




PERIOD LIVING

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Britain enjoys an unparalleled wealth of stately homes and historic houses to visit and enjoy. Whether under the care of charities, trusts or privately owned, there is always a dedicated and passionate team devoted to the preservation of these properties and their contents, making an enormously valuable contribution to our country's unique heritage. Alongside discovering the fascinating stories about the characters that created and lived in these treasure houses over the centuries, and the unique artworks and antiques passed down the generations, the historic interiors and architectural details serve as an endless source of inspiration for homeowners today. Interior designers regularly look to the past, replicating the intricate patterns or honest craftsmanship of their predecessors, and referencing the sumptuous styles of glamorous epochs. For keen gardeners, meanwhile, there is much to learn from the seasonal changes and planting palette of the carefully tended glorious gardens and grounds.

At *Period Living*, we have had the privilege to visit many properties, delve into the archives and unveil the secrets of their custodians and collections. So as many of the houses prepare to shake off their dust sheets and open their doors to visitors after a winter of conservation and care, we've picked out some of our favourites to inspire you for places to visit in 2017. From 'cabinets of curiosities' filled with the fascinating and eclectic artefacts of passionate collectors; the personal retreats of much-loved authors; the ancestral seats of Dukes and Lords; or homes that are like time capsules, presenting a perfectly preserved story of the past, we hope that you enjoy and are inspired by our selection of Britain's best heritage days out.

Rachel Crow
Supplement Editor

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Above: A painting of Rudyard by the Hon John Collier, 1900
Left: With parts of the house dating from 1634, Bateman's has connections with the Sussex iron industry

SUSSEX

Bateman's

The 17th-century home of Rudyard Kipling, the imaginative mind that wrote such literary classics as *The Jungle Book* and *Just So Stories*, is still filled with his creative spirit

Our guide: Gary Enstone
House manager, Gary says: 'It's wonderful to be able to immerse yourself in Kipling's environment, and you really can imagine him here.'

When Rudyard Kipling first set eyes on Bateman's in 1902, he instantly fell for the property's charm. 'This is she! Let's make a good, honest woman of her quick,' he said; for although the Jacobean house was in a rather decrepit state, with no modern amenities and holes in the walls and floors, it offered the isolation that he and his wife Carrie yearned for. They loved that no Victorian additions had been made to the home, and that its original 17th-century bones had survived. 'Behold us,' Rudyard later wrote in a letter, 'lawful owners of a grey stone, lichened house – A.D. 1634 over the door... all untouched and unfaked.'

Rudyard was as dedicated as ever to his writing at his Sussex home, where he remained for a further 34 years, until his death in 1936. In accordance with his wishes to pass his 'little bit of England' to the nation, the house was given to the National Trust upon Carrie's death in 1939. With the advice of their surviving daughter, Elsie, it has been perfectly preserved from the 1930s, as if the Kiplings have just stepped out for a moment.

What brought the Kiplings to Bateman's?

They moved here from Rottingdean, where they were living when their eldest daughter, Josephine, died in 1899, aged six. The grief and memories weighed heavy on the couple there, so it was therefore almost like a fresh start coming to ➤

Bateman's, which Rudyard described as 'not having a bad brick in her body.'

The couple were very concerned about privacy and security – at Rottingdean, visitors would sometimes arrive by the coachload to try to catch a glimpse of the celebrated author. People would try to get hold of pieces of his writing to sell on – tradesmen would often not cash in cheques for work done but sell them on, as Rudyard's signature was worth more. The Kiplings were therefore very careful by the time they moved to Bateman's. Adopting the role of head of the household, Carrie could see through to the entrance hall from her office, and she would give a Caesar-style thumbs up or down as to whether a visitor should be accepted in or not.

How would you describe the furnishings and decoration?

The Kiplings didn't want to damage the historic atmosphere of the house, so they sympathetically carried out repair work, but it is very much a Jacobean home through Edwardian eyes.

They collected pieces appropriate to the age of the property, but not all of the same style – they mixed English, Spanish, French, Dutch, Japanese... A multitude of designs, but eclectically they work because they are of the same time period. In the dining room are some remarkable Jacobean leather wall hangings that they acquired second-hand from a house being refurbished on the Isle of Wight. These were from the era when tapestries were becoming old-fashioned in wealthy houses, but before the advent of wallpaper. The hangings are now quite stiff and rigid with age, but were designed to have a life to them, a little like a textile, and would have moved and rippled slightly in the draughts. When lit by candlelight, the colours and gold in the exotic design would have caught the light, so it would have felt a little like sitting in a jungle at night. You can see the stains from pipe and cigar smoke that built up over time, but this tells part of their story.

All through the house are also Rudyard's mementoes from the Indian subcontinent, where he lived in his early life, with many Buddhas and effigies of Indian gods. He was also a great believer in the use of good luck emblems and charms, and there are examples of lovely fabrics with Swastika motifs – a sacred symbol signifying auspiciousness in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism – which, of course, from 1939 became inappropriate to use.

Where did he do his writing?

The study upstairs is the key room. As a rule, Kipling only worked in the mornings. He would often lie on the daybed and get himself into an almost meditative state, then he would suddenly ➤

Below: Kipling referred to a house with a chequered hallway in *Puck of Pook's Hill* – the lantern clock with its original workings dates back to the 1580s, and is the oldest working clock in the National Trust
Right: Kipling enjoyed the lush gardens and unaltered details of the Jacobean property
Below right: The Jacobean leather wall hangings in the dining room depict exotic birds and flowers. The Chippendale-style carver dining chairs at either end of the table have wooden blocks attached to their feet, to allow Carrie and Rudyard, who were both quite small, to sit comfortably for dinner

snap out of it, pounce straight up to the desk and write in a frenzied, manic way. The desk remains covered in old ink stains.

The floor of his study was generally strewn with papers, and because Carrie was paranoid that the maids may try to sell on pieces of his work to national newspapers, she would go into the study two or three times a day, collect up random scraps of paper and burn them in the fireplace. One can only imagine how many half-finished works got lost as a result! Kipling got so frustrated with this that he started writing ideas he didn't want to forget, or lines for poems, in the margins of his books in the library. It was a working library – these were the tools of his trade – so as well as margin notes on the texts, many have the strange annotations that he made.

In the afternoon he liked to go out, and he enjoyed the company of children and the way they looked at the world – a characteristic that was apparent in his writing. There are some lovely stories of village boys coming to the house to see if he wanted to play, being told he was in London on business, but then as they are walking away hearing his voice from the study window pleading with them to rescue him!

What were among the works he wrote while here?

By the time he moved to Bateman's Kipling had already written the 'Empire' books, such as *The Jungle Book*, inspired by the exotic and remote environments from when he was living in India or America, but now he entered his 'Sussex phase'. The view from his study looks out down a valley landscape, and he fell in love with this typically British setting and the history connected with it, and you can see how that inspiration fed into his writing. Works he produced here included *Puck of Pook's Hill* and his famous poem *If*, and he composed a lot of the phrases that were used in World War I, such as 'We will remember them' and 'Our glorious Dead'. Following the death of his son John in the war, he never returned to the joyful and enchanting children's tales, but wrote more reflective pieces with undertones of the grief of a family and nation.

You can gain an insight into the workings of this amazing mind through the little knick-knacks and trinkets from travels dotted all over the property – how mysticism, spiritualism and exoticism all fed into his work and the comparison between Kipling the homely English Sussex man, and Kipling the Empire man.

Visiting information

Bateman's is open daily, 11am–3pm until 23 February, then 11am–5pm until 29 October (gardens 10am–5pm all year). Admission: adult, £10.40; child, £5.20; family (two adults and three children), £26.25. Bateman's Lane, Burwash, East Sussex TN19 7DS. Tel: 01435 882302; nationaltrust.org.uk/batemans

Above left: Carrie painted by Sir Philip Edward Burne-Jones, 1899. She was very much the head of the household and ensured Rudyard concentrated on his writing
Right: The room where one of the greatest English writers crafted his work. The Indian rug is a rare surviving example of a more simplistic rural design. The desk, which Rudyard had specially made, is a replica of an 18th-century table in the parlour

LEICESTERSHIRE

Stoneywell Cottage

Designed by leading Arts and Crafts architect Ernest Gimson in 1898 as a rural escape for his brother, Sydney, the house is a wonderfully preserved example of the movement's ideals

This image: Stoneywell was built from stones out of its garden. Head mason Detmar Blow purportedly sometimes 'liberated' stones he liked the look of from dry-stone walls by 'accidentally' reversing a cart into them
Below: Ernest Gimson on the cottage steps

Our guide: Simon Chesters-Thompson
As curator, Simon was closely involved in the Trust's refurbishment of Stoneywell. 'Donald Gimson was on hand to advise and admonish,' he says.

The Charnwood Forest in Leicestershire is an area of ancient rocky outcrops, dotted with trees and woodland. It's a wild and remote environment, perfect for childhood adventures, and one that presented a picturesque escape to Sydney Gimson, just 10 miles from the smoky town in which the industrialist ran the family's iron foundry. Having bought a plot of land, in 1898 he engaged his younger brother, Ernest, a leading light in the second generation of Arts and Crafts architects, to build a summerhouse to where he, his wife Jeannie and their two sons would decamp.

Constructed from stone largely gathered from the garden, and slates from a nearby quarry, Stoneywell is inspired by the landscape in which it sits, and completely embodies the Arts and Crafts philosophy of the use of local materials and a return to a simpler way of life. As you wend your way through the garden path and top the brow of the hill, the house that Ernest created is seen ahead, emerging half born out of the bank. ➤

Above: The sitting room at Stoneywell contains both original pieces of furniture and items acquired by Simon on behalf of the Trust. The protruding slate was purposefully left at the side of the fireplace for Sydney Gimson's tobacco jar

The property remained in the Gimson family until 2012 when Donald, Sydney and Jeannie's grandson, approached the National Trust to continue its care for the future.

How would you describe the property?

It is set in this extraordinary landscape and appears to have organically grown, zig-zagging from the bank. When you go inside, it's not a large property, but because it is on six slightly different levels, laid out in an irregular shape and with concealed stairwells, there is a sense of being somewhere larger. The position of the windows is designed to give you different views, so it takes a while to work out where you are as you walk around. You can step out of the window of the main bedroom as the slope of the hillside rises to meet the first floor, so there is almost a seamless transition from the house to the surrounding environment.

