



# The Marble Hill Society

## NEWSLETTER No. 112 FEBRUARY 2017

*The Marble Hill Society was founded in 1987 to bring together people with an interest in this 18C House and Park and to help English Heritage preserve its history and enhance its amenities. The Society provides volunteer guides for the House, has a regular Newsletter, and holds talks, entertainments and themed visits in the House for members and guests.*

(see [www.marblehillsociety.org.uk](http://www.marblehillsociety.org.uk))

### Chair's Report

Our focus over the last three months has been on English Heritage's Big £6mn Investment project for Marble Hill. Kate Pitt, Audience Development Manager (who made a presentation to Marble Hill Society members on 27 November and has met regularly with Committee members and our guides) has led the Stage 1 consultation and engagement with vigour, patience and determination; and EH now has a team of staff and outside consultants developing the Stage 2 plans. Attached is a comprehensive summary of the current proposals and we are opening a Project page on the Marble Hill Society website to help keep members and others informed.

The Stage 2 "Parks for People" Heritage Lottery Fund bid will be submitted this month, with a decision due by the end of June. If all goes according to plan, the House will close for 12 months from September for major restoration work – with a grand re-opening in September 2018. Kate says "*We've had a busy consultation, reaching hundreds of residents and a variety of community groups. It has been an exciting process, listening to and responding to everyone's views. Now we look forward to putting their ideas into action!*".

Marble Hill House opens for the Summer season on Saturday 1 April and we have arranged two talks for Society members and guests in April and May (details below) and a special concert and party to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on the evening of Sunday 25 June – details of this will follow in the next Newsletter.

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Jennifer Rimmer who has been site manager for Marble Hill since 2015 will be leaving EH in March to start her training as a veterinary nurse. I would like to thank Jennifer for all her help and support for our Society events over the last two years and wish her every success in her new career.

Committee member Sandra Pullen is arranging a visit for members to the newly restored Queen's House, Greenwich on the morning of Monday 3 April. After lunch, you might also like to visit the spectacular Emma Hamilton Exhibition before it closes. Like Henrietta Howard, Emma was an extraordinary woman in a man's world – but her story does not have such a happy ending.

Our search for a new webmaster has brought forth two keen young volunteers who are working with Keith Hathaway on developing our website. In addition to a new web page on the EH Big Investment Project for Marble Hill, we have plans for dedicated pages on the park, garden history and your photos of life and activities through the year in Marble Hill. Further information will be provided in the next Newsletter.

Finally, we always welcome your comments and suggestions on the Newsletter.

Best wishes,  
Denise Carr  
([denisecarr2@virginmedia.com](mailto:denisecarr2@virginmedia.com))

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## **SOCIETY EVENTS FOR 2017 - BOOK NOW**

\* **Sunday 23 April** - talk by Marble Hill curator Dr Esme Whittaker on “**The Two Cottages**”. Esme has been researching the 2-storey cottage Henrietta Howard had built close to Marble Hill House, the first floor of which was used to display her growing Chinese porcelain collection; and “Little Marble Hill”, the cottage by the river she purchased in 1751 and which was later occupied by Little Henrietta amongst others. Sadly, neither building survives, but their fascinating stories live on.

Join us for drinks from 6-6.30pm and the talk 6.30-7.30pm. Free to members; £3.50 for non-members (pay on the door), but please book in advance by phone or e-mail to Miriam King (07930-136-161 [hillierking@btinternet.com](mailto:hillierking@btinternet.com)).

\* **Sunday 21 May** - talk with readings by Bruce Gordon Smith on “**The Role of Servants in the Lives of Henrietta Howard and Horace Walpole**”. Using first hand testimony about their servants from the letters between these two good friends and neighbours, and with some creative acting, this should be very entertaining!

Join us for drinks from 6-6.30pm and the talk 6.30-7.30pm. £5 for members and guests. To book, please phone or e-mail Miriam King (details as before). Cheques payable to the Marble Hill Society should be sent to Miriam at Compton Cottage, Walton Bridge Road, Shepperton TW17 8LX.

