Towards the end of 2012, the National Trust in Wales finalised its second significant leasehold acquisition of the year, and brought Dyffryn Gardens into Trust guardianship for the next 50 years. (In April 2012, the National Trust also acquired Tredegar House, Newport, on a 50-year lease.)

Dyffryn Gardens is a magnificent 55-acre Edwardian garden with Dyffryn House, the home of the Cory family, at its core. It is situated just a few miles west of Cardiff city centre. Since 4 January 2013 it has been open seven days a week as a National Trust property.

Negotiations with the Vale of Glamorgan Council, which retains the freehold of Dyffryn, were completed in time to allow a very brief period of transition over the Christmas holiday. This enabled the installation of new office infrastructure and the training of staff in Trust systems and ways of working. Very little else has been changed, save for a sign at the front gate!

Over the coming months and years we will build on the success of the Vale of Glamorgan’s 15-year campaign to restore the gardens to their early 20th-century appearance. Our next significant milestone will be the opening of Dyffryn House to visitors for the first time at Easter 2013.

The Cory family
The Cory family moved to Wales from Bideford, North Devon in the 1830s. From modest beginnings with just one small vessel trading between Bristol, Cardiff and Ireland, Richard Cory (1799-1882) opened an archive of drawings, designs and correspondence by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-52) and others relating to the redecoration of Chirk Castle in the 1840s and early 1850s has been purchased at auction at Sotheby’s, London, for £22,500 including buyer’s premium, funded by gifts and bequests to the National Trust. Pugin’s work at Chirk is one of three successive phases of gothicisation, begun by Charlotte Myddelton in the early 19th century, continued by her son Colonel Robert Myddelton Biddulph (who commissioned Pugin), and also by his son Richard Myddelton in the late 19th century.

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a chandlery and provisions store in Cardiff, taking advantage of the rapidly growing shipping industry. Richard’s sons joined the family business, which from 1856 was known as Richard Cory & Sons, trading as ship owners, brokers and coal exporters. The family firm continued to grow, acquiring several collieries in the South Wales valleys, as well as investing in Barry Dock and its railway network in the 1880s. By 1908 the Cory business had 118 coal depots all over the world, providing fuel for steam ships on all major shipping routes.

John Cory (1828-1910), eldest son of Richard Cory, bought Dyffryn in 1891; it was conveniently located within commuting distance of the family’s extensive business interests across South Wales. He had married Anna Maria Beynon in 1854. They had four children; both Herbert and Clifford worked in the family firm, while the third son, Reginald, who studied law at Cambridge, was able to indulge his lifelong passion for horticulture at Dyffryn. Florence, the only daughter, inherited the estate on John’s death in 1910.

The Cory family’s tenure of Dyffryn was brief, lasting only until Florence’s death in 1916, but this was certainly a highly significant period in terms of the stylistic development of both house and garden. The Dyffryn estate was bought by a neighbouring landowner, Sir Cennydd Traherne, and shortly afterwards the house and garden were transferred to municipal ownership, with successive Glamorgan Council governing bodies managing the site throughout the 20th century.

The Garden
Described by Cadw as ‘the grandest and most outstanding Edwardian gardens in Wales … comparable to some of the most extravagant gardens of the period in Britain’, the Grade I gardens were born of a creative collaboration between the landscape architect Thomas Mawson, who was commissioned by John Cory to create a master plan in 1903-04, and Reginald Cory, whose horticultural knowledge and passion for plant hunting ensured that Dyffryn amassed a sensational collection of plants and trees from around the globe.

After graduating from Cambridge, Reginald was able to spend his time indulging his passion and considerable talent for horticulture. In 1901 he visited the Arnold Arboretum in America, and on his return created a tree nursery, which developed into a significant arboretum on the east side of the garden. This collection is of international importance, and it currently includes 17 trees recorded as Champion Trees in the Tree Register of Britain and Ireland. One of these is a Paperbark Maple (Acer griseum) grown from seed collected by the plant hunter Ernest Wilson in 1901, and planted at Dyffryn in 1911.

Work started on Mawson’s master plan in 1905, and continued for more than a decade, although the full scheme was never completed. On the west side of the house is the series of interconnected garden rooms for which Dyffryn is famous, each with its own theme of planting and enclosed within high yew hedges, providing an exciting foil to the more formal areas of the garden. Mawson created the architectural infrastructure, while Reginald designed the planting for the rooms. These include the Theatre Garden, which housed Reginald’s collection of bonsai trees, the Paved Court, the Physic Garden, the Cloisters, the Mediterranean Garden, and spectacular herbaceous borders. The Grade II-listed Pompeian Garden, constructed in 1909, was inspired by Mawson’s and Reginald’s trip to Italy, during which they visited Herculaneum and Pompeii.

Reginald had many links with the horticultural world. After his graduation, he maintained a connection with the Cambridge University Botanical Garden until his death in 1934; he was also a member of the council for the Royal Horticultural Society, a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London, President of the Dahlia Society, and a founder member of the Garden Society. He funded numerous plant hunting trips made by George Forrest and H F Coomber between 1917 and 1927, as well as undertaking a number of trips himself. He travelled to South Africa (with Lawrence Johnston, the creator of Hidcote, and John Taylor) in 1926, to the West Indies in 1931, and to the Atlas Mountains in 1932.

The garden was well recorded during Reginald’s lifetime. Its plan was included in Mawson’s Art and Craft of Garden Making (5th edition 1926), in which Mawson expresses his admiration for Reginald’s horticultural research and his collections of plants from around the world. Two campaigns of photography were carried out by Neame Roff, the first in 1915 and the second in the 1920s. These photographs, along with a series of watercolours of the garden by Edith Adie (a specialist in garden and flower paintings, active between 1892 and 1930), were instrumental in the recent restoration of the gardens.
Dyffryn House

The Ordnance Survey maps show that the footprint of Dyffryn House (Grade II*) changed only superficially between 1878 and 1919, the period that encompasses the majority of the Cory developments. John Cory engaged the architect Edward Augustine Lansdowne (b. 1838, son of Henry Venn Lansdown of Somerset) to remodel the 18th-century house in 1893-94. Lansdowne had worked extensively for chapels and school authorities in Monmouthshire, and in 1889 had been the runner-up in a competition to design the Cory business headquarters in Butetown, Cardiff. Dyffryn is his only known domestic commission.

