THE ROYAL OAK FOUNDATION

Americans in Alliance with the National Trust of England, Wales, and Northern Ireland

A Major Gift to the Trust

Restoring Dyrham Park

Clive of India Revisited

SPRING 2021

The East Front of Dyrham Park is bathed in sunlight on a beautiful Autumn's day.

Dear Members & Friends,

A new year and a new outlook. I know we are all glad to see 2020 behind us and though we are not completely back to normal, we can at least see a light at the end of the tunnel. I know many of you travel to the UK and that that has not been possible for the last 12 months. We all hope that some of that may change in the second half of 2021.

Though many of our trips have been cancelled we have endeavored to keep you connected to the UK through our virtual programs, and the stories and podcasts in our newsletter. Our spring season includes a full schedule of lectures and tours and with a little luck we may be able to meet in person in the fall.

The year 2020 was a milestone for the National Trust as they marked their 125th anniversary. To celebrate this momentous occasion, The Royal Oak Foundation provided a gift of $4 million for the Conservation Studio at Knole. The Board put a great deal of thought into how this donation should be used so as to have a meaningful and lasting influence on the Trust. The Conservation Studio preserves and protects a wide range of objects from around the Trust, and it is therefore the perfect place to insure that the money from Royal Oak has the widest impact for the entire National Trust. The studio will be renamed The Royal Oak Conservation Studio in honor of our gift, and any object conserved there will identify Royal Oak when returned to its original property.

We will again have a dedicated appeal for a National Trust property this year, which will be Dyrham Park located just outside Bath. Dyrham was the home of William Blathwayt from 1689 and despite being in the English countryside, the house has an American connection. Among his many government positions, Blathwayt was administrator of the English colonies in North America and used his role to import rare products and woods, using American black walnut and cedar for the home's grand staircase. Our appeal of $250,000 will restore the Gilt Leather Hall where Blathwayt pored over his maps and books in his "virtual" travels abroad.

I want to thank all our members and friends who have supported us during this difficult year. I know that membership provides you with many benefits, but your dues and contributions really provide the funds Royal Oak needs to continue our work to help the National Trust.

Ian Murray
Executive Director

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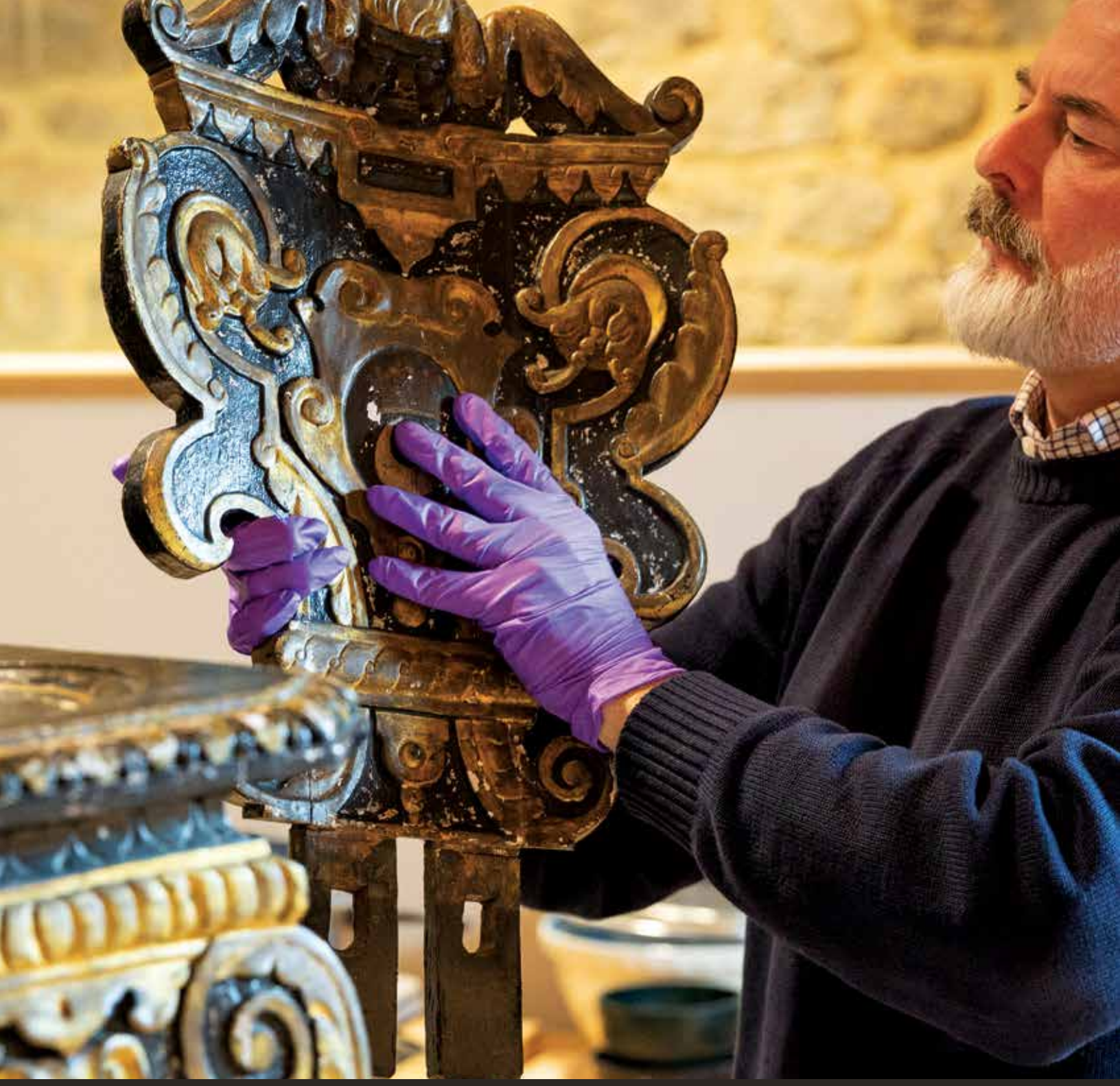
Cover Photo: The evening sun shines down on the West Front of Dyrham Park.



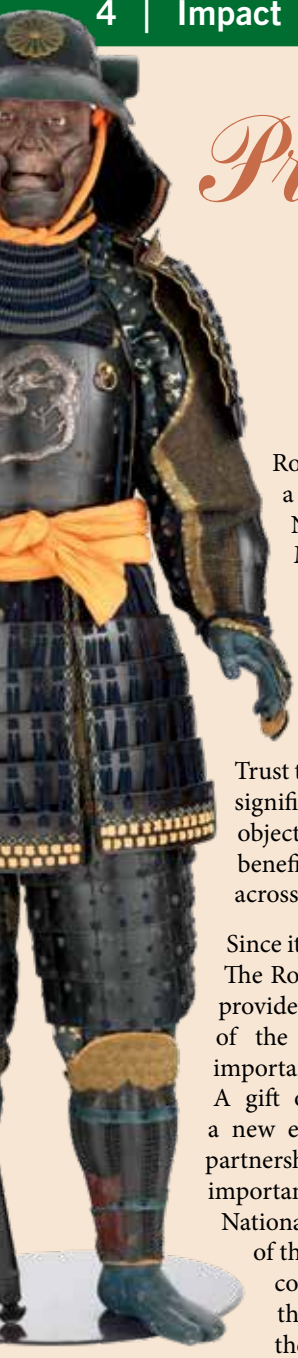
Become a member of the Royal Oak Legacy Circle

The Royal Oak Legacy Circle has made possible the preservation of hundreds of important objects across the National Trust. To learn more about planned giving or to notify us of a planned gift, please contact Ian Murray, Executive Director at 212-480-2889, ext. 202, or imurray@royal-oak.org. You can also visit the Legacy Circle page on our website under “support us.”

Preserving Britain's Treasures

Royal Oak provides $4 Million in Funding to the Decorative Arts Conservation Studio at Knole

By Professor Sir David Cannadine



Samurai armor at Snowshill.

Royal Oak has announced a major gift to the National Trust of $4 Million in honor of the 125th anniversary of the Trust's founding. The gift will be directed to the Decorative Arts Conservation Studio at Knole enabling the Trust to tackle several hundred significant and high-profile objects over the next 5 years, benefiting historic places across the organization.

Since it was established in 1973, The Royal Oak Foundation has provided vital support for some of the National Trust's most important conservation projects. A gift of this scale represents a new era in our decades-long partnership and marks this important anniversary year for the National Trust. In recognition of this transformative gift for collections conservation, the Trust has renamed the Studio, The Royal Oak Foundation Conservation Studio, for a period of 10 years.

As Europe's biggest conservation charity, the National Trust is home to one of the world's largest collections of art and material culture. With more than one million objects at over 200 historic places, looking after the unique needs of such a deep and varied collection is one of the Trust's greatest challenges. These collections and interiors reflect an enormous range of materials and types of object – everything from paintings by the Old Masters to early Chinese teacups. Many of the works of art, furniture and other objects in the collections were commissioned, acquired and accumulated by past owners and their families over many centuries, as then-contemporary furnishings and dazzling displays.

