



# THE COUNTRY HOUSE REVIVED?

**The Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates,  
Maynooth University and The Office of Public Works  
in association with The Attingham Trust,  
The Historic Houses Association, and The Paul Mellon Centre**

**Conference and Exhibition, 2017  
Dublin Castle, 19-21 June 2017**



# THE COUNTRY HOUSE REVIVED?

The focus of this conference will be on the survival and revival of historic houses in Ireland, the UK, and Europe in the course of the last fifty years.

Increasing numbers of houses are opening their doors to the public, presenting and interpreting their histories and collections in imaginative ways, looking to engage with local communities, and to diversify in terms of commercial activities.

This holds true for houses in private ownership as well as for those in the guardianship of national heritage organisations, local authorities, or other bodies. Historic houses are uniquely poised to take advantage of international and domestic trends in cultural tourism and heritage learning. The historic house in all its manifestations remains a constant feature in the curriculum, from scholarly study to heritage, conservation, and management training, and the creative arts. The enduring relevance of the historic house is also defined by its role as an important economic driver at local, regional, and national levels.

And yet only 40 years ago the Victoria & Albert Museum held its ground-breaking exhibition, *The Destruction of the Country House*, marking the nadir in the fortunes of the country house during the 20th century, with many properties demolished, abandoned, or under physical or political threat. The story since 1974 is by no means one of simple recovery, houses still face a variety of challenges, however the menace of the wrecking ball has receded. Throughout Ireland and Europe battles of a different nature have been fought, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Nevertheless growing numbers of houses are engaging with the external world as opposed to feeling beleaguered and retreating behind closed doors.

How do we assess this recent history: is it one of the glass half-full or half-empty? For every success story is there a contrary one? Do demise and uncertainty still shadow rise and recovery?

*The Country House Revived?* is aimed at a wide audience of owners, scholars, students, heritage professionals, policy makers, and the many people with an interest in the built heritage. There will be papers examining a variety of topics and perspectives in different jurisdictions across Europe, comparing experiences that have many affinities but significant contrasts too.

Topics will include:

- **Overviews of how properties and organisations have refashioned and re-presented themselves to an ever more diverse and discriminating public**
- **Case studies: evaluating successes, failures, and in-between**
- **Examining political and economic challenges and opportunities across the sector**
- **Identifying new audiences, practitioners, and owners**
- **Reviewing conservation and heritage management practices**
- **Assessing the state of scholarship, educational policy, and public outreach**
- **Understanding the historic house and international audiences**
- **Crystal ball gazing: future trends, demands, difficulties**



**Accompanying the conference will be a photographic exhibition, which will illustrate a variety of houses from across Ireland, the UK, and Europe.**

Properties discussed in the conference, as well as other houses, will be represented by two images and a brief summary of their recent history; each display encapsulating the change in fortunes of a house in recent decades. Individual narratives might include dramatic images of decay and restoration; or they might show a new range of activities, or level of public engagement; or they might reveal new research that has enhanced the understanding of a house.

As with the proceedings of the conference the aim is to show how every house operates under its own unique circumstances, influenced by governance, ownership, funding, scholarly investigation, national trends or other factors. There is no one-size-fits-all model for historic houses: each one will make different choices about creating a sustainable future. There are many different definitions of “revival”, as will be apparent from the conference papers, the photographic displays, and the variety of experiences that will be shared by a broad range of delegates.



For more details  
on the CSHIHE go to:  
[www.historicirishhouses.ie](http://www.historicirishhouses.ie)

