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Finding their feet: the ‘Petworth Beauties’

Paintings of two ladies of Queen Anne’s court, which were shortened 200 years ago to make more space on the wall, have been restored to their full glory by the National Trust for an exhibition at Tate Britain. The paintings, by the Swedish portrait painter Michael Dahl (1656/9–1743), depict Rachel Russell, Duchess of Devonshire, and Mary Somerset, Duchess of Ormonde, two of the highest-ranking noblewomen at court. They belong to a set of eight portraits commissioned for the ‘Beauty Room’ at Petworth House in Sussex at the end of the 17th century. In the 1820s the third Earl of Egremont, then owner of Petworth House, wanted more space for some new paintings celebrating the Battle of Waterloo (1815). He ordered that six of the portraits should be cut to three-quarter length, declaring: ‘I will cut off their legs, I do not want their petticoats’.

The two paintings appear in Tate Britain’s ‘British Baroque: Power and Illusion’ exhibition, but please note that Tate Britain, along with Tate’s other galleries, is currently closed until further notice. For more information about the exhibition see: www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/british-baroque.
‘Lost’ reliquary bust discovered

A carved 15th-century sculpture displayed on top of a cupboard at Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire has been identified as a unique reliquary bust of the martyr St Agnes (NT 514456). Previously believed lost to the art world, the life-sized bust is by Niclaus Gerhaert von Leyden (c.1430–73) or his workshop. Only 20 of his works are thought to survive and the newly discovered sculpture is the only one in a UK public collection.

The discovery was made during a four-year sculpture cataloguing project to fully record and research all 6,000 sculptures and statues in the National Trust’s collection. According to Sculpture Research Curator Dr Jeremy Warren, who made the discovery: ‘It was clear to me that the sculpture was of superb quality ... my research took me to the surviving plaster cast of this bust, which tied up all the loose ends neatly. It has taken over 80 years for St Agnes to be given back her identity.’

The Nostell Dolls’ House
Publication: March 2020

Published to mark the opening of a permanent exhibition showcasing this rare 18th-century dolls’ house at Nostell in West Yorkshire, Simon McCormack’s book features new photography of the house and its contents.

Never intended for use as a mere toy, the dolls’ house would have served as an important educational tool for young women learning how to run a grand 18th-century house. Its diminutive interiors, which are in a remarkable state of preservation, provide a rare window on the largely lost décors of grand houses of that time.

For further details, see page 1.
To order a copy (RRP £6.50), visit: shop.nationaltrust.org.uk

India & Me: A Journey
Basildon Park, Berkshire
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/basildon-park

The Garden Room at Basildon has been transformed with the help of an audio-visual exhibition produced in collaboration with the Reading Indian Centre.

In a series of workshops the property invited the local Indian community to respond to Basildon Park’s Zuber wallpaper (left), which was designed in 1806 by a French artist who had never been to India.

The property worked with Studio 24, a digital design agency, to create an atmospheric soundscape mapped onto these idealised depictions of India. Quotations exploring themes of migration and cultural adjustment are projected onto the wallpaper, while visitors can listen to recorded memories and personal journeys.

Along with all other National Trust properties and sites, Basildon is currently closed, but ‘India & Me: A Journey’ will resume when the property re-opens and is scheduled to run until early 2021.
Lost Killerton

Uncovering James Wyatt’s unfinished Palladian house

Fiona Hailstone
Land Outdoors and Nature Project Officer

Rumours of a lost house by the renowned architect James Wyatt (1746–1813) at Killerton, Devon, have circulated for years. John Martin Robinson’s 2011 monograph James Wyatt, 1746–1813: Architect to George III described this ambitious project in some detail, providing evidence that the new house was to be built on an elevated site and reproducing Wyatt’s 1775 elevation drawing of the façade. Robinson concluded, however, that the building was never started.1

The existing Killerton House (Fig. 1) is a modest two-storey house, described in the property’s Conservation Management Plan as ‘… the result of complicated incremental growth and alteration’.2 The Acland family bought Killerton at the turn of the 17th century and while the exact date of the initial footprint of Killerton House is unknown, an inventory of 1646 confirms that it was a substantial building at that stage.

Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, seventh Baronet (1722–85) (Fig. 2), chose Wyatt to build a grand Palladian seat more befitting his family’s status. In the autumn of 2016 new evidence relating to the Wyatt project came to light with the help of a combination of serendipity and newly available LiDAR imaging provided by the Environment Agency (EA).

LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a mapping technique that uses a laser to measure the distance between the sensor and the target object or area, allowing highly detailed terrain models to be generated. In September 2015 the EA began providing all its data freely via an online portal, making a huge amount of airborne LiDAR data available for archaeological purposes.

The team at Killerton had already begun work to restore the Grade II parkland and repair the roof of the Grade II* house. While the roof timbers of the current house were revealing multiple phases of construction, the new LiDAR imaging of Killerton’s deer park was beginning to uncover evidence of other early phases of the property’s complex history.

The earthwork in the woods

Funded by a Higher Level Stewardship agreement in partnership with Historic England, Killerton’s ranger team was restoring two large scheduled monuments within the parkland: Dolbury hill fort, and two sections of deer park pale (a ditch and bank structure designed to impark wild deer).

While the restoration of the hill fort could largely be achieved with the help

1. Killerton House was adapted for the family of Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, seventh Baronet, when his plans for a grander residence fell through.

Photo: National Trust Images/Malcolm Jarvis
of some friendly Dartmoor ponies, the pales were altogether more complex and labour-intensive. These stone-faced banks are each a kilometre long; they were extremely overgrown with scrub and in many sections the facing had slumped completely.

South West Archaeology Ltd was contracted to undertake a watching brief on the pale repairs. With fresh eyes on the map of these two pales, which have subtly different styles of construction, their team noted that the pales did not form a complete boundary. How then could they have kept the deer in? What had happened to the rest of the boundary? Or was it made up of fencing that had been removed later?

When South West Archaeology Ltd consulted the LiDAR data from the EA (fortunately Killerton had been well covered by the survey aircraft’s flight lines), it revealed an archaeological palimpsest of earthworks within Killerton’s parkland. The most eye-catching was a very distinct, rectilinear terrace and earthwork bank within Columbjohn Wood, just west of Dolbury hill fort.3

The geology of Killerton Park is a mix of strong igneous rocks because its highest points are the result of a volcanic outcrop. It is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its local geological interest and it encompasses several large quarries that have been used in the past to extract building stone. However, the shape on the LiDAR was so different to that of the quarries that further investigation was needed.

After some initial ground-truthing (on-site verification of the remote-sensing data) it was possible to see the large L-shaped earth bank and, in the pit, discarded brickwork and clay roof tiles. However, the site was covered with 20ft-high laurel and mature sycamore trees, and it was difficult to gauge its scale. The site lies right beside a busy footpath that follows the ridge of Columbjohn Wood and it was surprising that such a large site had remained unnoticed for so many years.

The Acland archives and Wyatt’s designs

The Acland family had lived at Killerton since the mid-17th century, having moved just one kilometre eastwards from their manor at Columbjohn, nestled beside the River Culm. This original house was badly damaged during the English Civil War, causing them to relocate to Killerton.

At one stage in the early 19th century, their land holding covered most of the West Country and it was said to be possible to walk from the south to the north coasts of Devon without leaving Acland land.

The family’s archives are incomplete due to losses in the Second World War bombing of Exeter, but the estate ledgers of Thomas Dyke Acland, the seventh Baronet, have survived almost in their entirety. They tell of an expensive and disastrous building project in the 1770s undertaken by James Wyatt to create the ‘New House’, which is also referred to in the accounts as ‘the Building on the Hill’. The location of this ‘New House’ had, however, long since been lost from memory.

Following further research, the designs by James Wyatt, dated 1775, were located in the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) archives. They included scaled drawings of two storeys of the building, all the elevations and a cellar (see Figs. 3 and 4).4 The scale of these plans for a grand Palladian country house indicate that this building would have been three times the size of the current Killerton House: a grandeur befitting the Aclands’ wealth and status at this time.

Interestingly, the RIBA archives also hold designs drawn up by Robert Adam in 1768 for Thomas Dyke Acland. However, only Wyatt is shown to have received payment for construction in Sir Thomas’s estate ledger.5

2. Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, 1767, Sir Joshua Reynolds PRA (1723–92), oil on canvas, 150 x 123cm
Photo: National Trust Images/Sophia Farley
Rallying the troops
With a property-wide enthusiasm to investigate the site in the woods further, a volunteer day was organised and staff and volunteers from all departments helped to clear the laurel that was hiding the true extent of the earthworks. The group made quick progress and within a day the site had been cleared of understory, leaving just the mature trees. Several internal piles of broken bricks were revealed.

It was now clear that the natural ground level of the woodland was somewhere between the base of this depression and the banks around it, suggesting that it had been dug lower and the earth thrown up to create the rectilinear rampart. Perhaps this was the cellar shown in Wyatt’s impressive designs, which included a circular Roman-style bathroom, billiard room and extensive wine cellars (Fig. 4).

The earthwork survey
South West Archaeology Ltd was commissioned to lead an earthwork survey of the site with a newly formed archaeology volunteer group – now the Heritage Archaeological Ranger Team (HART) – which had been inspired to action by this new discovery. Volunteers also made an important contribution to the archival research.

The earthwork survey matched the scale of Wyatt’s symmetrical design, even providing a hint of the centrally placed grand curved entrance and the convex portico on the north side. Meanwhile, the volunteer researchers had also found an important exchange of letters between Sir Thomas Dyke Acland and James Wyatt in the Acland archives, which confirmed that construction of the new house had indeed been started.

An excavation was planned with two trenches (Fig. 5): one on this north side, which it was hoped would hit the convex portico,
if any evidence of its construction remained; and another on the western side, where the rampart sloped into the rectangular pit.

**The excavation**

Dishearteningly the first two days of digging revealed nothing except the rubble of the re-deposited natural geology of broken basalt fragments. Day three, however, brought a change of fortunes. One of the team from South West Archaeology Ltd was explaining to a member of the public that no signs of construction had yet been found, when one of the volunteers, who was working in the western trench, brushed away the earth towards the lower half of the trench to reveal constructed brickwork. The dimensions of the bricks in the trench matched those of the bricks in the loose rubble banks in the pit.

Two corners of a room, a doorway and an outer wall were uncovered in this trench (Fig. 7). The size and construction of the outer wall suggested that it had been built to support a very large building. If the cellar of Wyatt’s plans had been completed, this would have been the site of the billiard room.

