

THE FRIENDS OF CROOME



SPRING 2015 ISSUE 22

NEWSLETTER

Croome update **by Michael Forster-Smith**

Visitor numbers

We welcomed over 170,000 visitors during the financial year ending February 2015, a huge increase of over 30,000 on last year's total, which contrasts with some other high-profile properties with major restoration projects underway. Perhaps our focus on allowing visitors to access and enjoy the scaffolding around Croome Court has helped us to send out a clear message that Croome is open for restoration, rather than closed for repair.

Future developments

Further significant progress is planned for Croome in 2015, thanks to the involvement of various grant funders and individual donors. In the parkland, our plans to recreate the 'Chinese Bridge', which once spanned the Croome River to the west of Croome Court, have been finalised. The project is funded by the Monument 85 Fund, a charitable trust created by the late Simon Sainsbury to fund important landscape restoration initiatives. We aim to begin the work at the start of summer, minimising the potential for high rainfall to disrupt our work. The bridge was originally built in the late 1740s, but had fallen into disrepair by the time the first photos of Croome were recorded in the mid-nineteenth century.

Parkland planting

The National Trust central Forestry team has underwritten an extensive programme of parkland planting, designed to fill in some of the gaps in our restored parkland planting scheme. We aim to plant several thousand native broadleaf trees in Croome's wider parkland over the next couple of winters, in order to make sure that Croome looks at its very best for the celebrations of the 300th anniversary of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown's birth in August 2016. We also plan to work alongside Chris and Karen Cronin to open the Walled Garden at Croome more regularly in 2015, building on the successful trial opening during the August Bank Holiday last year.



Croome Court under scaffold © Tracey Blackwell

Croome Court building work

The major building works at Croome Court remain on target for completion at the end of 2015. The project comprises the full repair and re-servicing of Croome Court, including the installation of a new ground source heating system. Significant roof repairs, structural works and the restoration of the original windows, doors and floors are all scheduled, after which we will be able to remove the scaffolding and open all four levels of the mansion to visitors.

Coventry family collection

Once the building works are complete, we will be in a position to display some of the original eighteenth-century paintings and furnishings within the house. These will be loaned to the National Trust by the Earl of Coventry's family trust, and represent about a fifth of Croome Court's original contents (the remainder having been auctioned off in 1948, when the Coventry family left Croome Court).

These will include such wonderful items as Richard Wilson's 1758 painting of the Croome landscape, which graces the front of every book on Capability Brown's work. The painting features the Chinese Bridge in the foreground, and it is encouraging to think that these key components of eighteenth-century Croome will once again be brought together for our visitors to enjoy from 2016.

The first piece from the furniture collection will return very soon. This will be displayed alone in the Tapestry Room, evocatively lit, in the otherwise darkened room, to underline the current "Loss and Survival" theme of Croome's journey. There will be an exhibition telling the story in the old Library next door.

www.friendsofcroomepark.org.uk

Friends of Croome

EVENTS 2015-16

by Christine Adams

2015

Thursday 26th March

Annual General Meeting - 7.15pm

Thursday 23rd April

Visit to Hampton Court Palace, London
- depart 8.30am / return 4.00pm

Sunday 10th-Thursday 14th May

Holiday to Bournemouth

Thursday 21st May

Visit to Hartlebury Castle with David
Vernon - depart 9.30am / return 3.30pm

Monday 8th June

Visit to Croome Kennels and Stables
- 2.00-5.00pm

Monday 29th June

Visit to Moseley Old Hall and 'John's
Garden', Ashwood Nurseries
- depart 9.00am / return 4.00pm

Saturday 4th July

Evening visit to Croome Walled Garden
with cheese and wine by kind invitation
of Chris and Karen Cronin - 7.00-9.00pm

Wednesday 29th July

'Continuing the Restoration' a walk with
Park and Garden Manager, Katherine
Alker - 6.00-8.00pm

Saturday 15th August

Coach Trip and Cotswold Walk with
General Manager, Michael Forster-Smith
to include Broadway Tower, The Fleece
Inn (Bretforton) and Tithe Barn
(Middle Littleton)
- depart 10.00am / return 3.30pm

Tuesday 8th September

Visit to Bath

2015

Thursday 15th October

'Return of the Coventry Collection' a
talk by General Manager, Michael
Forster-Smith - 7.15pm

Thursday 26th November

'Return of the Tall Man on the Rostrum'
light-hearted auction evening with
Charles Robinson (Griffiths & Charles)
- 7.15pm

Thursday 8th December

Craft workshop and lunch

2016

Tuesday 19th January

Festive Meal - 7.00pm for 7.30pm.