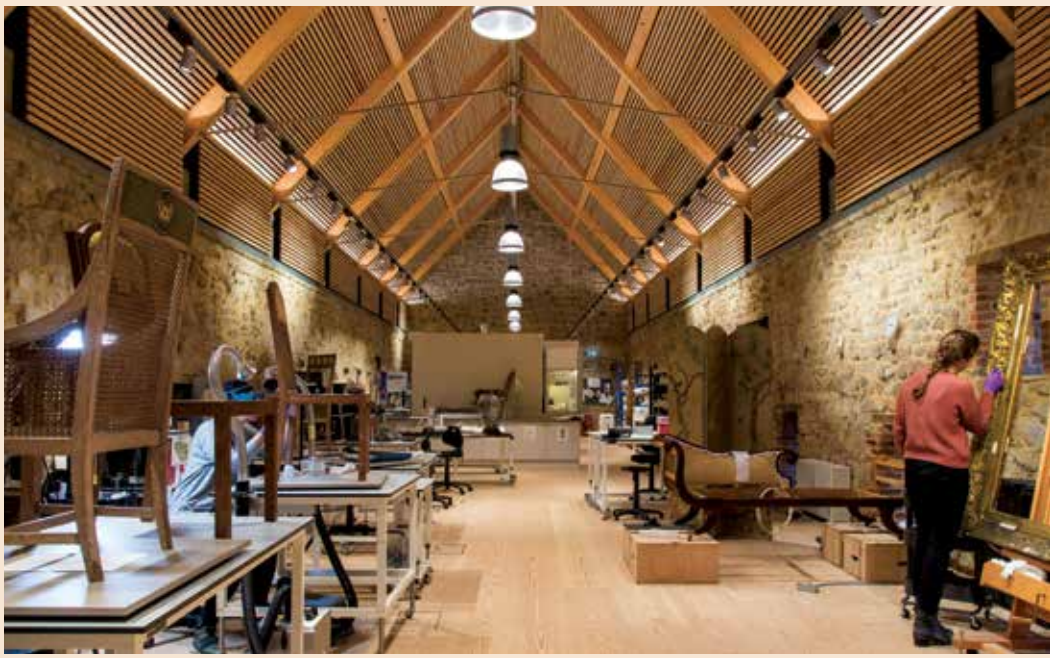
These were conscious creations: personal statements of taste, patronage, lineage and social status. Today, the collections and their historic settings evoke experiences past, illuminated by surviving personal treasures. They inspire wonder, creativity and curiosity.

Caring for such a wealth of fine art and heritage objects requires specialist expertise and the cost of collections conservation is high. The Trust needs to spend £3 million a year to address the conservation of the most significant objects. However, in recent years they have only able to spend approximately £1.5 million. Without this additional gift from Royal Oak, these precious treasures would be at risk of further deterioration and damage.

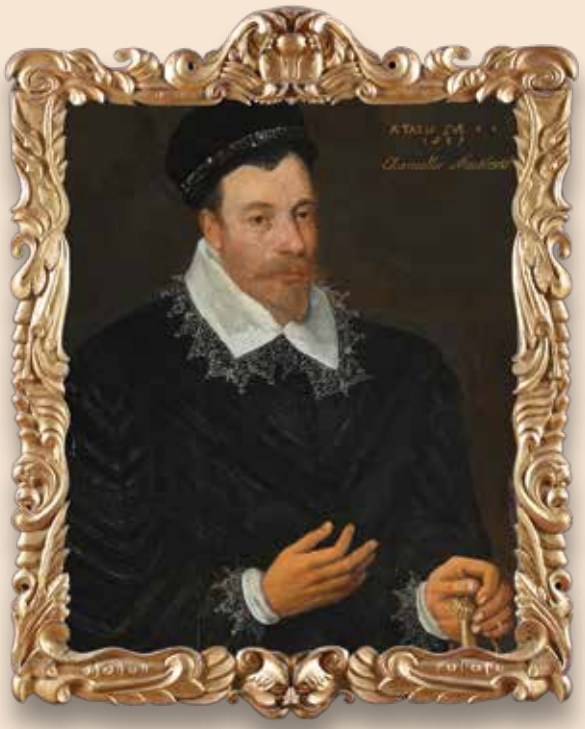
With this support from Royal Oak, the Trust will be able to undertake much needed conservation work and technical research on key objects from around the organization. The Trust will prioritize objects which are classed as highly significant across a wide range of mediums including paintings, decorative arts, furniture and more.

The Studio, founded in 2017, is located at Knole in Kent. One of the treasure houses of Britain, Knole has been home to 10 generations of the Sackville family for over 400 years. The building itself is a remarkably preserved and complete early Jacobean remodeling of a medieval Archiepiscopal palace. The Studio was the first of its kind at the National Trust, allowing visitors the unique opportunity to watch conservators working on objects from the house's magnificent collection. Housed in a beautiful medieval barn, this state-of-the-art space is the only conservation studio at a National Trust property open to the public. It is a perfect mix of contemporary and historical: an airy, open-plan studio with exposed Kentish ragstone walls punctuated by the barn's original narrow windows.

In the first two years, the Conservation Studio focused on objects from Knole's own remarkable collection, however, it will now serve all the National Trust collections as a whole. All items conserved at Knole will recognize Royal Oak when they are returned to their original settings.



Curators at work at the Conservation Studio.



Portrait of Sir John Maitland at Ham House.

At first, part of the funding will be used to enhance the Studio's facilities with some essential equipment to allow for paintings conservation and technical research as well as supporting staff to undertake documentation and interpretation of conserved objects. The current list of conservation priorities includes spectacular items like oil paintings by Tintoretto, Titian, and portraits by Van Dyck; early Medieval painted screens, embroideries and tapestries; Chinese wallpapers; and furniture connected to Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf.

The first objects to be conserved

A set of nine 17th-century carved, painted and partly gilded "sgabello" chairs from Petworth House, which were directly influenced by Italian style and designed to impress and furnish a grand chamber or gallery. They now need structural treatment and conservation of their highly decorative surfaces. Through this treatment the Trust hopes to learn more about the materials and techniques used in the 1600s.

A suit of Japanese Samurai armor, one of a set of 27 purchased for the quality of their craftsmanship by avid collector Charles Paget Wade for his home at Snowshill. The beautifully decorated armor needs conservation cleaning and stabilization treatments on the metal work and textiles, and investigation into other elements.

An oil painting of Sir John Maitland, from Ham House, by an as-yet-unknown Anglo-Dutch artist, which is in need of structural work on its oak panel support, consolidation of the paint layers, and careful removal of varnish and overpaint. The painting came to public attention in 2017 when X-ray analysis revealed what is believed to be an unfinished portrait of Mary Queen of Scots hidden beneath it. Trust conservators now hope to learn even more about the painting through technical art historical investigations.

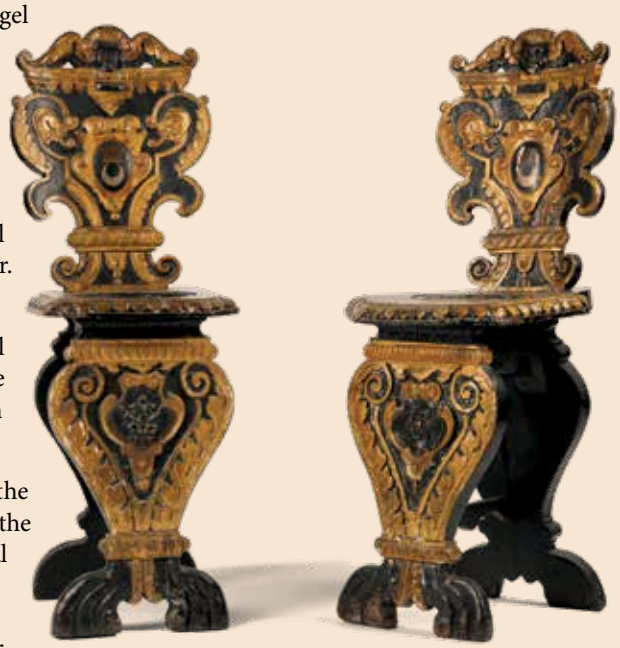
The funding from Royal Oak represents many years of generous donations from members and supporters who provided money that was restricted for the National Trust. Every friend of Royal Oak has played a part in this incredible project, especially those members and friends who have made legacy donations. Over the decades, Royal Oak members and friends have raised close to $20 million to support the National Trust, including a $1.25 million donation in support of conservation of the ballroom at Knole in 2012. Royal Oak has also sponsored two Nigel Seeley Fellows to work on conservation projects at the Studio in the past five years. The Nigel Seeley Fellowship provides training and educational opportunities for individuals with a professional interest in the preservation of historic interiors, finishes, and collections. It is named for the former National Trust's Head of Conservation, Dr. Nigel Seeley and funded by a Royal Oak donor.

