



THE ROYAL OAK FOUNDATION

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



A Secret Garden in Wales

Life on the English Riviera

Looking for London's Lost Palace

FALL 2021



The Chapel of St Cuthbert on Inner Farne, in the Farne Islands, Northumberland. A carved crest from the Chapel will be conserved at the Royal Oak Conservation Studio.

Dear Members & Friends,

As we approach the end of 2021, we are seeing signs that international travel will resume. The UK and US are allowing fully vaccinated travelers to enter the country without requiring a mandatory quarantine. The National Trust has resumed operations with most properties now fully open, some with a pre-booking system. I hope that as you each feel more comfortable traveling, you will go to the UK to enjoy the wonderful houses, gardens, and natural landscapes that are under the care of the Trust. In this issue of the newsletter, you will find articles about places that can be visited, such as Coletton Fishacre, and another that has been lost to time - the Palace of Carleton House. There is also an article about legacy giving. Legacy giving has been an essential part of Royal Oak's fundraising plan, and it was through legacy gifts that we were able to provide the National Trust with our generous donation to the Conservation Studio at Knole earlier this year.

When you are not travelling, you can look forward to enjoying all Britain has to offer through our online programs. These have been a major success and members comments have been overwhelmingly positive; we can now engage with all members regardless of where they live. Virtual lectures and tours will continue this fall and include exciting and diverse topics ranging from Secrets from the National Trust, to The Queen, and Country Houses of Derbyshire.

Our twice postponed annual benefit dinner is scheduled for April 21, 2022 and will be held in New York City. It will feature a conversation between our honoree, Dame Karen Pierce and Sir David Cannadine. Dame Pierce is the UK ambassador to the US, and Sir Cannadine is a noted author and professor of history at Princeton. The evening is certain to be an entertaining and informative affair. Please look for more information as we get closer to the date.

Our appeal to restore the Gilt Leather Parlor at the National Trust's Dyrham Park is well underway and we expect to meet our goal of \$250,000 by year-end. The restoration will re-present the room as it would have been in William Blathwayt's time and showcase many of his important maps and books, some of which are now in collections in the US. If you have not already given to this appeal, I encourage you to do so and help restore this place that has significant connections to the Americas.

Though this past year has been difficult, our members loyalty never ceases to astound me. You have provided the support necessary to continue our crucial work for the National Trust. Thank you and I look forward to seeing you in person in the coming year.

Ian Murray
Executive Director



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Cover Photo: The Ice Tower and West Front of Penrhyn Castle, Gwynedd, Wales.

News from the Royal Oak Conservation Studio



The conserved Sgabello chairs from Petworth on display.

Current Projects

The conservation of the Samurai Armor is complete and has been re-installed at Snowhill Manor. It is part of a celebratory display for the new book from the National Trust, *125 Treasures*, in which it features. The Studio spent nearly 200 hours conserving the elements to ensure its future stability.

The structural condition of the oil painting of Sir John Maitland from Ham House has been assessed and dendrochronology completed. It is now at the Hamilton Kerr Institute undergoing Macro-XRF and is due back in September for conservation work to be completed in the studio and analytical results to be discussed and put into context.

Conservation work on the Sgabello chairs from Petworth is nearly complete: six chairs have been returned to Petworth in time for their display celebrating the *125 Treasures* book. The remaining three chairs will return to Petworth by the end of September. The chairs required over 800 hours conserving time, which included structural treatment and decorative surface stabilization. Their conservation has raised interesting questions around manufacture and the group as a whole. There are distinct but subtle differences in their design and results are pending dendrochronology and cross-section analysis.

Highlights of Upcoming Projects

The Governor/Sultan of Surat painting has been displayed in the Banqueting House at Fountains Abbey since at least 1771 when it was first mentioned in Dorothy Richardson's travel journal. It is possible that it was displayed there from 1730 when the building was

constructed by John Aislabie. The Persian inscription suggests that the sitter is Nawab Khan and is the work of Shaykh Isfahani from Shams Abad in modern day Punjab in 1123 (1711-12). During that time, John Aislabie's brother William was the East India Company Governor of Bombay, and it is possible that it was brought to Studley Royal when he returned in 1715.

Textile conservation of the Erddig State Bed started in 2018 and is being undertaken by the National Trust's Textile Conservation Studio. In November, decorative gilt elements will be removed for conservation at the Royal Oak Foundation Conservation Studio, and will be completed by February 2022.

A carved crest from St Cuthbert's chapel in the Farne Islands will make a journey to the conservation studio due to the lack of facilities on the island. Part of the woodwork was introduced during the Chapel restoration in the 1840s carried out by Archdeacon Charles Thorp who took on the lease of the islands in 1838 and began restoring the Chapel. The woodwork came from Durham Cathedral and was thought to be part of Bishop Cosin's 17th century choir stalls.

Two backstools of high historical and aesthetic significance from Ham House will be conserved. Recorded in inventories from 1677 onwards, the stools' unusual form may derive from Italian sgabello chairs. Each differs slightly, indicating they came from different original sets. They are decorated in a Chinese manner and the splats bear the Duchess's cypher ('EDL'), making them a fascinating document of female patronage and Stuart taste.

