

# Croome Chronicle



SUMMER 2009

No. 1.

## CROOME SURVIVES BBC

By Christian Walker, Assistant Property Manager

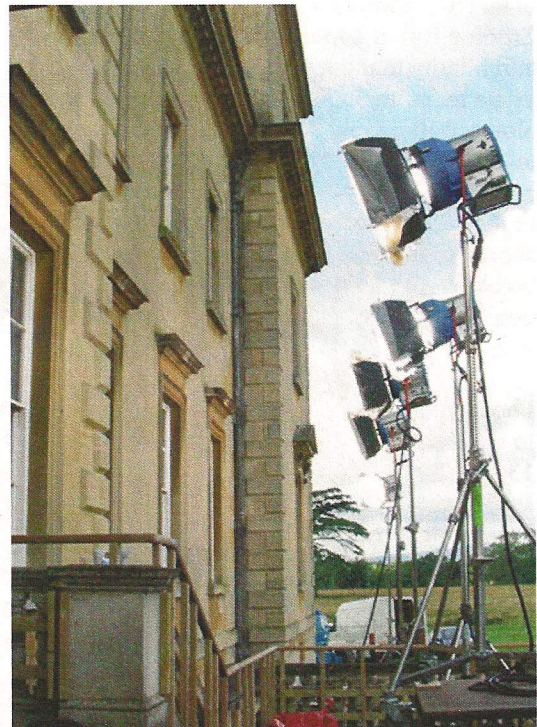
Croome volunteers stood firm in July when Croome Court became Tredegar Hall in the BBC series 'Survivors'. With a crew of over 80 people the BBC camped daily in the Visitor Centre car park for over a week, while filming took place across the Croome Park estate as well as in Croome Court.

Volunteers marshalled the enthusiastic BBC as they erected lighting cranes and generators running cables outside the court. They provided extra pairs of eyes for Alex Patchett-Joyce (Filming Conservator) who was on hand to watch the proceedings during the week. Assistant Property Manager, Christian Walker said 'the volunteers critically maintained a sense of order during filming so that the property had a voice against the demand of the directors and their team'.

The programme, which is now into its second season, follows the outbreak of a virus that kills all but a small number of people. It is a remake of a 1970's series of the same name and based on a novel by Terry Nation.

A particular highlight for anyone visiting the park on the preparation days was the scene of antique furniture and historic old master paintings being unloaded and carried up the main steps into the Court.

As we conjured for a moment the hopeful future image that many look forward to, when some of the contents of the Court are returned. The items were used to create a study and dining room on the first floor while filming also took place in the Long Gallery, Billiard Room, Entrance Hall as well as in the Basement where a Wine Cellar was created. The second series of the BBC series Survivors is due to be aired late autumn 2009.



Lights. Camera, Action - Artificial light at Croome

### CROOME COURT SET TO OPEN

By Amy Forster, House and Visitor Services Manager

Well, we're nearly there - Croome Court is set to open at the end of September! We will, of course, let you know the exact opening date which we still have to confirm, but we are on track and getting excited! I will be in touch with everyone to invite you to a familiarisation session in the Court in late August to show everyone at Croome the new interpretation for visitors. We are also having a special Georgian Weekend on the 5th and 6th of September which is in addition to our events programme and coincides with the bi-centenary of the 6th Earl of Coventry's death.

The Head Gardener's Diary  
Katherine Alker: Success of digging for  
summer victory PAGE 7



*Birthday Teas  
at Croome Park's  
Canteen...now being  
served*

call Heather on 01905 371006





## Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of the Croome Chronicle, hopefully an informative way to keep our ever expanding up to date.

I write this from a tower bedroom in the Court in my makeshift office while I watch the BBC entourage envelop the building in vehicles and lighting cranes, but it appears this is just another week of mild chaos at Croome – nothing the team can not handle!

In fact as I approach the end of my third month at Croome Park it appears each week presents challenges and hilarity that the team solve in good humour. The estate team, including volunteers now amounts to almost 240 people that are split into much smaller teams that ensure smooth running – well almost.

In the short time I have been here we have had teapot shortages in the Canteen, woodpeckers attempting breaking and entry and a swaying bridge. I am therefore beginning to get a taste of life at Croome in all its splendid colours.

