Strawberry Hill completes second stage of



Wallpaper and fireplace in Mr Walpole's bedchamber Killian O'Sullivan

The completion of the second stage of the award-winning restoration of Horace Walpole's Gothic villa, Strawberry Hill, will be unveiled to the public on 1 March 2015, with five of Horace Walpole's private rooms on display for the first time since the 18th century.

Beginning in 2013, the second phase of the far-reaching restoration has been made possible with a £821,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) together with partnership funding from other trusts and foundations.

Strawberry Hill in Twickenham, London, was designed and created by the writer, collector and historian Horace Walpole, the youngest son of Britain's first Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole. Horace Walpole transformed a modest house in fashionable Twickenham into his own 'little gothic castle' creating a tourist attraction that was as popular in its own time as it is today.

The house is Britain's finest example of Georgian Gothic Revival architecture. But in the late 1900s the house fell into significant disrepair and was classified by the World Monuments Fund as one of the world's 100 most endangered sites and included in English Heritage's, 'at Risk' register from 1991. The first stage of restoration saw an £8.9million programme was planned. Funding from HLF, with partnership funding from English Heritage, The Architectural Heritage Fund, The World Monuments Fund, Britain and many other trusts and foundations, led to the re-

opening of the building in 2010 with 20 rooms fully restored including the famous State Apartment.

This second stage restoration, totalling £1.2m, authentically reinstates the architectural detail and decoration, revealing the bold patterns and colours of fashionable London from 1700 to the 1750s. An array of traditional crafts have been brought together, with paints made from raw materials using natural pigments, to handmade paper and wood block printed flock wallpapers. Original fragments found in the rooms have been redrawn, new wood blocks carved, and paper printed and flocked by the Adelphi Paper Hangings in America.

Michael Snodin, Chairman of the Strawberry Hill Trust, which has been responsible for the overall restoration says: “The opening of the new rooms marks a significant and exciting phase in the restoration of Strawberry Hill. Horace Walpole created a Gothic villa which was pioneering at a time when classicism and Palladianism were the fashionable trends for country villas.

“The influential villa triggered the Gothic revival, leaving art and architecture transformed forever. To have Horace Walpole’s private rooms open to the public for the first time in a hundred years is a major step forward and enables people to see the domestic accommodation of the house and the rooms in which Walpole lived.”

The newly restored rooms include Walpole’s private apartment featuring his Bedchamber, the Plaid Bedchamber and Dressing Room. Directly below are the Breakfast Room and Green Closet, where he lived and wrote so many of his famous letters. A further room on the first floor, the Red Bedchamber served as the best guest bedchamber.

As part of an educational and outreach programme and the project to bring items of furniture back into the villa, Strawberry Hill is creating a replica of one of Walpole’s 18th century beds, a most prized possession. Based on George II’s campaign bed, its frame has been constructed by students from the conservation course at London Metropolitan University and its cover and Indian chintz hangings are being hand sewn by the Strawberry Hill Sewing Bee – a group of skilled volunteers who originally came together to make costumes for school children and other visitors to the house.

A book detailing the materials and techniques used during the restoration is being created by the Sewing Bee and will be completed during 2015.

Many pieces of furniture, patterns and colours in the house came to 18th century England through the East India trade. An associated community project, Walpole and the Wider World, has explored links between Europe, Asia and the Americans, through practical workshops by a printmaker. A display of the participants’ prints, together with a series of short films showing craftsmen at work will be on view to visitors.

Michael Snodin commented, “Strawberry Hill is a jewel of a house and the second stage of restoration is a triumphant episode in the history of the house, which has been made possible with the fantastic support of HLF. Now visitors from both the UK and wider world will have another insight into the home of Horace Walpole, one of the most influential collectors and historians in the 1700s, whose impact on buildings and their interiors can still be seen today.”

Blondel Cluff, Chair of the London Committee HLF, commented: “Strawberry Hill was the celebrity home of its time, with visitors queuing to buy tickets just to glimpse the interior and Horace Walpole’s marvellous collection of antiquities. Whilst building this extraordinary home, Walpole not only taught himself to build, but became recognised as a first class architect, devising a style that was the talk of the town. Walpole’s ‘little Castle’, as he himself described it, is now open to the public, including for the first time his private rooms, bringing a sense of excited expectation back to Strawberry Hill once more.”

Further information

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For more information about Strawberry Hill, visit the Strawberry Hill website.



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