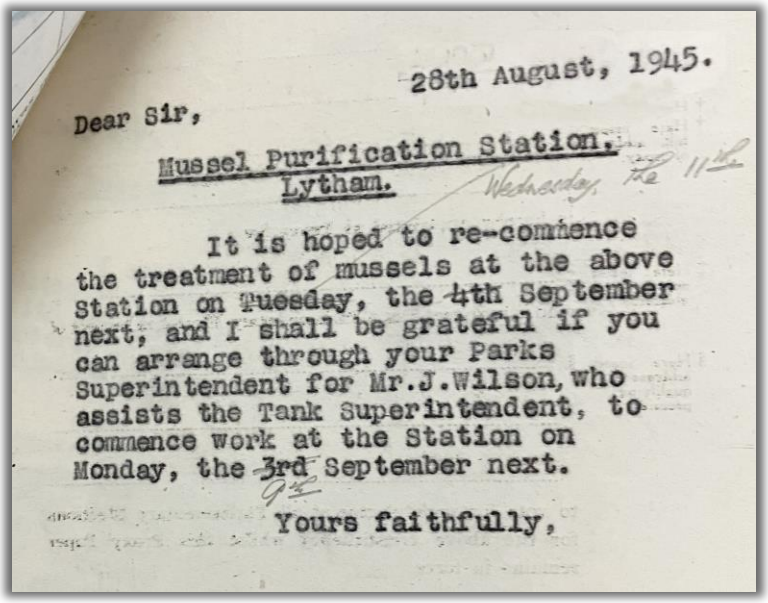
BOY RESCUED FROM THE SEA, CENTRAL BEACH, LYTHAM, AT 15.15 HOURS (3-15 P.M.) ON MONDAY, 27TH AUGUST, 1945.

At 15.20 hours (3-20 p.m.) on Monday, 27th August, 1945, whilst on duty in Church Road, Lytham, I received information that a child had been dragged from the sea on Central Beach, Lytham.

"At 15.20 hours (3-20 p.m.) on Monday, 27th August 1945, whilst on duty in Church Road, Lytham, I received information that a child had been dragged from the sea on Central Beach, Lytham."

The child was eight-year-old Alan Kenworthy, of 26, Trent Street, Lytham who had fallen off the jetty near to the mussel tanks and was being swept away in the ebbing tide towards the Pier. Alan's sister, Shirley, called for assistance and Jean Haxby (age 20), who had been bathing in the sea, swam out about 100 yards and got a hold of the boy. In the meantime, Mr. Gomery (53) had heard of the child's plight and, fully clothed, swam out to them. On reaching them he took hold of the child and brought him to the shore where he applied artificial respiration. Alan survived his ordeal and for their valiant efforts both Mr. Gomery and Jean Haxby were awarded Royal Humane Society Certificates. (see Appendix 1 for further details.)

The following day and acting on Mr. Gomery's request in his weekly report for Mr. Wilson to commence work, a letter was sent from County Hall to the Town Hall in St. Annes: *"It is hoped to re-commence the treatment of mussels at the above Station on Tuesday, the 4th September next, and I shall be grateful if you can arrange through your Parks Superintendent, for Mr. J. Wilson, who assists the Tank Superintendent, to commence work at the Station on Monday, the 3rd September next."* These dates were then amended, in pencil, to *"Wednesday the 11th"* and Monday, the *"9th"*.



28th August, 1945.

Dear Sir,

Mussel Purification Station, Lytham.

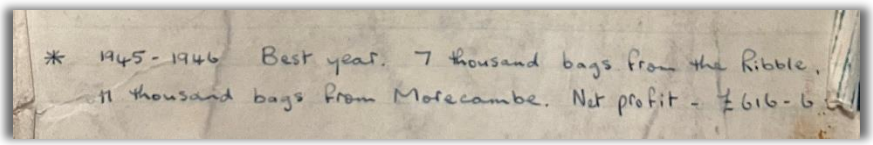
Wednesday, the 11th

It is hoped to re-commence the treatment of mussels at the above Station on Tuesday, the 4th September next, and I shall be grateful if you can arrange through your Parks Superintendent for Mr.J.Wilson, who assists the Tank Superintendent, to commence work at the Station on Monday, the 3rd September next.

9th

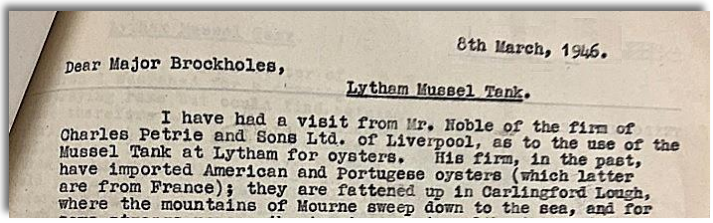
Yours faithfully,

So started, what was later to be noted as, the 'Best year' in terms of the number of bags of mussels purified at the Lytham Mussel Purification Station. A line in a handwritten note provides the information:



* 1945-1946 Best year. 7 thousand bags from the Ribble, 11 thousand bags from Morecambe. Net profit - £616-6

> * 1945 -1946 Best year 7 thousand bags from the Ribble, 11 thousand bags from Morecambe. Net profit - £616



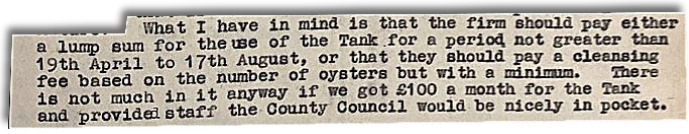
8th March, 1946.

Dear Major Brockholes,

Lytham Mussel Tank.

I have had a visit from Mr. Noble of the firm of Charles Petrie and Sons Ltd. of Liverpool, as to the use of the Mussel Tank at Lytham for oysters. His firm, in the past, have imported American and Portugese oysters (which latter are from France); they are fattened up in Carlingford Lough, where the mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea, and for

Towards the end of 1945/46 season the Chairman of the Lancashire County Agricultural Executive Committee, Major J. W. Fitzherbert-Brockholes, received a letter, dated 8th March 1946, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Experimental Station at Conway regarding "*the use of the Mussel Tank at Lytham for oysters".* In the letter, it was suggested that "*the firm of Charles Petrie and Sons Ltd. of Liverpool … should pay either a lump sum for the use of the Tank for a period not greater than 19th April to 17th August, or that they should pay a cleansing fee based on the number of oysters but with a minimum".*

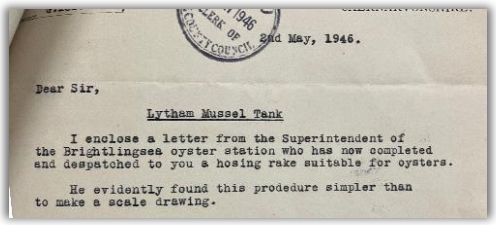


What I have in mind is that the firm should pay either a lump sum for the use of the Tank for a period not greater than 19th April to 17th August, or that they should pay a cleansing fee based on the number of oysters but with a minimum. There is not much in it anyway if we get £100 a month for the Tank and provided staff the County Council would be nicely in pocket.

The letter continued: *"There is not much in it anyway if we get £100 a month for the Tank and provided staff the County Council would be nicely in pocket."*

The oysters in question would be imported immature Portuguese shellfish which were to be fattened up in Carlingford Lough, where it is said 'the mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea', before being cleansed in the mussel tanks at Lytham.

The proposal must have been considered favourable, as this letter sent to the Clerk of the County Council, dated 2nd May 1946, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Experimental Station at Conway, states: *"I enclose a letter from the Superintendent of the Brightlingsea oyster station who has now completed and dispatched to you a hosing rake suitable for oysters. He evidently found this procedure simpler than to make a scale drawing."*



2nd May, 1946.

Dear Sir,

Lytham Mussel Tank

I enclose a letter from the Superintendent of the Brightlingsea oyster station who has now completed and despatched to you a hosing rake suitable for oysters.

He evidently found this prodedure simpler than to make a scale drawing.

No further references to this project were forthcoming so, presumably, the hosing rake quickly became redundant.

Then, just as the 1946/47 season was about start, and perhaps as a warning to anybody thinking of collecting mussels as a way of making some extra cash, the Lancashire Daily Post printed a court case under the strap-line: 'SOLD UNCLEAN MUSSELS'.



SOLD UNCLEAN MUSSELS

When Edward Wignall, of Radnor-street, Preston, was fined £5, plus 7s. 6d. witness's expenses, at Preston Borough Magistrates' Court, to-day, on two summonses for selling native mussels which had not been subjected to a process of cleansing, Mr. J. W. Harrison, prosecuting for Preston Corporation, said the local health authority took a serious view of the matter.

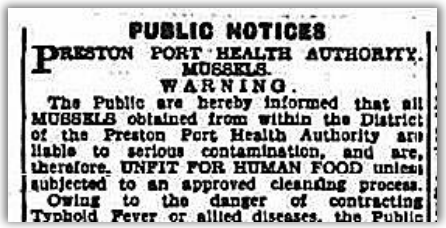
"When Edward Wignall, of Radnor-street, Preston, was fined £5, plus 7s 6d, witness's expenses, at Preston Borough Magistrates Court, to-day, on two summonses for selling native mussels which

had not been subjected to a process of cleansing, Mr. J. W, Harrison, prosecuting for Preston Corporation, said the local health authority took a serious view of the matter."

The newspaper report continued: *"Mr. Harrison said Wignall was seen by an inspector selling mussels from a flat cart during the "close season" (May 1st – August 31st) while the mussel purification plant at Lytham was closed."*


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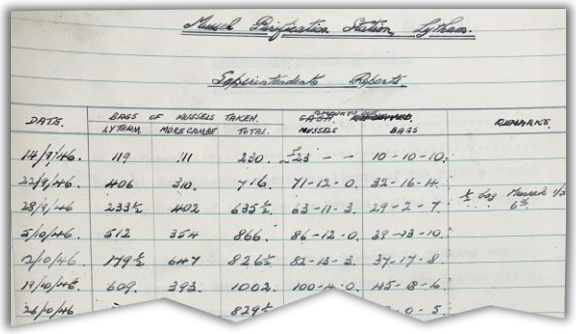
Two weeks later, 18th September 1946, the same newspaper carried a 'PUBLIC NOTICE' informing the general public *"that all MUSSELS obtained from within the District of the Preston Port Health Authority are liable to serious contamination, and are, therefore, UNFIT FOR HUMAN FOOD unless subjected to an approved cleansing process".*


PUBLIC NOTICES

PRESTON PORT HEALTH AUTHORITY.
MUSSELS.
WARNING.

The Public are hereby informed that all MUSSELS obtained from within the District of the Preston Port Health Authority are liable to serious contamination, and are, therefore, UNFIT FOR HUMAN FOOD unless subjected to an approved cleansing process. Owing to the danger of contracting Typhoid Fever or allied diseases, the Public

For the licensed mussel fishermen of Lytham and Morecambe the season, after a slow first week when only 280 bags passed through the purification process, built steadily week-by-week, as shown in the summary of 'Superintendents Reports': 14/9/46 – **230**, 22/9/46 – **716**, 28/9/46 – **635½**, 5/10/46 – **866**, 12/10/46 – **826½**, 19/10/46 – **1002**. Resulting in an year-end total of 10145 bags purified. At this rate the previous season's total ('Best year') looked set to be broken but the weather was about to change!


Mussel Purification Station, Lytham.

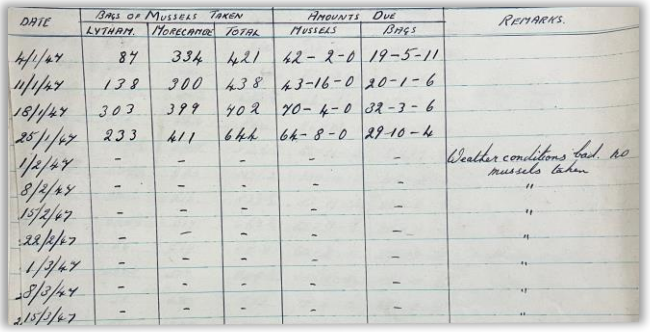
Superintendents Reports

DATE.	BAGS OF MUSSELS TAKEN LYTHAM.	MORECAMBE	TOTAL.	CARTS MUSSELS	BAGS	REMARKS.
14/9/46.	119	111	230.	£23 - -	10-10-10.	
22/9/46.	406	310.	716.	71-12-0.	32-16-11.	
28/9/46	233½	402	635½	63-11-3.	29-2-7.	½ bag Mussels 1/3 6d
5/10/46.	512	354	866.	86-12-0.	38-13-10.	
12/10/46.	179½	647	826½	82-13-2.	37-17-8.	
19/10/46.	609.	393.	1002.	100-4-0.	45-18-6.	
26/10/46			829½		0-5.	


THAW DELAYED: MORE SNOW AND FROST FORECAST

THE great thaw has been delayed and the week-end's weather prospects are—more frost and snow, and some fog and gales.

On the first day of February 1947, it was reported in the 'Lancashire Daily Post' that following a heavy snowfall towards the end of January, an expected thaw was delayed *"and the week-end's weather prospects are - more frost and snow, and some fog and gales"*. The comment *"Weather conditions bad. No mussels taken"*, in the Superintendent's report in the 'REMARKS' column for the seven weeks from the 1/2/47 through to 15/3/47), showed that it was more than just the week-end's weather that promised more frost, snow, fog and gales.


DATE	BAGS OF MUSSELS TAKEN LYTHAM.	MORECAMBE	TOTAL	AMOUNTS DUE MUSSELS	BAGS	REMARKS.
4/1/47	87	334	421	42-2-0	19-5-11	
11/1/47	138	300	438	43-16-0	20-1-6	
18/1/47	303	399	702	70-4-0	32-3-6	
25/1/47	233	411	644	64-8-0	29-10-4	
1/2/47	-	-	-	-	-	Weather conditions bad. No mussels taken
8/2/47	-	-	-	-	-	"
15/2/47	-	-	-	-	-	"
22/2/47	-	-	-	-	-	"
1/3/47	-	-	-	-	-	"
8/3/47	-	-	-	-	-	"
15/3/47	-	-	-	-	-	"

[Meteorological records show that from 22nd January to 17th March in 1947, snow fell every day somewhere in the UK, with the weather so cold that the snow accumulated. The temperature seldom rose more than a degree or two above freezing. Much of the snow was powdery and was soon whipped into deep drifts by strong winds. If February hadn't been enough, March was even worse. In the first half of the month, there were more gales and heavy snowstorms. On 4th and 5th March, heavy snow fell over most of England and Wales, with severe drifting. On 6th March, drifts were five metres deep in the Pennines. On 15th March, a deepening depression from the Atlantic approached the British Isles, bringing rain and severe gales.]

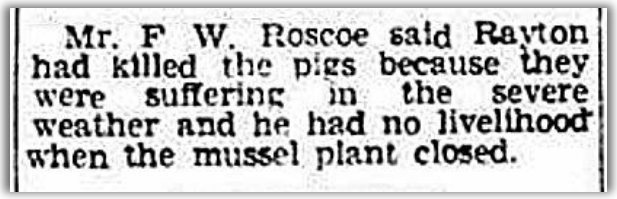
During the two weeks following the rain and severe gales, the hardy Morecambe mussel fishermen managed to bring 172 bags and 222 bags to Lytham for purifying but for the Ribble fishermen the season had ended on the 25th January. As a result, the total number of bags purified for the 1946/47 season was a disappointing 12744 bags (only 2/3rd the quantity of the previous season) and the associated fees dropped from £1,860 to £1,265.

One outcome for the fishermen of the prolonged bad weather was the loss of earnings during this period, which no doubt resulted in significant hardship for them and their families. For one man this hardship landed him in court. It was reported in 'The Lancashire Daily Post' on the 24th April 1947, that *"Pleading guilty James Rayton (42), an ex-Naval seaman, of Fern Cottage, Lytham Road, Warton, was fined a total of £21"*. The newspaper article detailed his wrong doing: £10 for slaughtering three pigs without authority, £5 for producing bacon without a licence, and £5, and 10s in each case for possessing a firearm and ammunition without a certificate. In his defence, *"Mr. F. W. Roscoe said Rayton had killed the pigs because they were suffering in the severe weather and he had no livelihood when the mussel plant closed."*



PIG OFFENCES LEAD TO FINES AT KIRKHAM

Pleading guilty James Rayton (42), married, an ex-Naval seaman, of Fern Cottage, Lytham-road, Warton, was fined a total of £21.



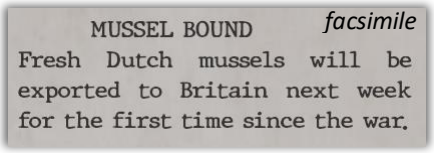
Mr. F W. Roscoe said Rayton had killed the pigs because they were suffering in the severe weather and he had no livelihood when the mussel plant closed.

