A Positive Impression

A review of WMFB’s exhibition ‘Giving our Past a Future’ at Sir John Soane’s Museum
A wonderful evening was had by all at the pre-advent Candlelit Fundraiser at Sir John Soane’s Museum on Tuesday 27th November. Our guests were treated to a private tour of WMFB’s exhibition ‘Giving our Past a Future’ and later explored this remarkable museum by candlelight. WMF Britain’s new ambassador, broadcaster, Kevin McCloud attended and warmly welcomed our guests. The evening concluded with the drawing of the 2012 Winter Raffle.

Thank you to those who supported the evening or took part in the raffle. Many congratulations to those who won prizes and many thanks to all who attended. WMFB is generously supported by Mr Pierre Valentin and Mrs Catrin Treadwell, Dr Christopher Tadgell, Dr Peter Frankopan, Dame Vivien Duffield, Dr Lois de Menil, Andrew Fane, CEO Jonathan Foyle, The Viscount Norwich, Mr James Hervey-Bathurst, WMFB’s new ambassador, broadcaster, Kevin McCloud attended and warmly welcomed our guests. The evening concluded with the drawing of the 2012 Winter Raffle.

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To wander through the spaces of an historical building is not always enough. An exhibition created by WMFB at Sir John Soane’s Museum, London, uncovered the hidden narratives surrounding some of our architectural gems, as letters, artworks and precious objects illuminate the past in a way nothing else can.
Exhibitions serve a variety of purposes. Some forge academic propositions, others revise artistic reputations, or gather scattered objects in great effect. *Giving our Past a Future* which opened on 26 October at Sir John Soane’s Museum does none of these precisely, but explains who we are as a global organization whilst offering windows into the lives of the sites we have worked with in the UK.

The buildings themselves show the main results of our interventions, and many thousands of people enjoy them for the sheer delight of their aesthetic, existential qualities. But any walk amongst the sunlit colonnades of Stowe, the damask-lined halls of Strawberry Hill, or the Gothic ruins of St Michael’s Coventry will be in the absence of some details that help to explain their experience and purpose with much greater clarity than impressions allow. It is very often from highlighting these disparate drawings, paintings, and objects that an overlooked history can begin to be constructed. Places need a narrative that makes the past come alive in the present, captivating the support necessary to make them valued into the future.

Sir John Soane’s Museum, the fossilized artifact-lined house and studio of the great Regency architect (1753-1837) is an apt venue for World Monuments Fund for many reasons, not least because Soane himself contributed to several of the sites we have helped to preserve. Those featured are five in all: Coventry Cathedral (Watch listed 2002) and its cleaned and repaired fifteenth-century stained glass; the laser survey of Hampton Court’s terracotta medallions moulded c.1520 by Giovanni da Maiano; the reinvigorated St George’s Bloomsbury (Watch listed 2002); the restoration of Strawberry Hill (Watch listed 2004). Finally, the refurbished Stowe House, home to the Temple-Grenville family who after 1822 became Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos, which is given a whole room. Soane designed Stowe’s Gothic Library, and possibly the Egyptian Hall, and drawings of both are shared amongst all five.

‘Craft and traditional materials are always expensive, but quality is the only course, and our £10 million challenge to preserve and present Stowe is exceptional value. This, of course, is the benchmark for all our work.’

WMF Britain’s founding Chairman, John Julius Norwich
AN ANCIENT MELTING-POT

The strip of land along the coast of Tanzania, between the sea and the hinterland of Africa, where great rivers flowing from the African Rift Valley meet the Indian Ocean and islands hidden amidst mangrove forests provide safe mooring for dhows, has for millennia been a place of meeting and exchange. Merchants and seafarers from all corners of the globe visited this coast to trade in commodities brought from the African interior. Settlements sprung up around harbours, which in time became cities, and the form of these settlements reflected the diverse and disparate origins of their builders. The ancient cities of the coast of Tanzania are a remarkable fusion of styles and influences, creating an architectural heritage that is rich and varied, and entirely unique.

The Great Mosque at Kilwa, founded in the 14th century, was for over 200 years the largest and most renowned in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1333 the Sultan completed a palais on a hill overlooking Kilwa, which has been described as unrivalled in East Africa for its architectural sophistication and splendour. In 1498 the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama moored in the harbour at Kilwa, and within a short period of time superior Portuguese fire power had eclipsed Swahili authority along the coast. In 1505 the Portuguese completed a fortress overlooking Kilwa harbour. The Swahili never regained their former power, but the standing ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara bear testimony to a sophisticated and rich culture, and were inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1981.

