

# THE ATTINGHAM TRUST

FOR THE STUDY OF HISTORIC HOUSES AND COLLECTIONS

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## CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

*Timothy Cooke OBE*



I'm writing at the end of my first year as Chairman of Attingham and in that time have already developed an attachment to the Trust and all that it stands for. I now appreciate why many of the alumni whom I have met have been quick to tell me when they attended a course; it is clear to me that the Attingham experience

has been an important professional milestone in the career of many.

My year as Chairman has been unusual with difficult decisions to cancel the courses one by one as it became clear that Covid was extending its impact through the summer and autumn, impacting in particular those students who were due to join us from overseas. The Course Directors and their administrators have successfully held together the cohorts that were due to attend the courses and we look well placed to host a full programme next year with the majority of places already confirmed. That said, the operating environment for the houses and their collections and for museums is if anything more challenging than last year: the support mechanisms and grants available during the pandemic are falling away, leaving a cost base to sustain but without the levels of income that would have been expected in the pre-Covid years. Cash will be tight and budgets trimmed in response, including curatorial expertise in some cases, with the result that Attingham's mission to provide high quality courses for professional development is as relevant today as at any time in its long history. The Trust will also need to be in a position to provide more scholarships in the future and we anticipate a major fund-raising programme to coincide with the 75th anniversary in 2027.

This year has also seen changes within the charity. You will all be aware of Annabel Westman's decision to stand down as Executive Director and of Helen Jacobsen's success in being appointed to the role. Annabel, supported by my predecessor as chairman, Sir John Lewis, successfully developed Attingham's far-reaching reputation and also its ethos. Helen and I have inherited a strong platform from which to respond to new opportunities for the Trust, plus a few threats as well. Helen has shared her ambitions for Attingham with the trustees and with Council and we all have every confidence in her ability to achieve the goals whilst holding firm to the values of Attingham. We shall continue to benefit from Annabel's impeccable knowledge of Attingham and all those associated with it through her new role in which she will develop still further the relationships with our alumni. We also say goodbye, regretfully, to Rebecca Lyons, whose commitments at the Royal Academy have made it difficult for her to continue in her role as Course Director of Royal Collection Studies. Rebecca's recent election to our Council, however, means that we will continue to benefit from her valuable knowledge and experience.

The trustees also said farewell to Martin Drury who has been involved with Attingham for four decades and has been throughout a steadfast and effective supporter; we shall miss his expertise, counsel and personal charm. Much to my delight, Sir Robert Hildyard has accepted an invitation to join the trustees; many alumni of the Summer School will remember with pleasure their visit to Robert's home, Flintham in Nottinghamshire, and the trustees are already benefiting from his experience both as a house owner and through his professional input to our discussions.

Despite the events of the last two years, Attingham is in good heart and the senior team is champing at the bit as we all anticipate a full programme for 2022. I am hugely looking forward to being part of it.

# COMMENTARY

*Helen Jacobsen, Executive Director*

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The patience, optimism and perseverance of the Attingham team and those waiting to go on our courses in 2021 have been sorely tested this year, as we have suffered yet another year of postponements due to Covid-19 and the knock-on effects around the world. Although the decisions to defer the Summer School and Royal Collection Studies had to be taken early in the year, we approached the summer months with renewed optimism that we might be able to run three other courses in September and October. However, international travel restrictions and continued high levels of infection rates meant that even these three had to be postponed, to everyone's disappointment.

It was a peculiar year to be taking over as Executive Director. I am particularly grateful to my Attingham colleagues in the support they have given me during these first difficult months of my tenure, and to my predecessor, Annabel Westman, who has gone beyond the call of duty in the extent and thoroughness of her handover. On behalf of all of us, I would like to thank her for her extraordinary commitment to Attingham over the last four decades. I am delighted that she is now actively involved in our alumni relations programme which is, after all, one of the defining factors of the Attingham experience.

Another departure in 2021 was that of Rebecca Lyons, Course Director of Royal Collection Studies. For the last five years Rebecca has ensured that RCS has maintained and grown its reputation for excellence and scholarship in the field of royal patronage studies, both through the strength of the course programme and her own contributions to the field. We are indebted to her for her

commitment and hard work, and are particularly pleased that she will be staying connected to Attingham through her recent election to the Council.

