
SIR RICHARD WALLACE

The Benefactor of Paris
The Great Philanthropist



SIR RICHARD WALLACE

A Brief Biography of an Extraordinary Man

An Englishman and Francophile

Richard Wallace was born in London on 26 July 1818. At birth, he was given the name Richard Jackson. The identity of his natural parents was never proven. Most believed he was the illegitimate son of the 4th Marquess of Hertford, Richard Seymour-Conway, and a married woman named Agnes Wallace Bickley, who sometimes went by the name of Agnes Jackson.

His earliest years are a mystery. It is assumed he lived in England with his mother until the age of six when he was brought to Paris. He was taken into the Hertford family, which included Richard Seymour-Conway and his mother Maria Emily, the Marchioness of Hertford always known as Mie-Mie. Mie-Mie was estranged from her husband, the 3rd Marquess of Hertford, and lived separately in France from 1802 until she died in 1856 at the age of 85 years. Richard Jackson was raised by Mie-Mie and they were devoted to one another.



Mie-Mie, 3rd Marchioness of Hertford
The Wallace Collection, London



Richard Wallace, Age 8
Victoria & Albert Museum, London

From early childhood until his death, Richard Jackson never left the Hertford household. Seymour-Conway was engaged in art collecting and dealing. He provided for Jackson's education and employment and passed on his passion for art. As a young man, Jackson worked for Hertford, helping the marquess amass a formidable art collection, as well as serving as Hertford's personal secretary. He became an art lover and collector himself and believed art could educate and inform, as well as enrich and beautify. He also believed art could inspire artisans to incorporate good design into the useful items they created.

Jackson lived with Mie-Mie until she died, but kept a mistress, Julie Castelneau, with whom he had an illegitimate child, George Castelneau, born in 1840.

In 1842 when the 3rd Marquess died, Richard Seymour-Conway became Lord Hertford, the 4th Marquess, and returned to England to settle affairs and look into the sources of his enormous wealth. While he was away, Richard Jackson, 22, had himself baptized and took the name Richard Wallace, the maiden name of the woman thought to be his mother. Lord Hertford soon returned to Paris. Wallace continued to serve as his personal secretary, helping Hertford manage his affairs and expand his growing art collection.

There was a striking resemblance between Lord Hertford and Richard Wallace. Most thought Richard Wallace was Lord Hertford's child. Hertford, however, never publicly or privately recognized Wallace as his son.



Wallace and his son, George, playing dominoes as a friend looks on, 1863. Private collection.



*4th Marquess of Hertford, Richard Seymour-Conway
The Wallace Collection, London*



*Julie Castelnau Wallace circa 1871-2
The Wallace Collection, London*

On 25 August 1870, Lord Hertford died at Chateau Bagatelle and to everyone's surprise left his enormous wealth to Richard Wallace. This fortuitous event was a blessing for the residents of Paris. Within days Paris was under siege during the Franco-Prussian War and it was Wallace who came to the rescue.

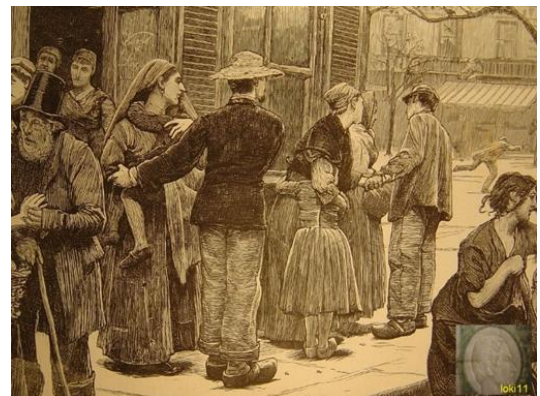
Immediately, Wallace used his new wealth to alleviate the suffering of the poor caused by the siege. As soon as the siege ended, Wallace married Julie Castelnau in February 1871 and legally recognized his son, then age 30, whose name was changed from Georges Castelnau to Edmond Richard Wallace.

Le siège de Paris, 19 septembre 1870 - 28 janvier 1871

"...in the most solemn and the most appalling of crises, he gave signs of sympathy, the memory of which will forever remain indelible in the hearts of the people of Paris." Pierre Pagent, L'illustration Journal Universel 29 December 1872

Richard Wallace barely had time to bury "his father" in the family tomb at Père Lachaise before the siege began. He quickly moved all the art and fine furniture from Bagatelle to Lord Hertford's house in Paris. Bagatelle was commandeered by the French army and Wallace went to stay at his house in the 9th arrondissement.

