

# THE FRIENDS OF CROOME



AUTUMN 2014 ISSUE 21

NEWSLETTER

## ***No Ordinary Holiday: the Friends' holiday in Northumberland May '14*** **by Eric Jones**

This year's Friends' holiday took forty-six members to the north of England. Beningborough Hall, a National Trust property in North Yorkshire, was our first visit, where we enjoyed the collection of works from the National Portrait Gallery before venturing into the Victorian walled garden. Our accommodation was the spectacular Lumley Castle Hotel in Chester-le-Street.



*Lumley Castle, Sharon Joyce*

Next morning the group explored new gardens created by the present Duchess of Northumberland at Alnwick, the centrepiece of which is the Cascade that delights everyone each half hour by bursting into life with fountains jetting into the air. Then we saw the Poison Garden, a curious treat kept behind locked gates. Each plant is described by the guide, from the common, uncomfortable stinging nettle to hemlock, which poisoned Socrates.

A short walk took us to Alnwick Castle, home to the Percy family for the last seven hundred years. Thanks to the Duke's predecessors, the main building was sumptuously converted into magnificent living quarters comprising handsome Italianate-style state rooms hung in gorgeous materials of green, gold and red to set off the rich paintings and furniture.

Durham Cathedral was a calm and welcoming retreat at the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, its magnificent Romanesque architecture probably the most remarkable in Europe. The cathedral has the Shrine of St. Cuthbert and is the resting place of the Venerable Bede.

The following day, we set off for Gibside, a Georgian creation, which is now a glorious landscape with views and mainly ruined buildings being brought back to life by the National Trust. The spaciousness of the landscape and the many trees were very much part of the appeal of this property.

A short further journey north took us to Kirkharle, birthplace of "Capability" Brown. Little remains to be seen to remind us of Brown's early years, as a gardener's boy for Sir William Loraine, or to evoke the significance of the place as his birthplace.

Our last full day in Northumberland, enabled us to visit Lindisfarne and the Farne Islands. Lindisfarne Castle, high above the sea on Holy Island, has a long history, but the main features of its present interior are associated with Sir Edwin Lutyens, the architect, who converted it into a holiday home.

The Farne Islands visit to see the seabird colonies was an exhilarating experience. Enthusiastic National Trust Rangers watch over 23 breeding species of birds, puffins being one dominant species. We also saw Atlantic Grey Seals at very close quarters from our boat.

We headed for home with one more visit, to Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, where we were able to explore the grand design of Robert Adam, a "temple of the arts" set in extensive parkland. Kedleston provided another opportunity to admire Adam's design genius and made a fitting conclusion to the holiday.

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

# Chairman's Note

**Tim Hickson**



At the last AGM, we were taken to task – rightly – for not getting the members of the committee to stand up so they could be identified. They will reveal themselves at the next AGM. In the meantime, having done my job for six months and watched them at work, I want to tell you what your committee does, for it is not always obvious. I will go through them alphabetically.

**John Chugg** elected at the last AGM is a long-term local resident who had dealings with the Coventrys and is a mine of valuable information.

**Graham Evans** is the Chairman of the Defford Airfield Heritage Group with a wide knowledge of those RAF Defford veterans still with us.

**John Henderson** Agent for the Croome Estate for many years is past Chairman of the Friends and full of useful wisdom for new chairmen!

**Alan Lee** is our extremely competent Treasurer, as well as organiser of Croome's buggy rota and one of our drivers, around which he fits his golf.

**Sue Lloyd** who represents the Events Committee, also has been the driving force behind the fascinating tea towels with their WWII instructions for making tea, coffee and hot chocolate (all with milk and all with sugar, so there!). She also does a great deal for Croome's catering. The Events Committee, under the leadership of **Christine Adams**, have produced so many interesting, enjoyable and well-attended events, and is highly-valued.

**Tony Perfect** will have completed six years as our Secretary. Not only does he produce our minutes and agendas but he has detailed knowledge of the correct procedures for AGMs and other meetings. He acts as a first port of call for outside organisations, prompts your chairman as well as sweeping up tasks that could be missed.

