A ‘SING-SONG’ RESTORED
The innovative conservation of Anglesey Abbey’s Pagoda Clock

Anglesey Abbey has one of the finest clock collections in the Trust; the clocks here were largely acquired by Lord Fairhaven in the 1920s and 30s. Of these 70 clocks, one of the most spectacular is the Pagoda Clock (a ‘sing-song’—see the next article for a definition). It has a triple function: timepiece, carillon and automata. The clock is set in motion twice a day at 12 noon and 3pm with the automata going through a display of rotating flower pots with plants that grow and subside at the same time as the carillon plays from a cycle of four tunes.

Single-function timepiece clocks usually have movements which are relatively robust and can run (with care and regular maintenance) without concern, being wound once a week. The Pagoda Clock is somewhat different. The intricacy and mechanical complexity of the chiming and automata drive trains, and in particular their use of a musical carillon cylinder mechanism, means that they are particularly prone to mechanical problems and wear. The clock had been behaving in a rather erratic and unreliable way for a number of years, and was making clunking, mechanical noises as the automata spun and whirled twice a day.

In 2012 the clock was sent to Matthew Read, tutor in clock conservation at West Dean College, for a systematic clean and investigations into both the clock and automata mechanisms. On opening up the clock and inspecting the mechanisms it was immediately apparent that there were numerous problems of wear to the springs and gearing. There was also serious wear to an intermediate brass pinion in the main musical/automata train which had caused significant problems. Every time the automata operated there was a build-up of brass dust on the bottom of the clock due to wear to the gear wheels. More worryingly, inappropriate replacement and clocksmith work to the...
springs and wheels had placed the clock in serious danger of major internal damage to the movement—the fusee chain had already broken at least once before.

The options that we faced were:

1. To disconnect the musical and automata movement and to return the clock after cleaning to function just as a timepiece
2. To undertake a major task of traditional clock repair and replacement of working parts to allow the clock to function as before
3. To disconnect the musical and automata movement and replace it with digitalised sound and an electro-mechanical drive which would be fully reversible

To return the clock to Anglesey without its chimes and automata functioning fully was felt to be too great a disappointment for the house staff, volunteers and visitors, as the clock is one of the iconic objects in the house. To have taken the second option of restoring the working parts would have involved a great deal of intervention; many components would need to be replaced. This high level of intervention would have interfered with the structural integrity of the clock movement. Furthermore, it did not offer a long-term solution, as the cyclical process of wear and replacement would have continued into the future.

A decision was made to take the third option of a pure conservation approach, to substitute the musical and automata drive with an electric-powered motor and gearbox and to replace the chimes with a high-definition digital recording. Although the Wallace Collection had been the first to have a digital recording installed in two clocks in 2010, this would be the first attempt to fit an electronic drive to power both clock and automata movements with synchronisation to a digital recording of musical chimes.

The first task was to dismantle and clean the clock, a task carried out by postgraduate student Brittany Cox under supervision from Matthew Read. It consisted of over 600 individual parts in the external case alone. During the cleaning an interesting discovery was made. When the enamelled side plaques to the base were removed small packets of paper were found as wedges holding the plaques in position. On opening the wedges, it was discovered that they were a mixture of torn up pieces of newsprint and some writing paper. What was significant was that it was Chinese newsprint from the early 20th century which was the first indication of the clock’s Chinese provenance.

The replication of the sound of the chimes was carried out by John Leonard, a theatre and exhibition sound engineer based in London who had previously worked on the two clocks from the Wallace Collection, replacing the sound from a moving carillon with a digitalized sound recording.

An audio recording was made of the strikes and chimes, and these were then edited to match very closely to the frequency spectrum of the original sounds. An amplifier, sufficiently small in size, economical in power consumption and high in fidelity was then sourced. Both the playback system and the amplifier required a 12-volt dc power-supply which could be provided by a 12-volt battery supply or mains power. Because of the additional drain on power from the drive for the automata, mains power rather than batteries was used. Conventional mini loudspeakers were sourced, and these were connected to an amplifier fitted with level control so that the recorded musical chimes could be matched to the clock’s real hour chime.

A custom circuit board was designed and built by two electronic engineers, John Butt and Mark Record. The audio files were triggered by photo-electric sensors activated from the clock’s movement. Two photoelectric sensors were required: one for the quarter hour and hour strikes, and one for the carillon. The end result is a sophisticated system of playing the strikes and the four tunes of the clock in sequence activated by the normal movement of the clock. The sound that comes from inside the clock is indistinguishable from the original, creating an authentic sound.

To power the movement of the automata, several miniaturised motors and gearboxes were tested until the correct combination was found to suit the 45-second movement time of the automata. Photoelectric movement sensors were again used to trigger the
new motor for the automata. The final and perhaps the most time-consuming task was to design and make the digital drive movement using traditional clock-making practices so that it could interface with the historical mechanism. This was carried out by Matthew Read using a new brass plate and pillar frame. This acted as a chassis for the motor, gearbox, drive train, electronic control board, loudspeakers, digital sound store, and amplifiers—the new frame occupied the space of the original mechanism. That mechanism is on display alongside the clock to explain to visitors the reasons why it was necessary for it to be replaced by the new electronic drive and digital recording.

The conservation of the Pagoda Clock has revealed intriguing insights into its Chinese provenance. It has pushed the boundaries of the conservation of dynamic objects with an approach which is new and radical. By avoiding the need to replace original drive components, this approach ultimately offers a sound and sustainable conservation solution which is fully reversible and has greatly reduced the mechanical wear and the risk of serious damage from the continuing use of the clock.

Chris Calnan, Conservator, East of England

With acknowledgements to the following for their contribution to the project: Matthew Read, Clock Conservation Tutor, West Dean, Jonathan Betts, Adviser on Clock Conservation, Brittany Cox, Automata Conservator New York, John Leonard, sound engineer, John Butt and Mark Record, electronic engineers.

Tracing the Chinese Origins of Two Automata Clocks from Anglesey Abbey

The first Western clocks to arrive in China did so during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), brought by the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) to the court of the Wanli emperor (1572-1620). By the 18th century, elaborately decorated clocks and flamboyant automata, referred to in English as ‘sing-songs’ (derived from the Chinese word *zhiming zhong*, meaning ‘bells that ring by themselves’), had become a prominent part of the collections of emperors and high-ranking court officials. The Qianlong emperor (1736-95) was a prolific collector, and it was during his reign that the importing of clocks to China from the West, and the manufacture of Chinese clocks on Western models, reached its height. The imperial clock and automata collection at this time is said to have numbered as many as 4,000, and the remainder of this can still be seen in the Forbidden City, Beijing today. The London jeweller James Cox was the most well-known manufacturer and exporter of English clocks and automata to China, and many of his commissions ended up in the imperial palaces.

Two such clocks in the collection of Anglesey Abbey have traditionally been known as the ‘Pagoda Clock’ and the ‘Tower Clock’. The Pagoda Clock is a four-tier gilt and enamel musical clock in late 18th-century style. Although it has not been possible to put names to the tunes played by this clock, they can be identified as examples of Scottish Airs, a sort of classicised folk music that had been made popular in amateur music-making circles in the earlier decades of the century by composers such as Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762). Tunes like *The Lass of Peaty’s Mill*, which had been set by Geminiani in 1749, are widely found in clocks of the later 18th century. The musical movement of the pagoda-style Tower Clock is signed John Mottram, who worked in London from 1790 to 1808. The musical movement of the Pagoda Clock is signed Henry Borrell, who was working in London between the years 1790 and 1840.

Both these Anglesey Abbey clocks show fine engine-turned enamel work decoration. This is particularly evident on the Tower Clock; it is decorated with enamel panels and has prominent high-quality miniature landscape and portrait enamel plaques, some thought to be by the Genevan artist Jean Louis Richter (1769-1840). In common with all such clocks, both examples in the collection have automaton mechanisms. In the case of the Pagoda Clock these are in the form of gilt and enamel flower pots which swivel round as the music plays. Similarly, the Tower Clock had swivelling whirligigs to the front of the tiered panels and a domed top section made from metallic petals that open out around a fountain of (now missing) spinning glass rods.

