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Curators, Dukes, and Lords

Graham Hood, curator of collections, talked with Lou Powers about his research on Lord Botetourt and the Palace.

LP: Many of us have heard that you went to England this summer on a research trip concerning Lord Botetourt and the refurnishing of the Palace. What exactly were you looking for? How did you know where to look?

GH: I knew where to begin my research because there are copies of eighteenth-century letters here in the research department that were provided to us in the 1960s by Bryan Little, an English historian who was interested in the English career of Lord Botetourt. His article on that subject appeared in the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography,* LXIII (1955). He came across these letters from Williamsburg written in 1770 and 1771, as well as a copy of the Palace inventory, in the muniment room at Badminton while he was working on that article. (A muniment room is a storage area for family records.) He kindly copied the letters for us and sent them over. We were not really interested in the inventory at that time, since the Palace exhibit wasn't being reworked then and we already had a copy.

So, thanks to Mr. Little, I knew that I wanted to begin my work at Badminton in Gloucestershire, home of the duke of Beaufort. I corresponded with the duke (mainly through his secretary) and received permission to study them and was told that the business papers had been loaned to the Gloucestershire County Record Office. The personal and private materials are still at Badminton.

LP: What's the connection between Botetourt and Badminton? Why were the Palace materials in an English country house?

GH: Botetourt's only sibling, a sister, married the younger brother of the third duke of Beaufort (whose family seat was Badminton). The third duke died childless. His younger brother, Botetourt's brother-in-law, became the fourth duke, so Botetourt's sister became the duchess.

When Botetourt wrote his will, not having any legitimate offspring, he left most of his estate to his sister's family. His principal heir was his nephew who, by the time of the governor's death, was the fifth duke. Eventually these papers got put in the muniment room at Badminton, and that's where this English historian found them, so that's where I went looking.

LP: You said "legitimate" offspring? Were there illegitimate ones?

GH: Apparently Botetourt had a natural son and left him an annuity. This son and he

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The Exchange

The editors of *The Interpreter* are delighted with the many exchanges that have occurred as a result of this publication. Numerous interpreters have suggested future topics, while others have asked specific historical questions that need to be answered in forthcoming issues of either *The Interpreter* or *Questions and Answers*. We will continue to respond to these suggestions and questions, because that is why these periodicals exist. Recently, Mark Pepper of the Windmill offered the following extension of Shomer Zwelling's observations about "Why Historians Disagree" (*The Interpreter,* Vol. 1, No. 3, November). Mark's comments address the problem of accuracy in historical documents: "It is often hard to recognize useful and accurate information. For instance, the Royal Society in England sent Thomas Glover in the late seventeenth century to send back scientific observations in Virginia. Mr. Glover completed his study and published it with high recommendations from the Royal Society. In it is a brilliant piece on tobacco cultivation and preparation. . . . Al-

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corresponded and seemed to have had an affectionate relationship. I'm not quite sure what the protocol of the day was, but I suspect that if one had some affection for one's natural child, one left him or her something but not everything.

LP: Since we already had a copy of the 1770 inventory, why were you so keen on seeing the one in England?

GH: We have a Virginia version that survived in a public collection in Richmond. It's the *working* copy, made before the final and fair document was sent to the duke. I was very eager to compare the final version with the working copy here to see if there were any differences, and if those differences might tell us anything about the Palace that we didn't already know.

LP: And did you find the fair copy?

GH: I finally found it three hours before I was due to leave. I had written to them weeks, if not months, ahead of time to say that I wanted to see the inventory. As soon as I got there, I said that was one of the things I most wanted to look at. I had been there two and a half days, and it took them that long to find it.

LP: Why was it so misfiled?

GH: Well, it was not so much misfiled as put in another place by the late Queen Mary (the mother of George VI and wife of George V), who had been sequestered in Badminton during the Second World War to get her away from the bombing of London.

One of her little projects was to work with the family papers and discover connections as far back as the sixteenth century between the Somerset family (the surname of the dukes of Beaufort) and the royal family. She had become interested in Botetourt because he was a Groom of the Bedchamber of George III. When she came across his papers, the queen shuffled them around, and this inventory she put in a package entitled "Interesting Things."

LP: That's the understatement of the year!

GH: Finally it was "Interesting Things" that located the document. Here I was tearing my hair out, searching through two floors of records at Badminton, on all fours or knee-deep in dust, looking for that blithering inventory.

At last I said to the people helping me, "I believe that when Mr. Little saw this inventory some years ago, it had been put in an envelope by Queen Mary and labelled "Interesting Things."