**Geoff Sherwood** represents the Church Conservation Trust which is responsible for Croome's church. He also was brought up on the Croome Estate, starring as a baby in a photograph of the Coventrys' pram!

**Diana Skeys** deals with all applications for membership and produces – and keeps up to date (as best she can) – the detailed spreadsheet of contact information about our membership.

**Michael Smith** known to many of you, is the Property Manager at Croome and has been on this committee since its inception.

**Paul Stanley** deals with publicity, our notice board by Reception and our website. With his wife, Judith, he organises events including our very successful auctions, our quizzes and the fascinating river trip from Upton to Worcester.

**Jill Tovey** the Croome Estate Archivist, once in charge of the Coventrys' archive too, simply knows everything worth knowing about Croome and its history.

**David Vernon** is a long-term volunteer and also has the near-impossible job of ensuring there are sufficient volunteers in the Court on Sundays. He will be one of the pioneer stewards in the new RAF Museum.

**Chris Wynne Davies** is not merely Vice-Chairman but he also produces our newsletter which I consider top-class.

I am very grateful for what they do and I believe the Friends are very fortunate to have such a high quality committee. Now you can put faces to names at the next AGM!

If you want to share a visit to Croome, drop a line to your Committee members, send in a photograph or feed back 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:

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c/o National Trust, Builders' Yard  
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Severn Stoke  
WR8 9JS

**The deadline for the next issue of the newsletter is 1 March 2015.**

# ***Croome Court Construction work begins***

***by Lucy Hadley***

The building works are now underway at Croome Court; it will take approximately 18 months for the repair work to be completed. Currently we are 3 months into the initial phase of the works and already we are discovering many hidden gems in the Court. This includes the original flooring beneath the concrete floor in the basement. Parts of this floor date to the 18th century but other parts are much earlier and look very similar to the floor in the boys' school locker room. Repairs will be carried out on the floor to make it stable for our visitors to walk on. The hidden window in the wine cellar has been revealed and now the leaded glass and ironwork can be seen far more easily. With all these discoveries we understand even more how Croome Court used to look before the 6th Earl.

Some of the rooms are cordoned off. In the Lord's Dressing Room, Croft Conservation, the builder carrying out the works, are sampling different conservation repair methods. This includes working out how to lift floorboards that have been fixed in 3 different ways! By trialling the methods in this room, it will influence decisions about repairs in other rooms and provide guidance on protecting an historic environment during major building works. The old boilers have now been decommissioned and the former boiler room is being converted into a joinery workshop for the construction team. Here visitors will see how doors and windows are repaired, and have the opportunity to talk to the builders about the work.

Outside, the ground source heat pump array is being excavated. This covers an area 200 by 50 metres, equivalent to 2 football pitches. The piping running through the array totals 6,000 metres in length. The ground source heat pump will provide enough energy to heat the Court, however there is LPG back up just in case.

The scaffolding at the western end of the Court has been fully assembled though it isn't quite ready to open to the public. Visitors will be able to climb to a viewing platform at the top to enjoy spectacular views over the parkland and beyond. Once the scaffolding along the northern face of the Court has been built, it will be opened to the public on guided tours. Here visitors can discover more about the repairs to the guttering, stonework and windows.

There will be plenty happening at Croome over the next couple of years – more creative responses to the work, including a hidden house puzzle that visitors can build, conservation in action and family activities. It is looking to be a very exciting time.



***Ground Source Heat Pump under construction at Croome, Lucy Hadley***

# Friends of Croome EVENTS 2014-15

**Wednesday 19 November 2014**  
General Knowledge quiz with Paul Stanley  
7.15 p.m. (includes Ploughman's Supper)



**Tuesday 2 December 2014**  
'Wartime Christmas at RAF Defford'  
talk by Bob Shaw (includes lunch)  
11.30 a.m.

**January 2015**  
Festive Meal (details to be confirmed)



**Tuesday 24 February 2015**  
Tours of Croome Court with General  
Manager Michael Smith

**Thursday 26 March 2015**  
Friends of Croome Annual General  
Meeting

**Sunday 10 May to  
Thursday 14 May 2015**  
Friends of Croome Holiday to Dorset  
(staying in Bournemouth)

email: [croome-events@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:croome-events@hotmail.co.uk)  
[www.friendsofcroomepark.org.uk](http://www.friendsofcroomepark.org.uk)

## **Croome Horses and Hounds** by Eileen Clement

The varied history at Croome in the 20th century attracted me to start interviewing in 2003 and 'Croome before the National Trust' Oral History Project was born. The Coventry family, servants, estate workers, tenants, local residents, RAF Defford, St Joseph's School, Hare Krishna devotees, several developers with all sorts of hopes and plans, Youth Training Scheme students and Croome Hotel staff have contributed fascinating stories.