A clock sale which took place at Robersons’ Gallery in Knightsbridge is of fundamental importance to the history of these clocks. In 1923 ten clocks were sold at the sale, three of which are now at Anglesey Abbey (only two are discussed here). In Robersons’ catalogue, one paragraph in particular is highly relevant to the history of the clocks:

‘The collection was gathered by an Irish gentleman during the course of his world travels before the Great War. In Peking, Teheran, St. Petersburg, Lahore and many other Eastern towns this gentleman made his purchases, paying fabulous prices, and he kept them for several years in his home in Danzig. At the outbreak of war he returned with them to Ireland …’

All mention of ‘Irish gentlemen’ as military or religious figures in available sources have been examined but no reference can be found to an Irish man, of high rank, who spent time in China,
India, Persia or Russia, and who had been a one-time resident in Danzig/Gdansk. The identity of this man would help us unravel the history of these clocks, but exactly who he was remains a complete mystery.

Conclusive proof that both clocks had been in China does exist. On examination of the Tower Clock it was found that scratched crudely inside are two Chinese characters, no doubt inscribed to identify the panels for assembly. One character clearly reads you 右 (right) and the other appears to read shang 上 (upper); together translating as ‘upper right’. The date at which the Pagoda Clock left China can be deduced, with a certain amount of accuracy, through the deciphering of Chinese textual fragments found on scraps of paper discovered inside the clock during conservation. These had been used as wedges designed to keep the enamel panels in place, perhaps to prevent movement in transit.

No complete sentence can be found on these scraps, but it has been possible nevertheless to identify the nature of the fragments, and the approximate date of printing, from the vocabulary used in the text. Among these fragments are those from a woodblock printed leaflet on the subject of a popular lottery, and scraps from a newspaper of a political nature. The earliest time this newspaper could have been printed is 1912, the year of the founding of the Chinese Republic, and the latest is October 1914, the time when Shuntian Prefecture (mentioned in the text) was abolished as an administrative unit. Such a date, just before the outbreak of the First World War, concurs with the story of the ‘Irish gentleman’, although this information does not preclude the possibility that both these clocks had been looted in China in 1860 at the time of the Sacking of the Summer Palace, or in the Boxer Uprising; indeed, this does appear to be the most likely scenario. Following the Robersons’ Gallery sale in the 1920s, the clocks were in the hands of the antique dealers M. and R. Geneen. The clocks were then dispersed into various collections, and at least three were purchased by Lord Fairhaven of Anglesey Abbey, either directly from Geneen, or through an intermediary such as the clock restorer Harold Carter-Bowles (1889-1961).

It was usual to manufacture this type of clock in pairs; the Anglesey Abbey examples are no exception to this—the pairs to both these clocks still survive to this day. The twin to the Pagoda Clock has been traced to the private collection of the Getty family in California (an image of this clock can be seen in a design book as the centrepiece of a group of largely Chinese and Japanese objects). The history of the pair to the Tower Clock can be traced with some accuracy. It is known that this clock was taken from China at the time of the Boxer Rebellion by Lt-Col. W. J. R. Rainsford and Major J. J. C. Watson and presented by them to the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1901. The Anglesey Abbey Tower Clock itself came to Europe at a later date in the hands of the ‘Irish gentleman’ and, most likely, in the company of the Pagoda Clock.

Acknowledgements: Mrs Frances Greathead, David Just

THE COWBOY BARONET

In her enjoyable and thought-provoking piece in the last ABC Bulletin (‘Found in a tea chest at Knole’), Felicity Stimpson asked, ‘How many National Trust properties can claim such a connection with the Wild West?’ As it happens, Oxburgh Hall in Norfolk can.

In the 1880s, the young Henry Bedingfeld (heir to Oxburgh and later 8th Baronet) and his brothers were each given £1,000 and challenged to make their fortune in the United States. The US government granted them land for free near Cheyenne in Wyoming, on condition that they fenced it in: the fence round their ranch eventually extended to twelve miles.

For several years the Bedingfeld brothers lived the outdoor life. However, the saloons of Cheyenne held more attraction than ranching for Henry’s brother Richard, who was nicknamed ‘Whisky Dick’. While his brothers were away getting drunk, Henry was left to fend for himself, but his education at Stonyhurst College had little prepared him for the simplest practical tasks such as cooking rice. He became more adept at riding, and a photograph survives of him in full cowboy gear. Henry’s Wild West adventure came to an end in 1899, when he returned home to serve in the Boer War.

Acknowledgements: Mrs Frances Greathead, David Just

Oliver Garnett, Property Publisher, National Trust

1 Catherine Pagani: ‘Clockmaking in China under the Kangxi and Qianlong Emperors’ in Arts asiatiques vol. 30, no.1, 1995, pp.76-84.
5 Discovered by Chris Calnan on an examination of the clock with the author.
6 The Republic of China was established on 1 January 1912 after the Xinhai Revolution of 1911.
8 Ian White: English Clocks for the Eastern Markets, p. 245.
A FORTUITOUS GIFT AT CLANDON
Conservation treatment of ‘The Farmyard’ by Francis Barlow

On 29 April 2015 a devastating fire caused significant damage to Clandon Park, the Palladian mansion built for Lord Onslow in the 1720s. Many of the contents of the house, including two paintings by Francis Barlow, *A Cassowary* and *An Ostrich*, were saved through the efforts of the Fire Services and National Trust staff. However, two large paintings by Francis Barlow, *The Decoy* and *Landscape with Birds and Fishes*, were destroyed in the fire. By sheer good fortune, the other large painting by Barlow, *The Farmyard*, and another painting, *The Jockey* by John Wootton, were undergoing conservation treatment in a conservator’s studio at the time.

Since 2008 both these paintings had been highlighted as conservation priorities, but their location at the top of the staircase and the cost of the conservation treatment meant that funds were not readily available. However, in 2014 the Royal Oak Foundation expressed a desire to celebrate Sarah Staniforth’s 30 years with the National Trust through a generous donation to a conservation project of her choice (Sarah was Director, Museums and Collections). She chose *The Farmyard* by Francis Barlow, thus setting in motion the removal and ultimately the survival of not only the Barlow but the Wootton painting as well—it made sense to remove both paintings at the same time, as their location on the staircase meant that full scaffolding had to be erected.

Francis Barlow (c. 1626-1704) was a significant English artist. His paintings show a fascination with nature; he combines meticulous detail with moral content, revealing the anxieties of human life. In *The Farmyard*, danger is everywhere: a kite descends on a wood pigeon and a tawny owl is mobbed by tits and finches, but the hog lying in the sty is apathetic towards any impending disaster.

Before conservation, many of the details within the painting were obscured by a discoloured varnish and by extensive over-paint, which covered at least 60% of the painting. In addition, several large damaged portions had been repaired by inserting canvas inlays which had been filled and crudely retouched. The painting’s condition indicated that it had received two major restoration treatments. One had probably been done in the 19th century, and a more recent treatment in 1958 was carried out because of water damage at the property—the painting was relined and extensively retouched. The retouching/over-paint had a pinkish-blue hue which distorted the colour balance in the painting.
The removal of the discoloured varnish revealed the extensive over-paint (1) which covered original paint as well as damage; the photograph (2) shows lines of water damage. After removal of overpaint, areas of loss were retouched to reintegrate the overall image (3 and 4).

The conservation treatment proved to be challenging owing to the extensive areas of damage and the insolubility of some of the over-paint. Previous restorations had interpreted areas of loss too freely; some areas had been completely over-painted, hiding the original paint and altering the tonality of the painting (5 and 6, before and after treatment).

