

# *An Explosion of Beauty*

## An Online Course on the Art, Architecture & Collections of British Country Houses



**Session 1: November 8, 2022**

Medieval (12<sup>th</sup> century—16<sup>th</sup> century)



Art & Architecture  
with Curt DiCamillo

# Curt DiCamillo

*Curator of Special Collections*



# PROGRAM

- **Presentation (60 mins.)**
  - What is a country house
  - Overview houses
  - Study houses
- **Q&A (30 mins.)**

# *What is a Country House?*

A country house is a centuries-old institution virtually unique to Britain and Ireland.

I define a country house as being a house of a minimum of five bays that, at some point in its history, was the country seat of a landed family.

These houses had an estate (agricultural land) that served as the center for local community life and may have included farmland, villages, or other supporting acreage.

Their estates ranged from 1,000 acres to 1 million acres and employed hundreds, sometimes thousands, of people.

9 Bays



**Houghton Hall**  
Norfolk

# *What is a Country House?*

A wonderful snapshot of the British country house comes from Brian Masters, writing in his 1975 book, *The Dukes*:

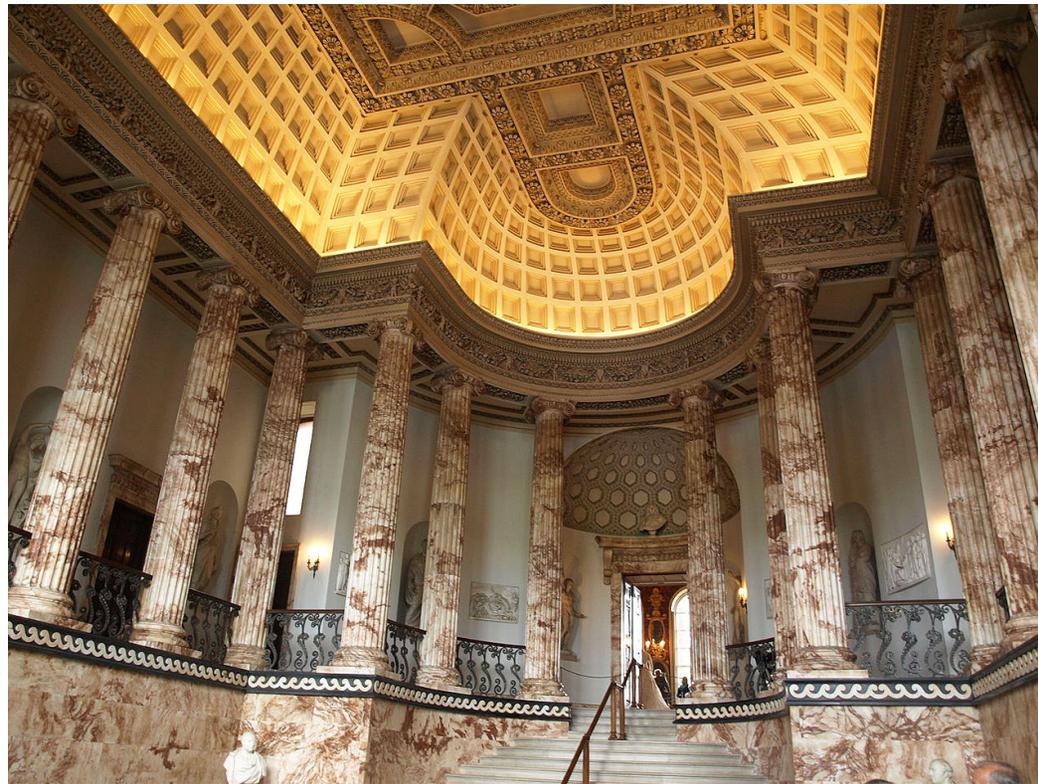
“The large country estate, with the house as its pivot, was (and is) a peculiarly British affair. In many ways it was a perfect example in miniature of the welfare state, self-sufficient and self-protecting, with every member of the ‘family,’ from shepherds to carpenters to kitchen-maids, provided for from cradle to grave.”

Over 350 estates in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland are owned by the National Trust. In Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland owns over 128 properties.



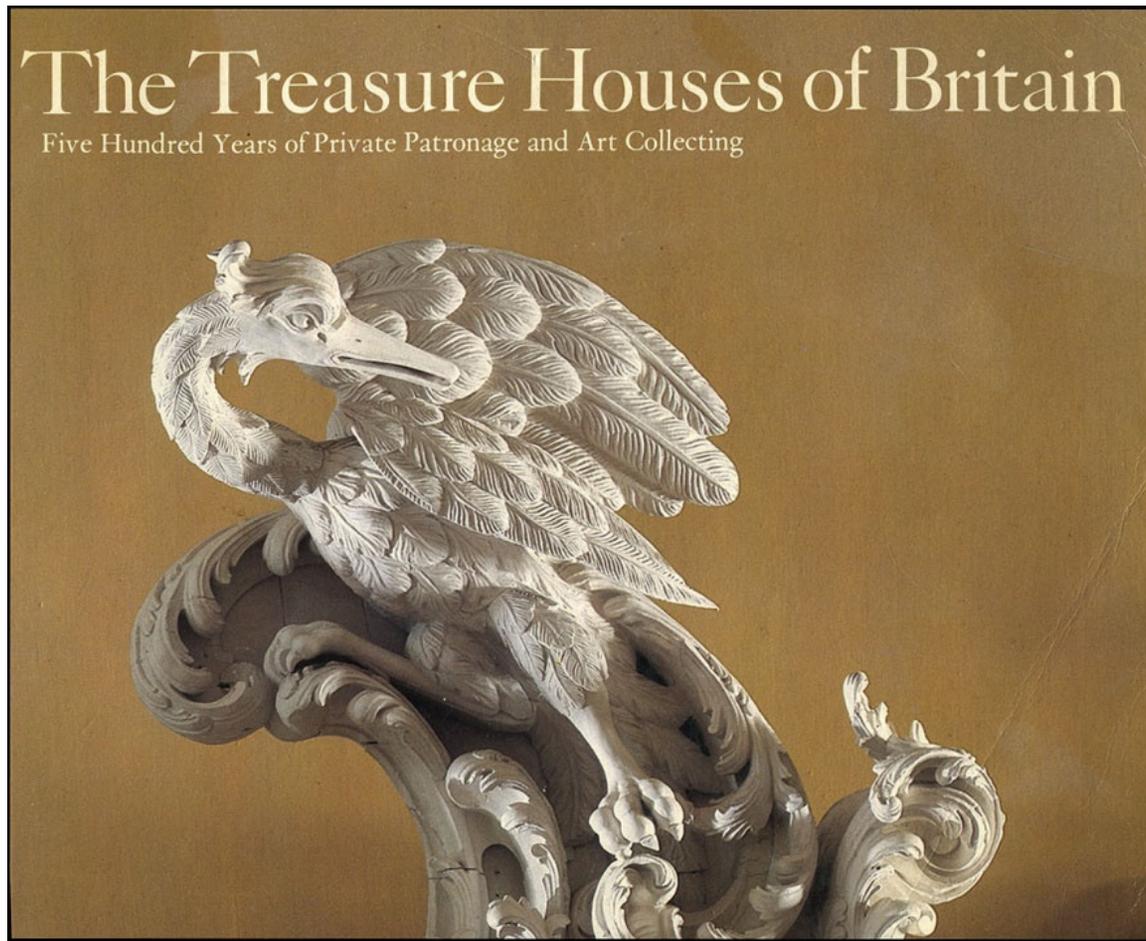
**Blenheim Palace**  
Oxfordshire

The arrangement of houses by dates/stylistic periods is a moving target. Many houses began in one period, but were added to in later centuries, so, in the interest of sanity, I've tried to rationalize these along lines that make sense to me. For example, technically, the Medieval period, or the Middle Ages, ended in England in 1485, but I've stretched out the period until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to include more houses.



**Holkham Hall**  
Norfolk

A recurring theme will be objects that appeared in the seminal  
*The Treasures Houses of Britain* exhibition  
at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in 1985-86.



Each session will be divided into two primary sections:  
**Overview Houses** and **Study Houses**,  
with three question and answer sessions breaking up the class.