I hope you enjoy this quarter's news and I look forward to seeing you at our Pimms in the Park event on August 13th.

Well done everyone,

Christian Walker  
Assistant Property Manager

## Fresh understanding of Chinese Bridge

By Jeremy Milln, Croome Archaeologist

The main focus of archaeological activity recently has been the site of the Chinese Bridge, designed by William Halfpenny in c.1750, so pre-dating Brown's arrival and the full development of the Croome River. Timber-built and no doubt originally brightly painted, it was one of the earliest structures in the Chinese taste to have been constructed for a designed landscape in this country. An excavation, following geophysics survey, was carried out in June by Dr Jodie Lewis, David Mullins and a team of nearly 20 students from the University of Worcester. The purpose of the exercise, apart from providing training for the students, was to enhance our understanding of the structure, which we hope to reinstate one day. The excavation was able to demonstrate the location of the abutments, the route of the ramped approach, and a lower path cut to access the bridge which replaced it early in the twentieth century, but it would seem that the remains were largely grubbed out when the bridge was taken down.



*The bridge dig in progress*



## Croome - One man's monument

Jill Tovey, Croome Archivist

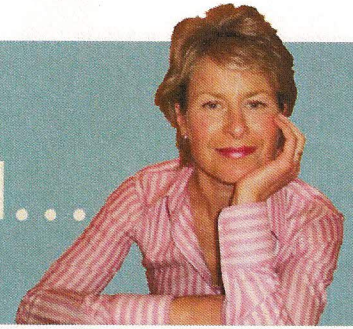
As the person who has known the 6th Earl for longer than anyone else (we've been friends for 20 years!), I give you my short summary of 'The Man' as he comes through to me from what he has left behind.

'Primarily a man who was liked and respected by his contemporaries and probably very attractive to women, both for his looks and perhaps for his presence and power (even today men in high places seem to have little problem!). He was confident and therefore perhaps a little arrogant – maybe because, after the death of his brother, he had been spoilt by his father; when he got a bee in his bonnet he could be obsessive (i.e. his plant collection) and a perfectionist. Which brings me to the negative side of the man - this obsession with having the best & the most perfect meant that, sadly, none of Maria's children could live up to his high standards, so he cut them off; therefore maybe 'a disappointed man' to some extent too. He was, though, capable of great love - primarily for his older brother, the shock of whose sudden death probably coloured his whole life, as it seems to have hastened the death of their father. I'm sure he also loved his wives, particularly Barbara - because they were of like mind.'

So this man, like us all, had his frailties but that should not be what we leave the public with - Croome is the monument to his life and, I'd like to think, the reflection of his inner self. And how beautiful is that?

# Basement discoveries and Long Gallery secrets revealed...

By Sarah Kay, Project Curator



I am looking forward to using this newsletter as a useful channel of communication to share with everyone the nuggets of information and exciting discoveries that are coming to light as Jill Tovey (Croome Archivist) and I continue with the fascinating job of researching the Court.

If you remember, my role as Project Curator is to gather together all the sources of historical documentary and physical evidence of the development of the Court and its interiors, with the aim of producing a Conservation Management Plan for the forthcoming Heritage Lottery fund bid. We also need to do this so that our understanding of the place and the people is as detailed and accurate as possible. The facts and the evidence are basically the 'stories' that we want to share with our visitors, but we also want to share the processes of building our knowledge as well, so that the visitors (and all of us!) feel involved and are part of the journey of discovery.

So here, as a start, are a couple of those nuggets and pieces of information that have recently been revealed, one physical and one documentary:

