

**BOWOOD'S ADRENALIN IS PUMPING  
AS IT CHAMPIONS ADVENTUROUS AND IMAGINATIVE PLAY IN 2007.**

Spirits soar and imaginations run riot as soon as the Pirate's Galleon at Bowood in Wiltshire is spotted on the horizon, drawing youngsters 'bound for the high seas' closer towards the Adventure Playground here. This year more than ever Bowood will be encouraging children to be dare-devils, as it advocates and champions adventurous play with the opening of its 2007 season on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March.

Undoubtedly, Bowood (between Calne and Chippenham) can supply plenty of adventure and inspire fantasy at playtime for children of 12 and under. As the playground's central feature, the full-size Pirate's Galleon - complete with rigging and a crow's nest - was designed and constructed by Cornish boat builder Alistair Guy, using timbers from the Bowood estate. Around and about, there are also giant slides and flume tubes, high level rope walks reached by huge scramble nets and the much-talked about 'Space Dive'! This pulse-racing slide is a modern version of a Victorian invention which starts with a shocking 19-foot vertical drop and then levels out for a sleek, smooth and triumphant landing.

Recognising the manifold merits of outdoor play, good old-fashioned rough-and-tumble and how a sense of risk encourages a child's development, the call for more adventurous play is one that is very close to the heart of Bowood's owner, the Marquis of Lansdowne.

"I do fear for a generation of children who spend far too much time in front of computer and TV screens, who aren't getting sufficient exercise or who are over protected and not encouraged to test their boundaries," comments Lord Lansdowne. "Yet, the general reaction from children after a visit to our Adventure Playground is that it's the sheer height and suggested danger of it all that appeals to them most. There's no doubt that regular outdoor play and a thrilling sense of adventure are hugely rewarding for body and soul while also boosting self-confidence."

Eager to tap into children's attitude on this subject, Bowood will be canvassing the thoughts and opinions of youngsters visiting during the week of Monday 9<sup>th</sup> April. Results of this vox pop survey will be revealed shortly afterwards and should make interesting reading. "We will listen to what the children have to say and see if there are ways that we can improve upon or adapt what we are offering within the Adventure Playground and across the Pleasure Grounds at Bowood," adds Lord Lansdowne, grandfather to eight boys and girls under twelve.

Having flown single-handed in a Cessna 182 to Australia when he was 28, Lord Lansdowne understands only too well that a thirst for adventure and seeking challenges has to start in childhood. He first came to Bowood aged six, after his father inherited the estate and here he was able to get up to all sorts of adventures, scrapes and bedevilment as he played with friends by the lake and they explored around rock landscapes, cascades and grottoes, a Hermit's Cave and a Monkey Puzzle tree. He was therefore certain about the Bowood magic that he wished to encapsulate in the Adventure Playground when he launched it in 1976, just after taking over the running of Bowood in 1972 and then opening it to the public in 1975. Today, the playground attracts some 50,000 children annually.

While advocating adventurous play, Bowood nevertheless avoids undue risk by taking its responsibilities extremely seriously and ensuring that all sensible safety precautions are well in place. Equally, less daring children are not overlooked thanks to the inclusion of swing boats, spinning discs, trampolines, a Wendy House, a ball pool, see-saws, swings and a sand pit. For younger children and toddlers (up to 132cm in height), the separate Soft Play Palace - located next to the Bothy Bonanza Party Rooms and a short distance from the Adventure Playground – is equipped with a ball pool, slide, spinning discs and rope walks. The air blower, which lifts balls into the air, is a particular favourite here!

“As children return to Bowood's Adventure Playground time and again and graduate to bolder and more confident play as they do, who knows which of them might in the future make their names among a new generation of adventurers, explorers and innovators?” muses Lord Lansdowne.

*Bowood House & Gardens is open to the public from Saturday 31 March – Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2007, from 11am-6pm daily – with last admissions at 5pm (closing one hour earlier after the autumn clocks go back).*

*Individual entrance tickets start at £4 per head for children aged 2-4 and go up to £7.70 per adult. Special rates for groups and senior citizens are also available, as are individual and company Season Tickets.*

*For further details, log on to [www.bowood.org](http://www.bowood.org) or call 01249 812102.*

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