



MANNERS THAT MAKETH THE MAN

Most aristocrats are *gentlemen for*, in the main, they not only have a line of descendancy and family history to attach to their existence. They can also, presumably, exercise a degree of independence of spirit and character much less enjoyed by those in the common pursuit of merely earning a living for its own sake. Charming, interested in people whilst being somewhat modest in character are the observations made of Lord Edward Manners - whose family pedigree and sense of history is embodied in the hauntingly beautiful Haddon Hall. *Rebecca Stark*



LORD EDWARD MANNERS is the owner of one of Derbyshire's most well-known and well-loved local landmarks, Haddon Hall. Once described as "the most perfect house to survive from the Middle Ages", the Hall was originally owned by the descendants of William the Conqueror's illegitimate son, Peverel before passing through marriage to Lord Edward's family in the sixteenth century. The property has been owned by the family ever since.

Lord Edward, 43, is a son of the late tenth Duke of Rutland. One of four children from his father's second marriage to Frances Sweeney, he was raised at the family seat of Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire. He was 33 when he inherited Haddon - although his father's declining health meant that he was, in effect, running the estate's affairs and the family's hotel, The Peacock in Rowsley, for some time before then from his base in London.

Working for a corporate finance company, Lord Edward describes how he very often had to take to "dingy coffee shops and Covent Garden's alleyways" in order to take the calls necessary to run the family business alongside his day job. Haddon is, in actual fact, part of a much wider legacy. "With the dying out of the Rutland line at the end of the seventeenth century, our line took over the main one and there were places all over the shop!", he declares. Elder brother David inherited the family seat of Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire, along with the title Duke of Rutland. "Haddon was always the oldest and coldest," says Lord Edward. "But the most romantic".

One gets the impression that Lord Edward rises to a challenge. Clearly comfortable in wax jacket and accompanied by terrier *Marley*, his approach to running the Estate - the fisheries, woods, the restaurant and most particularly the Hall - has, over the last decade, been very much hands-on.

Once in his possession, it was clear from the outset what a massive undertaking his new role would be. "Where to start - was the biggest question we faced", he recalls. "Some parts of the building such as the curtain wall of the house and parts of the Eagle Tower are 900 years old. The first thing I did was to commission a full condition survey to identify what needed to be done and in what order".

restoration plan

One of the first items on the list of the resulting 30-year restoration plan was work on three windows in the fifteenth-century chapel. The vertical 'flow' of glass over the centuries had rendered the glass, in places, less than a millimetre thick. With painstaking care, the windows were removed, dismantled, gently cleaned and then re-set.

This is the second time in its history that the Hall has undergone such dedicated restoration. Whilst there had always been a caretaker and routine repairs were undertaken, it had, in fact, been in semi-abandonment up until the early 1900s. For the two hundred years prior to that, the family had used the Estate for nothing more than picnics, choosing to spend their time in other more comfortable and fashionable properties.

"That changed when my grandfather, the ninth Duke of Rutland inherited the Hall. Not only did he love it as a boy, he was a great historian, archivist and archaeologist. He couldn't wait to get his hands on it!". Caring for the Hall was a labour of love and Lord Edward describes how his grandfather removed, one-by-one, the tapestries in the Long Gallery in order to photograph and catalogue each one. Sadly, in 1925, a fire in the stable



Lord Edward and Lady Saskia with their dogs



block - where the tapestries were temporarily hung during the archive process - decimated half the collection. Those that survived - a number of handsome English, Flemish and French tapestries, along with five early seventeenth century tapestries thought to have once belonged to King Charles I - are still in Lord Edward's possession. The fact that he has kept even the most scorched fragments suggests the collection's great sentimental worth.

Ultimately however, the biggest challenge is to make the Hall economically viable and, with his background in corporate finance and a degree gained from Edinburgh University in Economic History and Politics, Lord Edward clearly has the ability to bring to run his business affairs. "The houses, barns, bridges and hedges require lots of maintenance but are not productive so we need to ensure the Hall can support its upkeep through opening the house to visitors and through the restaurant and gift shops."

