

THE FRIENDS OF CROOME



NEWSLETTER

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Happy birthday to Croome!

by Katherine Alker

It's 30 years since the National Trust acquired Croome Park back in 1996.

To celebrate this milestone, we have created a display in the Temple Greenhouse explaining why the National Trust wanted to save Croome, the importance of the 'Capability' Brown designed landscape and what we've done in the past 30 years to restore it.

In 1996 the National Trust secured ownership of 670 acres of the parkland and set about its dramatic restoration thanks to Heritage Lottery Funds of over £5 million, grants from Natural England and other sources, as well as donations from other organisations and private individuals. At that time, Croome looked very different to how it looks now. There were arable fields where we now have restored pasture and shrubberies; the buildings and statues were in a very poor state of repair and many of the paths were nowhere to be seen.



We removed 50,000 cubic metres of silt from the lake and river, putting it back on the fields which were then re-seeded to meadow pasture where cattle and sheep now graze. Guided by the historic plans and maps, archaeologists were able to dig trenches to find the original paths enabling us to re-establish Brown's original routes through the parkland. Hard working volunteers thinned and cleared overgrown shrubberies; they planted thousands of flowers, shrubs and trees to the original plans using the same varieties of plants that Brown and the 6th Earl would have had in the 1700s. The difference now is staggering – the shrubberies look like they have been there for such a long time. Some of you might remember that when we first opened to the public in the late 1990s, visitors were welcomed to Croome via our glamorous caravan and then at our portacabin until the current Visitor Centre was opened in 2007.

I hope that you'll be able to visit and see the display which includes photographs from before the NT was at Croome, as well as many from during the restoration work. It's so important to tell our visitors about the huge amount of work that's gone on as I am sure many of them think Croome has looked like this for centuries! The display is on until the end of the year, so you've got plenty of time to see it. Thanks as always to the Friends' ongoing support for work in the garden and park.



friendsofcroome.org.uk

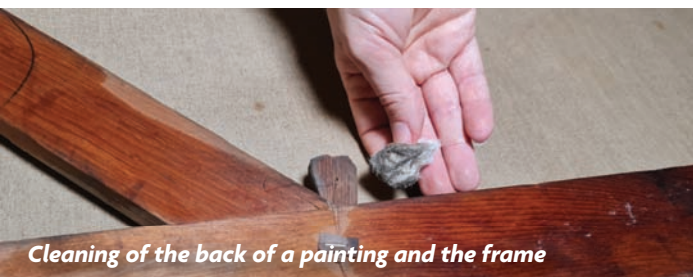
Conservation of Historic Paintings at Croome

by **Katya Belaia-Selzer**

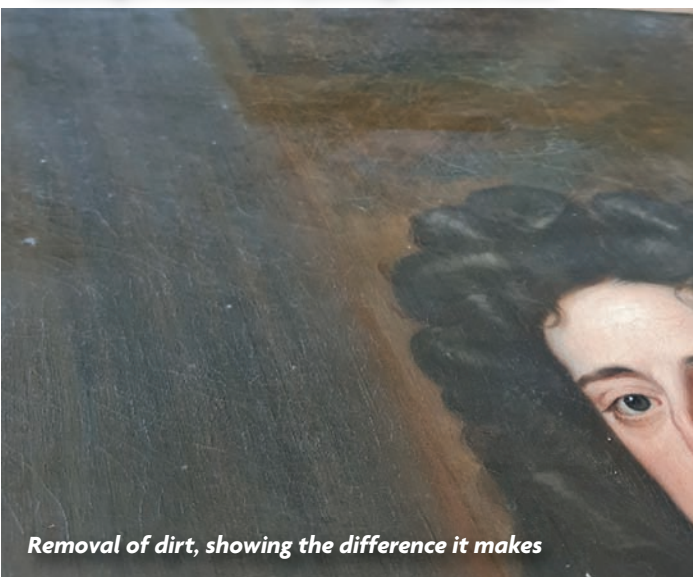
Thanks to generous support from the Friends of Croome nine large oil paintings and frames were treated during an eight day intensive work programme in July 2026 at Croome Court by Katya Belaia-Selzer Studio. The full-length portraits all date between the late-1600s and mid-1700s. They depict George William 6th Earl of Coventry and his brothers Thomas Henry and John Bulkeley by the eminent artist Allan Ramsay; Maria and Elizabeth Gunning by Gavin Hamilton; Winifred Edgcumbe Countesses of Coventry by the leading court painter Sir Godfrey Kneller, as well as King Charles I and William III attributed to the circle of John Riley.

The paintings had been in storage for some time before returning to Croome and had thick layers of dirt, soot, mould, cobwebs and even bird droppings. This was an ideal time to undertake essential conservation work to the paintings and frames to make them safe for display and to remove years of accumulated dirt.

Each of the paintings had to be taken out of their frames for a thorough assessment of their condition. The dust and mould were removed with conservation smoke sponges, brushes and vacuum cleaner. Much of the dirt on the faces of the paintings was so thick it obscured original colours so removing this made the paintings brighter and more legible. Given the age of the paintings, some of the paint was very fragile and needed to be carefully consolidated. Dirt can often hide other imperfections in historic paintings. Once the dirt had been removed, previous restorations became more obvious. This happens when the varnish and the retouchings age differently and over a long time can become incongruous. This was especially noticeable on the portrait of Maria Gunning where most of the face was covered by historic restoration that has become too pale compared to the rest of the painting. We were able to apply a thin glaze of pigment in a conservation resin medium to improve the definition of the face.