Constructive material was also found in the northern trench. It had been covered over with the bank, which may have been built up to hide the pit from view when the site was abandoned.

**Why were these grand plans abandoned?**

The archives show that building work was started in 1775 but abandoned two years later. After closely studying what little documentary evidence exists of the project, several possible explanations emerge as to why Sir Thomas decided to abandon the site part way through construction. A number of factors probably contributed to his decision.
His eldest son, John Dyke Acland (1747–78), the heir to the estates, had been wounded and taken captive in the American War of Independence (1775–83). With the help of his wife Harriet he managed to return to England in 1778. A quarrel with a fellow officer soon afterwards, however, culminated in a duel, and although neither party was hurt, Acland caught a chill and died from the resulting fever. This seems to have been the last straw for Sir Thomas’s plans to make Killerton the finest home in Devon. His diary reads:

November 12th, dined at Holnicote, sent for to Pixton on Account of my Son’s Illness … 13th–14th my Son dangerously ill … 15th my Dear Son dyed … 16th Went to Holnicote, could not bear Pixton.

The death of his son – and the heir to the ‘New House’ – was a devastating blow and the building project was abandoned. The estate workers were charged with salvaging building materials from the site and ‘bringing them down the hill by Horse and Cart’. It is thought that the stone was either used to adapt the existing Killerton House at the bottom of the hill or to build the Stable Block, both of which were worked on in 1778–79.

Wyatt’s grand house was lost, and this was probably a time in Sir Thomas’s life that he wanted to forget. By the end of Wyatt’s career, he had become notorious for his poor account-keeping and he was destitute, having scattered more than one unfinished project across the English countryside.

Finding the lost house 240 years after it was abandoned has greatly contributed to the Conservation Management Plans for Killerton. The excavation validates the theory that Wyatt’s abortive house was located on this site (Fig. 6). Furthermore, the rarity of a grand house of this period that was abandoned mid-construction increases the site’s significance in the archaeological record, and the team at Killerton are now considering applying for Scheduled Monument status.

Notes
4. For further images of Wyatt’s designs see the RIBA Image Library (www.architecture.com/image-library/ribapix.html).
5. An entry from Sir Thomas Dyke Acland’s personal journal account (Ref I48M add/General Accounts/Acland Household I&2) reads: ‘23rd May 1775 Advanced Mr Wyatt at [the commencement of my building at Killerton] & charged in Mr Hoare’s Acct by my Draft £500 0s 0d’. The December 1775 end of year reconciliation in Sir Thomas’s journal includes the entry: ‘To Mr Wyatt for ye New House £300’.

One of the problems the project ran into was the relatively poor quality of the bricks, which was evident from the examples surveyed as part of the excavation. James Wyatt expressed his concerns in a letter to Sir Thomas Acland in 1775: ‘Johnson gives me so bad an Acct. of the Brick that I cannot by any means advise you to use it in the foundations and Basement Storey’. Wyatt’s letters also record the difficulty of establishing a water supply at the site: ‘... the well which they are sinking the immense depth of it will render it useless ...’. He suggested pumping water from the River Culm:

I have got an estimate from Chapman in St Martins lane of the expence of erecting an Engine at the River (to work itself by the current) and raise the water to the building it will cost abt. £300.

By this point it was 1777 and having paid Wyatt £6,000 already this news came to Sir Thomas in London after months of no communication from the architect. He wrote to Wyatt and told him to put the project on hold, present his bill and order his workmen to leave the site. Other, far more pressing, developments demanded Sir Thomas’s attention.
All miniatures seem to have intrinsic aesthetic quality – and from what should they draw this constant virtue if not from the dimensions themselves?\(^1\)

For the French social anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, miniaturisation was the very essence of art. Far from merely reducing their subjects in size, although that often requires great skill, he felt that small-scale models had an aesthetic value linked to the way the viewer perceives them. Unlike most real-world objects, ‘knowledge of the whole precedes knowledge of the parts’ – so the work can be perceived immediately and as a whole, powerfully enhancing the viewer’s experience.\(^2\)

Lévi-Strauss’s analysis of the relationship between art, perception and miniaturisation is persuasive, but the strange and enduring appeal of the model village, one that has occasionally bordered on mania in Britain, seems to draw on something deeper too. For adults, of course, much of the fascination lies in their evocation of the miniature worlds of childhood: neat ranks of toy soldiers drawn up in battle order, tiny locomotives speeding through the perfect villages of a model railway set, or the trim and orderly rooms of a dolls’ house.

Crucially, these small worlds are territories of the imagination, formed both by and for its exercise. Importantly, too, they are places outside adult regulation which, for all their apparent orderliness, are primed with dramatic, even chaotic, possibility. (No small boy ever looked at a train set the same way after they’d seen 1960s television series The Addams Family creatively introducing dynamite to this sedate pastime.) Perhaps this is why model villages have sometimes harboured darker, even downright dystopian elements, too – though few quite as extreme as the 1:87-scale model village (more of an urban riot-scape) that featured in Banksy’s ‘anti-theme park’ Dismaland in 2015.\(^3\)

Miniature worlds invite the viewer’s imagination to enter and interact, functioning as what cultural theorists would call an ‘open text’ – one written as much by the active ‘reader’ as by the ‘author’. This idea of the viewer as a kind of co-creator rather than mere passive consumer, is important in all spheres of art but it seems to hold especially true for miniature works.

Snowshill Manor in Gloucestershire testifies to the fact that the great collector and former owner Charles Paget Wade (1883–1956) (Fig. 2) understood these ideas long before modern cultural theory formalised them.
The extraordinary community of objects with which Wade populated Snowshill includes many scale models and other forms of artistic miniaturisation with a special capacity to generate wonder. Wade loved to ignite the imagination of others, too. Before he gave Snowshill to the National Trust in 1951 he had welcomed over 10,000 visitors to view his collection,5 which he strove to present not as a museum but as an experience, a place that would 'inspire a thousand fancies'.5

Wade’s fascination with scale models reached its highest and fullest expression in Wolf’s Cove, the elaborate model village that he began building in the grounds of Snowshill Manor in the 1920s. More a group of settlements than a single village, Wolf’s Cove centred on a miniature Cornish fishing village built around a stone-lined plunge pool, complete with bustling quayside and stone breakwater. It featured a canal system (Fig. 9), river, model railway, pubs, cottages and even hand-made wooden inhabitants.

Wolf’s Cove evolved from an earlier model village, Fladbury, designed and built by Wade in the garden of his Hampstead lodging in c.1908, which is often cited as ‘Britain’s first recorded true model village’.6 Fladbury was ground-breaking because it was a great deal more than an outdoor railway set with some attractive trackside scenery. It orchestrated a whole array of miniature infrastructure, with houses, figures and even, as one archive photograph shows, a horse-drawn cart being loaded with tiny grain sacks (Fig. 6).

Wade bought Snowshill Manor in 1919, creating a terraced garden with help from the Arts and Crafts architect and designer M. H. Baillie Scott (1865–1945). During the 1920s he began to build Wolf’s Cove, using elements of the earlier Fladbury as a basis but now transforming it into a lively fishing village. It expanded further in the 1930s, acquiring a canal and 1:30 scale W. J. Bassett-Lowke 1-gauge railway, installed with the help of an Evesham building contractor.7 Carefully pruned box trees (now rather too mature for the village’s scale of roughly 1:24) provided a real miniature forest.

Wade had trained and worked as an architect and close inspection of the surviving buildings and archive photographs of the original Wolf’s Cove shows how he brought that experience to bear. The collection at Snowshill includes many of Wade’s original plans and preliminary sketches for buildings and other components of the village. The level of detail is staggering but entirely consistent with Wade’s meticulous and finely grained approach to all his creative endeavours. For example, a pencil sketch (NT 1331809) of a harbourside winch (probably the one shown in Fig. 8) shows each individual plank and beam and records the dimensions, the materials to be used and even the required paint finish.

In contrast, there are elements of pure whimsy in Wade’s creation, too, reminding the visitor that he was an artist and illustrator as well as an architect and craftsman. The quayside, for example, features some deeply eccentric builds, including The Sail Loft (NT 1339211), a truncated man-of-war fitted with a pitched roof and dormer windows. Likewise, at the northern end of the dry-stone wall that overlooks the main village site, is a cluster of ‘trogloidyte houses’ built into the wall structure that are visible in archive photographs. Wade’s hand-carved and painted figures are also full of wry humour and dynamic character (Figs. 3–4).

Wolf’s Cove and the National Trust

Unusually, the village was designed to be dismantled in winter so that the wood, plaster, felt and straw-thatched buildings could be taken in out of the weather. The
structures sat on permanent brick, stone or concrete foundations, rather than being permanently fixed in the landscape. The original buildings continued to be displayed outdoors at Snowshill until sometime in the 1970s, when they were permanently moved indoors. Today, many of them can be enjoyed in a series of displays in the Costume Room in the manor house. Many of the model buildings were cleaned and repaired in 2013 by Tankerdale Conservation and Restoration, the Trust’s advisers on furniture conservation. Around the same time, in 2012, Snowshill volunteers began to produce detailed replicas of the original buildings as part of a project (still under way) to recreate a large section of the original Wolf’s Cove layout outdoors for the enjoyment of visitors. Property staff also began exploring the wider site for evidence of the lost elements of the village, including the river and canal, which had been filled in during the 1970s.

Small-scale archaeological excavations were carried out in 2013 and 2014 to explore elements of the Wolf’s Cove site. Overseen by Jennifer Rowley-Bowen (Snowshill’s Senior House Steward and a trained archaeologist), they revealed parts of the original river and canal as well as the footings of some of Wade’s buildings. The evidence, corroborated by archive sketches, plans and photographs, potentially paves the way for the village’s full reinstatement, rather than the limited replica that occupies the site today. The features revealed by the excavations were in surprisingly good condition, given that they are close to a century old and have been much disturbed by tree roots. The 2014 excavation report concluded that ‘it would be entirely feasible to restore the features that exist and recreate lost elements sympathetically using our knowledge of materials used by Charles Wade’.  

