



Newsletter 135 – December 2025

EXHIBITION 'DOUBLE VISION: VERMEER AT KENWOOD'

1 Sept 2025 - 11 Jan 2026



*The Guitar Player, Johannes Vermeer
Philadelphia Art Museum (detail)*

After the resounding success of *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits* at Kenwood, the small, free – and extraordinary – display, *Double Vision: Vermeer at Kenwood* has continued to bring in new visitors to Kenwood.

The display reunites Kenwood's *The Guitar Player* with a version in the Philadelphia Art Museum, marking the 350th anniversary of Vermeer's death in 1675. The two paintings, which depict the same subject, are on display side-by-side for the first time since they were created. Originally thought to be a Vermeer, and then assumed to be a copy, the origins of the Philadelphia painting remain unknown. Scholars have debated the paintings since they entered public collections around 100 years ago; *Double Vision* presents visitors with the evidence and invites them to look closely and consider when, by whom, and why the Philadelphia version was made.

Visitors are immediately struck by the similarity in composition and differences in condition. Kenwood's *Guitar Player* is in exceptional original condition and is the only Vermeer painting that remains unlined and on its original stretcher. This unusual and fragile condition meant that the painting did not travel to the Rijksmuseum in 2023, where almost all of Vermeer's works were gathered from around the world. By contrast, the Philadelphia painting shows signs of harsh cleaning and has a large tear in the lower right corner. Remarkably, it is shown unrestored, without any later overpainting, to facilitate further research.

English Heritage have worked closely with the Philadelphia Art Museum, National Gallery (London), and the National Gallery (Washington), to carry out technical analysis on both paintings. Several of the findings have been presented in a digital article on the Kenwood page of the English Heritage website:

https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/kenwood/history-stories-kenwood/guitar_player_vermeer/#group-section-Under-the-Microscope-woexDMu1J9.

An academic article is currently being prepared and will be published in 2026.

Today Vermeer is considered one of the greatest painters of the Dutch Golden Age, and the rarity of his work has only increased his status. While we leave the experts to complete their interpretation of the scientific analysis, there has been much press interest and debate surrounding the paintings. There has been discussion about the wisdom of applying AI techniques to the work of Old Masters, and Andrew Graham Dixon has recently published a book with his own theories about Vermeer, largely based on research previously undertaken by the Rijksmuseum.

But we leave comment to the journalists - for now:

The real winner of this contest is the viewer, who gets to bask in the quiet luminosity of Vermeer while taking part in an important moment in art history. (The Guardian)

For now, the mystery remains unresolved. What is certain is the drama of seeing both canvases together—two guitar players, one assured, one elusive, both locked in a dialogue across time. (ArtLyst)

'Double Vision: Vermeer at Kenwood' is supported by The Friends of Kenwood and by Riverstone Living

'HEIRESS' EXHIBITION

Summing Up



Kenwood's first ticketed exhibition in over 25 years was a success, and we give enormous thanks to the Friends of Kenwood for making it possible.

The starting point for *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits* was Kenwood's own John Singer Sargent portrait of Daisy Leiter, which formerly hung on the Deal Staircase. The exhibition was an opportunity to celebrate this magnificent portrait and show Daisy alongside other American heiresses who married into the British aristocracy. Bringing together 18 portraits of 16 women, executed in oil and charcoal, *Heiress* explored their lives, contributions to British society, and challenged the stereotype of the 'Dollar Princess'.

34,750 visitors viewed the exhibition – well above the targets of English Heritage and the Friends of Kenwood. Figures were boosted by strong press coverage in national (Guardian, The Times), international (New York Times, Art Newspaper), and local publications (Ham & High, Camden New Journal).

Over 80 Heiress-related events were held at Kenwood, including the opening night private view, paid curator tours, lectures on Sargent's work, and charcoal drawing workshops. The exhibition also made Kenwood a more engaging and inclusive place, through school visits, youth engagement visits, British Sign Language tours and an increased mobility vehicle service.

The exhibition brought in many first-time visitors – 12% of online tickets were booked from a foreign IP address, and our volunteers have shared conversations with new visitors drawn in by Sargent's fame, who discovered Kenwood's fantastic permanent collection as a result. *Heiress* has helped put Kenwood on the London tourist map, and we expect this to have a knock-on effect for future summers.

Kenwood's volunteers were a crucial part of the exhibition's success. Volunteers gave over 2,000 hours of their time through invigilation, delivering talks, and preparing *Heiress*-related book displays in the second-hand bookshop. They broadened our understanding of the artworks on display and the women in them through 65 'spotlight talks', covering themes such as The Leiter Sisters, Heiresses and British Politics, Sargent's Artistic Practice

and Historic Portraiture, and Jewellery Worn by the Heiresses. Volunteers delivered a talk on the exhibition to a local care home, and arranged visits for external volunteering groups, to showcase the strength of their work at Kenwood.

Finally, *Heiress* proved that, with effective fundraising and a carefully managed budget, exhibitions can boost Kenwood's financial stability. The exhibition recovered the non-donated money put in by both English Heritage and the Friends of Kenwood and contributed to a 42% increase in shop sales compared to the previous year.

The success of *Heiress* would not have been possible without the Friends of Kenwood's generosity. Members opened their address books to bring in donors, built strong relationships with lenders, organised excellent events, arranged school visits, kept an eye on the budget, and gave hundreds of hours of their time. On behalf of English Heritage, we thank you for your continued support and friendship.

Ella Letort – Curator of Collections & Interiors, Kenwood

The Friends Of Kenwood comments:

Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits transformed Kenwood.

