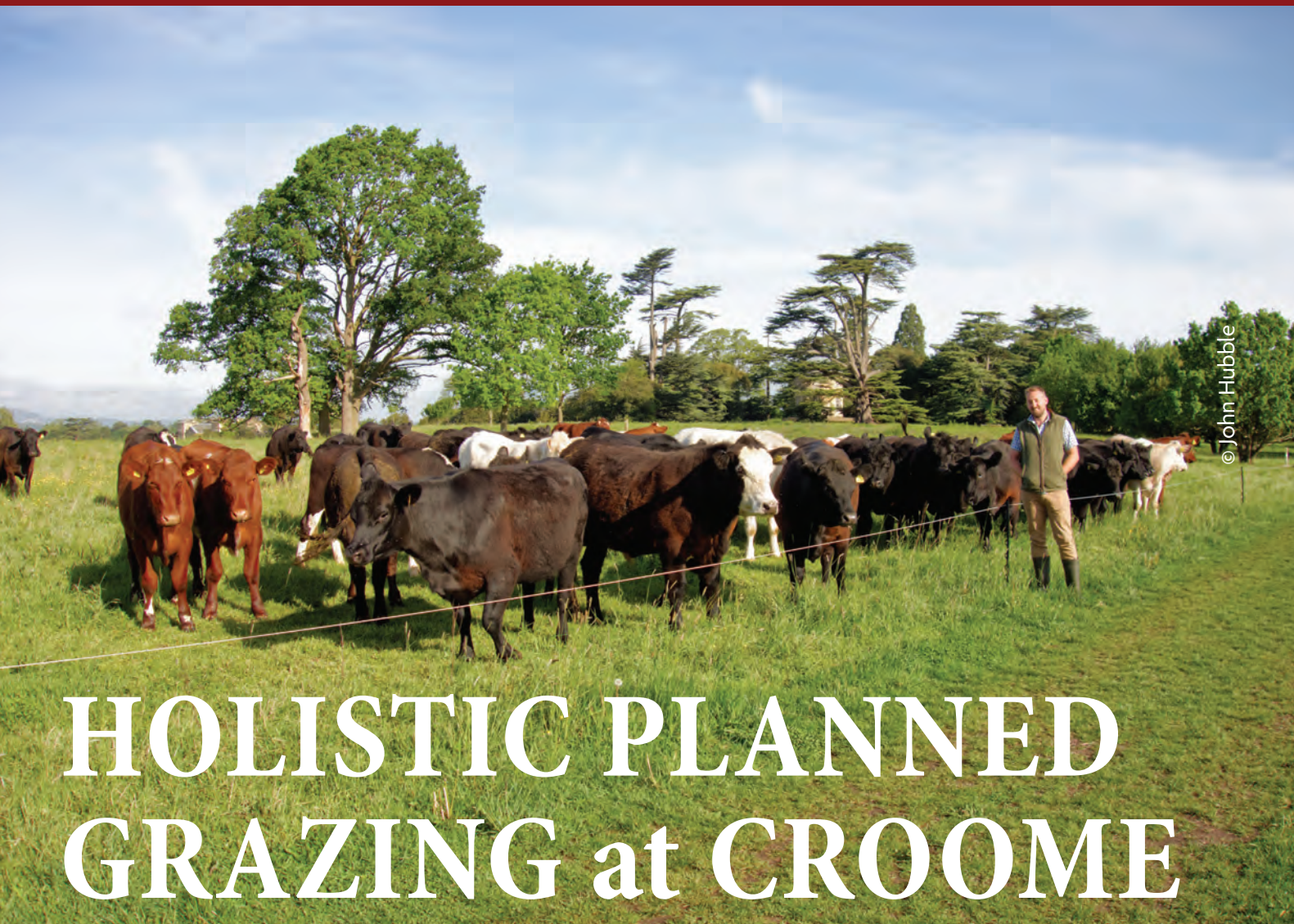


THE FRIENDS OF CROOME



NEWSLETTER

Spring 2020 Issue 32



©John Hubble

HOLISTIC PLANNED GRAZING at CROOME

by Katherine Alker and Rob Havard

Rob Havard has been a tenant at Croome for almost 5 years. He keeps cattle on South Park and takes hay from Church Hill and Horse Close. He comes from a farming family who have been farming in Worcestershire since 1919 when his great-grandfather moved from south Wales. They have always farmed sheep and cattle and have been in Environmental Stewardship schemes for well over 10 years now and have recently converted to organic and certified 'Pasture for Life' beef and lamb. Their main operation is fattening grass-fed organic Aberdeen Angus beef cattle.