**Sennowe Park**  
Norfolk

# *Overview Houses*

**Arundel Castle, Sussex, 11<sup>th</sup> century core**

**Windsor Castle, Berkshire, Late 11<sup>th</sup> century core**

**Cotehele House, Cornwall, Circa 1300 core**

**Leeds Castle, Kent, 12<sup>th</sup> century core**

**Eltham Palace, Kent, 13<sup>th</sup> century core**

**Penshurst Place, Kent, 14<sup>th</sup> century core**

**Lytes Cary Manor, Somerset, 14<sup>th</sup> century core**

**Bodiam Castle, Sussex, 1385—93**

**Hampton Court Palace, Middlesex, 1495 core**



**Arundel Castle**  
Sussex  
11<sup>th</sup> century core



**Windsor Castle**  
Berkshire  
Late 11<sup>th</sup> century core



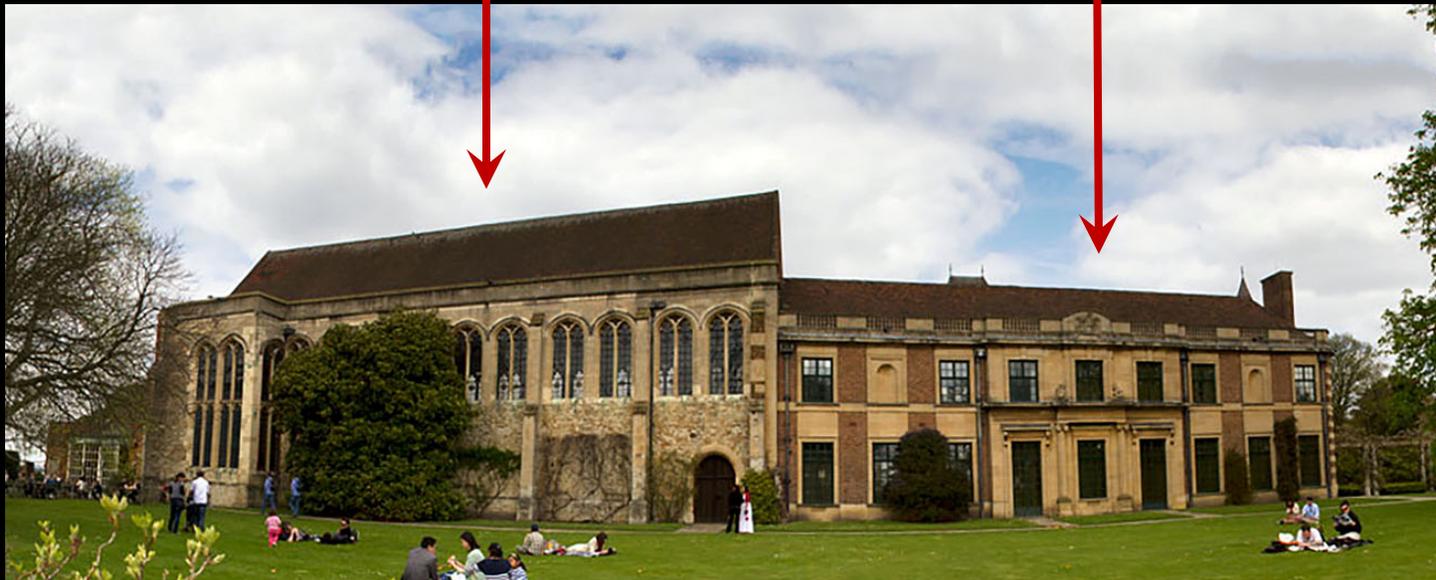
Windsor Castle  
**The Grand Reception Room**  
19<sup>th</sup> century



**Leeds Castle**  
Kent  
12<sup>th</sup> century core

The Great Hall  
1470s

The New House  
1933—35



**Eltham Palace**  
Kent  
13<sup>th</sup> century core

The third-largest hammerbeam roof in England



Eltham Palace  
**The Great Hall**  
1470s

According to legend, the incident that inspired Edward III's founding of the Order of the Garter in 1348 took place at Eltham Palace.



Star of the Order of the Garter of the Marquesses of Londonderry



Garter of Prince Albert



**Cotehele House**  
Cornwall  
Circa 1300 core



Cotehele House  
**The Great Hall**



**Penshurst Place**  
Kent  
14<sup>th</sup> century core

# Penshurst Place The Baron's Hall





Penshurst Place  
**The Heraldic Garden**



**Lytes Cary Manor**  
Somerset  
14<sup>th</sup> century core



## **Bodiam Castle**

Sussex

1385—93



**Hampton Court Palace**  
Middlesex  
1495 core



## Hampton Court Palace The Chapel Royal

**Pendant Vault**, a rare form of ceiling vaulting unique to English architecture.



Photo by Curt DiCamillo  
© 2010 by The DiCamillo Companion, Ltd.

## Hampton Court Palace The Tudor Garden

# Hampton Court Palace Heraldic Beasts in the Tudor Garden



Panther



The Black Bull  
of Clarence



The White Greyhound  
of Richmond



The Red Dragon  
of Wales

Q & A



# *Study Houses*

**Alnwick Castle, Northumberland, 12<sup>th</sup> century core**

**Blair Castle, Perthshire, 13<sup>th</sup> century core**

**Knole House, Kent, 1456—86**

**Burghley House, Lincolnshire, 1552—87**

**Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, 1587—99**



**Alnwick Castle**  
Northumberland  
12<sup>th</sup> century core



**Alnwick Castle**



## Alnwick Castle The Upper Guard Chamber

Mosaic floor inspired  
by the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD  
Temple of Hadrian,  
Rome

Claude Lorrain's  
*Sunset*, painted for  
Pope Urban VII  
in 1637.



16<sup>th</sup> century  
Ming Dynasty  
christening bowl



18<sup>th</sup> century  
George II  
console table





Alnwick Castle  
**The Saloon**



Alnwick Castle  
**The Drawing Room**



Alnwick Castle  
**The Drawing Room Ceiling**



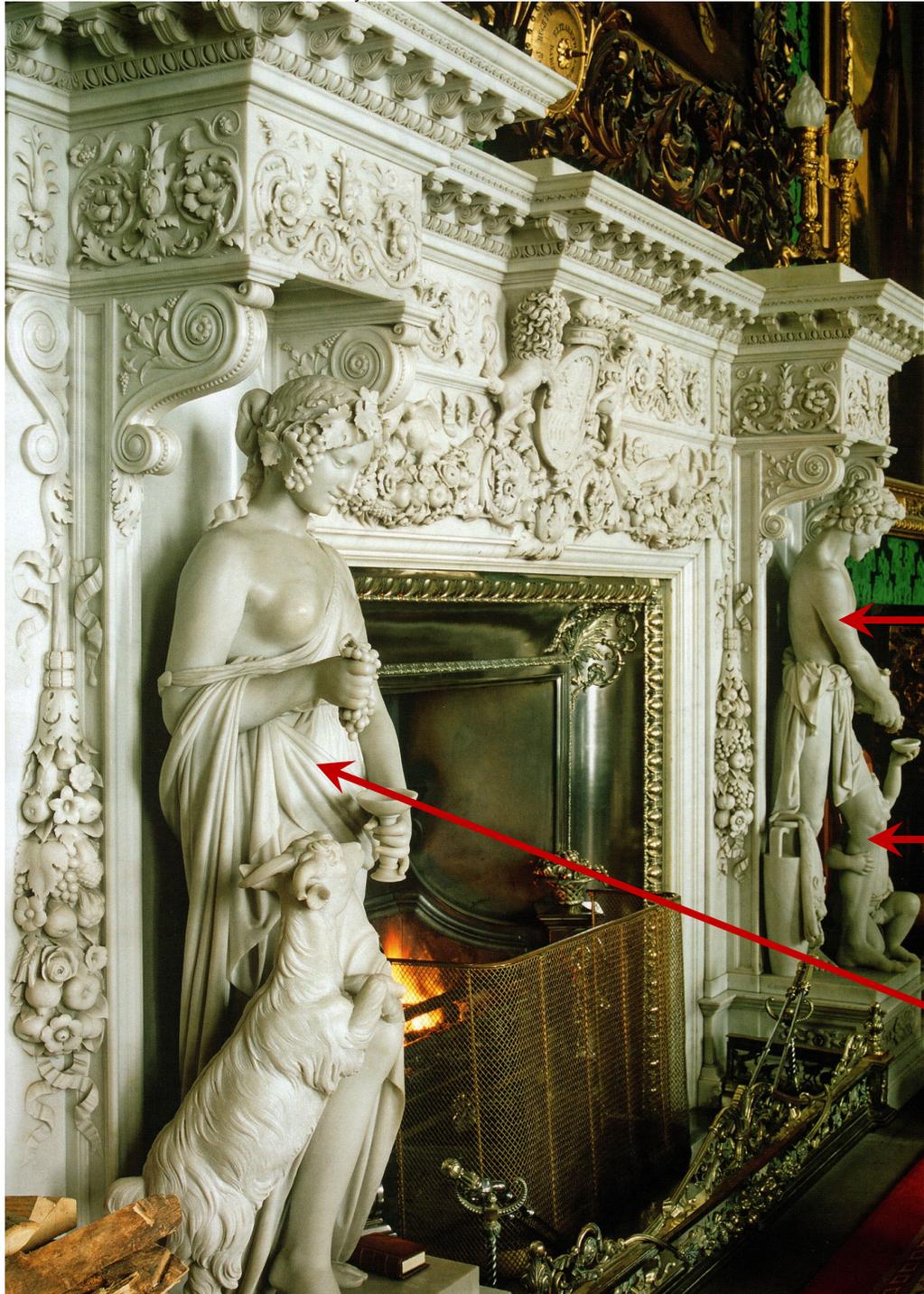
**Ceiling of Isabella d'Este's Apartment  
The Ducal Palace  
Mantua  
Circa 1520**

