

National Trust Press Release

3 December 2009

Cobham Mausoleum, Kent, named as Country House of the Year

The National Trust is pleased to hear that the Darnley Mausoleum, in Kent, has been named as Country House of the Year in The Country Life Awards.

After an extensive restoration project instigated by the Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme (CAMS), the National Trust hopes to acquire the Grade I listed building and surrounding woodland and open it to the public in the late spring of 2010.

For 50 years the mausoleum suffered neglect, vandalism and abuse. After being broken into, defaced by graffiti and generally used as a place for criminal activity, the worst came in November 1980 when a local gang filled the crypt with tyres and cans of petrol and set them alight. The resulting explosion brought down the roof of the crypt and the chapel floor.

However, a ray of light came in 1997 when CAMS was formed. The partnership, involving Gravesham Borough Council, the National Trust, English Heritage, Kent County Council, the Woodland Trust, Cobham Hall School and Channel Tunnel Rail Link, provided a swift reversal of fortune. In 2001 Gravesham Borough Council was able to purchase the mausoleum with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Working together, the partners began the task of reclaiming the mausoleum which has now been restored to its former glory.

Mark Hedges, editor of Country Life magazine, said: "The restoration of the Darnley Mausoleum is an outstanding achievement and has preserved an architectural masterpiece to be enjoyed by the public. Our glorious countryside has produced some extraordinary people who are dedicated to preserving the rural way of life."

Opening dates and times for the mausoleum will be published on www.nationaltrust.org.uk when they are available, or you can email cobham@nationaltrust.org.uk for more information.

- Ends -