



THE HOLFORDS OF WESTONBIRT TRUST

PRESS NOTICE

Date: 27th March 2009  
Embargo: 30th March 2009

**The Westonbirt Partnership** – which includes **The Holfords of Westonbirt Trust, The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum and Westonbirt School** – has been successful in the first important stage of its application for a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

**The National Committee of the Heritage Lottery Fund**, which had had submissions totalling four times the funding available, announced today that it was making grants to four applicants only.

**The application from the Westonbirt Partnership had been chosen because of the conservation needs involved, the importance of the site and the public benefit proposed.**

**The Westonbirt Partnership**, which unites elements of the original Holford estates at Westonbirt, has proposed extensive plans **to restore the Grade 1 nineteenth century landscape, to increase public access to it and to develop educational programmes based on its extra-ordinary variety and beauty.**

**The total cost of the project will exceed £7m.** The Partnership has applied to the HLF for 40% of this sum. Today's decision will encourage them to develop their plans in greater detail and to work to raise the remaining 60% of the matched funding necessary. **Following this development stage, the HLF will make a final decision as to whether their grant of £2.8m will be confirmed.**

**The element of this sum attributable to the Holfords of Westonbirt Trust is £841,000.** This is only for works in the gardens. To receive this, the Trust will have to raise a further £1.2m from other sources

**Lady Bland** – Chairman of **The Holfords of Westonbirt Trust** said

'The Trust's purpose is to restore all that the Holfords created with such vision and passion at Westonbirt and to make it accessible to a wide public. Having recently agreed a 99 year lease of the Pleasure Grounds around the house, we are delighted that the HLF is seriously considering making such a crucial grant towards their restoration. We are now starting work on replanting these gardens; we hope that the public will come to know and love them as they do the Arboretum – extending their Holford experience.'

**Notes to editors:**

- For more information please contact  
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- **Presidents:**

Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall

**Vice Presidents:**

The Duchess of Beaufort  
Lord Howick of Glendale  
Mr. Michael Stone D.L.  
Sir Roy Strong

**Patrons:**

Mr Henry Keswick, Mr James Joll, Sir Simon Jenkins, Mr James Hervey-Bathurst, Sir Max Hastings, Mr Michael Green, Mrs Charlotte Gere, Mrs Gilly Drummond, Lady Brittan, Mr Robin Benson, Mr David Holford Benson, Mr Lawrence Banks, Mrs Elizabeth Banks, Sir Humphry Wakefield, Lady Juliet Townsend, Professor Caroline Tisdall, Mr Charles Sebag-Montefiore, Lady Renfrew, Mr Thomas Pakenham, The Viscount Norwich, The Earl of Morley, Mrs Candida Lycett Green, Lady Arabella Lennox-Boyd, Mr Martin Lane-Fox, Lady Lucinda Lambton.

**Trustees:**

Lady Bland (Chairman), Lady Mary Keen, Dr Edward Impey, Mrs Mary Henderson, Mrs Antonia Filmer, Mrs Julie Clare, Miss Mary Burton, Mr Richard Boggis-Rolfe, Mr John Weir, Mr Simon Tomlinson, Mrs Annie Stone, Mr Andrew Sells, Mrs Annabella Scott, Mr Richard Marriott, Mrs Hilly McCallum, Mr David Adams, Mr Hans Falkenburg.

**Consultants:**

Ms Jennifer Murray Band, Ms Bridget Bomford, Dr Sophieke Piebenga, Mr Peter Story

**Company Secretary & Administrator:**

Mrs Janice Malschuk

- The Westonbirt estate came to the Holford family by means of marriage in the middle of the seventeenth century. As Masters of Chancery based in London, they initially managed the estate as absentee landlords.

In the early nineteenth century **George Peter Holford** (d.1839) replaced the original manor with a Regency house. However, it was his son **Robert Stayner Holford** (1808-1892), who, backed by wealth from the original legal practice but especially from lucrative shares in the New River Company (which supplied London with fresh water), employed architect **Louis Vulliamy** to design and build, over ten years, this grand country house at Westonbirt in the later half of the nineteenth century. (Vulliamy had previously designed Dorchester House - his Park Lane residence – to house his great collections of paintings, sculpture, rare books and silver)

The gardens at Westonbirt had originally been laid out by his father **George Peter Holford** and the picturesque improver **William Sawrey Gilpin**. Upon inheriting the property in 1839, Robert Holford took on the task of enlarging the park and expanding the gardens, assisted by the landscape gardener **William Broderick Thomas** and the famous firm of **James Pulham & Son**. Planting large areas of woodland on previously arable ground, Robert Holford laid the bones for his extensive arboretum - which included the ancient Silkwood.

R S Holford was a scholarly collector of Old Masters, rare books, manuscripts, ceramics and silver. He was one of the most learned judges of quality in the country at a time when Art was becoming an important part of British cultural identity.

R S Holford married into an artistic family of collectors when he wed, in 1854, **Mary Ann Lindsey** (d.1901). They had three daughters, Margaret, Evelyn and Alice and one son, George.

**George Lindsey Holford** (1860-1926) together with his father, subscribed to international seed and plant collecting expeditions and were the creators of the now world-famous Westonbirt Arboretum. After his father's death, George continued to expand his father's tree collection.

As Equerry to various members of the Royal family, George spent much time at Court. He married Susannah Menzies (d.1943) but died childless, in 1926. Westonbirt passed to his nephew, the fourth Earl of Morley who sold off most of the estate but who retained the arboretum until his death in the 1950s when it was taken over by the Forestry Commission.