CONTENTS

3 An inspiring resource – The Coventry Collection returns to Croome Court, by Jane Gallagher

6 Lifting the lid at the Vyne – Interpreting the roof project and an opportunity for collaboration, by Kathryn Allen-Kinross

9 The Knole Cartoon Gallery – Refurbishment increases understanding of its decoration history, by Gerry Alabone and Emma Slocombe

13 Printed Threads at Oxburgh – Recreating lost heirloom tapestries using digital technology, by Anna Forrest

16 Reviving Scotney’s ‘Best Staircase’, by Chloe Tapping

18 Borrowdale’s Bowder Stone – A valuable reminder of what we have lost and cannot regain, by Harvey Wilkinson

22 Remembering the Day Nursery at Rainham Hall, by Sally James

24 Circe’s Enchanted Ark at Mount Stewart – Exploring a social network through the library of Edith, wife of the 7th Marquess of Londonderry, by Dr Danielle Westerhof

27 Recreating Miss Chichester’s Museum at Arlington Court, by Paula Martin

The ABC Bulletin is produced quarterly as an online publication. If you would like to receive future issues, please email Jo.Hodgson@nationaltrust.org.uk
© National Trust 2017
Commissioning Editor: Claire Forbes
Consulting Editor: Christopher Rowell
Articles may not be reproduced or republished without permission
When the local auctioneers Bentley, Hobbs & Mytton of Worcester held their four-day sale at Croome Court, Worcestershire, beginning on 7 December 1948, no one in the county could have imagined the complete reversal of fortune that awaited the house some 70 years later. This particular sale was the culmination of seven others held during the same year at Sotheby's in London, which included French and English furniture, continental porcelain, Chinese ceramics, Old Master paintings and drawings, books, carpets, wallpapers, and other works of art. Many pieces had been commissioned or purchased by the builder of the house, George Coventry, 6th Earl of Coventry (1722-1809) from the mid-18th century onwards; many others were subsequently added by the 9th Earl (1838-1930), who crammed the house with objects, creating the comfortable and cluttered Edwardian interiors that can be seen in historical photographs (Fig 2).

In 1887 a trust was set up by the 9th Earl to ensure the continuity of Croome Court, the park and a collection of chattels as ‘heirlooms’, and in 1921 he extended it to include the wider Croome estate. Following his death in 1930 at the age of 92, the title was inherited by his grandson, George William Coventry, 10th Earl (1900-40). However, the events of the Second World War were to change Croome irrevocably: the 10th Earl was killed at Dunkirk in 1940, leaving his six-year-old son as heir, and in the same year Croome was requisitioned by the government. Part of the park was occupied by the RAF, which carried out secret research work into airborne radar technology, whilst the house itself was one of a number identified as a refuge for the British royal family in the event of an evacuation from London. For a short while it was also leased to the Dutch government for potential use by Queen Wilhelmina. It was handed back to the Croome Estate Trust in 1946; by that time, in the straitened circumstances after the war, it had become completely untenable as a private residence for the widowed Countess and her young family.

Important heirlooms were sold during this period by the Trustees. They had little choice: many of the objects were too large or too grand for the smaller house on the estate to which the family had moved. American museums came forward to purchase major pieces from Croome for display in their galleries of European art. The future of the house itself was precarious, for demolition was a distinct possibility; safeguarding highly significant pieces of 18th-century craftsmanship, even overseas, was undoubtedly then the Trustees’ best option.

In 1949, for example, the Trustees agreed to the sale of all the architectural elements of the Tapestry Room to the Metropolitan Museum, New York. The room was dismantled, crated up and shipped across the Atlantic. It was reconstructed in the museum in 1959 to create a complete ensemble with its original set of Gobelins tapestries, commissioned by the 6th Earl of Coventry in 1763. These had been sold much earlier by the 9th Earl in 1900 to repay family debts,
and were later acquired by the Metropolitan Museum, with the help of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, which had tenaciously bought the dispersed elements of the Croome Tapestry Room.1

It took the Croome Estate Trustees some time to find an alternative owner for the Court, but eventually in 1950 the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham acquired the building and 30 acres of land and established St. Joseph’s Convent School for Boys. It is surprising, perhaps, that some valuable and significant heirlooms remained in the house; these included a magnificent pair of pier glasses designed by Robert Adam, commissioned in 1765 for the Long Gallery, which was put into use as the school refectory. These were also later acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in 1959.

A group of family portraits was also retained in the Saloon (Fig 3), though their original carved and gilded 18th-century frames, commissioned by the 6th Earl from William Linnell in 1760, were sold to the Metropolitan Museum in 1960 (the pictures were re-set in plain frames). The magnificent set of library bookcases designed by Robert Adam for the 6th Earl and made by the cabinetmakers Vile & Cobb in 1763 also remained in the house until the 1970s; at that time, owing to their heavy use as stationery cupboards by the school, they were acquired by the V&A Museum.

The family portraits similarly remained in situ, even after the school was closed in 1979 and the Court was sold to the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (it became Chaitanya College in 1980). The Hare Krishna community of over 400 people proudly cared for and maintained Croome, adding their own layer to its history, most memorably with the striking and colourful decoration they applied to the 18th-century plasterwork in the Dining Room (Fig 4).

The Hare Krishna community lived at Croome until 1984. Thereafter the property passed through various ownerships and was put to a number of alternative and at times insensitive commercial uses. In 2004, when the opportunity arose to re-acquire the house, the Croome Estate Trustees established the Croome Heritage Trust which generously stepped in and purchased the property, reuniting it with the historic parkland which the National Trust had gradually begun to acquire and restore in the 1990s. The house is now leased to the National Trust for 999 years, and once again forms the core of the complete work of art envisaged by the 6th Earl of Coventry and his creative partners, Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown and Robert Adam.

With the purchase of the house came the opportunity to return the collection of objects still retained by the Croome Estate Trust, of which about a fifth of the original remains.2 For the past three years a project to reintroduce and present the objects, most of which were temporarily on public view at Kelmarsh Hall, Northamptonshire3, has been under way; in early 2017 the majority of the collection returned to the house.

Many of the most significant objects are those commissioned by the 6th Earl of Coventry from the mid-18th century onwards for both Croome Court and Coventry House in London. These include pieces designed by Robert Adam and made by some of the leading cabinetmakers and carvers of the period, notably Mayhew & Ince, Vile & Cobb and France & Bradburn. Surviving designs by Adam for some of the pieces, together with an extensive archive of bills submitted by the craftsmen, are to be found in both Sir John Soane’s Museum, London, and the Croome archive (now held by the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service).

The 6th Earl was a Francophile. He bought French furniture, tapestries, and important pieces of Sèvres porcelain, including a richly enamelled tea service or déjeuner ‘du roi’ of 1764 painted with pastors after François Boucher and possibly originally commissioned by Madame de Pompadour.4

The curatorial approach to the presentation of the collection at Croome is different to that at most other Trust properties, given that it is incomplete, thus precluding the re-creation of furnished interiors. The concept for its display and interpretation reflects the original creative partnership between George Coventry, 6th Earl and Robert Adam, together with the various craftsmen with whom they shaped Croome. By working with contemporary artists and designers, the presentation offers visitors a different perspective on the objects and different ways of appreciating them; solid historical information about the objects is still available for those seeking it. Indeed, the Croome collection has been extensively researched and published.5

In 2016, the ceramics conservator and artist Bouke de Vries worked with the project team and designer...
Gabby Underwood of Underwood & Co to create an imaginative display of the ceramics collection, including the highly significant pieces of Sèvres porcelain. The result is the Golden Box (Fig 1), a walk-in display case in which the objects and their reflections surround the visitors, providing a rich experience that captures their imagination. Those who are interested can learn more from the Sèvres expert Dame Rosalind Savill: in a series of film clips available on an electronic tablet, she shares her deep knowledge and brings the objects fully to life.

Will Datson, a Bristol-based designer and maker, was commissioned to produce a striking installation in the Entrance Hall about the 18th-century mahogany hall chairs, commissioned by the 6th Earl for this room and originally used by visitors to the house. To draw attention to the chairs, which in the normal course of things might go unnoticed, and to announce to today’s visitors arriving in the Hall that they can expect the unexpected as they explore the house, three of the original chairs are surrounded by Chair Play, a construction of metal and plaster chairs based on the design of the original.

Some objects are displayed in a more traditional and ‘museological’ manner to spotlight their importance and to share with visitors the extent to which the 6th Earl was a trend setter and taste maker. A pair of commodes, made by Mayhew & Ince in 1764 are among the first pieces of Neo-Classical furniture to be created in Britain, is showcased in one of Croome’s smaller rooms, the Lord’s Dressing Room (Fig 5). A short film narrated by the Furniture Conservation Adviser to the National Trust, John Hartley of Tankerdale Ltd., explains the innovative design of the pieces and the materials and craftsmanship involved in their manufacture.

Through Trust New Art, the National Trust’s contemporary arts programme generously funded by Arts Council England, the team at Croome is curating a project involving community groups from the Midlands working alongside the artist Chris Alton. Mentored by the artist Hew Locke, they will be using the collection to create interventions inspired by Robert Adam’s design work for the house.

Later in 2017 new installations within the accessible stores on the first and second floors of the house will offer visitors a glimpse of other aspects of the collection. These will include the remnants of the once magnificent bed designed by Robert Adam for the 6th Earl of Coventry shortly before his marriage to his second wife Barbara St John in 1764, and also a display of family pictures, including a charming group portrait by Charles Philips (c.1703-47), The 5th Earl of Coventry and his Family in the Park at Croome, c.1730s (Fig 6).

Further major projects are planned, including the re-display of the Saloon with its original family portraits, all which all survived the sales (Fig 3). In 2016 two of their original carved and gilded picture frames were purchased by the National Trust with the help of the Monument £5 Trust Fund and the Friends of Croome. Having been sold from the Metropolitan Museum’s collection, they had suffered an ignominious fate, being cut down in size and converted to mirror frames. A major conservation project will entail reconstruction to their original size and the careful re-carving of all the missing decoration. Once complete they will be used to frame the portraits for which they were originally designed. This project perhaps epitomises the story of the Croome collection: despite all the losses it has suffered, it has nevertheless survived to create an rich and inspiring resource for artists, designers and our visitors.

