

Welcome to Petworth House

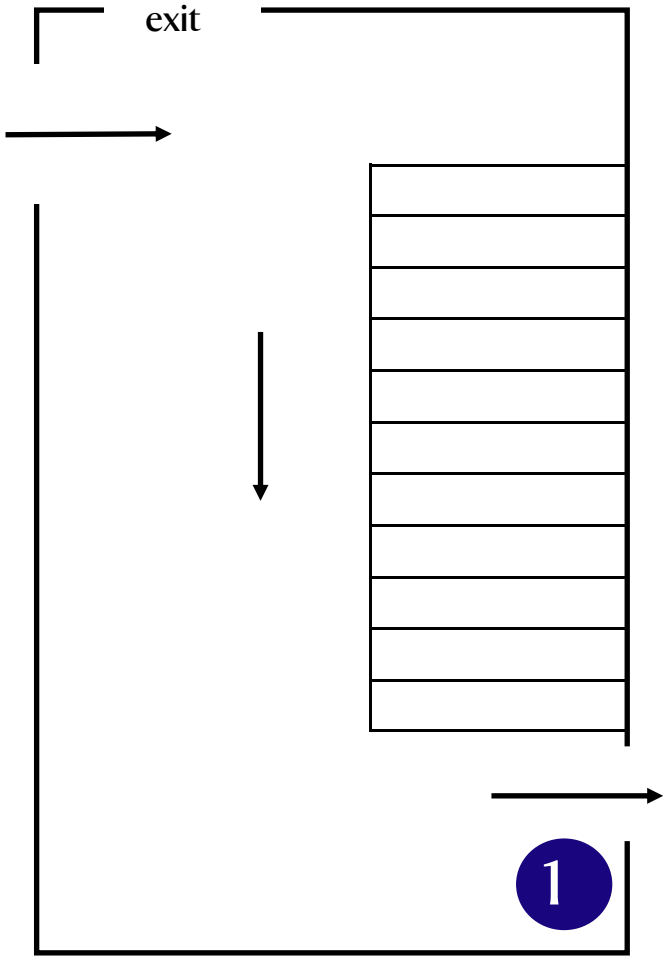
Petworth has been a family home for over 900 years. The land was a royal gift from the widow of Henry I to her brother, Jocelin de Louvain. He married into the renowned Percy family, who were Earls of Northumberland.

The Percy stronghold was originally in the north, but in the late 1500s Petworth became a permanent home to the Percys after Elizabeth I grew suspicious of their allegiance to Mary, Queen of Scots, and confined the family to the south.

George O'Brien Wyndham, the 3rd Earl of Egremont, inherited Petworth in 1763 as a direct descendant of the Percy family. He began what's known as the 'Golden Age' of Petworth. As a collector of British art, the 3rd Earl was patron to many contemporary artists. John Constable, a guest of the 3rd Earl, called Petworth the 'house of art'.

Oak Hall

This hallway has been used as the tourists' entrance to the house for over 250 years. This was quite common from 1700– 1800s. People would request a visit to the house through the housekeeper, usually while the family were not at home.





