



Newsletter 119 - December 2017

A ROMANOV AT KENWOOD



We are marking the anniversary of Grand Duke Michael's seven-year tenure at Kenwood House from 1910 – 1917 with this short account of his life and times, and also with our 'Russian Interlude' event, reported elsewhere in this newsletter.

Grand Duke Michael Mikhailovich (1861-1929) was the second cousin of Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia, and a direct descendant of Catherine the Great.

The family grew up in the Caucasus where the Grand Duke had a spartan upbringing and a troubled relationship with his parents - his father was a distant figure and his mother showed little affection, comparing him unfavourably with his eldest brother, Grand Duke Nicholas, who was considered more gifted.

In 1891, after several unsuccessful marital overtures, the Grand Duke fell in love with Countess Sophie von Merenberg and the couple quickly married in San Remo without asking the permission of the Tsar or his parents.

The marriage was morganatic and illegal under Imperial law and the Grand Duke was promptly exiled from Russia for life.

Following their exile, the couple travelled extensively in England and France, enjoying high society life, settling at Keele Hall, Staffordshire and wintering in Cannes.

During this period, the Grand Duke published a novel called "Never Say Die". A favourable review in "The Spectator" in June 1908 describes the moral of the story – "that if a Prince who is at once susceptible and attractive goes in mortal dread of a capricious and tyrannical mother, his matrimonial ventures are likely to land him in considerable difficulty". The autobiographical elements are inescapable!

Quite why the Grand Duke and the Countess came to move from Staffordshire to Kenwood is unknown – possibly to find suitable matches for their daughters - but they took out a 21-year lease on the then furnished house and moved in with their three children, Zia, Nada and Michael, in 1910. The rent paid was a substantial £2,200 a year, £250,000 in today's money. Kenwood became the setting for family life and glittering cosmopolitan parties. One such dinner and ball was reported by the Ham & High just before the outbreak of War, where it was noted that the drives and grounds were brilliantly illuminated and the rooms – already luxuriously furnished – were filled with plants and flowers whilst a Viennese orchestra played in the Orangery. Supper was served in a marquee hung with pink and green draperies outlined with gold mouldings on the South Terrace, overlooking the lake.

The Grand Duke involved himself with several local good causes and became President of Hampstead General Hospital in 1912 and the following year he presented it with a motor ambulance – at that time, state of the art. He was also responsible for the installation of a high diving board at Highgate Men's Pond.

The Grand Duke and Lord Mansfield offered Kenwood for use as a war hospital, and from November 1915 to August 1916 the Royal Naval Anti-Aircraft Mobile Brigade was established in the Stable Block. The military appear to have mixed easily with the family and had use of the golf course, created for the Grand Duke just before he moved into Kenwood, in the meadow beyond the South Wood.

The Grand Duke's children all became part of British society. In 1916, Kenwood hosted the wedding reception of Countess Nada and Prince George of Battenburg (elder brother of Earl Mountbatten) and the following year Countess Zia married Sir Harold Wernher, the diamond magnate; they lived at Luton Hoo. Their only son Count Michael, who was subject to bouts of depression, found some success as a painter mostly of still-lives and luxuriant garden landscapes, a far cry from the developing avant-garde movements of the family's native Russia. He was also active as a theatrical painter.

The Russian Revolution in 1917 took a heavy toll on the family's fortunes. The family income had been derived from the Borjomi mineral water plant on the family estates in Georgia, which after modernisation was producing a third of a million bottles a year by 1913. Following the confiscation of the estates by the Bolsheviks, the Grand Duke was left virtually penniless and had to rely on the charity of his wealthy son-in-law. The family was obliged to leave Kenwood in 1917 and move to a (comparatively) modest house at Cambridge Gate, Regent's Park.

The loss of many relatives – three of his brothers were murdered by the Bolsheviks – and his straitened circumstances appeared to take their toll on the Grand Duke's spirits and he is reported to have become troublesome and short-tempered with his wife and with servants. In September 1927, his wife died aged fifty-nine. King George V wrote a letter of condolence and the Prince of Wales attended the funeral. The Grand Duke survived her by less than two years and died of influenza in 1929. The couple are buried in Hampstead Cemetery in Fortune Green Road.

Two of the family dogs, Bill and Mac are buried at Kenwood, on a ridge of North Wood between the house and Hampstead Lane and memorial tablets mark the spot.

