

POWDERHAM CASTLE

CONSERVATION STATEMENT

Exeter EX6 8JQ, United Kingdom

Prepared for:

The Earl Of Devon

In fulfillment of the requirements for
HSPV 70 Preservation Studio Course
Weitzman School Of Design
University Of Pennsylvania
in partnership with University of Plymouth

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Introduction



View of Powderham castle, approaching from the southwest drive.



View of Powderham's east tower from the formal garden. The castle was originally approached from the east, via the estuary.



View of the formal terrace garden, looking east out towards the Exe estuary.

**Unless specified, photographs within this document were taken by the UPenn team during site visits from 2017-2019.*

Powderham Castle is located south of Exeter on the banks of the River Exe in Devon, England. This Grade II listed, 200-acre site is comprised of a remarkable complex of historic buildings and landscapes that has remained in private ownership by the same family for 600 years, yet has received little study to date. In 2017 and 2018, students and faculty from the Historic Preservation Program at the Weitzman School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania, in collaboration with the University of Plymouth and the Earl of Devon, spent three weeks on site documenting the medieval and 18th century portions—less than half of the castle core. Extensive archival written, graphic and photographic documentation, as well as fabric analysis carried out to date, was compiled and organized as an illustrated report and a database which can guide future research and site and collections management

Today, many challenges face the site, the result of decades of deferred maintenance and competing demands for resources and audience. Charles P. Courtenay, the Earl of Devon, his family and staff recognize that Powderham represents many things to many people and, in the four years since assuming the ownership and the title, have implemented a wide variety of programming and management changes. Recent planning for repairs to the North Wing of the Castle has made clear the need for information about the evolution of the building and the relative significance of its spaces and features.

In the fall of 2019, eleven students and two faculty from the Historic Preservation Program at the Weitzman School of Design studied the site with a new lens—preparing a Conservation Statement for the Castle precinct. Work was carried out as part of the Preservation Planning Studio required of all second-year students in the Master of Science in Historic Preservation. This is designed as an applied course in “conservation planning”—an internationally-recognized methodology used to advise clients, recommend public policies, shape development and curate sites of cultural significance.

The core methodology for the course is “values-based planning,” as codified in the Burra Charter (2013). The practice acknowledges that sites have multiple values and stakeholder interests and thus, there is no single best answer to “what should the future of this site be?” reachable by scientific method. Instead, planning methodologies should employ a multitude of tools, types of research and decision-making processes to balance the many issues and many possible solution paths to conserving a site. Heritage sites often have long histories of change, and multiple stakeholders and clients asserting claims. Every site is valued in a multiplicity of ways, and rarely can all values of a site be realized without conflict.

Objective



Student Joe Bacci documents changes in masonry on the castle's exterior.



Students examine the "30's wing," part of the castle that has not been inhabited since the 1980s.



Students visit the formal garden at Knightshays, a National Trust sight that shares some similar characteristics with Powderham.

The primary purpose of this Conservation Statement has been to provide a framework for the ongoing care and management of Powderham Castle which will guide future considerations related to alteration and use, to ensure that its significance and values continue to be translated and maintained into the future. The report provides a brief historical narrative of the evolution of the site, assesses levels of significance within the spaces, identifies challenges and opportunities for the site, and suggests appropriate measures for future change.

A Conservation is defined by Historic England as “a shorter and less detailed version of a Conservation Management Plan (CMP).” While a CMP is “usually a detailed document, which includes a management agreement and maintenance plan, prepared by a specialist after consulting different Stakeholders,” a Conservation Statement is “often prepared ... on the basis of existing knowledge... [and] should detail how the heritage asset will be cared for once the project has ended. It should include an understanding of the heritage and an explanation of what is important about it as part of a Statement of Significance.”¹

Methodology

Over the course of thirteen weeks, the students’ work was organized in three phases:

- Understanding of the place through research and documentation
- Analysis and synthesis of this knowledge
- Response in the form of plans, projects and other interventions.

They spent five days and nights on site in early October, surveying all accessible spaces not previously documented by Penn, meeting with staff and key stakeholders and observing operations, as well as another day visiting comparable sites nearby. They produced three interim presentations which were critiqued by University of Pennsylvania faculty and special guests. Three of the faculty—Frank Matero, Randall Mason and Laura Keim—had participated in the two previous three-week UPenn engagements at Powderham, while guest critics brought expertise managing a wide variety of historic sites.

¹ Historic England. HERITAGE WORKS: A toolkit of best practice in heritage regeneration. (April 2017) <https://www.bpf.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Heritage-Works-14July2017-for-web.pdf> accessed 9 January 2020.

Methodology, Continued

In addition to preparing the Conservation Statement, the students:

- Expanded the AutoCAD plans developed by previously by Penn teams to include the western courtyard. These drawings are included as Appendix A3 and should be considered diagrams, as dimensions have not been verified;
- Enlarged the evolutionary Sketchup model developed by previously by Penn teams to include the west court;
- Transcribed the handwritten Charles Fowler accounts of work completed in 1848-18xx, making them more accessible (included as Appendix A2);
- Documented of all spaces within the precinct with photographs and survey forms, summarized in the Space Survey in A4; and
- Pursued individual research related to historic significance and design studies related to current needs, included in Appendix Volume B.

With limited time and available resources, the students worked to the best of their abilities to complete the following report. The findings and recommendations related to significance, values, and guidance should be updated, confirmed and expanded as future research on the site, its built fabric, occupants, builders and designers is carried out.



Charles Courtenay, the Earl of Devon, marks up architectural plans to illustrate changes made to the castle to the group of students.



The students take an introductory tour to the Castle with one of the site's official guides.

University of Pennsylvania Project Team

Faculty:

Pamela Hawkes, Professor of Practice

Starr Herr-Cardillo, Research Associate and Studio Critic

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Students Joe Bacci and Renata Lisowski study the Castle's east facade from the garden.

Acknowledgments



Students Sung Di and Monica Ortiz study archival documents with Powderham's archivist, Felicity Huffman.



Building Surveyor Philip Hughes gives students a tour of the roof at Powderham and discusses ongoing work at the Castle.



Students and instructor Pamela Hawkes pose in front of the mansion at Knightshays, which shares similar Victorian-era aesthetic details with Powderham Castle.

This Conservation Statement would not have been possible without the generous guidance support, and knowledge of many people. First, we would like to thank Charles and AJ Courtenay, Earl and Countess of Devon, and the Powderham Staff for generously sharing their knowledge and providing the incredible opportunity to explore and research Powderham Castle.

We are indebted to previous research conducted by the University of Plymouth and PennPraxis, which proved instrumental in our analysis of the site. This project grew out of previous work spearheaded by Cornerstone Praxis and University of Plymouth faculty members James Daybell and Daniel Maudlin, who framed the scope of the investigations and led archival studies that provided the basis for much of our research.

Additional logistical contributions and academic support was provided by the faculty of the Weitzman School of Design, Department of Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania, including Frank Matero, Chair; Randall Mason, Associate Professor; Micah Dornfeld, Administrative Assistant; and Amanda Bloomfield, Assistant Director for Administration. We would also like to thank the various reviewers, who gave useful feedback throughout the process.

We would like to extend a special thanks to faculty members and studio instructors, Pamela Hawkes, Professor of Practice; Starr Herr-Cardillo, Research Associate and Studio Critic; Dorothy Krotzer, Regional Director, Building Conservation Associates, Inc.; and Laura Keim, Curator, Stenton, who have provided indispensable guidance, support, and knowledge throughout this entire process.

Specialized knowledge was also generously provided by:

Derry Tydeman, Heritage Manager, Powderham Castle;

Diana Walters, Honorary Research Fellow, School of Humanities and Performing Arts (Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Plymouth);

Philip Hughes, Building Conservator, Philip Hughes Associates;

Miles Webber, Estate Manager;

Rhiannon Rhys, Historic England;

Naomi Archer, Teignbridge District Council;

Emma Robinson, Director of Policy, Historic Houses; and

Felicity Harper, Archivist, Powderham Castle



Map showing Powderham's location in the United Kingdom (source: Google)



Map showing the extent of Powderham's grounds and the site's location relative to the River Exe and Kenton Village (source: Ordnance Survey)



Diagram showing Grade I and Grade II listed historic resources at Powderham. (Source for base diagram: Powderham Castle)



View of Powderham's northwest gate. The approach to the Castle has changed over the centuries.



View of the Gothic Tea House in the American Garden.



Sheep grazing near the Exe. Powderham's rural setting is part of its significance.

Understanding the Site

Site and Location

Powderham Castle is located on the west banks of the River Exe, 6 miles south of Exeter and less than three miles from the English Channel. The traditional seat of the Earls of Devon, it is positioned near the center of the County. The estate includes 3500 acres of river, marshland, fields and forests and supports a wide range of activities. Following is a description of the location and setting excerpted from the English Heritage listing for the Park and Garden:

Powderham Castle is located on the west bank of the Exe River in Devon county, in the Parish of Powderham, at the Southwest corner of England; It is approximately 6 miles south from Exeter and less than a mile east from the village of Kenton. The Castle stands on a terrace above the former course of the Kenn river about 80meters south, and above the deer park to the east. The site encompasses 250Ha where 10Ha are formal and informal gardens, pleasure grounds and kitchen gardens, and 240Ha are parkland and woodland.

