HERITAGE OPEN DAYS



More confirmation of the spread of that contemporary and popular sensibility attuned to the resonances of pasts-in-the-present.

English Heritage, the government agency, has put up nearly half a million dollars for a weekend of 4500 heritage open houses. This is the biggest heritage event in the UK this year.



Peter Saunders in his re-creation of a Victorian grocer’s shop. Photograph: David

Sillitoe for the Guardian

A small clue to the Victoriana nuttiness of Peter Saunders is the name of his chihuahua puppy sulking in a basket after vet’s injections, but there are so many others in the house: the chintz, the loving restoration, the forensic re-creation of a 19th-century grocer’s shop.

The puppy’s name is Bertie. His owner admitted: “All my friends do think I’m mad,” as he showed off his remarkable Victorian cottage in Nottingham. “But then they like coming here.”

Everything that could be restored has been, with Saunders spending eight years trawling auctions, fairs, shops and eBay to fill it with authentic fittings and artefacts.

This weekend, members of the public will be able to see his house as he takes part for the first time in England’s annual Heritage Open Days project.

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Authenticity and material presence