



CHISWICK HOUSE
& GARDENS TRUST

UNVEILING OF THE RESTORED CHISWICK HOUSE GARDENS

Monday 14 June 2010

Press information

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CHISWICK HOUSE GARDENS: RESTORATION, REGENERATION & RECREATION

He leapt the fence and saw that all nature was a garden. He felt the delicious contrast of hill and valley changing imperceptibly into each other, tasted the beauty of the gentle swell, or concave scoop, and remarked how loose groves crowded an easy eminence with happy ornament.

Horace Walpole on William Kent, designer of Chiswick House Gardens

Chiswick House Gardens, designed by William Kent and Lord Burlington in the 1720s and 30s are – as the birthplace of the English Landscape Movement – of immense importance in the history of Western art and culture. For the first time, a garden moved away from the straight lines and formality of Renaissance gardens in favour of natural curves and clusters. This Arcadian image of the English Garden would take Europe and North America by storm, its influence can be seen in landscapes from Villa Reale in Italy to Central Park, New York.

Over the past 300 years, the Gardens have been transformed from a great nobleman's estate to a public park. The different areas within the estate (described below) each embody a distinct historical period and combine to deliver a beautifully illustrated history of English garden design.

The end of the 20th century witnessed a slow decline in the fortunes of the Gardens as its vistas became overgrown and its paths struggled under the strain of over a million pairs of feet a year. The Gardens suffered because of the split management of the site, with Chiswick House being managed by English Heritage and the Gardens by the London Borough of Hounslow. Like most parks and gardens across the country, dwindling non-statutory local authority budgets meant that fewer resources were available.

Grass and hedges were cut but very little was done to the trees and woodland. The vigorous regeneration of self sown trees, following the great storm in 1987, prevented sufficient light penetrating to the woodland floors, choking-out the ground flora and leaving bare ground and muddy patches.

In 2005, English Heritage and the London Borough of Hounslow (although still closely involved) collaborated to form the independent Chiswick House and Gardens Trust to oversee the regeneration of the Gardens. The aim of the restoration was to reveal the cultural and natural heritage of the site as well as improve the facilities for visitors. Historic restoration was given precedence in the core area around Chiswick House and in the Italian Garden (see below) at the eastern end of the site. To the west of the artificial river, the woodlands are managed with the aim of increasing biodiversity, a meadow is being established and areas have been set aside for wild fowl. Important changes by Burlington's successors were respected and conserved. Extensive consultation with present and potential visitors to the site has been important in guiding the project, to ensure the improvements meet the needs of today's visitors.

The overriding ambition was to restore the special character of the Gardens, making them a source of beauty, inspiration and recreation for visitors from the local Chiswick community, London and across the world.

House Forecourt and Cedar Avenue

The forecourt with entrance piers, cedars and stone pedestals was designed by Lord Burlington in 1727 to create a formal reception area from where the perfect proportions and exquisite carved detail of the House's façade could be admired.

In keeping with the original entrance, two sphinxes – symbolic guardians of the House – have been reinstated on the gate piers (with support from the Wolfson Foundation). The six terms (or stone pedestals ending in carved human heads) that flank the forecourt have been restored and repositioned.

Visitors to Chiswick House in the 18th and 19th centuries frequently commented on the size and splendour of the Cedars of Lebanon. There were originally eight in the forecourt: “the beautiful dark tint of the solemn evergreens affording a pleasant contrast to the whiteness of the building...”. As part of the project, Cedars of Lebanon propagated from the historic Chiswick Cedars are once more alongside the terms.

The classically-inspired symmetry of the forecourt has been restored, revealing the unified design of House and Gardens.

The Western Lawn and Cascade

The birthplace of the English Landscape Movement, an informal lawn slopes down from Chiswick House to the ornamental river. Originally divided by hedges and lawns, the area was opened up and extended by Lord Burlington and William Kent in the 1730s to create uninterrupted views of the House and visually linking the surrounding landscape with the neo-Palladian villa.

As part of the restoration, the lawn was cleared of a number of self-seeded trees and haphazard planting, bins and seats which were obstructing the views and disrupting the historic design. The railings by the edge of the river were also removed and a 2 metre wide stone shelf installed to act as an initial shallow area.

The nearby cascade terminates the river and is the last major work undertaken at Chiswick during Burlington's lifetime. An entrancing waterfall descending a series of rock steps through three archways, it was inspired by designs Burlington and Kent had seen in Italian Renaissance gardens. The cascade restoration was supported by the Rothermere Foundation.

The Avenue, Exedra and Grove

The Avenue, a flat lawn, extends from the rear of Chiswick House and terminates in the Exedra, a semi-circle of yew hedging with niches containing statuary and sphinxes. A grand allée inspired by the Roman Appian Way separates the Avenue from the Grove and is lined on either side with cedars and cypresses, sculpture and urns.

The trees, urns and sphinxes form a symbolic processional avenue unique in England. The Roman origins of the statuary, the classical use of Egyptian imagery and the shape, motifs and decoration of the urns all express and exemplify the unique Italian quality of the Burlington design.

The urns and statuary have all been restored (with support from The Duke of Devonshire's Charitable Trust), and new *Cupressus sempervirens* Mediterranean cypress trees have been planted on either side of the allée and in the process restoring the necessary form and

proportion. The planting of a formal grid of lime trees in the Grove reinstates the uniformity in Burlington's concept for this area.

