

Croome Chronicle

VIEWS WITH A ROOM

By Michael Smith

Croome's Outer eye-catcher follies are key to both the design and understanding of our landscape parkland, all three buildings fulfilling the important role of drawing the visitor's eye beyond the confines and immediacy of the central Pleasure Ground, out to the wider landscape, as one boundless scene. The most visible and best known is the Panorama Tower, the architectural work of James Wyatt.

The Panorama Tower was one of last of the grand follies to adorn Croome's landscape. From the low-lying Croome Court, the visitor perceived but a bowl of land, far smaller than Lord Coventry's total holding of over 14,000 acres. However from the Panorama Tower's vantage point, on the high ground of Cubsmoor, views across the whole of the grand estate and well beyond toward the distant Cotswolds and Broadway Tower, could be well and truly shown off to visitors. By the 21st century the Panorama Tower, along with its fellow eye-catchers Dunstall Castle and Pirton Tower, was in a state of serious disrepair, and of great concern to the National Trust in our endeavour to restore and safeguard the future of Croome's heritage. After many years



of discussions with the building's owners, we were able to acquire the Outer eye-catchers in May 2009, which was only made possible by strong grant funding support from Natural England.

A year on, and this major project is nearing completion. We have repaired the Tower's roof structure and made it wind and water tight again, as well as reinstating the timber sash windows

(we found ill-fitting and unglazed kidnapped RAF windows in place when we started the project!), carried out all exterior masonry

repairs, and reinstated the interior plasterwork. With further fundraising help from the Rowland's Trust, Natural England and the Wolfson Trust we have now begun to reinstate the perimeter iron railings and gate which match the 19th century design. We suffered a significant setback in early November when an attempt was made to steal lead from the newly restored roof, causing significant damage. Building work is now firmly back on track, and we hope to open the tower to visitors by the summer. We will then enjoy glorious views across the Croome estate from the balcony of the Panorama Tower.

Our new look Chronicle

Not a coup - we were asked!

A team of volunteers have taken over the Chronicle. We hope that the new look Chronicle is one you approve of and that you find the content informative and interesting.



We have been working hard and are awaiting your comments in anticipation.

We are keen to hear your ideas for future articles and would certainly like feedback on this issue. Our contact email address is on the last page.

MUSIC MUSIC MUSIC

A fantastic programme of classical music will be performed in the Court this summer. The Elgar Chorale will be performing on June 5th and music performed by talented local musicians on June 26th. On September 4th the Croome Ensemble will perform 18th century pieces. See Events for details.

TRIVIA

Lady Coventry's Minuet and Lady Coventry's Delight were popular tunes in the late 18th century, both were inspired by Maria.

Did you know.....

1. There was a short 'canal' to the west of the house pre-Brown.
2. A brick pit is shown on the Doherty survey of about 1750 on what was to become the location of the lake.
3. Claimed as second only to Kew for its plants in the early C19th.
4. There were 5 great sash windows across the front of the Temple Greenhouse.
5. The goddess at the grotto is Sabrina.
6. The oldest tree in the park is probably an oak in South Park near the Rotunda.
7. The orchard has different varieties of cherry, apple (incl cider) pear, plum, quince all C18th or C19th.
8. The Iron bridge linking the estate to Pirton was knocked down accidentally by contractors building the M5.
9. The Walled Garden (not NT) is probably the largest C18th walled garden in England and probably Europe, at just over 7 acres.
10. The river and lake have a maximum depth of 6 feet.

Question Time

- Q. What happens to all the wood you chop down?
 A. It is chipped and used as mulch.
- Q. How many bulbs have been planted?
 A. In the past 3 years over 20,000 bulbs.
- Q. How many volunteers are there working in the park?
 A. About 35

TRIVIA

It is believed that there are no Australian plants in the park.

A VIEW FROM THE PARK

By Garden and Park Manager Katherine Alker



After what seemed a long winter, spring is very welcome to the garden and park department. The weather during January put us about 3 weeks behind with our planting but we managed to get the hedgerows and apple trees planted in the car park, and finish this year's target of hedgerow planting in the parkland before the planting season finished.

The large beds in the Evergreen Shrubbery have been weeded and mulched with well rotted horse manure (courtesy of the Cronins at the Walled Garden). Work by the Croome Plant Research Group continues to inform us of the modern names of plants purchased in the 18th century by the 6th Earl, enabling us to replant the shrubberies and parkland as accurately as possible. We shall continue to add to these beds over the coming years.

Hopefully you will have spotted spring flowers such as hellebores, aconites, daffodils, cyclamen and primroses. Snowdrops in the Church Shrubbery will be more impressive next year after the planting of over 7000 more by volunteers in March. Many of the shrubs in the Evergreen Shrubbery were badly affected by the frosts and cold winds of the winter; we shall be removing these as soon as time allows and replanting where appropriate.

