



Irish  
Georgian  
Society



# HERITAGE HOUSEKEEPING PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

THE SALOON, RUSSBOROUGH,  
BLESSINGTON, COUNTY WICKLOW  
THURSDAY 26TH NOVEMBER 2015



STUDY DAY

**HERITAGE HOUSEKEEPING:  
PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE PROGRAMME**

**REGISTRATION & WELCOME**

- 9.20am            **Registration and tea/coffee**
- 9.50am            **Welcome:** Eric Blatchford, CEO of The Alfred Beit Foundation
- Session I:**        **Chair: Donough Cahill, IGS Executive Director**  
10.00am        *Good Housekeeping in Historic Houses: Philosophy and Practice* (Keynote Address)  
                 Katy Lithgow, Head of Conservation, The National Trust, UK
- 10.30am        *Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI) and the Historic House Collection*  
                 Lesley-Ann Hayden, The Heritage Council's MSPI Co-ordinator
- 11-11.10am      Q&A
- 11.10-11.40am   Tea/coffee (in the basement exhibition area)
- Session II:**        **Chair: Jessica Baldwin, Chair of ICRI**  
11.40am        *Care & Preventative Conservation of Prints, Drawings and Archival Material in Historic Houses*  
                 Susan Corr, President of European Confederation of Conservators and Restorers' Organisation (ECCO)
- 12.20pm        *Integrated Pest Management in Heritage Properties: alternative ways of combating heritage eaters*  
                 Sven Habermann, Manager, Conservation Letterfrack
- 12.50pm        Q&A
- 1.00-2.00pm      Lunch, The Tea Rooms, Russborough

**Session III:**      **Chair: Kevin Mulligan, co-author of *Russborough: A Great Irish House, its Families and Collections***

2.00pm              *Care of Furniture in the Historic House Setting*  
Fergus Purdy, Independent Furniture Conservator

2.30pm              *Displaying Oil Paintings in Historic Houses: conservation principles, care and maintenance*  
Simone Mancini, Head of Conservation at National Gallery of Ireland

3.00pm              *How to Preserve Textiles in the Historic House*  
Clódna Devitt, Independent Textile Conservator

3.30-3.40pm      Q&A

**Session III:**      **Chair: David Fleming, Chairperson of the Irish Georgian Foundation**

3.40-4.30pm      Care and cleaning of historic objects in heritage properties: a ‘hands on’ practical demonstration using artefacts from Russborough’s collection as exemplars  
Sven Habermann, Manager, Conservation Letterfrack

**Close and thank you: Emmeline Henderson, IGS Conservation Manager & Assistant Director**

4.30-5.15pm      **Guided Tour of Russborough**

## ABSTRACTS

### ***Good Housekeeping in Historic Houses: Philosophy and Practice (Keynote Address)***

**Katy Lithgow, Head of Conservation, The National Trust, UK**

The National Trust for England, Wales and Northern Ireland revived the practice of housekeeping in its mansions in the 1980s. This combined the best of traditional knowledge with conservation science in developing its current housekeeping approach to the preventive conservation of historic house interiors and collections. This presentation will consider the heritage, current practice, and future challenges of ‘good housekeeping’, in the light of National Trust Conservation Principles, a risk management as opposed to rule-led approach evolving in the sector, and the need for historic houses to continue to attract new audiences in a competitive visitor attraction environment.

### ***Integrated Pest Management in Heritage Properties: alternative ways combating heritage eaters***

**Sven Habermann, Manager of Conservation Letterfrack**

The paper will give a brief introduction into the methodology of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in Historic Houses. The innovative and ‘holistic’ approach towards pest reduction and eradication, without the use of insecticides, is based on understanding what pests are attracted to, their habits, and life cycles. This understanding will lead to taking controlled steps to discourage insects being present and therefore avoiding damage. IPM is an ongoing process based on monitoring, identifying, acting and reviewing which has been successfully implemented internationally for more than 20 years.

## ***The Museum Standards Programme and the Historic House Collection***

**Lesley-Ann Hayden, Coordinator, Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)**

The Heritage Council's Museum Standards Programme for Ireland is primarily focused on caring for collections. As well as museums and galleries, MSPI participants also care for collections housed in historic properties. The paper will review this Programme in general as well as how it has been applied by eligible historic house properties. It will discuss how many of the standards may be another tool to consult for privately owned collections.

