The success of Attingham depends very much on the loyalty and quality of those arranging and running its courses and, despite the retirement of some valued members this year, we continue to have a great team in place. Emma Ryder Richardson stepped down as Administrator of the Summer School at the end of February and was replaced by Rebecca Parker, who has proved an able and enthusiastic addition to the Summer School. Another welcome member was Christopher Garibaldi, an Attingham Summer School alumnus (2001), who was appointed to assist Lisa White on the course. Also, Caroline Rimell directed her last Study Week after 18 years of involvement. She has contributed enormously to the success of the programme and will be greatly missed. A party will be held to thank her after our AGM in November. She was assisted by Kate Morgan, who will continue as the course Administrator with Giles Waterfield, who will direct the Study Programme in Dresden and Berlin in 2009. Finally, I would also like to thank you to welcome Christopher Garibaldi, who has completed her first year as Trust Secretary. She has proved to be an excellent member of the team and her hard work to launch the new Attingham website has been well received.

In the US, we shall be very sad to lose Molly Seiler who steps down in September as the President of the American Friends after her three-year tenure. She has dedicated a considerable amount of time and energy to renewing contacts and fostering new sources of funding. She has been ably assisted in these endeavours by Tom Appelquist, who will be taking over as President and whom we warmly welcome. On the scholarship front, I would personally like to thank Stewart Rosenblum, the former Treasurer of the American Friends, for his very generous donation to RCS which has been most gratefully received on both sides of the Atlantic. There have been various scholarship initiatives pursued by Annabel Westman and myself over the past year and I am particularly pleased with the connection made with the President of the Fondation de Moffarts in Belgium, a private Trust, which has agreed to fund a Belgian scholar over the next five years. They supported two full scholarships this year. In addition, despite the general economic uncertainties, I believe that we will receive further good news from other sources later this year.

The tremendous support we receive from the various heritage bodies and museums is, however, as I mentioned last year, not matched by the Government’s approach to helping house-owners which, I fear, is the consequence of a lack of interest and understanding rather than malign intent. Clearly, straitened Government finances militate against financial assistance, but there are considerable areas where the burden on house-owners could be lifted without any loss of revenue to the Treasury. A proposal, which has been justified by academic research, is that of putting the clocks forward by one hour throughout the year (i.e. the same time as the rest of Europe). It is estimated that, as a result of extended daylight in the late afternoon, this would result in at least 4% more expenditure each year on tourism (totaling more than £2bn p.a.) and a 5% decrease in the consumption of energy throughout the UK during winter months, which would help the income and decrease the expenditure of those running large houses. In addition, it would result in a corresponding reduction in Co2 emissions (approx 1.2 million tonnes per annum), and fewer car accidents (saving some 450 serious injuries and 100 deaths), resulting in a reduction of N.H.S. costs of over £200m per annum. Why not?

JOHN LEWIS, Chairman
The Attingham Society
Jacqueline Riding • Chairman

This year has been particularly important for The Attingham Society. With the wholehearted support of the current Society members and the Council of the Attingham Trust, it was agreed at the recent AGM that membership of the Society will now be automatic and free for all non-US participants, past and future. This will be the first time in its 23-year history that the Society, as a group, will represent all non-US alumni (the US alumni are members of the American Friends).

In addition, the current Society members also agreed to the creation of an Attingham Society Scholarship – all alumni are encouraged to support this new initiative via an annual standing order or single donation. Please see www. attinghamtrust.org (select Attingham Society) for details. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have already made donations, and hope that with the continued support of the alumni we can offer grants to attend one of the Trust courses for many years to come.

The 2007 Annual Reunion was held at Sir John Soane’s Museum hosted by the Director Tim Knox and Deputy Director Helen Dorey. Over 70 members attended the drinks party and private view of the Museum and its current exhibition, including many of Helen’s fellow scholars from the 2007 Summer School. Many thanks to Tim and Helen, and to Laura Houliston for organising yet another wonderful event. Laura has now retired from the Committee and I would like to thank her on behalf of the members and Committee for all her help over these last years.