Rob uses Holistic Planned Grazing to manage the livestock for the benefit of the cattle, the environment and the people involved. The beef is sold through the usual organic supply chain and he also sells the Aberdeen Angus through a supermarket scheme for Aberdeen Angus beef. Holistic Planned Grazing makes the most of diverse native pastures; the livestock thrive on the pasture diversity that provides all their needs and allows Rob to fatten all stock from grass and natural herbs alone. The cattle are kept in compartments surrounded by an electric fence. He moves cattle every 2 days (but it might be twice a day in really

wet weather), and they always have a back fence. The cattle will graze every bit of South Park several times a year, but as they are only on a small patch at a time, the grasses and herbs get a good time to rest and re-grow before being grazed again.

The cattle are out on the park all year round – that’s some achievement on the heavy clay this winter! Rob’s had permission to roll out some hay bales across the park. The bales are from Church Hill and Horse Close which both have a wider variety of wild flowers than South Park at present. The bales provide some extra feed during the winter and also encourage a wider mix of herbs and flowers as the seeds pass through the cattle back onto the ground.

Using grazing techniques that are based on recreating natural processes allows Rob to grow fitter cattle for less money while leaving the land in a better state than when he found it. Populations of wild birds have been increasing

year on year, the wildflowers are going from strength to strength, and more are being introduced every year via the bales. We now see pyramidal and common spotted orchids in summer, a wide variety of butterflies, and birds and bats are benefitting from the range of insects. There’s also a kestrel which regularly visits to hunt the small mammals which nest across the park.

Rob concludes: “We are really pleased with how the holistic management of the cattle is working on South Park; we’re getting healthy pasture that looks good from the court and other viewpoints in the park. We see the wider benefits of the grazing too; using Holistic Management allows us to ensure that the land, environment, people and our bottom line all benefit from our farming, and that is what gets us up in the morning. We aim to farm in Nature’s image; to keep the environment the way it was meant to be kept.”

Katherine Alker and Rob Havard

THE METEOR RETURNS TO DEFFORD

by the late Bob Shaw

There are very few surviving aircraft which flew at Defford Airfield. In 2015, Dennis Williams pointed out that Meteor WD686 was still in existence and complete but deteriorating and at risk. It was owned by the Imperial War Museum (IWM) at Duxford but loaned to a private museum, the Muckleburgh Military Vehicle Collection at Weybourne on the Norfolk coast.

Dennis obtained a comprehensive technical condition report from IWM. He visited the site in Norfolk and confirmed the basically sound but deteriorating condition of the Meteor. It appeared the owners no longer wanted the Meteor, so had chosen to park it on a location at the edge of their land, close to the sea and exposed to the elements. We made the decision to secure the Meteor for display at Crome on the former RAF Station Sick Quarters site, adjacent to the RAF Defford Museum. We negotiated with IWM to release the Meteor to the Defford Airfield Heritage Group.

£120,000 funding was raised which met the budget target for work to save, restore and display the Meteor. Severn Waste Services offered £50,000 through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme. Lord Flight suggested Vernon Hill, the Chairman of Metrobank be approached. Mr Hill donated £50,000 of his own money and as a personal gift to DAHG was eligible for Gift Aid, which increased the value of the donation to £62,500. Boscombe Down Aviation Collection (BDAC) were approached to do the restoration work in



© Bob Shaw

their workshops at Old Sarum. BDAC had an excellent reputation for restoring post-war military aircraft. Seeing the completely restored Meteor now confirms BDAC have done an outstanding job.

Two lorries arrived at Croome carrying the main elements of the Meteor. Once the centre section had been unloaded, re-assembly was soon under way.

With the forward fuselage and nosewheel in place, the aircraft was stable on its undercarriage and the rear fuselage could be fitted. The aircraft was then moved into position before the mainplanes were attached.



