

CROOME TIMES

The Newsletter of The Friends of Croome Park. No 4 – January 2006

Welcome to this our 4th edition of Croome Times as we near the end of our first year as a group. It has been a successful year during which we have been able to recruit over 90 members; have served tea / coffee on several occasions and swelled our funds by nearly £400.00; have applied for a Local History Initiative Grant (see below) and had two enjoyable trips to other N T properties. We now look forward to our first AGM (with something special) and a successful second year.

Visit to Berrington Hall and Croft Castle.

On a glorious autumn day in September some 14 members visited Berrington Hall where we were given a very enjoyable and informative guided tour of the house. What is interesting about Berrington is that it is the last landscape park designed by Capability Brown and unlike Croome, where there was a house to design the Park around, Berrington Hall was not built until the Park was completed.

In the afternoon the members moved on to Croft Castle. We were given a very interesting introductory talk by one of the Volunteers and then were able to tour the castle and the nearby church.

We hope to arrange more visits in the New Year. Any Suggestions?



Some of the members on the steps of Berrington Hall
Photo – David Forgan

Excavations in the Walled Garden

To the eastern side of Croome Court beyond the Stable Block is a very large walled garden, (reputedly the largest in Britain), which was probably the source of fresh fruit and vegetables for the house.

An interesting feature of this garden is the presence of an internal hot wall dividing the area

into two unequal sections. This wall is heated by a series of furnaces, which lead to flues inside the wall. A number of these have been uncovered (see photograph). This wall is not on the early maps of Croome but was added in about 1820. It is thought that such hot walls would enable more exotic and tender fruits to be grown and possibly ripened earlier.



If any reader has any further information about this feature please let us know by contacting the Secretary.

Mike Ellison & Hilary Burton

Oral History Project – “Croome Before the National Trust”

This project being undertaken by The Friends is to record memories of Croome from all walks of life. Because of the Croome archive there is already plenty of information on the Coventry family, Capability Brown, Robert Adam, James Wyatt, etc. and we wish to complete the whole picture. Many visitors to Croome have memories of life there, working for the Coventry family, on the estate, farming, living in the locality, at the RAF base, at the school and at the time of the Hare Krishna movement.

The suggestion was made that application should be made for a grant from the Local Heritage Initiative and in March this year the application was set in motion. After several meetings with the Friends committee, I was asked to submit the final application form in September on behalf of The Friends and last month we were delighted to hear we have been awarded a grant of £15,000. This will be used for the purchase of recording and editing equipment, a computer and software, a camera and for printing and publishing costs. A booklet will be produced by March 2007.

Caroline Livingston and I have had training in interviewing. Our list of potential interviewees continues to grow and a few weeks ago we started interviewing.



Mrs Muriel Mason – one of our first interviewees
Photo: Caroline Livingston

We are very grateful for the support we have received from the Friends, including the financial contribution that enabled us to make an early start with our recording.

We should be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to be involved in this project – we need help with interviewing, transcribing and editing and would particularly like to hear from anyone with printing and publishing skills. If you are interested in helping in any way, please let us know by contacting the secretary.

Eileen Clement

The Croome Forum

The Forum was set up during the early planning stage of the National Trust's restoration of the Park, its purpose being to provide management with a 'sounding board' – a group of people drawn from outside organisations, and individuals with an interest in the project and with relevant experience in one or more of its many aspects.

The Forum has developed into a lively discussion group, involving not only its members but also the Trust's own staff with direct or indirect responsibility for the evolving work of ensuring historical accuracy in the restoration as well as laying plans for the Park's promotion and interpretation, and the management of the predicted growth in visitor numbers. The group meets at six monthly intervals to review at first hand what has been accomplished, to consider members' comments on plans as they develop and to provide ideas based on their own professional

experience where appropriate. These regular meetings are often supplemented by individual 'ad hoc' visits and less formal discussions between members and NT staff. Links with the Regional Committee of the Trust are maintained by the involvement on the Forum of two of its members; and valuable publicity for the Croome project is generated by the keenness of Forum members to promote it at every possible opportunity.

The Forum is an outstanding example of how a body of enthusiastic individuals can be galvanised to provide support for the work of the Trust by contributing members' time, experience and expertise in a very happy and productive relationship with local and regional management,

Peter Chester

Annual General Meeting.

Our first Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 21 February 2006. It is being held a little earlier than the actual end of our first financial year, but this is the only date that our President could attend. After our formal business he will give us a short talk. We hope that as many members as possible will be able to attend.

Croome Park in Springtime.

Croome Park opens again in March. The Friends will be serving refreshments on March 5th so if you are able to help, please let us know. A very important date is March 26th when we will be formally launching the Oral History Project and look towards uncovering stories of the past. As much help from members as possible will be appreciated. Just to whet your appetites – a photograph of bluebells and primroses in 2005 – let us hope for a good start to the new season.



Photo: John Willis