

LUTYENS, LYTTONS and LOYALTY

March 2026

Last month reports emerged that India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, had ordered the removal of a bust of Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944) #3716 from the former Viceroy's House — today known as Rashtrapati Bhavan — in Delhi.

Lutyens' work in India is sometimes less widely recognised than his British commissions, including the Cenotaph in Whitehall, the vast Thiepval Memorial in France, and the many country houses he designed across Britain.

Following the 1911 announcement that the capital of India would move from Calcutta to Delhi, Lutyens was appointed principal architect for the new imperial city. Working alongside Herbert Baker, a masterplan was approved and construction began in 1913. The Viceroy's House was completed in 1930, and on 13 February 1931 New Delhi was formally inaugurated as the capital.

The inscription beneath the bust read simply: "Edwin Lutyens, Architect of this House."

Lutyens already had a strong familial connection with India. In 1897 he married Lady Emily Lytton (1874–1964) #3713, daughter of Edward Robert Bulwer/Lytton (1831–1891) #3147, Viceroy of India between 1876 and 1880, and Edith Villiers (1841–1936) #3148, who bore seven children, though two died in infancy.

In 1862, aged just 21, Edith sat for George Frederic Watts (1817–1904), a pioneer of the Symbolist movement. Her portrait is widely regarded as one of the finest associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

Her sister Elizabeth (Betty) Edith Lytton (1867–1942) #3711 married Gerald William Balfour (1853–1945) #3715, 2nd Earl of Balfour and younger brother of Prime Minister Arthur Balfour.

Among her brothers were Neville Stephen Lytton OBE (1879–1951) #3710, 3rd Earl of Lytton, and Victor Alexander George Robert Lytton KG PC GCSI GCIE (1876–1947) #2298, great-grandfather of the present Lord Cobbold (1962) #662.

The Cobbold Family History Trust — reinforced by the stewardship of the [Knebworth House Education and Preservation Trust](#) — remains loyal to its commitment to telling history as it was lived and recorded.

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