

M3C DTP Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) Project Brief

Project Title			
Reconstructing Wollaton Hall: From Elizabethan Showcase to 21 st Century Museum.			
LEAD INSTITUTION			
Name of HEI institution	University of Nottingham		
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
PARTNER ORGANISATION			
Name of organisation	Nottingham City Museums and Galleries		
Website URL	www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/events-markets-parks-and-museums/museums-galleries-and-attractions/		
THE RESEARCH PROJECT			
Research Context and Timelines			
<p>Wollaton Hall, which was constructed as an Elizabethan showcase by Sir Francis Willoughby during the 1580s, passed from private ownership into that of Nottingham City Council in the 1920s. For the past ninety years, the hall has been home to the city's Natural History collection and, together with its parkland, a major heritage destination for visitors from across the world. Building on the success of the service's project to develop Nottingham Castle as a world-class heritage destination, funded with substantial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the service is now seeking to raise the visitor offer at its partner sites, including Wollaton.</p>			
Research Questions and Originality			
<p>The basis for any understanding of Wollaton's history as a family seat is a full and authoritative academic history, drawing upon the wealth of different collections held locally, nationally and privately. The lack of such a history has long been recognised by academics in a wide range of related fields, including social and economic history, political patronage, archaeology, art history and landscape design. Unlike Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, which arose from similar sources of dynastic patronage and family ambition, Wollaton has not yet received the scholarly attention which it deserves. The Middleton family were amongst the most significant local families in Nottinghamshire, over a sustained period, yet their role as patrons and local magnates, located on the outskirts of a fast-expanding county town, is still insufficiently understood. The only history of Wollaton (Pamela Marshall, <i>Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family</i> [Nottingham, 1999]), needs updating in the light of subsequent research and fieldwork conducted on sight. Similarly, the recent exploration of the family's significant private library has revealed a wealth of information (Ralph Hanna and Thorlac Turville-Petre (eds), <i>The Wollaton Medieval Manuscripts: Texts, Owners and Readers</i> [Woodbridge, 2010]) which highlights the need for a sustained history of the family and its local importance as patrons and magnates.</p>			
The key research objectives of this project are:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To research and write a history of Wollaton Hall, its owners staff, park and estate, using archive collections and printed primary sources. The objective is to uncover the history and development of 			

the family's local interests and influence as patrons and magnates, through its ambitions for Wollaton Hall and its associated parkland, concentrating on the period from the late-seventeenth to mid-twentieth century, and its impact upon the lives of all those who lived and worked at the Hall.

Research questions to be addressed include: What is the history of the development of Wollaton Hall and its associated Park? How have individual owners and members of staff left their imprint upon the house and landscape? How much did it cost and how was it financed? What builders, designers and architects were employed and what influenced their designs? What vision was developed for the landscape and under what motivation? How did Wollaton relate to the family's local influence and ambitions? Why did Wollaton leave private hands? What alternatives were considered for its future?

2. To prepare a full analysis of the development of the house and surrounding estate across this period, based on a combination of documentary and visual sources (maps, photographs, surveys) alongside archaeological and architectural evidence within the park landscape, which will enable the research to create new understanding and interpretation of the site for staff and visitors.

Research Methodology

The methodology will be based on archival research in the relevant collections held locally (Nottinghamshire Archives, University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections), nationally (British Library, National Archives) and privately (within the family) together with the wide range of material amassed by the Museums Service as well as in Nottingham Local Studies library (e.g. maps and photographs).

The project will benefit from dedicated on-site access to the park and estate, which will allow the student to visit and explore the house and estate at first-hand, and to the curatorial knowledge and expertise held within the service, as well as permitting access to the range of materials prepared by the service since it came into custody of the site.

In addition to spending intensive periods researching in regional and national archives, the student will explore the materials still held within the Middleton family at their home in Yorkshire.

Indicative timetable:

Year 1: Literature and Document review; Initial visits to Archives; Induction to Wollaton site (Hall and Parkland) and exploration of materials held within the Museum Service;

Year 2: Intensive research in the Archives, locally and national; On-site analysis

Year 3: Presentation of initial findings and Writing-up of thesis.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

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