The site is bordered to the east by a minor road and the South Devon Railway that joins with the Exe estuary. On the south and north-west it is enclosed by stone walls fronting the A379 Road, and to the south-east and south-west is bordered by agricultural land and private properties. To the west, the Kenn river and an associated mill stream mark the extent of the site, to the north it adjoins agricultural land on Exwell Hill, and a minor road running east from A379 to Powderham village.

The site slopes steeply up to the ridge of Powderham Hill, around 250m north-west of the Castle which extends north-west to the site boundary with wooded, south-west-facing slopes, while park and agricultural land to the north rise to Exwell Hill 2km north-north-west of the Castle. The grounds of the park, north and east of the castle are relatively level, while to the south-east and south it falls gently to the marches and Kenn river and rising again at the boundary.¹

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000698>

Heritage Status

The Powderham Estate includes five separate sites which are listed in the National Heritage List for England:

Site	Grade	List Entry #	Date first Listed
Powderham Castle	I	1097666	11 Nov. 1952
The Belvedere	II*	1306164	11 Nov. 1952
Powderham Castle Park and Garden	II*	1000698	12 Aug. 1987
Stables House	II*	1097668	02 Dec. 1988
Gothic Teahouse in the American Garden	II	1271149	28 Nov. 2000

Definitions of the listing Grades are as follows:

- Grade I buildings are of “exceptional interest”
- Grade II* buildings are “particularly important buildings of more than special interest”; and
- Grade II buildings are “of special interest.”²

Powderham as a Heritage Asset

The National Heritage List for England includes over 400,000 listed properties, according to Historic England. Of those locations, 91.7% are listed Grade II, 5.8% are Grade II*, and only 2.5% have Grade I listing. Thus, Powderham Castle, with its Grade I listing, is in an relatively exclusive class among historically significant estates.

Thousands of sites nationwide are open to the public. The National Trust operates over 500 historic properties, which include natural areas, and attracts more than 26.6 million visitors.³ The Historic Houses Association advises over 1,500 privately-owned properties, 500 of which are open to the public, including Powderham.⁴ A report published for Historic England in 2018 determined that the Heritage sector had a £12 billion impact on the economy every year.

Though there are hundreds of historic attractions in Devon, Powderham has established itself as a regional point of interest. Powderham draws over 100,000⁵ visitors per year by catering to a diverse audience, offering a variety of tours and special events which draw on values of historic stewardship, community engagement, and adventure. Furthermore, the aesthetic and natural beauty of Powderham makes the site attractive as a wedding venue, making the estate competitive beyond the heritage industry.

² Historic England. “Listed Buildings.” <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/listed-buildings/>

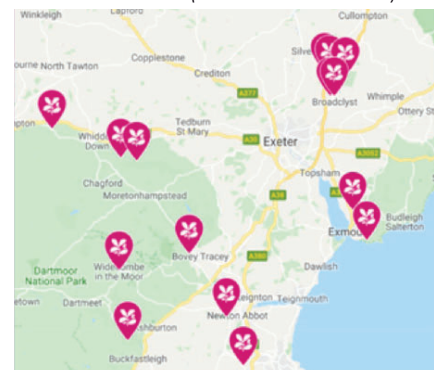
³ “National Trust responds to record visitor numbers with ambitious plans to improve visitor experience.” 7 September 2018. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/press-release/national-trust-responds-to-record-visitor-numbers-with-ambitious-plans-to-improve-visitor-experience>.

⁴ Wells, Charlie. “When Your Home is a Castle (and a Tourist Destination).” Wall Street Journal Nov 23, 2016. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/when-your-home-is-a-castle-and-a-tourist-destination-1479922056>

⁵ Ibid.



Diagram showing the distribution of National Trust Sites in the UK. (Source: National Trust)



National Trust Sites in the vicinity of Powderham Castle. (Source: National Trust)



Diagram showing historic Historic House Members throughout the UK. (Source: Historic Houses)



Historic Houses in the vicinity of Powderham. (Source: Historic Houses)

Stakeholders

Preliminary stakeholder research was carried out by the studio group in the beginning of the fall semester. This was informed by prior research conducted by Powderham Praxis 2017-2018 and in conversation with Diana Walters on site. The below entities represent some of Powderham's many stakeholders. As research in this vein was only surface deep, this does not represent a fully inclusive list. The stakeholders have not been prioritized in terms of the degree to which they impact or are impacted by decisions made by the site.

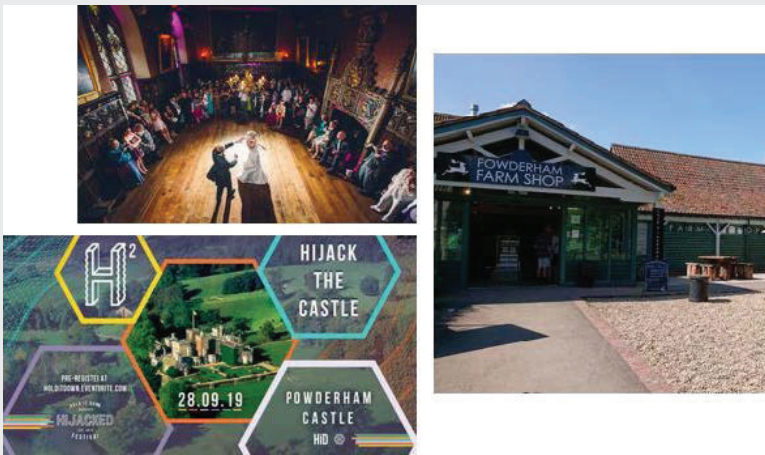


- The Courtenay Family
- Powderham Staff
- Historic England
- Natural England
- Teignbridge District
- The Courtenay Society
- Residents of Kenton
- Residents of Devon
- Residents of Starcross
- Residents of Cofton
- Residents of Exminster
- Residents of other nearby towns
- Historic Houses Association
- University of Plymouth
- University of Exeter
- University of Pennsylvania
- Exe Estuary Management
- Local farmers
- Powderham tenants
- Exeter City Community Trust
- Wedding parties
- Event goers
- Local businesses.

Comparable Sites

Ten sites within Devon were identified as comparable to Powderham, offering varying levels of Tours, Weddings, Accommodations and Community Involvement. These are described in Appendix A4. One of these sites, Bickleigh Castle, and Knightshayes, operated by the National Trust, were visited by the project team.

Three sites—Longleat House, Escot and Killerton—were identified as comparable sites by Powderham management, who provided their notes on relative Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Other sites associated with the Courtenay family include Ford House, and Tiverton Castle.



Along with being open to tourists and visitors on a seasonal basis, Powderham also relies on revenue from weddings and large events and operates a local farm shop.



Care for the site must address much more than the historic castle itself, but also extends to ecosystems and complex landscapes, including the tidal waterfront and the Deer Park.



Bickleigh Castle was selected as a "comparable site" and visited by the UPenn team. It is privately owned and primarily functions as a bespoke wedding venue. (Source: Bickleigh Castle)



Knightshayes is managed by the National Trust and shares some similarities to Powderham, particularly in its Victorian-era design. (Source: Flickr)



Forde House was the Courtenay family's principle residence after Powderham Castle was damaged during the Civil War.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Prior to and after visiting Powderham, the team conducted a SWOT analysis, which entails listing perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats held by or posed to the site. Attributes may overlap various categories, for example, Powderham's sheer size may be perceived as a strength and an opportunity, but also as a potential threat, as maintenance of a large estate poses many challenges. The primary purpose of a SWOT analysis is to develop a more nuanced understanding of a site's potential advantages and challenges, and to serve as a strategic planning tool.

<p style="text-align: center;">S T R E N G T H S</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Local Community Resource <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Venue Local Employer Open to public; recreational area Community activities •Historical Resource <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unique floorplan Representative of a number of architectural styles Established history Conveyor of national and local history Historic England Grade I Listed •Stewardship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuity of multigenerational stewardship Efforts towards inclusivity Dedicated proprietors Institutional Memory 	<p style="text-align: center;">O P P O R T U N I T I E S</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Re-population and Updating of Rooms •Continued legacy of Courtenay involvement •Collection and archives on site •Continued, increased profits from tourism & events •Build on curation and interpretation strategy •Further academic research •Brexit (domestic tourism) •Lots of available space (within buildings and grounds)
<p style="text-align: center;">W E A K N E S S E S</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Deferred maintenance •Operational costs •Remote location •Collection and archive management •Promotional material •Interpretation strategy •Accessibility due to difficult layout •Under-utilized space •Limitations due to Grade I listing 	<p style="text-align: center;">T H R E A T S</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Collection and archive management •Staff turnover and loss of institutional memory •Climate change •Deferred maintenance •Wear from regular use and events •Unstable revenue stream •Brexit •Adaptations to building fabric •Rehabilitation costs and long-term investment •Aging visitor population •Limited staff and operational budget

Significance

A key element of a Conservation Statement is the Statement of Significance. As Historic England notes in Conservation Principles (2008):

Designation necessarily requires the assessment of the importance of specific heritage values of a place; but decisions about its day-to-day management should take account of all the values that contribute to its significance. Moreover, the significance of a place should influence decisions about its future, whether or not it has statutory designation.

