



CHISWICK HOUSE FRIENDS

NEWSLETTER 1 April 2018

Charity No 289907

Patron: Lord Burlington



With Spring come new beginnings, and I have first to thank George Nissen, who stepped down as Chairman at the end of last year, for his wisdom and guidance of the Friends since 2001. He has seen us through the time of the Gardens Lottery Project and the creation of the Opera and Dog Show, as well as an increase in Friends numbers from 200 to its present level of over 500.

In my tenure I would like to continue the work of an independent Friends representing the community and supporting the Chiswick House and Gardens Trust, especially to improve access to the House. We welcome two new trustees on board, see back page, and a new editor of this newsletter!

John Armstrong

Chiswick House and Gardens Trust News

Update from Sam Glenister-Batey, CHGT Head of Commercial Activity and Marketing

Camellia Show

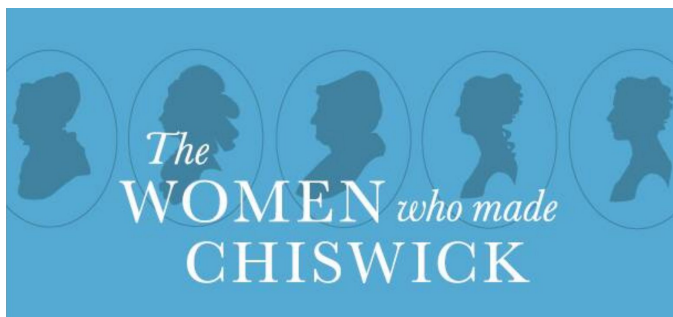
The Camellia Show got off to a great start on 22 February with a private preview for the Friends. Geraldine King, the Trust's Estate Manager and an expert in camellia propagation, introduced Chiswick's rare blooms and their fascinating story. A big thank you to the Friends who generously sponsored the Camellia Show again this year, for which the Trust is very grateful.



Chiswick House – New Opening Times 2018

The House re-opens on Friday 30 March and will be open every day except Tuesdays, from 10am to 5pm until the end of October. On Sundays, a free tour of the House at 2.30pm is included in the admission price. **Please remember that all Friends receive unlimited free entry to the House during season opening** and this year we are pleased to announce that all under 18s go free as well. Occasionally we need to close the House for private events so please check our website for opening times before visiting. We look forward to welcoming you to the House soon!

CHGT Events 2018 - The Women who made Chiswick



This year, to celebrate 100 years since women gained the right to vote, the Trust is hosting a series of events on the theme of "The Women who made Chiswick". This explores the lesser known stories of women who left their mark on Chiswick House and Gardens – aristocratic ladies with money and great social influence, 18th century business women taking on the building trade, and housekeepers ensuring the smooth running of the household.

17 April: The Ladies of Chiswick - Join the House curator Dr Esmé Whittaker for this talk exploring the lives of Lady Burlington and Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and discover how they influenced and used the House and Gardens.

13 May: Embroidery Workshop - Taking inspiration from historical pastimes, this embroidery workshop will lead you through a variety of decorative sewing techniques, completing a hand-stitched design.



16 May: The Working Women of Chiswick - In this talk by Dr Esmé Whittaker, find out about the hard-working women who contributed to life at Chiswick in the 18th and early 19th centuries including a slater, a supplier of artificial stone ornaments, and a housekeeper turned reluctant tour guide.

7-8 July: Georgiana's Breakfast; Garden Party - Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, requests the pleasure of your company for a weekend of music, dancing, food, drink, historical talks, storytelling & fun for all the family at a summer party in the Gardens.

9 September: Pomander Workshop - Join this unique workshop to make a fragranced pomander ball, inspired by the perfumed adornment in historical times.

Other 2018 CHGT Events

21–22 April: National Tea Day Festival

20 May/24 June/15 July/9 September: Kitchen Garden Open Days

31 May: London History Day

28 June–8 July: Giffords Circus

12 July: Lord Chamberlain's Men - The Tempest

15 July: Cameo Workshop

10-12 August: Great British Food Festival

21-24 August: Wind in the Willows - theatre

2 September: Autumn Craft Market

4-6 September: Luna Cinema - Casablanca, The Greatest Showman and Pretty Woman

13 September: Chiswick Book Festival The opening night of the 10th Chiswick Book Festival will be devoted to William Thackeray and *Vanity Fair*, which is being serialised on ITV this autumn. Thackeray went to school in Chiswick and the book's first chapter is set in Chiswick Mall. Tickets will go on sale in July at www.chiswickbookfestival.net

For further details on Trust events see the website below.

Chiswick House and Gardens Trust

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Curator's Spotlight

Caring for Chiswick's Collections in the Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century

by Dr Esmé Whittaker, Curator, Collections & Interiors, English Heritage

Winter is always a busy time for the Collections team in the House and this year we completed a project to upgrade the painting alarm system and also removed three paintings for treatment at the conservation studio. As the Conservators and I carry out this work, it makes me think about how the collections at Chiswick House were cared for in the past. While researching the changes made to Chiswick by the 5th and 6th Dukes of Devonshire in the late 18th and 19th century, I noted down with interest the methods that were used to protect, display and catalogue the collections.