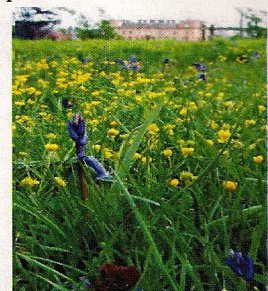
We will be providing arrangements of fresh flowers in the Court this year. It would have been the gardeners' responsibility to get cut flowers for the house in the 6th Earl's day, so it seems appropriate that the same happens today. Over Easter the Flower Arranging volunteers presented daffodils (from the Home Shrubbery) in the Entrance hall, and just this week we have arranged parrot tulips. All the flowers used will be the same as those that would have been grown in the 18th century,

so visitors will be seeing authentic Georgian Style arrangements.

Maintenance of the garden is becoming rather a large task, with the weeding of the beds and flowering studs, pruning and tidying. Much more planting is planned too. We hope to have the windows back in the Temple Greenhouse before next winter and planning for this is underway. The plant collection in the greenhouse has had to be kept to a minimum while we await the return of the windows, but now we can start to think about what might have housed there in the 18th century, and start to locate specimens to rebuild the exotic plant collection.

There is always more to do in the parkland. Hugh will be taking the lead on this work in the future, and tasks for the coming season will include maintaining the rides along Sweet Briar Walk, which is now open to the public, allowing one to walk through the shelterbelt from the end of the river; ensuring the guards in the parkland are secure to prevent the cattle from eating the growing tips of young trees; and keeping all footpaths on our land clear and passable.

As ever, it is thanks to the fantastic garden volunteer team and Hugh that Croome Park looks so good. As our visitor numbers and our opening hours increase, so does the challenge to maintain the standards that we set ourselves, but our aim will always be to present Croome to the highest standard possible



BEES.....BEES.....BEES

An interview with Keren Green by Sue Coleman

Croome Park honey really does come from bees kept at Croome Park. The Croome Park bee keepers are Keren and Phil and two of their hives are on show in the orchard. The bees have been specifically selected for their docile nature. Bees forage up to a 3 mile radius from the hive and as the worker bees only have a life span of about 6 weeks. Over the last few winter months, the bees have not been entirely inactive as the queen starts laying a small number of eggs in February and March with their main food supply being sugar syrup provided by the beekeeper. As the weather warms up, occasional flights take place and early flowering plants – snowdrops, crocus, hazel and willow, are particularly important for the collection of pollen. By April the activity increases rapidly. As the queen bee lays more eggs, so the eggs laid earlier in the year form the basis of the foraging bees working to bring in pollen and nectar so the brood can be built up. For the beekeeper, the next few weeks will be very busy; the

bees will be inspected regularly for evidence that they are getting ready to swarm. Swarming is a form of procreation which is based on divide and survive – but it's also a nervous time for the beekeeper who will not want to lose thousands of bees as these bees are the main honey providers. If Keren hears of a swarm she'll happily go in pursuit so she can provide them with a new home in one of her empty hives. If you see a swarm contact Keren on 07905 045075. There may well be around 25,000 bees in a swarm. Keren will be busy making pure bees wax hand-dipped candles which will be available from the shop later in the year as well as Keren's delicious honey.



Photo is of Keren studying a feral colony of bees which have taken up residence in a tree near the Ice House.

WILDFLOWERS AT CROOME

By Ann Meadows

A survey during 2008 identified 125 different species of wildflowers in the Pleasure Gardens and Church Meadow area. Although none are rare one plant identified, Lesser Centaury, is 'scarce' in Worcestershire. Sadly it was disturbed by the creation of the new path to the Court so may not appear this year. Another plant 'scarce' in Worcestershire, Grass Vetchling, was added to the list in 2009. Look out for it on the west bank near the boathouse. In June the meadow flowers should be coming into their own. As well as enjoying the unmistakable Oxeye Daisies, Meadow Buttercups and Red Clover look along the edges of Church Meadow to spot purple Common Vetch, yellow Birdsfoot Trefoil and the tiny yellow Black Meddick. The river side of the path will be full of

Cow Parsley and later pink Field Bindweed. By the end of June the tiny Field Pansy should be flowering each side of the path just before you reach the gate and railings in to the gardens. The garden and meadow are home to at least five species of Speedwell, the blue Common Field, Common Green, Slender and Germander Speedwells and the tiny Thyme Leaved Speedwell. If you are lucky there may still be a glorious display of Lords and Ladies behind the Summer Pavilion at the beginning of June, but look quickly because this is the end of their short season and they are at their best for just a few days. From mid August in to September take a regular look at the large stones on the other side of the path from Sabrina for blue Skullcap.

Easter Eggstravaganza

The Easter holiday saw cold winds, warm sunshine and heavy showers. A small army of volunteers welcomed 4806 visitors and sold 1141 Easter Egg trails over the four days. Amy's popular Easter Egg trail led to the Temple Greenhouse where the Golden Egg was concealed. The prizes were awarded and crafts and activities entertained a constant stream of small enthusiasts. Trusty the Hedgehog (alias Michael Smith) cavorted happily whatever the weather.