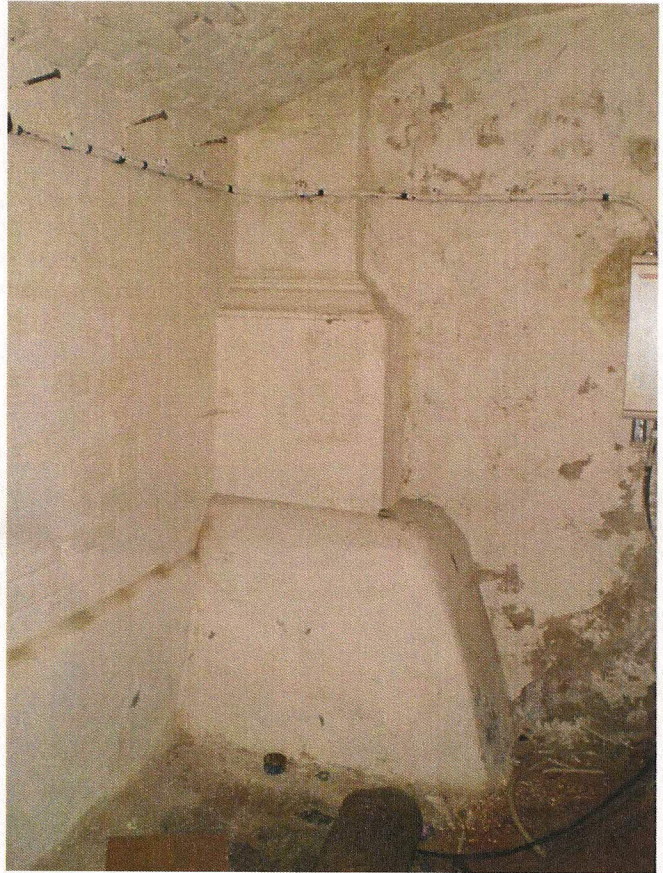
## Intriguing discovery in the basement

Whilst discussing electrical cabling routes in the basement with the electricians recently, we were standing in the small, dark, window-less space that is underneath the columns/South Portico. We were studying the thicknesses of the walls and considering the least invasive routes for cable to follow. As my eyes became accustomed to the gloom I noticed something intriguing in the north east corner of the space and let out an excited shriek!

It appeared to be the base of a large square pillar on a plinth of dressed stone, atop a stone mound, half-subsumed into the NE corner walls. Why was it there, half-hidden?

The South Portico above was only added as part of Brown's remodeling of the house in 1751. So before that, this space would presumably have been outside the south front. Its position is close to the centre of the south elevation: could this be a tantalizing piece of evidence relating to an entrance of the earlier house on the site? (Although we have yet to find a possible pair to it).

This will be one of the conundrums we will put to the architectural historian when they carry out the archaeological survey of the fabric of the building....



*The basement pillar*

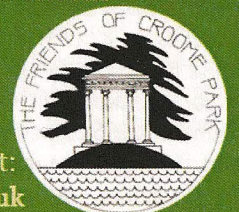
## What is the subject of The Long Gallery grisaille?

There are many decorative fixtures missing from the Long Gallery, most of which were sold in the 1960s. These include the pair of pier tables (tables against a wall between windows) and pier glasses (wall mirrors) on the west wall, the ten plaster statues in the niches, and various circular and rectangular grisaille panels from around the walls. *continued over page...*

## The Friends of Croome Park

Founded in 2004 to promote the National Trust property, Croome Park, and to assist in encouraging appreciation and understanding of its history.

For further details, how to join and up coming events visit:  
[www.friendsofcroomepark.org.uk](http://www.friendsofcroomepark.org.uk)



## Basement discoveries and Long Gallery secrets revealed... continued



*Dining room from Lansdowne House*

Grisailles are basically monochrome paintings on canvas, painted to look like low-relief stone sculpture, using lots of highlights and shadows so that they appear to be 3D. They are sometimes referred to as chiaroscuro, from the Italian for light and dark.

We know where some of these things now are (the Metropolitan Museum in New York) and some we don't (yet!). The Long Gallery's main grisaille was above the chimneypiece, and it is one of the room's elements that are now on the other side of the world in the Met.

In the Metropolitan, it is displayed as part of the neo-classical dining room from Lansdowne House (London) by Adam, a very similar room to our Long Gallery (left).

### But what is the scene represented in this grisaille painting?

I had a reference in a National Trust paper written in 2004 describing it as *The Sacrifice of Iphigenia*. I am grateful to Mike Brown, one of our new volunteers, for querying this. After checking with Alastair Laing, the NT's Curator of Paintings & Sculpture, it transpires that it is not this at all, but simply a generalized classical scene with figures taken from various sources.