# Alnwick Castle The State Dining Room



Paul Storr  
**Desert Stand**  
Circa 1810  
Vermeil





Alnwick Castle  
**The Dining Room**  
**Fireplace**  
Circa 1825  
Marble

← Satyr

← Infant Bacchus

← Bacchante

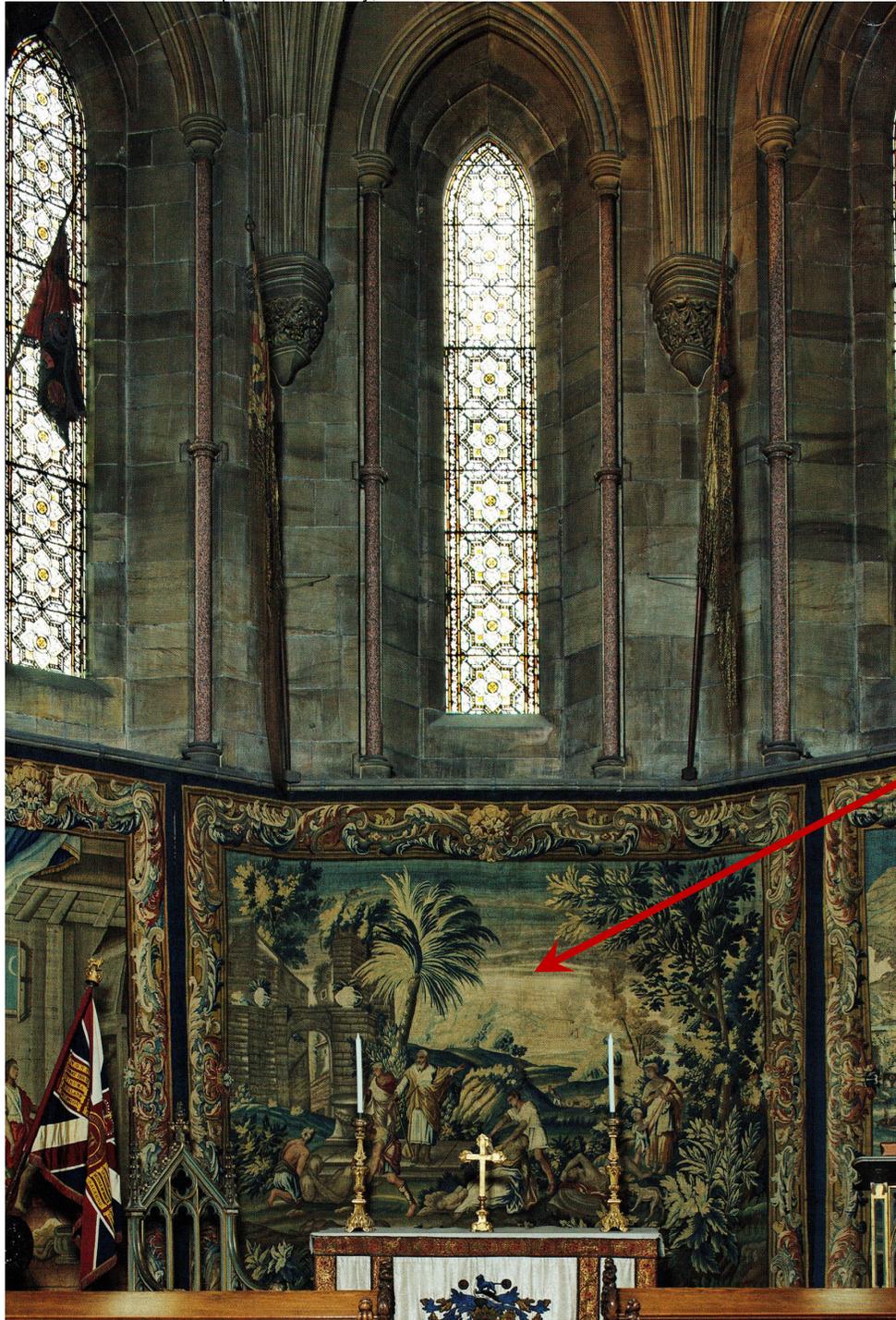


Alnwick Castle  
**The Library**



# DOWNTON ABBEY





## Alnwick Castle The Chapel

The chapel was designed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Anthony Salvin in the Gothic style. The altar features three 1750s Aubusson tapestries.

Robert Adam  
**Gothic Style  
Chapel Chair**  
1770s



# Alnwick Castle The Duke's Study





## Alnwick Castle The Archives

# Alnwick Castle The Archives

19<sup>th</sup> century  
Percy  
servant  
uniforms



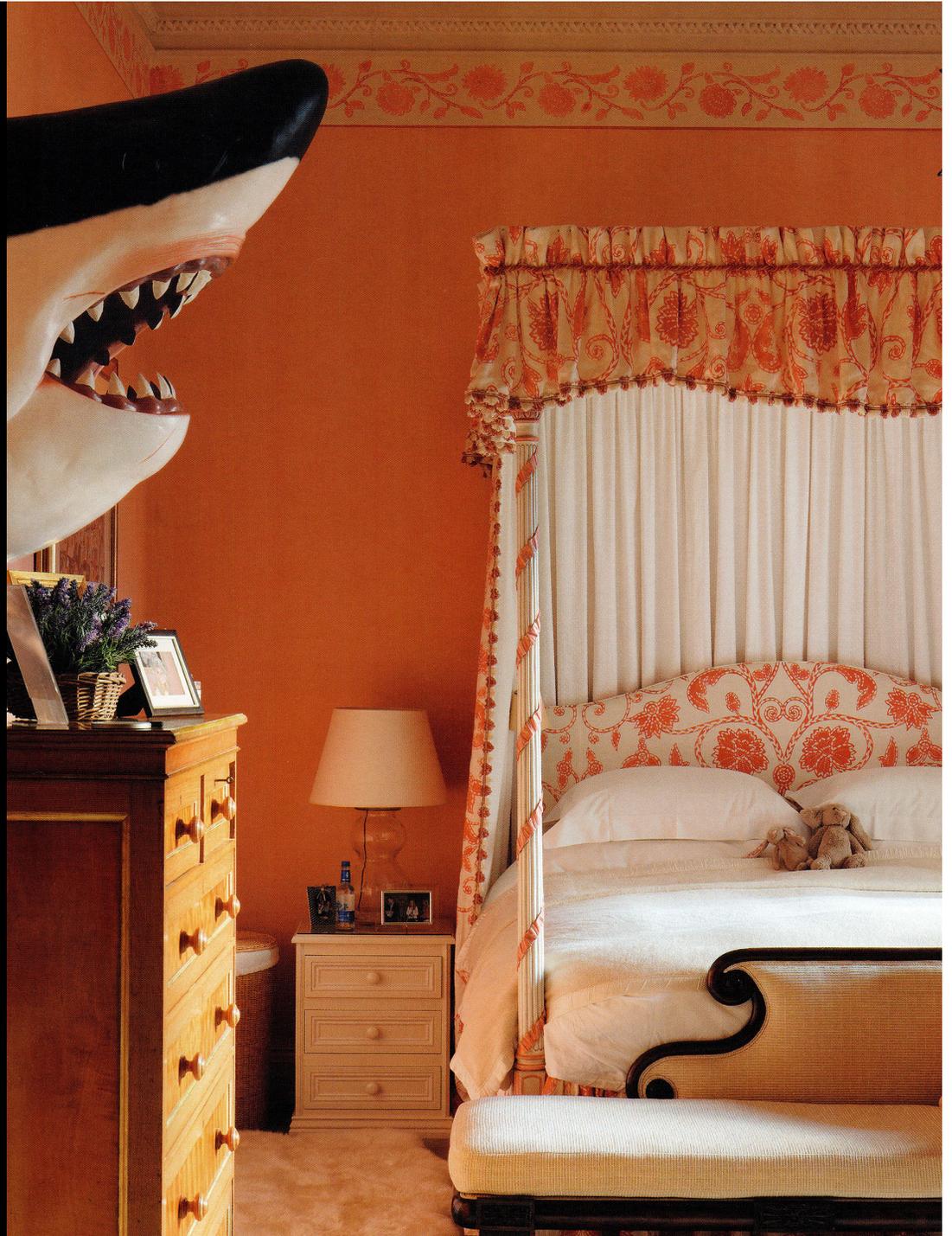


Meissen  
**Tureen from the  
Northumberland Service**  
Circa 1745



Alwick Castle  
**The China Gallery**

Alnwick Castle  
**Melissa's Bedroom**



This 1844 painting is considered Landseer's masterpiece. The full title is taken from Thomas Campbell's *Lochiel's Warning* of 1802, in which a seer warns Cameron of Lochiel of his impending fate at Culloden. The stag has come to the margin of a loch and bellows his challenge while his assailant swims from the furthest shore, in what some scholars see as a battle between two superheroes to determine the destiny of the world.