While many escaped from Paris before the Prussians arrived, Wallace remained. Others, mostly poor refugees from neighboring regions, fled to Paris for safety and were trapped without resources. When the Prussian grip on Paris tightened, Richard Wallace stepped in to help those suffering most from the war.



Wallace Gives 2.5 Million Francs in Aid

Funds two ambulances - Ambulances are temporary field hospitals with an assigned vehicle to transport patients. Immediately, Wallace gave 300,000 francs to establish an ambulance to join the 13th corps of the French Army. Wallace's son, George, served in the 13th corps during the war. Wallace also established an ambulance in a house to serve sick and destitute British citizens trapped in Paris.

Aids the poor - Things were bleak for the poor. Thousands would have died if not for the generosity of Richard Wallace. He funded aid for food, clothing, healthcare, housing and fuel. In the midst of artillery shelling, Wallace heroically walked from district town hall to town hall distributing cash for vouchers to aid the unfortunate. He gave 400,000 francs for fuel vouchers and 100,000 francs to start a city subscription for victims of shelling who needed housing. He bought 300,000 soup tickets to distribute to war victims and funded another subscription to aid those injured by the shelling. When all the cats, dogs, rats and zoo animals were eaten and there was nothing left in the city to feed the starving, France capitulated and the



war came to an end on 28 January 1871.

Wallace also aided British nationals living in Paris during the siege, about 4,000 people. He became chairman of the British Charitable Fund (BCF), which offered help to impoverished British people in Paris. During the fall and winter of 1870, Richard Wallace gave 78,158 francs to the BCF. To escape the war, the charity sent 871 British



citizens to England free of charge. By mid-January 1871, 1,266 people were almost entirely dependent on the BCF for food and fuel. Wallace served as chairman or honorary chairman of the BCF for the rest of his life.

In less than a year Richard Wallace donated 2.5 million francs, money which kept thousands alive during these terrible times. The press called him the “Providence of the Poor” and “The Benefactor of Paris”.

When the siege began, the British Ambassador, Lord Lyon, and the Embassy staff fled Paris. Edward Blount, a banker and friend of Wallace, was left in charge. Wallace’s hands-on administration of the aid he personally provided was efficient and effective. When the siege ended, Wallace and Blount were tasked with administrating the distribution of food sent to the people of Paris by the London Relief Committee. Accounts tell of Wallace and Blount rolling up their shirt sleeves to personally help hand out food to the needy.



Richard Wallace, center at desk, chairing the British Charitable Fund during the Siege of Paris 1870-71.

Wallace Receives Honors

During the siege, hot air balloons were the only method for getting information out of the city. A balloon named *Le Richard Wallace* was intended to be the last balloon to leave Paris before surrender. It was launched on 27 January 1871 carrying messages to Bordeaux and a letter from Jules Favre to Gambetta describing the terms of armistice. Unfortunately, the balloon and its pilot were lost at sea.

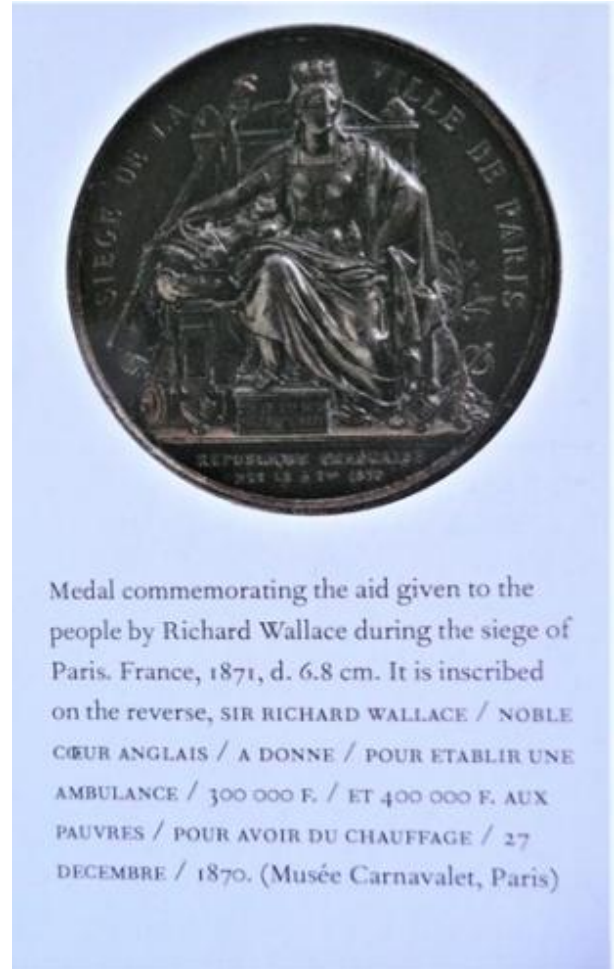
Richard Wallace was the most famous philanthropist of his time. He was loved by Parisians. Authorities were urged to honor his extraordinary acts of kindness and generosity. Medallions were cast to commemorate Wallace and his good deeds. A street in the Paris suburb of Neuilly-



