



# THE ROYAL OAK FOUNDATION

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

Reinvigorating a Spectacular Woodland Garden  
Grinling Gibbons and the Country House  
Creating Arcadia in England

SPRING 2022





The Cascade Bridge and Lower Woman's Way Pond at Sheffield Park, East Sussex.

## Dear Members & Friends,

This year the Queen will celebrate her Platinum Jubilee in June, marking 70 years on the throne. National Trust properties will commemorate this milestone with festive events and outdoor activities, as well as highlight the special connection between the Royal family and specific National Trust houses. I hope you all get the chance to travel to the U.K. this spring and join in the festivities.

One especially fascinating exhibit will be a series of hand-selected archive photographs that will tell the story of the special relationship between the Queen and Sir Winston Churchill, at his family home at Chartwell. If you are near Kent, I encourage you to go see it.

A bit further afield from Kent, in East Sussex is where you will find Sheffield Park and Garden, the subject of our 2022 National Trust appeal. This beautiful, designed landscape is known for its vibrant colors and diversity of plant species. A previous owner, Arthur Soames, was an experimental horticulturist who introduced many rare plants. Much of his experimentation has been lost and the Trust now aims to revitalize the garden for the 21st century. With your help, Royal Oak will be a major contributor to the restoration of this historic landscape.

If you are traveling to the U.K., an alternative to the traditional hotel is to stay in one of three Historic House Hotels owned by the National Trust. These historic country houses have been rescued and carefully restored as historically accurate, yet contemporary Michelin-awarded hotels. You can learn more about them in this issue of the newsletter.

February marked one year since the conservation studio at Knole received our gift of \$4 million. In that time, the Trust has conserved objects that have included monumental pieces like John Constable's *Embarkation of George IV from Whitehall: The Opening of Waterloo Bridge, 1817* to diminutive ceramics from Hill Top, the home of Beatrix Potter. In addition to conservation of items, some of the Royal Oak funding is being used to convert a storage area into a high-quality painting conservation space. This gift would not have been possible without the generosity of our members and friends.

Thank you for your continued support of the Royal Oak Foundation and our work on behalf of the National Trust.

Ian Murray  
Executive Director



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# The National Trust Celebrates The Queen's Platinum Jubilee



Her Majesty The Queen on a state visit to the U.S. in 2007.

In February of this year, the National Trust unveiled its plans to mark The Queen's Platinum Jubilee with a diverse range of tree planting projects as part of The Queen's Green Canopy. In honor of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee year, The Queen's Green Canopy aims to leave a lasting legacy with the planting of trees across the nation. The trees will be planted by a broad range of individuals, communities and organizations, including the National Trust.

Seventy projects are planned by the Trust across England, Wales and Northern Ireland ranging in size from small-scale individual tree plantings where there is some significance to the property or landscape, to those where the Trust will be recreating notable, historic, lost avenues of trees. The following is a sampling of the plans.

Avenue projects include the recreation of a significant 80-tree avenue originally planted in 1766 at Dyrham Park on the outskirts of Bath. Today only one lone tree remains due to the other trees succumbing to diseases like Dutch elm, ash dieback and also the great storm of 1987. (In 2021, Royal Oak donors raised over \$300,000 to restore important historical interiors at Dyrham.)

A 24-tree sweet chestnut avenue will be planted at Abinger Roughts in Surrey, where the last of the original trees planted in the 1780s were also lost in the same great storm of 1987. At Sissinghurst Castle Garden in Kent, 15 poplars will be planted to recreate Harold and Vita Sackville-West's 1932 original vision for a tree avenue on the front field.

Smaller projects planned by the Trust include the planting of two Cornish elms close to the Queen Victoria Jubilee oak tree planted in 1897 at Trengwainton in Cornwall. At Chartwell, Churchill's home in Kent, two trees—an oak and a field maple



Chartwell, Churchill's home in Kent.



New poplars will be planted to recreate Harold and Vita's vision at Sissinghurst.

tree, will be planted to sit alongside an oak tree planted for The Queen's Silver Jubilee. And, a single walnut tree will be planted on Mottistone village green on the Isle of Wight to recreate and complete a six-strong walnut tree circle, to replace one tree which succumbed to age and disease.

Blossom trees will also be planted at Shugborough in Staffordshire, a new orchard will be planted this spring in the Surrey Hills, and a pear tree archway will be recreated at Rudyard Kipling's former home, Bateman's in Sussex.

Hilary McGrady, Director-General of the National Trust said: "The Platinum Jubilee is such a special moment for the UK, so I am delighted that the Trust is able to take part in the celebrations. By taking part in The Queen's Green Canopy we're able to mark this historic achievement whilst also creating a legacy for the future—a fitting tribute to Her Majesty The Queen's 70 years of service to the country."

The majority of the projects will be planted later this year.

