



‘THE ADVENTUROUS GOVERNOR-GENERAL’

**Exhibition dedicated to the 5th Marquis of Lansdowne, linking Canada and Bowood,
opens on 31st March 2007**

Being a fine horseman and an all-round sportsman were qualities not to be underestimated when appointing a Governor-General for Canada in the late 19th century. Highly skilled in these respects and also possessing a great intellect, political nous, diplomacy and a sense of humour made the 5th Marquess of Lansdowne the ideal choice for this prestigious role from 1883 to 1888. Aged 38-43 during this time, he spent much of his tenure exploring new frontiers and an exhibition to be mounted at Bowood (nr. Calne, Wiltshire) – home to the Lansdowne family since 1754 – will recall his adventurous spirit and experiences in Canada.

As Bowood re-opens to the public on Saturday 31st March (through to 31st October), visitors will have the chance to discover something of Lord Lansdowne’s Canada years thanks to a fascinating collection of family letters, albums, photographs and portraits displayed in the Robert Adam Orangery at Bowood House. A brightly-woven Indian 'friendship' belt, a 'pipe of peace' and the Marquess’s Fair Isle winter sports socks bearing his 'L' monogram will be among other colourful artefacts on show.

Bowood’s archivist, Dr. Kate Fielden who has assembled ‘The Adventurous Governor-General’ exhibition, explains, “We have uncovered illustrations and descriptions of diplomatic life, winter sporting entertainments, fishing expeditions and pioneering journeys into the Canadian heartland and to the western seaboard. Meetings with settlers and First Nation chiefs are recounted, as well as some of the more troublesome events of the time, such as the Riel uprising and the fisheries dispute with the USA.

“A magnificent country in the making is portrayed: the construction of dams and railways, towns and cities plus the development of mines and agriculture in vast natural landscapes. The real man behind the statesman is revealed too: his concern for his children making sea journeys to school in England; his worries about finance and the upkeep of his estates at home; his sense of fun – and his admiration for the natural beauty of Canada as well as its people.”

Lord Lansdowne’s frank and fascinating letters home to his mother in Scotland provide vivid depictions. For instance, with the Canadian Pacific railway across the country still to be completed, there was a gap along the way that had to be undertaken as an arduous journey on horseback: *“We travelled from the ‘summit’ of the Rockies (i.e. in railway parlance the point where the railway begins to go down hill), to the end of the track. Breakfasted in the car at 7.20, and took ponies to resume the journey, rode about 18 miles over fearful ground, but thro’ the grandest possible scenery to a railway village called Farwell where we camped very comfortably in tents provided by the Ry. People.”*

A meeting with a Red Indian chief was certainly a far cry from home: *“We rode on towards the Reserve and were met at the border of it by Red Crow and his principal chiefs all on horseback in full costume. After fraternising with Red Crow we all galloped on together across the prairie, and I think our motley cortege would have made you laugh. On arriving at the Reserve my formal interview or ‘pow wow’ with the Indians took place. I sat in an arm chair with my little staff and the Police officers round me and an interpreter by my side. Red Crow and his chiefs opposite in a semi-circle. The conversation lasted some time and we discussed sundry Indian grievances which I need not recapitulate to you. At the conclusion my presents were produced – a silver medal and a pair of field glasses for Red Crow, with pipes, knives and tobacco for the minor notables. We all parted excellent friends and in the evening we camped at a very pretty spot on the other side of the river where our tents had been pitched and where Timson who has been indefatigable provided us with a very good supper. The night was cold but fine and I slept comfortably rolled up in my blankets. I rode about 35 miles this day.”*

After his success as Governor-General, the 5th Marquess was appointed Viceroy of India (1888-94) and on his return to England in 1894 he went on to become Secretary of State for War, Foreign Secretary and Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords.

‘The Adventurous Governor-General’ exhibition is well-timed to coincide with this year’s championship by Bowood of more adventurous, imaginative and stimulating outdoor play for children, centred around the Adventure Playground and the new Nature Trail. Charlie Lansdowne,

the 9th Marquis comments, “My great-grandfather’s many adventures in Canada are certainly the stuff of boyhood dreams.... children might think of him as an early ‘Indiana Jones’! As a statesman in what was then a developing country you clearly had to be a very strong character, well-able to fend for yourself. It’s his sense of daring-do, wonderment and possibility that we are seeking to recapture in the youngsters that visit Bowood today.”

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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