The Hall opened for the Christmas period for the first time in December and Lord Edward was happy to report on its success. "We had a great reaction and a staggering 4,500 people visited over the eight-day period. I think people particularly liked the older parts of the Hall which were decorated with Medieval and Tudor trimmings, evergreen foliage with silk ribbons which were simple, but effective: and of course the medieval re-enactment groups were present, dancing and generally, as always, enjoying themselves whilst bringing some atmosphere to the place".

Haddon Hall has reached a rather more global audience through its popularity with film-makers. An excellent source of income for the Hall, its appeal is set to continue as demand for period dramas and an escape to a more romantic era show no signs of waning for film goers. Over recent years, it has been the setting for the 2005 film *Pride and Prejudice* featuring Keira Knightley and Dame Judy Dench and last year's BBC production *Jane Eyre* along with *The Other Boleyn Girl* with Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson.

This is certainly an aspect of the job that enthralled Lord Edward. "Film people are such fun! The crew that filmed *Jane Eyre* was here for three months over the middle of winter and it was absolutely perishing. The actors had to put ice cubes in their mouths to disguise their breath on camera". For one cast member in particular, the experience was a memorable one. "I can remember one day, we were filming the scene where the madwoman jumps to her death. I noticed a woman sat on her own, chain-smoking and looking decidedly uncomfortable. 'What on earth's the matter?' I asked. 'I'm the stuntwoman!' was the reply!" he laughs. "There's not much call for real stunts these days because so much can be done through computer generation. With a 60-foot drop from the Duke's tower into a small courtyard, the poor woman was understandably nervous but did an excellent job with no second take required."

Lord Edward clearly enjoys the atmosphere of the film set and comments by the producer in his on-line Production notes stand testament to his warmth: "After three months, Lord Edward is not only still talking to us, but is taking us out for dinner. He is fantastic company - a great host, knowledgeable, funny, interesting, interested. It's a lovely end to our Haddon experience".

hydroelectric plant

This year will see two rather more earthy ventures. Firstly, permission has been granted for a hydroelectric plant at the redundant Alport Mill. Due for completion in June, it will borrow water from the River Lathkill before pumping it back forty metres on and will power thirty five homes in the



The chapel (overleaf) is where family ancestors have been laid to rest - above history recreated in a recent BBC production of *Jane Eyre*.

village. All electricity generated will be sold into a local network and will each year save a hundred tonnes of carbon dioxide entering the Earth's atmosphere. "I want the Estate to be more self-sufficient and water is a dependable source of energy with less environmental impact than wind power," explains Lord Edward, adding philosophically, "It's like planting trees; it's not about our lifetime".

The second project involves extending the Estate's medieval park with its grasses and wild flowers - parts of which have never been touched - to rear rare breeds of cattle. Produce from the Estate direct to the menu at *The Peacock* - the ultimate in 'farm to fork' self-reliance.

These days, Lord Edward splits his time between a home in London and two quite different ones in Derbyshire. As the Hall "needs some getting going to get some steam up", he and his wife of four years, Saskia, generally reserve its use for entertaining friends. The rest of the time they are happily ensconced in their nearby three-bedroomed farmhouse which in a former life was a bowling pavilion.

It would seem Lord Edward enjoys the best of both worlds "without being stuck in either" - the cut and thrust of his own corporate finance company

in London and the rather more sedate pace of life at the Hall where he is able to indulge a newly-acquired passion for photography. "I enjoy shooting landscapes. Who wouldn't; it's just so beautiful around here". He takes a moment to reflect: "But what I really like is photographing people, captured in whatever situation".

Lord Edward appears a man of contrasts - convivial host yet a naturally quiet character who is happier to photograph rather than be photographed. Not one to court publicity, he does not often grant interviews and would rather the spotlight remain firmly on Haddon. Like his grandfather before him, he modestly sees his contribution to this ancestral home - both public and personal - as one that should last longer than his own lifetime. And if his enterprises prove to be good fun along the way, so much the better. ■

Editor's note: Haddon opens on April 4 on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. From May 1 to September 30 it is open every day except for June 27 and 28. From October 3 to 31 it is open on Saturday, Sunday and Monday and from December 5 to 13, open daily. Daily opening times are noon to 5pm - except 10.30 to 3.30pm in December.