CURATORIAL NEWS

Jerzy Kierkuc-Bielinski, Curator of the Iveagh Bequest left Kenwood in August to take up a post at the National Trust. In addition to his considerable curatorial work at Kenwood, Jerzy introduced the excellent Friday lunchtime Curator's Tours, and also made some short films about Vermeer's 'Guitar Player', the Chinese fireplace surround on the first floor, the restored Constable view of 'Hampstead Heath with Pond and Bathers', and de Jongh's 'Old London Bridge'. The films

can be viewed on the EH Kenwood House Facebook page.

We wish Jerzy all the best in his new job.

We welcome our new Curator, Allison Goudie, who joins us from the Paintings and Sculpture department of the National Trust. She previously worked at The National Gallery on the 17th and 18th century paintings catalogue for the German Schools and co-curated the exhibition 'Australia's Impressionists'.

Jan Baptist Weenix's 'Family in a Mediterranean Seaport' has returned from a revealing conservation and clean. The Friends of Kenwood funded a new slip for the frame to ensure the best presentation of the picture. The conservation has revealed a hitherto concealed wealth of detail and colour in the painting and it is worth going to have a look at it, rehung in the Dining Room.

The first-floor rooms are open again after a significant eighteen-month programme of careful conservation work to resolve structural problems in Lady Mansfield's bedroom. You can read the full story in our June 2017 Newsletter.



First floor conservation work

Following this conservation, the Suffolk Collection has been rehung along with John Singer Sargent's portrait of Daisy Leiter, later Margaret Hyde, 19th Countess of Suffolk.

LANDSCAPE MATTERS

There are plans to plant new beech trees on Beech Mount, new oak and beech in North and South Woods, and to reduce and regenerate the very leggy and excessively dark holly in North Wood before next summer. At the same time, there will be a selective amount of tree-felling before the nesting season: a small stand of birch is suppressing the growth of an ancient boundary oak on the hanging west of the Dairy, while in West Meadow a birch between majestic beech and oak trees is affecting their growth.

English Heritage are worried that larch, a 'super-sporulator' for phytophthora ramorum (sudden oak death) could put Kenwood's rhododendron collection at risk. There are three larches on the Kenwood Estate and these will be felled as it is not worth risking such a devastating loss.

Rhododendrons, favourites of the Victorians, were only first planted at Kenwood in the 1890s. In the photo below, you can see how the Garden team has thinned out the centre of the island beds with a view to their regeneration, although cleverly from a distance, they still look solidly green.



The Rhododendron Beds

The Viewpoint by the Stable Block is now completed and the Kitchen Garden herbaceous bed has been renovated to great effect.

Following on from our last Newsletter, don't forget to look out for snowdrops in late winter!

2018 marks the 200th anniversary of the death of Humphry Repton and Kenwood represents one of Repton's best-known proposals for landscape design. Through the year, but particularly in spring, English Heritage will be running a series of walks and talks at Kenwood and at other Repton landscapes in their purlieu to celebrate the anniversary. You might also like to book a ticket for the lecture at the London Parks & Gardens Trust on 8 January by Emily Parker, EH Landscape

Historian, entitled 'Humphry Repton's Designs for Kenwood'.

For tickets, please visit www.londongardenstrust.org.

If you are interested in recent developments on Hampstead Heath, you can visit the City of London's Hampstead Heath page on its website: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath.

This includes links to the proposed Community Vision for Hampstead Heath 50 years from now, prepared by environmental charity Groundwork London.

KENWOOD ESTATE SPRING WALK

24th October 2017

A large group of Friends of Kenwood went on a fascinating tour of the estate given by Head Gardener, Dave Gibbons, the theme of which was autumn colour. About 15 years ago, the Friends of Kenwood contributed to the planting of the trees on the Half-Moon Lawn north of the House, which we viewed first of all. Although it was a day of dull light, the blue foliage of the noble fir really stood out and the Estate was brightened up by the strident reds, yellows and oranges of the liquidambar and the tulip tree, not forgetting the common birch. We noted the runner-bean-like fruit dripping from an Indian bean tree, and the bright yellow of a ginkgo, as well as the five swamp cypress near the Lake which survive from the original planting of the Estate.



Vine in the Kitchen Garden

In the new garden planted around the Dairy, further autumn colours were viewed. However, the horse chestnut there showed signs of the dark rust which results from the moth that virulently attacks these trees. The next destination was the bog area, designated Site of Special Scientific Interest for its rare sphagnum moss. The area is cleared of any invasive common or buckthorn alder,

which are however allowed to grow around the edge as they are the only vegetation that the brimstone butterfly feeds on.