We were delighted to welcome alumna Ada de Wit (SS 2017) for our Annual Lecture, held online this year, and are extremely grateful to her for giving us the



*St James's Piccadilly. Photo: Ada de Wit*

benefit of her new research on Grinling Gibbons' work in British country houses and royal palaces, a suitably appropriate theme for us in this 300th anniversary year of Gibbons' birth. Our on-going lecture programme aimed to highlight the different courses that had been planned for the year, with course directors either putting together a foretaste of what can be expected when the course is able to run (for example, Lizzy Jamieson's *Irish Odyssey*) or giving a lecture related to a theme of their course (such as David Adshead's look at Pompeii and its influence on the historic house). Rebecca Lyons hosted Royal Collection Trust curator, Kathryn Jones, for a fascinating insight into Queen Mary's personal tastes and

collecting habits, and later held an 'In Conversation' event with Tim Knox, Director of the Royal Collection, for a celebration of 25 years of Royal Collection Studies, our partnership with the Royal Collection. Annabel Westman treated us to a deep insight into interpreting archival furnishing texts – *What Tone is Salmon-coloured?* – and I kept the French eighteenth-century theme alive with a talk about the delightful *Château de Bagatelle* and its changing interiors.

One of the benefits of these online lectures is that we have been able to reach our alumni all over the world, which has been a real bonus for us. Importantly, it has meant that we have been able to welcome lectures from international alumni, such as the two fascinating video presentations hosted by the American Friends of Attingham and given by Sean Sawyer (on Frederic Church's *OLANA*) and Ted Bosely and Jennifer Trotoux (on the *Gamble House* in Pasadena). We extend our warm thanks to all our lecturers.

We would be unable to run our courses without the generous support of our donors, and we are extremely grateful to everyone who has continued to support us during this difficult period, and for the promise of support in the future. We are looking forward to 2022 with great anticipation and with renewed commitment to the Attingham ethos. Having seen the difficulties faced by the heritage sector all over the world as a knock-on effect of the pandemic, we are even more determined that the experiences and knowledge-sharing opportunities offered by Attingham courses should be continued and celebrated as a unique contribution to the understanding of the historic house.

# AMERICAN FRIENDS OF ATTINGHAM

Beth Carver Wees • AFA President

As I write this review of the past year's events, we have just come off a successful Fall Benefit Lecture, held remotely via Zoom. Sheila ffolliot, past-president of the AFA and Professor Emerita at George Mason University, led us on a remarkable tour of Catherine de' Medici's 1572 Parisian Palace, the Hôtel de la Reine. In the very best Attingham fashion, Sheila explored its architecture, décor, festivities, and people through surviving documents, enticing images, and even music and dance. Proceeds from this annual fund-raiser support the AFA's ongoing operations and programs. For our most generous Sponsors, we also organized an intimate, post-lecture Zoom

event: an exclusive, eye-opening preview of the exhibition *Inspiring Walt Disney: The Animation of French Decorative Arts* with the exhibition's curator, Wolf Burchard of the Metropolitan Museum, and Attingham Trust Director Helen Jacobsen, who is the co-curator of the exhibition at the Wallace Collection. We hope to plan a live tour for alumni while the exhibition is on view in New York this winter, before it moves to London in Spring 2022.

In lieu of in-person meetings over the past year, we have continued to hold online events, including the popular regional Zoom gatherings organized by our Alumni

Engagement Committee. American alumni have also enjoyed tuning in to the AT's excellent virtual lecture series. Our Administrator, Mary Ellen Whitford, working with the AT's Rebecca Parker, is close to launching an international alumni directory, which will offer course participants from all classes access to colleagues around the globe. Soon we will commence our end-of-year Annual Appeal—another way in which we maintain our ongoing activities and, importantly, help to support U.S. presence on the Attingham Trust courses. Like everyone involved with Attingham, we look forward eagerly to the resumption of live programs and gatherings in the year ahead.