Photo Exhibition

The Friends of Croome Park Committee has given enthusiastic approval to a proposal to organise an Exhibition / Competition of photographs taken at Croome Park to raise funds.

We now need a few people to join a task group to turn this idea into reality by establishing the criteria, sorting out the logistics and undertaking administrative tasks. You don't need to be a keen photographer yourself to join the task group or if you do join it will not exclude you from submitting your own photographs. If you would like to get involved or discuss the task further please contact Ann Meadows by emailing AnnCP2010@aol.com I look forward to hearing from you.



A Day In The Life

Martin Wright

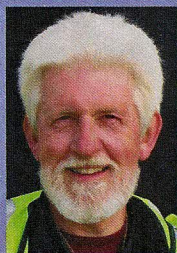
The volunteers have got me out of the house (sometimes), onto the Buggy hoping the weather is awful, I'll give up, leave finally.

Two sets of clothes, Buggy a.m. Court pm. Arrive early, re-adjust to handling, never be over confident. Which one's broken today, petrol or electric ? Track conditions - Gluey Mud or Saharan Sand ?

First customers, can't operate seatbelts, next lot won't wear them as they're covered in mud. Kid them I've not driven before so it's the 'Buggy of Doom' ride. Outward commentary, passing Ice House, Pirton Castle on skyline, Browns culvert, etc. They seem interested. Questions asked. "What's the Red derelict building next to the house" "What's the river?"

Arrive Court, volunteers shaking fists from windows, reckon nothing's left to tell. Return, will we make it uphill ? Will they get out and push ? Arrive orchard, cars stuck in mud, folks rush over, they think the Buggy is up to pulling them clear! Passengers express thanks, many give donations, they enjoyed themselves.

Another Buggy day over, next time will be different - now for the hose down, Buggy not me. As for my near disasters, well that's for another time.



SIR IAN BOTHAM COMES TO CROOME

By Sue Coleman

On Monday 12th April Sir Ian Botham set out from Worcester on Day 3 of a series of walks to mark the 50th anniversary of Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research, of which he is President, and the 25th anniversary of his 1st fund-raising walk from John O'Groats to Lands End. Croome Park hosted the final leg of the walk as more fundraisers joined Sir Ian for a 4 mile circuit ending on Church Hill.

Croome rose to the occasion, delighting new visitors in spring sunshine. Scores of volunteers turned out to manage car parking and stewarding. It was a strange and slightly surreal experience to be stationed in South Park with radio and binoculars looking for the first sight of the walkers as they rounded the Court and began to climb towards the Rotunda on the ridge. We were the army on a secret mission. The success of the walk, of Croome, maybe the entire universe, hinged on us. Excitement mounted when the radio sputtered into life. Was he on his way? No, but the swans were mating near Menagerie Wood and certain stewards had witnessed the ceremony!

The word came; they were off, they were near And whoosh, they had passed – Beefy nobly shouted his thanks and strode off to the next outpost.



Afterwards, medals for all, a photo call with Sir Ian, and another page in the history of Croome.



To contribute to Leukaemia Charity please go to www.justgiving.com/beefy

CHRONICLE EDITORIAL

By Christian Walker, Operations Manager

Our preparation for 2010 was hampered by snow, however we have had a great start to the season with yet again record visitor numbers, notably over the Easter weekend. It is important, however, not to necessarily focus entirely on visitor numbers, but on the quality of the visits. We therefore await the first feedback from our experience questionnaires. We are still busy putting in new resources and facilities on the site and our new Visitor Services and Catering Office has now opened at the RAF Building, providing a much overdue

base for Gen, Amy, Susan, Heather, Joyce and John and we are already looking at the next stage of office expansion into Croome Court for the Duty Manager(s). We have also updated the phone system with the help of the voice of volunteer Jane Hulse – while the new system is not the finished article we need – I hope it is a step forward. We are now on the brink of the summer season, which promises to be very exciting, with a range of different events aimed to appeal to all. Keep up all the great work.

AND A WORD FROM SARAH

From Sarah Kay



As part of building up our understanding of Croome Court we need to carry out an Architectural/Archaeological Survey. The aim of this is to investigate the historic fabric of the Court and discover what physical clues there are buried in the fabric to the earlier houses on the site, what remains of them at the core and what those tells us about how the building evolved. This is important for our own understanding and so that we can better respond to visitors' questions about the history of the Court.

For example, were the wooden stairs at the west end always in that position? Was their status ever more than a back stair? Was there another, more impressive staircase elsewhere in the house before the 1751 re-modelling? Was the Saloon always its present double height? What were the historic

uses of the spaces, especially the domestic offices?

How did the Court relate to the Red Wing? What was the number of bays (windows) on the north and south façades before the re-modelling and how much were these re-configured for the sake of symmetry?

The answers to these questions and others will hopefully emerge through physical investigations and 'opening-up' work, but also by combining the clues with documentary evidence from the archive. Some work on this has already started but we are hoping that the survey proper will be taken on by Catherine Gordon. As an Architectural Historian, the author of the Coventrys of Croome and someone who has huge enthusiasm for Croome and lots of prior knowledge of the place and its history, she is an ideal person to do this.

