



KEDLESTON HALL

a temple of the arts

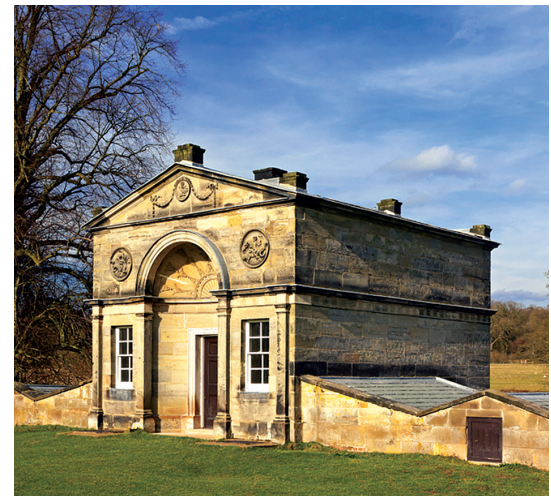
The Curzon family is one of the oldest of the English aristocracy, having arrived with William the Conqueror in 1066. Their name is derived from Notre-Dame-de-Courson in Normandy and they have owned the Kedleston estate in Derbyshire since 1297, writes Judith Dunn.

As country squires, the Curzons built and lived in a series of manor houses. The first to be ennobled, as Baronet, was Sir John Curzon (1599-1686), who sat in the House of Commons and supported the Parliamentarians in the English Civil War. It was the 5th Baronet, Sir Nathaniel Curzon, created 1st Baron Scarsdale in 1761, who commissioned Kedleston Hall. After his father, the 4th Baronet, died in 1758 he lost no time in

planning his stately home, intended to rival nearby Chatsworth House, seat of the Cavendish family, Dukes of Devonshire.

Given to the National Trust in 1987 by the 3rd Viscount Scarsdale, Kedleston Hall is truly a Temple of the Arts, both in its external structure and its magnificent interior and contents. Let's take a tour.

James Paine and Matthew Brettingham were the first architects Curzon called upon in 1759. Their design for the north front, seen in Image 1 as approached across a bridge, drew on the ideas of Andrea Palladio for the Villa Mocenigo on the Venetian mainland. Palladio was a hugely influential 16th century architect whose great gift was to take inspiration from classical sources and adapt these



models to the functional needs and taste of his own period. The Villa Mocenigo never materialised, but Kedleston gives us an idea of how it might have looked. The north front is some 107 metres long and dominated by the huge six-columned Corinthian portico. Italian Renaissance influence is also visible in the structure: the ground floor is of rusticated stone, the upper floors ashlar or dressed stone.

However, there the involvement of Brettingham and Paine ended. The bridge and the rest of the Hall is the work of



This page, top: **Image 1** shows the north front of Kedleston Hall, seen here as approached across a bridge. ©National Trust Images/Robert Morris. Left is **Image 2**: The south front – quintessential Robert Adam. ©National Trust Images/Rupert Truman. Above is **Image 3**: The Fishing Room, which was used as a boat and (cold) bath house and for picnics and rests during fishing trips, rather than actual fishing. ©National Trust Images/Robert Morris. Opposite page: **Image 4** and the wow factor! The Marble Hall rises the full height of the house and evokes the atrium of a Roman villa. ©National Trust Images/Nadia Mackenzie



Visitors to Kedleston Hall are able to experience that rarest of creatures: a private palace of the 18th century in near complete and pristine condition.

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The library at Kedleston consists of roughly 1400 books, with the most striking feature being the magnificent collection of architectural books. In addition to the main collection, Lord Curzon's basement rooms contain a large number of later nineteenth and early twentieth-century books that form at least part of the working collection of George Nathaniel Curzon, 1st Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy of India from 1898 to 1905.

Robert Adam. Adam would soon be a household name, but in 1759 he was an unknown architect, given the job of designing features (follies, temples and so on) for the park. Among these was the bridge, eventually built a decade or so later. Curzon was so impressed with his drawings that he soon made Adam responsible for the whole house.

The Hall has three sections, each with three floors. The central block is the biggest and houses the State Rooms. These, as their name suggests, were intended to impress and to be used for important guests. The east wing (or pavilion) is a separate, self-contained family house whose private apartments are still

dedicated to the daily life of the Curzons; the 3rd Viscount's son now lives there. A matching west pavilion contained the kitchens and all the other domestic and supply facilities, as well as accommodation for the staff. Each pavilion is linked to the central block by curving corridors.

The south front is quintessential Robert Adam (*Image 2*). Born in Scotland, he spent five years on a Grand Tour of France and Italy, taking in classical sites and architectural principles. He developed his own style, both in structure and ornament, which in turn proved highly influential. The four-column arch pictured is based on the triumphal Arch of Constantine in Rome. The central glass door on the first floor, or 'piano nobile', is reached via a double curved staircase. This and the decoration give the whole façade a lightness and mobility in striking contrast to the imposing north front. The 'piano nobile' houses the state apartments, significantly taller than those on the other floors. The central dome, only visible from a distance, neatly echoes the curve of the staircase.

The Fishing Room (*Image 3*) is a delightful neoclassical Adam building from 1771-2, cleverly linking two levels of Kedleston's plentiful water supply. It was used as a boat and (cold) bath house and



for picnics and rests during fishing trips rather than actual fishing. The front, on three levels, is designed to be seen from the bridge on the approach to the Hall.

The rear, seen in *Image 3*, features a triumphal arch structure and roundels, carved by stonemason George Money Penny, of seahorses ridden by putti.

