THE FRIENDS OF CROOME

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2017 Issue 27

Photo: Peter Young

AUTUMN UPDATE from KATHERINE ALKER

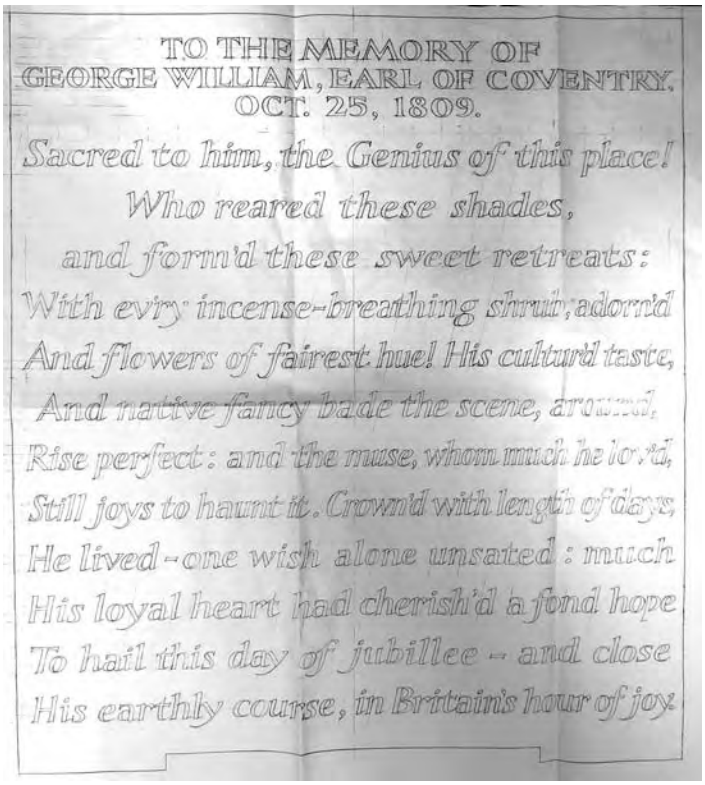
Where has the time gone? It's Autumn already and we've had some exciting and intriguing projects in the garden and park this year.

The volunteer Walling Team have been making superb progress with the repair and rebuild of the Rebecca Road estate wall. They had extra pairs of hands helping when we hosted a group from Vodafone (above) on a team building - and wall building - day earlier in the year. Back in February, we had a generous donation from an individual which paid for 20 tonnes of blue lias stone from the quarry in Somerset in March. The team has used nearly all of this over the summer, so I am about to put in an order for another 20 tonnes of stone. Thank you very much to the Friends of Croome for the donation for this purchase. The team work at the wall every Friday so please do go and see what they are doing and ask any questions about the work.

As you know the 6th Earl's urn in the Home Shrubbery was pieced back together and re-set on its plinth last year. This year I have been working with the team at Cliveden Conservation as well as NT conservator Julie Marsden to work out the best way of replacing the plaque with the inscription for the 6th Earl, which was once on the plinth. Fortunately the full wording is in the Hortus Croomensis and Cliveden have mocked up what this would look like on the plaque - pictured on page 2.

We discussed materials, including bronze, marble and slate. Slate was considered the best option, so we then looked at several samples of different slate - there is a surprisingly amount of variation in the colour!

We are in the final stages of getting all the detail sorted, and I hope the plaque will be in place by the New Year. Thank you very much to the Friends for their continued support with this particular project and for paying for the plaque to be recreated.



The mysteries of Croome deepen as SWAG (South Worcestershire Archaeology Group) have taken advantage of the low water level in the lake to investigate the remains of the boathouse. They have excavated to find large worked wooden beams - maybe taken from elsewhere on the estate? - with the brick piers of the boathouse built on TOP of them - pictured right. They have found a slipway from the grassy bank into the boathouse and also a lovely metal boathook. I'm sure there will be more to learn about this once SWAG have completed their work.

The low level of the water in the river and lake has been a concern for a while. After some initial investigation we have now commissioned repairs to the weir, which was found to be leaking, and the carriage splash, which had been damaged when water found a weak spot and started to gouge out a section. The repairs should be complete by the end of October, and I am looking forward to seeing the water level steadily rise back to its correct height over the winter.

As always, I would like to thank the Friends for their support of the Garden and Park team and the projects which we have going on - I really appreciate it!

Katherine Alker

Members of South Worcestershire Archaeology Group

The volunteer Walling Team

Terence and Sandra Andrews of R M Frobisher demonstrating the resistance meter at Croome.

The largest standing remains at the boathouse.

ARCHAEOLOGY AT CROOME

Over the past few months, South Worcestershire Archaeological Group members (who are also registered as National Trust volunteers) have been continuing their investigations at Croome. During the winter, when vegetation was sparse, fieldwork forming part of the National Trust's Heritage and Archaeology Rangers Team (HART) project took priority. HART is a scheme initiated in the Midlands and involves teams of National Trust volunteers collecting information about the current condition of archaeological sites and monuments. This is run as a rolling programme, with approximately half of the features at Croome being inspected each year. A number of new features have been recorded, and a particularly important part of the project has been the identification of those that are at risk.