## THE ATTINGHAM SOCIETY

Annabel Westman • Director Emeritus

Attingham alumni are the life blood of the Trust to be nurtured and encouraged and I was delighted to have been asked to kick start the live events as we emerged from Covid restrictions this November. Judging from a most successful visit to the Royal Pavilion, Brighton, with keeper, David Beevers, who led an inspired tour of the royal loans at the beginning of the month, such visits are eagerly anticipated. Another has since taken place at the Wallace Collection to see the male portraits by Frans Hals, thanks to the curator, Lelia Packer, who organised this very special exhibition.

The alumni annual reunion, always our biggest event of the year, was unable to take place in spring so it will be all the more reason to make it a bumper occasion in 2022 as we launch our 70th year celebration of the Trust.



Royal Pavilion, Brighton. Photo: Annabel Westman

# THE ATTINGHAM SUMMER SCHOOL

*Tessa Wild and David Adshead • Course Directors; Lorna Gartside • Administrator*

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*Raby Castle, Co. Durham*

We were very disappointed to have to postpone the 69th Summer School for the second year running but are delighted that all those who had been due to come on the postponed course have been offered a place for 2022, and that

almost everyone has confirmed acceptance.

We much look forward to convening in person at West Dean in Sussex with participants from India, China, Scandinavia, Europe and America next July. We have a wonderfully rich itinerary planned with visits to houses in Sussex, Oxfordshire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire and Co. Durham and anticipate a warm welcome from house owners and custodians. We are extremely grateful to our hosts who have been so understanding during this difficult year.

We will be based in Darlington for the final week and will be taking advantage of the many fascinating houses, collections and landscapes within striking distance, including Wentworth Woodhouse, Harewood House, Castle Howard, Markenfield Hall,

Birdsall House and Raby Castle. The Summer School will take place from 30 June - 17 July 2022.

Earlier this year, we devised a separate five-day course studying Norfolk houses and collections which we planned to hold in late September. We invited applications from alumni and received a very enthusiastic and heartening response. The itinerary was to be based on the visits to Norfolk houses including Holkham, Houghton, Raynham and Sheringham Hall which had been part of the postponed 2020 Summer School programme.

However, now that the full proposed Attingham calendar is in place for 2022 it is not clear that the Norfolk course will be possible and a decision will be made early in 2022 as to whether it will go ahead.

## ROYAL COLLECTION STUDIES

*Rebecca Lyons • Director; Sara Heaton • Administrator*

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Early in the year, although others were feeling more hopeful, both the Course Director and Course Administrator were very uncertain that RCS would be able to run to its highest, uncompromising standards in 2021. It was predicted that the course would still be facing multiple challenges pertaining to COVID and we also noted that the most privileged access – into private homes and small spaces – would potentially be the most difficult to negotiate. We were unwilling to impinge on generous hosts or curatorial colleagues with large group visits in small spaces at a time of social distance. One of the most compelling arguments to postpone involved considering the course from the point of view

of the participants. Although every year brings minor changes and adaptations, we were aware that the programme we offered would be compromised too much compared with that offered to previous and future cohorts. Thus, with heavy hearts, we had to make a difficult but necessary call to cancel relatively early in 2021.

We thank our participants hugely for their loyalty and engagement – there have been lots of emails and words of support and hope for the future course.

Likewise, generous scholarship assistance was offered this year by many of our benefactors, with whom we have remained in touch during the year and who

have promised to maintain their generous support in 2022. We are particularly indebted to those who donated their funding to meet the on-going costs of Attingham during this difficult period.

This report marks the end of my five years as Course Director, though with only three courses having taken place during this tenure. It has been a tremendous honour and a privilege and I hope very much to keep in touch and support the course, the RCT and Attingham in other ways. It is marvellous to know that RCS is passing into such excellent hands in the secure leadership of Helen Jacobsen - we have held some key handover sessions already and will continue to do so over the next few months.

# THE ATTINGHAM STUDY PROGRAMME

Elizabeth Jamieson • Course Director; Rita Grudzień • Course Administrator

Despite our best efforts, it was disappointing that we were unable to run the Irish Study Programme for the second year in a row. Continuously changing travel restrictions, COVID-related regulations and other uncertainties around the world made it impossible for us to deliver the course as we had planned it.

Fortunately, we have a very positive and loyal band of members who have borne the postponements with good grace, for which we are very grateful. Next year the Study Programme will take place in September, when we hope the sun will be shining upon all our faces.

