

Diane Vogt-O'Connor

Cultural Tourism and the Landmark Trust



The door into 7 St. Michael Street, Oxford, premiere Landmark Trust Property in the heart of historic Oxford that sleeps only two tenants. Photograph courtesy of Hugh A. O'Connor

Exterior of Clytha Castle, a Landmark Trust 18th century castellated folly in Gwent, near the scenic Brecon Beacon mountains of Wales. Clytha boasts gothic arched windows, linen fold paneling, impressive fireplaces, bedrooms with very high ceilings in the towers, and a ha ha and cattle guard on the grounds. This Landmark sleeps six. Photo courtesy of Susan Vogt-Brown.

Travelers now have a cultural alternative to the lures of ecotourism. For those interested in renting historic holiday houses in the United Kingdom, England's Landmark Trust, celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, is an excellent choice. The Landmark Trust allows visitors to contribute to the preservation of vernacular architecture as they enjoy it.

What is the Landmark Trust?

The Landmark Trust is a non-profit British organization which rescues remarkable historic structures in distress or disrepair, renovates them, and rents them out for a single day or weeks at a time. The rental funds underwrite additional historic preservation work—including the salvage of historic buildings that would otherwise be destroyed. Currently the Landmark Trust is rescuing Gargunnoch House, a Georgian country house in Stirling, Scotland; Crownhill Fort, a vaulted structure on 16 acres with parade grounds, ramparts and a 300-man garrison; and Church House, a Tudor arch-brace roofed parish house dating from 1500 in Somerset, as well as several Italian structures. All these new structures should be available for rental later this year. The funds from these rentals will support further rescues of endangered architectural treasures in years to come.

The beautifully preserved Landmark buildings include historic forts, castles, cottages, oast houses, mills, mines, follies—including one in the shape of a pineapple, pavilions—including one for cricket, towers, a fox hunting hall, monasteries, well houses, a pigsty in the shape of a classical temple, a Methodist chapel, train stations, gate houses, lighthouses, schools, barns, lookouts, London town house, and shrines, often in remarkably beautiful country, town, or city settings. The buildings are all unusual, whether for design, materials, location, or for their associations.

What's it Like to Stay in a Landmark Property?

Visitors staying in Landmark structures find themselves in the heart of England, rather than in tourist encampments. Being regional landmarks, each historic structure fits naturally into a community, and comes with interested neighbors and a relationship to the regional history. Many of the 200+ structures are on the grounds of country houses or castles, including Hampton Court Palace—part of the current Royal Palaces.

Two Landmarks visited this June by the author include the Fox Hall, a Palladian hunting lodge built in 1730 for the Duke of Richmond in West Sussex, and a flat in the Oxford Union Society. Fox Hall is described in the *Landmark*



How is the Landmark Trust Related to the National Trust?

The Landmark Trust has close links to the National Trust (currently celebrating its centenary). The Landmark Trust's current Chairman of Trustees, Martin Drury, is Director-General of the National Trust; while the Landmark's founder, Sir John Smith, was the National Trust's Deputy General. The Landmark Trust also works closely with the National Trust for Scotland, for example sharing work on the historic folly called The Pineapple in Stirlingshire, as well as with the Royal Incorporation of Architects.



Interior of the 7 St. Michael Street sitting room in the Oxford Union Society Building. The windows to the right overlook a street of bookshops and cafes; while the back windows overlook the garden, debating chamber, pub, and library reading room of the Oxford Union—all available to the Landmark tenants. Photo courtesy of Hugh A.O'Connor.

Trust Handbook as, “undoubtedly Britain’s premier bed-sitter.” The Oxford flat, decorated in William Morris papers and fabrics, sits in the heart of England’s architectural splendors and Oxford’s scholarly treasures. Both properties encouraged the illusion of belonging to the community, allowing tourists to live according to the rhythms of the region.

At the 7 St. Michael Street property in Oxford, Landmark tenants may join the Oxford Union, a retreat open only to dues-paying faculty and students. Union membership allows access to Oxford Union dining halls, an inexpensive pub, and several libraries (including one decorated by the pre-Raphaelites as students). During the day the Landmarker can glory in the magnificent architecture of the 38 colleges, shop, and visit the many gardens, museums, and libraries. In the evening the Oxford Union lectures, concerts, and debates come into their own.

In Charleton West Sussex at Fox Hall, the c. 1730 Palladian fox hunting lodge of the Duke of Richmond, Landmark tenants were offered pots of homemade marmalade. Locals gave advice on restaurants and places to visit from the Roman ruins at Fishbourne and Bignor; the stately homes of Petworth and Goodwood House; the Castle at Arundel; the Brighton Pavilion; to the Chichester Cathedral and theater. Options were so overwhelming that it was tempting to just stay home and watch the local foxes, pheasants, rabbits, deer, and barn owls.

