

# FENTON HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

## CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### VOLUME 1: Understanding, Significance, Issues and Policies



for  
**THE NATIONAL TRUST**

**Drury McPherson** Partnership  
*Historic environment policy and practice*

**CONSULTATION DRAFT:** December 2015

CAVEATS: This draft has been prepared in advance of receipt of the record photographs, which will be used in the final version. The illustrations below are provisional. Copyright has not yet been confirmed for all the images currently included so the draft should not be circulated externally. The appendices are listed below are incomplete and additional data will be included in the final draft. A number of citations need to be added or corrected.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The purpose of the conservation plan

1.1.1 In April 2012, the Drury McPherson Partnership was commissioned by The National Trust to produce a conservation plan for Fenton House and the Coach House (the former stable block and coach house, also known as Garden Cottage). The four main objectives of this Conservation Management Plan are:

- Understanding the site
- Assessing Significance
- Defining issues / vulnerability
- Developing an overall vision for the House and Coach House and setting out policies for its future management and development.

1.1.2 Fenton House, with its outbuildings and gardens, was acquired by the National Trust in 1952. It has been open to the public since then. This conservation management plan has been commissioned to inform the future management of the property, particularly in the context of the Trust's ambition to increase substantially the number of visitors.

1.1.3 The plan is intended to be a working document that responds to changing circumstances. As such, it is anticipated that new information about the site and buildings will be added as it comes to light, and policies periodically updated in response to new or changing issues affecting the buildings and spaces.

## 1.2 The structure of the plan

1.2.1 The conservation management plan for Fenton House is structured in three parts:

- *Understanding and Significance*: comprising an account of the history of the house and its context and an historic building analysis describing the structures and their evolution; and a 'Significance' section that assesses the cultural heritage values attached to the place, culminating in an overall statement of significance.
- *Issues and Policies*: comprising a discussion of the issues affecting the building, strategic recommendations to address them, and a set of management and development policies
- *The Gazetteer* (in a separate volume) comprising data sheets for each room and space, documenting their historical development, current form and the significance of individual elements.

1.2.2 In order to produce a concise and readable narrative, much of the detailed evidence and discussion of specific details of the development of the building is

placed within the gazetteer. Statutory list descriptions are included as Appendix 2 and early maps and selected views are gathered together in Appendix 7.

1.2.3 Throughout the text rooms, windows and doors are numbered as on the floor plans, prefixed as follows: B: basement; G: ground floor; F: first floor; S: second (attic) floor.

1.2.4 The history of Fenton House and the evolution of the building are described in seven periods, as follows:

- Period 1: The site before c1686
- Period 2: c1686 -1706: construction
  - 2.1: c1686-90: primary construction phase
  - 2.2: c1690-1706: internal fitting out
- Period 3: 1706-1793: completion and early occupiers
  - 3.1: 1706-1750: Gee family
  - 3.2: 1750-1794: Martin, Hyndman, Bond
- Period 4: 1794-1834: Fenton family
- Period 5: 1834-1936: later occupiers and modernisation
  - 5.1: 1834-1884: Davis, Turner, Montgomery, Selwyn and tenants.
  - 5.2: 1884-1920: Trewby
  - 5.3: 1920-1936: Brousson
- Period 6: 1936-52: Lady Binning
- Period 7: 1952- present day: The National Trust

### **1.3 Preparation**

1.3.1 This plan has been prepared by Paul Drury and Michael Copeman of the Drury McPherson Partnership. Survey drawings and rectified photographs have been produced by James Brennan Associates. The understanding and assessment of the collections, and recommendations for their management were provided by Halahan Associates. Specialist expertise on the gardens was provided by David Jacques.

1.3.2 Concurrently with the preparation of the plan, The National Trust commissioned historic paint analysis from Catherine Hassall. The first part of her report, on the interior paint finishes, was available to the authors of this plan.

1.3.3 In addition to published sources, archive research has been undertaken at the London Metropolitan Archives, the British Architectural Library, L.B. Camden Archives and the archives of The National Trust in London and Saunderton.

1.3.4 Individual members of the team made numerous site visits during the summer of 2015.

1.3.5 A formal consultation session on emerging conclusions and policies was held ...

- 1.3.6 We have referred to Fenton House by its modern name throughout. In its earliest years it does not seem to have had a formal name. It was later known as Ostend or East End House, and later still as Clock House. The present name came into common use in the mid-19th-century.



## 1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 We would like particularly to thank the following...

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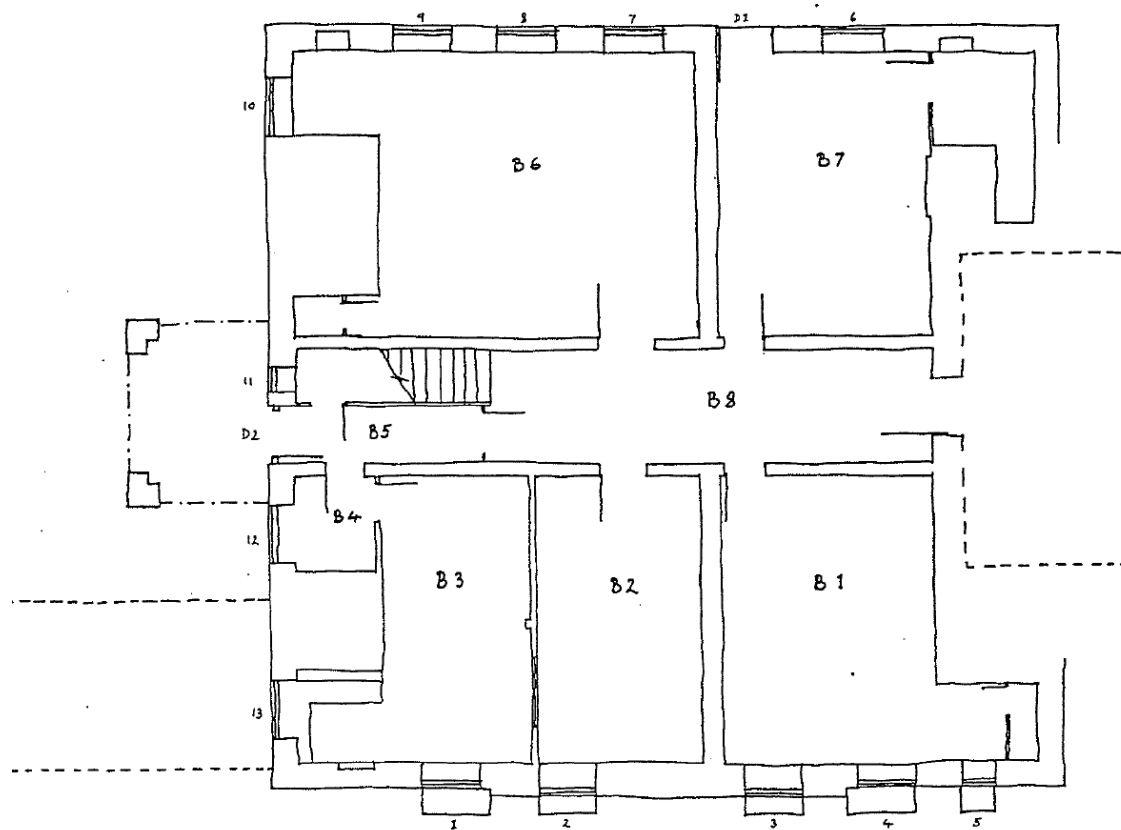


# SITE LOCATION PLAN

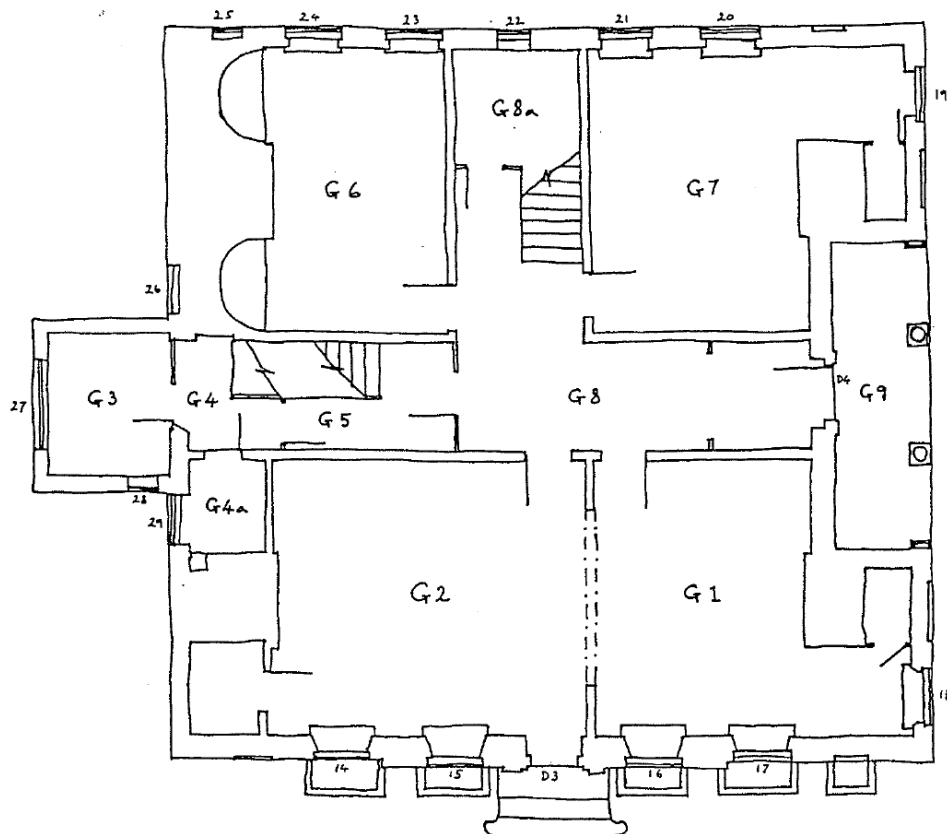
 <b>THE NATIONAL TRUST</b>  LONDON & SOUTH EAST REGION	Title:		
	Scale 1/1250	Centre = 526278 E 186016 N	
	Date 19/6/2013	User	
	© Crown copyright and database rights 2012 Ordnance Survey 100023974		



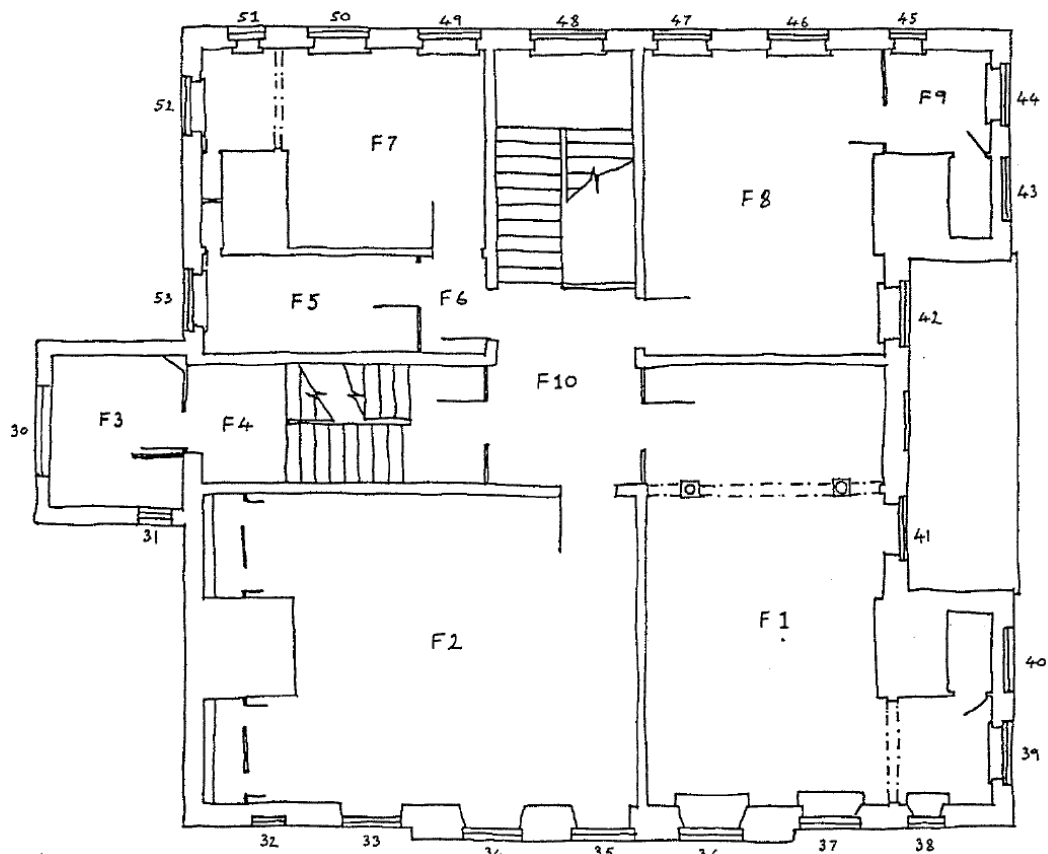
**FLOOR PLANS** (*Indicative; see Appendix 1: 2015 survey plans; phasing etc to be added*)



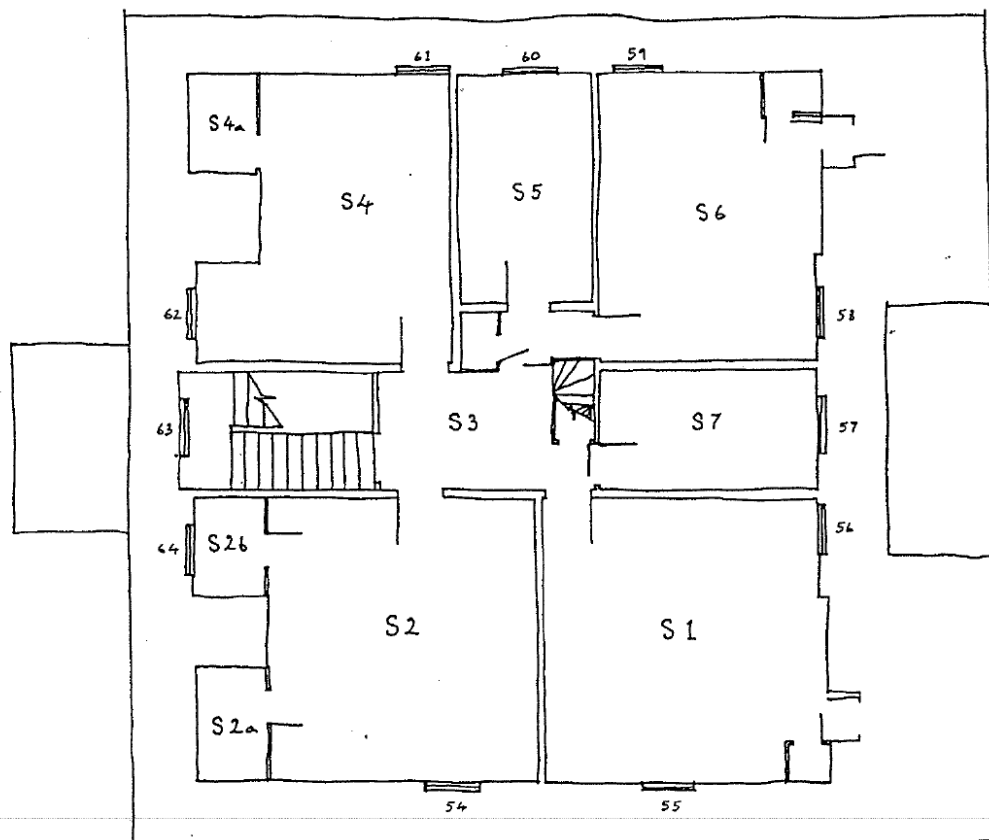
**BASEMENT**



**GROUND FLOOR**



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

## Key to Room names:

### Basement

B1	Present Kitchen
B3	Office
B6	Old Kitchen
B7	Former Servants' Hall

### Ground Floor

G1	Morning Room
G2	Dining Room
G6	Porcelain Room
G7	Oriental Room
G8	Entrance Hall/Main stairs
G4/F4	Back Stairs

### First Floor

F1	Lady Binning's Bedroom
F2	Drawing Room
F5	Ladies WC
F7	Green Room
F8	Rockingham Room
F10	First floor landing

The second floor rooms are not named and are referred to by the corresponding number on the survey plans. Windows and doors are numbered sequentially from basement to attic (see Appendix 1).

## 2 UNDERSTANDING

### 2.1 Period 1: The site before c1686

- 2.1.1 Hampstead was, and remains, one of the most desirable and attractive of London suburbs. Its airy heights and good water, within an easy ride of the city, have attracted residents to this pleasant village, still recognisable as such, since the mid 17th century. Fenton House, with its garden, is the best and largest 17th-century house to survive in the area. The Hampstead Court Rolls record that during the late 17th century land was being taken out of the Heath (i.e. the manorial waste) and enclosed for- mainly- residential development. The site of Fenton House has its origins in pieces of land acquired in this way by a man named William Eades.
- 2.1.2 The copyhold of the land on which Fenton House was built was formally granted to Eades early in 1686. The Hampstead Court Rolls<sup>1</sup> record that: "William Eades, a Customary Tenant of this Manor, who formerly was admitted to twenty roods of land of the waste of the aforesaid Lord of the Manor in a certain place commonly called or known by the name of Eastend. In which piece of land the same William had constructed or built a certain *[illegible words due to ink not having taken on back of skin]* house with stable and all necessary outbuildings." It was usual for such a grant to be made on completion of the house and stable 'in carcass' - that is to say, when the building had been constructed but not fitted out internally- under a pre-existing building agreement.
- 2.1.3 Eades had acquired a number of plots in Hampstead, presumably with the intention either of developing them himself or selling them on for development. It is not known whether he actually built on other plots. Eades does not seem to have lived at Fenton House, suggesting that he built it as a speculative development. As such, while its location in an expanding and desirable residential suburb is unexceptional, as a single large residence rather than a group of smaller houses, it is relatively unusual. Large houses of this period were more often built for a particular individual. No such patron has been identified and it is possible, therefore, that Eades had a commission, but that his patron withdrew from the deal- or even died- at an early stage.
- 2.1.4 The site of Fenton House is more complex in both its topography and its evolution than it may appear at first glance. Fenton House crowns the hill-top and its handsome south elevation ought to command a sweeping view; and one might expect a house of this date and status to be framed by a larger and more regular forecourt. The houses that now encroach on the site to the south-west post-date Fenton and the narrow front garden, with steep steps from the street, is unlikely to have been builder's ideal, or first intention. While the relationship between the south gate and the south elevation is ingenious, in creating a semi-formal visual

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<sup>1</sup> <http://camdenhistorysociety.org/index.php/hampstead-court-records/summary/5-hampstead-manorial-courtrecords/49-roll-8-1685-1689>.

setting, it is hardly a practical means of approach. A measured plan of the site (Fig. 1) reveals irregularities in the layout of, and relationship between, the house, garden and stable block. It is now clear that the layout of house and garden are the result of several phases of development in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

- 2.1.5 The evolution of the site reflects the way in which the manorial waste was colonised, piecemeal, in the 17th century; land being assembled by the original developer, to form (or by later owners, to enlarge) the property. Both the Hampstead Manorial Rolls and the 1860 deed of enfranchisement make it clear that the Fenton House property was made up of one large and a number of small parcels of land enclosed separately out of the Heath. These plots were each subject to a separate copyhold, so that when Fenton House was enfranchised in 1860, the deed details seven holdings within the present boundary. This, along with a study of the physical fabric of the garden, allows us to begin to reconstruct the history of the site.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.1.6 The reclamation of the manorial waste seems to have resulted in a number of 'islands' of development, divided by lanes and footpaths that probably already existed as informal paths. The plot later developed as the informal terrace of three early-Georgian Houses at Windmill Hill (Windmill Hill House, Bolton House and Volta House, all of c1730s<sup>3</sup>) is topographically the earliest element in this 'island', predating the houses on it. Another relatively early division is suggested by the north end of the brewhouse/stable block of Fenton house, which seems to have defined the northern limit of land intended to be associated with Fenton House at this point. North of this the area of the present garden seems to have been laid out more regularly, perhaps with the intention of creating regular plots east and west of what is now the spine wall of the Fenton House garden, for the development of housing.
- 2.1.7 It seems likely that Fenton House, as conceived by its original developer, was intended to occupy a long, more or less rectangular strip of land on Hampstead Grove, running from about two thirds of the way down the present front (south) garden, to the extant north garden wall. Its west boundary was on the line of the extant north-south dividing wall at the centre of the north garden. A service yard, slightly bigger than today, but in the same location, extended westwards, to create a T-shaped plot which would have provided a generous semi-formal forecourt to the south of the house, a large garden to the north, a convenient entrance from the east and a service area to the west (Fig. 1). However, the land originally granted with Fenton House, 20 roods,<sup>4</sup> equates to the footprint of the house plus the narrow terraces to its north, west and east, and it has not yet been possible to establish how and when this larger plot was assembled.

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<sup>2</sup> Schedule to Enfranchisement Deed of 1860, LMA Ref. E/NT/1/4

<sup>3</sup> VCH (ref.)

<sup>4</sup> Nominally 5½ yards square (about 25 sq m)

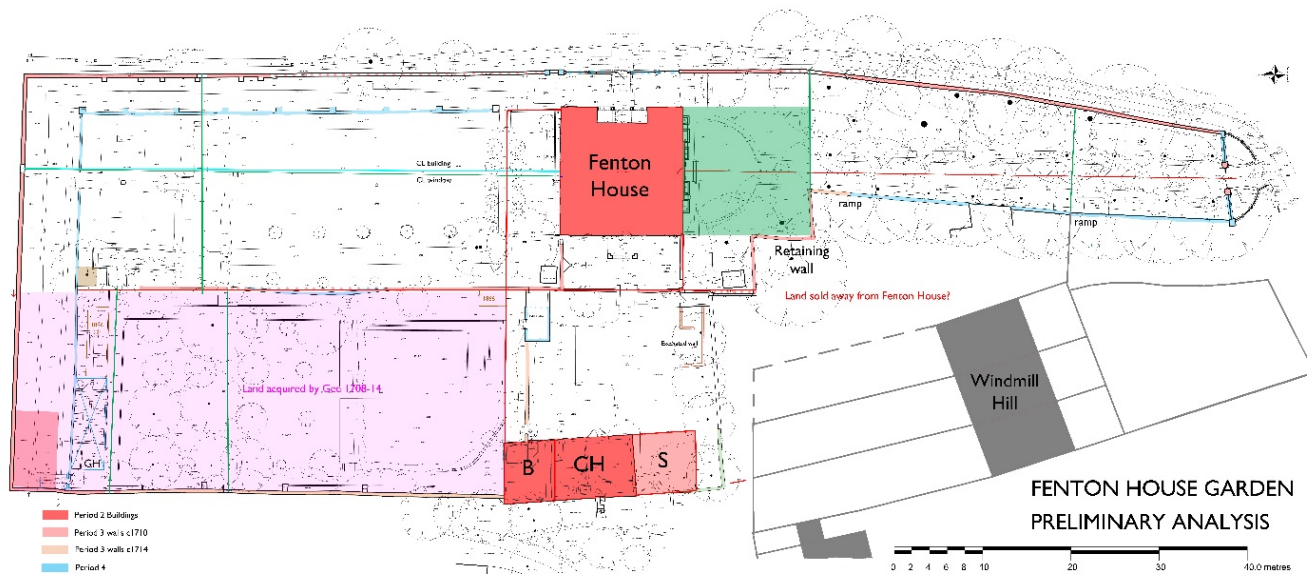


Figure 1: Plan showing the garden walls and early site ownership

## 2.2 Period 2: 1686 - 1707: The construction of Fenton House and stables

2.2.1 The Hampstead Manor Rolls<sup>5</sup> are explicit in stating that William Eades 'constructed' the house, although this need not necessarily mean that he did more than supervise or contract the builder. The design, details, location, size and plan of the house include features that point to the authorship of a master builder rather than a professional surveyor or gentleman architect. William was the son of a bricklayer, Thomas Eades,<sup>6</sup> who may also have speculated in land.<sup>7</sup> He may be the same Thomas whose house and garden were soon to be incorporated in an expanded Fenton House garden (see 2.3). For this reason it has been suggested, plausibly, that father and son, or either one of them, was responsible for designing and building the house. William Eades seems principally to have been a property speculator, rather than a builder, but trades were, of course, commonly passed from father to son, and master craftsmen would usually have been their own 'architects' at this period.

2.2.2 Fenton House is, nonetheless, something more than the usual speculative development of the period. John Summerson notes<sup>8</sup> that there are several other houses in the Hampstead area, of the early-18th century, with similar modillion eaves cornices to Fenton, of which Burgh House, New End (1703, probably built for another Quaker family, the Sewells<sup>9</sup>) is the best-known. Summerson was writing in 1945 when Fenton was widely thought to date from no earlier than 1693. It is difficult to assert with confidence that the houses of a particular London suburb form a distinct group, rather than part of a London-wide style, but if the Hampstead houses can be regarded as a group, Fenton is among the

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.camdenhistorysociety.org/index.php/hampstead-court-records>

<sup>6</sup> Guidebook 2008 p.24

<sup>7</sup> Transcript from 'The National Trust Hampstead Centre at Camden Local History Library 'Fenton Deed 210, 1667' [check ref.] records that Thomas Eades Bricklayer held 5 acres of manorial waste in 1667.

<sup>8</sup> Summerson 1945 p.256

<sup>9</sup> Cherry & Pevsner 1998 p.215



earliest, and thus, perhaps, the local source of any common features; the south elevation, at least, is quite fashionable for its date.



Figure 2: South elevation (prior to removal of false acacia 'avenue' in 2015)

- 2.2.3 It was normal in London for a speculative property developer to complete the 'carcass' of the house before selling it on to an occupier to whose specifications it would have been completed. It is likely that Eades had undertaken at least this much work by 1689 when he (with his wife, Elizabeth), mortgaged Fenton House for £630 to Thomas Simpson, a lawyer, supporting the conjecture that the initial development undertaken by the Eades had not been successful, or that if the house had been commissioned, the patron had withdrawn.
- 2.2.4 Simpson is not recorded as occupying the house but a tenant named George Hutchins is recorded by 1692.<sup>10</sup> Graffiti reading '1693 NS EB' on the brickwork of the northeast chimney stack (visible from the north-east roof terrace) and the lead pump-head with the same date, indicate that some work took place during the early 1690s. NS and EB cannot be identified in the legal (or other) documentation, so were perhaps masons or carpenters working on the final stages of the construction. The date on the pump head can only be taken with absolute certainty to refer to the object itself, but assuming that it is 'indigenous', it suggests that the house was ready for occupation at more or less this date.

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<sup>10</sup> Wilson 2003:3



### *The House in 1693*

2.2.5 The basic structure of the house, evidently complete by 1693, survives today. Only the bathroom (west) addition, the loggia to the east, and the various blocked windows have significantly altered its elevations. The roof retains its original form externally, but originally had a central well rather than the present sunken crown flat, which dates to the 1970s. There can be little doubt, given the generous fenestration and particularly the stair window, that the house was always intended to overlook a garden to the north; the basement service area on the garden side was probably hidden behind a low wall. The house had a not-quite square triple-pile plan with four main rooms on each of the principal floors, of which the eight principal rooms each had a pair of closets flanking their fireplace. The service stair occupies the west end of the central pile, opposite the entrance from Hampstead Grove, while the main stair opens off it to the north, overlooking the garden and opposite the garden entrance to the Dining Room on the south.



Figure 3: North elevation

2.2.6 The most unusual feature of the plan is the placing of the chimney-stacks, for which there are no other exact precedents, and the extension of the house eastward with two small wings surmounted by balustraded terraces. Because of this the internal attic plan has four good heated rooms rather than typical servants' garrets, possibly of higher status than usual because they were the only means of access to the roof terraces. Service accommodation was in the basement, with the kitchen at the north-west corner, and a cool cellar, at lower level between the two

projecting wings, is likely to be primary.



Figure 4: East elevation

- 2.2.7 The earliest phase of paintwork, predating the first layers of paint on the panelling, is found on the mullions and frames of the north-facing dormer windows to S4 and S6 and the basement door frames, which are massive and simply chamfered, in the 17th century manner, and integral with the house's structural timberwork. These features were necessarily part of the first phase of construction but as they are in service areas they do not provide information about the higher-status rooms. This primary joinery was made of oak (in contrast to the structural carpentry of Baltic pine). It also includes some of the shutters in B6 and at least one, re-used, in S2. The hinged part of the oldest shutters had an unusual rounded shape and it was primed with white oil paint, not the red and pink mixtures used for the pine panelling.



Figure 5: Basement: primary door and frame to room B7

2.2.8 Apart from the attic and basement, the whole house always had sash windows, which are thus quite early examples of the type, with heavy oak frames pegged together. There is no evidence for mullions and transoms to the windows in the principal rooms, as would be the case if the sashes were a later introduction. (Sash windows only became widespread in London in the last quarter of the 17th century, and rather later in the provinces.) Paint analysis has confirmed that a few windows and frames are primary; these include the north-facing sash to the former closet in the Green Room (F7) and the frames to the west-most window in the Oriental Room (G7) and the ground floor scullery (G4a). The primary shutters survive in many windows on the north side of the house, although some have later mouldings. The shutters originally had quarter round mouldings to face the room, and were plain behind. The shutters in the Green Room are unaltered. The door and window architraves are largely primary throughout the house, as are many closet and cupboard doors, but the doors to the main rooms are early 19th-century replacements.



Figure 6: Primary sash window detail (C. Hassall)

2.2.9 Most of the interiors were panelled from the outset, the evidence for which can be seen, for example, below the interior of the north-facing window in the closet in room G6, which has clean penny-struck brickwork that has never been plastered or painted. However, there is a coat of limewash under the panelling in the inner closet to G1 (See Fig. 7), so it is possible that parts of the house were occupied before it was fully panelled. The extent of the limewashed areas could only be revealed if more panelling was to be removed. (This hypothesis could be tested during the next cyclical redecoration.) The first paint schemes found on the panelling include a blue verditer pigment, which was uncommon after c1710.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Hassall 2015:





Figure 7: Inner closet to room G1 with primary dado rail and limewash behind panels (C. Hassall)

- 2.2.10 No complete primary interiors survive in the house. In some rooms, such as the Morning and Dining Rooms (G1 and G2) almost nothing earlier than the 19th century survives (although extant joinery in the closets indicates the primary or early treatment of the rooms). Overall, enough primary joinery survives to illustrate that it was typical London work of the period 1690-1730, with timber 'box' cornices, wall panelling in Baltic pine (with bolection or quarter-round mouldings, or plain panels, depending of the status of the rooms). The marble chimney-pieces (e.g. in G7 and F8 and S1) and the staircases are also characteristic of the same period.
- 2.2.11 The surviving primary interiors cannot easily be dated more exactly on stylistic grounds, so it can only be said for certain that the house was panelled and fitted out internally between c1690 and c1710. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, much primary joinery was replaced and panelling removed or stripped of its mouldings and 'restored' with early Georgian details. The picture is confused by the fact that restored details are in many cases reasonably accurate reproductions of the originals.
- 2.2.12 Most of the extant wall panels are primary but very little of their decorative joinery survives. Primary quarter-round mouldings to the panelling survive in the Porcelain Room G6 and the closets G4a, G4b, the former closets to G1 and F1,

to a small area of wall panelling in F1 and on the shutters in F7 and F8. Quarter-round moulding might be found in good rooms in the period *circa* 1700; plain panels would be usual only in service areas. The main rooms were probably originally panelled in the same style as their closets with shutters to match. It seems most likely therefore that much of the primary panelling had quarter-round mouldings. Primary timber box cornices survive on the first floor landing, the former closets to the Morning Room (G1), Green Room (F7), the back stairs at ground floor level and to the inner closet of G1. The primary dado rail survives only in the inner closet to G1 and on the first floor landing of the back stairs.