## ***The Care of Furniture within an Historic Setting***

**Fergus Purdy, Independent Furniture Restorer**

The talk begins by locating the furniture collection within the context of an historic setting. It considers the different causes of damage and how these agents of deterioration function within this environment. The focus then moves to the range of materials, construction techniques and surface finishes found in historic furniture collections and the way in which these differences will affect the methods employed to care for the collection. Finally the talk addresses the question of how historic furniture continues to be used, and the issues around working collections.

## ***Picture Perfect: caring for archival papers; books and photographs***

**Susan Corr, President of the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisation (ECCO)**

This presentation looks at some of the problems encountered by works on paper in historic houses and private collections with practical advice for care and maintenance.



## ***Displaying Oil Paintings in Historic Houses: conservation principles, care and maintenance***

**Simone Mancini, Head of Conservation at National Gallery of Ireland**

Care of the collections demands a multi-disciplinary approach inclusive of technical, ethical and aesthetical aspects as well as documentation and scientific analyses. These factors, all together, represent the overall theoretical approach to conservation as a modern holistic discipline.

The talk will explore and evaluate advantages and obstacles of preventative conservation practices and processes. In particular, the constant stream of theoretical debate, technical information, collection and classifications of data are factors of great significance. Additionally the exchanges of expertise and collaboration amongst the national and international collection care community encourage most up-to-date conservation standards.



The Library at Russborough today.

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Jessica Baldwin** is Chair of the Institute of Conservator-Restorers in Ireland. She graduated with a degree in Conservation of Art on Paper from Camberwell College of Arts, London (1993). Following graduation, she worked at the Royal Archives and in a number of private studios in London. In 1995 she was appointed as paper conservator at Trinity College Library, Dublin. In 2000 she was awarded a one-year Fellowship in conservation at the Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco. In 2003 she moved to The Chester Beatty Library as Head of Conservation, where she established the conservation workshop. She was appointed Head of Collections in 2014. Jessica became an accredited member of the Institute in 1999 and has been an active member ever since; working on sub-committees for training and accreditation and as a member of the Board, she was appointed Chair in 2015.

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**Eric Blatchford** is CEO of The Alfred Beit Foundation which is a charitable and not-for-profit organisation. The Foundation operates Russborough House and Parklands for the purpose of promoting the fine arts in Ireland and as a tourist attraction for domestic and international tourists. Tourism numbers have grown dramatically in recent years, with in excess of 100,000 visitors to the Estate during 2015 of which almost 25,000 will have experienced the wonderful guided house tour from our locally based guides. In aggregate, over one million visitors have benefitted from the guided house tours of Russborough since they commenced in 1978.

**Donough Cahill** is the Executive Director of the Irish Georgian Society, where he oversees its strategic and day-to-day operations and works with the Irish Georgian Foundation's Committee of Management, its sub-committees and working groups and with the Society's North America and UK based membership in promoting the appreciation and protection of Ireland's architectural heritage and allied arts. Most recently he was responsible for overseeing the restoration of the City Assembly House in Dublin, which now serves as the Society headquarters' and as a hub for promoting heritage and culture in the heart of the Georgian city.

**Susan Corr** studied History of Art and Spanish (University College Dublin) and trained as a Paper Conservator (National Gallery of Ireland, ICCROM Rome and Japan). She is the author of *‘Caring for Collections, a Manual of Preventive Conservation’*. As a freelance conservator Susan has worked for many public and private collections. She is currently President of the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers’ Organisation E.C.C.O., where she has coordinated the ECCO Working Group on developing and publishing ‘Competences for Access to the Conservation-Restoration Profession. E: [corrnewman@gmail.com](mailto:corrnewman@gmail.com) / T: 091 791070

**Clíodna Devitt** is a textile conservator and historian. She established her business in 1992. Her services include conserving textiles, preventive conservation and condition surveys of textile collections, for museums and private clients. Objects are treated for future preservation. Clíodna examines, documents and tests the material before the conservation process begins. Treatments generally consist of cleaning, supporting structurally damaged areas and preparation for display/storage. Clíodna is an accredited Conservator, ICON. Address: Studio 51, Trinity Technology & Enterprise Campus, Pearse Street, D. 2. E: [cliodevitt@gmail.com](mailto:cliodevitt@gmail.com) / T: 01 679 5235

**David Fleming** is Chair of the Irish Georgian Foundation; he is an historian and author specialising in political and social history of eighteenth-century Ireland. He is a Lecturer in the Department of History, University of Limerick; Secretary of the Eighteenth-Century Ireland Society and Treasurer of the Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement. Most recently he was presented with a Fulbright Award for 2015-16. Based at the University of Montana, he will deliver master classes in Irish history to undergraduate and postgraduate students.