The Orange Tree Garden and Ionic Temple

Lying beyond the Exedra, this garden in the shape of an amphitheatre surrounds a circular pool with an obelisk in the centre, overlooked by an Ionic Temple. It was created in around 1726 and at the time, orange trees in tubs were planted on the garden terraces.

The temple is currently still under repair, delayed slightly because of vandalism (loss of lead due to theft). A new circulating water supply has been provided to improve the quality of water. The temple's stonework and the obelisk have been cleaned and repaired. The viewing area is substantially improved. Supported by Soho House Group, through the House Festival fundraising events.

Patte d'oie

Located north of the House, the patte d'oie (French for 'goose-foot') is one of the key features of the Gardens and denotes three radiating avenues, like the webbed foot of a goose, each originally terminating in a small building. Probably laid out by Burlington in about 1716, it was meant to reproduce the type of layout found in an ancient Roman garden.

The left hand avenue led to the 'Bagnio' (bath-house) or 'Cassina' (little house), 'the first design of his lordship's happy invention'. It was demolished in 1778 and in the 1950s the avenue was incorrectly reinstated on the Classic Bridge. The central avenue led to a domed building similar to a temple or Pantheon. Dating from 1716 and attributed to James Gibbs, it was demolished in 1784 and now contains a Venetian window saved from the demolition of the House's late 18th century wings. The right hand avenue leads to the Rustic House, the only building to survive.

The original alignments of the goose foot have been re-created and the Rustic Temple repaired and its setting enhanced. The arched entrance to the park, behind the Rustic House has been opened up providing those visitors parking in the refurbished car park with a direct and dramatic route to the core of the park (with support from The Dr. Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation). The hedges have been halved in height restoring their desired proportions. The muddy track that led up the central toe of the goosefoot has been re-laid in hoggins to provide a more suitable dry surface. Supported by The Fidelity UK Foundation and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

The Wilderness Lawn and Classic Bridge

The Wilderness Lawn lies to the north of the Ionic Temple, between the river and the goose foot's left hand avenue. Previously the site of a formal pool and temple, the lawn was for a long time fenced off and inaccessible to the public, a poor use of the area. It has been transformed into a dog-free picnic area with fencing at the water edge, ideally suited for parents with small children. Supported by The Goldsmiths' Company Charity.

At the bottom of the Wilderness Lawn and spanning the lake, lies an elegant – and now conserved – stone bridge attributed to James Wyatt and built for the fifth Duke of Devonshire in 1774. Restoration of the western toe of the goosefoot and the carriage drive contemporary with the bridge now provide a more appropriate setting.

Doric Column and Rosary

Thought to have been designed by Lord Burlington in about 1729, the Doric Column was originally surmounted with a copy of the statue of the Venus de Medici from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. In 1736, it was the focus of a small triangular area of dense planting, with six allées radiating out from it. This was replaced by a rose garden, laid out by the fifth Duke of Devonshire and first recorded in 1811. Over the years, the rose garden was suppressed, replanted and fell into decline.

The column has now been restored and a new copy of the Venus statue installed on top. The rosary has been restored to its mid-19th century appearance and the Victorian radial layout of paths, beds and planting re-installed. Supported by Chiswick House Friends and David Austin Roses.

The Conservatory

The Grade I listed hothouse, located north east of Chiswick House, is a spectacular landmark within the Gardens. Initially designed by Samuel Ware for the sixth Duke of Devonshire in 1813, the conservatory is also famous for its large collection of camellias, a significant number dating from the original 1828 planting. Thought to be the oldest camellia collection in England (and perhaps outside China and Japan), it includes some extremely rare specimens, not least the 'Middlemist Red' – one of only two specimens in the world.

The 19th century superstructure was rebuilt in the 1930s by Messenger and Co. at 392ft (96m) and was their last and largest commission – significant in its own right. The back sheds behind the conservatory rear wall retain many elements of the original structure, including the historic hot air heating system.

The conservatory was deemed unsafe for the general public and required major conservation, restoration and repair. Throughout the works, the camellia collection was carefully protected. The public now enjoys full access and the conservatory is available to hire for private parties and other functions. Supported by The Wolfson Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation and the Monument Trust.

The Italian Garden

Located in front of the conservatory, this semi-circular parterre, designed by Lewis Kennedy, dates from 1814 and represents an early example of the reintroduction of formal gardens to England. The garden is characterised by its symmetrical formality and intricate pattern of flower beds. Stone urns on plinths are set against an enclosing semi-circular path, the central path is flanked by copies of two magnificent Coadestone vases (the originals are in the conservatory).

The shapes of the flower beds had eroded and these have now been restored to their 1880's design. The urns, plinths and vases have been repaired and a new framework for the wisteria installed. An enclosing yew hedge planted in the 1950s has been replaced with an unusual planting of mop headed Robinias, rambling roses trained to swags ropes, hollyhocks, lilies and shrub roses, based on a detailed garden survey undertaken in the 1850s. Supported by a legacy from the late Miss Phyllis Bishop.

The Camellia Shrubbery

In 1812, the 6th Duke of Devonshire acquired the neighbouring estate of Morton Hall, demolished the house and established the Camellia Shrubbery. Prior to the restoration, the density of mature trees coupled with very limited management had resulted in increasing

shade that had caused the historic flowering shrub to decline. Visitors made limited use of the area, partly due to its overgrown and deeply shaded character.