With generous funding from the Friends of Croome, the National Trust has been presented with a new resistance meter and a total station for the volunteers to use. The resistance meter, manufactured by R M Frobisher Ltd, allows geophysical surveys to be carried out much more quickly than was previously possible. This equipment passes a small electrical current through the ground, whose local variations in resistance reveal archaeological features. Unfortunately, the very dry conditions this year have produced high surface resistances which masked the effects of features lower in the soil. Nevertheless, a survey was completed on the west side of Croome Church after a short spell of rain in May. The aim of the work was to investigate the suggested presence of a carriage turning space. In the picture shown above , low resistance areas are light and high resistance areas are dark. Areas where measurements could not be carried out, including paths and the church, are shown in red. However, the results are inconclusive. Variable resistance around the tower and to the north of the nave is probably indicative of modern gravel pressed into the soil, though much older construction rubble could also be present below the surface. Further south, there is another area of disturbance, but thanks to Malcolm Walford's expert knowledge we found out that there is crushed tarmac beneath the turf here, brought from Defford Airfield and deposited in the 1960s to provide a car parking surface. The team are hoping for plenty of rain during the autumn so that further work can be carried out in the park.

The total station comprises a digital theodolite combined with a laser rangefinder. This enables geophysical survey grids to be laid accurately over long distances. This equipment has also been used in a survey of the remains of the 18th century boathouse, carried out during August. The surviving standing brickwork of the boathouse, at the south end of the lake, was noted as being at risk during a HART inspection. Recently, the Croome River level has been lowered to allow repairs to the weir and carriage splash to be made at its south end. With the boathouse dock now dry and exposed, it has been possible to record the details of the brick piers which supported the roof structure. Large quantities of stone, brick and slate have been recovered from demolition rubble, but less well understood are substantial wooden beams that lie across the northern entrance to the boathouse. One of these appears to be reused, as it bears clear signs of old joints, and it may therefore pre-date the construction of the boathouse in the 1760s, leaving us intrigued as to where else at Croome it could have come from.

Dennis Williams

BOMBER'S LAST FLIGHT REMEMBERED

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY of a fateful flight from a National Trust property near Worcester was marked on June 7th this year. A Halifax bomber took off from the once secret wartime airbase RAF Defford, now known as Croome, but would crash, in what would become the worst accident, in terms of casualties, in the history of British military test flying.

The Handley Page Halifax bomber, V9977, took off equipped with an experimental radar, code-named 'H2S' on June 7 1942. The aircraft was operated by a five-man RAF crew from the Telecommunications Flying Unit, based at Defford.

Their captain was Pilot Officer Douglas Berrington, an experienced pilot. Also on board were Geoffrey Hensby (a TRE scientist in the H2S radar team led by Dr Bernard Lovell), two RAF liaison officers attached to TRE, and three engineers from EMI at Hayes, including the distinguished electronics engineer Alan Blumlein.

The plane headed to the Bristol Channel to provide a demonstration of the H2S radar. Sadly, at 4.20pm, the bomber was spotted over the Forest of Dean trailing smoke from one of its four Rolls-Royce Merlin engines. Just two minutes later the starboard wing detached and the aircraft crashed in a field north of the River Wye, at Welsh Bicknor, Herefordshire. All eleven on board died instantly.

Investigations later found that a servicing error a few days previously had led to a catastrophic engine failure which resulted in a fire that spread to a fuel tank. A few days after the accident Dr Lovell was informed personally by the Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, that H2S radar development must retain its priority status. H2S went into action with Bomber Command in January 1943 and provided crews, for the first time, with a means of navigating accurately to targets as far afield as Berlin.

The sacrifices made in furtherance of radar test flying are commemorated in the stained glass of the 'Radar Memorial Window' in the chapel at Goodrich Castle, close to the crash site of Halifax V9977. This window was dedicated on 7 June 1992, the 50th anniversary of the crash. Defford has its own RAF memorial on the village Green. This was unveiled in 2002 by Sir Bernard Lovell OBE FRS, Emeritus Professor of Radio Astronomy at the University of Manchester.

Worcester Observer

Obituaries: *Cara Henderson* *15.8.2017 and* *Christine Adams* *17.8.2017*

I am sad to have to record the loss of two of our friends. Cara Henderson, whose husband, John, served as our Chairman, died peacefully at home on August 15th 'sitting in her wheelchair looking out to the Malverns having enjoyed her lunch'. She was a staunch supporter both of John and of Croome. Charming, cheerful and never complaining, she will be missed at future Croome events.

