

THE FRIENDS OF THE IVEAGH BEQUEST, KENWOOD

AGM 14 APRIL 2019

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2018 has been one of the most exciting years for the Friends! Our membership level has risen which has pleased us greatly. We are most grateful for the continued support of our long-standing Corporate Benefactors, Killik & Co and the Pentland Group plc and have been delighted to welcome the Swiss bank, Julius Baer, to their ranks. Our Rembrandt and Vermeer Friends remain constant in their loyalty, which is much appreciated.

Members will recall that at last year's AGM we reported that we had raised concerns with English Heritage about its new team of staff caring for Kenwood, which did not include a full time, site-based Curator. We argued that Kenwood's outstanding collection could not be promoted and exploited without such a Curator. We considered, also, that Kenwood's future would be put at risk. In May the Friends submitted a *Vision Paper* to English Heritage outlining our aspirations how best the collection could be developed with minimal cost to English Heritage.

The Friends were very pleased by the response from English Heritage! At the end of October, Louise Cooling took up her post of Assistant Curator and together with her colleagues, Dr Wendy Monkhouse, Senior Curator (South) and Dr Esme Whittaker, Curator (Collections & Interiors) North London, have shown a dedication and enthusiasm for the care for Kenwood, which delighted the Friends and has left us very optimistic about the future.

During the past year the Friends benefited from two important legacies from the estates of the late Leone Westbury and Melinda Harris and a further very substantial donation. The Friends are extremely grateful for this largesse. One of our ambitions over the next few years is to use these generous gifts of money to support English Heritage in mounting small, in-focus exhibitions to help raise the profile and international importance of the Kenwood collection further afield. This was one of the proposals we put forward to English Heritage in the *Vision Paper*, arguing that exhibitions, however small, can have an impact reaching well beyond their size.

On 3 October, the members and guests gathered together to celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the Iveagh Bequest and we did so in some style! The occasion was made particularly special by the presence of our Patron, Lord Iveagh and the Countess of Iveagh and members of the Guinness family. We also had the pleasure of welcoming Kate Mavor, the Chief Executive of English Heritage.

The evening started with a Lecture by Julius Bryant, an authority on all matters Iveagh, who gave us a fascinating talk on the Bequest's history. This was followed by a delicious supper in the Orangery provided by Searcy's, the Brewhouse caterer. The anniversary cake was cut by Lord Iveagh, which he generously provided from the Elveden Farm Shop. The Friends are very grateful to Searcy's and Waitrose and Partners for sponsoring elements of the catering.

Our celebrations continued on 18 October, when Andrew Graham Dixon, the celebrity art historian, captivated his audience by talking about some of his favourite paintings in the Iveagh

Bequest, such as those by Frans Hals and Vermeer. It was a splendid evening and the Friends were delighted to co-host the event with English Heritage.

A note for your diary: Julius Bryant's forthcoming lecture on 23 September on *The Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood: Discoveries from the Agnew's Archive* will mark the 90th anniversary of the signing of the Act in 1929.

2018 was also the 200th anniversary of the death Henry Repton, the celebrated British Landscape designer. On 13 September Dave Gibbons, the Head Gardener, escorted members around the estate highlighting the various changes to the landscape inspired by Repton. This was closely followed on by an informative talk on *Revealing Repton: Approaches on the Art of Landscape Gardening* most ably delivered by Dr Stephen Daniels on 14 October, after which members enjoyed a small drinks reception.

In November the Friends heard that English Heritage had formed a partnership with the Gagolian Gallery, an international group of contemporary art galleries, with a central London gallery at Grosvenor Hill. Through this partnership, Kenwood's Rembrandt's *Self-portrait*, widely acknowledged to be one of his finest, will take centre-stage at the Gagolian's exhibition, *Visions of the Self: Rembrandt and Now*, which will run from 12 April until 18 May this year. The Gagolian has invited the Friends to a champagne reception on the evening of 16 April. We are sure that this will help raise awareness of Kenwood's magnificent art collection and help raise much needed funds. The Friends are delighted that Gagolian is supporting English Heritage and through them, Kenwood.

As most of you know, this year- 2019 - marks the 350th anniversary of the death of Rembrandt and, although, my Report covers the Friends' activities last year, I thought you would like learn of the exciting programme of events planned. On the evening of 15 October, Professor Jim Welu, Director Emeritus of the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts will talk on the significance of the dual hemisphere world map in the *Self-portrait*. A drinks reception will follow in the Upper Hall. The lecture will coincide with a special exhibition, *Rembrandt #NoFilter*, which will at Kenwood from 20 September until 12 January 2020. This highly original exhibition – the first at Kenwood for many years – will demonstrate how self-portraiture still communicates in a powerful way with contemporary audiences. The Friends are delighted to be funding the exhibition and working alongside English Heritage. The final event will be on 4 November in which our Ambassador, Lord Melvyn Bragg, will take a major role. Further details will follow in the June Newsletter and, of course, in the infomail.

The Mansion Cottage has been converted into a second-hand book shop. This is a splendid project, which we fully support. If you have any quality books to donate or time to work voluntarily in the shop, Kristian Kaminski, Properties Curator, would be very pleased to hear from you.

Congratulations must go to Lesley Barnes and the Events Group for their meticulous planning of the celebrations marking the 90th Anniversary of the Iveagh Bequest. Lesley has now stood down from the Council, but I am very pleased to announce that Mala Gole, our Secretary has taken over the helm, for which I thank her.

Our lecture series continues to be immensely popular and one of the major benefits of Friends' membership. We are extremely grateful to Richard Ormond and Angela Cox for devising such excellent programmes. Our popular Christmas lecture and party attracted a record attendance.

Angela Cox's ability to select interesting locations ensures our visits are fully subscribed, for which we thank her most warmly.

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

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

The Newsletter and website are most competently managed by Nicholas Fielding, as is the Development Group, led by Sally Doganis, whose source of potential benefactors is invaluable.

Administrative and financial prudence is the core of any society and the Friends are extremely well served by our Secretary, Mala Gole and our Treasurer, Ken Solomons.

Finally, I am very grateful to English Heritage for their unwavering support during a year that has seen considerable changes and, of course, to my Council members for their enthusiasm and hard work, which is outstanding!

Christine Mathez-Davey
Chair
April 2019