



# NEWSLETTER

*Issue No. 22 April 2011*

## **20 Years of Achievement**

On 25<sup>th</sup> March 1991 the four founder trustees took up a lease of no.132 at a peppercorn rent from the Town Council following the Council's purchase of the freehold a month before. It was the start of an odyssey. No-one knew where the money to conserve and restore the building would come from, what kind of support the project would receive or even the function of the building itself. Twenty years of sustained effort later we can look back with some pride on the Trust's achievement. "The jewel in Marlborough's crown" has been largely restored and furnished in its 17<sup>th</sup> century glory and is the focus of admiration from visitors far and wide; by purchase, the majority of the original "burgage plot" belongs to the Council or, in the case of no.133 and the Old Printworks, to the Trust; we have a thriving gift shop which turns over more than a quarter of million pounds a year; the Trust has around 400 Friends and 100 volunteers as well as



*The Founder Trustees*

eight part-time staff; the House is a cultural centre in its own right, being the venue for lectures, concerts, study days and exhibitions, not to mention talks at the new Marlborough Literary Festival. None of this would have happened without the sustained support of many volunteers, generous donors and grant-giving institutions over the years. Completion of the project is still some way off but we have established a solid base which will stand us in good stead in the years to come.

*Michael Gray, John Sykes, Vic Chinnery, Diana Keast*

## **Mary Potter retires**



her dedicated service and presented by the Shop Manager, Liz Hosier, with a specially commissioned painting.

It was a sad day for the Shop when our superlative window-dresser announced that she was calling it a day after 14 years of imaginative hard work. Her flair for creating striking displays was outstanding and her success marked by the great number of items on display which (paid for!) walked out of the Shop. We are confident that her successor, Abi Gibbon, will be able to maintain Mary's high standards when she returns in the autumn after having a baby, our former Shop Manager Annabel Czyba filling the gap in the meantime. At the Volunteers' Party on 1<sup>st</sup> February Mary was thanked for

## **Spring Lecture – The Trial of Penn & Mead 1670**

On 31<sup>st</sup> March Nigel Pascoe QC entertained a near capacity audience of 105 at St Peter's to a dramatised lecture about the trial of William Penn (the Quaker and Founder of Pennsylvania) and William Mead for inciting a breach of the peace by preaching in Gracechurch Street in the City of London. Although patently innocent of the charge, the jury was directed to find them guilty. When it refused to do so, all twelve members were incarcerated without food, water or chamber pots for a total of some three days but despite the unwarranted pressure refused to give way. This *cause celebre*, recounted with drama and passion from contemporary records, established the pre-eminence of the jury's verdict once and for all. Sad then that when Penn tried to preach in Marlborough in 1680 he was jeered by the crowd and boys set light to his coat with fireworks! With sponsorship from Brewin Dolphin the evening resulted in a profit for the Appeal of £1,223.30.

## MH Personality Profile – Rita McVittie

Rita has been a stalwart volunteer for many years, helping with restoration work almost at the start, assisting in the Shop and guiding occasionally, and, most importantly, dealing with the wages for the last eight years and with the day-to-day Shop accounts for the last five years. She came to Wiltshire initially as a fully qualified teacher but then changed career to provide secretarial services for several local racing trainers and was a Special Constable for over 20 years. Besides volunteering with two other local charities she rides as well as running a smallholding with some 16 ewes. We are lucky to benefit from her dedication, energy and expertise.



## Inaugural Children's Art Festival 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> April



The Merchant's House joined with 17 other Marlborough retailers in this excellent initiative organised by Sarah Conlie by inviting juniors from Chilton Foliat and Preshute Schools to produce artworks based on what the children saw in the House. Chilton Foliat did collages with figures in costume while Preshute produced paintings and drawings. The results were imaginative and inspirational. The accompanying photos show Nathan from Preshute with his picture of a turkeywork chair for which he not only won a prize as the top junior from his school but also third prize overall.



## Another Accolade

Victor Chinnery recently received the following email from an old friend and colleague, who understandably wishes to remain anonymous, and with whom he had worked on another project to interpret a prominent Elizabethan historic house.

*My husband and I have just returned from spending a weekend in Marlborough and we visited the Merchant's House while we were there. WOW! what a fantastic place it is! We stayed for ages and looked at everything, and had an excellent guide to show us round. How nice to see so much thought and care going into the restoration - and what another heritage organization that I know well could learn from that. I went into one of their houses last week - it was 'done' over the winter - and you would cry if you could see all the magnolia paint on the walls and black gloss paint on the hinges etc. Every time I get depressed by what they are doing I shall think about that lovely house in Marlborough!*

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP** The house is now open! If you haven't renewed your membership subscription this will be your last Newsletter. SO DON'T DELAY - REJOIN TODAY!!

## 2011/12 Phase III Appeal barometer (000s)

### FORTHCOMING MERCHANT'S HOUSE EVENTS

*Please book in advance (esp. lectures and concerts) to avoid disappointment*

£250

May 20	Reema Pachachi – Talk by the designer of the Millenium Star pendant	6.30pm/MH
May 21	Open Day – House & Garden & Exhibition (Free Entry)	11-4pm
Jun 5	Marlborough Open Gardens	2-6 pm
Jul 24	The Merchant's Summer Lunch – Marlborough College	12.30-3.30pm
Jul / Aug	Marlborough College Summer School Visits – MH & St Peters	5-7pm

£14

**Patrons:** Lord Lothian QC. James Ayres, Clive Aslet, Jeanne Dolmetsch, Eric Knowles, Sir Roy Strong  
**Trustees:** Sir John Sykes Bt (Chairman), Victor Chinnery, Richard Clapp, Anthony Cohen, Caroline Goodfellow, Cllr Alexander Kirk-Wilson, Anna Marsden, Clyde Nancarrow, Jane Nicholson, Cllr Margaret Rose, **Manager:** Samantha Pinkney  
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