2. The collection comprises approximately 1,300 objects including English and French furniture, English and European ceramics, paintings, prints and drawings and other works of art
5. For the history of the family and of the house, see Catherine Gordon, The Coventrys of Croome, London, 2000; see also, for example, Geoffrey Beard, Decorators and Furniture Makers at Croome Court, Furniture History, vol. 29, 1993, pp. 88-113, and Jill Tovey, et al, Croome: The Place, The People, The Treasures Revealed, exh. cat. (Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum), Little Logaston, 2005, unpaginated
6. The bed is illustrated in Fig. 2. By this date it had lost its domed canopy in a fire
LIFTING THE LID AT THE VYNE
Interpreting the roof project and an opportunity for collaboration

Kathryn Allen-Kinross
Assistant Project Curator, NT

The Vyne, Hampshire, was once the seat of William, Lord Sandys (1470-1540), Lord Chamberlain to Henry VIII. In the 16th century John Leland described The Vyne as ‘one of the Principale Houses in all Hamptonshire’. After the death of Sandys, an inventory of 1541 showed some 57 furnished rooms, including one described as the King’s Chamber. In 163 the property was sold to Chaloner Chute, Speaker of the House of Commons. It was Chaloner who demolished two-thirds of this grand house, added the east wing and the west tower, and commissioned John Webb to design the columned portico. The roof’s structure and form has developed over the centuries and is now a patchwork of different eras. The great changes that the property has seen, along with 500 years of weather, has meant that water has found its way in – hence the roof project.

Undertaking major works while remaining open to visitors is a problem that many properties have faced, or will face. It presents challenges, such as managing visitors’ expectations, health and safety requirements, and changes to the visitor route. However, it also provides opportunities to do things differently. At The Vyne it was decided that a rooftop walkway and a new way of presenting the house would interest visitors both in the roof repairs and also in its history and significance (Fig 1).

The roof project
In the mid-1990s the quinquennial (QQ) report suggested that there would be a need to re-roof The Vyne in the near future. Subsequent QQs confirmed that the roof was gradually deteriorating and in 2009 it was recommended that a roof project should be carried out within 15 years. In the winter of 2013, when bad storms hit The Vyne, the roof’s condition worsened. The team had to rally round to stop the water ingress and to remove and protect precious works of art. In the weeks that followed, surveyors and structural engineers investigated the damage. Temporary props stabilised the building and an assessment of necessary repairs began (Fig 2). The storm had revealed the weaknesses in the roof. In 2015 trial repairs were carried out and many meetings were held to develop the project plans: the feasibility stage cost £150,000. By 2016 the budget had been approved and fundraising had begun with a target of £475,000. The main contractor was on site in September and the first scaffolding poles arrived in October, so that within the next four months The Vyne was gradually encased.

The project is scheduled to cost £5.4 million. Its objectives are: to plan, cost and implement the high-priority building works associated with the house and the roof, so as to prevent water ingress and protect this Grade I listed house and its contents from further damage (the set of Soho tapestries of the 1720s have had to be removed for conservation after getting wet); to investigate the feasibility of insulating the roof voids to meet the Trust’s energy Key Performance Indication (KPI) policy; to upgrade all roof fire compartmentation and protection to meet significantly higher standards; and to use this conservation work to provide a top-quality experience for visitors, to motivate our supporters, and to increase the overall Visitor Experience (VE) score – then 43% – over the two-year lifetime of the project.

As the tiles come off, previously unexplored areas of the roof are being made accessible; this will enable experts to better understand the construction and dates of the roof, as well as to address the damage caused by the water ingress. Investigations will also be made into the materials that make up The Vyne’s roof. 71,000 clay tiles and 1200 slates need to be replaced. Many parapet walls and 14 chimneys are being rebuilt, and rotten timbers are being repaired. New insulation is being installed alongside fire retardant panels; this will ensure that both fireproofing and energy efficiency will be improved. Each of the 71,000 roof tiles is hand-made, and each bears the handprint of its maker. Visitors have the opportunity to make their mark at The Vyne by tagging a message on one of the roof tiles.

Owing to the wide scope of the project, various collaborations are delivering expert research into a range of areas. The Oxford Rock Breakdown Laboratory...
(OXRBL), overseen by Professor Heather Viles, has been investigating the building materials (Fig 3). Historical research for interpretation in the house was undertaken in partnership with academics from Oxford University’s Story Interventions programme, facilitated by Dr Oliver Cox and The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH). Further collaborations with Southampton University and Bangor University also took place as the research progressed. Masterclass workshops of Mendelssohn’s Songs Without Words were performed on the Broadwood piano for visitors to enjoy, and guest lectures on The Vyne’s history were given.

Using technology
The National Trust’s archaeologist Gary Marshall explains: ‘Through extraordinary scientific and technological equipment we are finding out so much about The Vyne’s construction and we are sharing our discoveries with our visitors.’ Roof materials are recorded and dated by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) as they are removed, and OXRBL is using the latest technology to map decay and moisture movement through the walls so as to understand the deterioration in historic building materials. Moisture meters and Karsten tubes (which measure water penetration) together with more advanced methods such as 2D resistivity surveys allow moisture to be located within the walls without the need for physical intervention. From the public walkway visitors can see the work happening, and there are also occasions when visitors can meet specialists. There are monthly visits from OXRBL’s mobile laboratory when visitors have the chance to use a range of equipment and discover how it measures deterioration in historic building materials.

Dendrochronology analysis is being carried out by the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory, which has taken samples to establish the dates of the wood in different parts of the roof. Timbers in the Oak Gallery roof space were given a felling date of 1526, which tallies with our understanding of when Lord Sandys undertook his major building works. The analysis has also revealed that some 16th-century building materials were re-used in different parts of the house. These recycled materials may well have come from the lost Tudor courtyards that now sit buried under the north lawn. Other materials have been recycled, such as part of an 18th-century staircase that was used as a beam to support the Tudor roof. This may well have been put in by William Wiggett Chute, who carried out a major roof project in the 1840s. He remembered that: ‘It was impossible to reduce the size of the house, which could only be done by pulling down the Chapel at one end, or the Gallery at the other, or the staircase in the centre, which are all rather historical and could not with any regard to taste or good feeling be removed, and I was obliged therefore to undertake the repair of the whole as it stood.’2 His extensive roof repairs saved The Vyne from major deterioration.

How was the house affected?
The roof works had a direct effect on the presentation of the house, and the first floor had to be closed. Three rooms were selected as open stores for the duration of the project. The house team, with the Project Conservator, volunteers, and art handlers, had to work hard and fast to move, pack and protect over 3000 objects. This was a great opportunity to display parts of the collection in new and exciting ways – an example is the room full of lamps and mirrors (Fig 4).

Unfortunately, there are few surviving Tudor interiors and a lack of 16th-century items in the collection. The Chapel, which Horace Walpole described in 1755 as ‘the most heavenly chapel in all the world’3, is one surviving interior, and the Oak Gallery with its heraldic carvings is another. Unfortunately, the Oak Gallery is on the first floor, and so it was one of the rooms closed for the project (with protection in place to safeguard the contents). The Stone Gallery beneath belies its Tudor origins, but lends itself to hosting interpretation about the Tudor heyday of the house. This gave two good spaces to tell a Tudor story, although they were at opposite ends of the house. For the remainder of the rooms, William Wiggett Chute’s 19th-century roof project and its impact were to be explored.

William inherited the property unexpectedly in 1827 from Thomas Vere Chute who, with his brother William John, determined that as neither of them had children,
William Wiggett was the best person to inherit. He assumed the name of Chute, and following the death of William John’s widow Eliza in 1842, he moved to The Vyne. He realised its poor state: ‘The house had always been considered to be in substantial repair, but it became necessary soon to have it thoroughly examined, and unfortunately much of it, and especially the roof was found on examination to be in an unsafe condition.’ William had never lived at The Vyne, it was not his ancestors who had called it home, and yet he felt compelled to carry out his extensive repairs. William wrote that he ‘very soon found it necessary to have a brick kiln of my own, and by making my own bricks and tiles and drainage pipes I have saved a very large outlay.’ From the memoirs, letters and accounts of The Vyne held at the Hampshire Records Office a good understanding of the extent and cost of his project can be gained.

A Royal Progress

The VE workstream team worked with a number of academics from different universities to research and develop plans for the house presentation. It began with a visit to Oxford University (through the National Trust’s connections with TORCH) to meet Dr Cox and a group of Tudor historians including Dr Lucy Kaufman of Keble College and Dr Katherine Butler of the Tudor Partbooks Project, Faculty of Music.

Next, specialist academics were invited to attend a workshop held at The Vyne to explore its connection with Henry VIII, his royal progress, and his relationship with William Sandys. By standing in the relevant rooms and discussing Tudor royalty, politics, religion, society, music, and gift-giving, the team began to focus on the elements which could be interpreted and form part of the new presentation of the house.

Henry VIII’s visit in October 1535 was agreed to be the most significant because he came with Anne Boleyn and stayed at The Vyne for four days. At that time changes were sweeping through the country as Henry continued his break with Rome. Subsequent workshops allowed the team to look hard at the key areas, including political and religious changes and Anne and Henry’s marriage. The fact that William Sandys was absenting himself from court at crucial times, that he had 49 pomegranates (Catherine of Aragon’s symbol) carved in the Oak Gallery, and that he was one of the people who escorted Anne to the tower, provided an intriguing view of The Vyne’s owner.

A vast amount of information was generated, and the difficult task of deciding what to tell and how to tell it began. The Vyne’s 1541 inventory lists the types of furnishings that adorned the house, including a set of tapestries, *The History of Cupid*, which is represented in The Victoria & Albert Museum. Sound is another effective way of understanding the period; collaborations with Professor Jeanice Brooks of the University of Southampton, Director of Sound Heritage, highlighted a song from Anne Boleyn’s Songbook (inscribed ‘Mistres ABoleyne’) to complement the projections of moving Tudor tapestries in the Stone Gallery. The Chapel became the focal point, with ambitious plans to recreate a Tudor ‘Lady Mass’ in honour of the Virgin Mary. Working with Professor John Harper of Bangor University, a Lady Mass of 1535 was recorded as it might have been heard by Henry VIII on his visit. In the Chapel ten loudspeakers fill the space with the music and sounds of the Mass, while new altar cloths and the scent of frankincense complete the experience (Fig 5).