DUNSTALL CASTLE

By Jeremy Milln

In the early 1970s, Dunstall Castle suffered hasty unrehearsed and unrecorded remedial work using inappropriate materials, resulting in grievous loss of detail and structure. Most of the turret atop the centre tower was thrown down the stair-well then capped with concrete. Elsewhere original local blue lias was replaced by Cotswold oolite. Archaeological research detected that the turret was originally built, in 1765, like a little pepper-pot, with stone steps almost to the top. Croome papers record that in 1771 the turret was to be taken down and enlarged (cost £20). We confirmed that only a new skin was added to the wall, to make it appear enlarged and that the high oculus shown in the Burney watercolour, and in a little vignette in the Snape Map

of 1796, cannot have held a lantern. The impression is that, as at Pirton, the circular stair was open to the elements, ending at a quarter landing. With conservation at Dunstall, we will be taking a slightly different approach. Rather than restoring it slavishly, we will be rebuilding with a larger turret closed with a roof, so that visitors can be accommodated more easily. Dunstall Castle, alone of the eye-catchers, was occupied domestically. It seems that it had a pair of cottages pinned to its back wall almost from the start. They are just visible in the Burney and as ghosting lines in the Castle's masonry. Were they the hovels of squatters or were they the rustic abodes of the Castle's keepers? We will try and find out.

Second Hand Bookshop

Plans are well under way to open a second hand bookshop. It is hoped that this will be open towards the end of June and will be sited where the current N.T. shop is now.

We already have a large stock of books covering all subjects waiting in the right hand side of the Carpenters Workshop at High Green. Anyone who has books they want to get rid of, please take them to High Green and add them to the piles that are there.

When the shop is open we are going to require a number of people who would be willing to man the shop at various times. If you might be interested, please let me know.

If you want any further information or would be willing to help contact me at:-
phil.douce@oracle.com

Osterley Park

If you ever find yourself in south west London, with a few hours to while away, make your way over to NT's Osterley Park. A spectacular Robert Adam designed house (he remodelled it around an earlier house between 1760 and 1780) it has a stunning red tapestry room from the Gobelins factory in Paris, wonderful gardens and very good cakes.

TRIVIA

In 1617 it is recorded that baskets of apricots grown at Croome were sent to London.

1784 it took only two days by coach to reach London.

Spring

With the opening of the Panorama and work progressing on the

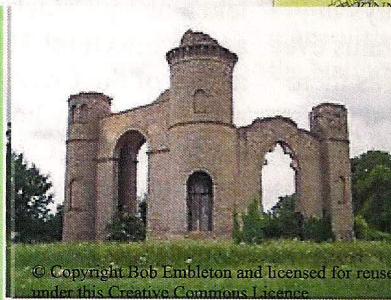


PANORAMA TOWER

Built to be not only a Viewing platform from which to follow the hunt, but also one of the principal eye-catchers in views from the Court and Park. It was designed by James Wyatt in 1801 following a design by Robert Adam, but was not built until 1805 to 1812. The scene of picnics and parties - and those wonderful views of nature's great eye-catcher the Malvern Hills. Recently restored we hope to be able to open this to the public.

DUNSTALL CASTLE

Designed by Robert Adam in 1756 as a mock medieval ruin. It stands on Dunstall Common a mile south of Croome Court, from which it was originally visible. It was built by Robert Newman in 1765-8 who altered the central tower in 1771. Now covered in an abundance of scaffold recent archaeological works have discovered a very interesting history that has surprised us all. See Jeremy Milln's article.



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PARK SEAT / OWLS NEST

Standing at the southern end of the Croome river it was intended as a shelter and viewing point from which to see the other Croome eye-catchers. It is also known as the Owl's Nest after a temporary occupant. The original design was by Adam in 1766 but not finally built until 1770-2.

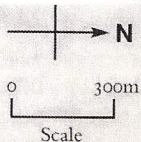
BROADWAY TOWER

Not a National Trust property but a real Coventry estate eye-catcher. Built for the 6th Earl of Coventry on the second highest point of the Cotswolds. The "Saxon Hexagon Tower" was designed by James Wyatt in 1794 and built in 1797-9. It was restored in 1866. It has enjoyed a number of well-known owners and occupants one of which was William Morris, famous architect, designer, poet and revolutionary who used the Tower as a holiday retreat together with his friends Edward Burne-Jones and Rosetti.



