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18 April 2026

## Vanbrugh: Rockstar of the English Baroque Influence, Patronage and Networking (17th Century Style)



Vanbrugh: Rockstar of the English Baroque at Seaton Delaval Hall

We're delighted to bring you the latest edition of the Vanbrugh300 newsletter, welcoming both returning readers and those joining our celebrations for the first time.

In this issue, we explore the new displays taking place across the houses as part of [Vanbrugh: Rockstar of the English Baroque](#), focusing on Vanbrugh himself, his architecture, and the patrons behind these remarkable houses. We also feature an [article by Ophelia Field](#) examining the Kit-Cat Club and its influence on Vanbrugh's life and career, highlighting how this network connected him with many of his key patrons.

We also take a closer look at the [Vanbrugh300 schools programme](#), highlighting the range of FREE educational resources available on the website, and look ahead to the upcoming [Vanbrugh300 weekend at Blenheim Palace](#) on 25 April.

To learn more about VANBRUGH300, [visit our website](#) and explore the [What's On](#) page to see upcoming events and activities.

[Visit the VANBRUGH300 Website](#)

### Vanbrugh: Rockstar of the English Baroque



Vanbrugh: Rockstar of the English Baroque is a new exhibition that introduces visitors to Sir John Vanbrugh – architect, playwright, soldier, spy. Each participating venue explores Vanbrugh's life and work, as well as his relationship with his patron and the buildings he created at that site.

The exhibition begins with his time in India and inside French prisons, where he was imprisoned as a hostage for a leading French spy in England. He would see buildings in both countries that would influence his later architectural achievements. Before then, he was a controversial dramatist and built the Queen's Theatre in London's Haymarket. He was invited to join the exclusive Kit-Cat Club, whose members were mainly Whig politicians, writers and artists. Most of his building commissions would come from his friends and other contacts he made in the club. Visitors are then introduced to his influences and his work as an architect. His major commissions were Castle Howard, Blenheim Palace, Grimsthorpe and Kimbolton castles, Seaton Delaval Hall and Stowe House. His work would go on to influence architects of the Gothic Revival and landscape designers of the picturesque.

Each house has its own unique part of the exhibition and each display is illustrated with newly commissioned photographs of the house, original plans and contemporary paintings and portraits.



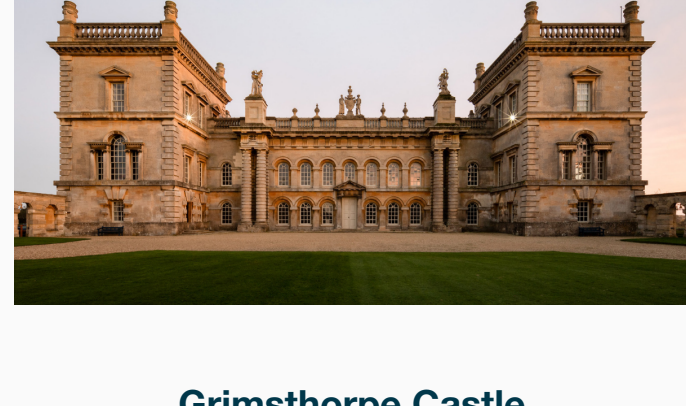
**Castle Howard**  
20 March - 31 October

Celebrating Castle Howard's beautiful Baroque architecture, this new exhibition, *Staging the Baroque*, curated by architect Roz Barr, explores Sir John Vanbrugh's visionary use of scale, shadow and light in the creation of one of Britain's most iconic stately homes. The exhibition traces the moment when an ambitious Vanbrugh with a teeming imagination encountered the equally ambitious Charles Howard, 3rd Earl of Carlisle in the confines of the Kit-Cat Club in London, and was commissioned. [\[FIND OUT MORE\]](#)



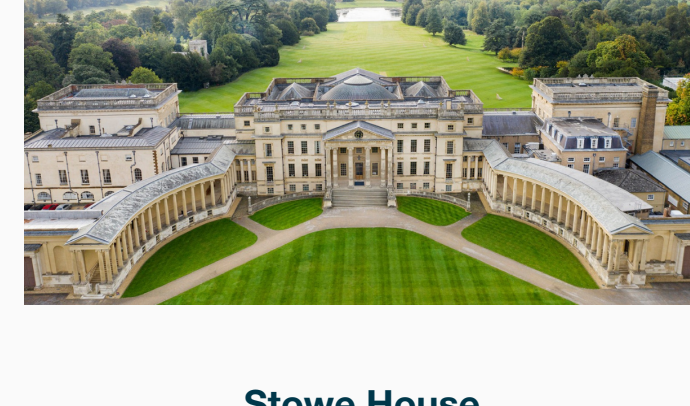
**Seaton Delaval Hall**  
25 March - 18 October

