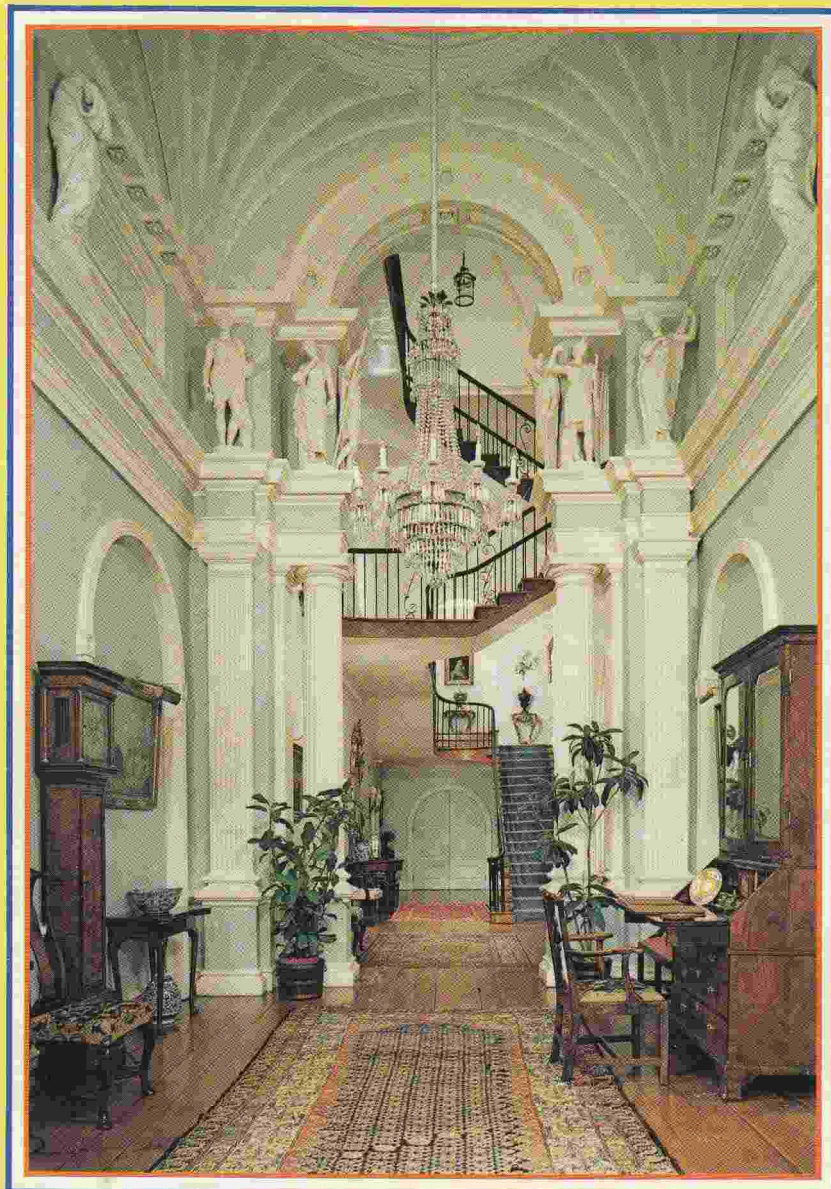


# Kingstone Lisle Park and Gardens



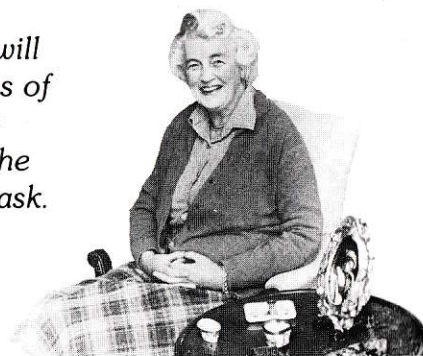




Adam Woolfitt

*I welcome you to my home and hope you will enjoy seeing round the house and gardens of which I am so fond. Should you have any questions that remain unanswered during the tour of the house please do not hesitate to ask.*

*Blanche Lonsdale*



Mrs. Lonsdale.

## **Kingstone Lisle Park and Gardens**

The central part of the house was built in 1677. Previously there had been a house in the park which was burned down. The house was considerably altered between 1810 and 1820 when the two wings on the north side were added. It is not known which architect was responsible for these alterations but the hall is likely to have been inspired by Sir John Soane whose interiors are unique in English architecture.



## The Billiard-Room

This room comprises the whole of one of the wings added in 1812. All the windows facing the drive are dummies and from the outside it gives the appearance that the house is very much larger than it is. The room was redecorated in 1960 in the style of that period.

The glass cabinets house various gifts that have been given to the family over the years and the smaller case contains letters from Lord Raglan, Commander in Chief of the Crimea and the great-grandfather of Mrs. Lonsdale.

## The Staircase Hall

The idea of the architecture of the hall must have been that you had come through an Italian palace, eyes uplifted, to an English country house—there being a strong contrast between the palace and house. The change of scale is most skilfully and intentionally arranged where one sees the staircase lightly criss-crossing a dark cavern. The only comparisons are probably some of the staircases of Sir William Chambers, notably those in Somerset House and the Albany. Nobody knows who designed it but there are several different opinions. Sir John Betjeman who did much research on the subject was inclined to think that it was either Basevi or Cockerell. On the other hand Marcus Binney believes it to be the work of an amateur, possibly the owner at that time, Mr. Martin Atkins.

