

# THE FRIENDS OF CROOME PARK



AUTUMN 2013 ISSUE 19

NEWSLETTER

Katherine Alker  
Garden and Park Manager



*Restored ha-ha and steps*

The year is flying by and we have made good progress with restoration of the 6th Earl's vision for Croome in the garden and park this year. I am really pleased with the way in which the planting in the garden is developing.

We have made a good start at reflecting the variety of plants that were grown here in the 18th century. I don't think people realise that in 1801 Croome's plant collection was described as 'second only to Kew'. I know we've got a very long way to go before we get anywhere near the 6000 plants listed in the Hortus Croomensis but Croome is more than rolling landscape with a few cedar trees now!

Work to restore the ha-ha walls has been in full swing this year to take advantage of funding from Natural England. Over 600 metres of wall on Church Hill was restored or rebuilt, depending on condition, as well as the stretch around the Home Shrubbery including the original steps that allow access into the parkland from the Rotunda area.

Over the winter we'll be making a start on opening up the route from the Rotunda across the top of the Home Shrubbery, across the court drive to the Church Shrubbery.

*Cont. on page 4...*

£2

where sold

[www.friendsofcroomepark.org.uk](http://www.friendsofcroomepark.org.uk)

## WELCOME

It is with sadness that I bid you farewell as your editor. I remain on the Committee for another few months but my final edition signals the end of my 'official' involvement with Croome.

When I started work here in 2003, Croome was a much quieter place than today. I have many happy memories and will now be watching with interest from the sidelines when popping in to enjoy Heather's cakes!

Best wishes to Chris Wynne-Davies - I'm sure the newsletter will go from strength to strength under his editorship!

Thank you to each and every one of you who has helped and made my time at Croome so enjoyable and memorable - I'll hopefully bump into you sometime soon.

Wendy

### Your Committee:

Chair:  
John Henderson

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Secretary:  
Tony Perfect

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Diana Skeys

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Sue Lloyd  
Geoff Sherwood  
Paul Stanley  
David Vernon  
Chris Wynne-Davies

# Chairman's Note

Dear Friends

It happens occasionally in organisations that, despite trying to avoid it, post-holders all seem to retire at the same time!

As intimated later, Eileen Clement is retiring as the Oral History co-ordinator. She has been the prime mover and inspiration for one of the most important objectives of the Friends: to record the life and times of those who lived in and around Croome before the epoch of the National Trust. From the inception of the Friends in 2003, Eileen has instigated over a hundred recordings. With tremendous enterprise and some valuable help, she published the booklet, 'Croome before the National Trust' and, more recently, the CD 'Croome Voices'. With the photographs and memorabilia kindly donated, the Oral History Room at the Court has been established and the sound posts around the Court primed to breathe life into what might have been a hollow shell of a house and its surroundings. We owe her a great debt of gratitude and we need volunteers to take on this fascinating and rewarding work.

You only have to look at the forthcoming events on Page 3 to see the variety of excitements arranged by the Events Committee. I am sad to tell you that their Chairman, Christine Adams, is also standing down. She has given so much to us through



her dedicated friendly efficiency, providing members with happy memories of so many visits and events. These have immeasurably enhanced our enjoyment and, as if by accident, our ability to provide profitable benefits for Croome.

Our brilliant Editor, Wendy, is also handing over the reins. As our Newsletter has developed over the years, her enthusiasm and expertise have made it a colourful document to inform and entertain and, gathered together as they are on our website, they provide an invaluable archive. Congratulations Wendy on your enviable contribution to another strand of the Friends' vital interests.

Congratulations also to our sister organisation, Defford Airfield Heritage Group for arranging a wonderful Heritage Weekend Exhibition this September and the sensational flypasts

So, please read on and enjoy this Autumn Issue.

**John Henderson**  
Chairman, Friends of Croome  
September 2013

# HEROINES AT WAR

## Thursday 3rd October

As well as the wonderful array of events below, why not come along to this joint one organised by the Friends of Croome and Defford Airfield Heritage Group...

