

THE FRIENDS OF THE IVEAGH BEQUEST, KENWOOD

AGM 23 APRIL 2017

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

It has been an exciting and demanding year! Membership has risen since April last year, which is very pleasing. Our portfolio of Corporate Benefactors, namely Aberdeen Asset Management, the Pentland Group plc and Killick & Co and our Rembrandt and Vermeer Friends have continued their generous support, for which we are most grateful.

Our funds were augmented by a legacy from Dinah Abel and we expect two further legacies shortly. We are deeply appreciative.

The great success of the previous year's jazz concert prompted us to invite the Nicholas Meier group to return in 2016 and on this occasion, accompanied by the talented chanteuse, Gabrielle Ducombe. On 13 October, the Friends enjoyed a wonderful concert of French music. Searcy's, the Kenwood caterer, sponsored the splendid buffet reception prior to the concert. We thank them for their generosity. We were also delighted to be joined by our Ambassador, Lord Melvyn Bragg.

The year has been marked by several major administrative changes to the Council. Gill Hopkins and Christine Morgan, both decided to stand down after many years of invaluable service on the Council.

Gill joined the Council in 1999 as Secretary, but in 2003 assumed the additional responsibility for the Newsletter. Relinquishing her role as Secretary, Gill took the outdated format of the Newsletter and turned it into an interesting and essential twice yearly publication, which soon became one of the benefits of membership. By 2011 Gill had become our Website Administrator and redesigned the website, turning it into a superb tool for accessing full details about the Friends and providing links to English Heritage. She was also a member of the Events Group,

and significantly, the Vice Chairman, in which role, Gill was invaluable in standing in for me, for which I thank her most warmly.

Christine became Secretary in 2010 after joining the Council in 2008 as Events Organiser. Under her guidance, the 1979 Constitution was revised to meet the changing demands of the society and which received approval at the AGM in 2012. With the help of a professional archivist, Christine established a Friends' archive, which was long overdue. She was also a member of the Events and Development Groups.

On behalf of the Council and members, I would like to thank both Gill and Christine for the enormous support and dedication they have given to the Friends: their contribution has been vital to the development of the Friends over the years.

Finding replacements for these two key posts caused the Council considerable concern. We were, therefore, extraordinarily fortunate in obtaining Mala Gole, to be our new Secretary, who has already displayed mastery of her role, and in getting Nicholas Fielding to assume the mantles of the Editor of the Newsletter and Website. We are very pleased to have recruited two such experienced people and we are most grateful to them for joining the Council.

We have also welcomed Barbara Solomons to the Events Group and are looking forward to her input. As an English Heritage Volunteer, she will bring to the Group considerable expertise.

As you know, English Heritage will become self-funding in 2023, which will necessitate a fresh strategic approach towards the care of its properties. In order to assist English Heritage with new initiatives, the Council felt that the creation of a new post of Strategic Adviser was essential. I am delighted that Peter Barber has accepted this role: his presence on the Council will be invaluable. He is, of course, already known to many of you as one of our regular Sunday lecturers.

English Heritage too has seen staff changes at Kenwood. Paul Jackson, the Head Gardener, left at the end of December, followed by the General Manager, Phil Wright in January. We very much appreciate the assistance they gave to the Friends and wish them well.

A new General Manager, Sam Cooper, has recently taken up his post as has Dave Gibbons, the new Head Gardener. We wish them a long and fulfilling stay at Kenwood and to many years of happy collaboration with the Friends!

In September I had the pleasure of a personal meeting with Kate Mavor, the Chief Executive of English Heritage. This was the first time that a Chairman of the Friends had such an opportunity and I much welcomed not only discussing the Friends with her, but also how we could develop a closer working relationship after the introduction of the self-funding structure of English Heritage. I look forward to further meetings.

The organisation of the Jazz Concert demanded meticulous planning and congratulations must go to Lesley Barnes and the Events Group.

Visits were fully subscribed throughout the year. This was due to Angela Cox's unerring ability in selecting interesting places. The Events Group is also now assisting with visits, for which I thank them. The ever popular Christmas Party, following the December lecture, was very well attended.

Our regular discussions with Searcy's, the Kenwood caterer, continued and proved to be constructive. The Council is grateful to Helen Payne and Mary Seabrook, one of our Volunteers, for attending these meetings.

We are also indebted to our Garden Tour Organiser, Elizabeth Inglis, for arranging the estate tours, which are always popular.

Our lecture series continues to be one of the major benefits of Friends' membership and attracts capacity audiences. The variety and quality of the speakers are outstanding and we are extremely grateful to Richard Ormond and Angela Cox for devising such excellent programmes.

Membership remains under the highly efficient care of Helen Payne, who also represents us on the Landscape Forum, the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee and is also responsible for liaison with local community groups.

Financial prudence remains in the sure hands of Ken Solomons and the Development Group is skilfully organised by Sally Doganis.

Just before I complete my Report, I'm delighted to announce that the Friends have funded ten new Obelisks which can now be seen in the Brewhouse Garden. They are extremely handsome! The original Obelisks, installed in 1999, were designed by Lady Arabella Lennox Boyd, but had rotted away. The Council decided to replace them and we are delighted with the results! The project was overseen by Helen Payne, which was much appreciated by the Council

Finally, I am grateful to English Heritage for their unwavering support during the year and in particular to the Iveagh Bequest Curator, Dr Jerzy Kierkuc-Bielinski for making possible several ad hoc museum visits.

The enthusiasm of all my Council colleagues is outstanding and I thank them, most warmly, for their dedication and hard work.

Thank you.