To read more about all the plantings being planned, visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/queens-green-canopy](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/queens-green-canopy)





Red maples are just one of types of trees featured in the woodland garden at Sheffield Park.

## Sheffield Park & Garden

Royal Oak is raising \$300,000 to help the National Trust restore this spectacular woodland garden

Located in East Sussex and one of the most visited properties in the National Trust, Sheffield Park and Garden is a designed landscape, created over centuries by a series of owners for pleasure and play. Leading landscape and garden designers have lent their artistic vision to the property including Capability Brown and Humphry Repton. Sheffield Park was once the country seat of the Earls of Sheffield throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and the home of Arthur Soames in the early 20th century before being broken up and sold off in the 1950s when the National Trust purchased the garden.

The garden visitors see today is very much however the vision of Arthur Gilstrap Soames. Soames came from a family of brewers in Lincolnshire and was the owner of Sheffield Park from 1909 until his death in 1934. Born in 1854 and Eton educated, most of his working life was spent at his malting business in Grimsby. The business made Arthur a wealthy man, affording him substantial homes around the Grimsby area before life brought him to Sheffield Park where he was able to indulge his life-long passion for horticulture.

Soames was keen to make his impact on the garden as soon as he arrived and drew upon the knowledge he had gained from

travelling around the world for inspiration. He corresponded with the famous horticulturalist and writer E.A. Bowles, as well as other leading horticulturalists of the day including W.J. Bean, curator of Kew Gardens 1922-1929, Sir George Holford, owner of Westonbirt Arboretum and Professor Sargent, American botanist, and director of Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum from 1872 to 1927.

In 1927, Arthur wrote an article for the RHS magazine, giving a guided tour of the autumn color in Sheffield Park. The Trust still use this detailed account today as a guide for their gardeners on Soames' vision for the garden. In it, he talks in detail about his choice of trees and shrubs in the garden, the soil conditions, drainage, the effect of the winds, rainfall and the management of the lakes. Arthur's horticultural passion and knowledge shines through.

Sheffield has had its share of associations with British Prime Ministers. Later in life, at age 65, Arthur married Agnes Helen Peel, granddaughter of Prime Minister Robert Peel. His nephew and the ultimate heir, Arthur Granville Soames would become the father-in-law of Mary Soames, the youngest daughter of Winston Churchill. During World War II, Churchill moved his beloved pair of black swans to the estate in hopes

of protecting them from possible bombing raids on Chartwell. However, they may have been accidentally killed by Canadian soldiers stationed there and were discreetly replaced.

Today, the landscape remains renowned for its spectacular autumnal color display, as well as the rare plant collections and species. The Trust is undertaking a large-scale conservation of the gardens. Their plan is to continue the legacy established by Soames and bring the Park to a new generation of garden enthusiasts and visitors alike.

The Trust will create a new garden where the historic but now derelict gentian borders are currently situated. The Gentian Walk was established by Arthur Soames between 1909 and World War I. Around Gentian Walk, there were Silver Birches, Tupelo, Scarlet Oaks, Snowy Mespilus and Photinias. Only the Scarlet Oaks have been lost. Either side of the grass path there were long, winding beds of Autumn Gentians.

Despite their best efforts and the investment of significant Trust resources, gardeners have been unable to re-introduce gentians. Now, having reached the conclusion that to grow gentians at large scale at Sheffield Park and Garden is no longer viable, they have chosen to embrace a new, more dynamic future for this special place.



Arthur Soames pushed boundaries with experimental planting, creations of hybrids and exotic species collected from far reaching lands. However, the garden has lost that sense of innovation and experimentation that was so central to its former design. The current garden design and planting scheme was created almost 90 years ago and as a whole it has remained fairly static with little introduction of new planting, succession planting or new interest since it was purchased by the Trust in 1954.

Added to this need for a new, more inspiring vision is the reality that increasingly extreme weather conditions each year are having an impact on plant and tree health at Sheffield Park and as a result some part of the planting is coming to the end of its natural life. It is therefore the ideal moment for this project which represents the first, critical steps toward transformative renewal within the garden.

Through this project we will excite visitors and attract new audiences with the spirit of exploration and experimentation harkening back to the time of Arthur Soames. Although smaller interventions have taken place in some areas, this will be the largest area tackled to date. The planting will provide interest throughout the four seasons, incorporating modern seating, and a shelter to encourage visitors to dwell in the space. The Trust is also exploring the opportunity to introduce sculpture and additional features. The hope is to engage people with the natural world, to draw attention to the communication and connection between plants, insects and us. The lockdowns during the pandemic showed how important such natural spaces are in our lives.

The National Trust has selected the garden designer, Joe Perkins, an RHS Chelsea Gold Medal winner to design the garden and has received the initial concepts. The Trust is now working to refine these to create a garden that will take in the experimental and innovative spirit of Arthur Soames to help reinvigorate the garden for the next 100 years.