On August the 17th, in Worcester Royal Hospital, Christine Adams failed to recover from a series of complications following a fall at home where she had been looking after her mother. Christine lived on the edge of Defford, down Croome Road which, before the aerodrome, led to the Croome estate. She had been a volunteer at Croome since the National Trust's involvement. She was a member of the Friends of Croome since its early days and organised the Events Committee at its inception. That group produced events that spread the word about the Coventry family, their Lancelot Brown Park and the Georgian house, as well as the RAF station in WW2. The range of subjects provided splendid entertainment for our members as well as raising money to support projects at Croome. Christine also initiated the Festive Meal to enliven the dull days of January, as well as liaising with Chris and Karen Cronin so that, each year, the Friends were invited to go to see how the Walled Garden was progressing. Perhaps her most ambitious venture was the annual holiday she organised which let Friends visit other parts of the Country and experience the local National Trust properties. To achieve all this, Christine led a superb team of very competent ladies who ensured that outings, visits and events at Croome ran smoothly and efficiently and always with charm.

She did all this having retired from a career as a teacher of what was variously called Domestic Science/Home Economics/Food Technology. As well as Prince Henry's in Evesham, she taught at The Chantry School in Martley where one of her pupils was Nigel Slater, now a household name in the world of cookery writing.

I shall remember her smiling, welcoming face at many of the events I attended. As I got to know her, not only her competence but her cheerfulness, energy, friendliness and her wicked sense of humour became apparent. She will be sorely missed.

Tim Hickson

Photo: Jane Bradney

DOES MONEY TALK?

Jane Bradney, of Gloucestershire Gardens & Landscape Trust, explores the creation of Springhill's park and gardens

Broadway Tower was the most visible feature on the Springhill estate until its separation and sale in 1824 as a print workshop to the bibliophile Sir Thomas Phillipps. Constructed around 1800 for the 6th Earl of Coventry (1722-1809) to designs by James Wyatt (1746-1813) it is argued here the Tower was erected during a second phase of landscaping at Springhill which began around 1788. The first phase having started around 1756 under the direction of the Earl's younger brother John Bulkeley Coventry (1724-1801) and 'Capability' Brown (1716-83). However, the archival evidence for this, in common with all of the Springhill archive, is somewhat fragmentary. (Springhill is a private estate and not open to the public.)

The Earls of Coventry owned land known as Springhill at the beginning of the 18th century and, although not specifically identified in the 5th Earl's will, this property would pass to John Bulkeley Coventry - an unusual clause gifting the farms inherited by the Earl with his earldom, to his youngest son, along with £6,200 cash and some substantial bequests in outstanding rents and chattels. This legacy supports two conclusions. Firstly, that John, as a younger son, did have the independent means necessary to pay Brown £1,300 between 1756 and 1758 (as evidenced in Brown's bank account). And secondly, that Springhill was the site for that investment. Others have suggested Burgate House in Hampshire, but John would not inherit this property until 1764 and even then, it was reserved for the use of his benefactor's spinster sister during her lifetime. Furthermore, there is no known evidence to suggest Brown's hand on the ground at Burgate House.

Not only did John have the necessary funds to engage Brown, he also possessed the aesthetic wherewithal. Notwithstanding his brother was one of Brown's greatest patrons. John and his 'very old friend' George 'Gilly' James Williams (1719-1805) were both close to Horace Walpole (1717-97). Walpole was himself a public and vocal advocate of Brown's work and looked on John and Gilly Williams as members of his small and close 'out of town set'.

Somewhat unexpectedly Humphry Repton (1752-1818) emerges to muddy this developing picture of John as Brown's patron at Springhill. In his 1803 "Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening", Repton quotes a personal letter from the 6th Earl confirming Brown's role as architect of the house but casting its author - not John - in the role of patron. Now the 5th Earl had made provision in his will for his eldest son to buy out his younger brother's inheritance. The price was set at £13,000 plus 4% interest pa with the option to be exercised within twelve months of their father's death. Some evidence implies the option was not taken up. For example, Samuel Rudder's attribution of the elegant house at Springhill to John (1779) and Lord Torrington's admiration for the hare hunting to be had on 'Mr Coventry's Springhill estate' (1784). Could it be that by 1803, with Brown and John both long dead, the 6th Earl embellished his own fond memories of working with Brown at Croome and, the extent of his influence over his younger brother, leading him to claim Springhill for himself? Or did John make the payments to Brown on his brother's behalf after the buy-out was exercised? This seems the least likely for loans between the

brothers would be surely be kept private avoiding John making direct payments to Brown. It also contradicts Rudder's opinion of John as the creator of Springhill and Torrington's understanding of him as the owner.

Whichever option is correct, it is feasible the brothers reached an amicable agreement to trigger the buy-out of Springhill after the deadline envisaged in their father's will and after Rudder's and Torrington's visits. That is after 1784. The first evidence suggesting the 6th Earl had an interest in Springhill arose in 1788 when heads of agreement were drawn up for his purchase of the adjacent farm, Severn Wells. This signals the beginning of a campaign to expand the estate, with improvements following from around 1794 when Wyatt drew his plans for the Tower. The Tower occupied a portion of the Severn Wells farmland re-designated to the Springhill park.