## **SPECIAL VISIT FOR MEMBERS AND GUESTS**

### **Monday 3<sup>th</sup> April Trip to Queen's House Greenwich**

We are pleased to invite members and a guest to an exclusive guided tour of the newly restored Queen's House at Greenwich. The Queen House can be easily reached by public transport by river or by train, tube and DLR in about 1 hour 20 minutes from Richmond station. We will need to arrive by 11.00am.

2016 was the 400th anniversary of the Queen's House - Inigo Jones's 17C architectural masterpiece and royal "House of Delight". Following major restoration, 22 rooms are open to the public filled with over 450 works of art by great British and European artists together with a new work in gold leaf by Turner Prize-winner Richard Wright on the Great Hall ceiling.

**Cost £10** per head including coffee on arrival and a private one hour art tour of the Queen's House. **Lunch:** for those wishing to make a day of it, we have also negotiated a special lunch rate of £9 for sandwiches, soup and a hot drink with reserved seating (must be pre-booked).

**"Emma Hamilton: Seduction and Celebrity"**: after lunch, you could also enjoy a self-guided tour of this exhibition in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, before it closes on 17 April. Emma's spectacular career from rags to riches and back again is told through over 200 objects - great paintings by George Romney, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir Thomas Lawrence, and heartfelt letters between Emma and her lover. The exhibition also explores the obstacles and social barriers for a woman of her time in the public eye, many of which still resonate today. (Cost for exhibition £10.80 seniors £6.30 Art Fund members: buy on the door.)

**Booking:** places are limited to 20, so please phone or email Sandra Pullen (020-8977-6148 [spullen3@aol.com](mailto:spullen3@aol.com)) to book. Payment (tour only £10; tour & lunch £19) should be made by cheque payable to the Marble Hill Society and sent to Sandra at 45 Langham Road, Teddington, TW11 9HF. Payment must be made by 3 March.

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## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MARIA FITZHERBERT - A ROYAL ROMANCE

### Part 2: 1785 to 1837

At the end of the previous article we left George, Prince of Wales (later George IV) and Maria Fitzherbert living a form of married life. This did not involve living together but spending time in her Park Street house in Mayfair. Afternoons were the special times for this couple with dinner followed by a period of time undisturbed. People realised that they should not visit the house during these particular hours – otherwise they may cause offence. The couple attended Society events on the understanding that both of them would be invited. Similarly when the Prince stayed in Brighton, Maria would be lodged in a house close to the Prince's private residence and presumably there was a similar visiting arrangement there. As his unofficial consort Maria would have played a role as hostess in the houses which the Prince owned, as and when required.



The beautiful Maria Fitzherbert

For Maria, her situation was a mixed blessing. She was married to the heir to the throne but had not been received in the Royal Drawing room. Furthermore whenever George's debts came to the fore, people asked questions about their relationship. In 1786 John Rolle MP raised the question of the relationship and Mr Sheridan, as the Prince's defender was forced to answer – not always satisfactorily. Meanwhile Maria tried to remain amiable about it all. Another attack came in the form of scurrilous cartoons: a speculative cartoon of 1786 entitled 'Wife or no wife' by James Gillray showed the wedding ceremony attended by leading politicians including Lord North and Charles James Fox - purely fanciful of course. In 1789 one pamphleteer described Maria as 'either a wife or a Catholic whore', which she found very hurtful.

With the onset of the madness of George III, pressure was taken off Prince George but in 1793 trouble lurked in the form of the Countess of Jersey – beautiful, clever and unprincipled – who supplanted Maria in his affections. It is thought that Maria retaliated with a brief affair with a French aristocrat. As if this was not enough, the question of the Prince's financial profligacy came up for discussion, plus the question of an official Royal wife for George - preferably Protestant. Backed into a corner by his father, he agreed to marry his cousin Princess Caroline of Brunswick. However with Lady Jersey on the scene and a wedding to come, it was time to end the relationship with Maria.

