

14 November 2016

## Press information

### **Visitor Numbers are Booming at The Portland Collection**

Six months on since its opening, The Portland Collection continues to attract visitors from far and wide with footfall to the gallery, on the Welbeck estate in north Nottinghamshire, already over 40,000.

Unveiled to the public on Sunday 20th March, The Portland Collection at Welbeck houses treasures assembled over 400 years by the Dukes of Portland and their families, including works by Michelangelo and Van Dyck.

The Portland Collection is part of The Harley Foundation, a charitable trust which also runs the free entry Harley Gallery next door.

Since the opening of The Portland Collection, The Harley Gallery has reported a 25 percent increase in visitors, with a boost in visitors travelling over an hour and a half to visit the Courtyard at Welbeck.

George Buchanan, chair of the North Notts Place Board, said: "The Portland Collection is a window into the past of one extremely important, but wonderfully understated, family who've called Welbeck in North Notts their home for centuries. How does one family find in its possession the earring worn by Charles I when he was executed, a silver cigarette case from Archduke Franz Ferdinand, a Cartier tiara and personal letters from 6 Prime Ministers? Because they were there at the time, a witness to our nation's history. We are lucky and privileged to have a modern gallery filled with wonders with free entry on our doorstep."

Lisa Gee, Director at The Harley Foundation, said: "The past six months has been a whirlwind with positive visitor reactions to The Portland Collection gallery as well as a whole host of architecture awards for the new building. We've seen lots of families

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through our doors, as well as visitors from across the UK and abroad including the Isle of Man, France and Thailand. With the new gallery it's easy to while away a day in The Courtyard – since it opened we've noticed visitors are travelling from further away and staying longer."

The Portland Collection was named RIBA East Midlands' building of the year, as well as winning the East Midlands Sustainability Award, Heritage award and a prestigious national RIBA award. The Gallery most recently won a silver award in the American Architecture Prize, and is currently in the running for a 'Building' award and a Civic Trust award.

Businesses on the estate have also been thriving with an increase in trade. The award-winning Welbeck Farm Shop, situated in the Courtyard at Welbeck, has reported an increase in sales since the opening of The Portland Collection with customers especially enjoying locally made Stichelton blue cheese.

Welbeck Farm Shop manager Oliver Stubbins said: "It's been great to see new faces through our doors and especially nice to hear such positive feedback. It seems visitors are keen to not only look at the history of the estate, but also how it has transformed more recently, supporting local artists and artisan food producers. Many customers take home products made here on the estate, including Stichelton cheese, Bakehouse bread and the Welbeck Abbey Brewery ales"

Masterpieces of The Portland Collection include: Michelangelo's Madonna del Silenzio, on show for the first time in 50 years; Van Dyck's paintings of a young Charles II in armour and Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford, not publicly exhibited since 1960, as well as the pearl earring worn by Charles I at his execution in 1649.

The Portland Collection is internationally regarded for its miniatures, of which a new display has just opened selected by Art Historian Karen Hearn, curatorial advisor to The

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Portland Collection, honorary professor at UCL and previous Curator of 16th & 17th Century British Art at the Tate Galleries. The Portland Miniatures display will change every six months.

For more information visit: [www.harleygallery.co.uk](http://www.harleygallery.co.uk).

**-ENDS-**

### **Notes to editors:**

#### **The Portland Collection:**

The new gallery showcases masterpieces from The Portland Collection, including:

- Michelangelo's *Boy with a Snake* (c.1538), on show for the first time in 50 years
- A rarely seen Van Dyck painting of Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford and advisor to Charles I, not publicly exhibited since 1960
- The pearl earring worn by Charles I at his execution in 1649
- The Portland Tiara by Cartier worn by Winifred, Duchess of Portland to the coronation of Edward VII, and drawings of the tiara on display for the first time
- George Stubbs painting of the 3rd Duke of Portland on horseback outside the stables at Welbeck

#### **The Harley Gallery**

The Harley Gallery is where old and new come together. Home to the historic Portland Collection of fine and decorative art, displays from this internationally significant collection are accompanied by exhibitions from leading contemporary artists.

Additional attractions include events, ranging from tours of the State Rooms at Welbeck Abbey to meeting craftspeople at the Open Studios, a café serving homemade meals and snacks, shop specialising in contemporary crafts, and children's' activity area.

Situated on the picturesque Welbeck Estate in Nottinghamshire, The Harley Gallery is easily reached from the A1 and M1.

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# Press information

Free entry. Free parking.

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

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