



Newsletter 136 – June 2026

## KENWOOD'S COLD BATH



*Kristian Kaminski, Curator of Properties and Ben Noton, Kenwood Operations Manager ensuring all was in order on the day of the dip*

**Kenwood's Rare Cold Bath Conserved and Used for the First Time in 200 Years!**

Visitors to Kenwood can once again view the Cold Bath after English Heritage recently completed an extensive conservation project.

The Cold Bath at Kenwood is a rare and intriguing survival, much loved by visitors. It has been rebuilt several times but probably dates from the early 18th century when cold bathing, thought to be good for health, was most fashionable. Hampstead was developing as a spa during this time due to its mineral springs. The Cold Bath is fed by a Chalybeate stream containing iron salts (giving the water its reddish colour) and other minerals thought to have health-giving properties.

In 1715 Dudley Ryder, a London attorney, wrote:

*"Mr. Porter, who is an apothecary, was talking of the cold bath... He says it is extremely good against the headache, strengthens and enlivens the body, is good against the vapours and impotence, and that the pain is little."*

After the Mansfield family bought the house in 1754 improvements were made, including a new oval pool lined with marble. The fashion for cold bathing faded and in the early 19th century the pool was filled in and the building became a store.

When I started as Properties Curator, eight years ago, my predecessor's parting words to me were 'would have liked to have done something with the cold bath', so off I went to inspect it.

The Cold Bath was excavated and restored in the 1980s. However, by the time I went to see it the dark and damp conditions had led to its decay, the plaster was crumbling and the speculative modern paint scheme was peeling off the walls. The marble had become stained green by algae, the pool had silted up and the lighting had failed. Funding conservation works would be a challenge but I was encouraged by incredible enthusiasm from the Friends of Kenwood, and Kenwood's staff and volunteers.

One of the first things I did was set up Kenwood's second-hand bookshop, seeking out and recruiting a great group of volunteers, in order to raise funds for conservation works. Since this time the bookshop has gone from strength to strength. Unfortunately, the pandemic interrupted our aims but in 2023 we started planning works and applied for grants.

In autumn 2024 we were able to begin a conservation project thanks to the kind support of the Friends of Kenwood, Pilgrim Trust, Helen Payne, The John and Ruth Howard Charitable Trust, The Rose Foundation, The Aurelius Charitable Trust and Kenwood's second-hand book shop donors and volunteers.

We appointed Rosewood Ltd., specialists in restoration and conservation, as contractor. They temporarily diverted the natural stream to allow the bath to be drained and cleaned. Defective modern paint and plaster were removed from the walls and repairs undertaken using plaster and surface coatings more suitable for damp conditions. The electrical

wiring and pump were replaced, new lighting installed and external repairs undertaken. A new interpretation panel was installed.

We were able to use the same paint colours that were used at Kenwood in the 19th century. The windows have been painted in 'Lead White', the railings 'Invisible Green', the door 'Brunswick Green' and the rainwater goods 'Lead Grey'.

The plaster walls took time to dry out and colour variation will always occur due to the age of the fabric conserved, especially as part of building is below ground and retains moisture.

To complete the project I thought it would be fun, as living history, for someone to take a plunge in the Cold Bath for the first time in 200 years. Friends of Kenwood introduced us to Jamie Knowles, a member and a regular cold-water swimmer at Hampstead Ponds. Jamie was not only prepared to go into the Cold Bath, despite its iron-stained water, but was positively keen! The Times was also keen to record it and asked for a photo exclusive, sending a bemused Science Correspondent more used to visiting tunnels under CERN than Georgian cold baths. An enthusiastic crowd gathered to witness Jamie take the plunge including a number of English Heritage volunteers and a large group of school children cheering him on with 'jump, jump, jump!'. In the interests of health and safety and conservation there was no jumping but Jamie carefully entered the murky water and onlookers remarked that he appeared instantly revived.

The Cold Bath will require constant maintenance to prevent its decay and English Heritage would welcome hearing from anyone who wishes to support the building's ongoing conservation.

*Kristian Kamiński MA FSA IHBC, Curator of Properties*

## CURATORIAL REPORT

### Staffing

Ella Letort completed her one-year maternity cover contract and left English Heritage on 19 December 2025. She made a significant contribution to Kenwood, as a curator and as a team player during an exceptional year.

After returning from maternity leave in February, Louise will leave EH in late June to take up a new role at Brighton & Hove Museums.

### Message from Louise:

*"I will be very sorry to leave Kenwood and so many talented and dedicated colleagues across English Heritage. I've been lucky enough to have enjoyed some wonderful opportunities over my seven years at Kenwood and to have gained lots of fantastic experience. I'm looking forward to carrying this forward into my new role in Brighton, and to swapping the five-hour round-trip commute for a twenty-five-minute walk to work, allowing me to spend more time with my young family."*

*"Thank you to all the Friends of Kenwood for their support over the years and continued enthusiasm for Kenwood".*

## Displays and Exhibitions

### Double Vision: Vermeer at Kenwood (1st September 2025 – 12th January 2026)

*Double Vision* closed in January 2026, was safely deinstalled (and the Dining Room lobby reinstated, with the help of registrars, other London curators, Conservation, and Kenwood House team). Jenny Thompson (The Gloria and Jack Drosdick Curator of European Painting and Sculpture and Curator of the John G. Johnson Collection), who had been from the beginning our collaborator in Philadelphia, came to Kenwood to personally courier the Philadelphia version home; she was able to scrutinize the two works beside each other and comment informally on them and their attribution.