Audio-visual installations, new interpretation panels and displays were incorporated into the costs of the scaffolding walkway, lifts, and protected tunnels and entrances, which cost roughly 10% of the project budget.

Conclusion

The new presentation of the house is continuing to inform visitors and inspire them with the work of the Trust as the roofing works are carried out. Fundraising has achieved some remarkable results, both through a direct mailing campaign and also at the property (tag-a-tile, a coin drop and donations). The ambitious target of £475,000 was almost reached with six months still to go. It is encouraging that The Vyne’s year-to-date VE score is currently at 50% (up 7% on last year), and with further events to come this summer it should continue to improve. One visitor commented: ‘To see the condition of the roof was outstanding. Every pound that the Trust is spending on the repair is worth it, I myself would give my last coin in my purse. To be so near to 500 years of history was just an amazing experience. I hope to visit again before the scaffolding comes down.’

With acknowledgements to Dr Oliver Cox, Heritage Engagement Fellow, and Alice Purkiss, Knowledge Transfer Partnership Associate, Oxford University.

3. Horace Walpole, letter to Horace Mann, July 16, 1755
5. William Wiggett Chute, *Reminiscences 1872*
This year Knole, Kent celebrates the opening of its new conservation studio and refurbished historic rooms, part of the five-year programme 'Inspired by Knole', a £20m Heritage Lottery Fund-supported project to secure the future of the house and its collection. It was never going to be straightforward to address the challenge of Knole: the need to care for its rare and fragile contents displayed in damp, originally medieval interiors without environmental control or adequate electricity supply, all beneath six acres of leaking roof. Extensive building repairs and re-servicing, interior redecoration, and collections conservation, combined with the re-display and re-interpretation of the historic rooms, has enhanced the experience of visiting Knole. Throughout, our understanding of the history of the house and its sometimes unparalleled works of art has been enriched by the investigation and collaborative research that has accompanied the work.

Knole is valued for its atmosphere redolent of the past, created through centuries of occupation by successive members of the Sackville family. Robert Sackville-West, 7th Lord Sackville, the 14th generation of his family to live at the house, describes its character as one of 'faded magnificence … that, like the gilding on its paintings, smoulders rather than sparkles'. This has informed the Trust’s approach to the presentation of Knole. As the project has progressed, layers of the house have revealed evidence of long-buried eras. Nowhere has our understanding been more strikingly advanced than in the Cartoon Gallery (Fig 1).

Originally forming part of Archbishop Bourchier’s south lodgings, the Cartoon Gallery was remodelled by Thomas Sackville, 1st Earl of Dorset, between 1603 and 1608 when Paul Isaacson was commissioned to create a decorative scheme of elaborately carved and painted grotesque ornament (illus 7). The gallery takes its name from the full-size oil copies on canvas of Raphael’s six tapestry cartoons (Royal Collection Trust on loan to the

**Gerry Alabone,**
Senior Conservator (furniture and frames)

**Emma Slocombe,**
Project Curator

1. View of the Cartoon Gallery towards the east wall, following conservation and reinstatement with newly installed lighting, July 2017

2. *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, c.1639, after Raphael, oil on canvas, 101 x 130cm, Knole, Kent (NT 129946), in its original frame, July 2017
Victoria & Albert Museum) (Fig 2) illustrating scenes from the life of the Apostles. They were installed in 1701 by Charles Sackville, 6th Earl of Dorset who moved them from Copthall, Essex, the seat of his maternal grandfather, Lionel Cranfield, 1st Earl of Middlesex. A new decorative scheme was introduced by Lionel, 1st Duke of Dorset in the 1720s, when the 17th-century decoration was replaced on the north, east and part of the south walls with wall-hangings of floral crimson velvet; the gallery was furnished with sofas of matching upholstery, later mixed with earlier seat furniture from the palaces of Hampton Court, Windsor and Whitehall acquired by the 6th Earl as perquisites of his office as Lord Chamberlain at the court of William and Mary. Late 19th-century photographs record the room furnished with sculpture, carpets and chandeliers that were subsequently put into store or sold.

In 2015, the repair of the gallery began. The contents were packed and stored. The copies after Raphael’s cartoons were the among the last objects to be removed by John Hartley, National Trust Adviser on Furniture Conservation and Fine Art Services, in preparation for a two-year conservation treatment by Alan Bush and Jonathan Berry in their Bristol studio. As they were taken down from the walls, great rectangular cuts in the velvet wall hangings were revealed, indicating an earlier arrangement of the cartoons in the gallery (Fig 4). Also revealed was the former location (on the north wall of the gallery) of a State Canopy, first recorded in the gallery in 1799, and then in 1837 and 1864 where it was described as ‘a rich crimson satin damask Canopy or covering for a Throne’ comprising ‘a Centre richly embazoned in Gold and Silver and embossed Satin with the Royal Arms and Initials of George the 3rd. Three outside Draperies embazoned with numerous devices in Gold and Silver and deep Gold Fringe. This was the ambassadorial canopy of John Frederick Sackville, 3rd Duke of Dorset during his embassy in Paris from 1783 to 1789. It was displayed together with ‘a full length Portrait of His Majesty King George the 4th. in his regimentals’ by Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), and both had been removed by the time the gallery was first photographed around 1870. An annotation in the 1864 inventory shows that the canopy was used to create a bed in the private apartments (it is still there), while its figured satin hangings were used to repair and cover seat furniture throughout the state rooms. The portrait of George IV was re-hung in the Great Hall.

The cuts and old outlines where the frames had protected the velvet from light damage also demonstrated that three of the cartoons, *The Healing of the Lame Man at the Gate of the Temple*, *The Blinding of Elymas*, and *The Death of Ananias*, had originally possessed their own individual frames, before they were connected in the 1860s following the removal of the canopy. These original frames are a unique set in a rare English pattern based on the Venetian ‘Sansovino’ style, characterised by scrolled ornament with gilded highlights and symmetrical about each centre (Fig 2). They date from around 1639, when they were acquired by Lionel Cranfield and carved with his coat of arms. The frames were the first objects to enter the new conservation studio in November 2016, where they were treated by Gerry Alabone, Claudia Davies and Liisa Vesa. Examination during treatment confirmed the survival of their original black oil-painted and gilded scheme. This discovery was assisted by research carried out between 2014 and 2015 by
Kirsten Walsh, who undertook cross-section analysis of the frames while she was a conservation student at City & Guilds of London Art School. Five of the six frames are similarly carved and decorated. However, the frame of the sixth, *Christ’s Charge to Peter*, is significantly unlike the others with its thin carving and different ornament, perhaps indicating that it was made by a different workshop or at a slightly different date. During conservation, the solubility of its black paint was found to be unlike that of the other frames, requiring different treatment to remove the later overpainting (this, believed to be ‘boot blacking’, had been applied to all six frames). The different carving and decorative surface of this one frame supports the opinion formed during the treatment that all were decorated black and gold originally, and this is not contradicted by the analysis. Under specialist supervision, old losses to the decorative surfaces were re-painted by five volunteers.

After treatment, the cartoons have been rehung as they have been since 1870, when three paintings were connected and their four adjoining vertical frame members were thinned to just gilded sight edges only 3 cm wide. However, the present system enables the paintings to be hung independently from one another, using the existing brackets and hooks but still appearing to be framed as one. Examination of the crimson velvet wall-hangings on the east end wall of the gallery by the textile conservator Zenzie Tinker showed that they were in an exceptionally fragile condition, having been repaired with over 50 patches that were starting to detach. The decision was made to remove the velvet so as to clean and stabilise it. This also made it possible to investigate any indications of the earlier decoration of the room that might have survived beneath. In 1817, John Bridgman recorded that the set of portraits of notable figures of the 16th century hanging in the Brown Gallery at Knole (Fig 3) had been removed from the Cartoon Gallery in the early 18th century.4 Recent doctoral research by Edward Town and Catherine Daunt supported this assertion; perhaps beneath the velvet hangings there would be evidence of the frieze for the portraits created for the 1st Earl. It was disappointing that only a narrow black-painted strip with gilded strap work decoration was found beneath the east wall cornice. However, removal of the velvet over the door on the adjacent north wall revealed two black frames with gilded strap work at the centres and corners, with impression marks in the remaining velvet hangings indicating that the portraits extended along the entire length of the north wall.

This discovery was significant; additional funding and time was allocated within the project to enable examination, surveying and recording. Robin Mills, Building Surveyor and Martha Infray, Project Conservator, worked with Zenzie Tinker to design a scaffolding and roller system that would allow the fragile velvet wall hanging to be unrolled to the base of the frames for a short time before the velvet was re-instated and conserved. As the velvet was detached along the top of the north wall, black and gold spaces for 25 portraits were revealed (Fig 5), forming a frieze with a small architrave below. Trapped behind nails on the surface of the frames comprising the frieze were surviving fibres of ‘the Hangings of blew printed Stuff’ listed in the 1706 inventory. These were used to cover the walls in preparation for the hanging of the cartoons in 1701, when the set of portraits was removed from its frieze together with the ‘Tenn peices of Tapestry Hanningings’ [sic] that presumably hung below and which were listed in the gallery in 1682.

Examination of the portraits by Gerry Alabone established that their original flat-backed frames, made without a rebate to contain the paintings, had been nailed to the panels from the back, and that many of these were later adjusted, seemingly to re-join splits in their panels caused by contraction. This adjustment must have been done some time after their removal from the wall in 1701. He realised that the filled nail holes around the edges of the framed panels could correspond to the nails and holes in the inner edges of the 25 black and gold spaces on the north wall. Assisted by studio conservator Mark Searle and Allison Jackson (the 2016 Nigel Seeley Fellow), tracings were made of
the nail pattern around the edges of the frames of the 38 paintings, and these were then offered up to match those in the spaces in the north wall. The flat backs of the frames slightly overlapped the spaces in the wall, thus allowing their original fixing with nails. Tracings were subsequently matched to the east wall just before the Gallery’s reinstatement. There are slight differences in the widths of the paintings on each side of the fireplace. All these matches were made only on the evidence of the nail holes; however, the order in which the pictures were originally hung suggested by this evidence is considered in new research by Catherine Daunt to be mostly entirely plausible – the lost Jacobean picture hang could perhaps be recreated.5

On the north wall, the portraits were all of English nobility, grouped as dukes, earls, barons and knights (Fig 6). On the east wall, the portraits were all of English clergy, grouped as archbishops and bishops. It is interesting that Thomas Sackville positioned his own portrait directly opposite the door to the King’s Room, which ensured that should James I spend the night at Knole, it would be Sackville’s face that he would see on leaving his room.