Cleaning of the back of a painting and the frame



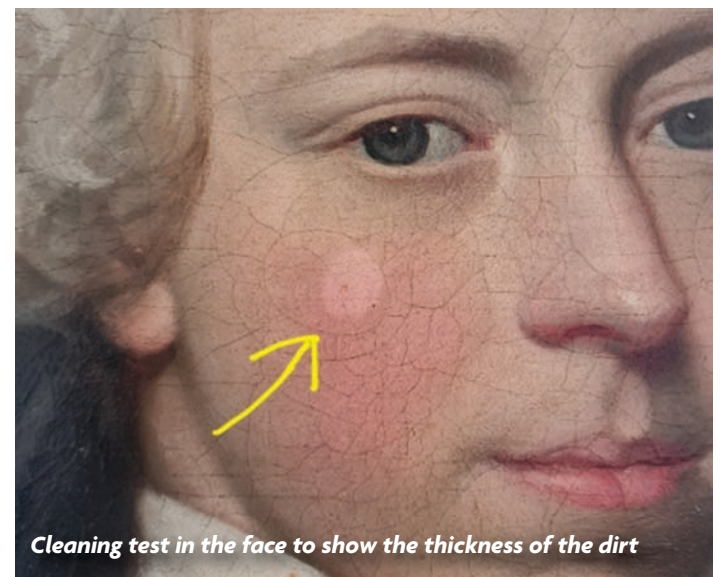
Removal of dirt, showing the difference it makes

The backs of paintings often have interesting features and can require just as much attention as the fronts. Some of the stretchers had historic woodworm damage which needed repair, the stretcher keys can occasionally become dislodged and fall between canvas and stretcher thus forming canvas distortions – these needed to be secured, metal tacks which hold the canvas on the stretchers can rust and eat through the canvas thus requiring local repairs to the turnover edge. Several paintings had scratches, dents and punctures which were mended. Finally, the backs of the paintings were covered by a breathable material called Tyvek to protect them from any dust and moisture ingress.



Example of the mould on the frames prior to cleaning

The frames also required a lot of work. Storage conditions had meant that the gesso and gilding on some of the frames had become loose and in some cases had fallen off. These were all consolidated and any losses toned with watercolour. This means that should in the future any new loss of gilding occur, it can be easily detected. Some of the older Maratta and guilloché frames had historic woodworm which was closely assessed – we now know that the woodworm is no longer active and the paintings can be safely displayed. The series of modern frames such as on Elizabeth Gunning, have been badly affected by mould in storage – this had to be carefully cleaned and removed. The rebates of frames on which the paintings sit, were lined with gum paper tape to prevent the varnish becoming abraded and fitted with new balsa spacers to hold the paintings snug in their frames. All the paintings had previously been framed with large rusty nails – these were removed and replaced by brass plates. We also checked the current frame hangings to make sure they were adequate. The work proved to an excellent opportunity to undertake essential assessment, treatments and documentation of this set of paintings prior to their display.



Cleaning test in the face to show the thickness of the dirt

His Lordship's Wigs

by Kathryn Nye

George William Coventry, the sixth Earl, was a style leader and arbiter of taste. He moved in the highest echelons of 18th century society, and liked to be at the cutting edge of fashion, whether in clothing, art or architecture. He wanted, and could afford, the very latest and the best. He was especially fond of the more exotic tastes of the French nobility, and, in the Croome Archive, there are many bills relating to items purchased from France. These range from tapestries, furniture and porcelain, to his regular order of fine wine.

However, there are also numerous, more mundane entries - for wigs and hair products. We know that in April 1767, Lord Coventry paid Monsieur J Mercier, of Paris, 4 guineas for four 'peruke' wigs - these were wigs of long hair, curled at the side and with a ponytail at the back, tied with a ribbon. This style was favoured by the Earl, and can be seen in the 1764 full-length portrait by Allan Ramsay, which hangs in Croome Court.

A typical bill from another of the Earl's Parisian wigmakers, Monsieur Dumas, is translated below, and covers the five month period from November 1768 to March 1769.

	<i>For having supplied the hair & lining to make a wig</i>	<i>£0 - 2s - 6d</i>
<i>November 6th</i>	<i>Six pounds of powder</i>	<i>£0 - 6s - 0d</i>
	<i>Two dressing gowns</i>	<i>£0 - 1s - 8d</i>
	<i>One ribbon</i>	<i>£0 - 0s - 6d</i>
	<i>One hair bag</i>	<i>£0 - 5s - 2d</i>
	<i>One powder knife</i>	<i>£0 - 1s - 6d</i>
<i>December 28th</i>	<i>One ponytail ribbon</i>	<i>£0 - 0s - 6d</i>
	<i>Three razors</i>	<i>£0 - 0s - 6d</i>
<i>January 28th</i>	<i>Three pounds of powder</i>	<i>£0 - 3s - 0d</i>
<i>February 24th</i>	<i>Four pounds of powder</i>	<i>£0 - 4s - 0d</i>
	<i>One hair bag</i>	<i>£0 - 5s - 9d</i>
	<i>One ponytail ribbon</i>	<i>£0 - 0s - 6d</i>
<i>March 1st</i>	<i>Some silk for a band</i>	<i>£0 - 4s - 4d</i>
	<i>Six pounds of powder</i>	<i>£0 - 0s - 6d</i>
	<i>Four razors</i>	<i>£0 - 0s - 8d</i>
	<i>One dressing gown</i>	<i>£0 - 0s - 10d</i>
	<i>One stick of pomade</i>	<i>£0 - 1s - 0d</i>
	<i>Making of the wigs</i>	<i>£2 - 12s - 6d</i>
<i>Total</i>		<i>£4 - 16s - 4d</i>

From a review of other available bills, it would appear that the Earl, himself, was in the habit of spending at least £20 per year on hair products (excluding wigs). This equates to approximately £1750 in today's money and the equivalent of 200 day's wages for a skilled craftsman at the time. Relatively speaking, however, the 6th Earl seems to have been quite careful with his money and some of his contemporaries, on both sides of the Channel, spent far more.