The 2008 Reunion will be held at the Art Workers Guild on Tuesday 25th November. Details will be sent out soon, and will also be available on the Trust’s website www. attinghamtrust.org
Engaging our supporters more deeply in our work is at the heart of the National Trust’s new strategy. We want to share our passion, inviting our supporters to join in as well as to join us, and be actively involved in looking after the inspiring places we care for. At the heart of engagement is an ‘arms open’ approach to conservation. We’re encouraging members and visitors to ask questions and to take part. We want to do more to help people appreciate the importance history, heritage and beauty play in all our lives.

In the past, we would have undertaken conservation work out of the public eye, usually when properties were closed for the winter. Our new approach includes the visitor, consulting them and giving them a chance to understand the complex choices we make. An example is the Attingham Park re-discovered project.

Attingham Park, in Shropshire, is a vast, austere, late Georgian mansion. Since it was given to the National Trust in 1947, the public have only been able to see a small number of rooms, making its development and historic use difficult to grasp and giving a sense that much was hidden behind closed doors.

Our team at the property wanted to achieve three things:

- to improve the way existing rooms are presented (both in terms of historical accuracy and atmosphere) and interpreted to visitors, to extend the visitor route and to engage visitors in curatorial and conservation debates.

Throughout the project, we have asked visitors to comment – for example on proposed decorative schemes, the colour of a carpet and the presentation of rooms. We have told them about the conservation techniques involved and the costs – which have been a revelation! Having received their feedback, we explain the decisions we’ve taken and encourage them to return to see progress and to comment.

We have provided a lot of interpretation and educational information, using the project to explain the history and use of the house, and the conservation and curatorial choices we have to make, and to show conservation work in progress. Of course, not everyone agrees with our decisions, which stimulates further debate. Our property staff and expert advisers have learned to appreciate feedback!

This openness is new and challenging for the Trust and means that the project really is, in more than one sense, a journey of discovery.

Fiona Reynolds is a regular and welcome visitor to the Summer School. Every year, the National Trust provides scholarships for one of its employees to attend the Attingham courses.
The itinerary of The Attingham Study Week in June 2008 provided visits to a great variety of houses and some of the finest collections in Britain. We had an enthusiastic group which included two American Friends of Attingham scholars, Eve Barsoum (U.S. Commission of Fine Arts; SS’05) and Maria Santangelo Brown (Legion of Honor, Fine Art Museum of San Francisco). On this side of the Atlantic we added scholars from Lithuania, Denmark, Scotland and England and other participants came from New Zealand, Ireland, Switzerland, Denmark and the States. We undertook 17 visits beginning with a fine 18th century house, Cottesbrooke Hall, and ended with an exploration of Althorp, the Spencer family home. In between we saw the eccentric 16th century Triangular Lodge with its subtle declaration of the owner’s Catholic faith and visited three conservation and restoration projects. At Nevill Holt the essentially Elizabethan architecture was complemented by the owner’s cutting edge collection of contemporary art. Kirby Hall and Apethorpe were examples of English Heritage conservation work with Apethorpe for sale – all 50,000 square feet of it! Kirmarsh Hall reflected American Nancy Lancaster’s English Country house taste while 19th century Harlaxton must astonish its University of Evansville American students with its vast Elizabethan exterior and dramatic Baroque interiors. Belton was our only National Trust house visit where we had the good fortune to be led by (SW’05), Visitor Manager, escorted a tour of the estate and explained environmental issues being addressed there. At Deene Park, the Hon. Marion Brudenell gave a warm welcome and graciously allowed the “Attingham Last Night” production to take place after the gala dinner. Festive as always, this year it took the form of (1) a State bed and (2) an Award Ceremony which culminated in presentations to the Director and the Administrator of the 2008 Study Week.

