



STOWE HOUSE

Volunteer's Newsletter

October 2015

Introduction

Some of you may remember that Ed Grimshaw, spoke to as about the estate and family as portrayed though the pages of the local press. He showed us a clipping referring to the “Grenville Steam Wagon”, as an enthusiast fan of all things steam, this starting me on an adventure. After spending time on Wikipedia I found enough information to be able to locate the only example left. So a few days ago we took a short holiday in the New Forest, which just happen to be were the Beaulieu Motor Museum is located, and where the only example of the “Grenville Steam Wagon” is



kept in running order with a current MOT. It was built by Rupert Neville -Grenville in partnership with George Jackson Churchward in about 1845 in Glastonbury. If any of you are real steam anoraks you will recognize the name Churchward; he was chief engineer of the GWR in later life.

We have not been able to find a direct link between Rupert and the Temple-Grenvilles, but you never know. If any of you know more please let us know.

Visitor Services

Website launched!

September has been a month filled with website building. You may have noticed I have been quite quiet (ha!), squirreled away in the office and trying not to get too distracted. The new site has now gone live (check us out at www.stowehouse.org). My ambition for the site was for it to be clear and easy to use, and so the text is minimal and is written in ‘plain English’. The idea of ‘plain English’ is to reduce the amount of fluffy language used (no more *magnificent!*) and to tell people what they need to know in a chatty and informal style. Not only does this make a trip on to our website quick and pain free, it also helps us with our ambition to be one of the most accessible Historic Houses in the country, and achieve our *Enlightenment for All* project aims.

Our *Google Analytics* (a clever site which tells us how many people look at what on our website) told us that a huge portion of the old website was never looked at. So we were spending time updating information which no one ever read! Knowing how busy the SHPT team are this did not seem very

efficient! I have reduced the number of pages on the website and I have created a 'News' page where we can easily upload restoration updates and information about what we have all been up to. We can also start up our *Volunteer Blog* and we can post *Lost Treasures of Stowe* updates and our *Intern Blogs*.

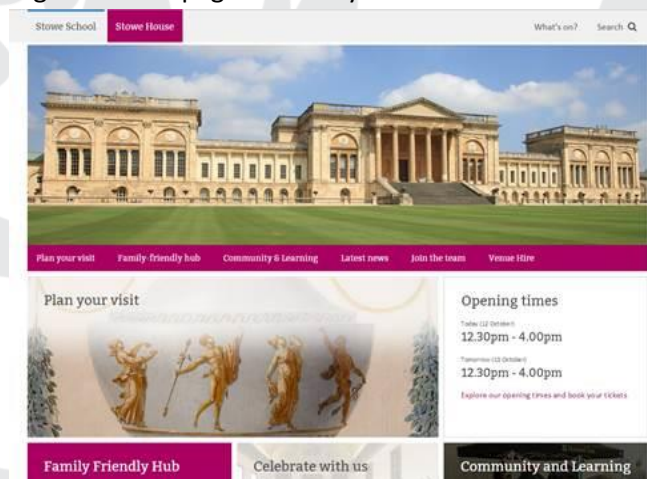
The new site also allows us to highlight our events, under the *What's On* page you can see all of the public events held at Stowe, so it is quick and easy to find Arts, Music, Tours and Family Fun all in one place. The new Family Friendly Hub allows those with young children to quickly see that we are family friendly and unlike traditional country houses! All the information they need in is one place. Our *Accessibility* pages make visiting the House much easier. Information about the two entrances to the site is clearly explained and all of our accessibility resources are detailed so that visitors can request these when they arrive without any fuss. One of the key advances is our new online ticket booking. Visitors can now book their House visit up to one month in advance if they wish to! This is not something we expect will be much used for the first few months however it is an area of the business we can grow and hopefully it will help increase visitor numbers in the winter.

There is still more to come – I am in the process of building a '*What there is to see*' page which will give some historical information and images of the State Rooms, and I will be making tweaks and adding content to the website regularly from now on.

It is really important you have a good look through all of the pages so that you can talk to visitors and ensure you have all the correct information about Stowe.

Do please let me know if you spot anything out of the ordinary – the site has been professionally proofread so should not have too many mistakes however there may be the odd link that doesn't work or sentence which you do not think is clear.

The Stowe School website has also been made over and so they have a beautiful website too!



