



# Welbeck is moving with the times

Once one of the richest abbeys in England Welbeck has entertained royalty and nobility throughout the centuries and has witnessed its fair share of English eccentricity.

Now the estate, one of the great landed estates, set mostly in Sherwood Forest, is reinventing itself once again.

The task of transforming one of the most important collections of heritage buildings in the county and breathing new life into the estate has fallen to the Welbeck Estates Company Ltd and its Director of Development is Nottingham Art History alumnus Robert Mayo.

But Robert is just the latest example of the strong ties that exist between the estate, the Dukes of Portland and the University for more than half a century.

The house was originally the principal family seat of the Earls and Dukes of Portland. After the Second World War the Dukes leased the Abbey to the Ministry of Defence who used it as a training facility, Welbeck College, until 2005.

Three years later the oldest surviving member of the family Lady Anne Cavendish-Bentinck, who continued to live on the estate, died one of the richest landowners in Britain, aged 92. Her father was William Cavendish-Bentinck, the 7th Duke of Portland, former Conservative MP for Newark, Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire and the Chancellor of The University of Nottingham from 1954 to 1971, hence the name of the University's Portland Building.

It was also the 7th Duke who deposited the

Portland Collections with the University's Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University in 1949, a collection which is designated by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council as having outstanding national significance.

Welbeck Abbey is a private family home with no public access; it is home to Lady Anne's nephew William Parente and his wife Alison who are overseeing the Welbeck Project.

"Our vision is true to Welbeck's tradition of innovation. We want to develop a sustainable community based on rural diversification, education, the creative industries and the arts," said Robert Mayo.

Last year the company co-financed the Studios in the Digital Age research project by Gianluca Sergi, Director of the University's Institute for Screen Industries Research in the Department of Culture, Film and Media.

"We've already attracted several organisations and established a vibrant and varied community, from a brewery to a company designing and producing top quality contemporary furniture."

The estate is home to some historically fascinating buildings including a riding house which, at the time it was built, was the second largest in the world, an underground ballroom and a network of underground tunnels built by the 5th Duke, who was known variously as reclusive and introverted but also a friend of the workmen who put into operations his many building projects.



"This historic and beautiful setting with its glorious architecture is already home to the award-winning Harley gallery, the Welbeck Farm Shop, the Limehouse Café, Welbeck Bakehouse and, of course, the School of Artisan Food which has an international reputation as a centre of excellence and a school dedicated to artisan food," said Robert.

"But we believe that many of our outbuildings offer a unique opportunity for others to be part of the Welbeck Project and to be woven into the rich tapestry of Welbeck's history."

Visit: [www.welbeck.co.uk](http://www.welbeck.co.uk).

You can find out more about the University's Portland Collection and access to it here: <http://tiny.cc/UoNWelbeck>. ■

