



BOWOOD

STATELY BOWOOD MAKES A VERY ENGLISH

ST. GEORGE'S DAY APPEARANCE ON PRIME TIME TV LAST NIGHT

(24 April 2008): Towards the end of last night's programme, Apprentice candidates Claire, Sara, Jennifer (Celerier), Alex, Michael and Kevin were seen spending a very English afternoon at Bowood House & Gardens (between Calne and Chippenham). As their reward for winning this week's task, Sir Alan Sugar arranged for them to leave the tension of the Boardroom and the hustle-and-bustle of the city behind them as a helicopter whisked them off to the rolling Wiltshire countryside. Within Bowood's Grade I listed parkland (mapped out by the fashionable 18th century garden designer, Capability Brown) the group then had a chance to unwind and enjoy archery, golf and a fairytale English afternoon tea in a very stately setting.

As their helicopter landed in front of Bowood House – home to the descendants of the 1st Earl of Shelburne and the 1st Marquess of Lansdowne for over 250 years - they spotted an archery range set up on a grassy bank and looking down to the lake. Here the six were instructed in the finer points of archery by a qualified instructor as Robert Adam's magnificent 'Diocletian' Orangery wing of Bowood House provided a most dramatic backdrop, too.

English afternoon tea came next, laid out in splendid style inside the nearby Boathouse. Only usually available for his family's private use, Lord Lansdowne had granted special permission on this occasion for the enchanting Boathouse to be made available to the Apprentice candidates. Taking tea on the covered porch and overlooking the water's edge as the turning autumnal columns fringed the lake, the group felt as though they had stepped back in time.

A fleet of golf buggies waited outside ready to take the candidates over to Bowood Golf & Country Club, in the western corner of the Great Park (on a completely separate part of the 4,000 acre estate from Bowood House & Gardens). Here, on the three-hole Academy course

- tucked back from the 18-hole championship golf course that weaves through 200 acres of Capability Brown's mature woodland – the six practised their golf swings guided by PGA-qualified golf pro and Bowood's Director of Golf, John Hansel.

All too soon it was back in the helicopter bound for London and the next Apprentice task - a world away from the calm tranquillity of Bowood - but not before one last swoop over the estate. Flying off into the sunset, the candidates had a bird's eye view down onto Bowood House - spotting the Adventure Playground for children tucked discreetly within the expansive Pleasure Grounds – and back over the golf course (normally entered through the majestic 'Golden Gates', built by Sir Charles Barry in 1840).

"I am a great fan of 'The Apprentice' and was thrilled that Sir Alan decided to send this week's winning team to Bowood for their reward," comments Lord Lansdowne (the 9th Marquis). "The six candidates will have seen what a glorious escape Bowood offers from the frenzy and pressures of today's world and I am sure that, increasingly mixing business with pleasure as their careers progress, some may find their golf lesson to have been particularly worthwhile."

Lord Lansdowne opened Bowood House & Gardens to the public in 1975 and since then over 3 ½ million people have visited. During this time, he's converted a row of former stables and grooms' quarters into the Sculpture Gallery and exhibition rooms for the priceless Bowood Collection (alongside the laboratory within Bowood House where Dr. Joseph Priestley discovered oxygen gas); built the Adventure Playground, complete with a gigantic timber Pirate's Galleon and aerial walkways; expanded the Rhododendron Walks, stretching out over 60 acres of woodland garden and now just coming into bloom for the annual six week viewing period; and converted former farm land into one of the finest golf courses in the south of England, suiting both the occasional golfer and the experienced pro. The latest task that Lord Lansdowne has set himself is the development of a brand new 43 bedroom hotel and health club that's scheduled to open alongside Bowood Golf & Country Club in mid-2009.

"Steeped in history, Bowood is a dynamic and highly diverse business at the same time," explains Lord Lansdowne. "While always respecting our past, we have to focus on the preservation of the estate well into the future. Opening the Bowood hotel is crucial to meeting this evolving challenge. The new hotel will add enormously to Bowood's range of facilities and opportunities."

If you missed last night's episode of The Apprentice, there will be the chance to catch the programme again – and Bowood's appearance in it – this Saturday 26 April on BBC2 from 10.45-11.45pm.

Bowood House & Gardens is open to the public during 2008 until Tuesday 4 November, from 11am-6pm daily. Large scale family events and open air concerts are also planned for the coming months, including a Balloon Festival and appearances by artists such as Girls Aloud, KT Tunstall, The Feeling, Mark Ronson and UB40. For further details, log on to www.bowood.org.

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For further press information, please contact:

Charlotte Doherty
Charlotte Doherty PR

Tel: 0207 736 6639
charlotte.doherty@virgin.net