

# CROOME CHRONICLE

## MY MOMENT TO SHINE

Croome *is* the Centre of the Universe. Flirtatious and beguiling, it gently woos you, teases you, gathers you in, vies for your attention, enralls you with its magic, grips you in its power, never lets you go ... Ha! But there is life outside, and occasionally one of the love-struck volunteers breaks free to shine forth from some other sector of the community. So it was that the limelight was on Garden Steward and Friends of Croome stalwart Judith Stanley in May when she was selected to carry the Olympic torch. Here's her story.

"Last December I learnt that I would be one of just 8,000 people to carry the Olympic torch and I would be running my leg of the relay in Callow Hill on the 24<sup>th</sup> May. My nomination was based primarily on running Hindlip Badminton Club for the last 17 years, encouraging and inspiring people aged 18-80 to take up the sport and to keep active in mind and body. Another factor was my voluntary work at Croome—as a Garden Steward and on the FOC Events Committee, where I devote a great deal of time to organizing social events, which both promote and raise funds for Croome.



My big day dawned with the prospect of beautiful blue skies. I arrived at my rendezvous point and met some of my fellow runners. All of us felt truly privileged and excited to have been chosen. We were taken on a bus to a holding area to await the arrival of the Torch Relay – tension mounted. Then we were off, and it was an absolutely

amazing sight. Crowds lined the road, old people, young people, children from the local schools - all of them waving and cheering. Soon it was my turn to be dropped off and, for the next few minutes whilst I waited for the previous relay runner, members of the public clambered to have their photo taken with the Torch. It was wonderful for everyone to be able to get involved, including family and friends from Croome.

The convoy came into sight and the Olympic flame, which had started its journey in Greece, was handed over to me. I was flanked by Metropolitan Police Officers as I began my run carrying the Torch aloft and feeling very proud. Towards the end of my run the crowds became deeper. I was surrounded by spectators and the noise levels were incredible. I really didn't want it to end.

All in all, it was a magical experience and a day I will never forget – and I also get to keep the Torch. "



## WHAT A FINE OLD TIME WE HAD

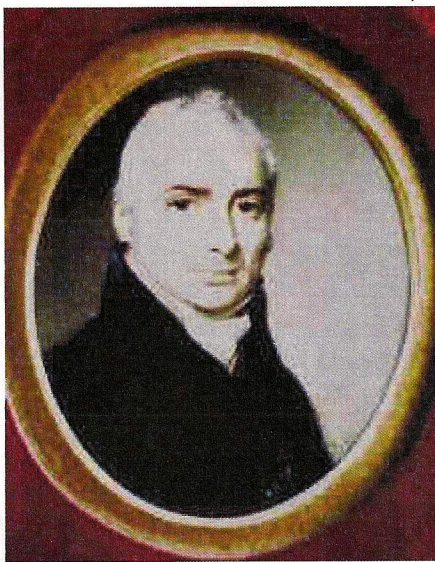
Jubilee street party in the RAF Canteen did not suffer the drenching from the weather that many others did. The sold out event was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



Photos by Kath Morris and Larry Gleaves







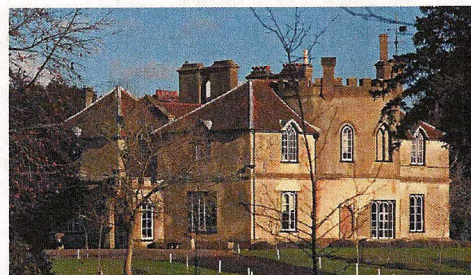
## Whatever happened to John?

On a quiet afternoon at the Court, this question from one of my fellow volunteers set me wondering. We had begun our conversation by talking about Spring Hill House, which in 1807 was left by the 6th Earl to his 'beloved son' the Hon. John Coventry.

John was the Earl's second son and Barbara's first son - the only one of the Earl's three sons who was referred to in this affectionate way. He was well provided for in his father's will - the terms of which are outlined in Catherine Gordon's *The Coventrys of Croome*. However, it seems as though the favoured son of the family was also held in high esteem by his uncle, John Bulkeley Coventry, the younger brother of the 6th Earl. The connections between the Bulkeley family of Hampshire dated back to the marriage of Anne Coventry, sister of the 5th Earl, to Sir Dewey Bulkeley. After Sir Dewey's death in 1734 the estate passed to his son; on his death in 1764 to his sister, another Anne, and then on her death to cousin John Bulkeley

Coventry, who took the name Bulkeley as a condition of the will.