A pair of jade ornamental gardens and two Chinese pots with jade plant leaves from Sissinghurst will be coming to the studio for assessment, specialist cleaning and stabilization.

Smaller Projects

A suite of green, striped furniture in the style of Chippendale from ca.1770 were conserved as part of the Rex Whistler room at Mottisfont Abbey. Whistler died in action during World War II before his plans for the room were fully implemented. Maude Russell (the owner) worked closely with Whistler on the decorative scheme, including colors and fabrics and she may have been involved in the selection of this suite. A low-fired ceramic llama from the entrance to 2 Wandsworth Road which was accidentally broken recently has been repaired. A day bed at Standen House was conserved as part of the plan to highlight the furniture designed by the pioneering cousins A&R Garrett – Britain's first professional female interior designers.

Chair from Mottisfont after treatment, clean and with losses replaced.





LIFE ON THE ENGLISH RIVIERA

by Barbara Wood, Cultural Heritage Curator, National Trust

Coleton Fishacre is a 1920s country retreat complete with a luxuriant garden by the sea.

Coleton Fishacre is about two things – the gardens and the sea. Built for Rupert D'Oyly Carte and his wife Lady Dorothy Milner Gathorne-Hardy, it was designed for weekends of sailing, swimming and tennis, of fishing, riding and gardening.

With miles of glorious sandy beaches, sweeping views, rocky coves, fishing harbors, small towns and a warm climate, Torbay is England's own "Riviera." The area became fashionable in the 19th century partly when the Napoleonic Wars (1803-15) put a stop to European travel but it really took off with the arrival of the railway in 1848. New coastal villas were built alongside small and picturesque cottages as wealthy visitors came to enjoy the spectacular scenery and sea air.

One of those visitors was Rupert D'Oyly Carte, heir to the business empire built by his father Richard, theater impresario, founder of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, composer, and owner of a string of luxurious hotels including the Savoy and Claridge's in London. Out sailing, Rupert and Dorothy first spotted the combe, or valley, of Coleton in 1923. They soon purchased the land from Coleton Farm and by 1925 had rented a house nearby to oversee building works for a new house.

It was a time when the countryside was becoming much more accessible, cars were becoming common, and it was easier to get away from the work and grime of the city. In past centuries, landed families had sought to escape the boredom of their country house for the excitement of the town. By the 1920's, it was the countryside that was much more appealing. Fortunes acquired through business

rather than inherited wealth meant renewed interest in country houses. Trends for exercise and outdoors pursuits also required a suitable base for such a lifestyle. The wealthy D'Oyly Cartes were able to build their own idyllic place, a permanent home for Dorothy and a weekend retreat for Rupert who travelled by train every Friday evening from London.

Coleton Fishacre was designed by Oswald Milne, son of an architect and previously an assistant to Sir Edwin Lutyens. Known partly for his work on large country houses but also for designing schools and hotels, Milne created a building and garden completely in harmony with its setting, perfect for a relaxed, outdoor life but also practical. The relatively small scale and simple aesthetic still appeal and it's easy to see why this has become one of the National Trust's most popular houses.

Externally the house is almost without decoration apart from a weathervane and sundial facing the garden, but a closer look will reveal a sense of detail and style in every fitting, window catch or door. The asymmetrical design is built in slate rubble with a slate roof, quarried from the lower part of the combe and transported to the site of the house using a temporary, small-scale railway. It looks almost domestic and functional but that of course is part of the intention. Suggesting an honest simplicity, it is also both carefully elegant and expensive.

Resonant of the traditional craftsmanship so evident in the Arts & Crafts movement, the house also looks to the future in its clean



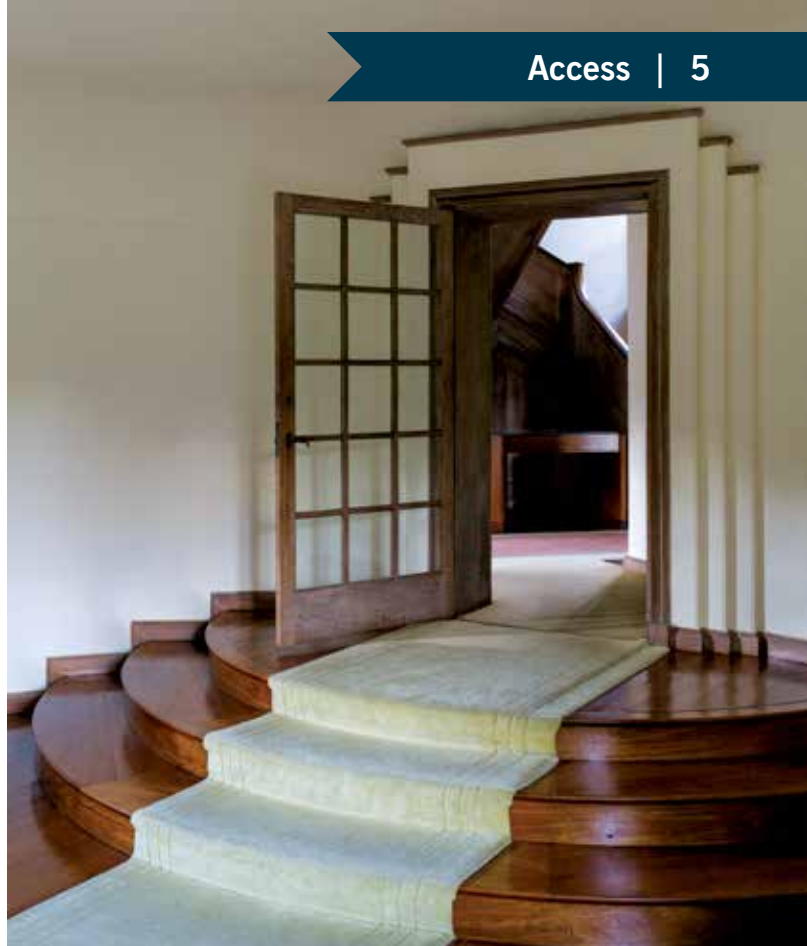
Rupert D'Oyly Carte and Lady Dorothy enjoying their tidal pool at Pudcombe Cove.