As a Grade I listed building, Powderham Castle is of “exceptional interest.” However, its listing does not include a statement of significance. Therefore, this Conservation Statement has set out to identify both values and aspects of significance for Powderham Castle, and to draft a succinct statement of them. The analysis of the significance of Powderham Castle has been guided by the National Planning Policy Framework of the United Kingdom, in conjunction with the direction provided by Historic England, the advising public body charged with interpreting the Framework as it relates to the management and conservation of heritage assets.

The Framework defines significance as “...the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.” Historic England, further recommends how the concept of significance should be conveyed:

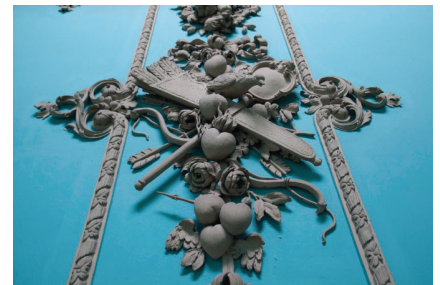
A ‘statement of significance’ of a place should be a summary of the cultural and natural heritage values currently attached to it and how they inter-relate, which distills the particular character of the place. It should explain the relative importance of the heritage values of the place (where appropriate, by reference to criteria for statutory designation), how they relate to its physical fabric, the extent of any uncertainty about its values (particularly in relation to potential for hidden or buried elements), and identify any tensions between potentially conflicting values. So far as possible, it should be agreed by all who have an interest in the place. The result should guide all decisions about material change to a significant place.



Traditionally significance is often derived from a place's aesthetic and architectural value, which is the case at Powderham, particularly in formal spaces like the Music Room.



Powderham's Music Room is also significant for its connection to the 9th Earl, William Courtenay and has experienced very little change.



Other areas that hold high significance, like the Great Stair Hall, have seen change over the centuries, such as changes in paint color schemes and the elimination of windows and addition of a lantern in the ceiling by architect Charles Fowler.



As Powderham has shifted from a private estate to a tourist destination and public venue, long-held values have evolved and, in some ways, shifted the way in which significance is evaluated.



Evidential value relates mostly to physical fabric and its ability to yield scientific information. Pictured: an embedded sandstone arch indicates where original medieval openings were located.



Communal value includes the way that people value a place in the present. Pictured: a food festival held at Powderham in the fall of 2019 was well attended by the local community.



Powderham's Belvedere suffered a fire after World War II that left the structure gutted. Ongoing conservation work has stabilized the structure as-is.

Values: Expanding the Concept of Significance

Historic England. Historic England traditionally has assigned heritage interest in terms of four values: Archaeological, Architectural, Artistic and Historic. These have been modified and defined:

- Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative.
- Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. Communal values are closely bound up with historical (particularly associative) and aesthetic values, but tend to have additional and specific aspects.

Historic England's criteria for judging significance include "the degree to which the following criteria are met:"

- Rarity: Does it exemplify a pattern or type seldom encountered elsewhere?
- Representativeness: Is its character or type representative of important historical or architectural trends?
- Aesthetic appeal: Does it derive value from the intrinsic visual quality of its architecture, design or layout, the harmony or diversity of its forms and materials, or through its setting?
- Integrity: Does it retain a sense of completeness and coherence? Integrity is most often used as a measure of single-phase survival, but some buildings and landscapes are valuable precisely because of their multiple layers, which can have considerable evidential value
- Associations: Is it associated with important historic events or people?

 <p>AUSTRALIA ICOMOS International Council on Monuments and Sites</p> <p>Social Historic Spiritual Scientific Aesthetic</p>	 <p>Historic England</p> <p>Evidential Historical Aesthetic Communal</p>	 <p>POWDERHAM CASTLE</p> <p>Authenticity Sustainability Community Inclusivity Adventure</p>
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Value categories recognized by Australia ICOMOS and Historic England, and Powderham Castle's own identified set of values.

International Standards

The Burra Charter, a national charter suggesting principles for the management and conservation of cultural sites, has set the standard for the acknowledgment of the fact that the values embodied in the built environment are dynamic and change over time. The Burra Charter states:

Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects. Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups.

The Burra Charter provides a touchstone for an expanded understanding of the concept of significance, one that is increasingly intersectional and participatory.

Powderham's Values.

Alongside the Castle, Powderham includes ancient farmland and woodland, a deer park, a number of unique but crumbling buildings, three miles of muddy foreshore and a long-lived community...We are proud of Powderham as a business, as well as a home; we see it as an 800-year-old start-up, with social purpose at its core. Our Powderham balances between commercial efforts and cultural/community engagement within the warmth of a cherished, family home.

---Charles Peregrine Courtenay, 19th Earl of Devon,
Powderham Castle Guidebook (2018)

As deftly articulated in the introduction to the current Powderham Castle Guidebook Powderham represents many things to many people. The Courtenay family and the site staff have identified their own values as a guide for programming and promotion:

- Authenticity
- Sustainability
- Community
- Inclusivity
- Adventure.



Powderham's estate includes footpaths that are valued by the community.



Powderham's Belvedere is a prominent visual landmark from the Exe and from across the river.



Powderham encompasses a wide range of heritage buildings, farmland, woodland, and a deer park.



One of the most remarkable things about the Castle is that it has served as a family home to the Earls of Devon for centuries and continues to do so today. (Devonshire Magazine)

Powderham & Criteria for Significance

The significance of Powderham Castle has unfolded over centuries and continues into the present day. Some aspects of the site which respond to Historic England's criteria include:

Rarity: Documenting the relative number and importance of various elements and aspects of the site relative to other resources in the country was beyond the scope of this project. Given the site's age, however, it is likely that many rare survivals exist. A few noted so far include:

- The Deer Park, while not strictly related to the Castle proper surrounds the building and contributes enormously to the setting and feel of the place.
- The ensemble of buildings, fittings, furnishings, fine and decorative arts and books, and their documentation through records preserved at the Castle and in nearby archives.

Representativeness: The main public spaces in the Castle represent major developments in Georgian and Gothic Revival design as well as the known work of designers and craftsmen of both local and national repute. The site's reputation as a representative of the family home is demonstrated by three articles in *Country Life* over the course of a century. Key spaces include:

- Great Stair Hall: carpenter James Garrett and plasterer John Jenkins;
- The enfilade created by the Ante-room and Libraries;
- Music Room: architect James Wyatt and sculptor/project manager Richard Westmacott;
- State Dining Room, with its wallpapers, heraldic paneling and gas chandelier by Charles Fowler; and
- The innovative 19th century construction technology found in the buildings of the West Court.

Aesthetic appeal: The castle has been a major landmark along the shore of the River Exe since the medieval period and is now a landmark from the railway. The site's aesthetic appeal is demonstrated by paintings, engravings and photos by numerous from the 18th century on, including Samuel (1696-1779) and Nathaniel Buck in their *Buck's Antiquities* (Powderham was depicted in 1734 and 1745) and the Reverend John Swete (1752-1821) in his *Picturesque Sketches of Devon*.

Integrity

The survival of the primary mass of the Castle is demonstrated through this sequence of images and maps dating from 1583 to the present. While spaces were added or transformed throughout that period in response to changing tastes, the family appear to have consciously preserved evidence of its medieval origins through the fabric of the building.

Associations

Powderham's long association with the Courtney family and the Earls of Devon is noteworthy, beginning with Margaret de Bohun and her marriage to Hugh de Courtenay in the first quarter of the 14th century and continuing to the present day. The site is one of several associated with the family in the area, including Forde House and Tiverton Castle.

Community

Powderham has traditionally been a center of economic development in the community, as an employer and landlord. The Castle itself remains a major regional employer and is now a center of community culture, the site of meetings, gatherings, programs and sponsoring local charities.



Jean-Antoine-Théodore Giroust. *The Harp Lesson*, 1791.



James Wyatt. Music Room, designed 1788.



Depiction of a medieval hunting park from *The Master of Game* (written by the 2nd Duke of York), early 15th century.



WH Bartlett. View of Powderham's East Facade, 1829.



Deer rutting season at Powderham Castle, 2016.



1583.



1785.



1836.



1908.

Detail views of: Saxton Atlas of England and Wales, 1583; G. Lang. Map of Lands within the Township of Powderham, Glebe Lands of Powderham, The property of The Right Honorable William Lord Viscount Courtenay, 1785; Robert Dymond (Surveyor, Exeter). Map of the Parish of Powderham in the County of Devon, 1836; St. Thomas Union and R.D. Ordnance survey



Clockwise from above: Effigies of Hugh Courtenay (d. 1377) and Margaret Bohun (d. 1391) at Exeter Cathedral; Portrait of Edward Courtenay, 1st Earl of Devon, 1855; Richard Cosway. Portrait of William Courtenay, 3rd Viscount Courtenay of Powderham, 1789; Matt Austin. Photos of Charlie Courtenay, 19th Earl of Devon and Parliament, 2018.



Statement of Significance

Powderham Castle embodies a legacy of survival, adaptation, and resilience in response to cultural, political, economic, and environmental shifts over the past 600 years.

