Visits to historic houses remain very popular; but I am not sure that people enter National Trust houses with the anticipation of being excited, of their curiosity being stirred, of learning something new, or of being moved. I feel that kind of anticipation when I go to see a film or a play, and—more and more—when I visit a museum. I believe that our houses should—and could—pack a similar punch.

This was certainly the view of Freeman Tilden (1883-1980), the American interpretation expert who wrote a handbook for US National Park Rangers in 1957. It is a fascinating read, and 57 years on, it is just as relevant to us today as it was to the rangers then. Tilden recognised that interpretation is not just about facts. Interpretation is about engaging people: to spark their curiosity, to tease them into thinking differently, and to feel. In Tilden’s words, interpretation seeks ‘to get to the soul of things’, and in so doing it can open a window in our hearts and minds. Or, as Tilden also wrote, ‘the chief aim is not instruction, but provocation.’

A visitor’s experience must, of course, be pleasurable, and the National Trust has done a great deal in this area over the last

**EPHEMERA FOR CRAGSIDE**

A group of ephemera relating to Cragside was purchased at auction at Anderson & Garland, Newcastle, for £346 including buyer’s premium. The items include a letter from the 1st Lord Armstrong dated 17 January 1881 discussing the lighting of Cragside using hydro-electricity, the Siemens dynamo-electric machine and Joseph Swan’s lamps, a Cragside meter-reading book dated 1901-05, and a quantity of glass photographic negatives of Cragside.
decade; but we should also aspire for it to be thought-provoking. This is something the great museums now acknowledge. The British Museum, for instance, demonstrated this in the BBC Radio 4 series *A History of the World in 100 Objects* and in its exhibition *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum*.

Interpretation should be rooted in the significance and spirit of each place, but not locked into it. It is the Trust’s ambition to engage visitors in some of the bigger issues of the day: the threats against places in general, and the benefits to society of a beautiful and sustainable built and natural environment. We need to do this if we are to promote a lasting love of places of natural beauty and historic interest. We can no longer say that our job is done if we simply look after our own places. We also need to influence public opinion beyond our boundaries.

To convey information with authority requires knowledge, which in turn requires research. So the Trust must aspire to be at the forefront of research in both the built and natural environments, and to use that knowledge to promote a greater understanding of the countryside and our heritage.

What are effective ways of conveying information? Here are four examples, two from the National Trust, and two from national museums, that in my opinion show the way forward.

Leith Hill Place in Surrey was the childhood home of Ralph Vaughan Williams, one of England’s most important composers. Gabe Gabriel, who manages the house, has created a soundscape in the attics. Visitors hear the voices of professional actors performing a script (written by her) telling the story of Vaughan Williams’s life accompanied by a soundtrack of his music. The combination of the story, the black and white photographs of Vaughan Williams, objects placed in the rooms as ‘art’, and the views from the window that inspired him, together with his music, builds to an emotional climax that brings many visitors to tears.

At Dunham Massey the Trust has created an exhibition called Sanctuary from the Trenches. Commemorating the centenary of the First World War, this takes the bold step of transforming the entire house for the next two years from its normal parade of state rooms laid out in Edwardian elegance to an authentic and thoroughly researched re-creation of how the house was used as a military hospital during the war. From diaries, photographs, oral history, bills, and day-books, a detailed picture of individual patients, nurses and the family are vividly brought to life. The response from visitors has been extraordinary. Last year the house welcomed 88,000 visitors; this year 80,000 people have come through the doors in March and April alone. And the responses have been extraordinary: ‘I was spell-bound’; ‘almost in tears’;
‘inspirational’; and ‘amazingly touching’ have been just some of the reactions.

The dislocation of objects from their original context and place makes interpretation difficult for museums—something that, in theory at least, gives the National Trust an advantage. However, with its ground-breaking collaboration with the BBC, the British Museum’s *A History of the World in a 100 Objects* showed how individual artefacts could be used to tell the stories of whole civilizations and bring the past alive. With *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum* they took the same approach into the museum, making the artefacts tell the story. *Life and Death* … set out to create the Roman world of AD79 when the eruption of Vesuvius buried the two cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. This is a world away, a place remote in time and geography, and yet the museum brought this world close to us. The curators of the exhibition deliberately chose not to fill the exhibition with significant objects from temples and palaces, but brought this extraordinary event to life by choosing everyday things.

We get to know a family well. We learn their names, we see a loaf of bread baked that morning; we can approach them through their humour and their interest in sex; we feel their appreciation of the beauty of their garden room. Through these intimate moments we feel as if we could reach out and touch them. The objects in the exhibition are special and rare, and yet they are ordinary in the sense that they were a part of the family’s everyday lives.

This creation of a personal bond removes the mystique that usually surrounds exhibitions of antiquities and great art. With a window opened on this new world, all the cultural baggage goes out with it: you see how special these ordinary lives were. The beauty of the objects hits you: the serpent bracelet, or the portrait of Flora, painted by a jobbing artist yet one of the most evocative renderings in art of the passing of time. Having seen the Romans

*A selection of items from the British Museum’s ‘Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum’ exhibition*
as people like us, and their possessions as so similar to ours, we can take a real interest in their lives and feel the horror of their deaths.

But it does not have to be all gloom and tragedy. Another great example of imaginative interpretation, of the special made ordinary, is the video made by the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam as part of its re-launch publicity having just completed a major restoration of the museum:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6W2ZMpxhG

The video re-interprets the well-known painting by Rembrandt known as The Night Watch. An exceptional object is again made relevant to us today: a painting made almost sacred by the respect that has been given it over the years is revealed as a depiction of a band of men who have been chasing a thief. Now that we can see the painting for what it is, we can enjoy it and see how special ordinary events are. The everyday is transformed into great art, but great art that we can appreciate more fully.

These four examples show how effective and stimulating imaginative interpretation can be. In the cases of Dunham and Pompeii, the visitor is also provoked to think more broadly. At Dunham, for instance, the Trust ran a three-day festival of talks to explore the social, medical and artistic legacy of the First World War.

For the last 20 years those of us in the heritage business have all ridden a wave of enthusiasm for the past. However, I no longer think that interpretation that just gives basic information—‘This is a portrait of the 6th Duke by Reynolds’—or attempts to be relevant simply through endless recreations of below-stairs rooms will satisfy an ever more discriminating audience. The challenge to us must be to release our creativity, to take a few risks, and not least to spend some money, so as to truly engage people. We who work for the Trust all feel that we work for a cause; the public, in the main, sees our properties just as visitor attractions. We need to make better connections with the public—and interpretation offers us the key.

Simon Murray, National Trust Senior Director for Strategy, Curatorship and External Affairs

---

**ACQUISITIONS**

**BELTON HOUSE**

A copy of Vincenzo Cartari’s *Le Imagini de I Dei de gli Antichi*, first illustrated edition with 88 full-page engravings, Venice, Valgrisi, 1571, with a Belton House bookplate of Earl Brownlow, was purchased at auction at Bloomsbury Auctions, London, for £1,984 including buyer’s premium.

**CHIRK CASTLE**

A copy of James Edward Smith’s *An Introduction to Physiological and Systematical Botany*, London, Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme and J White, second edition, 1809, with an R E Myddelton bookplate and the signature of C W Myddelton, was purchased from Elizabeth Nelson for £400 from legacy funds.