lines and open, sparse interiors. It feels reassuringly traditional and familiar but also exciting and modern. Milne's plans were not only for the building but also the furnishings and show the position of beds, cupboards and washbasins. The modern design included a motor house for the family Bentley, a generator to provide power for the buildings, a chauffeur's flat and staff cottages. A call for the car could be made on a telephone line between the house and motor house.

Furnishings were minimal, after all, the point of being at Coletton Fishacre was to be outside. The limed oak and white rooms emphasized the light filling each room from the wide windows. There are Art Deco details, such as the ceiling lights but comfort and color were added with rugs and ceramics, often of Chinese or East Asian style. The expansive windows and bare walls drew attention to the gardens. Records of the planting were kept in a series of notebooks by Rupert and Lady Dorothy until their separation in 1937. Terraces, seating and the gazebo all encourage a sense of easy relaxation and a pathway led to Pudcombe Cove with its concrete platform for sunbathing, seawater pool and landing stage for yachts.

As idyllic as the setting was, the family did experience tragedy during these years. The D'Oyly Cartes divorced in 1941, having grown apart after the death of their son Michael in 1932, and Rupert left Coletton Fishacre to their daughter Bridget. She sold the estate in 1949 to Rowland and Freda Smith. They took great care of the house and garden but by the late 1970's it was becoming overgrown, and the lower valley was used for grazing Jacob sheep.

The National Trust bought the estate from Freda Smith in 1982 with funds raised through Project Neptune and it opened to visitors in 1999. A few original pieces remain including Lalique light fittings and the dining room table and chairs, a wind map in the library painted by Spencer Hoffman in 1927 and a carpet designed for the saloon in the 1930's by Marion Dorn. The light fittings are also still



The grand Art Deco-style entrance into the Saloon.

in place and the deep baths and whimsical tiles of the bathrooms are rare survivals.

The reconstructed interiors evoke a sense of the house in the 1920s which has been based on photographs taken for *Country Life* magazine in the 1930s and Oswald Milne's plans. In 2010 this approach extended to the servant's wing, previously used as staff and volunteer facilities. New Rooms were researched and re-imagined, adding 17 spaces to the visitor route. With such a small collection, Coletton Fishacre will continue to see changes and development in coming years, but it remains a glorious place to sit on the lawns and look out to the sea, just as the D'Oyly Cartes intended.

Barbara Wood is a Cultural Heritage Curator working in Devon, Somerset and Cornwall. She has a background in archaeology and in national, regional and community museums and joined the National Trust in 2010.



Explore the English Riviera

The D'Oyly Cartes were not the only people enchanted by the area. Agatha Christie was born in Torquay and grew up there in a Victorian mansion called Ashfield. As a local girl, Agatha enjoyed all aspects of an English Riviera social life: roller-skating along the pier; going to dances, dinners and balls; and bathing in the sea. In adulthood, Agatha couldn't resist buying Greenway (pictured here), a place she had known about since childhood.

Other National Trust properties in the area include Compton Castle, Bradley Manor, Castle Drogo and Overbeck's Garden.



The Anglo-Gallic Style

The French Revolution's impact on British interior design

By Diana Davis

Though newly made by London's Robert Hume & Son, this ebony and pietre dure cabinet at Belvoir Castle recalled those made for Louis XIV and the Medici.

In 1829 John Henry Manners, 5th Duke of Rutland, celebrated his birthday with a grand party. The inspiration for the Elizabeth Saloon, his new drawing room at Belvoir Castle, Rutland, was French. Large mirrors reflected gilded 18th-century rococo paneling believed to have belonged to Madame de Maintenon, now emblazoned with the Rutland peacock. Four ebony and pietre dure cabinets recalled those made for Louis XIV and the Medici, much admired by British collectors. Belvoir's cabinets, attributed to the London dealer-cabinetmakers Robert Hume & Son, were brand new. Chandeliers, blue silk damask wall panels, a crimson and gold Aubusson carpet and a painted ceiling completed the glittering ensemble.

