



# Kings Weston Action Group Newsletter number 10

## Winter 2012: Happy New Year!

### Kings Weston BioBlitz!

KWAG is hugely grateful to everyone who has taken the time to voice their sympathies following the sudden death of our co-founder Tim Denning in October. Following an invitation from Tim's parents we have been collecting donations towards a memorial project and have already received a number of generous donations from KWAG members and Tim's family and friends. We have been discussing what form the memorial should take and have recently discussed suggestions from our members with officers from Bristol City Council.

The idea that has been settled upon is to replant part of the historic avenue that once led up to the front of Kings Weston House. The lost avenue can be seen in the engraving that we donated to Bristol Record Office, and was illustrated in our last newsletter. The existing trees along the former drive are the only fragments that remain of an avenue that once stretched from the house as far as Park Hill leading into Shirehampton.

Whilst the Conservation Plan for the estate will now not be available for consultation until later this year we are encouraged that the reinstatement of this avenue will be supported by it. The replanting of these trees seems to be a fitting tribute to Tim's memory as well as being a practical and achievable project that KWAG can take on. It's also something that helps achieve a key restoration objective in returning some of the formal views towards the Grade I



Listed house.

As part of our aspiration for the memorial avenue we have produced some illustrations to show how it should look. The proposals would be to replant the same species of Lime tree as are already growing along the adjacent path and we hope to work with the Council's tree planting officer to develop the project as a community

Plans of the earlier mansion that Edward Southwell sought to replace. Now in Bristol Records Office. (BRO 33746)



### Leaflet boxes

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## Newsletter number 10 (cont.)

### Meet the Neighbours

Since our last newsletter we have received some fantastic news. In October the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded KWAG a grant of £10,000 as one of the first projects to receive support from their "All Our Stories" grants scheme.

Up till now we have concentrated heavily on the history of the estate but this award will enable us to focus on the estate's natural heritage through a major event to which everyone will be invited. We will be working with the Bristol Natural History Consortium (BNHC) on a 'Bioblitz' which will set out to record everything we can in a 'day in the life of' survey. The grant will enable us to support the event across the park, put it in the context of the historic landscape, and use the information we collect in a variety of ways. We hope these will include local exhibitions, teaching packs for schools and new wildlife nature trails.

The BNHC hope to use the event at Kings Weston as the flagship launch event of their own "Bristol.99" project; part of the Bristol Festival of Nature in May next year giving us exciting opportunities to help more people discover the estate and develop a better record of the park's natural habitats. This will become increasingly important as conservation plans progress for the protection of habitats and for promoting greater biodiversity. We will be keeping a particular eye out for rare species native only to Bristol and which we know have grown here historically, such as Bristol Rock-creep (pictured) that once thrived on the rocky limestone grassland around Penpole Point.

We will definitely need volunteers to come forward and help us out closer to the time, so if you are interested in lending a hand please let us know and we will keep you abreast of things as they develop.

English Heritage has received £2.7M funding from the Government to pilot a new Heritage Schools programme with clusters of schools across the country. We are fortunate that Bristol has been selected to pioneer this project which aims to help school children become more aware of the rich local history in their area and get out exploring it. This will be achieved through cross-curricular projects supported by "Heritage Brokers". Two local schools, Avon Primary and Avonmouth Primary, will form



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### 2nd Birthday

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## Newsletter number 10 (cont.)

### Working party progress

Over the last few months KWAG volunteers have been working hard to uncover the Georgian viewing terrace overlooking Shirehampton Park. Our objectives have been to uncover the forgotten and neglected terrace and return it to prominence as a spectacular location to enjoy views across the Avon Valley.

Since September working parties have focussed on removing ivy and self-seeded saplings from the terrace before they further damage the masonry and also to remove undergrowth that has encroached on the view in the areas below the terrace. We have to express our thanks to the City's new estate's team and Andrew Gordon and his team of rangers in particular for reengaging with the estate and helping in our efforts by removing trees too large for our volunteers to manage safely.

The terrace is now clear again for the first time in a generation and the spectacular view can take its place as one of the estate's highlights. It has also benefitted in opening up views to and from the old Kingsweston Inn and the Iron Bridge restoring the connections between Shirehampton Park and these historic features.

During the work we made a few new discoveries about the terrace. Looking closely at the construction of the retaining wall it shows that it was built in two phases with the parapet wall being added some time after the original terrace retaining wall and with a continuous dividing line running along its entire length. We also found that part of the wall was topped in



'Bristol Black' slag blocks created as a by-product of the City's Eighteenth Century copper smelting industry. One of the more curious discoveries seems to be a small Nineteenth Century rockery.

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### Ethel Thomas Collection

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

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### Finding fireplaces

Last year we generated a lot of interest in our announcement that 2012 was the tercentenary of the commencement of Kings Weston House and we have been asked to provide more detail to support our claim. This research update hopes to outline some of the evidence that we have collected and suggest startling new theories on how the house developed.

Although we know that Kings Weston House was designed by the architect Sir John Vanbrugh and replaced an older mansion there has always been uncertainty about when it was begun. Most authors have suggested a date of 'about' 1710 and this has become widely accepted, but there is no firm foundation of evidence that supports this. Last year we discovered some engravings in the Bristol Record Office that shed more light on the matter and in conjunction with other evidence we can propose a more certain date. These engravings are a full record of all of the house's elevations and floor plans and were produced by the eminent architectural engraver 'Mariette' and published in 1724. Each of the four sheets states 'Begun 1712', but one goes further and suggests that the building was begun on the specific date of 17th June 1712.

Whilst the engravings were produced more than a decade later it appears that the author visited Kings Weston and recorded the actual detail of the building rather than relying on Vanbrugh's original drawings to base his engravings on. If he did visit did he get such a precise date directly from the Southwell family?

We know from a letter written in April 1711 that the house was furnished and its gallery of paintings was still in place. The author, Sir Emanuel Moore also states



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that the house as "Crazy"; a term used to describe a dilapidated or 'crazed' state. We do not know whether this referred to the poor condition of the old building or whether it might imply that some demolition work had begun in advance of Vanbrugh's reconstruction. Either way we know that the roof was being finished in October 1713 when Vanbrugh wrote to Southwell expressing that he was "much pleased that the house being quite covered in so good season" though the elaborate chimneys were not yet begun.

Another issue perplexing historians has been the long construction period of the new house which we know ended with





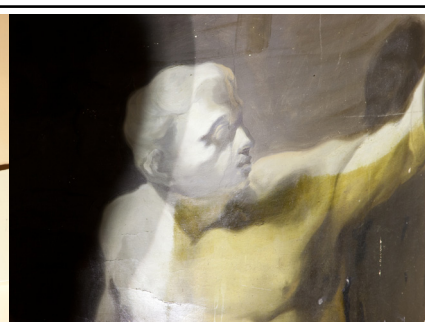
# Kings Weston Action Group

## Research update (cont.)

### The collection of trompe l'oeil statues

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