**PAYCOCKE’S HOUSE**

A group of three etchings by Cyril Henry Barraud (1877-1965) has been purchased for Paycocke’s House for £200. The pictures, which include the exterior of the house, an interior, and a view of the local Woolpack Inn, date from the 1930s, when the artist was a friend of the tenant.

**SANDHAM MEMORIAL CHAPEL**

A pencil study for the painting *Reveille* at Sandham Memorial Chapel by Sir Stanley Spencer, RA (1891-1959), has been purchased from Moore-Gwyn Fine Art for £1,400.

**THE VYNE**

A George III silver salver engraved with the arms of Chute quartered with Keck was purchased from Christopher Hartop for £4,500 funded by the Northamptonshire National Trust Association and from other gifts and bequests.

---

Emile de Bruin, Registrar (Collections & Grants)
PEVSNER REVISITED IN CORNWALL
A reassessment of his achievement and a revised edition

Published in 1951, Cornwall was the first of what eventually became the 46 county volumes of Nikolaus Pevsner's monumental work The Buildings of England. He had visited Cornwall in the spring of 1948, his researches restricted by a relative dearth of published information about the buildings of the county apart from its churches, as well as petrol rationing and the erratic behaviour of an unreliable car lent by the publisher, Allen Lane. When a modest revision was produced in 1970 (limited to obvious corrections and some additions sent in by correspondents), Pevsner freely acknowledged that the book had been an experiment—‘we were all beginners at the job then’, he observed—but nevertheless it set the pattern for the 45 volumes that followed before the coverage of all England was completed in 1974.

The publication of a comprehensively revised edition 66 years after Pevsner undertook his fieldwork has necessarily required taking account of the subsequent burgeoning of architectural history. The perspective of history has also allowed a clearer assessment of the architecture of the later Victorian and 20th-century periods; in 1948 Pevsner was, it is worth remembering, nearer the end of the Victorian age than we are to the 1960s. So the revision has afforded opportunities both to celebrate Pevsner’s achievement and also to explore new areas of interest, some of which—like vernacular architecture or the buildings of industry, both very significant in Cornwall—were hardly recognised at the time the series originated. Critics who have pointed to the limitations of the first editions cannot have read his own modest assessment of his achievement when, in completing the series with Staffordshire in 1974, he concluded that ‘The more of the revised volumes I shall see the happier I shall be. Don’t be deceived, gentle reader, the first editions are only ballons d’essai; it is the second editions which count’ (Some words on the completion of ‘The Buildings of England’ in Staffordshire, 1974).

In assessing his achievement it must be remembered that although he was working from files prepared by his researcher, he only spent a few weeks in the county. Cornwall in the late 1940s was still remote, so the fact that he nevertheless managed to visit every church was remarkable in itself. His accounts of the medieval churches, one of the glories of Cornwall, have more than stood the test of time. His underlying narrative of the development and architecture of the medieval Cornish church remains convincing. Only in one significant respect, the continuation of the rebuilding of churches well into the 16th century, even sometimes beyond the mid-century, is the dating sequence better understood. And always in his descriptions there is the eye of the man who has seen so much that he can easily make references that would elude most of us. Thus at Holy Trinity, St Austell he observes of the curious doorway to the south porch with its openwork tracery that it is ‘an ogee arch inserted into a round one (cf. Mylor and St Just-in-Roseland), a motif originated at Gloucester and found, for example, in tomb canopies at Tewkesbury’.

His coverage of the greater houses of Cornwall was much more succinct in comparison to the generous space he devoted to medieval churches, but it was still an authoritative
assessment of what was known at the time with the vital
dimension of relating Cornish architecture to the national
picture. He was one of the first, for example, to realise how
remarkable the north front of Godolphin is, a daring example
of Renaissance planning and architecture so far west, showing
the Godolphins’ connections with the Stuart court. Similarly,
his appreciation of the combination of the military innova-
tion and architectural symmetry of the Henrician fort at
St Mawes makes for one of his most memorable passages of
architectural description.

And, given how close he was to the end of the Victorian
period, his take on 19th-century architecture is pioneering
too. Here one can sense the great champion of the modern
movement growing in his respect for some (though not all) of
the 19th-century architects working in Cornwall as he recog-
nises how surprisingly rich the county is in the work of some
of the most important: it was, after all, in Cornwall that those
pioneers of the Gothic Revival, George Edward Street (1824-
81) and William White (1825-1900), built their first churches
and carefully restored many more. At Ladock, Cornwall has
the first collaboration between Street and William Morris
with the finest display in the county of Morris & Co. glass.

John Dando Sedding (1838–91) is also well represented; he
too started from a Cornish base with his elder brother Edmund
Sedding (1836-68) and later Edmund’s son Edmund Harold
Sedding (1863-1922). All three were highly skilled in Arts and
Crafts Gothic and worked on 63 churches, either new builds
or major restorations. Pevsner finds his best prose to de-
scribe the crowning glory of the Gothic Revival in Cornwall,
John Loughborough Pearson’s Truro Cathedral. He skilfully
deploys his knowledge of European architecture to source the
resonances of both Normandy Gothic and English Gothic in
its exterior, while his description of the interior conveys a feel-
ing that this was a building which, architecturally speaking,
moved him profoundly: ‘The Cathedral interior, of soaring
height and ever changing vistas, is in many ways a beau ideal
of the E.E. style, perfected as against the proportions of, say,
Salisbury and purged of the loveable irregularities of other
E.E. churches. Truro is vaulted throughout. Pearson knew
better than any other architect of his generation how neces-
sary stone vaults are to Gothic perfection and here he offers a
master class in their design and variety.’

There were, therefore, sure foundations laid by Pevsner
on which the revision could be built. Specialist contribu-
tions have been added on building materials, the prehistoric
to early medieval landscape, vernacular building, and the
industrial archaeology of Cornish mining and transport.
There was a need to recast many of the descriptions, espe-
cially of Cornwall’s greater houses, where the vast amount of
new research has greatly enriched and sometimes altered the
narrative and added much valuable detail. The National Trust’s
Cornish estate offers an exceptionally good range from Tudor
Cotehele through Elizabethan Treliske and the Renaissance
north front at Godolphin to the extravagant late 19th-century
aggrandisement of St Michael’s Mount and Lanhydrock. In
each of these places the new descriptions have also been able
to capture something of the historic entity of house, setting,
ancillary buildings, gardens, park and landscape.

Much fuller accounts of the pre-19th-century building range
can now be offered—for example, the emerging understanding
that the great medieval castles at Launceston, Restormel
and Trematon fulfilled other functions than the purely
defensive: all three were also adapted for pleasure as hunting
lodges in extensive deer parks. But the single most significant
additions are the buildings of the later 19th century to the
early 21st century. The phenomenal growth of the county’s
copper and tin mining during the first half of the 19th century
generated huge wealth before the rapid collapse of copper and
the slower decline of tin. Mining funded a building boom
right across the architectural range. The great mining mag-
nates like the Boscawens at Tregothnan, the Treffrys at Place,
Fowey, and the Agar-Robartes at Lanhydrock enlarged and

Launceston and its medieval castle
embellished their houses on a prodigious scale; but even more modest houses were made over, as with George Wightwick’s accomplished Palladianism at Pencarrow and his classical re-working of Tregiran. One of the most enjoyable aspects of later Victorian and Edwardian architecture, public and commercial buildings, is to be found in Cornish towns; most, a good range, are still miraculously intact, many by local architects—Wightwick at Helston, James Hicks at Redruth, Henry Rice at Liskeard, Otho B Peter at Launceston and, most prolific of all, Silvanus Trevail at St Austell, Truro, and all over the county.