Having complied with the conditions set down by the Local Heritage Initiative, and later the Heritage Lottery Fund, including three special event days, display boards, audio posts, talks, and a booklet and subsequently producing a double CD, I still felt some aspects had been neglected. In June 2012 I produced a folder on St Joseph's School and this year a folder on Croome Horses and Hounds. Horses and hounds were a very important part of Croome life and this folder only scratches the surface, but includes the Croome Hunt, the 9th Earl of Coventry, his stud groom, horses, hounds, Lady Maria Coventry, the Pony Club, the salt baths and Westfield Farm. The folders can be found with the Oral History display boards, currently in the Drawing Room at Croome Court.

My thanks go to John Chugg and Mary Evans for their helpful support and input, which has made my life much easier. Originally, I planned to include farms and aspects of estate work, but decided this was too big a task.

As previously advised, I am winding down from this project and hope that the new group of volunteers involved will continue to spread the word.



*The Croome Hunt crossing the River Severn at Pixham Ferry near Kempsey*

# Geophysical survey at Croome

## by the SWAG Geophysics Team

The South Worcestershire Archaeological Group (SWAG) geophysics team has been working with the National Trust, in order to locate archaeological features in the vicinity of Croome Court.

The mid-eighteenth century plans and drawings of the park show a number of interesting features that were lost during the landscaping by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Drawings by John Doherty (c.1751) and an unknown artist (possibly Gilbert, 4th Earl of Coventry) show a gatehouse on what is now the North Lawn, as well as the medieval church of St. James the Apostle situated close to the Court. SWAG has been undertaking surveys to determine if there is any evidence of the demolished structures.



*Members of the geophysics team at work, Helen Kirkup (2014)*

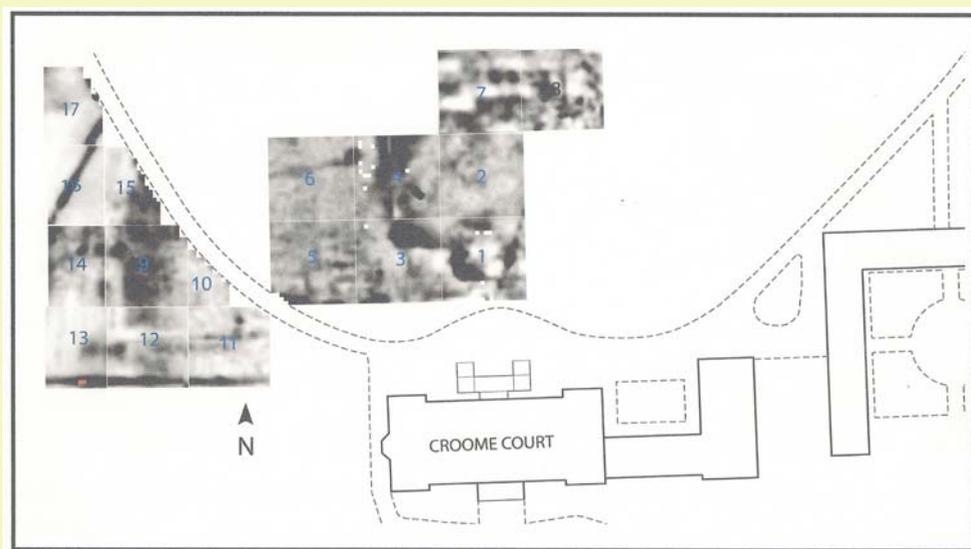
Geophysical surveys, which include electrical resistance measurements, are methods of 'seeing' below the ground surface, using the ability of the soil to pass an electric current. A small current is passed

between two electrodes inserted into the ground. If the ground is moist (e.g. ditches) the current flows more easily, indicating a low resistance. Conversely, dry ground (e.g. masonry) has a high resistance. Measurements are taken at regular intervals and a computer displays the results in the form of a two-dimensional plot. This reveals local anomalies in resistance that may be the result of archaeological features.