**Sven Habermann** is an accredited object conservator with a keen interest in Collection Care and Entomology. Next to being a full-time conservation practitioner, he leads a team of highly skilled, professional conservators as the Manager of Conservation Letterfrack, Co. Galway, one of the largest commercial conservation studios in the country. He has worked extensively with the Museum sector and has advised Museums and Historic House on a range of topics from collection care, storage to environmental issues and carried out condition surveys on many major collections. E: [sven@conservationletterfrack.ie](mailto:sven@conservationletterfrack.ie) / T: 095 41036 / [www.conservationletterfrack.ie](http://www.conservationletterfrack.ie)



**Lesley-Ann Hayden** has been engaged as a consultant by the Heritage Council to coordinate its Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI) since 2006. She also takes on other heritage related work from time to time. After graduating from Trinity College Dublin in Italian and History of Art, she took a diploma in arts administration. She lived in Canada for 14 years where she worked in retail and human resource management while maintaining links with the museum sector as a volunteer.  
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**Emmeline Henderson** is the Conservation Manager & Assistant Director of the Irish Georgian Society. She manages the IGS's Conservation Education Programme to include the delivery of the Society's annual Traditional Building & Conservation Skills in Action Exhibition, its Conserving Your Period House courses, its online conservation skills and academic registers, as well as other seminars, conferences and study days relating to the conservation and promotion of Ireland's architecture and decorative arts.

**Katy Lithgow** is Head Conservator in the National Trust, UK. Katy Lithgow joined the National Trust in 1991, having taken a BA Hons in Archaeology, Anthropology and History of Art in Cambridge, and obtained the Postgraduate Diploma in Wall Paintings Conservation from the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, where she taught following an internship at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. As an Area Conservator and then Assistant to the Housekeeper she specialized in storage and protection of collections during building works. In 1995 she became the Trust's Wall Painting Conservation Adviser and in 2002 Conservation Advisers Manager, co-ordinating the advice provided by the Trust's staff and freelance conservation advisers, before being appointed Head Conservator in 2005. She has published and lectured on wall painting conservation, preventive conservation, conservation management, science in collections conservation and sustainability, and is a Trustee of the National Heritage Science Forum. Katy is an Accredited Conservator-Restorer (ACR) in both preventive and wall paintings conservation, and is Chair of the PACR scheme's Accreditation Committee.

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**Simone Mancini** is graduated in Architecture at the Italian University in Florence followed by a course in scientific conservation of paintings at the International University of Art in the same city. Having worked as a free-lance conservator in Italy and with partnership projects in UK and Ireland, Simone spent 6 years teaching preventive conservation at the Italian University before being appointed Head of Conservation at the NGI in 2008.

**Kevin V. Mulligan** is an architectural historian. He is a regular contributor to Irish Architectural & Decorative Studies, the journal of the Irish Georgian Society. He is the author of *Ballyfin: the restoration of an Irish house and demesne* (Tralee, 2011), *South Ulster in the Buildings of Ireland* series (New Haven and London, 2013). He was a contributor to *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690 -1840*, with an essay 'The Realm of the Irish Country House. In 2013, he co-authored with William Laffan, *Russborough: A Great Irish House, its Families and Collections* (Wicklow, 2014).

**Fergus Purdy** graduated from the London College of Furniture in 1989, and thereafter established his own conservation studio in Belfast, which is listed with the UK Conservation Register. He is an accredited Conservator Restorer, with over 20 years' experience in conservation, during which time he has been involved with the care of furniture and wooden artefact collections in museums, historic houses and churches throughout Ireland. This has involved not only conservation treatments of objects but also condition surveys, preventive conservation programmes, good housekeeping and preventive conservation training and public engagement projects. Purdy is a member of the Regional Furniture Society and have occasionally contributed articles on Irish furniture. E: [fergus@ferguspurdy.com](mailto:fergus@ferguspurdy.com) / T: +44 (0)28 90333004



Restoration of the Belloni table top in 2009 by a team from the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence, photo, NGI

*Heritage Housekeeping: Philosophy and Practice* study day convenors:

- Jessica Baldwin, Chair, ICRI
- Emmeline Henderson, Assistant Director & Conservation Manager, IGS
- William Laffan, Board member, IGF

We would like to acknowledge the work of Georgia Corcoran, Heritage and Cultural Administrator of the Irish Georgian Society for the graphic design of this programme.

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Images reproduced courtesy of The Alfred Beit Foundation.



*The Dining Room hung with the Murillos c.1980.*

