

Discover Montacute House

First Floor



iBook Guide



Welcome to the interactive guide to the First Floor

You can either swipe left or right with your finger to navigate around the guide, or select the room you want to visit by touching the room names on the right of this page.

Each room has a 360° panorama in the bottom left corner. If you tap on it with your finger it will open full screen. Use the onscreen controls to look round the room. To close the 360° tap on the **X** symbol in the top left corner of the screen.

There are also photographs of key objects and architectural features in each space with brief descriptions. You choose between the images by touching on the small picture below the text.

Please do not hesitate to ask one of our volunteers who will be happy to help you.

Curzon's Bedroom

The Library

The Crimson Bedroom

The Hall Chamber



Curzon's Bedroom

This room was referred to as the 'The Garden Room' (the room above the garden) in a 1638 inventory. In 1638 it was a bedroom lined with '5 peeces of green cloth hangings pained with guilt leather' and the bed hung with 'green taffety'.

Today it is furnished to remind visitors of Lord Curzon's tenancy of the house between 1915 and his death in 1925.



Bath in a Cupboard

Lord Curzon installed this en-suite bathroom when he rented the house from 1915 to 1925. Fred Rogers, the local village wheelwright, carpenter and undertaker, was responsible for making this curious cupboard which houses Lord Curzon's bath.

According to oral sources, there was a reservoir on Ham Hill and this supplied water to the house until 1947. There are tanks in the roof, and these must have been put in place after 1870 when a circulating water system was developed which finally allowed water to be piped to the upper floors.



The Hall Chamber

This bedroom would have been reserved for the most important visitors to the house. Royalty never visited Montacute, although James I did stay with Sir Edward at another house he rented at Wanstead in Essex.

All that remains of the splendour of this room is the plasterwork over-mantel with the coat of arms of Sir Edward Phelips I and his second wife, Elizabeth Pigott.

The upstairs rooms, which were called chambers, took their names from the rooms they were above. This room was above the hall, so it was called the Hall Chamber.



Stumpwork box, 1693

Although its precise origins are unknown, stumpwork, as it is known today, has evolved from the beautiful and decorative raised embroidery which became enormously popular in England from 1630 to 1680. Stumpwork gained its name from the fact that stumps of wood were often used to raise the embroidery. Early designs depicted stories from the bible or showed the English Stuart court.

Once the young girls of the house had mastered their stitch samplers, stumpwork would probably be their next task. Girls as young as 11 years old would work on stumpwork designs.

A wide range of materials was used to work the designs - peacock feathers, gilt wire, pearl beads, spangles (like our modern sequins) and even human hair. Leaves were often made separately, stiffened with fine wire and attached individually to embroidered trees.



The Crimson Bedroom

What is now the Crimson Bedroom and dressing room were originally the Withdrawing Room to which Sir Edward Phelips (the builder of the house) and his guests retired after dining in the Great Chamber. Not everyone moved into the Withdrawing Room, it was a privilege bestowed only on those guests invited to do so by the owner of the house.



The Gamlen Bed

The Gamlen bed is made of oak, and is heavily carved throughout especially on the headboard. There is a full relief of the royal coat of arms of James I (1566–1625) with lion and unicorn supporters which is partly coloured. The tester roof is panelled and richly carved with foliage and the cornice has lion-head consoles.

The bed was given to the National Trust in 1946 but its early history can be traced to the Ball family in Devon. It has been suggested that the bed was probably made for Egidius Ball (baptized in 1573), and we understand that the headboard may well have been intended as part of a gift from the citizens of Exeter to Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I, and her husband.



The Library

The Library was originally the Great Chamber in the house and did not become a library until the end of the 18th century.

Sir Edward Phelips would have received important guests and dined in state with a procession of servants bringing in food from the distant kitchen. After the meal the table would have been cleared and the room prepared for music, dancing or a play.



Heraldic Glass

The stained glass heraldic shields are one of the most important features in the house and would have certainly impressed visitors.

There are forty-two shields in the glass ovals which belonged to the Phelips family, their Somerset friends and neighbours. This display of arms was similar to having photographs of someone famous taken with a member of the family.