Following in the footsteps of the very successful 'Life and Death at RAF Defford' lecture by Dennis Williams in May there will be another joint FoCP/DAHG lecture on Thursday October 3rd: 'Heroines of Croome at War – The Women of RAF Defford'.

The lecture will pay tribute to the forgotten role of women and their unsung contribution to airborne radar research. The lecture will include the Fleet Air Arm WRNS radar technicians and mechanics who flew from Defford on dangerous missions over the sea; WAAFs, who served at Defford in a variety of important roles; and the civilians, including some outstanding women scientists and technicians.

The lecture is, as usual, in the Canteen and begins at 7.15pm. Tickets are available price £5 from Graham and Sylvia Evans on 01684 295327.



WAAF officer & scientist  
Sqn Off Audrey Rundle MBE

## Events - join in!

Wed 16th October, 7.15pm

### Quiz Evening

*the return of Paul and Judith Stanley's popular quiz evening.*

Thur 14th November, 9.00am

### Coach trip to Oxford

*incl 90min official walking tour of colleges with time at leisure for early Christmas shopping.*

Wed 4th December, 9.30am

### Activity Day – Festive Door Hangings

*with Jane Hulse, Croome's flower arranger  
incl lunch at RAF canteen*

### 2014

Tue 14th January, 7.00pm for 7.30pm

### Festive Meal

*at the Oak Inn, Defford*

Wed 12th February, 7.15pm

### From Wyre to Croome: a Journey through Worcestershire's Wildlife

*talk by Wendy Carter, Communications Manager at  
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust*

Tue 25th February, 10.30am

### Behind the Scenes Tours of Croome Court

*with Michael Smith, Property Manager*

Thur 21st March

Friends of Croome AGM

April - date to be confirmed  
Valuation & Auction Evening

Sun 11th - Thur 16th May

Holiday to Northumberland  
*(see page 7)*

Thur 22nd May

Visit to Laycock Abbey

June - date to be confirmed

Restoration Walk

*with Katherine Alker, Park and Garden Manager*

**Email: [croome-events@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:croome-events@hotmail.co.uk)**

**[www.friendsofcroomepark.org.uk](http://www.friendsofcroomepark.org.uk)**

...continued from front page

Some trees will be felled, the carriageway restored and also some fencing installed to ensure visitors don't stray down the drive to the private housing. Opening this route will allow better flow of visitors around the site and hopefully encourage more people to see both the Rotunda and the Ice House in Church Shrubbery.

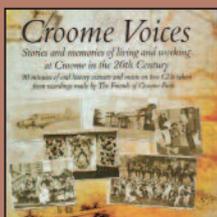
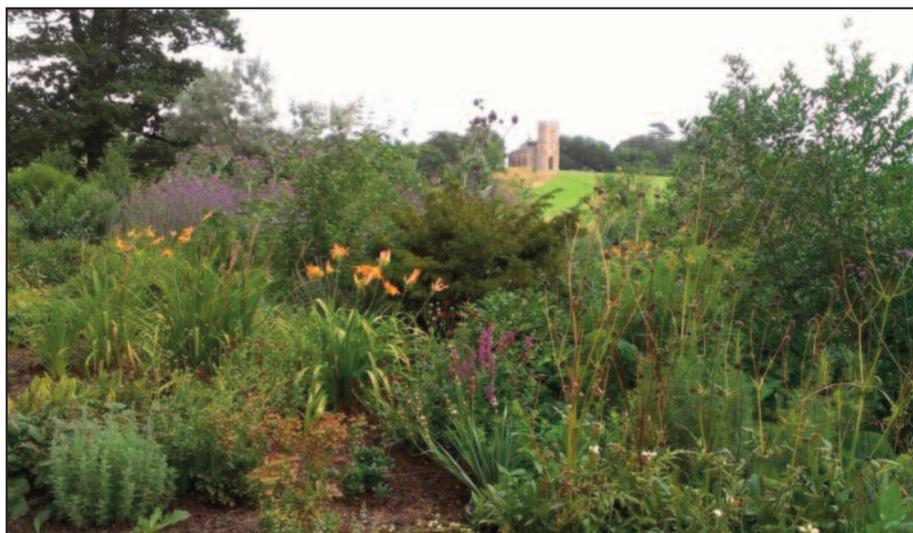
We're in the early stages of another very exciting project too; rebuilding the Chinese Bridge. Archaeological investigation and other surveying work will start on site this autumn and we aim to have the bridge open by late spring 2014. With the bridge in place, there will be a dramatic impact on views to and from the court, as well as across the parkland.

