

## 6. VULNERABILITIES. THE PROBLEM: WHY THE BUILDING IS AT RISK

The heritage problem at Strawberry Hill is not primarily one of physical condition, but a pressing need to resolve the future of one of the most significant sites in the British Isles. In 1993 the Vincentian fathers, who ran St Mary's College and lived in Walpole's house, vacated the building. Walpole's villa had served very well as the residence of the fathers, but it is now redundant to the needs of St Mary's College. The accommodation does not provide appropriate space for a modern educational institution. In its present state, a number of issues represent a corporate liability in terms of health and safety, disabled access, &c. The College has restricted the use of the building, both in terms of its own use and the opening of the building to the public. In effect, the building is in the first state of being moth-balled. The College have not been able to find an alternative use as the spaces are either too small or too fragile for academic use; the possible sale of the house has been resisted as it would destroy the entity of the site and remove the cultural background that has been an essential part of St Mary's since they saved the site in 1923 from housing development.

Over the past decade, the building has come to be recognised as redundant and seriously at risk because of the lack of any clear future use. Attempts to rescue it by English Heritage failed in 1999 as they did not prove to be financially viable because of the amount of replacement accommodation required by St Mary's College at that time. Strawberry Hill was subsequently placed on the *Buildings at Risk Register* maintained by English Heritage and was included in the World Monuments Fund *Watch List* of the World's 100 Most Endangered Sites for 2004. The College is very conscious of the significance of the cultural asset that is in its care and has now offered the gift of a long-term lease of the building to Strawberry Hill Trust if it can secure Walpole's villa as a heritage site. The offer by the Trustees of St Mary's University College is related to a deadline of the autumn of 2005 by which time the Trust has to have come forward with a set of viable, funded proposals that will secure the long term future of Strawberry Hill.

Although the College has maintained the building, lack of use is now reflected in its condition: the painted and plain glazing is deteriorating rapidly, often because of rampant vegetation; the roofs are not being regularly cleared of debris; lack of fire detection equipment, physical security measures and alarms present real threats to the many surviving elements of Walpole's interiors. In the past five years, significant elements of Walpole's decorative schemes have been irreparably damaged and regrettably some elements, most significantly one of the staircase antelopes, have been lost.

Walpole's villa is open to the public between Easter and October, through guided tours, which have been limited by St Mary's College following a risk assessment. Local initiative has led to the setting up of a Friends group to raise funds for conservation, and the Strawberry Hill Trust has been established. The Trust's first task has been to commission this feasibility study to look at future options, with a view to finding a financially viable solution that will preserve, restore the house and continue to make it publicly accessible.

#### *Risk Assessment*

A risk assessment has been commissioned by St Mary's University College in relation to the corporate liabilities posed by Walpole's villa. This covered structural condition, the state of the services, health & safety issues, access for people with disabilities, &c. The findings are of considerable concern and have to be addressed. The report was prepared by Hamson Partnership in 2003 on the basis that the College would be responsible for Walpole's villa for at least another ten years and would need to tackle the issues at a cost of about £500,000. Carrying out such works in isolation was seen by the Trust as detrimental to the heritage asset and, given that the transfer of the property to Strawberry Hill Trust is now likely to take place within three years, it has been agreed that many of the risks can be handled in the short term through a management regime and immediate implementation of only urgent items. The majority of items would then be treated as part of the conservative refurbishment of the house that will be necessary when Strawberry Hill Trust takes over the building. This includes structural repairs, replacement of services and lead pipework, and the finding of solutions to sensitive conservation issues such the health & safety problem posed by Walpole's very low balustrade on the staircase, that are also acceptable in terms of conservation. A reconciliation document on the handling of the identified risks on these lines has, therefore, been agreed in principle by the College and the Trust.