Finishing in the Kitchen Garden we were struck by the vitas vine with its range of reds and purples, and the striking dark purple of an acer. Dave explained that there were only ever three walls bordering the garden; the south side being just a shelter belt allowing the cold air to roll away in winter, thus preventing it from becoming a frost pocket. He also pointed out the Grade 1 listed north wall which is hollow; fires would be lit in it to heat the glass houses that once leaned against it; hence the square detachable stones with metal ring-pulls.

Paul Huggins, FOK

VISIT TO IGHTHAM MOTE

26th September 2017



Twenty-two Friends of Kenwood visited this 700-year-old manor house on a sunny autumn day. Although it is moated, 'mote' actually means 'meeting place', originating from the Dutch – the 14th century purpose of the

house was for the locals to use the plentiful water for wool and fishing, which was all explained by our knowledgeable and entertaining guide. We had a tour of the house, kept in a very good condition, and we discovered the unfolding of the different periods over the centuries. Our guide went into every detail concerning ownership by different generations and different families - no one decided to demolish a previous generation's work.

The most impressive part of the house was the fireplace in the first-floor room – the owner in 1612, Dame Dorothy Selby, raised the ceiling and the roof so that an astonishing Jacobean fireplace could be accommodated in the room. The chinoiserie wall-coverings were handmade and amongst the first to be imported to England, and are unique in that they are intact; mirrors were added to appear to elongate the room for dancing, and with a bit of imagination one could picture what a social event the dances there must have been.

Towards the end of private ownership, the house changed hands and was bought by an American printing magnate from Colorado Springs, Charles Henry Robinson. He loved it so much he felt he had 'come home', and his ashes are buried within the walls of the house. After his death, the house was passed to the National Trust. We were also able to see John Singer Sargent's portrait of seventeen-year-old Elsie Palmer, the eldest daughter of Queen Palmer (wife of an American railroad engineer, who lived in the house from 1887 - 90), currently on loan

from Colorado Springs Fine Arts Centre, a nice ending to the present moment. The restoration works to the house are still in progress. At the time of our visit, the house was being imaginatively used for a selling exhibition of sculptures created by local East Surrey sculptors.

Theodora Al-Sowaidan, FOK

A RUSSIAN INTERLUDE

23rd October 2017

Our Russian evening marked the anniversary of the end of the seven-year tenure at Kenwood of Grand Duke Michael Mikhailovich in 1917. The occasion was all the more poignant for the attendance of our special guests HRH Prince Michael of Kent and Alexandra Duchess of Abercorn, her sisters and other family members. Lady Abercorn is the great granddaughter of Grand Duke Michael.

Following refreshments served in the Green Room, we were treated to a fascinating lecture on the eventful and glamorous life of Grand Duke Michael by our guest speaker Julius Bryant, who is Keeper of the Department of Word and Image at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Julius had researched contemporary newspapers, periodicals and archives and new light was shed on the life of the Grand Duke and his family, from his marriage and subsequent exile from Russia through his years in Cannes, Keele Hall in Staffordshire and Kenwood, to his final abode at Cambridge Gate.

The second part of the evening was a performance of Borodin's romantic and melodious 2nd String Quartet by the Solem Quartet. The performance was brilliantly executed and further enhanced by the warm and reverberant acoustic of the Orangery.

The evening concluded with a short speech of thanks by the Duchess to the Friends for organising the event and a plea for greater political understanding between Russia and the West.

Thanks to Searcys for sponsoring the refreshments and to all those Committee members who helped to organise a really memorable evening.

LECTURES AND VISITS JANUARY TO JUNE 2018

All lectures begin at **11.00am** in the Lecture Room

Seating is limited in the Lecture Room due to fire regulations. The Lecture Room is open from 10.30am.

The lecture on 15 April begins at 11.30 am, following the AGM.

Sunday 10 December, **The Making and Meaning of Plaster Casts in the 19th century: their Future in the 21st century**

Dr Holly Trusted

This lecture is followed by the **CHRISTMAS DRINKS**. There is a 10% discount in Kenwood shops following the lecture.

Sunday 14 January, **Literary Highgate: Walking with Ghosts**

Isabel Raphael

Sunday 18 February, **The Great Velásquez at Court in Madrid**

Dr Jacqueline Cockburn

Sunday 18 March, **Impressionists in London, French Artists in Exile (1870-1904)**

Dr Caroline Corbeau-Parsons

Sunday 15 April (at 11.30am following AGM)

Art and Revolution: The Life and Death of the Russian Avant-Garde

Dr Rosamund Bartlett

Sunday 13 May, **Making hay while the sun shines: the agricultural cycle and the marking of time in the Middle Ages**

Dr Cathy Oakes

Sunday 17 June, **Within Walls: The Archaeology of Magical Building Protection**

Brian Hoggard

SPRING ESTATE WALK

Tuesday 17 April, 10.30 am, **Kenwood's Ancient Woodlands**

A walk with Kenwood's Head Gardener. Meet at North Front of Kenwood House.