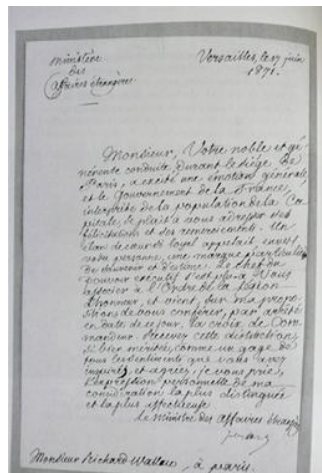
Postcard showing Boulevard Richard Wallace in Puteaux.

sur-Seine which extends to Puteaux bears the name of Wallace. In June 1871, Wallace was made Commander of the Order of the Legion of Honour in France, but a dossier was never created because Wallace was considered a foreigner and dossiers were mandatory only for nationals.

He became Sir Richard Wallace in August 1871 when Queen Victoria made him a baronet in the United Kingdom, recognizing his "splendid munificence during the difficult period of the siege of Paris". His wife became Lady Wallace and he created a Wallace coat of arms. Queen Victoria would not make Wallace a full baron, and thus a peer, or make his baronetcy an inherited title because both Wallace and his son were born illegitimate. Wallace's title of baronet died with him.



Medal commemorating the aid given to the people by Richard Wallace during the siege of Paris. France, 1871, d. 6.8 cm. It is inscribed on the reverse, SIR RICHARD WALLACE / NOBLE CŒUR ANGLAIS / A DONNE / POUR ETABLIR UNE AMBULANCE / 300 000 F. / ET 400 000 F. AUX PAUVRES / POUR AVOIR DU CHAUFFAGE / 27 DECEMBRE / 1870. (Musée Carnavalet, Paris)



Left – Letter to Wallace from the French Foreign Minister announcing he was conferred commandeur de l'ordre de la légion d'honneur.



Right- Richard Wallace Coat of Arms

Many felt that these honors were not enough and that Richard Wallace never received the recognition he deserved for all he had done to alleviate suffering and save lives during and immediately following the siege of Paris.

Wallace Donates the Fountains

The events of 1870-71 convinced Wallace to move to England to safeguard his art collection and attend to his inherited estates. Before moving to England in 1872, Wallace gave an additional one million francs to help reestablish the poor of Paris following the traumatic siege and Commune era. He also supported general public assistance, food aid to public hospitals, and night shelters for the homeless.

In parting, he offered the residents of Paris his greatest and lasting gift – 50 public drinking water fountains in two models which he created, financed and donated to the city. Initially, he gave 10 wall mounted fountains costing 450 francs each and 40 grand model, caryatid fountains costing 1000 francs each. Their purpose was to provide everyone with equal access to life-sustaining, clean drinking water. The first was installed in July 1872 and the people soon called them *Les Wallaces*. For 150 years, this lasting gift has given everyone access to drinking water and the fountains remain symbols of a public/private partnership for the common good and of one man's kindness and generosity.



Source: *L'illustration Journal Universel*, 17 August 1872.