The *Morning Post* declared the room a "blaze of splendour ...fitted up in the richest and most magnificent style of Louis XIV." However, the Elizabeth Saloon and similar Francophile interiors had little to do with the taste of the Sun King. Their eclectic mix of French and English furnishings – old, new, and reimagined – was an opulent

"Anglo-Gallic" decorative style that combined the taste of two rival nations.

British monarchs, aristocrats and grand tourists had shopped in Paris for luxury goods since the 17th century. In the 1760s and 70s, George, 6th Earl of Coventry and the banker Robert Child commissioned sets of crimson-ground tapestries from the Gobelins factory, based on designs by François Boucher, for Croome Court and Osterley Park. Robert Adam designed Osterley's "Cabriole Sofa richly carved & gilt in burnish Gold and covered with Gobelin Tapestry" and chairs, listed in 1782, in French style to match.

But the Elizabeth Saloon represented a step change in collecting practice. The catalyst was the French Revolution. Hitherto luxury had meant new. From 1793 the *Convention Nationale*, anxious to excise all traces of the Bourbon monarchy, sold off the contents of French royal palaces and aristocratic collections. *Démodé* furnishings

tainted by association were unsaleable in France. Enterprising dealers looked instead to Britain, persuading collectors that this was a unique opportunity to buy something rich, rare, and royal. Ancien régime art became the cherished symbol of a vanished past, displayed with new furnishings like the Belvoir cabinets, inspired by that past.

British collectors visiting Paris during the peace of 1802-03 and after the war in 1815 purchased both new and old. In 1803 and 1819 Charles, 1st Baron Whitworth bought the latest bronzework and silver from Louis-Stanislas Lenoir-Ravrio and Henri Auguste but also a Boulle marquetry clock of ca. 1710 by Etienne Baillon, still at Knole. Prices suggest that the new remained the traditionally desirable item with the old competing for primacy. In 1803 Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh commissioned two pietre dure cabinets from the dealer Martin-Eloi Lignereux for George IV for £380. A lacquer commode of 1773 bought for Uppark cost only £51. Attributed to the master *ébéniste* Martin Carlin, it is thought to have been made for Madame du Barry.

Dealers made the furniture of André-Charles Boulle increasingly desirable. Always prized in France, it was rare in 18th-century British collections although a *bureau Mazarin* of ca. 1695, “1 Tortorshell Table inlaid wth Brass,” was recorded at Erddig in 1726. Sir Harry acquired several Boulle pieces including a *bureau plat* and four Boulle revival pedestals. Demand was such that the British “buhl inlayer” Thomas Parker imitated the technique, embellishing Regency furniture with the distinctive marquetry and reusing original marquetry panels, combining the new with the antique.

The auctioneer Harry Phillips specialized in selling “Parisian elegancies,” importing decorative art from Paris assisted by a Franco-British dealer cartel. In 1816 Sarah Child-Villiers, Lady Jersey bought a *secrétaire* with quoin recesses and a Sèvres plaque on the fall front of ca. 1775 at Phillips. Attributed to Roger Lacroix, it was temptingly described as “removed from the Boudoir of the late Queen of France.” A painting by William Ranken of 1931 shows the *secrétaire* (no longer extant) in Osterley’s Tapestry Room. Unlike the tapestries, this was an old piece of furniture, acquired in London not Paris in a market transformed by auctioneers and dealers.



Top: This clock at Knole is a late Louis XIV Boulle pendule, ca. 1710, by Paris-based Etienne Baillon.

Antiquarianism provided part of the appeal of Anglo-Gallic furniture. Black and gold Boulle marquetry evoked East Asian lacquer and ebony furniture. Collectors like George IV and William Beckford were as attracted by gleaming 18th-century gilt bronze mounts and jeweled decoration on Sèvres porcelain as by hardstones, pietre dure and *Kunstkammer* objects. Following George IV’s lead at Carlton House and Windsor, interiors, whether Anglo-Gallic or Gothic, resonated with color, mirror glass and gilding, harmonizing furniture of different styles and dates.

Charlecote Park, “re-edified” by George and Mary Elizabeth Lucy in the 1820s and 30s, was an exercise in romantic revivalism. New stained glass and flock and gold-leaf wallpapers supplied by the antiquary Thomas Willement provided a vibrant historicist backdrop for the “antient” furniture bought to suit an Elizabethan house. However, Charlecote’s ebony and ivory seat furniture was not Elizabethan but made in India in ca. 1690-1720. Mary Elizabeth’s embroidered cushions, commemorating a visit by Elizabeth I to Charlecote, read: “a gift of ye Queene to ye Earle of Leicester, 1575.”

At Beckford’s Fonthill sale in 1823, Lucy acquired both a magnificent pietre table top, reputedly looted by Napoleon from the Borghese palace, and new furniture that utilized precious materials from the past, all still at Charlecote. An ebony cabinet by Robert

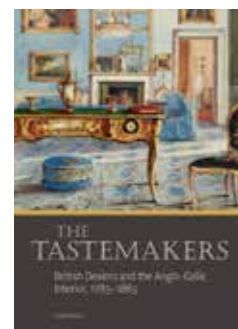
Hume was enriched with hardstones, marble, and pietre dure. Two cabinets attributed to the dealer Edward Holmes Baldock incorporated 17th-century carved ebony panels. Baldock also made new furniture featuring marquetry in specialist woods by Messrs Blake. Lucy purchased an octagon-shaped library table with floral marquetry in 1837.