After 18 wonderful years with the Study Week I am retiring to the wings with many thanks to all those I have worked with and to those who have supported me with the Study Week, especially Annabel Westman who was always available with her wise counsel. Kate Morgan, Study Week Course Administrator this year, was both efficient and good company. It has been rewarding to watch the development of scholarships for the Study Week as the scholars add an important dimension to the group as do the international participants. I hope it needs no reminding that the Study Week is the only Attingham course which can be repeated and is the only one to organise some programmes out of the UK. I am delighted Giles Waterfield has agreed to lead next year’s Study Week to Berlin and Dresden.

In 2009, The Attingham Study Programme will take place in Dresden and Berlin between 7-16 June
The 57th Attingham Summer School took place in challenging weather but no amount of rain seemed to daunt our 48 scholars from 15 countries and a wide range of professional backgrounds. In addition to our regular 24 scholars from the USA, we enjoyed the company and expertise of eight scholars from the UK, 13 from Europe, two from Australia and one from New Zealand.

During our travels we welcomed many distinguished visitors whose support of the Summer School is greatly appreciated. These included Fiona Reynolds, Director-General of the National Trust, Martin Drury, formerly Director-General of the National Trust and currently Chairman of the Landmark Trust, John Lewis, Chairman of the Attingham Trust, Mr and Mrs Robert Brawer of the Ida and William Rosenthal Foundation of New York, Libby de Rosa, Administrator of the American Friends, Jim Mundy, Co-Chairman of the Fundraising Committee of the American Friends, Jacqui Riding, Chairman of the Attingham Society, and other former Trust officers including Rosemary Lomax-Simpson, David Freeman and Lucy Abel Smith.

The programme followed its usual schedule for two-thirds of its duration, based firstly at West Dean College in West Sussex and then at the University of Nottingham. Introductory lectures and seminars on many aspects of house ownership, architecture, collectors of works of art, and the relationship between town and country houses supported on-site study at Arundel Castle, Petworth House, Uppark, and Brighton Pavilion. We were also enjoyed a private view of the ‘Chinese Whispers’ exhibition at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, which brought into focus dazzling objects in the Chinese taste culled from many country houses.

In Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire our programme explored in greater depth the challenges of interpretation, conservation and education in historic country houses at Kedleston Hall, Calke Abbey, Chatsworth, Bolsover, Hardwick Old and New Halls and Flintham Hall. A new timetable for two days of visits to Chatsworth made our studies there even more valuable. Course members also enjoyed warm hospitality in private houses and the personal interest of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire over lunch and seminars at Chatsworth.

The final part of the course was based at the University of Bristol from where we were able to visit Corsham Court (Wiltshire), Dyrham Park (Gloucestershire), Tyntesfield and Barrow Court (Somerset). A day spent in Bristol allowed us to study Blaise Castle House, Blaise Hamlet and The Royal Fort, while across the Severn in South Wales we visited the magnificent Baroque house of the Morgans at Tredegar and Burges’ neo-Gothic Castell Coch, and enjoyed a marvellous evening tour of the National Museum of Wales. Our final day was spent in glorious sunshine at Badminton under the scholarly tuition of John Harris.

One of the requirements we make each year is that our scholars write a report after the course, explaining how the Summer School has benefited them. A theme that comes through clearly is the value of learning together. In the words of one of this year’s scholars: “It was a real joy to be thrown together with such a diverse group of individuals and experts, from places as far flung as Alabama, St. Petersburg and Dublin.... By the close of the course, we had formed a tight and well-formed unit, and I have no doubt that the friendships forged will survive well into the future.”

In 2009, The Attingham Summer School will be based in West Sussex, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and Yorkshire between 3-21 July.
The thirteenth session of Royal Collection Studies combined tradition with innovation. For the first time we stayed at Cumberland Lodge in Windsor Great Park, an eighteenth-century house which was once the residence of the Duke of Cumberland and is now used for conferences and meetings. It was ideal in its location, comfort and sympathetic atmosphere, as well as the quality of the catering, and we were made to feel extremely welcome by the staff under their Principal, Alastair Niven. Staying there helped to make the sometimes extreme rigours of the course sustainable.

