

Friends of Kenwood – Chair's Report 2023

It seems a distant memory but in 2022 the country was still recovering from the effects of the COVID pandemic and Kenwood House and estate were no exception. The Friends were anxious to see the house open daily as soon as possible and we welcomed the return to normality by May. This was only possible with the support of the wonderful volunteers who help make Kenwood so special. It was good to see the return of Spotlight Talks. These are once again a regular offering.

Initially English Heritage created a route around the house that all visitors had to follow but by the end of the year the route was optional and people could enjoy the collection freely with no restrictions. Sadly, there are still days when some rooms have not been open due to limited number of volunteers available. Hopefully 2023 will see recruitment increase and closures become rare events.

Our Sunday lectures are once again back in the lecture theatre. Unfortunately, health and safety issues mean we have had to restrict numbers to a maximum of 60 but members are still able to join the lectures on YouTube and many have taken advantage of that opportunity. The lectures continue to be a success and special thanks must go to Angela Cox, Richard Ormond and Nick Fielding. We were particularly grateful to Anna Eavis for giving the annual FOK lecture on the history of Blue Plaques. Our visits programme is extremely popular, thanks go to Mark King, Visits Coordinator, and I am also grateful to Sally Doganis, Jerzy Kierkuc-Bielinski and Tracy Abraham for their support on the Council.

The Friends have helped fund the acquisition and conservation of miniatures that will go on display later in 2023. We have also supported the *London Stone* exhibition and *The Captured Carriage* paintings from the Wellington Collection.

With the financial support of the Friends of Kenwood, English Heritage has commissioned a new Masterplan for the estate and house. The Chair is on the committee overseeing the work and we hope it will be completed by summer 2023.

We have received a generous legacy bequest of £349,000 from a former FOK member Rosemary Campbell. This will enable us to support future projects at Kenwood.

The successful relighting of the Iveagh Bequest collection in two wings of the House was celebrated with a reception for donors. Later in the year Corporate Benefactor Killick & Co held a reception for their HNW clients in North London. We extend our gratitude to Pentland and to Julius Baer, our other Corporate Benefactors, for their steadfast support, and also to our Vermeer and Rembrandt Friends. Our Christmas drinks party in December was held in the Upper Hall and it was a pleasure to welcome so many members.

Finally, a special thanks to Helen Payne, Mala Gole and Ken Solomons who as Membership secretary, Secretary to the Council and Treasurer make everything happen. They are tireless in their support of the Friends