

Profile for Heritage Counts 2015

Lord Carnarvon – Listed Building Owner

What are the details of your building?

“It is Highclere Castle near Newbury Berks. It is an Early Victorian building, built between 1840 and 1844. The architect was Sir Charles Barry on behalf of the 3rd Earl of Carnarvon. The style is Italian Gothic and the main material of the exterior is Bath stone.”

How long have you lived in/owned the building?

“The building has been in the family since construction and my Grandfather, the 6th Earl, lived in it all his life until 1987. It opened to the public for the first time in 1988. My wife, Fiona, and I have been in charge of the building since 2002 as my father, the 7th Earl, died in September 2001. As the building has to work hard to pay for its upkeep, we live in it only on occasions and in recent years when the Downton Abbey film crew have been using the Castle for some 70 days a year.”

What do you like/value most about living in a listed building?

“We never tire of the individuality, beauty and fascination of being part of and around one of the most famous and fascinating of Britain’s heritage buildings. It is an astonishing creation of the imagination of Charles Barry and the fascination of travel, especially in Italy of the 3rd Earl. We love Highclere not just for the Castle but also the great 18th century landscape in which it is situated, which also needs considerable work and attention to maintain. There is never a dull day living in and around the Castle – from dealing with stone issues on the exterior, to carpets, wall fabrics and art by great masters in the State Rooms. We have enjoyed slowly restoring and re-decorating bedrooms on both the 1st and 2nd floors and we are now restoring some of the upper rooms at the base of the great tower which has been a challenge but will transform the upper part of the building for the next and future generations.”

Could you provide an example of an experience have you had with undertaking repairs of maintenance work on your building (detailing the work, the process, and who advised you)?

“The upside of living in and around such an interesting place is the achievement of sorting complex issues related to the Castle and its surrounding buildings. The downside is the worry of financial problems, as there seems to be no end to the long cycle of repairs which were not dealt with in the last 60 years.”

“Actually, the most recent work on a large project was not on the Castle (which for the time being has a continual programme of annual but not very large repairs – until we do the Tower in 2 years), but the restoration of London Lodge, a 1793 Triumphal Arch and associated North and South side Lodges, which was completed in the early summer of 2014. As part of our heritage remit with Historic England and HM Revenues & Customs, we are responsible for the upkeep and restoration of the seven 18th century arches or follies, one medieval barn and one large Victorian sawmill on the Estate which is a considerable burden as they are very expensive to repair but generate no income. We have enjoyed the project management and the satisfaction of seeing a number of these buildings repaired and the key part they play in the enjoyment of the landscape but they put a great

burden on overall financial resources as they are in effect capital investments with no actual return and in a normal business capital would not be employed in such ventures!”

“London Lodge was the original entrance into the Brownian Park at the end of the 18th century and marked the entry into the Peerage of the 1st Earl of Carnarvon. The Triumphal Arch had a considerable amount of decorative Coade stone and this had to be removed and conserved (though in mostly good condition) and then replaced onto the restored arch. Besides the Triumphal Arch we also restored the side lodges and their interiors so that people can stay overnight, sleeping in the south lodge and using the north lodge with its sitting room and kitchen during the day. We let it out on a two night basis rather like the Landmark Trust. The architect for this project was Peter Brownhill of Brownhill Hayward Brown and the contractors Fairhurst Ward Abbot who specialise in heritage conservation. Sarah Morris of McWhirter Morris advised on the interior design and the landscape works were supervised by ourselves. The key works involved removing all the render from the Triumphal Arch and completely rebuilding the internal brickwork which had become weak and offering no support. We then restored the render and all the top coping and decorative stone as well as the original gates which were conserved and re-painted. Base stonework was also fractured and needed restoration as did the roofs of the Lodges and their doors and windows. The Lodges needed complete re-building internally with all modern features, such as electricity and plumbing. An old brick culvert under the building needed unblocking and some restoration to remove water from the site.”

What would you say are the main barriers or challenges to owning a listed building (in relation to carrying out repairs and maintenance)?

“The main challenges of owning Highclere Castle and its associated listed buildings are the very difficult choices to be made between investment work, which will produce a long term income to support the Estate, and work which is necessary for heritage repairs both in and around the Castle and parkland. There are always decisions to be made about what business to take or not take in relation to how much wear and tear will be inflicted on the Castle the lawns or fields in the park used for parking for events.”

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