



CHISWICK HOUSE FRIENDS

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2006

Patron: the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire

Charity No. 289907



The sphinxes look on as the gardens head towards another winter

It has been a pleasant and busy summer with many people enjoying the beauty and peacefulness of the House and Grounds, and plenty of enjoyable activities taking place as well.

The Lottery project Phase I bid has paused for longer than we had expected. As Martin Clayton for the CH & G Trust explains in an interview reported later in this newsletter, the Lottery Fund have asked that outlines be worked up for the proposed Facilities Building that will be part of Phase II. This has meant widening the brief for the architect considerably, and that has required opening the appointment up to European tendering. This has put everything back by about two months, so that the revised bid will now only be put out for further consultation in November.

Martin's interview mentions many of the changes and responses in the bid to feedback from the public, and especially from you, our members: on the cafe, the Northern Wilderness, the Kitchen Garden and so on. Most of these changes are positive. However, the one area that does still concern us is the proposed new vehicle-way across the existing cafe area. The Trust maintain that this is just "the retention of an historic carriage-way", and that a turning circle for delivery vehicles and disabled parking area will be designated just southeast of the House. We are opposed to any vehicle-way at all across the lawn in front of the new cafe - the temptation for it to be used for traffic at some point in the future may be too great. Anyway, please write and tell us what you think about this - and about any other topic raised in the interview - we still have a few months to put our case to the designers of the bid.

On a sad note for us, Jan Shawe has been offered a place on the Chiswick House and Gardens Trust, and is therefore standing down as a Trustee of the Friends. We would like to thank her for all her hard work on the newsletter, and in promoting & helping organise many of our successful events, and wish her well with the Trust. Our loss is their gain.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, Adrian Cook has written about the history of the Walled Garden, and Janie Burford of our Advisory Panel has written a position paper - "Balancing Restoration, Ecology and Amenity" - which we have sent formally to the Trust.

¹ The "historic carriage-way" - Old Burlington Lane - was the perimeter road when the park was smaller. When the park was enlarged and a new perimeter road built - the present Drive - the need for the original route completely disappeared, and there has been no vehicle-way across the site of the cafe for as long as anyone can remember.

Recent Events

Significant improvements have been made to the Obelisk and surrounding area (including seriously needed drainage) by the Burlington Lane Gate. Two beautiful Sphinxes were re-instated in front of the House and the Camellia Shrubbery has been cleared and re-planted.

Hounslow's CIP ecologists organised two interesting and popular Bat Walks on dark nights in July and August. The gardens are one of the best areas for bats in west London and provide a safe and obviously comfortable habitat for these furry creatures. Forty people attended and were very enthusiastic about the experience.

The Kitchen Garden Association had a busy summer and early autumn; they grew beautiful produce and flowers and held some very well attended Open Days. BBC TV Gardeners' World came to film for transmission in Spring 2007. The KGA is one of the 63 community groups across the country to be given a share of £1m worth of Lottery Money as part of the Breathing Places grants scheme. A £4,500 award has been made to help transform a derelict shade tunnel into a green space. The removal of the shade tunnel will open up space for 2 more beds to be cultivated. There has also been considerable interest in the history of the Kitchen Garden, and Adrian Cook has written on it below. Mail: info@kitchengarden.org.uk

The **Goosefoot Volunteers** received a huge accolade in an article by William Douglas in November's Westside Magazine (p36) in which he writes "Those of us who use and enjoy Chiswick House owe the Goosefoot Volunteers a huge debt. He also praises "the modest mastermind behind the Goosefoot Volunteers - Adrian Cook, development manager of Chiswick House and Grounds who credits the Friends' support, and makes particular mention of Richard Sales' contribution to the Lake, Jane Callender's to the Camellias, Colin Heath's to the Lions and Staveley Road entrance and Pam Bater's to historical research. Mail: adrian.cook@hounslow.gov.uk