In 1798 John Snape (1737-1816), a surveyor and water engineer previously active at Croome, invoiced the Earl for a plan of Springhill; an act that often followed a change in ownership or boundaries. (Frustratingly this 'plan' is lost, leaving the 1812 survey by JW Osborne as the first evidence of the layout.) In 1799 the 6th Earl expanded the estate northwards with the acquisition of Campden Ash Farm and Campden Hill where subsequent 'ornamental improvements' included the walling of clumps in 1801 and 1802. By 1808 Arthur Young could praise the "thriving plantations. Firs, beech, hornbeam, larch, ash, elm, [and] some oak". But maintaining Springhill's lake would prove the Earl's most costly and least successful intervention with large repair bills arriving in 1796 and 1807, while a third estimate prepared in 1803 may or may not have been implemented.

Yews and laurel predominate as the Circle Walk encloses the walled garden. Brown's plan for Croome included a similarly placed shrubbery walk.

Photo: Glenda Weil Aug 2017

Extract from john Osborne's volume of surveys for the Worcestershire and Gloucestershire lands of the Hon John Coventry, 1812. Springhill features: Inner lodge [a]. Hare Park at Plantation no. 6 [b]. Drive running east from the perimeter belt [c] crosses Seven Wells land towards Broadway Tower. Walled kitchen garden [d]. Ha-ha [e]. Rock pools [f]. The dotted red line bisecting the lake [g] marks the county boundary with Gloucestershire to its south and Worcestershire to its north.

Courtesy Croome Estate Trustees.

All these developments took place long after Brown's death in 1783 and raised only one suggestion that an alternative professional improver may have been involved. This was recorded by Snape as he finalised his repair of the lake in 1796 and wrote to the Earl of his intention 'to secure it in the state left by Mr Aimes' - possibly a reference to William Emes (1729/30-1803) who worked at nearby Northwick Park in 1778, had a reputation for managing water and has been suggested as a pupil of Brown.

The 6th Earl was a knowledgeable and motivated landscape improver and horticulturalist in his own right, joining the [Royal] Horticultural Society in 1805 just a few weeks after its formation and being credited with the introduction of foreign species such as Chimonanthus Praecox (wintersweet) and Koelreuteria paniculata (Golden Rain Tree also known as Pride of India.) He was therefore well able to direct Springhill's new planting, and had sufficient experience of the mercurial nature of water at Croome to appreciate the value of an experienced hydrologist. If planting the expanded estate was the broad extent of the Earl's work at Springhill - that is, the second phase in the development of its landscape - what evidence exists to suggest other improvements had taken place before 1788 under John's suggested ownership?

John's payment of £1,300 to Brown would fund much more than the design of the neat Palladian villa recorded by Repton. Osborne's survey (see left) showed a miniature park and pleasure grounds encircling the house independent of the 6th Earl's expansion described above. In brief, a perimeter belt encircled a miniature park or 'lawn', which in turn surrounded a sheltered circular walk through trees and shrubs at the centre of which sat an irregular walled kitchen garden. A string of three small pools decorated the western boundary of the lawn with the troublesome but undated lake (discussed above) sitting on its south-western boundary. A serpentine walk connected the water features to an arm of planting extending out from the south-east corner of the lawn. Some original planting survives including the evergreen side-screens to the house sketched by Osborne in a cartouche for his survey. It is suggested here that this planting, and the water features as well as the house are the likely extent of Brown's work for John.

This research into Springhill was inspired by last year's national tercentenary celebrations of Brown's birth. This did much to deepen our understanding of the range and variety of Brown's commissions across the country. For example, the previously often denied contribution of walled gardens to Brown's landscapes (David Brown and Tom Williamson; Steffie Shields and John Phibbs); the absence of a template by which to identify a Brownian walled garden beyond the appropriate use of topography and orientation; a pleasing appearance (Susan Campbell); and a pattern for creating water, out of view of the house and at the park boundary (John Phibbs).

These wider findings support but can never confirm the case that the Springhill landscape was begun by Brown for John Bulkeley Coventry, but if 'money talks' the payment of £1,300 is a strong voice in support of it.

Jane Bradney

Some recently published titles on Brown:
David Brown and Tom Williamson, Lancelot Brown and the Capability Men; Landscape Revolution in Eighteenth Century England, 2016
John Phibbs, Place-making, the Art of Capability Brown, 2017
Steffie Shields, Moving Heaven and Earth; Capability Brown's Gift of Landscape, 2016

GHOSTS FROM THE PAST

The Long Gallery looking south

The Chimneypiece in the Long Gallery

Enter the Long Gallery at Croome today and what do you see? Ghosts from the past in many forms. The ten niches, specifically created by John Hobcraft to display the 6th Earl of Coventry's collection of classical statues to rival those at Kedleston, Holkham and many other grand houses now stand empty. The statues were sold at auction in the early 1960s – 'Flora' and 'Isis' are now on display in the Los Angeles Museum of Art in America and 'Mercury' is at Kenwood House, London. The whereabouts of the others remains unknown.

