of Guido Reni’s *The Death of Cleopatra* (c. 1628; Royal Collection) – hung over the chimneypiece. In 1769, Chippendale made a tambour frame for embroidery, inlaid with various coloured woods representing landscapes & a brass rim, for Lady Winn. In 1776–77, another avid seamstress, Sarah Child, wife of Robert Child, Robert Adam’s patron at Osterley, commissioned the architect to design a workbag and neoclassical patterns for embroidery, which she sewed for the Adam-designed firescreens in the Etruscan Dressing Room at Osterley.

Other women played similarly prominent roles in building, furnishing and decorating National Trust properties. The Honourable Theresa Robinson, wife of Thomas Parker, Adam’s patron at Saltram, wrote in 1772 to her brother Fritz asking him to check on the progress Zucchi had made on the paintings for the Library there. She also asked him, in relation to the Saloon, ‘to send some patterns of Blue Damask, as we shall soon write to Genoa [then famous for silk-weaving] and wish to fix upon the best Blue for setting off the pictures’, which included four by Angelica Kauffman.

Women, both chatelaines and servants, played important roles as conservators. Ham House was famous for the careful preservation of a sense of antiquity by successive owners and their staff. Miss Slack (she refused the usual courtesy title of ‘Mrs’), the housekeeper at Ham for much of the 19th century, ‘was in the real sense of the word a housekeeper, and most carefully did she guard all the treasures of the beautiful old Jacobean house’, recalled Lady Sudeley, niece of the eighth Earl of Dysart. High standards of housekeeping were maintained well into the 20th century.

Lady Meade-Fetherstonhaugh at Uppark and Evelyn, Duchess of Devonshire, at Hardwick were pioneering 20th-century textile conservators, the first specialising in cleaning and coating 18th-century silk curtains and wall hangings, the latter in conserving tapestries. At Waddesdon Manor, after the death of its builder and creator, Ferdinand, Lord Rothschild, the house and its magnificent collection were inherited by his unmarried sister, Alice, a collector in her own right. She carefully preserved the tradition of good housekeeping there until her death in 1922 (Fig. 15). In her book *The Rothschilds at Waddesdon Manor*, Dorothy, wife of James de Rothschild, who bequeathed Waddesdon to the National Trust in 1957, described its transition from private house to public museum and the role Alice played in its conservation. The National Trust’s conservation principles are now enshrined in the monumental 1,000-page *National Trust Manual of Housekeeping*. Its predecessor, completed in 1985, was compiled by the Trust’s first in-house conservators, Herranida Sandwin and Sheila Stainton.

Much has been written about women artists, collectors and patrons in relation to National Trust houses and collections. This compendium of essays emphasises the rich variety of their contributions.

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