Wigs, of one form or another, have been worn for thousands of years, but the history of gentlemen's wigs, as we think of them today, dates back to the 17th century, and Louis XIII of France. Louis had become king at the age of nine, after the assassination of his

father, Henry IV, and needed to be seen as a strong, robust leader, which he achieved, very successfully, with the backing of Cardinal Richelieu. Sadly, he was afflicted with poor health, and he began to lose his luxurious, curly hair prematurely. Baldness, at that time, was seen as a sign of weakness - it was also one of the side effects of the treatment of syphilis - so the king had a wig of shoulder-length, black hair made.

Many who wished to curry favour at court adopted this style, and soon, it became the height of fashion, signalling power, wealth and sophistication. Naturally, this soon spread to the other royal courts of Europe, and, from there, to the lesser aristocracy, the wealthy, and anyone else who wanted to be seen as having a certain status in society. By the time of the sixth Earl, wigmaking was a major industry, with guilds established in larger cities, and, literally, thousands of shops cashing in on the trend, as well as travelling wig sellers.

The most expensive wigs were made of human hair - often supplied by poor women, or prisoners, who would sell their hair to hair collectors for a pittance. Light coloured, curly hair was most desirable, but, for those with a more limited budget, wigs of horse or goat hair had to suffice. There was also a vigorous trade in stolen wigs.

In the mid-18th century, Louis XV led the style change to smaller wigs of white or grey, with a ponytail at the nape of the neck, tied with a bow. However, many different styles were available, including those which could easily be carried in a bag, hence the Earl's ten shilling outlay above. The whiter the hair, the more distinguished the wearer appeared, so wigs were powdered with various preparations of starch, flour, talc or kaolin. In fact, it was considered indecent to be seen in public without powder on your wig. The problem with powdering was that it was a very messy business. The wealthy would often have a 'dressing' room, or 'powdering closet', where their wigs could be arranged and powdered without causing a mess in the rest of the house. It was not something that could easily be achieved without at least one servant.

The first step was to don a 'dressing gown' - the Earl purchased three of these over the winter of 1768/69 - in order to protect the clothing. Of course, the powder would not stick easily to the wig, so the hair was first covered in an oily pomade (or pomatum). Pomade was made from rendered animal fats, beeswax (or spermaceti from sperm whales) and plant oils. Bear grease was highly prized, but beef, pork or sheep fat was also used. As these fats had a strong smell, essential floral oils, spices and fragrant resins were added to make them more attractive.

One advertisement in the Times newspaper read;
Rose, Orange, Jessamine, Violet, and white Marechalle Pomatums, that will keep good in any Climate twelve months; 1s per Roll and Pot. The Pomade de Grasse, Sharp has sold with great Reputation and Success for many Years; and now, as heretofore, does most solemnly assure the Public, that it will certainly and effectually thicken and strengthen the Hair; keep it from falling off or turning Grey. Sold with Directions for Use.

Once the pomade was applied, the wig-wearer would be given a large cone of stiff card, which would be placed over the face, to protect them from the clouds of powder. Large quantities of powder would then be puffed over the wig with a variety of custom-made puffers or bellows, until the desired effect had been achieved. Some would, in addition, apply a 'finishing' powder, called

Marechale powder, which was perfumed. It is said that 1 to 2lbsof powder may have been used in a single dressing. The Earl ordered 19lbs (around 8.6kg) of powder in 5 months, which projects to about 45lbs (20kg) a year, so he may have been more frugal - or bought from additional sources.

While the wearer of the wig would have a degree of protection from the powder, the poor wig dressers were less fortunate. In the confines of the powdering room, and without a mask, they would have inhaled large quantities of powder, which gave rise to serious lung problems. Initially they would be afflicted with wheezing and shortness of breath, but they were also at risk of permanent lung damage. Talc and kaolin were particularly likely to cause fibrosis of the lung, similar to pneumoconiosis in coal miners, but, sometimes, powder was adulterated with lead, which would result in damage to the nervous system. Wig dressers would not have had a long lifespan.

Once the powder had been applied successfully, the powder knife, mentioned in Earl Coventry's bill above, was used for the finishing touches - a small, blunt blade, which would have been used to scrape excess hair powder off the forehead and to shape one's facial hair, ensuring a neat hairline.



This Caricature entitled 'La Toilette d'un clerc de procureur', from 1816, shows a lawyer's clerk having his wig generously powdered by a servant or barber. (Musée Carnavalet, Histoire de Paris)

Having finished his 'toilette', the Earl would be ready to face the day, but the tribulations of a gentleman did not end with his looking the part. It was very difficult to prevent the powders and pomades from drifting, or oozing down onto your clothes. It is always worth looking at portraits of this era to see if the artist has faithfully depicted the powder on the shoulders of their beautiful jackets. One notable example is of the king himself, George IV, (see right) painted in 1790 by John Russell, where His Majesty's shoulders appear to be covered in a light dusting of wig powder. The pomade was another matter, as it dripped down the tail of the wig onto the back. This gave rise to the 'dress bags', or rosettes at the back of a barrister's gown. Apparently, their original purpose was to protect their robes by soaking up any leaking pomade.

The wearing of wigs was not a comfortable experience either. Men's hair was usually cut short or shaved to enable a better fit, but also to deter head lice. Fleas, mites, and rodents (if the wigs were not kept securely) were attracted by the pomade, which had a tendency to become rancid, so the perfumes added would need to be applied in large doses to cover the smell. These same fragrances were also known to cause scalp irritation - what we would now call contact dermatitis. Long handled scratching tools and bottles of reviving scents would often be carried to relieve the experience.

Wigs could not be washed, so would eventually become rather horrible, greasy and smelly. For the wealthy, they could just replace the wig, but for those with smaller purses, the stench would have to be endured for much longer. Personal hygiene at the time, was, generally, rudimentary, so perhaps it just added one more layer to the rich, olfactory landscape, but we would, undoubtedly, find it hard to live with today. Wigs for ladies were much more complicated, and fashions reached their literal peak in the 1780s and 90s, but this article will not address that subject. Suffice it to say that wig-wearing was not to last for much longer.

