Comings and goings

This annual report covers the last two years activities and is our 22nd issue since we first began to write these in 1991. They form a catalogue of events and conservation treatments undertaken, as well as being a reminder of how the Trust and the Studio has changed over the years. In all this we are also reminded of the fantastic people who have supported our work along the way.

Carol Watts, our business support co-ordinator, retired in May 2012 after 21 years with the National Trust. To wish her well and to show our appreciation the studio team decided to execute a needlework in the manner of those well known panels at Oxburgh, made by Mary Queen of Scots and Bess of Hardwick. One of the panels, depicting an oak tree (what else you may ask!) was chosen and re-interpreted showing the tree change through the seasons with the motto ‘Integrity stronger than oak’. It gave us some insight as to how long the 100 needleworks that make up the Oxburgh hangings, would have taken to make.
Engaging our Supporters

Free tours of the Textile Conservation Studio
Saturday 8th September 2012

Tours take place at 10am, 11.30am, 2pm and 3.30pm
Oulton Street, Norfolk, NR17 6AF
This is a rare opportunity to see important and historic textiles up close and personal as they are being conserved. Join a tour, meet the conservators and get a unique behind the scenes view of work, at the Textile Conservation Studio.
call 01263 735878 - Booking Essential

Engaging our Supporters

Every two years the Studio opens its doors to the public for free as part of Heritage Open Day. This always proves extremely successful with timed tours throughout the day and plenty of tea and cake to enjoy in the sunshine afterwards.

Jim Donald of Wissey reports;
‘...we were amazed at the level of work and expertise on show. It obviously takes a great deal of skill and dedication to produce work of such high standard. It is extremely gratifying, to see first hand, these historical items being maintained for future generations.....thank you for such an interesting and informative tour.’

Paid group visits are a source of income as well as engagement. Ksynia can talk for hours so has to be carefully monitored by the rest of the team!

Doncaster NT Association, Norwich Civil Service Sports Council, ACE Cultural Tours Group, Norfolk Museum Services, Binham Historical Group, Wolverhampton Decorative Fine Arts Society, the Diverse Textile Group, Churchill Fellows, National Carpet Cleaners Association are just a few of the groups who all enjoyed their close up view of some of our fabulous objects.

Pre-booked staff and NT volunteer groups are free.

As part of the first NT 7Days event held at Calke Abbey, Rosamund spoke to visitors about the history and conservation of chintz, inviting discussion about decisions required during the treatment process.

Blog it...

Nathalie Reynolds, ably took over Business Support in 2012 and the task of keeping us all in order and she quickly set up our new web site and blog which now has an international following.
www.nttextileconservationstudio.wordpress.com
In 1848 John Ruskin wrote about the buildings of past times in his publication, ‘Seven Lamps of Architecture’ and his sentiment has relevance here: ‘They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us’. The properties of the Trust have been referred to as ‘theatres of memory’ and, at a time of rapid change, these theatres of memory are particularly vital. Historic textiles are as much a part of that memory as is the architecture, the paintings and other decorative arts.

Why are we fascinated by these buildings, their furnished interiors, their collections and the people who lived and worked in them? Apart from the way we dress; clothing being a way of making a very personal statement, the one creative activity in which every person takes part on a fairly regular basis, is the decoration and furnishing of the rooms in which they live.

This activity is a visual externalisation of our personality and aspirations, our likes and dislikes.
We deliberate over colours and patterns, over the shape of lampshades and sofas, we create an atmosphere, we buy House and Garden or Interiors Magazines, we compare our rooms to those of others, and some of us busily horde pieces of prized cloth just in case it will do for a cushion or cover a chair. This creative activity is true for both men and women and is something that can bind us together or cause vehement disagreement.

Jeremy Musson in his book, ‘How to Read a Country House’ states that, ‘Furnishing a country house was usually spurred on by the twin desires for comfort and impressive display.’ This is probably true of our own endeavours.

Textiles as furnishings can be found to cover almost every surface of a room; walls, furniture, floors, in the form of tapestries, wall coverings, carpets, upholstery, loose covers, bed hangings, trimmings, mattresses, fire-screens, household linens, tablecloths, napkins, lampshades, curtains and pelmets. Every conceivable technique of manufacture can also be found, from woven and printed cloths to those embroidered, embellished or painted. Additionally they are likely to be closely associated with a range of other materials such as gilded surfaces. Textiles are often manipulated into extravagant shapes as window dressings and bed hangings, or be under enormous tension when used as fixed upholstery or wall coverings.