A favorite Fox Hall evening entertainment was searching for the “secret drawers”; finding the hidden initials in the cobbled

pavements; and identifying the hidden *trompe d’oeil* effect on the exterior. The Fox Hall visitor’s log book offered tantalizing clues on when and where to find the wildlife and plantlife, as well as how to proceed locating the “secret” aspects of Fox Hall. (Visitors to Fox Hall will find the author’s business card in one secret drawer.)

Some Landmarks are in extremely exotic and remote locations such as Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel, a three-mile landscape boasting three lighthouses, a castle, a church, a lookout, cottages, sheep, puffins, and sitka deer. Other interesting Landmarks include the Sant’Antonio in Tivoli, Italy (portions of which date from 60 BC); the Villa Saraceno in Vercenza designed by Andrea Palladio in 1559; or a suite at Hampton Court Palace in Surrey.

Other Landmark buildings have remarkable associations, such as the Casa Guidi in Florence, Italy, which was Robert and Elizabeth Browning’s home (opposite the Pitti Palace); the poet Keats’s house (No. 26 Piazza de Spagna in Rome); the poet Sir John Betjeman’s flat in London; Luttrell’s Tower, built by Temple Simon Luttrell (a member of Parliament, smuggler, and victim of the French Revolution); or St. Winifred’s Well in Woolston, Shropshire (originally a pre-Christian nature shrine, then the shrine to a 7th century Welsh princess who became a saint and is associated with the shrine’s healing spring). The Landmark Trust also maintains Naulakha, Rudyard Kipling’s house near Brattleboro, Vermont. All Landmark buildings have some English association.

Most of these beautifully renovated structures may be rented for a weekend or a week or longer year round. Children are welcomed. Inside the Landmarks’ front doors the visitors find modern bathrooms (with towels and heated towel bars) and fully outfitted kitchens with regionally-

Exterior of Bromfield Priory in Shropshire, dating prior to 1400. This Landmark has a timber-framed upper story that was added after the dissolution of the monasteries. The main sitting room has a timbered ceiling and a fabulous hand-carved chimney piece on the Jacobean fireplace. Photo courtesy of the author.





Wolveton Gatehouse, begun during the reign of Henry VIII, in Dorset. This Landmark sleeps six and boasts huge bedrooms with fireplaces, a spectacular solid oak staircase carved from a single tree, and Tudor Renaissance windows. Sir Walter Raleigh was a frequent visitor to Wolveton. Photo courtesy of Susan Vogt-Brown.

appropriate dishes, pots, and pans; for example, old Chelsea crockery in Cornwall. Central heating is the norm. The Landmarks have comfortable bedrooms outfitted with wool blankets, sheets, and pillowcases.

Each Landmark property has a housekeeper, who prepares for arrival and cleans up after each visit. While television is not included, most Landmarks offer bookcases full of books, maps, and puzzles, as well as writing desks for more serious travelers. Visitors need provide only luggage, food, paper products, and soap.

What Do Visitors Say About their Stays in Landmark Structures?

Due to their reasonable cost and unusual nature, Landmarks have developed an enthusiastic audience of frequent renters who visit as many of the 200+ structures as possible, and frequently

return to their favorite ones. Since advertising is largely done through word-of-mouth, more recently renovated structures tend to be less heavily booked. One of the special pleasures of a Landmark stay is sitting by the fireplace reading the visitor log book, an archival account of the joys and excitements experienced by previous visitors to your Landmark property. A visitor to the 13th-century Bath Tower in Caernarfon, Wales wrote, "We put the children in the dungeon which they thoroughly enjoyed."

Visitors to Clytha Castle, a castellated folly built by William Jones in 1790 wrote, "Our intentions were to dine out every night, but the atmosphere of the dining room was too much to resist." A

visitor to The White House, dating in part from the 14th century, noted, "We have left one of our party in the secret room." A visitor to the 13th-century Bath Tower in Caernarfon, Wales, noted, "A medieval atmosphere has been achieved without the discomforts of the period." Comments such as "The vicar called on horseback," and "You do recover from a 20-mile walk," enliven Landmark logbooks. Visitors to the Pineapple, a two-story summerhouse, dating from around 1760 which boasts a remarkable dome in the shape of a pineapple, wrote, "The experience of actually living in such a building is so much more rewarding than merely visiting," and "There is a hermit's cave nearby." Elegiacally, one departing visitor to the Pineapple wrote, "Farewell, old fruit."