- 2.2.13 It is possible the best rooms had more elaborate, raised and fielded panels with bolection mouldings (in the style of the fragments of early dado railing), which were removed in the early-19th century, but no definitive evidence for this has yet been found. A bolection-moulded over-mantel panel and chimney-piece in the attic room S4 are in the style that one might expect to see in the best rooms of a house of this status of c1700 and the earliest paint scheme on the overmantel panel and in to the panelling in S6 includes silver-leaf. This would be most unusual in an attic room and suggests material moved from elsewhere, but there are no other examples of the overmantel paintwork in the house.



Figure 8: Chimney-piece in Room S4

- 2.2.14 The chimney-piece in S4, but not the overmantel, has blue verditer paintwork as

noted above, but the later paint on these areas belongs with the room in which they are now located. This evidence is tantalising and ambiguous, but if, as seems possible, these fragments were from a downstairs room, the paint work indicates that this happened very early in the history of the house, raising the possibility that a much grander scheme than can now be seen was at least planned for the best rooms, but was either not completed or was removed in the early 18th-century. It is possible to speculate, again, that an early commission for grand interiors was cancelled before the house was fully completed. However, paint research suggests that some of the bolecion-moulded panelling in the attic, for example in S2, could

### *The Coach House*

2.2.15 The correlation between the materials and details of the extant Coach House and those of the rear of the house are consistent with the stable block being that referred to in the 1686 grant. The bricks are identical, it has a slightly projecting plinth, projecting plain band course at first floor level, and the primary openings have segmental arches to their heads. The surviving early trusses (T3-4) of the roof are of queen strut form, all the timbers (purlins and rafter couples) are pine of substantial scantling, also like those of the house.



Figure 9: Coach House from the east

2.2.16 The Coach House was later truncated southwards, to about two-thirds of its original length, and has been subject to multiple campaigns of substantial alteration, making its primary form difficult to understand in detail. The position of the original south wall is suggested by a straight joint in the west boundary wall

of the yard,<sup>12</sup> confirmed by the fact that this locates the wide bay between two surviving early roof trusses (T3-4) at the centre of the building. Valley rafters between them suggest a roughly central cross-gable on the east side, facing the house.

- 2.2.17 The northern section of the building is separated from the rest at ground floor level by a substantial, apparently primary, brick wall. Its north gable wall incorporates a massive chimney-stack, with two large hearths filling much of the north wall. Both are altered, the western one opened up almost to ceiling height, and the details obscured by plaster, but they leave no doubt that this was the *Brewhouse* mentioned in the 1756 sale particulars<sup>13</sup> (see below). It was entered from the yard by the surviving doorway on the east, flanked by windows,<sup>14</sup> with another window in the adjacent section of the north wall. The brewing equipment was presumably against the windowless west and south walls, served by the western hearth. The eastern hearth should reflect the common additional use of brewhouses as secondary kitchens. There is nothing to suggest that the brewhouse extended through two storeys, unlike that at Rainham Hall (Essex); the stack has four flues, indicating fireplaces above, and there is a seemingly original first floor window opening on the west, in the line of the cross wall.
- 2.2.18 The southern section of the stable building must have housed the ‘two coach houses [and] two four-stall stables’ of the 1756 sales particulars. In the surviving section of the ground floor west wall there is a single, wide, arched opening in what would have been the centre of the elevation. The lower part of the east wall has been rebuilt save for a single pier between two original openings, the southern blocked in a Period 3 remodelling. But a further one to the north is implied by the position of the bridging beam of the first floor, prior to Period 5. Thus the openings to the coach houses and stables were concentrated on the yard side, as one would expect, with the coach house doors, each 2.15m/ 7ft wide, towards the north. There were ‘servants’ rooms over them’, but a first floor doorway whose north jamb marks the limit of truncation of the east wall suggests that part at least contained a hayloft, which it is evident internally was open to a ceiling on the collars, with no garret. This is consistent with the stables being at the southern end of the building.
- 2.2.19 The surviving northern part of the first floor has two primary window openings in each long wall, and was heated via the north gable stack, so provided some of the servants’ accommodation, with a garret above. The east cross gable probably had a window, answered by the trimming for a dormer on the west, and there are two small primary windows in the west gable, flanking the chimney-breast. There is no discernible architectural organisation in the arrangement of the surviving windows, suggesting that unlike the house, it has always had a rather vernacular character, given no more than a veneer of *politesse* by its rudimentary pediment.

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<sup>12</sup> The joint reflects the engagement of a half brick wall, presumably standing on the old foundation, in a wall that clearly post-dates the truncation of the stable block but whose plan is related to it – see Gazetteer.

<sup>13</sup> LB Camden Archives (Ref.)

<sup>14</sup> The southern one is evidenced by a line of closers at the edge of the surviving primary brickwork



2.2.20 The Eades's mortgage had not been redeemed by 1704, when, through a complicated series of transactions, copyhold ownership of Fenton House passed to Jane, widow of Thomas Simpson and by then married to her cousin Roger Twisden.<sup>15</sup> She had paid the 'equity of redemption' (the difference between the mortgage debt and market value) to Eades's heirs.

### 2.3 Period 3: 1707 - 1793: completion and early occupiers

#### *Period 3.1: 1706- 1750, Gee family*

2.3.1 Joshua Gee (sen.) bought the copyhold of the house from Roger Twisden in August 1707.<sup>16</sup> Gee was a Quaker merchant with important connections to the New World and considerable wealth. He was one of a group of businessmen who provided William Penn with a mortgage secured on his Pennsylvania settlement in 1708.<sup>17</sup> The house may have been known as Ostend (or East-end) House at this date, a name that has led to speculation that the house's owner or design had connections with the Low Countries. In fact the early documents refer to either to a house 'at', or 'nearly adjoining' a place called Ostend; or by the name of its owner.<sup>18</sup> Only later in the 18th century do official documents refer (e.g.) to the 'messuage or tenement formerly called or known by the name Ostend'.<sup>19</sup>

2.3.2 If the house was not fully fitted out or decorated when Gee arrived, he clearly finished the job. The rooms were painted in a range of colours. A dark green oil paint was used in the Porcelain Room. Pale blue oil paint, based on the pigment blue verditer, was used for the Oriental Room, the Morning Room and Lady Binning's Bedroom. A buff, or light brown colour was used for the joinery in the Entrance Hall, the Main Stairs, the Back Stairs, the Rockingham Room and the Dining Room and a similar buff colour was used for the panelling in the Attic Rooms.<sup>20</sup> Service rooms and the back stairs were typically painted with off-white distemper.

#### *The Garden*

2.3.3 Gee's principal contribution to the evolution of Fenton house was the creation of the garden over the period 1707-1730, the year in which both he and his wife Anne Gee died. It was - and remains- of exceptional size for a suburban house of this date and status. By the time Gee bought the house, it seems to have included the whole of the T-shaped site noted earlier, although it is evident from the plan (Fig 1) that this had itself already been assembled around the 20 roods of land initially granted with the newly-built Fenton House. The most obvious addition before Gee's time is perhaps that the southern end, marked by a ramp in the

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, Roll 23, f1a.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, Court Book A, f26-7.

<sup>17</sup> *The Delaware Register and Farmers' Magazine*, Volume 2, Ed. Huffington W., S. Kimmey, 1839, Delaware

<sup>18</sup> Hampstead Court Rolls e.g. 1707, 1710, 1711

<sup>19</sup> LB Camden Archives, (e.g.) Copy admission of Archibald Hamilton, Robert Bunn and Thomas Main etc. 1786. Ref. A/01533/1

<sup>20</sup> Hassall 2015: 78, 84

extant (later) west wall and the former dividing line through the plots to the west, but the east wall is continuous across it.



Figure 10: General view of garden, looking north

2.3.4 The original southern boundary was and is marked by the piers and the gates that bear his initials. Gee had married Anne Osgood in 1706 and the fine wrought iron southern entrance gates at the have the initials JAG in the overthrow; presumed to be for John and Anne Gee. The gates are in the style of the great ironworker Jean Tijou (fl. in England 1689-1711) known for work at Hampton Court and St Paul's Cathedral. Neither the artist nor the exact date of the Fenton gates is known. It has been suggested<sup>21</sup> that they originated elsewhere, but there is no reason to doubt that Gee commissioned them himself; probably, on stylistic and circumstantial grounds, relatively soon after acquiring the house, and as a celebration of his marriage. They are comparable to gates of c1720 at Burgh House, Hampstead.<sup>22</sup>

2.3.5 The house had a forecourt of identical footprint (Fig 1, green), which necessitated retaining walls on the west, which still survive. By 1719, when Gee obtained a confirmation of the grant of Fenton House from William Eades, following the death of his father William, and Roger Twisden 'for better Assurance' of his

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<sup>21</sup> Mainly due to their similarity with the Hampstead Churchyard gates acquired from the Duke of Chandos's Canons (Edgware) sale of 1747

<sup>22</sup> Cherry & Pevsner 1998, 215

title,<sup>23</sup> there was 'a Walk planted with trees on the front of the [house]', and this is indicated on the 1762 manorial map. At this time, however, the land west of the retaining wall, as far as the block of three houses on Windmill Hill, was probably also part of the Fenton House site, although by 1762 it was numbered with the property to the west.

- 2.3.6 Although the east wall along Hampstead Grove is interrupted by the early 19th century entrance screen and sporadic rebuilding, its construction is similar throughout save that the section south of the screen has lost its projecting coping. It returns across the north end of the garden and for a short distance on its west, and is the earliest identifiable element of the garden structure. It is of red stocks, laid (like the house, suggesting a comparable date) in English Bond to the lowest (offset) levels and Flemish Bond to the wall proper above, and finished with a brick coping corbelled on the outside but flush within. The central wall that now divides the garden into two compartments is contemporary with the north wall. The walls of the north garden have a consistent level coping line despite the fall of the land, implying that Gee also created the terrace walks, probably of earth, around the east and north sides of the north garden, leading to a building- probably a pavilion of some kind- at its the north-west corner. It was perhaps intended to take in views over the Heath as much as south-east towards the house, so would have lost its function as development extended towards the Heath.
- 2.3.7 The construction of the north wall, however, anticipated rather than followed the acquisition between 1708 and 1714 of the five parcels of land that were to form the west compartment of the garden. These, indeed, remained separately identified holdings until the constituent Fenton copyholds were enfranchised in 1860. However, to have embarked on such a venture, Gee must have had at least 'an option' (in modern parlance) on the land when he built the north wall, that can only have been intended to enclose it, along with its terrace and pavilion. The sequence begins in May 1708 with the grant of a strip of land of 4¼ rods 'between the Brewhouse of the aforesaid Joshua Gee and the tenement lately in the possession of Thomas Eades'. Next, and evidently retrospectively in May 1711, came the grant of 8 rods of the 'waste', 'now enclosed by a wall built of bricks and being part of the garden of the aforesaid Joshua Gee'. This helpfully dates the construction of the primary garden walls to in or before 1710. The next section of 7 rods of 'waste' to the south was granted at the same time. In May 1713 came the grant of 8 rods on the west of the 'Mansion House' abutting the pale of the garden of [---] Eades, widow, and finally, in May 1714, the remaining 15 rods, with the condition that no 'House or other building except a Brick built Wall not exceeding ten feet in Height' be built upon it. This is the wall, in red stocks all Flemish bond, which still exists filling the gap between the Brewhouse and the first phase wall at the north end. It is in three distinct alignments, possibly reflecting the plots acquired piecemeal, yet structurally, seemingly all of a piece. A very similar wall- presumably of the same date- defines the south end of the west

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<sup>23</sup> Hampstead Court Rolls; this suggests the risk of a claim arising from the 1704 transactions



garden, placed as far south as would still allow the Brewhouse to be entered from the service yard.



Figure 11: North garden wall from the north: showing offset foundation courses ramping down on the line of the central compartment wall



Figure 12 The front entrance gates and screen as modified in the early C19; the forward screen is later C19 following the grant of the 'manorial waste' between them, the latest of the separate parcels enfranchised as a whole in 1860

2.3.8 There are few clues about how the gardens might have been arranged or planted but the primary gateways in the walls may suggest the position of paths and thus,

planted compartments. The gateways towards the northern end of the first phase east and west walls were blocked early, perhaps when the secondary west wall was completed, leaving a single functioning gate<sup>24</sup> in both the east and north walls.



Figure 13: Gateway in East wall with early blocking



Figure 14: West garden wall, north end with offset at end of first phase wall and blocked gateway  
*The house*

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<sup>24</sup> Now blocked by the NT for security reasons



2.3.9 There is little evidence for major change to the interiors of the house during the occupancy of Joshua and Anne apart from regular redecoration, but the paint sequences do indicate some minor changes. The panelling to the main stairs was altered and some anomalous details such as piece of quarter-round moulding where the landing balustrade meets the wall, and new mouldings to the sides of the stair window, suggest that the original treatment of the stair-well was changed. It could originally have been panelled, painted *trompe l'oeil* or decorated with hangings, but this cannot now be determined, at least without destructive investigations. Alterations also seem to have been made in the area that is now the doorway to Lady Binning's Room, but the nature of these is unclear as this area was altered again in the early 19th-century. The present cupboards and stair to the roof were built into the second floor landing (S3), cutting across the edge of the door to room S7 and requiring that it be reduced in size. These works can be associated with the third redecoration, probably c1730-40.



Figure 15: Primary doorway and later cupboard, second floor landing

2.3.10 Joshua Gee died in 1730 and the house passed to his youngest son Osgood Gee, who was in occupation until he married in 1737<sup>25</sup>, but he did not sell the house until 1757. There is little in the official records between 1737 and the arrival of a tenant in 1750. During this period the land to the south-west of Fenton House was developed with the present group of three houses, to the detriment of Fenton House, perhaps reflecting a period during which the owner lived elsewhere and had other interests, or even that the house was vacant.

2.3.11 Fenton House can be identified on John Rocque's 1746 map of London and the country ten miles around.<sup>26</sup> The map is at a small scale and does not show individual houses in detail, and it was surveyed a little earlier than its publication date. The garden at Fenton House is shown as four equally sized compartments, but this may more a conventional rendering rather than topographically accurate. The block plan of the house and the site boundary conform to that which exists today but the Coach House extends further south than at present, as the surviving fabric shows that it did. The map also supports archaeological evidence that the yard itself extended further southwards.<sup>27</sup>

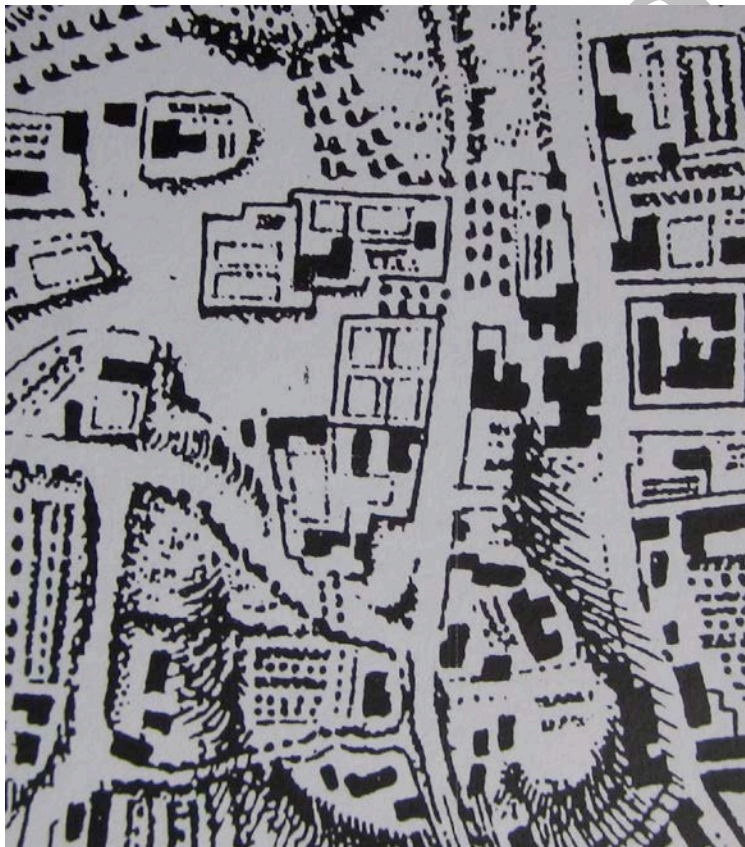


Figure 16: Extract from Rocque's map, 1746, Fenton House at centre (LMA)

<sup>25</sup> Wilson 2003:11

<sup>26</sup> *An Exact Survey of the citys of London Westminster ye Borough of Southwark and the Country near ten miles round / begun in 1741 & ended in 1745 by John Rocque Land Surveyor ; & Engrav'd by Richard Parr* [source?]

<sup>27</sup> Gary Marshall, *Fenton House, Hampstead, London: An Archaeological watching brief over the excavation of trenches in the stable yard* [1998; and postscript, 2000]. Unpublished internal NT report

2.3.12 In 1750 the house was let to a Levant merchant named Arthur Radcliffe (or Ratclif)<sup>28</sup> and in 1756 it was offered for sale by 'Order of the Proprietor Osgood Gee Esq.' The advertisement<sup>29</sup> described it as follows: 'A copyhold messuage, situated at Hampstead lately tenanted by Arthur Ratclif Esq. at the yearly rent of 70 l. consisting of a substantial brick building containing four very good rooms on a floor, two stair cases, with exceeding good lower offices, which are remarkably dry, and two wine vaults, the out-offices are of brick, apart from the house, and consist of two coach houses, two four-stall stables, with servants rooms over them, a brewhouse, a pleasant garden well-planted with fruit-trees and a kitchen-garden all enclos'd with a substantial brick wall. Also a small piece of land, containing about two roods without the wall at a distance of about ten rods. Stephen Geave and John Stump, brokers.'

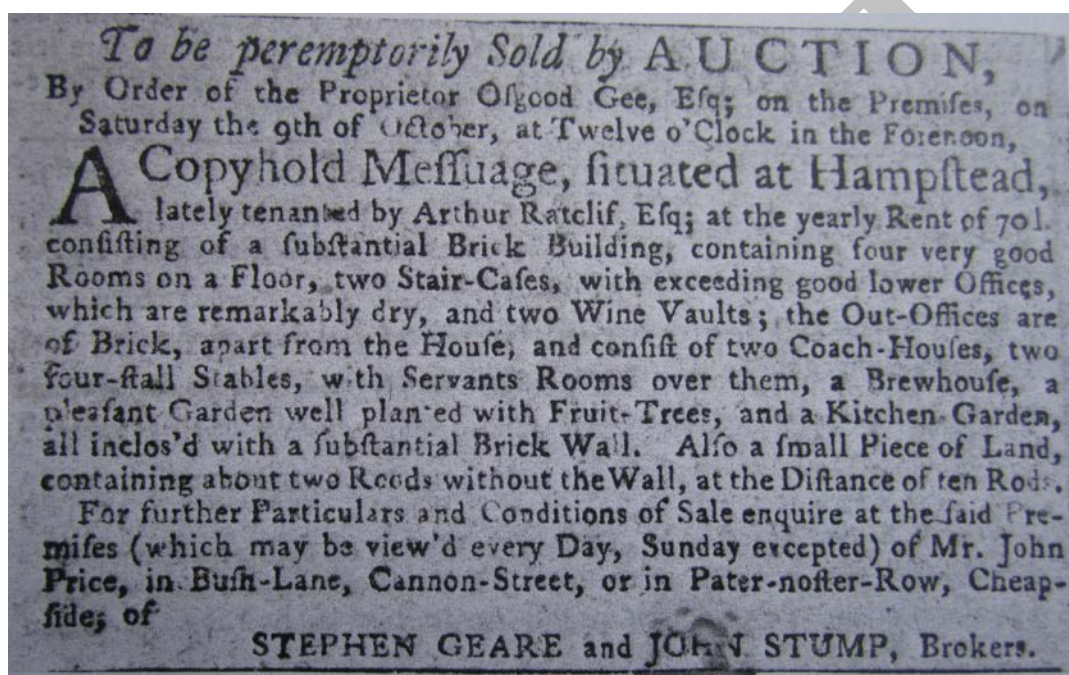


Figure 17: 1756 Sales Particulars (LB Camden)

2.3.13 The property was bought by Mary Martin, thought to be the widow<sup>30</sup> of Admiral William Martin (1696-1756)<sup>31</sup>. The key to the Survey of Hampstead (Fig. 19) by John Ellis (1762)<sup>32</sup> describes: 'a capital messuage called the Clock House, being the dwelling house of and belonging to Mary Martyn with outhouses, coach house, stabling, yards, forecourt, gardens with a green house...'. The 1762 plan is the first to show the area in detail, and it reveals two key changes to the site. This is the first mention of a greenhouse, so it may have been added by Mrs Martin.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre ref. H728.3/Fenton House

<sup>30</sup> Wilson 2003:12-14

<sup>31</sup> DNB

<sup>32</sup> LMA. Ref.

<sup>33</sup> Or represent a reworking of the pavilion at the north-west corner of the garden; it was certainly a greenhouse later



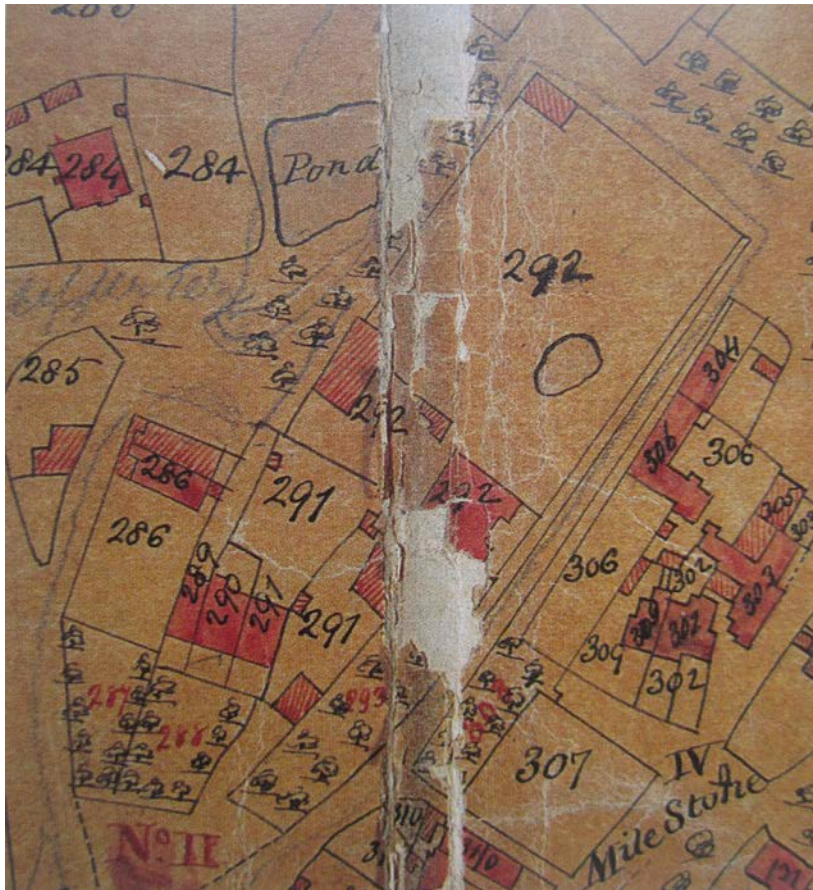


Figure 18: Extract from Hampstead manor map 1762 (LMA)

2.3.14 The plan shows that the service range had been truncated and the present form of the service yard established. The easternmost of the newly built houses on Windmill Hill, along with all the land between it and the present Fenton House boundary are apparently in the same ownership. This presumably restricted the original access to the Fenton House yard to the point that it was necessary to reduce the size of the stable block. The gateway in the south wall of the upper terrace of the yard and the adjacent pier with ball final appear to be associated with the same changes.

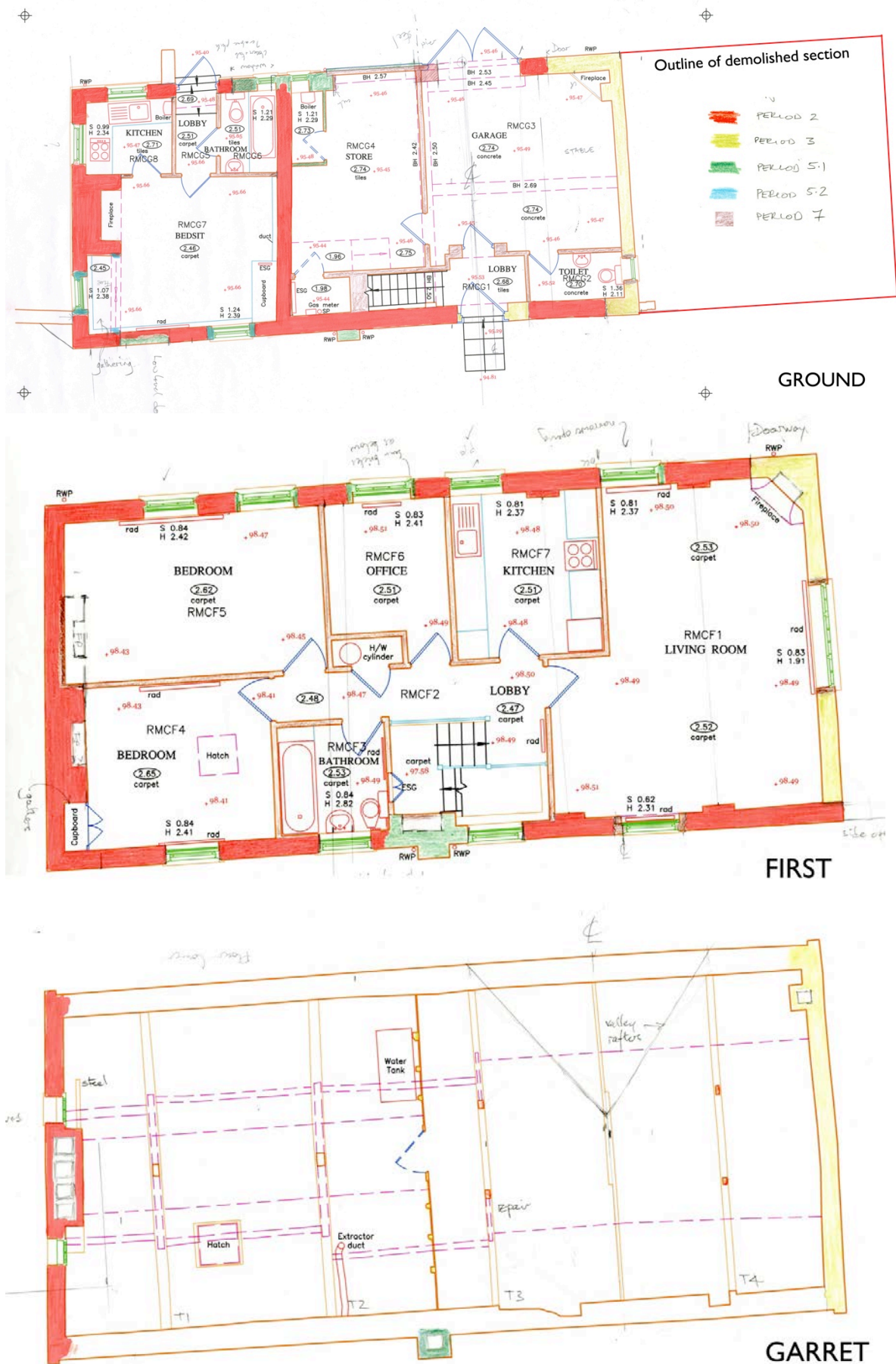


Figure 19: Provisional plans showing the evolution of the Coach House

- 2.3.15 The truncation of the stable building southwards took place soon after the sale to Mary Martyn, for, as noted above, the 1756 sales particulars described its primary form. The building now took on the form recorded in 1884, 'Detached stabling, comprising Three-Stall stable, Two Coach Houses with [missing] over', suggesting that the former Brewhouse was then doing duty as a stable and the remainder housed the coaches. The upper floor was presumably now accessed from the west door, which is set within the earlier central opening and reusing a primary type door frame provided with an over-light. The new south wall was built with recycled brick, windowless but incorporating a corner fireplace at first floor level.<sup>34</sup> The garret went out of use save for a storage loft in the southern part (since the new south wall was not plastered), separated by a boarded partition from the unfloored southern end. The roof was extensively repaired (after localised failure, particularly of the western strut of T3) and the northern end reconstructed with spindly king post trusses (T1-2). The reason for the drastic reconstruction is not clear. Structural problems are a possibility since the ongoing movement extends beyond the rebuilt south wall, perhaps compounded by neglect (evident in the roof repair) and the lack of masonry cross-walls. The driving force may have been the sale of land to the adjoining property.
- 2.3.16 Analysis of paint suggests that only minor internal alterations were made to the house during this period. When the main stairs were painted for the fourth or fifth time, perhaps c1760-80, the small ground floor room under the main stairs (G8a), was formed with a timber panel partition dividing it from the entrance hall. Its window (W22) may have been cut into the north elevation at the same time. New panelling may have also been made for wall to the north of the Porcelain Room (G6). It is possible that the area between the bottom flight of the main stairs and G6 was partitioned from the entrance hall and may not previously have been panelled, since after G8a was formed the panelling in this part of the hall was painted differently from the rest of the entrance hall. However, these anomalies may relate to the early 20th-century recycling of panelling which is reflected in the corresponding wall to G6, where the panelling was clearly reset in the early 20th century. Further minor work at the same period included new shutters and a panel below the east window (W39) in Lady Binning's Bedroom (F1).<sup>35</sup>
- 2.3.17 On Mary Martin's death in 1765 the house was sold to John Hyndman, a tobacco importer, who kept it until his death in 1786. Hyndman's ownership is known from the admission of his executors, Archibald Hamilton, Robert Bunn and Thomas Main to the copyhold in 1786.<sup>36</sup>
- 2.3.18 The house was bought by John Bond, 'a property speculator'.<sup>37</sup> Bond's purchase is recorded by his admission to the copyhold in the manor of Hampstead on surrender of Hamilton's, Bunn's and Main's interests. There is no evidence that

<sup>34</sup> The pier at ground floor level supported the hearth; the stack had only one flue, visible where truncated in the garret

<sup>35</sup> Hassall 2015:38

<sup>36</sup> LB Camden Archives, Copy of admission of Archibald Hamilton, Robert Bunn and Thomas Main etc. 1786. Ref. A/01533/1

<sup>37</sup> Guidebook 2008 p33

Bond lived at Fenton House, nor of his tenants. He sold the house in 1793 to Phillip Fenton.

