

Finding the right balance

How a new set of farming principles is shaping the future of land management at Holkham

Upstairs, downstairs... auctioning the past

A preview of the estate's Attic Sale, and your chance to own 'a little piece of Holkham'

New species and record breeding

Read about the benefits of seasonal restrictions on the Holkham National Nature Reserve

HOLKHAM GAZETTE

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Sustainability is a key tenet of Holkham’s WONDER strategy and in this issue you will read about some of the numerous ways that teams across the estate are making changes to shape the landscape for future generations. Across farming, forestry, construction and tourism, Holkham’s businesses are making decisions to positively impact the environment. If you have yet to do so, learn more about WONDER at holkham.co.uk/wonder. With the festive season just ahead, we meet two creatives involved in this year’s Christmas celebrations, and also a Holkham tenant playing a major role in the £18m restoration of the Norwich Castle Keep.
Daska Davis, editor

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Hobbs Close site underway

Holkham’s development of 23 new homes at Hobbs Close in Wells-next-the-Sea began in July. The development comprises 23 dwellings of which eight will be private sale, ten affordable dwellings, with five homes retained by the estate for private rent. Of the ten affordable homes, which must be acquired by a registered provider of social housing, four will be offered for rent by tenants allocated from the district housing list, and four will be let with an affordable rent that is 20 percent below market rent and targeted at local key workers. Two homes will be offered with shared ownership, by which the occupier has a share in the property’s equity, but pays a rent on the unsold share to the provider.

The dwellings are being developed within Holkham’s Policy Plus Plus approach, which aims to meet local housing need by delivering a mix of tenures with a focus on affordable and rental properties, as well as smaller homes. “We are trying to look at ways that we can improve housing stock in and around Wells,” says James Bracey, Holkham’s General Manager of Planning and Development. “We are using a variety of high-quality, traditional materials, including brick and flint, and the homes are being constructed to meet EPC A and B ratings so they are energy efficient. We hope this will be the first of a number of schemes developed by Holkham to make housing more accessible to the local community.”

Keeping a watchful eye on curlews

A collaborative approach by Holkham’s farming, gamekeeping and Holkham National Nature Reserve (NNR) teams has resulted in a record seven curlew nests this Summer. The species is on the UK Birds of Conservation Concern red list, having declined by 65 percent over the past 30 years. “We are delighted,” says Andrew Bloomfield, NNR Warden, “it has been a real team effort.”



Photograph: Andrew Bloomfield

The Victoria extends its accommodation



Guests at The Victoria will have a new way to enjoy a stay from Spring 2025, following the hotel's investment in four shepherd huts. These will be located next to a meadow to the south side of The Victoria.

The project was granted planning permission with the support of Geoff Armstrong of Armstrong Rigg Planning. The huts are to be built by Lincolnshire Shepherd Huts, with interior design by Johanna Tennant and groundwork and landscape project

management by Kristian Gleave of Gleave Associates.

"We chose Lincolnshire Shepherd Huts as their build quality was some of the best we found," says Ben Hunter-Watts, Managing Director of The Victoria. "Each hut will feature a lounge, kitchenette, bathroom with shower, and double bedroom. We hope that the new accommodation will appeal to a wide variety of guests such as walking couples or those looking for a romantic break."

Seeds of success

Holkham's forestry team is set to plant 25,000 new trees across the estate this Winter. Led by Head Forester, Harry Wakefield, the team's silvicultural work is part of an approved ten-year woodland management programme of annual clear-felling and planting. This year, up to 20 percent of the stock has been grown from seeds collected on the estate by Forester Mai Sussex, who is helping to establish the



small-scale nursery. "This is the third year we've collected seeds," says Mai. "We will plant oak, sweet chestnut and walnut gathered in the first year, and have collected beech for the first time."



Paramedics receive boost with e-bike

Paramedics based at Wells Community Hospital are the first of the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) to adopt an Electric Cycle Response Unit (eCRU), following local donations to fund an electric bike. The e-bike was sourced by James Cowan of E-Motion Cycles, located

in Holkham Village. "The whole community came together to make this happen," says EEAST Paramedic Andy Long. "The eCRU is a real game-changer which will upgrade and help to improve response times to emergencies in Wells and the surrounding villages."



It's a re-wrap!