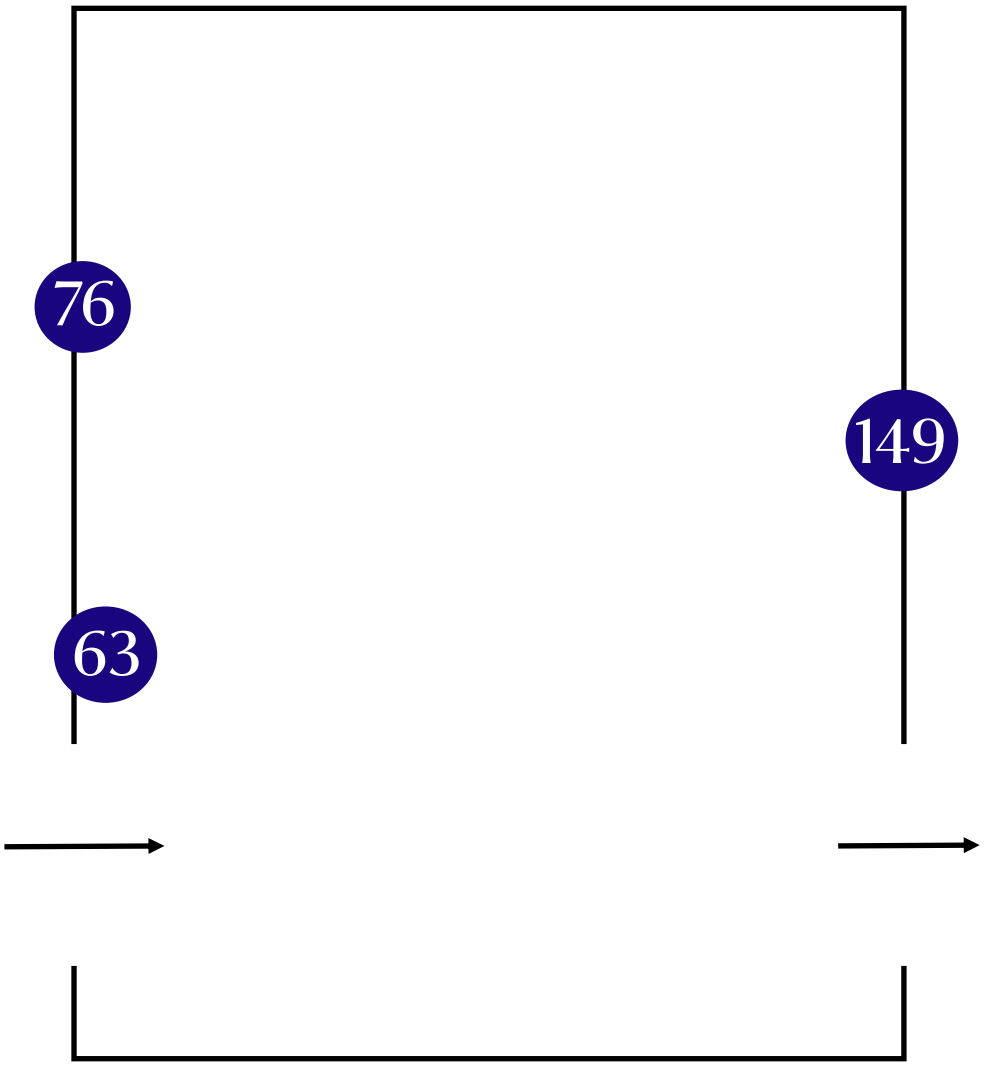
1 Burr walnut longcase clock

A walnut-veneered longcase clock that runs for a month before it needs winding. Made by Thomas Tompion (1639-1713), the most famous of the 17th century clockmakers.

Thomas Tompion was born in 1639, the son of a blacksmith. Little is known of his life until 1664, when he was an apprentice to a London clockmaker. By 1671 he had become a freeman of the Clockmaker's company. From here his fame grew and he quickly became the most in demand clock maker in London.

The Somerset Room

The Somerset room was used to display paintings, sculpture as well as a servery to warm up food before taking it through to diners in adjacent rooms.



63 The Adoration of the Magi by Hieronymus Bosch (c.1450-1516)

This is one of the most famous paintings in the Petworth collection and is one of a number of works Bosch painted on a traditional Christian subject. The hostile figures in the stable have been identified as Herod and his spies or the Antichrist with his cloth between his legs.

76 The Archduke Leopold's Gallery, 1651 by David Teniers (1610-1690)

David Teniers was the keeper of the Archduke's collection of 517 Italian High Renaissance pictures, can you spot him presenting a painting to the Archduke? All the paintings within this painting still exist and many can be seen in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

149 The Youngest Children of Charles I by Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680)

From left to right you can see Henry, Duke of Gloucester aged eight; Elizabeth aged twelve and James, Duke of York (the future King James II), aged fourteen. During the English Civil War the children were placed in the care of the 10th Earl of Northumberland who commissioned this painting in 1647.

You often ask us...

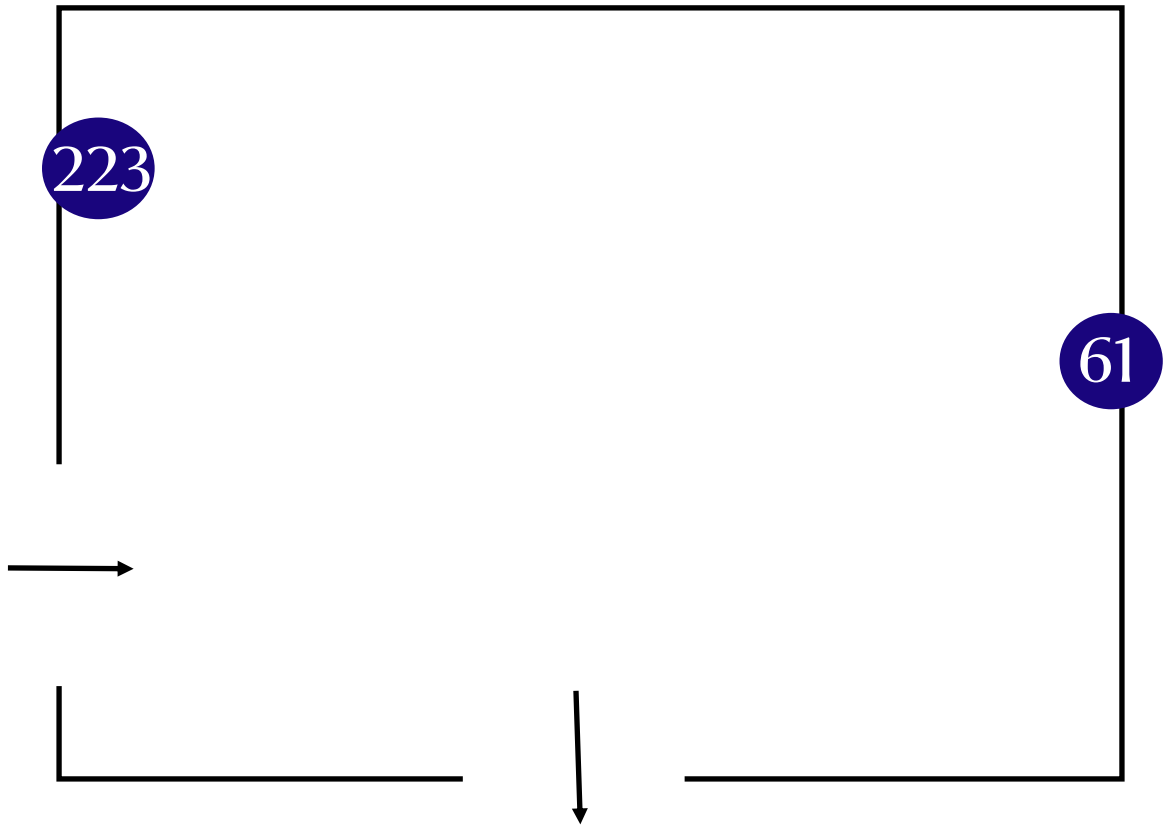
How many servants were there?

