

Kenwood House: one of the country's greatest art collections on our doorstep

How often do you go for a walk on the Kenwood estate and Hampstead Heath? If you are anything like most north London residents, the answer is "Very often, that's where I get my exercise, meet friends, family, walk my dog, take in the fresh air of a green space, just enjoy being outside with the wildlife and appreciate one of London's great places." We are fantastically privileged to have such a wonderful open space on our doorstep; Hampstead Heath gets over six million visitors per year, and the Kenwood estate over one million.

And yet only about 250,000, a small proportion, of visitors go into the jewel which is Kenwood House. In the rooms on the ground floor, you will see Rembrandt's famous self-portrait; one of only four Vermeers in the country, the Queen has two, and the National Gallery has the other; a Frans Hals, which will bring a smile to your face; and a number of memorable paintings by Joshua Reynolds and George Romney. That leaves aside Gainsborough's painted ladies; Watteau's fancy pictures; works by Angelica Kauffmann, one of the first female members of the Royal Academy 250 years ago; and the list goes on.

Upstairs is the Suffolk Collection, a separate group of pictures of rakish English gentlemen with slashed sleeves and pattern-book ladies dating from the 17th century and once the collection of the Earls of Suffolk. There you will also find one of Kenwood's more recent paintings, Daisy Leiter, otherwise known as Margaret Hyde, Countess of Suffolk, by John Singer Sargent.

Those who do go into the house can enjoy the extraordinary philanthropy of the first Earl of Iveagh who left his house, estate and some of his paintings under the Iveagh Bequest to the nation 90 years ago.

Kenwood first opened its doors to the public on 18 July 1928 and there are a number of celebratory events to mark the 90th anniversary this year.



The Friends of Kenwood exists to preserve and protect the Iveagh Bequest for generations to come. English Heritage manages Kenwood, but we endeavour to advise them with our expertise and experience, and we try to support them as best we can, always believing that they should be accountable to their members and to the nation in general, as Kenwood was left to 'the nation'.

If you would like to support us, you can find us at www.friendsofkenwood.org.uk. You can become an ordinary member at a very competitive rate, or you can support us more significantly

by becoming a special Vermeer or Rembrandt Friend. English Heritage was not given enough money by central government when it was turned into an independent charity, but we can help Kenwood specifically by continuing to show how much

the place means to us through our loyal Friends. We have nearly 600 members and we would be delighted if you, the reader, would join us and help us in our efforts. You can contact us at info@friendsofkenwood.org.uk.

HELEN PAYNE



Rembrandt self-portrait, Kenwood House

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