The dealer’s skill as maker and marketer transformed collecting practice and the decorative interior. Anglo-Gallic style, a romanticized vision of Frenchness, owed as much to the imagination as to reality. However, by changing perceptions of value, dealers had created the modern concept of the antique from the old and unwanted. Wily brocanteurs, every one, they were also tastemakers whose legacy endures whenever we visit an antique shop.



An octagonal library table at Charlecote, ca. 1837, by Edward Holmes Baldock, of walnut and ebony veneer with floral marquetry, the top border incorporating cartouches with crowns, fleur-de-lys and crossed ‘T’s similar to French royal furniture.

Diana Davis researches the history of dealers, collectors, and the art market in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Her publications include *The Tastemakers: British Dealers and the Anglo-Gallic Interior, 1785-1865* published by the Getty Research Institute in 2020. She lectures widely and is co-editor of the *French Porcelain Society Journal*.





Looking for London's Lost Palace

National Trust properties can help us understand and reimagine its glories

by David Oakey

When the notoriously waspish aesthete Horace Walpole first viewed the young Prince George of Wales's new London home Carlton House in 1785, midway through its construction, he was clearly impressed. *'It will be the most perfect palace in Europe. There is an august simplicity that astonished me. You cannot call it magnificent; it is the taste and propriety that strike. Every ornament is at a proper distance, and not one too large, but all delicate and new, with more freedom and variety...'*

Located on Pall Mall in the southern part of Waterloo Place, its heyday was during the Regency of its owner from 1811 to 1820, when it became the leading royal residence of the United Kingdom. Despite only existing for about 40 years until its demolition in 1827, by which time its owner had assumed the throne as George IV, Carlton House had arguably more impact on architectural style and interior taste in Britain than any other architectural project of the era. It may be surprising that such an important residence was so short-lived; a question often asked is

why did the king decide to demolish his first home? It seems that despite its splendor, it suffered from insurmountable problems: too small, not private enough, and most importantly, persistent structural issues. A serious fire in 1826 may have sealed its fate. Lamentably now only a handful of painted and drawn interior views, a few written accounts and some archival sources survive to help us imagine its magnificence.

Yet some contemporaneous architectural projects can help too. The National Trust holds in its care three such houses. First is Berrington Hall in Shropshire, which remains the most complete and fully realized architectural project undertaken by Carlton House's original architect Henry Holland. Executed in 1778-81 for Thomas Harley, former Lord Mayor of London, with grounds by Holland's father-in-law and professional mentor Capability Brown, it was the architect's main project directly prior. It gives us an excellent insight into the 18th-century, French-inspired Neoclassical elegance of the earliest phase of Carlton House, in contrast

to the Regency redecorations seen in many of the surviving watercolors.

Berrington's hallway and staircase rely on spatial impact, scagliola columns and a geometrically black-and-white flagged floor that are evocative of the entrance hall and tribune at Carlton House. In particular, the elaborate decoration and lighting effects in the staircase and its central lantern are features subsequently deployed by Holland at Carlton House, admittedly on a yet grander and more adventurous scale. Berrington gives us a glimpse of vistas using perfectly aligned enfilades of doors, so effective at Carlton House that Horace Walpole remarked it was "full of perspectives." Indeed the exquisite neo-classical detailing throughout give us some impression of the "chaste simplicity" described by Walpole, which he contrasted favorably to the work of Holland's rival, Robert Adam and his "gingerbread and snippets of embroidery."

Berrington also features a signature of Holland's projects: a boudoir. Boudoirs were a French idea, the name deriving



possibly from the French verb *bouder*, to sulk. Intended to be the most private room in a house, to which an owner could retreat for solitary rest and relaxation, it was also often subject to the most exquisite decoration. New research on Carlton House has uncovered that it too had a short-lived ovoid dressing room, sometimes referred to as a boudoir, yet more elaborate than the one at Berrington; some early plans of the house show a circular room attached to the Prince's private apartments, also mentioned in the only inventory of the house from this era. The appearance of a room of this type in an English house at this time may seem surprising, however we can turn to another National Trust house not distant from Berrington to find something similar built at almost exactly the same time. The Circular Boudoir at Attingham Park, built for Lady Berwick during the renovations of the house undertaken between 1772 and 1785 by George Steuart probably gives us a good idea of what the mysterious room at Carlton House looked like. The charming and consummately executed painted decoration in the Attingham boudoir is attributed to French artist Louis-André Delabrière, who also worked extensively at Carlton House.

In 1806 Henry Holland died, and as the 18th century turned into the 19th, change was afoot at Carlton House. The rise of Napoleon presented George with a new rival in magnificence, meaning much of the 18th-century decoration of the type described above would disappear behind the gilding and velvet swags more typical of the Regency. War with France returned in 1792, prompting George to turn to the increasingly popular gothic style, perceived to be reassuringly British. One of the most notable later interiors executed at the house and completed in 1809, was the Gothic

Conservatory designed and built by architect Thomas Hopper. Visitors commented it on frequently: one announced it was “really like what one would imagine a fairy hall to be.”