We are immensely grateful to the Friends of Kenwood for supporting this non-charging, small but impactful display, which marked the 350th anniversary of Vermeer's death and fulfilled its aims of celebrating one of the Iveagh Bequest's star paintings without exposing it to the risks of travel. Other supporters – Riverstone and internal EH Interpretation funding – are also gratefully acknowledged.

As with last year's *Heiress* exhibition, we gathered feedback from the visitors throughout the display in visitors' books, and publicized the display through a modest marketing campaign (banners, social media, PR, including a second hyper-local push in November organized by FOK) and a podcast, transmitted on New Year's Day. This featured Wendy Monkhouse, Ella Letort, and Alice Tate-Harte (*Vermeer: Double Vision - The English Heritage Podcast* | Podcast on Spotify). Volunteer Spotlight Talks enhanced the visitor experience and were extremely popular and well attended. The QR code on the interpretation, linking to the collaborative web article which goes into the conservation science findings in greater depth (*Vermeer* | *The Guitar Player* | *English Heritage*), worked well in describing the nuances of dating the painting by scientific analysis.

The display resulted in dwell time of between 15 and 45 minutes, as the hang invited people to look more closely at the Kenwood *Guitar Player* than ever before (in the words of *Country Life*, "A mini exhibition at Kenwood House allows viewers to practise their own connoisseurship"). The 'mysterious twin', as CNN dubbed her, provoked continued debate and theorizing throughout the run, and the right balance between scholarship and accessibility seemed to be struck.

### New edition of the Iveagh Bequest Catalogue

Work continues towards a new edition of Julius Bryant's catalogue, *Kenwood: Paintings in the Iveagh Bequest*. Since its initial publication in 2003, the catalogue has become essential reading for successive curators, conservators, volunteers, and site staff. It has opened Kenwood's collections to the public and academics and continues to draw in new visitors and lead to new loan requests. The re-

edition will include new and updated catalogue entries, and it is hoped, will renew engagement with the collection ahead of the centenary of the opening of Kenwood in 2028.

### Loans

#### Gainsborough: The Fashion of Portraiture, Frick

*Countess Howe* and *John Joseph Merlin* were lent to the Frick in New York (*Gainsborough: The Fashion of Portraiture*). The show ran from February 12, 2026 to May 25, 2026, and the works were couriered by Wendy Monkhouse and were brought back by Louise Cooling. *Countess Howe* was the lead image for the show, which brought together 24 of what the show's curator, Aimee Ng, believes to be the greatest Gainsborough portraits in the world. Both works have been backfilled at Kenwood from our own collections, but a marker has been placed with the Frick to lend something significant, at their expense, as a late reciprocal loan.



*The inventor Jean Joseph Merlin (1735-1803), by Thomas Gainsborough*

#### Van Dyck The European, Genoa

Two works have departed for the Palazzo Ducale in Genoa – *Princess Henrietta of Lorraine* from Kenwood, and *St Rosalie* from Apsley. The works will be couriered both ways, on the outward leg by Kathryn Bedford.

The exhibition (duration 20 Mar 2026 — 19 July 2026) is curated by two internationally recognized specialists in the field: Katlijne van der Stighelen, Emerita Professor of the University of Leuven, and Anna Orlando, member of the Board of Culture of the Municipality of Genoa. Following on from past exhibitions on Van Dyck, the exhibition intends to offer recent and significant critical updates on his Italian period and a retrospective with international scope, comparing his works from the Genoese and Italian period with those executed at first in his homeland and later in England.

<https://palazzoducale.genova.it/en/mostra/van-dyck-the-european>

#### Thomas Howard quatercentenary display: *From Monastery to Mansion*, Audley End

Celebrating the 400th anniversary of the death of Thomas Howard, 1st Earl of Suffolk, Peter Moore is curating a small display of five works in the great hall at Audley End from April to November 2026. The exhibition explores the dramatic chapter in which Audley End evolved from the remnants of a Benedictine monastery into one of the finest houses in early modern England. For the first time, the remarkable portraits of Thomas Howard and his wife, Katherine, will be displayed in the very house they built - in the ceremonial heart of the mansion, designed to impress all who visited.

Two works are on loan from Kenwood: *Lord Thomas Howard de Walden, 1st Earl of Suffolk* (1561-1626), and *Katherine Howard* by William Larkin. The show is being funded in part by the Friends of Audley End and in part by EH. These kinds of internal loans, within EH, show what can be done by thinking of the whole of EH's collection as a source, and by close collaboration and flexibility within the curatorial team.



*Katherine Howard, née Knyvett, 1st Countess of Suffolk, by William Larkin, c.1614-18*  
© English Heritage

### Future loans agreed and requests

Angelica Kauffman's self-portrait, *The Artist in the Character of Design Listening to the Inspiration of Poetry*, to *Angelica Kauffmann and Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun: Two Key Figures in Naples and in the Italy of the Grand Tour*, at the Gallerie D'Italia, Naples. Exhibition opens 29 October 2026 and closes on 7 March 2027.

Joseph Wright's *Two Girls Dressing a Kitten by Candlelight to A Light in the Dark: Joseph Wright of Derby*, at the Getty, California, from December 8, 2026 – March 14, 2027. We will borrow *Two Boys Blowing up a Bladder* from March – June 2027, when the Getty show has closed, as our reciprocal loan, and create an in-focus display around these related works.