February (tba)

'Behind the Scenes' tour of Croome
Court with General Manager, Michael
Forster-Smith



Friends of Croome visit to the Tower of London, October 2014
© Judy Wynne-Davies

Local partnerships at Croome – what a year it's been

by Rachel Sharpe

From celebrity authors to dragon fly hunters Croome's community engagement programme has gained real momentum in the last year. Not only did we continue to welcome visitors but also actors, writers, poets, dancers, puppeteers, conservationists, health walkers, schools, historians, colleges, universities, short-stay schools, archaeologists, carers, sibling groups and children's hospices – all of them thoroughly enjoying the wealth of history, knowledge and inspiration Croome has to offer.

We have a unique opportunity here at Croome to enrich people's lives, give them the chance to view a different perspective, both literally and figuratively, and to invite them to add their vision to the future of Croome. An impressive example of this is the partnership with the Worcestershire County Council Libraries and Learning Service who have chosen Croome for the launch of the Summer Reading Challenge, the UK's biggest reading

promotion for children aged four to 11. The three winners of last year's competition are now helping children's author Roddy Brooks write his next book, inspired by the stories and history of Croome.

The 'Beatfreeks' an exciting group of poets and rap artists joined us to stage a poetry slam with the intriguing title: 'Capability Brown, Visionary or Vandal?' The poems were not only inspiring but added a very different dimension to Croome.

At Croome we are at the forefront of finding practical, positive and appropriate ways to work with new audiences and their ideas and passions, all helping to broaden the understanding and appeal of Croome. All this would not have been possible without the knowledge, commitment and energy of the volunteers and staff at Croome. The warmth of the welcome they extend has ensured that we are developing new relationships that will last a lifetime.



Visitors enjoying the 'Beatfreeks' performing at Croome © Rachel Sharpe

Croome during the Great War

by Susanne Atkin

On 25 January 1915 the 9th Earl and Countess of Coventry celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary. By then, the Great War was affecting all aspects of life on the Croome Estate the celebrations with the family and estate tenants were muted but heartfelt. During the day the 8th (Reserve) Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment was marched from Worcester to pay their respects to the Earl and Lady Coventry; they posed for newspaper photographs on the south steps at Croome Court; they were then marched back to Worcester; the following day they left for further training in Northampton.

The presence of the battalion reinforced the close ties between the Coventry family and the military. In 1770 the 6th Earl of Coventry, Lord Lieutenant of the county, formed the Worcestershire Regiment of Militia; his arms were on one of the regimental colours, and the officers dined at Croome Court. Each year the Militia underwent 28 days training.

to the Worcestershire Regiment; he disembarked in September 1914, and was killed at Ploegsteert in November 1914, age 32. Charles Finch, a land drainer on the estate re-joined in August 1914; he was killed in 1917, age 33, having been awarded the Military Medal. The Mason brothers had fought in South Africa in 1901-3; they were mobilised in August 1914 with the Worcestershire Regiment, but survived the war.

Household staff were also subject to early enlistment: Leonard Taylor (killed in 1917, age 34) had been employed at Earls Croome Court by Charles Coventry, having previously worked at Strensham Court. Thomas Hunt, a footman at Strensham Court, was killed in 1916. William Seaborne, the valet of Henry Coventry at The Rectory in Severn Stoke was killed in 1918, age 27.



Men of the 8th (Reserve) Worcestershire Regiment at Croome, January 1915 © Newsquest (Midlands) Group Ltd

In July 1914 up to 600 soldiers were camped under canvas about 700 yards east of the Court. After the 6th Battalion was mobilised and departed, the 5th Battalion (Special Reserve) of the Worcestershire Regiment continued to train at Croome and on Defford Common. For musketry practice, they might have used the 1,000-yard shooting range, one of only two in the county, stretching from the south lawn to the rising ground below the Park Seat. After four weeks of training the 5th Battalion were presented with new colours by the 9th Earl, the Lord Lieutenant and the Honorary Colonel. Chosen to receive the colours was Lt. Aubrey Hudson, son of the owner of Wick House; one month later he was the first man from the Pershore area to be killed in the Great War.

