



# CHISWICK HOUSE FRIENDS

## NEWSLETTER Autumn 2019

Charity No 289907

Patron: Lord Burlington



We welcome to the Chiswick House and Gardens Trust its new Chairman, Sir Derek Myers. Inside we print an interview with Sir Derek, as well as bringing you other news and a report of our very successful 15th Dog Show, master-minded by the wonderful organising committee led by our Trustee Jan Preece.

*John Armstrong*

## Interview with new CHGT Chairman

*In this newsletter, we are pleased to introduce you to Sir Derek Myers, newly appointed Chairman of the Chiswick House and Gardens Trust. Derek has taken over from Andrew Fane who served as Chairman for eight years. The Chiswick House and Gardens Trust, which is entirely separate to Chiswick House Friends, was set up in 2005 and is responsible for the running of Chiswick House and Gardens. As Chiswick House Friends, we support the Trust by raising funds for projects in the House and Gardens as well as acting as a link between our members and the Trust. We recently met Derek to talk about his new role and his plans for the future.*



***On behalf of Chiswick House Friends, we would like to welcome you Derek to your new role as Chairman of the Trust. Please could you tell us about yourself?***

Thank you and I'm really looking forward to working with the Friends. I have lived in Chiswick for 20 years and, living very close to the Estate, I am a regular visitor. I currently have a variety of roles in both the public and commercial sectors. I am Deputy Chairman of Public Health England, a Director of a small communications company and a Trustee of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. I was previously Chief Executive of the London Borough of Hounslow and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

***What are your immediate priorities as Chairman?***

We are starting from a position of strength: we have a good mix of events throughout the year which allow us to generate income, we have a great management team and a strong Board of Trustees. That said, there is always more to do and one of my priorities is to make sure we all have the same purpose. We need to be clear on our spending priorities and, importantly, we need a sense of ambition and vision which means thinking about how we want the Estate to look and operate in 10 years' time. To support this, we need to put the right strategy in place.

I should also add that we are looking for two new Trustees to join our Board of eleven. Fun and interest guaranteed! We are looking for one candidate with experience of fundraising and/or social marketing and one with experience of family attractions. Please send expressions of interest to me by 8 November 2019 ([derek.myers@chgt.org.uk](mailto:derek.myers@chgt.org.uk)).

***Could you tell us more about your longer-term vision?***

I would like us all to be proud of the Estate. This may sound rather trite but we have an incredible asset on our doorstep and, whilst it is deeply appreciated by many, we are often inclined to take it for granted. I want us to be able to spread the glories of the Estate to a wider audience and to introduce more people to this particular part of English history. I want us to continue to improve the Gardens so that we can find delight in them every day and to improve the House so that more people find it accessible, interesting and relevant to their lives.

***Will we see any immediate changes to the House and Gardens?***

I hope you don't notice too much change, after all this is a beautifully maintained Estate, but you will hopefully see step by step improvements in both the House and the Gardens. In particular, I would like to make some improvements to the landscaping around the lake and would like to introduce more variable content into the House. Most people visit the House just once and don't see the need to go back. I would like to change that. I want our visitors to want to come back to the House time and again, bringing family and friends with them. By introducing more variable content, it should help to draw people in on a more regular basis.

***What do you see as your biggest challenge?***

Like most organisations, money is our biggest challenge. Maintaining and improving the Estate is expensive and we cannot expect any additional funding from either the London Borough of Hounslow or English Heritage; we have to earn our keep. However, we must do this in a way that doesn't offend our regular visitors or our local residents, for example by putting too much of a parking or noise burden on them. We need to be sensitive to all local stakeholders and listen to their views but, at the same time, we need to be entrepreneurial and learn from others about how we can run events and have other income generating opportunities.

***You recently said you wanted Chiswick House and Gardens to be recognised as the most beautiful, and most useful, Grade 1 listed House and Gardens in London. What did you mean by 'most useful'?***

I am mindful that, as a long-term Chiswick resident and somebody who has brought up children and walked the dog here, the Estate is a resource for the every day. It's where people come to have a picnic, read a book, walk their dog or watch the cricket. These are all parts of every day life we should celebrate and protect, particularly as we approach the centenary of the Estate being placed into public ownership and open to all.