Edwin Landseer  
*Coming Events Cast Their Shadow Before Them:  
The Challenge*  
1844



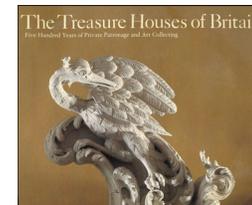


Spirit  
Lamp

## Augustine Courtauld Tea Kettle on Tripod Stand 1725

This is one of only seven English silver tripod table stands ever made, and one of only two that has its original kettle and lamp.

Such tea kettles with table stands are an indication of the importance of the tea ceremony in the English country house in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Sold in 2003 to the  
Getty for \$56 million.

In approving an export  
ban, the UK Government  
called the painting “...the  
freshest and most  
delightful small image of  
the Madonna and the  
Christ child from the  
Italian Renaissance.”



Raphael  
*Madonna of the Pinks*  
Circa 1506—07  
*The National Gallery, London*

THE BEVERLEY  
COLLECTION  
OF GEMS



**Old Man Ring**  
1<sup>st</sup> Century BC  
Sardonyx Cameo



**Young Boy Ring**  
18<sup>th</sup> century  
Emerald Intaglio



Alnwick Castle



**Blair Castle**  
Perthshire  
13<sup>th</sup> century core



Blair Castle  
**The Entrance Hall**

## Blair Castle The Entrance Hall

This room was redecorated in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in the Scottish Baronial style. A portrait of the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Atholl in Highland dress surveys the array of arms and hunting trophies.





Blair Castle  
**The Drawing Room**



## Blair Castle The Dining Room

Scenes of the local mountains are framed in lavish Baroque plasterwork. Like most rooms in the castle, the dining room was redecorated in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and filled with furniture in the latest London styles.