In contrast to the appalling snowy, cold, stormy weather conditions experienced at the start of 1947, the weather conditions for the following summer and autumn were the opposite: dry, hot and calm and while this was ideal for the local holiday businesses it was, as we shall see, a disaster for the mussel fishermen.The 1947-48 season got off to a good start for the mussel fishermen and, by the end of the first week, it was reported that the purification tanks were full; although not everything was satisfactory.


MUSSELS WERE
"TOO CHEAP"

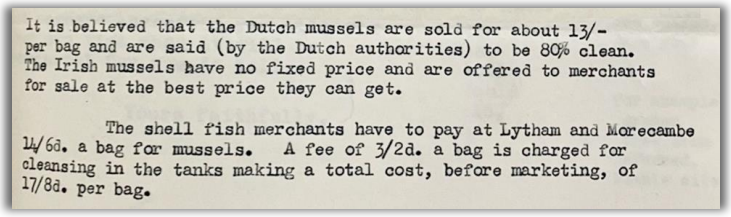
An article in 'The Lancashire Daily Post' for the 18th September 1947, informed its readers that *"MUSSELS WERE TOO CHEAP"*. This headline appeared above an article that described a minor mutiny by some of the Lytham and Morecambe mussel fishermen. The fishermen had returned 20 bags of mussels to the gathering beds, rather than sell them to the merchants, as they were not prepared to accept the 2s 6d less per bag offered. Some of the fishermen, however, agreed to the price and accepted the explanation that demand was not meeting supply.

An innocuous report in the 'Manchester Evening News – Last Extra Edition' on Tuesday, 12th August 1947, perhaps provides a reason for the 'lack of demand' as it states: *"Fresh Dutch mussels will be exported to Britain next week for the first time since the war."*


MUSSEL BOUND *facsimile*
Fresh Dutch mussels will be exported to Britain next week for the first time since the war.

To added to the fishermen's woes, Irish mussels were also being imported into the country.

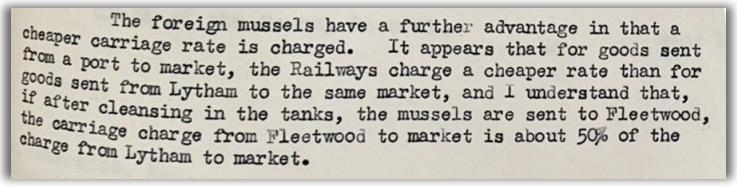
Thus, the real issue wasn't that the demand for mussels had fallen, it was more that the price of their product was too high in comparison to foreign mussels. The details of this dilemma was explained in a report sent to the Clerk of Lancashire County Council by Mr. J. Craven, secretary of the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries, on the 4th January 1948: "*It is believed that the Dutch mussels are sold for about 13/- per bag and are said (by the Dutch authorities) to be 80% clean. The Irish mussels have no fixed price and are offered to merchants for sale at the best price they can get.*


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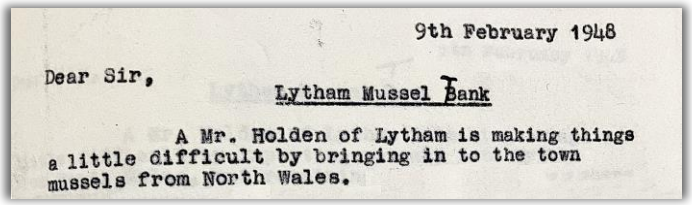
The shell fish merchants have to pay at Lytham and Morecambe 14/6d. a bag for mussels. A fee of 3/2d. a bag is charged for cleansing in the tanks making a total cost, before marketing, of 17/8d. per bag.

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His report continued: "*The foreign mussels have a further advantage in that a cheaper carriage rate is charged. It appears that for goods sent from a port to market, the Railways charge a cheaper rate than for goods sent from Lytham to the same market, and I understand that, if after cleansing in the tanks, the mussels are sent to Fleetwood, the carriage charge from Fleetwood to market is about 50% of the charge from Lytham to market.*"


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As if life wasn't difficult enough for the Lytham mussel fishermen, their livelihood was also being threatened by a local Lytham shellfish merchant. A letter from the Clerk of Lancashire County Council sent on the 9th February 1948, to the Chief Constable of Lancashire described the problem:



9th February 1948

Dear Sir,

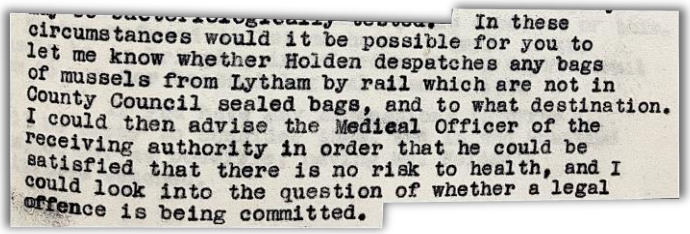
Lytham Mussel Bank

A Mr. Holden of Lytham is making things a little difficult by bringing in to the town mussels from North Wales.

"*Dear Sir,*

A Mr. Holden of Lytham is making things a little difficult by bringing in to the town mussels from North Wales."

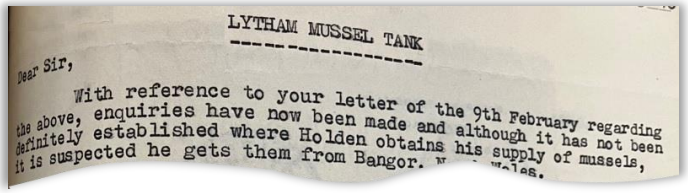
He then went on to describe what information he wanted the Chief Constable to obtain, together with the reasons why he needed it:



circumstances would it be possible for you to let me know whether Holden despatches any bags of mussels from Lytham by rail which are not in County Council sealed bags, and to what destination. I could then advise the Medical Officer of the receiving authority in order that he could be satisfied that there is no risk to health, and I could look into the question of whether a legal offence is being committed.

"*In these circumstances would it be possible for you to let me know whether Holden despatches any bags of mussels from Lytham by rail which are not in County Council sealed bags, and to what destination. I could then advise the Medical Officer of the receiving authority in order that he could be satisfied that there is no risk to health, and I could look into the question of whether a legal offence is being committed.*"

The Chief Constable sent his reply on the 20th February:



LYTHAM MUSSEL TANK

Dear Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 9th February regarding the above, enquiries have now been made and although it has not been definitely established where Holden obtains his supply of mussels, it is suspected he gets them from Bangor.

"*Dear Sir,*

With reference to your letter of the 9th February regarding the above, enquiries have now been made and although it has not been definitely established where Holden obtains his supply of mussels, it is suspected he gets them from Bangor, North Wales."

The letter continued:

"*Holden brings the mussels into Lytham by his own motor lorry and re-distributes them from Lytham. In addition, however, it is believed he occasionally transports them direct to Fleetwood from where they are dispatched to the South of England.*

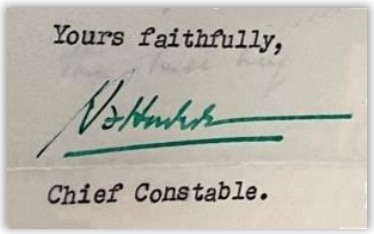
On the 18th February 1948, six bags of mussels were sent by rail from Lytham, addressed to Messrs. Abrams and Sons, Blackburn, and a further six bags were addressed to Messrs. Tomlinson, Blackburn. They were contained in ordinary sacks, some of which formerly held cattle meal. None of the bags bore the printing "Ribble Purified Mussels" and none bore the Lancashire County Council lead seal, showing that they had passed through the Lytham

Mussel Tanks. Mussels landed at Lytham would have passed through the Tanks, and there is little doubt that this consignment has come from Bangor.

Holden supplies the above-mentioned Firms regularly, and no doubt a sample of the mussels could be obtained from a purchase at the premises of these Firms.

Holden has not used the Lytham Mussel Tanks since the 2nd February 1948. On the 6th February 1948, three bags were despatched by passenger rail from Lytham to the following- one bag to Messrs. Atkinson, Nelson; one bag to Messrs. Green, Bradford; and one bag to Messrs Brown of Burnley. It is not known what sort of sacks they were, or whether they were despatched as Ribble Purified Mussels."

The letter was signed:



"*Yours faithfully,*
AFHordern
Chief Constable."

Of course, the investigation carried out by the Lancashire police wasn't, in fact, driven by the mussel fishermen's plight but by the much more serious issue of selling shellfish unfit for human consumption.

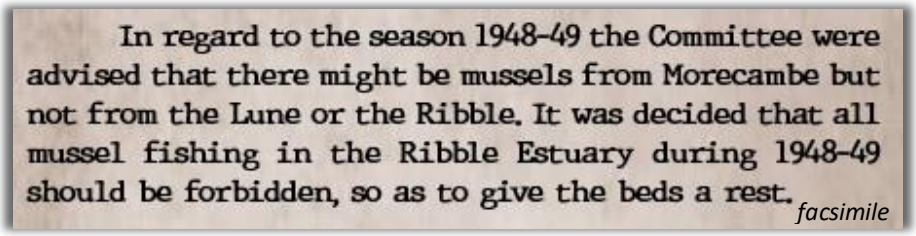
[There is no record of Mr. Holden being formally accused of carrying out any legal offence following this investigation.]

In addition to the three-pronged attack from Dutch, Irish and Mr. Holden's Welsh mussels, the Lytham and Morecambe mussel beds had had to contend with unfavourable weather conditions during the summer and autumn of 1947. Dry, hot, calm weather during this period resulted in a high percentage of mussel ova being fertilised and, furthermore, the calm seas didn't disperse the larvae far afield or wash the young mussels off the beds. As a consequence, the mussel beds were blanketed with young mussels (but not as prolific as the 1940 Conway 'phenomenon') depriving the existing mature shellfish of a full ration of food resulting in poor quality 'fish'. The extremely dry period and the lack of fresh water coming down the river also contributed to their poor quality. This led to the shellfish merchants, with whom the fishermen along the Lancashire coast dealt, informing them that they were unable to sell their locally gathered mussels.

The combined effect of these problems resulted in the total number of bags of mussels purified at the Lytham station for the 1947/48 season as 8534½ bags (of which 5155 came from Morecambe, 3164½ from Lytham and 215 from Bangor) compared to the previous year's figure of:

12744 bags (Morecambe 7764, Lytham 4980). The corresponding fees amounted to £853.9.6d whereas the previous fees were £1265.4.6d.

The poor condition of the Ribble estuary mussel beds was still causing unease within the Lancashire County Council prior to the start of the next mussel gathering season. In a letter dated 16th June 1948, the Clerk of the County Council wrote: *"In regard to the season 1948-49 the Committee were advised that there might be mussels from Morecambe but not from the Lune or the Ribble. It was decided that all mussel fishing in the Ribble Estuary during 1948-49 should be forbidden, so as to give the beds a rest."*

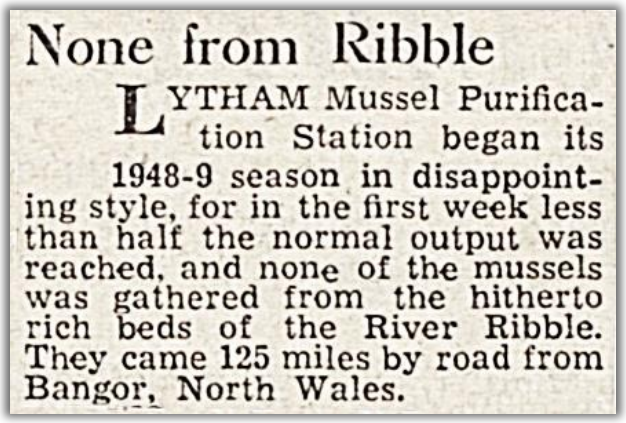

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facsimile

As the new mussel gathering season began, the 'Manchester Evening News', 28th September 1948, reported under the headline:

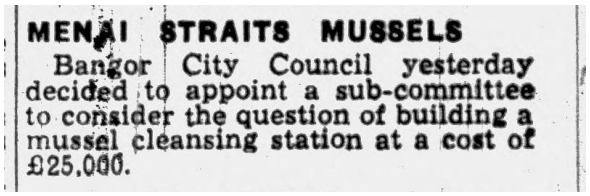
"**None from Ribble**"

"Lytham Mussel Purification Station began its 1948-9 season in disappointing style, for in the first week less than half the normal output was reached, and none of the mussels was gathered from the hitherto rich beds of the River Ribble. They came 125 miles by road from Bangor, North Wales."


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Although the Conway mussel purification station was only 16 miles away, the 125-mile trip to Lytham was needed as the Conway tanks were being fully utilised by the local Conway fishermen. Around this time, the Bangor fishermen had been asking for a purifying plant of their own and, following lengthy discussions, Bangor City Council considered building a £25,000 cleansing station. A brief article in the 28th July 1949 edition of the 'Liverpool Daily Post' reported:


MENAI STRAITS MUSSELS

Bangor City Council yesterday decided to appoint a sub-committee to consider the question of building a mussel cleansing station at a cost of £25,000.

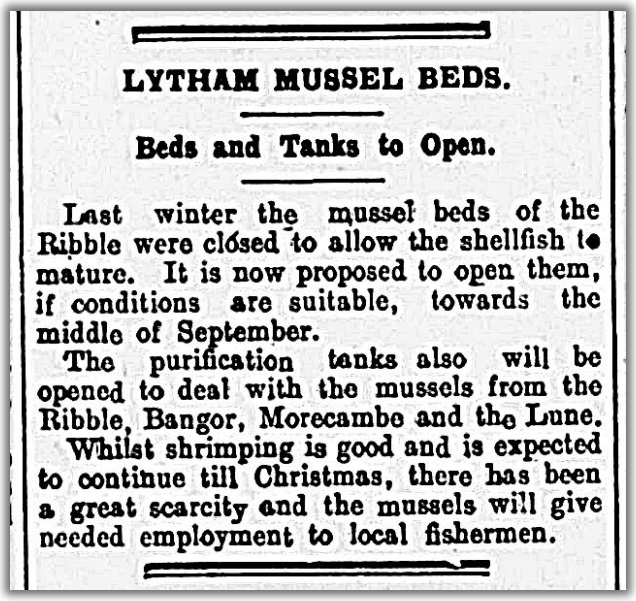
"*Bangor City Council yesterday decided to appoint a sub-committee to consider the question of building a mussel cleansing station at a cost of £25.000.*"

It never came to fruition.

By the end of the season, the effect of the decision to close the Ribble beds can be clearly seen in table below and for the second season in succession the output from the tanks was well below the break-even point of 10,000 bags.

Season	Number of Bags				No. Bags Total
	Lytham	Morecambe	Bangor	River Wyre	
1944/45	5,318	6,707		433	12,458
1945/46	7,417	11,192			18,609
1946/47	4,980	7,764			12,744
1947/48	3,164	5,155	215		8,534
1948/49	0	3,499	3,874		7,373

An article in the 28th August 1949 edition of the 'Lytham Times' announced the good news **"Beds and Tanks to Open"**. It went on to say:



LYTHAM MUSSEL BEDS.

Beds and Tanks to Open.

Last winter the mussel beds of the Ribble were closed to allow the shellfish to mature. It is now proposed to open them, if conditions are suitable, towards the middle of September.

The purification tanks also will be opened to deal with the mussels from the Ribble, Bangor, Morecambe and the Lune.

Whilst shrimping is good and is expected to continue till Christmas, there has been a great scarcity and the mussels will give needed employment to local fishermen.

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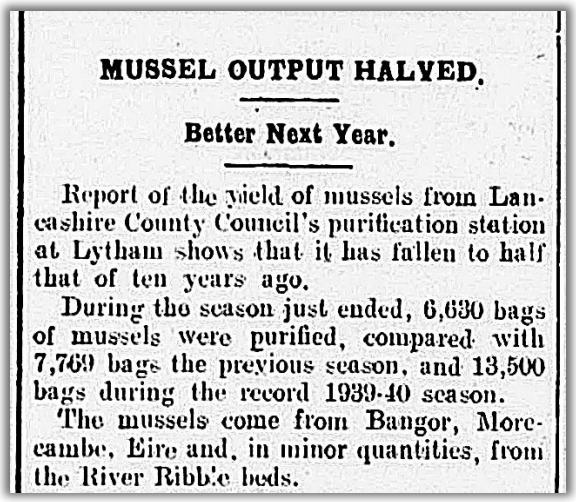
Whilst shrimping is good and is expected to continue till Christmas, there has been a great scarcity and the mussels will give needed employment to local fishermen."

At the end of the 1949-50 season the news wasn't good. **"MUSSEL OUTPUT HALVED"** declared. the Lytham Times on Friday, 7th April 1950, followed by the hopeful strapline **"Better Next Year"**.