The restoration has completely transformed this section of the Gardens, making it far more inviting to the public. Trees were thinned out and new ones planted, improving the level of light and allowing for greater variety in planting. The original path layout has been conserved as well as the remaining boundary walls to Morton Hall, the oldest fabric within the site.

Benches and seating have been installed, creating an attractive destination close to the new children's play area and cafe. Supported by The Wolfson Foundation.

CHISWICK HOUSE CAFÉ BY CARUSO ST JOHN: ARCHITECTURAL STATEMENT

The new café is part of the regeneration of the life of the Gardens, and has been designed as a meeting place, a kind of social hub for the park. It stands close to Chiswick House, where Burlington's Jacobean house and stables were once located, and its formal alignment with the house reinforces the public atmosphere of this part of the park, in contrast with the more natural and intimate atmosphere of the surrounding gardens. The arcaded elevations and wide terrace of the cafe forms a belvedere; a special place to gather, to enjoy the scenery and look out for your friends. The lawns around the café and the new adjacent playground provide outdoor playspace for more energetic members of the family, while others can enjoy sitting out in the sun with their tea and cake. .

Chiswick House and its gardens, as well as being one of London's loveliest parks, were the site of very important artistic innovations in architecture and landscape design. To make a new building here is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The design is consciously more elegant and classical than most park cafés, which are more usually rustic, informal or housed in converted out-buildings. The park café as a type is unusual, in that it needs to work as a comfortable interior in winter, and as an outdoor space in summer. In this case, an arcade provides a space between the inside and the outside, giving some shelter in cooler weather, and a shaded spot in summer. The deep shadow held within the arcaded shape gives the building a sculptural presence. The atmosphere it creates responds to the picturesque grandeur of Burlington and Kent's vision, with its references to the ruins, the shapely trees and the vistas in the Campagna around ancient Rome.

The project has involved careful consideration of the site of the building, and its effect on the parkland around it. There was a smaller café from the 60s here before, which stood further to the south and was more isolated from the gardens around by dense overgrown woodland. Trees have been removed and the area feels more connected to the rest of the park. The new café with its southern aspect can now be seen from a distance as you approach it, between the rounded shapes of mature chestnut and willow trees.

At the centre of the café is a large glazed room, which seats up to 80 people. The wide aspect from here includes newly opened-up views back to the portico of the House. A much larger number of people can also sit outside, on the forecourt and within the arcade. The wide piers of the arcade chase each other around the perimeter of the plan, to give a slightly labyrinthine effect that encloses the café interior. The structure of the café is exposed white concrete, whose thermal mass is used with a natural ventilation system to keep the interior cool in summer. The perimeter piers are made of stacked blocks of Roachbed Portland stone. Its wild fossils and deep cavities are miniature versions of the primitive rockwork in the grottos that were popular in 18th century English gardens.

The scale of the arcade and its smooth masonry finishes refer to more recent Italian architectures. In particular, the arcades of 19th century Turin that are beautiful, cool places to take your lunch in summer, and Milanese cafes from the 1950s, where material luxury, and a sophistication in how masonry and metal are put together, make elegant places to sit and have a coffee.

Peter St John, Caruso St John Architects

THE RYSBRACK PAINTINGS

To celebrate the £12.1 million restoration of Chiswick House Gardens, eight landscape views of Chiswick by the 18th century Dutch artist Pieter Andreas Rysbrack have been reunited as a complete set.

The Rysbracks have always been held in private estate, some were dispersed by auction, and the current exhibition is the first time in over fifty years that the public has had any opportunity to view them in their entirety.

Chiswick House Gardens was created by the third Earl of Burlington and William Kent from 1717 onwards and is regarded as a birthplace of the English Landscape Movement. The paintings depict the early results of this famous and hugely influential design.

Lord Burlington commissioned two sets of the paintings. While a single or pair of paintings of an aristocratic estate was not unusual, the wide scope of this commission was extremely uncommon. It illustrates Burlington's desire to capture the new developments and the variety of features at Chiswick.

The only previous occasion the public has had to view the paintings was when the set belonging to Burlington's sister, Lady Bedingfeld, was put up for auction in 1951. Following that auction, Marcus Whiffen, writing for the *Architectural Review* in 1952 lamented, 'It is regrettable that the set had to be broken up: in a better world someone would have bought it for hanging in Lord Burlington's villa when its repairs should be completed.'

That wish has been realised with the current exhibition. English Heritage has been collecting paintings of Chiswick House Gardens since 1985. To be able to present a complete set, English Heritage has gathered paintings from both the Burlington and Bedingfeld collections, the set completed with two loan paintings from Chatsworth.

Rysbrack and the restoration of Chiswick House Gardens

Rysbrack's paintings have a central place in the historical research of Chiswick undertaken for the restoration. They document the appearance of the House and Gardens as they were in the late 1720s or early 1730s and provide a clear record of the breadth and scope of Burlington's Arcadian vision and the work undertaken.

In addition, the Rysbracks are full of details that no longer survive: the two ponds beside the canal, the elaborate gardens west of the water, garden buildings such as the Bagnio and Casina, and of course major lost structures such as the Jacobean House, which was demolished in 1788.