## We Hope You Will Join Us

Donate today to restore Sheffield Park and Garden. [Royal-Oak.org/Sheffield](https://Royal-Oak.org/Sheffield)





# The Art of Carving

## Grinling Gibbons and the English House

By Ada de Wit

Grinling Gibbons (1648–1721) is one of the greatest artists of the English Baroque. His exuberant life-like carvings of fruit, flowers and trophies adorn some of the country's most iconic buildings such as Windsor Castle, Hampton Court and St Paul's Cathedral. His name is strongly linked with the English country house and some of his best works can be admired in National Trust properties. Gibbons has been popular with scholars and the general public alike and even became the subject of myths such as the incorrect but stubbornly persistent belief that he used a peapod motif as his signature.

Gibbons was born to English parents in Rotterdam, in the Dutch Republic, where his father and maternal grandfather were wealthy merchants. It is not known where he trained, but his style was shaped by the Classical Dutch school of realistic carving in limewood. When he moved to England at the age of nineteen, he had the advantage of the superior Continental training that involved drawing, and he had a good knowledge of European painting. Gibbons was famously discovered by the diarist John Evelyn who encountered the young man in Deptford, carving a panel after a print of Tintoretto's *Crucifixion* (now in Dunham Massey, in Greater Manchester). Although Evelyn introduced Gibbons to the king, it was thanks to the royal architect, Hugh May that he received his first important commissions in the 1670s. May employed Gibbons at his two country houses, Holme Lacy in Herefordshire and Cassiobury Park in Hertfordshire, and Windsor Castle. Sadly, the carvings cannot be admired in their former glory. The interiors of Windsor Castle were remodelled, Holme Lacy was stripped of its carvings in the early 20th century, and Cassiobury Park was demolished in 1927. Gibbons's carvings were dispersed, and some are today in the United States, for example, in the Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Holme Lacy and Cassiobury are the first known houses in England decorated with limewood foliage carving. Gibbons developed there his signature form of an elaborate overmantel surround; the realism and three-dimensionality of the carvings were unprecedented. These three projects established Gibbons as the leading carver of his time and helped to spread his influence. Besides, these were large undertakings, involving many more carvers who were exposed to his way of working.

Little is known about Gibbons's workshop. Nine apprentices are recorded in the Drapers' accounts (Gibbons was a freeman of the Drapers' Company by patrimony) and we know the names of a few Catholic assistants who needed a special indemnity. However, he certainly



A carved panel by Grinling Gibbons at Dunham Massey in Greater Manchester that was based on a print of Tintoretto's *Crucifixion*.







had many more helpers. It can be assumed that the more successful he got, the less actual carving he did. He most likely supplied drawings, supervised work and carved models. His distinctive style was copied by many other carvers, some of whom were very talented. Today this creates problems with attributions. For instance, many country houses claim to have Gibbons's work although few have documented work by him.

Sudbury Hall in Derbyshire, built for the Vernon family between 1660 and 1680, has records that reveal the names of its 17th-century craftsmen. Gibbons was paid in 1679 and 1680 for carvings, including the overmantel in the Drawing Room. The decorative motifs include flowers and fruits, shells, fish, and dead game birds. Interestingly, his carvings were acquired in London—he does not seem to have visited Sudbury at all. The house has a splendid staircase balustrade with flowing acanthus scrolls by another distinguished carver, Edward Pearce. A similar staircase, attributed to Pearce, was at Cassiobury Park and is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.



The limewood carving of musical instruments by Gibbons at Petworth House.

Petworth in West Sussex houses some of Gibbons's most famous and impressive carvings, dating from the early 1690s. The house was rebuilt and decorated for Charles Seymour, 6th Duke of Somerset. Gibbons's work includes two double surrounds that consist of extraordinarily realistic motifs such as musical instruments, antique vases, lace and baskets of fruit. Although Gibbons's carvings at Petworth are considered to be his masterpiece, their current state and arrangement are far from the original concept. In the late 17th century, there were two rooms and Gibbons's surrounds were installed in one of them, facing each other on the two side walls. One hundred years later, the rooms were merged into one Carved Room. Gibbons's carvings were rearranged, and woodcarvings from other rooms were placed there as well. The two surrounds were installed on the long wall facing the windows, where they flanked the central fireplace. Carvings by other less talented carvers were added.

All this resulted in a profusion of carving and destroyed the balance and design of Gibbons's decoration. The original color scheme of Gibbons's carvings was also not preserved. The Victorians favored the dark brown color scheme, whereas, in the 17th century, Gibbons had his pale unvarnished lime carvings placed on the dark panelling that created color contrast.