## Blair Castle The Picture Staircase



Blair Castle  
**The Red Bedroom**

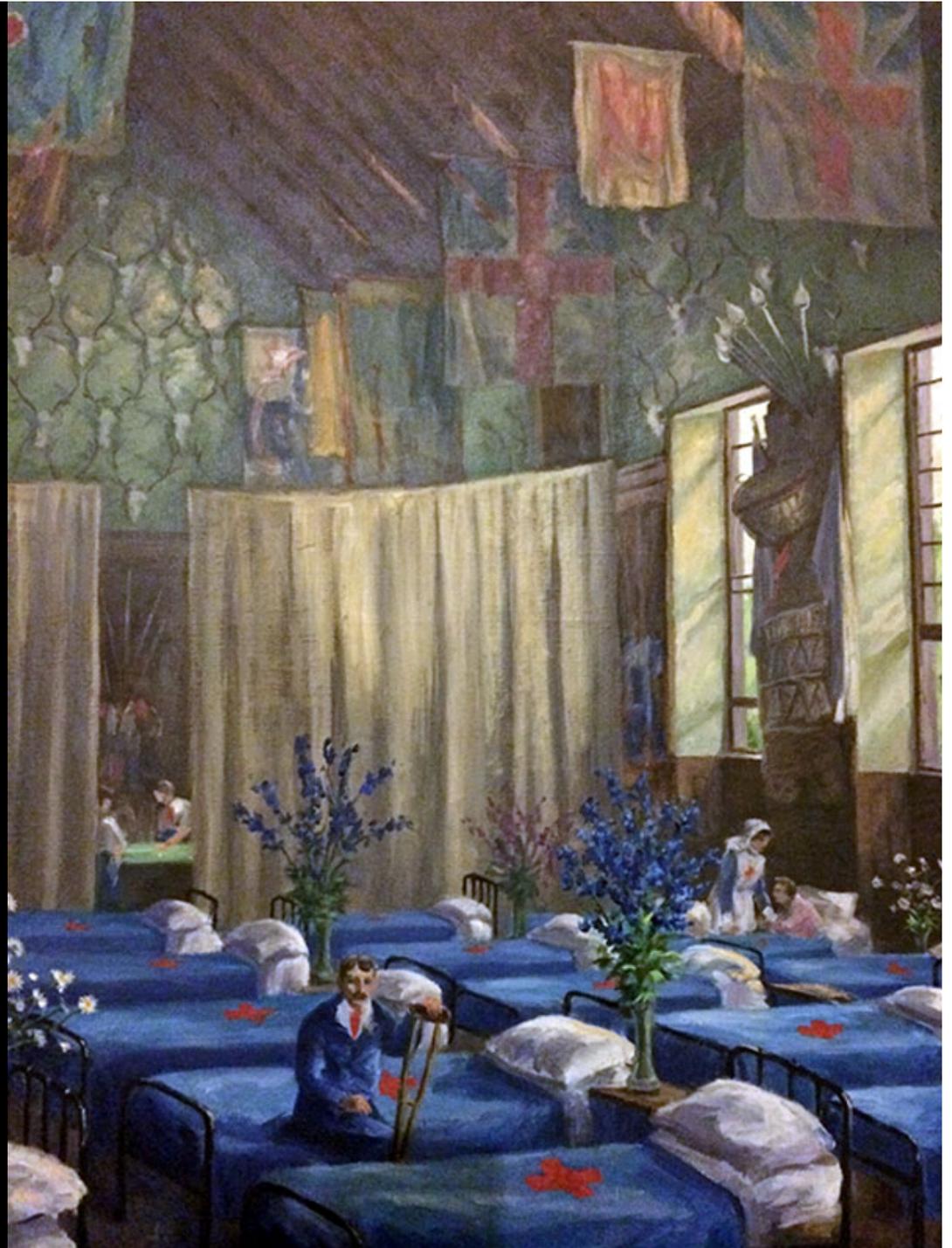


Blair Castle  
**The Ballroom**



Blair Castle  
**The Ballroom Setup for a Wedding**

Blair Castle  
**The Ballroom as a  
Hospital Ward  
During World War I**

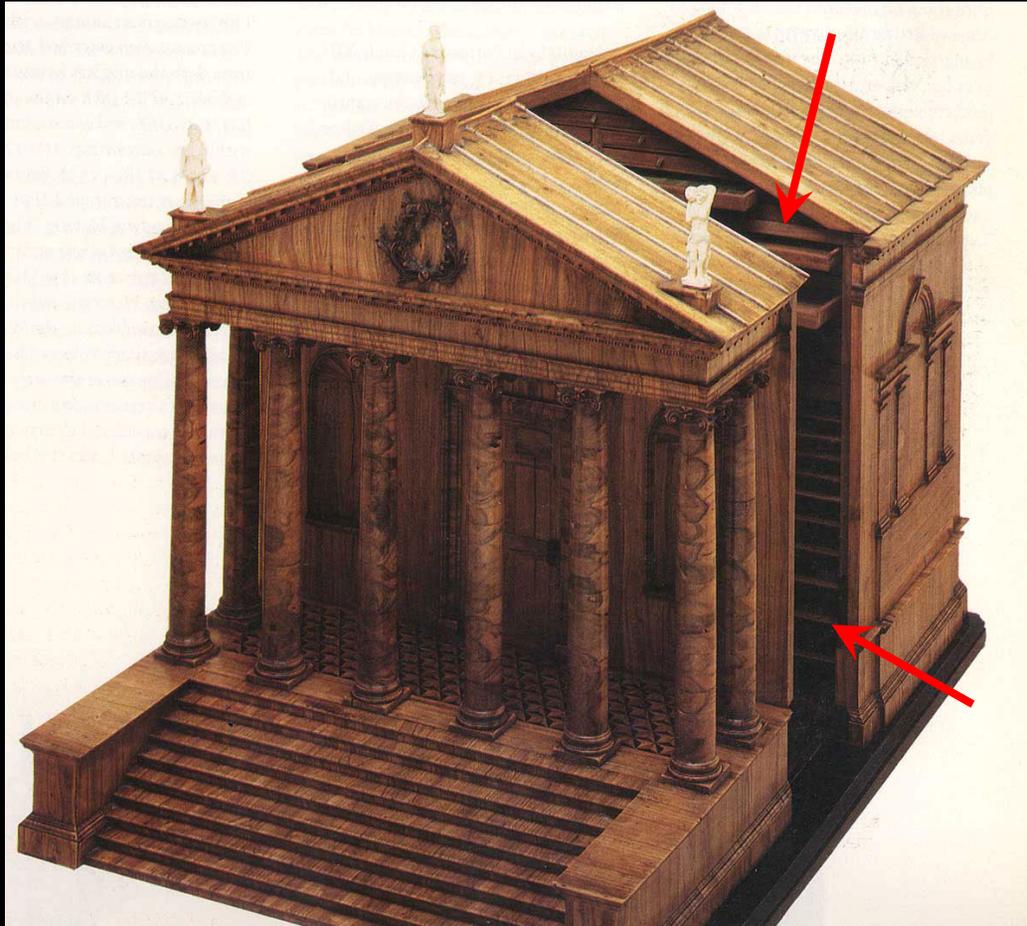




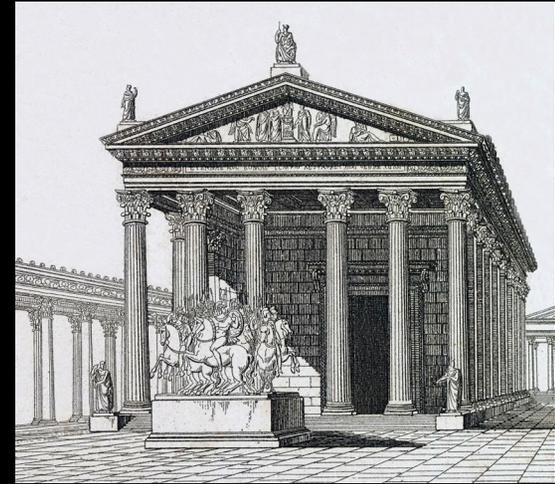
Johan Zoffany  
*The Family of John, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Atholl*  
1765—77



George Sandeman made an entire suite of broomwood furniture for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Atholl



Attributed to George Sandeman  
**Medal Cabinet in the Form of a Temple**  
Circa 1765  
Mahogany with broomwood veneer



**Temple of Septimius Severus**  
**(Portico of Octavia)**  
Rome



**Osterley Park**  
London



Based on the *Aldobrandini Wedding*, a 1<sup>st</sup> century BC Roman fresco today in the Vatican Museums.

## Tiara and Waist Clasp

1823  
Roman  
Gold and shell cameo



Q & A



Knole is the largest private house in England.  
It's also a calendar house—it has 365 rooms, 52 staircases, and seven courtyards.



**Knole House**  
Kent  
Primarily 1456—86



Knole House  
**The Great Hall**



Knole House  
**The Entrance Hall**

The architectural scheme was influenced by the Renaissance revival of the classical orders, which are arranged here in the correct sequence: Doric at the bottom, Ionic in the middle, and Corinthian at the top.



Knole House  
**The Great Staircase**  
1605—08

# Knole House Painted Wall





## Knole House Painted Wall



## Knole House The Orangery

Attributed to William Kent  
**Carved Wall Light**  
(one of a set of four)

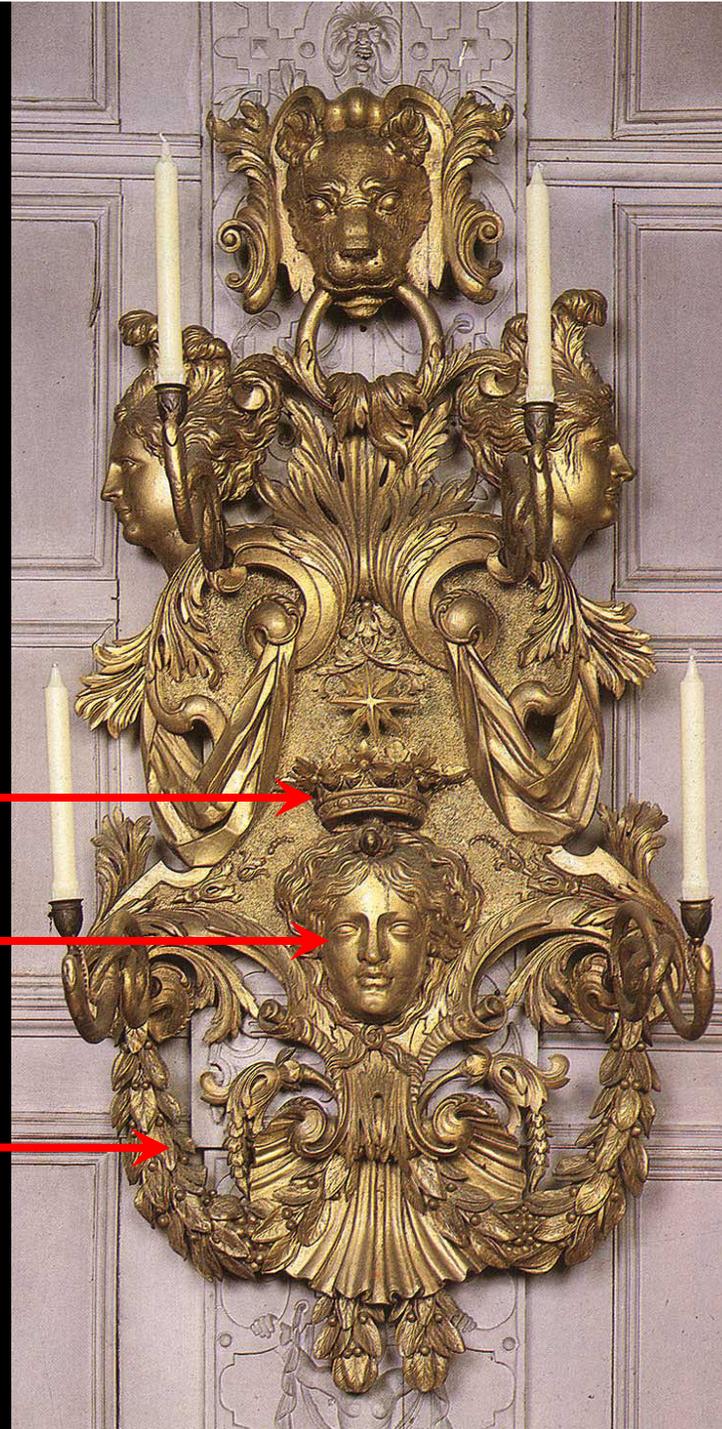
Circa 1735  
Gilded pine

William Kent was one of the first English architects to design complete interiors, including furniture, as part of a unified decorative scheme.

Coronet of 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Dorset

Face of Apollo

Laurel leaves



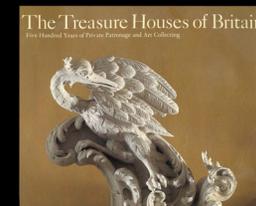


## Maker Unknown Silver Mirror, Table & Stands

1676—81

Oak frames covered with sheets of  
embossed and chased silver

Following the precedent set by Louis XIV at Versailles, silver furniture was made in England between 1660 and 1710. But whereas in France almost every known piece was melted down on the king's orders to pay for his wars, important pieces still survive in English collections. Apart from this set at Knole, only one other complete set survives in England: at Windsor Castle.



Maker Unknown  
**The Duchess of  
Dorset's Toilet  
Service**  
Circa 1750  
Vermeil  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





Thomas Farren

**Basket**

1725—26

Sterling silver

*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



**Knole Sofa**  
19<sup>th</sup> century



**Burghley House**  
Lincolnshire  
1552—87



## Burghley House

# PRODIGY HOUSES

Prodigy houses are large and showy English country houses built by courtiers and other wealthy families. They have been called “noble palaces of an awesome scale” and “proud, ambitious heaps.”

The houses stretch over the periods of Tudor, Elizabethan, and Jacobean architecture, though the term may be restricted to a core period of roughly 1570 to 1620.

Many of the grandest houses were built to host Elizabeth I and her large retinue as they made their annual summer progresses around the country.