In October 1911, in a substantial article in the South Wales Daily News which ran over two weeks, the history of Dyffryn’s garden and interiors was described in great detail. The impetus for the article is not clear; perhaps it was (rather belatedly) a part of the celebration of John Cory’s life (he had died 18 months before its publication). However, its effusive praise for the gardening skills and taste of the family and the ‘magnitude and beauty of the Dyffryn grounds’ is unequivocal.

Along with the 1937 sale catalogue listing the contents of Dyffryn House, this article provides us with the only clues to the taste and collecting habits of the family. We have not yet discovered any photographs of the interiors, or any family papers that shed further light on the domestic life of the Corys. Reginald’s instructions to burn his papers on his death may account for the loss of a lot of material, but presumably some of the paperwork relating to the house would have remained at Dyffryn until Florence’s death in 1916.

Following the four-day sale in 1937, and the advent of municipal ownership, parts of the house were occupied briefly in the 1940s, and then used variously as a police academy, a dog training centre and a conference centre. In the early 1980s, in order to make the most of the income from the Dyffryn estate, a residential conference centre was built on the southwest side of the house; the service wing and stable yard were demolished or encompassed to provide the delegates’ bedrooms in the Traherne Suite. The final incarnation of the house as a luxury hotel fell through shortly after conversion works started, and as a result the house has been disused since 1996. Essential works to the house were carried out by the Vale of Glamorgan Council in 2007; a £1.4 million investment ensured that the structure was sound, with the roof and external stonework in good condition.

The principal interiors of the house are currently subject to a restoration project administered by the Vale of Glamorgan, and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. On completion of the building work at the end of February 2013, we will prepare the house for opening at Easter. A number of rooms will be open on both the ground and first floors, providing wonderful views of the gardens to the east and south, and an insight into the recent restoration work.

The transition of Dyffryn from the Vale of Glamorgan to National Trust guardianship has not precipitated any immediate or fundamental change; we now have time to celebrate the success of the Vale of Glamorgan Council in its restoration of the gardens, and the newly restored parts of the house.

As Dyffryn moves into a new era, and the National Trust in Wales embarks on a journey of research and better understanding of the house and garden, we look forward to welcoming visitors to Dyffryn. We hope that they will come to explore and enjoy the wonderful gardens and house, and meet our new team of Dyffryn staff and volunteers.

Emma Jones, Curator, South East Wales

The South Front of Dyffryn House, from the Great Lawn
NAILING WALLPAPER AT PECKOVER HOUSE

AN EXCITING FIND has been made in Wisbech. Fragments of an early 18th-century wallpaper were uncovered recently during building works at the National Trust's property 14 North Brink, next to Peckover House. It is rare enough to find wallpaper getting on for 300 years old, but these fragments also provide evidence of the original method of hanging, which included the use of nails.

Today, it might seem bizarre to nail wallpaper to a plastered wall. However, a number of early 18th-century paper stainers (wallpaper manufacturers) gave instructions to hang wallpaper this way, often with some use of paste as well. Very few examples of these early nailed papers survive today. Whilst there are spectacular early panels of wallpaper that were originally hung with nails at Erddig, other fragments of papers with nails found at Clandon Park, Owest and Greys Court may have been a result of subsequent repairs as opposed to the original hang. In the example from Wisbech, tacks clearly form part of the original hang in that some of them lie between the overlapping sides of the individually printed sheets.

The panelling that was put up later in the principal first-floor room helped to ensure the survival of the fragments during subsequent redecoration. The house was built in about 1720, and it seems likely that the wallpaper is of the same age. It was a time when production methods were changing from the printing of individual sheets to printing on rolls of paper which were made from pasting sheets together. It was not until a century later that continuous paper rolls were used in the wallpaper industry in the UK.

In this example at Wisbech a deep yellow ochre distemper ground was first applied to the paper, followed by a stencilled pink, a block-printed white, a main outline motif block-printed in black, followed finally by a transparent green, brushed through a stencil. The width of the printed design is approximately 21 inches. Although only about 20% of the pattern repeat survives behind the panelling, some additional small fragments found in a cupboard in an adjacent room have provided sufficient evidence to reveal the likely overall design, a floral trail with pairs of vase-shaped panels. Examples of early 18th-century wallpapers have been found in several National Trust properties, but at the time of writing this design appears to be unique; perhaps it was produced by a local printer.

This wallpaper will feature in a BBC4 documentary on wallpaper to be aired in the summer.

Andrew Bush, Paper Conservation Adviser, National Trust
‘DIFFERENT KINDS OF GOOD WEATHER’

Sustainable energy initiatives in sensitive landscapes: a curatorial perspective

‘Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating; there is really no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather.’1 John Ruskin

IN WALES we have embraced this mantra, and are putting it to practical use. The concept of siting a power station in a Grade 1 Registered Park or on the side of the nation’s highest mountain may sound like a bizarre or, at very least, puzzling suggestion. However, this is precisely what we are doing within the Reptonian landscape at Plas Newydd, and beside the Watkin Path, one of the most popular and dramatic routes to the summit of Snowdon, near to the famous Gladstone Rock, and amid the evocative ruined structures of the Cwm Llan copper workings.

The vision of the National Trust is to reduce our use of fossil fuels by 50% by the year 2020. This means that not only must we become more aware of our consumption, and frugal about energy use, but also that we must start using the natural, renewable resources around us, the sunshine, the rain and the wind, ‘different kinds of good weather’.