"Report of the yield of mussels from Lancashire County Council's purification station at Lytham shows that it has fallen to half that of ten years ago.

During the season just ended, 6,630 bags of mussels were purified, compared with 7,769 bags the previous season, and 13,500 bags during the record 1939-40 season.

The mussels come from Bangor, Morecambe, Eire and, in minor quantities, from the River Ribble beds."



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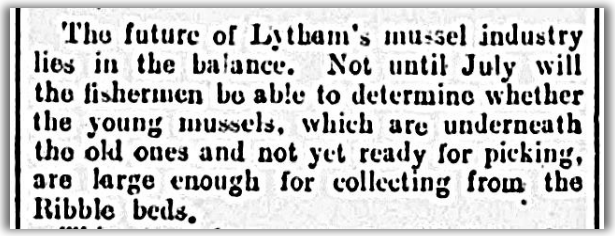
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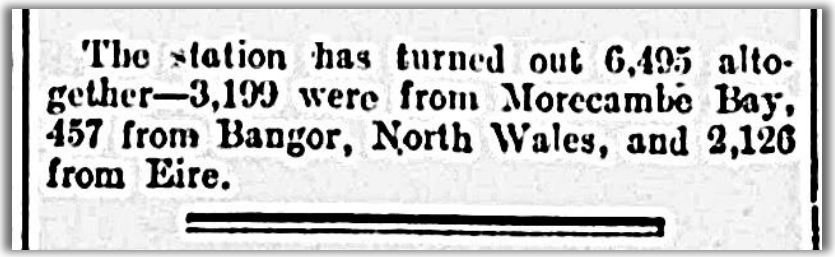
The reason for the "minor quantity" of mussels gathered from the Ribble beds was provided in an article in the 'Lytham Times' printed three weeks later: *"The future of Lytham's mussel industry lies in the balance. Not until July will the fishermen be able to determine whether the young mussels, which are underneath the old ones and not yet ready for picking, are large enough for collecting from the Ribble beds."*



The future of Lytham's mussel industry lies in the balance. Not until July will the fishermen be able to determine whether the young mussels, which are underneath the old ones and not yet ready for picking, are large enough for collecting from the Ribble beds.

It would appear that the previous year's mussel gathering had been compromised by a lack of mature shellfish. The same article also quantified a further problem for the local fishermen (which was also evident in the previous article) i.e. mussels from Eire.

Whilst at odds with the previously quoted figure of 6,630 bags of mussels purified, the article showed that not only were Irish mussels being imported into the country for sale but 2,126 bags of Irish mussels had been purified here. Good news for the Purification Station owners but not good news for the local fishermen.



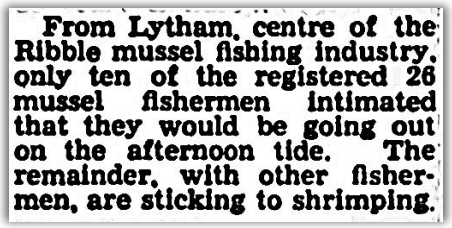
The station has turned out 6,495 altogether—3,199 were from Morecambe Bay, 457 from Bangor, North Wales, and 2,126 from Eire.

With the future of Lytham's mussel industry lying in the balance, the prospect of the Purification Station running at a loss for a fourth season needed attention and to that end a meeting of the Mussel Purification Management Sub-Committee was held on the 13th September 1950, "to consider whether any steps could be taken to increase output of mussels from the Station during the coming season". The minutes of the meeting recorded that, in addition to the Station Superintendent, Major J.W. Fitzherbert-Brockholes was the only member present. At the meeting it was identified that an 'old problem' had re-emerged: "… *the local merchants were temporarily stopping*

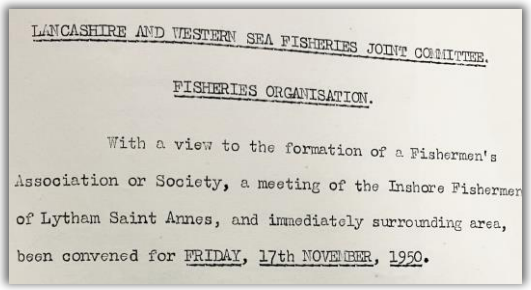
supplying the markets when there was a fall in price and they considered it unprofitable and as a consequence, the fishermen ceased to gather any further mussels until the market price was again acceptable to the merchants."

The minutes continued: *"The Tank Superintendent said that a number of fishermen were now taking steps to market their own mussels for the reason that they would be prepared, if necessary, to accept a market price lower than that which the merchants require and this would, to a large extent, ensure a continuous flow of mussels from the tanks to the markets throughout the season."*

Although at the start of the next season a report in the 'Manchester Evening News', 25th September 1950, revealed that a possible cause of the financial problem experienced by the purification station wasn't the result of a marketing problem or a lack of shellfish but rather a lack of fishermen: *"From Lytham, centre of the Ribble mussel fishing industry, only ten of the registered 26 mussel fishermen intimated that they would be going out on the afternoon tide. The remainder, with the other fishermen, are sticking to shrimping."*


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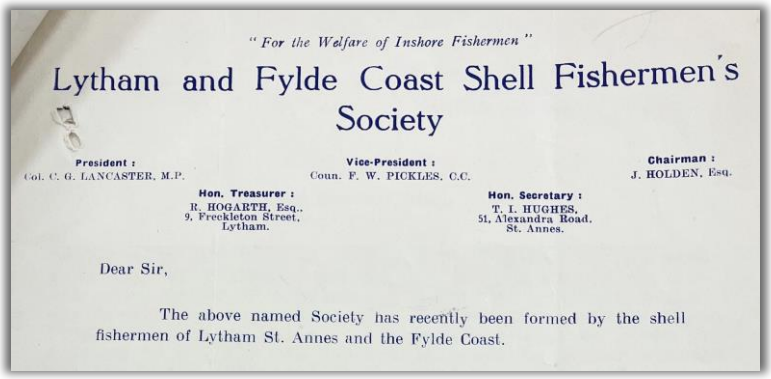
It was seen by the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee that one step to facilitate the problem would be for the local fishermen to form a Fishermen's Association or Society. As such a meeting of the Inshore Fishermen of Lytham Saint Annes, and immediately surrounding area, was convened for Friday, 17th November 1950.


LANCASHIRE AND WESTERN SEA FISHERIES JOINT COMMITTEE.

FISHERIES ORGANISATION.

With a view to the formation of a Fishermen's Association or Society, a meeting of the Inshore Fishermen of Lytham Saint Annes, and immediately surrounding area, been convened for FRIDAY, 17th NOVEMBER, 1950.

The outcome of the meeting was the formation of the Lytham and Fylde Coast Shell Fishermen's Society:


"For the Welfare of Inshore Fishermen"

Lytham and Fylde Coast Shell Fishermen's Society

President : Col. C. G. LANCASTER, M.P.

Vice-President : Coun. F. W. PICKLES, C.C.

Chairman : J. HOLDEN, Esq.

Hon. Treasurer : R. HOGARTH, Esq., 9, Freckleton Street, Lytham.

Hon. Secretary : T. I. HUGHES, 51, Alexandra Road, St. Annes.

Dear Sir,

The above named Society has recently been formed by the shell fishermen of Lytham St. Annes and the Fylde Coast.

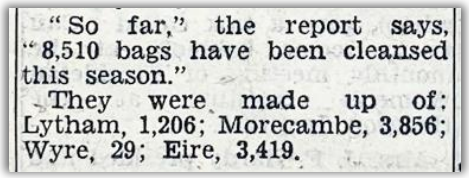
President: Col. C.G. Lancaster M.P., Vice-President: Coun. F.W. Pickles, C.C., Chairman: J. Holden, Esq, Hon. Treasurer: R Hogarth, Hon. Secretary: T.I. Hughes.

The Chairman of the Society, J. Holden, Esq, was the shellfish merchant 'spied' upon by the constabulary three years previously and also the proprietor of:

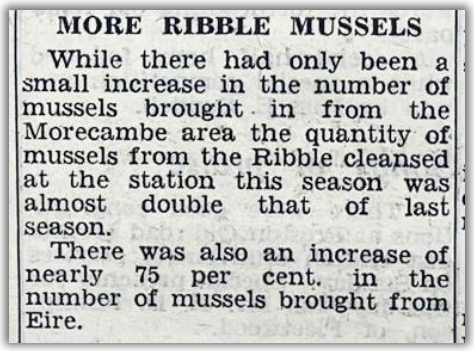


J HOLDEN & SON LTD
LYTHAM
LANCS

By March 1951, the output from the Purification Station was showing a significant increase.


"So far," the report says, "8,510 bags have been cleansed this season."
They were made up of: Lytham, 1,206; Morecambe, 3,856; Wyre, 29; Eire, 3,419.

The 'Lytham St. Annes Express' reported: *"So far, ... 8,510 bags have been cleansed this season. They were made up of: Lytham 1,206; Morecambe, 3,856; Wyre, 29; Eire, 3,419."*

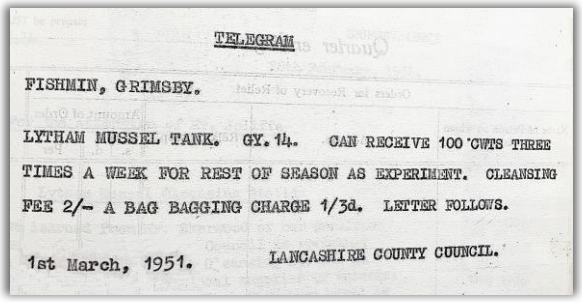

MORE RIBBLE MUSSELS

While there had only been a small increase in the number of mussels brought in from the Morecambe area the quantity of mussels from the Ribble cleansed at the station this season was almost double that of last season.

There was also an increase of nearly 75 per cent. in the number of mussels brought from Eire.

The newspaper article continued: *"While there had only been a small increase in the number of mussels bought in from the Morecambe area the quantity of mussels from the Ribble cleansed at the station this season was almost double that of last season. There was also an increase of nearly 75 per cent in the number of mussels brought from Eire."*

In an attempt to further increase output from the station, Lancashire County Council contacted the Fishery Officers of the Ministry at Grimsby, Lincolnshire by TELEGRAM, on the 1st March 1951, and offered them space for 100 cwt (hundred-weight) of mussels three times a week in the Lytham tanks for the rest of the season – as an experiment.


TELEGRAM

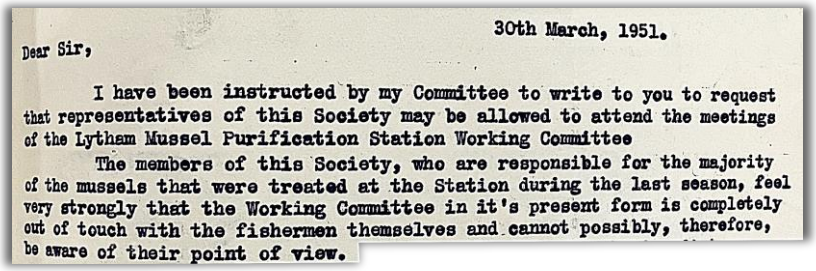
FISHMIN, GRIMSBY.

LYTHAM MUSSEL TANK. GY. 14. CAN RECEIVE 100 CWTS THREE TIMES A WEEK FOR REST OF SEASON AS EXPERIMENT. CLEANSING FEE 2/- A BAG BAGGING CHARGE 1/3d. LETTER FOLLOWS.

1st March, 1951. LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL.

By the end of the 1950/51 season 9,057 bags had been purified and although this showed a significant increase over the previous seasons return, it still represented a potential loss of £250 for the current season. The Grimsby experiment failed to materialise.

The newly formed Lytham and Fylde Coast Shell Fishermen's Society had, presumably, played an important role in the improved Ribble returns but they weren't happy. In a letter sent to 'Lancashire County Council' by their Secretary, Mr. T. I. Hughes, on the 30th March 1951, wrote: *"I have been instructed by my Committee to write to you to request that representatives of this Society may be allowed to attend the meetings of the Lytham Mussel Purification Station Working Committee.*



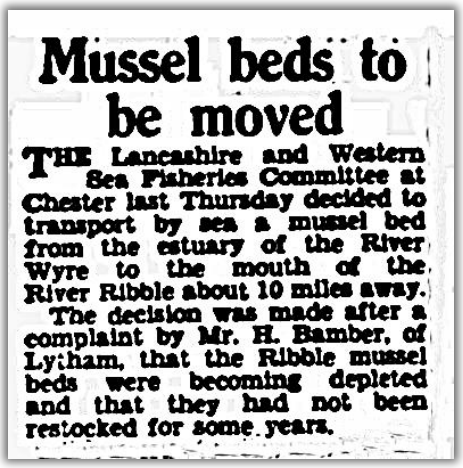
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The members of this Society, who are responsible for the majority of the mussels that were treated at the Station during the last season [by this date the membership of the society include the majority of shell-fishermen from Morecambe to Lytham]*, feel very strongly that the Working Committee in it's present form is completely out of touch with the fishermen themselves and cannot possibly, therefore, be aware of their point of view."*



Mussel beds to be moved

THE Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Committee at Chester last Thursday decided to transport by sea a mussel bed from the estuary of the River Wyre to the mouth of the River Ribble about 10 miles away.

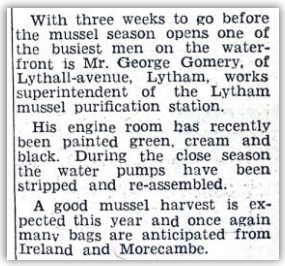
The decision was made after a complaint by Mr. H. Bamber, of Lytham, that the Ribble mussel beds were becoming depleted and that they had not been restocked for some years.

On the 6th April 1951, it was reported in the 'Fleetwood Chronicle' that: *"The Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Committee at Chester last Thursday decided to transport by sea a mussel bed from the estuary of the River Wyre to the mouth of the River Ribble about 10 miles away.*

This decision was made after a complaint by Mr. H. Bamber, of Lytham, that the Ribble mussel beds were becoming depleted and that they had not been restocked for some years."

The mussel bed relaying took place during the closed season when 20 tons of mature and semi-mature mussels from the River Wyre and 3,000,000 seed mussels from Roosebeck, on the north-west coast of Morecambe Bay, were transported by Lancashire and Western Seas Fisheries launch to the River Ribble.

During the closed seasons the Superintendent was employed to carry out maintenance work on the station's plant and machinery and during the summer months of 1951 this was no exception. On the 31st August of that year, the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' reported: *"With three weeks to go before the mussel season opens one of the busiest men on the waterfront is Mr. George Gomery, of Lythall Avenue, Lytham, works superintendent of the Lytham mussel purification station. His engine room has recently been*



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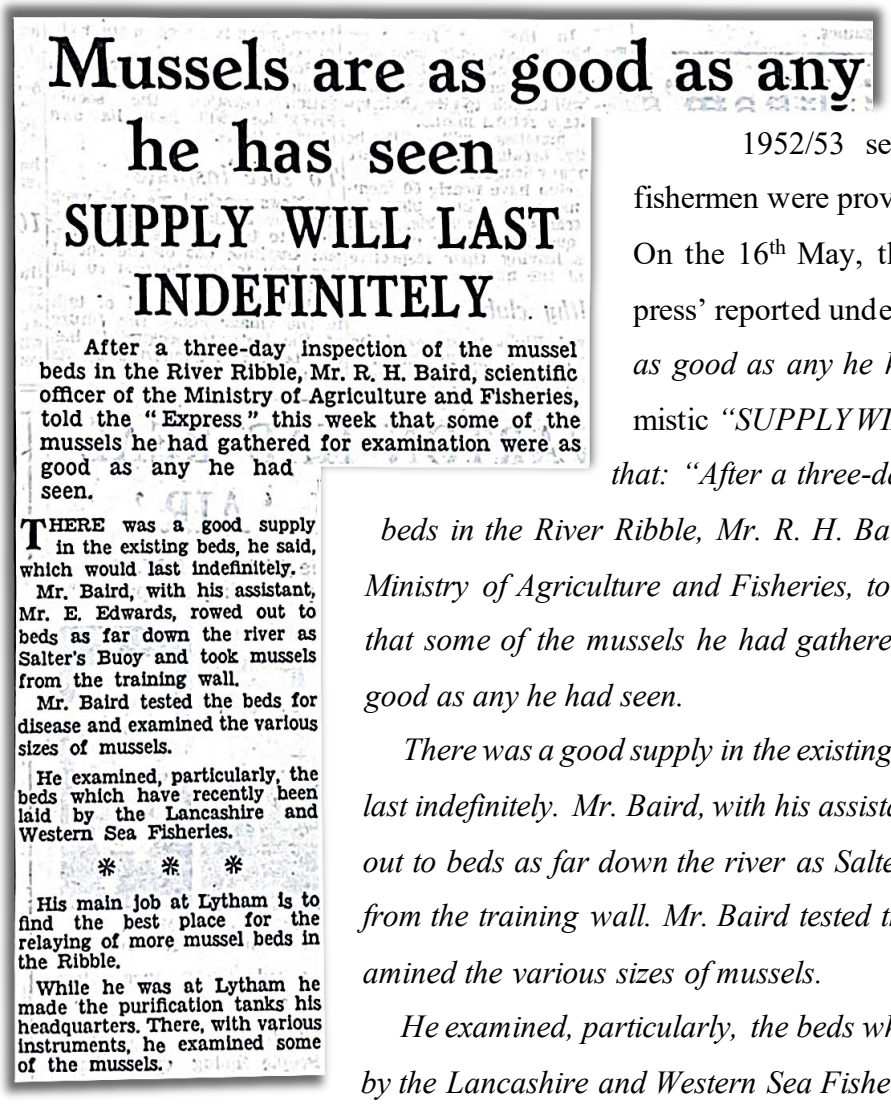
His engine room has recently been painted green, cream and black. During the close season the water pumps have been stripped and re-assembled.

