ISSN 0963-9004

FOLLIES

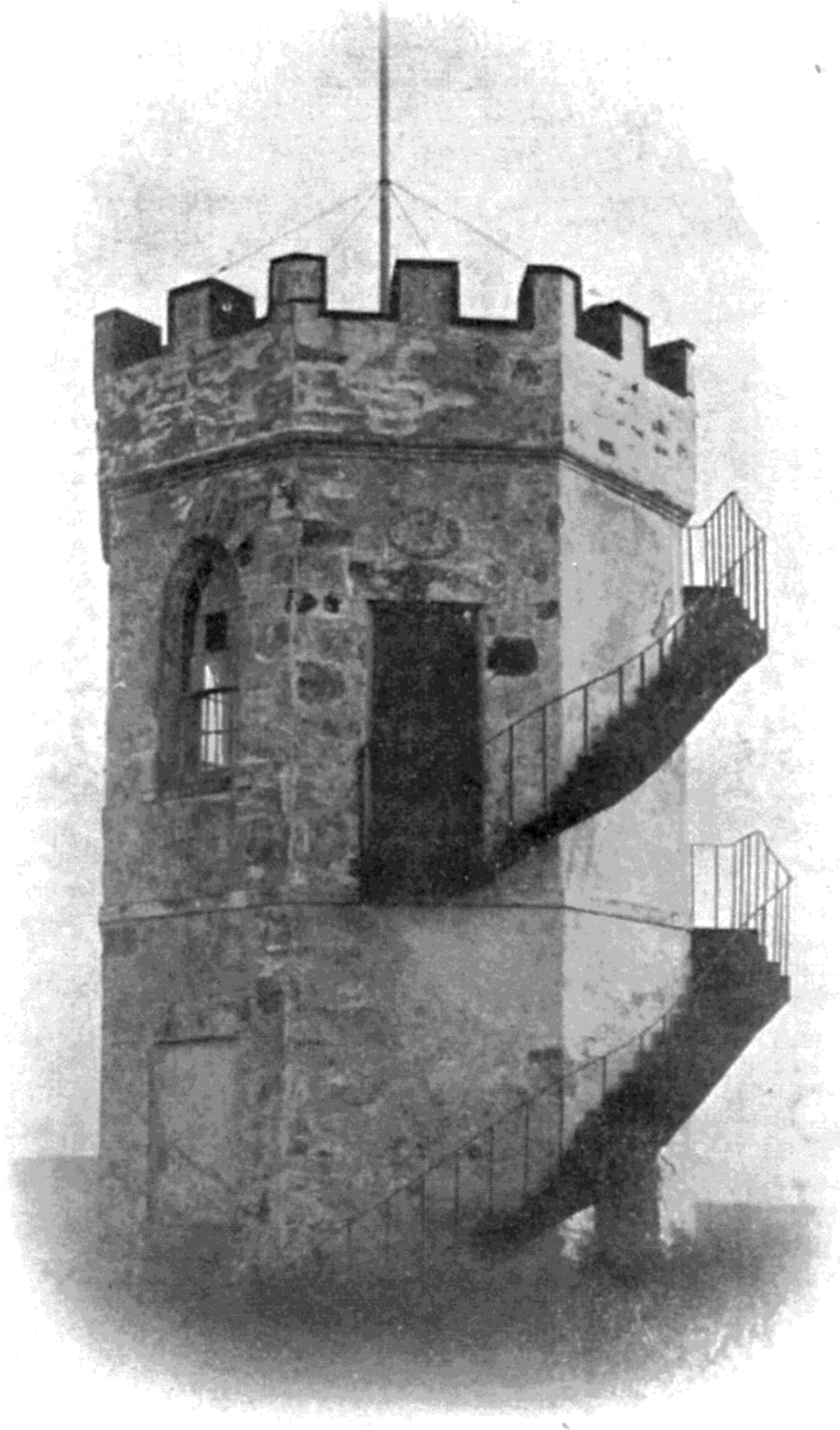
The International Magazine for Follies, Grottoes and Landscape Buildings

Volume 7, No 4 £3.00 Spring 1996

THE SHELL HOUSE

GOODWOOD EVENTS

BOOKS



TOWER OF GARTINCABER. THE DAVE MARTIN COLLECTION

BROADWOOD TOWER

PERROTTS FOLLY

LETTERS

FOLLIES

The International Magazine for Follies, Grottoes and Landscape Buildings

No.28 £3.00 ISSN 0963-9004 Spring 1996

Published four times a year by

The Folly Fellowship

A registered charity and a company limited by guarantee
Registered in England No. 2600672

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THE FOLLY FELLOWSHIP

Registered Charity No. 1002646
Founded 1988 by Andrew Plumridge, Gwyn Headley and Wim Meulenkamp.

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EDITORIAL

I am convinced that there has been a well orchestrated plan to make the editor's life hard work—never have I received so many articles with ligatures, accents (acute, umlaut, grave and circumflex), and other special characters. Should I ever forget where these keyboard combinations lie!

Events

This year's events are given on page 6—so as soon as you've read the editorial, jot down the dates in your diaries and start dialling.

All Change

We welcome Sharon McGinn and Susan Kellerman as respective secretaries for the South-West and Northern regions. Sharon is replacing Jonathan Holt who is gracefully bowing out in spectacular fashion with a period piece at Goldney this Summer (fingers crossed for the sun) but who will still be active co-ordinating events overall and contributing to the magazine. Susan has been a member for the last seven years having spent much of that time abroad (Susan also holds the record for the most changes of address). We hope that you will extend a warm welcome to them both and give your support to their forthcoming folly forays.

Contents:

Press Cuttings

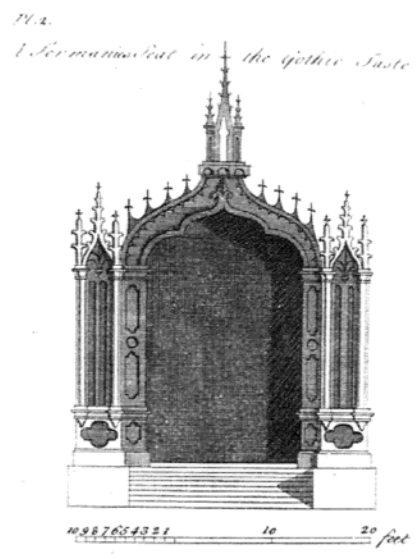
When Gwyn and Wim were working on their infamous tome, they found a press-cutting service invaluable, and this has continued to be instrumental in bringing you news of follies via the magazine. However, many articles, particularly local pieces, get missed and so we rely more and more on the eagle eyes of the membership to send them in. I would feel guilty if I didn't single out Dave Martin for special thanks in this endeavour, although there are others, and would ask everyone out there to forward any cuttings (or photocopies) to the editor.

Subscription Increase

"But it is pretty to see what money will do" and in order to cover increasing costs of the magazine, and the indexes, against static membership numbers, we have had to increase subscription rates. Individual membership is now £16.50 and family membership, £20.00. The cover price of the magazine has also risen, to £3.00. In the meantime we are still gunning for direct debit payment and credit card payment facility. We will be writing to those members paying by standing order with amendment details in due course. When new brochures are printed they will reflect these changes.

Articles For A Wider Audience

Calling all contributors, past, present and future. After all the hard work that goes into researching and writing articles, we believe that there is a real opportunity to increase awareness of the Folly Fellowship, and for you to achieve further fame and glory—why not submit your article to the local and county journals, such as *Essex Countryside*! All we would ask is that the journal must carry the following closing paragraph: "This article first appeared in Follies, the magazine of the Folly Fellowship. For further details, please write to: The Membership Secretary, 21 Beacon Road, Ware, Herts SG12 7HY" Let's see if it works.



The Shell-House Goodwood

LUCY BRIGHT

When I first heard about the shell-house at Goodwood Park from Vernon Gibberd I really wanted to see it for myself. But as Wim and Gwyn said: "it is sensibly closed to visitors to ensure its preservation." By great good fortune I was invited to join one of two trial tours which were held at the end of August this summer. By even better fortune we were joined by Lord and Lady March (and baby Charles), son and daughter-in-law of the present Duke of Richmond, and the leading grot-restorer Diana Reynell!

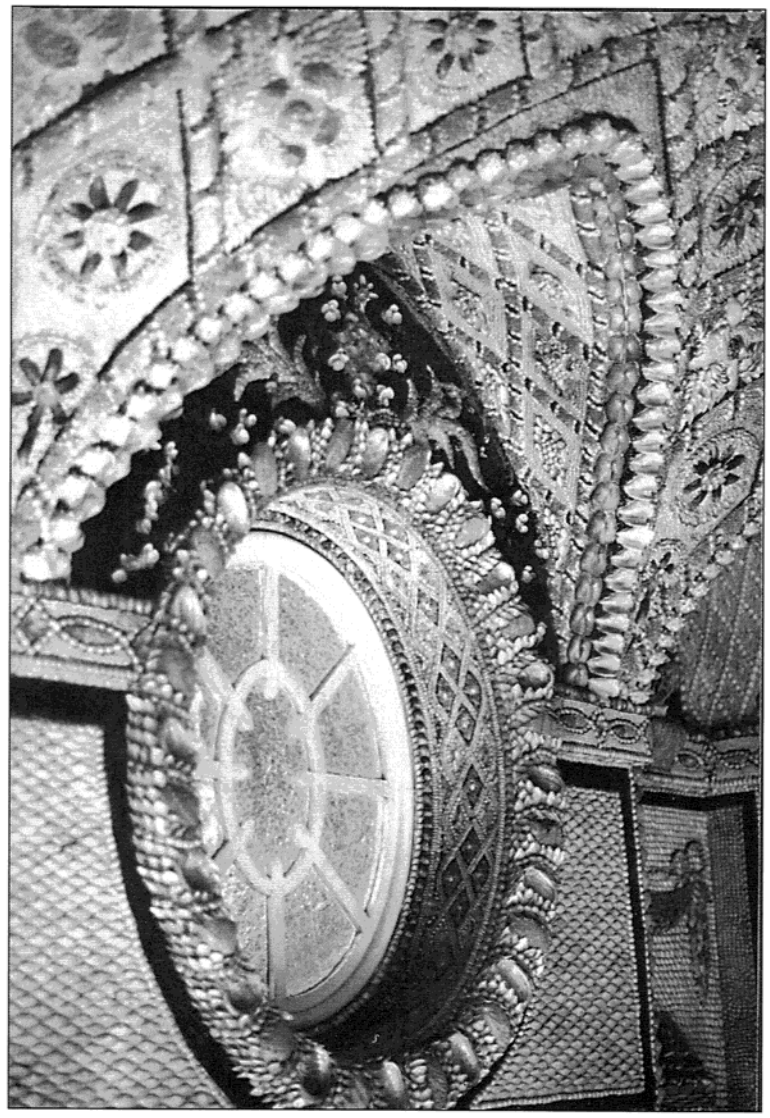
The building is situated behind the great house at Goodwood about ¾ of a mile up on a hill-top hidden by a cluster of yew trees. The exterior is a modest design providing no intimation of what is to come, cement-faced and encrusted with variously-sized conch shells further embellished by nature with trails of ivy. The grey tones of the external decoration are stony, almost bone-like—a great contrast to the sun-lit golden-pink glow faced on entering the grotto.

