



CHISWICK HOUSE FRIENDS

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2014

Charity No 289907

Patron: Lord Burlington



Moving towards self-sufficiency; and a new Trust Director

The Chiswick House and Gardens Trust is moving closer to independence. Already running the gardens under a lease from the London Borough of Hounslow, CHGT will now negotiate with English Heritage the transfer of the management of the House and all this will entail, so that the estate will be run as one unified body. To master-mind these changes, we are delighted to welcome the new CHGT Director, Clare O'Brien.

In this issue, you can read an interview with Clare, and her views on the exciting challenge of this new phase... as well as Friends news of this year's opera, dog show and other events.

George Nissen

Interview with Clare O'Brien, new Director of the Chiswick House & Gardens Trust



CHF: Welcome to Chiswick! Can you tell us a little about your background ?

CO'B: It's a great pleasure to be here! I have always worked in the non-profit sector, usually on marketing, public relations and income generation. My last appointment was as Director of Development and Marketing at the Wallace Collection, a national museum full of Old Master paintings, the decorative arts, and arms and armour. While I was there we managed to almost double visitor numbers to 400,000 per year.

CHF: How do you do that?

CO'B: Mostly it's about communication - you need to know who your audience is and both appeal to the visitors you already have as well as attracting new ones. There has to be a story to tell, and something to interest all ages. Chiswick is very prestigious - well up in the Roll of Honour - and there is a story to tell... about the people and who they were and their lives in grand houses, as well as about the architecture and the Garden Movement.



CHF: What are the issues at Chiswick?

CO'B: The Gardens are now looking fantastic after the Lottery project restoration, so there is a need to look at the House, especially with self-sufficiency coming. The upstairs really sets the tone for the visitor and can't be changed too much, but the downstairs can be improved a lot. Ideally visitors would come through the upstairs to get the feel of the House, and then go downstairs for more context and history, but I'm not sure yet about the practicalities of that. Outside the House, we can do more to boost private and corporate events, enliven the café and encourage more corporate input to cricket events. Education and public events are also very important.

CHF: Self-sufficiency?

CO'B: Yes; English Heritage have announced that from April next year, all their properties will need to be self-sufficient. There will be an initial pot of about £80m to prepare all these properties. After that we will have to raise whatever money we spend, including all staff costs which will transfer to the Trust. We need to be protected by Government Indemnity, which means we avoid the need for increasingly expensive insurance. I suspect EH will have to become more like the National Trust, attracting more members and raising funds. It is going to be a very exciting time!

CHF: What do you see as the Friends' role?

CO'B: The Friends have been fabulous as a supportive body. Your future role will be up to you to decide, but there can be real advantages in remaining an independent body. The Opera and the Dog Show are great public events that I hope you will continue to manage. And your support for the Melon House project is greatly appreciated. With self-sufficiency, the need to fund-raise will be even greater, so efforts by the Friends will be even more important!



CHF: Is there any truth in rumours of further dog restrictions?

CO'B: None are planned. There have been one or two dog attacks that we need to try to prevent. Also we want to enforce the restrictions on commercial multiple dog-walkers. I believe the site for this year's Dog Show will again be the cricket ground, with the old Hockey Field site planned for next year.

CHF: Most Friends are local residents who appreciate the Gardens as their local park. Will entry remain free as it is now?

CO'B: Yes, the Gardens will remain free and open to all - it is after all a Hounslow Borough park and the money they provide helps cover its upkeep. The important thing is to maintain a balance between the needs and wishes of the local residents, of those who value the cultural and educational aspects, and of those corporate and private clients without whom we cannot bring in enough income to achieve self-sufficiency.



Clare O'Brien can be contacted at clare.obrien@chgt.org.uk.

Chiswick House and Gardens Trust News

The Royal Opera's Lady of the Camellias at Chiswick House Camellia Festival



Ailyn Pérez in the dress she will wear as Violetta on 20th May

The 4th Camellia Festival opened at Chiswick House and Gardens on 1st March, following a preview on Thursday 27th February to which Chiswick House and Gardens Trust welcomed internationally acclaimed soprano Ailyn Pérez, who will appear in La Traviata at Covent Garden in May.

All funds raised from the Festival support Chiswick House & Gardens Trust, a registered charity dedicated to the preservation and continued enhancement of Chiswick House Gardens, which are open free to the public every day from 7am until dusk.

