



Registered Charity Number 1185952

British Napoleonic Bicentenary Trust
c/o St Helena Government
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2nd March 2021

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**LORD ASHCROFT MAKES GENEROUS GIFT TO THE BRITISH NAPOLEONIC
BICENTENARY TRUST**

The British Napoleonic Bicentenary Trust is delighted to announce that Lord Michael Ashcroft KCMG, PC, has made a generous donation of £300,000 to the Trust, to support its work in preserving the built heritage of the British Overseas Territory of St Helena.

Lord Ashcroft has a strong attachment to the Island, having visited first as a child and having made repeat visits since. He has supported the Island's media channels for many years, and has written numerous articles about St Helena.

The gift will be used principally to fund repairs to **Jacob's Ladder**, a precipitous stairway that leads steeply up the side of the valley from Jamestown, the island's capital. The Ladder is 924 feet in length, with 699 steps and to the top of a peak 603 feet above sea level.

Lord Ashcroft, who is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster, said: **"My affection for the island of St Helena and its residents spans seven decades and so I am delighted to be able to support these splendid projects.**

"Jacob's Ladder will always have a special place in my heart because my late father, Eric, carried me up all 699 steps when I was toddler and my family was visiting the island in 1948. So, now, to be able to fund these much-needed repairs feels very special to me.

"In the past four years, I have been privileged enough to have visited St Helena twice more and the warmth of the welcome that I always receive from Saints means a great deal to me. I will continue to champion St Helena's needs and I can't wait to return to the island again when circumstances allow it."

Today, Jacob's Ladder is a significant heritage tourism attraction in Jamestown and much loved by Islanders. The steps are in various states of condition with varying amounts of cracking and wear. The Trust plans to renovate the Ladder, repairing the steps with minimal impact on the heritage structure.

James Bramble, Executive Director of the British Napoleonic Bicentenary Trust said **"We are very grateful to Lord Ashcroft for his support which will both repair one of St Helena's best-known heritage sites, and enable work on less well-known sites which have a fascinating story to tell about the island's people, history, and cultural heritage"**.



In addition to funding Jacob's Ladder, Lord Ashcroft's contribution will also support the other heritage repairs planned by the Trust. These may include **Toby's Cottage**, a building at the Briars, where Napoleon was first held, and which housed slaves. The Trust plans to rebuild the site to explain the early history of slavery on the Island.

Other heritage sites the Trust hopes to preserve are the **Napoleonic fortifications** including Mundens' Battery and Banks Battery – dramatic cannon batteries built on rocky outcrops overlooking the sea to prevent any attempt to free Napoleon.

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What is the British Napoleonic Bicentenary Trust?

The British Napoleonic Bicentenary Trust has been set up to preserve the built heritage of the British Overseas Territory of St Helena dating from the Georgian period (1714-1837), with a particular emphasis on the sites built by the British as a result of Napoleon Bonaparte's rule (1799-1815) and subsequent incarceration on the Island (1815-21).

The charity has two main objectives: to **preserve the Island's heritage**, and to **promote new perspectives** on the story of Napoleon on St Helena.

The Trust is a new UK registered charity, set up by the St Helena Government. It's patrons are HRH the Duke of Gloucester, and Jean-Christophe Napoleon Bonaparte, great-great-great-great nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte. Our chair of trustees is author and former head of the European Investment Bank, Sir Brian Unwin. Other trustees include TV Historian, Dan Cruickshank, Penny, Viscountess Cobham, and Times Writer, Michael Binyon.

What is the Napoleonic Bicentenary?

To commemorate the bicentenary of Napoleon's death, the Trust had planned to organise an event in London on the 5th May 2021. However, as a result of the Coronavirus restrictions this event has been postponed to **7th July**, the date that news of Napoleon's death reached the UK. Further details will be announced shortly. The Trust is also continuing with its programme of online events:

On **18 March**, Dan Yon, social anthropologist at York University in Toronto, will share his 'Contemplations on Exile' with historian Hlonipha Mokoena from Wits University in Johannesburg, and the author and travel writer Will Atkins. They will discuss St Helena's long history as a place of banishment and isolation, and the significance of this to the Island's identity.

On **15 April**, Andrew Roberts, celebrated historian, and author of 'Napoleon The Great', will debate with Sir Brian Unwin, our chair of trustees and author of 'Terrible Exile - The Last Days of Napoleon on Saint Helena' on the battle between Napoleon and the then Governor, Sir Hudson Lowe.

Previous events have featured Peter Hicks speaking on the 'British Witnesses to Napoleon', Adam Zamoyski and Alan Forrest on British attitudes to Napoleon, Dan Yon, Andrew Pearson and Colin Fox on the history of slavery on the Island, and Brent Fortenberry presenting 3D scans of the built heritage of the Island. More information on the British Napoleonic Bicentenary Trust can be found at www.napoleon200.org More information on Lord Ashcroft can be found at www.lordashcroft.com