



Croome Chronicle



Volunteer Survey Results 2012

The annual survey of volunteers across the entire portfolio of the National Trust is regarded as an extremely important indicator of how the Trust is operating as a whole, at regional level and at individual properties.

In 2011 Croome had 132 responses from a volunteer base of about 230. In 2012 we had only 70 responses from an increased volunteer base of 250, that's about 28% of us. What is the view of the other 72%?

Of the 70 responses, 47 were Room Guides, 9 Garden Stewards/Gardeners, 2 Retail, 8 Visitor Services/Events, 2 Admin, one Speaker and one Other.

Why has the level of volunteers responding fallen so drastically? Were we poorly informed as to the importance the Trust places on these figures? Were we apathetic? Or are things humming along so well we felt no need to take part?

On the positive side by combining the 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' responses 96% of responders stated they would recommend volunteering. The enjoyment volunteers get out of their roles came in at 95%. Organisation and Management appear not to have come out of it too well with 52% placing their view in the 'neutral' to 'strongly disagree' boxes, but any organisation which realises the growth which Croome has, from a standing start with no administrative

structure in place, will take a while to settle. Leadership also exposed a 47% response in the lower half of the scale.

Communication, which all volunteers must surely agree has improved in leaps and bounds since 2009, received an impressive 75% of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' responses.

Happily Croome did well against the regional and national levels. Where the National Trust was targeting a general 64% in the 'strongly agree' to recommend driver, Croome scored 66% (against 67% in 2011).

One senses disenchantment in some quarters of the Volunteer body. The Christmas lunch and supper were not at all well supported; we have struggled to find enough volunteers to open the house over the Christmas and New Year period; the January Croome-a-Doodle was very poorly attended and this month only 41 turned up on Tuesday evening. And despite asking for feedback about the Croome Chronicle we have had no more than eight responses from volunteers in three years.

It is to be hoped that the Voice will boom with positivity and will assist in the cohesion of all threads of the Croome community. Croome is an exciting place to be working and we are extremely lucky to be involved in its development. And, please, next October, fill in the 2013 survey and have your views counted.

Amy Forster recently welcomed Clare Balding to Croome to record an episode of Radio 4's 'Ramblings' in the company of Toyah Wilcox. In 2011, Toyah named the walk from the London Arch to the Park Seat as one of her favourites and her 'ramble' with Clare goes out at 3pm on Thursday February 28th.

COVENTRY COAT OF ARMS by Sylvie Partridge

It was such a simple question "what do the crescents on the Coventry coat of arms stand for?" but sadly I did not know the answer. Determined to find out I turned to the fascinating world of heraldic imagery and immediately became hooked by the quaint charm of all that it represents.

In days gone by before the advent of media advertising, Facebook, Linkup, Twitter and the like the way you told the world about yourself, your wealth and your status in life was by the use of an heraldic coat of arms. The symbols used to have many meanings. The colours and furs make important statements too and as one rose through society, additions could be made to the original heraldic design to reflect your change in status.

In the past, coats of arms were essentially a form of pictorial shorthand telling those able to interpret the symbolism much about the owner and where he sat in society. For example the crescents on the Coventry coat of arms could be interpreted as the sign of a second son, one who held hope of glory, one who has been honoured by the sovereign or one who has been enlightened. Similarly the cockerel in heraldic terms stands equally for courage, perseverance, an able man in politics and more besides.

It is understood that the original Coventry coat of arms was designed for Thomas Coventry (subsequently knighted in 1606) who was indeed a second son and also a lawyer. The chosen motto 'Candide Et Constanter' meaning "Constant and True" reflected the legal background of the family. The use of the Coventry heraldic design was ratified in 1602 by Clarenceux, King of Arms to Queen Elizabeth I, on the basis that the Coventry family had established a right to them due to their long usage. I believe the coronet in the coat of arms as we see it today was added later after the 5th Baron became the 1st Earl of Coventry.

Because the symbols used in heraldic designs can hold a number of meanings it is possible to interpret the Coventry coat of arms in more than one way so I have set out my personal view based on what is known of Thomas Coventry the Elder who ended his political career as a Justice of the Court of Common Pleas in the reign of James I.



