Bees are Buzzing Again at Tudor Place

The new beehive on the South Lawn continues the tradition of beekeeping at Tudor Place. Come see for yourself what the buzz is all about.

1907-1911: First Beehives
When Britannia Peter Kennon was 92, her grandsons Armistead, Walter, and Freeland supervised much of the day-to-day upkeep of the house and property. On April 22, 1907 Armistead Jr. noted in his diary that he and his brother Freeland were “going to get a swarm of bees and try our hand at keeping them.” They planned to place the hives at the foot of a serviceberry tree located on the south side of the house.

According to Armistead Jr., Freeland told Britannia “he was going to sell her all the honey he got from the bees! Whereon she told him that she would take all she wanted and send the rest” to her other grandsons.

Upon being informed that the bees were in place below her second-floor-bedroom window, Britannia said to her grandsons that if the bees came into her room, “she would take her scissors and snip them in two, as she did the locusts!” Her grandsons found that prospect to be quite entertaining.

There is limited documentation of this attempt at beekeeping, but at least one colony was active and producing honey four years later in the summer of 1911.

1933-1943: Armistead Jr.’s Bees
Armistead Jr.’s second attempt at beekeeping was more successful. His beekeeping notebook in the Tudor Place Archives shows that he took a deep interest in the bees, monitoring the health of each hive and recording the results several times per year over a decade.

Armistead Jr. chose interesting names for each colony, such as “Gold Standard” and “New Deal,” which were taken from current events. In 1933, the United States went off the “gold standard,” a system in which all monetary currency was backed in gold. The “New Deal” was a series of federal programs to alleviate the effects of the Great Depression.

In the fall of 1933, Armistead’s granddaughter Anne observed a swarm of bees in a tree near the East Wing of the house. He was able to capture the swarm and introduce it to one of his hives. Photographs suggest that these hives were adjacent to the pigeon flyway south of the smokehouse.

One problem that plagued his attempts at beekeeping was the loss of the queen bee that was necessary for the survival of the colony. His entry in the notebook for August 7, 1934 noted that he “ordered a new queen bee” for the existing colony. The queen, which Mr. Peter purchased for one dollar, would have been placed in a glass vial that was then carefully packed into a small cardboard tube for mailing. One such package from the York Bee Company can be found in the Tudor Place collection.

In 1942, health problems prevented Armis-
instead, then 72, from checking his bees. When he was able to inspect his hives early in the summer of 1943, he found that the one remaining colony had perished.

His son, Armistead Peter 3rd noted in his book, Tudor Place (1969), that his father “was very fond of bees and had a number of hives here.”

2018: Queen Bee Britannia Arrives
In recent years a swarm of wild bees lived in the stump of an old tulip poplar on the South Lawn, but they disappeared before staff were able to move them to a new beehive.

Wanting to continue the tradition of beekeeping at Tudor Place, the gardeners researched the topic, then ordered Italian bees and a beehive. On May 17, Tudor Place’s head gardener, Virginia Velez Thaxton, emailed the staff to say, “Our bee colony is here!” After a 35-mile car journey from Crownsville, Maryland to Georgetown, the colony was moved to the beehive at the base of the South Lawn.

The beehive is a top bar hive, so-called because it is a long wooden box with wooden bars on top where the bees attach their wax combs. Top bar hive design provides a more natural setting for the bees to construct combs, and makes regular inspections by the beekeepers less disruptive. The new queen bee was named “Britannia Bee” after Britannia Peter Kennon and she is already a social media star with a video on Facebook. The entire colony is thriving—building large combs, and pollinating the gardens at Tudor Place and in the surrounding blocks of Georgetown.

― Historical content and research provided by Curator, Grant Quertermous
Dear Friends of Tudor Place,

I have just returned to my desk after hosting staff members from Washington Old Hall, a historic site in Sunderland, United Kingdom. During their visit, we shared the wonders of Tudor Place, guided their explorations of Washington, DC, and even took them to a Nationals baseball game! Throughout their visit, our discussions centered upon the things we have in common, as well as those that make us distinct.

Washington Old Hall faces challenges that arise from being part of the National Trust of Great Britain, Europe’s largest conservation charity—they are one site among over 500 historic landmarks and natural wonders throughout the UK. While they do have access to vast resources to support their work, they compete with sites that have higher visitation and visibility, and must navigate a complex bureaucracy. Tudor Place, on the other hand, enjoys the relative simplicity of being an independent organization. We are the masters of our own fate, which is both liberating and daunting.

This exchange focused on the common threads that intertwine our two historic places. The most obvious is the Washington connection: Washington Old Hall commemorates George Washington’s ancestors and Tudor Place commemorates George Washington’s descendants (or step-descendants). We also share concerns about balancing the preservation of the historical and horticultural resources in our care while offering them to a growing number of visitors. Fundamental to both groups is our commitment to sustainable stewardship.

Washington Old Hall carries the banner of the National Trust through activities that support the Trust’s initiative, Playing Our Part. One example is “Nature on Your Doorstep,” a program that has allowed their community to rediscover their Nuttery, a one-acre nut orchard now filled with wildflowers, diverse habitats, and hundreds of species of wildlife. At Tudor Place, we are guided by the ideals of sustainability embedded in our Master Preservation Plan and expressed through projects like the South Lawn Cistern Project now underway.

Staff from Tudor Place will be traveling to Sunderland in July to see their operations up close and tell the Tudor Place story to people in northeast England. This experience will offer further evidence that our differences are not nearly as important as the wonderful things we have in common. Whether at Tudor Place in Washington, DC or at Washington Old Hall in Sunderland, UK, we are all doing our part to care for the treasures in our possession and the planet we share.