Model villages: a small history
The social media era has seen a surge in interest in micro-worlds and hyper-realistic dioramas, while miniaturisation has become both a medium and a powerful theme for contemporary artists like street installation artist Slinkachu and ‘micro-sculptor’ Willard Wigan. Scale modelling, however, is an ancient art. Architectural models have been found at sites associated with Ancient Egypt, Han Dynasty China and the Pre-Columbian Americas, among others. Many of them are replicas of granaries (Fig. 5) and other buildings connected to wealth and status, which could be placed in the tomb with a view to ensuring prosperity in the afterlife. Much later, in the Renaissance and Baroque periods architectural models were widely used in Europe to demonstrate designs.

Early small-scale landscapes include the Japanese ‘promenade gardens’ that began to evolve in the 7th century, which incorporated miniature mountains, lakes and islands. Another precursor of the modern model village is the Georgian designed landscape, with its scaled-down temples and ruins. In the 19th century, the Victorian preoccupation with alpine gardens and rockeries saw the proliferation of exquisitely tended miniature landscapes as visitor attractions.

It was the growing popularity of model railways in the early 20th century, however, that made possible the model village as we know it today. Companies like the UK’s Bassett-Lowke manufactured increasingly popular model trains from table-top scale up to outdoor rideable live-stock locomotives at 15-inch gauge. Outdoor model railways grew in popularity and began to accumulate more extensive trackside scenery. Scale modelling also took off as a hobby thanks to the pioneering work of enthusiasts like John H. Ahern (1903–61), author of the seminal Miniature Building Construction: An architectural guide for modellers (1947).

After, and perhaps influenced by, Charles Paget Wade’s early model villages of Fladbury (Fig. 6) and Wolf’s Cove, the next great leap forward in model village development is provided by Bekonscot in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire. Still open today, it was created in the 1920s by wealthy accountant Roland Callingham (1881–1961). The village and its 1-gauge Bassett-Lowke model railway rapidly expanded around the fringes of the Callingshams’ swimming pool; it was opened to the public in 1929.

The 1950s and early 1960s were the heyday of the British model village. The accessibility and affordability of the British seaside drew great summer crowds and model villages sprang up along coastal resorts from Polperro in Cornwall to Skegness in Lincolnshire (both still operating today). Then, as Simon Garfield eloquently puts it, ‘The Costa Del Sol and the permissive society arrived, and miniature innocence went the way of the girdle and the Teasmade’. British model villages didn’t die out (as a visit to Windsor’s Legoland will confirm), but their golden years may be behind them.

Finally, returning to a National Trust context, one other example should be mentioned. The Trust created a temporary model village, Acorn Magna, for the ‘Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition’ in 1978, which included 1:12 scale reproductions of 43 buildings owned by the Trust. They were arranged around a common, complete with that popular model village trope, the miniature cricket match.
The report also identified a number of possible areas for future exploration, potentially revealing further stretches of the river and canal; the ‘lost’ railway stations of Stoke Dry, Thirlwall Mere and Caldecote; and more of the original footings. Removal of ivy from the northern end of the dry-stone wall could also expose evidence of Wade’s tiny troglodyte houses. Further excavation, however, is complicated by the risk of damage to established trees and plants. Nevertheless, as the 2014 report points out: ‘There is a real opportunity now to recreate Wade’s marvellous vision and leave a lasting legacy for future visitors’.24

To fully understand that legacy and what it might mean for future visitors, it is necessary to return to the power of imaginative engagement discussed at the start of this article.

Dramatic potential
Between 1919 and 1951 Snowshill was visited and admired by some of the best-known cultural figures of the day, including Virginia Woolf, Edwin Lutyens, J. B. Priestley and John Betjeman. Wolf’s Cove was clearly a highlight for many of them and it began to make regular appearances in print, initially in the mid-1920s in periodicals like Homes and Gardens and Country Life, and later in books including Priestley’s 1934 travelogue English Journey and the 1947 Puffin book Marvellous Models (co-authored by W. J. Bassett-Lowke, the founder of the illustrious model railway and toy company).

The greatest tribute of all came in an illustrated article for the January 1932 issue of Architectural Review by its then Assistant Editor, John Betjeman. Of everything written about Wolf’s Cove it is this remarkable flight of fancy that is most deeply in tune with the spirit of Snowshill and Wade’s vision of a place that would inspire the imagination.

Treating the village as though it were a real place he had visited, Betjeman populates it with smugglers, drunken sailors (and their long-suffering wives), an eccentric Lord of the Manor, a surly station master and others, all drawn in just the kind of whimsical detail that animated the builder’s hand.

Betjeman’s portrait of the village and its surroundings begins cosily enough with a description of the ‘snug harbour … enclosed by the new breakwater, whose protecting arm shelters the fishermen’s cottages and older parts of Wolf’s Cove’.25 As in all the most intriguing miniature worlds, however, his vivid sketch finds not just quirkiness but also darker undercurrents sliding beneath its tranquil exterior: social rifts between ‘landlubbers’ and fisherfolk, and between the coarser locals swilling suspiciously cheap brandy in the Benbow and the more refined beer-drinkers at the Nelson. There is even an eye-catching reference to the village stocks that recalls the darker nursery rhymes (they were used quite recently, the narrator recounts, when a farm boy ‘was found to have cut off the tails of some cows’).26

It is only in the article’s final paragraph that the author ‘comes clean’, admitting that all of it was ‘made by Charles P. Wade … to a half-inch scale, so that is why no tripper has ever visited the district’.27 As Jonathan Howard notes, however, this caveat didn’t stop at least one reader from attempting to spend the day there: ‘Martin Hardie CBE of the Victoria and Albert Museum … wrote to Betjeman that after coming across the illustrations for Wolf’s Cove he had immediately decided to spend his annual leave there; he only discovered the deception after failing to locate it on a map’.28

7. A range of three half-timbered cottages made by Wade either for Fladbury or Wolf’s Cove; wood, plaster and paper, 50 x 37 x 11.5cm (NT 133999)
The village’s effect on Priestley was similar. He looked at Wolf’s Cove and immediately found himself spinning stories about it:

[Wolf’s Cove]’s creator decided that it should have a castle … I hope there will be no trouble in the village with the two-inch lord of this castle, for by this time the place may have settled down to an easy democratic existence and it may resent this sudden descent into the feudal system. This Lilliputian seaport … is still so real in my mind that I could write a novel about it.39

Wade’s injunction that Snowshill should not be presented as a conventional museum but as an absorbing and atmospheric experience is still honoured at the property today, and it is key to understanding Wade, Snowshill and Wolf’s Cove. The visitor is invited in to a series of imaginative interactions, actively meeting the objects that Wade collected and made ‘part way’ rather than passively consuming them. Modern admirers of Wolf’s Cove may not be drawn into quite such elaborate fantasies as Betjeman’s Cornish mini-saga but, as with everything at Snowshill, they are sure to experience that strange sensation of having entered another world.

Notes
Acknowledgements: the author would like to thank Jennifer Rowley-Bowen (Senior House Steward, Snowshill) for her help and advice.
2. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p.10.
17. Ibid., p.11.
‘Take this as my last dying gift’

Samuel Johnson’s Books at Felbrigg Hall

John Gandy
Librarian, Blickling Hall

On Tuesday 7 December 1784 at his London home, 8 Bolt Court, just off Fleet Street, Dr Samuel Johnson (1709–84) received a visit from his young friend William Windham (1750–1810). Johnson, the most distinguished man of letters of his day and author of the famous Dictionary (1755), was in the 75th year of his long life but was finally succumbing to his last long illness. Windham recorded their conversation in his diary:

After waiting some short time in the adjoining room, I was admitted to Dr. Johnson in his bedchamber, where, after placing me next him on the chair, he sitting in his usual place on the east side of the room (and I on his right hand), he put into my hands two small volumes (an edition of the New Testament, as he afterwards told me), saying, ‘Extremum hoc munus morientis habeto.’ ‘[Take this as my last dying gift’, a quotation from the Roman poet Virgil.]’

William Windham of Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk, a politician by profession but a scholar by nature, had probably made the acquaintance of Dr Johnson through his tutor at University College, Oxford. Johnson also knew Windham’s father, perhaps through their mutual friend David Garrick, the famous...
actor. Windham became a good friend of the much older Johnson, sharing with him a love of classical learning and membership of the Literary Club and the Essex Head Club, of which establishments Johnson was the leading light.

Windham’s final visit to Johnson was on Sunday 12 December, when Johnson said to him: ‘God bless you, my dear Windham, through Jesus Christ’. Windham wrote: ‘These were the last words I ever heard him speak. I hurried out of the room with tears in my eyes, and more affected than I had been on any former occasion’. Johnson died the following day, Monday 13 December 1784.

In his will, Johnson left to Windham as a keepsake his copy of *Poetæ Graeci Heroici per Henricum Stephanum*. Johnson’s library was sold the following year, on 16 February and the three following days. Nearly 3,000 volumes listed in 662 lots were sold for a total of £242 9s. Windham seems not to have attended the sale, but he commissioned the bookseller John Nourse to buy a number of books for him.

Johnson’s books can still be found on the library shelves and tucked away in cupboards at Felbrigg Hall (Fig. 1), where they continue to be objects of some interest to visitors and researchers. However, finding and actually identifying them as part of the ongoing cataloguing of Felbrigg’s books into the National Trust’s Collections Management System turned out to be more complicated than expected.

Of the two named books given to Windham by Johnson, the *Poetæ Graeci Heroici per Henricum Stephanum* has to be the edition of Homer and the Greek poets with the title (in Greek and Latin) *Hoi tēs hēroikes poïēseōs proteuontes poïeite... Poetæ Graeci prūncipēs heroici carminis*. It was printed in Geneva by Henri Estienne (i.e. Henricus Stephanus, 1531–98) in 1566. A well-known edition, it was one of the first great collections of the Greek poets and was Estienne’s typographical masterpiece. There are two copies in Felbrigg’s library. One is a tatty and imperfect copy inside which is a handwritten note: ‘A legacy to Mr Windham from Dr Johnson. See his life vol 2d, p. 573 note’. Beneath this is another inscription in a different hand: ‘This note is incorrect, as the volume contains at the end of the Odyssey, the date in Windham’s handwriting of Jan 13t 1777, eight years before Johnson’s death. RWKC’. The second note was written by Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer (1906–69), the biographer and historian who inherited Felbrigg Hall in 1933 and bequeathed it to the National Trust on his death.