In 1801 John Bulkeley had left Burgate House in Fordingbridge Hampshire to his nephew John and in 1824 it seems as though John decided to sever his connections with Worcestershire and Gloucestershire to concentrate on his properties in Hampshire. He therefore sold Spring Hill House, which subsequently had a succession of owners, at one time being the home of Gen. the Hon Edward Pyndar Lygon of the Beauchamp family.



John died at Burgate, aged 64, in 1829 - two years before his half-brother, the Blind Earl, and is buried in Fordingbridge. His descendants remained on the estate until 1937. At this date ended the Bulkeley-Coventry occupation of Burgate which had lasted since 1446. The house was occupied by ICI for a while and is now Burgate Manor, the national headquarters for the Game Conservancy and Wildlife Trust. Spring Hill House, John's other home, is still in private ownership, the trees of its Capability Brown landscape shielding it from the public eye.

## Lord Coventry's Dressing Room by Carol Lewis

Some months ago I arrived for my Sunday shift in the Court expecting the usual suspects to be there but what a shock, 11 Volunteers had turned up. Having had some pleasant banter with colleagues I was feeling particularly generous and offered to wash up our tea cups. Big mistake! Why? Because when I went up stairs all the rooms were occupied. Where now? I wandered into the Dining Room to have a chat with Jackie Eyles, then I realised that The Lord's Dressing Room was empty so I went in there. At first I wasn't sure how to engage visitors. I really didn't know anything about this room. I think that first week I talked in a very general way, asking if it was their first visit to the Court, where they were from etc. but I knew I must do better next time. Since then it has become my favourite room and this is why.

Although it is the smallest room on this floor it is, probably, the most personal, private one. It is built in the northeast end tower, added to the Court by Lancelot Capability Brown in 1751. The joinery, plain carving and cornice and friezes were by Hobcraft, an archived bill from him for the cornice and friezes is dated 1757 which gives an indication of how long the work had taken to that point.

When the new wing was added the chimney of the original house was not going to be used on this floor so the obvious thing to do was to knock into it to create a fireplace for this room. The chimneypiece is by Sefferin Alken (1764).

A passageway was cut through the original external wall to the Dining Room so that the two Dining Room doors could be positioned opposite each other and to avoid the old chimney this had to be done at an angle. As this is not shown on the 1771 Vitruvius Britannicus plan it is not known whether it was just omitted or if it was a later addition. Because symmetry was important a jib or hidden door was fitted. This would create the illusion that the chimneypiece was in the centre of the room.

In old age the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl suffered from Arthritis and had apartments in the Red Wing with a door that gave access to the half-landing of the main staircase. This meant he only had a few stairs to negotiate to find himself, effectively, in a bungalow as everything he needed was on the ground floor. From this room he could see visitors arrive from the north window and keep an eye on his servants in the Red Wing from the east window. I like to think this would have been his 'retreat', somewhere he could sit by the fire and read or even take an afternoon nap, although looking at the inventory of furnishings created on his death it was probably rather crowded but none the less homely.

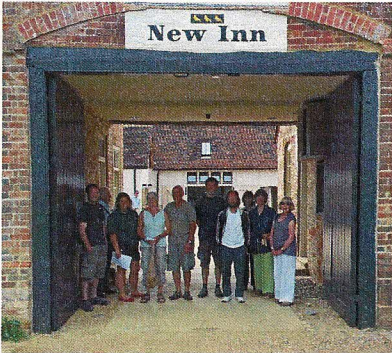
Since working this room I have grown to enjoy it more and more. I have already found what I believe to be a scrap of the wallpaper as shown in *Country Life* and hope to find out much more. There are many questions I want answers to, maybe one day I will be able to share them with you.



