



STOWE HOUSE



The State Dining Room

Conservation and restoration of the major State Rooms
and some unexpected discoveries

The background image shows a highly detailed ceiling from Stowe House. It features a central circular medallion with a gilded, fan-like design and a small dark blue gemstone. The ceiling is divided into sections by white plasterwork, some of which are filled with a gilded, scale-like pattern. Below the main text area, there is a painted panel depicting a classical figure, possibly a woman, in a landscape. The overall style is 18th-century Baroque or Rococo.

The 21st century

Step inside Stowe House and you can see the wonderful results of one of the most comprehensive restoration projects of the 21st century. When work began on the exterior over a decade ago the scaffolding became the largest free standing structure in the world and visitors flocked from far and wide to get a glimpse of the restoration in action.

The restoration of Stowe House is funded by the Stowe House Preservation Trust (SHPT), a charity that is independent of Stowe School and the National Trust. SHPT was established in 1997 to raise funds for vital repair on the historic fabric of Stowe House, and to enable this impressive ducal palace to be accessible.

Over the last 15 years, fundraising has focused on the external structure and the State Room interiors but we have also worked with various partners to bring back or copy key items from the Estate's long history. On several occasions, lost treasures have unexpectedly emerged or

we have had the opportunity to recreate them with the permission of their owners. These beautiful artefacts can now be seen as you walk through the Discovery Centre, Large Library, Music Room, and Marble Saloon, and on the South Front steps and balustrade. SHPT's fundraising efforts have helped to rebuild the majesty and nobility of the Mansion and have allowed us to share Stowe's stories with the Stowe community and the public but the story isn't finished, yet.

Stewardship of one of the country's grandest 18th-century houses remains an immense task. As we embark on the final stages of the restoration, we face one final challenge, that of finding funds to match those already raised so that we can complete the work which started nearly twenty years ago. There are, of course, the added challenges that don't affect the average country house restoration, because its function as a school continues simultaneously...

both rooms are significant f



"Over the last 15 years of the restoration programme, the fundraising has focused on the structure and room interiors, and on several occasions one of the original lost treasures has unexpectedly emerged or been recreated."

or their symbolism



Dining Room

The State Dining Room

The State Dining Room was pivotal to many grand occasions. Raising the funds necessary for this phase of restoration is now critical.

The State Dining Room, and its adjacent State Drawing Room, are the last of the major State Rooms at Stowe requiring significant restoration. Over the years, thousands of pairs of feet have trodden on the floorboards which now require replacement, while the ceiling has suffered the ravages of time. The State Dining Room remains in use today, with 1,000 staff and pupils using it during term time. It also serves much grander purposes, as it has welcomed royalty and revellers over the years.

“We hope that you share our vision for Stowe and that visitors will continue to be enraptured and inspired by the spirit of the English Enlightenment and the poetry of the place.”

Dr Anthony Wallersteiner
Headmaster, Stowe School



The ceiling was originally the work of the Venetian painter Francesco Seter, who also painted the interior of the Temple of Venus in the gardens and the eastern Grand Staircase ceiling and walls in the house.





Continued...

Originally, the State Gallery, this room was probably turned into the State Dining Room when the original dining room was turned into the Large Library in the late 1790s.

The important works of art that adorned the walls when it served as a gallery were moved into the State Drawing Room next door (now the Temple Room), and replaced by a magnificent series of five large tapestries depicting the triumphs of classical deities.

We are currently aware of the location of three out of five of these pieces. The room also had a pair of elaborately carved Siena marble chimneypieces, by James Lovell - the present timber Georgian chimneypieces were installed in the 1920s after the originals had been sold.

The original fireplace surrounds have been discovered in a Hampshire mansion and we hope to recreate them from the recorded dimensions.





The beautifully painted mosaic ceiling, depicting a remarkable and curious menagerie, is the key to restoring this magnificent room, and complementary lighting will allow visitors to imagine themselves among Stowe's many illustrious dinner guests.

The symbolic Order of the Garter overdoors and the intriguing centaur images above them are an excellent survival but need careful conservation to bring them back to life.

The established game in the 1940s was to put a butter pat on the end of a springy knife, bend the blade back as far as possible and release it. The pat then flew into the air. The objective was to try to get the pat to stick to the ceiling, an endeavour which not infrequently met with success.