The ground plan is about 12-foot square and the vaulted roof about 12-foot at its highest point. There is an alcove at the far end opposite the door with niches for seats and a centrally-positioned round mirror which was reputedly placed there to show a reflection of Chichester Cathedral spire which is only a few miles away. The interior is entirely covered in shells apart from the marble skirting and fireplace and the horses teeth floor. The detail of the shell-work is absolutely astonishing; intricate patterns and images created using a huge range of exotic shells from volutes and cones to scallops and abalones to the more common mussels and periwinkles. The images are predominantly floral, bar some bows and urns, with frames of geometric patterns.

In fact the shells have their own interesting story; they come from all over the world, particularly the West Indies, and the collectors were an uncle, other naval officers and most importantly Captain Knowles of the HMS Diamond who brought a shipload for the Dukes of Bedford and Richmond in 1739. Sarah, 2nd Duchess of Richmond, and her two daughters, and sometimes Charles, Duke of Richmond, spent their leisure time during the 1740s decorating the shell-house. Their initials C.R., S.R., E.K. (Emily Kildare) and C.F. (Caroline Fox) are worked into the ceiling design.

There are visibly different styles within the whole design, perhaps reflecting the individual tastes of those involved. The ceiling panels are very reminiscent of Elizabethan or Jacobean ceiling mouldings or wood carvings, a style that would certainly have been familiar to the Duchess.

INSIDE THE SHELL HOUSE



During the First and Second World Wars soldiers that were based nearby caused considerable damage to the folly, shells from Goodwood seem to have been a popular memento. Restoration in the 1960s was poor and unsympathetic. Diana Reynell is now attempting to right this with more careful work, replacing areas shell by shell using heated shellac. Some parts have been prepared on panels off the wall then set in place, a technique that was probably used by the original craftsmen.

Diana said that she feels that the shell-work at Goodwood is the highest quality in the country; world-wide it is probably second only to Rambouillet in France. She compared the delicacy of design to fine relief embroidery, a perfect comparison.

The Duchess's two daughters carried on the family's traditional interest in follies even after marriage. Having eloped with him, Georgina Caroline married Henry Fox in 1744 and was made Baroness Holland in 1762. When Lord Holland was subsequently refused an earldom by King George III in 1766, he retired as leader of the House of Commons to his Kingsgate Estate in Kent. Here he established a large folly group including Kingsgate Castle, Whitfield Tower, the actual King's Gate and the Arx Ruohim (Neptune's Temple) all publicly funded, although the public were not aware of this at the time! With large amounts of money at their disposal and their enjoyment in creating pseudo-ancient monuments, the Hollands seem a likely link with the mysterious Margate grotto (not far from Kingsgate). The similarity between shell-work at Goodwood and Margate is very apparent and the link, to me, seems to be too important to dismiss—although this is another story!

Emily Mary married James, Duke of Leinster, in 1747 and went to live at Carton in Kildare. Here she at least supervised the alteration of an old thatched cottage, called Waterstown, into a shell-house. Some of the decoration is similar to that at Goodwood, but more amateur and rustic.

The trial visits at Goodwood to the shell-house will hopefully lead to more access to this exquisite folly. However, the Richmond family's concern for its preservation and protection can be fully understood when you have been lucky enough to see it, the shell-work at Goodwood is the most beautiful I have seen.

Perrott's Folly—Birmingham's Most Eccentric Building

SARAH L. PERRIN

The middle of a modern day housing estate in downtown Edgbaston, Birmingham, is not the usual place you would expect to find an eighteenth century folly. Then again, 'Perrott's Folly', by Birmingham's standards, is not a 'usual' building. Acclaimed as "Birmingham's most eccentric building" the tall, graceful, crenellated tower, rising incongruous in its surroundings, proves the point. Variously known as the "Edgbaston Observatory", and the "Monument", 'Perrott's Folly' presents an enigma seeming to raise more questions than answers.

'Perrott's Folly' was built in 1758 by a wealthy landowner, John Perrott. He is responsible for the first question to be raised; should his Folly be called 'Perrot's Folly' or 'Perrott's Folly'? There is some uncertainty over the spelling of his surname, upon which records shed little light, spelling the name in a multiple of ways: *'Peret, Parat, Parrott, Perott, Peret, Perrot'* and *'Perrott'* are just some of the spellings recorded. However the latter spelling seems to be the most commonly used, certainly in later years, so it can be assumed that 'Perrott's Folly' is an accurate spelling.

John Perrott built his tower Folly on the Rotton Park estate, one of the two estates he owned. Both estates had been acquired by his ancestor, Humphrey Perrott, who bought the other estate, Bell Hall in Belbroughton, Worcestershire, in 1599. Nineteen years later in 1628 he purchased the vast Rotton Park estate in Edgbaston. As far back as 1307 this had been known as the "*Parc du Rotton juxta Birmingham*", and it had been the hunting ground of the Lords of Birmingham for many generations. By 1628 Rotton Park was an area of unspoiled wooded country which stretched from Hockley Brook in Handsworth to the boarders of Smethwick and Harborne, about six square miles in total. It was a favourite place of the local aristocracy for hunting, coursing and other such sports.

When Humphrey died in 1632, the Bell Hall and Rotton Park estates passed down the Perrott family and were inherited by his great, great, great grandson, John Perrott, in 1737. At the age of 35, John Perrott was a gentleman of considerable wealth and standing in Worcestershire. Unlike his predecessors he made his home at the hunting lodge on the Rotton Park estate, preferring it to the family residence at Belbroughton. When he indulged in the fashionable folly-building pastime, it was natural that he should pick a site on the Rotton Park estate. The Folly was built about ¾ of a mile from the Lodge itself.

'Perrott's Folly' is a ninety six foot high brick tower. The identity of the architect presents a further question mark; his name is unrecorded. There have been several suggestions made, regarding his identity; it is possible that Perrott himself designed the Folly, something that was within the capability of many eighteenth century gentlemen, especially if they enlisted the help of other amateur architects. Alternatively 'Perrott's Folly' may be the work of the amateur architect, Sanderson Miller, who had designed a Folly built at nearby Hagley Hall nine years previously. These are, however, conjectures, the Folly's architect remains a mystery.

The architectural style of 'Perrott's Folly' is interesting, being part Tudor and part Gothic. The Folly consists of seven rooms one on top of the other. The ground and first floors are square in plan, above the rooms are octagonal. Originally the now enclosed ground floor room would have acted as a porch and been open on three sides, the fourth opening on to the staircase. The spiral staircase, contained in a circular projection on the western face of the tower, consists of 139 steps. This was originally made out of oak but was replaced in 1922 by the present precast concrete staircase. The staircase rises without a break until the very top of the tower is reached.

The first five floors are cleanly simple in design; the tower really comes into its own on the fifth and sixth floors. Both of these have windows on all of the seven open sides of the tower. All of the windows on the sixth floor are round, resembling something like the portholes of a ship, in contrast to the arched windows of the floors below and above. Originally there was comfortable seating around all the walls, enabling Perrott and his guests to sit and look out across the beautiful heath stretching away below. Despite this Perrott really did, as the saying goes, leave the best for last.

The top room of the tower is the *piece de resistance*. This room has a startlingly splendid rococo gothic domed ceiling and cornice, lavishly decorated with arches, flowers and plaster casts relating to hunting and agriculture, the tell tale signs of Perrott's passion for countryside pursuits. The finishing touch, on the east side of the room, is a small but elegant Adams fireplace. (The next question must be, 'How did the fuel reach the top room?'). Above the top room is the roof from which today one can see for miles across Birmingham.

As one might expect, many legends have grown up surrounding the Folly, especially those seeking to explain why John Perrott built it. One very practical story suggests Perrott built the tower so his daughter, Catherine, could watch him hunting with his friends. Another story says it was to enable him to watch his wife, also Catherine, when she went out in the neighbourhood. The most romantic and tragic legend put forward in the *Central Literary Magazine*, October 1886, by "Achespe", tells how John Perrott built the tower so he could see the grave of a former sweetheart, Amy. This is a melancholy tale, but unlikely to be true since Perrott was fifty-five and married with a ten year old daughter when the Folly was built. Leaving legends aside it, appears that John Perrott built his tower for the simple purpose of providing a means for enjoying, in elegant surroundings, one of the finest panoramic views in the county.

When John Perrott died in 1776, at the age of seventy four, his estates, including his beloved Folly, passed to his son-in-law, Walter Noel, who had married Perrott's only surviving child, Catherine. Over the next 100 years various parts of the Rotton Park estate were leased and later sold off: from 1821 to 1835 Perrott's Folly was included in the grounds of Monument House, leased for the duration to a Doctor John Johnstone; in 1851 the remainder of the estate, which included the Lodge and the Folly were bought by the millionaire pen-maker, Joseph Gillot, for the princely sum of £100,000, which caused quite a sensation at the time.

Joseph Gillot died in 1872 and Rotton Park passed into the hands of trustees. All was quiet until, in 1884 the unthinkable happened. A gentlemen by the name of Abraham Follet Osler, a brilliant and enlightened industrialist and scientist found the perfect use for Perrott's Folly—as a weather meteorological observatory. He was associated with the Birmingham and Midland Institute (BMI), which was responsible for the meteorological observations and recordings for the city of Birmingham. Osler persuaded the BMI to lease Perrott's Folly on a long term basis from the Gillot estate Trustees. The Folly, or Observatory as it was subsequently known, became one of the world's first weather recording and forecasting stations. It was actually bought by the BMI in 1914. In 1966 due to ever increasing costs, the running of the building was taken over by the Meteorological section of the Geography Department of Birmingham University. They were responsible for it until 1984 when it was bought by the Perrott's Folly Company, who remain the present owners.

Today 'Perrott's Folly' no longer stands in open countryside due to the sale of parcels of land and the demand for housing over the last 100 years. Instead it is enclosed by a small walled garden, shielding it from the surrounds and business of the twentieth century. A graceful and valuable relic, Perrott's Folly is a symbol of fortune and discovery, of conformity and individuality: famous as a weather station and renowned as the inspiration for J.R.R. Tolkein's "The Two Towers"; this is 'Perrott's Folly'—'Birmingham's most eccentric building'.