Although two of Clandon's large Barlow paintings were lost in the fire, the survival of The Farmyard is not only fortunate but significant. This painting, along with A Cassowary and An Ostrich, form part of the original collection at Clandon; they are important in furthering our understanding of Barlow and his importance, and his concerns with natural history, politics and issues of morality.

Christine Sitwell, National Trust Paintings Conservation Adviser

1 Flis, Nathan and Hunter, Michael, Francis Barlow: Painter of Beasts and Birds, 2011
2 Note in the property files: 'In addition, water damage caused by burst pipes in 1956 necessitated conservation treatment and records note that the paintings were cleaned and restored by Bostrom in 1958'.
Two portraits at Nostell Priory, West Yorkshire, of Henry VII (1457-1509) and his consort Elizabeth of York (1466-1503) recently underwent conservation work. This confirmed that despite being displayed as a pair, they are by different artists and from different sources, and shed new light on an intriguing and interrelated history of provenance, repair and alteration.

A matching pair?
Although these two panel portrait paintings of the first Tudor monarchs are currently displayed as a pair, it was previously unknown whether or not they were painted at the same time, by the same hand or studio.

The two portraits are both datable to between the late 16th century and the early 17th century, and they are copies of contemporary portraits of the first Tudor monarch and his queen. The king’s portrait shows him in a red velvet surcoat and a black cap decorated with a cap badge, and in his right hand he holds a red rose, the heraldic symbol of the House of Lancaster. The queen is shown in an ermine-lined gown and wearing a long, gabled hood, and she in turn holds a white rose, the heraldic symbol of the House of York (she was the eldest daughter of Edward IV, and after the death of her brothers, the so-called Princes in the Tower, she was her father’s heir).

The prototype of the king’s portrait was a standard type that was produced in c.1500, although the composition of nearly all of the earlier copies and versions include a ledge covered with a piece of embroidered material (or it could be a large cushion) on which she rests her arms. Again, Henry VIII had his mother’s portrait in his collection, presumably the original of the type, and it is listed for the first time in an inventory of 1542. Holbein used the composition of the queen’s portrait for his retrospective image of the queen in the Tudor family group portrait known as the Whitehall Mural, painted in 1537 for Henry VIII and destroyed in the fire at Whitehall Palace in 1698.

So why are there two versions of these royal portraits at Nostell? Charles Winn, the then owner of Nostell, bought the pictures from the dealer Mr. Oxley of Pontefract, through his cousin, Arthur Strickland, in January 1830. The dealer S. Jennings, of Poland Street in London, wrote in a letter dated 24 September 1830 that the price of ‘Two Portraits of Henry 7th and Eliz of York’ was £5 5s. The portraits were later purchased by the National Trust from Charles Winn’s descendant, Lord St. Oswald, by private treaty sale in 2010.

The portrait of Elizabeth of York, which had previously been attributed to Holbein, has at some point been extended to make it the same size as that of the king (and thus helping to make them, visibly at least, appear as a pair), and the composition has in turn been changed so that the covered ledge or cushion seen in most of the portraits has been removed; the extended lower portion of the picture instead shows the bottom of the queen’s stomacher and the top of her dress. It was likely that the alterations (along with additional timber side panels) were made shortly before Charles Winn acquired the picture in 1830.

Winn bought the portraits for Nostell—the majority of the pictures in the house were acquired by him, and to this day they make a pertinent visible reminder of his important collecting habits and tastes. The specific reason that he bought the portraits is likely to have been his particular interest in the Tudors and 16th-century history. This included the dissolution of the Augustin-
ian priory at Nostell in 1540, after which the buildings and land were transferred from religious to secular ownership. In the next century (in 1654) Nostell was bought by Sir Rowland Winn, and has since descended down through his family.

The Winns particularly treasured the large group portrait of Sir Thomas More and his family copied from Holbein’s original, and the two royal portraits would have complimented this huge picture (not least because Charles Winn believed the More family group and the portrait of the queen to be by Holbein himself). Winn’s antiquarian tastes were particularly obvious in the lower hall at Nostell; here he displayed his collection of furnishings, again believing them to be 16th-century originals. He also renamed the house, which he had inherited as Nostell Hall, back to Nostell Priory, as part of his historicising of his country seat. This anti-quarianism was a fashionable trend at the time, and dealers acted accordingly when selling pictures or furniture. The portraits may have been altered (and reframed) to make them appear as a pair—as husband and wife from a larger set of portraits of kings and queens.

A history of repair and restoration
When the panel paintings were brought to the conservation studio in 2015 it was discovered that they had been conserved, restored and altered at various times throughout their histories. The original outer sides of the panels had been lost at some point, and replaced with new planks of wood, possibly during the late 18th or early 19th century. These new side planks had then been painted to match the adjacent original paint layers. Heavy layers of over-paint were also discovered in the area of the lower section of Elizabeth of York’s dress. These layers of over-paint appeared to date to the same time as the paint on the non-original side planks. A frame conservator found that although the frames were made in the style of the 17th century, they were also likely to date to some time between the mid-18th and early 19th century. It could, therefore, be theorised that the paintings were restored, the alterations made, and the frames constructed, as part of the same campaign.

Technical analysis – dendrochronology
Tree-ring analysis was carried out by the dendrochronologist Ian Tyers. The original planks were found to originate from two eastern Baltic oak trees, which had been split, sawn and smoothed by hand. Whilst the wood of the planks of Elizabeth of York could be dated to between c.1571 and 1603, those of Henry VII could be dated to between c. 1597 and 1629. However, all of the non-original planks (1 and 4 of each panel) had been machine sawn and appeared relatively recent (perhaps 19th- or 20th-century). The two non-original outer planks (1 and 4) of Henry VII and the right-most plank (4) of Elizabeth were found to be contemporaneous, with the left-most plank (1) of Elizabeth mysteriously appearing to date to a slightly later time.

Further technical analysis: the over-painted costume
Small cleaning tests carried out at the conservation studio revealed that beneath the over-painted lower section of costume of Elizabeth of York were some underlying original green paint layers. It was decided to investigate this further with cross-section analysis, which involves taking a small sample from the object in order to see the layer structure of the underlying paint and ground. Cross-section analysis confirmed that the original layers comprised a white priming layer (1), followed by a dark grey paint layer containing lead white and small black particles (2), and an overlying verdigris green paint layer (3).

Anomalies of iconography: costume and ledge
Many other portraits of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York are in existence across the UK. These were commissioned during
their actual reign by subjects expressing their allegiance with the monarchy, but also at later dates, for example during the reign of Elizabeth I when a vogue developed for the collection of sets of portraits showing eminent men and women. Cross-referencing these with the Nostell Priory versions revealed that whilst the Nostell Priory version of Henry VII fits neatly within the pictorial tradition, the over-painted lower section of costume in Elizabeth of York’s portrait is rather unorthodox. Elizabeth of York’s iconography is based on one particular portrait type: it includes her distinctive gabled hood, her square neckline, and turned-back cuffs lined with ermine, and her arms resting on the ledge or cushion mentioned above.

In the Nostell Priory version of Elizabeth of York it appears that the green velvet-covered ledge had been over-painted to show the lower section of Elizabeth’s costume, including a low pointed stomacher and the soft pleated skirt of the red velvet dress. The style of this over-painted area of costume is, however, not likely to be accurate for the period. It is thought that the sleeves are too baggy—instead they would have had a folded-back section at the reverse.

Additionally, the original dress probably had a gentler waistline, rather than the low pointed stomacher that we see today. Whilst most of the other versions show a plain green velvet cloth (or cushion) on the ledge, the National Portrait Gallery version shows a rather more ornate fabric with patterned gold thread decorations. Three cross-sections were taken from the ‘ledge cloth’ area of the Nostell Priory version of Elizabeth of York, but none showed any traces of the gold thread. It is more likely that the original composition of the Nostell Priory version incorporated a plain green velvet-covered ledge.

