

A day with...

CLEMENTINE DE LA POER BERESFORD

We meet the curator of Goodwood House in West Sussex, seat of the Dukes of Richmond for over 300 years

BRITAIN: What is the first thing you do when you arrive at work in the morning?

CPB: I usually get to work for 8am and I'll make myself a cup of coffee, then settle down and flip through my emails before the day really begins. No two days are ever the same and there might be a number of different projects going on in the house.

B: What does your job involve?

CPB: My main responsibility is looking after all the treasures in the house; the paintings, furniture, porcelain, books and textiles. Goodwood has one of the finest art and furniture collections of any English country stately home, with paintings by artists such as Stubbs, Canaletto, Reynolds and Lely. We have an ongoing conservation programme, so every day includes liaising with a conservator about a particular object or painting. The essential part of the role is looking after the house and maintaining the objects in it, and recognising when anything needs attention.

The Duke of Richmond is very passionate about history, and the history of his family, the House and collection are all key components of the estate itself. Although Goodwood is well known for motorsports and horse racing, it is less known for its collection – I am working hard to make sure more people hear about us. Social media is very important for this, as is putting on special talks and events, and writing articles.

B: What inspired your passion for history and curating?

CPB: When I was younger, I was brought up on a diet of history books and old history films. My mum and I often used to visit National Trust houses, so going to these places really feels like it is in my DNA.

B: Can you tell us about any events you have coming up?

CPB: To celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III, this year we have put together an exhibition celebrating the central involvement of the Dukes of Richmond in past coronations. In almost every Coronation since 1702 the Dukes of Richmond have played a key role, primarily as bearers of the Sceptre with the Dove, which is one of the crown jewels presented to the monarch before crowning. The exhibition *The Dukes of Richmond and The Coronation* brings



together objects including Coronation robes worn by past Dukes and Duchesses of Richmond, and the cushion used – we think – to support the Bible at Queen Victoria's Coronation, and the glove she wore during her Coronation ceremony.

B: How did you go about researching?

CPB: A lot of these items were discovered in the attic, quite by chance. I was very pleased when I found the 9th Duchess's Coronation robes. I was rummaging around in a box of clothes belonging to the Dowager Duchess and I opened a fur coat and found the robe inside.

The best find was the second of the two page boy's frock coats. I'd seen a photograph of a page boy at the Coronation of King George V in 1911 and I came across a similar-looking outfit to the one in the photograph. In the coat pocket I found a match box which had the date '1911' on it, and the initials GR for 'George Rex', and then a little 'H' initial, for the page boy's mother, Hilda.

It was a thrill to put it all together and to do the detective work to work out where the outfit was from. What made it more moving was that the same young boy, Lord Settrington, was killed at Archangel, North Russia, after the end of the First World War in 1919, so those objects I found in his pocket suddenly felt even more significant.

B: What has been your proudest moment in the role so far?

CPB: Seeing the exhibition come together has been my proudest moment of the job, and also finding out we have been nominated for the Historic Houses Collections Award, which recognises the work that goes into caring for historic homes, and how they share their collections with the public. Above all, I feel so lucky to go to work surrounded by such beauty and history, and when I walk through the early 19th-century portico at the front of the house I have to pinch myself to remember just how lucky I am.

'The Dukes of Richmond and The Coronation' runs until the end of September and can be viewed with a ticket to tour the house. www.goodwood.com. Follow Clementine's work at Goodwood on Instagram at @thehistorygal