SWAG began the survey on the North Lawn in July 2013 and this summer further work has been undertaken. A plot of 17 grids was surveyed in the area north and north-west of the Court. The plot shows high resistance features as dark areas, whilst the lighter the shading, the lower the resistance.

The dark areas in grids 3, 4, 7 and 8 are thought to be associated with the gatehouse and those in 9, 14 and 15 suggest the location of the church. It is very unlikely that all the demolition rubble created during the landscaping of the park was removed from site – it was probably used to level the surrounding area which would account for the large areas of high resistance.

The account by William Dean, Croome's head gardener, attests to the wet and marshy ground which led to the system of culverts built during the landscaping of the park. These show up very clearly on the plot. One of the main culverts runs east to west under the north steps of the Court before draining into the Croome River. The route can be seen running along the southern edge of grids 11, 12 and 13. Another culvert runs diagonally through grids 16 and 17, the outlet of which is visible from the west river bank. With the agreement of the National Trust, the group plans to continue work, to see what other features are revealed.



*Plot of grids 1-17, SWAG*

# ***The Tragedy of a First World War Aviator from Croome***

***by Bob Shaw***

The church of St. Mary Magdalene at Croome has a plaque in memory of four parishioners who fell in the Great War. Perhaps because of the strong connection of Croome with military aviation in the Second World War and with the airfield of RAF Defford built partly on the Croome Estate, one entry amongst the names on the plaque catches the eye: Lieut. Charles Gallie.



***Memorial in St Mary Magdalene Church, Croome***

Charles was born on 4 February 1892, at Shipton near York. His father was a forester, who by 1901 was employed by the Earl of Coventry as an Estate Bailiff, living with his wife and family in an estate cottage at High Green. Charles, his sister and two brothers all attended Severn Stoke village school.

By 1911 Charles had left home and was working as a motor repairer in Slough, Buckinghamshire. Having acquired valuable experience as a car mechanic, he enlisted in the Royal Scots Fusiliers. The next year,

Charles seized the opportunity to secure attachment to the Royal Flying Corps, which had only recently been formed (in April 1912).

Charles must have had outstanding ability and personal qualities, because in less than 12 months he was chosen to be taught to fly, and by July 1913 had been promoted to the rank of 1st Class Air Mechanic. It was unusual for a junior member of the ranks to be given this opportunity. Amongst Charles' fellow pupils at the Central Flying School at Upavon, were Major Hugh Trenchard (later Marshall of the Royal Air Force, revered as the founder of the RAF) and Capt. Geoffrey Salmond (later Chief of the Air Staff in 1933). Charles was awarded his Royal Aero Club Aviator's certificate. This required the demonstration of "two flights of 5 km in a closed circuit", in "figures of eight" to demonstrate left and right turns, and a flight to a height of at least 100 metres, then descending with engine off to land within 180 metres of the point of take-off. The certificate issued was No. 559, showing that he could be counted amongst the earliest pioneers of flying in this country.

As and when the weather permitted the pilots took turns to fly the aircraft available at Upavon – a difficult and challenging aerodrome from which to fly. In the middle of the Salisbury Plain it was on top of a hill with a sharp escarpment on the northern side and a drop to the Avon valley to the west. These combined to create turbulent air conditions in otherwise good flying days.