#### *Physical Vulnerability*

The greatest area of concern has to be the fragility of many of the interiors. Much is constructed with insubstantial materials such as *papier mâché* and textile hangings and need the most careful management if they are to survive, even in rooms without direct sunlight such as Lady Waldegrave's Boudoir. The deterioration of such elements as Sir Albert Richardson's rehanging of the Long Gallery's silk, which is threadbare on the south facing wall only 50 years after being hung, means that the villa is becoming progressively shabby and even that could be a catalyst to a wrong decision. In parallel with this, the small scale of many of the spaces means that they are particularly susceptible to visitor erosion and are unsuitable for intensive use by numbers of people whether they belong to the institution or are historic house visitors.

Walpole's villa and the Waldegrave Wing have also been used extensively for corporate entertaining and filming. Although this focuses primarily on the much more robust rooms in the wing, it has caused damage to the villa, which is used to gain access to them. However splendid it is, the route to these destination rooms is long and tortuous: the hall, staircase, Star Chamber, Trunk-ceiled Passage, Long Gallery, and Round Room. As the route is unclear, visitors become lost and, as it is long, the route is also difficult to supervise. Accidental damage and theft of souvenirs have both contributed to loss of historic fabric.

#### *Risk of loss of access*

The tradition of opening the house was established under Walpole himself and at times he had to retreat to the Cottage because numbers proved to be too much for him. As part of their conscientious care of the historic asset in its charge St Mary's has made the house available to the public for many years. In recent years, it has been regularly opened between

Easter and autumn, through guided tours organised by the College. However, this has now been limited by the Risk Assessment because of the lack of disabled access, the limited means of escape and other issues. The College has restricted its own use of the building because of the same issues. In effect, Walpole's villa is in the first state of being mothballed.

## 7. CONDITION AND PRINCIPAL REPAIRS REQUIRED

An inspection of the house was carried out by Duncan Wilson of Peter Inskip + Peter Jenkins Architects and Jeff Stott of Mann Williams, Structural Engineers. The recommended works were costed by Dearle & Henderson, quantity surveyors.

### *Walpole's villa*

The exterior of the building is in fair condition and generally weather-tight. However, as much of the house is constructed of brick infilled timber framing covered by render, any water penetration where renders are failing places structural timbers at risk and has to be taken very seriously. Outbreaks of rot in such circumstances resulted in extensive reconstruction of the Holbein Chamber in the post war period.

Strawberry Hill is as much noted for its influential interiors as for the external fabric. Despite 70 years of institutional ownership and use, these interiors have remained remarkably intact. Parts of the house, such as the Great North Bedchamber, have had no major work carried out since the nineteenth century. This represents both a benefit and a major threat. As a consequence of its irregular maintenance regime many layers of archaeological material that document successive 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century decorative schemes survive within the structure. However elements of the structure such as the projecting bays of the Great North Bedchamber with its glass designed by Walpole and painted by William Peckitt represent an element of the building growing close to structural failure. The details of the eighteenth century surviving interiors are particularly at risk through the present use of the house and are rapidly deteriorating.

Since the departure of the Vincentian fathers, parts of the house have been used as temporary and permanent office accommodation. Although these areas are no longer in use, many secondary rooms, particularly within the garrets, have accumulated disused non-historic furniture, and abandoned files. This poses a considerable fire risk. Other rooms are densely packed with flammable materials which have no association with the house. The structure has no fire compartmentation at this moment. The present fire detection system is neither effective nor an efficient means of rapidly detecting and alerting the staff of the threat. If a fire were to start in one of the secondary room, because of the level of debris and the lack of fire separation and the present lack of fire detection the scale of loss would be devastating and would threaten the attached college accommodation. The present risk could be greatly reduced by the removal of unrelated material from the secondary rooms and this should be addressed as a matter of urgency, though this will need to be undertaken with caution as there may be historically important material mixed within the debris.

The structure has been inspected by Jeff Stott of Mann Williams, Structural Engineers. His report is that the basic structure is secure and that the building is stable. However, there were a number of issues that were critical to the structures and require monitoring:

- a. Foundations and walls  
The timber framed elements of the structure that provide the enclosures to the Long Gallery, the Holbein Chamber and the Great North Bedroom are particularly susceptible to risk from water ingress that is trapped by failing render. The timber frame supports critical historic fabric and should be protected at all times.
- b. Floor and ceiling structures  
The slope of the floors at first and second floor levels, falling generally to the north and east.
- c. Roof structures  
The stability of the copings, especially to the parapet to the north over the Library, needs to be secured.

