Raising the Roof
Stowe’s large library reclai ms its golden glory

Project news: from Sheerness to Winchester
Plus: Winter lecture: Simon Jenkins on the true value of our Great Houses
Sir Donald Insall: Our Congratulations

WMF—Britain would like to congratulate Sir Donald Insall on his Knighthood for services to cultural heritage. For many years we have been extremely grateful to have had Sir Donald’s invaluable advice and guidance through our Architectural Advisory Committee in which he continues to play a very active role. Over a long and distinguished career Sir Donald has created one of the country’s most respected architectural conservation practices, Donald Insall Associates, and has been an immeasurable help to many people entering the field of building conservation. Donald Insall Associates has won as many as 140 conservation awards, including 13 Europa Nostra awards (the most of any single organisation), and has contributed significantly to the international field through organisations such as ICCROM and WMF.

Jonathan Foyle Broadcasts with Buildings

During July and August, I had the privilege to film at a number of W MF sites for BBC broadcasts. BBC4’s ‘People’s Palaces: The Golden Age of Civic Architecture’ set the W MF Wilson Challenge co-funded St George’s Hall Liverpool centre stage in the nineteenth-century development of great classical civic buildings in the north of England. For BBC2 I scaled a thousand year span of British architecture in ‘Climbing Great Buildings’, broadcast from 6 September on BBC2, which included abseiling 230 feet from the inner dome — the literal high point — of St Paul’s, the focus of a £500,000 of Amex/WMF Partners in preservation funding. My hope for this occasionally terrifying venture is that it will encourage many amongst the one million viewers to develop a closer interest in British architecture, and perhaps even join us to embark upon the spirit of philanthropic support that so many of our vulnerable works of architecture rely upon.

On 9 December I will be sharing my experiences of climbing these great buildings. Find out more on page 11.

World Party!

Some of WMF’s most influential supporters strutted their stuff at this year’s revived Summer Party

The decision to bring back WMF Britain’s annual Summer Party proved to be a popular one, as more than 100 guests flocked to Radisson Edwardian's May Fair Hotel for an exciting new format and celebrate the year’s achievements. Our marvellous Chairman Emeritus, John Julius Norwich led proceedings with his usual verve and exuberance whilst Sir George’s Bloomsbury’s ensemble in residence, DISPATCH, treated us to a recital of early twentieth-century chamber music. Our Patron, HRH Prince Michael of Kent was also in attendance and mingled with our wide spectrum of guests, who ranged from financiers to the famous.

We would like to thank The Radisson Edwardian Group, owners of the May Fair Hotel and From Vineyards Direct for their kind support and sponsorship.

Jonathan Foyle
The Gold Standard

The refurbishment of Stowe’s library has included gilding and other restoration work of the highest quality.

At World Monuments Fund, we believe that the restoration or repair of a building is a worthy charitable act only if it enhances its usefulness to society. So we are committed to broadening opportunities for public access and participation through each of our partnerships.

Stowe is an excellent example of a ‘useful’ site. As our work progresses in repairing the house and conserving and restoring its interiors, such as the Large Library, we never lose sight of who we are doing it for. WMF is uniquely positioned to forge national and international partnerships for the site. Jonathan Foyle reports on recent developments.

The Large Library

Stowe’s Large Library, it transpired, was not originally one room but two when built in the middle of the eighteenth century; it was united, furnished and gilded and stocked as a library during the 1790s in anticipation of a visit from George III, whose fondness for books is today manifested at the heart of the British Library. But the king never arrived at Stowe, and the fortunes of the Temple-Grenville family waned in the coming decades, leaving the library without furniture, its great ceiling beneath layers of white emulsion paint, the plasterwork failing.

Two hundred years on, in March 2010, under the partnership of the Stowe House Preservation Trust, Stowe School and World Monuments Fund, a panel convened at Sir John Soane’s Museum to discuss the evidence for the original decorative scheme upon which the ceiling’s restoration depended. Carefulness in the discussion and recording of decisions was vital because it would be the very last time to share forensic information. The ceiling’s paint was stripped in order to fully repair and replace the cracked and failed plasterwork, over which an entire oak-trussed roof had just been rebuilt to replace a leaking and sagging twentieth-century mono-pitch.

The talented historian Michael Bevington, Stowe’s Classics Master, presented excellent documentary and visual evidence for the development and usage of the room. Paint analyst Patrick Baty had taken over 600 samples of the paint and gilt finishes; Cliveden Conservation brought observations made during the stripping process whilst experts in the field of decorative history helped guide the process. The result was a reasoned and clear understanding of the reinstatement of the decorative finish.