**Sir William Cecil,  
1<sup>st</sup> Lord Burghley**



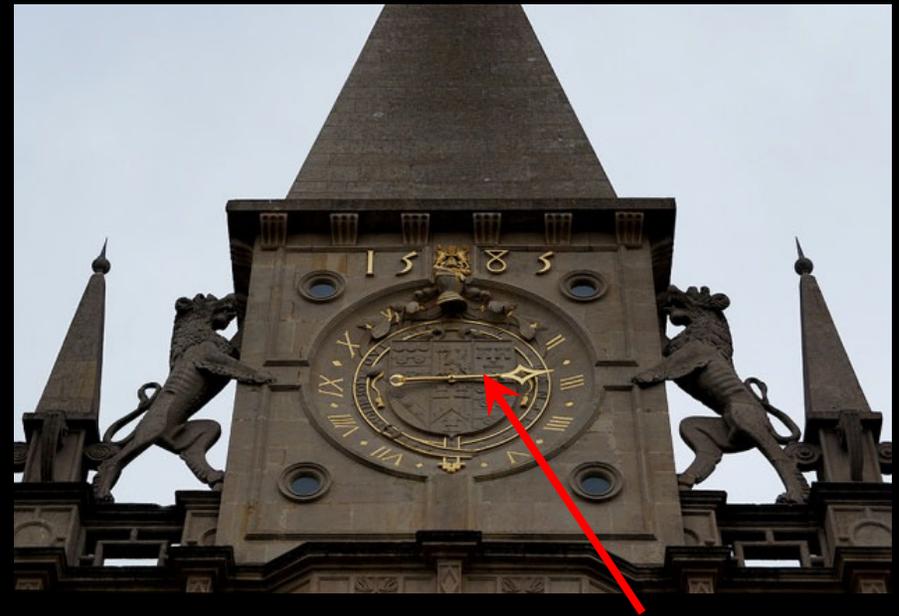
**Queen Elizabeth I**



Burghley House  
**Gilded Ironwork**

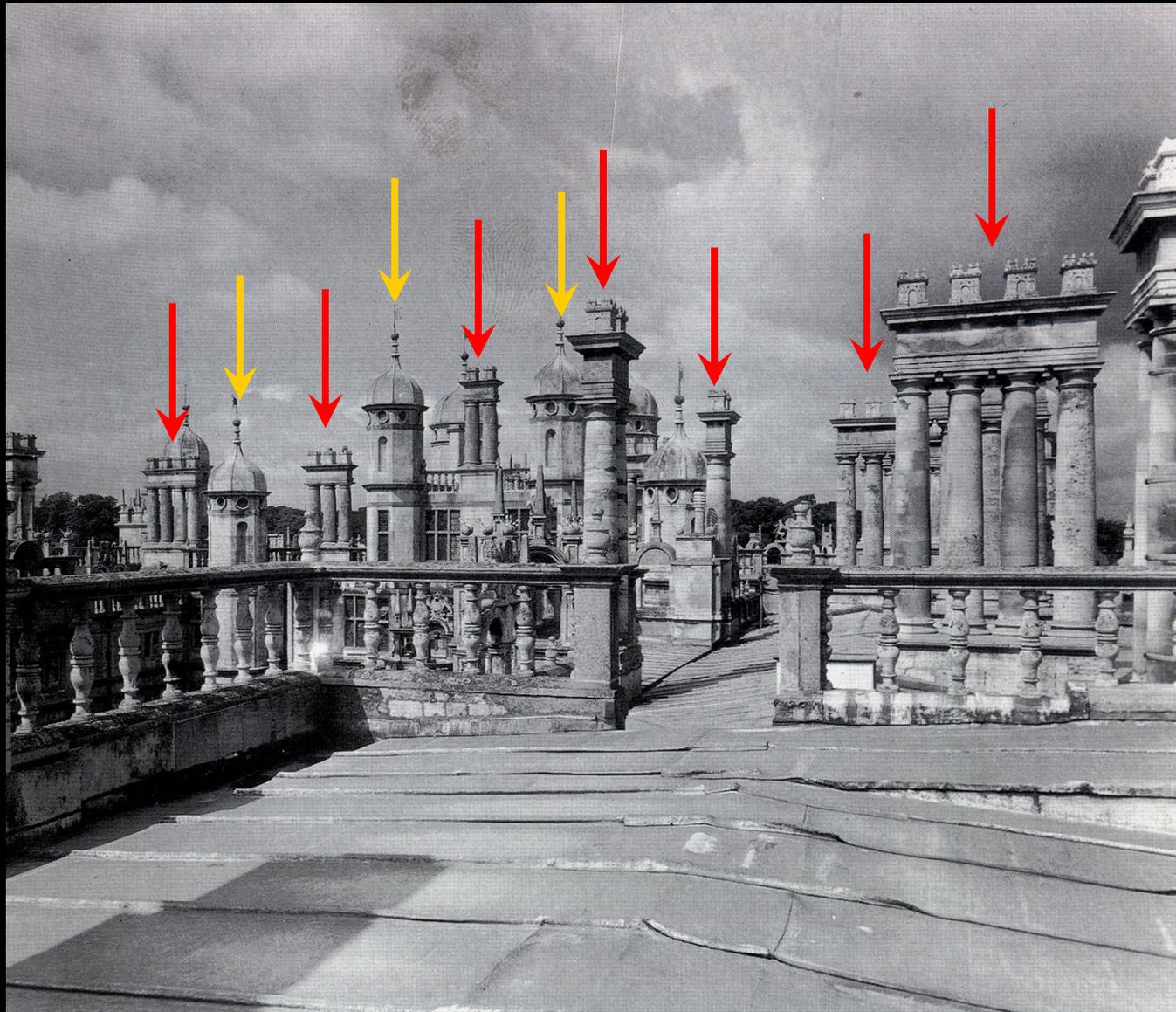


Burghley House  
**The Courtyard**



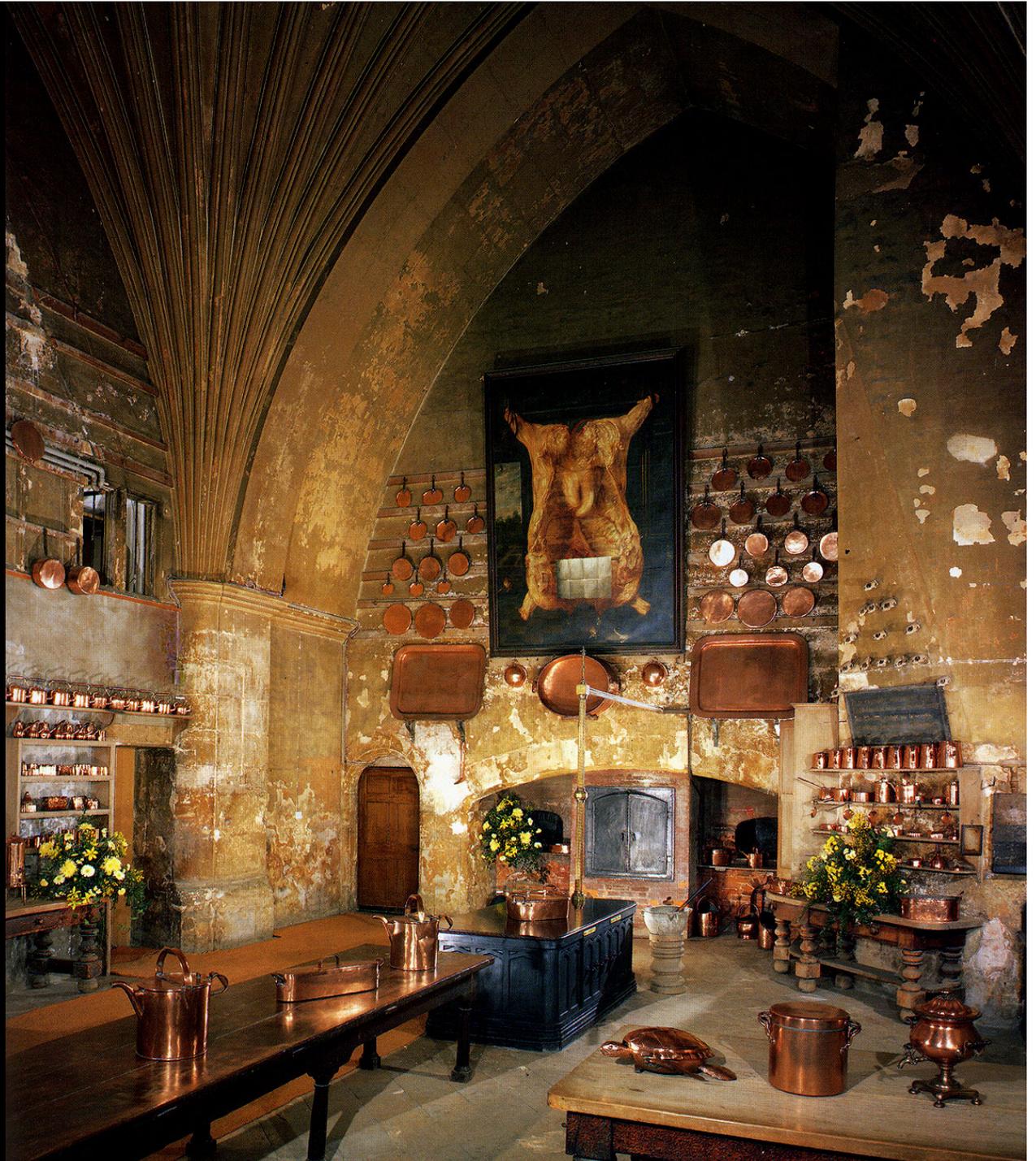
Second hands appeared in the 15<sup>th</sup> century on German clocks and reappeared intermittently for the next few centuries, but they didn't become common until the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Burghley House  
**The Courtyard**



