



CHISWICK HOUSE FRIENDS

NEWSLETTER Spring 2021

Charity No 289907

Patron: Lord Burlington



I was watching the children playing football by the café recently, thinking that this would never have been acceptable before Covid. But now kids need somewhere to play, and people need a place to escape lockdown for a moment. The Gardens have played a huge role in bringing sanity to a crazy world, with visitor numbers up 80%. We must preserve this amenity, and that takes money. Please continue to support our efforts: donate to our campaigns and help safeguard this place for us all.

As we move towards the end of lockdown, refurbishment of the playground is a green shoot for better things to come. We were able to contribute £20,000, resulting largely from the past generosity of you, our members. In fact this will have been a record year for support – in the last twelve months we have donated £75,000 to help fill the financial hole left by Covid and the cancellation of almost all events. Hopefully we will see some of these, for instance our Dog Show, returning later this year.

In this edition we have an update from the CHG Trust, and on pages 3 and 4 we report on progress with the Chiswick House LEGO model and on a new book about the Gardens. And then our regular contributions from Richard Sales and Jan Preece.

A Happy Easter to you all!

John Armstrong, Chair, Chiswick House Friends

Chiswick House and Gardens Trust News

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends

I started in my role as Director in March 2020 and what a first year it has been. It has given me great comfort that we have remained open throughout and provided a sanctuary for so many: only possible with the support of our local community and volunteers.

2020 was a difficult year for so many. Providing an open, beautiful space for our community has been an honour. Sadly this year we too have lost loved ones. Rosemary Day, one of our founding Trustees, passed away in September, and in February our first female Head Gardener Fiona Crumley after a long battle with cancer. Our volunteer team has sadly lost three members: Marion, David and Tom. We grieve their loss and remember them with love. Our team are working on the best way to remember these wonderful people and their contribution to the site, and when decided details will be on our website.



The late Fiona Crumley

Last summer we lost £500,000 income overnight from cancelled events. We managed to plug some of that gap raising over £165,000 from donations over the last 10 months. And a big thank you to Chiswick House Friends for all their donations in our current financial year. Thank You!

When I wrote in September, I set out our three strategic priorities which we have been focusing on since then;

1. Kids Outdoor Play, exciting and inclusive play-area and programme for all our local communities,
2. Volunteering, a programme to improve wellbeing for vulnerable communities in Hounslow and expand our existing volunteer programme,
3. House interpretation refreshed and engaging visitor experience to broaden our audiences in time for reopening - now planned for the end of May 2021.

How have we done and what next?

We have made progress, but this has only been possible with the support of funders. 2021 continues to be challenging, we have not recovered from last year and still have a significant gap in our funding which means we can only carry out essential works and not invest in projects.

Volunteering & Community Outreach

With thanks to our Culture Recovery Grant, we have been able to fund Neena Sohal and Rinku Mitra, well established community outreach practitioners in the local Boroughs, to consult with local community groups, colleges, schools and our volunteers. Their findings will feed into our plan to expand our volunteering and community outreach activities. Once the plan is defined, we will need to raise funds to deliver the programme. In the meantime, we have been so lucky that our volunteer gardeners, kitchen gardeners, rangers and beekeepers have continued to volunteer when they can. We are working towards having all our volunteers back soon, as well as welcoming new volunteers.



December Duckpond Market vegetable stall

Chiswick House Reopening

Also, thanks to our Culture Recovery Fund grant, preparations for reopening the House are progressing at pace. We have invested in refreshing our welcome film, explorer map, audio guide, website and an opening exhibition working with contemporary artists. We will also expand our visitor offer to include the Kitchen Garden - which we are very excited about! We plan to reopen towards the end of May 2021. Chiswick House Friends can still enter the House free of charge but will need to buy a ticket for the Kitchen Garden. Pre-booking will be in place so please do keep an eye on our website.

And finally...

Colicci's, the independent family-run company that runs our café, will be closing after the Easter holiday for 3 weeks to refurbish the café. We are delighted with their plans which promise to provide wonderful indoor & outdoor seating - just in time for unlocking!

And following the latest government announcement we are working with all our event partners to see what can go ahead. Keep an eye on our website for information.

Looking forward to meeting soon,

With best wishes

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Chiswick House and Gardens Trust

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CHISWICK HOUSE FRIENDS NEWS

Donations this year

Since Covid struck and almost all events had to be cancelled, the financial loss of some £0.5m has had a devastating effect on the running of the estate.

To help plug the gap, the Friends have in the last 12 months donated a total of £75,000 - more than in any similar period during our history. About half this money has been raised by our projects and about half has come from our reserves, which fortunately were standing quite high.

Our donations to the CHGT have been:

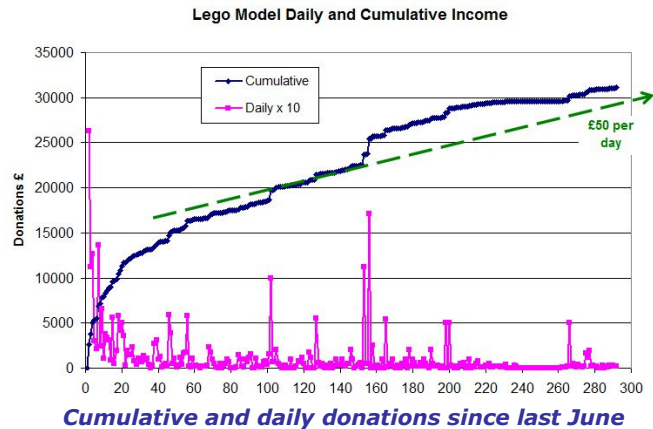
March '20 - Cascade repair: £5k
April '20 - IT for Trust staff home working: £10k
2020 -2021 - Lego model fundraising: £30k
August '20 - in lieu of Dog Show: £5k
Dec '20 - for Playground: £20k
Feb '21 - for Dog Bins: £5k.