Symbols

Red Cockerel = Able man in politics

Red / Gold Wheat Sheaf = Secure hopes for the future, generosity of spirit, elevation of the mind, valour and energy

White Eagles with open wings = Protector, man of action, occupied in high weighty affairs, lofty (elevated) spirit, clever

Quick to understand and wise when dealing with difficult situations

Crescents = Second son, one who has been honoured by the sovereign

Colours

Red (Gules) Ardent love towards God and one's neighbour, valour and energy

Yellow or Gold (Or) Generosity and elevation of the mind

White (Argent) Peace and sincerity

Black (Sable) Constancy

Green (Vert) Hope, joy and loyalty in love

Fur

Ermine Mark of dignity

TAKING A BET ON CROOME

Croome Volunteers Fundraising Group is hosting a Casino Evening at the RAF Visitor Centre at 7.30 on Friday 19 April. Ticket price is £15.00 and includes 20,000 'Croomes' (play money) and a light supper. Money raised will buy items for the Dining Room fireplace - a fender and fireside equipment. So come, one and all, we need to raise about £700.

Telephone 01905 371006 or email croomepark@nationaltrust.org.uk

GARDEN AND PARK UPDATE by Katherine Alker

There are many things to look forward to this year in the garden and park – including, we hope, some drier sunnier weather (fingers crossed!) Tree and hedge planting in the parkland, and weeding, pruning and planting in the garden will continue, as well as garden tours and activities.

This year there are also several larger projects planned; the replacement for the 1970s Black Bridge should be in place by Easter. The contractors are now working offsite on the new bridge, and work at Croome will start in a few weeks. The new location will be to the east of current bridge, so that the views of the lake from the Dry Arch are as Brown designed.

We have been fortunate to have been given a generous donation to build a Bird Hide; located in Church Shrubbery, it is now open and we hope that visitors will spend some quiet time there spotting green and great spotted woodpeckers, blue and great tits, wrens, and many more.

There will also be work to replace the Chinese Bridge this year, as out of the blue we have been given a substantial donation specifically for this bridge by Monument 85. At this point we have early designs and costs, but much more detailed work including archaeological investigation and structural surveys of original footings is still needed. Replacement of this bridge will have a dramatic impact on views around the parkland and from the court. Watch this space!

Now that we are in a new agreement with Natural England for the farm land at Croome, this has opened up funding opportunities for some building works in the parkland. We have been given a grant to repair the ha-ha

around the Rotunda, including the steps into South Park, and a grant to continue with some ha ha repair work along Church Hill / Evergreen Shrubbery. We anticipate that work will start in the Spring.

As you will have noticed, the front gates into the car park are in poor shape since a coach drove into them in 2012. I have been finding out from Dennis Williams – RAF Defford expert – what would have been there in the 1940s. Our new gates will be metal and set a bit further back from the road near the original picket post location, which will also hopefully prevent the queuing that sometimes occurs on the road.



There are still four Eye-catcher open days to come. Visitors have been really keen to see inside Dunstall Castle and Panorama Tower. There was a queue throughout the day to climb to narrow spiral staircase at Dunstall, and everyone who made it up the top enjoyed the views. The climb to the balcony at Panorama Tower is easier, but the views equally dramatic. Thanks to

volunteers who are helping with these open days.

Relief for Garden Stewards, visitors, Garden and Park team and others will come in later in 2013 in the form of a toilet in the garden!! The raffle proceeds for 2013 will be put towards a composting toilet to be located somewhere near the C18th latrine site, behind the Temple Greenhouse.

As ever, all of this could not be done without the dedication of so many volunteers. Thanks to everyone involved with working in the garden and park throughout the year. I do appreciate it!

The National Trust is pleased with the results of the survey but does it always represent the true feeling of the average volunteer? We ask why only 70 volunteers completed the survey out of about 240 volunteers at Croome. What was the opinion of the other 170 - the silent majority? Do you feel you have an opportunity to have your say? Do you feel there is enough feedback after events have taken place? Do you feel providing feed back has any positive benefits? Are you listened to? We'd like to know whether you completed a survey, or not, and your reasons. Is it the best way to gauge the general feeling?