A representation of the statues originally in the Long Gallery

The magnificent Joseph Wilton chimneypiece remains proudly 'centre-stage' but where is its accompanying fire basket and fender designed by Robert Adam in 1765 and produced by Hartley & Cooper? It is visible in photographs of the room in 1915 included in a Country Life article, but sadly no longer survives. The blank space above the chimneypiece was once the home of the neo-classical grisaille painting which would have complemented the other grisaille panels on the west wall. This now resides in the Lansdowne Room at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York who also acquired the richly carved stone coloured picture frame produced by Sefferin Alkin.

The space would have been beautifully balanced by marble topped pier tables and huge mirrors either side of the bay window. One pair now resides in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the other in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Pier mirror and table in the Long Gallery

A reflection of the statute of 'Mercury' can be seen in the mirror. The bust on the table is still in the Croome collection. The grisaille panels which complemented the remaining larger ones have clearly been filled in at some later period. Some of the furniture designed by Robert Adam for this space has thankfully recently returned to Croome and although no-longer upholstered in its original blue Moroccan leather will perhaps one day return to their rightful place in this magnificent setting.

Robert Adam and indeed the 6th Earl would be sad to see how much of their original design has been lost but thankfully the main feature of Adam's masterpiece remains in the form of the intricate coffered ceiling, and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown would surely be proud of the magnificent views of the parkland from each of the Long Gallery windows.

Alan Little

VISCOUNT DEERHURST'S HUNTING ACCIDENT

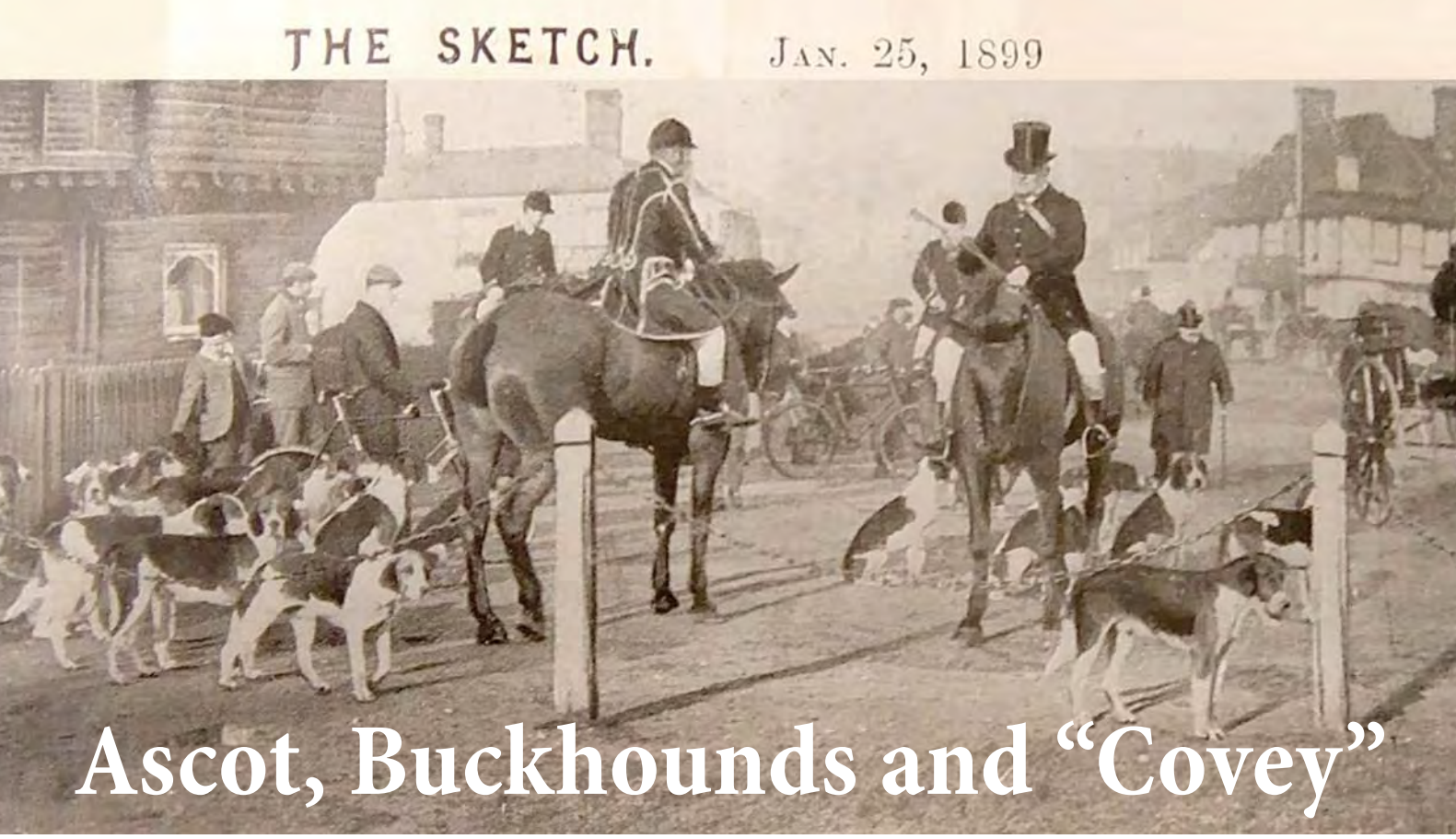
George Coventry, Viscount Deerhurst and the future 7th Earl of Coventry, suffered a catastrophic hunting accident in 1780 when still a young man in his early twenties, resulting in the loss of his sight. He is mentioned frequently in our latest book "An Infamous Mistress: The Life, Loves and Family of the celebrated Grace Dalrymple Elliott" and we thought our readers might be interested in this contemporary newspaper account of his tragic accident, given in full, as a little extra information.

