

Hartwell House has a remarkable history, stretching back almost a thousand years to the reign of Edward the Confessor. It has been the seat of William Peverel the natural son of William the Conqueror; of John Earl of Mortaigne who succeeded his brother Richard the Lion Heart as King of England in 1199; and of Louis XVIII, the exiled King of France who held court there from 1809 to 1814. Louis was joined at Hartwell by his Queen, Marie-Josephine de Savoie, his niece the Duchesse D'Angoulême, daughter of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, his brother the Comte d'Artois, later Charles X, and Gustavus IV the exiled King of Sweden. During the residence of the French Court the roof was converted into a miniature farm, where birds and rabbits were reared in cages, while vegetables and herbs were cultivated in densely planted tubs. Shops were opened in the outbuildings by émigrés short of money.

Others who lived at Hartwell include Richard Hampden (d.1567) a member of one of England's most illustrious families who entered the household of Queen Elizabeth I and rose to the position of 'Chiefe Clerk of the Kychen unto the Queen's Majestie'. Sir Alexander Hampden (d.1627) who received the singular Honor of being knighted by James I in his own house; Sir Thomas Lee (d.1690) who took a leading part in the Restoration and was elevated to the Baronetage by Charles II in 1660; the Rt. Hon. Sir William Lee (1688-1754) who became Lord Chief Justice and served for a time as Chancellor of the Exchequer; and the Rt. Hon. Sir George Lee (1700-1758) a close friend and adviser to Frederick Prince of Wales whose widow he served as Treasurer and Receiver-General. The Lees were ancestors of General Robert E Lee of American Civil War fame. Sir William Young, MP for Buckingham and later Governor of Tobago was a tenant of Hartwell from 1800 to 1808. With the arrival of Dr. John Lee, a teetotaler and amateur scientist who lived at Hartwell from 1829 to 1866, the building became a cross between a temperance hall, a museum and an astronomical observatory. Festivals of Peace and Temperance were held in the park, with the local inn-keeper being paid to close his doors to the public; geological specimens from the ancient world were put on show in the Long Gallery and the Strong Room, and powerful telescopes were trained on the stars through the open roof of a new observatory extension adjoining the Library (since demolished). Dr. Lee was a champion of the technological revolution that reshaped English industry and agriculture, and in 1830 Hartwell became the target of a Luddite conspiracy. Several disgruntled farm workers plotted to burn the house but were rounded up by the local Constabulary. A hundred years later the estate took on the appearance of a giant auction house as hordes of collectors and dealers descended on Hartwell for the 1938 sale of its contents. Those who came to view included Queen Mary and the Dukes and Duchesses of Gloucester and Kent. They brought with them a picnic lunch, which was served in the Dining Room by a body of liveried footmen. After the sale the house was purchased by millionaire recluse Ernest Cook, grandson and co-heir of the Victorian travel tycoon Thomas Cook, and subsequently vested in the Trust that bears his name. For the duration of the Second World War Hartwell served as an Army billet, a training ground for British and American troops. Later, in 1956, Hartwell was let to The House of Citizenship, a finishing school and secretarial college which remained in occupation until 1983. A fire in 1963 caused extensive damage, and destruction of much of the architectural detail inside the house, and was followed by reconstruction to the requirements of the school. If Hartwell is remarkable for its history, it is also remarkable for its architecture. True to the English tradition it has evolved in sympathy with changing

tastes. On the north front the compass and oriel windows are remarkable examples of early 17th century design, but the carved decoration was simplified and the original gables removed in the middle of the 18th century. The south and east fronts were built around 1760 and are characteristic of their period, with projecting eaves, canted bays, skirted windows and Ionic colonettes set within relieving arches. The Great Hall is a masterpiece of English baroque design, and with the exception of the floor which was originally flagged with Portland stone, remains virtually unchanged since its completion in around 1740. The principal staircase with its extraordinary carved figures is partly Jacobean, but partly modern. Two of the balusters are carved to represent Winston Churchill and G K Chesterton. The house has fine Georgian interiors, dating from around 1760. The Morning Room and the Library are decorated in the Rococo style, with curvilinear marble chimney pieces and fluid plasterwork, and joinery ornamented with garlands, masks, animals and volutes. The bookcases in the Library are fitted with some of the finest surviving gilt-brass wirework in the country. The landscaping of the park dates from the second half of the 18th century. Work is thought to have begun around 1757 when Sir William Lee commissioned the magnificent equestrian statue of Frederick, Prince of Wales which now stands in the centre of the entrance drive to the north of the house. The park boasts a fine collection of 18th century pavilions and monuments. Some of these date from the 1730's when a magnificent topiary garden-planted in 1690 was finally brought to completion. There is the Gothic Tower, a romantic crenellated turret; the Ionic Temple, an elegant exercise in Italianate classicism, flanked by four terms, figures from classical- mythology, now returned to their original position after 200 years in another part of the garden. There is the statue of Hercules, a fine copy after a famous antique original, the obelisk in Park meadow and the statues of Zeus and Juno in the gardens behind the arch. The present bridge over the lake was erected at the end of the 19th century and is the central span of old Kew Bridge, built in the 18th century by James Paine, but dismantled in 1898 and divided up into lots and sold at auction. The Old Dairy is a relic of the 18th century, as is the Gothic bridge. The avenue of trees that crosses the Old Court Garden was planted around 1830, while the estate wall was completed in 1855, encrusted with fossils and rare stones from the grounds. Four years earlier an Egyptian style pavilion had been erected over the spring in Weir Lane. In 1900 a forecourt was created in front of the entrance, ringed by a ha-ha to the north. The Rock Walk and cobbled paths were laid out some time before 1901 and there are trees and plants dating from the Edwardian period. The Church was built in 1753-6 and is generally recognized as one of the most important buildings of the Gothic Revival. Unfortunately it was allowed to collapse shortly after the last war but the West Tower and roof have recently been reinstated. The creation of Hartwell House and its grounds has involved many distinguished architects and designers including James Gibbs (1682-1754), whose works include the Radcliffe Library, Oxford, the Senate House, Cambridge, and the London Churches of St. Martins in the Field and St. Mary- Le-Strand; Henry Keene (1726-1776), a pioneer of the Gothic Revival; James Wyatt (1746-1813) a master of neo-classical design; and Richard Woods a well- known follower of Capability Brown. Coming to the present time, Historic House Hotels have undertaken a complete restoration to the highest standards of the house and grounds, under the sympathetic direction of its chairman Richard Broyd and eminent Buckinghamshire architect Eric Throssell. The interior design and furnishings have been carefully chosen under the supervision of Janey Compton of Newby Hall in Yorkshire, who was responsible for the success of the interior decoration at Middlethorpe Hall, another property of Historic

House Hotels. During the restoration great attention has been paid to the reinstatement of period, detail, particularly in those parts of the house damaged during the 1963 fire. There is much new plasterwork, fireplaces have been reinstated, a dining room has been created in the manner of Sir John Soane and the original features of the Staircase Hall have gained a Gothic setting. The gardens and park have been extensively restored and some garden buildings and ornaments have been moved to their original, or found more suitable, positions. A dramatic new entrance sweep has been constructed, centered not only on the house, but also on the life-size equestrian statue of Frederick Prince of Wales, rescued from obscurity in a shrubbery. Hartwell House opened as an hotel in July 1989 and this famous stately home thus entered a new phase of its long and distinguished history.