

Quantock u3a Local History Group visit to Nettlecombe Court (Field Studies Council Centre) July 17th 2023

After some late withdrawals 15 members made it to Nettlecombe for a fascinating afternoon. We were lucky with the weather and made very welcome by the very knowledgeable Centre Manager Dan.

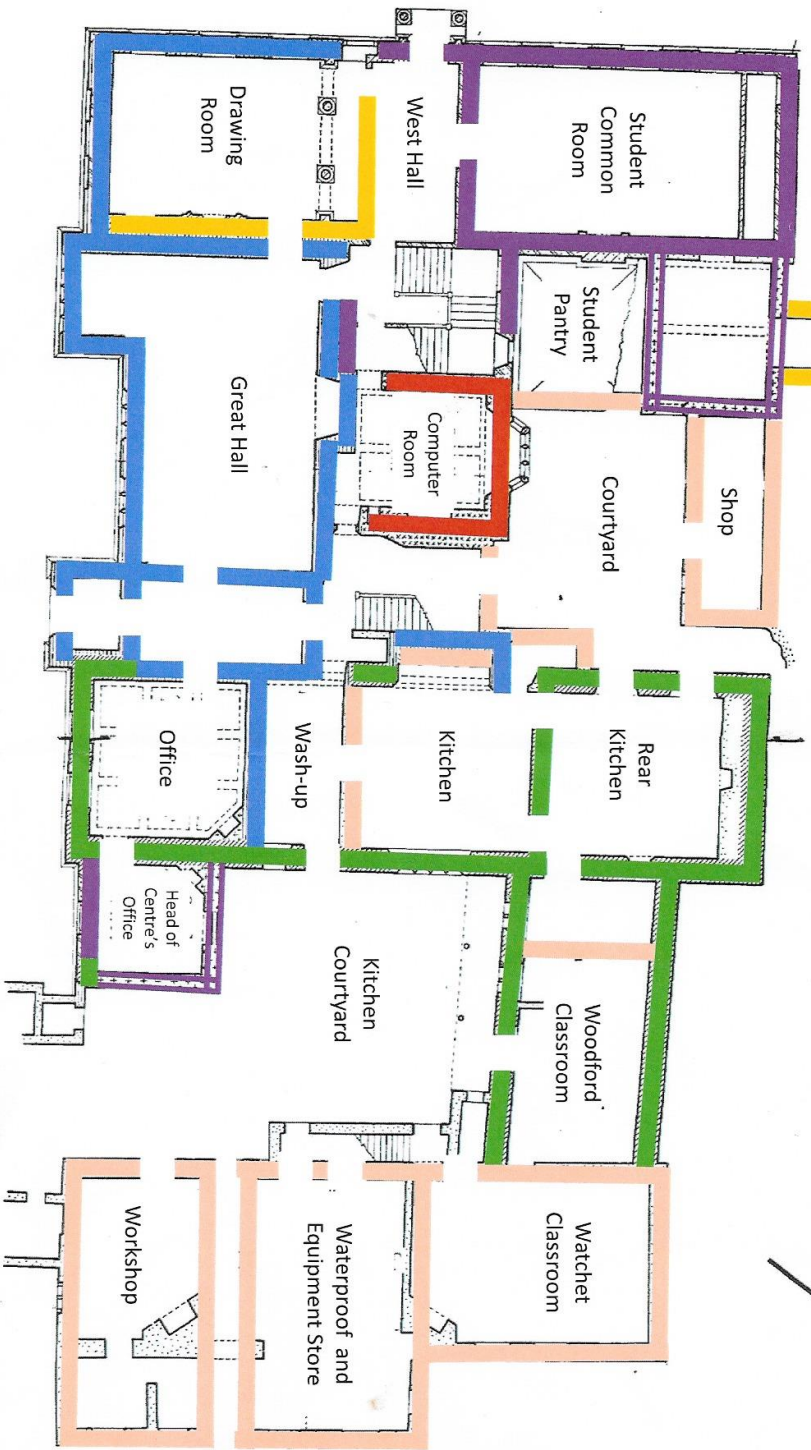
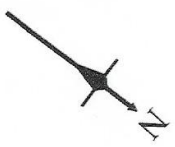
As usual here are my random jottings and some photos to help jog memories or entice members who couldn't make it. Also a couple of links. Dan also shared a couple of documents they have put together for students who visit the centre on an academic course (the centre is focussed on Geography and environmental studies from GCSE to degree level – and is being eyed up as a place for the Botany group to visit!) which I will forward in due course.