Over the coming months and years, Royal Oak members and friends will have the opportunity to learn about the projects undertaken at the Studio both in-person and online.

Lynne Rickabaugh, Chairman of the Royal Oak Foundation Board, said that the Board is thrilled to support the National Trust Conservation Studio at Knole. "The Board has a special relationship with Knole, helping to raise monies for the restoration in 2012. We feel that all properties at the Trust will benefit from this gift at the Studio and members will be able to visit the Conservation Studio to learn what objects are being restored. It is a privilege to celebrate the National Trust's 125th anniversary."

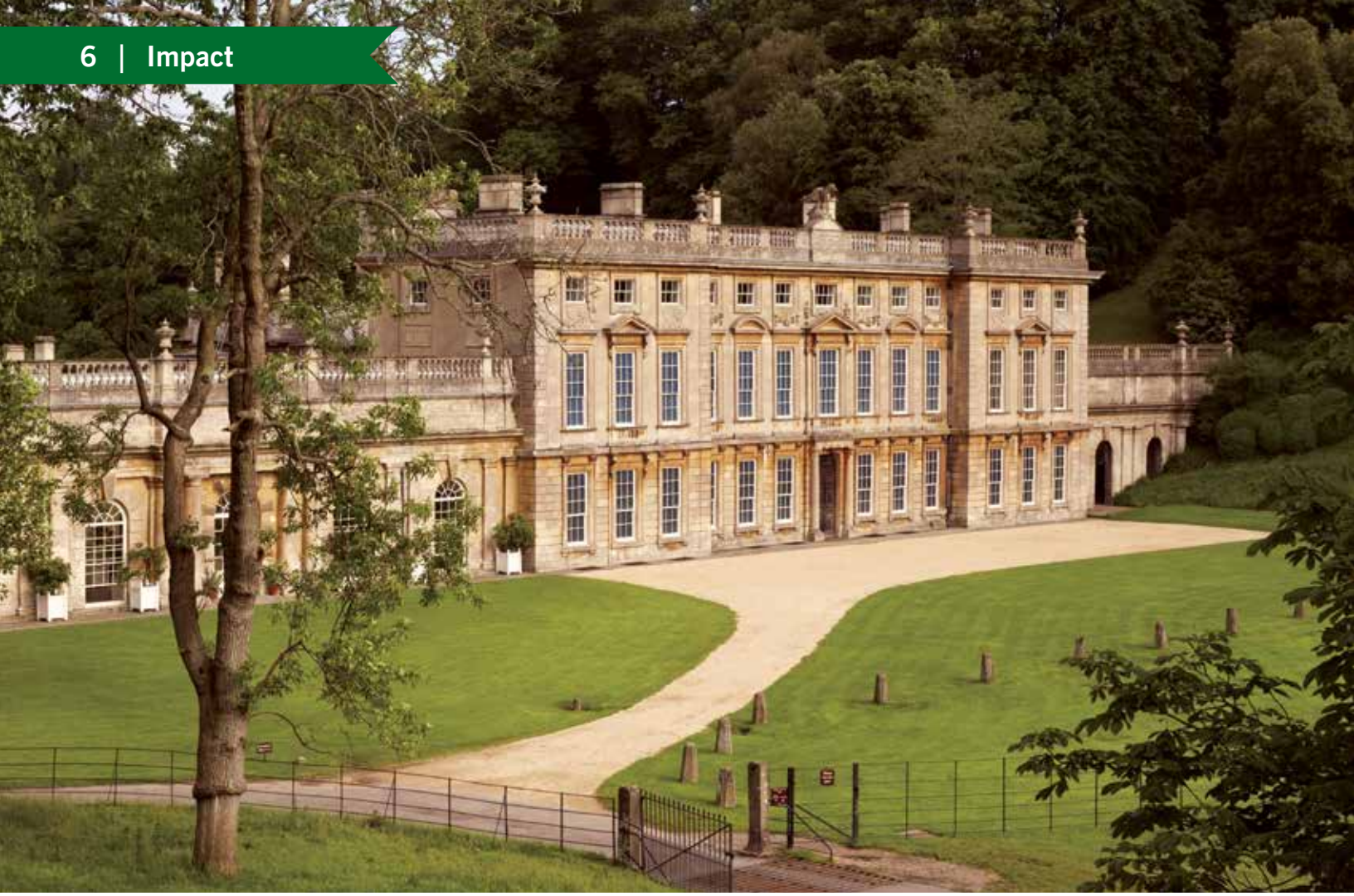
Ian Murray, Royal Oak's Executive Director, thanked Royal Oak members and friends, saying. "A gift this size would not have been possible without the generous support of our donors especially those who provided legacy gifts in their estate plans."

I write these words as Secretary of the Royal Oak Foundation, and as a long-term member and life-long supporter of the National Trust itself. And that in turn means that this transatlantic gift, which is so timely, so generous, so important and so imaginative, is one with which I am very proud to be associated and to which I am delighted to have had the chance to contribute. More than ever, in these dark and difficult times, the Foundation is reaffirming its commitment and devotion to the work and mission of the Trust, and all of us here in the United States look forward to the time when we may get back to Britain to visit its houses and properties again — and especially the Conservation Studio at Knole.



Sgabello chairs at Petworth.

Professor Sir David Cannadine is the President of the British Academy, Dodge Professor of History at Princeton University and Visiting Professor at the University of Oxford. He is author of many books including Churchill, The Statesman as Artist *and* Margaret Thatcher: A Life and Legacy. *He is a Trustee of the Wolfson Foundation, sits on the Bank of England Banknote Advisory Committee and is a Vice President of the Victorian Society. Sir David is the Editor of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, a member of the Past and Present editorial board and Secretary of the Royal Oak Foundation.*



Restoring Dyrham Park

In 2021, Royal Oak is raising money to restore an important interior at Dyrham Park, a Barqoue-era mansion in the West Country, not far from Bath, built by William Blathwayt, one the most important British government figures of the 17th century

Sitting deep within an ancient deer park, just six miles north of Bath, Dyrham Park is a magnificent Baroque mansion of Cotswold stone. A rare survivor from the 17th century, the house is home to a wonderful collection of paintings, furniture and tapestries collected and commissioned by William Blathwayt, an important but little-known figure of the period. Highlights from the collection include precious Delftware, 300-year-old tapestries, leather wall hangings and Dutch masterpieces.

Built between 1692–1704, the house was created in two phases: first by Samuel Hauduroy and secondly by William Talman, renowned architect of the period, Controller of the Royal Works, and famed architect of Chatsworth. Visitors may note more than a passing resemblance between Dyrham Park and Chatsworth.

Born around 1649, the year that Charles I was beheaded, William Blathwayt was a government administrator who lived through the Commonwealth, the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the Great Fire of London, and the Glorious Revolution that brought William and Mary into power. Though he served all monarchs from Charles II to George I, it was under William of Orange, or William III, that his career truly flourished.

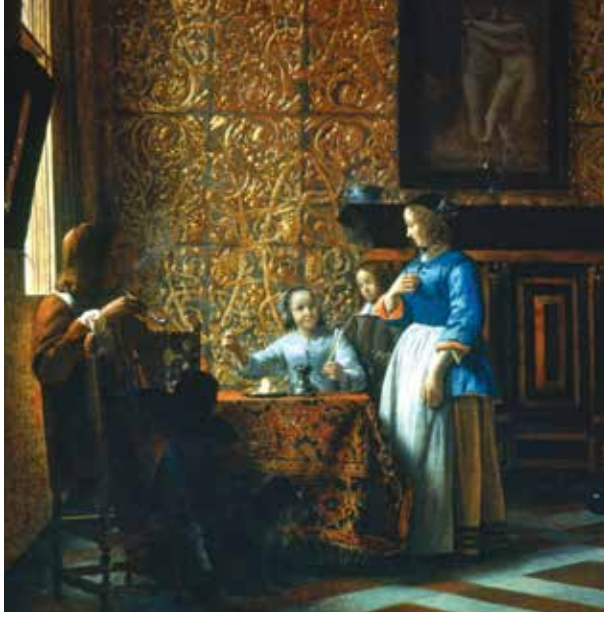
Serendipitously, Blathwayt had encountered William of Orange early in his career at the English embassy in the Hague. Blathwayt spent his formative years in the Netherlands where he learned Dutch and acquired a life-long enthusiam for Dutch arts and crafts. His ability to speak Dutch and his natural efficiency made him indispensable to William III. Throughout his career, he held several powerful positions including: Auditor-General of Plantation Revenues, Member of the Board of Trade, Secretary at War, acting Secretary of State, Clerk of the Privy Council and Member of Parliament for Bath.