"Why didn't you say so in the first place?" they asked. A little cabinet stands right in the middle of the floor in the muniment room. Down at the bottom of the cabinet there's a little drawer only a few inches deep labelled "Interesting Things."

LP: Besides the inventory, what other sorts of information were you looking for?

GH: I was really going through and looking for everything relating to Botetourt from, say, 1765 to 1770. Before 1768 he had no knowledge that he was coming to Virginia, and Bryan Little had gone through much of the earlier material anyway.

From Virginia sources I knew that Botetourt's executors in Virginia had sent copies of the General Court records about the governor's estate to the duke, his heir. Originals of the General Court records were, of course, destroyed. I really wanted anything pertaining to his households in England and Virginia.

LP: What were you able to find?

GH: First of all, I found two inventories of Botetourt's house, Stoke Park, just outside Bristol. The first one I looked at is dated mid-1780s during the stay of Botetourt's sister who had gone to live there as the dowager duchess.

The next one turned out to be an inventory of Botetourt's English house compiled on the eve of his leaving for Virginia. William Marshman wrote it. We knew Marshman was Botetourt's butler here in Williamsburg. Next to some of the items is the annotation "sent to Virginia." The list was corrected and checked in December 1770, just a few weeks after Botetourt's death. It will be very interesting to compare how Botetourt's Virginia house and his English house were furnished.

One of the items I had called for at the County Record Office turned out to be a group of books. The first I looked at was a small, thin, paperback that lists servants' salaries back to about 1765. I recognized quite a few of the names as having been members of the Palace staff. Besides salaries, it also tells us which of the servants from Stoke Botetourt brought with him to Williamsburg.

LP: How many and what kinds of servants came to the Palace?

GH: Twelve in all, including a gardener, an undercook, a draper, a smith, and a carpenter. Without this notebook we would know only that the governor brought with him "a great many" servants of his own.

The next book I looked at was entitled something like "An Account of William Spar-

row with His Excellency the Right Honorable Lord Botetourt in the Palace at Williamsburg." I didn't know who Sparrow was, but this turns out to be the kitchen account book for about eighteen months kept by the cook. It shows supplies bought on a daily basis, how much of what was ordered, and the prices — not just for food — but for other things like hardware too.

Next I opened a pigskin book. On the inside is the heading "Work Done with the cart, Thomas Gale and Samuel King." It lists all the cartmen's activities, like bringing stuff in from the farm, taking goods to Yorktown, Capitol Landing or College Landing, what it was, where it was going to or coming from.

By this time I was in a daze! The next book was incredible! "An Account of Money Received and Dispersed for the use of the Right Honourable Lord Botetourt Beginning May 14, 1769 by William Marshman," and it goes up to the time of Botetourt's death. It's official money received for marriages licenses, ordinary fees, Mediterrean passes, and much more. That it was kept by Marshman implies that he acted in the capacity of private secretary as well as butler. It is the only account I'm aware of that tells the daily details of a governor's work. This volume will be invaluable to John Hemphill in his study of royal governance.

The last of these three similar pigskin volumes was a petty cash book starting in June 1768. It seemed obvious to me that Botetourt at that point knew he was going to Virginia. He must have told Marshman to keep an account. By August he and his servants were on their way to Williamsburg. This account book lists their travel expenses and hundreds of items in Williamsburg like Mr. Bucktrout's bill, Mr. Anderson's bill, Mr. Geddy's bill, tips to "Mr. Wythe's man for bringing humming birds," and "Colonel Lee's man for bringing raspberries," and so forth. It's a fantastic notation of the things coming into the Palace.

That's the main body of material I saw in Gloucestershire. There was one more important account book. It starts with the cabinetmaker William Fenton of London and gives a long and very detailed description of the refurbishing of the state coach. The coach must have been very, very elegant, a real eye-opener and mind-boggler to some people in Williamsburg. They could never have seen anything like it! Even the edges of the wheels were gilded!

Then this volume lists furniture sent over here from Fenton, including mahogany chairs, many yards of Wilton carpet, and — very interesting to me — "2 reams of fine large elephant paper" and "500 feet of gadroon gilt molding." The last two were for the ballroom. The paper came in large ("elephant") folio rather than rolls. It's exciting to know the exact pattern of the border. Twelve bamboo chairs are listed here, along with clothes-presses and so forth. All these entries are vital for our plans to refurnish the Palace.

LP: What changes will your research bring to the Governor's Palace by April?