The paintings are also beautiful in their own right and of the sources for Lord Burlington's gardens and buildings, they are the only ones to provide detail about colour. For example, they show that the villa was originally rendered or painted so that the walls were the same colour as the Portland stone of the portico. The original Jacobean House was likewise rendered, but the stable block was in bare purple brickwork.

Over the past 300 years, the gardens have been transformed from a great nobleman's estate to a public park. The restoration project at Chiswick House Gardens was designed to view the

history of Chiswick more widely than just the period of Lord Burlington.

Today the different areas within the estate each embody a distinct historical period and together combine to deliver a beautifully illustrated history of English garden design. And while some of Burlington's features recorded in the paintings that were lost over time have been reinstated – such as the original alignment of the western allée in the Patte d'oie, or the layout of terms and cedars in the villa forecourt – the project has also tried to respect the changes in the periods after Lord Burlington's death.

Today visitors can view the paintings brought together in the house, and with them in mind, can go out into the gardens and see more clearly than ever not only Burlington's original vision but also how later owners of Chiswick transformed the landscape to their own wishes and tastes.

Pieter Rysbrack

1694-1770

Rysbrack was born in Paris when his father moved there briefly from Antwerp, looking for work as a landscape painter. However the family did not settle in France, returning to Antwerp where a further nine children were born. Four sons became artists, including Pieter's brother Michael, a sculptor, who also worked at Chiswick.

In 1710-11 Pieter was made a Master in Antwerp, but circa 1720 he and Michael settled in England, later joined by another brother, the still-life painter Gerard Rysbrack. Virtue records Pieter Rysbrack as excelling in 'Landskip painting, fruit and flowers herbage birds and dead game....' and that 'his works were valued much and paid for by Noblemen and Gentleman...'.

In England he continued to specialise in Flemish-style still-life and game pieces however he also painted a number of topographical landscapes and country-house portraits. His two sets of Chiswick House Gardens were an influential contribution to the vogue in the second quarter of the 18th century for sets of garden views and Burlington appears to have been Rysbrack's biggest patron. Pieter Rysbrack remained in England for the rest of his life.

The number of known works by Rysbrack in the UK is few. There are only three works held in English museums; Manchester City Art Gallery, 'Dead Game'; York City Art Gallery, 'Fish', and a topographical view, 'View of Richmond Ferry' in Orleans House Gallery, Richmond Borough Art Collection. Chiswick House therefore now holds the largest known group of his works open to the public.

HISTORY OF CHISWICK HOUSE

Chiswick House is the first and one of the finest examples of neo-Palladian design in England.

The third Earl of Burlington (1694-1753) built the house as a homage to Renaissance architect Palladio and an evocation of the glories of Ancient Rome, taking inspiration from his own 'grand tours' of Italy.

Originally located in a modest estate purchased by Burlington's grandfather, the villa was built next to the family's existing Jacobean house and completed in 1729. It was never conceived as a residence in its own right. Instead, it was a bold architectural experiment by Burlington, an elegant pavilion where he could display his collections of art and sculpture and entertain small groups of friends.

During his travels Burlington had met the painter William Kent and invited him to collaborate on the decoration of the villa and the design of its grounds. The landscape garden they conceived has inspired countless gardens including New York's Central Park. It is recognised as a birthplace of the English landscape movement, one of England's main contributions to European art.

Further alterations to the estate were carried out in the late 18th and early 19th centuries by the fifth and sixth Dukes of Devonshire. The fifth Duke initiated a series of major changes to both house and garden. These included building the stone bridge over the lake, demolishing the earlier Jacobean house and adding new wings to the villa, turning it into a substantial mansion. The wings were subsequently removed in the 1950s in a move to restore the villa to something approaching its original appearance.

The villa became home to successive members of Lord Burlington's family, including the fifth Duke's wife, the celebrated Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. Georgiana's time saw the addition of a rose garden in an area where the Lord Burlington had placed a Doric column topped by a copy of the Venus de Medici.

Georgiana's son, the 'Bachelor' sixth Duke, purchased the adjoining property to the east, extending the grounds, building a 300-foot long conservatory and creating an Italian garden in front of it. He also introduced some new and exotic residents including an elephant, elks, emus, kangaroos, and an Indian bull.

During the second half of the 19th century the house was occupied by a series of eminent tenants, including the Prince of Wales. Chiswick has welcomed scores of significant guests over the years, including the musician Handel, the politician Charles James Fox, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. But by 1892 the building had become a private asylum and entered a prolonged period of decline.

The Chiswick House estate was acquired by Middlesex County Council for the benefit of the public in 1929. In the 1950s Chiswick House passed to the Ministry of Works, via Middlesex Council. The villa has been cared for by English Heritage since 1984. In 2005 English Heritage and the London Borough of Hounslow (owner of the Gardens) established The Chiswick House and Gardens Trust as an independent charity to drive forward an ambitious £12million restoration plan for the Gardens and secure its future for the 21st century. The results of that restoration can now be enjoyed by all.

WILLIAM KENT (1685 – 1748): BIOGRAPHY

William Kent was born in Bridlington, Yorkshire, in 1685. In the words of Horace Walpole, Kent "was a painter, an architect, and the father of modern gardening. In the first character he was below mediocrity; in the second, he was a restorer of the science; in the last, an original, and the inventor of an art that realizes painting and improves nature. Mahomet imagined an elysium, Kent created many."