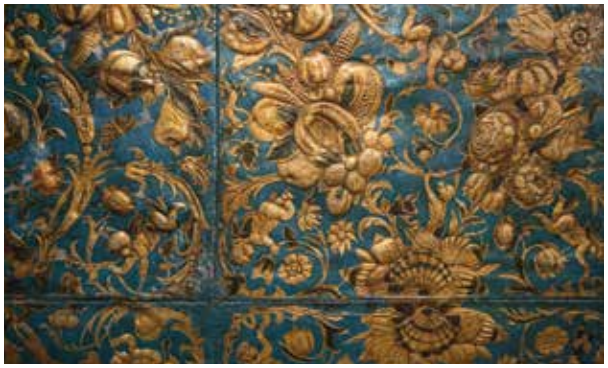
The significant themes of Blathwayt's life and career can be explored, understood, and seen in Dyrham Park. A time of tumult and change, his era saw the creation of a modern British state with a constitutional monarchy, a sitting parliament and a supporting administrative bureaucracy. Concurrently, there was a reorganization

and professionalization of the military. This period was marked by globalization and trade as well as an economic revolution in the banking and financial markets. Britain was extending its reach around the world and building its colonial empire. It was the beginning of both emigration out of Britain into the colonies and the rise of the transatlantic slave trade.

Blathwayt was at the heart of this new world coming into being. His involvement with the colonies spanned four decades and his role within government gave him unparalleled access to leading designers and makers, and most importantly, materials and plants from across the globe. His house and garden was a dazzling display of these treasures and rare materials from around the world.

Through his colonial contacts in America, he was able to procure black walnut and red cedar from Virginia and the Carolinas for panelling and two staircases at his house. The collection at Dyrham contains a painting of a cacao tree and roasting hut, showing Jamaican colonists making chocolate, one of the many new foods in Britain introduced from the new world. Blathwayt never visited any of the colonial terroritories but gained his expertise from books, maps, letters, and accounts. His library was the world. Today, the library is still home to many maps and books that reflect Blathwayt's studying of geography as well as military management. Some archives from Dyrham concerning his long involvement with American colonies are in American libraries, such as the important Blathwayt Atlas of early maps at Brown University and working papers at the Huntingdon and Colonial Williamsburg.

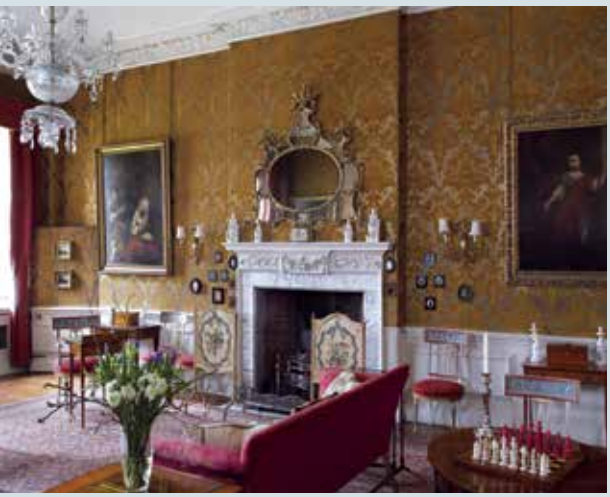




(Top) Fig. 1: This painting by the Dutch painter, Pieter de Hooch (c. 1663-1665) shows the kind of gilt leather wall coverings that might have adorned the parlor at Dyrham. (Bottom) Fig. 2: Close-up detail of a set of gilt leather panels in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These panels were likely made in the Netherlands in the mid 1600s and would have been similar to what Blathwayt had in his parlor.

Blathywayt's collection at Dyrham is also notable for its Dutch artifacts including rare Delftware tulip vases, gilt leather wall hangings as well as significant Dutch paintings like the Flower Piece by Cornelis De Heem (purchased with Royal Oak support in 2015) and paintings by Hoogstraeten and Murillo.

Because of this history, Dyrham was chosen by the Trust as one of eight properties across Britain to be part of a wider program to enhance how visitors experience these historic places. Visitors will be invited to travel to the period through important stories, passing through rooms restored to their authentic 17th-century schemes. The visitor experience will be greatly enhanced and will provide emotional and intellectual connection and engagement through the relevant themes of global trade and colonial emigration.



The Dyrham Restoration Project

This project provides an opportunity to restore and re-present this magnificent house as the home of 17th-century colonial administrator, William Blathwayt. Since a major re-roofing project in 2016, the Trust has turned their attention to the interiors which are in desperate need of revival to reveal and reinstate the most significant and substantial part of Dyrham's history.

Royal Oak has committed to funding the restoration of the drawing room. This room was re-imagined in the 1930s and will now be re-presented as it would have been decorated in Blathwayt's time as the Gilt Leather Parlor, showcasing the books and maps which Blathwayt poured over as essential tools for his overview of international trade. This room was originally decorated with gilt leather wall hangings, like those seen above in Figures 1 and 2. Once complete, the reinstated historic rooms will immerse visitors in the magnificent and opulent house William Blathwayt created.

We hope you will help to restore this important interior to its former glory.
Learn more at www.Royal-Oak.org/Dyrham

The Anglo-Jewish Country House

By Juliet Carey, Senior Curator, Waddesdon Manor

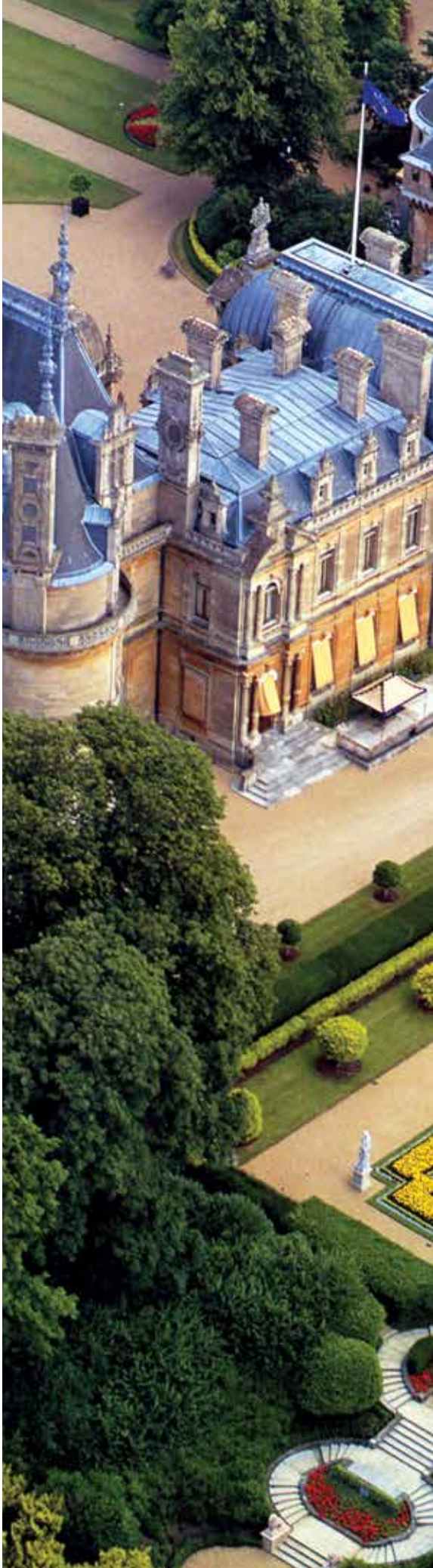
In Britain, the country house has become a symbol of a particular kind of Britishness. As a heritage site or setting for TV drama, the country house is tinged with nostalgia for a lost world of ancient lineages and landed society, underpinned by models of continuity and rootedness. A new research project – 'Jewish' Country House: Objects, Networks, People – is unsettling these assumptions through its focus on a hitherto unidentified group of houses: those owned, renewed or built by Jews and those of Jewish origin, which have escaped systematic study because they do not fit prevailing models of the aristocratic landowner or metropolitan Jew.

Jewish country houses were ubiquitous across Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century, often clustered within easy reach of capital cities or near seaside and spa resorts. They include prodigy houses and private retreats, houses at the heart of agricultural estates, houses for hunting and houses created to show off art collections or to stage lavish entertaining. In many countries Jews had historically been barred from land ownership and were often confined to urban ghettos, so there is often something transgressive about these properties. They reveal the aspirations of their owners and the extent to which Jewish emancipation subverted established hierarchies and reshaped society and culture as it did so. They raise questions about belonging and alienation, assimilation and integration, about social mobility, Jewish self-fashioning and national identities.

The geographical scope of the subject ranges from 17th-century Jewish plantation houses in the Dutch Caribbean to mock-Tudor houses built by the Randlords of South Africa, to Waddesdon Manor, , built by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, soon after the battle for Jewish emancipation in Britain was won. The Château de Champs outside Paris is famous for Madame de Pompadour, but was owned and restored by the Cahen d'Anvers family in the 19th century; Villa Kérylos on the French Riviera, is a recreation of ancient Greek prototypes built for Theodore Reinach in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair and its traumatic impact on Jewish life in France; the little neo-classical palace Schloss Freienwalde in Brandenburg, was restored by the industrialist and statesman Walther Rathenau as an expression of the values of the Prussian Enlightenment, and the Villa Tugendhat, Mies van der Rohe's modernist masterpiece in the suburban enclave was created by Jewish textile entrepreneurs on the edge of Brno in the Czech Republic.

