

Cliffe Castle Museum, Keighley, West Yorkshire



V&A objects have played a part in the re-creating the lost interiors of the main suite of rooms at Cliffe Castle in Keighley since the 1970s.

In 1874 the wealthy textile magnate Henry Isaac Butterfield inherited Cliffe Hall. During the next ten years he transformed the modest Elizabethan-style villa into a 'modernised Tudor castle'. In 1883 the interior was described as of an 'efficiency and splendour no residence could surpass'.



The Drawing Room at Cliffe
Castle, 1883

...and today.



The furnishings were sumptuous and cosmopolitan. Business interests had led the family to acquire homes in Paris, New York and Nice, as well as Keighley. Henry Isaac Butterfield was wealthy and stylish, popular in the French court of the Emperor Napoleon III. In 1854, he had married Mary Roosevelt Burke, an American who served as lady-in-waiting to the Empress Eugénie. Butterfield's French decorator, Monsieur Gremond, used furnishings from Italy, Russia and China, as well as pieces from France. The completion of the house was celebrated with a lavish White Ball in the Music Room.

In the 1950s, the house was sold, the original furnishings sold or removed to other family houses. The rich interiors were lost and Cliffe Castle became a museum. Responsibility for the museum was transferred to Bradford Museums in 1974, since when a large-scale restoration project on the major interiors has been undertaken. Various pieces have been bought back, others lent by descendants of the family, but loans from the V&A and other museums have been crucial in recreating a sense of the Castle's original opulent furnishing schemes.

V&A pieces at Cliffe Castle

Twenty-nine pieces of V&A furniture can be seen at Cliffe Castle, including suites of nineteenth-century giltwood chairs and sofas, French cabinets and pieces from England and Holland which reflect the taste of wealthy collectors of the mid-nineteenth century.



Armchair, from a suite of seat furniture
French, about 1860-1900, copying a design by the chair-maker
Jean-Baptiste Lebas, made in Paris about 1770
Beech, water gilded; the upholstery covered in woven tapestry of
wool and silk on warps of cotton
Bequest of Henry Louis Florence

From about 1840 onwards, French furniture of the eighteenth-century was highly valued. It was also frequently copied, to furnish houses such as Cliffe Castle. The French tapestry industry was also revived at the time to provide suitable covers for the thousands of such suites that were produced.
V&A Museum no. W.79-1917

Cabinet with the monogram of Marie Antoinette
French, about 1860-1900, in the style of about 1780
Oak, poplar and mahogany, set with panels of Japanese
lacquer; mounts of gilt brass
Part of the Arthur James Collection, bequeathed by his
wife.



Mr Butterfield's wife was a lady-in-waiting to the Empress Eugénie, wife of Napoléon III of France. It was the Empress who was a leader in the cult of the last queen of France, Marie-Antoinette, who was guillotined after the French Revolution, in 1793. Objects that had belonged to the tragic queen were avidly collected and other pieces made, like this piece, in the style fashionable during her reign.

V&A Museum no. W.42-1948

In 2009, five new pieces joined those lent in 1970s: cabinets and tables decorated with inlay of semi-precious stones, from the Gilbert Collection, which found a new home in the V&A in 2008. The malachite chimneypiece which Henry Isaac Butterfield bought for his drawing-room, from the palazzo in Florence of the famous Russian collector Prince Demidoff, is no longer at Cliffe, but these items illustrate Mr Butterfield's taste for such glamorous works of art.



Writing table; c 1840-60
Gilbert Collection: 1996-599



Table (Detail of top) c 1850
Gilbert Collection 1996-194

Over the years, a number of the lost furnishings have been located by Bradford Museums and many acquired with the help of the V&A Purchase Grant Fund. This is source of funding to help regional museums build their collections, managed by the V&A since 1881.

www.vam.ac.uk/purchasegrantfund

Click for more information about furniture at the V&A

www.vam.ac.uk/collections/furniture/index.html

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