



History and Place

Informing the future

	Introduction
2	Listening and involving
5	Changing values
9	Access and enjoyment
14	Messages from the past
18	Learning and skills
23	Moving forward together

Introduction

To care for our historic environment is to embrace change. For more than a hundred years the National Trust has looked after places which connect the present and future with the past. From ancient stone circles and Victorian cotton mills, to gardens, village streets and castles, these places are alive with history. Conserving them is a creative, not a static, activity. Just as plants and trees need to be tended and replanted, so the conservation of historic places is a process of continuous care and engagement.

Ideas of what is historically significant are also constantly changing. Heritage is more than bricks and mortar, paint and canvas: it is how each generation discovers fresh meaning and value through interacting with these physical things. Responses change: an object of terror to one generation can become a source of delight to the next. This never-ending dialogue between past, present and future has moved the greatest poets and painters. It is equally real and relevant to everyone, making sense of the world around us.

With the right approach we can help people to experience this dynamic relationship through the power of places to stir hearts and minds. Their significance, and their contribution to society, must be continually re-evaluated. This leaflet describes how the National Trust, in the words of its founding Act of Parliament, is finding new ways to use its 'places of historic interest' for the 'benefit of the nation'. We hope it inspires all with a responsibility for historic places and helps in realising their potential.

Listening and involving

Today's National Trust could not exist without huge popular support. Our greatest strength is the shared commitment of the volunteers, members, staff, visitors, trustees and benefactors who make it what it is.

For much of its history the National Trust had a few thousand members and a scattering of largely isolated properties. Now it has a membership of over 3.3 million, and the properties include hundreds of miles of coastline, city and town houses and their contents, whole villages, great estates, parks, gardens and thousands of acres of open country. Today's National Trust serves a much wider community, in far more diverse ways, than its founders could ever have imagined. What makes the range and scale of the Trust's activities possible is the engagement of vast numbers of volunteers and supporters.

When the Tyntesfield estate near Bristol, with its extraordinary Victorian house and contents, was in jeopardy, an unprecedented public response saved it. More than 70,000 individuals gave donations from across the country and around the world in just 100 days. Public involvement did not end there: in its first year 150 local volunteers have worked at Tyntesfield, and over the next four years hundreds more from all walks of life will take part in its restoration and presentation. For those discovering what conservation means in practice, this can be a formative, unforgettable experience.

The Trust's purpose is to look after places 'for ever, for everyone'. This involves collaboration: responding to other people's interests rather than telling them what we think they ought to know, and encouraging visitors to explore not only what it is they have come to see, but why a property appears as it does. Across the country thousands of volunteers help to keep the stories of our past alive for new generations of visitors, using our properties to give context, relevance and drama to the facts of history. We can never hope fully to understand the past, but we can at least recognise that history is open to widely different interpretations, that it is many layered and that it sometimes gives up its secrets in unexpected ways, if we are allowed to explore for ourselves. Creative involvement can give us a passion for the places all around us and a lasting sense of their value.



Participating in rescue and restoration

Volunteers working at Tyntesfield, Bristol



Promoting pride in local identity and urban regeneration

Quarry Bank Mill, Cheshire

Changing values

The discovery of what is significant or revealing from the past can be made by an individual or collectively by a community. Deciding what is historically significant is no longer the preserve of the expert but involves the shared judgement of everyone with a stake or interest. This may mean rejecting the values of previous generations. The cotton mills of Yorkshire and Manchester were originally statements of commercial power, then became symbols of industrial decline. Now they are valued because they give a sense of identity to great centres of population. Pride in previous achievements may be easier to evaluate with the passage of time. The restoration of industrial buildings like Gibson Mill in Yorkshire or Quarry Bank Mill, Cheshire, contributes to regeneration by renewing a community's confidence in its future.

