

**WEST LODGE PARK: the Beale family celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their family business.**



In 1769 John Beale, a master baker from Royston in Hertfordshire, set up shop in Oxford Street. Four generations later, William Beale moved into a 5-storey building in the Holloway Road to accommodate a bakery, groceries, banqueting and a restaurant, the largest such enterprise in North London. In 1945 his grandson, Edward Beale, took the lease on West Lodge Park from Enfield Council and gradually turned the unlicensed premises with permanent residents from the war years into a modern hotel. He started planting fine specimen

trees and shrubs, some now registered as national collections, to create the Arboretum. He also began to assemble the remarkable collection of portraits by Mary Beale (1633-99), the seventeenth century portrait painter who was the first woman to make a living as an artist. The definitive biography of Mary Beale by Penelope Hunting was published just a few months ago. These portraits, some originals, some reproductions and some on loan from museums, are displayed throughout the hotel. Edward's son, Trevor, and grandson, Andrew the current managing director, have continued this family enthusiasm for local history, arboriculture and Mary Beale's portraits.



On 6<sup>th</sup> November a sumptuous lunch was held to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this long-established family business. This was not used as a marketing opportunity, rather the chance to bring together the family and staff, past and present, many of whom have worked at the hotel for decades. Other guests included the Mayor of Enfield, Kate Anolue, and our previous and prospective MP, David Burrowes, who planted a magnolia tree.

Before lunch Andrew gave us a guided tour of the

Arboretum, pointing out a few of its highlights: the Bhutan Pine, Swamp and Pond Cypress, the Dawn Redwood (known from fossils but only discovered alive in China in 1941), the massive Cedar of Lebanon and Wellingtonia both planted in Victorian times, and the Killarney Strawberry Tree with luscious looking fruit that we were told you would not eat twice. After lunch Andrew revealed his other passion by introducing us to many of the Mary Beale portraits, which include self-portraits, her family and many of the great and the good of the late seventeenth century. In the hall there hangs a copy of Mary's patron, the Hon. Henry Coventry, Secretary of State to Charles II, who acquired West Lodge in 1673 as Keeper of the west bailey of Enfield Chase. Besides being scholarly and informative, Andrew's presentations were immensely entertaining.

In 2012 the company bought the freehold of the estate to secure the future of the family enterprise. Already the ninth generation is working in the business. The desserts, prepared by Andrew's son Dominic, were a delight to behold and a pleasure to eat. May West Lodge Park remain in the Beale family for many more generations.

*John Leatherdale*

