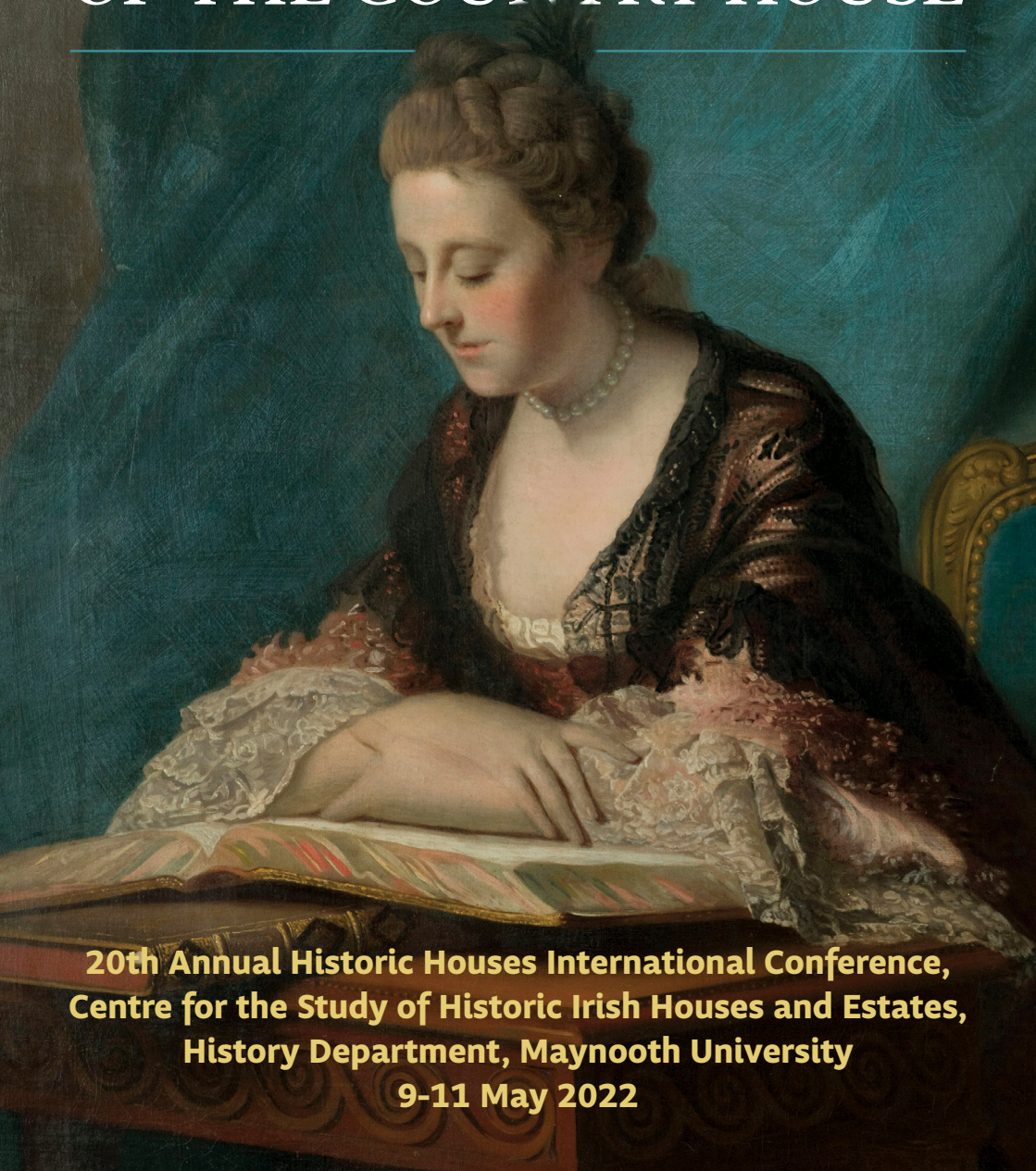


EXPLORING THE MENTAL WORLD OF THE COUNTRY HOUSE



**20th Annual Historic Houses International Conference,
Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates,
History Department, Maynooth University
9-11 May 2022**

Country houses are masterpieces of material culture, they are triumphs of architecture, fine and decorative art, and landscape design, but they are also about the history and transmission of ideas.

In varying degrees their occupants (above and below stairs, indoors and outdoors) thought, conversed, read, and responded to their milieu through books, newspapers, as well as other media and forms of knowledge. In recent years country house libraries and archives have steadily revealed more evidence for how people in country houses fashioned themselves and their views of the world.

The Twentieth Annual Historic Houses Conference for 2022 will examine the intellectual background to the country house. What is the meaning of all those volumes in bookcases, did they do more than just decorate a room? How were they acquired, read, and put to use?

By what means did elite society exchange ideas, absorb new trends, and engage in wider debate, especially when at home in the country? To what degree was this knowledge valued and displayed in terms of stylish library design, and how did houses preserve, or neglect, their books and other records?

How did members of a household entertain or better themselves, what was popular to read with whom – men, women and children? The classics, natural history, literature, genealogy, fiction, and other subjects feature in many country house libraries, and very often a battered, plain copy of a publication will reveal more than the most pristine edition in a lavish ornamental binding. In what ways did books furnish minds as well as interiors?



In the library, by Georg Reimer
National Museum in Warsaw/
Wikimedia Commons



Peter Smith Photography

Beyond the demesne walls how has the world of the country house been perceived and understood in fiction, poetry, drama and, more recently, film? How have these treatments shaped a wider understanding of the country house as a cultural and literary phenomenon?

Exploring the Mental World of the Country House will examine these and other related questions, and mark the twentieth anniversary of the Centre; *the conference is likely to be a mix of real and online proceedings.*

Papers on any of the above topics relating to country houses in Ireland, the UK, Europe, or further afield will be considered. Abstracts of no more than 400 words should be sent to Professor Terence Dooley and Professor Christopher Ridgway before 19 November 2021 at the following addresses: terence.a.dooley@mu.ie and cridgway@castlehoward.co.uk



The interior of the library at Cassiobury, before 1816, by Augustus Charles Pugin
Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum/Public domain