The discovery of the decorative frieze for the portraits and the subsequent partial reconstruction of Thomas Sackville’s lost 1608 picture hang provides a window on the past unimaginable at the beginning of the ‘Inspired by Knole’ project. Did the project team consider the permanent return of the portraits to the Cartoon Gallery as part of its reinstatement in 2017? The disruption to the fragile historical layers in the Cartoon Gallery would have been considerable, and the presentation of the Brown Gallery dramatically different – and the impact on the delivery of the ‘Inspired by Knole’ project would have been huge. The portrait panels are now also markedly distorted, and could not sit comfortably within their former frieze. Additionally, since leaving the Cartoon Gallery, their oval spandrels have been gilded and ornamented over their original colour (blue smalt in some cases) and their now characteristic carved ribbons added in the late 18th century. Instead they will be treated in the Knole Conservation Studio and returned to the Brown Gallery in 2018. A team from Museum of London Archaeology undertook a selective 3D total station survey (electro-optical scanning which provides accurate measurements) to record the spaces for the portraits and create 2D plans and elevations. This digital data will be used as the foundation for an interpretative recreation of the 1603-08 scheme. Work will be done to reveal and record what remains of the frieze on the north wall and art historical analysis will be made of the evidence for the location of the remaining portraits – all this should be completed in winter 2017. In tandem, research into the painted grotesque panels and the portrait panels is continuing, carried out by students from the Courtauld Institute. Examination of the Cartoon Gallery’s 1608 decorative scheme will conclude in December 2017 with a multi-disciplinary symposium to examine the significance of the findings at Knole.

2. Christopher Rowell and Wolf Burchard, ‘From Paris to Knole: The Third Duke of Dorset and the First Earl Whitworth as Diplomatic Patrons and Collectors’, National Trust Historic Houses and Collections Annual 2016, published in association with Apollo, pp. 42-52; for the 3rd Duke’s canopy, see pp. 44-45 and as it is now, converted into a four-post bed, fig. 3. The duke’s ambassadorial chair of state and flanking stools that were placed beneath the canopy are illustrated in fig. 4
3. For a survey of the frames at Knole, see Jacob Simon, http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/the-art-of-the-picture-frame/guides-knole
7. The Cartoon Gallery
In 1830 Sir Henry Bedingfeld, 6th Baronet (1800–62), and his wife, Margaret Paston, embarked on an ambitious project to restore the Bedingfelds’ 15th-century moated manor house, Oxburgh in Norfolk. The first member of the family to live there for nearly 20 years, Sir Henry affectionately described it in letters to his brother as ‘The Ruin’. He spent the next 30 years rejuvenating the house and gardens, employing the architect J C Buckler to re-Gothicise the exterior and reconfigure the interiors. Sir Henry – and after him his son, also Sir Henry, 7th Bt. (1830–1902) – redecorated and re-furnished Oxburgh’s interiors in the antiquarian style in order to evoke the spirit of Tudor Oxburgh and emphasise its antiquity. The results are well recorded in watercolours, historical photographs, and written accounts, and the decorative schemes survive in many of the rooms. Heavily carved woodwork, stained glass, embossed leather wall-hangings, vibrant Pugin-style wallpapers, and ancient tapestries were put together thoughtfully to create a series of ‘romantic’ interiors.

This antiquarian approach to design and furnishing was particularly strong in the grand King’s Room, located on the first floor of Oxburgh’s magnificent gatehouse. The name of this room commemorates a visit to Oxburgh made by Henry VII and Queen Elizabeth of York in the 1490s, although evidence from 16th-century inventories suggests that the room in which the King stayed would have been elsewhere in the house, nearer to Oxburgh’s Great Hall (demolished by the 4th Baronet in 1775). There is ample evidence for the appearance of the interior of the King’s Room in the 19th century, including a description in the journal *Norfolk Archaeology* by the Reverend G H McGill in 1855:

‘Over the gateway is the King’s Room which will be found, next to the general external view of the hall, the part most interesting to the historian and antiquary. Its size is about 33 feet long by 20 feet broad. The walls are covered with beautifully wrought tapestry of the time of Henry VII. The figures in the tapestry are particularly striking and though the subjects are not capable of exact ascertainment yet they well deserve careful examination. In one compartment the figures appear to be those of a king and an ecclesiastic, the latter in the act of blessing the former. The chief figure on the North side of the room is that of a lady surrounded by a group of persons. There is not any tradition in the family as to the meaning of these representations, though the tapestry itself and the bed which is in the same room are heirlooms and descend with the hall.’

These heirloom tapestries, which were so important to the character of the King’s Room, are the focus of this article. It is not known whether they were in the King’s Room before the 6th and 7th Baronets’ works, or if they were formerly elsewhere in the house. Certainly, 16th-century inventories of the house refer to numerous tapestry hangings in rooms that were later swept away. Perhaps these tapestries were originally chosen as symbols of the Bedingfelds’ relationship with the monarchy and the court.

The 6th Baronet’s approach to furnishing the room is depicted in a watercolour of c.1850 by his daughter, Matilda Bedingfeld (Fig 1). To the right of the bed it is just possible to make out the outlines of figures on the walls, which may be a representation of a tapestry. The bed is shown dressed with the celebrated Marian

---

1. Matilda Bedingfeld: The King’s Room, watercolour on paper, c.1850
2. The King’s Room, *Country Life*, April 1903
Hangings, worked by Mary, Queen of Scots and Bess of Hardwick between 1569 and 1584 (now on loan to Oxburgh from the Victoria & Albert Museum and displayed separately). The first clear visual record of some of the tapestries is a photograph published in Country Life in 1903 (Fig 2). By this time panelling had been installed on the lower half of the east and west walls, but the tapestries remain in situ and the figure of a king beneath a canopy can be seen clearly. This photograph confirmed that the tapestries described by G H McGill were Flemish, dating from the early 16th century, and that on the south wall and the east end of the north wall there were late 16th-century game park or verdure tapestries (which are not discussed further here).

In the 1920s there were sporadic sales of groups of items from Oxburgh, including the King’s Room tapestries – these, according to the family, went to Buenos Aires. These sales, coupled with the auction of the greater part of the collection in 1951, had a significant impact on the integrity of many of Oxburgh’s interiors. The King’s Room in particular was denuded of its contents, and it has been a long-held aspiration to address its somewhat bald appearance and to investigate a possible means of recreating the way it looked in the 19th century. The current project has gone some way towards achieving this.

The level of information about the lost tapestries increased exponentially four years ago when a collection of old photographs of Oxburgh came to light. This included close-up images of the tapestries never seen before, which made the notion of recreating them in some way significantly more plausible. The photographs showed the hangings on the entire west wall (Fig 3) and three quarters of the east wall, and provided enough information for a concerted research phase to begin.

The photographs showed many scenes of courtly life, including the ecclesiastics and kings mentioned by McGill. Each wall was hung with several individual sections of different tapestries stitched together along vertical and horizontal seams; the east wall had at least three sections, and the west wall six. Figures were cut in half or truncated, the state of preservation of adjacent sections was often markedly different, and the hangings were rolled or folded somewhat awkwardly where they butted up against the panelling. Physical evidence surviving in the room shows that the tapestries were nailed straight on to the brick walls.

In an extraordinary episode, further detailed evidence literally fluttered to the floor from a book picked at random from the shelves of the Library by the former house manager, Edward Bartlett. Between the pages were detailed pencil sketches of sections of the King’s Room tapestries made by someone who had seen them before they were folded and stitched (Fig 4).

Given the family tradition that the tapestries had gone to South America, the detailed photographs and pencil sketches were sent to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and to the Museo Nacional de Arte Decorativo in Buenos Aires. There was no trace of the Oxburgh tapestries in the Buenos Aires museum’s records, and, as yet, no evidence for their retention in a private collection in Argentina. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art the photographs and sketches were examined by Dr Elizabeth Cleland, Associate Curator of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts. Using the records kept by the museum and by the Getty Research Institute, Dr Cleland was able to provide significant information.

The nine tapestry sections visible in the detailed photographs were taken from seven tapestries, of which five could be identified. Two of them – one on the east wall, one on the west – had been bought by the philanthropist and collector of Gothic and Renaissance art Leon Schinasi (1880-1930), from whom they were acquired in 1926 by the New York-based specialist

![Image 2](https://example.com/image2)

![Image 3](https://example.com/image3)

![Image 4](https://example.com/image4)

![Image 5](https://example.com/image5)
dealers W.P. French & Co. The tapestry formerly at the left side of the east wall was described by French & Co as *King with Courtiers* (French & Co stock number 10466), but is identified by Dr Cleland as *Esther approaching the throne of Ahasuerus*. It was purchased in January 1927 by the actor and prolific collector David Warfield (1866-1951). The other, which was in the centre of the west wall, was described by French & Co as *People gathered in a court or courtyard* (stock number 10465) and was purchased by the collector of paintings and tapestries Ernst Rosenfeld in April 1927. It has not yet been possible to trace what happened to these tapestries after they entered these collections. Detailed photographs of both tapestries were taken when they were exhibited in French & Co’s showrooms, and they show the extent to which the tapestries had been folded to fit the space on Oxburgh’s walls.