Reservists on the Estate were amongst the first to be called up, usually older men, often married. Joseph Lee worked in the Croome timber yard, until recalled



Lord and Lady Coventry and their family, January 1915 © Newsquest (Midlands) Group Ltd

Croome employees who had enlisted were noted at a tribunal in 1916 – the valet, footman and oddman, plus a coachman and 6 stable hands. John Hill, the land agent, represented the Earl who wanted to prevent the military conscripting of his chauffeur (coachman), unnamed by the tribunal but almost certainly Harry Preece, who would be 41 in December, the limit of military conscription age. Hill argued that no exemptions from military service had

been requested before, the chauffeur had been with the Earl for 13 years and was a trusted driver. The Earl was advancing in years, and needed to travel on war business and to fulfil his duties as Lord Lieutenant; one tribunal member described him as 'growing old and grey' in the service of the country and county. The tribunal practically tied themselves in knots to reach a decision in 'a difficult case'; they were 'anxious to deal fairly between rich and poor': there must not be 'one law for Lord Coventry and one for the tenant farmer'. Absolute exemption was granted for the chauffeur.



Croome Estate tenant families, January 1915 © Newsquest (Midlands) Group Ltd

Ernest Henry Wynn Powell was the Earl's oddman, and joined the war in September 1914 as an orderly in the British Red Cross. Reginald Coventry signed the document: in 1915 he had the task of selecting orderlies to send abroad. They should be 'men of good character, capable physique, and holding first-aid certificates' but should not be eligible to join 'fighting units in the Army'.

Gerald Dudley Smith, husband of the Earl's daughter Barbara, was in Pershore on 5 August 1914 (the day after war was declared) to buy horses in his capacity as the procurement officer for the Remount Service. As the Earl's son-in-law and closely associated with the Croome Hunt one wonders about any conflicting loyalties. Smith was later praised by the War Office for his work in processing 136,428 horses that passed through the Remount Depot at Strensham Stables on their way to war, and his father-in-law recommended him for a special reward for his 'important and patriotic duties'.

Men with experience of working with horses were encouraged to join up, and as casualties increased, notices appeared in newspapers and local shop windows asking for more and more men throughout the war: grooms, rough-riders, strappers, coachmen, shoeing smiths, hunt servants and carters, exactly the type of people found on a country estate such as Croome. Harold Drew was a stableman at Strensham Court (killed in 1918, age 32). Robert Hull worked with horses (killed in 1918, age 21). Both appear on a memorial in Croome Church.

Grooms from the Croome Court stables and the hunt stables at Kinnersley would probably have accompanied the horses to war, such as Reginald Lee, a

groom at the hunt stables (killed in 1916, buried in Israel). Albert Morris, a coachman at Croome Court, enlisted as a reservist for the Worcestershire Yeomanry in December 1915 (age 28); he returned there in 1919. His brother, Charles, was the 2nd horseman at Strensham Court and likely to have been involved in looking after remount horses.

Hunt servants were often farmers' sons. In November 1914, men in uniform were seen at a Croome hunt meeting for the first time. Hunts across the country lost 170,000 horses ('ready-made chargers' and fine light cavalry horses) in the first trawl after the outbreak of war, and with them went '10,000 hunting men', but from then on the hunts would wage their own battles with military authorities to prevent further huge losses of men and horses. By April 1915, W.J. Gresson, master of the Croome Hunt, had lost 8 employees and later had to defend his chief whip Edward Hawtin and whippers-in at military tribunals.