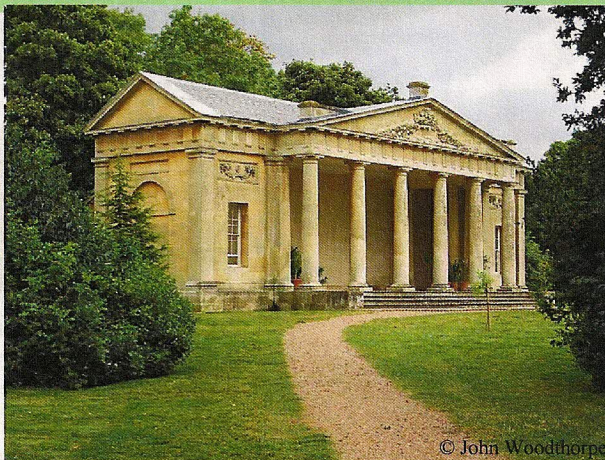
Follies

Rotunda a spring view of the Follies of Croome is worth a visit.



PIRTON CASTLE

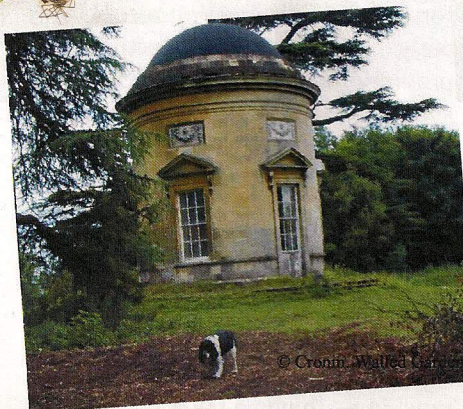
Only a curtain wall and recently restored, it was designed by James Wyatt and built by William Stephens in 1797 as a Gothic ruin. "It occupies a fine situation, on a lofty eminence commanding from its high grounds, beautiful and extensive prospects". Can be seen from the motorway and only a short walk to Pirton Pool.



© John Woodthorpe

TEMPLE GREENHOUSE

Built from Painswick limestone in 1760 this was Robert Adam's first garden building at Croome. Originally there were large sash windows made by John Hobcraft (now gone but hopefully being replaced soon - see Katherine Alker's article). The Pediment and horns of plenty over the windows were carved by Sefferin Alken in 1765.



© Cronin, Walled Garden

ROTUNDA

The Rotunda stands in the Home Shrubbery to the east of the house. It was built in 1754 -7 to a design by Brown. John Hobcraft was responsible for the joinery and Francesco Vassalli for the stucco work. Six stone panels carved by Sefferin Alken to a design by Adam were added in 1763. Has been recently restored.

Croome Fruit Scones

700g Self Raising Flour
 150g Sultanas
 50g Castor Sugar
 2 tsp Baking Powder
 400ml Milk
 50ml Sunflower oil
 Two Eggs
 Weigh and mix dry ingredients
 Measure milk, oil and eggs into jug and beat well.
 Combine all ingredients and mix gently but thoroughly.
 Turn out on to floured board. Use well floured cutter.
 Place on to baking sheet.
 Bake 12-14 mins at 170C.
 Enjoy with butter, strawberry jam and cream – I prefer whipped – lashings of it !

Croome Volunteers' Library

The library has been up and running now for a few weeks and it is great to see so many people are browsing and borrowing items from it. Although rather small at present, it is growing all the time with both volunteers and staff very kindly lending or donating books and other material. Currently there are some interesting photographs of the various rooms, prints of the early landscape, an article on the Gunning family, books on the craftsmen and the King Georges, books about 18th Century society, a very interesting transcript of William Dean's 200 year old treatise and even an article about Grand National winners associated with the Croome Estate (there were eight since you ask!). The library is based in the Court, but there is also an index of the contents in the Mess Room by Reception. And if anyone would like to lend or donate anything to the library please contact David Vernon - details in the indexes.

WOW - WHAT A START !

A word from Heather Waddoups

First things first, a huge THANK YOU to all of you (staff & volunteers) who have lent a hand in the canteen even if for just a few minutes. Your help is much appreciated. For those of you who do not know me, I am the one covered in cake mix.

In 2008-9 sales were £171,068 (Inc. VAT). In 2009-10 sales were £244,295 (Inc. VAT) For the 2010-2011 season we are budgeted to take £360,000 - we are already 20% ahead of target so who knows we could be looking at £500,000 – that's a lot of washing up!!!!!!

All the proceeds from the Catering go directly to Croome and in 2009-2010 season we generated £57,000 income. The week to Easter Sunday had record takings of £15,500 about £4.90 for every minute we were open!!!

Each week we use:-
 50 dozen eggs; 144 litres of fresh milk; 6 kg of clotted cream; 20-30 kg of butter; 700 bottles of cold drinks.

We make:-
 500 packs of sandwiches; 400 Scones; 14 big sponge cakes; 250 portions tray bakes; 12 loaf cakes and 24 flans !!

The tea tent at the main entrance will be open every weekend (weather permitting) after taking £1400 on Easter Sunday and Monday.



See the side column for Heather's Fruit Scone Recipe. Noted among many visitors as being the Best in the the National Trust.