# “Oh! Lead me to the far extended walks, the far majestic paradise of Stowe”

(James Thomson, autumn 1744)

Barry Smith, Head Gardener at Stowe, is preparing to move a golf course ... this a group of Croome's park and garden staff and volunteers learned one day in May when we were invited to find out more about the work and restoration of the garden where Lancelot Brown was Head Gardener before he was commissioned by the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Coventry at Croome Park. Brown, in fact, was married at Stowe and lived in one of the Boycott Pavilions.



In 1990 The National Trust took over the gardens at the request of Stowe School, who had rescued the estate in 1922, and spent £10million over 20 years 'reclaiming the wilderness'. The plan was to be able to recreate the footsteps of the 'original' 18<sup>th</sup> century tourist while allowing for all the modern needs, staff and visitor facilities, car parking, etc. After a further £9million restoration programme, the Visitor centre at the New Inn comprising tap room, laundry, kitchens and parlours (in later years a farm but once the original 1790s visitor entrance), has been opened and we duly admired and enquired with perhaps just a hint of envy – it's very, very nice.

After a highly informative talk about the transformation, by Property Manager David Brooks, and a viewing of the excellent DVD *Stories of the Temples at Stowe* by Richard Wheeler, the Trust's Garden Historian, we took a turn about the garden to work off our lunch. The original garden plan evolved as a journey through the mythical paths of life, encompassing such delights as the Palladian Bridge, Lord Cobham's Pillar, the Corinthian Arch, two lakes & the Temple of Venus, to name but a few. Like Hercules, we had to choose between three paths, Vice, Virtue and Liberty. Vice cast an ugly shadow but Virtue won the day. Hooray!

Many thanks to Stowe for their hospitality – It's only about 60 miles from Croome and it makes for a fascinating and – in the world of landscape gardening – a very relevant day out.

## GARDEN AND PARK UPDATE - Katherine Aiker

As always we've been very busy in the garden and park. Since winter, the ongoing parkland job has been making tree guards in Middle Grove on Westfield, which can be seen if you look out and to the right from the Saloon door in the Court. By the time you read this we shall have finished about 130 of them. Once these are complete we'll move across to the east of the river where there are a few score more to make.

In between tree guarding we have been weeding in the garden; the wet then hot then wet weather has made for perfect conditions for weed growth, so we have been struggling to keep up somewhat, although I think we've got the situation in hand now! We've also been controlling weeds in South Park and over at Old Wood (the 10 acre patch where we planted 7000 trees last winter). I am relieved to report that despite the drought conditions last year the trees we planted over there are doing reasonably well! The next job will be refreshing the barley bales in the lake so as to keep the amount of blanket weed to a minimum, allowing reflections to be seen in clear water.

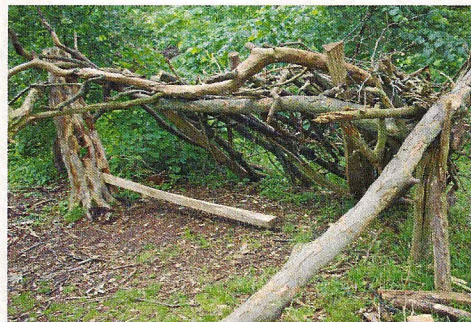
We've got two exciting projects coming up in the garden; the Punchbowl Gates restoration and the Black Bridge replacement. Both projects have been a long time in the planning and fundraising stages. The Punchbowl Gates project has started and you may have already seen the handsome new cleft oak fencing next to the stone piers. We are very grateful to Worcester and Malvern NT Association for the generous donation which is funding the whole project. I hope that the metal work element of the project will start within the next month or so.

At the time of writing, the Black Bridge Project is in the final stages of fund raising, and the architect has drawn up

detailed plans for the new crossing. We hope that everything will be finalised as soon as possible and the project can get underway in early autumn.

In May, a number of Garden Stewards joined me on a tour of the garden – I shall be repeating the tour soon, so look out in the Nugget for the date. I am pleased to say that the Garden Tours by volunteers (set up by Lucy) has had a really positive and successful start. Visitor feedback has been great, so well done to all Garden Tour Guides!

