

Report on activities undertaken by the University of Portsmouth at Wymering Manor since 2012

Dr Karen Fielder, School of Architecture, 15th July 2017

Introduction

The University has been engaged with student activities at Wymering Manor since 2012 when the proposal to form a building preservation trust to acquire the Manor from Portsmouth City Council was first put forward. Trustee Andrew Mason, then a recent graduate of the University's MSc in Historic Building Conservation, approached the University to explore potential student projects and opportunities for collaboration. Andy had developed an interest in the Manor through historical research that he carried for his postgraduate thesis project.

In the early stages of the Manor's acquisition by the Trust, our MSc Historic Building Conservation students were able to learn about the process of acquisition and to engage on-site with specialists as they carried out initial surveys and investigations of the property to assess its condition. I was invited to assist with the selection of professionals to carry out an options appraisal for the Manor. We were also able to support the Trust's successful campaign for the People's Millions in November 2013 through publicity and promoting support amongst the student cohort.

We have since gone on to develop a range of student projects and research activities within the School of Architecture and the wider Faculty of Creative and Cultural Industries, as well as through other departments across the University.

Note that this report does not represent the entirety of University activities that now take place at the Manor as we do not maintain a centralised database of activities.

Student Learning

BA(Hons) Interior Design (BA Interior Architecture and Design from 2015)

Wymering Manor has been used as one of a number of optional sites for the Year 3 Major Design Project since 2013. Students select a site to develop a specially tailored design brief which they identify through their own interests, previous research and a recognition of their own identity as designers. It encompasses the entire design process from research, site analysis and conceptual design through to modelling, detailed design and presentation. In the case of Wymering, this typically involves developing schemes for the reuse of the Manor. The work represents the synthesis of their knowledge and learning from the entire undergraduate programme and the highpoint of their portfolios, and is the focus for their end-of-year exhibition.



Model of Wymering Manor made by Interior Architecture and Design student, 2015. The model is now on show at the Manor.

Interdisciplinary Projects with Creative Technology Students (including Digital Media, Marketing, Music and Sound Technology, Entertainment Technology etc)

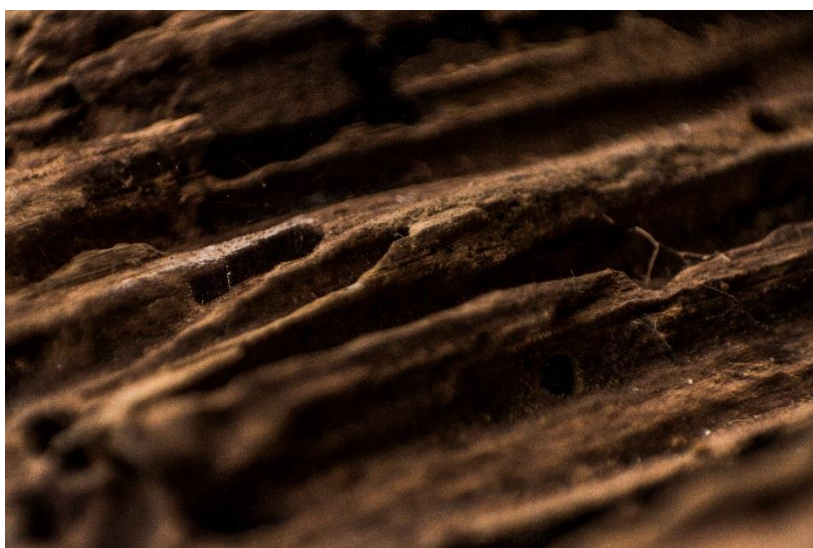
For two years we have been working with Year 3 Creative Technology students from different disciplines on a unit that offers the opportunity to gain exposure to real-world experiences working with external clients on an interdisciplinary client brief. The first project involved a group of digital media, marketing and music and sound technology students to deliver a public event as part of the Shakespeare Festival in April 2016 based around creating a Tudor soundscape inside the Manor and in the grounds. This required the sourcing and collecting of relevant sounds to animate the house with an acoustic landscape as might have been heard during Shakespeare's time, the choreographing of the sound in the Manor and the technical delivery for the event. The second project involved digital media, marketing and computing students in preparing an app for use on a tablet to interpret rooms in the Manor based on historic and contemporary photographs navigated through the historic doorways.