The Metropolitan describes it thus: "While the subject is in the antique taste, only Abundance, crowned with a wreath and supporting a cornucopia, and the piping Pan behind her can be identified".

The subject matter also differs, as was often the case, from the design shown in Adam's original drawing for the room. Please would all those who have a copy of my October 2008 paper make a note of this correction (p.54), which will be available in the Volunteers Room.



# News from the Friends



*Friends Report 1*  
By Eric H. Jones  
Chairman

In the five years since its formation, the Friends of Croome Park Supporter Group has steadily grown in membership and has been able to make some tangible contributions to Croome's appearance and amenities. Most recently, the Friends bought a large marquee which will be a useful venue for various occasions, as well as a refuge from uncertain weather in the Park. There has also been a welcome surge in membership lately to well over 300, partly as a result no doubt of the recruitment of more volunteers for the Court.

It is well recognised that the National Trust depends greatly on its 50,000 plus volunteers who give their time, energy and commitment to an organisation which is responsible for so much of our heritage and landscape that enhances our lives today. Within the wider volunteer community at Croome, a group such as the Friends provides opportunities to meet and share

experience and knowledge of the property and, similarly, members who are not volunteers can gain satisfaction from identifying with and supporting a favourite place.

In June, a large party of Friends went to Kelmarsh Hall in Northamptonshire to see the Coventry treasures which are displayed there before their later return to Croome. Every year there is an opportunity to see the Walled Garden, courtesy of Mr and Mrs C. Cronin, and there are walks and talks which relate to various aspects of Croome and its history (please see programme for details). A regular Newsletter keeps members informed of Friends' activities: another one will be published in the autumn.

For only £5 per year or £12 for family membership, The Friends of Croome Park to gain so much more from their attachment to Croome.

## Croome - Whose Story?

By Joyce Wallace, Croome Outreach Officer

The Whose Story? Project is an exciting initiative by the National Trust to attract audiences from cultural diverse backgrounds that would not normally visit properties. This also includes uncovering cultural histories of Croome and creating new stories, events and activities for our present and emerging audiences.

As part of the Whose Story? 2009 programme children from Stanley Road Primary School, Worcester worked with Dancefest recently exploring the trees cultural connections through dance and movement in the parkland.

Supported by dance artists Marcia Edwards and Chitra Bolar the young people also explored spiritual expression inspired by the Hare Krishna movement, who had a presence at Croome Court in the late seventies.

Workshops took place at three sites in the parkland and culminated in a showcase watched by visitors, the Stanley Road Primary Year 6 and invited Black and Minority community group representatives.

It was a magical sight to see the young people and volunteers in the parkland expressing themselves; and also gaining an understanding of the natural and man made landscape.

The young people also toured Croome with Head Gardener, Katherine Alker and took part in a photography workshop with Ming de Nasty to produce images for Top Trunks:2. This will be available in the autumn and is visual exploration of the diversity of four trees at Croome and a new trail and for the property.



*Performance of Dancefest*

### Hare Krishna Research

As part of our 2009 Hare Krishna programme Dr Chris Upton will also be exploring and researching the presence of the Krishna's at Croome and documenting the community's thoughts and recollections, as a lasting legacy. We recently held 'Memory Days' in Pershore and Worcester as well as promoting the days on BBC Hereford and Worcester radio, Breakfast Show.

### Majestic Yarns project

As part of the 'This is Britain!' a pilot project to host arts in National Trust spaces, Textile Artist Pat Dixon will be exploring Croome and holding drop in workshops in August. Visitors will be encouraged to make 1940's rosettes, decorative tin plant pot wraps and fabric kites; which are inspired by the landscape and flora from around the world.

*continued over page..*

**Croome - Whose Story? *continued...***

Pat will also be creating an art piece for Croome supported by two community groups. Majestic Yarns will be unveiled in the Wild Walk North on Saturday 19 September at 12.30pm. Workshops dates 4th, 12th, 13th 10am-1pm. 18th August 10am-1pm, 2pm-5pm.