One of the saddest stories concerns Frederick Harold Bishop, who lived at Birch Green. His grandfather Amos, formerly the Earl's 'night watch' man, was once attacked by poachers. He enlisted in the Worcestershire Yeomanry in November 1915, age 19, but was discharged in February 1916 as medically unfit, described as a 'sober industrious man'. Being a young man perhaps he was then subjected to great pressure to 'do his patriotic duty'; badges and armlets had to be issued to wounded, disabled and exempted men to try to protect them from receiving white feathers, accusations of shirking, and relentless recruitment drives; or perhaps he thought a different service would accept him. Whatever the reason, in August 1918 Fred was enrolled in the RAF at the Aeroplane Experimental Station in Suffolk, but was again declared medically unfit, fit only for clerical or sedentary work. Three months later he died, age 22, in a Military Hospital in Ipswich, and lies buried in Severn Stoke churchyard.

The Great War affected Croome deeply. And at the heart of the Estate was the Court, which escaped being requisitioned, presumably because it housed the Lord Lieutenant, a man dedicated to his family and tenants, and to duty and patriotism, even when his grandson, Charles Dudley Smith, was killed in action in June 1915, age 19.



The grave of Frederick Harold Bishop, Severn Stoke © Susanne Atkin

Garden and Park update

by Katherine Alker

With so much activity at the Court, you might think there's little happening in the Garden and Park... how wrong you would be! Last summer, we repaired the drainage culvert in the Evergreen Shrubbery, which had been damaged over 15 years ago by heavy farm machinery when arable crops were grown here. The original eighteenth-century culvert lacked foundations, so the job developed into rather more than we had first anticipated (as often happens at Croome). So, foundations had to be built to support new side walls. We decided to leave some of the arch of the culvert open so that visitors can peer inside and see water that has travelled from miles away, making its way into Croome River.

Also last summer, we were busy restoring the hoggin carriageway through the Home Shrubbery and installing fencing near the drive to the private houses near the Court. This has been a great success and now allows a lovely walk to the Rotunda and the Court, and visitors were able to see the work to restore and rebuild the ha-ha wall which surrounds the Home Shrubbery. There is just one 20 metre section still to restore, and we plan on doing that this year – in fact, 5,250 bricks have already been delivered for the job!

Thanks to the generosity of the Friends of Croome, we were able to repair the plinth for the 6th Earl's memorial urn which is also located in the Home Shrubbery – and this year's raffle proceeds will go towards the repair of the urn itself. I recently found three more boxes of carved stone pieces of the urn, so our contractor is now piecing them all back together! Hopefully the repaired urn can be returned by the end of the year.

2015 promises to be another busy year. We hope to have water flowing again from Sabrina's urn at the Grotto. Although we are not able to use the original source, which channelled water all the way from Pirton, we aim to create the same effect with water cascading from the urn into a rock pool below.

The largest project is the re-instatement of the Chinese Bridge. The design is based on the detailed notes by William Halfpenny, the original designer of the bridge in the eighteenth-century, and also informed by several paintings of the parkland which include the bridge. Work is underway off-site by the joiners and we hope to open the bridge by early summer.

I am gradually assembling the drawings and information to secure planning permission for the composting toilet. This is a wooden structure which will be located near the site of the eighteenth-century latrine behind the Temple Greenhouse.

We also have some major tree felling work underway in South Park. The trees being felled grew up over the remains of Site 6 of RAF Defford and block a view which was open in the eighteenth-century. The excellent volunteers from the South Worcestershire Archaeology Group surveyed and recorded the area before work started, and found a couple of sections of concrete and several drainage shafts.



Tree felling to restore views across parkland © Katherine Alker

Once the tree felling is complete, there will still be a significant amount of work to restore the site to parkland as it was in 'Capability' Brown's design. The tree stumps will all be removed, the ground levelled and pasture seed mix sown over the area. In a couple of years we'll be able to remove the fence and the area will be incorporated into South Park.

We shall also be drawing up plans for repair work to the weir and the carriage splash at the end of the river, just below the Park Seat. Both structures are part of Brown's design for the landscape and crucial for maintaining the correct water level in the river. Each is in desperate need of repair, and once archaeological and structural surveys are complete we can draw up plans for the repair work and submit bids for funding.



Southern end of the man-made river at Croome © Katherine Alker

Another exciting project, currently in the planning stage, is the 'Croome Carriageway Circuit'. We're hoping to restore the hoggin carriageways which ran though Menagerie Wood and the shelterbelts, as well as install some new routes which will join up to make a circular route in the wider parkland. This will be open for visitors to walk and cycle around, and hopefully give more people the opportunity to get out into the parkland. We still have to get agreements from a number of bodies, but we hope to get there in the next 18 months or so.