The National Trust's astonishing Penrhyn Castle in Northern Wales (see cover), designed and built by Hopper after his work at Carlton House in the 1820s and 30s, may give us some idea of the impact of the conservatory. It represents a new tangent of the Gothic revival that had developed by this slightly later stage; the Romanesque, or Norman style, probably chosen to reflect the many other Norman castles that still dot the landscape of northern Wales. It perhaps also aimed to suggest a spurious lineage for its owners, the Pennant family, who in reality had gained the majority of their wealth from the nefarious North Atlantic slave trade.

The space in the castle that is most comparable to the Gothic Conservatory is the Great Hall, which shows a similar sense of theater. In both spaces, many details were added in Coade stone; not stone at all, but in fact a ceramic, moulded and repeatedly fired in a kiln. It is illustrative to compare the virtuoso design work shown on the huge monumental Coade stone candelabra from the Gothic Conservatory, which is taken yet further with the so-called *luminaires* of Penrhyn Castle. Both show remarkable ambition and creativity with individually modelled, writhing animals and figures.

They both make much use of colorful stained-glass windows. Those at the Gothic Conservatory were worked on by designers such as Richard Westall, whereas Thomas Willement was responsible for those at Penrhyn.

Over the four decades of its existence, Carlton House's evolution reflected changes in taste during this tumultuous era of history while continually setting higher and higher standards of extravagance. Probably the clearest inheritors of Carlton House's architectural and decorative legacy are the surviving Royal Residences of Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle, also largely creations of George IV. However as demonstrated here, something of the impact of the house can be appreciated elsewhere, including at some of these wonderful properties owned by the National Trust.

See comparisons of Carlton and National Trust houses at www.Royal-Oak.org/carlton.org

David Oakey is a Curator of a private art collection and previously spent seven years working in the Decorative Arts Section of the Royal Collection. He has published on Carlton House in the Georgian Group Journal, and in the catalogue to accompany the recent exhibition 'George IV: Art & Spectacle' at the Queen's Gallery London.



Of Character and Crown

What does it take to succeed
in the “top job”

By Tracy Borman

In February 2022, Queen Elizabeth II will celebrate her 70th year on the British throne – her Platinum Jubilee – by far the longest reign of any British monarch. It will resonate around the world, and especially in the US where the royal family, and British royalty in general, is enduringly popular (witness the success of Netflix’s award-winning series *The Crown*). Despite personal upheavals in the royal family, it continues to be held in high esteem.

The institution that the Queen represents is one the most iconic and enduring in the world. Elizabeth II can trace her descent to Egbert, the 9th century King of Wessex, which means that (excepting the Interregnum from 1649 to 1660) the British monarchy boasts a dynastic continuity that spans nearly 1,150 years. The ceremony followed at the Queen’s coronation in 1953 was largely the same as that used for the Anglo-Saxon kings 1,080 years earlier.

Despite the almost unimaginable change that has taken place during the twelve centuries of its existence, the British monarchy has survived, weathering the storms of rebellion, revolution and war that brought many of Europe’s royal families to an abrupt and bloody end. So what are the secrets of its success – and are there any lessons that can be learned for the future?

Of course, it’s not as straightforward as taking a leaf out of the books of Britain’s most celebrated monarchs because each was very much of their time. The decisive leadership of William I, Edward III and Henry V was perfectly suited to an era when Britain’s kings ruled by conquest. Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria embodied the self-confident, imperialistic values of their age and won widespread adulation as “weak and feeble” women in a male-dominated world. In more recent times, George V and George VI made up for their diminishing political role by providing a national figurehead for the war effort.

But there are certain lessons which stand the test of time. As has been shown again and again in the history of the British crown, the most successful sovereigns have been those who have skilfully managed their public image. As the first Stuart king of England, James I, observed: “A King is as one set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly do behold.” It is a delicate balancing act: too reclusive a monarch will appear aloof and uncaring; too accessible and they risk “letting daylight in upon magic,” as one Victorian commentator put it. Although Elizabeth II has generally struck the right balance, a notable exception was when she agreed to a behind-the-scenes documentary by the BBC entitled *The Royal Family*. It aired in 1969 and was such a PR disaster that she ordered it to be immediately withdrawn from view.

So, when it comes to royalty, mystique is important. But then, so is accessibility. As Princess Diana once observed: “It’s vital that the monarchy keeps in touch with the people.” Some of the most popular monarchs in British history are those who have led a riotous, even notorious private life, or whose lack of formality has endeared them to their people. Those ultimate royal rakes, Charles II and Edward VII, kept a bevy of mistresses, sired numerous illegitimate children between them and were the life and

Left: Portrait of Charles II attributed to Antonio Verrio at Packwood House.
Right: The Crown Jewels illustrated in *Their Gracious Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth*, published 1937





soul of every party. Yet they never forgot their royal dignity. Thus, in 1681, at the height of a crisis in his government, the same Charles II who had excited disapproval for his “profaneness and dissolution” asserted his majesty by appearing in full royal regalia. Likewise, when Edward VII’s beloved mistress Lillie Langtry poured a handful of ice down his back as a joke during a costume ball, the king was so furious that he spurned her for a long time afterwards.