Ernest was indulged by his big brother, who gave him free rein to create something truly vernacular. Sydney's initial suggestion was to build the house on a flat site, which had a nice view, but Ernest wanted to build it on the plot's far edge, which involved buying more land. The rationale behind this was that it should appear as if to have emerged from the earth, and this is why it is so architecturally important. In my opinion, Ernest was founding this natural style of architecture, totally rooted to the landscape, which was taken on as Organic architecture by people like Frank Lloyd Wright. However, you do pay a price for this style: because of the cottage's sinuous form coming out of the bank, the gable wall can be damp; and it is a bit cold. Even in 1905, *Country Life* reported the occupants had to "suffer for its beauty".

Where is the Arts and Crafts design philosophy evident?

It's a deceptively spare design, but is arguably the apogee of the Arts and Crafts movement. For instance, the slate shelf in the sitting room was about to be chopped flush by the stone mason when head mason Detmar Blow said to 'leave it – it'll serve for Sydney's smoke shelf.' So there is that attention to detail but on a very human level.

How is the house presented today?

Not a great deal had happened to the house since it was built – other than the original thatched roof was replaced with Swithland slate in 1939 following a fire, a bathroom added in 1938, and kitchen in 1953. We had some wonderfully arcane debates as to how to present it. One view was that we should show Stoneywell at the moment Donald left it in December 2012, but we felt this was too long after the children left. Others advocated that we return the house to how it was when Sydney and Jeannie first holidayed there in 1899. This would have meant re-thatching the roof and removing later historic fabric that, from the view of conservation ethics, would have been quite wrong. So we decided to show the house in the late 1950s, as it was when Donald and his family moved there.

Feature Rachel Crow Photographs National Trust Images/James Dobson, (Ernest Gimson) Leicester City Council, (family photo) Gimson Family Archive

What work needed to be done to return the cottage to the 1950s era?

This entailed removing the 1980s radiators, reinstating the fireplace, and we also replastered with hydraulic lime plaster, which will dry even in damp conditions. Over this we have applied 13 coats of limewash, which will be an ongoing maintenance job.

We removed the more modern shower in the bathroom and I bought a 1930s cast-iron bath on Ebay for about £40 – which then cost £120 to deliver! It was astoundingly heavy and tricky to move up the winding staircase.

There is a real sense of childhood fun and school holidays re-created. Donald's son Roger used to have a model railway in his bedroom, so with this historical precedent I was able to seize the opportunity, and at last indulge my own little fantasy in setting one up!

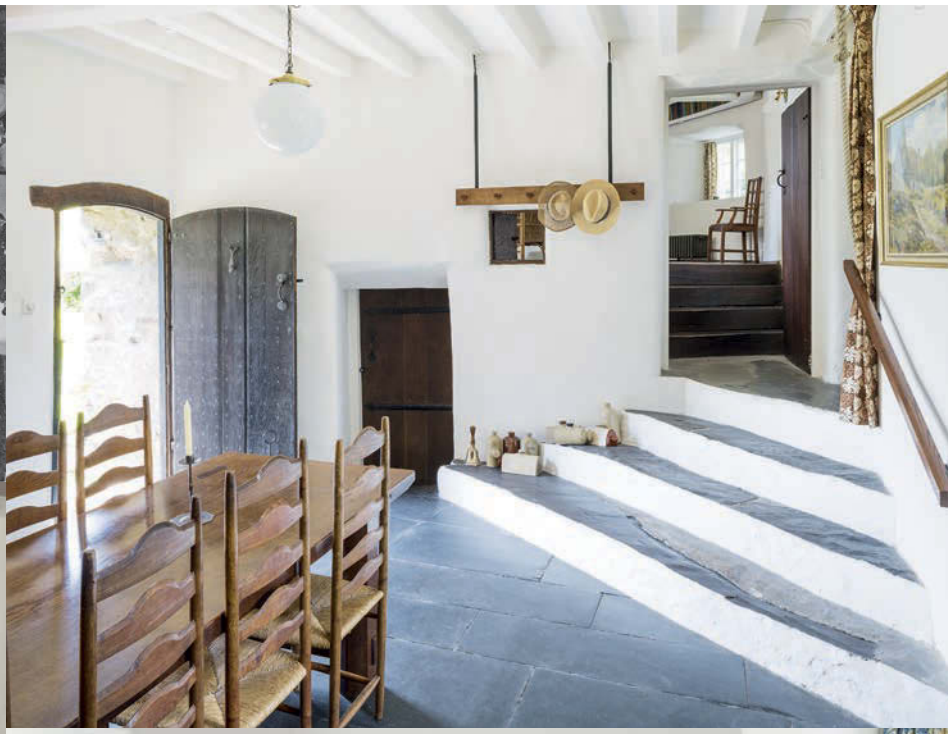
Is the furniture in the cottage original?

Most of the furniture is original, and was commissioned by Sydney and Jeannie. Rather than bring in unwanted pieces from their townhouse in Leicester, they wanted to source and have furniture made in the same spirit as Stoneywell. So they opted for practical solid pieces that wouldn't suffer when the cottage was left unoccupied, and much of it was made by Ernest and his Arts and Crafts collaborators in the Cotswolds. It is this fantastic example of the marriage of the contents with the property that makes Stoneywell so important.

Visiting information

Stoneywell is open from February to November. Visits by pre-booked tours only. Adult: £8.60; child, £4.25; family (2 adults, 2 children), £21.80. Ulverscroft, Leicestershire LE67 9QE. Tel: 01530 248040; nationaltrust.org.uk/stoneywell

Clockwise from top left: The Gimsons celebrate Christmas at Stoneywell, circa 1912; the dining room was originally the kitchen until 1953 – steps reveal the multiple levels of the house, set out in a zig-zag plan; the Well Room was Donald's son Roger's room in the 1950s; it is possible to step straight out onto the bank from this bedroom window on the gable end



GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Snowshill Manor

Bought in 1919 by artist-craftsman Charles Wade, the joy of this unique property lies in the vast collection of eclectic objects that Wade amassed in his lifetime, and which fill every room

Above: The Turquoise room is painted in 'Wade' blue, a colour he believed complemented the warm Cotswold stone property
Far left: The part-Tudor manor house had wings added in the 16th and 17th centuries. Wade lived in the cottage seen beside
Left: In Zenith is his grandmother's cabinet of curiosities, which captivated him as a young boy and fuelled his passion for collecting

Our guide: Harriet Groves
Conservation and engagement assistant Harriet has worked at Snowshill since 2013. 'Through the National Trust's work, we aim to keep Mr Wade's spirit alive.'

Britain has nurtured – and arguably treasured – a magnificent roll call of eccentrics over its history, which while unconventional in their lifestyles, left a legacy to intrigue future generations. Snowhill's Charles Paget Wade was one such fascinating character.

Born in 1883 into a family that made its fortune from sugar plantations in St Kitts, he was an architect and artist-craftsman, but from a young age was also a passionate collector of items both rare and commonplace, sourced from around the world. From Samurai armour to spinning wheels, bicycles to Balinese masks, he amassed a hoard of more than 20,000 items, all of which, in keeping with the Arts and Crafts philosophy, celebrate colour, design and fine craftsmanship.

In 1919, Wade bought and restored Snowshill Manor near Broadway in the Cotswolds, to house his treasure trove of curiosities, reserving the humble cottage in the garden for his home. Originally belonging to Winchcombe Abbey, the part-Tudor manor house is today a unique visitor experience – neither home nor museum – its maze of rooms still largely arranged as Wade left them, filled with his eclectic finds.

What do you know of the man behind the fascinating collections?

Wade was very creative from a young age, and didn't enjoy school because it was a place where ➤

imagination was suppressed and he had to conform. Growing up he lived with his grandmother, and every Sunday, if he was well behaved, he could play with the varied items displayed in her oriental cabinet of curiosities – be it a wax angel Christmas tree decoration, or a delicately decorative music box – and it was this intriguing array that first sparked his interest in how things were crafted, and in collecting.

He trained as an architect, but when he inherited the family fortune on the death of his father in 1911, was able to semi-retire and take up collecting almost full-time. While he was serving in the Royal Engineers near Arras during World War I, he saw a 'for sale' advert for Snowshill in the back of a *Country Life* magazine, and promised himself that if he survived the war he would buy it to house his collection. He gifted the property and contents to the National Trust in 1951, five years before his death.

Is there any specific theming of the items on display?

Craftsmanship is at the core of the collections, so everything is made by hand. Wade was a highly skilled craftsman himself and bought whatever caught his eye and appealed to him. There are no big names or famous makers – just beautiful items. But he also collected domestic objects or pieces connected with rural and cottage industries, particularly the Cotswold wool trade, so in a way he was then preserving a fast vanishing way of life.

Display items date from the Egyptian era, with a lot from the 17th to 19th centuries. As Wade built up the collection he moved things around a lot. The theming of some rooms is more obvious than others, but each has a very different feel. Contrast, for example, the Meridian room, in the middle of the manor, filled with a truly diverse and eclectic assortment, including lacquered cabinets, shields, a reliquary dedicated to St Ignatius, and an 18th-century sedan chair, with the more cohesive Hundred Wheels in the attic under the eaves, a room dedicated to transportation, with bicycles, prams and model carts in almost every regional design, or Admiral with its globes, sextants and other nautical-themed pieces.

Wade left very specific instructions on how he wanted the rooms arranged and lit with subtle candlelight, so they are very atmospheric, and this tied in with his theatrical nature. He had over 2,000 costumes, now kept at Berrington Hall, and he would often perform plays for his friends and ➤

Below: Nadir, with its wagon-vault ceiling, has a quote by writer Nicholas Breton inscribed in gilt letters around the cornice
Right: Seraphim is filled with what Wade described as 'unlikely treasures', including masks from Bali and Java that he found on his honeymoon
Below right, from left: This 19th-century Japanese carving of a mask maker for the No Theatre by Hanunuma is carved out of a single block of wood and was Wade's favourite item in the collection; part of the remarkable collection of Japanese Samurai armour in the Green Room; in Mermaid, a selection of 18th- and 19th-century dolls, soft toys, and 'Robert's Shop', which was one of Wade's favourite toys as a child

family, and had rooms specifically adapted, with 'stage' doors concealed in the wood panelling.

Did people visit to view the collections during Wade's lifetime?

He wanted to educate people through the pieces, so students were welcome, but he didn't like the term 'museum', as he saw the house with its contents as a living collection. He was also well connected in artistic and intellectual circles. John Buchan, Virginia Woolf and Graham Greene were just a few of his visitors.

Where did he find the pieces?

Surprisingly, he did not travel widely to amass his collection. He only bought about 30 items overseas, and the majority was purchased in the UK. This was a time when large family estates were being broken up after World War I to cover the cost of war, death duties and crippling taxes.

