

Historic art collection 'on the menu' at West Lodge Park Hotel



A unique collection of paintings are on display at West Lodge Park Hotel in Hadley Wood. Portraits by Mary Beale, Britain's first professional female artist, have been brought together for the first time in the hotel restaurant, recently renamed in her honour.

West Lodge Park Hotel is owned by Beales Hotels, Hertfordshire's oldest family business, and MD Andrew Beale is a descendant of the artist. Mary Beale was the first woman to make a living from portrait painting, in a time when it was an exclusively male profession, during the seventeenth century. Working in London she survived the Great Plague of 1665 by moving to Hampshire and painted many high society figures.

Unique in her time, Mary was assisted by her husband Charles who kept diaries on her work. Andrew Beale has brought together both original and copies of her portraits as well as pages from the diaries for display in the Mary Beale restaurant :

"It is an honour to be guardians of such unique works of art and help tell the tale of such an amazing woman. Mary was very ahead of her time, earning a living for her family, supported by her husband Charles who looked after her studio and accounts. He even took on the upbringing of their two sons, which was unheard of in those days."

"It is fitting that this collection should be on show here at West Lodge Park not only because of the family connection, but also because Mary Beale painted the portrait of Sir Henry Coventry in 1673 who was the then owner of this fine house."

At the height of her fame in 1677 Mary painted 83 portraits earning the then considerable sum of £429. Her paintings are now considered national treasures, some of which are on display in the National Portrait Gallery and Tate Britain.



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Andrew Beale

Right : Mr Grevile Bridge and Mr Trevor Beale



Below : Mr Simon Lester



Mrs Emma Beale with Dr Shah



Above : Andrew Beale with Herts Life Editor Clare Bourke

Right : Paull Jaffa on the piano as guests take their place for lunch

