

William Hogarth painting saved for the nation

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City of Leicester Museums Trust secures *William Wollaston and his Family in a Grand Interior* by William Hogarth

Image



William Wollaston and his Family in a Grand Interior

The painting *William Wollaston and his Family in a Grand Interior* by eminent 18th-century English artist William Hogarth, has been allocated to New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester, via the Acceptance in Lieu scheme, following a campaign to save it for the nation.

Tax of £903,672 was settled by the acceptance of the painting. The value of the painting exceeded the liability on the estate and the City of Leicester Museums Trust launched the “Save the Hogarth Campaign”, which raised the £564,528 difference needed to secure the painting with generous grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) and Art Fund, and contributions made by the public of Leicester.

The Friends of Leicester & Leicestershire Museums, The Leicester Archaeological & Historical Society, The Leicester Literary & Philosophical Society and The Golden Bottle Foundation also played a vital part in the campaign.

William Wollaston and his Family by William Hogarth has been on loan to New Walk Museum and Art Gallery for 75 years; it has been enjoyed by generations of gallery visitors and now, due to the generous contributors to the fundraising campaign and the Acceptance in Lieu scheme, which is administered by the Arts Council, it will be enjoyed by many generations to come.

William Hogarth (1697 - 1764) is one of England's most acclaimed artists. Born in London at the end of the seventeenth century, he is most well-known for moral series including *A Rake's Progress* and *Marriage A-la-Mode*, and his prints such as *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*. Hogarth was instrumental in bringing so-called 'conversation pieces' – informal group portraits which could depict a large amount of people, often families – to the forefront of British artistic circles in the eighteenth century.

In this conversation piece, Hogarth depicts the Wollaston family, whose head, William Wollaston, was MP for Ipswich from 1733-41. Hogarth was commissioned to paint the piece, which depicts either the family's Charterhouse Square mansion, or their seat, Finborough Hall, Suffolk, after the death of Charlton Wollaston, the elder brother of William Wollaston and former head of the family. The extended period of mourning can be seen in the black clothing of some of the sitters, and cloths hung over wall decoration. Charlton's bust sits on the mantelpiece.

The painting has been passed down through the Leicester Wollaston family, who have been residents of Leicestershire since 1652, in the family owned estate of Shenton Hall, which the family still reside in today.

William Wollaston and his Family is on display to the public in New Walk Museum & Art Gallery and will remain so until 6 September 2019 before being removed for conservation cleaning in preparation for a series of public events and an exhibition dedicated to the work and the artist in early 2020.

Joanna Jones, Head of Arts, Museums, Festivals & Event for Leicester City Council, said: "We are grateful to everyone involved, this is such an important addition to Leicester's internationally recognised art collection."

Jim Roberts, Chair of the City of Leicester Museums Trust, said: "We are delighted to announce that the fundraising campaign reached its target, with the generous

support of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Art Fund, and the Arts Council, who were instrumental in its success.

It was important to demonstrate the support of the people of Leicester through £30,000 of our own funds, donated by visitors to the museum alongside contributions from The Friends of Leicester & Leicestershire Museums, The Leicester Archaeological & Historical Society, and The Leicester Literary & Philosophical Society. We're also grateful for the events run by the public – including a much attended 'Pug Parade' along Leicester's New Walk – which were hugely important to raising money and awareness!"

Edward Harley OBE, Chairman, Acceptance in Lieu Panel, said: "I would like to thank the Wollaston family for offering this wonderful picture to the nation through the Acceptance in Lieu scheme. I am delighted that it should be acquired for the New Walk Museum and Art Gallery in Leicester, where it has been on loan from the family since 1943. Hogarth is one of this country's greatest artists and his conversation pieces such as this represent some of his most fascinating works. I hope that this example will encourage others to use the Acceptance in Lieu scheme, which continues to bolster museum and gallery holdings with cultural treasures."

Sir Peter Luff, Chair of NHMF, said: "The popularity and influence of William Hogarth's pioneering 'conversation pieces' in the 18th century led to a genre that would come to be considered quintessentially British. One of the most important of these pieces remaining in the UK is *The Wollaston Family*. At the National Heritage Memorial Fund, we felt it was imperative that we should help to keep it here for future generations to enjoy."

Stephen Deuchar, Director of Art Fund, said: "This is such a great acquisition for Leicester - a real coup to have acquired a work of such landmark significance to both Hogarth's career and the wider history of 18th century British art. We are delighted to have helped."

Further information

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Notes to editors

The acceptance of the painting settled £903,672 of tax. As the tax settlement value generated by the offer exceeded the liability on the estate, the City of Leicester Museums Trust has made good the difference to the offerors with the assistance of generous grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund for £393,575 and from the Art Fund for £125,000. Financial support was also given by The Friends of Leicester & Leicestershire Museums, The Leicester Archaeological & Historical Society, The Leicester Literary & Philosophical Society and The Golden Bottle Foundation. A public fundraising campaign raised £14,952 towards the total, in just 70 days.

The **Acceptance in Lieu scheme** is administered by the Arts Council. The Acceptance in Lieu Panel, chaired by Edward Harley, advises on whether property offered in lieu is of suitable importance and offered at a value which is fair to both nation and taxpayer. AIL allows those who have a bill to Inheritance Tax to pay the tax by transferring important cultural, scientific or historic objects to the nation. Material accepted under the scheme is allocated to public collections and is available for all. In the last decade this important government initiative has brought over £330m worth of treasures into public ownership for the enjoyment of all.

The Arts Council is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk

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for their collections. It also helps museums share their collections with wider audiences by supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, and makes additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators. Art Fund is independently funded, with the core of its income provided by 151,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions and subscription to Art Quarterly magazine. In addition to grant-giving, Art Fund's support for museums includes Art Fund Museum of the Year (won by Tate St Ives in 2018) and a range of digital platforms.

Find out more about Art Fund and the National Art Pass at www.artfund.org