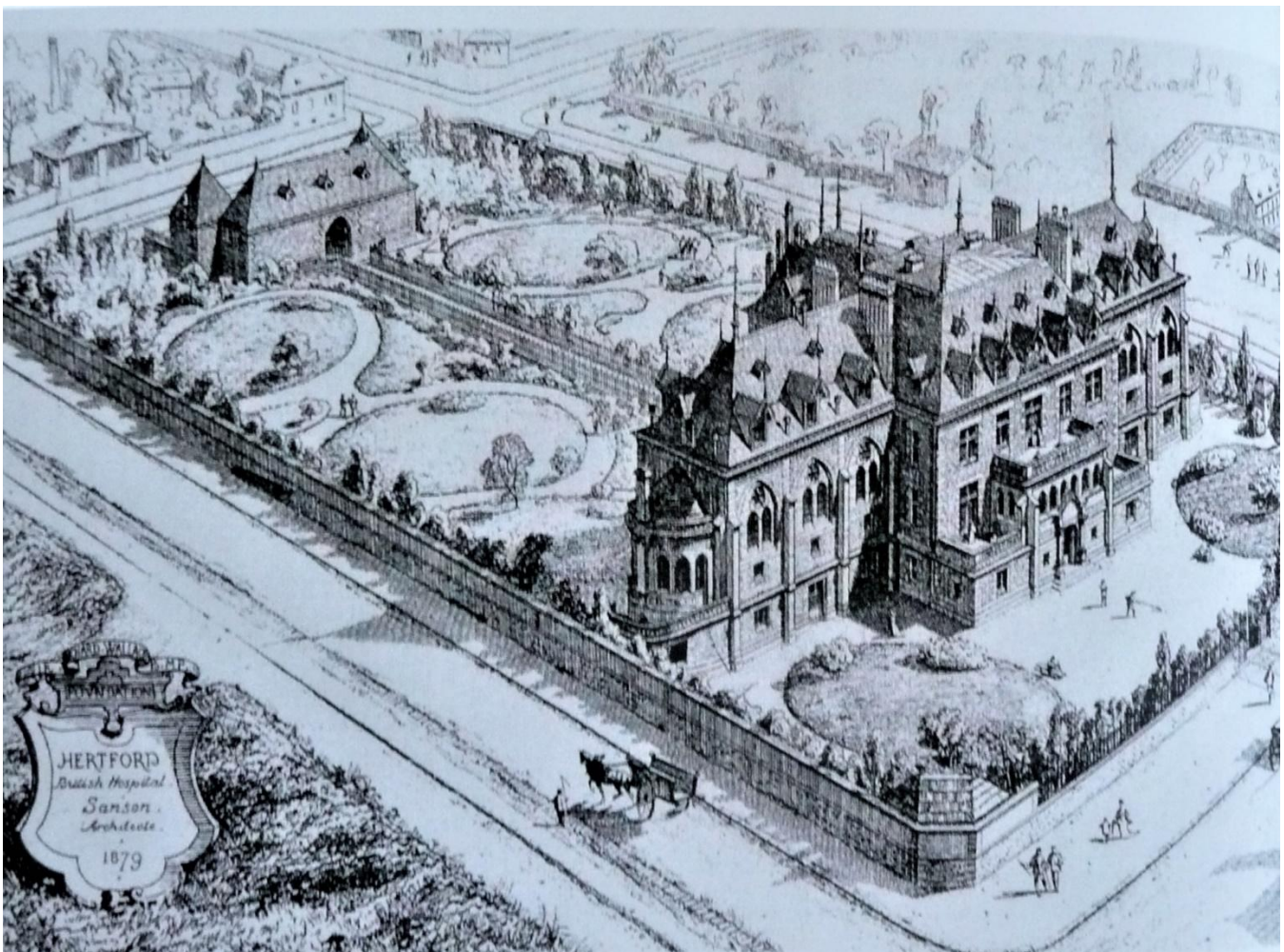
La Fontaine Wallace, Georges Alfred Bottini (1874-1907), water colour dated to the 1890s. Wallace Collection, London.

Today, Wallace fountains grace the streets of Paris serving rich and poor and standing as testament to one man's humanity, love of beauty and belief in equality.

A Life of Charity and Service

After unexpectedly acquiring great wealth, Richard Wallace lead a life of quiet philanthropy and service. He generously provided aid to the poor and enriched many lives in Paris, London and in Lisburn, Northern Ireland where he inherited a vast estate.

The ambulance Wallace established to provide medical and surgical treatment to indigent British nationals during the siege inspired him to build and endow a permanent hospital. The Hertford British Hospital opened on rue de Villiers in Levallois Perret just outside Paris in 1879 and it served the British public for 70 years.