Joshua Reynolds' *Kitty Fisher as Cleopatra Dissolving the Pearl, to Inventing Fame: Portraiture in the First Age of Celebrity, 1750-1800* at the Getty and the National Gallery of Art, Washington (who lent *Mary Crowninshield Endicott to Heiress*). Dates: National Gallery of Art: October 2, 2027 – January 2, 2028; J. Paul Getty Museum: February 8, 2028 – April 30, 2028.

Rembrandt's *Self Portrait* to *Rembrandt: Father and Son*, Rijksmuseum 18 June – 12 September 2027, Wallace Collection 7 October 2027 – 16 January 2028. There are ongoing discussions on a reciprocal loan.

## FAREWELL TO OUR CURATOR LOUISE COOLING

We are sad to announce that our Curator of Collections & Interiors, Louise Cooling, is leaving us for a new position on the south coast. Louise has been at Kenwood since 2018 and her deep knowledge of the collection, of portrait miniatures in particular and her enthusiasm and collaborative style of working have led to numerous events, displays and improvements to the House and collections.

Louise was responsible for bringing the Lady Cohen Collection of portrait miniatures to Kenwood, the acquisition of which significantly enhances our existing collection of early-to-mid-19th century miniatures. This work included cataloguing and conservation work.

She created many displays and small exhibitions, all of which were well received by press and visitors alike. These included the Rembrandt 350th anniversary events and display (*Rembrandt #nofilter*), *London Stone: From Westminster Abbey to London Bridge*, presenting Claude de Jongh's *Old London Bridge* alongside *A View of Westminster Abbey* by Houbraken, *The Captured Carriage: Paintings from the Wellington Collection* and *Spotlight on Reynolds: Lord Iveagh's Favourite Artist at 300*. She was instrumental in mounting *Strike A Pose: Stephen Farthing and the Swagger Portrait*, and she was heavily involved in the extensive preparations for *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits* before going on maternity leave.

Louise also oversaw the Relighting Kenwood project, supervised the conservation of the Andover Albums, gave many talks and created digital content on a wide variety of Kenwood-related topics.

The Friends' council has greatly enjoyed working with Louise, we'll miss her and we wish her every success in her new post.

## OUR CURATOR FUND CAMPAIGN

In our December Newsletter, we gave a summary of our new appeal for the *Curator Fund*, which we launched on 10 September 2025. Many of our members have generously donated to this fund and we are incredibly grateful for your support, thank you.

We are now in a position to fund for the next 3 years a full-time, on-site curator, dedicated only to Kenwood. We have committed to English Heritage that we will be able to fund this named post, the Friends of Kenwood Curator, for 5 years. This means that our fund-raising efforts must be ongoing, and we cannot do this without your help!

Our view is that Kenwood must remain a vibrant art collection, and a dedicated curator should bring new ideas to Kenwood, partly through exhibitions and also through imaginative interaction with the collections.

Your support is vital: your donations help 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](mailto: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 have even greater value if you are able to use Gift Aid.

THANK YOU!

## KENWOOD EVENTS AND LANDSCAPE MATTERS

Twelve people attended this spring's Public Consultation about outdoor events at Kenwood. The meeting reviewed past events and planned summer outdoor events. Attendees always have good ideas and comments to make, so we encourage our members to come to the next public consultation, which will be on 2 November 2026.

*Neverland at Kenwood* and *Halloween at Kenwood* had a total of 73,000 visitors. Unfortunately, this was insufficient to prove a commercial success, and so it was announced in March 2026 that RG Live / Sony Music would be terminating their current contract with English Heritage to deliver light trails at Kenwood. While *Halloween* had mixed reviews, the reception for *Neverland* was overwhelmingly positive and brought new visitors to Kenwood, one of our constant ambitions. English Heritage have said they will now pause to consider what large-scale events might replace this. The Flower Lawn has not yet fully recovered from the build for the light trails. Closure of the car park from October to January was also unpopular, and lost English Heritage valuable revenue. It is unlikely to be repeated.

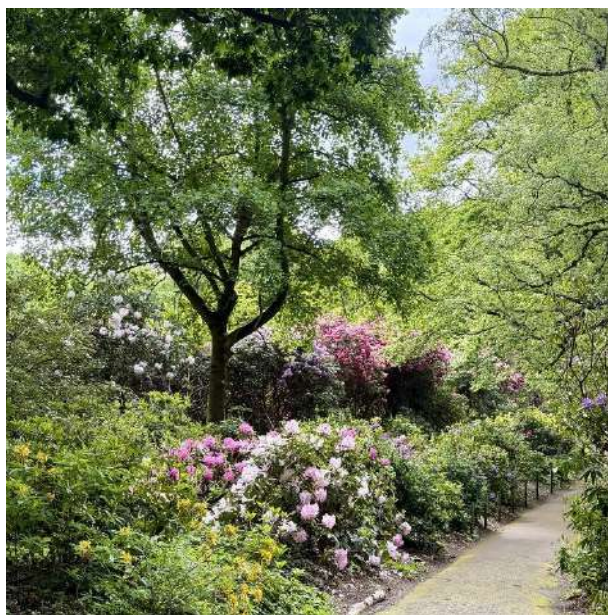
However, there are a number of small and larger events to look forward to in the coming months: English Heritage have listened to repeated requests for music and small-scale events in the house. On 28 June the early music group,

Saraband, will give two (free) *Painted Ladies* recitals in the Music Room supported by the Continuo Foundation. There will also be organ and strings concerts in the Music Room on 19 July, 13 September and 27 September. There will be some theatre too – a reading (free) in the Lecture Room in June, which will be a trailer for a performance, to coincide with Black History Month in October, embracing the life of Dido Elizabeth Belle. Look out for more details in our email news bulletins and also on the Kenwood page of the English Heritage website.

