

# Attractions

Inspiring days out for groups

## Power and passion at Kenilworth Castle



This year marks the 450th anniversary of Elizabeth I's 19-day visit to Kenilworth Castle in July 1575 – and we're celebrating it with a display of a major new artwork.

Set in the castle's Great Hall, artist Lindsey Mendick's installation will offer a new perspective on Elizabeth's

relationship with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the queen's long-term suitor and extravagant host.

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Maltings joins our collection.

### Thank you for your support

We're looking forward to welcoming you and your groups to the sites in our care.

Heritage is for everybody, and we are here for heritage. Thank you for helping us share it with millions more people for generations to come.



Working closely with our historians, Lindsey was struck by the ruthlessness of Dudley's pursuit during the queen's time at Kenilworth – and the precariousness of her position.

'As I read more about Elizabeth,' says Lindsey, 'I began to understand the profound vulnerability of her reign. She was not just the iconic queen with "the heart and stomach of a king", but the child scarred by her mother's execution and a woman surrounded by an ever-closing circle of men in a perpetual battle of wits.'

No expense was spared by Dudley in his quest to win the queen's heart, with hunting, feasting and even a firework display, said to have been heard 20 miles away. He planned to bring the curtain down with a masque which would have urged Elizabeth to marry him. But rain put paid to his plans, and three years later Dudley married one of the queen's cousins.

Our curatorial director Matt Thompson says: 'the significance of this visit to Kenilworth is undeniable. Dudley spent around £1000 a day on the no-holds-barred festivities, which would be in the region of £7 million

today. Rather than choosing the focus of the artwork to be on Dudley and this seemingly grand romantic gesture, Lindsey has followed a different thread, putting the queen at the centre of the story and exploring the potentially dangerous and complicated situation in which she found herself.'

Lindsey's work builds on her previous exhibition, *Off With Her Head*, where she explored the vilification of powerful women through history, including Elizabeth's mother Anne Boleyn. At Kenilworth, her installation will centre on a series of sculptural tableaux, with imagery drawn from accounts of the visit and the cut-throat game of chess. At the heart of the piece, you'll find Elizabeth represented as a lion-like figure and Dudley as a bear – the animal found on his crest.

**Your group members can enjoy Lindsey's installation at the castle from July to October.**



**Cover, main image** Costumed characters portray Elizabeth I and Robert Dudley at Kenilworth Castle

**This page, clockwise from top**  
The Elizabethan Garden at Kenilworth Castle; artist Lindsey Mendick ©Elissa Cray; visitors enjoy views from the tower Dudley built for Elizabeth I.



# Kenwood exhibition

## Lives of the American heiresses

This year, Kenwood in north London is hosting a major exhibition of stunning portraits by John Singer Sargent.

Marking the centenary of his death, the exhibition brings together 18 of Sargent's portraits of so-called 'dollar princesses' – wealthy American women who married British aristocrats. The exhibition will explore the real lives of the women, including a future wartime nurse, a helicopter pilot and Britain's first sitting female MP.

Exhibition curator Wendy Monkhouse explains that *'Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits'* explores a side to his portraits not often considered: the women behind the works. Dismissed historically as dollar princesses, their stories were far more complex, and their reach stretched beyond the boundaries of their marriages.'

The exhibition is also a salute to Sargent (1856–1925), the most sought-after portraitist of the Gilded Age. For Wendy, the works on display demonstrate 'Sargent's mastery of portraiture at a time when the seeds of the special relationship between England and America were sown.'

Among the treasures included in the exhibition will be Kenwood's own magnificent portrait of Daisy Leiter, a Chicago heiress who married the Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire. Private loans and major international loans also feature, including portraits of Mrs Wilton Phipps from a private collection, and Mrs Joseph Chamberlain from the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC.

*Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits* is supported by The Friends of the Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood, the American Friends of English Heritage, the Deborah Loeb Brice Foundation, the Blavatnik Family Foundation, Rockefeller Capital Management, Gregory and Melissa Fleming, L.K. Barnes, Mark King, the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation, The Sargent Circle and other generous supporters.

**Clockwise from top** Guided tours at Kenwood; Self Portrait with Two Circles, by Rembrandt van Rijn; Margaret Hyde 'Daisy' nee Leiter, 19th Countess of Suffolk, 1898 by John Singer Sargent © *Historic England*



### Special group offer

Groups of 15 or more receive **10% off** admission prices to this special exhibition and early morning exclusive access is also available for groups of 30+.

For more information email [Kenwood.House@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:Kenwood.House@english-heritage.org.uk)

Admission to the house and grounds at Kenwood is free. There's also the opportunity to view Kenwood's permanent collection containing works from other world-famous artists including Gainsborough, Reynolds, Rembrandt, Turner and Vermeer. You can also pre-book guided tours of the house and grounds.



# A million and more reasons for your visits

Charity  
appeal

We care for a treasure trove of over a million historic objects in our sites and stores across England, from Old Masters paintings to tiny fragments of prehistoric pottery.