Bag a new Holkham tote when you visit the Courtyard Gift Shop from 7th November. Two new bags and a tea towel have been made ethically and sustainably using organic cotton by re-wrap, a B Corp Certified social enterprise which works with Indian farmers and women. The company approached Holkham with the idea of creating a branded bag. "We felt Holkham shared our values," says Natascha Chambers, Creative Marketing and Media Manager at re-wrap. "It's inspiring to work with a business going beyond the basics of sustainability and the fit felt natural."



Above: James Beamish, General Manager of Holkham Farming Company

A matter of principle

As part of its sustainability and conservation plan, WONDER, Holkham is establishing a set of land management principles which sets out how the estate is farmed now and in the future.

Holkham has been renowned for excellence in land management and, as far back as the 18th century, the active part Coke of Norfolk played in the Agricultural Revolution attracted interest from across the globe. Today, Holkham's focus is firmly set

upon how food production and conservation can work beneficially together. Working closely with the estate's conservation team, the Holkham Farming Company (HFC) is using scientific data to determine how it farms the land

to grow healthy, nutritious food, while actively supporting nature.

Now, as part of its WONDER action plan, Holkham has created a set of working principles which underpin this approach and have the potential to influence others. “We’ve completed three years of carbon auditing to understand and get to the data and detail of where we sit in Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, which is the way a company’s direct and indirect carbon emissions are measured,” says James Beamish, General Manager of HFC. “We know that 90 percent of the estate’s direct carbon emissions come from farming – our livestock produce methane, we burn fuel to cultivate the land and apply artificial fertiliser. There is an economic argument for this, as food needs to be produced cost-effectively, but with the new farming principles we are plotting the journey to reduce emissions and use less fossil fuel.

SHARED KNOWLEDGE

“Our decisions are informed by evidence. For example, we have three years of nutrient use efficiency trials from the Catalyst Farming study and, while cost prohibitive in large-scale production at the moment, greener fertilisers are being developed which can reduce the use of synthetic fertilisers. We have already

reduced artificial nitrogen on most of our crops without a significant yield penalty. We are also reliant on plant breeding and, under the UK Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill, we are fortunate to have the John Innes Centre in Norwich which has the potential to develop cereals that can fix their own nitrogen, like legumes do, thereby reducing the need for ammonia fertilisers.

“There’s a balance to be had between yield, income and sustainability. We fully understand that food production has an impact on nature, yet farms need to be profitable businesses, so we have to compromise. Where we can produce quality food, we should, but in a nature-friendly way. We’re unusual in that we have some leading food producers working here to grow premium quality potatoes and malting barley. The financial risk is far greater at the top end of this type of food production, where tolerances are narrow, and the more that we can do to develop and encourage nature-friendly food production, the better.

“We want to share knowledge and, while we are in the very early stages of documenting the Holkham farming principles we adhere to for our own land management, we hope this is something which will inspire others in their own approach too.” ■



Sprayer trials test targeted approach to crop management

Holkham Farming Company is testing a more targeted approach to the use of chemicals in crop production as part of a trial with Dutch crop sprayer manufacturer Agrifac. The company took delivery of a new spot sprayer in September 2023, which was first used on sugar beet crops in Spring.


The machine is fitted with a camera system which uses artificial intelligence (AI) to identify weeds. “Agrifac approached us to trial the spot sprayer. The company was interested in the way we produce food and wanted to see if its equipment could help us to be more efficient in chemical application,” says James Beamish.

“Using AI, the machine learns the structure of a crop to identify it from a weed. Predominantly used for herbicides, the sprayer has cameras one metre apart on a boom which can spot and target weeds. Where we would normally

spray 100 percent of a crop, this more targeted approach significantly reduces chemical use. This has cost savings and benefits the environment too. We trialled 80 hectares of sugar beet in Spring and the results were impressive.”

One of only four systems being trialled globally, the £120,000 AI spot sprayer camera and software equipment used at Holkham is the only one in operation in the UK. “HFC is very forward-thinking and the wide variety of crops grown there makes it a great test bed,” says Agrifac’s Account Manager Tim Carter. “It was a challenging, wet season, but the data captured will help us to refine the machine’s algorithm.”

“The next step is to look at other crops,” adds James. “With a cereal, it will be more challenging, but we are excited to explore the software to become more targeted in our approach.”



