



CHISWICK HOUSE FRIENDS

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2008

Patron: The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire

Charity No 289907



An all too rare fine evening this summer

This Year's Opera

In June an enthusiastic audience of over 700 enjoyed Donizetti's comic opera, "Don Pasquale", performed on the north lawns in the gardens of Chiswick House. The opera was a sell out several weeks before the performance and raised a record-breaking £17,500 for the Friends. This included generous sponsorships from local businesses and organisations. This evening of opera is the Friends' main fundraising event of the year.

Following the huge success of the past four years' events, plans are now well in hand for the Friends to host a fifth open air summer opera in June 2009.

The audience enjoyed picnicking both before the opera and during the interval, and made the most of the wonderful surroundings. One of the event's main sponsors is local brewers Fuller, Smith & Turner who had a bar pavilion in the grounds for purchases of wine, champagne and beer on the evening.

Next year's opera will again be performed by the Garden Opera Company in the Gardens and will be announced in the New Year. For more information on the Garden Opera Company see their website www.gardenopera.co.uk.

A message from our Chairman

It is exciting to be able to report that, after many years of waiting, work is now well under way in our much loved gardens at Chiswick.

We are delighted to welcome Sarah Finch-Crisp as the new Director, and have asked her and Fiona Crumley, the Head Gardener, to provide details of work progress inside this Newsletter. Sarah will be responsible for getting life organised around the Gardens, and will chair the meetings of the Project Board, which is supervising the three firms of Contractors doing the work.

We have now got used to the temporary cafe by the cricket pavilion —where incidentally the pitch is looking vastly improved. Work is under way on the building of the smart new cafe, as well as on the Conservatory. News from the Trust is that good progress has been made in securing the balance of the matching funds needed to add to the grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Our own opera in July and another Pop concert in the grounds have helped.

The Friends are delighted to have been presented with two copies of very rare old books about camellias by the International Camellia Society who look after the historic collection in the Conservatory.

We are excited that this year is the 500th anniversary of Palladio's birth, & will not go unmarked. The House continues to be a favourite place for weddings during the summer, so much so that events this year were booked not only on every available Saturday but also on a number of Fridays too!

Making the best of the splendid work now under way means spreading the word around that there is a new look to Chiswick gardens, so tell your friends, and encourage them to join us. Membership not only gives you free access to the House, but also keeps you up to date with all the news via this Newsletter - now in colour! - and our website, as well as events we organise in the House. We are here to keep you informed as well as to collect and pass on your views. And thank you for all your support, which is about to produce magnificent results!

George Nissen



This year's opera in June

Dear Friends,

Progress on the Lottery Project

Firstly, I would like to say thank you to so many of you who have given me such a warm welcome to Chiswick House and Gardens. It is an immensely exciting time to be here, both to help steer and witness the restoration of this internationally important garden and to develop its significant potential as a heritage site and much loved public park.

Negotiating the Park

As many readers will be aware the Chiswick House Restoration Project is now well underway with works happening across the park. Fencing, ditches, diggers, hard hats and yellow jackets greet regular visitors at every turn, and the Trust is immensely grateful for their patience in negotiating a plethora of diversions! The refreshment kiosk by the cricket pavilion has attracted a regular trade whilst the new cafe building is constructed and the adjacent lavatories at Staveley Road gates have been brought back into public use.



Dismantling the Camellia House



Camellias protected (left in the picture)

Camellia House Dismantled

Perhaps the most visually dramatic restoration currently underway is that of the Camellia House. Visitors to the Italian Garden can see the complete dismantling of the ruinous glazed structure, including the dome. Every piece of wrought iron has been carefully labelled and transported to Barnsley for specialist restoration. Next year our specialist contractors Walter Lilly & Co will reassemble the jigsaw with new glazing and replacement timber. In the meantime the historic camellia collection has been deliberately exposed to the elements so that it acclimatises prior to winter frosts. The plants are looking exceptionally healthy and are well protected from the construction works.



Contractors cleaning layers of grime off the statuary

Visible restoration

Already there are some early results of the restoration programme. Specialist conservators have removed years of grime from statuary behind the house in preparation for repairing damaged pieces. The Classic Bridge will be similarly cleaned in October and subsequently repaired. Thereafter all the historic garden buildings will be returned to good order.

Forthcoming Tree Works

As well as the tree works identified in the Heritage Lottery Fund project, additional works are required both to prolong the lives of mature and veteran trees and to prevent accidents from falling branches. An independent arboricultural survey has identified a number of urgent tree works that will commence this autumn. These include pollarding the large plane tree in the Camellia Shrubbery, which has a huge cavity where the branches divide from the trunk.



