

Women at EHH

Martha Lytton Cobbold, known as Lady Cobbold, from Knebworth House in Hertfordshire, England, reflects on her unique role managing the family estate which has been in her husband's family since 1490.

"I started working with the estate 30 years ago when my youngest child was one and took over management of our companies 24 years ago. There are always difficulties in running businesses, but I use it to my advantage wherever possible by being determined and prepared to do anything I ask of another", says Lady Cobbold, highlighting her hands-on approach. To help her through this journey, she mentions notably the role of Lady Hermione, her husband's grandmother, who gave her amazing life-long advice which is to make a decision and always follow it through.

Beyond Knebworth, Lady Cobbold leads the UK Historic Houses Association: "It is a great privilege to represent the 1500 house members and 76,000 visitor members of the Historic Houses Association," she notes, emphasizing her commitment to preserving historical treasures. Her presidency brings a fresh perspective, breaking away from tradition. She finds being different from previous presidents advantageous, bringing innovation and a new energy to the association.



As an inspirational leading woman herself, she has formidable women role models in her family to inspire her. From suffragette Lady Constance Lytton to her husband's grandmother Lady Hermione and her own mother Gray Boone each of whom exemplified strength, determination, and resilience, rising above the odds to achieve remarkable feats. Knebworth has hosted illustrious female visitors as well, including Queen Elizabeth I, Ella Fitzgerald during a Jazz concert, and Dame Judi Dench for a film shoot, contributing to the house's rich guest book.

When asked regarding fond memories at Knebworth, Lady Cobbold shared her joy to witness the visitors' enjoyment during events like the Sonisphere Festival and concerts by renowned artists. "It was a brilliant experience to show Liam Gallagher the repaired

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turrets and chimneys his events made possible," she adds, illustrating the direct impact of such events on the estate's restoration.

In conclusion, Lady Cobbold stands as a steward of heritage, and a great leading woman in the conservation and promotion of English private cultural heritage. She accepted to conclude our exchange by sharing with us her motto that could inspire many: "Lead by example, offer opportunities and support one another".

Photograph credit: Millie Pilkington