## 2.4 Period 4: 1793 - 1834: the Fenton family

- 2.4.1 Philip Fenton, from whose family the house gained its present name, was originally from Lancashire, a non-conformist and a moderately successful Riga merchant. He was granted the copyhold of the property in 1793.<sup>38</sup> Phillip was childless and by 1796<sup>39</sup> his nephew and heir James Fenton came to live at Fenton House with his large family. On Phillip's death in 1807, James was admitted to the copyhold under his uncle's will.

### *The House*

- 2.4.2 The interiors of the house were comprehensively redecorated in the early 19th-century taste, at the expense of much 18th century fabric and detail. The work can be dated to *circa* 1790s-1830s on stylistic grounds, but not precisely. The work of this period has generally been attributed to the Fentons, but it is possible that some was undertaken for Richard Davis, to whom the Fentons sold the house in 1834. Stylistic evidence, inconsistencies between the detailing in different rooms and paint analysis suggest that there were at least three phases of work between c1790 and c1840. On stylistic and circumstantial grounds, it has generally been assumed that James Fenton made the most significant changes when he inherited in 1807.
- 2.4.3 The principal works in this period include the construction of the loggia to the east elevation; the redecoration of the entrance hall with its part-glazed vestibule screen; the creation of the double drawing room on the first floor with a neo-classical screen (now in room F1); re-fenestration of the south, east and part of the north elevations; the subdivision of the Green Room (F5/F6/F7); the blocking of various windows, the redecoration of several of the closets (possibly associated with the blocking of their windows), the introduction of new doors to the main rooms, the removal of most of the timber box cornices, dado rails and-if any previously existed- the bolection mouldings to the panelling, and the renewal of all of the skirting boards in the main rooms. Also likely to be of similar date are the Portland stone window cills. The blocked ground floor window to the south of the west elevation (which would have served the Dining Room closet) has no stone cill, suggesting that the windows were blocked no later than the cills were introduced.

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<sup>38</sup> LB Camden Archives, Copy of admission of PI Fenton, 1793. Ref. A/01540/4

<sup>39</sup> Wilson 2003:19





Figure 20: Neo-Classical screen in Lady Binning's bedroom (G1)

- 2.4.4 The loggia and the works to the hall have been shown by the paint analysis to be part of a single phase of work. The re-fenestration of the south front is, logically, likely to have been undertaken at the same time as the creation of the first floor drawing room (F1 and F2) and the refurbishment of G1 and G2; all these rooms have similar early 19th century shutters. The Green Room has an early 19th century fire surround and the subdivided parts of the room (F5, F6) have early 19th century cornices.
- 2.4.5 Several features point to an early 19th century date for the blocking of the windows. Paint analysis shows that the shelves fitted into the inner closet off G1 were of the early 19th century and several other of the blocked windows have similar shelves. All but one of the blocked windows served closets, some of which were redecorated and given new plaster cornices in the Regency style at this date. The exception is the central first floor east window (now bearing the 'clock face'). This was a corridor or unheated room which must have been lit until it was incorporated in room F1, where the columns, doorcase and door can be dated to the same period stylistically and by paint analysis.
- 2.4.6 The blocked windows consist either of brick infill, behind which most of the window linings remain (although some are plastered-over), or internal blocking with timber boards or plaster, with the sash window retained externally. It is not entirely clear why the windows were blocked but the large windows may have

restricted the usefulness of the closets. The spaces behind the eastern stacks, for example, are little more than cupboards, for which the full-sized windows would have been disproportionately large. To the south and east elevations, the choice of brick infill or retained sashes to block windows seems to have been intended to preserve symmetry and proportions; elsewhere - especially to the north elevation - the pattern is inconsistent.



Figure 21: Detail of blocked window and inserted cill

2.4.7 The blocked window bearing the 'clock face' raises the curious issue of the house's name. As recorded by the Hampstead Manor Map of 1762<sup>40</sup>, the house was known as 'Clock House', but the details of the window blocking to which the extant clock-face is fixed appears the same as the others, and of the early 19th century. There may well have been a clock that gave the house its 18th-century name, but it is evidently unlikely that it was in this position. The confusion may partly be explained by Lord Mansfield, who wrote in 1899 to the Secretary of the Hampstead Antiquarian and Historical Society that it was called the Clock House because of 'a resident some thirty years ago having placed a sham dial plate on the front of the entrance porch';<sup>41</sup> suggesting that the present clock-face may have been intended to celebrate an historic name, the precise origins of which have been lost.

2.4.8 The doors from the hallways and landings to the principal rooms have an identical pattern of five panels. Selective paint analysis of doors [to e.g. G1, G2, G6, G7<sup>42</sup>] has shown that they date from the early 19th century. However, circumstantial evidence suggests that doors from the house were reused and eventually reached the first floor flat in the Garden Cottage. That to CF6 has a similar five-panel

<sup>40</sup> LMA E/MW/H/256

<sup>41</sup> White, C., *Sweet Hampstead and its Associations*, London 1903 [check]

<sup>42</sup> Hassall 2015

design to those in the house, but is much thinner, as might be expected of an 18th century door; it has been stripped and repainted in recent years and could not be dated from paint analysis but it seems likely to have served as a model for early 19th-century replacements. A second door, of two panels, in the flat, to room CF1 is clearly 19th century, and most likely to have been recycled from the house since it has the same early 18th-century blue verditer paint as was found in Room F1.

- 2.4.9 The absence of primary cornices, mouldings and skirtings (and their partial later reinstatement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries) point towards the very strong likelihood that in Period 4, at least some of the panelling was covered over with wall-paper, which would have required a flat wall surface. It would have been a typical early 19th century change. Paint samples taken from room G6 reveal that the panelling here was not painted during most of the 19th century. The way in which the entrance hall screen was simply butted up to the panelling with little regard for aesthetics also suggests that the panelling was covered, but the hallway continued to be painted well into the 19th century, so if it was papered, the change here seems to have been later. The first floor landing was never papered and its primary cornices survive.



Figure 22: Chimney-piece in Oriental Room (G7)

- 2.4.10 The refurbishment of the ground and first floor rooms included the replacement of several chimney-pieces, in F1, F2 and F7. Analysis of paint shows that the panelling immediately surrounding all the ground and first floor chimneypieces



was removed in the early 19th century. Even where primary chimney-piece remains, for example, in the Oriental Room, it has been 'modernised' with the addition of a mantel shelf and fluted frame.

- 2.4.11 The attic (second floor) was also redecorated at this date, and while it is not precisely clear what was done, it seems most likely that this part of the house was improved to provide more comfortable accommodation and at least some fixtures from downstairs were recycled. As noted, the attic rooms S4 and S6 have fragments of panelling and S6 a bolection-moulded chimneypiece of c1690-1725 of the type used for high status rooms of that date. The chimneypiece in S1 is of the same period and is over-large for the hearth and so may have been moved here from one of the downstairs rooms. S2 has a very plain chimneypiece of the type that might be expected in an attic and although it has no early paint, it may also be primary. S6 has a larger, plain chimneypiece probably of early 19th century date, but possibly earlier. The attic hearths have early-19th century grates and most of the doors are of a similar date. On balance, it seems most likely that the attic rooms took their present form in this period, even if some of the panelling had migrated here at an earlier date.

#### *The Garden*

- 2.4.12 Phillip or James Fenton is most likely to have been responsible a number of changes to the gardens, broadly identifiable by the use of yellow stock brick. The most substantial work was the construction of the extant retaining walls of the north and east terrace walks, perhaps in place of banks. Their brickwork bonds at the north-east corner and they are clearly of a single build. Associated with them is a vaulted heating chamber for greenhouses at the north-west corner of the garden, under the terrace, which served the successor to the early 'pavilion' structure and perhaps Mary Martin's greenhouse on the lower level. The main entrance forecourt on the east side of the house was opened up by replacing the putative high wall (assumed to have been a continuation of the walls at either side) with a low wall with iron railings and a central gate. The masonry was wholly renewed in Period 7. To the east of the screen is a pedestrian gate, now blocked, which probably provided access down to the kitchen door at lower ground level (Fig 26). The Southern entrance screen either side of the gatepiers was also modified with similar railings to the E screen, providing *clair voies* to the house, contained by yellow stock brick piers (Fig 13). The west wall of the south garden was partly rebuilt during this period, along with the charming potting shed (Fig 27). The central wall between the two compartments of the north garden also shows signs of multiple repairs and local rebuilding in the 19th century as it slumped under the pressure of retained earth.





Figure 23: Blocked pedestrian gateway to N of entrance screen



Figure 24: Potting shed

## 2.5 Period 5: 1835 - 1935

### *Period 5.1: Davis, Turner, Montgomery, Selwyn and tenants 1835-1884*

- 2.5.1 Following the death of James Fenton in 1834 the house was sold to Richard Hart Davis (1766-1842), a retired MP, banker and West Indies merchant.<sup>43</sup> Davis was living at the house in 1841<sup>44</sup> but died the following year. He had been a prominent and active politician,<sup>45</sup> and necessarily at this date, a man of considerable wealth. His main enthusiasms were virulent anti-Catholicism and free trade. He defended the financial interests of his fellow West India Merchants, introducing a petition to Parliament on behalf of Bristol Merchants in 1824 calling for 'gradual abolition', but he does not seem to have been a slave owner himself.<sup>46</sup>
- 2.5.2 The margin-glazed sash windows to G6 and F8 are characteristic of the period of Davis's occupation, and of the early 19th century windows these are likely to be the latest in date. It is also possible that Davis rather than the Fentons subdivided the Green Room (F7). If so, the newly formed room F5 could have been a bathroom from the outset. When Davis died in 1842 the house was sold again.



Figure 25: Rockingham Room (F8)

<sup>43</sup> LB Camden Archives, deeds, refs.

<sup>44</sup> Census 1841 TNA

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/davis-richard-1766-1842>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/44177>



- 2.5.3 The house was bought by Thomas Turner,<sup>47</sup> a Barrister at Lincoln's Inn and, from 1856, Treasurer of Guy's Hospital. The following year he and his family moved to lodgings at the hospital. Fenton House was let to a Mary Millicent Montgomery. The house was sold in 1859 or 60 but Miss Montgomery remained in occupation until 1863 or 64<sup>48</sup>
- 2.5.4 The purchaser in 1859 was Mary Selwyn. The following year she exercised her right to purchase the freehold ('enfranchise') what had previously been tenure by copyhold of the Lords of the Manor of Hampstead. The deed of enfranchisement<sup>49</sup> describes the property and includes a coloured plan (Fig. ). The house is described as 'formerly known by the name Ostend... now more generally known by the name of the Clock House'. Enfranchisement consolidated the various copyhold plots which are described in a schedule attached to the deed, although the individual plots are not identified on the plan.

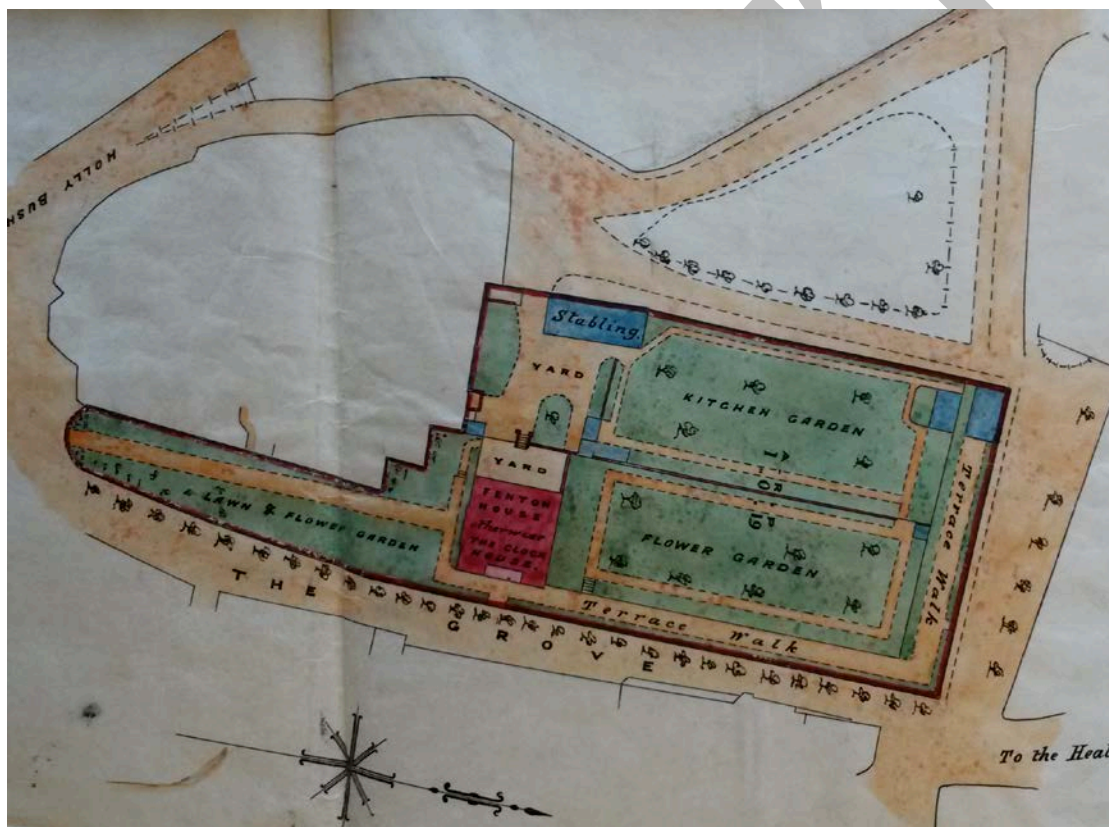


Figure 26: Plan from 1860 Deed of Enfranchisement

- 2.5.5 There is a remarkable degree of correspondence between the site's layout in 1860 and today. The drawing gives relatively little information about the house but it is the first reliable record of the form of the garden. The planting may not be accurate but it is notable that no orchard is marked (or mentioned in the deed). By the east wall was an upper 'Terrace Walk', and below this the garden was divided into two level areas separated by a retaining wall. The upper level was labelled

<sup>47</sup> LB Camden Archives, deed, ref. Admission of Thomas Turner

<sup>48</sup> Wilson 2003:29, 41

<sup>49</sup> LMA E/NT/01/004

‘flower garden’ and had a path close to the periphery linking to the Terrace Walk by steps under the north front. The lower level was the ‘kitchen garden’, also with a near peripheral path. Along the northern boundary was another terrace. Greenhouses are shown at the western end of the northern Terrace Walk and at the north-west corner of the flower and kitchen gardens, and the potting shed at the south-east corner of the kitchen garden. To the south the treed walk was shown running up to the house through a ‘lawn and flower garden’. The area on the west side of the house is shown as a yard, partly enclosed by a wall. The basement area on the north side is not defined as such and appears to be planted. A small structure is shown on the north side of the stable yard.

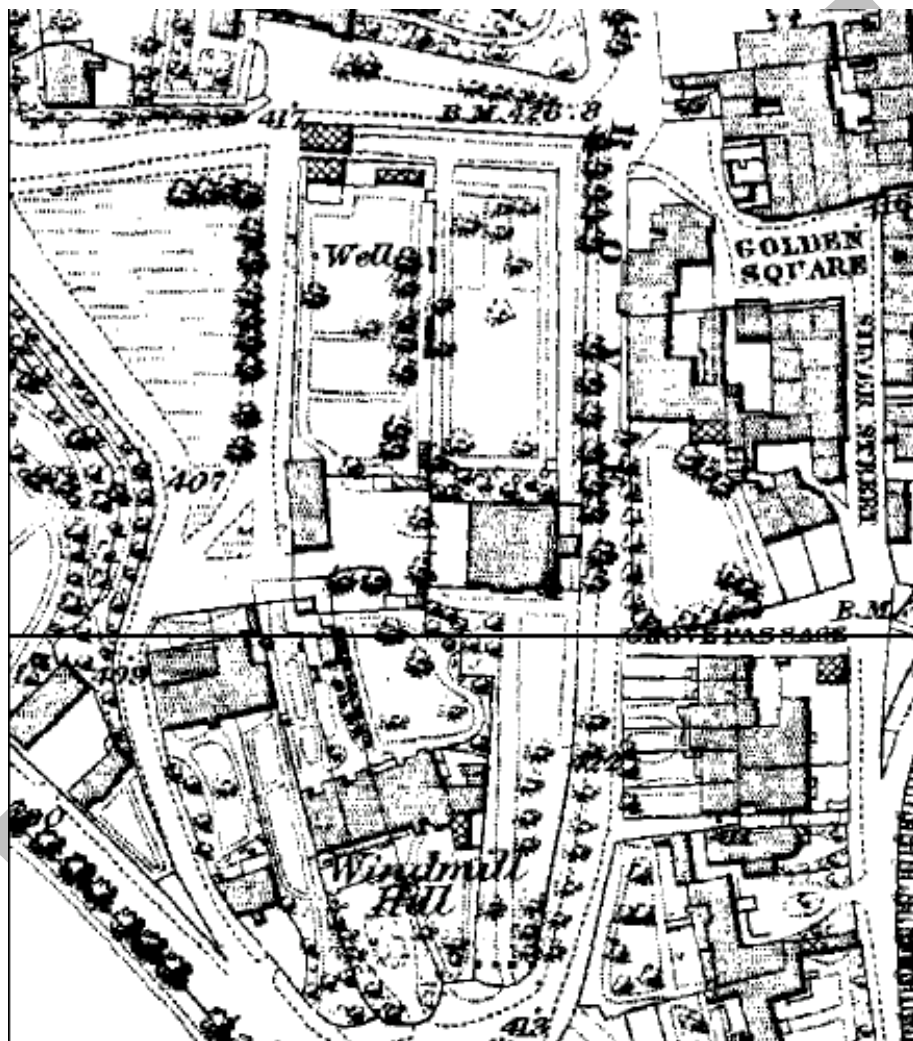


Figure 27: 1879 Ordnance Survey extract

- 2.5.6 The first edition of the large scale Ordnance Survey for the area was published in 1866 and the Ordnance Survey of 1879 shows the house and gardens with the same key features. There are few changes from the map attached to the Deed of Enfranchisement a few years earlier. The covered porch to the east side of the house seems likely to have been added at around this date, although as only a semi-permanent structure it could have been omitted from the deed plan.



- 2.5.7 A third glazed structure, probably a forcing pit, appears to have been added to the east of the existing structure, below the west end of the raised walk. The map suggests that the structure in the north-west corner of the Flower Garden was a further set of steps up to the northern Terrace Walk, that there was a short flight down to the kitchen garden, and that there were greenhouses at the north end of the kitchen garden. The small structure to the northwest of the east garden has gone.
- 2.5.8 Mary Selwyn does not seem to have lived at the house.<sup>50</sup> The house was leased to Margaret Murray (nee Gray), Lady Gray in her own right (in the peerage of Scotland) and widow of Hon. David Murray, son of the 3rd Earl of Mansfield (of Kenwood House). She lived in the house until c1871<sup>51</sup>. Between 1871 and 1884 the house was sub-let to tenants who included Robert Whytlaw and Henry Boswell Lee. Mary Selwyn died in 1881 and the house was inherited by her Aunt, Amelia Murray. On her death in 1884 the house was sold.

*The House in 1884*

- 2.5.9 A copy of the 1884 sale particulars<sup>52</sup> survives, although somewhat damaged, and it gives the earliest detailed description of the house. The house is described as 'lately in the occupation of H. B. Lee whose lease expired [text missing]'. The accommodation at this date included: 'On the Upper Floor - Four Bedrooms, Two Small Room and Staircase to Roof'; 'On the First Floor - Two Drawing Rooms 22ft [illeg.] by 17ft [illeg.] and 25ft By 13ft 10in, Communicating by Folding Doors, Two Bedrooms each with Dressing Closet, Bath Room, W.C. and Landing. On the Ground Floor - Spacious Entrance Hall with covered approach, Principal and Secondary Staircases, Dining Room 19ft 6in by 17ft 6in, Morning Room with Lobby, Study with Recess, Small Smoking Room, Passage, Closet under Stairs, Small Housemaid's Pantry and WC. In the Basement - Kitchen, Housekeeper's Room, Larder, Butler's Pantry, Scullery with Furnace to warm house, Stairs to Coal Vault, Passage, Large Wine Cellar and Two outside WCs.'
- 2.5.10 This description allows for a number of inferences about the alterations to the primary plan that had been made by this date. The two inter-communicating first floor drawing rooms can only be the present Lady Binning's Bedroom (F1) and the Blue Porcelain Room (F2). The dimensions given confirm that the former had been extended to its present size by this date, incorporating the putative 'clock room'. The two bedrooms with closets must be the Green Room (F7) and Rockingham Room (F8), and the, bathroom, presumably including WC, the present Ladies' lavatory and lobby (F5/F6).
- 2.5.11 On the ground floor the Dining Room (G2) and the Morning Room (G1) were still separate. The reference to a 'lobby' in the Morning Room (G2) is ambiguous; it is difficult to equate a 'lobby' with a closet although this seems to be the most

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<sup>50</sup> Wilson 2003:29

<sup>51</sup> Wilson 2003:31

<sup>52</sup> LMA E/NT/001/05

likely explanation. Belcher and McCartney's 1900 drawing<sup>53</sup> shows the closet to the south of the Morning Room chimney as an 'alcove' and suggest that there may have been an arch rather than a partition here, possibly but not convincingly explaining the use of the word 'lobby'.

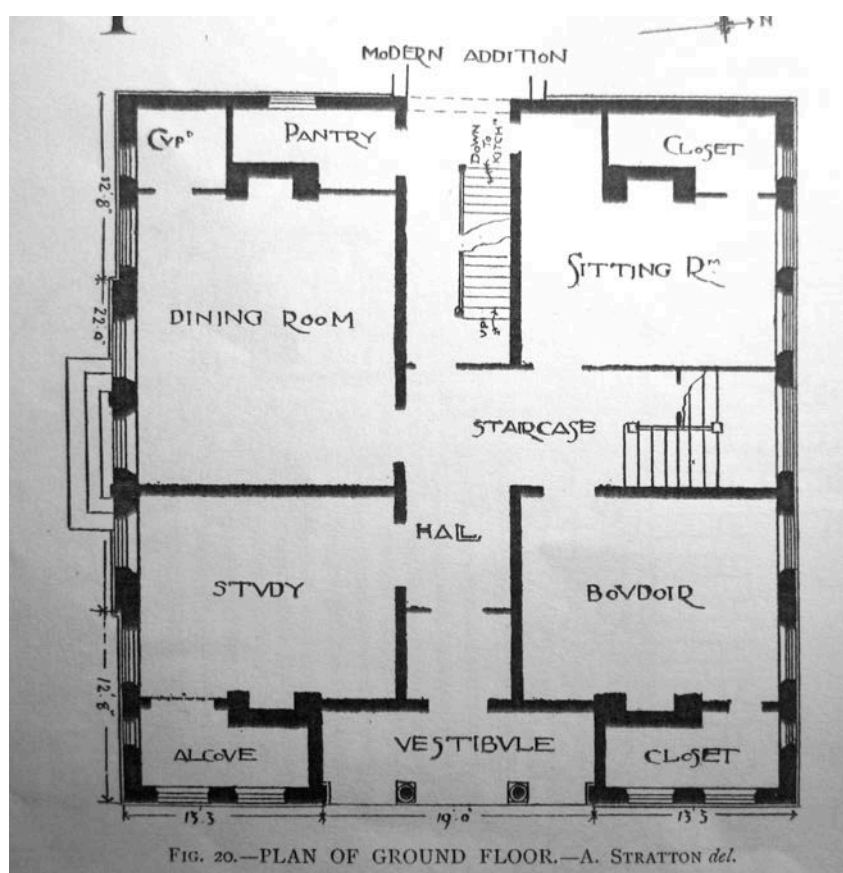
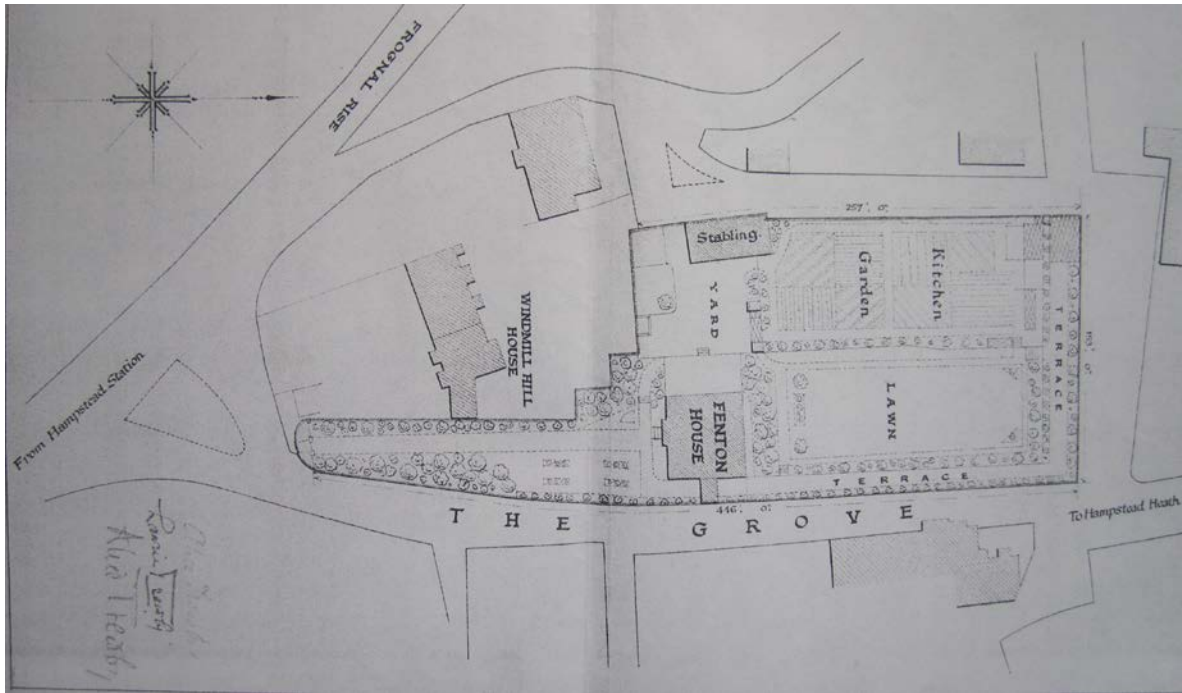


Figure 28: Ground floor plan (Belcher & McCartney 1900)

2.5.12 The 'Study' is the present Oriental Room (G7). The 'recess' seems to refer to the closet, which is shown as a separate room on the 1900 plan. No mention of closets is made in relation to the Smoking Room (presumably the present Porcelain Room, G6) but the former closet to the south (G4b) is almost certainly the 'passage' noted in the particulars, as shown on the 1900 plan. The ground floor 'Housemaids' Pantry' is presumably the room (G4a) off the back stairs, adjacent to the Dining Room. The location of the WC is uncertain but it may have occupied one of the other closets.

2.5.13 Outside there was: 'Detached stabling, comprising Three-Stall stable, Two Coach Houses with [missing] over, and Yard with Folding Gates, Poultry House etc. Walled Kitchen Garden, Mushroom House, Potting Shed, a Seven-Light Pit, Four-light Pit, Greenhouse and [missing] by hot water pipes. Lawn Tennis ground and Ornamental Flower Garden with Terrace, the whole containing one acre and nineteen perches Or thereabouts.'

<sup>53</sup> Belcher & McCartney 1900:20



Plan from 1884 sales particulars

*Period 5.2: 1884-1920, Trewby*

- 2.5.14 The purchaser in 1884 was George Careless Trewby, the son of a coal merchant, who eventually rose to become Chief Engineer of the Gas, Light and Coke Company. He died in 1910, at Fenton House, and his widow Alice remained there until 1920. The Trewbys occupied Fenton as a family house and modernised it with further bathrooms and a motor garage, among other things.
- 2.5.15 They built the small two-storey wing on the west side of the house, with bathrooms on the ground and first floors, over an open porch at basement level. The addition required that the level of the half-landings of the back stairs be raised to allow for access to the new bathrooms, creating the present unequal flights from basement to ground and ground to first floors. The original hand-rails and balusters were reused in the new configuration.



Figure 29: North elevation showing bathroom extension

2.5.16 We do not know the exact dates of each historic redecoration, but as redecoration is most frequently associated with changes in ownership, it seems more likely that internal work that dating from the late-19th century was carried out by the Trewbys, rather than by one of Mary Selwyn's relatively short-term tenants. The most significant decorative schemes of this period are to the Oriental room (or Library, G7) and to the Servants' Hall in the basement (G7).

2.5.17 The Oriental Room appears to retain its early-18th-century appearance. However, the extant 'box' cornice is made of plaster rather than wood, as would have been the case if it was a primary feature, and while the panelling is primary, its dado rail, mouldings, over-mantel panel, and the ceiling, have been shown by paint sampling to be of late-nineteenth/early-20th century date. Therefore, the Trewbys probably took down the early 19th century wall-paper and restored the room to the English early-18th century style that was returning to fashion at the end of the 19th century. The taste for late-18th- and early-19th-century (and French) decorations was losing popularity and 'restoring' a room to something like its 18th-century appearance would not have been unusual at this date, but this 'Georgianisation' could be anachronistic, and tended to employ richer details than might originally have been the case. Thus, at Fenton, the restored details have a



slightly more baroque character than the originals; in particular, the heavier and more elaborate bolection mouldings rather than quarter-round ones. The marble chimney-surround appears to be primary and in its original location.



Figure 30: Oriental Room in 2015, with reset panelling by door

2.5.18 Paint analysis also suggests late-19th century dates for some of the panelling in the Servants' Hall (B7). This would be consistent with the sort of improvement in accommodation for servants that was seen at this date, and possibly also with the use of the attic for children's bedrooms, suggested by the hooks for a fireguard in S2 and the gate at the head of the stairs. The panelling seems most likely to have been recycled from elsewhere, and been combined with a new plaster cornice, to create a more comfortable room than previously.



Figure 31: Room B7, former servants' hall with recycled panelling

2.5.19 The Trewbys probably also added the extant mouldings to the panelling in the Entrance Hall. No original mouldings survive here. This space was grained during at least some of the 19th century, suggesting that the panelling was either not papered-over or was uncovered at a similar date to G7. Paint samples indicate that the Trewbys were also responsible for the elaborate, vaguely neo-classical bookcases and alcove cabinets in what was then the double first floor drawing room (now in F1 and F2). They would have been stylistically broadly in keeping with rooms that retained their early-19th-century character.