This walk is free for Friends of Kenwood; non-members £5.00.

Please contact Elizabeth Inglis on 020 8450 8802 or via email efinglis@dsl.pipex.com



VISITS

Thursday 1 February, **An Evening at The College of Arms**

130, Queen Victoria Street, London, EC4V 4BT at 6.15pm



Friends should note that access is by a flight of steps, lavatories are on the 3rd floor and we shall be on our feet in the Record Room for an hour.

The total cost of the visit, including wine and buffet supper is £38.

Wednesday 7 March, **Turner's House, Sandycombe Lodge**

Sandycombe Lodge, 40 Sandycombe Road, Twickenham TW1 2LR at 1.45pm

The cost is £8 for admission and tour.



FOR FULL DETAILS OF LECTURES AND EVENTS SEE THE EVENTS SHEET AND WEBSITE

ESTATE NEWS

Scarcys at The Brew House

Thank you to all who have taken the time to give us feedback, please do keep giving us your views, and of course, there is a comments box in the Brew House if you wish to give direct feedback to Scarcys. In response to demand, the excellent salad bar was introduced at the beginning of the summer. If you would like speedier coffee, filter coffee is available.

Good news for early risers: the Steward's Room now opens at 8am; don't forget that with the shorter winter opening hours for the House and the Estate, the Brew House will close earlier too.

We will continue to keep you updated with news via our regular emails.

Kenwood Concerts

Keep your eyes on our website, monthly email circulars, our Facebook page and Twitter for news about outdoor Kenwood Concerts in 2018 - we remain optimistic that these may happen. If they do, please show your support by buying tickets!

Deckchairs

You might have noticed some deckchairs for hire this summer along the same lines as those available for hire in the Royal Parks. By the time this Newsletter expires, it will be nearly deckchair time again, so keep a look out for them!

MEMBERSHIP

It's never too late to renew your membership!

You can pay in several different ways:

PayPal: go to the Membership page on the website, www.friendsofkenwood.org.uk and click on the PayPal button.

Standing Order which, once done, saves you having to remember to renew, and then your membership cards are sent to you automatically every year.

Cheque (made payable to 'The Friends of Kenwood').

Please encourage your friends to join too. Membership makes a nice Christmas present!

If you wish to support us even more generously, you might consider becoming a Rembrandt or a Vermeer Friend, all details are on our website.

Single Annual Membership	£18 p.a.
Joint	£27 p.a.
Single Life Membership	£300
Joint Life Membership	£400
Rembrandt Friend	£300 p.a.
Vermeer Friend	£750 p.a.

SUPPORTING THE FRIENDS OF KENWOOD

We rely on your support to keep our high profile at Kenwood House, and your donations are welcome in increasingly challenging times. Kenwood is under the care of The English Heritage Trust which has to be self-funding by 2023. Our aim at the Friends of Kenwood is to keep Kenwood a top priority.

If you would like to make an additional financial contribution to our work, please contact our Treasurer,

Ken Solomons by emailing him at kssco@aol.com or writing to him c/o Kenwood House, NW3 7JR.

You can also support us by remembering the Friends of Kenwood in your will. This can make a significant difference to our fund-raising efforts, helping us protect the future of Kenwood House, its outstanding art collection, and the Kenwood Estate. If you choose to include the Friends in your will, you will need to direct your gift to our registered charity number: 273258. It is simple to do and tax efficient.

A further benefit of leaving a gift to Friends of Kenwood, or any other qualifying charity, is that this amount will not be subject to Inheritance Tax. In addition, if total charitable bequests amount to at least 10% of the taxable estate, then the Inheritance Tax chargeable on the balance is reduced from 40% to 36%.

NOMINATE THE FRIENDS OF KENWOOD AS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARITY FOR YOUR ONLINE SHOPPING

You can support us really easily every time you buy something online! It's no extra effort for you once you have registered at:

www.giveasyoulive.com/join/kenwoodfriends

A percentage of your purchases at most major retailers will be donated to the Friends of Kenwood and to date, we have received over £300 in these small donations.

VERMEER AND REMBRANDT FRIENDS

The Friends would like to extend grateful thanks to the following for supporting us as Vermeer and Rembrandt Friends:

Chris Carter, Elizabeth Meek, David Pears

CORPORATE BENEFACTORS

The Friends would like to extend grateful thanks to the following for supporting us as Corporate Benefactors:

