



Kings Weston Action Group Newsletter number 6

KWAG springs into action this season with a flurry of new activity and announcements. Come along to one of our events to find out more about the fascinating past of the estate or lend a hand with our working parties, meet new friends and help make a difference.

Hard work begins to turn the tide of neglect

As many will have seen KWAG has begun working events in the Park and we have received a lot of press coverage in the process. Following our first official event in January the Evening Post ran an illustrated article about our activities and Shire newspaper also took up the story. After a few weeks hiatus a new programme of monthly meetings has been published and the working group met again on the 17th March to continue clearing. We had over a dozen volunteers for both events, including one who came all the way from Lincolnshire to help!

KWAG have made a huge difference in clearing self-seeded saplings, brambles and undergrowth from the woodland either side of the Echo path. The work has restored the views across the lawns and it is hoped the improved light to the woodland floor will encourage native wildflowers. Already primroses and bluebells are taking advantage of the change.

Next month we hope to change the focus of the work to Penpole Lodge to the west of the park where the ruins of the demolished Breakfast Room need revealing. Please come along to lend a hand, meet new friends, and help make a difference to the historic landscape. Our events all begin at 10am from Shirehampton Road car park and are scheduled for the forthcoming dates in 2012:

Sun April 15th,	Sat Sept 15th
Sat May 12th,	Sat Oct 13th
Sun June 17th,	Sun Nov 11th
Sat July 14th,	Sat Dec 15th
Sun August 12th,	



KWAG volunteers pose outside the Echo at our first Working Party event in January

New Tree gazing walk

KWAG has organised a second tree-gazing walk with celebrated tree expert Tony Titchen on Saturday 5th May. Tony's walk last autumn proved very popular. For anyone who joined that event this walk will offer a completely new experience.

The new walk will take in the fascinating and historic trees of Penpole Wood. There is a rich tapestry of species in this area where the historic landscaped garden meets the ancient woodland. There are many interesting specimens each with their own story to tell and spring should offer an ideal time to appreciate them at their best. Join us and Tony as he interprets the living history around you. We hope that you can join us at this event, but booking is essential as spaces limited.

Please get in touch with KWAG to reserve your place on Tony's walk.

The walk starts at 10:45 from Shirehampton Road public car park at on May 5th. Places Cost £4 - children are free. Well behaved dogs on leads are welcome.

Localism & Kings Weston

On the 16th March Bristol City Council and English Heritage presented a conference on "Localism and Heritage" in an effort to explore how the Government's new Localism bill and, continuing shrinking budgets might affect the UK's historic assets. At least nine KWAG members were in the audience throughout the day. A number of local authorities presented case studies illustrating new ways they are working with communities. This included A particularly interesting "character assessment toolkit" from Oxford City Council who are trying to make the most of their community partner's knowledge. The afternoon was devoted to case studies in Bristol including presentations from local groups from Fishponds and Old Market highlighting the need for better communication between council officers and communities for Localism to work effectively.

With the Localism Bill yet to pass through parliament there remained a lot of uncertainty as to how it would impact the ability of English Heritage and local authorities to maintain and conserve historic properties. The overriding message from the day was the increasingly important role of local community and voluntary groups in protecting local heritage assets. Frameworks are urgently needed to enable these groups, like KWAG, to enter partnerships with local councils.



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Conservation Plan progress

Last month Bristol City Council began work on a new Conservation Management Plan (CMP) which will help guide future efforts to restore and enhance the historic landscape. The plan, which is being produced in partnership with the National Trust and supported by the Bristol Buildings Preservation Trust, covers the whole of Kings Weston and Shirehampton Parks as well as Kingsweston Hill and the Tump. As a key Stakeholder KWAG has supplied feedback on the proposed scope of the report and gave an enthusiastic support to assurances that the document will become an exemplar of modern practice and public accessibility.

KWAG are keen to work with the City Council to make sure that our members, park users and local residents are all part of any consultation work regarding the future of the estate. An Initial site walk with KWAG committee members and the city's landscape architect was made early in March and we hope to continue as close partners in the project.

Bristol Uni partnership

In February KWAG worked with archaeologist Philip Wright of Bristol University to start work surveying the lost landscape features around the house. Although the results of the geophysics' survey was not as clear as had been hoped the work did pinpoint the outline of the demolished Great Court in front of the house and felled avenues leading to it. There is certainly much more scope for future work, a finding supported by Bristol University.

Bristol University and KWAG are now partners in a local heritage event being to be held in May in conjunction with Bristol City Council's Know Your Place project. Details will be announced closer to the day but the event will invite members of the public to bring their own stories



Bristol University archaeologist Philip Wright directs KWAG volunteers helping with Geophysics' survey work.

about Kings Weston including family history and memories of the house and estate. We are also encouraging people to bring along objects such as films, family photographs, and historical artefacts. KWAG will be exhibiting an exhibition of the history of the estate and a number of new artefacts that the group has collected in its archive.

Don't forget! Find us online. Search for Kings Weston Action Group on [Facebook](#) or [Flickr](#) and follow us for more regular updates.

Vanbrugh's lost vision

Many will be familiar with the interior of Kings Weston House with its remarkable picture gallery, but it was not always like this. The original design by Sir John Vanbrugh was much altered for the Southwell family in the 1760's by Robert Mylne. KWAG has produced a series of images that uncover the original appearance of the lost interiors as Vanbrugh left them. The changes probably resulted from the bare stone walls rendering the old entrance hall "totally useless by a vast echo" according to one visitor.

Southwell's inheritance of a collection of valuable portraits of the Tufton and Rockingham families drove a need to find a suitable setting for them. The resulting redecoration gave us the magnificent room we see today, but lost the original theatrical effects and the ability to see through a first floor arcade into the staircase hall beyond.

The entrance hall of Kings Weston as Vanbrugh would have known it