(Old Stois, 1940s)

The ceiling, depicting scenes from classical mythology in trompe-l'oeil coffering was designed and part painted by Francesco Sletter

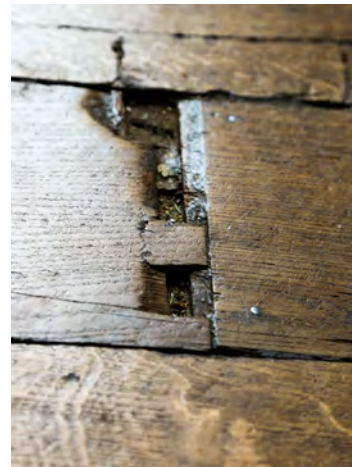


Challenges

Restoration challenges

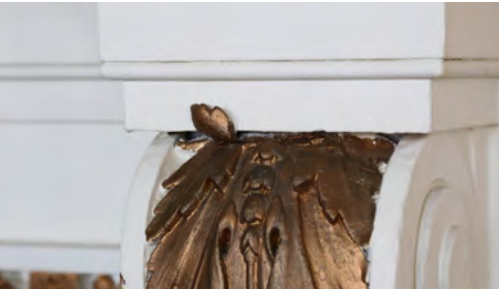
During the sale of the entire contents of the house and gardens in 1922, the archives and estate papers of the Temple-Grenville family were bought by a bookseller in Buckingham who then sold them to an American philanthropist. Subsequently, these important political papers became part of the foundation of the Huntington Library and University and there they reside to this day, largely uncatalogued. Consequently, we don't know as much about Stowe as we'd like to, so each restoration project helps us to understand a little bit more through archaeological and conservational evidence to add to the understanding we gain from the archives.

- The beautiful and intriguing ceiling and painted wall panels were created from the 1740s onwards but have been added to over the years by different artists. During the restoration, by inviting experts to help us, we hope to uncover more about what was done when and by whom. We will be cleaning, repairing, replacing and restoring areas of the ceiling as well as harmonising the different repairs added over the years.
- The roof was never replaced like its sister room, the Large Library, and so, over the years water has leaked in and badly damaged the paintwork. Although the roof is now watertight, the ceiling retains this tell-tale scarring, plus large cracks and severe flaking paintwork. These areas will be conserved and repainted during the restoration.



It is the care of the floor which is the

- The elaborate joinery, the dado rail, skirting boards, door frames and overdoor decoration have been painted several times over the last 100 years, thus losing the finer detail, and some areas are badly damaged through wear and tear. These areas will be stripped back to the original woodwork, repaired where necessary and painted in the original colour or gold leaf applied, as identified through paint analysis.
- The historic floorboards are now in a perilous state as they are very thin in places and are constantly having to be patched in. We are keen to save as many old floorboards as possible to keep in the Dining Room but with the room constantly in use, this is getting harder. During the restoration, the floorboards will be taken up, assessed and relaid or replaced where necessary. It is the care of the floor which is the most pressing need of this project.



This once important room has now lost the decorative treatment to the walls and chimneypieces but retains a magnificent painted ceiling and overdoors.



the most pressing need of the project

Continued...

- Since we have no images of magnificent chandeliers hanging from the ceiling, we will install a lighting scheme that allows the features of the room to be subtly highlighted to show it in all its glory.
- The original 18th century marble chimneypieces were sold in the 1922 sale. They were replaced with pieces from the same period but from another house. The originals have been located and we hope to have copies made.
- Since 1923, three doors have been added in to the north wall to facilitate the movement of pupils through the room. Since we are looking to possibly use the wall to display an image or copy of the Lenyiers tapestries that were originally there, we are looking to replace the current doors with jib doors, to harmonise the wall.

Your philanthropic support will ensure we keep our traditions alive. No matter how small or large, a gift today will endure and is a positive commitment to the future.