The 'Access All Areas' mp3 Audio tour is now available online to download free online at: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/croomepark](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/croomepark)

**Croome Community Ambassador**

Currently a Croome Visitor Experience Volunteer, Sue Waugh has recently been recruited as Croome Community Ambassador. She will act as an advocate for the National Trust amongst local multi-ethnic communities therefore raising the profile of Croome and the National Trust. Sue will also run a community forum to advise Whose Story? on what communities would like to make the National Trust more accessible.



If you would like to get involved with Whose Story? activities contact me, Joyce Wallace, Croome Outreach Officer on 0121 753 7751 or email [joyce.wallace@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:joyce.wallace@nationaltrust.org.uk)

**Rotunda Dome unearthed**

By Jeremy Milln, Croome Archaeologist

For the Rotunda, Dr Pat Hughes has been able to extend the historical research done by Jill Tovey so that our knowledge of its construction, decoration and repair grows. We are still not absolutely certain of its date of origin or designer, but for my money its Robert Adam's. This would be one of his first jobs in 1760 but there is a tantalising suggestion it may be earlier. Archaeologically we have concerned ourselves chiefly with the floor, beneath, which a clay pipe was found dated to c.1830 (perhaps from a later intervention) and the roof, which is double-domed. Its upper supporting a lead covering (latterly felt) and a lower from which the plaster ceiling is suspended.

Between the two domes a complex of cranked principals and curved rafters, the upper dome largely oak, the lower dome elm, many of which were found to be reused. Three courses of blocking stone were added around the outside of the outer dome perhaps in the 1780s to prevent the spread of the roof structure and the failure of the cornice whose stones oversail almost to the point of balance. Ward & Co have been strengthening the support for the roof, splicing decayed timbers and repairing stonework to a very high standard. Sadly none of this will be seen by the ordinary visitor.

**Oral History Update****Memories of a Scullery Maid**

By Eileen Clement, *Croome Oral History*

**'Croome before the National Trust' Oral History Project**

The Oral History Project is entering a new phase now that we have many volunteers willing to help with the various aspects associated with it. This means more interviews will be conducted, together with scanning of many photographs and press cuttings, etc. I thought the following snippet from the memories of one of the Coventry's maids, Minnie Trenfield (1873-1962), may be of interest:

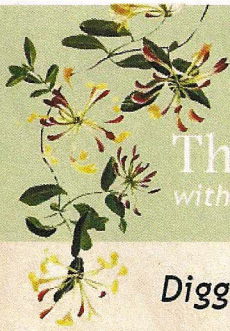
"On February 26th 1890, I went as scullery maid to the Earl and Countess of Coventry at Croome Court, Worcestershire and Hill Street, Mayfair, being made vegetable maid in the London season.

I will not say it was not hard work. But we had some happy times. There were about thirty-five servants and I was the youngest. Today no one will realise such an establishment. Everyone was responsible for their own job and we had much to do when entertaining took place, either in the country or in town, as there were no universal caterers to help out; from raw materials - bullocks, just killed and quartered, head, feet, tripe and all to be dealt with; sheep whole and all offal to be attended to the same; and pigs or porkers likewise.

Suckling pigs roasted whole and boar's head at Xmas; and sugar loaves to cut up; cows' feet made jelly; sweet of all kinds and aspic, as gelatine was in its early stages."



Within the dome of the Rotunda



## The Head Gardener's Diary

with Katherine Alker



### *Digging for summer victory!*

Well so far so good on the summer weather front (I hope I don't regret writing that!)

We've been very busy keeping the garden and park looking good; in the Temple Greenhouse the bright yellow and orange Crown Imperial Fritillaria looked stunning in Spring, but as they have finished flowering we have removed them and replaced them with *Eucomis autumnale*, the Pineapple flower. The *Nerium oleander* are doing well, as are the olive trees which even have some fruit on them - who knows we may be producing Croome Olive Oil in the future!

The Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday volunteer groups have been busy pruning and weeding throughout the garden to keep the place looking good. We had fun wading in the lake and raking out pond weed to try to improve the water quality.

Just a few of the recent jobs we have tackled include planting a new hedge around the car park boundary, clearing up fallen and felled trees in the Home Shrubbery, Menagerie Wood and Sweet Briar Walk, weeding along the hedgerow on Westfield Lane and the new shrubbery beds in the garden, digging in signs in the car park, dismantling the steps to the old portakabin and laying the hedge along the boundary of the Arboretum.

