

**Daylesford**  
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When on 26 August 1788, Warren Hastings (1732-1818), Governor General of Bengal from 1773-85, completed the purchase of Daylesford, a freehold estate encompassing a manor and over six hundred acres of land, he had been on trial for professional misconduct since February of the same year. The manor was derelict and the grounds unkempt – even so, Hastings paid £11,434, a not insignificant amount, considering his fortune was only £75,000, the majority of which he stood to lose, were he to be found guilty of the twenty-two charges brought against him in Parliament. But since it had long been Hastings' dream to buy back the house, which had been his family's seat from the reign of Henry II until 1715, when his great-grandfather was forced to sell; he was willing to take the risk. Although he would have to wait until 1795 before his name was cleared, he set out to improve the property according to the reigning, eighteenth-century tenets of enlightened landownership. Over the next seven years, Hastings spent the staggering sum of £60,000 in order to turn Daylesford into a haven for himself and his beloved wife Marian.<sup>1</sup>

Hastings' Daylesford journals record in great detail his enjoyment over his new role as gentleman farmer and his experiments in agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry; in 1787, he travelled as far as Scotland to learn the secrets of progressive tenant management.<sup>2</sup> Over the course of time, Hastings added to the property so that when Daylesford was sold in 1873, it comprised over a thousand acres. The advertisement of the sale shows that in addition to the mansion, it included the village and church of Daylesford, several farms, stabling, a well-timbered park, lakes, pleasure gardens, and 'an orangery heated with hot water pipes,' the latter building suggesting that Hastings and his German-born spouse missed the gardens of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> His correspondence furthermore shows that he wrote to his agents in India to send him lychee, cinnamon, and custard apple seeds, as well as Arab horses and shawl goats, so that he could recreate the exotic Arcadia the couple missed in England.<sup>4</sup>

The jewel in the Daylesford crown, however, was the house, designed by [Samuel Pepys Cockerell](#) and constructed at the exorbitant cost of £25,000.<sup>5</sup> Before [Sezincote](#) and the [Brighton Pavilion](#), it boasted a 'Mughal-style' dome whose interior Hastings had painted to evoke the skies over Bengal. Among the first collectors of Mughal drawings and art objects, he and his wife filled Daylesford with Indian treasures – ivories, silks, silver filigree ornaments, fly

flaps set with rubies and emeralds, an agate jewel casket with single-stone diamond spring to lock, Persian weaponry, and chain mail. These 'Oriental' antiques vied with Indian-inspired, Western art, such as the fireplace frescos by Thomas Banks, the scenes of William Hodges and the portraits of Johan Zoffany which, along with Hastings' extensive library on Indian subjects (the former Governor-General had commissioned the first translations of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and *The Hedaya*), intimated that Daylesford was the home of a true connoisseur, who knew and loved India better his detractors, Edmund Burke and Philip Francis.



Figure 1. Armchairs and table, Murshidabad, India, c.1785. Ivory, carved, pierced and partly gilded. [1075-1882](#). © Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Mani Begum of Murshidabad gave these pieces to Warren Hastings as a special gift.

At least three inventories of Daylesford are in existence. The first dates from 1799 and was probably made out by Marian Hastings; the second hails from 1837, the year of Marian's death and was authored by her son Sir Charles Imhoff and his fellow executors; the last was compiled in 1853, when the contents of the house were sold.<sup>6</sup> Allowing for change and loss, they all depict the rooms, furniture, and ornament fairly consistently. However, the final document is the most interesting to study, since [The Catalogue of the Valuable Contents of Daylesford](#)

[House, Worcestershire, The Seat of the Right Honorable Warren Hastings, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1853](#)

singles out wares as specifically ‘Indian’, and takes pains to describe Daylesford’s famous ivory furniture as, for example, ‘solid ivory superbly carved and richly gilt, the elbows finished off with tiger heads’, ‘six chairs of elbow chairs of equal magnificence’, and ‘a solid ivory table, silver laced’ (see figure 1).

A comparison between the inventories shows that, apart from a few insignificant pieces, the Hastings’ entire collection of precious ivory was sold on 22 August 1853. It is difficult to know what the couple would have made of its dispersal, given that they treasured it greatly – both as personal gifts of the Mani Begum, widow of Mir Jaffir, *and* as mementos of the high esteem in which they believed they were held by the nobility of Bengal. On 14 November 1785 Warren wrote to his wife, who had by then returned to England, that ‘The begum sent me more than one message expressive of her disappointment in my passing the city, as she had prepared an elegant display of your couches and chairs...They are since arrived, with a letter to you, recommended most earnestly to my care’ (see figure 1).<sup>7</sup> After he joined Marian in London, the couple presented an ivory bed of equal exquisiteness to Queen Charlotte, which papers such as *The Lady* described in glowing terms: ‘A state bed of rich and very curious workmanship was carried to the Queen’s Palace as a present from Lady [sic] Hastings, brought from India, which exceeds anything in grandeur seen in this country’.<sup>8</sup>

From *The Lady*, the bed made it into the pages *The Rolliad*, a satirical mock epic authored by members of Charles James Fox’s Whig Liberals’ group, garnering an infamous reputation:

O, that for you, in Oriental state,  
At ease reclin’d to watch the long debate,  
Beneath the gallery’s pillar’d height were spread  
(With the QUEEN’s leave) your WARREN’s ivory bed!