In 1819 over 50 'indoor' servants lived here and by 1834 there were 135. The servants' bedrooms were above the kitchens and domestic service rooms and are now used as National Trust offices.



The Square Dining Room

Today the Square Dining Room is frequently compared to a family photo album, with family portraits featuring seven generations covering the walls. This was originally part of the 6th Duke's bigger Servants' Hall with an adjacent Butler's Pantry and Servants' Staircases which in 1764 were converted into a dining room and a vestibule to the Grand Staircase by the 2nd Earl of Egremont. The current Square Dining Room was constructed by the 3rd Earl of Egremont in about 1795.





61 Macbeth and the Witches by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792)

This huge, unfinished and much deteriorated painting depicts the scene of the three witches gathered by a cauldron and creating potions with ingredients such as '*Eye of newt and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog'.* In this scene, the witches command: '*Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble'.*

223 Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland (1564-1632) by Sir Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641)

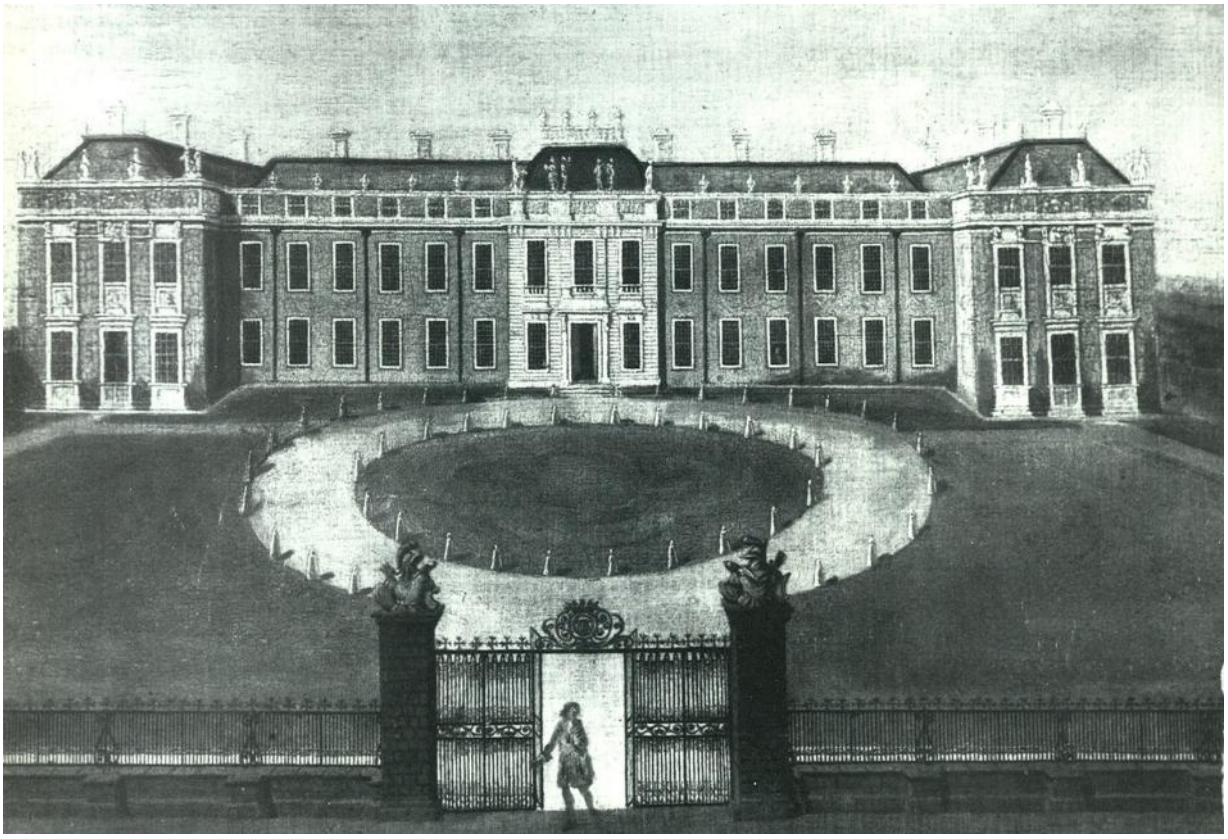
The 9th Earl was nicknamed the Wizard Earl due to his interest in astronomy and alchemy. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London for 16 years after being implicated in the Gunpowder Plot. While imprisoned, he met Sir Walter Raleigh, who we believe gave the Molyneux Globe to the 9th Earl.