And of course, we'll be working hard to keep the garden and park looking its best ready for the celebration of the tri-centenary of 'Capability' Brown's birth, in 2016.

RAF Defford Museum *by Bob Shaw*

The RAF Defford Museum welcomed its 10,000th visitor in early February 2015, since opening at the end of September 2014. The success and popular interest generated by the Museum is a tribute to the concept and vision of Dennis Williams, to the design and content of the Museum, and the enthusiasm and commitment of the volunteer stewards.

After a quieter period in January, the Museum is gearing up for increasing visitor numbers in summer. It is open seven days a week, from 10.30 a.m. each day.

The Museum is housed in the restored former RAF Decontamination Annexe, one of the complex of six or seven buildings which constituted the former RAF Defford Station Sick Quarters. The National Trust is restoring these historic buildings for modern use while preserving as much as possible of the 1942 appearance and structure of the site.



RAF Defford Museum © Tracey Blackwell



Ambulance Garage, before and during work © Bob Shaw



Work is now progressing well on the restoration and preservation of the former RAF Ambulance Garage and Mortuary, despite problems encountered. When the ivy and undergrowth was stripped off, the building was found to be in worse condition than expected with quite severe structural problems. These though are being overcome by the skilled and resourceful Contractor under the direction of Sarah Fowler, the surveyor in charge of the project.

Trial boring revealed unexpectedly difficult ground conditions, which have required deep piling, to ensure the floor will take the weight of the front end of a Canberra in the former Ambulance Garage. The Mortuary is to be used for Museum storage and to make provision for bats who, being a protected species, must not be disturbed. It is hoped to complete the building work in the spring with a view to opening to the public sometime in the autumn.

The ever-popular RAF Defford Heritage Weekend, held at Croome, takes place this year on Saturday 11 July and Sunday 12 July. Application has been made to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight for fly pasts by Lancaster, Spitfire, Hurricane, and to the RAF Air Events Team for Hawk, Tornado GR4, and to the Red Arrows.

'Soul to Sole'

by Clare Harris

For most of last year I have been obsessed with shoes but not in the way you might think. It seems a long time ago now when I started work on the Soul to Sole project in the basement of Croome Court. The installation sought to create an engaging but informative experience for visitors which would assist volunteers as they spoke about the complex and varied histories which have graced Croome. I worked with a total of 22 different artists to create 30 unique and very diverse pairs of shoes. The majority of the artists were local, five being students from the University of Worcester who each created a piece as part of their final degree.



Squadron Leader Frank Griffiths' escape and return home by Jon Wilks © Jack Nelson

Alongside the artists we were fortunate to find a newly graduated shoemaker Maud Van Den Broeche. Maud was a real treasure, amazing us all with the ability to adapt her shoemaking process to collaborate with a majority of the artists to produce unique pieces for the project. Each pair of shoes draws attention to a vast array of different characters, delving into different pockets of time and celebrating the well-known to the less familiar characters. From digital technology, ceramic, glass, textiles, photography, mixed media and poetry, I hoped there would be something that would pique everyone's interest.

The room although filled with many rich historical artefacts and clues to Croome's past, with an untrained eye could be easily wandered through and overlooked. I wanted to bring back the magic and to encourage visitors to ask more questions. On entering the space visitors experience a gentle ambience which evokes echoes of life at Croome.

The footsteps of those who have lived and worked here, the distant drumming of the Hare Krishna devotees, the gentle twittering of birds and the growing atmosphere within the space. The room is lit overhead picking out the detail in the uneven and worn floor. Housed within the 1950s boys' school shoe rack the artworks now sit like gems, almost as if they should have always been there. Each encapsulating an essence of life bringing the once empty space to life.

Soul to Sole was an extremely ambitious exhibition made up of lots of smaller installations, with each piece being an artwork in its own right. It was the very first creative project from the Croome Redefined four-year plan so the pressure was on. I had worked within listed buildings before but had not experienced anything on this scale. Croome had far more departments and an enormous number of volunteers. I soon found myself working and communicating with well over 100 people. There were a few trials and tribulations along the way as in any project, particularly when working in a listed property, but with a bit of imagination and determination I am delighted to see that it is still a success and all the hard work has paid off.