Dr Cleland found that a third section of the King’s Room tapestries – from the right side of the west wall, showing a female figure beneath a canopy – had made its way to Detroit, where it entered the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts as *The Toilet of Psyche*. In 1947 the Institute sold it to French & Co after restoring it and adding a new border. It remained with French & Co until 1966 (stock number 45154), when it was bought by the collector Robert Guard. There is no information about it after this. Dr Cleland has suggested that instead of the Toilet of Psyche this tapestry may depict *Esther preparing herself before going to banquet with Ahasuerus*, making it the second piece of King’s Room tapestry to illustrate the story of Esther, which was an extremely popular subject for tapestry in the late 16th century. A fourth section, formerly on the east wall and showing the king who stands out prominently in the 1903 *Country Life* photograph, was identified from the Getty archives as *King presented with a portrait of his fiancée*, which had passed to the dealers Jacques Seligmann & Co. The fifth identifiable section was last seen exhibited by the dealer Bernard Blondeel of Antwerp at the Maastricht Art Fair in 1993, but there is no further information on it. Similar versions of this scene are recorded in the Getty archives and are known as *Queen Enacting a Decree*.

Despite having gathered so much more information about the tapestries and their destinations after their sale from Oxburgh there was no immediate prospect of finding them, and the archive images were of insufficient quality to reproduce to a large scale. It would be impossible to find a set of tapestries that would fit the spaces in the King’s Room perfectly, and out of the question to sew together different tapestries to create the same effect as the original scheme. It was decided to pursue the idea of evoking the former appearance of the room by digitally stitching together high-resolution images of other similar tapestries and printing them on sufficiently weighty linen. This process was pioneered by the specialist company Zardi & Zardi, Painswick, who had already successfully supplied Oxburgh with a digitally printed *verdure* tapestry for the south wall of the King’s Room in 2016 to represent the garden park. The collections of many national and international museums were searched before approaches were made to the Royal Collection, the Victoria & Albert Museum, and Hever Castle. Each had within their collections South Netherlandish tapestries of the right date and sufficiently similar style to the lost Oxburgh tapestries. From the Royal Collection came the *Romance tapestry* (RCIN 1267), from the Victoria & Albert Museum *Esther approaching Ahasuerus* (V&A 338-1866) and *Esther hearing of Haman’s plot* (V&A 5669-1859), and from Hever Castle their *Marriage* tapestry. With the permission of the respective curators, high resolution images of these tapestries were obtained and sections with similarities to Oxburgh’s tapestries were identified and extracted. These were then arranged in a way which conformed as far as possible to the disposition of figures shown in the close-up images of Oxburgh’s tapestries. The image manipulation, colour correction and scaling were carried out by the photographer Robert Thrift, who was able to create a composite image for each wall to send to Zardi & Zardi. As the wall dimensions are approximately 2m high and 5.8m wide, the file sizes were vast, and the resolution of the images had to be immensely high so as to achieve the required level of detail to create a convincing and fitting replica tapestry. Zardi & Zardi printed the images on bespoke Scottish linen using a large format digital printer and pigment inks at approximately 150dpi (dots per inch). The seams between each section were hand sewn, and the hangings were lined and fire-proofed. Wooden battens were attached to the top of each wall, to which the tapestries were fixed using velcro.

The printed tapestries have added a warmth and richness to the King’s Room that has been lacking for almost 100 years (*Figs 5 and 6*). Architectural paint research has been carried out, and the walls have been returned to the light stone colour they were in the 19th century. Further digital prints for the north wall are planned for later this year to complete the project. Interpretation and information given by volunteers ensures that visitors are aware of the background to the tapestries, and of the remarkable possibilities that technology offers to the presentation of historic interiors.

1. McGill, G H, Norfolk Archaeology, Volume IV, 1855, p.279

---

*6. The King’s Room, east wall: the recreated tapestry, 2017*
This year is an important anniversary for Scotney Castle, Kent: it is ten years since the opening of the Victorian house to visitors. The property was bequeathed to the National Trust by Christopher Hussey in 1970. His widow, Betty, continued to live in the house until her death in 2006, and enjoyed seeing visitors experiencing the picturesque garden and the Old Castle during this time.

When describing the decorative scheme at Scotney, Betty Hussey is quoted as saying: 'I rather like a slight shabbiness here and there!' Owing to historical water ingress from the flat roof above, as well as extensive light damage from the large window on the half landing, the main staircase had gone beyond having a slightly shabby feel to looking rather forlorn. The wallpaper had suffered extensive staining and fading.

Repairs were made to the flat roof and guttering over the staircase, but an attempt at conserving the original wallpaper was unsuccessful, and so it was decided to redecorate this area of the house. The team raised funds by holding a raffle at the property, and a large and generous donation of £15,000 came from the John Cornforth Memorial Fund (John Cornforth, the architectural historian, was a great personal friend of Christopher and Betty Hussey, and had an extensive knowledge of Scotney Castle).

There are rolls of the original wallpaper in the Scotney attics; these show that the rich golds of the original design had faded to a pale yellow, a startling difference. David Style, a friend of the couple, discovered the paper; Betty Hussey described it as "a rather grand, bold patterned wallpaper in two grades of gold, the same period of the house, which looks well on the staircase". David was a highly regarded decorator, antique dealer and collector who lived near Maidstone in Wateringbury House. The fabrics and wallpapers of Scotney Castle offer some of our greatest challenges to conservation, as the house has so many large windows.

The project team worked with James Finlay to decide on a colour scheme somewhere in the middle between rich gold and faded yellow. Once this colour was agreed Atelier d’Offard of Tours, France, specialists in wallpaper production by historical methods, produced 22 rolls of block-printed rose damask wallpaper.

A large sample of the original wallpaper was carefully removed and kept in store, while the rest of the wallpaper was removed. Samples were offered as souvenirs for visitors to keep – many were happy to leave a donation. The redecoration project was carried out by George Knibb & Son of Aylesbury, and was undertaken during the winter of 2016-17 when the house was open and visitors could see the redecoration taking place.
Furthermore, what was discovered under the wallpaper – paint dating from the original decoration of the Victorian house (Fig 2) – prompted some research in Scotney’s archives. It is known from Betty Hussey’s recollections of moving into the house in 1952 that ‘the staircase walls were putty colour, hung with numerous small water colours, blue china, and various strange weapons, while on the half landing one was greeted by a rampant, distinctly disintegrating boa constrictor’!

In the diaries of Edward Windsor Hussey (1855-1952), some entries were found from 1882 and 1883 which helped to shed more light on this new discovery. In the September of that year he writes of ‘looking over some of the china in the store room to see about putting it up on the stairs.’ In October he refers to putting plates ‘on the new shelves on the best staircase,’ and the following year he talks of helping to hang ‘some of mama’s large watercolours on the staircase.’ This information not only gives likely dates for the decorative scheme that Betty refers to, but also informs us that the Husseys referred to these stairs as ‘the best staircase’.

The redecoration project for the ‘best staircase’ at Scotney Castle has given this part of the house a wonderful facelift. The beautiful golden tones of the new wallpaper show how Betty and Christopher Hussey chose a colour scheme which complements the pictures that were hung here.

The house team have revised the lighting plan for the staircase and are installing new sun blinds as part of the preventative conservation measures so as to ensure the longevity of the paper. The project was not only a successful way of interesting visitors in the Trust’s conservation work but also gave a fascinating insight into the former decorative schemes in the house.

Sources:
The diaries of Edward Windsor Hussey, held in the Centre for Kentish Studies, County Hall, Maidstone
A House Rejuvenated, Betty Hussey, held in the Scotney Castle Archives

‘A rather grand, bold patterned wallpaper in two grades of gold, the same period of the house, which looks well on the staircase’  Betty Hussey

Striking sculptures at Cliveden
Internationally acclaimed conceptual artist Bernar Venet is bringing a new perspective to the gardens at Cliveden with an exciting outdoor art exhibition. Ten large-scale sculptures, some up to 9 metres high, are placed around the estate, challenging the visitor to re-think the space which has often been home to new and striking art.

Bernar Venet (b.1941), considered by many to be the world’s greatest living French sculptor, rose to prominence in the late 1960s through the avant-garde art scene in New York. He moved to the city in 1966 and quickly became instrumental in developing a radical new proposition involving the use of mathematics and scientific language.

The exhibition in the grounds at Cliveden, Taplow, Maidenhead, runs until mid-October.

The De Morgans at Wightwick
An exhibition of William De Morgan’s work is running throughout the summer in the newly created dedicated exhibition space in the Old Malthouse at Wightwick. The Trust has been working in partnership with the De Morgan Foundation to bring a new exhibition from its collection of art and ceramics to Wightwick.

William and Evelyn De Morgan were one of the most energetic and creative couples of the late 19th and early 20th century. The new exhibition will explore what motivated them as artists, look at their creative process, and showcase how they reacted to the socio-political changes of their era as they strived for a better, more beautiful world.
In September Wordsworth House in Cockermouth will present an exhibition dedicated to a curious object – the Bowder Stone, Borrowdale, Cumbria, a famous rock that was once an essential part of a Lake District itinerary, which has belonged to the National Trust since 1910. The exhibition brings together many of the defining 18th- and 19th-century images of the Stone, including work by Joseph Wright of Derby, George Beaumont, and John Atkinson Grimshaw, and includes a specially commissioned animation by Gemma Burditt. The exhibition will also include work by students of Central Saint Martins School of Architecture, and photography by Henry Iddon.

The Bowder Stone, an object of celebrity

In 1749, the natural philosopher and surveyor George Smith travelled south to the rarely visited valley of Borrowdale.1 Cresting a rise on open ground he found something startling:

'We had now reached the Bowders stone of Borrowdale, which is much the largest stone in England, being at least equal in size to a first rate man of war; it lies close by the road side, on the right hand, and seems to have been a fragment detached from the impending precipice above, by lightening [sic] or some other accident.'

The rock that Smith encountered would become the most famous single object in the Lake District, not just because of its size, but because it stood in a place that was central to a growing debate about our relationship to landscape.

The story of the Bowder Stone could also be seen as a microcosm of the changes that have come to the whole of the Lake District – from an obscure mountainous region of Cumberland and Westmorland, with only general principles to define it, it has become a famous landscape made up of a web of specific cultural loci and associations. The Stone, however, is unusual in the sense that it has passed the point of fame, and has begun to return to obscurity. Similarly, the once open landscape that allowed the stone to announce itself to travellers from a great distance – adding to the sense of arrival and trepidation at the ‘Jaws of Borrowdale’ – has grown over, burying the Stone beneath a canopy of trees (Fig 2). As the Lake District has just gained UNESCO World Heritage Site status, it is perhaps worth re-visiting this strange object whose discovery coincided with the appropriation of the Lake District for scenic value. It is also worth considering how objects like the Bowder Stone could be conserved and understood.

