

The

FHH

Newsletter



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Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

At the 2013 Annual General Meeting in July we heard from Dr. Jane Sills about the restoration of the Walled Kitchen Garden at Ramsey Abbey. Those of us interested in the gardens of historic houses were very impressed by what she and her team of volunteers have achieved.

After that some of us went round the new 'Tree Trail' that Ann Colbert has devised as an additional aspect of visiting Hinchingsbrooke. This initiative from Ann has really added an attractive feature for the Sunday afternoon visitors and I am very grateful to her for seeing this through to a good conclusion.

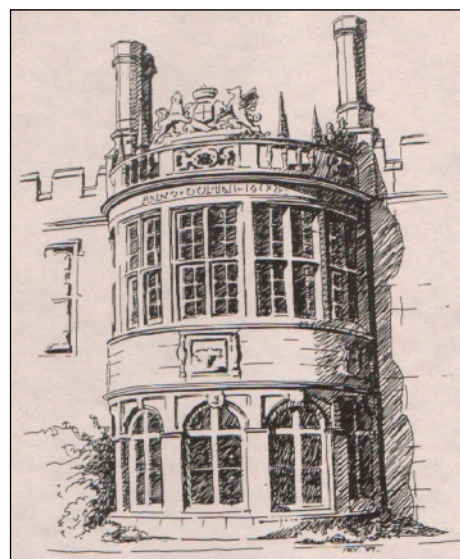
I'm glad to report that most of our members have now signed up to receive copies of this Friends' Newsletter by e-mail rather than by post. By reducing our printing and postage costs, we have more money to spend on projects to improve the House and grounds. If you have not yet got round to signing up for an e-version, please get in touch direct with the Newsletter editors, Geoff and Ann Gardner, by sending an e-mail to ann.gardner3@ntlworld.com.

As well as funding the costs of producing the Tree Trail booklets, our recent help to the school has been a grant towards the cost of providing a flag for the newly-restored flagpole on the turret of the House. We also paid for the investigation of 'The Bones'. There will be an article about this in a future newsletter. Our next outlay will probably be some more benches for the Rose Garden.

In this and other ways, we can help provide a few 'extras' and I know that what we can do, modest though it is in the great scheme of things at Hinchingsbrooke, is appreciated.

With all good wishes,

Peter Downes



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*The Committee of the
Friends of
Hinchingsbrooke House
wish you all a
Merry Christmas and a
Happy & Healthy New
Year*



The Annual Dinner, February 2nd, 2014

We have booked the House for our Annual Dinner as usual on the first Sunday in February, 6.00 for 6.30 p.m. in the Library. The price this year will be £22, slightly less than last year and, after a 'robust discussion' between the Chairman and the Catering Manager, we are assured that the standard of the meal will be restored to what we used to enjoy some years ago.

Given the significance of 2014 as the centenary of the outbreak of the 1st World War, we have chosen 'Hinchingsbrooke, Huntingdon and WW1' as the topic for the evening. It is expected that a number of people will make a contribution to this event and details are still being negotiated. There is no truth in the rumour that we might be trying to outshine *Downton Abbey* though I do confess to watching the TV series and being struck by how some of the problems faced by Lord and Lady Grantham and their ill-fated family and servants must have affected Hinchingsbrooke as well.

Applications for places at the Dinner should be sent to the Treasurer and a separate form is provided to help you with this. Please indicate if you require a vegetarian option.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as can manage to make it. It is also a good opportunity to bring along a guest who might then be interested in joining the Friends.

Peter Downes

Dinner Menu

Sunday 2nd February 2014

Cream of leek and potato soup, finished with crispy fried chives, served with homemade tear and share bread.

Honey roasted gammon, with a mustard reduction and apple and sultana chutney

Roasted potatoes with cracked black pepper and sea salt

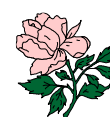
Roasted root vegetables and green cabbage

Chocolate and raspberry roulade, encasing Chantilly vanilla cream and fresh raspberries.

Tea/coffee

Please inform us of any dietary requirements and final numbers by Monday 27th January

The Rose Garden and Herbaceous Border



We focus our efforts on maintaining the rose garden and our scheme for naming roses in memory of a loved one has been taken up by several people. A £30 donation provides a standard rose, a stake, a rabbit guard (yes, the rabbits are still active!) and a small plaque naming the person in whose memory the rose has been donated.