George's tactics were somewhat brutal. In June 1794, Maria received an affectionate letter from him in Brighton. The same evening she was dining with the Duke of Clarence at Bushy House and received an abrupt note telling her that the relationship was over. However George continued to pay her financial allowance which may have helped their later reconciliation. The Royal wedding took place in the Chapel Royal, St James's on 8 April 1795 and George only got through the ceremony by being drunk. By that time Maria had rented Marble Hill House. She told Lord Stourton that 'a day or two preceding the marriage he had been seen passing rapidly on horseback before her House at Marble Hill but that his motive for doing so was unknown to her'.

During her stay at Marble Hill on August 5<sup>th</sup>, she visited Strawberry Hill with Lady Sefton to view the celebrated collections of Horace Walpole. In October 1795 she left Marble Hill and moved to Ealing into the Italian Villa on Castle Bar Hill – at a cost of £9,000 Guineas. Whilst Maria licked her emotional wounds, George was faring no better. The Royal marriage was a

disaster: the Royal bride was perceived to be vulgar and did not conform to the levels of cleanliness that George expected. They had a daughter together – Princess Charlotte born 7<sup>th</sup> January 1796 – but enough was enough. In April 1796 George officially separated from his wife. Unbelievably, George now conceived the notion that reconciliation with Maria was possible. Intermediaries discussed the possibility with her. Stubbornly religious, she was reluctant to consider the idea until the Pope had consented to the new arrangement which set down some conditions – but what these were we do not know. There were two marriages to be taken into account.

In June 1800, there was a public breakfast held in Maria's new London house attended by 400 guests to celebrate the new arrangement. However the exact nature of the relationship is unclear. After the reconciliation, Maria wrote that 'we live like brother and sister. I find no resentment tho' plenty of regret that I will have it on this footing and no other but he must conform to my stipulations. I did not consent to make it up with the Prince to live with him either as his wife and or his mistress'. Maria was in her mid forties and wanted an uncomplicated life which would bring her happiness with a man who had become respectful and considerate with age.

The next six years were probably the happiest of her life, with the couple dividing their time between London and Brighton, and Maria continuing her role as a Royal consort but sleeping in separate accommodation. During this time changes were being made to the Prince's residence in Brighton which would culminate with Nash's work in 1815. But by 1809 the Prince was getting restless and was having a dalliance with Lady Hertford which in turn cast a cloud over Maria's relationship with him. Given Maria's comments as quoted above the situation had become complicated and led to an official separation the same year. In 1811, the final split came when Maria was denied social precedence at a fete at Carlton House: she was not placed on the top table with the important guests.

The rest of Maria's life was less eventful. She moved to a house in Battersea called Sherwood Lodge where she spent many of her last days. George succeeded to the throne in 1820 and when he was dying in 1830 Maria sent him a note of affectionate regard: her miniature was hanging round his neck on his deathbed and then placed in his coffin. Maria, whom George acknowledged as his wife in his will, refused the offer of a dukedom from William IV but proudly accepted permission to dress her servants in the royal livery colours. She requested her letters to George from the King's executors, but it was finally agreed that all the letters between the two should be burnt – a tragedy for the historians of the future. William IV treated Maria well and she was blessed in her old age. She enjoyed the company of adoptive grandchildren, lived a lot of her time much respected in Brighton, and died aged 80 on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1837. She was buried in a Roman Catholic Church in Brighton, where the figure on her monument clearly displays her three wedding rings.



So lived one of the great and colourful ladies of the Georgian era.

Compiled by Bruce Gordon-Smith for the Marble Hill Society, January 2017

*Correction of Part I: sentence in fifth paragraph starting 'In November 1784' should read 'In early July 1784'. Apologies.*

## **BIG INVESTMENT PROJECT FOR MARBLE HILL: UPDATE**

**Background** In 2015 EH unveiled exciting and ambitious plans for a major project at Marble Hill which could see investment of £6mn by the Spring of 2018 to improve the House and the Park. Following a public meeting at the House on 16 July 2015 (hosted by Alex Sydney) a Stage 1 funding bid was submitted to the HLF “Parks for People” in September: this was unsuccessful (due to a large number of bids) but was re-submitted in February 2016. In July a grant of £275,000 was awarded to progress planning and development work on the project. By October 2016 Ndai Halisch had been appointed Project Manager and Kate Pitt as Audience Development Manager. EH hoped to submit a Stage 2 bid for further funding to the HLF in February 2017.

