

A History of Cumberland Lodge

On 30 January 1649 Charles I was executed, England became a republic and Oliver Cromwell came to power. Within a short space of time the Crown lands were sold at preferential prices to officers in Cromwell's army, who had not been paid for years. One such was John Byfield, who bought a plot in Windsor Great Park for £4,000. On it he built a house, known initially as Byfield House, later New Lodge, Ranger's Lodge, Great Lodge, Windsor Lodge, and finally, from the late 18th century, as Cumberland Lodge.

On the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 Charles II re-possessed the Crown lands.

He made Byfield House the home of the Ranger – the overseer of the Great Park. Baptist May, Keeper of the Privy Purse, was given the job. It is during his time that the Long Walk linking Windsor Castle to the heart of the Great Park was laid out, the project starting in 1680.

'Bab' May died in 1697. The next Ranger at the Lodge was Lord Portland, a friend of King William III. He created the lime-tree avenue approaching the main entrance of the house.

In 1702, the same year that Portland died, Queen Anne came to the throne and gave the Rangership to Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, the only woman so far to hold the post. Normally grace and favour arrangements such as the Rangership end with the death of the Sovereign. However, a unique arrangement was made allowing Sarah Churchill, her husband and her son to occupy the Lodge for their lifetimes. The Marlboroughs enlarged and embellished the main Lodge and built the first version of the Mews, where, in the second half of the 20th century, their surviving buildings became houses for former royal employees. The Marlboroughs would have looked out on to marshy wasteland beyond the garden, though John Churchill encouraged the first attempts at drainage and lake formation in the Park.

John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, died in the Lodge in 1722. Sarah lived here until her death in 1744, leaving the Rangership to her grandson John Spencer, an ancestor of Diana, Princess of Wales.

After John Spencer's death just two years later, in 1746, the Rangership passed to William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, second son of King George II.

The Duke of Cumberland, from whom the Lodge takes its name, was a military man. His most famous victory was at Culloden in Scotland on 16 April 1746, the day after his 25th

birthday, when he defeated Bonnie Prince Charlie and thus stopped any prospect of the Stuarts returning to the throne.

The Duke was given the Rangership in 1746 as a reward for Culloden. In Scotland, however, because of the tough, even brutal, rule he imposed, he was given the nick-name 'Butcher' Cumberland.

The Duke of Cumberland greatly changed the Lodge and invested in landscaping its surroundings.

The magnificent view from the back of the Lodge today owes much to the landscaping in this period. The Duke also recruited the architect Henry Flitcroft to design additional buildings in the Mews, which date from 1750, and which stabled the great racehorse Eclipse.

William Augustus died in 1765 and was succeeded as Ranger by his nephew, Prince Henry, the 2nd Duke of Cumberland, who died in 1790. King George III then took on the Rangership and engaged the major architect of the day, James Wyatt, to give the Lodge a fashionably Gothic look. The money ran out, however, which is why the back of the building is Gothic but the front is not.

In 1841 Queen Victoria, who had known the Lodge as a child, made her husband, Prince Albert, the Ranger of the Great Park.

With a non-resident Ranger, various people lived in the Lodge in the first part of the Victorian period, including the Earl of Uxbridge, who was the Lord Chamberlain at the start of her reign, General Wemyss, who looked after the Prince's equestrian interests, and Alexander Hood, Equerry to The Queen.

Prince Albert died in 1861. The Rangership remained vacant until the appointment of Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein in 1866, following his marriage to Queen Victoria's daughter Princess Helena, but Colonel Hood was still living in the Lodge when, in November 1869, a catastrophic fire gutted a whole wing. Queen Victoria came over from the Castle to see what was happening. She wrote in her diary, 'Lord Bridport and I were pumped upon and got very wet'.

The ruined parts of the Lodge were re-built by 1872 and in that year Helena and Christian moved in.

It is from Cumberland Lodge that Princess Helena founded the Royal College of Nursing in 1916, and pursued her charitable works.

She was also the first President of the Royal School of Needlework, and early trustee meetings were held in the Lodge. Prince Christian died in 1917 and Princess Helena in 1923. The final private occupant of the Lodge was Lord FitzAlan of Derwent, last Viceroy of a united Ireland under British rule. Lord FitzAlan was never Ranger, but he lived at the Lodge from 1924 until his death in 1947.

As a friend of Lord FitzAlan, the Prime Minister of the day, Stanley Baldwin, often stayed here for shooting parties, so it was a natural place for him to choose Cumberland Lodge as

a venue for discussions in October 1936 when the constitutional crisis arose around King Edward VIII's desire to marry Wallis Simpson.

Following Lord FitzAlan's death in 1947, King George VI broke with tradition and Cumberland Lodge was made available to a new organisation coming into being as a result of Amy Buller's book *Darkness over Germany*, published in 1943. This told about the feelings of German students and academics in the Nazi Germany of the late 1930s, when Miss Buller was a frequent visitor.

Amy Buller feared that what had happened in Germany could happen in this country, and so wanted to establish a place where university students could reflect on the moral and spiritual issues of the time.

Her roots were Christian, but she wanted to create a space that would be open to people of all beliefs. Her ideas impressed many influential people, including William Temple, who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 to 1944, and Lord Halifax, who was Foreign Secretary from 1938 to 1940.

It was, however, her introduction to King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, who invited her to Buckingham Palace in 1943, that led to them offering her Cumberland Lodge as a place where she could realise her dream.

After the establishment of the foundation in 1947, the Lodge operated for many years mainly as an academic retreat and as a second home for Commonwealth students studying in this country. It was known as the St Catherine's Foundation.

During their stays at the Lodge, students had regular opportunities to discuss the big ethical and social issues of the day with leading intellectual figures and prominent people in public life, such as the philosophers Karl Popper and Paul Tillich, the poet T.S. Eliot, and the artist Stanley Spencer.

Those who visited the Lodge as students include the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, the writer Iris Murdoch, the physicist Peter Higgs, and the biologist Richard Dawkins.

The first Principal of the foundation, in 1943, was Sir Walter Moberly, a former Vice-Chancellor of Manchester University.

The foundation's first Board of Trustees was chaired by Lord Halifax and included the educationalist A.D. Lindsay (a former Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University and Principal of what became Keele University), and Fr Edward Talbot (Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, and Amy Buller's close friend and mentor).

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother was Patron of the foundation until her death in 2002, by which time the formal name of the organisation had become The King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Foundation of St Catherine, Cumberland Lodge.

Following the death of her mother, Queen Elizabeth II took up the role of Patron in February 2003.

In June 2005, a new incorporated charity, known simply as Cumberland Lodge, assumed the operating role and the assets of the foundation, which still exists as holder of the warrant for the property.

Over the years, Cumberland Lodge has developed in terms of both its range of activities and its facilities.

From 1970 to 1980 the Mews were converted into conference facilities and extra bedrooms, because in the early days the Lodge itself had accommodated all visitors. Under Lord Vaizey, who was Principal from 1982 to 1984, the whole complex of buildings was modernised and upgraded, and an emerging policy of accepting groups other than students was consolidated.

Shortly afterwards, we launched our own programme of St Catharine's Conferences and events, which was the basis for the wide range of cross-disciplinary conferences, seminars and events we organise today.

By the late 1980s, Cumberland Lodge had evolved into what is recognisable today: an educational foundation that aims to understand and address issues of social division by bringing people together and provoking fresh thinking and open discussion, to help bring about more cohesive societies. Our venue hire facilities help to support our charitable work. The Lodge offers a magnificent yet elegant and relaxed setting for private conferences, meetings, retreats, away days, professional development courses, weddings and other special events.