- 16th century with Georgian additions
- Never sold, always gifted
- Trevelyans most significant family
- Main hall fireplace arms white horse coming out of sea is Trevelyans plus additional family crests
- Grade 1 because of the ceilings
- Symbols in the plasterwork
- Park one of oldest deer park. Oak used for boatbuilding, inc possibly Marie Rose
- 4 resources - history tour, longer history, maps and images (2016 a refurbishment program heating and heating, but Thred consultancy did a review and research leading to this),
- Nearly burned down by parliamentarians, one table in dining room used to barricade doors and then around the world, ink wells.shove ha'penny played on it
- Trevelyans have just donated £100k reparations to Grenada for plantations and slavery, plans to recognise
- Landscaping removed part of hill and the old village, conservation management
- Woodford was the new village
- The Combe in Devon (now hosting a restaurant called the The Pig is a very similar building <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000691?section=official-list-entry>)
- Only remaining house organ, but needs repair
- Priests hole in the thicker wall, found remains of wrapped infant inside when excavated
- Firedogs in main hall 17th century

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nettlecombe_Court

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001152?section=official-list-entry>

NETTLECOMBE COURT *Somerset*



- Late medieval
- 16th Century
- 1641
- Probably 17th Century
- Uncertain, probably 17th Century
- Late 18th Century
- After 1800 and uncertain



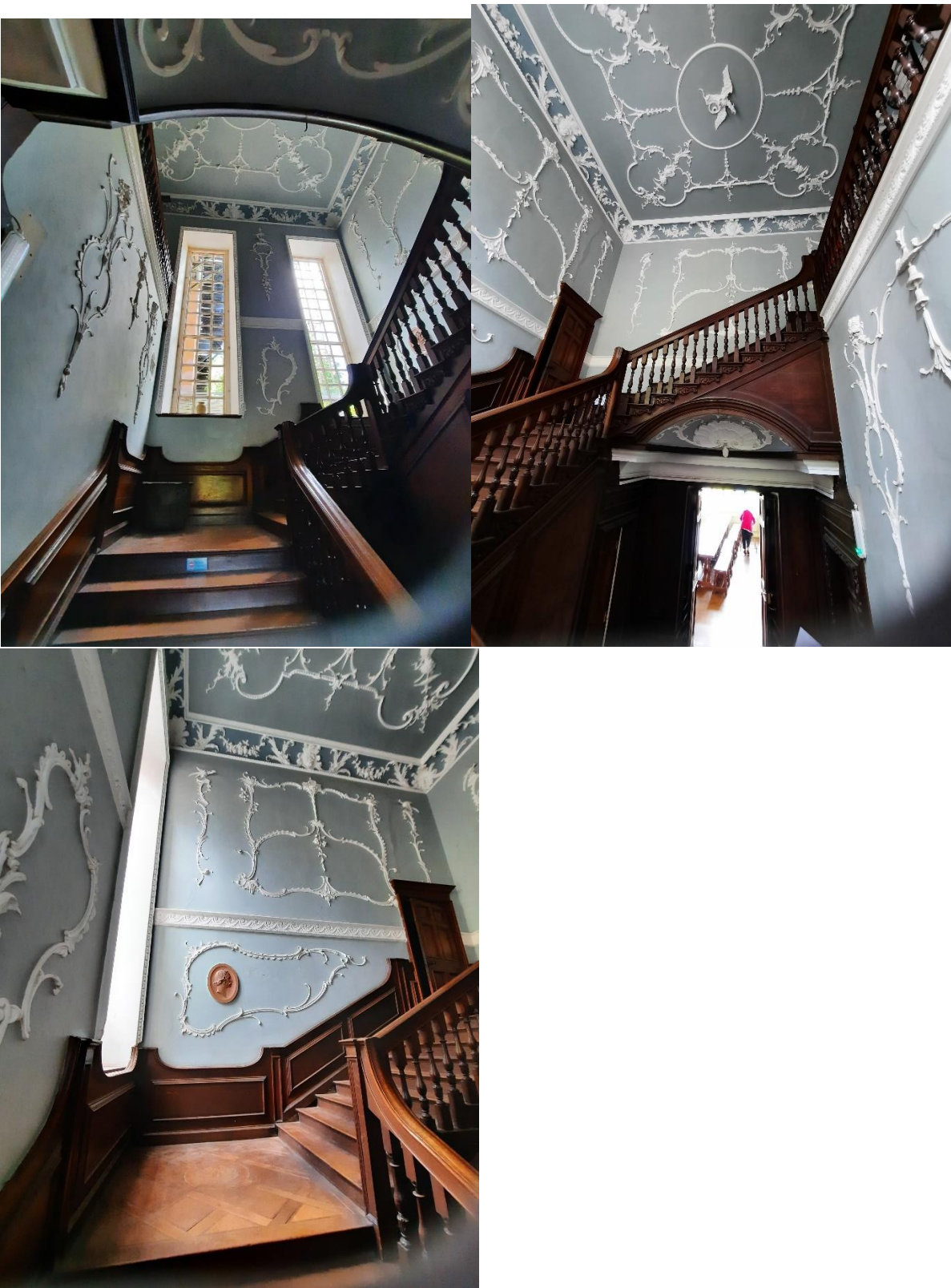
The Great Hall (now the study centre refectory) and superb ceiling and fire mantel. Portraits of various family members. Trevelyans known for being extremely eccentric, some would say mad – one member so portly unable to climb stairs to bed, so was winched into a bed on the “minstrels gallery” (where the house organ is now situated). Another was quite convinced he was a bird, and had to be tempted round the place with bird-seed, and was known to spend the day perching in trees. A more recent family member is quite convinced that a white horse roams the corridors of the house. The priest hole is in the thickened wall to the right of the organ.