In 1786, the Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger, faced with a huge national debt as a result of the American War of Independence, increased taxes, including a sales tax on hair powder, other cosmetics (scents and pomades), and dental preparations. This tax was set at between 12.5% and 20% depending on the cost of the item. Although the wealthier folk continued, perhaps in a more modest fashion, the final death knell came when Pitt introduced a new tax, in 1795. This time, it became necessary to have an annual certificate just for the privilege of using hair powder. At the princely fee of one guinea per annum, people decided the expense was not worth it, and its use stopped.

The final factor in the demise of the powdered wig was the French Revolution in the last decade of the 18th century. The extravagance of wigs and their perceived connotations with a wealthy, entitled elite, oblivious to the sufferings of the population in general, was a real concern at a time when it was feared the revolution might spread across the Channel. It is intriguing to contemplate whether gentlemen across the country met this change with profound relief or sadness.

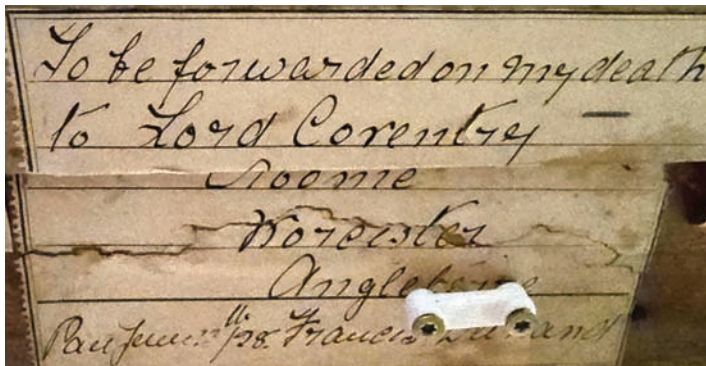




Where Have You Been to My Lovelies?

by **Nicola Hewitt**

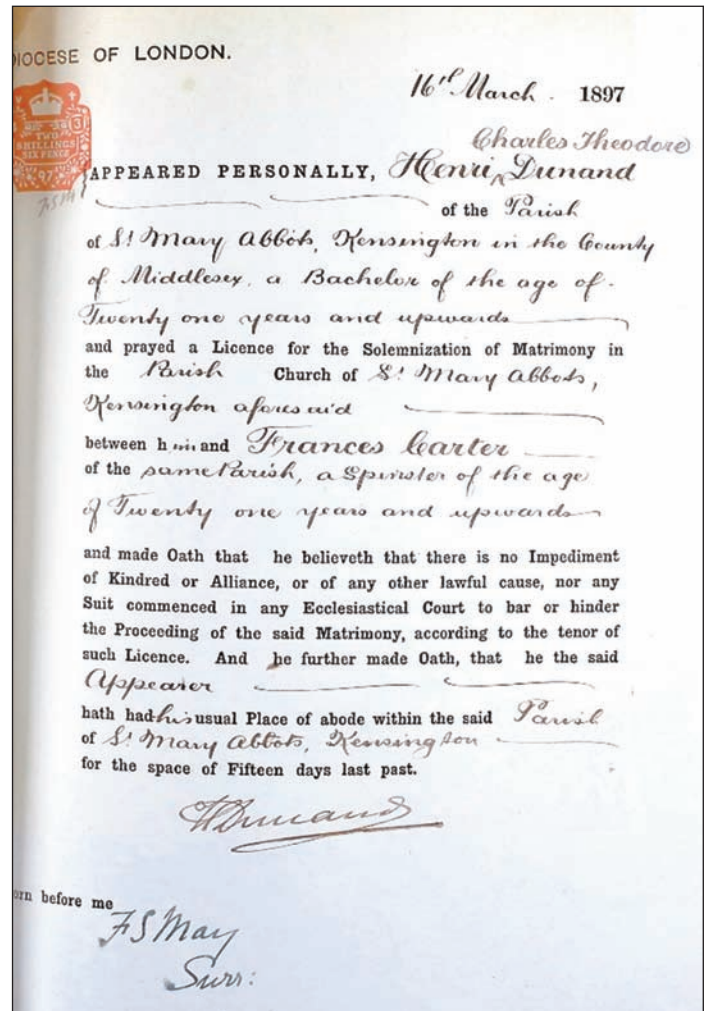
Amongst the paintings in the collection at Croome Court are two pastel portraits by Francis Cotes (1726-1770). They are of the two Gunning sisters, Maria and Elizabeth and both are signed by the artist and dated 1751. This is the year before both sisters were married, Elizabeth in February to the Duke of Hamilton and Maria in March to George 6th Earl of Coventry. So it would be perfectly natural to assume they had always been in the collection. However, there is a label on the reverse of both portraits which suggests otherwise.



"To be forwarded on my death to Lord Coventry, Croome, Worcester, Angleterre Pau Jul 13/28 Frances Dunand"

In fact it suggests that the pair of portraits had not even been in England, but in Pau, France and in the possession of Frances Dunand. Two questions quickly sprung to mind. Why were they in France? And who was Frances Dunand?

A search of a well-known genealogy website for a death in 1928 of a Frances Dunand did not bring any results, but widening the date range brought a probate record for a Frances Dunand in 1939, a widow who had died in Pau. Knowing that she had been married and



that her husband had predeceased her, I broadened the search again and searched for a male dying in Pau before 1939. This brought up another probate record for a Henri Charles Theodore Dunand who had died in 1927 in Pau at an address on an adjacent road to that of Frances, but whose probate was granted in July of 1928, the year on the portrait label.

March 30 th	Henry Charles Theodore Son of	Theodore Jean Charles & Henrietta Louisa	Dunand	Boulogne	Medecin	George Brooks
No. 30.						

