# Cranleigh man's garden becomes a museum of historical artefacts



A 71-year-old man from Cranleigh, Charles Brooking, is garnering attention for his unique back garden, which is home to an extensive and eclectic collection of historical artefacts from around the UK. Situated on an ordinary residential street, Brooking's garden features a variety of items that reflect his fascination with objects that many might overlook as mundane.

Brooking's interest in collecting began at a young age, influenced by his mother's profession as an antique dealer and picture restorer. Speaking to SurreyLive, he shared, "It started when I was very young. I started collecting door furniture and even different types of Bakelite numbers when I was about three.” His upbringing amidst antiques ignited a lifelong passion for preserving pieces of history.

To showcase his collection, Brooking initially established a museum in his home, which later moved to the University of Greenwich. However, he is now preparing to open a dedicated museum in its own facility. Much of his impressive collection is currently housed in his back garden, where he has filled sheds with sections of windows, staircases, and other significant pieces, each with a compelling story behind it.

“I’ve covered the whole country, mainly London,” Brooking stated. His remarkable assemblage includes items donated by prestigious institutions such as The Royal Collection and Historic Royal Palaces, a testament to his recognition as a legitimate museum curator. Notable items from his collection feature artefacts originating from iconic sites including Windsor Castle, Buckingham Palace, the Tower of London, and Palace of Westminster.

Among the myriad of pieces, one particular door from Guildford’s Abbot’s Hospital has a particularly eerie reputation. Brooking recounted an unsettling experience involving a former curator at Dartford who was so deeply affected by the door's presence that she abruptly left her job, stating, "I can't cope with that door." The door is said to have a haunted history, linked to the Duke of Monmouth, who spent the night at the hospital before being executed in London.

The museum serves not only as a display of historical curiosities but also as a reference centre for historians and architects. Visitors from various backgrounds utilise Brooking's collection for research and educational purposes, with institutions such as English Heritage and the National Trust engaging his expertise on significant restoration projects, including the fire-damaged structures at Windsor Castle and Clandon House.

Charles Brooking remains enthusiastic about his work, dismissing the idea of a mundane desk job. "Sitting behind a desk in front of a computer would be like death," he remarked. Reflecting on his passionate pursuit of collecting, he noted, “It's a huge thing to take on. There's no money in it. It's something that people think is mad, but it's still great fun. It is very important.”

His commitment to preserving and sharing the stories of these historical objects highlights an enduring dedication to the past, one that continues to resonate with academics, historians, and the curious public alike.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.cranleighmagazine.co.uk/people-profile-doorways-into-history/> - This article provides details about Charles Brooking's collection and his role as an architectural historian, highlighting his efforts to preserve historical artefacts and his involvement in expanding his collection into the post-war period.
* <https://londonist.com/london/museums-and-galleries/brooking> - This piece from Londonist describes Charles Brooking's unique museum, its history, and the extensive collection of architectural details, including items from iconic buildings like 10 Downing Street and Windsor Castle.
* <https://www.cranleighmagazine.co.uk/people-profile-charles-brooking-architectural-historian-and-founder/> - This article discusses Charles Brooking's background, his role as a historic buildings consultant, and the evolution of his collection, which includes items from notable sites such as Buckingham Palace and the Tower of London.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source is mentioned as the original article about Charles Brooking, though it does not provide additional external validation beyond the text itself.
* <https://www.thebrookingcollection.org> - This is the official website for The Brooking Museum of Architectural Detail, which would provide more detailed information about Charles Brooking's collection and its significance as a reference museum.