The Trust reaches beyond current stereotypes of what is safe, fashionable or popular. In 1939, we acquired Wightwick Manor, an Arts and Crafts house associated with William Morris and less than fifty years old. It is now both a home and a popular museum, much used by local schools. In 2004 we opened The Homewood, a house designed in 1937 by the architectural pioneer, Patrick Gwynne. A building which shocked traditionalists just a few years ago is now a modern classic.

Embracing modernism

Spiral staircase at The Homewood



6 History and Place Informing the future

Similarly, we must constantly revise our assessment of what is culturally or politically significant. This has encouraged us to open a range of buildings which have powerful social messages, from the Chartist cottages at Rosedene, near Wolverhampton, to the Back to Backs at Styal and in Birmingham.

The great collections of the Trust include its gardens. Throughout the country there are properties with internationally important collections of particular plant species: box at Ickworth, roses at Mottisfont and old varieties of vegetable at Clumber Park. The Trust's Head Gardeners are as much curators of great collections as those concerned with its pictures or furniture. Extending those collections is often only possible because volunteer gardeners have taken on the work previously carried out by scores of estate staff, as has happened with the restoration of the walled vegetable garden and glass houses at Wimpole. It is the diversity of our collections – from Hogarths to hellebores, from bats to Beatles and from tithe barns to taxidermy – that makes the Trust's holdings so remarkable and so important.