Jonathan Porritt, speaking at the Trust’s Fit For the Future? Conference in April 2012, reminded us that the key to changing a mind-set, and thereby influencing behaviour, is not to be found in the large-scale generating schemes, away from our consciousness, but in the small, community-based initiatives that are part of the daily landscape of our lives.2 Could empowering communities to generate and control their own renewably-sourced energy be the key to breaking down those final barriers of perception of the National Trust as an organisation of large houses and collections, remote and removed from normal existence?

For an organisation whose principal purpose is to care for some of the most exquisitely beautiful historic landscapes, gardens and buildings, electricity generation could appear to be a particularly delicate issue. However, my curatorial instincts suggest that rather than shying away from these technologies and hiding behind the notion that power generation is something that happens in vast, unsightly structures beyond our boundaries, we should be demonstrating that it is perfectly possible to design and site the means of harnessing nature’s energy in such a way that they do not detract from their setting, but, like the romantic ruin, industrial archaeology and the

in the small, community-based initiatives that are part of the daily landscape of our lives.3 Could empowering communities to generate and control their own renewably-sourced energy be the key to breaking down those final barriers of perception of the National Trust as an organisation of large houses and collections, remote and removed from normal existence?

The park at Plas Newydd, Anglesey, has recently been furnished with an array of photovoltaic cells which contribute 45,000kwh of energy per annum, or roughly a fifth of the electricity need of Plas Newydd, reducing the mansion’s reliance on fossil fuels. Following very careful consideration and a detailed analysis of the development and significance of the landscape and the principal viewpoints, the array has been sited in a hay meadow, which is within the former parkland as reworked by Humphry Repton. Their simple elegance adds a hint of the Victorian glass house to the landscape; and, by virtue of their being raised slightly off the ground, sheep continue to graze around them and orchids, abundant in this meadow, continue to flourish.

At Cwm Llan, on the south slope of Snowdon, a much painted and photographed waterfall bountifully demonstrates an abundance of water-born energy. Indeed, the first hydro-electrical generator was installed here in 1892. This water power is to be harnessed and turned into 640KW of electricity (or 1,900,000kwh energy per annum, which equates approximately to the energy consumed by 7.6 mansions in a year), without any attendant pollution or damage and from a perpetually renewing source. The weir extraction point is being constructed now; over the coming months a 600mm diameter pipe will be laid, both above and below ground, working with the contours of the mountainside, existing walls and woodland, within a sublime landscape of huge nature conservation and historical value.

Octavia Hill, writing about the importance of access to open green space, trees, sunlight, and the elements, wrote: ‘We all want beauty for the refreshment of our souls. Sometimes we think of it as a luxury, but when God made the world, He made it very beautiful, and meant that we should live amongst its beauty.’3

It is my belief that our founders would have applauded the initiative being taken by the Trust today. I also believe that one in particular of our Sustainability Principles truly embodies their original intentions:

‘We will be light on our feet, innovative and creative, adaptive and responsive, fit for the future, learned from the past.’

Elizabeth Green, Curator, North Wales

1 Ruskin, John, taken from a lecture Sincerity in Landscape Art given at Oxford University, 23 November 1883.
2 Porritt, Jonathan at Fit For the Future? (April 2012), extract from informal lecture.
Magnificent textiles, many not seen in public for over two decades, take centre stage at Waddesdon Manor in our special exhibition for the 2013 season.

Surprising though it may seem for a Jewish family, several members of the Rothschild dynasty collected medieval and later embroideries and textiles made for use in the cathedrals, churches and monasteries of Europe. But they were not acquired for their original purpose. Attracted by the rich textures and sumptuous patterns, Baron Ferdinand, Miss Alice and Baroness Edmond de Rothschild used their textiles to furnish interiors. A vestment might be transformed into a chair covering or part of a draught-excluding screen. As so often at Waddesdon, a closer look at the collections reveals that things are sometimes not what they seem.

Waddesdon Manor was built by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild (1839-1898) from 1877 to display his collection of French decorative arts alongside English portraits and Dutch Old Master paintings in interiors designed to recall the great French houses and palaces of the 18th century. Created for entertaining, the Renaissance-style house sits in one of the finest Victorian gardens in Britain, famous for its parterre and ornate Aviary.

Ferdinand’s wife, Evelina, had died in 1866 with their child, so Waddesdon was inherited by his sister, Alice (1847-1922), also a collector. She bequeathed the house to her great-nephew, James de Rothschild (1878-1957), a member of the French branch of the family. His parents, Baron and Baroness Edmond, were both collectors, and from the late 1930s part of their collection came to Waddesdon by inheritance. The house as it is displayed today reflects these layers of collecting by a family famous for creating its own style, le goût Rothschild, a homage to the craftsmanship and patronage of the 18th century, adapted for 19th-century living.

In his summary of the creation of the gardens and building of the Manor, privately published as the Red Book in 1897, Baron Ferdinand wrote that he ‘first slept in the so-called “bachelors’ wing” in 1880. James’s wife, Dorothy de Rothschild, noted that Ferdinand insisted that he, and not his architect, Gabriel-Hippolyte Destaillleur, was responsible for the interior decoration of Waddesdon. Surviving stamps on furniture and entries in the order books at the silk-weaving firms Tassinari & Châtel and Prelle in Lyon show that the Parisian decorating firm Decour and Prellie was involved at Waddesdon, but the extent of its influence on the interiors is not known.

The Bachelors’ Wing has quite a different feel from the rest of the house: here, Ferdinand looked to the Renaissance. However, he stated that ‘a general adoption of the art of the Renaissance, so that its feeling could pervade our everyday existence, would be out of keeping with all the essentials of modern life’. Perhaps this is why the style was restricted to the communal areas, rather than the guest bedrooms, providing a theatrical backdrop for the masculine activities of smoking and billiards, and for Ferdinand’s ‘Renaissance Museum’.