The condition of the building has been assessed by Duncan Wilson of Peter Inskip + Peter Jenkins Architects. He has found that the deterioration is accelerating. This arises from the way that Horace Walpole constructed the villa with large areas of plaster and studwork where masonry might have been expected externally and with *papier mâché* internally. The delicacy of the internal ornament and finishes are at risk from impact and this is exacerbated by the small scale of the rooms.

The material defects in structure and finishes:

- a. Walls  
The ground surface around the building has been raised over the years by gardening activities leaving the base of the walls prone to damp. Manuring the ground has deposited salts against the external walls.

The rendering of the walls has been patched with a harsh cement render which entraps water within the fabric.

Much damage was caused by dry rot in the north ranges of the house during the middle of the twentieth century where timber studwork forming the external walls was affected when by water ingress arising from defective roofing. Recent thermographic survey of the walls of the Long Gallery has indicated similar construction and further investigations are required to establish if this is at risk.

The painted timber finials that formed the pinnacles that terminated each of Walpole's towers had decayed and were taken down by the College by 1927. Over the following seventy years, the removal of other details has followed leaving the elevations water-tight, but impoverished.

Inside the building significant areas of applied decoration (carved, composition and *papier mâché*) that form the detailed decorative elements of most rooms have become loose and detached. This includes sections of the Library

bookcases (made for the room and designed by the amateur gentleman-architect John Chute), as well as elements of the chimneypieces, door cases and window surrounds in several rooms. The crimson silk damask walling of the Gallery is festooned in shreds where degraded by sunlight. Surviving eighteenth & nineteenth century wallpapers are constantly over exposed to natural light and papers have been crudely mutilated to insert or inspect electrical cabling. All of these activities have incurred significant areas of loss over the past 13 years.

b. Floor and ceilings

Parquet laid in the Long Gallery for Lady Waldegrave is fading and deteriorating, the damage exacerbated by recent use and lack of management. The panels of engraved brass, copper and steel floor panels have been damaged through recent use by inexperienced caterers who place tables with sharp metal feet directly on these surfaces. Other areas of plain flooring have been damaged by cutting service access routes.

Staircase

The general condition of the staircase is fair, however, the balustrade is low and poses a hazard for visitors that needs to be managed. The painted glass panels for the over-head ceilings lights are detached from their supports and are dangerously bowed.

b. Doors and windows

The highly important, fifteenth to eighteenth century painted glass, largely from the Low Countries, collected by Walpole for his new villa, is extremely fragile. Loose panes have fallen and many of the lead comes are in a precarious state. Vegetation has been allowed to cover, and in part attach itself to, areas of the original 18<sup>th</sup> century settings of heraldic glass and these are at risk of collapse. Elsewhere, glass reset in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries requires cleaning and conservation.

d. Roofs

Lack of regular maintenance has allowed the accumulation of vegetable matter and debris in the gutters of the building. The condition of the gutters has been exacerbated by the stringing of telephone, data-link and electrical cables (now all redundant) through the troughs. At the time of inspection, the parapet gutters were backing-up and overflowing during heavy rainfall. Additionally, the rainwater surface drains require clearing, in most areas more than two inches of composted leaf matter prevents surface rainwater from draining away from the building fabric.

e. Services

The services installations are all out of date and require complete renewal to current standards

f. Health & Safety

Apart from the danger related to loose elements of the building fabric, risks have been identified arising from areas of the house where light levels were intended by Walpole to be very low.

## 8. OPTIONS

### *The Setting*

The key to the future use of Strawberry Hill House is the historical arrangement of the landscape. The historic site extended south from Walpole's villa to the existing trees that now separate the sports field from the garden on a line extending out from the Richardson chapel. Originally, however, the garden was further structured by another band or of trees in the form of an open grove running eastwards from the New Offices across the site. The band was gradually eroded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as trees died and were not replaced. If the grove was to be restored it would imply the division that would be necessary to give a degree of privacy if two different users were to occupy Strawberry Hill whilst still maintaining the entity of the site.