The depth and range of the history of the fortified medieval manor house turned Georgian mansion turned Victorian Gothic Revival castle is illustrated in its fabric. Architectural elements are found physically overlaid and interwoven into each other, though the iconic outline of the building has remained remarkably consistent. Each layer represents a generation, a personality, and a renewed commitment to the tradition of private stewardship by the Courtenay family that has remained unbroken for centuries.

It is this layering – the knitting together of material across time – that underscores the character and strengthens the significance of Powderham Castle. Powderham Castle is now poised to take its next transformative turn as a contemporary community-focused sanctuary, guided by principles of authenticity, inclusivity, sustainability, and accessibility.

Periods of Significance

Powderham's significance can be demonstrated through historical periods which encompassed important personages and major changes. The PennPraxis report completed in 2018 outlines key documentary and archaeological evidence for the evolution of the castle complex for the areas associated with the Medieval and Georgian periods. A Sketchup model prepared by Penn illustrates the evolution of key massing elements, and can be viewed from all sides.

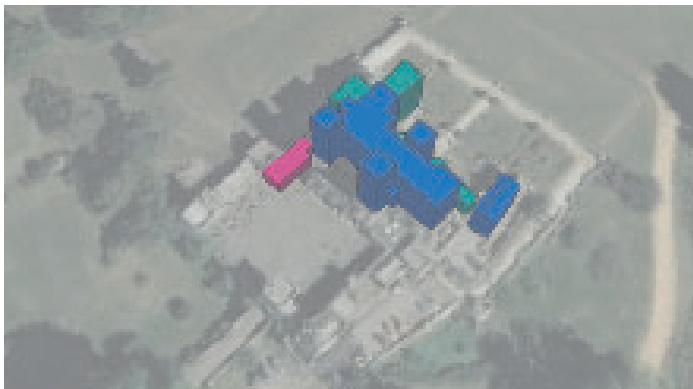
1391-1702 Medieval

Powderham occupies a rise along the west bank of the River Exe, facing the river's entrance from the English Channel. This strategic location appears to have been occupied since Roman times, suggested by recent discovery of ruins on the Castle grounds. The manor of Powderham is mentioned in the 1085 Domesday Book,¹ and Margaret de Bohun (1311 – 1391), Countess of Devon bequeathed Powderham to her sixth son, Sir Philip Courtenay (ca. 1355-1406). Sometime afterwards, the original medieval portion of the castle—more properly a fortified manor—was constructed, consisting of a Great Hall with six towers.² Service rooms and a kitchen were located on the southern end, with private quarters to the north. Sir Philip is said to have modeled the layout on the contemporary Dartington Hall, which had “three-storied end blocks, a tall porch tower, and the common use of two- and four-centered door heads.”³

1 <https://www.powderham.co.uk/stories>.

2 Harding 1876, 175; Girouard 1972, 22.

3 Emery, pp. 619.



These evolutionary diagrams illustrate how the Castle has grown and expanded over the centuries.

- ca. 1390-1540 Medieval Core
- ca. 1702-1735
- ca. 1735-1788
- ca. 1788-1835
- ca. 1836-1859 Fowler
- ca. 1860-1899 Post-Fowler



Christopher Saxton, *Atlas of England and Wales*, 1583 (British Library)



The walls of the original Medieval Hall were built with a distinctive rubble stone that can be differentiated from later additions made in brick and gray chert.



The northwest tower retains medieval-era window openings in the winding newel stair.

Periods of Significance, Continued

The 16th century depiction of Powderham Castle in Saxton's *Atlas of England and Wales* (1579), the first comprehensive atlas of England and Wales, is diagrammatic, but suggests a gable-roofed structure flanked by towers, projecting the image of a sturdy, formidable structure which has persisted even to this day. The original core of the castle is built principally of limestone, a reddish conglomerate, and a locally-sourced white stone referred to as "Exmouth stone."⁴ Relieving arches of red sandstone indicate the presence of medieval-era windows and doorways. The complex was accessed from the river through a walled courtyard to the east, and included a detached Grange, now the Chapel.

Character-defining Features:

- Walls of the Great Hall remain within the core of the complex.
- Five of the six towers remain, though some are changed in height or form.
- Fragments of medieval masonry and window lintels are visible on exterior walls of the Hall and towers.
- Medieval arches at doorways between Stair Hall and China Closet and Marble Hall and private kitchen.
- Wood brackets in 2nd floor rooms south of the Sitting Room.
- Walls of the Grange, incorporated in Chapel.

1702-1835 Georgian

The Courtenay's fortified manor house was damaged during the Civil War (1642-46) and the family relocated to Forde House, home of Lady Courtney's family, in Newton Abbot. In 1702, 5th Earl of Devon Sir William Courtenay (1628–1702) was succeeded by his grandson, also William (1675–1735). During his lifetime, the family returned to Powderham and made it habitable, initiating a new round of building campaigns which transformed the medieval structure into a series of axially-linked spaces on the ground and first floors. Three generations of Courtenays—the 7th Earl, also William (1709-1762); the 8th Earl, William (1742–1788); and his only son, William (1768- 1835), 9th Earl of Devon and 3rd Viscount—corresponded roughly to the reigns of George I, George II and George III (1714 – 1837), known as the Georgian Period. The Courtenays maintained a townhouse in London, and spaces at Powderham were finished with fine wood- and plasterwork and furnished by craftspeople from London as well as Exeter.

4 Harding 1876, 174.

Periods of Significance, Continued

The exterior evolution of Powderham in this period is documented through a series of contemporary exterior views and estate maps (analyzed chronologically on pp. -- of the PennPraxis report). Investigation by the University of Plymouth of Powderham documentation at the Devon Heritage Center has also uncovered detailed account books for this period, and much remains to be interpreted from careful scrutiny and placing the information in context.

1702 – 1735: Key Developments:

- North Wing was extended on three floors and connected via a doorway to gardens to the north, shown on a 1723 map.

1735 to 1788: Key Developments:

- Great Hall was divided into the Stair Hall, crafted by James Garrett in 1736, and the Marble Hall, entered through the east tower, with associated changes on the upper floors.
- Plaster decoration installed in Stair Hall by John Jenkins in the 1750's.
- Enfilade including the Ante-Room and First and Second Libraries (which were drawing rooms), including papier-mache ceiling decorations dated to 1752.
- Formal Library on the first floor created, including Channon Book cases (1740) and fireplace surround, above the Second Library, in the current State Bedroom.
- East Tower constructed or rebuilt, including single story rooms on either side for Breakfast Room and Dining Room (now the White Drawing Room).
- Chapel moved from east side of castle to northwest corner.

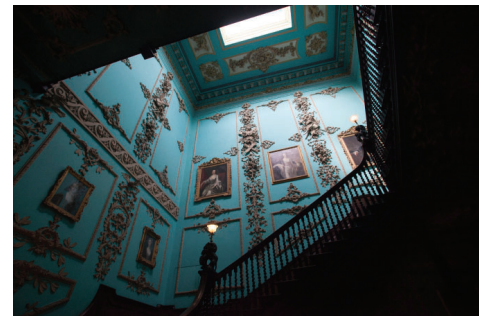
1788 – 1835: Key developments:

- Construction of Music Room in 1788 to the designs of architect James Wyatt (1746-1813) and installed under the direction of James Westmacott, sculptor of the marble fireplace.

The 9th Earl was forced to leave England in 1810, and less is known about how the house was used by the family afterwards. Few significant developments appear to have been carried out at the Castle before his death in 1835.



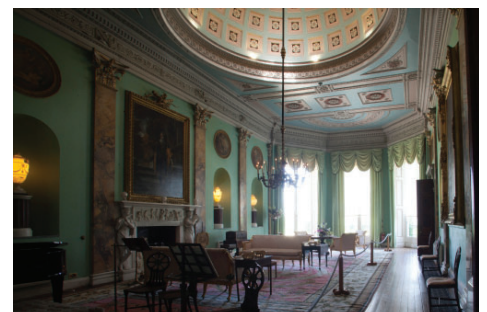
The addition to the North Wing is referred to as the 30's Wing. It is partially built of rubble stone (first floor) and rendered brick (second and third floors).



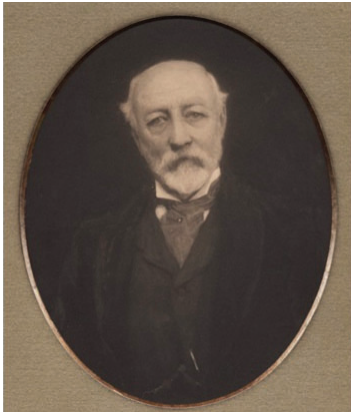
The Stair Hall was first added in 1736, though it has since been slightly modified.



The enfilade created from the Ante Room through the First and Second libraries is a signature feature of 18th century architectural design.



The Music Room most closely resembles its 18th century appearance.



Architect Charles Fowler was hired by the 10th Earl to modernize Powderham. (Source: RIBA)



Fowler playfully highlighted and incorporated a number of earlier features in the Castle in his work, imitating earlier finishes and features, like the three Medieval doors that now lead to the Kitchen off of the Marble Hall.



