

The Landmark Trust

CAVENDISH HALL

Cavendish Hall is not a house that has participated in events of high national drama nor been the home of exceptionally notable people, but is one of those gracious and solid houses that helps define the tone of our ancient villages, both through its residents and staff. Its residents have lived here contentedly and it has inspired memories of deep affection. Today, its 30 acre estate remains intact with lodge, coach house, walled garden, English landscape park, woodland, garden and pleasure ground. Its significance lies in its typicality, cohesion, completeness and for the consistent high quality of its parts. The unbroken continuity of its parkland gives a glimpse of archetypal English countryside, as treasured by the artist John Constable, who was born not far away in East Bergholt.

Listed Grade II, Cavendish Hall remains an excellent example of a Regency country house. According to White's Directory of 1844, it is said to have been built by Thomas Halifax, once Mayor of Chester, for one of his sons. The coat of arms in the stained glass window does indeed show arms granted to a John Halifax of Kenilworth in 1788, making a Hal(l)ifax connection plausible. According to the date on the window, and if the stained glass window in the cloakroom is in its primary position, the house was completed by 1802. The next firm evidence is the catalogue for a seven day sale of the entire contents of Cavendish Hall, the effects of its deceased owner, Captain Ogden, in 1814.

Sir Digby Mackworth lived here in the 1830s and in 1840, a retired medical doctor, John Yelloly, bought the house. The Yellolys owned Cavendish Hall for more than a century, although for much of that time the house was let to a succession of tenants, the residents for longest being the Trappman family (1880s) and a widow, Mrs Adeline Ramsay L' Amy (1896-1914). The last tenant, Mrs Morwena Brocklebank, bought the estate around 1948.

In 1969, Cavendish Hall was bought from Mrs Brocklebank by T. S. (Tom) Matthews for his third wife, Pamela. Thomas Stanley Matthews (1901-1991) was an American journalist and writer, patrician but a Democrat and a former editor of Time magazine. His network of friendships and acquaintances during a long and interesting life provide Cavendish Hall with links to some of the great literary figures of the twentieth century. T. S. Eliot, Robert Graves and Laura Riding were all good friends of his; his second wife was international correspondent Martha Gelhorn, Ernest Hemingway's first wife.

Pamela Matthews (née Firth, 1917-2005) had led an equally interesting life. As a little girl in the 1920s, her father Lesley Firth had rented Cavendish Hall from the Yellolys for several years, and Pamela never forgot her happy times here. The artist Francis Bacon was a cousin, and he too revived his links with this part of Suffolk in later life. During WWII, Pamela Matthews served with British intelligence in Vienna, where she met and, in 1948 married, a dashing and charismatic soldier, Vladimir Peniakoff. Nicknamed Colonel Popski, Peniakoff had formed his own elite fighting force in the North African desert during the war. 'Popski's Private Army' (No 1 Long Range Demolition Squad) carried out a series of daring raids behind the German lines in North Africa and Italy – freeing prisoners, destroying installations and generally spreading alarm. Popski wrote and published his daring and hilarious memoirs while married to Pamela, though died in 1951.

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In the early 1960s, Pamela met T. S. (Tom) Matthews, then still married to Martha Gelhorn from whom he was divorced in 1963. Pamela married Tom Matthews in 1964 and they spent twenty two years together at Cavendish Hall, Tom writing several of his best known books here, including his biography of T. S. Eliot *Great Tom: Notes towards the Definition of T. S. Eliot*; *Jacks or Better*, and *Angels Unawares*. Pamela delighted in her herbaceous borders, and both shared deep affection for their Jack Russell terriers. Tom died in 1991.

At Pamela Matthews's death in 2005, Cavendish Hall and the rest of their estate passed to a trust set up to manage the estate. It was Mrs Matthews's wishes that her own deep enjoyment in her years spent at the Hall be shared by as many people as possible, and the Trust identified use as a Landmark holiday let as a way of meeting those wishes. A lease was signed between the Pamela Matthews Trust and the Landmark Trust in 2009. The house and its grounds were in need of general refurbishment. A generous endowment was provided to enable Landmark to carry out these works, which were undertaken 2009-10.

The site feels carefully chosen, providing shelter and fine views across the countryside with fine oaks, limes and some interesting exotic tree species. The estate lost a generation of beeches and other mature trees in the 1987 storm; and in managing the landscape our aim is to sustain the subsequent replenishment by further timely tree planting and management to provide a Reptonian setting appropriate for a house of this age. We have removed certain more recent features and herbaceous planting, which also helps reduce maintenance costs and allows those staying in the building their privacy.

Internally, the entire house was re-wired and a new heating system was installed. Late partitions and ensuite facilities were removed from the first floor to reinstate the original spacious floorplan. A new kitchen was put in next to the breakfast room, to be close to the dining room (Pamela Matthews' kitchen was at the rear, overlooking the terrace). All the bathrooms were replaced. The areas of the house that form the Landmark were redecorated in colours and wallpapers which evoke the early nineteenth century.

The Landmark Trust is a building preservation charity that rescues historic buildings at risk and lets them for holidays. Cavendish Hall sleeps up to 12 people. To book the building or any other Landmark property for a holiday, please contact us.