© Bob Shaw



© Bob Shaw

Armstrong Whitworth Meteor WD686, restored and complete, now stands fully assembled in the Croome car park adjacent to the Ambulance Garage. This aircraft is so important historically to Croome because it is thought to be the last aircraft to have flown out of RRE Defford, on 28 March 1958.

The aircraft is painted in its original dark green and medium sea grey camouflage scheme. The pilot's front cockpit has had all instruments and controls refitted, while the navigator's rear cockpit now contains replica displays for the AI radar, Gee navigation system and Radio Compass. A fence similar to the wooden one that runs between the Ambulance Garage and the Museum has been constructed around the aircraft. BDAC have supplied a platform which will enable people and especially children to look into and perhaps even (under supervision) get into the cockpit.

All navigation and cockpit lamps work and are LED-powered so the electrical load is minimal. A complete Meteor jet aircraft positioned in the Croome car park and all lit up is, undoubtedly, a heart-lifting sight. The Meteor is due to stay at Croome until the end of June 2020.

Bob Shaw

PERSHORE'S WAR MEMORIAL: BEAUTIFUL MONUMENT UNVEILED BY LORD COVENTRY

(Birmingham Post, 2 November 1921)



One of the most beautiful and certainly the most artistically conceived memorial to fallen soldiers yet met within the Midlands is an extensive experience was unveiled in the Abbey Church, Pershore yesterday by the Lord Lieutenant of the County (the Earl of Coventry). The Sculptor, Mr Alfred Drury R.A. has moulded a bronze figure of Immortality on a Portland stone pedestal which bears the names of the local men who laid down their lives for their country. The winged figure of Immortality is represented as having alighted on the terrestrial sphere and is holding in her right hand the olive branch of peace, while with her left hand she is bestowing "The crown of everlasting life; the crown of glory that fadeth not away". The whole work has been cast by the Cira Penduta process which was employed by Benvenuto Cellini in his famous statue of Perseus. This process ensures an absolute facsimile in bronze of the wax as it left the sculptor's hands. The winged figure, with flying drapery, gave to the artist an opportunity of producing a rhythmic composition and he has taken excellent advantage of it, at the same time contriving to keep his work in harmony with its religious surroundings.

The setting of the memorial is no less remarkable than the work itself. The history of Pershore Abbey has been traced back to the seventh century. The existing Abbey Church has a south transept dating from the 15th century and it is in this spot in company with relics 700 years old, that the memorial has been placed. Its construction is such that in course of time it will blend well with its ancient surroundings.

Under the finely decorated stone roof of the old church a large congregation assembled yesterday to do honour to the gallant company who marched away from their picturesque native town to defend the cause of freedom and never returned. Relatives of the fallen men, bearing wreaths, were conspicuous and a goodly number of ex-Service men in uniform were also present. A procession headed by crucifer and acolytes immediately behind whom walked youths in khaki, carrying magnificent wreaths and the choir and energy with various prominent men in the county including Lieut. Col A H Hudson, Mr J Willis Bund, Mr W J Gresson, Dr Emerson, Mr W J Gardner and Mr J Faulker marched from St Andrew's Church to the place of unveiling. At the oaken lych gate of the Abbey churchyard they met the Lord-Lieutenant who there joined them.

The service in the church was of an impressive and affecting description. The Vicar of Pershore (the Rev Canon L S Robinson) and the Rev J Dolphin were amongst those who officiated. At a certain point a procession was formed to the memorial which the Lord-Lieutenant unveiled, revealing the names inscribed on the panels of the pedestal which also bore a representation of a fallen soldier and the words "To the immortal dead 1914-1918. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a Crown of Life"

Addressing the congregation, Lord Coventry reminded them that the men of South Worcestershire gave a hearty response to the call of King and Country. At the time of the armistice, the number of Pershore men serving was 276 and 89 were killed in action. Twelve died while serving and 27 were discharged, the total number being 404. That was a record of which Pershore might be proud.