Thus furnishings can be appreciated and informative on several different levels; a representation of a society, a reminder of how people lived in the past, of what sort of people they were, their wealth and status, as an expression of culture and gender, as indicative of changes in artistic style and taste detailing the history of design, how different materials were used for different purposes, as examples of craftsmanship and endeavour, of patience and perseverance, examples of advances in technology, as historical palimpsest and an inspiration for the future.

We need to be aware of, not only the single object, but the object in context. This may change as a result of a shift in cultural priorities or fashion, or as a result of political unrest or, at its most extreme, war. The care of collections within our properties requires a robust and pragmatic approach, particularly for functional objects such as carpets and curtains. We need to decide when to conserve and when to replicate. Such decisions involve a great many people.

Teams of house staff trained in specialist cleaning and handling techniques, curators, conservators and national specialists advising on planning and research make this all possible.

Extract from lecture presentation given by Ksynia at the Swaffham Visual Arts Festival 2013

The Drawing Room at Felbrigg Hall
Dust to Dust

Dust sample from the Cragside chenille carpet

Dust levels have risen in line with increased numbers of visitors, meaning that objects have to be cleaned more often. An extra 20,000 more visitors a year creates a third more dust. This is where we have to do a certain amount of risk management, weighing up visitor access, aesthetics against maintenance and potential damage. Cleaning regimes are based on knowledge of the collection and informed practice. Dust sampling and careful monitoring is now normal practice. Who would once have thought that dust would become part of visitor engagement!

Condition Surveys

With a collection of over 100,000 textile objects surveys are essential in understanding condition and planning work. Onsite visits and documentation can take several days.

Clockwise from top right: Cragside boudoir chair; Cotehele tapestry; Seaton Delaval Buff coat; Cragside dining room carpet; Uppark Dolls House & Polesden Lacy King’s bed.
A re-servicing project at Oxburgh Hall allowed us to achieve our desire for improving the visibility and interpretation information for the three 16thc Oxburgh hangings. Liaising with the V&A Museum and property staff the fragile hangings were de-installed, their condition survey revised and the largest hanging, the Marian, prepared for a major exhibition in Edinburgh in 2013. The exhibition was a great opportunity to share these gems with a wider audience.

Projects: some of the pieces we have worked on

From top right: Stumpwork box, Washington Old Hall; Bodice, Claydon House; Chair, Dunham Massey; Rehanging 10th Gideon ‘Gideon Destroying the Altar of Baal’. Middle row: Dress, Ickworth House; Penelope Great Hanging, Hardwick Hall; Last of eight Story of Scipio tapestries to be conserved, Hardwick Hall.
Investing in our People

In February 2014 Claire and Rosamund both successfully achieved professional accredited status (ACR) following an intensive external assessment process. This now means that all five of our senior team are accredited.

We have been actively involved with continuing professional development through attendance at a number of peer conferences, meetings and visits. These have helped to inform our practice and enables us to share experiences:

- Tapestry in the Round research meetings, Glasgow University
- ICON Positive Futures conference, Glasgow
- ICOM Rijksmuseum textile symposium, Amsterdam
- ICON Textile Group AGM and Conference, London
- Tapestry Symposium, Edinburgh
- Beds & Bedding Conference, Temple Newsam
- Historic Royal Palaces Beds exhibition, Hampton Court
- Textile workshop and gallery visit, Abegg Stiftung
- Fashion Museum, Bath
- Oriental Carpet Conservation Studio and museums, Berlin
- Broderer’s Guild volunteer workshop, Norwich Cathedral
- Masterpieces of East Anglia, Sainsbury Centre Norwich
- ICON Textile group visits to Toye & Co and Watts & Co
- Various in house training for IT and Management systems.

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Succession Planning

Student Placements

Each year we offer one to eight week placements for conservation students and aspiring conservators. We cannot accommodate everyone who applies, but six lucky candidates joined us. Read about some of their experiences on our blog.

Joanne Parnham (Lincoln)
Abigail Tyler (Lincoln)
Julie McBain (Science teacher)
Stella Gardner (Glasgow)
Catherine Ruff (Aylsham High)
Becky Doonan (Bristol)

“Thank you for making my time at the studio such a wonderful experience” J. McBain
Keeping House and getting down to basics

Every year the National Trust holds a three day training course called House Keeping Study Days. Basic cleaning techniques and hints and tips are demonstrated and shared amongst tutors and delegates to inform the day to day care of collections. There are evening lectures and jolly dinners. In January 2014 it was held at Nostell Priory near Wakefield in West Yorkshire. Sessions included a close look at agents of deterioration such as the impact of dust, light and handling.