The energy and excitement of having an expertly curated loan exhibition with glowing national and international reviews has injected a much-needed enthusiasm and energy into Kenwood, experienced by staff, volunteers, members of the Friends of Kenwood, and all visitors. For this, we are hugely grateful to Richard Ormond, Council member of the Friends of Kenwood, Sargent scholar, and Sargent's great-nephew, and to Wendy Monkhouse, Senior Curator at English Heritage and exhibition curator.

Delivering the exhibition is an illustration of what can be done at Kenwood with the Friends of Kenwood working in partnership with English Heritage. The exhibition would not have been possible without the financial and practical support of the Friends of Kenwood and the dedication of the Friends of Kenwood Council, using all the varied professional skills they bring together. In turn, we called upon our members and the volunteers for help. The exhibition benefitted from the committed support of colleagues at English Heritage, both those working for English Heritage nationally, and particularly those based at the house once the show opened in mid-May.

Most importantly, *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits* has shown what can be done at Kenwood, with hard work and the will to succeed. It has raised the profile of the house, increased general visitor numbers significantly, introduced the entire collection to a new audience, and has illustrated the outstanding expertise held within English Heritage.

The entire cultural sector is under pressure at the moment, and English Heritage is no exception to this. The exhibition has been one of its greatest successes this year, and has made a significant impact which we hope English Heritage will be able to leverage off in the years to come.

CURATOR FUND

On 10 September, we launched our new appeal for the 'Curator Fund' and we'd like to thank all who have so far donated to this very important next step in the life of Kenwood.

In early 2025, English Heritage announced a redundancy programme, and one of their proposals was to reduce the number of their London curators and downgrade the post for Kenwood. We firmly believe that Kenwood should always have its own dedicated, full-time, on-site Curator at Kenwood.

The Friends of Kenwood have therefore offered to cover the total cost of employing a curator (for a period of time still to be agreed), and English Heritage have gratefully accepted this offer.

This is the only way to be sure that Kenwood can remain a vibrant art collection, bringing new ideas to Kenwood through exhibitions and maintaining the high profile we have achieved in 2025 through *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits*, the first loan exhibition in over 25 years.

English Heritage are very supportive of the Friends of Kenwood fundraising for a Curator, and we must raise the money by Spring 2026.

We have already received donations from many of you, which helps demonstrate the strength of our members' support to future donors. If you would like to join in the growing number of supporters, please donate, if you can, by contacting us at info@friendsofkenwood.org.uk, or by going to the Join Us page of our website, where you can make a donation via PayPal, bank transfer or find details of how to donate by cheque. Your donations are, of course, Gift Aidable, if you are eligible for Gift Aid.

So far, we have raised enough to cover approximately 2 years of the cost of a Curator. This means we still have much work to do before the spring.

THANK YOU!

ANNUAL FUND-RAISING EVENT

Charles H Cecil
10 September 2025

Over the run of *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits*, we hosted a number of events at Kenwood: a tea party and private view of the exhibition on the first day, two evening drinks parties and private views, all of which included curator talks, a party after Elaine Kilmurray's masterly presentation of Richard Ormond's planned lecture on the charcoal portraits (Richard being indisposed), and a book launch for the publication of *Sargent: The Charcoal Portraits* by Richard Ormond (Yale, 2025).

Finally, in September, we had a celebratory champagne evening, where we brought together two titans of the Sargent world. In the exhibition space, Richard Ormond,

leading authority on Sargent and author of the 9-volume catalogue raisonné on Sargent, introduced our guests to Charles Cecil who runs a prestigious atelier in Florence, where Sargent's practice of sight-size painting is still taught. Charles explained his inheritance, how he wears the mantle of John Singer Sargent, and described the technique of sight-size painting.



Charles H Cecil, Richard Ormond and Friends

Charles Cecil trained at the ateliers of RH Ives Gammell in Boston and Richard F Lack in Minneapolis. Gammell taught the sight-size method of painting, whereby the image and the subject are placed side by side and the artist then walks back and forth from the canvas and the sitter to get a visual impression of the whole, as seen from a distance. Richard Lack studied at the atelier of Ives Gammell, became one of the key 20th century artists to revive the atelier in America, and he coined the term 'Classical Realism' as an artistic designation.

Charles described how drawing to scale for portraiture, using the sight-size technique, was practised extensively by the British school of the 18th century, and by Titian, Van Dyck and Velázquez. This tradition continued via the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and Carolus-Duran, to Sargent and his contemporaries, and thence to the American revival of atelier training and Charles Cecil himself.

Not only is Charles critically important in continuing the practice, he was also able to tell anecdotes of his painting life, and one of our guests, Caroline Percy recounted her childhood memory of a thunderous Nancy Astor, by then in exceedingly advanced years, who caught her hiding behind a rose bush. Quite different from the winsome Nancy Astor captured by Sargent in 1908, now at Cliveden (National Trust).

As well as a final celebration of the highly successful exhibition, the evening was an opportunity to launch the Friends of Kenwood's fund-raising campaign for the support of a curator post at Kenwood. We have created a 'Curator Fund' to fund a full-time, site-based, dedicated curator at Kenwood, and by doing so have persuaded English Heritage to give us time to fund-raise. The donations of our members are vital to demonstrate to potential future funders the strength of our support, and we are extremely grateful to all who gave so generously on 10 September, and who continue to do so now.

There will still be plenty of opportunities to make a donation towards our Curator Fund, but you don't need to wait, you can donate at any moment by going to our website, www.friendsofkenwood.org.uk.



Nancy, Viscountess Aster, John Singer Sargent

CURATORIAL REPORT

The second half of 2025 has been busy, and Kenwood has been buzzing with visitors to *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits* and *Double Vision: Vermeer at Kenwood*. For regular visitors, the displays offer new artworks and fresh ways of viewing much-loved paintings.