Joanne Major

"Lord Viscount Deerhurst was alive when the last express arrived from his surgeons, but lay in such a dreadful state, that his dissolution might almost be wished for by his friends. The following is the real state of the fatal accident. His Lordship was hunting on Monday last, with his Grace the Duke of Beaufort, near Wooton in Oxfordshire; while the hounds were running, he and Sir Clement Cotterell came up to a very aukward [sic] five barr'd gate at the same time.

"Come, Cotterell," says his Lordship, "don't stand here, let's get over!" - Sir Clement replied, "I would not take it for all the money in Europe." - "No!" replied his Lordship, "then I do for twenty pounds!" - and at this instant he pushed his horse at it, who entangled his feet between the upper bar, on which Lord Deerhurst clapped his spurs to his side, which only served to irritate the horse, without disengaging him, so that they both fell over the gate and the horse upon him, by which Lord D's right eye was beat into his head, his nose broke and laid flat to his face and his Lordship so much mangled in other respects, that he was taken up the most terrible spectacle that ever was beheld. As soon as he came to his senses, he requested of his friends that they would put him to death; there was but little probability of his surviving it when the last accounts came away.

Lord Coventry, his father, went down yesterday to him; they had not seen each other since Lord Deerhurst's marriage with the younger sister of Earl Northington."



Ascot, Buckhounds and "Covey"

The year is 1711, Queen Anne is out riding near Windsor and comes across an open area of heath at East Cote that she declares looks "ideal for horses to gallop at full stretch". And so, the idea for a horse race was born. A horse race that would become what we know today as Royal Ascot.

Although founded by Queen Anne and on Crown property, administration was handled on behalf of the Crown by a representative appointed by the monarch. It was decided that the most appropriate person for the job was the Master of the Royal Buckhounds, an officer in the Master of the Horse's department of the Royal household whose role was to oversee the Buckhound hunting pack. A buckhound is smaller than a staghound and is used for hunting smaller breeds of deer particularly fallow deer.

Initially, it was a hereditary position associated with the Manor of Little Weldon in Northamptonshire and held by the Brocas family until 1633, when they sold the title to the Watson family. Henry VIII created the Privy Buckhounds, a pack that would be overseen by an individual appointed by the King rather than being a hereditary title, and in 1528 the Master of the King's Buckhounds was George Boleyn. In 1706, the packs were merged forming the Royal Buckhounds and the hereditary office ceased.

The Master not only oversaw the hunting pack but also became His or Her Majesty's Representative at Ascot. The meeting as we know it today started to take shape in 1807 with the introduction of the Gold Cup. In 1825, King George IV established the first Royal Procession, which still occurs on each day of the meeting, and makes its way from the Golden Gates, along the racecourse and into the Parade Ring. As the Royal representative at Ascot, the Master was responsible for planning the event, running the course, admission to the Royal Enclosure and leading the Royal Procession down the course.

The 9th Earl of Coventry, known as "Covey" to his friends, was Master of Queen's Buckhounds from 1886 to 1891 and again from 1895 to 1900. A newspaper clipping in one of Lady Blanche Coventry's scrapbooks, held in The Hive in Worcester, puts most of the success of Cup Day down to him.

LORD COVENTRY AT ASCOT.—The *Daily Telegraph*, describing the Royal procession at Ascot, says :—"The procession was headed, according to ancient custom, by Lord Coventry, the master of the Buckhounds, wearing 'the couples,' and the Head Huntsman of England looked as stately as a General leading an army to victory as he rode down the course. Indeed, much of the distinct social success of the Cup Day is fairly due to Lord Coventry, in whose official charge the meeting is placed. 'The Master's' kindly courtesy to everybody was most marked, and even when his official duties were over, and after Cactus's win in the last race he had safely steered 'the Royalties' homeward, he did not forget the rest of the visitors to the Heath, but returned to his post to 'speed the parting guest' with a good-bye as cordial as was his welcome."

