Hoorah for Holland!

Chertsey Museum has recently acquired some rather beautiful 19th century tiles from the former residence of Lord Holland on St. Ann’s Hill.

The tiles are thought to have come from either the folly or the teahouse that once stood within the grounds of his estate. The 38 tiles probably date from the mid-19th century when Lord Holland inherited the estate from Elizabeth Fox, widow of Charles James Fox.

Fox, Britain’s first Foreign Secretary, lived on the hill in the latter years of his life. He was extremely fond of the location and took to rural life with ease. He developed a keen interest in sheep rearing, often discussing farming methods over the fence with his neighbours.

As well as the main house, there were many smaller buildings within the grounds including a Temple of Friendship, a folly and a grotto with a teahouse above! Alas, many of these are now in ruins and have all but disappeared. On Elizabeth’s death in 1842 the area we now think of as St. Ann’s Hill passed to her nephew-in-law, Henry, 3rd Baron Holland, and his wife, Elizabeth Vassell. They made extensive alterations to the estate and planted many of the large specimen trees that are still there today. Unfortunately by the early part of the 20th century the Holland family did not use the house as much and it gradually fell into disrepair. Sections of the estate were sold off and eventually the old house was torn down.
Gearing up for Edwardian Glamour

Plans for the next exhibition to grace the Olive Matthews Fashion Gallery are now well underway. The display will feature underwear, day wear and stunning evening dress from the period. Visitors will be transported back to a golden age of luxury and style when it was normal for wealthy women to change their dress at least five times a day (including donning a diaphanous tea gown in order to take tea promptly at 5pm).

A number of mannequins have already been padded by Grace Evans, Keeper of Costume and freelance costume expert Kerry Agar-Hynd. This is a process that takes many hours of painstaking work. Standard mannequins are covered and padded with conservation-grade wadding so that the correct body shape for each garment is achieved. Great care is taken in order to ensure that the shape is historically accurate for the period, and at the same time we make certain that the garments are adequately supported to prevent undue stress on the fabrics. Barbara Prowle, fashion volunteer, also makes petticoats or ‘underpinnings’ to hold skirts out to the correct shape.

Each garment due to be on show will be fully conserved by our freelance conservator Poppy Singer. Poppy does an amazing job making sure that the pieces look their very best, with areas of damage mended or protected in order to prevent further deterioration during installation and display periods.

The exhibition will open on Saturday 14th September 2013.

The Big Spring Clean & a Big Thank You!

Chertsey Museum displays approximately five exhibitions a year in our temporary exhibition gallery. That’s an awful lot of holes drilled, text panels nailed to the walls and general wear-and-tear. Which is why we are very grateful to Royal Holloway College’s Big Spring Clean for sending us a great group of students to give the walls a bit of a make-over.

The College has been running the Big Spring Clean for six years to coincide with national Student Volunteering Week. Over 100 students undertake all sorts of community projects from planting saplings to, well, painting museum walls! So many thanks to Patrycja, Vanessa, Caitlin, Xiuyue, and Hani.

Getting Crafty!

We have long held craft activities for children which have always been very popular and now The Friends of Chertsey Museum have arrange a series of evening craft sessions especially for adults. So, no longer do you have to look on wistfully at the fun the younger visitors are having; you can join in too! The first two sessions are on the Friday 7th and Friday 21st June when we will be making decorated cushion covers and creating cards using distress ink and stamping techniques, respectively.

We are also changing the time of our monthly Fun With Fabric sessions slightly to fit in better with school collection commitments, and we are putting together a full programme of events for members of The Friends of Chertsey Museum to participate in. So, make sure that you keep an eye out over the forthcoming months for our flyers on planned events such as a trip to the Museum of Brands, Packaging & Advertising, and a session on family history and dating photographs from costume.
Dear Friend,

Spring is here: dandelions are flowering and my barometer has a high reading for the first time in weeks!

Early in February we had a fascinating talk on the War Years at St. Peter’s Hospital which tied in with the exhibition that was on display in the Discovery Zone. At the beginning of March we had a wonderful daytrip to Bexhill and the De La Warr Pavilion. A number of us had been before, and one of us even claimed to have visited it before he was born!

The current temporary exhibition on hair styles had more of an appeal than I had expected. While it did not show many male hairstyles, I did note that those notable Chertsey residents Charles James Fox and Abraham Cowley did put in an appearance.

The next Friends event is in early June when we will be holding a circus skills day. If we each learn one each we can provide entertainment at Black Cherry Fair on Saturday 14th July!

See you all in June!

Derek Weston  
Chairman

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The Big Dig Day!

As you are no doubt aware, last year The Friends of Chertsey Museum funded our mock archaeological trench on Abbeyfields. It has been a great success and has been used by a number of school groups, as well as our very own Young Archaeology Club. During these sessions members of the public frequently come up to us and tell us how much fun it looks and how they wish they could have a go - well now you can!

On Saturday 27th July we are holding two archaeology sessions for children and adults alike. Come along and try your hand at digging up our relics, sifting through the sand and uncovering a surprise resident! There will be two sessions on the day, 10am to 12pm or 2pm to 4pm - £5 per person, young and old, and bookings must be made in advance!
Taking our Hat Off to Miss Matthews!

April 2012 marked the 125th anniversary of the birth of Olive Matthews and to commemorate the occasion the Olive Matthews Collection Trust commissioned a replica of her beloved Tudor nightcap.

Louise Taylor was the winner of the 2011 Patterns of Fashion Award and costume assistant with Past Pleasures, the company that staged our 1930s murder mystery evening last year. She has lovingly created a version as true to the original as possible, using obscure techniques such as Elizabethan spider’s web stitching and braiding. She also painstakingly sourced silk threads that were as similar as possible to the Tudor ones, not only in colour but in the way they were manufactured.

In the past Louise has also made replica Tudor costumes for our education sessions as well as the replica wedding dresses the children enjoyed in the 2010 costume exhibition. We are hoping that, later on in the year, we will be able to display both Louise’s masterpiece and the original together, so that visitors can fully appreciate the accuracy of her endeavours. In the meantime, you can view the original which is on show in the newly re-displayed Accessories Gallery.