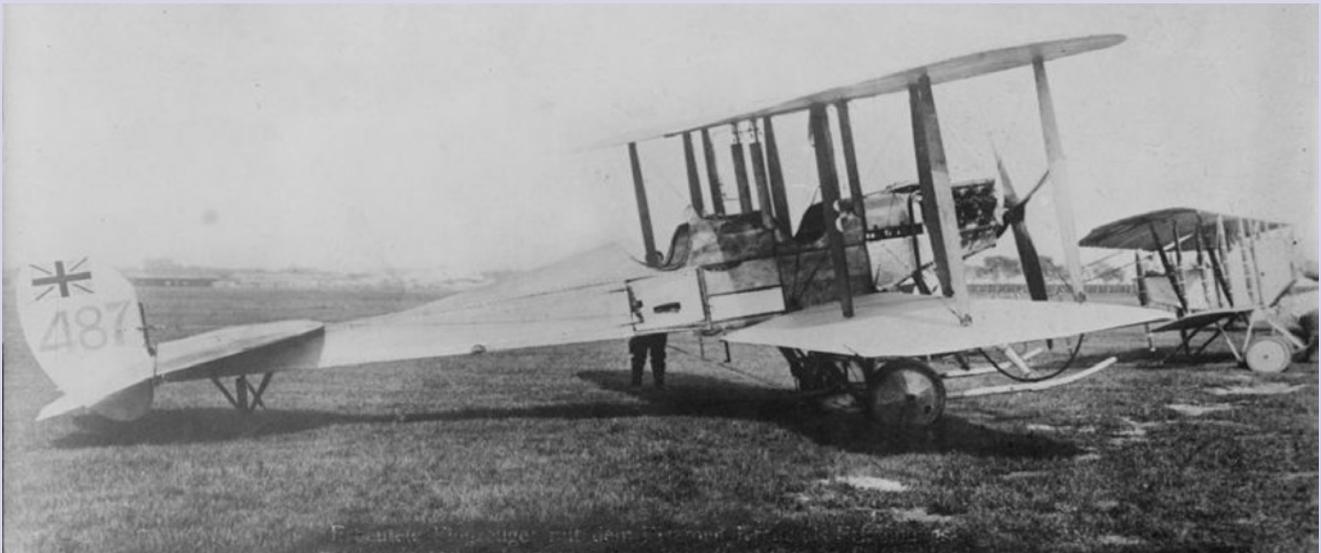
***1st Class Air Mechanic Charles Gallie, RFC 1913, Royal Aero Club***

Following the outbreak of war in August 1914, Sgt Gallie, by now an experienced and well qualified pilot, was attached to No. 6 Squadron, ferrying aircraft to the squadrons in France and Belgium. His records date his service in France as starting on 7 October 1914.

Gallie was fortunate in the type of aeroplane he was given to fly – the BE2 designed by Geoffrey de Havilland and built by the Royal Aircraft Factory at Farnborough was one of the best aeroplanes available in the early years of the Great War. After his tour of duty as a ferry pilot, Charles was posted back to Upavon as an Instructor.

On 22 August 1915, Lt. Gallie and his Observer Lt. Robert Walker Wallace set out from Hesdigneul on a reconnaissance flight over enemy territory. On that fateful day, they died in action when their aircraft was shot down, probably by German shell fire, falling near the village of Marquillies, east of Lille. They both lie buried in the Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery, Souchez. Gallie was aged 23, Wallace 22.

The name of Charles Gallie appears on the Severn Stoke School War Memorial, now at the Severn Stoke Parish Hall. He is also remembered on a War Memorial at Slough St. Mary in Buckinghamshire. The National Archive records that Charles Gallie was awarded the France Star, a campaign medal.



**BE2a (Serial Number 487), 1914**

In May 1915, he was posted to No. 2 Squadron, at Merville in France, as a pilot on front-line duties – reconnaissance and artillery spotting over the trenches. In June, he gained promotion to 2nd Lieutenant, and 10 days later his squadron moved to Hesdigneul. Gallie was once again in distinguished company. His Flight Commander was Capt. Wilfred Freeman, later Air Chief Marshall and one of the most important influences on the rearmament of the RAF including the provision of radar, up to the end of the Second World War. Amongst his fellow officers, were Lt. Sholto Douglas (later Marshall of the Royal Air Force, also a senior figure in the RAF up to and during World War II), and Lt. Hereward de Havilland, who later became a director of the de Havilland Aircraft Company.