It has been a great pleasure to deliver this project and to work with so many talented people. I don't think I will ever be far from the shoes; I am often finding myself adjusting them and almost a year later it is delightful to see it is still treasured by some many. There are whispers of possibly expanding the collection on display, which I hope will come to fruition.



Maria Gunning by Aida Kuliesyte © Jack Nelson

Pirton Remembers

by Diana Skeys

Historically there has been a link between the churches of Pirton and Croome D'Abitôt. Indeed, the funeral of Maria Gunning, wife of the 6th Earl of Coventry was held at St Peter's Church, Pirton. Maria died aged 28 in 1760. It is said that 10,000 people travelled to Pirton Church to pay their respects. The two churches also shared Rectors until 1972, one of whom was Thomas Henry Coventry son of the 7th Earl of Coventry. Pirton Court was said to have been repaired and altered in 1815 to provide a comfortable home for him whilst he was Rector of Pirton with Croome D'Abitôt.



Pirton Church Remembrance, November 2014 © Derek Skeys

Many of the properties in Pirton were part of the Croome Estate and many of the villagers were also employed on the estate. When war was declared in 1914 young men left Pirton and the surrounding villages to fight for their country. Nine of those who did not return are remembered on the War Memorial within Pirton Church.

One of those brave men was Joseph Stephen Lee a Private in the 3rd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment. Joseph had been an Army Reservist for some 12 years before 1914 and also a worker at Croome Timber Yard under the manager Mr J A Gallie, whose son, Charles, was killed in action, in 1915.

Joseph was born in 1882 in nearby Kempsey the second son of William and Ellen Lee (née Godfrey), both of whom were born in Kempsey. He was one of 10 children. Joseph was married in January 1912 at St Mary's Church, Kempsey to Mary Ann Lloyd of Severn Stoke. A son, Joseph Stephen Lee, was born in 1912 and a daughter, Florence, followed in 1914. Both children were baptised at Pirton Church.

Joseph went off to war leaving his wife and their two small children, never to return. He lost his life on 5 November 1914 aged 32 years and is remembered with honour at the Ploegsteert Memorial, Belgium and at St Peter's Church, Pirton.



Pirton Church before repairs © Derek Skeys

According to Joseph's Army Service Record his wife Mary Ann had some difficulty obtaining her late husband's war pension. The War Office saying they were unable to trace him. During this time Mary Ann and the children were living with her parents at Sandford near Severn Stoke. With no pension forthcoming, Viscount Deerpur wrote several letters to the War Office. His last, strongly worded and insisting that the matter be resolved, given the information he had previously forwarded, resulted in Mary Ann receiving her pension some 8 months after her husband's death and amounted to 18 shillings and 6 pence a week for her and the children.

Pirton Church Tower restoration is almost complete with just the clock to be restored and placed on the west side of the tower later this year. As part of the fundraising efforts, a Flower Festival is planned for August 2015.



Pirton Church Tower repaired, 2015 © Derek Skeys

From Kirkharle to Blenheim Palace

by Eric Jones



Richard Wilson's 1758 painting of Croome Court © Croome Estate Trust

As we all look forward to the anniversary of Lancelot “Capability” Brown’s birth (1716-2016), it is well worth viewing an unusual 1964 documentary in the East Anglian Film Archive, celebrating the achievement of a designer who re-shaped the landscape of eighteenth-century England and whose legacy we enjoy to this day at Croome and hundreds of other places around Britain, including several in Wales.

There are many books and other sources of information about Brown’s life and work, but the film offers in just over 22 minutes a very succinct overview of Brown’s own work, while also tracing the antecedents of some of his landscape design hallmarks in the work of his predecessor William Kent. Essentially, Brown’s characteristic landscape designs – “natural” though paradoxically artificial – were a reaction against the geometric formality of

the previous century’s French and Dutch designs.