Portuguese military may have dominated the coast of East Africa for over 200 years, but in the early 18th century another force began challenging their power. Dhows from Oman had traded along the coast for centuries and skirmishes with the Portuguese were frequent. But in the early 18th century the Omanis began a more concerted effort to eject the ‘infidel’. Kilwa fell to the Omanis in 1721, followed by the last outpost of Portuguese power, Mombasa, in 1730. East Africa became the focus of Oman’s maritime economy, so much so that in the early 19th century the Sultan of Oman moved his capital to a port city at its hub, Zanzibar. The city of Zanzibar grew rapidly in the second half of the 19th century, and came to dominate trade with the interior of the continent, just as Kilwa had done three centuries earlier. Merchants from all over the world came to Zanzibar to trade, and the Sultan, as the city’s master and gatekeeper, grew fabulously wealthy. Zanzibar Stone Town, which became a World Heritage Site in 2000, reflects the varied origins of the people who settled here, combining influences from Arabia, the Gulf and Western India with European and traditional Swahili architecture. The economy was based chiefly on the export of ivory and cloves, but it also became the fulcrum of a more infamous trade in slaves. The slave market in Zanzibar, which was the last public slave market in East Africa was finally closed on the orders of the Sultan in 1873. The Anglican community built a cathedral at the site, and the altar marks the exact location of the whipping post at the centre of the former market.

World Monuments Fund first became involved at Kilwa Kisiwani in 2007, after the site was placed on the WMF Watch List of endangered heritage. In 2011, WMF was awarded a major grant by the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to undertake a comprehensive preservation program at Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara. A project is also under development for Zanzibar, focused on the Anglican Cathedral, which is seriously threatened by structural collapse, and creating a heritage centre to commemorate the abolition of slavery. Through these efforts WMF is contributing to preserving the remarkable built cultural heritage of Tanzania.

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A noble pursuit

The Duke and Duchess of Devonshire and the remarkable Chatsworth House played host to members of WMF Europe in December.

World Monuments Fund Europe held its annual meeting at Sir John Soane’s Museum in London on 3 December. Hosted by WMF’s President Bertrand du Vignaud, with WMF’s Chairman Chris Oxström, President Bonnie Burnham and representatives of nations from Poland to Portugal attending, the meeting concluded with a view of the exhibition on WMF Britain’s work in the UK. The following day, the group enjoyed a visit to Chatsworth where they were welcomed by the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. The Duke was the recent recipient of the first WMF Watch Award for his family’s custodianship of the Chatsworth estate. Curator Matthew Hirst guided through the state apartments just as their contents were being boxed up for conservation, the lights down and curtains drawn against the cold. This gloom gave a wonderful sense of the true character of the vast rooms in their historic reality in the harsh winters of the 1690s, when Celia Fiennes described Derbyshire’s trees exploding from frozen sap. She wrote of the unfinished Chatsworth in 1697, a year after its architect, Christopher Wren, had died, that ‘many roomes on the other side wch were not finisht, they were just painting ye Ceilings and Laying the floors wch are all jnlaid, there were the Duke and duchess’s apartments besides which are a great number of roomes and several offices.’ She also explained that her arms were unable to encompass the 14ft high columns in the chapel despite energetic attempts to embrace them. This group did not replicate her efforts but left grateful for the experience.

Baroque Cathedral of Buses’, thrilling and celebratory. We often take for granted that transportation is the essence of the modern world - mobility and the experience of journeys is a large part of what makes us who we are. As the greatest railway stations stand for the technical progress of the nineteenth century and remain useful despite former claims of redundancy and outmodedness calling for their demolition (imagine the loss of St Pancras now) so the best twentieth-century engineering deserves to be looked after as a legacy.

In the Lancashire Evening Post it was voted the citizens’ favourite building, and Alan Mercer explained why through his experience of it in the 1970s: ‘The designers dispensed with the arrogance of expense and ornament and instead chose durable products that although minimalist also provided texture, contrast and interest. It was this utilitarian approach that gave the public a sense that they owned the building rather than just being allowed to use it. It was not just somewhere to catch a bus - Preston’s concrete 1960s bus station - hangs in the balance. Sounds absurd, perhaps. A bus station might seem a bleakly utilitarian structure that serves a purpose and no more. But any building that transcends the practical into the poetic is surely to be valued. This vast 1969 building by Keith Ingham of BDP Partnership, based in Preston, is an example of how to make buildings that serve a purpose and no more.

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Who can ask for more from a public building? Today, Preston Council leader Peter Rankin admits that ‘10-12 years of lack of investment has taken its toll’ with the result that it’s a less pleasant a place to be. Decay through willful neglect is a self-fulfilling prophecy. But so is rescue and revitalization self-fulfilling: there’s every reason to take a bold, imaginative decision to refurbish it as a useful, dynamic landmark.