LOST & FOUND

EAST YORKSHIRE

Thompson's Folly

A recent publication, *Lost Houses of East Yorkshire*, is a sad reminder of how once glorious mansions and country houses have become victim to a combination of estates being split up during the inter-war years, the spread of suburbia, and the impact of the second world war. One example in Cottingham, a castellated mansion built by the banker Thomas Thompson (1754-1828) in 1808-16, is only recalled by its 40-foot octagonal folly tower built in 1825, the ruins of the house now lie under Castle Hill Hospital. The tower served as a lookout for viewing "the Humber and lovely land on every side." Inside, at the top there was to be a table with a map identifying all the places which could be seen, and "suitable extracts from our best poets" including Cowper and Goldsmith. [A.R.B. Robinson, *The Counting House*, York, 1992, pp.94-6]

CENTRAL

Tower of Gartincaber

Our cover shows the folly at Gartincaber, near Thornhill, (OS sheet 57, grid ref: NN 69 00). William Murdoch erected a Gothick octagonal viewing tower for the simple enjoyment of the "wide and beautiful view it commands on both sides". In most aspects the folly is a standard, two-storey, castellated structure, with both of the internal rooms once being fitted up with fireplaces. Its unique feature is the external cantilevered staircase and anybody, upon making proper application, could have access to ascend.

WEST SUSSEX

Holmbush Tower Update

An earlier issue of FOLLIES [Vol. 5, 1, p.18] asked the question "when exactly was Holmbush Tower demolished?" We can now add to the history already given in Vol. 6, 1, pp.10-11. When Mr T. Broadwood [*see also p.10 of iths magazine*] built his house 'Holmbush' in 1820, he just happened to have some bricks left over and so decided to build a tower with a bungalow underneath. It was never intended as a folly but as a beacon which would line up with other beacons along the coast. Apparently anyone could go to the top of the tower by paying three pence to a woman who lived in the bungalow at the base. This was not to last and in the latter half of the Second World War the owner at that time, General Clifton-Brown, had the tower demolished. It was in a very poor state, the bungalow was uninhabitable, and the whole structure was unsafe, it having served its purpose. Even so, it did succumb to a brief occupation during this period by the Home Guard. We also know exactly where it stood, on the road formerly known to the inhabitants of Faygate as Colgate Hill, and to the inhabitants of Colgate as Faygate Hill. It went through a phase of being called Beacon Hill, and now seems to be known as Tower Road.

THE MOUNT AT SWINTON

CLWYD

Nant-y-Belan Tower

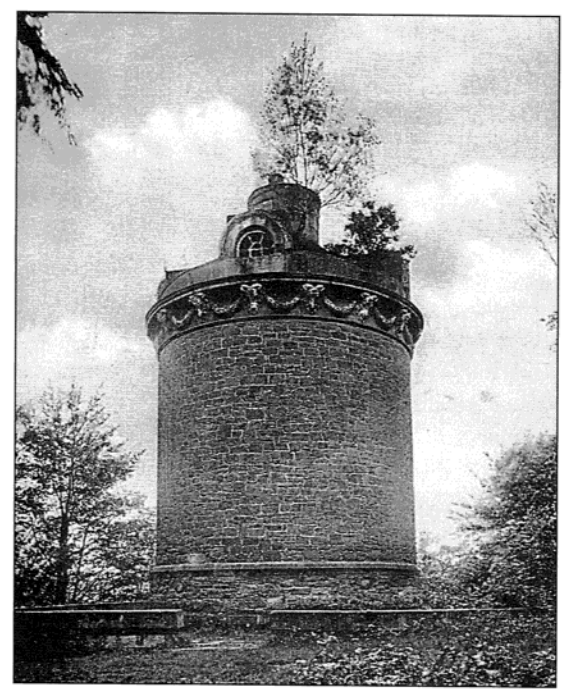
The postcard, *c.*1930, shows the round tower at Ruabon prior to its collapse on the edge of a precipice, as noted by Gwyn in *Follies*. Anyone who has read the book will undoubtedly know this by heart but an estate worker remarked to him: "When I was a kid, it used to have plaques all the way round the walls recording the names of the people of the Light Brigade. You could get inside and there were two huge oak doors and in the middle of the floor there was a huge eagle crouched over with a cup on its back and my friends and I—we were kids, mind—my friends and I went underneath and we found a room and when you lit a fire in the fireplace the smoke came out of the rams' heads round the top of the tower. You should have seen it 30 years ago, it was wonderful then..." It was built by Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, Bart., and intended as a cenotaph "to commemorate the heroes, belonging to the *Cambrian* legion of Ancient Britons, who fell in their country's cause, under the command of Sir Watkin [his father, the fifth baronet]; and contributed so effectively towards the subduction of the late rebellion in Ireland. On this, appropriate memorials, allusive to the several campaigns, are intended [then, 1812] to be inscribed, in English, Welsh, and Latin." So our local was slightly out in that it commemorated the Light Brigade and not the Irish Rebellion of 1798, but in its prime it obviously commanded a superb position over the Dee valley. The architect was Sir Jeffry Wyatville—there is a drawing in the British Museum Print Room signed and dated 1806. By Gwyn's account one can only suppose that all of the tower has now disappeared, but should anyone wish to have a look...

NORTH YORKSHIRE

The Mount, Swinton

The other side of the mount is now a cottage residence, but this view was almost certainly intended as an eye-catcher from Swinton Hall. Sadly the ivy has gone as have the flanking castellated walls for the most part, and the three openings giving access to a rustic seat are now wired up. The occupiers have a splendid miniature model of their dwelling and were quite proud when asked for permission to photograph that as well as the façade (negotiating the geese at one's own risk). One must assume that the building dates from the same time as the rest of works on the estate, but nothing definite has come to light yet, including the architect. OS sheet 99, grid ref: SE 202 795.

NANT-Y-BELAN TOWER, RUABON



Forthcoming Events

APRIL

Saturday 27th

Horton Menagerie, Northants, rescued and restored by the late Gervase Jackson-Stops, with a unique grotto and splendid garden buildings. A chance to see other local follies. Tel: 019268 56494, Barbara Hague.

MAY

Saturday 11th

The Gnoll, Neath, is a landscape re-discovered and our guided tour will take in all its features and follies. Tel: 0181-348 1234, Gwyn Headley.

JUNE

Saturday 29th &
Sunday 30th

Bath Follies Tour and Goldney Anniversary Visit, Bristol. Subject to sufficient numbers, we hope to turn this into a weekend folly foray. A separate questionnaire is enclosed and responses are required by 23 March. Tel: 01179 601837, J. Holt.

JULY

Sunday 21st

Sir Francis Dashwood's bizarre creations in and around West Wycombe Park, Bucks. Tel: 0181-673 6264, Iain Gray.

AUGUST

Saturday 10th or Sunday 11th

The Annual Garden Party. Need we say more! Details of this event featuring, as always, a magnificent folly cake, will appear in a future magazine.

SEPTEMBER

Tupgill Park—the recently opened gardens and follies in Yorkshire as featured in FOLLIES, Vol.7, 3, pp.12-13 will, we hope, form the first of our Northern Region events (subject to confirmation).

We'll keep you posted in future issues!

Haldon Belvedere Revisited

WILLIAM BIRKINSHAW

A previous article by Sharon McGinn in FOLLIES (Vol. 6, 2, p.2) told the story of the slow deterioration of this fine tower on the Haldon hills five miles to the west of Exeter. It was built in 1788 by Sir Robert Palk in memory of his friend, General Stringer Lawrence, the founder of the Indian Army. The two had met in India in the 1750s; Sir Robert had amassed a great fortune, bought Haldon House on the lower slopes of the Haldon hills and erected this tower, partly in memory of his friend and partly as a landscape feature in the plantations and drives that he was laying out on his estate.

The tower is three stories high with Gothic features, triangular and with three corner turrets. It is at 800-feet above sea-level, and has magnificent views from the roof. On a clear day, it is possible to see Dartmoor, Exmoor and along the coast to Portland Bill.

Sir Robert Palk's successors were less competent than he was and the estate slowly went downhill. In 1924, the tower was sold with a small area of land around it and in 1933 was bought by a family named Dale. They made it their home and allowed visitors to see it and provided teas. The last member of that family died in February 1994 and, three days before his death, the last document was signed which enabled the future of the tower to be secured. He transferred the freehold to a charitable trust (The Stringer Lawrence Memorial Trust) which in turn leased the building for forty years to the Devon Historic Buildings Trust. They undertook to restore it.

Work started in July 1994 and after thirteen months work the restoration of the tower is complete. Various difficulties were encountered. The roof was in a far worse condition than expected; 90% of the roof timbers had to be replaced. The gales in January 1995 were so severe on this exposed site that work had to be stopped on several occasions in the interests of safety. The whole building-over 80-feet high-was cocooned in scaffolding with a roof on top. This shifted in the gales and damaged some of the crenellations.

It was also discovered that the internal plaster (which was not applied direct to the stonework but had a 2" gap between the back of the plasterwork and the stonework kept in place by battens) was in many places merely resting in position. The battens had become rotten. English Heritage, who were making a generous grant, wished to conserve the original plaster as much as possible and the architects and contractors were confronted with a practical problem as to how to secure the plaster.

The solution was found using an child's ordinary balloon. A hole was drilled through the plaster, a balloon inserted and material injected into the balloon under pressure so that it spread out in the gap between the back of the plaster and the stone wall forming a pad which then set. Bolts were then driven through the centre of the pad into the stonework to hold the plaster secure.

The frames and glazing bars of the large windows were found to be of mahogany; the small windows were made of oak. The original woodwork has been retained as much as possible.

The provision of services-electricity, water, drainage and telephones-presented another range of problems. The tower is built on a very early Neolithic site; all trench excavation was monitored by archæologists and a large number of flint implements and

HALDON BELVEDERE RESTORED

SHARON MCGINN

some very early pottery was discovered. The site is one of the only four known in Devon dating from about 3000 BC.

The bore-hole sunk to provide a water supply proved unsatisfactory and this is now being obtained from the mains but because of the elevated site an intermediate pump is required to boost pressure.

Notwithstanding all these difficulties, the architects and the Trust are very pleased with the quality of the work which has been carried out by Historic Property Restorations, the contracting arm of English Heritage. The cost has been just below £500,000. English Heritage grant is up to £201,000; Devon County Council, Teignbridge District Council and Exeter City Council have given £80,000, £30,000 and £5,000 respectively. This reflects the importance attached to the building locally. It is a local landmark and many people have visited it over the years whilst it was in the hands of the Dale family.

The Trust's Appeal Director is Mr. Tim Legood, telephone (01392) 74387, and if any member of the Fellowship would like to help, he would be delighted to hear from them and show them round the building.

Turning to the future, the Folly Fellowship is visiting the building in March. From April, it will be open to the public every Sunday afternoon from 2pm to 5pm until the end of October and be open every afternoon except Saturdays during the summer school holidays. Group visits can be arranged at other times and there is a flat on the top floor which can be booked for holidays. The ground floor and first floor rooms may be booked for functions and it is hoped to have the building licensed for civil weddings. Management of the building is in the hands of the custodian, Mrs. M. Donohue whose telephone number is (01884) 32884.