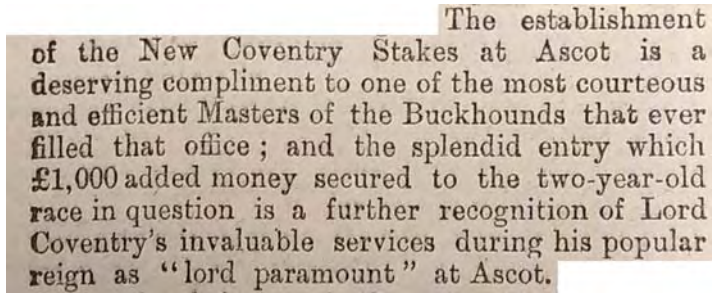
Clipping in one of Lady Blanche Coventry's Scrapbooks

The Master is also responsible for the Ascot Cup design. A letter from Garrard's about the design for the Ascot Cup can be found in one of Lady Blanche Coventry's

scrapbooks, together with the design for the 1891 cup. Dated 1888 the letter reads:

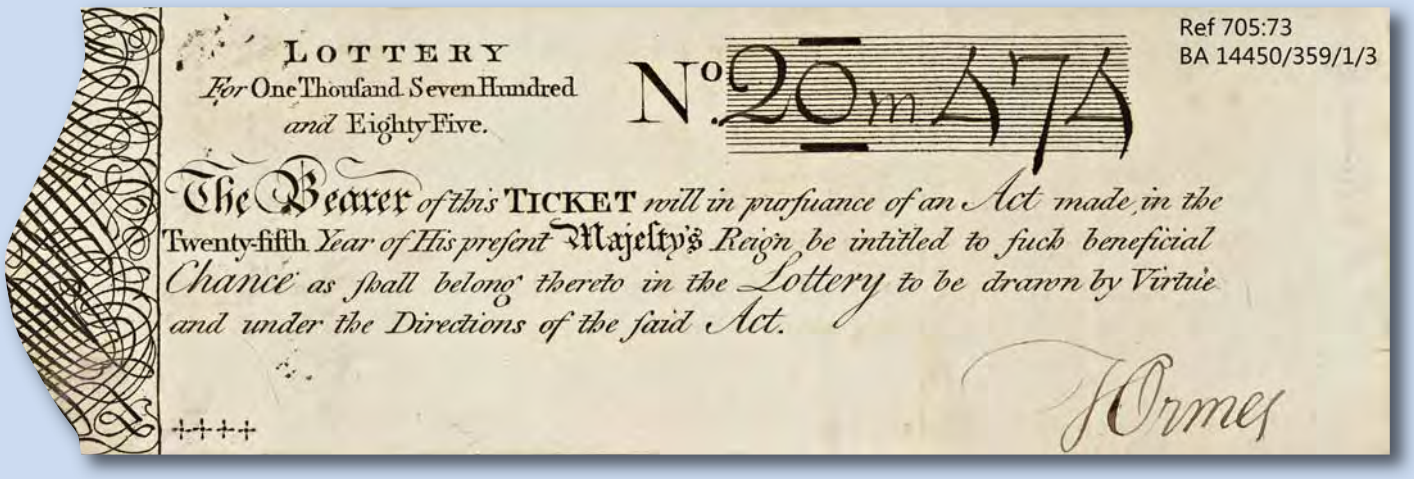
"Your Lordship will doubtless be glad to know, that we have had opportunities this week of submitting the Ascot Cups both to Her Majesty The Queen and to HRH The Prince of Wales. Her Majesty was graciously pleased to express her entire satisfaction with both cups, but especially with the Gold Cup, the design of which she was so pleased with that we are commissioned to make one somewhat similar for Her Majesty to give as a present."

The letter then goes on to say that they are making up a model of the proposed design discussed with the Earl for the next year's cup for his lordship's approval. In 1890, the Coventry Stakes was established and remains the second race of the meeting after the Queen Anne Stakes. As can be seen from the clipping (top right) again taken from Lady Blanche's scrapbook, the money for the race was £1,000. In 2017 the prize fund for the Coventry Stakes was £150,000


The establishment of the New Coventry Stakes at Ascot is a deserving compliment to one of the most courteous and efficient Masters of the Buckhounds that ever filled that office; and the splendid entry which £1,000 added money secured to the two-year-old race in question is a further recognition of Lord Coventry's invaluable services during his popular reign as "lord paramount" at Ascot.

In 1891, society was rocked by the Royal Baccarat Scandal, Queen Victoria was not amused and Lord Coventry resigned from his post as Master of the Royal Buckhounds. But in 1895, Queen Victoria asked him to return to his former position as Master, which he then held until 1900, when ill health forced him to resign once more. By then opinions on deer hunting were changing with many newspapers calling for an end to "the cruelty of tame stag hunting". The Royal Buckhounds was abolished by the Civil List Act 1901 and the position of Royal representative at Ascot was passed to Lord Churchill and later to the Ascot Authority. In 2002, Ascot Racecourse Ltd was incorporated and is now the organisation responsible for running the racecourse.