From 1894, this collection of princely treasures in precious metals and stones was displayed in cases in the Smoking Room. On Ferdinand’s death, he bequeathed it to the British Museum, where it may still be seen as the Waddesdon Bequest. The collection includes devotional objects, among them the Holy Thorn Reliquary, the Conversion of St Paul hat jewel, the Moses pendant, and other jewels depicting the Virgin and Child or crucified Christ.

It seems particularly appropriate that Ferdinand should have placed former ecclesiastical textiles in this setting. Included in the exhibition ‘Sacred Stitches’ is a two-leaf screen, probably made in England in the 1880s, but using 17th-century embroidered panels that match other hangings now in store. On the inner leaves, two Italian or Spanish embroidered collars, dating from 1675 to 1700, are suspended above 19th-century pleated silk and velvet swags. The collars would have been worn with a dalmatic, a T-shaped vestment worn by deacons and bishops. The screen appears in a photograph of the Smoking Room from Ferdinand’s Red Book to the right of the chimney-piece (above left).

Behind the screen, suspended over the dado panelling, is a hanging which may once have been an altar frontal. It depicts the beheading of John the Baptist. While the central cartouche with the dramatic scene and inscription dates from 1575 to 1600, the embroidered border is an addition, albeit historic. The silk
fringing around the edges is 19th-century, and very similar to fringing on other items of furniture and textile covers at Waddesdon, suggesting that the hanging was further embellished for Ferdinand’s interior scheme.

All of the textile-covered furniture in the exhibition was acquired by Baron Ferdinand for the Bachelors’ Wing. Two 19th-century English sofas, possibly manufactured by Howard & Sons, are covered with embroidery in coloured silks depicting the finding of Moses in the bulrushes (Italian, 1650-1700) and with apparels from dalmatics (Italian or Spanish, 1600-1625), decorative panels at the lower front and back and on the sleeves. A set of four armchairs, also covered with apparels from dalmatics, dates from 1575 to 1600.

Ferdinand’s sister, Alice, was also an enthusiastic collector of textiles which she used to furnish her own house at Eythrope on the neighbouring estate. Highlights of the exhibition, five panels from c. 1400, embroidered in silver thread in various forms of couched work. The panels would have been joined together with embroideries of additional saints, facing inwards towards a central scene probably showing the Annunciation or Crucifixion.

Alice had the saints mounted as banners, and it is possible that they hung in the Hall at Eythrope with other Spanish religious banners, now in the collection at Waddesdon. Historic red velvet, three different brads and five lengths of fringing survive in store from the saint banners. The minutes of the Management Committee responsible for the administration and care of Waddesdon of 4 February 1980 record that Dorothy de Rothschild was lending the saints for display in the Smoking Room. At this time, the banners were disassembled and the embroidered panels placed in red velvet-covered frames.

An altar frontal depicting the Annunciation (Spanish, 1400s?), a pair of cushions showing Saints Peter and Paul (South German, late 1500s) and an embroidered picture of Esther before King Ahasuerus (English, 1650-1675) were also acquired by Alice for Eythrope. With the saints, they suggest that Alice had a particular interest in high-quality embroidery; although these items were adapted for domestic purposes, their transformation into banners and hangings is perhaps indicative that Alice preferred to display them rather than use them.

Many of the items acquired by Ferdinand and Alice remained on display in the Smoking Room and Corridor until the restoration (1990-95), when Waddesdon was completely closed and the collection stored while essential work to the fabric of the building and services took place. In 1997, the Bachelors’ Wing was redecorated, and some of the historic furniture re-covered for use. At this point, it was decided that the embroidered furniture was too fragile to leave on display, and these objects have been in store ever since.

The third collector represented at Waddesdon is Ferdinand and Alice’s niece, Baroness Edmond de Rothschild (1853-1935). She was interested in ecclesiastical textiles for their potential usefulness as furnishings, but also as collectable objects (not unlike her passion for 18th-century lace and buttons), and she formed a group of robes made for small statues of saints displayed in churches, chalice veils, and parts of vestments.

When Waddesdon opened to the public, some of these items were displayed in the Long Gallery, an area of the house occupied by bedroom suites that was converted into an exhibition space by Dorothy de Rothschild from 1970 to show treasures inherited from her parents-in-law.

Gathering these objects together for the first time, ‘Sacred Stitches’ will allow visitors to explore this unusual aspect of the collection, and to experience an alternative Rothschild style to that generally associated with Waddesdon. An accompanying display of objects, including books, drawings and metalwork, will complement the textiles on display, and illuminate the original contexts in which they would have been used.

Rachel Boak, Curator, Waddesdon Manor

‘Sacred Stitches: Ecclesiastical Textiles in the Rothschild Collection’ is in the drawings rooms on the second floor at Waddesdon Manor from 27 March to 27 October 2013. For more information, see www.waddesdon.org.uk
‘NEW’ WINCHELSEA was founded by Edward I to replace the original town, which had been lost to coastal erosion; it quickly became a thriving port, most importantly for the continental wine trade. The settlement flourished in the first half of the 14th century. However, a series of French maritime raids in the second half of the century resulted in severe damage to the town’s infrastructure and the curtailing of trade. This decline was exacerbated by the siting up of the harbour in the late medieval and Tudor periods.

The remains of the National Trust’s Blackfriars Barn are situated on Rectory Lane, Winchelsea, now on the edge of the town, but originally in the heart of the 14th-century settlement. A barn stood here during the 19th century, and during its demolition after a fire in the early 20th century, the ruins of a large early 14th-century building were revealed. Its size, construction and layout suggested that it was not a simple domestic building. It appears to have been short-lived: as the result of a French raid it was probably derelict by as early as 1364.