Figure 32: North front and garden c1904 (LB Camden)

### *The Coach House*

- 2.5.20 The former coach house was converted to a motor garage, with two pairs of double doors, and a steel-framed glazed roof added to form a wash-down area for cars in the yard. This work has similar details to the bathroom extension (steel lintels capped with York stone blocks) and belongs to the same phase (perhaps indeed the same date). WC compartments were formed either side of the wall that originally defined the Brewhouse (between CG4 and CG7), lit by a pair of small windows; that to the south survives. The cupboard in the south-east corner of CG3 probably belongs to this period, and this space, south of the doors, was probably the workshop area necessary for early motor vehicle enthusiasts. The areas of cement render to the west elevation of the house may also date from this period, or shortly afterwards; the possible reasons for these are discussed below.
- 2.5.21 The 1896 Ordnance Survey shows very little detail that was not shown on the earlier map, except that the bathroom extension is present. The Trewbys used the lawn to the north of the garden, adjacent to the house, as a tennis court (Fig 35). Greenhouses and forcing pits now extended along the whole of the north end of the kitchen garden, and a further glass-house stood at the centre of the north end of the eastern 'pleasure garden'.

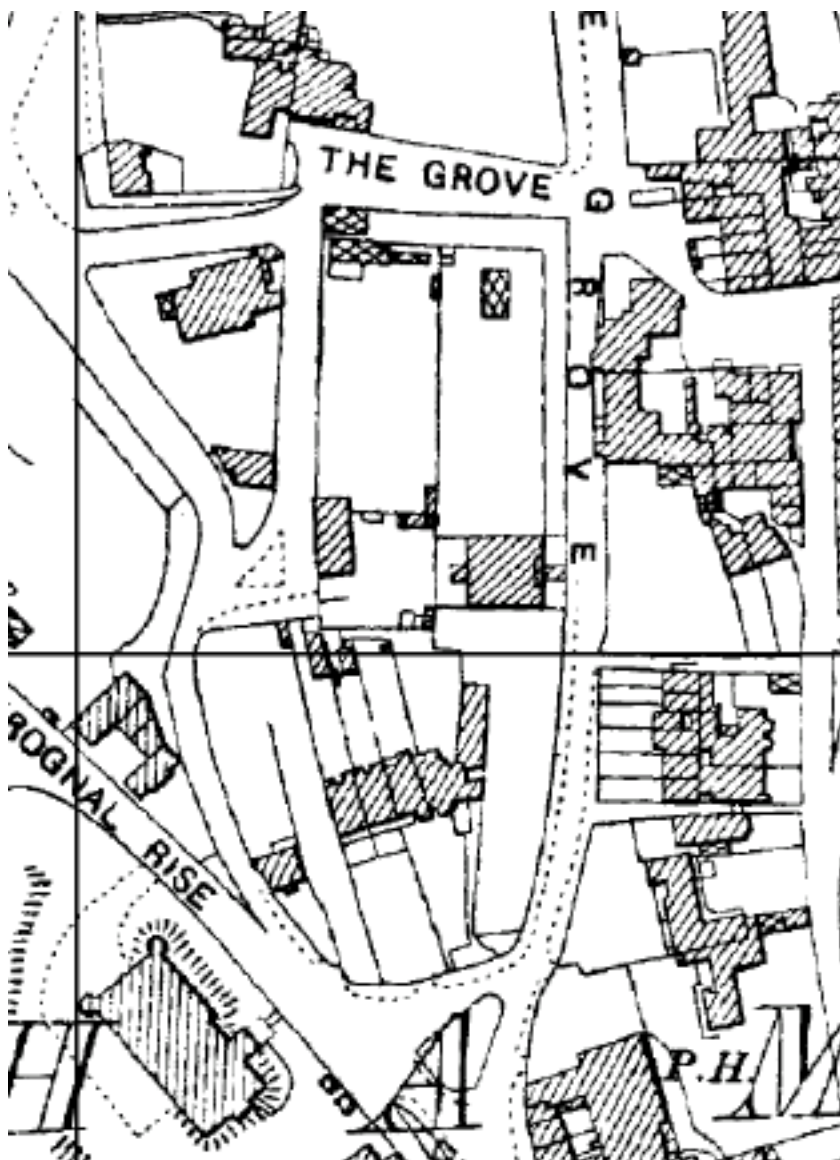


Figure 33: 1896 Ordnance Survey extract

#### *The House in 1920*

2.5.22 The house was put up for sale in 1920. The sales particulars<sup>54</sup> describe it in detail and record a number internal changes - such as gas stoves - that had not been present in 1884 catalogue. Of particular interest is that only the Entrance Hall, Library (G7) and the Servants' Hall (B7) are explicitly mentioned as being panelled.

2.5.23 On the ground floor it is noted that 'the panelled internal and outer halls' (G8) were divided by a pair of doors and had a parquet floor; all as today. The Morning Room (G1) was heated by a "delightful hob fireplace" but it also had a patent 'Calorigen' gas stove. The north-east ground floor room (G7) is first described as the 'Library' here; it had a 'quaint old hob grate set in marble mantel and hearth' and 'beautifully panelled walls'. The Library (G7) closet retained its door and contained another 'Calorigen' stove; it had a window, as today, facing east (that to

<sup>54</sup> National Trust archives, 20 Grosvenor Gardens



the garden is bricked up). The Study (G6) is described as having a closet with a window (facing north, now blocked), which communicated via a lobby to the back stairs; this connection is now blocked by the post-1952 porcelain cabinets. There were a lavatory and separate WC, presumably in the recently added rear extension. The inner (that is, northern) closet between the back stairs and dining room is described as a 'servery (used as a china and glass pantry)' with a hatch to the Dining Room and 'a small lead-lined sink'.

- 2.5.24 On the first floor, the Drawing Room (F2) had book-cases flanking the fireplace and a 'tile hearth, marble surround and mantel'. What is now Lady Binning's bedroom (F1) had a 'fireplace in marble hearth, sides and mantel'. Bookcases extended across the whole of one wall (the north) 'the centre section containing a cleverly arranged door' that communicated with 'bedroom no.2',<sup>55</sup> now the Rockingham Room (F8). This was heated by a 'hob grate set in marble hearth and surround and mantel'. The Green Room (F7) was also a bedroom. It had a 'fireplace set in marble hearth and surround and carved wood mantel'; the present fireplace, of early 19th century appearance, answers this description.
- 2.5.25 The four heated attic bedrooms each had a 'hob grate' set in 'panelled mantel and overmantel'; presumably as survive today. The south-east bedroom (S1) communicated with one of the smaller unheated rooms (S7), which is described as a dressing room. The door is now blocked.
- 2.5.26 In the basement was a 'light airy kitchen with four windows' (now B6). (There is no mention of a door; it may have been blocked by this date or possibly referred to as one of the windows.) The range was 'adapted for gas cooking'. The scullery was probably the unheated room (B2), opposite the kitchen. The laundry with a 'patent Brevette stove for hot air warming of the house', opened to the coal cellar, and was therefore the south west room, B3. The Servants' Hall was 'lighted by two windows, and having original panelling and fireplace', with a door to a store closet, evidently the north-east room B7; there is no mention of a door to the garden. The Butler's Pantry also had a fireplace and store closet. In addition there was a larder, one beer cellar (evidently under the house, rather than as at an earlier date, below the yard), two wine cellars and an under stairs cupboard.

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<sup>55</sup> Described it as a 'jib door' in *Country Life*, 1950, p806



Figure 34: Former Kitchen (B6)

2.5.27 Apart from the addition of the bathroom and lavatories, relatively little had changed since 1884. The laundry in 1920 seems likely to be the same as the 'scullery with furnace' described in 1884. The 1884 'Housekeeper's Room' was presumably the 1920 'Servants' Hall' (B7).

2.5.28 The garden to the south of the house had a 'pretty garden path flanked by Lawns and Flower Borders containing some delightful old Acacia and other trees'. The north garden had 'charming old-world terraces with extensive Flower Borders and walled fruit trees; full sized tennis lawn; prolific walled kitchen garden with a quantity of matured fruit trees in full bearing; two vineries; peach house; three long ranges of heated pit lights'.

#### *The Coach House*

2.5.29 The Coach House was described as having direct access to the road, and the 'Two-bay garage' with washing space, covered by glass span roof; as well as a three-stall stable, presumably G07 (but now with a WC in the corner). The first floor remained in domestic use, as a flat comprising two rooms and a kitchen at the southern end, and a 'large apartment... which would make a very fine studio.' Two additional windows were inserted, and the southern one widened southwards, on the east elevation and a new corbelled chimney added to the west, serving a chimney breast in CF2. The extant arch-headed sashes on the west, in contemporary style, are probably of this phase, as presumably was the decision to standardise the sashes on the east in early 18th century style (although they are not

all of common manufacture). The stable building is marked on the accompanying plan as 'Stabling and Motor House'.

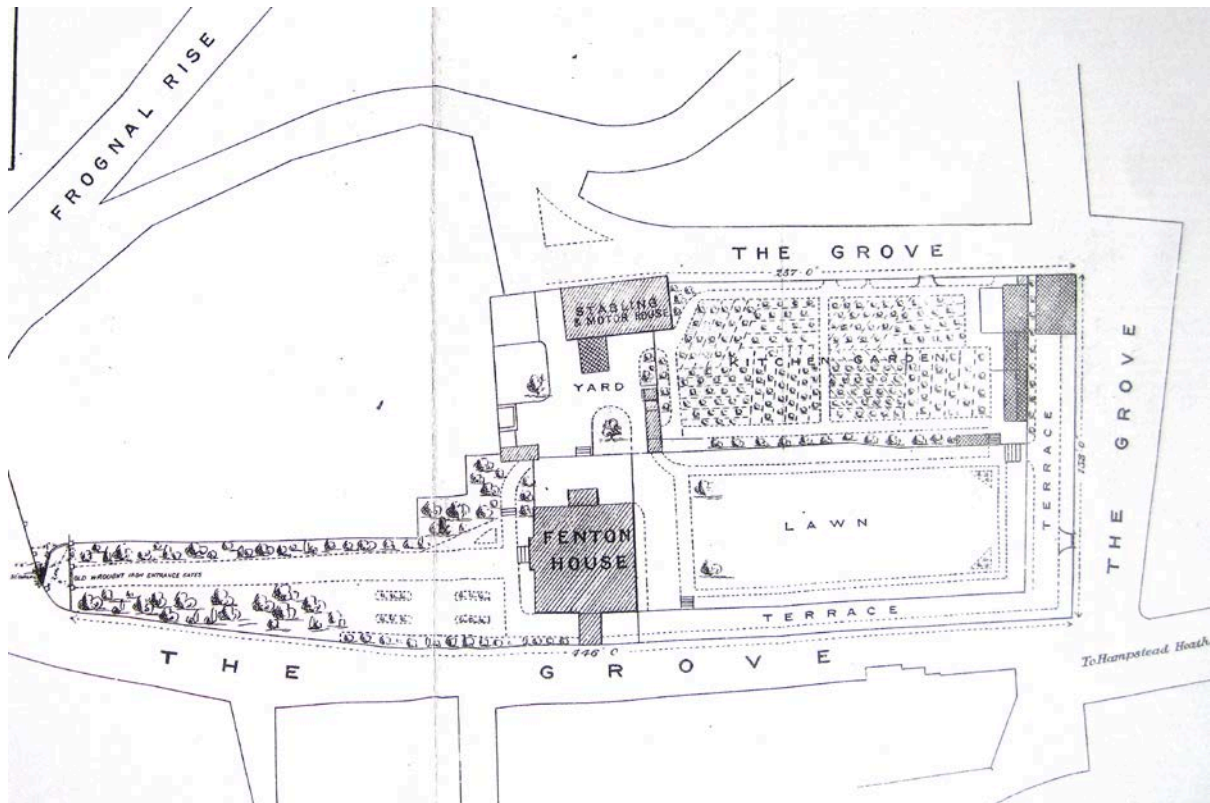


Figure 35: Plan from 1920 Sales particulars

#### *Period 5.3: 1920-1936, Brousson*

2.5.30 The house was purchased by Eustace Young, a stockbroker, who let it to Robert Brousson of the Anglo-Mexican Oil Company in 1922. The Brousson family occupied the house from c1924 to 1937.<sup>56</sup> They seem to have redecorated most of the interiors in an approximation of the early-Georgian style, by removing the early 19th century wallpaper and recreating box cornices (based on the surviving originals, e.g. on the first floor landing) and adding bolection mouldings to the newly-exposed panelling from which the original mouldings had been removed.

2.5.31 The house was inspected and described by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (RCHME) in 1925.<sup>57</sup> It noted that: 'The date, 1693, scratched on the upper part of one of the chimneys with the initials 'N.S.' and 'E.B,' together with a lead pump-head in the garden embossed with the same date suggest that the house was built in that year', that the house: 'is a complete and interesting example of a domestic building of the period' and that: 'Inside the building the original plan is retained... Most of the rooms are lined with moulded panelling and many of the original doors remain; some retain their old fittings. Most of the fireplaces have been replaced, but in the attics are two panelled overmantels and one fireplace with a bolection-moulded architrave. In the

<sup>56</sup> Palmer, Ellis *Guidebook* 2000/8 p.28

<sup>57</sup> RCHME *London II* (west), 1925:40

basement the former kitchen has the upper part of an old dresser with carved brackets to the shelves.'

*The House in 1936*

- 2.5.32 The alterations can be identified from the sale particulars prepared when the house was again put up for sale in 1936. All the principal rooms are described as having radiators (mainly under the window seats) as well as hearths. On the ground floor the former Smoking Room (1884)/Study (1920) (G6) had been turned into a kitchen. The room also had a 'Trades lift', presumably to the basement, although its exact location has not been identified. Old lead pipework survives in the former closet to the north-west of the room, suggesting that there was sink in that location. The closet (G4b), which had in 1920 provided a link to the back stairs, was a larder, presumably connected to the ground floor kitchen.
- 2.5.33 Whilst the sales particulars cannot be relied on as a complete description, by 1936 the newly formed kitchen (G8), the first floor Drawing Room (F2) and Bedroom No.2 (F8) are described as being panelled. In G8 and F8, therefore, the extant (and still surviving) 18th century panelling seems to have been exposed and repaired and new mouldings applied to replace those almost certainly removed in the early 19th century to allow for wall-paper.
- 2.5.34 There were at this date communicating doors between the Dining Room and Morning Room but not between the first floor drawing room and principal bedroom, or from there into the next room, so these doors were moved during the Broussons' tenure. According to *Country Life* in 1950 (see below) the first floor double doors were reused on the ground floor. It seems likely that the Regency style cornices in the Morning Room (G1) Dining Room G2, and Drawing Room (G2) are of the same date. Paint analysis suggests that the drawing room panelling is entirely of the early 20th century, and thus, almost certainly dating to the same phase of work. From the same period are the pilasters and arches between rooms G1, G7 and F1 and their former closets.
- 2.5.35 These details are broadly consistent with the Royal Commission report. Unfortunately RCHME gives no details of which rooms were panelled. It seems unlikely that they can have been referring to the Dining Room and Morning Room- either in their putative wall-papered 19th-century form or with the extant dado panelling that seems to have been added by the Broussons.
- 2.5.36 The former kitchen in the basement (B6) was advertised as a billiard room, with an 'old English fireplace'. The former servants' Hall (B7) was described as a 'staff sitting room' and the other basement rooms as a cold larder, work room and boiler room (B2, B1, and B3/B6 respectively).
- 2.5.37 The Broussons undertook further alterations to the Coach House. The accommodation above the garage remained as it was in 1920, comprising two rooms, kitchen and WC. They created an additional self-contained gardener's cottage with three rooms, kitchen and WC in the northern end of the building, in place of the stable and presumably the 'large apartment' above it. This is



presumably when windows were inserted in the western part of G7. A photograph from the 1930s shows that the Coach House then had by then three first floor windows on the rear (west).

- 2.5.38 A set of fine measured drawings of the principal elevations and some full-sized details was made in 1930<sup>58</sup> by DM Wilson and G Sargeant, but the locations of the interior details are not identified. The drawings reveal little than cannot be seen today, but illustrate the great interest in houses of late 17th- and early 18th centuries during the early 20th.

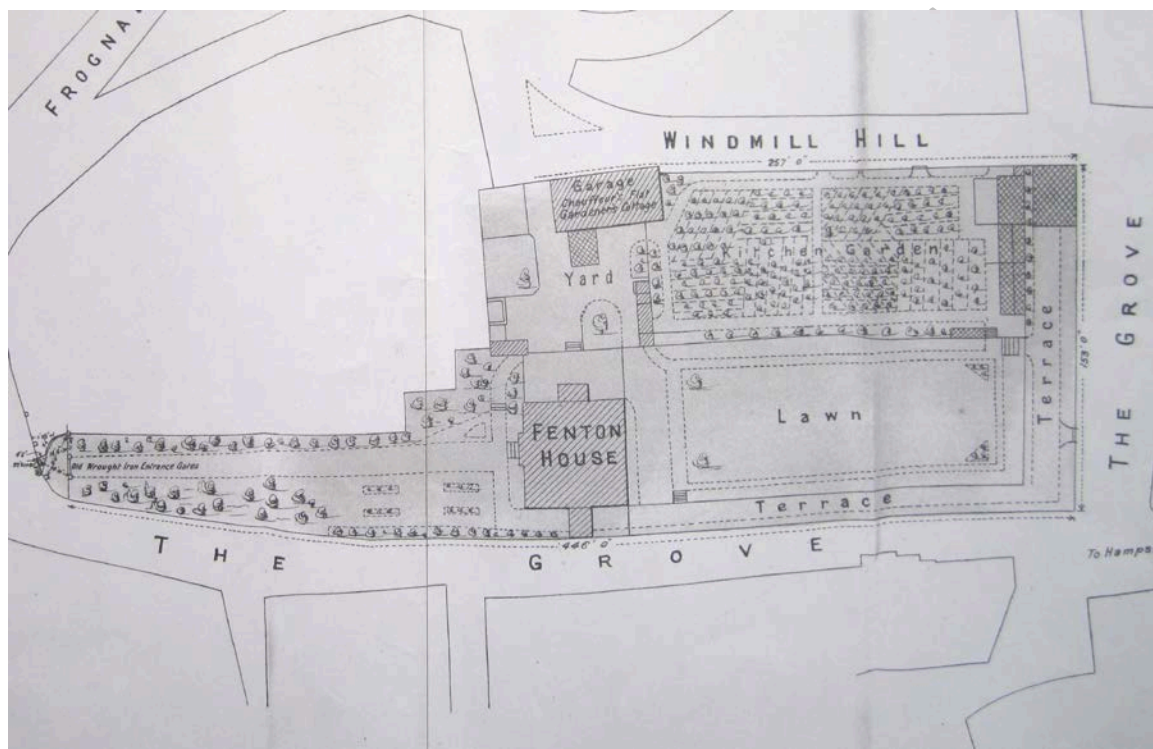


Figure 36: Plan from 1936 Sales particulars

## 2.6 Period 6: 1936 - 1952: Lady Binning

- 2.6.1 The house was bought in 1936 by Katherine, Lady Binning (1871-1952). She was the niece and heiress of George Salting (d.1909), who had inherited a fortune based on sheep-farming, sugar plantations and other investments in Australia from his father, Severin Kanute (Knud) Salting (1805-1865), a colonial entrepreneur originally from Denmark.<sup>59</sup> George Salting was an important collector of pictures, ceramics and porcelain, of which he left the best to the National Gallery, British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. His remaining collections were left to, and enlarged by, his brother William and his wife, Millicent, née Browne (d.1924), and it is part of this joint collection that came to Lady Binning (see Section 3, below). Katherine had married Lord

<sup>58</sup> NT, Saunderton,

<sup>59</sup> A. F. Pike, 'Salting, Severin Kanute (1805-1865)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/salting-severin-kanute-2626/text3633>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 5 August 2015

Binning, heir to the Earl of Haddington, in 1892 and they had three children. Lord Binning died 1917 before succeeding to the earldom. His widow did not remarry.

- 2.6.2 Although Lady Binning occupied Fenton House for only eight years and made few structural changes, its present character owes as much to her as to any of its previous owners or occupiers. She bought the house intending from the outset that it should provide a permanent museum for the collections she had inherited. She lived at Templehill House, West Heath Road, Hampstead from c1934 and it is unclear whether she originally planned to live at Fenton House, but she did ultimately move there in 1944. Her solicitor had made contact with National Trust as early as 1938 but serious negotiations did not take place until 1944, when Lady Binning wrote directly to James Les-Milne, the Trust's architectural adviser<sup>60</sup>, who subsequently visited her on several occasions, which he recorded in his diaries. Initially she wished the house to be used wholly as a museum.
- 2.6.3 The Broussons remained in occupation, as tenants, until 1937, when Lady Binning let the house to a local GP, Dr Abercrombie, although she seems to have kept the garden for her own use.<sup>61</sup> Dr Abercrombie returned the Broussons' kitchen (in north-west ground floor room G6, now the porcelain room) to the basement and it became his consulting room. As noted, it had been provided with a water supply to serve its previous use. The present anachronistic and grandiose marble chimney-piece was presumably introduced at around this date.
- 2.6.4 James Lees-Milne first records visiting Fenton House in December 1944. He describes Lady Binning as 'an elderly, delicate, hot-house lady' but the house as 'built in 1693 of beautiful red brick... large for London and has a large walled garden. Much of the pine wainscoting has been stripped by Lady Binning... She gave me tea and we liked each other I fancy. At the end of tea she disclosed that she was anti-democratic, very pro-German and pro-Nazi. She denied that the Germans had committed atrocities, and declared that the Jews were the root of all evil. Oh dear!' Lees-Milne returned in February 1945 and was able to report that Lady Binning was prepared to leave the house as part-museum and part-let, despite the fact that she 'could not like Lord Esher<sup>62</sup>... because he was a Jew.'<sup>63</sup> Lady Binning does not seem to have left any autobiographical records, but her vision for Fenton House was clear by 1948 when she gave £16,000 to the Trust to maintain the house and garden, a sum that proved to be quite inadequate.<sup>64</sup>
- 2.6.5 In 1946, E.M. Bottomley, then a student at Liverpool School of Architecture, surveyed the house and drew the south and east elevations, ground and first floor plans and a number of details. It confirms that few changes had been made to the ground floor plan since Belcher McCartney's plan of 1900. The partition to the

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<sup>60</sup> *Guidebook* 2008:28

<sup>61</sup> Wilson 2003:39

<sup>62</sup> Oliver Brett 3rd Viscount Esher, then Chairman of the National Trust

<sup>63</sup> Lees-Milne J, 1977, p

<sup>64</sup> Extract from Lady Binning's Will, National Trust Archives

Library (G7) closet had been removed, as had that to the Morning Room (G1), although the 1900 plan is, as noted, ambiguous on this point. The southern closet (G4B) to the Porcelain room was still, in 1946, wholly integral with the room.

- 2.6.6 A 1950 *Country Life* article<sup>65</sup> describes and illustrates the exterior and principal rooms as they were during her occupation. The article does not shed a great deal of new light on the history of the house, concentrating rather on the collections, of which only a part ultimately came to the Trust, and the house as a setting for them. The article notes that 'early in this century' (i.e. the 20th century) the doors that had previously connected the first floor drawing rooms were moved to create an opening between the Dining and Morning rooms on the ground floor; the first floor opening being 'disguised with old panelling'. The sales particulars referred to above confirm that this work took place between 1920 and 1936. The article notes that the enlarged ground floor room (G1, G2) was decorated with red velvet curtains and green walls picked out in gold.
- 2.6.7 An anecdotal description of the life of the house during the 1940s or early 1950s under Lady Binning is given by her former plumber, Mr. Terry Bowley, in an undated letter now in the National Trust archives.<sup>66</sup> He worked in the house as a young man and remembers Lady Binning as eccentric and inclined to old-fashioned, dark, clothes. He mentions that the 'blocked up door at the top of the [back] stairs was put there to allow people into the toilet area without coming onto the landing where she might see them'. In fact, as noted, the door was blocked to allow for the construction of the toilet, but the comment is telling about Lady Binning's character. The staff included a housekeeper, butler and cook who had heated attic rooms and at least two maids, who had unheated rooms, presumably also in the attic. A gardener and his wife lived above the garage. All of the staff was Scottish. He mentions that the Butler's pantry was the room opposite the basement kitchen, although the 1936 sales particulars state that the Butler's pantry had a fireplace and store closet, so it was at that date almost certainly B1 rather than the small, unheated room B2 which was the larder when noted in the 1884, 1920 and 1936 sales particulars. However, one page of another anonymous reminiscence of the 1940s, dated 2000, in the National Trust Archives, includes a rough sketch plan showing B1 as a vegetable and wood store, B2 as the Butler's pantry and B3 as a cleaning store. The former servants' hall is described as the maids' rest room, noting that it had no door, perhaps suggesting that Lady Binning was a less than trusting employer. In this context the Butler's pantry may simply have been a store, for plate etc., rather than his private room.

## 2.7 Period 7: 1952 - the present day: The National Trust

- 2.7.1 Lady Binning died in February 1952 and the Trust had to consider how to present Fenton House to the public, supported by an inadequate endowment. It was initially proposed that only the ground floor would be shown, furnished with the

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<sup>65</sup> *Country Life* March 24 1950 pp.802-6

<sup>66</sup> Bowley T. unpubl. recollections of life at Fenton House in 1940s/50s NT Archive, Fenton House; no ref.

best of Lady Binning's furniture and collections. The basement would provide a flat for the housekeeper (who would also conduct visitors) and the upper floors would be let.<sup>67</sup> However, an opportunity was then identified that would provide the means to open much more of the house to the public and to increase substantially the endowment for the house by what has been called a 'sort of posthumous marriage arranged for financial reasons',<sup>68</sup> by using Fenton House as a home for the Benton Fletcher collection of early keyboard instruments.

- 2.7.2 Maj. G. H. Benton Fletcher (1866-1944) left his collection of instruments, and Old Devonshire House in Bloomsbury, to the National Trust in 1937, in order to preserve the instruments, to ensure that they were played and to encourage the study of ancient music. He gave the Trust a substantial endowment to support these objectives. Old Devonshire House was destroyed in an air raid during the war, but the keyboards had been moved out of London and thus survived, although most of their stands were lost. In 1943 a house at 3 Cheyne Walk was bought jointly by Fletcher and the Trust as a new home for the collection, but Fletcher died in 1944 and the move never took place.
- 2.7.3 Thus in 1952 the Trust decided to house the keyboards at Fenton House where they could be preserved, displayed and played as Fletcher had desired, and almost the whole house could be opened to the public as Lady Binning had hoped. No. 3 Cheyne Walk was sold and the proceeds combined with Fletcher's legacy and Lady Binning's gift, thereby increasing the value of the Fenton House 'endowment' fivefold. Fletcher also left money to the Trust 'for purposes of any society formed for studying ancient music at the discretion of the National Trust'.<sup>69</sup> Under the new arrangement the basement would still be for a housekeeper but the rest of the house would be open to show the Benton Fletcher and Binning collections, as today.
- 2.7.4 Lady Binning left most of her collections to the Trust with the house (see Section 3 below), but certain objects belonging to her late husband's family were returned, at his request, to her son, the earl of Haddington (seated at Tynninghame House, East Lothian until 1987; and thereafter at Mellerstain house near Kelso.) (A note in the National Trust's archives suggests that 'Lady Binning's gift ... [was] not altogether welcome to her children'.<sup>70</sup>) As a result, the interiors photographed by Country Life in 1950 were denuded of important pieces. Such domestic- albeit rather formal- character as the house had had when she lived there, was subsumed by the keyboard collection.
- 2.7.5 The Trust did not undertake major works when the house came into its care. Geddes Hyslop was appointed architect for new show-cases for the ceramics with Sir Leigh Ashton advising.<sup>71</sup> Lady Binning's collection of blue and white K'ang

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<sup>67</sup> NT Archive; (Fenton House), memo from CV Wallace 28/4/52

<sup>68</sup> NT Archive; (Fenton House), Christopher Wall quoted by Anthea Palmer [?], unpubl. report n/d. c2000

<sup>69</sup> NT Archive; (Fenton House), [ref?]

<sup>70</sup> NT Archive; (Fenton House), file ref. 1493, 4/02/53)

<sup>71</sup> NT archives, (Fenton House), Finance [or buildings?] Cttee Minutes 14/6/52)



Hsi porcelain remained (and remains) as she displayed it on the late 19th century bookshelves in her bedroom (F1), although the cases were glazed.<sup>72</sup> The Trust's archives note that house was redecorated and 'three defective dormers' were repaired or replaced in 1953, but few details are given.<sup>73</sup>

- 2.7.6 The doors between the Dining Room and Morning Room were removed c1961 and the present, wider opening formed. A National Trust file note also records that the Dining Room was painted white that year.<sup>74</sup>
- 2.7.7 Some relatively minor structural repairs were undertaken along with redecoration in 1964-5. Where specified - in the secondary rooms- the paintwork was white. Overall the Trust's treatment of the interiors between 1952 and 1973 seems to have been utilitarian. The house was viewed and presented primarily as a museum for the collections. As noted, Lees-Milne recorded that Lady Binning had stripped the wainscoting, and the previous late 19th/early-20th-century phases of alteration and modernisation were doubtless still very obvious. Lady Binning's 1930s interiors were probably not of any intrinsic interest and by the 50s, perhaps, they were viewed in light of the almost universal rejection of each generation's taste by the succeeding one. In any case, her decorations were 'obliterated by gallons of 'institutional' cream and white paint... and the Trust decided to present the house more like a lived-in home.'<sup>75</sup> Overall the Trust seems to have taken the view either that Fenton had lost such historic interiors that it may once have had, or that as a relatively modest suburban house, its early interiors were not have been of historic significance.
- 2.7.8 By 1972 it was clear that the house was in need of substantial repair and redecoration and a programme of works was put in hand. The 'first phase' works are detailed on an undated note in the NT archive, including: re-roofing the south and east pitches, removal of disused water tanks, stripping-out of the internal flat roof, reforming the central roof at higher level, replacement of lead gutters, flats to balconies and cornice cover and repointing, brickwork and joinery repairs to the elevations under scaffold (i.e. south and east). Work to 'alter sash astragals where this is required and re-glaze' is specified although the reason for this not given.
- 2.7.9 Only 11 days after the completion of the refurbishment, in June 1973, a fire broke out in the attic. The cause is not known, but it was discovered quickly and relatively little damage was done, although the newly tiled roofs and leadwork were evidently affected. The lower floors were able to remain open to visitors after the fire. A newspaper report following the fire stated that: 'Fenton House has suffered a run of bad luck with estimates of restoration costs continually rising. The National Trust had contributed £27,500, but Hampstead residents have given

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<sup>72</sup> NT archives, (Fenton House), file note, 20/09/52)

<sup>73</sup> NT archives, (Fenton House), note from CV Wall, August 1953

<sup>74</sup> NT archives, (Fenton House), anon. file note c2000.

<sup>75</sup> Wood 2007: 232

only £2,000 towards the remainder - £30,500.<sup>76</sup> A campaign to support the cost of repair works had in fact been launched by the Hampstead Centre of the National Trust, a local supporters' group, in 1972.<sup>77</sup> Despite the affluence of the neighbourhood, the appeal was singularly unsuccessful.