The fashion for elaborate limewood carvings declined by 1700. In the early 18th century, Gibbons's workshop focused on work in stone. By no means was it a new material to him as he had delivered stone monuments throughout his career, but the emphasis shifted from wood to stone.

The Victorian romanticized picture of Gibbons was that of a modest, poor craftsman. In reality, Gibbons was a savvy businessman who knew how to brand himself and who got on well with his aristocratic patrons. He was clearly a gentleman artist; we know he was musical, social, and was an art connoisseur and collected art. Portraits of Gibbons reveal a self-aware artist, who could be mistaken for an aristocrat. August 2021 marked the tercentenary of Gibbons's death and launched a year of events that create an opportunity to review the life and legacy of Gibbons and look at his work in a new light.

*Ada de Wit is the Curator of Works of Art and Sculpture at the Wallace Collection, London. Her lavishly illustrated book, **Grinling Gibbons and his Contemporaries (1650-1700): The Golden Age of Woodcarving in the Netherlands and Britain** will be published by Brepols later this year.*

The exuberant carving of this magnificent staircase from Cassiobury Park is attributed to the English master Edward Pearce, where he worked along with Grinling Gibbons. Today the staircase is the heart of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's British Galleries in New York City.





# Europe Divided

## Huguenot Refugee Art & Culture

by Tessa Murdoch



The Marble Hall at Petworth House and Park, West Sussex attributed to Daniel Marot, the most influential Huguenot designer in England.

This year marks the 450th anniversary of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, when over 2,000 Protestants in Paris and more than 7,000 in regional France, lost their lives in the fighting that broke out between the Catholics and those of Reformed Faith. Many talented French Protestant artists and craftsmen decided to leave France and join Huguenot communities established in London and South East England, where another Huguenot community was centered on Canterbury. One of the talented artists who had already made London his home, Jacques le Moyne de Morgues, a painter of flowers and fruit from Dieppe, Normandy, had accompanied an expedition to America in the 1560s. The artist's account of his experiences in Florida in 1564-5 was later published in Frankfurt in 1591, as the second volume of a series devoted to the New World. According to a recent biography published in New York City in 2008, Jacques le Moyne

de Morgues may be the son of Henry le Moynes, embroiderer to Mary, Queen of Scots (M. Harvey, *Painter in a Savage Land: The Strange Saga of the First European Artist in North America*).

*Europe Divided: Huguenot Refugee Art and Culture* covers the wide range of skills which Huguenot refugees brought to the British Isles. They were important as teachers and masters, passing on their skills to the next generation of students and apprentices. They worked as decorative painters, architects and engineers. They are often associated with production of silks and silver, as designers, merchants, weavers, goldsmiths, jewellers and retailers of such luxury goods, but arguably their most important contribution is in the field of horology where they combined invention with artistic flair. Longcase and table clocks have sophisticated cases supplied by specialist cabinet-makers;

watches were contained in jewelled or chased gold cases, drawing on the range of skills practiced within established Huguenot communities.

Following a renewed wave of persecution from the 1670s, Huguenot refugees were welcomed during Charles II's reign from 1660 to 1685, but were less certain of the attitude of his successor the Catholic James II who reigned from 1685 to 1688. However, the Glorious Revolution and Protestant reign of William and Mary heralded a certain welcome and the resulting economic confidence inspired courtiers to build and extend great houses in preparation for a visit from their monarch. For the royal palace of Hampton Court, Daniel Marot, trained at Versailles under Louis XIV's court designer Jean Berain, provided designs for the layout of the gardens and for the interior of Queen Mary's Thames-side Water Gallery.



Resident in London in the mid-1690s, Marot probably designed some of the interiors for the 6th Duke of Somerset's great house at Petworth, West Sussex. The Marble Hall has a bracketed frieze, egg-and-dart moulding and semi-circular topped frames cutting into bold segmental pediments which recur in the Trevesaal, the Binnenhof audience chamber in The Hague, designed by Daniel Marot later that decade after he returned to the Netherlands.

Daniel Marot's contemporary, the mysterious architect Samuel Hauduroy, worked for William Blathwayt at Dyrham Park, near Bath. Hauduroy was paid 10 guineas for his designs for the new West Front which masked the original Tudor house. Hauduroy, employed because he was "conscientious, penniless and therefore cheap," was expected to supervise the builders and craftsmen. But Hauduroy was frustrated because his grasp of English was inadequate and he could not make the local workmen understand his instructions. So Hauduroy was dismissed and Dyrham was completed to the designs of the English architect William Talman, who also succeeded Marot at Hampton Court Palace.

Decorative artists were better paid than architects. Samuel Hauduroy's close relative Louis Hauduroy (the exact connection is undocumented) was paid over £185 for painting some of the panelled interiors at Dyrham to simulate marble and exotic wood. Another family member Mark

Anthony Hauduroy, worked at Knole, near Sevenoaks, in the mid-1720s. He painted the King's State Bedroom, the Colonnade and the painted staircase that links the Colonnade to the State Rooms. Mark Anthony Hauduroy often worked in grisaille and personalized the decoration by incorporating the patron's coats-of-arms and initials.