The tipis will be erected in the Kitchen Garden for private events from 5 – 22 June. Please contact us if you are interested in holding an event there.

Landscape questions are often raised at our AGM. This year, questions were again raised about the unsatisfactory state of the café (this has now been contracted out to Elior since December 2025), and about security on the Kenwood estate and the ineffective euonymus hedge as a barrier to Barbara Hepworth's *Monolith (Empyrean)*. After a wait of over two years, there is finally a descriptive sign at the sculpture, and an additional sign informing that CCTV is in operation and it is a criminal offence to damage the Grade II listed sculpture. We hope this will be effective. We wait to see what might happen to the planting. It is a challenge to find a plant which will be low maintenance, and yet a barrier to potential vandalism.

As signalled in our December 2025 Newsletter, three trees have been felled between Wood Pond and Thousand Pound Pond. Other trees will continue to be monitored, and scrub and tree growth controlled, always with a view to keeping the banks stabilised as best as possible. The large metasequoia by Stable Field Gate has finally died, it was not happy last year, and will be removed in due course.



The gardens team now comprises the Head Gardener plus three, ably assisted by about 25 garden volunteers, who are invaluable extra support for the hard-pressed core team

who look after 112 acres. Together, they have replaced metres of pale and stock fencing throughout the estate, removed invasive tree seedlings from the sphagnum bog area, reduced and managed invasive weeds and other plant growth throughout the estate, erected dead-hedging around the lily-of-the-valley patch on West Meadow, reduced dense holly in the SSSI South Wood, and helped manage the historic holly hedge which runs all the way from the Dairy to Beech Mount. The Kitchen Garden is worth a visit at any time of year, but particularly in the spring, and the Brew House café garden and the front of Mansion Cottage are also cared for.

There has been more work on laurel reduction and care of the rhododendrons, which we saw at first hand on our Spring Estate Walk (see report below).

*Thank you to all our members for your regular feedback about all aspects of Kenwood House, its world-class paintings collection, and the estate. Our objective is always to ensure the House, its art collection and the estate are safeguarded for generations to come. We welcome any comments you might have about current or future plans.*

### Hampstead Heath News

Hampstead Heath is a charity, and is run by the City of London. It is a vital resource for us all. The City would like to encourage Heath users to share the aspirations of the Heath Vision. Since April 2026, management of the Heath has changed from a deficit funding model to a grant funding model. For this the City will need to rely much more on philanthropic funding.

The Friends of Kenwood are represented on the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, along with other local stakeholders. We have been informed about the retendering process for cafés on the Heath, Queens Park and Highgate Wood, and about the change of funding model. We have warned the City about local resistance to non-local café operators, and they have chosen to ignore us. There has been considerable press coverage on this.

We have lobbied the City to ensure the Heath will have a realistic operating budget, which has entered into effect this financial year. We have noted our concern that the Heath will need funding for current and future stress factors on the Heath, climate change, and a constant shortage of staff capacity. We have cautioned the City that fund-raising is a real challenge in the current climate, especially as it is an area where they currently have limited experience, but have been assured by the City that they will be the lender of last resort. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact us or go to:

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

### Planning

There are ambitious plans south of the Heath for the area stretching from Murphy's Yard to the Bacton estate, through land at Regis Road and the proposed Film Quarter. Not all the planning applications have been made at the same time, so this is a gradual massing, including tall

buildings, which might affect some of the statutory views from Kenwood and other points of Hampstead Heath. We have joined with the Heath & Hampstead Society in asking Camden to undertake a collective visual impact assessment and examination of cumulative mass and tall buildings on the southern edge of Hampstead Heath.

### Other Heath News

The 2026 *Hampstead Heath Kite Festival* will be at Parliament Hill and its bandstand on 28 June, 12- 4pm.

Hampstead Heath biodiversity boards: have you seen them around the Heath and at Kenwood? They change quarterly with the seasons to raise awareness of the Heath's biodiversity.

For the last few years, sheep from Mudchute Farm have done a limited amount of conservation grazing on the Heath Extension in the summer. Keep your eyes open for them in June and September this year!

### Summer Fairs

Don't forget that *Highgate Fair in the Square* is on 13 June and the *Hampstead Big Fair* is on 5 July.

*Highgate Festival* is from 13 - 21 June

### Heath Hands

Check out the Heath Hands website if you would like to find out more. Heath Hands are volunteers who help out at Kenwood and all over Hampstead Heath. They gave over 1,000 volunteer hours to Kenwood in 2025 and make an important contribution to keeping the estate looking so spectacular throughout the year.

## VISIT TO BANK OF ENGLAND MUSEUM *At the Tea Table*

18 May 2026

Our first organised visit for 2026 took a group of Friends to the Bank of England Museum for an introduction to this temporary exhibition led by its Curator, Grace Benham.

Grace is Assistant Curator of the Chitra Collection, a private collection based in Farringdon near the new London Museum, that claims to be the world's most comprehensive collection relating to the production, processing, consumption and culture of tea. The Bank hosted this rare gem of an exhibition (one may imagine) because a theme explores the City of London's historic role in financing what grew to become one of Britain's largest industries. The Museum also offers an excellent space in which to enjoy up close three dozen carefully selected objects that Grace helped bring to life for us during her tour.