Music and sound technology student Krisjanis Birkmanis recording actors narrating period conversations at Wymering, 2016

BA(Hons) Photography

The Manor has provided an atmospheric and inspiring site for photography students to develop their craft. This has included a Year 1 student with an interest in documenting transformation in the city and Year 2 students who have supported interdisciplinary projects with other students from the School of Creative Technologies.



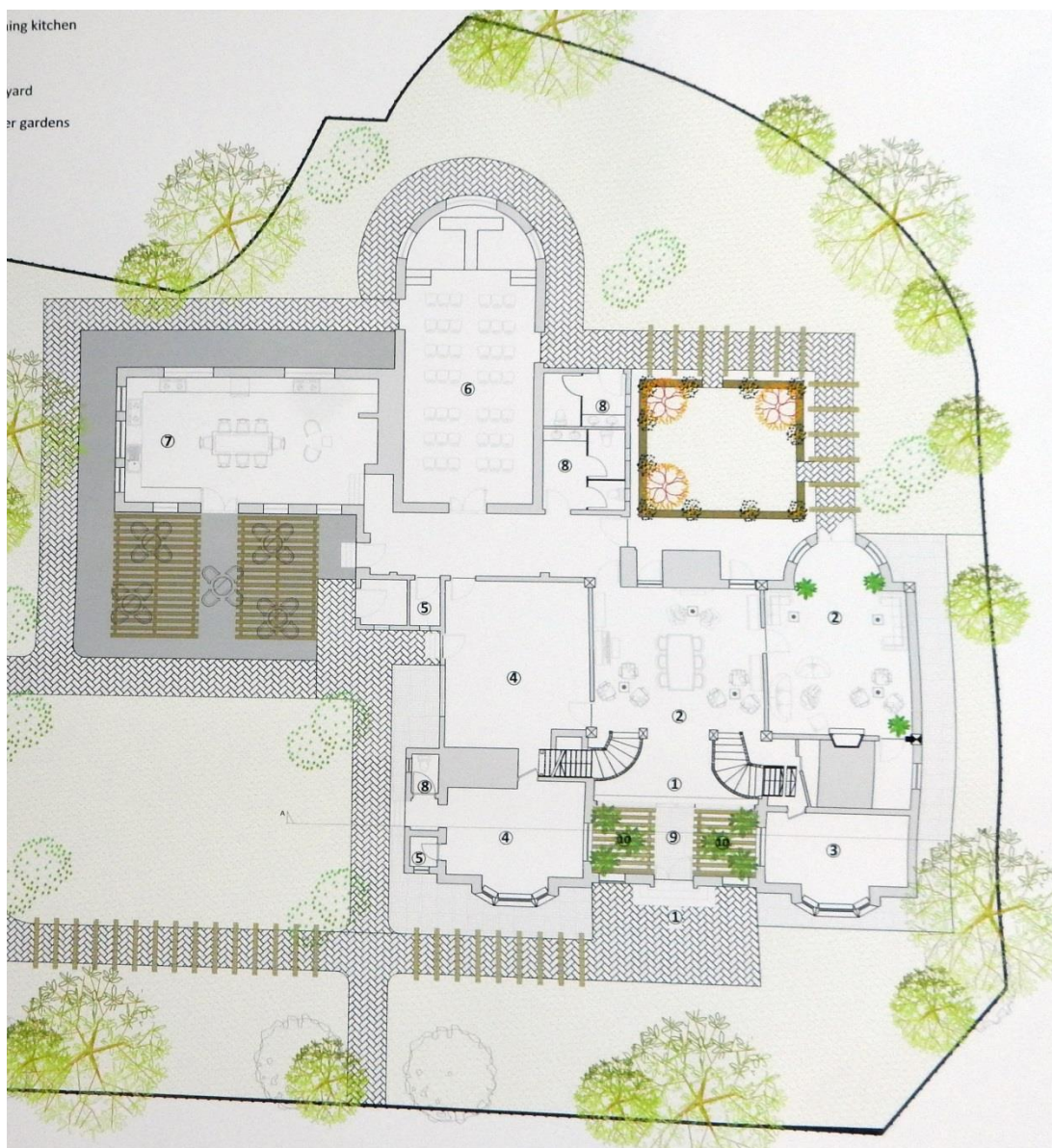
Historic timber at Wymering photographed by photography student Alisha Payer, 2016

BA(Hons) History

As part of a Public History Placement unit in 2016 a student worked at Wymering to develop content for a revised booklet about the Manor.