Membership

One by-product of this extraordinary year has been a substantial increase in our membership. People value the House and Gardens, and want to support it, and joining the Friends is seen as a worthwhile way to do this. Our membership now stands at 646, 116 more than at this time last year.

Fund-raiser Lego Model

Our Just Giving fund-raising project donations have reached £31,000, just under half of the way to our eventual £75k target.



The average donation rate for quite a while has been £50 per day, which means we should reach our target late in 2022. You can of course speed that up by buying more bricks today! (at JustGiving.com, Chiswick House Lego Model).



LEGO model in the Chiswick House cafe

For the past month or so, the model has been on display in the café, somewhat shielded so that it doesn't become a gathering point for too many people... It will be there until the week of the 22nd March.

Play ahoy!

No smashing of a bottle of bubbly over the bow, but the good ship Playground now sails, see front cover. The quiet re-opening of the playground on 12th March was carefully scheduled around exterior and forthcoming interior works to refurbish the café.

The new sandpit and swing are the start of fulfilling the strategic Kids Outdoor Play priority highlighted by the Trust. Future plans include new equipment that encourages explorative play and the planting of trees, shrubs and plants for more scent, colour and shade. Plus the creation of an outdoor learning programme for families.

The Trust is now seeking to raise a further £100,000 to finish the project - see CHG website (under /play), where you can donate and give feedback on how you think the outdoor play activities should be developed.

New Book on Chiswick House & Gardens

A new book about Chiswick House Gardens by Dr David Jacques is entitled "Creation and ReCreation - 300 years at Chiswick" and links garden development to the four main periods when the fortunes of Chiswick House were in the national spotlight. Details from <https://www.gofundme.com/f/chiswick-house-garden-300-years>, where you can book your early copy.



From David Jacques' new book about the Gardens

Quiz

Our one-time newsletter editor Susan Lee Kerr has set this quiz to test your knowledge of the House and Gardens. Answers on the back page.

1. Where in the House will you find your astrological sign?
2. What was a favourite 18th century dog breed, and where do you see it in the House?
3. What is a deadhedge and why would you want one?
4. What is the difference (and the code) between the carved mantelpieces in the Red Room?

COVID Dog Effect

Because of the influx of so many new puppies and dogs over the last year - with 80% more visitors - it has become more of a challenge to deal with DWM (dog waste management). A normal year (2019) brought 19t of dog poo, but in 2020 it was 31.4t!

The Dog Show Committee responded to the CHGT appeal for help with the £16+k annual DWM cost, and via the Friends £5,000 was contributed in this extraordinary Covid and dog year. This includes a £400 donation from a charitable trust designated for 'dog-related activities' - which neatly turns out to match the cost of this spring's painting of the bins.



Dog bins before and after repainting

Dog Show Committee members plan to help 'educate' new dog owners in the skills of keeping poo off the ground and in the bins.

Jaimie Cook is the gardener at CH responsible for DWM, and the cricket pitch too. Always in the grounds, she gets to meet the dogs and posts "Jaimie's Dog of The Month" on Instagram - follow @jaimiegardens to see canine stars and register a "like".

Spring Update from Richard Sales

The severe cold in early February (-5°C for three consecutive nights) built up a thick layer of ice on the lake. This encouraged visitors of all ages to find logs and branches which they threw on the lake in huge numbers. It has taken 10 hours so far to clear this debris from the water which will, hopefully, be made into log piles for insects, hedgehogs etc. I can hardly complain as I used to do the same thing over 70 years ago when we had really severe winters!!

The cascade is now working again after complete restructuring of the electrical cabling. To save money on the electrical bill it does not operate all day. We have had to revert to the old system of filling the lake, manually opening flaps and baffles down at the Thames, as the electric pump there has failed again.

A moorhen is already nesting about 4 metres up a self-rooted willow in the southern pool by the cascade bridge path, close to the life buoy.

All the coots are on nests. The Egyptian geese have not been seen for a while: perhaps they have not found a suitable nesting tree and have flown away to breed. The overwintering shoveler duck have flown away as have the little grebe pair.



Icy Water (courtesy of Julie Ritson)

The Canada geese are pairing up but our two male swans seem to be discouraging them from nesting. One goose has an angel wing and cannot fly.

The male mallard, which outnumber females by six to one, are squabbling over breeding rights. One of the females has had a broken wing for about 18 months. Despite this she seems very fit and a source of interest for the males.



Three Gardeners in a Boat

Events

While most of our Friends events have had to be cancelled because of Covid, we do hope to hold our usual Summer Party for Friends and Volunteers on 15th September, and our Annual General Meeting a few days later on the 20th. Details to follow, also news of the potential Dog Show.

Quiz Answers

1. Ceiling of the Red Room, painted by Wm Kent. Which worthy shares your sign?
2. Pug, ceiling of the Summer Parlour, painted by Kent for Lady Burlington.
3. Deadheading is the craft of weaving and binding fences using cut-offs from managing the wildernesses. They make good bug hotels, and keep areas from being trampled.
4. Instead of 3 central sunflowers (symbol of courtiers who follow the sun [that is, the king]) the left hearth has a rose and 2 sunflowers. Nearby spot a thistle and a fleur-de-lys. Symbols of Tudor monarchy, Scotland and France. Guess who this might represent.

Published by the Chiswick House Friends

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