Fowler also re-purposed materials, such as these 15th century chest panels, which he incorporated into the interior design.



Fowler also reoriented the Castle to the west and designed the west court and surrounding gatehouses and buildings.

1835-1888 Victorian

In 1835, William Courtenay, 9th Earl of Devon died and was succeeded by his second cousin, William Courtenay (1777-1859), who became 10th Earl of Devon. The new Earl employed the architect Charles Fowler to repair and modernize the entire estate between 1835 and around 1859. The high level of activity appears to have been influenced not only by decades of deferred maintenance and the new Earl's desire to make his own mark on the site, but also by the sale of lands along the Exe River for the Devon Railway, cutting off the principal access route (as shown in a survey of the estate in 1836, Fig. -). An account book with yearly reports from Fowler remains in the archives at Powderham, and a series of Fowler drawings for this work were given to the Devon Heritage Center. These resources have only been briefly reviewed, but include "before" and "after" plans of the ground floor and exterior elevations for new construction, with some sections and details. With the first photographs of the site appearing in the 1840's and an 1842 inventory of the rooms, this period offers particularly rich opportunities for future research and interpretation.

Charles Fowler (1792-1867) was born in Cullompton, about 17 miles from Powderham. From 1807-1814, he apprenticed with architect and builder John Powning of Exeter, who served as Surveyor of Exeter Cathedral at the time. After working in the London office of David Laing, he established his own office in 1818 at a time when "there were not half a dozen men of superior qualifications among the professed architects of England."⁵ Fowler quickly gained a reputation for design of large public structures that employed innovative typologies and building techniques: Hungerford Market at Charing Cross, Covent Garden Market, the Syon House Conservatories, the Lower Market in Exeter, the Devon County Lunatic Asylum and the London Fever Hospital. Architectural Historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock declared that "The early Victorians built many larger markets in the 40s and 50s without producing any comparable in architectural quality to those designed by Charles Fowler for Charing Cross and Exeter in the 30s."⁶ Active in founding the Institute for British Architects (now the RIBA), Fowler retired from practice due to ill health in 1852, though his son, also Charles, continued some aspects of his work until his own death [date?].

Fowler's most dramatic addition to the castle was the new entrance from the west. The new approach road passed over the River Kenn south of the castle, past the former Stables Block, and rose on a vaulted viaduct through a castellated gatehouse into a paved forecourt surrounded by new service buildings. He enlarged the West Tower, added a new State Dining Room between the West and the Northwest Towers,⁷ and created a new formal garden above the deer park on the east side. The last was reportedly laid out

5 Taylor, Jeremy. Charles Fowler (1792-1867): A Centenary Memoir. Architectural History, Vol. 11 (1968), p. 58. pp. 57-74+108-112

6 Hitchcock, Early Victorian Architecture in Britain, i (1954), p.299., quoted in Taylor, p. 67.

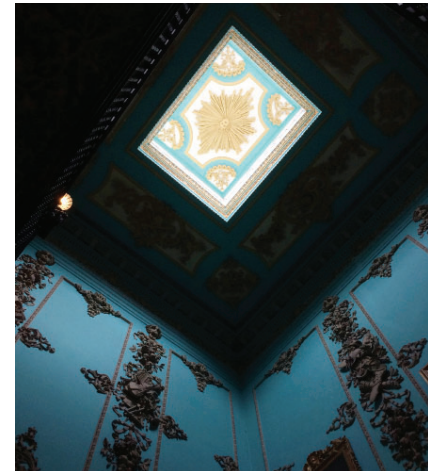
7 (Taylor 1968).

with the advice of William Sawrey Gilpin⁸ (1761/62-1843), artist, landscape architect and author of *Practical Hints upon Landscape Gardening*: with some remarks on Domestic Architecture, as connected with scenery (1832).

Some of Fowler's most significant work at Powderham was largely hidden from view. Nineteenth century critic J.C. Loudon called Fowler "one of the few modern architects who belong to the School of Reason and who design buildings on fundamental principles instead of antiquated rules and precedents."⁹ His market buildings pioneered a fireproof system for construction of large-span flat roofs which Fowler described in a paper delivered to the IBA in 1836: "Essentially a lamination of three courses of plain tiles, set in cement with overlapped joints, it acted both as roof covering and ceiling in one material and could be easily laid direct upon cast iron bearers. In addition it was completely waterproof, quick to construct, light in weight and extremely cheap."¹⁰ This system is shown in Fowler's details for the new buildings surrounding the western court at Powderham, and clearly visible today in the former Steward's Strongroom. This early composite construction, employing steel sections similar to those being laid for the railway along the river, was a precursor to those used in high-rise construction in the 20th century.

Fowler also introduced ingenious mechanical devices into the Castle. Construction of the State Dining Room cut off natural light from the Grand Stair and the Ante-room; Fowler created the lantern above the Great Stair to introduce light from above, and the mirror that slides over the new window opening above the fireplace on the north wall of the Ante-room. When bookcases were installed in the First and Second Library, he created the jib doors to maintain access through the spaces. His plans delineate drainage systems and the water closet on the second floor likely dates from this period, as does the hot air heating system visible in parts of the ground floor. The service spaces created around the west courtyard housed a wider range of servants and activities under the same roof than the outbuildings depicted in earlier estate maps, providing the greater degree of comfort and convenience expected of the Victorian country house (see also Appendix B4).

Fowler described many parts of the Castle as being in "quite in a ruinous state" in his initial report from 1835 (Appendix A3), and few spaces escaped his touch, albeit a light and respectful one. Fowler's reports on repairs to the existing historic rooms typically end with the phrase "and making good," and preliminary paint and molding analysis by PennPraxis students confirmed that what appear to be 18th c moldings were in fact added in the 19th century to match the existing trim. His conservation approach is also demonstrated in the care taken to document the age of various parts of the structure in his initial plans, as well as the views of historic fabric preserved behind doors.



Fowler introduced the lantern to the top of the Stair Hall after enclosing windows to add the State Dining Room.



The window inserted above the Ante Room fireplace can be closed by a rolling mirror.



Pocket doors added between the First and Second Libraries.



A jib door built into the Second Library bookcase connects the east end of the room to the Music Room.

8 (Mellor 2015).

9 Taylor, p. 59

10 Ibid.



The State Dining Room was comprehensively designed by Fowler.



It features a chimney piece copied from Bishop of Exeter's Palace c. 1485.



The interior of the Chapel, following Fowler's renovations.

1835-1888 Victorian, Continued

Fowler's new west courtyard required removal of the family chapel that had stood to the west of the Northwest Tower since the mid-18th century. Between 1850 and 1870, the Medieval Grange in the southeast corner of the complex was adapted as the chapel, reportedly to the designs of "Mr. Fowler and Mr. Buckler."¹¹ The adaptive re-use of the Granary suggests a sensitivity to its Gothic origins. William Reginald Courtenay (1807-1888), the 11th Earl, had been a founding member of the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture in 1844.¹² John Chessel Buckler (1793-1894) was the author of *Views of the Cathedral churches of England and Wales* (1822) and an architect "frequently employed on the restoration of buildings, particularly in Oxford."¹³ The original roofing arch-braces were decorated with stencils. The new chapel was finished and licensed by the Bishop on 16th August, 1861, soon after the 10th Earl's death and the benches, possibly from the old church at South Huish, were been given to the 11th Earl in 1874.¹⁴

Character-defining Features:

- Viaduct, West Gate and West Courtyard
- West Tower
- East Terrace
- State Dining Room. Wallpapers and chandelier are representative of Gothic Revival manufacturing. The mantelpiece is a reproduction of that in the Exeter Bishop's Palace, installed in the 15th Century by Bishop Peter Courtenay (ca. 1432- 1492). The heraldic shields of the Courtenay family tree wainscoted and, also done around 1860s. (Harding 1863).
- Lord Devon's Study (North Room), with wallpapers and woodwork (Room #0008)
- Victorian Kitchen
- Business Office (#0028)
- Jib Doors in ground floor rooms
- Water Closet (#0207).

11 "The Royal Archaeological Institute at Exeter," *The Building News* (August 15, 1873). John Chessel Buckler (1793 – 1894) was the son of John Buckler (1770-1851), noted for his paintings and studies of historic churches and buildings. He took over his father's architectural practice in 1830 and became particularly noted as a proponent of the Gothic Revival for churches, country houses and colleges at Oxford, where he likely met William R. Courtney, a graduate of Christ Church. He retired from practice in 1860. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Chessel_Buckler. The *Building News* article included much discussion among the attendees of whether the structure had been a chapel or a granary, with some claiming that it was "The position and general design of the chapel almost exactly corresponded with that at Lytes Carey, Somerset" —though the structure is currently assumed to have been the grange.

12 *The Rules of the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture*. Oxford, 1844, p. 12.

13 *Benezit Dictionary of Artists*, <https://www-oxfordartonline-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/benezit/view/10.1093/benz/9780199773787.001.0001/acref-9780199773787-e-00028352> Jeffrey Tyack (2004) notes that Buckler retired in 1860. Cited in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Chessel_Buckler.

14 (Pevsner 1979).