Admiral George Delaval commissioned Vanbrugh to design the hall, which he did by combining elements of his English Baroque with his 'castle air.' One of the most striking features, and unique for Vanbrugh, are the oval-shaped spiral staircases that allowed guests to be shown the estate from the roof. Celebrating Seaton Delaval, where volunteers and crafts people have brought it back to life, this exhibition honours their work as well as that of Vanbrugh. [\[FIND OUT MORE\]](#)



**Grimsthorpe Castle**  
30 April - 30 September

Discover Vanbrugh's political relationship to his 'old friend and ally,' Robert Bertie, who he travelled with to visit William of Orange in the Netherlands. Bertie commissioned Vanbrugh to redesign Grimsthorpe Castle, where his mature style combined scale and symmetry to convey martial strength. One of Vanbrugh's last major works, his design promoted the Bertie family's social standing and Enlightenment learning. The exhibition guides visitors to identify Vanbrugh-designed features in the house. [\[FIND OUT MORE\]](#)



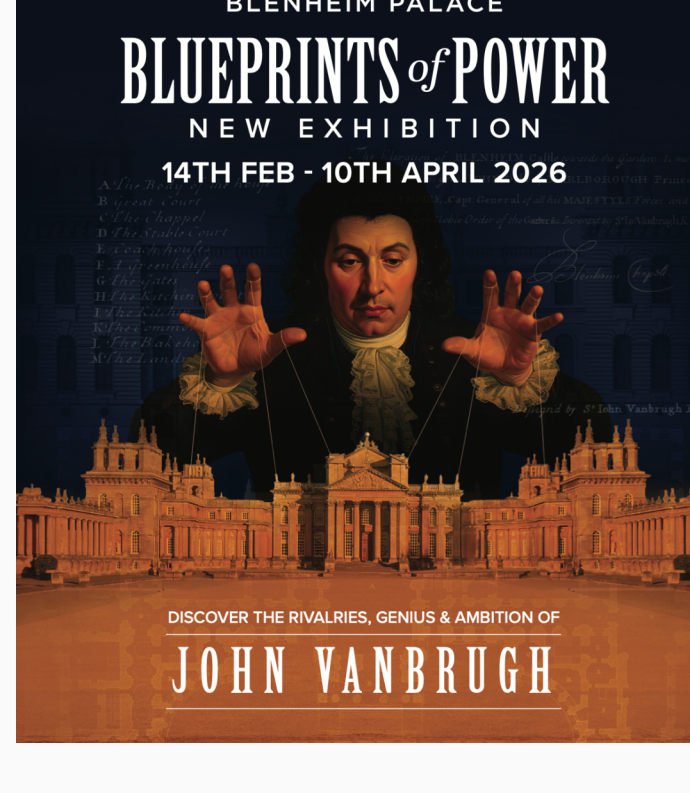
**Stowe House**  
29 June - 31 August

Vanbrugh was commissioned by fellow Kit-Cat Club member, Sir Richard Temple, to work on the house and gardens. The exhibition uses many contemporary illustrations to show Vanbrugh's work, some of which has been replaced or moved. Four of Vanbrugh's garden buildings and parts of his house survive. He transformed a country manor into one of the great aristocratic seats of the 1700s, while his naturalistic approach in the gardens influenced famous landscape designer 'Capability' Brown. [\[FIND OUT MORE\]](#)



**Kimbolton Castle**  
4 October

(Further Locations and Dates tbc)  
Kimbolton's Charles Montagu was a close friend of John Vanbrugh and an influential patron of the arts who brought the artist Pellegrini from Venice to work on his home. You can see the murals painted by Pellegrini in the house today. Vanbrugh was influenced by Kimbolton's history to design a building with a 'castle air' that combined medieval detailing with a symmetrical style. This would go on to influence architects of the Gothic Revival. The exhibition guides visitors to identify Vanbrugh-designed features in the house. [\[FIND OUT MORE\]](#)



**Blenheim Palace**  
14 February - 31 May

Don't miss Blueprints of Power at Blenheim Palace, shining a light on Sir John Vanbrugh's brilliant mind, his rivalries and ambitions. **This exhibition has been extended to 31 May!** [\[FIND OUT MORE\]](#)

[Find out more on our What's On page](#)

### Vanbrugh and the Kit-Cat Club By Ophelia Field



Patronage was the whole raison d'être of the Kit-Cat Club (1690s-1720). Founded by publisher-bookseller Jacob Tonson as a means of connecting his young authors with aristocratic officeholders who could support them – usually by means of sinecures, licences, honours or other jobs – this London club was one of the first of its kind. It was certainly the first to combine a clear political agenda (tied to the 'Whig Junto') with an equally clear cultural agenda (namely, patriotic promotion of English arts and letters, especially architecture, journalism and opera). With this combination as the basis for its patronage... [\[READ MORE\]](#)

### Inspiring the Next Generation: Vanbrugh300 for Schools



Education sits at the heart of the Vanbrugh300 programme, opening up the world of architecture, creativity and history to young people across the UK. This year, more than 2,000 primary school pupils are visiting some of Britain's most remarkable historic houses, taking part in a nationwide celebration of the life and work of Sir John Vanbrugh.

Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and presented by The Georgian Group, the schools programme offers a rich and on workshops, students explore how Vanbrugh's buildings were designed, how architecture can tell stories, and how creativity and imagination shape the spaces around us.

At each site, pupils are encouraged to look closely, ask questions, and think like designers – from sketching architectural details to experimenting with their own Baroque-inspired ideas. The programme connects directly to the national curriculum, supporting learning in art, design, history, and beyond, while fostering confidence, curiosity, and creative thinking.

Although funded school visits are now fully booked, schools everywhere can still take part through a wide range of FREE digital resources available online. These include lesson plans, PowerPoint presentations, and adaptable classroom activities, designed to bring Vanbrugh's world to life in any setting. Whether used in the classroom or as part of a wider project, the materials offer an accessible and inspiring way to explore architecture, storytelling, and design.

[Explore the FREE Resources](#)

### Blenheim Palace VANBRUGH300 Weekend Saturday 25 - Sunday 26 April

Get ready for a celebration packed with creativity, discovery, and fun for all ages! Enjoy a lively storytelling performance that brings history and imagination to life, then roll up your sleeves in a hands-on workshop to create your own Vanbrugh-inspired wearable architecture. You can also step into an engaging family workshop, where you'll explore the extraordinary life and buildings of Sir John Vanbrugh through movement, imagination, and play. Plus, don't miss Blueprints of Power, now extended until 31 May. Whether you're discovering new stories, crafting something unique to take home, or simply soaking up the atmosphere, there's something for everyone!

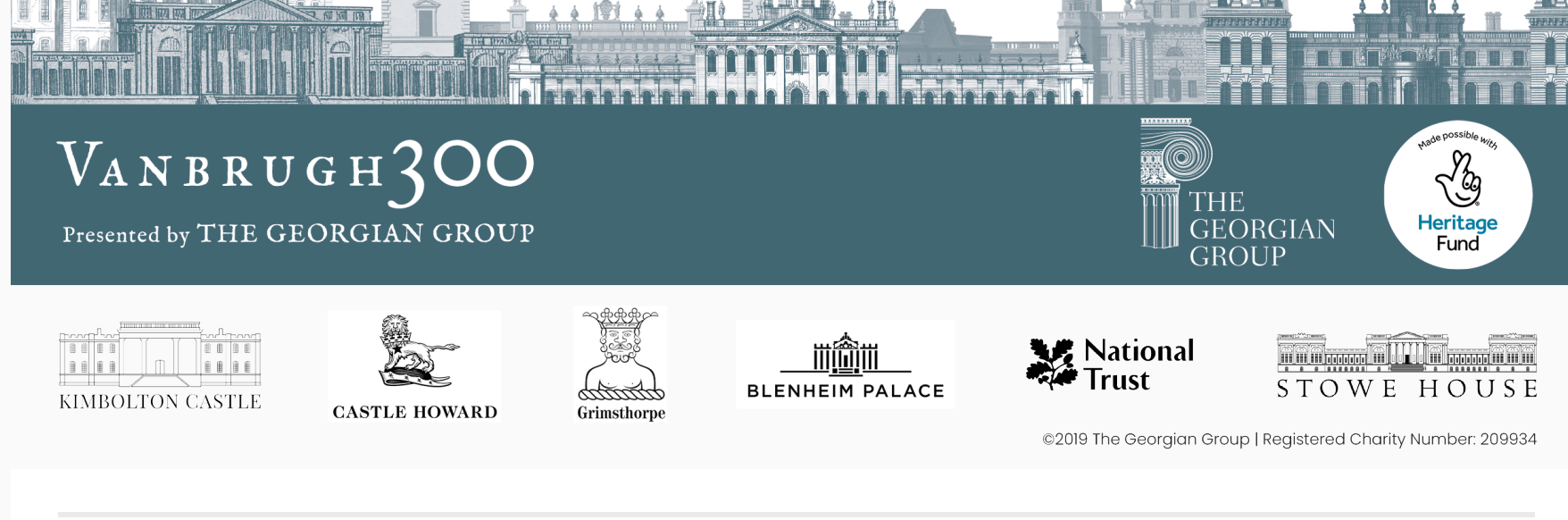


[Find Out More](#)

### Dates for your Diary

- **24 April** - [Soane Late: The Drama of Architecture](#)
- **25 - 26 April** - [Blenheim Palace Vanbrugh300 Weekend](#)
- **29 April** - [Panel Talk: Vanbrugh's Hidden Blenheim](#)
- **30 April** - [Vanbrugh: Rockstar of the English Baroque](#) opens at Grimsthorpe Castle
- **30 April** - [One of a series of free lectures](#), this event will take place at Blenheim Palace...
- **17 May** - [Talk: Vanbrugh's Garden Legacy at Stowe](#)

[Explore the full programme at Vanbrugh300.co.uk](#)



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