Kent's career began as a sign and coach painter but he was encouraged to study art, design and architecture by his employer and was sent for a period of study in Rome under the patronage of a group of Yorkshire gentlemen. During his stay he decorated the church of San Giuliano dei Fiamminghi and was recognised for his painting by the Accademia di San Lucia in Rome.

He also met several important figures including Thomas Coke, later the 1st Earl of Leicester, with whom he toured Northern Italy in the summer of 1714. It was this tour that led Kent to an appreciation of the architectural style of Andrea Palladio.

But the most significant meeting was between Kent and Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington which sowed the seeds for a life long friendship and patronage and he returned to England with Burlington in 1719. Back home, Kent continued to paint but under Burlington's encouragement he branched out into architecture. It was through his collaboration with Burlington that he has come to be remembered as the central architect of the revived Palladian style in England.

Kent applied this style to several public buildings in London for which Burlington's patronage secured him the commissions: the Royal Mews at Charing Cross, (1731–33, demolished in 1830), the Treasury buildings in Whitehall (1733–37), the Horse Guards building in Whitehall. Perhaps the most striking example of his work however is Burlington's own villa at Chiswick which is regarded as the first and one of the finest examples of Neo-Palladian architecture in England.

However Kent's greatest legacy lies elsewhere as the father of the English landscape garden. Yet Kent was no horticulturalist - he envisioned the landscape as a classical painting, carefully arranged to maximize the artistic effects of light, shape, and colour. His most important gardening creations include Stowe and Rousham but perhaps most importantly Chiswick House.

Created by Kent and Lord Burlington in 1729, Chiswick is today known throughout the world as a birthplace of the English Landscape Movement. Its carefully planned but naturalistic form was groundbreaking in its day, influencing such famous gardeners as 'Capability' Brown and Humphrey Repton and providing inspiration for Blenheim Palace and New York's Central Park. For the first time, gardens moved from strict formality to something closer to nature. This concept of informality, developed at Chiswick, moved Horace Walpole to write that Kent had "leaped the fence and saw that all nature was a garden." William Kent's own remark that "all gardening is landscape painting" continues to influence garden designers.

RICHARD BOYLE, THE THIRD EARL OF BURLINGTON (1694 – 1753): BIOGRAPHY

Richard Boyle, Third Earl of Burlington and Fourth Earl of Cork, was born in Yorkshire in 1694 and was only ten when he inherited his father's titles and estates.

He acquired an early love of the arts and by the age of twenty was already being praised in print for his taste in gardening and painting. In May of 1714 he embarked on a 'Grand Tour' of Europe, as was the fashion of the time, spending four months in Rome.

At this stage Burlington's chief passions appear to have been music and theatre. His interest in architecture was to be stirred by the publication of two important volumes – the English translation of Palladio's 16th century work *The Four Books of Architecture* and Colen Campbell's compendium of British classical architecture *Vitruvius Britannicus*. In 1719 he returned to Italy and this time his visit had a definite architectural focus.

It was during this trip that he reconnected with an acquaintance from his first Italian tour, William Kent, who had been in Italy for a decade and was already influenced by the Palladian style which Burlington was drawn to. This reunion sowed the seeds for a life long friendship and patronage which was to hugely influence Burlington in his approach to architecture and landscape.

By 1720 the Third Earl had become one of England's leading cultural arbitrators and a great patron of the arts. His salon at Chiswick in London included not only Kent, who had returned to England with him, but such luminaries as Alexander Pope, Isaac Ware, James Thompson and John Gay.

As an aristocrat Burlington was not able to abandon his other responsibilities to pursue a full time architectural career. However his driving ambition was to steer the country away from the Baroque style and through his patronage of other artists, notably Kent, and in his own buildings, he furthered the revival of an architecture based on the styles of Palladio and Inigo Jones. The most important of Burlington's own works are the villa for his estate at Chiswick – the first and one of the finest examples of Neo-Palladian architecture in England (begun 1725) and the Assembly Room, York (1730).

Inspired by their tours of Italy and Rome, Burlington and Kent worked to translate what they had seen at Chiswick which became a hotbed of architectural and horticultural experimentation. Chiswick's reputation as the most important garden in English history – with a cultural impact that is still felt internationally today – is thanks to Burlington's influence. Its grounds evolved into the carefully planned but naturalistic approach that came to signify the English Landscape movement and went on to inspire designers such as Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton and informing sites across Europe and to America, where it even helped shape New York's Central Park.

TEN THINGS TO SEE AT CHISWICK

The Western Lawn and Cascade

Chiswick's Western Lawn and Cascade is one of the most significant developments in the birth of the English Landscape Movement. It has been so copied that today it looks almost common place; an informal lawn slopes down from Chiswick House to the ornamental river. However in its day this naturalistic interpretation of the estate was groundbreaking. Originally divided by hedges and lawns, the area was opened up and extended by Lord Burlington and William Kent in the 1730s to create uninterrupted views of the House and providing a visual link to the surrounding landscape with the neo-Palladian villa.

The nearby cascade terminates the river and is the last major work undertaken at Chiswick during Burlington's lifetime. A waterfall descending a series of rock steps through three archways was inspired by designs Burlington and Kent had seen in Italian Renaissance gardens.