***What excites you about your role?***

I am not an expert on old houses and historic landscapes but I love to learn and I am relishing the opportunity to learn more about the House and Gardens from people with experience and expertise. I'm also excited about working with our many stakeholders and thinking about how we can move forward in partnership with them.

### **How can the Friends help you in your new role?**

I hope that the Friends share my vision of wanting the Estate to be recognised as the most beautiful and useful Grade 1 asset in London and to sharing its glories with a wider audience. I am looking forward to hearing the Friends' views, either individually or collectively, on how we can progress and how we can work together. I would also like to harness the volunteer efforts of the Friends as part of a greater army of supporters we want to build for the Estate.

### **What is your favourite part of the Estate?**

This is very difficult to answer! I risk controversy by picking out a favourite part of the Estate and indeed the politic thing would be to list many elements and claim I cannot choose between them. Inside the House, I would certainly list the Blue Velvet Room, a sumptuous, complex and mysterious room and the Upper Tribune with its impressive architectural features. Outside, I would include the Inigo Jones Gateway, which was designed in 1621 for a house in Chelsea and was donated to Chiswick House in 1738, and is somewhat underrated. But perhaps most of all I love the Classic Bridge. From 1774, the same year Georgiana the Duchess of Devonshire got married, I like to think of her standing on the bridge as it opened. Seized with her new domain, her "earthly paradise", she imagined a perfect life ahead. We know of course how her life instead was marked by addiction, betrayal and heartbreak. What romance!

## **Chiswick House and Gardens Trust News**

### **Update from Caroline Busby, Interim Director, Chiswick House and Gardens Trust**

It's been a busy summer for the Trust with the appointment of a new Chairman, many visitors and activities, and lots to celebrate.

We are very proud of all the hard work and care that is taken to maintain the Estate by both staff and volunteers. These efforts have been recognised this year by the receipt of our first Green Flag Award in July and with a number of London in Bloom Awards in September, including Heritage Park and Garden of the Year and Walled Garden of the Year.

The House has been open to many visitors from far and wide over the summer months. A highlight was the September Open House weekend which saw over 2,000 visitors, a massive increase on last year's 1,235 visitors.

We hosted several events on the Estate over the summer and we hope there was something for everyone to enjoy. We are due to announce our winter events soon so do watch this space for news.

Over the next few months we have many plans to improve the Estate for our visitors. We are fundraising for a new playground to replace the existing play equipment which is now rather dated. We are also looking at access improvements to the House.

Visitors to the Gardens will also notice work being carried out to repair the rotunda of the conservatory. Work to repair the cascade is nearing completion too.

We'd like to thank the Friends for their contribution to these works as well as their support for the Trust's on-going work.

### **Chiswick House and Gardens Trust**

The Estate Office, Chiswick House, London W4 2QN

Tel 020 8742 3905

[www.chiswickhouseandgardens.org.uk](http://www.chiswickhouseandgardens.org.uk)

## **Chiswick House Friends News**



We held two very successful chamber concerts in the House this summer. The first (image above) featured the Coro choir, who performed a marvellous selection of *a capello* works through the centuries.

In the second, musicians from the Junior Royal Academy of Music entertained us with a gripping programme of instrumental works from Brahms to Shostakovich.

### **Historic Picture – The Mythical Sphinx**

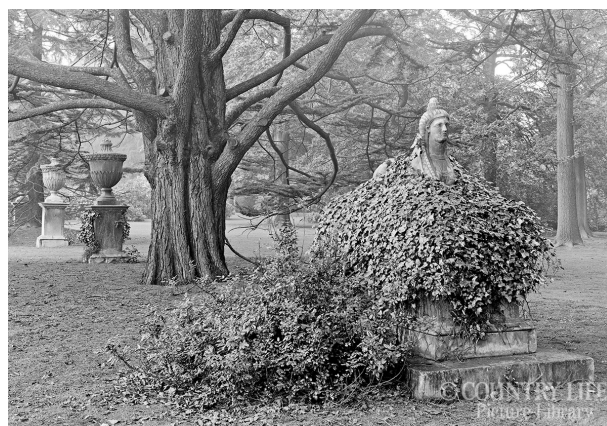


Image courtesy of Charles Latham and Country Life Picture Library

The above picture, which was published by Country Life in April 1901, shows an ivy-engulfed statue of a mythical sphinx in the Gardens. This is one of two stone sphinxes which were installed in the Gardens at the rear of the House by Lord Burlington in the 1730s. A pair of sphinxes can also be found on top of the gate piers at the front of the House, replacing a pair which were moved from Chiswick House to central London in the nineteenth century, and which are now located in Green Park at the Piccadilly entrance.