His friends knew what he liked, so when something came up at an auction or shop, they let him know, but occasionally he came across pieces by chance. The Green Room, for instance, is a fascinating space filled with models wearing Samurai ceremonial suits of armour. These he found in a tiny shop in Cheltenham where he'd gone only to buy a washer for a tap!

Are there any items that he crafted himself?

The Occidens room contains a model village that Wade made, and which used to be in the garden. He based it on an imaginary Cornish village, called Wolf's Cove, and utilised his skills as an architect and craftsman in its creation.

We knew that wooden panels slid back on one of the fireplace surrounds to reveal little niches in which he built theatre scenes with tiny characters. However, we've recently discovered that in the little drawers he left handwritten notes describing how a selection of buttons animated the niches – one may move a figure, another open the doors. It shows what a gifted inventor he was, and perfectly sums up his creative, theatrical, fun, but also highly intelligent, personality.

How would you describe his cottage?

It is quite frugal and spartan, but again packed full of items, including a lot of rural domestic equipment. His room, by contrast, contains many religious relics and iconography, as he wanted to reflect the monastic connections of the Tudor manor. In it there is a Tudor box bed, but not many creature comforts, and a chill wind blows through the draughty window panes.

He was a man of many characters, which you can only really appreciate as you walk around the house. It is a property like no other.

Visiting information

Snowshill Manor is open from 13 March until 29 October, 12–5pm (gardens 11am–5.30pm) seven days a week. Admission (house and garden): adult, £10.80; child, £5.60; family (two adults and three children), £27.50. Snowshill, Gloucestershire WR12 7JU. Tel: 01386 852410; nationaltrust.org.uk

Above: In Grey Room is a c.1700 Flemish oak canopied bed
Above right: The living room ceiling is hung with domestic and farming equipment. Wade's bedroom and the bathroom – the only place with running water – are reached via an external staircase
Right: Wade's bedroom in the cottage, called the Priest's House, is more akin to a chapel, filled with religious items. He made and painted the large crucifix on the wall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BEDFORDSHIRE

Woburn Abbey

The family seat of the Earls and then Dukes of Bedford for nearly 500 years, this grand Palladian property holds many stories and treasures within its walls

Our guide: Matthew Hirst
The Abbey's head of collections, Matthew says: 'Woburn has so many great stories and treasures to discover, from the Canalettos or silver and gold vaults, to the fantastic 17th-century shell inlaid grotto chamber in the centre of the ground floor.'

The history book on every stately home includes a diverse cast of characters, whose stories help to breathe life into the bricks and mortar. Woburn's chapters are many and varied: from the imprisonment of Charles I and interrogation by Oliver Cromwell within its walls in 1647; Anna Maria, wife of the 7th Duke, pioneering the tradition of afternoon tea in the 19th century; to ➤

The west front with its classical Palladian features, which include a columned central bay, pedimented and serlian windows

Woburn Abbey

the 'Flying Duchess' Mary, wife of the 11th Duke, who at the age of 60 trained as a pilot, but disappeared on a solo flight from the Abbey in 1937, her plane and body never found.

There are many more tantalising tales dating back to 1547, when Woburn was granted to Sir John Russell, later the 1st Earl of Bedford, by Edward VI. The former Abbey of an order of Cistercian monks, which was dissolved by Henry VIII, Woburn was established as the principal family seat in around 1619 by the 4th Earl, who added a two-storey wing on the north side. But the grand Palladian composition seen today was at the hands of the 4th Duke, who in 1747 commissioned Henry Flitcroft to rebuild the west wing with its striking sweep of state rooms.

What is the first impression of Woburn?

The primary view of the house is the long west front. Henry Flitcroft was a protégée of the 3rd Earl of Burlington, who was instrumental in developing the Palladian style at the beginning of the 18th century. There is a large central pediment set over ionic columns, but everything else is quite plain – the architectural vocabulary is very restrained. Then in the background on rising ground are two balancing quadrangle stable blocks with octagonal domes. The effect is palatial, but not overly flamboyant.

Can you describe the state apartments?

The enfilade of rooms stretches down the length of the west axis on the piano nobile, so when you stand on the north-west corner you have a vista through the aligned doors of the connecting rooms to the south-west corner. They are incredibly elaborate rooms, with ornate gilt and plaster decoration. The fantastic ceilings in Queen Victoria's bedroom and dressing room were designed by Giambattista Borra and are copies from a soffit in the ruins of the Temple of the Sun at the ancient city of Palmyra, Syria.

The design of the paper and silk on the walls and furniture in here, and some of the other state rooms, is a recreation of the 1820s Woburn armure installed by the 6th Duke, a textile woven with a repeating raised gold floral design on a pale blue background. It was probably inspired by the fabric used at Carlton House, the former London residence of the Duke's great friend, George IV. This armure in turn replaced the 4th Duke's original silk damask, which we know from archival descriptions was a rich dark blue – one of the most expensive pigments.

The great showroom of the state apartments, and the most important room in the house, is the double-height saloon. With its stunning, richly ornamented and gilded coffered, coved ceiling, inspired by the likes of the cupola at Kensington Palace, and two impressive marble fireplaces at either end with relief carvings by the great Belgian sculptor John Michael Rysbrack, you are in no doubt that you are standing in the centrepiece of the house. The 13th Duke found the height of the room too oppressive and felt it needed greater perspective, so in the 1970s he commissioned Roland Pym to paint wall murals to create a trompe-l'oeil effect. These murals tell the story of the history of the family, such as its connection with the port of London and the East India Trading ➤

Below: Redesigned by Henry Flitcroft for the 4th Duke, the long gallery was redecorated in the 1980s with a hand-blocked wallpaper by Cole & Son, in an 18th-century design *Right*: The highlight of the state rooms, the ornate saloon rises up through the first and second floors. The chandelier was commissioned by the 4th Duke

Woburn Abbey

Company. The tones of blue used are also a reference to the original wall coverings from the 18th century.

Can the styles and tastes of other dukes be seen elsewhere in the property?

The 5th Duke commissioned Henry Holland in 1798 to remodel the south and east sides of the house, and the Holland Library is all that remains of the south wing. This neo-classical style suite of interconnecting rooms, divided up by screens of fluted columns, is a complete contrast to the Palladian rooms that the 4th Duke built, as the architecture is much lighter in style, with white painted bookcases that are so exquisitely carved it almost looks like sugar sculpture. Unlike the state rooms, which are dripping with gilding on the ceilings, these rooms have a more relaxed, comfortable atmosphere and are used by the family today.

There is also a long-standing tradition at Woburn Abbey of a love for chinoiserie, which dates back to the 18th century, when many exotic wares, including textiles and porcelain, were bought back to England by the East India trading ships, two of which the family owned.

What do you find most intriguing about the property?

It is the continuity and respect for the past that makes Woburn so fascinating. Each generation of the family preserved elements of what existed before, rather than just wiping the slate clean and starting again with a new building plan.

The 4th Duke retained the 17th-century apartments and built around them, and the long gallery that Henry Flitcroft redesigned was an antiquarian room from the first, as it was an 18th-century update of a 16th-century space for displaying ancestral and dynastic portraits. In many great houses these were lost over time but here have been preserved.

Visiting information

Woburn is open daily from 10 April, 11am–5pm. Admission (Abbey and gardens): adult, £16; child, £8; family (2 adults, 2 children) £40. Bedfordshire MK17 9WA. Tel: 01525 290333; woburnabbey.co.uk

Above: The pinnacle of the long gallery display is the 'Armada Portrait' of Queen Elizabeth I, commemorating England's victory at sea against the Spanish Armada in 1588
Right: The gilded, intricately carved pier glasses in the saloon, supplied by Whittle & Norman in 1757, are from the 4th Duke's original scheme

Words Rachel Crow Photographs courtesy of Woburn Abbey

Woburn Abbey

Left: Surrounded by its garden in summer, a haphazard mix of flowers, herbs, fruit and veg, Hill Top was Beatrix's refuge. The 17th-century farmhouse came with a 34-acre working farm, buildings and orchard
Right: Beatrix photographed in the porch at Hill Top in 1913

LAKE DISTRICT

Hill Top

More than one-and-a-half centuries after the birth of Beatrix Potter, a visit to her Lake District home reveals there was much more to the beloved children's author than tales of Peter Rabbit

Our guide: John Moffat
General manager of the South Lakes, John says: 'Beatrix was important as a writer and illustrator, but more important for us is her connection with the Lake District.'

The herbaceous borders lining the slate garden path leading up to Hill Top house burst with frothy waves of colour and scent on summers' days. Within a year of moving to her adored Lake District home in 1905, Beatrix Potter had planned the higgledy-piggledy and informal mix of flowers, herbs, fruit and vegetables for her half-acre plot. Today the beds still spill over with her cottage garden favourites – spring's irises, forget-me-nots and geraniums giving way to summer's foxgloves, phlox, roses and hollyhocks. It doesn't seem too far-fetched to imagine you might glimpse her 'naughty little rabbit in his blue jacket' hopping between cabbages and lettuces in the vegetable garden, where tools are arranged among the beds in homage to her fictional Mr McGregor.

Sitting at the edge of the hamlet of Near Sawrey, with views out over the surrounding undulating landscape, Hill Top presented a refuge for the 39-year-old Beatrix. By then already a successful published author, with seven of her beautifully self-illustrated books under her belt, she had recently lost her fiancé, editor Norman Warne, to leukaemia, and sought the peace and inspiration of this pocket of the country that she had come to know and love from family holidays. She would escape London for the 17th-century farmhouse whenever she could, and the rural location proved to ignite her imagination, as in the eight ➤

years following she produced 13 more of her 'little white books'.

Still furnished with her personal treasures and antiques, Hill Top is filled with the spirit of this passionate conservationist who used her publishing royalties to buy up farms and land in threat of development, and worked closely with the National Trust to help preserve Lake District land. In 1913, aged 47, Beatrix married local solicitor William Heelis and moved to a house nearby, yet would still visit Hill Top daily.

What is the first impression of Hill Top?

The summer months are the best time to come and get the full impact of the garden in bloom. It was restored by reference to photos taken by her father as well as Beatrix's own letters, and has stayed true to her cottage garden style.

We want people to experience Hill Top as if Beatrix is still around somewhere. For me it is the house's absolute authenticity that is so special. It isn't a curated collection – if Beatrix liked something, then she bought it. So, for example, elaborate china and Staffordshire pottery sit alongside great old oak furniture and horse brasses. It might have been from London or farm sales, but it was what was special to her. She was not concerned with the value of an item, and it was like her giant dolls' house, which she would rearrange at will.