SLASH AND BURN

From an interview with Nigel Matthews

'My addiction to garden volunteering at Croome started over the Easter Holiday in 1996. I went to a dilapidated caravan at the Punchbowl gates to express my interest and in August 1996 the Sunday monthly volunteer team was created. A team led by Kate (the first NT Gardener) & Brian Brown cut a path round the lake. There I met John Sayer, another long-standing volunteer.

In early days, the work was dominated by clearance. The undergrowth was a mass of fallen trees, vicious 20ft brambles, nettles and debris. With nowhere to take timber and brash, we had regular large bonfires. This is where the phrase 'slash and burn team' came in!



I remember the huge sense of achievement one Sunday when we

broke through the jungle of the Drive and saw the Lake. There was a narrow path through to the Temple Greenhouse but beyond this the Evergreen Shrubbery was a dark, oppressive, impenetrable jungle; half of it had been completely ploughed out with a ditch and fence by the splendid oak tree. This was where the original visitor entrance was created.

Sunday volunteer days were supplemented by NT groups from Solihull and Cheltenham and Kate formed the Croome Volunteers in early 1998 to co-ordinate activity and provide educational and social support. This organization was wound up in Dec 2004 but the core of volunteers has carried on. Volunteer gardeners have tackled planting and weeding, pruning and mulching, felling and shredding, reed beds, archaeology, car parking, fishing, building, problem-solving, furniture removal, tent erection and cattle ranching – to name but a few.'

A VIEW FROM THE COURT

By Operations Manager Christian Walker

Throughout Croome there are projects and works underway. In terms of the Court we have been able to remove some of the barriers from the front and use some sustainable sourced timber posts and rope to provide a tidier approach. Within the mansion we are renewing the items in the drawing room and completing simple maintenance work to shutters and loose floorboards.

Outside the visitor areas we have now confirmed work for the removal of more asbestos from the first floor. This work is planned for May/June and will also allow investigation of the structural issues associated with the first floor. We are also completing the costing for repairing the broken main beam in the library floor. The opening of extra rooms is currently on hold while we consolidate our operations in the Court – we do not want a repeat of the basement, where we can't open it on some days.

Elsewhere, sadly, on the second floor it looks like our resident pests - the Deathwatch Beetles - have found a second home.

Outside - to the south side of the Court, the paths reinstated last September are being extended to the Chinese Bridge site, where a new temporary bridge allows access across the river and then from the Court to the east to the Rotunda. During these and other works around the Court, including removing an old oil tank, we have discovered the 6th Earl's Water Supply chamber (measuring at least 4.5m deep). Within this we believe we have found the foundations of a 17th century building



Finally, at the Court we have now erected a small marquee (thanks to Bill, Robin and Alan), to provide a catering outlet at the Court – we hope to open this at weekends and during the school holidays during the summer.

VOLUNTEER'S VIEW OF THE COURT

This issue featuring Linda Pritchard

Having been a member of the National Trust for a number of years I had decided when I retired to become a volunteer and then discovered Croome was wanting people.

I do two shifts a week as well as working with the Oral History project and helping out where I can. I love the great sense of light in the Long Gallery and think that leaving it empty is the best way to show it off.

I enjoy "off the wall" conversations with visitors and getting them to challenge some of their pre-conceived ideas. I have also enjoyed working

with and getting to know the other volunteers.

When I'm not here I have four horses - and two very spoilt cats - to look after. When we can get away we love exploring "off the beaten track" Spain.



New Shop

Following long discussions with English Heritage, we have now agreed on a location for the temporary shop to the west of the current plant sales area. We are working on landscape proposals for this area at the RAF Buildings. Sadly we have further delays to the planning application submitted over a month ago following a sudden request for extra drawings of the Oak Frame building we are planning.

Drinks and Events License

We are now halfway through the application process to receive a license for Croome Park that would enable us to sell the Cider made from our Apples and locally produced wines and bitter. We hope this will be in place by early June. The full permanent license also allows us to host events and concerts – not that we are planning any Glastonbury style concerts! (but what a thought! - ed.)

Volunteer visit to nearby property (which shall remain nameless)

In March twelve volunteers drove through sleet and snow to a nearby property with Sanderson Miller and Vassalli links. A locked door at ground floor level was the apparent entrance (no signs at all). After knocking a few times it was slowly opened and "Yes ?" very curtly delivered from an unhappy countenance. Twenty minutes of confusion (theirs) over entry costs until one of our number took over the transaction and then we were left standing in a hallway without any direction as to where to go. How not to do it.

Oral History
Eileen Clement

We now have a team of ten volunteers working on different aspects of this project but there is one large gap in this team – we need someone who is computer literate who can copy recorded interviews on to Audacity on the laptop and generally keep the database up to date. If you feel this is for you please get in touch with me.

Since Croome Court opened many people have visited for the first time for forty years or more. They have fascinating memories and we are eager to capture these in order to convey as full a picture as possible of ‘Croome before the National Trust’. Please pass on contact details of prospective interviewees or contributors of photographs, press cuttings, artefacts, etc. to any member of the team. We are now updating and re-presenting the Oral History project exhibition, currently housed in the basement and are looking at moving this upstairs.