The Avenue and the Exedra

The Avenue, a flat lawn, extends from the rear of Chiswick House and terminates in the Exedra, a semi-circle of yew hedging with niches containing statuary. This area is thought to have been designed by William Kent and clearly illustrates his 'pictorial' approach to garden design. Kent conceived gardens as semi-naturalistic scenes similar to the paintings of 17th century artists such as Claude Lorraine and Nicolas Poussin. Trees, urns and sphinxes form a symbolic processional avenue reminiscent of the ancient Apian Way leading from Rome. The statuary in the Exedra dates from both ancient Rome and the 18th century and was collected by Lord Burlington. Daniel Defoe attributed the origins of three of the Roman statues to Hadrian's Villa near Tivoli. The Roman origins of the statuary, the classical use of Egyptian imagery and the shape, motifs and decoration of the urns all express and exemplify the unique Italian quality of the Burlington design. As part of the restoration the urns and statuary have all been restored.

The Conservatory

Chiswick's Grade I listed conservatory is a spectacular landmark within the Gardens. It was initially designed by Samuel Ware and completed in 1813. The author Mary Berry described it as "a magnificent hot-house" and it was a forerunner of those designed by Decimus Burton at Kew and Sir Joseph Paxton at Chatsworth. It is famous for its important collection of camellias, a significant number dating from the original 1828 planting. Thought to be the oldest camellia collection in England (and perhaps outside China and Japan), it includes some extremely rare specimens, not least the 'Middlemist Red' – one of only two specimens in the world. The conservatory has been painstakingly restored with detailed archaeological and historical research undertaken by English Heritage experts to ensure the accuracy of the restoration.

The Italian Garden

Chiswick's Italian Garden is located in front of the conservatory. Most 18th century conservatories were seen as exotic extensions of kitchen gardens and were built to look onto those gardens. Chiswick was unusual in that it looked onto a decorative Italian garden, which may be why the sixth Duke quickly turned the hothouse over to housing the exotic blooms. The Italian Garden forms a semi-circular parterre and was designed by Lewis Kennedy. It dates from 1814 and represents an early example of the reintroduction of formal gardens to England. The garden is characterised by its symmetrical formality and intricate pattern of flower beds. Stone urns on plinths are set against an enclosing semi-circular path, the central path is flanked

by copies of two magnificent Coadestone vases (the originals are in the conservatory). The planting of mop headed Robinias, rambling roses trained to swags ropes, hollyhocks, lilies and shrub roses, is based on a detailed garden survey undertaken in the 1850s,

Doric Column and Rosary

Thought to have been designed by Lord Burlington in about 1728, the Doric Column was originally surmounted with a copy of the statue of the Venus de Medici which sits in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. By 1736, it was the focus of a small triangular area of dense planting, with six allées radiating out from it. This was replaced by a rose garden, laid out by the fifth Duke of Devonshire and first recorded in 1811. Over the years, the rose garden fell into decline and by the 1950's had been grassed over, while the copy of the Venus de Medici mysteriously disappeared in the late 19th century. The column has now been restored and a new copy of the Venus statue installed on top. The rosary has been restored to its mid-19th century appearance and the Victorian radial layout of paths, beds and planting re-installed.

Rysbrack Paintings in the Green Velvet Room

Commissioned by the third Earl of Burlington, these eight paintings are among the first to record the transition from the 'formal to the informal' English landscape garden. Formerly held in private collections and dispersed through auctions, the paintings have been reunited as a set and are now on display as a set for public exhibition for the first time in over fifty years. Two sets of eight paintings were commissioned by Burlington from the Dutch painter Pieter Rysbrack, the second set was for Burlington's sister, Lady Bedingfield. While a single or pair of paintings of an aristocratic estate was not unusual, the wide scope of this commission was extremely uncommon. The only previous occasion the public has had to view the paintings was when the set originally belonging to Lady Bedingfield, was put up for auction in 1951.

The Blue Velvet Room Ceiling

The Blue Velvet room is the most sumptuously decorated in Chiswick House and was used by the third Earl of Burlington as his study. Today the curtains and wall coverings have been recreated to reflect their original appearance. The most striking feature of the room is the ceiling, supported on pairs of massive curving brackets, a feature which Burlington recreated from a sixteenth century Italian ceiling design in his own collection of architectural drawings. The structure is overlain with glittering decoration, predominantly in blue and gold, painted (probably by William Kent) in imitation of mosaic. The central panel is sometimes taken to represent Architecture as it depicts a woman seated on a fallen column on a cloud, holding compasses and an architectural plan and wearing a Corinthian capital as a crown. The other interpretation is that, as these are also Masonic symbols, the room may have doubled as a secret meeting of Craft Masons, also known as 'Blue Masons'.