Adam saw the interior and exterior of a building as all of a piece in design terms. The Marble Hall (*Image 4*) is exactly that and was meant to be as impressive as the façade, as guests entered through the north portico door on the 'piano nobile'. The Marble Hall rises the full height of the house and evokes the atrium of a Roman villa. There are twenty fluted alabaster columns, topped with Corinthian capitals, beneath a coved and decorated cornice. Classical statuary stands in niches beneath a frieze of *grisaille* panels, imitating sculpture. The

Left: *Image 5* shows The Circular Saloon. Completed in 1763, its design and décor recall the temples of the Roman Forum. ©National Trust. Images/Nadia Mackenzie
Top: *Image 6*: A dedicated music room. This is the only part of the main block in regular family use. ©National Trust Images/Robert Morris.
Above right: *Image 7* shows a bedroom in the State Apartments. The state bed with palm trunk and leaf design and ostrich feather plumes would have been made by the team of carvers working at Kedleston Hall in the eighteenth century. ©National Trust Images/Dennis Gilbert.



floor is inlaid with Italian marble. Adam's clever skylights dispense with the need for windows (a distraction) and maintain the illusion of a Roman villa courtyard without the inconvenience of English rain.

Guests proceed to the circular Saloon (Image 5), behind the triumphal arch of the south front. It too rises 62 feet to the top of the dome and enjoys natural light. Completed in 1763, its design and décor recall the temples of the Roman Forum and it serves as a sculpture gallery. The four double entry doors have heavy pediments and the supporting columns are faced with *scagliola*, made from selenite, glue and natural pigments. This technique was an inexpensive imitation of *pietra dura* marble inlay. In each of the four apses, stoves are camouflaged as pedestals for classical urns – another concession to English weather. The Saloon has a sprung wooden floor for dancing.

Architecture, sculpture, dance – arts are spectacularly catered for at Kedleston. Any self-respecting stately home needs music and a dedicated room (Image 6). This is

the only part of the main block in regular family use and contains an organ by John Snetzler, in an Adam-designed case carved by a team of carvers at Kedleston in 1765.

Image 7 shows a bedroom in the State Apartments. Adam considered the furnishings to be as much a part of his brief as the structure of the house, and the Grand Tour theme is maintained throughout the 'piano nobile' in bedrooms and reception rooms alike. The state bed with palm trunk and leaf design and ostrich feather plumes would have been made by the team of carvers at Kedleston Hall in the eighteenth century.



Kedleston was designed not as a family home, but as a showpiece palace for lavish entertaining and the display of Sir Nathaniel's collections of paintings and sculpture. Visitors were welcomed from the moment the house was finished in 1765.

The Family Corridor shown in Image 8 leads to the family pavilion and boasts another art form – Kedleston's collection of portraits. Note the curved floorboards, following the curve of the building.

Robert Adam appreciated Nathaniel Curzon as being 'Good temper'd & having taste himself for the Arts and little for Game', as he wrote to his brother. Clearly later generations had a lot more taste for game,

as witnessed by the Trophy Corridor (Image 9), below the Kitchen Corridor, where all manner of birds and beasts are stuffed or impaled...

Adam's *trompe l'oeil*, 'Design of a Ceiling for the Painted Breakfasting Room' (1768) shown in Image 10 is typical of his creativity. He noted that the room was '25 feet Diam.'

The Curzons reached the pinnacle of the aristocracy when George Nathaniel Curzon (1859-1925) was created an Earl in 1911. He had been Viceroy of India from 1898 to 1905. This was no sinecure; he knew India well and was an ardent reformer. His love of the country is reflected in the wealth of artefacts at Kedleston, displayed in the Eastern Museum shown in Image 11.

Also on display is Lady Curzon's Delhi Durbar dress (Image 12), worn for the Coronation celebrations of Edward VII in 1903. It was designed by Worth of Paris and was lavishly embroidered with precious stones in a peacock feather pattern – the dress weighs more than 4.5kg. The stones are now imitation, but the effect is sumptuous; a guest at the ball remarked: "You cannot conceive what a



Top: Image 8 shows The Family Corridor. ©National Trust Images/Nadia Mackenzie. **Left: Image 9** shows The Trophy Corridor below the Kitchen Corridor, where all manner of birds and beasts are stuffed or impaled... ©National Trust Images/Dennis Gilbert **Above: In Image 10** we see Adam's *trompe l'oeil*, 'Design of a Ceiling' for the painted Breakfasting Room. ©National Trust Images/Angelo Hornak.



KEDLESTON HALL *a temple of the arts cont.*

dream she looked”.

Kedleston Hall’s vast rolling gardens are the venue for Jaguar Fair’s twice yearly Antiques in the Park – a three-day event with in excess of 1000 exhibitors under canvas and out in the open. It also hosts a wide range of smaller events such as vintage and classic car shows (Image 13). The gardens were landscaped in the 1760s as a fashionable 'Pleasure Ground' of the period, and a 'ha ha' allows uninterrupted



views of the parkland and grazing areas beyond. There are numerous sculptures and architectural features with a summerhouse and an orangery. The Park covers 820 acres and was designed by Robert Adam, who created the five lakes as well as various smaller buildings and walks.

Kedleston Hall is near the village of Kedleston in Derby, in the UK. It’s open for group tours from 16 February 2013 and to the general public from 9 March until October. The Hall closes in the winter months, but there are occasional special events and the Park is open daily from 10am to 4pm. Further details on the website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/kedleston



Above: In **Image 11** George Nathaniel Curzon’s love of India is reflected in the wealth of artefacts at Kedleston. ©National Trust Images/Robert Morris. Left: **Image 12** shows Lady Curzon’s Delhi Durbar dress, worn for the Coronation celebrations of 1903 and known as The Peacock Dress. ©National Trust Images/Andreas von Einsiedel. Above: **Image 13**: Kedleston hosts a wide range of events, such as vintage and classic car shows. Ivor Hughes

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