Monarchs such as Charles II and Edward VII were forgiven their playboy lifestyles because they upheld and asserted their royal dignity when it mattered. They also fulfilled their royal duty. This is something that even the most charismatic and popular monarch must never neglect. Edward VIII’s glittering social life was irresistible to admirers all over the world. But that changed abruptly when he chose to give up the crown for the woman he loved: the American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Thereafter, he was presented as a shameful wastrel, selfish and vain, his life lacking all meaning. A similar shift in public attitudes towards Prince Charles’s younger son Harry took place in some quarters after he gave up his royal duties and started a new life in America with his wife Meghan Markle.

Perhaps the most vital ingredient for success is one that is difficult to imitate: character. The crown has survived numerous incumbents ill-suited to the position over the past thousand years, but now that the role is almost entirely symbolic, personality is of paramount importance. The last six decades have proved that the decidedly unglamorous qualities of duty and dignity are highly prized, just as they were during the reign of the first Elizabeth, who sacrificed personal desire for her country.

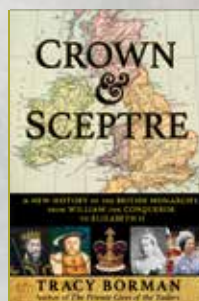
Any future monarchs not blessed with such a character would be well advised to take refuge in the trappings of monarchy that have long been beloved of people not just in Britain but across the globe. The sumptuous palaces and glorious pageantry, the glittering regalia and centuries-old ceremonies. These “toys and trifles” of monarchy, so disdained by Oliver Cromwell’s supporters during the English Civil War, may be the key to its continuity, its longevity and, ultimately, its survival. Royal ceremony and spectacle still captivate people across the world. When Prince William married Catherine Middleton in April 2011, two billion people in 180 countries watched the television broadcasts and there were 72 million live streams on YouTube.

“Always changing, always the same.” This description of an ideal monarchy neatly encapsulates Elizabeth II’s achievement. She has quietly modernized the monarchy by reducing its cost to the public purse and giving women equal precedence with men in the royal succession, among other innovations. Yet she has also retained those traditions which have defined the Crown for centuries: the Trooping of the Color, the State Opening of Parliament, and so on. The thread of continuity that she symbolizes offers a much-needed sense of certainty in a rapidly-changing world – and therein lies her greatest lesson for her successors.

Buy a ticket to Tracy Borman's December 2021 lecture for Royal Oak at www.Royal-Oak.org/Events.

Tracy Borman's forthcoming book is Crown & Sceptre: A New History of the British Monarchy, William the Conqueror to Elizabeth II.

Top: The King's Sceptre with the Cross and the King's Orb. Right: HRH Queen Elizabeth II. She is wearing the George IV State Diadem, or Diamond Diadem.



A Secret Garden in Wales

By Claire Masset

The National Trust is famous for its epoch-making gardens such as Hidcote, Sissinghurst, Stourhead and Stowe. But it also looks after lesser-known horticultural gems that are well worth seeking out. One such is Plas yn Rhiw in North Wales. It sits on the tip of “Snowdon’s arm,” in the wild and windswept Llŷn Peninsula. Despite its edge-of-the-world feel, the garden exudes cottage garden cosiness.

“To those sailing bleakly across Hell’s Mouth, there is just one spot where the eye gratefully rests on relative snugness,” wrote the architect Clough Williams-Ellis. Set half-way down a hillside overlooking the sea, Plas yn Rhiw lies in sheltered seclusion, protected from the strong south-westerlies by the ragged tor of Mynydd y Graig.

That a garden should even exist here is thanks to the determination of three indomitable sisters – Eileen, Lorna and Honora Keating – who acquired the small 17th-century manor house, with its one-acre garden and wooded grounds, in 1938. They were passionate conservationists and devoted the last decades of their lives to protecting the area, waging campaigns against commercial forestry, caravan parks and proposals for the construction of a nuclear power station. Like Beatrix Potter in the Lake District, they developed a productive partnership with the National Trust, acquiring land for the sole purpose of donating it to the charity. In their garden, they displayed this same respect for nature and the environment. Never overly controlling, their attitude was one of working with their site rather than against it. Still today it is gardened in a way that embraces this philosophy.

When the Keatings acquired Plas yn Rhiw, brambles had taken over the house. You had to climb through a side window to get into it. With the help of Williams-Ellis, who was concurrently creating the famous village of Portmeirion in North Wales, within a year the house was habitable.

Honora, the youngest of the sisters, was the driving force behind the garden’s restoration. What a delight it must have been to discover, under the brambles, bracken and weeds, a network of box-lined paths and the remains of a box parterre in front of the house. This was reinstated and a few judiciously placed topiarized yews and boxes were also added to the garden.

Within this formal structure, nature was left relatively untamed. Along the paved and cobbled paths, hardy geraniums, Welsh poppies and ferns

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The house, framed with bright azaleas and the new leaves of box hedges, at Plas yn Rhiw, Gwynedd.

grew wherever they could, while moss and lichen clothed the garden in a veil of timeless beauty. Old walls dripped with ivy-leaved toadflax. Crevices and banks were colonized by wild primroses, hart's tongue fern and lady's mantle.

