



Kings Weston Action Group Newsletter number 4

KWAG has not been idle over the last couple of months and we continue to make huge progress in research, promoting the historic estate, and trying to ensure its future. Hopefully this especially extended newsletter will manage to give a flavour of some of our main achievements since September.

Green light for the future

One of the key short-term goals of KWAG has been to get a plan for the future conservation and maintenance of the estate commissioned. This report, a Conservation Management Plan or 'CMP', would help guide us in moulding a future for Kings Weston and be essential for any future grant applications to bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.

We are delighted to report that following our discussions with Bristol City Council, funding has been secured for a new Conservation Management Plan. This will help structure the future shape of the estate balancing the conservation of historic features with modern demands. The Bristol Buildings Preservation Trust have approved match-funding for the report which will be undertaken by the City's Landscape architect.

Although still at the planning stage the work may begin in early 2012. As soon as a scope and brief have been agreed. KWAG are keen to be involved in the project which will add considerable momentum to our own ambitions. This is a major landmark on setting Kings Weston on the road to a secure future.

KWAG has been keen to make sure that Shirehampton Park, presently leased as Shirehampton golf course by the National Trust, is included in the new report as it's one of the last remaining sections of the original estate.

We have been promoting this idea to the National Trust and we are pleased to announce that they have enthusiastically agreed to help with the management plan project.

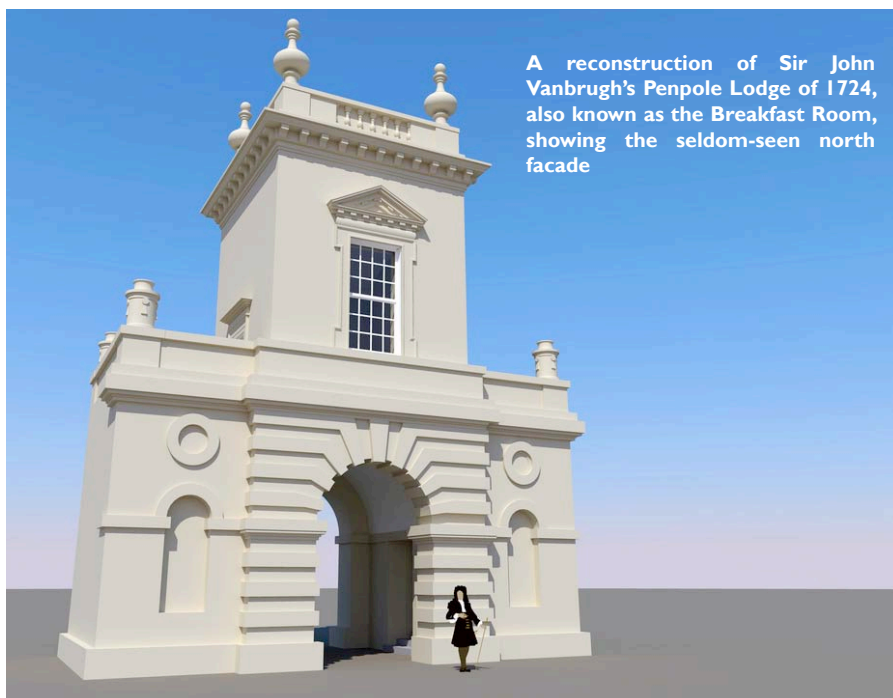
Great group growth!

Another landmark achievement was reached in the same week. The joining of our 100th member! All of this has been achieved since April this year and we are extremely grateful for everyone who has expressed an interest in KWAG.

To coincide with our first anniversary in April 2012 we will be arranging our first AGM. Some of you may be aware that we are presently operating with small provisional committee, but we are keen to get the group operating on a more structured basis. If you think you might have time to help as a committee member we would like to hear from you. There is a lot that needs organising and there is plenty of help and support that the present members can provide.. If you would like to help or have ideas to help promote the group or get things done then please let us know.