When the procession had returned, General Sir Francis Davies (Scottish Command) gave an address from the chancel steps. He said he would venture to say such an occasion as that had never come about before in the long history of the ancient Abbey and let them hope that the need for it would never occur again. Every one of the men who laid down their lives had brought honour to his country and to the town in which he lived. He asked those present not to think, when they left the church, that they had done all there was to be done in honour of those men. He would rather ask them to think that what they were doing that day was just the beginning of one long act of reverent remembrance and recognition of what those men had done. Let it not be said in years to come that it had been forgotten. He asked them to bring their children up in understanding of what the memorial meant.

The names of the fallen were read out and towards the close of the service the "Last Post" was sounded. An offertory was taken for the memorial fund, the chairman and committee of which are faced with a deficit of about £200.

HMS CROOME

by Chris Wynne-Davies



HMS Croome was a Hunt class Type-II destroyer of the Royal Navy. She served during the Second World War spending much of the time in the Mediterranean, operating from the ports at Gibraltar and Alexandria.

On 8 September 1941 Croome was escorting Convoy OG 75, en-route from Liverpool to Gibraltar. While conducting a forward sweep the Croome spotted the Italian submarine Baracca on the surface at 8,500 yards. The Baracca dived as the Croome turned towards her at full speed. After two depth-charge attacks, the Baracca surfaced astern of the Croome, which opened fire with all guns as she went about. The Italian submarine returned fire with her main gun, but the shots went wide, the gun deck was then cleared by the Croome's Lewis guns. As the Croome approached, the Italians began to abandon ship. The Croome rammed the Baracca just abaft the conning tower. The submarine sank immediately by the stern and exploded underwater. After picking up survivors, Croome headed for Gibraltar while the crew shored-up the flooded forward compartments, damaged by the ramming. A DSO, a DSC and two DSMs were awarded for the action. 28 Italians were killed.

On 2 February 1942 Croome, the destroyers HMS Westcott and HMS Exmoor and a corvette were sent to escort the damaged troopship Llangibby Castle which had taken refuge from attack by two U-boats in the neutral port of Horta, in the Azores. They made contact with U-581 by asdic in the channel outside Horta and attacked her with depth charges. The U-boat was eventually forced to surface, where she was fired on by Croome and

Westcott. Westcott rammed the U-581 and the whole crew were able to escape before she sank. However, Westcott ran back through the survivors in the water and dropped another depth charge, resulting in four deaths and a number of casualties.

Between 12 and 16 June 1942 Croome was one of 27 destroyers and eight cruisers escorting 11 merchant ships to re-supply Malta from Alexandria. Codenamed Operation Vigorous, the convoy was forced to turn back because of a sortie by the Italian battle-fleet from Taranto and heavy air attacks.

On 4 August 1942 Croome, HMS Sikh, HMS Tetcott and HMS Zulu attacked U-372, which had been spotted by an RAF Wellington bomber near Haifa, Palestine. The U-boat was forced to the surface with depth charges and sank shortly afterwards. The whole crew was captured. Between 13 and 14 September 1942, Croome, HMS Hursley, Zulu and Sikh took part in a night bombardment of Tobruk. Zulu was hit by shore batteries and then bombed by enemy aircraft. Croome went alongside to take off survivors and Zulu was taken in tow by Hursley, but capsized and sank 100 miles from Alexandria after further air attack.

HMS Croome survived the war and was almost sold to the Royal Danish Navy in 1954, but other sister-ships were bought instead. She was finally scrapped, being broken up at Briton Ferry, South Wales on 13 August 1957.

Chris Wynne-Davies

ALLAN RAMSAY

(1713-1784)

by *Joanne Major and Sarah Murden*

Allan Ramsay's skill as a portrait painter is well known and his work included several important portraits of members of the Coventry family. Here, we study his family and the lives – and tragic deaths – of his children.

Born in Edinburgh in 1713, Ramsay was the eldest son of the poet and bookseller, Allan Ramsay and his wife Christian Ross. Ramsay's talent was evident from an early age. His father said he could paint 'like a Raphael' and raised money so Allan could study in Italy.

By 1738, Ramsay was living in England where, a year later, he married Anne Bayne, a fellow Scot. Around the time of their wedding, in London, Ramsay painted Anne's portrait. The couple had two sons (Allan and Bayne) who died young. Anne's third pregnancy was her last. She died in childbirth early in 1743 but her daughter, named Anne for her mother, survived for at least nine years.