The next stage was to see if this was a husband and wife by looking for a marriage. A search uncovered a marriage bond for the pair dated March 1897 for a Henri Charles Theodore Dunand and a Frances Carter. Unfortunately, there was no other information about the couple on there. The next step would be to try and chase the birth or baptism for one of them. Louise Carter being a quite common name the obvious choice was to start with Henri. A search of both English and French records led to a baptism for him in Boulogne Sur Mer, France in the foreign and overseas register of British subjects. Dated March 30th 1846, it gives his parents as Theodore Jean Charles and Henrietta Louise Dunand. Theodore's profession is given as a Doctor.

With still nothing that linked back to Croome, the Coventry or Gunning families, the next step was to try and go further back and find Henri's parents' marriage. Using his father's name resulted in a few hits to different records. His baptism and death in France, and his marriage in England. His wife's maiden name was given on both his death and marriage records; Henrietta Louisa Coventry. But there was no father's name on the marriage certificate, just a line in the box where it should be written. The usual reason for this is that the child is illegitimate.

The marriage is dated 26th April 1845, and took place at St George's, Hanover Square, London, a place that has seen a lot of Coventry baptisms and marriages. Over the years I have gathered together a fairly extensive family tree for the Coventry family and it was not a name I had come across. Whose child could she be? There were clues on this certificate though. The service was conducted by the Rev. J Jones of Streatham, not the regular curate, and by license

rather than banns. Streatham was where the 7th Earl and his family had had a house, so did she fit into the family through one of his children? There was also the witnesses, the number of them and who they were. The first name was Thomas Henry Coventry, fourth son of the 7th Earl, a possibility but unlikely as if she was indeed illegitimate she would have had her mother's surname. The next two names are Jane Emily Goding and James Goding. Jane is one of the 7th Earl's daughters and sister of Thomas. James is her husband. This suggests that Henrietta is somehow connected to the 7th Earl and his children. Could she be the illegitimate daughter of one of his daughters?

Clearly the next step was to find a record of Henrietta's baptism, hopefully that would help solve the mystery. Records show that Henrietta Louisa was baptised on the 9th March 1816 at St James, Westminster and gives her date of birth as 8th February 1816. It shows that she was baptised Henrietta Louisa Coventry Grellet and that her parents' names were Thomas Henry and Louise Grellet. Could Thomas Henry actually be Thomas Henry Coventry? A search of Thomas' name through the various records gave me the answer: in a couple of the census returns she was with him and in 1851 along with her husband accompanied Thomas on a visit to his brother John's house. But the proof came with their final resting place, a photo of Thomas's grave in Old Brompton Cemetery and its inscription.

"To the memory of the Honourable and
Reverend Thomas Henry Coventry.
Third* son of George William 7th Earl of Coventry
Rector for 30 years of the parishes of Severn Stoke
and Hill Croome, Worcestershire.

Also his devoted and loving daughter
Henrietta Louisa Coventry
the wife of Monsieur Theodore Dunand M.D.
of Boulogne Sur Mer France"

It is probable then that Thomas inherited the portraits from his father and passed them on to his daughter who in turn left them to her only child Henri. On Henri's death he instructed his wife to return them to the Earl of Coventry at Croome.

*Thomas Henry was the third surviving son of the 7th Earl, a previous son, also called Thomas Henry, died in infancy.

1845 Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of St George Hanover Square in the County of Middlesex								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
398	April 26	Theodore Jean full age Bachelor Charles Dunand Henrietta Louisa full age spinster Coventry			Esquire	Piccadilly Albert Terrace (Chelsea)	Charles Dunand Esquire	
Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by Licence								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		Theodore Jean Charles Dunand		Henrietta Louisa Coventry		in the Presence of us,		
		Thomas Henry Coventry		Jane Emily Goding		James Goding		
		Rev. J. Jones		Margaret Goding				

9	Henrietta Louisa Coventry B.B	Thomas Henry Louisa	Grellet	Piccadilly	Gentleman	3rd	Gentleman
No. 204							

All that Shaped a Punjabi Princess

by **Sundeep Braich**



*Clockwise from top:
Catherine, Sophia, and Bamba Duleep Singh at the 1895 debutantes' ball*

Indian royalty became unexpectedly entwined with the British during Queen Victoria's reign, says Sundeep Braich. The first Sikh and Punjabi queen to live in Britain, Maharani Jind Kaur, died at Abingdon House, Kensington, in 1863, at the age of 46. She was the youngest wife of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Lion of Punjab, who had once worn the Koh-i-Noor diamond. In 1849, her son, Maharaja Duleep Singh, as a child, had surrendered the diamond to Queen Victoria and converted to Christianity, becoming one of Victoria's favourites.

After 13 years of separation, in imprisonment and exile, Jind Kaur was reunited with Duleep in India in April 1861, and sailed with him to England. Despite the Maharajah's royal title and his favour at the British court, the two years between his mother's arrival and her death in 1863 produced no proposals of marriage alliances with English or European aristocracy. For the first known Sikh-heritage marriage in a Christian ceremony, he was to look beyond England and Europe for a bride. Jind Kaur was initially interred at the Dissenters' Chapel, in Kensal Green

Cemetery, before her body was returned to India for Sikh rites. Afterwards, her son consulted missionaries at the American Presbyterian Mission in Cairo before marrying Bamba Müller on 7 June 1864 — not in a church, but at the British Consulate in Alexandria. Bamba was the daughter of a German merchant and a formerly enslaved Ethiopian woman, Sophia, who were not married. Bamba became known as Maharani Bamba Duleep Singh, and bore Duleep three sons and three daughters.

His second marriage was to an English chambermaid, Ada Douglas Wetherill, from Lambeth. Their two daughters became the last-born Duleep Singhs — although, as an exhibition in Kensington Palace, “The Last Princesses of Punjab: Sophia Duleep Singh and the Women who Shaped Her”, explains, Queen Victoria did not support the second family as she did the first, because she did not recognise Ada’s daughters as legitimate heirs.