New Garden Manager

Peter Oates has left as Garden Manager and will be replaced by Geraldine King for a six-month period. Geraldine worked at a 77 acre park in East London, West Ham Park, for 11 years as Park Manager. Prior to this she was Assistant Park Manager of Hyde Park. She is a judge for London in Bloom, and currently chairs the London Gardens Network.

Speeding in the Gardens

There have been reports of occasional cars and contractors' vans speeding in the driveway. If you see an offender, please call the Warden service straight away on 07790 959 999.

Progress with the Melon House

Work is still underway with the Melon House restoration, to be completed in the summer.

William Kent Exhibition at the V&A

An exhibition of Kent's work has opened at the V&A Museum and will run until 13th July. The House and Gardens will feature throughout the exhibition with some of the best examples of Kent's designs.



William Kent's Blue Velvet Room at Chiswick

Award for Volunteer Wardens

Three Chiswick House and Gardens Trust Volunteer Wardens have won an 'Outstanding Heroes' accolade at the Hounslow Community Safety Heroes awards ceremony in March.



Awards for Barbara Korsarska, Dee Reader & Andrea Williams

Chiswick House and Gardens Trust

Registered Charity no 1109239

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www.chgt.org.uk

Donation of Bags

Our thanks to the Dogs Trust for their most generous donation of 1m (yes, 1 million) dog scoop bags!

Waterfowl Update (from Richard Sales)

We lost one of the cygnets during the October/November storm. The remaining three are doing very well – the adults will soon be expelling them from the lake. The male swan has a virus, we think caused by mouldy bread which manifests itself by pink rear feathers and damaged tail feathers. It does not seem to affect egg production as two, probably infertile, eggs were laid by 6 Jan on the muddy nest site.

All seven of the second successful brood of Egyptian Goslings flew away in September. The female was on her chestnut tree nest since early January, and in late Feb produced 8 new goslings. Hope the weather will be kinder to them this year!

The most exotic visitor was a male juvenile mandarin duck which over the six weeks it was here truly changed from an ugly duckling to a magnificent specimen, see below...



Dog Show

Last year the dog show was a tremendous success, with glorious weather, a riot of colour, visiting celebrities and over 500 dogs and 3,000 visitors. This year we'll be celebrating the 10th Anniversary on Sunday 28th September - plans are underway to make it the best ever!

Christmas Cards

Thanks to all who bought cards last year, and to our trusty volunteers who braved the cold of Chiswick High Road to boost sales. We managed to raise over £2200 towards projects planned for the House and Gardens - our biggest total ever!

We are now gathering images for 2014 cards; these will be on sale from September on our website.

Opera in the Gardens

British Summer at its Best! Celebrating our 10th anniversary, we have two operas for you this year on successive evenings; the Barber of Seville and Cosi Fan Tutte – see below for dates and times.



Focus Opera will treat audiences to two evenings of spectacular opera in the beautiful gardens of Chiswick House. Performing for the second year at Chiswick, this professional company will provide a magnificent stage, enhanced sound system and two exciting new productions. With a young international cast, Focus Opera will bring these searing dramas, with their exciting and beautiful melodies, to life.

Tickets are now on sale from our website; £30 adult & £15 child (5-16 years). A 10% discount is offered to Members and their guests, and for Group Bookings of 10+.

Guests can picnic all evening. The entire rear lawn of the House is reserved for ticket holders from 6.00pm. Guests set up their chairs and picnics and enjoy a magical evening celebrating summer with friends. Food, hot drinks, champagne, wine and beer are on sale on the night, or you and your guests bring your own picnic.

CH FRIENDS & CHGT Events 2014

- 1 - 30 March, Conservatory: Camellia Festival
- 26 April, 11 May, 15 June, 27 July, 30 August, 21 Sept, 11 - 3pm: Kitchen Garden Open Days
- 2 June, 7pm, House: CHF AGM
- 12 June, 6.30pm, Conservatory: CHF party
- 2 July, 7.30, CHF Open Air Opera: Barber of Seville
- 3 July, 7.30, CHF Open Air Opera: Cosi Fan Tutte
- 18 Jul, 7.30, Open Air Theatre: Pirates of Penzance
- 25 July, 6.30pm, Open Air Theatre: Robin Hood
- 21 & 22 Aug, 8.15pm: Open Air Cinema
- 28 Sept, 10.30-3.45, Cricket Field: CHF Dog Show
- 25 Oct, 4-6.30pm, Kitchen Garden: Pumpkin Party

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