Broadening definitions of significance

The tailor's shop in the Birmingham Back to Backs

Conserving variety for future generations

Vegetable labels at Clumber Park



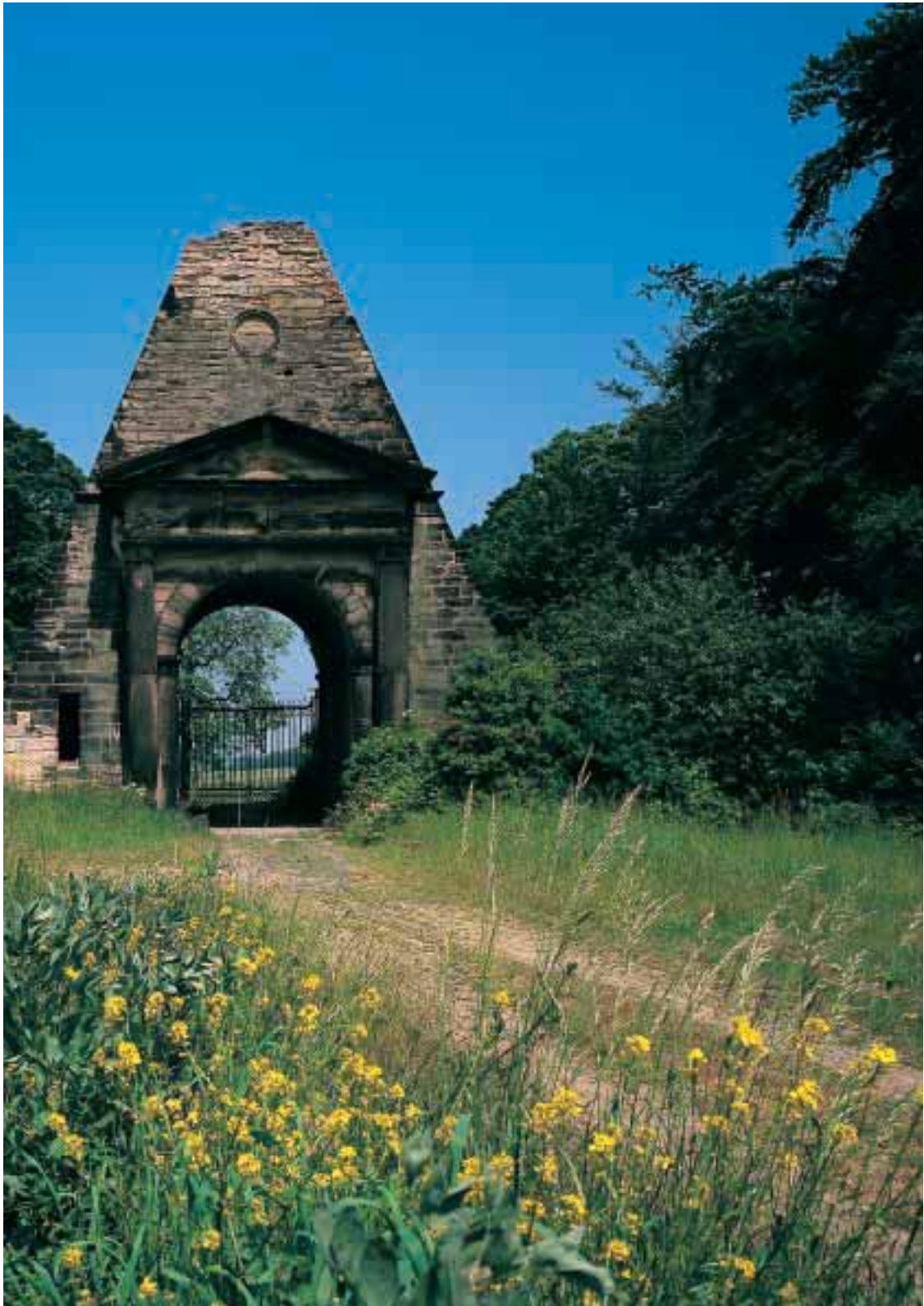
Celebrating social history

Photo from E Chambré Hardman's Collection

In 2004 the Trust opened the house, studio equipment and collection of the photographer Edward Chambré Hardman, and with it provided access to an evocative record of Liverpool life during a period of twentieth-century decline and revival.

The Trust's group of Merseyside properties are an eclectic mix, matching the cultural diversity of Liverpool and telling the stories of those who lived and worked there. They include the timber-frame Tudor house of Speke Hall, sand dunes and asparagus fields at Formby and the childhood homes of two of the Beatles.





Access and enjoyment

Historic places are also valued because they offer people the opportunity for refreshment, excitement or contemplation. The Trust opens the doors to real places which can rouse our imaginations and creativity.

At Nostell Priory, Yorkshire, Lottery funding has meant the parkland can be open to visitors and local residents for the first time. A site that was once closed is now a place to stretch limbs and minds. Our acquisition of Divis and Black Mountain – the backdrop to Belfast and previously reserved for security use – should have immense shared significance for the people of different communities in Northern Ireland.

Increasing enjoyment

Nostell Priory, Yorkshire



Enabling shared access

Divis and Black Mountains

10 History and Place Informing the future

Rievaulx and Fountains abbeys, whose remoteness once attracted the medieval Cistercian monks, continue to offer an escape from the noise and frenetic activity of life today. The Trust's gardens are similarly valued for their tranquillity, as well as for the varieties of trees, plants and colour. They are for many people the most inspiring

