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## London's Country House Collections

*Julius Bryant*

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**Julius Bryant : London's Country House Collections** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised London's Country House Collections:

The four houses whose collections form the subject of this book were all built as suburban villas in the first half of the 18th century. In this century they were saved as public monuments and their contents, dispersed by previous owners and tenants, are gradually being replaced or restored. Kenwood, the largest, was bequeathed as a museum by its last owner, the Earl of Iveagh, whose outstanding collection of paintings forms the heart of the display. The other three began their lives as public collections in the post-war period. Chiswick is a monument to the great 3rd Earl of

Burlington, and attempts have been made recently to restore the original scheme of decoration to the villa, through research, loans and judicious purchases. Marble Hill, built for Henrietta Howard, mistress of George II and patroness of Pope, Swift and a number of artists, has been furnished with some of its original contents and with a wealth of fine paintings and objets d'art to reflect the taste of its first owner. Ranger's House, the oldest of the four, is home to the Suffolk Collection of paintings, including a spectacular group Jacobean portraits by William Larkin. In a clear and informative text, full of witty anecdote, the author charts the history of these houses and discusses their collections, original and current. A general introduction outlines the various points of connection between the villas, their owners and their collections. This is followed by detailed coverage of the four houses, which together form one of the finest public collections of Georgian painting and furniture in the world, together with works by Rembrandt, Vermeer, Van Dyck and other Old Masters favoured in 18th-century England.