Conservation decisions: to reveal the artist’s original intention or to preserve the historic alteration?
The question of how to proceed with the conservation of these portraits was discussed at length by various members of the National Trust involved with the conservation of the paintings. On the one hand, removal of the over-painted paint layers would have presumably revealed the underlying green cloth, thereby uncovering the original composition and colour contrasts, and putting the iconography of the work back in line with the other panel painting versions of Elizabeth of York. However, removal of these layers would also have removed much of the painting’s interesting history: not only the painting’s individual history, but also the history of the painting as its place in a pair (with the portrait of Henry VII), and also the two portraits’ context within the historic house and in relation to the decisions taken by the various art dealers, collectors and restorers of the past. It was decided to leave the non-original costume extension in place as an interesting discussion point for this pair of royal portraits. Thus Elizabeth of York stays visually paired with the portrait of her husband, Henry VII. Also the fascinating history of the two panels is revealed, along with the tastes and collecting habits of Charles Winn, whose important presence still looms large at Nostell.

Lucy Critchlow, Critchlow & Kukkonen, Conservation of Paintings
David Taylor, National Trust, Curator of Pictures and Sculpture

2 Tyers, Ian, Tree ring analysis of two panel paintings from the National Trust Collection at Nostell Priory: Portraits of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, February 2016.
3 Samples analysed by Christine S Kimbriel, Hamilton Kerr Institute, Whittlesford, Cambridge.
THE ‘INSPIRED BY KNOLE’ PROJECT
The Conservation of the Reynolds Room Picture Frames at Knole

As a frame and furniture conservator at Knole, I am greatly honoured to be a part of the ‘Inspired by Knole’ project. Knole is a place of truly worldwide significance. Physically it is not only monumental in scale, with surviving architecture from the medieval period and the Jacobean era; its impressive external appearance is more than matched by its magnificent interiors, which display a spectacular collection, with many priceless artefacts from several different epochs. However, arguably the most alluring aspect of Knole is also the most intangible. When visiting the house, one is walking in the footsteps of the many celebrated and notorious individuals who lived and experienced Knole, from Henry VIII to Vita Sackville-West. Knole is steeped in six centuries of culture and history.

An inevitable consequence of Knole’s age, vast visitor numbers, and uncontrolled environmental conditions is that its buildings have become structurally unstable and its collections have severely deteriorated. The ‘Inspired by Knole’ project, funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, has aimed to counteract this decay. As the largest conservation project in the National Trust, ‘Inspired by Knole’ has implemented far-reaching but sympathetic measures to ensure the preservation of Knole for future generations, without radically altering its unique character. At the forefront of the project is the conversion of a 15th-century barn into a state-of-the-art conservation studio. This studio has a dual purpose. It not only enables vital conservation work to be completed on the collection but will also generate greater interest and understanding of the Knole collection through allowing visitor access.

Specialising in the conservation of frames and furniture, I am part of the new team of conservators at Knole. My primary focus for the first stage in this exciting project is the conservation of the picture frames from the Reynolds Room. This room is named after the 18th-century artist Joshua Reynolds (1723–92), who painted the majority of the artworks on its walls. Commissioned by John Frederick, 3rd Duke of Dorset (1745–99), this stunning collection of paintings includes some of Reynolds’s more unorthodox compositions and subject matter. For instance, the room contains Wang-Y-Tong, the famous portrait of a Chinese pageboy, whose exotic clothing and enigmatic expression is particularly distinctive, and Ugolino and his Children in the Dungeon, a large historical painting, depicting a harrowing scene from Dante’s Inferno. It seems highly likely that the great majority of the paintings in the Reynolds Room are in their original frames. The frames are mainly in the Carlo Maratta style, which is symptomatic of the pre-eminence of Neo-classicalism in the later 18th century.

In this room, the Carlo Maratta frames are often enriched with linear runs of classical ornament, such as ribbon-and-stave and acanthus-leaf carvings.

Owing to unforeseen delays in the opening of the conservation studio, work began in the Old Kitchen Lobby. We were fortunate enough to share this space with several painting conservators. The two disciplines worked in unison to provide a complete treatment for the paintings and their frames.

Before embarking on any practical work, the treatment aims had to be considered and understood. Through discussions with Emma Slocombe, Knole’s curator, we decided that the age and life-history of the frame must be preserved, and thus the conservation treatment would have a ‘light touch’. The main treatment aims were to stabilise any structural issues, consolidate the flaking gilding, and update the painting’s fittings. This included protecting the back of the canvas by attaching a melinex sheet (stiff transparent polyester) to the back of the frame. When the treatment

‘The Calling of Samuel’ by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1770–76), after treatment

Work in action in the pop-up studio in the Old Kitchen Lobby at Knole
was complete the frames were stable and aesthetically pleasing, but with their age and use still clearly visible.

This project has also been a brilliant opportunity for conservation students. Working on real works of art to time pressures has been a great experience to complement their studies. In the next section, India Carpenter, a student from City & Guilds of London Art School, will describe her time as an intern at Knole.

Mark Searle, Frame and Furniture Conservator at Knole

TWO WEEKS AT KNOLE HELPING TO CONSERVE THE REYNOLDS ROOM PICTURE FRAMES

The refurbishment of the Reynolds room offered the perfect opportunity for me to spend a few weeks working with the conservation team at Knole towards the end of summer 2016. I was invited to help with the restoration of the picture frames, a small aspect of a much wider project encompassing the restoration of the paintings, furniture and textiles of the room.

The aim was to work systematically through the frames, assessing their condition and treating them accordingly. As is often the case, time was a large factor in our treatment decisions. Fortunately, the majority of the frames were in fairly good condition, and most required a similar level of treatment. I started with a frame that accompanied a Joshua Reynolds portrait of Samuel Johnson. A previous restoration had become rather unsightly over time and needed to be removed and replaced, and the flaking gold-and-white layer needed to be consolidated and stabilised.

Key to the restoration of the room was the need to retain an aesthetic continuity in the level of aging. To restore the frames to their previous sparkling and spangling glory would leave them totally incongruous in a room where the passage of time has muted and softened the colours of the surrounding furnishings. Of course, they needed to be cleaned, but gently and judiciously. Similarly, the new fills and small losses needed to be ‘toned in’ to harmonise the surface. Using a mixture of watercolours, just the right shade of dirty gold was achieved, and the frame was restored back to its former, though slightly less sooty self.

Sharing the old kitchen with the paintings conservators was real pleasure, both socially and educationally. As an objects conservator, it had been rare for me to work so closely with paintings conservators, so it was superb to be able to observe their work, discuss their treatment decisions and share cross-discipline tips. The unexpected proximity also proved very helpful when we needed to collaborate on certain works, particularly the re-framing of a rather warped 16th-century panel painting.

The two weeks’ work at Knole was enormously rewarding and a genuine pleasure. It was refreshing to work at a fast pace, to have to think on my feet, and yet to be surrounded by knowledgeable people to whom I could readily turn for advice and second opinions. I feel that this kind of practical experience is truly invaluable in developing the confidence to be a professional conservator, and I hope that future students have such an opportunity. I very much look forward to returning to Knole next year to see the frames and paintings back in the restored Reynolds Room, and, of course, to see the new conservation studio — although I will certainly look back fondly on my time in the temporary, yet charming, Old Kitchen Studio.

India Carpenter, Conservation student at City & Guilds of London Art School

‘Dr Samuel Johnson’ by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1769-70) after treatment

India consolidating the flaking gilding on a large frame with rabbit-skin glue

India Carpenter, Frame and Furniture Conservator at Knole
EMOTIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY
An innovative exhibition at Tyntesfield and the Arnolfini, Bristol

As part of its National Trust New Art programme, Tyntesfield, North Somerset, is working in partnership with the international art centre Arnolfini to exhibit the work of the contemporary artist Daphne Wright in Bristol. The exhibition, titled Emotional Archaeology, a survey of Daphne Wright’s work spanning 25 years, is presented at both Tyntesfield and the Arnolfini Gallery. Tyntesfield is showing two major series of works which reflect the history of the estate, Prayer Project (2009) and Bulls (2002-03). The exhibition at the Arnolfini includes works such as Where do Broken Hearts Go? (2000), Stallion (2009), and Domestic Shrubbery (2009), together with new sculptures.

