WMF rides through Bloomsbury

Following a £9.2 million restoration, WMF celebrates the opening of Hawksmoor's masterpiece of eighteenth century architecture in this special edition of Monumentum.
The restoration of St George’s, Bloomsbury was marked by a magnificent five-day celebration of dinners, services, concerts and site visits that culminated in a Service of Thanksgiving lead by the Bishop of London.

In attendance were the American Ambassador Mr Robert Tuttle, HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO, WMF’s International Council, UK Trustees and many colleagues from our New York office. The programme, designed for WMF’s International Council, took a distinguished group round the country and included many of WMF’s British past and present projects. The five day visit ran as follows:

Wednesday 4th October
am Press Conference at St George’s pm Dinner with Mrs Theresa Sackler, WMF-in Britain Trustee

Thursday 5th October
am Visit to Stowe House followed by a farewell dinner and stay at Hartwell House Hotel

Friday 6th October
am Visit to Strawberry Hill and Kew Gardens pm Gala Concert at St. George’s by the Orchestra for the Age of Enlightenment, sponsored by Withers LLP and Brown Dolphin Securities. Dinner at the Garrick Club, hosted by John Baskett

Saturday 7th October
Visit to Stowe House followed by a farewell dinner and stay at Hartwell House Hotel

On the 5th October an American and a British flag were parted to reveal a new plaque to the ‘galloping Angrophile’ Paul Mellon, whose estate contributed £5.4 million to the restoration of St George’s. The Service of Thanksgiving marked an indefatigable high point in the life of this forgotten Hawksmoor masterpiece.

The galloping Angrophile

A joint restoration project between the UK and USA benefits London.

The church, originally part of Queen Anne’s 1711 act to build fifty new churches, was on the brink of closure with severe structural problems and water leaking through the roof. No repairs had taken place there for over 100 years and the exterior was grey and unwelcoming.

Today, following WMF’s £9.2 million restoration, with help from the HLF and many other donors, the church is once again Hawksmoor’s ‘temple of light’. Clean architectural lines, clear glass windows, and the altar moved back to the eastern apse make the interior a place of wonder and reverence. Most striking is the rebirth of the ‘lions and unicorns’ – the plain stone walls speak for themselves. Most striking is the rebirth of the ‘lions and unicorns’ – four ten-foot heraldic beasts chasing each other up Hawksmoor’s eccentric spire, recreated by sculptor Tim Crawley. In fact the sculptures have just won a Natural Stone Award from the Stone Federation for Craftsmanship. Topped by George I, the spire features in an eighteenth century rhyme:

‘When Henry VIII left the Pope in the lurch
The Protestants made him head of the Church
But George’s good subjects, the Bloomsbury people
instead of the Church made him head of the steepes.’

‘…a masterpiece of absurdist architecture... It is good to see a work of one of Britain’s greatest architects returning closer to his intentions. Something half-buried under alteration and decay has been exhumed, and you can sense better than at any time for nearly three centuries the change in the rhythm of time, from the pace of the street to the one that refers to antiquity – it is one of the church’s most powerful effects.’

Rowan Moore, The Evening Standard

‘St George’s is like a gem, and in its restored state it is a masterpiece. Tim Crawley’s replacements are a lion and a unicorn of robust design, the sort of sculpture that would have made Hawksmoor’s heart jump with joy.’

Alistair McAlpine, World of Interiors Magazine

St George’s, Bloomsbury is now open:
Sund-Fri 9am-5pm
Sat 11.30am-5pm
From 11.30am-6pm

The main Sunday service is at 10.30am with guided tours at 3pm and a concert later in the day at 4pm. The carol service, with choir, is at 6pm on Sunday 17th December. The parish welcomes everyone to all these events.

www.stgeorgesbloomsbury.org.uk
The first Saturday after the opening some 450 people came to see the church. Since the restoration overseen by WMF, the congregations have increased, our Sunday music programme has begun and interest has swelled from the local community. Particularly gratifying is that St. George's is now back at the heart of Bloomsbury as a major symbol of regeneration. The congregation and diocese are deeply grateful for the Mellon gift and all that has followed. The restoration began at a time of great difficulty for the church and all concerned hoped this would be more than simply a restoration of a building – how true this has been.

Reverend Perry Butler, The Rector of St George's

Thanksgiving Service

Thursday 5th October, 11am

Service of Thanksgiving to mark the restoration of the church in the presence of HRH Prince Michael of Kent. Presided over by The Bishop of London, the Rt. Hon. Rt. Revd Richard Chartres, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the US Ambassador to Great Britain.

The Bishop of London wrote in the Service sheet for the celebratory service on October 5th – that the church had been ‘re-pristinated’. It’s a great word because it means both renewal and going back to the original inspiration. This is undoubtedly what has been achieved at St George’s and the reprisitinating effect will spread – more people are coming to the church; it is filled with light; music sounds wonderful and prayers and praises are inspired by the architecture. St George’s is one of London’s finest buildings and to see the joy with which the lions and unicorns leapt back to grasp the staggering steeple reinforces the rightness of the restoration.

Colin Amery, WMF in Britain Director

1 The Mayor of Camden, Councillor Jill Fraser
2 Mrs Maria Tuttle and Ambassador Robert Tuttle
4 Mr Frederick Terry and Mrs Barbara Terry, Dr Marilyn Perry and Ms Bonnie Burnham
5 The Mayor of Camden, Councillor Jill Fraser, The Bishop of London and HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO

8 Lord Norwich greets Prince Michael of Kent
9 The Mayor of Camden and The Bishop of London are introduced by Lord Norwich to Prince Michael of Kent
10 Mrs Barbara Terry meets the Prince
11 Mr Julian Sharpe leads the Procession to the end of the church to unveil the plaques
13 HRH Prince Michael of Kent unveils the plaque to the major donors of St George’s
14 Prince Michael and the American Ambassador to the UK unveil the plaque to the late Paul Mellon
15 Mr Duncan Robinson delivers his tribute to Paul Mellon
16 Mrs Maria Tuttle and The Bishop of London
17 Mr Peter Kimmelman and Mrs Robin Hambro
18 Mr Peter Sichel and Mr Frederick Terry
19 The Bishop of London, Revd Perry Butler and Prince Michael of Kent
... the restored St. George’s is almost entirely free of funereal gloom. The interior is gloriously light and airy, and the outside, exfoliated of a few centuries of grime, is bright and clean.

Steve Rose, The Guardian

‘The Restoration of St George’s, Bloomsbury also restores Hawksmoor’s name... and what a tower! There’s none like it anywhere in the world. No, nobody in Britain has ever made architecture like Nicholas Hawksmoor. The church is re-opened after a magnificent and mercifully ‘still rough around the edges’ restoration.’

Tom Dyckhoff, The Times

‘Honouring Hawksmoor’ leader, The Daily Telegraph

Heritage-lobby good taste is much in evidence inside. The church used to be gaudily painted. Now, all is taken back to a presumed original state of calm, stone-coloured distemper and dark wood. More importantly the axis of the church has been turned back to Hawksmoor’s original east-west layout. It feels good, and, unlike Spitalfields, it retains some rough edges, even in the new stone floor of the church.’

Hugh Pearman, The Sunday Times

‘It is an unalloyed pleasure to look from Bloomsbury Way on its mighty portico, tower and steeple, without fearing, as before, for their future.’

Wednesday 4th October, 10-11.30am

Press Conference

Journalists, photographers, and representatives from other heritage bodies attended the conference which was filmed for BBC News, ITV’s London Tonight and Channel 4 News.

1 Mr Colin Kerr discusses the restoration of St George’s
2 The keynote speakers at the Press Conference (from left): Mr Tim Crawley (sculptor of the ‘Lions and Unicorns’), Mr Colin Kerr (Main Project Architect), Mr Colin Amery (WMF in Britain Director), Ms Bonnie Burnham (WMF President), Mr Colin Amery (WMF in Britain Director) and Mr Peter Zampetti (Architect, North and South Gallery)
3 Mr Bruce Broughton is interviewed by ITN’s
4 Mr Ricardo Salinas and Mr Yvon Couleau

Friday 6th October, 7.45pm

Concert of Celebration

Inside St George’s, Bloomsbury with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment performing music by Purcell, Vivaldi, Locke, and Geminiani. The acoustics at St George’s were deemed perfect for this contemporary music to Hawksmoor’s time.