A once in a lifetime sale

The attics and cellars have been cleared and catalogued ahead of a sale of items next spring, offering the chance to acquire a piece of Holkham!

For most of us, the loft is a rarely ventured space to store unwanted items, held onto ‘just in case’ or out of sentimentality. Holkham Hall’s attics and cellars are little different, except the forgotten treasures stored there have far greater interest. With the introduction of Holkham’s popular attic and cellar tours, the need to declutter these areas has given the Earl and Countess of Leicester an opportunity to review items, many of which have been stored for centuries.

Working with the estate’s former Collections Co-ordinator, Katherine Hardwick, and Maria de Peverelli, Executive Chairman – Art Management of Stonehage Fleming which advises on management of Holkham’s collections, Lord and Lady Leicester have selected 450 lots which will be auctioned at Holkham on 11th February 2025. Among the items included in the sale are porcelain and china, silver, furniture, sculpture, pictures and prints from the late 18th and 19th centuries.

“I’m a natural hoarder,” says Lord Leicester, “but equally I realise how cathartic decluttering can be and that one shouldn’t be too sentimental about things. The attics and cellars are stuffed with items that are no longer in regular use. We want to create a clear space to enable tours to flow easily. We worked through the list in bite-sized pieces, category by category. Some were easy decisions to sell or

keep, while others were more marginal. For example, I kept a really interesting torchiere stand table, which was in bad repair and listed to go, but I noticed that the feet were sheep’s hooves and I thought that would have been something Coke of Norfolk might have commissioned or been given, so we decided to keep it. We will spend some of the receipts of the sale on its restoration. I let go of an unusual 19th century bracelet of lion’s claws, set on a silver chain, which is intriguing and would make a great objet d’art in a frame. We want to attract interested purchasers who will love and cherish the items that they buy.”

A further consideration was to establish whether sale items have an historical importance. “Attic sales usually include a large volume of relatively inexpensive items,” says Maria. “We chose to work with Sworders as they are experienced in this type of sale and their record is impressive. It was important to pick some items with a coat of arms and to select things that were used by the family on a daily basis, as people want to own a little bit of Holkham.”

Following their appointment, the Sworders team worked with Maria and Holkham’s Archivist, Lucy Purvis, to create the catalogue which will accompany the sale. Guy Schooling, Sworders’ Chairman and Head of Art and Antiques, says the event is likely to attract international interest.



“It’s unusual to have a sale at a house, and holding it at Holkham provides a great opportunity to visit. Many bids are made online and there will be screens to display these as they come in, but with viewing over four days prior to the sale, the chance for catalogue holders to see items on display in The Lady Elizabeth Wing and Marble Hall will be unique.

“There are some interesting pieces including a number of 18th century plaster busts, which rarely come to market, a Regency giltwood firescreen in the manner of Thomas Chippendale the Younger and a group

of marble fragments of a Roman sarcophagus relief from Thomas Coke, 1st Earl of Leicester’s grand tour. These are really special things, but there are also many highly affordable pieces including clocks, Victorian china and plenty of furniture. As a collection, it gives an insight into the story of the house and there will be great interest from the USA, where collectors love the idea of a grand, aristocratic country home. Anyone can participate, whether they are in Burnham Market or Birmingham, Alabama and it will be fun to see what captures people’s imagination on the day.” ■

A sale catalogue will be published in January with viewing held on 7th-10th February, ahead of the Holkham Hall Attic Sale on 11th February 2025.



Holkham's high flyers

Restrictions to protect wildlife habitats on the Holkham National Nature Reserve have helped nature to flourish this Summer, with some unexpected arrivals.

With its complex landscape, the Holkham National Nature Reserve (NNR) is a magnet for nature lovers, particularly in Summer, when the population of breeding birds peaks. It's a delicate balancing act between people and nature, but measures to protect wildlife and improve the reserve are paying dividends with the NNR team reporting new species and increased breeding. Holkham's General Manager of Conservation, Jake Fiennes, says there are winners and losers in nature, with climate

change also playing a part in the changing landscape. "The natural world is about long-term trends. The aim is to maintain a wide variety of species," says Jake. "For example, the number of butterflies, hoverflies and bumblebees has been lower than previous years, due to the wet weather. People talk about insect armageddon, yet swifts, swallows and house martins, which are invertebrate feeders, have had a successful year, so some of the species which are less obvious to us have an effect on others."