- 2.7.10 A draft letter from the Trust applying for retrospective grant aid was made to the Historic Buildings section of the GLC in July 1994, for works 'recently carried out'. It does not make any reference to fire damage. The (unspecified) works to which the letter refers had cost £51,000 and a further programme estimated to cost £33,000 was 'still to do'. In any case, the fire damage was repaired.
- 2.7.11 In 1973 John Fowler was commissioned by Christopher Wall of the National Trust to work on a complete redecoration of the house that ultimately included a wholly new decorative scheme, with completely new fabric and upholstery throughout. Only the Green Room was subsequently redecorated, to designs by David Mlinaric in [DATE]. As a result, the decorative character of the house today is almost entirely the creation of a 'society decorator' of the 1970s.
- 2.7.12 Fowler's brief does not seem to have included any significant structural work although he does seem to have made some physical changes in the context of his decorative conception of how the house should look. The builders' work at this date was minor. In the Dining and Morning Rooms, the specifications for the contractor Merry & King<sup>78</sup> included that: 'the mantel shelves be taken off and the part between the shelf and the fire surround should be removed & the mantel then refixed; the picture rails to be removed; the serving hatch to be infilled'. The hatch was from the north-west corner of the Dining Room to the pantry (G4a). The work also included the removal of 'timber slats to the largest wall panels' which were to be made good and filled, (but it is unclear to which room this refers) and removal and re-fixing of the lining from front entrance door reveal and cutting back the handrail at foot of basement stair.

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<sup>76</sup> *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, June 15 1973.

<sup>77</sup> Hampstead Centre of the National Trust, *Newsletter*, November 1972, Camden Archives, ref. H728.3/Fenton House

<sup>78</sup> NT Archives (Fenton House, copy of specs. 5/12/73)



Figure 37: The Drawing Room as redecorated by Fowler

2.7.13 Fowler's social and professional connections- often inseparable- brought him into contact, from the 1940s onwards, with leading figures in the Trust most notably James Lees-Milne and St John (Bobby) Gore. He advised the Trust *pro bono* on the redecoration of its historic houses and especially on the creation or re-creation of appropriate decorative schemes for houses that came to the Trust without contents or having lost their historic decorations. Fenton House seems to have been regarded as falling into the latter category, being in fair order when it was acquired, but in the eyes of the Trust at the time, lacking significant historic interiors.

2.7.14 The science of historic paint analysis has developed greatly in the intervening years, but Fowler certainly used historic paint scrapes and paper samples at many of the great houses on which he worked for the Trust. It is not clear that he did so at Fenton. He created domestic interiors that were intended to give a suitable backdrop to the collections, taking ideas from much grander houses such as Kasteel Duivenvoorde (nr. Voorschoten, Netherlands) for the curtains in the first floor drawing room, and Hardwick Hall (Derbyshire) for the stair carpet,<sup>79</sup> an approach that was in vogue amongst certain of the affluent British middle classes at this date (satirised by commentators such as Peter York as the 'Sloane Rangers'). Thus whilst it has been noted<sup>80</sup> that most of Fowler's work for the

<sup>79</sup> Wood 2007 p.232-3

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.* p234

Trust was generally quite different and more historicist, if not 'archaeological', than his commercial work, Fenton is close to the latter. John Cornforth declined to speak to the room stewards on John Fowler's work at Fenton House on the grounds that he thought it Fowler's least successful job for the Trust.<sup>81</sup> However, it is one of the few that survive, following the fire at Clandon Park in 2015. It is not known how many of his privately-commissioned interiors survive, or are even recognised as being of any potential artistic significance; in any case, they are most unlikely to be publicly accessible.

- 2.7.15 The mechanical and electrical services were upgraded in 1993. The garden walls were repaired in 1994 and new timber gates to the yard installed.
- 2.7.16 In the 1975<sup>82</sup> the interior of the Coach House was gutted below garret floor level, leaving only the brick cross wall between G4 and G7 and the WC compartment in the latter, and replanned in its current configuration as a large flat on the first floor and a bedsit at the north end on the floor below (G5-8). Judging from the downstanding beams, some or all of the first floor structure was probably retained, but all is concealed by modern finishes. An additional sash window was inserted in the west wall, and two casements in the south wall. Further minor works to remove the internal partitions from the ground floor apartment were proposed in 1996 but they do not seem to have been carried out.<sup>83</sup>
- 2.7.17 The Trust seems to have left the garden largely undisturbed, much as it had been under the supervision of Lady Binning's long serving gardener [NAME]. By the late 1970's the garden was described as over-mature and dull.<sup>84</sup> Photographs show overgrown trees and shrubs and the north lawn heavily shaded. The Trust, in consultation with its Gardens Panel, decided to re-create a relaxed 'Old English Style' garden evoking the Edwardian period. Paul Miles, formerly a gardens advisor who had worked on the Ham House gardens in 1974, drew up plans for Fenton House in 1977 (refined following discussions in 1978) showing how structure could be created using hedges, topiary, formal borders, etc. Miles's plans<sup>85</sup> set the tone for how the garden should look and work structurally. He did not propose a strict restoration, which would anyway have run into problems of determining the 'original' form, and the design seems to have been Miles's response to the spirit of place, the architecture of the house and his acute sense of scale.
- 2.7.18 He suggested some kind of parterre garden at the north end of the north lawn. This would be screened from the house and the rest of the lawn by yew hedges to give more interest and mystery. It was his idea to introduce the yew arbour that is the entrance to the north gardens. He made proposals for the kitchen garden. He suggested robinias to replace/replicate the effect of the elms, recently deceased, in

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<sup>81</sup> File note; National Trust Archives, 20 Grosvenor Gardens

<sup>82</sup> LB Camden listed building consent [to add ref.]

<sup>83</sup> NT Archives, Saunderton (plans)

<sup>84</sup> Source

<sup>85</sup> NT Archives, Saunderton FEN 07.08.13.14.15.17



the southern walk. Miles's ideas were considered by the Gardens Panel on 22 October 1980. A further plan was drawn up by James (Jim) Marshall after discussion with Mary Keen and Martin Drury to extend the flowering season so the garden would be of interest over a longer period. In 1984 Mike Calnan drew up planting plans for the new steps into the orchard and also the east terrace and formal garden. His intention was to introduce some more intricate and horticulturally diverse planting ideas, such as small bulbs in the spring border and orchard, influenced by Jekyll. He proposed planting the *Arbutus*.

- 2.7.19 The garden was 'revived' by the National Trust from 1982 over a period of 10 years. Not every change was executed to Miles's exact proposals but it is clearly his design for the garden structure that shines through. His layout for the orchard and kitchen garden was carried out and the south garden followed his proposals in detail, including his suggested plants. When it came to make the formal garden behind the yew hedge it was in the form of a sunken rose garden. This was constructed 1983-6 to designs by Dick Jeffcoate and Mike Calnan. Where the flower garden had probably been on the south front the NT installed hedges of box, and Robinias were planted along the walk. A large quantity of yew hedge was planted around a formal garden area at the north end of the north lawn, one aim of which appears to have been the suppression of any perceived axis from the house so that the fact that the sunken garden behind the hedge was off-axis would not be noticeable.
- 2.7.20 The hedgework was clipped to allow spikes (like those on Prussian helmets) to emerge from its tops; this may have been an influence from Westbury Court, Gloucestershire, a William and Mary re-creation. The reason for the spikes at Westbury goes back to a Victorian restoration based on a mis-reading of an historic print. The space between two lines was read as a vertical plane instead of a horizontal one, resulting in the planting of a hedge instead of a border with yew obelisks and holly globes. When the NT took over the garden and its 'restored' hedge in the late 1960s it noticed that the obelisks and globes shown on the print were missing, and so clipped the hedge to encourage these forms. Although such niceties are understood better nowadays, Westbury was one of the first serious attempts at garden restoration anywhere, and received much publicity and acclaim at the time. The spikes became iconic, and one might see them as recalling a moment in the restoration movement. Fenton House was less than ten years after Westbury and in its way is a tribute to it.
- 2.7.21 The sunken Rose Garden is another tribute – to the work of Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll. Why that Edwardian partnership was recalled is unclear, for the actual owner in Edwardian times was George Trewby, whose contribution to the garden appears to have been minimal, but it is known that the NT's Chief Gardens Advisor until 1975 was Graham Stuart Thomas, a staunch admirer of their work. Perhaps the large quantity of walling combined with the overgrown vegetation appeared to some to resemble Lutyens gardens.

- 2.7.22 In 1999 alterations were made to the basement.<sup>86</sup> The south-west room (the area now comprising B3, B6 and the WC opening off the lobby to room B2) had until then been made up of the main room and a small utility room in its north-west corner just inside the doorway from the hall. The doorway from the hall was blocked and a bathroom formed on the north side of the room, opening at its east end to a lobby that communicated with B3 which was to be used as a bedroom and B3 which was subdivided into its present form and linked by a new doorway to B3. At the same time the extant semi-glazed timber screen and doorway at the west end of the basement hallway was installed. A door that had previously been at the foot of the staircase from the entrance passage (B6) was reused in the new screen. The door from the entrance hall to B3 was re-located, although it is unclear where it went.
- 2.7.23 The beer cellar (later coal cellar) was originally connected with room B3 via a short flight of steps cut through the external wall of the house immediately below basement window W13. A 'cover', removed from this location, is shown in the 1999 listed building consent application drawings, and may at some point have enclosed the opening to the beer cellar, but the opening itself seems to have been blocked previously as no mention of doing so was made in 1999.
- 2.7.24 The ball finials to the south gates were replaced after the originals had been stolen in 2000. In 2001 the west boundary wall was partly increased in height and the wicket gates blocked to improve security after a spate of thefts. These had included (in 1988) the loss of three of the four 18th-century lead statues from the garden. The attic was redecorated the same year.
- 2.7.25 In 2010 the functions of B2 and B3 were reversed, the original doorway from the hall to B6 and B3 was re-opened and the lobby between B2 and B3 that had been created in 1999 was converted into a WC.<sup>87</sup> The arrangement thus created remains at the time of writing.

### **3 THE COLLECTIONS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

- 3.1.1 Fenton House contains three major collections: Lady Binning's collections of ceramics, textiles, paintings and furniture; the Benton Fletcher collection of, early keyboard musical instruments; the Barkworth Collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century paintings. There is also a loan of paintings by Nicholson and some smaller collections. These are largely associated with specific collectors and this section will examine the collections from this perspective, looking at the following:
- Lady Binning's Collection
  - The Benton Fletcher Collection

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<sup>86</sup> LB Camden listed building consent, ref. LW9902662

<sup>87</sup> LB Camden listed building consent, ref. 2010/6574/L

- Peter Barkworth Collection
- Nicholson Loan
- Other collections at Fenton House including the Jordan collection

### 3.2 Lady Binning's Collection

3.2.1 Lady Binning's collection makes the house what it is today. She left the house and collection together to the National Trust, with the intention that the former could become a kind of 'museum' to showcase the collection. Her collection includes European and Oriental porcelain, satinwood furniture and needlework, and is displayed throughout the house, some in original bespoke cabinets made before she died.



Figure 38: Katherine, Lady Binning

#### *History*

3.2.2 Katherine Lady Binning is a more enigmatic figure than Major Benton Fletcher (*below*). Much less is known about her personally; what little there is comes largely from James Lee Milne's diary entries which give a rather one-sided and biased view. The motivations behind her collecting have not been significantly explored although Avery's article,<sup>88</sup> in making a comparison between Lady Binning, her mother Millicent Salting, and Mrs David Gubbay, whose collection was at Clandon Park until the recent disastrous fire,<sup>89</sup> seeks to position the women as part of the movement that saw early 20th century collectors focus in on Georgian pieces such as satin-wood furniture, needle work and ceramics.

3.2.3 The picture is complicated by the fact that Lady Binning, the collector, followed in the footsteps of her uncle, George Salting and mother, Millicent, and it is hard to distinguish who collected what. Her paternal grandfather Severin Salting was originally from Denmark and made his fortune in Australia. On his death in 1865

<sup>88</sup> Avery, Tracey, *Four Georges: The decorative art collections of Mrs David Gubbay and Lady Binning*

<sup>89</sup> Note that it is unclear to what extent the Gubbay collection survived the fire

he left most of his wealth to his first son, George Salting, who never married and spent his time amassing a remarkable collection of art, porcelain, renaissance bronzes, rare prints and drawings and furniture. When he died in 1909 he left various parts of his collection to the Victoria and Albert Museum, British Museum and National Gallery<sup>90</sup> (see examples below).



Figure 39: Nephrite Chinese Dish, c.1926-1910: Japanese Bowl c.1507-1910 (V&A)

3.2.4 George's younger brother William married Millicent Browne, the daughter of Robert Browne, Archdeacon of Bath and Wells. Millicent Salting not only inherited much of the George Salting collection but was another collector. In 1914 an inventory of her home at 49 Berkeley Square was prepared by George Stoner, a porcelain dealer, and includes over 1600 items, primarily English pottery and porcelain, continental porcelain, furniture, needlework and late 18th century engravings of society women.<sup>91</sup> The Chinese blue-and-white porcelain displayed in Lady Binning's bedroom is listed in this inventory and was probably from the original George Salting collection.<sup>92</sup> It is unclear whether the national organisations had the pick of Salting's collections and the family received what they did not want, or whether George Salting deliberately left his family the core of an excellent collection, for example of ceramics.<sup>93</sup> Other items in Millicent Salting's collection, including English pottery, were probably collected later by Millicent herself, having parallels with the tastes of other contemporary women collectors. This seems all the more likely given the absence of references to English or Continental pottery in either George Salting's will, bills of purchase or V&A loans, although it could be that the V&A was not interested in such collections given they already held the Schreiber collection which was of a similar nature.<sup>94</sup> It is clear that several pieces were purchased at auction following George Salting's death and she continued to loan objects to major public institutions.

<sup>90</sup> Wilson, Sheila, *Families of Fenton*, The National Trust 2002

<sup>91</sup> Avery, Tracey, *Four Georges: The decorative art collections of Mrs David Gubbay and Lady Binning*

<sup>92</sup> Fenton House Guide-book, National Trust 2000 (revised edition 2011); Avery, Tracey, *Four Georges: The decorative art collections of Mrs David Gubbay and Lady Binning*

<sup>93</sup> Tessa Wild, Curator, Personal Communication September 2015

<sup>94</sup> Avery, Tracey, *Four Georges: The decorative art collections of Mrs David Gubbay and Lady Binning*



- 3.2.5 William and Millicent Salting had one daughter, Katherine. Aged 21, she married George Ballie-Hamilton, Lord Binning, a soldier in the Horse Guards and with whom she had three children, two girls and a boy. Lady Binning was widowed in 1917 but subsequently spent time at her husband's family homes, Tynninghame and Mellerstain<sup>95</sup>. During this time Katherine and Millicent added to and sold parts of the collection. From annotations to the 1914 inventory it can be seen that much of Millicent's furniture was subsequently sold, including some of the best satinwood furniture,<sup>96</sup> but additional pieces were also purchased, including many of the German and English figures and animals, by either Katherine or Millicent.<sup>97</sup> Other parts of the original Salting collection were given away over time, for example a John Constable sketch 'On the Stour' was presented to what is now National Galleries Scotland in 1918.<sup>98</sup> More pottery and porcelain was lent to the Royal Museum of Scotland from 1928<sup>99</sup> and subsequently donated on Lady Binning's death in 1952.
- 3.2.6 Lady Binning moved to Templehill House, West Heath Road, Hampstead in about 1934 and purchased Fenton House in 1936, apparently to provide a museum for her collections which continued to grow, albeit very slowly. In December 1938 she purchased Meissen figures of a harlequin and a miner, for example. It seems unclear whether she originally intended to live in the house, but ultimately moved in towards the end of the Second World War.<sup>100</sup> The house and remainder of the collection were given to the National Trust in 1952 when Lady Binning died.

#### *Bequest*

- 3.2.7 Lady Binning left her property, Fenton House to the National Trust. Her collections were largely included with the house. Mr Clifford Smith prepared an inventory of the collection, available in the Grosvenor House archive of Lady Binning's collection, in advance of her death in 1952.
- 3.2.8 The key extract from Lady Binning's will reads: 'I devise unto the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty my freehold property known as Fenton House Hampstead for preservation by them under the National Trust Act 1907 together with all articles of artistic merit including furnishings in accordance with a list prepared by Mr. Clifford Smith acting under my supervision and including such of my books as are considered suitable to retain at Fenton House and also the furniture in the Top Storey.' It continues: 'If any questions at all arise as to what passes under this bequest the decision of my Executors shall be binding. I rely on the National Trust that the property will be properly maintained and that they will employ a competent curator who shall live in the top storey and also a skilled gardener to maintain the garden and grounds of the said property in

<sup>95</sup> Anthea Palmer, 'London's Most Enchanting Country House' in *Country Life*, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2003

<sup>96</sup> Fenton House Guide-book, National Trust 2000 (revised edition 2011)

<sup>97</sup> Avery, Tracey, *Four Georges: The decorative art collections of Mrs David Gubbay and Lady Binning*

<sup>98</sup> National Galleries Scotland Website: <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/c/artist/john-constable/object/on-the-stour-reverse-study-of-cows-ng-1219>

<sup>99</sup> Avery, Tracey, *Four Georges: The decorative art collections of Mrs David Gubbay and Lady Binning*

<sup>100</sup> Wilson, Sheila, *Families of Fenton*, The National Trust 2002

good order for which purposes I have already given them the sum of sixteen thousand pounds.'

- 3.2.9 The National Trust archive shows Lady Binning approached the National Trust as early as 1938 to discuss the possible bequest of Fenton House and the collection. In 1944 she again opened proceedings<sup>101</sup> and James Lee-Milne visited her several times to discuss the bequest. His diary recorded some of these visits. The entry for 22 December 1944 reads: 'She intends to leave her excellent furniture, and wishes the house to be a museum, but I feel it ought to be put to some use. Her porcelain collection is first rate and at present bequeathed to the V&A, but she is prepared to alter her will.'<sup>102</sup> For 15 January 1946 he notes: '... her china now all displayed'<sup>103</sup> and on 3 November 1948: 'she asked me to get Cliffy (Clifford Smith) to do an inventory of her collections. I promised I would make him settle the question of fee with me; I would act as intermediary because he is very tiresome over money matters.'<sup>104</sup>
- 3.2.10 Lady Binning's reasons for finally leaving her collection to the National Trust, rather than the V&A, appears that she recognised only then could it be shown in its entirety, reflecting the best of British, European and vernacular porcelain in one place.<sup>105</sup> She was clear that she wanted her house to be a 'museum', to showcase her collection, acting as a place for people to visit and see items of 'artistic merit' in perpetuity.

#### *Provenance*

- 3.2.11 The provenance of most of the collection is unknown. Very little paperwork survives aside from deposit and account books of Lady Binning, which date from after the bulk of the collection was purchased. Only three of Lady Binning's bills have been found, for the Meissen figures bought in 1938 and a harlequin from Longton Hall.<sup>106</sup> It further is known that Lady Binning would occasionally sell objects and then repurchase them at auction; for example, the G.F. Watts on the attic staircase is reputed to have been bought back at auction although this needs further research to confirm.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Wilson, Sheila *Families of Fenton*, The National Trust 2003

<sup>102</sup> Lees-Milne J. *Prophesying Peace*

<sup>103</sup> Lees-Milne J. *Caves of Ice*

<sup>104</sup> Lees-Milne J. *Midway on the Waves*

<sup>105</sup> Tessa Wild, Curator, *pers comm.* September 2015

<sup>106</sup> Avery, Tracey, *Four Georges: The decorative art collections of Mrs David Gubbay and Lady Binning*

<sup>107</sup> Leigh Sneade, FH House Steward, Personal Communication September 2015. This information is not in the online CMS but maybe in the in-house records.



Figure 40: Neptune's Horses, George Frederic Watts, OM, RA

- 3.2.12 Further information on the collection could possibly be found in the archives of the auction houses, and catalogues from the museums known to have received part of either the Salting collection or later collections, including the British Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, National Galleries Scotland and The National Gallery.
- 3.2.13 Most significantly in terms of provenance, distinctions between this collection and more recent National Trust 'gap-filling' are no longer clear and work must be done to rectify this. For example several people at the house were convinced that the telephone in Lady Binning's bedroom was original where in fact it was purchased in March 2003 and added to the collections' catalogue.<sup>108</sup>
- 3.2.14 The National Trust Collections Management System does not specifically identify objects as from the Lady Binning's collection. Instead, in the general note field, a comment 'From 1952 Bequest' is included, which we can presume to mean of Lady Binning's collection. This is not ideal, however, and a more thorough investigation would be worthwhile.

#### *The Lady Binning Collection today*

- 3.2.15 Lady Binning's collection, with its ceramics, satinwood furniture and needlework has a Georgian flavour, collected in the early twentieth century during a period of renewed interest in 19th century decorative arts.<sup>109</sup> The collection can be broken down into a number of different parts.

<sup>108</sup> Personal Communications September 2015

<sup>109</sup> Avery, Tracey, *Four Georges: The decorative art collections of Mrs David Gubbay and Lady Binning*

### *Porcelain and Ceramics*

- 3.2.16 The main focus of the Salting-Binning collection is the porcelain and pottery collection. The current collection includes up to 1000 pieces which range from early Chinese examples to much more modern pieces. Highlights include the oriental ceramics, in particular the blue and white mainly K'ang Hsi porcelain (probably from the original George Salting collection) on show in Lady Binning's bedroom. In the Oriental room early Chinese ceramics said to have been bought by Lady Binning in the late 1920s and early 1930s, including examples from the Song and Ming dynasties, are shown.
- 3.2.17 The Porcelain Room contains very fine 18th century English and continental figures. These include notable early Meissen figures sculpted by Johann Joachim Kändler, Meissen's greatest modeller, and examples from other major German factories.<sup>110</sup> English porcelain includes a Bristol set of the Rustic Seasons from c.1773-1774, a good example of 'the heights to which this provincial factory rose only a few years before its final closure in 1781'<sup>111</sup> and formerly found in the distinguished Alfred Trapnell collection. Soft-paste porcelain from factories at Bow, Chelsea and Derby are also included. Wills notes examples in his 1956 article, in particular a pair of Bow figures which are also represented at the Boston Museum of Fine Art and at the Victoria and Albert Museum, reflecting their unusual nature and significance.<sup>112</sup> Other ceramics in the collection, many of which are popular although maybe less rare, comprise early 19th century English pottery animal figures, stirrup cups and Toby jugs.

### *Needlework*

- 3.2.18 The collection of 17th century embroidered pictures was mainly included in the 1914 inventory of Millicent Salting's house but it is unclear who brought the collection together. Most accounts suggest Millicent Salting was the collector but an article by Thomasina Beck suggests that it was George Salting.<sup>113</sup> Given that there was also a well-documented collection of embroidery at one of the Scottish homes of Lady Binning's husband and Lady Binning herself enjoyed needlework, completing at least two of the seat-covers seen in the Rockingham Room, it is possible Lady Binning also had a hand in the collection.
- 3.2.19 The 17th and early 18th century embroidery work is typically English and would have been embroidered by the female members of families in both Royalist and Puritan households through the period, despite great political upheaval. Most of the pieces in the Binning's collection are copies of Biblical prints and engravings or mythological scenes popular at the time, and are largely undertaken in canvas-work, silk and wool stitches on fabric; silk-work, silk threads on a silk satin ground; and 'stumpwork' or raised embroidery, three-dimensional designs with added padding and trimmings such as seed pearls. Together they form an excellent discrete collection, highlights being the casket of the Judgement of Paris and King

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<sup>110</sup> Fenton House Guide-book, National Trust 2000 (revised edition 2011)

<sup>111</sup> Wills, Geoffrey 'Lady Binning's Porcelain' in *Connoisseur* March 1956

<sup>112</sup> *ibid*

<sup>113</sup> Beck, Thomasina *Embroidery at Fenton House*



Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Such caskets can be seen as the culmination of a girl's needlework education and are today highly prized by collectors and museums,<sup>114</sup> particularly where the individual embroiderer can be traced, unfortunately this is not the case with the Fenton example.<sup>115</sup>



Figure 41: Stumpwork casket at Fenton House (NT)

3.2.20 The pole and fire screens are also of interest, being largely in their original frames, and reflecting the embroiderer's desire to render the flowers accurately.

#### *Pictures*

3.2.21 The Binning/Salting collection includes around twenty pictures, and more prints and engravings. Notable are Neptune's Horses by George Watts, as mentioned above, a view of Hampstead Heath after John Constable, and a 1525 print of 'The Sea Monster' by Albrecht Dürer. Additionally there are nine embossed flower and bird pictures, made by the original inventor of the technique in the 18th century, although neither comprises a full set.

#### *Furniture*

3.2.22 The 18th century satinwood furniture is a particularly good collection although Lady Binning had sold at least some of her mother's original collection of this by 1934, including in a 1925 Christies' sale. Highlights include an ensemble in the drawing room. Display cases of satinwood were built to Lady Binning's specifications for display of her collection. Some of the other furniture in the house is also originally from Lady Binning, including the needlework pole screens already mentioned, a series of Regency pieces in the dining room including lyre-backed chairs, a pair of console tables and a wine-cooler.

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<sup>114</sup>Telegraph article <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/collectables/25451/a-stitch-in-time-english-stumpwork.html>

<sup>115</sup> National Trust CMS <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1448795>



Figure 42: Pole screen from Fenton House (NT)

### *Books*

3.2.23 This collection seems to mainly come from the Salting family including some presented to George at Eton, some stamped with 'Brighton College', attended by William, and presents from the Salting brother's mother while in Sydney. The collection is fairly representative of what a rich young man would read in the 1850s.<sup>116</sup>

### *Other items*

3.2.24 Lady Binning's collection includes various other objects. For example, a red lacquer set including a tray and pier glass, featured in the 1950 *Country Life* article about Fenton House, and therefore was presumably of importance to Lady Binning.<sup>117</sup> Also of interest is a collection of mainly Qing dynasty snuff bottles in porcelain, glass and hard stone, an Elizabethan sweet bag in purple velvet, gold and pearl –a beautiful object in its own right, and a silver nef or ship table ornament, which is described as a 'copy of a sixteenth-century silver nef' in the guidebook<sup>118</sup> but for which additional information isn't available in the National Trust CMS.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Wilson, Sheila *Families of Fenton*, The National Trust 2002

<sup>117</sup> Nares, Gordon, 'Fenton House, Hampstead' in *Country Life*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1950

<sup>118</sup> Fenton House Guide-book, National Trust 2000 (revised edition 2011)

<sup>119</sup> National Trust CMS <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1449154>



Figure 43: Silver nef (NT)

### 3.3 Benton Fletcher Collection

- 3.3.1 The Benton Fletcher collection of early keyboard instruments came to Fenton House after the house was given to the National Trust in 1952 but before it opened to the public in 1953. It has played an important part in making the house what it is today and impacts on the current atmosphere of the house. This is particularly true on Wednesday afternoons when many of the instruments are played by volunteers and the house resonates with music. It is also the case during all other visiting hours, where the size and number of silent instruments are somewhat dominating and can be quite overwhelming in some rooms, particularly the upper floors.

#### *History*

- 3.3.2 The Benton Fletcher collection was begun in the first half of the twentieth century. Major George Benton Fletcher had a very varied life and numerous interests and enthusiasms. In his early life he was a social worker in South London and then went on expeditions to Egypt and Palestine with the renowned archaeologist Flinders Petrie. He was an artist, writer and traveller, undertaking expeditions to the Sahara desert among others.
- 3.3.3 Benton Fletcher became increasingly passionate about early instruments, having spent much time with Percy Grainger, Roger Quilter and other composers. He was clear that music should be played on the instruments for which it was written.<sup>120</sup> He began to assemble instruments and furniture 'with the intention of enabling students of early music to have access to keyboard instruments in good playing order of the type preceding the pianoforte.'<sup>121</sup> In 1934 he bought Old Devonshire House in Holborn to house the instruments. He described it thus, 'here was the ideal house in which to revive the neglected art of harpsichord playing and the correct interpretation of contemporary intimate music.'<sup>122</sup> So Old Devonshire House became 'A 17th century home of music' for amateurs and

<sup>120</sup> Waitzman, Mimi 'From 'Ancient Musicland' to 'Authenticity' in *Music & Musicians International*, November 1988, Vol.37, No.3

<sup>121</sup> *Early Keyboard Instruments, The Benton Fletcher Collection*, National Trust publication 1972

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*

professionals alike, for practice and performance, despite Benton Fletcher's quest for authenticity being dismissed as eccentric by many. A letter to the *Times* in 1938 reflects Benton Fletcher's disappointment at a Museum and Galleries report of the time. He comments 'it has been left to a private individual to establish and endow as a permanent institution in Central London a museum of music open to the public.'<sup>123</sup>

- 3.3.4 Fletcher continued to fund performances and loan instruments for use in various concerts including at Westminster Abbey<sup>124</sup> during the 1930s, and took part in various national discussions and debates on the subject of early music. He was scathing with regard to British government policy on museums, benefactors and the continued lack of a national museum of music in particular. He had great scorn for the various music colleges and their disinclination to study or teach early keyboard music. However Trinity College of Music in London latterly included the 'School of Music for Ancient Instruments at Old Devonshire House' in a prospectus, with harpsichord, virginals and spinet lessons probably given by Benton Fletcher himself.<sup>125</sup>
- 3.3.5 In 1937 he entrusted Old Devonshire House and contents to the National Trust, an early donor under the 1937 National Trust Act, with the understanding he would remain there until his death. An extensive inventory from the house at that time includes 18 keyboard instruments –four virginals, two clavichords, two transverse spinets (or English bentside spinets), six 18th century English harpsichords, two grand pianofortes and two pipe organs. Also included is considerable furniture and portraits. By 1940 he had added an early 17th century Italian harpsichord and a 1776 Backers grand piano.<sup>126</sup>
- 3.3.6 The start of the Second World War brought to an end Benton Fletcher's collecting, concerts and teaching. In 1941 Old Devonshire House was destroyed in a bombing raid but the majority of the keyboard collection survived, having been sent to the Bourton-on-the-Hill Rectory in Moreton-in-Marsh, under the care of Canon E.T. Murray.<sup>127</sup> Unfortunately a 16th century clavichord, grand piano, two pipe organs and many of the original stands were destroyed together with some furniture and portraits.
- 3.3.7 In 1943, the National Trust bought 3 Cheyne Walk, in cooperation with Benton Fletcher, as a new place for the instruments and associated activities. Benton Fletcher died on 31 December 1944 and so did not live to see the end of the war. A valuation of the estate lists 16 instruments: four virginals, two bentside spinets, seven harpsichords and two grand pianofortes. Post-war, at the Cheyne Walk

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<sup>123</sup> Waitzman, Mimi 'From 'Ancient Musicland' to 'Authenticity' in *Music & Musicians International*, November 1988, Vol.37. No.3

<sup>124</sup>Waitzman, Mimi 'From 'Ancient Musicland' to 'Authenticity' in *Music & Musicians International*, November 1988, Vol.37. No.3

<sup>125</sup> *ibid*

<sup>126</sup>Old Devonshire inventory; Waitzman, Mimi 'From 'Ancient Musicland' to 'Authenticity' in *Music & Musicians International*, November 1988, Vol.37. No.3

<sup>127</sup> Canon E.T. Murray –Correspondence 1940s, Grosvenor Garden archive



address, the National Trust carried out Benton Fletcher's wishes and by the late 1940s Trinity College was again offering early music tuition in conjunction with the collection. This is reflected in an agreement made on 24 October 1946 between the National Trust and Trinity College of Music to continue to follow Benton Fletcher's wishes by creating an early music school, to give training and performances of early music using the Benton Fletcher collection.<sup>128</sup>

- 3.3.8 In 1952 Lady Binning bequeathed Fenton House to the National Trust and the decision was taken to move in the Benton Fletcher collection. A 1950 letter from James Lee-Milne justifies this action, stating 'I believe he would not disapprove of our transferring the instruments to a better building so long as the move did not involve a greater demand on the endowment provided.'<sup>129</sup>
- 3.3.9 Today, the Benton Fletcher collection dominates Fenton House and the instruments continue to be used, with a specialist conservator, Ben Marks, working for two to three days per week to keep them in tune. A concert series takes place on a monthly basis in the dining room to a maximum audience of 35; these are usually adequately attended with about half the tickets sold and others passed on to volunteers.<sup>130</sup> Early keyboard students continue to visit, and auditions are held to select amateurs who are permitted to play, including every Wednesday afternoon. Total playing time is currently about 100 hours per year, down from an average 200 hours per year in the 1990s.<sup>131</sup> There is no longer any formal arrangement with a music college.