Emotional Archaeology and Spirit of Place
Daphne Wright’s approach to producing sculptures, prints and films involves looking at subjects with an intense psychological engagement, intellectual reasoning and meticulous research. The exhibition’s title calls this unique approach ‘emotional archaeology’ because Wright’s exploration of contemporary culture uncovers truths about humanity.

Although made within the last two decades, primarily with galleries in mind, the two installations at Tyntesfield resonate strongly with the property’s ‘spirit of place’. Firstly, this is because the artworks know their place within art history, and therefore relate to an art collection that spans four generations of the Gibbs family. Secondly, the works are beautifully made and sit well with the quality of craftsmanship at Tyntesfield. Thirdly, Wright knows her subject-matter intimately—prayer, family life and animal breeding—and these are also strong themes in the history of the estate. Art and religion were central to the Gibbs family’s life. This is reflected on the bookshelves of the library and the artworks seen in almost every room. It is also visible in the Gothic Revival architecture of the house and chapel, and in the family’s patronage of artists and craftspeople. The material culture at Tyntesfield reveals a family that embraced new ideas and inventions and was curious about the world around them.

Within the context of the Tyntesfield as a Victorian estate, dairy farm, family home and chapel, Daphne Wright’s work speaks of gender and class in domestic life, of faith and intellectual enquiry, and the cycle of life and death. By focussing on the individual and the intimate, Wright’s artwork helps people to engage with something that is both intangible and emotive.

Bulls in the Boudoir
Horace has been laid to rest in the Boudoir (the domain of Mrs William Gibbs) surrounded by portraits of his family lineage. The shock of the exquisite perfection of the dead bull is amplified by this very feminine environment. This room was affectionately referred to by William Gibbs as ‘Blancheys boudoir’, and is decorated with a fertile frieze of boxwood carvings of fruits and flowers. The bull prints (each named) pay tribute to ancestral portraits, elevating the animal to the position of master. There are many family portraits in the house that document the close-knit relationships and intermarriage between the Gibbs family and their circle, the Crawleys, Yonges and Daubenys.

Wright has perfected a casting technique to produce a series of death masks. These draw on art history, and examine our complex relationship with animals. Death masks have survived from antiquity up to the Victorian period; they played an important role in ancestor cults, where masks were cast from the dead. The sculpture reproduces the corpse rather than the living presence of the bull. We might expect to be more comfortable viewing these works amongst the taxidermy and masculine gaming, hunting, shooting and smoking of the Tyntesfield Billiard Room; but by placing the death mask in the Boudoir, it is the contrast with civilised domesticity that provokes our response.

Daphne Wright grew up on a farm in Ireland, and so is not prone to romanticisation or an anthropomorphic approach to animals. Mankind’s role in breeding and making pets of animals evokes conflicting emotional responses to birth, relationships and death. Estate workers employed at Tyntesfield were engaged with animal husbandry from birth to dining table. Home Farm was built in 1881 for rearing cattle and pigs, and was recognised for its prizewinning herd of Alderney cows. Farming remained important throughout the Gibbs’ time and continues today. The Boudoir was one of the last rooms used by Richard, Lord Wraxall at the end of the Gibbs’ era, so this setting makes the work all the more poignant.

Stillborns In the Garden Porch
Two stillborn calves lie on the floor of the garden porch, as if still warm, brought in for safekeeping. The Brute is massive, contorted and misshapen, the result of genetic interference that also killed its mother. Stillborn is beautifully formed and lies peacefully, as if asleep. For Wright, the emotional and practical difficulties of sourcing and reproducing their dead bodies are part of an archaeology of meaning that charges the objects with potency.
Human experiences of birth and parenting also inform our response. Furthermore, people familiar with Tyntesfield will perhaps see the ghosts of prams and children's toys that have inhabited the garden porch in the past.

The work is also richly steeped in classicism and history. The sculptures represent the agony and ecstasy of existence, with the animals symbolising the sacrificial. The Gibbs family would have been familiar with such visual codes, which were part of a rise in antiquarianism and the Gothic Revival. The Northern European Flaxley Casket, one of the gems in the Tyntesfield collection, tells the story of a king and a queen and of the queen's evil mother-in-law. The queen gives birth to seven children who are born with silver chains around their necks. All but one are substituted by puppies and later transformed into swans. The surviving child saves his mother from being burnt at the stake. Wright's fallen creatures, reproduced in sparkling white marble dust compound, refer to such fables. They decry human follies and failures and suggest the consequences of aggrandisement.

Bringing Prayer back to the Family Chapel

The Tyntesfield chapel is once more inhabited by the quiet voices of conviction. Prayer Project comprises seven portraits of the private moment of prayer and meditation. These tranquil, mainly silent, films place religions on an equal footing in their stripped-down, human form, showing faith as part of daily life. Ritual is pictured as surprisingly ordinary, yet also extraordinary in its diversity. We are invited to explore the notion of communion, both in the sense of its religious connotations (a communion with God) but also in the old sense of the word as communication, community, or dialogue with the self or with an 'other'.

Experiencing the work in the setting of the Gibbs family chapel encourages us to look at individuals and their social responsibility from Victorian times to today. William Gibbs had a deeply felt and public-spirited benevolence, supporting charities and welcoming guests to the estate. William paid for at least nineteen ecclesiastical buildings; the Tyntesfield Chapel was commissioned in 1873, just two years before his death, and was designed by Arthur Blomfield (son of a Bishop of London). William and Blanche Gibbs were profoundly influenced by the Oxford Movement, a group which sought the revival of the ancient rituals of the early church and religious symbolist decoration.

Daphne Wright is interested in understanding the diversity of her religious heritage from the Huguenots, the Methodists, the Church of Ireland and the Quakers. The production of Prayer Project entailed lengthy negotiations with a range of ecumenical leaders between 2007 and 2009. By granting permission to be filmed, the figures are sharing their faith with viewers and each other.

The portraits are of Bryan Appleyard, from the Buddhist Society in London; Sister Frances Dominica, filmed in the grounds of the All Saints Convent, Oxfordshire; Jay Lakhani from the Hindu Council UK; Rabbi Francis Berry of the Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation; Prafula Shah, a representative of the Jain faith; Vanessa Gilliland from the Vineyard movement; and Dr R. David Muir from the Evangelical Alliance.

In the history of art the portrait, perhaps above all others, is the genre where private and public collide at their most intense. The colourful luminosity of the projected portraits echo the richly decorated stained glass. The bespoke light box created for the Tyntesfield Chapel is designed to celebrate ecclesiastical architecture; its form reflects a rood screen frontage, its portrait panels echo the Christ mosaic nearby.

Despite tempting digital technological advancements, Wright chooses to work in an honest, pared-down way. There are no complicated camera shots, edits, effects or scores. The work plays with the rawness of time as a material; the films are hard to look away from, but the duration also makes them challenging to watch. Viewers are granted permission to observe, but not access, these faith rituals as private acts. This depiction of a connection with the divine opens hidden truths and a door into otherworldliness quite out of step with the modern world.

Emotional Archaeology runs until 20 November at Tyntesfield and 31 December 2016 at Arnolfini, Bristol.

Susan P Hayward, Tyntesfield Curator
Edward Herbert, first Baron Herbert of Cherbury (c.1583-1648) was a statesman, poet, diplomat and knight. He epitomised the romance and chivalry of the late Elizabethan age, and he knew it.

