



Friends of Hylands House

NEWSLETTER

April 2025



Photo: Alan Mayo

<http://www.friendsofhylandshouse.co.uk>

FRIENDS OF HYLANDS HOUSE

Reg. Charity No. 1059969

President: LORD PETRE

**Vice-Presidents: Glenda Hicks, Paul Hutchinson, Stuart Mole,
Richard Oscroft, David Thomson and Linda Knock**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Chairman:** **CHRIS RYCROFT**
35 Canford Close, Chelmsford CM2 9RG
Tel. 01245 473047 email: c.rycroft123@btinternet.com
- Vice Chair:** **NICK WICKENDEN**
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- Secretary:** **Vacant**
- Membership:** **ALAN MAYO**
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- Bookshop: Manager:** **STAN KALUZA** 01245 256765
stankaluza@blueyonder.co.uk
- Staffing** **Cynthia Walker** 01245 474781
cjwalker2010@gogglemail.com
Bookshop Tel No.: 01245 605509
- Newsletter Compilers:** **BERRY CORNELL** 01277 355823
CYNTHIA WALKER (as above)
- Committee Members:** **Ann Bell, Val Chiswell, Richard Oscroft**

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RATES

Adult: £18; Joint adult £34; Concessions: Single £13; Joint £24

*Existing members – you can change your payment to a Direct Debit on the new website at any time **but don't forget to cancel your existing Standing Order.***

Payment will be collected on 1st March each year and if you have given your consent, we will claim Gift Aid.

www.friendsofhylandshouse.co.uk

Chairman's Message

I would like to wish you all a happy New Year, although the year is now three months old.

We had a successful Christmas lunch enjoyed by 52 members followed by carols accompanied by Will Coleridge.

Several committee members attended the “enlightened” festival before Christmas which was amazing. If the event is repeated next year I would recommend it to members, particularly those with children or grandchildren.

We had also reserved tickets for the pantomime at Colchester but unfortunately the response was very poor and we had to cancel. I would ask members to let us have any ideas for outings that they would like us to arrange that will attract sufficient participants. We have 330 members so it should be feasible to find something that 40-50 people would enjoy.

On March 10th we held a tea party in the house for the bookshop volunteers to thank them for their time and effort (please see page 11).

The Friends have made donations towards making applications to the lottery fund and erecting a fence round the Ice House with a vehicular gate. We are going to fund the provision of plaques for portraits in the House in conjunction with Chelmsford Museum.

You will see from the AGM Notice that Alison Woollard will be speaking about Humphrey Repton. We feel this is of interest to many so we have decided to split the AGM into two halves. The business will take place as usual, we will then adjourn for tea/coffee and then the Humphrey Repton talk to which we will invite non-members. We hope this will generate interest in the Friends and attract new members.

At the AGM we will be looking for new Officers (Chairman and/or Secretary) and committee members. Please consider becoming involved in the management of the Friends of Hylands House.

I look forward to seeing you all at the AGM.

Chris Rycroft



The 'Friends' enjoying their Christmas lunch 2024. Organised by Cynthia Walker.
Photo Alan Mayo

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Monday 28th April 2025 at 2pm

Followed by talk at 3pm

Gardens are Works of Art rather than of Nature
Speaker Alison Woollard

What part did Humphry Repton play in the changing fashions of gardens, including Hylands Park, from Rococo gardens of the mid-18th century and Capability Brown's landscaped park revolution through to the picturesque and then gardenesque styles of the 19th century?



View from the Sundial.



Winter walk.

Hylands Open Estate Day

Hylands Open Estate Day takes place the second Sunday of the month. The day starts early at the front of Hylands House with the arrival of stall holders in their vans setting up for a busy day. Staff too are early birds, arriving at 7am to open up the House which is always full of activities for children. April's theme is Romance and Weddings where we will be joined by Chelmsford Museum. Mike the storyteller also delights children of all ages with his stories in the beautiful Drawing Room. At 10am and at 1pm, one of the guides will be leading tours of the House. The 1pm tour in particular is extremely popular, so it's good to be early!

In the Library, the Hylands House volunteers have also been busy behind the scenes preparing for Open Estate Day. A few days beforehand, three of the House volunteers – Alison Woollard, Val Chiswell, and Michael Gray – along with historian Barbara Gray, carefully select items from the archives, now located in the basement. They create an engaging display of cards showcasing information on past owners of the House, their lives, the servants who worked there, or notable events from Hylands' history. We are especially grateful to Nick Wickenden, Linda Knock, and Shirley Harman for their dedication in researching the history of Hylands House and the estate through the generations.

Meanwhile, the Friends of Hylands House charity is always on hand to share its purpose. Our chairman Chris Rycroft and Berry Cornell are available to promote the work of 'the Friends' and answer visitors' questions. We enjoy talking to families visiting the House because of past associations, as well as those who have moved away but return to reminisce about their childhood memories of Hylands and its restoration. We often dive into (and promote) the official guide, *Hylands*, written by our vice chairman, Nick Wickenden, with contributions from Linda Knock, a past chairman of the group.