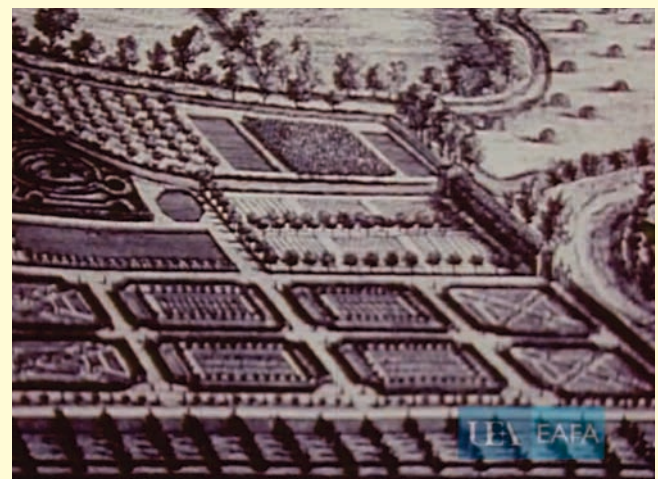
Water and lakes play an important part in Brown’s landscapes, as exemplified at Croome, and straight lines give way to serpentine paths and surprise vistas. French influence took a different form now, with the seventeenth-century painters Claude and Poussin colouring the way the landscape is seen, as in the 1758 view of Croome Court by Richard Wilson. The film itself is both scholarly and very accessible, combining an enjoyable and instructive account of Brown’s life and development as a garden designer with a lightning tour of some of the more significant parks and their defining features.

This film is an interesting document in its own right. We have one or two glimpses of smartly dressed visitors to National Trust properties, and the whole film has a somewhat nostalgic quality for the viewer

that even includes the kind of background music favoured by documentaries of the period. Ransomes, the lawnmower manufacturers, have here sponsored a film which acknowledges the contribution, not least, of Dorothy Stroud, the author of an influential book about Brown and whose ashes, of course, are buried on the lakeside at Croome close to the 6th Earl's memorial to the "genius" of the friend who transformed the unpromising "morass" he inherited. We are reminded that the innumerable gardeners who maintained Croome and turned vision into reality in the eighteenth-century did so without the benefit of Ransomes' lawnmowers, the first of which came onto the market in 1832.



This archive film can be highly recommended for its excellent summary of Brown's achievement as a design genius who came from humble origins in Kirkharle, Northumberland and who, by the end of his life in 1783, left an indelible creative mark on the British landscape, coming to be regarded as "the world's foremost garden designer", as he is described in the film. The film can be viewed at www.eafa.org.uk/catalogue/6068



Friends of Croome donations

by Paul Stanley



Post Rammer © Katherine Alker

December 2014: £646 for the purchase of off-road wheels for the Land Rover.

September 2014: £6,100 towards the restoration of the 6th Earl's Monument; £621 for the purchase of Cups and Saucers for use at events at Croome.

July 2014: £879 for building and installation of a new cupboard in the Second-Hand Bookshop; £1,509 for the purchase of plants and pots for the Temple Greenhouse.

June 2014: £200 contribution towards the purchase of a dust extractor for use by the property maintenance team.

May 2013: £5,500 for the purchase of a forward trailer for use in woodland management at Croome. Donation towards the restoration of the Coventry family crest above the main entrance to Croome Court.

May 2012: £3,800 for the purchase of 100 chairs for use in Croome Court; £1,995 for purchase of a post rammer for use by the Garden and Park team; £948 for the purchase of additional display boards for the Oral History Project room in Croome Court.

October 2011: £1,345 for the purchase of display boards and stands for the Oral History Project room in Croome Court.

November 2010: £435 towards tours of Croome Court.

September 2010: £1,300 towards plants for the Home Shrubbery and Arboretum.

August 2009: £350 for the purchase of a camcorder to record events at Croome; £750 for a grass cutter/topper for use in the park.

April 2009: £350 for a marquee for use during events in the Park.

February 2009: £2,000 for the provision of benches in the Island Pavilion.

In addition, we have agreed to fund further items which are yet to be purchased:

Pellenc Battery Pack, Charger and Hedge Cutter est. cost £1,500.

Pellenc Brush Cutter, for use alongside hedges and ditches est. cost £940.

Winch for Land Rover, for general use in the park and tree felling est. cost £1,000.