His deep self-awareness would not have been out of place in the 21st-century atmosphere of obsessive self-promotion and over-sharing: the selfie age. Herbert wrote in the opening pages of his autobiography citing the lucky beneficiaries of his wisdom and experience as his ‘children, servants, tenants, kinsmen, and neighbours’, and stating that ‘… in university, the study of the law, in court, or in the camp … I have thought fit to relate to my posterity those passages of my life which I conceive may best declare me and be most useful to them’.

During his life, Herbert commissioned numerous portraits of himself from the most fashionable portrait artists of the day, some of which also hang at Powis Castle; not least is this exquisite miniature by Isaac Oliver, Royal Miniaturist, and Herbert’s friend.

With generous grants from NHMF and the Art Fund, the National Trust has succeeded in acquiring for the nation the important cabinet miniature Edward Herbert, 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury by Isaac Oliver, to be placed at its historic home, Powis Castle. Without this partnership effort it is highly likely that this internationally significant picture would have found a private buyer and been lost to Powis, and the nation, for ever.

Isaac Oliver was a pupil of the celebrated miniaturist and goldsmith Nicholas Hilliard, and after Hilliard died Oliver succeeded him as Limner Royal to the Queen, Anne of Denmark. He took the art of miniature painting to new heights and employed techniques such as chiaroscuro to bring light and shade, modelling and depth to a picture, achieving a richer sense of realism and life in his pictures than his predecessors. It is no surprise, then, that the poet, soldier and international politician Lord Edward Herbert invited Oliver to paint his portrait.

And this is no ordinary miniature, but a flamboyant expression of Herbert’s own generously-proportioned ego. He is portrayed as the romantic knight, resplendent with sword and dazzling spurs, reclining in a forest glade, taking a short rest from the business of being a dashing young hero. He was in his late twenties at the
time that this was painted, recently matriculated from Oxford, and married since the age of 15 with a growing family. His career was colourful, featuring military heroism, duels and fencing prowess, of which he modestly writes: ‘Indeed I think I shall not speak vaingloriously of myself if I say that no man shall understand the use of his weapon better than I did, or hath more dextrously prevailed himself thereof on all occasions.’

A great European diplomat and traveller, his appointment as Ambassador to Paris in 1619 saw Herbert brokering the marriage between the future Charles I, then Prince of Wales, and Henrietta Maria. Lauded in courtly circles, much decorated and celebrated by other poets including John Donne and Ben Jonson, he was reputedly the object of numerous amorous attentions. Selflessly realising that it would be a waste not to share his glittering life with his successors, he recorded it all in his Autobiography, richly peppered with references to his own brilliance. And, just in case any doubt as to his all-round fabulousness remained, he commissioned this stunning portrait from the greatest miniaturist of his age. Edward, First Baron Herbert of Chirbury could rightly be termed a celebrity of his day and would, one could imagine, have featured regularly in Twitter and the celebrity press had he been born into the 21st century.

Herbert did not live at Powis Castle, home of his first cousin, William Herbert, Earl of Powis, but at nearby Montgomery Castle—that is, when he was not gallivanting on the continent or in London on court business. The castle, now a ruin, was transformed by Herbert, much as his cousin did at Powis Castle, from a mediaeval fortification into a mansion, but this flowering was short-lived: the house was surrendered to Parliamentary forces in 1643 and destroyed soon afterwards.

The Chirbury and Powis branches of the Herbert family were reunited in the mid-18th century with the marriage of Henry Arthur Herbert (Lord Herbert of Cherbury and created Earl of Powis, 2nd creation, in 1748) and Barbara Herbert, and the miniature has remained in the collection of the Earls of Powis ever since. The Powis collection is an amalgam of the contents of multiple Herbert and Clive houses, including Lymore, the Montgomery house that replaced Montgomery Castle; Walcot, the Clive family home; and Powis House in London. Following conservation and analysis, the picture will be re-displayed at Powis.

Conservation
The cabinet miniature portrait of Edward Herbert, 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury, is painted in watercolour on vellum that has been adhered to card, a technique derived from the illustration of books. The vellum and the comparatively thick paint layer make the painting susceptible to changes in relative humidity, since the card, the vellum and the paint expand at different rates. The paint surface of Edward Herbert, 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury is friable, and has suffered some flaking in the past, as can be seen in the greens of the trees and the background.

The acquisition of the miniature provides an opportunity to undertake a programme of remedial conservation, and to study the artist's painting technique and use of materials. The conservation will be carried out at the Hamilton Kerr Institute, Cambridge University in collaboration with the Fitzwilliam Museum. The primary aim of the remedial conservation treatment will be to consolidate and stabilise the paint where it is flaking, and if needed carry out minor re-touching. At the same time, the paint surface will be documented using photomicrographs to map the existing flaking, and provide a baseline for monitoring its condition in the future. The frame will also be conserved, and moisture-buffering material such as Art-Sorb sealed within it to protect the painting from fluctuations in relative humidity and temperature.

Researchers at the Fitzwilliam Museum will use non-invasive techniques developed for studying illuminated manuscripts. The protocol involves a combination of spectroscopic analysis by fibre optic reflectance spectroscopy (FORS) to identify a wide range of pigments and selected paint binders, and X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectroscopy to refine and support the identification of selected pigments, mostly inorganic. As non-invasive methods, these techniques do not require samples to be removed from the painting, and the instruments do not touch the paint surface.

Further research will help us understand how the materials employed by Oliver for this painting compare to his other works and to those of contemporary miniature painters such as Hilliard. Knowledge of the pigments will also help us to understand their susceptibility to light damage and fading, and to develop acceptable conditions for displaying the miniature in the future. The results will also be included in the display of the miniature once it returns to Powis Castle, to help interpret the painting for visitors, and to highlight the origin of the pigments and the technique of miniature painting.

Elizabeth Green, Curator
Siobhan Watts, Conservator

1 From To Her Face, Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury
2 Historic spelling of the village Chirbury, near Montgomery
3 The Autobiography of Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury by Edward Herbert, 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury
GLIMPSES OF A LOST INTERIOR
Restoration of the Duchess of Sutherland’s cipher panels at Cliveden

Queen Victoria wrote the following in her diary after visiting Cliveden on Thursday 20 April 1854: ‘The Duchess showed us all over the house, which is finished & being fast furnished. It is quite beautiful, in strictly Italian style & the rooms so light & cheerful. They are arranged without actual splendour, but with all the Duchess’s rare taste. In the Dining Room, beautifully painted flowers, on a gold ground, intersect the pictures on the walls, the ceiling being painted to represent trellis work with flowers & an effect of blue sky peeping through.’

The owners of the Thames-side estate at Cliveden at this time were George Granville Leveson-Gower (1786-1861), 2nd Duke of Sutherland, and his wife Harriet (1806-68), daughter of the 6th Earl of Carlisle. They commissioned Charles Barry to rebuild the house following the second devastating fire at Cliveden in 1849, and the Queen’s visit in 1854 came shortly after completion of the rebuilding work. Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland was the Queen’s Mistress of the Robes and the two women enjoyed a long friendship.

Four years later, the Queen’s enjoyment of the Dining Room in particular appears undiminished. Her diary entry for Saturday 3 April 1858 describes another afternoon visit to the house: ‘It is a perfection of a place, 1st [sic] of all the view is so beautiful, & then the house is a “bijou” of taste. The painted ceilings, the pictures, let into the walls, the furniture “objects d’art”, china, glass, all, so lovely & such a fresh look over the whole place … Took tea in the Diningroom, the prettiest of all, really quite beautiful.’

Cliveden today shows only fragmentary glimpses of the Duchess’s interiors at Cliveden is one surviving ceiling (over the staircase, in which the painter Auguste Hervieu depicted four of the Duchess’s children as the seasons).