"We've had a record year with cattle egrets on the reserve," says NNR Warden Andrew Bloomfield. "They feed on toads and frogs in wetland areas, and grasshoppers and crickets later in the season. The egrets timed their nesting from July to coincide with this and we recorded 15 nests and 26 juvenile fledglings. Holkham saw Norfolk's first successful egrets breed in 2020, but the population was decimated by cold weather in 2021. We've now seen it bounce back as a result of climate change."

“With the warmer weather in July, we also saw southern migrant hawker dragonflies and southern emerald damselflies, which form colonies in the pools on the reserve, and this points to climate change as they are species typically seen on the other side of the English Channel. The glossy ibis is a water-bird which nests in southern Europe, where it feeds on snails, but with shifting weather patterns and the work we’ve done to improve the wetlands we’ve seen one or two since April, and it’s a species we hope will nest here in the future.”

NEW AND IMPROVED

One positive change has been the introduction of signage and Beach Wardens to raise awareness of the Holkham Beach dogs-on-lead policy to protect shorebirds, in effect from 1st April to 31st August each year. “We want to thank responsible dog walkers for adhering to the seasonal restrictions to protect species,” says Jake. “The Beach Wardens are there to ensure everyone has an enjoyable experience and make visitors aware of the wildlife we live alongside.”

“Shoreline breeding birds can have a tough time, due to tidal and weather conditions which are beyond our control,” adds Andrew, “but by changing people’s mindset towards disturbance by dogs we can help species like little tern – this Summer we saw a record 58 nests in the bay.”

“If you look at changes we have made to manage the reserve over the past five years, it’s clear some species have benefited,” says Jake. “Cetti’s warbler, a resident bird which stays through Winter, was quite hard hit, but we have seen the population double with 64 territories this year. It’s a similar scene with stonechats, which nested here for the first time in 2002, and this year we’ve seen ten pairs due to milder Winters. Overall, we see species benefiting from our

changing climate and new species turning up all the time as they find less favourable conditions further south. Some species are finding the changes problematic – for example, we have a healthy population of otters and this has an impact on duck species such as mallard, moorhen and little grebe.”

WINTER WARNING

While footfall may be lighter on the reserve during Winter, the challenges to wildlife remain constant. “We have up to 200,000 birds overwintering on the reserve,” says Jake, “and, while there are no restrictions during Winter, we are part of an international fly-way where birds migrate along the east coast of England. Many feed along the shoreline, so we want people to be aware that it’s still an important time for them. Regardless of the time of year, keeping dogs under control will always have a positive knock-on benefit to species.”

“There’s also the threat of fire,” adds Andrew. “We had several last Winter and anyone who spots one should call the Fire and Rescue Service and use ‘what3words’ to help them quickly locate and put it out. We are also coming up to the grey seal breeding season and, while Holkham and Wells are not breeding sites, pups can get washed up on the beach and walkers and their dogs should keep a distance as seals are territorial and can give a nasty bite.”

“Over the past six years, we’ve worked to make the wetland wetter and more dynamic, and we’ve seen a range of species respond positively, so now it’s about protecting and maintaining the landscape,” says Jake. “It’s a constant challenge and, as the way nature is supported by government incentives is changing, it’s important that sites like the NNR, which are of international importance, have the level of support that is recognised for the benefits they provide to people and nature.” ■



Beach view

Kevin Hobart, pictured above, is one of two Beach Wardens who patrol Holkham Beach daily from 1st April to 31st August and at the weekend during the rest of the year.

“Holkham Beach is part of a nature reserve and a lovely place to walk a dog, but during the nesting season we put up dogs-on-lead signs and maps at each end of the beach and on Lady Anne’s Drive to remind people of the area where restrictions apply. It’s a small tidal area, a mile at its widest, so just a fraction of the beach. We approach people in an open and friendly manner if their dog is off-lead and most say they didn’t realise, but occasionally we will get a negative reaction.

“We also police the area for BBQs, which can easily cause a wildfire, and pick up the rubbish a few people leave behind – in addition to our daily collections, we organised a litter pick which recovered 20kg of rubbish from the dunes. Horses hack out and gallop on the beach, so great care is needed to ensure everyone’s safety.”