If you haven't visited the House lately on an Open Estate Day, do come back and enjoy what you have helped to achieve.



Hylands Estate, a Diary from the Park

It was a soggy changeable day in January when I, as a new parks officer, met Head Gardener Alastair Carden and Claire Smith, Gardener, to catch-up on what the gardeners have been up to as we head in towards spring.

In the background, among the bird song, I can hear the low hum of hedges being trimmed, the steady fountain like aerator in the pond, and the rustling of ornamental bamboo.

We have started in the formal gardens, where the *Trachycarpus fortunei*'s (Windmill Palm) had their winter jackets on, as did a few of the beds to help keep the frost off, and in part to guard against the cheeky bulb eating resident wildlife, who sometimes have their own ideas for the garden.

There are five varieties of Daffodil (*Narcissus*) emerging in the formal beds; 'Tete-a-tete', 'Kedron', 'Snow Baby', 'Quail', 'Baby Moon', 'Intrigue', and two varieties of Tulip, which are biding their time, in the sundial bed; 'Jordan' and 'Paul Scherer'. Preparations for these bulbs started back in late summer/autumn 2023. Since they were planted the daffodil bulbs have multiplied, so should get a very good display this year, and are sure to be a firm favourite of many.

On approaching the formal gardens, from the Writtle end pedestrian entrance (near stop eight on the garden tour), you may notice an area which has been changing over the last few seasons. From a concept starting back in 2022, this quiet corner is now well over halfway through its development.



Formal garden approach from Writtle end.

The border, designed by gardener Claire, has been opened up, allowing for a brighter view, with a mix of seasonal planting promoting a pollinator friendly entrance into the gardens.

Formerly crushed by overgrown Laurels, the area has been gradually cleared, with old stumps being dug up both manually and mechanically, for use as habitats elsewhere. Topsoil has been reused from other parks, after screening, to level the ground. Plants like the Ferns, were lifted, split and replanted for added seasonal interest.

The bedding here will continue to develop and change through the seasons, but for now, in late January, the Hellebores are bringing renewed peace to this junction and helping to tie this area in with other sections.



Over in the One World Garden there was a heavy hit of the winter flowering *Sarcococca confusa*, an evergreen sweet box, enjoyed by pollinators and birds alike for its sweet honey scented flowers and dark berries. The hazel catkins were forming in their arch after a refreshing winter coppicing, prior to their leaves returning at this popular selfie-spot.

The One World Garden really does have something to see and smell all year round, but shines most through the spring into summer as the Camellias, Verbenas and ranges of grass start to return to top form.

Hopping into the Hanbury Garden, the buds on the nearly 100-year-old Rhododendron ‘Cynthia’, set out by Christine Hanbury, are developing at

great pace and should put on a wonderfully vivid display again this year. But in case you needed another reason to pop by, the views from this garden perfectly frame the changeable seasonal colours of the wider parkland, making it a lovely spot to come back to time and time again.

At the time I visited in late January, the showstopper, in my view, of all the gardens had to be the Winter Walk, another area which is constantly evolving.

The Winter Walk is full of contrasting textures and colours, with varieties of vivid reds, oranges and yellows from the *Cornus* (Dogwood's), ornamental grasses ranging showing rustic to black shades, evergreen shrubs, and the delicate purple-white flowers of the *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' shrub, which will change to black berries later in the year. There is just so much see, not forgetting the white of the peeling birch bark, the pale ornamental bramble stems (*Rubus cockburnianus*), the distinctive Mahonias, and the fragile Snowdrops, together with timeless Heathers placed around the boarder. I wish I could list them all here, but you will have to come see for yourself, as even on a rainy day this is not an area to be missed.

Coming up this spring and summer, look out as life renews in the shrub beds and Wisteria starts to bloom in formal gardens. Further into the Winter Walk preparations are continuing for its gradual extension over the coming years.

If you are visiting and looking for a longer adventure, wind your way past the playgrounds and into the woods, where the rangers and volunteers have been lightly coppicing and removing encroaching species like the self-seeding Euphorbia, as well as refreshing the paths and cutting back overgrown vegetation, to keep this woodland habitat healthy.

We cannot wait to see what the rest of this year will bring to the gardens at Hylands.

Yours sincerely,
Parks and Green Spaces

Interview with Mr. Cornelius Kortright of Hylands House by the Essex Herald Reporter, for the edition of 23rd January 1810

Rep. Thank you, Mr Kortright, for granting me the privilege of speaking to me in your beautiful and prestigious home and answering a few questions.

News of your recent sumptuous ball and supper held here, to which you invited one hundred guests with dancing until dawn, has circulated around Chelmsford and well beyond engendering much curiosity.

CK. Having completed most of my changes to the original house, extensions, additions and the excellent work of the celebrated Mr Humphry Repton both internally and externally, I thought it time to not only reveal them to local influential worthies but also to entertain, demonstrating my generosity and lavish hospitality.



Rep. How long have you owned Hylands House and why did you buy it and settle in England?