The second copy of *Poetæ Graeci Heroici* was therefore probably Johnson’s, though it lacks any physical evidence of his ownership. The book was expensively rebound in the early 19th century into three volumes, in elaborately gold-tooled Russia leather, with new marbled endpapers and fly-leaves watermarked ‘1823’. What of the other book given to Windham by Johnson on his deathbed? There are at least 16 different editions of the New Testament in Felbrigg’s library so identifying Johnson’s copy is difficult without anything further than the title to go on, but perhaps it is a nearby volume in a similar 19th-century gold-tooled Russia-leather binding. This is a diglot edition in ancient and modern Greek, containing the earliest printed version in modern Greek, issued as two volumes in Geneva in 1638 (Fig. 2).

On the surrounding shelves are a dozen or so other books, all 16th-century editions of Greek texts in similar (but not identical) 19th-century gold-tooled Russia-leather bindings (Fig. 3). As there are no other bindings of this type in the library, this led to the intriguing possibility that these were all Johnson’s books, identifiable by their fine bindings.

2. 19th-century bindings: Greek poets (left and right) and New Testament (centre)

3. Different styles of binding on the surrounding shelves
It was gratifying, therefore, to find tucked away inside the third volume of the Greek poets a small eight-page typescript pamphlet entitled ‘Johnson’s Last Gifts to Windham’. This was written by Ketton-Cremer in September 1951. In it he explains his theory that the Johnson books might be the volumes expensively rebound in Russia leather during the early 19th century, and that they had been accorded special treatment by his ancestor Admiral William Lukin (1768–1833) after he had inherited Felbrigg in 1824. Ketton-Cremer wrote: ‘I can imagine the Admiral feeling that some special reverence should be paid to Johnson’s last gifts, and despatching them to a binder to be recased in the grandest style’ (Fig. 4).

My theory that the other books in similar (if less ornate) bindings were also Johnson’s – bought at the sale of his library in 1785 – turned out to be largely incorrect. Of the books in question only one was listed in the original auction catalogue: lot 478, a commentary on Homer printed in Rome in 1542. It was bought by John Nourse, who as we know acted as a buyer for Windham, for 19 shillings. Perhaps Admiral Lukin mistakenly thought that the other books, all of a similar type, were also Johnson’s and had them rebound accordingly.

As the cataloguing of Felbrigg’s book collection progressed and led to the investigation of various cupboards away from the main library, the identification of the other Johnson books bought at the 1785 sale proved to be somewhat easier. Of the 17 volumes, many contain a Latin note written by William Windham in pencil recording Johnson’s ownership, using slightly different formulas to describe his friend’s virtuous nature. One example will suffice: an edition of the works of the Italian Renaissance philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Opera omnia, printed in Basel in 1572. It is inscribed by Windham ‘Fuit e libris boni humani Reverendi[issimi] Sam. Johnson’ (‘This book belonged to that good man the venerable Sam. Johnson’), though the inscription is somewhat faded (Fig. 5). One other volume, an edition of Janus Gruterus’s Lampas, sive Fax artium liberalium (Frankfurt, 1602), contains an additional intriguing inscription (apparently not in Johnson’s hand):

Mr Verdier’s Servant is ready to attest, upon oath that the volume which wounded the head of Robert Norris M.D., was Gruterus’s Lampas Critica, and that which broke Mr. Lintot’s shin was Scaliger’s Poetices.

Crucially, none of these books has been rebound or repaired and they have retained the original endpapers on which these inscriptions have been written. Their battered original leather bindings are, in the words of Ketton-Cremer, as shabby now as when Johnson threw them around and ‘they received the last buffeting from their master in his hedger’s gloves’.

Notes

4. Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer’s 1951 pamphlet ‘Johnson’s Last Gifts to Windham’, which was discovered in a volume of Greek poetry

5. An edition of the works of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Opera omnia, bearing William Windham’s faded pencil inscription (on the blank paste-down opposite the title-page) recording Johnson’s ownership
In Pictures

The Nostell Dolls’ House

Simon McCormack
Project Curator and author of The Nostell Dolls’ House (2020)

Newly conserved and re-photographed, the dolls’ house at Nostell in West Yorkshire
is a marvel-in-miniature: it measures 212 x 192 x 76cm (NT 959710). Commissioned by the
Winn family in around 1735, this remarkable survivor is arguably the best example of its
kind, not least because of its detailed design and fine state of preservation. Comprising
nine elegantly appointed rooms arranged across three storeys, it is inhabited by owners,
servants and pets. Each piece of furniture has been made with great precision, the
meticulously carved doors have working latches, and the silver is hallmarked.

The dolls’ house is the subject of a new book to mark the opening of a dedicated
display space at Nostell that will help visitors to appreciate its historical significance
and exquisite craftsmanship. For more information about the new permanent exhibition
and on visiting Nostell, see www.nationaltrust.org.uk/nostell.

1. The walnut bureau bookcase in the Velvet Dressing Room is an example of excellent
craftsmanship, with functioning brass-handled drawers and pull-out lopers to
support the hinged slope.
Photo: National Trust Images/Robert Thrift

2. Internally, the layout is on three floors with three rooms each, which was typical
for a dolls’ house of the period. The ground floor contains a mixture of service rooms
and more functional spaces: an entrance hall in the centre, an elaborate working
kitchen (lower right) and a parlour (lower left) for everyday dining.

The middle or state floor is the showiest, with its State Apartment. This comprises
a grand dressing room, bedroom and ostentatious Drawing Room (centre right)
for refined entertaining. On the top floor there is another, less majestic, apartment,
perhaps intended for other guests or family members. Above the Drawing Room is
the Morning or Lying-in Room (upper right), to which the lady of the house would
retire during pregnancy, the birth of her child, and to receive guests afterwards.
Photo: National Trust Images/David Brunetti
3. The Morning or Lying-in Room, where visitors came to see mother and new-born. The nurse is especially lifelike as, unlike the other servants, her face is made in the more realistic material of wax rather than wood. Both she and the little girl have costumes dating to the 1740s.

The blue-grey paint colour in this room acts as a perfect foil for the chintz, a block-printed Indian cloth that was one of the most sought-after fabrics of the 18th century. These fabrics had an added cachet as they were banned by the British government in order to protect the domestic textile industry.

Photo: National Trust Images/David Brunetti

To order a copy of The Nostell Dolls’ House by Simon McCormack, visit: shop.nationaltrust.org.uk

4. At nearly 300 years old, the dolls’ house has been subject to all the agents of deterioration that affect a real house, from light exposure and changes in relative humidity, to the effects of repetitive handling and overzealous cleaning in the past. As with an actual historic house, conserving this precious object has also involved complex curatorial issues, such as how to deal with newer introductions that are of variable quality but nonetheless part of the piece’s evolving history.

At the heart of the recent conservation work was a recognition of the overriding significance of the originality and rarity of the materials and surfaces, alongside a recognition of the fact that the clock could not be turned back without greatly altering the original fabric. It is an approach generally adopted in the Trust’s real-sized houses, too.

Photo: Gavin Repton

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A new carpet has been laid at Carlyle’s House, Chelsea in one of the largest re-display projects at the property since the mid-1970s.

The National Trust has been working with historic carpet consultant David Luckham for over 40 years and in 2005 he was invited to research, commission and create a new carpet for the Front Parlour, Drawing Room and China Closet of the house. Working with the National Trust, he was tasked with finding a design, method and materials appropriate to this significant Victorian interior.

A Victorian power couple
Carlyle’s House, Chelsea, opened in 1895 as a literary shrine to Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), the influential Victorian essayist, philosopher, satirical writer and historian who lived in the house for 47 years. Since 1936 the property has been in the care of the National Trust, which has more recently endeavoured to give equal prominence to Jane Welsh Carlyle (1801–66), Thomas’s wife, who is now admired for the witty and uncompromising letters in which she recorded her social and daily life. The couple’s letters provide unique insights into the lives of an extraordinary couple and their little home in Chelsea, where they were visited by many of the most famous literary figures of the day, including Charles Dickens, Alfred Lord Tennyson, the Brownings, William Makepeace Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, John Stuart Mill and John Ruskin.

Reconstructing a home
Carlyle’s House was built in 1708 and retains many authentic features from the Carlyles’ residency, including the soundproof attic that Thomas Carlyle had built in 1853 so that he could work in peace and quiet. The house also contains many pieces of furniture, books, pictures and other artefacts that belonged to the Carlyles and which have been returned to the house over time. The interiors of the house are recorded in Jane’s letters, in drawings by Helen Allingham and, of most significance for the new carpet, in the painting A Chelsea Interior by Robert Tait (1816–97) (Fig. 1). Tait exhibited the painting under this anonymous title at the Royal Academy in 1858, but many would have recognised the celebrity couple...
in it and their dog, Nero. The painting was bought by William Bingham Baring (1799–1864), second Baron Ashburton, the husband of one of Carlyle’s greatest female admirers, Louise Stewart-Mackenzie, Lady Ashburton. It was acquired by the National Trust from the seventh Marquess of Northampton in 1998 with the help of the Art Fund and an anonymous benefactor.

In an often-quoted letter, Jane Carlyle wrote of A Chelsea Interior:

My chief impediment has been that weary Artist who took the bright idea last spring that he would make a picture of our sitting room – to be ‘amazingly interesting to Posterity a hundred years hence’.

She would have been surprised, when scathingly quoting Tait, to learn just how interesting the painting has now become as an invaluable record of the room’s design and décor.

In the 1950s a new curatorial approach to the house began to develop that sought to present it as a facsimile of the Carlyles’ home rather than as a museum of associated objects, as had been the case when the house was cared for by the Carlyle House Memorial Trust and during the early period of the National Trust’s ownership. In the 1970s the interiors of the Front Parlour and Drawing Room were reconstructed, guided by their appearance in A Chelsea Interior and under the direction of Martin Drury, then the Trust’s Historic Buildings Representative and later its Director General.

This reconstruction included pieces of furniture formerly owned by the Carlyles, either acquired by the National Trust or generously on loan, as well as new objects similar to those owned by the Carlyles, including textiles and wallpapers sourced from the commercial market. These were aesthetically comparable to their equivalents seen in A Chelsea Interior, but were included in order to recreate the atmosphere of the period rather than to replicate the rooms exactly.

Floor coverings
In the 1970s the rooms were carpeted with thick red felt underlay overlaid with patterned Turkish-style carpets (Fig. 2). Over time the ‘Turkish’ carpets became worn, and there has long been a desire for a floor covering across the three rooms that is more authentic in both material and appearance.