...

Above in colors warm with mimic life,  
The German husband of your WARREN’s wife,  
His rival’s deed should blazon; and display,  
In his blest rule the glories of your sway.<sup>9</sup>

These lines represented an explicit slight on Marian Hastings, who was criticized for her supposed ‘oriental’ love of luxury and ostentation and for being a divorcée, and thus, having a (German) husband still living. The insinuation was inherently damaging. Fanny Burney recorded in her diary that several influential courtiers feared that the former Governoress of Bengal might taint Queen Charlotte by association, and only the friendship with Her Majesty and Mrs. Juliana Schwellenberg, Keeper of the Robes, both of whom she knew since the 1760s, protected

her from being denied access to the royal presence.<sup>10</sup> Given the viciousness of these attacks, it is not surprising that Marian and Warren Hastings eventually retired from public life, concentrating their social sphere almost entirely upon Daylesford, where they welcomed a number of select friends, Marian's one surviving son Charles and his wife Charlotte, and a succession of nieces and nephews from Germany.<sup>11</sup>

Although Marian Hastings returned from India as a woman of means – her fortune amounted to over £100,000 – the couple's expenditures and propensity to speculate on the financial market took their toll, and they were forced to live modestly among the splendiferous scene they had created for themselves at Daylesford.<sup>12</sup> Warren Hastings died in 1818, but his wife survived him by almost twenty years, long enough to campaign for a bust of her husband to be placed in the west aisle of the north transept at Westminster Abbey. On occasion, Marian Hastings would take guests to her 'Picture Room' and point out a particularly dramatic painting by [William Hodges, which depicted her on her boat in 1782, close to capsizing near the rocks of Colgong, when she intended to join her husband, who had fallen dangerously ill at Calcutta.](#)<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, her husband had commissioned this work as a private exhibition piece,<sup>14</sup> and its existence speaks eloquently of the lasting devotion the couple felt for each other.<sup>15</sup> Safely ensconced at Daylesford, Warren and Marian sought to weather the storm of societal disapproval by transforming their home, with the aid of an assortment of iconic tokens –among them, the ivories and Hodges' paintings– into a veritable Western 'Taj Mahal', a monument both to their extraordinary marriage and Warren's achievements as the creator of 'British India'.

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<sup>1</sup> G.R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of Warren Hastings*, (London: Richard Bentley, 1841) III, 251. On Hastings' financial status, see P.J. Marshall, 'The Personal Fortune of Warren Hastings in Retirement', *The Economic History Review*, 17 (1964), p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> British Library MS Add. 39879-39889.

<sup>3</sup> *Plan of the Parish of Daylesford...* (London, 1873).

<sup>4</sup> Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of Warren Hastings*, III, p. 243.

<sup>5</sup> Lindsay Boynton, 'The Furniture of Warren Hastings', *The Burlington Magazine: British Art in the Eighteenth Century* 112:809 (August 1970), pp. 508-20.

<sup>6</sup> British Library MS Add. 41609-10.

<sup>7</sup> Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of Warren Hastings*, III, p. 212.

<sup>8</sup> Cited after: K.L. Murray, *Beloved Marian: The Social History of Mr. and Mrs. Warren Hastings* (London: Jarrolds, 1938), 160.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Richardson, et al., *Criticism on the Rolliad: A Poem*. 2 vols. 8<sup>th</sup> edition (London: J. Ridgway, 1788), pp. 87-89.

<sup>10</sup> Hester Davenport, *Faithful Handmaid: Fanny Burney at the Court of George III* (London: Sutton Books, 2003), p. 68 and p. 166.

<sup>11</sup> Warren Hastings kept detailed journals while he lived at Daylesford. They record the visits he received and paid. See British Library, MS Add. 39879-39889.

<sup>12</sup> P.J. Marshall, 'The Private Fortune of Marian Hastings', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 37 (1964), pp. 245-53.

<sup>13</sup> Sophie von La Roche, *Tagebuch einer Reise durch Holland und England* (Offenbach am Main, 1788), pp. 536-45.

<sup>14</sup> On the painting see Boynton, 'The Furniture of Warren Hastings', p. 520. Also Hermione de Almeida, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 267. De Almeida dates the commissioning of the painting to 1790, but La Roche records seeing it as early as 1786, although not at Daylesford, but at Beaumont Lodge, where the couple resided beforehand.

<sup>15</sup> On the subject of the couple's devotion, see: *The Letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife*, ed. Sydney C. Grier [H.C. Gregg] (London and Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1905).