Anne Bayne, wife of Allan c.1739
(National Galleries of Scotland)



Allan Ramsay, self-portrait
(National Galleries of Scotland)

The widowed Ramsay spent many of the following years in Scotland. His fame grew, if not his wealth, which was a problem as he was supporting his young daughter and his two spinster sisters. Certainly, Sir Alexander Lindsay of Evelick didn't consider Ramsay a suitable husband for his 26-year-old daughter, Margaret, whom Ramsay was teaching to draw. Denied her father's approval, in early 1752 Margaret eloped with Ramsay. They married in Edinburgh.

Later that year – in London and probably well before term - Margaret gave birth to twins. In an attempt to placate her father, the infants were named Alexander and Amelia after Margaret's parents. The twins were baptised on 17 October 1752 at St Paul's, Covent Garden and sadly buried there the very next day. By the end of 1753, the Ramsays were back in Scotland. In February 1754, another son was born, again named Alexander, who was left behind in Scotland when his parents travelled to Italy the following year.

While in Rome, Margaret gave birth to a daughter, Amelia, but sadly, back in Edinburgh, little Alexander died. By the end of 1758, Ramsay brought Margaret and Amelia back to London, just in time for the arrival of another daughter, Elisabeth. Two more daughters, Frances and Grizelda, followed in quick succession. Sadly, all died in infancy. Grizelda lived for less than six weeks. Elisabeth died almost a year later (aged 3). Just under three years later, her sister Frances also died. A ray of light amongst the darkness was the birth of Charlotte in 1765, the youngest daughter of the family. Charlotte was strong and healthy and thrived. The final child was a son, John, born in 1768.



**Margaret Lindsay, wife of Allan Ramsay c.1758
(National Galleries of Scotland)**

Allan Ramsay suffered ill health during his later years and spent some time abroad. By the mid-1780s, both he and his wife, Margaret had died but, what of their three surviving children? All three shared a love of adventure and travelled the globe. Amelia married an army officer, Archibald Campbell (later General Sir Archibald Campbell).

When Campbell was posted to Jamaica (he was the island's governor 1781-1784), Amelia and her sister, Charlotte sailed to be with him. They were aboard the *British Queen*, in a convoy of 63 ships bound for the West Indies, but there was scant safety in numbers for it was a perilous time. Spain had sided with the US in the American Revolutionary War and declared war on Britain. At Cape St Vincent in the Algarve, the convoy of British ships met a combined Spanish and French fleet and it was disastrous. All but eight of the British vessels were captured. Amelia and Charlotte were incredibly lucky. Their ship, the *British Queen*, was one of the eight which evaded capture. They managed to reach Jamaica unscathed.

Seven years later, Charlotte married Lieutenant Colonel Henry Malcolm, Adjutant-General to the East-India Company's troops on the coast of Coromandel, South East India. Meanwhile, John Ramsay joined the army and made his way to India. In 1789, a ship returning to England from Madras via St Helena listed all three Ramsay siblings on board. Amelia and Sir Archibald Campbell had no children. However, she brought up two children as her own, a boy who shared her husband's name, Archibald Campbell and a girl born c.1784 named Mary Macleod. Amelia Campbell died in 1813 and was buried in Westminster Abbey alongside her husband (who had died 23 years earlier). Their grave is next to that of George Frederic Handel.



**Amelia Ramsay, daughter of Allan Ramsay c.1776
(National Galleries of Scotland)**

After Amelia's death, Mary Macleod lived with Charlotte who became as close to the girl as her sister had been. Both Amelia and Charlotte left the bulk of their wealth to Mary (Charlotte, in her will, declared that she viewed Mary as a daughter). Charlotte died in 1837. John Ramsay, who was promoted to the rank of general, lived until 1845; he died in Geneva.



**George William 6th Earl of Coventry by Allan Ramsay
(Croome Heritage Trust)**



©S.Haslam

Pediment relief by Sefferin Alken

TEMPLE GREENHOUSE

by Mark Grimshaw

The Temple Greenhouse was Robert Adam's first garden building at Croome and is a Roman Doric building constructed of Bath stone with a central hexastyle (six columned) portico with pediment not unlike the front of the Pantheon in Rome. Adam charged £15 for the design in the early 1760s which included designs for garden furniture, such as benches with Lion's paw feet, to go inside. The large windows seen today are replacements for the lost originals and they are designed to be removable so they can be taken out in the summer months.