20th Century

The mid-19th century marked a high point in the development of Powderham for nearly a century. Over the following century, the family and the estate were beset by a host of challenges that mirrored those facing country estates throughout the United Kingdom. During the 20th century, an estimated one in six country houses were demolished—1200 in all.

The agricultural depression of the 1870's diminished a key source of income that had traditionally been used to maintain the family and the estate. Income taxes and death duties instituted in the 19th century also imposed crippling burdens on each succeeding generation. Powderham was particularly hard hit. In response to death duties imposed after the death of the 11th Earl in 1888 and the ongoing impact of the loss of rents during the depression, the Devon estates were restructured and halved in size from 15,700 to 6,469 acres.¹⁵ At the same time, architect Charles Redwin Ware of Exeter suggested repairs necessary to make the castle attractive as a rental property,¹⁶ and it was leased to the Bradshaw family.¹⁷ The family invested successfully in new sources of income but, in the period between 1927 and 1935, the death of three heirs in quick succession imposed new liabilities.

During World War II, many large estates were requisitioned by the government as troop billets, hospitals and schools. Expedient and insensitive adaptations for new and different activities, coupled with lack of traditional maintenance, meant that most estates were in very poor condition when returned to their owners. Struggling with post-war diversion of supplies and personnel to rebuilding housing and other critical structures, many owners felt there was no alternative but to demolish them. Powderham appears to have fared better than most, with a military transport unit housed there during the war, but the financial situation was still challenging.¹⁸

Between World Wars I and II, the pool of servants that had kept great houses like Powderham operating had greatly diminished. Education, job training and growing political power made the traditional long hours and low pay of service less appealing. To respond to this need, to promote the value of country house and to help raise funds, the Countess of Devon, who had run the estate during the war, opened a Domestic Science College in 1947. For various reasons, the school failed to attract enough students to cover costs, nor did a riding school operated after that.¹⁹

15 Andrew John Jackson. Rural property rights and the survival of historic landed estates in the late twentieth century. Doctor of Philosophy, University College London, 1998, p. 88.

16 Letter dated 8 August 1890, Powderham Archives.

17 Powderham website History.

18 Jackson, p. 143.

19 Jackson, pp. 45-47.



Portions of the Castle, such as at the North Wing, served as residential wings for the family after Powderham opened to the public and have since been left vacant.



A lift was inserted to the North Wing in the 1950s, to accommodate aging residents and make living quarters accessible.



The West Tower has also been occupied as a residential space since opening the main house to the public.



Until the 2000s, the Marble Hall, which adjoins the private quarters most recently used, was also used as a formal family living room.



Many of the bedrooms in the formerly private family quarters are now available for rentals.



The private quarters occupied since the 1990s were reconfigured to accommodate the family.



This has resulted in a layering of fabric that can be more challenging to decipher, with medieval, Georgian and more modern elements incorporated.

20th Century, Continued

In response to concern about the fate of country houses, and the vast damage to heritage sites caused by World War II, the Town and Country Planning Acts of 1944 and 1947 for the first time established lists of architecturally important sites that included private residences that were still inhabited. Powderham achieved a Grade I listing in 1952 and was thus protected from demolition. Around that time, the Courtenays applied to the National Trust for transfer of ownership, but were unable to provide the requisite endowment of 60,000 pounds to cover maintenance.²⁰

Powderham had attracted wealthy tourists like the Reverend John Swete since the late 18th century (see Appendix B2).²¹ Spurred on by the discovery of significant structural problems in 1956, the Courtenays applied for and received grants from the Historic Buildings Council, which required that the building be open to the public at least one day a week in the summer. Following the lead of other landowners, they first opened to the public in 1957.²² House touring became a popular activity in the UK during this period, and the family soon opened the house every day and participated actively in managing the site and providing tours.²³

To minimize conflicts between family life and the increased public presence, the family moved away from the central spaces that had become the main tour route, occupying the north and south wings of the Castle. The second floor of the north wing was updated with a new entrance and a lift to provide private access from the ground floor to the first and second floors. The south wing, having previously been occupied by servants, was already a distinct part of the castle, and was easily adapted to provide a private area for the family. In the 1990s, this section received updated finishes and fixtures to accommodate overnight guests associated with wedding bookings.²⁴ In recent years, many of the service spaces around the West Courtyard have been adapted to visitor services such as the café, gift shop and exhibits.

Character-defining features:

- The new entrance on the west side of the North Wing.
- Coin-operated water closets under the Chapel, adjacent to original tea room.

²⁰ Jackson, p. 147.

²¹ Gray. Garden History of Devon, p. 182.

²² A series of plans and elevations prepared by John Sidey of Exeter in 1956 are preserved in the Devon Heritage Center.

²³ Jackson, pp. 147-48.

²⁴ (Powderham Guidebook).

Room-by-Room Survey

Methodology

A room-by-room assessment survey was conducted at Powderham Castle over the course of five days on site. The survey was intended to:

- Identify how landscape and building features and spaces relate to the overall evolution of the Castle and its periods of significance;
- Establish the range and relative significance of spaces within the Castle,
- Distinguish character-defining features which should be preserved within the spaces;
- Identify current uses and their impact on character and potential for change; and
- Identify spaces with potential for future change while preserving significant features.

The assessment was based on physical observation of the spaces with reference to available archival materials and historic records. Four major characteristics were evaluated: function, condition, level of significance, and capacity for change. A survey form was developed (shown on the following page) which included numerical values for integrity, significance and capacity for change, and representative photographs were taken of each space and its character-defining features.

To execute the work, the eleven-person studio team was divided into five groups and assigned to survey areas within the Castle which had not been previously studied by UPenn teams. The areas corresponded to the general vertical organization and evolution of the site. Following the on-site work, each group compiled a summary that includes a physical description of the particular area, its physical evolution and key features. Survey forms were completed after the on-site period for the core spaces based on documentation collected in 2017 and 2018.

The four values were mapped on floor plans of the site, and also overlaid to see how one factor, such as tolerance for change, was influenced by the others. These maps, overlays and analysis are included in Appendix A5. Definitions of the categories, criteria for values and representative examples are outlined on the following pages.

Note: The ability to assess the relative significance and integrity of spaces depends on an understanding of their condition and appearance during its period of significance. Much remains to be known about non-public spaces in the Castle, so all ratings should be re-evaluated as more information is revealed.



View of a gate in the West Court buildings lining the west entrance to the Castle. The spaces were designed by Charles Fowler and many of them have not experienced much change.



Some areas, like the Scullery (pictured) have evolved to serve utilitarian functions yet still retain high levels of significance.



The Chapel (formerly the Grange) is part of the original medieval-era construction. The assemblage of windows present on the south face of the exterior reflects many periods of change.



Some rooms, like the Music Room, have seen little to no alteration.

A. Levels of Significance

Many spaces have been modified during different periods and may have multiple levels of significance. The survey teams selected the periods that seemed most clearly characteristic of the space and most closely aligned with the significance of the site.

According to the U.S. National Park Service, “Character refers to all those visual aspects and physical features that comprise the appearance of every historic building. Character-defining elements include the overall shape of the building, its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details, interior spaces and features, as well as the various aspects of its site and environment.”¹

- **Very High:** Plays a crucial contribution to the significance at a national and/or regional level. These spaces contain character-defining features that are fundamental for communicating the site’s significance. Spaces of Very High Significance typically were the most public and highly-finished and retain their original uses, while also functioning as part of the tour route. Examples: Music Room, Stair Hall, and State Dining Room.

- **High:** Plays an important role in supporting the significance of the Castle at a regional and/or local level. Marked by levels of integrity between those identified as Very High and Moderate. Examples: Chapel and Office in North Tower

- **Moderate:** Plays a role in supporting the significance of the Castle at a regional and/or local level. These rooms have some character-defining features which remain, even though their original use may have changed. Examples: Scullery, Bedrooms in South Wing

- **Low:** Plays a minor role in communicating the significance of the Castle. Typically have few character-defining features as well as many adaptations through time (thus a Low level of integrity). These rooms tend to be more of utilitarian finish and functional use. Example: Administrative offices.

B. Integrity

Historic England defines Integrity as “Wholeness, honesty.”² The U.S. National Park Service defines it as the ability of a property to convey its historical associations or attributes.”³

A space is evaluated as having **High** Integrity when its elements are able to convey the values and qualities that make it (or the space) significant.

1 <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/17-architectural-character.htm>.

2 Conservation Principles, English Heritage, 2008.

3 <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalhistoriclandmarks/glossary.htm>

B. Integrity, Continued

An element is evaluated as having **Moderate** Integrity when the ability of elements to convey the values and qualities that make it (or the space) significant is somewhat compromised

An element is evaluated as having **Low** Integrity when the element is no longer able to convey the values and qualities that make it (or the space) significant.

C. Capacity for Change

- A room is evaluated as having **High** capacity for change when major interventions may be possible without compromising the significance. Examples of these rooms include utilitarian rooms and rooms that have been modified or physically changed.

- A room has **Moderate** capacity for change when It can accept a number of alterations without compromising its significance.

- A room has **Low** capacity for change when It is vulnerable to change and neglect. It is capable of accepting some changes provided that key character-defining features are preserved.