The Wild Walk North is now home to our 'Wild Play Area' which Hugh and Justin, the Wardens, created a few months ago. There are balance beams made of logs and branches, a throne cut from a tree stump, sections of trees to climb, and lots of logs and branches for den making. The area seems to be really popular with visiting families – dismantling numerous dens after the weekend has now become a regular job for us!



Thanks as always to all of the dedicated volunteers who work in the garden and park, whether weeding, fencing or stewarding, I really appreciate the time and effort you put into making the outdoor spaces at Croome so special.



## FLYING IN THIS SPRING

One of the pleasures of volunteering as a Garden Steward is to see and hear the many species of bird that Croome's Diverse habitats attract. Amazingly ninety species have been recorded in the landscape park. Some are resident but many are summer and winter visitors.

Bar Headed Goose



This year the very wet April delayed the arrival of some of the summer migrants by up to three weeks but by the middle of May breeding activity was in full swing. Woodpeckers, Jackdaw, Starling, Nuthatch, Tits and Little Owls were all seen visiting nest sites in holes and cavities in the more mature trees in the garden and parkland, and Nightingales have been heard singing in the surrounding woodland. Raven, an early breeder, successfully reared young for a second year in the great cedar adjacent to the 'Chinese' bridge and Mistle Thrush young were in the Wild Walk. Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Willow Warbler and Wren have all been holding breeding territories in the Lakeside shrubberies and Wild Walk.

A particular treat has been viewing the activities of a pair of Goldcrests, the UK's smallest bird measuring a mere 9cm, amongst the yews near Brown's memorial. House Martins are nesting on the Court. I wonder if numbers will beat the 83 active nests of last year, and whether Swallows will nest again inside the RAF buildings.

Along the river Reed Buntings are frequently seen clinging to reed stems. The male has a sparrow like body, black head and throat and a broad white collar and can often be seen singing from the top of a bush. Less visible but always betrayed by their manic chattering and erratic calls are the Reed and Sedge Warblers. They are skulking birds who inhabit the riverside vegetation and both have brown upper parts with buff or creamy white under parts. If you are lucky enough to get a view you can separate them because the sedge Warbler has a very prominent white stripe above its eye. Both can be found at the moment either side of the 'Chinese' bridge. Mallards, Coot and Moorhen have all had young but once again the predation rates are high. A pair of mute swans bred successfully on the island. Sadly the complete absence of the cygnets two weeks later meant that they too had been predated. It has always surprised me just how few swans actually breed at Croome considering there are usually over thirty birds here.



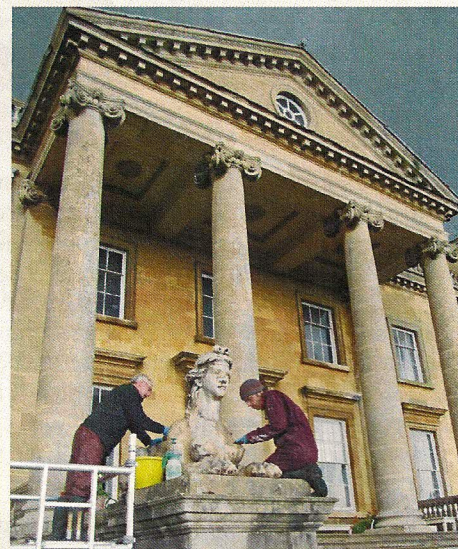
## House & Visitor Services Update

The rain and clouds may have been putting some of our visitors off, but we're not letting that dampen our spirits.

The House and Visitor Services team work hard to keep our income within budget and to meet our many targets. To keep within budget we need to welcome 140,000 visitors to Croome. We're doing well considering the disappointing weather: against a budget of 52,478 visitors we have had 45,588. Our admission income is on target which is good news. A lot of work has been completed to encourage people to visit during the gloomy weather. There are now plans for an advert campaign for the (hopefully) upcoming good weather. Press releases have been sent out every week so you may have seen notice of our Jubilee events, the Panorama Tower opening (front page!) and our Sphinx restoration.

John and the Reception team have kept pace with recruiting new members to the National Trust (which raised £41,500 for us last year!) and have already signed up 236 memberships. The new team of Visitor Reception volunteers have been a great success and have helped cope well with peak periods.