MA Interior Design (MAID)

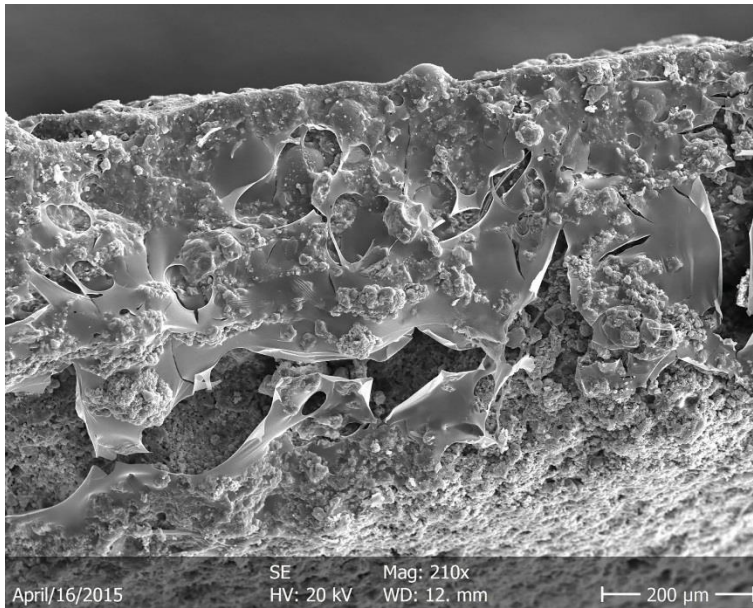
The Manor has been used as a site for explorations of interior design theory and practice by MA Interior Design students since 2013. The students engage with the idea of the interior through working at the site, developing their research through doing, thinking and material investigation. They use their investigations to inform future proposals for the site and to develop research-led design solutions. The process supports students to engage with an 'archaeology of the present' to go beyond the visual, to use their sensory experience to make decisions about colour, light, temperature, smell, materials and physical objects. Past projects have included proposals that examine health care, bed and breakfast, community/workspaces and a hotel.



Scheme for a health centre at Wymering by MAID student Hadi Hoshmand, 2015

MSc Historic Building Conservation (MSc HBC)

MSc students have benefitted from site visits to Wymering to learn about research, site analysis, condition reporting and materials. In 2015 as part of the core curriculum the students were required to prepare heritage statements for the Manor to assess the impact on significance of certain proposals for alterations. Other student projects have included investigation of the render and paint layers on the external chimney stack using a scanning electron microscope and survey of the chimney stacks using an endoscopic camera searching for evidence of priest holes. One of our current students is using Wymering as a case study for his coursework based around decorative plaster repair projects.



Scanning electron microscope image of render from external chimney stack at Wymering by MSc HBC student Simon Davis, 2015

MAID/MSc HBC

In 2016 postgraduate students from these courses collaborated to undertake research and documentation of historic doors at Wymering. They explored different disciplinary methods of drawing and documentation to carry out on-site measured surveys, photography, freehand sketches, and experimental sensory drawings as well as conducting historical research to compile collective documentary reports.



MAID and HBC students drawing doors at Wymering, 2016

School of Architecture Project Office

The Project Office is a unique form of architectural practice within the School of Architecture with a small core team of architects and designers who provide traditional consultancy, innovative design approaches, knowledge transfer and research opportunities for a range of clients, University staff and students. This offers clients a unique design experience which connects directly to the next generation of designers; and gives students the chance to experience 'real' projects in preparation for practice. In February 2014 a group of 60 architecture and interior design students from the School participated in a week-long intensive design 'charrette' with the Trust which culminated in a professional presentation to Trustees. The ambition was to assist the Trust with the creation of inspiring, creative and beautiful design ideas to revitalise and reinvigorate the Manor. (See booklet).



Wymering Manor Project Office Design Charrette, 2014

Events

Elizabethan Noyses at Wymering Manor

For the Shakespeare Festival in April 2016 students staged a weekend event which celebrated Wymering as a rare survival of a timber-framed manor house from the time of Shakespeare. Drawing on the skills of students from Creative Technology disciplines, Creative Writing, Photography and Interior Design, this multi-disciplinary event introduced creative installations at Wymering to invite imaginative engagement with the Manor's Elizabethan past.



Visitors at Shakespeare Festival Event, April 2016

Exhibitions and Open Days

Student and staff work has been exhibited at the Manor on a number of occasions, including for Open Days. This has included models, photographs, drawings, sketch books, artefacts and presentation sheets of design proposals.

