



CHISWICK HOUSE FRIENDS

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2013

Charity No 289907

Patron: Lord Burlington



This autumn we can not only look back on another successful year for the House and Gardens, but can also feel excited about what can be achieved in the months ahead. The Camellia festival was once again a widely enjoyed event, as was the Friends Opera, this year with the excellent Focus Opera Company and some good weather as you can see from the image on the back page. The Dog Show is still to come. Both these events rely on the commitment and hard work put in by their entirely volunteer committees. We are especially grateful to Jan Grandison for chairing the Opera committee for the last 3 years. She will be succeeded by Diane Treganowan, whose husband Richard has kindly agreed to take on once again the job of Treasurer of the Friends. Our special thanks are due to James Stitt who has occupied that post most skilfully since 2009.

The Friends say a special good-bye to Sarah Finch-Crisp, who is relinquishing the challenging job of Director of CHG Trust after six years. She has been a brilliant leader, and has achieved a huge amount - for the benefit of us all. We await with eager anticipation plans now being discussed for enhancing the delights of Chiswick House itself. During the winter, the first stage of a renovation of the heating system will be undertaken. We then hope that English Heritage, despite big structural changes in their organisation, will be able to come forward with plans for improvements to the presentation of some of the first floor rooms.

And to end on another positive note, it has now been possible to reinvigorate the Cascade, which gives such a special character to the Lake.

George Nissen

Chiswick House and Gardens Trust News

Trust's First Director Departing



Sarah Finch-Crisp is leaving Chiswick in December after nearly six years in post. Trust Chairman Andrew Fane said, 'Sarah has done a wonderful job for this unique heritage site since she joined us in 2008 as our first director. Following her early chairmanship of the restoration project board she has established a 99-year lease of the gardens from the London Borough of Hounslow and formed an inspiring team to improve and manage the site including its gardens, landscape and buildings. The team manages education, volunteering, community and special events, security and visitor services. Sarah has attracted significant grant funding and overseen the development of sustainable income streams through commercial activities, including a catering and hospitality business, allowing us to invest in the future of this special place. She has worked constructively with all our partners to deliver an organisation which we aspired to in our Heritage Lottery Fund bid of 2005 and the major restoration which concluded in 2010. Looking to the future we hope to announce Sarah's successor before very long.'

Sarah said, 'It has been a privilege to lead the Trust through its first years and a pleasure to work with such enthusiastic, talented and dedicated colleagues and supporters. Amongst these I am particularly grateful to the Friend's marvellous Chairman George Nissen, and all the trustees and members who do so much to promote and protect this extraordinary place. Chiswick House and Gardens are a national treasure and I look forward to seeing them go from strength to strength in the years ahead'.

Progress on the Melon House

One of the projects about which the Trust is currently most excited is the Melon House restoration project which Friends will have read about in their Spring newsletter. Work is progressing well with archaeologists overseeing the excavation of this early 19th Century glasshouse

which stands behind the Conservatory. It appears the building went through various stages of construction and modification in the 19th Century to suit changing horticultural requirements, all of which will be carefully recorded prior to rebuilding.



The Melon House

The Kitchen Garden

Have you seen the Kitchen Garden recently? Our next open day is Sunday 22nd September 11am - 3pm. Community Gardener William Rallison and his team of dedicated volunteers have been busy laying new paths to provide better access for growing, and developing their planting plans on a crop rotation basis. The garden team are also constructing a large new fruit cage and have been harvesting a wide variety of delicious vegetables and fruit. In July sweet peas were a picture, and currently squashes and pumpkins, including the spectacular 'Atlantic Giant', are flourishing.



The Kitchen Garden

Park users have the opportunity to purchase produce and poses of cut flowers off the Kitchen Garden barrow outside the café on most weekdays. The garden continues to provide a wonderful place for school visits, a safe environment for vulnerable groups to learn about growing food and build their confidence, re-acustom to a work place environment or gain valuable work experience.

Restoring the Staveley Rd Side

Important work is also underway in an area of the gardens largely untouched by the major restoration of 2008-10. The Staveley Road end of the gardens, which includes the cricket pavilion and pitch, is receiving long overdue attention following detailed discussions with John Watkins, Head of Parks and Gardens at English Heritage and consultation with the Friends and other users.

Design plans include refurbishing entrance beds and installing a drinking fountain for visitors and dogs, reinstating Lord Burlington's loop path and associated vistas near the cricket pitch perimeter, tree planting and hedge works, disabled access to the cricket pavilion and renovation of the 1930's toilet building. We are immensely grateful to the Friends for the funds they have contributed to this project – both as an organisation and from individual members.

