



BOWOOD – SOME FASCINATING FACTS

Bowood's rich tapestry is woven with some fascinating and colourful facts and details – both historical and modern. Here's just a selection:

- Bowood House & Gardens rose out of *the fortune of Sir William Petty* – a Professor of Anatomy at Oxford in 1651 and Physician-General to Cromwell's army in Ireland. A founder member of the Royal Society, he was knighted after the Restoration. His widow was created Baroness Shelburne and it was their grandson who inherited the Petty fortune and, as the 1st Earl of Shelburne, bought the Bowood estate in 1754.
- As Prime Minister from 1782-3, the 2nd Earl of Shelburne headed the coalition that *granted America its independence* and negotiated peace with the United States after the War of Independence. On account of this, he was created the Marquess of Lansdowne in 1784.
- What is now The Sculpture Gallery was once a menagerie for wild animals. It was here that the 1st Marquess kept an orang-utan and the 18th century philosopher, *Jeremy Bentham, stroked a leopard.*
- The lakeside *Ferryman's Cottage* was built when the valley at Bowood was flooded by Capability Brown in 1768. Here was housed a ferryman who had to be on duty round the clock to row people across the lake since the public footpath no longer existed. Today, the cottage is occupied by a tenant...with no ferrying responsibilities!
- The 'Laboratory' was a working laboratory in the late 18th century and it was here that Dr. Joseph Priestley (a friend of the 1st Marquess and tutor to his sons) *discovered oxygen gas* on 1 August 1774. Another practising scientist here was Dr Jan Ingenhousz who discovered the process of photosynthesis in plants and worked on *smallpox inoculation.*
- The *Doric Temple* – originally in the Pleasure Grounds – was moved to the promontory at the north end of the lake around 1840 to set it in an even more picturesque position.
- At just 25, the 3rd Marquess of Lansdowne became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1806. He was also a *friend and political confidant to Queen Victoria.*
- The dashing Charles Comte de Flahault, an *ADC to Napoleon* married Margaret Mercer Elphinstone (daughter of Admiral Lord Keith who had held Napoleon prisoner after Waterloo) and their daughter was to marry the 4th Marquess. Coincidentally, as a young child, the Comte and his mother had been rescued from revolutionary Paris in 1792 and brought to England by the 2nd Marquess.

- **Lord Byron gave the Albanian costume** in which he was painted in 1813 by Thomas Phillips to the 4th Marchioness of Lansdowne's mother, Margaret, suggesting she use it for fancy dress.
- The ultimate doll's house – **a miniature ivory palace from India** - was given to the 5th Marquess's 13 year-old daughter by the Begum of Bhopal.
- The Adam dining room that was originally in the Big House has now been **reassembled as the Board Room at Lloyd's of London**.
- Artists down the ages are represented on the walls at Bowood House – the likes of Sir Joshua Reynolds, George Romney, J.M.W. Turner, Edward Lear, Oswald Birley and Philip de Laszlo have recently been joined by contemporary portrait painters, Henrietta Young and Gemma Phipps (daughter of the celebrated equestrian artist, Sue Crawford). They have painted separate portraits of the 9th Marquis and Marchioness of Lansdowne, respectively, so establishing the **start of new millennium art at Bowood**.
- The Library houses **over 5,000 books**. These were mostly gathered together by the 3rd Marquess and they cover literature, art, architecture, sciences and travel.
- The **Pirate Ship** in the Activity Playground was designed by former boat builder, Alistair Guy, using timber from the Bowood estate.
- Estate timber has also recently played its part in the Irish game of hurley. Ash stumps from Bowood have been crafted into **hurley sticks** (any details of quantities, how this came about etc.)
- When Lord Lansdowne saw the plans for an addition to the playground that had been devised by part-time staff member, Georgina Fowlke, he gave her the opportunity for her ideas to become reality resulting in the **Sandpit Playground** for children .
- In 2004, the Lansdowne family celebrated their 250th anniversary at Bowood. Estate staff collected together to present 15 of Magnolia trees to Lord and Lady Lansdowne to mark the occasion. The Lansdownes have now planted the trees to create **a new 'Magnolia Anniversary Grove'** within the 60 acres of Rhododendron Walks.

...this list could stretch on forever and if the walls and grounds of Bowood could speak they would yield unending chit-chat! What fascinating stories, weird coincidences and intriguing anecdotes might be heard in the years to come?

Bowood House & Gardens is open to the public from Saturday 31 March – Wednesday 31st 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.

Entrance tickets for the Rhododendron Walks are priced separately from £4.45 per person (with children up to 15 being admitted free of charge). If visiting Bowood House, on the same day too, then entrance to the Rhododendron Walks is reduced by £1 per person.

For further details, log on to www.bowood.org or call 01249 812102.

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