



# CHISWICK HOUSE FRIENDS

## NEWSLETTER SPRING 2013

Charity No 289907

Patron: Lord Burlington



### ***Spring - is it really here yet?***

With Spring comes a new season of events such as our Opera and Dog Show; and also a new website for the Friends - now an important part of the way in which we communicate with you our members. On [www.chfriends.org.uk](http://www.chfriends.org.uk) you will see that as well as all the familiar news and features you can buy opera tickets (at a discount), make small purchases and even pay subscriptions on line. A group of Trustees led by Louise Chapman has laboured hard to make our new website attractive and accessible.

With this upgrade comes the realisation that we have not increased our subscription fees for almost ten years. An increase is now unavoidable and, we think, the new levels of £15 for a single membership and £25 for a double still represent excellent value.

*George Nissen*

## Chiswick House and Gardens Trust News

### The Melon House project



This year the Chiswick House and Gardens Trust in partnership with the Chiswick House Friends will be restoring the historic Melon House behind the Conservatory. Constructed sometime before 1867 this large glasshouse would have contained raised beds with melon plants trained up the glazing bars of the roof, their fruit drooping from the bars in string bags. Steps which led down into the sunken house have long since disappeared as have the original raised beds as a result of the floor being filled in during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Today the dilapidated building is being given a new lease of life to ensure its survival and put it back into productive use as a propagation house for the walled kitchen garden and wider park.



The Trust has appointed conservation architects Caroe and Partners to oversee the restoration which will include an archaeological study of any remaining features which might be discovered when the building is excavated. We expect to complete this project by Spring 2014 providing our garden team and kitchen garden volunteers with

vital glass house space for the first time since the Trust was established. The building will also become a feature of future garden open days and we even hope to grow a token melon or two!

This important project is being made possible due to the generous support of the Chiswick House Friends and income raised from the Chiswick House Camellia Festival earlier this year. If you would like to make a donation towards the Melon House or are interested in supporting other areas of the gardens please do contact the Trust Director, Sarah Finch-Crisp at the Estate Office, Chiswick House Tel 020 8742 3905 or [sarah.finch-crisp@chgt.org.uk](mailto:sarah.finch-crisp@chgt.org.uk). Your support is hugely appreciated.

### Artists support CH&G Trust

This year we have been privileged to have the support of locally-based artists Sir Peter Blake and Marthe Amitage. Sir Peter Blake whose work is represented in major collections throughout the world recalled his long association and affection for Chiswick House Gardens: "Chiswick House Gardens is a special place. I took our daughter Rose there so many times when she was a child".



To celebrate this year's Camellia Festival Sir Peter painted a beautiful image of one of Chiswick's historic Camellias and allowed the Trust to produce 250 limited edition prints to assist our fundraising. *Camellia japonica 'Incarnata'*, 2013 (290mm x 350mm), each signed and numbered by the artist, can be purchased for £100 and have been enthusiastically sought. If you are interested in acquiring your own unique print please contact the Trust office on 020 8742 3905.

Marthe Amitage was equally glad to help the Trust saying: "Chiswick House and Gardens is an extraordinarily wonderful place and I feel incredibly lucky to have such a unique park here in Chiswick that we can all enjoy". Marthe Amitage has been creating wallpaper designs for over 50 years from her studio in Chiswick and still handprints beautiful wallpapers from original linocuts. Her striking design on a new Chiswick House tote bag was a feature of the Camellia Festival and the bags will also be available to purchase at future garden events.



### Garden Manager makes a difference

Meanwhile the 65 acres of gardens and public park - a challenge for any Garden Manager - is where Peter Oates with just 6 months at Chiswick has already made a visible difference. With a background in managing substantial parkland and private estates Peter is making the presentation of the gardens his top priority.



*Peter Oates, Garden Manager*

Hedges, edges, beds and paths are all receiving particular attention alongside pruning and tree works. Helping him are our fabulous Goosefoot garden volunteers who are learning new skills in the process with a lively programme of training sessions from rose pruning to propagation. Thanks once again to the Friends, we are also developing a plan to improve the paths, planting and access in the Staveley Road side of the gardens.

### **Become a Garden Volunteer**

If you or someone you know already have gardening interests and skills and would like to develop these by lending a hand in keeping Chiswick House Gardens in tip top condition, we would love to meet you. The Trust is looking to recruit Kitchen Garden and Goosefoot Volunteers to join the team. To apply please contact Volunteer Manager Louise Randall by email [volunteer@chgt.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@chgt.org.uk).

### **Chatsworth Attic Sale items return to C House**



*Photograph of Chiswick House Bedchamber c.1890*

A group of furniture originally belonging to the 5th Duke of Devonshire and his wife Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, is newly exhibited at Chiswick House following extensive conservation. The group which was acquired in the Chatsworth Attic Sale includes two sets of neo-classical gilt and painted chairs. These were part of larger sets used by the Duke and Duchess throughout the first floor of Chiswick House in the late 18th century.