The day-to-day work of caring for Kenwood has continued, as has our calendar of loans from the collection. As the year ends, Ella Letort (maternity cover Curator of Collections and Interiors) is preparing a smooth handover back to Louise Cooling.

Thank you for your friendship and support throughout my year at Kenwood — and what a year it's been! I'm proud of what we've achieved together, and none of it would have been possible without your dedication to this exceptional art collection and its curation. It has been a privilege to work alongside the Friends of Kenwood, and I look forward to seeing many of you in the future, when I return as a visitor.

Displays and Exhibitions

Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits

See the separate article above.

Double Vision: Vermeer at Kenwood

See the separate article above.

Research, Talks, Tours, Digital and PR

Podcast

On 31 July, the English Heritage podcast episode *Dollar Princesses or Influential Heiresses? A new perspective on Sargent's American Portraits* went live. The podcast is hosted by Amy

Matthews and interviews Wendy Monkhouse and Ella Letort about the exhibition. A video recording of Ella and Amy in conversation was shared on English Heritage's social media accounts to advertise the podcast and exhibition:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/dollar-princesses-or-influential-heiresses-a-new/id1156861002?i=1000719952001>.

Social Media

On 12 July, the *American Countess* YouTube account run by Countess of Sandwich, Julie Montagu, posted a 32-minute video featuring Julie and Ella Letort exploring the exhibition together. To date, the video has over 41,000 views:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBXepNErdgQ>.

On 27 August, English Heritage posted a short video to their Instagram, TikTok and Facebook of Ella Letort exploring what it was like to have your portrait painted by Sargent:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@english.heritage/video/7543200395439377666>.

Education and Outreach

The exhibition hosted two Youth Engagement tours: on 29 July, *Enfield Young Carers* explored the house before being shown the exhibition by Ella Letort; on 30 August, *Assemblage Collective* toured the exhibition with Wendy Monkhouse before joining a collage craft session in the Old Kitchen.

We thank Lesley Barnes (Friends of Kenwood member) for her support of the education programme at Kenwood. Lesley has been guiding school groups around the exhibition and making important connections between Sargent's portraits and our permanent collection.

Helen Payne (Friends of Kenwood Council Member) and Amy Bellringer (Operations Manager) organised 2 charcoal workshops exploring Sargent's artistic practice and 2 family art workshops in collaboration with Mark Mindel, a local visual artist. These were hosted in the Housekeeper's Room and the Old Kitchen and welcomed budding artists, amateurs, and families.

On 15 July, Ella Letort and Amy Bellringer met with British Sign Language (BSL) guides John Wilson and Alan Murray to create a one-hour tour of Kenwood and the *Heiress* exhibition. Tours were arranged on 25 August, 5 September, 14 September, and 22 September.

Engagement

Postcards have been designed and printed with a line drawing of Kenwood's *The Guitar Player*, inviting visitors of all ages to create their own copy of the painting. The postcards are being offered free of charge and have been included in the education packs for visiting school groups.

Spotlight talks have been delivered by John Hayward (Friends of Kenwood member) and Sue Hargreaves (Friends of Kenwood member), offering visitors the chance to dive deeper into the two paintings' histories, their similarities and differences.

The display was also the centrepiece of a fundraising dinner hosted by Geoff Parkin, EH interim Chief Executive, at which Tracy Chevalier spoke.

In November, Wendy Monkhouse, Ella Letort, and Alice Tate-Harte (Paintings Conservator) recorded an episode on *Double Vision* for English Heritage's podcast series. It is expected to air later in the year.

Rehang of the Music and Green Room following *Heiress*

Following the safe return of paintings on loan to Gainsborough's House, Wendy Monkhouse and Ella Letort took the opportunity to reassess the permanent display in the Music and Green Room, resulting in a few changes:

John Singer Sargent's portrait of Daisy Leiter has been moved from the Deal Staircase to the south wall of the Music Room. This move highlights the influence of 18th century country house portraiture on Sargent's work, and the similarities between *Daisy Leiter* and other paintings in the room, particularly Reynolds' *Mrs Musters as Hebe* and Gainsborough's *Countess Howe*.

As a result, Reynolds' portrait of Lady Louisa Manners has been temporarily placed in storage. The painting will be returned to display when Gainsborough's *Countess Howe* goes on loan to The Frick Collection's upcoming exhibition *Gainsborough: The Fashion of Portraiture* (12 February – 11 May 2026).

Bath House Restoration

The Bath House restoration is now complete, and the space is open for public viewing. Kristian Kaminski (Senior Properties Curator) led on the creation of a new interpretation panel exploring the history of the Bath House, installed in July.

Publications

Work continues towards a new edition of Julius Bryant's catalogue, *Kenwood: Paintings in the Iveagh Bequest*. Katherine Davey (Publishing Manager) is overseeing the new edition. Ella Letort has been facilitating research visits for Julius at Kenwood.

Since its initial publication, *Kenwood: Paintings in the Iveagh Bequest* has become essential reading for successive curators, conservators, volunteers, and site staff. It has opened Kenwood's collections to the general public and academics, and continues to draw in new visitors and lead to new loan requests. The re-edition will update catalogue entries and renew engagement with the collection.

Loans

Masterpieces from Kenwood: British and French Paintings

Associated with *Heiress* was the major loan of 29 paintings to Gainsborough's House, Sudbury, for the exhibition titled *Masterpieces from Kenwood* (3 May to 19 October 2025). The loan included nearly all the paintings from the Green and Music Rooms, along with a few additional works from other rooms in the house.

In October, English Heritage curators, conservators, and registrars supported the deinstallation of paintings from Gainsborough's House and their safe return to Kenwood. In late October and early November, the paintings were reinstalled with minor changes (see 'Rehang' section above). On 7 November, the Green Room and Music Room were reopened to the public.