We need to raise a final £950,000 to enable us to carry out the restoration of this last major state room at Stowe. The restoration of the State Rooms is beyond the resources of both the Trust and the School. We need your support to help us restore one of Britain's most beautiful country houses to its 18th century magnificence. *No matter how small or large, a donation towards the State Dining Room is a gift that will make a difference.*

There are always smaller restoration projects which occur at Stowe, sometimes through the chance to buy or copy a lost treasure, or unexpected discoveries whilst carrying out planned restoration. On the next page, we describe two exciting smaller projects for which we are also fundraising.



I was at Stowe from 1946 to 1951: the rationing period was at its worst.

This was a challenge to the catering staff who responded by providing us with two new found 'delicacies', whale and snoek. The real treat was hot rolls for Sunday morning breakfast.

(Christopher Latham, Chatham 1951)



Laocoön

North Hall Laocoön Statue

Having recently discovered the location of the original bronze statue which once graced North Hall, we have been given permission to copy it. The Laocoön group, which, until it was sold in 1848, was the Victorian centrepiece in North Hall, is a dramatic classical scene of Laocoön, a Trojan priest and his sons being attacked by giant serpents sent by the gods. It would have been very striking in the entrance hall of the House and expressed the Duke's taste and wealth. The current owner of the piece is allowing us to copy it – this means taking the statue to a London conservation studio to clean and conserve it, to take a mould and then cast a new bronze copy. We are currently looking to raise £180,000 to allow us to undertake this opportune project.

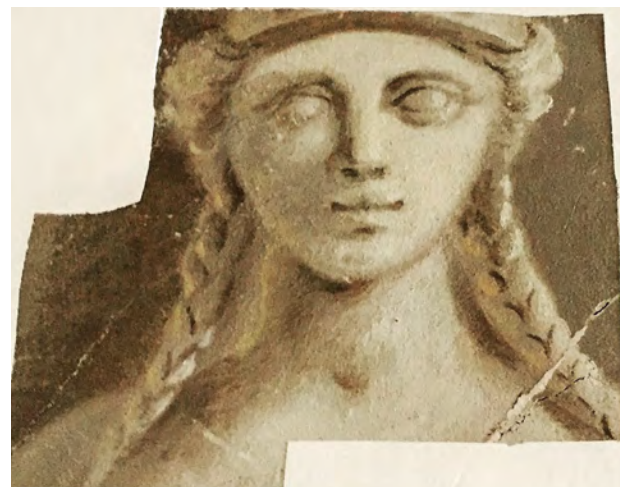


*A donation will help us bring
home our lost treasures*

New Discoveries

While undertaking the restoration of the east grand staircase ceiling (known as the Grenville landing) last summer, the conservators noticed raised white lead paint outlining original painted wall decorations underneath the centuries of paint layers. The historic guidebooks mentioned wall paintings which had previously been thought destroyed. We were unaware of the trompe l'oeil hidden on the upper landing. Some initial openings beneath the paint showed an amazing survival, suggesting that they were covered up soon after they were painted, perhaps during one of the extensions of the House or as the result of a change in interior decorative taste.

For this project, we are looking for funds to remove the paint to reveal the original painted scheme and for research to help us understand the evolution of this area. About £350,000 is likely to be required for this painstaking work which will reveal one of Stowe's greatest secrets.



*With a gift today you can help
us reveal one of Stowe's greatest
secrets...*



Donations

Be part of Stowe's Story

Help us to conclude the next chapter in the great story of Stowe House.

We are now embarking on a new and enthralling chapter in Stowe's restoration programme. Raising the funds necessary for the restoration of the State Dining Room will be a significant challenge, but it is clearly one to which we must rise. With the generosity of all quarters of the Stowe community, and those with a passion for the restoration and preservation of historic buildings, we are confident of success. Donations of all sizes will be important: as our achievements to date have shown, it is the accumulation of both large and modest gifts that will be vital in reaching our fundraising targets. This appeal is a way for everyone to become involved in supporting the State Dining Room's progress, whether it is £10, or £10,000. Every gift is valuable.

We need funding in place by the end of 2017. We would be so grateful if you would join the effort and show your support and affection for Stowe. To donate, please use the enclosed form. If you would like to discuss how you might help with the restoration project, or wish to obtain further information, please contact Hannah Al-Anazi, Development Manager or Anna McEvoy, SHPT House Custodian.

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Stowe house needs
your protection...
will you stop it
crumbling?







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