Exploring the rural world of the Jewish social and cultural elite takes us into all kinds of buildings: the writers' retreat, Monk's House (National Trust), that belonged to Leonard and Virginia Woolf and Villa Liebermann, the lakeside studio-house of the German Impressionist painter Max Liebermann; canonical country houses, such as Houghton Hall, Norfolk, built in the 18th century by Robert Walpole, but restored and revived in the 20th century with the money and collections of the Jewish heiress Sybil Sassoon, who kept her Jewish origins very quiet. This was unlike Frances, Countess Waldegrave, the daughter of a Jewish opera singer, who expressed her complex cultural identity in all kinds of ways, including commissioning paintings of Jerusalem and Masada in another famous Walpole edifice, the Gothick Strawberry Hill House, which she inherited, restored, extended and used as the setting for her social salon.

Jewishness is an elusive category and many of those who owned and lived in country houses resisted being defined by it. Yet the heyday of the Jewish country house was also an age of rising political antisemitism. Myths about Jewish wealth, solidarity and power that fed conspiracy theories in the late 19th and early 20th century had a particular salience for the



Photos: Right: Waddesdon Image Library, John Bigelow Taylor. Bottom: ©National Trust/Andreas von Einsiedel.

Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire.

owners of these houses. Without exception, whether religious or secular, the Jewish origins of country house owners mattered in a social, cultural and political context where Jewishness was stigmatized and Jews were regarded as 'other'. Our project aims to establish 'Jewish' country houses as a focus for research, a site of European memory and a significant aspect of European Jewish heritage, moving beyond the usual emphasis on religious buildings and urban contexts.

Hughendon Manor (National Trust), Buckinghamshire is the creation of Benjamin Disraeli, who was twice Queen Victoria's prime minister and who, although baptized into the Church of England, was Jewish by origin and by public perception. Research is revealing the centrality of Hughendon to the narratives of otherness and belonging cultivated by the statesman-novelist, who called himself "the blank page between the Old and the New Testament." Disraeli's interiors mix together imagery of landed Englishness with a kind of Byronic exoticism.

The ultimate insider-outsider, Sir Philip Sassoon – whose family originated in Baghdad and made its fortune in Bombay before settling in England and assimilating into British high society – split aspects of his identity between two separate houses. Port Lympne in Kent, is shot through with Orientalism – one houseguest encountered Sassoon in the gardens one morning "sitting alone in a fez." Contrastingly, Sassoon's other country house, Trent Park, near Enfield, was an exercise in a particular kind of Englishness – with murals by Rex Whistler, English conversation pieces, and Georgian furniture. After Sassoon's death it became a very strange kind of country club, for the gathering of enemy intelligence during World War II, when the British government sent the highest-ranking Nazi prisoners of war there. The country house setting put them at their ease while secret listeners in the basement (most of them German-Jewish refugees) monitored their every word.

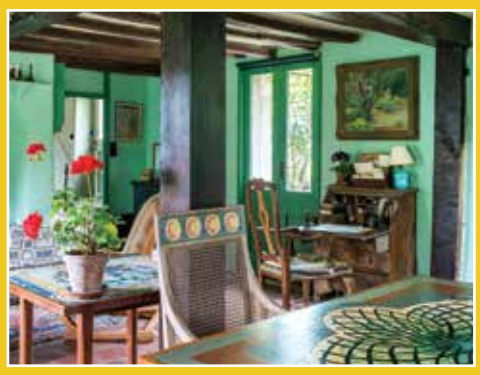
The Jewish country house is a truly international story in which kinship and business networks connected families, buildings, and collections in different parts of Europe and often throw light on the appearance of individual houses. The Château de Ferrières, the political powerhouse outside Paris built for Baron James de Rothschild aimed at a bold cultural synthesis, with façades in four different national styles and interiors that identified its owners with the merchant-princes of the Renaissance. It was designed by the English Joseph Paxton, of Crystal Palace fame, who epitomized modernity and technological innovation and had also designed Mentmore, for Baron James's English nephew Anthony, with which Ferrières's visual references were in conversation and competition.

Last year, staff at Nymans in Sussex (National Trust) discovered in the ruins of the old kitchen a broken brick decorated with a Star of David. Nymans is particularly famous for its gardens, which were created in the 1890s by the Germane émigré Ludwig Messel and which helped ease the family's integration into English society. The first house they built was modern and Germanic but, by the time Ludwig's son Leonard inherited in 1915, the German style had become much more problematic and they replaced it with the romantic, faux-ancient and utterly English house that we see today. A stone with the Star of David is built into the wall of entrance court – paired with the complementary emblem of a rose – almost invisible to passersby. The Jewish Country House project is shining new light on these (literal) building blocks, building new understanding of country houses and enriching the public's understanding of Jewish heritage all over Britain and Europe.

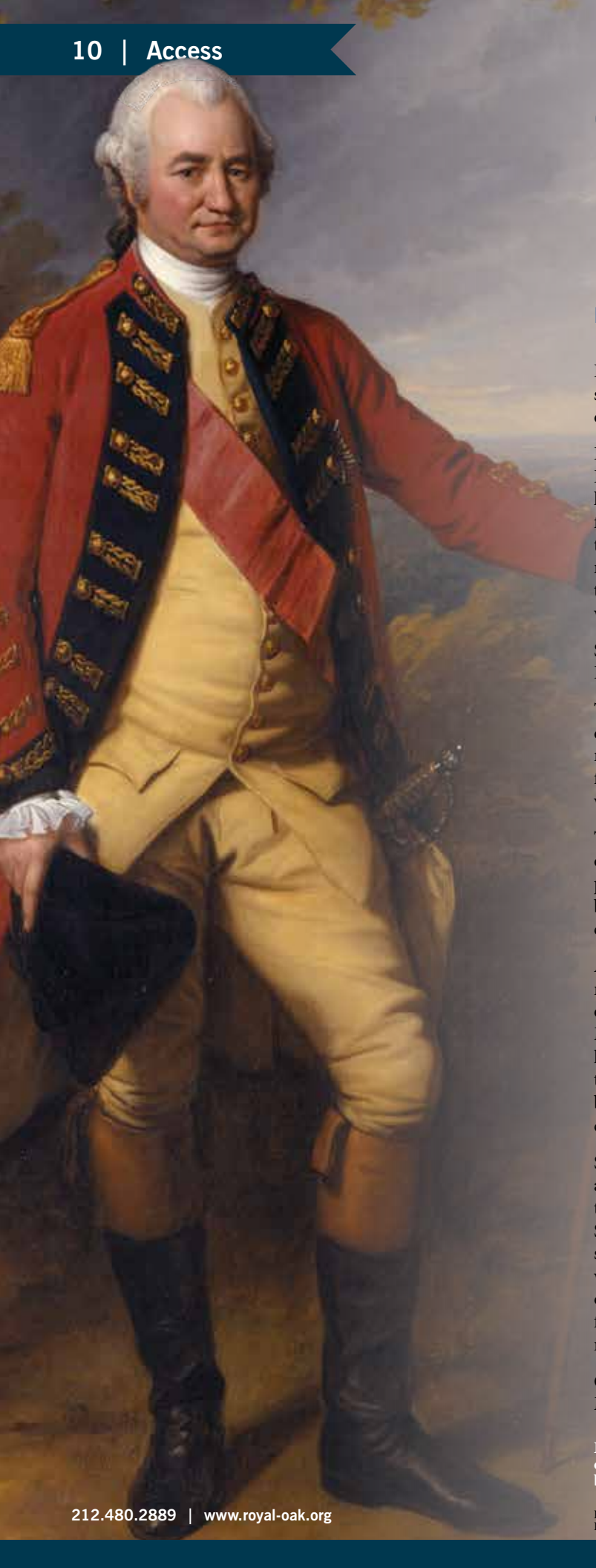
Juliet Carey is Senior Curator (Academic Collaborations and Research) and Curator of Paintings, Sculpture and Works on Paper, at Waddesdon Manor.

Anglo-Jewish Families at National Trust Houses

To learn more about Anglo-Jewish houses in Britain and the new research being done, visit www.Royal-Oak.org/Jewish



The Sitting Room at Monk's House, East Sussex



Clive of India Revisited

Reviled in his own time, one of Britain's most notorious figures hits the headlines again

By Kieran Hazzard

In 2020, the 18th-century general and administrator, Robert Clive, was suddenly thrust into the spotlight to become the one of the most hotly debated figures in the history of Britain.

Responding to the Black Lives Matter movement, a group of young British-Asian campaigners sought the removal of Clive's statue at the heart of Westminster. Newspaper columns in both Britain and India filled with discussions of Clive's deeds, while online a lively mock trial with historians and lawyers found him guilty of involuntary manslaughter. The National Trust unexpectedly found itself drawn into the middle of this debate, as the custodians of Powis Castle in Wales, where Clive's descendants created a museum to honor him.