Her books are key to the interpretation of the rooms: about half a dozen of the stories are based closely on Hill Top and around Sawrey. For instance, you can stand in the spot she must have stood in when painting the front door, sideboard or the stove that feature in the illustrations for *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers*. Most visitors remember reading her books as children, so visiting the property is an emotional experience for many.

How would you describe the cottage?

The house does feel quite dark on entering – one of the first things the Trust had to do was install electricity as Beatrix didn't have power, so lit rooms by candlelight or oil lamp. It's very atmospheric, with quite small and snug rooms, and you can ➤

Below: The entrance hall, which was the heart of the home, is simple and rustic, with its stove, oak furniture and rag run, made from scraps of waste fabric. In Beatrix's day it was lit by candles *Right*: Her entrance hall made several appearances in *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers*, published in 1908. In this illustration, Ribby the cat and her cousin Tabitha sit by the stove and you can see the same rag rug, rocking chair and coal stove as in Beatrix's own room

Above: The parlour, with its small table set for tea, was where Beatrix would entertain formal guests. The neoclassical chimneypiece, wood-panelled walls and 19th-century framed silhouettes offer a sense of what her childhood home would have looked like
Right: Miniature bronze characters from her books – Beatrix was a pioneering merchandiser and her characters adorned all manner of spin-off items, her 'little side shows'

imagine her sitting by the range in the entrance hall. Beatrix added the wallpaper on the ceiling and walls in this room, which is typical of a farmhouse interior, and the carved oak cupboard that she bought from a farm auction was one of her favourite pieces of Lakeland furniture – she believed handcrafted objects had an honesty, which reflected the Arts and Crafts philosophy.

But far from being a typical farmer's cottage, it is an unusual hybrid – a mix of simplistic cosy rooms hinting of her life as a farming landowner, while others speak more of her former grand London lifestyle. She was quite an upper class Victorian lady so the parlour was for entertaining guests and is more refined, with wood-panelled walls and a marble mantelpiece.

What insights do you get into her life?

The contents of the parlour demonstrate the different aspects of her life – delicate decorative items reminiscent of her affluent background, displayed along with her sheep-breeding trophies. She managed a large sheep farm on her own land and became an expert on the Herdwick breed.

You also see what an artistic family she came from. The New Room upstairs features huge landscape paintings by her brother, Bertram, as well as works by her parents. It acts as a reminder of what an accomplished artist Beatrix was. As children, she and her brother would skin and boil dead animals' bodies to understand them better anatomically, which is why her book illustrations are so perfect.

How strong was Beatrix's connection to the Lake District?

The sale of her books gave her the money to buy and look after land. Hawkshead and Coniston would look very different if she hadn't been around, and while she was still alive she did a lot to support the Trust through raising money. Without her it would not be looking after about a quarter of the Lake District. The bequest she made on her death is still one of the biggest ever made – comprising over 4,000 acres of farms and little workers' cottages, and her Herdwick sheep.

In what way did her life change after she was married?

She became Mrs Heelis, the wife, farmer and landowner, and entered a different phase – she wrote less books and those she did are less well known, I think because she lost interest in it. But Hill Top remained her refuge, and in her will she asked for it to remain as she had furnished it, as her private place of inspiration.

Visiting information

Hill Top is open seven days a week from 18 Feb to 29 Oct, 10am–4.30pm. Admission: adult £10.40, child £5.20, family (2 adults, 3 children) £26. Near Sawrey, Ambleside LA22 0LF. Tel: 01539 436269

Above: Beatrix embroidered the hangings for her 17th-century Lake District tester bed *Above middle*: The Daisy wallpaper by William Morris was a very popular design for the times. The chest features symbolic carvings designed to bestow blessings on the household – pomegranates for fertility, tulips for opulence and wealth, and vines fruitfulness *Above right*: The gate leading in to the garden, which featured in illustrations for *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-duck*, published in 1908 *Right*: Borders of cottage garden flowers line the slate path leading up to the house. Her garden evolved as much by chance as by planning




Above left: Charleston sits in the dramatic landscape of the South Downs *Above right*: The studio, with its fire surround frescoes, has retained the spirit of artistic creativity *Far left and left*: The paisley hand stencilled pattern on the walls in the garden room was designed by Vanessa after the war. The fireplace is plain marble decorated with blue specks to give the illusion of marbling

EAST SUSSEX

Charleston House

The former Sussex home of British painters Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, and country retreat of the influential literary and artistic 'Bloomsbury Group', can still inspire creativity in its visitors

Our guide: Wendy Hitchmough

Former curator of Charleston, Wendy Hitchmough, says: 'I've always been fascinated by the Bloomsbury artists and Charleston is such a fascinating place.'

Set in the beautiful landscape of the South Downs National Park, Charleston farmhouse occupies a special place in 20th-century British cultural history. As well as being the country home from 1916 of Vanessa Bell, an artist and interior designer, and Duncan Grant, a painter and designer of textiles and pottery, the house was the creative and intellectual hub of the 'Bloomsbury Group' of artists, writers and intellectuals. Known for their unconventional lifestyle, Bloomsbury members, including art critic Roger Fry and literary figures such as Vanessa's sister Virginia Woolf, EM Forster, and Maynard Keynes, shared certain beliefs, ideas – and lovers – and supported each other in their creative activities. Today, through its painted rooms and collections, the house tells the story of the radical decorative style, ideas and relationships of the group.

What do you enjoy most about Charleston?

I think the fact that it's still very much as it was when the Bloomsbury artists lived here; the house is shown without labels, there are no velvet barrier ropes, and it still feels very much lived in.

How is the lifestyle of the Bloomsbury Group and their work reflected in the house?

The way the house was used, like any domestic setting, changed over the years as the children grew up (Vanessa Bell had two children, Julian and ➤

Quentin, with art critic Clive Bell, and a daughter, Angelica, by Duncan Grant) and different people came to stay. The first room that you go into now is shown as Clive Bell's study, but when Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant first moved here it was used as the school room.

There is an air of bohemian freedom about the house – it feels as if there are no rules and that is very inspiring and liberating. It is, however, important to emphasise how much work was done here, and you get a sense of that work ethic as you walk around it – artists would go to the studio to paint, and writers to their bedrooms to write. Members of the Bloomsbury Group had a shared belief system that spanned the fields of painting, writing and politics, and you see a coming together of that at Charleston. It is a really peaceful place, too, so conducive to focused work; for instance, Maynard Keynes wrote the acclaimed *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* while staying here in 1919.

Every surface – walls, doors, screens, tables, lampshades – is hand-decorated. How would you describe the effect?

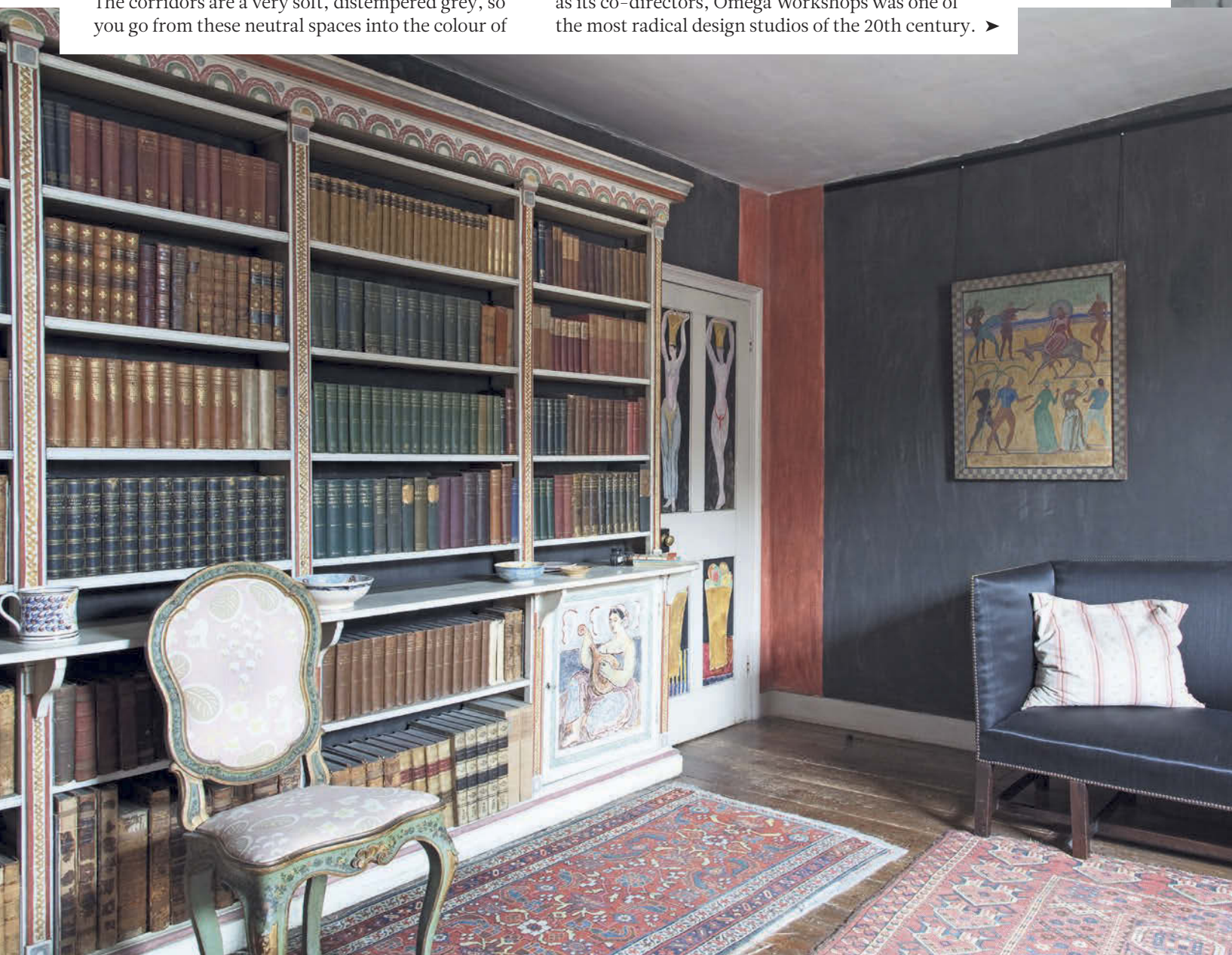
The corridors are a very soft, distempered grey, so you go from these neutral spaces into the colour of the various rooms, and each has a different decorative character. The dining room, for example, has black wallpaper covered with hand-stencilled oak-yellow chevrons and sponged grey diamonds, while the table was painted by Bell and at the windows are curtains that she made by stitching together vertical strips of different chintz patterns, which was quite extraordinary.