A good mussel harvest is expected this year and once again many bags are anticipated from Ireland and Morecambe.

painted green, cream and black. During the close season the water pumps have been stripped and re-assembled."

The article finished on an optimistic note: *"A good mussel harvest is expected this year and once again many bags are anticipated from Ireland and Morecambe."*

This prophesy proved correct and the returns for the 1951/52 season were: Lytham 2,359 bags, Morecambe 3,772, Eire 3,155, Wyre 23, Bangor 0. A total of 9,309 bags cleansed and, for the second season in a row, the Lytham fishermen had doubled their input to the tanks and, for the second year in a row, there had been increase in the total number of mussels purified. Whilst these figures showed an improvement, the total was still below the breakeven point and resulted in another financial loss for the Lancashire County Council of £267.



Mussels are as good as any he has seen

SUPPLY WILL LAST INDEFINITELY

After a three-day inspection of the mussel beds in the River Ribble, Mr. R. H. Baird, scientific officer of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, told the "Express" this week that some of the mussels he had gathered for examination were as good as any he had seen.

THERE was a good supply in the existing beds, he said, which would last indefinitely.

Mr. Baird, with his assistant, Mr. E. Edwards, rowed out to beds as far down the river as Salter's Buoy and took mussels from the training wall.

Mr. Baird tested the beds for disease and examined the various sizes of mussels.

He examined, particularly, the beds which have recently been laid by the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries.

* * *

His main job at Lytham is to find the best place for the relaying of more mussel beds in the Ribble.

While he was at Lytham he made the purification tanks his headquarters. There, with various instruments, he examined some of the mussels.

Then, a few months before the start of the 1952/53 season started, the Lytham fishermen were provided with some good news. On the 16th May, the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' reported under the headline *"Mussels are as good as any he had seen"* and a very optimistic *"SUPPLY WILL LAST INDEFINITELY"* that: *"After a three-day inspection of the mussel beds in the River Ribble, Mr. R. H. Baird, scientific officer of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, told the "Express" this week that some of the mussels he had gathered for examination were as good as any he had seen.*

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Good news indeed for the long-term prospects of the Lytham mussel fishing industry but, as in the past, the industry always played second fiddle to the shrimp industry and the start of the new season was no exception. An article in the "On Lytham's Waterfront" section of the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' for the 29th August 1952, describes the situation under the heading "Shrimp catches are good":


ON LYTHAM'S WATERFRONT

Shrimp catches good

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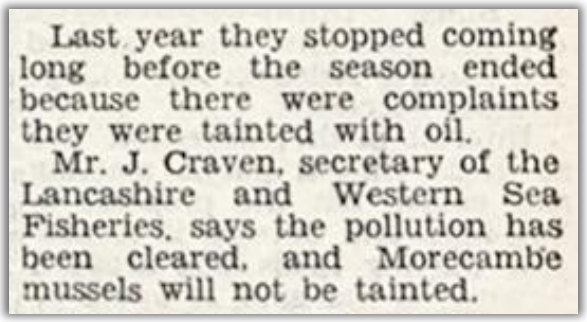
The article went on to explain that the *"reason for this is that after a poor start, shrimp catches are now as good as they have been for some time, and the fishermen will make the best of them while they last".*

"It is more than likely that the Morecambe mussels will be the first to reach the Lytham purification tanks."

The article also provided some background information regarding an unfortunate happening at Morecambe the previous season that led to a reduced supply to the tanks from there:

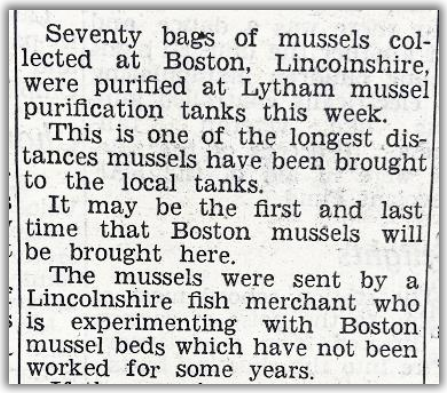
"Last year they [Morecambe mussels] *stopped coming long before the season ended because there were complaints they were tainted with oil.*

Mr. J. Craven, secretary of the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries, says the pollution has been cleared, and Morecambe mussels will not be tainted."


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The late start in gathering by Lytham fishermen was offset, in a small way, by the arrival of mussels from an unexpected source.


Seventy bags of mussels collected at Boston, Lincolnshire, were purified at Lytham mussel purification tanks this week.

This is one of the longest distances mussels have been brought to the local tanks.

It may be the first and last time that Boston mussels will be brought here.

The mussels were sent by a Lincolnshire fish merchant who is experimenting with Boston mussel beds which have not been worked for some years.

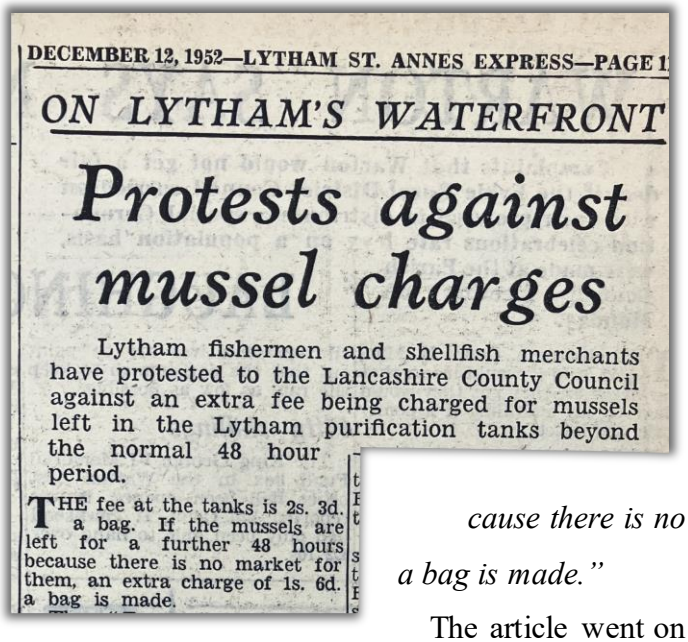
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The mussels were sent by a Lincolnshire fish merchant who is experimenting with Boston mussel beds which have not been worked for some years", reported the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' on the 5th September 1952

When the local fishermen eventually started gathering, they found that the previously reported "plentiful supply" of mussels in the Ribble estuary allowed them to bring in ample quantities for purifying. But an old problem soon resurfaced. The merchants would only take the quantity for which they had orders. To mitigate the problem, the fishermen decided to leave their unsold mussels in the cleansing tanks for a further forty-eight hours, awaiting new orders. In response to this the Lancashire County Council imposed an additional fee for the continued use of the tanks. The 11th December 1952 edition of the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' printed the story under the heading *"**Protests against mussel Charges**"*.


DECEMBER 12, 1952—LYTHAM ST. ANNES EXPRESS—PAGE 1

ON LYTHAM'S WATERFRONT

Protests against mussel charges

Lytham fishermen and shellfish merchants have protested to the Lancashire County Council against an extra fee being charged for mussels left in the Lytham purification tanks beyond the normal 48 hour period.

THE fee at the tanks is 2s. 3d. a bag. If the mussels are left for a further 48 hours because there is no market for them, an extra charge of 1s. 6d. a bag is made.

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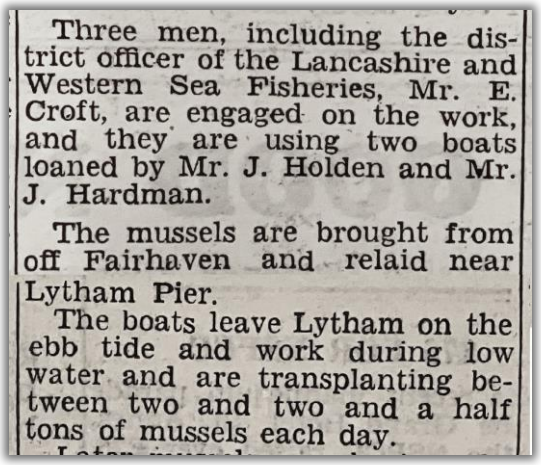
The fee at the tanks is 2s. 3d. a bag. If mussels are left for a further 48 hours because there is no market for them, an extra charge of 1s. 6d. a bag is made."

The article went on to explain that: *"The merchants had been granted the concession of paying 1s. 6d. if they left their mussels in instead of a full tanking fee of 2s. 3d. If the mussels are left in the tanks they have to be processed again."*

Ongoing work re-laying the Ribble mussel beds was reported in the 'Lytham St. Annes Express', 7th March 1953: *"Three men, including the district officer of the Lancashire and Western Fisheries, Mr. E. Croft, are engaged on the work, and they are using two boats loaned by Mr. J. Holden and Mr. J. Hardman.*

The mussels are brought from off Fairhaven and relaid near Lytham Pier.

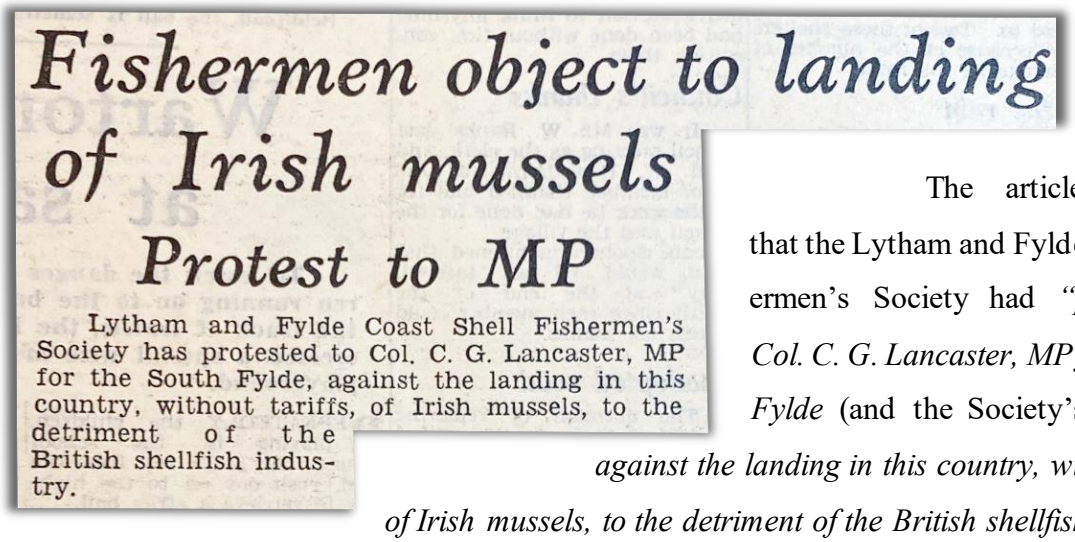
The boats leave Lytham on the ebb tide and work during low water and are transplanting between two and two and a half tons of mussels each day."


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The previous day the 'Lytham St. Annes & Fylde Express' had carried a worrying article harking back to a situation that had been ongoing for many years which was harming their livelihood: cheap foreign mussels.



Fishermen object to landing of Irish mussels

Protest to MP

Lytham and Fylde Coast Shell Fishermen's Society has protested to Col. C. G. Lancaster, MP for the South Fylde, against the landing in this country, without tariffs, to the detriment of the British shellfish industry.

The article explained that the Lytham and Fylde Coast Fishermen's Society had *"protested to Col. C. G. Lancaster, MP for the South Fylde* (and the Society's President), *against the landing in this country, without tariffs, of Irish mussels, to the detriment of the British shellfish industry"*.

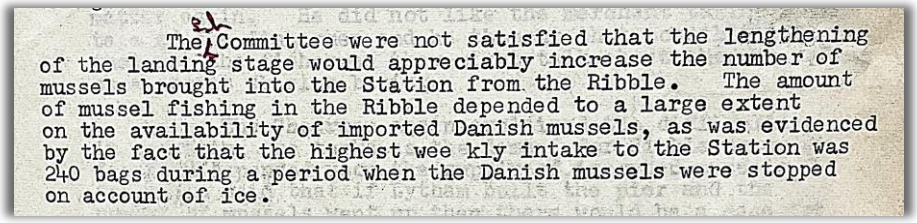
"... these landings are having their effect on Lytham ... This has been partly due to the importation of Danish mussels as well as Irish. But there is 30 per cent tariff on mussels from Denmark, plus a 1s. per bag landing fee, which is not applicable to Irish mussels. When the Irish and Danish mussels are available there is usually a big demand for them from the markets, for they are larger than English mussels and better for bottling."

Another problem concerning the Lytham fishermen around this time was the difficulty they were having getting the mussels ashore. Since the beginning of 1951, the fishermen had been asking the Lytham St. Annes Borough Council for a 100-yard extension to the landing stage situated along side the purification station but the cost, estimated at between £1,250 and £1,500, was considered too high in relation to the few people who would use it. The landing stage had been installed during the building of the station and jointly funded by the Borough Council and the Lancashire County Council.

The need for an extended landing stage was brought about by an ongoing and worsening problem, a build-up of silt on the beach at Lytham. The silt had created an area of deep, oozing, black mud between the river channel used by the fishermen and the end of the landing stage, making it difficult for them to bring their heavy bags of mussels ashore from their boats.

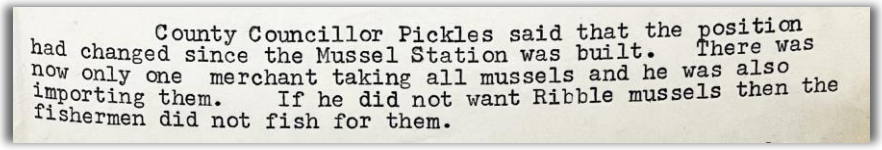
In an attempt to resolve the problem of the landing stage, a meeting of the Lancashire County Council's Mussel Station Sub-Committee and representatives of the Lytham St. Annes Borough Council was held on the 1st July 1953. In his report of the meeting, the Chairman of the Mussel Station Sub-Committee explained that the meeting *"had been called as the Fishermen had asked the Borough Council to extend the landing stage and they had asked the County Council to contribute because the Borough Council and the County Council had shared the cost of the original landing stage"*.

The Chairman then further explained that *"The Sub-Committee were not satisfied that the lengthening of the landing stage would appreciably increase the number of mussels brought into the Station from the Ribble".*

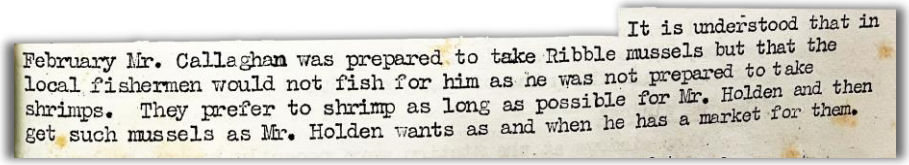

The Committee were not satisfied that the lengthening of the landing stage would appreciably increase the number of mussels brought into the Station from the Ribble. The amount of mussel fishing in the Ribble depended to a large extent on the availability of imported Danish mussels, as was evidenced by the fact that the highest wee kly intake to the Station was 240 bags during a period when the Danish mussels were stopped on account of ice.

The meeting was also reminded about two key factors that had long been the source of the Stations poor performance Firstly: *"The amount of mussel fishing in the Ribble depended to a large extent on the availability of imported Danish mussels, as was evidenced by the fact that the highest weekly intake to the Station was 240 bags during a period when Danish mussels were stopped on account of ice."*

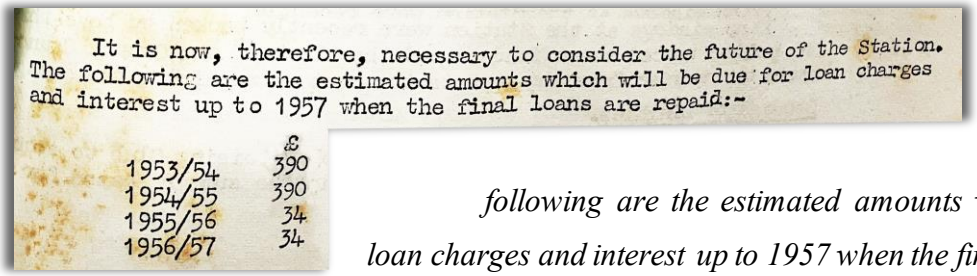
And secondly: *"There was now only one merchant taking all mussels and he was also importing them. If he didn't want Ribble mussels then the fishermen did not fish* (sic) *for them*".


