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DON F. ADG (C) and
2) Return to me for
Prime Minister (h)

17, DUKE STREET,
ST. JAMES'S,
LONDON, SW1Y 6DB.

22 December, 1983

mt

The Prime Minister

Thank you very much for your letter of 20 December and for enclosing the relevant extracts from Hansard in connection with Calke Abbey.

I note that the Government will shortly be making a response to the recent Report of the Select Committee on Public and Private Funding of the Arts and I await this with the greatest interest.

I entirely agree that the Government has achieved much for the heritage, both through general policies and specific measures - in particular, in my opinion, the National Heritage Act. I wholeheartedly believe that there is indeed, as you imply, scope for procedural improvements which if implemented could go a long way towards alleviating or indeed even eradicating some of the problems. Naturally, if there is anything that I could do to help I would make myself available at any time to Ministers or Government Officials.

With every good wish for the New Year.

Yours sincerely
Hugh Leggatt

Hugh Leggatt

The Rt. Hon. The Prime Minister,
10, Downing Street,
London, SW1

PRIME MINISTERPa
DMS
20/12Calke Abbey

Hugh Leggatt wrote to you on 23 November about Calke Abbey. There is quite a debate about how to preserve this beautiful Derbyshire house.

The basic issue is whether the Government should accept in lieu of tax not only the Abbey and its surrounding "heritage land" but also the bulk of the agricultural estate. Ministers have agreed to accept the Abbey and heritage land (at a cost to public funds of £2 million) but not the agricultural land (which would take the total cost to £10 million).

Ferdie Mount supports the DOE line (see note at Flag A), though not their original draft reply. He suggests that the final solution may require a modest further subvention via the National Heritage Memorial Fund, as well as a re-think by the Trustees.

I attach at Flag B a draft reply for you to send to Hugh Leggatt, revised as recommended by Ferdie.

Would you like us also to write to DOE on your behalf, along the lines proposed in conclusion b. of Ferdie's note?

DMS

Note : letter to Hugh Leggatt despatched agreed with FM that it was not worth troubling the FM again with the proposal at his of his mind

19 December 1983DMS
20/12

16 December 1983

MR BARCLAY

CALKE ABBEY

Calke Abbey sounds a wonderful place. It must be preserved.

But I do not like the easy way out - "a quick, clean and certain solution" as Esmond Bulmer described in the House of Commons. To me it looks more like a retrospective dodge for the convenience of a rich family which has mismanaged its affairs in an endearing fashion.

The acceptance-in-lieu machinery was always intended for beautiful objects and places, not for the funds or lands necessary to maintain them. It was not intended as a last-resort escape route from the Capital Transfer Tax, iniquitous though that tax may be.

The total cost to public funds of the Harpur-Crewe proposals is estimated at £9-10 million.

The Government has frequently stated its readiness to accept the Abbey and parkland in lieu at a cost of some £2 million. Substantial grants to assist with repairs will also be available. We ought to make these points. The present DoE reply is too passive.

If we need to do more, I suggest that the appropriate route would be by an extra subvention to the National Heritage Fund, but on a much more modest scale. Such a contribution is already clearly implied in our present stance. And I am sure that proposals will come forward from the interested parties and the Harpur-Crewe Trustees as soon as they have finally realised that the Trustees' present scheme is unacceptable.

I suggest that:

- a. the DoE draft be amended to show what we have already offered;
- b. the Prime Minister might write to Patrick Jenkin or Grey Gowrie expressing her view that the present scheme is not acceptable, but that she hopes a solution may be found along the lines suggested by Lord Charteris in his letter to the Times* and that the Government should be ready to play its part in this.

FERDINAND MOUNT

fm

* Copy attached

Fresh look at Calke Abbey

From the Chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund

Sir, Mrs Currie (December 5) criticizes the trustees of the National Heritage Memorial Fund over Calke Abbey. I hope you will allow me the space to explain the attitude of the trustees.

Calke Abbey and its fate have weighed heavily on our minds for many months. In June this year we considered a request from the National Trust for very substantial grants in respect of both Calke Abbey and Belton House. As far as Calke was concerned, it was explained that the approach was necessary because the Department of the Environment had refused to accept certain "non-heritage" land in lieu of capital tax, which could have been used to provide an endowment.

We had visited both Calke and Belton and, after much deliberation, informed the National Trust that, although we felt both properties to be of great importance to the national heritage and that both ought to be saved, we had sufficient resources to help only one of them.

Having been put into the position of having to make a choice, we chose Belton; bearing in mind that Belton was already on the open market for sale, we really had very little room for choice. Indeed, the National Trust had already told us that they regarded Belton as the more urgent priority. The assistance promised in respect of Belton at the time represented almost 40 per cent of our uncommitted resources.

Our responsibilities extend wider than simply English historic houses and their contents. There are historic houses in other parts of the United Kingdom, paintings and other works of art, areas of land of scenic and scientific interest, all of which have a call on our funds. We have indeed wide responsibilities and relatively slender resources. Moreover, we have no idea what future funding we shall receive from Government.

To date, the National Heritage Memorial Fund has been invited to consider contributing to one solution only for Calke Abbey. Are there no other ways to save Calke? Is this not a case when a wider partnership of interests, including Government, National Trust, Historic Buildings Council, local authorities, the Harpur-Crewe trustees, as well as ourselves, could achieve the objective which all your correspondents are seeking? For our part, and within our available resources, we are ready to consider any possibilities.

Yours faithfully,
CHARTERIS OF AMISFIELD,
Chairman, National Heritage
Memorial Fund,
Church House,
Great Smith Street, SW1.
December 6.