The Trust hope to arrange a small exhibition recording the work of the restoration and illustrating the archaeological remains and the history of General Lawrence and Sir Robert Palk. Both men were part of the battle with the French supremacy in India in the 1750s. Lawrence has been eclipsed by Clive but, in his own day, was highly esteemed. Clive served under him and had sufficient regard for him, to grant Lawrence an annuity out of the wealth he had amassed in India. There is a large monument to Lawrence in Westminster Abbey, a statue of him by Peter Scheemaker in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (a copy of which is in the Belvedere) and he was painted by both Gainsborough and Reynolds.

Palk started life as a clergyman, serving as a chaplain in the Royal Navy. He was sent out to Southern India in 1747; the ship was wrecked and he was taken on as a chaplain by the East India Company. He proved a skilled negotiator and shrewd judge of men. The East India Company used him in negotiations with the Indian Princes and they appointed him as head of Commissariat with Lawrence's Forces. A picture of the two men is given in a letter written in 1755 which recounts how the local governor chose Palk "to go to camp, under the name of a Commissary designed to retrench expenses but with the real view of softening and managing Colonel Lawrence's warm and sudden temper." Be this as it may, the two men became warm friends.

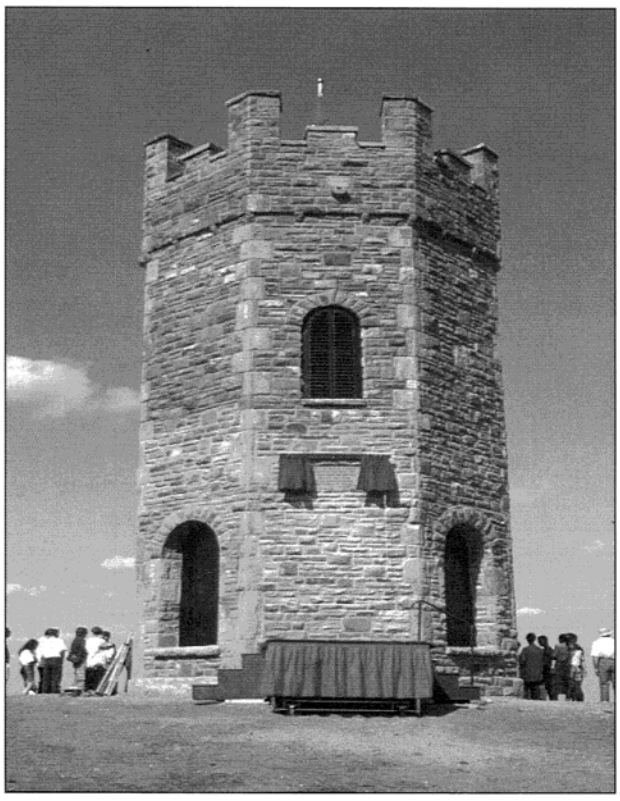
Lawrence remained a bachelor and when both had returned to England he spent long periods staying with his friend at Haldon House. On his death he left part of his estate to Palk's children and it was partly in acknowledgement of this that Palk built Haldon Belvedere.

W.A. Birkinshaw is Company Secretary to Devon Historic Buildings Trust.

PAST EVENTS

Members of Folly Fellowship who were brave enough to face the rain and fog at Pontypool on 7 October were given the red carpet treatment by the local community including the officers of the Campaign for the Rebuilding of the Old Folly Tower (CROFT). Pictured inside the reconstructed tower are, back row, left to right: Michael Gray (Mayor of Islwyn), Arthur Crane (Secretary of CROFT), Jonathan Holt (former Secretary of the South-West Region of the Folly Fellowship), Peter Dane (Education Officer of the Folly Fellowship), Don Evans (CROFT Committee Member). Front row, left to right: David Miller (Mayor of Torfaen), Bev Miller (Mayoress of Torfaen), Ruth Gray (Mayoress of Islwyn), Derrick Green (Folly Fellowship) and Bernard Derrick (Chairman of CROFT). Our sincere condolences go to the family of Don Evans who died of a heart attack on the morning of the ceremony where CROFT received a prestigious Prince of Wales Award for improving the Welsh environment. The award ceremony took place in Newport, Gwent, in November.

PONTYPOOL FOLLY TOWER



Hopetoun House, Lothian—Update

VERNON GIBBERD

Readers may recall the summer house in the grounds of Hopetoun House (FOLLIES Vol. 6, 2, p.9). With some hesitation I recently sent a copy of my rather rude comments of that time to the newly appointed agent Paul Normand, who was until recently the comptroller of Arundel Castle. I was delighted to hear from Paul that far from being embarrassed he was in complete agreement about the neglect of this charming feature, a feeling apparently shared by many of his estate colleagues as well.

The bad news is that the building is too far gone for restoration. The good news is that the bandstand is likely to be saved. It seems there are more funds and grants available now for the estate generally and we can look forward to great improvements to this splendid Bruce/Adam palace, one of the grandest houses in Scotland.

And the rustic cottage? It is apparently known as the "Canadian House", and was shipped across the Atlantic at the beginning of this century. Far from illuminating its design sources this only makes it more intriguing. It doesn't look like anything of the vernacular of this period in the New World, nor to anything indigenous. Any theories?

Looking For Follies: A Dutch visit to some follies in England

CHRIS GOEDHART

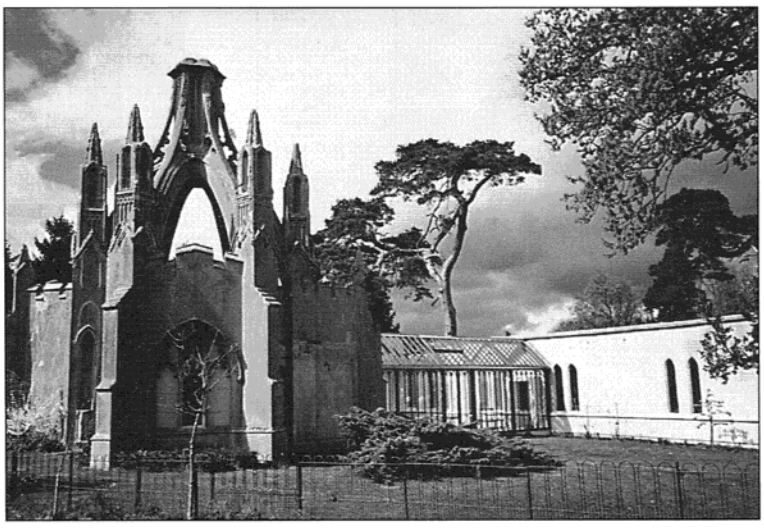
Let's do the follies first", came the shout from a group of probably eight-year-olds, jumping out of the coach and running across the vast fields round Wimpole Hall towards the sham ruin, late eighteenth century, looming large and giving the impression of having been the ancestral castle of the previous noble residents of this estate, not far from Cambridge. I was amazed. In the Netherlands we keep explaining even to well-educated people that neither the Folies Bergères nor volleyball are anything to do with follies, while here on the other side of the North Sea even toddlers are apparently made familiar with follies.

We had seen the House with its many period rooms and internal Bath House some twenty years ago, when we were less folly-conscious. So now we took our time for the longish walk through the landscaped garden towards the folly, occasionally consulting the signs saying that the shortest route across the Chinese Bridge was closed and that we couldn't reach our goal without detours, courtesy of the National Trust who are executing major restorations to the park: the Wimpole Landscape Project, their way of celebrating their hundredth-birthday. The Chinese Bridge is done up thoroughly, but more importantly the two great lakes, once essential features of the park, are cleaned, cleared and dredged.

A stiff walk, as the big mock-ruin sits on a slope at the distance where it will be most impressive from the easy chairs of the house. So it's a sham ruined castle with a three-or four-storeyed tower, two ruinous side-towers with interconnecting wall fragments, all according to plan. But not crumbled away or overgrown. The National Trust have secured everything thoroughly, so that the boys we had met earlier could safely climb all over it. Only the tower is closed. The real romance is in the illusion from behind the windows of the House and that may be exactly what these follies are all about.

On to Anglesey Abbey on the other side of Cambridge. This too we had seen a long time ago, and again we had to catch up on a tour of the garden and park. But we hadn't counted on the long distances in these lovely gardens with far-off ornaments and dozens of statues. The temple we were supposed to find consisted of some ten Corinthian columns of Portland stone in an open circle, unconnected and uncovered. Lord Fairhaven, who rebuilt Anglesey Abbey into what it is now, wanted to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in this way. He got his sculptures and many other objects from everywhere, but these columns are from Chesterfield House, Isaac Ware's Palladian masterpiece. In the middle is a 1901 replica of Bernini's David. Frightening early seventeenth century lions guard the entrance from a distance. More of a garden ornament than a temple really. More for the Dutch DonderbergGroep than for the Folly Fellowship perhaps.

Anglesey Abbey has been a National Trust property since 1966, but a Dutch friend of ours remembers being Lord Fairhaven's guest in the fifties and getting an archaic reception. Liveried white-gloved footmen graced the dining-room. Visitors then were allowed to inspect the special collection of bronzes: all nudes, all young, all male. Nowadays visitors see only a few of them. Catching up on twenty years isn't easy. So reluctantly and unusually we decided to forgo English Cream Tea and took the Soldiers' Walk to the Emperors' Walk and after the various gardens and the Coronation Avenue we were both exhausted and satisfied.



RENDELSHAM LODGE

A friend of ours in Suffolk has written several travel guides and historical books, and he had promised us access to special places.

THE UMBRELLO, GREAT SAXHAM

He got us into Rendlesham Lodge near Woodbridge. We met the new owner, who has constructed a long glass corridor to connect the cathedral-like porter's lodge with a slightly Gothick residence in the same type of brick. How often had we goggled at this wondrous structure! Always from the closed gate and pleased if we could see fully half of it behind the bushes. And now we were sitting there, sipping wine with the devoted owner whose restoration plans have been approved, provided that the execution of them is not too neat and thorough.

On to Bramfield, a red-bricked castellated house, with towers attached and Gothic windows and doors all round. It's like a fortress with flint walls, built at the turn of the century in a beauty spot with well-kept gardens round it. To get there you have to be your own railway track-man, opening and closing the barriers in folly-like fashion. Of course we saw the Tattingstone Wonder: for appearance's sake a mediæval parish church on the one side and just a farm with a useless hollow tower on the other.