**War Memorial previously in Severn Stoke School**

# ***Historic walled gardens open for the first time***

***by Chris Cronin***



***Karen and Chris Cronin in the Rose Garden***

The August Bank Holiday weekend coincided well for the historic Walled Kitchen Gardens at Croome which were opened for the first time ever to the public. Visitors came from far and wide to discover the 'secrets' inside the Gardens. In spite of the persistent rain showers, numbers exceeded 1,400 in total, which was quite remarkable. Information boards were posted around the Gardens providing narrative and pictorial evidence of the restoration progress over the years. Also, there were many activities for children (of all ages) including storytelling, creative drawing, face painting and even beekeeping. One feature was the Hot Wall furnaces, one of which had been recently excavated. The temptation to fire it up was too great to miss and on the rainy Monday, smoke could be seen billowing out of the chimney from all around the Gardens.

The Rose Garden was a particularly popular feature too, even though the roses were coming to the end

of their season. Inside the Fig House there were more surprises to be discovered. Nestled in between the two fruiting banana trees is a rather large Jasmine plant, producing a very pleasant perfume throughout the Hot House. However, on closer inspection the Jasmine also appears to be bearing fruit! In fact these are the seed pods which can only normally be found in the plant's native country, Madagascar. One of the seed pods has since been opened and the seeds have propagated into young Jasmine plants, thus completing the cycle.

All praise goes out to the friendly volunteers, without whom the event could not have happened. Their helpful and friendly assistance was continually commented on by the mass of visitors. In summary the 'one-off' event was a complete success and Chris and Karen are already talking about opening the Gardens again, maybe next Easter!

# ***Croome... an Australian connection!***

***by Geoff Sherwood***

My grandfather John Sherwood was born at Birch Cottage, Severn Stoke in 1856. Grandfather had six brothers. Each one as soon as they left school went to work either on the Croome Estate or on farms nearby and all, except one, spent their working life around Croome. The exception was the eldest, Amos. After working briefly on a farm he left for “pastures greener” and joined Cadbury Bros. at Birmingham as a gardener. He married and settled down in Kings Norton, Birmingham.

Now, moving forward 100 years to 2014, a Sue Sherwood in New South Wales, Australia was researching her family tree when she came quite by chance upon an article I had written in the Friends of Croome newsletter on ‘The Sherwoods of Croome’. She contacted our editor and asked to be put in touch with me as she thought we were related through a certain Amos Sherwood who is her great grandfather.



***The Sherwood family, 1920s***

Uncle Amos was always spoken of with the greatest respect by my family. He must have done well at Cadburys, working at their private residence. When he returned to visit the family at High Green, he always drove up in a horse and carriage. He was a generous man and always gave his nieces and nephews some pocket money and was always referred to as the “better-off” member of the family. He had four sons three of whom also went on to work at Cadburys, in the chocolate factory.

The third son George however, seemed to have inherited a ‘restless’ gene from Amos. On 18 December 1913 he was married to Maggie Foster and next day, they set off on a journey – not the 30 odd miles from Croome to Birmingham like Amos, but the 10,000 miles voyage to Australia. They settled down in Sydney where he worked as a skilled carpenter.

As soon as I read her email I knew there was a family connection as Amos Sherwood was my great uncle. I replied straight away to Sue and we have been in touch ever since, and I have been able to send photos of Birch Cottage where the story began.

It’s amazing to consider that our newsletter can be read worldwide. Now I am hoping one day Sue and her family will be able to visit Croome and see for themselves where some of their ancestors lived and worked.

# ***From Hades to Heaven - well almost!***

***by John Henderson***

It was Eric Jones, when he was Chairman of the Friends, who visited a number of National Trust property second hand book shops throughout the country. Eric was determined that Croome should benefit from a book shop as well. The Friends' Committee was regaled by Eric with how much money these enterprises raised if they were in a good location, so we tagged along in slightly unbelieving fashion.