Beneath the building is one of the finest and largest of the 33 accessible medieval undercrofts in Winchelsea. It has three bays; the western and eastern bays are unusual in that they each have two window openings, which would have opened on to light wells. A wide stair from the eastern chamber gave direct access to the street. It is unclear what the undercroft was first used for, but by the late 18th or early 19th century it was being used as an unofficial town dump. In 1976-77 archaeologists removed the accumulated rubble and debris, and collected pottery and glass artefacts. In 2005 volunteers from the Winchelsea Archaeological Society cleared the undercroft of further loose debris and began re-sorting the ceramic assemblage. During remedial work in preparation for the opening of the site to the public a number of graffiti were observed on the northern wall of the western chamber (Bay 3).

In May 2012 a photographic and drawn survey was undertaken, and the other walls were also examined to see if there were any more graffiti. The survey recorded the extensive remains of at least thirteen examples of ship graffiti—twelve on the northern wall and one on the east wall of Bay 3. The original wall surface appears to have been a single layer of lime plaster, approximately 8-15mm thick, applied over the stone fabric. In general the plaster was in an extremely friable condition, and large areas appeared unstable owing to water ingress.

The ship graffiti at Blackfriars Barn are unusual: they have been inscribed into freshly applied wet plaster, they are comparatively large (the biggest is over one metre in height), and they are within an ostensibly secular structure. The only comparable examples so far recorded are those at the Tudor House Museum in Southampton. However, unlike the Southampton examples, which date from the end of the 16th century, the Blackfriars graffiti are more difficult to date accurately. This is because the ships were drawn relatively crudely—probably because they were inscribed into wet plaster—and some detail has been lost owing to the damage to the surface. However, all the images clearly depict single-masted vessels with raised bow and stern sections, and some have crows’ nests, similar to early sea-going vessels. Indeed, several of the smaller images are strikingly similar to contemporary depictions of the late medieval cog, or large merchant ship—an example appears on Winchelsea’s early 14th-century seal. It seems, then, that the most likely date for the Blackfriars graffiti would be between 1350 and 1450.

Although many examples of ship graffiti are recorded in British churches, they remain highly enigmatic. The reasons for their creation, their intended purpose, and in many cases even their date, are still the subject of debate and remain open to multiple interpretations. Ship graffiti are most commonly found in ecclesiastical buildings in coastal areas: an apparently obvious association. However, recently many more examples have been found far away from the sea or major inland waterways. There is a strong argument that these inscriptions were made as ritual and symbolic acts with devotional, and perhaps commemorative, intent. They may not have been made by the sailors themselves, but by those who had a vested interest in, or had undertaken, sea voyages.

There may be another reason why a fleet of ships was depicted on a cellar wall in Winchelsea. On 29 August 1350 the naval battle of Les Espagnols sur Mer (‘the Spaniards on the Sea’), or the Battle of Winchelsea, was fought and won by Edward III and the Black Prince. Could it be that the graffiti in the Blackfriars Barn undercroft show this event, and commemorate an English victory at sea?

Matthew Champion and Nathalie Cohen

The pursuit of new and advanced techniques in agriculture and horticulture has long been the pastime of energetic and forward-looking landowners wishing to achieve improvements in the productivity of their land. The support of innovative craftsmen and inventors is another form that this passion in the landowning classes could take. The interest of well-connected and wealthy men was a vital step on the way to publication of ideas that might revolutionise practice in a specific area of endeavour. So it was with Thomas Nutt of Moulton Chapel near Spalding in Lincolnshire and his bees.

In 1832 Nutt published *Humanity to Honey Bees, or Practical Directions for the Management of Honey Bees upon an Improved and Humane Plan*. In the preface he set out his ideas as to how ‘… honey of the very purest quality, and in more considerable quantity … may be taken from Bees, without recourse to any suffocation whatever, or any other violent means;—how all Bees may be preserved uninjured; —and how swarming may be prevented … and minute directions for the accomplishment of these most desirable objects are laid down in this book’.

Following a none-too-subtle dedication to the Queen is a long list of subscribers headed by the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, followed by the cream of aristocratic society; one wonders how Nutt, a man in his own words ‘brought up in the fens of Lincolnshire … amidst difficulties, misfortunes and hardships’, and whose ‘pretensions to learning are but small’, could ever have gained access to such an elite. An answer lies in the name of one particular local landowner and improver on the list: Peregrine Langton Massingberd of Gunby Park. Peregrine Langton had married the heiress to Gunby Park, Elizabeth Mary Anne Massingberd, in 1802; as she was an only child and he a second son, it was agreed that he would change his surname on their marriage.

Peregrine’s tireless work to improve the gardens and park at Gunby has been fully brought to light recently in a Conservation Plan. He documented unsparingly both his successes and his failures in experimental plantings in his Journal, which also records his episodic love of bees. In the late 1820s, a time of high bee-interest for Peregrine, scarcely a letter from his brother Algernon or his elder daughter Mary fails to enquire after the progress of his apiary. For this he had added an entire wing to the little gate lodge at Gunby where he was living at the time (being unable to afford to live in the Hall as a result of the collapse of his marriage). How Peregrine came to hear of Nutt and why in particular he was drawn to his method is uncertain, but his enthusiasm for Nutt’s great invention of ‘the inverted hive’ (from which all of the improvements alluded to in the preface were to be achieved) was initially boundless. In Peregrine’s re-telling of the accident of an over-turned hive that occasioned the discovery of the utility of the great invention, the story is told with more drama than Nutt’s relaying of it: Peregrine even drew a little sketch of the resulting arrangement in which ‘the whole swarm instantly set to work, repaired all the damage that had been done and showed that the belief of bees never working upwards was ill-grounded, as they took as kindly to their work as if the hive were placed in its usual manner, and … very soon … they worked out of the hive [once more], returning loaded with their spoils.’

