

# Early electricity trail



Find in the  
Servants' Hall

## 1 Electrical call board

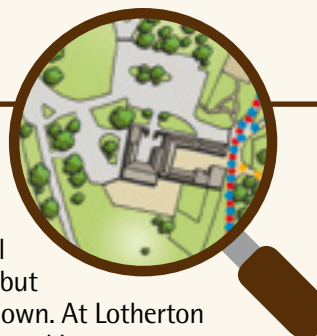
This call board was connected to buttons in rooms around the house, which the Gascoignes could use to summon servants. Electric call systems were the earliest use of domestic electricity. The first electrical call system was installed in 1869 at Hatfield House, near London. Here you can see that many rooms at Lotherton were named after places the Gascoignes had visited. Look out for call buttons as you go around the house – they were often placed on either side of the fireplaces. The Servants' Wing, built shortly after the house was electrified in 1903, was also lit using electricity – not necessarily a given at the time.



Find outside

## 7 Wind turbines

Before the National Grid came online in 1938, some houses were connected to local centralised electricity supplies, but most needed to generate their own. At Lotherton the electrical generator was housed in a separate building. The dynamo was driven by a 15 horse-power oil engine, and 53 glass accumulator cells acted as batteries to store excess electricity and supply it when demand was higher. This was a common set-up in the period. Although the generator building has since been demolished, we can now see another form of energy generating system from the Lotherton gardens – a renewable one: wind turbines.



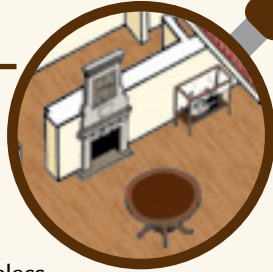
**Colonel and Mrs Gascoigne installed electricity at Lotherton Hall in 1903 as they built the new western extension: the Hall and the Drawing Room. Many of the electrical fittings you can see in the house are original. Follow the trail to learn more about them.**



### *Find in the Hall*

#### **2 Electrified candlestick**

Before it was electrified, Lotherton Hall was lit with candles and oil lamps. It was never lit by gas. Many upper-class people were worried that gas fumes could damage expensive gilt-work, blacken their white ceilings, and reduce the quality of the air. Many people at this time converted older light fittings when they installed electricity, for example this electrified candlestick. This might have been because they liked how the older fittings looked, or they had sentimental value for the owners.



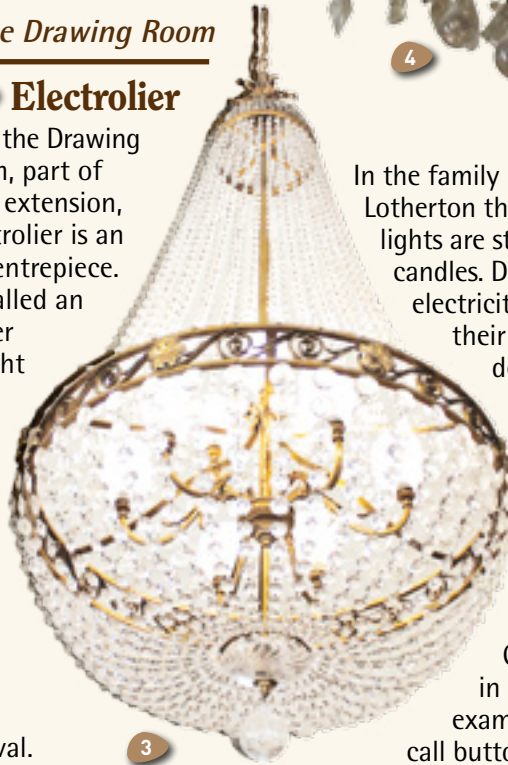
### *Find in the Drawing Room*

#### **3 Electrolier**

In the Drawing Room, part of the 1903 extension, the electrolier is an iconic centrepiece. It was called an electrolier to highlight

its use of

electricity and therefore its modernity. It was bought from Perry and Co. probably by Mrs Gascoigne. Because of the strong gender roles in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, the household was the woman's sphere of influence – decisions about electrification therefore relied largely on women's approval.



### *Find in the Boudoir and Medal Room*

#### **4 Feminine and masculine light fittings**



In the family rooms at Lotherton the electric lights are styled to look like candles. Despite having modern electricity, many people at this time still wanted their lights to look very traditional. The decorative schemes chosen for a room often reflected the gender of the person who used it. Light fittings were an important part of such schemes. The contrast between the delicate chandelier in Mrs Gascoigne's Boudoir and the heavier design of Colonel Gascoigne's lights in the Medal Room is a good example of this. Their electrical call buttons also look very different.



### *Find in the Dining Room*

#### **5 Candelabra**

In the early days of domestic electrification in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, electricity wasn't always reliable. There were embarrassing stories of electric lights failing at dinner parties hosted specifically to show them off. At Lotherton the lights often flickered. It was important to have a back-up, like candles, in case you were suddenly plunged into darkness. People also still liked to have candles at the dinner table because their soft light created a nice atmosphere.



### *Find in the corridor*

#### **6 Lift**

Colonel and Mrs Gascoigne installed this lift in the 1930s. Electricity was generally more reliable and safer by this time. Electrical accidents were not uncommon around the time Lotherton was electrified in 1903. Understandably, servants were often quite nervous about electricity. Few people understood what electricity was or how it worked. As it was the servants who managed the electrical systems, they were often the most at risk. Female servants were especially concerned, because they were responsible for cleaning electrical fittings, and were alarmed by exaggerated rumours of maids being killed by electricity. However, there is no record of any electrical accidents at Lotherton.