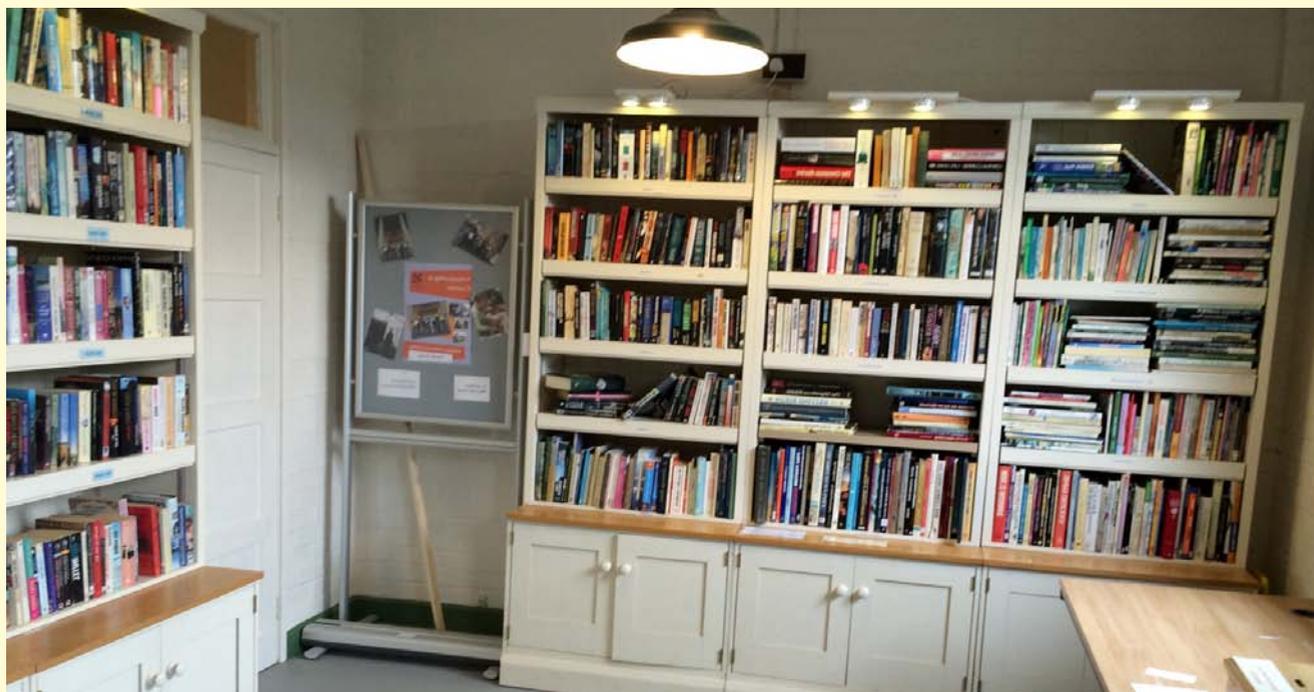
With all the development plans underway for Croome, it was a headache for the staff to allocate yet another requirement for space and storage. We were fortunate to be offered the Basement Pump Room in the Court and the book cases from Reception, which Ted Lerner and his team of property maintenance volunteers installed.

This became home to Lesley Tanner and Pam Gerrard, who had miraculously volunteered to supervise the Book Shop and Phil Douce as committee contact. There only remained the need for an Honesty Box, a handsome one kindly presented by Eric – and some books to open for business on August Bank Holiday 2011. Even though it was not ideally situated, the bookshop started to earn valuable income – over £2,000 in its first six months and well over £5,000 in each of the following years.

In May this year, the Basement of the Court had to be cleared for major work. We always thought the best place for the Book Shop would be where the Defford Airfield Heritage Group had their display. With their success in winning funding for a new museum, suddenly this space would be available – except that there were several other pressing uses for the space as well! Somehow, these other demands were spirited away to offer the book shop a new home in the best possible location, between Reception and the Canteen.

The Friends have been fortunate in the massive assistance provided by the National Trust in paying for Croft Construction to refurbish the ceiling and renew the floor. Ted Lerner's talented volunteers re-decorated the room. The Friends had a storage cupboard built and the books and book cases were hauled back up from the Court. These all required fitting, securing and lighting. Somehow, everything was ready for opening at the end of July.

We are indebted to the National Trust and the property maintenance team for all their help. The book shop would be nothing without Lesley and Pam for their knowledge, loyalty and hard work stocking and tidying the shelves, now recently joined by Caroline Pears to help. Finally, thanks to those who give their books and to those who buy. It's a boon for Croome!