Talking with the wounded

Unflinchingly honest, sometimes dark, yet surprisingly humorous on occasion, Ben Stephens' 'Talking with The Wounded' podcast is raising funds for the Army Benevolent Fund's (ABF) Norfolk Committee with an event at Holkham.

It's estimated that more than half of England's military veterans struggle with mental or physical health issues after returning to civilian life. Even with greater awareness, finding the right support is still a challenge for many. One person who is ready to hear their story is Ben Stephens, whose podcast, 'Talking With the Wounded', gives veterans a chance to speak about 'when the unforgettable happens'. A former Captain in the Grenadier Guards, and a close friend of ex-Scots Guard Lord Leicester, Ben first worked closely with wounded veterans during his involvement with The Colonel's Fund Grenadier Guards, leading expeditions to canoe 750km down the Yukon River in northern Canada. The conversations he had with injured servicemen on those trips inspired him to create a podcast to ensure their stories receive a wider audience.

"The Yukon is one of the last great wildernesses and one hell of a challenge

to navigate, but also one which offers rewards," says Ben. "On those expeditions, being with their own kind, dealing with their injuries and feeling more confident enabled many to open up about what had happened. Invariably they were explicit about their experience, telling their story with typical military dark humour and unflinchingly about the darkest moments and the process of being medically discharged and thrown out of a job they loved, wondering what lay ahead. The very frank way they speak about what is unimaginable, in truly horrific circumstances, can be jarring to listen to, but these are amazing stories, and there are thousands of these veterans out there."

TURNING UP THE VOLUME

With a growing audience, the 'Talking With the Wounded' podcast raises awareness and now vital funds for wounded veterans. An event at Holkham on 18th October saw Ben and four soldiers



who served in Iraq and Afghanistan bring the podcast to life in front of a live audience with tickets sold in aid of the ABF.

Speaking before the event, Ben said, "People enjoy the show and it's not just those you might expect to listen – we have audiences in Japan, New Zealand and Canada, and I was surprised by how many young people, who are unconnected to the military, tune in. I think we will have a good audience of military people at the Holkham event, but it is something everyone should be interested in.

"With the podcast, people love that we are sitting at the kitchen table with a coffee and listeners feel that they are in the room with us. Some of the stories are quite amusing, even though we're talking about people getting very hurt or frightened or violent. It's refreshingly real and direct, and people feel connected.

Initially I spoke with veterans, but as the podcast has grown and gained interest I heard from doctors and paramedics who deal with wounded soldiers, and in the third series, released this October, we feature their stories too.

"We want to get these stories out there as we're generally not very good at looking after our wounded, and so many veterans end up homeless, addicted or sadly die by suicide. Now we are not at war, funding to help veterans is drying up, but the military charities are seeing a wall of PTSD coming down the track which requires a huge amount of resource and effort to manage." ■

Download the 'Talking With the Wounded' podcast at [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#) or your usual podcast provider. To donate, visit armybenevolentfund.org/regions/east-anglia/

The finishing touch

Holkham Forge, which occupies the estate's 19th century forge, is playing a key part in an £18m project to transform Norwich Castle's Norman Keep.

A blacksmith was once a vital part of the village, a one-stop-shop for household items, farming equipment and keeping horses shod, an all-round problem-solver for the community. While many have fallen away, Holkham Forge, which occupies the original forge at Longlands, is a thriving business with a trio of artists still transforming 'the noble material' into unique artwork. The skill of these creatives is also playing a key part in an £18m project to transform Norwich Castle's Norman Keep, a Grade I listed and Scheduled Ancient Monument. With the support of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, The Royal Palace Reborn project will see the reinstatement of the floors and room layout of the Keep as they would have been on its completion in 1121. With a new atrium entrance reopened in July, the restoration is expected to be completed in 2025.

CREATIVE COLLABORATION

Initially approached in 2019 by a firm tendering for the project, James Spedding of Holkham Forge says the metalwork designs it scoped led to the company being contacted by the architect in late 2022 to work on the building's ironmongery. "The architect sent us new drawings which were more era specific to the late 11th and early 12th century and this gave us an idea to develop concepts for the fixings," says James. "The design team had copied existing examples of 12th century ironwork from six locations in Norwich and we have tried to harmonise the designs to create a cohesive style."