*The teapot of tea magnate N. K. Sethia*

We were transported back in time to 17th century Europe - an era of globalising trade over the oceans and colonial rivalries in Asia between Britain, Holland and Portugal. Our journey through time paralleled the physical transportation of tea, as it became central to a lucrative international trade driven by an increasingly insatiable market for luxury consumer products in Europe and European colonies.

We saw a painting representing how tea was adopted initially in Europe as a fashionable novelty item, long before it became an everyday commodity, affordable for all classes of society. Tea was celebrated with specific social rituals that deployed a variety of quasi-devotional objects: porcelain teapots from China; handleless bowls for sipping the green brew; lacquered, lockable caddies from Japan; nutmeg from Dutch plantations in Indonesia; silver sugar casters whose contents were produced by enslaved labour in British plantations.

Notable objects on display included Chinese porcelain destined for Europe but lost in a shipwreck, then salvaged in modern times after the glaze had been dissolved by centuries of immersion in seawater. There were beautiful teapots, kettles and stands made in England by Huguenot silversmiths such as Paul de Lamerie. There was the small, silver teapot for one, used by Admiral Lord Nelson onboard HMS Victory and engraved with the letter 'N' (one imagines for 'Nelson' rather than 'No sugar, please!'). The Chitra Collection's owner, tea magnate N. K. Sethia, designed a remarkable elephant-shaped teapot made of gold, silver, ruby, emerald, diamond, quartz, topaz and mammoth ivory. We could contrast antique Chinese porcelain with later British ceramic ware from the Potteries that evolved the language of tea as it became less heavily taxed and more of an everyday comfort for everyone to enjoy. Also, beautifully reticulated porcelain miniature teapots elicited gasps of pleasure.

There are plans to put part of the Chitra Collection on public display at a future date. In the meantime, this small exhibition is being adapted for residency at the Huguenot Museum in Rochester, where you may catch it during the summer of 2026. Grace also invited us to make contact with her to arrange any personal visits to the main collection in Farringdon:

[grace.benham@chitracollection.com](mailto:grace.benham@chitracollection.com)

<https://chitracollection.com/>

<https://huguenotmuseum.org/>

## KENWOOD ESTATE SPRING WALK

14 May 2026

You don't have to stray far from Kenwood House itself to witness an incredible botanical display.

We began our Spring Estate Walk on the shady path between the East Drive and the Service Drive; some might even call it gloomy. The laurel here is so happy that it has grown into a towering tunnel and needs a hard cut, in layers. This has proven very successful around various parts of the estate and so pruning will be undertaken here soon; such reduction will let more light in and gives the laurel a chance to regrow and dormant buds to shoot from a lower level. In fact, look closer and you will see that the small wooded area between the two drives and north of the café is not a monoculture at all, it is a mosaic of Aucuba, holly, cherry, sycamore, Arbutus, hazel, and rhododendron.

Crissy had brought some blossom samples she had prepared earlier: from the Judas tree, *Cercis siliquastrum*, part of the pea family, and from the Medlar, *Mespilus germanica*, both specimens on the bank just to the east of South Terrace. We often admire the nearby ancient Cork oak, *Quercus suber*, which has cable bracing at its upper level to help give it extra support. At the western end of South Terrace, Lime Avenue is one of the first recorded features at Kenwood, believed to have been planted by George Middleton c. 1726 and easily discernible in early maps. Some lime failed in the 1960s, some blew down in the 1987 storm, most of the trees are younger specimens replanted in 1993, but at this time of year they are wonderfully lime green.

Spring is a perfect time to admire Kenwood's magnificent rhododendrons, in full flower. The island beds on the Flower Lawn received drastic pruning in autumn 2022, because they were overgrown and beginning to fail. The majority of these have sprouted and replacement plants have been introduced, although the healthier island bed is the northern one; the one nearer the handkerchief tree (*Davidia involucrata*) seems to be on a patch of water which discourages new growth. Did you know that Kenwood's handkerchief tree has the widest canopy in the British Isles? To germinate, its seed needs two cold stratifications, and once it has become a seedling it takes 10 years to fruit.

As part of his designs at Kenwood from 1793-96, Repton moved the Kitchen Garden from next to the house to

where it is now, east of the Service Wing. In its place he devised a Flower Lawn with parterres cut into it in the shape of crescents of varying sizes, altered by the beginning of the 20th century into a radiating petal design. But for nearly 70 years, most of this area has been laid to lawn and is heavily used by visitors, rhododendron admirers and small and large groups of friends and families, local and from further afield. Here is an example of pragmatic management, given limited resources for the 112-acre Kenwood estate: the Flower Lawn offers considerable community value in its present form, with two striking island beds of rhododendrons at the back.



*Avery, the first baby ever to enjoy our spring walks!*  
[Photo reproduced with parental permission]

Over the next two years, the bank of rhododendrons behind Hepworth's *Monolith (Empyrean)* will be reduced; there is another extensive row of rhododendron behind this 'wall', which are now doing well after their 2022 pruning. In this way the views from the house across to the Dairy will be maintained as Repton intended. However, it is not possible to preserve all historic views, for example, the view from Beech Mount to the house is now obstructed by a very healthy oak. Landscapes are constantly changing.

Our thanks as always to Crissy for another informative walk, just looking at plants is always enjoyable, particularly when they are right next to one of London's greatest 18th century houses!

## FRIENDS OF KENWOOD AGM

12 April 2026

The 49th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood (the Friends of Kenwood) was held at Kenwood House on Sunday, 12 April 2026. It was attended by 30 Friends (including 10 officeholders) and 3 representatives from English Heritage.

The Chair, Dame Jenny Abramsky, reported on the Friends' activities since the last AGM on 6th April 2025.