#### *Bequest*

- 3.3.10 Benton Fletcher's will of 18 February 1938 appointed Donald Macleod Matheson, then secretary of the National Trust, as his executor. It bequeaths his half of his estate to the National Trust with the option to sell and invest as the National Trust saw fit. Income derived from these investments and properties was to be used 'for the purposes of any society formed for the purpose of studying ancient music at the discretion of the National Trust.'<sup>132</sup> An earlier letter from the secretary of the National Trust to his solicitors explains in more detail: 'Major Fletcher will convey the freehold of Old Devonshire House to the National Trust together with its fixtures and fittings'; 'He is prepared to hand over to the National Trust his freehold property known as The Cedars House, Cobham, and the furniture therein for the purposes of providing an endowment for the maintenance of Old Devonshire House'; 'He is also prepared to hand over his freehold house 6 Buckingham Street.'<sup>133</sup>

- 3.3.11 These additional endowments were intended to be used primarily in the maintenance of Old Devonshire House and the surplus to be used to form a

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<sup>128</sup> Agreement 24<sup>th</sup> October 1946, National Trust and Trinity College of Music

<sup>129</sup> Letter from James Lee Milne, 1950.

<sup>130</sup> Sara Nicholls, House & Gardens Manager, Personal Communication October/November 2015

<sup>131</sup> Tessa Wild, Curator, Personal Communication May 2015; Benton Fletcher Advisory Committee Minutes 1990s

<sup>132</sup> Agreement 24 October 1946, National Trust and Trinity College of Music, Grovesnor Garden archives

<sup>133</sup> Letter 9 July 1937, from National Trust Secretary to Horne and Birkett Solicitors, NT Grosvenor Gardens archives

Musical Society to be called 'The Living Memorial to British Composers' to continue the work already started by Benton Fletcher to encourage the special study and performance of works of older English Composers.<sup>134</sup> The letter makes clear that the Society itself would be tenants and the Trust not liable for the obligations of the Society. As mentioned above, following the bombing of Old Devonshire House, the collection was transferred to 3 Cheyne Walk, but the other terms of the will still held.

- 3.3.12 Benton Fletcher's intention in leaving his collection and properties to the National Trust was to ensure that early music continued to be played and performed after his death. He intended for his collection of instruments to be used in the continuation and promotion of early keyboard music for future generations. Today, the Benton Fletcher Advisory Committee, founded in 1950 to oversee the collection and ensure the terms of the endowment are met, continues to meet on a bi-annual basis. They discuss the care of the instruments, their condition, the concerts and competition, the curation of the musical instrument collection and how they might best raise awareness of the importance of the collection.

#### *Provenance*

- 3.3.13 Waitzman's article notes various sources which suggest that Benton Fletcher began collecting as early as the previous century and as late as 1931.<sup>135</sup> It seems likely he did the bulk of his collecting during the 1930s but few records exist of where he acquired all his instruments. His first instrument was the Longman and Broderip single-manual 1783 harpsichord which he found 'hidden under a couple of heavy armchairs in a second hand shop'<sup>136</sup> in Wells, Somerset. The 1761 Fanny Davies Shudi was his second purchase and he found the mahogany bentside spinet in a Welsh outhouse.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> We found references to Handel and presume that the virginalists William Byrd, Henry Purcell and John Bull etc. would be included. Further work could be carried out on researching his preferences regarding composers.

<sup>135</sup> Waitzman, Mimi 'From 'Ancient Musicland' to 'Authenticity' in *Music & Musicians International*, November 1988, Vol.37, No.3

<sup>136</sup> Benton Fletcher, George, *Old Devonshire House*, National Trust publication (from 1930s)

<sup>137</sup> Waitzman, Mimi 'From 'Ancient Musicland' to 'Authenticity' in *Music & Musicians International*, November 1988, Vol.37, No.3



Figure 44: 16th century virginal (NT, Fenton House)

3.3.14 The 16th century Italian virginal was being used as a carpenter's bench in Florence. Others were given by well-wishers, as accounts of his search were passed on by word of mouth, or found in outhouses and restored.<sup>138</sup> Provenance for the rest of the collection seems based on rumour and guesswork. The large Shudi and Broadwood harpsichords were apparently made for Dr Hartley, a friend of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Others have attribution, for example the 'Roberttus Hatley' English virginal, but Benton Fletcher is said not to have trusted this provenance and others concur that its date and maker cannot be confirmed.

#### *The Benton Fletcher Collection Today*

3.3.15 The Benton Fletcher collection itself is very well documented, particularly in the book by Mimi Waitzman, former keeper of the instruments and now curator of instruments at the Horniman Museum.<sup>139</sup> There are currently thirty seven musical instruments held at Fenton House. However not all of these belong to the Benton Fletcher collection. There has been a tendency to add other musical instruments to the collection, or at least bring them to Fenton House, as it already has a musical flavour, given the Benton Fletcher collection. Of the original Benton Fletcher Bequest the following instruments are on display at Fenton House:

- Shudi and Broadwood Harpsichord, 1770
- Italian Harpsichord, c.1590
- Shudi Harpsichord, 1761
- Kirckman Harpsichord, 1752
- Kirckman Harpsichord, 1762
- Kirckman Harpsichord, 1777
- Longman and Broderip Harpsichord, 1783

<sup>138</sup> Benton Fletcher, George, *Old Devonshire House*, National Trust publication (from 1930s)

<sup>139</sup> Mimi Waitzman, *Early Keyboard Instruments: The Benton Fletcher Collection at Fenton House*, 1999

- Unsigned English Bentside Spinet
- English Bentside Spinet –Attributed to John Hancock
- Hatley Virginals, 1664
- Marcus Siculus Virginals, 1540
- Celestini Virginals
- Anonymous German Clavichord
- Grand piano, falsely attributed to Americus Backers c.1776.

3.3.16 Since the Benton Fletcher collection came to Fenton, the house has developed a reputation within the National Trust and among some early music enthusiasts as a ‘musical’ place. While this has not been reflected in the wider public imagination, it has led to a sometimes random selection of music-related ephemera and other instruments from the National Trust collection being placed at the house. In 2005 Charles Pugh, National Trust curator, said, in relation to a disagreement about these instruments ‘The Benton Fletcher collection is a distinct, closed collection with a very clear purpose that places it apart from the rest of the National Trust’s body of musical instruments’. He suggested that previously there had been a tendency to assume the house would accommodate any and all other keyboard instruments which was neither sensible with regard to the collection nor practical.<sup>140</sup>



Figure 45: Detail from the 1769-70 Shudi Harpsichord

3.3.17 More recent (post Benton Fletcher) musical additions to Fenton House include:

- Joannes Ruckers Harpsichord: This has been on loan from the Royal Collection since the 1950s. It was previously at Windsor Castle. It is maintained by the National Trust and for many years could only be played twice per year. A 2015/16

<sup>140</sup> Charles Pugh, *Correspondence*, 2005



review is pending of the impact of playing on the instrument and it is hoped it will be possible to play up to five times a year. There have been discussions about the return of this instrument, given that it is not of the original Benton Fletcher collection and the playing restrictions. However, the important additional dimension the Ruckers brings to the Benton Fletcher collection has been acknowledged and it is accepted that the instrument should be kept for the foreseeable future.

- Dolmetsch Clavichord: Donated by Miss Leeper in memory of her aunt in the 1960s. Minimal conditions beyond that ‘it must be played’ and a small plaque should be displayed next to the instrument explaining its origins.<sup>141</sup>
- 1774 Broadwood square piano
- 1805 Broadwood piano
- Other non-keyboard instruments including lutes, a hurdy-gurdy and two harps

*Other Benton Fletcher collection objects:*

3.3.18 The Benton Fletcher collection originally included furniture and other items, some of which are located at other National Trust properties. All that is now at Fenton House, in addition to the keyboard instruments, are a few drawings and paintings by Fletcher himself, such as the drawing of 3 Cheyne Walk, some oil paintings, fire arms and possibly some furniture although this needs to be identified.

### **3.4 Peter Barkworth Collection**

3.4.1 Peter Barkworth was a familiar local resident of Hampstead, a well-known British actor both on screen and stage. His local connections led him to donate 55 works from his collection on his death in 2006. Barkworth had a lifelong passion for collecting art, collecting works he liked and reflected his own interests, collecting works on the theatre, Hampstead and Camden and the English countryside and coast. Barkworth collected the works over the last forty years of his life and they comprise mainly watercolours and oil paintings, ranging in date from the 18th to the 20th centuries. The collection is currently largely hung in the dining room and hall, which have relatively low light levels.

*Bequest*

3.4.2 Barkworth had been in discussion with the National Trust to bequeath his collection from the early 2000s. The bequest was discussed with curator Anthea Palmer and considered to be ‘non-indigenous chattels acquired in order to furnish the property’.

3.4.3 When Barkworth died in 2006 he left the artworks to the National Trust in his will with the following stipulations:

- ‘Every drawing or painting in the collection should become a permanent part of the National Trust collection and should not be dispersed or disposed of.
- Every work in the bequest should be displayed for the benefit of the public at Fenton House.

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<sup>141</sup> Grosvenor Gardens files

- If it became impossible or impracticable for the bequest to be displayed at Fenton House, it could be displayed at another National Trust property on display to the public.
- That unless it were necessary for preservation or the protection of each painting or drawing, all works should be on display and not kept in storage.<sup>142</sup>

3.4.4 Barkworth wanted to ensure his whole collection would always be on display, unless conservation issues made that impossible. Preferably the works should be displayed as a group at Fenton House but if that were to become impossible, they could be shown, as a group, at another National Trust property. There is no provision in the will to split the bequest. This is confirmed by the National Trust Chattels Acquisition Record which states, ‘we believe we can meet the terms of Mr Barkworth’s will and keep the pictures on permanent display at Fenton House.’<sup>143</sup> It was also noted that the bequest had already been publicised in the local press, risking reputational damage if the Trust did not take it on.

#### *The Barkworth Collection Today*

3.4.5 The collection Barkworth bequeathed to the house comprises 52 works from 39 British artists covering the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. The subjects of the artworks are not particularly related to Fenton House itself, but there are connections between a number of the artists represented in the collection to London, North London and Hampstead in particular, as well as connections between the artists themselves.

3.4.6 Nearly half of the works in the collection are by artists who were part of, or associated with, the Camden Town Group: a short-lived society established by Walter Richard Sickert which exhibited three times between 1911-2.<sup>144</sup> The society worked out of Sickert’s rooms in Camden Town.<sup>145</sup> It dissolved in 1913 and became part of a wider group, the London Group, in 1914.<sup>146</sup> A recent Tate catalogue on the group highlights that it has been neglected in art historical study, but was a part of a group of artists representing everyday life in Edwardian Britain.<sup>147</sup> Artists in the collection who were part of the society include Charles Ginner, Philip Wilson Steer, Robert Bevan, Duncan Grant, Spencer Frederick Gore and James Boliver Manson, as well as two women associated with the group (though not allowed to be members in their own right): Sylvia Goose and Clare Atwood. None of the works at Fenton House are those exhibited as part of the Camden Town Group, but they represent the artists’ work either before or after that period. Tate holds the most significant collection of works by the Camden Town Group artists.

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<sup>142</sup> Extract from Peter Barkworth’s Will, 2006

<sup>143</sup> National Trust Chattels Acquisition Record, November 2006

<sup>144</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/introducing-the-camden-town-group-in-context-r1106438>

<sup>145</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/walter-richard-sickert-r1105345>

<sup>146</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/introducing-the-camden-town-group-in-context-r1106438>

<sup>147</sup> Ibid

3.4.7 The collection also has a grouping of works from the nineteenth century, including John Constable; James Clarke Hook, who allegedly received advice from Constable in his youth; and William McTaggart, a Scottish artist whose depiction of nature is seen as being reminiscent of Constable<sup>148</sup>.

3.4.8 A number of the works also hold particular personal significance to Barkworth himself such as *Richmond, Yorkshire* by Steer and *Rye, Sussex* by Mason where he recollects visiting the scenes that have been painted. Specific works of interest include:

- John Constable, *Cumulus Clouds over a Landscape* (1822): Constable painted his first cloud study in 1821<sup>149</sup>, and over two years he painted them whilst he was living in Hampstead. Like the early example at the National Gallery of Art in Australia, this one also includes the tip of treetops. Other examples include an inscription on the back of the canvas showing location and the time the work was painted.
- Malcolm Drummond, *The Garden* (c1909): Drummond was a member of the Camden Town Group. He became Sickert's pupil in 1910. Few of his works are dated before this period<sup>150</sup>, so if this one can be verified to 1909 it would be particularly significant.
- Charles Ginner, *Flask Walk, Hampstead at Night* (1933) and *Pond Street, Hampstead* (unknown): both of these works by Ginner depict scenes in the local area, and pick up the realities of urban life: a particular strength in his work.
- Dame Ethel Walker, *The Garden Bench* (unknown): Walker was elected the first woman member of the New English Art Club in 1900. She is particularly noted for her portraits of women and dominant colours<sup>151</sup>, of which this piece includes both.
- Duncan Grant, *Woman Sewing (possibly Mary 'Molly' McCarthy)* (1916): Grant, who was briefly a membership of the Camden Town Group, is more widely associated with the Bloomsbury Group of which he was a key member when this picture was made.<sup>152</sup> The portrait, with its bold colours, shows the influence of post-impressionism.

### 3.5 Nicholson Loan

3.5.1 The house contains another significant collection of paintings, by William Nicholson, on loan from various members of the Bacon family. T.W. Bacon brought this collection together, and by the time he stopped collecting in the 1930s it comprised over 30 oil paintings plus watercolours and engravings.<sup>153</sup> The collection has a long association with the house, of about 20 years, and visitors come to see the Nicholson paintings specifically.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/artists/william-mctaggart>

<sup>149</sup> <http://nga.gov.au/exhibition/constable/Detail.cfm?IRN=143229>

<sup>150</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/malcolm-drummond-r1105356>

<sup>151</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/dame-ethel-walker-2115>

<sup>152</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/bloomsbury-group/art>

<sup>153</sup> Fenton House Guide-book, National Trust 2000 (revised edition 2011)

<sup>154</sup> Tessa Wild, Curator, *pers comm*. September 2015

- 3.5.2 In 2004 there was a Nicholson show at the Royal Academy which led to prices of the works rising quickly and many of the original loans to Fenton House were withdrawn. However replacements were found to borrow on 5 year loans from various Bacon family members, and there are now several on display in the attic, albeit potentially 'less good' than the originals. The current collection on display includes semi-posed portraits of Bacon children and a less formal portrait of Nicholson's own son.
- 3.5.3 Currently the Nicholson paintings are on display in the attic where they are overscaled and feel somewhat out of place, particularly given the musical instruments that are there. Previously they were shown downstairs but the darkness of those rooms made the oil paintings difficult to see and they moved to make way for the Barkworth collection<sup>155</sup>. Despite the relatively long association of Nicholsons with the house it is unclear and confusing for the visitor why they are there and what, aside from being lovely paintings, they add.

### 3.6 Other Collections

- 3.6.1 There are two objects which relate to the earlier story of the house: the Fenton Portrait and a miniature of Margaret Fenton (1782-1821) who lived at the house 1796-1814. Given the lack of 'indigenous' artefacts at Fenton House, these are highly significant for their association with the Fenton family. Both are currently on display, but can be lost among the wider collections of the house.
- 3.6.2 Several pictures are associated with Dora Jordan (1761-1816) an actress who was mistress to the Duke of Clarence, later King William IV. Their children took the name FitzClarence and several very large portraits, of William IV, George IV and Frederick FitzClarence and Adolphus Fitzclarence, illegitimate sons of William and Dora Jordan, dominate the main staircase of the house. They are from the Courts, Holt, Wiltshire, part of the Major Clarence Goff collection and owned by the National Trust. They are kept at Fenton House as the Hart Davis family, who lived in the house during the 19th century, were descended from William IV and Dora Jordan via a daughter. However this link is quite tenuous and not fully explained anywhere. Whether these should be kept at the house needs to be examined.
- 3.6.3 A collection of rectangular and oval enamel plaques and snuff boxes was donated to the National Trust in 1973 by Dr J.W.P. Bourke. These are currently shown in the Green room in a small cabinet.
- 3.6.4 Inter-house loans, reflecting the ephemera of life, have been used to 'round out the story' but it is currently unclear which objects are from the various collections and which are more generic. These need checking in conjunction with the Lady

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<sup>155</sup> Tessa Wild, Curator, *pers comm*. September 2015



Binning collection lists to ascertain which is which and hence properly to assess their significance in relation to Fenton House.

DRAFT

## 4 SIGNIFICANCE

### 4.1 Introduction: Significance and values

4.1.1 In accordance with the Historic England *Conservation Principles, Policies, and Guidance* (2008), the significance of Fenton House and its garden are articulated as the sum of the identified heritage values of the site. These can be considered under four headings:

- *Evidential values*: the potential of the house to yield primary evidence about past human activity;
- *Historical values*: the ways in which past people, events, and aspects of life can be connected, through the house, to the present, both by illustrating aspects of architectural and social history, and through its association with notable people and events;
- *Aesthetic values*: the ways in which people derive sensory and intellectual stimulation from the House; and
- *Communal values*: the meanings of the house for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

4.1.2 Various instrumental values flow from these heritage values. They are not considered to be part of Fenton House's significance, but their relationship with the house is considered in the Issues and Policies section.

4.1.3 The significance of the collections is subject to slightly different considerations, which are addressed at Section 4.4 below.

### 4.2 Grading significance

4.2.1 The following grading system has been adopted to enable the relative weight of the values contributing to the significance of the house and its setting to be compared:

- *A: Exceptional significance* - Elements whose values are both unique to Fenton House and are relevant to our perception and understanding of it in a national and international context. These are the qualities that, for buildings, warrant listing in grade I or II\*.
- *B: Considerable significance* - Elements whose values contribute to the house's status as a nationally important place. These are the qualities that justify statutory protection at national level.
- *C: Moderate significance* - Elements whose values make a positive contribution to the way the house is understood and perceived, primarily in a local context.
- *D: Little significance* - Elements whose values contribute to the way the house is perceived in a very limited, but positive, way.
- *N: Neutral significance* - Elements which neither add to, nor detract from, the significance of the House.

- *INT: Intrusive* - Elements of no historic interest or aesthetic or architectural merit that detract from the appearance of the House, or mask the understanding of significant elements.

### 4.3 Significance: Fenton House, Coach House and gardens

- 4.3.1 Fenton House is 'a fine example of the type of well-built medium sized house which was once common in villages around London but has almost entirely gone.'<sup>156</sup> It has a fairly standard plan for gentry houses of this date and size. Although it may have been built as a speculation, there is little to distinguish it from houses of a similar quality commissioned by an individual. Within the framework of the four-rooms-to-a-floor plan, it has some unique features, most notably the position of the chimney-stacks, which, perhaps, suggest an intention to provide higher-status rooms on the attic floor than was usual, in order to make use by 'polite' residents or visitors of the roof-flats from which there is an exceptional panoramic view across London. This house as a whole has *exceptional significance*.
- 4.3.2 The history of the house tells a distinctly urban story, which can be read in the palimpsest of small internal changes, redecoration and *ad hoc* modernisation, carried out by twenty-five or so individuals and families who lived in or owned it. The human story of Fenton House is not one of aristocratic continuity but rather of the prosperous middle classes. A house of this type was primarily a home, to some extent a mark of status, but never a monument to power or success like a great house. Many of its residents stayed for only a few years. Fashionable improvements were made to a room or a few rooms at a time. Before the tenure of the National Trust, it seems to have had only one comprehensive redecoration, in the early 19th century, and even this may have been several different phases of work rather than a single grand scheme. As a result of this piecemeal approach, much of the evidence of each phase of change survives, in one room or another, roughly covered-up or simply adapted.

#### *Evidential Values*

- 4.3.3 Fenton House has considerable evidential value because it is a rare survival of what was once a relatively common type of high quality suburban house, most of which have been lost as a result of urban development. Large old houses are especially vulnerable in the urban areas, and the more affluent the area the greater the development pressure. In this context, it is of *exceptional significance*.
- 4.3.4 London's historic buildings are now largely protected by law, but planning controls are less effective at protecting their patina and internal details. 'Renovation' or 'refurbishment' of listed buildings in the most affluent areas of London, such as Hampstead, will often involve, for example, the removal of all elements of the building considered superfluous such as historic services, and the replication (rather than repair) of extensive fabric. Minor features like hooks and shelves, and especially, the layers of hidden historic 'information' that survive

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<sup>156</sup> Knight, C. 2009 p353

under later features and decorations, are often stripped away. This has not happened at Fenton, and much of this hidden history, especially of decoration, which has survived by accident, is yet to be fully understood and revealed. The silvered attic over-mantels are a good example. Although many of these features were commonplace when they were made, they are now of *considerable significance*.

- 4.3.5 No significant archaeological finds have been made on the site, although various features, associated with present house were identified during excavations in 1998.<sup>157</sup> Nothing that pre-dated the present buildings was found. Therefore the archaeological potential the site is considered to be of *moderate significance*.
- 4.3.6 The few surviving original window sashes are of *exceptional significance* as very early examples of their type and as templates for any future work. They should be preserved even if they become, at some point in the future, beyond repair.

*Aesthetic values: Architectural Merit, The House*

- 4.3.7 The principal importance of Fenton House lies in its architectural merit. As discussed, the house cannot be attributed to a known professional architect, and was probably designed largely by its builders, probably William Eades, possibly working with his father Thomas, or their associates. Fenton House - actually built in the reign of William and Mary- is the embodiment of one of the most enduringly popular English architectural styles, that of Queen Anne and the early Georges. The house as a whole is of *exceptional significance* simply as a substantially unaltered example of its type.
- 4.3.8 Various country houses dating from the Commonwealth and Restoration periods have been suggested as architectural antecedents for Fenton. These include Coleshill, Berks. (1650-54, dem. 1952), Clarendon House, Piccadilly, London (1664-7, dem. 1683) both designed by Roger Pratt, and Belton House, Lincs. (1684-8), which have broadly similar features on a very grand scale. Comparisons have also been made with Eltham Lodge, Kent (1664); and Codicote Bury c1660, and The Grange, Hoddesdon (1657), both in Herts. Parallels have even been drawn with the balustraded crown flat at Ragley Hall, Warks. (begun c1680, architect Robert Hooke) which, following the plan of the house, necessarily projected forward at the corners.<sup>158</sup>
- 4.3.9 Such great houses, mostly of a generation before Fenton, in as far as they might have been familiar to a master builder- perhaps from a print or a visit- were doubtless the architectural exemplars of the day, but is questionable whether a Hampstead builder-developer would have been familiar with the planning of a house as new and spectacular as Ragley. However, in broad aesthetic terms these great houses may be considered as influences. It may be possible to identify conceits, such as a grand symmetrical facade or the use of chimney-stacks for visual effect, that Fenton shares with these great houses, but none can be traced directly from one to the other. In some particulars, such as the design and

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<sup>157</sup> Marshall G., 1998; Marshall G., 2000

<sup>158</sup> Jackson-Stops, G., 1976, 11; for Ragley see Knyff & Kip 1708, pl 71 before late 18th century alterations.



position of its chimney-stacks, Fenton is fundamentally different from its precedents and comparators, which almost invariably have their stacks in the spine- or cross-walls. Moreover, whilst Fenton has some relatively advanced features, notably the south front, there is nothing to suggest the influence of the Baroque style that was the fashion among the elite at this date and is evident even in relatively plain country houses, such as Stanford Hall, Leicestershire (1697).

- 4.3.10 Fenton is essentially a medium-sized suburban 'gentry' house. Similar houses in the country, dating from the first few decades of the 18th century, are not uncommon, but Fenton, and the few other comparable houses that survive around London make up a distinctive group that is neither fully urban nor wholly rural. Its closest relations are in the London suburbs, and were, similarly, mostly the work of master builders. They include Burgh House, Hampstead (now Hampstead Museum, c1704), Eagle House, Mitcham, Surrey, (1704), the closest to Fenton in plan; and of a slightly later date, Rainham Hall, Essex (1724), The Water House, Walthamstow, Essex (c1730) and the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, 179 Clapton Road, London (c1720-30, dem. 1933). The planning of each reflects the available land; Eagle House is unconstricted and nearly rural; Clapton Road was almost part of a terrace.
- 4.3.11 The differences between each, and the occasional experiments in planning, or even structural failures, mark out such houses as the work of master builders; working from experience, using craftsmen with similar backgrounds, but without the direction of a specialist designer. The position of the chimneys at Fenton, discussed above, feels like an experiment, causing at least minor structural weaknesses (the stacks settled independently of the walls) and it is not known to have been repeated. It has a parallel at Rainham Hall where what seems to have been an error in setting-out led to the omission of a structurally significant internal wall in order to maintain symmetry in the elevations and plan. The architectural features and interior details of these houses are almost indistinguishable from those in central London and it is clear that the same craftsmen were involved.
- 4.3.12 Fenton is notable for a number of characteristics. The south and east elevations are pretentious: grandiose and *a la mode*. They are in contrast to the roof, which is a functional, builders' solution to a practical problem. The elevations and roof are architecturally, wholly unresolved. The garden front is ordered in its proportions but unpretentious- even austere- in the manner of houses a generation earlier. The interiors may have been- or have been intended to be- grander than is now apparent, if, as seems possible, the silvered bolelection mouldings in the attic reflect the primary decorative schemes of the principal rooms, but most of the rooms seem to have been finished quite plainly. No primary raised and fielded panelling remains, as one might have expected in the best rooms. It is possible that a richer primary interior than that which survives in the house today could have been removed from e.g. G1 and G2 in Period 5, but no physical evidence has been found to support such a conjecture.

- 4.3.13 The planning of the house, at least as it was completed, is pragmatic; with a large number of good rooms, well suited to the urban middle class rather than the aristocracy, another feature that can be associated with its location close to London, where the demand for such a house would have been strongest. It is tempting to interpret these features as reflecting a speculative development rather than a commission. Fenton House is thus part of the architectural mainstream of the late 17th century in its overall classical characteristics and grand antecedents; an example of progressive and inventive construction in features such as the chimneys and sash windows, and a distinctly suburban, London type in its functional typology, planning and craftsmanship. In this context, all of the surviving fabric, decorative features (including hidden layers of paintwork), fixtures and fittings (such as cupboards and shelves) of the late-17th and early-18th centuries (Periods 2 and 3) are of *exceptional significance*.
- 4.3.14 The 19th century (Period 4) alterations were made at the expense of much the house's 18th century appearance (such as windows) and a good deal of its internal fabric, such as its doors. Relatively little of the work of this period survives intact but the changes of this date are of interest for their own sake as good examples of Regency design and decoration, and as a reflection of the modernisation and adaptation of the house to changing times and demands. Whilst many of these features are quite commonplace examples of their type, in the context of Fenton House and its architectural history, all of the Period 4 fabric including the sash windows, loggia, cornices, chimney pieces and doors is of *exceptional significance* for this reason.
- 4.3.15 The most significant late 19th century (Period 5.2) alteration was the addition of the bathroom wing to the west elevation, and the rendering of part of the west elevation. These works are architecturally and visually intrusive. However, there are good practical reasons for leaving the extension *in situ*; it is probably the best place for the facilities it currently provides and it may have the potential for other uses. Similarly, removing the cement render could cause damage to the underlying brickwork and they are best left alone unless there is a clear structural reason to remove them. Therefore these features are of *neutral significance*.
- 4.3.16 The other substantial Period 5.2 work (the panelling of the Servants' Hall (B7) with recycled panelling, and the re-creation of the 'Queen Anne' appearance of the Oriental Room (G7)) is, in the context of Fenton House, architecturally of *little significance*, although it has historic interest.
- 4.3.17 The Period 5.3 'restoration' recreated something like the early appearance of (e.g) G6, F1, F7, F10 and F1 with the broadly authentic replicas of historic fabric (such as cornices), but it did not necessarily recreate the actual historic appearance of these rooms when they were first made. Where it is evidently a repair or recreation of what was known to have existed previously, on the basis of extant historic fabric this is of *moderate significance*. Where it is purely conjectural, such as to the Rockingham Room (F8) it is of *little significance*. If there was a good reason to do

so, and clear evidence on which to base a more authentic recreation of the historic form of the room, reversing the Period 5.3 work could be considered.

- 4.3.18 The present form of F1, F2, G1 and G2 dates from Period 5.3 although the decorations are Period 7. The early 20th century decorative schemes have largely been replaced. The cabinets in G1 and G2 are of good quality joinery but add little to the architectural understanding of Fenton House. The Period 5.3 work in these rooms is *little significance*.
- 4.3.19 Relatively little survives of Period 6 in terms of the structure or decoration of the house. The Edwardian chimney-piece in the Porcelain Room (G6) is anachronistic and out of keeping with the rest of the house. At best, it may say something of Lady Binning's taste: it is *little significance* to the house.
- 4.3.20 John Fowler's work at Fenton (Period 7) is almost entirely decorative, realising effects through the use of colours and textures in paint and fabric. He made no significant physical changes to the building. It is an example of a well-known society decorator working in the specific context of an historic house that had been preserved for the nation. As such, and as an example of its type, it has interest in historic terms, including its relative rarity; this is discussed below. In aesthetic terms, as decorative or architectural art, it must be considered in its own right, and in terms of the contribution it makes to the understanding and appreciation of Fenton House.
- 4.3.21 Fowler's work - at least when it was based on limited or no historic evidence - was a personal interpretation of historic 'character' or atmosphere. It could be removed from Fenton House with almost no loss of architectural significance to the house, but such intrinsic interest as the decorative scheme has would be much diminished if it were seen out of context. It does not respond in any obvious way to the date, historic fabric or design of Fenton House. It is neither hugely original nor does it contain great (as opposed to competent or complicated) craft-work. He is said to have considered 'decoration as essentially ephemeral' and 'the equivalent of haute couture in dress'.<sup>159</sup> A museum re-creation would be little more than a footnote in design history. The contention that he was seeking to 'create a classical style for his own time in the way that the Regency revival had been in the early 1930s and the work of Raymond Erith and Francis Johnson was in the decades after the Second World War'<sup>160</sup> may be valid as an assessment of his career as a whole, but it is hard to sustain on the basis of his work at Fenton.
- 4.3.22 Whilst Fowler was commissioned to provide a more complete and unified interior design than that inherited by the Trust in 1952 and a sympathetic setting for the collections, his work has also had the effect of obscuring the diverse human histories embodied by the more commonplace but authentically historic interiors that his work disguises. While we do not at the moment know exactly how the house looked in the 18th or 19th century it is quite possible with sufficient

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<sup>159</sup> Cornforth J. 2002

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*

research this could be discovered. In summary Fowler's work at Fenton is of *little significance* in aesthetic terms.