County Councillor Pickles said that the position had changed since the Mussel Station was built. There was now only one merchant taking all mussels and he was also importing them. If he did not want Ribble mussels then the fishermen did not fish for them.

This last statement, referring to "only one merchant", did not tell the whole story and another part of the same report revealed a wider conflict: *"It is understood that in February Mr. Callaghan* (sic) *was prepared to take Ribble mussels but that the local fishermen would not fish for him as he was not prepared to take shrimps. They prefer to shrimp as long as possible for Mr. Holden and then get such mussels as Mr. Holden wants as and when he has a market for them."*


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The conclusions of the Meeting were: 1) The Sub-Committee did not feel that they could recommend to the County Council to contribute towards the cost of the landing stage; and more significantly for the Mussel Tanks, 2) that it was necessary to consider the future of the station:


It is now, therefore, necessary to consider the future of the Station. The following are the estimated amounts which will be due for loan charges and interest up to 1957 when the final loans are repaid:-

	£
1953/54	390
1954/55	390
1955/56	34
1956/57	34

"It is now, therefore, necessary to consider the future of the Station. The following are the estimated amounts which will be due for loan charges and interest up to 1957 when the final loans are repaid."

The importation of mussels and the fishermen's conflict with Messrs O'Callaghan and Holden had a serious effect on the number of mussels cleansed in the Lytham tanks in the 1952/53 season: Lytham 1,280 bags, Morecambe 2,700, Eire 50, Wyre 0, Bangor 174. A total of only 4,204 bags, down from 9,309 the previous season and the balance sheet showed a loss of -£764 (including £390 of charges and interest).

Included in this loss was a payment for £12. The cause of this expense was reported in the 'Blackpool Evening Gazette' on the 10th April 1953: *"Boys throwing stones on the beach at Lytham have smashed 23 panes of glass at the office of the storeroom of the Lytham mussel purification tanks. The damage is estimated at £12 and the police have been informed."*

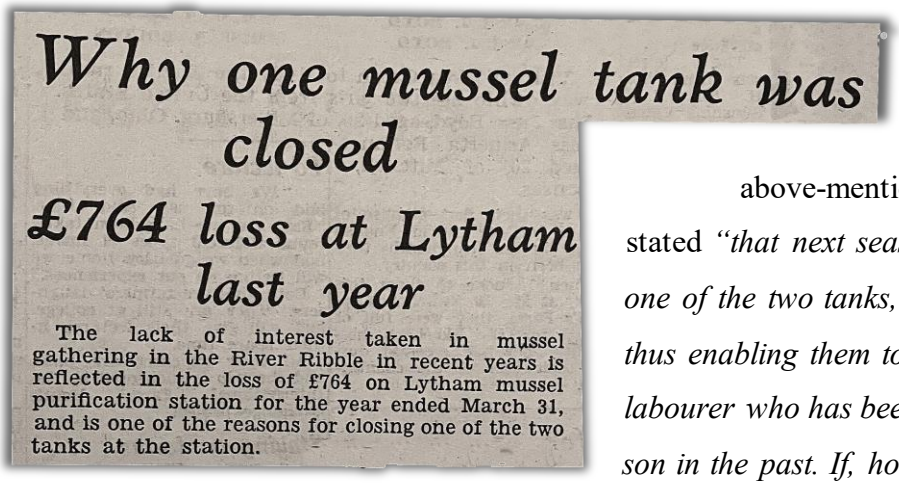


Boys smashed windows

Boys throwing stones on the beach at Lytham have smashed 23 panes of glass at the office of the storeroom of the Lytham mussel purification tanks.

The damage is estimated at £12, and the police have been informed.

The financial loss was the reason given for one of the two cleansing tanks not being open at the start of the following 1953/54 season reported the 14th August 1953 edition of the 'Lytham St. Annes Express'. This cost saving measure had been agreed to at the above-mentioned meeting where it was stated *"that next season they should open only one of the two tanks, at least in the first place, thus enabling them to do without the additional labourer who has been taken on during the season in the past. If, however, there is a sufficient demand for the second tank it would be used and it would then be necessary to take on a labourer."*



Why one mussel tank was closed

£764 loss at Lytham last year

The lack of interest taken in mussel gathering in the River Ribble in recent years is reflected in the loss of £764 on Lytham mussel purification station for the year ended March 31, and is one of the reasons for closing one of the two tanks at the station.

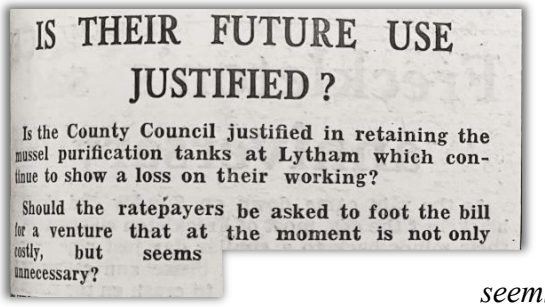
The newspaper report also mentioned that *"the labourer engaged at the tanks will now not be employed unless the second tank is opened."*

Further details were provided regarding the cost of providing an additional person: *"The existing authority is for a casual labourer for the season at a weekly wage of £5. 18. 4d. for a 44-hour week plus 1d. an hour when working in water."*

In addition to closing one tank and in an attempt to lessen any future losses, the Mussel Purification Management Sub-Committee also approved the use of the yard by the Ribble Cruising Club for storing dinghies during the summer season at a rent of 10/- per week and for merchants to store mussels in the tanks after cleansing, free of charge, provided the space was not required for fresh mussels. Perhaps in an attempt to encourage the fishermen to bring in more mussels for cleansing, the Sub-Committee also reduced the price of the sterilised bags. The Purification Station held a

stock of 1,860 bags which had been purchased in 1951 at a price of 26.48 pence (approx. 2s 2½d) per bag during a time when jute was controlled. In view of the fall in the market price of bags since then it was recommended that for the coming season the price of bags should be reduced to 1s 6d per bag.

But in the outside world questions were now being asked.



IS THEIR FUTURE USE JUSTIFIED?

Is the County Council justified in retaining the mussel purification tanks at Lytham which continue to show a loss on their working?

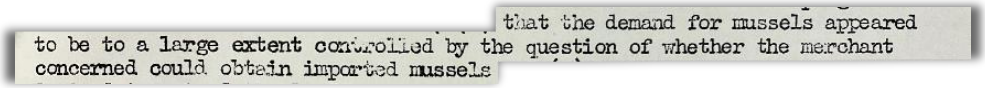
Should the ratepayers be asked to foot the bill for a venture that at the moment is not only costly, but seems unnecessary?

"Is the County Council justified in retaining the mussel purification tanks at Lytham which continues to show a loss on their working?"

"Should the ratepayers be asked to foot the bill for a venture that at the moment is not only costly, but seems unnecessary?"

"These are questions to which people in Lytham St. Annes would like an official answer, because they are not in favour of an undertaking which would appear to be faced with continual financial burdens." reported the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' a fortnight after publishing the article about the previous season's £764 loss. This later article also provided the reader with an insight into why only one of the two cleansing tanks would be operated in the forthcoming season: *"The reason for this, as a Lytham Merchant said this week, is that buyers will not look at these [local] mussels once they have seen Danish mussels which are much larger. Danish mussels are better for bottling than English and Irish because, said the merchant, people like a mussel they can get their teeth into."*

One notable fact discussed by the Mussel Station Sub-Committee was *"that the demand for mussels appeared to be to a large extent controlled by the question of whether the merchant concerned could obtain imported mussels".*



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To disprove this statement and show a commitment to local produce, Lytham fishermen set about forming their own trading organisation. On 12th April 1954, the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' announced: *"Lytham St. Annes fishermen who have formed their own trading organisation have decided to name it the Lytham Fishermen's Society Ltd.*

Mr. Alan Spencer, of St. Annes, has been appointed manager, and will begin his duties on Monday. He was formerly with the Lytham Shrimp Company.

The new company hope to start trading shortly."



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facsimile

The following week the same newspaper provided further details about the new trading organisation: "*"No foreign fish"*

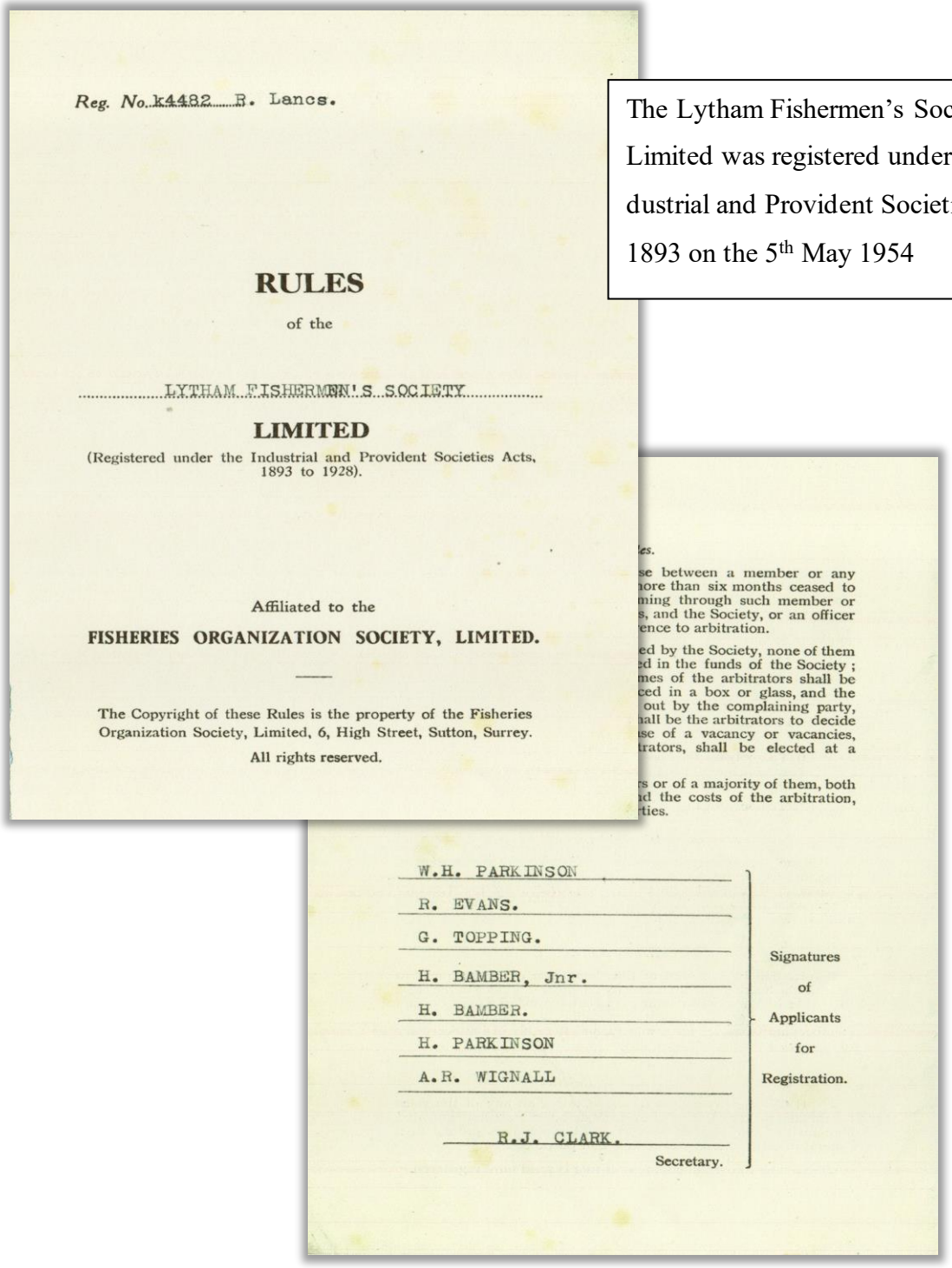
"No foreign fish"

This will be one of the main mottoes of the Lytham Fisherman's Society Ltd., which is now ready to start trading.

A member of the committee said they did not intend to handle any foreign fish. "It will be local fish caught by local boats." he said.

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Reg. No. k4482 R. Lancs.

RULES

of the

LYTHAM FISHERMEN'S SOCIETY

LIMITED

(Registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts, 1893 to 1928).

Affiliated to the

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R. EVANS.
G. TOPPING.
H. BAMBER, Jnr.
H. BAMBER.
H. PARKINSON
A.R. WIGNALL

Signatures of Applicants for Registration.

R.J. CLARK.
Secretary.

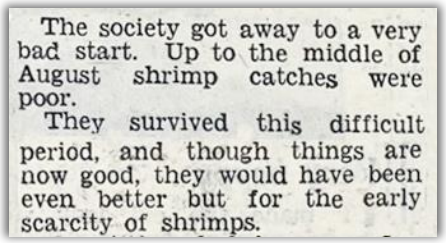
The Lytham Fishermen's Society Limited was registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act, 1893 on the 5th May 1954

The number of bags purified for the 1953/54 season was the worst on record: 743 bags from the Ribble, 0 from Morecambe, 0 from Eire, 0 from Wyre, 3,025 from Bangor. A total of 3,768 bags. [Morecambe mussel fishermen had abandoned collecting mussels for human consumption and were now only trading in 'unpurified mussels' for fishing bait.]

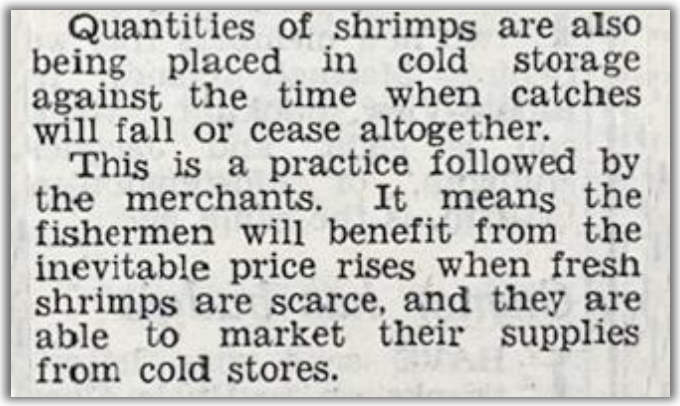
Was it too little too late for the new Society to rescue the Lytham Purification Station? During the last week of November 1954, a 'Lytham St. Annes Express' reporter visited the Society's factory in Lytham to find out what had gone on in the eight months since the 12 Lytham fishermen had formed the society. He was told that:

"The society got away to a very bad start. Up to the middle of August shrimp catches were poor.

They survived this difficult period, and though things are now good, they would have been even better but for the early scarcity of shrimps."


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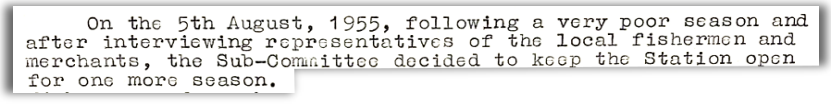
Two further paragraphs imply that, once again, shrimps were the primary source of income for the Lytham fishermen and perhaps, in future, the winter subsidy provided by mussels may not be needed: *"Quantities of shrimps are also being placed in cold storage against the time when catches will fall or cease altogether.*


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By the end of the 1954/55 mussel season, the purification station's output showed a further decline with only 1,309 bags purified: 563 from the Ribble, 362 from Morecambe and 384 from Bangor. Resulting in a financial loss of £812 and a very long way off the 10,000 bags needed for cost-effectiveness.

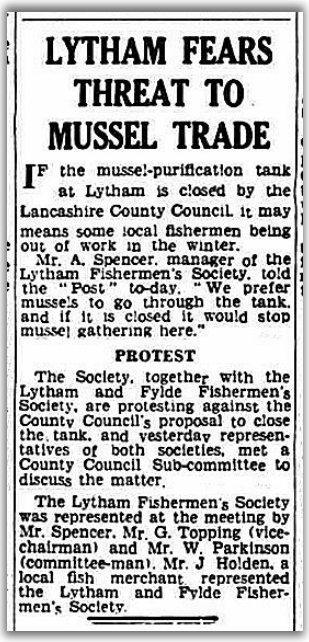
Following a meeting between the representatives of local fishermen, merchants and the Mussel Purification Management Sub-Committee, it was decided to keep the Station open for one more season: "*On the 5th August, 1955, following a very poor season and after interviewing representatives of the local fishermen and merchants, the Sub-Committee decided to keep the Station open for one more season.*"


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The meeting was reported in the 'Lancashire Evening Post' the following day under the heading "**LYTHAM FEARS THREAT TO MUSSEL TRADE**":

"If the mussel purification tank at Lytham is closed by the Lancashire County Council, it may mean some local fishermen being out of work in the winter.