The gilding process was time-consuming but it has revolutionised the impression of the space, which can be returned to its rightful place amongst great Georgian interiors. And the work is not yet finished. The original 1790s gilding was applied with the expectation of being highlighted by sources and levels of illumination that have since disappeared. In July, our Stowe Scholar Laurel Peterson found an inventory of 1839 amongst the Stowe archives in the Huntington Library, California, which describes: “Three ormolu Chandeliers and glass Lustres, with Chains from Ceiling.” In the quest for authenticity, we have arrived at gold-upon-gold, a library fit for King Midas, if not George III. The library is open to regular public view from next year.

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Kidscape in the Landscape

In 2008, the children’s charity Kidscape found that 79% of severely bullied children gained the self-confidence to avoid antagonism after one of their ZAP courses. The charity’s Deputy Director Peter Bradley, welcomed a partnership with WMF and Stowe School for residential ZAP courses at a site laden with both pacific beauty and fine school facilities. A report on the first weekend course was written by Max Sanderson, a pupil at Stowe.

The Gold Standard cont.

On August 15th, 1848, a forty-day sale of the contents of Stowe House commenced. Since the early eighteenth century, Stowe had been recognized as one of the grandest country houses in England. The home of a politically prominent family, it had played host to such figures as Louis XVIII and Queen Victoria. However, the second Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, £1.1 million in debt, was forced to sell the vast majority of Stowe’s contents, from ancient Roman sculptures and paintings by Rembrandt and Reynolds, to eleventh-century illuminated manuscripts and Sèvres porcelain. Two days were devoted to selling the contents of the wine cellars alone, the sale of which realised close to £1400.

A Scholar’s Story

Thorough academic research is essential to understand a building before restoration work is undertaken whilst publishing new discoveries is a natural conclusion... In 2010 we negotiated the ‘Stowe Scholarship’, co-funded by Yale Center for British Art and The Paul Mellon Centre in London. Laurel Peterson, a PhD student at Yale University, was the chosen scholar for 2010. She spent a month in England and a month studying the Stowe archives in Los Angeles with archivist Cathy Fisher. Laurel writes below.

Stowe Masons

The WMF’s new heritage skills training programme has seen young stonemasons gaining experience at Stowe.

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The list of objects in the sale catalogue from this monumental event tells a story of Stowe and of the passions and interests of the family who lived there.

This summer, as work progressed on the repairing of the fine masonry of Stowe House, David Gundry, WMF’s Project Director, was delighted to launch a heritage skills training programme, generously supported by The Paul Mellon Estate. Held with The Building Crafts College, one of the UK’s leading construction skills schools, this training programme met with the support of the main contractor, Linford Bridgegan and will see stonemasons gain valuable on-site experience towards their National Vocational Qualification III.

At Stowe four trainee stonemasons, Hannah Baars, Daniel Davidson, David Pickering and Yuki Mito, who have already achieved their Advanced Craft Diplomas will gain three weeks’ ‘banker’ experience in the Linford’s workshop followed by three weeks on-site ‘fixing’ experience at Stowe.

Hannah Baars commented ‘to be given the opportunity to work on such a prestigious, large-scale project alongside experienced craftspersons is invaluable. It will be enormously beneficial for me to be able to build on the skills I’ve learnt during the last year in a professional environment.”
Winchester Cathedral

WMF Britain commences a new project at Winchester Cathedral to restore glorious carving from the seventeenth-century High Altar canopy.

The seventeenth and eighteenth-century High Altar at the Cathedral consisted of a Laudian (Anglican High Church of Charles I) timber canopy surrounded with later ensemble of carved drapery, cartouche and naturalistic festoons in the style of English wood carver Grinling Gibbons. A James Cave watercolour dated 1801 shows this ensemble in position. Since then, as a result of changes in liturgical practice and fashions, the canopy arrangement has been disassembled and scattered to different areas of the cathedral with the carved drapery and festoons hanging, largely unnoticed and in a deteriorating condition, below the south transept crossing arch.

WMF Britain will support the conservation and re-presentation of the altar carving so that it can once again contribute fully to the story of the cathedral during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This involves discussions with the Cathedral Chapter and Fabric Advisory Committee to agree an approach to the work, cleaning and consolidation of the object, recarving of some lost elements and improving the coherence of the piece and improvements to its positioning and interpretation within the Cathedral, so that visitors can enjoy it once more.

David Esterly, a US-based expert in the restoration of woodcarving of this period, comments that “the composition embodies the tensions and triumphs of English carving during this period, with its nod towards the dominant Gibbons style but its stubborn grip on the older, pre-Gibbons tradition. The work has great educational value, encapsulating as it does the history of carved decoration in Britain in the second half of the seventeenth century.”

The work will feature in our 2011 Mellon Lecture (details to follow), presented by David Esterly. We will have the opportunity to use the Cathedral as a venue for the lecture, enabling the public to view the object at close hand before it is returned to its elevated position.