There is much more work

planned in the garden and park over the coming months and years; hedge laying, parkland planting, plantation felling, coppicing, garden planting, more ha-ha work and the general maintenance that keeps us busy, as well as projects on the wish list like restoring the water from Sabrina's urn, restoring the



swirly urn in the Home Shrubbery to the 6th Earl, replacing the Four Seasons Statues.... the list goes on.



## Croome Voices

Don't forget that our Oral History Project's 'Croome voices' is still available to buy and would make a perfect Christmas present. 90 minutes of recordings taken from hours of interviews document life at Croome before the National Trust - all for just £10. See page 9 for details on how to order.

## New logo

The more observant reader may have noticed a change on the front cover of this latest edition?

For some time your committee has pondered over the name of the Friends; "Croome Park" is a modern term and one that was never used historically. Croome was simply "Croome".

At our AGM in April we asked those present if they agreed to the Friends being referred to as the Friends of



Croome rather than the Friends of Croome Park. There was overwhelming support for this.

With a change of name comes a change of logo. Catherine Gordon, designer of the original logo, took up her pen once more to change the name - and perhaps tinker with one or two other features at the same time. We hope you like where we've got to so far - alterations are still in progress!

## Monitoring Wildlife

Caroline Uff  
Wildlife & Countryside Advisor, NT West Midlands

Getting site habitat management right, especially when you have just entered a new Environmental Stewardship scheme, can be one of the most challenging things for a property. A good monitoring programme is essential to inform managers as to whether what's being done on the ground is helping or hindering the wildlife and Croome Park can confidently boast one of the best NT wildlife monitoring programs in the region.

A motivated group of volunteers, under the careful direction of Katherine Alker, carry out this work. All of the volunteers bring different skills and knowledge to the site as they carry out, for example, bird, butterfly and dragonfly monitoring. Simple surveys like this, if done regularly, help to flag up potential problems at an early stage so that, if needed, appropriate action can be taken.

On a hot and sunny day in early July, amongst the marbled white and skipper butterflies, we had a training day on grassland monitoring. We saw that

the restoration of Church Hill to flower-rich grassland had been a great success with a high diversity of good grassland species including yellow rattle, bird's-foot trefoil, ladies bedstraw and ox-eye daisy. Taking a late hay cut followed by aftermath grazing should ensure that this site continues to flourish. We picked up also that diversity was lower on Westfield and this result will feed into the grazing management plan so that, in time, the grassland can achieve its full potential.

Of course, the story doesn't end there. Monitoring can help tell us what the wildlife needs are, but Katherine then has the challenging job of balancing this with historic and farmed landscape objectives, all within the ever present constraints of time, budget and the unpredictable British weather!



*training day*

# Defford Airfield Heritage Group

Bob Shaw  
Friends of Croome Park member

Plans to restore the Decontamination Annexe building to its former RAF appearance externally, and internally for use as the Defford Airfield Heritage Museum, are progressing steadily.