Statues of Andrea Palladio and Inigo Jones

From the forecourt, visitors can admire the perfect proportions and carved details of the façade of Chiswick's neo-Palladian villa. The portico to the villa is reached by an elaborate staircase ornamented by elegant urns, probably only used on exceptionally grand occasions. Positioned on either side of this staircase are two full length statues of Burlington's favourite architects, Andrea Palladio on the left and Inigo Jones on the right. The sculptures are attributed to one of the most famous and sought after talents of the day, the Flemish sculptor Michael Rysbrack, whose brother Pieter painted the two sets of paintings that Lord Burlington commissioned to celebrate the development of the grounds. Before the completion of the villa the two statues had stood outside the earliest of the gardens' buildings, the Bagnio. As a devotee of the architecture of Ancient Rome, Burlington wished to honour two earlier

masters, Italian and British, who had pioneered the revival of Classical architecture in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The Coffered Dome in the Upper Tribunal

The great octagonal central hall of the villa was the first room that visitors entered on arriving via the portico on formal occasions. It was called the 'Tribunal' by an early visitor in 1772 and the 'Salloon', in the 1770 inventory. Apart from its practical functions as a hall from which to reach the other main rooms on this floor, it is primarily an imposing architectural space. In the decoration there is a strong emphasis on classical antiquity. The coffering of the dome is particularly impressive and was copied from the 4th century Basilica of Maxentius in Rome. The Basilica was the largest and one of the last buildings to be built in the Roman Forum and was used as Rome's public law courts.

Chiswick's Sphinxes

Sphinxes were considered creatures of wisdom, of protectorship and guardians of arcane and occult knowledge. Chiswick has several examples which were possibly intended as symbolic guardians of the villa. One of these is a lead sphinx made by the sculptor John Cheere (1709 - 87). It was originally situated in the gardens alongside the path from the Link Building to 'patte d'oie'. Today, it is protected from the elements in the villa's Link building – added by Lord Burlington in about 1732-3 to provide a covered connection between the old Jacobean house and the new villa – which is used to display several important pieces of original sculpture. Three other sphinxes can be found in the grounds to the rear of the villa. As part of the restoration of Chiswick House Gardens, two new lead sphinxes have been created and placed on the stone gate piers at the entrance to the villa, where two originals once stood. The originals were commissioned by Lord Burlington when the villa was built in the 1720s but were removed at the end of the 19th century and are thought to have been taken to Green Park.

CHISWICK HOUSE GARDENS RESORATION: BIOGRAPHIES

Rupert Hambro, Chairman, Chiswick House and Gardens Trust

Rupert Hambro is Chairman of Chiswick House and Gardens Trust, formed in 2005 to bring together the management of Chiswick House with that of Chiswick House Gardens. He has led the successful fundraising campaign to restore the gardens and has overseen this ambitious regeneration project.

After training with Peat Marwick Mitchell & Co Rupert joined Hambros Bank in 1964, became a Director in '69, Deputy Chairman in '80 and Chairman in '83. He left in '86 to form JO Hambro with his father and two brothers.

He is Chairman of the Trustees of the Silver Trust which has commissioned 39 contemporary British silversmiths to build a collection for use at No 10 Downing Street. He is President of British Association of Adoption and Fostering and Deputy President for Clubs for Young People (ex Boys' clubs).

He was Chairman of the Museum of London from 1998 to 2005, including the Museum of Docklands and a Trustee of the Chatsworth House Trust for 25 years.

Simon Thurley, Chief Executive, English Heritage

Dr Simon Thurley is the Chief Executive of English Heritage; the Government's principal advisor on the historic environment in England.

Before April 2002 Dr Thurley was the director of the Museum of London, the world's largest city museum where he was director for four and a half years. In 1989 Simon Thurley was appointed Curator of Historic Royal Palaces. In the 8 years he held the post he was responsible for a number of major restoration projects, including the completion of the fire damage at Hampton Court, the restoration of the King's Privy Garden there and the building of the new Jewel House for the Crown Jewels at the Tower of London.

Dr Thurley is a leading architectural historian. His books include the best selling *Royal Palaces of Tudor England* published in 1993, *Whitehall Palace* and in 2003 *Hampton Court a Social and Architectural History*. Dr Thurley is a regular broadcaster. As well as a number of documentaries for channel four and BBC 2 his television series include *The Buildings That Made Britain* for Channel 5 and Channel Four's six part series *Lost Buildings of Britain* for which he also wrote an accompanying book.

Dr Thurley is Honorary Fellow and Visiting Professor of London Medieval History at Royal Holloway College, London. He is an honorary member of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Chairman of various historical and archaeological societies and serves on the Council of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Sarah Finch-Crisp, Director, Chiswick House & Gardens Trust

Sarah Finch-Crisp was appointed Director of Chiswick House and Gardens Trust in May 2008. In this role she is responsible for developing and managing Chiswick House and Gardens to ensure its future prosperity and continuing enhancement, including the development of its educational potential.

A museum curator by profession, and formerly Head of Heritage at Swindon Borough Council Sarah was responsible for the restoration of the Palladian Lydiard House and return and conservation of much of its original contents and collections over two decades. She initiated

and led the successful restoration of the historic landscape and gardens at Lydiard Park, an exemplar project for the Heritage Lottery Fund involving wide community involvement and unprecedented business partnership, investment and participation in a local authority property. She has lectured at regional and national conferences on community and corporate engagement.

Sarah was on the board of the Country Parks Renaissance Panel 2001 -2003, is a Trustee of the Bishops Palace in Wells and advisor to St. Mary's Church Lydiard Tregoze.

John Watkins, Head of Gardens and Landscape, English Heritage

For over a decade John Watkins has headed English Heritage's Gardens and Landscape Team, which provides specialist advice and technical guidance on the maintenance and management of historic parks and gardens, as well as policy advice on designed landscape. John has been closely involved with a number of high profile restoration projects including Chiswick Gardens, Wrest Park, Witley Court and Kenilworth Castle.