The Friends held three events over the summer, including the highly successful opera **Così fan tutte**, performed by the Garden Opera Company (picture above). It brought in over 600 people on the night; the weather was thankfully clement and a lot of enthusiastic picnickers turned up with hampers and rugs. Our annual **drinks party** in September was also well attended. Later that month we held our second **Dog Show**. 149 dogs were registered totalling 350 entries in all vying to be the Dog with the Waggiest Tail, the Best Veteran (7 years plus), the Best Youngster (under

2 years), the Prettiest Bitch, the Handsomest Dog, the Best Rescue Dog, the Dog Most Like Owner and the Best in Show. The overall winner was Hyphen, an enchanting daschund pup, who stole the show. Our thanks to all volunteers, and to **Fullers** and **LB Hounslow** for sponsorship.

Cricket Pitch - we have co-sponsored with Hounslow a professional report on the state of the cricket pitch. This makes sad reading - "in poor condition" - and we want to work with LBH and the Trust to improve things. www.chiswickandlatymer.org

Toddlers' playground - the Friends and LBH have jointly signed a contract for a £15,000 grant from the environmental charity VEOLIA. Together with money raised for the Friends by Amy Barclay, LBH are now able to go ahead with the final modelling by the Trust's architects for planning approval.

Email addresses - we are delighted with the response to our request for email addresses to help us to circulate information in a more timely manner, and now have well over 300 email addresses for our total membership of nearly 500. **If you have not yet replied or if you have changed your email address recently please mail Halcyon Palmer at rpalmer@btinternet.com**

Christmas Cards Chiswick House and Grounds Christmas cards are on offer now (order form in this newsletter and on our website). All proceeds will be re-invested in the House and Gardens.

The Walled Gardens of Chiswick House - *Adrian Cook*

The walled gardens of Chiswick House have seen many changes and developments since the 17th Century. What we now think of as the walled gardens of Chiswick House were, for the first 130 years of their existence, part of the formal walled gardens of the neighbouring property of Moreton Hall. The kitchen gardens of Lord Burlington's Chiswick House were located in what is now the Hockey Field. Moreton Hall (located approximately where the sundial now stands) and its gardens were created in 1683 by Sir Stephen Fox, described as "the richest commoner in three kingdoms". The gardens were noted for their fine horticulture and were admired by King William III. Fox's gardens consisted of a number of walled compartments, beginning with a highly formal "First Garden and Terrace" immediately to the rear (north) of the house, laid out with clipped evergreens and parterres. The view from the house across this garden was terminated at its northern end with the grand gates that still stand behind the conservatory. These lead to what is now called the 'Southern Walled Garden' or "Kitchen Garden", but this was originally a walled compartment called the "Grove Walk and Wilderness", a semi-formal "wilderness" of trees. To the east of these two compartments were two or three further walled compartments containing the productive gardens; the "Kitching Garden", and the "Angles" with south-facing walls for fruit trees. Fox's layout

was similar to other Thames-side gardens of the period, as can still be seen at Ham House.

The 6th Duke of Devonshire bought Moreton Hall in 1812 and added it to his Chiswick House gardens. Several changes had been made to Fox's original gardens by this time. The "First Garden" and "Kitching Garden" had been joined together and laid to grass and informal parkland. It was in this area that the Duke laid out the Italian Garden, Conservatory and shrubbery. The "Grove Walk and Wilderness" had become the Kitchen Garden, with the "Angles" alongside virtually unchanged, and presumably still used for fruit-growing. And an additional compartment had been added to the north, described as a "paddock" (now known as the "Northern Walled Garden", located south of the public car park). This northern area appears to have been added to the gardens between Fox's death in 1716 and 1743, most probably during the ownership of the Earl of Wilmington. The Duke added these three areas to his existing walled gardens on the Hockey Field to create a large area of productive gardens, laid out with fruit trees lining the paths.