Burghley House  
**The Roof**

# Burghley House The Old Kitchen



Burghley House  
**The Chapel**

Veronese  
*Zebedee's Wife  
Petitioning Our Lord*





## Burghley House The Bow Room

# Burghley House The Black and Yellow Bedroom

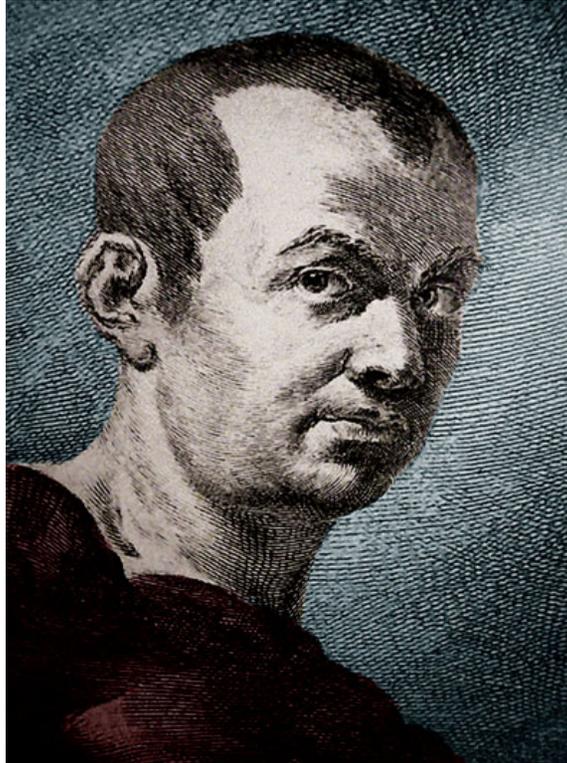




**King George VI and Queen Elizabeth**



## Burghley House The Second George Room



**Giovanni Battista Piranesi**

1720—78



Burghley House  
**The Second George Room**  
**The Piranesi Fireplace**



Giovanni Battista Piranesi  
**Carved Rosso Antico  
Marble Head**

1760s

Rosso antico

Rosso antico marble was used by the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Etruscans, mainly for decorative architectural details, but also for smaller sculptures. The stone was quarried on the east coast of Cape Matapan in Greece.



## Burghley House The Third George Room



Burghley House  
**The Fourth George Room**



Burghley House  
Antonio Verrio  
**The Heaven Room**



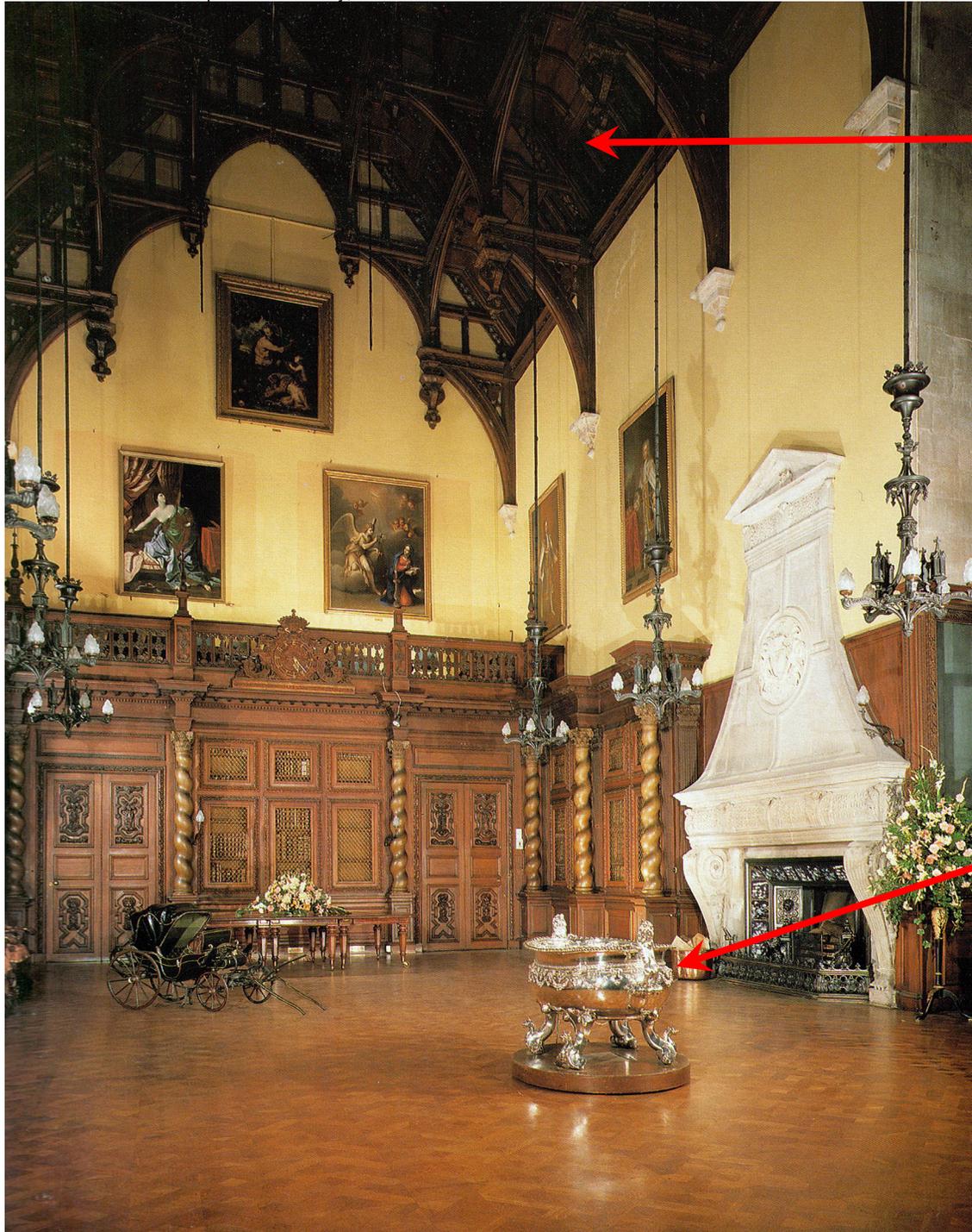
## Burghley House The Hell Staircase



Burghley House  
Antonio Verrio  
**The Hell Staircase**



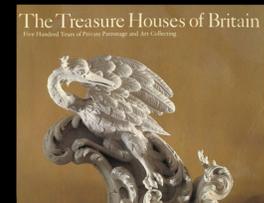
Burghley House  
Antonio Verrio  
**The Hell Staircase**



Burghley House  
**The Great Hall**



Philip Rollos  
**Wine Cooler (Cistern)**  
Circa 1710  
Sterling silver



David Willaume I  
**Cistern and Fountain**  
1708—09  
Britannia silver  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



Benjamin Pyne  
**Ewer**  
1727  
Vermeil





Antonio Canova  
*The Three Graces*  
1813—16  
Hermitage Museum



Isaac Oliver  
*The Three Brothers Browne*  
1598  
Vellum on card

Hermann van der Mijn  
*A Rose in a Glass*  
1730



Inscription by the artist to  
the 8<sup>th</sup> the Earl of Exeter





Maker Unknown  
English Table, Italian Top  
**Pier Table**  
Circa 1765



Marble edges set with volcanic lava specimens



Probably made for the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Exeter, who made many trips to Italy and fell in love with ancient sculpture and all things Italian.

Maker Unknown  
Italian, Probably Roman  
**Tabletop**  
1760s

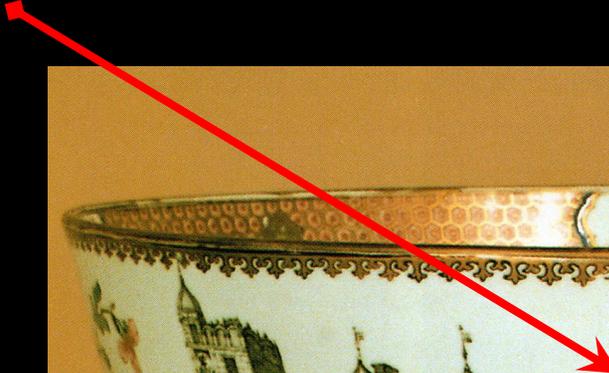
The use of marble for tabletops, following Italian precedent, only became general in England in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Maker Unknown  
Indian  
**Jasper Bowl**  
17<sup>th</sup> century



The south façade  
of the house  
in grisaille



Maker Unknown  
Chinese Export Porcelain  
**The Burghley Bowl**  
Circa 1738

This garniture is probably the earliest European porcelain ever made. The pieces have been at Burghley since 1690, but were not “discovered” until 2010.