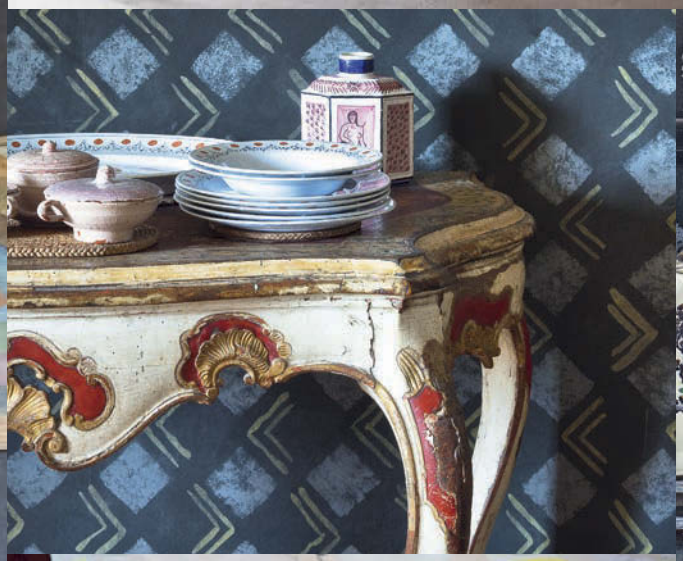
Grant and Bell had a very distinctive palette – we talk about the Charleston palette – which informed all of their work and paintings and was quite shocking at the time. They used these coco browns and soft pinks and juxtaposed colours together which you really think wouldn't work. They were extraordinarily radical at the beginning of the 20th century as painters and influenced by Picasso and the work of French artists – so there is strong colour, boldly applied, and with a complete disregard for convention; it's inspiring.

What is among the collections on display?

2013 was the centenary of the founding of the Omega Workshops, where you can see different objects that the artists produced. Founded in 1913 by Roger Fry, with Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant as its co-directors, Omega Workshops was one of the most radical design studios of the 20th century. ➤

Below: The library, with its dramatic dark decoration and exotic artwork, is filled with a wide-ranging selection of books – Charleston was an epicentre for the intellectuals and artists of the Bloomsbury Group
Right: The dining room, dominated by the decorated table, displaying ceramics made in the Omega Workshops
Below right: Many house guests helped to stencil the walls in the dining room, while Bell painted the decorative table





The idea of the workshops was partly to take the decorative elements of Post-Impressionism (bright colours and dynamic, abstract patterns) and extend that into items used in everyday life.

How else have the interiors inspired others?

Even in simple things; for instance Vanessa Bell had a bedroom on the ground floor with French doors opening on to the walled garden, and had a bath in the room. In those days – the 1930s – you didn't have a bedroom on the ground floor unless you were an invalid, but Bell lived according to her own rules.

What is your favourite room in the house?

The studio is the biggest draw and is often the last room you see on a tour. While the farmhouse dates from the 17th and 18th centuries, with domestically scaled rooms, the studio was designed as an extension in 1925 by Roger Fry. It is a double height, large space and has the energy of an artists' studio. There are still tubes of oil paint lying around, cigarette butts in the stove, whisky on the sideboard and paintings on the easel.

How did their artistic touch extend to the garden?

Roger Fry designed the garden as we see it today. His own garden in Guildford was designed by Gertrude Jekyll, so there are Jekyll influences.

It is an artists' garden, with extraordinary colour contrasts, and it is also rule-breaking, in the sense of the plants that you see growing next to each other. There are lots of surprises and quite witty sculptures strategically placed, so that you come across things as you explore, such as 'The Spink', a brick sculpture almost completely concealed in a thicket of yew, made by Vanessa's son Quentin Bell. Like all good gardens, it has different characters through the seasons.

Visiting information

Charleston is open from Wednesdays to Saturdays between 1 March and 29 October; entry to the house is by guided tour only and it is recommended that you book in advance online before your visit. Entry (house and garden): adult £12, children £7, family (two adults, two children) £32. Firle, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 6LL. 01323 811626; charleston.org.uk.

Top left: A mural on the door of Clive Bell's study
Above: Bell painted this cupboard in her bedroom using her signature circle motif
Above left: The windowsill in Duncan Grant's dressing room with his collection of possessions

Words Rachel Crow Photographs Penelope Fewster/ Charleston Trust

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ROXBURGHSHIRE, SCOTLAND

Scott's Abbotsford

Set on the banks of the River Tweed in the Scottish Borders, the home of the 18th-century novelist and poet Sir Walter Scott is like a physical representation of the romantic stories that he penned

Our guide: Matthew Withey
Matthew was curator at the house for three years. 'I often visited Abbotsford as a student and knew Scott's cultural importance, although not much about him as a man before.'

Acclaimed as the founder of the modern historical novel genre, Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) was essentially an international celebrity author of his day. An advocate and judge by profession, his literary creations include poems such as *The Lady of the Lake*, and the 26 books that came to be known as his 'Waverley' novels, amongst them *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy*. Many of his novels, filled with gallantry and romance, popularised the story of Scotland's past and the Highlands culture.

A great socialite, Scott developed friendships with many of his great contemporaries, such as Byron, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and was created a baronet by the Prince Regent, later George IV.

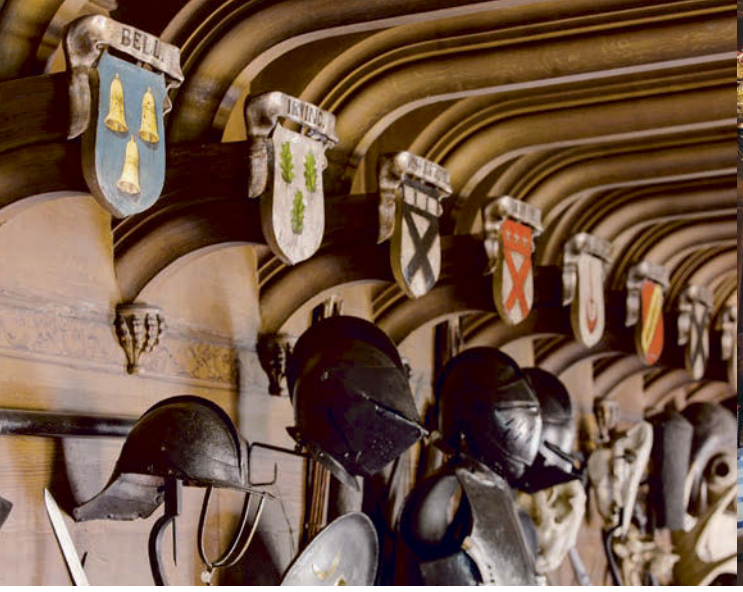
Abbotsford, near Melrose, was Scott's creation and he supervised it all, down to choosing the curtains and door handles. Built between 1811 and 1825, what turned into a 'fairy palace' was in fact the gradual expansion of Cartley Hole farmhouse, and was where Scott lived until his death in 1832.

Now under the care of the Abbotsford Trust, the house until 2004 was still occupied by the direct descendants of this great literary figure, and they helped in keeping his legacy and story alive through guided tours of the historic rooms, including the library filled with more than 7,000 volumes, as Scott left them, and the study where he toiled over many of his famous works.

Abbotsford is described as Scott's 'Conundrum Castle'; what is meant by that?

Physically, in terms of planning, it is not a very logical house. Three months after I arrived there, I was still walking up blind alleys; for instance there is a false room in the house – no door leads in to it, we just know it is there. This illustrates that in many places things seem to have been added on willy-nilly, as the whim took him. ➤

Above: Sir Walter Scott designed his faux medieval castle, which contains many architectural oddities, and spent his days in his study, writing to pay off his debts



The other conundrum is the balance between reality and make believe. Scott's novels are all about taking real historical figures and events and romanticising them, adding drama and intrigue. He recognised that he wasn't writing history. His home was similar, and he called it a 'museum of the living': it was his home, but also a way of displaying his collections. It is like a fantasy castle because he took the architectural language of old abbeys and castles and translated this into Abbotsford, in some cases literally including artefacts from older properties and plonking them on to the house – a side door was taken from the Old Tolbooth prison in Edinburgh. The effect is almost like a theatre set, because it is clearly a reimagination of something else. I think Scott enjoyed that the house is full of trickery and make believe and a sense of humour, such as plaster coving painted to look like wood.

The house recently underwent an extensive restoration. What did that encompass?

A lot of the work was behind the scenes – such as replacing the 1960s electrics – but we also cleaned up some of the decorative paintwork of David Ramsay Hay, an influential interior designer in the 19th century who went on to work at Holyrood. His trompe-l'œils are all over the house, among the most striking in the library, where he painted what look like green draperies on the walls; these had been lost under nearly 200 years of grime. Abbotsford was one of the first houses in Scotland to have gas, because Scott was deputy chairman of the Edinburgh Oil and Gas Co. He produced his own gas on site and, as a result, there would have been quite a sooty atmosphere, so the decoration would have darkened down even in his lifetime.

What can people see on the tour?

The rooms that relate to his public persona as a writer, including the library, his study and Chinese drawing room, and which are a way of displaying his vast amounts of antiquarian objects. These rooms have been on the public tour since 1833, a year after Scott died. Even in his lifetime, there is a history of Abbotsford being a visitor attraction: often people would just knock at the door and he was always very welcoming, according to the social mores of the time.

How is Scott's writing reflected around the house?

He was a collector of objects that belonged to historical figures, often of figures he was writing about. Soon after he acquired the Old Tolbooth door, he published *The Heart of Midlothian*, many scenes in which are set at the Tolbooth. It is almost as if once he has an object it has this creative charge and he can channel the characters. In *Waverley*, Bonnie Prince Charlie is an influential character, so Scott acquired objects he believed belonged to him, and the same with Mary Queen of Scots. In this way the house inspired his work, and was inspired by his work.

Do you have a favourite room?

You can really feel Scott in the study, struggling away with his writing at the desk. He describes a room like this in *The Antiquary* (1816), but he didn't finish his study until 1825, so you get a sense that for 10 years he was working towards it. However, then the financial crash of 1826 happened and the publishing firm in which he was a partner became liable for debts of many millions in today's money. From that time onwards everything he wrote was partly in order to pay off the debts. So the room goes from being something desirable, to almost being a millstone around his neck. I like the arc of that story.

Does it still feel like a family home?