The forecourt to the north of the house relates the House; and St. Mary's University College has its own forecourt further south in Waldegrave Road. However, because of sight lines, exit from the isolated College car park to the north of the Waldegrave Wing needs to be across the area. As the College car parks are fully used during term and as additional on-street parking would be unacceptable because of its impact on local residents, a small dedicated car park is necessary for visitors to the villa and it could be established within shrubberies at the north east corner of the site, to the east of the forecourt, without undue disturbance of historic landscape.

### *The Listed Building*

The division of the building itself to separate Walpole's villa from the Waldegrave Wing is more problematical and a permanent physical separation of the two principal parts of the listed building is likely to be detrimental to the special interest of the site. Having said that, such a division in terms of use was facilitated by closing the doors between the two buildings during the college's first seventy years and a case for the different use of the two buildings can be made on those lines. Any physical separation, however, would have to be reversible and not interfere with the historic fabric.

The following options for the reuse of Walpole's villa have been considered:

### *College Use*

Strawberry Hill House is important to St. Mary's University College as it has been its home for more than seventy five years. It provides the image of the institution and enhances the significance of the site through historical association.



However, after more than a decade of attempts to use the villa, it is clear that the accommodation is generally unsuitable for academic use. Rooms are either too small (Beauty Room) or too fragile (Long Gallery). Accessing the building through the College and the Waldegrave Wing is difficult and one has to survive an obstacle course to reach one's destination. The two rooms that could be useful for meetings because of their size (the Refectory and the Library) are so far from the centre of gravity of the campus that they have proved to be little used. The same reasons that made the villa satisfactory as the residence of the Vincentian fathers, ensured a privacy that runs counter to active academic use.

Suggestions that it should be an outpost of an American university prove to be unrealistic for these reasons. In addition, the site is seen as unattractive by such institutions as it is distant from central London.

#### *Moth Balling*

Moth balling a Grade I building is an expensive process as the owner is still required by law to maintain the heritage asset in its care. Our inspection of the condition of the building indicates that the essential repairs that will become due over the next five years will cost in the order of £300,000. This cost is in addition to the general routine maintenance and servicing. Such an arrangement is unlikely to be attractive to the College.

#### *Private House*

Walpole's villa could form a generous, private house with seven bedrooms. Its appeal, however, would be limited to a very particular type of occupant and would best be suited to a rich, art collector who did not mind the house being attached to a series of academic buildings and having a shared garden.

The major difficulty is that Strawberry Hill House would be divided, and the entity of the Grade I building would be compromised. Furthermore, St Mary's College would lose its identity with Walpole's villa with which it has been associated with for over seventy-five years, an association much prized and providing the image of the College.

#### *Commercial Use*

The commercial use of the building either as offices or a restaurant is severely limited by the small scale interiors, problems with the means of escape in case of fire and limitations on parking in what is essentially a residential area. Although the site is presently in institutional use, it is unlikely that consent for a standalone commercial use would be forthcoming. As with private domestic use, a commercial lease would disassociate Strawberry Hill from the College and, what is more, would be likely to restrict the possibility of public access other than for those patronising the facilities provided.

#### *Heritage Site*

In the light of attendance at Marble Hill, Ham House, Chiswick House and Orleans House, it is anticipated that Walpole's villa would attract about 15,000 visitors per year if it were to be opened to the public on a more regular basis than at present. To

make this economically viable, the house would be shown via guided tours and would be open Friday to Sunday afternoons with tours by appointment for parties Tuesday to Thursday. It would be closed on Mondays for cleaning.

In addition to the house, the historic garden would also be restored. Because access to the garden is not dependent upon going through the house, the garden could be open for extended hours.

Walpole's villa would be shown as a building of several periods, but with Walpole's period taking precedence. The house would be shown in the order described by Horace Walpole in his Description of Strawberry Hill (1784) and the Long Gallery and Round Room would be the climax of the interior as intended by him. Visitors would not proceed onto the Waldegrave Wing which would remain in College use. Many original objects and artefacts are held in museums and private collections in this country and America and a secure area with a controlled environment would be created in the lower storey to facilitate loans that would form a changing exhibition at Strawberry Hill. This would encourage return visits.