The building housed some the 6th Earl of Coventry's collection of exotic plants such as orange and lemon trees, birds of paradise plants, cacti, canna lilies and oleanders.

Adam included symbolic sculptures to complement the vegetation that once filled the greenhouse: overflowing cornucopias and a brimming basket of flowers. These vigorous reliefs carved by Sefferin Alken are full of life, with a variety of blooms turned this way and that, and leaves twisting, as it were, in the breeze.



The Temple Greenhouse in 2005 after initial restoration



Temple Greenhouse circa early C20th

The greenhouse was heated in the winter by a fire that was lit in a brick-built bothy at the rear, with the heat then channelled through voids in the floor. The bothy was also used to store the windows during the summer months.

The current windows are made of larch with European oak sills - materials very similar to those used in the original windows in 1763 when John Hobcraft manufactured and installed them.



Temple Greenhouse in the 1930s

In the Victorian era the sash lights were changed in favour of larger panes of glass, which by then were more readily available. The windows were removed altogether in the 1950s and rumour has it that they were used to construct a greenhouse by one of the estate workers in the nearby village of High Green.

In 1824 William Dean, the Botanic Gardener at Croome, published a book with the title 'An historical and descriptive account of Croome D'Abitot, the seat of the Right Hon. The Earl of Coventry with biographical notices of the Coventry Family to which are annexed an Hortus Croomensis, and observations on the propagation of exotics.'

After purchasing the parkland in 1996 the National Trust started research and restoration using archive documents to replant and restore the landscape as faithfully as possible. In 2004 the building was restored which included repairing the roof, the ceiling, the flag stone floor and the external steps. In 2006 the interior was decorated.

Within the book there is a descriptive walk through the 'Pleasure Grounds' where William Dean describes the Temple Greenhouse...

In 2011, specialists were commissioned to supply and fit replacement sash windows. The original windows were made by John Hobcraft in 1763 for £84, replacing them in 2011 cost around £40,000. Approximately a third of this cost was covered by the proceeds of raffle tickets sales sold at Croome during the previous year.

"A few steps onward bring us to the Temple... It is a handsome stone building; open in the centre, and closed at each extremity, where two interior rooms, of good size are formed. Its front is supported by Doric pillars. In two niches, one on each side, are figures of Ceres and Flora: and in the centre, near the summit, is a Basket of Flowers, extremely well carved. This building being closed up, in front, with glass windows, is used as a greenhouse in winter: and when these are removed, it becomes an agreeable summer apartment. From the Temple there is a fine view of the house, which, here, appears seated at the extremity of a sweet retiring vale... And all this, it must be remembered, to the praise, skill and perseverance, was once a flat and a marsh."

The only evidence of the existence of the sash windows was a photograph from Country Life magazine from 1913, some holes in the stone floor, and a sketch from the 1824 guidebook 'Hortus Croomensis'. Architects designed the new windows using joinery details contemporary with the time of the installation of the original windows.

In 2016 a piece of the internal plaster architrave above the sash windows fell onto the moulding below it. The area was investigated, and it was found that there had been rot there prior to the 2004 restoration, and this had damaged the lathes holding the architrave. New architrave was created using the old section as a mould - 32 layers of paint had to be removed from the original section! Also, in 2016 several of the flagstones in the floor dropped. Upon

investigation by a structural surveyor, it was found that there had been animal activity under the floor in the voids made for the heating. A stonemason lifted the back section of the floor, secured the area under the flagstones and re-laid them. Once again, the Temple Greenhouse is now fully open for visitors to enjoy.

Mark Grimshaw



KING GEORGE III'S VISIT TO WORCESTER

by *Faithful History*

In August 1788 King George III visited Worcester when he and his family attended the Three Choirs Festival. The festival itself claims to be the oldest non-competitive classical music festival in the world.

The King, Queen Charlotte and three of the Royal Princesses arrived at the city on the evening of Tuesday 5th August and, according to the diaries of a one Thomas Pitt, were entertained by a 'general illumination' of Worcester. The Royal family and their entourage stayed in the Bishop's Palace.

