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## STRAWBERRY HILL RE-OPENS AFTER £9 MILLION RESTORATION

### VISITORS WILL MARVEL AT THE RESTORED 18<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY GOTHIC CASTLE NEAR THE BANKS OF THE RIVER THAMES, TWICKENHAM, UK.

*For Immediate Release—Thursday, 23 September, 2010:* The Strawberry Hill Trust today announced that the £9 million, two-year-long restoration of Horace Walpole's magnificent Gothic castle Strawberry Hill is complete and the site will re-open to the public on Saturday, October 2, 2010.

Strawberry Hill, in Twickenham near the banks of the River Thames in London, is Britain's finest example of Georgian Gothic Revival architecture and is set to become a major tourist and heritage attraction for London and the UK. It was designed and created as a Gothic fantasy between 1747 and 1792 by Horace Walpole, historian, writer, collector, and son of Britain's first Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole.

Having fallen into a state of extreme disrepair, the house had been on English Heritage's At Risk Register since 1991. Furthermore, it was listed by New York based World Monuments Fund as one of the world's 100 most endangered heritage sites in 2004, a move which proved a catalyst in starting a campaign for its repair. The restoration program has been made possible by a £4.9m grant from the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund and over £1.5m from World Monuments Fund—including a \$1.1m donation from the Robert W. Wilson Challenge Fund to Conserve Our Heritage—as well as numerous charitable trusts, local societies, and individual patrons.

**Michael Snodin, Chairman of the Strawberry Hill Trust**, which has orchestrated the restoration, stated: "With Strawberry Hill Horace Walpole set a fashion for Gothic architecture which led to buildings such as the Houses of Parliament and this trend then spread throughout the world. Strawberry Hill is an important part of Britain's architectural history because it is a physical manifestation of Horace Walpole's cultural legacy, which was

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to pioneer an imaginative self-expression in building, collecting, and decorating which still inspires us today.”

**Dr. Jonathan Foyle, Chief Executive of World Monuments Fund Britain** added: “A decade ago, Strawberry Hill was clearly a building in need of support. World Monuments Fund strongly advocated for this project and was pleased to offer a considerable financial contribution to the restoration of the house. These investments have now been fully realized by skilful management and talented craftspeople. This is a successful project we are proud to have sponsored.”

Horace Walpole created Strawberry Hill as his summer villa in partnership with friends and architects including the celebrated Robert Adam. It represented a significant contrast to the architectural fashion of the time, which was based on classical symmetry. Walpole favoured instead irregularity and asymmetry in order to convey mystery, surprise, and a sense of the theatrical. Strawberry Hill was a popular tourist attraction in its time and visitors to the newly restored castle will enjoy a dramatic Gothic experience just as in Walpole’s day.

There are 25 showrooms on the ground and first floors, 20 of which have been fully restored to take the house back to the 1790s when Walpole had completed his creation. Of particular note is the conservation of the huge collection of painted Renaissance glass for which Strawberry Hill is famed.

As they approach Strawberry Hill, visitors will be met by the remarkable Gothic exterior, restored to its original “wedding cake” appearance, lime-washed in white. The castellated parapets and three-meter-high pinnacles create a dramatic and spiky silhouette. Inside, Walpole’s design concept created an atmosphere of “gloomth” in the first rooms, gradually revealing a greater use of colour as one proceeded. Therefore, on entering at the ground floor, today’s visitors will witness Walpole’s same atmospheric use of stony grey, castle-like hues as they ascend the staircase lit by a single hanging lantern.

Strawberry Hill was the focus of Horace Walpole’s life for half a century. It was here that he created his garden, amassed his huge collection of art and antiquities, and was the place of his printing press. Partly through his writings and activities developed modern concepts of critical historical thought, social history, and an approach to art history from the perspective of the artist rather than that of the patron.

At Strawberry Hill, Horace Walpole created the first neo-Gothic building in Europe by carefully knitting together quotations of real medieval and renaissance Venetian buildings for the exterior, and for the interior deploying an intentionally irregular plan, a contrived

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circulation, and carefully managed natural light. Walpole's villa is a building which subsequently influenced a style found throughout Britain, Europe, and America in the later 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Led by architects Peter Inskip and Stephen Gee, these international connections have been maintained during the restoration project. Many of the donations came from America, with students from the University of Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Program participating in the planning stages while students at the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale University created an online digital archive of Walpole's collection. Within the UK students from London Metropolitan University and trainees from the Prince's Foundation have been involved helping to research the site and recreating historic furniture as part of their teaching programs. At Strawberry Hill new education suites and a seminar room have also been created to ensure that education of people of all ages continues to feature prominently in the future use of the house.

Horace Walpole's extensive collection of paintings, furniture, sculpture, arms, and other artifacts was sold at auction in 1842 after his death and the Trust is actively seeking to locate the treasures with a view to recording, borrowing or even buying them in order to return them to their former home.

### **World Monuments Fund**

World Monuments Fund (WMF) is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For 45, working in more than 90 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF inspires an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide, including WMF Britain, based in London and headed by Jonathan Foyle. [www.wmf.org](http://www.wmf.org)

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