In conjunction with the skeleton ground staff the School is able to afford, we are coming to terms with the fact that maintaining an authentic herbaceous border is beyond us. The plan now is to widen the paths so that there is less bed to maintain. The School is paying for the restoration of the entrance gates to the herbaceous border area, will replace the missing ball, repair the support columns and, we hope, replace the cherubs from the entrance to the rose garden. These have been safely guarded for many years and we are now hoping to see them back in place.

We still have working parties in the garden area and anybody who would like to help with this, on an occasional basis, should contact Peter Downes on 01480 398082. We are very grateful to former Headmaster John Wakelin who, though no longer able to help in person, pays for additional assistance whenever we have a working-party session.

Visit to the House of Lords

At the invitation of our President, John Sandwich, a number of Friends had a fascinating guided tour of the Palace of Westminster. We were shown round the famous rooms and corridors with their historic paintings and it was a real privilege to be guided round by a person whose ancestors were depicted on some of the paintings.



This photograph has been reproduced with the permission of the Parliament of the United Kingdom

It wasn't just a history lesson, interesting though that would have been. John also told us how the House of Lords works today. John is one of the 92 hereditary peers who 'survived' the reform that increased the number of life peers and reduced the hereditary component. John sits as a 'cross-bencher' i.e. he has no political party affiliation. He is greatly respected for the contribution he can make on the topic of overseas aid, in which area he worked for many years before taking up the Earldom of Sandwich on the death of his father.

We sat in the gallery of the House of Lords and watched them 'at work'. As most of the peers are people of a mature age and outlook, and have usually been chosen for their expertise, the level of debate was rather more scholarly and polite than what we see most evenings from the 'other place'. When John came to speak to the Friends about the House of Lords, he humorously pointed out that it is not unknown for some of the noble lords to fall asleep. Our short visit enabled us to confirm that perception!

We would like to thank John Sandwich for giving up his time to show us round. We all enjoyed our visit immensely.

Peter Downes

The hidden history within the walls

With the return of the so-called "Nuns' bones" to their resting place below the staircase (more details on this in a future issue), it seems the House continues to provide us with intriguing glimpses of its past. Following some damage to the gate leading into Nunnery Court it has been necessary to dismantle and rebuild a small section of wall. Removal of the dressed stonework on the outside of the wall has revealed the rubble in-fill amongst which was found a piece of white marble. It appears that the marble, complete with lead pins, was once part of a statue, possibly depicting a fold in clothing or armour plating. The wall may have been altered in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century during alterations to that section of the House, but may date from as early as the Tudor period. It seems that old masonry was used to help build the walls – could we be getting a glimpse of an effigy from the nunnery church or possibly a broken statue from later in the history of the house?



Tom Wheeley

Flying the flag

Those Friends who live close to Hinchingsbrooke may have noticed that in the last year, thanks partly to the contribution made by the FHH, the flagpole on the House has been replaced. You may have also noted that on occasion we have been flying a new flag emblazoned with the school crest. The flag, sewn by Kimbolton Flags, has been purchased by the Friends to mark the connection between the school and the House. The intention is that we will hoist it at the start of each term or on other significant dates for the school. Sadly, the highly exposed position of the flagpole prevents us from flying it permanently.



In addition, at the end of term you may notice other flags flying. These depict the heraldic designs adopted by the four houses within the school – Cromwell, Montagu, Pepys and Vesey. In addition there is Wylton house, newly introduced this year and named to mark the last prioress of the nunnery. The designs

draw inspiration from the family coats-of-arms or history of the houses. The house that is winning the interhouse competition at the end of term will have the honour of their flag being flown in the last week.

Tom Wheeley

The gardens at Mapperton

Some of you may be asking – what/where is Mapperton? It is in Dorset and is now the residence of the Sandwich family and indeed has been since they left Hinchingsbrooke over 50 years ago. Earlier this year there was a very detailed and complimentary article in the *Sunday Telegraph* magazine about the Mapperton gardens. If you missed that, you can still read it and see lots of photos by going to the Mapperton web-site below www.mapperton.com.

Subject to negotiation with the Earl and Lady Sandwich, the committee is suggesting that a Friends' day-trip to Mapperton might be a good idea next summer, date to be confirmed. If you would like to be included, please let me know at the following address (peterdownes42@aol.co.uk) and I will send out further details if and when they become available.



Picture by J.M. van der Putten

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Peter Downes