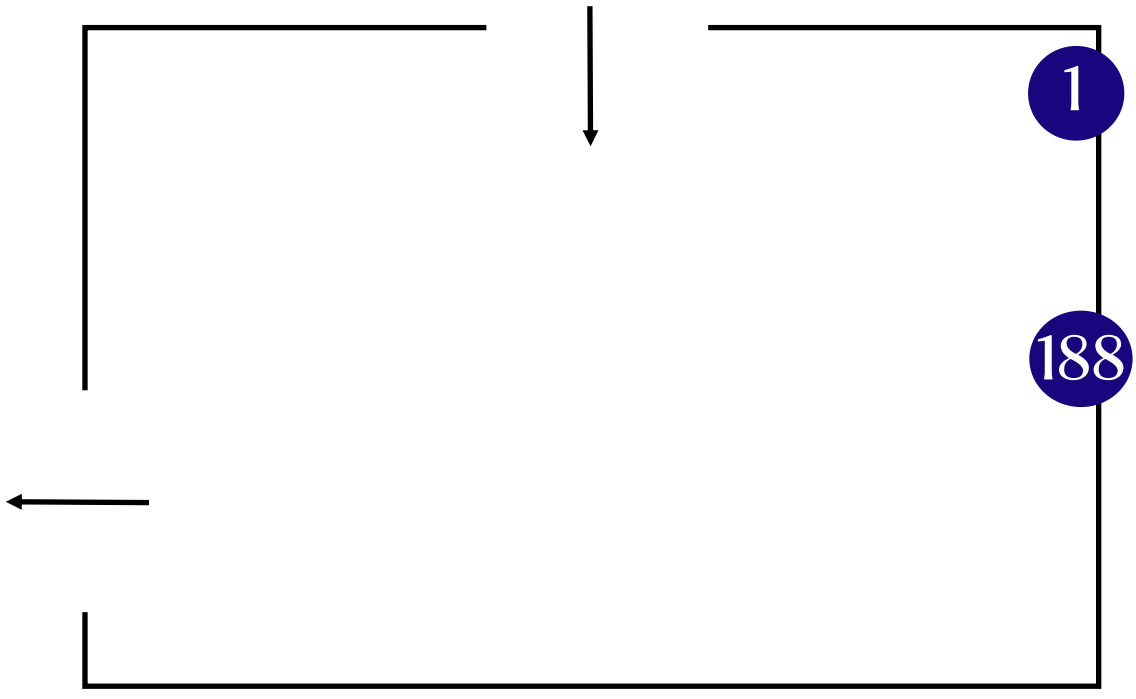
Macbeth and the Witches, Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The Marble Hall

Until the early 1870s this was the main entrance to the house. In the 6th Duke of Somerset's time, there were formal gardens and a large turning circle in front of the entrance. Today you can admire Capability Brown's beautiful landscaped parkland and lake, created in the 1750s, under orders of the 2nd Earl of Egremont.



The front of Petworth House in the 6th Duke of Somerset's time



1 This inlaid mahogany **organ** was bought on Christmas Day in 1786 by the 3rd Earl of Egremont. The mechanism was removed in the early 1900s.

188 **An Unknown Cardinal, by Titian (1488-1576)**

This portrait was acquired by the 3rd Earl as a work by Titian but was downgraded as being 'in the manner' of Titian in the 1900s. However, in 2019 on an episode of the TV programme *Britain's Lost Masterpieces* Bendor Grosvenor visited Petworth and, along with other experts, confirmed the portrait to be by Titian.

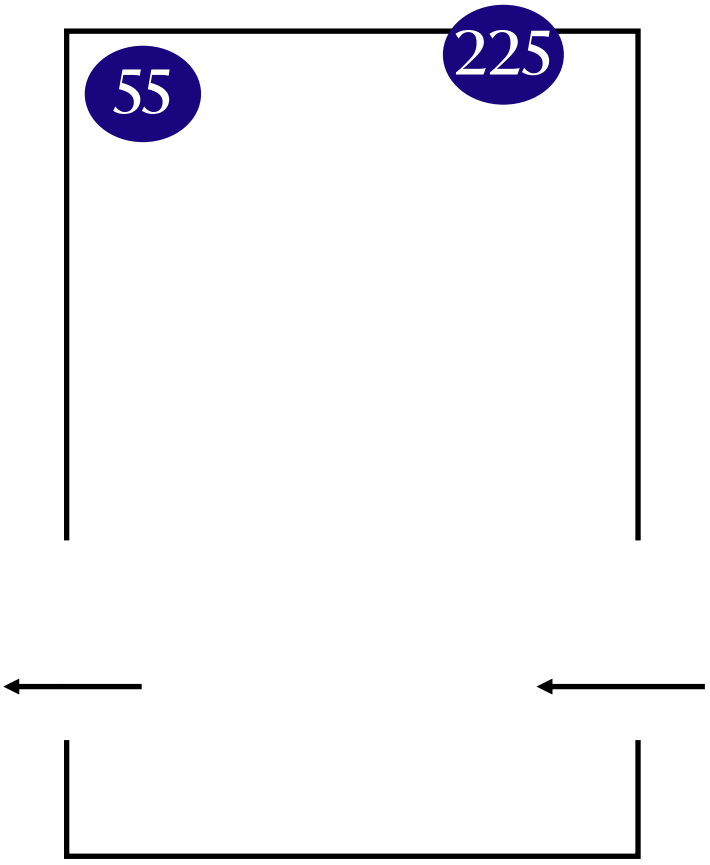
Marble Hall Floor Conservation



In 2017 conservation work was carried out on the Marble Hall floor to re-lay some tiles which had sunk and become loose. When the tiles were lifted from the ground, some unusual items were found in the layers beneath the marble, which would have once been a worksite. Among the finds were an oyster shell which was probably one of the workers' lunch and part of a smoking pipe which was presumably discarded after being broken.