Friends of Croome

Dr Jones reported on an excellent AGM, paying special tribute to Joan and John Willis, retiring founder members of the Friends. Support is now huge, with a membership of over 400. Eric Jones reported on the transformation brought about by the opening of the Court. He celebrated the wholeness of Croome as a grand design; it was conceived as a single entity, Court and Park as one, where neither can be fully appreciated or understood on its own. Friends Membership - see back page.

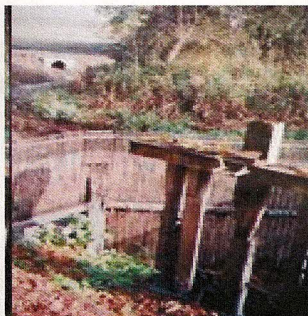
A WORD FROM THE PAST

By Archaeologist Jeremy Millin

Over the years the South Worcestershire Archaeological Group (SWAG) has excavated the Carriage Splash which crossed the Croome River at its southern end.

The Splash was designed to be permanently covered by about five inches of water, so it was, in the past, possible to examine the finely laid stone setted approach, but not the structure of the submerged causeway. However when emergency work was done by National Trust to stem a leak in the River, we had an opportunity to record a brick culvert under the splash, the remains of its surface and a series of guide posts alongside.

Surprisingly, the River has a plug, like a rather large bath plug. The 250 year old oak plug fits snugly to a square hole fashioned from massive timber and held within a jointed frame stuck into puddled clay and lifted via a vertical post. The whole plug assembly is protected by a screen of oak and wrought iron bars designed to prevent fish being lost if the river is drained. Those parts of the plug and screen which have been permanently submerged are in excellent condition. However, parts above the water seemed to have rotted away by the early 20th century, as there is evidence of extensive previous repair. The plug which is 2' square, has been repaired and we are currently researching the form of the screen so that it too can be accurately repaired later in the year.



SWAG are also investigating the path system in the Home Shrubberies.

Initial results confirm that little has changed since Brown's day.

Hoggin is used for an eight foot wide cambered drive, taking in the Rotunda. But there are lesser paths too, some apparently always grass and detectable only as earthworks. More cobbles have been encountered close to the south wall of the walled garden, as though a fancy path was created here to allow close appreciation of exotics trained to the wall. Old iron nails stud this wall in great density and number.

The Flower Garden, in its time second only to Kew for variety and possibly extent, appears on the Snape Plan with an oval central ornamental pool and, to the north, a series of glasshouses and a bothy cottage. Part of the site is privately owned, but NT has the majority. Almost nothing of it is visible today, save a heavily silted central depression signifying the site of the pool.



During investigations by Pershore College student Ashley Ryall (BSc Horticulture), a single trench located one of the glasshouses which turned out to be a form of pit house, possibly with a forcing hot bed, a tufa ground and a perfect gravel topped path with a lias edging.

Preserved, as it has been, from later change, the flower garden has enormous potential for our understanding of contemporary gardening.

WHOSE STORY ?

By Outreach Officer Joyce Wallace



Spring has been a time of preparation and an opportunity to get ever more diverse groups interested and excited about Croome. We have been speaking to groups (such as Evesham Polish Association) and involving others, like the Worcester Afro Caribbean Association, in the planning for the All Nations Picnic on Sunday 20 June. This will be an exciting day of live music and the exploration of Croome's trees through food samples from around the world. There will be an opportunity to join in with outdoor games from many parts of the globe. Volunteer Margaret Marshall has been exploring their origins and her findings will be permanently at Croome. So come and try your hand at yo-yoing which originates, like our Gingko trees, from China. The day will be documented by NT photographers and the results included in the national photo library. At the beginning of June, National Volunteering Week celebrates the contributions made by volunteers. Sue Waugh and four Croome volunteers will be giving anyone interested a taste of volunteering at Croome.

The Hare Krishna publication is currently being edited by historian

Chris Upton. We have been working with Worcester University 3rd year Digital Arts students (inc film, animation graphics, journalism) who have a brief to create a page/cover for the publication inspired by Hare Krishna faith stories, Croome as a spiritual haven or the 2009 oral history research. The winning design will be published. Students have toured the Court and Jamuina Zakheim, a previous student at Chaitanya College, shared her memories of growing up at Croome.

Volunteer visit: To Bhaktivendanta Manor, Watford, British headquarters of the Hare Krishna (also previous home of Beatle, George Harrison), including tour of house, temple and gardens. Only 50 seats - details in Volu



STOP PRESS

Many congratulations to Joyce, who is expecting a baby later this year and looks truly blooming !

CARING FOR THE COURT

An interview with Phyll Owen by Kath Morris

Phyll Owen, Housekeeping Assistant, does a wonderful job routinely cleaning the Court so that it always looks fresh and welcoming for our visitors. She has also undertaken some special restoration projects over the past few months, receiving some special training recently to bring the oak floors in the principal rooms back to their former glory.