The transition from the general to the specific, the un-defined to the categorised, the un-mapped to the mapped, is one that the Lake District has made in tandem with the modern human subject. Through its role in what we now call Romanticism, the Lake District has played a formative part in the development of the ‘account of the self’, in German the Bildungsgeschichte, the building of personal identity though experience.3 Through the experience of nature, this is arguably an outstanding significance of the Lake District. But the account of the cultural object can also be traced in this contested landscape, in its transition from a self-contained anonymity to a recently designated World Heritage Site. The Bowder Stone, as an early piece of this wider objectification, has often challenged visitors to question its status as a ‘thing’ or an object of significance.

William Gilpin (1724-1804), author of famous essays on Picturesque beauty,4 arrived at the Stone on his Lakes tour of 1772:

‘In the middle of one of the recesses of the valley lies an enormous stone; which is called in this country the Bother-stone. Massy rocks of immense size, rent from..."
towards its status as a ‘thing’, or an object of significance. This progress might have been more gradual had it not been for an abrupt objectification, its re-birth as a tourist destination. While the early visits to the Stone coincided with the opening up of the Lakes to a relatively small élite interested in antiquarianism and the picturesque, the early 19th century brought modern tourism and an intense scrutiny of place. It has been suggested that in the years between 1750 and 1850 no single landscape in Britain, or the world, underwent the literary and visual deconstruction that Derwentwater was subjected to.\textsuperscript{7}

The Lakes, Wordsworth wrote, were ‘without the signs of ancient grandeur\textsuperscript{6}: the ruined monasteries, the castles and seats of the feudal gentry, the symbols of long pedigree in the landscape. And, while noble families existed, their seats were largely arrayed around the perimeter of the mountains, in the flatter lands. At Keswick there was one such family, but James Radclyffe, 3rd Earl of Derwentwater, was executed following the uprising of 1715, his land confiscated, and his seat on Lord’s Island pulled down. Further into the massif, the feudal controls common to much of the rest of England fragmented into a network of ‘statesmen’ farmers with long-established customary rights and complex patterns of common grazing, quarrying, mining and coppicing.

The Lake District was, therefore, as Wordsworth understood, significant for its lack of the visual signs of feudal aristocracy. A new social class rooted in industrial capitalism found beauty here, but also a vacuum, an unclaimed territory in which to negotiate a place in a rural scene where they had hitherto had no real place or home. The Lake District started to be configured as a sub-urban space of merchants’ villas and their parks and gardens. Perhaps the most extreme and defining example of these villa builders was Joseph Pocklington (1736-1817), who became the owner of the Bowder Stone in 1798.

Pocklington was a banker’s son who had an extraordinary career as a self-appointed cultural ‘squire’ in the Vale of Derwentwater. His controversial reign began with his purchase of what is now called Derwent Island and the erection of a prominent villa, surrounded by a selection of mock buildings including a chapel and a coastal battery, along the lines of the 5th Baron Byron’s estate, Newstead Abbey. It was Pocklington to whom Wordsworth referred in his Guide to the Lakes (1810):

‘The Lakes had now become celebrated; visitors flocked hither from all parts of England; the fancies of some were smitten so deeply, that they became settlers; and the Islands of Derwentwater and Winandermere as they offered the strongest temptation, were the first places seized upon and were instantly defaced by the intrusion.’\textsuperscript{9}

Pocklington’s Island\textsuperscript{10}, as it was re-named, near the island of the executed Earl of Derwentwater, was the first of his interventions in the Vale. He became the promoter of an annual regatta, complete with mock assaults on his battery, and involved himself in the development of Keswick’s fledgling museum. By the time of his acquisition of the Bowder Stone he
had returned to the mainland, building another villa nearby and re-modelling his own waterfalls, a miniature version of the nearby Falls of Lodore. At the site of the Bowder Stone, Pocklington followed the methodology he had used on his island. He levelled the site, adding a mock hermitage, an ‘ugly house’ for a keeper, a Druids’ monolith and an old lady who could be paid to improve your luck by shaking your hand through a perilous hollow under the stone’s 1200-tonne bulk. The coup de grace was the ladder placed in the position where it has remained ever since, lying diagonally across the face of the stone, and visually propping it against the ground.

Considering the passage of time and neglect over 200 years, Pocklington’s material interventions have remained to an extraordinary degree. The ladder and the old lady were replaced at intervals as they wore out, and a sense of timeless continuity established itself at a place that became an essential part of a Lake District itinerary – and indeed something of a mascot for the Lake District itself.

**One of the spectacles of the country**

This latest bid for World Heritage Site status for the Lakes was not the first: the previous two failed. This was not because of a lack of merit, but because there was at that time no category with to inscribe places which were not discrete, easily-defined monuments. Instead, UNESCO revived the idea, first coined in the 1930s, of ‘Cultural Landscape’. This could allow places like the Lakes to be better conserved as the ‘combined works of nature and man’, a multi-layered and evolving compound of farming practice, Romantic and Picturesque discovery, and – in the case of the Lakes – a history of early conservation movements.

Recent discussions about whether or not to return the site of the Bowder Stone to its Victorian openness, thus restoring its commanding position in the valley, have raised the question of the status of the object in this ‘cultural landscape’, and what the Stone’s value to us actually is. As a natural rock, an accidental object in the landscape, it perhaps needs no attention. As a designed object, it appears to have little merit as a ‘thing’ cruelly objectified for the amazement of 19th-century tourists. Its significance, therefore, may be somewhere in the relationship between viewer and object at certain times, and in particular political, social and class contexts; what Peter Bürger calls ‘mode of reception’ when applied to works of art or cultural objects. Although the rock itself remains static, understanding this changing ‘mode of reception’ helps us to consider whether or not the Stone and its setting are ‘relic’; their cultural development frozen in time, with only associative, referential values remaining. The ‘appearance’ of the Stone is therefore not fixed, but fugitive and historically located, and its value may now only be in the collective sum of the imaginative responses to it.

To Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), the Gothic novelist, the appearance of the Bowder Stone is partly an acoustic one, where the sound of cataracts mingles with the shouts of distant children – but this is combined with the apocalyptic image of a house cast onto its roof. Her account of 1794 is perhaps the last of the rock in its natural state:

‘Hence we pursued the pass for a mile, over a frightful road, that climbs among the crags of a precipice above the river, having frequently glimpses into glens and chasms, where all passage seemed to be obstructed by the fallen shivers of rock, and at length we reached the gigantic stone of Bowther, that appears to have been pitched into the ground from the summit of a neighbouring fell, and is shaped, like the roof of a house reversed. This is one of the spectacles of the country. Its size makes it impossible to have been ever moved by human means; and, if it fell from the nearest of the rocks, it must have rolled upon the ground much further than can readily be conceived of the motion of such a mass … The stillness around us was only feebly broken by the remote sounds of many unseen cataracts, and sometimes by the voices of mountaineer children, shouting afar off, and pleasing themselves with rousing the echoes of the rocks.’

To Radcliffe, writing this now little-known account of the Borrowdale valley, the idea of pre-history or geological time starts to encroach into a world that has up till then assumed that people always had been present, and always would be. Radcliffe’s account is one of a viewer who is stepping out of an age of rationalism and into one of uncertainty – and Romanticism.

Similarly, Wordsworth’s lines from *The Excursion* (1814) offer us an insight into the reception of a mid-19th-century audience longing to connect to the consoling but fading power of Romanticism in a rapidly changing industrial world – a world that had not yet produced another transforming critique to take its place. Wordsworth’s defining account is in fact of a different rock in another valley, almost universally mis-applied to the Bowder Stone by guidebooks producing Wordsworth-focused tours during the 19th century:

Upon a semicirque of turf clad ground,
The hidden nook discovered to our view.
This collision between a famous poem and an already famous rock tells us more about its reception than if this passage was addressed to the correct subject. It confusingly references earlier comparisons of the Bowder Stone, such as the first by George Smith, to a beached ship. But removed from its framing text, this powerful human metaphor could apply to encounters with many isolated boulders in other lonely valleys. To the top hat-wearing Victorian tourists standing proudly on the summit of the Stone (Fig 7), it is perhaps the universality of the text combined with the specificity of the place, and its connection to Wordsworth, that gives this location its power – even if the poem describes the wrong rock. Photography, when it arrived at the Bowder Stone in the 1860s, compounds the Stone’s status as a little mountain, but seems to combine a delight in the trappings of tourism with a new set of significances for unique things in a world of mass production. Similarly, there is also a sense of an object intended for the Great Exhibition that is too large to carry to the Crystal Palace. It was not necessary to prove the claim for the Stone made in an advertising flyer of 1860 that it was ‘the Biggest Rock in the World’.

World-withdrawal and world-decay

How then should we regard the Bowder Stone? Does it have significance as an object of nature or culture, or indeed, as a work of art or design? The debatable distinction between the natural and unnatural, or nature and culture, is important for our understanding of the Lake District. This is especially so for the National Trust, whose policy is for the care of the natural environment, and is part of a continuing debate in the Lakes about whose policy is for the care of the natural environment, water systems, and soils. Recently, there has also been some worry that the Lake District will become a museum. But perhaps it is not the material presence of the Lake District that should concern us in this respect. As Heidegger points out, and the Stone reminds us, cultural objects in history are subject to both ‘world-withdrawal’, a sense of an object intended for the Great Exhibition that is often too large to carry to the Crystal Palace. It was not necessary to prove the claim for the Stone made in an advertising flyer of 1860 that it was ‘the Biggest Rock in the World’.