She reported on a most eventful year with two world-class exhibitions being held in the House with the crucial support of the Friends, and the vision and expertise of Council member Richard Ormond and Senior Curator Wendy Monkhouse. *Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits* celebrated the centenary of the death of John Singer Sargent and brought together eight oil paintings and twelve charcoal portraits of American women who made an impact on British society. The smaller, extraordinary exhibition, *Double Vision: Vermeer at Kenwood* brought together for the first time in over 300 years Kenwood's Vermeer, *The Guitar Player*, with *A Lady Playing a Guitar* from the Philadelphia Art Museum. Both exhibitions drew many visitors and were accompanied by lectures and several members' events, and received well by the press.

The Friends are most grateful to Charles Cecil for his excellent talk on sight-size as a portrait technique used extensively by John Singer Sargent and his contemporaries. This was held amongst the paintings in the exhibition rooms followed by a champagne reception in the Upper Hall.

Membership numbers have increased significantly over the past year, mainly due to the success of the exhibitions. A membership fee increase for the first time since 2019 was proposed and passed at the AGM. Thanks were extended to all members for their loyal commitment and generosity. The Friends are also grateful to our corporate benefactors and Vermeer and Rembrandt Friends.

The Friends supported the two exhibitions by providing grants and underwriting the *Heiress* exhibition. The Friends have had preliminary discussions with English Heritage about providing funding to secure the maintenance of a full-time, on-site curator for Kenwood. Fund-raising is ongoing and donations and pledges that have been received are in the Kenwood Curator Fund.

The Earl of Iveagh's publishers hosted a successful book launch *Guinness: A Family Succession* with a talk followed by tea in the Old Kitchen. This was soon followed by another book launch of Adrian Tinniswood's book *The Houses of Guinness*.

The lecture series throughout the year continued to be of a high standard and were well attended in the Lecture Theatre as well as through live transmission. The lectures, when permitted, are recorded and made available on the Friends YouTube channel. The Friends hosted the members' Christmas Party after the December lecture.

English Heritage reported a highly successful year at Kenwood with an increase in visitors, retail and food & beverage figures and membership. A new Operations Director for London, Jack Brill, was appointed in the Autumn of 2025. The *FT Weekend Festival*, *How The Light Gets In*, *Barcode Festival*, Lord Chamberlain's Men, *Halloween* and *Christmas at Kenwood* were held on the estate, as were Easter Trails and Father Christmas. The Food and Beverage operation was outsourced to Elixir. The gardens team have continued with their tireless work to keep the estate looking well. English Heritage thanked the Friends

of Kenwood for their ongoing and generous funding support for the exhibitions and various projects.

The Kenwood curatorial team contributed several articles to the English Heritage website as well as their members' magazines and through social media channels and in national newspapers.

The Chair thanked all Council members for their time, expertise and commitment to Kenwood.

The Report, in full, will be available on the Friends' website <https://friendsofkenwood.org.uk/>

*Mala Gole, Secretary, Friends of Kenwood*

## LECTURES, VISITS AND EVENTS AUTUMN 2026

*Please see the separate Lectures and Events sheet for more details of our lectures, visits and events, or visit our website*

### Lectures

*Lectures take place in the Lecture Room starting at 11am. Numbers are limited and so pre-booking is advised - details for booking will be given in the Friends of Kenwood email news bulletin that precedes the lecture.*

*Our lectures will also be live-streamed on our YouTube channel. Whenever possible, the lectures are recorded.*

Sunday 20 September, **Mrs Kauffman and Madame Le Brun**  
Franny Moyle

Sunday 18 October, **Vermeer: A Life Lost and Found**  
Andrew Graham-Dixon

Sunday 15 November, **Renoir and Love**  
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Sunday 6 December, **The Royal Collection in Three Dimensions**  
Jonathan Marsden

You are warmly invited to a Christmas Drinks party in the Upper Hall after this lecture.

### Visits

Monday 20 July, **Private After-Hours Viewing of 'Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style'**  
The King's Gallery

### Events

Thursday 8 October, **Friends Annual Evening Event**

Further details to follow.

### Autumn Estate Walk

Thursday 5 November, 10.30 am, **Autumn at Kenwood**

## OUTDOOR EVENTS AT KENWOOD

### SUMMER 2026

We will notify you in our email news bulletins of set-up and take-down periods where there may be some reduced access, although the grounds will always be accessible, and we ask you to be mindful of your own health & safety.

#### Barcode Festival

2 July, 2pm – 11:30pm

In collaboration with GroceryAid. The *Barcode Festival* is a ticketed music event in its second year, now with a capacity of 10,000 people. We were disappointed last year that very large vehicles passed in front of the house, despite assurances to the contrary. This year, we have been told there will be a human being monitoring vehicle transit. We have repeated our concern that large vehicles passing in front of the house pose a risk of damage to its fabric and the collection. The *FT Weekend* event and *How the Light Gets In* now seem able to manage this challenge more effectively.

#### Illyria: Pirates of Penzance

Outdoor operetta on the Half-Moon Lawn, Tuesday 4 August 7 – 9pm, doors open 6pm.

#### The Lord Chamberlain's Men: Othello

Sunday 23 August: on the Half-Moon Lawn at 7pm, doors open 6pm

The UK's premier touring all-male theatre company

#### Financial Times Weekend Festival

5 September

<https://ukftweekendfestival.live.ft.com/>

#### The Institute of Art and Ideas at Kenwood

19 & 20 September: **How the Light Gets In**

<https://howthelightgetsin.org/festivals/london>

### WINTER 2026

**An Audience with Father Christmas** will start on weekends from 28 November 2026; it might also be held on Monday 21 and Tuesday 22 December. This has become very popular, so be ready to book as soon as you see it advertised!