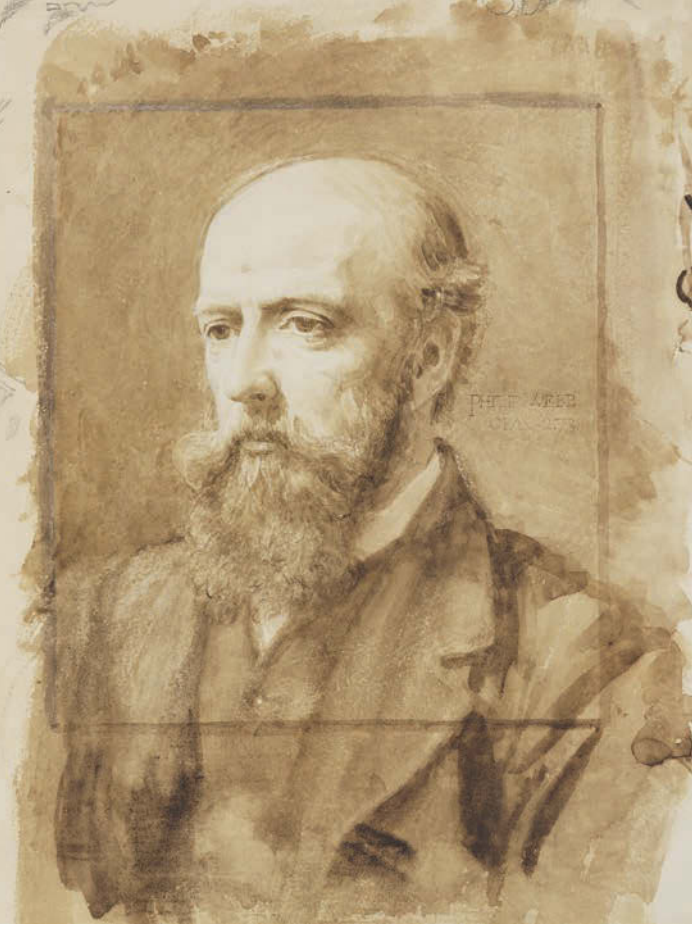
Scott's descendants did a lot to keep the house going and it seemed critical that the domestic character was retained. So the ghosts of the family, if you like, are all through the house, and the Trust wanted them to stay and be happy there.

Visiting information

Admission to the house and gardens open from March–October: Adults £9.60; children £4.90; family ticket £28. The renovated, former private Hope Scott Wing is now available to rent as self-catering accommodation. Melrose, Roxburghshire TD6 9BQ. Tel 01896 752043; scottsabbotsford.co.uk.

Above left: The arms of the Border families are painted around the cornice of the entrance hall
Above right: In the hall are displays of myriad items relating both to Napoleonic France and medieval Scotland
Opposite: The Chinese drawing room walls are hung with 18th-century decorative paper

Words Rachel Crow Images courtesy the Abbotsford Trust



Left: In 1856, aged 25, Philip Webb met the 22-year-old William Morris, and it was to be the start of a lifelong collaboration and friendship. As Morris once said of Webb: 'We understood each other at once'
Opposite: Standen was built from a rich texture of materials, which included sandstone that was quarried from the garden, local bricks, hanging tiles and oak weatherboarding. The house and garden were intended to be seen together as one design

SUSSEX

Standen House

The wide-ranging skills of leading Arts and Crafts architect and designer Philip Webb, are showcased in this preserved 19th century country home, built for the family of a wealthy solicitor

Our guide: Tessa Wild
Former National Trust curator Tessa says: 'Philip Webb made a remarkable contribution to the history of architecture and design, so deserves to be better known and appreciated.'

Completed in 1894, Standen House is one of the last works of Philip Webb's career that survives almost in its entirety, and offers a rare insight into his designs – from architecture to candlesticks and table glass. Often known as the father of the Arts and Crafts movement, Webb's philosophies of good craftsmanship and reverence for local materials and traditional skills are embodied in every aspect of this property and its decorative interiors.

The house was designed for wealthy solicitor James Beale, his wife Margaret and their seven children. The Beales had bought three neighbouring farms overlooking the Medway Valley and Ashdown Forest in Sussex, to create a comfortable country weekend retreat, and were introduced to Webb's work by their neighbours in Holland Park, London. The couple shared with Webb a passion for art and culture, and developed a close working relationship with him. Standen remained the Beale family home for nearly 80 years, until Helen Beale, the last surviving daughter of James and Margaret, bequeathed the house, its contents and 360 acres of woodland to the National Trust in 1972.

In what way does Standen showcase Webb's skills and influence?

It speaks directly of what became the Arts and Crafts movement, and the traditions we associate with that – a return to honest craftsmanship and the use of local materials. There is a wonderful interplay of different materials; Webb drew on the vernacular buildings of the Sussex Weald for inspiration, but then applied his adept skill at proportion. He didn't work in any particular style: he wasn't interested in getting caught up in the Gothic versus classical debate, but his buildings have a real sense of being right for their location, and he designed for the needs of his clients.

Webb approached his commissions with a complete vision; his creativity extended to the smallest detail – no doorknob, fireplace or mantelpiece were left to chance, and he advised on decoration and furnishings, too. ➤

Below: The carpet in the drawing room was produced by Morris & Co's Merton Abbey Factory. Webb was a founding partner of the firm, and continued to supply Morris & Co with designs throughout his career spanning 41 years

How would you describe the property?

It is in a lovely location, with long views over the Wealden landscape, which caught Webb's imagination. The Beales had already engaged a landscape designer before he was involved, and decided where the house was going to sit, but Webb gently but purposively persuaded them to rethink it, so it was nestled further into the hillside to look as if it had always been there. He also convinced them to keep many of the historic farm buildings on site, which he looked to for inspiration and incorporated into the design.

The house reveals itself slowly – it doesn't present its main front to the visitor on the approach. Inside, it is extraordinarily light and beautifully detailed; there is colour and pattern everywhere, of a pared-down quality. You can see Webb in every detail. For instance, no two fireplaces are the same, and in the spirit of the Arts and Crafts tradition, he created the designs but then gave the craftspeople freedom to make each piece individual, from light fittings to fire panels, so that the maker was creatively involved in the process, too. Webb was also very interested in technology and electricity, as were the Beales, so it was a thoroughly modern house for its time.

How were the Beale family members involved in the design process?

Webb chose his clients with great care – ones with whom he felt he would work well, and there would be a dialogue rather than a stiff arrangement. By the same token, he wasn't the stereotype of an architect who came in and simply did what he wanted. He got to know the Beales and to understand the way they wanted to live at Standen: weekends that revolved around eating, and outdoor games and billiards. Even the children got involved. The youngest, Helen, commissioned Webb directly to design her own playroom and paid him 6d for ➤

Above: 'The fireplace in the dining room is an extraordinary ensemble of Webb's design genius,' says Tessa. The decorative fender echoes the forms of the fretwork panelling above *Right*: The floral Trellis wallpaper, seen in the conservatory and morning room, was William Morris' first marketed design in 1862 – however, he turned to Webb to create the naturalistic birds for it

the privilege. He also discussed with the eldest daughter, Amy, the style of fitted wardrobes she wanted for her bedroom. He was very open to ideas and, although he wanted everything to look beautiful, function was important to him, too.

Can the influence of any others in the Arts and Crafts movement be seen in the house?

There are ceramics by William De Morgan, textiles and drawings by Edward Burne-Jones, and decorative additions by Morris & Co, of which Webb was a founding partner. The firm's designs, a lot of which were contributed by Webb, were very complementary to his architecture, and so he recommended them to Margaret and helped her to choose papers, carpets and fabrics that were in the right spirit – not too patterned or coloured. She and her three daughters also worked on embroideries designed by Morris & Co.

Why is Webb's name not as well known as that of, for instance, William Morris?

Webb has a strong following, but it's small and fervent! In a way, his skills as an architect should be as well known as those of Edwin Lutyens or Charles Rennie Mackintosh. He chose not to publish his designs in his own lifetime because he wanted his work to stand on its own merit, and I don't think he sought accolades, either. He was a modest chap, and kept the designing all to himself – for instance, he didn't have a big office like his contemporary, Richard Norman Shaw, and in the course of his career only had two assistants.

His designs for decorative items such as glassware, wallpaper and furniture fall under the banner of Morris & Co, but I think Webb needs to be extricated from Morris' shadow. People don't often marry the two practices of architect and designer, and think of them as discrete. Yet it was the combination of Webb's vision in terms of architecture and the decorative elements that really sings out at Standen, and which makes it such an extraordinary property.

Visiting information

Open daily, 11am–4.30pm. Admission (house and garden): Adult, £11.50; child, £6; family (two adults, two children), £30. West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 4NE. Tel: 01342 323029; nationaltrust.org.uk/standen-house-and-garden

Words Rachel Crow Photographs National Trust Images/Rupert Truman/Andreas von Einsiedel/ Jonathan Gibson/ Michael Caldwell

Left: The morning room, as with other spaces in the house, is still filled with the Beale family's original furniture
Right: The sunflower motif centrepiece of an occasional table designed by George Washington Jack and made by Morris & Co. Webb was fond of natural forms, and the sunflower mimics the light fittings that are also found in the drawing room
Below: Webb designed the sequence of fitted wardrobes in the Larkspur bedroom having talked through the design with Amy Beale

Above: The white stucco facade of the four-storey town house; *Left*: Linley and his wife Marion in 1874; *Right*: Marion ran the household from the morning room

LONDON

18 Stafford Terrace

This former Kensington town house of the 19th-century Punch cartoonist Edward Linley Sambourne, retains the feel of a real, lived-in home

Our guide: Daniel Robbins
As Senior Curator, Daniel oversees the house collections, including cyanotype prints, photographs and press cuttings compiled by Linley Sambourne for his cartoons, and many of his drawings.

From the outside, this white stucco-fronted house on a quiet street in Kensington looks much like its neighbours; the interior, however, is another story. It stands as a time capsule from the Victorian era, the contents and decoration for the most part unchanged from when it was inhabited by Edward Linley Sambourne, his wife ➤

Marion and their children Maud and Roy, who lived here from 1875.

Sambourne began working for the popular satirical magazine *Punch* as a cartoonist in 1867, when aged just 23, and continued working there until his death in 1910. He also illustrated many books, including the 1885 edition of Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* and Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tales. About 1,500 of his drawings and sketches survive today as part of the house's collections, many of which are hung on its walls.

How does the house and its contents provide an insight into the personal lives of the Sambourne family?

As well as all of the contents, there is a huge surviving paper archive – household bills and accounts, and a large amount of correspondence – which is sitting in various drawers, plus we have the diaries of Linley, Marion and Roy. From these it's possible to build up an extremely detailed picture of how they spent their time.