With its narrow pathways, its twists and turns and small compartments, it would be easy to think of this small one-acre garden as inward looking. Yet your eye is constantly being pulled towards the magnificent views of the sea beyond, in a delicious to-and-fro that offers the perfect balance of comforting intimacy and sublime grandeur.

Today, native wildflowers such as foxgloves, aquilegias and red campion, together with hardy cottage garden plants and shrubs of sweet bay and cherry laurel, happily coexist with a sprinkling of exotic beauties. Honora Keating was a keen plantswoman and could not resist adding a few tender plants to her garden, such as *Abutilon* "Ashford Red," which flowers almost continuously in the shelter of the veranda.

The recently replanted box parterre in front of the house is a hard-working blend of repeat-flowering shrub roses, perennials, bulbs, annuals and biennials in shades of pink, white, blue and purple. Amongst the roses are the popular David Austin varieties "Harlow Carr" and "Eglantyne" and "The Mayflower."

The hardy cottage favorites – including phlox, lupins, hardy geraniums, Japanese anemones and echinaceas – are further enhanced by annuals, not least the wonderfully long-flowering and scented tobacco plants (*Nicotiana mutabilis* "Marshmallow" and *N. x hybrida* "Whispers Mixed") and the ever-reliable Cosmos "Purity."

In keeping with the sisters' love of nature, the garden is managed organically. In fact, Plas yn Rhiw is currently the only organic National Trust garden in Wales. Now, as it was in their day, it is both beautiful and productive. The small vegetable garden has been reinstated and, above the house a new orchard, filled with native Welsh fruit trees and a mass of wildflowers in spring, is maturing.

Claire Masset works as Publishing Manager for the National Trust. Prior to that she was gardens editor of The English Garden magazine and deputy editor of the Historic Gardens Review. She is the author of Secret Gardens of the National Trust (2017), Cottage Gardens (2020) and Buckingham Palace: A Royal Garden (2021).



Bodysgallen, North Wales

A few miles from famous Bodnant Garden, Bodysgallen is more compact, less showy but wonderfully atmospheric. Garden lovers will discover a pleasing mix of walks, terraces and enclosures, an attractive kitchen garden and a wooded landscape with glorious views of Conwy Castle and Snowdonia. Bodysgallen Hall is one of the three Historic House Hotels of the National Trust. As such the garden is only open to hotel patrons, but it is well worth the expense of an afternoon tea.



Woolbeding, West Sussex

When Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli visited Woolbeding in the 1840s, he called it "the loveliest valley in the land." Today this rural Arcadia is home to a brilliantly varied contemporary garden so secret that many locals don't even know it exists.

The Homewood, Surrey

This Modernist house is surrounded by a large garden inspired by the neighboring Surrey heathland. While it may look naturalistic, much like a Capability Brown landscape it is composed of carefully orchestrated set-pieces, with water features, trees and shrubs creating a sophisticated, painterly garden.

Tintinhull, Somerset

Hidden in a corner of Somerset, Tintinhull is the creation of two talented women. Phyllis Reiss, a gifted amateur, devoted 30 years of her life to this charming, almost domestic-scale garden. Her successor, award-winning garden designer and writer Penelope Hobhouse, spent 14 years tending its intimate outdoor "rooms," memorably describing it as "the offshoot of Hidcote."



Mr. Robinson's Japanned Cabinet

by Amanda-Jane Doran, Collections and House Manager, Ightham Mote

The American, Charles Henry Robinson had fallen in love with the 14th-century moated manor house, Ightham Mote, in the 1920s and when he saw an advertisement in *Country Life* decades later, in 1952, offering the house for sale, he immediately came to England and put in an offer.

Robinson stayed at the house during the summer months over the next three decades. In those years, he filled the rooms with furnishings he believed were appropriate to the spirit of the house, while making it a comfortable home. Much of his collection survives at Ightham, and today visitors can see his bedroom and library decorated as they were in Robinson's time.

In the drawing room there are two beautiful Japanned cabinets, one that belonged to earlier owners, the Colyer-Fergusson family, and one that was purchased by Robinson. The room is papered with hand-painted Chinese wallpaper depicting gorgeous exotic birds in a variety of landscapes against a sunny background. Mr Robinson's Japanned cabinet was made in England around 1750 and rests on a golden giltwood stand embellished with dramatic swags of fruit and foliage, dominated by a head of Bacchus. The metallic decoration on the cabinet is set against a classic black lacquer background and depicts exciting scenes of battling warriors on horseback, temples, flowers and game birds, in striking tones of gold and red. The cabinet is very delicate and in recent years has suffered some damage to its baroque base. The cabinet is now undergoing conservation at the Royal Oak Conservation Studio at Knole with funds provided by Royal Oak Legacy Circle members.

Robinson died in 1985. He bequeathed the house and contents to the National Trust, stating that "a house like the Mote belongs to the ages. One does not possess it, rather the opposite: one acts as a temporary protector or guardian."



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Sheep and lambs at Ickworth, Suffolk.

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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