## KENWOOD HOUSE OPENING TIMES

Kenwood is open 7 days a week, from 10am – 5pm until 25 October, when it moves to winter hours 10am – 4pm.

## Second-Hand Bookshop

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 and opening hours have now been extended to every day of the week, 10am – 4pm. It has some fabulous books for sale and takes donations during opening hours. All profits remain at Kenwood.

### Kenwood 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 go to the English Heritage Volunteering page or send an email marked for the attention of the Kenwood Volunteer Manager to [Kenwood.House@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:Kenwood.House@english-heritage.org.uk).

### YOUR FRIENDS MEMBERSHIP DON'T DELAY – RENEW TODAY! WE NEED YOU!

The new membership year begins on 1 June 2026, and membership rates are:

|                                        |           |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|
| Single annual membership               | £35 p.a.  |
| Joint annual membership                | £50 p.a.  |
| Associate (u-18s & full-time students) | £13 p.a.  |
| Single Life Membership                 | £525      |
| Joint Life Membership                  | £700      |
| Rembrandt Friend                       | £300 p.a. |
| Vermeer Friend                         | £750 p.a. |

These subscription rates represent an increase for the first time since 2019 and reflect our ongoing commitment to provide outstanding value to our members.

Please continue to support us and our work for Kenwood by renewing your membership as soon as you can.

You can pay in a number of ways. You can pay by **Direct Debit** or **PayPal**, both available via the Join Us page on our website, <https://friendsofkenwood.org.uk/join-us/>. You can also pay by **Bank Transfer** to our account. All details can also be found on the Join Us page on our website.

The advantage of paying by Direct Debit, available from April to October through the GoCardless platform, is that you do not have to think about renewing every year and your cards are sent to you automatically.

You can pay by **cheque** (payable to 'Friends of Kenwood'), but we would much prefer an electronic form of payment for efficiency and to speed up processing.

You can complete the renewal membership form here:

<https://friendsofkenwood.org.uk/membership-form/>

You will also receive a posted reminder to renew (unless you are a Life Member or currently pay by Direct Debit).

If you wish to support us even more generously, you might consider becoming a Rembrandt or a Vermeer Friend, all details are also on our website.

The loyalty of our members is really important to the Friends of Kenwood. It helps us advocate for Kenwood, and encourages us in our ambition to safeguard Kenwood as English Heritage's greatest asset at a time when art patronage is sorely needed.

We need lots of support as well as encouragement so please renew your membership and encourage your friends and family to join too!

For instant updates, please keep checking our Facebook, X, and Instagram posts. Don't forget we also have a YouTube channel which has turned into a fantastic digital archive for most of our lectures and talks on many of the most well-known paintings at Kenwood.

## 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.

The Master Plan for Kenwood is now being actively worked on by English Heritage and we know we will have to help in every way we can, including significant fund-raising efforts.

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](mailto: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 and we have received over £700 to date.

Once you have registered, we receive a small donation each time you make a purchase.

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 their continuing support:

Vermeer Friend: 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**

## FRIENDS OF KENWOOD - LECTURES AND VISITS

### SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2026

Lectures take place in the Lecture Room starting at 11am.

Numbers are limited and so pre-booking is advised - details for booking will be given in the Friends of Kenwood email news bulletin that precedes the lecture.

Our lectures will also be live-streamed on our YouTube channel. Whenever possible, the lectures are recorded.

Sunday 20 September, **Mrs Kauffman and Madame Le Brun**  
Franny Moyle



*Self-portrait by Angelica Kauffman, (detail),  
1770-75, National Portrait Gallery*



*Self-portrait by Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun, (detail),  
1782, National Portrait Gallery*

Élisabeth Louise Vigée le Brun (1755-1842) provided defining images of Queen Marie Antoinette and a host of influential men and women who dominated French, European and Russian society from the 1770's through to the early 19th century, evolving portraiture as she did so. Meanwhile, her contemporary Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807) captured the cream of European society, whilst also establishing her own genre of neoclassical 'history' painting that explored the image of the heroine. Franny Moyle reveals how these painters invite comparison with Old Masters as part of a shared agenda to establish that female talent could

match that of men. Women tended to be downgraded as painters, their efforts often diminished and dismissed without proper consideration.

Moyle shows how the two most successful female painters of their era fought back against ingrained prejudice and engaged in – quite independently of one another – a lively pictorial dialogue with Rubens, Rembrandt, and van Dyck. They also sparred with their most successful male contemporaries, including Jacques-Louis David, Joseph Duplessis and Sir Joshua Reynolds, as a means of reinforcing their claim to a seat in the cultural pantheon.

Franny Moyle is an author, art historian, lecturer, curator and former TV producer. Her publications include a biography of Hans Holbein, the critically acclaimed *The King's Painter* (2021) which was a BBC 4 Radio Book of the Week. Her account of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, *Desperate Romantics* (2009) formed the basis of a six-part television drama. Her most recent book, *Mrs Kauffman and Madame Le Brun* (2025) is a comparative biography of these two painters.