We are just about to launch our new Visitor Welcome team, a new role for volunteers which Heather and Jono will be coordinating. This is a really positive step towards giving our visitors a personal welcome and helping to improve their experience at Croome. Other good news is that Heather (who has been on work placement from university) will be joining us as a member of staff until September, not only to launch the Welcome team, but also to help with the delivery of our large events programme.





## by Robert Phelps



A much more successful breeder is the Canada Goose. By early June four healthy broods were evident. The Canada Goose is a species introduced into the UK from North America in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first birds formed part of the Royal collection and were considered an exotic species. It is perhaps no surprise then that in about 1768 a small number formed part of Lady Coventry's menagerie. Croome has a summer population of about 40 Canada Geese. However during the winter this can swell to around 400 birds. The winter flock is always worth checking closely because it can often contain the unexpected. Last winter the flock included a Bar Headed Goose and an Australian Shelduck. Both are non-native species so these birds were obviously escapes from private collections. But nice to see all the same.

Common Sandpiper were seen along the banks in Spring as they stopped off on their migration to more northerly and western breeding grounds. Having bred they are amongst the first birds to begin their return migration, adults through July and August followed by the juveniles in September. Look out for these along the lower river. They are easily identified as a medium sized wader, grey brown above with pure white under parts, a straight bill and short greenish legs. They constantly bob up and down, especially when feeding.

The lower river often produces surprises for here in the past I have seen Shelduck, Great Crested Grebe and Little Egret. This spring saw the arrival of a pair of Oystercatcher. An inhabitant of coasts and river estuaries they move inland to breed, and their continued presence over at least a fortnight led to unfulfilled hopes that they would breed at Croome.

Never mind there's always next year and the sights and sounds of Croomes winter birds to look forward to.



Jon has been working with Heather and Jono to ensure our events are delivered successfully on the day. He took the lead in planning our 1940s weekend, while I helped put the finishing touches to our HLF bid for Croome Redefined.



As always, there are lots of things happening in the house. I hope you're getting good feedback about the new family trail – keep letting us know how we can improve it! I've received some great ideas already which we'll include.

The Great Horse has had some much needed attention (except for a House Martin...) and awaits its retouching in August. Lucy has been a brilliant addition to the house team and has been working with many of you to get the guided tour programme up and running. She is also putting together portfolio folders for each room to hold interesting photos and information for volunteers and visitors.

The restoration of the eagle on the Main Hall fireplace is due this summer thanks to a donation made specifically for it, so we'll update you with the progress.

I hope you've all met Becky, our Volunteer Coordinator, who has now helped us reach a total of 256 volunteers. She has organised recruitment and induction sessions which many volunteers have been involved with. We hope there will be more to come!

Thanks to all the team and all of our volunteers who have helped us achieve so much this year already,

**Amy, House & Visitor Services Manager**



## COVENTRY BY NAME

*Why were the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl and others holding the title referred to as Earls of Coventry, whereas one would have expected the title to be Earl Coventry of Croome ?*

The title first given to the head of the Coventry family was Baron Coventry of Aylesborough, bestowed on the Lord Keeper in 1628, early in the reign of Charles 1<sup>st</sup>. Aylesborough is an area which formed part of the Coventry estates located around what is now known as Allesborough Hill just north of Pershore. This title became extinct on the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl's death in 1719 which ended the direct line of descent from the Lord Keeper.

The title Earl of Coventry was given at a later stage to Thomas the 5<sup>th</sup> Baron - he who is buried and has the splendid memorial in Elmley Castle Church. Thomas was created 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Coventry in 1697, his eldest son to take the subsidiary title of Viscount Deerhurst. With the title Earl of Coventry, the family name was linked to the ancient city of Coventry. After all, the earliest ancestor claimed by the family had been John de Coventry, the mercer who was recorded as the executor of Dick Whittington's will in 1423 and, in 1425, like him became Lord Mayor of London

However, the title Earl of Coventry had been bestowed before upon a totally different family. It was given to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, favourite of James 1<sup>st</sup>, as a subsidiary title in 1623. After the assassination of Buckingham in 1628, the title passed to his son who became 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Buckingham and Earl of Coventry, but on his death in 1687 the title became extinct so that 10 years later it was available for 'our' Coventrys. A scandal became attached to the earlier Coventry title when allegations were made that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Buckingham had buried his illegitimate son by the Countess of Shrewsbury in Westminster Abbey under the title Earl of Coventry.