Behind every plea for its salvation is the World Monuments Watch listing and our support- we wish it well. The Lancashire Evening Post halted the scheme with its loss of buses’? Does Svi Sit Preston Bus Station: double-decker on public venture? It was a warm bright open space and by and large a safe and friendly place to be. It was not just somewhere to catch a bus. Whether you only used it a couple of times a year, or used it twice a day, you would probably bump into someone you knew [...] there was every reason to break your journey.’

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COVENTRY CATHEDRAL PROJECT UPDATE

The glass conservation

Coventry’s late medieval stained glass was paid for by merchants dealing in blue cloth and millinery - and sometimes a combination of those, to go by a fragment showing a blue hat with a gold hat-pin. That piece is one of around 11,000 from St Michael’s that miraculously escaped destruction, twice: first, in the 1640s, when Puritan iconoclasts attacked the masonry of the clerestory. The many surviving pieces were then reassembled in a jumble to fill the clerestorey windows above the main arcades. All those panels were taken down for safe storage when war broke in September 1939, one year before St Michael’s was promoted to cathedral status - was destroyed by incendiary bombs on 14 November 1940. But why was it rescued?

Coventry wasn’t unusual: medieval stained glass was removed and stored all across Britain in 1939. As established collectors’ items, old panels of stained glass had become valuable. By the late 1930s, medieval glass was valued by collectors and museums alike, and its removal from buildings to storerooms was prioritised lest more of a finite resource be lost to war. Coventry’s glass went to a vicarage in rural Warwickshire. But it could never go back home to St Michael’s, for when it was hit by firebombs, the centre of the church crumbled, bringing down the masonry of the clerestory.

The project to clean the glass was conceived this spring, and from summer until Christmas Crick-Smith Conservation from the University of Lincoln set up a studio in the Herbert Gallery so the people of Coventry could watch the faces emerge as they passed along the production line of swabs, bonding agents and catalogue files. Dr Heather Gladstone Scott, the medieval glass consultant is currently working on her catalogue which analyses the glass collection and complements the conservation programme. The catalogue should be completed for spring 2013.

Coventry participated in the first World Monuments Watch Day on Saturday 8th September 2012 with a children’s stained glass workshop and treasure trail. Watch Day is a new component of WMF’s biennial World Monuments Watch programme, encouraging local engagement with these sites and raising global awareness of their vital importance both to the communities in which they are located and to our shared human history.

It was John Thornton’s medieval stained glass that provided the inspiration for Coventry’s Watch Day activities. Children were asked to draw a portrait of themselves, a member of their family or a friend, and these were then placed on a replica window. A colourful representation of the 21st century emerged as children and adults alike absorbed themselves in the activity. Coventry was among around 30 sites across five continents partaking in Watch Day.

Watch Day 2012

Edinburgh Graveyards

Included on WMF’s Watch List in 2010, Edinburgh’s five historic graveyards - the three kirkyards of St Cuthbert’s, Greyfriars and Canongate and the two burial grounds of Old and New Carlton - are set to get support through the appointment of a new development officer post.

Buried within these important historic sites are international figures such as the economist Adam Smith, the philosopher David Hume; as well as important characters from the history of the city such as the poet Robert Fergusson, James Craig who planned the New Town and of course ‘Greyfriars Bobby’ the famously loyal Skye Terrier.

The development officer will be appointed to carry through the recommendations of a recently completed report, commissioned by World Monuments Fund Britain and Edinburgh World Heritage Trust, addressing the task of managing Edinburgh’s historic city centre graveyards. The challenges facing these sites are complex, but often come down to a question of ownership, which has led to neglect. Headstones, tombs and memorials are owned by the family but over hundreds of years they are forgotten and fall into disrepair. The City of Edinburgh Council and the churches are respectively responsible for general maintenance, but there are no funds available for repair. Graveyards also offer secluded spaces for anti-social behaviour, which can deter visitors as they feel unsafe.

The Office will be appointed for two years to develop the project, and co-ordinate efforts to improve the condition and promotion of the graveyards. World Monuments Fund Britain and Edinburgh World Heritage have each contributed £4,000 to the project, which has in turn unlocked additional support from the Pilgrim Trust with an award of £8,000 to fund the post.

Edinburgh’s historic graveyards are vulnerable to decay, vandalism and neglect. Call to Action. City of Edinburgh Council, City of Glasgow Council, the City of London and City of York Council have each ensured that their graveyards are listed in the UK’s National Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, thereby ensuring that they are protected locally.