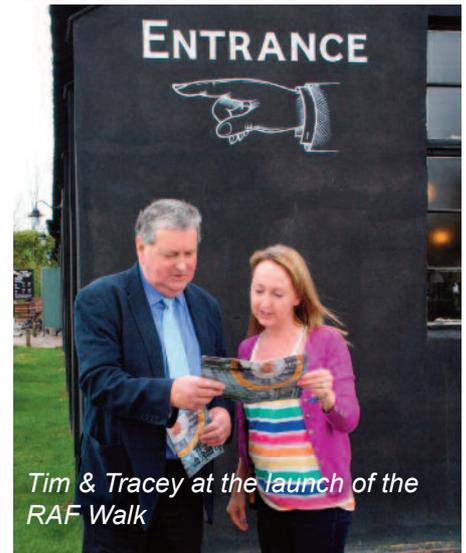
Thanks to the initiative of DAHG, the National Trust has received an offer of a grant of up to £87,000 towards the estimated

designing and fitting out the interior as a flexible exhibition space and organising a succession of exhibitions. Part of the building will be set out for displays of vintage radar equipment by the DAHG members of the Electronics Restoration Trust (ERT).

DAHG are now seeking grant funding to fit out the interior of the Museum. It is hoped funding will also allow DAHG to organise a programme of events and 'outreach' activities for schools, aimed at putting on record and publicising the extraordinary airborne radar achievements of the service personnel and scientists at RAF Defford.

It is hoped to open the Defford Airfield Heritage Museum in the first half of 2014.

The "RAF Walk" was launched at May Day Bank Holiday. The route of the Walk enables visitors to Croome to learn more about RAF Defford and its achievements, the location of various sites and features of the airfield that can still be seen from the Park (the route is on NT land and public footpaths; it does not take visitors onto those parts of the airfield that are private property and not open to the public). A guidebook to the Walk, prepared by Dennis Williams and volunteer graphic designer Matt Jarvis, is on sale on Reception price £1. The guidebook provides a potted history of Defford Airfield and a map, and takes the visitor stage by stage through the walk, identifying points of interest.



Tim & Tracey at the launch of the RAF Walk

The Brian Kedward Memorial bench, funded by his friends in DAHG, has been erected in a position overlooking the Airfield and forms a convenient resting point on the Walk. An intensive programme of guided walks is planned for the autumn and more volunteers are needed to act as guides.

On May 12th, there was a Group visit to the West Mercia Constabulary security compound on the airfield, which the police inherited from QinetiQ in 2002. The visit was arranged by DAHG member Brian Smith, who heads up the Police Records and Archives in the very fine Sir Bernard Lovell Building on the site. After a fascinating tour of the police facility where some features of the airfield survive, the party went on to a memorable visit to the former Technical Site, under the leadership of Dennis Williams, who had secured the permission of the landowner and the farmer – vital for any visit to this private area.



Graham Evans inspecting the interior of the decontamination annexe

cost of £127,000 to restore the building for the purpose of housing the Museum. The National Trust has underwritten the balance of £40,000 needed, to enable work to start, but hope to recover this money by applications to Charitable Trusts.

The offer of the grant to fund the greater part of the work comes thanks to generosity of the Evesham-based company Severn Waste Services, via the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme. The National Trust has appointed a surveyor, Sarah Fowler, to take charge of the building works and set up a Management Board for the project consisting of Michael Smith, the Property Manager, Dennis Williams of DAHG, who is to act as Curator of the Museum, and Bob Shaw, Secretary of DAHG. Specifications for the building work have been mostly agreed and, when finalised, will be used as the basis for seeking tenders.

It is envisaged that the National Trust, who own the building and the land, will be responsible for all aspects of the building – heating, light, safety, repairs, security, stewarding and so on. DAHG will be responsible for



Visit to the West Mercia Constabulary at RAF Defford airfield

# Holiday?

In September 2012 33 Members travelled with Just GO Holidays for a five day break to Northumberland. We followed our own itinerary, stopping at National Trust properties on the outward and return journey; Nostell Priory and Hardwick Hall were both welcoming and provided good food in interesting surroundings (too much to see on our extended lunch stops).

Our hotel, the recently refurbished Novotel Newcastle Airport, proved to be way above expectations and provided excellent accommodation and superb food.

...one very discerning member of the group who can normally find room for improvement was forced to admit that *nothing* required changing.

The sun even shone for us after a damp start. We had a morning visit to Housesteads Fort and followed that with an afternoon at Washington Old Hall where we were made especially welcome and catered for by their Friends group.