As well as showing the building, the house would be an education resource at all levels. A centre could be established on the ground floor of Walpole's villa focussing on the old kitchen. If the house were to be run in parallel with St. Mary's University College, Lady Waldegrave's Drawing Room could provide the occasional venue for a lecture or gathering that could be integrated with the villa, yet stand outside its normal boundary.

There would be a shop, where light refreshments would also be available, supplementing the full-scale catering facilities available in Twickenham.

An administrative office and accommodation for a property manager could be located in Walpole's staff rooms on the top floor.

To assist in reducing any deficit, a self-contained holiday flat could be established in the upper storeys of the Tower. Access to this would be via a dedicated entrance from the Prior's Garden which leads directly to the back stairs. The flat would have the use of the tower roof which would be decked.

With the Strawberry Hill Trust and St Mary's College working closely together, Strawberry Hill House would remain an entity. The necessary element of division would be achieved by simply employing a series of doors between Walpole's villa and the Waldegrave Wing. These would provide separation in terms of fire and security, but still allow access between the two sections, thus allowing Lady Waldegrave's Strawberry Hill to be understood when the two buildings are opened together on occasion, College use of the Long Gallery at times of graduation, and Trust's use of the Waldegrave Drawing Room for lectures as part of its education programme.

## 9. STRAWBERRY HILL TRUST'S VISION FOR STRAWBERRY HILL

### *Strawberry Hill House*

Strawberry Hill House should be retained as an entity by an informal partnership between St Mary's University College and Strawberry Hill Trust who would take a lease of Walpole's villa and its related garden.

Strawberry Hill House has been the home of St Mary's College for eighty years and the rescue of the historic site and its association with the College should be maintained.

### *Walpole's villa*

Walpole's villa will be repaired, restored and opened to the public. In essence, the principal rooms of the villa will be a heritage site pure and simple. However, very occasional use for corporate entertainment or filming will be allowed as long as this fully respects the constraints imposed by the fragile interiors.

Full education programmes will be supported by education rooms on the ground floor and these will also be planned to interpret rooms the original service areas in which they are accommodated.

A vacation flat will be formed in the Round Tower in areas substantially transformed by Lady Waldegrave, providing an income for the property as well as another form of access. It will be independent of the Walpole interiors.

### *Waldegrave Wing and New Offices*

These will remain with the College and continue to be used for its administrative offices and academic areas. Use by the College of Lady Waldegrave's suite of reception rooms for weddings and corporate entertainment will also continue, but a new access will allow it to be independent of both Walpole's villa and the academic areas.

The occasional opening of the reception rooms in parallel with Walpole's villa on specific heritage days will allow Lady Waldegrave's extension to be viewed and experienced in the context of the original house.

### *The Site*

Lady Waldegrave's forecourt will be restored by reinstating the missing railings and gates that gave it a presence on Waldegrave Road. A new car park will be located within the north east shrubbery, concealing cars from the heritage site as well as respecting the needs of local residents.

The gardens to the south and east of the house will be restored as an historic landscape, balancing the underlying Walpole garden with the overlay of Lady Waldegrave. The management of the garden transferred to the Strawberry Hill Trust will be

seamless with that of the area remaining with the College and visitors will be discreetly managed to ensure that this is possible.

## 10. THE TRUST'S APPROACH

Strawberry Hill is vulnerable as Walpole's villa is now redundant to the needs of St Mary's University College. Whilst the villa is no longer capable of providing appropriate space for the institution, the later sections of the Grade 1 building are still in use and integral to the College. The entity value of the three parts of the house and its important setting, therefore, is at risk because of the possibility of the villa being sold off, leaving the historic property divided in separate ownerships. It is a building of outstanding importance, but its construction, design and scale render it extremely fragile and prone to damage as it was never intended for intensive use by a modern university.