This major loan ensured that Kenwood's exceptional collection of 18th century British portraits remained on public display for the duration of *Heiress*; they were enjoyed by **17,615 visitors**. It also fostered a strong relationship with Gainsborough's House, who have thanked Kenwood for loaning the paintings and Helen Payne for her generous sponsorship of the accompanying catalogue.

From Function to Fantasy: The Brooch

From 1-12 October, five brooches were loaned to the Wartski Gallery, St. James's Street, London, for their exhibition *From Function to Fantasy: The Brooch*. The exhibition and accompanying catalogue have enhanced the knowledge of, and engagement with, Kenwood's jewellery collection.

Joseph Wright of Derby: Life on Paper

From 23 May – 7 September, Derby Museum and Art Gallery loaned a portrait of Thomas Moss Tate attributed to William Tate, but once believed to be painted by Joseph Wright of Derby. The painting is owned by Marble Hill House, but is cared for and stored by Kenwood. On 9 September, the painting safely returned to Kenwood.

Friends of Kenwood Funding

The generous funding provided and fundraised by the Friends of Kenwood for *Heiress* and *Double Vision* is fully recognised and appreciated by the curatorial team on behalf of English Heritage. Without this support, neither exhibition would be taking place. Visitor figures, ticket revenue, and secondary spend have demonstrated the importance of ticketed exhibitions for Kenwood's financial sustainability. This busy year has also provided fresh ways for returning visitors to engage with much-loved paintings and has increased Kenwood's accessibility and engagement with its community.

We sincerely thank you for your continued support.

Ella Letort – Acting Curator of Collections & Interiors, Kenwood

LANDSCAPE MATTERS

The Friends of Kenwood are members of the Kenwood Landscape Forum, which meets just twice a year. Our responsibility is to act as a mediating body: balancing conservation of heritage and ecology with public use, landscape interventions, and events programming. We therefore discuss with English Heritage forthcoming capital works, landscape maintenance, tree management, event impacts, and heritage conservation projects. We take our role seriously because the Forum can give English Heritage our opinions on event proposals, monitor sensitive areas, and encourage visitors to understand heritage, landscape, and their responsibility in preserving it (as with Hampstead Heath). We can also endorse English Heritage's existing policy of letting certain sections of the landscape rest and recover, and we can help ensure any new or scaled-up event proposals are properly assessed from a heritage and environmental angle.

Landscape Work

The Kenwood gardens team currently has three gardeners, assisted by 26 hard-working garden volunteers. In the past 6 months, volunteers have repaired stock fencing in the SSSI and other woodland, with more still to do once budget becomes available. Reduction of the historic holly hedge all the way from Beech Mount to the Dairy continues, and in the south wood, selective groups of holly have been cleared to allow more light into the SSSI (Natural England's agreement is always required). Some of Kenwood's rhododendrons suffered in this summer's drought and where there are annual losses due to a virus in the soil, new plants are added. Coppicing and clearing of shrubs along the edge of Wood Pond is necessary annually, and some tree work between Wood Pond and Thousand Pound Pond is scheduled for February 2026, when 3 failing trees will be felled. The remaining trees near the banks will continue to be monitored and resurveyed as necessary, although there is no budget currently allocated. English Heritage continue to refer to the 2023 tree survey and in the longer term, they plan to conduct further tree works to remove dead or dying trees in the area and to keep water outlets clear of roots and scrub growth. On Half Moon Lawn, the pine was removed as notified, and the area grassed over.



Area cleared of holly

Monolith 'Empyrean'

There is now a third row of the low euonymus 'Green Spire' hedge around Hepworth's sculpture on the Flower Lawn and the hedge has finally got away! However, very sadly the sculpture suffered significant vandalism over the summer, with scratches incised into several places. Disappointingly, there is still no interpretive sign, and we continue to urge a resolution.

Outdoor Events and Autumn Public Consultation

Thank you to those members who attended the Public Consultation meeting on 3 November in Kenwood's Lecture Room. We very much appreciate your support in persuading English Heritage to listen to the views and comments of local stakeholders.

We received a summary report of outdoor summer events, and there was time for attendees to discuss future plans. At the beginning of July, *Barcode* had 10,000 visitors, while in September, the *FT Weekend Event* had 7,000 visitors, and *How the Light Gets In* 6,000 visitors.

Last year English Heritage assured us overly large vehicles would not pass in front of the house in setting up, a concern we raise every year, because of the risk of damage to the fabric of the House and the collection. We were therefore surprised to see such large vehicles on South Terrace during set-up and take-down for *Barcode 2025*, and have again lodged our objections.

There were mixed opinions on *Halloween at Kenwood*, but high hopes for *Neverland at Kenwood*, the Christmas trail which will run until 3 January. The consensus was that it was unwise to close the car park for such a protracted length of time, and that it would have been helpful to have much greater notice of closure. EH Kenwood could considerably improve advance communications on matters which affect regular users and visitors.

Abandoned vehicles on Hampstead Lane were discussed; the Highgate Society has been in discussion with Haringey Council about this for many years.

Once again, more classical music in Kenwood House was high on the list of suggestions as a way of bringing the house to life. We are delighted that Saraband made a welcome return to the Music Room on 16 November and we hope more recitals will be organised from this popular, early music group with a strong local following.

Future Plans

Summer 2026 plans are still in formation. However, the Pasture Ground will receive *Barcode* on 2 July 2026, the *FT Weekend Event* on 5 September 2026, and we do not yet have dates for *How The Light Gets In*. We will keep our members informed of summer 2026 events in our regular email news bulletins.

An Audience with Father Christmas

This very popular event is booked out for every weekend in December (as usual very popular!).