Hertford British Hospital and Grounds, 1879

It was the most beautiful and modern hospital of its day. The building is no longer a hospital, but it is still in use and owned by the Hertford British Hospital Charity. There is a Wallace Fountain in the garden.

Wallace served as chairman or chairman emeritus of the British Charitable Fund in Paris until he died in 1890. During the 20 years he was involved with the Fund he provided hands on administrative support in addition to being its major funding source.

Wallace inherited a large estate in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. The benevolent landowner made many community improvements to the town of Lisburn, including land for a school and a public park. He built a town hall, restored churches and made improvements to the area infrastructure. He represented the county as a Member of Parliament (MP) from 1873 to 1885. A towering Wallace Memorial was erected in 1892 in Wallace Park and paid for by the people of Lisburn in tribute to Wallace. It was dedicated to 'the memory of one whose delight was to do good and in grateful recognition of his generous interest in the prosperity of this town.'



The Wallace Memorial at Wallace Park, Lisburn, Northern Ireland



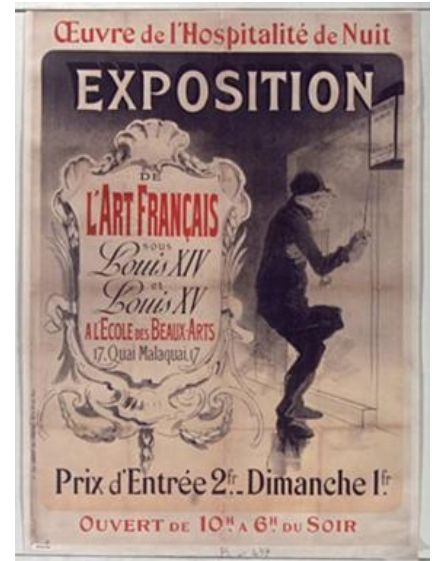
Wallace gave five (5) fountains to Lisburn in 1876. Two survived and are still in use.

In London, while his new residence, Hertford House, was being renovated, he loaned his art collection to open the new Bethnal-Green Museum in a working-class neighborhood of east London and made sure there were free visiting days and suitable hours for the poor and working

class to attend. He frequently loaned pieces from his collection to special charity exhibitions in Paris and London to raise funds for overnight shelters and services for the poor.



Illustration titled Art Connoisseurs of the East End shows locals visiting the Wallace Collection on loan to the Bethnal-Green Museum in East London from 1872-75.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Wallace lent his artwork to many charitable art exhibitions, including the one promoted by this poster. He also donated money for many years directly to Œuver de l'Hospitalité de Nuit.

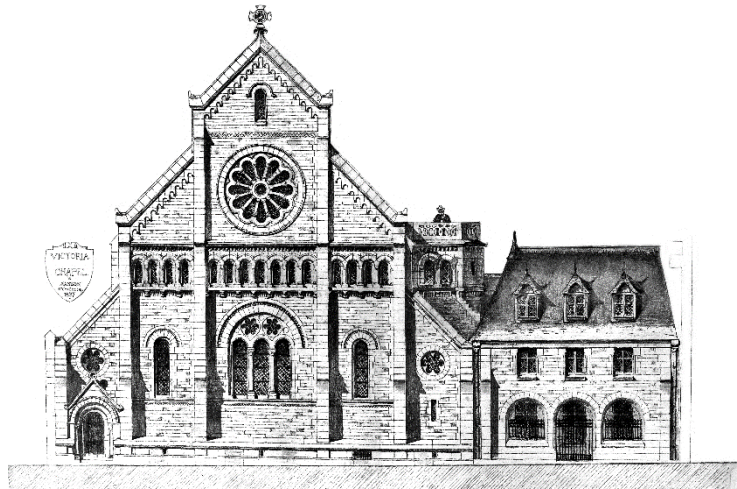
The Wallace Collection, one of the finest private art collections ever assembled, is on display today at Hertford House museum, the former London residence of Sir Richard and Lady Wallace. The Collection was gifted to the nation upon the death of Lady Wallace. The museum opened in 1900. At its dedication, Lord Rosebery, former Prime Minister of the UK, described the art collection as



“the greatest gift, I believe, that has ever been made by an individual to our country”. The Wallace Collection continues to this day to provide access to fine art to everyone, including extraordinary examples of French Renaissance and eighteenth-century art, many important seventeenth and nineteenth-century paintings and one of the finest collections of arms and armor in Britain. A Wallace fountain was installed in the forecourt of Hertford House in 1960.