The builder was one called Pace who lived in Lechlade. He produced a trade card (the original copy is in the Bodleian Museum in Oxford) which gave drawings of various houses he had renovated of which Kingstone Lisle is one. It was interesting to discover from these that his idea had been to add another storey to the central block and make the wings longer. Fortunately this was not carried out.

Pictures in the hall include *The Doge's Palace, Venice* and *The Castel San Angelo, Rome* by Hendrik van Lint and a conversation piece showing the Lonsdale family painted by Julian Barrow in 1976.

The tapestry chair seat covers were worked by Mrs. Lonsdale being copied from designs in the Victoria and Albert Museum.



One of a pair of pole screens with a triangular base containing a wooden Egyptian figure.

Adam Woolfitt

## The Drawing-Room



At one time this must have been divided in two; the front entrance of the house being opposite where you enter the room. In 1978 when outside work was in progress traces of a portal were discovered with a plaque above marked 1677 with the initials H and G (this plaque can now be seen in the loggia). At this time the Hyde family owned the property.

Much of the furniture in this room is late eighteenth century. Of particular note is the console table by Thomas Chippendale and the pair of Queen Anne walnut footstools in front of the fire.

Throughout the house there is a great deal of needlework and the carpets in this room are exceptional examples. Both are modern, of the Morris design and are hand-made in gross and petit point on one piece of canvas. It took twelve girls two years to make each carpet in Pontremolli's workshop. The card table, stools and fire screen were all worked in tapestry by Mrs. Lonsdale's mother. There are two items in the room which formerly belonged to royalty. On the piano is a small bookcase made of cherry wood.



This originally belonged to King William IV and was given by him to his illegitimate son, Lord Frederick FitzClarence who in turn gave it to Lady FitzRoy Somerset who was afterwards Lady Raglan, Mrs. Lonsdale's great-grandmother. The small Coalport tea service belonged to Queen Mary and was given to Mrs. Lonsdale by the Princess Royal after Queen Mary died. Queen Mary was her godmother.

The glass cabinets contain a very interesting collection of seventeenth and eighteenth century glass, mostly Irish and English, which was collected by the late Captain Lonsdale. The coloured groups of small figures are also made of glass and are French.

Another collection displayed in the room is of miniature furniture. This is comprised of original pieces made by apprentices before they left the cabinet maker, which were usually used as samples to send out to potential customers.

The picture over the fireplace is of Captain Lonsdale's mother, Mrs. Thomas Lonsdale, by Raoul Millais. The one on the right is by Marcus Gheeraerdt the younger of Elizabeth Throckmorton who later became Lady Raleigh. She was married secretly to him and the child was only revealed when the picture was cleaned. The other two pictures are of a girl with red bows, possibly the Princess of Aorang-Nassau and the Duchess of Parma by Sustermans.



A double-chair.





## The Dining-Room

The window opposite the door was originally a door leading into a formal garden and the ceiling must have been put in much later.

The pictures are all of the family. Starting from the chimney piece is an over-mantel painting of Kingstone Lisle Park by Lady Gascoigne. On either side are pictures of the late Captain Lonsdale's grandparents, Mr. and Lady Elizabeth McClintock. Following on is Captain Lonsdale by Grizoni; Norman Somerset (1894–1914) Grenadier Guards; and, beyond the door, Lord Armaghdale (1850–1934), Captain Lonsdale's uncle. Over the sideboard is Mrs. Lonsdale's father, Captain the Honourable Arthur Somerset.

The furniture is mainly of mahogany and English late eighteenth century. The tapestry carpet was worked by Mrs. Lonsdale.

## The Gardens

When Captain and Mrs. Lonsdale came to Kingstone Lisle in 1945 much of it was overgrown. What the visitor now sees is the result of gradual restoration and innovation over forty years with a view to providing harmony between the house, the garden and the parkland setting beyond.

The north front is dominated by tall and very old clipped yew trees extending round to the terrace along the east side from where one gains a good view across the park. Beyond the north entrance forecourt an overgrown wilderness has been replaced with a collection of standard trees highlighted by shrubs—lilacs, philadelphus, roses—with acers and cercidiphyllums providing wonderful autumn colour. There are several fine beech trees including a copper beech, a cut leaf beech and a dawyck beech.

On the south side of the house there is a long view across lawn to wrought iron gates which open first on to a lime avenue and an avenue of Cambrian elms planted for the Lonsdales by the late Earl of Bradford, acknowledged during his lifetime to be one of Britain's leading tree experts. At its far end the lawn is bordered on its west side by pleached lime with undulating tops, an idea brought back by Mrs. Lonsdale from Bell Œil, a Belgian garden designed by André le Nôtre. Mrs. Lonsdale designed the walls and yew hedges which enclose a path edged with lavender leading to the croquet lawn and rose garden. The gates were found in a junk yard in Seville.

The rose garden is a smaller replica of Queen Mary's garden in Regent's Park. On one side climbing roses are trained up poles and along the encircling chains. Beyond the climbing roses is a magnificent cedar of Lebanon; its trunk is only just smaller than that of a nearby vicarage garden specimen recorded as the largest cedar of Lebanon in England. The vicar of Childrey visited the Lebanon in 1690 and brought back specimens of which this must be one.