- 4.3.23 The changes to the basement undertaken by the National Trust to create the office and caretaker's flat are of *neutral significance*.

*Aesthetic values: Architectural Merit, Coach House*

- 4.3.24 The exterior shell and roof structure of the Coach House are largely contemporary with the house (Period 2) but the building was been radically altered in Period 3 when it was truncated at the south and in Period 5.2 when the garage doors and most of the fenestration to the west were formed, and in Period 7 when the present interiors were created. As a whole, and especially because of its group value with the house the building is of *considerable significance*. Internally only the Period 2 cross wall, fabric relating to the northern hearths (the brewhouse) and the recycled first floor doors have the same value. The remainder is of *neutral significance*.

*Aesthetic values: The garden and setting*

- 4.3.25 The gardens as they exist today are dominated by the earthworks and wall-building that originated with Joshua Gee and were consolidated in Regency times. In garden historical terms, they demonstrate that the landscape gardening principles of Humphry Repton and other landscape gardeners did not necessarily apply in town gardens. Gardens of this size, of close to an acre, were sometimes treated as villa gardens with shrubberies and flower-beds in lawns. Contrary to what might have been expected in the village of Hampstead, the Fenton House gardens were decidedly a town garden, if a large one, divided up and regularised for functional reasons, and with no concession to landscape tastes. It was only in Arts and Crafts times, when an appreciation of formal gardens came to rule taste once more, that the Fenton House 'charming old-world terraces' could come to be seen as ornamental. Although surveys of town gardens are rare, it is reckoned that this one would stand out for its size, level of investment and survival. As such the underlying form and structure of the garden is of *exceptional significance*.

- 4.3.26 The design and planting of the 1980s is of *moderate significance*.

*Setting*

- 4.3.27 The urban context of Fenton House includes a large number of listed buildings, many of 18th century date and in similar materials and of a similar scale to Fenton, although Fenton is probably the largest to survive. The streetscape is characterised by houses of two or three stories, and their garden walls, in red or yellow brick. The neighbourhood is recognised as one of the most untouched of the historic suburban villages now absorbed in London's urban sprawl. Its historic character is zealously protected both by its affluent and articulate residents and by the local planning authority's conservation officers.

- 4.3.28 However, the same affluence and articulacy mean that there is considerable pressure to intensify development and population density here, and to increase the perceived 'security' of the neighbourhood. Planning controls mean that visible

intrusion on the appearance of the area is unlikely. Rather than the threat of inappropriate development, local residents may be reluctant to see substantially greater numbers of visitors to Fenton, because of their potential impact on the exclusive atmosphere of the area. Any such development of Fenton House will need to obtain the support of the local community.

- 4.3.29 Fenton House is set in a walled garden and the most significant aspect of its setting is its strong sense of enclosure, giving protection from the surrounding, now urbanised, environment. The key views of the house are from the gardens to the north and south, up Holly Hill from the south and of the east front from Hampstead Grove. The garden wall itself is also a feature of the streetscape from all sides. The view from the roof terraces is a spectacular panorama of London. All of these views are of *considerable significance* and should be protected.

#### *Historic Values*

- 4.3.30 The historic values of Fenton derive from the way in which the fabric of the house and garden illustrate its history. They are of as great significance as its architectural and aesthetic qualities, not because of any association with great public figures but because this was a private house for almost the whole of its history until it came to the Trust. Each generation made the changes that Londoners were making throughout the city, each layered over the one before, and as a result, most of these changes are still legible within the fabric. These historic values are embodied in the house as a whole and in for this reason even some features of limited aesthetic interest are nonetheless of historic significance.
- 4.3.31 The history of the house starts with its uncertain origins, probably as a speculative development by William Eades, reflected in its plan of good numerous good rooms and 'service' closets, in an up-and-coming suburb with fine views. It is a middle-class rather than an aristocratic house, built to serve the emerging London business class of the late 17th and early 18th century. The Gees exemplified this with their strong colonial connections and non-conformist background; they were prosperous and even influential. (Joshua Gee wrote a successful book, *'The Trade and Navigation of Britain Considered'* (1729).) Fenton is however, clearly a suburban house with its walled garden, although it is inseparably linked with the city. It has no aspirations be a country mansion, like nearby Kenwood, which was not greatly larger than Fenton in its early 18th century form. Fenton House also reveals something of the development of Hampstead as a suburb of large houses in good gardens, neither city nor country.
- 4.3.32 Even if, as seems possible, the Gees had decorated parts of the house quite extravagantly, subsequent tenants and owners in the 18th century were more modest. The absence of major changes in Period 3.2 reflects the typical middle-class rather than exceptional 'aristocratic' nature of the house. The re-planning and modernisation by the Fentons is a snapshot of the way in which an affluent bourgeois family of the early 19th century would have lived. The creation of the first floor drawing room illustrates the change from independent apartments to a more stratified, gendered and hierarchical household. The decorations reflect the



fashion for neo-classical art and perhaps the perception that the house as built was somewhat unsophisticated and its original character was therefore best disguised.

- 4.3.33 The Trewbys introduced heating and bathrooms, reflecting the technological changes of the later 19th century. George Trewby was a self-made engineer and one of his priorities seems to have been domestic comforts such as modern heating and bathrooms. Where we can identify his redecorations (notably in G7), they reflect the then nascent revival of the Queen Anne and early-Georgian taste with its patriotic undertones, but there is no sense of a major recasting of the house in the latest style. Rather, improvements were made in comfort and 'good taste', probably piecemeal. The broader context of this period is the taste for essentially English culture- in houses, furniture and ceramics- it had its roots in the emergence of nation states and national identity in the colonial period. Fenton's place in this is exemplified by its inclusion in Belcher and McCartney's *'Later Renaissance Architecture in England'* (1900), one of many books on similar subjects, capable for the first time of being illustrated with photographs as well as drawings. Belcher and McCartney documented many houses of a similar period to Fenton mentioned above, including Groombridge Place, the Deaf and Dumb Asylum and Eagle House.
- 4.3.34 The Broussons undertook a rather more thorough 'un-modernisation' reflecting what was by then the mainstream popularity of all things English of the period between the Restoration and the early Georges (often epitomised as the 'Queen Anne' style); their patriotism (at least among the middle classes) intensified by the Great War. The 'restoration' of the 'original' interiors was also part of the emerging conservation movement. By this date, Fenton could be seen as a rare survival of its type and it was perhaps as such that Lady Binning chose it for her collections, which were archetypal of her generation's taste. One of the key features of the collections is their Englishness. We cannot ignore the fact that they are a cultural expression of her political views. While these are now regarded as unacceptable, they were not uncommon in the 1930s, when national identity and patriotism in Europe were not always distinguishable from racism and fascism. There is also a strong sense of resistance to modernism and change in such a cultural environment.
- 4.3.35 Thus, in Fenton House, the National Trust acquired a house that was both a physical record of two-and-half centuries of social and cultural change and a confabulation; a series of ideas expressed through the domestic environments of ten generations. At the end of this period, moreover, the expression of cultural identity through 'restoration' became preservation as a museum; in other words, the evolution of the house was supposed to stop. The role of the house as a museum was cemented, like the vases on the mantelpieces, by the introduction of the Benton Fletcher collection, which was at the time thought to be an ideal complement to the Binning collections. House and contents were broadly consistent in date, and the later 20th century idea that such a display was (and can only be) an expression of its own time, rather than of an objective history, was not yet widely current.

4.3.36 Paradoxically, by inviting John Fowler to redecorate the house, the Trust went very much against the preservationist ideas of the 1930s-50s and, in effect, added a new layer to the history of the house that was very much of its own time. There is now doubt that Fowler and Christopher Wall (in effect his patron at the Trust for Fenton House) were conscious of working in the present rather than recreating an artificial past, and, as such, if Fowler's work does not help interpret the house or reveal its story, it is nonetheless part of its history and of some interest for that reason.

4.3.37 In this context at least two aspects of the house, whilst of debateable aesthetic merit, have some significance in historic terms. Lady Binning's bedroom was recreated c2000 on the basis of the 1950 *Country Life* photographs. While the Period 5.3 restoration work is of little interest, the decoration of the room as a whole is an authentic replica of the room that now speaks most clearly of Lady Binning's occupation. Her importance to the history of the house means that this re-creation, while of little architectural significance, has *considerable significance* in historic terms. Much of Fowler's work for the National Trust has been lost, most notably in the 2015 fire at Clandon Park, and it is unlikely that many of his private interiors survive. The rooms at Fenton are therefore relatively rare as an example of a moment in social, economic and design history. As such they have *moderate significance* in historic terms, perhaps justifying the preservation of one or more of his schemes at Fenton.

#### *Communal Values*

4.3.38 By far the most significant aspect of Fenton House in communal terms is the garden. In its present form it attracts large numbers of visitors and is the feature for which the house is now best known. It is of *exceptional significance* to the local and wider communities.

4.3.39 Fenton House is essentially a private house. Its principal communal role is its important, positive contribution to the character and appearance of its historic neighbourhood. However, in addition to the numerous families who lived here, were large numbers of servants, most of whom remain anonymous, their lives and work at Fenton unknown. This aspect of the house's history remains to be more fully explored; through individual life stories, in the fabric of the service areas and in researching how the house was occupied and managed over the years.

4.3.40 Apart from the involvement of a few of its residents in local politics, only when it was acquired by the National Trust did the community obtain a stake in the place. Despite strong support for conservation in the area and resistance to new development in Hampstead, the National Trust's local supporters in the community failed spectacularly when asked to raise funds in the 1970s<sup>161</sup> and it has not been possible to make concerts at the house profitable in recent years. There is clearly scope to develop community involvement with Fenton House.

## 4.4 Significance: The Collections

- 4.4.1 The assessment of significance in collections is necessarily somewhat subjective, taking into account many facets both specific to an object or collection and in relation to other collections, people or stories that need to be told. The historical, technological and aesthetic meaning of objects or collections must be explored. The condition, provenance and stories of the collections themselves, their current and potential future usage and capacity for interpretation allied with the mission and aims of an organisation must also be considered. Broader knowledge and research allowing comparison with similar collections and their place on a local, national and international stage are crucial to placing the collection in context.
- 4.4.2 The methodology used for this document was developed with reference to *Significance 2.0*, a guide to assessing significance by the Collections Council of Australia (2009), the UCL Collections Review toolkit (2010) and conversations with Subhadra Das, a co-author, and the Arts Council England (ACE) guidelines for the Designation Scheme they have inherited from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).
- 4.4.3 The first step was to look at the collection itself, and discuss it with members of the Fenton House team, both staff and volunteers. Records regarding the development of the collection were investigated, so a holistic view of the way in which the collection has been built up over time could be understood. An understanding of the current state of collections in terms of their condition and conservation needs, but also provenance and state of the documentation, was also crucial to understanding the full picture of significance. The wider context of the collection and its place within the local area was considered.
- 4.4.4 It is vital to assess significance with the particular needs and goals of an organisation in mind. As discussed, the National Trust has a broad remit to look after places of historic interest ‘for ever for everyone’<sup>162</sup> which gives a wide scope for the interpretation of significance. In addition, National Trust London-based strategy is very relevant to the future of Fenton House. Such plans are still under development, making it challenging to gauge significance in terms of specific ideas for the future, so various possibilities were considered and options given.
- 4.4.5 We have looked into the significance of the collections, but more work needs to be done on the comparison with other properties and collections and consultation with stakeholders, before a fully considered assessment of significance can be made.
- 4.4.6 Given time pressures for this report comparison with other similar collections has only been undertaken on a limited basis, identifying comparative collections in

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<sup>162</sup> Charity Commission Website: The National Trust For Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty  
<http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=205846&SubsidiaryNumber=0>

preparation for a more complete exploration of similarities and differences with the collections at Fenton. Further work could be undertaken on the comparison of the collections. Once all the background information had been gathered a fuller assessment of significance could be made. The limited time available for this report meant a simple series of criteria were considered as the most straightforward way to gauge the significance of the collections, as follows:

- *Current Significance*: Including historical meaning, local significance, links to Fenton House, aesthetic interest and wider significance
- *Comparative Criteria*: The provenance, acquisition and documentation of collections, the rareness of items and their condition and completeness.
- *Using the collection now and in the future*

### *Lady Binning Collection*

4.4.7 The Lady Binning collection has the strongest links with Fenton House of all those at the property, and as such, can be seen as the most significant for the purposes of this report. While the collection does not have a particular link to Hampstead beyond the Lady Binning connection, she clearly hoped her collection would continue to be displayed at Fenton House beyond her death and made provision for this. Display units and cabinets were built to house the collection to its best advantage under Lady Binning's auspices. For example, she oversaw the building of satinwood china cabinets in 1932, lined with brown velvet and lit electrically to show off the contents.<sup>163</sup> The built-in shelves in her bedroom, and grandmother clock on the landing are as they were in the 1950 *Country Life* article.<sup>164</sup> Particularly relating to the needlework collection, Beck feels that display in the house is a 'domestic setting much akin to that for which it was originally intended'.<sup>165</sup>



7.—AT THE HEAD OF THE STAIRS

Figure 46: The grandmother clock 'at the head of the stairs'<sup>166</sup>

<sup>163</sup> Avery, Tracey, *Four Georges: The decorative art collections of Mrs David Gubbay and Lady Binning*

<sup>164</sup> Nares, Gordon, 'Fenton House, Hampstead' in *Country Life*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1950

<sup>165</sup> Beck, Thomasina *Embroidery at Fenton House*

<sup>166</sup> *ibid* [check this looks like CL 1950]

- 4.4.8 As seen in the Avery article, the collection as a whole reflects an early 20th century revival in Georgian tastes, of which other examples have potentially been reduced by the Clandon Park fire in 2015.<sup>167</sup> Such collections have often not been preserved as female collectors have historically been seen as lesser interest.<sup>168</sup> It is clear that for Lady Binning, the porcelain collection was the ‘pivot about which everything else moves,’<sup>169</sup> and that the porcelain and ceramics are the most significant part of her collection. Included are very high-quality examples of Chinese collections and an appealing and good range of 18th century and later German and English ceramics. While small, some elements bear comparison to other collections which received parts of the Salting bequest, i.e. the Victoria and Albert Museum and British Museum. The needlework also forms a small distinct collection which is very well-regarded and has particular items of significance. Caskets, for example, are highly sort after, and similar examples are held at the Victoria and Albert Museum<sup>170</sup> and Royal Collection.<sup>171</sup> The furniture and picture collections must also be considered as part of the whole collection, but need additional work to understand each part. The collection is provenanced as belonging to Lady Binning, but beyond that has a complex story which is yet to be unravelled despite its coverage in various articles.
- 4.4.9 In summary, Lady Binning’s collection is has some significant pieces and has potential to be ‘used’ and displayed in interesting and enticing ways. The collection is an integral part of the house, as the house was purchased to house it.

#### *The Benton Fletcher Collection*

- 4.4.10 The Benton Fletcher collection is highly significant and has been historically well studied and understood. According to Waitzman, the Benton Fletcher collection ‘contains a remarkable selection of extremely rare or even unique Italian examples’ which, with the 17th century English virginals and the Royal Collection Ruckers harpsichord, ‘cast an important and informative light on the practice of music in England both before and during the 18th century’. She suggests that even though Benton Fletcher’s collecting probably wasn’t so intentioned, together the instruments allow one to ‘trace the elaborate transition from harpsichord to pianoforte in this country.’<sup>172</sup>
- 4.4.11 The collection has been at Fenton House since before its opening to the public by the National Trust in 1952, but that is the only link to the place. Benton Fletcher ‘prized these instruments simply for what they were, what they represented and what they could do.’<sup>173</sup> That is, he was happy for his instruments to be placed together at any location where they could be played, studied and used for performances. The fact that additional instruments have been brought to Fenton

<sup>167</sup>Details on collection salvage at Clandon Park <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/article-1355895325746/>

<sup>168</sup> Avery, Tracey, *Four Georges: The decorative art collections of Mrs David Gubbay and Lady Binning*

<sup>169</sup> Tessa Wild, Curator, Personal Communication September 2015

<sup>170</sup> <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O11096/embroidered-casket-edlin-martha/>

<sup>171</sup> <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/39240/stumpwork-casket>

<sup>172</sup> Mimi Waitzman, *Early Keyboard Instruments: The Benton Fletcher Collection at Fenton House*, 1999

<sup>173</sup> Mimi Waitzman, *Early Keyboard Instruments: The Benton Fletcher Collection at Fenton House*, 1999



House is in line with Benton Fletcher's vision, but they are not part of, and should not be viewed as part of, the collection. In particular the Royal Collection Ruckers is a particularly fine example, but it is not part of the Benton Fletcher collection and there are severe limitations on how much it can be played. This means that it also does not fit with the ethos of the collection.

- 4.4.12 While the provenance of the instruments is in most cases unclear, the link with Benton Fletcher is evident for each part of the collection. Their condition is generally good, and they receive constant attention each week to keep them in a playable condition. Specific examples are very rare, such as the earliest Broadwood. Moreover, although English 18th century harpsichords survive in relatively large numbers, huge demand having led to mass-production, they have been historically undervalued and rarely copied, which will inevitably lead to a future shortage. Currently the collection is played on a regular basis, albeit less than was previously the case, and without a link to a local music college. This was a crucial requirement of Benton Fletcher's bequest.
- 4.4.13 In summary the Benton Fletcher collection contains a number of highly important instruments, and as an articulation of Benton Fletcher's ideas about ancient music and of his particular interests, it is of exceptional significance. However, the collection's importance to Fenton is very limited, and it is primarily a matter of practicality and historical convenience. When played, the instruments make a positive contribution to the visitor experience at Fenton House, but this is not because they are part of Benton Fletcher's collection; other individual, playable ancient instruments could have the same effect. The house accommodates the instruments and while they enhance the overall interest of the place they contribute little to the understanding of the house and they are not ideal as furnishings. Moreover the other musical instruments that have been housed alongside the Benton Fletcher Collection add little or nothing either to the significance of original collection or to Fenton House, although some are individually significant. The significance of the collection would not be harmed to any significant degree if it was located in another suitable place.

#### *Peter Barkworth Collection*

- 4.4.14 The Barkworth collection includes several very good works, and is of interest as a whole, collected by Peter Barkworth himself. As a group they represent a collection chosen following personal taste, much like that of Lady Binning, and as such have personal significance. Of particular interest in terms of Fenton House are those of the local area, Hampstead and North London. The provenance, acquisition and documentation of the collection are good, although there was initially some confusion in the number of works included in the bequest.
- 4.4.15 In summary, the Barkworth collection includes some significant and interesting works. Peter Barkworth wanted to ensure his whole collection would always be on display, unless conservation issues made that impossible. Preferably the works should be displayed as a group at Fenton House but if that were to become impossible, they could be shown, as a group, at another National Trust property. There is no provision in the will to split the bequest.

## 4.5 Summary Statement of Significance of Fenton House

### 4.5.1 Fenton House is of *exceptional significance*:

- in architectural and historic terms as a rare, substantially unaltered, and early example of what was once a relatively common type of high quality suburban house
- for all of the surviving Period 2, 3, 3.1 and 3.2 fabric, decorative features (including hidden layers of paintwork), fixtures and fittings (such as cupboards and shelves)
- for all of the Period 4 (or 4.1) fabric including sash windows, loggia cornices, chimney pieces and doors

### 4.5.2 Fenton House is of *considerable significance* for:

- views of the house from Holly Hill and Hampstead Grove
- Lady Binning's bedroom

### 4.5.3 Fenton House is of *moderate significance* for:

- the Period 5.2 work to the Servants Hall (B7) and the Oriental Room (G7)
- the archaeological potential of the site
- the Period 5.3 work to G6, F1, F7, F10 and F1

### 4.5.4 Fenton House is of *little significance* for:

- the decorative work of John Fowler
- the Period 5.3 work to the Rockingham Room (F8)
- the Period 5.3 cabinets in G1 and G2

### 4.5.5 The chimney-piece in the Porcelain Room (G6), and the bathroom wing, are of *neutral significance*

### 4.5.6 The Coach House is of *considerable significance* for its remaining Period 2 structure. The alterations of Periods 5.2 and 5.3 and the Period 7 interiors are of *little significance*.

### 4.5.7 Fenton House Gardens are of *exceptional significance* for:

- Earthworks, garden walls and ironwork gateway mostly dating from the reign of Queen Anne
- Their value to the community

### 4.5.8 Fenton House Gardens are of *considerable significance* for

- Major earthmoving and retaining wall building in the early 19th century

### 4.5.9 Fenton House Gardens are of *moderate significance* for:

- Alterations by the National Trust in the 1980s

## 4.6 Summary Statement of Significance of the Collections to Fenton House

- 4.6.1 For the purposes of this conservation management plan, as a tool to inform future management and decision-making, the significance of each collection to Fenton House is as important as its intrinsic significance. The collections cannot be evaluated against the same established criteria as the building, but here we give a summary indication of the intrinsic significance of each collection, and its relationship to Fenton House, based on the guidance set out in 4.4.2 above. This assessment should not be regarded as a formal evaluation, but simply an indication of their relative significance in the context of this plan.
- 4.6.2 The Lady Binning Collection is of *considerable* intrinsic significance and includes a number of objects of *exceptional* importance. It is of *exceptional* significance to Fenton House, which was acquired by Lady Binning principally for the purpose of housing the collection.
- 4.6.3 The Benton Fletcher Collection is of *considerable/exceptional* intrinsic significance. It is of *little significance* to Fenton House
- 4.6.4 The Peter Barkworth Collection is of *moderate* intrinsic significance. It is of *little significance* to Fenton House
- 4.6.5 The Bacon/Nicholson Collection is of *moderate/considerable* intrinsic significance. It is of *neutral significance* to Fenton House
- 4.6.6 The Fenton Portrait and miniature of Margaret Fenton are of *moderate* intrinsic significance. They are of *exceptional significance* to Fenton House.
- 4.6.7 The intrinsic significance of the Goff/Dora Jordan Collection has not been fully assessed because of its specialist nature. However, it is of *neutral* significance to Fenton House and the large scale of the pictures could be regarded as *intrusive*.
- 4.6.8 Further research is required to establish the significance of the numerous small objects and their relationship with the house.

## 5 ISSUES AND POLICIES

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The context of this Conservation Plan is set out in detail at the beginning of Section 1, addressing ‘Understanding and Significance’.
- 5.1.2 The purpose of this section of the Plan is to inform and guide the conservation and management of the house. Any future management decisions should be informed by the assessment of significance and the policies set out in the plan. In order to achieve this, it is important that the plan is adopted by The National Trust and used by all those involved in managing the property in its local context.
- 5.1.3 The plan should be a living document, which is updated and amended as new information comes to light. In order to ensure that this takes place regularly and systematically, an electronic master copy should be held in the Property Manager’s office. The Property Manager should also be responsible for updating it. However, a distinction should be made between holding this responsibility and undertaking the updating process itself, which is likely to be best carried out by a member of staff, contractor or volunteer with relevant building conservation skills.
- 5.1.4 The conservation plan is intended to be a high level document setting out the long-term strategy for the property. In order to deliver strategic change an implementation plan will be necessary. A management plan is required to ensure that the significance of the property is sustained on an on-going basis.

*Policy 1: Public access to and enjoyment of Fenton House, proportionate to its national interest and compatible with sustaining its historic fabric, will be maintained and enhanced.*

*Policy 2: The assessments of significance set out in this conservation plan will be used to inform decisions about the future management of the Fenton House.*

*Policy 3: The conservation policies recommended in this conservation plan will be endorsed by the National Trust as a guide to the future development and management of Fenton House.*

*Policy 4: Responsibility for updating the conservation plan will ultimately rest with the Property Manager.*

*Policy 5: Following any major physical interventions, this plan should be updated to reflect the changes.*

- 5.1.5 It is assumed that the conservation of Fenton House will be in general conformity with Historic England's *Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance 2008*, which informs the policies set out here.
- 5.1.6 The policies set out in this plan have also been informed by the National Trust's own Conservation Principles. These are
- Principle 1: *Significance* - We will ensure that all decisions are informed by an appropriate level of understanding of the significance and 'Spirit of Place' of each of our properties, and why we and others value them.
  - Principle 2: *Integration* - We will take an integrated approach to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, reconciling the full spectrum of interests involved.
  - Principle 3: *Change* - We will anticipate and work with change that affects our conservation interests, embracing, accommodating or adapting where appropriate, and mitigating, preventing or opposing where there is potential adverse impact.
  - Principle 4: *Access* - We will conserve natural and cultural heritage to enable sustainable access for the benefit of society, gaining the support of the widest range of people by promoting understanding, enjoyment and participation in our work.
  - Principle 5: *Partnership* - We will develop our skills and experience in partnership with others to promote and improve the conservation of natural and cultural heritage now and for the future.
  - Principle 6: *Accountability* - We will be transparent and accountable by recording our decisions and sharing knowledge to enable the best conservation decision to be taken both today and by future generations.

## 5.2 Statutory and policy frameworks affecting the site and its setting

### *Statutory designations*

- 5.2.1 The significance of Fenton House is recognised by a number of statutory designations. The house itself is listed grade I. The southern garden gates, railings and garden walls, are listed at grade II. Four garden statues and a cistern in the grounds are included in a separate listing at grade II, although three of these statues have been stolen, only the Shepherdess remaining. The statues and cistern are understood to have been brought to the house by the National Trust. The Coach House is also listed in its own right (as Fenton House Garage) at grade II. The whole site is within the London Borough of Camden's Hampstead Conservation Area (Church Row/Hampstead Grove sub-area).

### *Listed Building Consent*

- 5.2.2 Listed building consent (LBC) is required for all works affecting the special architectural or historic character of a listed building,<sup>174</sup> both internal and external, whether or not a particular feature affected is specifically mentioned in the list description. As Fenton House is a Grade I building, relatively minor works have the potential to affect the special character of the building so although LBC may not be required for routine repairs, the advice of Historic England and the local

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<sup>174</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990, Ch. II, Pt I, s.7ff.



authority's conservation officer should be sought in advance of all proposed works. Although the associated structures are listed grade II, their group value with the house means that the same principles should be adhered to in relation to works to the garden walls, coach house and garden ornaments.

- 5.2.3 In addition to establishing control over works to listed buildings themselves, Section 66 (l) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that *'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State, shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'*

#### *Planning Permission*

- 5.2.4 Listed building consent is a different regime from planning control and does not supersede the need to apply for planning permission. Where works or use changes constituting development are proposed, planning permission must be sought in parallel with listed building consent.
- 5.2.5 National planning policy, for plan-making and decision-making affecting designated heritage assets and their settings (as well as undesignated heritage assets) is set out in the *National Planning Policy Planning Framework* (NPPF),<sup>175</sup> published in March 2012, supported by the *Planning Practice Guidance* published (online) in March 2014.<sup>176</sup>
- 5.2.6 The over-arching aim of NPPF is that there should be *'a presumption in favour of sustainable development'* (para. 14). One of the three dimensions of sustainable development is environmental and this includes *'protecting and enhancing the ... the built and historic environment'* (para.7). Included in its core planning principles is the statement that planning should *'conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations'* (para. 17)
- 5.2.7 The house and its setting, are 'designated heritage assets' by virtue of their statutory listing. Designated heritage assets are subject to the provisions of Section 12 of the NPPF, which sets out relevant national planning policy for such heritage assets and their settings.
- 5.2.8 Section 12 of the NPPF, *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, adopts a 'significance-based' approach. Its policies relate to all 'heritage assets', elements of the historic environment defined as having *'a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions'*. 'Significance' is defined as *'The value of the heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.'*<sup>177</sup> Heritage assets include, but are not limited to,

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<sup>175</sup> *National Planning Policy Planning Framework*, Department of Communities & Local Government, 2012

<sup>176</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

<sup>177</sup> NPPF Annex 2: Glossary

formally designated assets, such as scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas and registered parks and gardens.

- 5.2.9 NPPF advises local planning authorities that: ‘When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification... Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably ... grade I and II\* listed buildings ... should be wholly exceptional’ (para 132).
- 5.2.10 The significance of the settings of heritage assets and the impact of development on them is recognised at para. 128 of the NPPF. It defines ‘setting’ (at p56) as *‘The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance, or may be neutral.’* This is relevant to the Fenton House because, in addition to the heritage significance, its garden is of significance in its own right and the garden and townscape settings contribute to the significance of the house.

*Local Planning Policy and other guidance*

- 5.2.11 Local planning policy for the historic environment is contained in LB Camden's Local Development Framework as set out in: Core Strategy (2010) Policy CS14; Development Policies 2015-2025 Policy DP25 and Camden Design Guidance CDG1 Design (2015) Chapter 3 Heritage. These policies will form the basis on which the Borough will determine applications for development.
- 5.2.12 The *Hampstead Conservation Area Character Appraisal* (2002) has been adopted by the Council as "additional planning guidance" and as such it is a material consideration in the determination of any application for planning permission within the conservation area.
- 5.2.13 Fenton House is within the Hampstead Archaeological Priority Area, which covers the core of the medieval settlement. Within archaeological priority areas and on other sites identified as having archaeological potential, an archaeological desk based assessment report and/or field evaluation may be required to determine the impact of development upon archaeological remains.