Great Saxham was a genuine folly-hunt. The Hall, where Lady Sterling lives, naturally has a large park with all the trimmings. "Capability" Brown was involved in the design, with its 'serpentine waterway'. But we were after the octagonal "Umbrello". In amongst the tall weeds and bushes we found the thing, badly neglected and without any roof. But still, how elegant. The view must have been great once. It was made of Coade Stone, a half mysterious

sort of terra cotta, "the mixing being a jealously guarded secret" (John Summerson, *Georgian London*, London, 1962).

The most exciting location came at the end. Exciting for me especially, since this time it concerned a couple of do-it-yourself builders, like I am. It was in a rather remote part of Suffolk, near Cavenham. They had bought a lodge and first restored the entire house before starting on the large garden. That's where they wanted the follies that we came to see. Such as an orangery, with two Normanesque side-walls, interesting stretches of wall with little obelisks, a very tall Ionic column with a golden ball, and a Grand Arch in classicised Norman in front of a walled court. At the moment they are completing the execution of a Gothic Banqueting Hall in the wooded part of the garden.

When we arrived on the site the finishing touches were being added to the cascade; a giant fork-lift truck was putting a colossal concrete stag on a water-spouting plinth. We were just in time to assist in the positioning and then a leg broke off that hadn't been reinforced. Not our fault fortunately, and no reflection on us. On the contrary, the incident elicited some fruitful advice and discussion. In conclusion of this interesting visit we had an excellent lunch in the octagonal sun lounge, where four sides had been built up with grotwork, with ferns and water splashing down and with a view of the now stable stag.

On our way back to Harwich we saw the Cat House, famous for its smugglers' story. It was for sale at an exorbitant price, probably because of its location, practically on top of a large new marina. Not much ground, but two Victorian(?) sun lounges attached. If you don't happen to have the ready cash, you could always try smuggling - that would be in style. And by the way, shrubs, probably planted to protect the privacy, had completely overgrown the famous painted cat!

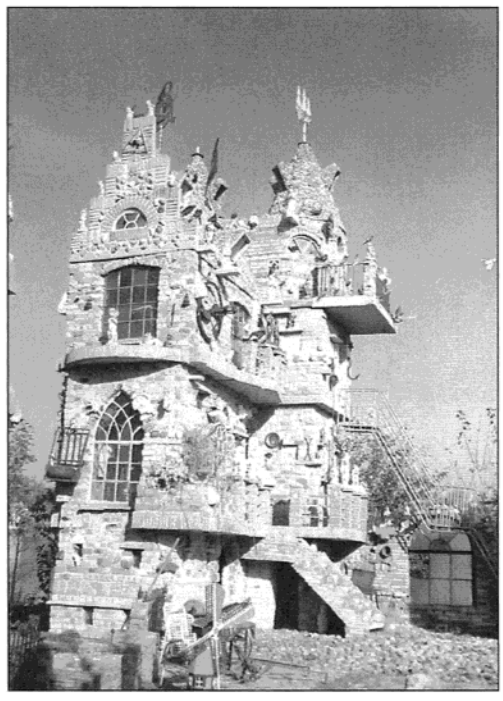
(With thanks to Pieter Boogaart for the translation.)

Fort Willem

VERNON GIBBERD

The pleasant Dutch city of Utrecht is famous not only for Dr. Strabismus (whom God preserve), but also Drs. Meulenkamp (whom God preserve, too, for that matter). Wim Meulenkamp is famous to Folly readers for his co-authorship with Gwyn Headley, of Follies and as Vice President of the Fellowship. Recently he has published another book called Follies, but this time about those of Holland and Belgium.

I recently spent a weekend in Utrecht and, with Wim as my guide, tried out some of his native treasures. The one which caught my imagination was Fort Willem, pictured on the cover of his book and built quite recently by one Willem Ham. I quote from Wim's book, which although in Dutch, is more pungent than any translation: "Willem Ham is wat in Engeland een original, een character zou noemen. Hij is echter geen excentriek. Een excentriek is weerloos, pathetisch en nerveus." Well, the last sentence is a bit puzzling. There didn't seem to be much pathetisch or nerveus about Mr. Ham, though I am prepared to find him "weerloos", whatever that may mean. The Mr. Ham I met was a robust man in late middle age, a former market trader with more than a passing resemblance to our late Syd James, an eccentric no doubt but not a man to make an enemy of, as local planners and tax inspectors have found to their cost. It is not called Fort Willem for nothing. With the proceeds of his successful market enterprises he was able to buy a few acres of waste land alongside a new motorway, from which a constant hum affords the only external intrusion into his little Eden. It seems the land was cheap because of this very disadvantage, but excavated grand pits have left him with little lakes as a focus for his follies.



FORT WILLEM

Around the edge of these Mr. Ham has built a series of towers, put together with whatever materials he found to hand, mostly stone, concrete block and brick. He claims to have built these - structurally speaking - quite sophisticated buildings without professional help. If so, they are a remarkable achievement, but if this claim is open to question the finished result is proof of a vigorous and ingenious imagination. They are an example of true popular art, undefiled by intellectual pretensions, in the architectural tradition so lively on the Continent and so regrettably moribund in Britain. What is it in our culture which inhibits such works as Fort Willem, the Palais Idéal in France or Watts Tower in Los Angeles? It appears that we excel only in "gentry follies", our naive culture limited to painting, home decoration and gardening.

For whatever reason, Fort Willem offers a refreshing experience for the British visitor. For an architect it is particularly rewarding to encounter any building which defies category. Fort Willem is neither classical nor gothic (its lancet windows a chance salvage opportunity from a disused church) neither art nouveau nor post modern. They are magpie assemblages of architecture, bits borrowed and put together as in a child's drawing; here a church roof, there a Dutch gable, elsewhere something perhaps from Gaudi, though such an esoteric source seems unlikely. One can never tell, for Ham has a certain peasant cunning and isn't going to give anything away. However, with Wim as introductory agent, he was very cordial and we took coffee with him in his recently abandoned cafe (tax problems). Afterwards we followed as he stomped off in his clogs to the lakeside, where the shock waves of his footsteps aroused a Pavlovian response from a swarm of carp who gathered together to fight over a lunch of stale bread. Chickens, ducks and doves completed the zoological menage, the airborne among them fluttering down from the kitchsy garden centre statues with which Ham likes to decorate his architecture. As he left he said, "give my good wishes to England", so I am passing them on to you now.

A final folly. In the lake he has laid out various islands, one of which is in the contours of a naked woman. Originally she lay in the water as a bank of bare shingle, floating face upwards, a single bush the only vegetation (no prizes for guessing where), from which position she attracted the admiration of low flying pilots. Alas, now she is all overgrown. Wim stood on her right breast, I on her left, but they might as well have been casual bumps in the topography for all they revealed.

Long may such private enterprise flourish. Willem Ham has defeated local bureaucracy and given pleasure to countless visitors. British eccentrics, shed your inhibitions and follow his example.

Flint Forts, French Émigrés and Topsy-Turvy Majors: The curios of Box Hill

ANDREW PLUMRIDGE

At one of the highest points in the Surrey section of the North Downs—the chalk ridge that runs eastwards from the Hampshire border through to the Straits of Dover—Box Hill has always been a popular spot for visitors, attracting the likes of Jane Austen, John Keats, Admiral Lord Nelson, Percy Shelley, Sir Walter Scott and William Wordsworth. Like their predecessors, most contemporary visitors are drawn by the fine views over the Mole Valley and the Weald of Kent and Surrey beyond, while others enjoy the woodlands and the butterflies, fungi and orchids that abound within its natural habitat. To those who know where they are located, the beauty spot is also home to three curiosities: Broadwood's Folly, General Hamley's Fort and Major Labelliere's grave.

On the north side of Box Hill stands Juniper Hall, a small mansion that from 1793 was home to a large group of distinguished émigrés who fled from France during the French Revolution. In her excellent (though stodgy) record of their stay,[1] Constance Hill notes that the escapees included those with "high sounding names, famous as statesmen, as orators or as writers...[from whom]...we catch the words of eloquence of Madame de Staël, and the cynical jests of Talleyrand, and can distinguish the voices of Narbonne and of Matthieu de Montmorenci, of Malouet, of Jaucourt, of Lally-Tollendal, of the Princesse d'Hénin, of Madame de Broglie, of Madame de la Châtre, of Girardin and of Général d'Arblay." It was here too that the diarist Fanny Burney first met d'Arblay and later became his wife. On 18 March 1815, the Hall was purchased for £8,236.10s.0d[2] by Thomas Broadwood, a partner in the firm of piano makers of the same name, and younger brother of the feared local magistrate James Shudi Broadwood.[3]

It was Thomas Broadwood who built the circular flint tower on the crest of Lodge Hill, and which from the outset was known as **Broadwood's Folly**. Its precise date is unknown, although it is probably 1815. Although Lodge Hill affords a fine view over the valley and Juniper Hall below, it is not clear why Broadwood should select such an isolated and awkward spot for his building.[4] Indeed, the tower's remoteness has added to its misunderstanding and fuelled gossip about the connection with Major Labelliere's actual grave.[5] There are claims that the tower was erected to commemorate Wellington's victory at the Battle of Waterloo on 18 June 1815, although there is no evidence to support this except for coincidence in the date. It is also likely that Broadwood would have included a plaque to record the event, but no such inscription, or sign of a plaque, exists. A more likely reason is that the tower formed a viewing point from which Broadwood could look down upon his fine house and its elegant gardens. It is also rumoured to have been a signalling station, from where Broadwood's servant would use semaphore flags to send messages to his master's friends in Westhumble, a few miles to the south-west.

BROADWOOD TOWER

When the National Trust finally secured ownership of Lodge Hill in 1921,[6] they also acquired the tower. One of their first acts was to block the entrance door to prevent access to the tower's interior, and in so doing form a protective cage in which an Evergreen Oak has been able to take root and grow unhindered through the ramparts. While the tower has suffered minor structural damage since then, the loss of some of the surrounding trees during the 1989 hurricane has opened up the view and means that the tower and its prospect is much the same today as it was during Broadwood's time.

Two buildings in the vicinity sound as if they should be of interest: Flint Cottage and Swiss Cottage. While both are pleasant enough houses of some distinction, they are of no concern to follyphiles. Flint Cottage was home to the author George Meredith from 1867 until his death in 1909, and from where he did much of his writing. Swiss Cottage stands on the summit of Box Hill and was built as a shooting lodge in the early years of the eighteenth century.

Many visitors to Box Hill incorrectly assume that the **Box Hill Fort** is a folly. In fact, it is what it claims to be—a defence post. During the 1880s, public confidence in the Royal Navy's ability to prevent an invasion was undermined by the major ship building programmes being undertaken by the French and the Russians. The leading writer on military strategy at that time was the retired General Sir E. Hamley who joined the concerned voices by conducting a vigorous campaign for suitable preventative measures to be commenced. Unlike many other soldiers, Hamley believed that volunteers could play a key role in defending London should an invasion occur, and in a series of articles in the *Nineteenth Century* magazine[7] outlined a scheme to establish a series of lightly fortified positions round the capital. His scheme was accepted by the government in 1888, causing the War Office in July of that year to release a memorandum recommending that suitable sites be acquired. These were to include twelve sites between Guildford and Knockholt (north of Sevenoaks, Kent), of which one was to be on Box Hill.

