



31 March 2023

## **Historic House of the Binns set to reopen this spring following restoration**

- **17<sup>th</sup>-century country house re-opens after essential work**
- **First opportunity for public to see inside historic house since pre-pandemic**
- **The National Trust for Scotland has invested in repairs and refurbishments to conserve over 400 years of heritage**
- **Packing and moving the historic collections from the dining and morning rooms alone took a team of five people eighteen days**

Major conservation work at the House of the Binns, near Linlithgow, is approaching completion, with the house reopening to the public once again from Saturday 1 April. It's the first opportunity to see the property's interiors and collections since pre-lockdown.

The project is part of the National Trust for Scotland's ten-year strategy – *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone* – which was launched at the historic house one year ago. The conservation charity, which has been caring for House of the Binns since 1944, has committed to improving the condition of its estate and is carrying out a number of repair and restoration projects – large and small – at its places all over Scotland.

Built for a butter merchant, Thomas Dalyell, in 1612, the country house has been the Dalyell family home for centuries and holds over 4000 artefacts which give glimpses into the history of the house, the family, Scotland, and its place in the world over four centuries. In support of the Trust's restoration aims, roof works began at the House of the Binns in 2022. The whole collection remained on site during the restoration project and was moved around, with great skill and care, to enable the work to take place.

Lesley Scott, the National Trust for Scotland's Regional Conservator, oversaw the movement and safe interim storage of the collection to allow for redecoration work and to make sure the greatest care was taken for the house's historic collections. Each piece was carefully condition-checked, dusted, checked for signs of pests and mould, and labelled and packed for short-term storage and

dust prevention, by a team of five. Over the space of eighteen days, this included over one hundred pieces of historic china, thirty-two framed portraits, over forty pieces of furniture, three clocks, a piano, curtains and curtain rails, light fittings, fireplace and removable grates, and hundreds of small collectables, crockery and dinnerware items which all hold significant importance to the family.

Over the following months, major repairs were made to the roof and rooms were redecorated using period-appropriate colours and finishes. National Trust for Scotland curators, in close discussion with Kathleen Dalyell, advised on wallpapers and curtains that would be appropriate for the Georgian Morning Room and Dining Room, areas of the house that were most affected by roof works. The Trust's ongoing conservation work continues, and visitors will discover a house being cared for and lovingly maintained, in line with the family's vision for the house.

Philip Long OBE, Chief Executive of National Trust for Scotland, said: 'Bringing back the Binns has been a real privilege for the Trust. Since 1944, the Dalyell family have entrusted the care of this important historic home to our conservation charity. We feel very honoured to have that responsibility for such a beautiful place so intertwined with centuries of Scotland's history.

'The works carried out over the past year not only show that we are doing what we said when we launched our new strategy here a year ago, making sure our places are well cared for, but they also enable us to reopen the doors to visitors once again. We cannot wait to share once again the House of the Binns' stories with our supporters who make all our vital work to care for Scotland's special places possible. As spring arrives, it's the perfect time for anyone planning to make the most of their membership to plan a trip back to the Binns.'

The House of the Binns is still home to Kathleen Dalyell OBE, the widow of Tam Dalyell who served as a Scottish MP for 42 years. Kathleen, as a former manager of the property, member of the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland and Chair of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), knows the stories of the Dalryells and their family home better than anyone, and she often describes the house as having its own personality that welcomes people and loves visitors.

Kathleen Dalyell OBE said: 'It is with a great sense of satisfaction and appreciation of the continuity of life through difficult times that I see the fruits of this past year's labours by the Trust. I have been impressed at the thought and hard work that has gone into restoring and stabilising the roof, along with work on the heating and electrical systems - all "behind the scenes", but an important investment for the future.

'I am sure the redecoration and re-displaying of the collection "front of house" will be of interest and a delight to visitors. I am grateful to the National Trust for Scotland – with its excellent staff, members and volunteers - who have ensured that the history, legend and memory of the Binns can continue "to be preserved for all time" as intended by Eleanor's gift of 1944.'

Tours of the house give visitors the chance to learn about the Dalryell family tree and heritage, including General Tam Dalryell, also known as 'Bluidy Tam', a Scottish general who fought in the War of the Three Kingdoms, in the seventeenth century. Visitors also enjoy hearing about Tam's alleged card game with the Devil, in which his cheating was discovered. The story goes that Auld Nick launched the table they were playing on across the room, narrowly missing Tam's head and landing in the pond outside the house. Two centuries later, after a significant drought, the table was rediscovered and is a prized visitor attraction with a mysterious hoof mark burned into one of the corners. Artefacts in the house also include Tam's newly conserved riding boots, dating back to the 1600s. According to the legends that sprung up after Tam's death, the thigh-high Russian leather boots were given to a family member and were rumoured to march around his house on their own at night, until they were returned to the House of the Binns.

The house and its collections are set in beautiful grounds, just a 30-minute drive from Edinburgh, offering fantastic views over the Firth of Forth. Throughout the year visitors can enjoy woodland walks, with daffodils in April, bluebells in May and glimpses of the flock of peafowl who also live onsite.

Tours of the House of Binns can be booked on the [National Trust for Scotland website](#).

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

### **About the National Trust for Scotland**

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland's largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland's magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to

battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022 the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland's heritage which doesn't have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk).

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410