

Last chance for Tyntesfield

22 July 2021

40 years of NHMF: In 2002, the largest ever NHMF grant saved historic house in Somerset for the nation.

Image



Tyntesfield

Grade I listed [Tyntesfield House](#) is one of the few complete Victorian estates that remain in England, regarded as of outstanding heritage importance.

So when the property was at risk of being sold at auction in separate lots, an acquisition by the National Trust looked like the only way of saving this High Victorian Gothic wonder.

A home for the Gibbs family

[William Gibbs was a merchant](#) who made his fortune from the large-scale import of guano – the excrement of seabirds and bats – for use in agriculture. Gibbs purchased Tyntesfield in 1843 and soon began remodelling the site in the Gothic Revival style over several decades

Internally, treasures ranged from old master paintings and watercolours through to furnishings, wallpapers, carpets and light fittings. Thanks to the survival of an extensive archive, including bills, diary accounts, drawings and catalogues, it is possible to trace the contributions of four generations of the Gibbs family.

When it came onto the market in 2002, the estate had been in the continuous ownership of the Gibbs family for three generations. What marks Tyntesfield as particularly special is the completeness of the estate, the house and its contents.

Together they present a unique picture of the social and historical background of a rich merchant family through the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Risk of loss

The risk of the estate being broken up for sale was imminent, with auctioneers lined up and ready to prepare a catalogue for a country house auction.

The National Trust needed £27m to save Tyntesfield for the nation. The most likely alternative would see the house converted into a luxury hotel, a serious threat to the character and interior décor that would also have seen much of the important items from the estate sold in individual lots to separate bidders, dispersed forever.

A fund of last resort

With no question that this was the last chance for Tyntesfield to be kept together as one entity, the National Heritage Memorial Fund was able to step in with £17,425,000. The largest grant NHMF has ever awarded saved the complete estate for the nation.

Today Tyntesfield is looked after by the National Trust and contains over 60,000 objects accumulated by William Gibbs, his family and heirs, from celebrated paintings and ornate furnishings to the more domestic objects including ice skates and picnic sets.

40 years of NHMF

We're marking our 40th anniversary of saving the most important treasures at risk as a memorial to those who've given their lives for the UK. See more on [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) using the hashtag #NHMF40.

Keep updated

Keep updated with news from NHMF by [signing up to our mailing list](#) and following us on [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).