The Little Dining Room

This room has had many different uses over time: from servery to sculpture gallery and lounge and even as an orchestra pit to accompany grand dining





Lucy Percy, Van Dyke

55 The Emperor Nero as a boy

Nero was declared an enemy of the state and all images of him were ordered to be destroyed. This is a rare statue with only two others known still to exist today. It is almost 2,000 years old.

225 Lucy Percy, Countess of Carlisle (1600-1660) by Sir Anthony Van Dyck

Lucy was the daughter of the 9th Earl of Northumberland. She was a renowned beauty of her time, her charm and wit were celebrated by many poets of the day.

The Carved Room

The Carved Room was originally half the size of the room you see today. The walls are adorned with limewood carvings by Grinling Gibbons. In the late 1700s the 3rd Earl doubled the size of the room and filled the gaps on the walls with carvings from elsewhere in the house. Look closely at the magnificent detail in the carvings and you may be able to spot a cat chasing a bird, a lobster, violins and some sheet music that reads 'The Fairy Queen' by Henry Purcell.



Petworth Park by JMW Turner hung in between two Roman Busts

127 Elizabeth Percy, Duchess of Somerset (1667-1722) and son, by J.B. Closterman (1660-1711)

Elizabeth was the heiress to the huge Percy Estates and was married three times before she was sixteen. Her third husband, Charles Seymour can be seen to her right. Their son, Algernon is pictured next to Elizabeth. Algernon had no male heir so his daughter continued the Percy branch of the family at Alnwick in Northumberland. The Petworth Estates were given to Elizabeth and Charles' daughter Katherine, who married William Wyndham. Their son, Charles Wyndham, became the 2nd Earl of Egremont.

129 Charles Seymour, 6th Duke of Somerset (1662-1748) by J.B. Closterman (1660-1711)

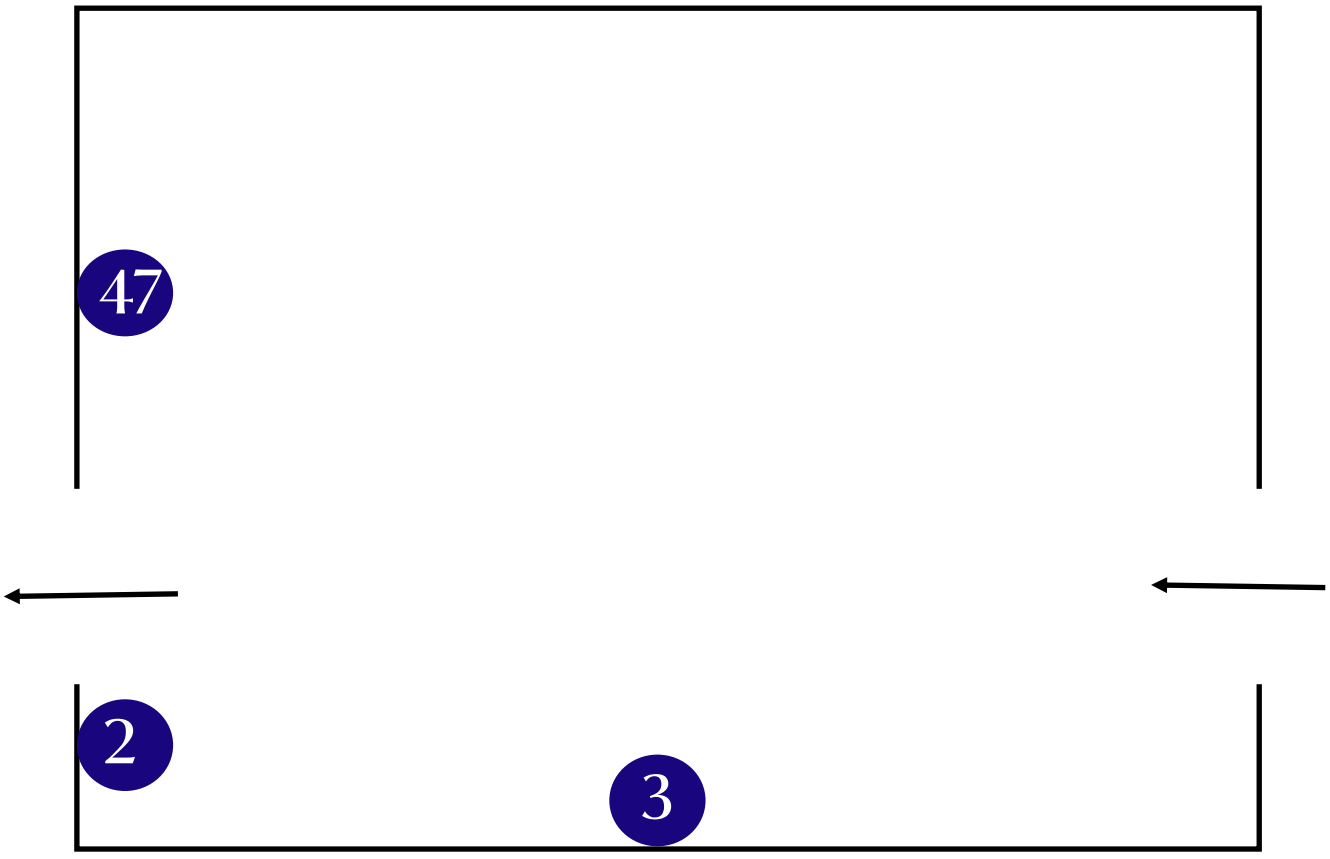
Following his marriage to Elizabeth Percy, the 6th Duke transformed Petworth into a grand ducal seat using his vast inheritance. He was known as the 'Proud Duke' because he was notorious for his absurd pride and pomposity.
To his right, a boy and a dog gazes up at him. In the 1600s, having black servants and slaves signified wealth and global significance. We assume the boy is a page, as he is holding the Duke's hat.