So who was the real Robert Clive, and what might the Clive Museum at Powis Castle mean to visitors today?

The young Robert Clive was the son of Shropshire gentry, and a juvenile delinquent: fighting, climbing the local church tower, and finally running a protection racket. In an attempt at setting him straight, his father found him a job in the East India Company—an employer who would find a use for Clive's violent energy.

The Company had been founded as a trading company in 1600, but during the 18th century, was beginning to bully its way into Indian politics, with its own forts and an army. Though it would eventually be nationalized, becoming the Victorian Raj, throughout the 18th century, it was an independent corporation.

After Clive joined the Company's army in 1744, he rose through the ranks, fighting in a series of wars in a constantly changing system of alliances between various Indian states and the Company. The Muslim Mughal Empire had ruled most of India since the 1500s but had begun to break up, and Clive saw an opportunity for himself in the middle of this upheaval. On the outbreak of war with the Mughal backed ruler of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daula, Clive led a successful campaign to recapture Calcutta.

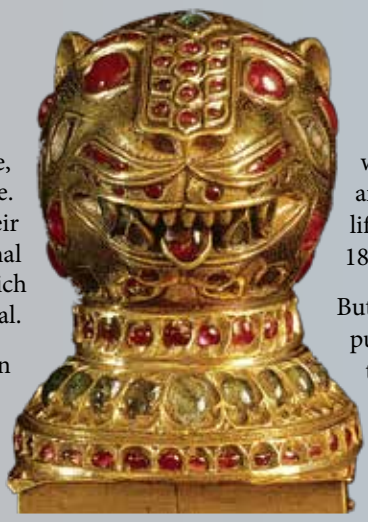
Siraj's own alienated nobles and merchants were also conspiring against him, led by Mir Jafar, an army general. The conspirators asked the Company to provide a mercenary army to help them overthrow Siraj. Clive was now the Company's most trusted commander and he soon led this army to victory at the Battle of Plassey. Though this war was supposed to be in support of Indian allies, Clive and Company quickly stepped into the power vacuum it created to become the de facto rulers of Bengal. Plassey marked the start of the Company's rise to power. It also made Clive fabulously rich.

Clive and Jafar met after the battle and marched on Murshidabad, the Bengali capital, where Jafar paid off

Left: a portrait of Robert Clive, 1st Baron Clive of Plassey, also known as Clive of India. Portrait by Sir Nathaniel Dance-Holland, 1770.

Clive with a huge bounty of £234,000 and an estate, making him one of the richest men in Europe. Later, the Company made Clive the head of their new regime and, following the defeat of the Mughal Emperor in another war, Clive struck a deal which made the Company the recognized rulers of Bengal.

These new British rulers, organized from an office in Leadenhall Street, London, were more interested in the profits of their shareholders than the welfare of the Bengali people. Clive pursued a policy of tax collection at all costs, sometimes resorting to violence, and impoverishing ordinary Indians. His successors maintained his priorities, even during the failure of the Bengal rice crop in 1769-70, leading to a mass famine which resulted in what historians have estimated as between 1 and 4 million deaths.



Two pieces now in the Clive Museum at Powis Castle that were once owned by Tipu Sultan: (bottom) a tiger-headed sword and (top) a tiger head finial from his throne.

As Clive built up the Company's empire, he also built up the trappings of imperial rule for himself, indulging in the lifestyle of a Mughal prince. The collection he amassed included swords and shields covered in gold, ivory inlaid furniture, hundreds of painted miniatures, jewel-encrusted smoking pipes, and a menagerie of exotic animals. Some of this he bought, other items were gifts from high-ranking Indians wishing to win his favor or out of fear of his army, and a handful of items were acquired as loot.

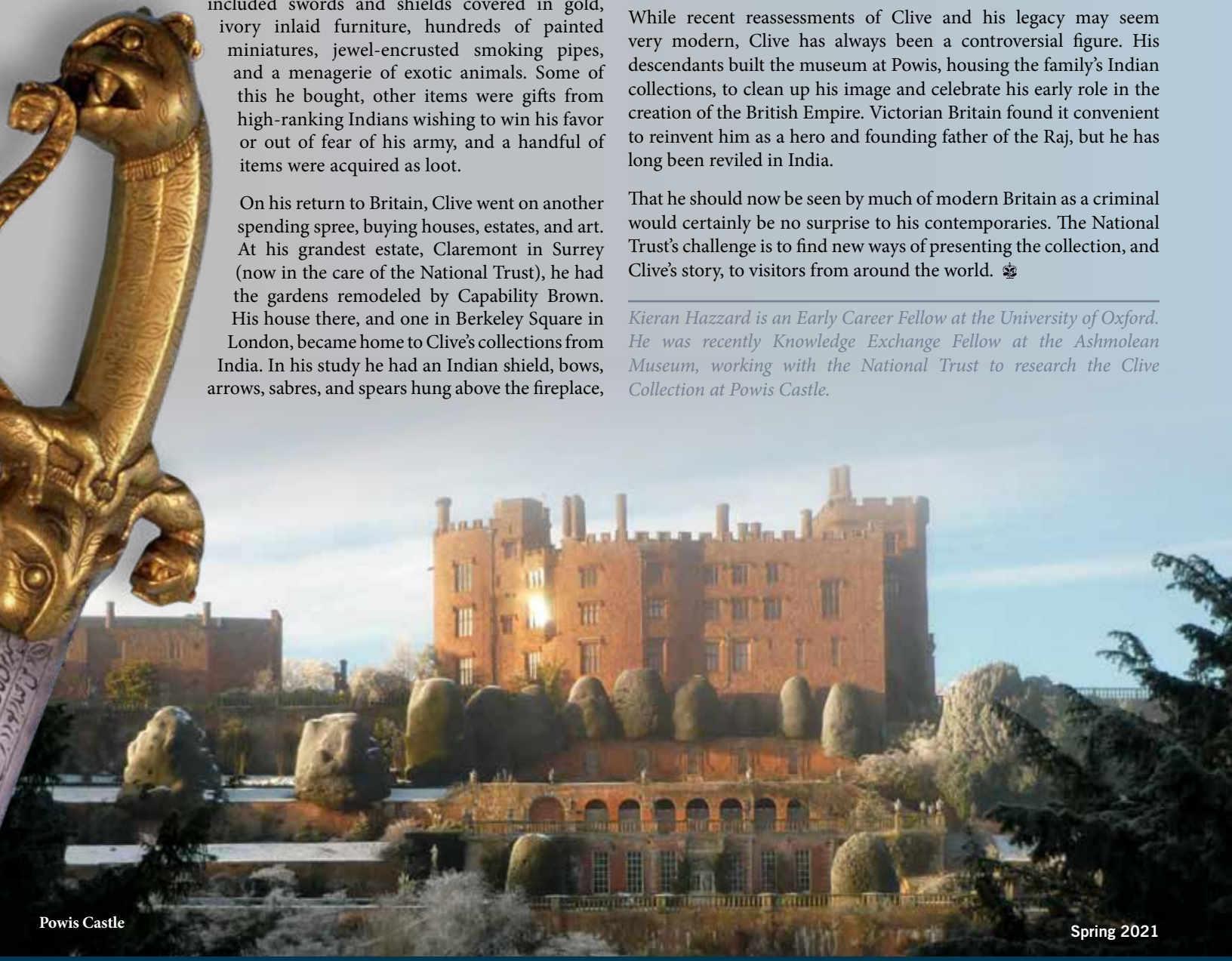
On his return to Britain, Clive went on another spending spree, buying houses, estates, and art. At his grandest estate, Claremont in Surrey (now in the care of the National Trust), he had the gardens remodeled by Capability Brown. His house there, and one in Berkeley Square in London, became home to Clive's collections from India. In his study he had an Indian shield, bows, arrows, sabres, and spears hung above the fireplace, while in other rooms he displayed Indian furniture and paintings, and the lavish mementoes of his Indian life. He also bought his way into the notoriously corrupt 18th-century Parliament.

But when news reached London of the Bengal famine, public unease with Clive's vast wealth and power turned to open hostility. He was vilified in the British press and theatres for stealing both the land and wealth of India. Clive was brought in front of a parliamentary enquiry and his actions in India savaged. He managed to use the influence he'd bought to escape any official consequences but, he was commonly regarded as one of the country's greatest villains. When he died suddenly in 1774 rumors of suicide spread instantly, as the public chose to believe he killed himself from the shame of his actions. Samuel Johnson was recorded as saying that Clive had "acquired his fortune by such crimes, that his consciousness of them impelled him to cut his own throat."

While recent reassessments of Clive and his legacy may seem very modern, Clive has always been a controversial figure. His descendants built the museum at Powis, housing the family's Indian collections, to clean up his image and celebrate his early role in the creation of the British Empire. Victorian Britain found it convenient to reinvent him as a hero and founding father of the Raj, but he has long been reviled in India.

That he should now be seen by much of modern Britain as a criminal would certainly be no surprise to his contemporaries. The National Trust's challenge is to find new ways of presenting the collection, and Clive's story, to visitors from around the world.

