



Friends of STRAWBERRY HILL

# SERENDIPITY

SPRING 2005

NEWSLETTER 16

## WATCH OUT STUDENTS ABOUT



Staff and students at the London Metropolitan University, with the support of the World Monuments Fund, have been engaged in a number of projects at Strawberry Hill. While Bsc Conservation students have been documenting and researching various aspects of the house's interior the Higher National Diploma in Furniture Restoration students have commenced a project to recreate the Great Parlour Gothic chairs.

One of the original chairs is on display at the V&A and students, with the kind support of the Department of Furniture, Textiles and Interiors, have been along to take photographs, measurements and drawings for the making process.

Initially, a prototype chair will be made from American Walnut and from this the eight chairs will be manufactured. However, due to the complexity of the decoration, gothic tracery and carvings the chairs will have to be finished off by hand, which will be a very challenging task for the students!

It is envisaged that the proto chair will be ready by May, discussion is still on going for the reproduction costs of the chairs. Should this project run smoothly then in future years students will make other objects in the house. Next year it is hoped that the two William Hallett sofas in the Great Parlour will be produced.

Dr John Cross, Historical Techniques and Technology  
London Metropolitan University

## TRUST COMMISSIONS AWARD WINNING TEAM

An award winning professional team led by architect Peter Inskip has been commissioned by Strawberry Hill Trust to guide the restoration project through to fruition. Peter Inskip will be familiar to many as he worked on the first phases of the project and is the author of the Feasibility Study for the house. Peter's architectural practice is very experienced in conservation and has worked at The Vyne and Stowe and currently on the restoration of Moggerhanger House which has received several conservation awards.

The team that he leads consists of The Landscape Agency who is currently restoring the historic landscape at



Rupert Symmons, Project Manager

Fulham Place and Boughton House. Mann Williams who have worked with Peter Inskip on many projects and last year won an award for the restoration of Pilton barn have been appointed as structural engineers. They are joined by historic buildings services consultants Martin Thomas Associates who also worked on The Vyne. The final member of the team

Continued inside



### PRESENTING THE STRAWBERRY HILL ROSE

The Strawberry Hill Rose (Ausrimini) is being developed especially for us by David Austen Roses. It is a very beautiful rose whose flowers, as they age, vary widely in both colour and form. The tight buds are a magenta pink that open to a deep pink with a touch of

salmon then gradually fading to pure soft pink when the flowers are fully open. As the colour changes so the form develops from a rounded bud to a very shallow cupped, open rosette, the stamens eventually prominent in the centre. It will form a delightfully rounded shrub that will flower particularly freely and stay extremely healthy. Lovely,

strong, myrrh fragrance with a hint of lemon. 4ft x 4ft.

Save a space in your garden for our special rose. Ordering details will follow and a sizeable sum of money from each order will be donated to the house restoration.

## NOTES FROM THE CHAIR...

2005 was another great year for Strawberry Hill. In September, after a huge amount of work by the Friends, the Strawberry Hill Trust and the World Monuments Fund, the Strawberry Hill project was granted £4.9 million by the Heritage Lottery Fund towards a total project cost of £8.8m. We were thus able to launch into the development stage of the project, which is timed to finish in September this year. Peter Inskip, our architect, is working on the conservation management plan and the Trust has appointed Rupert Symmons to manage the project. If all goes to plan, the Trust will be able to take over the lease of the Walpole House early in 2007. In all this the Friends have played and will continue to play a very big part, not only in contribution of time and expertise, but also in the key area fundraising. 2006 will be an even more important year for fundraising: in addition to the grant from the HLF, another £1 million has been pledged through the World Monuments Fund. The WMF, working with the Strawberry Hill Trust is now seeking £3 million from additional sources. I would like to take the opportunity here to thank the many Friends who have made donations towards our great enterprise. They have been vital in directly supporting the work of the Trust. 2005 also saw huge steps being made in the better understanding of Walpole's house, its forerunners and its subsequent history, as Peter Inskip showed at the AGM. Yet more will be revealed this year as the conservation management plan develops, aided by volunteers from the Friends, working on the Walpole correspondence and other sources for inclusion in the 'dossier' which will record the physical and documentary evidence for each room of the house. If you would like to help in this way or in one of the other practical tasks, please get in touch.