Mr. A. Spencer, manager of the Lytham Fishermen's Society told the "Post" to-day, "We prefer mussels to go through the tank and if it is closed it would stop mussel gathering here."



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PROTEST

The Society, together with the Lytham and Fylde Fishermen's Society, are protesting against the County Council's proposal to close the tank, and yesterday representatives of both societies, met a County Council Sub-committee to discuss the matter.

The Lytham Fishermen's Society was represented at the meeting by Mr. Spencer, Mr. G. Topping (vice-chairman) and Mr. W. Parkinson (committee-man). Mr. J Holden, a local fish merchant represented the Lytham and Fylde Fishermen's Society.

The report continued: *"The Society, together with the Lytham and Fylde Fishermen's Society, are protesting against the County Council's proposal to close the tank, and yesterday representatives of both societies met a County Council Sub-Committee to discuss the matter.*

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The fishermen's case against the closure of the station, that was *"it may mean some local fishermen being out of work in the winter*", wasn't particularly strong but perhaps the Lytham Fishermen's Society could convince the Sub-Committee that they had the answer.

"Lytham Mussels with a French flavour?" This was the strapline for an article in the 'Lancashire Evening Post' on the 4th October 1955. The article related to an experiment that Lytham Fishermen's Society Ltd were to embark on to further increase mussel stocks in the Ribble estuary using the French system of bouchets.



Lytham mussels with a French flavour?

Lytham Fishermen's Society Ltd. are experimenting with the French system of bouchets. The idea is that the mussels cling to the stakes and being washed away by the tide is prevented.

"It is amazing how many mussels do grow on the stakes," said Mr. A. Spencer, the society's manager.

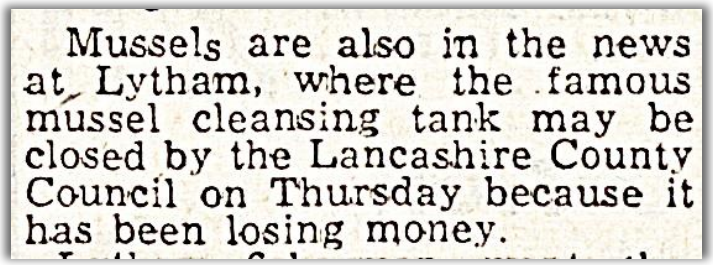
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[This was the same method of mussel 'farming' initially proposed in 1892. See Chapter 3.]

But it is doubtful whether the experiment made any progress beyond the initial talks with the Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries as there was no further mention of it in the local press.

In fact, on the topic of Lytham mussels, press coverage was primarily interested in whether the tanks would be closed down. At the end of the same month the 'Manchester Evening News' stated:

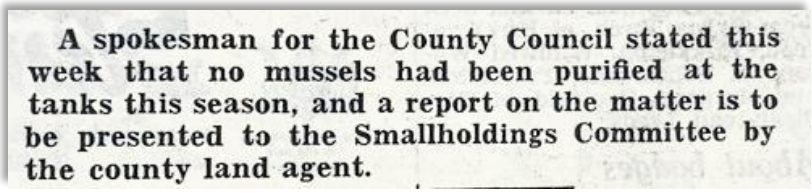

Mussels are also in the news at Lytham, where the famous mussel cleansing tank may be closed by the Lancashire County Council on Thursday because it has been losing money.

"Mussels are also in the news at Lytham, where the famous mussel cleansing tank may be closed by Lancashire County Council on Thursday because it had been losing money."

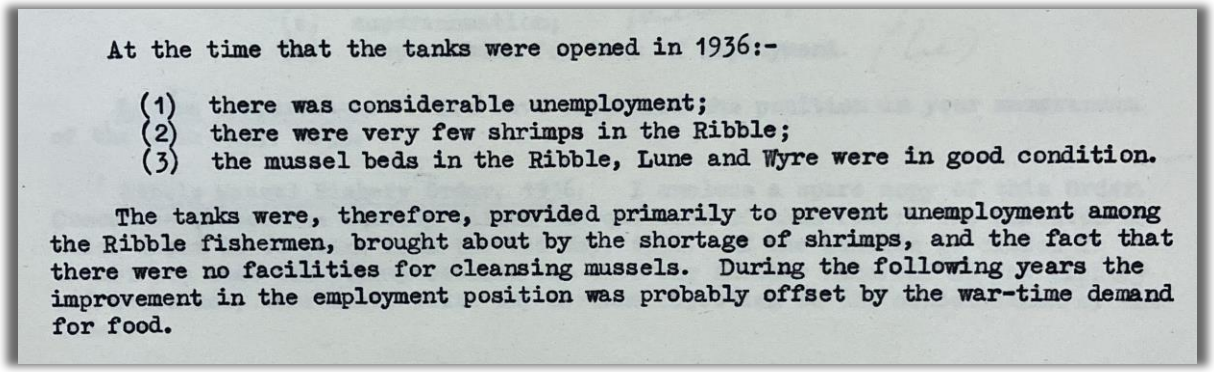
By February 1956, dark clouds were looming over the Ribble estuary. The 'On Lytham Waterfront' section of the 10th February 1956 edition of the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' carried the headline:


DAYS OF MUSSEL TANKS MAY BE NUMBERED

It was reported that *"A spokesman for the County Council stated this week that no mussels had been purified at the tanks this season, and a report on the matter is to be presented to the Smallholdings Committee by the county land agent".*


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Prior to preparing his report to the Smallholdings Committee, the County Land Agent had sent a letter to the Clerk of the County Council, which he received on the 13th April 1956, asking him for his views on the various aspects of the situation. In his letter he briefly summarised the background as to why the tanks were built:


At the time that the tanks were opened in 1936:-

(1) there was considerable unemployment;
(2) there were very few shrimps in the Ribble;
(3) the mussel beds in the Ribble, Lune and Wyre were in good condition.

The tanks were, therefore, provided primarily to prevent unemployment among the Ribble fishermen, brought about by the shortage of shrimps, and the fact that there were no facilities for cleansing mussels. During the following years the improvement in the employment position was probably offset by the war-time demand for food.

followed by his findings of the current situation:

Today:-

(1) there is an abundance of shrimps in the Ribble, and shrimping is undoubtedly far less arduous and far more profitable for the fishermen than musselling;

(2) with over-full employment some fishermen have been attracted by high wages in industry, and in the case of those who remain, during the short periods when they are unable to get shrimps they are able to get temporary jobs at wages which probably pay them better than musselling;

(3) Commander Craven informs me that the Ribble mussel beds are at present in a poor condition. It would appear, however, that this is mainly due to changes, which it is hoped are only temporary, in the channel. These changes make it impossible in existing conditions to restock the two main scars.

The Clerk's letter finished with a brief but damning conclusion:

The local merchant appears to be able to import all the cleansed mussels he requires for his trade.

It seems, therefore, that as far as the County Council is concerned there is no alternative but to close the station.

Although the last sentence appears to be sounding the death knell for the purification station, the Land Agent then put forward three points for consideration:

(1) should the closing be permanent or temporary?

(2) if the Ministry or the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee, or any other body, can be persuaded to take over the tanks for operation at some future date, can we, subject to the agreement of the Lytham Corporation, either lease or transfer the tanks?

(3) any alternative use to which the tanks can be put either by the County Council or the Lytham Corporation.

At the conclusion of the Smallholdings Committee meeting held at County Hall, Preston, on Wednesday, 9th May 1956, the Mussel Purification Management Sub-committee convened to discuss the report prepared by the land agent, Mr. G. P Attenborough.

The committee, Major J.W. Fitzherbert-Brockholes (Chairman), County Alderman J. Mawdsley, County Councillors W. D. Cooper and F. W. Pickles considered in detail the report and with respect to answering Point (2) invited:

Dr. Nial Reynolds of the Conway Research Station,

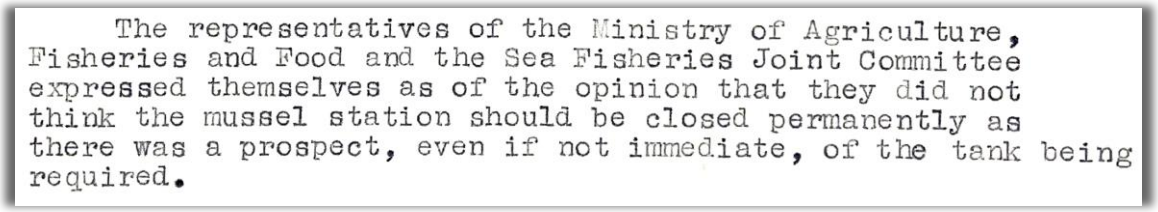
Commander C.F.B. Powell, District Inspector of Fisheries for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food,

Commander N. V. Craven, Superintendent of the Lancashire and Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee,

to 'persuade' one of them to take over the tanks for operation at some future date.

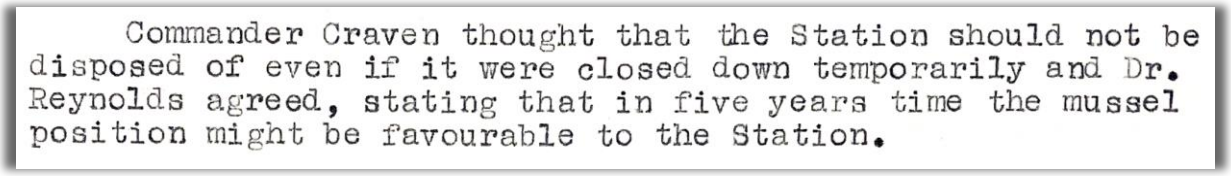
The minutes of the meeting recorded their responses:

Commander C. F. B. Powell:



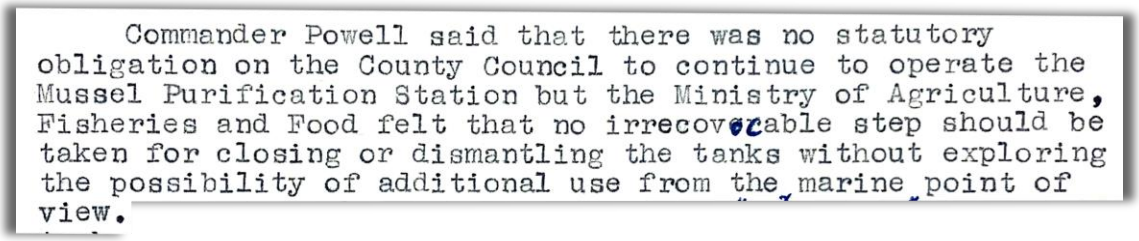
The representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Sea Fisheries Joint Committee expressed themselves as of the opinion that they did not think the mussel station should be closed permanently as there was a prospect, even if not immediate, of the tank being required.

Commander N.V. Craven:



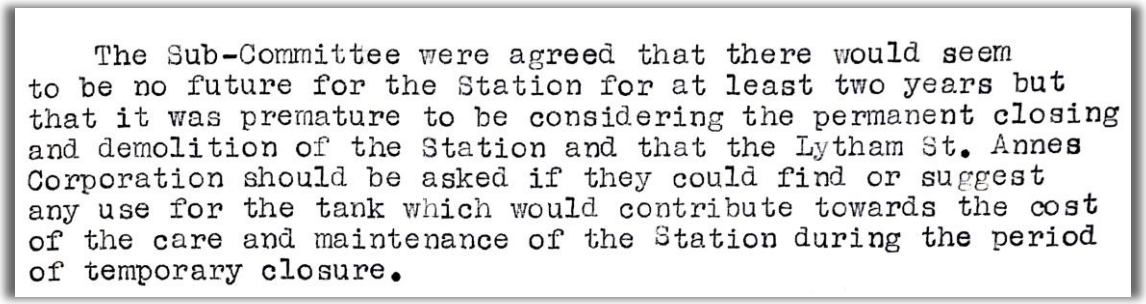
Commander Craven thought that the Station should not be disposed of even if it were closed down temporarily and Dr. Reynolds agreed, stating that in five years time the mussel position might be favourable to the Station.

Dr. N. Reynolds:



Commander Powell said that there was no statutory obligation on the County Council to continue to operate the Mussel Purification Station but the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food felt that no irrecoverable step should be taken for closing or dismantling the tanks without exploring the possibility of additional use from the marine point of view.

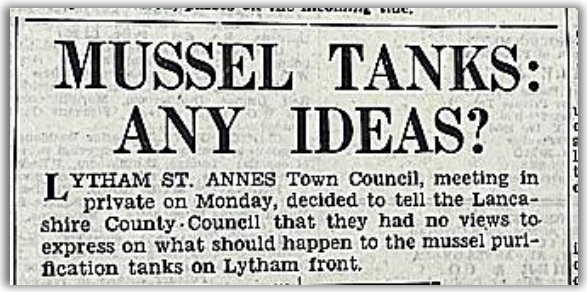
The Sub-Committee then made their decision:



The Sub-Committee were agreed that there would seem to be no future for the Station for at least two years but that it was premature to be considering the permanent closing and demolition of the Station and that the Lytham St. Annes Corporation should be asked if they could find or suggest any use for the tank which would contribute towards the cost of the care and maintenance of the Station during the period of temporary closure.

The recommendation made by the Mussel Purification Management Sub-committee to the Lancashire County Council to ask the Lytham St. Annes Corporation *"if they could find or suggest any use for the tank which would contribute towards the cost of care and maintenance of the Station during the period of temporary closure"* was subsequently made and the Corporation's response was reported in the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' on the 22nd June 1956.

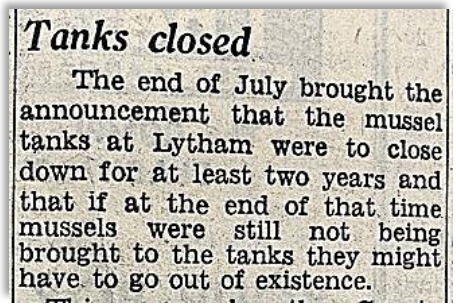
Under the heading "**MUSSEL TANKS: ANY IDEAS?**" the newspaper reported that the Town Council told the County Council *"that they had no views to express on what should happen to the mussel purification tanks on Lytham front"*.



MUSSEL TANKS: ANY IDEAS?

LYTHAM ST. ANNES Town Council, meeting in private on Monday, decided to tell the Lancashire County Council that they had no views to express on what should happen to the mussel purification tanks on Lytham front.

Four weeks later, 26th July 1956, the same newspaper reported, under the small sub-heading, "**Tanks closed**". The article continued: "*The end of July brought the announcement that the mussel tanks at Lytham were to close down for at least two years and that if at the end of the time mussels were still not being brought to the tanks they might have to go out of existence*".

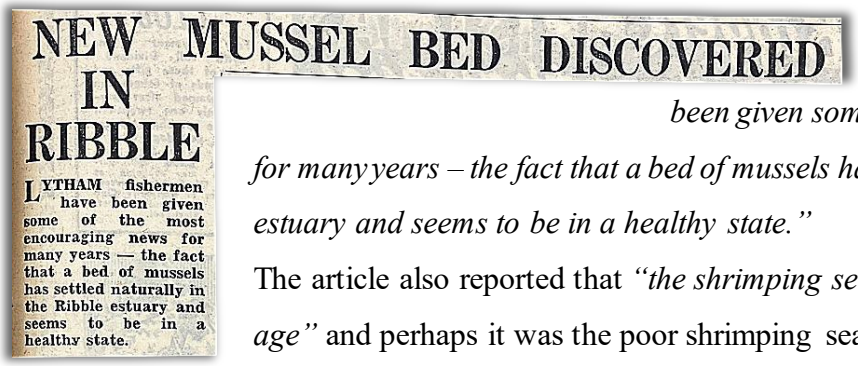


Tanks closed

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In actual fact, the decision was to close the Purification Station for operational purposes but to keep it for a two-year period on a care and maintenance basis. This still required them to retain the services of the Tank Superintendent; however, this was only for two days a week for a wage of £3 a week. Prior to this the Tank Superintendent was earning £510 per annum.