***Policy 6: Listed building consent will be obtained for any works affecting the character of Fenton House and its Coach House.***

***Policy 7: Planning permission will be obtained for any works constituting development.***

### 5.3 Overall strategy for conservation and presentation

- 5.3.1 The National Trust aims to 'To look after special places of historic interest or natural beauty permanently for the benefit of the nation across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, for ever for everyone.'<sup>178</sup> Of its houses, the Trust's *Playing Our Part* strategy document (2015) states: 'Historic houses are quite unlike museums in that their significance is in the whole, and not just in their parts. They are laid down over time by successive occupiers, like seams of coal. While we should celebrate their survival, this is not enough. We want our visitors, our supporters to understand our love for places as much as we do. We should continue to seize the opportunity for finding relevance for our visitors. Relevance is about revealing contemporary currency in places and things, and providing pleasure, fun and an enthusiasm for learning. While in some places, dynamism can come through the way we encourage people to experience them, in others we need new presentations, uses beyond just looking at them, to reveal their spirit of place.'
- 5.3.2 In essence the National Trust wants to look after places of historic interest and make them accessible and engaging to all. In addition, for historic homes such as Fenton House, the National Trust aims to reveal the stories behind the house to allow visitors to understand such places and their relevance in the world today. This remit is broad and can be challenging to work towards when examining specific collections and their place within a particular National Trust property. Recent work among London National Trust properties has approached the challenge of targeting Londoners. Those working at such properties are very conscious of the need to attract London audiences, encouraging more local visitors and those from less represented visitor groups.
- 5.3.3 In this context, the over-riding strategic issue affecting Fenton House is the tension between its status as a museum collection of objects and as a significant historic house in its own right. It receives a relatively low number of visitors compared with other Trust properties, and there is a broad consensus that it could and should attract greater numbers. This raises the fundamental management issue of whether- and if so how- it should be presented in order to do so. Associated with this is the question of how to use the parts of the property that are either inaccessible to the public or relatively under-used, including the basement and the Coach House.
- 5.3.4 Given the variety of people and collections associated with Fenton House, there are many potential directions that future interpretation could take. The current displays are arguably very staid and static: future planning needs to make Fenton House and its collections a destination for London audiences. To compete with other London attractions there needs to be careful consideration not only of

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<sup>178</sup> Charity Commission Website: The National Trust For Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty  
<http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=205846&SubsidiaryNumber=0>

interpretation and how to tell stories of the house but its general presentation and wider programming.<sup>179</sup>

- 5.3.5 The foregoing assessment of relative significance evaluated the elements of the house and collections and concluded that the house and substantial parts of the collections are of high significance, but that within both house and collections there are elements that have much more significance than others. It is also clear that some aspects of the collections are highly significant intrinsically but have little connection with Fenton House. At present the experience of visiting the house is dominated by the collections. For some visitors the collections may get in the way of their enjoyment and understanding of the house, and for those who come primarily to see the collections the house may not be the best setting in which to appreciate them.
- 5.3.6 In summary, Fenton House contains competing elements of high significance, which, potentially, diminish appreciation and understanding of each; but there is considerable scope for re-presenting the house. The following sections set out the issues that must be addressed in order to resolve this tension and better represent the house to the benefit of both house and collections; and to make both more attractive to visitors. Additionally it is considered that the house and stables have great potential to provide better understanding, interpretation, access and facilities for visitors.

#### *Management*

- 5.3.7 The staff divide their time between Fenton House and 2 Willow Road, and so have little time to spend at Fenton or for planning and initiating many activities, although they work hard and conscientiously to make the most of the property. The volunteers are crucial for opening the house, but the staff have had few resources for their development, and they could be more effective.

## **5.4 The House**

#### *Issues: structure*

- 5.4.1 As a National Trust property, Fenton House has the benefit of the Trust's well-established systems for conservation and repair of historic buildings. However, the 2011 Quinquennial Inspection (QQI) report suggested that a number of repairs recommended in 2006 had not been carried out. This is a cause for concern. The necessary repairs should be addressed as a matter of urgency. A clear commitment should then be made to act on the recommendations of the current and future QQI's and the resources to do so should be identified for each forthcoming quinquennium.
- 5.4.2 In addition to the matters identified in the QQI, concerns were also raised about the vulnerability of the house to fire as a result of the lack of horizontal compartmentation between floors, in the voids behind the panelling and especially in the voids between the chimney stacks and the external walls, which on the west

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<sup>179</sup> Sara Nicholls, House & Gardens Manager, Personal Communication October/November 2015

rise unchecked through much of the height of the house. A fire breaking out adjacent to these voids would tend to spread very rapidly through the building.

- 5.4.3 The extent to which the house can be adapted to accommodate visitors without damage to its heritage significance is limited by its size, its plan and by the lack of access for visitors with mobility difficulties. In the first instance floor loadings should be tested to give an indication of their capacity to carry significantly greater visitor numbers.
- 5.4.4 The house raises few unusual maintenance or repair issues. The traditional repair techniques that the Trust is well used to providing are more than adequate for Fenton House. However, its construction, with a timber cornice and largely timber linings to the internal walls, makes it especially vulnerable to the consequences of deferring routine maintenance and minor external repair, especially to the roof or rainwater systems. This is reflected in local outbreaks of rot to panelling.
- 5.4.5 The external brickwork has been repaired with various different techniques over the years. The late-18th- or early-19th-century tuck-pointing has survived in patches but there are no walls where it is complete. As far as possible it should be preserved, and repaired in small areas if necessary. It is not considered that it is so central to the external character of the house that it should be reproduced over large areas. A suitably coloured lime mortar should suffice for any necessary repointing and most brickwork repairs. Hard, dark 19th century pointing has been used in many areas. Although such hard pointing can damage the brickwork or cause damp retention, there is no obvious evidence that this is the case at Fenton House, and it would best be left until it begins to drop out, when it could be replaced with a softer lime-based mix. Pointing should, in any case, not be removed mechanically.
- 5.4.6 It would be useful to know why the panels on the west elevation were rendered, and to evaluate their impact on the structure in that context. Meanwhile, as their removal could cause damage, they should be left *in situ* until they fail unless there is a compelling reason, identified by the Trust's architect or surveyor, to remove them.

*Issues: Change*

- 5.4.7 Scope for structural change in the ground, first and attic floors of the house is very limited. The historic plans of these floors are substantially intact and the whole of each floor (with the minor exceptions of store rooms etc.) is important to the interpretation and enjoyment of the house by visitors.
- 5.4.8 The basement is under-used. It contains several rooms that could be 'dressed' to show their historic uses and opened to visitors. Historic features here include the early shelves and doors, and the wine cellars (which might possibly be open occasionally by appointment). It could provide visitor facilities, particularly the historic and attractive kitchen B6 and the former servants' hall B7, one of which could possibly serve as a cafe. Consideration could be given to re-establishing



access to the garden via room B7. The modernised area including the former flat and the office (rooms B2, B3 and B6), has little of historic interest and is well suited to its present use for National Trust service and management functions.

*Policy 8: Conservation, repair and alteration of the House, outbuildings and their setting should as far as possible preserve all of the fabric, features and spaces identified as being of exceptional or considerable heritage significance.*

*Policy 9: Reversal or removal of alterations identified as being of less than considerable significance may be appropriate if there is a sound operational reason for doing so, or the benefit of further revealing or reinforcing elements of exceptional significance decisively outweighs the loss.*

*Policy 10: All repairs and alterations to Fenton House and its outbuildings will be assessed against and comply with National Trust and conservation principles and the relevant national and local policies for the conservation of the historic environment.*

*Policy 11: Quinquennial surveys following the National Trust's established policies should be carried out by a suitably qualified and experienced professional and the recommendations of each survey promptly acted on within the following five-year period.*

*Policy 12: A review of the vulnerability of Fenton House to fire and other disasters should be carried out by suitably qualified professionals and any subsequent recommendations carried out.*

*Policy 13: Consideration should be given to better use of the basement, particularly for visitor facilities, having regard for its potential to give access the gardens.*

## **5.5 The Collections**

### *General condition*

5.5.1 This plan included only a limited, broad brush assessment of collections. However, we have discussed the care and condition of the collections with the house staff and with Gill Nason and Rebecca Ellison who, between them, are the conservators involved with the collection over a number of years. As a whole the collection is currently reasonably well kept, although the ceramics on open display are somewhat dusty in places and some of the needlework and pictures have potentially too much light exposure. Apart from the musical instruments, no remedial conservation has been carried out for some time and some of the collections, such as the textiles, have not had a thorough conservation needs survey.

- 5.5.2 The time available for housekeeping is less than NT recommendations of a house of this size. This means that certain non-routine jobs are never undertaken, for example a deep clean in all areas of the house. This could impact on the cleaning of some specific parts of the collections such as books, textiles and frames. It also increases the risk of damage from insect infestations. There is also the risk that objects will need specialist conservation cleaning if they are not regularly cleaned as appropriate for the material.
- 5.5.3 There has been no funding for remedial conservation for at least 4 years, except for the musical instruments, as the budget has been severely reduced. Superficially the collections look cared for but there are some issues such as repair of furniture joints, replacement of veneers, repair of carpets which should be solved so that they do not become more severe. For example, a survey of the furniture was carried out in January 2009 with conservation recommendations but no work has been commissioned. Some of the collections have been assessed for condition and preservation needs etc. but the textiles, metalwork and pictures have not had a full survey.

*Monitoring and control: light*

- 5.5.4 The collections are well monitored. The staff carry out one-off monitoring using an Elsec meter and use blinds and curtains. There are 3 blue wool dosimeters in the Drawing Room, Green Room and Rockingham Room. The Green Room and Rockingham Room are considered to be highly light sensitive (baseline 150,000 lux/hours). The lux/hours in the Green Room are slightly over the baseline, but much higher in Rockingham (286,000 lux hours). The Drawing Room is considered moderately sensitive with a base line of (600,000 lux hours) and the monitoring shows that the light exposure is lower than the baseline.

*Monitoring and control: relative humidity and temperature:*

- 5.5.5 Most of the instruments are keyboard instruments kept under playing condition under terms of the bequest. This means that they are particularly vulnerable to changes in RH. RH fluctuations not only affect the playing pitch but also risk damage to the many sensitive parts of the instruments, such as soundboards and bellies. Low RH is of major concern when keyboard instruments are kept under the tension required for playing condition. As a result the NT Policy of maintaining an RH between 40-65% RH about 90% of the time has been narrowed to 50-65%. The Hanwell Calibration Report of 2015 says that the conditions have been maintained for c. 70- 80 % of the time except in the SW attic. This seems to be primarily due to heating system failure.
- 5.5.6 The insect pest management (IPM) system is in place and the house staff check for and record insects in traps. A small number of insects have been seen including silver fish, webbing clothes moth and carpet beetle larvae. The numbers are small, but the reduction of housekeeping time and sensitivity of some of the collections means that the checks should continue to assess whether the number of insects is increasing.

### *Mechanical damage*

- 5.5.7 The size of the rooms and the house in general means that there is a risk of damage to the fabric of the building and the objects when the house is busy. The rooms are relatively small and the damage is likely to be from people brushing past, or leaning against, paintings, and furniture of the walls. There is some evidence of wear in the upper rooms, but generally it appears that the visitors are experienced historic house visitors and are careful not to touch the objects.

## **5.6 Presentation**

### *The House*

- 5.6.1 The key challenge in the presentation of Fenton House is to strike a balance between the historic house and the collections. The problem from the visitor's point of view may be summed up by one who asked the author: "why is it [the house] here?" The usual narrative of a National Trust property answers this question through the story of the builders and occupiers of a house. Fenton House does not, at the moment, tell its story; although it has the potential to be every bit as fascinating, and perhaps more accessible, than that of many other, grander houses. Fenton is a house in which visitors might indulge that most popular and delightful of fantasies: seeing themselves or their forebears living there. Yet it barely attempts to stimulate that pleasure.
- 5.6.2 The collections are almost overwhelming, and there are many objects that are hard to distinguish from each other. Again one might ask: why are they here? Which ones should I look at and why? These questions are not well answered, and the visitors who get most from the house are probably those who are best informed when they arrive, or who have sought it out because of a pre-existing interest in one or other aspect of the collections. This situation does little to encourage new visitors.
- 5.6.3 Since it was acquired by the National Trust, the house has been shown to the public primarily as a museum occupying a series of semi-domestic spaces. To a great extent the collections at Fenton have arrived there by accident, rather than design. Lady Binning may have chosen Fenton as the home for her collections, but this was a choice based more on her personal taste (and perhaps what was available on the property market), than any particular affinity between the building and the objects. The Benton Fletcher collection has even less cause to be at Fenton: the Trust has acknowledged that its initial presence here was essentially the result of financial considerations, which are outside the scope of this report.
- 5.6.4 As a result, where the Trust might present an aristocratic great house in the context a continuous narrative of family history, or a more modest property through the lives of a typical occupier or trade, Fenton House lacks a clear story. At the same time, while the collections contain some notable objects and pictures, it is not always easy to understand their significance or even appreciate their quality in this setting. Several rooms are named for the collections they house, as would be the case in a traditional museum, but their function and qualities within the historic house are not always clear as a result. Moreover, this approach is

increasingly being reconsidered today, in favour of greater contextualisation. With a better balance between house and contents, Fenton House has the potential to complement its contents to a much greater extent.

- 5.6.5 The Trust has, of course, already made an attempt to re-present Fenton House and its collections more accessibly, with a greater focus on its domestic qualities. John Fowler produced a series of 'domestic' interiors for Fenton, 'presenting it as a fashionably decorated and lived-in house'<sup>180</sup> of the 1970s; in line with what might be called the SPAB consensus that repairs and recreations should be visible as such. Historic 'stage sets' are ubiquitous in historic buildings open to the public and they are invaluable as interpretative tools. The problem at Fenton is that Fowler's work does not succeed in interpreting the house and nor is it easy to appreciate - as an example of modern interior design, for example- in itself.
- 5.6.6 Visitors' comments underline the complexity of these issues; revealing that the same features can both enrich and confuse the experience of visiting Fenton. The collections are crucial to making Fenton House special. Comments from 2015 visitor surveys reflect the homely feel of the house: 'it was like coming to his [a staff member's] house'; 'the scale of the house made it attractive'; 'Fenton House felt like a family home, we were able to freely walk around all the rooms with no restrictions'; 'The house and gardens are a really beautiful, tranquil surprise in the middle of London.'<sup>181</sup> This is reinforced by the 2015 visitor survey which returned high scores for the 'Warm and Friendly' and 'Relaxed and Informal' criteria.<sup>182</sup>
- 5.6.7 However, while the collections are both engaging and interesting, they also present challenges.<sup>183</sup> Leigh Sneade, House Steward, notes that parts of the collection are routinely overlooked: the musical instruments tend to take centre stage and there are insufficient links between the different collections.<sup>184</sup> Visitor comments from April to September 2015 are split on how well the house makes sense. For example, one commented that: 'For me, the house lacked atmosphere and 'grandness'. Another said that: 'Fenton had little to capture my imagination'. Another that: 'The top floor is used to store musical instruments (and I understand the reasons why), but it is a shame, it detracts from rooms that could be dressed to suit the house.' Another said 'Either it has to be an instrument museum or a house and not both.' Other comments suggested that there is considerable potential for better interpretation. Whilst live music has been noted above as adding to the appeal of the house, the number of instruments was seen as more problematic: 'Gardens lovely, but house, although well kept, had no 'heart'. I felt no connection with the people who had lived there. I was very disappointed to see so many piano type instruments in inappropriate places in the house. Especially the ones in the attics. Surely they could be better displayed elsewhere. Here they seem neglected.'<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> Fenton House Visitor Feedback March-September 2015

<sup>182</sup> Fenton House Visitor Feedback March-September 2015

<sup>183</sup> *ibid*

<sup>184</sup> Leigh Sneade, FH House Steward, Personal Communication September 2015

<sup>185</sup> Fenton House Visitor Feedback March-September 2015

5.6.8 It is likely that the complexity of overlapping collections and lack of coherent interpretation which led to visitors in the 2015 visitor survey scoring their visit as weak for 'Emotional Impact', 'Great Story' and 'Presentation.'<sup>186</sup> The story element was brought out in the redevelopment of Lady Binning's bedroom in 2004, which has improved the visitor experience; volunteers report that it is a particular highlight for many visitors. However it raises an issue, as developing stories about Lady Binning goes against Lady Binning's hopes for the house: for it to become a showcase for her collection.

5.6.9 As has previously been discussed, in 1952 Lady Binning bequeathed Fenton House and much of her collection to the National Trust. However she did not leave much of the 'paraphernalia of daily living',<sup>187</sup> leaving some of the rooms rather bare. The decision was taken to bring the Benton Fletcher collection in to fill the gaps, both in the house and also financially as neither endowment was sufficient on its own. However, according to the guidebook, 'early photographs of the Benton Fletcher instruments at Fenton House show them sitting awkwardly amongst Lady Binning's possessions.'<sup>188</sup> The 1973 John Fowler refit aimed to, among other things, make the porcelain and instrument collections sit together more harmoniously, and to a large extent has succeeded in that goal. However, it can be argued that the Fowler refit, while successful in giving the collection a decent setting, actually adds yet another story to the mix. The redisplay is not in any way 'authentic' and doesn't follow either Lady Binning's original plans or reflect any of the previous owners and tenants' use of the house.

#### *Lady Binning's Collection*

5.6.10 Currently the collection is on display throughout the house and very little is in storage. While some items are displayed according to Lady Binning's original plans, more have been reimagined through John Fowler's 1970s refit. Visitors to the house really enjoy many aspects of the collection, including the porcelain, figurines and needlework, as reflected in the visitor feedback. However, in places the displays can appear rather overpowering, particularly the large number of pieces of ceramic. However, more interpretation would allow the idea of collections and collecting in general, and individual items or groups, be better explained and make more sense to the visiting public.

5.6.11 In general, interpretation is somewhat limited; laminated cards in each room have only a small amount of information relating to specific items and what they are; there is very little about the collection as a whole or Lady Binning. A visitor who came in July 2015 said, 'There could be more detailed information in the house. The room cards tended to point out the obvious, and I didn't get much of a feel for the house or family's history, apart from that the Lady really liked porcelain.'<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Fenton House Visitor Feedback March-September 2015; Brief for a Historic Buildings Analysis and CMP for Fenton House and Garden, 2015:3

<sup>187</sup> Statement of Significance, 2003, National Trust

<sup>188</sup> Fenton House Guide-book, National Trust 2000 (revised edition 2011)

<sup>189</sup> Fenton House Visitor Feedback March-September 2015



Additionally there are contradictory points and errors on some of the cards,<sup>190</sup> plus at least one visitor found there were insufficient copies to go around.

- 5.6.12 While Lady Binning did provide both the house and funds for the ongoing display of her collection there are very few details in writing of what she actually wanted the National Trust to do with her collection. This gives a relatively free reign to potential redisplay, although it is important that what is known of her wishes is considered.

*Benton Fletcher*

- 5.6.13 Visitors to the house on days when the instruments were played find it integral to their visit; 'discovering that it was a real person playing on the harpsichord was a joy', 'The best thing about the house was the playing of the instruments which we hadn't expected at all. I hope we can go back another time and listen to different instruments being played. Very enjoyable and John Henry (if that's the right name) was entertaining, informative and very good to listen to'. However, other comments are much less complimentary, '[Needs] a more interesting and informative presentation of the many instruments some of which seemed to be simply stored there (particularly in the attic rooms)', 'Gardens lovely, but house, although well kept had no 'heart'. I felt no connection with the people who had lived there. I was very disappointed to see so many piano type instruments in inappropriate places in the house. Especially the ones in the attics. Surely they could be better displayed elsewhere. Here they seem neglected.'<sup>191</sup>
- 5.6.14 Other similar collections are held at the Horniman Museum, the Royal Academy of Music Museum, the Musical Instrument Museum in the University of Edinburgh national collection and the Cobbe Collection at the Hatchlands National Trust property. All hold regular concerts.<sup>192</sup> Musical instruments can be a challenging type of museum object. They are designed to be functional and play music, with moving parts and requiring physical interaction in order to 'fulfil the purpose for which they were made.'<sup>193</sup> Curators have an obligation to 'bring them to life'<sup>194</sup> but the Benton Fletcher collection is unusual in that almost all the instruments are played. The active playing of the instruments is boosted by an argument from Benton Fletcher's life time, that early music should be played on authentic instruments, and transposition to more modern instruments was not an effective way of continuing the tradition. It is very challenging to produce replica instruments which sound like the originals. However, it must also be acknowledged that musical instruments, even with careful upkeep, do have a finite lifespan. According to Waitzman, 'the playing of original instruments is philosophically unsound...the fidelity of the resemblance of a working antique to

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<sup>190</sup> Fenton House interpretation card, Porcelain Room

<sup>191</sup> Fenton House Visitor Feedback March-September 2015

<sup>192</sup> National Trust Website, Hatchlands <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hatchlands-park/lists/the-cobbe-collection-at-hatchlands-park>

<sup>193</sup> Andrew Lamb 'To play or not to play: the ethics of musical instrument conservation' *Conservation Journal* April 1995 Issue 15

<sup>194</sup> Martin Cullingford 'The world's greatest musical instrument collections' *Gramophone Magazine*, 2003

the object as new, can never be better than highly conjectural. Furthermore, the continued use of the object degrades that which may remain of its originality.’<sup>195</sup>

5.6.15 The music played at Fenton can greatly enhance the visitor experience on Wednesday afternoon and the concerts held monthly during the summer open the house to a different audience and use. However the limitations on playing time mean this is only an occasional visitor experience and significant space constraints at Fenton House mean it is very challenging to move or reorganise the Benton Fletcher collection. Ultimately the musical instruments dominate the house and other collections to their detriment for the majority of visitors, particularly given the limited interpretation available.<sup>196</sup>

5.6.16 Benton Fletcher’s intention in leaving his collection and properties to the National Trust was to ensure that early music continued to be studied, played and performed after his death. He intended that his collection of instruments should be used in the continuation and promotion of early keyboard music for future generations. The location of the collection was not important, the most important element was for the collection to be utilised. Visitors report that the live music in the house is attractive but the size of the collection is overpowering for a relatively small house. The instruments dominate the visitor experience and confuse the interpretation.

#### *The Barkworth Collection*

5.6.17 The Barkworth collection is currently largely on display downstairs in Fenton House, where the small pictures and idiosyncratic images work well with other collections on display. A visitor in August 2015 commented, ‘felt that Peter Barkworth would have been so pleased to see his superb collection of paintings displayed in such a lovely setting and they enhanced the House.’<sup>197</sup> A key challenge with the collection is that the terms of the bequest mean all pictures should, as much as possible, be on display at all times, giving curatorial staff little flexibility.

#### *Presentation: Options*

5.6.18 The presentation and interpretation of future interpretation at Fenton House could take many different directions. There is no single narrative that should clearly dominate and very few absolute constraints on the use and display of the collections. All the collections should be under review and three key questions should be asked of each:

- what do they add to the current house?
- what could they add to a future interpretation?
- what requirements must the National Trust fulfil in their future use and display?

5.6.19 Ultimately any re-presentation should aim to break down the tensions between collections and building so that they complement, rather than compete with each

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<sup>195</sup> Mimi Waitzman, *Early Keyboard Instruments: The Benton Fletcher Collection at Fenton House*, 1999

<sup>196</sup> Fenton House Visitor Feedback March-September 2015

<sup>197</sup> Fenton House Visitor Feedback March-September 2015

other, with parallel narratives illuminating both. The Benton Fletcher collection does not 'belong' to Fenton House and given the confusion created by such a profusion of collections, its moving elsewhere would allow the story of the house itself and those who lived there to come to the fore. While this would be a significant step to take, it is the most obvious possibility for creating the space to providing a clear and coherent 'story' in the house.

- 5.6.20 Fenton could become a 'House of collections' representing a power-house of British individuals, their idiosyncrasies and predilections, rather than dominated by instruments as currently. Another very powerful suggestion, particularly given the limited and varied information known about each inhabitant of the house, would be for it to become an 'urban house of change', reflecting the personalities of all those who lived at Fenton: a house lived in by numerous different people over the years. This would tie in with the National Trust's London proposals, potentially making the house more relatable to modern life and Hampstead now. This would necessitate a reduction in the number of keyboards, and possibly a greater degree of selection from Lady Binning's collections, matched by a much clearer explanation of their significance and historic context.
- 5.6.21 This approach could aim to give each room a more individual character, based on its historic fabric, decorations and use, and complemented by its contents. Each room could have a key theme based, for example on a period of the house's history and a particular occupier or room function. This approach would not be to invent anything new but rather clarify and bring the existing narratives to the fore. Features in other rooms could be contextualised in relation to these various narrative themes. For example: Lady Binning's bedroom might remain as it is, but with a much clearer emphasis on the fact that this room is a 20th century creation. A Fowler interior could be presented primarily as such, as could, perhaps, an example of the Broussons's neo-Georgian taste. The Fenton's and Trewby's modernisations (even the bathroom extensions) are good illustrations of 19th century social and technological changes, and so on. Further research may well allow for a greater understanding of the primary appearance of some of the rooms, and evidence-based repair and restoration of the original appearance of one or more rooms could then be considered. All such changes should be informed by the assessment of relative significance in this report, and based on Policies 8, 9 and 10, above.

***Policy 14: The presentation of the house should be reconsidered having particular regard to establishing a balance between the story of the house and the collections***

## **5.7 Physical Access**

- 5.7.1 There is no easy, level access for visitors to the public areas of the house beyond the ground floor. An access audit should be undertaken in order to identify the needs and opportunities within the house. If major investment (such as Heritage Lottery Fund HLF grant) were to be available, it would be necessary to consider all options for improving physical access. There may be potential to install a lift

between ground and first floors between G4b (the closet to G6) and the present ladies WC, but a link between three or all four levels any one location would result in a significant loss of primary fabric, which would be likely to outweigh the benefits in terms of access.

***Policy 15: An access audit should be carried out and consideration should be given to recommendations that are consistent with the conservation of the heritage significance of Fenton House and garden.***

## **5.8 The Coach House**

### *Opportunities and Constraints*

- 5.8.1 The Coach House is in good condition and provides useful ancillary space and residential accommodation, which allows for a permanent National Trust staff presence on site. The interiors are of low heritage significance and most of their historic fabric (such as doors) has been recycled from the house, and could be re-used on site in a different configuration without harm to its, or their significance.
- 5.8.2 Although the Coach House has considerable commercial rental value, the advantage of having staff on site is considered to outweigh the loss of rental income. The Gardener's flat is large and the same advantages (for the Trust) could be had from a smaller staff flat within the building. There is also potential to colonise at least the northern garret.
- 5.8.3 The Coach House has currently unrealised potential to contribute to the understanding of the house and its historic setting. It is relatively underused (for storage and residentially) and it could provide visitor or staff facilities including the relocation of office, staff or storage facilities from the house, or as a cafe and shop (the lack of which was also noted in the visitor survey). If so, the ground floor would be best suited to visitor facilities and the upper floor for staff and ancillary uses.

***Policy 16: The key features of heritage significance within the Coach House should be conserved.***

***Policy 17: Consideration will be given to introducing new visitor facilities and reducing the size of the staff accommodation in the Coach House.***

## **5.9 Gardens**

- 5.9.1 The gardens at Fenton are one of its most attractive and popular features. They are well and sensitively managed, although potentially vulnerable to high visitor numbers. The most intrusive aspect of the present planting, the false acacia 'avenue' in the south garden, was removed in 2015. The pruned trees along the edge of the north basement area are out of keeping and contribute little to the overall design. They could be replaced with an appropriate screen of planting for which there is good historic precedent.

- 5.9.2 Circulation in the garden is inconvenient but it could be greatly improved by minor changes. The most valuable and straightforward of these would be to allow public access to the service yard and thus circulation between the north and south gardens on the west side of the house.

***Policy 18: The gardens at Fenton House will be managed to sustain and reinforce their role as the setting for the house, having regard for its surviving historic features and its 1970s design, and allowing public access compatible with its conservation.***

## **5.10 Setting**

- 5.10.1 The setting of the house beyond the gardens, including local views of the house, makes an important contribution to its significance. Local planning policy provides a robust framework for the protection of the heritage significance of the surrounding area, through conservation area designation. The Trust should engage with Camden Council when appropriate to ensure that new development in the area does not harm this setting.

***Policy 19: The National Trust will monitor local development proposals and make representations to Camden Council when appropriate to seek to ensure that the setting of Fenton House is protected.***

## **5.11 Research and conservation: Archaeology**

- 5.11.1 There has been relatively little archaeological work on the Fenton House site. There is little likelihood of significant features predating the house surviving below ground, given that most of its site was enclosed progressively from the Heath and the terracing of the gardens will have had a major impact on any earlier remains (although some will, in the process of cut and fill, have been deeply buried). More promising is the archaeology of the gardens themselves, and of the yard areas where earlier outbuildings and ancillary features have been shown to survive, not least the demolished south end of the Stable Block.
- 5.11.2 Similarly the recent paint research has revealed an unexpectedly complex story, possibly including unusual and elaborate decorations e.g. in the attic rooms. Further research is likely to require a slightly more invasive approach, and should probably only be undertaken in the context of other works (especially redecoration or services renewal), but when such an opportunity arises further detailed analysis of hidden or inaccessible areas of the house would be advantageous.

***Policy 20: Opportunities for archaeological investigation will be take when they arise.***



***Policy 21: Changes to the buildings will be comprehensively monitored and documented, the results incorporated in the room data sheets and/or archived by the National Trust, and used to update the interpretation set out in this Plan.***

***Policy 22: A comprehensive property archive will be compiled and maintained at Fenton House.***

## **5.12 Research and conservation: Historical and Collections**

### *Historical sources*

5.12.1 Two key areas of further research would be invaluable to obtain a better understanding of the history of the house. The recently transcribed early Hampstead Manor Rolls have been searched for specific references to Fenton House and its known owners. However, the rolls contain extensive material concerned with the enclosure and development of the area. In particular, the sequence of land assembly to create the present site by the earliest owners of the property, Eades, Gee, Simpson, Twisden and Fenton remains to be fully understood and further research would be desirable. Further research into the lives of the people who lived in the house, including servants would help inform and enrich its presentation. This might suit volunteers.

***Policy 23: When the opportunity arises further research should be undertaken into the documentary and decorative history of the house.***

### *The collections*

5.12.2 This plan has included only limited research into the collections, and further research is required on: how the collection came together; what were the motivations for the collection and dispersal of each piece over time; and what made up the final core collection in 1952. This information will enable a more thorough understanding of the collections as a whole and the significance of individual pieces. For example, it is unclear who collected the needlework, whether it was brought together from different sources or bought as a job lot and if it relates to other family collections. More work needs to be undertaken, making comparisons with similar collections, identifying related places and discussing this with various experts in the different collection fields. This is particularly true for Lady Binning's collections. Detailed recommendations for further research are set out in Appendix 8.

***Policy 24: In order to understand the significance of the collections to the house and to inform future decisions about presentation, a programme of further research should be agreed and carried out***

## **5.13 Nature conservation**

5.13.1 There are no natural environment designations affecting the site [DLJ to check]. The garden is likely to provide habitats for nesting birds and invertebrates. These

should be identified and protected as appropriate if any building work to the house, landscaping, tree replacement or major new planting works is undertaken.

*Policy 25: A survey will be undertaken to establish whether nesting birds and/or invertebrate habitats are present in advance of any works likely to affect them. If so, the advice of the Trust's Regional Nature Conservation Advisor will be sought.*

*Policy 26: Advice on protected species (including bats) from the Trust's Regional Nature Conservation Advisor will be sought in advance of works and appropriate mitigation measures provided where necessary.*

*Policy 27: Where bats are found during building work, the works will halt immediately and advice from the Trust's Regional Nature Conservation Advisor or Natural England will be sought.*

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