Hampstead Heath News

Hampstead Heath is a charity, and is run by the City of London. It is a vital resource for us all. You can read about recent developments on Hampstead Heath and the City's wish to encourage Heath users to share the aspirations of the Heath Vision here:

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath>.

The Hampstead Heath 2026 Calendar with photos by Matt Maran is on sale in the Kenwood shops, and is also available from Heath Hands, from Matthew Maran's website, and at the Parliament Hill Farmer's Market.

Heath Hands

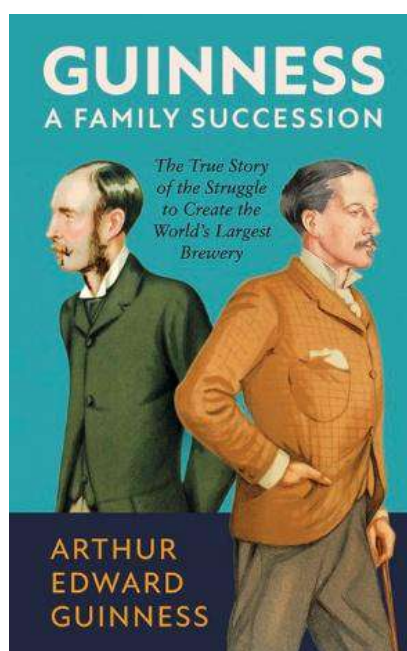
Heath Hands open their nature interpretation space at Kenwood Dairy on the second Sunday and last Saturday of the month. The Dairy is occasionally open too.

Heath Hands are crowdfunding to plant new hedges around the Heath, go to their website for more information.

Thank You

Thank you to all our members for your regular feedback about all aspects of Kenwood House, its world-class paintings collection, and the estate.

BOOK LAUNCH AND AFTERNOON TEA WITH LORD IVEAGH 2 October 2025



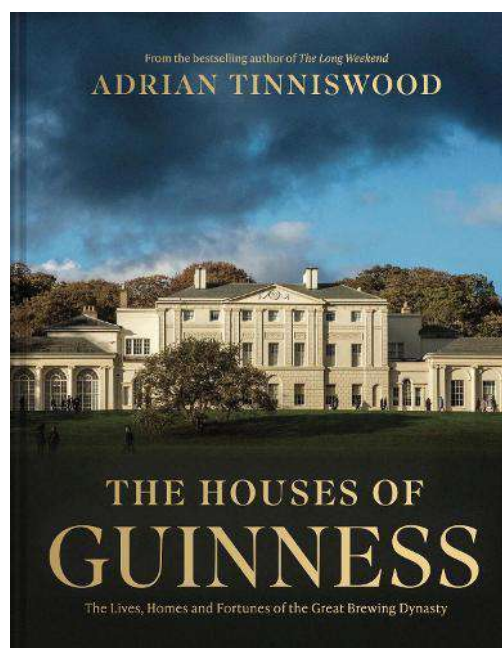
We were delighted that our patron Lord Iveagh chose Kenwood to launch his new book *Guinness: A Family Succession. The True Story of the Struggle to Create the World's Largest Brewery*. The publication is particularly timely as it coincides with the to no small extent fictional and sensational version of the same story in the Netflix film series *House of Guinness*. And so sixty Friends and many guests from the Guinness family gathered in the Old Kitchen to hear about the book and enjoy afternoon tea kindly provided by publisher Batsford Scala.

Our Chair Jenny Abramsky conducted a question-and-answer session with Lord Iveagh and we heard about the early Guinness forbears who created the brewery in Dublin all the way through to the ennoblement of Edward Guinness, 1st Earl of Iveagh in 1919. The story is one of immense wealth and privilege, the apogee being the visit of King Edward VII to the Elveden Estate for a hunting party ('the biggest bag in the country'), but also of great philanthropy - the Iveagh Trust funded large areas of slum clearance in Dublin and still provides a large chunk of the social housing in Dublin. The immense success of the brewery over such a sustained period appears to counter every business orthodoxy on diversification!

Lord Iveagh kindly answered questions from the floor and we learnt that a second book was planned to continue the story from the bequeathing of the Kenwood Estate to the nation up towards the present day. The afternoon concluded with a convivial book signing session during which further questions could be asked.

Many thanks are due to Lord Iveagh, Jenny Abramsky, Mala Gole, publisher Scala and to Kenwood staff for dressing the Old Kitchen so attractively for tea.

BOOK LAUNCH 'THE HOUSES OF GUINNESS' BY ADRIAN TINNISWOOD



Only a few weeks after Lord Iveagh's launch of his book, *Guinness: A Family Succession*, the Friends of Kenwood were delighted to assist again Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers Ltd, a subsidiary of Batsford Books, in arranging another convivial afternoon at Kenwood House.

The Houses Of Guinness: The Lives, Homes and Fortunes of the Great Brewing Dynasty is a new history of the Guinness family and their homes, told by the UK's leading historian of the country house and bestselling author Adrian Tinniswood, OBE, FSA.

Professor Tinniswood gave us the histories of the Guinness family through their mansions and town houses, with an illustrated presentation. Some of the houses are now virtually derelict, some have been demolished, some are owned by the Irish government, Kenwood by the British nation, and a few remain in good order and very grand. Only four of the houses he writes about remain in family hands. He enthusiastically conveyed the idea that it was a lot of fun to have been a Guinness acquiring houses. All, that is, except for one wife, who is said to have wept upon the presentation of another house.