Another significant element of the revised edition is the opportunity it provides to present a fuller picture of the vibrant religious culture of 19th- and early 20th-century Cornwall. The dynamism of Methodism at this period is reflected in an explosion of chapel building with nearly 900 at its peak around 1900, with the Classical-inspired style of pre-1850s chapels increasingly replaced by a version of 18th-century Picturesque Gothic without its whimsical detail. But the single most significant architectural theme of the second half of the 19th century in Cornwall is the role of the Gothic Revival in the Anglican church’s energetic attempt to re-invent itself, pioneered, as described above, in new churches by Street, J D Sedding, and White, and in Pearson’s new cathedral. White also built the elegiacally beautiful Romantic Gothic rectory at St Columb Major (currently in a scandalously sad state of disrepair) and a bank in Venetian Gothic at the centre of the same town. A longer historical perspective has also allowed the new edition to make a kinder reckoning of the vast amount of church restoration that was carried out in later 19th-century Cornwall, where J.P. St Aubyn was cast as the chief villain; his restoration work (he undertook 78 churches in all) soon becomes wearisome, but he was a skilful deployer of Gothic when building his 20 new churches.

The first half of the 20th century saw flashes of modernism here and there, but not the sustained campaigns that might have been expected in a county marketing itself as ‘The Cornish Riviera’. Penzance has some good examples; most spectacular is the Art Deco Jubilee Pool (the town also has a whole suburb of lovely early 19th-century terraces and gardens that has been little celebrated).

The second half of the 20th century saw some bolder modernist architecture, including Team 4’s Creak Vean, but more significantly, the work of the County Council Architect’s Department, culminating in New County Hall. Towards the end of the century and into the 21st century European funding helped bring major architectural practices here to design important new buildings like Evans & Shalev’s excellent Tate St Ives, Long & Kentish’s National Maritime Museum, Cornwall, and Nicholas Grimshaw & Partners’ Eden Project. And in Newlyn and St Ives the evidence of the artistic communities of the later 19th and mid-20th centuries is still tangible, most powerfully expressed in Barbara Hepworth’s garden and studio at St Ives.

But perhaps the most pervasive of all the themes to enter the new volume is its emphasis on context and the sense of place. Pevsner himself remarked in the first edition that in Cornwall the setting was often as memorable, or more so, than the architecture. Yet partly for reasons of space and partly because he felt he had no skills in conjuring up the genius loci in words (and maybe also because he was up against Betjeman’s incomparable descriptions in his Shell Guide), Pevsner rarely attempts to convey character and atmosphere. The new edition attempts to express something of the distinctiveness of places, a small contribution to ensuring that Cornwall, still a land apart, remains unique.
UNRAVELLING UPPARK

‘Unravelling Uppark’, supported by Arts Council England, showcases the work of leading artists inspired by Uppark’s elegant Georgian interiors, sumptuous Grand Tour collection, and larger than life historical characters. The works include:

✦ Delicate origami miniature boats by Steven Follen created from folded metal sheets and filled with spices, echoing Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh’s connections with the exotic East India Company.

✦ A series of mirrors and images by video artist Jini Rawlings that reflect Emma Hamilton’s unfolding story of fame and misfortune.

✦ A landscape by Helen Felcey and Alice Kettle inspired by HG Wells’s novel *The Time Machine*. Wells spent much of his boyhood at Uppark, and the grim servants’ tunnels are said to have influenced this famous science fiction novel.

✦ An installation in the stables by Caitlin Heffernan using materials rescued from Uppark’s great fire, including horse tack, jewels and fabrics. It explores the contrast between the privileged lives of people like Sir Harry and those of the grooms and stable boys who worked there.

Above: Video installation by Jini Rawlings
Left: ‘Patchwork’ vases and bowls by Zoe Hillyard
Right: Brick mosaic vessel by Andrew Burton

Photographs by Jim Stephenson

Unravelling Uppark, 4 May - 2 November 2014
For more information call 01730 825415

PICTURE FRAMES AT HAM HOUSE

A new book by Jacob Simon looks at the picture frames at Ham House, particularly the development of 17th-century auricular frames. The changes in picture framing in the 1620s and 1630s from simple designs to elaborate ones were a result of collecting by King Charles I and his court. Some pictures collected abroad had elaborate frames; the Netherlands inspired the auricular style, literally ‘of the ear’, a stylised interpretation of organic forms. In the later 17th century craftsmen developed less elaborate foliage patterns, used at Ham House for the over-door frames and some overmantel frames as well as picture frames.
SIMPLY TOO DRAUGHTY AND COLD?
Unravelling the puzzle of the blind windows at Mount Stewart

Mount Stewart in Co Down, Northern Ireland, is currently undergoing a £7 million restoration and conservation project. Like most houses, Mount Stewart has undergone many structural changes over the years, and still puzzles us with occasional mysteries. A pair of blind windows is one of them.

Blind windows are a feature of many houses, usually put in when the need for a symmetrical façade did not correlate with the interior layout. There are several National Trust houses in Northern Ireland that have windows like this, including Ardress, Springhill, The Argory and Castle Ward. Some were part of the original design; others were the result of later changes. A lining board just inside the glass is usually painted black so that from the outside it reads as a void rather than a solid. Occasionally, access doors or hatches are created to ensure that the glass can be cleaned from the inside, as otherwise they are inclined to become rather cobwebby. One way around this is to paint the back of the glass black.

At Mount Stewart there are two windows on the west front that were thought to have been blind from the early 19th century. They are in the oldest part of the house, which was built at least partly to designs by George Dance Junior (1741-1825) around 1804-05. Lord Londonderry seems to have been concerned about having too many windows, and that they would be too high, thus letting in too much light. Dance wrote in one of his letters to Lord Londonderry at the time: ‘… with respect to the windows I beg here to remind you that it is better to make them of a good height proportion’d to their breadth for whatever objection you may have to the light from the upper part, that is easily obviated by an application of blinds or other contrivance whereas the wall once built if the windows are too low there is no remedy—leave in the wall—make the opening for windows & shut up those you don’t like when wall erected’ (Sir John Soane’s Museum, D3/9/1a).

So it was not surprising for Mount Stewart to have two windows that look like working windows from the exterior, but in fact are blocked up and invisible from the interior. They are the two windows on the west front at first floor level, nearest to the south (see illustration above). The left-hand window is blocked by a cross-wall on the inside; if we assume that the wall dates to the building of this part of the house in 1804, it indicates that this was always intended to be a blind or false window. However, anecdotal family tradition suggested that at least one of these windows had been blocked up in the early 20th century, most likely by the 7th Marquess and Marchioness of Londonderry, who began to make this their Irish home from 1920 onwards. One of the windows (to the right in the photograph) should open into the bedroom labelled ‘Genoa’, one of the most pleasant bedrooms in the house—it faces south and affords views over the wonderful gardens from three tall windows in the south-facing bow. The room is not particularly large, so a fourth window seems unnecessary.