Peregrine’s admiration was material; he set about writing to all the influential people he could think of setting forth the virtues of Nutt’s invention and soliciting support and orders for Nutt’s new ‘boxes’ for inverted hives. The Earl of Chichester, General Sir James Affleck, Lady Gifford, Lord Northwick and the Earl of Arran were all importuned either directly or indirectly by Peregrine on behalf of his protégé; the greatest coup, the interest of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, cousins of the King, was obtained through his lobbying. As letters from Nutt (transcribed by Peregrine) made clear, this was a mixed blessing:

‘Day by day do the National Repository crowd with visitors of distinction enquiring after my system on the management of Bees … Could I but have your attendance and influence here what would I of given yesterday. 4 noblemen of distinction was
examininng and looking at my apparatus [sic] unknown to me, & I heard them say “Mr Massingberd has said much in favour of this most singular discovery but no one can yet describe its importance … but the inventor.” I should of step’d forward and made myself known but the nature of your former letter forbid me, but by enquiring I made out one of these Gen. was Lord Sandal, which I expect to see today, with the Earl of Arran & Lord Northwick, your name as been mentioned by many of them, & it is you alone who I may thank for all these distinguished honours conferred [sic] upon so humble an individual, to see Dukes, Earls, Lords & Barrons [sic] courting a common subject a home head Man on such an important discovery is but a dream to me.

Nutt’s appearance at the National Repository in London with his system was a resounding success, and his subscription list grew. However, Peregrine’s urgent desire to correct everyone and to have things his own way had disastrous consequences for his relations with his protégé. In the same letter, Nat concludes

‘… with many thanks for your forgiveness: not that I deserved your sincere [censure] but I had obtained it through my imperfct scrawl no doubt, and very deserving would it have been had I thanked Mr Clarke for withholding any information from you. This never once entered my thoughts.’

The Rev. Thomas Clarke of Gedney Hill was a great supporter of Nutt; he built bee boxes himself, and helped Nutt in the compilation of his book. He sent details to Peregrine of the building of boxes by the correct method in April 1829, but warned that ‘Mr Nutt … seems to be quite busy with answering letters superintending the making of his boxes and waiting upon noblemen and Gentlemen to fix and stock them; so much engaged is he that I think his Book will not be much attended to just yet.’

On this last point Peregrine felt his honour piqued. He had promised his noble acquaintances that if they ordered boxes from Nutt, a book with operating instructions would be forthcoming immediately. As it became apparent that this was not going to be the case (and furthermore, Peregrine felt that the quality of Nutt’s workmanship was wanting), a sad conclusion to the relationship between patron and protégé became inevitable. A letter of 28 June 1829 from Nutt to Peregrine (and transcribed in full in his journal by the latter) is full of injured pride and self-justification:

‘Here I found a letter … requesting … to sell the box ordered for Germany [Peregrine was planning to travel abroad] you had no oacation [sic] for it, you had instructed your carpenter and he had become a manufactuer and consequently you had no oacation for the boxes in question for your carpenters could work them as well as myself. I shall make no further comments on your last letter I feel a disposition to explain but if I answer it in a proper manner it will displease you more than the disappointment you met with in the unfinished state of my Apiary … I found the Rev. C Townley in his Garden with his Bees, and fortunately I went, for by your instructions you have led him into a great error by ordering him to get a swarm of bees in a Cottage hive … you well know this is not my instructions … and if my Apiary at G Park disgrace me by neglect send it back again I scarce can get them made fast enough. Had you got my Tretice [sic] out you and your carpenter might of given me the go by but providence yet protect me and I trust it will not suffer such an imposition to pull down the bullworks [sic] of such an important discovery. In hast your Hum St Thomas Nutt’.

Peregrine merely opined of the letter that ‘what I consider as insolence—he might really mean in part as wit:—besides I thought the letter worth preserving’. However, of Mr Nutt and his capabilities as a carpenter he was less forgiving:

‘His inverted box (Apiary as the silly man persists in calling each swarm, in spite of all I can say to correct him) was in particular so shamefully put together, that without hesitation I should have packed it up, and sent it back … had it not been a present to my daughter from him … His last remark is worthy of himself — “had you got my Tretice” etc. etc. a rascal, he promised me from the beginning that his book should be immediately published, which my friends believed would be the case, or they would not have been so foolish as to buy boxes, which, without the necessary information were of no manner of use to them.’

Andrew Barber, Curator, East Midlands

1 As, however, every colony of Bees, … is under an admirable government, the presiding head and Sovereign of which is a QUEEN, as no colony of Bees, deprived of its QUEEN, ever prospers or long survives such a loss … as these most curious … little creatures have hitherto been … annually sacrificed by millions, for the sake of their sweet treasure, I do feel a pleasure, and think there is a sort of analogical propriety, in dedicating for your Gracious Majesty this work …’

ACQUISITIONS

COUGHTON COURT, WARWICKSHIRE

A silver cup by Robert Cooper, London, 1709, engraved with the arms of Throckmorton quartering Yate, almost certainly for Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, 9th Baronet (1818-1919), of Coughton Court, has been purchased at auction at Christie’s, King Street, London, for £3,300 including buyer’s premium. The cup had previously been sold at auction at Christie’s by the trustees of Sir Nicholas William Throckmorton on 25 July 1934.
Unlocking the tragic story of Repton’s ‘most favourite work’

In his diary, held by the Norfolk Record Office, Abbot Upcher wrote: ‘I am like the possessor of some gem of inestimable value and beauty, concealed in a casket, you have presented me with the key, and I now perceive with astonishment all its hitherto latent beauties bursting on my raptur’d sight.’ How sad that the romantic young owner whose dream it was to build a family home on his newly purchased estate was never to enjoy its fulfilment; both he and Humphry Repton, the creative force behind that dream, were to die before its completion.

Abbot Upcher was a wealthy young man from an old Essex family. He married Charlotte Wilson, daughter of the 5th Baron Berners. In 1811 he purchased an estate in Upper Sheringham for £52,000 from its previous owner, Cook Flower. Upcher was pleased with the ‘beautiful and romantic grounds’ overlooking the sea, but ‘cruelly disappointed’ with the house, vowing to realise the potential of this enchanting spot. Several years earlier the estate had been under consideration to be given as a tribute to the nation’s hero Horatio Nelson, and the fashionable landscape gardener Humphry Repton had been commissioned to design it. This project was ill-fated; however, Cook Flower’s agent William Repton introduced the new owner to his father Humphry, and this meeting of kindred spirits set a tragic story in motion.