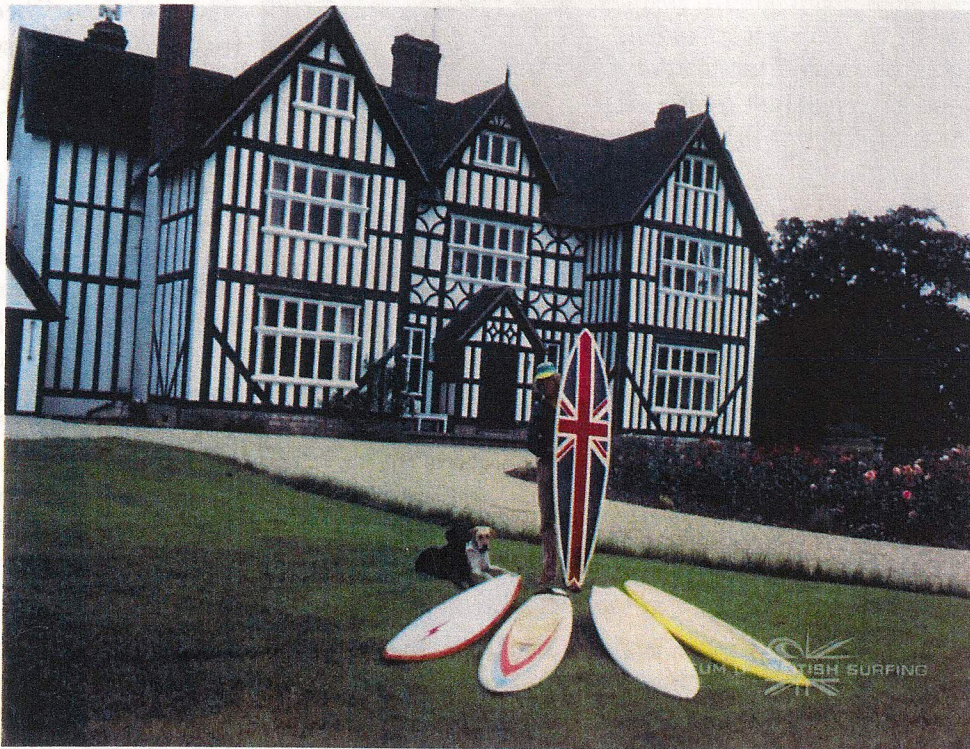
LORD ON A BOARD

by Don Neil

Croome's very own Googlemeister, Don Neil, happened upon the Museum of British Surfing website.

“Viscount Ted Deerhurst, the only son of the 11th Earl of Coventry, became Europe’s first professional surfer in 1978, joining the new ISP world circuit. He made the semi finals in his first contest in Hawaii in 10 – 12 foot surf at Sunset Beach, beating the likes of Cheyne Horan on the way. Ted died in Hawaii in October 1997 after suffering an epileptic fit at his home.

In the weeks before his untimely death, Ted was regularly out surfing with his Hawaiian friends on the north shore of Oahu riding waves in the 20 to 30 foot range without any fanfare. The young Viscount was an incredibly passionate and well-liked surfer. He didn’t trade off his aristocratic background, instead paying his own way to surf around the world bringing happiness and inspiration to others – especially through his Excalibur Trust.



The Museum of British Surfing has been supported by the Coventry family since we first started up in 2003, and we are proud to have Ted’s personal North Shore Lightning Bolt surfboard shaped by Tom Parrish as part of our collection.”

Attention was drawn by the Birmingham Post early last year to Roger Mansfield's book 'The Surfing Tribe', where Lord Ted (as he was known) was revealed as a significant figure in his time. The only son of the 11th Earl and his American wife Mimi, he spent several years after their divorce enjoying the free and easy lifestyle of southern California before being brought back to the UK by his father and, as the Birmingham Post put it ‘given a haircut and packed off to boarding school.’

