

present house, rebuilt after the war, was remodelled by Soane in 1800. This too is documented in the archive (see *C&CH* 13.8, Spring 1997, 'Sir John Soane at Aynhoe Park', Ptolemy Dean).

One of the striking features of the Cartwright papers is that they give such a lively and vivid picture of day-to-day life in a country house over a long period. However, the Cartwrights had ambitions which reached beyond their home and estate, and a view of the world unusually wide for a landowner of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Successive generations served as diplomats in the courts of Europe, sometimes bringing back sophisticated foreign brides to enliven the local scene. The Papers include a large body of material relating to political issues in Europe from the 1830s to the First World War.

One can understand American institutions wanting to acquire quasi-political archives which may relate to the past few centuries. However, as shown by the Stowe archive now in the Huntington Library in the Los Angeles conurbation (purchased long before county record offices were in existence), the blanket acquisition of family papers because of dubious political interest rides roughshod over the very legitimate importance of humble estate records. These are the very stuff of our own local history, and can rarely be of any relevance to overseas researchers. Stowe, whilst always of outstanding importance as a house and park, and only saved by becoming a public school, is now one of the most visited of National Trust estates. Its historian, George Clarke, has, at great expense, to research its history in San Marino, California.

The Cartwright archive is the documentary source for the study of several gentry families and for places both in south-west Northamptonshire and north Oxfordshire. It is the raw stuff of all our history – not just our local history – for no (inland) place, any more than any man – is an island.

Local, and national, historians are outraged that such material should be allowed to leave the country.

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To show how passionately we feel about this matter, we are putting our money where our mouth is. Several local societies have donated money to the Northamptonshire Record Office appeal. The committee of Banbury Historical Society have agreed to contribute a thousand pounds.