***The new Second Hand Bookshop, Chris Wynne-Davies***

# ***Life before Croome***

**by Malcolm Walford**



*Wednesfield Station, where Malcolm Walford was born, John Mann collection (1955)*

My father Len Walford was a Worcestershire man through and through and lived with his parents, six sisters and two brothers in the village of Wadborough near Worcester. My Uncle Ernest was Second Groom at Pirton Court, my Dad was Second Groom and my Uncle Bob was Forester on the Croome Estate. Two of my Dad's sisters worked at Croome Court and the other four went into nursing.

When Dad returned from the Great War he joined the Midland Railway, later to be called the LMS. He was posted to Walsall as a signalman where, after a short time, he met his future wife, my Mum; hence my brother and I were both born in Wednesfield, Wolverhampton. I was born in 1933, lived and went to school in Wednesfield, where we lived all through the Second World War. The bombing was tremendous during the air raids and we spent nearly every night in an Anderson Air Raid Shelter. It must have been a terrible time for my Mum because Dad would be on duty and she was the one who had to prepare sandwiches, and then get us into the Shelter.

We lived in a Railway House on Wednesfield Station in the middle of a large marshalling yard with factories all around us. Many a night we had gone into the shelter at 7 p.m. and emerged the next morning. Schooling carried on, that is if your school was still there! I left school at the age of 14 and joined the LMS Railway two weeks after leaving school, at Wolverhampton High Level Station in the Telegraph Office. My parents, my brother and I came to live with my Gran at Wadborough in 1948.

*The rest of Malcom's story can be found in his book "My Life on the Croome Estate", on sale at the Croome Bookshop.*

# **Croome – Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown’s first landscape**

**By Amy Forster-Smith (prepared for the 300th anniversary of Brown’s birth in 2016)**



*Croome Lake and Urn, David Norton*

Croome, in south Worcestershire, was ‘Capability’ Brown’s first large scale commission. The 6th Earl of Coventry wanted the estate and house he had inherited completely redesigned in the new fashion of the times.

Brown was commissioned by the 6th Earl in 1751, having been introduced by Sanderson Miller who had also worked at Croome. Croome was to be Brown’s first grand design and it marked a key development in the natural looking English Landscape style, which was copied hundreds of times at other country estates across Britain and Europe.

The wider parkland at Croome was an unproductive marshland when Brown arrived, with formal gardens outside the house. He swept away the local village, which was in view of the house, and rebuilt it further away shrouded by tree planting. He removed Croome’s medieval church and created a new Gothic church overlooking the park. The formal gardens were dug up and in their place Brown created natural looking parkland as far as the eye could see, complete with flowering shrubberies to walk through, temples and follies to add interest, carriage drives to ride on and a hand-dug 1¼ mile long serpentine river topped with a lake.

Brown expertly drained the land by installing a system of culverts across the estate – brick built drains under the ground which fed into the new lake and river. Brown created elaborate illusions in his new landscape – the river was designed to appear as if it drifted off into the

distance around a corner, but in fact abruptly came to an end behind some cleverly planted trees and shrubs.

The planting carried out at Croome was extensive and many of the trees planted by Brown still survive in the park today including Planes, Cedars and Oaks. By the early 19th century Croome’s reputation for its plant and tree collections was formidable. In 1801 the Annals of Agriculture described Croome as “second only to Kew” for its botanical diversity.

At Croome, Brown created an original masterpiece of landscape design. Remarkably, this was only part of Brown’s exceptional work at Croome. He not only designed the park, but was the architect chosen to remodel Croome Court into the fashionable Palladian style house. Brown directed the creation of many of the mansion’s interiors, plasterwork and decorative schemes, bringing the natural world inside by using flower and fruit motifs.

Thirty years after he started, Brown was still visiting Croome and had become ‘sincere friends’ with the Earl. In February 1783 he died whilst returning home from dining with the Earl at his London home. Their friendship and shared ideals were immortalised in a monument to Brown erected by the 6th Earl at Croome’s lakeside:

*To the Memory of Lancelot Brown  
Who by the powers of his inimitable and creative  
genius formed this garden scene out of a morass.*