CK. I successfully bid £14,500 for the house at an auction in Chelmsford at the Black Boy Inn, back in 1797. As you may know I am Danish by birth and became a successful merchant with a sugar plantation on St Croix Island which is under Danish rule. I also dabbled in the slave trade. However, when it became obvious that the opposition to the latter was increasing from the abolitionists threatening it with extinction I, and many other traders, decided to leave the West Indian Islands and seek property in which to invest elsewhere. I decided to make England my home. The County of Essex is sufficiently close to the London metropolis and the area around Chelmsford seemed pleasant enough.

Rep. At the auction I presume you were aware that the Comyns family were the first owners and in fact built the house albeit in redbrick Queen Anne style?

CK. Yes of course. I realized that it had great potential for altering to my favoured, and indeed more popularly in favour, modern architectural style of neo classical, with space for extension to accommodate my wife Mrs Juliana Kortright, my son Lawrence, and my daughter also Juliana. The estate had great potential for both formalized gardens. landscaping and agriculture.

Rep. So, what we see today are the results of your alterations and additions?

CK. Of course and I immediately set about bringing my plans to fruition. I was able to secure the engagement of the celebrated and well-known architect and landscape gardener Mr Humphry Repton, His abilities of course are well known, and I regarded it as something of a coup to secure his services. He came to the house, spent several days discussing with me what I wanted, what his vision might be and then returned home. Some days later, he attended again with his plans in a red book, one of which he produced for all his clients. I was delighted, engaged him and so began his work.

Rep. Can you describe exactly how the house and Hylands estate has been changed, and is any more work intended?

CK. As you see it today, the red brick has been covered in white stucco plaster. The colonnaded portico, through which you entered, has been added. The single-storey east extension has been built, containing a large drawing room which opens on to, although I say it myself, a beautiful conservatory and aviary which afford me much pleasure as well as my family. Humphry had plans to make the house symmetrical with a west wing, but I and my family eventually grew tired of all the hustle and bustle connected with the aggrandisement of what is after all a family house, and I decided not to proceed with it.

Rep. We all know of Repton's reputation as a landscape gardener so what has he designed for you here at Hylands?



CK. Two important features which he designed relate to the approach road to the House which I hope you noticed as your coach brought you in, and the formation of a serpentine lake. The original drive to the house was straight so now I have a drive which

curves and turns in such a way that glimpses of the House appear through the trees as one approaches. The lake is at right angles to the London Road, giving my visitors a glimpse of water as they enter from the road.

Rep. I did indeed enjoy the vista as I approached the House. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview you. Our readers will be impressed with and appreciate the information imparted to me today about yourself and your prestigious home.

(In 1814, Kortright put Hylands up for sale and downsized to a smaller house in Fryerning. He died in 1818 and is buried in the churchyard. The auction description is of a grand house, including thirteen bedrooms and a nursery, whilst the gardens are described as tastefully



laid out, with high walls, well stocked with fruit trees, a gardener's house, pinery (for growing pineapples) hot house and ice house.)

The Friends of Hylands House Bookshop Team 17th Anniversary Bookshop Tea



On Monday 10th March 2025, 45 members of the Bookshop Team enjoyed a 17th Anniversary Celebratory Tea. Not only was this a celebration but also a 'thank you' to the team for their continued support and loyalty.

Cynthia opened the afternoon by welcoming everyone and thanking them all for being such a great team and the support they give her when she asks for additional help. Without this help the bookshop would not be able to open seven days a week 52 weeks of the year. What a wonderful achievement.

We all enjoyed a delicious buffet of sandwiches, cake and fruit. This was followed by the raffle and a quiz. We had such fun and laughter with the quiz. Stan provided the prizes for the quiz, each person on the winning table taking home a variety box of Walkers Crisps (a very unusual prize, but great fun) also one lucky lady or gentleman won the raffle for the table decoration.

To close the afternoon Stan thanked everyone for their continued support and then we all made our way to the Grand Staircase for the photograph of the Hyland House Bookshop Team 2025.

Needless to say, we are always looking for volunteers so if you are interested in joining the bookshop team, please ring Cynthia on 01245 474781 to find out more.

HYLANDS OPENING TIMES

For up to date information please check on www.hylandsestate.co.uk

Park and Gardens

Hylands Park is open to the public every day of the year. The gates at the park entrances are opened at 7.30 am and are closed and locked at the following times:

January	5pm	August	9pm
February and March	6pm	September	8pm
April	8pm	October	7pm
May	9pm	November	5pm
June and July	10pm	December	5pm

Hylands House

The House opens its doors Free of Charge on the second Sunday of each month, 10am - 3pm as part of the Open Estate Day.

Stables Information Point

Monday – Friday – 10.00am – 4.00pm

Saturday and Sunday – 10.00am – 5.00pm

The Deli Hylands (in the stables)

From April – 8.00am to 5.00pm every day

Castle Playground changing place and toilets

open every day from 9.30am to 2.00pm.

The Friends' Book Shop

Spring Summer – [1st April – 30th September]

10.30am – 3.45pm, weekdays and 10.30am – 4.30pm, weekends

Autumn – Winter [1st October to 31st March]:

10.30am - 3.00pm, weekdays and 10.30am - 3.30pm, weekends