How you can help:

We would like to add you to our website! I have created a meet the team page (<http://www.stowe.co.uk/house/join-the-team/meet-the-team>) and we have a volunteer page (<http://www.stowe.co.uk/house/join-the-team/volunteer>), and I would be really pleased if one person from each day's team would write a little hello telling us why you enjoy volunteering – this will help the website reflect what a lovely and welcoming place Stowe House is to volunteer at. I look forward to receiving some 'Hellos' soon!

I am also looking for some willing Guides to do some 'My favourite Stowe story' videos talking for a couple of minutes about a subject from Stowe's history that you love!

Thank you all for your help and patience while I have been busy putting the site together – another project ticked off the list!

Ruth Peters
Visitor Services Manager

I thought for my first piece in the Newsletter I would let you know about our visitor numbers! Over the past year (October 2014 – September 2015) Stowe House has welcomed approximately 17,517 visitors! This number is a mixture of payers (NT members and non-members), Grand Opening and Heritage Open Day visitors, Annual Pass members and Historic Houses Association members.

The figure I know you might be excited to know is how many visitors we have had since we opened the new Welcome and Discovery Centres. Drumroll please...8479 (approx.) visitors came through the doors since 30th July! This figure includes the roughly 3500 visitors who came to the Grand Opening and 1009 who visited on Heritage Open Day.

Thank you everyone who has been here welcoming these visitors, sharing Stowe stories with them, making endless cups of tea and coffee, or beavering away in the SHPT office!

Kate Groome
Visitor Services Officer

House Custodian News

So post-opening, I'm spending time catching up with databases! The assets register, which records any items we have worth over £50, is now up to date with the new Bonhams evaluation and changes of location – it always surprises me how these objects move! We've been updating records detailing the items we put on display, those items that we were going to put on display but ran out of space for, and the items still in storage. This does mean that we have more items which we can put on display for our changing exhibitions. This database relates to the *Salvage Plan* that I have spoken to some of you about, and also to the *Conservation and Housekeeping* folder that I am currently compiling. With regards to items being offered to us or telling us about, an Old Stoic is buying a sketch of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert planting the trees outside Concord and Victory, (presumably an original which was probably created with a view to be printed in a newspaper). This will be a nice one to put on display eventually. Also we have been informed that 17 George III dining chairs, ca. 1770, "in the manner of Robert Manwaring", described in the extensive text in the Stowe Sale of 1848 catalogue, lot 2522, came up for sale in May; the estimated price was £ 100-150,000. There had originally been 18 of these, but it seems that one has been lost since then. It's always interesting to know what Stowe activity there is out in the world – it confirms that Stowe really is the centre of the universe!

Anna McEvoy
House Custodian

Enlightenment

As many of you will know, we hosted several interns this summer; two of them worked specifically with the Community & Learning team. This is the first time that we've been able to offer placements

especially for students who wish to work in Heritage Learning and we were able to give them a very hands-on experience! Ella and Meghan were with us for eight of the busiest weeks that Stowe House has ever seen and I'm sure that those of you who worked with them will agree that they played a vital role in supporting all of our efforts at that time. They spent a lot of their time stewarding and assisting at family events, preparing resources and maintaining the family offer throughout the State Rooms (amongst other things!). If you're wondering what they did with the rest of their time, each of them worked on their own projects. Ella has done some of the preparation for the online resources that we plan to make available to secondary schools in the coming year. Meghan has been researching and preparing resources for us to use in projects with local schools after our HLF projects; these are based on the 'Take One' model that the Tower of London and National Portrait Gallery have developed. They visited the Roald Dahl Story Centre, Kensington Palace and the V&A to see examples of good practice. The quality of the projects that both of them produced were exceptional and we expect to be able to put both to good use in the coming year. They really enjoyed their time at Stowe and were very grateful for all of the support that you gave them. Ella has now returned for her final year at Oxford and Meghan is a fully-fledged graduate, now job-hunting from home. You can read their diaries of their time at Stowe in the *Intern Blog* on the new website.



Natalie
Community & Learning Manager

Tours and Events

Friday, 4th Nov, Coffee Morning in Music Room at 10.00am for 10.30am, Speaker Andrew Rudolph "Chandos in the West Indies".

Friday, 15th Dec, Coffee Morning in Music room at 10.00am for 10.30am.

Friday, 15th Dec, Drinks in Marble Hall at 12.00pm followed by Christmas Dinner in State Drawing Room.

Friday 8th Jan, Coffee Morning in Music Room at 10.00am for 10.30am followed by our annual post-Christmas walk.

Stephen Vanns
Volunteer Social Organiser