1-3 The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
4 Mr Frederick and Mrs Barbara Terry
5 Mrs Elbrun Kimmelman
6 Mr Pedro Girao
7 Harpsicord played by Steven Devine

Concert sponsored by Withers LLP and Brewin Dolphin Securities

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Then, in the spring of 1747, an effeminate young man with a taste for luxury, lace collars and gossip bought a former coachman's house on forty acres of land in Twickenham on the River Thames – and set about building himself a villa which gravely complicated the prevailing sense of what a beautiful house might look like…

Alain de Botton 'The Architecture of Happiness'

A lavish dinner was followed by John Julius singing 'Diamonds are a girl’s best friend', which wowed the distinguished crowd. Bouquets of autumnal flowers graced the apartments which features original portraits of Charles II and his long term mistress and the first actress to gain prominence, Nell Gwyn.
Opening in 2007

Exhibition
The first photographs of Angkor were taken in 1994. The exhibition tells the story of the church, its context and its significance to Cambodian people. It will open to the public in Spring 2007.

Saturday 7th October
Tour of Stowe

Stowe House has rightly been described as the blueprint for fashionable country houses in the 18th century. Its East Colonnade and South Front are inspired by the Pantheon in Rome. The Marble Saloon, the elliptical hall inspired by the Pantheon in Rome, was the work of an Italian architect Giovanni Battista Bartoli and was designed and built between 1775 and 1778. The domed space is in fact elliptical and is surmounted by a frieze which shows a procession of triumphant soldiers in high relief returning home with the spoils.’
Colin Amery, WMB in Britain Director

Programme of events 2007

Lecture

Stalin: the Gangster Years
Wednesday 17th October
Simon Sebag Montefiore, best-selling historian, discusses his new book on Stalin as a young man and what drove him to become the dominating tyrant that looms over the 20th Century. Stalin’s hit his past and many questions surrounding his early years. Was he illegitimate? Did he owe everything to his mother? Even as a child he was dangerous and charismatic. Simon Sebag Montefiore will answer these questions.
His previous book Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar was the winner of the British Book Awards Book of the Year for history 2004.

7pm
Royal Geographical Society
Kensington Gore, SW7
£15/£10 WMF members & students

Christmas

Give a gift membership to friends and family
A gift membership package to WMF is the present that will impress your surroundings and make a difference to the world! A membership includes:

• a copy of A Decade of Monumental Achievements, the history of WMF in Britain, plus a free ticket to the Royal Geographical Society’s Film Preview on February 7th at the KGS.
For more information or to purchase a gift membership, please contact Membership Officer Emily Luhmann on 020 7730 5344 or by email: emily@wmf.org.uk

Events

Film Preview

Churning the Sea of Time: A journey up the Mekong to Angkor
Wednesday 7th February
We travel by boat up the Mekong Delta through Vietnam into Cambodia, then up the Tonkie Sap River. The film provides a fascinating counterpart between the struggles of modern Cambodia and the silent majesty of its iconic heritage. In Angkor, World Monuments Fund’s John Stubbs and John Sarday describe their 15-year restoration of a city called ‘the eighth wonder of the world’. Directed by Les Guthman
Introduction by Les Guthman, who’s other expedition, adventure and environmental documentaries include Farther than the Eye Can See, Missanon and Into the Tsangpo Gorge.

7pm
Royal Geographical Society
Kensington Gore, SW7
£15/£10 WMF members & students

Travel

South India
15-24th February
This is truly a trip of a lifetime! Organised with the leading tour specialist, The Ultimate Travel Company, friends and members of the WMF have a rare chance to visit notable sites in the relatively unknown parts of southern India. Visit Hyderabad and tour the Residency built by James Achilles Kirkpatrick, the British Resident with the author William Dalrymple, as well as explore Bidar, Gulbarga and Bijapur with the eminent historian Dr Helen Pithon, an expert on the religious and royal architecture of the early Bahmania. Due to the popularity of India at this time of year, it is important to book this trip as soon as possible to secure hotels and flights.
For India trip information and itineraries please contact David Pettitt at The Ultimate Travel Company on +44 (0) 20 7386 4646 or email: david@theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk

For further information and booking please contact:
WMF in Britain
2 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0DH
Telephone: 020 7730 5344
(credit cards accepted)
Fax: 020 7730 5355