Nicola Hewitt


LOTTERY
For One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty-Five.
No. 20,474
The Bearer of this TICKET will in pursuance of an Act made in the Twenty-fifth Year of His present Majesty's Reign be intitled to such beneficial Chance as shall belong thereto in the Lottery to be drawn by Virtue and under the Directions of the said Act.
J Ormes

Ref 705:73
BA 14450/359/1/3

DID THE 6TH EARL OF COVENTRY WIN THE LOTTERY?

Recently, when looking through the archives Croome held at The Hive, Worcester, the National Trust found a lottery ticket dated 1785. Whether it was the 6th Earl himself or a member of the family who bought the ticket, they do not know or whether they were lucky winners. Was this ticket bought in 1785, a winning ticket?

The National lottery as we know it today is not something new. In fact the first lottery was in 1569 in the reign of Elizabeth I but it was not till 1694 that Parliament set up State lotteries and over the next 130 years there were 126 lotteries. Today lotteries are used to raise money for good causes but in the 18th century the money raised was often spent on fighting overseas conflicts. It is believed that 40% of the cost of trying to defend the American colonies and 25% of the cost of fighting in the Napoleon wars was funded from money raised by lotteries.

State lotteries came to an end in the 1820's partly due to evangelical opposition but in the main the poor way they were handled by the contractors who operated them on behalf of the Treasury who was often not able to account for the money raised by the contractors.

Even if the Earl of Coventry did not win in 1785 he would pleased to know that Croome has benefited from the lottery as we know it today. A grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund in recent years has enabled the National Trust to carry out vital restoration work to the Court.

Hugh Worsfold

The Magic of Walled Gardens

An Interview with Karen Cronin in The Walled Gardens at Croome Court

Over the past 17 years the Cronins have been lovingly bringing Britain's largest Georgian Walled Gardens back to life as well as restoring glasshouses, the Gardener's cottage, vineries, the 'Capability' Brown dipping pond and much more. They have also carved a new layout, adding paths, a rose garden planted with over 400 scented David Austin roses and espalier fruit trees, and are now starting work on a new Mediterranean garden which will feature two enormous olive trees believed to be more than 100 years old. Walled gardens are magical and enchanting. They entice you with the mystery of what's behind the garden door; the pathways lead you into the unknown; there are secrets to be told as you explore; there are peaceful spots to take solace and sooth the mind; the intoxicating smells arouse your senses and not forgetting the kitchen gardens main purpose, to grow and supply an abundance of produce. Karen Cronin tells us more.

"The walls are very important in contributing to the gardens' microclimate as is the aspect of the garden. Walled gardens are usually built with a slightly off centre south, east axis. This allows the warmest south facing wall to get as much sunlight as possible. The walls store the heat from the sun during the day and is released throughout the night. Effectively, they work a bit like a night storage heater. The walls also give protection from the weather and depending on their orientation either reflect heat or cast shade onto the borders. Our walled garden also has an extra layer of protection as it has a largely evergreen woodland planted around the outside perimeter, giving extra protection from the wind. Outside the south facing wall there is a Yew wooded area, these trees are also very good at taking moisture from the air which helps to lessen the likely hood of frost in the gardens.

The heated dividing wall inside the gardens is known as a 'hot wall' and is an incredible piece of engineering. Heated walls were developed in the early 1800s when there was a tax on glass. Fires would be lit in the furnaces along the wall, the hot air and the smoke would rise up the wall, heating it and protecting frost from tender plants and trees. Traditionally, fruit trees were planted along the south side of the wall with a border to enable earlier cropping and probably some later cropping too.

With the help of the heat from the walls and the aspect of the garden we are successfully growing Echium which is more of a Mediterranean type plant. We have great success with growing tomatoes outside, compared to other gardens that might struggle with temperature drops. We also attempted to grow sweet potatoes outside for the first time last year which was a great success. Usually you would require a greenhouse to be able to grow them in the UK. Plants outside often come into flower and vegetables mature slightly earlier in the season than you might expect, although usually just a little bit later than things that have been grown commercially within a greenhouse.

One of the things I particularly like about heritage varieties of fruit and vegetables is that they taste better. Over recent years everything has been grown to conform to the consumer's expectations of how their food should look, wanting everything to be the same shape and size and to look perfect. 'Real' vegetables are all different shapes; arguably the uglier the fruit or vegetable, the better it tastes. I believe we've lost a lot of flavour and character from our fruit and vegetables by trying to mould them into something else.

Making the gardens even more productive is an ongoing process for us as part of the restoration project. At the moment we are installing a computerised state of the art irrigation system. The sensors will detect the moisture levels within the soil and will be programmed to water when the gardens need it. We are also planning on creating a Mediterranean garden over the coming Winter months. We're hoping for it to be complete by the time we reopen the gardens to visitors again next year. The plan is to have Mediterranean plants and flowers such as Geraniums, as well as olive trees, lemon trees and orange trees. We'll be growing more tomatoes, aubergines, basil plants and general things you would expect to find growing more in a Mediterranean climate than in the UK."

Victoria Cronin