Policies would aim to recover the exceptional significance of Walpole's villa whilst respecting the significance resulting from campaigns arising from subsequent owners.

### EXTERIOR

The exterior of Walpole's house was transformed dramatically with the introduction of the Waldegrave Wing that joined the villa to the New Offices. The house was also recast with the raising of the Circular Tower and the remodelling of the Walpole's elevations to give a unity with the new work. The completed house is well recorded in photographs of 1923 and these show that the garden elevations of Walpole's villa were still remarkably legible. Since that time, loss of architectural detail and ornament, repairs and minor modifications have had an accretive effect in eroding the quality of the exterior.

#### *Approach:*

*The exterior would be returned generally to its appearance in 1923. Missing crestings and finials would be reintroduced to regain the spikey feel of the house. The 1920s heightening of the central bay in the original house would be reversed as this would recover the character of the end bays as corner towers. Lost details of the fenestration would be reinstated in place of the simplified detail incorporated in War damage repairs.*

### INTERIOR

The physical fabric of Walpole's interiors appear to survive remarkably in tact. Lady Waldegrave's alterations to bring his interiors in line with her new wing were respectful and mainly restrained. The majority of her work relates to the introduction of new door furniture, or the elaboration of mouldings on doors or ceilings, or the introduction of new glazing. Physical alteration of the space was mainly limited to the introduction of new doorways or built in cupboards (eg Great North Bed-chamber, Round

Drawing Room, Walpole's Bed-chamber), the introduction of a bathroom adjacent to the Holbein Chamber, or the remodelling and extension of the entrance hall. The latter was largely unpicked by Richardson in the 1950s.

The alterations by subsequent private owners have had remarkably little impact on the historic fabric, but the bays in the Long Gallery were crudely altered following the removal of the portraits that been built into the wall linings.

The occupation by the fathers respected the principal rooms, but led to the adaptation of a number of closets for bathrooms and the like, particularly in the south-east tower, and the remodelling of the servants' hall to provide a kitchen. The extension of a second floor bedroom was realised by raising the south bay an additional storey.

The services date from the occupation of the College, but aspects have been updated over the years. However, total replacement to current standards is now required.

#### *Approach:*

*Any work required in the alteration of Walpole's villa as a heritage site takes advantage of the areas of the house which have already suffered modification by later owners. They are, therefore, accommodated within service spaces created or remodelled since Walpole's time. (eg the lift would be housed in a bathroom core built by Lady Waldegrave). Where education and visitor facilities are created, they are located in the service areas below the principal floor which have also be altered and the opportunity is taken of recovering the plan form of the house as developed by Walpole, but respecting change by Lady Waldegrave. In effect, the policy is to return the fabric of the interior to its arrangement in 1923, a parallel strategy as for the exterior. The exception to this is the arrangement of the entrance hall where Lady Waldegrave's alterations were substantially reversed by Richardson in the 1950s; it is not the intention to recreate alterations by post-Walpole owners that have been dismantled.*

*Where details of chimneypieces &c have been lost through time, they would be restored to their state in 1797, but respecting further alteration by Mrs Damer or Lady Waldegrave where this is still evident.*

*Services should be independent of the adjacent buildings and accommodated, as with any alterations, within the less sensitive fabric.*

*Improvements to upgrade items such as the balustrade on the main stair should be reversible or realised through the planning of circulation routes that distance the visitor from the hazard.*

#### DECORATION

Only very limited paint analysis has been carried out to date, but full paint analysis has been commissioned and against this policies on decoration can be confirmed. Four principal phases of decoration are known to have existed: Walpole's, (shown in John Carter's watercolours) Lady Waldegrave's (her paper survives in the cupboard within Walpole's bed-chamber), a scheme of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century (the brown painted decoration that which survives in the Tented Room), and the existing scheme instituted by the College in the 1950s and 60s (the red damask walling in the Long Gallery, the commercially produced, Victorian style wallpapers in most of the villa, and the painted decoration of the hall). The last two phases are clearly less significant than the earlier phases, and in places can be seen as intrusive on significant elements.