By all accounts a shy, quiet young man, he spent his adult life following the surf in Australia, California and Hawaii. Competitions, featuring in surf films and running various surf-related businesses filled his life, as well as the Excalibur Trust which he set up to enable handicapped and underprivileged children to take up surfing. His obituary in the Guardian noted that he was the only surfer who read history between heats (his idol was Winston Churchill). In true surfer tradition, his ashes were scattered at sea, off Sunset Beach.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE PARK by Alexis Robinson

A new initiative by the National Trust to monitor archaeology and heritage (Heritage and Archaeology Rangers Team), has recently been introduced.

At Croome we are working from a database that was established in about 1997. Volunteers will verify the locations of archaeological features, appraise their current state and take note if any feature is under threat from natural or human interference. The monitoring of such features is planned to take place annually and will result in an accurate and up-to-date database.

If you think spotting an archaeological feature should be pretty easy—can you identify what Ken Rogers is pointing to?



A WALK IN THE PARK by Martin Wright

The weather was superb with the sun beaming down from a clear blue sky and the temperature was well up into the twenties. Yes, I am talking about 2012. Nineteen intrepid explorers gathered at Reception. Our destination: the Panorama Tower. We set off through the Wild Walk (I pointed out the vista through the shrubbery - Hopcraft 1810 compared to Snape 1796), passed behind the Temple Greenhouse ('you can see the bothy, where the windows were originally stored for the summer months') and saw, in the distance, Pirton Castle and the focus of our trip, the Panorama Tower.

We crossed two arable fields, admiring the treeline, passed through High Green, saw the former Coventry Arms, the carpenters' yard where the archive was stored and what was once head gardener William Dean's house.

Our route took us over the M5. We looked at Worcester Lodge and imagined the carriage ride to the Court - so different from today's traffic speeding along the motorway. And then our goal, up on a hill, the Panorama Tower.

The key to the Tower is large and elaborate ... adding to the sense of occasion. The group were entranced by the amazing views.



Forty minutes later we started to make our way back down the hill. Retracing our steps through High Green, we had a view of the wetlands, which act as a natural filter to improve the quality of the water entering the lake and river, and which attract a wide variety of birds. Ahead of us lay the site of the iron bridge, destroyed by a motorway contractor's lorry. Only one buttress is remaining, but my picture showed the visitors what had been there, and I pointed out the Arboretum, explaining that the flower garden beyond used to provide cut flowers for the house. Three hours after setting off, the weary but happy walkers returned. A worthwhile event, which I look forward to repeating, weather permitting.

ONCE UPON A CROOME STORYBOARD by Richard Higgs

With all of the funding now in place Croome Redefined has kicked off with a project with one of our key partners, the University of Worcester. Croome Redefined is not just about what we are doing but also how we do it. Developing volunteering, engaging with the local community and working in partnership will become the norm and this project is the start of much more to come.

The Storyboard is the place where we will tell visitors, staff and volunteers about the project. It will be the "go to" place to find out all about Croome Redefined, a place to give feedback and to find out how to get involved. It will have a physical presence at the property and also a virtual presence, perhaps as a website or using other applications. Design students at the University were looking for a Pressure Project where they get a brief on Thursday morning and then give a "Dragons Den" style presentation on Friday afternoon with their proposal, hence the name Pressure Project. We gave the students our Storyboard to design as their brief. The student teams of 5 worked extremely hard and the ideas that Stewart Flisher (Croome volunteer) and I saw in the "Den" were creative, exciting, with some ideas we would never have thought of. We are now working with a small group of the students to develop and refine their ideas and get the Storyboard up and running this Spring. The presentations were filmed so we plan to share these with everyone at Croome soon.

A COVENTRY AT WAR — THE JAMESON RAID 1895

by Ken Rogers

The Jameson Raid was a botched raid in what we now know as the Republic of South Africa. Major Honourable Charles John Coventry, the second son of the 9th Earl, led a company of the 3rd Battalion of the Worcester Regiment. At the time of the raid Charles Coventry was second in command of the Bechuanaland Border Police.