Domestic silver provided further evidence of status. Huguenot goldsmiths, mostly from French regional cities, provided sophisticated vessels for dining, both for the table and for display on the adjacent buffet. Each piece would be customized with the family coat-of-arms. Great houses often included a chapel for ease of access to private worship. A set of altar silver was required for Anglican Holy Communion. George Booth, 2nd Earl of Warrington, a particular patron of Huguenot goldsmiths, commissioned sacred silver for his chapel at Dunham Massey, Cheshire from Huguenot goldsmith Isaac Liger, a refugee from Saumur. Liger provided an altar dish which served as a diminutive altarpiece. The dish is engraved with the *Deposition of Christ* after the Bolognese artist Annibale Caracci by the Huguenot Simon Gribelin, another refugee from Blois, from a celebrated family of clock and watchmakers. The engraving is signed and an impression from the inked plate is preserved in the 1722 album that Gribelin compiled of his work, now in the British Museum.

Huguenots made an important contribution to clock and watchmaking from the 1540s to the 1820s. Several National Trust houses have Huguenot-made clocks including Melford Hall in Suffolk and Stourhead, Wiltshire. The important collection of clocks at Lyme Park, Cheshire includes a musical table clock with movement signed by Claude Viet which dates from circa 1715. The painted case imitates Asian lacquer, imported through the East India Company, which was very fashionable. The silver dial mounts are an indication of the quality of this clock which supports sophisticated figures of Mercury and four crusader knights each carrying Christ's cross. Claude Viet came from Orleans and joined the London Clockmakers' Company in 1698. He was later appointed watchmaker to Queen Anne. In 1715, he took as apprentice his niece Marie Anne Viet (b.1699) the first woman to be accepted by that London guild. When her uncle died in 1734, Marie Anne

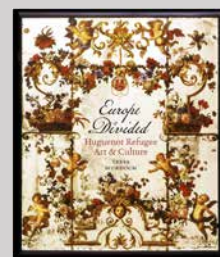


The altar dish created by Isaac Liger for George Booth, 2nd Earl of Warrington for his chapel at Dunham Massey in Cheshire.

formed a partnership with his son-in-law, Thomas Mitchell (d.1751) and maintained the family shop in the City of London at the sign of the Dial and King's Arms, Cornhill.

This book celebrates the Huguenot contribution to art and culture in the British Isles and benefits from 40 years of research. The text was written while the author was Getty Rothschild Fellow at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles and at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire in 2019. With over 260 illustrations, the book includes the extraordinary Elephant automaton at Waddesdon which was first displayed by the Huguenot retail jewellers Masquerier and Perigal in London's Haymarket. At Waddesdon, the Rothschild wine cellar provides a welcome diversion from the historic collections and library, but even there the visitor is greeted by the painted lead statue of Bacchus c.1740, attributed to the Huguenot sculptor John Cheere.

Dr. Tessa Murdoch FSA has 40 years curatorial experience. Her publications include *Boughton House: The English Versailles* (1992) and *inventories of Noble Households* (2006) and *Great Irish Households* (forthcoming 2022). She advises the National Trust, the National Heritage Memorial Fund and chairs the board of the Huguenot Museum, Rochester, Kent.



The musical table clock with movement signed by Claude Viet at Lyme Park, Cheshire.





The Studio featuring new lighting and two paintings from the recent book, *100 Paintings from the Collections of the National Trust*.

## Paintings at Royal Oak Conservation Studio

By Emma Schmuecker and Rebecca Hellen

One year on from receiving Royal Oak's generous \$4 million gift for collections, the Conservation Studio at Knole has a successful program of work, collaborating with properties and specialists to identify collection items in need. The gift has already contributed towards the conservation of over 250 pieces in support of 25 properties, including Ham House, Chartwell, Blickling, Anglesey Abbey and Hill Top. Our team of specialists blend science and craft skills, researching, exploring, understanding and treating the collections. Modern technology, such as our Erbium:YAG laser used to clean traditional gilding of unwanted over-paint through to woodworking skills or expert cleaning are employed side by side. As part of the process, learning about our collections through observation, technical examination and analysis occurs naturally, but also through the development and consideration of clear research questions established by close collaborations with property, regional and national curators and conservators. This gift is providing significant opportunities to develop knowledge of our collections, as well as care for them.

In addition to our specialists working on furniture, frames and decorative art objects, the long-awaited plan for a high-quality painting conservation service is in progress. The first phase is complete, and the new lighting system has been designed and installed. This specialist lighting mimics diffused daylight and the color rendering quality is excellent, necessary for the technical work and color matching needs of our conservators.