'Special wax polish has to be applied by hand,' Phyll explained. 'Then, when this has dried off, the electric polisher is used to produce a rich finish - which of course has to be non-slip.' Another ongoing project is

cleaning the windows.

In conjunction with Katriona Hughes (Regional Conservator) four volunteers worked really hard to help Phyll bring windows

up to standard, at the same time recording any slight cracks so that they could be monitored over time.

A local young man with a new business has been cleaning the outsides. The impact has been impressive.

Any volunteers who would like to be involved - see Genevieve.



The Plane Truth

You may have heard the rumours, but the Chronicle captured the moment when a gentleman from Hay on Wye was so desperate to see what was going on at Croome Court that he dropped in by aeroplane, landing on the grass in South Park and surprising the cattle (no animals were hurt).



The National Trust is keen to stress the importance of accessibility for all and we wonder whether we've missed a trick in not providing aircraft hangars in the orchard, and perhaps a small Air Control Tower on top of the redundant Rotunda.

Our visitor was not the first airman to 'drop in on Croome - during WWII a Wellington bomber crash landed in front of Croome Court having failed shortly after take-off from Defford. With an aircraft full of fuel the crew made a hasty retreat only to watch horrified as a 'Boffin' remained inside trying to retrieve his equipment. He was dragged clear moments before the whole lot was engulfed in flames.

Your Story

In future issues, we aim to highlight more of the work of our Volunteers, past and present. We'd love to hear from anyone who has material they feel would be of general interest. Email the editors - details on back page.

VOLUNTEERS ONLY



Croome-a-doodle-doo !

Every second Tuesday of the month 6-8pm, usually in the RAF Canteen. Come and meet the other volunteers. A chance to chat and share experiences. There will also be Q & A sessions with the experts.

The first "Croome Doodle-Doo" will be -

11 May - Croome Court - Explore the rooms behind the closed doors. Ground and first floor rooms will be open. Staff will be room guides so think hard for really devious & difficult questions to put to them.

3 June. Walk to the Panorama Tower with Christian to look inside.

13 July - Q & A

10 August - Pimms in the Park . A pleasant evening by the Temple Greenhouse with lashings of the lovely liquid !

14 September - to be confirmed

12 October - to be confirmed

9 November - to be confirmed

14 December - Christmas Meal in the RAF Canteen.

BHAKTIVEDANTA MANOR

Visit to the Krishnas at Watford.
1 June 7.45am-7.30pm

50 seats available at subsidised rate of £5 (bargain!) Bring packed lunch but NO meat taken onto the site. Please take cash payment to Gen by Wednesday 26 May.

You are missed !

On behalf of everyone at Croome the Chronicle team would like to send best wishes to Ann Butcher who works in the office at High Green. Ann is still recovering from an accident in January and although many people have rallied round to cover her responsibilities she has been greatly missed. Get well soon!

DIARY THIS !

CROOME IS ALIVE WITH THE SOUND OF MUSIC

5 JUNE Saturday 7.30pm ELGAR in the Long Gallery. [SOLD OUT]

17 JULY Saturday 12, 1 & 2pm Malvern District Brass Band at the Temple Greenhouse

26 JULY Saturday 7.30pm RISING STARS in the Long Gallery [SOLD OUT]

14 AUGUST Saturday 11-3pm MUSIC IN THE PARK - free event

4 SEPTEMBER Saturday 7.30pm CROOME ENSEMBLE in the Long Gallery

GREAT EVENTS

12 MAY - Wednesday 7-9.30pm Evening bird walk.[SOLD OUT]

18 MAY - Tuesday 7-9.30pm Evening Bird Walk. Charge.

29 MAY- 6 JUNE 10-4pm Pirate Treasure Map Trail Child £1.50

20 JUNE Sunday 12-7pm ALL NATIONS PICNIC [see Joyce's article]

21-27 JUNE till 8.30pm - MIDSUMMER PICNIC Week - late opening

26 & 27 JUNE 12-4pm WIND IN THE WILLOWS family fun

17 & 18 JULY 11-4pm RAF DEFFORD AT 70! Celebrate !

24 JULY - 8 AUGUST 11-4.30pm DISCOVER DAZZLING DESIGNS -
- Free self guided family trail

9-15 AUGUST 10-4pm STATUES - free self guided family trail

16-20 AUGUST 11-4pm KITE FLYING WEEK - Charge £2.50

21 AUGUST 10.30-12.30pm WALK AROUND THE WORLD. Charge.

22 AUGUST - 5 SEPTEMBER 10-4pm EXPLORE CROOME
- Free self guided trail

CONTACTS

The Editors welcome contributions from everyone. Any ideas or articles please send to alexis.chronicle@googlemail.com

Remember the Duty Manager's phone number is 07920 751589

Telephone number for Croome is 01905 371006

Friends of Croome. Membership is only £7.50 pa. Contact Mrs Diana Skeys Tel: 01905 820044 or email derek-di@skeys.demon.co.uk Membership forms available online at www.friendsofcroomepark.org.uk/