Mark S. Hudson, Executive Director

This exchange is part of the Sister City partnership between Sunderland and Washington. This project was supported by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, which receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts.
New Faces at Tudor Place

We are pleased to welcome these new members to the Tudor Place team.

Maintenance Technician Michael Coleman
Michael is a US Army veteran with over 10 years of buildings maintenance experience, including electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and carpentry with additional experience in landscaping in his previous position at Chapel Valley Landscape Company. In his free time, Michael cares for his two young boys and loves fixing up old cars.

Capital Campaign Coordinator Bryn Cooley
Bryn Cooley recently accepted the role of Capital Campaign Coordinator following a stint as a Visitor Services Assistant in the Visitor Center and a Living Collections Intern in the Buildings, Gardens, & Grounds department. A Wisconsin native and graduate of the George Washington Museum Studies program, she is thrilled to take on this new challenge. When not at Tudor Place, she can be found with her nose in a book or experiencing history firsthand at any of the numerous museums in the area.

Communications Coordinator Charlotte Germane
Charlotte joins us from the American Horticultural Society, where she spent four years as their first Digital Communications Manager. The history of Washington, DC is one of her favorite topics and she’s looking forward to a deep dive at Tudor Place.

Visitor Service Assistant Amy Pollard
You will see Amy in the Visitor Center on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. She is enrolled in the Museum Studies graduate program at George Washington University and recently received a History degree from Baylor University.

2018 Tudor Place Board of Trustees

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Sachiko Kuno, who was elected to the Tudor Place Board of Trustees at the June 13 Board meeting. We extend our thanks to Jayne Plank and Deborah Winsor who recently resigned from the Board. Their service and support are greatly appreciated.

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Two Watercolors Return to Tudor Place

On May 14, the Corcoran Art Gallery Board of Trustees announced that more than 10,750 works remaining in the Corcoran’s art collection would be distributed to over 22 institutions across Washington in one of the largest free art distributions in US history. Tudor Place was among the esteemed group of museums and received two watercolors by Armistead Peter 3rd.

Both of the newly acquired works are from the later period in his artistic career when he focused on painting landscapes. Tudor Place has over 1,500 works by Armistead Peter 3rd in the collection. These include oil portraits, small portrait miniatures, watercolor landscapes, pen-and-ink drawings, and even sketches of family pets.

Armistead Peter 3rd frequently painted the landscape around this region as well as the mountains and fields surrounding the family farm he owned in upstate New York. When he and his wife Caroline travelled, he usually brought with him his watercolors and paintbrushes. Morning Mist—Hong Kong—was painted during an extended trip through the Pacific in the winter and spring of 1963.

Saving Water One Drop at a Time!

In 1914, Armistead Peter, Jr. undertook a bold and necessary project aimed at updating and modernizing Tudor Place including the addition of electricity and running water. Objects and details in the 1914 kitchen demonstrate a unique marriage between the old and new technologies. There is still a trapdoor in the floor near the dark-green water pump that leads to the underground cistern the family had used for nearly a hundred years. Armistead Peter 3rd recalled that people in Georgetown came to Tudor Place for water during a shortage.

Tudor Place continues to serve Georgetown’s water-based needs in the present century. This time, we are actively conserving water rather than distributing it. Construction begins in July on the South Lawn. We will connect the existing storm water lines that gather water from the main house, to two underground holding tanks. Each tank is the size of a city school bus and holds roughly 9,000 gallons of water. Altogether, this project will involve excavation, inserting the tanks in the ground, installing the irrigation pump and water treatment box, and connecting the irrigation system to the new water supply. This conservation effort will reduce silt and water runoff, mitigate destructive erosion, and diminish our consumption of fresh water.
Please join us for these upcoming events.

**Friday, July 13 | 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm**

**Art in the Garden: Outdoor Class**
Join resident artist Peter Waddell in the North Garden to sketch edible plants. Students will learn colored pencil techniques and create a unique piece of art. No previous art experience required!

*Tudor Place Members $45 | Non-Members $50*

[www.tudorplace.org/art](http://www.tudorplace.org/art)

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**Monday-Friday, July 30 – August 3 | 9:00 am – 12:00 pm**

**Summer Camp: Great Garden Adventure**
The Great Garden Adventure offers five days of activities for 4-6 year olds. Campers will explore bright colors, cool haunts, broad lawns, and amazing plants.

*Tudor Place Members $150 | Non-Members $175*

[www.tudorplace.org/gardencamp](http://www.tudorplace.org/gardencamp)

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**Monday-Friday, August 6 – August 10 | 9:00 am – 3:00 pm**

**Summer Camp: Tudor Tech through Time**
How did people see in the dark before electric lights, or cool off before air conditioning? Campers will travel through tech time with the inventions at Tudor Place and create their own projects.

*Tudor Place Members $300 | Non-Members $350*

[www.tudorplace.org/techcamp](http://www.tudorplace.org/techcamp)

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**Saturday, September 22 | 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

**Brews, Booze & Bites**
Come for heritage food and drink, outdoor music, lawn games, and ties to local history. You’ll find purveyors of artisanal and local food, drinks, and desserts on our rolling South Lawn.

*Tudor Place Members $35 | Non-Members $45*

[www.tudorplace.org/foodfestival](http://www.tudorplace.org/foodfestival)

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**Thursday, October 4 | 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm**

**Tudor Nights: Members’ Choice**
It’s your turn to choose the theme for the October Tudor Nights gathering. Watch for a link to our members-only poll and tell us which special collection items you want to see.

*Tudor Place Members FREE | Non-Members $15*

[www.tudorplace.org/pickit](http://www.tudorplace.org/pickit)