Our day at Alnwick Castle and Gardens was magical and accompanied with warm sunny weather and wonderful relaxing surroundings

On our final day we visited Wallington; first walking through beautiful woodland to the wonderful walled garden followed by a tour of the 17th century house with magnificent interiors including a Pre-Raphaelite central hall painted to look like an Italian Courtyard.

In the afternoon we moved on to Craggside. This was the revolutionary home of Lord Armstrong, Victorian inventor and landscape genius and was a wonder of its age - it was the first house in the world to be lit by electricity.

In the evening our very skilled and helpful coach driver, Derek, organised a Blue Badge

Christine Adams  
Friends of Croome Committee

Guide and took us on an evening sightseeing tour of Newcastle – more magic in seeing the SAGE Building and bridges lit up at night .

Following the advice of the Blue Badge Guide –not to leave Newcastle without a close up view of the Angel of the North - Derek took us on a surprise diversion to ensure we did not miss it.



We negotiated a good price last year and even had a free place; we made a donation of £190 to Croome and £330 was donated by Just GO to NT HQ.

## Fancy coming with us?

Northumberland has so many treasures that requests were made for a return visit.

We're currently negotiating a trip from May 11th to 16th at the 4-Star Lumley Castle Hotel, Durham [www.lumleycastle.com](http://www.lumleycastle.com)

The cost will be just £389.99 plus £16 insurance (& a boat trip to the Farnes will be an extra £13 or so).

We're still confirming the detailed itinerary but it will include visits to Kedleston Hall (Derbyshire), the Farne Islands, Lindisfarne Castle, Holy Island and a 'Capability' Brown trail visit to Kirkharle.

Just GO Holidays have changed the way they organise group trips and we must have a minimum of 40 people for the trip to happen. So, what are you waiting for? We'd love you to join us to see and do even more wonderful things and have more magical experiences.

If you're interested please get in touch with me - please email [christineadams430@btinternet.com](mailto:christineadams430@btinternet.com)

# FRIENDS FORUM

## The 9th Earl's Hounds

The 9th Earl of Coventry's great passion in life was to breed a first class pack of foxhounds and racehorses and a first class herd of Hereford cattle. All these he achieved with remarkable success.

The family's hounds had been kept at Croome Court for over three hundred years; it is recorded that a pack had been kept at Croome since the early part of the 17th century. On coming of age, Lord Coventry took a leading part in foxhunting. In 1868 he became the First Master of the North Cotswold Hunt and hunted the country at his own expense for six years. He either rode a park hack or went by carriage to and from the Kennels and hunted all day.

An elaborate plan was worked out before telephones to warn the staff when the Earl would arrive at Croome Court at night so that his bath could be run and formal dinner would be started. On leaving Broadway, a beacon would be lit at Broadway Tower to be seen by an observer at the Panorama Tower at Kinnersley. When the Earl arrived at Kinnersley a beacon would be lit at the Panorama Tower warning the staff that their master would be home within fifteen minutes. This brings us to the year 1874 when Lord Coventry, finding the distance too great, withdrew his Mastership and formed his own private pack, the Earl of Coventry's Hounds. He bred and produced a first class pack, one of the finest in England. The famous Coventry Rambler, 1875, has been one of the most influential stud hounds in foxhound history.

The Opening Meets at Croome Court, which ended when the Court was sold, were very smart occasions. Liveried footmen with six silver buttons attached to the back of their tailcoats would dispense drinks from silver trays to mounted visitors, while maids dressed in black with white lace would take round trays of food. On the sale of Croome Court to a Holy Order of Nuns for a school, the Opening Meet moved up the hill next to the Church, to the Officers' Mess, the best Nissen huts.

I used to ride my pony to these Meets; the cap was half a crown, taken by Major Rayer who, incidentally, conducted a four day sale of the contents of Croome Court by his firm Bentley, Hobbs and Mytton. I remember one amusing incident at the Opening Meet at the Officers' Mess when the officers, dressed in smart uniform,

John Chugg

Friends of Croome Park member



*The Croome Hunt meet at Croome Court, 1931*

dispensed drinks on large trays. When passing me, as a very small child on a very small pony, the pony put his nose under the tray, producing a large fountain as all the glasses went into the air, spraying the officer's smart uniform with alcohol. He was not much amused.