In the 1920s Lady Londonderry made Genoa her bedroom and furnished it in her own distinctive style. She swept away the heavy Victorian and Edwardian furnishings left by the 6th Marquess and previous generations, preferring plain distempered walls and Queen Anne furniture. In the 1950s, following the death of her husband,
Charles, she filled the house with layers of dramatic colour; she gave the principal bedroom suite pale green ceilings, blue walls and rich red carpets. Her daughter Lady Mairi Bury also used Genoa from the 1960s until her death in 2009. During those years the room hardly changed at all except for the carpet, which had suffered the ravages of too many pet dogs, and the textiles generally, which had suffered from the light streaming in through the three south-facing windows.

So when was the window blocked up? Or was it like this from the start?

Early inventories were not helpful. An 1821 inventory is confusing, as the arrangement of some rooms was changed and other rooms disappeared altogether during the 1840s when the house was extensively enlarged. It seemed possible that Genoa might equate to the ‘Best Bed Room’, with its ‘3 Dicker work white cotton Window Curtains with Dicker work sowed on and Dicker work Drapery with Silk Fringe / 3 Mahogany Inlaid Cornishes / 6 Brass Curtain Pins / 3 Brown Rola Blinds’. The south-facing room would have needed roller blinds to give light protection to the fine ‘Dicker work’ bed hangings (Decca work was embroidered silk made in the Deccan, Southern India). The three curtains and blinds implied that the ‘Best Bed Room’ had three windows in 1821.

The 1895 inventory seemed to corroborate this. By that time the rooms had received their city names, and included in the contents of Genoa were: ‘3 Pairs Lace Curtains’, indicating that there were only three windows in the room at that date. Indeed, a photograph of the room prepared for the visit by King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in 1903 shows that the ‘4 Post State Bedstead and Draperies’ stood against the west wall, behind which is the blind window.

So the blocking of the window clearly pre-dates the 1920s, and must pre-date the royal visit in 1903 and the inventory of 1895.

When the bed was dismantled during the present building conservation project the shape of the window could be clearly seen on the wall; it appeared to have been boarded over, and the boards then papered and painted. But was this original, or a later intervention?

The exploratory opening-up work led to the removal of the skirting below the blocked-up window. I stuck my camera up under the boarding, pointed it upwards, and pushed the button. I expected to see either the back of rough stonework blocking the inside of the window, or perhaps a void with rough joinery, painted black to camouflage it from the exterior. Imagine my surprise when I saw a full set of window shutters and dado, complete with carved mouldings that matched the other windows in the room.

The boarding was soon removed from the wall, and the shutters opened. They had been painted black, but were otherwise in excellent condition, even retaining their brass lion’s mask pull handles. And we were thrilled to see a signature and date scratched into the black paint as it dried: ‘Geo. A Kennedy /1883 April 2’.

This sent me back to the 1821 inventory to see what I had missed. The order of the rooms that had seemed so muddled before now made more sense. The room that is now known as Genoa was not the ‘Best Bedroom’ after all, but the ‘Pink Bedroom’, with its ‘4 printed Cotton Window Curtains lined with Pink Drapery of Do. Lined pink Fringe and Tossles / 8 Brass Curtain pins / 4 Linen Rola Blinds’—four curtains for four windows.

After careful consideration, and after discussions with the donor family, who had always believed that the window existed and that it should be opened up, we have agreed to do so. This means some rearrangement of the furniture in the room, but we should still be able to accommodate most of the larger items, and the rearrangement will even help create a more logical visitor route. The window and surrounding joinery have been repaired and re-painted, though the signature remains intact and legible. A new architrave has been made to match the one on the other windows. The lion-mask handles do not survive anywhere else in the house; on all the other shutters they have been replaced by porcelain knobs. We hope to replicate the lion handles, at least for all the shutters in Genoa.

We do not yet know why this window was blocked up; we hope that future research into the Londonderry papers for the 1880s will provide some clues. Perhaps having four windows in one relatively small room just proved too draughty and cold. Or perhaps the placing of the bed in this position gave a better view out over the gardens towards the glimmering waters of Strangford Lough. Who knows?

Frances Bailey, Project Curator
Hanbury Hall in Worcestershire was home for the Vernon family for 251 years. Since the National Trust took ownership in 1963 the family portraits have gazed down on our visitors as our volunteers regaled them with their many trials and tribulations—all except for one. Emma Vernon was owner of the Hanbury estate from 1771 until 1818. This is one of the most interesting periods of history at the Hall; it includes an arranged marriage, an elopement with the local curate, and three husbands. But in telling her story we have always had a challenge: up until now not a single image of Emma has been found. Had portraits of her been painted? Where were they? What did Emma Vernon look like?

Born in 1755, Emma was the only child of Thomas Vernon and Emma Vernon, née Cornewall. Her early life was spent with her parents, moving between Hanbury and residences in London and Bath. On 23 September 1771, Emma’s seventeenth birthday, her father died of a stroke, leaving Emma heiress to the Hanbury estate. This was highly unusual for a time when large estates were generally only left to a male heir. Emma thus became mistress of Hanbury at a tender age, supported by agents and estate managers—and a domineering mother.

Emma’s mother was determined to find a good match for her daughter, and with Hanbury as bait she was able to make an excellent match in Henry Cecil, nephew and heir to Brownlow Cecil, 9th Earl of Exeter. On 23 May 1776 Emma became the first Mrs Henry Cecil, and the couple settled down to life at Hanbury Hall. They set about making Hanbury their own. Changes were made to the house and estate. The formal baroque gardens of Thomas Vernon’s time were swept away, and rooms were knocked through to make grander rooms, following the fashions of the day. They spent a great deal of money improving and altering Hanbury, so it is highly likely that they would have commissioned portraits of themselves. But where have they gone?

One explanation could be the sale of furniture in 1790. This sale came about because of the breakdown of the Cecils’ marriage. In 1777 their only son had died at only two months old, and despite a busy social calendar and much travelling Emma became increasingly unhappy in her marriage. In 1783 there was a significant arrival in Hanbury village: William Sneyd, the new curate. Emma and William soon struck up a friendship, which developed into an affair. For five years the couple met in secret; then in 1789 Emma finally broke down and revealed the relationship to Henry. She agreed to give William up, and planned a ‘last’ meeting with him at a local Birmingham hotel. But instead of saying their goodbyes, the couple eloped to London, and from there went on to Dawlish. Henry Cecil locked up Hanbury Hall and moved to Great Bolas, where he lived under an assumed name to escape the shame of his wife’s infidelity.

In April 1790, after a brief dalliance, Henry (still under his assumed name of John Jones) married Sarah Hoggins, a local farmer’s daughter. At this point he was still married to Emma, making him a bigamist. After his second marriage he decided to...
We would be interested in acquiring them for Hanbury Hall. He
Emma Vernon and Henry Cecil at a recent auction and asking if
Devon who claimed to have bought the marriage portraits of
Vernon at all.