The title of Coventry appears even earlier in history when some sources cite Roger de Cundi (born about 1128) as having the title Lord Coventry but importantly not Earl ... He married, in 1153 Alice de Cheney, and had one daughter Agnes. She married into the Clifford family of Herefordshire.

## A WOOD BY ANY OTHER NAME..... Hugh Warwick

Do you know your Sandy Orchard from your Salt Bath Covert? Ox Leasow from Old Ground? The place names in and around Croome give a fascinating glimpse into the historic uses and associations of the land we think we know, many of them pre-dating the 18<sup>th</sup> century designed landscape. To avoid just listing field names I'm going to focus on a few and try to shed some light on them.

Sandy Orchard, the location of the RAF buildings, is, unsurprisingly the only sandy area at Croome, with everything else being heavy clay and was originally home to a large orchard. In the centre was a cider mill, now Keeper's Cottage (currently for sale), essential as most of the manual labourers would've received cider as a part of their pay.

In the north eastern corner of Sandy Orchard is Corner Cottage. This first appeared on the 1968 OS map simply as "Gerrards". As many of you know, the Gerrard family had a longstanding association with Croome having worked the estate for many decades. A member of the Gerrard family still lived there 5 years ago; nice to have had that recorded and honoured on the OS maps.

On the Broome plan of 1763 there's no sign whatsoever of Menagerie Wood, but work began on Lady Maria's Menagerie in 1768 with improvements continuing as late as 1805. What we now know as Menagerie Wood is marked on both the 1796 Snape plan and the 1810 Hopcraft plan as Westfield Wood. Having looked on the internet (which we know is always accurate!) the 1964 - 1970 OS maps still label it as Westfield Wood, but by the 1971 - 1972 revision it's labelled as Menagerie Wood. On the Snape plan of 1796 the area to the west of the wood is referred to as Westfield, obviously being west of the centre of the estate, with Westfield Wood created on part of Westfield. Why did the name Westfield Wood slip out of use? Or perhaps, more accurately, why wasn't it called Menagerie Wood in the first place? I can only guess that the woodland created to hide the sights and sounds of the Menagerie until you were allowed to see it, was given a name to aid its purpose; another layer of Brownian deception.

A final curiosity, delving a little further back to the Doherty plan of 1751 before Brown and the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl got their labourers' hands dirty; directly to the north of the Court is First Mill Field - on what is now Church Hill. Beyond Horse Close on North Field Bank is Third Mill Field, further to the north is another Mill Field, harder to discern but possibly Far Mill Field. Obviously an estate of this size would have required mills for flour production; the steady and reliable flow of water which was later canalised and culverted along that exact route would have been ideal, but what became of the mills and where was flour produced after Brown's plans swung into action?

### **Marie Curie Cancer Care Twilight walk at Croome on 25th August.**

Our roving reporter Sue Coleman, fellow editor Alexis Robinson and Garden Steward Liz Turrell are taking part in the Marie Curie Twilight walk at Croome on the 25th August and we need your support—so please sponsor us and help raise much needed funds for this great organisation.

Go to [www.justgiving.com/Siou-Coleman](http://www.justgiving.com/Siou-Coleman) or [www.justgiving.com/Alexis-J-D-Robinson](http://www.justgiving.com/Alexis-J-D-Robinson) or [www.justgiving.com/Liz-Turrell](http://www.justgiving.com/Liz-Turrell) or envelope a contribution and pass it on to Sue, Alexis or Liz.