Keeping this irreplaceable collection from our past safe and sound for the future is an immense task, costing us around £600,000 a year. As a charity with no government funding, we have limited resources, so we've launched the Million and More Appeal to help us raise funds to research and conserve these precious objects and their incredible stories.

Dr Frances McIntosh, one of our curators, is responsible for the collections on view and in store along Hadrian's Wall and throughout the northeast.

'Just like any museum, we can only display a very small percentage of the collections in our care. But the items in store are just as important as those on display for understanding the sites and our shared past. Ensuring they are kept safely and are accessible for research and further study is a really important aspect of our charity's aim. The Million and More Appeal enables us to care for the stored collection much better and collaborate on more research into these fascinating objects.

'I work alongside our conservators to ensure our collections are kept safe for future generations. My responsibilities could involve me in anything from creating new museum displays for visitors to see, researching our collections to share information on our website, or recording a podcast.

'Objects from my patch are either on display at the sites they come from, or are in store at Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens or at Corbridge Roman Town. Some are also stored at Helmsley Store in North Yorkshire – particularly the larger items, as that store is an entire warehouse.

'Every day is different for me. If I'm at my office in Corbridge I open up the store and get my volunteers set up. I have a wonderful team of six who are currently working on cataloguing and re-packing pottery and glass from Roman Corbridge. But equally I could be at Brinkburn Priory and Manor House cleaning bat poo from the 19th-century organ, auditing the material on display at Chesters Fort or cataloguing World War II objects found under the floorboards at Belsay Hall.

'We've recently been given a collection of Roman and medieval artefacts found by two amateur underwater archaeologists in the river Tyne, close to Corbridge. I'm preparing an exhibition of some of the finds, which your groups can see on display at the site from June. Star of the show is a rare 2,000-year-old knife handle in the shape of a gladiator which provides new proof that gladiators' celebrity status extended to the very edge of the Roman Empire. Despite being enslaved and socially outcast, gladiators certainly had sex appeal – there are cases of high-status Roman women falling 'in love' with these lowly fighters.



**Main image** Roman vase found in a cremation burial at Corbridge Roman Town

**Top left to right** Dr Frances McIntosh with a rare knife handle in the shape of a gladiator (close up shown on right); A rare double-sided ivory memento mori pendant at Ranger's House, London.

**Front cover inset** Frances holding a glass perfume bottle



'Even now their fascination continues – as evidenced by the excitement surrounding the new Gladiator film sequel. I'm also working on two other projects your groups can enjoy. At Warkworth Castle, we're opening rooms which have been closed for the last five years to tell the story of how in 1847 the 4th Duke was conned into buying furniture he thought was ancestral, when in fact it had just been made! And at Belsay we're embarking on a project with Northumbria University to create artwork inspired by the craft skills visible in the hall and across the estate, culminating with an exhibition in 2026.'

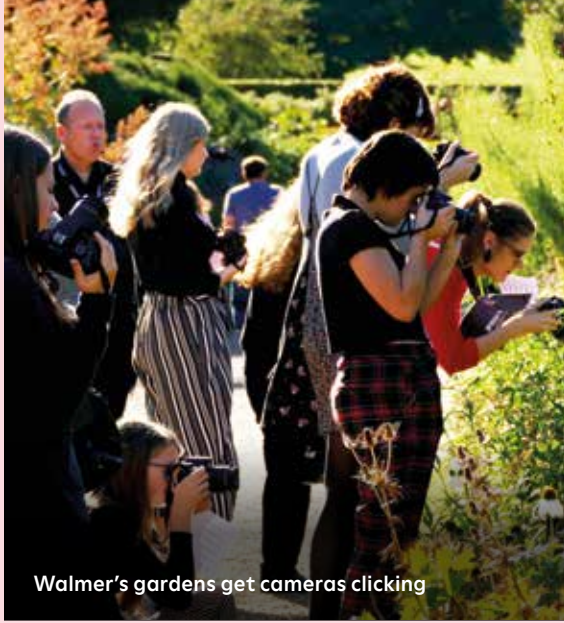
## How you can help

By bringing your groups to our sites, you're supporting the important work being done by Frances and her colleagues. If you or your group members would like to make a donation directly to the Million or More Appeal, visit [www.english-heritage.org.uk/support-us/our-appeals/millionandmore](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/support-us/our-appeals/millionandmore)



# Inspirational photography

Two of our most photographed sites provide stunning backdrops for photographic exhibitions this year.



Walmer's gardens get cameras clicking

## Zoom in on gardens at Walmer Castle

Wed 3 September – Mon 3 November

Fresh from success as the winner of the 2024 European Garden Award, Walmer Castle and Gardens in Kent is hosting an international garden and landscape photography exhibition this autumn.

Featuring the best entries from this year's International Garden Photographer of the Year competition, the exhibition will run between Wed 3 September and Mon 3 November.