Sheringham at this time consisted of two communities totalling around 400 people: Upper Sheringham was the most developed, whilst Lower Sheringham was a busy fishing hamlet. As new squire of the manor, Abbot immediately began making improvements to his estate by repairing cottages and farm buildings and planting trees and crops, whilst Charlotte set about distributing blankets and food to the needy and establishing a female friendly society and a school for local children. From the outset this was to be a family home, and in his diary entry of 2 July 1813 Abbot describes how the young children all helped with the laying of the foundation stones (little Emma fell into the mortar), followed in turn by each of the servants. Every Christmas Day the Upchers would entertain their servants and their families, and the children would all dance together in the nursery.

The Upcher’s paternalism, born out of their strong faith and sense of Christian duty, was returned in their relationship with Repton and his architect son John Adey, who produced working drawings for the house and supervised the building work. No ‘useless’ showy drawing room was required for the Upchers—they had few plans to entertain—but he provided a large family living room, a business room for Abbot, and a cozy sitting room for Charlotte.

The young owner and the sixty-year-old landscape designer struck up an immediate friendship. A Norfolk man himself, Repton was returning to his home county for this commission. After years of trying to please wealthy clients with an eye for fashion, he was relieved to find a kindred spirit who shared his views on ‘improving’ the landscape within the bounds of practicality. Sheringham, Repton believed, possessed ‘more natural beauty and local advantages’ than anywhere he had ever seen, and it promised to showcase his art as never before, as we can see from the exquisite Red Book of designs he left for posterity.

Upcher’s great delight in planning his new house and its setting is evident from his diaries. He often writes of the anticipated pleasure he and the family will derive from the estate, ‘a place to escape from the cares of the world and to meditate on God’s mercies and be thankful for them.’ In October 1812, however, the dream started to fall apart. He was struck down with a ‘violent nervous fever’, thought to be a breakdown brought on by stress, which was to culminate in his death from a stroke in February 1819. Repton, by this time wheelchair-bound following a carriage accident, concluded sadly that his ‘favourite and darling child in Norfolk has ceased to be an object of delight’; he himself was to die in 1818. Following the untimely death of her husband, the distraught Charlotte vowed to mourn his loss for five years, and was unable to complete ‘that once happy paradise’ that had been her husband’s dream. Two years later she still writes to him in her diary, anticipating the time when they will be reunited. She left home on only one occasion, to take young Henry to school.

Gradually Charlotte’s mourning came to an end, and she began to take up the reigns of administering to the needs of the parishioners whilst mothering her six young children. Encouraged through her friendship with the philanthropic Buxton family, she gradually rejoined society, working to promote the Bible Society, visiting local prisons, and supporting Sheringham fishermen by lending them money to buy larger boats. She also provided the town with its first lifeboat in 1838. In that year her eldest son...
REVEALING NEW LAYERS OF VALUE AND MEANING
A creative partnership interprets Sheringham’s designed landscape

The landscape of Sheringham Park in Norfolk was recently the subject of new research into its history and evolution. The occasion was the 200th anniversary, in 2012, of Humphry Repton’s Red Book for the site. The project has resulted in a new installation at the reception centre that helps to bring the landscape to life in new and interesting ways.

The National Trust acquired Sheringham in 1987. The significance of the place lies particularly in its designed landscape, which is one of the few extant examples of a Repton design still evident on the ground (although there have been some changes in the two centuries since it was created). The house is let to private tenants, meaning that visitors are drawn to Sheringham Park purely for its landscape and setting.

Sheringham had a special place in Repton’s heart. Having been brought up in Norfolk and spent his formative years here, Repton was dismayed that he was not better known professionally in the county—perhaps, as he once said, ‘from its being “the prophet’s own country”’. Sheringham was originally envisaged by Repton as a patriotic gift from the nation to Admiral Nelson, another local son made good; Repton was eventually commissioned to create his design for the park by Abbot Upcher, who purchased the estate in 1811.

Repton declared Sheringham to be his favourite work, though it came fairly late in his career (Repton died in 1818). He produced it while recovering from the after-effects of a carriage accident in 1811. The Red Book reveals much about Repton’s anxieties, both about the state of the nation and his own personal circumstances. The year 1812 was an eventful one: Britain was at war with France, Henry was to marry; he completed the house in the following year, making it his family home until 1892. Bills amongst the family papers reveal that the house was finally decorated in the 1840s with marble fireplaces and silk wall panels, probably much as Repton’s son had intended, and filled with fine mahogany and rosewood furniture. Further restoration work by Thomas Upcher, who inherited after the Second World War, brought the interior of the house even closer to the Regency villa it was first intended to be, with a staircase very like the original design, niches for classical statues, and pale lilac walls.

Sheringham Bower, as it came to be romantically named, is a house with an intriguing and largely untold story. The tragedy of the two men who were inspired to create it has only been outlined here. Further scouring of archives and interviews with people who lived and worked on the estate have revealed insights into Sheringham’s history and previously hidden tales of girls in the wartime Women’s Land Army, vintage car rallies, and champagne parties amongst the rhododendrons.

The final part of Repton’s design, a temple, was added in 1975 by Tom Upcher, though realised in hexagonal rather than circular form, and a gazebo opened by the Prince of Wales in 1988 was the descendant of a look-out tower that had stood at the top of the hill since Napoleonic times. The estate passed to the National Trust on the death of Tom Upcher; today, whilst the house is tenanted, the beauty of the park can be enjoyed by walkers, wildlife enthusiasts and schoolchildren, and serves as a fitting tribute to its unfortunate creators.