A number of specialists were drawn together to consult on the project. As already mentioned, consultation started in 2005 with David Luckham, who contributed his knowledge of the history of carpet styles, colours and manufacturing processes. He had worked on durable, historically informed carpets at other National Trust properties, including Oxburgh Hall and Felbrigg Hall, both in Norfolk. At Oxburgh, David created a carpet based on a 19th-century sample of English ‘Brussels’ stair carpet. To allow full public access to the Library at Felbrigg Hall, the National Trust also worked with him to commission a 34-colour, worsted wool representation of an 1840s printed tapestry carpet (NT 1402098).

One of the challenges encountered at Felbrigg is a familiar one for those who work with historic textiles – the original technology and skills had been lost. With his colleague, Mo Mant, David founded the Living Looms Project in 2006 in an effort to halt this trend. Living Looms conserves and promotes the knowledge, skills and technologies associated with traditional textiles. The Carlyle’s House commission supported the preservation of the project’s fine Axminster looms.

There were several factors to consider in the design and production of the new Carlyle’s House carpet: the appearance of the original carpet in the painting, the realistic capabilities of the 19th-century looms used to produce it, and the likely detail of the pattern based on historical evidence. Additionally, one of the joys of Carlyle’s House is that visitors are free to roam the house as one would a private home, so the carpet needed to be sufficiently hard-wearing to allow this.

It soon became apparent that to meet these stringent and varied requirements, a bespoke carpet would need to be designed and produced using traditional methods. David Luckham commissioned artist Roger Sullivan to design the Carlyle’s House replica carpet and Grosvenor Wilton to weave it. He worked closely with them throughout the process to supervise the design, specification, colour selection, manufacture and – later, with the fitters – the installation of the carpet.

Pattern and colour
The process of interpreting the pattern and colours of the carpet from A Chelsea Interior had to begin with advice from curators and conservators.

A distinctive pattern is clearly shown in the painting but its rendering of the room in perspective causes the proportions of the pattern to broaden and condense. This is particularly evident in the lower left-hand corner of the painting, where the pattern
has been ‘stretched’. Fortunately, the actual scale of the pattern in the painting could be examined in relation to the furniture depicted, some of which remains in the room, and by studying historical examples.

The colour scheme of the carpet was another important consideration: analysis of the painting established that where the paint now appears tinged with blue it would originally have had a more vibrant green tone. As with the scale of the pattern, an informed decision was made about the colour scheme using a combination of research expertise. The fine detail of the carpet, including the gold borders of the shield and the scrolling foliage, which are only shown in a few instances in the painting, are picked out in tonal shades and bring a depth to the design and composition that the new carpet needed to emulate.

From design to installation
While National Trust curatorial staff were researching and working to create the best possible reproduction and presentation, the design artist, the staff of Grosvenor Wilton, the Living Looms Project, the dyers and the installers, Edgcot Ltd, were focusing on the design, production and installation elements of the project.

The carpet was identified from the painting as a fitted Wilton carpet by a process of elimination. In 1857 three main types of carpet were being produced that were suitable for wall-to-wall fitting: Chenille Axminster, Wilton/Brussels, and Kidderminster flatweave (or ‘in-grain’). In this context, Chenille was unlikely because it was usually reserved for state rooms and other formal spaces. The original carpet’s repetitive pattern also made this option unlikely. Flatweave carpet, like Wilton and Brussels, is woven in narrow widths that are then sewn together, and all are characterised by a repetitive pattern. They also have a limited colour distribution but the pattern colour yarns of flatweave carpets are introduced via the weft of the textile and this is visible in the pattern style of the finished carpet. In velvet Wilton and Brussels carpets, however, the coloured pattern yarns are introduced via the warp threads, often selected by a Jacquard mechanism above the loom (see text box, right), and this characteristic is also visible in the finished carpet. It was therefore determined that the original carpet was a Brussels Wilton. Finally, evidence relating to the financial status of the Carlyles also suggests that, since they were not wealthy, they would probably have chosen the most economical type of Wilton carpet – Brussels Wilton. Fortunately, this option also fitted very well with the public-use purpose of the new carpet.

Brussels carpet-weaving in England, is believed to have begun in the late 17th century. Brussels carpets are woven in narrow widths on the loom. Writing in 1838 (19 years before the painting of A Chelsea Interior) for the British Cyclopaedia of the Arts and Sciences, Charles Partington explained: ‘Brussels’ carpets are not made in large squares, but in pieces about seven eighths [17 inches] wide … When well-made they are very durable, and being at the same time elegant, they are at present much in request for the good apartments.

The working design was painted by Roger Sullivan, who has 50 years’ experience in this field and also painted the design for the National Trust’s Felbrigg Hall Library carpet. Roger then transferred the painting to a computer for colour conformation, Jacquard card preparation and to calculate the amount of yarn required for each colour. The chosen yarn colours were then checked

The Jacquard mechanism
In loom weaving, a thread called the weft is interlaced at right angles through a set of threads called the warp. Patterned fabric is created by regulating the order in which the weft passes over and under the warp threads. Traditionally, this was slow and highly skilled work, carried out by master weavers and their assistants (or ‘draw boys’), and the product was therefore relatively expensive. In 1804, however, the French weaver and merchant Joseph-Marie Jacquard (1752–1834) patented a revolutionary loom that used interchangeable punch cards to determine the pattern. It allowed complex patterns to be produced more quickly and accurately bringing down the cost of patterned fabrics and making them more widely accessible.

The process begins with a designer painting the selected pattern onto squared paper. The pattern is then translated by the card-maker onto the punch cards, each of which represents a different part of the pattern. Each unpainted square on the paper is marked by punching a hole in the card. The punched cards are then laced together and fed into the Jacquard mechanism on the loom. This incorporates a series of sprung pins that either pass through the punched holes, activating hooks to raise the selected warp threads, or are blocked by an unpunched area of card, leaving other threads untouched. The shuttle then passes the weft thread under the raised warp threads and over the others, creating the ‘pre-programmed’ pattern as it goes.

3. The new Carlyle’s House carpet on the loom
   Photo: Woodward Grosvenor Ltd

4. (Following page) The new carpet installed
   Photo: National Trust Images/Jonathan Marsh
several times against the painting, the known mid-19th-century colour palette, and the colours’ compatibility with each other and with the existing colours in the rooms in which the carpet was to be fitted.

Once the colours had been agreed, sufficient worsted woollen yarn was purchased and sent to the dyers in Yorkshire with the chosen yarn samples and instructions to ‘dye to side’ or ‘dye to cut’ (although the colour remains the same with either option, each one results in a tonal difference created by the effect of light falling on the different surfaces). While the yarn was being dyed, checked and wound onto spools, the punched Jacquard pattern cards were being produced by Grosvenor Wilton. The Jacquard mechanism was set up with the cards over the loom and the loom made ready to receive the yarn (Fig. 3). The spools and trays of yarn were then set up and weaving commenced. Once weaving was complete, the carpet was thoroughly checked and a thin latex backing was applied.

At Carlyle’s House there were extended discussions about the use of felt under the carpet because felt or padding can produce a luxurious feel for what was (historically) a less expensive type of carpet. However, the team also had to consider contemporary conservation needs and the risk that the felt and wool could attract pests. It was determined that the best preventive conservation method was good housekeeping and eventually a 42-ounce hair felt was chosen, crosslined with Feltine paper.

The last stage of the carpet-making process was to hand-stitch the lengths of carpet together width-wise into a ‘blanket’ to roughly fit the room. This was then delivered to the property and installed over the course of two days using the traditional ‘turn and tack’ method. Prior to this, the ornaments, books, soft furnishings and small pieces of furniture had been moved out into other rooms. The large pieces of furniture were too heavy to move far, so the carpet-layers were required to work around them while property staff moved the pieces around the carpet.

**Visitors’ views**

Visitors have responded very positively to the new carpet (Fig. 4). Its appearance and quality are often admired but, perhaps more importantly, visitors often comment that ‘it looks like it belongs’. Rather than being jarringly new in a Victorian room, the carpet seems to elevate the patterns on the walls, furnishings and ceramics, and ties together the entire aesthetic of the room. The success of this effect is, without doubt, due to the intensive research and expertise that were brought to bear on the project by the custodian, the house steward and other property staff, David Luckham and the Living Looms Project, the installers, and property curators past and present.

**Traditional skills and technologies**

Off-setting the success of the project at Carlyle’s House, however, is a wider context of disappearing traditional carpet-making skills and technology. The level of authenticity achieved at Carlyle’s House will no longer be available to curators unless urgent action is taken to safeguard the historic looms and skills that are uniquely able to produce the best historic carpets. Chenille and printed-tapestry looms no longer exist and the last few of the highest quality spool Axminster and Wilton looms are dangerously close to being lost. Without authentic, high-quality carpets, historic rooms and collections will be impoverished.

*More information about the not-for-profit Living Looms Project can be found online at http://thelivinglooms.co.uk*
Creativity at the Heart

A decade of Trust New Art

Grace Davies
Contemporary Arts Programme Manager

The landscapes and buildings in National Trust care have been a source of inspiration for centuries. From the acclaimed to the amateur, their inspiring qualities have been captured in poetry, prose, photography and painting. The landscapes and buildings of Petworth feature heavily in the work of J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), while the verse of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) drew on the landscapes around his cottage in Dorset. Digital imagery from National Trust places adorns many an Instagram feed, while for others the beauty of these sites provides nourishment for the soul. Indeed, the inspiration derived from these places and the significant creative works associated with them are the main premise for looking after many of them. It is unsurprising, therefore, that they continue to inspire creativity to this day, and capturing and representing that creativity is at the heart of Trust New Art, the National Trust’s programme of contemporary arts, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2019. Through Trust New Art, the National Trust works with living artists across a range of artforms to respond to the stories, landscapes, architecture and spirit of the places it cares for.

The formation of Trust New Art in 2009 acknowledged the merits of having a formalised programme of contemporary arts, and it was developed in partnership with Arts Council England. Yet this was not the Trust’s first foray into working with...
contemporary artists. In 1986 the Foundation for Art was set up to collect and commission work by living artists, and sought to ‘record the houses and gardens of the National Trust and the people associated with them and to exhibit these works’. The Foundation for Art built a sizeable national collection of new commissions from which exhibitions were often created and shown at National Trust properties, acquiring, by the end of 1999, over 270 works.