- A room has **Very Low** capacity for change when it is highly vulnerable to change and neglect. Change would severely alter its significance. Changes that are limited in scale or quantity may be possible. These spaces are typically public rooms and of High significance.

D. Condition

Overall physical condition of the spaces was evaluated and ranked as one of three levels: Good, Fair, and Poor. Future intervention, whether repair or renovation, would require a more careful examination of the specific space as well as identification of causative factors. Criteria and definitions are:

Good:

- structurally sound, with most of the physical fabric intact
- there are few or no cosmetic imperfections;
- the element needs no repair and only minor or routine maintenance;
- minor cosmetic damage that is relatively easily repaired, but not sufficient to detract from the appearance and performance of the space.
- Spaces that are in Good condition do not require immediate repair, but only routine maintenance.
- Most spaces used for Exhibition, Rental or Administrative functions are in Good condition.



Some rooms, like the State Bedroom, have served multiple functions over time.



Past modifications, such as converting a medieval newel stair leading from the China Room to the Solar to a china cabinet, have altered historic fabric.



Some spaces, like the visitor cafe in the West Court, were initially designed to serve a more utilitarian function and are particularly amenable to changes in use and function.



The Drawing room, located on the first floor adjacent to the private quarters, is in generally good condition.



Rooms in the North Tower have not been occupied for some time, though damage is primarily superficial. This room represents Fair condition.



Some rooms are in severe disrepair, such as the spaces on the lower floors of the West Court, beneath the cafe.

D. Condition, Continued

Fair:

- There are early signs of wear, failure, or deterioration, though the element is generally; structurally sound and performing its intended purpose;
- There is failure of a sub-component of the element;
- Replacement of up to 25% of the element or replacement of a defective sub-component is required.

Poor:

- The element is no longer performing its intended purpose;
- The element is missing;
- Deterioration or damage affects more than 25% of the element and cannot be adjusted or repaired;
- The element shows signs of imminent failure or breakdown;
- The element requires major repair or replacement;
- These spaces are typically not in active use, such as those located in the 30's wing and the basement of the North Wing of the West Court.

E. USE

A Function category was included to document way in which the spaces are currently used. The degree to which original functions have changed can affect integrity. This also helped to identify spaces which might be available for new uses related to current needs. The use categories included:

Exhibition,
Visitor Service,
Rental,
Storage,
Administrative, and
Other.

Most of these categories are self-evident. Visitor Service may also include circulation spaces that are intended for public use. Administrative spaces refer to those that are currently used by the staff at Powderham. Spaces identified as Other include those that are not currently in use.

Illustrations

As part of the Powderham Rapid Assessment Survey, a series of diagrams were generated based on data collected. First, the functions of spaces throughout the castle were mapped to illustrate how spaces are currently used. Six general categories were created to identify the current uses of the Castle spaces, including: **Exhibition, Visitor Service, Rental, Storage, Administrative, and Other.**

Exhibition spaces include those that are currently accessible to the public as part of the Castle tour. These include the State Dining Room (G-11), the Music Room (G-01), and the Great Stair Hall (G-10).

Visitor Service refers to spaces that serve the needs of public visitation. These spaces include the Courtenay Cafe (G-56) and the Gift Shop (G-50). Visitor Service may also include circulation spaces that are intended for public use.

Administrative spaces refer to those that are currently used by the staff at Powderham. These include offices located in the South Wing in the basement and ground floor and also bathrooms, circulation spaces, and kitchenette that are intended for staff use.

Spaces identified as **Other** include those that are not currently in use. These include primarily spaces in the 30s wing and the north wing of the west court.

Rental includes all spaces that can be rented out for weddings or events hosted at the Castle. These include bedrooms on the first and second floors, the Dining Room (G-15) and the Private Kitchen (G-17).

The **Storage** category includes a variety of spaces that currently hold either the Castle's archival materials or other utilitarian equipment and furniture that are not currently in use. These spaces vary in architectural details and interior finishes and may have been used for significant functions in the past. Examples of spaces defined under Storage include the Business Room (G-28), the Vault (B-05), and B-03.



Diagram showing the function of spaces on the ground floor. For all diagrams and floor levels, see Appendix.



Diagram showing the level of significance of spaces on the ground floor. For all diagrams and floor levels, see Appendix.



Diagram showing the overall condition of spaces on the ground floor. For all diagrams and floor levels, see Appendix.

Illustrations, Continued

During the survey, grades were to spaces reflecting their level of significance and general condition based on an established scale.

Significance: four levels of significance were defined including **Low, Moderate, High and Highest**. It is important to note that areas may convey multiple periods of significance, but were evaluated based on their overall significance, based on features that define these spaces the most.

Condition: The general condition of each room was defined in three levels: **Good, Fair, and Poor**. The levels are meant to convey the overall condition of the space and should not be relied upon to evaluate the appropriateness of any future intervention.

Significance and Condition both informed the assessment of each space's **Capacity for Change**. Four levels for Capacity for Change were defined including **Lowest, Low, Moderate, and High**. It is important to note any proposal for change should consult a preservation professional who is aware of the significance of the Castle. (Refer to the "Conservation Approach" section for full guidelines regarding changes).

A space is evaluated as having **high capacity for change** when major interventions may be possible without compromising the significance. Examples of these rooms include utilitarian rooms and rooms that have been heavily modified or physically changed over time. A space is evaluated as having **moderate capacity for change** when it is capable of accepting a number of changes without compromising significance and change may occur with only some risk of loss. A space is evaluated as having **low capacity for change** when it is vulnerable to change and neglect but is capable of accepting some changes. A space is evaluated as having the **lowest capacity for change** when it is highly fragile and vulnerable to change and neglect and any change would severely alter its significance.



Diagram showing the capacity for change of spaces on the ground floor. For all diagrams and floor levels, see Appendix.

Conservation Statement Objectives

According to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Conservation Statement is “a rapid, outline version of a conservation management plan,” “a document which sets out the significance of a heritage asset, and how that significance will be retained in any future use, management, alteration or repair.”¹ The Powderham estate encompasses a wide range of features, including landscapes, buildings, formal gardens, and a deer park. This statement is limited to the Grade I “Powderham Castle” listing established by Historic England on November 11, 1952.² It does not address the castle grounds and other listed elements, though some of these guidelines may be applicable to other resources on the site.

The Conservation Statement for Powderham Castle has sought to:

- Summarize overall values and significance of the site;
- Provide a narrative of the physical evolution of the castle;
- Establish themes of significance across the Castle’s evolution, the relative significance of spaces within and around the Castle and character-defining features;
- Identify areas with a potential capacity for change to meet current needs;
- Evaluate comparable sites and strategies;
- Outline recommendations and guidelines to inform appropriate future use and alterations;
- Identify future areas for research.

The Conservation Statement was developed with an understanding of the site as a privately-owned, public-facing entity with local and national significance. As the field of preservation has evolved since the 1950s, with greatly expanded criteria for what is determined significant, this also provided an opportunity to re-define the site’s significance and values, as outlined in the preceding sections of this report. The goal of the Statement is to assist with establishing sustainable, significance-driven policies for management, maintenance and alterations that will ensure Powderham Castle is conserved for current and future generations.

Conservation Philosophy

The policies set out within this Conservation Plan seek to comply with principles, guidelines, and best practices for the conservation and development of historic properties. Consulting documentation developed by Historic England and the Burra Charter, an attempt was made to create a unified approach that respects the site as a Grade I listed building, yet leaves room for appropriate alterations and changes in use that are critical to the long-range viability of the site and in keeping with the Castle’s significance as a place of continued evolution and adaptation.

1 Heritage Lottery Fund, “Conservation Management Plans: A Guide,” 2002, http://ip51.icomos.org/~fleblanc/documents/management/doc_ConsevationManagementPlans-Guide.pdf.

2 “Powderham Castle” (Historic England, November 11, 1952), <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1097666>.

Conservation Philosophy, Continued

Powderham Castle is a physical manifestation of the Courtenay family's responses to changing family size and financial circumstances, as well as fashions, politics, the community and technology over a period of more than 600 years. As such, it is essential that the spirit of adaptation and layering, as expressed through the coexistence of periods, be preserved and considered in future decisions. This will ensure that both the unique spirit and physical character of Powderham will be.

In order to determine an appropriate conservation approach to the physical fabric of the building, an initial review of past research and accounts of the evolution of the castle was first made. This was followed by a rapid assessment of the entire site, which identified character-defining features and confirmed a narrative of the building's evolution, connecting the character-defining features to major phases of change and significance. This, in turn, allowed for an evaluation of the site as a whole as well as with components in relation to one another. This analysis, along with the rapid assessment survey results, provided the basis for assigning levels of significance of particular spaces and mapping on the site floor plans.

It is important to note that, as a Grade I listed property, the entire Castle has a high level of significance. Nonetheless, this document has identified certain areas that would be suitable for updates and changes, within appropriate parameters. Once significance had been mapped, areas with a potential capacity for change were identified. As noted in Chapter xx, capacity for change was defined as the ability of a space to accommodate change without detracting from its significance or the overall significance of the site and its values.