The walled gardens were still broadly in this form when the park came into public ownership in 1929. During the 1939-1945 war "Dig for Victory" allotments were dug in the Hockey Field, but it was converted to informal sports use shortly afterwards. The original area of the "Angles" now incorporates the Stable yard and the gardens of Paxton and Kent Houses. The remaining southern and northern areas retained a few fruit trees and vestigial productive use into the 1960's, when the Beatles filmed there. During the 1970's and 1980's they were adopted for use as a council nursery. When this use ended in the late 1990's, nursery tree stock was left in place, and still stands in rows. The area furthest south was kept clear for depot and storage use, and part of this area has been cultivated by the Kitchen Garden Association since 2005.

Extracts from an interview with Martin Clayton, Project Director on the CH & G Regeneration Project.

CHF: What is now the timing for submitting the Stage 2 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund?

Martin: We are now working towards a submission date of early 2007 and will be in a better position to assess the timing more accurately following the appointment of the architect later this month.

In response to our Stage 1 submission, the HLF asked us to work up detailed designs for the cafe and some early outline visuals for a potential new Phase II facilities building. So we need to appoint an architect for both new build elements, which has added to our timescales. The HLF is supportive of our efforts to make sure the proposals are absolutely right, and have shown some flexibility in terms of deadlines.

We advertised the architect position earlier this year and identified a short-list of seven potential candidates. We are interviewing these and will make an appointment soon.

The additional time we have taken to ensure the brief was right for this appointment has impacted on the timescale of our HLF Stage 2 submission as the cafe is an essential element of this.

We plan to publicise developed plans in November through new project information boards displayed in the Chiswick Town Hall, Chiswick Library and in the cafe. We will also hold a public meeting in November.

Final proposals need to balance a number of aspects including historic, natural, community and sustainability considerations. We will provide explanatory information on the website for each of the Gardens character areas.

CHF: Within the overall context of the bid, will there be a specific emphasis on Peace and Tranquillity? Will the Trust commit to maintaining it as far as possible?

Martin: Since the beginning of the project we have realised the importance of Chiswick House & Gardens as an "oasis" and a "place of calm", and this has guided our vision for the site and our plans. "Peace and Tranquillity" in the gardens is something we have aimed for throughout.

CHF: I'll touch on some of the specific questions we sent to the Trust. Will the Friends' recommendations for the Northern Wilderness be implemented?

Martin: We know that the Friends, and other community groups we have consulted, like the natural woodland character of the Northern Wilderness, and we want to protect this. This has guided us in our plans, and we are treating this area with a light touch, seeking to improve its current essential historic character and natural habitat. There is much we can do to improve the ecology/biodiversity, which is currently quite poor. The bats' colonies are an important feature here and our plans respect their habitats.

We want to avoid adding any unnecessary new roads or pathways to the existing garden layout and this should help to retain the site's "peace and tranquillity", as well as the freedom and safety of movement for users. We are taking particular care to ensure that all central areas are kept road-free. Proposals anticipate that small parks vehicles carrying out essential soft landscape maintenance work will primarily use existing perimeter garden paths to access all areas of the gardens. These paths need to be of a sufficiently robust design to minimise wear and tear and ongoing repair costs, and include the path to the rear of the Northern Wilderness.

CHF: Will waterfowl like ducks and geese be affected detrimentally by your plans to reduce the amount of fencing around the lake?

Martin: We are taking advice on this matter through the ecological impact assessment. Waterfowl are robust creatures and quite used to dogs and people without the perceived benefit of fencing. However, there are a number of compensatory improvements planned around the lake including improving the two overgrown islands - one near the Park Road entrance and the other in the southern pool near the main Burlington Lane entrance, and these should provide additional cover.

CHF: There has been a lot of discussion about access, vehicular ways and traffic. Would you comment on these and particularly the recommendation that there should be no vehicular way across the site of the existing cafe?

Martin: We totally agree that we need to maintain the core centre of the gardens as a peaceful and safe place for all visitors. As such we will not be introducing any new roads. Currently there is a vehicular-way which runs in front of the existing cafe; this has been extended over time to become a wide pavement to accommodate cafe patrons. This track follows the historically important Old Burlington Lane, which used to serve the House. The Lane's historic alignment has been interrupted in the area of the existing cafe and our intention is to redress this as part of the project. This also offers re-landscaping opportunities in the current hard paved areas.