Kieran Hazzard is an Early Career Fellow at the University of Oxford. He was recently Knowledge Exchange Fellow at the Ashmolean Museum, working with the National Trust to research the Clive Collection at Powis Castle.



Powis Castle

THE STONES SPEAK

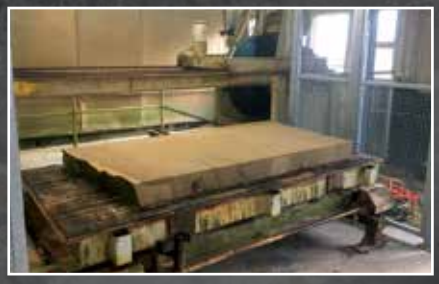
An Interview with Richard Wilkes, Building Supervisor Specialist Craft Mason

Historic buildings stand as tall, majestic pillars of the past, silently reminding us of a life that went before. Despite their aging walls and — on some occasions — leaking roofs, they still dominate their surrounding landscape with an air of wisdom and authority.

Behind every National Trust estate lies a secret workforce keeping everything in good condition. From carpenters and bricklayers to those installing new biomass boilers, the teams protect historic buildings for present and future generations to enjoy.

These people know these buildings in ways that most of us never will. If walls could speak, what intriguing stories would they tell? This issue, we talk to Richard Wilkes, a mason who works at Hardwick Hall to try to find out.

Stonemasory at Hardwick Hall in Yorkshire



Can you tell us a little bit about your background and how you came to work in this area?

I have been coming to Hardwick Hall since I was around 4 years old. My mother, Margaret, was the catering manager in the restaurant at the Hall for many years. I was getting close to leaving school and was thinking of becoming a joiner or bricklayer, but my mother asked me if I would be interested in becoming a stonemason at the Hall instead.

I was very interested but unfortunately the mason team at the Hall where not taking on apprentices at the time. But after a few months of letter writing and interviews, I got an apprenticeship with a church restoration firm in the area. I worked for several different masonry companies until I started with the Trust around 20 years ago. After 7 years of working as a stonemason at Hardwick, I left to be the Clerk of Works for the Trust in the Peak District. In December 2020, I returned to Hardwick to run the Mason Team.

What are the skills required of people who work in this? Are these skills dying or is there a resurgence in this field?

For someone who wants to become a mason, an apprenticeship, along with experience, will teach them all they need to know although it is good to be a bit practical. It's also important to have a good understanding of basic math.

For quite a long time, I was the youngest mason I knew on the mason teams. However, over the last 10-15 years, I have met quite a few young people. Today, there is a member of the mason team at Hardwick named Hamish Blair who is just 25 years old. But we could always do with more masons as there will always be the need for them.

For a number of years, the team at Hardwick did run stone-carving weekends for the public to have a go and produce a little stone for them to take home. We also have had apprentices here too. Some of the apprentices have stayed for a while, and some have left and moved to other companies or set up their own firms. I would like to take new apprentices if we can find the funding to do so.

What types of projects is the Trust currently working on?

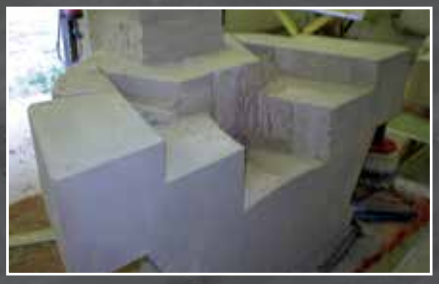
At the moment, we are working on the West Loggia of Hardwick Hall. We are replacing stones on the columns of the front of the Hall and around the windows on the ground floor. Simultaneously, a contractor is rebuilding the leaded windows using the original glass. Once he has refitted them, we will have to point around them with a lime mortar.

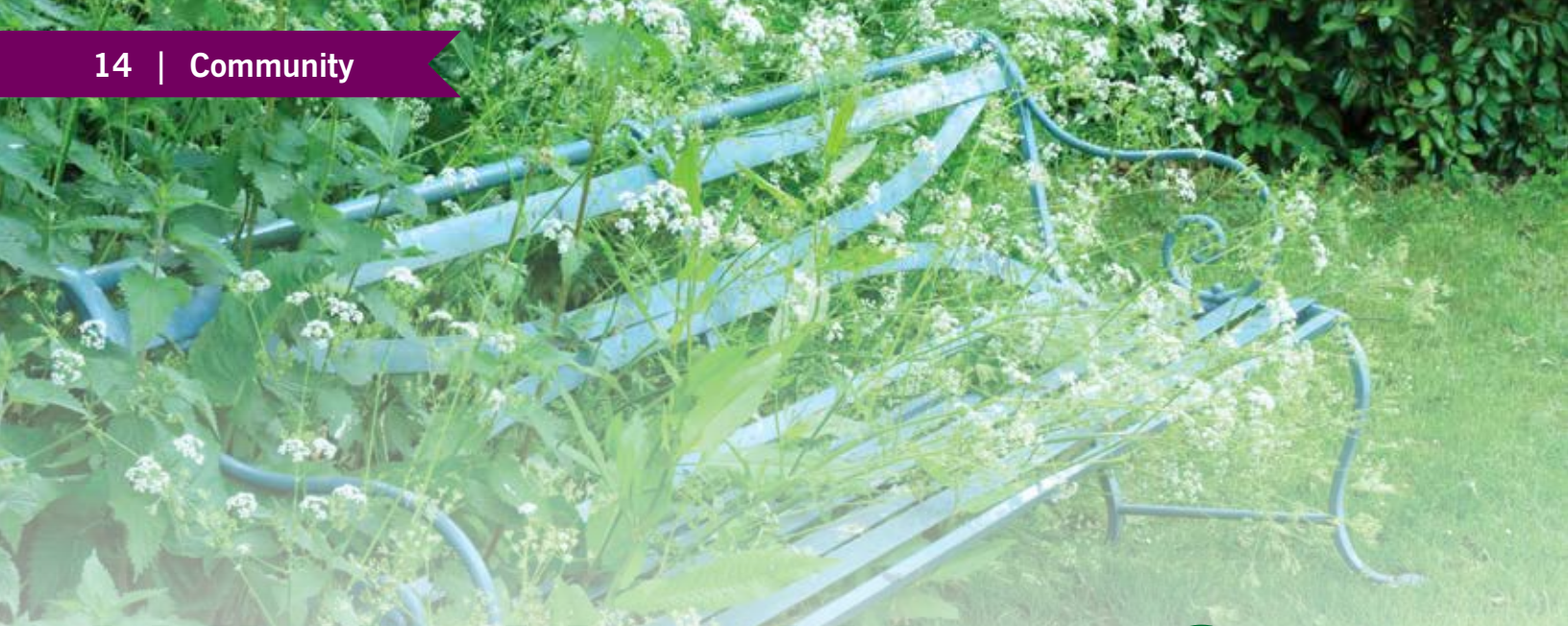
Another contractor is replacing the lead flat roof along with plastering the ceiling under the Loggia roof. The new masonry involves the stone block being delivered from the quarry in 3-3.5 ton pieces. These are then loaded onto the primary saw to be cut in large slabs which are then moved to the secondary saw to be cut down into smaller 6-sided pieces that are then ready the go into the workshop. (See the pictures below.) There, each individual item of masonry is worked until ready to go up to the Hall or other building it may be destined for.

Where do the materials come from? What types of materials are found in the British Isles? Are there certain types of historical regional/vernacular styles?

The Hall and surrounding buildings where originally built from Hardwick Stone, which is a sandstone quarried out of the estate at a couple of locations up to relatively recently but now the stone in the quarry on the estate is quite poor quality so the decision was made to look elsewhere. Blaxter Stone a sandstone quarried in Northumbria was deemed to be a suitable match for color and texture. There are still many quarries operating in the country from sandstone to limestone with some limestones being so hard they are almost a marble. Although a lot are used for architectural stone many are only good enough for aggregates and sands.

Many of the vernacular types of buildings have different styles that vary from region to region. Some are built of sandstone, some limestone, and others brick with some flint or with a mixture of these materials. Roofs are composed of various forms of clay tiles, welsh slate, or even stone.





While You Were Gone

One of Britain's most beloved and celebrated gardens is Hidcote, an Arts and Crafts-inspired garden with intricately designed outdoor spaces in the rolling Cotswold hills, created by the American, Lawrence Johnston

Letter to America from Lottie Allen, Head Gardener at Hidcote

Due to the novel coronavirus, Hidcote went into lockdown and closed to visitors on Mother's Day, Sunday, March 23, 2020. Shortly after that, six of the garden team were furloughed and volunteers were asked to stay at home.

A conscious decision was made not to furlough the senior garden team of five including the head gardener, assistant head gardener and three senior gardeners, who continued to work using a 7-day rotation.

An essential task list had been issued to all National Trust properties including watering, security and compliance checks. During the first lockdown, hundreds of young plants, propagated the previous autumn, were composted to reduce watering and planting time, and annual flower seed was directly sown once the spring bulbs had bloomed.