It was from the wrong period and could not be of Emma
Alastair Laing, former Curator of Pictures for the Trust, proved
depicted Emma Vernon hung at the Hall for many years before
seemed to have survived. A portrait that was thought to have

seems to have survived. A portrait that was thought to have
eventual position as the respectable mistress of Hanbury Hall,
cousin, Thomas Shrawley Vernon.

leaving no child to inherit; instead the estate went to her
1818
the Hanbury estate, including many of the farms. Emma died in
the next
the Hanbury estate reverted back to Emma and John Phillips. For
its estate became more and more derelict. In
Deserted, and empty of all its furniture and contents, the Hall and
also now married for the third time) kept Hanbury closed up.

Despite her three marriages, her high social standing, and her
life at Winterdyne House on
Emma and John lived a quiet
1804
Henry died, and
Hanbury estate reverted back to Emma and John Phillips. For
the next 14 years Emma and John set about repairing and restoring
the Hanbury estate, including many of the farms. Emma died in
1818, leaving no child to inherit; instead the estate went to her
cousin, Thomas Shrawley Vernon.

However, last year the property was contacted by a dealer in
Devon who claimed to have bought the marriage portraits of
Emma Vernon and Henry Cecil at a recent auction and asking if
we would be interested in acquiring them for Hanbury Hall. He
also sent photographs of the portraits, offering our first tantalising
glimpses of Emma’s image.

Trying to verify the portraits was a challenge, as we had nothing
to compare them with. We contacted Burghley House, home of
the Cecil family, to see if we could verify Henry’s portrait, as this
would have been a good starting point, but there is no portrait of
Henry as a young man at Burghley. They have portraits of an older
Henry at the time when he was married to Sarah Hoggins, but
nothing else. So we were back to square one. The best option we
had was to ensure that the artist and portraits were of the correct
period.

The artist is John Downman (1750-1824), who studied for a
short time in Liverpool before spending two years in Italy. On his
return to England in 1773 he set himself up as a portrait painter
in Cambridge; within four years he was one of the most fashion-
able portraitists in London, patronised by the royal family and
the aristocracy, including the Duchess of Devonshire and
the Duchess of Richmond. The marriage portraits of Emma and Henry are
dated 1776. Like her relative
Thomas Vernon, Emma had
the knack of commissioning
artists shortly before their
rise to fame: in 1701 Thomas
Vernon had commissioned
Sir James Thornhill to paint
the walls and ceilings of
Hanbury Hall—and Sir
James Thornhill subsequently
completed commissions at St
Paul’s Cathedral, Greenwich, and Chatsworth House.

Once the two portraits were verified and checked by Michelle
Bartlett, the Trust’s Conservator for the Devon region, we were
satisfied that we had finally been presented with an image of
Emma Vernon. At last we were able to put a face to one of our
most colourful owners. The portraits show Emma and Henry on
the brink of their marriage. Both look remarkably young to be
embarking on married life, and there is no hint of the trials ahead
of them.

The provenance of the portraits is harder to establish. They
were bought at auction from a ‘dead’ estate, meaning that tracing
the history of the portraits is impossible. The labels on the back
do show that at some point during their history they were owned
by John Phillips, Emma’s third husband, but how they got from
his family to an auction in Devon we do not know, and probably
never will.

For Hanbury Hall the return of these two portraits is incred-
ibly significant, and we are extremely grateful to the donor who
paid for the purchase and the necessary conservation work. The
portraits will be on display from 19 June in our Dining Room,
taking pride of place on the dining room table surrounded by the
other family portraits. Their permanent home will be decided on
after the conservation work has been completed in the autumn.

It has taken nearly 200 years for Emma’s image to make its
way back home to Hanbury Hall; she will be welcomed by staff,
volunteers and visitors alike, whilst we continue to tell the story
of her highs and lows.

Michelle Hill, House Engagement Manager, Hanbury Hall
SALTRAM BY THE BOOK
A celebration of the exceptional treasures in Saltram’s Library

During the 2012 season Saltram was one of four Plymouth sites that hosted the externally curated Sinopticon exhibition, part of the National Trust's 'Trust New Art' programme. The new works exhibited in the house and garden were inspired by our Chinese wallpapers, ceramics and chinoiserie furniture. The success of this exhibition inspired us to develop collection-themed exhibitions in subsequent years. In 2013 we celebrated our paintings, drawings and photographs with our Picture Perfect exhibition, and in 2014 we are highlighting our books with Saltram by the Book.

The Library at Saltram
George Parker (d.1743) purchased a controlling interest in Saltram in 1712. After inheriting the estate his son, John Parker I (1703-68), and later his grandson, John Parker II (1734/5-88), employed both local and nationally recognised architects and artisans to redesign and furnish the house. In 1768 Robert Adam was commissioned to design a library in the northeast corner of the house; his design drawing survives in the collection at Sir John Soane’s Museum. It seems that shortly after, in 1770, the books, including the working collection of legal reference books and contemporary devotional books belonging to George Parker, were brought together as a formal collection for the first time.

Unfortunately Adam’s Library only lasted 10 years. A fire in the service wing of the house led to the creation of a new Great Kitchen, and the Library and Dining Room were transposed for practical reasons.

The new Library in the southwest corner of the house was extended into the neighbouring Drawing Room by the architect John Foulston in 1819. The mahogany bookcases are believed to date from this period, although some may have been installed during the earlier alterations made c.1797 by John Parker III (1772-1840), 1st Earl of Morley. The bookcase pediments were added by Albert Edmund Parker (1843-1905), the 3rd Earl, in the late 19th or early 20th century.

The collection is very much a country house collection as opposed to an antiquarian one; it contains mostly working books of the period 1730-1830, with illustrated books and some unusual early 19th-century light fiction. It does, however, contain a number of early books of note. While the largest contributor to the collection appears to be John Parker III and his wife Frances, it reflects the careers and interests of many family members.

Saltram by the Book
Our latest exhibition, Saltram by the Book, extends through the whole of the house and showcases the collection’s treasures and curios and the books that tell the story of the people who spent time in the house.

The Parkers had been immensely wealthy landowners in Devon since the 16th century, and the education of the family was very important to them. Receipts dating from the 17th century show that George Parker’s father, Edmund, bought Latin and Greek grammar books for his children.

George went to Exeter College, Oxford, where it seems that he read Law, judging from the number of his legal reference books still in the Library. His great-grandson John Parker III attended Christ Church, Oxford. The doodle-covered Greek grammar book from his schooldays is on display in the Study; so are two annotated volumes of Thucydides’ History of the Peloponnesian War belonging to Albert Edmund Parker, which contain his minute handwritten notes in pencil. Unlike those of his grandfather, Albert’s notes seem to reflect a deep interest in the subject—indeed, he went on to read Classics at Oxford.

The Library houses a number of treasures, and the exhibition highlights two of these: Mark Catesby’s The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands; Containing the Figures of Birds, Fishes, Serpents, Insects and Plants (1754), and Hartman Schedel’s Liber Chronicarum cum figuris et imaginibus ab inicio mundi (1493), commonly known as the ‘Nuremberg Chronicle’.