This project is generously supported by The Gilbert Butler Foundation and The Paul Mellon Estate.

Shobdon Parish Church

This Herefordshire church needs a financial boost to restore its Rococo Gothick glories

Although elements of its twelfth-century origins survive, this small country parish church was remodelled in the 1750s to become the most complete surviving Rococo Gothick interior in the UK, including all the furniture, and is architecturally one of the county’s most important churches. It is closely associated with Horace Walpole’s Taste because Sir Richard Bateman, a member who was intimately involved with the construction of Strawberry Hill during the same period, is thought to be its creator.

Unfortunately, Shobdon is suffering from the failure of fourteenth-century timbers which were recycled in the mid-eighteenth century. These issues were the reason for its successful nomination to the 2010 Watch and, subsequently, we can report that English Heritage has offered a grant of £700,000 towards the repair programme.

The superlative interior of the church has not been subject to any detailed physical analysis or documentary research to inform its future interpretation or possible restoration. We hope to enable this research so that a full understanding of what the church looked like at the time of its conversion is revealed, contributing to the public’s enjoyment of the building.

This project is generously supported by The Paul Mellon Estate.

Sheerness Dockyard

A unique forgotten landscape of maritime heritage risks being neglected further unless WMF Britain and SAVE Britain’s Heritage can create a compelling vision for its future use.

In recent months SAVE, WMF Britain and local community groups have vocally objected to a proposed development at Sheerness’s Regency Terrace. This would have seen a new gateway made through the Grade II listed dockyard wall as well as three blocks of flats constructed on the gardens of Dockyard House and Regency Terrace which are both Grade II* listed and are significant elements of a coherent landscape. We are pleased to report that this effort has succeeded as the application was unanimously rejected by Swale Planning Committee members.

Now that the immediate threat of inappropriate development has been significantly reduced, SAVE and WMF Britain have turned their attention to the Grade I* Dockyard Church, neglected by its current owner who also wishes to sub-divide the building for conversion into flats.

Along with SAVE, we intend to author a report which will include a visualised proposal for the re-use of the Church as a heritage centre, as well as a location for the unique dockyard "model" which is currently being stored by English Heritage. More generally, the report will highlight and present options for a holistic approach to the historic areas of the dockyard. The site offers much potential, including a national centre of excellence in ship restoration, providing much-needed work and educational opportunities, and the return of the Boat Store to its original use. The report will consider the various opportunities whilst taking into consideration the management options for the long-term care of historic buildings within the dockyard.

This project is generously supported by The Paul Mellon Estate.
Have you considered adding World Monuments Fund Britain to your Will?

We rely on support from generous individuals to help us preserve beautiful historic structures at home and abroad for future generations. Without this support we would be less able to realise our ambition to protect historically important sites across the globe. By including World Monuments Fund Britain in your Will you can help us preserve many more wonderful buildings for years to come.

WMF Britain was founded in 1995 as a result of a major bequest from one of America’s most enlightened benefactors, Paul Mellon (1907–1999). He saw the great benefits of preserving the architectural heritage of Great Britain and the role of WMF in using its skills to make it happen. Since then we have accomplished a great deal, but there is still much to do.

A gift in your Will to WMF Britain would give loved ones the pleasure of knowing that you are giving to a cause in which you believe, whilst creating a lasting memorial which reflects your passions. It also allows you to pledge your support without experiencing any immediate financial burden.

Our legacy pledgers are very important to us and to convey our thanks we invite them to learn more about our organisation and current projects through invitations to special events and visits. On receiving a bequest, appropriate acknowledgements will be made, but if you have any specific wishes we will do our utmost to honour them.

If you are considering making a bequest to World Monuments Fund Britain, our Finance Director or those in development would be pleased to discuss this with you. Please email enquiries@wmf.org.uk, call +44 (0) 20 7730 5344 or send a cheque payable to World Monuments Fund Britain Ltd. to WMFB, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH to request more information.

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John Julius Norwich, Chairman Emeritus, World Monuments Fund Britain.

Winter Lecture & Study Day Series 2010

Sir Simon Jenkins

The 24 Houses in the twentieth-century

The issue is a pressing one. Over the last two centuries, Britain’s historic houses have faced waves of threats. Those which survived have largely been taken into the guardianship of charities as museums, or have found alternative uses such as Stowe House, WMF Britain’s major project in tandem with the National Trust’s restoration of the gardens. Sir Simon, as Chairman of the National Trust, explores the circumstances, values and opportunities of great houses in the twenty-first century.

