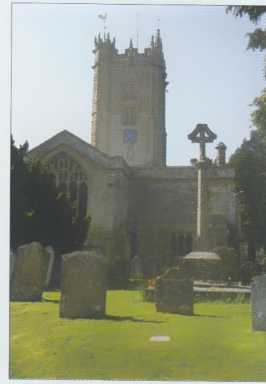




The wild man and the wild woman in the Poulett Mausoleum, Hinton St George



The top section of the scagliola monument in the Poulett Chapel undergoing conservation



The church of St George, Hinton St George

Visit to Hinton St George

30 March

On a bright and sunny Somerset morning, we arrived at the impressive 19th century private home of our hosts. After a fabulous welcome of coffee and cake in the conservatory, we separated into two groups to begin our tour of their fine collection of furniture and works of art.

Our hosts' primary interests are early French and English furniture and Venetian sculpture. Over the last 20 years they have carefully chosen pieces to adorn all corners of their house. Paul Fitzsimmons has been instrumental in helping the furniture collection grow over the years and was therefore able to provide excellent commentary on the pieces, pointing out the typical dark red colouring of west country pieces and the carved strapwork often seen on furniture from the county town of Taunton.

After commandeering the Lord Poulett Arms for a sociable lunch, we took a stroll through the picturesque village of Hinton St George, to the 15th century church of St George. Here, local historian and author of the church guide, Charles Bird, explained how the church has evolved through generations of the Poulett family.

The original Lord Poulett, William, married Elizabeth Denibode in the first half of the 15th century. Elizabeth was heiress to the magnificent Hinton House and it was here that the Pouletts lived for the next 400 years, rising through the ranks to earls in 1706. The last earl died in 1973 after selling up and moving to the Channel Islands.

The main focus of our visit was the meticulous restoration of the Poulett Chapel, an impressive mausoleum with six monuments carved in stone, alabaster and what is thought to be one of the earliest examples of scagliola in England. A composite material made of chunks of coloured plaster, mixed together with animal glue and pigment, scagliola is polished to mimic marble or inlaid stonework. Emma Jones, of Humphries and Jones, the conservation specialists, gave a fascinating talk on the progress of their work, their approach being to stabilise and stop the decay of the monuments, not removing any original material and making sure future generations will be able to distinguish old from new. Our thanks go to all involved in making this a very interesting day.

Rebecca Fisher