

Pre-visit Powerpoint Teachers' notes

## AN INTRODUCTION TO HOLKHAM ESTATE

This PowerPoint presentation is designed to be used as an introduction to all elements of life at Holkham. It's much more than just a big house with old furniture. We hope you find this resource useful and that you and your pupils can use it to extend your knowledge of the estate before you arrive here for your fantastic visit! Included at the end are some suggested pre-visit activities that can easily be adapted to suit your children.

## THE COKE FAMILY

Thomas Coke - 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Leicester (pictured right), Thomas Coke – 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Leicester (pictured middle) Sir Edward Coke - Lord Chief Justice (pictured left). The family tree is a big one and rather complex. The three Cokes pictured are perhaps the most in the family's history. The current Earl is very down to earth and forward looking and has continued his father's work of making the estate a welcoming place for visitors and ensuring it runs as an efficient business. The estate employs 250+ people all in different jobs and so is a very important employer in the local area. The 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Leicester was a huge collector of art and brought hundreds of important paintings and sculptures back from his very long holiday in Italy! Sir Edward Coke (not an Earl) was a very important lawyer and made lots and lots of money which he spent purchasing the land which made up the Holkham Estate.

## THE BUILDING OF THE HALL

Holkham Hall is privately owned and a lived-in family home. It is home to the 8th Earl of Leicester. As well as Lord Leicester and his family, two other families live here throughout the year and although the house is closed to the public in the winter, it is never empty or idle. Its library, statues, paintings and furniture are a major source for academic research. Holkham has loaned paintings, furniture and manuscripts to galleries and museums in Italy, Germany, England, Japan and America. The Hall is a member of the Treasure Houses group which consists of ten of the most magnificent palaces, houses and castles in England today.

The Hall is said to have been so carefully and symmetrically built that, if you look through the keyhole of the final door at the west end of the wings, you can see through all the keyholes of all the doors right through to the last door at the east end of the wings!

## CHANGES TO THE HALL

The Hall remains much how it was 200-300 years ago, but some modern changes have been required. Lord Leicester thinks using environmentally friendly energy is very important and so the carbon footprint of the Hall is kept as low as possible. Specially tinted windows have been installed and room temperature and humidity levels are carefully checked in order to protect the priceless paintings and sculptures.

## THE GRAND TOUR AND ART COLLECTION

When the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl brought back all the works of art from his 'Grand Tour' to decorate the hall, bubble wrap had not yet been invented. Instead, it is said that the paintings were packed in acorns. The beautiful evergreen oak trees that you can now see in the park grounds were, legend has it, grown from these acorns.

## HOLKHAM PARK

### **Fallow Deer**

(800) on right – Spots, Long tail, Up to 95cm tall with Palmate (hand-shaped) antlers. Bucks (males), Does (females) and Fawns (young) are quite relaxed and you can get quite close to them.

### **Red Deer**

(40) on left - No spots, No tail, Up to 120 cm tall, Pointed antlers, Stags (males), Hinds (females) and Fawns (young). Very shy and hard to see. Famous for their rutting during mating season.

Both are Herbivores – eat grass, berries and nuts. Mate in autumn and babies are born in the spring.

Deer at Holkham are culled every year to control the herd size. The venison (meat) is used by the family, the chefs at The Victoria and is also sold to local butchers.

The Monument was built between 1845-50 in memory of Thomas William Coke, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl (2<sup>nd</sup> Creation), who popularised crop rotation. He also set up sheep shearings held at the Great Barn during which farmers showed their sheep just like at agricultural shows today.

The ice house was the original cold storage unit for the family and is beautifully designed.

The six acre walled gardens were kept by gardeners and fruit and veg were grown in them for the family to eat. They are now back in working order and once more provide the family with delicious, healthy food, as well as supplying The Victoria with fantastic produce for its menu. Local school children come here to study for a horticulture qualification and also help design some of the beds. There is also a new vineyard and there will soon be a jungle garden with rare plants from around the world. There are six bee-hives, which help with pollination and also provide honey, which is sold in the gift shop.

## FARMING METHODS AND INNOVATIONS

The huge area of farmland is mostly arable (crops). The small number of cows and sheep are used as natural lawnmowers to keep the grass low enough for birds to nest in. There is also a solar farm and an anaerobic digester – both are methods of renewable energy as the estate has had to diversify. Areas of land are planted specially with wild flowers or left uncultivated to provide habitat for some of the UK's endangered and declining farmland birds, such as the Grey Partridge, Turtle Dove, Skylark, Yellowhammer and Corn Bunting. The estate still hosts driven shoots during the autumn/winter during which the gamekeepers wear traditional tweed and bowler hats.

## NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

Just four Reserve Wardens look after the whole 9,000 acre reserve! It is an internationally important wintering site for tens of thousands of Pink Footed Geese and also a stop-off and resting spot for rare birds on their migration routes. Lord Leicester is interested in re-introducing the Red Squirrel to Holkham Pines, which were planted to act as protection for the grazing marshes and which help the formation and structure of the sand dunes. They are also home to the rare False Widow Spider! Around 40 Spoonbills nest and breed here each year. They use their spoon-shaped beaks to catch small fish, shrimps and insects in the reserve lagoons and are normally only found in much warmer countries.

## A TOURIST DESTINATION

Holkham Estate is a very important employer in the region and much of its income and work is generated by tourists and visitors. There are activities run by the Education Department during school holidays, such as Pond Dipping, Gardening Workshops, Halloween and Easter activities. There are also open air concerts and cinema screenings. The huge cycling festival 'Pedal Norfolk' has been hosted at the estate for three years now and gets bigger every year. The estate is continually looking for new areas of development and new attractions to offer the visiting public.