Fortunately for him, and the Lytham mussel fishermen, the decision to only temporarily close the tanks was quickly justified. On the 6th December 1956, the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' announced: "**NEW MUSSEL BED DISCOVERED IN RIBBLE.**"

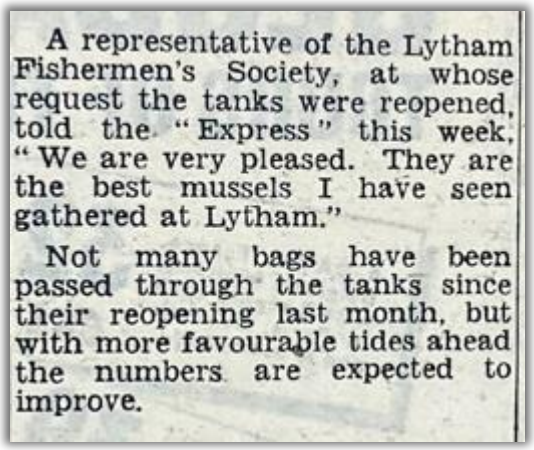


NEW MUSSEL BED DISCOVERED IN RIBBLE

LYTHAM fishermen have been given some of the most encouraging news for many years — the fact that a bed of mussels has settled naturally in the Ribble estuary and seems to be in a healthy state.

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The article also reported that *"the shrimping season has been well below average"* and perhaps it was the poor shrimping season that led the Lytham fishermen to return to collecting mussels. The 'Lytham St. Annes Express' (dated 7th February 1957, reported that: *"A representative of the Lytham Fisherman's Society, at whose*



A representative of the Lytham Fishermen's Society, at whose request the tanks were reopened, told the "Express" this week, "We are very pleased. They are the best mussels I have seen gathered at Lytham."

Not many bags have been passed through the tanks since their reopening last month, but with more favourable tides ahead the numbers are expected to improve.

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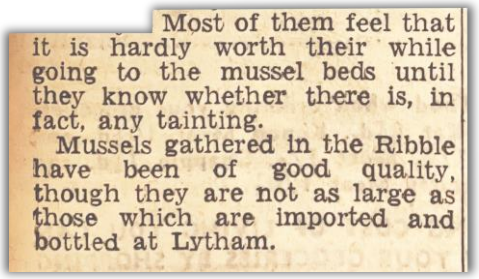
The favourable tides did bring the expected improvement and during the short period that the tanks were open "*from the 19th January to the 16th March, when 635½ bags of mussels were cleansed, of which 424½ bags were from the Ribble and 211 bags from Morecambe. The season might have extended a little longer, resulting in the cleansing of a further 200 to 300 bags had it not been for a complaint that the Ribble mussels were suspected of being tainted with oil, a spell of warmer weather, and Mr. Gomery's absence on sick-leave".*

MUSSEL PURIFICATION STATION *facsimile*

As was reported on the 12th April last, the Station was only open last season from the 19th January to 16th March, when 635½ bags of mussels were cleansed, of which 424½ bags were from the Ribble and 211 bags from Morecambe. The season might have extended a little longer, resulting in the cleansing of a further 200 to 300 bags had it not been for a complaint that the Ribble mussels were suspected of being tainted with oil, a spell of warmer weather, and Mr. Gomery's absence on sick-leave.

[Mr. Gomery remained on sick-leave until his enforced retirement on the 13th December 1957]

As the start of the new mussel gathering season approached, the oil-tainting saga was still causing concern amongst the fishermen. The 1st August 1957 edition of the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' reported that: "*Most of them feel that it is hardly worth their while going to the mussel beds until they know whether there is, in fact, any tainting.*"



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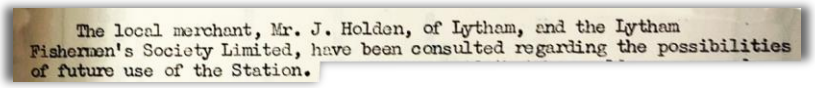
Mussels gathered in the Ribble have been of good quality, though they are not as large as those which are imported and bottled at Lytham.

The second paragraph of this newspaper article reminds us that there was, perhaps, a greater threat to the Lytham mussel industry than oil-tainting: "*Mussels gathered in the Ribble have been of good quality, though they are not as large as those which are imported and bottled at Lytham.*"

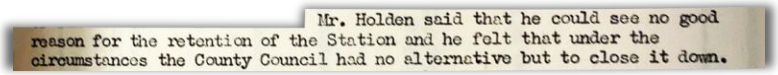
It was subsequently reported that there was no widespread tainting of Ribble mussels and that the oil tainting had been caused by a one-off discharge from a passing ship.

Five weeks later, on Wednesday, 11th September 1957, the Mussel Purification Management Sub-committee held, once again, a meeting to discuss the situation at the mussel tanks. The meeting minutes recorded the situation:

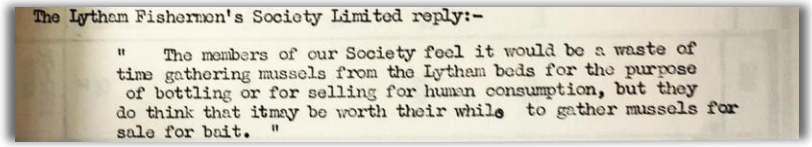
"The local merchant, Mr. J. Holden, of Lytham, and the Lytham Fishermen's Society Limited,


The local merchant, Mr. J. Holden, of Lytham, and the Lytham Fishermen's Society Limited, have been consulted regarding the possibilities of future use of the Station.

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Mr. Holden said that he could see no good reason for the retention of the Station and he felt that under the circumstances the County Council had no alternative but to close it down.

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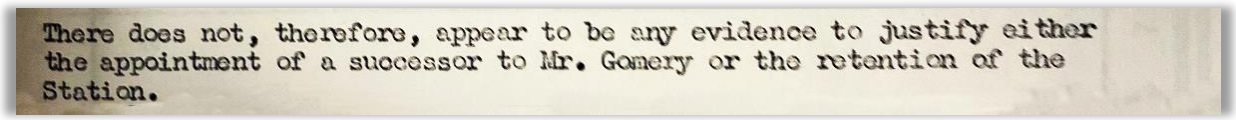

The Lytham Fishermen's Society Limited reply:-

" The members of our Society feel it would be a waste of time gathering mussels from the Lytham beds for the purpose of bottling or for selling for human consumption, but they do think that itmay be worth their while to gather mussels for sale for bait. "

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So, on that day, **Wednesday, 11th September 1957**, the fate of the Lytham Mussel Purification Station was set:


There does not, therefore, appear to be any evidence to justify either the appointment of a successor to Mr. Gomery or the retention of the Station.

"There does not, therefore, appear to be any evidence to justify either the appointment of a successor to Mr. Gomery or the retention of the Station."

Chapter 14
And Finally …

In the Introduction to this book, I wrote "With the opening of the Lytham Mussel Purification Station in 1935 it was hoped that this would lead to a reawakening of the local mussel fishing industry and the restoration of a winter livelihood for the fishermen of the Ribble estuary".

As we have seen, the requirement to purify mussels for human consumption was brought about by the introduction of the "The Preston (Shellfish) Regulations 1923", at a time of high unemployment and poor living standards for a great many people; none more so than the inshore fishermen of Lytham and the surrounding area. The sole reason behind Lancashire County Council building the purification tanks was, therefore, to provide the fishermen of the Ribble estuary a much-needed extra source of income.

It took 12 years before mussel gathering was finally re-introduced to the Lancashire coastline but nobody could have foreseen the obstacles that lay in the way of providing what was supposed to be an improved livelihood for the fishermen and their families. A world war took young men away from their traditional employment; increased pollution of the river by industry; silting up of the old river channels (brought about by the constant dredging of the shipping channel); and better paid jobs on-shore, all contributed to the demise of the mussel industry. Another enemy of the industry was, no doubt, imported mussels, preferred not only by the consumer - cheaper and tastier, but also by the local merchants - better profits.

But perhaps the biggest adversary to the success of the mussel industry was a tiny opponent: the local shrimp. Throughout all the years that the station was in operation, mussel gathering always came second to the more lucrative activity of shrimping and, as the annual returns have shown, for many years the purification station's viability relied upon the support of 'out of town' fishermen to provide the majority of the shellfish.

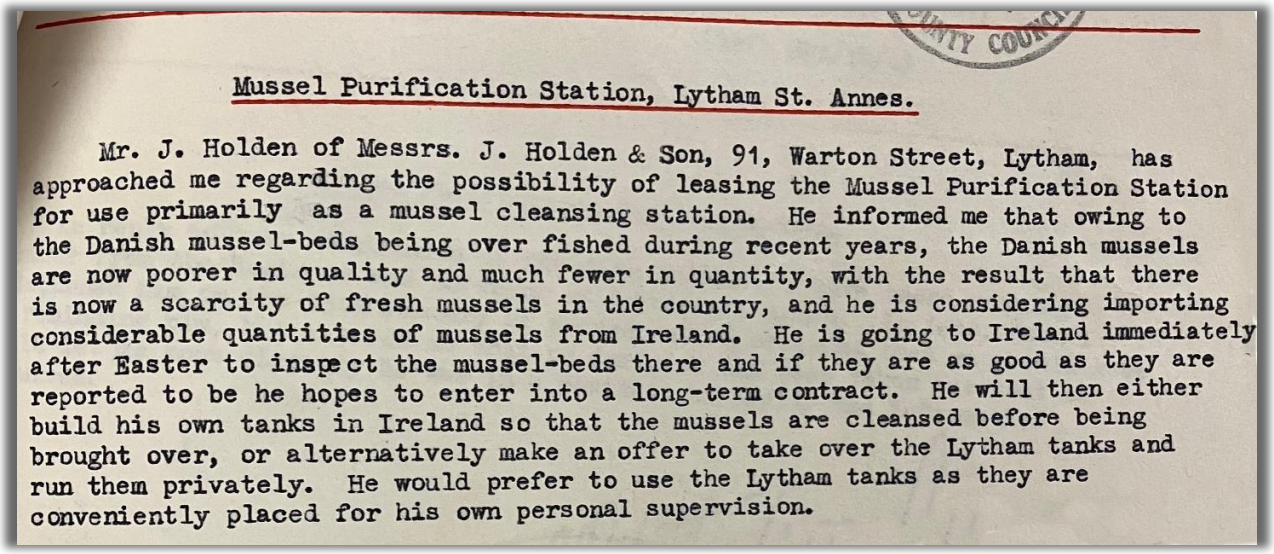
By the 1950's, the need to go mussel gathering to provide a winter livelihood for 50 or 60 Lytham fishermen had been reduced to a 'hobby' for about 10 local men who could now trawl for shrimps in motor-powered boats and freeze their wares for winter-time markets. So, the end of the Lytham Mussel Purification Station was brought about by the very men for whom it had been provided in the first place.

Although the Lytham Mussel Purification Station was not used again following the 11th September 1957 decision to stop purifying mussels, the buildings, tanks and plant remained untouched for over a year before the Lytham St. Annes Town Council finally decided their fate.

Indecision about the future of the site was mainly due to there being four interested parties involved:

1. Lancashire County Council - the owner of the Station, who at great expense would have had to demolish the buildings and return the site to its original condition.
2. The Royal National Lifeboat Institute – who wanted to convert part of the site into a new lifeboat house and museum.
3. Ribble Cruising Club – who wanted to use the tanks for storing boats and to convert the pumphouse into a clubhouse.
4. Mr. J. Holden – who wanted to keep it as a mussel cleansing station for imported Irish mussels.

As owners of the Station, the County Council were keen for it to be used for its intended purpose and were therefore interested in Mr. Holden's proposal to take out a ten-year lease for the purpose of mussel cleansing. A letter, dated 1st April 1958, from the County Land Agent to the County Council, provides the reason for Mr. Holden's renewed optimism for mussel purification:



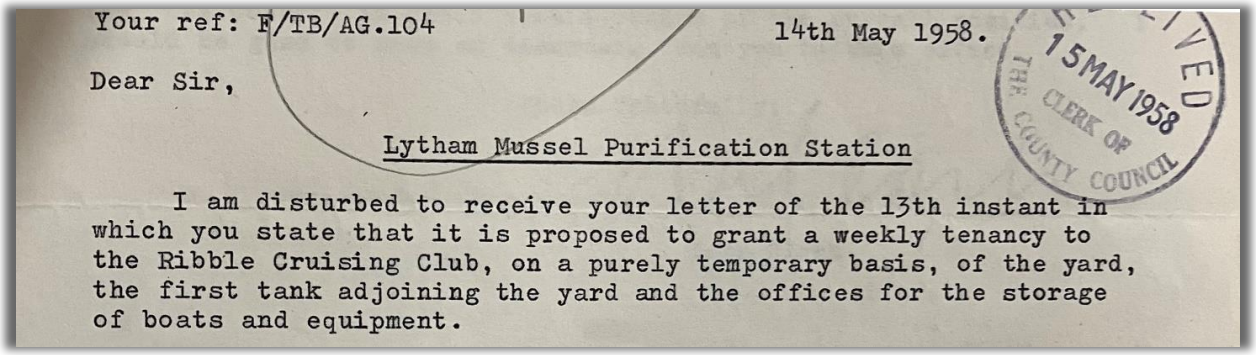
Mussel Purification Station, Lytham St. Annes.

Mr. J. Holden of Messrs. J. Holden & Son, 91, Warton Street, Lytham, has approached me regarding the possibility of leasing the Mussel Purification Station for use primarily as a mussel cleansing station. He informed me that owing to the Danish mussel-beds being over fished during recent years, the Danish mussels are now poorer in quality and much fewer in quantity, with the result that there is now a scarcity of fresh mussels in the country, and he is considering importing considerable quantities of mussels from Ireland. He is going to Ireland immediately after Easter to inspect the mussel-beds there and if they are as good as they are reported to be he hopes to enter into a long-term contract. He will then either build his own tanks in Ireland so that the mussels are cleansed before being brought over, or alternatively make an offer to take over the Lytham tanks and run them privately. He would prefer to use the Lytham tanks as they are conveniently placed for his own personal supervision.

During these negotiations it became clear that Lytham St. Annes Town Council wouldn't allow the County Council to lease the Station to Mr. Holden or in fact to any other possible lessee. This was made evident when the County Council also tried to lease the tanks to Ribble Cruising Club.

On the 9th May 1958, the County Council Land Agent wrote to G. Pitt, Esq, the Hon. Secretary of Ribble Cruising Club. accepting an offer of £2-10s a week for the use of the first tank adjoining the yard and the offices at the Station for the storage of boats and equipment. The tenancy was to start on the 17th May 1958.

Five days later the Town Clerk wrote back to the Land Agent:



Your ref: F/TB/AG.104 14th May 1958.

Dear Sir,

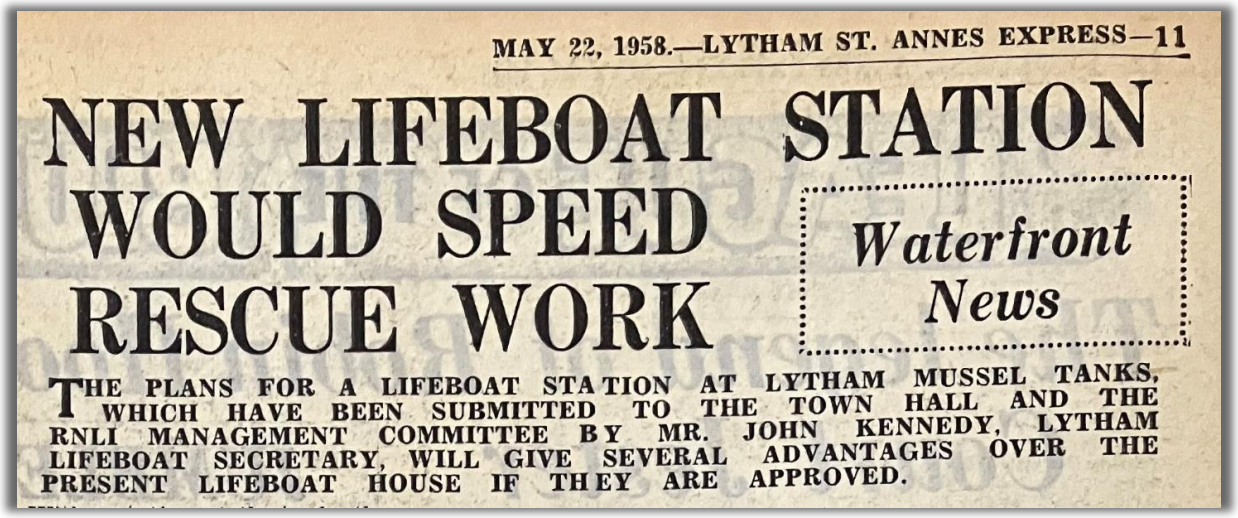
Lytham Mussel Purification Station

I am disturbed to receive your letter of the 13th instant in which you state that it is proposed to grant a weekly tenancy to the Ribble Cruising Club, on a purely temporary basis, of the yard, the first tank adjoining the yard and the offices for the storage of boats and equipment.