The Natural History is the first recorded and published systematic study of the fauna and flora of this region of North America. Mark Catesby (1682-1749) was commissioned by the Royal Society to undertake a plant-collecting expedition between 1722 and 1726, and he spent 17 years producing his two-volume work. He learned to etch the plates himself, becoming the first person to produce folio-sized prints. He included plants in his depictions of the birds, fish and snakes he had found, some of which no longer exist in their native habitat.

The ‘Nuremberg Chronicle’ is the oldest hand-printed book at Saltram. It relates the history of the world from the creation to 1493 from a Biblical perspective. It is also the only incunable (early printed book) in the collection. It has oak boards and the original fine tawed pigskin binding with blind tooling that includes the distinctive circular stamp of the arms of Nuremberg.
From a manuscript inscription it appears that the book was in the Library of the Monastery of St Emmeram in Regensburg from at least 1643, but possibly as early as c.1500. It is said to bear the marks of the chain and staple with which valuable books were secured to the shelves.

Also on view in the Library are two interesting pieces of specially designed furniture: a mahogany and leather reading chair (1810-40), on which the reader sits back to front, and a mahogany and cane metamorphic library chair which folds to make a set of library steps (1810-12).

On display in the Entrance Hall is one of three finely bound volumes of David Roberts’s Views of Egypt and Nubia (1842-1849). A favourite among Egyptologists, it depicts the work of the much-admired artist David Roberts (1796-1864), who travelled to Egypt in 1838-40. The book contains Roberts’s drawings and watercolours, engraved and coloured by Louis Haghe (1806-1885). Published by subscription, this work gained royal approval—Queen Victoria was the first of 400 subscribers. The late 19th-century bookplate of the Earl of Morley conceals previous ownership details, but the book may have belonged to Edmund Parker (1810-64), the 2nd Earl of Morley. Edmund was Lord in Waiting to Queen Victoria and a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to her consort, Albert (who was godfather to the 3rd Earl). The family’s interest in antiquities was carried on by the 5th Earl, Montagu Parker (1879-1962), who believed that the Ark of the Covenant was buried beneath the Temple of Jerusalem, and in 1909 joined an expedition to unearth it.

The Parker family’s interest in the arts is revealed in their purchase of Angelica Kauffman’s ‘Working Library’ (c.1765-80), one volume of which is on display in the Staircase Hall. This ‘Library’ is a series of ten volumes of prints and drawings collected by Kauffman. Given her decision to sell the collection, it is unlikely that the volumes were deemed irreplaceable. Numerous male and female figure studies in the volumes are unlike the more delicate figures associated with her work. A founding member of the Royal Academy of Arts, and one of the leading female artists of her day, Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807) is well represented in the Staircase Hall, which houses nine of her paintings, including six history paintings and her portrait of the President of the Royal Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The volume is complemented by Discourses to the Royal Academy by Sir Joshua Reynolds PRA (1723-1792). Originally published in pamphlet form, the Discourses are a series of lectures delivered by Reynolds between 1769 and 1785. The third and fourth discourses include his views on what constituted history painting and the basic principles which should guide and be the goal of the aspiring artist in what Reynolds considered to be the highest genre of artistic expression.

In the Large Drawing Room, overlooking the Chapel, there is a copy of Henry Thomas Austen’s Lectures upon some important passages in the Book of Genesis. The lectures were delivered by Austen (1771-1850) in Berlin in 1818. Henry, brother of the novelist Jane, was Chaplain to the British Embassy in Berlin and Domestic Chaplain to John Parker III, 1st Earl of Morley, from 1817 to 1820. Jane Austen is known to have corresponded about her novel Emma with the Earl’s wife, Frances Parker, who had written praising it.

Elsewhere in the house are displayed fashion catalogues, novels, and poetry books that belonged to various ladies of the house or were contributed to by them. A number of finely bound books are on display in the Garden Room, including Oxonia Illustrata, prints by David Loggan (1655-c.1700), and an Authorised King James version of the Bible (1667), which has a fabulous removable embroidered velvet cover.

The exhibition was kick-started by two weeks of in-situ book conservation. This included the production of a book support so that one of our smallest books, a miniature History of England, could be displayed in the Doll’s House Room alongside the ‘Bryce Bible’, c.1901, a tiny but complete copy of the King James Authorised version only readable with a magnifying glass.

The exhibition runs from April to October 2014.

Louise Ayres, House and Collections Manager, Saltram

---

1 Saltram House: the Library, Elizabeth Quarmby Lawrence, 24 January 2001
2 Mark Purcell, http://copac.ac.uk/about/libraries/ngazeteer.html#P
3 Research and photography by Michael Ford, House & Collections Volunteer
REVEALING STANDEN’S HIDDEN HISTORIES
Affirming cultural status and the preservation of traditional skills

Standen possesses an extensive collection of works of art. Although some of these were acquired when the property was first bequeathed to the National Trust in the early 1970s, surprisingly little was known about their association with the Beale family who once lived there.

I became particularly interested in a collection of historic prints, engravings and photographs displayed on the walls of Standen’s first floor landing. Some of them were engravings after Old Master religious paintings, which did not appear to fit in with the Arts and Crafts character of the house, so I was curious to find out where they had come from and why they were there. The mystery started to unravel when I discovered a small stack of old Christie Manson & Woods auction catalogues dating from 1878 which had once belonged to James and Margaret Beale.

When James and Margaret Beale commissioned the architect Philip Webb in 1891 to design Standen, a holiday home in the country, they were living in Holland Park, Kensington.1 James Beale, a qualified and respected lawyer, was running the London office of Beale & Co, his family firm of solicitors based in Birmingham. The family had lived at Holland Park since 1875 and belonged to an influential social circle of professionals, industrialists and politicians who could afford to spend some of their disposable income on works of art. Their neighbours at No.1 Holland Park were the Ionides family, well-known patrons of artists, and Sir Frederick Leighton’s studio house was within walking distance at 2 Holland Park Road. The Holland Park area was home to many of the fashionable and artistic elite who decorated their houses with prints, paintings and even photographs associated with Old Masters. It was a way of demonstrating an elevated artistic taste, a social accomplishment which signalled a reputable cultural pedigree.

The Beales were no exception; they participated in the passion for collecting engravings that were mainly by late 18th- and early 19th-century European artists. In June 1879, an invoice from the dealers John & William Vokins details that five lots were purchased on 3 and 4 June which included La Belle Jardinière, an engraving by Desnoyers (1779-1857), and The Last Supper by Morghen (1758-1833) after Leonardo da Vinci.

By this time the centre of the picture trade had shifted so as to be near the new galleries opening in the West End.3 The Grosvenor Gallery in Bond Street, for example, attracted art enthusiasts like the Beales; in the year after it opened, they loaned two paintings for its Winter Exhibition of 1878-79, Haymaking by George Fripp and Stone Quarry, near St. Albans Head by Margaret’s cousin, Walter Field.4 The auctioneers Christie, Manson & Woods, also located in the West End, had a reputation as one of the leading auction houses in the area. It was popular with collectors like the Beales who wanted to furnish their houses with engravings after Old Masters and with watercolours by contemporary British artists.