Repairs and access improvements for the Classic Bridge



Relics of 19th century gardening in the back sheds

Volunteers Make the Difference

Under the direction of Head Gardener Fiona Crumley Chiswick Garden's stalwart volunteers, the Goosefoots, continue to battle the brambles, weeds and other unwanted plant life on a weekly basis and the park is noticeably better cared for due to their efforts. Happily the Heritage Lottery Fund project will deliver purpose-designed volunteer accommodation within the service yard which will be a huge improvement on current facilities.

The Trust is committed to expanding the volunteer programme to cover all aspects of volunteering in the house and gardens and there is enormous scope for a wide range of activities. Philip Sarell, a long standing member of Goosefoots has gamely stepped forward to coordinate the volunteer programme and anyone interested in joining is encouraged to contact him via the Trust office at North Lodge (Tel 020 8742 3905 or email via Fiona.Crumley@hounslow.gov.uk - please put "Volunteer enquiry" in the subject line).



Trenching for service pipes and cables in the yard



Landscape contractor UPM Tilhill's base by the Hockey

Garden Secrets

Hidden from view, the back sheds behind the camellia house have been completely cleared of decades of paraphernalia to reveal a fascinating series of rooms complete with evidence of early 19th century root trenches, heating and irrigation systems, drying poles for garden produce and much more. The story of horticulture at Chiswick will be given new life through the interpretation and use of these buildings in the future.

Project Information

The Trust have erected large plans of the restoration works on new signs at every entrance to the park as well as more detailed posters positioned at specific works areas. The excellent exhibition on Chiswick House and Gardens at North Lodge, which was generously supported by The Friends, is also being reproduced for display on the back railings of the Villa. Further information is available on the Trust's web site, www.chgt.org.uk, in particular in the new monthly newsletter slot.



Careful handling of the gate-post masonry



Opening up the rustic arch by the tennis courts

£1 million to go!

The £12.1 million restoration works have been made possible due to the collaborative work of English Heritage and Hounslow Borough Council, a £7.9 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other generous donations. However a public campaign is still underway to raise the last £1 million and if you would like to contribute, please do contact the fundraising team via www.chgt.org.uk - they will be delighted to hear from you.

I look forward to meeting more of the Friends in the coming months. In the meantime — my best wishes.

Sarah Finch-Crisp
 Director
 Chiswick House and Gardens Trust



The Gardens are an informal place!

This year's **Dog Show** will take place on 28th September starting at 10.30am (Staveley Road entrance).

Supported by Chiswick House Friends, CHOW and Hounslow Council, last year's event was judged to have been very successful with an estimated 800 visitors. This year's event promises to be even better with increased numbers of rings and the introduction of new classes such as Best Six Legs. A new Doggy Dash competition will also be making its debut.

The number of organisations supporting the event has also increased, and includes Chiswick Pets, Southfields Grooming, Insider Tart cake-makers, Doggy Days bakery, Labradoodle Rescue, The Dogs Trust, The Cinnamon Trust, Hounslow Animal Warden Service and The Mayhew Animal Home. Capable Canines will once again be organising agility and heelwork to music displays. Rings this year will be sponsored by CJ Hall Veterinary Surgery of Acton Lane, Acton. Fullers Brewery have kindly donated a year's supply of beer for the winner of Best in Show. Refreshments will include a barbecue, and cream teas will also be available throughout the day.

The organisers are appealing for volunteers to help make this year's show even more successful.

For further details go to www.chowgroup.co.uk or www.chf.org.uk. On-line registration for dog classes can be found at www.chowgroup.co.uk.

The ever-popular **Janiculum Concert** on 1st October is already sold out! Jane Clark, a celebrated harpsichord player, founded Janiculum to revive forgotten 18th century manuscripts and editions popular at that time. Instruments used are either originals or modern copies and last year's concert was greatly enjoyed by a capacity audience. Jane will be accompanied by Harry Nicoll (tenor), John Trusler (violin) and Graham Walker (cello).

We hope there will be another concert next year and those who missed out this year will be able to enjoy this wonderful evening.

North Lodge Exhibition

The history of Chiswick House Gardens and events up to date is being shown in North Lodge (by the A4 entrance). The exhibition is open Tuesday and Sunday afternoons until the end of September from 2 to 5pm.

House Opening Times

Sunday to Wednesday and Bank Holidays (House closed Thursday, Friday and Saturday).

21st March - 31st October: 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Project Walks in Chiswick House Gardens

A series of walks to explain what is happening under the Lottery Project: meet at the front of the House on:

21st September at 11.30am and 2.30pm

2nd October at 2:00 pm.

Objections to Heathrow Expansion We have placed our full-page advertisement objecting to Heathrow expansion in Government Today, a 30,000-circulation magazine going to all party conference attendees. Our ad (see below) goes opposite a full-page statement by Ruth Kelly presumably making the case for expansion!

CHISWICK HOUSE FRIENDS SAY NO TO HEATHROW EXPANSION



IF you feel the same way, please make your views known to Rt Hon Ruth Kelly MP or to your Party leader.

www.chf.org.uk
 Friends since 1981

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