

## **BROCKET HALL**

### **Thanks for the invite to your show**

**When it comes to a rich and varied history**, Brocket Hall has one of the most intriguing of any of the great houses of Britain. Indeed the scent of scandal can be found in the fabric of the building back to its roots in the 13th Century right up to the present day.

### **Early Period**

- 1239 – Earliest evidence – called Watershyppes – owned by Simon Fitz
  - Had a daughter who married Sir Thomas Brocket from Yorkshire
  - 1440 - Rebuilt and renamed
  - Only about 10 miles north of Greater London
- 1507 – Sir John Brocket became Sheriff of Hertfordshire and Essex
  - Close ally of **Queen Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup>**
  - Came about because:
    - Sister Mary Tudor sat on the throne and saw Elizabeth as a threat – put her under house arrest at Hatfield House - used to visit Brocket Hall.
    - 1558 - Princess Elizabeth (aged 25) was reading under her favourite oak tree in the grounds of Brocket Hall when told Mary had died aged 42 after 5 years on the throne.
  - 1642/1651 – English Civil War – another Sir John Brocket kept swapping sides to survive (d.1712) not daft
  - Sir John's eldest son James went to Rome to study religion and politics but died of smallpox and left no heirs or brothers.
  - Estate went to eldest sister and sold on her death.

### **Middle Period**

- Matthew Lamb
  - Bought by Matthew Lamb in 1746
  - Sir James Paine designed a new Brocket Hall for Matthew Lamb and the new Lamb dynasty
  - The new and current Brocket Hall was completed in 1760 in the 543 acre estate.
  - Matthew Lamb left the estate to his son Peniston who married a beautiful, artistic, and intelligent Elizabeth Millbank.
- Peniston Lamb – Lord Melbourne – 1<sup>st</sup> d.1829
  - Peniston Lamb was granted an Irish dynasty and made Lord Melbourne
  - **Sir Matthew's son became the first Lord Melbourne**, largely through the efforts of his wife who was a mistress of the Prince Regent, later George IV, who was a frequent visitor to Brocket Hall. The Prince gave his mistress a gift of a Reynolds painting which hangs in the ballroom and created the Chinese suite of rooms - known as the Prince Regent Suite - which are still used by residential guests today.
  - Left the estate and title to William Lamb

- William Lamb – Lord Melbourne 2<sup>nd</sup> 1779/1848 (Cook discovered Australia 1771)
  - William Lamb inherited the estate and entered politics becoming **Prime Minister**
  - 1805 - William married Caroline Ponsonby becoming Lady Caroline Lamb
  - Lady Caroline Lamb
    - Caroline was a wild and brilliant character
    - Her most high profile affair was with the poet Lord Byron
    - She described him as “Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to know”
    - Byron ended the affair when Caroline became unstable, she eventually burned everything he had given her or might remind her of him.
    - is said to have fallen from her horse at the shock of seeing his funeral cortege passing the Bocket estate; she had by all accounts, not known of his death until that moment.
  - Became Prime Minister in 1834 to 1841 (17 years)
  - Very close to **Queen Victoria** 1819 – 1901 (crowned 1837)
  - When he left politics sent flowers from Bocket Hall to Queen Victoria every week.
  - She was a frequent visitor
  - The city of Melbourne, Australia, was named in his honour in March 1837, as he was the Prime Minister at the time.
  - Died 1848 – estate passed to his sister Lady Palmerston
- Henry John Temple - 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Palmerston – **Lord Palmerston**
  - Had been liberal **prime minister** twice
  - Was very active and enjoyed vaulting over railings – even at 80 years old
  - Reputation for vigorous exercise
  - Palmerston was often engaged in school fights and fellow Old Harrovians remembered Palmerston as someone who stood up to bullies twice his size.<sup>1</sup>
  - In 1839, following the death of her husband, he married his mistress of many years, Emily, Lady Cowper (née Lamb), a noted Whig hostess and sister of Lord Melbourne. They had no legitimate children, although at least one of Lord Cowper's putative children, Lady Emily Cowper, later Countess of Shaftesbury, was widely believed to have been Palmerston's.[
  - One of the finest golf courses in England – and golf academy
  - Enjoyed the outside and ignored doctors' advice d. 2 days before 81 b'day
  - Below stairs gossip says his death was triggered by a fumbled liaison with a chambermaid on the billiard table – is it true – no one knows – but a good story
  - Died 1865
- Rented for a period up to 1923

## Recent Times

- Sir Charles Nall-Cain – First Lord Brocket
  - 1923 – History turned full circle from 400 years before – bought by Sheriff of Hertfordshire
  - Son of Robert Cain founder of brewing dynasty that became Allied Breweries
  - Businessman and philanthropist
  - 1933 he became the first Lord Brocket but sadly died 2 years later
- Arthur Ronald – Second Lord Brocket
  - Inherited the family fortunes and titles
  - Entertained German supporters
  - Close friend of Ribbentrop
  - Foreign Office used him to convey British concerns to Germany
  - Urged a settlement with Germany and arranged contact between Foreign Office and Goering but German demands were unacceptable (give control of Poland and Czechoslovakia)
  - Had to do his duty for the war effort - turned Brocket Hall over to the War Office – to become a maternity hospital run by the Red Cross
- Maternity Hospital
  - 8,338 babies were born within the safety of its walls and in the peace of the countryside
  - First – Alan Lowe – 3 September 1939
  - Last – Sandra Woollard – 27 November 1947
  - Lord Melbourne’s Room centre of birthing
  - Prince Regents Chinese Room used for recovery – mothers startled by the Chinese style wallpaper which is still in place
- Ronald Nall Cain
  - Eldest son of Arthur (2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Brocket) died 1961 before his father
- Baroness Thatcher spent time at the Hall where she wrote her memoirs.
- Charles Ronald – Third Lord Brocket
  - b. Feb 1952 – a month after me
  - Became 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Brocket in 1967 on the death of his grandfather
  - Promoted Brocket Hall as a conference venue for high profile corporate events
  - 1992 built the first golf course – named after 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Melbourne
  - About that time ran into major business problems trading vintage Ferraris
  - Lord Brocket moved out – now lives South of France with flat in London – has Brocket Hall Foods
  - Trustees sold 60 year lease to CCA International – worldwide group involved in several exclusive golf and country clubs
    - added Palmerston course
    - Palmerston Golf Academy



- Next floor more suites, all in period style and incomparable to modern hotel rooms.
- More suites on the next floor.
- So much more:
  - Paintings
  - Fireplaces
  - Hall of Fame
  - Wind vane
- Ghosts
  - Not a classic haunted house – only a few think so
  - Summer 1977 workmen felt a presence – maybe Lady Caroline’s spirit is still there