15 MAY 1958 CLERK OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

In his letter he further explained that the original agreement between the County Council and the Town Council dated 21st May 1934, does not, in terms, grant any lease to the County Council to the site, but merely confers upon them permission to erect and use a Mussel Purification Station.

The following week the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' outlined the R.L.N.I. proposal:



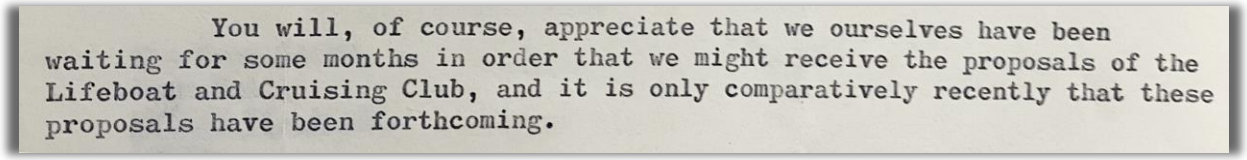
MAY 22, 1958.—LYTHAM ST. ANNES EXPRESS—11

NEW LIFEBOAT STATION WOULD SPEED RESCUE WORK

Waterfront News

THE PLANS FOR A LIFEBOAT STATION AT LYTHAM MUSSEL TANKS, WHICH HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE TOWN HALL AND THE RNLI MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE BY MR. JOHN KENNEDY, LYTHAM LIFEBOAT SECRETARY, WILL GIVE SEVERAL ADVANTAGES OVER THE PRESENT LIFEBOAT HOUSE IF THEY ARE APPROVED.

A month later the Lytham St. Annes Town Council again wrote to the County Council to explain the reason for the indecision about the site and finished the letter by assuring the County Council that they considered it to be a very important matter and were anxious to give it very full consideration.



You will, of course, appreciate that we ourselves have been waiting for some months in order that we might receive the proposals of the Lifeboat and Cruising Club, and it is only comparatively recently that these proposals have been forthcoming.

On the 1st November 1958, it was reported that a decision had been made:

MUSSELL PLANT CONVERSION
Big Scheme For Lytham

A CAFE to seat 200 people.

A sun-lounge overlooking the River Ribble.

A clubhouse for the Ribble Cruising Club.

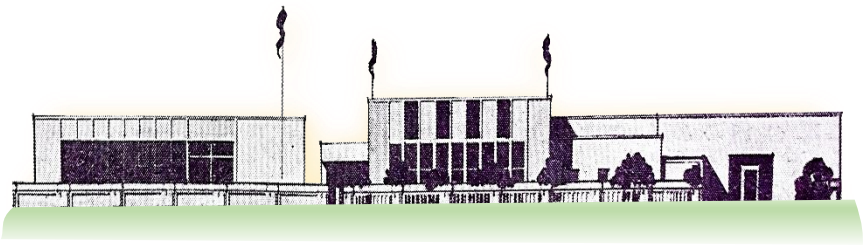
A lifeboat house and museum for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, and

An enclosure for yachts.

This is what is to become of the mussel purification station on Lytham Promenade.

At their private meeting at which they agreed to go ahead with these plans, the Town Council rejected a request from Lytham Ratepayers' Association that the council should acquire Lytham Pier and incorporate it in the mussel station scheme.

So reports the Lytham St. Annes Express.



A plan for the development of the mussel purification station was prepared by the Borough Surveyor (Mr. J. S. Mason). The estimated cost of the sun lounge, café and toilets was £23,612.

And finally, on Monday, 6th March 1961, 24 years, 7 months and six days after its creation, the 'Ribble Mussel Fishery Order 1936' was absolutely determined [terminated]. This meant that the estuary was no longer a several [private] mussel ground under the control of Lancashire County Council and anybody was allowed to collect mussels from there free of charge. As a result, mussel gathering from the Ribble estuary reverted back to its former status, as it was on Wednesday, 10th October 1923, whereby its mussels could not be sold for human consumption unless purified by an approved process.

The rescinding of the Ribble Mussel Fishery Order wasn't reported by the 'Lytham St. Annes Express' until the 17th August 1961, when it announced that:

"**NOW ITS OFFICIAL**

Coincidental with the death last week of Mr George Gomery, former Superintendent of the Lytham mussel purification station, comes the news of the official end of the station for cleaning mussels."

NOW IT'S OFFICIAL *facsimile*

COINCIDENTAL with the death last week of Mr George Gomery, former Superintendent of Lytham mussel purification station, comes the news of the official end of the station for cleaning mussels.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD, by virtue of the powers under the Sea Fisheries Act, 1868, transferred to him by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries Act, 1903, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Act, 1919 and every other power enabling him in that behalf hereby certifies that he is not satisfied that the grantees of the Ribble Mussel Fishery Order, 1936, are properly cultivating the mussel ground within the limits of the Fishery granted to them by that Order.

AND THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD, hereby notifies that by virtue of Section 45 of the Sea Fisheries Act, 1868, and of this Certificate the right of several fishery conferred by that Order is now absolutely determined and all provisions of Part III of that Act have now ceased to operate in relation to such fishery as a several Mussel Fishery.

IN WITNESS whereof the Official Seal of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is hereunto affixed this sixth day of March one thousand nine hundred and sixty one

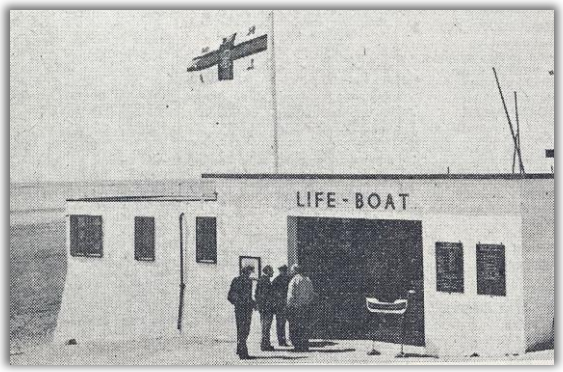
B. C. ENGHOLM

FISHERIES SECRETARY

Postscript

Following the November 1958 decision to go ahead with the conversion of the mussel tank site, Lytham St. Annes Town Council agreed leasing terms with the Ribble Cruising Club (21 years at a rent of £50 a year for the centre portion of the tanks) and the R.N.L.I. (a 50-year lease at a rent of £10 a year for the easterly section of the tanks, i.e. the office and storeroom area. Work was well underway on these two buildings by end of the year but the start of any work on the Council-owned café / sun-lounge was delayed until the following February, as it required a loan sanction to be approved by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

- The building housing the lifeboat and museum was opened on Sunday, 26th June 1960.



The 'Liverpool Daily Post' recorded the occasion: *"A new lifeboat house costing £1,300 was opened at Lytham yesterday by the Mayor of Lytham St. Annes, (Councillor Norman Utley, J.P.) to replace the old life-boat house built 109 years ago at a cost of £298.*

Among the exhibits to be included in the new headquarters will be photographs and records from the greatest disaster in the history of the lifeboat service."

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Among the exhibits to be included in the new headquarters will be photographs and records from the greatest disaster in the history of the lifeboat service.

Today, an enlarged building houses the R.N.L.I. inshore life-boat and a gift shop.



The Ribble Cruising Club building work was completed during March 1960, at a cost of £2000, but the official opening wasn't held until Saturday, 1st July 1961, due to the need for a sewer pipe to be laid by the Corporation across the Green. On that day, Robert Page Esq. duly smashed a bottle of champagne on the clubhouse wall.


Ribble Cruising Club

Official Opening of the Club House

by

Robert Page, Esq.

on

Saturday, July 1st, 1961, at 6-30 p.m.

Dinner 7-45 — Dancing 9-15 till midnight

Dress: Lounge Suits — Tickets 16/- each



Further modifications were made to the club-house in 1964 and 1976, leaving the internal and external layout of the building very much as it is seen today.

- The Café / Sun lounge didn't materialize as described. When it opened during April 1961, the £23,600 Lytham St. Annes Corporation restaurant, the Anchorage, was advertised as



having a snack bar, dining room and a ballroom. The ballroom was, in fact, a dancefloor within the dining room.

The loss of a 'Sun Lounge', or 'Solarium' as some people referred to it, was a significant bone of contention for the Lytham Ratepayers' Association. At their annual meeting held

on 3rd August 1961, it was stated that *"the Council said there would be a solarium, where visitors could go and shelter during wet weather, as well as a café…It is not fair to the ratepayers. We argued about the size of the solarium and now we haven't got one at all. You have to buy a coffee or a cup of tea"*.

In 1979, following several changes of lessee, the building was given a £40,000 facelift which included converting the dining / ballroom area into Lytham's first nightclub: 'SCRUPLES'.

Following a major refit in 1985, the nightclub reopened as a 'fun-pub': ZANZIBAR, but only a few days after reopening it was completely destroyed by fire. The cause of the blaze was reported to have been a *"carelessly discarded cigarette end"*.

The building was rebuilt as a café, prior to the former nightclub area opening, in August 1990, as the 'Waters Edge Roller Disco'.

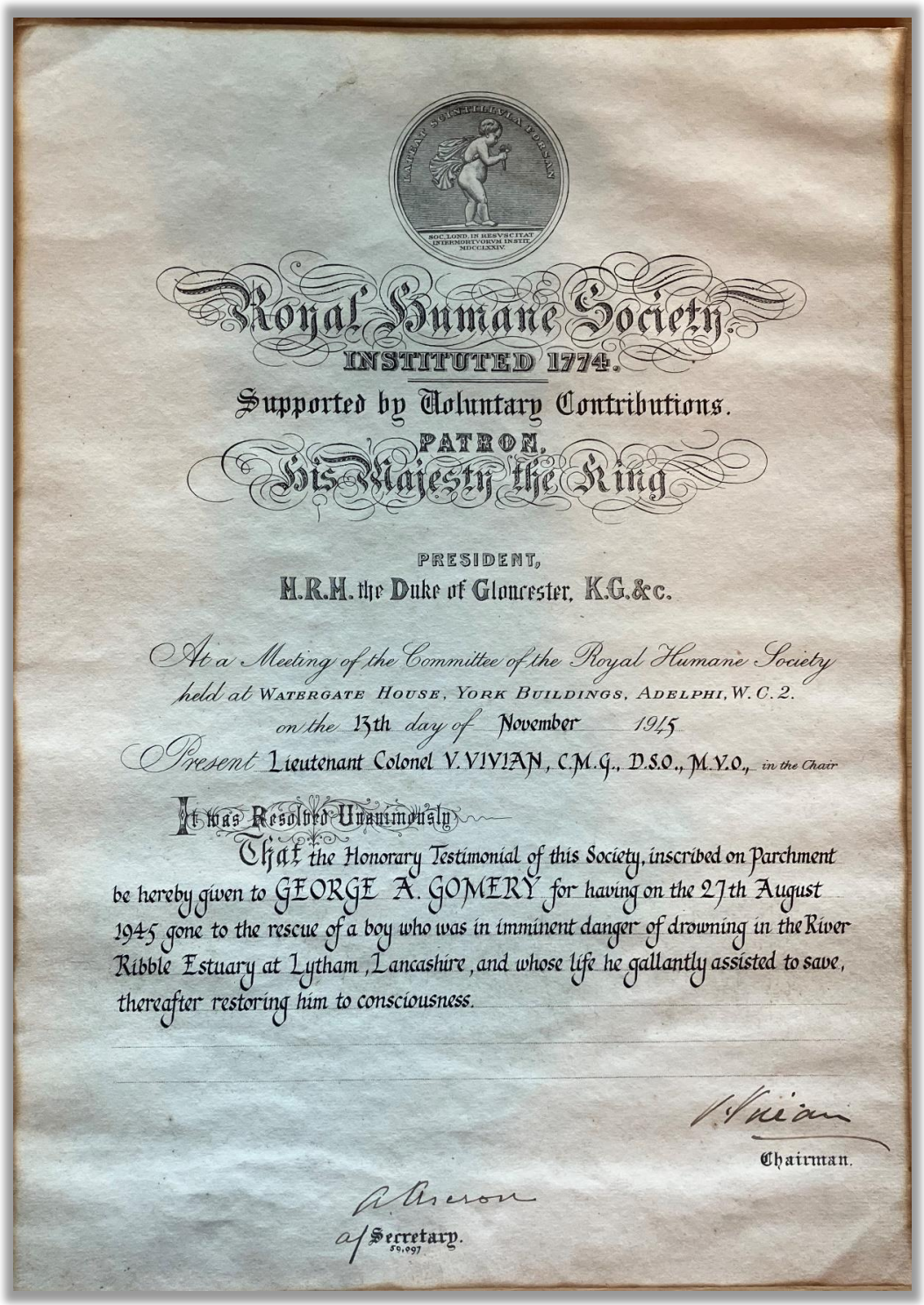
Then in 1997, the Fylde Borough Council decided to sell the site for further development but the Lytham Civic Society fought off proposals for another building. The Civic Society then raised £14,000 to demolish the now derelict structure and create an open-air arena for public use. In 2017, the site was further refurbished by the Civic Society to retain the open view of the River Ribble estuary and celebrate the heritage of the 'Mussel Tanks' site.



The 'Shanty Crew' performing on the site of the Mussel Purification Storage Tank (2025)

Appendix 1

Royal Humane Society Award for Bravery (see page 102)



Royal Humane Society.
INSTITUTED 1774.
Supported by Voluntary Contributions.
PATRON,
His Majesty the King
PRESIDENT,
H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, K.G.&c.

At a Meeting of the Committee of the Royal Humane Society held at WATERGATE HOUSE, YORK BUILDINGS, ADELPHI, W.C.2. on the 13th day of November 1945
Present Lieutenant Colonel V. VIVIAN, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.V.O., in the Chair

It was Resolved Unanimously
That the Honorary Testimonial of this Society, inscribed on Parchment be hereby given to GEORGE A. GOMERY for having on the 27th August 1945 gone to the rescue of a boy who was in imminent danger of drowning in the River Ribble Estuary at Lytham, Lancashire, and whose life he gallantly assisted to save, thereafter restoring him to consciousness.

V. Vivian
Chairman.

A. Aveson
a/Secretary.
59,097

Opposite is a transcript of an article printed in the 'Lytham St. Annes Express', dated 11th January 1946, describing the award ceremony together and details of the rescue.

An interesting event at Lytham Magistrates' Court on Monday, was the presentation by Chairman, Mrs. P.L. Birley, CBE, of the Royal Humane Society's testimonial on parchment, combined with the resuscitation certificate to Mr. George A. Gomery, Lythall Avenue, Lytham, the superintendent of the mussel purification tanks.

Supt. W.T. Hinds, asking Mrs. Birley to make the presentation, said that on August 7th last year an eight-years-old boy, Alan Kenworthy, was on the boating jetty at Lytham when he fell into the sea. The tide swept him towards the pier. A visitor, Miss Jean Haxby, of Nottingham was on the beach and went out to the boy's assistance, wading out as far as she could, then swimming for about 100yds. She saw the boy under water and got hold of him. He was unconscious.

Mr. Gomery realised the danger and dropped over the sea wall, took off his boots and swam out to Miss Haxby who was still holding the boy. He took the boy from her and helped both back to the shore. Mr. Gomery commenced artificial respiration which was successful.

There was a high tide ebbing strongly and there was no doubt that but for the action of Miss Haxby and Mr. Gomery the boy would probably have lost his life. Miss Haxby, it was considered, could not have got the boy to shore, she being practically "all-out" when Mr. Gomery reached her.

The facts were sent by the Chief Constable to the Royal Humane Society and both rescuers were awarded the testimonial.

Handing the testimonial to Mr. Gomery, Mrs. Birley said: "I feel it a great honour to have the privilege of presenting you with this certificate. You are the type of man to whom England owes so much, and of whom England is so proud. We are grateful for your wonderful example."

Mrs. Birley said the Bench would also like their congratulations and an expression of their gratitude to be sent to Miss Haxby.

Supt. Hinds said that would be done, and he added that Miss Haxby's testimonial would be presented to her in Nottingham.

THE MUSSEL TANKS tells the story of the rise and fall of the once famous, and nationally enjoyed, 'Lytham Purified Mussel'. Chronological facts from news articles, official documents, and online sources provides an insight into this now forgotten way of life.

Discover the cause of widespread illness and death throughout the nation and the resulting scientific discovery that led to the building of Lytham's Mussel Tanks. Follow the efforts of politicians, businessmen and fishermen in their fight to make England's only mussel purification facility a success.

However, success was not achieved. Was it foreign competition, national indifference, or something closer to home that doomed Lytham's unique industry?



Sacks of mussels arrived at the Purification Station at Lytham having been brought by lorry from Morecambe. The sacks of mussels were then emptied on to wooden slats, each owner marking off their allocation using bricks, prior to the 2-day purification process commencing



Once cleansed of impurities, the mussels are re-bagged in clean sacks which are then sealed, using an official lead seal, before being transported to markets throughout the country.by rail.