Liz Larby, Freelance Collections Manager

Humphry Repton
(1752-1818)

Humphry Repton’s Business Card
and the country faced social and financial strife, including Luddite protests and hardship suffered by the poor. ‘The times look portentous … all the country seems in Arms’, wrote Repton to his son in April 1812. His design for the landscape included advice on the maintenance of good community relations through alms giving, the provision of a village green, and the laying on of cricket matches and hare coursing on the beach. Suggestions like this would have appealed to the moral feelings of the deeply Christian Upchers.

Sheringham was the most perfect realisation of Repton’s lifelong ambition to enhance natural beauty through landscape gardening. Subtle planting schemes gave a sense of depth and vitality to the views from a long drive that forms the heart of the landscape; it travels along a high ridge before turning dramatically to reveal the house, designed by Repton’s son John Adey. Much of the visitor’s experience of the landscape here depends upon a sense of movement and theatricality, so the researchers explored the influence of music and the theatre on Repton’s own craft.

The research was funded by a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council as part of its programme addressing questions of environmental change. It was undertaken by a team from the University of Nottingham and the University of East Anglia, led by Repton’s biographer Professor Stephen Daniels. A workshop was held at Norwich in June 2012 which was attended by academics, Repton experts, National Trust staff, and other custodians of historic landscapes.

Archival research was undertaken to address questions of environmental change in relation to this particularly significant historic landscape. Different timescales and contexts were explored, from the geological changes affecting the nearby coastline to the political and social context of 1812, when Repton was preparing his designs. In this way, the researchers teased out the multiple narratives within the Sheringham landscape, and asked how best this landscape could be conserved and displayed as a consequence.

Most people visit Sheringham to take pleasure and delight in the outdoors, from the distant view of the sea to the flowering rhododendrons (an addition that post-dated Repton’s influence on the site). A principal aim of the research was to encourage visitors to see the park in a new light, in the hope that we might reveal new layers of value and meaning to them without overdosing them with curatorial direction. A key challenge, therefore, was to find ways to bring the landscape to life.

The result was the new visitor exhibition that has been installed in the reception centre with an accompanying catalogue and downloadable walk. The exhibition features an audio-visual interpretation of Repton’s design of 1812, with music that was researched, selected, arranged, performed and recorded by staff and students of the Department of Music at the University of Nottingham, under the direction of Dr Philip Weller. Other panels fill in the context of 1812, while touch-screen technology allows visitors to explore Repton’s Red Book for themselves.

The project was a highly successful demonstration of the benefits of the National Trust’s working with academic partners. Public engagement was at the heart of the project, compelling the researchers and Trust staff involved to think afresh about how (and why) we conserve and present historic landscapes.

Ben Cowell, Regional Director, East of England
ACQUISITIONS

ACCEPTANCE IN LIEU 2010-12
Arts Council England recently published the list of works of art and other heritage objects accepted in lieu of inheritance tax during 2010-12, and among the beneficiaries were the following National Trust properties:

BASILDON PARK, BERKSHIRE
A group of 41 items and sets was accepted in lieu of inheritance by HM Government and allocated to the National Trust for display at Basildon Park, settling £696,920 in tax. The allocation included an outstanding work by the French painter Anne Vallayer-Coster (1744-1818), The Attributes of Hunting and Gardening: Still Life with a Bust, Game and Vegetables. Vallayer-Coster was a prodigy who was elected as a member of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture at the age of twenty-six, one of only three women to receive that honour in pre-Revolutionary France.

Also included was Portrait of Frances Lyde Browne by Pompeo Batoni (1708-87), painted when the sitter accompanied her father, the antiquities collector Lyde Browne, on a visit to Rome. All the items in the allocation had been brought to Basildon by Langton, 2nd Lord Iliffe and his wife Renée, who restored and redecorated the house from 1952 onwards.

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BUCKLAND ABBEY, DEVON
Two paintings by the Dutch 17th-century master Willem Willemsz. van de Velde the Younger (1633-70), entitled Dutch shipping in a heavy swell, with a small bolder under a half-lowered mainmast and a school of porpoises in the foreground, and A Dutch three-master and a boeier in the foreground, her mainmast being lowered in stormy weather, were accepted by HM Government in lieu of inheritance tax on the estate of Edna, Lady Samuel of Wycherell, in 1776. Two of the four coolers in this set have later gilt liners by Paul Storr, London, 1813. Their relatively simple design with tapering bodies decorated with bands of ribbed decoration imitates the shape of milk pails and is related to the taste for country life, model farms and pleasure dauries which was prevalent in the late 18th century.

The second set is by the leading early 19th-century silversmith Paul Storr and is hallmarked 1812 and 1813. The form of these coolers is ultimately based on a 1778 design by the Italian engraver and architect Giovanni Battista Piranesi.

LYME PARK, CHESHIRE
Twelve pieces of furniture, a pair of Dehua Chinese porcelain figures, eight portraits and one landscape painting have been accepted by HM Government in lieu of inheritance tax and allocated to the National Trust for display at Lyme Park, settling £679,840 in tax.

The furniture includes a pair of English toccoco gillwood side tables with Portoro marble tops and also a carved mahogany settee, bergère armchairs, and stools which are part of a set dating to about 1745.

The portraits include a late 16th-century full length of Margaret Gerard (1569/70-1603) attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger. The sitter married Sir Peter Leigh IX (1568-1616), who completed and extended the Elizabethan house at Lyme.

SEATON DELAVAL HALL, NORTHUMBERLAND
A group of 14 objects with a provenance from the Ashley family, Barons Hastings, was accepted by HM Government in lieu of inheritance tax and allocated to the National Trust for display at Seaton Delaval, settling £312,860 in tax. The allocation includes a group of four 17th- and 18th-century miniatures of members of the Astley family, a large 17th-century Flemish ewer and basin, and a group of textiles, the most important of which is a 16th-century leather purse embroidered in gold and silver thread, said to have belonged to Cardinal Wolsey.

Emile de Bruijn, Registrar
(Collections and Grants)