Volunteering Opportunities

MSc Historic Building Conservation students have gained experience volunteering at the Manor and offered services including specialist plastering expertise.

Staff Projects

Belinda Mitchell, More or Less Than Conversation, Winchester School of Art

The Phenomenology and Imagination Research Group (PIRG) at Winchester School of Art are a group of artists and researchers whose collective practice uses conversation as a research methodology to reflect on and develop their work, both as a group and as individuals. The glue that binds the group is a common interest in how material practice can be researched and disseminated through verbal and non-verbal conversation. With a particular focus on the relationship between imagination and material practice or embodiment, the group uses reading, writing and drawing, together with individual making practices to develop their work. Belinda uses Wymering as a site for investigating these material conversations, and is currently using a timber floor joist from the Manor as a focus for her creative practice. Her work has been exhibited at WSA with further exhibitions planned.



Belinda Mitchell and Dr Karen Fielder, Matter of the Manor

Matter of the Manor is a practice-based research project that examines alternative modes of architectural space-making in order to develop a language with which to represent the emotional and sensory experience of space. It explores the overlaps between the disciplinary territories of interior design and building conservation to focus on the emotional force of historic sites and the potential implications for conservation and design practice. Absent from orthodox guidance, regulatory processes, vocabularies and methods of architectural drawing are the feelings of present and future users, the affect of space and the experience that comes from moving through it and being in it. Emotional and sensory experiences are not easily captured on

paper, particularly when disciplinary norms require objectivity and empirical analysis. This work investigates how we might draw, write, and re-think ways to represent and engage with space-making at historic sites. It uses Wymering as an initial case study to test and develop practice-based research methodologies from an embodied position of being within the site.

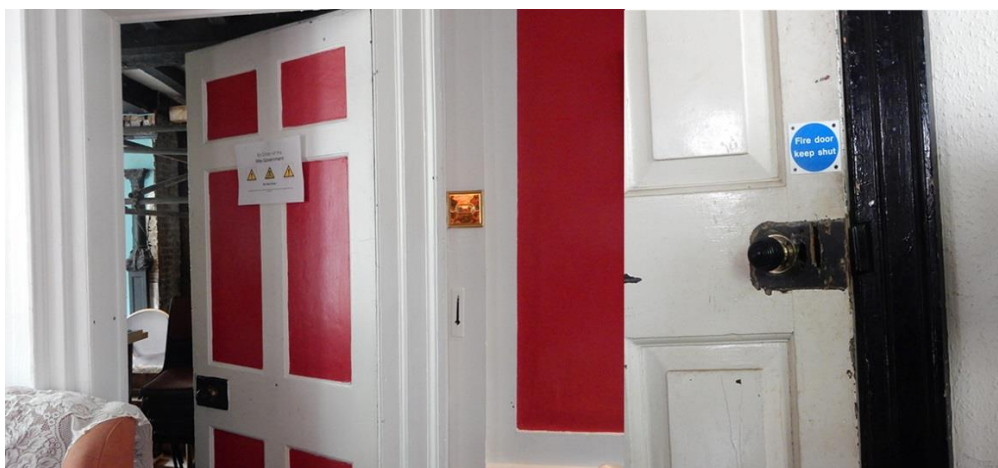
The work has been presented at conferences including at 'Embodied Methodologies' conference at Royal Holloway in November 2016 and at 'A Sharing of Speech: Scholarship on or Inspired by the Work of Luce Irigaray' at the University of Winchester in June 2017. Academic journal papers are in preparation.



Belinda Mitchell and Dr Karen Fielder, Thresholds of the Future

In this project we use the doors and the thresholds of the Manor to discuss its past, present and future life. The unstable compositions of these thresholds and the spaces they articulate support us to think through material and non-material elements as constellations of affects, of space, time, and atmospheres. We re-imagine the house through both human and material fields drawing on New Materialist thinking through Jane Bennett and Gilles Deleuze to discuss the manor as an assemblage, as matter, as material having affect. The work responds to feminist philosophers such as Luce Irigaray and Elizabeth Grosz to rethink the body through its materiality and through its surfaces, to look at alternative modes of engaging with space which are excluded from dominant male practice and architectural thinking.

We are currently preparing this work for publication as a visual essay.



