

Jewish Country Houses – Objects, Networks, People is a 4-year research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council commencing in October 2019. The project is a collaboration between the Universities of Oxford, Durham and Cardiff, the National Trust, Waddesdon Manor and Strawberry Hill House (all UK), and European partners including the Centre des Monuments Nationaux (France), individual partner properties, and the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage (AEPJ). The project has been incubated over four years with the generous support of TORCH (The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities).

The project takes country houses as a starting point for opening up a much broader intellectual agenda at the interface between Jewish history, art history and heritage culture. It is organised around two major strands: politics/philanthropy and collecting/material culture. Each will feature workshops and conferences with significant heritage sector participation. Where possible they will be organised with relevant partners: the National Trust (co-sponsor of all collecting strand events), the Victoria & Albert Museum (UK), the Musée Camondo (France), Villa Montesca (Italy), and Villa Stiassni (Czech Republic). An emerging collaboration with the National Gallery (UK) aims to bring both strands together through a focus on cultural philanthropy.

What are the project aims?

1. To establish 'Jewish' country houses – properties that were owned, built or renewed by Jews - as a focus for research, a site of European memory and a significant aspect of European Jewish heritage and material culture.
2. To challenge the nationally framed paradigms of continuity and rootedness that underpin country house studies in the UK and elsewhere in continental Europe by highlighting the parallels and connections between 'Jewish' country houses across Europe, and by developing a conception of the country house grounded not in national characteristics but in pan-European relationships.
3. To go beyond the conceptual framework that shapes existing work on Jewish elites, which focuses on their integration in the nation state and in specific urban centres, by illuminating, through a focus on their country houses, the international culture and networks of the "Jewish aristocracy" and the ways this intersected with national and imperial political, social and cultural contexts.
4. To establish what, if anything was distinctive - and by extension *Jewish* - about these properties, the tastes of their owners and the networks of dealers, decorators and designers who embellished them.
5. To bring new perspectives to bear on established disciplines such as the history of collecting, and modern Jewish history through significant publications and targeted conference activity. This will focus on the Jewish country house as an expression of familial, financial and intellectual relationships and as a repository for art collections, as well as on the equally neglected social and philanthropic role played by Jewish elites in the countryside.
6. To transform practice in the heritage sector by developing an intellectual framework and practical resources to enable heritage professionals working in Jewish country house museums in the UK and continental Europe, often with little knowledge of Jewish history, to better engage the 'Jewishness' of their properties, their often-contested history, and their heritage dissonance.

8. To foster relevant pan-European relationships in the heritage sector with a view to enhancing and enriching curatorial understanding and interpretation of individual properties both in the UK and in continental Europe, because Jewish country houses cannot be interpreted or understood without reference to this broader European context.

The project will have a range of outcomes, some more geared towards specialist research outputs, whilst others will be co-designed with project partners with significant potential public benefit. Confirmed outcomes include:

- 2

10. A copy of a dress owned by Lady Louisa de Rothschild, made by members of the Worth Park Historic Costume Group, for display at the Worth Park Visitor Centre.

Which historic houses are we working with?

In the UK we are working closely with 6 National Trust properties (Hughenden, Monk's House, Mottisfont, Nymans, Upton House & Gardens, Waddesdon Manor), as well as Strawberry Hill House, and we are in contact with several other properties (Bletchley Park, Salomons Estate, Trent Park, Worth Park). In France we are working with the Musée Camondo and with 2 properties administered by the Centre des Monuments Nationaux (the Château de Champs and Villa Kerylos). More recently, we have begun to work with the Château de Seneffe (Belgium), Villa Montesca (Italy), and the Villas Stiassni and Tugendhat (Czech Republic). We hope that the events we have planned will enable us to connect with new properties and to expand the JCH network further into Italy, Germany and Scandinavia.

How will the project be managed?

The project is led by Professor Abigail Green (Oxford) with Dr. Tom Stammers (Durham) and Dr. Jaclyn Granick (Cardiff) as co-investigators. Dr. Silvia Davoli will be a post-doctoral researcher at Oxford, while continuing as Research Curator at Strawberry Hill House on a part-time basis. Dr. Juliet Carey, Senior Curator at Waddesdon, is also a member of the core team. The project is administered by Briony Truscott. The steering committee, which will meet three times yearly, consists of Dr. Oliver Cox (Oxford), John Reeve (Strawberry Hill), Professor David Rechter (Oxford), Marcus Roberts (J-Trails), Pippa Shirley (Waddesdon Manor) and Nino Strachey (NT).

