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Henry Compton began work on Castle Ashby House in 1574 and building continued into the early 1600's

The house was originally built as an 'E' shape building to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth I with the steps within the present courtyard forming the central stroke of the 'E'.

In 1624 the front façade was added by Inigo Jones.

Around the top of the house the Latin inscription reads:

*"Except the lord build the house they labour but in vain that built it; except the lord keep the house the watchman waketh but in vain"*



The sunken lawn at the front of the house is described in history books as a bowling green.

The avenue dates back to the time of William III (William of Orange) when he visited Castle Ashby in 1695. King William suggested the planting of four great avenues - North, South, East and West and the planting, mainly with Elm trees began within a month, and continued for a further 25 years.

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When Capability Brown came to Castle Ashby in 1761, he removed the avenues to the North and West and broke up the avenue to the East with clumps of trees. The remaining 'Grande Avenue' to the South stretches for three and a half miles over the main Northampton/Bedford Road and into the Deer park beyond. Nowadays this Avenue is planted with a mixture of Oak, Walnut and Lime Trees.

Castle Ashby House has recently been passed to Earl Compton, the son of the 7th Marquess, to continue the family tradition of managing the Castle Ashby Estate. The Gardens are continually undergoing change and restoration and are open daily for all to enjoy. Why not bide a while and borrow our complementary pass to view the gardens at any time of year.

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### Why The Jersey Barn?

The story - from an old farm hand that worked on the estate - is that some 50 years ago our offices used to be the home and milking parlour for a herd of 29 prize Jersey cows. The milk was much sought after but the cream off the top was reserved for the Marquess and the Castle!

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## Marquess of Northampton - First creation

The title of Marquess of Northampton was created for the first time in the Peerage of England in 1547 in favour of William Parr, brother of Catherine Parr, the sixth and last wife of King Henry VIII. The title was forfeited in 1554 after the accession of Queen Mary but restored in 1559 by Queen Elizabeth I. On Parr's death in 1571 the title became extinct.

## Second creation

However, the title is chiefly associated with the Compton family. This family descends from Sir Henry Compton, who in 1572 was summoned to the House of Lords as **Baron Compton**, of Compton in the County of Warwick. This title was in the Peerage of England. Lord Compton was later one of the peers at the trial of Mary, Queen of Scots. He was succeeded by his son, the second Baron. He served as Lord President of the Marches and of the Dominion of Wales and was also Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire. In 1618 he was created **Earl of Northampton** in the Peerage of England. His son, the second Earl, was a supporter of King James I and served as Master of the Robes to Charles, Prince of Wales (later King Charles I). He fought in the Civil War and was killed at the Battle of Hopton Heath in 1643. He was succeeded by his son, the third Earl. He also fought as a Royalist in the Civil War and notably commanded the cavalry at the First Battle of Newbury in 1643. Lord Northampton was also Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire and Constable of the Tower of London. His eldest son, the fourth Earl, also served as Constable of the Tower of London and as Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire.

His eldest son, the fifth Earl, briefly represented Warwick in the House of Commons but in 1711 he was summoned to the House of Lords through a writ of acceleration in his father's junior title of Baron Compton. He married Elizabeth, 14th Baroness Ferrers of Chartley. They had no sons and Lord Northampton was succeeded in the barony of Compton, which could be passed on through female lines, by his daughter Lady Charlotte. The earldom passed to his younger brother, the sixth Earl. He had earlier represented Tamworth and Northampton in Parliament.

He was childless and was succeeded by his nephew, the seventh Earl. He was the son of the Hon. Charles Compton, third son of the fourth Earl. Lord Northampton died childless at an early age and was succeeded by his younger brother, the eighth Earl. He briefly represented Northampton in the House of Commons before he inherited the earldom and also served as Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire. His son, the ninth Earl, sat as Member of Parliament for Northampton and served as Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire. In 1812 he was created **Baron Wilmington**, of Wilmington in the County of Sussex, **Earl Compton**, of Compton in the County of Warwick, and **Marquess of Northampton**. These titles were in the Peerage of the United Kingdom. On his death the titles passed to his son, the second Marquess. He represented Northampton in Parliament but is best remembered as a patron of science and the arts. Between 1838 and 1848 he served as President of the Royal Society. He was also

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instrumental in helping the new College of Preceptors (College of Teachers) of London receive its Royal Charter. Lord Northampton married Margaret Douglas-Maclean-Clephane, daughter of Major-General Douglas Maclean Clephane. He was succeeded by his eldest son, the third Marquess. In 1831 he assumed by Royal licence the additional and principal surname of Douglas. When he died the titles were inherited by his younger brother, the fourth Marquess. He was an Admiral in the Royal Navy. Lord Northampton assumed in 1851 by Royal licence the additional surname of Maclean and in 1878 upon succeeding to the titles that of Douglas. He was succeeded by his second but eldest surviving son, the fifth Marquess. He represented Stratford-on-Avon and Barnsley in Parliament as a Liberal and served as Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire. As of 2013 the titles are held by his grandson, the seventh Marquess and sixteenth Earl, who succeeded his father in 1978.

#### Other notable members of the Compton family

Several other members of the Compton family have gained distinction. Henry Compton, sixth son of the second Earl of Northampton, was Bishop of London. Spencer Compton, 1st Earl of Wilmington, Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1742 to 1743, was the third son of the third Earl. Catherine Compton, daughter of the Hon. Charles Compton, third son of the fourth Earl, was created Baroness Arden in 1770. She was the wife of John Perceval, 2nd Earl of Egmont, and the mother of another Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval. Lord Alwyne Compton, fourth son of the second Marquess, was Bishop of Ely. Lord Alwyne Compton, third son of the fourth Marquess, was a Unionist politician. He was the father of Captain Edward Robert Francis Compton. The latter married as his first wife Sylvia, daughter of Alexander Haldane Farquharson. Their son Alwyne Arthur Compton was officially recognised by warrant of the Lord Lyon in the surname of Farquharson of Invercauld and as Chief of Clan Farquharson in 1949.

#### Estates

The Compton family are major land owners. Their two major estates are Castle Ashby House in Northamptonshire and Compton Wynyates in Warwickshire. The family also own land and property, including the 16th century Canonbury Tower <sup>[2]</sup> in Canonbury, Islington, north London, where many streets are named after names associated with the family. These include: Alwyne Road; Bingham Street; Compton Road; Douglas Road; Northampton Place; Spencer Place; as well as Wilmington Square in Clerkenwell.

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