#### *Approach:*

*The decoration would be returned to either its state at the time of Walpole's death or to Lady Waldegrave's scheme.*

*Each space would be taken on its merits and the weight of material would influence the decision on treatment. At present, it appears clear that Walpole's bed-chamber should be a room of the later period following the alteration of its plan by Lady Waldegrave and the surviving evidence of her floral paper. The Refectory and Library rooms of the earlier period following Carter's illustrations informed by paint analysis.*

*The decision would also be informed by creating a balance between a group of rooms. Hence, the Great North Bed-chamber could be seen as more important as a room hung in the crimson Norwich damask that united the State Suite, than as a room divorced from it by the survival of the 19<sup>th</sup> century wallpaper. Similarly, the hall and staircase, an area already largely unpicked in the 1950s and 60s) would be better returned to Walpole's castle style, recovering a unity with the Library and Refectory.*

#### FURNISHINGS

The furniture and collection of paintings is an assembly principally gathered together in the 1960s by the College to furnish the house in a sympathetic way. It was collected, largely at country house sales, or commissioned by the Principal and his friend and colleague, Peter Rose. An 18<sup>th</sup>-century architect's table and other pieces associated with Walpole were given by their architect, Sir Albert Richardson. The majority of the furniture is 19<sup>th</sup>C, and includes a few distinguished pieces. However, little of it relates to the character of the house in Walpole's time and it only contributes to the effect of a rather typical 'Victorian' house seen by Pevsner when he visited. The pictures are again domestic furnishings rather than works of art and bear little relation to the property or the treasure house that it once was.

Only three pieces relate to Lady Waldegrave: the benches in the Round Drawing Room, the sideboard in the Refectory and a set of chairs now in the Holbein Chamber and dispersed around the house. The latter two both date from around 1830 and were imported items rather than being specific to Lady Waldegrave's interiors.

The lantern on the stair is a copy of the original designed for Walpole and now at Farmington and was made for the Friends of Strawberry Hill.

*Approach:*

*An inventory of the contents will be prepared to verify the items that relate to the house and should remain at Strawberry Hill, but it is envisaged that the house will be cleared of the majority of its present contents.*

*In the first instance, the interior would not be furnished. The rooms would be shown empty, but with albums in each space showing the contents that were known to have been in them at Walpole's time.*

*Where loans of authentic pieces from before the sale of 1843 can be secured these will be introduced in their original locations. Other items that lend themselves to being successfully copied, such as the black painted furniture, could be introduced such as examples of the dining chairs from the Refectory that are now at Farmington. In the locations where Walpole used standard pieces of furniture, comparable 18thC pieces would be reintroduced over time as they became available.*

*Unless loans can be agreed, it is unlikely that pictures will be hung in the rooms and that visitors would be aware of the paintings from the room albums. The exception would be where the architectural treatment required the introduction of pictures, such as in the built-in frames in the Long Gallery. In such an instance, photographic copies might be considered.*

*The principle behind the re-furnishing of the house would be one of gradual development over time. A similar approach has been successfully demonstrated at Marble Hill and Pitzhanger Manor over the last two decades.*

SETTING

The structure of the gardens to the south of the house survives very much as left by Walpole, but with subsequent embellishment by Lady Waldegrave. The area of change is to the north where, to provide a fitting entrance for Lady Waldegrave's guests, and in order to provide greater privacy, a new forecourt was created and consequent relocation of the road further to the north, destroyed Walpole's flower garden and isolated his cottage. Well established planting now screens the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century extensions and the later development of the College is on land to the south of the original property, beyond Walpole's original boundary plantation that survives. The use by the fathers of Walpole's villa as their residence from 1923 placed the north end of the site largely 'out of bounds' for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and secured the survival of both house and garden structure.

Beyond the site boundaries, the setting has changed with development of housing in the late nineteenth century and first

decade of the twentieth century and to the east in the 1930s. The river Thames is near by and many of the west London fashionable villas of the seventeenth and eighteenth century survive, several which are opened by public bodies and private owners. The eighteenth century Thames Arcadia defined by villas and pleasure grounds bordering the river still a defining characteristic of the region.