The Worcester Drive was rather impressive before the M5 motorway carved it up. On entering the Worcester Lodge Gates a splendid pebble carriage drive opened up with wide grass verges each side, on which I used to canter my pony. On each side lay an avenue of large fine oak trees that stretched as far as the Pier Gates and made a very imposing entrance to Croome Court.

The 9th Earl kept a fine herd of both Hereford cattle and red deer in Croome Park surrounded by a blue lias wall. The Hereford cattle were prolific winners in the show-ring. The deer were kept for the large house's use and the Slaughter House was in the field opposite London Lodge against the road. I remember seeing the remains of this building as a child before it was demolished.

Lord Coventry bred and raced top class horses on the flat and over jumps and was a member of the Jockey Club and Steward at Cheltenham, Worcester, Pershore and other local courses. He was a member of the Hunters Improvement Society, Master of the Queen's Buckhounds 1886 to 1892 and 1895 to 1900, Master Earl of Coventry's Hounds 1874 to 1882. His daughter, Lady Barbara Dudley-Smith, who lived at Strensham Court, bred the fine mare Verdict, which won the Cambridgeshire in 1923 and Verdict's daughter, Quashed, won The Oaks at Epsom in 1935. Verdict walked across our farm (Red Deer Farm) as a

yearling on the way to Croome Court from Strensham Court to be broken in. I am fortunate to have a collection of Coventry memorabilia, including some of the 9th Earl's ornate walking sticks, his hunting horn and other members of the family's hunting crops and hunt buttons.

What is now termed as the water splash in Croome River was originally built for the 9th Earl's hounds, this being the only crossing place for

horses and hounds. When I rode across this ford most days on my pony it was quite deep and came up to my pony's belly on account of the massive amount of silt and bulrushes on either side. I remember there being oak posts on either side of the ford to guide you across. When I returned some sixty years later, the crossing was drained and you could see the rotted oak stumps on either side.

## Oral History Update

Eileen Clement  
Oral History Co-ordinator

At my presentation to the Friends in March I displayed some of the artefacts and written memories collected over the years. This made me think how disappointing it is that these are not shared enough, as this was one of the conditions of the HLF grant. I have, therefore, arranged for copies of these to be available in the Volunteers' Library in the Court. If you wish for further information please contact David Vernon on [vernond@btinternet.com](mailto:vernond@btinternet.com).

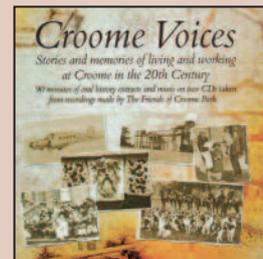
### Francis Bird

In this edition I am relating some memories of Francis Bird who helped to build the runways at Defford. At the age of 14 he started work at the aerodrome, picked up by taxi (with a lady driver) from the Bluebell. He was taught to drive a tractor with a trailer. Runways were dug out and rubble from Malvern quarries

put there before being concreted. There were no JCBs, just picks and shovels, one big mechanical concrete mixer and no tippers, so rubble had to be shovelled off. Steam rollers flattened the stone and concrete was poured between steel screens.

They took their meals in satchels and every morning a little blue Austin Seven van came round with lardy cakes from the Upton bakery. In the afternoon a man from the pub (now a house) at Severn Stoke used to bring tea. The 'black gang' took their tractors to a hedge near the Monkey House, which served strong cider, and had dinner there. Francis was teetotal and had to fetch the boys from under the hedge. It took two years to build the runways and dispersal points. One week Francis worked 96 hours and earned £12 10s. How times have changed!

Francis features on the 'Croome Voices' CDs and these are still available at a cost of £10. 90 minutes of recording gives a historical sketch of life at Croome in the 20th century. Please contact me if you wish to buy one. [croome-oral-history@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:croome-oral-history@hotmail.co.uk) or 01684 891815.