Maker Unknown  
Probably English  
**Buckingham China**  
Circa 1660  
Hard paste porcelain



Maker Unknown  
Mughal

**Rock Crystal Perfume Bottle  
Set with Rubies and Emeralds**  
17<sup>th</sup> century

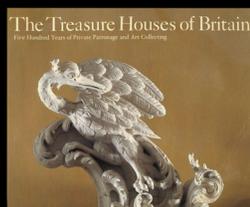
Maker Unknown  
Probably Italian

*Cicero*

1730

Boxwood

This is one of a set of eight  
statuettes of famous people from  
classical history.





Maker Unknown  
Probably North German  
*Apollo and Daphne*  
Late 17<sup>th</sup> century  
Ivory



Gian Lorenzo Bernini  
*Apollo and Daphne*  
Circa 1622—25  
Marble  
*Galleria Borghese, Rome*



**Laurel Wreath**



Antonio Canova  
*Apollo Crowning Himself*  
1781—82  
*The J. Paul Getty Museum*



Maker Unknown  
**Apollo**  
1<sup>st</sup> century BC  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



Maker Unknown  
***Man Wearing a  
Laurel Wreath***  
Circa 1750  
*The J. Paul Getty Museum*

François Gérard  
**Napoleon**  
1805—15  
*Rijksmuseum*

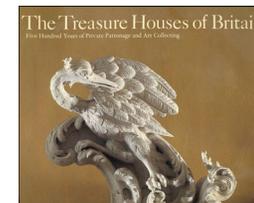




**Hardwick Hall**  
Derbyshire  
1587—99



Attributed to Rowland Lockey  
**Elizabeth Hardwick,  
Countess of Shrewsbury**  
Probably 1590s





**Hardwick Hall**

This badge was designed to be pinned to a hat or cloak.



Maker Unknown  
English

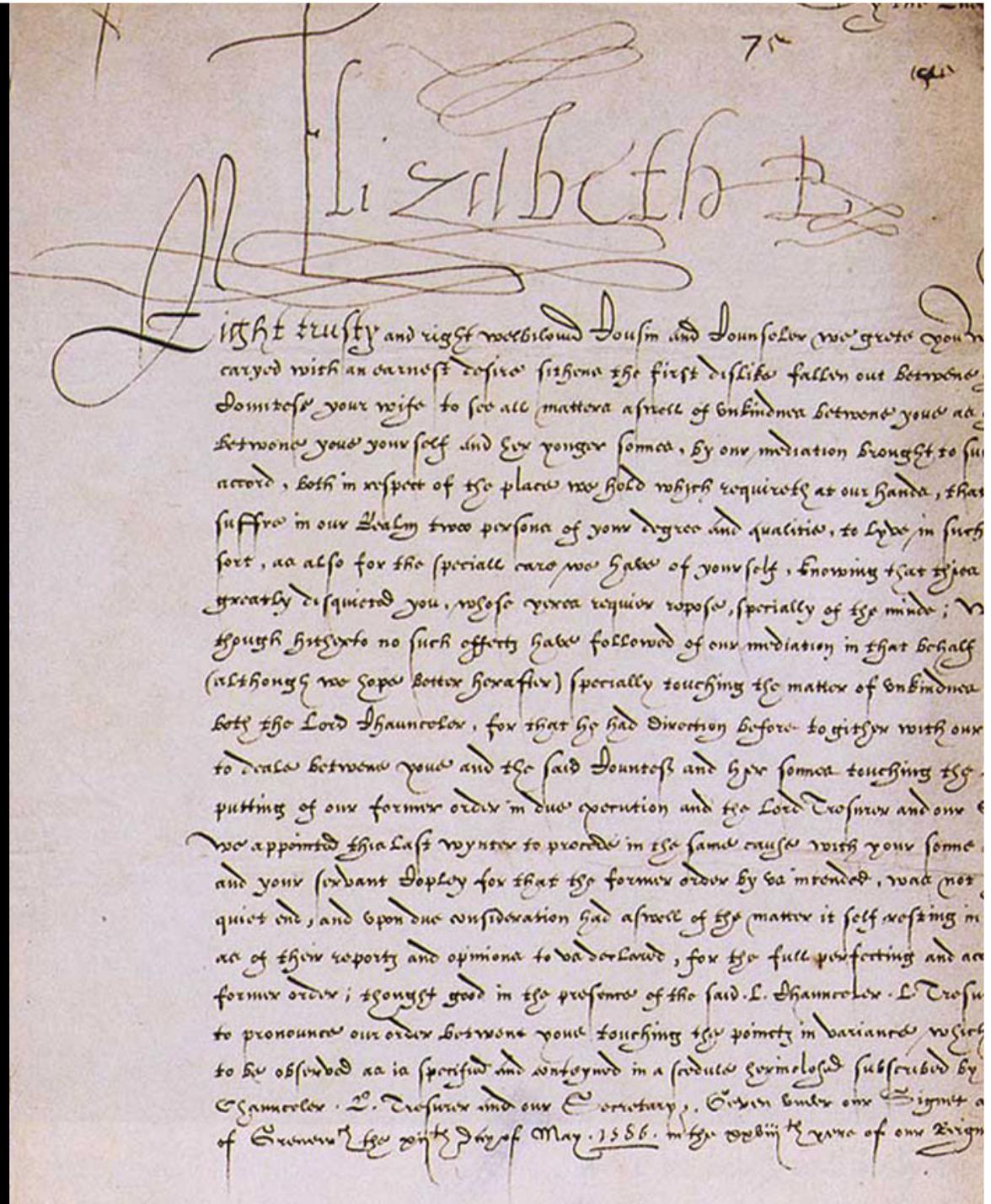
**Bess of Hardwick's Silver Badge**

Circa 1590—1600

*Chatsworth House*

# May 12, 1586 Letter from Queen Elizabeth I *Chatsworth House*

This letter from the queen to the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury is an order forcing the earl to get along with his wife, Bess of Hardwick.





Hardwick Hall  
**The Staircase**



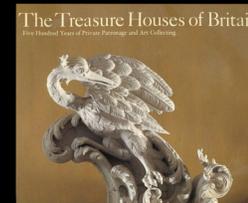
Hardwick Hall  
**The High Great Chamber**



Hardwick Hall  
**The High Great Chamber**



Maker Unknown  
English  
**Embroidered Cushion Cover**  
Late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
Linen canvas and colored silk





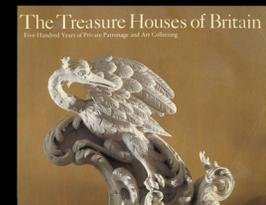
Maker Unknown  
French  
**The Sea Dog Table**  
Circa 1570—80

Walnut with fruitwood and tulipwood marquetry

One of the most celebrated pieces of surviving Elizabethan furniture.

The creatures have fish tails, the heads of dogs, the wings of eagles, and the bosoms of a woman, possibly making them chimeras, who were able to fly, swim, and walk.

The fact that the chimeras sit on turtles probably illustrates a Latin pun: “festina lente” (“make haste slowly”).



Q & A





**Art & Architecture**  
with Curt DiCamillo

*Next Class:*

**An Explosion of Beauty, Session II**

***Jacobean (1603—25)***

***Restoration (1660—85)***

**November 15**

**4:00 – 5:30 PM EDT**

**[www.AmericanAncestors.org/events](http://www.AmericanAncestors.org/events)**

More information about the houses discussed today can be found on Curt's website:

**[www.TheDiCamillo.com](http://www.TheDiCamillo.com)**



Art & Architecture  
with Curt DiCamillo

*Thank you!*



18<sup>th</sup> century Kyoto Japanese  
Porcelain Kitty at Burghley House

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# An Explosion of Beauty, Part I 2022

**Thank you for registering for the online course, *An Explosion of Beauty: The Art, Architecture, and Collections of British Country Houses, Part I!***

*Nowhere in the world are there so many country houses as in England, matchless for the astonishing variety of their styles and the richness of their collections and furniture.*

This quote from the English architectural historian John Harris sums up what many scholars believe is Britain's greatest and most lasting contribution to world culture: the country house. For centuries the country house held a unique position in English life. Before World War I, the families in these power houses ruled Britain. Not only were their houses the center of productive agricultural estates, their breathtaking interiors were the repositories of jaw-dropping collections of art.

In this online course, Curator of Special Collections and celebrated architectural historian Curt DiCamillo, FRSA will guide you through these stately homes, their interiors, and their world-class art collections. This seminar will cover Medieval, Jacobean, Restoration, and Baroque style, examining how each influenced design and culture.

*This course includes three 90-minute classes and extended Q&A with the instructor, access to the slides, and a bibliography. You do not need to attend the live sessions to participate in the course. Each class will be recorded and made available to participants until the end of February 2023.*

## INSTRUCTIONS ON JOINING

To join the live presentation, click: <https://zoom.us/j/91665340651>

[AmericanAncestors.org/explosion-beauty-part-i-2022](https://AmericanAncestors.org/explosion-beauty-part-i-2022)



NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC  
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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