The exhibition marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Jind Kaur’s third granddaughter from her son’s first marriage: Princess Sophia Duleep Singh. A suffragette and wartime nurse, she was granted a grace-and-favour residence at Hampton Court Palace, where an English Heritage blue plaque now recognises her work for women’s rights. She was a goddaughter of Queen Victoria, and this is as much an Anglican story as a Sikh and Punjabi one.

A GOLD-framed portrait of Maharani Jind Kaur draws visitors into the exhibition. Painted by George Richmond in the year of her death, it is alive with the jewel tones of the Lahore court — deep blue, flashing emeralds, and crimson rubies threaded through silver and pearl. Across the room, in a case devoted to Princess Sophia’s mother, sits the enamelled gold makara bracelet that Duleep Singh gave Bamba shortly after his mother’s death: the same deep blue along the outer band, the same crimson enamel scrolling around the field, the same emerald winding through the manes of the two facing creatures at the clasp.



The enamelled gold bangle owned by Maharani Bamba Duleep Singh is set with table-cut sapphires from Jaipur, India, and dates to c.1850

The bracelet had been Jind Kaur’s. Mothers passed such heirlooms to their daughters-in-law, and Duleep had performed the gesture on his mother’s behalf. A Sikh mother-in-law and a Christian daughter-in-law who never met are held together across two display cases in the same colours, across the threshold that the makaras were believed to guard. Images of the makara, an ancient mythological water creature, are carved into the gateways of South Asian temples. It is also an emblem of fertility and marriage. But the royal line was not to continue past the last-born Duleep Singh from the second marriage, Princess Irene, in 1889.

In the family tree, one last princess is absent: Princess Sophia’s only sister-in-law, Princess Victor Duleep Singh, wife of the eldest of Duleep and Bamba’s children, Prince Victor. It was she who challenged English aristocratic convention by marrying an Indian prince in an Anglican church.

It was in St Peter’s, Eaton Square, in London, on 4 January 1898, that Prince Victor married Lady Anne Blanche Alice Coventry, youngest daughter of the 9th Earl of Coventry in what the next day’s Daily Telegraph called “the first socially important wedding of the year”.

The Vicar, the Revd John Storrs, officiated. The hymn was John Keble’s “The voice that breathed o’er Eden”, and the address drew on a sermon by another Tractarian leader, Edward Pusey, on marriage, placing the ceremony firmly in the High Anglican tradition. Among the wedding gifts was a piece of silver inscribed: “To Prince Victor Duleep Singh on his marriage, from his godmother, Victoria, R.I., 1898.”

Lady Anne appeared in a Country Life frontispiece in August 1898, recognised after marriage as HH Princess Victor Duleep Singh. Thirteen years later, in January 1911, another frontispiece showed Princess Pauline Duleep Singh, her mother named by mistake as “Lady Anne Duleep Singh”. A mixed-heritage princess of the right age had been assumed to be the daughter of the famous 1898 marriage.

A Historic Royal Palaces conservator, Nelson Garcia, prepared a banner for display in the exhibition. It was used by the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) in the early 20th century. The following week, Princess Sophia wrote in: “My half-sister, Pauline Duleep Singh, is the elder daughter of the late Maharajah Duleep Singh of Lahore by his second wife”: Lady Anne and Prince Victor never had children.

It has been suggested that Queen Victoria privately instructed Lady Anne never to have a child with Prince Victor, and to live abroad with him. The source is a single letter, dated January 2001, from an unnamed great-nephew of Lady Anne, recalling a conversation that, he says, he had with her in the 1950s. The letter is addressed to a private collector, Peter Bance. Because the letter is in a private collection, it has not been independently assessed, and its full contents are unpublished. There is no record of the alleged instruction in Princess Victor’s or Queen Victoria’s own words, and no evidence that Prince Victor or his family knew of any such arrangement. Whether the marriage was childless by command, circumstance, or choice remains unclear.

Prince and Princess Victor rest together in Monaco under the inscription “My peace I give unto you.” The reference cited is John 19.27, although the words are from John 14.27. John 19.27 reads: “Behold, thy mother!” — a reference to motherhood, set into the stone of a threshold-crossing marriage that has since raised questions about motherhood and children. Whether by coincidence, error, or design, this quiet misalignment between inscription and citation has been there ever since.

Prince Victor died in Monte Carlo in 1918. Lady Anne lived on, widowed, for 38 more years, dying the year the foundation stone of Coventry Cathedral was laid. The last surviving child of Duleep Singh, Prince Victor’s sister and Lady Anne’s sister-in-law, Princess Bamba, died the following year, and with her the Sikh royal line of Punjab came to its end. She is buried in a Christian cemetery in post-partition Lahore.

On New Year’s Day, as the current exhibition was being prepared, Coventry Cathedral hosted Langar Aid, a feeding humanity project by Khalsa Aid: the Sikh and Punjabi tradition of communal eating brought into a Christian space built on the hope of resurrection from ruins and reconciliation after conflict.



THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY AT LSE

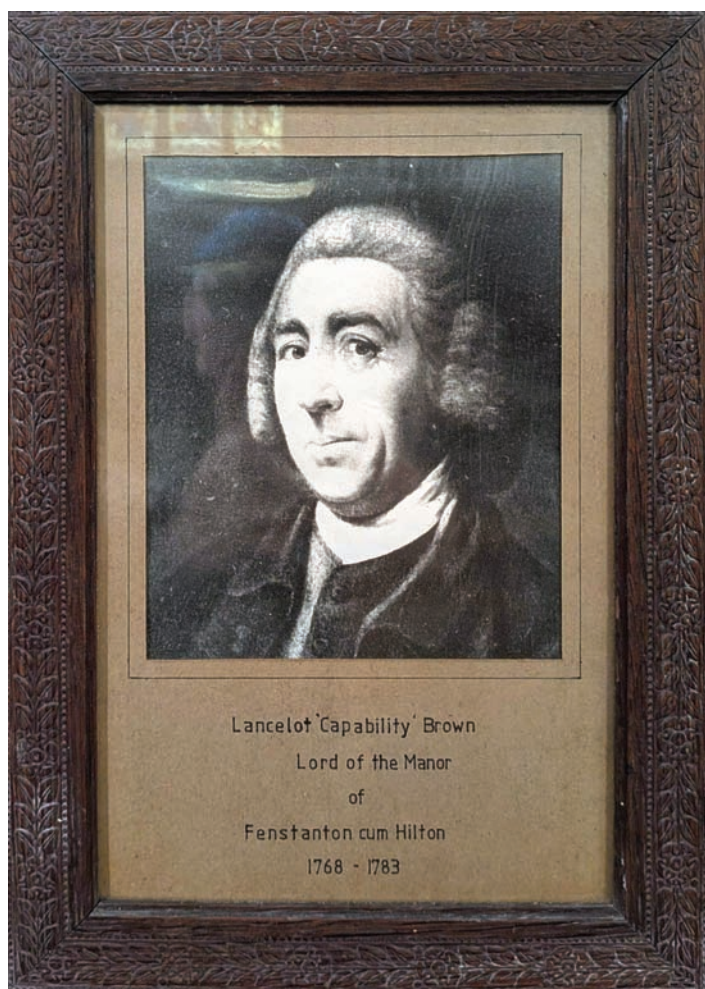
A Historic Royal Palaces conservator, Nelson Garcia, prepares a banner for display in the exhibition. It was used by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) in the early 20th century

People of every race, background, and faith were welcomed to share their first meal of the new year beneath John Piper's baptistery window, its golden yellows, blues, reds, and greens the same colours as glow in George Richmond's portrait of Jind Kaur, and in the enamel of the makara bracelet that her son passed to his bride. A chain of mothers and daughters-in-law who never met are held together across centuries by a painting, a makara bracelet, and a stained-glass window in the same vibrant colours: "My peace I give unto you" (John 14.27) and "Behold, thy mother!" (John 19.27).

Sundee Braich is a heritage detective investigating the Duleep Singh family and the Koh-i-Noor diamond story. The exhibition at Kensington Palace, Kensington Gardens, London W8, runs until 8 November. hrp.org.uk

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‘Capability’ Brown's Association with Fenstanton

A Visit in April 2026

by Lawrence Baker

The Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, Fenstanton is the last resting place of Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown, the world-famous landscape gardener. He was Lord of the Manor of Fenstanton and Hilton, having bought the manor in 1767. He and his wife, Bridget are buried in the church grounds; his commemorative headstone is on the northside of the chancel. Their family memorial can be found within the chancel of the church.

Parts of the church date from the 13th century, with the rest completed in the 15th century, when it was used as a welcoming landmark by sailors returning by boat on the Great Ouse river to the port of St Ives. It is believed that it may have had a beacon lit for this purpose. As the church is built on the highest ground in the area, 13 metres above sea level, it stands tall above other buildings in its surroundings. Inside the church there is a memorial to John Howland, who sailed on the Mayflower to America, and whose family settled in New Plymouth, Massachusetts. Descendants of the Howland family include Franklin D Roosevelt, Richard Nixon and Winston Churchill.

In 1767 Lancelot Brown bought ‘the Manor of Fenstanton’ (which included the Parish of Hilton) from the Earl of Northampton for the sum of £13,000. This was paid in two installments with a deduction of £1,500 for work done by Brown at Castle Ashby for the Earl. With this title came an official residence, the Manor House, which still stands today. Brown is thought to have used this house as his estate office when visiting his parish. Brown commissioned surveys of his manor, although these were not completed for ten years. Anyone local to Fenstanton looking at Brown’s plans would quickly deduce that a watercourse has been moved. It has been speculated that this

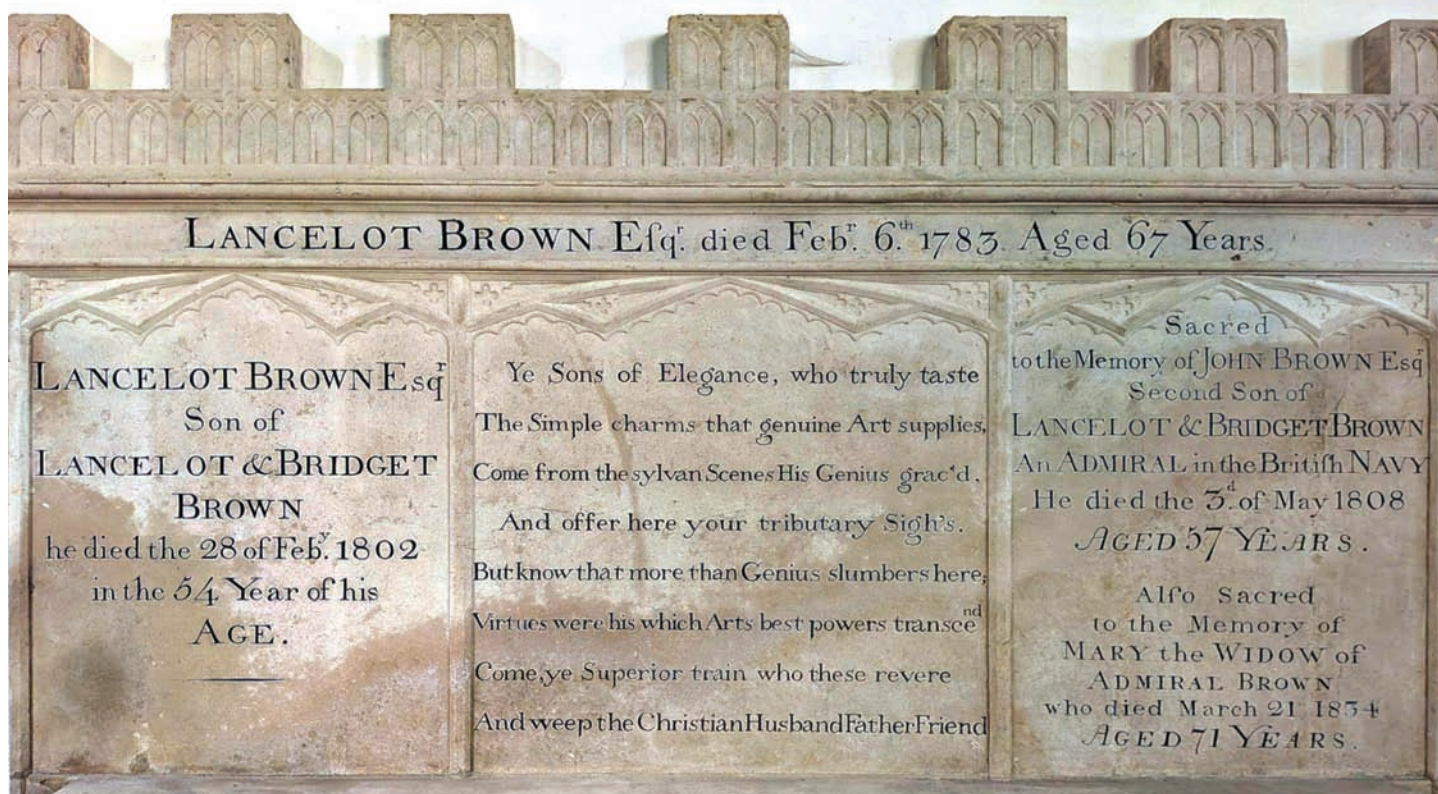
was Brown’s plan for his retirement with the landscape changed to parkland spreading out from Manor Farm (now called Fenstanton Manor) as his new home.