135 King Henry VIII (1491-1547) by Studio of Hans Holbein the Younger (c1543-1547)

This is a superb copy of the figure of the King from the Mural in Whitehall Palace which burnt down in 1698. Henry VIII owned Petworth for a short time from 1537 and built a banqueting house in the park.

The Red Room

In the late 1600s, the 6th Duke of Somerset's time, this room showcased no fewer than 60 paintings. In 1764 it was known as the Green Drawing Room. In 1806 the 3rd Earl redecorated transforming the room into 'the Crimson Room'.



47 The Card Players by Jan Massys (c.1509-1575)

Depictions of card games in Renaissance pictures usually contain some sort of cautionary comment on good and bad behaviour. In this picture, the older man on the left stares lasciviously at the young woman. She ignores him and instead smiles out at the viewer, holding up the ace of hearts and protectively putting her hand on her pile of coins. . The Card Players was the only 16th-century northern European picture acquired by 2nd Earl of Egremont (1710–63). He paid the large sum of £48 for it in 1755 (the equivalent of around £5,000 today).

2 Sarcophagus-shaped Boulle commode, circa 1710

This chest of drawers was made by André-Charles Boulle, who was known as the 'furniture jeweller', and was a renowned French cabinet maker to Louis XIV of France.

3 Giltwood pier glass

This is the largest and most spectacular of the magnificent group of pier glass attributable to James Whittle and Samuel Norman. It is in the Rococo style and at the very top features three Chinese ho-ho birds holding garlands of flowers in their beaks. It is based on a design by Matthias Lock (c.1710-65) and is dated c.1755-60.

You often ask us…

How many famous artists are there in the collection?

There are over 300 paintings at Petworth, including 20 by Turner, 17 by Van Dyck, 16 by Lely, 16 by Reynolds, 3 by Blake, 3 by Gainsborough, 6 by Teniers and 8 rare works by Elsheimer.