The second phase of development addresses the additional space required for paintings conservation and changes will be complete by the summer. To do this, we have altered and adapted our storage facilities to safely accommodate the wide range of objects we are conserving in the studio.



John Constable's *Embarkation of George IV from Whitehall: The Opening of Waterloo Bridge, 1817* undergoing conservation.



Recently we welcomed the National Trust's first remedial conservator for paintings, Sarah Maisey. She joins us from the Royal Museums Greenwich and is already ably addressing conservation issues surrounding two significant paintings that feature in the book, *100 Paintings from the Collections of the National Trust*.

John Constable's *Embarkation of George IV from Whitehall: The Opening of Waterloo Bridge, 1817* is being conserved in the studio. The surface has a very thick and yellowed glossy varnish. This has resulted in a loss of depth to the painting and distortion of the palette so that whites appear yellow, and blues appear green, for example. There are also remnants of older varnish combined with grey layers of dirt underneath that are particularly concentrated in pockets in the paint troughs. This all causes an uneven appearance and reduces our chance of viewing Constable's masterpiece as it should be.

As expected for a painting of this status, curators and conservators are using the opportunity to learn about this artwork. The painting has been x-rayed at the Hamilton Kerr Institute, Cambridge University and this, together with close technical examination will clarify material evidence, and inform treatment options for cleaning. The conserved painting will return to Anglesey Abbey this spring.

Royal Oak's gift continues to prove itself invaluable, enabling some properties to continue with their collection plans. *Cockerel, Hens and Chicks* from Chartwell has not been displayed for many years due



*Cockerel, Hens and Chicks* from the Churchill's collection at Chartwell after conservation.

to its condition. Upon examination, Sophie Reddington found the painting to be extremely dirty and almost unreadable in places due to several layers of thick discoloured varnish sitting on the surface. The canvas is lined onto another linen fabric and unfortunately, the lining was losing its function, as paint was lifting and cupping throughout. Examination under UV light made it apparent that large areas of the painting had been crudely retouched and overpainted.

The instability of the surface was addressed first, and the paint layers were consolidated with an aqueous adhesive and heating spatula. The surface was then cleaned, and a brownish layer of nicotine was removed along with other dirt—could this have been Winston Churchill's cigar smoke? The next step was varnish removal, which was completed in two stages due to a fairly insoluble top layer. It seemed that there were three different campaigns of restoration on top of the original paint.

Unfortunately, certain areas of the original paint have been overcleaned—almost scrubbed in the past. Despite the difficulties posed by previous treatments the overall appearance was improved significantly with the removal of clumsy old restorations and discoloured varnish layers. The painting came back to life through the simple retouching of small losses and blending with the surrounding original paint recreating depth and bringing out the background details, foliage and feathers. Colors are revived and a careful approach to varnishing in several stages with stable resins ensured the long-term stability of the painting.

The painting conservation program for 2022 is exciting and varied, and we look forward to sharing our work and discoveries with you.

*Emma Schmuecker is Studio Lead and Senior National Conservator for Decorative Arts and Rebecca Hellen is Senior National Conservator for Paintings.*



A curator uses a tiny hypodermic needle to introduce adhesive to secure the board support on William Taylor Longmire's *Swaledale Sheep and Ram in Profile*.

The delightful *Swaledale Sheep and Ram in Profile* by William Taylor Longmire, from Townend, presents different composition and conservation challenges. It was created with oil paints applied to a board made from old rope, as identified by our colleagues at the Trust's Textile Conservation Studio. The discolored varnish and overpaint was relatively straightforward to remove but the unusual construction from board with creases and distortions were understandably not so familiar to a paintings conservator. Sarah turned to other specialist colleagues for consultation, and Nicola Walker, one of our National Senior Conservators for paper and photographs, developed the treatment plan for addressing the board's issues.

The striking frame is its own piece of folk art, constructed from architectural reclaimed oak. Made into a simple flat profile and ornamented by George Browne (d.1914) of Townend (and owner of the sheep) using simple tools, such as a scratch-stock, two carving gouges, an auger drill and triple headed punch. As the painting is on a vulnerable board, we addressed the conservation framing as a hybrid approach to an oil on canvas or work on paper.



# Into Arcadia

## Looking at the Landscapes of Humphry Repton

By John Phibbs

In 1859, Frederick Law Olmsted wrote to Sir William Hooker, of Humphry Repton's Stoneleigh Abbey, in Warwickshire: "I find that the simplicity without refinement of art, if indeed not without art, of Stoneleigh ... seems to me far more worthy to be striven for than the beauty for which certainly much greater study, skill and labor has been expended ... Reflecting upon all that I have heard & seen during this short visit to England, it has seemed [to] me that the great addition to the resources of art in gardening which botanic adventure has recently secured ... is just now resulting very generally in a style of gardening in which the peculiar landscape beauty of old English places, & in which England excels all the world, is sacrificed to botanic beauty and variety and the interest of frequent contrasts & surprises."