An experienced horticulturist with some 30 years experience, John was Senior Lecturer at Hadlow College in Kent and has worked at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Edinburgh and Kew, the National Trust for Scotland and the Royal Horticultural Society at Wisley and Hyde Hall. He was on the management board of Plant Network, and Trustee of the Kent Gardens Trust and has recently stepped down following a successful period as Chair of the Great Dixter Charitable Trust. As a writer and lecturer on plants and historic gardens and their management, his works include the *Glasshouse Garden* published by Conran Octopus. More recently he has been joint editor and contributor to the English Heritage Manual: *The Management & Maintenance of Historic Parks, Gardens & Landscapes*. Working with partners across the sector he established and secured significant funding to establish the Historic and Botanic Gardens Bursary Scheme that places young people in gardens to receive practical training in gardens across the UK. He has served as an examiner for the Royal Horticultural Society examinations and represents English Heritage on the ODPM Green Flag Board.

Wesley Kerr, Chairman, HLF Committee for London

Wesley Kerr is a freelance broadcaster and journalist and a keen historian and horticulturalist. He has recently appeared on BBC TV's *How Britain got the Gardening Bug* and presented Radio 4's series on the Britain in Bloom competition, *Wars of the Roses*, which was judged by the Garden Media Guild as National Radio Broadcast of the Year 2009.

Born in London, Wesley was brought up in Middlesex and Hampshire. He was awarded a Hampshire County Bursary to Winchester College and an Open Scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he read History, graduating with a BA Hons and an MA.

He joined the BBC in 1979 as a trainee researcher then was a director, producer, reporter and correspondent, on programmes including *Panorama*, *The Book Programme*, *Nationwide*, *South-East at Six*, *Sixty Minutes* and *London Plus*. In the late 80s he spent 4 years as *Newsnight's* Arts & Media Correspondent covering theatre, books, movies, music, museums, galleries, TV and newspapers. At BBC News in the 90s he was Education, Social Affairs, Health, New York and Washington Correspondent and reported for most of BBC Radio's news and current affairs shows. For a decade he was also Royal Correspondent. Wesley received the RHS General Certificate in Horticulture in 2004, the year after he went freelance. He has written many articles for publications in the UK, (including *The Times*, *Sunday Times*, *The Guardian*, *Evening Standard*, *Punch* and the *Times Literary Supplement*) and also for

periodicals in Jamaica and the USA. From 2004 – 2006 he was a Judge for the National Lottery Awards.

Cllr Jagdish Sharma, Leader of Hounslow Council

Councillor Jagdish Sharma is the Leader of Hounslow Council. He was elected in May 1974 as a councillor for Hounslow West ward, and was appointed as Chair of the school development sub-committee. He became Mayor of Hounslow in 1979. As the UK's first Asian Mayor, he was interviewed by and appeared in US Magazine TIME.

Over the years, Cllr Sharma has served as: Vice chair of the Education Committee; Chair of Leisure Services for 8 years; Chair of Finance committee for 2 years; Chair of Education Committee from 1998-2002. He became Deputy Leader of the Labour Administration in 1992 and also served as Chief Whip. He was appointed Lead member for Education while he was deputy Leader from 2002-2004, and became Leader of the Labour Group in 2006.

Cllr Sharma has an MA in Economics. He spent thirty years as a teacher, holding the position of Headteacher of Lower School, Lady Margaret, in Ealing (started as head of maths), and Headteacher of Woolfield School. He has been a magistrate for 32 years, and from 1984 – 2008, was General Commissioner of Taxes.

In 1995 he received an MBE for services to local government, and in 2000, he was given the Freedom of the Borough to mark his 25 years of service.

Peter St. John, Partner, Caruso St John Architects

Peter St John began his architectural studies at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, completing them at the Architectural Association in 1984. He worked for Richard Rogers, Florian Beigel, Dixon Jones, and Arup Associates prior to establishing his own practice with Adam Caruso.

Peter taught at the University of North London from 1990-2000. He was a Visiting Professor at the Academy of Architecture in Mendrisio, Switzerland from 1999-2001, and Visiting Professor in the Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering at the University of Bath from 2001-2004. In 2005 he was a visiting critic at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. From 2007 to 2009 he was a visiting professor at ETH in Zurich. He is currently an external examiner at the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture in Aberdeen and Cardiff School of Architecture.

TRUSTEES OF CHISWICK HOUSE AND GARDENS

Rupert Hambro (Chairman)

Councillor Felicity Barwood

Janie Burford MBE

Lord Burlington

John Chatt

Rosemary Day

Gilly Drummond OBE

Anthony Fuller CBE

Dr Richard Hewlings

Dr Edward Impey

Dr David Jacques

Councillor Paul Lynch

George Nissen CBE

Jan Shawe

Professor Caroline Tisdall

LIST OF CONTRACTORS

Architects for the new café: **Caruso St John**

Conservation architects: **Dannatt Johnson**

Conservation /structural engineers: **Gifford**

Lead designer and landscape architects: **Scott Wilson**

Main contractor for landscape: **UPM Tilhill**

Main contractor for conservatory: **Walter Lilly**

Main contractor for the new café: **Thomas Sinden**

Mechanical and electrical engineers: **Roger Parker Associates**

Project management: **Mouchel**

Quantity Surveyors: **Press & Starkey**



**London Borough
of Hounslow**



ENGLISH HERITAGE



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