A Royal Visit

Earlier this summer, we were delighted to welcome Her Majesty the Queen to Lancashire as part of the celebrations to commemorate the 750th anniversary of the creation of the original Duchy inheritance. The visit began with a ceremonial welcome at Lancaster Castle and included a tour of Duchy farms across the Myerscough estate. Her Majesty arrived by Royal Train and was welcomed by the Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire, Lord Shuttleworth KCVO.

The approach to the Castle and the historic John of Gaunt gate was lined by local air, sea and army cadets and members of the Duke of Lancaster’s own Yeomanry, together with thousands of well-wishers.

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Sustainability projects

Working with our tenant Bennett Equine, the Duchy has this year completed the installation of a £130,000 eco-friendly heating system at Woodhouse Farm on the Needwood estate in Staffordshire.

The innovative biomass system provides heating and hot water for both the residential farmhouse and the business elements at Woodhouse Farm, which is one of the UK’s leading equine rehabilitation centres. As the property’s previous heating consisted only of open fires, the woodchip biomass boiler system will help the environment and deliver significant savings in terms of energy bills.

The system is the first of its kind to be installed by the Duchy and we carried out extensive research beforehand to identify the best and most effective energy solution. The boiler will use existing woodchip from another Duchy tenant, forestry and harvesting company UPM Tilhill, which occupies the nearby Needwood Sawmill site.

In accordance with our sustainability strategy, green energy sources are actively encouraged across all our properties and a number of tenants are now using green systems such as ground source heat pumps, solar PV and rainwater harvesting.

Nathan Thompson, Chief Executive of the Duchy of Lancaster

Five of the best

Our holiday cottage at Root Farm on the Whitewell estate in Lancashire has received a 5-star rating from Visit England. This puts our newest holiday cottage on a par with the Duchy’s other luxury cottages at Scalby Lodge in Yorkshire, which have also received 5 stars for the third consecutive year and been awarded a Certificate of Excellence from the online travel site, TripAdvisor.

TripAdvisor, which bases its awards on the positive feedback received from visitors, has also awarded Lancaster Castle a Certificate of Excellence, calling it ‘the best in the business’.

For further information, visit our websites: www.duchyholidaycottages.co.uk and www.lancastercastle.com
New Homes For Harrogate

Following the success of our £2m investment in residential property at 11 Ripon Road, the Duchy is preparing an outline planning application to deliver more high quality homes in Harrogate.

Ripon Road completed in September 2014 and all 13 apartments at the development were let less than six months after completion, with the first tenants moving in immediately. Now, in response to a call for potential development sites from the local planning authority, the Duchy is responding by bringing forward land at Cornwall Road for new homes, recreational green space and sports pitches.

More than 200 local people attended a public consultation and exhibition held in June, talking to the Duchy project team about the proposed scheme. The suggestion is for an extension to the existing Duchy estate and the creation of a new ‘soft’ green boundary to the south of the town. Property designs would reflect the surrounding environment and the architectural heritage of the area and would retain the wide streets and low density layout of the existing estate.

The plans also include extensive landscaping throughout, well maintained open spaces for recreational use and wildlife, a wide green corridor and sports pitches for local school and community use. If approved in principle, the Duchy will work with local stakeholder groups to develop a detailed application for submission by late 2016.

Lord Shuttleworth KCVO


A member of the Council since 1998 and Chairman since January 2006, he has seen significant changes to the operational structure of the Duchy during his tenure, while ensuring the preservation of its historic values and principles. Much of the Duchy’s growth and development over recent years is due to his stewardship, wisdom and guidance.

As a retirement gift and to remind him of his years as Chairman, the Duchy Council presented Lord Shuttleworth with a specially commissioned wrought iron gate bearing the Lancashire Rose and the letter ‘S’ entwined. The gate, which was designed and produced by local master ironsmith Tim Swettenham, was ‘presented’ in the form of a framed drawing at a special retirement dinner held at Buckingham Palace. It has now been installed in the garden of Lord and Lady Shuttleworth’s new home.

All members of Council, staff and tenants would like to formally record their thanks to Lord Shuttleworth and Lady Anne Shuttleworth for their outstanding record of service to the Duchy.

Hive of activity

Following the launch of the Duchy’s new Beekeeping Grant last year, a number of families across the country have taken up the challenge and are now actively keeping bees.