Searching for tranquillity

Temple on Rievaulx Terraces



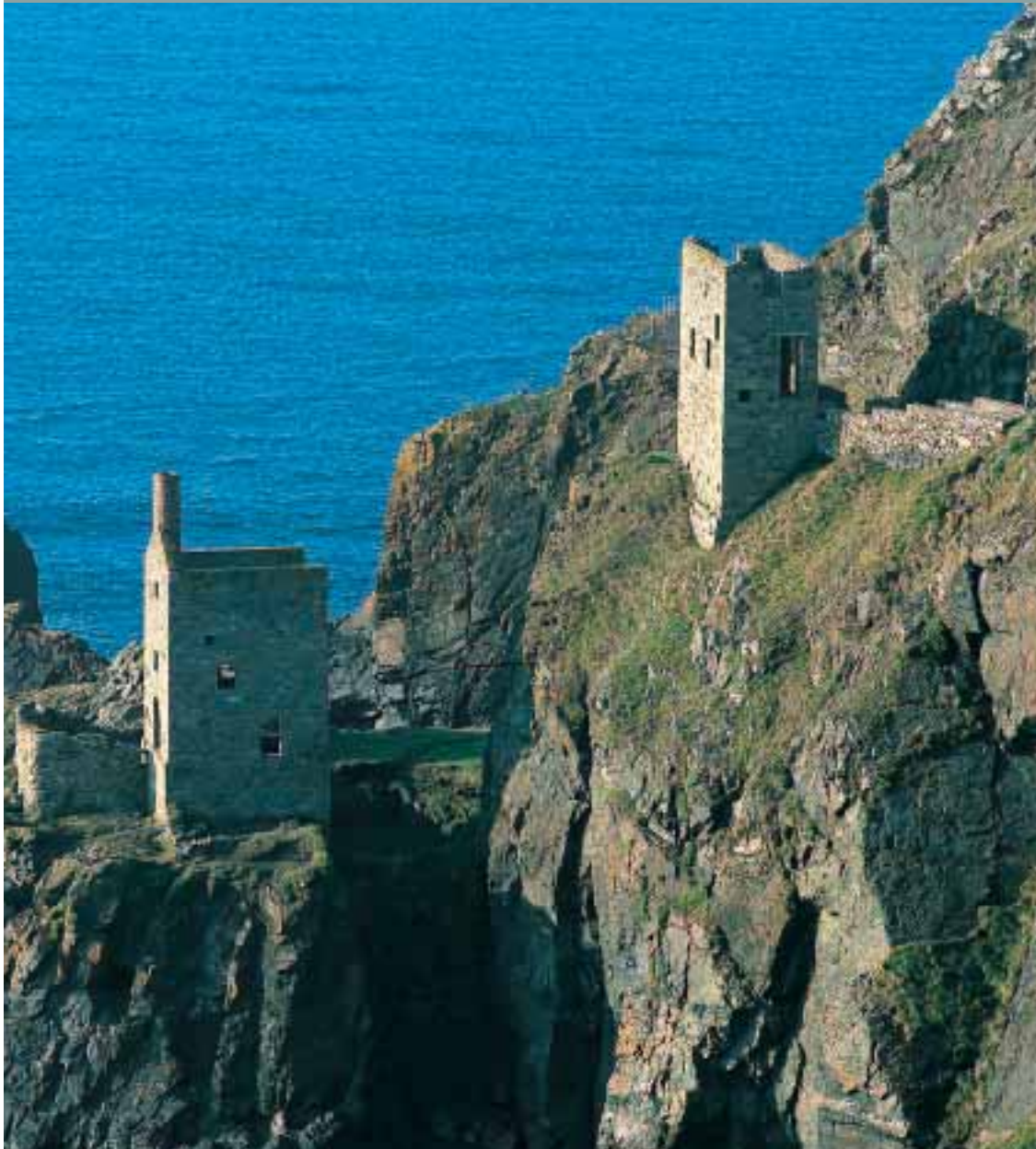
11 History and Place Informing the future

and precious places in the care of the Trust. For others the opportunity to contemplate a great work of art, such as a portrait by Titian at Kingston Lacy, Dorset, or a landscape by Claude at Anglesey Abbey, Cambridgeshire, is what they value most.



Experiencing wildness

Mines on West Penwith coast, Cornwall



**Providing different
routes to understanding**

Roman costume at Chedworth Roman Villa



Others seek the wildest, loneliest properties for refreshment, whether walking in winter along the cliffs of the Cornish coast, among deserted Iron Age earthworks and abandoned industrial sites, or on the Lake District fells. Their natural beauty combines with the historic interest of Stone Age factories, paved Roman routes and more recent farm buildings.

The search for a rural idyll may have motivated the builders of the Roman Villa at Chedworth, which looks down a beautiful, hidden valley in Gloucestershire. Many visitors instinctively value the sense of retreat to a place rich in history and set in unspoilt country-side. Others – among them schoolchildren – may need assistance to cross the imaginative bridge between present and past, and will then be able to feed their own curiosity.

