

# National Trust Properties

## Hyde's House

*Extract of an article by Christopher Stocks - 2012*

What's the first question that comes into your mind when you visit a National Trust house? Is it 'How do they dust that plasterwork?' Or do you think, like me, 'I wonder what it would be like to live here?' Well, as it happens there are several thousand people who could tell you, because they're tenants of the Trust. Surprisingly, perhaps, only a few of them live in the historic houses that are open to you and me: in fact the majority of the Trust's tenants live in perfectly ordinary houses – though often in marvellous surroundings.

We're all familiar with the Trust's role as guardian of some of Britain's most beautiful countryside and grandest stately homes, but what's less well known is that as the country's largest landowner it also owns something like 5,000 cottages and 700 farms, not to mention 40 villages or more, from the Lake District down to Cornwall. And while few of these smaller properties are open to the public, the people who live in them are among the unsung heroes of the National Trust. For without their care, and the income from their rents, many of these properties – and the communities they form part of – would face an extremely uncertain future. These days we hear, quite rightly, about the immense contribution made by the Trust's 38,000 volunteers. But spare a thought for the thousands of tenants who support the Trust in a less visible way, and often at considerable cost to themselves. As the Trust's Land Use Director, David Riddle, says, 'Tenants are our partners in conservation. There is no better way to conserve a building than to keep it in the use it was intended for.'

At the rather grander end of the scale, George Cruddas lives at Hydes House, a Grade 1 listed Queen Anne house in Dinton, a few miles west of Salisbury. It stands in the grounds of Philipps House, which was given to the Trust by George's family in 1943, with the stipulation that Hydes House should continue to be occupied by a member of the family. With its justly celebrated gardens and a lovely setting overlooking the National Trust park and lake, Hydes House sounds like an enviable place to live. And it is, but George's tenancy also includes more than its fair share of financial responsibility – including spending a six-figure sum on improvements. 'With some small exceptions,' George explains, 'the cost of all repairs, improvements and maintenance is borne by myself.' And though the house itself isn't open to the public, he welcomes people to his garden for a number of charities, including the National Gardens Scheme.