Saint George's Church

In 1884, land was purchased at rue Auguste-Vacquerie (then rue des Bassins) as the location for a new Anglican church in Paris to serve those of the Anglican faith. The congregation struggled to find funds to pay the debt on the land and build an adequate church to meet the needs of the churchgoers.



At the instigation of longtime friends associated with the Hertford British Hospital and the British Charitable Fund, Wallace became personally involved with the planning for the new church. He chaired many of the committee meetings and was the driving force behind its design, making it a grander and more expansive church than initially envisioned and one that could accommodate seven to eight hundred people. He covered most of the costs for construction and he gave a stipend to provide for the future permanent Chaplain.

In May 1887 work began on the new building to house Saint George's Church. Construction was quickly completed and the first service in the new building took place on Christmas Day 1888. The funeral service for Sir Richard Wallace took place there in 1890.

In the 1970s, the old church building was demolished and replaced with a structure that had an underground church space to serve the congregants of Saint George's and aboveground, profitable apartments.

Chateau Bagatelle

Richard Seymour-Conway purchased Chateau Bagatelle on the outskirts of Paris in 1835, saving it from demolition. Wallace inherited the property. It was damaged during the siege and Wallace had it restored and renovated. Bagatelle was his primary residence when he was in Paris.

After 14 years living mostly in England trying to claim a place in high society and a legacy for his son, Richard Wallace returned to Paris disappointed, unwell, lonely and depressed. His son had become estranged and died in 1887 without reconciliation. Some say this broke his heart. Wallace lived his last days alone at Bagatelle and died there in the same bed as his father on 20 July 1890.



Bagatelle is owned by the City of Paris and is being restored by the Mansart/ Bagatelle Foundation.



*Sir Richard and Lady Wallace with friends at Bagatelle.
Source: Private Collection*

Père Lachaise Cemetery

The funeral of Richard Wallace took place on 25 July 1890. *The Times* reported from Paris, "The deceased, moreover, had expressed a desire that there should be no display. A third-class hearse and six mourning coaches were engaged, and only a few intimate friends were admitted



*Wallace funeral procession leaving Bagatelle on 25 July 1890.
(L'Univers illustré, 2 August 1890)*

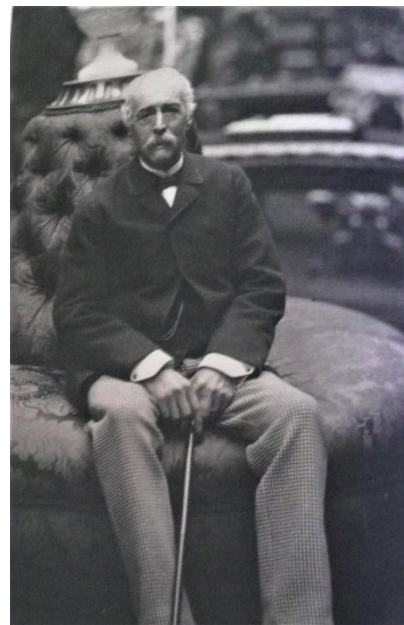
to Bagatelle.” A service was held at St. George’s Church. As the procession made its way from the church to Père Lachaise cemetery, crowds of grateful Parisians lined the streets to bid farewell to the Englishman whose French patriotism during 1870-71 was unequalled by any Frenchman. Sir Richard Wallace was buried in the Hertford-Wallace family tomb.



The Hertford-Wallace Family Tomb in Père Lachaise

Wallace Fountains – The Lasting Tribute

Sir Richard Wallace was a charming, empathetic, humble man with ties to two nations and devotion to both countries and their people. His generosity and charitable good works in Paris and the United Kingdom were remarkable for his day. He is one of Europe’s first and finest philanthropists and one of Paris’ greatest heroes. Sir Richard Wallace will be remembered for two of the most extraordinary and lasting gifts ever made by a single person in the history of Europe, the remarkable Wallace Collection in London and the iconic Wallace Fountains in Paris.



Credits:

Special thanks to Suzanne Higgott, author of Sir Richard Wallace: Connoisseur, Collector & Philanthropist, Matthew Harrison, author of An Anglican Adventure: The History of Saint George’s Church, Paris, The Wallace Collection, Peter Howard, Hertford British Hospital Charity and members of the Society of the Wallace Fountains for contributions to this content.