Work on the project also led James to contact British Art Historian Professor Jane Geddes, who wrote, 'Medieval Decorative Ironwork in England' in 1999. Her source material helped the team to determine the right age and style for the forgings. "The working details of the hinges, latches and bolts had not been included in the original designs and we want to ensure that what we make is as authentic as possible," adds James. "For example, the wooden doors are a traditional style and the nails used play a large part in the design. We created a prototype, with some forged from scratch and others reformed to make the heads look suitable for the period.

"A large part of our work is problem-solving and one of the key considerations is the metal we use. The Keep was one of the most important buildings in Europe when it was built, and iron was still relatively rare and expensive, used largely for

weaponry, decoration and as a status symbol. Today, iron has a smooth, industrially-made finish, so we needed to hand-forge every surface to add texture, a subtle but important difference. Colour was also a status symbol in the middle ages and, while it had been planned to paint the doors, the metalwork finish was less certain. A 12th century manuscript mentioned applying cow horn to create a black finish for ironwork, and this led us to experiment with the process and, as a result, we rediscovered a technique not used since paint became available.

"Looking at the metalwork forged by hand 900 years ago is incredible and has emphasised the talent of those blacksmiths. It is inspiring to recreate and incorporate some of our own work into the Keep and we are proud to have played a part in the restoration." •

Visit norwichcastle.norfolk.gov.uk and holkhamforge.co.uk



Photograph: Russell Sach



the lawn mower, tractors and gator over to HVO with the help of Anglia Farmers. A second trial saw the introduction of hydrogen-powered tower lights. These offer an almost silent, cleaner alternative to diesel-fuelled lights, and were first used at Holkham's weddings in September. "Hydrogen fuel cells use a chemical reaction to produce energy without combustion, leaving only power and water vapour," says Sue. "It's a good alternative to fossil fuels and in future we might see hydrogen-powered tractors and harvesters."

Leaner, cleaner and greener

As part of its WONDER sustainability and conservation strategy, Holkham's leisure businesses are switching to greener energy to reduce carbon emissions.

Low carbon living sits at the heart of the WONDER sustainability and conservation strategy. Great strides are being made to reduce carbon emissions across the estate with renewable fuels introduced in several areas this Summer. "We wanted to turn attention towards the

percentage of emissions which come from diesel and heating fuel, and explore alternatives to further decarbonise our visitor-facing operations," says Sustainability Manager Sue Penlington. A relatively easy switch has been the use of hydro-treated vegetable oil (HVO), manufactured

from 100 percent renewable and sustainable waste, as a diesel alternative. This can reduce emissions by up to 90 percent. "We wanted to prove the concept with a small-scale trial with the landscape team," says Sue. "Diesel accounts for 81 percent of the team's emissions, so we moved

Further changes are being made at Pinewoods, where LPG gas used to provide heat and hot water to caravans and lodges, and the shower and toilet blocks on the touring field, generated 59 percent of the holiday park's carbon emissions. Working again with Anglia Farmers and Calor Gas, the park switched to Futuria Liquid Gas which reduced emissions from the shower blocks by 32 percent. "Each change is another step towards a sustainable future," says Sue, "and that's something we all need to get behind." ■



Two Farmers: Sean Mason and Mark Green

BAGS OF APPEAL

One of WONDER's goals is to stamp out waste and phase out single-use plastic. A perennial challenge is crisp packets, the majority of which can't be recycled. After much searching, the team discovered Two Farmers crisps, which are made in Herefordshire and packaged in 100 percent compostable packets. Initially stocked at Pinewoods and The Victoria, Two Farmers is now scaling production to supply The Lookout, with a view to adding the range to the Courtyard Café in time.

All in a day's work for... Alex Triplow

With a new Non-Executive Director role at sustainability body IEMA, Head of HR, Alex Triplow (right), says Holkham's recognition as a great employer comes down to its people.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR ROLE.

"I joined in 2018, and our HR function was in good shape with robust policies and procedures. We undertook a staff survey and it showed that our management style was quite directive – even though we had a wealth of extremely capable people, a feeling of being empowered was lacking, so we embarked upon a plan to develop a coaching style. A key part of getting to where we are has been that people are more empowered. My role is about creating high levels of engagement amongst teams. People really care about Holkham and tools like Blink, our staff app, enable them to share the incredible work that teams deliver across the estate, while our staff forum, Heads Up, ensures everyone has a chance to be heard."