**The Project** was intended to address the serious damp, electrical and building repairs in the House; improve conservation standards (heating, humidity control systems, displays etc.) visitor flow and presentation; offer 5 days a week opening for free-flow (with room stewards and volunteers); provide a variety of 21C visitor activities, talks, exhibitions and educational events for all ages; review the location/effectiveness of the shop; create a Visitor Centre; review/improve the catering offer/role of the cafe; improve the sports facilities and the toilet provision; and reinstate the historic core of the landscape, including restoration of the Grotto and other 18C features.

**A Steering Group of local stakeholders** was set up to work with EH on the Project, including representatives of the Marble Hill Society, Orleans Gallery, the Marble Hill Cricket Club, the Model Market Garden, Marble Hill Playcentres, Riverside Dogs and park sports teams.

**Stage 1 consultation, engagement and development of the plans:** following various meetings and discussions with local groups led by Kate Pitt; a public “Drop In” session (19.11.2016) in a marquee near the Stables Cafe, with a small exhibition and curators and landscape historians on hand to answer questions; a presentation to members of the MH Society (27.11.16); and meetings with the MHS Guides – more detailed plans were developed to support the Stage 2 bid. These were unveiled in early 2017 to meetings of the users of the park (24.1.17); the public (25.1.17); the Steering Group (27.1.17) and the MHS guides (6.2.17).

**Note:** through leaflet drops in the local area; promotion of these events in the local press, via the Council website and through community groups; an open invitation to contact Kate Pitt direct to discuss the plans; a dedicated website link ([www.english-heritage.org.uk/marblehillrevived](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/marblehillrevived)); the option to submit views/comments online or via the “Be Part of the Story” suggestion cards; and 5 triangular “project information boards” in the park – EH has tried to raise awareness and engage with interested parties and the general public; listen to views, aspirations and concerns; and incorporate these into the planning process.

**Key Features of the 2017 Plans:** restoration of the lost Georgian Pleasure Garden of Henrietta Howard (from the House to the River); extended cafe and toilets, with shop, in the Stables; expanded and themed, dog-free children’s play area; enhanced sports facilities and refurbished changing rooms; refurbishment/reinterpretation of the House and free entry 5 days a week; programme of events and “interpretation” of the site to help tell Henrietta’s story.

\* **Henrietta’s Pleasure Garden:** based on the recently discovered 1752 plan of the park which clearly defines a rectangle of land stretching from the carriage drive on the north of the House down to the river and includes a wealth of detail of the walks, trees, planting and usage of the area known as “The Pleasure Ground”. This is a unique and historically important aspect of the site showing the latest thinking in classical villa gardens of the 18C. Though the basic structure survives today, paths no longer penetrate the “Wilderness Quarters” (which are

fenced off); the “Mount” (a man-made hill from which to admire the estate and the river) is gone; and some evidence of a series of earth terraces is all that remains of the lawn which originally descended through a stepped gradient (a feature characteristic of the work of the King’s landscape gardener, Charles Bridgeman who collaborated with Pope on the gardens).



<b>J.A.L. BRIDGEMAN LLP</b> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE URBAN DESIGN		Project: MARBLE HILL REVIVED		Drawing title: PLEASURE GROUNDS PLANOMETRIC	
Date: 10_01_17	Scale: 1:500 @ A1 1:1000 @ A3	Status: Information	Drawing number: 581_PL_S_06	Rev: -	
Drawn: PK	Checked: ND	Approved: ND			

Reinstating the 1752 plan as faithfully as possible is at the core of the “Marble Hill Revived” investment project. It is proposed that the area be enclosed by “estate style” pin metal railings with a number of access gates, and be dog-free. Winding walks and flower beds will be recreated in the part nearer the House (together with HH’s “Ninepin Alley”); the ice house and the grotto retained and improved; an oval circus/performance space created between two semi-circular walks of shrubs; and an elongated horseshoe of lawn will be flanked by ordered groves and trees to enhance the view of the House from the river. The best of the existing trees etc. will be retained but extensive new planting will promote a more diverse flora and fauna in

keeping with the 18C history. The railings will leave clear a strip of land at the south of the area (before the park railings) so that dog-walkers can still circumnavigate the park without going out onto the tow path.