A mass of rock, resembling, as it lay
Right at the foot of that moist precipice,
A stranded ship, with keel upturned, that rests
Fearless of wind and waves.
(William Wordsworth, The Excursion, Book III, lines 50-55)

4. William Gilpin’s numerous published works on the Picturesque did much to popularise the Vale of Derwentwater as a tourist destination in the late 18th century. His Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty, made in the year 1772, on several parts of England, particularly the mountains, and lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland, published in 1786, was the first of his guides dedicated to the vale
5. S. Matthews, ibid, p.164
7. S. Matthews, ibid, p.8
10. Now called Derwent Island House, a privately tenanted National Trust property, occasionally open to the public
13. The English Lake District was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in July 2017; the National Trust itself, as the progenitor of many later conservation organisations, forms part of the ‘outstanding universal significance’ of the UNESCO inscription
15. The term ‘relic’ is used by UNESCO to denote a ‘fossil’ cultural landscape or site that has ceased to evolve, leaving visible material traces behind. See www.worldheritagesite.org
17. D. Higgins, Mythologising Malhamdale: Englishness, Sublimity and Tourism from Wordsworth to the the Trip, Lecture, York St John University, 30 June 2017
20. T. Mole, ibid, Chapter 5
21. E. Lunn, Marxism and Modernism, London, 1985, p.163. Walter Benjamin suggested that world exhibitions represented ‘the fetishistic worship of objects which have been alienated from their social production and usage’. Although not a manufactured object, the Bowder Stone appears from early accounts to have functioned as a shelter for livestock in a small enclosure, before its appropriation for tourism
22. M. Heidegger, ibid, p.132. The German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, is referenced here in his important role in addressing the nature of our material culture after the Second World War. His world view has been described as being conditioned by an extreme and troubling mode of provincialism, which, with a lineage to the Romantics, has a relevance to this article. See: A. Borghann, ‘Cosmopolitanism and Provincialism: On Heidegger’s Errors and Insight’, Philosophy Today, 36, 1992, pp.131-145
23. The Latin root of the word monument is in mortuo: ‘to remind’
REMEMBERING THE DAY NURSERY AT RAINHAM HALL

Sally James, Creative Programme Manager, Rainham Hall

Since opening in 2015 following a major £2.5 million conservation and interpretation project, Rainham Hall in the London Borough of Havering has embarked on an ambitious and innovative programming strategy. Built in 1729, Rainham Hall has since been the home to nearly 50 different families and inhabitants, ranging from merchants to artists, the children of a day nursery, a photographer, and even a cycling vicar (this was the Reverend Nicholas Brady, who lived here in the 19th century. A keen member of the local cycling club, he was also an amateur scientist). All have left behind decorative imprints on the building which reflect their time and taste, while being respectful of the architecture. However, the house does not have an indigenous collection, and no famous former inhabitants or long family dynasties have lived there. Its living memories, captured through the property’s oral history project, have enriched our understanding of the building's history in fascinating and unexpected ways.

In 2014 a volunteer-led oral history project, Rainham Remembers, was launched to capture memories about the house and the surrounding area. As part of the property’s activity plan (supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund), it was aimed at developing the skills of participating volunteers, engaging the local community, and enhancing the knowledge of the history and significance of the property. The Project Curator, Oonagh Kennedy, supported the establishment of the oral history volunteer team with a training programme, which included how to use recording equipment, how to perfect interview technique, how to complete the necessary paperwork, and how to manage the ethical side of delving into people’s memories. Today a core team of four volunteers continues the project; over 35 people have been interviewed, far exceeding expectations.

In 2015 the first interpretation programme was about John Harle, the sea merchant for whom the house was built in 1729. A variety of interesting exhibits and installations explored trade in the 18th century, a life at sea, and the development of the wharf at Rainham, which provided a gateway to the Thames and beyond. Over 60% of the exhibition was co-curated or co-created by members of the local community and volunteers (they helped to identify key themes, selected objects for display, and helped decide on their presentation; or created items for display, including furniture, models, costumes, music and works of art). Research was led by volunteer historians.

The Oral History Group was asked instead to focus on a second programme about a war-time day nursery which occupied the building in the 1940s and 50s. In 2014 very little was known about the nursery, but thanks to the oral history project new information has emerged.

Seven former day nursery attendees have already been identified, and others continue to come forward with information, each intrigued to know more about the project. All were keen to share their experiences and memories. Most remarkably Linda, one of the present garden volunteers, revealed that she had attended the nursery as a child, and shared some photographs that the researchers had never seen before. The information was invaluable from a research perspective because Rainham has few archival records.

It was discovered that the Rainham Hall day nursery for local children operated between 1943 and 1954. During a time of national crisis, the house had been requisitioned by Essex County Council in 1942 and set up as a day nursery catering for a maximum of 45 local children under the age of five. For the first time the house was a public, communal building, and the grand front door opened each morning to the youngest members of the community. With one exception, the oral history interviewees have been overwhelmingly positive about their time at the nursery. Many speak of the friendly matron and nurses, playing in the gardens, Christmas parties, and enjoying exploring the building. One interviewee, however, spoke of being put in the
dark cupboard under the stairs by one of the nurses as punishment for crying – a traumatic experience for a small child.

In the Rainham area there was plenty of war work to be done. The Ford works and Briggs engineering at Dagenham, the Murex metal works along the Thames, the Thames Board Works at Purfleet, and many other companies all contributed to the war effort. All were clamouring for extra staff. Rainham Hall became part of a network of new war-time nurseries set up in industrial war-work areas to encourage mothers of young children to fill those vacancies. The new government-funded war-time nurseries were based on the most up-to-date ideas of child care, with specific guidance on daily routines, which included plenty of fresh air and exercise. With materials in short supply, template specifications for nursery furniture were issued along with guidance on the number of yards of fabric required. The staff were told how to provide the best possible meals under rationing, which continued all the time the nursery at Rainham Hall was in operation.

The story of this remarkable era in the house’s history is told through a new exhibition for 2017, Remembering the Day Nursery at Rainham Hall, curated by Roger, Janice, John, Diane, Joe, Linda, and Pat, who all attended the nursery as children. The property’s understanding of this time is enriched by memories of playtime, meals and naps, and also through the hazy memories of a childhood spent in a house with staircases that seemed to go on for ever and its dark cupboard under the stairs. Visitors can listen to excerpts from the recordings via old telephone handsets, pick up a series of ‘memory moment’ quotations carefully positioned around the building, watch film interviews, see historical photographs, and view a series of works of art which are inspired by each of the attendees’ top three memories of the nursery.

When the day nursery closed in 1954, Rainham Hall reverted to a private house, so ending its first period as a bustling, public space. The council’s lease had expired, and the new owners, the National Trust, moved in the first of a series of tenants. Today the house is open to the public once more, welcoming visitors and encouraging people to share new memories.

This project at Rainham Hall puts the day nursery children at the heart of the narrative, a personal approach which engages visitors and helps them to connect with the historic building. It has transformed an empty house with a confusing history into a compelling experience full of relevance for visitors today. For the next project, the property staff and volunteers will be looking at the life and times of a 1960s tenant, the Vogue photographer and interior designer Anthony Denney. One of Denney’s contemporaries has already been interviewed; he remembers seeing a valuable Dubuffet painting hanging at Rainham Hall.

The changing interpretation programme will introduce the stories of many more inhabitants and continue until 2029, the 300th anniversary of the building of Rainham Hall.
London 1915. Britain is in the throes of a desperate war that is claiming the lives of many men and women. In the midst of all this, the aristocracy cling to a diminishing charmed life of luxury and extravagance. In a spirit of optimism, Edith, Marchioness of Londonderry (1879-1959) decides to establish a safe haven for politicians, civil servants, and other eminent people at Londonderry House on Park Lane.

The Ark Club was intended to provide light-hearted fun, each member being given an animal alias or name of a mythological figure. Edith herself took the name of Circe the Sorceress, after the enchantress who captured Odysseus and his men, turning them into swine. From the start, the Ark was different from high-minded gatherings such as the Souls (a group of distinguished politicians, aristocrats and intellectuals, active c.1885 to 1920). The Ark’s spirit was encapsulated by an English translation of Giovanni Battista Gelli’s Circe (1744) on the shelves at Mount Stewart, County Down, Lady Londonderry’s Northern Ireland house. In this series of dialogues, various animals – the crew members transformed by Circe – argue with Odysseus about the merits of their altered state. Most prefer to stay as animals, apart from the philosopher who recognises the superiority of the human mind.

After the First World War, the Ark took on the character of a salon, still light-hearted, but with a more diverse membership. Londonderry House was not the only place where artists and writers mingled with politicians, aristocrats and wealthy Americans; but since much of Lady Londonderry’s library survives at Mount Stewart, we have a unique opportunity to explore her connections through her books.

A list of members, drawn up by Lady Londonderry in an address book in the mid-1930s, provides a snapshot of inter-war London high society, while at Mount Stewart there are books on animals with the names of people written on inserted scraps of paper. Political and artistic Ark members float in and out of focus. For example, the politicians Winston Churchill (the Warlock) and John Ramsay MacDonald (Hamish the Hart) feature alongside the playwrights J.M Barrie (the Bard) and Sean O’Casey (the Prawn), the painter William Orpen (the Ortolan), and the writer Stephen Gwynn (the Scribe). The artist Edmond Brock (the Badger) became something of a court painter to the Londonderrys, painting portraits of their youngest daughter Mairi as well as an enormous painting of 1925, Circe and the Sirens (Fig 1).

What is interesting about this list is that it includes people from across the political and social spectrum.

Although Lord and Lady Londonderry spent much more time at Mount Stewart after 1921, the other Londonderry houses were not neglected. In particular, Londonderry House (demolished in the 1960s to make...
way for the Hilton) remained the focus of much of their social and political life. It was here that the Ark Club continued to meet on Wednesday evenings. Some of its members had the privilege of being invited to house parties in the country, such as at Mount Stewart, Wynyard Park (Co. Durham), or any of the other properties the Londonderrys owned, although the most frequent guests at Mount Stewart appear to have been family and close friends, rather than acquaintances from the London set. The Londonderrys' gradual retreat to Mount Stewart meant that books kept at their different houses joined the growing number of books on gardening already on the shelves in Lady Londonderry's Sitting Room.