Messages from the past

Our properties can also help to reveal the history of ideas, whether of Sir Isaac Newton's scientific discoveries or William Wordsworth's exploration of the relationship between the human imagination and the natural world. The apple orchard at Woolsthorpe Manor in Lincolnshire helps us to explore the concept of gravity and how ideas can change the world.

Some of the Trust's most remote properties have been used for experiments in the very latest technology. At Poldhu on the Lizard in Cornwall, where Marconi made the first transatlantic radio transmissions, a museum celebrates this huge step forward. The history of great inventions is as much part of our heritage as battlefields or great palaces.

At Orford Ness, Suffolk, the first radar trials were successfully carried out, changing the course of the Second World War. The whole history of twentieth-century aerial warfare, from the bombs dropped over the sides of biplanes in 1915, to the nuclear bomb tests of the Cold War, is written in the shingle and concrete expanses of this corner of Suffolk.

Understanding the power of ideas

Woolsthorpe Manor, Lincolnshire





Revealing the uses of technology

Orford Ness, Suffolk



Using the past to inform the present

Eighteenth-century silver at Dunham Massey

The history of photography finds its unexpected origins at Lacock Abbey, in Wiltshire, where William Henry Fox Talbot's invention of the negative/positive photographic process is explained in a small museum. Light is often thrown from the past on today's political concerns. Visitors who admire the collections of silver at Dunham Massey, in Cheshire, will find that most of the finest pieces are the work of asylum seekers. Huguenot silversmiths, banished from France in the early eighteenth century for their Protestant beliefs, were given asylum in this country and employed by the Earl of Warrington because of his strongly held political and religious convictions. Visitors discover that the collection represents much more than just fine craftsmanship and extravagant living, and they leave with new insights into their own communities.

A collection of a very different kind is on show at Patterson's Spade Mill near Belfast. Each spade, from those for turf cutting to those for shovelling manure, tells a different story and is both a tool and a social document. Understanding how and why things were made in a particular way, whether humble objects like spades or grand ones such as carved picture frames, can add greatly to their interest. In newly opened rooms at Beningbrough in Yorkshire, where we are working in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, there are exhibitions devoted to wood-carving and sculpture, where the materials and techniques used in the modelling of portrait busts will be explained. Visitors will be able to handle facsimiles of some of the carved decoration for which Beningbrough is justly famous.

Contemporary artists can encourage others to see a building or landscape in new and different ways. The atmosphere of the Spade Mill has been captured in a series of paintings by the Irish painter, Jack Crabtree. At Powis Castle near Welshpool a contemporary sculpture by Vincent Woropay replaces a lost feature in the baroque water garden, breathing new life into an historic scene.



Documenting rural life

Workshop at Patterson's Spade Mill near Belfast

Learning and skills

Our cultural heritage is also a resource for learning and developing skills. The task of conservation must draw in both voluntary effort and salaried staff from a wide-ranging conservation community. This work brings benefit to those involved and to the places they are looking after. The walled garden at Llanerchaeron in Ceredigion has been brought back to life by dedicated local volunteers who give up a day a week to its upkeep, producing fruit, vegetables and herbs for sale, whilst sharing techniques and forging new friendships.