Potential Activities at Wymering Manor

There are a number of departments across the University who might be interested in developing activities at Wymering. These include:

School of Architecture (SoA)

School of Creative Technologies (CT) (particular interests in application of creative technologies in heritage contexts)

School of Social, Historical and Literary Studies (SSHLS) (including public history and heritage)

School of Art and Design (AD)

School of Media and Performing Arts (SMPA)

School of Civil Engineering and Surveying (SCES) (including heritage property, condition reporting etc)

Portsmouth Business School (PBS) (Tourism and Leisure)

Scholarships

There would be potential to offer scholarship opportunities for the MSc Historic Building Conservation funded by HLF to study part-time on the course whilst working as a conservation trainee at Wymering. A similar model was adopted for HLF-funded scholarships for the MSc in Historic Building Conservation at Oxford Brookes University and Bletchley Park (<http://be.brookes.ac.uk/postgraduate/profiles/elizabeth-sharples.html>)

Student Placements and Live Projects

Some undergraduate and postgraduate course programmes include units that require students to engage with external organisations and to work on real-world client briefs. These include Public History Placements for BA(Hons) History, the INTER unit for Creative Technology students, and postgraduate Work-Based Learning for the MA Interior Design, MSc Historic Building Conservation, and MA Sustainable Cities.

Student Design Projects

SoA could potentially run an MArch design studio for RIBA Part II students focussing on Wymering. Professionals involved in the project would support studio learning by engaging in the studio environment and in reviews.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students from across disciplines in the Faculty of Creative and Cultural Industries could develop temporary installations or performances at the site to generate ongoing interest in the project. These might be part of the curriculum or extra-curricular. They could be run as competitions.

Development of audience engagement tools including use of AR/VR

Students of CT and SoA could participate in the development of interpretive media, including the use of virtual and immersive environments, supporting the development of skills in the use of digital media for heritage applications. Colleagues in CT have a track record of engaging students in this area, working with heritage organisations such as the Mary Rose Trust and Fishbourne Roman Palace.

Repair Skills

MSc HBC students could learn craft and repair skills by working alongside specialist craftspeople on-site or in workshops, including timber repairs, decorative plasterwork, repointing of brickwork etc.

Student Projects on Historical Research and Analysis

MSc HBC students would benefit from working alongside specialists in developing skills in on-site investigations. Building historian Charles Brooking has carried out some initial investigations of architectural fixtures and fittings thanks to the generosity of volunteer Janet Hird but there is more work to be done in this area. Charles recommended that paint analysis should be carried out (possibly by Patrick Baty).

Opportunities for conservation students (and possibly MAID students) to work alongside specialists such as Charles and Patrick would be highly beneficial. Charles runs courses in the identification of fixtures and fittings and has his own research collections. Students could potentially work alongside Charles to document the interiors of Wymering in more detail, visiting his collections and joining his training programmes. They might also learn from Patrick about paint scrapes, processes of paint analysis, and interpreting past decorative schemes from the data. Visual documentation of the building and its details through measured and freehand drawing and photography would contribute to the archive for the Manor.

Students from SLHSS and SoA could engage in in-depth historical research, developing skills in the use of historical archives and documents.

Oral History

Students from a range of disciplines learn about oral history and interviewing and they would benefit from specialist training in this area. This includes students MSc HBC, MAID and BA(Hons) History students as well as heritage property students in SCES. Collecting oral history would add to the archive for the Manor.

Environmental Monitoring and Analysis

MSc HBC, MA Sustainable Cities and possibly students from SCES could conduct ongoing environmental monitoring of the Manor to develop specialist skills in this area. This could include monitoring and modelling of temperature, humidity and seasonal daylighting. We have access to some specialist equipment, including thermal imaging cameras and data loggers, but provision of additional equipment could be incorporated into the bid. The data could inform plans for 'greening' and retrofitting the Manor.

Student Participation in Community Consultation and Audience Research

Students from a number of departments (CT, SoA, SCES, PBS) could work on community consultations and conduct audience research to support the HLF project whilst gaining skills in this area.

Research

The University has a newly established Cultural Heritage Research Group and we would welcome opportunities to develop research in this area through the Wymering project. Membership of the Group includes staff from SoA and CT. This could involve collaboration with the Wymering Manor Trust and/or HLF.

Belinda Mitchell and Dr Karen Fielder are already engaged in research at Wymering exploring embodied methodologies as approaches to understanding, documenting and recording historic interiors. This work can be further developed as part of the HLF programme.

Based in the SSHLS, the Port Towns, Urban Cultures Research Project could develop their research through focussed investigations around Wymering. (See <http://www.port.ac.uk/centre-for-european-and-international-studies-research/research-projects/port-towns-urban-cultures/>)