While wanting to retain and improve this important historic carriage-way we need to provide the safest thoroughfare for pedestrians and park users. So we have designated an area southeast of the House to provide for vehicular turning, deliveries and disabled parking.

CHF: What is now the plan for the use of the northern walled garden?

Martin: As discussed and evolved during the consultation process, the northern walled garden (which is currently derelict and unused) will be developed to provide a useful site for a number of community activities such as craft markets and plant fairs, and will also be used on occasions for parking to support hospitality events. From our consultations (and those of the Chiswick House Friends) it appears that people are generally happy with this solution, though it is also very clear that people do not want this site to become a permanent car-park.

CHF: There has also been a lot of discussion about the southern walled garden. What is the current situation and what are your plans for it?

Martin: The southern walled garden will be used in the main for horticultural use under the control of the Head Gardener.

The Kitchen Garden Association has done some excellent pioneering work in the southern walled Garden over the past year or more in engaging school children and other volunteer kitchen gardeners in producing wonderful vegetables, plants and flowers. We are very happy with the results that the KGA have achieved, and are keen to see this initiative continue as part of the use of this space.

The Head Gardener will also require space for horticultural use associated with the management of the gardens.

A further area [about a quarter] will be laid to lawn, to provide a flexible area that could respond to a variety of potential uses including occasional events.

CHF: What are the current plans for the cafe? Will you implement the recommendations of our members in their response to the design and use of the cafe?

Martin: Yes - we found the members' recommendations very helpful, and we are making full use of them as we

develop plans for a new cafe. Some of the recommendations are informing designs and others will inform the catering offer. The cafe consultation feedback forms part of the briefing to both.

CHF: Are you now committed to a self-policing approach to dog walking?

Martin: We have listened carefully to the views of dog owners and to the many other users and potential users; the Trust are acutely aware that the Gardens must respond to a wide range of visitors as part of a sustainable future.

Responding to feedback from consultations, we are looking at developing a "code of conduct" for all users of the Gardens, and within it a self-policing approach to dog walking. There are certain times of the year when dogs off the lead may cause damage or nuisance - for example, when birds are nesting; when planting has taken place; when cricket is being played on the green; when families are picnicking at holiday times in the summer months.

We believe that this approach can work well with the understanding and support of the dog-owning fraternity, and offers a number of associated benefits and opportunities for the Trust.

CHF: Has the Head Gardener been appointed?

Martin: The position of Head Gardener has been advertised, applications received and short-listed applicants interviewed. Two very good candidates have emerged as being suitable and from which an appointment will be made following a final interview. We hope the successful candidate will take up the post at the end of this year.

CHF: Finally, what are the prospects for improving the quality of the cricket pitch and supporting areas such as the Pavilion and nets?

Martin: The cricket area comes outside of the HLF bid. However we are very aware of the important role that cricket has to many who use the grounds, and are working through ideas for attracting funding for the sustained improvement of these facilities.

Forward Calendar:

November 5th (Sunday) 1 - 4pm and December 3rd (Sunday): Kitchen Garden "drop-in sessions".

25th November (Saturday) 9.30am - 4.30 pm: Chiswick House and Gardens Conference 2006 (leaflet enclosed).

December 10th at 4pm: It is hoped to have carols, mince pies and roast chestnuts in the Conservatory - to be confirmed on our website.

Published by the Chiswick House Friends

55 Park Road, London W4 3EY

secretary@chfriends.org.uk

www.chfriends.org.uk

Balancing Restoration, Ecology and Amenity

Introduction

In the current masterplan for Chiswick House and Grounds there is little reference to the natural ecology of the site and its proposed management and protection.

This is in contrast to the earlier aborted masterplan (1987 Hounslow BC with English Heritage), which contained a section on “Wildlife Objectives” and identified large areas of the grounds west of the “River” for specific wildlife management.

It is good news therefore that an Ecology Impact Assessment or similar study may be in hand under the auspices of the Trust, and it is hoped that the principles outlined in this paper will be taken into account.