We know from their diaries that money was always an issue for them. When interviewed by journalists in his home, Sambourne always liked to make out that the contents were only the very best, and that he had gone to great lengths sourcing the furniture and textiles, but the archives reveal a different story. It is evident that he would buy things from all kinds of sources – house clearances and auctions and what were like bric-a-brac shops, so not as exclusive as he claimed. The archive also reveals it was Linley himself who was the 'house furnisher in chief' and there are references in Marion's diary where she is clearly exasperated by 'yet another delivery of chairs…'.

How would you describe the decoration around the property?

When they first moved in, Linley and Marion decorated it almost entirely in William Morris wallpapers, which would have been quite expensive and also quite a progressive thing to do.

Linley wanted to be taken seriously as an artist, even though he was an illustrator, so his aim was to make what was quite a conventional middle-class terraced house more artistic and an example of an 'Aesthetic' interior; this movement was a deliberate reaction against overcrowded Victorian interiors and advocated a more pared back look with exotic, Eastern pieces mixed in. This competed with his middle class ideals of wanting to make his home grander and fill it with things, though, so that is the fascinating thing about the house: the two values do battle with each other, the artistic and more conventional side.

A lovely example of where their decorating budget didn't go quite far enough was when in the 1880s, wanting something more luxurious, they covered over the Morris wallpaper with more

Words Rachel Crow Images courtesy of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea/Justin Barton

Far left: In the studio, Linley's work sits on his desk easel
Left: the entrance hall leads up to a mini conservatory on the first landing, where coloured light floods through the stained glass windows;
Below: Roy lived on in the house after his parents' death, and his bedroom still has its original bed, furniture and floral wallpaper

expensive, embossed and gilded papers. In the drawing room, instead of first taking everything off the walls, they just papered around where they had groups of pictures and mirrors hanging, and it seems to be off-cuts, as sometimes the pattern runs on its side, sometimes vertically, but because the room is so full you don't notice. When you take the pictures off the wall, there are these islands of William Morris wallpaper.

What do you know of how Linley worked?

The house also doubled up as his work space and on the top floor is his studio. He only got use of this space for about the last dozen years of his life, after his daughter Maud married; before then it was her bedroom and Linley worked in an extension that they had built at the back of the drawing room.

In the studio is his camera, as photography became an important aid in his work as a cartoonist. Thinking up the ideas for the cartoons could be rather laborious, and he realised that he could speed up the process by modelling people and taking photographs, and from these photographs create the sketch. There are examples to show the relationship between a photograph used to produce a finished illustration. We can cross reference his sketches to his diary to find out who modelled for him and where he got the costumes from. The staff were often dragooned into posing for these odd scenes in the back yard, so it must have been an unusual, and quite fun, household to work in.

Why was the house preserved in the way that it was?

Roy lived on in the house after his parents passed away, until he died in 1946. He had never married, left Oxford without a degree, and was fairly unenthusiastic about his career in the city. There is a sense that he was a disappointment to his parents, so after they died it's almost as if he saw the preservation of the house as his atonement, or felt obliged to preserve it in their memory. He never really took possession of it, and stayed almost like a custodian. It is fortunate, however, because this was the era where all over London comparable interiors were being lost and Victorian interiors were falling out of fashion. Roy commissioned photographs be taken of the house in the 1920s as a way of recording it, which are very valuable to us now for reference, alongside the photos taken by Linley himself. As a result, the whole property is very atmospheric and communicates the feel of the age that it was first put together.

Visiting information

Public tours are on Wednesdays, Saturdays (costumed) and Sundays. Adults £10; children £8. 18 Stafford Terrace, London W8 7BH. Tel 020 7602 3316 (weekends 020 7938 1295); rbkc.gov.uk PT

Waddesdon Manor

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Waddesdon Manor

Built to display a collection of art treasures and to entertain the fashionable world, this French Renaissance-style château was the 19th-century creation of Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild

Our guide: Pippa Shirley
Head of collections and gardens, Pippa says: 'The ensemble – house and collections – was conceived as a whole by Rothschild, and I just find that fascinating as a concept.'

The architectural historian James Lees-Milne once described Waddesdon Manor as having 'an awful impressiveness', and it is true that the building, in the style of a 16th-century French château, is a slightly incongruous sight in the Aylesbury Vale in Buckinghamshire. But there was a certain logic behind its design from the creator, Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild.

Hailing from the wealthy and powerful 19th-century family of international bankers, Ferdinand built Waddesdon in the 1870s to fulfil two purposes: partly as a country retreat where he could entertain the great and good at his famous 'Saturday to Monday' house parties; but also as somewhere that would serve as a fitting backdrop to display his impressive collection of mainly 18th-century decorative arts, furniture and paintings. ➤

Left: Seen here from across the parterre, Waddesdon Manor was built in the style of a 16th-century French château
Above: Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in his private sitting room, which is filled with a mix of 18th- and 19th-century items and furniture

What do you know of Ferdinand?

Born in 1839, he didn't become involved in the work of the family bank, so he had a lot of resources and time at his disposal. He was influenced by his father, Anselm, who was a great collector, so it was almost in his DNA, but he was also a character of great contradictions. While he surrounded himself with important people – from the future Edward VII downwards – he also had a more reclusive side. His hospitality was legendary, and he gave glittering parties where guests would dine on the very finest, yet he would sit at the end of the table, eating toast and drinking water.

Why did he choose to build Waddesdon in the style of a Loire château?

Ferdinand was fascinated by the arts of France, but as Waddesdon was one of 42 Rothschild houses scattered across Europe, he also wanted it to be individual. The Rothschilds were very focused on acquiring and collecting what they thought was the best, and Ferdinand greatly admired French 16th-century architecture.

From the outside, Waddesdon is like a fairytale castle, a wonderfully mad apparition appearing in front of you. But then you walk in and it is as if you are suddenly transported to an 18th-century Parisian townhouse, which reflected the collection of treasures housed inside.

Is there a particular focus to the collections at Waddesdon?

They are typical of the Rothschild style, sometimes known as 'le goût [the taste] Rothschild' – principally 18th-century French decorative arts, English portraits and Dutch Old Masters. But Ferdinand also intended that his amazing objects should be used. He would happily combine a set of 18th-century furniture covered in Beauvais tapestry with comfortable 19th-century leather seating. He sat at a Louis XVI desk and walked on Savonnerie carpets, surrounded by Dutch Golden Age paintings. It was all about discernment, comfort and luxury.

How would you describe the interiors and decorative schemes?

Ferdinand wanted to show off the collections in appropriate interiors, so he was making a scholarly statement as well as designing spaces in which to live. He bought architectural salvage, such as panelling from 18th-century French houses, with the intention of recreating accurate interiors from the period – but it is very much a 19th-century vision.

The Red Drawing Room, which is the first room you would have come into as a guest to one of his parties, is at the heart of the house in every sense. It is almost a representation of le goût Rothschild. There are paintings by [Thomas] Gainsborough and [Joshua] Reynolds – including one of the Prince Regent, who became George IV, the collector prince par excellence, so it was a deliberate statement by Ferdinand to have the royal portrait there. Underfoot is a beautiful Savonnerie carpet, one of a set woven for Louis XIV for The Louvre, 18th-century French commodes, tapestry-covered chairs, acquired by his sister, Alice, and, on the mantlepiece, vases of Sèvres porcelain – essentially a representation of the key elements of the collection. The whole is set off against incredibly rich silk fabric wall coverings and curtains that are re-weavings of 18th-century furnishing fabrics. There are a lot of the original textiles still in place, including silk curtains and covers chosen by Ferdinand, thanks to a programme of conservation at the on-site textiles conservation studio.

To the left is the Dining Room, shown set for a party in 1897, which really evokes what it would have been like to have been a dinner guest. There is a column of exotic flowers running down the table, reflecting the fact that Ferdinand had the largest range of private glasshouses at the time, and was known for orchids and carnations, in particular. On the walls are ornate mirrors and frames carved by Nicolas Pineau, one of the early exponents of Rococo, which came from the Hotel du Villars in Paris. More mirrors from the same set are at another great Rothschild house nearby, Mentmore Towers, which was typical of the family – they frequently acquired groups of objects and divided them up between themselves.

Who did Waddesdon subsequently pass to?

On Ferdinand's death in 1898, Waddesdon passed to Alice, also a great collector as well as a gardener, who introduced her strict rules of housekeeping to preserve the collection, still known today as 'Miss Alice's rules'. In turn, the estate was inherited in 1922 by her great-nephew, James, and his English wife Dorothy, who lived more consistently at Waddesdon. World War II brought huge social change and an end to the era of country house entertaining, and with such a different world and no children, James decided to bequeath the manor, a substantial part of its collections, and gardens and park to the National Trust, but the family continues to manage the property on the Trust's behalf.

Lord Rothschild is the current chairman of the Rothschild Foundation. It is through him that we have started to explore contemporary art and develop an exhibitions programme. These invite a new perspective on the house and maintain its sense of energy and ambition, which you might say is also a Rothschild characteristic!

Visiting information

Waddesdon is open from 22 March to 29 October, Wednesday–Friday, 12–4pm. Saturday–Sunday, 11am–4pm. Admission (house and garden): Adult, £20; child, £10; family (two adults, three children), £45. Aylesbury, Bucks HP18 0JH. Tel: 01296 820414; waddesdon.org.uk

Right: The fragile Savonnerie silk carpet in the Red Drawing Room has been replaced with a digital replica, so that visitors can once again enter straight into this room, as party guests would have done in the 19th century

Waddesdon Manor


18

LONDON

Dennis Severs' House

With its imaginatively recreated rooms evoking the lives of inhabitants over the course of nearly two hundred years, visitors to this Georgian terrace observe the historical drama as it unfolds

Above left: A lamp always burns above the front door of the central London property
Left: The sparsely furnished Lekeaux room under the eaves, strung with paper chains
Above: A riot of patterns and possessions compete for attention in the Victorian room

Our guide: David Milne
A close friend of the late Dennis Severs, David worked for an interior design company for many years, and following Dennis's death in 1999 gradually took over as the curator of his captivating house.

Upon entering the extraordinary and atmospheric surroundings of Dennis Severs' house in London's Spitalfields, you are immediately transported back to the 18th century and the home of the imaginary Jervis family of Huguenot silk weavers. But this is no museum: it is an unusual theatre experience, with half-eaten plates of food and unfinished glasses of wine on tables, items of domestic life scattered about, beds rumpled and unmade, smells of cooking drifting up from the kitchen, and the sound of voices of its occupants always just out of sight, seemingly having stepped out of a room as you step in.

Visitors are invited to silently wander the 10 rooms of the Georgian terrace – each recreating a different era, mood and spirit between 1724 and 1914 – and participate in the 'still-life drama' devised by the American Anglophile Dennis Severs.