For more information about Edinburgh’s graveyards, visit the World Monuments Fund website; or follow @WMFUK on Twitter and Facebook.
STUDY DAY SERIES 2013

Supporters enjoy priority, everyone is welcome

Medieval Coventry

London Squares

ST GEORGE’S
BLOOMSBURY AND THE LIFE OF GEORGIAN LONDON

The ruins of St Michael’s Cathedral, Coventry are a uniquely powerful reminder of the effects of war. They are also the remains of England’s largest medieval parish church from which an astonishing collection of stained glass was removed a year prior to the city’s bombing. This study day examines the remains and the rich symbolism of its parts. WMF Britain recently assisted with the repair of its stained glass, some of the finest of the high middle ages, whilst its collection of later medieval tombs each represent a work of architecture in miniature. A walk through the city places the Cathedral in its medieval context.

WMF Members: £45
Non-members: £65

Winchester Cathedral and city walking tour

Winchester was the capital of England. Its cathedral, the longest in England, is an echo of the Rome of Emperor Augustus. The apogee took place at the turn of the 17th century when the famous Savoy Palace was developed, and why they seemed to serve as “a wider space between the genteel and the vulgar race”. Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, author of The London Squares (Yale) takes us on a walking tour to discover our capital city for its refined architecture; Hallie Rubenhold reveals the story of the notorious slum of central London called Whitechapel, the scene of Hodge’s ‘Cin Lane’. Gavin Stamp explains the astonishingly refined architecture; Hallie Rubenhold reveals the shocking low-life.

WMF Members: £45
Non-members: £65

Please note: this day will include significant amount of walking between sites.

Kindly sponsored by Symm, www.symm.co.uk

STUDY DAY DETAILS

Price includes lunch and refreshments throughout the day and all entrances.

To book please call +44 (0)20 7251 8142 or book online at www.wmf.org.uk/activities

Thursday 26 February, 1pm
Bettany Hughes is one of our best-known broadcasters, and a specialist in ancient Mediterranean history. This talk is based on her book ‘The Hemlock Cup’, a New York Times Bestseller. Its Athenian subject, Socrates, contributed to a city that nurtured key ingredients of contemporary civilisation – democracy, liberty, science, drama, rational thought – yet, as he wrote nothing in his lifetime, he himself is an enigmatic figure. Bettany followed in the footsteps of Socrates across Greece and Asia Minor to shed new light on his world.

Kindly sponsored by Symm, www.symm.co.uk

WMF Members/Supporters £10    Full price £15

HOW TO BOOK

Call +44 (0)20 7251 8142 or book online at www.wmf.org.uk/activities

Project Review Seminar

The first annual project review seminar is taking place on Wednesday 24th April. The seminar is open at 6.30pm to all Supporters and will feature short updates on the sites we are currently working on. We are also delighted to welcome Rupert Harris Conservation who has been working on the restoration of the Stowe Lions which will be returning to the South Front of the house this coming spring. Rupert will also talk about his work as a leading conservator of fine metalwork and sculpture.

The event will include wine and nibbles and an opportunity to meet other supporters and likeminded individuals. It will take place at The Croft, 70-75 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6JF.

Plates are limited so if you would like to attend please email Sarah Meaker at sarah@wmf.org.uk or call +44 (0)20 7251 8142.
ABOUT WORLD MONUMENTS FUND BRITAIN

World Monuments Fund Britain is a leading charity which conserves vulnerable buildings in the UK and abroad. We build partnerships with people committed to protecting sites in their care and create long-term public value for the community, whilst preserving built heritage for future generations to enjoy.

We have worked in the UK since 1995 and raised in excess of £18m to safeguard threatened architecture. But our impact goes far beyond this thanks to the biennial World Monuments Watch. The Watch draws attention to important historic buildings across the world which are facing a variety of challenges and have an uncertain future.

Today, as industrialised development, more extreme weather and a poor economy continue to threaten fragile historic sites, the work of World Monuments Fund Britain is more vital than ever.

You can help us build on our past successes by joining us as a Supporter.

WHY SHOULD YOU BECOME A SUPPORTER?

Like us, you love old buildings but you’re concerned that some still don’t receive the help they need. World Monuments Fund Britain stands up for these important, and sometimes forgotten, buildings and gives them a better future. If we didn’t have support from people like you we’d be less able to help.

WE DO MORE THAN JUST RESTORE OLD BUILDINGS

We believe that our distinctive architecture is a national asset, so it’s important that communities are able to benefit from their restoration. When we get involved with new projects we make sure visitor centres, charitable partnerships and on-site training programmes are built into the plans right from the start. Every penny you give helps to secure the future of historic buildings for everyone’s enjoyment.

HOW WE THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING US

- Behind-the-scenes access
- Unique opportunities for learning
- Meet like-minded people

TO FIND OUT MORE GO TO WWW.WMF.ORG.UK/INVOLVED OR CALL US ON +44 (0)20 7251 8142