\* Stables Cafe & Shop: the main Stables block (built 1825-27) is retained, but the raised beds will be removed and the rear and sides developed to create a 60 seat cafe (run by EH) with an open courtyard with views down to the river; an EH shop; a kiosk for take-away drinks etc.; an office and service yard; and public toilets. The two staff flats on the first floor of the existing block will be retained.



\* Children’s Play Area: the existing, dog-free grassed area for children (near the cafe) will be extended and improved by the addition of some play equipment (age up to 5) in keeping with the natural feel of the park which will promote social interaction.

\* Enhanced sports facilities and changing rooms: this EH site is also unique in having both an historic house and gardens, but also a public park with sporting facilities including, cricket, football and rugby, dog walkers and exercise groups. Extensive tests and surveys of the soils, grass cover, flooding and drainage, and trees/shrubs of the site and the pitches indicates that the conditions are generally good and so no dramatic changes are needed.



However patches of heavy wear, some undulation of the pitches, areas of poor grass cover or mixed clover etc., areas of inadequate drainage (leading to pitches not being playable), and some shading caused by overhanging tree canopies can all be improved. A programme of measures to address these issues is proposed, including sand grooves, over-seeding to improve the sward, levelling and rolling, and regular maintenance. To re-seed a pitch and allow it to properly grow would take a year, so a rolling programme is suggested. In addition, the tennis courts would be re-surfaced; and the cricket nets and pitch improved.

The changing rooms (male only at present) are generally felt to be very inadequate and totally unacceptable: providing 21C facilities for men, women and disabled players is considered a priority and EH’s limited proposals in this regard are not adequate. The sports groups are keen to work with EH to see if dedicated sports funding could be secured for this purpose. Similarly, the sports users were unanimous in asking for a Pavilion of some kind for post-match teas, drinks and socialising. This was not part of EH’s plans and there is no funding in the project

budget for it, but again the teams are very keen to work with EH to see if other sources of funding could be accessed for these improvements.

\* The House: refurbishment of the fabric (plaster, windows, damp, guttering, electrics etc.) will be carried out. The house will be better furnished and some new wall coverings and hangings are planned. In re-creating Henrietta's story, there will be a focus on themes like her letter writing, tea drinking, hearing problems, friends and entertaining. Information in the main rooms will be "light-touch" re-creating this unique family home rather than a museum, with information on 6 key items. More extensive and detailed information will be available from the room "explainers", in room-specific leaflets, in a new audio-visual film of Henrietta, her life & times, and in the new EH book for visitors. There will also be more family and child-friendly features. Entry to the house will be free, with the option of free-flow or guided tours.

On the ground floor, the current shop area will be a new introductory space showing Henrietta's back story, George II, court life, and the building of Marble Hill. The Stone staircase area will be used to tell about the work and lives of the house servants; and in the main Entrance Hall visitors will learn about trade, imports and the growing economic wealth of 18C England. The Tetrastyle Hall will be furnished as the entertainment space it was used for, and will feature information about the cultural landscape of Henrietta and her Twickenham set. In the Breakfast Parlour, the story of tea drinking, china, and Henrietta's private conversations with friends like Lady Betty Germain will feature. On the other side of the house, the Dining Room will be set for dinner and tell how productive the Marble Hill estate was and how the produce was used; and the disused Paper Room will be transformed by an audio-visual presentation on Henrietta's life and times and the wider 18C world as it impacted Georgian life (including the arts, commerce, politics etc.).