GH: Well, as far as the furnishings are concerned, it gives us the information we need to proceed with papering the ballroom, and we now know the color of the bamboo chairs. We have an excellent description of the library table (but I don't think we're going to have one quite that ornate — we'll have to look around for one a bit more elaborate than the present one).

The main effects on interpretation are still to be determined, because there's a wealth of social history in those books that will take us a long time — months and months — to digest properly. We can't possibly retrieve all the nuggets of information out of those accounts in time to get them into the interpretation by April. These materials will affect our interpretation for some time to come and will enormously enrich our understanding of the whole Williamsburg community and the Palace in particular. The accounts cover in detail a long enough time that we can begin to plot certain events with regularity and see that they were customs or habits.

LP: Did you meet the present duke and duchess of Beaufort?

GH: Oh yes, I did. They're both elderly but still quite active. They were very, very kind and very helpful. The duke gave permission for these documents to be microfilmed for thorough analysis by the Foundation's historians and curators. He has also said that we can borrow one of the account books for an exhibit here, but we're not quite sure yet which book or where it might be displayed.

LP: All in all, what was the high point of the research trip for you?

GH: The high point was opening that account book and seeing "An Account with His Excellency the Right Honourable Lord Botetourt at the Palace in Williamsburg." At the Palace in Williamsburg! *At the Palace in Williamsburg!*

Life in the English Country House

A book review by Mildred Arthur

Sometimes the physical aspect alone of a book makes it a joy to pick up, handle, and thumb through. Mark Girouard's *Life in the English Country House* is one such book. Glossy paper, easily readable type, handsome illustrations, many in color: all a sensuous treat.

But there is much more. Girouard has written a remarkably informative book that in lucid prose traces from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century the evolution of the English country house to meet the changing lifestyles of England's upper classes.

The "power houses," as he calls them, were the houses of a ruling class — power based on the ownership of land used originally not for farming but for tenants and the rent that came with them. The country houses that stood on that land became the symbol of the owners' importance. Size, elegance, pretension: these told the story.

We learn how the elite ran their estates and, when possible, ran the country; how they were served, sometimes on bent knee, by footmen, butlers, pages; how they entertained on the grand scale; and how that entertainment could affect their lives and fortunes. We learn how and why great halls, libraries, morning rooms, smoking rooms, still rooms (for distilling medicine or scent), conservatories, and chapels came into their houses. We learn that galleries, intended originally to be protected corridors leading from one place to another, soon became enclosed areas for exercise in bad weather. Early seventeenth-century virtuosos (defined by the earl of Shaftesbury as "real fine gentlemen — lovers of art and ingenuity") contributed to the gallery's changing decor. These gentlemen, in pursuit of art, became collectors of it. They had to put those collections somewhere. The gallery became the receptacle for the larger objects such as statuary and paintings, the cabinet or closet for the smaller ones.

Envision the social, possibly political implications just in the service of a meal in the medieval household . . . whether a man sat at the reward end above the salt or at the "board" end of the table below the salt. What do the back stairs, the green baize door, the bellrope, the billiards table tell us about the people who introduced these features into their houses and used them?

Girouard progresses from the formal to the social to the informal house, and later to the moral house in the Victorian age. This, with its tracery and stained glass gothic design, represented ethical principles and a touch of piety. Girouard supplies us with a wealth of illuminating details that resurrect the people who moved through the rooms of these houses and left within their walls the architectural evidence of the varied stories of their lives.

The Exchange, *continued*

though the article was sanctioned as the truth, his sighting of a mermaid in the James River is an obvious fallacy."

You will notice that this issue of *The Interpreter* is twice as large as last's. Today we are introducing a periodic insert. We call it *Fresh Advices: A Research Supplement.* Coordinated by the Research Department, *Fresh Advices* will contain important interpretive information from other divisions within the Foundation. This issue informs us of important early findings of that massive research effort known as the York County Project.

The King's English

Definitions of some objects listed in the Botetourt inventory:

Bowfat — "In the Bowfat" in Botetourt's dining room were assorted pieces of ornamental and useful china, cut glass, and sweetmeats for dessert. *Bowfat*, an English corruption of the French *buffet*, denotes a storage cupboard, often built-in, like the one being built into the wall left of the dining room fireplace in the Palace; the word was sometimes used to mean a movable piece of furniture.

A Glass Lustre w^th^ 12 Branches — in the supper room. Glass chandeliers were commonly referred to as lustres in the period.

Shagreen or **Chagrin** — an untanned shark's skin, often dyed green or black, used to cover cases for small accessories such as knives, razors, and shoe buckles.

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