One local legend recalls how the King (who was known to suffer from bouts of madness) escaped from his chamber at the palace by abseiling on a rope made of bedsheets and was to be found effusively greeting bemused locals in the streets with handshakes in his bedclothes. Sadly, no evidence exists at all to support this claim.

On the 6th the Royal family attended performances at Worcester Cathedral and College Hall, before taking an evening tour of the cathedral. The day of the 7th began with a morning concert followed by an afternoon stroll of the city. En route they visited the premises of the

Worcester Porcelain Company, founded in 1751 by Dr John Wall (who also founded Worcester Royal Infirmary in 1745). Here the Royal Family arranged to purchase a quantity of china wares. The next year King George issued the company with their first Royal Warrant, which is where the name 'Royal Worcester Porcelain' comes from.

The crowds that thronged the street to greet the royal party somewhat overwhelmed the Queen and Princesses and the King returned to the Bishop's Palace to order them their carriage. En route he took a course through back alleys and lanes to avoid the crowds. On exiting one alley the King was met by a person 'in liquor' who offered the King his services. The King allegedly replied that 'persons in liquor were frequently too zealous and recommended the man 'go home to bed'.

On the 8th the King took procession from the Palace to the Guild Hall, where he drank a glass of wine and toasted the prosperity of the city. They departed the evening of the next day. In the same year, Croome also received the rare and distinguished honour of a royal visit whereupon, the King and his Consort presented full-length portraits of themselves to Lord and Lady Coventry.

Portrait of King George III in The Guildhall, Worcester



MARRIED TO A VISCOUNT

Washington Post, 11 Mar 1894

*Virginia Coventry,
Viscountess Deerhurst
(Lady's Realm, 1904)*



The marriage of Miss Virginia Bonyng, daughter of the California millionaire, Charles W Bonyng, to Viscount Deerhurst, took place in the Church of All Saints, Kensington, at 2:30pm today. The weather was perfect.

Large crowds of men and women were attracted to the vicinity of the church to catch a glimpse of the bride and groom and study the magnificent costumes of the bridal party.

The church was well filled with guests, among whom were the Princess Christian and Princess Helena Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein, the Countess of Arran, the Countess of Cairns, the Earl and Countess of Cadogan, the Earl and Countess of Essex, the Earl and Countess of Craven, Lord and Lady Burton, Mrs Bradley Martin, General and Mrs Byron, and many others.

The wedding gifts were numerous, costly, and magnificent. The gift of Prince Duleep Singh was a diamond bracelet with enamel links, and that of Prince F Duleep Singh a diamond pin and a pearl brooch. The Earl and Countess of Coventry gave a service of silver plate, a pearl necklace and a pearl and diamond bracelet. Mr Bonyng, the father of the bride, gave his daughter a diamond tiara, a diamond bracelet, a silver tea and coffee service, and a check (sic) for a large sum of money. Besides the presents mentioned, the bride received many others, all of which were of great value and exquisite design.

- Lady Deerhurst (1866-1948) was born Virginia Lee Daniel, the daughter of William Daniel and Rhoda Stephens. Her parents divorced, and her mother married Charles William Bonyng in 1869. She used her stepfather's surname after the marriage. Prior to her marriage to Lord Deerhurst, Virginia was apparently briefly engaged to the Hon Ronald Greville (whose eventual wife, Margaret, left a fortune's worth of jewellery to the Queen Mother on her death).

- Charles William Bonyng (1838-1913) was born in Ireland but made his fortune during the gold mining boom in California. He was involved in a rivalry with John Mackay, the husband of one of Boucheron's best customers.

- George William Coventry, Viscount Deerhurst (1865-1927) was the eldest son of the 9th Earl of Coventry and Lady Blanche Craven. He died three years before his father, so his elder son, George, became the 10th Earl.

- Princess Helena, the fifth child of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert married Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein and, according to a 1903 issue of the San Francisco Call, she was Lady Deerhurst's close friend and sponsor in society.

- Prince Victor Duleep Singh, son of the Maharaja of Lahore, was married to Lord Deerhurst's sister, Lady Anne Coventry. Prince F Duleep Singh is his younger brother, often called "Prince Freddy."