Penpole Lodge

KWAG are always keen to present research on the Kings Weston Landscape in an accessible and eye-catching way and following a query on the last history walk we undertook to make a computer reconstruction of Sir John Vanbrugh's Penpole Lodge. This building, built in about 1724, exists today only as a fragmentary and overgrown ruin on the edge of Penpole Woods. We have been incredibly fortunate that a series of architectural drawings were produced in the 1940's before the lodge was pulled down. The view seen here shows the rarely seen north side of the lodge that faced into woods and was much more ornamental than the side overlooking Penpole Point. Whilst most of the drawings are now safe in the collections of the National Monuments Record in Swindon a critical drawing showing this façade is missing. If you know where it might be please get in touch.



A reconstruction of Sir John Vanbrugh's Penpole Lodge of 1724, also known as the Breakfast Room, showing the seldom-seen north facade



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Tree Gazing

On the 12th November a group of twenty-six people came out to listen as tree expert Tony Titchen took us out around Kings Weston Park sharing his encyclopaedic knowledge of trees on the way. After an unseasonably mild season there were still plenty of leaves on the trees and the walk made the most of a perfect autumn morning. Amongst many interesting facts we were introduced to a two-hundred year old holly tree on the path up to the echo and perhaps the tree with the most interesting history was the huge Himalayan Cedar outside the garden front of the house, which we were informed, was the first in the country and introduced in about 1835.

With so much on show the walk overran, perhaps predictably, but everyone expressed how much they had enjoyed the event when it ended at Kings Weston house in time for lunch. Our thanks to KWAG's Tim Denning for organising the walk and to Tony for the fascinating walk.

Walk brochure

KWAG have produced a short walking guide across Kings Weston estate and hope to have it published early next year. The walk of about two hours has been designed to take visitors across both Kings Weston and Shirehampton Parks and it is hoped that it will give a greater appreciation of the incredibly variety within the Registered Historic Landscape. From the green lawns and avenues around the house, the wild romance of Penpole Woods, to the spectacular views over Horseshoe bend the walk should give a hint of what led to the estate being described as 'justly celebrated' at the start of the Eighteenth Century. The free guide will be published as an A4 leaflet that we hope will be available from locations close to the estate as well as downloaded from KWAG's facebook or Flickr pages.



Above: Tony Titchen guides a party around Kings Weston on KWAG's Tree-Gazing walk on November 12th.

The Brunel connection

One of the more unexpected surprises that has turned up during our research into the estate and its residents has been a the connection between Kings Weston with the ships SS Great Western and SS Great Britain.

Many people will know that throughout the Victorian era the house was owned by the Miles Family. Philip Miles of Leigh Court bought the house in 1833 and made it his home. He and three of his sons, William Miles, Philip Skinner Miles and John William Miles were successful bankers, philanthropists and stereotypical Victorian industrialists promoting and directing projects across the city.

A large proportion of the family's wealth had come from their shipping interests; the largest in the city at the time, and it is perhaps not surprising that they became keen investors in the Great Western Steam Ship Company. At the launch of the SS Great Western in 1838 Clarrisa Miles as wife of a prominent company director, was chosen to launch

the ship, an honour she reprised beside Prince Albert at the launch of the SS Great Britain in 1843. She shared the stage with her husband and her son Philip Skinner Miles who had been returned as MP for the city in 1838.

Not only were they investors, along with many other successful business families like the Gibbs from Tyntesfield and the Bright family, but John William Miles was the registered owner of the ships on behalf of the GWSS Co. John spent much of his life at Kings Weston after his brother Philip Skinner Miles inherited it in 1845. He was also an Investor in Brunel's third ship, the ill-fated Great Eastern, and deputy Chairman of the Great Western Railway whilst, in typical Victorian fashion, being a keen cultivator of orchids and ferns in the Kings Weston glasshouses!

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