

# VIVENDO

Newsletter of Scottish Historic Buildings Trust

Spring / Summer 2018

Scottish  
Historic  
Buildings  
Trust



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# THE INTERVIEW

Una Richards, Director of  
Scottish Historic Buildings Trust



## What are you most looking forward to in 2018 ?

Having successfully completed the restoration of Riddle's Court, I am looking forward to seeing work get underway on the Custom House project. As Director, I always keep an eye on the future and so look forward to the unexpected phone call leading to an opportunity to explore how the Trust might help restore another old, special, neglected historic building. We also often receive approaches from local community groups looking to examine ways to save a particularly popular landmark building in their neighbourhood, or outside parties seeking Heritage Consultancy Advice - approaches we welcome. (see later feature)

## What is your biggest challenge at the Trust ?

As a small charity, with a retained property portfolio and a remit to promote participation in our buildings, funding and finance is never far from my mind. We are fortunate to be supported by some generous donors and supporters who are understanding of our needs, but sourcing money to fund our work is always challenging.



Riddle's Court. By Colin McLean



Custom House. By Dave Morris.



## Is conservation changing ?

Most definitely. When the Trust began it was enough to restore the fabric of a building, provide for its future via securing a few long term commercial tenancies, and off you go. Today with many, many more competing claims on both funders wallets and private donors, SHBT's funding applications must demonstrate a wide range of societal impacts and benefits. This is a key reason behind the Learning Programme at Riddles Court, why we strive hard to offer public access, when we can, and why we seek to participate in a range of partnership activities with our local communities.



Custom House

## Is there one surprising thing you would like to do in 2018 ?

Well yes. We run a large diverse learning programme, and time permitting I would love to try my hand at Fresco painting.

## We would love to get you involved!

### As a Friend of SHBT you benefit from:

- Invitations to special events, an Annual Reception for our supporters and newsletters.
- We keep you up dated on developments to preserve Scotland's built heritage.
- Volunteering opportunities and community links.
- Discounts on facilities hire.

For more information contact: [Julie@shbt.org.uk](mailto:Julie@shbt.org.uk). Tel: 0131 510 8789

# PROPERTY IN FOCUS

## Strathleven House, Dunbartonshire.

To enquire about rooms and bookings call 01389 750005.



## Palladian mansion and small business hub

This stunning Palladian mansion is the happy home of a diverse collection of thriving small businesses and charities, which enable us to maintain the once neglected property, and offer event space to the community.



The Oak room. By Paul Zanre.



Strathleven House from the air. By TRM.

It is managed by Elizabeth Mackay and her small team, who provide serviced office support to the residents. Elizabeth's care and attention to detail is reflected in how well kept the property is today. Elizabeth actively supports the development of the team who are recruited via the Community Jobs Scotland programme, work for which she received an award nomination in 2017.

The Trust would be nothing without its enterprising range of residents. One such business is Turkey Red Media a multi-disciplined digital media company, offering drone aerial 360 degree imaging. They need an accessible place from which to operate across Scotland, good fast internet communication and spacious studios. Following 2 years of rapid growth they are now expanding into new premises in the building.

# IN DETAIL

## Riddle's Court, Edinburgh.

Ceiling conservation by Karen Dundas, Scottish Wall Paintings Conservators



Ceiling detail. By Colin McLean.

## The Craft of Ceiling Restoration

Conserving the ceilings and decoration at Riddle's Court has been both an exciting exploration and a challenge. Here Karen shares her insights.

"The decoration on Scottish Renaissance board and beam ceilings at Riddle's Court would have been painted in situ by teams of painters using 'tempera' paint - a bright palette of powder pigments mixed with hot animal glue. Over time glue binder deteriorates leaving paintwork weak, powdery and vulnerable.

The King's Bedchamber ceiling had darkened since previous treatment in the 1960s. While ornate designs were visible, surface soiling completely obscured the colours. More dramatically, surviving paint remains on a newly-discovered 2nd floor ceiling were covered with mud, spider-web 'hammocks' and permanently charred or altered due to historic fire and water damage.

The cleaning and paint consolidation approach involved applying various concentrations of hot gelatine solution through Japanese tissue and 'massaging' out grime. Gelatine, a more purified version of the original animal glue binder, 'nourishes' and replenishes the paint layer without changing its appearance, conflicting with original materials, or jeopardising future treatments."

# LEARNING

Historical aspects of the building  
and Patrick Geddes legacy.

With Russell Clegg.



## Tours, talks and cultural programme

We have had an exciting programme with tours of the building, talks on the Restoration of Riddle's Court, a 10 week Gaelic Cultural programme, and Academics discussing the art of Courtly Processions accompanied by Gaita, the medieval music group. We have also hosted Doors Open Day, school visits, a marvellous promenade interpretation by the Royal Lyceum Youth theatre group and much more.

This activity is part of the Trust's commitment, principally to offer the local community, a diverse range of events and activities through which they can learn about the property and the many historical aspects of the building. It aims to offer material of interest to people of all ages and backgrounds.



To find out more visit  
[patrickgeddescentre.org.uk](http://patrickgeddescentre.org.uk) or  
look out on [@riddlescourt](https://twitter.com/riddlescourt) or at  
[facebook/RiddlesCourt](https://facebook.com/RiddlesCourt)



# SERVICES AND EVENTS

Upcoming events for 2018



## Join us on

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Twitter@shbt  
Twitter@riddlescourt

Websites:  
riddlescourt.org.uk  
patrickgeddescentre.org.uk  
shbt.org.uk



## Booking your event

Meeting spaces / conferences  
Family gatherings  
Community events  
Weddings

Please call 0131 510 8789

To book Riddle's Court or one  
of our other properties.

## Highlights in the coming months

20th February

**"FIVE CENTURIES OF RIDDLE'S COURT"**

Edinburgh Adult Education (for 5 weeks)

**Booking:** [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/adultcourses](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/adultcourses)

**Telephone:** 0131 556 7978

7th March

**OLD TOWN ASSOCIATION AGM**

Russell Clegg presents on two recent art additions to  
the Patrick Geddes Centre

**Email:** [info@eota.org.uk](mailto:info@eota.org.uk)

22nd March

**INAUGURAL MUSIC NIGHT WITH SINK**

Accordion, violin and saxophone

**Telephone:** 0131 510 8789

28th April

**CUSTOM HOUSE CELEBRATION DAY**

Event starts at 10am, Commercial Street, Leith

1st May

**"ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SCOTTISH SOCIETY"**

Scots Indoors - why have we lost our connection  
with nature? with Lesley Riddoch

**Tickets:** £8.50 (inc. lunch)

**Telephone:** 0131 510 8789

# CONSULTANCY

Seeking expert advice regarding saving and repurposing neglected built heritage?



Broadford Works, Aberdeen.

## Neglected, significant community properties - SHBT's advisory role

Forgotten historic buildings are often in the heart of a township where deprivation and underfunding makes it unlikely that they can attract the funds and advocacy to take their ideas forward. In revitalising such properties many groups can foresee the building prompting improvements in their local community.

Whilst SHBT may not have the resources to support all such requests despite having the expertise, experience and reputation to deliver, we welcome enquiries. Often enquirers have been directed to us by statutory agencies reflecting the state of support for Heritage, so the Charity's role has never been more vital.



Chambers Institution, Peebles.

**We welcome reader feedback and comment, so contact us:**

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