This paragraph of Olmsted's shocked me into asking the really obvious question: what was it about Repton in particular that made him and his landscapes, over 40 years after his death, still so important and relevant?—so important indeed that Olmsted rejected all the exuberant cornucopia of Victorian garden design ("the interest of frequent contrasts & surprises") in favor of the less assertive, quieter, Augustan style of Repton's Georgian England. After all, this was a man who had just conceived Central Park and just as the languid chords of Vaughn Williams summon up Augustan English pastoral, so Central Park is John Coltrane and jazz in green.

I'm sure Repton would have loved to know how enduring his reputation has been, but it was never his aim to be great. He only wanted to be accepted in high society, to be a familiar of the Prince Regent, on easy terms with the Earl of Sheffield, a regular at the table with Edmund Burke and the Duke of Portland—in short, a gentleman. He'd rather have been known as a wit (instead he was castigated as a coxcomb) or play-wright, a poet or a businessman (he failed in each of these), even as a painter (a skill he was slow to master). Landscape gardening was going to be an escape from his troubles.

It was 1788. Capability Brown had died five years earlier and the great man's business, under the erratic guidance of his executor, Samuel Lapidge, was falling apart. Repton saw a gap in the market and seized his opportunity to drive out the drunken and hopeless Lapidge, take over the business and help himself to an easy living, trotting out landscapes in the familiar Brown tradition and hobnobbing with the great and famous. Certainly he was familiar with

Brown's style—the extensive lawns, the lake and the groups of trees—and certainly he claimed to have inherited the tradition of which Brown had been the leading exponent. All he had to do was finesse Brown's formula and by 1792, he thought he had.

Poor chap! 1792 may have been the high point of his aspirations for an untroubled and gentlemanly existence. In 1793, the cultural landscape of Britain was turned on its head by the French Revolution. The British radicals called out for new liberties to rival those that the French people had taken on for themselves and in response William Pitt the Younger turned conservative, put an end to free speech with his infamous gagging acts, and embarked on a war with France that was to last for the rest of Repton's career.

War and taxes were hardly an inducement to Repton's clients to invest in landscape, but worse was to come in 1794 with a vicious personal attack on Repton made by the two Herefordshire

squires, Richard Payne Knight and Sir Uvedale Price, each with their own publication but with a common aim, namely to torpedo Repton and his ambitions with a direct assault on Brown, on Repton himself, and on the Brownian style that he had adopted.

From then on Repton was never free from attack and by the end of his life he was embittered, he felt excluded and a failure, and he portrayed himself in the character of a crabby self-pitying old man, in a wheel-chair or hobbling on crutches, having come to the conclusion that with his death the art of landscape itself would



Sarsden House in Oxfordshire.



Humphry Repton's Red Book for Courteen Hall.





Courteen hall in Northamptonshire.

die: “During the last ten years, the art of landscape gardening, in common with all other arts which depend on peace and patronage, has felt the influence of war, and war taxes, which operate both on the means and the inclination to cultivate the arts of peace; these have languished under the impoverishment of the country, while the sudden acquirement of riches, by individuals, has diverted wealth into new channels; men are solicitous to increase property rather than to enjoy it; they endeavour to improve the value, rather than the beauty, of their newly purchased estates ... It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that the art of landscape gardening should have slowly and gradually declined.”

The magic of this story is that, with every setback, the work this nondescript man produced became greater, more complex and more profoundly charged, and those magnificent works of his last years—Endsleigh, Ashridge and Woburn Abbey are among the survivors—while utterly different, may reasonably be compared with the greatest of Brown’s achievements.

His practice as a landscape gardener will have drawn Olmsted to study his work, but there was more to connect the two men. Olmsted worked in the shadow of a terrible civil war. Britain was always at war with France, but there was no threat of invasion to dampen Capability Brown’s ambition to “finish England” and perfect its beauty. Repton on the other hand did have that threat to face, so underlying his work from the very beginning was a desire to provide for his troubled society and create a Britain in which all kinds of people could live together peacefully and harmoniously.

In 1783 he spent some time in Dublin, Britain’s second city, as a political official. He hob-nobbed with the best and so will have met with the leaders of the United Irishmen who struggled to make Ireland independent; he will have seen there the impact on society of a sectarian policy where position and prospects were largely determined by religion. He was a friend to William Wilberforce and familiar with the tensions arising where slavery is legal and society is stratified by racial distinctions. He rejected any classification by wealth, as is apparent in the passage from his final book, quoted above. Above all he will have rejected the autocracy of France, where position was determined by blood and caste, and those born into the aristocracy would automatically rule. Faced with this variety of ways for organizing society, Repton adopted and promulgated a new system, the class system, in which people are ranked not by their wealth, their parentage, their race or religion but by their trade, thus giving them the freedom to rise (or fall!). Every rank of society was to be provided with appropriate places to live. Thus he concerned himself not just with the well-being of his clients, but with the tenants and laborers of his clients. This concern for people’s welfare extended also to London squares which he designed to allow carers in the houses around to keep an eye on children as they played.