As the photograph above shows, by the 1890s some of the chairs had been grouped in the Bedchamber at Chiswick together with a small ladies' writing desk. The chairs, roll-top writing desk and a parcel-gilt and simulated rosewood pole-screen have been now been returned to the Bedchamber – their last known location in the house.



*A Ladies' roll-top writing desk, veneered in fiddle-back mahogany with gilt-bronze mounts, c.1785.*

This furniture, relating to the residency of the Dukes of Devonshire, adds an exciting new dimension to the displays which focus primarily on the house's first owner and architect, Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington. A mahogany pole-screen designed in about 1730 by Burlington's protégé and collaborator William Kent has also been acquired and is displayed in Lord Burlington's Blue Velvet room, upholstered to match the sumptuous wall hangings.

Having been removed to the Devonshire family estate at Chatsworth in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, these pieces were acquired by English Heritage at a auction in 2010 with the special assistance of The Art Fund. Conservation has been made possible by the generous support of The Art Fund, Chiswick House Friends and The Pilgrim Trust.

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

*Registered Charity no 1109239*

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**[www.chgt.org](http://www.chgt.org)**

## Pavements

News emerged early this year that all pavements in Chiswick outside the conservation areas (CAs) were to be repaved with tarmac under a new PFI scheme. The ensuing outcry was focused on Foster Road and Alwyn Avenue, where arrival of 'The Tar Bucket' was imminent. After some hasty negotiation, the solution adopted was for the group of seven streets roads comprising the 'Devonhurst Estate' to apply for and become a CA, thereby qualifying for proper paving. Repaving in Foster Rd and Alwyn Ave is now nearing completion, and very nice it looks too. The streets around the House are already in a CA, so there is no prospect of wholesale tarmacking: however it is noticeable that the standard of paving in some of these streets is poor, with gaps, bumps and many areas poorly repaired with tarmac.

## Parking

Not everyone is happy with the weekend parking arrangements for the House and Gardens. The Will-to-Win tennis centre reports 25% fewer people using the courts for the first two months of the year. We understand that it is important to introduce charging to exclude commuters during the week and keep space for House visitors, but we haven't yet been convinced why charging is also applied at the weekends, deterring visitors and legitimate users of the facilities alike.

## Waterfowl Update... or Take-offs Good, Landings Terrible (from Richard Sales)

In our last newsletter (Autumn 2012) we reported having 6 cygnets plus our adult pair of swans.

Since then all of the cygnets have gone. In early November, by which time they were all flying with or without the adults, they were becoming a danger both to themselves and to members of the public.

One landed on a dog! All of them landed outside the lake boundaries and two landed outside the Park - one wandering towards the A4 - the possible traffic carnage can only be imagined!

We thought we had identified the problem ones, so four were caught and taken to the Swan Sanctuary at Shepperton. Within a week the remaining two were just as troublesome, and so were taken to Kingston Bridge where there is a large flock of juvenile swans for company and future pairing.

The adults have been seen mating but no sign so far (9<sup>th</sup> March) of the male refurbishing the nest, which usually takes place by mid March.

However, there is exciting news about a resident pair of Egyptian Geese: 7 goslings hatched overnight on 23<sup>rd</sup> March! (see photo to top right).



## Opera

Our summer opera is planned for July with a two-day event put on by a company new to us - Focus Opera - see enclosed leaflet and ticket application form. The Opera Committee has always been keen to see the proceeds put to specific use, and suggested to the Trustees support for the renovation of the Melon House.

## Christmas Cards

Thanks to all who buy our Christmas cards - the takings last year were almost £3000 for our Projects Fund!

## Website

As you read on the front page, we have a new-look website, at [www.chfriends.co.uk](http://www.chfriends.co.uk). As well as a host of interesting news items and features, we have for the first time arranged on-line payments for tickets, shop purchases and subscriptions!

## CH FRIENDS and CHGT Events 2013

- 12 May, May Fayre
- 26 May, 10am - 4 pm Kitchen Garden Open Day
- 3 June, 7pm CHF Annual General Meeting, House
- 9 June, 10am - 5pm Open Garden Squares, Kitchen Gdn
- 19 June, 7pm CHF Summer Party, Conservatory
- 3 July CHF Opera - 'Behind the Arias'
- 4 July, CHF Opera - 'Carmen'
- 19 July, Open Air Theatre - 'Gulliver's Travels'
- 21 July, 10am - 4 pm Kitchen Garden Open Day
- 26 July, Open Air Theatre - 'A Little of What You Fancy'
- 18 August, 10am - 4 pm Kitchen Garden Open Day
- 29 August, Open Air Film - 'West Side Story'
- 30 August, Open Air Film - 'The Commitments'
- 12 Sept, Chiswick Book Festival, Burlington Pavilion
- 22 Sept, 10 am - 5pm Kitchen Garden Open Day
- 29 Sept, CHF Dog Show, Cricket Pitch
- 26 Oct, Pumpkin Party, Walled Gardens

## Published by the Chiswick House Friends

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