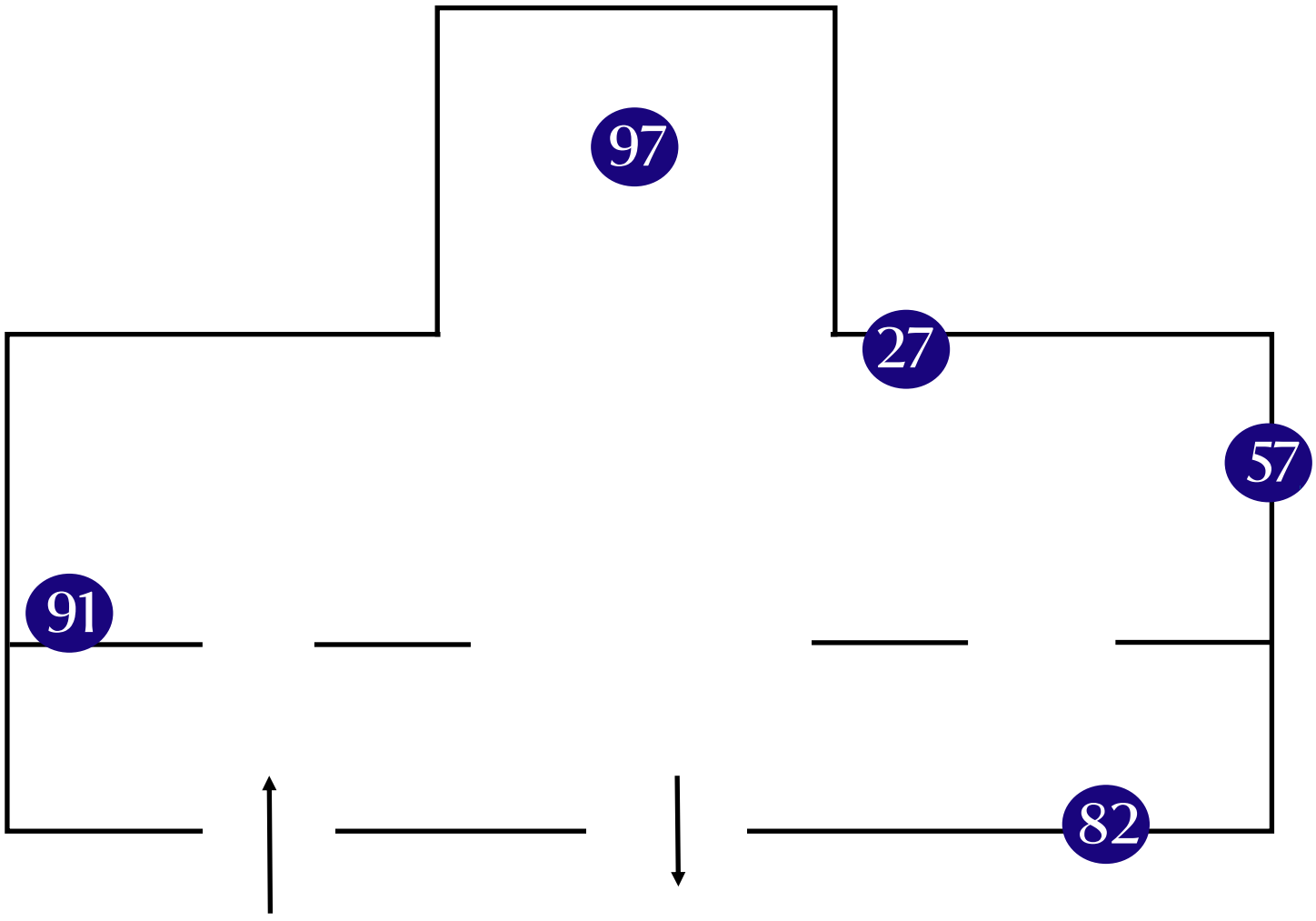
Sir Robert Shirley by Anthony van Dyck

The North Gallery

Welcome to the North Gallery, one of the few top-lit galleries to survive from the early 1800s. It was built to house the family's ever-growing collection of paintings and sculpture.

The North Gallery is unique in that it is the only gallery in a country house that exhibits Ancient and Neo-classical sculpture alongside paintings.





27 A Fête in Petworth Park, 1835 by William Witherington (1785–1865)

This was the second of two great feasts laid on by the 3rd Earl of Egremont for local people. 4,000 invitations were sent out to locals but on the day almost 6,000 people turned up. The Earl could not bear to see hungry people at his gates, so all guests were fed. On top of the hill to the left, you can see the 3rd Earl on horseback greeting guests. In the foreground the boy chasing a butterfly is thought to be the Earl's son.

57 George O'Brien Wyndham, 3rd Earl of Egremont (1751-1837) by Thomas Phillips (1770-1845)

The 3rd Earl spent 74 years at Petworth, giving this period of the House's history the title of 'the Golden Age'. He inherited Petworth at the age of 12 and became a great agriculturalist, philanthropist and patron to a whole generation of British painters and sculptors, including JMW Turner, Flaxman and Chantrey. Like many wealthy young men of his day, he had many mistresses and is rumoured to have fathered over 50 children, although only 12 can be accurately traced.

82 Murder of the Princes in the Tower by James Northcote (1746-1831)

This painting depicts the Murder of King Edward V and his brother Richard, Duke of York from Shakespeare's *Richard III*. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1786 and was first recorded in the 3rd Earl's collection in 1835.

91 Jessica from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* by JMW Turner (1775-1851)

There are 13 Turner paintings in the North Gallery. This unique portrait by Turner depicts Jessica from Shakespeare *The Merchant of Venice*. Turner was known for his seascapes and skyscapes, so it is thought his peers challenged him to create a portrait, Jessica being the result. It is one of his most criticised paintings. *The Morning Chronicle* reported 'It looks like a lady getting out of a large mustard pot'.

97 St Michael and Satan, 1826 by John Flaxman (1755-1826)

This masterpiece was commissioned by the 3rd Earl in 1819 and was finished in 1826 at a cost of £3,500. It was carved, apart from the spear, from a single block of marble. The bay that it sits in was specifically designed and built to house the Earl's supreme commission.