For example, it is possible that the glossy polished full calf and half calf books with marbled endpapers once lined the shelves at Londonderry House, although many carry a ticket of the Belfast firm W. Erskine Mayne. Among these luxuriously-bound books there are several volumes by literary members of the Ark Club; some are inscribed to Lady Londonderry, and others are unmarked. The novelist and biographer John Buchan (1875-1940), named Buchan the Buck in John Buchan (1875-1940), was on friendly terms with Lady Londonderry, humorously inscribing the biography of himself by Hesketh Pearson (1942) with an admonition not to be too cross about the scant references to her in the index: ‘Note well, O Circe, that the absence of your name from the index to this book proves that the author does not know everything about me. Where the days are longer and petrol less precious, pass this way and look in. G. Bernard Shaw. Ayot St. Lawrence, 19th January 1943.’ Similarly, the composer Rutland Boughton (1878-1960), up to 1928 a paid-up member of the Communist Party, visited Mount Stewart in May 1923 and gave her a performer’s copy of his opera *The Immortal Hour*, first performed in 1914 (the libretto was by Fiona Macleod, the pseudonym of William Sharp), inscribed by himself and some of the performers. There is no evidence that he ever entered the hallowed circle of the Ark; indeed, only a few years after his visit his relationship with Lady Londonderry soured after he dared to offer his views on Lord Londonderry’s treatment of the coal miners on his Durham estates.5

There is also a good deal of Celtic Revival material on the shelves, including books inscribed by Lady Gregory (1852-1932, Irish dramatist, folklorist and founder of the Abbey Theatre); one has a letter pasted in suggesting that there was some correspondence between the two women to discuss the finer points of early Irish sainthood and mythology. There is an Abbey Theatre anniversary programme (1925) with a bland ‘with all good wishes for the New Year from W. B. Yeats.’ O’Casey, Yeats and Lady Gregory were pressing Lady Londonderry to throw her weight behind the return to Dublin of the Lane Bequest (Sir Hugh Lane (1875-1915) had bequeathed his picture collection to the National Gallery, London, but an unwitnessed codicil
left the collection to Dublin; prolonged negotiations ensued). Lady Londonderry herself was keen to learn more about Irish mythology. Ella Youn’s *Celtic Wonder-Tales* (1910), illustrated by Maud Gonne (1866-1953), Irish nationalist and muse to Yeats, was one of the sources of inspiration of Edith’s *The Magic Inkpot* (1928), while James Stephens (c.1880-1950, poet and re-teller of Irish myths) was a member of the Ark Club, where he was nicknamed the Leprechaun. Copies of his works from the 1920s include unsigned editions of his earliest books and a proof copy of his poetry collection *Theme and Variations* (1930; corrected to 1929) with a droll stick-figure drawn on the fly-leaf accompanied by the inscription: ‘This is me, wishing Lady Circe many happy returns. James Stephens. Dec. 1929’.

A single article can hardly do justice to the richness of Lady Londonderry’s collection and the breadth of her interests. The Ark Club formed an important part of her public persona as a society hostess and supporter of her husband’s political ambitions, but it is only a single facet of her multifarious activities during the first half of the 20th century. Despite many unanswered questions about the full membership of the Ark, the books on the shelves in her Sitting Room at Mount Stewart give us a tantalising glimpse of some of the artists and writers she befriended.

1. Mount Stewart was inherited by the Londonderrys’ youngest daughter, Lady Mairi Bury, who handed ownership of the house to the National Trust in 1977. The famous gardens created by Edith have been in the care of the Trust since she donated them in 1957. Thanks to a generous grant from the Betty Foyle Foundation it was possible to catalogue the books in Lady Londonderry’s and Lord Londonderry’s Sitting Rooms, giving the opportunity to learn more about the interests of the Londonderrys. For the latest volume dedicated to the history of Mount Stewart, the family, the collection and the garden, including several aspects discussed in this article, see *Mount Stewart: National Trust Historic Houses & Collections Annual 2017*, published in association with Apollo magazine.

2. I am grateful to the house team at Mount Stewart for giving me access to this address book and other documentation relating to the Ark Club.


4. So far, I have not found any reference to George Bernard Shaw being a member of the Ark Club.

5. PRONI D3099/3/16/3/1


Mount Stewart’s ‘rich veins of history and art’
National Trust Historic Houses & Collections Annual 2017

The National Trust *Historic Houses & Collections Annual*, published in association with *Apollo* magazine, offers readers an absorbing insight into the latest curatorial research into the Trust’s world-class art collections. This year’s Annual, edited by Frances Bailey, Lead Curator for Northern Ireland, and Christopher Rowell, furniture Curator, is dedicated to Mount Stewart, County Down. The most famous member of the family was Viscount Castlereagh, who in 1814-15 played a crucial role in the Congress of Vienna and the downfall of Napoleon. This issue includes articles on the recent restoration of the house, the family’s patronage and collecting, portraits by Sir Thomas Lawrence, furniture associated with the Congress of Vienna, silver, books, and the exceptional gardens. Christopher Rowell writes in the editorial: ‘A comprehensive restoration, together with the serendipitous return to the house of many outstanding works of art, have made Mount Stewart more exciting than it has ever been. Its rich veins of history and art are international.’

To read the issue online, visit: https://reader.exacteditions.com/issues/57788/spread/1
I give the National Trust absolute discretion as to how they shall use Arlington Court after my death … I wish the public to be given access to the Museum in the house and if necessary a small payment may be made. I do not wish the house used as a Convent or Monastery.’

When Miss Rosalie Chichester (1865-1949) gave Arlington Court, Devon to the National Trust in 1945 she continued to live there as a life tenant. She wrote a memorandum of wishes outlining her vision for the continuance of the house and estate after her death. The Museum to which she refers was the result of a lifetime’s collecting, containing over 1,000 objects.

Rosalie Chichester was the only child of Sir Bruce and Lady (Rosalie) Chichester. Her father died young in 1881, leaving the 15-year-old Rosalie his entire estate. Rosalie and her mother managed to keep the estate relatively intact and viable. Rosalie never married, and after her mother’s death in 1908 she indulged her love of travel along with her paid companion, Miss Clara ‘Chrissie’ Peters.

They started out by travelling around Britain, taking photographs, sketching, and collecting postcards and small souvenirs. They even invested in a car and a chauffeur, rare in North Devon or indeed anywhere, and very expensive before the First World War. After the war they travelled to Europe to look at the battlefields; then in 1921 they embarked on their great adventure – two world tours organised by the travel company Thomas Cook & Son, taking in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States of America, and South Africa. Many of the objects acquired on these travels remain in the collection at Arlington today.

It may seem at first sight that Miss Chichester collected somewhat randomly – the collection includes a section of a tree felled on the Arlington estate as well as shells, taxidermy and coral. In reality she had developed a scientific approach to natural history; she even had an observatory and weather station built in the grounds. She made detailed botanical drawings and took many photographs. Her collection included hundreds of shells from all over the world, some now very rare or extinct, including the pearly nautilus. It also encompasses objects such as model ships, pewter, objets d’art, commemorative china, textiles, and Egyptian antiquities.

The house and estate had suffered through the Second World War owing to lack of maintenance. Miss Chichester had moved out to the home farm, and Arlington Court was effectively moth-balled for the duration. So after Miss Chichester’s death in 1949 the Trust had to deal with repairs, and took on the responsibility for a collection representing the enthusiasms of a lifetime. The inventory taken by the Trust at the time indicates its scale and variety. In her later years, keen to expand her Museum for the benefit of the Trust, Miss Chichester had been buying whole collections of model ships and shells straight from the dealers’ catalogues, which were still in their crates. Some objects were disposed of, and what remained of the vast collection was re-arranged. Miss Chichester’s wishes were fulfilled by opening the ground floor of the house to the public in 1952, as well as the estate.

Miss Chichester had taken over the dining room to display her collections as early as the 1920s, but unfortunately, owing to a combination of extensive dry rot and post-war building restrictions, the room had to be demolished by the National Trust in the early 1950s. So Miss Chichester’s Museum was no more, but some of her collections remained, scattered around the house or displayed in a corridor by the exit door where few visitors really noticed them. Her own inventory (dated 1930) was still at Arlington, along with two large display cases, which were stored in the cellar for want of space. No images of the interior of the original Museum survive, although there are a number of photographs of other rooms in the house taken by Miss Chichester. Since those early days the showing of the house grew organically – rooms were gradually opened up, objects were moved, and parts of the house were re-decorated – so that only three original interiors remained.
In 2016, as part of a major re-display of the house, Miss Chichester's Museum was brought back to life. Rooms were returned to their original uses, thus allowing their contents to tell the story of the particular family member who was most associated with each room. For example, the original dining room had been displayed as a morning room, but it still had the dumb waiters linking the room to the kitchens below. This was redisplayed as Sir John Chichester's dining room; he was the first Chichester to live in the house after it was built, and it is his interior design scheme, dating from the late 1830s, which remains.

The former billiard room (known as the Explorer Room, as it was used for a temporary interactive exhibition exploring Rosalie’s travels) had never found a successful identity. It was chosen to become the new Museum as it was closest to the site of the original and was an almost blank canvas. The only object which had to remain in the room (it was too large to get through the door without removing it from its frame) was a double portrait of Miss Chichester's father Bruce and his sister Caroline (Fig 3).

Since there were no surviving historical images of Miss Chichester's museum, the inspiration for the room had to come from elsewhere. Images of museums and private collections, especially the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford, proved invaluable, together with research into Victorian collectors and their displays.

A review of the collections was undertaken as part of the re-display. It was found that in fact only 20% of the objects in the house definitely belonged to the Chichester family, and the vast majority represented Miss Chichester's collection. It would appear that having disposed of a large number of objects in order to open the house in 1952, the Trust then bought more objects with which to furnish the rooms which they later gradually opened.

Having the original Museum inventory was invaluable in deciding what needed to go into the room and where. It was also decided to bring the various family portraits, previously scattered around the house, into the room to add to the effect of Victorian clutter and to have the family all in one place – and to give the large portrait of Bruce and Caroline some context (Fig 1).

Over the course of three weeks in January 2017 the 1970s display cases from the exit corridor were emptied and moved into the room along with the original museum cases, and these were all filled with the collections. Each case was arranged in thematic order, just as Miss Chichester herself had done. New, subtle conservation-standard lighting was installed in the cases.

The reaction from volunteers, staff and visitors has been extremely positive. The time visitors spend in the room has increased dramatically. They have commended how much more there is to see and how they can experience the authentic feeling of a period museum. Collections which were often missed are now being seen and appreciated by many more people, and Arlington Court better reflects the lives and passions of the people that lived there.

7. Rosalie Chichester, Memorandum of Wishes, 7 December 1945 (Arlington archive)