### Handing over the reins

I've thoroughly enjoyed running this project for many years but will be stepping down from it over the next few months. If you'd like to play a role in recording the history of Croome then please get in touch.

Whether you want to share a visit to Croome, write to your Committee members, send in a photograph or feedback on an event you've attended, we'd love to hear your thoughts.

Please email [croome-editor@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:croome-editor@hotmail.co.uk) or write to:

Friends of Croome Newsletter Editor  
c/o The National Trust  
Builders' Yard  
High Green  
Severn Stoke  
Worcestershire WR8 9JS

**The deadline for the next issue of the magazine is 1st March 2014**

# Red Wing Project Update...

Alice Padley  
Project Co-ordinator, Red Wing

Our contractor, Croft, has done a fantastic job so far of keeping the project on schedule.

We are more than halfway through a 40 week contract now and on the homeward stretch; much of the scaffolding has now been dismantled.

The new roof slates have arrived and are being put on as I write. Croft is reusing as much as possible of the original slate but due to the way the original slates were fixed many were broken when they were taken off.

The stonemasons have been on site for the majority of the project and their work is almost done. They have been repairing, where possible, and replacing the stone parapets. Each Thursday one of the

stonemasons, Dave, has set up on the west side of the Court in order to show visitors some of the work he has been doing. This has proved very popular and Dave has really enjoyed the chance to talk to visitors and show off his skills.

When this phase of the



project is complete at the end of the year the building will be a structurally stable weatherproof shell. Many floors and ceilings will be

missing until future use is decided.

The two volunteers on the Red Wing project board Janine Cobain and Tim Hickson, have been an enormous support to the project and have been instrumental in recording, photographing and filming the

work as we have gone along. We are going to share these images with our supporters and a video loop will appear very soon in the Lords Dressing Room of Croome Court showing the notorious diagonal beam being block and tackled back into position.

For further information on

the project please don't hesitate to contact me at [alice.padley@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:alice.padley@nationaltrust.org.uk) or chat to Tim or Janine who are both at Croome on a weekly basis.

## Second hand books

We say it in every issue but thank you for continuing to support our second hand bookshop in the basement of the Court. It is raising invaluable funds for us to continue our work as well as the National Trust to continue theirs. Don't forget to visit us and don't forget to recycle your books!

## 2014 calendar - buy yours now!

Following the incredible success of our 2013 calendar, Sue Lloyd and Judith Stanley have been busy choosing photos to create a 2014 calendar. And we're sure you'll love this one just as much.

Calendars cost just £5.00 (plus 50p if you'd like a posting envelope) and are available from Croome's reception now.

We're working on a way to incorporate Friends' photos of Croome for future calendars so watch this space...!



# Thank YOU

Some of you have been with us since the start. Some of you are relatively new to the Friends of Croome. But all of you have done your part in some way and helped us to raise an astonishing £8000 over the last eight years.

We were never established to be a fundraising tool for the National Trust at Croome but from our very early days - with Members running a mini-tea shop in a gazebo on busy event days - we recognised that we needed to fund our awareness raising and education activities...and if we raised some cash that could be usefully spent in the Park at the same time then that, as they say, was a bonus.

In the last decade or so, you've helped us to purchase:

**May 2013:** £5,500 for the purchase of a forward Trailer for use in woodland management at Croome

**March 2013:** Donation towards the restoration of the Coventry family crest above the entrance to the Court

**May 2012:** £3,800 for the purchase of 100 Chairs for use in the Court

**March 2012:** £1,995 for the purchase of a post rammer for use by the Garden and Park team

**March 2012:** £948 for the purchase of additional display

boards for Oral History Project room in Croome Court

**2009:** £66.70 donation towards upkeep of William Dean's grave



2009 - topper

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

**November 2010** £435 for tours of Croome Court

**September 2010:** £1300 towards plants for the Home Shrubbery & Arboretum

**August 2009:** £350 for the purchase of a camcorder to record Croome events

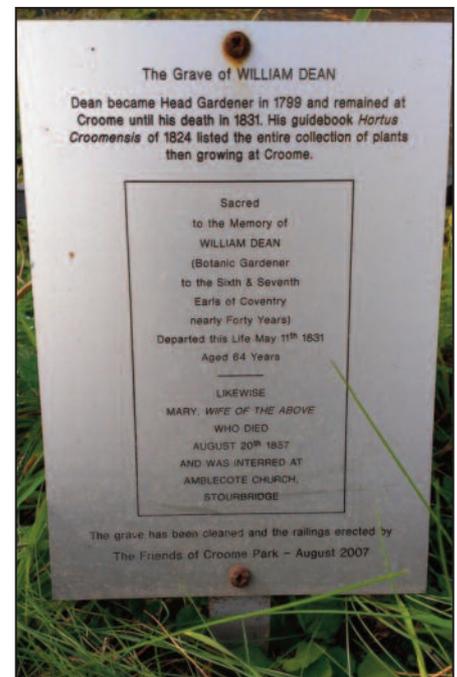
**August 2009:** £750 for a grass cutter/topper for use in the Park

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

**February 2009:** £2000 for the provision of benches in the Island Pavilion

**2008:** £100 towards the purchase of recording equipment for the Oral History Project (pre-external funding)

**2008:** £324 for ironworks and misc goods for William Dean's grave



**Apr 2007:** £300 for trees and guards in Menagerie Wood

**2006:** £10 donation to The Churches Conservation Trust



2012 - post rammer

# Croome Redefined

Cate Statham  
Croome Redefined Project Co-ordinator

We are now 9 months into this ground-breaking five year project to transform everyone's experience of Croome, in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund. Following 2 years of major repair works that visitors will be able to see up close, the whole of the Court will be open for everyone to explore and use for the first time ever. Through partnerships, local community involvement and a vibrant volunteering culture, together we will create a place quite unlike any other National Trust property. Craftsmanship, design and new talent will be at the heart of everything as we find new ways of telling Croome's stories.

We recently interviewed contractors to undertake the main capital works at Croome Court, which are scheduled to begin in early 2014. We have ambitious plans to leave the Court open whilst these essential repair and re-servicing works happen and use them as an opportunity to share both Croome's stories and our conservation work with our supporters. Detailed designs are now underway to finalise the

proposed uses for the Court, including rooms that the public can hire, creative studio spaces and a dedicated research room linked to the Croome archive at The Hive in Worcester.

Before these works can begin, our contractors ICL will be removing the bulk of the asbestos from the Court from September to December. The property will remain open to visitors throughout and strict safety measures will be in place to ensure visitors can find out as much as they want to about this process whilst ensuring everyone visiting, working and volunteering are perfectly safe. Doing this will allow us to conduct further investigation into the historical structure of the building before works begin in earnest next year. We will of course be letting you know about any exciting finds!

A large part of the project is improving how we share the spirit of Croome and we have been



forging better links amongst our local community as well as getting more of our volunteers involved to get their views on how we can do this together. This has resulted in several exciting developments, from a new branding style for Croome designed by students at the University of Worcester (due to be launched across the site in October) to projects planned with local schools and organisations, as well as the seeding of ideas for creative ways of telling Croome's wonderful stories. Recent successes include an evening to which over 100 of our volunteers came to discuss plans for Croome and get involved in the project and a summer reading scheme 'Creepy Croome' day in partnership with the Pershore Library Service that nearly 700 local families attended. By the time you read this, our next community event - Art Takeover at Croome - during Open Heritage Weekend (Sept 14-15) will have taken place; anyone who visits will be able to pick up a pencil, camera, paintbrush or other artistic material of choice and document Croome in whichever way they choose for the day.

The above represents a snippet of the exciting things beginning to happen at Croome and we sincerely hope you will join us in continuing to make this a wonderful place to visit and volunteer. For more information do keep your eyes out for our new Croome newsletter which comes out bi-monthly or contact [cate.statham@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:cate.statham@nationaltrust.org.uk).