The Box Hill site was acquired on 25 March 1891 from the Hope Clinton Trustees, at a cost of £2,221. Construction work on the fort and its barracks commenced during 1892 but waned soon after Hamley's death in the following year. Writing in *The Volunteers and the National Defence* magazine of 1896, Spenser Wilkinson expressed support for the scheme and successfully persuaded Parliament to continue funding the project. Work was eventually halted in 1905 after Haldane became Secretary of State for War and completely revised defence policy in the home counties. In a speech in Parliament, he confirmed that a total of £8,584 had been "wasted" at Box Hill, and on 8 December 1908 he sold the land and the fort back to the Hope Clinton Trustees. Soon after the National Trust acquired Box Hill, the barracks were converted to the Fort Tea Rooms.

Approximately 90m to the west of the Fort stands a plain white stone recording the bizarre burial on 11 June 1800 of the eccentric and much liked Major Peter Labelliere.

The Labellieres were French and as staunch Huguenots suffered intense hardships for their religious belief. For their own safety, Peter's mother escaped to England with her infant son[8] where she managed to scrape a meagre living and educated her son as best as she could. Although he received no formal education, Peter secured a job as a pupil teacher and subsequently as assistant teacher in a large London school that was notorious for its indiscipline. The experience of dealing with unruly children proved to be particularly beneficial when Labelliere later joined the 92nd Foot Regiment of the Marines, and he quickly rose to the rank of Major.

It is said that a disastrous love affair unsettled Labelliere's mind and brought his eccentricities to the fore. He retired from the army in 1763 after his regiment was disbanded, and occupied his time by writing numerous political papers that were controversial and poorly reasoned, often walking to Whitehall from his home in Chiswick to present them to government ministers. The government's rejection of those papers only added to Labelliere's depression and he eventually left Chiswick and moved to humble dwellings in Dorking.[9]

Box Hill held a particular fascination to Labelliere. He loved to walk the hill in all weathers and at all times of the day and night, and was often seen sitting at the highest point admiring the view and contemplating matters that concerned him. On one occasion, during a violent thunderstorm, he lost his footing, fell against a broken branch on a Yew tree and gouged out one of his eyes. This seems to have heightened his local notoriety and failed to deter his love for Box Hill. He was a generous man and regularly gave money and gifts to those who needed it; on one occasion, he gave to a beggar his coat and his shoes. Sometime before his death, he sent to one of his friends a parcel that was curiously folded and sealed, and accompanied with strict instructions that it was not to be opened until after Labelliere's funeral. Those instructions were complied with, and upon its opening was found to contain nothing more than a plain memorandum book.

When he was in his seventies, Major Labelliere made a three month's stay with the Duke of Devonshire. Upon his return on 6 September 1799, he told his landlady that "I have come back to live and die with you, for this day nine months hence I shall depart out of this world."[10] On 6 June 1800, on the very day mentioned and in the presence of his landlady, he "stretched out his arms, then gently folded them, and died like a lamb."[11]

Major Labelliere left strict instructions for his funeral, including his wish to be buried on Box Hill close to the spot where he lost his eye. As the horse drawn hearse began its slow journey up the hill, dozens of polished coaches and open carts full of people were seen ascending the narrow dust road ahead of it. Many hundreds of people were observed climbing the steep hill on foot. Never before "had there been seen in Dorking such numbers of vehicles, nor for that matter such numbers of people walking and running on the grassy verges...[from whom there was]...a constant buzz of excitement, laughter and cat calls from the young bucks in their swallow-tail coats, much slipping and sliding on the short wiry grass and much calling for assistance by the ladies"[12] in their broad hooped dresses. Some brought picnics having arrived in the morning to secure a good seat and watch four workmen take it in turns to dig a deep hole in the chalk hill—a hole that resembled a well more than it did a grave—and blanket the bottom with yew twigs and leaves.

When the hearse arrived, four men dressed in black carried the coffin to the hole. In line with Labelliere's other instructions, the youngest son of his landlady danced upon his coffin,[13] after which, and "without any religious ceremony at all, except perhaps for the silent prayers of a few friends, the coffin was placed on its end, head downwards in the hole. More branches of yew and box were thrown in, followed by earth and lumps of chalk, until the hole was completely filled and all that remained was a large white mound."[14]

Labelliere's reason for being buried upside down remains something of a mystery. Like the many other examples around the country, some claim that it is so that when the Day of Judgement arrives and the world is turned upside down, they alone will be the right way up and ready to meet their Maker. A close friend of Labelliere's believed more appropriately that it was because "the apostle Peter was crucified with his head downwards and the Major desired to imitate his namesake."[15]

It was estimated that three thousand people attended the bizarre funeral and there was much "laughing, singing and dancing and waving [of] their green branches."[16] When they dispersed, some returned home via the dusty roads while other bravely walked through the undergrowth and down the steep grassy slopes. To their horror, the little wooden bridge over which they first crossed the river Mole had been dismantled by pranksters and many were forced to wade across to avoid the long walk back to the main road.

There are claims that Major Labelliere's final resting place is not at the spot marked by the gravestone. Some believe it to be under Broadwood's Folly. There is no evidence to sustain either claim, nor the rumour that after the excitement had died down, the Major's body was removed from the unconsecrated ground and buried in the local church.

NOTES:

1 C. Hill, *Juniper Hall: A rendezvous of certain illustrious personages during the French Revolution including Alexandre d'Arblay and Fanny Burney*, John Lane, London, 1905

2 D. Wainwright, *Broadwood By Appointment: A History*, Quiller Press, London, 1982

3 James Shudi Broadwood lived at Lyne House in Capel, Surrey, and was founder of the firm of piano makers that bore his name. He was also a feared but respected magistrate of Surrey and Sussex, and successfully quashed the Dorking and Guildford mob rising of 1830.

4 The tower is some way from Juniper Hall and access to it involves climbing a steep hill.

5 Local gossip claims that Broadwood's Folly marks the actual spot where Major Peter Labelliere was buried, although this is unlikely as the tower was built fifteen years after Labelliere's funeral and contemporary accounts of the well attended funeral more than suggest that the burial was close to the Fort.

6 The majority of Box Hill was acquired between 1913 and 1914.

7 Later reprinted in Hamley's book *National Defence*, published in 1889.

8 Peter's father died in France from the suffering imposed because of his beliefs.

9 C. Holland's book *Dorking People* (Kohler & Coombes, Dorking, 1984) observes that the Duke of Devonshire was so fond of Labelliere's company that he gave him a pension of £100 per year and an invitation every year to spend one month on one of the Duke's estates. Despite his comfortable income, Labelliere chose to live a simple life and rented rooms at a cottage called "The Hole in the Wall", in South Street, Dorking. Holland also records that Labelliere neglected his appearance and cleanliness and was known locally as 'The Walking Dunghill'.

10 W.H. Chouler, *Tales of Old Surrey: Myths, Legends, Folk-lore and Ghosts*, Second Impression, 1978

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

13 The instruction was that the youngest son and daughter should perform the dance but the little girl could not be persuaded to undertake the strange request. The son remembered the event vividly for the rest of his life and his recollections are well documented in many local records.

14 Chouler, *op. cit.*

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

BOOK REVIEWS

David R. Coffin, **The English Garden: Meditation and Memorial**, Princeton University Press, Chichester, 1994, 283pp, £25.00
ISBN 0 691 03432 X

Books on memorials within the garden context are few and far between, so this publication verily fills the gap. The period covers the early sundials of the sixteenth century, noted as "one of the most common images to assert the brevity of life and the morality of men and women", through to the thoughts of Loudon in the early nineteenth century. But within this we are entertained by material which spans the evocation of ruins, the role of the wilderness in meditation, hermits, goths and druids, and burials in the garden, a practice that can be related to classical times instanced by the Greek philosopher Theophrastus, but certainly more familiar to readers as the variety of mausolea that still abound. However, the most satisfying chapter is that devoted to monuments and memorials themselves. On enigmatic preference alone, my favourite has to be the obelisk which once stood in Pope's garden at Twickenham, erected in memory of his mother. It was moved, together with several garden urns, to Penn House at Amersham in the nineteenth century and although marked on large scale maps, this elusive structure seems to have moved again. All we are left with today is its imprint at the head of a small pool of water, easily overlooked. It is pleasing, therefore, to have an early water-colour of this obelisk as one of the eighty seven well reproduced illustrations. No complaints there. Indeed, no complaints anywhere. The notes alone make impressive reading, and I doubt if we shall ever see Follies by Headley and Meulenkamp cited so much—testimony to their cultured interest in memorials. Certainly worth borrowing from your local library and equally worth buying if you see it.—MC

Michael Raeburn, Ludmila Voronikhina, Andrew Nurnberg, **The Green Frog Service**, Cacklegoose Press, London, 424pp, £150
ISBN 0 9526584 0 2

To garden scholars and historians alike, the Green Frog Service commissioned by Catherine the Great has major significance, depicting contemporary scenes from celebrated gardens and antiquities throughout England, Scotland and Wales; it also expresses the Empress's interest in transporting the essence of some of these delights to her native land. This timely offering coincided with the Wedgwood celebrations and exhibitions (see FOLLIES, Vol.7, 2, p.6) and marks the culmination of many years' work and research. Every view on the extant pieces of the service has been photographed and reproduced (sadly a number of pieces have not survived the last 220 years) and explanation is provided through four chapters which sub-divide the views into Antiquities, Landscapes Gardens, The Land of Britain and finally City Arcadias. The complete list of views is broken down by the old counties (and so they should be) together with an appendix. The latter includes pieces which were omitted when the service was shipped to Russia, most of which are now in museums or private collections. Here, in a few cases, I have reservations as to the descriptions, simply because the pieces were uncatalogued at that time and personal research does not tally with the attributions. With a forward by Sir Martin Wedgwood, Bt, three introductory essays, including one by Gaye Blake Roberts, curator of the Wedgwood Museum at Barlaston, this tome would appear complete. It is due, in part, to the unswerving energies of editors and contributors alike, and their love of this service that it came to England at the recent V&A exhibition. Complete with slip case, it is a sumptuous work, on a paper that emulates the cream colour of the actual service, and a green cover embossed in gold with the frog motif. There is the odd mistake to be found—mis-referencing between page numbers, the odd incorrect footnote numbering—and these may be due to late layout changes. This is a limited run edition of 1,000 of which only 600 are for general sale. For fellow subscribers, well done in endorsing this *magnum opus*, for fellow academic readers, if you can afford it buy it while you still can.—MC

Fiona Green, **A Guide to the Historic Parks and Gardens of Tyne and Wear**, Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation Team, Development Department, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1995, 62pp, £3.00
ISBN 1 85795 086 0

This very welcome guide covers Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside, and Sunderland districts, and describes the profusion of historic gardens and parks which survive in whole or in part in this area. The survival of so much is perhaps surprising given the level of urbanisation and industrialisation which has occurred in the area- though one tends to forget that much of the wealth created by the industries of the area in the last century was spent by rich entrepreneurs beautifying their newly acquired domains. The publication of this booklet is part of the programme to increase awareness of what does survive. Nine sites are currently on *English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest*—and more are expected to be listed in the near future. The booklet surveys the sites chronologically, beginning with early parks and gardens, and then going on to cover landscape parks, cemeteries, municipal parks, villa gardens and ending with a survey of twentieth century designed landscapes, coming right up to the 1990s with the Gateshead Garden Festival site and the new "hanging gardens" at Royal Quays, in Newcastle. It is good to see early Victorian cemeteries recognised in such a work. Each chapter begins with general observations, and then contains a gazetteer of key sites. Grid references and an indication of public access are given—useful for the non-Geordie—and a good selection of maps and prints accompany the text. The reproduction of some of the black and white photographs leaves something to be desired, but the overall quality of the publication is good for the cover price.

