



A TWO-YEAR RESTORATION OF THE MARBLE HALL OF ENGLAND'S STOWE HOUSE IS NOW COMPLETE.



GEORGIAN REVIVAL

A stunning restoration of one of Britain's great interiors

Emulating Rome's Pantheon, the Marble Hall at Stowe is one of the great interiors of northern Europe. It is at the heart of the great Stowe House, which itself is at the center of one of the greatest manmade landscapes in England. Almost all the great English architects of the eighteenth century worked at Stowe: Vanbrugh, Gibbs, Kent, Soane—and in the park, Capability Brown. The Marble Hall was the work of an Italian architect, Giovanni Battista Bartoli, and was designed and built between 1775 and 1778. He designed all the interior detail and masterminded the wonderful plasterwork and the great *scagliola* column, imitating Sicilian jasper.

In September of this year, Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover hosted a reception and dinner at Stowe as Chairman of the Appeal to mark the completion of the two-year restoration of the Hall. It looked completely magnificent—the Carrara marble floor gleaming and the 16 polished columns shining and reflecting the light of the new lanterns. Standing in the center of the Hall one sees both ways through the entire house and out into the park, where the great Corinthian Arch was specially illuminated for the evening.

The restoration would not have been possible without support from WMF's Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve our Heritage, which contributed U.S. \$600,000 of matching funding. The Marble Hall is part of a larger six-phase project, begun when the entire house was placed on WMF's 2002 Watch list of 100 *Most Endangered Sites*. The domed space is in fact elliptical, and is surmounted by a frieze in high relief depicting a procession of triumphant soldiers returning home with the spoils of war. Today they must be celebrating the triumph of the restoration that has made Stowe one of the wonders of Europe once again.

—WILL BLACK