## Chiswick House Dog Show 2019

It wasn't the best of days weather-wise but it didn't stop nearly 600 dogs registering in the 17 classes this year! The day before had glorious weather, perfect for getting the site ready for the show. However, on the day, notwithstanding a couple of downpours, the show went on – with only two stallholders dropping out because of the rain. Dog owners are used to walking in all weathers so we weren't surprised when so many showed up!

Our theme this year was a commemoration of the moon landings 50 years ago - and this was reflected in the Fancy Dress class. All the regular classes were well subscribed – as were the not so regular – Naughtiest Dog, Best Young Handler, Best Rescue, Waggiest Tail. Aside from the classes, the crowds were entertained throughout the day by the Womballs Flyball Club, by a Re-homing Parade put on by the Dogs Trust Harefield Re-Homing Centre, and then by the ever popular and entertaining egg-and-spoon relay race. The Dogs Trust put on their 'Doggy Dash' to find the fastest four-legged friend.



We had more stalls than ever this year, with an even greater range. Beside the usual canine-related offerings we had a variety of other dog-related stalls – canine myotherapy, nutritious drinks for dogs, canine massage – as well as our usual spread of charity stalls (Many Tears, All Dogs Matter, Pets as Therapy, RNLI). The Hogarth Health Club, Metrobank and Chiswick Arts, all locally-based, were also there. Chiswick House and Gardens had their ever-popular produce stall.



We had a great line up of celebrity judges, including Mel Giedroyc (pictured above), and each and every one has said they would come back again if asked! They were all entertained in the Green Room - this year sponsored for the first time by Chiswick Auctions.

We were more than pleased to welcome a contingent of volunteers from Chiswick School, led by their headteacher, Laura Ellener, and other staff members, as well as a number of scouts from the 20<sup>th</sup> Chiswick.

Added to these, there was an army of 165 other volunteers. We couldn't put on the Dog Show without all these helpers – and we are indebted to them for the time and effort they put in.

Every single dog gets a "well done" rosette, but the pinnacle of the show has to be the Best in Show class. A large crowd stayed on to see the very special spaniel, Angus, take the biggest rosette of the day (pictured below).



All the monies raised go back into the community by helping to pay for the upkeep of the Chiswick House and Gardens, a beautiful park enjoyed by hundreds of dog walkers every week.

### Friends Donations

We are pleased to report that we have recently made a donation towards the essential repairs which are being carried out to the Conservatory, to support funding from Viridor Credits Environmental Company. We have also committed funds to the repair of the Cascade.

### Autumn Update from Richard Sales

Our pair of male swans did not go to the Thames to moult this year but stayed here. The long term resident Egyptian goose pair who lost their breeding nest tree have been eased out by a younger pair who have not yet bred.

Despite the fact that the Cascade hasn't been working for over a year, we haven't had any cases of botulism or blue green algae. This is probably due to regular filling of the lake by use of the 'portullis' in the block-house on the Thames and the fact that the hot period over the summer only lasted for about 10 days. This also seems to have kept the blanket weed in check.

As far as the breeding season goes, very few mallard ducklings survived predation by the usual suspects. Moorhen and coot had a good summer but, strangely, we had no tufted ducklings for the first time since they started breeding here in 2013. If anyone has seen these ducklings on any other London lakes I would like to know. (Richard can be contacted via the contact details below).

### 2019 Friends Events

**Saturday 14th Dec:** (2:15pm) Christmas Carols outside the House.

**Published by the Chiswick House Friends**

57 Thames Village, Hartington Rd, London W4 3UF

[secretary@chfriends.org.uk](mailto:secretary@chfriends.org.uk) [www.chfriends.org.uk](http://www.chfriends.org.uk)