During this time, the popularity of ‘site-specific’ art-making was on the rise, with artistic interventions staged in landscapes and in heritage, industrial and historic spaces across the world – including at National Trust places, outside the Foundation for Art programme. Perhaps the most notable was a presentation of works by 14 contemporary artists at Killerton in Devon titled Ha-ha, and curated by Iwona Blazwick in 1993. This included works by rising stars Cornelia Parker, Antony Gormley, Peter Randall-Page and others, several of whom have since exhibited with the National Trust as part of Trust New Art. With the backing of Arts Council England, and the subsequent appointment of the National Trust’s first Contemporary Arts Programme Manager, the establishment of Trust New Art signalled a confidence in the role of the contemporary artist at the Trust’s historic places. The partnership was built on a belief that ‘art has an inspirational effect’, and with the explicit aims of making contemporary art and craft an integral part of the National Trust’s daily offer, building new audiences and providing new opportunities for both emerging and established artists.

**Modernity and tradition**

Other historic properties had similar ideas – the Palace of Versailles began its contemporary arts programme in 2008. Introduced by then Director Jean-Jacques Aillagon, with a presentation of works by Jeff Koons as the inaugural show, the initiative drew admiration and condemnation in equal measure, with some calling for its cessation. Yet the programme continues and, in online French publication Le Quotidien de l’Art, the current Director Catherine Pégard asserts:

> The issue of contemporary art [at Versailles] was determined by Louis XIV who made the château into a creative centre. These [contemporary] shows have raised the profile of the site. It’s a question of balance. We have to respect both the modernity and tradition [of Versailles].

It would be fair to say that Trust New Art has also had its share of sceptics, and on occasion been the subject of media hostility. Yet Pégard’s argument also holds true for contemporary art at many National Trust places, where creativity has been at the heart of their origins. Such places include Croome in Worcestershire, where the sixth Earl of Coventry (1722–1809) commissioned emerging Georgian artists, designers, carvers and cabinet-makers, including the then 32-year-old architect and designer Robert Adam (1728–92), who was first employed in 1760. Since coming into the care of the National Trust in 2007, commissioning contemporary creativity and innovation has been at the heart of this particular chapter in its history. Arguably, it is not only true to the spirit of Croome, but essential to its future. Commissions and exhibitions held at Croome have included a Robert Adam-inspired treehouse located in Capability Brown’s designed landscape by Chris Alton; The Golden Box by Bouke de Vries (Fig. 1) – a reflective structure containing exquisite pieces of Meissen, Worcester and Sévres porcelain from Croome’s collection; and two exhibitions of tapestries by Grayson Perry (2016 and 2019) in the former ‘Tapestry Room’, which originally contained specially commissioned tapestries.

**Illuminating the past**

The creative legacy of Hannah More (1745–1833) was reinvigorated during 2018 at Tyntesfield, North Somerset, as part of the National Trust’s ‘Women and Power’ programme, which commemorated the centenary of the Representation of the People Act – an important milestone in the
struggle for female suffrage. Little Elevations (Fig. 2) responded to Hannah More’s recommendation that a woman should see the world from ‘a little elevation in her own garden’, leaving the ‘distant prospects’ to the wealthy gentleman busy exploring and exploiting the wider landscape. Addressing the question of how feminists, environmentalists and poets might consider how power should be distributed today, Holly explored the site of the ‘little elevation’ as the ideal position, a place from which we can prioritise expertise, cooperation and care. Her residency not only engendered a new anthology of site-responsive poetry, it also enabled further creativity through a series of woodland poetry workshops led by Holly.

While continuing the important creative legacy at many National Trust places is contributing to their enduring relevance and retaining the true spirit of these places, the commissioning of contemporary art practice also holds a number of other, perhaps more tangible, benefits.

Working with artists has helped to shine a spotlight on less well-known stories such as that of ‘The Great Gift’, the 14 summits in National Trust care that were gifted to the nation as a war memorial after the First World War. A century after the ‘war to end all wars’ finished, we commemorated the extraordinary vision of this great gift with a special ‘leave no trace’ arts project of song performed and recorded on the top of Great Gable and the other fells gifted by the Fell and Rock Climbing Club and private landowners. The Fellowship of Hill, and Wind, and Sunshine (Fig. 3) was led by Dave Camlin and Mouthful, and invited participation from anyone who wanted to sing on the summits. The performances, documentation and media coverage served as a reminder of the poignancy of these peaks, and served as a reminder that the site should be given the respect due to a national war memorial.

A significant draw
Evaluation and data analytics have demonstrated year after year that the addition of the contemporary arts programme has been a significant draw for visitors, both encouraging culturally curious first-time visitors to National Trust sites, and giving members a reason to return. Data from surveys conducted during the 2019 programme showed that 76 per cent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that ‘it’s a good idea that this type of arts event happens in places like this’, and 49 per cent strongly agreed or agreed that ‘the art content made the National Trust feel more relevant to me’.

Importantly, Trust New Art has not only brought people to National Trust places, it has also taken the National Trust out to engage with people and communities. Many of the commissioned artists have taken stories of National Trust places and connected them more closely with the surrounding communities. In 2019 along the Durham coast, as well as on the Tin Coast in Cornwall, artists created films about local people’s connection with the landscape, revealing new depictions of place and forging deeper relationships.

It is exciting to be entering the second decade of Trust New Art with a number of enticing and inspiring new commissions across National Trust places. From Studio Morison’s structure inspired by the restorative qualities of the beautiful landscape at Wicken Fen, to a national dance and song event that celebrates nature marking the National Trust’s 125th anniversary, Trust New Art will be continuing to work with the most exciting creative talent and with communities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Trust New Art is greatly enhanced by its many partners, who bring their expertise, connections and skills to build these inspirational projects and the Trust is extraordinarily grateful to them. Much of this work is supported by Arts Council England and Arts Council of Wales, along with many other funders and supporters who have contributed to the programme, and enabled it to stretch its ambitions and bring lasting impact for those who have experienced it.

Notes
Online Exhibition

Treasures of Osterley

www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/exhibition/treasures-of-osterley

Osterley House in Middlesex was built on a banking fortune. Over successive generations, the Child family transformed the house and filled it with treasures acquired with the profits from the bank on Fleet Street in London that still bears their name today: Child & Co.

Osterley is best known for the Neo-classical interiors that the Childs commissioned from Robert Adam (1728–92) in the later 18th century, but this online exhibition takes a step further back in time. It introduces the individuals who made their business the most successful of its kind during the ferment of Britain’s Financial Revolution (c.1660–1750).

Wealthy and well-connected in this new era of expanding global trade, the Childs furnished Osterley and their other houses with bright Chinese porcelain, dramatic Italian paintings and gleaming Japanese lacquer.

The online exhibition takes a close look at these precious works of art and craftsmanship and considers their meanings, both to the family that acquired them and to the original cultures that created them.


It was curated by John Chu with contributions from Benjamin Alsop, Emile de Bruijn, Patricia Ferguson, James Rothwell, David Taylor and Megan Wheeler.

The online exhibition is edited and produced by Gabriella de la Rosa.

1. Jar and cover, c.1700–20, porcelain, underglaze cobalt blue, overglaze polychrome enamels, gilt, 60.5 x 44cm (NT 77133)
   National Trust Images/John Hammond

2. Saint Agatha (detail), c.1665–70, Carlo Dolci (1616–87), oil on canvas, 68.3 x 50.1cm (NT 2900293)
   Photo: National Trust Images/Matthew Hollow
‘A Kind of Patriotic Duty’

Chastleton House and the Ashmolean Museum collection during the Second World War

Benjamin Alsop
Curator, Hughenden and Central Chilterns and West Oxfordshire

During the Second World War the UK’s country houses played host to all manner of unexpected and unorthodox guests. Humourists even joked that SOE, the top-secret Special Operations Executive, really stood for ‘Stately ‘Omes of England’. Today, visitors to National Trust sites including Hughenden Manor and the Coleshill Estate can learn about their secret wartime roles.

The story of how Chastleton House in Oxfordshire (Fig. 1) found a new wartime use begins with a letter in the Oxford University Archives dated 3 March 1939 and addressed to Douglas Veale Esq, Oxford University Registrar. The respondent, G. T. Hutchinson (whose precise role is now unclear), begins somewhat cryptically, ‘One of the following might be suitable…’. The letter goes on to name three houses in Oxfordshire, the first of which, Chastleton, it describes as a ‘Tudor masterpiece, empty, likely to remain so. Write Mrs Whitmore Jones’.¹ The other homes mentioned are a ‘modern house’ known as Kitebrook, and Great Tew in Enstone, which Hutchinson describes as ‘big, occasionally inhabited for brief periods by some old ladies’. The correspondence seems to hint at some clandestine activity best hidden from prying eyes, but it was a different kind of war-work altogether that was being discussed.

These three properties were all earmarked in the late 1930s as possible repositories for the Ashmolean Museum’s ‘irreplaceable art treasures’ should the impending threat of global conflict become a reality. After receiving the letter, Veale wrote to Irene Whitmore Jones (Fig. 2) at Chastleton House on 8 March appealing to ‘one or two public spirited owners of country houses, who would be willing to put a certain amount of space in their houses at our disposal on the outbreak of war’.

The looming conflict, which began in September 1939, had focused minds within the museum community. As early as 1933, discussions were held at a governmental level between national museum directors and the Minister of Works about how to ensure the safety of museum collections in wartime. Advances in military technology and the capabilities of long-range bombing led some to question whether it was worth removing collections at all, given the speed at which aerial attacks could take place.² Eventually a consensus was reached and museums looked to large country houses as possible repositories for their collections.

Veale’s letter of 8 March met with a very positive response from Mrs Whitmore Jones, who replied a day later:
I would be delighted to house some of your Art Treasures in the event of war. Perhaps it would be well for you to come over one day and then you could give me an idea of the amount of space needed.

Writing in 1947, Veale recounted his preliminary visit to Chastleton on 28 March and explained that Mrs Whitmore Jones regarded the storing of the collection as ‘a kind of patriotic duty’ that she would undertake ‘without any thought of reward’. A day later Veale wrote to Mrs Whitmore Jones asking her to reserve accommodation on the first floor of Chastleton House and mentioning that he would like to send a museum employee to live in the house while the objects were stored there. The person would therefore require somewhere to sleep, ideally ‘in the room you showed us in the middle of the floor on which the collection will be placed’. Veale also made an offer that would become a bone of contention when the objects were returned to Oxford following the end of the war:

Since the central heating would have to be kept on very largely for the sake of our collection we should … expect to be allowed to meet the cost. Otherwise I need hardly say that we gladly avail ourselves of your offer to store our material as a kind of public duty.