The conservation of two carved and painted wooden panels at Cliveden last year presented the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the decoration of the now lost Sutherland Dining Room, the room that Queen Victoria appears to have admired most during her visits of the 1850s. The room occupied the south-west corner of the principal floor of the main house. The room continued to be a dining room for the Astor family and, indeed, is used as a dining room today (by Cliveden Hotel, who lease the house from the National Trust), but in a radically different guise. Charles Barry’s Dining Room for the Sutherlands was transformed in 1897 into Jules Allard’s French Dining Room for W.W. Astor, with the installation of exuberant 18th-century rococo panelling from the Château d’Asnières near Paris.

Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland (1806-68) after Franz Winterhalter (1805-73), after 1849 (inventory number 766116)

The Duke & Duchess of Sutherland’s Dining Room at Cliveden in the second half of the 19th century, from an album in the National Trust’s collection (inventory number 766068)

The French Dining Room at Cliveden, installed by Jules Allard in 1897 for W.W. Astor

Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland (1806-68) after Franz Winterhalter (1805-73), after 1849 (inventory number 766116)
The Dining Room's appearance before the Astors' time is known from a photograph taken in the second half of the 19th century, either during the Sutherland or Westminster ownership. The only architectural or decorative survivals from this room are four painted wooden panels carved with the interlinked initials H and S. These are thought to be the monogram of Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland, and as such they must date from some time after 1833, the date that Harriet's husband became the 2nd Duke of Sutherland and his wife gained the initials HS (before 1833 they held the title of Earl & Countess Gower). The carved initials are surmounted by a ducal coronet.

Two of these panels appear as overdoors in the 19th-century photograph of the Dining Room. Architectural plans of the room suggest that two further doors are not in the view captured by the photograph; hence the assumed total of four overdoor panels in the room tallies with the four cipher panels which survive in the National Trust collection at Cliveden (inventory numbers 765876.1-4). The panels could either have been made after the fire of 1849 specifically for the Dining Room at Cliveden or they could have been made sometime earlier, but after 1833, and first displayed at another of the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland's houses (including Trentham in Staffordshire, Dunrobin Castle in Scotland and Stafford House, now Lancaster House, in London).

The cipher panels were removed in 1897, if not earlier, with the rest of the contents of the Dining Room, and it is not currently known how or where the panels were displayed during the Astors' occupation of Cliveden. From at least the conversion of the house to a hotel in the 1980s, two cipher panels have hung in the curved corridor linking the main house to the West Wing, with the other two in the similar corridor to the East Wing. The two pairs have been decorated differently. The East Wing pair has been painted an ivory colour, which may have been to make them sit more comfortably with the display of marble busts and sculpture in this space. The West Wing pair was painted a grey stone colour. The decorative treatment of both pairs was not based on how the panels had been decorated historically.

Paint analysis of all four of the cipher panels informed the conservation of the two West Wing panels by Tankerdale in 2015. Missing areas were re-carved and old repairs replaced. Paint sampling and analysis by Tankerdale and Lisa Oestreicher, with further analysis and interpretation of the results by James Finlay, revealed that the panel beds had historically been painted a number of different blue colours and the carved HS monogram had been gilded. Exact dating of all the blue layers was not possible, and the black and white photograph of the panels in the Dining Room is only of limited use as evidence of the panels' decoration at that time. Of the historic blues found on the panels which fell within the right date period, the shade which seemed tonally to accord most closely with what is represented in the historic photograph was a mid-duck egg blue.

This colour has been repainted on the West Wing panels and the carving has been oil gilded, returning the two panels as far as possible to how we think they might have looked in the second half of the 19th century when they were overdoors in the Sutherlands’ Dining Room. Furthermore, an apparent uniformity of tone in the black and white historic image suggests that the blue ground of the cipher panels may have been used more widely throughout the room.

The current framing of the panels does not appear in the historic photograph, when the panels were inset into panelling. The frames are therefore thought possibly to date from after the reconstruction of the Sutherlands' Dining Room in 1897. The new painted decoration of the frames—of gilt highlights over an ochre-coloured paint—is therefore not historical, but a modern choice made to harmonise (but not compete) with the gilded carving of the panels and the wider surroundings and contents of the West Wing corridor.

The new blue and gold decorative scheme brings the panels closer to their appearance historically. It also provides an indication of how part of the now lost decoration of the Sutherland Dining Room might have appeared when Queen Victoria admired it on her visits in 1854 and 1858. For her, however, the room was to lose its sparkle within a short period of time. Visiting the house in 1865, less than two years after the death of the Prince Consort, the Queen wrote: ‘Only the good Dss of Sutherland was there, who showed off everything to the greatest advantage. But I gazed on all this taste & beauty, on the lovely view beyond & felt how utterly pleasureless it all was to me without my own Darling to share it.’ Three years later, during an extended stay at Cliveden in the summer of 1866, Victoria made a further observation in her diary: ‘Breakfast below in the lonely dining room, which dearest Albert & I had so often admired together.’

Tom Boggi, formerly National Trust, Curator, London & South East now Senior Curator, Holburne Museum, Bath

1 www.queenvictoriasjournals.org, accessed 15 October 2016
2 ibid.
3 ibid, diary entry for 1st July 1863
4 ibid, diary entry for 27th May 1866
WORKING WITH CREATIVE PARTNERS
Involving artists during a long-term conservation project at Castle Drogo

In 2013 Castle Drogo, Devon embarked on an ambitious five-year £13m building conservation project to make the building watertight for the first time in its history. Designed by the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens for the businessman Julius Drewe (founder of the Home and Colonial Stores), and built between 1911 and 1930, the Castle has always suffered from water ingress. In 2007 a section of repair work was completed on the Chapel roof, and a long-term solution was found to enable the Trust to carry out vital conservation work to save the castle. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the building conservation project involves:

✦ Raking out and repointing 60,000m of mortar joints
✦ Removing all the upstanding parapets and structures above roof level—taking around 2,600 granite blocks down to the ground before rebuilding
✦ Removal, repair and reconstruction of 913 brass-framed windows
✦ Removing the asphalt from the flat roofs and replacing it with a modern membrane system—an area of almost two football pitches

The decision was taken to remain open to the public for the duration of the project. This has enabled visitors to see the work first-hand, not only encouraging a deeper connection with the history of the property, but also the wider conservation work of the Trust. The project has enabled us to explore new ways of interpreting the design and architecture, as well as offering visitors a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see behind the scenes, encounter a range of different presentations of Castle Drogo, and make connections to the garden and estate.

The normally warm, welcoming home of the Drewe family became a construction site: this meant that our presentation needed to be dramatically different. The entire collection has had to be moved twice as the building work shifts to different parts of the Castle, and extensive protection works have been put in place. The collection has either been displayed in new ways, or creatively stored in collection rooms; this has challenged us to work differently. We were determined that the collection should be as accessible as possible to visitors during the project.

The interpretation has been phased, changing every two years and linking with the schedule of building work. The original construction of the castle and the story of the people who created it provided inspiration for the visitor experience in 2013/14.

We worked with the Bristol-based creative design company Codsteaks, known for their work with Aardman (the animation studio who created Wallace and Gromit). They created a series of large theatrical installations for the empty, dark spaces that resulted after the collections had been removed and protection works placed over the windows. Replica granite wall sections, arches and wooden scaffolding helped visitors understand the original construction of the castle, and the ‘Call to Arms’ wall highlighted the craftsmen who built the castle and Drogo’s First World War story. Dramatic lighting emphasised the stunning architectural features. Our volunteers encouraged visitors to look at the high-quality craftsmanship involved in creating the building, and shared stories of the Drewe family.

As visitors explored the castle they encountered large-scale reproductions of some of the 8,000 letters from the archive written by J. C. Walker, the tenacious Clerk of Works who oversaw the original construction. Each letter provided a window into the past; they revealed conversations, debates and dilemmas as the castle took shape, with drawings and plans demonstrating Lutyens’s skill as a draughtsman and architect. Two additional rooms were opened to the public for the first time, and became collection stores where conservation work was also carried out by staff. Here, visitors were able to get a chance to see this work close up, and understand how objects in the collection are cared for.