South Africa at that time was split into four regions: Cape Colony and Natal governed by the English, Transvaal and the Orange Free State governed by the Boers. The purpose of the raid, led by Leander Jameson, into Boer territory was to support an uprising by the British expatriate workers (known as Uitlanders) in the Transvaal. The Jameson Army would come in to help the Uitlanders then take control of the province which included the lucrative gold mines. The uprising failed to happen but the raid went ahead anyway and was an important precursor for the Second Boer War.

Jameson, with 600 men at his disposal, sent a telegraph stating his intentions to Cecil Rhodes (then Prime Minister of the Cape Colony) that unless he heard to the contrary the raid would go ahead. Joseph Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary, though sympathetic to the cause, heard about the proposed raid and stated that he would stop it. He feared for his own political position - so he made arrangements to stop any support to the Jameson Army from the Uitlanders. As Jameson became extremely frustrated at delays he decided to carry out the raid. As soon as his men crossed the border into Boer territory, they came under heavy fire from the Boer Army. The attack culminated at Doornkop, about 25 miles from Johannesburg where the survivors (possibly over 30 of Jameson's men were killed) were arrested and imprisoned. They were eventually transported back to England where Jameson, Charles Coventry and other senior officers were tried and found guilty of treason. Charles was sentenced to five months imprisonment but only served a short time when he was released due to ill health.

During this time it was thought that Charles was killed in action, and a memorial service was organised at Croome by his grieving parents. Just hours before the service a telegraph was received stating that he was alive. Very quickly the memorial service was turned into celebration service.

It is also worth noting that Charles Coventry was selected for the English Cricket team tour to South Africa in 1888-89 in one of the first international test matches. Batting at number 10 he scored 12 and 1 in each innings.



JAMESON'S LAST STAND—THE BATTLE OF DOORNKOP, 2nd JANUARY 1896.

Painting by R. Caton Woodville.

THE IRON BRIDGE OF CROOME by Sue Coleman

The many visitors to Croome Park pass through Reception and are invariably drawn left along the Wild Walk towards Church Hill. More often than not, those who turn right are bound for the play area. If you do follow the path northwards, it peters out above the road to High Green.



But up until the early 1960s when the local stretch of the M5 was under construction, this route continued across an impressive iron bridge displaying the Coventry Coat of Arms on each side, through the Arboretum and Flower Garden and across to the Court. It had been the favoured route for the 9th Earl and members of the household to take to visit Pirton Court, owned by the Coventry family from 1690 to 1983 and once the home of Lord Deerpur.

In the early 1900s it was widely known as The Iron Bridge and was a prestigious feature of the estate. Spetchley Estate had one too, still

visible above the A422 Worcester to Stratford road. Cast iron was widely and attractively used for ornate fireplaces, and iron bridges on country estates were popular in the Regency period.

Croome's was a cast iron footbridge; brick piers to each side had decorative caps and records indicate there was a gate at each end which would be shut on hunting days.

When A Monk & Son were contracted to work on the motorway, the Croome Estate allowed the use of the old RAF buildings as their HQ and Croome was turned into a temporary car park for construction vehicles.

One fateful evening, there was a problem on the construction site at Strensham and an urgent call went out for the crane. The usual crane driver had finished his shift but someone else volunteered to drive it. Estate workers described how they heard an almighty crash. The driver had forgotten to lower the crane to go under the bridge and the inevitable happened. Croome's historical bridge was severely damaged, the metal structure was fractured, and in the interests of safety estate workers had to dismantle what remained.

They salvaged the Coventry Coat of Arms – points (but no prizes!) to anyone who's spotted them - but sadly the bridge was never replaced.



HI-HO, HI-HO, IT'S OFF TO WORK WE GO by Alexis Robinson

What do the Chemist, the Doctor, the Teacher and the Engineer have in common? They are members of the Volunteer Property Services team. Along with their colleagues and behind the scenes they are performing small miracles. No more loose toilet seats or leaky taps. Now we have door handles that work and light bulbs that light. From these small but important tasks to the larger project of re-decorating the canteen and reception areas, under the supervision of Shaun Wilkes the Building Surveyor, this hard working team has brought an array of skills to not only solve those little problems but also saving over £14,000 in maintenance expenditure in 12 months. Among things on the 'to do' list this year is painting the external walls of the RAF building and the London Lodge.