In the late 1970s, when still a young artist, Severs bought the property for the sum of £18,000 from friends of his who were in the process of forming the Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust, among them Dan Cruickshank, architectural historian and television presenter.

The house stills lacks virtually any nod towards modern comforts, as in restoring it, Severs chose to immerse himself in the period of the property by living in much the same way as its original ➤

occupants would have done. Furnishing and decorating it with items and memorabilia from the 18th and 19th centuries, he gradually created scenes of Georgian and Victorian domestic life.

What state was the property in when Dennis bought it in the 1970s?

Parts of the house had been shut down, so the basement rooms and attic rooms had been closed and the windows boarded up. This is why they are the most precious, as they contain original 18th- and 19th-century paint finishes.

When Dennis bought the house, there was still an old chap living on the second floor who had worked on the fruit and veg market (the house was formerly owned by the City of London Corporation and tenanted), so when he died, Dennis moved in. Many of the rooms that had remained in use had been panelled over, with the rudimentary electric cables for lighting hanging down behind the panels, and most of the fireplaces had been boarded up and some had stoves in them. When he removed all of this, the house began to reveal itself and its story and that became the basis of the tour.

When did he decide to recreate different eras in the various rooms of the house?

It was a process of evolution over the 30 years that he lived here. He had people visiting the house from the outset because he was quite well known and knew a lot of theatre and film folk, so they would come out to slummy old Spitalfields – as it was at that time – to see what this young American chap was doing. He began to do tours, but only at night, in winter, for eight people, and it cost £35 each, which was a lot of money 30 years ago.

All of the chambers are prepared to look as if someone has just departed. You are not given a narrated story, but your imagination is stimulated by all that you see and sense. Dennis studied Old Masters' paintings and Hogarthian illustrations – pictorial records of social history – for inspiration, and also used visitors' experiences as a canvas to create the rooms, so their feedback became a part of it. Over the years he added to the rooms and even today, people's comments help the house to evolve. The tiny details change because it has to reflect life, and life changes constantly.

How does the tour of the house unfold?

You start down in the basement, in the ruins of the medieval priory that once covered the site, where it is dark and cold. From there you are drawn into the kitchen, which has blazing fires, candlelight and food cooking, and you head up constantly into the future of the house. The 18th century was the beginning of the modern world, the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, all of which is reflected throughout the rooms.

From the kitchen you move up into the eating parlour of the 1720s, when the new house's imaginary occupants, Elizabeth and Isaac Jervis, are just married, and then on into the 1750s when Spitalfields is dominating the world's silk trade. The affluence of this period is reflected in the dining room, which has the finest furniture in the house: gilded mirrors, oil paintings, wingback chairs, fine carpets and silver candlesticks, while in the master bedroom, there is evidence of the massive mania of Chinese imports, and a huge four-poster bed covered in beautiful damask silks, another sign of their wealth. Personal effects, such as a lady's bonnet left on a seat, help you imagine its occupants in your mind's eye.

You carry on into the late 18th century, and the last years of Elizabeth and Isaac's lives, and then ➤

Above: Mrs Jervis' gown hangs in her room ready for her maid to alter
Left: On the writing desk, quill and ink await the scribe; *Right*: 'Dennis called the kitchen the "soul" of the house, and we still sit around the fire,' says David

Above left: The femininity of Mrs Jervis's dressing table is captured perfectly with its assorted items *Above*: The Jervis children's toys left discarded on the staircase *Opposite*: The ruffled bedcovers in the Dickens room suggest its owner has just risen from slumber

that shifts slowly into the 19th century with the Victorian passion for ephemera. By the mid-19th century, with the growth of imports, Spitalfields' grip on the silk market begins to fall away and the development of the railways leads wealthy merchants to move to the manufacturing north, so the poor move in to the area. This is when the story of the house begins to stand still in time. In one of the rooms at the top, under the eaves, we have a family of five tenants living. The furniture is threadbare, there are indications of them all huddled around the fire, sleeping top to tail in the beds, and rain leaking through the roof.

Do most of the visitors automatically pick up on all of this as they wander from room to room in the house?

Most do and there are various indications in the house reminding you where you are, but everyone who visits will take it in a different way. The rooms stimulate all sorts of senses within you. You aren't allowed to speak, so when you lose one sense, all of the others are heightened. The house is full of smells and noises: of horses and carriages going up and down the street, the master calling for a maid, servants' bells ringing... Life is never absent.

How does the scene in the rooms change during the Christmas period?

Everything changes during the Christmas period and the house becomes something else.

The ground floor is heavily decorated in accordance with the ancient idea that in the middle of winter, when everything is dead, you find something living and bring that in to the house to bring health and prosperity. It is all spruce branches and pomegranates, nuts and spices.

The drawing room is set in the mid-18th century, so there is no decoration here because it is the Age of Enlightenment, when they challenge ideas based on tradition and faiths. They consider themselves above what is seen as a pagan ritual, but there are still pies and sweetmeats and gifts.

You pass through the Victorian room, which is heavy with ornate decorations, glass baubles and 19th-century toys half opened by the children. In contrast, when you get to the poor room at the top of the house, with its Dickensian feel, the decorations are paper chains made from old newspaper. Although they didn't have much, they still decorated their home because the children loved Christmas, so there is a much more joyous aura to the whole house.

Visiting information

The house is open Sundays, 12–4pm, Mondays, 12–2pm, and Silent Nights on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 5–9pm. Admission: daytime visits £10; Silent Night visits £15. Booking recommended. 18 Folgate Street, Spitalfields E1 6BX. Tel 020 7247 4013; dennissevershouse.co.uk

Words Rachel Crow Photographs James Brittain /Roelof Bakker /Justin Barton


Dennis Severs' House

OXFORDSHIRE

Nuffield Place

The former home of William Morris, later Lord Nuffield, the founder of the Morris Motor Company, gives a fascinating insight into the life of one of the country's greatest industrialists and philanthropists

Our guide: Joanna Gamester
The house steward, Joanna has worked at Nuffield Place since the 1970s, when it was in the care of Nuffield College. She says: 'Lord Nuffield's philanthropy is still affecting lives today.'

Above: The west front of Nuffield Place, seen in winter
Opposite: Lord and Lady Nuffield photographed in the 1930s

Born in 1877, William Morris, a former bicycle manufacturer, brought motoring to the masses when he spotted the market for quality-made small and economical cars. Within three years of starting the Morris Motor Company in 1910, he introduced the two-seat Morris Oxford 'Bullnose', and many more designs, including the sportier MGs, came rolling off the manufacturing lines in the years to come. After World War I, Morris cars became famous around the world.

Made 1st Viscount Nuffield in 1938, he was also a great philanthropist. He and his wife Elizabeth had no children, and as his fortune grew, he made a vast and important contribution to a pre-welfare state, giving away over £30million of his fortune (the equivalent of £700million in today's money) to support education, hospitals and medical research. He founded the Nuffield Foundation in 1943 in order to advance education and social welfare, and Nuffield College in Oxford.

Despite his considerable wealth, however, Lord Nuffield remained personally frugal. Nuffield Place in the small Oxfordshire village of the same name was his home from 1933 until his death in 1963, and was perfectly preserved as he left it by Nuffield College. In April 2011, the college gave the house and collection to the National Trust, and today it still offers a glimpse of a bygone era.

How would you describe the house?

The house was built in 1914 for a shipping magnate, and was designed by Oswald Partridge Milne, a pupil of Edwin Lutyens. It is furnished to reflect the tastes of the 1930s in a traditional, upper-middle class style, mostly with reproduction furniture ➤

made locally in Oxfordshire, and many of the walls are decorated with gold rag-rolling, popular at the time. It is modest in terms of Lord Nuffield's wealth, but at that time people were more concerned with being thrifty, and it is still fairly lavish in terms of how most people lived.

What impression do you get as you wander around all the rooms?

The main observation is how complete the house is. It's a time capsule; it still feels like a home, and is very evocative. The atmosphere is personal, from the cocktail cabinet and gramophone in the drawing room to the dining room table laid with the couple's china and glassware, or the pink glass in which Lord Nuffield's secretary served him a daily dose of milk of magnesia on a silver salver. He was a dedicated smoker – he paid for cigarettes to be distributed to the troops during World War II – so there is a lot of smoking paraphernalia, including ashtrays, pipes and lighters around the house.

How does the house tell the story of Lord and Lady Nuffield?

Many of their possessions are still where they left them, offering an intimate glimpse into their world. The more you look, the more it gives a real story of Lord Nuffield and an insight into his hobbies and pastimes, as well as reminders of his achievements. In an outside room is an iron lung, a large wooden contraption used to help people, such as those suffering from polio, to breathe. He made these in the car factory and donated them to any hospital that wanted one.

The biggest surprise is when you go into his bedroom, which is very practical and modest. On the floor is worn carpet, made out of pieces of car carpet from the factory. His bed is pushed up against the mantelpiece, which forms a bedhead, and he rigged up a Heath Robinson-style lamp by the bed that he screwed into the mantelpiece. In the corner of the room, he turned a cupboard into a miniature workshop, with a workbench and his metalworking tools. On one shelf is his appendix in a jar; you don't get more personal than that!

Are there many reminders of Lady Nuffield around the house?

There are beautiful textiles throughout, and lovely tapestry work – Lady Nuffield was a great sewing buff and trained as a seamstress at department store Elliston & Cavell in Oxford. The National ➤

Below left: The couple would sit and listen to the wireless in the evening, until they bought the television in 1955 for 105 guineas *Below right*: The decorative tiled hearth and fireplace in Lady Nuffield's private sewing room *Right:* The living room is filled with the couple's personal items, such as a drinks tray and Lord Nuffield's smoking paraphernalia

Trust has re-created her sewing room and dressing room, so there is now more of a balanced view of the couple in the house.

How would you describe Lord Nuffield?

He was very hardworking; business was his hobby, and even in old age he was described as full of energy. Although a household name when alive, over the years he had slipped into relative obscurity, but this is now changing since the house passed into the care of the National Trust.

This very important figure of the early 20th century is being brought back into the limelight, which is where he deserves to be.

Visiting information

Nuffield Place is open from 27 February to 5 November, seven days a week, 1pm–5pm. Admission: Adults, £9; children, £4.50; family ticket (two adults and up to three children), £21.60. Huntercombe, near Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 5RY. Tel: 01491 641224; nationaltrust.org.uk/nuffield-place

Above: Lord Nuffield's rather simple bedroom; *Above right*: His tool cupboard and workbench, housed in his bedroom wardrobe *Right*: The sunburst clock is one of a few mid-century modern pieces in the house *Right*: Lady Nuffield's Wolseley motor car – Wolseley Motors Limited was bought by Lord Nuffield in 1927

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