Walmer's gardens are spectacular at any time of year, and autumn is an ideal time to visit, with much still to see in the flower beds, formal gardens and kitchen garden as the leaves begin to turn. Other highlights include the Glen Garden, the billowing Cloud Hedge and a contemporary garden created for the Queen Mother.

## Focus on stone circles

Now until Sun 7 September

A new exhibition at Stonehenge sees three young artists responding to some of Britain's most ancient structures.

Running until Sun 7 September, *Echoes: Stone Circles, Community and Heritage* focuses on three of our sites — Arbor Low and Nine Ladies circles in Derbyshire and Kingston Russell stone circle in Dorset.

English Heritage historian Dr Jennifer Wexler, says the exhibition 'shows us how stone circles still connect the past with the present. Once places where people came together, they continue to inspire us as symbols of connection, belonging and meaning.'



New exhibition at Stonehenge

## Stone Circle Experience upgrade

The popular Stone Circle Experience at Stonehenge – which gives visitors the chance to go inside the circle itself before or after normal opening hours – is becoming even more unmissable.

From April, pre-booked groups of up to 52 visitors will be split into two 30-minute back-to-back guided tours – making their experience fuller and more intimate. With a maximum of just 26 people at a time, your group members can get up close to the iconic stones and discover their stories more fully on these consecutive guided tours: one of the inner circle, and another of the wider monument field.





# Changing the world's skyline

An iconic piece of industrial heritage joins our collection of sites.

This spring, Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings joins our 400-plus collection of nationally important historic sites. You can book group visits to explore this wonder of the industrial revolution from 1 April.

The Main Mill was the world's first multi-floored building with a cast iron frame. Designed to avoid the risk of fire which had plagued other large mills, the strength that iron gave the Main Mill was the leap needed to allow buildings to reach ever-greater heights. Today, it's described as the grandparent of the modern skyscraper.

Opened in 1797 as a purpose-built mill to spin linen thread from flax, it supplied the textile industry for a century before it became a maltings for brewing. It also served as a temporary army barracks during the Second World War.

After closing in 1987, it was left derelict until Historic England bought the site and breathed new life back into the buildings in partnership with Shropshire Council and the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings. It opened to the public in 2022 with a self-guided exhibition and behind-the-scenes tours.

As part of our collection, the mill will become a national industrial heritage visitor attraction.

## What your group can discover

Group members can explore the exhibition which delves into stories of the mill and the lives of its workers, engineers, soldiers and entrepreneurs. Pre-book a guided tour for the opportunity to walk one of the floors where machines whirred, flax flew and barley was malted, and climb the Jubilee Tower for views across Shrewsbury and beyond. Don't miss the excellent Turned Wood Café, where group members can relax with a cuppa and a snack or meal.

**You'll find Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings on the edge of the town centre. It's open seven days a week from 1 April until 31 October, and at weekends during the winter.**



**Top image** Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings  
**Left** The exhibition space

# Wartime action at Dover Castle

Mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day with a visit to this fascinating fortress, which played a key role in defending our shores for centuries.

Its finest hour came in the Second World War when, in secret tunnels deep beneath the iconic White Cliffs, the castle hosted the command centre for naval operations in the Channel. Most famously, in late May and early June 1940, the men and women based here orchestrated the miraculous evacuation of Dunkirk, helping to save some 338,000 allied troops from the German advance.

Your group can relive the drama of the rescue with an immersive experience in the tunnels themselves. Real film footage projected onto the tunnel walls gives a sense of the terror of awaiting rescue on exposed beaches under attack by enemy planes.

A second underground experience takes groups on a guided tour of the

hospital tunnels, where they follow the story of an injured pilot.

Both these experiences are hugely popular, but you can avoid the queues with an exclusive early-bird tour before the castle opens to visitors.

Afterwards, there's so much more to explore at the castle, including the Roman lighthouse and the vividly recreated medieval Great Tower, which offers panoramic views from the roof. There's a fantastic new exhibition that tells the tale of Dover Castle under siege through interactive displays and reopened medieval tunnels filled with sound and light. There's also the chance to learn about life as a soldier at the castle during the Napoleonic Wars.

## Awards finalist

Dover Castle with its new Siege Experience, has been shortlisted as one of six finalists for Group Leisure and Travel magazine's Best Historic Attraction or Venue Award for 2025.

Please add your vote to the magazine's poll before Sun 27 April - go to

[www.groupleisureandtravel.com/awards/vote](http://www.groupleisureandtravel.com/awards/vote)

**Image** The immersive tunnel experience at Dover Castle.



## Inspired to book? Find out how

For more information and booking details for the properties featured in this issue of Attractions, please visit:

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/traveltrade](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/traveltrade)

Click through to Planning Resources to download our **Group Visits Guide** and **Trade Admission Prices and Site Opening Times** booklet.

Advance booking no less than 7 days ahead is required for all group visits.

## Contact us

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