It was not until 25 August 1939 that the Ashmolean Museum officially closed to the public and work began on packing objects for removal. Four days later on 29 August the first consignment of objects from the Departments of Antiquities and Fine Arts left for Chastleton.3

In 1950, D. B. Harden, Keeper of Antiquities at the Ashmolean, remembered that:

We were lucky enough to have just received from the Sudan the Taharqa monument in 200 packing cases and were able to use them for the great bulk of our requirements. We also had some special cases and crates made for some of the large exhibits. As to packing material, we managed to get what we wanted on the spur of the moment from suppliers in Oxford.

Originally accompanying the objects was Mr Godfrey, the museum’s stoker, who acted as caretaker until permanent watchman Mr W. W. Wing was employed. Elsie Took, who was given free rein of Chastleton House gardens as a child in the early 1940s, remembered Mr Wing as a ‘lovely man … who looked after [the Ashmolean Collection] and he was very good to us as well. So we all had a very good time.’4

Collecting at the museum continued despite the war. Its acquisitions included the Daisy Linda Ward bequest of 17th-century Dutch and Flemish still-life paintings, comprising more than 90 works by artists such as Rachel Ruysch, Willem van Aelst, Adriaen Coorte and Jacob Foppens van Es. Accompanying the Ward bequest to Chastleton in May 1940 was a similarly impressive collection of European art donated by the Bolton Mill Owner Frank Hindley Smith in 1939. The collection included Blue Roofs, Paris by Pablo Picasso, Pierre-Auguste Renoir’s Study of a Nude Girl Reclining, Claude Monet’s Sunset at Sea as well as works by Paul Cézanne, Édouard Manet and the final painting by Walter Sickert in his Ennui series (Fig. 3). 5

Another significant object that Mr Wing looked after during his time at Chastleton was the ‘Messiah’ Violin (Fig. 4) by Antonio Stradivari. Considered by many to be the finest preserved Stradivari violin in existence,
the instrument was given to the Ashmolean in 1939 by brothers Alfred and Arthur Hill and promptly sent for safekeeping in the Oxfordshire countryside.

In May 1945 objects began returning to the Ashmolean from Chastleton and Filkins Hall (where other collections had been stored). The museum’s keeper reported that:

The collections evacuated to the country for safety at the outbreak of war were returned to the Museum in six consignments on 17 and 24 May, 12, 13, 24 and 25 July. The Visitors wish to express their thanks to Mrs Whitmore Jones for the hospitality accorded by her at Chastleton House to the University’s property.

However, the return of the objects did not immediately end the association between the Ashmolean and Chastleton House. Following their return to the museum, the protracted task of unpacking the various crates and boxes revealed instances of bronze disease (a form of corrosion), picture frames infested with woodworm and Greek vases reduced to fragments by the failure of conservation glue due to the damp conditions.

The issue of suitable heating at the property also gave rise to a curious postscript. As previously mentioned, the museum had agreed to meet the cost of centrally heating the house to protect the collections. Regular deliveries of fuel took place throughout the period and a large amount remained at the house once the objects were returned to the museum. As the fuel could not be recovered, a bill was sent to Chastleton, an act which met with a particularly terse reply:

Dear Mr Lilley,

Thank you for you very unwelcome letter! After losing more than half one’s income for six years it is quite a shock to be confronted with an unexpected bill!

I wonder whether the University realises how much I gave up when I lent the house. I was taking £500 a year by showing it, so I’ve been running on an overdraft since 1939, in spite of selling out stock to the value of £1,200. I’m glad to say that I’m getting visitors again now, but of course at this time of year one can’t expect many people. An American University at Shrivenham comes over sometimes on Sundays, but they have such bad buses that they have to push them!! Apart from this they seem quite intelligent.

Chastleton House had first been opened to the public by Irene Whitmore Jones in the late 1930s and it had become an important source of income for the perennially cash-strapped Whitmore Jones family. It was eventually decided that the museum should pay for the fuel and allow Irene Whitmore Jones to keep what remained at the house. Veale did, however, deliver something of a parting shot in response to Irene’s claims that she had been financially inconvenienced by the closure of the house to the public:

Mrs Whitmore Jones may have been taking £500 a year by showing the house before the war, but it is extremely unlikely that she would have made a tenth of that sum during the war when the place was practically inaccessible.

While discussions relating to the Ashmolean collections and their storage at Chastleton re-emerged in the 1950s, its proximity to bomber airfields eventually meant that it was deemed unsuitable should a future conflict break out. K. T. Parker, the Ashmolean Museum’s Keeper, mentioned meeting...
Irene Whitmore Jones in 1952, a few months before Chastleton was finally deemed unsuitable for the storage of collections:

I was rather distressed to find that she is now extremely feeble and shakey, and this is possibly a point which we would bear in mind in negotiating any possible arrangements with her. I do not know what the ultimate ownership of Chastleton is to be.

Irene Whitmore Jones died in 1955 with the house passing to her relative Alan Clutton-Brock, who, with his wife Barbara, continued to open it to the public. The National Trust acquired the house and its collection in 1991 – a collection which, for a period in the 1940s, had been supplemented by ancient Greek vases, works by Picasso and Monet and Stradivari’s exquisite ‘Messiah’ Violin.

Notes
1. The letters referred to in this article are held as part of the Oxford University Archives in Special Collections at the Weston Library at the Bodleian. Many thanks to Anna Petrie, Assistant Keeper at the University Archives, for providing access to this material.
4. Elsie Took interview conducted by Ruth Peters, Senior House Steward at Chastleton House.
5. Many thanks to An Van Camp, Curator of Northern European Art and Catherine Casley in the Department of Western Art for supplying collections information relating to the Daisy Linda Ward and Frank Hindley Smith bequests.

4. The ‘Messiah’ Violin, 1716, Antonio Stradivari (1644–1737), maple and spruce, length 59.3cm
Photo: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, WA940312
‘Look Beneath the Lustre’

A collaborative De Morgan exhibition at Wightwick Manor

Sarah Hardy
Curator and Manager, De Morgan Foundation Collection

Wightwick Manor in Wolverhampton, a Victorian treasury of the Arts and Crafts Movement, has been home to the De Morgan Collection since 2016. The housing of part of the De Morgan Collection at Wightwick became a catalyst for collaboration between the National Trust and the De Morgan Foundation. Shared resources and curatorial research have resulted in some fascinating finds, now revealed to visitors in the exhibition ‘Look Beneath the Lustre’, which opened in September 2019 (Fig. 1).

Structured around the insights provided by diaries and letters in Wightwick’s collection, the exhibition explains how the De Morgans made art, why so much of it came to be at Wightwick Manor, and how the landmark partnership between the National Trust and the De Morgan Foundation is the realisation of an ambition to collaborate that began nearly a century ago.

The De Morgan Foundation

William De Morgan (1839–1917) was one of the premier ceramics designers of the Victorian Arts and Crafts Movement and the Aesthetic Movement, providing tiles and other works of art for domestic use. In 1887 William married Evelyn Pickering (1855–1919), a technically brilliant painter of Pre-Raphaelite pictures, often with subversive feminist undertones, who had trained at the Slade School of Art. The marriage formed one of the most exciting artistic partnerships of the day.

Evelyn’s sister, the author and socialite Wilhelmina Stirling (1865–1965), and her husband Charles (1866–1948), surrounded themselves with Evelyn’s jewel-like canvasses and William’s glittering ceramics at their London home, forming the most impressive De Morgan collection in the world. Wilhelmina established the De Morgan

1. ‘Look Beneath the Lustre’: held in partnership with the De Morgan Foundation in Wightwick’s purpose-built Malthouse Gallery, the exhibition includes drawings and paintings by Evelyn De Morgan (née Pickering) (1855–1919) and ceramics by William De Morgan (1839–1917)

Photo: Jean McMeakin
Foundation charity in 1965 to take over the care and display of the collection upon her death, and to make it available for the enjoyment and education of the general public – the basis on which it still operates today.

**Wightwick Manor**

Wightwick Manor stands on a wooded hilltop just outside Wolverhampton city centre. The mock-Tudor mansion was completed in 1887 by paint-manufacturing millionaire Theodore Mander (1853–1900) and De Morgan tiles were part of the original decorative scheme. They survive in four of the fireplaces (Fig. 2) and one of the washstands today, while the cool blue hues of De Morgan’s Iznik and Islamic ware, as well as fiery-red lustre plates and vases, remain on display throughout the house.

A notebook in Wightwick’s collection, discovered while researching Mander’s involvement in the temperance movement, sheds new light on his treatment of Wightwick.1 Entitled ‘Choice Extracts from Various Authors’, the tiny notebook is inscribed: ‘Notes from Lecture on the House Beautiful By Oscar Wilde, Wolverhampton, 10.03.1884’.2 Wilde had toured his lecture across the US before delivering it in selected locations in the UK. It was more of a prescriptive ‘to-do’ list, informed by Morris and Ruskin’s earlier theories, than an expression of radical new thought, but it provided the inspiration Mander needed to complete his own ‘house beautiful’.

One aspect of Wilde’s lecture that made a particular impression on Mander was the idea that the mark of all good art was that it had been ‘worked out with the head and the workman’s heart’.3 As a prominent Liberal and the head of a firm that employed many of Wolverhampton’s workers, Mander was particularly interested in the wellbeing of his staff. The principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement to which De Morgan adhered in his practice – that workers should take pride in their craft – resonated with the paint magnate.

**De Morgan at Wightwick**

Mander’s diaries describe a trip to Morris & Co. at 449 Oxford Street and to Liberty’s in London to shop for his ‘hand-made house’. De Morgan & Co. was based just around the corner from these fashionable suppliers, at 45 Great Marlborough Street, and it is possible that the Manders visited De Morgan’s store, too. The shop is described in Wilhelmina Stirling’s biography of the De Morgans as being like a ‘ballroom’ where tea would be served in red lustre cups.4 ‘Look Beneath the Lustre’ evokes William De Morgan’s showroom with an original red lustre teacup and a wide array of tile panels on display, demonstrating how the Manders might have shopped and selected tiles and other ceramics for Wightwick.

Theodore’s son Geoffrey Mander (1882–1962) inherited the house on his father’s death in 1900. Geoffrey was equally captivated by Wightwick and sought to expand, enhance and preserve the house and the collection, before giving it to the Trust in 1937. His second wife, the author and art historian Rosalie Mander (1905–88), shaped the art collection at Wightwick into the remarkable one that it is today. Because the Manders had a deep interest in the Victorian artists’ lives and work processes, they acquired drawings and diaries, rather than paintings, creating one of the most celebrated Victorian artists’ archives.