Once the initial lockdown had been lifted, the still-reduced team turned their attention to how the garden could be opened safely. Many of the National Trust's large gardens and landscapes found this easier than Hidcote. The narrow and bisecting paths proved to be a challenge in following government guidance and building confidence in those who would visit.

To tackle this challenge, a one-way, restricted route around the garden, including provision of an accessible route, was planned. With no opportunity to hand out garden maps, staff painted "no entry" signs on sawn logs and placed arrows around the garden to guide visitors.

To trial the route, furloughed staff and volunteers were invited to book a time to test the routes. Hidcote reopened to visitors using a pre-booked timed tickets only system on Monday, June 22. Initially, visitor numbers were limited to 300 per day, equally spread across the day, though by Monday, July 27, bookings were raised to 938 per day, the equivalent of a normal summer day.

The timed entry allowed both visitors and staff a quieter, more intimate atmosphere allowing for clear glimpses of the central axis and careful access across the grass to the Old Garden and Red Borders. Some visitors commented that a slightly less formal Hidcote might have better reflected Johnston's original conception of the garden.

Following reopening in July, three of the furloughed team returned to a complicated work rotation and hedge-cutting started. By July, the garden had already lost 5,000 hours of staff and volunteer time and it was unclear how the rest of the year would unfold.

Work needed to be prioritized. Hedge-cutting was done in the Long Walk, Theatre Lawn, along the central axis and Old Garden. In August, following strict guidance, volunteers were invited to return. As with managing visitor volume, Hidcote staff opted to manage volunteers using a booking system. Initially three volunteers came twice a week, and then that was briefly increased to five every other day, and all for mornings only.

In November, the rest of the team returned though three of the team resigned due to personal circumstances and other opportunities. In a normal year, staff and volunteers would spend 30,000 hours of time managing the garden – in 2020, it is estimated that approximately 8,000 hours were lost.

Britain once again mandated new lockdowns in December, though there is hope that some normalcy may return in the summer of 2021.

On a personal note, while 2020 was not the year I had in mind when I started at Hidcote in September 2019, I can honestly say I have wholly benefited from working more closely (albeit socially distanced!) with the senior garden team, as well as having spent time gardening which realistically may have fallen to others in a normal year.

I have watched the garden's wildlife flourish (as well as some large weeds!), observed how resilient the garden is without the time to stake and dead head, and enjoyed the slightly wild tone and tranquil nature that lockdown brought us.

We hope to see you all again soon.

Photos: ©National Trust Images.

Life Under Lockdown at Hidcote

The garden continued to flower and looked beautiful under lockdown. The slightly disheveled look of some areas felt very much in the spirit of Lawrence Johnston and the wildlife thrived with the garden full of birdsong

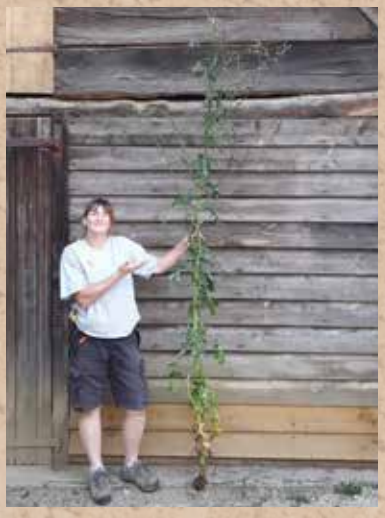
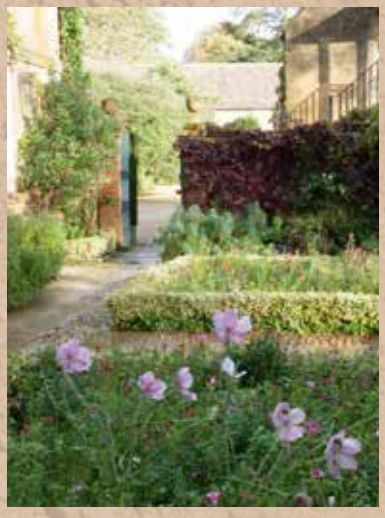




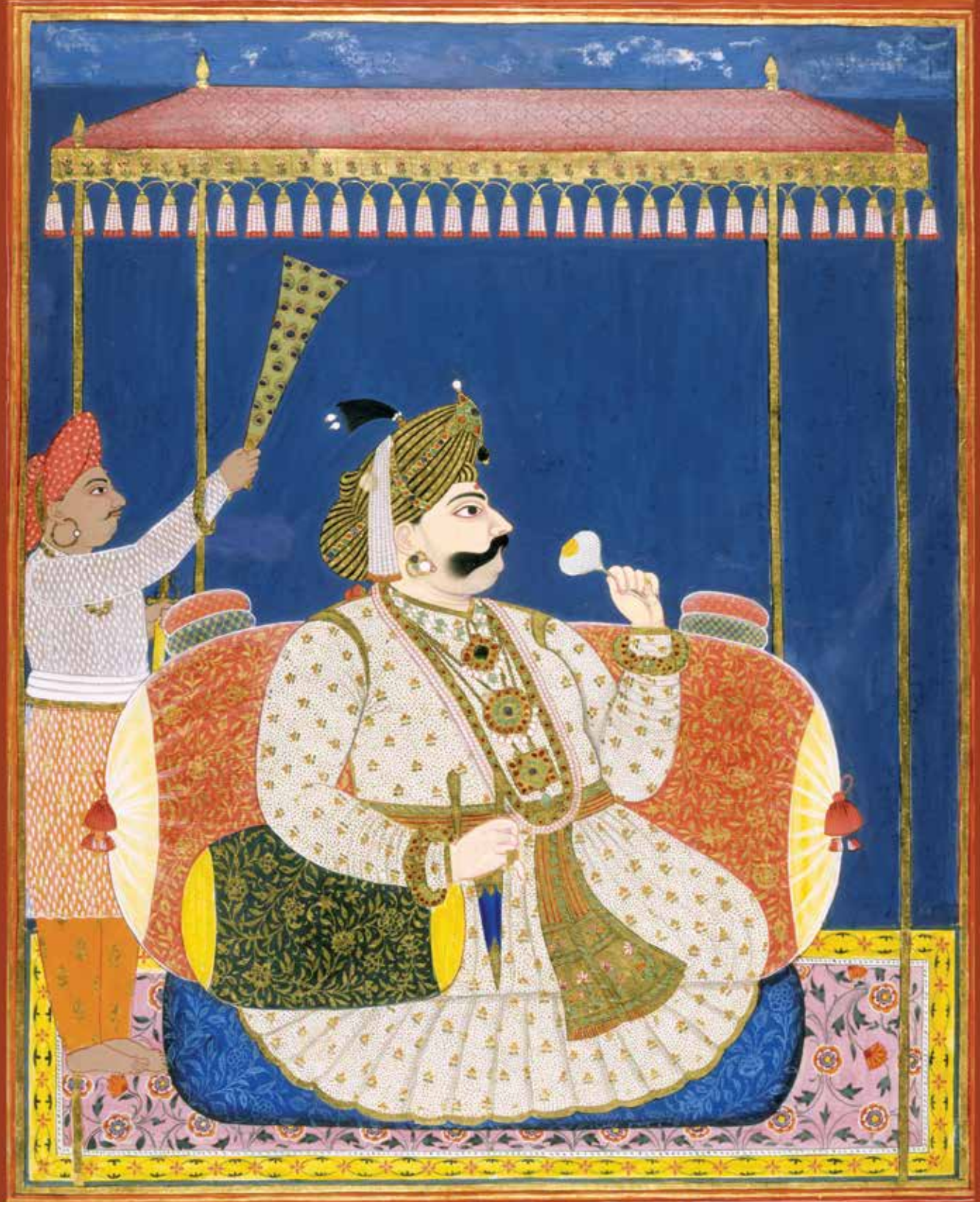

Work continued throughout lockdown on essential tasks: weeding, irrigation, clearing invasive plants. Clearing borders, planting out, hedge-cutting and mowing.

Our one-way route around the garden was directed by arrows and "no entry" signs. These were initially printed onto paper, but later painted onto logs.



Here you can see one of the champion weeds found in the garden! In many areas, like the parterres in East Court, we have left the spring bulbs in for next year's display. As we didn't have resources for propagating plants, we used an annual bedding mix to create a display. Finally, in the Kitchen Garden we sowed a green manure to provide ground cover, suppress weeds and add fertility to the soil.



A portrait of the Maharaja Pratap Singh of Tanjore (1739-65.) The Maharaja sits in traditional Indian style up against bolsters. He holds a flower-like rose water sprinkler. Gouache, gold and beetle wing. In the Clive Museum at Powis Castle.

The Royal Oak Foundation seeks to raise awareness and advance the work of the National Trust of England, Wales, and Northern Ireland by inspiring support from the United States for the Trust's efforts to preserve and protect historic places and spaces – for ever, for everyone.

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