Throughout the year we have kept in touch with members and our Irish contacts via a series of virtual events. In May we presented



Leixlip Castle, Co. Dublin

“An Irish Odyssey” which started with a short compilation film including historian and writer Robert O’Byrne, speaking about shell houses; a sequence of photographs of venues on the Study Programme itinerary; some clips and excerpts from documentaries on the Irish country house. It was followed by a live panel discussion chaired by Lizzy and featuring Mary Heffernan, Manager at the Office of Public Works; Terence Dooley, Director of

the Centre for the Study of Irish Country Houses & Estates; Donough Cahill, President of the Irish Georgian Society and Fionnuala Ardee, Owner and CEO of Kilruddery.

In September we held a Zoom meeting where members shared short presentations ranging from descriptions of The Connolly Monument and Lissadell House to

focused discussions on an Irish occasional table in Australia, a set of walnut dining chairs in Virginia and some Waterford crystal glasses. There was poetry and Uilleann pipe music and even a virtual tour of a New York furniture gallery (O’Sullivan’s) which specializes in Irish-made pieces.

We look forward to meeting in person in 2022 with renewed optimism and anticipation.

# FRENCH EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY STUDIES

Dr Helen Jacobsen, Course Director • Rebecca Parker, Course Administrator

Being a non-residential course, there was a glimmer of hope this year that we might be able to go ahead with French Eighteenth-century Studies as scheduled in early October. Last year’s participants were keen and had proved eager to rearrange their schedules but unfortunately Covid-related regulations – this time connected to the restrictions imposed on room capacity in museums – were still in force and it had to be cancelled. We are extremely grateful to our course lecturers who had proved so flexible, and to the Wallace Collection and Waddesdon Manor

for trying to help us make it work. As part of the series of online lectures organized by Attingham during the year, and to keep the French eighteenth-century theme alive, Helen Jacobsen delivered a lecture on the architecture and sumptuous interiors of the Château of Bagatelle, the charming *maison de plaisance* designed by François-Joseph Belanger for the comte d’Artois in the late 1770s.

Although unable to run in 2021, the course has been postponed by six months and will now take place in May 2022. Moving the

course from October to May will allow it to take place during the run of an exhibition on French eighteenth-century decorative arts at the Wallace Collection, *Inspiring Walt Disney. The animation of French decorative art*. The course programme will include a day at Waddesdon Manor and object-based study sessions in the Wallace Collection, and we are delighted that curators at both institutions are able to play leading roles in the delivery of the course. We would like to extend our warmest thanks to everyone who has supported us this year and has promised to do so next.

# FROM COLLEGE LIBRARY TO COUNTRY HOUSE

Dr Andrew Moore, Course Director • Rita Grudzień, Course Administrator

Followers of the libraries course will know that the omens may at last be promising a happy outcome for the revised dates of 4 - 8 April 2022. Postponed by Covid-19 from September 2020 until September 2021, the course once again had to be postponed, this time until April 2022. Plans are now in the process of being finalized and the original itinerary has been maintained. Two changes can be announced here. Postponed building works in connection with our original accommodation, in addition to the complications of Covid, have meant that we now have Selwyn College as our central Cambridge venue, while Lorna Gartside, previously Course Administrator,

is stepping away from the course and Rita Grudzień has taken up its administration.

Our hosts and lecturers have remained enthusiastic in their support throughout the painful process of planning, booking, postponement and rescheduling. The course is due to last a total of five days and the twenty four members remain substantially those who were originally successful in their applications. We are optimistic that all members will be able to travel from their respective countries in the spring.

The course aims to visit six original College book rooms, enabling

consideration of their collections in the context of early library environments mostly lost to the country house today. Visits to five country houses in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire will extend the narrative of the country house library into the 21st century. At the Cambridge University Library, we shall view two early English Renaissance collections – those of Sir Thomas Knyvett (1539-1618) and Sir Nicholas Bacon (1510-1579). Our lecturers, all specialists in the field of book studies, will greatly extend our knowledge of the numerous narratives associated with book collecting in the context of the country house.



The Wren Library, Trinity College Cambridge

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