The complement of thirty members was extremely strong this year as it has been for a number of years: their variety of specialisation reflecting the school’s emphasis on the development of royal patronage and collecting. Members included directors and curators associated with the royal collections in Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, as well as former royal or imperial collections at the Dolmabahce Palace in Istanbul, the State Hermitage Museum, the Foundation for Prussian Palaces and Gardens in Potsdam, and such palace-museums as Het Loo. Directors or curators came from the Getty Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, the Wallace Collection, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Musée Girodet in Montargis, the Grünes Gewölbe in Dresden, the Strossmeyer Gallery of Old Masters in Zagreb, and the Art Gallery of Ontario, as well as independent art historians.

Heritage or research bodies sending staff included the National Trust for England and Wales, Historic Royal Palaces, the Newport Preservation Society, and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris. Academics attended from Trinity College, Hartford, Conn.; the University of St Andrew’s; and the Russian University of Human Sciences, Moscow. Other professions added to the high level of expertise, notably the auction houses with two representatives of Christie’s, and a highly expert art dealer. Architecture was represented by the Chairman of the American Friends of Attingham, who was particularly welcome, as was the substantial representation of Americans in the group. But we are aware, as always, that the international mix could extend further.

The programme followed the customary pattern of lectures and detailed visits to palaces in and around London, as well as specialised sessions to examine miniatures, armour or Old Master drawings. A high point was the presentation by Sir Geoffrey de Bellaigue on Sevres, for which he prepared an astonishing array of objects. New lectures included The Royal Image by Desmond Shawe-Taylor, and The Order of the Garter by Hugo Vickers. Members of the course participated vigorously in discussion and in making individual presentations: we appreciated their talks on such diverse subjects as current restoration projects at Dresden and Amsterdam, Baron Triqueti and the medieval usage of Westminster Hall.

The course was hugely indebted to the unfailingly good-humoured and wide-ranging erudition of numerous members of the staff of the Royal Collection. Historic Royal Palaces welcomed us to the properties in their charge and provided excellent demonstrations of their energy and learning.

For the participants, we were able to give generous scholarship assistance to 18 out of 30. Many of the participants were supported by their own organisations, underlining the international reputation the school has earned. The donors of bursaries are mostly loyal long-standing supporters, but it was a great pleasure to add Paula Madden to their ranks, who attended the inaugural year.

Sara Heaton acted as the indefatigable and omnicompetent course administrator.

In 2009, Royal Collection Studies will be based at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor between 6 – 15 September.
Scholarship benefactors
Annabel Westman • Director of Studies, The Attingham Trust

Encouraging strides have been made with significant funds for scholarships granted to candidates from all over the world to attend our courses.

The Summer School - for which 41 of the 48 participants received financial assistance this year – has benefited from new donations raised in countries other than the US and the UK. For example, 2008 marked the first Copland Foundation scholarship dedicated in perpetuity to an Australian national, an agreement for a further five years of the Clark Collection/ Creative New Zealand scholarship and, in an exciting development, the start of a 5-year commitment for the attendance of a Belgian scholar, funded by the Fondation De Moffarts. In addition, Rudolph Verspyck assisted a Dutch scholar, and the Hon. Desmond Guinness, an Irish scholar. In the UK, we were delighted that the Association for Cultural Exchange (ACE) agreed to support another European candidate from Croatia, and to receive the third and final payment for the John Cornforth endowment fund, following the very successful series of winter lectures given by country house owners held at Christie’s, London. As always, we were also grateful to the generous grant provided by The Monument Trust. A number of the regional museums have generously supported staff as part of their Continual Professional Development programme.

The National Trust, the Victoria and Albert Museum and English Heritage fund members of their staff on our programmes. RCS benefits from several individual donations for which the Trust is most grateful. Of particular note is the outstanding endowment of $100,000 in perpetuity made by Stewart Rosenblum to benefit a qualified candidate on RCS.

The Study Week has also been successful in receiving scholarship assistance to support candidates on both sides of the Atlantic. Hazel Wood, for example, has been a loyal supporter over the past years. Strengthening the Study Week’s funding is one of the key aims for 2009.

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