Tinniswood related much more than mere bricks and mortar as we enjoyed our tea and cake. He has a light writing style, and a gift for story-telling, witness the objection of Adelaide's mother to her marriage to Edward Cecil Guinness : there would be 'nobody to exercise the dogs'. Tinniswood revealed some of the great Guinness houses as possessions, not always as real 'homes', but also as a cultural and architectural legacy, and in so doing threw a light on a dynasty that rose from ordinary beginnings in Georgian Dublin to become one of the most powerful families in the British Isles.

KENWOOD ESTATE AUTUMN WALK

6 November, 2025

How many of you know North Wood? A number of those joining our autumn walk with Kenwood's Head Gardener, Crissy Mulrain, were not very familiar with it, but we would certainly recommend the short steep walk up to Prospect Hill, where you can get a glimpse of Kenwood house through the holly. It's a view deliberately maintained. The trees here form part of the original wood, once north of the road, before Repton persuaded the second Lord Mansfield to move Hampstead Lane away from the house at the end of the 18th century. If you continue through North Wood, you pass the dog graves and eventually come out near the west entrance drive to Kenwood.

Crissy led us along the path, pointing out magnificent beech in the SSSI. She was hopeful that the 'phoenix growth' from a veteran sweet chestnut which fell in a storm two years ago would be vigorous enough to survive, but this autumn it snapped off.

Nonetheless, there are other life forms in the SSSI: deadwood is left standing to support the ecosystem, and we admired one thin birch covered with fungi all the way up

its trunk. There are two kinds of fungi – saprophytic, found on decaying wood and leaves, and mycorrhizas, which are fungal associations underground between plant roots and beneficial fungi. The fungi effectively extend the root area of plants and are extremely important to most wild plants. Mushroom identification is not for the faint-hearted, but generally speaking, avoid poisonous mushrooms under laurel, sycamore, ash, maple and rhododendrons, all found in abundance at Kenwood.

After North Wood, we walked through the flower lawn where Crissy mentioned Repton's designs for nine flower beds, and reminded us that the first Lime Avenue was already on John Rocque's map of 1745-6. Down the hill along the historic hedge and west Inner Circuit to Stone Bridge, this year's autumn colours, and the last of the liquidambar, were magnificent.



Wood Pond

The still grey morning reflected off Wood Pond, where two coot swam uninterrupted. Kenwood has the largest jackdaw population in London, but more noticeable were the two Egyptian geese high in a tree, who chase off the Canadian geese.

We can't compete with their decibel level, but our loud thanks to Crissy for another enjoyable and informative walk around the Kenwood estate.

LECTURES AND VISITS

January to June 2026

Lectures

Sunday 11 January, **Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Light – and Darkness**
Martin Postle

Sunday 8 February, **John Soane's Cabinet of Curiosities**
Bruce Boucher

Sunday 8 March, **Fifty Years On: Memories of a Kenwood Curator**
Jacob Simon

Sunday 12 April, **Smithfield Market and the new London Museum**

Alex Werner

Sunday 10 May, **Winston Churchill: The Painter**

Xavier Bray

Sunday 7 June, **James McNeill Whistler**

Carol Jacobi

Visits

We are visiting places in the London area which are accessible by public transport. Several more visits will be arranged for the spring and summer. Do check the website and read the regular email bulletin, where you will also find booking details when these become available.

FOR FULL DETAILS OF LECTURES AND EVENTS SEE THE EVENTS SHEET AND WEBSITE

Spring Estate Walk

Thursday 14 May, 10.30 am, **Spring at Kenwood**

A walk with Kenwood's Head Gardener. Meet at North Front of Kenwood House.

This walk is free for Friends of Kenwood; non-members £5.00.

Booking in advance (essential) by emailing:

info@friendsofkenwood.org.uk

KENWOOD HOUSE OPENING TIMES

Kenwood House is open 7 days a week; winter hours are 10am – 4pm. During this period, the estate is open 8am – 4pm and from 1 February from 8am – 5pm. The café is open until 4pm until 31 January, and from Saturday 1 February, it closes at 5pm. Summer hours resume around the Easter holidays.

VOLUNTEERS

Kenwood ALWAYS needs volunteers!

To keep Kenwood open in the way it was intended, nearly every day of the year, English Heritage needs volunteers. If you know of anyone who might be interested in joining the existing group of wonderfully loyal volunteers, please send an email marked for the attention of the Kenwood Volunteer Manager to Kenwood.House@english-heritage.org.uk.

SECOND-HAND BOOKSHOP

Please buy your books here!

The Second-hand Bookshop in Mansion Cottage near the Brew House café is entirely run by volunteers. It has become a great success story for Kenwood. In 2025 alone,

it has raised over £28,000. It is open every day of the week, 12pm – 4pm. It has some fabulous, high quality books for sale and takes donations during opening hours. All profits remain at Kenwood.

MORE STOCK WANTED! Please donate your second-hand books to Kenwood! Just drop them in during opening hours.

FRIENDS OF KENWOOD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

You can find us on X, Instagram and Facebook. You can also find our Friends of Kenwood online talks on YouTube. Just search for 'Friends of Kenwood'.

MEMBERSHIP

Is YOUR Membership up to date? Support Kenwood by being a member!

If you haven't yet renewed for the current membership year, please remember it's never too late to renew your membership! If you're not sure about your current membership status, simply email us to ask: info@friendsofkenwood.org.uk.

You can support us even more generously by becoming a Rembrandt Friend for £300 p.a. or a Vermeer Friend for £750 p.a.

To renew your membership you can pay by bank transfer, by PayPal, or even by cheque. You can find all details of how to pay on the 'Join Us' page of our website at <https://www.friendsofkenwood.org.uk/>.

From April to October you can also pay by Direct Debit; this option is only available through our website and by setting up the direct debit facility through the GoCardless platform.

We would like to thank all of you for your support, whatever membership level you belong to. With your help, we are able to act as an important advocate for Kenwood. We need lots of support, so please encourage your friends and family to become Friends too!