We've also spent 2 days over at Hipton Hill plum orchard; a 70 acre site owned by the Vale Landscape Heritage Trust. After a tour of their wildflower meadows to spot butterflies and orchids, we pruned two acres of plum trees for them. Their group of volunteers come to Croome in the winter to help us with the planting. It's really good to meet other local volunteers and continue this relationship we have with them.

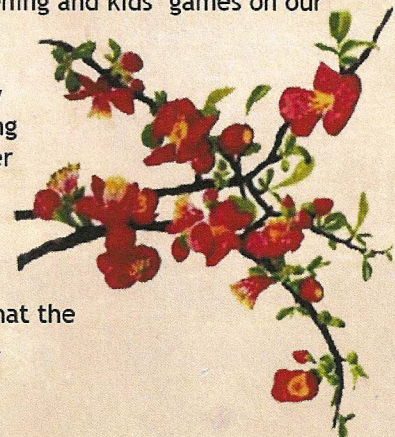


Hopefully you will have seen the Dig for Victory plot up near the RAF building by now. The Thursday gang spent a cold day in February turning the turfs to create the beds, then another couple of days installing the rabbit fencing. Jill and Jenn, our dedicated land girls, have done brilliantly to get such fantastic harvest from the plot in the first year - which we've been offering to our visitors in return for donations which will fund more seeds for next year.



In June the Friends of Croome kindly donated a large, new marquee to the National Trust. It will get lots of use, and has already been the venue for a Friends' social evening and kids' games on our Midsummer Week.

Looking forward over the next few months, we have lots more planting planned for the Autumn and Winter - work never ends in the garden and park! I must say a big 'thank you!' to all the garden volunteers and Hugh (Gardener), because it's due to many people's hard work that the garden and park are looking great.





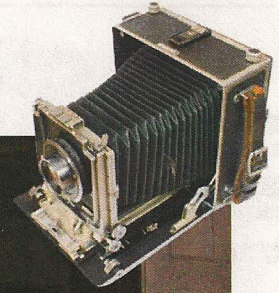
NEXT TIME IN THE CHRONICLE...



- What Jill Tovey, Sarah Kay, Christian Walker, Catherine McCarthy and John Goom found in the Earl's closet!
- A full update on the projects at Croome Property Manager Michael Smith
- News on the opening of Croome Court
- Autumn events and news

COMING EARLY OCTOBER 2009

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Sandra Lanigan, keeping a watchful eye on the BBC during the filming of *Survivors* at Croome Court. Entries for the next quarter to [christian.walker@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:christian.walker@nationaltrust.org.uk)

COMING EVENTS AT CROOME PARK  
FOR VOLUNTEERS & STAFF

AUGUST

5 August, 19.00 Talk with Michael Smith, Property Manager - History of Croome Park and its future. Sign up sheet in 'The Mess' (Volunteers & Staff Room, RAF Building)

13 August, 18.00 to 20.00 Pimm's in the Park - Celebrate the launch of the Croome Chronicle and meet the team Sign up sheet in 'The Mess' (Volunteers & Staff Room, RAF Building)

SEPTEMBER

14 September, 11.00am [NB: Revised Date] Walk to the Three Eye-catchers with Christian Walker, Assistant Property Manager - Walk of approx. 7 miles taking in the outer eye-catchers, Pirton Castle, Panaroma Tower and Dunstall Castle To confirm your place email [christian.walker@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:christian.walker@nationaltrust.org.uk) or call 01905 371006

20 & 23 September, Annual Volunteers Outing - Waddeston Manor, Buckinghamshire 2009 Trips will include a special presentation of the Rothschild Collection before a tour of the house and there will be an opportunity to explore the extensive grounds in the afternoon. Further details will follow. Sign up sheet in 'The Mess' (Volunteers & Staff Room, RAF Building)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

12 November, 11.00 Coffee Morning Details to follow.

26 November, 19.30 Croome Park Quiz Details to follow.

10 December, Volunteer's Christmas Meal 2009 Details to follow