Research for the exhibition has revealed an appetite for collaboration since the time of Geoffrey and Rosalie Mander, and Charles and Wilhelmina Stirling. The two couples

2. The Morning Room at Wightwick Manor: the fireplace is set with earthenware tiles (1875–1900) by William De Morgan depicting plants and animals (NT 1287285)

Photo: National Trust Images/John Pittwood
moved in the same social circles and had the same abiding interest in Victorian art. During the Blitz in 1940, Geoffrey Mander wrote to Charles Stirling and asked that the De Morgan collection be brought to Wightwick for safekeeping. A letter in the Wightwick archive shows the Stirlings’ delight at the offer. Charles wrote: ‘Dear Mr Mander, how extraordinarily kind of you to think of us in our anxiety about the De Morgan pottery and pictures’. He goes on to assure Geoffrey that arrangements have been made to remove the smaller paintings and pack up the pottery in the basement of their London house.

Addressed from Hertfordshire, the letter reveals that the De Morgan paintings were taken to a house that the Stirlings had rented in Harpenden, close to Evelyn and Wilhelmina’s sister-in-law Ethel Pickering, the wife of their deceased brother Spencer Pickering (1858–1920). Spencer had his own small De Morgan Collection, which he had left to his wife Ethel, who in turn left it to their adopted daughter, Phyllis.

The letters between Phyllis and Wilhelmina are charged with rivalry and mutual dislike – with both believing that particular De Morgan pieces should have been in their own collections. The correspondence traces the complex and fascinating provenance of many of the De Morgan pictures in the collection. The archive contains a black-and-white photograph of William’s painting The Alchemist’s Daughter (date unknown), which was legally the property of Wilhelmina from at least 1930. Phyllis has scrawled ‘belongs to Phyllis’ across the bottom, clearly convinced that the picture should have been left to her.

A second picture which Phyllis contested, now in the De Morgan Collection, was Daughters of the Mist (1910–19) (Fig. 3). This had been in the possession of her adopted
parents, but it eventually came to Mrs Stirling’s Collection after being exhibited at Leighton House Museum in London. The reason why Phyllis contested the ownership so vehemently was revealed when a private collector who lived near Wightwick contacted the Foundation with a drawing of Ethel Pickering (Fig. 4). The similarity to the central figure is striking, strongly suggesting that Evelyn De Morgan asked her sister-in-law to sit for this picture.

The family spat led Phyllis to bequeath her De Morgan collection to the National Trust at Knightshayes Court in Devon and Lanhydrock in Cornwall, properties close to where she had retired, rather than allowing it to join the De Morgan Foundation. This collection included significant pieces such as a pastel sketch for Evelyn’s later painting, Clytie (1885) (Fig. 5). The advice of the Trust’s curators in the 1990s was that the De Morgan pieces at Lanhydrock would be more in keeping at Wightwick Manor. As a result, they were moved permanently to the house in 1997, once again sparking a conversation about the potential re-housing of the De Morgan Foundation Collection in Wolverhampton, which was finally realised in 2016.

‘Look Beneath the Lustre’

The exhibition displays include a sketchbook belonging to Evelyn De Morgan and a letter from William De Morgan to the acclaimed scientist Spencer Pickering, which was discovered in the archive at Wightwick. Both pieces provide crucial insights into how and why the De Morgans created their art.

Among the compositional drawings in Evelyn De Morgan’s sketchbook is a handwritten list of books and authors. Perhaps surprisingly, this includes The Principles of Science: A Treatise on Logic by William Stanley Jevons (1874), a work that unpicked contemporary scientific theories using mathematical, logical and even theological principles. Jevons argued that it was logically conceivable that the world had been created out of nothing, or else that it had existed ‘from eternity’. He also argued that the theory of evolution need not be in conflict with theology, since it did not lead to the conclusion that divine intervention was impossible.6 It is probable that his work inspired Evelyn De Morgan’s Spiritualist ideas.7 Her picture The Mourners (c.1915), which is in Wightwick’s collection, depicts the afterlife co-existing with worldly life (Fig. 6). It could almost be an illustration of Jevons’s theories of eternal existence, which resonated so strongly with her.

Although he had no formal scientific training, William De Morgan had a brilliant scientific mind and was a keen inventor. Wightwick’s collection includes a letter from William to his brother-in-law (Evelyn’s brother), the groundbreaking chemist Spencer Pickering. William describes his visit to London Polytechnic (now the University of Westminster) to conduct an experiment with hydrogen gas in air. He writes, ‘I have just
come from the Poly, where I saw the result of an experiment that was very interesting’, and he promises to visit again and report back on the ‘next adventure’. Scientific investigation was key to the development of De Morgan’s work with ceramics. The lustre glazes he reinvented are created by firing copper or silver oxide at a critical temperature in a kiln starved of oxygen, and it was only by testing and recording his results with scientific precision that he was able to achieve such beautiful effects (Fig. 7).

‘Look Beneath the Lustre’ provides visitors with a space to reflect on the significance of the De Morgans as artists and their place in the art movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The exhibition, and its extremely positive reception among visitors, is the result of a productive collaboration between the De Morgan Foundation and the National Trust that should encourage and inspire other Trust properties embarking on similar partnerships.

Notes
1. Research undertaken by Hannah Squire, National Trust, Assistant Curator, National Public Programmes.
2. Theodore Mander, Choice Extracts from Various Authors, Wightwick Manor Archive, unpublished notebook, 1884.
Obituary

Trevor Proudfoot (1954–2019)

Trevor Proudfoot, who died in September 2019 aged 65, was a leading specialist in the conservation of stone, marble and plaster who pioneered an approach that blended the traditional skills of the mason with new techniques based on research into the nature of materials. He was the founder and for nearly 40 years the guiding spirit of Cliveden Conservation, a commercial practice that, under his leadership, built up an international reputation (and is now managed by one of Trevor’s four children, Lewis Proudfoot). This success was to a large extent due to the rare combination of qualities that Trevor brought to his role as Managing Director: the eye of an artist, the skill and sensitivity of a craftsman, the curiosity of a historian and the long-term vision and high standards of a curator. The combination of these gifts, together with his natural energy and charm, buccaneering spirit and intuitive approach to conservation, have been of immeasurable benefit to cathedrals and Oxford and Cambridge colleges, churches, country houses and historic monuments all over the British Isles, and won him widespread admiration.

Trevor was born a man of Kent in Herne Bay in 1954. His father, Peter, managed the family printing business, A. J. Proudfoot & Son. He was educated at Vernon Holme School, Canterbury, and Kent College before completing a foundation year at Exeter School of Art. He abandoned his subsequent course at Hull School of Art to join the London firm of J. Bysouth Ltd as a trainee stonemason.

The origin of Trevor’s career as a conservator can be traced to a day in or about 1979 when he was working on the Bristol Cross, a medieval monument in the gardens at Stourhead. He was approached by Hermione Sandwith, a paintings conservator who was then setting up a conservation department for the National Trust. As a result of that meeting, Trevor joined the staff. He was immediately sent to the Victoria & Albert Museum to study the new conservation techniques being developed there and on his return was appointed the National Trust’s first Adviser on the Conservation of Sculpture.

A generous donation from the late Mr Philip Henman funded the conversion of the redundant squash courts at Cliveden into a sculpture conservation workshop, an assistant was engaged and Trevor set about travelling the country assessing the cost of repairing works of art and craftsmanship made of stone, marble and plaster, and bringing them back to Cliveden or carrying out the necessary work on site. It was not long, however, before he began to feel constrained as an employee of the National Trust. He wanted to be free to work overtime and at weekends, to tend for work anywhere and so broaden his experience. As a result, in 1991 the Trust agreed that Trevor should cease to be a member of staff, take a lease of the Cliveden workshops and set up in business on his own. In exchange, he would guarantee the Trust six months of his time every year. Thus, Cliveden Conservation was born and in due course satellite workshops were established in Bath and North Norfolk. Though no longer an employee of the National Trust, Trevor remained deeply committed to its purposes and its values. He was proud to be its Adviser on Sculpture Conservation, a title which he retained to the end of his life.

Over the years Trevor gave advice on the care and conservation of stone and plaster in their various forms or directed work carried out by Cliveden Conservation at almost every National Trust property. A few examples give an idea of the range of his expertise. At Petworth he devised a methodology for cleaning ancient sculpture without harm to fragments of original polychromy surviving in crevices; at Powis and Kingston Lacy he developed the use of stainless-steel fixings to secure garden statuary against theft; at Chastleton he devised a way of pinning back fragile plaster ceilings with stainless steel pins and wire; at Uppark he reinvented the lost art of freehand modelling in lime/hair plaster to recreate the ceilings brought down by the 1989 fire; at Knole, Chartwell and Cliveden he developed a way of repairing worn stone floors while minimising replacement.

Disasters put Trevor on his mettle. Sophie Chessum recalls how he appeared unannounced the day after the disastrous fire at Clandon, borrowed a cherry-picker and organised the removal of the contents of the only undamaged room and the propping of its 18th-century ceiling.

Trevor had an incisive mind and a self-deprecating charm that masked a seriousness of purpose. In all of the projects he worked or advised on, he applied the principles he always championed: minimal intervention, maximum retention of original fabric and reversibility.

Martin Drury
Director-General of the National Trust 1996–2001
Fringe, Frog & Tassel
The Art of the Trimmings-Maker in Interior Decoration
Annabel Westman

This book, the first of its kind, traces the history of trimmings in Britain and Ireland from 1320 to 1970, examining the design and use of tassels, fringe, braid, gimp and cord and their dependence on French fashion.

Often overlooked as mere details of a furnished interior, trimmings were once seen as vital and costly elements in the decoration of a room. They were used not only on curtains and beds but also on wall hangings, upholstered seat furniture and cushions, providing a visual feast with their colour and intricate detail.

This lavishly illustrated book links surviving items in historic houses and museums to written evidence, paintings, drawings and other primary sources to provide a framework for dating pieces of uncertain provenance. The importance of the ‘laceman’, the maker of these trimmings, is also examined in its economic and social contexts, together with the relationship to the upholsterer and interior decorator in the creation of a fashionable room.

Annabel Westman FSA is an independent textile historian and consultant. She specialises in the reinstallation of historic interiors for heritage bodies, private houses and museums.

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