Why not buy a subscription as a Christmas present?



SUPPORTING THE FRIENDS OF KENWOOD

We rely on your support to keep our high profile at Kenwood House, and we would welcome any donation you feel able to make. Kenwood is under the care of The English Heritage Trust, itself a registered charity with no government funding. Our aim at the Friends of Kenwood is to keep Kenwood a top priority within English Heritage's national portfolio.

If you would like to make an additional financial contribution to our work, please contact our Treasurer, Ken Solomons by emailing him at kssco@aol.com or writing to him c/o Kenwood House, NW3 7JR.

You can also support us by remembering the Friends of Kenwood in your will. If you choose to include the Friends in your will, you will need to direct your gift to our registered charity number: 273258. It is simple to do and tax efficient.

A further benefit of leaving a gift to Friends of Kenwood, or any other qualifying charity, is that this amount will not be subject to Inheritance Tax. In addition, if total charitable bequests amount to at least 10% of the taxable estate, then the Inheritance Tax chargeable on the balance is reduced from 40% to 36%.

GiveAsYouLive

Help the Friends of Kenwood when you shop online!

Please consider supporting us through GiveAsYouLive. It is very easy to use and costs nothing.

A number of our members already help us by nominating us as their chosen charity when they make online purchases.

Once you have registered, we receive a small donation each time you make a purchase. It really makes a difference! You can use it to buy train tickets, food, holidays, cosmetics, pet food, sports equipment, gardening goods... all sorts.

To sign up for Give As You Live, you just have to register at <http://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/kenwoodfriends>

Please think about using this effortless way to support the Friends of Kenwood when you do your online shopping. Thank you!

Vermeer and Rembrandt Friends

The Friends would like to extend grateful thanks to the following for supporting us:

Vermeer Friends: Chris Carter, Kane Chu
Rembrandt Friends: Jenny Abramsky, Elizabeth Meek, John Owens

Corporate Benefactors, Trusts and Foundations

The Friends would like to extend grateful thanks to the following for supporting us:

The Rubin Foundation

KILLIK & Co

Julius Bär



LECTURES AND VISITS - JANUARY TO JUNE 2026

Lectures take place in the Lecture Room starting at 11am and are livestreamed so that Friends can alternatively watch at home. Whenever possible, the lectures are also recorded for future viewing on our YouTube channel.

Up-to-date information for each lecture will be in the Friends of Kenwood email news bulletin, where you will also find the booking link for the lecture.

Lectures are free for members, non-members £10

LECTURES

Sunday 11 January, **Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Light – and Darkness**

Martin Postle



Joseph Wright of Derby, Self-Portrait, c. 1772

Joseph Wright of Derby was among the greatest British artists of the 18th century, along with Hogarth, Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Stubbs. Even so, despite the renown of works such as *An Experiment on a Bird in the Airpump* and *A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery*, the full range and variety of his achievement as a painter of subject pictures, portraits, and landscape remains undervalued. This lecture will explore the various facets of his artistic career, in the context of new research which Dr Postle is conducting in preparation for a complete catalogue of Wright's oil paintings, to be published by the Paul Mellon Centre in 2027.

The lecture also coincides with the exhibition, *Wright of Derby: From the Shadows* at the National Gallery.

Dr Postle is making a welcome return to Kenwood as both lecturer and curator of exhibitions. He is currently Senior Research Fellow at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, where he previously served as Deputy Director. Between 1998 and 2007 he was Senior Curator and Head of British Art to 1900 at Tate. He has written extensively on many aspects of 18th century British art, and curated numerous exhibitions, on artists ranging from Joshua Reynolds and Richard Wilson to George Stubbs and Johan Zoffany. In the past, when Kenwood staged loan exhibitions, he curated three of them, *The Artist's Model: Its role in British Art from Lely to Etty*, *Angels and Urchins: The Fancy Picture in 18th Century British Art*, and *The Artist's Model: From Etty to Spencer*.

Sunday 8 February, **John Soane's Cabinet of Curiosities**
Bruce Boucher



Sir John Soane's Museum

Is the Soane Museum a maze without a plan? Scholars and the general public have been puzzling over the museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields ever since it opened in 1837. Sir John Soane, the renowned British Neo-Classical architect had amassed an extraordinary collection of objects – antiquities, furniture, sculptures, architectural models and drawings, and paintings – to display in his house. He claimed that everything was arranged as “studies for my own mind”, but he never explained what he meant. The absence of chronological order and the juxtaposition of

objects can seem random, but are there connecting themes? This talk will attempt to tease out the autobiographical nature of one of London's most fascinating historic sites.

Dr Bruce Boucher was Director of Sir John Soane's Museum (2016 – 2023). He studied at Harvard University, Magdalen College, Oxford, as a Rhodes Scholar, and the Courtauld Institute of Art. He taught for over twenty years at University College London and then entered the museum world as curator and head of European Sculpture, Decorative Arts, and Ancient Art at the Art Institute of Chicago (2002-2009) and subsequently as director of the University of Virginia's Art Museum (2009-16). He is the author of a number of books on Italian Renaissance and Baroque sculpture and architecture and most recently, *John Soane's Cabinet of Curiosities: Reflections on an Architect and His Collection*, 2024.

Sunday 8 March, **Fifty Years On: Memories of a Kenwood Curator**
Jacob Simon



Sir Thomas Gainsborough, John Joseph Merlin, 1781 This lecture is particularly close to home. Jacob Simon was assistant curator at Kenwood for ten years (1973-83), with responsibility for the Kenwood furniture collection, for Ranger's House, Blackheath and Marble Hill House, Twickenham. In ten notable episodes Jacob Simon will give us a sense of what it was like to work at Kenwood fifty years ago: Getting the job; The theft of the Vermeer; Acquiring the Suffolk portrait collection; Studying Robert Adam's Kenwood drawings; Acquiring the lost Adam wine coolers; Discovering the lost Marble Hill Panini overdoors; A series of exhibitions; The Repton landscape; Dido at Kenwood; Acquiring Gainsborough's *John Joseph Merlin*.

