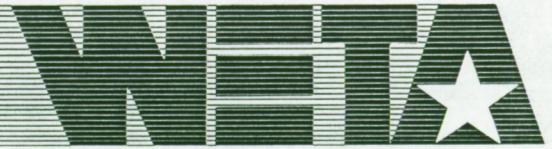


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**"TREASURE HOUSES OF BRITAIN" EXPLORES
500 YEARS OF PRIVILEGE, POWER, AND CULTURAL PATRONAGE**

In the land where an Englishman's home is his castle, the palatial houses that glitter in the English countryside epitomize a way of life that is no more. While changing manners, economics, and habits of mind have made the building of such houses a thing of the past, those that remain represent an enduring strand in British heritage. Today these gems -- over 700 in all -- stand as monuments to privilege and power, wealth and lineage, linking past and present. At the same time, interest in their preservation and admiration of their value has increased. Last year, more people toured the treasure houses of Britain than attended that country's wildly popular soccer matches.

TREASURE HOUSES OF BRITAIN, airing Monday, December 16 at 9 p.m.*, December 23 at 10 p.m.*, and December 30 at 9 p.m.*, celebrates the extraordinary legacy of these lavish estates; admires and studies the remarkable collections of art, tapestries, jewels, sculpture, books, and furniture they contain; and looks at how country home life was lived -- and is lived today. Guide for the tour is John Julius Norwich, a historian, writer and broadcaster specializing in architectural history, whose own family, the Dukes of Rutland, trace their lineage back to the armored warriors of the Middle Ages.

The three-part television series complements The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting, an exhibition under the patronage of Their Royal Highnesses The Prince and Princess of Wales at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The exhibition runs from November 1985 through March 1986.

(*Eastern Time. Check local listings.)

TREASURE HOUSES OF BRITAIN proceeds chronologically. In introducing viewers to the idea of the English country house (which National Gallery Director J.Carter Brown has called a "vessel of civilization"), Lord Norwich talks about his own deeply rooted family history, describing the new world of opportunity for the rich and powerful created by The Dissolution of the Monasteries decreed by Henry VIII at the beginning of the 16th century. It was then that castles (for the very few old monied families) gave way to palaces (for the many newly wealthy families), as the nouveau riche were able to build palaces to rival those of European royalty.

Program I, "Building For Eternity," opens with a visit to Hardwick Hall, one of the most extravagantly modern and impressive palaces of the Elizabethan era. Lord Norwich also visits Burghley House, an Elizabethan manor on a scale so grand that it sits in three counties. Completed in the 1580s for William Cecil (Lord Burghley), it is now the home of Lady Victoria Leatham (whose father, the 6th Marquess of Exeter, was one of the 1928 Olympic hurdlers portrayed in the film "Chariots of Fire").

Moving to Wilton House, renowned for its 17th century renovations attributed to master designer Inigo Jones, Lord Norwich visits with the Earl of Pembroke, whose ancestors saw two of Shakespeare's plays first performed on its glorious grounds. The next stop is Chatsworth, a 17th century Baroque treasure house that rivals Versailles. Here, the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire (the Duchess is the former Deborah Mitford, sister of the writers Nancy and Jessica Mitford) describe just what it takes to run the house today -- a staff of 230 and a fleet of experts assigned to restoring the aging masterpieces.

Program II, "Palaces of Reason and Delight," features treasure houses which reflect the power and sophistication of the 18th century. Built by Sir Robert Walpole in 1721, the Palladian-style

Houghton Hall is now owned by the Marquess of Cholmondeley, who proudly displays for television viewers his immense collection of miniature soldiers. Bowhill, Drumlanrig Castle and Boughton House are all owned by the Duke and Duchess of Buccleuch and each is rich with masterpieces, including a single room with 45 Van Dyke miniatures and the only work by Leonardo da Vinci in private hands. Also featured is West Wycombe Park, the grand Palladian home of the present Sir Francis Dashwood, and Syon House, built by the renowned Scottish architect Robert Adam for the first Duke of Northumberland.

Program III, "Recapturing the Past," features Lord Norwich visiting some of the great palaces of the 19th century including Belvoir Castle -- which is not a castle at all, but an evocation of the past built in the early 1800s.

At Plas Newydd, home of the Marquess of Anglesey, Lord Norwich points out the famed architectural fantasy mural painted in the 1930s by Rex Whistler, one of the most talented young decorative artists of his day. Addressing Wightwick Manor, completed in 1893, he discusses the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite and Arts and Crafts movements and the lures of the Picturesque style. And Lindisfarne Castle, reconstructed in the late 19th century by Sir Edwin Lutyens, is described as a celebration of native crafts married to more traditional forms, representing all past building styles in one grand design.

Putting his survey in perspective, Lord Norwich concludes the treasure house tour at Haddon Hall, the primary seat of his ancestors, the Dukes of Rutland. In the 1920s, the 9th Duke of Rutland's scholarly preoccupation with Haddon's reconstruction restored this 12th century castle to its medieval glory. Our age, Lord Norwich explains, is the age of preservation.

The producer of TREASURE HOUSES OF BRITAIN is Michael Gill. Gill's films -- which include CIVILISATION with Kenneth Clark; ALISTAIR COOKE'S AMERICA; ROYAL HERITAGE for the Queen's Silver Jubilee; and "The Ghost Writer," a dramatization of Philip Roth's novel -- have won almost every major international award, including four Emmys and three Peabodys.

TREASURE HOUSES OF BRITAIN was produced for American television by Malone Gill Productions, U.K., in association with the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The three-part series is presented over PBS by WETA/Washington, D.C., with underwriting support from the Ford Motor Company.

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