WHAT ARE THE KEY HR EVENTS IN THE YEAR?

"We are a Living Wage Employer and the rate is set in November, which triggers us to review pay and benefits.

In January, we run a large-scale recruitment campaign for the season ahead. Then in March, we hold our annual estate induction and staff briefing. I also organise our learning and development programme, based on common needs and themes across the estate. Every other year, we hold our staff survey and roadshows to update teams on progress against our visions and ambitions. Good communication is key to breaking down silos and, while we recognise that we have very different businesses at Holkham, bringing them together through our vision is the glue that unites us."

HOW DOES HOLKHAM WORK WITH SCHOOLS?

"We've always had a good relationship with Alderman Peel High School in Wells-next-the-Sea. Holkham sponsors and hosts its annual student awards; we offer work experience to students and attend career fairs. We are keen to develop this



and I would love it if every year group has a Holkham experience. As a local employer, we'd like to be able to offer more apprenticeships and work placements for young people and this is an area we are looking to grow. When a chance to become a Governor at the school came up, I thought it was a great opportunity to do more."

YOU RECENTLY BECAME A NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND ASSESSMENT (IEMA). WHAT DOES THIS INVOLVE?

"The sustainability body IEMA was looking for a Non-Executive Director with HR expertise, working in an organisation making great strides with sustainability. There were over 200 applications, so I was

delighted to be selected. There is parity between IEMA and Holkham's WONDER plan, to influence and inspire. At Holkham, every member of the organisation has an impact on our sustainability goals and these behaviours inspire our visitors, guests and partners in turn. IEMA has a similar ambition and aims to influence government and business to effect change."

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THE FUTURE?

"We won the Best Large Employer in the East of England last year and we want to keep the momentum going with high-quality accessible learning and development opportunities for our people. We also want to develop talent and equip our next generation of heads of department and senior management team." •



Bring us some pudding!

With the festive season almost upon us, meet two of the makers helping to create this year's Holkham at Christmas celebration.

For many, it wouldn't be Christmas without a pudding and Alison Lilly of LillyPuds, pictured above, is charged with creating a mouthwatering centrepiece for the North Dining Room, which is decorated with a rich red that provides the perfect seasonal setting.

A regular at the Holkham Christmas Market and a supplier to the Courtyard Gift Shop, her festive desserts were spotted by the team who challenged her to create a 4lb pudding for the table. "I was over the moon to be asked to collaborate," says Alison. "We've used our normal recipe, which is lighter and more delicate than the heavy

dessert people typically associate with Christmas pudding. We sourced an especially large pottery basin and have scaled up the ingredients with 2lb of fruit going into the display pudding, which was cooked for five hours in July to give it time to dry out. We use beer from a Brentwood brewery, Marriages' flour from Chelmsford, along with a mix of tropical fruit.

"The pudding won't be edible, but we hope it will add to the nostalgia of the Christmas celebration. We're run off our feet in December, but I hope to pop in and see the pudding on display while I'm at the Christmas Market."

lillypuds.co.uk

Visit holkham.co.uk to book tickets for **Holkham Hall by Candlelight**



Little robin redbreast

Long associated with the delivery of Christmas cards – as Victorian postmen were nicknamed 'robins' because of their red-breasted uniforms – the nation's bird is the theme for the South Dining Room which will feature a dining table feast for a flock of the birds.

Curious Fair's Natalie Burnett (pictured above), whose woodland inspired masks and headpieces have appeared in 'Vanity Fair', 'Saltburn', at Fortnum & Mason and the Natural History Museum, is creating bespoke elements for the mantelpiece as well as working on a robin-inspired centrepiece for the table with Julie Smith from the Fakenham and District Flower Club.

"I haven't made a robin before," says Natalie, whose work has included peacocks, ravens and owls, "so I'm excited to create something new. I'm also looking forward to working in an historic house, where the scale needs to be large for impact, and to create a magical extravaganza."

Instagram: [@curiousfair](https://www.instagram.com/curiousfair)

Building a legacy

A series of portraits commissioned by Thomas Coke cemented his place in history, writes Holkham's Archivist Lucy Purvis.