Learning through volunteering

A volunteer gardening at Llanerchaeron in Ceredigion



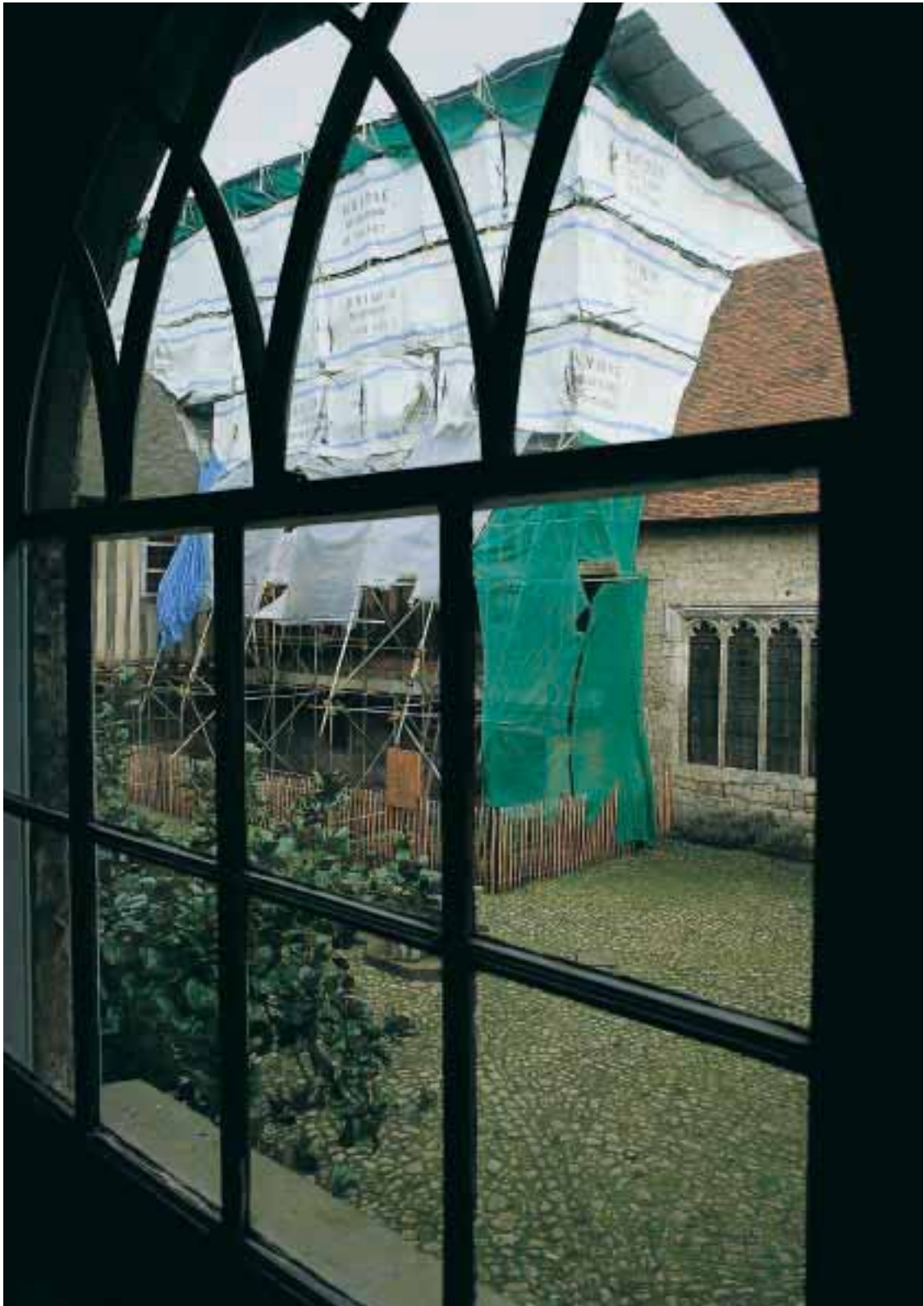
19 History and Place Informing the future

Some tasks require years of apprenticeship and training. The sixteenth-century tapestries and embroidery at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, are as fragile as they are rare, so their conservation has been entrusted to staff and trainees at the Trust's Textile Conservation Studio at Blickling, in Norfolk. At the Stone Interpretation Centre at Hardwick Hall visitors can see stone being cut and carved by twenty-first-century apprentices, learning a mixture of new and old skills to build careers in restoration.