Michael Snodin, Chair

### COMMITTEE OF TASTE

Mr Ciaran Brady

Mrs Lynn Fitzwater

Mr James Fitzwater

Mrs Chloe Teacher

The Rugby Football Union

Twickenham Festival

Strawberry Hill Residents' Association

### VIRTUOSI

Mrs Joan Samuel

John & Marie Rosselli

### DILETTANTI

Sir Michael Blake Bt & Lady Blake

Lord Cholmondeley

Mr Jonathan Gray

Dr & Mrs Meagher

Valerie & Neville Pinnington

Mrs Mary Roe

Lord Rothschild

Lady Scott

Sir James Scott Bt

Mrs Jane Wainwright

THANKS THANKS THANKS THANKS THANKS  
The Committee would like to thank the Strawberry Hill branch of **Threshers** for their help with our Wine Tasting Evening, **Langton's Bookshop** in Church Street, Twickenham for promoting the conference and the **RFU** for its generous support in helping to spread the word about Strawberry Hill.  
THANKS THANKS THANKS THANKS THANKS

Award Winning Team continued from front page

is Dearle and Henderson our quantity surveyors. They worked with Peter on the Feasibility Study and are advisers to English Heritage.

The professional team's services were the subject of a European tender process which drew interest from 50 teams; 20 of whom completed the first phase of the tender process from which several teams were drawn for interview. The Trust is confident that it has a skilled and experienced team for this complex project and look forward to working with them.

## FROM OTRANTO TO PSYCHO AND BEYOND

The subject of our 2005 Conference was Gothic Literature. The very term "Gothic Literature", owes its existence to Walpole's subtitle to *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*. This was the first time the word was used to describe the menacing style, ambience and content of what was to become the whole new genre of *Gothic Horror*. This was just one of the myriad of insights provided by the international group of academics and professionals assembled at Eton College on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005.

Horace Walpole's beloved *Alma Mater* opened her welcoming arms to his 21<sup>st</sup> C disciples. This was where his life-long love of gothic architecture was born and delegates were able to wallow in the atmosphere of the ancient cloisters and corridors. Moreover, Michael Meredith and Nick Baker of College Library had mounted a truly sumptuous exhibition from its collection and delegates were able, after a splendid lunch, to marvel at items such as the original manuscript version of Gray's *Elegy*, (*Stanzas Wrote in a Country Church-Yard*), an early printed version of the *Description of the Villa* and much, much more.

Visual Gothic was also considered;

In addition to selecting a new professional team the Trust has appointed Rupert Symmons as our project manager. Rupert has the ideal experience to guide the project. He has worked on many lottery funded historic building schemes. Amongst his most recent projects are the restoration and alterations of the Royal Naval College and Dreadnought Seaman's Hospital at Greenwich which now houses Greenwich University. Rupert is a quantity surveyor by training and he has worked in the construction industry for over 16 years in various project management roles.

Rupert will also be involved with coordinating the Trust and the Friends research for the Conservation Management Plan that Peter Inskip and the team are working on at present. The Friends are researching Walpole's letters for any references to the house and recording these in the plans for each room. Oral histories will also be collected by the Friends so many of you will hopefully be working with Rupert in the coming months. Terry Smith, Hon. Treas.

and what happened when the style emigrated to the United States: why *did* a new young nation, stepping out from the shadow of Europe, so readily embrace a style so redolent of that *old Europe*? These questions and many more were posed and answered.

Starting the afternoon session, House Guide, Kirsten McLaughlin regaled us with *A Gothic Interlude*~ a brilliant verse version of *The Castle of Otranto*!

The day was appropriately windy and cold, but the Egerton Lecture Theatre was warm and as welcoming as the rest of the College. The Friends are indebted to Eton College for their generosity and kindness. Likewise, this event would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of Yale University and especially The Lewis Walpole Library and Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

The last illustration of the day was the image from *Psycho* of "Mrs Bates", which Hitchcock clearly lifted straight from "Otranto": "And then the figure, turning slowly round, discovered to Frederic the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl". Many thanks to Anna Chalcraft & Raymond Davies for their splendid organisation of the Conference.

## STRAWBERRYHILL NEEDS YOU

Unlike so many conservation projects for an historic house, Strawberry Hill's legacy is near overwhelming with a vast quantity of Walpole's letters, accounts and descriptions providing a wealth of information. Material from an array of sources is being compiled in electronic form to build a Strawberry Hill database which will aid precise dating and assist with interpretation. The Strawberry Hill Trust needs you - the project is dependent on producing full transcriptions of the Walpole letters which relate to the building of his gothic dream and placing certain elements within a context. The Trust will also be running a number of activities, including an oral history project, over the next year and volunteers are much needed. Your work as a volunteer would help meet Heritage Lottery Fund criteria by demonstrating an active role in the project by the volunteer community. Please Contact Judith Viscardi on 020 8894 6628 if you'd like to get involved.