Preliminary works have begun with some felling of unhealthy trees, battered municipal railings removed and entrance beds cleared of aggressive bindweed and some urban style park shrubbery. Straggling hedges around the cricket pitch have been dramatically reduced to encourage new growth, which will soon appear, whilst pruning and scrub removal in the woodland areas is creating dappled shade to allow woodland flora to return.



The Cricket Pavilion

If you would like to find out more about the works taking place in this area please do join Garden Manager Peter Oates for a 'walking talk' on the 2nd Sept at 10.30am, or 3rd Sept at 2pm; meeting at the Cricket Pavilion.

Chiswick House and Gardens Trust

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Spotlight on the Cascade

Now you see it, now you don't – the Cascade has not been entirely reliable. Erected in about 1738 it was one of the later additions to Lord Burlington's garden and probably designed by his friend and protégé, the designer William Kent. A hydraulic system pumped water to the top of the falls but the system kept failing and the cascade earned the unfortunate nickname 'Lord Burlington's Piddle'!



The Cascade Prior to 1990's Restoration

It remained dry until more modern technology was introduced and the whole structure restored in a project championed by Chiswick House Friends and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 1997. The project commemorated the tercentenary of Lord Burlington's birth and the Cascade was officially 'opened' on 25th April 1997 by his descendant the 9th Duke of Devonshire.



1997 - Friends at a preview of the newly restored Cascade

However, operating the Cascade has remained problematic and for much of this year it has been switched off whilst English Heritage has conducted exploratory works. Garden Manager Peter, helped by volunteer Richard Sales, have done their utmost to keep the pumping equipment clear of debris. Equipment issues may not be entirely solved but at the time of writing the Cascade is a handsome torrent once more, and not just a fine sight – the 7ft plunge of water also helps to aerate the lake.

House Heating

Susan Jenkins is the new Director of Curating at English Heritage, and we met her to talk about issues to do with the House. The heating system is the main concern at present, and we learnt that the first floor heating will be replaced this winter with a warm air system venting through the fireplaces. The ground floor heating will be installed next year. We are also waiting to see what effects internal changes at EH will have on operations connected with the House.

Waterfowl Fecund Spring (from Richard Sales)

In our Spring Newsletter we reported on the March hatching of our first ever brood of Egyptian Goslings. Seven hatched, but with a temperature of -2° and no insects or seeds to eat, two died of hypothermia and the remaining five were taken to the Swan Sanctuary at Shepperton, where they remain. The adults mated again shortly after and, using the same nest 60' up a Chestnut Tree, had another brood of which seven have reached flying maturity. Five swan cygnets hatched in May, of which four are almost adult size but not yet flying.



Another first for the Gardens was four broods of tufted ducks (above). Also two nests of Canada Goose goslings, of which five juveniles are flying with four adults in a kindergarten group. Over 70 mallard ducklings hatched, of which at least 40 are still with us (last year none made it to maturity). About 40 coot and eight moor hen chicks hatched.

This has been by far the most successful breeding year ever!

Dog Show

Our annual dog show this year will have over 40 business and charity stalls, a class for every age and type of dog and the usual barbecue and other drinks and goodies to enjoy. The event was rained off last year, but this can't possibly happen a second year running, so do put it in your diary for a super day out in Chiswick House Gardens!

Christmas Cards

As usual, a leaflet is enclosed giving details of our Christmas Card selection for this year.

Opera

In stark contrast to last year, sunny days and high temperatures were predicted for this July, and morale in the CHF opera committee was high. A favourable forecast normally means increased ticket sales and therefore more money raised to support projects in the House and Gardens.

As well as a good forecast, we had formed a new partnership with the dynamic, London-based Focus Opera Company, performing for the first time at Chiswick House.



The opening night was well-attended, and the second night performance of Carmen a complete sell-out. Families and friends made the most of the warm balmy evenings to picnic beforehand. Audience feedback was overwhelmingly positive. One young family blogging after Carmen commented that it was "an English summer at its best". It gives us a tremendous platform from which to build in 2014 and beyond.

It was clear from the first meeting with Focus Opera that the partnership with CHF would be a great fit. Their creative passion for opera and the Friends' commitment to put on a first-class show for its supporters proved to be an effective combination and, we expect, the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship.

Our aim is to provide an outstanding event that matches the prestigious location as well as supporting our fundraising aims for Chiswick House. Here's to next year! We are always on the look out for new Committee members, and volunteers will be welcomed.

CH FRIENDS & CHGT Events 2013

- 22 Sept, 11-3pm, Kitchen Garden Open Day
- 26 Sept, 7pm, House, Janiculum Concert, £10
(celebrating life of composer Stephen Dodgson)
- 29 Sept, CHF Dog Show, Cricket Pitch.

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