George O'Brien Wyndham, 3rd Earl of Egremont

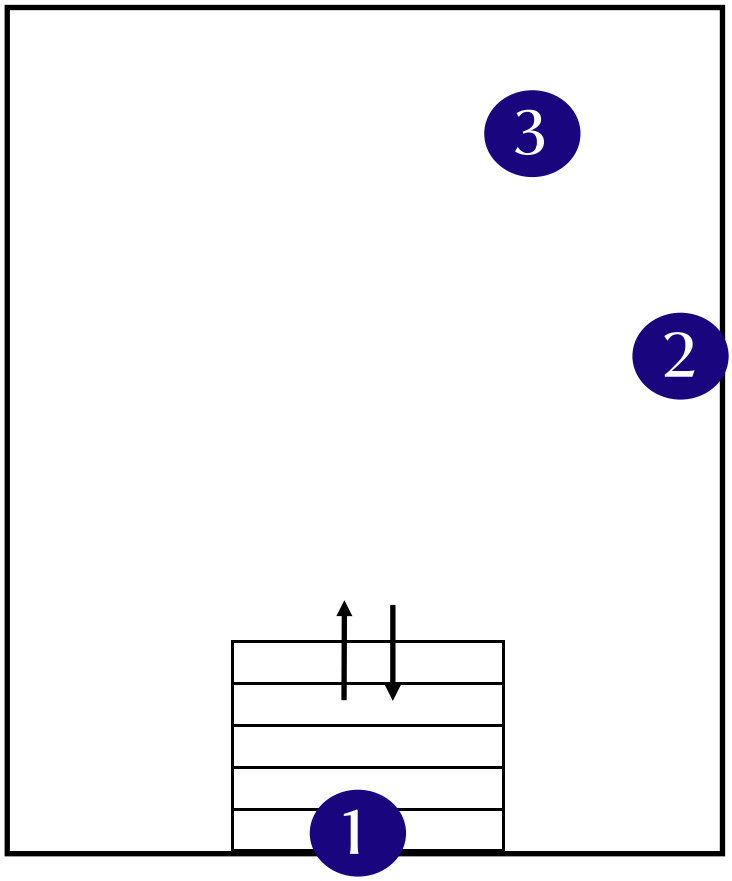
You often ask us…

Where did the money come from?

Historically, the family owned huge estates in Northumbria, Cumbria, Yorkshire and Sussex that brought in large rents. They managed their incomes wisely and married well. The 6th Duke of Somerset was one of the wealthiest men in England.

The Chapel

The Chapel is one of the oldest surviving parts of the house and dates from the 1300s. The Medieval Chapel was transformed in the late 1600s by Charles Seymour, the 6th Duke of Somerset who was married to Elizabeth Percy. It is one of the most complete Baroque conceptions in England.





1 Above the door is the family pew surrounded by magnificent painted wooden festoon curtains with angels supporting ducal arms and a coronet in the centre.
The Latin quotation is taken from King Solomon's Prayer at the Dedication of the Temple and translates as:
'Can God really dwell on earth? The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, much less the house which I have built.'

2 The **stained-glass windows** highlight the many alliances of the Percy family and date back to the 1600s.



3 The **Bronze Eagle lectern** is thought to have been at Petworth longer than any item. It is believed to have been made circa 1500.

Opposite the Chapel entrance is a copy of Michelangelo's famous **Pietà sculpture** (1600-1629). In 2019 the sculpture was restored and Jesus was given new toes and a new nose, which had previously been missing.



Pietà, after Michelangelo

You often ask us…

When was the house built?

The Chapel survives from the Medieval great house that was fortified in 1300s. After Elizabeth Percy married Charles Seymour in 1682, they set about rebuilding Petworth as a palatial Baroque mansion. The Chapel and Marble Hall were decorated in this period.

Why are some of the rooms closed in the winter?

During the winter months we close certain rooms within the house for short periods of time to enable the collections team to condition check and clean the collection.

We have over 350 paintings, 120 sculptures and numerous pieces of furniture which all need to be checked for any damage or deterioration.

Did you know that our collections team are qualified scaffolders?

In order for us to reach the higher areas and collection, such as paintings, we use scaffolding. This allows us to take a closer look and means we can reach parts we are unable to get to during the summer months.

While the rooms are closed we take the opportunity to carry out tasks like waxing the floors which wouldn't be safe or practical to do while the rooms are open

When will the rooms be open again?

We fully understand that it can be disappointing to find some rooms closed which is why we aim to make sure that we reopen rooms as soon as possible.

All of the state rooms within the house will be open again from early March. Over the winter different rooms will be opening and closing so there is an opportunity to see all of them over the next winter months - please see our website for information on which rooms are open each month.

Ownership of Petworth

Owners of Petworth House are shown in bold type

Earls of Northumberland 1–6 (1341–1537)



Thomas Percy
1528 – executed 1572
7th Earl of Northumberland



Henry Percy
1532 – found shot dead 1585
8th Earl of Northumberland



Henry Percy 1564–1632
9th Earl of Northumberland 'The Wizard Earl'



Algernon Percy 1602–68
10th Earl of Northumberland



Joceline Percy 1644–70
11th Earl of Northumberland



Lady Elizabeth Percy
1667–1722

=



3) Charles Seymour 1662–1748
6th Duke of Somerset 'The Proud Duke'



Algernon Seymour 1684–1750
7th Duke of Somerset
cr 1st Earl of Northumberland
and Earl of Egremont 1749

Lady Elizabeth Seymour 1716–76

Dukes of Northumberland

Lady Katherine Seymour =
Sir William Wyndham Bt
1688–1740



Charles Wyndham 1710–63
2nd Earl of Egremont



George Wyndham 1751–1837
3rd Earl of Egremont



George Wyndham 1787–1869
cr 1st Lord Leconfield 1859



Henry Wyndham 1830–1901
2nd Lord Leconfield



Charles Wyndham 1872–1952
3rd Lord Leconfield

Hugh Wyndham 1877–1963
4th Lord Leconfield

Edward Wyndham 1883–1967
5th Lord Leconfield



John Wyndham 1920–72
6th Lord Leconfield
cr 1st Lord Egremont 1963

=

Pamela Wyndham-Quin
m1947





Max Wyndham b1948
2nd Lord Egremont 7th Lord Leconfield =
Caroline Nelson m1978