Nurturing expertise through apprenticeships

Survey work at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire





21 History and Place Informing the future

The Trust's properties offer endless opportunities for learning throughout our lives. Sometimes this can be a matter of personal discovery – a moment of revelation – and sometimes the significance of place needs to be revealed or demonstrated. We want everyone to be able to share in the exhilaration of discovery, so we encourage schools to adopt nearby properties so that each generation has these opportunities. In Newcastle a schools project arranges for parties of city children to work at rural properties like Gibside and Wallington to discover a passion for their local area and its changing fortunes, and so inform their own futures. At Hanbury Hall in the West Midlands, our work with pre-release prisoners is boosting their confidence and transforming the attitudes of everyone involved.

Understanding the processes of conservation can help us all to take care of our local environment and find words to argue for its care. Instead of completing restoration work behind closed doors, we now encourage visitors to watch progress or get involved at every stage. At Ightham Mote in Kent repair techniques used on the fourteenth-century stone and timber structure were demonstrated during the building works. Where access is difficult for some visitors, as at Knole, Chartwell or Batemans, digital technology can provide a 'virtual tour.'

Showing restoration in progress

Restoration work at Ightham Mote, Kent



Reaching city communities

Families at Gibside, Newcastle upon Tyne

22 History and Place Informing the future

The Trust is ready to explore unfamiliar or uncomfortable history in new ways. At the Southwell Workhouse in Nottinghamshire, acquired in 2002, the harshness of the nineteenth-century Poor Laws is revealed in the bare rooms of the property. Using touch-screen information, visitors can search for family names amongst the catalogue of workhouse inmates and find where the nearest former Workhouse building is to their own home. They can also explore how this historical injustice relates to poverty and social inequality today.



Stirring our consciences

Southwell Workhouse, Nottinghamshire

Moving forward together

At a time when public fascination with history is evident in the tidal wave of coverage on television, in magazines and in books, the Trust offers immediate, direct and tangible contact with the solid evidence of the past. Our properties are not a virtual experience, but the real thing: places steeped in history, where past, present and future can meet in the minds of volunteers, visitors and staff. This is not a niche interest, but something which addresses a felt need of millions of our fellow citizens.

The National Trust does more than just open its properties to the public. Our aim is to be open to new ideas about what is significant, to share that significance in new and exciting ways and actively to engage everyone in the care of places rich in history. This requires constant dialogue with those who want to be involved in our work, and sharing the lessons learnt with all those who look after historic places today, so bringing wider benefits for the nation.

This commitment takes time and costs money. Thousands of supporters give generously by working as volunteers. Much of the Trust's conservation and educational work is only possible because of sponsorship and grants. More could be done with stronger political support, funding and tax incentives. The range of responsibilities faced by the Trust is huge, but the support of benefactors helps turn these from liabilities to opportunities.

Historic places provide a rich archive available to everyone who wants to explore how the past can inform and illuminate the present and the future. The great historian and benefactor of the Trust, G. M. Trevelyan, wrote that it is the purpose of history – and of the Trust's historic places – 'to instruct, enlarge and cultivate the human mind'. The potential for the Trust and all those with responsibility for historic places to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of the past, in new and surprising ways, increases year by year.

We hope this publication helps to stimulate a debate and provides some pointers for moving forward.

The National Trust is

a registered charity founded in 1895 to look after places of historic interest or natural beauty permanently for the benefit of the nation across England, Wales and Northern Ireland

independent of Government and receives no direct state grant or subsidy for our general work

one of Europe's leading conservation bodies, protecting through ownership, management and covenants approximately 250,000 hectares of land of special importance and over 700 miles of outstanding coastline

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dependent on the support of over 3 million members and its visitors,
tenants, partners, volunteers and benefactors

responsible for historic buildings dating from the Middle Ages to
modern times, ancient monuments, gardens, landscape parks, coastline,
woodland, mountain and farmland.

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going on visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk**

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