The ceiling in the “office”, or Little Parlour in 1750.



The more refined ceiling of the later west wing drawing room, now the Student Common Room. The Dining Room has a similar style, though less ornate ceiling.



The very grand west staircase, c 1700, with later rococo plasterwork.



The computer room, originally a small dining room – this has a very specific date of 1641 and was a set of two rooms believed to have been specifically built to attract/ honour Margaret Strode wife of George Trevelyan.



The room above the small dining room, built at the same time as the room below, with similar motifs in the plasterwork.



The porch, which accesses the screens passage, with interesting coats of arms.



The kitchen courtyard – the oldest extant part of the current building – late medieval to the left and ahead in the pictures of the group. To the right is the newer (c1800???) North East range – but which has interesting re-used elements of doorways (note the shell doorway) and wood (see below). The entire building was rendered originally in a lime and local red clay mix. Removed from the stone and brick fronts sometime in the early to mid 20th C. The wall in front of the church is a later introduction, as the house and church were interlinked in medieval times.



The current kitchen occupies the older kitchen – which was probably the original long hall of the medieval building. The swifts are nesting on a n ancient piece of wood re-used, and you can see a glimpse of another shell motif buried behind the later extension peaked roof.



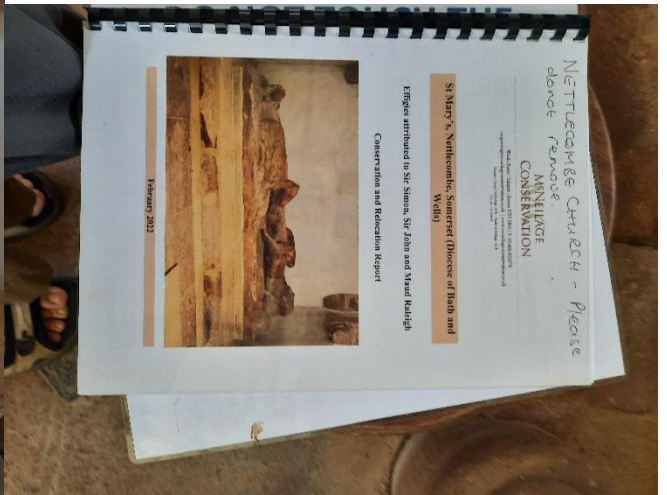
The south-east front – 16th Century – stone face now, compared with the south-west front – which is refurbished 16th C on the right, and probably 17th Century on the left – significantly remodelled, with some changes to the window size, or even maybe number of floors as ceiling height fashions changed. Once all hidden under pink render! The decoration on the rainwater goods is quite fine!



A bit of botany! A chocolate vine (*Akeba Quinata*) wound round the railings.

The landscaping of the 17th C was quite something – hillsides were re-shaped and the original village removed!





To the church – some fine tombs.



The font is of some note – the Church of England observes 5 sacraments, but the Church of Rome recognises 7 – and this font has those 7. This is one of only 39 of this form known, and this is one of only 2 outside East Anglia. Dates between 1465 and 1470. Because of the religion of the family at Nettlecombe there was more protection of the church from the extremes of the reformation. Other notable facts are that the church possesses but is unable to insure, the oldest known hallmarked pieces of church plate in England – a Chalice and Paten (part of the family treasure hidden under the floor by Margaret Trevelyan in the Civil War – this was not recovered it is said until the 18th C, when a maid dropped a thimble between floor boards which were then pulled up to recover it, and the family plate rediscovered). It is now generally on display at the V&A.



The exterior of the church – note the fine clock that was restored in 1997. It is dated about 1775. It was not working in 1954...

The family remained Roman Catholic for many years after the reformation, hence the priest's hole, and they set up a family chapel in the Court House – top floor, now "room 11" for services. In 1792 the family rejoined the CoE when George Trevelyan became Rector.