RE-BUILDING THE WALL by Pete Callaghan

This picture, taken by Pete Callaghan in November 2012, shows the dreadful condition of the entrance walls and posts either side of the gate at the public footpath entrance into the estate from Dunstall Common, beyond South Park and above the Park Seat. Now Pete heads a volunteer team (Pam & Richard Southerden & Martin Wright) who have started restoration work on the estate wall, and the park and garden team are currently assisting with the repairing and restoring the boundary gate to the original specification.

Not quite on the scale of the Red Wing, but important enough to be under the supervision of project manager Shaun Wilkes, the posts are to be replaced with two 9'6" new oak posts from Brockhampton estate and the walls rebuilt in line with the original building techniques using traditional lime mortar authentically sourced from the Traditional Lime Mortar Company in Cheltenham. To merge old and new, any original stone removed is being numbered for re-use in the two piers next to the pillars. This, in itself, is difficult because the stone (blue lias, a sedimentary rock we believe to have been quarried locally although more usually associated with the Dorset coast) has been weathered and is quite friable. The next challenge will be to fit the 2 enormous new oak posts in position and secure them with traditional clay and cobble packing.

Although a small project within the grand scheme, the restored entry should have a large impact on the public perception of the Park. In the same way, the newly laid hedge (again done by volunteers) at the RAF buildings has given the car parking area a sharper cleaner look.



AN EERIE STATE OF SUSPENSE By Alice Padley

A chance to spend a couple of hours in the Red Wing with Catherine Gordon was an opportunity I could not miss. Catherine has been commissioned to write a brief report on some of the archaeological aspects of the building as well as keeping a watching brief on the project.



Some of the areas I have been exploring over the years are now, sadly, too dangerous to enter. On the top floor, windows now seem to be balanced over mid-air. The first photo shows a panelled room believed to have been the apartment of the 6th Earl. If you look closely at the photograph you will see that there is virtually no ceiling and



pretty much no floor. The whole room seems eerily suspended almost intact in mid air. This photograph shows some internal scaffolding and if you look carefully you will see plastic sheeting hanging from the ceiling and piles of sand on the floor. This is not an example of 18th century insulation, but a 20th century solution to sound proofing. The bags of sand were inserted into the ceiling by the Hare Krishna community and over time the bags have begun to fall down and burst.

Scaffold Tours have commenced for volunteers and locals. If you want to come along contact the office.

The Croome Chronicle is by volunteers for volunteers. The Editors are: Sue Coleman; Di Dickinson; Phil Douce; Kath Morris and Alexis Robinson. To contact the Chronicle email croomechronicle@gmail.com or speak to one of the editors. We would also be delighted to receive articles for publication on any subject to do with Croome..

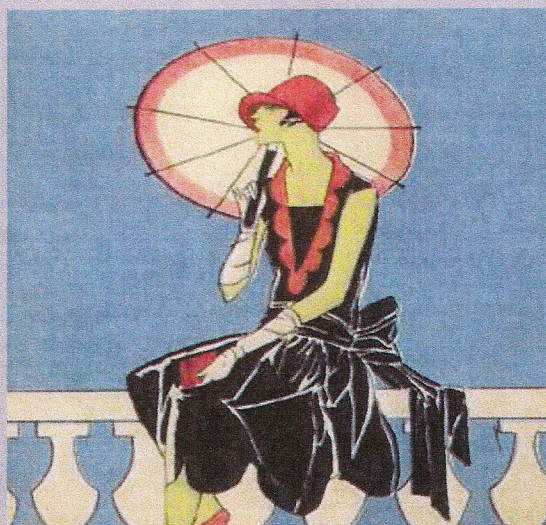
1920s
CASINO NIGHT
FRIDAY 19 APRIL 2013
CROOME RAF VISITOR CENTRE

A FUNdraising evening to help raise £700 to complete Croome's beautiful Dining Room Fireplace.

As well as

A great night out and an opportunity to dress up 1920s style.

(Not compulsory but fun!)



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