Nationally the pressure upon, and threatened existence of, many surviving sites of “wildlife in natural habitat” interest within urban areas causes growing concern. There is therefore an urgent land-management responsibility to protect and conserve these sites wherever they may be, not excluding within Grade I historic landscapes and gardens.

Extending the site management perspective long into the future is imperative if sustainability is to be achieved and maintained for posterity. The projected impact of climate change, perhaps sooner than currently envisaged, is a key factor in planning the conservation of both the historic grounds and the site ecology.

Guiding Principles

In seeking to balance restoration, ecology and amenity some definitions may be helpful.

By restoration, we mean the fulfilment of the historical aspects of the masterplan - putting back in place the aspects of the Burlington design that are critical to the overall presentation of Chiswick. By ecology, we mean the preservation and enhancement of those features of the animal and plant environment that are appropriate to this English garden. By amenity, we mean those features and activities within the site that appeal to visitors and enhance their peaceful enjoyment and learning. We include within amenity the need to generate revenue, so that the site can flourish and be properly maintained.

We believe that to achieve this balance, three principles are paramount - diversity of use, sustainability and education.

1. Diversity of Use

There should be a pluralist rather than a sole interest approach: few or no areas should have a sole function or attraction. For example: the northern kitchen garden should be an attractive orchard as well as providing informal car-parking; the Northern Wilderness should encourage wildlife as well as being an area to wander in; the cricket pitch should be shared by cricketers and dog-walkers, except at times dictated by common sense.

This may seem obvious, but we have seen many cases where a sole-interest concern has shut out the reasonable and heartfelt interests of others.



Trees like this Swamp Cypress are part of the glory of the gardens at Chiswick

2. Sustainability

Planning should be based on a perspective of say 50-100 years (renewable) to ensure a sustainable future for the site, taking into account the following aspects:

- higher temperatures and longer, drier summers
- water availability, conservation, use and management (borehole investigations, need for irrigation)
- tree canopy, canopy profile management for shade and protection of natural ecology, lawn areas, planting etc
- associated environmental issues (eg recycling, wood and waste management)
- sustainable levels of revenue as being essential for this goal.



3. Education (formal and informal)

Developing a successful education programme with and for the local and wider community is essential to developing the perspectives that will underlie the proper balance of restoration, ecology and amenity, as is amply evident at other similar, independent visitor attractions. These can be:



- formal; working with schools and colleges (state or private) in term time
- organised holiday activities and themed (CH context) children's parties can be very popular and profitable
- drama, music, dance workshop activities for 12 - 15yr olds is a much-needed area to explore for school holidays.

Public understanding and enjoyment of the restored grounds can depend upon how the history of the estate is presented. Discreet, informal "animations" of Chiswick's colourful historical figures and stories, walking the grounds, in costume, and storytelling, or re-enacting can surprise and delight - and educate - in an easy and entertaining way.

Underlying the education principle is the need for a good programme of lectures (on and off site), seminars and presentations, all of which would fall well within the scope of enthusiastic, willing and knowledgeable volunteers - who can be invaluable in looking after visitors.

Motivation

Chiswick House and its gardens have long encouraged a strong sense of pride and ownership locally, and this is one of its greatest strengths, even with the inevitable sense of unassailable rights this can foster, together with sometimes less appropriate uses of the gardens that can become "established" over a long period, hand in hand with pockets of opposition to any kind of change.

Proposals for wildlife conservation and a lively education programme for all, but particularly children, are practically guaranteed to stimulate community interest and attract support and voluntary participation, particularly if these subjects are seen to be given as high a priority as restoration.

Conclusion

There is an opportunity, through the explicit and even-handed balancing of restoration, ecology and amenity, underpinned by the principles we have outlined, to raise the tone of the debate about the future of Chiswick House. If the project is seen to adopt such a fair, open, public policy - negotiating the inevitable small areas of compromise between these equal priorities - then a clear vision, widely understood, and a spirit of enthusiastic cooperation would be achieved.

Janie Burford
CH Friends Advisory Panel