The book provides a good background for folly hunters in the area, but offers no new finds. Cascades, orangeries, bath houses, icehouses, and gazebos are scattered though the text, but no major towers or architectural oddities. This is perhaps partly because the best follies in the area survive somewhat marooned from their original landscape setting - Gibside being one of the few landscapes to survive relatively intact with a wide range of features. The book is warmly recommended to the garden historian and to folly hunters wishing to learn more about the Tyneside context, and its publication by Newcastle Council, at a time of spending cutbacks, is to be commended.—LH

John Beardsley, **Gardens of Revelation, Environments by Visionary Artists**, Abbeville Press 1995, £45 (£35)
ISBN 1 55859 360 8

The title may suggest something different, but the book is all about follies and related subjects and objects. Although the word folly hardly ever occurs and I would have welcomed a discussion on distinctions in the semantic field by this knowledgeable author, almost all of the objects and environments are generally considered follies. That is the good news. That bad news for some may be that the book is mainly about America. The exceptions to this rule are gathered in one chapter and they are very much worthwhile: from France the Palais Idéal and Maison Picassiette, from Belgium the Tower of the Apocalyps; Asia is represented by Chand's Rock Garden and Africa by Helen Martin's Owl House (did you know that one?). Here as well as in the main bulk of the book the descriptions of the buildings are complimented

and complemented by excellent photographs. Most space however is devoted to the motivation of the creators, which is usually very illuminating. The next four chapters are about American works. Most of these seem to be inspired by feelings of patriotism or religion. You can't help feeling that there could have been many more and much weirder buildings if the author hadn't tried to restrict himself to things that he could call works of (primitive bricolage) art. The last chapter, on Rodia's Watts Towers, some castles and modern works of art is not the best. The best is clearly the introductory first chapter, in which Beardsley, erudite writer on art in general and relative outsider in follydom, now devotes his understanding and eloquence to our field of interest. And in his theories he gets at least as far as our more celebrated cognoscenti. In practice this means that inevitably some pages are dedicated to the relationship between Ferdinand Cheval's Palais Idéal and the pope of Surrealism André Breton's dicta on convulsive beauty. All of which makes it an interesting book. And very American. Only an American author would take the trouble of elaborately explaining the difference between follies on the one hand and Disney and theme parks on the other. One more thing: idiosyncrasy, faith, labour and beauty are taken so seriously by the writer that the concept of fun hardly enters the pages of this folly-book. For more prominence of the element pleasure we shall have to wait for the next book on American Architectural Follies: the one by our own Gwyn Headley. This Beardsley book is worth a lot of money. But salesmen in England seem to think that dedicated enthusiasts are willing to pay anything for a good book on a specialised subject. That may go some way towards explaining why the British version is £10 more expensive than the American. One thing is certain: none of the folly-builders and artists in this book would have been able to afford it.—PAL

RUNDOWN

Croome Court

Sun Alliance has agreed a ten year sponsorship deal with the National Trust to restore "Capability" Brown's landscape gardening works at Croome in Hereford and Worcester (see FOLLIES #2, pp.5-7). Sun Alliance and the London Assurance Company bought the 3,000 hectares of Croome agricultural estate 14 years ago as an investment for life assurance policyholders. Sun Alliance has now agreed to sell the 270 hectares surrounding Croome Court to the National Trust which will allow the area to be restored and preserved. The price has not been revealed by the company which says it "represents a fair return for life policyholders". The National Heritage Memorial Fund has given £4.9m of lottery money to the National Trust towards the purchase, one of 56 projects that benefited from the £13.7m worth of grants announced in November. The restoration is expected to cost £8m, with Sun Alliance giving £300,000 towards the work. The house itself, owned by a property developer, is still empty but on the market. It is not part of the package. The National Trust's Severn Regional Director, Cecil Pearse, said: "This is a wonderful opportunity to restore a unique

MICHAEL COUSINS

CROOME COURT

creation. Brown carried out the work only for the Earls of Coventry, but we are doing it for the nation—that is why we find it so exciting." The Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust were instrumental in increasing national awareness of the plan to turn Croome into another golf course, starting a chain of events which has led to this welcome restoration.

Millennium Monument Competition

Luke warm off the pages of Country Life *[well, it was a few weeks ago now—Ed.]* we are pleased that the winning proposal came from architect Patrick Horsburgh, also a member of the Fellowship. His entry, a **Millennium Wildlife Memorial**, echoes the Needle's Eye at Wentworth in the form of a slender granite pylon over an arch but set in the Scottish Highlands. By siting it on a disused railway line, now used as a footpath, walkers are tempted to reflect on the passing of the industrial age, while the provision of a raptors' nesting box towards the top of the 80-foot obelisk "celebrates a return to vitality of certain threatened species among the birds of prey."

The idea was kicked off last June by Country Life: "a prize of £1,000 for the best idea for a Millennium monument to be erected in the countryside. The monument should be original, but in the spirit of structures erected on great estates in the 18th century to celebrate events and people and to ornament the landscape." The final selection was no easy task for the judges, with entries ranging from architects such as Peter Foster through landowners (the Duke of Marlborough) to a retired Bishop. The scope of subjects was equally varied but included a combined tower and sundial, an open glass rotunda and a neo-classical obelisk planned to transform into a picturesque ruin at the moment of the Millennium. *[I hope that Mr. Horsburgh will forgive my enthusiasm, and my early morning call, in congratulating him—Ed!]*

More Millennium madness may transform Calton Hill in Edinburgh into a bigger attraction if plans by the District Council go ahead. The whole project, estimated at a cost of a mere £37m, would include a 100-foot high viewing tower on top of the hill, developing the **City Observatory** already there and building a new, glass-domed visitor centre at the foot of the tower on the north side of the hill. A funicular railway would run to the summit. With **The Nelson Memorial, The National Monument** (and monuments and memorials to Playfair, Burns and Dugald Stewart for those who want the lot), already adequately serving the hill, it has been suggested that such a sum could be better spent elsewhere in the city. And what about detracting from the pleasure of the follies!

Virtually There

22 November marked the first Virtual Heritage Conference, organised by Pavilions of Splendour and VR News magazine. The star of the show was the Silicon Graphics Onyx Reality Engine and unless you own a Cray supercomputer it is one hundred times more powerful than the latest Pentium desktops, re-creating the likes of Cluny Abbey and pre-eruption Pompeii. At some £5m cheaper than the estimated cost to rebuild **Euston Arch**, it does offer a not-so-real alternative to what could be the not-altogether-original article.

A Gloucester Garden Temple

OLIVER C. BRADBURY

Snooping around the cathedral close in Gloucester last summer I noticed the back of an intriguing little garden building. Unable to resist my curiosity any longer, I asked permission to have a look. In the corner of an old walled garden was a little classical temple. It is in good condition with a freshly leaded roof and repointed walls; two part-fluted columns with Corinthian capitals support a pediment over an entablature. The latter is finely moulded with an overlapping leaf motif, with an egg and dart moulding. The pediment infill is somewhat puzzling—it looks slightly facsimile. In the middle is a cartouche with coat of arms, and on either side are cornucopias oozing with fruit. The inside of the shelter is very plain save for a simple cornice. This is all on a delightfully humble and delicate scale—one's head would come up to the entablature—and it is currently used as a garden shed.

David Verey writing for *The Buildings of England—Gloucestershire 2: the Vale & the Forest of Deans*[1] described it very briefly as "hut with the arms of Bishop Benson (1734-52)." So we know who it was built for, but I had to find out more about its history. Writing to the Chapter Steward at Gloucester Cathedral, his reply was quite fascinating: "Martin Benson approached William Kent to carry out improvements to the Bishop's Palace, and in particular (around 1740) to design a new portico in the Palladian style; when the old mediæval building was pulled down in the later half of the 19th century F.S. Waller (the cathedral architect) rescued this fine Palladian portico, moving it to the corner of the garden with supporting brickwork on the sides."

The Cathedral Architect made the following comment: "The stonework to the gable is supported on a T-shaped piece of steel, which is very unusual much before that date. The walls are brick, and are less than 9" thick, producing a very complicated construction with the inner leaf bricks set on edge. The whole was rebuilt 5 or 10 years ago when the boundary wall to the King's School garden had to be rebuilt following collapse."

I have consulted the two major biographical texts on Kent[2], but the only mention of the architect and Gloucester is for a gothic choir screen which he designed for the cathedral in 1741 and which was removed in 1820. Could this temple be a scrap of forgotten Kent? I will try to get it verified; can anyone help?

A big thanks to Anthony S. Higgs, Chapter Steward at Gloucester Cathedral with help from the Cathedral Architect/Librarian.

NOTES:

1 London, 1970, p.223

2 Margaret Jourdain, *The Works of William Kent*, London, 1948; Michael I. Wilson, *William Kent, Architect, Designer, Painter, Gardener*, 1685-1748, London, 1984

IN THE NEWS

Lady Harlech's Folly

Bath seems set for another folly, or two. Lady Harlech, an American socialite and chairman of the English National Ballet originally wanted to build a 40-foot **folly**, including a **grotto**, on her land at Hinton Charterhouse. However, planning officials at Wansyke Council deferred making a decision on the issue because of concern that the structure would be too high. Still her Ladyship is determined to have her folly and a report says that amended plans have now been drawn up, which substantially reduce the height "whilst not compromising its design." The folly would also be resited, reducing its visual impact on the countryside, and landscaping would also be planted. The site, at Hinton Fields, is in a Green Belt area and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We'll keep you posted when we hear more.