Conservation Challenges

Listed below outlines are some of the challenges that face the site today and which have informed the conservation guidelines established in the following section³:

- Deferred maintenance;
- Impact on physical fabric due to public visitation;
- Accessibility for visitors with physical limitations;
- Aging visitor population;
- Use related to rentals and events that support the castle's operation and maintenance;
- Requirements of current building regulations;
- Ecological sustainability and
- Climate change.

³ Please see the SWOT diagram on page 10 for a more detailed assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Conservation Guidelines

General Guidelines



Powderham's 600 year history is evidenced by medieval-era remnants, like the newel stair in the North Tower.



Staying on top of maintenance as much as possible is crucial. Issues like water damage and infiltration can compound quickly, leading to serious damage and costly repair.

1. Although certain changes may be necessary to preserve functions or fabric, all changes should minimize impact on significant fabric to the greatest degree possible. Before proceeding with any changes to significant features, consider both the short- and long-term consequences of the intervention in order to select the solution with least possible impact.

2. All proposed work should be managed and performed by or in consultation with qualified conservation professionals and experts.

3. Powderham embodies 600 years of change and adaptation, resulting in multiple layers of significance. It is critical to preserve all layers of significance to the greatest degree possible. Emphasizing or interpreting one period over another is only justified when what is left out, removed, or diminished is of slight significance and that which is emphasized or interpreted is of much greater significance.

4. Changes should be reversible when possible and should not eliminate or preclude future research.

5. Interventions are acceptable only when there is sufficient information to understand the impacts of proposed changes will have on the significance of the Castle. Prior to work, the history and significance, whether related to physical fabric, use, or association, should be understood. All spaces should be fully documented through photographs before, during and after work. Documentation is essential for future understanding of the structure and is critical when loss of fabric or negative impact is unavoidable.

6. Monitor and regularly evaluate the responses to change to assess its appropriateness and inform future courses of action.

Maintenance

- Maintenance is fundamental to retaining significant features and spaces.
- Planned maintenance should identify periodic repairs or renewal efforts and be informed by regular monitoring.
- Prepare a maintenance plan including annual repair programs, budget, and phased maintenance schedule.
- When a permanent solution cannot be immediately determined, appropriate intermediary measures should be implemented to prevent the problem from escalating.

Periodic Renewal

- Periodic renewal of historic fabric may be necessary when the fabric is becoming incapable of fulfilling its intended function. Such renewal occurs on a longer cycle, such as re-covering roofs or re-rendering surfaces.
- Periodic renewal requires the careful assessment of both short-term impacts on significance and potential permanent harm caused by the intervention. When possible, traditional materials and methods in keeping with the original fabric and application techniques should be used.

Repair

- Repair involves the replacement of decayed material with new material. The extent of repair should be limited to what is necessary to return the failing element to sound state and fulfill its intended function.
- To the extent possible, repair should look beyond the immediate need to anticipate long-term consequences.
- The extent of repair should generally be limited to the minimum amount of work necessary to return the failing element back into its intended function.
- While the use of traditional materials and techniques may be preferred, at times the use of modern materials and techniques may be more appropriate and desired in stances when they allow for the retention of original fabric. Assess the values of the elements concerned before proceeding.
- Understand the impact that repairing one part of the Castle may have on another and consider the relative significance of each in order to reconcile or balance potential conflicts.

Restoration

- Restoration entails returning a part or parts of the Castle to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing elements without the introduction of new material.
- Restoration works require careful justification based on existing fabric and historic evidence.
- Restoring to one particular period requires the careful assessment of the values of the elements affected. Emphasizing or interpreting one period over another is only justified when what is left out, removed or diminished is of slight significance and that which is emphasized or interpreted is of much greater significance.



Some historic fabric, like the leaded roofs, requires periodic renewal and care.



Repair to decayed or damaged material should, when possible use traditional materials and techniques.



Some spaces, such as the room now used as the Prep Kitchen, which were once more prominent spaces may be good candidates for restoration in the future.



Many alterations have occurred in some of the domestic spaces over time. New alterations should continue to respect the significance of important details and features.



Some spaces, such as those that were altered heavily in the 20th century, or that have served more utilitarian functions are better suited to adaptation and new uses.



Character-defining features, such as this decorative marble fireplace surround, should be taken into account when planning for change.



Introducing compatible new uses, such as family or rental spaces, is often the most appropriate means of conservation.

New Work and Alteration

- New work such as addition or alteration is acceptable where it respects the significance of the Castle and does not detract from its interpretation.
- In the long-term, new work and alteration should be anticipated to yield positive contribution to maintaining or operating the Castle. New work and alteration should not preclude alternative solutions in the future.
- Any new work or the introduction of new materials should be distinguishable from the existing fabric.
- Materials and techniques proven by experience to be compatible with the existing fabric, including using recycled materials of the Castle, generally minimize the risk of failure. Appropriate reuse of sound materials derived from the place contributes to retention of craftsmanship and local and traditional materials.

Adaptation

- Spaces of lesser significance generally have greater capacity for change and offer the greatest opportunity for contemporary design. However, spaces of lower significance often tend to be less understood because of the roles they played historically, and therefore require adequate documentation because so little exists.
- When adapting the Castle and surrounding grounds for uses such as events and rental, consider solutions that provide more permanent, but less visible, solutions to utilitarian elements such as power or lighting, in order to reduce impact on the physical fabric.
- When possible, avoid the excessive use of the most significant spaces for events or rental, such as the Music Room, in order to reduce impacts on its physical fabric and collections, which are integral to the significance of the site.
- Introducing a compatible new use may be the most appropriate means of conservation, but when adapting spaces to another use, the significance of the space should be preserved, as should the potential for alternative uses in the future.

Design Studies

To test the potential impact of the Conservation Approach on future initiatives at the Castle, five of the students with training in architecture studied several current challenges at the site:

- Creating an accessible route that would serve tours and event rentals. Priority areas for access were identified and barriers to access, in the form of level changes and narrow door openings, were mapped on floor plans. Strategies for eliminating those barriers to the greatest degree possible were considered, and those with the least potential impact were identified.

- New locations for Family Residence, Administrative Offices, Visitor Services and Archives. During the studio travel week, Charlie and AJ Courtenay expressed their vision of moving back into the Castle by converting the spaces underneath the Chapel, which now host offices, into family quarters. They recognize their presence at the Castle as an important contribution for continuing the legacy of Powderham. Thus, the team studied alternate locations for activities currently lodged in that area.

The full exploration and feasibility of design concepts were limited by lack of:

- Plans, elevations, sections and photos available for the proposed and alternate locations, especially areas of the West Courtyard which are currently closed and the Stables Block, currently used as the family residence.

- Detailed information on the space and functional requirements and goals for all activities. In the absence of space requirements from the Castle, students studied how the Castle spaces are currently used and developed design criteria from them.

- Understanding of relative importance of activities and criteria; and

- The opportunity for review and feedback by the users.

The design studies thus represent only a starting point for considering the opportunities and constraints of the site to accommodate future needs. The approach and options are presented in more detail in Appendices B7 and B8.



View of Powderham from the terrace garden, looking northwest.



Foxgloves near the woods on the way to the Belvedere.



Footpath along the River Exe, near Powderham Castle.



Looking out over the castle roof to the northeast, towards the River Exe.

Conclusion

Powderham Castle has evolved over centuries into a building with a diversity of character that narrates the shifting values of the Courtenay family, the Devon region and the country over time. Architectural features from medieval, Georgian, Victorian and 20th century alterations are woven together, illustrating the castle's adaptability in the face of an ever-changing political, economic, and social landscape. This process of adaptation has been remarkably sensitive, and the personality of each successive generation is able to shine through in the castle's fabric, creating a narrative of unbroken stewardship that has accommodated each generation's needs, while celebrating the family legacy.

This layering of styles, spatial arrangements, and use defines Powderham's significance as a resilient and eclectic site that links contemporary visitors to the arc of history. Today, Powderham is evolving yet again into a place committed to "authenticity, inclusivity, sustainability, and adventure." The enduring presence of the deer park, gardens, and the Castle itself as a fixture in the Exeter landscape underscores the site's value as an asset to the community.

This Conservation Statement set forth to assess levels of significance within the Castle to help guide both the site's owners and managers and heritage authorities with ongoing maintenance and respectful alterations. The castle's Grade I Historic England listing highlights the significance of the complex and the need for careful consideration of the building fabric as it adapts to the challenges and opportunities of a contemporary, community-driven resource. Meetings on site with heritage officials and consultation with a range of contemporary international conservation guidelines helped inform our assessment of and recommendations for the Castle. The goal has been a strategy that recognizes the site's historic value, yet allows the castle to be reshaped to suit contemporary needs as the family has done for 600 years. The layered nature and interplay between historic periods are integral to Powderham's character and significance. Thus, alterations should be made in a way that acknowledges the present while preserving historic features.

This Conservation Statement and research by the University of Pennsylvania and University of Plymouth over the past three years represents a remarkable partnership between faculty and students at both institutions and the leadership and staff of Powderham. At the same time, it has only begun to explore, document and analyze the physical and archival resources at the site and the stories it can tell. It is our hope that this Statement will be expanded and updated as a full Conservation Management Plan and that Powderham will continue to be a symbol of resiliency that links the past and present in an unbroken chain of history.