Great efforts were made to protect the collections from being damaged by dust and light. When the extensive building works to add wings to the villa were taking place in the early 1790s, the most valuable paintings were *'taken down, and put up in packing-cases'* until the improvements were finished. Loose cotton case covers were used to protect expensive upholstered furniture and, by 1869, there were also loose linen covers for the painted white silk wall hangings in the Drawing Room. The 5th Duke of Devonshire ordered *'silk for picture curtains'* which were hung from brass rods in the West and East Saloon. The experience of discovering a painting *'screened by a veil'* only added to the enjoyment of one visitor to Chiswick in 1838. The windows were fitted with blinds including, by 1811, *'2 Blinds to the Windows in the Dome'*, and, by 1869, blinds to the skylights.

Despite such efforts, when the director of the Royal Gallery in Berlin, G.F. Waagen, visited Chiswick in 1838, he was critical of both the condition and the position of the paintings. He recorded, among the great number of paintings, *'many good ones, many excellent; but unfortunately they are partly in a bad condition, either from cleaning or from dryness. Several pictures too hang in so unfavourable a light, that no decided opinion can be formed of them'*.

We can only imagine the reaction of the 6th Duke when his house guest (who was there for a 'breakfast') turned critic. To Waagen's great joy, the Duke politely promised to have one of the paintings repaired.

Both the 5th and 6th Dukes of Devonshire knew exactly who to turn to for advice about the paintings. The 5th Duke employed the painter, dealer and picture restorer Benjamin Vandergucht, to clean and repair the pictures at Chiswick. Unfortunately, while returning from one such visit to Chiswick House, his boat was run down and he drowned in the Thames. The 6th Duke used the influential art advisors William and John Seguier. William was made the first keeper of the National Gallery when it was founded in 1824. The household accounts for Chiswick record payments made in the early 1840s to 'Seguier & Co' and 'John Seguier' for cleaning and repairing pictures. They may also have advised the Duke on the arrangement of the collections as they did at Chatsworth. Their employment at Chiswick certainly coincides with the purchasing of picture line and picture rods, as well as picture frames from the leading frame-maker, William Cribb, indicating that an extensive re-hang was underway.



William Seguier by John Jackson, 1830 © The National Gallery, London - reproduced under the Creative Commons license. William, together with his brother John, was the 6th Duke of Devonshire's art advisor and picture restorer.

Such changes to the arrangement of the collections meant that it was difficult to keep the catalogue up to date. As J. Norris Brewer noted in 1816, *'A written catalogue is preserved at Chiswick house; but the situation of many of the pictures is altered since these accounts were drawn up'*. A problem which today I can easily rectify with just a few simple clicks on our collections management database.

Dr Esmé Whittaker will be giving a short talk at this year's Friends AGM on 'The Ambassador of Morocco' portrait by Godfrey Kneller that hangs in the Domed Saloon. The AGM will be held on 4th June at 7pm.

Chiswick House Friends News

New Trustees

We are delighted to announce the appointment of two new Trustees – Jan Preece and Victoria O’Bree, both of whom live in Chiswick. Jan brings many years’ experience as Chair of the Chiswick House Dog Show Organising Committee, and Victoria is an experienced Events Manager. We look forward to working with both of them. One of our existing trustees, Angela Purtil, is the new editor of this newsletter.

Retirement of George Nissan as Chairman



We celebrated George's time as Chairman with a specially commissioned bowl presented above by John Armstrong, new Chairman of the Friends, with Hilary Whalley, Hon Secretary.

Lantern Festival

Some of our members were disappointed at the disruption caused by this year's show, both at the time and afterwards from the damage caused to the lawns. We have made the Trust aware of this and hope that this year's replacement event will be more discreet.

Christmas Carol Event

Our first ever Christmas Carol event was held on Saturday 16 December in front of the House (see below). We were joined by The Addison Singers, who led the carols, and the choir of St. Mary's Primary School, Chiswick, both of whom sang beautifully. A huge thank you to all those who took part and to all who braved the cold (and rain!) to attend. We are planning an even bigger carol event next Christmas!



Chiswick House and Gardens Workshop

We were pleased to be invited by the Trust to take part in a workshop in February to discuss ways of attracting more visitors to the Estate, particularly the House. Only a small number of visitors to the Estate actually visit the House, and more needs to be done to improve this. We discussed different models for better engaging with House visitors including events, tours, education and other types of experiences. The Trust is

considering the output from this session and we look forward to hearing more about the steps it intends to take in due course. We will keep you posted.

Tales from the Riverbank - Spring Update - Richard Sales

Our swan pair have been here all winter and are now nest-building on the picnic area side of the lake. However, the male (cob) is still under three years old and may be too young to be fertile.

The resident pair of Egyptian Geese had a brood of seven goslings on St Valentine's Day. Three were taken within hours, probably by heron, magpie and/or crow. Within a week the remaining four were gone: easy pickings as they were the only young available. Had they survived, they would probably not have coped with the "Beast from the East" two weeks later. The total loss of their young means they will probably have another brood by mid-April.

The eagle-eyed amongst you may have seen that our winter resident Little Grebe/Dabchick has now gone, but our pair of Shovellers are still in residence.

A few of our small 'black headed gulls' have their summer black heads already. They will depart for the Coast to breed in late Spring.

The coots are already nest building on the lake.



The male Resplendent Quetzal (above), a rare visitor to the Gardens, photographed in March.

2018 Friends Events

- 4 June:** Annual General Meeting
- 27 June:** Junior Royal Academy of Music Concert
- 19 July:** Friends Summer Party
- 23 Sept:** CHF Dog Show

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