For many this is a real family affair, providing a great opportunity for the younger generation to learn about bee keeping and the importance of bees to the ecosystem.

Claire and Steve Peach in Staffordshire, for example, look after their bees with their 12-year old son Daniel, and Christine Fishburn in Yorkshire originally applied for a grant because her grandson Joseph was interested in learning how to keep bees.

With the help and support of neighbour Andy, Christine and Joe now have two busy, healthy hives on the go and are actively looking to establish two more.
Three High Sheriffs have been appointed across the County Palatine by Her Majesty the Queen as Duke of Lancaster. Mrs Amanda Parker JP will serve as High Sheriff of Lancashire, Mrs Sharman Birtles JP DL is installed as High Sheriff of Greater Manchester and Mr Robert Owen JP DL takes up the post for Merseyside. Each will serve for a 12-month period until April 2016 and all three will be supported by the new Under-Sheriff for the County Palatine, Mr David Cam DL.

The office of High Sheriff is one of Britain’s oldest, continuous secular appointments, dating back to Saxon times (circa 600 AD) when the ‘Shire Reeve’ was responsible to the King for the maintenance of law and order within the county, as well as the collection and return of taxes. Today the role is largely ceremonial and focused on support for local good causes through charitable work.
Rural Surveys

Our new Head of Rural, Christopher Sparrow, joined the Duchy team at the beginning of the year. Christopher, who is the fourth full-time appointment made by the Duchy of Lancaster in the last 12 months, has spent the past 10 years as estate manager for The Duke of Buccleuch on the Boughton Estate in Northamptonshire.

Working with Savills Smiths Gore who act as Asset and Property Managers for the Duchy across the rural estates, Christopher has realigned the traditional Surveys to reflect local populations and geographic boundaries, bringing the management of the new Southern Survey inhouse.

The five Rural Surveys are now: Cheshire, Staffordshire, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Southern.

New Tidal Barrage

The Duchy has agreed to allow private firm Natural Energy Wyre Limited access to explore building a tidal barrage on the River Wyre.

This is a £200m project designed to create the UK’s first tidal energy power station. It has a lifespan of 120 years and is estimated to provide sufficient electricity for tens of thousands of homes, as well as supporting the National Grid and helping to deliver the Government’s clean renewable energy policy.

Setting the Standard

As part of our commitment to quality and excellence, we want to ensure high standards of design and interior finish across all Duchy properties. We have therefore drawn up a new Design Standard for interior fixtures, fittings and furnishings in all of our rural rental portfolio.

The new Standard will be applied to all refurbishments and refits in our £1.9m rolling programme of property maintenance and improvement works across the Surveys.
Getting to know...

Christopher Sparrow, Head of Rurals

Q: What is your role within the Duchy of Lancaster?
My role is to lead and co-ordinate the Rural Team across all the rural Surveys and directly manage the newly formed Southern Survey. I have also taken up executive responsibility for the Duke of Lancaster Housing Trust, a charity, which is a stand-alone affordable housing provider.

Q: What does a typical day entail?
I split my time between London and the Surveys – probably 60:40. I have visited every residential property now and have been to all our landholdings. Understanding the geography has helped enormously. I am also meeting farm tenants and other stakeholders each week and reviewing our activity across the different enterprises in which we are invested.

Q: What do you do to relax?
I really enjoy sports and as my children are very keen too that soaks up plenty of time – albeit not always very relaxing! I grew up in Cornwall, so really enjoy being in the sea.

Q: Who would your ideal dinner guest be?
I have often wondered what it would be like to have a dinner party where you were able to magically invite your parents and children – but all at the age of 42. Getting a word in would be interesting.....

Q: What super-power would you most like to have?
Easy – to be able to breathe underwater.

Q: What is the best piece of advice you have ever received?
Keep to the high ground.

HMS Lancaster

Pride of the Royal Navy

The crew of HMS Lancaster wanted to do something extra-special to welcome Princess Charlotte of Cambridge into the world at the beginning of May. Careful planning, half the ship’s company and a Wildcat helicopter all contributed to the creation of an iconic photo salute. HMS Lancaster also visited one of the wonders of the modern world this year, the Panama Canal. The visit was made on the way to Balboa, the 8th stop of the ship’s current deployment, and involved a 10-hour journey and the successful negotiation of a total of 6 locks. Officers and crew said it was an incredible experience.