Sunday 18 October, **Vermeer: A Life Lost and Found**  
Andrew Graham-Dixon



*Girl with a Pearl Earring by Johannes Vermeer,  
c.1665, Mauritshuis, The Hague*

Kenwood's *The Guitar Player* by Vermeer is one of the finest paintings in the collection. Last year a new acclaimed biography of Vermeer was published, *Vermeer: A Life Lost and Found*. Andrew Graham-Dixon will give a revelatory talk on his groundbreaking new biography. He offers a dramatic reassessment of Johannes Vermeer—not as the isolated genius of legend, but as a painter deeply embedded in the radical, intellectual, and political life of the Dutch Golden Age.

In this richly illustrated talk, he will reveal Vermeer's hitherto unknown

friendships, his ties to a radical underground movement, and the powerful women who shaped both his private life and career. Alongside these startling biographical insights, Graham-Dixon presents fresh interpretations of beloved masterpieces, including *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, *A View of Delft*, *The Milkmaid*, and *Woman Reading a Letter*—recasting them in a bold new light.

Andrew Graham-Dixon is an art historian, biographer and broadcaster who has made more BBC television series about art than any other presenter. For many years he was the main art critic of the *Sunday Telegraph* and the *Independent*. His book *Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane* (2011) was shortlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize and has been translated into seven languages. He has judged the Turner Prize, the BP National Portrait Prize and the Annual British Animation Awards, among others. He has also served on the Government Art Collection Committee and currently serves as an ambassador for the Prince's Teaching Institute and as a member of English Heritage's Blue Plaques panel.

Sunday 15 November, **Renoir and Love**  
Christopher Riopelle



*The Umbrellas by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, 1881-6, National Gallery*

Among Impressionist painters, Pierre-Auguste Renoir was the undisputed master of sociable imagery. His depictions circa 1865-85 of people simply getting along together are universally popular – friends, lovers, young couples flirting in the streets or across a convivial table, dancers entwined, mothers and children, single figures lost in reverie over absent companions. The multifarious theme was rarer and more psychologically complex than sometimes realised. It confronted issues of democratisation, changing social, class and moral standards, the hastening pace of city life and rise of suburban leisure. Showing figures in intricate proximity and under subtly changing light conditions, it provided scope for rich formal experimentation as well. This lecture offers an overview

of Renoir's singular achievement as the chronicler of that pleasure which, when the moment, however fleeting, is right we all take in one another.

Christopher Riopelle, Contributing Curator at the National Gallery, is making a welcome return to Kenwood. For many years he was the Curator of Post-1800 paintings, curating and co-curating major international exhibitions. He gave lectures on two of them at Kenwood - *Gauguin's Portraits* (2020) and *Winslow Homer* (2022). He is co-curator of the National Gallery exhibition *Renoir and Love* (3 October 2026 – 31 January 2027), first received to rapturous reviews at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

## Sunday 6 December, **The Royal Collection in Three Dimensions** Jonathan Marsden



*Mars and Venus (detail) by Antonio Canova, 1815-19, Buckingham Palace*

The Royal Collection is perhaps most famous for its great Old Master paintings and drawings, French porcelain and furniture. In this talk, Jonathan Marsden considers another rich strand of the Collection which had not been examined as a whole before the appearance of his new catalogue, *European Sculpture in the Collection of His Majesty The King*, in autumn 2025. This exercise gives rise to an important question: does this constitute a 'collection' or is it merely the result of centuries of accumulation? Introducing highlights and new discoveries from Cellini to Canova, Jonathan Marsden will also discuss the extent to which monarchs have used the medium of sculpture to represent and project their presence and power in Britain's royal palaces over the last 500 years.

Jonathan Marsden was Director of the Royal Collection and Surveyor of The Queen's Works of Art from 2010-2017, having served as Deputy Surveyor since 1996. He was a research assistant on *The Treasure Houses of Britain* exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC (1985) and subsequently worked for the National Trust as a Historic Buildings

Representative in North Wales and Oxfordshire. He serves as a Trustee of English Heritage and is Chairman of the Furniture History Society.

His new catalogue *European Sculpture in the Collection of His Majesty The King* runs to four volumes with 2,000 illustrations. It covers some 1,800 works of art dating from the late 15th to the late 20th century, in marble, bronze, terracotta, plaster and other materials, distributed across some fifteen residences and palaces from the Isle of Wight to the Highlands of Scotland.

**You are warmly invited to a Christmas Drinks party in the Upper Hall after this lecture.**

### **AUTUMN ESTATE WALK**



© English Heritage

Thursday, 5 November, **Autumn 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](mailto:info@friendsofkenwood.org.uk)

### **EVENT**

Wednesday 8 October, **Friends Annual Evening Event**

Further details to follow.

## VISITS

*We are visiting places in the London area which are accessible by public transport.*

**Visit booking:** *To book a place for a visit, please use the Eventbrite or other link which can be found on the Lectures/Events page of our website, or look out for the link in our regular email news update.*

### Monday 20 July, **Curator's Introduction and Private After-Hours Viewing of 'Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style'**



#### The King's Gallery, Buckingham Palace

After an expert introduction to the exhibition, we will have plenty of time to appreciate the remarkable style of Britain's longest-reigning monarch through clothing worn in all ten decades of her life – from birth to adulthood, from princess to queen, and from off-duty style to dressing for the global stage for momentous occasions in Britain's history.

Highlights include her christening robe, bridesmaid dress, wedding dress, Coronation dress and the ensemble worn for the wedding of Princess Margaret.

*'In the year that she would have turned 100 years old, this exhibition will be a celebration of Queen Elizabeth's uniquely British style and her enduring fashion legacy.'*

Caroline de Guitaut, Exhibition Curator and Surveyor of The King's Works of Art.