## The Flipside of the Rich Man's Coin by Barbara Wild

The Croome Story is one of wealth and privilege, elegance and beauty, power and influence. Landowners, by purchase and by marriage, the Coventry Dynasty lived a privileged lifestyle. So, let's flip the coin . . . and learn about the fate of two ordinary Pershore labourers, living unprivileged lifestyles, who were transported for life for poaching on the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl's land. My story, and interest, was prompted by a visit of a Pershore couple researching their family history. They had discovered that two of their relatives *Samuel and Joseph Turvey* were involved in an affray on Croome land resulting in the death of one of the Earl of Coventry's employees. After arrest and trial, they were transported to Tasmania for life. This transcript (abridged) is from the Worcester Lent Assizes 1845:

*"1845 At the Lent Assizes, eleven poachers were put on their trial for the murder of Thomas Staite, one of the Earl of Coventry's watchers, who was killed in a very desperate affray which took place between the keepers and the prisoners on the 19th of the previous December . . . . . The keepers and watchers were nine in number, and they encountered the party of poachers at the gate leading into Park Farm, Pirton. A fight with bludgeons took place, in which the keepers were altogether worsted, and one or two of them left for dead. The poachers also fired off two guns, but the shots did not take effect. The unfortunate man, Staite, was found by his comrades after the affray was over in a ditch close by the Park Farm house, so badly used that he could not speak; and, indeed, he never uttered a word from that hour. He was taken first to a neighbouring cottage, and then to the Worcester Infirmary, where he died in six days. The identity of all the prisoners, and the part they had each taken in the affray, was very clearly made out by the evidence of four of the watchers . . . . . Mr. Godson, in a very able speech for the prisoners, contended that the case was not made out by the evidence of the keepers . . . . . ending with a protest against the game laws generally, as the cause of much injustice and innumerable crimes. The Lord Chief Baron Pollock, before whom the case was tried, told the jury that they might find the prisoners guilty of manslaughter;. . . . his lordship sentenced them to different terms of transportation . . . . Francis Dingley, Samuel Turvey, Joseph Turvey, and Joseph Tandy were transported for life . . . . . The prisoners were all Pershore men, but the case excited the most intense interest in that part of the county."*

The British Convict Transportation Registers 1787–1867, a database compiled from British Home Office records, show that Joseph and Samuel were two of 220 convicts transported on 13 May 1845, sailing on the "SS David Malcolm" for Norfolk Island and Van Dieman's Land (now Tasmania).

I located the original conduct records of male convicts, who sailed on the "SS David Malcolm", held by the Tasmanian Government. Every scanned page includes a comprehensive description of each man on board, full details of their crime and conviction and any misdemeanours that happened on board ship; for both it was their second conviction. Joseph, aged 47 years, married with 4 children, was transported for life, with a period of labour of 9 years. Samuel, aged 40 years, married with 5 children, was transported for life, with a period of labour of 3 years. Both were assigned to gangs in Norfolk Island. Further research showed that the worst offenders were transported to Norfolk Island, with a terrible reputation for brutality, and purposely structured to deter future offenders. So unpleasant were the conditions that

rebellions and uprisings were a regular occurrence. Although starting their sentences on Norfolk Island, Samuel and Joseph were transferred to Tasmania in 1847; Joseph on 18 May on the "Pestongee Bomangee" and Samuel on 6 August on the "Lady Franklin". Where they ended up I did not discover, but although already married, Samuel married Margaret Brown on 12th January 1858 at St Peter's, Hamilton (died 9th March 1880). There is no record of Joseph marrying again and he died on 11th June 1884 in Newtown pauper establishment.

My search continues . .



### ...wasn't that a dainty dish to set before a King (or Queen).....

Croome Court, July 1788 .... the King dined on salmon, carp, potted lamprey and venison. The spotlight fell on that local delicacy, lamprey, recently in the national Press. In the run-up to the Diamond Jubilee it was realised that the River Severn at Gloucester could not now provide enough of these charming little parasites to make the Lamprey Pie traditionally supplied to the Monarch on auspicious occasions. So the City of Gloucester had to go fishing further afield ..... to Canada, in fact.

Through the ages, the predilection of royalty for lamprey has been well recorded. King Henry I was reported to have died from a surfeit of lamprey in 1135. Not overly attractive, it looks similar to an eel and latches onto its host with a suckered mouth. It has a rasp-like tongue which then opens a hole in the skin and anticoagulants are secreted which keep the wound open for the lamprey to feed. Apparently Buckingham Palace was reluctant to comment upon whether the pies actually make it onto the royal dining table. Maybe the corgis have a treat.



