

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

STANDEN

The outstanding significance of Standen lies in the fact that it is now the most complete and comprehensive expression of the aims and philosophies of the Arts & Crafts Movement open to the public anywhere in the country.

The architecture, drawing from its setting in the landscape of the Sussex Weald, the decorations and furnishings as well as the design of the garden and grounds, each contribute essential and characteristic elements to the whole effect. It is rendered exceptional not only by these surviving qualities of the original concept but by its relative freedom from subsequent jarring alterations, changes or losses through a period of changing fashion and economic circumstances.

The National Trust's decision in 1972 to accept Helen Beale's bequest of a 'late Victorian' house was helped by the support of the Victorian Society and the influential writer, Mark Girouard. Mrs & Mrs Arthur Grogan, who took on the lease and gave essential financial support, influenced the direction and presentation of the property, as the addition of their collection – which was based on what the Beales owned – further enhanced the quality of the contents and replaced items returned to the family. The contents today are now mainly a combination of the late expression of the Movement – partly seen in the Beales' taste for Queen Anne Revival objects, and the Grogan collection, which gives a broader representation of the full Arts & Crafts style. Other exceptional items have continued to be added in line with a collecting policy of presenting the house as the Beale family home with a nationally important collection of Arts & Crafts furnishings. All the major exponents of the Arts & Crafts style are represented, with particular emphasis on Morris & Co., as Standen exemplifies a creative masterpiece of the collaboration between Webb, Morris & Co. and the Beales. The co-operation between the different artists within Morris & Co. is now considered to be at the very root of Arts & Crafts as an international movement.

The main house, built 1892-1894, and its associated outbuildings, are particularly important, as they are the most complete surviving example of a Philip Webb country house.

The original holistic concept, as commissioned by the Beales and evolved by Philip Webb, extends from the design of their own home to that of the adjacent estate buildings, and 360 acre home farm by Edward Vigons. Moreover, the buildings reflect Webb's socialist views, in particular seen in the comparison of his treatment of the service areas with the family areas of the house; for example his original use of Morris wallpaper in the Servants' Hall. Standen is generally acknowledged to be the best expression of Webb's mature style and one of his finest houses, featuring a large variety of vernacular materials such as render, oak weather boarding, locally quarried sandstone and local bricks.

Morris and Webb jointly founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) as part of the groundswell of opinion which resulted in the Ancient Monuments Act of 1889 and the founding of the National Trust in 1895. Consequently Webb's own interest in traditional materials, the treatment of the medieval farmhouse, the attention to detail and the quality of materials are all seen as an exemplary approach to Arts & Crafts architecture and building conservation in the 1890s. The Beales' building of Standen also reflects the popular movement of the middle classes to the countryside of the time, helped by the expansion of the railway system.

The Garden and wider Estate form a crucial part of this exceptional combination.

Embedded in the Movement's philosophy, but of unconventional Arts & Crafts design, the Garden was started, c.1891-92, by landscape gardener G.B. Simpson, with elements by Webb and additional work by the nationally important nurserymen and landscape firms of Backhouse & Sons of York (Quarry Garden, 1896-97) and Cheals of Crawley (Top Terrace,

1910). Planting was further developed during her lifetime by the owner Margaret Beale, to form an exceptional collection. The great range of plants included rare species and new introductions for which considerable documentary evidence still survives.

The House and Garden are firmly rooted in the rural framework of the wider estate and countryside of the Wealden AONB. The topography of the site guided the garden design which has a farm at its ornamental core. This farm and the extensive kitchen gardens ensured self-sufficiency, whilst significant elements of interest for children, like the swimming pond, tennis lawn and sand-pit, provided entertainment for the large and extended family.

Restyled during the 1970s by the National Trust to be managed by one gardener, much of the interest, variety and subtlety of the planting has been lost. Many of the structural features have survived but divided ownership and intrusive and historically inappropriate elements associated with visitor access, in particular the car park, have significantly damaged the historic character and fabric.

The Garden and wider Estate under National Trust ownership, principally Hollybush Wood, Standen Wood and Jack and Tommy Field, are the subject of long-term plans to restore their historic, landscape and ecological integrity and to re-establish Standen's 'spirit of place'.

Overall Standen's appeal to visitors now lies in the preservation of the homely atmosphere of its buildings, garden and setting within steep woods and meadows away from the noise of roads and urban development, and also in the preservation of an accessible family home.