Tuesday 26 October, 7pm
Royal Geographical Society, Kensington, London
WMFB members £10/non-members £15
Kindly sponsored by Symm (www.symm.co.uk)

Climbing Great Buildings

‘Climbing Great Buildings’ is a 15-part BBCC / BBC4 series in which Jonathan Foyle, CEO of World Monuments Fund Britain, explores a thousand-year span of British architecture through climbing, with the help of seven-times British Champion, Lucy Creaner. At the heart of the series is a major WMF project: St Paul’s Cathedral. In this talk, Jonathan shares the experiences of gaining unique access to the hidden wonders of some of Britain’s most exceptional buildings.

Thursday 9 December, 7pm
Royal Geographical Society, Kensington, London
WMFB members £10/non-members £15
Kindly sponsored by Grayling (www.grayling.com)

Dangerous Liaisons–Forbidden Love

Featuring Spirituoso and guests (WMF co-host with the Handel House Museum and St George’s Bloomsbury)

Handel House Museum’s ensemble-in-Residence, Spirituoso will take the audience on a moving journey through elements of the eighteenth century Europe, exploring contrasting passions. Love, lust, deception, grief and joy are enacted through music and movement, uniting two characters in a forbidden love. Spirituoso will be joined by guest artists on period instruments, and baroque dancers. World Monuments Fund co-hosts and during the course of the evening we will celebrate the installation of the church made possible through WMF funding.

Saturday 20 November, 7pm
St George’s Church, Bloomsbury
Tickets: £9/$5 students

To book please call the Handel House Museum on 020 7399 1553 and please mention WMF

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John Julius Norwich, Chairman Emeritus, World Monuments Fund Britain.

Christmas Cards

WMF Britain Christmas cards are on sale now. Each pack contains 10 cards and 2 designs. The first card features an image of the stunning chandelier in St George’s Bloomsbury. Installed last year, this seventeenth-century Dutch made piece was previously hung in the foyer of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The second features a detail of the William Kent ceiling in the North Hall at Stowe; WMF’s flagship restoration project.

Packs cost £6 (10 cards and envelopes) + £2 P&P for orders up to £18 and £3 P&P for orders over £18. To place an order please call 020 7730 5344 with your credit/debit card ready or send a cheque payable to World Monuments Fund Britain Ltd. to WMFB, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH. Please reference ‘WMFB Christmas Cards’ and include the delivery address. Packs will be despatched within a few days of receiving your payment. The cards will be on sale at all of our Winter events.

All profits from the sale of the cards will go towards the activities of WMF Britain.

Study Day to review the restoration

Intended as Horace Walpole’s summer retreat, Strawberry Hill became much more significant. Its interiors saw the early adoption of detail from Gothic buildings, providing a dramatic home to Walpole’s eclectic collection of antiquities. Following years of neglect in 2003 Strawberry Hill was placed on WMF’s Watch List and received £1m of WMF Wilson Challenge funding. The Strawberry Hill Trust has now completed the enormous task of restoring the house, and this study day represents a very special review of the achievement.

Thursday 4 November, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham
WMFB members £70/non-members £80
Kindly sponsored by Symm (www.symm.co.uk)
Please help us raise £150,000 for Stowe’s Music Room

WMF Britain’s current priority is to raise funds towards the restoration of Stowe’s majestic Music Room

Situated between the Marble Saloon and Large Library, the Music Room has retained its original usage as a space for entertaining and concerts. The exquisite decorations on the ceiling and walls are the laborious work of Vincenzo Valdre and were completed after 1781. Their style recalls the Pompeian discoveries which had attracted the Marquess of Buckingham on his Grand Tour of 1774. They depict flowers, butterflies and birds and bring a sense of fun, with many classical figures cheerfully suspending a swag or supporting a cornice. The imposing Corinthian columns at either end of the room are the work of Domenico Bartoli and imitate Siena marble. At the north end they frame a beautiful niche depicting a scallop-shell motif with oak leaves. Every donation is matched 1:1 doubling the value of your contribution.

The room requires a combination of conservation, repair and specialist cleaning.

How you can help...

- **£25**
  - Replaces a defective oak floorboard
- **£50**
  - Funds the painting of one square metre of ceiling background between the gilding and paintings
- **£100**
  - Allows for a conservator to spend 4 hours on site
- **£250**
  - Funds specialist joinery repair to an overdoor
- **£500**
  - Funds the conservation cleaning of a column capital and retouches its gilding
- **£1000**
  - Allows for paint analysis and the investigation of joinery decorations
- **£2000**
  - Funds the conservation of a Valdre-painted wall panel
- **£3000**
  - Allows for the entire cornice to be conservation cleaned and repaired
- **£4000**
  - Funds the conservation of the niche in the north wall

To donate to this appeal please complete the form which is located within this magazine or to discuss your donation contact Cathy Giangrande or Sarah Meaker on Tel: +44 (0) 20 7730 5344 or email cathy@wmf.org.uk / sarah@wmf.org.uk

The Music Room, photographed by J. Mudd & co., ca. 1870