The development of the water meadows to the east has removed the site from the River Thames and of the land to the north and west has placed the house in a suburban context. However, the core of his estate remains surprisingly intact, since being rescued from housing development by the College when it bought the property in 1923.

Lady Waldegrave's resiting of the road and her creation of a new forecourt places the site to the north of the villa in her realm, whilst the structure of the garden to the south remains very much that of Walpole's time. Admittedly, the impact of his grove to the south of the house has been eroded over the years as trees died and minor alterations were made by Lady Waldegrave, but the garden within the Serpentine Walk still remains very much Walpole's.

#### *Approach*

*The management of the landscape will be a partnership between St Mary's University College and Strawberry Hill Trust. It will allow public access to the historic garden, ensuring that the relationship of Walpole's house and garden are understood as an entity at the same time as respecting the needs of the college as an academic institution that has to provide a secure environment for the students who live on campus.*

#### *Forecourt*

*Lady Waldegrave's forecourt will be re-established and provide the visitor approach to Walpole's Villa. The restoration of the painted timber gates to the carriage sweep and the reintroduction of a defined boundary along Waldegrave Road will provide a generous frontage which will give Strawberry Hill House a presence in the street that is currently hardly existent. Vehicles will not be admitted to the forecourt and the tarmac on the drive will be replaced with rolled gravel. Visitors will approach the house across the forecourt on foot. The large oak tree within the central grass area will be retained, but the modern cherries and other ornamental will be removed to allow the replanting as shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1863. The boarded fences either side will be replaced with hedges and shrubberies.*

#### *Car Park*

*The visitors' car park will be formed at the north east corner of the site and will be approached by a new entrance off Waldegrave Road so that it is independent of the historic forecourt. Parking will be for about 29 vehicles including two spaces will be reserved for the vacation dwelling. The area is outside Walpole's garden, but was planted as a boundary belt*



containing a maze by Lady Waldegrave. The latter is long lost and would have been an anathema to Walpole. Planting within the car park will integrate the site with the garden and provide a proper boundary. Visitors will approach the house from the car park by a foot gate leading into the forecourt.

Coaches will drop visitors in a designated coach bay in Waldegrave Road.

#### *Prior's Garden*

The Prior's Garden on the north side of the house will be replanted as illustrated in Walpole's Description and will be approached by visitors from the entrance court through the restored gothic screen. The screen at the west end will be recreated.

#### *The Garden*

Walpole's open grove will be replanted and extend across the garden from the New Offices and the reinstatement of the romantic planting of both the freestanding shrubbery in front of the New Offices and the Serpentine Walk would be carried out.

The garden would be divided seamlessly between the college and the heritage site by managing the way visitors use the space. Visitors will approach the garden through the house from the door in the east bay opening from Walpole's Waiting Room. The restoration of the blue painted trellis and the planted tubs along the north side of the lawn will lead them to a Serpentine Walk on the east side of the lawn planted with Walpole's trailing honeysuckles and underplanting. This will be planned to screen the 20<sup>th</sup> century housing to the east, whilst framing views back west which will allow glimpses of Strawberry Hill House. Half way down the Serpentine Walk, the visitor route will bring people back into the lawn passing through the open grove back to the east front. This keeps visitors away from the college buildings and its sports field; using the existing plantations to screen the college buildings, but facilitating visual access to the elevations of the Grade 1 building.

Use of the west side of the garden will continue as at present with only low-key activities in order to provide a tranquil setting for the academic buildings. It thus continues the pattern established when the fathers occupied the house and the garden, particularly at the north end which was very much their private domain rather than that of the students whose activities concentrated outside the historic site. At weekends, the use of the garden outside Waldegrave will continue as an adjunct to Lady Waldegrave's reception rooms when they are used for weddings and corporate entertainment organised by St Mary's University College.

#### *Waldegrave Car Park*

The college car park will remain to the north and west of the Waldegrave Wing. It would be used by the college and at weekends it would provide access and parking for events in the Waldegrave Wing. It will be redesigned so that vehicles no