The Christie, Manson & Woods auction catalogues at Standen confirmed that the Beales not only purchased engravings after Renaissance masters but also modern watercolour landscape paintings. Their taste embraced both the modern...
and the traditional, reflecting current trends amongst a wealthy middle class seeking to establish their own cultural identity, one that was distinct from the now out-dated taste of the aristocracy. Some of the catalogue pages were marked in ink to indicate which prints and paintings they purchased and what prices were paid for other lots. An example of one of these is a print described as ‘St. Catherine after L. da Vinci by J G Muller—proof’, purchased for £31s from an auction held at Christie, Manson & Woods on 29 January 1884. Scribbled alongside its catalogue entry on page 4 are the initials ‘JSB’, James Samuel Beale (Fig.1). This entry refers to an engraving which is currently on display at Standen (Fig. 4). It was originally believed to be after a painting by Leonardo da Vinci, although it was later attributed to Bernardino Luini (1480-1532). The British Museum acquired a copy of this print in 1836, entitled Die heilige Catharina, an 1817 copper engraving by Johann Gotthard von Muller (1747-1830). Of the 33 plates that Muller engraved in his lifetime, ‘a St Catherine with two angels after L. da Vinci’ was soon considered to be one of his most important works.

Another print also on display at Standen (bought at a later auction) is a framed engraving of what is known as the Darmstadt Madonna or Meyer Madonna (Fig. 5). It was purchased for £10 0 6d on Tuesday 13 February 1894 at Christie, Manson & Woods, described as ‘Lot 300: The Madonna & Child, with Saints after Holbein, by M. Steinla—proof with arms’. It is possible that the Beales’ ‘proof’ copy could have been one of the first prints produced from the engraving; however, by the middle of the 19th century the term ‘proof’ had lost its association with uniqueness through indiscriminate use. This line engraving, by the German artist Moritz Steinla (1791-1858), was described as ‘a finished engraving on copper’. A medium that would support up to one hundred copies, copper was traditionally used before the introduction of steel in the 1820s. The work involved was laborious; a drawing was made on the copper plate, and then the engraver pushed a burin along the lines to remove slivers of metal. Thought to be one of his finest works, Steinla’s engraving of Holbein’s Madonna was produced when he worked at the Academy of Dresden. Several copies of the print are currently held in the collection of the Harvard Art Museums.

Prints such as these could be regarded as a ‘translation’ of the original artwork, and would have been valued by the Beales as works of art in their own right. Besides their aesthetic qualities, they involved a high degree of traditional skill and craftsmanship in techniques that were in danger of being overtaken by the newer photographic technologies. Thus art patrons like the Beales were not only buying vintage prints to embellish their interiors and to affirm their cultural status; they were also supporting the preservation of traditional skills, an ideal that inspired the Arts and Crafts Movement and the building of Standen.

Anne Stutchbury
University of Sussex researcher Anne Stutchbury has been working at Standen on a three-year collaborative PhD study funded by the AHRC. Her research project aims to facilitate a greater understanding of how the Beale family, the original owners of the property, lived at Standen and the part they played in the construction of its legacy as a significant Arts and Crafts home.

2 The Inventory of Household Furniture Etc., the Property of E. Linley Sambourne Esq. of Stafford Terrace, Kensington, 1877, p. 33, ST/6/6/6, Linley Sambourne Archive, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.
5 Original paintings are on display at the National Gallery, London: Saint Catherine of Alexandria, and at the Hermitage, St Petersburg; Heilige Catharina.
6 British Museum number 1858,0608.1308.
9 Darmstadt Madonna, (original) is on display at Johanniskirche in Schwäbisch Hall, Germany, Würth Collection.
THE CABINETS OF CURIOUSITY PROJECT
Promoting collections in Wales and the Pamela Ward Collection

The National Trust cares for nearly a million objects throughout the United Kingdom. Properties in Wales hold at least 64,213 of them and that number is increasing all the time as the backlog of accession work is tackled. With such rich and diverse collections in our country, we felt that it was about time we spread the news. In 2013 the ‘Managing our Collections’ project began. It aims not only to reach new audiences and engage them with our collections, but also to develop the skills of staff and volunteers so that they can better manage documentation, enriching the lives of volunteers at their respective properties.

The National Trust has spent over 10 years digitising its inventories, not only for internal use, but also to increase public access to our collections. The arrival of the National Trust’s dedicated Collections website provides worldwide access to our holdings, and with the growth of social media sites the Trust is increasingly engaging with new audiences. Property staff often use Facebook and Twitter to promote events and encourage on-site visits, and there is no reason why we cannot use the same methods to promote our collections too. Examples of this practice are provided by Emile de Bruijn’s Collections blog—nttreasurehunt.wordpress.com—and the Trust Libraries Facebook pages.

In 2013 staff at Llanerchaeron, with the help of Managing our Collections, began to develop a project that would encourage its Facebook followers to make curatorial decisions. The non-indigenous Pamela Ward Collection is composed of unusual, intriguing and always visually appealing objects ranging from jewellery through egg cosies, Tunbridge ware, toys, and furniture to corkscrews. All her life Pamela Margaret Ward (1908–94) collected ‘little things she liked’, both for herself and as stock for her small antique shop in Kensington. She never married, and with no heirs to whom she could leave her estate she chose to give her collection to the National Trust. Little is known about Pamela Ward or what motivated her to collect the objects that she did. All we have left are the things of beauty she left behind.

In 1994 the Trust decided to place this collection at Llanerchaeron. Home to the Lewes family for ten generations, the estate was originally purchased by Llewelyn Parry in 1634. The 500-acre estate included a late medieval hunting lodge located on the site where the villa now stands. In 1789 Colonel William Lewis inherited the estate and commissioned a new house to be designed and built by John Nash. The Neo-classical villa, along with its service courtyard, was completed in £1795. The villa and the estate complex evolved mainly between 1790 and 1850, and survived largely unaltered until the late 20th century. The Lewis (later changed to Lewes) family were typical gentry farmers; all of the members of the family had a passion for their estate and the country pursuits of hunting and fishing. While Llanerchaeron is characteristic of the small late 18th-century estates that were common in the area, what makes it remarkable is its survival in such an unaltered state. The last member of the family to live in the villa was John Powell Ponsonby Lewes (1900–89). He was a quiet man who continued the traditions of his family, and he feared Llanerchaeron would disappear after his death. With little family money left, the villa and much of the estate complex had fallen into disrepair during Ponsonby’s lifetime; his gift of the estate to the Trust ensured its preservation.

The Neo-classical villa designed by John Nash

Shoe buckles and decanter stoppers from Miss Ward’s collection

Miss Pamela Margaret Ward (1908–1994)
Miss Ward’s generous bequest enabled the Trust to restore the villa, a rare and little-changed survival of John Nash’s early work in Wales. Llanerchaeron is a property complete with its own collection, and one that truly reflects the Lewes family’s tastes and interests; the Pamela Ward collection was never intended to replace it. Both curators and property staff have always agreed that the Ward Collection (over 5,000 objects) should be restricted to two rooms in the house, and that what is displayed should be rotated on an annual basis.

Our Cabinets of Curiosity project tackles a difficult question: how can we engage our audiences with a collection that does not have a strong narrative? Those who frequently visit museums, galleries and heritage sites often remember their emotional reactions more than the details of the collections or interiors that they see. The staff at Llanerchaeron have always played a key part in deciding on the themes within the Ward Collection to ensure that different objects are exhibited every year. We thought that our visitors might now be involved in this decision-making process. What do they want to see? What emotional responses do they have when they see certain objects? Can objects alone evoke memories and inspire long-forgotten passions?