Wakey, Wakey

Gilbert White and Selborne are somewhat synonymous but it has taken a long time for his whimsical landscape garden at *The Wakes* to get the same recognition as his famous book. No that the sight lines of the vistas have been established, the "conceits" are shortly to be put in place—a small mount is to receive a whimsical folly known as the **wine pipe** (a cut-out wine barrel topped by an ogee roof) and the 12-foot high wooden cut-out painted figure of Hesperian Hercules. The Quincunx, an arrangement of conifers with a large earthenware oil jar on a pedestal in the centre, has already been reinstated. The house and garden at Selborne, Hampshire, is open weekends for the rest of winter.

Do You Know...

of a **Japanese pavilion** in Dorset? Read on...In the 1950s, the pavilion was installed as a feature on a private estate. The ground floor is used as a Japanese bath house whilst the top floor serves as an art studio. However, after forty years, the original built up roof covering with a green mineral finish had started to break down and split open in a number of places. It has recently been carefully refurbished and restored using *Vulcanite* roofing products, and the company also recommended that the final cap sheet be changed from green to Heather Brown in order to enhance the final appearance.

Tatton

The National Trust also has just completed a two-year restoration of the **orangery** and **fernery** at Tatton Park, Cheshire. The former was designed for the Egerton family by Lewis Wyatt, whilst the fernery, a Grade II listed building designed in the 1850s by none less than Joseph Paxton, was a favourite haunt of the Late Lord, who kept snakes among the foliage *[so who's scared of snakes—Ed?]* Paintwork has been matched to the original colour, and the orangery's trellis work, seats and window fittings have been reconstructed using some of Wyatt's original drawings. Sam Youd, Tatton's head gardener, campaigned for more than five years for the £300,000 restoration funded by the Trust, Cheshire County Council and English Heritage.

Decisions, Decisions

Paxton's masterpiece, **The Crystal Palace**, could also be rebuilt if confidential plans submitted to the Millennium Commission are successful. Standing in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851, then moved to Sydenham in 1854, it burned down in 1936. At an estimated cost of £50m, compared with £170,000 in 1851, the plans for a replica have

prompted protagonists and detractors to have their say. We shall know Virginia Bottomley's decision in due course but for those who can't wait, there is a replica in the middle of Dallas.

Around the World...in an Afternoon

There are a number of Lilliputian caprices, model villages which echo the strains of rural England with cricket scenes in one corner, and the modernism of airports in another. It takes the Chinese to copy the world. A theme park called **Window of the World** has been created in Shenzhen, Southern China, near the Hong Kong border, and its recreations include Niagara Falls, the Pyramids of Giza, the Eiffel Tower, the Acropolis, the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, and the Statue of Liberty. It is all very authentic and convincing, with a 1:15 scale model of the Capitol in Washington until...you just happen to notice the carved presidential heads of Mount Rushmore overlooking it.

French Fancy

Meanwhile, Dinard, the most British of French seaside resorts, has classified 407 extravagant and eccentric mansions, castles and houses overlooking the Baie de Rance in Brittany in an unprecedented move to preserve an historical coastline. The mayor, Marius Mallet, has campaigned for an all-embracing preservation order since failing to stop the demolition of **Villa Crystal** in 1977. This was considered the most unusual of the bizarre collection—a weird glass palace, topped by a small model of the Eiffel Tower—but was demolished to build flats. Most of the villas were built between 1850 and 1914 to attract the British and Americans but it was a Lebanese financier, Rochaid Dahdah who ensured international recognition for the resort by buying half the town and building the spectacular Villa des Deux-Rives and the workers' cottages, which gives the centre the look of a Breton fishing village. Another hundred villas were built by Albert Lacroix, Victor Hugo's publisher, and others owe their origins to exiled Russian princes, American millionaires and minor European royalty.

A Load of Old Clinkers

Trustees and Friends of Kingswood Heritage Museum Trust have been celebrating news of a £40,000 grant from English Heritage. It is all part of a plan to transform an eighteenth century brassworks into a museum. William Champion pioneered the process for producing zinc metal and became the largest single brass producer in Europe. Most readers, however, will be more familiar with the historic gardens which feature a **grotto** and a **statue of Neptune** made of zinc clinkers. This, together with the industrial site, was designated a conservation area last July. The first steps in the restoration programme have been taken with structural repairs to buildings.

A Room with a View

The *Daily Telegraph* recently ran an article in their property section on **gazebos** (6 Dec). There will always be the debate as to what constitutes a folly and what a sculpture but a modern gazebo designed by artist Tom Heatherwick's has been erected by Sir Terence Conran, the restaurateur and designer, in the garden of his house near Newbury, Berkshire. It seats four people and he uses it for smoking cigars. Weighing in at two tons, let's hope that it doesn't fall down when anyone is inside. The materials, some five hundred identical curved pieces of plywood, cost £4,000 and took four months to assemble together. We also hear of five gazebos in Lechdale, Gloucestershire, the best example being of red brick at the front of a William and Mary town house. The final example wishes the writer were better informed, calling the rotunda that forms a vista from Lindridge Park, near Exeter, a gazebo. Shame on you.

Gambo's Greenwich

And if Paul Gambaccini was offered a dream home it would have to be **Vanbrough Castle** in Greenwich: "This colourful folly is in the shape of a mediæval castle and has the most beautiful views. It has now been divided into three parts and although I've managed to look around two of the sections, I haven't got into the turret yet. That is the section I really fancy."

Groyne-strain

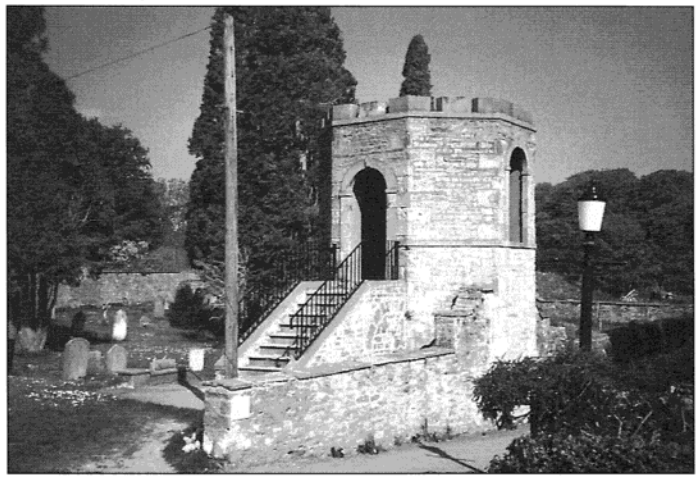
There was some concern about the future of the **pier towers** at Withernsea (FOLLIES Vol.6, 3, p.7) but a £6m sea defence project is set to save the day. Huge boulders have been shipped in to combat the ravages of winter tides and a new pier (the original was built 1875), a 65-metre rock groyne is being built out from the towers.

FOR SALE

Local agents Peter Eley are handling the sale of "The Old Chancel" in Sidmouth (FOLLIES, Vol.6, 3, p.4). A unique opportunity to acquire a grade 1 listed gothic folly, overlooking the bowling green and tennis courts, the asking price is £265,000 freehold. Tel: (01395) 512552

Kirkby Lonsdale Gazebo

DAVE MARTIN



The historic market town of Kirkby Lonsdale has attractions that appeal to visitors at all seasons of the year. To the north of the town is the Norman Church of St. Mary the Virgin, and to the north-west of this, the eighteenth century Vicarage. Originally the gazebo, a two-storey, octagonal brick building, was part of the Vicarage garden before this was handed over for burial purposes. Back in the early nineteenth century official annals note that the gazebo had a steep pyramidal roof, sadly now flat and topped off with cement blocks in imitation of battlements. J.M.W. Turner made use of this summer house when preparing his famous water-colour (engraved by Messrs. Longman of London in 1822) of the River Lune and the what is known today as 'Ruskin's View' from the Churchyard. A lover of Turner's works, it was the fine river and fell views that made a deep impression on Ruskin, inspiring him to write "I do not know in all my country, still less in France or Italy, a place more naturally divine", a comment still echoed today.

Nearby Church Brow Cottage, built around 1830 in the "romantic Gothic style", is leased to the Vivat Trust and provides holiday accommodation for two people. Although the gazebo is the property of the Church, the Kirkby Lonsdale and District Council Civic Society look after it but being open it has occasionally suffered from graffiti attacks. Thanks to Alan Day and Christine Strickland.

LETTERS

Turton Villa

In reply to N.T.G. Patrick's letter, I come from Weymouth and worked for a while just around the corner from Turton Villa. I was a member of the Civic Society keen on preserving Weymouth's historic architecture and heard various stories about the building, all fictitious, I believe, relating to George III's residence. Talking to Eric Ricketts, a retired architect, who has written extensively on Weymouth's buildings, Turton Villa is a Victorian make-believe Gothic villa dating from 1850-80. He personally remembers a master at Weymouth Technical College living there and adding the date 1771, in about 1960, because he heard this was the case, but according to Mr. Ricketts, no map of that time records a building there.

Ann Hole,
St. Catherine's Way,
Fareham

Shuffle the cards

Anyone who has visited 'The Pack o' Cards' pub in Combe Martin, North Devon, may well have enjoyed their fare under the pillared porch at the back (see FOLLIES #9, p.13). The landlord has applied for planning permission to erect panels between the pillars. The Georgian Group have objected to these proposals and suggested it would compromise the Grade 2* listed building. The local environmental officer has agreed—the proposal is unsuitable but concedes that by providing more usable space in the building, it will aid the pub's finances. I do not know the final outcome, but it has worrying implications if money is to be placed as the overriding factor in listed planning applications.

Sharon McGinn,
Rowandale,
Alandale Close,
Teignmouth

Also, from the same household [*although Sharon may well deny all knowledge—Ed.*]

Why did the Folly not cross the road?
Because it had no legs

Knock knock
Who's there?
Folly
Folly who?
Folly Fellowship
by Lindsay McGinn (aged 7)

THE CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

In a fashion befitting the Folly Fellowship, the draw for the crossword was made exactly half-way across the Queen Elizabeth bridge at Dartford. The winning entry was from A.J. Sambrook who will be receiving his prize in due course; our thanks to all those who took part, other correct entries were received from David Baldwin, Rita Boogaart, Maurice Gould, Iain Gray, Derrick Green, Dave Martin, Michael Milliken and Jean J. Vaupres.

Solution

ACROSS: 1 Rotunda, 5 Crich, 8 Ionic, 9 Citadel, 10 Sham Eye, 11 Heath, 12 Fresco, 14 Graham, 17 Scott, 19 Enville, 22 Old Palm, 23 Chart, 24 Norse, 25 Theydon

DOWN: 1 Ruins, 2 Tyndale, 3 Niche, 4 Arches, 5 Catcher, 6 India, 7 Holkham, 12 Festoon, 13 Cottage, 15 Holland, 18 Order, 20 Vache,

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