Brown did not permanently reside in Fenstanton, his main home being at Wilderness House, Hampton Court, which came with his post as the King’s Master Gardener. He did however, at the suggestion of the Earl of Sandwich at Hinchingsbrooke, serve as High Sheriff from 9 February 1770 but with his busy life his eldest son Lance Brown was nominated as a ‘pocket Sheriff’ and secretary to Lord Sandwich.

After Brown’s burial it was his eldest son Lance and Lord Coventry who arranged for the poet, Rev. William Mason, to write an epitaph for the monument to be erected in the chancel of the Church. The letter Lance wrote to Lord Coventry was as follows:

Lincoln’s Inn November 27th 1783

“My Lord, The great Friendship your Lordship honoured my Father with, when living, convinces me that every tribute paid to his memory will be acceptable to your Lordship. I have therefore taken the Liberty to enclose an Epitaph which I propose to have engraven on a monument now erecting, which will be placed in Fenstanton Church, where he lies buried. Some prose will be added, but the lines I send are the product of Mr. Mason’s pen. Few people have as yet seen them and I do not wish them to be made very public ‘till the Monument is completed. I hope your Lordship will excuse this Liberty as it arises from the affection of a son anxious to do the fullest Honour to the memory of his Father and hand his name to posterity with every advantage in his Power.”



The epitaph on the memorial in the chancel reads as follows:

"Lancelot Brown Esq died 6 February 1783, aged 67 years"
 Ye sons of elegance, who truly taste
 The simple charms that genuine art supplies,
 Come from the sylvan scene his genius grac'd
 And offer here your tributary sighs
 But know that more than genius slumbers here.
 Virtues were his, which art's best
 powers transcend, Come, ye superior train, who these revere.
 And weep the Christian, Husband, Father, Friend."



The Walled Gardens

by Chris and Karen Cronin



Since reopening at Easter, it has been wonderful to welcome so many returning visitors back to The Walled Gardens, alongside many discovering the gardens for the very first time. Spring and early summer have been full of colour, growth and special moments, with the gardens continuing to evolve as restoration work progresses.

One of the highlights of the season came on St George's Day when we were delighted to welcome guests as part of the British Asparagus Festival celebrations. Following the traditional launch at The Fleece Inn, Bretforton, a convoy of classic cars brought the first cut of Worcestershire asparagus to Croome, celebrating one of the county's best-loved seasonal traditions. As asparagus is also grown within the Walled Gardens, it was a particularly fitting occasion and a wonderful opportunity to showcase both our horticultural heritage and Worcestershire's outstanding food and tourism offer.

We were also incredibly proud to receive national recognition in the LUXlife Home & Garden Awards 2026, where The Walled Gardens at Croome Court were named Heritage Garden Restoration Project of the Year 2026 – UK. This award reflects more than 26 years of restoration, transforming what was once a derelict seven-acre site into one of Worcestershire's most distinctive historic gardens. It is also a tribute to the many volunteers, supporters and visitors whose encouragement has helped make this ongoing restoration possible.



The gardens continue to flourish throughout the season, with visitors enjoying the historic Hot Wall, Pineapple House, Mediterranean Garden, Water Garden, productive glasshouses and heritage fruit collections, while each month brings something new to discover. Fresh seasonal produce, including asparagus when available, continues to be harvested and sold to visitors during weekend openings.



Visiting The Walled Gardens

Open Saturday and Sunday from April to September, including Bank Holidays. Opening hours: 11 am - 5 pm (last entry 4 pm)
Admission: £7 per adult; children under 14 visit free of charge (usual National Trust Croome admission applies).
All proceeds support the ongoing restoration and care of the gardens.

Croome Gallery & Pottery is open every Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday from April to September, between 11am and 5pm (last entry 4pm). Access is via the National Trust Visitor Centre and, when The Walled Gardens are closed on Thursdays and Fridays, there is no additional admission charge beyond normal National Trust entry. Follow the signs to The Walled Gardens gate and head down the hill behind the gazebo to explore the gallery's collection of artwork and pottery.

As always, thank you for your continued support. Every visit helps preserve this remarkable place, and we look forward to welcoming you throughout the rest of the summer and sharing more of the gardens' continuing story.

friendsofcroome.org.uk