Octavia Hill and Sir Robert Hunter’s original motivation in setting up the National Trust was to preserve places of historic interest and natural beauty ‘for the benefit of the nation’. If that is the case, and we really do exist for our supporters, why should the Trust always determine what visitors might see? In an ever-changing world the Trust is still dedicated to conserving its assets for the future and ensuring that the nation has access to them. But should this access be on our terms alone? All businesses take into account what their customers want; why should the Trust be any different? We want to provide the best opportunities we can so that people find as much pleasure in our properties as possible, and that applies to our collections too. Good engagement provokes conversations. Whose opinion is more valid? Facebook and other social media are tools which enable supporters’ likes, dislikes, opinions, and ideas to be heard without restriction. The Cabinets of Curiosity project provides a forum for those voices and opinions, and an opportunity to display the most favoured objects without detracting from Llanerchaeron’s unique spirit of place.

This project also lays the foundation to encourage new visitors to Llanerchaeron. A recent poll taken by the National Museums & Galleries of Wales asked those not entering the Museum why they kept passing by. We also have to ask ourselves: why isn’t everyone walking through our doors? If there is a physical or intellectual ‘barrier’, how can we remove it? The Cabinets of Curiosity Project aims to work towards breaking down the perceived exclusivity of museums, and encourages our supporters to give us their opinions about the collection.

Katherine Hoad, Project Officer, Managing our Collections
BROTHERS IN ARMS AT CASTLE DROGO
The painstaking conservation of a First World War photograph

Castle Drogo in Devon was built by Julius Drewe, a self-made millionaire of the Edwardian era. Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the castle was not only an architectural masterpiece but also a comfortable family home equipped with the latest gadgets. In general, the contents collection reflects the tastes and interests of a family whose lives revolved around their love of the outdoors and spending time together. Photography was also a family enthusiasm, resulting in a substantial collection of informal and formal portraits. The Drewes seem to have been particularly fond of opaltypes (photographs on milk-glass or porcelain, frequently tinted) as well as unusually large portraits. Their collection records the lives of the five children in the family, from small babies through to adulthood.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Julius and Frances Drewe had three sons in their late teens and early twenties and, perhaps inevitably, all three joined the army as soon as they were able. The youngest, Cedric, was only 18 when he joined up. He spent the first year of the war at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, and served with the Royal Field Artillery until 1919. Basil served in both the Devonshire Regiment and the Royal Garrison Artillery. Adrian, the Drewe’s eldest son, joined the Royal Garrison Artillery and was promoted to the rank of major.

Adrian was killed in action at Ypres on 12 July 1917, aged 26. His parents were devastated. Like many grieving families at the time, they dedicated a room to their son’s memory. A small room at Castle Drogo acts as a repository for Adrian’s personal effects which range from his academic gown to items he took to the battlefield, such as his cap and badge. One of the most striking items in the room is a two-thirds life-size tinted colour photograph of Adrian in his military uniform. Set in an ornate gilt frame, it is often mistaken for a painting, the subtle colouration of the tinting giving the impression of a ‘hyper-real’ portrait.

Cedric’s forgotten image
However, there is another very large portrait photograph at Castle Drogo. The photograph is the same size as Adrian’s and employs the same techniques. The subject is the youngest son, Cedric, and appears to have been taken in the same photographic studio as Adrian’s (there does not seem to be an equivalent surviving portrait of Basil). However, Cedric’s portrait has not received the same cherished treatment as Adrian’s.

Perhaps because Cedric survived the war, the portrait became forgotten amongst the family possessions at Castle Drogo. The photograph was unframed, and it was clear that at some stage in its life it had been stored folded. There were extensive areas of physical damage to the surface of the print, ranging from light but disfiguring damage to the surface of the photographic emulsion to areas of complete loss where both the photographic emulsion and the baryta layer—a coating which stops the emulsion sinking into the paper and also brightens the image—had been removed down to the paper layer.

It had also been stored unprotected for a number of years, resulting in not only an extremely dirty surface but also in physical damage around the edges of the print. At some point, liquid had dripped across the surface of the print (exactly what the substance was could not be determined during the course of treatment). Because of the problem of water ingress into the castle, it is perhaps not surprising that the print was also suffering from having been stored in an atmosphere of high humidity, although, fortunately, mould had not affected the emulsion.

For all these reasons the photograph was seen as being a high priority for conservation, both to safeguard its future and to enable it to be put on display within the castle. In the autumn of 2013, Cedric was sent to Sarah Allen for remedial conservation (Sarah is a freelance Photographic Materials Conservator, who works from the Manger Barn Conservation Studio, Fox Talbot Museum, Lacock, and has worked extensively for the National Trust). The aim was to put Cedric on display in the castle for the first time, ready for the 2014 centenary of the outbreak of the First World War.
Cedric in Sarah’s care

Firstly, Sarah undertook a surface clean of the photograph by brush-vacuuming with a squirrel-hair mop and a museum vacuum cleaner with a protected nozzle. Areas which still remained ingrained with dirt were cleaned with a smoke sponge (made of natural rubber, used dry) and, if needed, cotton-wool swabs barely dampened.

In order to rectify the planar distortion and to prepare it for framing, the print then needed to be flattened. It was humidified in a purpose-made capillary matting/Gore-Tex sandwich in order to make it more flexible. This then allowed it to be flattened in a purpose-made press. The press was weighted down and the print was allowed slowly to reach its original EMC (equilibrium moisture content) over a period of six weeks. Once the print was flattened, it was possible to consolidate the delaminating layers of the photograph.

Once the structural integrity of the object had been re-established, Sarah undertook sympathetic touch-in of the areas of loss to the emulsion. She did this by first applying a layer of gelatine as the ground, and then retouching the losses using a fine paintbrush and watercolours mixed to match the surrounding area.

As the intention was to put the portrait on display, a specialised purpose-built frame was made from dark oak so as to blend in with other items in the show-rooms at Castle Drogo. The frame was made to fit the print tightly, but care was taken to ensure that the photographic emulsion was held well away from the surface of the glazing. This was achieved by using a wooden fillet. This fillet and all the other wooden interior surfaces of the frame were sealed with EVA (ethylene-vinyl acetate) in order to prevent harmful gases from the wood from affecting the photographic emulsion. To ensure that gases could not escape, the entire interior was then sealed again with 3M Scotch 425 soft aluminium tape. The tape also sealed the glazing within the frame, preventing future ingress of pests such as thrips (tiny insects). Finally a backing board was inserted, which had been covered with Moistop barrier foil. The purpose of the Moistop was two-fold: firstly to prevent harmful gases from the wooden backing board affecting the photographic emulsion; and secondly, as high humidity levels have been prevalent in Castle Drogo, it was felt that providing the entire object with the Moistop seal would help prevent any future damage to the object. Once the backing board was in place, tabs were inserted to hold it tightly into the frame. The gap was then sealed again with the aluminium tape.

Cedric is now on display at Castle Drogo, close to his brother’s memorial room.

Bryher Mason, House and Collections Manager, Castle Drogo
Sarah Allen, Photographic Materials Conservator