Visitors depart knowing that they have helped to preserve part of our cultural heritage.

How Does One Book a Landmark Property?

Potential interested visitors should write or call for a copy of the 15th edition of the Landmark Trust Handbook, a 300+ page illustrated guide to the properties that costs \$19.50 and is available from FPI at 28 Birge Street, Brattleboro, Vermont 05301 or via telephone at 802-254-6868. Potential renters who purchase a handbook automatically receive up-to-date prices lists and availability listings. Bookings should be made by contacting the Landmark Trust at Shottesbrooke, Maidenhead, Berkshire, England SL6 3SW, or by calling 01628 825925.

Prices for stays at Landmark properties vary from as little as 78 pounds for a January week at the Old Light Cottage which sleeps one to 2,600 pounds for a late-summer week at a monastery in Tivoli that sleeps 12. (Note: During the author's recent visit a pound was roughly \$1.60) Most weekly costs seem to average around 300 pounds in the Winter, and 400-700 pounds a week during the summer—making these structures which often sleep 4-8 individuals a reasonable and historic alternative to hotels or bed and breakfast lodgings. The funds obtained from rentals go toward renovating and salvaging other endangered historic structures.

Some Additional Purveyors of Historic Holiday Houses:

Landmark Trust: Book by writing to Shottesbrooke, Maidenhead, Berkshire, England SL6 3SW or by calling 01628 825925. The Landmark Trust Handbook is available from FPI at 28 Birge Street, Brattleboro, Vermont 05301 or via telephone at 802-254-6868.

Call the British Tourist Authority: 551 Fifth Ave., Suite 701, New York, NY 10176; 800-GO2-BRIT, and ask for books on “self-

catering” holidays, “farmhouse bed and breakfasts,” and “rural retreats.”

The National Trust: the 100-year-old-historic preservation organization of the U.K., offers 180+ historic cottages. Contact them at 36 Queen Anne’s Gate, London, England SW1H 9AS. Call 71-222-9251. In the U.S. dial 011-44 first when dialing England.

For Ireland, call the Northern Ireland Tourist Board: 1-800-326-0036 and ask for information on the Rural cottage Development and Marketing Company.

Each visitor’s comments left in the logbooks will help others to better enjoy that heritage. Most tenants immediately begin planning for their next Landmark stay. Will it be the Cloth Fair in London? What about the amazing 1835 Egyptian-style house in Penzance, Cornwall? Appleton Water Tower in Norfolk? Isn’t there a Charles Rennie Mackintosh house in Scotland and a 15th-century-parsonage in Oxfordshire? The Prospect

Tower cricket pavilion looks lovely... The options are many and tempting. *The Landmark Trust Handbook* is a catalog of promised pleasures for the cultural traveler.

Diane Vogt-O’Connor is Senior Archivist, Curatorial Services Division, National Park Service, Washington, DC.

Jeanne M. Harold

Disaster Mitigation for the Bertrand Collection Artifacts



Weights for securing cups and dishes.

Imagine being a curator, collections manager, or conservator entering a display/storage area and observing over 7,000 rare, 130-year-old bottles filled with their original contents of liquors and foodstuffs sitting unrestrained on open shelving. Awe would probably be your first reaction, and then panic! This situation would certainly be a textbook case of “an accident looking for a place to happen.” Add to this scenario a fire-suppression system that releases gas at 400 psi, and you can close your eyes and hear the glass shatter.

This, indeed, was the situation at the Bertrand Museum at the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri Valley, Iowa. Many museum collections include problems which share similarities to the potential plight of the Bertrand bottles. These problems can be mitigated with some common sense, hard work, and lots of acrylic sheeting.

Background

On April Fools’ Day, 1865, the steamboat *Bertrand* hit a snag on the Missouri River and sank 20 miles north of Omaha, Nebraska. The *Bertrand* was on her maiden voyage up the river, heading to Fort Benton, Montana, out of St. Louis, Missouri. She carried about 60 passengers and crew members—mostly supply traders eager to cash in on the lucrative trade with gold miners. She also hauled \$210,000 worth of cargo. The boat sank in 12’ of water. No lives were lost and passengers simply walked a plank to shore. Salvage efforts were undertaken, but eventually abandoned. As the boat became mired in the Mighty Mo’s murky bottom, there emerged a local legend of buried treasure—gold, mercury, and whiskey.

In 1968, two treasure hunters, using a fluxgate magnetometer (a type of metal detector), dis-