

The National Trust

Wordsworth House

Exhibition

Background

Wordsworth House is located in Cockermouth, Cumbria and is the birthplace of the poet William Wordsworth. In 1937, the house narrowly escaped demolition by Cumberland Motor Services to make way for a bus station. A group of residents formed the Wordsworth Memorial Fund and raised £1,625 to buy the house. They gave it to the National Trust the following year and it opened to the public in 1939.

Challenge

In the 1990s, the National Trust embarked on a major programme to restore the house using original sources. This was achieved after four years of painstaking research and planning by National Trust staff, skilled conservators, historians and craftspeople. Our challenge was to give a glimpse of what life was like in the 1770s, when Wordsworth and his family lived there as well as inform visitors to the ongoing renovation project of the house and gardens.

Our solution

We knew that only a similar attention to detail undertaken by the client to transform the house could transport visitors back to Georgian times. Our branding solution, exhibition, interpretation, and multimedia design ensured that the visitor reception and 'Discovery Room' set the tone for a memorable visitor experience.

The project included the production of a series of photographs that explore what life was like for people in Georgian Cockermouth. We provided the conceptual ideas for the images then commissioned the photographs, hired actor interpreters and sourced appropriate costumes.





Design and production of an exhibition that included exhibition identity, a visitor reception area, internal and external signage and a new property leaflet.

A series of IT based resources were also developed. These include extra layers of information downloadable fact sheets, virtual tours and Key Stage related interactives.

The project website can be seen at www.wordsworthhouse.org.uk

"We want to give special recognition to an exhibition that breaks the mould in terms of presentation of historic houses. It demonstrates a fresh approach and a change of direction that could conceivably be applied to many more historic houses in the UK".

Judges comments
2005 Museums and Heritage Awards.