Repton’s landscapes were not just to be looked at, they were to be lived in and enjoyed. Repton designed beautiful places such as Stoneleigh, so admired by Olmsted, and indeed we still admire Stoneleigh today, but it is in the care that these men had for the public good that they are brothers, it is this that we should celebrate in this year, 2022, Olmsted’s 200th birthday.



*John Phibbs has spent his life looking at the landscapes of England’s country houses and drawing up plans for their future, looking and looking and slowly learning to see. His books on the two giants of the 18th-century landscape movement, Capability Brown and Brown’s successor, Humphry Repton, are the synthesis of a lifetime of such looking. In 2017, 300 years since the birth of Brown himself, John was awarded an MBE by the Queen for his services to landscape.*



Brightling Park in East Sussex.





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It all started in 1979 when businessman and philanthropist, Richard Broyd became concerned about the demise of the grand country house, and so founded a company to acquire and rescue run-down country houses. His plan was to restore and convert houses to hotels, combining historically accurate standards with contemporary comfort for guests. Three such houses were found, each building being at least 300 years old: Hartwell House, once the home of exiled King Louis XVIII of France and his Court, was acquired on a long lease from The Ernest Cook Trust, and which had become a girls' school, then badly damaged by fire; Bodysgallen Hall, in Llandudno, was a bed and breakfast, with much of its former estate sold off and historic gardens overgrown; and Middlethorpe Hall, in Yorkshire, had become a nightclub.

Once the buildings and gardens had been restored, auction houses were scoured for appropriate furnishings, as the original contents had long been sold off and the houses were left empty. However, over the years, much delight has been had as treasured items once belonging to former residents have been acquired and brought back to the houses.

Louis XVIII's fine writing bureau is one such item and is now back at Hartwell in the Blue Morning Room. Two portraits attributed to Jonathan Richardson the Elder (1668-1745) of two sisters, Elizabeth and Judith Sandys, Elizabeth being the wife of one of Hartwell's former owners, Sir Thomas Lee, 3rd Baronet. These paintings would have been hanging at Hartwell while Louis XVIII was in residence and are now back on the wall of the Dining Room.

Just two miles from York's vibrant city center, Middlethorpe is a William and Mary house built in 1699 and set in 20 acres of gardens and parkland. One

Left: The drawing room of the Lee Suite at Hartwell House in Buckinghamshire. Right: Middlethorpe Hall in North Yorkshire.





Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

of its most famous residents was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who moved in with her baby son in August 1713. Today her portrait hangs in the grand stairwell. Lady Mary was a renowned diarist and blue-stocking, whose husband was Sir Edward Wortley Montagu, British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. On returning to England, she became an early pioneer of smallpox vaccinations in Britain. She lived and entertained at Middlethorpe until early 1715, when she returned to London to join her husband, a Whig politician.

Sitting prettily on Pydew mountain, Bodysgallen offers a quintessential country house-style break in a unique setting within 200 acres of parkland. Inside, guests can choose from traditionally styled rooms in the main house, or converted cottage suites, with views across the gardens to Conwy Castle and beyond to the craggy peaks of the Snowdonia National Park.

All three hotels are to be found in magnificent settings, reinstated gardens and grounds that are managed carefully in harmony with nature and the environment.

It is some 13 years since the directors of Historic House Hotels donated the company and its three hotels to the National Trust to continue their style of hotel keeping under the same management for the benefit of the National Trust. The motivation for the gift was to ensure that these historic houses and their land are kept safe forever while continuing to be maintained to the highest standards, for the pleasure and comfort of generations to come.

As Richard Broyd says “The object, the places and the settings are all here for people to enjoy.”

**To learn more about the Historic House Hotels, visit [www.historichousehotels.com](http://www.historichousehotels.com)**



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The Treasure Houses of England are a collection of the most magnificent palaces, houses and castles, each with its own unique charm, stunning architecture and beautiful gardens. Most are still homes to the great families who have owned them for generations. Together, the houses display some of the most important art collections in the world, showcasing exquisite examples of fine furniture, porcelain, china and portraiture.







For many, not just in Britain, but all over the world, Dame Vera Lynn will forever be associated with the White Cliffs of Dover which she sang about in her World War II-era song, "The White Cliffs of Dover." In 2021, a meadow along the cliffs was renamed by the National Trust in her memory to mark the anniversary of her death the year before.

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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