It is well-documented how Thomas Coke returned from his grand tour as a 'virtuoso', a man of great taste with a burgeoning art collection that would later be installed in a Palladian-inspired masterpiece – Holkham Hall. However, towards the latter part of his life, he was drawn to cement his own place in history: show his fine lineage and trace his connections back to the founder of the family, the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Edward Coke.

In 1758, he commissioned Italian artist Andrea Casali (1705-1784) to paint full-length portraits of notable ancestors which today can be found in the ante-room in Strangers' Wing. The likenesses for the faces were mostly based on miniatures (owned by Thomas), but the figures and backgrounds were invented by the artist and reflect the countryside around Holkham. Poignantly, Thomas included in this series a portrait of his only son, Edward, who had died in 1753, which is now in the Parrot Bedroom.

Casali had studied under Francesco Trevisani and Sebastian Conca, both

artists Coke had himself commissioned whilst in Italy, before coming to London in 1741. Coke was his most substantial patron, and it is recorded in the accounts that Casali was paid £300 for the portraits at Holkham.

In the corridor leading to the Chapel Gallery are two further portraits made by Casali of Thomas and his wife, Lady Margaret Tufton. They have a more fluid style which suggests that at least the initial studies were painted from life.

These show that Thomas has been raised to the peerage, he's dressed in ceremonial clothes, chain of office, and pointing to the coronet on the right. Behind Thomas are perhaps two of the key pieces of the statue gallery, Diana and Neptune, thus showing him as a man of impeccable taste and now a peer of the realm.

Thomas had first been honoured in 1725 when he and 35 others were chosen to be Knights in the revived Order of the Bath, and three years later he was advanced to the peerage as Baron Lovell of Minster Lovell. On 9th May 1744, he was



honoured again and made Viscount of Holkham and Earl of Leicester. There was no logic as to why he was made Earl of Leicester – there has never been any connection to the county or city, yet it was customary in George II's court for recently extinct titles to be reused in this way.

The 'House of Lords Journal' records that the new Earl was presented to the House of Lords just two days later, wearing the same as seen in the portrait: a floor-length flowing crimson velvet robe, lined and edged with miniver pure. The three rows of ermine tails on the white cape show his rank

of Earl. His coronet, with its distinctive eight strawberry leaves, alternating with raised silver balls on the trim of the silver-gilt circlet, would have only been worn for a coronation, unfortunately something that Thomas never saw, dying before the coronation of George III in 1761.

Thomas' choice to commission Casali to paint his ancestors, as well as himself and Margaret at this, the most significant point in his political career, can be further seen as a statement of confidence in his past, while simultaneously securing the future for his descendants. ■



Win a Christmas at Holkham experience

We are offering one reader and guest the opportunity to enjoy lunch at The Victoria before heading to Holkham Park for a Holkham Hall by Candlelight experience on a date of their choice, subject to availability. To enter, simply visit holkham.co.uk/gazette-comp and enter your details by 9am on Monday 11th November.

Terms and conditions: 1. The winner will be contacted by email on the week commencing Monday 11th November 2024. 2. If there is no response from the winner after three days, the prize will be reallocated. 3. Travel to and from Holkham, including accommodation if required, is the responsibility of the entrant. 4. Prize includes lunch for two at The Victoria on the same day as the tour, and one soft drink, beer or glass of wine. Any additional drinks excluded. Plus two tickets to a Holkham Hall by Candlelight experience. Subject to availability. 5. Prize has no monetary value, is non-transferable and must be taken between 29th November and 30th December 2024.

What's on this season

27th October	Munch in the Making – Youth Art Workshop
27th – 31st October	The Halloween Garden
2nd November	Candle Making Workshop
9th & 10th November	Winter at Holkham – Oil Painting Workshop
16th November	Needle Felting Workshop – Christmas Decorations
16th November, 5th & 16th December	Book signings with Lady Glenconner
22nd November & 9th December	Christmas Willow Weaving Workshop
29th November – 30th December	Holkham Hall by Candlelight – Self-led
29th & 30th November	Wreath Making Workshop
4th December	Lino Printing Workshop
5th, 12th & 16th December	Holkham Hall By Candlelight – Guided
7th & 8th December	Christmas at Holkham – Oil Painting Workshop
12th December	Carols in the Courtyard
13th, 14th & 15th December	Christmas Market
13th & 20th December	Silversmithing Workshops
21st December	Canine Carol Service

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See holkham.co.uk/christmas for full details and to book tickets.