

9 October 2018

Musselburgh Mansion progresses restoration after flooding

Dedicated volunteers and staff at the Musselburgh Mansion Newhailes have made a significant step in its recovery following a flood in February 2018 with almost 600 historic books returned to the house.

The National Trust for Scotland-owned Newhailes is a 17th-century Palladian house which brings 300 years of history to life. Many details make the house incredibly special, including the Chinese Sitting Room's early 18th-century *trompe l'oeil* decoration.

Earlier this year, a flood originating from the attic, affected the Chinese Sitting Room directly below. While nothing was destroyed, some items needed specialist care and conservation, particularly the room's collection which consists of 571 books, dating back as early as 1629.

The conservation team had a difficult decision to make around how best to care for them following the water damage, given their importance and delicate condition.

After being frozen and preserved by one of the country's most respected book conservators, they have been safely returned in acid-free cardboard boxes to the house and now, will be left to acclimatise at their original home, Newhailes.

Conservation manager, Pat Wigston, said: "It was incredibly upsetting when we discovered the flood. However, the property was in great hands with the workers and volunteers, whom immediately put their emergency recovery training into play.

"I'm particularly ecstatic by the return of the books, as the collection contains an original of one of my all-time favourites – The Gentle Shepherd. I studied the book when I completed my History of Art degree at Edinburgh University, and there is an original of it here from 1790!"

Since the flood, the carpets have been removed to be frozen and cleaned, and the floor boards have been taken up and replaced. Ongoing tasks include restoration of the textile collection and the ceiling of the Chinese Sitting Room.

Newhailes House and Gardens continues to lead tours of the property from 12pm-3.30pm. However, due to the flood, the Chinese Sitting Room and Old Kitchen cannot currently be seen. Nevertheless, the story of the two rooms will be told by guides in a special Conservation in Action tour.

The house is set to close at the end of the month for the winter and is due to reopen in March 2019, but the gardens and estate will open as usual.

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