## OUR VOLUNTEER SKILLS REGISTER by Ted Larnar

Surprisingly it was only last February that I input all our responses to the Questionnaire into a Croome based computer program with over 30 volunteer roles already being undertaken, (I did not realise how many), and some 90 additional skills on offer. Having typed them in it was interesting to see that with over 200 volunteers nearly every skill listed had at least one response – our expertise base is almost boundless.

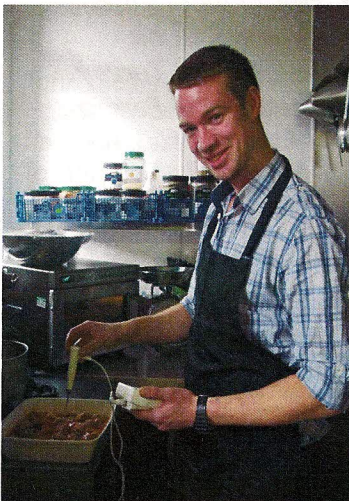
Since then the Register has been used by a number of staff to make personal contact with volunteers requesting specific help over a range of tasks. The day-to-day management of the Register is now with Becky, our Volunteer Coordinator.

One of the most common requests has been to support Kim and Shaun in the minor building repairs and refurbishments. These have included the painting of the RAF Building Canteen and Reception, **saving Croome over £3000**, constructing a “rabbit proof” storage area for the newly delivered plants for the Shop, assisting in taking down and then re-hanging the Horse Painting so that it could be X-rayed, varnishing all the tables and chairs outside the RAF Canteen, erecting a storage shed in the RAF Building courtyard, dismantling the Withdrawing Room project (some very keen volunteers), and there are still nearly 50 more jobs on the list - so do not despair, your turn will come !

As the Croome Redefined Project evolves a new wide range of opportunities will manifest itself. Having our Skills Register to hand will allow an immediate response either for us to use our skills and/or improve them by further training etc.

There is also a far wider interest in what we have achieved. Genevieve, who started the whole thing off but now works at Heelis, requested a Case Study so that the process we evolved at Croome, (but not our personal details), could be made available across the whole Trust. Not bad for the first few months.

### NEW CHEF AT CROOME



Since the beginning of June there has been a new face in the kitchen at the RAF canteen. Keith Turrell, originally from Kempsey, has worked in Poole and Bristol and at a Michelin star restaurant in Copenhagen. Keith has specialised in Asian, and more lately seafood, over recent years . “I enjoy cooking simple dishes and using seasonal ingredients, and I’m really looking forward to joining the team at Croome and building on the great reputation that has already been achieved “

### Q & A

Jill Tovey and the Oral History Project have kindly answered a couple of recent questions posed by volunteers.

**Q. Who last painted the Saloon?**

**A.** As far as I know, the present colours are Bilton. When the Croome Heritage Trust first bought the property there were green silk curtains there, which the National Trust gave to another property—I think !

**Q. Did George Harrison buy Croome for the Hare Krishnas?**

**A.** No, They had other properties in London and they amalgamated all the properties into one large mortgage.

### ANN MEADOWS MEMORIAL BENCH

Eric Jones, Vice-President of the Friends of Croome, has asked us to raise awareness that the oak bench in the grotto – a quiet and popular spot to contemplate the view across the lake – was provided by the family (in consultation with Katherine Alker) of Ann, in memory of the garden steward who died in October 2010.

Ann Meadows was a popular and dedicated volunteer who derived much pleasure from Croome.

Knowledgeable and well travelled, Anne loved all nature but had a particular interest in wild flowers and carried out detailed monthly surveys in the Park.

For many volunteers here, and for Eric and his wife who miss Ann as a special friend, the bench will always have great significance with memories of a lovely lady who regarded Croome Park as her spiritual home.



### THE LAST WORD

The Croome Chronicle is in it’s third year of publication. It is edited and produced by volunteers.

Please send us your ideas , articles and stories. We can’t promise to print everything as we have limited space but we will do our best. Use the boxes in the Mess or the Volunteers room in the Court or email us at:

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