The international advisory committee, which brings together leading academics and representatives of the heritage sector, will meet at two key review points. It consists of Philippe Bélaval (Centre des Monuments Nationaux), Alessandra di Castro (Jewish Museum, Rome), Professor Ewald Frie (Tübingen), Professor Cyril Grange (CNRS), Assumpció Hosta (AEPJ), Professor Rebecca Kobrin (Columbia), Professor Peter Mandler (Cambridge), and Aubrey Pomerance (Jewish Museum Berlin). This committee represents an intellectual resource, and should help us to embed this initiative in different cultural contexts.

Timetable of key events

Phase One

19 December 2019 *Jewish Stories and the National Heritage*. Conference at Polesden Lacy, bringing together curators and house managers from across the NT, and sharing perspectives on Jewish heritage in Britain from external institutions and heritage sites.

19-20 April 2021 *Jewish Dealers and the European Art Market (1850-1930)*. Workshop held in partnership with the Gilbert Collection at the V & A, including a preview of the Gilbert's forthcoming exhibition around 'Concealed Histories' and a tour of historic Bond Street firms. It will examine the social and commercial connections of Jewish dealers across Europe, the hostility they encountered and their role in the development of the global art market.

28-29 June 2021 *Jewish Collectors and Patterns of Taste (1850-1930)*. Workshop at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, with visits to Musée Nissim de Camondo (Paris) and the Château de Champs. It will explore the networks and cultural horizons of Jewish collectors across Europe, examining their contribution to key artistic trends.

September 2021 *Things Jewish: Objects, Knowledge and Identities*. Conference at Oxford, including visits to Lord Bearsted's art collection at Upton House, and possibly to Strawberry Hill. It will include panels devoted to the collection of Judaica and Jewish museums, the Jewish contribution to the circulation of antiquities from Rome, Greece and Egypt, and the genre of 'Jewish portraiture'. This conference will coincide with the first Review Point.

Three Women of Strawberry Hill: power, society & collecting 1800 – 1920. This exhibition, developed with the support of the Heritage Seed Fund at Oxford, will shed new light on the history of the house through a focus on the lives of three extraordinary women who owned it after Walpole's death: the sculptress Anne Seymour Damer; Lady Frances Waldegrave (daughter of the Jewish opera singer Francis Braham) and Lady Michelham (Geraldine Stern). The displays will focus on their work as art patrons and collectors and, in the case of Damer, on her own work as a successful artist.

Phase Two

28-29 March 2022. *How Global was the Jewish Aristocracy?* Organised in partnership with Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah (Leiden), this workshop will interrogate the concept of the Jewish aristocracy through an exploration of the role of Sephardic, Middle Eastern and North African elites in international Jewish networks, and potentially also their trans-Atlantic dimensions. We hope to hold it at Ramsgate, including visits to the Montefiore synagogue and mausoleum, to what remains of East Cliff Lodge, and to Philip Sassoon's house at Port Lympne, near Hythe.

21-22 October 2022 *Jewish Business Dynasties 1850-1950: Family, Power, Vulnerability*. Organised in partnership with Rebecca Kobrin (Columbia) and Chris McKenna (Global History of Capitalism, Oxford), this event will be held at Villa Montesca in Umbria, home to the liberal Jewish politician Leopoldo Franchetti and his American wife Alice Hallgarten, a key promoter of the Montessori movement. It will consider the economic, social, cultural and political role of the great international Jewish business dynasties (c.1850-1950), and the critical part they played in the making of modern capitalism in an age of rising antisemitism that culminated in genocide. It will coincide with the second Review Point.

27-29 March 2023 *Jewish Country Houses and the Holocaust in History and Memory*. Hosted by Villa Stiassni in the town of Brno, and involving a visit to Villa Tugendhat, a UNESCO World Heritage site, this final event will provide an opportunity to reflect on the Holocaust histories of many Jewish country houses and on subsequent developments. It will enable Brno to showcase its inspiring 'Jewish villas' heritage offer, and provide an opportunity for heritage professionals from across Europe to share experience and reflect on best practice. This event will be held in partnership with the National Heritage Institute (Czech Republic).