After Kenwood, Jacob moved to the National Portrait Gallery as Curator, 18th century portraits (1983-2001) and then as Chief Curator (2001-11). In a voluntary capacity, he has served on various National Trust committees (1969-2002) and acted as editor for the Walpole Society journal devoted to British art history. He maintains a link with the National Portrait Gallery as volunteer Research Fellow. His research interests include four online resources on the Gallery website, recording the lives and works of artists' suppliers, picture frame makers, picture restorers, and bronze sculpture founders and plaster figure makers. He has recently contributed an essay on Lucian Freud's painting materials and practice to the Freud Catalogue Raisonné.

Sunday 12 April, **Smithfield Market and the new London Museum** Alex Werner



Bird's-eye view of General Market and Poultry Market with Clerkenwell beyond, 2019 (artist's impression)

The home of the new London Museum is two extensive and architecturally significant buildings at the western edge of Smithfield Market. There are many challenges in converting old structures into a twenty-first century museum. However, it could be argued that there is no better place for a museum about London than these two market buildings grounded in the history of

the working life of the city and shaped by a global network of chilled and frozen meat. This lecture will illustrate some of their key features as well as their location within the surrounding area. It will reveal some of the exciting discoveries made by the team of architects and curators as they explored the buildings, including cocoa rooms and blocked-up vaults. The buildings' complex lay-out presented challenges to the project team as they considered the best ways that the vast spaces should be developed for museum displays, learning spaces, stores and services.

Alex Werner is a London historian and was for many years a senior curator at the Museum of London and has published widely on London subjects. He curated several permanent galleries and temporary exhibitions including *Dickens and London*, and *Sherlock Holmes*. His last post was as lead curator of the new museum working on its masterplan and displays. He retired at the end of 2022 and is currently chair of the Decorative Arts Society.

Sunday 10 May, **Winston Churchill: The Painter**

Xavier Bray



John Lavery, Winston Churchill, 1915

Universally renowned as an inspirational statesman, writer and orator, but perhaps less well known is that Winston Churchill was also an enthusiastic amateur painter.

In May 2026, the Wallace Collection will present a major retrospective of Churchill's creative oeuvre, the first

exhibition of its kind in the UK since his death. More than fifty paintings from Chartwell, Churchill's family home for over forty years will be brought together to represent the best of his output. Not merely a practitioner, Churchill also wrote extensively about art, notably in his series of articles grouped in his book *Painting as a Pastime*, and his words will contextualise his surprisingly extensive corpus. Dr Xavier Bray will take us through Churchill's activity as an artist from his first attempts during the First World War till the 1960s shortly before his death. Appropriately this exhibition is held at the Wallace, because the museum hosted in 1942 the exhibition *Artists Aid to Russia*, which aimed to raise funds for Clementine Churchill's Aid to Russia Fund.

Dr Bray is an art historian specialising in Spanish art. Prior to becoming Director of the Wallace Collection in 2016, he was Chief Curator at Dulwich Picture Gallery. He has curated a wide range of exhibitions. For the Wallace Collection, he has overseen and co-curated exhibitions including *Richard Wallace: The Collector*, *Henry Moore: The Helmet Heads*, *Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company*, *Frans Hals: The*

Male Portraits, Faithful and Fearless: Portraits of Dogs, Ranjit Singh: Sikh, Warrior, King and most recently with Sir Grayson Perry, *Delusions of Grandeur*.

Sunday 7 June, **The Painter James McNeill Whistler**
Carol Jacobi



*James McNeill Whistler, Arrangement in Grey and Black
No.1, 1871*

A major retrospective exhibition of Whistler's art is opening at Tate Britain in May. It brings together his most celebrated paintings alongside rarely, or never seen, works dating from his teenage years in St Petersburg to the late self-portraits. Included also, are drawings, prints and designs. The exhibition explores the career of a radical cosmopolitan artist who broke the rules in his fierce pursuit of an art of beauty

that was detached from 19th century conventions of narrative, morality and sentiment. To this end he experimented with new innovative techniques that emphasised form and atmosphere and gave his paintings titles that evoke the abstract qualities of music – nocturne, symphony, harmony and arrangement – to evoke mood. His influence on European and American art in his lifetime and beyond was colossal.

Dr Carol Jacobi, curator of *James McNeill Whistler* is Curator of British Art 1850-1915 at Tate Britain and publishes and broadcasts extensively on Victorian art, British art pre- and post-World War Two, and historic photography, with special interest in under and mis-represented groups. She has taught at Birkbeck College, the Courtauld Institute and elsewhere and was Leverhulme Fellow in the History of Portraiture at the National Portrait Gallery. Among the exhibitions she has curated are *William Holman Hunt and the Pre-Raphaelite Vision* (2009), *Van Gogh and Britain* (2019) and most recently, *The Rossettis* (2023).

SPRING ESTATE WALK



© Garry Knight

Thursday, 14 May, **Spring at Kenwood**

A walk with Kenwood's Head Gardener. Meet at North Front of Kenwood House at 10.30am.

This walk is free for Friends of Kenwood; non-members £5

Book in advance (essential) by emailing info@friendsofkenwood.org.uk

VISITS

We are visiting places in the London area which are accessible by public transport. Visits will be announced in the regular Friends of Kenwood email news bulletin, where you will also find the booking link for the visit.