For the second phase of interpretation from March 2015 we...
worked with creative partners to help explain why saving Castle Drogo is so important, and to look at the theme of the castle within the wider landscape. Amongst the shelving and collection storage, artists created small interventions to interpret specific objects or stories, technology, and communications, and made links to outdoor spaces. They also created larger installations to re-imagine empty rooms, including concepts of how they imagined the Castle would look if the building conservation did not happen.

The interpretation was designed by three creative partners who created installations in response to the architecture, the collections, and the Dartmoor landscape, which all link together to form a compelling experience for visitors. The artists spent time researching stories of Castle Drogo, working with staff and volunteers, looking in depth at the collection and archive, and exploring the outdoor spaces.

The opportunity to work with three creative partners meant that overall we were involved with over 20 contemporary artists and designers during this process. It also allowed us to bring in a wide range of skills and artistic disciplines ranging from film-making, sculpture and architectural model-making through to textiles, photography and animation. The artwork ranges from the interactive and humorous to the more conceptual, providing a range of experiences for our different audiences. Witnessing this artistic process as the project has developed has allowed us to become more confident in exploring new ways of working. It has also had an enormously positive impact on building the skills of the Drogo team through working with and talking about contemporary art and design.

In February 2015 the Drogo team helped the artists to transform empty rooms and storage areas with innovative and immersive installations, each highlighting different aspects of the building project and stories of the Castle. The creative partners included Mdesign, a Devon-based creative design group, who worked with Forkbeard Fantasy, a local multi-media arts company. The focus of their work is a parallel timeline and narrative that switches between 1915 and 2015. It includes playful, theatrical, informative and interactive elements; there is a ‘site hut of parallel time’, ‘The First Drip’, and a ‘missing objects’ room. Artworks in the landscape included an installation of jelly moulds in the formal garden, and an oversized chair in the landscape, linking the outside to the interior and to parts of the collection.

The artists imagined what might happen to the Castle if it was left to the elements. Forkbeard Fantasy’s ‘outside in’ room highlights conservation issues, and a specially commissioned animation displayed in the ‘little cupboard of decay’ explores the threats to the castle and the collection. This thoroughly-researched content presented in an engaging way has enthralled visitors, and is a useful tool to communicate our conservation message.

Jill Smallcombe is an interior designer and cob builder. Jill and her husband Mike Smallcombe, a photographer/artist, were another of our creative partners. Jill’s project was to interpret the Char de Triomphe armorial tapestry from the collection. (Made in c.1715, it returned to Castle Drogo in 2014 following extensive conservation). Jill’s interpretation aimed to ‘deconstruct’ the tapestry into its different components: history, materials, images and symbolism, and conservation. Her research added to what was already known about the tapestry. Her creative interpretation looked at the processes used in the making of the wool and silk threads, the craftspeople, and unravelling the symbolism within the tapestry design.

The tapestry returned to the castle lined up to be suspended on a scaffold frame across the centre of a room. Visitors have thus not only been able to view the front but also the back of the tapestry to see the full extent of the conservation repair work. This fascinating insight has been well-received by visitors. It is part of a rich room presentation along with other textiles and furniture from the collection.

Earlier in 2016, Jill was able to add to the installation with the loan of a Grayson Perry tapestry, Map of Truths and Beliefs, created in 2011. The resulting exhibition, Truth and Triomphe, has been a rare opportunity for visitors to compare and contrast the historical and contemporary symbolism and technique of making tapestry. The Char de Triomphe, made for King Louis XIV and believed to have been hung at Versailles, was designed by Charles Le Brun, and took six people approximately three years to weave by hand. In stark contrast, Map of Truths and Beliefs was firstly drawn by hand by Grayson Perry, then manipulated and digitally coloured in Adobe Photoshop. A digital mediator based in Madrid worked on the printed colour references, and Perry oversaw the yarn colours, before a modern loom produced the 15ft tapestry in under a day.

Mike Smallcombe created ten large-scale photographs, roughly 3m x 2m for his installation Teign Spirits. These are suspended from trees in the formal garden and on the estate, and represent the human story of Castle Drogo. The photographs include elements or clues that hint at stories about the history of the castle, the collection, and the outdoors. The aesthetics of the photographic images aim at giving the visitor an experience more fulfilling and thought-provoking than a simple factual exhibition.

Dovetail Foundry are a group of artists
based in London; they have a range of creative backgrounds, including architecture and urban design, film and illustration, and audio-visual digital art. Their interpretation includes hand-made installations inspired by the history and architecture of the castle, the stories of the Drewe family, and the collection. A time-lapse film also explores the concept of the castle in its wider landscape. Their work tells stories of the architecture and of the family and their hopes and dreams, as well as using collection objects in unusual and visually interesting ways.

For Dovetail Foundry, the architectural features of Castle Drogo inspired a range of artistic responses. The lantern model (page 16) is inspired by the kitchen roof-top lantern, and is used to create a visual narrative of the stories of Castle Drogo and the Drewe family. Lighting within the lantern projects a hand-painted illustrated storyboard. A hand-made façade based on an original drawing by Lutyens includes objects relating to the Drewe family to tell the stories of their lives at Castle Drogo. These objects are set within individual boxes which become backdrops to objects in the collection such as chess pieces, a Venetian glass goblet, a medal, fishing flies, and thimbles.

In 2017, as the project interpretation moves into its final phase, we are delighted to be working with the contemporary artist Luke Jerram to bring his art installation Harrison’s Garden to Castle Drogo. This stunning installation of clocks will link to our overall visitor experience with the theme of ‘Changing Times’. This is a large-scale installation; it will allow us to shift focus to our own collection of clocks, while the scale and arrangement of the artwork itself will highlight and draw attention to the architectural features of the Library and Billiard Room where it will be displayed.

The building project, and working with contemporary artists, has been an opportunity for us to share the history of Castle Drogo with our visitors in new ways; we have been able not only to interest first-time visitors, but to give reasons for repeat visits through changing presentations. Feedback has shown us that the building project and related interpretation has deepened visitors’ understanding of the work of the Trust. The variety of work by our creative partners over each phase of interpretation has enabled us to appeal to a wider audience, as well as offering a changing experience for regular and local visitors as they return to see the progress of the building conservation work.

As for the Drogo team, we feel excited and confident about new opportunities in the future as we move towards re-presenting the property when the building project comes to an end.

Louise Donovan, Creative Programme Manager

ACQUISITIONS

BERRINGTON HALL
The majority of the parts of a mid-18th-century silk gown (court mantua) were purchased at auction at Christie’s South Kensington. The silk, a white cannélé brocade woven with a gilt meander and flowers, was probably produced in Lyon. The gown was originally owned by Anne Bangham, wife of the Hon. Thomas Harley (1730-1804), Lord Mayor of London, who bought Berrington in the 1770s. NT 2900201

FLORENCE COURT
A painting of a chestnut hunter in a stable by Samuel Spode (active 1810-60) was purchased at auction at Adam’s, Dublin. The painting has a provenance from Florence Court. The horse blanket shown in the painting is embroidered with the crowned ‘C’ of Viscount Cole, the heir to the Earl of Enniskillen. NT 2900202

HUGHENDEN MANOR
A letter from Benjamin Disraeli to General Cecil Forester, dated 25 September 1886, about the latter’s request for a private secretaryship for his nephew, was purchased at auction at International Autograph Auctions, Nottingham. NT 2900205

OXBURGH HALL
A pair of portraits, of Edward Paston (d. 1713) and his wife Jane Frampton (d. 1739), by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723). The sisters are ancestors of Margaret Anne Paston who married Sir Henry Bedingfeld (subsequently Paston-Bedingfeld) in 1826. The portraits were sold from Oxburgh in 1951. NT 2900203 and 2900204.

Emile de Bruijn, Registrar (Collections & Grants)