On the first floor (the piano nobile suite of rooms), the magnificent Great Hall will be furnished as the formal social space it was used for, with an 18C musical sound-scape, and information on the arts, needlework, fabrics, Palladian influences and Henrietta's passions like chinoiserie. In the Dressing Room, the information will focus on Henrietta's circle while the rear Damask Room will tell the story of Henrietta's very happy second marriage to George Berkeley MP and explore the role of women in the 18C (was Henrietta typical of her time or not?). On the other side of the Great Room, Lady Suffolk's Bedchamber will be used to explain how her days were spent, her health problems, her extensive letter writing and the use of the room for private visitors; while Henrietta's dressing room to the rear will be transformed into the bedroom of her granddaughter Henrietta Hotham who was her close companion in her later years, with a new tester bed and hangings and appropriate furnishings and information about Little Henrietta's life at Marble Hill.

On the second floor – while this is not included in the Big Investment Project, free flow visitors will be able to access the splendid Long Gallery (also called the Ball-room, which was used for walking, conversation and dancing in Henrietta's time). As a panelled interior hung with paintings, this could have been the second finest room in the house, though not Palladian in concept. A room explainer and room-specific information cards will provide further information for visitors. The remaining rooms on this floor will be open for guided tours only. There are no plans to open the Garret storey of the house (used as servants' quarters).

Marble Hill House has a very fine collection of 18C British paintings – these will be re-arranged to better support this story and curator, Dr Esme Whittaker, is trying to arrange a loan to Marble Hill of the marriage portraits of Henrietta and George Berkeley from Audley End.

Improving disabled access in the House is a key requirement and after much exploration of options and costs it is proposed to install a small, Platform Lift in the control room (to the left

of the main entrance) going up to the first floor. This will not affect the external look of the House and it will be clad and painted to reduce its visual impact inside. It will not touch the walls, so all features are retained. The gaps between the lift and the walls will be in-filled with removable material and the lift will be structurally fixed to the masonry wall as per the plans of the Structural Engineer. Historic Door Fire Upgrading will also be carried out. In an emergency, a person with limited mobility could be carried from the first floor to the ground floor via the grand staircase.

Promoting commercial use of the house (e.g. weddings etc.) requires better options for catering, so permanent fixing points for a marquee are proposed – located to the left of the house, in an outside area which will be screened by trees and shrubs.

\* Interpretation: in addition to the improved interpretation facilities inside the house, there will be better signage and interpretation panels throughout the park to guide visitors and show how the landscape would have looked and been used in Henrietta's time. Features will be aimed at both adults and children (e.g. bee hives; carts etc.). There will also be a new, improved EH visitor book on Marble Hill.

Timetable - the Stage 2 "Parks for People" HLF bid will be submitted this month, February 2017, with a decision expected by the end of June. At the same time, a planning application will be submitted to the local Council. While these applications are under determination, the Project Team will continue detailed work on the plans. If the Stage 2 grant is approved, it is planned to close the House at the end of August for one year, with a grand opening in September 2018.

Note 1: The Sweet Walk, a serpentine avenue of trees lined with sweet-smelling, ornamental flowers was created for Henrietta by keen botanist the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Bute to screen off Montpelier Row (where he was living) from Marble Hill. Though not included in the Big Investment project, EH hopes to be able to recreate this Walk separately.

Note 2: The Model Market Garden, in the north-east part of the Park, is also not included in the project, but again EH wants to see this continue.

## **KEY PROJECT STAFF**

Project Manager	Ndai Halisch (English Heritage)
Audience Development Manager	Kate Pitt (English Heritage)
Head of Gardens & Landscapes	John Watkins (English Heritage)
Landscape Adviser, Marble Hill	Emily Parker (English Heritage)
Interpretation Manager	Cresida Diezfinch (English Heritage)
Senior Curator, London & East	Laura Houliston (English Heritage)
Marble Hill Curator	Dr Esme Whittaker (English Heritage)
Property Curator, London	Dr Agnieszka Sadrau (English Heritage)
Education Marketing Manager	Chantelle Joysury (English Heritage)
Archaeological Adviser	Magnus Alexander (Historic England)
Landscape Architects	Neil Davidson (J&L Gibbons)
Conservation Architects	Van Heyringham & Havard Architects, and Acanthus Clews

Denise Carr, Marble Hill Society (8 February 2017)