The textile sessions led by Ksynia and Rachel were lively and noisy – carpets were tamped to remove gritty dirt (a safe form of beating using a rubber paddle), methods of dust sampling and monitoring were demonstrated, and fibres and fabrics identified.

Practical demonstrations are supplemented by written guidance available on the intranet.

Communicating Conservation

Spreading the word - we are always being asked to talk about our work, whether to NT staff or volunteers or for external specialist interest groups, and this gives us a chance to reach a wider audience. In addition you may find us ‘performing’ on site, undertaking conservation in front of the public, most recently at Hardwick when we were rehanging the very large Gideon tapestries. This was followed by an evening talk to the volunteers.

Specialist groups include Bromley and Norwich Embroiders Guilds, The Textile Association, East Anglian Conservators Forum, Wolverhampton University Conference, Swaffham Arts Festival along with others.

Specialist training for house staff and volunteers

“It was a fab day, it really opened my eyes and I look at furniture in a whole new way now!” – Emily Watts, House Steward, Knole.

Upholstery Course Organised by Ksynia at Knole October 2013
Financing Our Future

In 2013 the Trust committed to the Studio becoming the first port of call for Textile Conservation within the organisation. This is a major step in securing the long term future of our Studio and continuum of expertise and knowledge of the collections.

‘The National Trust’s Textile Conservation Studio in Norfolk is the first port of call for textile conservation work and will provide single action quotes or tenders to demonstrate value for money.’

‘The Textile Conservation Adviser and Studio Manager will recommend other freelance conservators where the project is beyond the Studio’s capacity’

Donors and Benefactors

The Clothworkers Foundation, Wolfson Foundation and Royal Oak, as well as private donors, have all given us generous support for which we are enormously grateful. They have enabled us to complete a variety of projects ranging from a small exquisite Stumpwork box, Washington Old Hall, to the large Penelope Hanging from Hardwick Hall. See our first attempt at film making with a short video about Penelope - view it on YouTube or via the studio blog.

Private Clients

Studio income continues to be supplemented by external commissions. A rare 16th C English tapestry from the Bodleian Library, 19th C Reredos Hanging from Lound Church, wedding attire, samplers and the 1901 Koettelits polar exploration flag have been amongst the challenging items treated.

Textiles hold threads to stories of the past

Central fundraising launched an ongoing public appeal in November 2013, raising awareness of the identified conservation backlog.

A Right Royal Visit

After the successful conservation project to conserve the Queen’s coronation banners Jane and Pip were invited to Buckingham Palace for the preview of the Queen’s Coronation Exhibition. The banners from Westminster Abbey were displayed in all their glory.
What next?

We are working with Katy Lithgow, Head Conservator, Consultancy, Whole Trust and property colleagues with a major fundraising project to raise £4.5million in order to deal with the current back log of identified priority textile projects. A five to ten year programme of work has been drawn up involving the Studio and free-lance textile conservators which, if successful, will begin in 2016. Look out for more news on this during the coming year.

We will be offering our next Levy funded internship in September 2014, as well as supporting two more members of the team towards their professional accreditation.

We will be welcoming more visitors and our next Heritage Open day will be on September 13th 2014.

Apart from Ksynia taking three months sabbatical leave to write a tapestry conservation manual funded by the Clothworkers Foundation, it will be business as usual with continued work on the Gideon tapestries, Spangled Bed from Knole, the Cragside carpet and other luscious things.

The Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ksynia Marko ACR</td>
<td>Textile Conservation Adviser and Studio Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carol Watts</td>
<td>Business Support Co-ordinator (retired May 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathalie Reynolds</td>
<td>Business Support Co-ordinator (from May 2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eleanor Codman</td>
<td>Studio Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippa Sanders ACR</td>
<td>Senior Textile Conservator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rachel Langley ACR</td>
<td>Senior Textile Conservator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosamund Weatherall ACR</td>
<td>Senior Textile Conservator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Golbourn ACR</td>
<td>Senior Textile Conservator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadine Wilson</td>
<td>Assistant Textile Conservator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane Smith</td>
<td>HLF/ICON intern and Assistant Conservator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elaine Owers (Tolley)</td>
<td>Levy Textile Conservation Intern</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aimee Grice-Venour</td>
<td>Textile Conservation Intern (up to Feb 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor Brustow</td>
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The team have again been supported by free-lance conservators Lindsay Blackmore, Anne van den Berg, Melanie Leach, Debbie Phipps and Elaine Owers.